

ADDRESS: 1415 LOCUST STREET

Name of Resource: American Protestant Hall

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: 1415 Locust LLC

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, Allyson.mehley@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1415 Locust Street, historically known as American Protestant Hall, and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and J. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that 1415 Locust Street, completed in 1858, is a rare example of a pre-Civil War commercial-style loft building located west of Broad Street in Center City. The nomination further asserts, under Criterion C, that the 5-story stone and brick building was designed in an Italian Renaissance Revival Style notably influenced by leading architects of the era. Under Criterion J, the nomination highlights the building's architectural presence and complex cultural heritage as a significant point of interest in the architectural and historic landscape of Center City.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1415 Locust Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and J.



NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 1415 Locust Street_____

Postal code: 19102_____

Councilmanic District: 2nd_____

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: American Protestant Hall_____

Current/Common Name:_____

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair ☒ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Ground floor restaurant/taverns; vacant upper stories_____

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1858 to 1920_____

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1858_____

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:_____

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:_____

Original owner: American Protestant Hall and Library Association_____

Other significant persons:_____

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ## 8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date April 10, 2019

Name with Title Ben Leech, consultant Email patrick@preservationalliance.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut St., Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 15 April 2019

X Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: Correct-Complete on 6 May 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 17 May 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: 1415 Locust LLC/1415 Locust Associates *Transfer of ownership recorded 22 April 2019

Address: *Current and previous owners notified, see attached. Current owner is 1415 Locust LLC and

City: previous owner is 1415 Locust Associates State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation:_____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

Notifications sent to:

Owner
1415 Locust Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

1415 Locust LLC
100 S Juniper Street, 6th Floor
Philadelphia, PA
Attn: Brian Zoubek

1415 Locust LLC
1326-28 Chestnut Street, 6th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Attn: Brian Zoubek

1415 Locust LLC
21 S 11th Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Attn: Brian Zoubek

1415 Locust Associates
1821 Sansom Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-4904
Attn: Leroy E Kean Corp



5. Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the Northerly side of Locust Street at the distance of 108 feet 2 inches Eastwardly from the Easterly side of 15th Street, containing in front or breadth on the said Locust Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Northwardly between lines parallel with the said 15th Street 150 feet to the Southerly side of Chancellor Street.

6. Description

The former American Protestant Hall is a five-story, flat-roofed stone and brick structure filling the entirety of a 25-foot-wide by 150-foot-deep mid-block parcel at 1415 Locust Street in Center City Philadelphia. The building's primary south elevation fronts Locust Street, with a rear north elevation fronting Chancellor Street. Its east and west elevations are party walls; the east is currently freestanding but unfenestrated and minimally visible, while the west is engaged with its neighboring structure. The building was completed in 1858 for the American Protestant Hall and Library Association and was designed in an Italianate Renaissance Revival style by an unknown architect.

The building's Locust Street elevation is clad in marble with an infill storefront of black glazed brick. [Figs. 1-2] Its five stories and three bays are clearly articulated by a grid of chamfered pilasters and cornice bands demarking each story. Round-arched masonry openings light the facade, and a bracketed eave crowns the roofline. Tiered floor heights accentuate the verticality of the composition, with a grandly-scaled second-floor arcade diminishing gradually to a squat, flat-headed fifth-floor attic. A Vitruvian scroll caps the ground-floor cornice and heavy archivolts with roundel-studded spandrels crown the second-floor arcade. The third-floor windows feature ghosted outlines of lost window hoods, and the vestige of a fascia sign band reading "AMERICAN PROTESTANT HALL" remains semi-legible. The fifth floor features balcony railings across each full-height window. With the exception of a boarded second floor, all existing windows are paired single-light wood casements.

The rear Chancellor Street elevation is a utilitarian five-story, three-bay brick composition featuring round-arched center-bay windows flanked by segmental arched windows at each floor level. The windows feature brick surrounds, brownstone impost blocks and keystones, and bracketed brick sills. Windows are a variety of paired casement and double-hung configurations. The ground-floor facade is infilled with solid brick and capped by a pent eave, with a rear doorway located at its east end. A fire escape covers the upper stories. The roofline is crowned by a bracketed cornice. Historic atlases suggest that the rear is an early (pre-1874) addition to the original front portion of the structure [Figs. 5-7].

Note: The building's Locust Street facade is currently covered in protective netting which partially obscures visibility. This description is largely based on photographs taken in 2015, before limited masonry stabilization was undertaken and the netting installed. However, no major alterations to the facade are known to have been undertaken since that time, and all of the character-defining features described above are believed to remain intact.



Figure 1 (left): Locust Street (south) elevation, perspective-corrected photo c.2015.
 Figure 2 (right): South and partial east elevations c.2015.



Figure 3 (left): Chancellor Street (north) elevation, 2019.

Figure 4 (right): Partial Locust Street elevation, c. 1950. Parker & Mullikin Collection, Print and Pictures Department, Free Library of Philadelphia.

7. Significance

The former American Protestant Hall at 1415 Locust Street is a rare and notable example of a pre-Civil War commercial-style loft building located west of Broad Street in Center City Philadelphia. Completed in 1858 as a meeting hall and library by the American Protestant Association, a secretive anti-Catholic social and political organization established in 1842, the five-story stone and brick building was designed in an Italianate Renaissance Revival style clearly influenced by contemporaneous designs from Stephen Decatur Button, Joseph C. Hoxie, John Notman, and other leading architects of the era. It later housed a variety of academic and cultural institutions through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including (among other tenants) a Catholic military academy and the American Ethical Union. While the building's architect remains unknown, both its unique physical presence and its complex and conflicted cultural heritage represent a significant point of interest in the architectural and historic landscape of Center City. It therefore merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, meeting the following criteria for historic designation as set forth in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

A: Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;

C: Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
and

J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

American Protestant Hall and Library Association

On December 22, 1856, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published the following notice:

A New Public Building

The secret order entitled "The American Protestant Association," have purchased a lot in Locust street, on the north side east of Fifteenth street, immediately opposite the rear of the Opera House. It is the intention of the Hall Association to erect a suitable building five stories high, to be used for the meeting of the various bodies of the order in the city, and which wil [sic] also be an ornament to that

section of the city. The rapid growth of this order is surprising, as it numbers about thirty Lodges in this city. It is in a very flourishing condition, and is the means of much assistance to many a worthy citizen.¹

While the exact lineage of this “secret order” remains somewhat obscure, the group shared a name and a mission with an organization first founded in Philadelphia in November 1842, when a large group of Protestant ministers established the American Protestant Association to “awaken the attention of the community to the dangers which threaten the liberties, and the public and domestic institutions, of these United States from the assaults of Romanism.”² “Romanism,” also dubbed “Popery,” was a pejorative term for the Catholic faith, which faced intense levels of suspicion and vitriol from some quarters as Irish and German Catholic immigration to the United States surged in the 1830s and 1840s. Fueled as much by bigotry and xenophobia as by theological differences, these antagonisms reached a bloody crescendo in Philadelphia with the infamous Nativist Riots of 1844, when mobs attacked and destroyed a number of Catholic churches, homes, and businesses, and fighting between nativist protestors, Catholic counter-protestors, and state militia resulted in more than twenty deaths and one hundred injuries.³ Unfortunately, widespread public condemnation of the violence did little to quell anti-Catholic sentiments in the riots’ aftermath. The American Protestant Association, which was not directly involved in the rioting, continued to distribute anti-Catholic literature and host public lectures and meetings through the 1840s.

Beginning in the early 1850s, newer incarnations of the American Protestant Association, possibly but not conclusively outgrowths from the original Philadelphia charter, began to form in cities across the East Coast. But while the original organization was formed primarily by members of the clergy, these new chapters were organized as lay fraternal orders. Announcing a large gathering in Philadelphia in 1853, the *Philadelphia North American* reported that “[t]he order, which is a secret one, with rites and ceremonies like those of the Odd Fellows and Masons, though, unlike them, religious in its character and objects, has increased very largely in numbers within a year or two past, and will to-day, it is expected, make quite an imposing

¹ “A New Public Building,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 22, 1856.

² *Address of the Board of Managers of the American Protestant Association*. Philadelphia: American Protestant Association, 1843, p.13.

³ Schrag, Zachary M. “Nativist Riots of 1844,” *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*. <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/nativist-riots-of-1844/>

appearance.”⁴ Other accounts from the era noted the large numbers of Protestant immigrants active in these newer associations: “It is, as its name imports, an anti-Catholic organization, and is composed, for the most part, of Irish Protestants, with here and there an American with anti-papistical tendencies.”⁵ Specifically describing the Newark chapter in 1854, the *Newark Daily Advertiser* observed, “The Association is composed almost entirely of foreign-born citizens, German and Irish, and scarcely anyone suspected that a sufficient number of Protestant foreign born citizens lived among us to make so fine a display as we witnessed today.”⁶

In November 1856 a plot of land at 1415 Locust Street was purchased by the American Protestant Hall and Library Association, and the cornerstone for Philadelphia’s new five-story American Protestant Hall was laid on April 30, 1857.⁷ The building opened in June 1858 with a meeting of the “Grand Lodge of the Pennsylvania American Protestant Association” representing sixty local and regional chapters.⁸ Elsewhere, most notably in Newark in 1854, American Protestant Association parades were known to incite riots and violent counter-protests, but the group appears to have avoided significant unrest or controversy locally.⁹ Beyond the semi-regular processions and conventions reported upon by newspapers of the era, relatively little is known about the organization’s activities or its membership in the years and decades following the hall’s completion. In 1863 the American Protestant Hall and Library Association was granted tax-exempt status by the state legislature, affirming the organization’s status as a religious or educational institution.¹⁰ Regular meetings of the association continued for the next four decades until gradually disappearing from public view around 1904. In 1915 the American Protestant Hall and Library Association officially reconstituted as the Loyal Patriots of America Hall Association, and five years later sold the building.¹¹

⁴ “The American Protestant Association,” *Philadelphia North American*, Sept. 10, 1853.

⁵ “Grand National Convention of the American Protestant Association,” *Philadelphia North American*, July 25, 1855.

⁶ “Terrible Riot and Bloodshed--Dreadful Scenes in Newark,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 7, 1854.

⁷ Deed abstract, 2-S-17-80, Philadelphia City Archives; “Mount Sinai Lodge,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 16, 1900.

⁸ “Local Interest,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 9, 1858.

⁹ “Terrible Riot and Bloodshed--Dreadful Scenes in Newark,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 7, 1854.

¹⁰ Act 355, Laws of Pennsylvania of the Session of 1863.

¹¹ Deed abstract, 2-S-17-80, Philadelphia City Archives

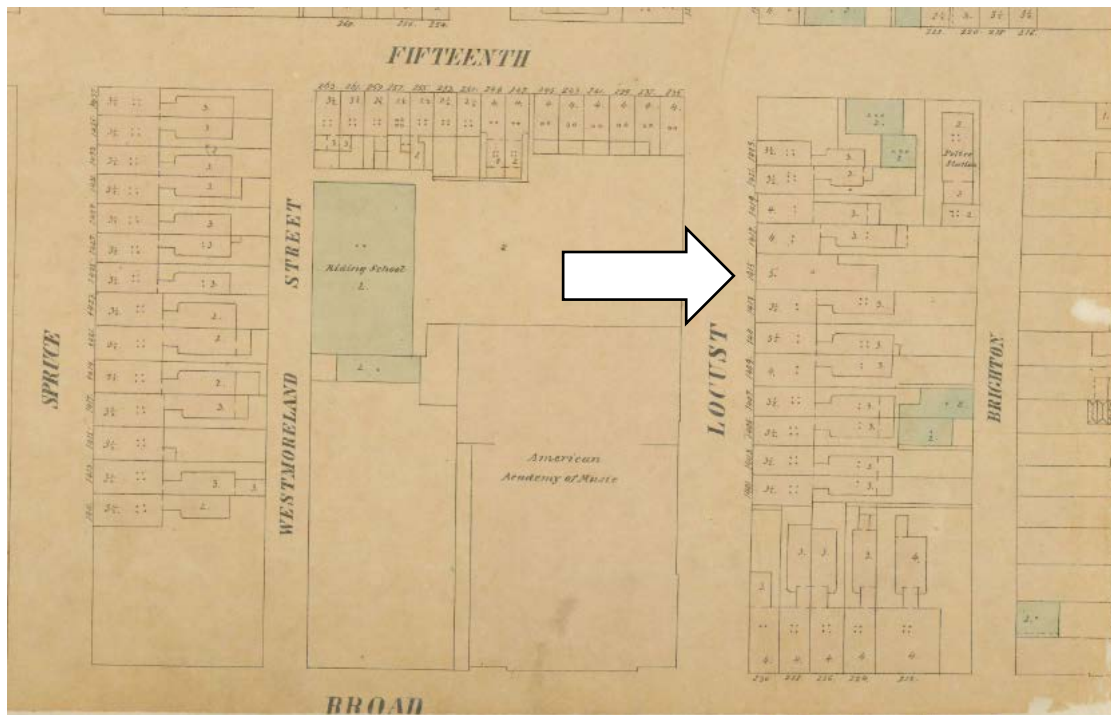


Figure 5: Maps of the City of Philadelphia, 1858-1860, Volume 3. Hexamer & Locher, 1858, Plate 36 (detail).

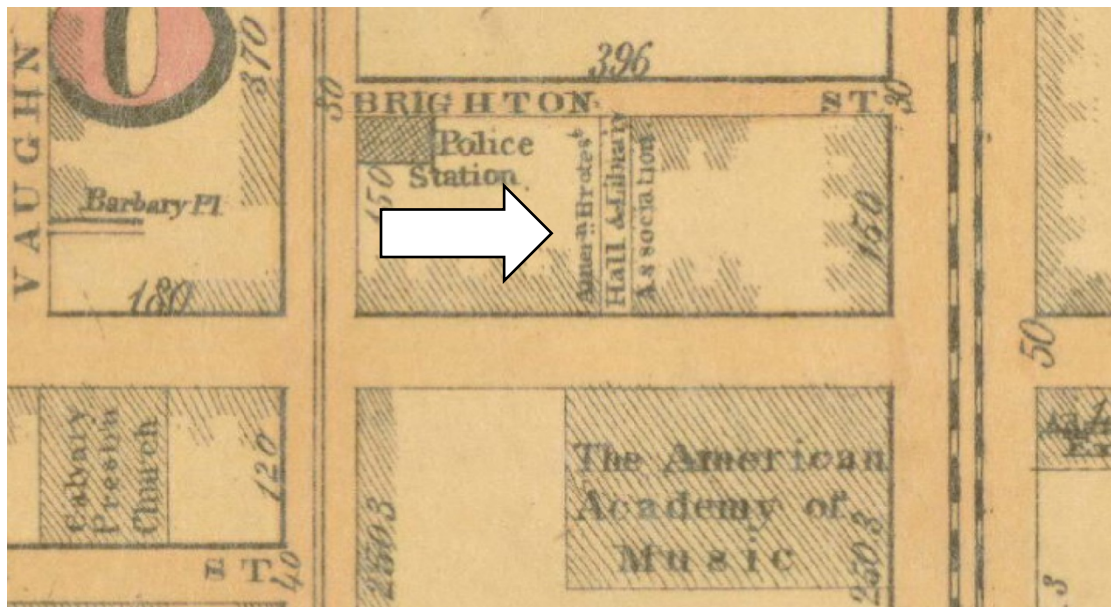


Figure 6: Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1862. Samuel L. Smedley, Section 4 (detail)

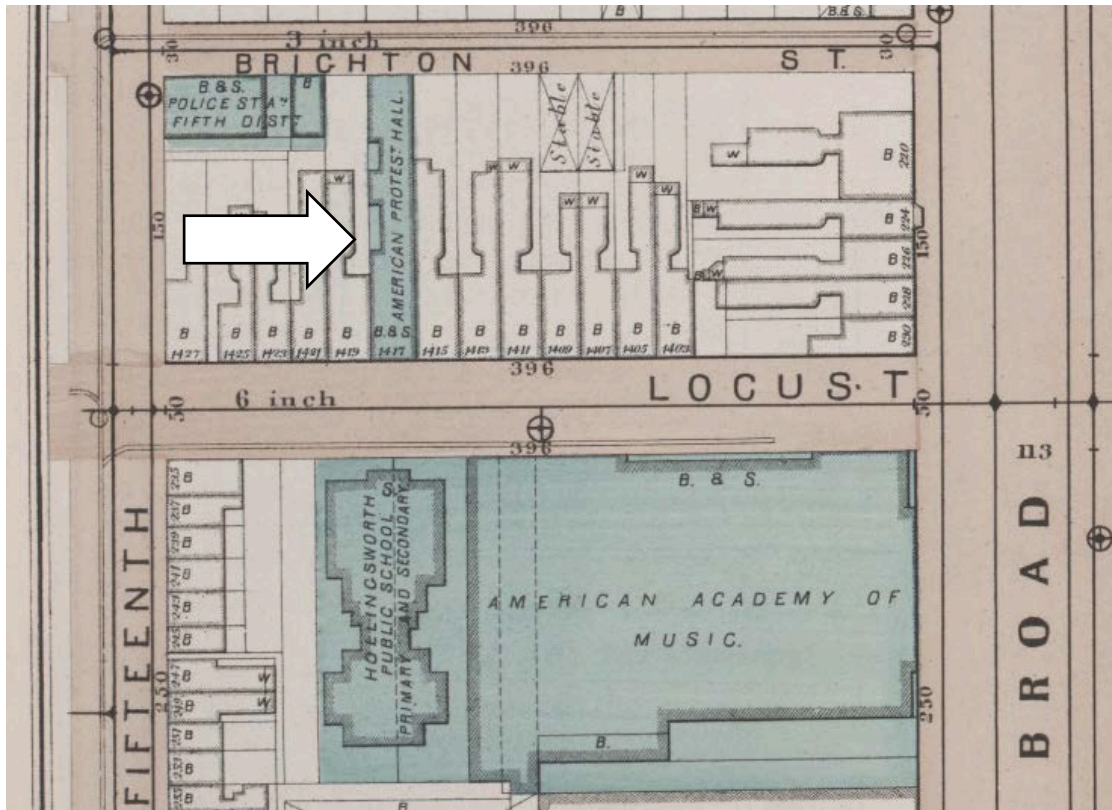


Figure 7: Atlas of Philadelphia, 5th, 7th, & 8th Wards. G.H. Jones, 1874, Plate 11 (detail)

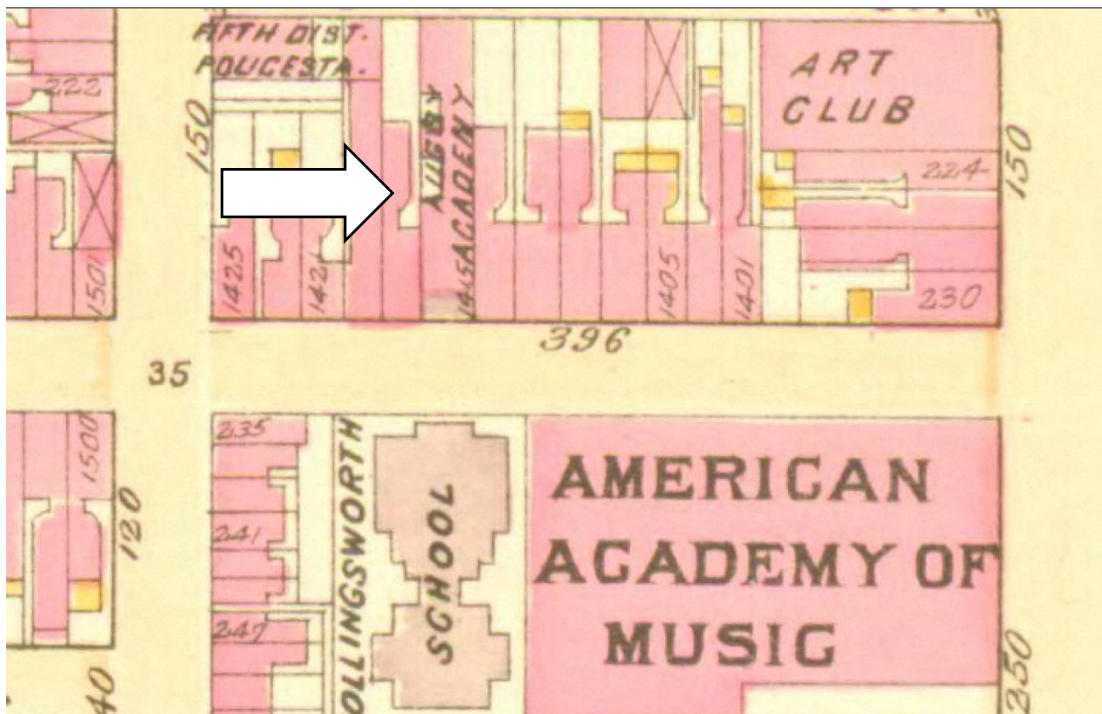


Figure 8: Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895. G. W. Bromley & Company, Plate 2 (detail)

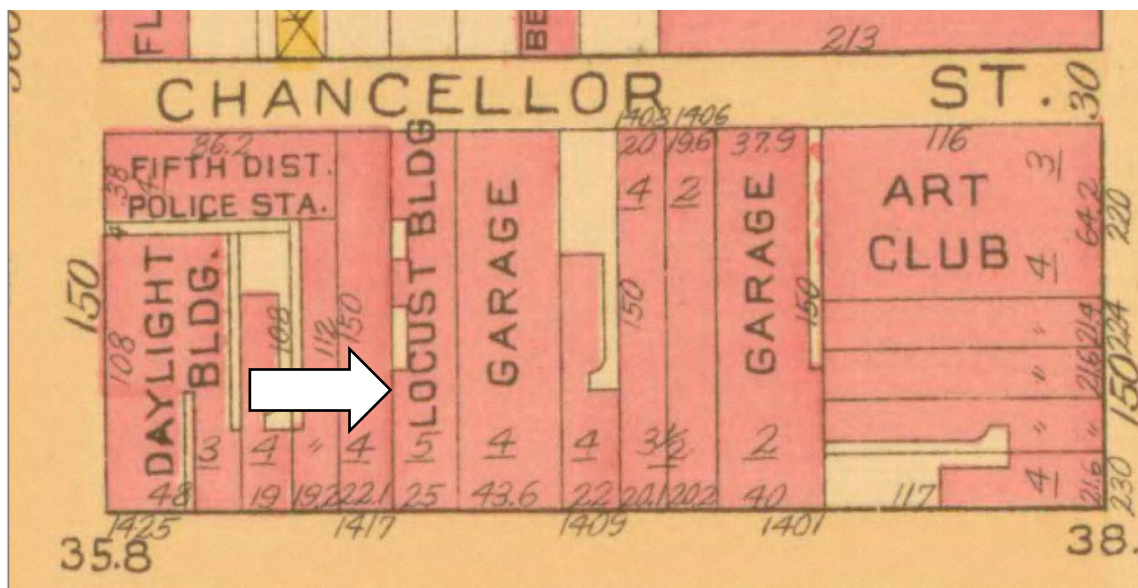


Figure 9: Atlas of the City of Philadelphia (Central), 1922. G. W. Bromley & Company, Plate 2 (detail)

A Diversity of Tenants

Even while the building was owned and occupied by the American Protestant Association, the organization rented out space to a number of other tenants as well. The entire ground floor was regularly advertised for rent as “suitable for literary or religious societies or reading rooms, or for business purposes,” though its early tenants remain unknown.¹² Multiple local chapters of other fraternal organizations, including the Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, and the Knights of Malta, rented meeting rooms in the building. Between 1865 and 1892, 1415 Locust Street was also home to the Rugby Academy, a primary and secondary preparatory school for boys. Its annual catalogues extolled the virtues of a building “situated in one of the best sections of the city, and is removed, at the same time, from the undesirable surroundings of the business centres. The rooms are neatly and comfortably furnished, and are light, well ventilated, and in every respect commodious.”¹³

Certainly the most unlikely of the building’s tenants was the Collegiate Military School, which took over the former Rugby Academy spaces in 1898. “An institution for the education of Catholic boys between the ages of 7 and 16 years,” its tenure in the building suggests a

¹² “Rooms to Rent,” *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 27, 1866.

¹³ *Catalogue of Rugby Academy*, Philadelphia, 1874. <https://archive.org/details/catalogueofrugby00rugb>.

tempering of the Association's anti-Catholic stance by the late nineteenth century.¹⁴ Other early twentieth century tenants included the American Ethical Union, a progressive non-denominational society which published the *Ethical Addresses and Ethical Record* out of its national headquarters on Locust Street from c.1905 to 1914.¹⁵

Architectural Significance

The architect of the American Protestant Hall remains unknown, but the building's relatively high style suggests a designer highly attuned to the emerging architectural fashions of the urban streetscape of the 1850s. In form and style, the building shares much in common with the Renaissance Revival and Italianate commercial lofts then beginning to transform the mercantile districts east of Broad Street: buildings like Joseph C. Hoxie's Caleb Cope & Company Store (429 Market Street, 1853, demolished) and Elliot and Leland Buildings (245-247 Chestnut Street, 1854-56), Gustav Runge's M.L. Hollowell & Co. Store (333 Market Street, c.1854, demolished), John Notman's Jackson Building (418 Arch Street, 1855, demolished), and Stephen Decatur Button's Leland Building (37-39 S. 3rd Street, 1855) and Korn Building (28 N. 3rd Street, 1857) [Figs. 10-15]. All were multistory stone or iron-fronted masonry buildings with large windows arranged in regular grids delineated by projecting pilasters and string courses or cornice bands. Round-arched arcade fronts were a recurring design element, as were bracketed cornices or classical entablatures at the roofline, embellished column and pilaster capitals, and ornamental window hoods. To varying degrees, each adapted the vocabulary of Italian Renaissance *palazzi* in a radically vertical new orientation-- a stark contrast to the shorter, brick-faced, gable-roofed rows that defined the Colonial and early Federal eras.

¹⁴ "The Leading Colleges and Schools," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 23, 1899.

¹⁵ "Important Announcement," *Ethical Addresses and Ethical Record*, Vol. 21, nos. 8-9, p.1.



Figure 10 (left): Caleb Cope & Co. Store, Joseph C. Hoxie, 1853 (429 Market Street, demolished). Photo: Historic American Buildings Survey, PA-1408-1

Figure 11 (middle): Elliot and Leland Buildings, Joseph C. Hoxie, 1854-56 (245-47 Chestnut Streets). Photo: Philadelphia Historical Commission files

Figure 12 (right): M.L. Hallowell & Co. Store, Gustav Runge, c. 1854 (333 Market Street, demolished). Image: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Bc 38 H 193



Figure 13 (left): Jackson Building, John Notman, 1855 (418 Arch Street, demolished). Image: Library Company of Philadelphia, *W99 [P.2144]

Figure 14 (middle): Leland Building, Stephen Decatur Button, 1855 (37-39 S. 3rd Street). Photo: Historic American Buildings Survey, PA-1086

Figure 15 (right): Henry Korn Building, Stephen Decatur Button, 1857 (28 N. 3rd Street). Photo: Curbed Philadelphia

While a wholesale transformation of the commercial streetscape was underway east of Broad Street, areas west of Broad were developing their own distinct character in the 1850s. Punctuated by major new civic landmarks like the Academy of Music (Napoleon LeBrun and Gustav Runge, 1855-57) and St. Mark's Episcopal Church (John Notman, 1848-51), an elite residential district was beginning to emerge in the blocks west of Broad Street and surrounding Rittenhouse Square. Stately brick and stone townhouses, many built as speculative blocks, began to line Chestnut, Walnut, and Locust, Spruce and Pine Streets, housing a middle- and upper-class population migrating westward from Society Hill and Washington Square. In contrast to the polyglot and mixed-use character of the mercantile districts east of Broad Street, the "West End" (as it was then known) was predominantly residential and more uniform in character. Not until the early twentieth century did many of these streets again transform into the bustling commercial corridors and high-rise blocks that predominate today.¹⁶ The Academy of Music had been open just four months when ground was broken on the American Protestant Hall across the street, and one can imagine the visual impact of the two imposing arcade fronts facing each other across Locust Street. Influences from both the Academy building and the aforementioned commercial lofts of Philadelphia's mercantile district are clearly evident in the Hall's design, which was decidedly contemporary for its time. In this context, the building survives today as an extraordinary artifact of antebellum Philadelphia, where in 1860 it stood as the *only* five-story building (excepting church steeples) between Broad Street and Rittenhouse Square, and today stands as perhaps the oldest surviving commercial-style building west of Broad.

Conclusion

The former American Protestant Hall stands today as an important reminder of the turbulent and often vitriolic tensions that arose during Philadelphia's growth as a multi-ethnic, multi-denominational urban capital; it also stands as an affirmation of that vitriol's eventual diffusion. Once one of west Locust Street's most conspicuous structures, its current relative obscurity belies an exceptional cultural and architectural significance that merits recognition by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. The building meets Criteria A, C, and J for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

¹⁶ "Men and Things," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Jan. 8, 1925.

8. Bibliography

“A New Public Building,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 22, 1856.

Act 355, Laws of Pennsylvania of the Session of 1863.

Address of the Board of Managers of the American Protestant Association. Philadelphia: American Protestant Association, 1843.

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<https://archive.org/details/catalogueofrugby00rugb>.

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“Terrible Riot and Bloodshed--Dreadful Scenes in Newark,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 7, 1854.

Weisman, Winston. “Philadelphia Functionalism and Sullivan,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 20, n. 1, March 1961.