

**ADDRESS: 324 N 13TH ST**

Name of Resource: City Morgue

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Roman Catholic High School

Nominator: Celeste Morello

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 324 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criteria for Designation A and E. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that the former City Morgue has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development of the City, being the City's third morgue by 1928 after the first two proved inadequate, and is associated with the life of a person significant in the past, Joseph W. Spelman, MD, the City's first medical examiner, who began and concluded his work at this City Morgue beginning in 1956 and ending with his passing in 1971. Under Criterion E, the nomination contends that the building was designed by Philip H. Johnson, the architect for Philadelphia's Department of Public Health, whose hospitals and public projects were examples of Progressive Era innovations in the early twentieth century.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 324 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A and E.



**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: 324 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Street

Postal code: 19107

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: City Morgue

Current/Common Name: Roman Catholic High School Annex

**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: Roman Catholic High School Annex

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1928 to 1971

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1928-29

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Philip H. Johnson

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: McCormick-Lenham Company

Original owner: City of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: Joseph W. Spelman, MD (Medical Examiner)

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

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

- ☒ (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; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☐ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization N/A Date January 22, 2020

Name with Title Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA Email N/A

Street Address 1234 S. Sheridan Street Telephone 215-334-6008

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19147

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: January 22, 2020

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: May 13, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: May 15, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Roman Catholic High School

Address: 324 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19107

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

### Boundary Description



Situate on the northwest corner of N 13<sup>th</sup> and Wood Streets in Philadelphia, containing in front of breadth of the said N 13<sup>th</sup> Street 71.4 feet and extending of that width in length or depth westward between parallel lines at right angles to the said N 13<sup>th</sup> Street 148 feet.



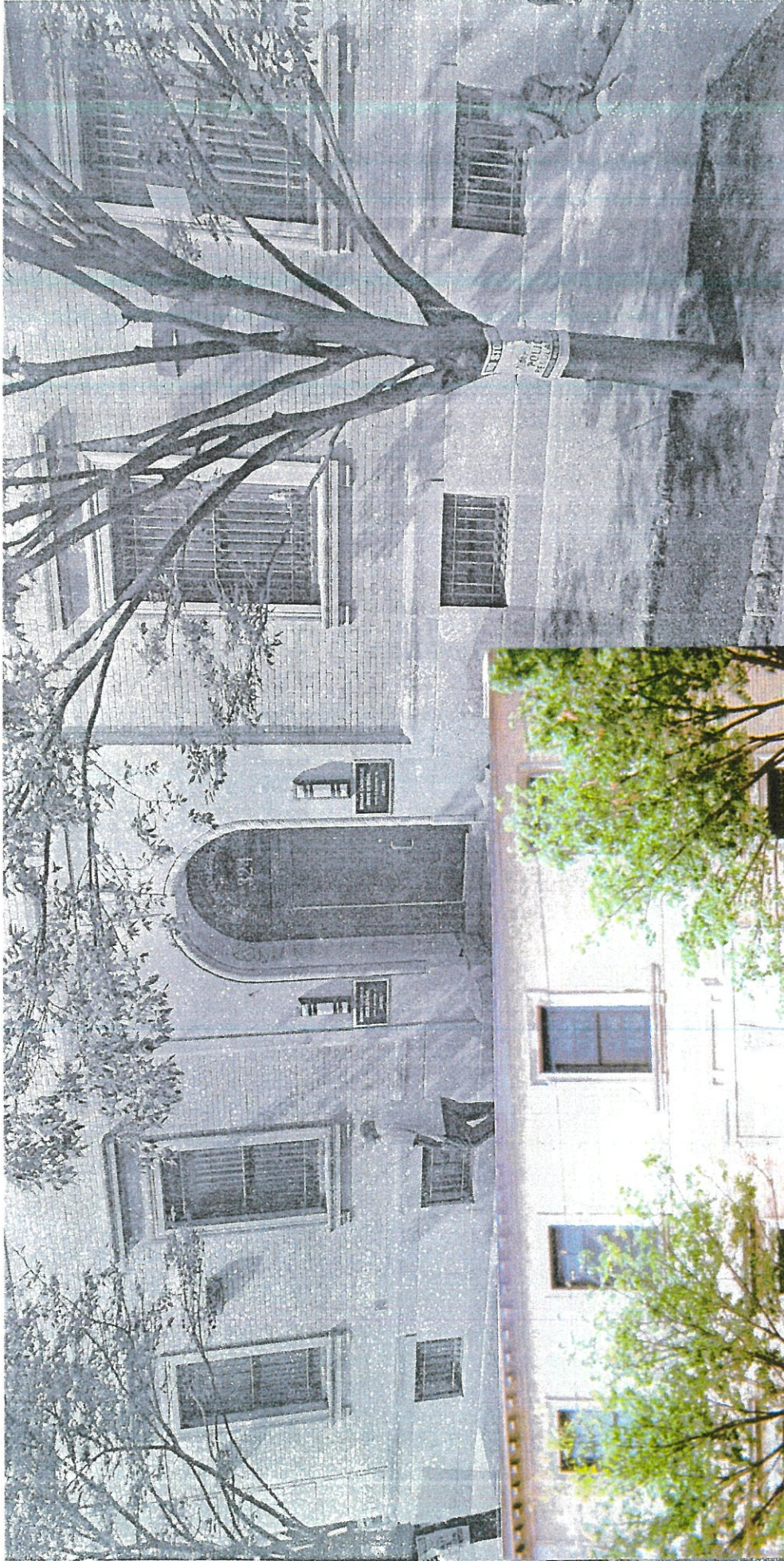
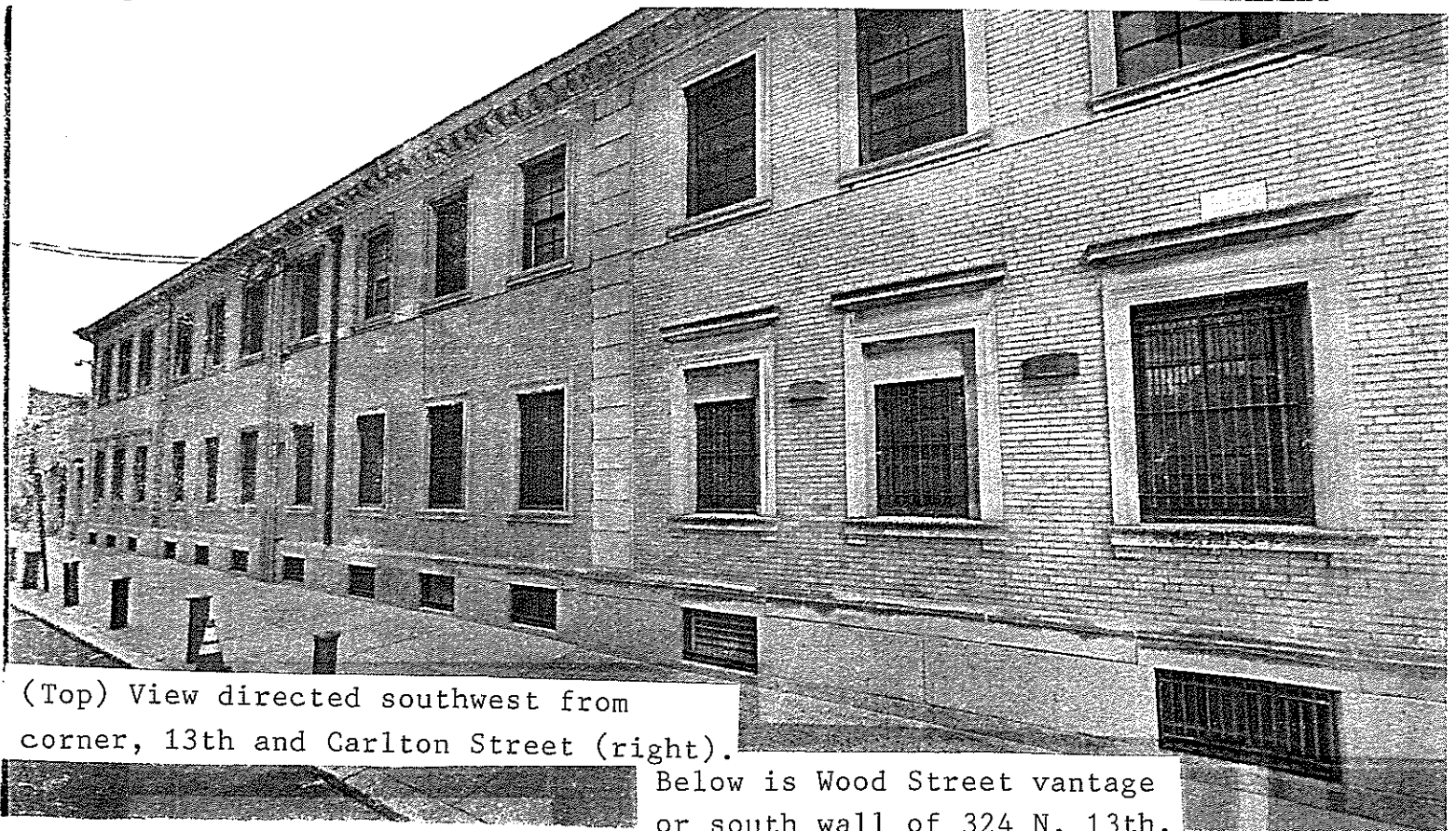
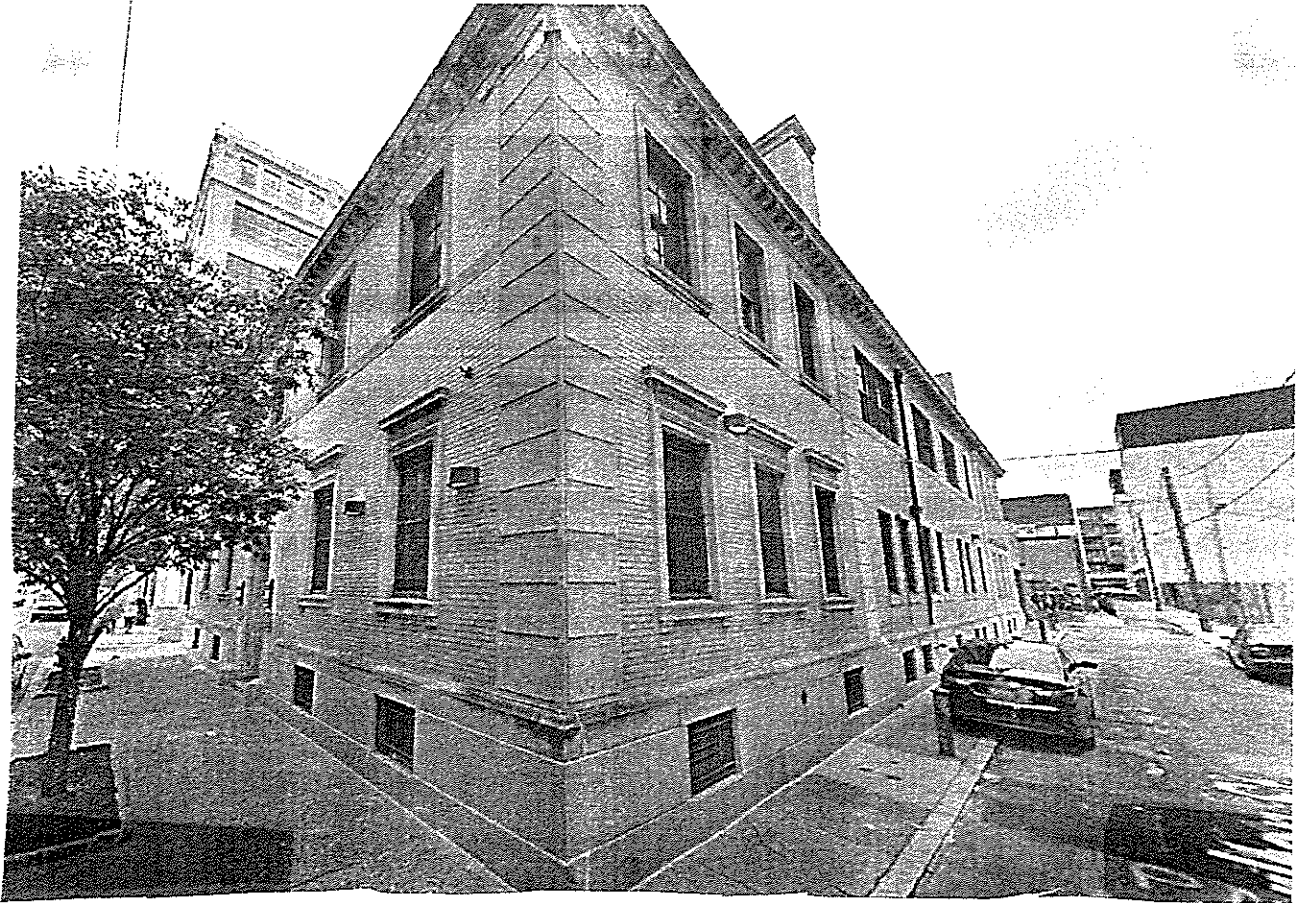


Image capture: Oct 2018 © 2019 Google

Nominator's color photograph (left) of 324 North 13th Street (2019) and 2018 Google Maps image (above).





(Top) View directed southwest from corner, 13th and Carlton Street (right).

Below is Wood Street vantage or south wall of 324 N. 13th.

Right: July 25, 1928 listing in The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide.

Below: DOR Archival photos of the City Morgue during final (exterior) phases of construction.

## THE BUILDERS' GUIDE

### Contracts Awarded

Scope of Contract and Successful Bidders; "Inside" Information for the Material Man and Interior and Exterior Fitter.

Morgue, Thirteenth and Wood streets, Philadelphia. Architect, Philip H. Johnson, Waldener Building, Philadelphia. Owners, Department of Public Works, Bureau of City Property, 216 City Hall, Phila. Reinforced concrete, brick, steel, granite, limestone, 2 stories and basement, 115,352 feet. Sag and tile roof, common floors, elevators, metal weather strip, metal bath, tile, marble and terrazzo walls, tiled steel and hollow metal cast, hollow metal doors, iron stairs, ornamental iron work, integral and aqueduct waterproofing, granolithic floors, incinerators, caulking, asbestos work, insect screens, steel lockers, refrigerators (plumbing, heating, electric separate). Contracts awarded: McCormack-Latham Co., Broad and Tasker streets, Philadelphia, \$188,965; electric, Electric Construction Co., Fifteenth and Race streets, Philadelphia, \$5,525; plumbing, Bulman Brothers, Fifth and Cumberland streets, \$5,260; heating, N. Connolly Co., 1104 North Thirteenth street, Philadelphia, \$15,948.

max. Brothers, 1924 North Marshall st., Philadelphia.

Office Building (alt.), (North American Broad and Sanson streets, Philadelphia. Architect, LeRoy B. Roberts, 215 South 11th street, Philadelphia. Owner, Herman Marx, care of Melvin J. Selzer, Fifth and Locust streets, New York, and so Contract awarded E. V. Wier, Co., 1 Arch street, Philadelphia.

Garage, 1015 North Sydenham street, Philadelphia, \$4,000. Architect, private pl. Owner, John Roberts, on premises. Brick story, 23x80 feet. Contract awarded Frank English & Sons, 1006 North Carlisle street.

Store and Residence (alt., add.), 500 E. Chelton avenue, Philadelphia, \$3,300. Architect, private plans. Owner, A. V. Sella, premises. Brick, 1 story, 14x4 feet. Contract awarded D. A. Pingatore, 6709 Charles street, Philadelphia.

Store and Residence (alt.), Northwest (Chelton and Gordon streets, Philadelphia.

Title  
Description

Address  
Date

Photographers  
Collection

Collection ID  
Asset ID

Morgue - 13th and Wood Streets-Looking Southwest  
Morgue - 13th and Wood Streets-Looking Southwest From Northeast Corner - 13th and Carlton Streets.  
N 13th St and Carlton St  
3/18/1929  
Howell, Charles L.  
DOR Archives  
Public Works-26603-0-10682

Title

Description

Address  
Date

Photographers  
Collection

Collection ID  
Asset ID

Morgue - 13th and Wood Streets - Looking Northwest  
Morgue - 13th and Wood Streets - Looking Northwest from Southeast Corner. New City Morgue - Automobiles  
N 13th St and Wood St  
6/25/1929  
Hess, Wenzel J.  
DOR Archives  
Public Works-27178-0-11048

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© City of Philadelphia, Department of Records



Staff-supplemented photographs, taken Spring 2020



324 N 13<sup>th</sup> Street, showing east (front) elevation on N 13<sup>th</sup> Street, and south (side) elevation on Wood Street.



Front elevation of 324 N 13<sup>th</sup> Street.



Staff-supplemented photographs, taken Spring 2020



South (side) elevation along Wood Street.



One-story section at rear of building, as seen from Wood Street.



Staff-supplemented photographs, taken Spring 2020



North (side) elevation along Carlton Street.



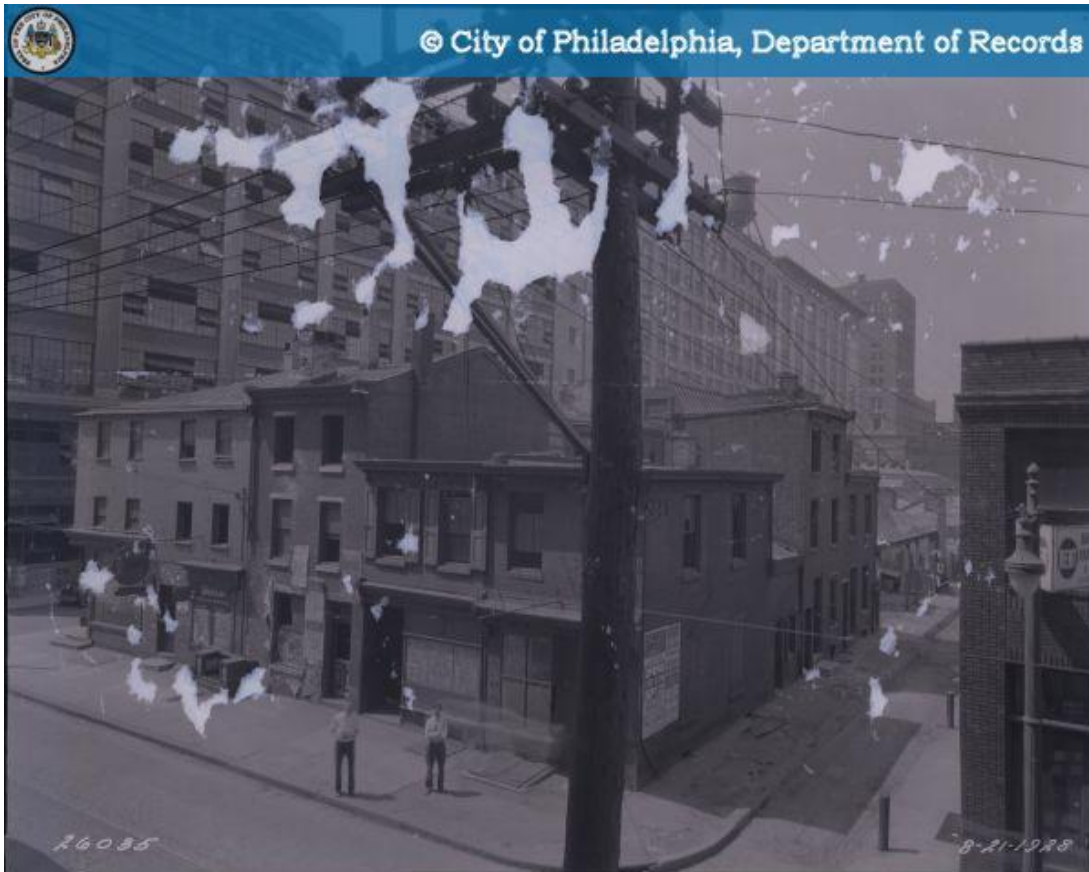
One-story section at rear of building, as seen from Carlton Street.



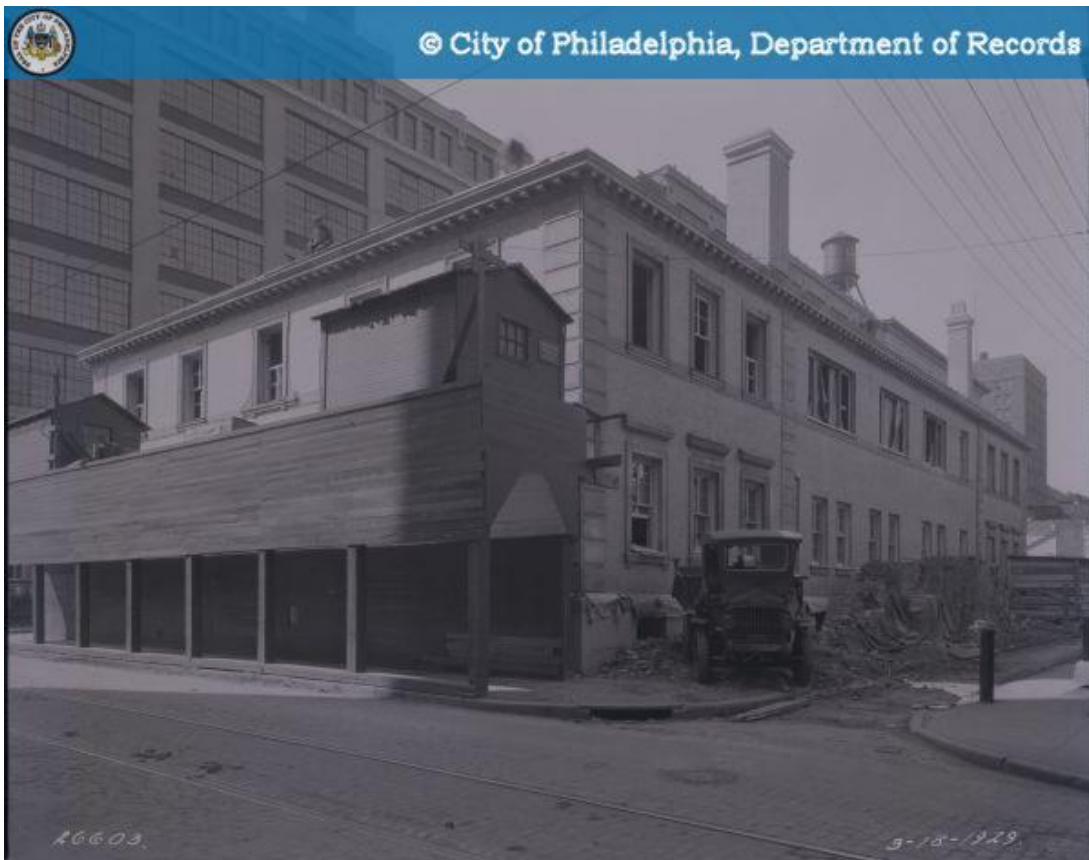


Main entrance on N 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

Staff-supplemented historic photographs



1928 photograph of the subject site at N 13<sup>th</sup> and Carlton Street, just prior to demolition and new construction of the morgue. Source: Phillyhistory.org



City morgue under construction in March 1929. Source: Phillyhistory.org



Staff-supplemented historic photographs



City morgue under construction in March 1929. Source: Phillyhistory.org



June 1929 photograph of the newly-constructed city morgue. Source: Phillyhistory.org

DESCRIPTION:

The present appearance of 324 North 13th Street is consistent to the construction in 1928 to 1929<sup>2</sup>. It is a two-story blond brick rectangular building topped with a terra cotta roof along the periphery. The roof's center exposes operational systems necessary for ventilation. (Refer to page 3 herein.) The design of the building is classically-influenced, rendering a serene effect. Overall 20th to 21st century modifications to the 1929 construction include new doors and windows, upon which metal security bars have been installed. The main entrance is on 13th Street where the portal has a broad, squared-off surround of limestone into which at the "keystone" is a bas relief of a standing angel. The portal has a rounded transom over a wide doorway. Modern metal lights are affixed near the doorway's jambs over signs identifying the building as "Roman Catholic High School McSherry Annex."

This building has three sides facing streets and its rear, or west side abutting properties on Wood and Carlton Streets. The prominent features are the alignment of the windows from the base (through the approximate 4' high limestone) to the first and second levels, separated by quoins at the corners and along the north (Carlton Street) and south (Wood Street) sides. The windows at the facade and depth of the original property from 13th westward, are remarkable for the moldings on the lintels. Corbels run the entire span of roofline. This is a well-kept building with no visible signs of needing repair(s) and a fine addition to Roman Catholic High School.

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Refer to page 6 herein of City's archival photographs from 1929 and Johnson's blueprints copied by staff at City Archives in "Appendix 1" attached.



STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE:

The nominated building is the earliest existing city morgue. It was the third morgue overseen by the city's Coroner, then the Medical Examiner when the former position was abolished by 1956.<sup>3</sup> As a city building, it served the public from 1929 to 1971 when the present morgue relocated to the Joseph W. Spelman Building in West Philadelphia, under the Department of Public Health.

The development of the city morgue also concerned the notable advances in sanitation, forensic science in "crime-solving," and in working with other agencies specifically handling immunology and epidemiology, as well as how ecological conditions affect the public. Thus, the city morgue's activities not only involve the dead, but also the living. This particular city morgue was much larger than its predecessors, to allow for more scientific testing for various toxins, methods of killing, tissue and other bodily fluids testing and in determining how long a corpse had been dead. Then, as now, the city morgue investigates "sudden," "suspicious" and "unattended" (without a physician's care) deaths, often recommended by the police Homicide Unit.<sup>4</sup> The autopsies, or post mortem examinations occur to those accepted by the pathologists who perform the work for an official cause of death to be filed.

The nominated former morgue was designed by architect Philip H. Johnson in 1927.<sup>5</sup> He had decades of experience in planning the newer hospitals in the area, redesigning many to accommodate any of the growing specialized fields in medicine. Johnson's work for the city had included many projects reflecting Progressive Age changes in public hygiene, such as in his public baths and parks throughout the city. But, Johnson's reputation also won commissions for police and fire stations, Temple University's Conwell Hall, the City Hall "Annex" in stylish Art Deco, and

<sup>3</sup> "The New York Times," February 10, 1971: obituary of Joseph W. Spelman, the city's first Medical Examiner.

<sup>4</sup> My gratitude extends to Mr. James Garrow, spokesperson for the city's Department of Public Health and to medical investigator, "Seth," to compare present activities to those at the nominated property from 1929 to 1971.

<sup>5</sup> Tatman and Moss, Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects. Boston: Hall, 1985, pp.418-421. Johnson was the "architect for

one of the nation's first radio stations, WCAU (now, the NBC affiliate, Channel 10.)

There were many fascinating and gruesome cases handled at this morgue from the end of the Prohibition Era's gangland victims to the Holmesburg inmates who were "roasted" to death, and the infamous "Arsenic Murders." Many autopsies had to be performed for insurance purposes. The "Boy in the Box" case in 1957 is still unsolved, but explained to the public how this morgue operated and tried to find the boy's identity and cause of death based on the child's puzzling condition. It was a case in which the city's first Medical Examiner, Joseph W. Spelman, MD would become nationally known. Moreover, it was at this city morgue when Dr. Spelman became the President of the National Association of Medical Examiners. The developments at this morgue from 1929 to 1955 had thoroughly influenced City Council to finally abolish the old Coroner position which had begun under William Penn in 1685.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the city has had the Medical Examiner assume the Coroner's role, but with the medical training and expertise that previous Coroners were not required to have for this politically-appointed position. Under Dr. Spelman, the deficiencies from the morgue's early years had determined the need for a modern facility. While this city morgue had the capacity for "100" corpses, the medical examiner's focus was on the scientific means of ascertaining the "sudden," or "suspicious" or "unattended" deaths, as well as identifying remains brought to the morgue. The additional laboratory work and staff also created the obsolescence of the 324 North 13th Street building.

For these and other reasons, Roman Catholic High School's McSherry Annex merits historical certification by this Commission.

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<sup>6</sup> the Philadelphia City Department of Public Health."(p.418.)  
Scharf and Westcott, History of Philadelphia. 1884, p. 1754iii.



Premises 324 North 13th Street...

(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: JOSEPH W. SPELMAN, MD, the City's FIRST MEDICAL EXAMINER.

The literature review on the history of the City of Philadelphia's morgue is one in which the varied functions of such a place developed at different times in the course of a growing municipal government. Each phase of the city morgue's assumption of additional responsibilities revealed a history of medical education, or a history of public welfare and management, or a history of the integration of medicine and the legal system. The public's fascination with forensics and crime-solving through the examination of human remains is a result of what begins and ends at a morgue. But, this multi-layered history of the morgue in Philadelphia is one from many sources, pieced together to form an account which had been nebulous. The 1884 History of Philadelphia placed "The Morgue" in its section on "Burying-Grounds and Cemeteries" with a disputable, uncorroborated listing as the "first place" in the city merely as a temporary repository for the unclaimed and unidentified. (Refer to next page's atlases.) City-generated sources only fared slightly better in the morgue's history, augmented with sources from others.

Pennsylvania Hospital's morgue had been used by the city's Coroner "(P)rior to 1870," wrote Lane, a former professor of history at Haverford College. Although he cited no direct source, he had consulted the irregularly-kept "Coroner's Docket Books" from some years within the 1850s decade. However, the hospital's 1897 History did not support this, adding that since 1766, it did have an "apartment" for the "bodies of patients who died... to be laid out" until claimed.

<sup>7</sup> Scharf & Westcott, op.cit., p. 2359iii.

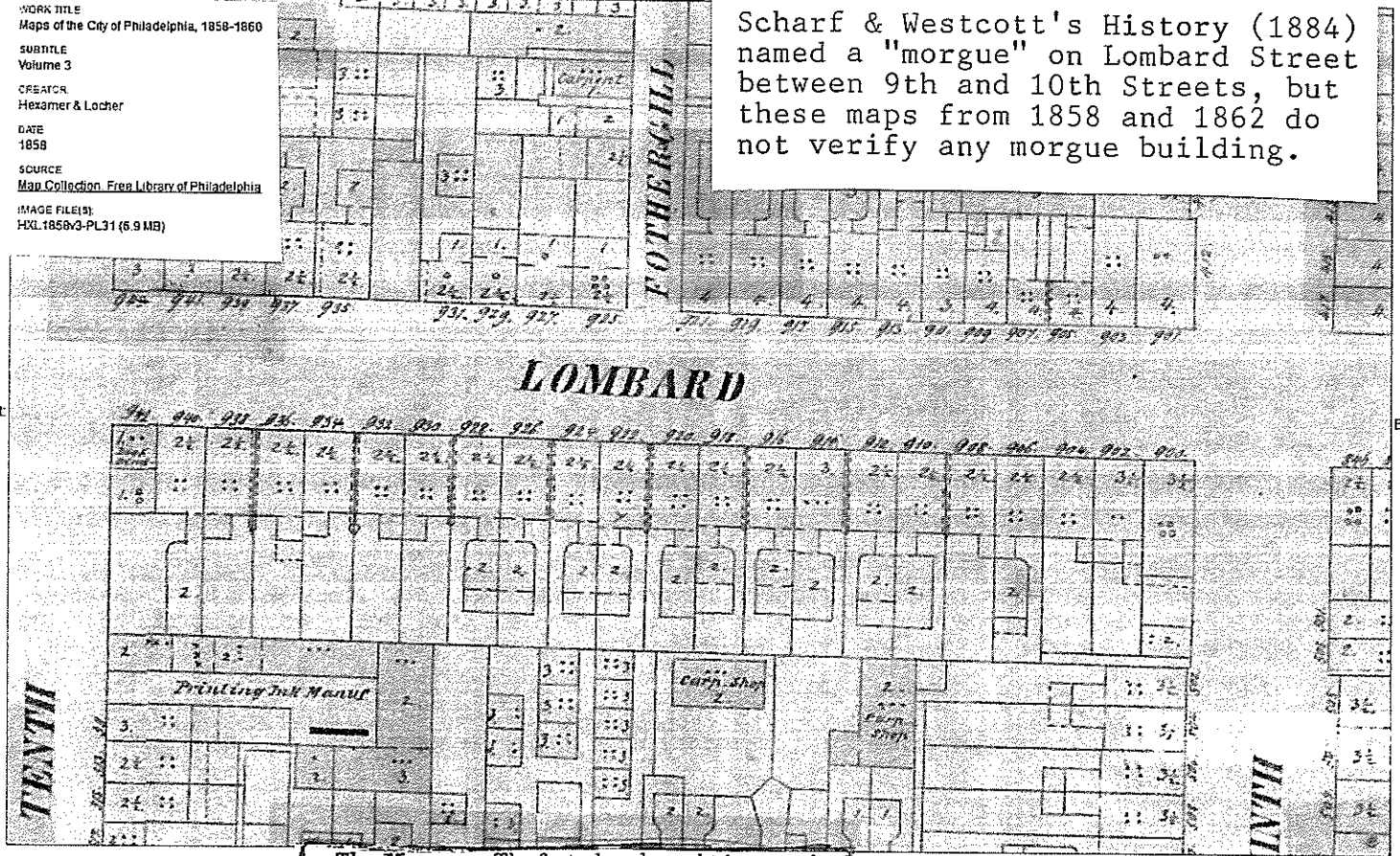
<sup>8</sup> Lane, Roger, Violent Death in the City...Harvard Univ.Press, 1979, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> Morton, MD, Thos., The History of the Pennsylvania Hospital, 1751-1895. Phila.: Times Printing House, 1897, p.212.

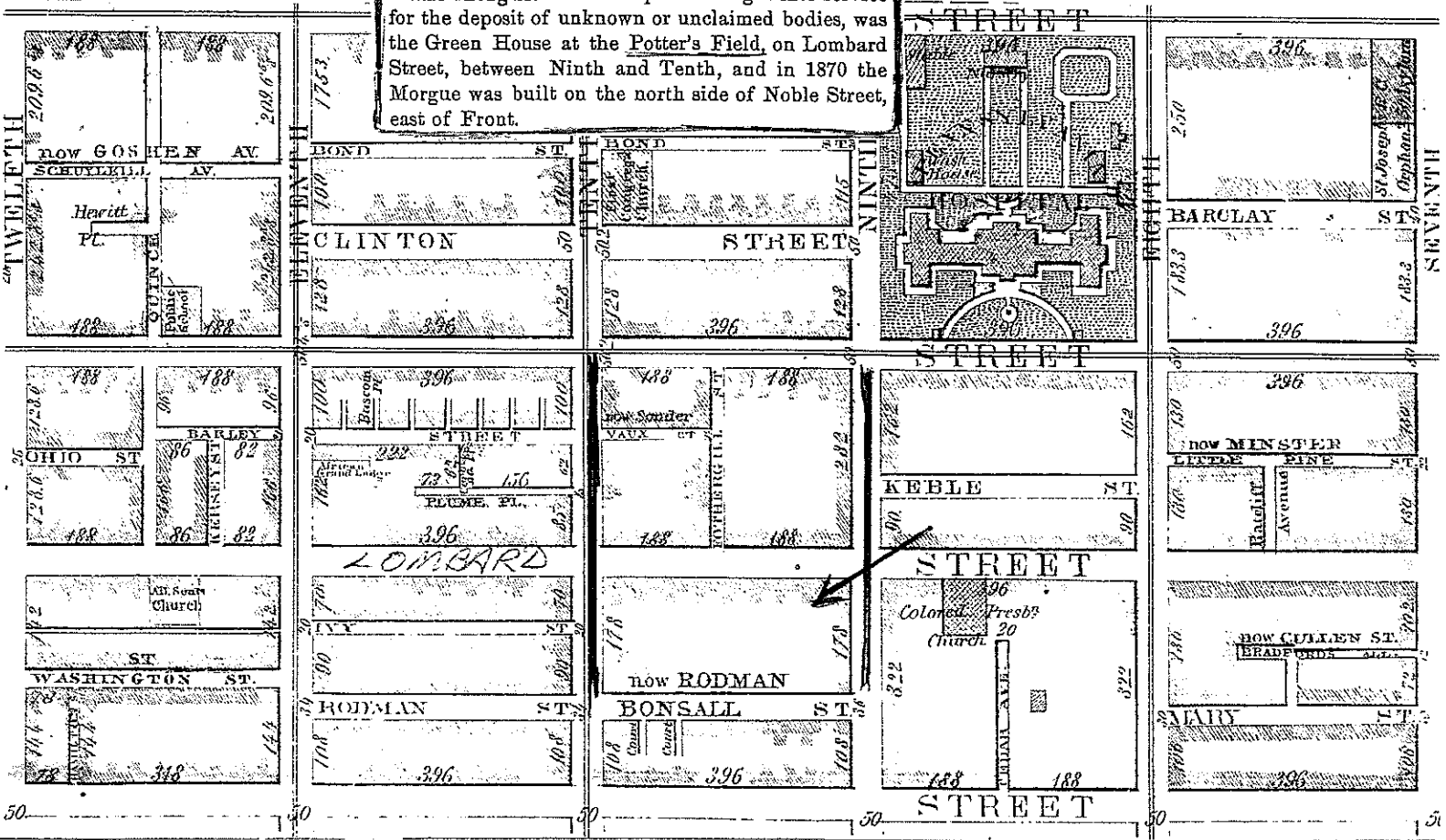
WORK TITLE  
Maps of the City of Philadelphia, 1858-1860  
SUBTITLE  
Volume 3  
CREATOR  
Hexamer & Locher  
DATE  
1858  
SOURCE  
Map Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia  
IMAGE FILE(S)  
HXL1858V3-PL31 (6.9 MB)

North

Scharf & Westcott's History (1884) named a "morgue" on Lombard Street between 9th and 10th Streets, but these maps from 1858 and 1862 do not verify any morgue building.



The Morgue.—The first place brought into service for the deposit of unknown or unclaimed bodies, was the Green House at the Potter's Field, on Lombard Street, between Ninth and Tenth, and in 1870 the Morgue was built on the north side of Noble Street, east of Front.





Of course, the morgue would be the site for more than as a repository, albeit a temporary one, for the unclaimed and unidentified. "Speaking for the dead," has been a phrase used by coroners and medical examiners alike over the centuries in putting to rest corpses who passed from "sudden," or "suspicious" or "unattended," and sometimes "violent" causes. Since 1685, the City of Philadelphia has sought official causes of death, taking as its purpose whether the deceased left any assets to be turned to the government. By the late 1700s, the City's Board of Health was to receive "Notes" from physicians who "attended" the dying and certified causes of death. The earliest of these "Notes" dates from "1803," and by "1860," the City printed official "Return of a Death" forms. Just as in the recording of births, so were the deaths, especially those with estates. Thus, the City's responsibility in record-keeping, often by the Coroner at the morgue--any morgue. (See "Appendix 4.)

Ascertaining causes of death by the categories cited above was officially by the Coroner who had his own inquest conducted and a Coroner's jury to finalize the investigations. Before the City would construct its own morgue for the "inspection" of the deceased's remains, the Coroner used the facility at Pennsylvania Hospital where by the 1840s "disputes have occasionally arisen between the physicians of the Hospital and the Coroner" who "asserted his right to make a post mortem examination" at the hospital. Horace Binney was the Hospital's legal representative who laid the limits of the types of autopsies which the Coroner could do there: the "unnatural" and "violent" deaths, which in 1840, were the jurisdiction of the Coroner because no detectives and no "police department" existed.

<sup>10</sup>Scharf & Westcott, p. 1720iii. City Archivist David Baugh provided copies of the "Notes" and said the "Returns" did not appear til 1860.

<sup>11</sup>Morton, op.cit., pp. 212-218.

<sup>12</sup>Only after the destruction of St. Augustine Roman Catholic Church during the 1844 Nativist Riots did the City and Commonwealth pass the Act of April 12, 1845 authorizing the city to have a "policing force," (the forerunner of the Philadelphia Police Department). But the policing force was only to quell rioting, not investigate crime. The nominator's application for St. Augustine's in 1994-5 was approved by the Penna. Historical & Museum Commission for the marker at the church which references the origins of "policing forces" here because of the destruction of the church which was in the City.

The Coroner was empowered to investigate thousands of deaths each year separate from the "Notes" submitted by physicians on those who died mainly of diseases. The latter, records to the Board of Health, then could include the unnamed and unclaimed who would be interred in any of the City's Potter's Fields. The records of the Coroner supposedly date from "October, 1854" irregularly through the early 1880s.<sup>13</sup> Some newsworthy deaths investigated by the Coroner during those years were the slaughter of the Deering family in 1866 where the police officers "took charge of the property," guarding the crime scene and gathering evidence for the Coroner. (The police were under the "Department of Public Safety" since about 1854.) In the infanticide investigation of the child of Hester Vaughan, it was the Coroner's physician, a "Dr. Shapleigh" who made the "post mortem examination" after "the child was taken to the Coroner's office" in February, 1868. (This case established the legal precedent of a defendant's right to a "jury of one's peers" which Vaughan was denied and the reason for her computed sentence--she was scheduled to hang at Moyamensing Prison.)<sup>14</sup> No morgue was cited in these cases, but they contributed to the city's need for its own morgue, especially in the post-Civil War years when many out-of-state fatalities overcrowded local hospitals.

#### The 1870 City Morgue:

The City's first morgue was in use by 1870, located at Beach and Noble Streets. It was described as "very plain" on its facade, two stories high and constructed of "pressed brick." Its size indicated its functions in the process of investigating the "sudden,"<sup>15</sup> or "suspicious" or "unattended" and "violent" deaths so that the causes of death could be entered officially on records.

<sup>13</sup> Holdings at City Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>14</sup> "Philadelphia Press," April 12, 1866; "Press," July 1, 1868. Susan B. Anthony led a national campaign for Vaughan's cause after Vaughan was found guilty by an all-male jury. Vaughan returned to England.

<sup>15</sup> The morgue building measured "42 feet" at the facade and was "40 feet" in depth. "Public Ledger," August 6, 1870; "Phila. Inquirer," November 2, 1870.



The 1870 morgue was carefully planned "for the reception of the bodies of deceased persons" who were placed in the "reception room" which held four(4) marble tables called "cold slabs." Water dripped over the bodies from a "gutta percha pipe" for a few days under this primitive "refrigeration" method. The inquest room was the scene of the post mortem examinations and where the Coroner's physician displayed his findings from the cadavers, along with the third adjoining room "to inspect the bodies." The second level had a private office, witness room and another inquest room. A caretaker or keeper also had an apartment in the building.<sup>16</sup>

John G. Lee, MD was one of several pathologists called by the City's Coroner to perform autopsies at the 1870 morgue. He had recorded his examinations of the corpses from 1871 to 1881 in "Handbook for Coroners" which coincides with the "Coroner's Docket" of some years within that period. One of the more historic cases for that 1870 morgue was that of African American leader, Octavius V. Catto who led fellow blacks to vote for Republicans in the 1871 elections. Two other black Republicans, Isaac Chase and Jacob Gordon also were autopsied, inspected by the Coroner and his jury and had their findings submitted to the prosecutors within days<sup>17</sup> as victims of the Riots of 1871.

University of Pennsylvania history professor Charles Rosenberg wrote, "Pathology was the most intellectually exciting frontier of medicine in the 1830s and 1840s."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, "Between 1870 and 1914, ...15,000 American physicians studied in German universities"<sup>19</sup> where specialization in areas such as pathology, serology and immunology were subjects leading to the training in post mortem examinations to find causes of death.

<sup>16</sup>Public Ledger, August 6, 1870; Inquirer, Nov.2, 1870; Jan. 5, 1871.  
<sup>17</sup>Philadelphia Inquirer, October 12, 1871.  
<sup>18</sup>Rosenberg, C., The Care of Strangers. Hopkins Press, p. 155.  
<sup>19</sup>Duffy, John, From Humors to Medical Science: A History of American Medicine. Univ. of Illinois Press, 1993, p. 168.

Any changes in the city morgue's policies or staffing were influenced by demands from the medical community, which included the experiences gained from caring for thousands of Civil War casualties and wounded even after the war. Philadelphia's proximity to the southern battlefields and the uncommon number of hospitals were a perfect combination to learn from the dying and dead to create changes, or at least a need to change in how the government manages its citizens in peril or in disposing of their remains.

The 1870 city morgue was subject to the activities of the living within the city's boundaries and the U.S. Census reported a figure of "674,022" which would swell to "1,046,964" by 1890. This last number hardly accounted for the masses from eastern and southern Europe migrating here from the 1880s, plus the Chinese and African Americans from the South settling here in sufficient groups to form defined enclaves before 1900. For the city morgue, handling "travelers" of unknown identities, and examining the body parts turned in by the Fairmount Park Police, along with the city dwellers in rising numbers would overwhelm the building and its personnel. During this city morgue's period of activity, the city would (again) redesign another "Return of a Death" form because of the counterfeit forms used to certify false causes of death in order to collect insurance money.<sup>21</sup>

The 1870 morgue proved itself obsolete before the property sold at auction in 1892. This year is important for another reason: the Department of Public Safety (Police Bureau) would begin to log its first homicides investigated by its own detectives, apart from the Coroner's investigators. The slipshod Volume 1 has many blank pages with the earliest entry at "March 18, 1892" and ends with a death on "April 16, 1899" between homicides from 1893 to 1898.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Information from City Archivist, David Baugh.

<sup>22</sup>Homicide Volumes held at the Police Administration Building and only accessible by permission from the Police Commissioner. I reviewed these volumes from 1992 to 2002 for my Graduate Criminology program at St. Joseph's University and for later published books and papers thanks to every Commissioner as I read them in the Homicide Unit.



The police detectives did defer most homicides anyway to the Coroner who ran the morgue, and to his jury to determine whether the body showed criminal (intentional) or accidental (involuntary) cause of death. By the time the second morgue would be planned, medicine, science and the morgue's ever-important role for the City, much had been gained in knowledge and sophistication.

#### The 1894 Morgue:

The appearance of this morgue at 1307-1309 Wood Street, in the midst of residential rowhouses, was intrusive and defied its association with finding causes of death. Designed by local architect James Windrim, this building was not much larger than the 1870 morgue either. (Refer to page 19.) The newspaper account reported that the morgue was where the "colored" have a "superstitious hatred of dead bodies," while the City claimed that the "opposition was easily overcome" to convert two rowhouses on Wood Street and raze those at the rear on Carlton Street. Many believed that the morgue's location was "to depopulate the entire street."<sup>22</sup> This may explain how the nominated morgue was able to occupy about nine(9) additional properties by 1927 when the City was able to purchase the properties for a substantially larger morgue.

In use from 1894 to 1929, this morgue was still not able to maintain the number of cases the pathologists were to autopsy in a (as in one) single room. It was at this morgue where William S. Wadsworth, MD, the Coroner's physician on the 1927 morgue's blueprints, would work from 1899 through the opening of the new morgue. He would comment that the morgue was where the physicians clashed with the "ignorant" and "careless" Coroners whose office was best at City Hall than at the morgue's autopsy room.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Refer to Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, April 18, 1894: "The new morgue building...is rapidly approaching completion..." to date its use from "1894." "Philadelphia Inquirer," January 8, 1894. This second morgue measured 31-32 feet on Wood Street and about 63 feet deep to Carlton Street. The 1895 Bromley Atlas held the original plot plans despite that the morgue was already in use and had been in construction since at least 1893.

<sup>23</sup> Wadsworth, W.S., Reprints. Bound papers presented from 1899 to 1926. n.p., n.d. "The Coroner and the Physician," read before the Northern Medical Association of Philadelphia, December 10, 1915.

Besides politics and personalities, this second morgue held new technology such as "its own electric light plant...fifteen-horse power engine in the building, and...a dynamo and other fixtures." <sup>24</sup>Months later, a trade journal, "Ice and Refrigeration..." lauded "The New Philadelphia Morgue" as the "second institution of this character in the United States in which the principles of mechanical refrigeration have been utilized for the preservation of the bodies of the dead." (The first was in Chicago in 1893.) The 1894 morgue was supposed to be "modeled after the one in Berlin, Germany" but ice was still needed. Machinery for the refrigeration was in the morgue's basement. "Cooling chambers or cold storage rooms" kept at a temperature of "20°F" were installed by the Ridgway Refrigerator Company of Philadelphia. Features of this morgue were the exposition room where cadavers could be viewed behind plate glass, a new innovation of its time. There also was a viewing room, and "living apartment" <sup>25</sup>for the round-the-clock keeper to be there to receive corpses at all hours.

The city morgue's eerie reputation often included the macabre crime of "cashing in" on the dead when the pathologists could not determine--or would not--if presented with "sudden" or "suspicious" or "violent" causes of death for the "Return of a Death" form to be filed or remitted to an insurance company for an indemnity. This 1894 morgue, however, was unable to falter when not only police, but Pinkerton detectives and insurance company investigators came together when the charred remains of Benjamin Pitzel were brought to this morgue. <sup>26</sup>The cause of death was from "benzine burns" and the suspect was H.H. Holmes, called "America's first serial murderer." The determination from this morgue <sup>27</sup>caused Holmes' conviction and his hanging at Moyamensing Prison.

<sup>24</sup>PRERBG, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup>"The New Philadelphia Morgue," in "Ice & Refrigeration: A Monthly Review of the Ice, Ice-Making, Refrigeration, Cold Storage and Kindred Trades. NY: July, 1894, Vol.VII, No.1.(on-line source.)

<sup>26</sup>Horan, Jas. and Swiggett, Howard, The Pinkerton Story. NY:Putnam, 1951, p. 282, which also cited Detective Frank Geyer's book, The Holmes-Pitzel Case (1896) on this Philadelphia detective's work.

<sup>27</sup>Holmes' murder spree began in Chicago. He is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Yeadon, Delaware County, an Archdiocesan cemetery.



Much of the importance placed in the nominated (third) City Morgue came from improvements tried at the 1894, or second morgue. And credit should go to Wadsworth who went from pathologist examining the dead to "Coroner's Physician" then later, the "head of the city's scientific criminal laboratories." What Wadsworth had learned at the 1894 morgue in its cramped space, would have greater significance in the development of forensics and in dividing the police department's testing to what occurred at the morgue. Wadsworth wrote on varied subjects, impressed by the high number of cases of children who died suspiciously, or of females "who were or had been pregnant" and perhaps culpable. Relevant to the industrialization in the city, Wadsworth studied and wrote about "toxins" inhaled or ingested at the workplace--the factories--which were the city's economy. Wadsworth also published a paper in 1910 entitled, "Wounds by Fire-Arms,"<sup>28</sup> a prescient effort before World War I would return thousands of Philadelphians with injuries from new calibres, as well as mustard gas. Wadsworth's expertise was valuable for the 1927 plans for the new morgue to have the gun range to test ballistics and several laboratories to test the poisons and fumes which could pose harm to the public. The rise of gunshot wounds during raucous Prohibition years (1920-1933) would also benefit from Wadsworth's knowledge. But another, larger morgue was still necessary. As was ridding the City of the Coroner.

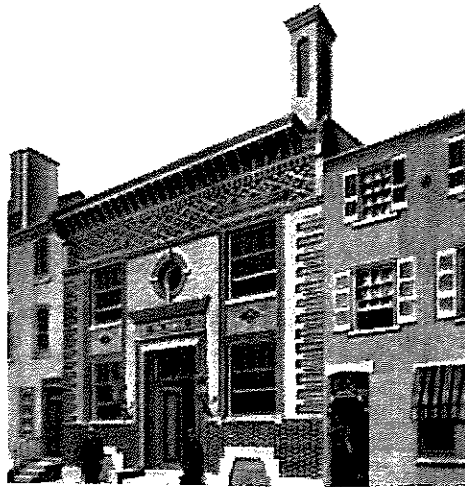
Wadsworth was one of the first of City employees to decry the need for a Coroner when the results of the morgue derived from the medical staff."..the Coroner's office should be abolished," he wrote in 1915, only to be echoed in 1916 with Common Pleas Judge Mayer Sulzberger saying the Coroner "outlived (its) usefulness" and had to be "abolished."<sup>29</sup> The Coroner was a tradition as well as a politically-powerful office in city government.<sup>30</sup> And it ran the morgue.

<sup>28</sup> From Reprints, op.cit.; "Philadelphia Inquirer," December 3, 1929.

<sup>29</sup> "Evening Bulletin," September 16, 1916.

<sup>30</sup> Wadsworth and fellow pathologists at the morgue called the Coroners "fools" and challenged the Coroners with medical language and terms not understood by the Coroners, but made the doctors more superior when giving presentments to the Coroner's juries.

The 1894 morgue and its staff managed to function in the situation it held on Wood Street with the surge in homicides and other types of deaths after World War I. The gradual increase in the police homicide rate after 1919 when the war ended to the mid-1920s<sup>31</sup> was a partial sample of all deaths in the city which the Coroner's Office still oversaw. And of the figures obtained from the Homicide Indices, many records did refer the cases to the Coroner, or were "discharged by the Coroner."<sup>32</sup> Many of the cases also were sent to the hospitals where physicians made the death certifications, not the Coroner's physician. The movement of law enforcement towards "police science" (later, forensics) in the 1920s made the Coroner's office and the 1894 morgue ever more antiquated by politics. In 1924, an inspection based on complaints that the morgue was "disorderly" found a filthy site<sup>33</sup> with "dirt" on the walls and floor and a call for a new morgue. Then in 1926 "for the first time" the morgue was "overcrowded" with cadavers lying there for weeks. The 1894 morgue was "long declared inadequate," and in the middle of the Prohibition years, there had never been the number of "suicides and accidental deaths" pouring into Wood Street.<sup>34</sup> By "December 19, 1927," architect Philip H. Johnson's plans for a much larger, more modern Morgue were approved<sup>35</sup> by the Mayor, Coroner and Coroner's physician, William Wadsworth.



(Left) The 1894 City Morgue in its 1307-9 Wood Street location. (Image from "Ice and Refrigeration" trade journal, July, 1894.)

<sup>31</sup>Philadelphia Police Homicide Volumes 1, 3 through 8.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>"Inquirer," July 19, 1924.

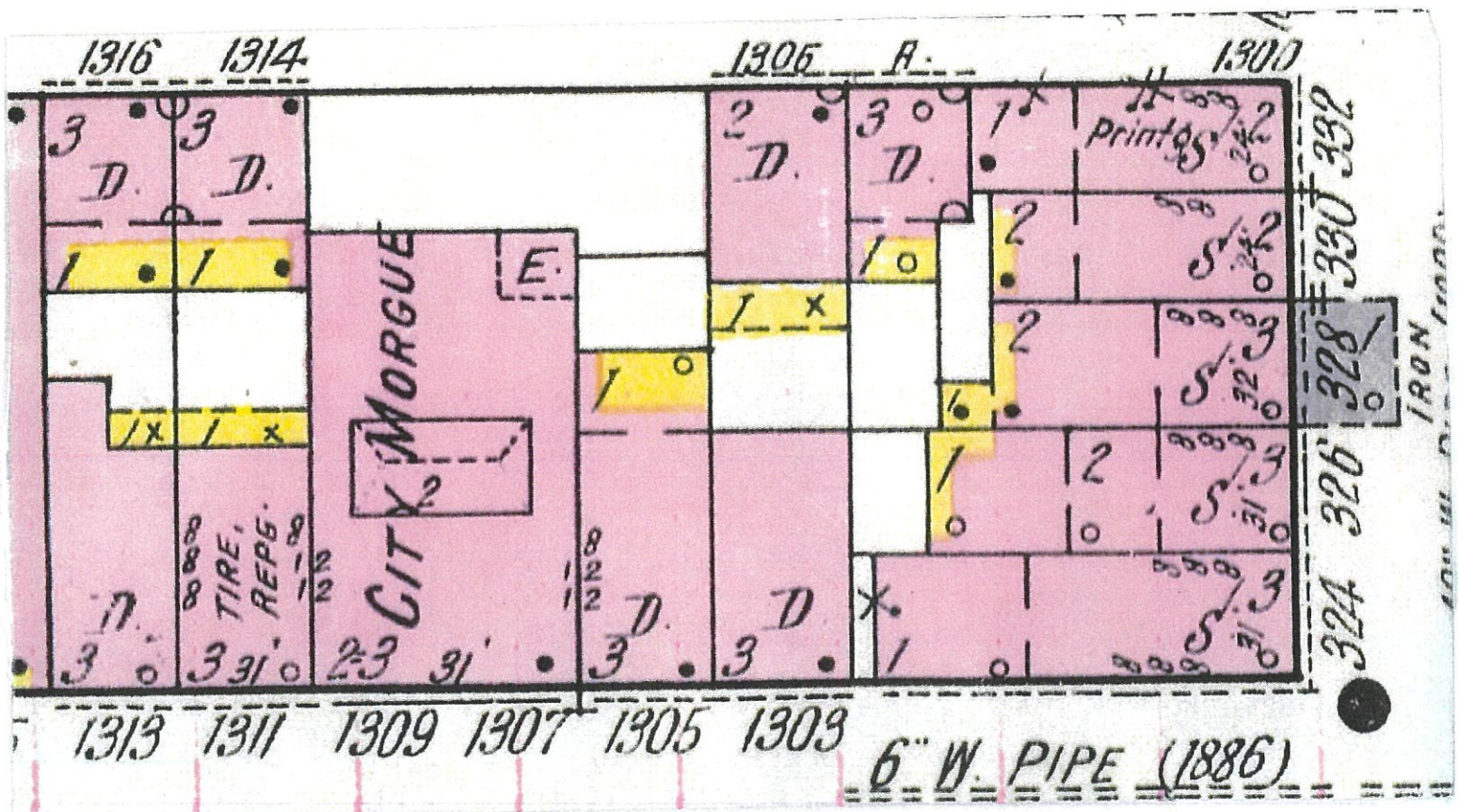
<sup>34</sup>Ibid., January 7, 1926.

<sup>35</sup>Refer to copies of blueprints from City Archives in Appendix 1.

Figure 4: The Commonwealth vs. Avena, et al.—the file



The Sanborn Atlas (1917-1929) depicts the type of roof on the 1894 morgue, deep loading dock at Carlton Street and the properties eventually acquired by 1928 when the cornerstone was placed on the nominated building. Of the "\$250,000" funding for the new 1928-1929 morgue, the contractors' accepted bid of "\$188,965." (PRERBG, July 25, 1928) indicates how much the City spent to condemn, then purchase all of the surrounding parcels: 324 to 332 North 13th Street; 1303 to 1305 Wood Street; and 1303 to 1305 Carlton Street. The exceptional size of the new morgue in 1928 was more proportional to the City's growth in population while also incorporating newer medical technology and sanitation controls in investigating causes of death.



**Homicides noted by Philadelphia Detectives in the Indices/ Volumes.\***

1892--24 (incomplete)	1930--155
1893--incomplete	1931--121
1894-- "	1932--145
1895-- "	1933--132
1896-- "	1934--101
1897-- "	1935--117
1898-- "	1936--114
1899-- "	1937--112
1900-- unknown to...	1938--108
1909--45 (incomplete)	1939--134
1910--76	1940--111
1911--70	1941--112
1912--91	1942--110
1913--71	1943-- 93
1914--64	1944-- 96
1915--69	1945--110
1916--88	1946--157
1917--82	1947--124
→ 1918--119	1948--119
→ 1919--104	1949--126
1920--111	1950--124
1921--108	1951--122
1922--130	1952--134
1923--163	1953--130
1924--119	1954--147
1925--163	1955--129
1926--153	1956--133
1927--161	1957--139
1928--175	1958--118
1929--168	1959--121

Many of these cases were forwarded to the Coroner to solve--up to 1955.

The Police's records often noted "dismissed by Coroner" or sent to Coroner, leaving the police somewhat outside or limited in the investigations.

**Population of Philadelphia, by U.S. Census:**

1890: 1,046,964  
 1900: 1,293,697  
 1910: 1,549,008  
 1920: 1,823,779  
 1930: 1,950,961  
 1940: 1,931,334  
 1950: 2,071,605  
 1960: 2,002,512

\*Some miscalculations may have resulted from cases of multiple victims and whether each case is handled as a single homicide, rather than as individual victim's case.

Source: Morello, C.A., The Philadelphia Police's Homicide Records, The First Decades of Investigating and Advancement. April, 2003, for the Philadelphia Police Commissioner, Sylvester R. Johnson.

The nominated 1928-1929 City Morgue, 324 North 13th Street:

The circumstances warranting a new and larger city morgue occurred beyond the Coroner and scandals within the 1894 morgue. The homicide rate recorded by the Police Bureau in 1925-1926 was comparable to the Coroner's unusually high number of suicides and accidental deaths in the same years. Overwhelmed with inefficiencies in space, plus personnel who claimed they "work under handicap," the peak of intolerance of this 1894 morgue came by the end of 1925 when the inadequate morgue left corpses in its yard on Carlton Street. In the January (1926) cold "to preserve the bodies," there was no room inside the morgue with the backlog of cases yet to be examined. By the time of the news report in the first week of January of 1926, personnel said the bodies had been in the yard "for weeks." On January 3, 1926 Coroner Fred Schwarz, Jr. would fire everyone at the morgue except Dr. Arthur P. Keegan, who was the Coroner's physician since 1925.<sup>36</sup> More political action would affect the 1894 morgue's demise during these Prohibition years of lawlessness throughout the city.

On July 2, 1927 City Council would finally authorize the Director of Public Works to purchase a "plot" at the northwest corner of Wood and 13th Streets with part of the "\$250,000," allocated for the land(s) and a new building erected thereon.<sup>37</sup> The Bromley Atlas of 1922 (page 21 herein) shows that at least nine properties were acquired for the new city morgue to lay its cornerstone on "1928." The Public Works' architect Philip H. Johnson would present his blueprints within six months, which by 1927, Dr. Wadsworth, the "Coroner's physician," would sign to approve. The new morgue would have "the latest model X-ray and criminal research laboratories" and hold "100 bodies"<sup>38</sup> (with emphasis.)

<sup>36</sup> "Inquirer," July 19, 1924; January 7, 1926; "Bulletin," Jan. 3, 1926.  
<sup>37</sup> "Inquirer," July 2, 1927.  
<sup>38</sup> "Inquirer," December 3, 1929.



The new morgue at 324 North 13th Street was very different than its predecessor beginning with its exterior design. Johnson planned a subtle, calming appearance with the monochromatic blond brick and classical details. Facing a street with more traffic than on Wood Street, the 1928-1929 morgue was discreet, unlike the Windrim design. At the west wall abutting other properties, were the "cold rooms" to place new arrivals, along with an "embalming room," large "receiving room" and "sterilizing room" in compliance to Progressive Era and hospital regulations in sanitation. At this first level were the personnel whose tasks did not required much skills or training. The first floor personnel then, were separated physically from the medical staff and their technicians on the second floor.

Wadsworth obviously had influence on the second level's plan: there were four(4) "doctors rooms," two(2) autopsy rooms--which only differed from the "clinic" in name because both had drains under their work tables next to "slop sinks." A "chemical laboratory" with a waste vent under its table, storage areas, toilets and sinks for the staff's use were also incorporated. As per procedure, a room to photograph the deceased and for film developing were also on this floor. Near the center of the second floor, under its roof, a long, wide corridor offered space from the workareas.

Sanitation, ventilation, upgraded plumbing and sewage disposal were mandatory and essential for this morgue to adapt a medically-acceptable environment, not one dictated by the city's bureaucracy who were not part of the medical community. Public health<sup>39</sup> protocols had to be incorporated in a morgue where the living would be directly affected by the dead's end of life. Moreover, this morgue compensated for what the Police Bureau lacked to solve crimes.

<sup>39</sup>Progressive Era reforms married home economics with medicine with regards to food refrigeration, hygiene, indoor plumbing and waste disposal which also were issues for this city morgue at that time. Refer to one source on this subject, Tomes, Nancy, The Gospel of Germs. Harvard Univ. Press, 1999, pp. 146-50 on how disease-causing pathogens in households held more widespread concern, leading to more sanitation in hospitals.

In another type of narrative, such as a doctoral dissertation, it would be appropriate to inject the Coroner's Office and this morgue within the local political machine, namely the Republican Party and its effects--positive or negative--at all governmental levels. The city morgue then, in 1929, conformed to municipal, Commonwealth and federal law not only in filing mandatory "Certificates of Death" but also in compliance to the same laws which hospitals were to obey. Moreover, the morgue continued to be where intestate individuals' remains laid, along with any personal effects (i.e., jewelry or anything of value) that were kept under the eyes of the Coroner and his staff. "The Evening Bulletin" on April 30, 1932 had reported that the Deputy Coroner "failed to make returns to the State of estates of persons who died intestate"<sup>40</sup> in the same building where Dr. Wadsworth and his staff toiled under the grossest conditions over cadavers. This bifurcated system at the city morgue--Coroner's work versus the medico-legal staff of pathologists and technicians--would not be resolved until the Coroner's Office was literally written out of the City's Government. And it would not happen until 1955.

The "medico-legal" half of the activities at the city morgue were the more interesting and "head-line" grabbing for the press. Gruesome stories on unusual "sudden," or "suspicious" or "unattended" or some of the "violent" deaths in the city emerged from this nominated city morgue. Many are historically-relevant to the significance of this nomination. It is noteworthy, for example, to mention the deaths of "heat stroke and asphyxiation" of four inmates held at Holmesburg Prison in 1938. The post mortem examinations were performed by "Dr. Crane" of the Coroner's Office at this city morgue.<sup>41</sup> Assigning culpability towards crimi-

<sup>40</sup> The theft of estates (personal property) is what was implied. If no returns or filings of the deceased were made, it meant that nothing existed of that individual's property.

<sup>41</sup> "Philadelphia Inquirer," August 22, 1938.

inal convictions by the District Attorney's Office was always the Coroner's job. But not until an organized police department developed with far more broad "force" in controlling crime, did the Coroner have to decide whether fellow city employees, i.e., police officers, had committed the "violent" deaths. The cases in 1938 to 1939 of gun shot wound victims "at the hand of" Captain of the Detectives, James P. Ryan went to the Coroner, and all were dismissed on his alleged use of excessive force.<sup>42</sup> These cases at the nominated morgue would be a reference for later investigations.

In the city-wide murder-for-insurance money cases in the 1939 "Arsenic Murders" where at least sixteen(16) victims from North and South Philadelphia were examined at this morgue, the medical staff performed autopsies--even disinterring corpses from 1932--to detect the poison.<sup>43</sup> Readily available toxins and others which arose from World War II's atrocities would be tested on the dead in this morgue, per the "suspicious" category under the Coroner's responsibilities.

Among the relationships with other city agencies the 1928-1929 city morgue had forged, perhaps the most important was that with the Philadelphia General Hospital (PGH). As a latent result finally realized from the Flexner Report of 1910 (which criticized the status of hospitals), the morgue relied upon a hospital's protocols, medical and laboratory practices and administration. The vastly larger city hospital, PGH, noted Rosenberg, "boasted an enviable<sup>44</sup> reputation as a place to teach and study clinical medicine " with a large staff and facilities moving faster in trends. In the 1940s, this city morgue would examine corpses for newer causes of death, and specific causes, like "criminal abortion."

<sup>42</sup> Ryan's homicides were recorded in the volumes held at the Homicide Unit. They did not include his killing of gangster Anthony "Musky" Zanghi in New York City years before.

<sup>43</sup> Homicide Indices, October 27, 1938 to June 12, 1939. PPD, Homicide.

<sup>44</sup> Rosenberg, op.cit., p. 325.



Another odd cause of death to emerge at this morgue were in the "methyl alcohol"<sup>45</sup> deaths among the homeless. With the mounting sophistication in medicine, "police science," toxicology and immunology, Philadelphia's 19th century form of government would be compelled to move towards reforms. In the late 1940s and definitely by 1951 with the election of Joseph Clark as mayor, a new Home Rule Charter would reorganize municipal government, opening thought on why the office of the Coroner should be "abolished."

Clark retrospectively admitted that his administration (1951-1955) was not focussed on crime, citing the police's investigations on organized crime.<sup>46</sup> His successor, Richardson Dilworth and the City Council session which ended in 1955 would be responsible for the abolishment of the Coroner and the implementation of a new position, that of "Medical Examiner" who would have to assume the important, non-medical tasks involved in the administration of the corpses, their property and the staff handling these duties. The position of "Medical Examiner" was by political appointment with authority under the City's Department of Public Health. As a full-time city employee, the Medical Examiner would need the knowledge and training of a doctor as well as a bureaucrat, at the behest of its employer, the City of Philadelphia. The City Council term that ended in 1955 also terminated the Coroner's medieval post and purpose. In January, 1956, medicine, science and the law enforcement system in Philadelphia finally met modernism when the first Medical Examiner in Philadelphia was hired: Joseph W. Spelman, MD.

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Spelman walked into a job in which the first Police Commissioner of the City, Thomas Gibbons, had already tendered an "agree-

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<sup>45</sup>Homicide Index, PPD, Homicide Unit. June 27, 1955.

<sup>46</sup>"Evening Bulletin," September 24, 1971: "A Reformer Tells His Story," by Joseph S. Clark. During Clark's term, the U.S. Senate's "Kefauver Commission" held hearings in Philadelphia on the "who's who" of racketeering. The 1952-1953 testimonies of underworld figures pointed to their cash and gifts to high-ranking police officials in Clark's administration showing that "reform" was still afar.

ment" with the Coroner to have its own "homicide squad." The following year, 1953 when a newspaper headline ran, "Many Philadelphians think the Coroner should be abolished," the Health Department maintained that the Coroner "would ascertain the cause of death (and) the police would gather evidence and the District Attorney would prosecute."<sup>47</sup> Thus, very little had changed until the election of 1955 when at the close, Council members approved to abolish the Coroner and his inquest and jury as relics of the past. The association of dishonesty and scandal with the Coroner<sup>48</sup> was also believed to be "abolished" as part of the reform movement.

Joseph W. Spelman, MD (1918-1971) accepted his position with the City as its first Medical Examiner at the nominated building. It was at 324 North 13th Street where Spelman began and concluded his work at the City Morgue. Upon his hiring in 1956, Spelman declared that the 27 year old morgue was "grossly inadequate physically for modern toxicology." He wanted to be near the other doctors at the city's hospital, PGH where the laboratories were better adept to test toxins. The<sup>49</sup> staff at the morgue had handled "2500 coroner's cases" in 1955 and he was determined to decrease the expenses at the morgue, through less patronage and better management.

Spelman's years of unraveling the causes of death at this morgue are a history of late 20th century America, with the social problems in gang violence, illegal narcotics use and overprescribed drug use, suspicious deaths among the growing numbers of homeless and the creative forms of killing in the least known ways. Born in

<sup>47</sup> "Evening Bulletin," January 15, 1952; October 14, 1953.

<sup>48</sup> In 1877, the medical examiner replaced the coroner in Massachusetts; for New York City, the abolishment of the Coroner for a medical examiner occurred in 1918. See Feegle, John R., Legal Aspects of Laboratory Medicine. Boston: Little, Brown, 1973, p. 154. and, Lardner, Jas. and Reppetto, Thos., NYPD: A City and its People. NY: Holt, 2000, p. 222.

<sup>49</sup> "Evening Bulletin," March 23, 1956.

Massachusetts and graduating with a medical degree from Yale University, Spelman enlisted in the Army in the last year of World War II (1945), rising to the rank of captain. Laboratory research and pathology were his specialized interests from those early years. He would be employed as the Chief pathologist for Vermont's Department of Health after more training in "legal medicine " at Harvard University. His experience in a bureaucracy began at the Department of Health for the State of Vermont where he oversaw "43 regional (medical) examiners' offices" before taking the Civil Service test in Philadelphia to become the City's first Medical Examiner and have charge of "62 people" who handled "approximately 5,700 cases" a year by 1957.<sup>50</sup> (The figure for morgue cases stands at approximately "6,000" or about one-third<sup>51</sup> of the annual deaths in Philadelphia from about 1.5 million reported in the U.S. Census.)

The City Morgue under Spelman was different in management. He would fire an assistant pathologist "because the man frequently listed the incorrect cause of death after an autopsy." He defined his position as the successor of the Coroner, but more in investigating the "sudden," "suspicious" or "unexpected" deaths through the post mortem examination. This City Morgue had investigated the remains from one of the notorious Blaney brothers who was in a detonated car; 31 corpses who died of "wood alcohol poisoning" in the city's "Skid Row"<sup>52</sup> were also autopsied here, as were a growing number of child deaths from neglect or harm. But the case which was "one of the most difficult," Spelman said, was the 1957 "Boy in the Box."<sup>53</sup> The case is still unsolved and the boy's identity still unknown, yet it has had more than fifty years of media coverage.<sup>54</sup> For this case at the nominated morgue, Spelman had invited Wilton M. Krogman, Ph.D, an anthropologist from the

<sup>50</sup> "The New York Times," February 10, 1971; "Inquirer," April 6, 1958.  
<sup>51</sup> September, 2019 interview with medical investigator, "Seth."

<sup>52</sup> "Evening Bulletin," December 31, 1963.  
<sup>53</sup> "Inquirer," April 6, 1958.

<sup>54</sup> The latest book to revive this case (with Spelman noted) is Stout, David, The Boy in the Box: The Unsolved Case of America's Unknown Child. Guilford: The Lyons Press, 2008.



University of Pennsylvania's Medical School. Krogman's assistant at this morgue was William Bass, Ph.D. "one of the foremost experts in forensic anthropology." The "Boy in the Box" case had described what was done in the morgue, in an exhaustive process wherein the "Boy's" skeleton was measured to determine an approximate age and his possible ethnicity. He was thoroughly X-rayed and probed for a cause of death--there were many guesses. The "Boy" was photographed at the morgue and held there until his burial in late July of 1957.<sup>55</sup> Other children who died prematurely of a variety of means--starvation as well as medical neglect--would hold Spelman's interest.

The late Medical Examiner of Montgomery County, Halbert Fillinger, MD, worked with Spelman as his assistant examiner from 1960 until Spelman's unexpected death in 1971. Fillinger recalled "Birdman Phelan," "mom and pop" homicide shootings (domestic cases)<sup>56</sup> and early MOVE fatalities, along with some underworld murders. While there, a "giant increase" of drug overdoses was newsworthy to account for the "61 deaths" from illegal narcotics in the first six months of 1968. Spelman "warned of increasing narcotics addiction cause by overprescription by doctors"<sup>57</sup> when there was no regulation of the "uppers" and "downers" from doctors. Here, at 324 North 13th Street, Spelman foresaw the need for a suicide control center in the City as well as more oversight to reports of parents who beat their children to death.

Spelman's work at the nominated morgue building elevated him to local and national renown. He taught at the premier medical universities here as well as lectured widely to be elected as the President of the National Association of Medical Examiners.<sup>58</sup> As he awaited the relocation to West Philadelphia, Dr. Spelman died. The City Morgue now is in a building named for him in West Philadelphia.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>56</sup>Personal interview with Fillinger on December 27, 2002.

<sup>57</sup>"Evening Bulletin," September 17, 1968; "New York Times," February 10, 1971.

<sup>58</sup>"NYT," February 10, 1971.

Premises, 324 North 13th Street, the former City Morgue...

- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation:

PHILIP H. JOHNSON (1868-1933)

As the architect for Philadelphia's Department of Public Health, Philip H. Johnson designed an ever-evolving group of hospitals and public projects which were examples of Progressive Era innovations in the early 20th century. Changes in the plans of hospitals occurred with new developments in medicine, as well as in technology to advance identifying disease and its treatment. Johnson's appointment to design the nominated building in 1927 came just prior to his commissions for one of the nation's first radio stations and Convention Hall where many sports championships made local and national history.

Johnson's career in retrospect had been criticized because of supposed nepotism in local government.<sup>59</sup> While this claim does not include comments on his designing by fellow architects, it should only be relevant in how the city's Republican machine had utilized his skills in the numerous projects which are part of the city's growth during Progressive Era developments in health, sanitation, police and fire services and in the corrections system. In the decades of Johnson's work, he had also designed hospitals and asylums for those recognized with mental conditions who had to be separated from society and placed in special places. One can see in Johnson's work a history of urban administration of the poor, the needy, the safety of neighborhoods and improvements in hospitals,<sup>60</sup> prisons and city life. Historian Charles Ro-

<sup>59</sup>Tatman and Moss, Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects. Boston: Hall & Co., 1985, pp. 418-421.

<sup>60</sup>See Rosenberg, op.cit. on the growth at Philadelphia General Hospital and Pennsylvania Hospital that lead in local developments.

senberg from the University of Pennsylvania wrote, "...there is no doubt that the first two decades of the 20th century witnessed a broadly conceived attempt to expand the traditional responsibilities of urban social services."<sup>61</sup> Local development came when the City's "Board of Health" formed in the late 18th century, would mature to be the "Department of Public Health" during Johnson's tenure. Indeed, Johnson's work on at least twelve municipal hospitals during the transformational Progressive Era and modernization of medicine deserves more attention. Nineteenth century hospital design in Philadelphia was hailed through the work of Samuel Sloan from 1850 to 1880 in private hospitals or "charity" hospitals.<sup>62</sup> In Johnson's role, it is the government--the city--assuming care of its citizens in a public service, funded by taxpayers, a shift in private-to-public responsibility. It is fundamentally important, and grossly overlooked when Johnson was tied into the governmental structure of laws and regulations over his designs. Johnson's buildings--many of which no longer exist--were constructed when the latest in municipal waste, sewage disposals, water purification and distribution and indoor plumbing became part of the lifestyle of resident Philadelphians. These systems were required in the medical profession as well, and Sloan and other hospital architects did not have this "modern" technical knowledge which Johnson had to execute the designs or renovations to hospitals and other city buildings.

Johnson's first commissions in "public health" were the baths, with three planned in the eastern European enclaves in North Philadelphia. The Public Baths Association already was active from 1898. As timely public "services" the baths were "essential for public health" "...as missions to the slums to spread the 'gospel of cleanliness',"aligning the Progressive concept to "evangelical Protestantism."<sup>63</sup>Public baths indicated lower economic class backwardness.

<sup>61</sup> Rosenberg, op.cit., p. 313.

<sup>62</sup> Refer to Webster, R., Philadelphia Preserved. "West Philadelphia," where Webster addressed the various hospitals there, omitting the Johnson name where alterations or additions were made by him. In fact, Johnson is only mentioned once in the book.

<sup>63</sup> Glassberg, David, "The Design of Reform: The Public Bath Movement in America," p.487 in Leavitt and Numbers, "Sickness and Health in America. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Johnson's public baths commissions were followed by other projects intended for the immigrant or lower classes to modify not only health but behavior. The architect would design no less than fourteen (14) public parks and recreation centers in some of the city's oldest and developing areas. One was the Weccacoe Playground at 5th and Catharine Streets which received recent attention when an African American burial ground was located at the site. The Starr Playground (7th and Lombard Streets) is another popular site while the Vare Center at 26th and Morris Streets<sup>64</sup> had undergone renovations of late. In their study, "The Decline in Mortality in Philadelphia from 1870 to 1930: The Role of Municipal Services," the authors credited "(G)overnmental intervention in Philadelphia ...for a mortality decline...between 1870 and 1930" but their findings show more significance after 1900. As sources, the "Annual Report of the Bureau of Water" and Reports from the Board of Health provided substance to how the city's water and sewage systems<sup>65</sup> greatly improved the quality of its use by the citizens. Water at the parks and playgrounds, water for homes, water for health care facilities and water for the incapacitated mattered and was improved during Johnson's years as architect for the Department of Public Health.

The city morgue in discussion, as noted on the Johnson blueprints of 1927, was mindful of the necessity of water for the medical staff on the second floor and their "clinic" and "autopsy" rooms. Water was needed to flush wastes and for the staff to be refreshed from the debris and odors of the workplace. Dr. Wadsworth had noted "the growth of health and sanitation laws...to the cause of the public welfare" back in 1915 and the laws effected changes in everyone's life,<sup>66</sup> not only in the medical setting.

<sup>64</sup> Tatman and Moss, op.cit., pp. 419-421.

<sup>65</sup> Condran, G., Williams, H. and Cheney, R., "The Decline..." in Leavitt, J.W. and Numbers, R., Sickness & Health in America. Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1997, p. 463.

<sup>66</sup> Wadsworth, MD, W., "The Coroner and The Physician," paper read before the Northern Medical Association of Phila., December 10, 1915. A.R. Elliott Publishing Co., 1916, p. 6.



Johnson was 59 years old when he planned the nominated city morgue in 1927. It was about one year after designing a "sewage system" at Philadelphia General Hospital, one of several projects at the site where later Dr. Spelman preferred to work and for a city morgue to be located. Since 1901, Johnson would work at no less than 12 different hospital projects, from "incinerator plants," to "bacteriological" and "pathological" laboratories to "antitoxin" departments<sup>67</sup> where rooms were dedicated to testing various poisons. Johnson's specialized knowledge and experience with these projects fully qualified him to draw the 1928-1929 morgue, which itself was revolutionary for Philadelphia at the time.

Thus, the historical significance in Johnson's work has not been duly credited in the city's Progressive Era transformation. Yet, in the remaining number of Johnson's wide portfolio of buildings, the 20th century developments in public health are more than evident, as well as impactful, especially in representing the city's concepts of providing for its citizens through public health initiatives. The nominated City Morgue was one example of the architect's contemporaneous handling of a building sensitive to the medical and legal tenets governing the dead. Johnson's design has proven its historical value even today.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA  
January, 2020

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<sup>67</sup> See Tatman and Moss, op.cit., pp. 418-421 for their list of projects attached herein as "Appendix 3."

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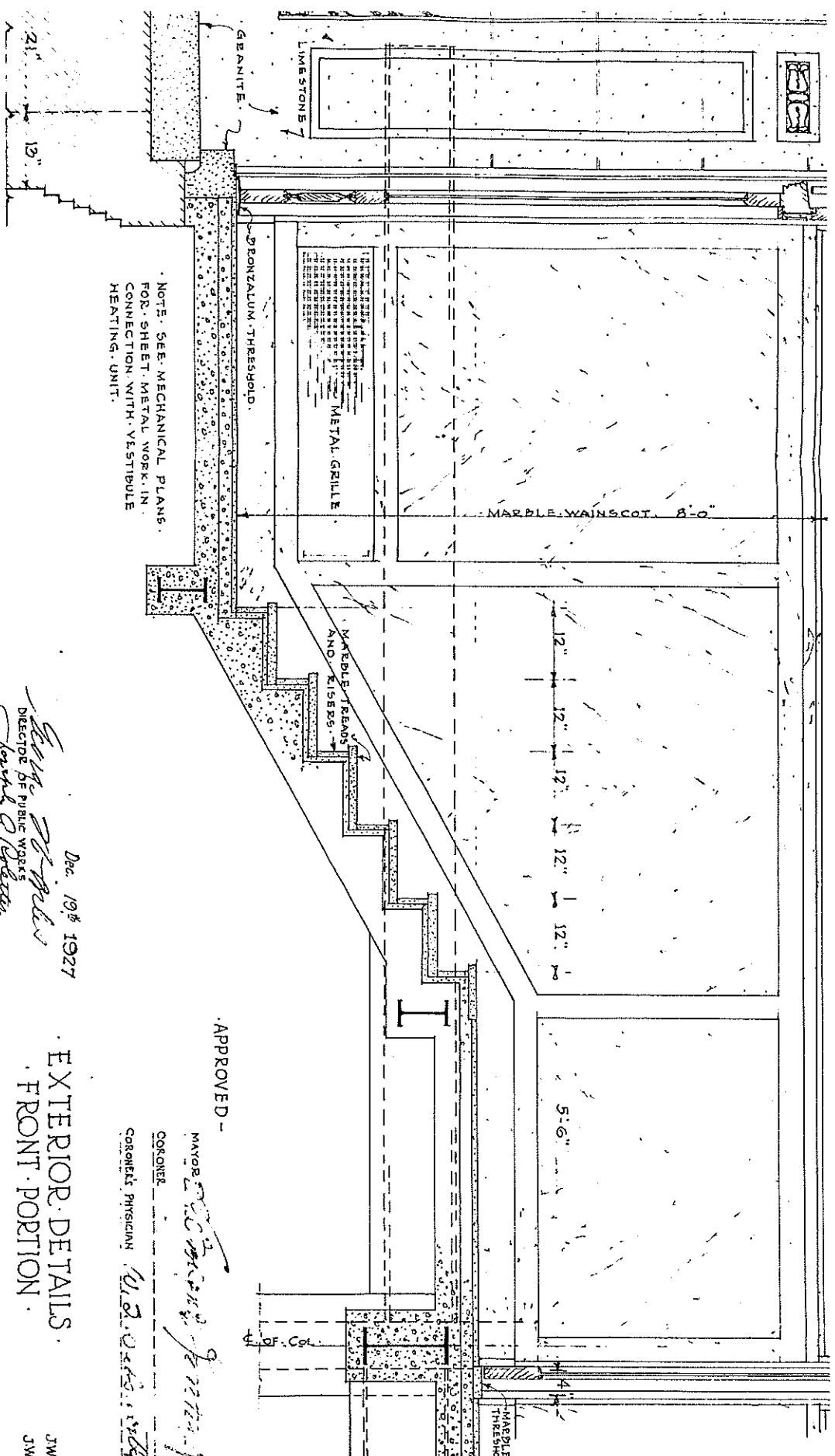
NEWSPAPERS, JOURNALS, other PUBLICATIONS:

- Philadelphia: Press; Times: Evening Bulletin; Inquirer.
- Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide.
- Philadelphia Police Department's Homicide Records, 1892-1960. Records, Clerk of the Quarter Sessions.
- "Ice and Refrigeration..." (published in Chicago and NY, 1894.)
- Free Library of Philadelphia Maps; newspapers.
- SPECIAL THANKS to Mr. Jim Garrow, Spokesman, Medical Examiner's  
"Seth" Medical Investigator.  
and, Mrs. Kim Chantry, PHC Staff.

A P P E N D I X    1:

The City Morgue by Johnson

(8 pages)



SECTION THROUGH MAIN ENTRANCE & VESTIBULE

NOTE: SEE MECHANICAL PLANS FOR SHEET METAL WORK IN CONNECTION WITH VESTIBULE HEATING UNIT.

APPROVED -

MAYOR *Wm. H. H. H. H. H.*  
 CORONER  
 CORONER PHYSICIAN *Wm. H. H. H. H. H.*

EXTERIOR DETAILS  
 FRONT PORTION

JW  
 JW

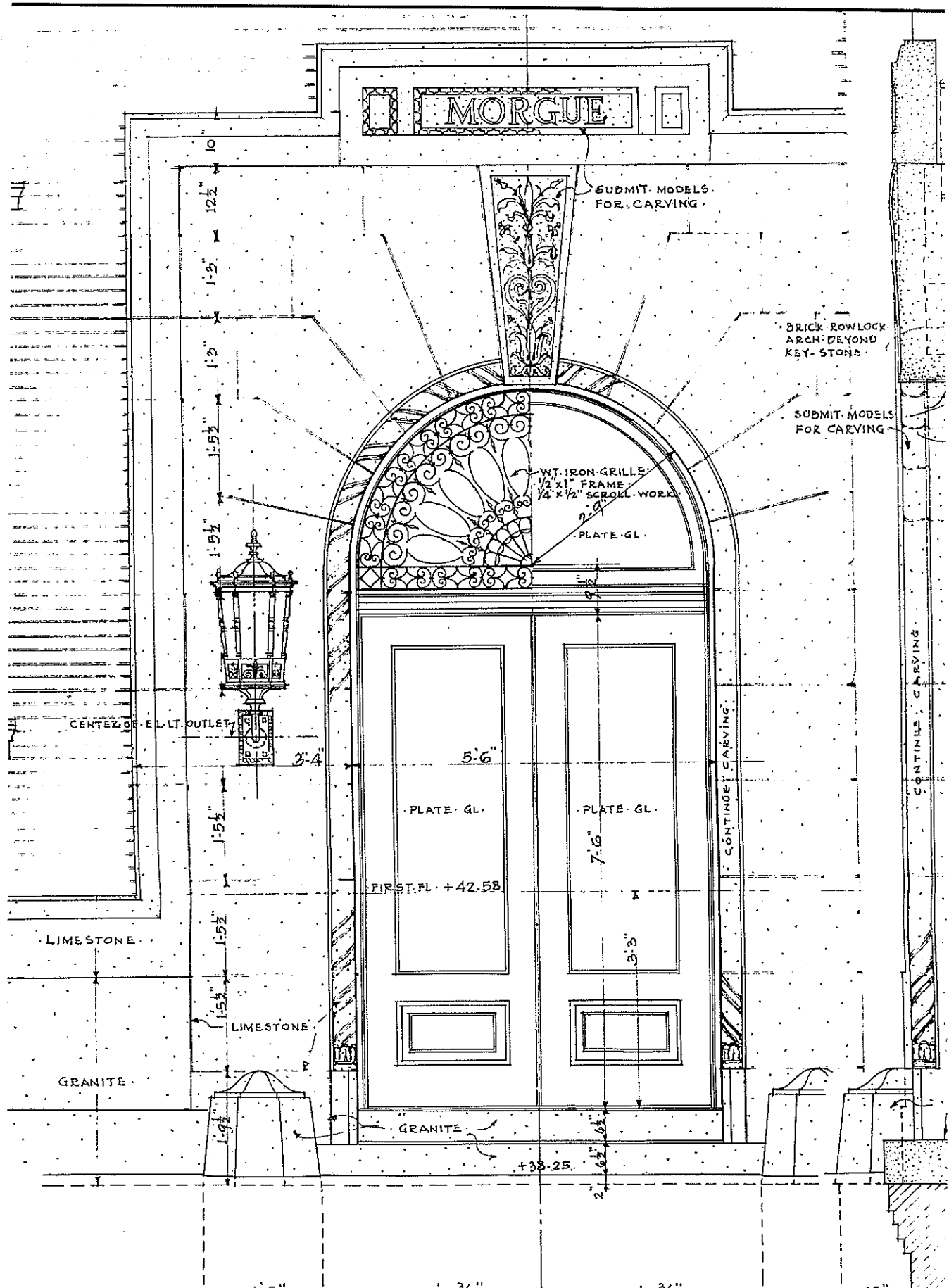
MORQUE BUILDING 3/4" TO 1"

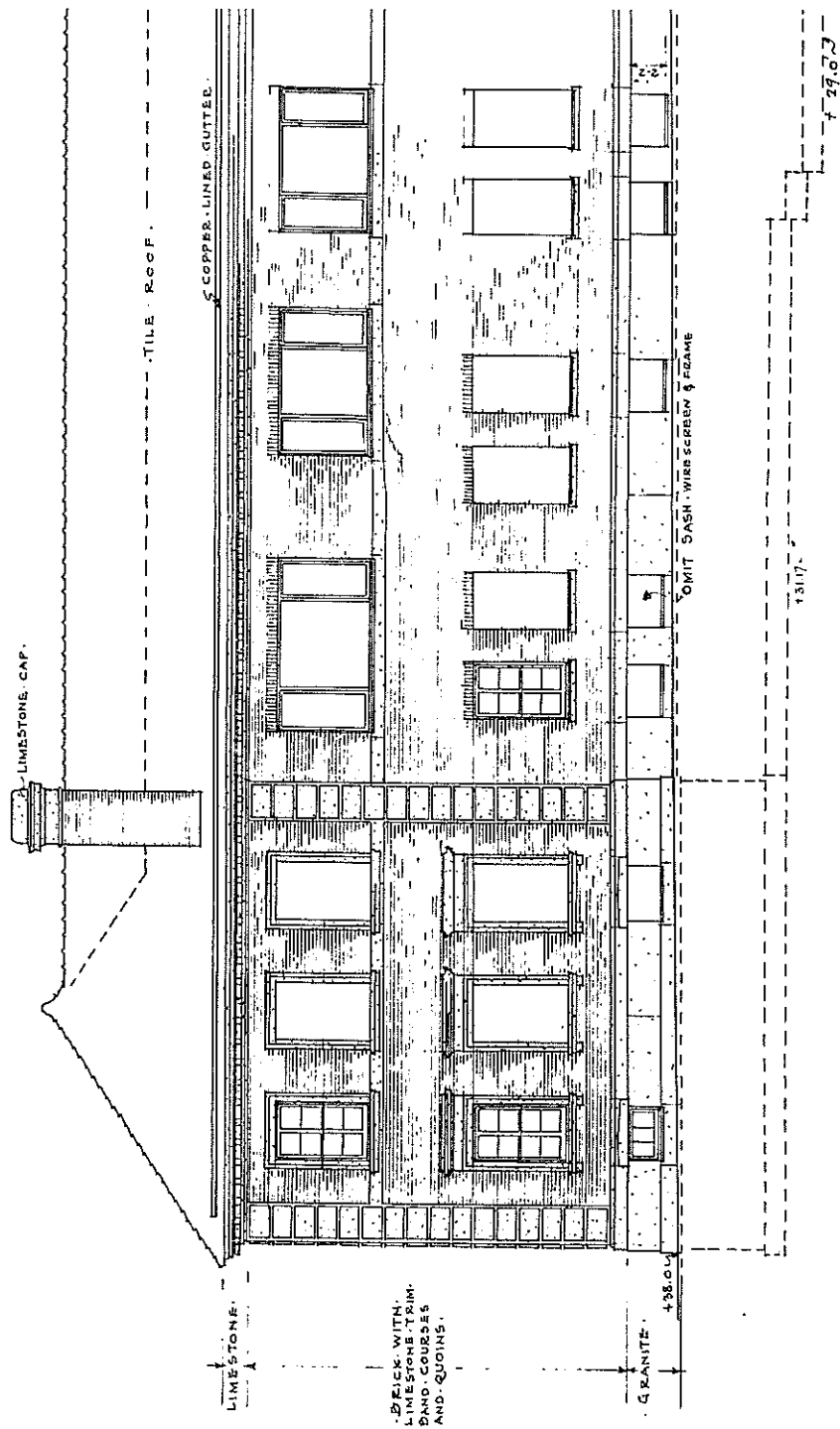
N.W. COR. 15 TH. & WOOD STS. PHILA. PA. 1097

Dec. 19th 1927  
 ACT. CITY ARCHITECT *John A. Roberts*  
 DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS  
 CHIEF OF BUREAU OF CITY PROPERTY  
 CHIEF OF ELECTRICAL BUREAU (FOR ELECTRICAL WORK ONLY)  
 ELECTRICAL ENGINEER OF ELECTRICAL BUREAU

3





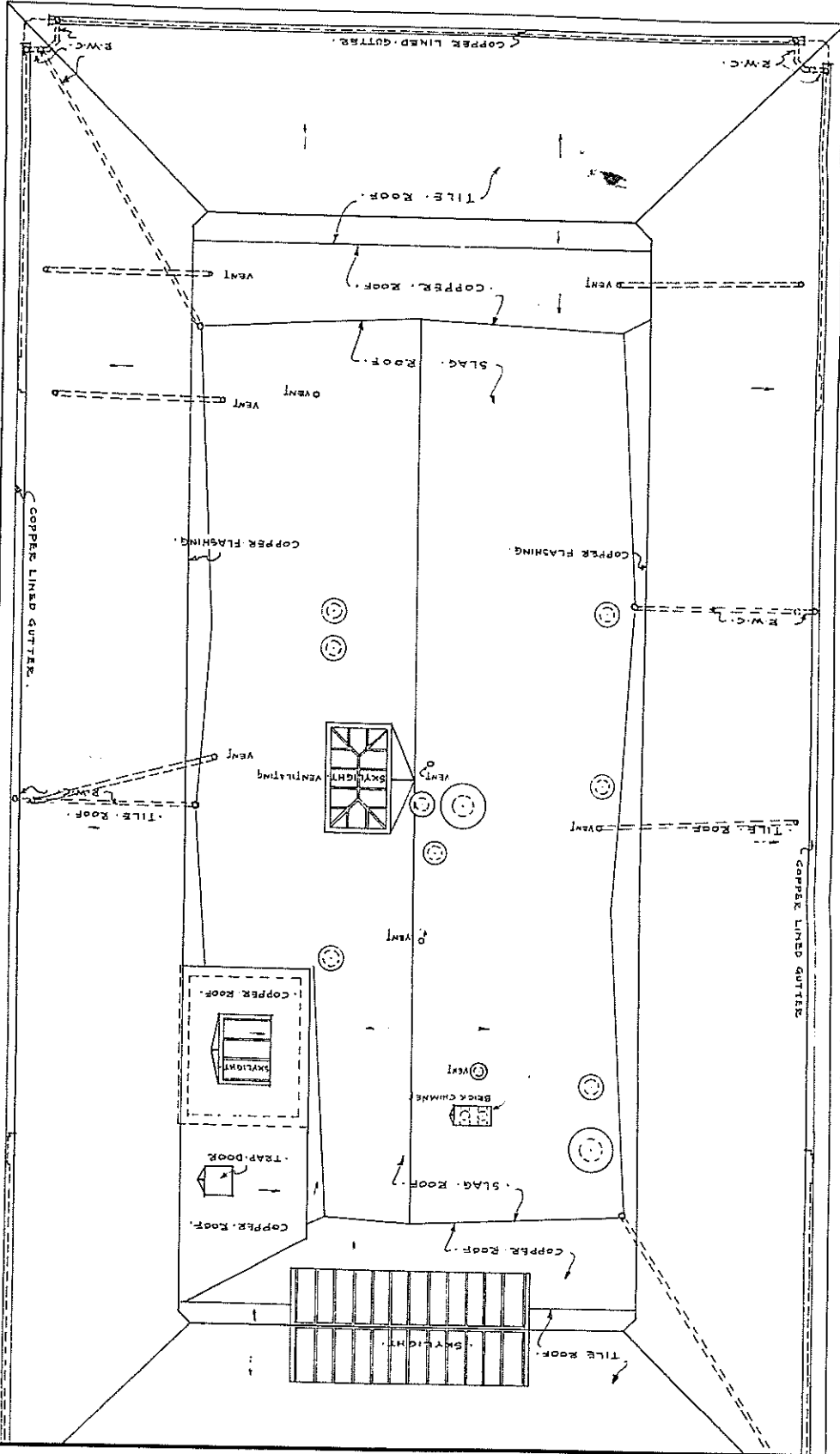
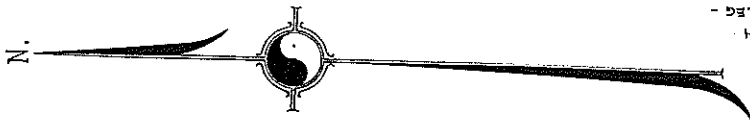


## · CARLTON · ST. ELEVATION



APPROVED-

1/2" PINS. 1/2" HIGH  
IN TOP OF EACH LEG  
SLATE SLAB DRILLED

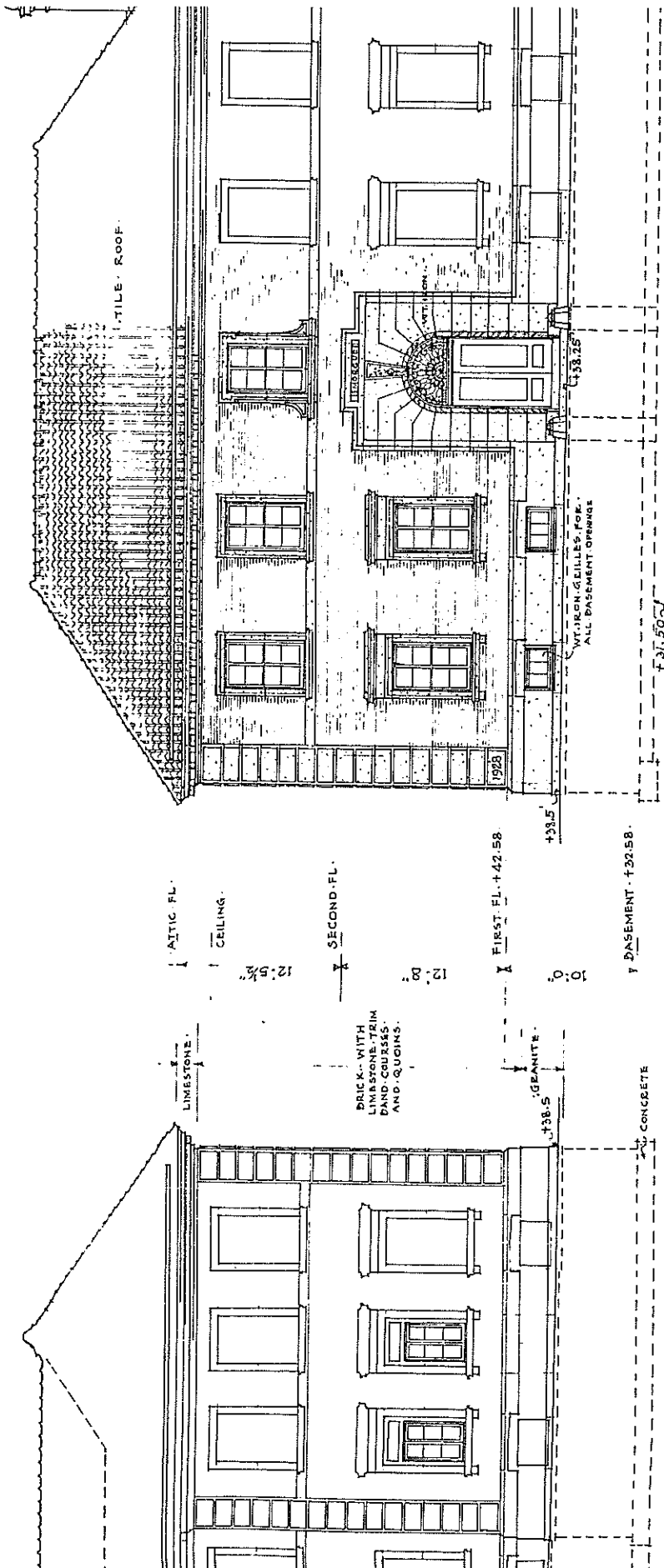


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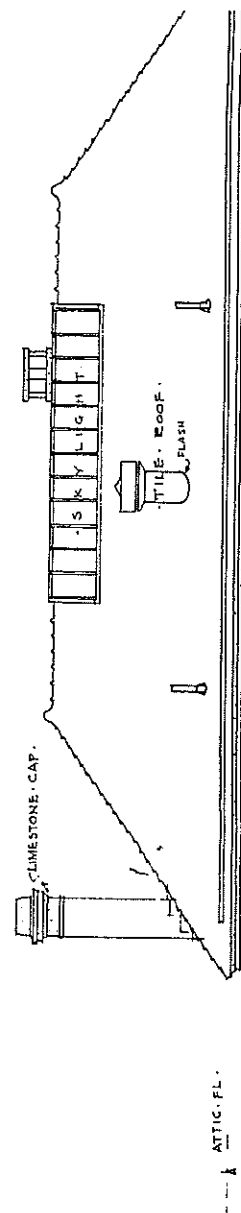
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BASE

MARBLE  
BRACKETS.

MARBLE WAINSCOT.



# 13 IH. ST. ELEVATION.

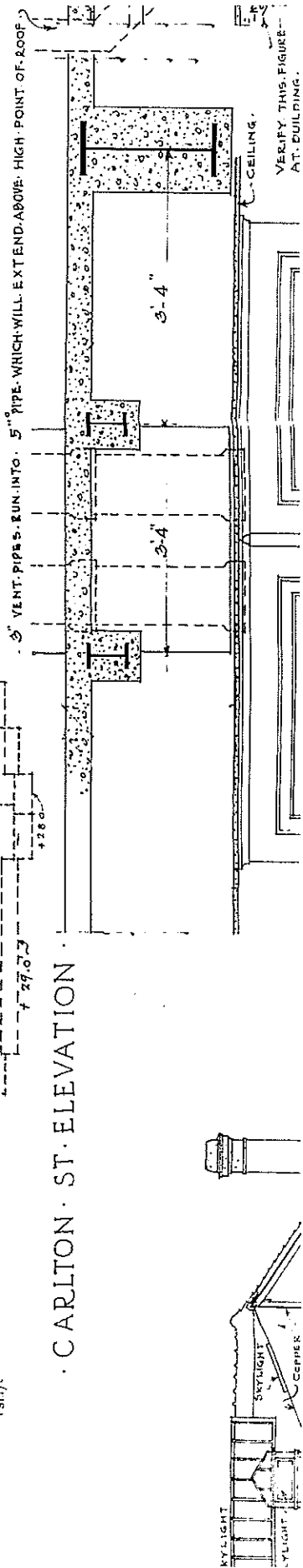
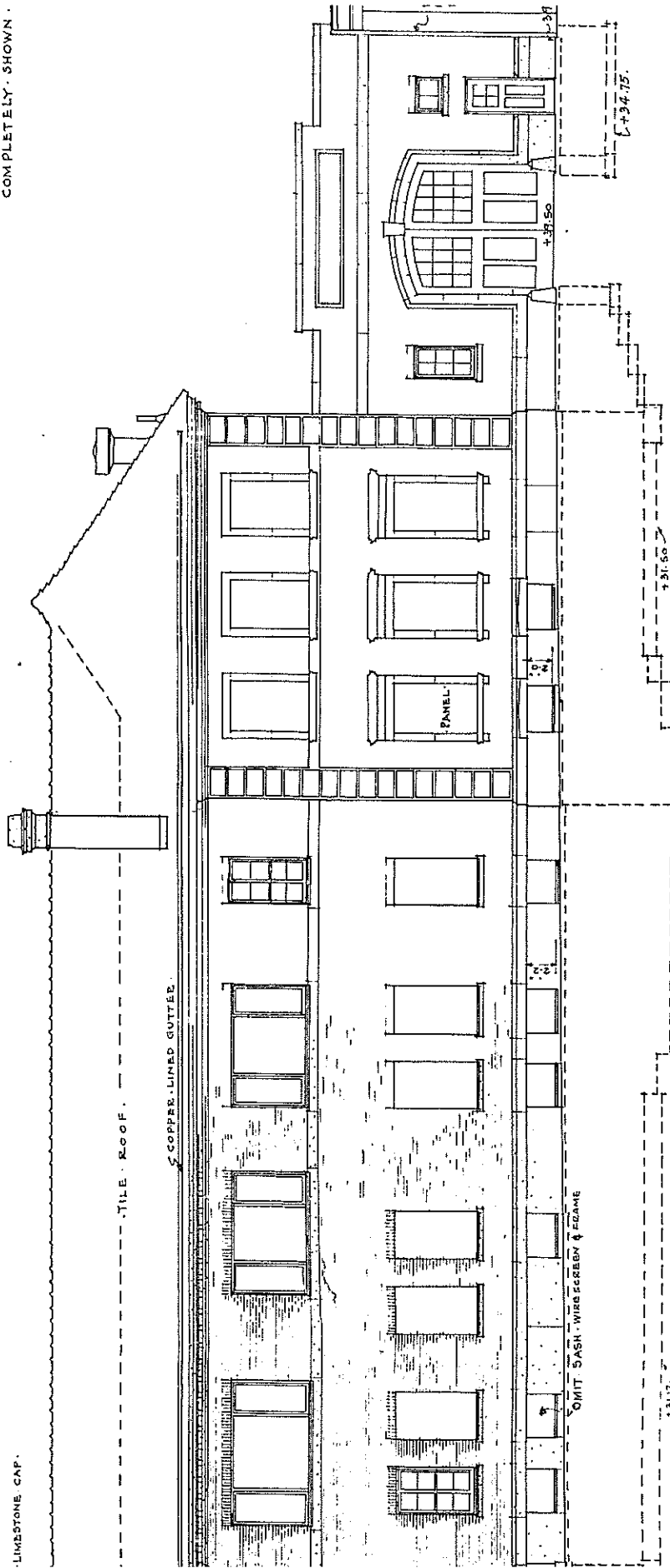


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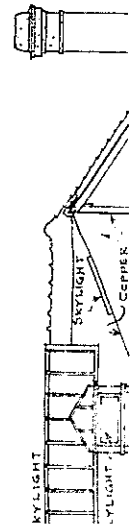


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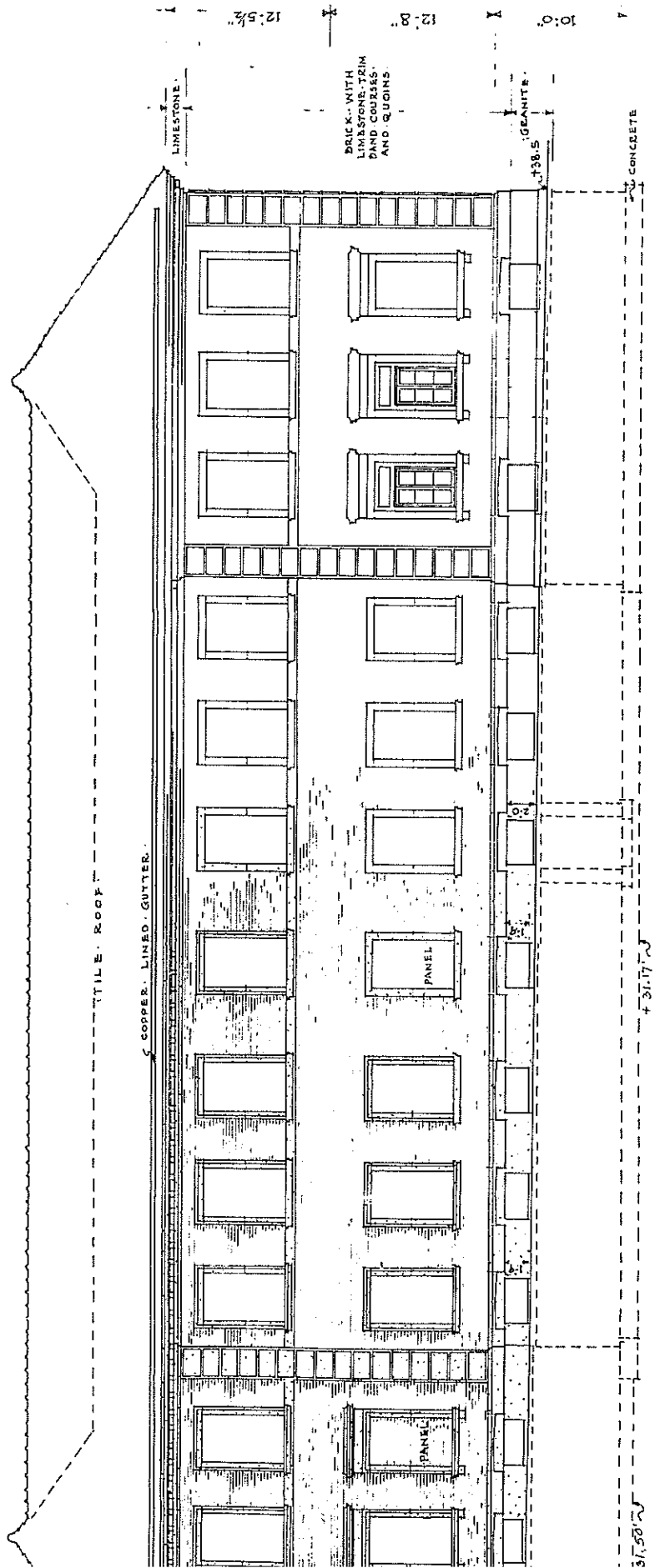
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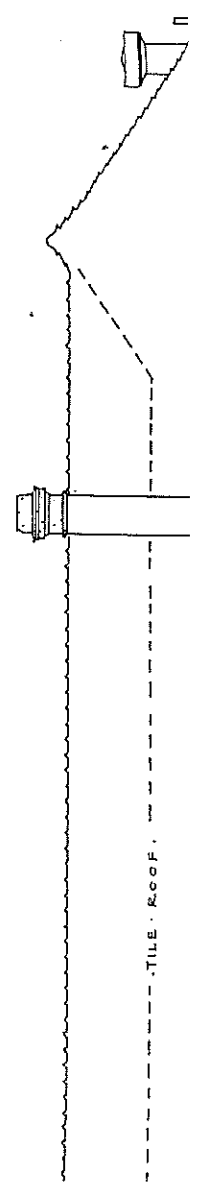
## CARLTON ST. ELEVATION

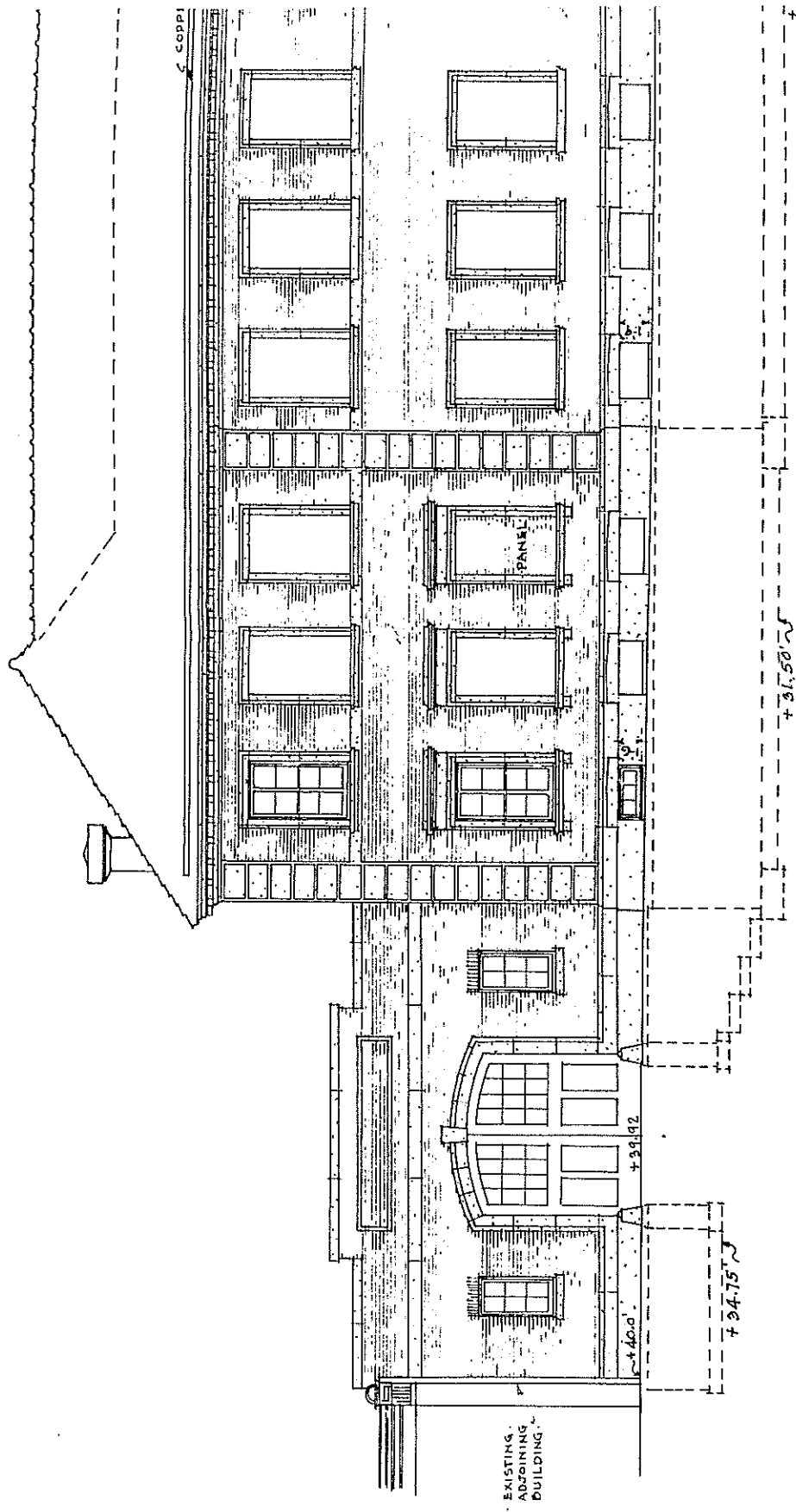


VERIFY THIS FIGURE AT BUILDING.



NOTE: ALL WINDOWS NOT FILLED IN WILL BE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF SAME TYPE COMPLETELY SHOWN.





WOOD ST.

LIMESTONE CAP.

A P P E N D I X    2  :

Interview of Dr. Joseph Spelman  
in 1958 in "The Philadelphia Inquirer."

and,

"New York Times" obituary



Interview of the Week—Medical Examiner Is Doctor

APR 6 - 1958 INQ.  
By JAMES P. McFADDEN  
LABORATORY techniques in the office of Philadelphia Medical Examiner have detected clues to unsuspected murder but either test tubes nor textbooks an supplant old-fashioned police methods in solving crimes, according to Dr. Joseph W. Spelman, Chief Medical Examiner. Speaking from experience distilled from investigation of 5700

AN INQUIRER  
SPECIAL REPORT

deaths last year, with causes ranging from disease to homicide, Dr. Spelman says, in an interview with The Inquirer, that the solution of crime must be a cooperative effort by detectives and policemen using "leg work" and the Medical Examiner's office.  
"The better the cooperation, the easier the case is solved," he said.  
Dr. Spelman also reported

that relocation of the City Morgue from its present overcrowded headquarters at 13th and Wood sts., to the Blockley Division, Philadelphia General Hospital, will be carried out in 1960. Plans will be drawn up next year, he said.  
The Medical Examiner said his office has slashed the number of inquests from 1200 a year to only one a month, thereby saving the city thousands of dollars.  
As for complaints of graft or thievery which haunted the department in the past, a system of controls and balances put into effect by the Finance and Law Departments, he said, prevents any irregularities.  
The transcript of Dr. Spelman's interview follows:  
Q. Dr. Spelman, what is the specific role of the Medical Examiner's office?  
A. The Medical Examiner's office investigates all deaths that occur in the city of Philadelphia which are sudden, suspicious or unexpected. It is our responsibility to establish both the cause



We have reduced the number of inquests."  
"I've had no complaints directed at this office."  
"... Investigation homicide must be coo  
der the jurisdiction of your office in a year?  
A. Last year we handled approximately 5700 cases, some of the wrong sort. An effort is made to investigate these cases  
what more than 5200 i  
Q. In what categories  
these cases fall last  
ly Council spent \$200,000  
have spent \$200,000

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# Detective

A. The vast majority of deaths result from natural disease; people found dead from pneumonia or heart disease. About 1000 cases resulted from accidental means of one sort or another, whereas the remaining were about 150 suicides and another 150 homicides.

Q. How many physicians and other personnel comprise your staff?

A. We have one additional full-time pathologist and five part-time pathologists who work by

Profile on Page 8

the hour. There is a staff for the detection of poisons, which includes two doctors and three technicians. We have a full time medical photographer and other related laboratory personnel who prepare tissues for study under the microscope. Our staff numbers 62 people in all.

Q. When you took office in

Continued on Page 8, Column 1

Continued From First Page

1956, Doctor, you noted that some 1200 inquests were held the previous year and you said you planned to eliminate unnecessary inquiries to save the city money. How is this plan working out?

A. I think it is working out very well indeed. We have reduced the number of inquests to about one a month or 12 a year. In that way we have been able to cut down our payroll for the court personnel required to run the inquests. On the other hand, I feel the interests of justice are just as well served.

Q. Did most of the inquests in the past year involve homicides?

A. They were in two categories primarily. One in which a police officer in the line of duty killed a person. It was our responsibility to insure that the killing was in the line of duty and not in the nature of an illegal act. The other category includes those questionable cases where both the homicide unit and ourselves feel it is desirable to get testimony under oath when the facts of the matter are not entirely clear.

Q. Many of the city's 5000 policemen—the "old line" veterans—contend you can't solve crime, particularly murder, with book learning. What is your opinion, sir?

A. The investigation of any homicide must be a cooperative effort between the detectives, policemen and Medical Examiner's office. The better the coopera-

Week

## al Exam

iniques in the scientific war against crime?

A. Yes, there are many areas both in the field of the knowledge of medical facts in relation to the duration of an injury and in the isolation of poisonous compounds. Every day new drugs come into the market and there are no suitable methods for testing them. They must be developed. There are societies of people doing similar work throughout the country and we are all attempting to do as much research as possible.

Q. Doctor, what case has been the most baffling since you came to Philadelphia?

A. Certainly one of the most difficult and the one which received a great deal of publicity was the case of the young boy whose body was found in Fox Chase. It was discovered in an empty cardboard carton covered only with a piece of torn blanket. That case has never been solved.

Q. What about your findings, Doctor?

A. The medical findings were not particularly difficult, but the question of the interpretation of the X rays, the height and weight of the boy, to arrive at some conclusion as to his exact age, were extremely difficult. In a case such as this we feel free to call in expert consultants from the universities and hospitals. The police investigation is much more difficult and as you know, the boy is still unidentified.

Q. Are there any other puzzling cases?

A. There are other cases that

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learning. What is your opinion, sir?

A. The investigation of any homicide must be a cooperative effort between the detectives, policemen and Medical Examiner's office. The better the cooperation the easier the case is solved. I will agree that you can't solve a crime strictly out of a textbook. A good investigation requires a great deal of police leg work that is continuing. But I do feel our office helps the homicide men to a considerable extent.

Q. Dr. Spelman, you gave a course for police and detectives last year. Just what subjects did you cover?

A. Last year we gave a course that was attended by some 78 detectives and fire marshal's investigators. It included an outline of the functions of the office of the Medical Examiner and specific forms or examples of sudden death, such as homicide, suicide or accident. We discussed methods of identification of an unknown or partial body and the role of arson in sudden deaths. We also mentioned certain aspects of sex crime in relation to violent death.

Q. Is the educational program being continued?

A. This year we are discussing similar matters in a more abbreviated form with all of the detectives of the city. Our office also conducts four or five lectures a year at the Police Academy for each new class of recruits. We hope to continue and expand this program.

Q. Will the "solving of crime in a test tube" ever become an accomplished fact, Doctor?

A. The laboratory cannot solve it in all its aspects. It may give very valuable clues, for example, prove that poison may be suspected or may not be suspected. We have found several unsuspected cases of poison death. We also can help the detectives by determining the blood type. But still leg work—the old-fashioned police methods—must continue.

Q. Can you give us an example of a particular case where your office helped police to bring about a speedy solution of a crime?

A. One series of cases that comes to mind was that in which four people were found dead in a burning building. The fire marshal's office was in the investigation as well as the police. As the result of our examinations we showed that two of the four people in that fire had been beaten to death and furthermore we could show by laboratory methods, conclusively, that one of these two had been dead before the fire started. This meant it was definitely an arson-homicide.

Police investigation is much more difficult and as you know, the boy is still unidentified.

Q. Are there any other puzzling cases?

A. There are other cases that are unsolved, one of which is an extremely interesting case where the body of a woman was found burned in her cellar. We know that the heat of the fire which consumed her body was in excess of 1700 to 2000 degrees. And yet paper and rags and cardboard all about her body were not as much as charred. A highly unusual case, especially in view of the fact there was an oily substance about her body and on the floor.

Q. Doctor, do most of your investigations concern crime?

A. No. One feature of our work that is extremely important is our decisions as they affect life insurance policies, particularly when there are accident or double indemnity provisions. Our decisions affect at least \$500,000 a year, if not more.

Q. What is the origin of the law which requires removal of the body to the morgue and autopsies?

A. The law stems from the old coroner's law which dates back to the Middle Ages. The coroner has been a constitutional officer throughout the entire history of the U. S. The functions of the coroner have been transferred to the Medical Examiner.

Q. Doctor, has there been any final decision on plans for relocating the morgue at the Blockley Division, Philadelphia General Hospital?

A. Yes. In the capital budget hearings of 1956 and 1957, an appropriation was approved by City Council for this purpose. At it stands now, there will be planning money available in 1959 and construction money in 1960 for the building.

Q. Sir, are there any outside agencies that you work hand-in-hand with?

A. As far as the investigation of any crime is concerned, the FBI extends its services to us. The National Institute of Health in Washington and the communicable diseases center at Atlanta, Ga., will offer specialized bacteriological or virological studies, as does, to a lesser degree, the State health laboratory.

Q. Are there any city agencies you can call upon for assistance?

A. We do to some extent use the Public Health Laboratory, Front and Luzerne sts. In certain other instances, we call upon the universities for highly technical assistance for which we don't have qualified personnel.

Q. Do you provide any aid f

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Q. What is the procedure for reporting a death of a suspicious nature?

A. The first person who discovers such a death, usually a doctor or it may be a policeman, telephones the Medical Examiner's office with the facts as he knows them. The emergency patrol of the police or one of our own vehicles goes to the scene of the death, which may be a hospital, private residence, highway, or a dump, and moves the body to the morgue where the examination is completed.

Q. When you took office the condition of the morgue was to use your own words—"appalling" and its equipment "antiquated." Have any steps been taken to correct this situation?

A. Yes, we have increased our staff considerably, especially the professional staff. In addition, we have spent \$200,000 which City Council granted us to make improvements. Most of new equipment is laboratory equipment, including X-ray apparatus, photographic and other technical devices.

Are there any particular for development of tech-

or the coroner have been referred to the Medical Examiner.

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A. Yes. In the capital budget hearings of 1956 and 1957, an appropriation was approved by City Council for this purpose. As it stands now, there will be planning money available in 1959 and construction money in 1960 for the building.

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Q. Are there any city agencies you can call upon for assistance?

A. We do to some extent use the Public Health Laboratory at Front and Luzerne sts. In certain other instances, we call upon the universities for highly technical assistance for which we don't have qualified personnel.

Q. Do you provide any aid for coroners in the suburban Philadelphia counties?

A. We do a certain number of analyses for coroners of other counties of the Commonwealth. But so far they are very few in number. This is a service that could conceivably get out of hand and we are circumspect with the number of cases we accept. We also have on occasions given advice without charge to the coroners in nearby counties as to the interpretation of their autopsies.

Q. Doctor, do you teach in any of Philadelphia's medical schools?

A. I have been asked to teach at several of the local medical colleges and have given lectures at these institutions. The pupils are, as a rule, senior medical students.

Q. Do you concentrate on topics relating to the Medical Examiner's office which will help them to have a better understanding of the coroner responsibilities when they begin practicing?

A. That's what I try to do.

Q. Sir, the previous coroner's offices in Philadelphia had series of outbreaks of charges of graft and stealing involving employees

MOVING  
MORGUE

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# Miner Is Doctor, Detective

## Profile

### Expert In Field

**DR. JOSEPH W. SPELMAN**, who will celebrate his 40th birthday this month, was State pathologist in the Vermont Department of Health when he was tapped to become Philadelphia's first Chief Medical Examiner in January, 1956.

Under provisions of the City Charter, his office, a division of the Department of Public Health, performs all the duties previously delegated to the coroner. The latter post has been abolished.

He received his doctor of medicine degree from the Yale School of Medicine in 1944 and served his internship in pathology at the University and New Haven Hospital. Dr. Spelman was commissioned in the Army in 1945 and for two years was chief of laboratory at the Army General Hospital, Camp Carson, Colo. Later he was a Rockefeller fellow in the department of legal medicine at Harvard.

Dr. Spelman lives at 7120 McCallum st., Chestnut Hill, with his two sons, John, 13, and William, 11.

at the morgue. Have you received any complaints since you took over?

A. No. I've had no complaints directed at this office. I would like to say there were no charges for many months even before I came here. After the latest scandals, a system of controls and balances was set up by the Controller's office with the finance and law departments to insure

against any irregularities. I feel the system has worked very well.

Q. In a case where a murder has been committed by shooting, what information do you look for?

A. Well, of primary importance of course is try to recover the bullet, which then is turned over to the police laboratory for ballistics tests. Certainly the angle of fire and some estimation if possible of the range of fire is extremely important. The distribution of any pattern of powder burns may help establish the range. The direction is extraordinarily important. It may make a great deal of difference in subsequent court proceedings.

One other thing that is very important is how long did the man live after being shot and how long was he dead. It is entirely possible for someone with a gunshot wound to live in a coma, let us say, on the floor, for two or three days before he is discovered. So the time of death may not be the time of injury. The time of injury is the length of the time the man lived plus the length of time he has been dead. They must be added together. That can provide the police with a great deal of very useful information.

Q. How about a poison death? What do you look for?

A. Most poison deaths actually are poisoning by drugs or household chemicals. In the case of drugs we make some attempt to find out if the drugs were obtained legally—through our staff of investigators—and if not we notify the Federal Food and Drug Administration. We feel that many of the poisonings, especially those that occur in youngsters occur as the result of carelessness or negligence on the part of the parent who, in preparing a formula, gets hold

of the wrong bottle. An effort is made to investigate these cases to prevent a repetition. We feel homicidal poisoning is extremely rare today although it does occur.

Q. Doctor, do you spend much time testifying in court?

A. I myself have not been called too often to court. For one reason the bulk of my job right now is administrative and I do less autopsies than some of the other doctors. However, I would say we are not called even in homicide cases in more than 33 percent of cases, if even that many. The other type of case we are occasionally called on is the civil suit which may be a workmen's compensation hearing or it may be to establish negligence on the part of some other person so that the family of the decedent can be rewarded financially for a wrongful death.

Q. Isn't it customary for the coroner to give evidence concerning the corpus delicti and so forth?

A. It is in many jurisdictions, but in Philadelphia the courts have come to accept our autopsy reports and by stipulation the defense and prosecution allow the record to be introduced with-

out the necessity of our being there unless there is a very difficult medical problem involved or the medical facts are disputed.

Q. Doctor, do personnel of the Medical Examiner's office ever save a life?

A. Certainly, yes. Scores of lives are saved through operation of the Poison Information Center at the morgue. Information on some 2000 types of poison is available by telephoning through the special number WA 2-5524. It is listed on the first page of every telephone directory. A lock is kept on the phone so it is never used except for an emergency.

pected. We have found several



# JOSEPH SPELMAN, PATHOLOGIST, DIES

Held Medical Examiner Post  
in Philadelphia 15 Years

Special to The New York Times

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 10 —  
Dr. Joseph W. Spelman, this  
city's medical examiner for 15  
years, died last night in Jef-  
ferson Hospital. He was 52  
years old.

As medical examiner, Dr.  
Spelman took part in a number  
of widely noted investigations.  
One was the murder of a small  
boy whose body was found in  
a box in an isolated section of  
the city in 1957, the year after  
Dr. Spelman came to Philadel-  
phia. That crime has never  
been solved.

Dr. Spelman testified in the  
1969 inquest on Mary Jo  
Kopechne, who was drowned  
when Senator Edward M. Ken-  
nedy's car went off a bridge on  
Chappaquiddick Island, Mass.

He was born in Waltham,  
Mass., and received his medi-  
cal degree from Yale University  
School of Medicine in 1944. He  
served his internship in  
pathology at Yale University  
and New Haven Hospital in  
1944 and 1945.

From 1945 to 1947 Dr. Spe-  
lman was chief of laboratory in  
the Army General Hospital at  
Camp Carson, Colo., and held  
the rank of captain. He was  
named a Rockefeller fellow in  
the department of legal  
medicine at Harvard University  
School of Medicine.

Dr. Spelman was appointed  
pathologist for the Vermont De-  
partment of Health in 1948,  
with responsibility for 43  
regional examiners' offices. He  
served as associate professor of  
pathology at the University of  
Vermont Medical School, he  
passed a civil service examina-  
tion for medical examiner in  
Philadelphia in 1955, and as-  
sumed the post in 1956. The  
job was created to replace the  
old one of coroner.

Dr. Spelman warned of in-  
creasing narcotics addiction  
caused by over-prescription by  
doctors. He called attention to  
the large number of child  
deaths from parental beatings.  
He promoted the establish-  
ment of a suicide control cen-  
ter, and installed closed circuit  
television in the morgue for the  
identification of bodies.

He was visiting professor of  
pathology at Temple Univer-  
sity and the University of Penn-  
sylvania Medical Schools, and  
visiting professor of legal medi-  
cine at Jefferson Medical Col-  
lege. He was president of the  
National Association of Medical  
Examiners.

Dr. Spelman leaves his wife,  
the former Concetta Riccuti;  
two sons, William and John;  
a daughter, Eleanor, a sister  
and a grandchild.

BOY IN  
THE BOX

NYT  
Feb. 10, 1971

← 1956 APPOINTMENT

The New York Times

Published: February 11, 1971

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A P P E N D I X     3 :

Tatman & Moss' List of Projects by Philip Johnson.

- Wanamaker, John, warehse., Carpenter to Washington, at Broad St., Phila.
- 1896 Hemsley, Frederic, cottages (6), Chelsea, NJ  
Struthers, Wm., cottage, Jekyll Island, GA  
Wilcox, James M., res. & stable, Rosemont, PA
- 1897 Dessez, Leon, res., Chevy Chase, MD  
Drinking fountains, Fairmount Park, Phila.  
St. Joseph's Hosp., alts. & adds., 17th St. & Girard Ave., Phila.
- 1898 Atlantic City Country Club, Atlantic City, NJ  
Hicks, Wm., res., Jekyll Island, GA  
Lisle, R.M., alts. & adds. to res., Paoli, PA  
Offices, alts. & adds. to fronts, 512-14 Walnut St., Phila.
- 1899 Deveney, Chas. F., stable & alts. & adds. to res., Haverford, PA  
Lesley, Robt., alts. & adds., 312 S. 15th St., Phila.  
Stephenson, Walter B., res., Lower Merion Twp., PA
- 1901 Brighton Hotel, new wing, Atlantic City, NJ  
Ellison, H.H., res., Rosemont, PA  
Green, John M., stable, Rosemont, PA  
Sargent, Winthrop, res., Haverford, PA  
Struthers, Wm., int. alts. & adds. to res., Bryn Mawr, PA  
Townsend, J.B., Jr., res., Overbrook, Phila.  
Townsend, J.W., res., Bryn Mawr, PA
- 1902 Barringer, D.M., res., Radnor, PA  
Ellison, H.H., stable, Rosemont, PA  
Lillie, Louis, stable, Haverford, PA  
White Haven State Hosp., White Haven, PA (actually 1901-1903)
- 1904 Dalley, Florence R., res., Haverford, PA
- 1905 Keating, J.P., res., 322 S. 16th St., Phila.  
Register res., stable & gardener's cottage, Haverford, PA
- 1906 Alts. & adds., 1823 Delancey St., Phila.  
Free Library of Phila., Tacony branch, Phila.  
Green, John P., alts. & adds. to res., Rosemont, PA
- 1910 Welsh, Sam'l., alts. & adds. to res., Bryn Mawr, PA (Cited as Johnson & Page in the PRERBG, this may refer to an association between Geo. B. Page, q.v., and Johnson)
- 1912 James, Robt. C., res., Haverford, PA
- 1914 Harrison, Phillip, apt. hse. & post office, Bryn Mawr, PA
- 1915 SS Peter & Paul Cemetery, lodge & entrance, Marple Twp., PA
- 1920 Gane & Snyder, store & apt. bldg., Bryn Mawr, PA

LOCATION OF DRAWINGS AND PAPERS: AIA Archives; PHMC; UPA Archives.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals; Koch, Bk. of Carnegie Libraries (1917); Phila. & Popular Philadelphians; T-Square: 1894/95, 1899/1900, 1902/03, 1903; UPA Gen. Alumni Cat. (1917), p.75; Withey, p.325. st

JOHNSON, ORLANDO D. (fl. 1900 - 1924). Construction engineer Orlando D. Johnson is listed as an architect in the Philadelphia city directories only for the years 1904 to 1907. Throughout his listings in the city directories, however, his office address is the same as that given for Philip H. Johnson (q.v.). st

JOHNSON, PHILIP H. (1868 - 11/29/1933). Philip H. Johnson for many years served as the architect for the Philadelphia City Department of Public Health and in that position designed a number of hospitals and city health institutions. His controversial appointment to this position was effected by the influence of his brother-in-law, Israel W. Durham, one-time political boss of the 7th ward in Philadelphia, according to obituaries published at the time of Johnson's death. With his brother-in-law's aid, Johnson received a contract with the City Health Department which was valid for his lifetime! Although several

later mayors attempted to break this contract, city courts upheld its validity, enabling Johnson to receive some \$2,000,000 in fees from the municipal treasury during his 30 years of design. Prior to his contract with the City, Johnson had been employed by the City's Bureau of Engineering and Surveys and was not well-known as an architect at the time of his appointment to the City's Department of Health in 1903. During his long career, Johnson designed such notable hospital complexes as the Philadelphia General Hospital buildings, Philadelphia Hospital for Contagious Diseases at 2nd and Luzerne streets, and several buildings at the Philadelphia Hospital for Mental Diseases at Byberry. In addition to hospitals, Johnson designed City Hall Annex and the Philadelphia Convention Hall.

A well-known yachtsman, Johnson was commodore of the Philadelphia Yacht Club, a member of the Larchmont Yacht Club, and a Mason.

#### LIST OF PROJECTS:

- 1900 Residences (25), nw 36th & Market sts., Phila. (carpentry work)  
Residences (14 additional), 36th & Market sts., Phila.
- 1901 Ford, A.E., factory, 1430-32 Callowhill St., Phila.  
PA Capitol competition, Harrisburg, PA  
PA Hosp., bldgs. (3), Phila.  
PA State Bldg., competition entry for Pan American Expo., Buffalo, NY  
PA State Bldg., competition, Charleston Exposition, SC  
Phila., City of, bath hse., 11th St. abo. Girard Ave., Phila.  
Phila., City of, firehse. for Engine Co. #13, 15th & Parrish sts., Phila.  
Phila., City of, bath hse., cw Ann & Belgrade sts., Phila.  
Phila., City of, police station, 20th & Fitzwater sts., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Charities & Correction, almshse., children's hosp., maternity hosp., hosp. for contagious skin diseases, 34th & Pine sts., Phila. (Blockley Hosp.)  
Purvis Machinery & Iron Co., factory, Water & South sts., Phila.  
Res., alts. & adds., 211 Atlantic Ave., Atlantic City, NJ
- 1902 Bath hse., 25th & Spring Garden sts., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Charities, pavilions (8) for consumptives, 34th & Vine sts., Phila.  
Phila. Yacht Club, Essington, PA  
Third Infantry, admin. bldg., 1221-31 S. Broad St., Phila.
- 1903 Hall, Chas., alts. & adds. to front, 2010 Pine St., Phila.  
PA Bldg. competition, St. Louis Expo., St. Louis, MO  
PA Homeopathic Hosp. for the Insane, Hanover, PA  
Phila. Hosp. for the Insane, admin. bldg., State Rd. betw. Ashbourne & Pennypack, Phila.  
Sterilacqua Water Co., fire damage repair, American St. ab. Brown St., Phila.
- 1904 Phila., City of, firehse., 2132 Fairmount Ave., Phila.  
Phila., City of, truck hse., Ridge Ave. betw. 29th & 30th sts., Phila.  
Phila. Hosp., engine hse. & boiler hse., Phila.  
Vare, Edward H., res., sw Broad & Wolf sts., Phila.
- 1905 PA Home for Feeble-minded & Epileptics, Spring City, PA  
PA Hosp. for the Insane, Norristown, PA  
Res., 338 S. 15th St., Phila.
- 1908 Phila., City of, hse. of detention, juvenile ct., 2139-41 Arch St., Phila.  
St. Luke's Hosp., alts. & adds., 4414 N. Broad St., Phila.
- 1909 Emery, J. Paul, res., Wynnefield, Phila.  
PA State Armory Bldg., Doylestown, PA
- 1910 Phila., City of, Starr Garden playgrnd., 7th & Lombard sts., Phila.
- 1911 PA Homeopathic Hosp., pump hse., Hanover, PA  
PA Homeopathic Hosp., reservoir & gatehse., Hanover, PA

- Phila., City of, cottages (4), Holmesburg, Phila.  
 Phila., City of, playgrnd., 9th & Jefferson sts., Phila.
- 1912 PA State Armory, alts. & adds., Phoenixville, PA  
 Phila. Bd. of Recreation, playgrnds., 7th & Lombard sts., 56th & Christian sts., 22nd St. & Sedgley Ave., Phila.  
 Phila., City of, dorm, Byberry, Phila.  
 Phila., City of, cow barn & adds. to dining rm., Byberry Farms, PA  
 Phila., City of, playgrnd., 5th & Catherine sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Municipal Hosp. for Contagious Diseases, ward bldgs. (2) & corridor, 2nd & Luzerne sts., Phila.  
 Second Regiment Armory, alts. & adds., Broad & Diamond sts., Phila.
- 1913 Nat'l Guard Patrol, alts. & adds. to armory, 4111-17 Mantua Ave., Phila.  
 Phila. Bd. of Recreation, playgrnd., Wayne Ave. & Logan St., Phila.
- 1914 PA State Hosp. for the Insane, dorms (2), Spring City, PA  
 Phila. Bd. of Recreation, playgrnd., 51st & Chester Ave., Phila.  
 Phila. Bd. of Recreation, gymnasium, 2nd & Catherine sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Dept. of Public Health, power plant, Holmesburg, Phila.  
 Phila. Dept. of Public Health, alts. & adds. to hosp., 34th & Pine sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Municipal Hosp. for Contagious Diseases, nurses' home, 2nd & Luzerne sts., Phila.
- 1915 Cavalry armory, 3205-51 Lancaster Ave., Phila.  
 → Phila. Co. Prison Bd., prison, Holmesburg, Phila.  
 Phila. Co. Prison Bd., alts. & adds. to prison, 10th & Reed sts., Phila.
- 1916 PA Institution for Feeble-minded & Insane, institutional bldgs., Spring City, PA  
 PA State Armory Bd., armory, West Chester, PA  
 Phila. Bd. of Ed., playgrnds., 17th & Catharine sts., & 26th & Morris sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Bd. of Recreation, recreation bldgs., Berks, Blair & Palmer sts., & 16th & Wyoming sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Dept. of Health, power hse., Byberry, Phila.  
 Phila. Dept. of Recreation, playgrnds. (5), C St. & Indiana Ave.; Shirley & Frances sts.; Cedar & Cambria sts., 22nd & Sedgley Ave.; 6th & Christian sts., Phila.
- 1917 → Phila., City of, fire station, 2315-2335 S. 24th St., Phila.  
 Phila. Dept. of Health, pathological lab. bldg., 34th & Pine sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Hosp. for Tubercular & Insane, general hosp., Byberry Farms, Phila.
- 1918 Free Library of Phila., branch library, 51st & Chestnut sts., Phila.  
 PA State Hosp. for Feeble-minded, piggery, Spring City, PA  
 Phila. Dept. of Recreation, park, 57th & Haverford Ave., Phila.
- 1919 PA State Armory, alts. & adds., 32nd St. & Lancaster Ave., Phila.  
 PA State Armory, alts. & adds. to armory, West Chester, PA  
 PA State Hosp. for the Feeble-minded, infirmary bldg., Spring City, PA  
 → Phila., City of, police station, 2301 S. 24th St., Phila.  
 Phila. General Hosp., towers (2) & elevators (2), 34th & Pine sts., Phila.
- 1920 Alts. & adds. of res. to apts., 2135 Spruce St., Phila.  
 Kendrick Hse., 6425 Woodbine Ave., Phila.  
 Kuehnle, Albert C., alts. & adds. to 17th & Vine sts., Phila.
- 1921 Phila. Dept. of Public Health, feed hse., barn & winter storage bldg., Byberry Farms, Phila.  
 Phila. Dept. of Public Health, alts. & adds. to intubation bldg., 2nd & Luzerne sts., Phila.  
 → Phila. Dept. of Public Health, infirmary bldg., Byberry Farms, Phila.  
 Phila. General Hosp., incinerating plant, 34th & Pine sts., Phila.  
 Phila. Municipal Hosp., alts. & adds. to bacteriological lab., 2nd & Luzerne sts., Phila.



- 1922 Farrell, Miss, res., 89th & Janifer sts., NW, Washington, D.C.  
PA State Armory, alts. & adds., 4111 Mantua Ave., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Public Health, admin. bldg., Byberry Farms, Phila.  
Temple Univ., Conwell Hall, 1801-09 N. Broad St., Phila.
- 1923 O'Brien, Joseph, 405 S. 10th St., Phila.
- 1924 Phila., City of, City Hall Annex, Juniper & Filbert sts., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Recreation, Geo. A. Vare Recreation Ctr., 2600 Morris St., Phila.
- 1925 Hoskin, Wm. H., Co., office & store, 1517 Chestnut St., Phila.  
Kendrick, W. Freeland, alts. & adds. to res., 6425 Woodbine Ave., Phila.  
\* Phila., City of, bath hse. & swimming pool, 2601-13 South St., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Public Welfare, Hse. of Correction, Holmesburg, PA
- 1926 Phila. Dept. of Public Health, sewage system, 34th & Pine sts., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Public Health, antitoxin bldg., 2nd & Luzerne sts., Phila.
- 1927 PA State Armory Bd., misc. armory work, Norristown, Lancaster & Williamsport, PA  
Phila., City of, alts. & adds. to City Hall Annex, Juniper & Filbert sts., Phila.
- 1928 Phila., City of, morgue, 13th & Wood sts., Phila.  
Second Regiment Armory, alts. & adds., Broad & Susquehanna Ave., Phila.
- WCAU broadcasting station, Phila.
- 1929 Free Library of Phila., branch library, B & Wyoming Ave., Phila.  
PA State Armory, alts. & adds., Media, PA  
Phila. Bureau of Hosp., psychopathic hosp., Phila.  
\* Phila. Convention Hall, 34th St. & Civic Center Blvd., Phila.  
Phila. Co. Prison, wards A & J, Holmesburg, Phila.  
Phila. Co. Prison, tubercular hosp. & dining rm. bldg., Holmesburg, Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Welfare, home for the indigent, State Rd. & Rhawn St., Phila.
- 1930 PA State admin. bldg., s. side of Essington Ave., w. of Island Rd., Phila.  
Phila. Bureau of Hospitals, porch enclosure, admin. bldg., 2nd & Luzerne sts., Phila.  
Phila. Dept. of Public Health, women's nervous bldg., 34th & Pine sts., Phila.  
Res., alts. & adds., 613 E. Phil Ellena St., Phila.

LOCATION OF DRAWINGS AND PAPERS: Philadelphia City Archives.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Philadelphia Municipal Auditorium.

Philadelphia: 1931; T-Square: 1927, 1928, 1929; Webster, p.184.  
st

~~JOHNSON, SAMUEL (fl. 1790s). Samuel Johnson, a master builder who served his apprenticeship under John Harrison (q.v.), was elected to The Carpenters' Company in 1793 and excluded in 1805.~~

~~SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Hall; MCCCCP; Moss, Master Builders; Roach.  
rm~~

~~JOHNSON, VIRGIL LAMONT (1868 - 10/5/1942). Virgil L. Johnson spent most of his professional career as an architect and structural engineer for the Philadelphia Board of Public Education. He was born in Mannsville, NY, the son of Levi and Harriet C. (Baker) Johnson and attended Adams Collegiate Institute in Adams, NY. He then spent nearly three years as a draftsman in New York City before coming to Philadelphia and entering the University of Pennsylvania, where he received his Certificate of~~

#### A P P E N D I X    4 :

##### "RETURN of a DEATH" forms

The copies from City Archives are the City's early "Death Certificates" processed by doctors and filed with the Board of Health, the oversight agency of the City Morgue.

Enumerated forms in 1890 seemed an attempt against counterfeit forms used in insurance claims.

RETURN OF A DEATH,  
IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
PHYSICIAN'S CERTIFICATE.

1. Name of Deceased, *Sam Adams*  
2. Colour, *White*  
3. Sex, *Male*  
4. Age, *8 mo.*  
5. Married or Single,  
6. Date of Death, *July 2nd 1860*  
7. Cause of Death, *Gravel of Brain*  
*his mother*  
M. D.  
Residence, *B. Green & Thompson St.*  
UNDERTAKERS CERTIFICATE, IN RELATION TO DECEASED.

8. Occupation, *Self*  
9. Place of Birth, *Wick*  
10. When a Minor, { Name of Father, *Nicholas Wicks*  
Name of Mother, *Mary*  
11. Ward, *19th*  
12. Street and Number, *Adams & 40th*  
13. Date of Burial, *July 5th*  
14. Place of Burial, *Washington Cemetery*  
Residence, *11th 12 45 St. W. 4th St.*  
UNDERTAKER.

Date of Certificate.

This Constitutes one Certificate. To be returned, by the Superintendent of Cemetery, to Health Office, on Saturday of each week, before 12 M.

RETURN OF A DEATH  
IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
PHYSICIAN'S CERTIFICATE.

1. Name of Deceased, *Daniel Alexander*  
2. Color, *W.*  
3. Sex, *M.*  
4. Age, *45*  
5. Married or Single, *Married*  
6. Date of Death, *June 24/80*  
7. Cause of Death, *Typhoid Intermittent*  
M. D.  
Residence, *Springfield*  
REGISTRATION DEPT  
JUL 1 1880  
HEALTH OFFICE.

UNDERTAKERS CERTIFICATE IN RELATION TO DECEASED.

8. Occupation, *Store moulder*  
9. Place of Birth, *Pole*  
10. When a Minor, { Name of Father, *—*  
Name of Mother, *—*  
11. Ward, *18th*  
12. Street and Number, *1517*  
13. Date of Burial, *July 1st 1880*  
14. Place of Burial, *St. Peter's N. B. Cemetery*

Residence, *David M. Alexander Undertaker.*

# RETURN OF A DEATH

## IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

5299

1. Name of Deceased,

2. Color,

3. Sex,

4. Age,

5. Married or Single,

6. Date of Death,

7. Cause of Death,

Physician's Certificate  
Office of Dr. Erdman

White

Male

10 Months

Sept. 1, 1898

Cholera infantum

Residence,

427 W. 2nd St. M. D.

Underwriter's Certificate in Relation to Decedent.

8. Occupation,

9. Place of birth,

10. When a Minor, { Name of Father,

{ Name of Mother,

11. Ward, 15-

12. Place of Death, Street and Number, 2242 Market Place

13. Buried from, Street and Number,

14. Date of Burial,

15. Place of Burial,

Residence,

1918 V. Philadelphia

Underwriter's must state the place of death; the place from which the deceased is to be buried may be added, if desired.

# RETURN OF A DEATH

## IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

17692

Physician's Certificate.

1. Full Name of Deceased,

2. Color,

3. Sex,

4. Single, Married,

5. Age, { Years, Months, Days,

6. Date of Death, { Year, Month, Day,

(If age is less than one day, give hours)

7. Cause of Death, { Chief, Contributing,

8. Occupation, (Give occupation for all persons 15 years of age and over)

9. Place of Birth,

10. Birthplace of Father,

11. Birthplace of Mother,

12. When a Minor, { Name of Father,

{ Name of Mother,

13. Last place of Residence, (This need only be given when the deceased resided out of the city)

14. Place of Death, Street and No.,

15. Ward, wherein death occurred,

16. Buried from, Street and No.,

17. Date of Burial,

18. Place of Burial,

19. This Certificate must be exchanged at the Health Office for a Permit before burial takes place or body is removed from the City.

20. Write plainly, and with ink; fill in every blank space.

Franklin

White

Male

Single

10

1903

Feb. 27

Cholera

Contributing

Occupation of Clerk

Philadelphia

Philadelphia

When a Minor

When a Minor

1331

25

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Feb. 27

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Residence,

1331

Underwriter's Certificate.

9. Place of Birth,

10. Birthplace of Father,

11. Birthplace of Mother,

12. When a Minor, { Name of Father,

{ Name of Mother,

13. Last place of Residence, (This need only be given when the deceased resided out of the city)

14. Place of Death, Street and No.,

15. Ward, wherein death occurred,

16. Buried from, Street and No.,

17. Date of Burial,

18. Place of Burial,

19. This Certificate must be exchanged at the Health Office for a Permit before burial takes place or body is removed from the City.

20. Write plainly, and with ink; fill in every blank space.

Residence,

1331

M. D.

1027 Pine Street.

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1027 Pine Street.

Underwriter.

1331

Underwriter's Certificate.

9. Place of Birth,

10. Birthplace of Father,

11. Birthplace of Mother,

12. When a Minor, { Name of Father,

{ Name of Mother,

13. Last place of Residence, (This need only be given when the deceased resided out of the city)

14. Place of Death, Street and No.,

15. Ward, wherein death occurred,

16. Buried from, Street and No.,

17. Date of Burial,

18. Place of Burial,

19. This Certificate must be exchanged at the Health Office for a Permit before burial takes place or body is removed from the City.

20. Write plainly, and with ink; fill in every blank space.

Residence,

1331

M. D.

1027 Pine Street.

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Underwriter.

1331