

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: 5607-13 Germantown Ave

Postal code: 19144

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: F.W. Woolworth 5¢ & 10¢ Store

Current/Common Name: N/A

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: N/A

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 1908 to 1994

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1938

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Henry E. Curtis

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Henry E. Curtis

Original owner: Geo H. Lutz

Other significant persons: F.W. Woolworth

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 Philadelphia City Planning Commission Date November 27, 2019

Name with Title Xue Fei Lin c/o Matt Wysong Email matt.wysong@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor Telephone 215-683-4650

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 27 November 2019

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 12 December 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 12 December 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: 215 TD Group LLC

Address: 5400 Eadom Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19137

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 15 January 2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 14 February 2020

Date of Final Action: Designated 14 February 2020/Criteria for Designation A, D, H, and J

Designated Rejected

12/7/18

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue is legally composed of three tax parcels, labeled A, B, and C as the following:

- (A) Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the Northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue and the Northwesterly side of Woodlawn Street; extending along the Northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue North $39^{\circ} 17\text{min } 40\text{s}$ West $36' 7\frac{1}{2}"$ to a point; extending to the Northwest North $50^{\circ} 42\text{min } 20\text{s}$ East $34' 11\frac{1}{2}"$ to a point, then extending to the Northwest North $41^{\circ} 53\text{min } 20\text{s}$ East $68' 4\frac{1}{8}"$ to a point; then extending South $48^{\circ} 6\text{min } 40\text{s}$ East $30' 10"$ to the Northwesterly line of Woodlawn Street; then extending along the Northwesterly line of Woodlawn Street South $41^{\circ} 53\text{min } 20\text{s}$ West $108' 6"$ to the first mentioned point and place of beginning. (Being known as 5607-09 Germantown Avenue.)
- (B) Beginning at a point on the Northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue at the distance of $36' 7\frac{1}{2}"$ from the Northwesterly side of Woodlawn Street; then extending North $50^{\circ} 42\text{min } 20\text{s}$ East to the Southeast $34' 11\frac{1}{2}"$ to a point; then extending North $41^{\circ} 53\text{min } 20\text{s}$ East $68' 4\frac{1}{8}"$ to a point; then extending South $48^{\circ} 6\text{min } 40\text{s}$ East $30' 10"$ to the Northwesterly line of Woodlawn Street; then extending along the Northwesterly line of Woodlawn Street North $41^{\circ} 53\text{min } 20\text{s}$ East $47'$ to a point; then extending North $48^{\circ} 21\text{min } 40\text{s}$ West $82' 8\frac{1}{2}"$ to a point; then extending South $42^{\circ} 30\text{min } 32\text{s}$ West $142'$ and $1"$ to the Northeasterly line of Germantown Avenue and then extending along the Northeasterly line of Germantown Avenue South $39^{\circ} 17\text{min } 40\text{s}$ East $48' 7\frac{1}{2}"$ to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.
- (C) Beginning at a point on the Northwesterly side of Woodlawn Street at the distance of $155' 6"$ from the Northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue; then extending North $48^{\circ} 21\text{min } 40\text{s}$ West $82' 8\frac{1}{2}"$ to a point; then extending North $42^{\circ} 30\text{min}$ and 32s East $30'$ to a point; then extending South $48^{\circ} 21\text{min } 40\text{s}$ East $82' 4\frac{1}{2}"$ to the Northwesterly side of Woodlawn Street; then extending South $41^{\circ} 53\text{min } 20\text{s}$ West $30'$ to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.



Figure 1 Map with 5607-13 Germantown Avenue highlighted in red; the three tax parcels that compose the larger premise are noted in the black outlines. 2019. Philadelphia City Atlas.



Figure 2 Aerial photo showing the building outlined in red. 2019. Philadelphia City Atlas.

6. DESCRIPTION

The former F.W. Woolworth 5¢ & 10¢ store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue is a two-story commercial building located in the Germantown neighborhood in Northwest Philadelphia. The building is at the northwestern corner of the intersection between Germantown Avenue and E. Woodlawn Street and contains three major facades. The building is detached from the adjacent building at 5615-19 Germantown Avenue with a small gap in between. It is rectangular in plan with a slanted frontage that is parallel to Germantown Avenue. The longer side of the plan runs along E. Woodlawn Street. A short alley is located in the rear of the building and terminates at 5615-19 Germantown Avenue. The building contains a mansard roof behind the raised parapet walls. There are two brick additions on top of the roof in the Northeastern corner of the building that provide circulation up to the roof. The chimney is located near the southern corner of the building.

The building's main façade facing Germantown Avenue is constructed in the Art-Deco style clad with terra-cotta panels and is typical of Woolworth's store design after the 1930s as part of the corporation's store modernization program under President C.W. Deyo. The first floor of the main facade contains a series of roll-up steel doors. The second floor of the main façade is divided into three major zones that establish symmetry. The elevated central zone is divided into five vertical strips. The partitions are accentuated by the peach panels that contrast from the main cream color used in the façade. The two bays of long rectangular windows are constructed in glass blocks. A narrow vertical strip of terra-cotta panel further separates each of the two bays into two parts. The central zone steps down to transition into the two side zones. Each of these symmetrical zones contains two bays of 2 x 4 horizontal rectangular louver windows. The window frames are painted in the same peach color that accentuates details in the façade. A series of triglyphs decorates the top of each of the two side zones.

The terra-cotta panels, along with the triglyph decorations, wrap around a small portion onto the building's southeast façade on E. Woodlawn Street. The second floor of this cladded portion contains two one-over-one double-hung sash windows in the same peach accent color. The first floor of this cladded portion contains a small side door and another small one-over-one double-hung sash window. The terra-cotta panels on the lower portion have been painted gray. The rest of the building is constructed in red brick laid in a combination of English, Running, and Soldier bonds. Other than two doors and another small one-over-one double-hung sash window towards the end of the southeast façade, there are no fenestrations on the lower level of this brick portion. The second floor of this portion contains nine windows, with the first being a horizontal rectangular two-by-two fixed window and the rest being small one-over-one double-hung sash windows. A row of bricks laid in Soldier and

Header bonds runs across the top of the window with another four rows of the same pattern running across on the bottom. The positions of the windows are marked vertically with two rows of alternating Running and Soldier bond bricks for each. The pattern of the brick bonds used provide evidence that one window near the center of the southeast façade, and another towards the end, were blocked and infilled.

The rear, northeast, façade of the building is constructed in red bricks laid in Flemish bond. The inlaid imprint shows evidence of an adjacent house that was demolished. The northwest façade, also constructed in red brick, is not visible from public view and the space in between the façade and the adjacent building is not wide enough for access.



Figure 3 View of the building's main façade facing Germantown Avenue. November 2019. Photo by Author.



Figure 4 View from the southern corner of the building from Germantown Avenue. November 2019. Photo by Author.

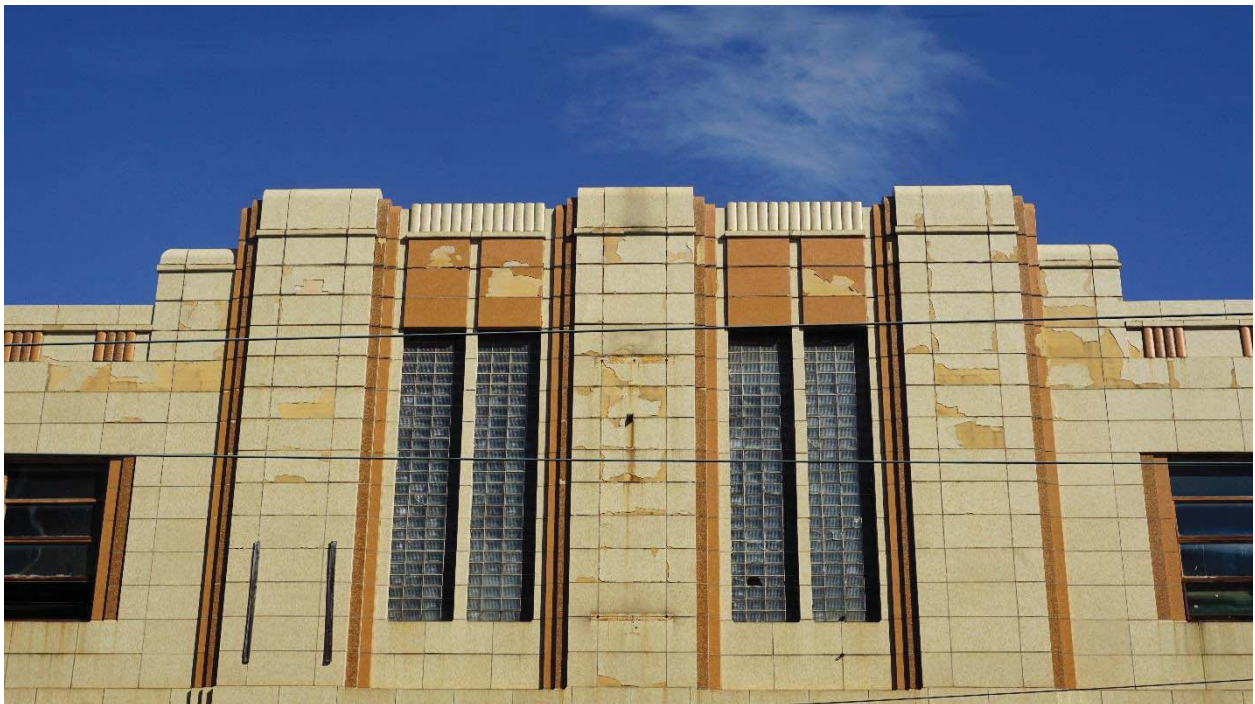


Figure 5 Detail of the main façade and the terra-cotta cladding panels. November 2019. Photo by Author.



Figure 6 View of the building's Southeast façade. November 2019. Photo by Author.



Figure 7 Detail of the terra-cotta cladding on the building's southeast façade. November 2019. Photo by Author.



Figure 8 View of the rear façade of the building and out to Germantown Avenue from E. Woodlawn Street November 2019. Photo by Author.

7.SIGNIFICANCE

The former F.W. Woolworth 5¢ & 10¢ store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue opened between 1908 and 1909 and remained in business at the same location for over eighty years until the early 1990's. This store was one of the earliest Woolworth stores in Philadelphia. The expansion of the store in 1938 is illustrative of one of the corporation's most important modernization initiatives following the Great Depression. The Art-Deco style façade of the building is exemplary of Woolworth's store design under this program. The store's commercial history at this location also reflects the history of economic growth and decline of the Central Germantown Business district, focused at the intersection of Cheltenham and Germantown Avenues. The former F.W. Woolworth 5¢ & 10¢ store, therefore, satisfies the following criteria for designation on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places as set forth by the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, section 14-2007(5), of the Philadelphia Code:

- 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;*

- D. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;*
- H. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City;*
- J. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.*

Criteria A, H, and J

F.W. Woolworth & Co.

The F.W. Woolworth 5¢ & 10¢ stores were founded by Frank Winfield Woolworth who came from a humble background but created one of the most successful retail chains in the 20th century. During his position as a senior clerk at Moore & Smith, Woolworth helped to launch the “5¢ counter”, a new retail experiment. After an initial failed attempt of his own “5¢ store” in Utica, New York, in February 1879, Woolworth opened the first store in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in June of the same year.¹ In 1905, Woolworth formed the F.W. Woolworth & Co. to better organize and administer his growing business. After absorbing a few other New York-based corporations, this company later became the F.W. Woolworth Co.² Woolworth stores were revolutionary to adopt one of the earliest self-selection and self-service models.³ By the time Woolworth passed away in 1919, the business had expanded to 1,081 stores around U.S. and Canada with annual sales of \$119 million.⁴ The size of the company grew to 1,825 stores by the end of the next decade and extended presence internationally to Cuba, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

The Woolworth Store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue

F.W. Woolworth Co. opened its first successful 5¢ & 10¢ store in Philadelphia at 43 N. 8th Street. in 1897.⁵ By 1907, another two stores opened in Philadelphia, including its first one in North Philadelphia at 2627 Germantown Avenue.⁶ F.W. Woolworth Co. opened its first store in Germantown at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue between 1908 and 1909.⁷ During this time, the address known as 5607-13

¹ *Woolworth's First 75 Years, 1879-1954*, (New York, William E. Rudge'ssons, 1954), 5.

² *Ibid.*, 5-6.

³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵ Gopsill's Philadelphia Business Directory 1897. Germantown Historical Society. F.W. Woolworth store appeared for the first time in the city directory in 1897. It is known that Woolworth opened his first “big-city” store in Philadelphia on N. 2nd Street earlier in March 1883, but this store closed within only three months due to low sales.

⁶ Gopsill's Philadelphia Business Directory 1907. Germantown Historical Society.

⁷ This location appeared for the first time in the 1909 Business directory but was not listed in 1908. It can be therefore inferred that this location opened sometime between 1908-1909.

Germantown Avenue comprised several buildings, with two fronting Germantown Avenue, each associated with the address 5607-09 and 5611-13 Germantown Avenue (Fig. 10). A photo of the Woolworth store from 1910 shows that it occupied the lower two-thirds of a brick building known as the Raymond Building (Fig. 11, 12). The Raymond Building, at the address 5611-13 Germantown Avenue, was a two-story brick building constructed in 1907 by Geo H. Lutz. Lutz was a former dentist who later founded and became the president of the Germantown Realty Co.⁸

While the Woolworth store was in operation on the ground level, the upper floor of the Raymond Building was used as offices for other businesses, including the Raymond Realty Company, Nelson Valve, American Loan Co, and Personal Finance Co.⁹ Many newspaper advertisements posted by the upper floor businesses mentioned Woolworth's as an iconic place locator.

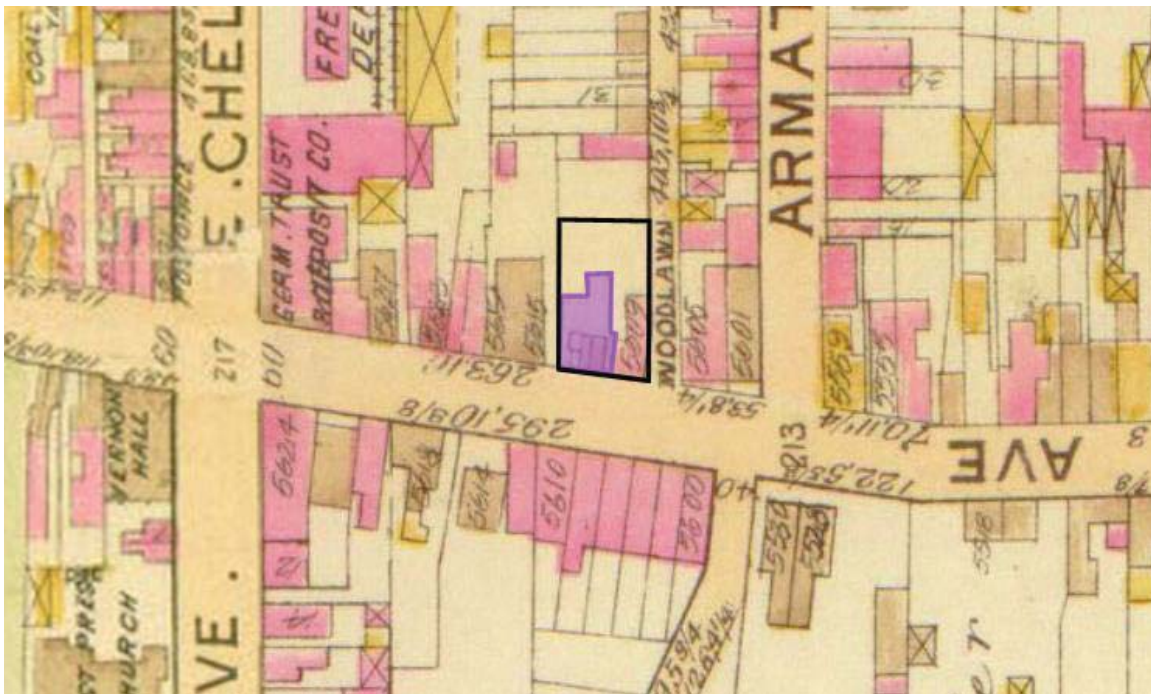


Figure 9 G.M. Bromley. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Complete in One Volume. 1901. Courtesy of PhilaGeoHistory. The approximate location of the Raymond Building during this time is highlighted in purple and the footprint of the later expansion of the Woolworth store is outlined in bold black.

⁸ Gopsill's Philadelphia Business Directory 1897, Boyd's City Directory of Philadelphia 1908. Germantown Historical Society.

⁹ Series of advertisements on the Philadelphia Inquirer between 1908-1933. Newspaper.com.



Figure 10 G.M. Bromley. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 22nd Ward. 1929. Courtesy of Germantown Historical Society. The location of the Raymond Building is highlighted in purple and the footprint of the later expansion of the Woolworth store is outlined in bold black.

The Raymond Building underwent several modifications during the early days of Woolworth’s business there. In 1918, Woolworth’s added a basement and a new stairway to the building as a stockroom.¹⁰ In 1920, a 16’ by 23’ expansion was added to the second floor by a photography studio.¹¹ In 1910, Geo H. Lutz acquired and demolished the building at 5607-09 Germantown Avenue and erected two new dwelling units with storefronts on the ground level.¹² During this time, F.W. Woolworth Co. continued to expand its business and by 1917 there were ten Woolworth stores in just Philadelphia.

¹⁰ Building Permit #4330. 5613 Germantown Avenue, October 28, 1918. City of Philadelphia Municipal Archives.

¹¹ Building Permit #2183. 5613 Germantown Avenue, April 5, 1920. City of Philadelphia Municipal Archives.

¹² Building Permit #5094. 5607-09 Germantown Avenue, July 26, 1910. City of Philadelphia Municipal Archives.



Figure 11 Historical photo showing F.W. Woolworth store occupying the lower two-third portion of the Raymond Building. 1910. Courtesy of Germantown Historical Society.



Figure 12 Historical photo of the F.W. Woolworth store on the ground floor of the Raymond Building; the adjacent building shows that 5607-09 Germantown Avenue was a different building at this time. 1910. Courtesy of the Robert M. Skaler collection at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Expansion and New Building

After its operation in the Raymond Building at 5611-13 Germantown Avenue for nearly thirty years, the Woolworth's expanded business at this location from the ground floor to take over the entire building and its neighbor at 5607-09 Germantown Avenue. In 1938, F.W. Woolworth Co. obtained two building permits to demolish the two original structures and to erect a new building that combined the addresses into 5607-13 Germantown Avenue that the building became associated with today.¹³

In November 1935, not long before the expansion of Woolworth's at this location, the Board of Directors of F.W. Woolworth & Co. adopted a new retail policy that ended the arbitrary top selling price which defined Woolworth's business model for the first few decades.¹⁴ The new policy expanded the range of merchandise that was offered and the business growth as a result demanded larger stores.¹⁵

In December 1935, C.W. Deyo became the new president of the company and immediately launched a store enlargement and modernization program that shifted the company emphasis on the number of stores to size.¹⁶ The owners listed on the permit of this Woolworth building, G. Raymond Lutz and Carl Helmetag, ran a real estate office in the Raymond Building until leasing the entire property to Woolworth's.¹⁷

In 1937, G. Raymond Lutz purchased the parcel behind 5607-13 Germantown Avenue (labeled C in the boundary description) and combined them into a single premise.¹⁸ A historical map from 1939 illustrates the footprint of the Woolworth store after this expansion (Fig. 13). The two attached residential units behind the store were later demolished. The rear façade of the building today contains the adjacent house's outline.

¹³ Building Permit #369. 5607-15 Germantown Avenue, January 26, 1938. City of Philadelphia Municipal Archives.

¹⁴ *Woolworth's First 75 Years*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁷ "1900-1940 U.S. Census." Ancestry Library. Accessed November, 2019.

¹⁸ Deed Book DWH 425, p.28 and following. Philadelphia City Archives.



Figure 13 Franklin Survey Company. "Intra City" Business Property Atlas of Philadelphia, Penna. 1939. The map shows the footprint of the new Woolworth store. Courtesy of Germantown Historical Society.



Figure 14 Parker & Mullikin. Photo of the Woolworth store in 1948. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Free Library Digital Collection.

The Context of Department Stores

The expansion of F.W. Woolworth Co. at 5611-13 Germantown Avenue exemplifies the broader economic context and the continued growth of department stores during the early to mid-20th century. Department stores emerged during the last two decades of the 19th century as mass distribution and retailers. By the 1920s, department stores thrived in booming cities of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, and became local cultural landmarks that stimulated both economic and social growth for the streets they were located on.¹⁹ The 1920s also saw interests in the expansion of department stores with the rise of finance capitalism.²⁰ During the same time, new building materials allowed department stores to achieve extravagant appearance at lesser costs.²¹

By the late 1800s, Philadelphia had established itself as the “workshop of the world.”²² It’s industrial prowess fueled a residential boom which saw the City’s population nearly double between 1890 and 1930. As the third largest city in the United States, Philadelphia developed a thriving downtown commercial district which was connected to its neighborhoods by a robust public transportation system.²³ John Wanamaker revolutionized retail in the city with his Grand Depot in 1876 and later the grand Wanamaker Store in 1911. By the early 1920s, Market Street East in Center City saw a concentration of major department stores in the U.S. including Wanamaker’s, Strawbridge & Clothier, Gimbel Brothers, Lit Brother, N. Snellenburg & Co., Frank & Seder, Blauner’s, and H.L. Green.²⁴

The Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue is illustrative of both a national and a local commercial trend. Moreover, the 5500s-5600s block in the Central Germantown Business district saw a concentrated growth of other prominent department stores during this time. Robert Cherry’s started as a shoe manufacturer and grew into a department store at 5541-47 Germantown Avenue in 1904. It remained in Germantown until 1961.²⁵ C.A. Rowell’s first established its store at 5615-17 Germantown Avenue in 1919. It relocated to the northwest corner of Germantown and Cheltenham Avenue at 5627 Germantown Avenue, where it remained until the 1980s.²⁶ A S.S. Kresge’s was also located at

¹⁹ Vicki Howard, *From MainStto Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

²² Lawrence M. Arrigale, and Thomas H Keels. *Philadelphia's Golden Age of Retail*. (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Pub., 2012), 7-8.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

5549 Germantown Avenue. In 1927, Allen's opened its flagship store at the intersection of Cheltenham Avenue and Greene Street. It remained in business until 1979.²⁷

As illustrated in the map, the appearance of these department stores followed a similar trend as that of Woolworth's, which combined small parcels into larger pieces of land along the block that accommodated their expanding businesses.



Figure 15 Franklin Survey Company. Atlas of Twenty Second Ward Philadelphia, Penna Volume II. 1955. Courtesy of Germantown Historical Society. The Woolworth store is outlined in black and the other department stores, from left to right: Rowell, Kresge's, and Cherry's, are outlined in red.

²⁷ Ibid., 61.

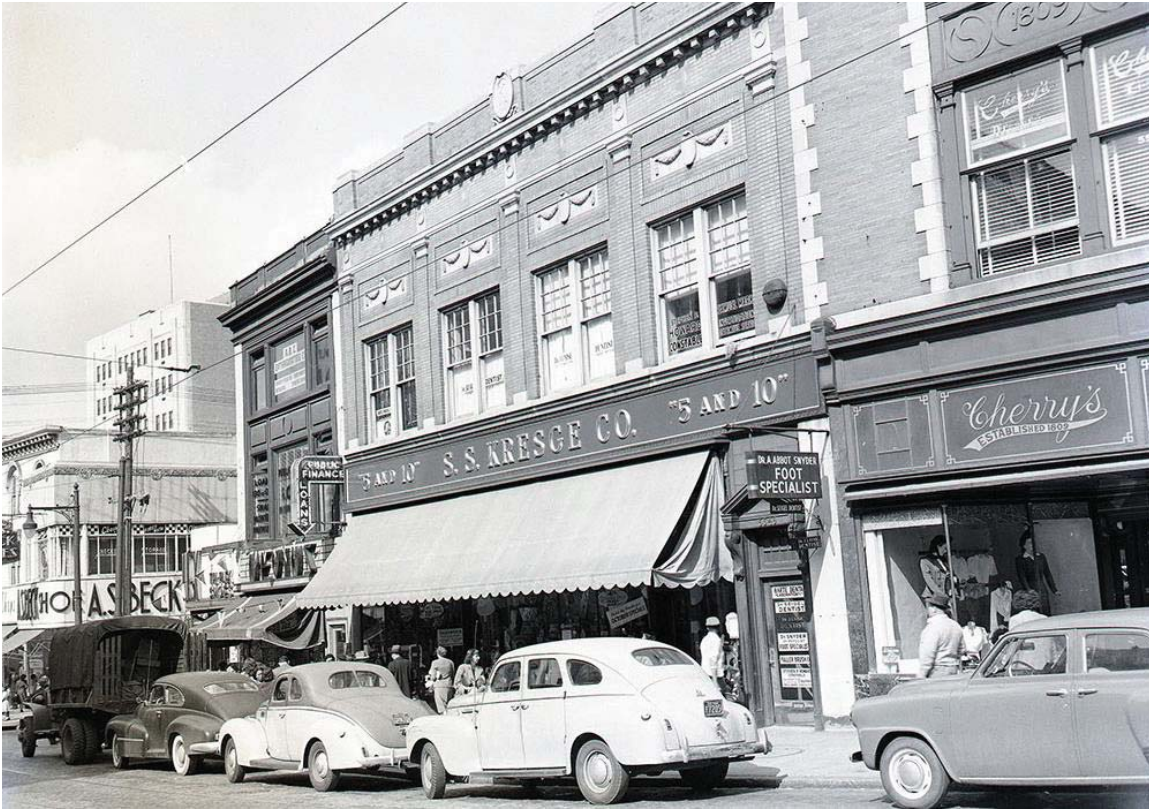


Figure 16 Parker & Mullikin. Photo of S.S. Kresge Co. at 5549 Germantown Avenue and Cherry's at 5541-47 Germantown Avenue in 1948. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Free Library Digital Collection.

Decline and Closing of the Woolworth Store

By the mid-1970s, chain department stores adopted new commercial identities. Kresge changed its name to Kmart and moved to the suburbs and J.C. Penney transformed into a shopping mall anchor.²⁸ The Woolworth stores, which decided to retain their existing model in the urban context, became the “last stand” of department stores.²⁹ Since the mid-1970s recession, Woolworth struggled with generating profits despite increases in retail sales. During this decade, F.W. Woolworth & Co. closed hundreds of small-scale stores in downtown Main streets, and opened fewer larger ones in the suburbs as replacements. By the 1980s, with the rise of discount chains such as Kmart and Wal-Mart, department stores lost their hold on consumers. Woolworth stores made their last stand in the 1990s. By 1997, the company announced that it would close all 400 of its remaining stores, marking 117 years of corporation history.³⁰ The Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue continued to operate

²⁸ Alison Isenberg, *A Historical of the Place and the People Who Made It*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.), 261-262.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 262.

³⁰ Jennifer Steinhauer, "Woolworth Gives Up on the Five-and-Dime," *The New York Times*, July 18, 1997.

until the early 1990s before it was replaced by Murray's Steaks, a neighborhood food store, in 1994.³¹ As one of Woolworth's earliest and also one of its last remaining stores in Philadelphia, its eight decades of commercial history is analogous with the growth and decline of Woolworth's history as a corporation.

Woolworth Store and the Germantown Community

The expansion and decline of the Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue also reflects the thriving development and ultimate disinvestment in the Central Germantown Business district. In 1832, the Germantown and Norristown Railroad, Philadelphia's first steam railway, was constructed and connected Germantown to Center City Philadelphia.³² Another railroad to Chestnut Hill opened in 1854, the same year that German Township became officially incorporated under Philadelphia.³³ The expansion of railroads, especially the Pennsylvania and Reading systems, allowed Germantown to thrive as a shopping node.³⁴ The east-west streetcar line drew larger population of shoppers to Germantown.³⁵ The expansion of trains and trolleys also attracted customers by hauling merchandise home. The intersection of Germantown and Cheltenham Avenues developed into a shopping hub attracting customers not just from Philadelphia but also from the nearby Montgomery County.³⁶

By the mid-1970s, Germantown saw significant urban decline. Most of the factories and mills in and around Germantown closed due to aging plants, foreign competition and cheaper wages in Sun Belt cities. The growth of large shopping malls outside the boundaries of Northwest Philadelphia accelerated the decline of Germantown's shopping district. Rising crime rates and deteriorating housing stock drove many middle-class families out to the suburbs.³⁷ By the end of the 1970s, major retailers and principal department stores closed in both Center City and Germantown as a result of increased suburbanization. The Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue ultimately fell victim to the neighborhood's disinvestment trend.

³¹ A public notice on the Philadelphia Inquirer from January 15, 1991 shows the Woolworth store received a \$500 for Health Department violations related to food sanitation. Another issue of the Philadelphia Inquirer from February 8, 1994 listed a job posting looking for store managers at Murray's Steaks that will soon open. These provide a time frame of when the Woolworth store moved out of this location. Newspaper.com.

³² Judith Callard. "Introduction" in *Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill*. Charleston, (S.C.: Arcadia), 2000.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Colin Divall and Winstan Bond. "Redefining the City: People, Transportation and Space in Philadelphia, 1876-1901," in *Suburbanizing the Masses: Public Transport and Urban Development In Historical Perspective*. (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate), 2003.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Arrigale and Keels. *Philadelphia's Golden Age of Retail*, 61.

³⁷ David Contosta. "Philadelphia's 'Miniature Williamsburg': The Colonial Revival and Germantown's Market Square," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*: 120 (October 1996): 318-319.

The long presence of the Woolworth store in the Central Germantown Business district played a significant role in defining community character. In addition to a major shopping destination, Woolworth's company vision focused on its contribution to community prosperity as a major provider of employment opportunities., patronage of local banks and utilities, and payment of taxes and rentals to local landlords.³⁸ The former Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue, therefore, curates a familiar community history and memory.

Criterion D

The building of the former Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue also contains distinguishing architectural characteristics of the Art-Deco style that was popular among commercial buildings during the 20th century and is also exemplary of the design standard of Woolworth stores. The Art-Deco was chosen as part of Woolworth's store enlargement and modernization program launched under then President C.W. Deyo in 1935. Following the Great Depression, Art-Deco became popularly associated with modernization, as Martin Greif called it and quoted by Ada Louise Huxtable in her discussion of Woolworth's, the "Depression Modern".³⁹ The building permit for the Woolworth store at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue described that the façade of the new building was to be constructed with limestone and terra-cotta and the building was going to have steel as its structure and a 13" thick brick backing.⁴⁰

The peach and cream glazed terra-cotta cladding became a standardization for the design of new Woolworth stores during this time. The former Woolworth store in downtown Seattle constructed in 1940 adopted similar Art-Deco design (Fig.17). The construction of this Woolworth store represented Seattle's recovery from the Great Depression and entrance into war-time economy.⁴¹ This building was determined eligible for listing to the National Register by the State Historic Preservation Office of Washington. Another similar store in downtown San Bernardino, California, was constructed in 1941 (Fig. 18).⁴² Two other similar Art-Deco Woolworth stores, including one in Wilmington, Delaware and one in Lexington, Kentucky, have been designated under the National Register of Historic Places and

³⁸ *Woolworth's First 75 Years*, 41.

³⁹ Ada Louise Huxtable. "The Death of the Five-and-Ten," in *Architecture, Anyone?*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press), 1988.

⁴⁰ Building Permit #369. 5607-15 Germantown Avenue, January 26, 1938. City of Philadelphia Municipal Archives.

⁴¹ "Seattle Historical Sites: Summary for 301 Pike Street," Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, [Seattle.gov](https://web6.seattle.gov/DPD/HistoricalSite/QueryResult.aspx?ID=194680611), accessed November 12, 2019, URL <https://web6.seattle.gov/DPD/HistoricalSite/QueryResult.aspx?ID=194680611>.

⁴² Nick Cataldo, "San Bernardino's Historic Downtown," *The Sun*, July 24, 2017.

recognized for their architectural significance. F.W. Woolworth Co. also had its own in-house construction department and architects in their regional corporate offices who implemented consistent design standards.⁴³ Art-Deco remained a rather “retardataire” style of choice for Woolworth’s store designs, as Ada Louise Huxtable called it, through the 1950s.⁴⁴

Beginning in the 1950s, Woolworth’s adopted the International Style as the new store design standard. Stores constructed during this time emphasized features such as flat roofs and horizontal bands of windows set into the simple rectangular form.⁴⁵ Examples of Woolworth’s International style stores are found in Clarksdale, Mississippi, Oxnard and San Diego, California, and Renton, Washington.⁴⁶ The Clarksdale and Renton stores have also been designated under the National Register of Historic Places for their architectural significance. Woolworth’s Art-Deco stores, therefore, is exemplary of a design choice that reflects a significant period of corporate history.

Despite a prosperous commercial history, many of Woolworth’s former stores had been demolished as a result of neighborhood disinvestment or significantly altered to accommodate contemporary uses. The building at 5607-13 Germantown Avenue is the most intact surviving example among the few other former Woolworth stores in Germantown. It is also the only example in Germantown that reflects a corporate design standard. Although alterations were made when Murray’s Steaks moved into the building, the representative Art-Deco façade remains preserved.

⁴³ “Seattle Historical Sites: Summary for 301 Pike Street”

⁴⁴ Huxtable, “The Death of the Five-and-Ten,” 312.

⁴⁵ National Register of Historic Places, F.W. Woolworth Co. Store, Renton, Washington, #15000880.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

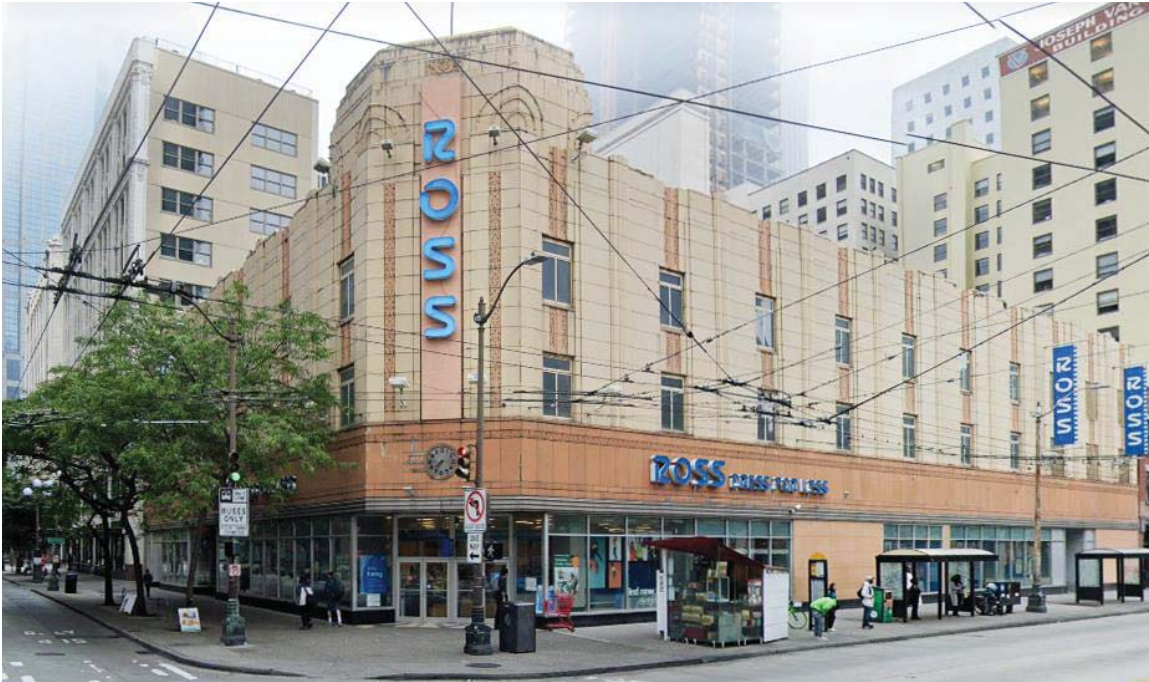


Figure 17 Street view of the former Woolworth store at 301 Pike Street. in downtown Seattle, Washington. Source: Google Maps Street View. 2019.



Figure 18 Street view of the former Woolworth store in San Bernardino, California. Source: RoadsideArchitecture.com. 2013.



Figure 19 Street view of the National Register of Historic Places designated Woolworth store in Wilmington, Delaware. Source: Google Maps Street View. 2019.

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