

THE CONWELL HOUSE BLOCK HISTORIC DISTRICT

Proposed Action: Designation

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Number of properties: 7

Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt, megan.schmitt@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate a historic district comprised of 7 properties on the west side of the 2000 block of Broad Street. Six of the properties are classified as contributing and one is identified as significant. The nomination argues that the district satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C and D.

Under Criterion A, the nomination contends that the district is significant for its association with the life and legacy of Reverend Russell Conwell, the founder of the college that would eventually become Temple University. Under Criterion C, the nomination argues that the buildings, “likely constructed at some point in the late 1880s, reflect the popularization of the Second Empire style in Gilded Age Philadelphia and the speculative development of North Broad Street...” Finally, the nomination asserts that the structures retain distinguishing characteristics of the Second Empire style, thereby satisfying Criterion D.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the proposed district satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and D.



**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICT
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. NAME OF HISTORIC DISTRICT (CURRENT/HISTORIC)

Conwell House Block Historic District

2. LOCATION

Please attach a map of Philadelphia locating the historic district.

Councilmanic District(s): 5

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a written description and map of the district boundaries.

4. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a written description and photographs of the built and natural environments/ characteristic streetscape of the district.

5. INVENTORY

Please attach an inventory of the district with an entry for every property. All street addresses must coincide with official Office of Property Assessment addresses.

Total number of properties in district: 7

Count buildings with multiple units as one.

Number of properties already on Register/percentage of total: 0 / 0%

Number of significant properties/percentage of total: 1 / 14%

Number of contributing properties/percentage of total: 6 / 86%

Number of non-contributing properties/percentage of total: /

6. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1880 to 1930

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic district 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.

7. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

8. NOMINATOR

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date January 5, 2021

Name with Title Dr. Kevin Block (consultant) Email kevinpblock@gmail.com

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

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: January 5, 2021

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: August 10, 2021

Date of Preliminary Eligibility: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: August 20, 2021

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

Nomination for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places



The Conwell House Block

A Historic District

2010-2022 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Nominator:

Dr. Kevin Block

On Behalf of The Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia

1. NAME OF HISTORIC DISTRICT

The proposed name for this historic district is the “Conwell House Block.” The name emphasizes the significant property within the district: 2020 N. Broad Street, the home of Reverend Russell Conwell, leader of the Grace Baptist Temple and founder of Temple University.

2. LOCATION

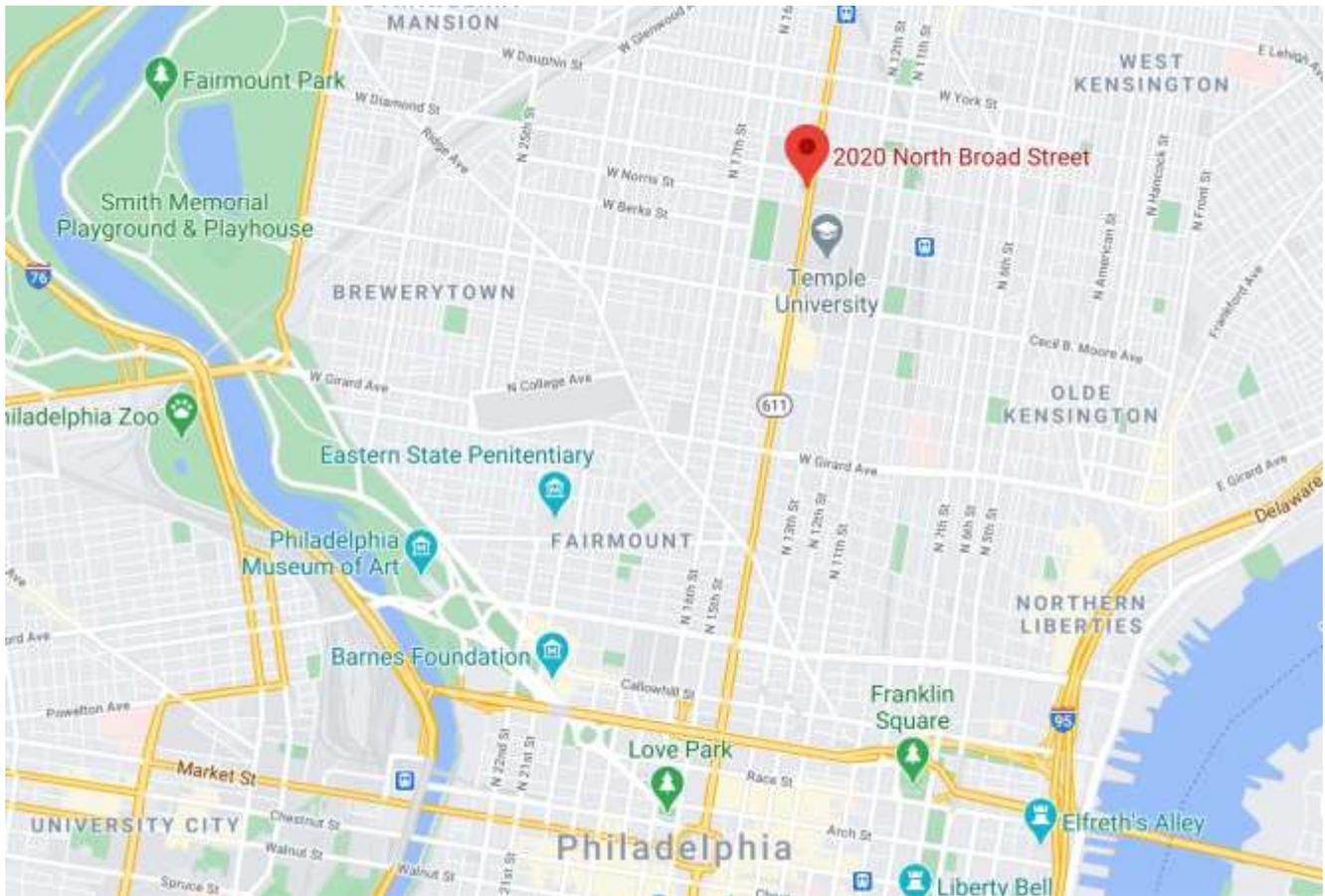


Figure 1. Location of 2010-2022 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia. Image from Google Maps.

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the southeast corner of 2010 N. Broad Street, the Conwell House Historic District extends approximately 190 feet northeastwards to the northeast corner of 2022 N. Broad Street, thence northwestwards an approximate distance of 95 feet, thence 190 feet southwestwards to the southwest corner of 2010 N. Broad Street, and finally southeastward an approximate distance of 95 feet (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2. (Left) The boundary of the Conwell House Block Historic District. Aerial image from Google Maps, August 2020. **Figure 3.** (Right) Image of the 2000 Block of N. Broad Street from the 1895 G.W. Bromley Atlas, available at the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

4. DESCRIPTION



Figure 4. The proposed Conwell House Block Historic District. Photo by author. August, 2020.

The Conwell House Block Historic District includes seven contributing properties that were originally part of four, four-story Second Empire townhouse twins, one of which (2020 N. Broad St.) is a significant property. The exterior of 2014 N. Broad Street (B’Nai Brith Hillel building), with the Star-of-David patterned lattice and flat roof, appears altered, but retains much of its original facade and window openings behind the screen.

No information related to the designer or builder of the homes within the district is currently available. There is no record of the project in *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, historical newspaper databases, or the Temple University archives. The exact date of construction remains unclear but it was definitely after 1862 and before 1895. Given the opening of Grace Baptist Temple at Broad and Berks streets in 1891 and Conwell’s occupancy of 2020 N. Broad Street in 1892, as well as the general timeline of development in this section of North Broad Street, it is likely that the properties that comprise the district were constructed in the late 1880s by a real estate developer.

Almost identical in silhouette, at the time of construction these four townhouse twins formed a modest, Second Empire ensemble. Modest, first, because they are mainly brick and wood structures with stone trim rather than masonry structures and, second, because they feature straight mansard rooflines rather than rooflines with flared or complex geometries. All together, the ensemble follows an A-B-B-A, A-B-B-A rhythm, with “B” sections including a two-story bay window and “B” sections with two-story bay windows and side bays over the alleyway. While the two-story bay windows distinguish the major from the minor side of each twin, both sides are connected by beltways that cross the second and third stories. From the pedestrian’s viewpoint, the homes read as four distinct masses rather than an extended row.

The Conwell House Block Historic District displays several notable features of Victorian townhomes and the Second Empire style, including straight mansard roofs with front-gable dormers and gingerbread trim; bracketed eaves; single- and double-story bays with double-hung windows, decorative plaster capitals, and pressed decorative rosettes; iron cresting along the mansard and bay window rooflines; paired arched windows on the third story; walk-up stoops to double-door-width entryways beneath transom windows.

The condition of the Conwell House Block Historic District varies significantly between properties. Two of the properties in the district (2010 and 2012 North Broad Street) have been converted into take-out restaurants and their adjacent twins have either been demolished or significantly altered. The attic dormers of 2012 N. Broad Street have been removed and a new stairway was installed. The basement windows for all but one of the properties (2010, 2012, 2018, 2020, 2022) have been filled or boarded. In every entryway, owners have replaced double-doors with single-doors and infill. The bay window of 2020 N. Broad Street is now boarded and covered with chain-link fencing. At 2022 N. Broad Street, a window pair has replaced the French doors above the single-story bay. Despite minor changes, 2016-2018 N. Broad Street and 2020-2022 N. Broad Street retain their original massing. For the best documentation of the district's original condition, see Figure 7 below.

4. DESCRIPTION (CONT.)



Figure 5. (Left) Detail of the 2010 N. Broad's mansard roof, showing ginger-bread window trim. **Figure 6.** (Right) Behind restaurant exhaust fans in the alleyway between 2010 and 2012 N. Broad Street is visible, showing a spiral or 'Solomonic' column. The bay appears to be made of pressed (and rusting) iron sheeting.



Figure 7. (Left) 2016-2018 N. Broad Street as a twin. **Figure 8.** (Right) Of the four two-story bay windows in the Conwell House Block Historic District, that of 2018 N. Broad St. is in the best condition. Decorative iron cresting. Side window has been replaced and extended downward from the third to the second story.

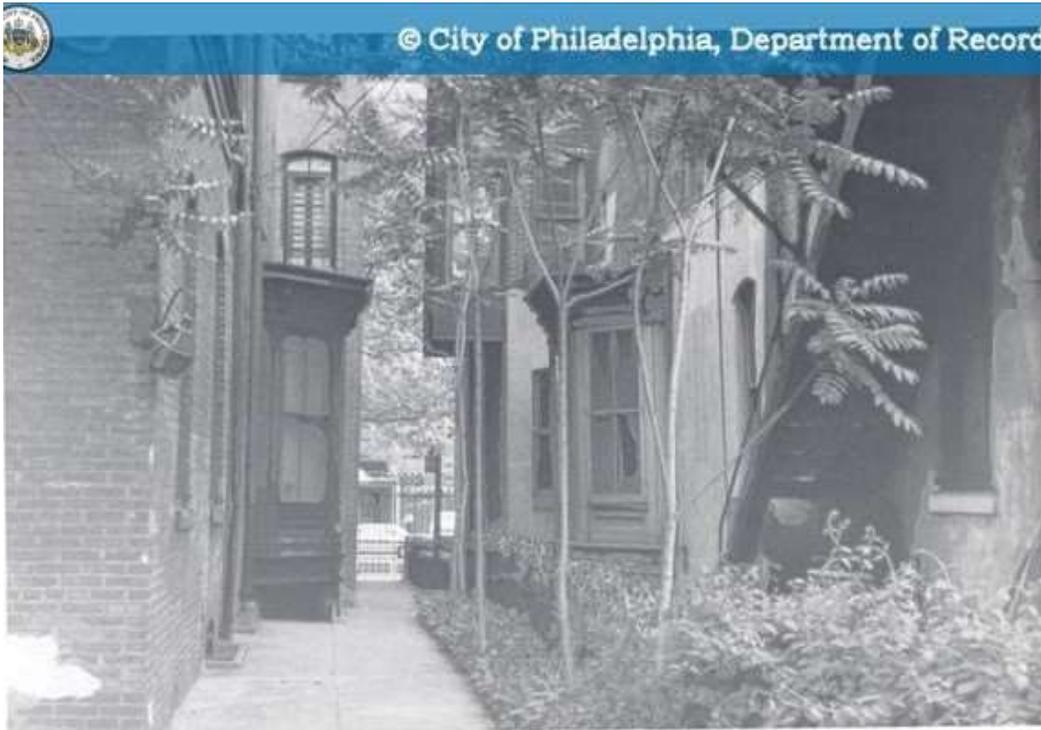


Figure 9. Rear of 2020 N. Broad Street circa 1961, looking out to N. Broad Street through the walkway between 2018 and 2020 N. Broad Street. Philadelphia Department of Records.



Figure 10. 2020 and 2022 N. Broad Street, circa 1890-1900. This is the best historical image on record in terms of documenting the original condition of the buildings within the Conwell House Block Historic District. Original facades were of unpainted brick. Original roof tiling appears to be slate. Entrances are enclosed with double doors and a transom window rather than single doors and infill. There is decorative iron cresting on the mansard roofline and the bay window roofline. Note the eclectic addition of stick style spindlework underneath the front-gable dormers. Temple University Special Collections.



Figure 11. 2020 and 2022 N. Broad Street (Undated, no author). Possibly near the time of Conwell's death in 1925, given the wreath on the door of 2020 N. Broad and the Ford Model-T cars. Temple University Special Collections.

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
The Conwell House Block
2010-2022 North Broad Street

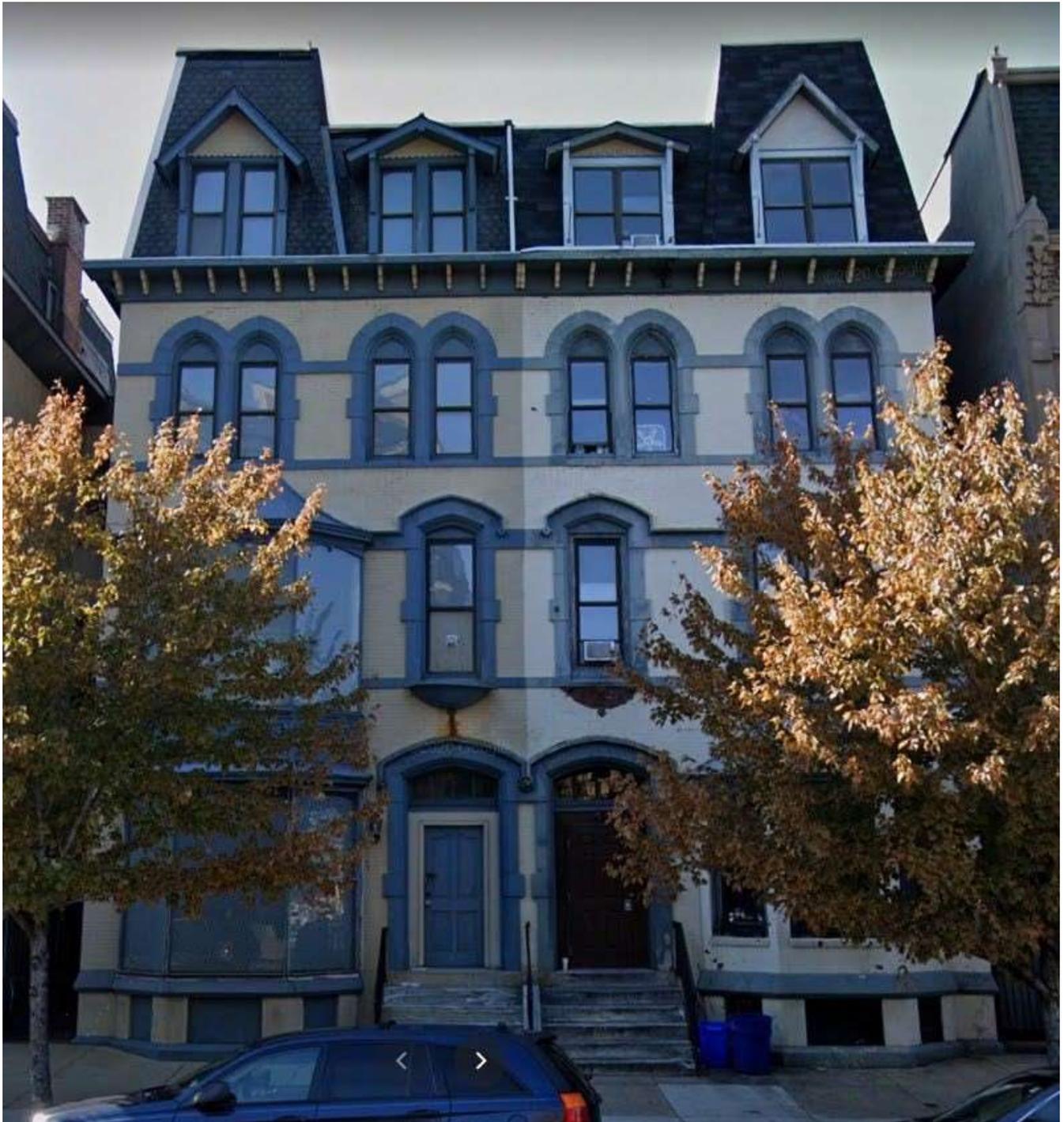


Figure 12. 2020-2022 N. Broad Street as of October 18, 2020.



Figure 13. (Left) 2020-2022 N. Broad Street was the home of the Kappa Chapter of the Sigma Pi Fraternity at Temple University. Conwell was himself a member of Sigma Pi. Greek lettering remained on the facade of 2022 N. Broad St. as late as September 2019, according to Google Maps Street View. **Figure 14.** (Right) A photocopy of a short article published in *Emerald* (Volume 77, Spring 1991), the alumni magazine of Sigma Pi, describes the fraternity's renovation of the building as follows: "The modest North Philadelphia row house in which Temple University founder Russell Conwell lived and died will soon be a vital part of campus life again. Kappa Chapter of Sigma Pi has joined in a unique partnership with the University to renovate the grey stone building on North Broad Street to add more housing for the membership and to honor Conwell, the man who began Temple 105 years ago and who lived in the big house for 33 years...Renovations were approved by the Executive Committee of the University Board of Trustees and allowed the fraternity to provide housing for 20 more of its members. The work involved new wiring, plumbing, custom windows and a new roof. A library and study area is also being created on the third floor, and a first-floor public area will display Conwell memorabilia and serve as a meeting place for fraternities and sororities." Conwell file, Temple University Special Collections.

5. INVENTORY

ADDRESS: 2010 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Contributing

Style: Second Empire

Description: Four-story brick building with mansard. Two-story projecting bay at first and second stories. Painted brick. Replacement windows, doors, and roofing. Non-original signage.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 125 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between parallel lines with the said Norris Street 126 feet to the middle of a 12 feet wide street.

ADDRESS: 2012 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Contributing

Style: Second Empire

Description: Four-story brick building with mansard. Two-story projecting bay at first and second stories with non-original iron cresting above. Painted brick. Replacement windows, doors, and roofing. Non-original signage.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 150 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between lines parallel with said Norris Street 126 feet to the middle of a certain 12 feet wide alley.

ADDRESS: 2014 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Contributing

Style: Modern

Description: Three-story brick building. Mansard removed. Non-original Star of David patterned lattice and paneled wall added in front of historic façade.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 175 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between lines parallel with said Norris Street 126 feet to the middle of a certain 12 feet wide street.

ADDRESS: 2016 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Contributing

Style: Second Empire

Description: Four-story brick building with stuccoed façade and mansard. Replacement windows, doors, and roofing.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 200 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between lines parallel with said Norris Street 126 feet to the middle of a certain 12 feet wide alley.

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
The Conwell House Block
2010-2022 North Broad Street

ADDRESS: 2018 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Contributing

Style: Second Empire

Description: Four-story brick building with stuccoed façade and mansard. Two-story projecting bay with iron cresting. Replacement windows, doors, and roofing.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 225 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between lines parallel with said Norris Street 126 feet.

ADDRESS: 2020 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Significant

Style: Second Empire

Description: Reverend Russell Conwell House. Four-story brick building with original slate mansard. Two-story projecting bay at first and second stories. Painted brick. Replacement windows and doors.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 250 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between lines parallel with said Norris Street 126 feet to the middle of a 12 feet wide street.

ADDRESS: 2022 N. BROAD STREET



Classification: Contributing

Style: Second Empire

Description: Four-story brick building with mansard. Projecting bay at first story. Painted brick. Replacement windows, doors, and roofing.

Boundary: Situate on the West side of North Broad Street at a distance of 275 feet Northward from the North side of W. Norris Street containing in front or breath on the said North Broad Street 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westward between lines parallel with said Norris Street 126 feet to the middle of a 12 feet wide street..

6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This nomination proposes that the Conwell House Block satisfies three criteria necessary for designation as a historic district. First, it has significant character, interest and value in its association with the life and legacy of Reverend Russell Conwell (1843-1925), the founder of the college that would eventually become Temple University, satisfying Criterion A. Conwell and his family resided at 2020 N. Broad Street, which is adjacent to the current campus. Second, the six structures that comprise the Conwell House Block, likely constructed at some point in the late 1880s, reflect the popularization of the Second Empire style in Gilded Age Philadelphia and the speculative development of North Broad Street, satisfying Criterion C. Third, each structure that belongs to the district retains a distinguishing characteristic of the Second Empire style, a dormered mansard roofline, thereby satisfying Criterion D. Because of the district's association with Conwell and the popularization of the Second Empire style in the United States, this designation proposes a 50-year period of significance that begins in 1880 and ends in 1930.

The following statement of significance rests on the premise that although one might categorize the architecture of Conwell's home at 2020 N. Broad St. as part of the commercial vernacular of the period rather than high design, it symbolizes the central actor in an evangelical network that extended throughout the city and played a crucial role in the religious and social history of Philadelphia. Conwell was the figurehead of the Grace Baptist Temple, which under his direction grew into one of the largest Protestant congregations in early-twentieth-century America. Grace Baptist Temple became what historians of religion call an "institutional church" or what Conwell called a "total ministry."¹ In addition to the impressive, Romanesque Revival sanctuary known as The Temple that was constructed at Broad and Berks streets--which, upon opening in May of 1891, was the largest Protestant church building in the United States (total seating capacity reached 4,600)--facilities belonging to or rented by the Grace Baptist Temple were scattered throughout the city, distributing Conwell's influence widely. Grace Baptist Temple used these facilities to minister to a multiplicity of community social welfare needs that municipal government did not address until the Progressive era, from healthcare and education to job placement and entertainment.² A working-class or newly middle-class Philadelphian could spend most of his or her life, let alone a given Sunday, within this religious network of services, hence Conwell's use of the term "total ministry."

¹ On the development of the institutional church, see Aaron Ignatius Abell, *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865-1900*. (Hamden Conn.: Archon, 1962); Paul S. Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978); Robert A. Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*, Illustrated Edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999). On Conwell's use of the phrase "total ministry," see Nicole C. Mantuano, "Acres of Diamonds: How Have Temple University Presidents Between 1884 and 1973 Realized the Conwellian Vision" (New Brunswick, N.J, Rutgers University, 2011).

² Ken Fones-Wolf writes, "The Temple supported kindergartens, gymnasium classes, clubs, popular lectures, a library, a dispensary, a savings bank, a soup kitchen, a hospital, and an evening school for the poor, in large part financed by Conwell's donations from his success on the lecture circuit." Ken Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865-1915*, 1st Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 38.

Despite his role in establishing Temple College and the growth of that institution as a public university, Conwell was not, first and foremost, an educational figure. He was a religious figure who emerged from a dynamic religious landscape. The designation of the Conwell House Block as a historic district will help to underline this distinction and memorialize the complexity of the whole man, including but not limited to his association with Temple University.³

This Statement of Significance proceeds in two subsections. First, it presents Conwell's biography to support the use of Criterion A. Second, it describes the spread of the Second Empire style along North Broad Street in order to support the use of both Criterion C and Criterion D.

³One can characterize Conwell as a religious figure rather than an educational figure without downplaying his role in founding Temple College. On that particular initiative, see James W. Hilty, "The Man, the Speech, the 'Temple Idea,'" in *Temple University: 125 Years of Service to Philadelphia, the Nation, and the World* (Temple University Press, 2010), 1–21.

6-1. Russell Conwell and the Grace Baptist Church

Criterion 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.

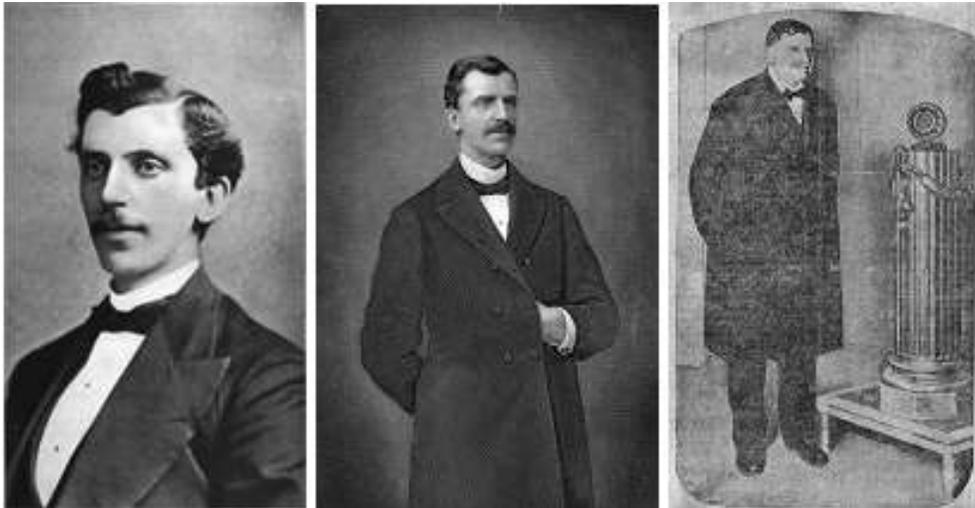


Figure 15. (Left) Conwell around 1880, at the age of 37, after receiving his ordination from Newton Seminary. Temple University Special Collections. **Figure 16.** (Center) Conwell in 1890, after arriving in Philadelphia. Temple University Special Collections. **Figure 17.** (Right) Conwell in 1923. The caption reads: “\$10,000,000 VOICE SAYS ‘ACRES OF DIAMONDS.’ Dr. Russell H. Conwell is shown delivering his celebrated lecture, ‘Acres of Diamonds,’ at Radio Station W.O.O., the Wanamaker store, Philadelphia. Doctor Conwell is 80 years old, but his endurance is such that he prefers to stand before the microphone rather than sit down while delivering his lecture, which occupies an hour and a half. With ‘Acres of Diamonds’ and other lectures, Doctor Conwell has raised more than \$10,000,000, every sent of which, outside of the barest traveling expenses, he has devoted to the education of poor boys.” Temple University Special Collections.

In American religious history and the history of Philadelphia, Russell Conwell is a complex figure. For some, he was only an apologist for the acquisitive values of the Gilded Age’s industrial and commercial elite. In “Acres of Diamonds,” the sermon that Conwell claimed to have delivered more than 6,000 times in his career and in a stream of self-help manuals that followed, Conwell preached the Gospel of Success, inspiring his listeners to believe that through hard work and Christian self-discipline, a “rags-to-riches” ascent in American society was possible. He believed staunchly in meritocracy and denounced the collectivist initiatives of trade unions.⁴ Other historians see Conwell as a religious

⁴ Conwell’s self-help manuals included *The New Day, or Fresh Opportunities: A Book for Young Men* (1904), *Present Successful Opportunities* (1902), and *What You Can do with Your Will Power* (1917). On these texts and their relationship to nineteenth-century evangelism, see Judy Arlene Hilkey, *Character Is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). For a general overview of the Gospel of Success (sometimes referred to by historians as the “Gospel of Prosperity”), see James Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty’s Dollar: A History of Money and American Protestantism*, First Edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Thomas F. Rzeznik, *Church and Estate: Religion and Wealth in Industrial-Era Philadelphia*, Illustrated Edition (University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, 2013). On the critique of Conwell as an ideologue of the capitalist class and the politics of vocational

entrepreneur whose “total ministry” anticipated Progressive Era reforms and prefigured the Protestant “megachurches” of today. For them, Conwell functioned like the manager of a large industrial enterprise--an inverse, of sorts, to Philadelphia’s famous department store mogul John Wanamaker, a devout Presbyterian--relentlessly expanding the reach of Grace Baptist Temple through the innovative use of grassroots fundraising efforts and new promotional tools such as the daily newspapers and the radio. In this characterization, Conwell was a realist more than an ideologue and an organizer more than a theologian. He recognized the convergence of religious and commercial culture around the turn of the century and found ways to make Protestantism relevant to the city’s growing middle class. “The successful church worker is one who recognizes the plain facts of life, and their relation to heavenly things,” Conwell wrote near the end of his career. “Who is neither profane nor crazy, who feels that his experience and judgment are gifts of God to be used, but who fully realizes that, after all, unless God lives in the house, they labor in vain who built it.”⁵ At times, Conwell was even critical of congregations in the emerging Protestant Establishment (especially the Episcopalians) that treated religion as little more than a fashionable trapping of elite Anglo-Saxon identity.⁶

Though it is difficult to parse Conwell’s biography from the construction of a self-mythologized public persona, the basic outline of his life up until 1892, when he moved into 2020 N. Broad Street, is clear. Conwell was born in 1843 and grew up in a rural area of Western Massachusetts. He was the son of poor, non-observant Methodist farmers. Never interested in an agricultural life, he enrolled in Yale College in 1861 intending to study law, but stayed for less than a year and was a social pariah to his wealthier peers. When the Civil War began, Conwell served as a recruiter for the Union Army--his first opportunity to put his natural rhetorical talents, including a truly stentorian voice, to work--and then enlisted in a company of the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. Later in life, Conwell claimed to have had a conversion experience during the war when his young aide-de-camp died trying to retain Conwell’s ceremonial sword from a Confederate attack. After the war, Conwell entered law school at the University of Albany and earned his degree in 1865. He married and moved to Minneapolis to pursue opportunities in law and journalism in the Great Northwest. In Minneapolis, he established the city’s first YMCA and served as the state’s emigration commissioner, which led to writing and travel opportunities as a foreign correspondent for the *New York Tribune* and *Boston Traveller*. In 1872, Conwell’s home in

education in the 1890s, when Conwell founded Temple College, see Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel*; Walter Licht, *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 59–79.

⁵ Quoted in William T. Doherty, “The Impact of Business on Protestantism, 1900-29,” *The Business History Review* 28, no. 2 (1954): 146.

⁶ References to Conwell and the convergence of religion and business around the turn of the century can be found in the following publications: Amanda Porterfield, Darren Grem, and John Corrigan, eds., *The Business Turn in American Religious History*, 1st Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty’s Dollar*; Gary Scott Smith, “Protestant Churches and Business in Gilded-Age America,” *Theology Today* 60, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 311–31; R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, 1st Edition (New Haven u.a: Yale University Press, 1995). On the division between evangelicals and the Protestant establishment in Philadelphia, see Thomas F. Rzeznik, “Representatives of All That Is Noble’: The Rise of the Episcopal Establishment in Early-Twentieth-Century Philadelphia,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19, no. 1 (2009): 69–100, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2009.19.1.69>.

Minneapolis burnt down and his family returned to New England. This was the beginning of a period of intense personal crisis during which Conwell's career shifted more decisively from law to ministry. He lost most of his financial estate in the Panic of 1873 and then his wife suddenly died later that year. In 1874, Conwell remarried a devout Baptist from a patrician Boston family named Sarah F. Sanborn. Two years later, a group of older parishioners from the Baptist Meeting House of Lexington, Massachusetts contacted Conwell to see if he could help them prepare the legal documents necessary to sell their church property. Instead of providing legal services, Conwell asked the congregants if he could try to revive their church. In 1879, with the congregation in Lexington growing under new, energetic leadership, Conwell received ordination from the Newton Theological Seminary.

In 1882, Conwell accepted the pastorate of Grace Baptist Church, a small congregation in a rapidly developing area of North Philadelphia, and moved his family to the church's parsonage at 2004 North Park Avenue. Despite Grace Baptist Church's small size, it was an opportunity for a "new minister" such as Conwell to advance himself as an influential cultural figure in a major metropolis with an evangelical tradition.⁷ When Conwell arrived in Philadelphia in 1882, Protestant evangelism was well-established in the city, appealing to a steady stream of young migrants from Philadelphia's agricultural hinterland who sought a warmer, more experiential kind of religious experience than what the rationalist Unitarians or other high churches provided. The Presbyterian minister Charles G. Finney led revivals in 1828. The so-called Third Awakening, which began in Upstate New York, reached in the city by 1858. In the summer of that year, Philadelphians gathered in empty parcels of the city under the giant movable canvas tent of the Union Tabernacle.⁸ In 1875-76, as the city prepared to host the Centennial, Wanamaker offered D.L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, the late nineteenth century's most famous evangelical duo, the use of his new flagship store beside City Hall for elaborate revivals.⁹ After ten years of non-stop urban missionary work, supported by the Philadelphia Baptist Association, and

⁷ In her analysis of Gilded Age success manuals and the generation of "new ministers" that wrote them, Judy Hilkey provides a compelling explanation for the motivations behind Conwell's decision to move from Lexington to Philadelphia, where there were more speaking and publication opportunities for him. She writes, "The professions most often pursued by those who wrote success manuals also tell us something about the men themselves and the web of aspirations and constraints characteristic of their careers. These professions--especially the ministry, journalism, and academia--were common choices of educated nineteenth-century men without capital who wished to advance themselves. They were vehicles for what Burton Bledstein termed the 'vertical vision,' in which practitioners sought the means to self-advancement. More than any other single occupation, the ministry was the stated profession of the success writers. The ministry that success writers entered has been largely transformed in the mid-nineteenth century by a generation of poor boys who escape economically depressed New England farms via church-sponsored scholarships to college and divinity school. The new minister was ambitious and thought more in terms of a career than a 'calling.' Rather than a lifelong commitment to a single congregation, a new generation of ministers moved from congregation to congregation and concerned themselves with rising salary and status." Hilkey, *Character Is Capital*, 63-64.

⁸ Marion L. Bell, *Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 185; Harry Kyriakodis, "Before The Pope, The Days Of The Revivalists," Hidden City Philadelphia, August 26, 2015, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2015/08/before-the-pope-the-days-of-the-revivalists/>.

⁹ Nicole C. Kirk, *Wanamaker's Temple: The Business of Religion in an Iconic Department Store* (New York: NYU Press, 2018), 48-49; Bruce J. Evensen, "'It's Harder Getting into the Depot than Heaven': Moody, Mass Media and the Philadelphia Revival of 1875-76," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 69, no. 2 (2002): 149-78.

the opening of Grace Baptist Temple's spectacular, state-of-the-art sanctuary, he announced his more permanent presence in Philadelphia by moving from the parsonage into one half of a Second Empire twin at 2020 N. Broad St., a block-and-a-half away from The Temple.¹⁰

Although Conwell used The Temple as his personal showplace, he also used his home at 2020 N. Broad Street as an extension of the ministry, hosting individuals and smaller groups in the parlor and business or church associates in his third floor study (Figure 18). Conwell's open door was part of his approachable persona. Known by the moniker of the "Penniless Millionaire," he was simple in manner and in lifestyle, leaving no doubt about his religious motivations. Burr describes the constant stream of house calls that Conwell and his wife would receive on a given weekend day as follows:

When not away from the city lecturing, he spends a certain part of the day in his study at the church, where any one can see him on any matter which he may wish to bring to his attention. The ante-room is thronged at the hour when it is known that he will be there. People waylay him in the church corridors, and on the streets, so well known is his kindly heart, his attentive ear, his generous hand.

Not only do these visitors invade the church, but they come to his home. Early in the morning they are there. They await him when he returns late at night. As an instance of their number, one Saturday afternoon late in June he had one hour free which he heaped to take for rest and the preparation of the next morning's sermon. During that one hour he had six callers, each staying until the next arrived.¹¹

Conwell's interest in education, which eventually led to the founding of Temple College in 1888, grew out of his commitment to self-help and his church's administration of healthcare facilities in North Philadelphia, including Good Samaritan Hospital (on the site of the current Temple University Hospital) and Garretson Hospital (which was near the Baldwin Locomotive Works). From the beginning, Conwell's idea was that Temple College would make a practical education accessible to all working men in Philadelphia, not just to the members of his congregation or the Baptist denomination. Early newspaper advertisements referred to Temple College as a "Peoples' University," in the tradition of the British workingmen's colleges. In 1907, tuition at Temple College was \$40 per academic year for the night session and \$75 for the day session.

Appreciating the incredible demand for low-cost education, during the 1890s Conwell tried to establish a vertically-integrated education system that would run parallel to the public schools (like the Catholic school system) and prepare the best students to attend Temple College. The Temple Academies, opened in 1894, served this purpose (Figure 19). While they proved unprofitable, the Academies enrolled over 2,000 students from every area of the city. Some were conveniently located near

¹⁰ My synopsis of Conwell's biography is based on Agnes Rush Burr, *Russell H. Conwell, Founder of the Institutional Church in America, the Work and the Man* (Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1905); Agnes Rush Burr, *Russell H. Conwell and His Work, One Man's Interpretation of Life*. (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston company, 1923); Hilty, "The Man, the Speech, the 'Temple Idea'"; Mantuano, "Acres of Diamonds: How Have Temple University Presidents Between 1884 and 1973 Realized the Conwellian Vision." It is fair to characterize Burr's texts, written while Conwell was still alive, as hagiographies.

¹¹ Burr, *Russell H. Conwell, Founder of the Institutional Church in America, the Work and the Man*, 258.

factories, such as the Tioga branch near Midvale Steel; others were located in neighborhoods that were predominantly immigrant or African American, such as the Pine Street Academy, which had a majority black student population. Conwell is rightly celebrated as the founder of the institution that became Temple University, but he did not initially think of the school as part of a national system of higher education, which at that point in time was still inchoate. The college was part of his thriving urban ministry.

In a period when the city was increasingly known for municipal corruption, Conwell died in 1925 as one of the most recognizable and respected figures of Gilded Age Philadelphia (Figure 20).



Figure 18. Conwell in his study at 2020 N. Broad Street circa 1910s. In addition to his personal work, he regularly hosted meetings and attended to the congregants of the Grace Baptist Church from his home. Conwell File, Temple University Special Collections.



Figure 19. In 1894, in addition to Temple College, Conwell had established five Temple Academies throughout the city. An advertisement published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (October 2, 1894, p. 6) stated their location at 3721 Lancaster Ave., 1833 Frankford Ave., 1200 S. Broad St., 922 Pine St. and North 22nd Street & West Tioga St. (the exact location of this Academy, near the Midvale Steel plant, is unknown).



Figure 20. A newspaper cutout soon after Conwell's death. The caption reads, "Philadelphia mourns at the bier of an illustrious citizen. A photograph made yesterday while the body of Dr. Russell H. Conwell lay in state within the crepe-hung Grace Baptist Church, where he had moved many a congregation by his stirring eloquence. The picture gives some idea of the number of people who passed through the church to do honor to the great preacher." Conwell File, Temple University Special Collections.

6-2. The Second Empire Style and the Speculative Development of North Broad Street

Criterion C) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.

Criterion D) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.

The Conwell House Block Historic District reflects the widespread use of the Second Empire style in Philadelphia from the 1860s until the turn of the century. The earliest, most prominent example of the Second Empire style in Philadelphia was the Union League, constructed on South Broad Street in 1865, roughly a decade after the Haussmannization of Paris (1852-1870) had begun. The Union League featured a projecting central pavilion with a straight mansard roof, the style's hallmark (Figure 23). The Post Office and Federal Courthouse at 9th and Chestnut streets, completed in 1884 under the direction of architect John McArthur Jr., was also built in the Second Empire Style, which by then was closely associated with the federal building program of Alfred Mullett and other centers of governmental administration (Figure 24).¹² Just as nineteenth-century American architects recognized a natural affinity between the Gothic style and Protestant churches, Greek neoclassicism and banks, the Egyptian style and prisons, they also recognized a natural affinity between the French Baroque and administrative buildings.¹³ Mullett's Post Office and Courthouse included a central pavilion along 9th Street that was capped by a billowing convex mansard roof. Construction for what many consider the finest example of Second Empire architecture in the United States, Philadelphia City Hall, began in 1872 (Figure 25). Intended as a monument to good government and the cosmopolitan spirit of a city that would host the Centennial Exhibition in 1876, City Hall had already become a symbol of municipal corruption by the time that it opened in 1902.

Though it was strongly associated with government buildings, the Second Empire style was not limited to them. Hotels such as the Aldine on Chestnut Street and the Bellevue-Stratford on South Broad Street featured the decorative iron cresting, *oeil-de-boeuf* ("bulls-eye") windows, bracketed cornices, and mansard roofs of the Second Empire style (Figure 26). There was even a mansard atop Frank Furness's wildly eclectic Pennsylvania Fine Arts Building (1871-1876). Many large private residences in

¹² On Mullett's use of the Second Empire style, see Lawrence Wodehouse, "Alfred B. Mullett and His French Style Government Buildings," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31, no. 1 (1972): 22–37.

¹³ For a brief overview of the origins of the Second Empire style and its complicated migration to Philadelphia, see David Van Zanten, "Second Empire Architecture in Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 74, no. 322 (1978): 9–24. Van Zanten notes the association between the Second Empire style and government buildings on p. 12. Virginia Savage McAlester demonstrates that the style came to the United States by way of England. "Exhibitions in Paris in 1855 and 1867 helped to popularize the style in England, from whence it spread to the United States. The first American pattern book examples of Second Empire were found in Calvert Vaux's *Villas and Cottages* (1857), which featured three Second Empire designs. Two important public buildings followed, both designs of James Renwick Jr.--Charity Hospital in New York City (begun in 1858) and Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington, D.C. (begun in 1859). For the next twenty years almost every American house pattern book published had at least one or two Second Empire designs." Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses (Revised): The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*, Illustrated Edition (Knopf, 2015), 313. For a quick overview, see Steven Ujifusa, "The Quaker City and the Second Empire," Philly History Blog | Philadelphia City Archives, January 20, 2015, <https://blog.phillyhistory.org/index.php/2015/01/philadelphia-and-the-second-empire/>.

Philadelphia were built in the Second Empire style between 1860 and 1880 in areas of the city where a new industrial elite settled, followed by the city's growing middle class. The Singerly mansion at North Broad and Jefferson streets is one of many possible examples of such residences (Figure 27). At the domestic scale, the great benefit of the mansard roof was that it complied with setback restrictions while allowing owners to maximize the habitable, rentable space of a given lot. One could build a relatively simple, inexpensive brick and balloon-framed building, or remodel an older building, and make it look modern and in fashion with the addition of a mansard roof, ignoring the more complex geometries and expensive masonry ornamentation of Second Empire monuments such as City Hall. St. Albans Place, a "garden street" development of brick row homes from the 1870s in the Grays Ferry area of Philadelphia, likely followed this formula (Figure 27). While the rowhomes were themselves little different from working-class housing stock found elsewhere in South Philadelphia, the mansard roofline, in addition to the shared central garden, expressed a new middle-class sensibility.¹⁴

Wherever it appeared after 1880, the mansard roof marked a wave of new development. Long a center of industrial production, North Broad Street and eastwards toward Kensington developed rapidly as a residential area between 1880 and 1924, when construction for the Broad Street Subway began. In 1862, large parcels of undeveloped land were still available above Girard Avenue. By 1886, the real estate boosters were claiming that North Philadelphia's residential development was an inevitability. "The drift of population is in that way," wrote one contributor to the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*. "North Broad Street will soon become a popular section of the city; it has many desirable features for residences; land is held quite firmly there, but considering the value of the houses which will be erected on it, the cost is not unreasonable. No doubt a few blocks of semi-detached houses would attract buyers and renters."¹⁵ In another column from that year, a contributor warned investors not to overlook a can't-miss opportunity

In less than twenty years the entire character of Broad street must undergo a radical change. It is the dividing line between the Easterly and Westerly sections of the city and is of easy access to both. The Northern tendency of the city's growth will soon make a change imperative and even now the erection and opening on North Broad Street of a few magnificent stores of the Wanamaker type, would very soon influence a host of followers.

The fact is the northern wards have grown so rapidly in wealth and population that they will soon tire of business isolation and demand the change. Predictions of dazzling magnificence may be justly ridiculed now, but he who lives through the second or third decade of 1900 will realize what a fool he was in 1886.¹⁶

By 1895, many of the parcels of land along North Broad Street were full, including the 2000 block (Figures 26 and 27). There, the detached twins with mansard roofs--a scale of residential architecture

¹⁴ On the growth of Philadelphia's middle class in this period, see John Henry Hepp IV, *The Middle-Class City: Transforming Space and Time in Philadelphia, 1876-1926* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

¹⁵ "Gossip of the Week," *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, January 27, 1886, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

¹⁶ "Gossip of the Week," *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, April 12, 1886, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

somewhere between the mansion and the row home--followed the developer's logic of maximizing space while accessorizing what are otherwise basic building materials. They did the job of attracting reputable if not fashionable buyers such as Conwell and remained good investments for the next three decades.

North Broad Street developed so rapidly because the transformation did not occur piecemeal. Instead, it was the result of speculative investment. It was not a coincidence that some of the most powerful and wealthiest members of Philadelphia's new industrial elite, such as P.A.B. Widener, William Elkins, and William Kemble, built themselves mansions along North Broad Street. These were men who profited handsomely from the Civil War and from urban infrastructure projects in cities across the United States. Flush with capital at the start of the Gilded Age, the members of this group invested heavily in the speculative development of North Philadelphia, assembling their own construction teams and maintaining close ties with the "contractor bosses" of the Republican Party. These political ties were crucial. In the 1890s, new residential construction, often completed in 50-300 unit chunks, followed closely behind the extension of utility lines and electric trolley service northwards, as well as the widening and asphalt paving of North Broad Street.¹⁷ So while Widener supported the construction of Benjamin Franklin Parkway as a grand civic project that would connect City Hall with the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Fairmount Park, he also profited from the private development of the city's *other* major boulevard in this period, North Broad Street.

¹⁷ On Philadelphia's contractor bosses, see Thomas H. Keels, "Contractor Bosses," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, 2016, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/contractor-bosses-1880s-to-1930s/>; Peter McCaffery, *When Bosses Ruled Philadelphia: The Emergence of the Republican Machine, 1867-1933*, 1st Edition (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). On the development of North Broad Street, see Robert Morris Skaler, *Philadelphia's Broad Street: South and North* (Arcadia Publishing, 2003). For a sophisticated account of speculative development in another Northeastern city, see David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
The Conwell House Block
2010-2022 North Broad Street



Figure 21. (Top left) A cyanotype from 1868 of the Union League (1865). Image from the Free Library of Philadelphia. **Figure 22.** Alfred Mullett's Court House and Post Office building (1874-1884) at 9th and Chestnut Streets. Its convex mansard roof is visible to the rear. Image from PAB, Athenaeum of Philadelphia. **Figure 23.** A photograph of McArthur's City Hall (1872-1902) from 1875. PAB, Athenaeum of Philadelphia. **Figure 24.** The Bellevue-Stratford Hotel (1902-1904). PAB, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

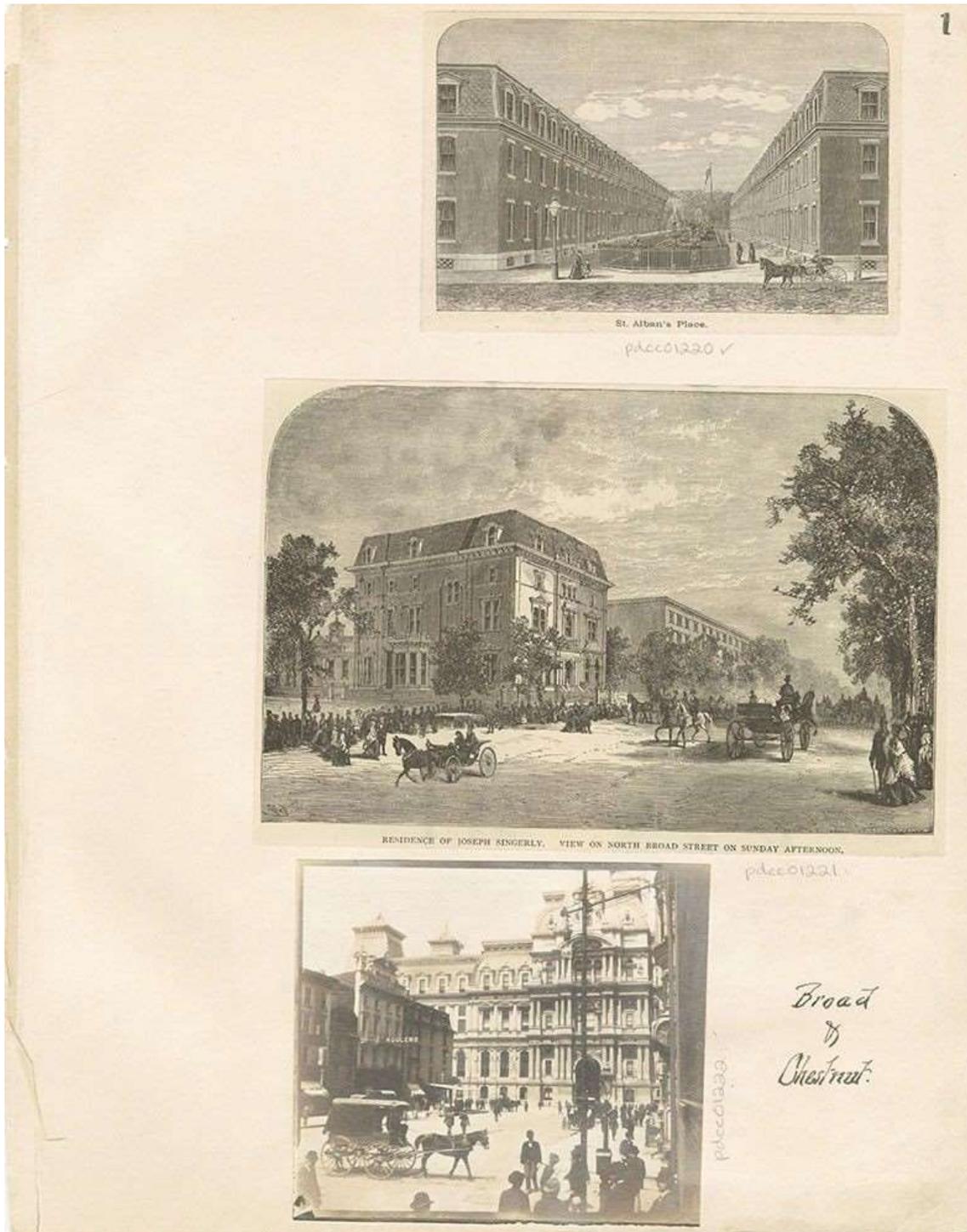


Figure 25. The mansard roof in Philadelphia at three different scales on a single sheet of the Castner Scrapbook Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. Top, the row houses at St. Alban's place, a "garden street" that was developed in the 1870s in what is now the Graduate Hospital area of the city (then Gray's Ferry). Middle, a view of Joseph Singerly's residence on North Broad Street at Jefferson Street. Singerly developed the city's street rail system and his son, William, was the owner of *The Philadelphia Record* and a major developer of North Broad Street. Bottom, City Hall.



Figure 26. (Left) The development of the 2000 block of N. Broad Street, pinned at 2020. In the 1862 Samuel Smedley Atlas, the 2000 Block appears undeveloped. **Figure 27.** (Right) By 1895, as seen in the G.W. Bromley Atlas of that year, the 2000 Block of N. Broad Street and the surrounding area was completely developed. Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

6-3. Bibliography

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