

ADDRESS: 775 S CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BLVD

Name of Resource: Piers 38 and 40 South

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Port of Philadelphia

Nominator: Keeping Society

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

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the Southwark Municipal Piers 38 and 40, located at 775 S. Christopher Columbus Boulevard, as historic and list the property on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the piers, constructed between 1914 and 1915, satisfy Criteria for Designation A, C, D, H, and J. Under Criteria A and J, the nomination argues that the piers represent the establishment and enlargement of the Port of Philadelphia as a municipal program to spur commercial activity through the creation of a system of municipal piers along the Delaware River waterfront. Under Criteria C and D, the nomination contends that the piers represent an era of civic architecture inspired by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and possess distinguishing characteristics of the Beaux Arts style of architecture. Under Criterion H, the nomination states that the massive piers form an established and familiar visual feature of the Southwark neighborhood, the City of Philadelphia, and the Delaware River.

The staff notes that the nomination would benefit from some editing and fact checking. The staff corrected some obvious errors, for example revising the name of Mayor Blankenburg's director of the Department of Public Works, who was Morris Cooke, not Frederick Winslow Taylor, on page 34. Other errors remain; for example, the statement on page 26 that the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was planned as early as 1906 and the groundbreaking took place in 1917 is incorrect. Planning, in fact, began in the nineteenth century and the official groundbreaking, the demolition of some houses in the boulevard's path, occurred in 1907.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 775 S. Christopher Columbus Boulevard satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, D, H, and J.



NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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

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

Street address: 775 S. Christopher Columbus Blvd.

Postal code: 19147

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 and 40

Current/Common Name: _____

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

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

Occupancy: ☐ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☒ unknown

Current use: Commercial

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 1914 to 1915

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Built 1914-15

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: George W. Norris, Director, Dept. of Wharves, Docks & Ferries

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: The Snare and Triest Company, Contractors

Original owner: City of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: Rudolph Blankenburg, Mayor of Philadelphia

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 Keeping Society of Philadelphia Date 27 October 2021

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian Email keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717-602-5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 27 October 2021

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 28 October 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 28 October 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Port of Philadelphia

Address: 3460 N. Delaware Ave., 2nd Floor

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19134

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

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

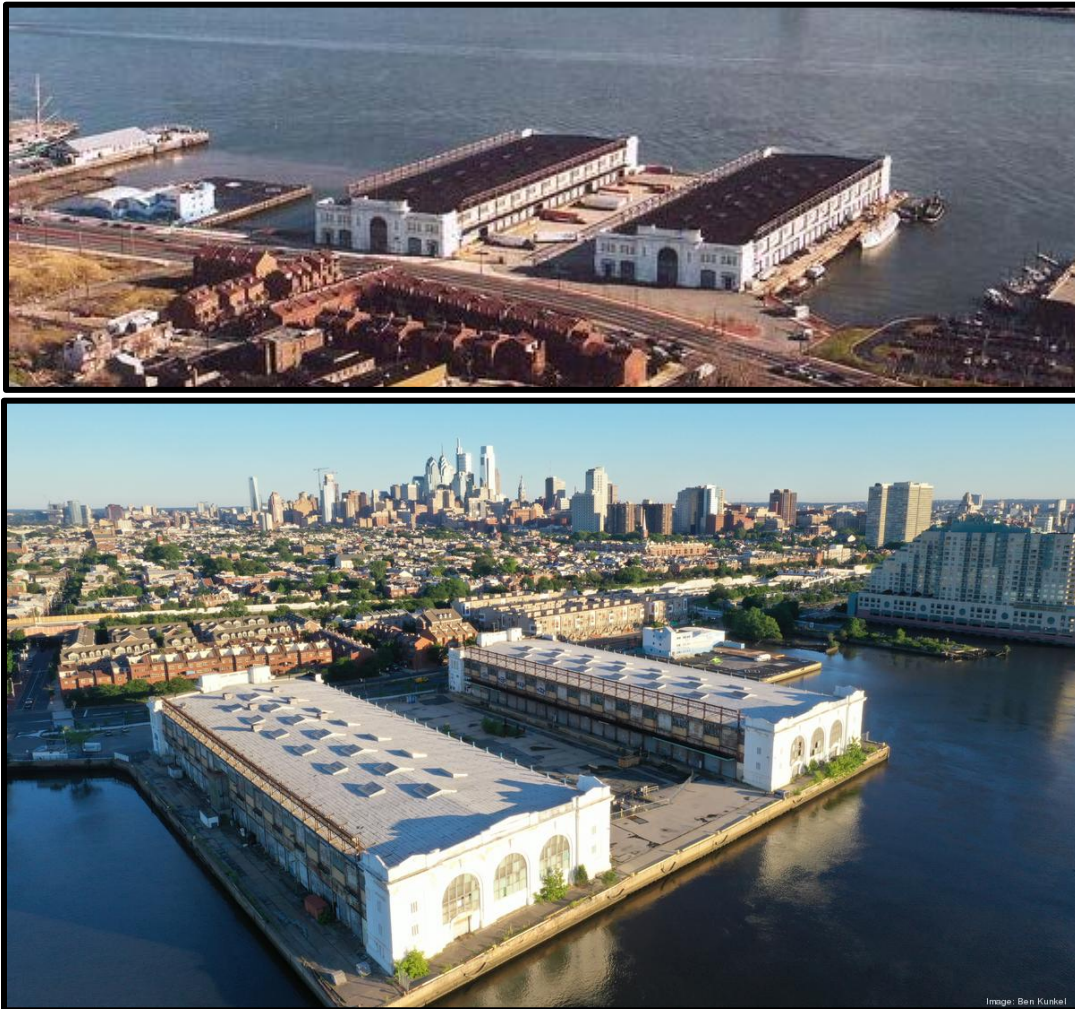


Figure 1. The inshore (west) elevation of Nos. 38 & 40. Source: wikimapia. Figure 2. Bottom: The side (south) and outshore (east) elevations of Nos. 38 & 40. Source: Inter Press Service.

SOUTHWARK MUNICIPAL PIERS

Nos. 38 & 40

IN THE BEAUX ARTS STYLE

BUILT 1914-15

775 S. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BOULEVARD
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19147-3503

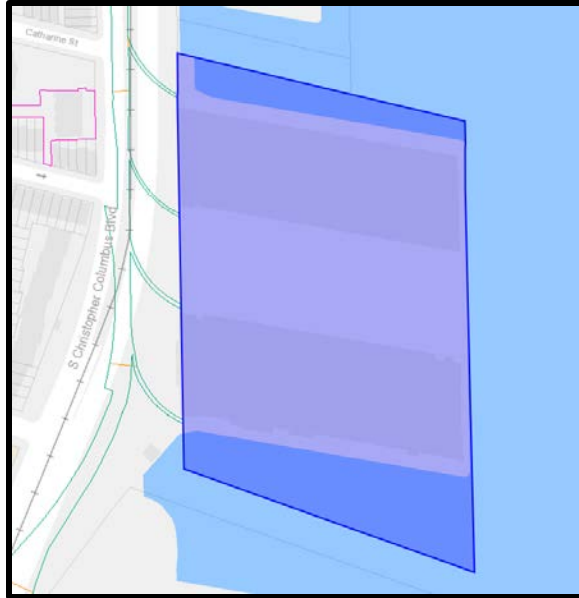


Figure 3. The boundary for the subject property is delineated by the blue line and overlay. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2021.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the designation of the subject property is as follows:

BEGINNING at a point on the easterly side of Delaware Avenue, (Variable width) at the point of intersection with the southerly side of Christian Street (60' wide) produced eastwardly; thence extending N 42° 56' 45" E along the easterly side of said Delaware Avenue, the distance of 132' 4-3/8" to the point of intersection of the easterly side of said Delaware Avenue and The Bulkhead Line of the Delaware River, approved by The Secretary of War September 10, 1940; thence extending N 1° 05' 56" E along the easterly side of said Delaware Avenue also being the said Bulkhead Line, the distance of 784' 3-1/8" to a point, said point being located on the easterly side of said Delaware Avenue, the distance of 76' 0-7/8" northwardly from the point of intersection of the northerly side of Catharine Street (50' wide) produced eastwardly; thence extending S 78° 20' 34" E along a line, the distance of 547' 10-3/4" to a point on The Pierhead Line of the Delaware River approved by the Secretary of War September 10, 1940; thence extending S 0° 46' 33" W along the said Pierhead Line, the distance of 1011'-11" to a point; thence extending N 68° 58' 00" W along an easterly projection of the southerly side of said Christian Street and crossing the said Bulkhead Line, the distance of 672' 11-3/8" to a point on the easterly side of said Delaware Avenue, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

Containing in Area 526,993.259 Square Feet or 12.09810 Acres

BEING known as 775 S. Christopher Columbus Boulevard.

Map Registry No. 005S140092

OPA Account No. 88401873

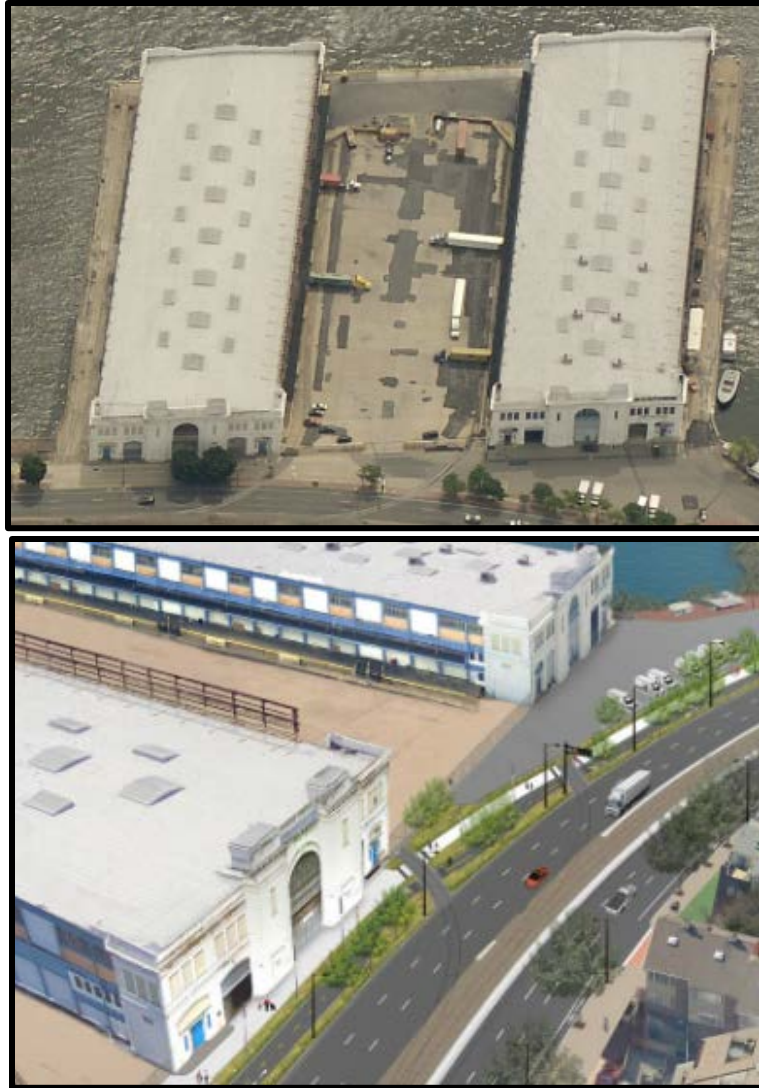


Figure 4. Top: The inshore (west) elevations. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2021. Figure 5. Bottom: Looking south at the inshore (west) elevations. Source: DelawareRiverWaterfront.com.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Built as substantial commercial pier sheds over the Delaware River between 1914 and 1915, the Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, at 775 S. Christopher Columbus Boulevard (referred to in the nomination as Delaware Avenue) are largely identical two-story bulkhead buildings of steel, concrete, and brick construction. Combining both the “City Beautiful” and the “City Useful” movements, the designs provided the Port of Philadelphia with both grandeur and modern infrastructure. On Delaware Avenue and the Delaware River, the east and west elevations featured distinctive Beaux Arts style facades, decorating a massive pier shed in between. Each structure provided approximately 500 pounds of cargo capacity per square foot on the first floor and an additional 250 on the second. The docks are located on each side of the building for the purpose of loading and unloading ships.

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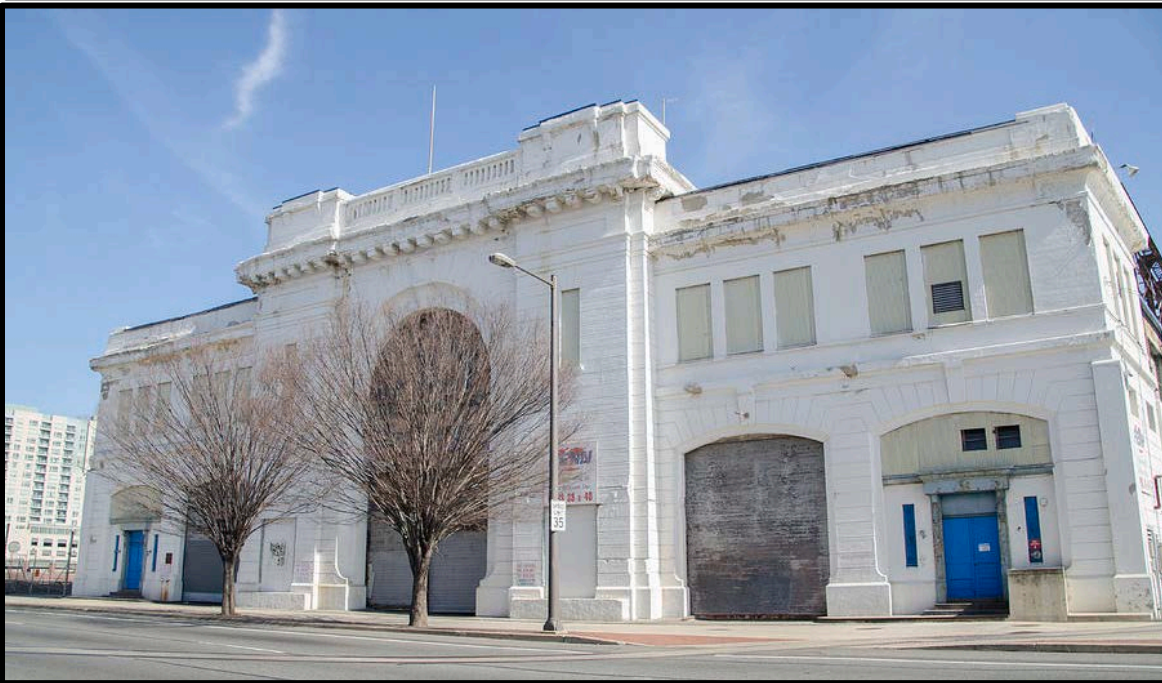


Figure 6. Top: The inshore (west) elevation of No. 38 in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 7. Bottom: The Inshore (west) elevation of No. 38. Source: pixels.com.

MUNICIPAL PIER NO. 38

INSHORE (WEST) ELEVATION

The inshore (west) elevation of No. 38 is an eclectic ensemble of Neoclassic and other stylistic elements. While certainly a modern design of its day, the west face of No. 38 employs the type of

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Memorial Arch theme in its central component that emulated ancient gateways like the Arch of Titus in Rome, among many other monumental elevations that marked important passageways or portals. Ruled by symmetry, the two-story fenestration is divided into three parts, at the center of which is an impressive arched opening that spans the height of both floors. The face of the arch and its abutments are characterized by the employment of smooth-faced banded rustication delineated by deep horizontal joints (minimized, if any, vertical joints) like that employed in the lower levels of the Palace of Versailles in France and the Foreign Office Building at London, England. The arch achieves additional distinction being slightly recessed from the abutments. Its intrados and extrados are comprised of cove moldings that extend from plinth to keystone. Myriad architectural details distinguish the keystone, extending into the cove molding below. The banded rustication elbows from the arch within that narrow expanse of the façade. The abutments are substantial masses with single openings per level—single pedestrian doorways, now shuttered, at the ground floor and single windows above. The pedestrian doors were once accessed by steps, which now only partially survive. The employment of elbows in the banded rustication occurs again at the slender second-floor windows, both of which are also shuttered. Separated from the second floor by moldings, traditional spandrels featuring single panels flank the spandrels of the tympanum. The entirety of this central part of the façade is set beneath a cornice of dentils and other molding types derived from Neoclassic architecture. Rising above the central part of the façade is a parapet comprised of a traditional balustrade. Impressive pedestals each with a stepped face are set above the abutments. These features support a three-part balustrade that stands high above the archway with a disused flagpole extending from the center.

Flanking and set back slightly from the central part, identical north and south two-story elevations feature symmetrical fenestrations each with two vehicle openings at the ground floor and two sets of three windows rising above. Unlike the central arch, the vehicle bays are defined by segmental arches, from which the same banded rustication elbows extend from coved moldings. These details begin at the plinths and extend to the keystone of each vehicle opening. The inner vehicle bays feature insensitive replacement garage doors, while the outer bays feature original pedestrian entrances featuring simple Neoclassic-inspired surrounds. Small narrow windows, all of which sits beneath a large, infilled transom within the larger bay, flank each opening. The second floor features a smooth-face façade, deviating from the banded rustication, each side featuring two sets of traditional rectangular windows that have been infilled. Each side features a cornice and a low parapet wall.

While the north and south elevations are largely undecorated, industrial elevations, serving the flanking docks, the Beaux Arts façade extends roughly one bay from the west to provide some depth to the inshore (west) elevation. The rustication extends on the first floor, as does the three-part window theme.



Figure 8. Looking west at the outshore (east) elevation. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2021.

OUTSHORE (EAST) ELEVATION

Designed to be seen by approaching ships and from New Jersey, the outshore (east) elevation is a two-story façade dominated by three massive arched windows flanked by substantial abutments. While thoroughly modern in its design, the employment of arches in sets of three has been an architectural theme since ancient times, including examples such as the Arch of Hadrian in Jerash, Jordan, the Gate of Mazaeus and Mithridates in the ancient city of Ephesus and the Qasr Al-Mshatta, also in Jordan. Less complex than the inshore (west) face, this elevation is characterized by a fenestration that reads as one large, relatively continuous unit. The façade is dominated by three massive round arch windows of equal size with likely original multi-light window fabric. Each arched opening is detailed with cove moldings that extend from the plinth to the keystone. In addition, this elevation is also clad in the same banded rustication. Below the northerly and southerly windows are single pedestrian doors that lead to a narrow deck. The triple is flanked by abutments that feature two-story recessed panels that are set with a façade characterized by banded rustication. A horizontal band unites the doorways, the piers, and abutments at the base of the triple arch windows. Another horizontal band of moldings has a similar effect at the cornice level. A low parapet wall further enhances the façade. Like at Delaware Avenue, the outshore (east) façade continues at the corners to the north and south elevations to provide addition depth to the elevation.



Figure 9. Top: The inshore (west) elevation of No. 40 in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 10. Bottom: The inshore (west) and south elevations. Source: wikiwand.com.

MUNICIPAL PIER NO. 40 INSHORE (WEST) ELEVATION

The inshore (west) elevation of No. 40 is an eclectic ensemble of Neoclassic and other traditional stylistic elements. Ruled by symmetry, the two-story fenestration is divided into three parts, at the center of which is an impressive arched opening that spans the height of both floors. The face of the arch and its abutments are characterized by the employment of smooth-faced banded rustication delineated by deep horizontal joints (with minimized, if any, vertical joints). The arch

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achieves additional distinction being recessed, just slightly, from the abutments. Its intrados and extrados are comprised of cove moldings that extend from plinth to key stone. Myriad architectural details distinguish the key stone, extending into the cove molding below. The banded rustication elbows from the arch within that narrow expanse of the façade. The two-story arched opening retains its original spandrel and window fabric above, though there is a replacement garage door at the ground floor. The abutments are substantial masses with single openings per level—single pedestrian doorways, now shuttered, at the ground floor and single windows above. The pedestrian doors were once accessed by steps, which now only partially survive. The employment of elbows in the banded rustication occurs again at the slender second-floor windows, both of which are also shuttered. Separated from the second floor by moldings, traditional spandrels featuring single panels flank the spandrels of the tympanum. The entirety of this central part of the façade is set beneath a cornice of dentils and other molding types derived from Neoclassic architecture. Rising above the central part of the façade is a parapet comprised of a traditional balustrade. Impressive pedestals each with a stepped face are set above the abutments. These features support a three-part balustrade that stands high above the archway with a disused flagpole extending from the center.



Figure 11. The inshore (west) and south elevations of No. 40. Source: [philadelphia-28.jpg \(425×285\)](http://philadelphia-28.jpg) (urban75.org).

Flanking and set back slightly from the central part, identical north and south two-story elevations feature symmetrical fenestrations each with two vehicle openings at the ground floor and two sets of three windows rising above. Unlike the central arch, the vehicle bays are defined by segmental arches, from which the same banded rustication elbows extend from coved moldings. These details begin at the plinths and extend to the keystone of each vehicle opening. The inner vehicle bays feature insensitive replacement garage doors, while the outer bays feature original pedestrian entrances, featuring simple Neoclassic-inspired surrounds. Small narrow windows, all of which sits beneath a large, infilled transom within the larger bay, flank each opening. The second floor features a smooth-face façade, deviating from the banded rustication, each side featuring two sets

of traditional rectangular windows that have been infilled. Each side features a cornice and a low parapet wall.

While the north and south elevations are largely unadorned, industrial elevations, serving the flanking docks, the Beaux Arts façade extends roughly one bay from the west to provide some depth to the inshore (west) elevation. The rustication extends on the first floor, as does the three-part window theme.

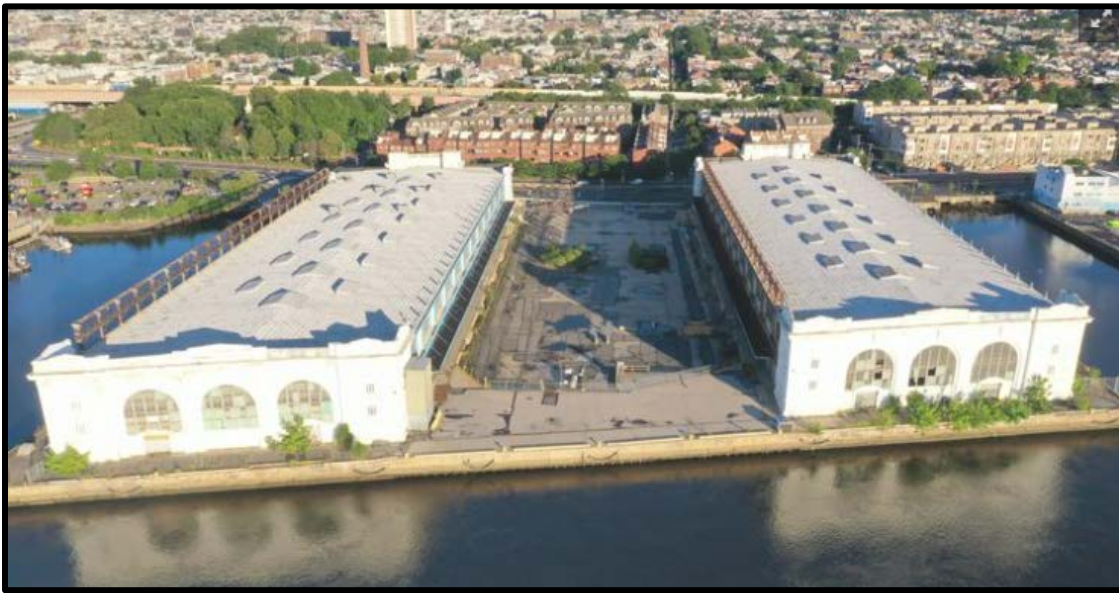


Figure 12. Top: The outshore (east) elevations. Source: bizjournals.com.

OUTSHORE (EAST) ELEVATION

Designed to be seen by approaching ships and from New Jersey, the outshore (east) elevation is a two-story façade dominated by three massive arched windows flanked by substantial abutments. Less complex than the inshore (west) face, this elevation is characterized by a fenestration that reads as one large, relatively continuous unit. The façade is dominated by three massive round arch windows of equal size and scale within which appears to be original multi-light window fabric. Each arched opening is detailed with cove moldings that extend from the plinth to the key stone. In addition, this elevation is also clad in the same banded rustication. Below the northerly and southerly windows are single pedestrian doors that lead to a narrow deck. The triple is flanked by abutments that feature two-story recessed panels that are set with a façade characterized by banded rustication. A horizontal band unites the doorways, the piers, and abutments at the base of the triple arch windows. Another horizontal band of moldings has a similar effect at the cornice level. A low parapet wall further enhances the façade. Like at Delaware Avenue, the outshore (east) façade continues at the corners to the north and south elevations to provide addition depth to the elevation.

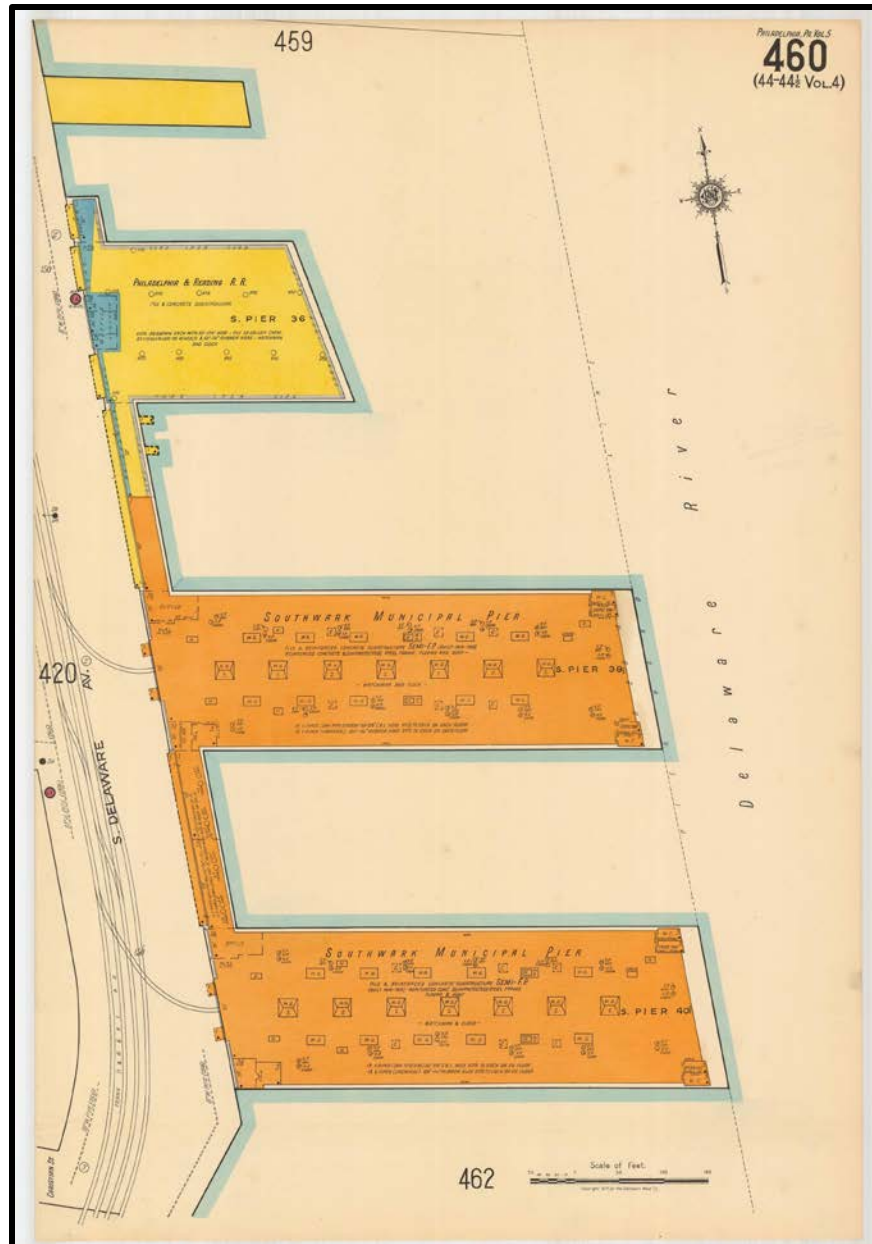


Figure 13. 1917 Sanborn Map of Nos. 38 & 40. Source: Insurance Maps of Philadelphia, Vol. 5, 1917 via Penn State University.

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Figure 14. Looking northeast at the inshore (west) elevations of Nos. 38 & 40. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40 are significant historic resources that merit designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 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;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (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; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance is related to the time of its construction in 1914-15.¹

¹ Please note that the subject property may be significant under additional Criteria for Designation.

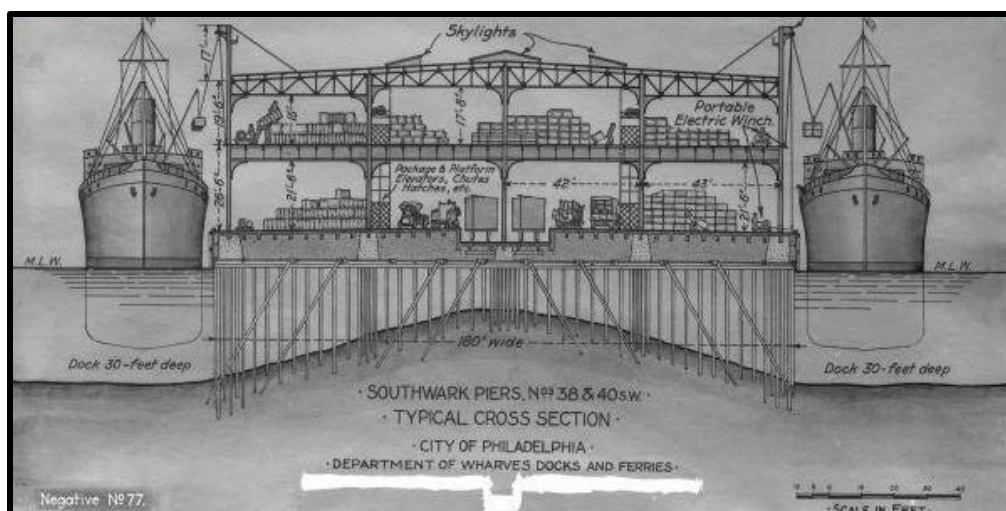


Figure 15. “Typical Cross Section” of the Southwark Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, in 1914. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOUTHWARK PIERS, NOS. 38 & 40

The Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40 were designed and built by the Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries between 1914 and 1915. The project was completed during the administration of Mayor Rudolph Blankenburg. The responsible department was headed by George W. Norris, Director; John Meigs, Assistant Director; and Norman L. Stamm, Harbor Engineer with assistance from Carroll W. Simon and John Downham, both Assistant Engineers. Both piers were constructed by The Snare and Triest Company.

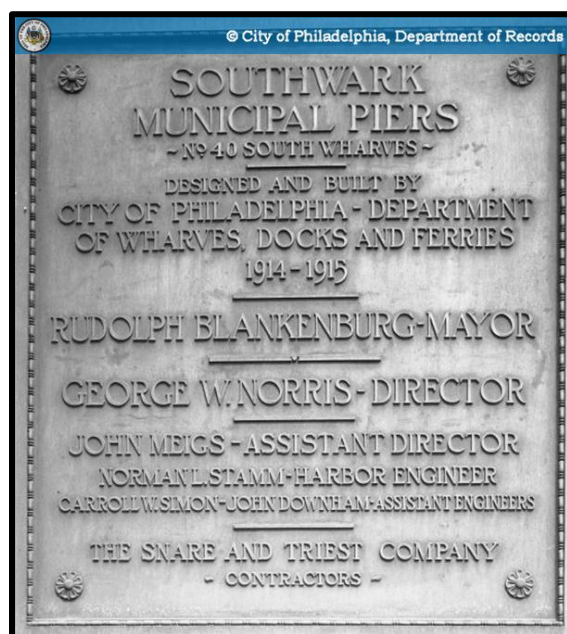


Figure 16. The dedication plaque informing the public of the basic information about No. 40. Source: Phillyhistory.org.

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Figures 17. and 18. Construction photographs of No. 38. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

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Figure 19. Top: Construction photographs of No. 38. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 20. Bottom: A photograph of No. 38 after completion in 1916. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

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Figure 21. Top: A photograph of the outshore (east) elevation of No. 38 after completion in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 22. Bottom: A photograph of the south elevation of No. 38 after completion in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

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Figure 23. Top: A construction photograph of No. 40 in 1914. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 24. Bottom: A construction photograph of No. 40 in ca. 1914-15. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

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Figure 25. Top: A photograph of the inshore (west) elevation of No. 40 after completion in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 26. Bottom: A photograph of the inshore (west) and south elevations of No. 40 after completion in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

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Figure 27. Top: A photograph of the outshore (east) elevations of Nos. 38 & 40 after completion in 1915. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 28. Bottom: A Port-Air-View North from Fitzwater Street, showing the evolving Port of Philadelphia in 1920. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

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Figure 29. Top: A photograph of the inshore (west) elevations of No. 38 & 40 during construction ca.1914-15. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

CRITERIA A, C, D, H, & J

Standing on the east side of Delaware Avenue just above a bend at Chirstian Street, the Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, comprise a striking duality of civic grandeur at the Delaware River waterfront. Satisfying **Criterion H**, these impressive structures form an established and familiar visual feature and landmark of the Southwark neighborhood, the City of Philadelphia, and the Delaware River. Satisfying **Criteria A and J**, Nos. 38 & 40, built between 1914 and 1915, represent the codification, establishment, and enlargement of the Port of Philadelphia as a municipal program that began around 1909 and extended through the 1920s. For much of its history, the waterfront's physical trajectory was almost entirely propelled by market forces rather than municipal intervention. While "city planning was an almost nonexistent discipline" in the early twentieth century, the vision for modern port facilities and infrastructure took root in 1909 when the Interstate Commerce Commission executed the "South Philadelphia Agreement," which included both municipal and private interests.² This led to the widening and extension of Delaware Avenue from Port Richmond to South Philadelphia, creating the major artery that exists today. No. 38 & 40 were among the earliest of the grand pier sheds to be built as part of the larger effort to

² Jonathan E. Farnham. "A Bridge Game: Constructing A Co-Operative Commonwealth in Philadelphia, 1900-1926," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2000).; and Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Montague Massengale. *New York 1900, Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915*. (New York, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1983), 49-50.

spur commercial activity through the creation of a system of municipal piers along the Delaware River waterfront.

Satisfying **Criteria C and D**, Nos. 38 & 40 represent an era of civic architecture that transformed metropolitan aspirations across the country, a movement that was rooted in the École des Beaux-Arts and inspired by the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1892-93. Evocative of this episode in civic grandeur, the subject structures possess disguising characteristics of the Beaux Arts style. Beyond the grand institutional buildings and monuments often associated with the Beaux Arts, transportation infrastructure was ennobled by neoclassicism, installing a sense of metropolitan permanence and civic pride to the buildings and structure that served a public purpose, including railroads, subways, piers, and bridges nationwide.

Nos. 38 & 40 represent a period known for such Beaux Arts style pier shed and ferry designs, including several in New York (the St. George Ferry Terminal (1907/Demolished), Staten Island, designed by Carrere & Hastings; the Whitehall Ferry Terminal (1907/Extant), the Battery, designed by Walker & Morris; the Chelsea Piers (1910/Demolished), design by Warren & Wetmore), San Francisco (the North Point Pier Bulkhead Buildings (1910-31/Extant) and the Central Embarcadero Piers (1918/Extant), and Philadelphia (Municipal Pier No. 16 (1913/Demolished); South Wharves, Dock Street, Municipal Pier No. 78 (1918/Extant), Moyamensing Group; Municipal Pier No. 9 (1919/Extant), North Delaware River, Cherry Street; Municipal Pier Nos. 84 (1919-20/Extant), Moyamensing Group; Municipal Pier No. 82 (1921/Extant), Moyamensing Group; and Municipal Pier No. 30 (1921/Demolished), Southwark Group).³

The Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, are distinctive landmarks that inform the City of Philadelphia's architectural, civic, cultural, developmental, economic, social, and visual heritage, satisfying **Criteria A, C, D, H, and J**.

³ Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Montague Massengale. *New York 1900, Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915*. (New York, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1983), 49-50.; *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).; and additional information from the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Database of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.



Figure 30. World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago: Palace of Mechanic Arts and Lagoon, 1892. Source: Library of Congress.

CRITERION D

The Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, embody distinguishing characteristics of the Beaux Arts style as applied to civic architecture, including buildings and structures that served transportation infrastructure. The State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission published the *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide (Architectural Field Guide)* in 2015 and describe nine *Identifiable Features* of the Beaux Arts style, all of which are extant in the subject buildings:

1. Flat or low-pitched roof
2. Wall surfaces with decorative garlands, floral patterns or shields
3. Symmetrical facade
4. First story rustic stonework
5. Grand and imposing in size and scale
6. Roof line balustrade
7. Pedimented or arched windows
8. Columns on porches and porticoes
9. Quoins⁴

⁴ The Beaux Arts Style 1885-1930, Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide, published online by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Accessed on 25 October 2021. < [Beaux Arts Style 1885 - 1930 | PHMC > Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide \(state.pa.us\)](https://www.pahmc.org/Pennsylvania-Architectural-Field-Guide)>

HISTORIC CONTEXT: BEAUX ARTS STYLE, 1885-1930

The *Architectural Field Guide* published the following summary on the history of the Beaux Arts in relationship to its stylistic origins and its local application:

The Beaux Arts style, named for the premier French school of architecture, the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, was introduced to the United States by American architects like Richard Morris Hunt who attended the prestigious school in the late nineteenth-century. Hunt designed the Newport, RI mansion of Cornelius Vanderbilt, "The Breakers," in this style in 1892. The Beaux Arts style was most often seen in places where turn-of-the-century wealth was concentrated, major urban centers and resort communities. The popularity of this style was advanced by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. With its grandiose treatment of classic architectural forms, the Beaux Arts style was seen as an ideal expression of both corporate wealth and civic pride. Buildings of this style are both formal and monumental with abundant and opulent decorative details. The Beaux Arts style is especially suited for public buildings designed to deliver a strong symbolic message, such as libraries, museums, court houses, train stations, and government offices. Privately owned Beaux Arts style mansions delivered a message as well, one of personal wealth. This style was popular in an era of great American palace building marked by eclectic use of historic architectural themes and elements.

The Beaux Arts style uses formal symmetry, Italian Renaissance form, and classical Greek and Roman decorative elements like columns, pediments and balustrades to create a grand and imposing architectural statement. Exterior decorative details may include quoins, balconies, terraces, porches, and porticoes as well as ornamental windows and grand entrances. This style also featured lavish interiors including pilasters, arched openings, elaborate chandeliers, coffered ceilings, or marble fireplaces. The State Capitol Building in Harrisburg, completed in 1906 and designed by Joseph Huston, is a penultimate example of this style. Envisioned as a "palace of art," the Capitol building has opulent detail and classically inspired design. Described by President Theodore Roosevelt at its 1906 dedication as "the handsomest State Capitol I ever saw," the State Capitol is Beaux Arts style architecture at its most extravagant. Other examples include private mansions and a vast array of public buildings, courthouses, libraries and offices.⁵

⁵ The Beaux Arts Style 1885-1930, Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide, published online by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Accessed on 25 October 2021. < [Beaux Arts Style 1885 - 1930 | PHMC](#) > [Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide \(state.pa.us\)](#) >



Figure 31. Looking east at the piers along Delaware Avenue and the Delaware River in the 1930s. Source: Dallin Aerial Surveys, Hagley Digital Collections.

CRITERION C

The Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, reflect the environment of civic, institutional, and municipal architecture in an era characterized by the Beaux Arts style. Inspired by the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* and World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893, the most important American cities invested significantly in both grand and modern facilities and infrastructure that was ennobled by the eclectic Neoclassicism of the Beaux Arts. Philadelphia, like Boston, Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, etc., saw the rise of privately funded architectural projects that serve as prominent examples of the style. *A Field Guide To American Houses*, authored by Virginia and Lee McAlester, describe the “City Beautiful Movement” as an important aspect of the Beaux Arts, which took root through “monumental planning” for “city centers” in Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.⁶

Pennsylvania Architecture, authored by Deborah Stephens Burns and Richard J. Webster, contextualizes the stylistic movement at the state level, which began and ended in Philadelphia:

The last, or creative, phase of the picturesque evolved during the 1880s and reached its maturity in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Buildings of this period are characterized by large scale, broad symbolism, and a return to eclecticism of taste, as architects creatively synthesized new designs from old sources for big buildings with archaeologically correct details and expanded functions. Sometimes called the American Renaissance, it was a time when large-scale classicism was virtually de rigueur for business, institutional, and public buildings. The era began with Hermann Schwarzmann’s marble-faced brick and iron Memorial Hall (PA-1659), an early Beaux Arts work for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and faded during the Great Depression with such examples of stripped classicism

⁶ Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide To American Houses*. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 380.

as Paul Cret's marble-clad steel-frame Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia (PA-1506), built 1931-35.⁷

Perhaps the most important of Philadelphia's municipal projects spurred by the "City Beautiful" was the creation of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, planning for which began as early as 1906. However, its groundbreaking did not materialize until 1917, after French landscape architect Jacques Greber was commissioned to finalize a plan that emulated the Champs-Élysées in Paris, France.⁸ With City Hall at one end and the Philadelphia Museum of Art at other, grand civic, municipal, and institutional buildings were integral to the success of this planned environment. The Beaux Arts style clearly influenced the following monumental structures: the Parkway Central Library (1917-27), designed by Julian Abele, chief designer in the office of prominent Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer; the Boy Scout Building (1929); the Rodin Museum (1929), designed by Paul Cret; the Board of Education Building (1930); the Franklin Institute (1934); the Family Court Building (1938-39), all designed by John T. Windrim.⁹



Figure 32. Looking east at the municipal piers just below the Benjamin Franklin Bridge along Delaware Avenue and the Delaware River. Source: Dallin Aerial Surveys, Hagley Digital Collections.

⁷ Deborah Stephens Burns and Richard J. Webster with Candace Reed Stern. *Pennsylvania Architecture, The Historic American Buildings Survey with catalog entries 1933-1990*. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2000), 133.

⁸ David Bruce Brownlee and Sherry Babbitt. *Building the City Beautiful, The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art*. (The University of Michigan, 1989).

⁹ The topical information on the Beaux Arts style buildings and structures of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was found in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Database of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.



Figure 33. Top: 1925. Bottom: Piers 10 to 40 South, Port of Philadelphia, 1939. Source: Dallin Aerial Surveys, Hagley Digital Collections. Figure 34. Bottom: Looking north at the Moyamensing Group, ca.1930s. Source: Dallin Aerial Surveys, Hagley Digital Collections.

While the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and its associated built environment is the most visible and impressive local product of the “City Beautiful Movement,” the American Beaux Arts was pervasive in other areas of municipal planning, including the enlargement and modernization of transportation infrastructure. This included buildings and structures of varying size and scale that served railroads, subways, piers, and bridges. Philadelphia’s Delaware River waterfront was one of the most important benefactors of a comprehensive municipal planning effort characterized by the monumental Beaux Arts aesthetic. As part of a larger effort to modernize and enlarge the Port of Philadelphia, the development of a comprehensive municipal pier system along the Delaware River waterfront led to the design and construction of several monumental pier sheds.

At the same time, “Philadelphia’s municipal government often enunciated as one of its primary goals the joint creation of a “City Beautiful” and a “City Useful,” which led to the establishment of an Art Jury. The purpose of this “critical division” was to “curb individualism with the

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legislation of a common aesthetic, limiting “both the excessively utilitarian individual who, motivated solely by greed, eschewed any expenditure on beauty, and the excessively extravagant individual who, motivated solely by taste, eschewed any endorsement of efficiency.”¹⁰ Along with the city’s Permanent Committee on Comprehensive Plans, the Art Jury was in part responsible for guiding the design and architectural style of new buildings and structures along Delaware Avenue. In its Fifth Annual Report, the Art Jury published photographs of the subject buildings, showing the designs were “Jury Approved.” The Art Jury would later review the design for a privately built pier at the Catharine Street Wharf, which was adjacent to the north of Nos. 38 and 40. The proposed pier modeled their bulkhead building after the subject buildings in both design and architectural style. The Art Jury determined that upon completion the three piers constituted “a new standard for such structures,” which led to the construction of several other grand pier sheds in the Beaux Arts style.¹¹ The new standard for the design and construction of these buildings was accompanied by a new standard for civic design review, which is now a standard part of city planning.

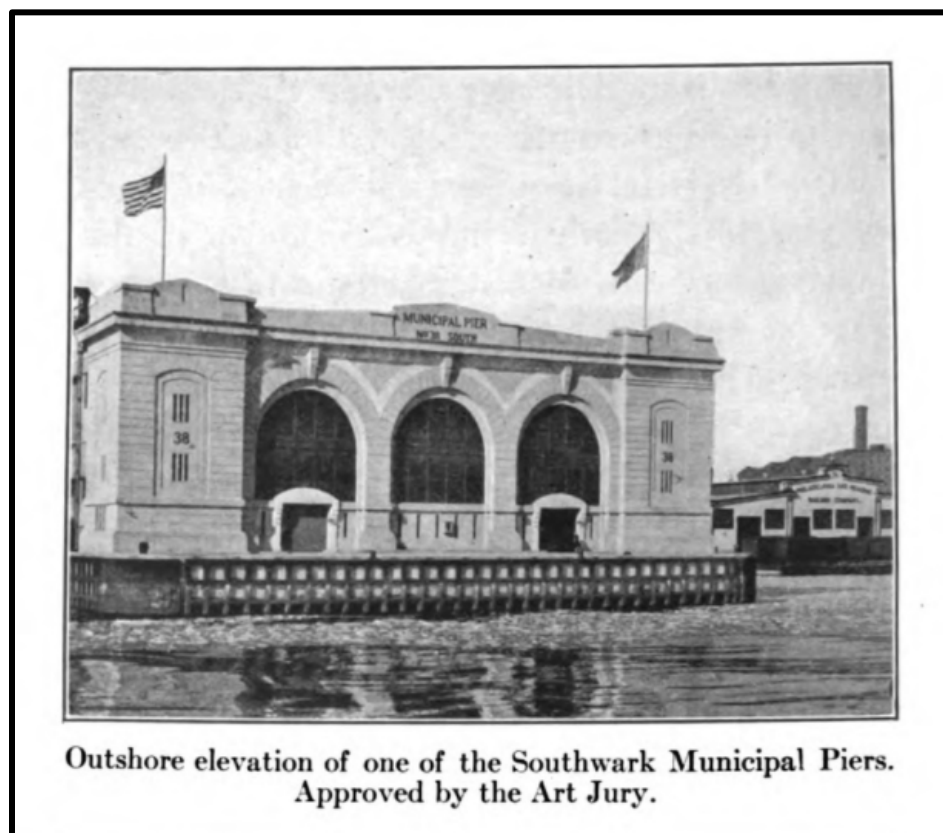


Figure 35. The design for No. 38, as approved by the Art Jury. Source: *Art Jury, Fifth Annual Report*. (Philadelphia: 1915), 10 and 17.

¹⁰ Jonathan E. Farnham. “A Bridge Game: Constructing A Co-Operative Commonwealth in Philadelphia, 1900–1926,” Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2000), 413–14.

¹¹ *Art Jury, Fifth Annual Report*. (Philadelphia: 1915), 10 and 17.

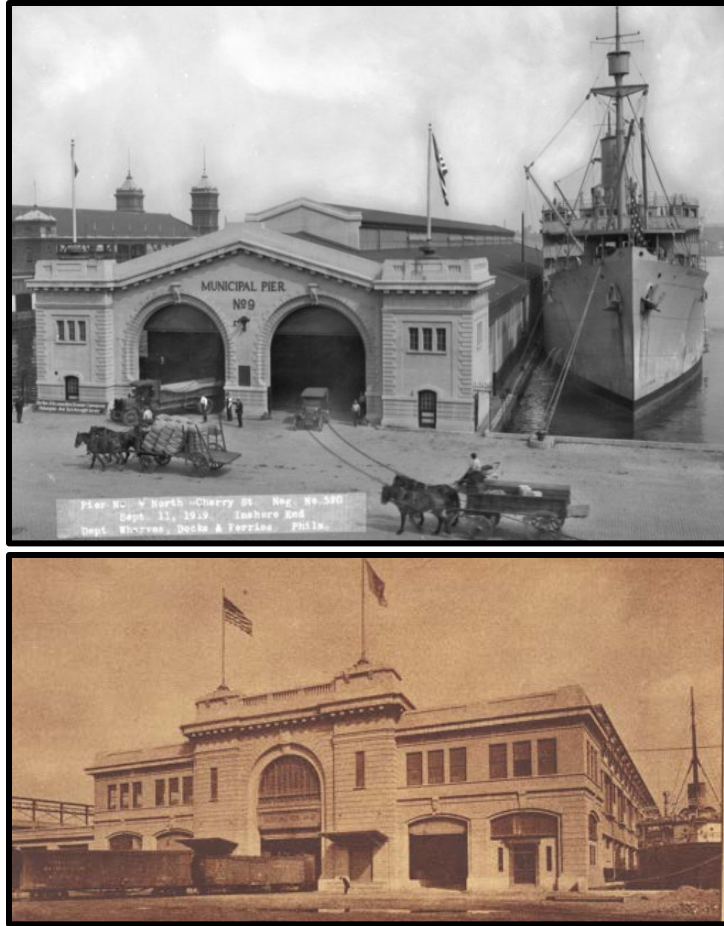


Figure 36. Top: The inshore (west) elevation of Municipal Pier No. 9, North Delaware River, Cherry Street (1919/Extant). Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 37. Bottom: The inshore (west) elevation of No. 38. Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

The following Beaux Arts style buildings were constructed to serve the Port of Philadelphia between 1916 and 1921:

- Municipal Pier No. 16, South Wharves, Dock Street (1913/Demolished)
- Municipal Pier No. 38, Southwark (1914-15/Extant)
- Municipal Pier No. 40, Southwark (1914-15/Extant)
- Municipal Pier No. 78, Moyamensing Group, McKean Street (1918/Extant)
- Municipal Pier No. 9, North Delaware River, Cherry Street (1919/Extant)
- Municipal Pier Nos. 84, Moyamensing Group (1919-20/Extant)
- Municipal Pier Nos. 82, Moyamensing Group, Wolf Street (1921/Extant)
- Municipal Pier No. 30, Southwark Group, Kenilworth Street (1921/Demolished)¹²

¹² *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).

The subject buildings were among the earliest of Philadelphia's grand pier sheds. However, there was a stylistic shift away from the grand Beaux Arts aesthetic in the early 1920s after No. 30 was completed, which is reflected in Municipal Pier No. 4 (1922/Demolished), Chestnut Street; Municipal Pier No. 3 (1922/Demolished), North Girard Group, Market Street; Municipal Pier No. 5 (1923/Extant), North Girard Group, Arch Street.¹³



Figure 38. Top: Municipal Pier Nos. 36, 38, and 40 in 1919. Source: *Wharf Equipment*, November-December 1918, 820-40. Figure 39. Middle: Municipal Pier No. 78, Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia. Figure 40. Bottom: Municipal Pier No. 84, South Wharves, Source: Philadelphia, Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, Municipal Pier Construction Photographs, 1917-1921, City Archives of Philadelphia.

¹³ *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).

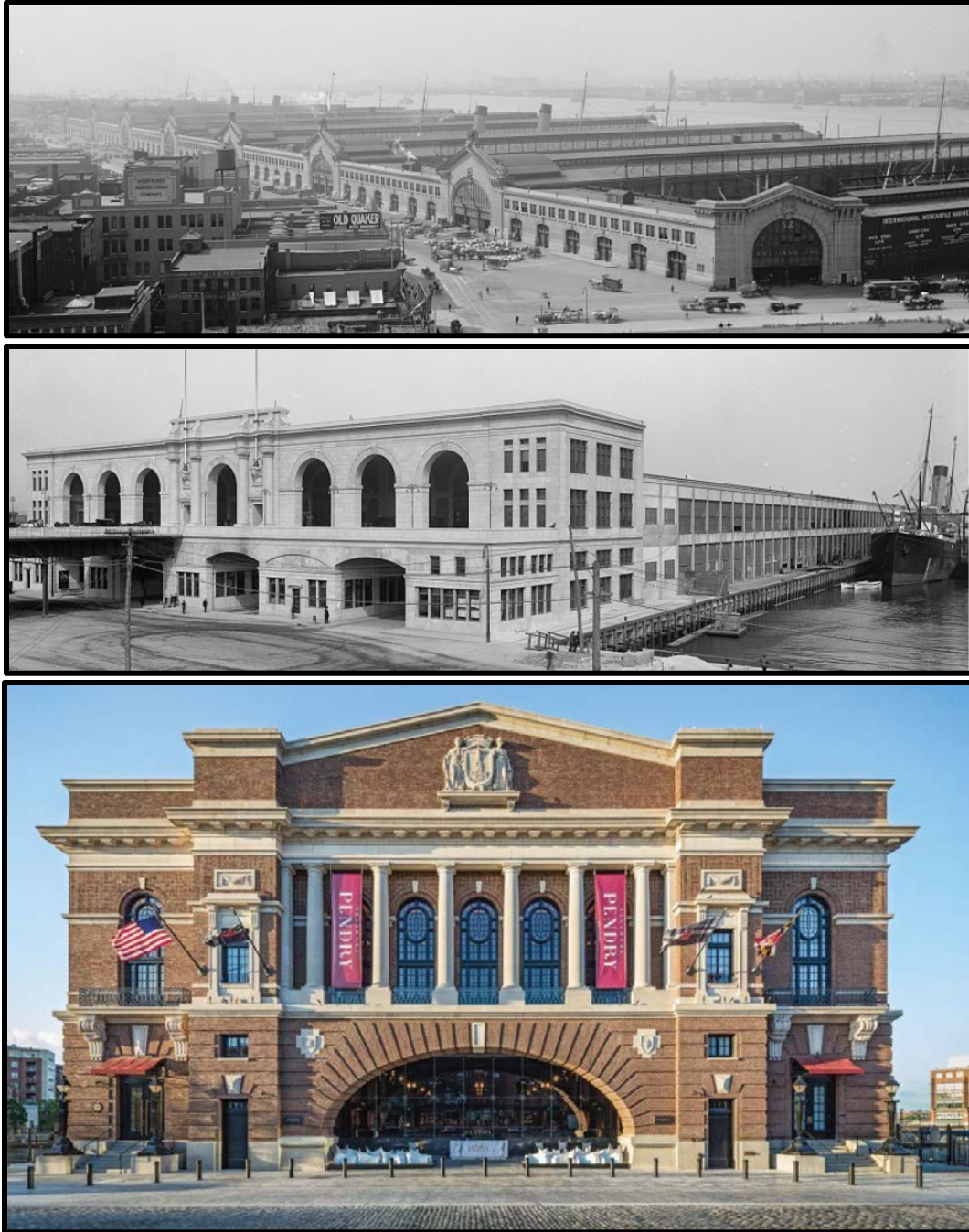


Figure 41. Top: Looking south at the Chelsea Piers (ca.1910/Demolished). Source: Library of Congress. Figure 42. Middle: Commonwealth Pier (Extant), Boston, Massachusetts. Source: Library of Congress. Figure 43. Bottom: Missing. Source: Missing.

The inspiration of the Beaux Arts is evident in similar structures even earlier in New York City, including the St. George Ferry Terminal (1907/Demolished) at St. George, Staten Island, designed by Carrere & Hastings; the Whitehall Ferry Terminal (1907/Extant) at the Battery, designed by Walker & Morris; and the Chelsea Piers (1910/Demolished) in Manhattan, design by Warren &

Wetmore.¹⁴ Grand pier sheds were also built in San Francisco, California between 1910 and 1931. These buildings included North Point Pier Bulkhead Buildings (1910-31/Extant); and the Central Embarcadero Piers (1918/Extant). Examples also exist in Baltimore, Maryland and Boston, Massachusetts—the Recreation Pier (1914/Extant) and the Commonwealth Pier (1914/Extant), respectively.



Figure 44.Top: Pier Nos. 1, 3, and 5 on the Embarcadero (Spanish: Wharf) in 1977. Source: Library of Congress.
Figure 45. Bottom: Pier 15, ca. 2010. Source: Bruce Demonte.

¹⁴Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Montague Massengale. *New York 1900, Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915*. (New York, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1983), 49-50.

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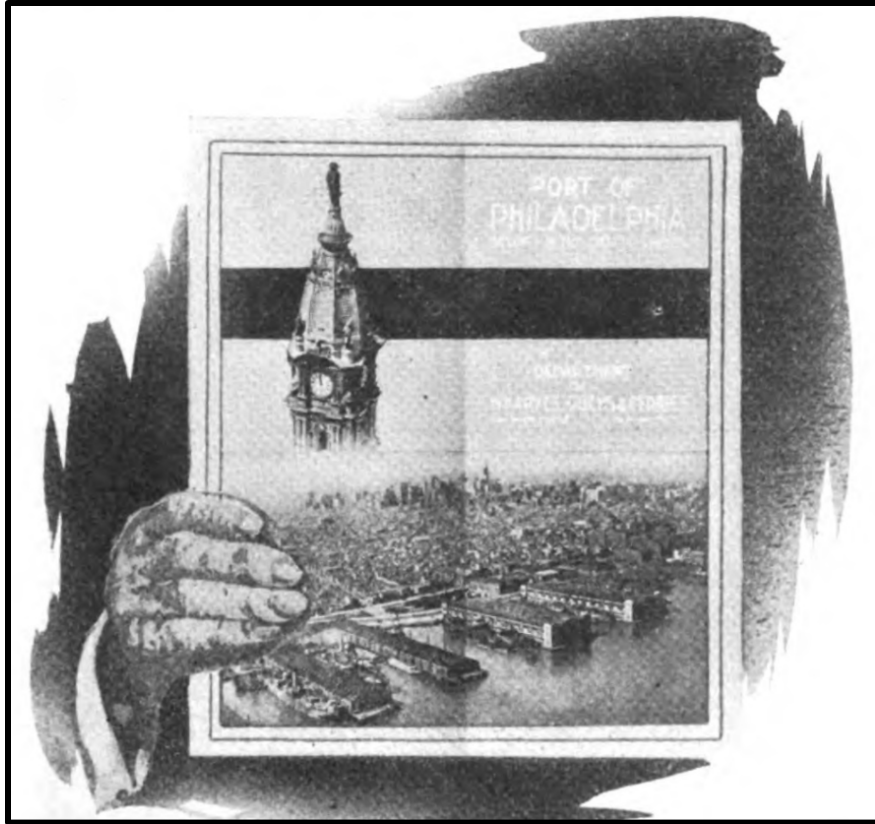


Figure 46. Advertising for the Port of Philadelphia, showing the subject property on right. Source: *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).

CRITERIA A & J

The Southwark Municipal Piers, Nos. 38 & 40, are among the earliest surviving buildings that represent the codification, establishment, and development of the Port of Philadelphia between 1909 and 1930, as well as the enlargement of Philadelphia's commercial and industrial prowess in the first decades of the twentieth century.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: PORT OF PHILADELPHIA IMPROVEMENTS & DELAWARE AVENUE EXPANSION, 1909 – 1930¹⁵

Philadelphia's past commercial and industrial primacy lies in the fact that it became a major port in both British North America and the United States. Located near abundant natural resources and agricultural products, the colonial city was able to gain status as the largest port in terms of trade by 1760. Though later overtaken by New York, Philadelphia would still retain its status as the second largest export port throughout much of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

¹⁵ Though revised for this designation, this context was abstracted from the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Edward Corner Marine Merchandising Warehouse.

¹⁶ Thomas M. Doerflinger. *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 335–42

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The leadership of Philadelphia's port began to falter by the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1907 its foreign trade was almost equal with that of Baltimore, a city with one-third the population, and there were fewer than twenty wharves along the Delaware, most of which could not accommodate large ships.¹⁷ Though the city established a single agency to manage the port, Philadelphia's machine politics limited its ability to effect change. However, the first steps to improve the port came in 1909, when the Interstate Commerce Commission decided to pursue the "South Philadelphia Agreement," at which time they also codified the Port of Philadelphia.¹⁸ In two years' time the city managed to put together a draft agreement with the three major railroads to improve access to the port. Known as the "South Philadelphia Agreement," it provided the major railroads direct access to the wharves through a belt-line route. In exchange for giving up some rights of way and wharves for municipal use, the city gave the railroads lands in South Philadelphia and committed to extending and widening Delaware Avenue to allow for rail lines connecting to all the wharves from lower end of South Philadelphia to Port Richmond.¹⁹



Figure 47. An aspirational rendering of the Port of Philadelphia, showing Nos. 38 & 40 at the far right. Source: *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).

While plans for an improved Port of Philadelphia were made in 1909, it was not until after the corrupt administration of Mayor John E. Reyburn (1907 to 1911) that plans were implemented. In fact, things were so bad under the Reyburn administration that the city elected a reform candidate in Rudolph Blakenburg, who served from 1911 to 1916. Mayor Blakenburg worked tirelessly with his Director of Public Works, Morris Cooke, in an endeavor "to overcome politics of selfishness

¹⁷ Lloyd M. Abernethy, "Progressivism, 1906–1909," in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 546.

¹⁸ Jonathan E. Farnham. "A Bridge Game: Constructing A Co-Operative Commonwealth in Philadelphia, 1900–1926," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2000), 413–14.

¹⁹ The Regional Plan of the Philadelphia Tri-State District (Philadelphia: 1932), 447–49.; and Jonathan E. Farnham. "A Bridge Game: Constructing A Co-Operative Commonwealth in Philadelphia, 1900–1926," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2000), 696–96.

with an ostensibly apolitical regime of technocrats” to improve much of the city’s infrastructure.²⁰ George W. Norris served as Director of the Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries with John Meigs as Assistant Director. It was under the Blakenburg Administration that the first of the grand pier sheds or bulkhead buildings were constructed along Delaware Avenue with Municipal Pier No. 16, South Wharves, Dock Street in 1913—now demolished; and the subject properties to follow in 1914-15.²¹

The progress of the port improvements would continue through the 1910s and 1920s, inspiring a commercial and industrial boom along the Delaware River. By 1930, the customs collections had increased by 93% since 1907.²² This increased activity led to an overall enlargement of not only the port facilities, but also the demand for commercial and industrial enterprises providing products and services for all components of the port and its activities. The physical improvements also forced many to adapt to a new environment. Obviously, commercial and industrial entities with enlarged capacities and the ability to change mostly benefited from these improvements.

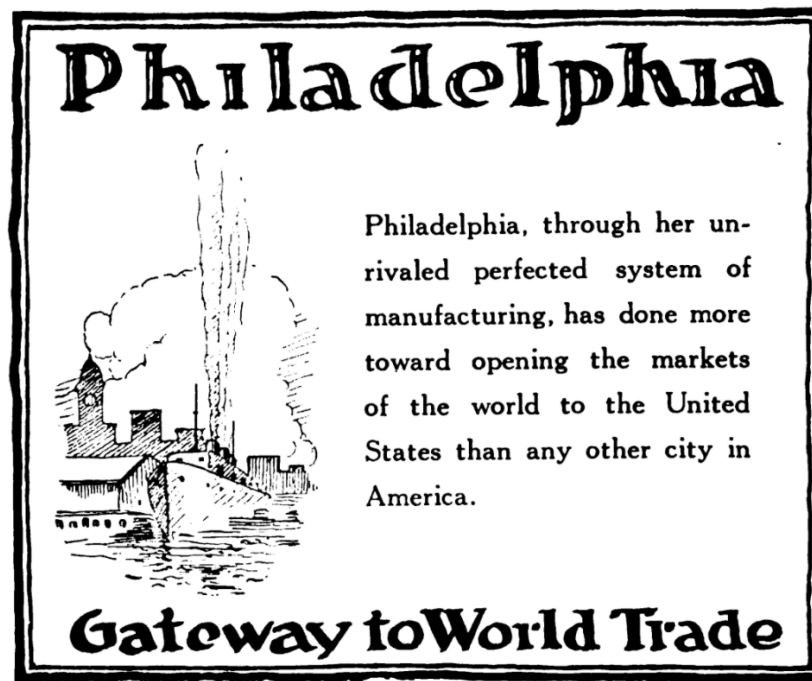


Figure 48. An advertisement for the Port of Philadelphia that speaks to the gateway architecture created by the grand Beaux Arts pier sheds. Source: *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).

²⁰ Jonathan E. Farnham. “A Bridge Game: Constructing A Co-Operative Commonwealth in Philadelphia, 1900–1926,” Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2000), 15.

²¹ *The Port of Philadelphia, Its History, Advantages and Facilities*. (Philadelphia: The Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, 1926).

²² The Regional Plan of the Philadelphia, 105.

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This nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian; and Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Athenaeum of Philadelphia

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Newspapers.com

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