

**ADDRESS: 1503-05 WALNUT ST**

Name of Resource: City National Bank Building

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: PR Walnut Associates LP

Nominator: Center City Residents' Association

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, [kim.chantry@phila.gov](mailto:kim.chantry@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1503-05 Walnut Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building, constructed between 1930 and 1931 for the City National Bank, satisfies Criteria for Designation C and D. Under Criterion C, the nomination claims that the building reflects the environment in an era characterized by the Art Deco style of architecture, during which several related modernist movements in Philadelphia became the dominant aesthetics for commercial buildings. Under Criterion D, the nomination argues that the stylized geometrical ornamentation, low-relief decorative panels, and other flourishes on the façade are distinguishing characteristics of the Art Deco style as applied to commercial buildings in Philadelphia.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1503-05 Walnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C and D.



Committee on Historic Designation minutes,  
October 18, 2023

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION  
OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2023  
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM  
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. The following Committee members joined her:

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., Chair	X		
Suzanna Barucco	X		
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Lavery	X		
Debbie Miller		X	
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.	X		

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director  
Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III  
Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner III  
Shannon Garrison, Historic Preservation Planner II  
Heather Hendrickson, Historic Preservation Planner I  
Ted Maust, Historic Preservation Planner I  
Alex Till, Historic Preservation Planner I

The following persons attended the online meeting:

Tim Kerner, Center City Residents Association  
Hanna Stark, Preservation Alliance  
Brett Feldman, Esq., Klehr Harrison  
Jay Farrell  
Allison Weiss, SoLo/Germantown Civic Association  
Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society  
Dennis Carlisle  
Suzanne Ponsen, West Central Germantown Neighbors  
Aaron Wunsch  
Amy Lambert  
Adrian Trevisan  
David Traub

<b>ITEM: 804-16 N ORIANNA ST (PART OF 801-15 N 4TH ST)</b>					
<b>MOTION: Designate; Criteria E and J</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Cohen</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: Barucco</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller					X
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

**ADDRESS: 1503-05 WALNUT ST**

Name of Resource: City National Bank Building

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: PR Walnut Associates LP

Nominator: Center City Residents' Association

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

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1503-05 Walnut Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building, constructed between 1930 and 1931 for the City National Bank, satisfies Criteria for Designation C and D. Under Criterion C, the nomination claims that the building reflects the environment in an era characterized by the Art Deco style of architecture, during which several related modernist movements in Philadelphia became the dominant aesthetics for commercial buildings. Under Criterion D, the nomination argues that the stylized geometrical ornamentation, low-relief decorative panels, and other flourishes on the façade are distinguishing characteristics of the Art Deco style as applied to commercial buildings in Philadelphia.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1503-05 Walnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C and D.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING:** 01:25:20

**PRESENTERS:**

- Ms. Chantry presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society and Tim Kerner of the Center City Residents' Association represented the nomination.
- No one represented the property owner.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Ms. Cooperman remarked that the façade is a unique design for a bank building, and that the amount of glass is surprising.
- Mr. Cohen commented on the design of glass and stone, and the skeletal nature of the facade.
- Ms. Barucco thanked the Center City Residents' Association for nominating this and other buildings on Walnut Street over the past several years.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- David Traub, representing Save Our Sites, commented in support of the nomination.
- Allison Weiss commented in support of the nomination.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The building was constructed between 1930 and 1931 for the City National Bank.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The building reflects the environment in an era characterized by the Art Deco style of architecture, satisfying Criterion C.
- The stylized geometrical ornamentation, low-relief decorative panels, and other flourishes on the façade are distinguishing characteristics of the Art Deco style as applied to commercial buildings in Philadelphia, satisfying Criterion D.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1503-05 Walnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C and D.

<b>ITEM: 1503-05 WALNUT ST</b>					
<b>MOTION: Designate; Criteria C and D</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Cohen</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: Milroy</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller					X
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

**ADJOURNMENT**

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING:** 01:36:20

**ACTION:** The Committee on Historic Designation adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- Minutes of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and its advisory Committees are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the video recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.
- Application materials and staff overviews are available on the Historical Commission's website, [www.phila.gov/historical](http://www.phila.gov/historical).

# 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: 1503-05 Walnut Street

Postal code: 19102-3001

#### 2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: City National Bank Building

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 1930 to 1931

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1930-31

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Arthur W. Hall, Architect

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: George Kessler Contracting Company

Original owner: City National Bank and Trust Company (1505) and Albert H. Kohlhaas (1503)

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**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 Center City Residents' Association Date 24 July 2023

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian, Keeping Society of Philadelphia Email keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717.602.5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: July 25, 2023

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: September 13, 2023

Date of Notice Issuance: September 15, 2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: PR WALNUT ASSOCIATES LP

Address: PO Box 44131

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: October 18, 2023

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

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

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18



# NOMINATION

FOR THE

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

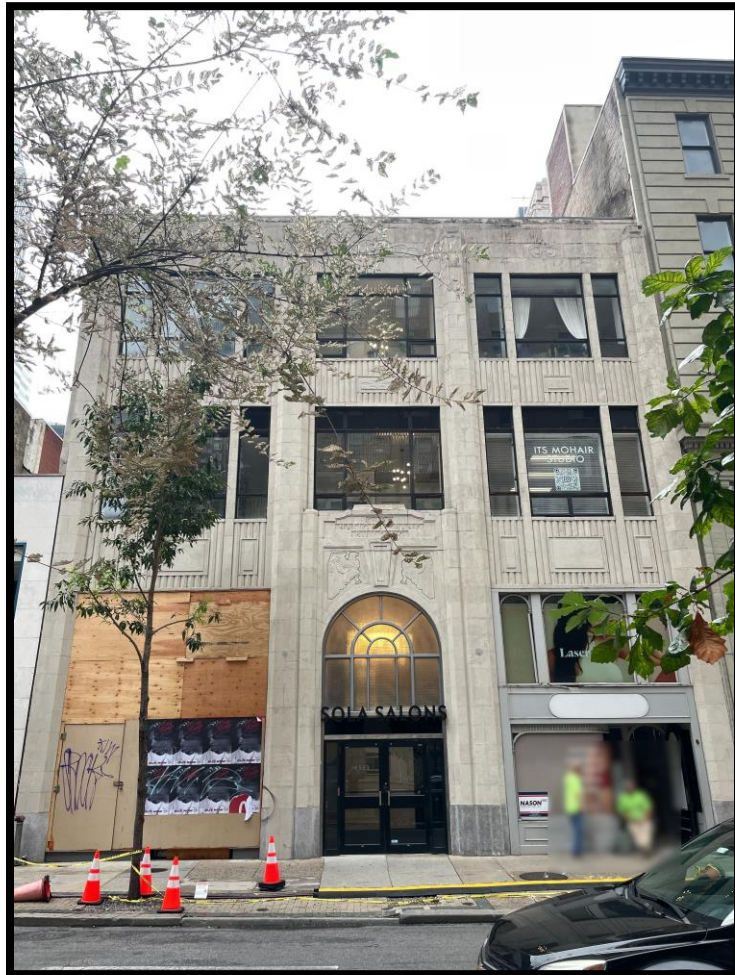


Figure 1. The primary (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Ted Maust, 2023.

**CITY NATIONAL BANK BUILDING**  
**IN THE ART DECO STYLE**  
**ARTHUR W. HALL, ARCHITECT**  
—  
**BUILT 1930-31**  
—  
**1503-05 WALNUT STREET**



## PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19102-3001

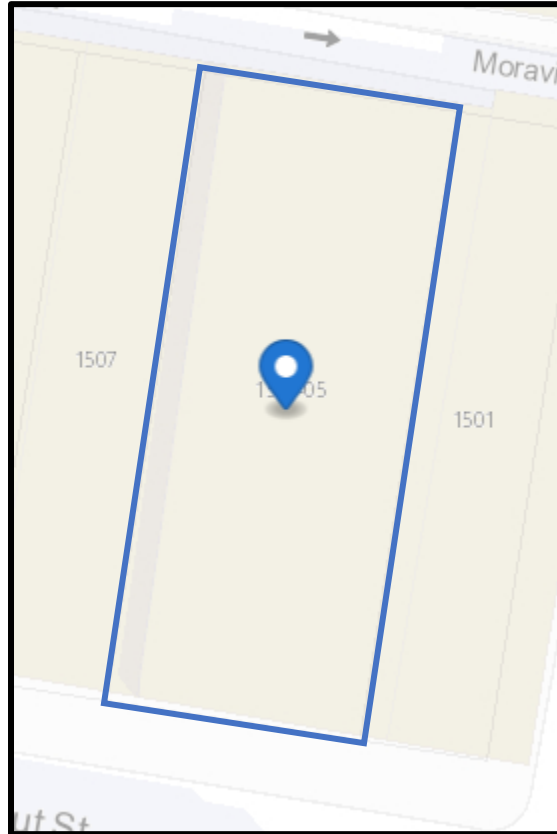


Figure 2. The boundary for the subject property is delineated by the blue line. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2022.

### 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE on the North side of Walnut Street at the distance of 72 feet westward from the west side of South Fifteenth Street, the boundary begins at the northeast corner of the parcel associated with 1505-07 Walnut Street extending forty-eight feet to the west along Walnut Street to the southwest corner of the said parcel; turning to the north and extending 119.75 feet along the eastern boundary of the subject parcel to its northwest corner; turning to the east and extending forty-eight feet to the east along Moravian Street to the northeast corner of the subject parcel; and turning to the south and extending 119.75 feet along the eastern boundary of the subject parcel to the point and place of beginning.

BEING known as 1503-05 Walnut Street.

Map Registry No. 001S210102  
OPA Account No. 882037910



Figure 3. The primary (south) elevation of the subject property prior to the collision, in July 2023, of a bus with the left portion of the first-floor facade. Source: Oscar Beisert.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The former Quaker City National Bank Building at 1503–05 Walnut Street is an attached commercial structure in an historic commercial section once known as "Bank Row." The three-story edifice is of brick masonry and structural steel construction. A brilliantly simple, but beautifully detailed Art Deco presentation defines the primary (south) elevation, a facade that is articulated in smooth-faced Indiana limestone. Like many commercial buildings of the period, the rear (north) elevation is entirely utilitarian, featuring a red brick facade with large commercial apertures.

The primary (south) elevation is three generous bays in width, though the outer bays are occupied by large mullion windows that befit the building's commercial character. The limestone façade is characterized by a symmetrical fenestration that embodies both traditional architecture and period modernism. The ground floor features a grand, central pedestrian entrance that is dominated by a transom in the form of a fan light. This opening is infilled with contemporary materials that replaced a highly detailed and ornamental copper system. Articulated in the modernist taste, this

bay of the larger limestone facade features a keystone that rises above the fanlight and is flanked by eagle reliefs that are presented in profile. Floating above these decorative over-door vignettes is a low relief banner, which reads City National Bank Building in the same continuous limestone. The doorway is flanked by three-sided pilasters that rise to the top of the first floor. The larger facade is delineated into three sections by four three-sided pilasters that rise nearly three stories, terminating just below the cornice line. These larger pilasters feature Art Deco-inspired capitals. The central bay with its doorway at the ground floor is flanked by large store windows with transoms in the outer bays. These openings have changed over the years, featuring modern replacement windows at present.

The upper floors of the primary (south) elevation feature tripartite mullion windows with one larger pane at the center that is flanked by smaller windows. All of these openings feature modern replacement windows. The first, second, and third floor windows are delineated by tripartite decorative spandrels which are part of the continuous limestone facade. Diminutive panels are individually centered within each section of the spandrels that align with the tripartite windows rising above. Each panel is set off by a backdrop of exaggerated fluting. The central spandrel between the second and third floors features a decorative limestone relief within the central panel. Each section of the facade terminates in decorative limestone reliefs centered above the third-floor windows.



Figure 4. The central bay of the second and third floors of the primary (south) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.



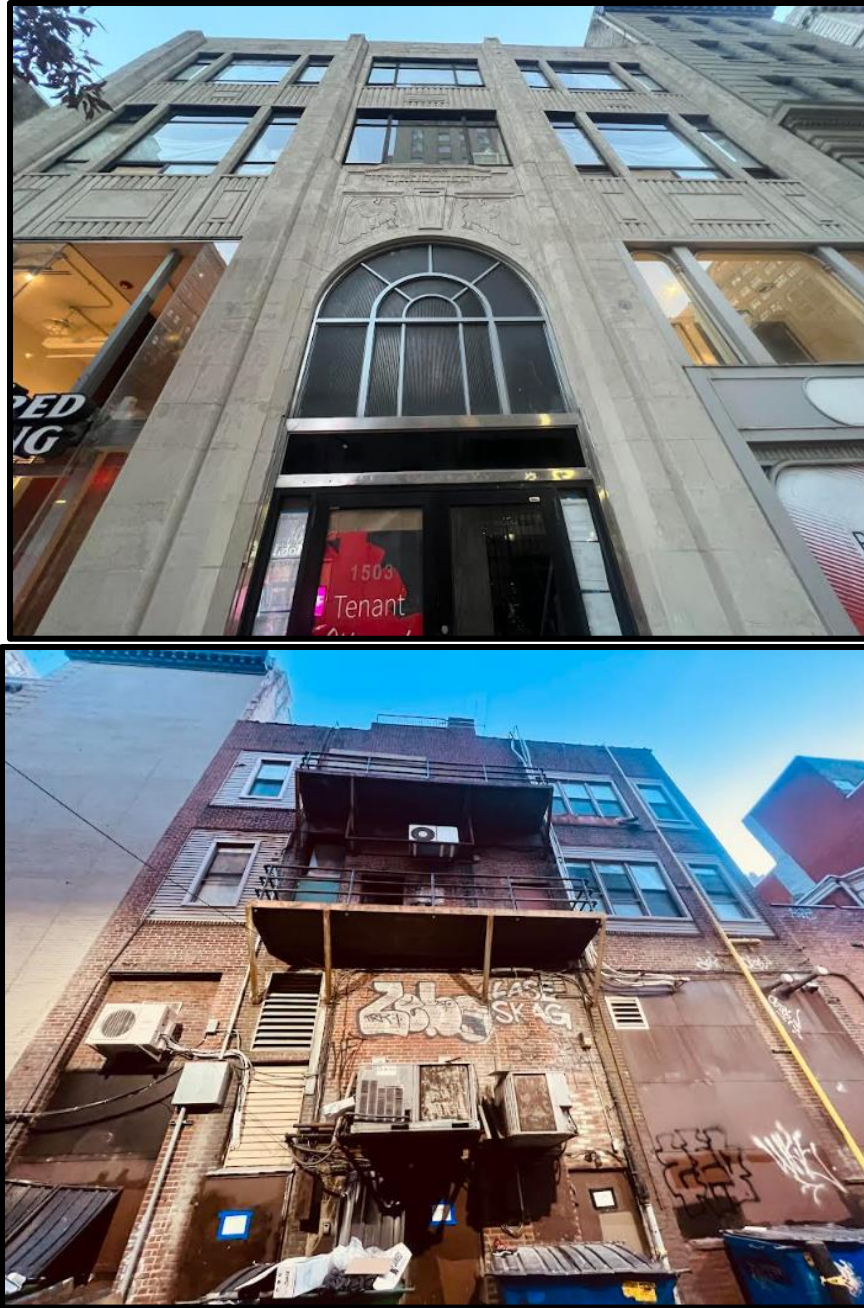


Figure 5. Top: The primary (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023. Figure 6. Bottom: The rear (north) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

The rear (north) elevation is three-story utilitarian façade of red brick with an altered, yet readable original fenestration that was designed to maximize light into the interior space. The first-floor features several infilled openings, as well as altered doorways, along with insensitive mechanical equipment and graffiti. The second- and third-floors feature large openings that have been infilled with modern windows, as well as pedestrian doors leading to central balconies that likely once served a fire escape.



Figure 7. The primary (south) elevation in 1949 by Parker and Mullikin for A.M. Greenfield. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The City National Bank Building is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located in the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood of Philadelphia, the building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and
- d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.

The period of significance dates to the time of construction in 1930-31.

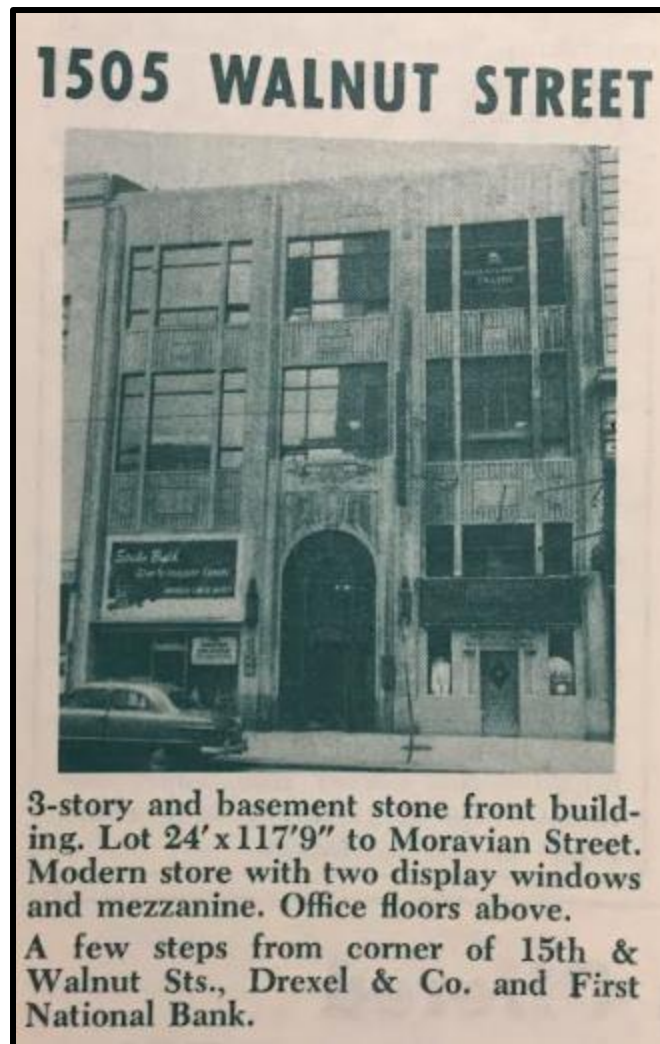


Figure 8. An advertisement for 1505 Walnut Street in 1950. Source: *Real Estate Bulletin of Albert M. Greenfield & Co.*, April 1950, 3. From the Collection of Oscar Beisert.

### **HISTORIC CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF 1503 AND 1505 WALNUT STREET**

Prior to 1930, the property and building known today as 1503-05 Walnut Street was two separate and unique buildings at 1503 and 1505 Walnut Street.

**1503 Walnut Street.** Once the site of Anthony J. Drexel's substantial city residence, the four-story brownstone store-and-dwelling at 1503 Walnut Street became a purely commercial component of the financial industry in the early 1920s, when a stock brokerage house occupied the building. For much of the 1920s, the Mackie, Hentz & Co., Members Philadelphia Stock Exchange, operated at 1503 Walnut Street.<sup>1</sup> In October 1928, the property was sold by A.H. Kohlhaas to the Real Estate-Land Title and Trust Company with an assess value of \$310,000.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 October 1928, 20.

<sup>2</sup> "Activities Of The Day In Real Estate," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 October 1928, 10.



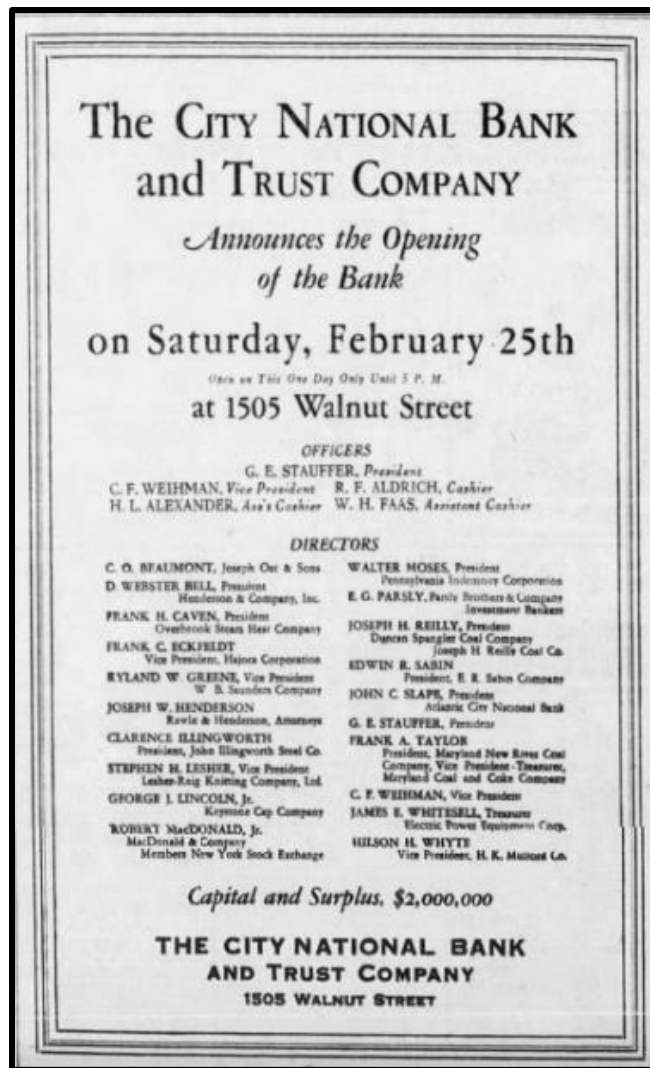


Figure 9. A newspaper advertisement announcing the opening of The City National Bank and Trust Company on Saturday, February 25, 1928, at 1505 Walnut Street. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 February 1928, 4.

**1505 Walnut Street.** After being flipped several times, the four-story store-and-dwelling at 1505 Walnut Street was sold in March 1925 by S. Leroy Wingate to Heyman & Brother for \$250,000 with a \$200,000 mortgage.<sup>3</sup> With the sale, William H.W. Quick & Brother, representing the buyer, informed *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that it was “the intention of the new owner to improve the property with a new bank building.”<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the banking house was not built, and the development languished for two years. In March 1927, the property at 1505 Walnut Street changed hands again, being sold by William L. Hirst to the Real Estate Finance & Guarantee Company, being assessed at \$260,000 and mortgaged at \$200,000.<sup>5</sup> By December 1927, the City National Bank and Trust Company became associated with the property 1505 Walnut Street. The four-story

<sup>3</sup> “Activities Of The Day In Real Estate,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 March 1925, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 March 1925, 20.

<sup>5</sup> “Activities Of The Day In Real Estate,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 March 1927, 15.

building was to be extensively renovated, with a projected completion date of February 2, 1928.<sup>6</sup> A newspaper advertisement announcing the opening of The City National Bank and Trust Company on Saturday, February 25, 1928, at 1505 Walnut Street confirms that the plan of action had come to fruition.<sup>7</sup> The bank began operating on the site with what appears to have been success, as the firm finally purchased the property from H. Le Roy Webb for \$335,000 in 1930.



Figure 10. Left: The buildings at 1511, 1509, and 1507 Walnut Street in 1909. Source: Fire Insurance Policy No. 8969, The Philadelphia Contributionship, 26 March 1909, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Figure 11. Right: The short-lived façade of the City National Bank at 1505 Walnut Street in ca. 1928-30 with the Anthony Drexel House still standing at 1503 Walnut Street on right. Source: Penrose Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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<sup>6</sup> “New Bank to Open in Feb.,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 December 1927, 23.

<sup>7</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 February 1928, 4.



Figure 12. Left: A photograph by Phillip P. Wallace of the 1500 block of Walnut Street with the former two-story building of the City National Bank at 1505 Walnut Street and the recently cleared site of 1503 Walnut Street in October 1930, indicating the initial construction of the subject building. Figure 13. Right: A photograph by Wallace of the 1500 block of Walnut Street with the newly completed City National Bank Building at 1503-05 Walnut Street in May 1932. Source: Boies Penrose Collection, Box 23, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

**1503 and 1505 Walnut Street.** In October 1930, “the old building erected on the lot [1503 Walnut Street], together with the adjoining building [1505 Walnut Street], was demolished and the present three-story building [1503-05 Walnut Street] was erected.”<sup>8</sup> The architect appears to have been Arthur W. Hall, then located at the southeast corner of Fifteenth and Locust Streets.<sup>9</sup> The City National Bank and Trust Company were responsible for construction of the westerly half of the subject building at 1505 Walnut Street. Albert H. Kohlhaas was responsible for easterly portion of the subject building at 1503 Walnut Street.<sup>10</sup> The building was constructed by the George Kessler Contracting Company of 1733 North Marvine Street with two separate permits, representing each half of the building, with brick, steel, steam heat, metal lath, a slag roof, and cement and maple floors.<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that the building was essentially a twin commercial structure, the façade shared one single limestone façade rendered in the Art Deco style, and it was named after the westerly owner—City National Bank Building.

<sup>8</sup> “Plan Sale By Sheriff,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 October 1933, 81.

<sup>9</sup> *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, 6 August 1930, 499.

<sup>10</sup> “Plan Sale By Sheriff,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 October 1933, 81.

<sup>11</sup> *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, 22 October 1930, 658.

Early occupants of 1503 Walnut Street include the tailoring firm of Mlasovsky and Wagner. The City National Bank and Trust Company were the first occupants of 1505 Walnut Street, along with Hemphill, Noyes & Co. by 1933. The easterly half of the subject building at 1503 Walnut Street was up for Sheriff's Sale by October 1933.<sup>12</sup>

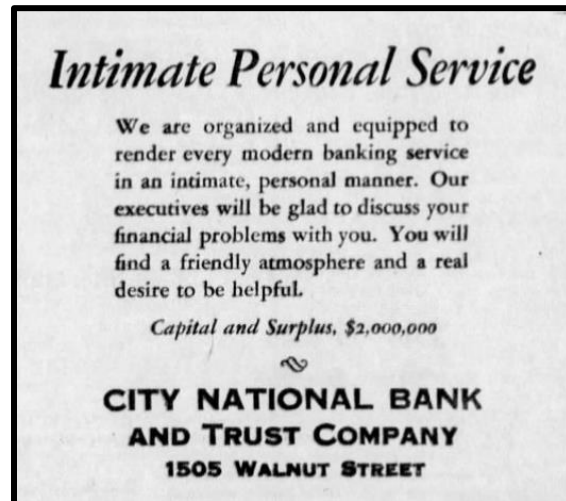


Figure 14. An advertisement for the “Intimate Personal Service” by the City National Bank and Trust Company in 1928. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 April 1928, 7.

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CITY NATIONAL BANK

The City National Bank, known originally as the City National Bank & Trust Company, was opened for business in February 1928 at their new banking house at 1505 Walnut Street with a capital and surplus of \$2,000,000. With George E. Stauffer as president, the nascent financial institution included the following additional leaders: “E.F. Weihman, vice president; R.E. Aldrich, cashier; H.L. Alexander, assistant cashier; and W.H. Faas, assistant cashier.”<sup>13</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted that many involved with the bank were highly placed in the financial industry. Stauffer was formerly vice president of Franklin Fourth Street National Bank. Weihman was “Assistant Cashier of the Fourth Street National Bank.” Aldrich was “Assistant Cashier” of the First National Bank.<sup>14</sup> The board of directors was comprised of no less than twenty men.<sup>15</sup> The institution’s earliest advertisements boasted their “Intimate Personal Service,” as well as “every modern banking service,” advice on “financial problems,” and a “friendly atmosphere.”<sup>16</sup> In just a few years, the City National Bank’s resources had risen to \$10,000,000 with total deposits of \$7,300,000. The following bank branches were opened since its founding in 1928: Fifty-eighth Street and Baltimore Avenue; Sixty-fifth Street and Woodland Avenue; and Seventieth Street and Elmwood Avenue with hopes for a new branch at Overbrook.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “Plan Sale By Sheriff,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 October 1933, 81.

<sup>13</sup> “New Bank Opens, City National Bank and Trust Co. Starts Business Today,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 February 1928, 26.

<sup>14</sup> “New Bank to Open,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 February 1928, 23.

<sup>15</sup> “New Bank Opens, City National Bank and Trust Co. Starts Business Today,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 February 1928, 26.

<sup>16</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 April 1928, 7.

<sup>17</sup> “Seeks New Branch, City National Bank and Trust Wants Overbrook Connection,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 July 1931, 19.





Figure 15. A close-up of the façade of the City National Bank Building at 1503-05 Walnut Street taken by Parker and Mullikin for A.M. Greenfield in 1949. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.

#### CRITERIA D

The City National Bank Building at 1503-05 Walnut Street embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Art Deco style, as applied to commercial buildings of the interwar years in the United States<sup>18[OBJ]</sup>

#### CRITERION D: THE ART DECO STYLE (1925-1940)

The Art Deco was a “Modernist” architectural style that was comprehensively employed in commercial, institutional, and residential design in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.<sup>19</sup> The aesthetic criteria is one defined by “sharp-edged looks and stylized geometrical decorative details” that were quite distinctive as a complete departure from architectural tradition.<sup>20</sup> Popularization of the style in American architecture initiated “in 1922 when the *Chicago Tribune* held a world-wide competition for a headquarters building in Chicago,” which led the newspaper powerhouse to select a Gothic Revival design. Second place was awarded to the young Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen (1873-1950) for a design in the Art Deco style, which was widely published throughout the architectural community nationwide. This would ultimately help to promulgate widespread employment of the style.<sup>21</sup> The aesthetic criteria that came to fore was the culmination of many preceding movements, as described by Benjamin Leech, Architectural Historian:

While French inspiration was indeed prevalent in the American incarnation of the style, so too was the influence of Viennese Secessionism, German Expressionism,

<sup>18</sup> *Commercial and Government Radio Station of the United States*. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, 30 June 1930), 196.

<sup>19</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018), 465-66.

<sup>20</sup> “Art Deco Style (1925-1940),” Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide. (Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, 2015). <<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/art-deco.html>> Accessed on 27 June 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018), 465-66.

Italian Futurism, Beaux-Arts Classicism, and the domestic Arts and Crafts and Prairie School movements of the late nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Popularity of the style was further amplified among architectural professionals after the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in 1925, a Parisian design exhibition where the term “Art Deco” is said to have originated.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 3 repeated.

As the Art Deco became established over time, the following architectural details and features became characteristic of the style, as defined by in *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* published online by the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office:

1. Smooth wall surface
2. Sharp edged, linear appearance
3. Stylized decorative elements using geometrical forms, zigzags, chevrons
4. Low relief decorative panels
5. ~~Stepped or set back front facade~~
6. Strips of windows with decorative spandrels
7. Reeding and fluting around doors and windows

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Leech. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Overseas Motor Works, 1501-05 Fairmount Avenue*. (Philadelphia: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, 2014), 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> Bevis Hillier, *Art Deco of the 20s and 30s*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1968, 13.

With its primary street-facing elevation on Walnut Street, the City National Bank Building contains many of the hallmarks of an attached commercial building executed in the Art Deco style. The character-defining features include a smooth-faced limestone facade; a sharp edged, linear appearance; stylized decorative elements, and beautiful details articulated in a simplified, geometrical manner, including characteristic decorative panels; windows set within vertical pilasters and above fluted spandrels; and low-relief decorative elements indicative of the period.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 16. The Wyoming Bank & Trust Company (1924) at the southwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Wyoming Avenue. Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

### **CRITERION C**

The National City Bank Building at 1503-05 Walnut Street reflects the environment in an era characterized by the Art Deco style, satisfying Criterion C.

### **THE RISE OF MODERNISM IN PHILADELPHIA, 1924 TO 1930**

With the advent of the Art Deco, as well as Modern Classicism and Stripped Classicism, Philadelphia became home to numerous modern commercial buildings, wherein the designers worked to both simplify and distinguish the architecture of banking houses, offices, and stores. The city's earliest Modernist buildings were primarily designed with basic structural forms, which were most commonly clad in smooth-faced limestone with strikingly simple fenestrations that were decorated with restrained classical and/or geometric architectural details. As old fashioned as Philadelphia was even in the 1920s, the city was home to new ideas in local design. In 1924, a year prior to the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, McLanahan & Bencker, Architects, designed an early streamlined banking house for the Wyoming Bank and Trust Company (Figure 16). With the symmetrical fenestration and poise of a detached building, the chaste, one-story limestone-clad edifice still stands at 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Wyoming Ave, retaining

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<sup>24</sup> "Art Deco Style (1925-1940)," Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide. (Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, 2015). <<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/art-deco.html>> Accessed on 27 June 2023.



a basic degree of integrity despite being whitewashed.<sup>25</sup> Just one year later, in 1925, Willing, Sims, & Talbutt, Architects, designed a banking house for the Western Savings Fund Society's North Philadelphia Office (Figure 17), adhering to the ideals of Stripped Classism. Its three-sided façade is comprised of smooth-faced limestone cladding with the primary entrance in the corner, delineated by a classical architrave.<sup>26</sup> The next year, in 1926, the Philadelphia Saving Fund commissioned Mellor, Meigs, & Howe, the eminent architectural firm, to design a modernist banking house at 4947 N. Broad Street (Figure 18).<sup>27</sup> This building too featured a smooth-faced limestone façade with minimal architectural details, including a large central entrance with a restrained classical architrave. While perhaps not textbook examples of commonplace architectural style, the three above-referenced banking houses embrace modernism, while also employing elements of classical and/or traditional design.



Figure 17. Top: The Western Savings Fund Society's North Philadelphia Office at 3547 Germantown Avenue in 1925. Figure 18. Bottom: The Philadelphia Savings Fund Society's Logan Branch at 4947 N. Broad Street in 1926. Taken by Philip B. Wallace, Photographer. Source: Building a Nation: Limestone Photograph Collection, Indiana University Bloomington.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth. *Architecture in Philadelphia: A Guide*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974), 149

<sup>26</sup> *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Western Savings Fund Society's North Philadelphia Office (1925)*, 3547 Germantown Avenue. (Philadelphia: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth. *Architecture in Philadelphia: A Guide*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974),



Figure 19. Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company Building, 1926, Zantsinger, Borie, & Medary, 26<sup>th</sup> and Fairmount Avenue. Source: Building a Nation: Limestone Photograph Collection, Indiana University Bloomington.

Creating one of the most beautiful buildings in Philadelphia, Zantsinger, Borie, & Medary designed a magnificent office building for the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company at 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Fairmount Avenue (Figure 19) in 1926. The design combines the simplicity of a smooth-faced, Indiana limestone with traditional architectural details that were employed in a prominent three-sided, corner building. The Quaker City's growing palette of modernist buildings was further increased in 1927. Perhaps the highest style of all the buildings mentioned, the Lasher Printing Company commissioned a behemoth Art Deco industrial building at 1309 Noble Street (Figure 20), which features fantastic characteristic architectural details. That same year the Pennsylvania Railroad commissioned the restrained, yet monumental Neoclassical style 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station (Figure 21), which was finally completed in 1933.<sup>28</sup>

Located near the subject property, WCAU commissioned Gabriel B. Roth, architect, to design a fabulous, high style Art Deco tower at 1618-20-22 Chestnut Street to serve as a radio station building. Completed in 1928, the skyscraper features highly decorative metal work, greatly amplifying the material composition and quality of the design.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth. *Architecture in Philadelphia: A Guide*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974).

<sup>29</sup> "Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia," <<https://www.broadcastpioneers.com/wcauhistory.html>> Accessed on 27 June 2023.



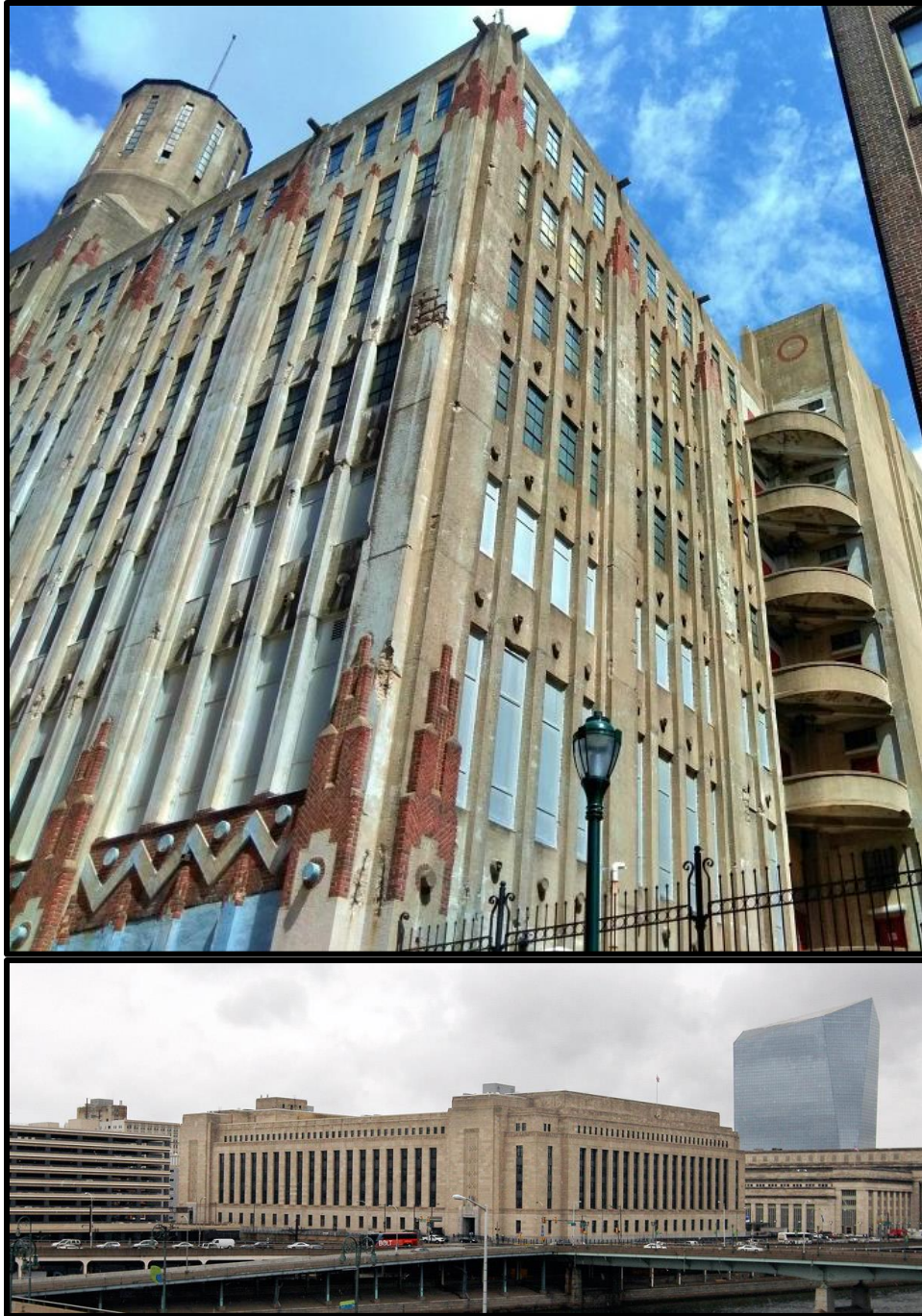


Figure 20. Top: The Lasher Printing Co. at 1309 Noble Street. Source: [The Rail Park And My Attraction To Industrial Design \[ Being Ron \] \(triloquist.net\)](#). Figure 21. Bottom: The U.S. Post Office Building (1930) and 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station (at right, completed 1933). Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.



Figure 22. The U.S. Naval Hospital (1929), Pattison Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street, designed by Karcher & Smith, Architects. Source: Library of Congress.

In 1928, the eminent French-born Philadelphia architect and designer, Paul Cret was commissioned to design the Integrity Trust Co. Building at 1528 Walnut Street. Trained in the Beaux Arts, he practiced in that milieu for two decades, when he used his training to influence the stylistic shift to Modern Classicism and Stripped Classicism. The following designs reflect this transition: World War I Memorial (1929), Providence, Rhode Island; the Folger-Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. (1929-32); the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia (1932); etc.<sup>30</sup> Resulting in one of the finest and most impressive buildings of the era, Karcher & Smith were commissioned to design a massive facility in the Art Deco style to serve as the U.S. Naval Hospital on Pattison Avenue between South Broad and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets (Figure 22).<sup>31</sup> Construction began in 1929 and ended in 1933. As a companion to 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station, the Federal government commissioned the massive and modern U.S. Post Office Building (Figure 21) in West Philadelphia in 1930.

This sampling of early major examples of the Art Deco, Classical Modernism, and Stripped Classicism styles in Philadelphia influenced more modest examples like the subject property, providing contextual information on the local built environment.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth. *Architecture in Philadelphia: A Guide*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974), 87.

<sup>31</sup> Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, et al., photographer by Elliott, Joseph. *Naval Hospital, Pattison Avenue between Broad & Twentieth Streets, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA*. trans by Price, Virginia Barrettmiller Documentation Compiled After. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <[www.loc.gov/item/pa3812/](http://www.loc.gov/item/pa3812/)>.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This nomination was completed for the Historic Building Preservation Task Force of the Center City Residents Association by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist with support from Tim Kerner, Architect and Chair of the Task Force.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Athenaeum of Philadelphia

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Newspapers.com

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Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Peck & Peck (1928)*. (Philadelphia: The Keeping Society, 2020).

Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Stock Brokerage House of Hano, Wasserman & Company (1929)*. (Philadelphia: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2019).

*Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Western Savings Fund Society's North Philadelphia Office (1925)*, 3547 Germantown Avenue. (Philadelphia: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2018).

Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018), 465-66.



## APPENDIX A<sup>32</sup>

### Historic Context: West Walnut Street—A New Financial Frontier and Banking Centre, 1900–1930

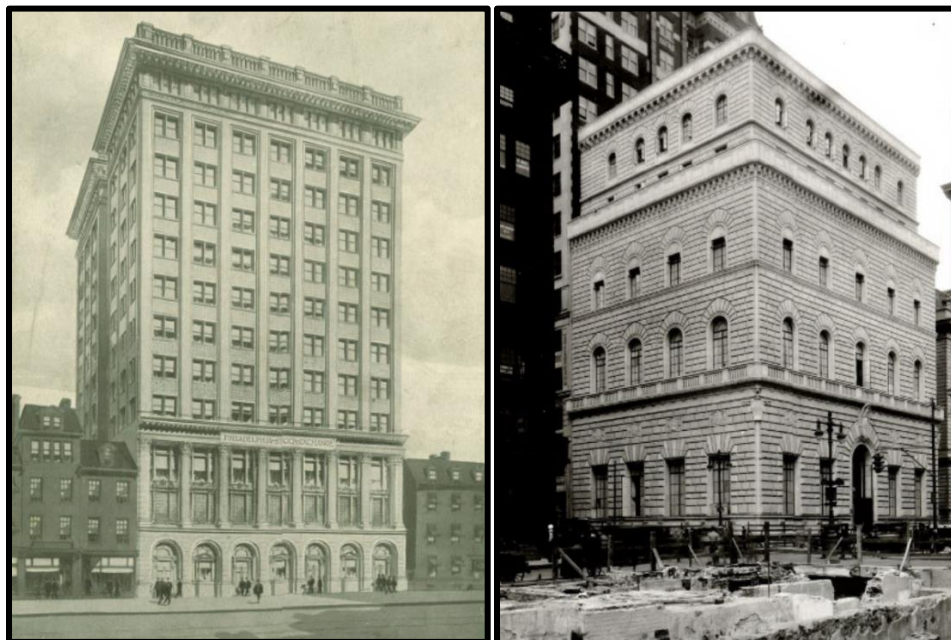


Figure 23. Left: The Philadelphia Stock Exchange. Source: Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. Figure 24. Right: Drexel & Company. Source: Day & Klauder Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, with the completion of the City Hall in Center Square, South Broad Street, as well as both Chestnut and Walnut Streets nearby, underwent a transformation from a largely residential neighborhood to a modern commercial center. Rows of substantial, terraced houses were altered to accommodate new uses, enlarged and even refaced, or entirely demolished to make way for new buildings, including “skyscrapers” and other distinctive commercial properties.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the most definitive shift in domicile for the local financial community occurred in 1914 when the Philadelphia Stock Exchange opened for business at 1411–1415 Walnut Street. The financial institution had commissioned the eminent Philadelphia architect, Horace Trumbauer, to design their twelve-story office building two years earlier. With its *piano nobile* of Corinthian columns at the second and third atop a foundation of round arches as the base of its modern Chicago-style building, this really was the new Philadelphia Stock Exchange at the center of Philadelphia. This development may not have been the first of its type

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<sup>32</sup> This historic context was included in the *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Stockbrokerage House of Hano, Wasserman & Co.* in 2019.

<sup>33</sup> The Dundas Lippincott Mansion, an impressive Greek Revival style edifice, and even the handsome double townhouse of the Wetherills—both at South Broad and Walnut Streets—are lost to memory, being demolished more than one hundred years ago for commercial development.

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to enter the neighborhood, but it certainly marked a major turning point, as its locality was otherwise low-rise and of a residential character (Figure 28).<sup>34</sup>

Numerous trust companies moved to this section of South Broad Street about this time, but it was not until the 1920s that Walnut Street became the city's new "banking centre."<sup>35</sup> While a special coterie of bank buildings survive in this section of Walnut Street to-date, in some cases, many of these buildings constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would survive just a few years, making way for even larger buildings soon after. Established in 1866, the H.F. Bachman & Co., members of the New York and Philadelphia Stock Exchanges, moved to 1425 Walnut Street in 1920, occupying the western half of what now stands at 1423–1425 Walnut Street.<sup>36</sup> Between 1920 and 1921, The Dollings & Co., investment securities, built a banking house with simple, but rusticated façade at 1421 Walnut Street.<sup>37</sup> Immediately adjacent to the subject property to the east, West & Company commissioned a Colonial Revival style banking house at 1511 Walnut Street, which was designed by Stewardson & Page, Architects.<sup>38</sup> By 1922, nearly half of those listed in the directory of Investment Bankers and Brokers of America were located at addresses west of Broad Street. Most firms occupied offices in larger buildings like the Philadelphia Stock Exchange Building (PSEB), making those who dared to build their own banking house somewhat unusual.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> 1910 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley.

<sup>35</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 January 1920, 19.

<sup>36</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 January 1920, 19.

<sup>37</sup> *The Morning Call*, 1 December 1922, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Cope & Stewardson Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>39</sup> *Investment Bankers and Brokers of America* (New York: A.C. Baize, 1922). listed several hundred in Philadelphia, the following of which had embarked upon the western frontier of Center City: Morton R. Alexander, securities, at Philadelphia Stock Exchange Building (PSEB), 1411 Walnut Street; Arnett & Co., PSEB; Charles D. Barney & Co., 1428 Walnut Street; Berdell Brothers & Co., SEB; Charles H. Biddle & Co., Inc., Bellevue Court Building (BEB), 1418 Walnut Street; Blair & Co., Inc., 1518 Walnut Street; Boureau & Evans, 130 S. Fifteenth Street; Brooke, Stokes, & Co., 140 S. 15<sup>th</sup> Street at the corner of Walnut; Brooks & Co. Inc., PSEB; Capitol Service Co., Fifteenth and Chestnut Streets; Gordon S. Carrigan & Co., PSEB; Carstairs & Co., 1419 Walnut Street; Jos. B. Clarke & Co., BEB; Cockrell & Co., 130 S. 15<sup>th</sup> Street; Crawford, Patton & Cannon, 1421 Chestnut Street; Edgar G. Cross, PSEB; Culver & Co. 1504 Walnut Street; Daniel & Co., 15<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Street—Flanders Building; De Haven & Townsend, PSEB; Dillon, Read & Co., 1421 Chestnut Street—Morris Building; H.L. Dowerty & Co., Morris Building; R.L. Dollings Co., 1421 Walnut Street; Drayton, Pennington, & Colker, 15<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets; William J. Dunn & Co., 1622 Chestnut Street; Ervin & Co., 1428 Walnut Street; Faris & Co., Bellevue Court; Fincke, Bangert, & Company, 1419 Sansom Street; Giroux & Co., PSEB; Goodman, Morton, 1419 Sansom Street—Franklin Bank Building; Conrad Granum, PSEB; Joseph W. Gross & Co., 1421 Chestnut Street; Samuel M. Hall & Company, Fifteenth and Chestnut Streets; George H. Hauberger, PSEB; Milton Heim & Co., 1622 Chestnut Street; George H. Huhn & Sons, BEB; George W. Kendrick, 3<sup>rd</sup> & Co., 1431 Walnut Street; E.E. Kohn & Co., 1522 Walnut Street; Kravis & Co., 26 S. Fifteenth Street; O.B. Lansinger & Co., 120 S. Fifteenth Street; Lewis & Snyder, 1524 Walnut Street; Liston & Co., 1619 Chestnut Street; S. McCreery & Co., BEB; William H. McKenna & Co., 221 S. Fifteenth Street; Martin & Co., PSEB; William A. Mears & Co., Inc., 1524 Chestnut Street; M.D. Middleton, Jr., & Co., PSEB; Morris Brothers Co., 1421 Chestnut Street; Frank Mullin & Co., PSEB; The National City Co., 1421 Chestnut Street; Newburger, Henderson, & Loeb, 1410 Chestnut Street; Parrish & Co., 1500 Walnut Street; Parsly Brothers, Co., 1421 Chestnut Street; Paul & Co., Morris Building; Pierce, Frederick & Co., Morris Building; Reid, McClure & Co., Bellvue Court Building; E.H. Rollins & Sons, Morris Building; Rothe, Johnson, & Co., PSEB; Scott & Stump, PSEB; Edward R. Smith & Company, 1411 Chestnut Street; Thayer, Baker & Co., Fifteenth and Market Streets; Thomas & Co., Fifteenth and Chestnut Streets; Thompson, Martin, Co., PSEB; Thompson & Co. 1733 Chestnut Street; Weber & Co., Dobbins



Between 1925 and 1929, numerous banking and financial houses began to rise in the 1400, 1500, and 1600 blocks of Walnut Street. Brown Brothers & Company—an old Philadelphia firm founded in 1818, announced their potential plans to move to the northeast corner of 16th and Walnut Streets in May 1925, where they promised “something very attractive would be built.”<sup>40</sup> Their six-story limestone-clad office building was constructed on the site, eventually becoming the Philadelphia quarters of Brown Brothers Harriman. When it first opened the offices included both Brown Brothers & Company, as well as Janney & Company.<sup>41</sup> Between 1925 and 1927, Drexel & Company made the ultimate in grand gestures when they commissioned a magnificent Renaissance Palazzo at the northeast corner of 15th and Walnut Streets (Figure 24). The architects Day & Klauder had designed one of Philadelphia’s finest buildings at what is now known as 135–143 South 15<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>42</sup> Around the same time the Mutual Trust Company commissioned an eighteen-story “bank and office building” at the southwest corner of Walnut and Sydenham Streets.<sup>43</sup>

The Eastman, Dillon & Company, investment bankers moved to a new banking house in 1506 Walnut Street between 1927 and 1928. Bioren & Company, investment bankers established in 1865, removed from their offices at 410 Chestnut Street to a new banking house in the 1500 block of Walnut Street in around this same time. The 1500 Walnut Street Building stands twenty-two floors, the ground floor of which was originally home to the First National Bank of Philadelphia, being completed in 1928.<sup>44</sup> The American Bank and Trust Company commissioned Davis, Dunlap, & Barney to design their new building. In May 1928 another banking house announced plans to move to the 1600 block of Walnut Street.<sup>45</sup> Most financial firms did not have representative banking houses in this period and, therefore, the decision to build a bank building for a single firm or representative of a firm was a strong statement as to the eminence of the institution.

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Building, 1511 Chestnut (Dobbins Building); Henry C. Weeks, 1417 Chestnut Street; West & Co., Dobbins Building; Harvey A. Willis & Co., 20 S. Fifteenth Street; and Wilson & Co., Inc., BEB.

<sup>40</sup> “Brown Brothers & Co. Plan To Move Bank To 16<sup>th</sup> and Walnut,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 December 1925, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Activities of Day in Real Estate,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 March 1927, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

<sup>43</sup> “Trust Company Plans Walnut Street Office, Will Be Located at Northeast Corner Seventeenth, Near New Banking Centre,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 June 1925, 76.

<sup>44</sup> “Walnut St. Grows As Banking Centre,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 May 1928, 81.

<sup>45</sup> “Walnut St. Grows As Banking Centre,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 May 1928, 81.