

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: **1611 Walnut Street**

Postal code: **19103**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Hollinger Building**

Current Name: **UNTUCKIT/works on paper gallery**

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): **1923-1968**

Date(s) of construction: **1923**

Architects: **Charles E. Oeschlager**

Builders: **W.S. Gore**

Original owner: **Henry C. Hollinger**

Significant person: **NA**

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**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian
Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Date: **15 March 2022**

Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Telephone: **717.602.5002**

Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 15 March 2022

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: May 12, 2022

Date of Notice Issuance: May 12, 2022

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: 1611 PPW LLC, c/o John Shaffer

Address: 110 S 19th St, Suite 300

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19103

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: September 6, 2023

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: September 6, 2023

Date of Final Action: October 13, 2023

Designated Rejected

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

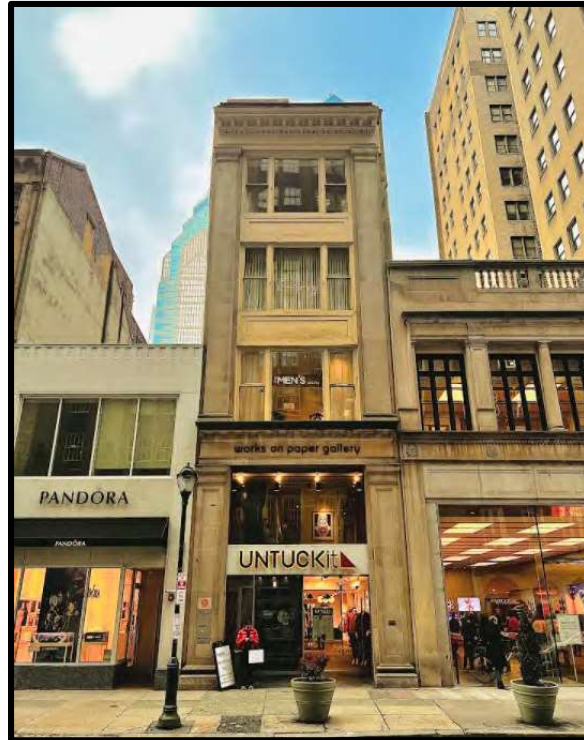


Figure 1. The primary (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2022.

THE HOLLINGER BUILDING

■
BUILT 1923
■

1611 WALNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

*Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination, March 2022
The Hollinger Building, 1611 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

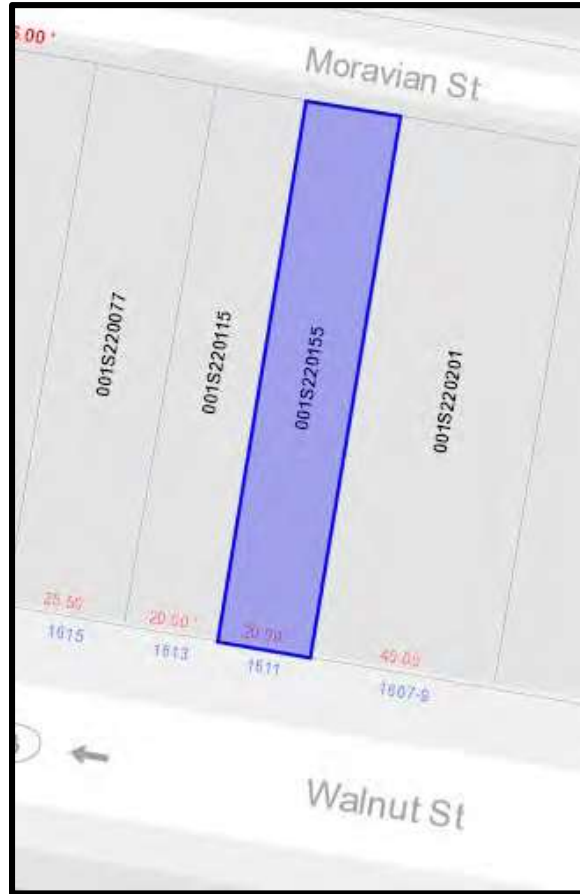


Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2021.

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 113 feet Westward from the West side of N. Sixteenth Street in the City of Philadelphia.

CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said Walnut Street twenty feet and extending of that width in length or depth Northward approximately 117 feet to Moravian Street.

BEING KNOWN AS No. 1611 Walnut Street.

Map Registry No. 001S220155

OPA Account No. 882421500



Figure 3. Left: The primary (south) elevation of the subject property in the 1920s. Source: City Archives of Philadelphia (CAP). Figure 4. Right: The primary (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Set within a section of Walnut Street west of S. Broad Street formerly known as “Bank Row,” the Hollinger Building stands at 1611 Walnut Street in Center City Philadelphia.¹ Spanning the depth of the entire lot from Walnut Street to Moravian Street, the rectangular parcel features a five-story building constructed of stone, brick, and structural steel. The building is designed in the Neoclassical style, as articulated by Philadelphia architect Charles Emerson Oeschlager (1873–1954). The hybrid banking or commercial building features a commercial ground floor and mezzanine above with office space on the three floors above.

The primary commercial space and its mezzanine are visible through a glazed opening that is set off by cast limestone pilasters, featuring large, single recessed panels. The glass front features a spandrel or signage with the name of the first-floor tenant: “UNTUCKit”. A cast limestone cornice separates the first and second floors. The frieze features signage for the mezzanine tenant: “works on paper gallery”. A second set of limestone pilasters is introduced above, flanking the second, third and fourth floors. Set between the smooth faced, cast pilasters are single three-part mullion windows per floor, each featuring a single fixed sash flanked by one-over-one sash windows.

¹ Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Stock Brokerage House of Hano, Wasserman & Co.* (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2019).

These openings are separated by spandrels defined by recessed panels. The elevation terminates in a cast limestone cornice of dentils and projecting modillions.



Figure 5. Top: Looking upward at the details within the primary (south) elevation. Figure 6. Bottom left: The rear (north) elevation of the subject property. Figure 7. Right: The rear (north) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2022.

Contrasting with its public face on Walnut Street, the rear (north) elevation facing narrow Moravian Street is a utilitarian red brick façade that exposes the five-story structure. The elevation is three bays in width, including a two-part mullion window at each level at the easterly side and an open, integral fire escape at the west readable through a single opening, each of which features a segmental arch. The windows and doors appear to be largely replacement units. A hoist extends from the top, center of the building.

* On October 13, 2023 during the 734th meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, Commissioner Lech moved to find that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1611 Walnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, E, and J, with the understanding that the significantly altered glazed storefront excluding the historic masonry surround is not a character-defining feature, but the division between the first level and mezzanine level is a character-defining feature, and to designate it as historic, listing it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Commissioner McCoubrey seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

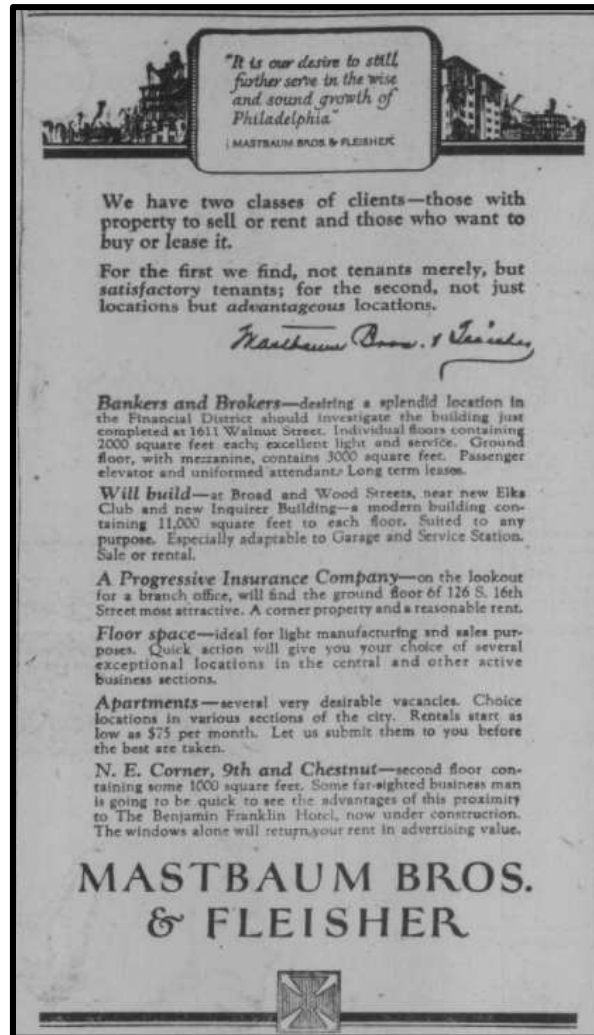


Figure 8. An advertisement for the newly built subject property. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 December 1923, 10.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hollinger Building at 1611 Walnut Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property 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;*
- (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; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.*

The period of significance for the subject building dates from the time of construction in 1923 through 1968.

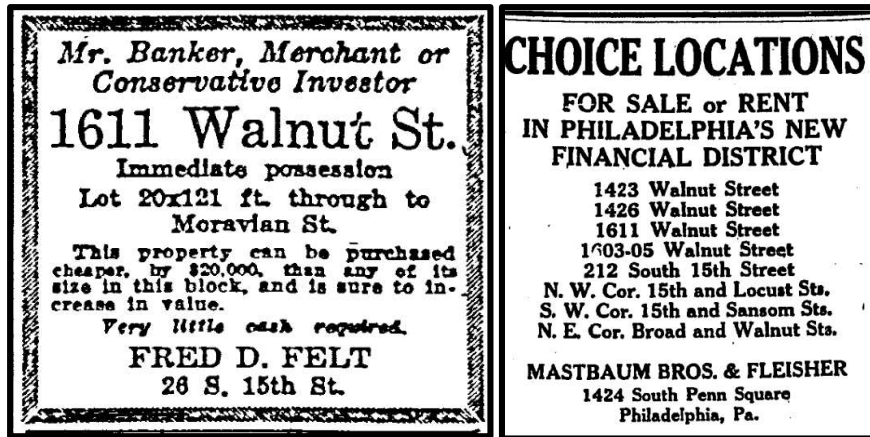


Figure 9. Left: An advertisement for the initial sale of the subject property in 1922, being directed at the financial industry. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 October 1922, 14. Figure 10. Right: An advertisement for the sale or lease of the subject property in 1923. Source: *Wall Street Journal*, 5 April 1923, 15.

CRITERION J

Built in 1923, the Hollinger Building at 1611 Walnut Street is a Neoclassical style commercial structure initially designed and developed to serve tenants in the financial industry. The subject building is representative of and related to the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Walnut Street's physical development and transformation, which occurred between 1900 and 1930. During this period, as this and adjacent upper-class residential blocks were largely rebuilt, a distinctive commercial theme emerged as financial institutions flocked to the 1400, 1500, and 1600 blocks of Walnut Street. Long quartered near the Merchants' Exchange and the First and Second Banks of the United States, old and new banking and brokerage houses alike consciously relocated and Philadelphia's financial district shifted from east Chestnut to west Walnut. The brick and brownstone townhouses were rapidly eclipsed by blocks of limestone-clad, Neoclassical style facades of both towering and domestic scales. This movement was solidified as fact in 1914 when the Philadelphia Stock Exchange abandoned the Mint Arcade and commissioned its monumental skyscraper at 1411–15 Walnut Street. Their new tower included twelve floors of office space for bankers and brokers to lease under auspices. However, other merchants in the newly established street had the option for their own space in smaller, yet distinctive buildings styled to achieve a monumental cache.



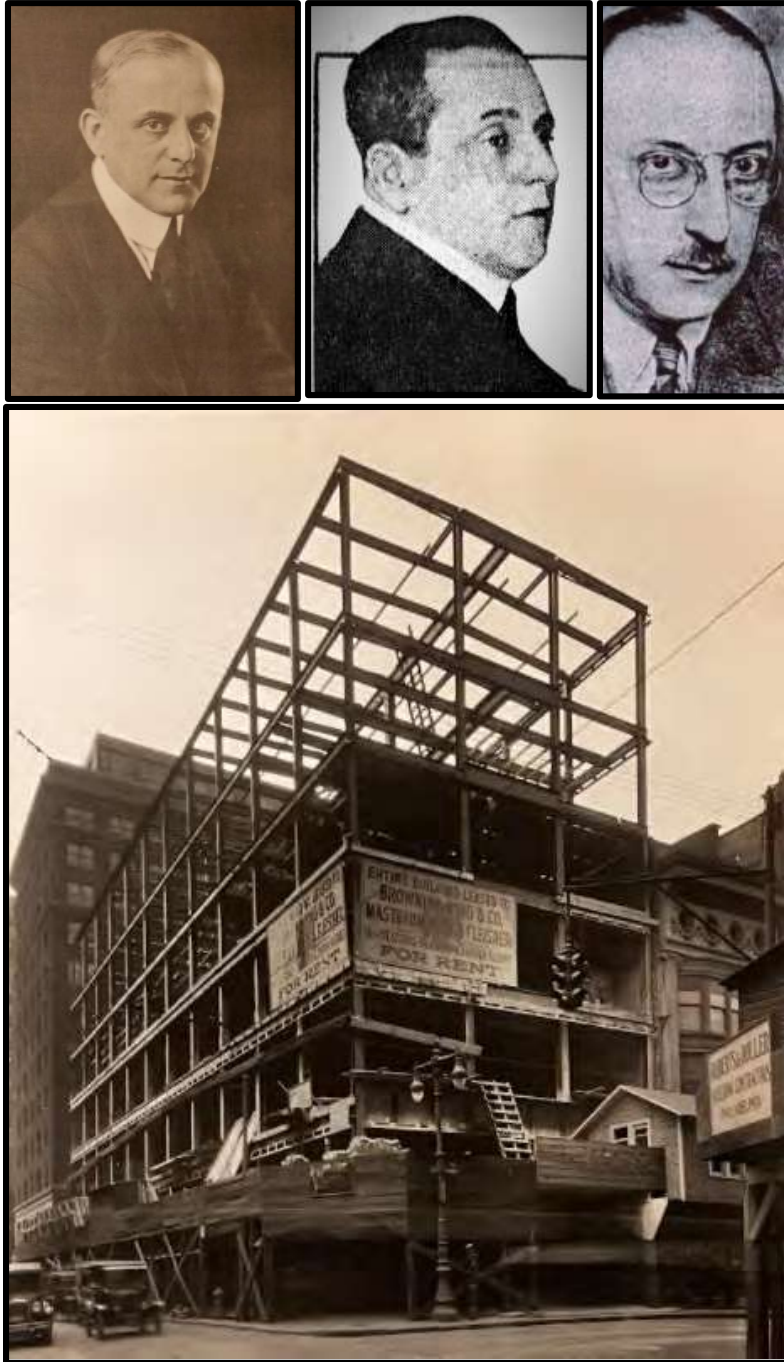
Figure 11. Left: An insurance survey photograph of 1611 Walnut Street in 1908, eventually replaced by the subject building. Source: Philadelphia Contributionship. Figure 12. Right: A municipal photograph of 1613 Walnut Street, showing 1611 Walnut Street on right ca.1925. Source: Phillyhistory.org

In February 1923, the subject property, then containing a “four-story brown stone house,” was sold for approximately \$150,000 to Henry C. Hollinger, an investor.² Hollinger was represented by Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher, real estate developers, investors, and managers, to acquire, develop, and lease his investment property. They immediately engaged Charles E. Oeschlager, architect, to design a five-story Neoclassical style office building, which was constructed on the site by W.S. Gore, contractor, for roughly \$40,000.³ Hollinger appears to have worked with Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher on several other projects, including 1437 Walnut Street; a property at Fifteenth and Sansom Streets in 1923; 1607-11 Moravian Street and the northwest corner of 16th and Moravian in 1925; etc.⁴ Little is known about Hollinger; however, his chosen developers included Jules E. Mastbaum (1872-1926), Stanley V. Mastbaum (1880-1918), and Alfred W. Fleisher (1878-1928), all of whom were Jewish American real estate developers and philanthropists.

² “Brown Stone House at 1611 Walnut Street Brings Close to \$150,000,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 February 1923, 7.

³ Permit No. 2330, Application for Permit for Erection of New Buildings, City of Philadelphia, March 1923. Source: CAP.

⁴ “Central Leases Closed,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 June 1921, 21.; *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 June 1923, 10.; *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 March 1925, 76.



The partners in Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher. Figure 13. Left: Jules E. Mastbaum (1872-1926). Figure 14. Middle: Stanley V. Mastbaum (1880-1918). Figure 15. Right: Alfred W. Fleisher (1878-1928). Source: Ancestry.com. Figure 16. Looking at the southwest corner of Sixteenth and Chestnut Streets, this photograph captures the construction work of Frederick Massiah, a prominent African American concrete contractor, who was commissioned as part of the construction of a building by Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher. Like the subject property, this new building was a tenanted property, already being leased to Browning, King & Co. at the time of its construction. Source: The Frederick and Edith L. Massiah Papers were donated to the University of Pennsylvania Archives by Louis J. Massiah in August 2011 (Accession # 2011:048).

*Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination, March 2022
 The Hollinger Building, 1611 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Later that year, Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher advertised “the building just completed” to “Bankers and Brokers—desiring a splendid location in the Financial District.” The advertisement described “individual floors containing 2000 square feet each; excellent light and service,” and a “ground floor with a mezzanine, contains 3000 square feet.” The building also featured an elevator with an attendant.⁵ The early tenants included West & Co., established in 1900, members of the New York and Philadelphia Stock Exchanges; the Equitable Bonded Mortgage Company, established in 1847; Diffenderffer & Co., members of the New York and Philadelphia Stock Exchanges; etc. The Hollinger Building represents the economic and historical heritage of the community.



Figure 17. Left: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 June 1930, 23. Figure 18. Right: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 May 1935, 24.

By the 1940s, the first floor and mezzanine was no longer occupied by bankers or brokers, as the prowess of the financial industry had greatly waned during the Great Depression and with the onset of the Second World War. Fortunately, the commercial versatility of the building allowed the primary space to be leased by Bachrach, Inc., a firm founded in 1868 by David Bachrach, then one of the leading portrait photographers in the country. A legacy in American photography, Bachrach continues to-date as the oldest continually operating portrait studio in the country. They appear to have entered the Philadelphia market in the 1910s, at which time their studio was housed at 1626 Chestnut Street.⁶ In these early years their sitters included prominent names like Barnes, Carstairs, Cassatt, Disston, Haines, Horrocks, Lippincott, Madeira, Snellenburg, and Stotesbury, among others. Beyond those of local renown, Bachrach was commissioned by the most prominent American politicians, jurists, actors, entertainers, athletes, inventors, and businesspeople, ranging from “JFK to Duke Ellington.”⁷

Early in 1940, William I. Mirkil Co. represented Bachrach in obtaining a lease for the ground floor and mezzanine of the subject building. The space was renovated by Frank Stockholm on designs by Ralph B. Bencker.⁸ Bachrach advertised at 1611 Walnut Street through the mid-century with “Bachrach Portraits of Men” by Fabian Bachrach, a “Photographer of Men,” and Bradford

⁵ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 December 1923, 10.

⁶ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 April 1917, 18.

⁷ Samantha Baskind. “The Story Behind the Photography Studio That Captured America,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 2021.

⁸ “Activities of the Day in Real Estate,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 February 1940, 44.

Bachrach, “Photographer of Women.” During the period of the Second World War, advertisements for Bachrach included photographs of both men and women in uniform. In the 1940s, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was in town visiting a prominent Philadelphia family, at which time the hosts requested a photograph of the famous Jewish-American genius. Without a photograph to provide, Einstein sat for one of his Bachrach portraits, no doubt at the subject property.⁹ The firm would continue at the subject property, where they displayed portraits in a ground floor show window, through the time of their 100th anniversary in 1968. In celebration of this significant anniversary, Strawbridge & Clothier hosted a photography exhibit at their Market Street store, which included portraits of “every President of the United States since Andrew Johnson.”¹⁰

Part of Bachrach’s eminence in American photography was achieved in the subject building from 1940 through its 100th anniversary in 1968, relating to the economic and historical heritage of the community.



Advertisements for Bachrach at the subject property. Figure 19, on left, and Bradford Bachrach, “Photographer of Women” in Figure 20, on right. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 June 1942, 8.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 August 1943, 32.

⁹ Peter B. Blaikie of Bachrach, Philadelphia. Interview. By Oscar Beisert. 10 March 2022.

¹⁰ “Studio, Store Mark Their 1st 100 Years,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 April 1968, 52.

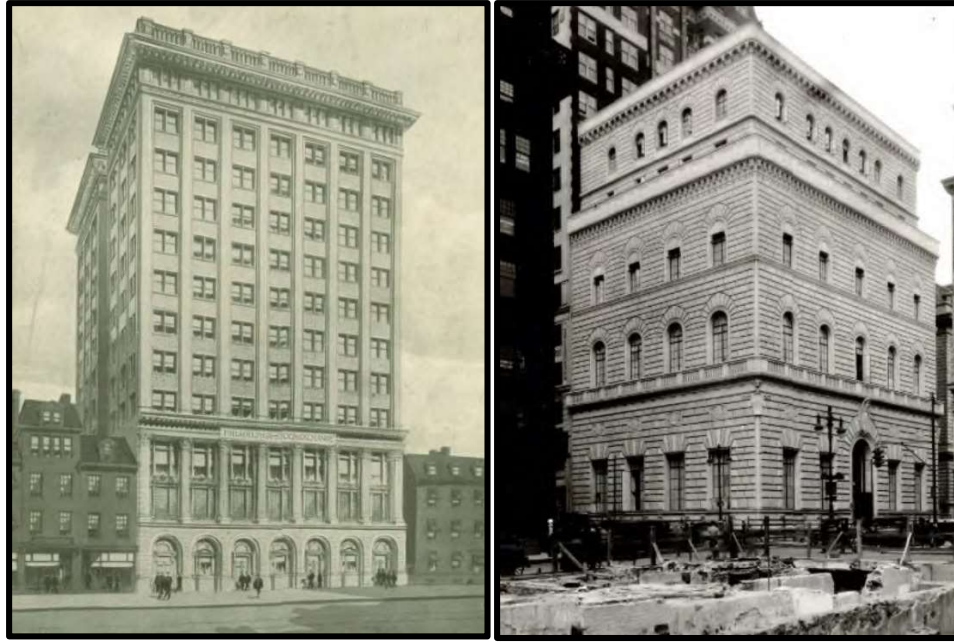


Figure 21. Left: The Philadelphia Stock Exchange. Source: Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. Figure 22. Right: Drexel & Company. Source: Day & Klauder Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: WEST WALNUT STREET—A NEW FINANCIAL FRONTIER AND BANKING DISTRICT, 1900—1930

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 and, most often, entirely demolished to make way for new buildings, including “skyscrapers” and other distinctive commercial properties.¹¹ As mentioned under the Criterion J discussion, part of the redevelopment of the neighborhood led to the emergence of a new financial district in 1400, 1500, and 1600 blocks of Walnut Street. Perhaps the most definitive shift in domicile for the local financial community occurred in 1914 when the Philadelphia Stock Exchange opened for business at 1411-15 Walnut Street. This prominent financial institution 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 floors 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 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 21).¹²

¹¹ 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.

¹² 1910 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley.



Figure 23. Looking north from the rear of the parcel at 1424 Walnut Street with Drexel & Co. in the background, employees of Frederick Massiah, a prominent African American concrete contractor, work on a new commercial building, designed for the financial industry, on May 20, 1929. Note the ubiquitous Philadelphia townhouse standing on left, which remained from Walnut Street’s residential period. Source: The Frederick and Edith L. Massiah Papers were donated to the University of Pennsylvania Archives by Louis J. Massiah in August 2011 (Accession # 2011:048).

Numerous trust companies moved to this section of South Broad Street around this time, but it was not until the 1920s that Walnut Street became the city’s new “banking centre.”¹³ 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. The transition is illustrated above in Figure 22. 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.¹⁴ Between 1920 and 1921, The Dollings & Co., investment securities, built a banking house with a simple, but rusticated façade at 1421 Walnut Street.¹⁵ West & Company commissioned a Colonial Revival style banking house at 1511 Walnut Street, which was designed by Stewardson & Page, Architects.¹⁶ By 1922, nearly half of those

¹³ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 January 1920, 19.

¹⁴ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 January 1920, 19.

¹⁵ *The Morning Call*, 1 December 1922, 24.

¹⁶ Cope & Stewardson Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

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 or occupy their own banking house or small office building somewhat distinctive.¹⁷

As the 1920s progressed, numerous other 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.”¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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 22). The architects Day & Klauder designed one of Philadelphia’s finest buildings at what is now known as 135–143

¹⁷ *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. 15th 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. 15th Street; Crawford, Patton & Cannon, 1421 Chestnut Street; Edgar G. Cross, PSEB; Culver & Co. 1504 Walnut Street; Daniel & Co., 15th 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, 15th 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, 3rd & 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 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.

¹⁸ “Brown Brothers & Co. Plan To Move Bank To 16th and Walnut,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 December 1925, 1.

¹⁹ “Activities of Day in Real Estate,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 March 1927, 19.

South 15th Street.²⁰ 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.²¹

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 1928.²² 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.²³ Most financial firms did not have representative banking houses in this period and, therefore, the decision to build a bank or office building for a single firm or representative of a firm was a strong statement as to the eminence of the institution.



Figure 24. Left: The trend of commissioning new rental buildings in the 1400, 1500, and 1600 blocks of Walnut Street for potential banking and brokerage houses continued through 1929, as illustrated in this photo related to the construction of a new structure at 1424 Walnut Street (shown in Figure 23). As is visible construction was underway even before a tenant had been found for the ground floor, involving both Albert M. Greenfield & Co. and Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher. Figure 25. Right: At the time of completion, the tenants included both Goodbody & Co. on the ground floor and Samuel Ungerleider and Company on the upper floor. Source: The Frederick and Edith L. Massiah Papers were donated to the University of Pennsylvania Archives by Louis J. Massiah in August 2011 (Accession # 2011:048).

²⁰ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

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

²² “Walnut St. Grows As Banking Centre,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 May 1928, 81.

²³ “Walnut St. Grows As Banking Centre,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 May 1928, 81.



Figure 26. Left: The Eastern Outfitting Company (1909) at 1017-19 Market Street in San Francisco, California. Source: [Grand Illusion - FoundSF](#). Figure 27. Middle left: The Republican Trust Company at 1429 Chestnut Street. Figure 28. Middle right: 1604 Walnut Street. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2022. Figure 29. Right: The subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2022.

CRITERIA C

The Hollinger Building reflects the environment of American architecture in an era wherein commercial buildings, specifically those that served the financial industry, were characterized by the Neoclassical style. While the basic form and design of the subject building and its façade diverges from the totality of classical design principles, the dressings include smooth-faced limestone, paneled and plain pilasters, spandrels with traditional paneling, and cornices with dentils and brackets. All these features are indicative of Neoclassical architecture yet applied to a modern building with a primary (south) elevation defined by a five-story “enframed window wall,” a façade format and commercial motif that dominated main streets nationwide in the first half of the twentieth century.²⁴ This general commercial interpretation of the building is worthy of individual consideration; however, the subject building’s association with “Philadelphia’s new financial district” in the 1920s introduces additional nuances to the interpretation.

While commonly assigned to impressive detached or semi-detached buildings, in this case, the Neoclassical style was applied to the Hollinger Building, a vertical structure historically wedged between brownstones. Even before the limestone-clad structure became a reality, the subject property was advertised for sale and development to the financial industry. And while the subject building was not designed for a specific financial institution, the finished product was specifically marketed to “Bankers and Brokers,” a tactic that included the physical Neoclassical commercial formula applied to its facade. With a large first floor and mezzanine, the building was designed with the versatility of serving a single financial institution on the first floor with exclusive offices above or possibly a primary tenant on the first floor with separate office suites for let to a variety of tenants. This type of building derives from a “hybrid type of bank building...with a ground-floor banking room and a superstructure of offices” that emerged in American cities during the first decades of the twentieth century.

²⁴ Richard Longstreth. *The Buildings of Main Street, A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. (Washington, D.C., The Preservation Press, 1987), 68-69.

By the 1920s, the features of general commercial architecture employed in vertical, urban row buildings merged with the “hybrid type of bank building” to create the subject property and many others like it that spoke to both building forms and commercial practices of the era. The commonality is the application of Neoclassical stylistic features to achieve a modicum of monumentality, which remained a staple of buildings designed to serve the financial industry.



Both of the buildings shown above are built in a traditional row format, commonly associated with urban areas where new building took on this typical form; however, the two examples show the transition of building facades from high style Classical Revival to Classical Modernism.²⁵ Figure 30. Left: A bank or trust company building in the 1400 block of Chestnut Street. Source: The Society Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Figure 31. Right: The Integrity Trust Company, design by Paul Cret, located in the 700 block of Chestnut Street. Source: Taken in 1949. Jacob Stelman Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Historic Context: The Neoclassical Style in the World of Finance

After the decades-long profusion of ornamentation that defines much of Victorian-era architecture, the showcase of monumental buildings that comprised the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 must have appeared like a mirage to the groves of commercial, financial, and institutional attendees who, in many cases, were perpetually seeking a means to rebrand their image, products, and/or services. The temporary neo-classical city of Chicago came by way of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, inspiring an American Renaissance that resulted in a brilliant aesthetic shift and variation in architectural expression and style. Architects like Daniel Burnham—chief architect of the exhibition, Richard Morris Hunt, Charles McKim, and George B. Post were almost all École-trained, and their metropolitan influence, via New York and Chicago, cast a spell on designers across the country.²⁶ Most importantly, these fantastically successful architects were “on board” and promoting the Classical Revival as expressed in the Beaux Arts language. Fortuitously, the 1893 Exhibition attracted “monied interest” well beyond design

²⁵ Edwin Heathcote, *Bank Builders* (Wiley, 2000), 45.

²⁶ Susan Wagg, *A Critical Look At Bank Architecture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 67–76.

professionals with the attendance of several financial bodies, including the World Congress of Banking and the American Bankers Association (ABA). In July 1893, the ABA held their annual convention at Chicago, a white-collar decision that would influence urban and town architecture for decades to come, as the conference brought bankers from across the country to see the “White City.”²⁷

Even with the passage of two decades, American bankers remained wary due to the financial panic of 1873, the embers of which had reignited with another “banking panic” at the time of the ABA’s conference in Chicago. Even though only 500 of 10,000 banks failed, the Panic of 1893 led to an economic depression that would last for several years afterwards.²⁸ After the initial panic itself ended in the fall of 1893, banking leaders assessed the situation, surmising that an overall lack of trust had caused the crisis. With the 1893 Chicago Exhibition and its magnificent “Court of Honor” recently emblazoned upon their minds, the ABA and other leaders in the industry began a campaign to restore the depositor’s faith through the infusion of classical architecture. The employment of monumental designs in new bank buildings would advertise the soundness of financial institutions, creating iconic “classically designed fortresses” that would come to symbolize fidelity and trust, as well as the promise of financial return and success. As night follows day, this architectural movement, occasionally called “the golden age of bank building,” accompanied an incredible period of American prosperity and optimism, which fittingly produced Beaux Arts-inspired banks across the country. After 1893 through the 1920s, granite- and limestone-clad temples with classical columns and pilasters came to represent America’s eminence in commerce and industry, instilling a renewed trust in the financial system.²⁹

From the 1890s through the 1920s, the United States saw the construction of more than 12,000 bank buildings. While New York City obviously boasted the greatest number of these classical buildings, Philadelphia, along with all the other large American cities, boasted their fair share of truly impressive banking houses and the edifices of other financial institutions. Over the years, it seems that almost every viable municipality with a dense Main Street had at least one banking house that was represented by a neoclassical temple at the center of town. This is certainly evident to anyone who has made any kind of survey of small-town architecture, a sentiment expressed in a period issue of the *Architectural Record*:

Throughout the country there is hardly a small town which does not boast one or more bank buildings, which though they may not be invariably of great architectural consequence, are yet among the most pretentious constructions in their respective localities.³⁰

²⁷ Belfoure, *Monuments To Money*, 126–127.

²⁸ Peter H. Bent, “The Stabilising Effects of the Dingley Tariff and the Recovery from the 1890s Depression in the United States,” *Crises in Economic and Social History: A Comparative Perspective* (2015): 373–90.

²⁹ Belfoure, *Monuments To Money*, 127–128.

³⁰ “Recent Bank Buildings of the United States,” *Architectural Record* 25 (January 1909): 1-66.

In a city like Philadelphia monumental bank buildings of the subject architectural movement and period would eventually be built in all shapes and sizes. Though the movement, unlike in New York and other fast changing cities, was slower to take hold.

Because Philadelphia was “The First Wall Street,” it had always been a city with its own financial prowess, and it certainly was a nineteenth century powerhouse in that regard, even after being eclipsed by New York City as America’s primary financial center.³¹ In fact, this early history and Philadelphia’s commercial and industrial primacy in the nineteenth century produced a financial district within which the city’s financial institutions were as old, established, and numerous as any of the world’s great cities. That said, the city was a conservative place, and its financial district was quartered essentially where it had started, in an old section near Independence Hall. Occupying the 300 and 400 blocks of Chestnut Street, as well as Walnut Street and the nearby numbered streets, this neighborhood was home to one of the most eclectic bodies of bank architecture in the United States, only a portion of which survives to-date.³² The shift of this longtime easterly financial stronghold illustrates the significance of the transition that occurred between 1900 and 1930 when a new financial district emerged on S. Broad Street and the westerly blocks of Walnut Street.

³¹ Robert E. Wright, *The First Wall Street* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³² In 1902, the following financial institutions stood near Independence Hall in addition the First and Second Banks of the United States (both extant): Brown Brothers & Co., Bankers (founded 1798), southeast corner Fourth and Chestnut Streets (demolished); Charles D. Barney & Co., 122 South 4th Street (demolished); Farmers’ and Mechanics’ National Bank (founded 1807), 427 Chestnut Street (extant); Fidelity Insurance, Trust and Safe Deposit Co. (incorporated 1866), 325 Chestnut Street (demolished); First National Bank (established 1863), 315–19 Chestnut Street (extant); Independence National Bank (established 1883), 400 block of Chestnut Street (demolished), The Bank of North America (chartered 1781), 307 Chestnut Street (demolished); The Philadelphia National Bank (established 1803, built 1859), 421 Chestnut Street (extant); Western National Bank (established 1832, built 1847), 400 block of Chestnut Street (demolished).



Figure 32. Left: Fire Engine Co. No. 47 at 3035-37 Gray’s Ferry Avenue designed by Charles E. Oeslager. Source: PhillyHistory.org. Figure 33. Right: A Beautifully Detailed, Original Plan of the Sales and Service Building for Gomery-Schwarz Co. designed by Oeschlager, published in the *American Architect and Building News* on 5 June 1918. Source: St. Croix Architecture.

CRITERION E

The Hollinger Building is the work of Charles E. Oeschlager, an architect whose work significantly influenced the City of Philadelphia and the larger region. Executed in the Neoclassical style, the subject property is an important representative work of Oeschlager’s larger oeuvre. He was a prolific architect during the first decades of the twentieth century, designing all manner of buildings—apartment houses, churches, dwellings, factories, garages, offices, stores, warehouses, etc. These designs were attractively rendered in the pervasive architectural styles of the era, including the Colonial Revival, Gothic Revival, Neoclassical, Tudor Revival, etc. The subject property is an important representative commercial building designed by Oeschlager during this period of his career in Philadelphia.



Figure 34. Engine No. 50, Ladder No. 12, at 1325 W. Cambria Street in Philadelphia, designed in 1900 by Charles E. Oeschlager. Source: Google.



Figure 35. W.A. Leiser & Co. designed by Charles E. Oelschlager. Source: Hidden City Philadelphia.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: CHARLES E. OELSCHLAGER, ARCHITECT

The subject property was designed by Charles E. Oelschlager, architect, and the following brief biographical sketch was written by Sandra L. Tatman for the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings database:

The prolific Charles Oelschlager appears in Philadelphia city directories as a draftsman from 1892 to 1897 and as an architect from 1898 to 1935/36. He had studied at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art from 1891 to 1893, and after he launched his own firm in 1897 he notes an office in the Harrison Building (Room 1009 from 1898 to 1910 and Room 1011 from 1911 to 1916). From 1917 to 1935/36 his office address appears as 1615 Walnut Street.

Oelschlager's practice was a general one and in the early days included a number of church commissions (Reconciliation P.E. Church and Sunday School, 13th and Tasker streets, 1899; Third German Baptist Church, 10th and Ritner streets, 1906); however, by 1909 he had embraced the new moving picture theatres with his design for a theatre (moving picture and vaudeville) on Broad Street between Ritner and Porter streets in Philadelphia. There followed other commissions for moving picture theatres and film companies, but these were also augmented by garages and automobile showrooms (automobile showroom for Henry A. Laughlin, Penn Avenue and Whitfield Street, Philadelphia, 1915; Gomery-Schwartz Autocar, 130-140 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, 1916; Keystone Pure Oil Co., gasoline filling and service stations, Broad Street below Huntingdon Street, Philadelphia, 1919; Neel-Cadillac Co., 25th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, 1919).

Oelschlager was an active member of the T-Square Club, joining the organization in 1895 and serving as secretary in 1896.³³

³³ Sandra L. Tatman, "Charles E. Oelschlager," in *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings* Accessed on 12 March 2022.



Figure 36. St. John's Baptist Church, 1601 S. 13th Street in Philadelphia, designed by Samuel Hall Day and Charles E. Oelschlager in 1892 and 1899. Source: Kevin Block. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Church of the Reconciliation, 1601 S. 13th Street*. (Philadelphia: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, 2020).

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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 assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian; Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian; and Tim Kerner, Architect.

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Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

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