

ADDRESS: 5604 N 5TH ST

Name of Resource: National Bank of Olney

Review: Designation

Property Owner: Roselia Marquez Torres and Hue Ton

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia; Kevin McMahon, consultant

Staff Contact: Ted Maust, theodore.maust@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 5604 N. 5th Street, historically the National Bank of Olney, and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The two-story, Art Deco-style cast-stone bank building was constructed in 1927 and 1928. The nomination contends that the property meets Criterion for Designation C and D, that it reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style and embodies distinguishing characteristics of that style. The nomination claims that the bank represents the shifting trends of the design of neighborhood banks away from classical models toward a more modern form known as the Art Deco style during the late 1920s. The nomination further argues that the building is eligible under Criterion for Designation E – is the work of an architectural firm whose designs have significantly influenced the development of the city, state, or nation – owing to the national prominence of the architects, Simons, Brittain & English, as specialists in designing banks, especially for small or medium-sized towns.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 5604 N. 5th Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E.



Figure 1: Photo of subject property from nomination.



Figure 2: The subject property is located just north of Olney and extends back from N 5th St to a private alley in the Olney neighborhood.

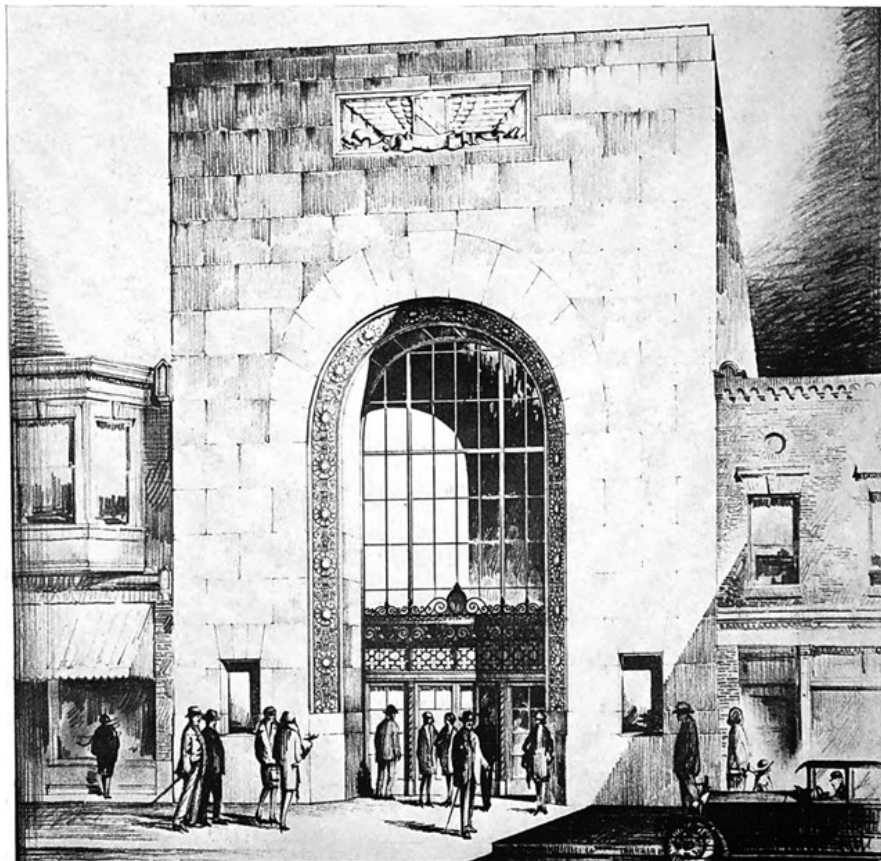


Figure 3: Charcoal and pencil sketch depicting the National Bank of Olney, as published in R.W. Sexton's *American Commercial Buildings of Today* (1927).

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: 5604 N. 5th Street

Postal code: 19120

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: National Bank of Olney

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: _____

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 1927 to 1928

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1927-28

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Simons, Brittain & English

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Unknown

Original owner: National Bank of Olney

Other significant persons: N/A

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 Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date March 17, 2026

Name with Title Kevin McMahon, consultant Email hstark@preservationalliance.com

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

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: March 18, 2026

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 4/16/2026

Date of Notice Issuance: 4/17/2026

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: HUE TON and ROSELIA MARQUEZ TORRES

Address: 4400 ASHBURNER ST

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19136

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 20 May 2026

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

5. Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the westerly side of 5th Street at the distance of 32 feet 2-1/2 inches northwardly from the northerly side of Olney Avenue, thence extending from said beginning point northwardly along 5th Street the distance of 32 feet 9-1/2 inches; thence extending westwardly at a right angle to 5th Street the distance of 110 feet 0 inches to the easterly side of an alley; thence continuing southwardly, following the S-curve line along the easterly side of the alley to a point 100 feet 0 inches westwardly from the beginning point; thence continuing eastwardly at a right angle to the alley and 5th Street the distance of 100 feet 0 inches to the beginning point.

(OPA No. 882928245)



Parcel Boundary Map, 5604 N. 5th Street (imagery from atlas.phila.gov).

6. Description

The National Bank of Olney is a two-story, Art Deco-style cast stone bank building. Designed by the firm of Simons, Brittain & English, the building was constructed between 1927 and 1928. The building is situated on the west side of North 5th Street, just north of Olney Avenue in the Olney section of North Philadelphia.



Figure 1: East elevation, looking west.

On the front or east elevation, the exterior wall primarily consists of cast stone, which rises from a polished granite water table. The flat surface of the wall is broken by the large central archway, which is the defining architectural feature of the building, and the stylized, rectangular ornamental panel found directly above it. At the first story, the central opening contains a 1990s-era aluminum entranceway and storefront. On either side of the entryway, there are separate, rectangular storefront windows, which sit within original openings that were enlarged in the 1990s (compare the current condition to the historic image in Figure 6). Directly above the entranceway and storefronts, a commercial awning, installed around 2010, spans the full width of the building.

At the second story, above the awning, the central archway features an original, multi-light steel window (Figure 2). The window is recessed several feet into the building and has an ornamental cast stone surround, which features a stylized, Art Deco floral motif. The stone surround angles inward from the outer face of the exterior wall to the deep intrados directly in front of the window. As illustrated in Figure 6, the surround originally continued down both sides of the central opening to the granite water table. Although this ornamental feature is currently not visible at the

first story, existing conditions suggest it remains intact behind the storefront windows. Above the central archway, the ornamental panel near the roofline features a central shield with stylized wings, all resting on a linenfold ribbon (Figure 3). At the top of the east elevation, the wall has a subtle stepped treatment, which visually reduces the mass of the building at the roofline.



Figure 2: East elevation, close-up view of central arched window at the second story.

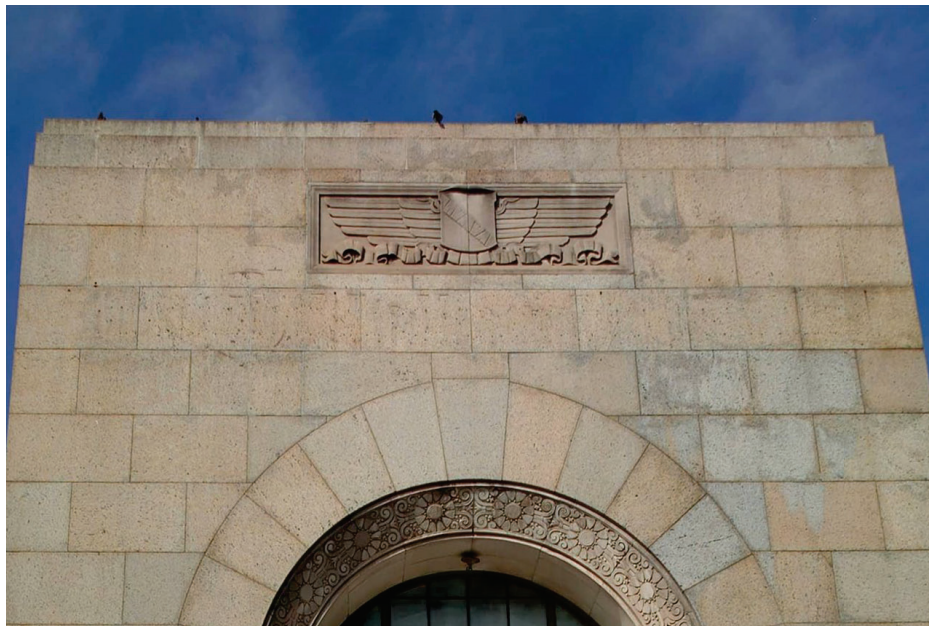


Figure 3: East elevation, close-up view of the ornamental panel below the roofline. Here, the stepped detail at the top of the exterior wall is also illustrated.

Along the north and south elevations, the building abuts shorter two-story commercial buildings. Above the neighboring buildings, the exterior walls are stuccoed and have no openings or

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
National Bank of Olney, 5604 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA

ornamental features (Figure 4). The west elevation is also clad in stucco (Figure 5). Here, the rearmost part of the building is lower than the primary two-story volume. Both sections have flat roofs. On the roof of the lower section, there are several pieces of mechanical equipment, a metal shed-like structure built onto the west elevation of the taller section, and a tall chimney at the northwest corner. On either side of the metal shed, the west elevation of the taller section has two original, multi-light steel windows with centered ventilating sash. There appears to be one or more door or window openings at the first story (the west elevation of the lower section), but these are not visible from the public right-of-way.



Figure 4: Partial view of the south elevation, looking northwest from 5th Street. The north elevation is similar.

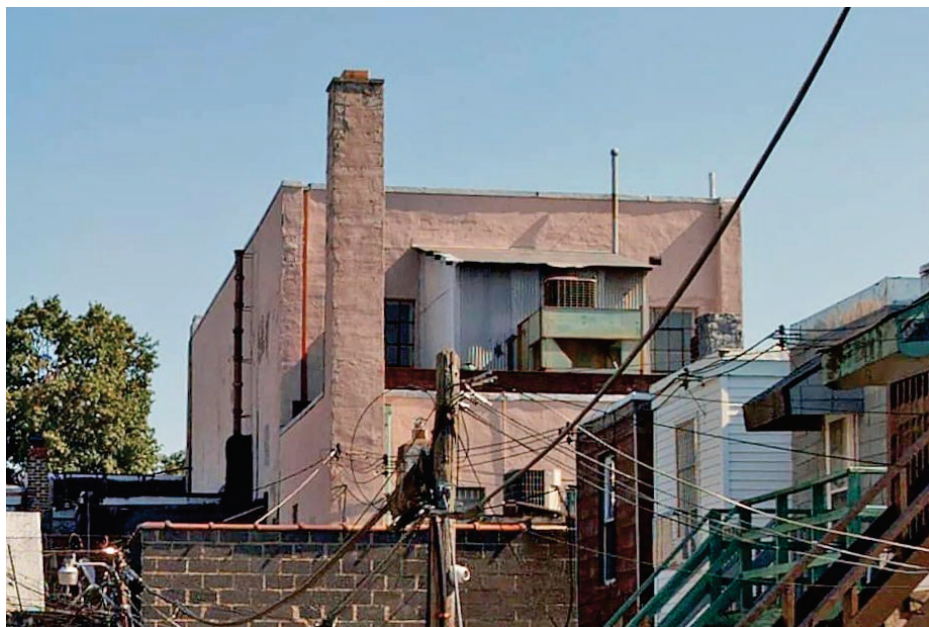


Figure 5: Partial view of the west elevation, looking east from Fairhill Street.

8. Significance

The National Bank of Olney was built in 1927-28. This two-story cast stone building was designed by Simons, Brittain & English, the Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Columbus, Ohio-based practice which garnered national recognition as one of the top firms specializing in the design of bank buildings during the 1920s. In its characteristically Art Deco treatment, the National Bank of Olney exemplifies how the architecture of neighborhood banks, and commercial buildings generally, began to shift away from classical models toward a more modern, clearer expression of form known as the Art Deco style during the late 1920s.

As a high-quality example of Art Deco-style bank architecture and as a notable work by Simons, Brittain & English, the well-known bank specialists, the Olney National Bank merits listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, satisfying the following criteria as established in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

CRITERION C

Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

CRITERION D

Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering Specimen; and

CRITERION 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.

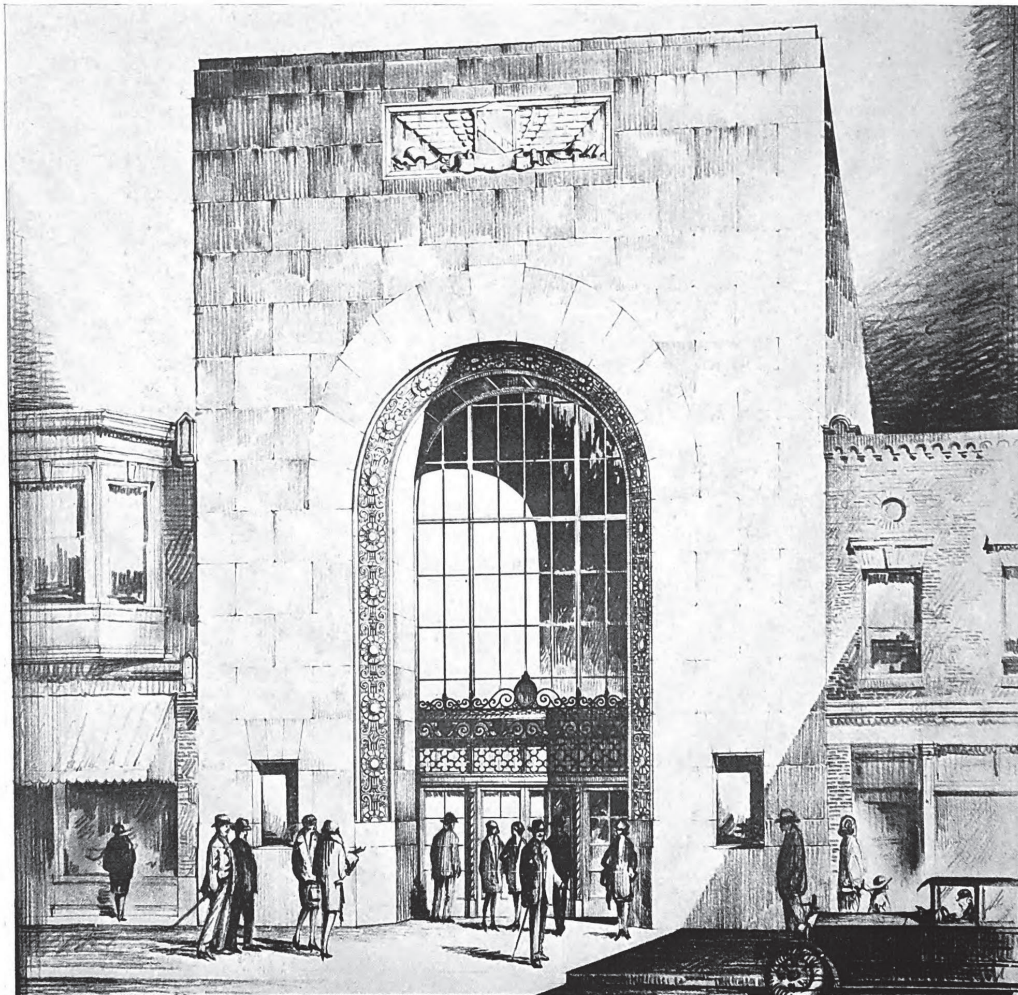
Early History of the National Bank of Olney

The National Bank of Olney was organized in November 1925 by a group of local businessmen. The Olney neighborhood, situated east of Broad Street in the uppermost reaches of North Philadelphia, remained relatively sparsely settled until the 1910s when real estate speculators began to target the area for development. With 5th Street serving as a commercial spine, the area grew rapidly, filling in with hundreds of new rowhouses over the course of the 1910s and 20s. As Olney's population increased, business leaders saw a need for a financial institution that could serve the everyday banking needs of this growing community. The National Bank of Olney would fulfill these needs. On May 15, 1926, the bank officially opened for business, having received its official charter under the National Bank Act the previous day. Initially, the bank operated out of a storefront in an existing building at 5608 North 5th Street.¹

Proving the high demand for financial services that existed in the neighborhood, the National Bank of Olney grew rapidly. Within just one year, the bank's total deposits had increased from about \$48,000 (on opening day) to nearly \$600,000. Two years in, Olney had deposits exceeding

¹ John Thom Holdsworth, *Financing an Empire: History of Banking in Pennsylvania, Volume 4: Banks and Bankers* (Chicago: S.J. Clark, 1928), 211-212.

\$1 million and over \$800,000 in loans on its books.² Even before Olney's first anniversary, the bank's growth had created a need for a more suitable, and permanent, place of business. With this in mind, Olney's directors acquired the property next door at 5604-06 North 5th Street and, in early 1927, hired the bank specialists Simons, Brittain & English to design their new home.³ The project was granted a building permit in late July, and construction appears to have proceeded quickly.⁴ Work on the new bank, a two-story, Art Deco-style cast stone building with a spacious banking room, was completed early the following year, opening to the public on February 18, 1928.⁵ The new National Bank of Olney not only provided the space necessary to handle the bank's ever growing customer base, but also signified the position it had achieved as a community institution.



NATIONAL BANK OF OLNEY,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

SIMONS, BRITTAIN & ENGLISH, INC.
ARCHITECTS.

Figure 6: Charcoal and pencil sketch depicting the National Bank of Olney, as published in R.W. Sexton's *American Commercial Buildings of Today* (1927).

² Holdsworth, 212.

³ "Advance Construction News," *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, March 16, 1927, 163.

⁴ Bureau of Building Inspection, City of Philadelphia, Building Permit #6714, granted July 27, 1927.

⁵ Holdsworth, 211.


Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
National Bank of Olney, 5604 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA

Simons, Brittain & English

The National Bank of Olney is a notable work of Art Deco bank design by Simons, Brittain & English, a Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Columbus, Ohio-based firm. Founded by George J. Simons, Berford Brittain, and George W. English in Pittsburgh in 1915, the partnership was originally formed not as an architectural practice, but as materials and equipment supplier specializing in bank buildings.⁶ While all three men had backgrounds in the construction industry, none had received an architectural education or, apparently, had experience designing buildings. Nonetheless, by 1919, Simons, Brittain & English had expanded the scope of the company and begun to advertise themselves not merely as bank outfitters, but bank designers and builders, too. The firm hired several architectural graduates to take on much of the design work, and Simons himself became a registered architect sometime in the early 1920s.

**“A BANK IS JUDGED
BY THE BUILDING IT KEEPS”**

WHETHER CONSCIOUS OF IT OR NOT we are all subject to the subtle influence of beauty. Designed in rugged masses, bank buildings suggest great strength and reveal their beauty to a proud public.



A new bank building designed in modern American, fully utilitarian, certainly has an appeal with a pull that builds up deposits.

Echoing the architecture of the mighty past the bank building today of original design and majestic scale has great advertising value.

Every Bank Building Should Have a Soul

Does your building proclaim this soul to be a thing of beauty—and of helpfulness, materially and financially?

Is the structure a monument to success attained; a tribute to a man or group of men and to the thrift of the community—or is it a cold soul-less pile?

We introduce life and vigor into our buildings and give them a soul.


SIMONS, BRITTAİN & ENGLISH
Designers of Bank Buildings for many years

336 FOURTH AVENUE, Pittsburgh
NEW YORK CITY PHILADELPHIA COLUMBUS

All inquiries receive immediate attention without obligation

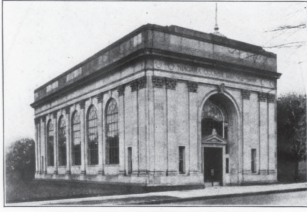
OUR BUILDINGS

Are Designed to fit the Individual needs and resources of the
BANK



KEYSTONE TRUST COMPANY, HARRISBURG, PA.
Approximate size, 39x74; Approximate cost, \$123,000.00

OWNERS may employ us to render the usual architectural services only of preparing drawings, specifications and superintending the construction of the work if they prefer.



THE NIAGARA COUNTY SAVINGS BANK,
NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y.
Approximate size, 63x85; Approximate cost, \$70,000.00


UNDER one responsibility the whole operation may be handled by our organization from first sketches to the turning over of the finished building ready for occupancy.

{ OWNERS who have completed their buildings under a single contract know it works well and will attest to the merit of such a procedure when employing this company. }

**SIMONS,
BRITTAİN
&
ENGLISH**

Designers and Builders of Banks

336 Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh
Philadelphia Columbus



THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK, CHILICOTHE, OHIO
Approximate size, 46x90; Approximate cost, \$149,000.00

8
Readers will confer a favor by mentioning THE MARCH, 1928 BANKERS MONTHLY when writing to our advertisers

Figures 7 and 8: Simons, Brittain & English advertisements from the May 1927 and March 1928 issues of *Bankers Monthly*, respectively. The 1927 advertisement depicts the 69th Street Terminal Title & Trust Company in Upper Darby, which was never built, see note 15.

Simons, Brittain & English were one of several firms who came to prominence as bank architects and builders during the 1910s and 20s. In his history of bank architecture, Charles Belfoure has written that “By the early twentieth century, banks had become such a ubiquitous building type

⁶ “Men of the Iron Trade,” *Iron Trade Review*, April 8, 1915, p. 711.

that banking design had become almost a science unto itself, and with that came the bank architect, a specialist who designed nothing but banks.”⁷ In the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest, Simons, Brittain & English were among the most prominent of the bank specialists, others being the Hoggson Brothers of New York City and the Tilghman-Moyer Company, which was based in Allentown, Pennsylvania and had offices in New York and Chicago. These three firms alone produced hundreds of bank buildings between 1915 and 1930. Usually, but not always, their clients were banks in small and medium-sized towns where local architects may not have had experience designing this highly specialized building type. In larger urban centers, on the other hand, banks were more likely to be designed by prestigious big-city firms whose practices were more diverse but who nonetheless became well-regarded as bank designers. In Philadelphia, such firms included Davis, Dunlap & Barney and Mellor, Meigs & Howe, among others.

Between 1919 and 1930, Simons, Brittain & English completed at least forty banks in towns and small cities across Pennsylvania, as well as in Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, and West Virginia. Like the Hoggson Brothers and Tilghman-Moyer, Simons, Brittain & English reached prospective clients through frequent advertisements in national banking periodicals, such as the *Bankers' Magazine* and *Bankers' Monthly* (Figures 7 and 8). Sometimes, too, firm principals became contributing writers for these publications, offering advice on all aspects of bank planning, design, equipment, and construction. George J. Simons himself wrote a piece in *Bankers' Monthly* in February 1924, entitled “Does Your Bank Building Extend a Welcome?,” in which he made recommendations as to how banks could be designed to be more customer-friendly.⁸

Around 1922, to handle a growing number of jobs in eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Simons, Brittain & English opened a branch office in Philadelphia, which was located in the City Trust Building at 929 Chestnut Street. But despite having a local presence, the firm completed relatively few projects in the Philadelphia area. Apart from the National Bank of Olney, the firm's local work included the Wayne Junction Trust Company at 4416 Germantown Avenue (1922; extant), where they completed extensive alterations to an existing three-story building; the Richmond Trust Company at 2701 East Allegheny Avenue (1923-24; extant but heavily altered); and, across the river in Camden, the American National Bank at 1213 Broadway (1927; demolished). The firm also completed design work for the new 69th Street Terminal Title & Trust Company in Upper Darby in 1927, although this project was never built (Figure 7). Otherwise, the Philadelphia office was occupied with such projects as the Bloomsburg National Bank in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania (1924-25; demolished), the Union National Bank in Atlantic City (1925; demolished), and the Heights Deposit Bank in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (1925-26; extant).

⁷ Charles Belfoure, *Monuments to Money: The Architecture of American Banks* (McFarland, 2005), 130.

⁸ George J. Simons, “Does Your Bank Building Extend a Welcome?,” *Bankers' Monthly* (February 1924), 66-67.

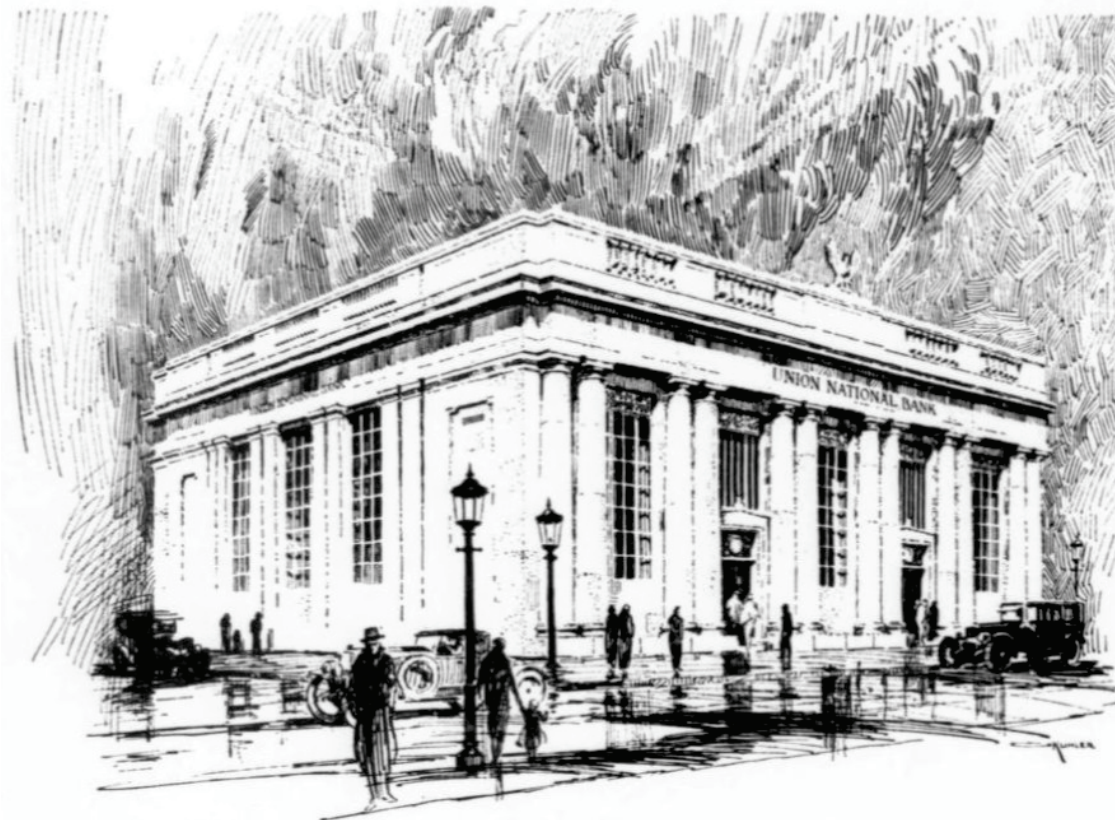


Figure 9: Charcoal and pencil illustration of the Union National Bank in Atlantic City, designed by Simons, Brittain & English and built in 1925 (now demolished). Image from the January 1927 issue of *Bankers' Monthly*.

With these projects and others, Simons, Brittain & English demonstrated a deep understanding of the classical and Italian Renaissance models that heavily influenced bank design during this period. It was only in the late 1920s that the firm's work started to reflect the growing popularity of the Art Deco style, a shift which, as explained below, is best illustrated by the National Bank of Olney.

Simons, Brittain & English remained in operation until the early 1930s. The firm's demise appears to have been precipitated by the Great Depression and the significant curtailment of non-residential construction that followed. Although Simons, Brittain & English were in practice for only a little over a decade, they had a significant impact on bank architecture during the 1920s through the dozens of notable banks they designed in towns and small cities across the Northeast and Midwest. Many of these bank buildings remain standing as important local landmarks today.

The Architecture of the National Bank of Olney

From about 1900 until the late 1920s, bank architecture in the United States was firmly rooted in the Beaux Arts tradition. In the decades before the turn of the century, bank architecture was characterized by a certain Victorian exuberance and frivolity, which came to symbolize the freewheeling speculation and unsound economic policy that led to the financial crisis of the 1890s. Once the economic downturn had subsided, bankers surmised that the physical appearance of the bank building would be a key factor in regaining the trust and confidence of their customers. Heavily influenced by the Beaux Arts magnificence of the architecture at the

Chicago World's Fair in 1893, bankers and architects "realized that a bank designed in the classical manner could do just that," as architect Charles Belfoure has written.⁹ By employing the classical orders and building in light-colored limestone, marble, or granite, the bank could, Belfoure continues, "be a dignified, magnificent structure that stands for solidity, strength, and above all trust." As a result, beginning around 1900 and lasting throughout much of the next three decades, most banks built in the United States reflected this type of Beaux Arts classical treatment, which became so ubiquitous that it "would cement the image of a bank in the public's mind forever," according to Belfoure.¹⁰

Beginning in 1926, commercial buildings in the United States, especially banks, reflected an increasing momentum away from rigid classicism toward a more modern form of architecture known as Art Deco. In *American Commercial Buildings of Today*, an exhaustive survey published in 1928, the critic Randolph W. Sexton wrote that "it is difficult to understand why so many people – architects and laymen alike – are so decided in their opinion that a bank building must be designed in the classic style," and that the classical orders "fail utterly to suggest twentieth century Americanism."¹¹ Many architects agreed. Influenced by the refreshingly modern architecture on display at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris in 1925, American architects began to instill in their work a new expression of simple geometries, plain wall surfaces broken by well-proportioned openings, and strategically placed ornamentation, which was often stylized or abstracted.¹² Gone was the "austere style of a quarter century ago, with its elaborate classical columns and pediments," another observer wrote in the *American Bankers Association Journal* in 1932, replaced by "the modern bank – simple, light, inviting, and business-like."¹³ The new bank architecture did not reject classical form completely – it still relied on Beaux Arts concepts of planning and massing – but it was, at least one critic believed, "a more consistent and intelligent design, one more practical and more appropriate for this specialized type of commercial architecture."¹⁴

In Philadelphia, the National Bank of Olney was one of the earliest bank buildings to be designed in this way. Begun in 1927 and completed the following year, the building's formal clarity and smooth, planar wall surface – broken only by the large, well-proportioned central archway with its stylized ornamental surround and the ornamental panel above it – make this a highly characteristic and notable example of Art Deco bank design in the city. In *American Commercial Buildings of Today*, Sexton prominently featured a charcoal and pencil sketch of the building as an example of how this more modern form of commercial architecture had begun to supplant the classical (Figure 6). In 1927, Simons, Brittain & English designed the 69th Street Terminal Title and Trust Company along similar lines, although this project was never built (see Figure 7).¹⁵

⁹ Belfoure 127.

¹⁰ Belfoure, 120.

¹¹ Randolph W. Sexton, *American Commercial Buildings of Today* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1928), 203.

¹² Belfoure, 212-213.

¹³ John Hancock Callendar, "Does Your Building Invite Customers?" *American Bankers Association Journal*, March 1932, p. 564.

¹⁴ Parker Morse Hooper, "Recent Banks by Davis, Dunlap & Barney," *Architectural Forum*, June 1928, pp. 887, 890.

¹⁵ The 69th Street Terminal Title & Trust Company did build a new bank the following year, but had by then hired the architectural firm of Ritter & Shay to design it.

Art Deco banks by other Philadelphia designers also garnered praise from various publications. Those by Davis, Dunlap & Barney, in particular, were widely acclaimed by the architectural press. In *Architectural Forum* in June 1928, one critic was especially pleased with the firm's work on the Tenth National Bank at 116 South 15th Street (1925; demolished) and the National Bank of Commerce at 713 Chestnut Street (1926-27; demolished).¹⁶ The writer commended their simple geometric treatments and how they used large, well-proportioned openings and concentrated architectural details to relieve what were otherwise plain, unbroken wall surfaces (Figures 10 and 11).



Figure 10 (left): Tenth National Bank at 116 S. 15th Street in Philadelphia (1926-27; demolished). Image from *Architectural Forum*, June 1928.

Figure 11 (right): National Bank of Commerce at 713 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia (1926-27; demolished). Image from *Architectural Record*, July 1928.

In the same issue of *Architectural Forum*, architect George Howe wrote about how he and his firm, Mellor, Meigs & Howe, employed many of the same concepts in the neighborhood branch banks they had recently completed for the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society (PSFS).¹⁷ With the Logan Branch at 4947-49 North Broad Street (1925-26; extant) and the West Philadelphia Branch at 15 S. 52nd Street (1925-26; extant), especially, Howe explained how they had achieved a friendlier, more welcoming type of bank by distilling each building down to the most basic cubic form and employing only the most deliberate moments of articulation where they were needed

¹⁶ Hooper, 887.

¹⁷ George Howe, "The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Branch Offices," *Architectural Forum*, June 1928, p. 881.

to break up the smooth surfaces of the walls (Figures 12 and 13). Both PSFS branch banks are listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.¹⁸



Figure 12 (left): PSFS, Logan Branch at 4947-49 N. Broad Street in Philadelphia (1925-26; extant). Image from the Indiana Limestone Photograph Collection at Indiana University.



Figure 13 (right): PSFS, West Philadelphia Branch at 52nd and Ludlow Streets in Philadelphia (1925-26; extant). Charcoal and pencil sketch from *Architectural Forum*, June 1928.

Other notable examples of Art Deco bank design include the City National Bank at 1503-05 Walnut Street, designed by Arthur W. Hall (1930-31; extant), which was listed on the Philadelphia Register in 2024, and the Broad Street Trust Company at 1221 North Broad Street, designed by Ritter & Shay (1927, extant).¹⁹

Compared to the decades in which Beaux Arts classicism dominated the architectural design of American banks, the Art Deco era was short-lived, lasting only until about the mid-1930s. As such, the National Bank of Olney and the examples cited above stand as important reminders of the period when architects first explored a form of bank architecture that did not rely on the classical orders.

The National Bank of Olney: Later Years

The National Bank of Olney continued to serve the banking needs of the Olney community for nearly three decades. Although deposits fell slightly during the Great Depression, from about \$2.3 million in 1930 to \$1.7 million in 1935, the bank survived the economic downturn and had emerged in good condition by the middle of the decade.²⁰ In early 1935, the National Bank of

¹⁸ Lynn Alpert, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, Logan Branch, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2010; Benjamin Leech, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, West Philadelphia Branch, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2011.

¹⁹ Oscar Beisert, City National Bank, 1503-05 Walnut Street, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2010

²⁰ *Moody's Manual of Investments, American and Foreign* (New York: Moody's Investors Service, 1936), p. 223

Olney made news when it completed the first ever FHA-insured mortgage loan in Philadelphia.²¹ In 1952, during a spate of bank mergers and acquisitions in the city, the National Bank of Olney was acquired by the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company and became a branch bank of that organization.²² In 1965, Fidelity consolidated its North Philadelphia operations into another branch location and sold the Olney branch to its competitor, the Girard Trust Company (Figure 14).²³ And in 1983, the bank once again changed hands after Mellon Bank of Pittsburgh acquired Girard Trust. The building remained a Mellon Bank branch until the early 1990s, after which it was converted for retail use. A retail tenant remained in the building until about 2022 or 2023, but since that time the building has been vacant.



Figure 14: The former National Bank of Olney in 1965, following the building’s acquisition by the Girard Trust Company. Image from the Old York Road Historical Society.

²¹ “FHA Here Approves First Insured Loan,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 1, 1935.

²² “National Bank of Olney, Fidelity-Phila. To Merge,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 22, 1952.

²³ “Business Briefs,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 11, 1965.

8. Major Bibliographic References

Alpert, Lynn. Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, Logan Branch, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. 2010.

Beisert, Oscar. City National Bank, 1503-05 Walnut Street, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. 2024.

Belfoure, Charles. *Monuments to Money: The Architecture of American Banks*. McFarland, 2005.

Callendar, John Hancock. "Does Your Building Invite Customers?" In *American Bankers Association Journal* (March 1932).

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