

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Equitable Trust Building

and/or common Broad and Locust Building

2. Location

street & number 1405 Locust Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Philadelphia

N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

code 42

county Philadelphia

code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Broad and Locust Associates

street & number 1700 Market Street

city, town Philadelphia

N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall

street & number Broad and Market Streets

city, town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Historic Sites

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980

federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation

city, town Harrisburg,

state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Equitable Trust building is a 21-story office tower that dominates the Broad and Locust Street intersection. Like so many other skyscrapers, it relied on an adaptation of historicizing style--in this instance a modified gothic which provides the detail of the three-story limestone base, and the two-story crenellated and towered top. The Broad and the Locust Street fronts are dominated by immense gothic portals, opening from Broad Street onto a stone-clad vestibule, and on the Locust Street side into a multi-level gothic lobby. Though altered in the past generation, the major details of that space, including its plaster beamed ceiling survive intact above the dropped ceiling. To the west, lower gothic entrances open onto an outer and an inner theater lobby, and up to a handsome gothic vaulted mezzanine lobby. The theater, recently demolished, extended out of the basic 50 x 210 foot tower, as a plain brick volume, hidden from the street by the old Art Club buildings. That theater has been demolished, without significantly affecting the appearance of the principal building, the corner office tower.

The selection of gothic detail was no doubt the result of the ongoing popularity of the gothic revival, stimulated by the enormous popularity of Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York, which had the happy effect of making visual, Frank Woolworth's statement that he was building "a cathedral to commerce," for our secular age. The use of gothic for tall buildings had the further advantages of using a style that was conventionally associated with great height to emphasize the loftiness of the Equitable Trust--and finally, it should be noted that Trumbauer had just completed a similar limestone and yellow brick, medievalizing tower (the Chateau Crillon) for the owner of the Equitable Trust, Louis Cahan.

The Equitable Trust Building is organized as a three-story limestone base, surmounted by a 16-story rising shaft of brick, and capped by a two-story terra cotta clad, crown. As was customary, the stylistic detail was restricted to the base and the top, establishing the base as a zone of proximate identity, while the top gave the building a clear visual image from a longer distance. The limestone base takes the form of a two-story gothic arcade, that runs along Locust Street, with six, pointed arches between shallow piers, on either side of the central, larger portal into the lobby. On the west side, the arcade is interrupted by a handsome pressed metal canopy, detailed to match the theater design, with gothic pendants and cresting. Spandrels are carved with small pointed arches, and small paned windows above recall the traditional scale of glazing of medieval buildings. Above the arcade, the first office story is indicated by gothic lancet windows below a crenellated parapet that sets flush against the rising brick wall. The same set of forms continued onto the Broad Street front, where a similar larger gothic portal, that reflects the center-loaded corridor of the tower, was flanked by the narrower pointed arches of the arcade. That facade received additional detail with a three-sided oriel above the gothic portal.

The rising walls are principally patterned by the fenestration of the offices, with paired 3/3 sash, rising in vertical registers above the base arcade. The brick piers between are treated as pilasters by modulating the brick color at the outer edges, and the slight projection of the pier which provides a subtle plasticity to the facade.

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7. (continued)

Only the piers that flank the three central bays of the Locust Street facade are given significant definition--breaking momentarily the slab building shape, as they rise to the raised turrets above the entrance. The theme of the gothic arcade is repeated again just below the top, as are the small triple lancets, in a field of light terra cotta, separated by slender buttresses that break through the parapet, and indicate the bay location. Octagonal turrets at the four corners of the facade, and above the entrance complete a varied and identifiable skyline.

The interior is nearly intact on the west side, in the sequence of theater lobby spaces, while the main office lobby has been altered in 1950s and 1960s campaigns. That space is now sheathed in polished granite, below an acoustical tile ceiling, but upper access panels from the mezzanine reveal the original gothic beamed ceiling is intact and can be readily restored, while the outline of the travertine wall surfaces is clearly evident in the plaster, and with the original plans, can readily be reconstructed. The level of detail is further indicated by a handsome gothic Cutler mailbox in the side corridor of the lobby.

The theater lobbies survive, beginning with the ticket lobby off the street entrance, the first floor stair lobby, and above it a handsome vaulted mezzanine lobby which served as the major public space for the playgoer. The first lobby opens from the street through flat tudor arches, with a mullioned transom that sets the rhythm of the of the small-paned door leaves below.

The masonry of the exterior continues into the interior, while the ceiling is worked out in a series of flat panels, framed by their moldings recalling the geometric ceiling work of Norman England. The cast metal chandeliers were brought from the demolished Mastbaum theater and were hung in the Locust lobbies; while attractive, they are more Chinoiserie than gothic. In the 1960s, the lower walls and doors were resurfaced in a padded vinyl, having nothing to do with the original style.

The second lobby has been similarly reworked but the paneled ceiling and raised moldings survive, as do the screens to the theater. Above the lower lobbies is a powerful groined vaulted room that opens onto public restrooms. Two ranges of gothic vaults abut the outer wall, and sit in the center on square piers. Instead of carved ornament, the soffits of the intermediary arches are painted with rinceau, and other decorations--which here are treated in naturalistic colors. Handsome original wrought iron chandeliers hang from the high point of each groin, while similar sconces mark the illusionistic painted stone surfaces of the piers on the periphery. The result is a visually stunning room of great character.

The auditorium was another of the typical grand spaces of the 1920s theater. Here again decoration in keeping with the theme of the exterior continued. The elliptical vault of the theater ceiling was broken by bands into large panels, which in turn were decorated

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with an all over stenciled pattern against a gilt background. The stage, on the other hand was a difficult, rather undersized vaudeville board, that limited the success of the theater since the day that it opened.

The office lobbies are extremely simple, with strongly-veined marble wainscotting, and metal door trim. Door knobs have an EB, for Equitable Building. Only at the 21st floor are there features of architectural interest, notably an oak-trimmed pent house, for the manager of the bank. That has continued as a separate use to the present day.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1925 **Builder/Architect** Horace Trumbauer & A.F. Gilbert (N.Y.)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Equitable Building has significance as a major skyscraper on South Broad Street. It gains further status as the design of Horace Trumbauer, then well known for civic, commercial, and residential projects, who designed it for Louis Cahan, who commissioned the same architect at the same time, to draw plans for the Chateau Crillon on Rittenhouse Square (National Register). Trumbauer was then at the height of his career, having widened the activities of his office to cover the entire nation, with prestigious mansions on New York's Fifth Avenue, the Widener Library at Harvard, and the great gothic campus for Duke University all spreading his reputation, at a time when most Philadelphia architects were being ignored. Moreover, the building represents an important American school of skyscraper design which utilized stylistic association to represent both loftiness and function, in a manner that had the added benefit of establishing commercial identity in the mercantile building market. It gains further significance in the extraordinary exploitation of its site--with first floor bank and upper offices anticipating by five years, the much admired plan of the PSFS tower. Finally, after Cahan went bankrupt and was forced to sell the tower, it was acquired by Thomas Mitten, one of the extraordinary characters of 20th century Philadelphia. He owned the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company which he ran from offices in the renamed Mitten Building.

Of these qualities, the most immediately interesting is its position in Trumbauer's career. He had initiated the grand beaux arts mansion style at the end of the 19th century, and rode that fashion to spectacular success in the early 1920s. By the end of World War I, however, he was increasingly preoccupied with tall buildings and the expression of modern use, in an original fashion. The result was a series of tall buildings culminating with the Chateau Crillon (also for Louis Cahan), and the Equitable Building.

At the same time, the interior finishes of the office lobby, the theater lobby, and the theater were handsomely developed versions of 20th century revivalisms adapted to the function of commercial building. As noted above, though the ornament was conventional, the plan of the building was profoundly original marking the inclusion of multiple functions in the same building, which were expressed by subdivisions of the facade. Though the theater has been removed, the adaptive reuse will preserve the dual use with retailing on the east end, and a restaurant on the west side, opening through the theater arches, and under its marquee. Beyond the planning of the lower levels, interior space was functionally divided, with bathrooms on the stair landings, at half levels between floors in the manner of up to date office planning. It is an excellent example of the modern

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multi-use building.

If the building is now perceived as an important work by a major architect, in the 1930s and 40s, it was best known for its flamboyant owner, Thomas Mitten. Mitten assembled the ownership of the Transit Company, and by the 1920s was its undisputed Czar. Nickels from the farebox went into the Mitten bank which operated out of the basement, while the PRT offices took over the second and third floors.

The Equitable Building is now in the process of being restored as the visual anchor of south Broad Street. The stainless steel awning and shopfronts of the 1950s will be removed, and the underlying stone will be restored. The original lobby will be returned to its original gothic glory, and the building will once again reflect the position in the Trumbauer career.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Philadelphia Building Permit 1925, Number 5280
Philadelphia Building Permit 1949
Free Library of Philadelphia Theater Collection, newspaper clipping file

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property .625

Quadrangle name Philadelphia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8
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 Zone

4	8	15	9	10	10
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 Easting

4	4	2	11	8	10	10
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 Northing

B

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

C

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

D

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 Zone

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 Easting

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E

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

H

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point at the northwest corner of Broad and Locust Sts., thence west along Locust St., 219'3" to a point, then north parallel with Broad St. 150', then east along the south side of Chancellor St. 100'3" to a point, then south parallel with Broad St. along the west side of a 3' wide alley 64'2" to

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

(continued)

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D

organization Clio Group, Inc.

date May 25, 1982

street & number 3961 Baltimore Ave.

telephone (215)-386-6276

city or town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

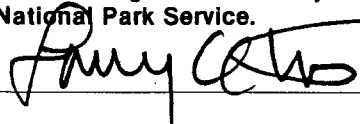
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 23, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA CO
CAMDEN CO

PENNSYLVANIA
NEW JERSEY

CAMDEN

4424

4423
57'30"

2.7 MI TO U.S. 130
ATLANTIC CITY 62 MI.

4422

4421

(CAMDEN)
5963 7 NE