

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 The Baptist Institute for Christian Workers

and/or common Crown Nursing Home

2. Location

street & number 1425-29 Snyder Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Philadelphia

N/A vicinity of

congressional district

state PA

code 42

county Philadelphia

code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input 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 Nursing Home Inc.

street & number 1425-29 Snyder Avenue

city, town Philadelphia

N/A vicinity of

state PA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall, Department of Records

street & number Broad and Market Streets

city, town Philadelphia

state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania State Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 Survey of South Philadelphia

federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg

state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" 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 building which presently houses the Crown Nursing Home is a four-story brick structure, which has major fronts on two of South Philadelphia's principal avenues -- Passyunk and Snyder. The building occupies an irregular lot, owing to Passyunk's oblique departure from the city grid, but that shift is resolved by a break in the building's axis in the middle of the block, that creates two rectangular blocks that sit squarely on their street fronts.

The principal facades are laid in Flemish bond, with rectangular flush terra cotta labels paired above large nine-over-nine sash windows. A moulded terra cotta water table sets off the basement, and there are terra cotta mouldings above and below the fourth story. Both street facades are capped by a parapet, while the major, Snyder Avenue front is also articulated by shallow stepped pediments above the salient side pavillons, and a semi-circular shaped pediment crowns the recessed center portion of the wall above the Snyder Avenue facade.

The axial entrance bay is given a Jacobean frontispiece with an entablature resting on two semi-engaged columns enframing a semi-circular order containing double doors and a fanlight. These fluted doric semi-columns have egg and dart capitals, and on the frieze above them are lion-headed plaques over the columns and midway between the flutes in the intervening sections. The whole entablature breaks out en vessant over the semi-columns, and a garlanded urn crowns the line of each. Above the entry, a triplet of sash windows is grouped by irregular limestone quoins. Strapwork marks the intervening spandrels, enframing plaques below and creating a resolving voluted oval in relief above the third story.

Narrow terra cotta blind arches mark the center of each stepped pediment in the parapet, and an eagle with a shield in relief marks the central round gable.

The public spaces of the building are restricted to a handsome, stone faced vestibule and stair which opens into a gracious lobby and rear auditorium. On axis with the doors is a massive tile framed fireplace, and oak overmantle, handsomely carved with strap work in the manner of Vredeman de Vries, and completing the reference of interior to exterior. Beams cross the ceiling, unifying the interior space, and focussing attention on the principal spatial axis.

The rear block contained the second public space, announced on the exterior by large, round headed windows. That room served as a simple auditorium, with plain plastered walls and ceiling in a two-story space. Space requirements, and changed usage, have caused the owners to add a story in the room, but they have carefully held the floor slab back from the window, to have the minimum impact on the exterior. Brick lined fire stairs, with bronze and iron stair railings and newels complete the public spaces of the building.

The remainder of the rooms were of utmost simplicity, befitting their original use as dormitory rooms for Christian workers. Metal door frames, and panelled wood doors articulated the double loaded corridors. They are being replaced to meet present fire codes, but with little impact on the complex which remains in a use that parallels its original purpose -- namely, a residence hall, with offices.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1911; 1925

Builder/Architect Benjamin Rush Stevens

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Crown Nursing Home Building is one of the principal landmarks in the South Philadelphia urban center, at Broad and Snyder Avenues. Its gothic detail and scale mark the transfer of an important architectural style, the academic gothic which developed here in Philadelphia, from its academic roots to the realm of institutional design. Finally, it is one of the last surviving monuments in Philadelphia to the settlement house idea, pioneered in Chicago by Jane Addams, and widely supported in Philadelphia by the 1890s.

The Crown Nursing Home was built in 1911 as the Baptist Institute for Christian Workers, an institution founded in 1892 as the Baptist Training School for Christian Workers. This institution was organized by a group whose nominal work was concerned with supporting missionary efforts abroad, but it seems that the poor living conditions among the immigrant working class in South Philadelphia was seen as an equally worthy, if more immediate need. There was a response of conscience to exploitation and lack of civic amenity in the area. Originally located at 10th and Catherine Streets, the Institute moved to its current location farther south at a time when that area was being built up, and was becoming the center of a dense ethnic concentration where exactly such conditions as the Institute felt it could ameliorate were depressingly present. What the Institute would provide was housing for single working men who found themselves inclined to seek an environment safe from the darker temptations of urban life in this bustling era.

The founding of the Institute itself belongs to a larger context that was extremely important in the late nineteenth century, a movement of philanthropic response to the poor conditions among the working classes, especially through the creation of settlement houses. The idea was first carried out in London in the 1880s, and was aimed at improving the life of slum dwellers. It was quickly followed in the 1880s and 90s in New York City's Neighborhood Guild and Henry Street Settlement House, Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago, Andover House in Boston and Philadelphia's Octavia Hill Association, patterned after London's and founded in 1896. The Baptist Institute for Christian Workers was an integral and significant part of this settlement house movement.

The Institute's new quarters were located on the site of the Passyunk Baptist Church, at one of the principal new nodes in South Philadelphia: that area near where Passyunk Avenue, shooting off southwestwardly from the oldest part of center city, met South Broad Street. The area was expanding rapidly in the early twentieth century under the pressure of mainly Italian immigration, especially by the end of its first decade. The major institutions locating there included police and fire stations, St. Agnes Roman Catholic Hospital; Methodist Hospital slightly farther south; the Southern Manual Training School; South Philadelphia High School for Girls; and the area's major bank. By the turn of the century the area was already served by a passenger railway station, which later became the Snyder station on the Broad Street Line of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company. The area thus had every possible urbanistic advantage going for it as a principal location in the vicinity, given the fundamental neutrality of the grid in South Philadelphia.

The building's locally prominent location demanded a pretentious design, as a strong outward symbol of the humanitarian commitment of its endowers. The stylistic vocabulary chosen was a Jacobean one which mixed the informality of late Gothic design, which has basically residential and Christian associations, with the civic suggestions of the classically

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The Baptist Institute for Christian Workers,
Continuation sheet Philadelphia County

Item number 8

Page 2

enframed entrance, marking it as a communal institution. The vocabulary chosen was particularly powerful in the area, as if the Baptists wanted to confront these recently arrived Italians with an English tradition of conscientious humanitarianism akin to the private endowment of universities, where this 'Collegiate' style was more familiar.

Its architect, Benjamin Rush Stevens was a lesser known Philadelphia architect who worked in the first four decades of the twentieth century. He came out of the very well known offices of G.W. & W.D. Hewitt, for a time a partner in the firm of Hewitt, Stevens and Paist. The Baptist Institute for Christian Workers was one of his principal designs, along with the Carnegie Library in the Roxborough section of the city. He also did a number of Baptist and Methodist churches, mostly in the northern and western parts of Philadelphia, and aside from many commercial properties and apartment buildings, designed buildings for St. Timothy's Hospital and Byberry Hospitals, where he further explored the implications of the medaevalized design.

Although the cornerstone was laid in 1911 and the building was dedicated in the following year, it was completed only in 1929 with the addition of a fourth floor with a solarium, recreation room, chapel, prayer room, faculty apartment, and Christian Center. In 1952 it was leased to the U.S. Navy, and the institution, now a junior college, moved out to the Main Line. Now most of the immigrants had been assimilated and had binding family ties, and the bulk of South Philadelphia's livelihood was no longer the hard life on the docks and in the shipyards. The improvement of the slums was now largely seen as the movement away from it to the suburbs, and the institution attempted to adjust its role toward different problems. Since 1958 the building has served as a nursing home for the elderly.

One final item deserves comment: the Institute building contributes to the most architecturally distinguished zone of South Philadelphia, and indeed served as the cornerstone of the Snyder Avenue development. After its construction came the major Mellor, Meigs and Howe bank for PSFS, the handsome John T. Windrim office for the Philadelphia Electric Company and the monumental building for Bell Telephone, and other commercial structures that create the Snyder Avenue node.

9. Major Bibliographical References

J. Burchard & A. Bush-Brown, The Architecture of America (Boston:1961) p. 226,270.
R. Webster Philadelphia Preserved (Philadelphia: 1976) p.161.
Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide XXVI:5(1 Februray 1911); XLIII:20
(16 May 1928)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .19

Quadrangle name Phila., PA-NJ

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	8	5	4	1	0	4	4	1	9	1	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point on NE side Snyder Avenue (75 feet wide) at the distance of 157 feet NW. Fron NW side Broad (113 feet wide) thence extending northwestward, along the said NE side of Snyder Avenue, 111 feet to a point; thence extending NEward 75 feet to a point.

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

state	code	county	code
PA		PA	

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jeffrey A. Cohen, M.A. and George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc. date 9/24/80

street & number 3961 Baltimore Avenue 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 _____

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 _____



4420

4419

55'

4418

0.6 MI. TO INTERSTATE 76

390 000 FEET
(N. J.)

Spruce A

RIVER

Kaighn Point

Tidal Flat

Cork

New York

Drydock

WHITMAN BRIDGE
TOLL

Greenwich Point

DICKINSON

St Thomas Aquinas Sch

St Edmunds Sch

McDaniel Sch

Vare Jr High Sch

Girard Sch

St. Monica's Sch

Girard Park

Library

Playground

U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL

ROOSEVELT PARK

Meadow Lake

KENNEDY STADIUM

PENN. CENTRAL

St. Agnes Hospital

South High Sch

Key Sch

Jenks Sch

Fell Sch

Thomas Jr High Sch

Marist Sch

Pattison Ave

Greenwich Recreation Center

Sewage Disposal

Tollgate

7 LANE

WHITMAN BRIDGE

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