

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

41

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC NATIONAL TRANSIT BUILDING

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

206 Seneca Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oil City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

25th

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Venango

CODE

121

**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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input 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 Petroleum Realty Company

STREET & NUMBER

22 National Transit Building

CITY, TOWN

Oil City

STATE

Pennsylvania 16301

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTER OF DEEDS, ETC. Register of Deeds - The Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Corner of Liberty & 12th Streets

CITY, TOWN

Franklin

STATE

Pennsylvania 16323

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

N/A

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The National Transit Building is a four story, stone and brick office building with ground level stores. The building consists of a main block 66' by 130' divided into three wide bays by seven wide bays. To its side is the annex, 50' by 185', narrower in its main facade and deeper than the main building. There is a connecting enclosed bridgeway at the 2nd and 3rd and 4th levels with an open archway at ground level.

The main building presents one facade (the longer side) to Seneca Street and a second facade to Center Street. Both facades are an arcade of similar arches around the windows with protruding central bay. The central portion, containing the entranceway, protrudes from the main block. The ground floor entrance, stands the height of both the ground and first floors, dominates the central extension and the whole facade. The archway is of massive sandstone blocks with the arch above the springing being the same height as the area below. The result is a massive, weighty arch used and made popular by H. H. Richardson. The Center Street entranceway, although also an arch, is a classically proportioned arch with narrow stone trim. Presently, an entrance portico stands in front of this ground floor entrance. The surface of the building shows care in the selection of materials and textures. The ground level is of cut and coursed sandstone with a rough facing and buttressed out to the ground. The upper portion of the building is of narrow hard brick with very narrow mortar joints. Most of the buildings corners and edges (other than the central extension) are molded to create a soft and flowing edge. Vertically between the window levels are sandstone blocks in a checkerboard design. A block design also caps the building with square sandstone blocks, five deep, all laid flat with deeply carved joints.

The facade in total has a rusticated stone foundation, a dominant entranceway in the center of its two facades, three stories of windows (three on either side of the Seneca Street facade and one on either side of the Center Street facade) tied together with elongated arches creating an arcade effect along the surface. The fourth story repeats the design of the central extension with strong angular lines and is set off both above and below with abbreviated cornice moldings in sandstone. Above the fourth story is a decorative attic. None of the upper surface overhangs the wall surface in any appreciable way.

Between the main building and the annex, just in front of the bridgeway is an ornamental iron fire escape in circular form.

The interior, particularly in the public spaces, retains most of its original character. The stairway is of cast iron and slate with bronze medallions and with richly designed surfaces of

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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      1890, 1896      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Architect: Oscar Brenot  
 Builder: Horace B. Robinson

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The years just after the Civil War witnessed the beginning of a change in the mode of transporting oil to market. Instead of the familiar piles of barrels at the wells and shipping points, the Oil Region now had pipe lines, railroad tracks and hundreds of railroad tank cars along the sidetracks. Between 1865 and 1880, numbers of small companies began building pipe lines. These were short local pipe lines that gathered oil in the field and transported it to the nearest refineries or shipping points on rivers and railroads. In the 1870's these lines began to consolidate as the Union Pipe Line. Because of the Union Pipe Line's considerable monopoly, Standard Oil began to set up its own pipe line system to be assured of a steady supply of crude oil. The result of the struggle is that Standard Oil brought the various pipe line systems, including Union Pipe Lines, under its fold. By 1876, Standard Oil had about 400 miles of pipe and nearly 1,400,000 barrels of tankage and, with the absorption of the Empire Transportation Company, Standard Oil had completely controlled all of the refining facilities and 3/4 of all the pipe in the nation.

The crowning event in the creation of Standard's great pipe line system was the organization of the National Transit Company, which became one of the most powerful corporations in the land. On April 14, 1881, to unite the trunk pipe lines, United Pipe Lines and bring in other competitors, Rockefeller organized a National Transit Company with a capitalization of \$5 million later increased to more than \$30 million.

By the spring of 1882 more than 3/4 of the crude oil that left Pennsylvania fields was being moved by pipe line and National Transit Company was a major force in the movement of that oil.

National Transit Company's main office was in New York at 26 Broadway but local operations and management were entrusted to a remarkable team in Oil City. Of these, the outstanding figure was the "driving, occasionally ruthless, exceedingly loyal" Daniel O'Day. As general manager he was directly in charge of the construction and operation of the trunk pipe lines. In the 1880's a new plant and new buildings to house the machine shop, blacksmith shop and pattern shop were located in Oil City. In 1890, the National Transit Building, to house these offices, was completed.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

NATIONAL TRANSIT BUILDING - Venango County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

Description: . continued

organic and geometric patterns. The building also retains its original elevator shaft with rich cast and wrought iron ornamentation.

The annex, built several years later, is also four stories high above the ground level, of sandstone and brick. This addition is more historical using the Renaissance palazzo as its inspiration. More telling of the classical influence is the decoration of urns and garlands with mullions and brackets carrying an overhanging cornice. Vertically the building has a rusticated ground floor, a brick first floor patterned to look like simplified columns and just above the first level a horizontal space to imitate a cornice which completes the lower section. The middle section is articulated only by the recession of the two central windows stressing the horizontal and not tied to the lower story windows. An overhanging cornice tops the structure.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

NATIONAL TRANSIT BUILDING - Venango County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

Significance: continued

A second building, known as the annex was constructed in 1896. Oil City was the center of the National Transit Company operations. From 1882 to 1899, the National Transit Company was a unit within the Standard Oil Trust. In 1899 the Trust was liquidated and a great holding company, The Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) was organized to take over the entire Standard Oil aggregation. As a result, Standard of New Jersey became the head of a veritable oil empire. The reorganization had no effect whatever upon the continuity of the Standard Oil management. In 1911, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the dissolution of the Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) and the separation of 37 companies from Jersey Standard. The effect of the dissolution decree was to make the National Transit Company and its subsidiaries separate and independent corporations with its base in Oil City.

In more recent times, the control of National Transit Company fell to Pennzoll Company, Quaker State Refining Corporation; Wolf's Head Oil Refining Company; Kendall Oil Refining; South Penn Oil Company of Bradford; United Refining Company of Warren; Waverly Oil Works of Pittsburgh; Pennsylvania Refining Company of Butler; Cities Service Company and L. Sonneborn Sons of New York.

The new company eventually became wholly-owned by Pennzoll which now operates it. --- paraphrased from Dr. Paul H. Giddens' article.

The National Transit Building derives its general design and proportion from "Chicago School" architectural precedents. The building evokes the Romanesque style of H. H. Richardson in its rusticated sandstone foundation and the low slung heavy arched entranceway. Also, by visually tying together three floors under arches and recessing the windows within the arches, Brenot's design is reminiscent of H. H. Richardson's Marshall Field Warehouse. However, the architect Brenot was influenced by other commercial building types as is visible in the amalgamation of design elements. The extended rectangular bay, which is repeated at the side entranceway, with its strong angular lines sharply contrasts the softer arched bays at its sides and recalls the small commercial structures of 1850's and 1860's. An emphasized

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

NATIONAL TRANSIT BUILDING - Venango County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Significance: continued

ground floor with shops and the strong articulation of the attic area are parts of the Chicago School formula for commercial buildings as can be exemplified in Louis Sullivan's Wainwright Building. The ground floor buttressing and rounded brick edges were reminiscent of Burnham and Root's Manadnock Building. Yet left to his own devices, the architect combined and rearranged the building's forms and surfaces to produce a local, unique variation of a major architectural style.

In the annex building the bravura and naivete of the architect changed a major commercial building design --- the classicism of McKim, Mead and White, among others --- and interpreted it in a unique and personal way.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Giddens, Paul H. "The National Transit Company: Its Rise and Fall",  
The Derrick, Oil City, Pa., Saturday, August 14, 1971.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 6071860 4587640  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Madeline L. Cohen, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Office of Historic Preservation/PHMC

DATE

March, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

William Penn Memorial Museum, Box 1026

TELEPHONE

717-787-4363

CITY OR TOWN

Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

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

*William J. Wewer*

TITLE WILLIAM J. WEWER, Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

DATE 3/16/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

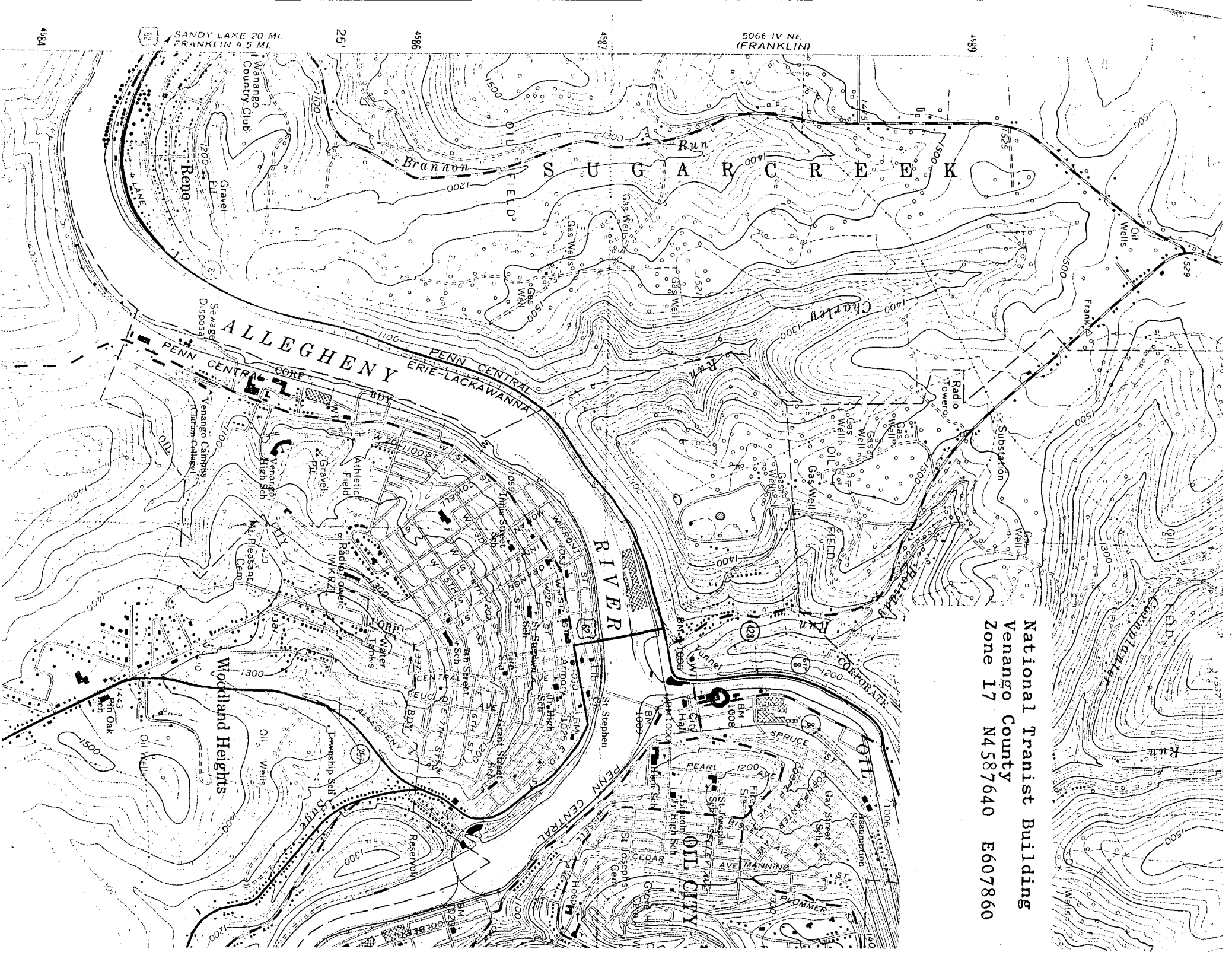
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



National Tranist Building  
 Venango County  
 Zone 17 N4587640 E607860

SANDY LAKE 20 MI.  
 FRANKLIN 4.5 MI.

5066 IV NE  
 (FRANKLIN)

ALLEGHENY  
 PENN CENTRAL  
 ERIE-LACKAWANNA

SUGAR CREEK

RIVER

OIL CITY

Woodland Heights

Reno

Charles

PEARL

AVE MANNING

ST. JOSEPH'S

ST. JOSEPH'S

OIL FIELD

Oil Wells

Radio Tower

Substation

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY

VENANGO CITY