

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

7

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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**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

*FIDELITY-PHILADELPHIA TRUST COMPANY BUILDING*

AND/OR COMMON

*Fidelity Building*

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

*123-51 S. Broad St., at N.E. corner Walnut Street*

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

*Philadelphia*

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

*3rd*

STATE

*Pennsylvania*

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

*The Fidelity Building Corporation*

STREET & NUMBER

*Broad & Walnut Street (135 S. Broad Street)*

CITY, TOWN

*Philadelphia*

VICINITY OF

STATE

*Pennsylvania 19109*

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

*Philadelphia County Courthouse*

STREET & NUMBER

*Philadelphia City Hall*

CITY, TOWN

*Philadelphia*

STATE

*Pennsylvania*

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

*Philadelphia Historical Commission*

DATE

*November 1973*

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

*1313 City Hall Annex*

CITY, TOWN

*Philadelphia*

STATE

*Pennsylvania 19107*

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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 Fidelity Building is a twenty-nine story steel-frame banking and office building measuring at the ground floor 220 feet and 6½ inches (twenty-two bays) on the Broad Street front by 175 feet and 5½ inches (seventeen bays) on the Walnut Street side. Its brick curtain walls are faced with coursed limestone ashlar on the upper stories and the street level and with pecked, rusticated granite on its second and third stories. Its flat roof is constructed of steel frame and concrete.

The Fidelity Building possesses a tripartite organization of classical elements and structural mass in both the horizontal and vertical planes. The horizontal plane is divided into a rusticated two-story and mezzanine base, a range or eighteen office floors capped by a modest limestone and terra cotta cornice, and a series of three small setbacks marking the top floors. Above the rusticated base the center of the building is recessed approximately fifty-five feet at the front and back to form an H-plan above the fourth floor, and to create the impression of two massive six-bay office towers rising from the rusticated foundation.

A symmetrical composition of classical details impart a sense of stability to the lower stories of the building's front, which is dominated by three round-arch entrances. Dressed limestone frames all major elements of these lower stories: the street-level foundation, the arches, and the trabeated windows flanking the arches. Each arch springs from ashlar piers with Tuscan capitals and has a molded extrados, a coffered intrados filled with carved rosettes, and an exaggerated keystone embellished with an acanthus-leaf console.

An allegorical classical figure, carved in bas-relief, fills each of the arches' six spandrels. Over the center arch are a male figure with a hammer, representing Industry, and a female figure with a bee hive, representing Thrift; over the northern arch, near Sansom Street, two youths each hold a cornucopia to symbolize Abundance; over the southern arch, near Walnut Street, two figures typify Art as a sculptor and a painter. Within each arch is a large window, designed by the d'Ascenzo Studios of Philadelphia. These windows are composed of leaded panes of amber glass in various tones and are outlined by a Renaissance style border. Beneath each arch at the street level are three bronze doorways, each with twenty-four high relief panels that allegorically depict the evolution of commerce and civilization. (The southern entrance has only one of these bronze doorways.) When open, they fit into recesses and can be viewed from both inside and outside the building. Surrounding the entrance doors is a richly ornamental bronze frame in the Renaissance style with highly wrought engaged columns and a shell-and-anthemion crest.

The center arch marks the main entrance to the banking floor. Its primary function is further emphasized by its slightly greater height, the pediments on its flanking trabeated windows, the dressed stone above the arch incised with the building's name (The Fidelity Bank), and the arcade of three arches and bas-relief sculpture rising behind a low ashlar parapet. This latter composition, centered above the main entrance arch in front of the building's recessed pavillion, opens onto the Directors' Room, and not only stands half a story above its adjacent windows but also is capped by an ornamental crest of alternating rosettes and anthemions. Filling the spandrels are allegorical figures carved in bas-relief and composed to express, "Intelligent effort produces world commerce."

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The four carved medallions that flank the spandrel sculpture of the two smaller entrances are a numismatist's delight; they represent early American coins. Flanking the northern entrance arch, near Sansom Street, are representations of the American Pine Tree coin (left), minted in Massachusetts in 1653, and the 1737 Grandi Copper from Connecticut (right). A representation of the Franklin penn, the first coin issued by Congress, in 1787, is on the left of the southern arch, near Walnut Street. On the right is the "Eye Coin," which was used in Vermont in 1783; its name derives from its radiant eye, symbolic of supreme power, directing its rays on thirteen stars, which represent the thirteen original states.

There are also two medallions at the same height on the Walnut Street, or south, facade. They represent the two sides of the Lafayette Medal, commemorating American independence. On the medallion at the eastern end of the building is a bust of Liberty above the inscription "Libertas Americana, 4 July 1776." The other medallion, at the facade's western end near the corner of Broad and Walnut Streets, depicts a robed female figure slaying a lion, symbolic of France defending the young American republic from the English. Below the sculpture are the dates 17/19 October 1777/1781, the dates of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga, which led to the Franco-American alliance in 1778, and Cornwall's defeat at Yorktown, where French naval and military contributions were vital in this decisive American victory. Only one medallion, representing a 1785 Vermont coin, is on the north facade, near the corner of Broad and Sansom Streets.

Above the third story the treatment of the Walnut and Sansom Street facades is the same as that of the Broad Street front. The differences appear on the rusticated-granite lower floors, where a range of eight large round-arch windows dominates the Walnut Street facade. Traveated windows are found on all of the lower floors facing Sansom Street, a narrow side street.

Cream-colored terrazzo marble is used throughout the main banking room, which rises three stories in the clear to the coffered ceiling of alternate squares and octagons decorated with gilt and painted classical designs. Above the floor on the north and south sides stand four massive modified Corinthian piers in antis that lead to mezzanines, whose ceilings continue on a smaller scale the coffered pattern of the banking floor's ceiling. Large round-arch windows, designed by the d'Ascenzo Studio of Philadelphia, dominate the west (front) and east (rear) walls. The front window, a series of leaded amber glass rectangles with a Renaissance style border, rises above the three entrance doors. The unique rear window, however, is the more impressive. Framed by marble pilasters, it is composed of leaded antique glass painted with scenes depicting the history of Philadelphia. Independence Hall (originally built as

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*the Pennsylvania State House) fills the tympanum, and below it at successive levels are pictures illustrating William Penn's arrival in America and his treaty with the Indians, President George Washington's farewell address to Congress, the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin's printing office, Betsy Ross exhibiting the first American flag, and Caesar Rodney's ride from Wilmington to Philadelphia in 1776. The border contains medallion portrait busts of six prominent Philadelphians of the Revolutionary era: David Rittenhouse, George Clymer, John Bartram, James Wilson, Benjamin Rush, and Robert Morris. Beneath the window is a marble sculptural ensemble by the Piccirilli Brothers of New York. A semi-nude male and female, representing Day and Night, clasp hands under an octagonal clock to symbolize Eternity.*

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 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 1926-28

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Irwin & Leighton/Simon & Simon

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

*The Fidelity Building is exceptional on two counts. It is a fine example of commercial architecture in the Beaux-Arts mode that also stands, as do few skyscrapers, as a glossary of modern skyscraper design, synthesizing the primary features of three phases of skyscraper development reaching back to the 1880's. Those characteristics are 1) the tripartite system of organizing vertical elements into the base, shaft, and capital of the classic column, which was introduced in the late 1880's; 2) the treatment of the skyscraper as a tower, which became popular after the mid-1890's; and 3) the use of setbacks that came into vogue after World War I.*

*The Beaux-Arts classical mode, emanating from Paris's Ecole des Beaux-Arts, became the vogue among American architects after it was adopted for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. As both a process and a product, the Beaux-Arts mode reflected the increasingly institutionalized and cosmopolitan society that was gaining ascendancy in early-twentieth-century cities. This latter-day classicism also conveyed a sense of sobriety and devotion to traditional values, which was important during an era of business consolidation. It was an especially suitable expression for the Fidelity Building, whose firm, the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company, was the result of a 1926 merger.*

*The Fidelity Building not only is one of the finest Beaux-Arts sky-scrapers but also was one of the last to be built.*

*Also notable is the manner in which the Fidelity Building's architects synthesized traditional architectural features and standard practices of skyscraper design to make the Beaux Arts mode both attractive and efficient.*

*Adding interest to the building is its rich display of allegorical sculpture oriented to the pedestrian. Designed by the Piccirilli Brothers of New York City in collaboration with the architects, Simon and Simon, the sculpture expresses more explicitly the patriotic and business values that the architectural style implies.*

*In the summer of 1926 the Fidelity Trust Company, chartered in 1866, and the Philadelphia Trust Company, chartered in 1869, merged. Two years later the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company moved into its new quarters at Broad and Walnut Streets. The choice of architects, brothers Edward P. and Grant M. Simon, practicing as Simon and Simon, largely determined the building's eventual plan and details. Both men were products of Philadelphia schools.*

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*Simon and Simon were engaged in 1925 to prepare plans for the building. By the end of the next year the plans were complete, and in January 1927, Irwin and Leighton (Alex J. Irwin and Archibald O. Leighton), noted builders whose work would later include the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, were chosen as contractors. Work progressed rapidly, and the building was thrown open to occupancy, June 1, 1928. The building has had minimal exterior alterations. In the fall of 1953 steel-frame and concrete pen houses were built at the building's rear to accommodate air conditioning equipment, and in 1967 the name stone over the main entrance arch was changed from "Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company" to "The Fidelity Bank" to reflect the company's new corporate title, which became effective at the end of the working day, March 31, 1967.*

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .88

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	485960	4421940	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies plot plan 1S20, city lot 12. It is 220 feet and 6½ inches by 175 and 5½ inches, and is bordered by Broad Street on the west, Walnut Street on the south, the Witherspoon Building (plot plan 1S20, city lot 166) on the east, and Sansom Street on the north.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

*Richard J. Webster, Associate Professor of History and American Studies*

ORGANIZATION

*West Chester State College*

DATE

*2/22/78*

STREET & NUMBER

*Box 124, Main Hall*

TELEPHONE

*436-2995*

*399-0784*

CITY OR TOWN

*West Chester*

STATE

*Pennsylvania 19380*

**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

*Ed Weintraub*

TITLE

*Ed Weintraub  
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission*

DATE

*6-21-78*

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

