

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Received 5/19/77

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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 Northern Saving Fund and Safe Deposit Company

AND/OR COMMON

branch office, Provident National Bank

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

600 Spring Garden Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia,

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Pennsylvania

VICINITY OF
CODE

COUNTY
Philadelphia

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME The Provident National Bank

STREET & NUMBER

17th and Chestnut Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia,

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 Philadelphia Preserved, Richard Webster, 1976 p.297-8, HABS

DATE 1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

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 Northern Saving Fund and Safe Deposit Company is a massive light grey granite building, occupying an important corner site in what was once a fashionable neighborhood in north Philadelphia. The principal facade faces along Spring Garden Street, towards what was once a small park. That solution may perhaps seem obvious, but it meant that the usual tripartite Philadelphia bank facade, with central door, and flanking windows would not do without serious modification. The architect's response was typically ingenious; for the long Spring Garden front, they constructed a plain ashlar wall, which they subdivided into townhouse sized bays by rusticated stone piers, while the middle was treated as an ordinary city bank front breaking through the established cornice.

The bank facade thus became an applied motif, representing the building's role. It is a billboard architecture of surprising sophistication, and of a type increasingly acknowledged by contemporary theoreticians as typical of American commercial architecture.

If the form of the facade is derived from local prototypes, the general organization and ornament have other sources, and probably point to the authorship of the design by Frank Furness, instead of his partner George Hewitt. Louis Sullivan, in the Autobiography of an Idea recalled that Hewitt's sources tended toward the English, Furness, on the other hand drew on the francophile designs of Richard Morris Hunt in whose studio he had studied. The monochromatic and symmetrical facade with the pavilion-like projection of the center are clearly dependent on the French Second Empire, while the abstracted Greek elements, triglyphs, metopes and acroteria are also from the French Neo-Grec mode which had been au courant when Hunt was studying in Paris.

Later additions, first in 1888 by Frank Watson, and then again in 1903 by George T. Pearson, continue the established vocabulary in a slightly, ever so slightly pinker granite. The interior was apparently altered as a part of the 1888 alteration, for it is a generally unsophisticated classical interior with none of the exuberance of the exterior. That interior has been further altered in the past generation, producing a small, anonymous modern interior in the grand exterior envelope.

It is worth noting that many of the motifs of the facade of this building appear at the same time on the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts which was being designed at the same time.

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 1872 - 3

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Furness and Hewitt

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Northern Saving Fund and Safe Deposit Company building is the oldest surviving bank of the extraordinary group that Frank Furness and George Hewitt produced in the years immediately before the Centennial. Like all of those which survive, with the sole exception of the Girard Trust Company, the interior has been changed, but it was as architects of extraordinary commercial facades that Furness and Hewitt are remembered, and it is that trait which gives it distinction.

Architecturally, the building is particularly interesting as one of the purest Neo-Grec facades that the firm produced. Later projects, notably the Guarantee Trust and Safe Deposit Company of the following year and the ongoing Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts show a greater tendency to synthesize English polychromy with French Structural rationalism. Here one constituent element of the rich eclecticism of the firm is in evidence.

Historically, the building represents the era when the more flamboyant generation of post Civil War leaders took over the institutions and the shaping of the city. Our era has not dealt kindly with those vigorous buildings, replacing far too many with blandly efficient parallelepipeds, or worse with parking lots. Of that generation, Furness and Hewitt were the most successful - and now, the most frequently demolished. It is vital that this reminder of the vitality of American commercial forces remain.

Urbanistically, the Northern Saving Fund Society building serves a variety of roles, recalling the glories of Spring Garden Street, once one of the city's fine residential districts, while at the same time providing a bit of architectural variety in an overly redeveloped district best characterized as dull.

Richard Webster, Philadelphia Preserved, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976) pp. 289, 297-8.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .2

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	487399	4423240
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Pennsylvania		Philadelphia	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

5 May 1977

ORGANIZATION

Drexel University

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

3920 Pine Street

215-386-6276

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Philadelphia

Pennsylvania

STATE

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

DATE

7/27/77

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



PHILADELPHIA

PENNSYLVANIA
NEW JERSEY

PHILADELPHIA CO
CAMDEN CO

Kensington

UNIVERSITY CITY

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Wanamaker Jr High Sch

CHANDLER COLLEGE

St. Elizabeth's Sch

St. Francis Xavier Sch

St. Joseph's Hospital

St. Luke's Hospital

St. Agnes Sch

St. Michael's Sch

St. Ann's Sch

St. Vincent's Sch

St. Francis Sch

St. Joseph's Sch

St. Ann's Sch

St. Vincent's Sch

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