

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Try Street Terminal

other names/site number Keystone Grocery Building

2. Location

street & number 600-620 Second Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Pittsburgh N/A vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Allegheny code 003 zip code 15219

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard J. McDonald October 30, 2007
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

Try Street Terminal

Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce / Warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and early 20th Century American

Movements / Commercial Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Concrete

Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1921

Significant Dates

1921

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bernard H. Prack, Industrial Architect and Engineer

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file (NPS).

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data.

Name of repository:

Try Street Terminal
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.2

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	585209	4476600
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Charles Uhl

organization Historic Preservation Services date _____

street & number 6711 Stanton Avenue telephone 412 492-9100

city or town Pittsburgh state PA zip code 15206

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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The Try Street Terminal is a seven and nine story building that served as a warehouse, business address, and transshipment /distribution center for downtown Pittsburgh. The two-part building is set in a tight urban site defined by the original Pittsburgh street grid, an elevated roadway to the south, a railroad viaduct to the west and the Liberty Bridge across the Monongahela east of the site. The building is 11 x 6 bays, and measures 212' east-west along 2nd Avenue, by 114' on Try Street. It is constructed of structural concrete and faced with brick. The nine story portion of the building has nine bays and is 180' in east-west dimension. The seven story section, 620 2nd Avenue, is two bays wide and 32' east west. It has six floors above Gasoline Street that passes under the building. Although structurally different, the only access to and vertical circulation for 620 2nd Avenue is through 600-618, and the buildings were constructed as a single entity. The buildings reflect a Commercial utilitarian style, where the concrete structural construction is apparent from the exterior.

The north (2nd Avenue) and south (1st Avenue) elevations are almost identical symmetrical grids of exposed concrete and brick. The outer two bays have projecting brick piers with a single horizontal masonry opening per floor. At the top of the outer bays are corbelled brick elements above the masonry opening. The openings have thin concrete sills and thick concrete lintels. In each opening is a pair of 3 (vertical) by 4 (horizontal) light rolled steel sash. The sashes are separated by a steel mullion. Above the first floor there is a horizontal concrete water table across the elevation. The middle seven bays have the same thin sills and thick lintels with wide masonry openings containing three 3 x 4 light rolled steel sash. The piers between the bays are exposed concrete. Below the masonry openings are yellow brick panels. Across the top of the seven center bays is a wide concrete band that was used as a sign panel.

Originally there were pediments above the parapet at the corners and center of the intended façade, the north (2nd Avenue) elevation. The corner pediments survive, but the center pediment (containing the building date, 1921) was removed, apparently in the 1960s (photo H-3). The exposed concrete has spalled in many places on both elevations. The 2nd Avenue elevation has an ornamental band of concrete above the second floor. The 2nd Avenue elevation is hidden by the rise of the Boulevard of the Allies. The elevated street was completed five years after the Try Street Terminal was finished.

The tall first floor of the 2nd Avenue elevation has six business entrances with tall concrete bases and rolled steel sash above. The doors are recessed in the center of the entrances and are flanked by 2x3 light rolled steel sash set on the tall base. Above the doors is a transom-like horizontal element composed of 2 x 9 lights of rolled steel sash. One original entry survives with a pair of two-panel pressed steel doors, now rusted in

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place. The recent primary pedestrian business entrance was remodeled with mill finish aluminum storefront and glass dating from the 1960s. In other cases the rolled steel sash surround survives but the doors have been replaced with mill-finish aluminum units dating from the 1960s.

The first floor of the 1st Avenue elevation has the street vehicle access bays to the warehouse. Originally it appears that there was a center garage-type door flanked by two small windows in each bay. Some of the windows have been modified into man doors. The original appearance of the garage doors is not clear, as none survive. Most currently are corrugated metal articulated overhead doors. Above the doors is the same horizontal window panel as in all the upper floor bays. The windows and garage doors are both in the tall first floor.

The west (Try Street) elevation has six bays. The first floor of the elevation is hidden by the railroad siding that serves the second floor of the building. The second floor has infilled loading dock doors, the infill dating from the 1960s. Attached to the building above the doors are the anchoring plates for a canopy that sheltered the loading docks. Presumably the canopy was removed in the 1960s. The bays of the upper floors of the building are almost identical to the north and south elevation. The only difference is that the south bay of the west elevation is narrower than the north bay, and has single 4 x 4 light windows in each opening rather than two 3 x 4 light sash.

Gasoline Street passes under 620 2nd Avenue, and provides access to the first floor of the east elevation. The first floor of Gasoline Street has four loading dock bays, and was remodeled with brick infill, apparently in the 1970s. The top two floors of the east elevation of 600-618 are visible above 620 2nd Avenue, and most of the elevation is flush brick. There are two horizontal sets of rolled steel sash, like the bays in the other elevations, in each of the upper two floors near the north elevation.

Interior:

The interior of 600-620 2nd Avenue is largely open. The first floor is taller than the upper floors. The space could be and was divided into rentable sections by non-structural concrete or cinderblock walls. The interior features common to every floor are the five elevators and three sets of stairs in five separate masonry shafts (see included plan). There are no demising walls common to every floor other than partial divisions between the nine and seven story sections of the building. There are walls constructed at various times to enclose different sections of different floors. The variations on internal wall construction include hollow tile, concrete block of various types, brick, and stud-and

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drywall. The few bathrooms in the facility seem to be afterthoughts. They are on raised sections of concrete so that the plumbing can be installed in the floor, and are not stacked above each other.

One freight elevator is located near the west end of the building to aid the distribution of goods arriving from the siding on the Try Street side of the building.

The structural system is a flat slab / concrete mushroom column arrangement. The system was developed by two engineers, a Swiss and an American, in the first decade of the 20th century.¹ The first US buildings to use the system apparently date from 1906. The advantage of the mushroom columns is that they spread the floor load, and allow flat ceilings which make better use of the floor-to-ceiling height of warehouse space. Warehouse space is measured in cubic rather than square footage. The older methods of structural concrete construction used post-and-beam designs no different from heavy timber construction. The beams projecting below the ceiling interfered with the use of the full height of warehouse space. The mushroom columns decrease in size in both the diameter of the column and the cap on the upper floors as the load decreases.

620 2nd Street

The companion building at 620 2nd Avenue is attached structurally to the east elevation of 600-618 2nd. It is built of the same brick as 600-618 2nd. It is seven stories tall, and 32' wide. The first story is open, allowing Gasoline Street to connect 1st and 2nd Avenues. The six floors above Gasoline Street have two bays with two vertical window openings each. The vertical windows are 2/2 hollow steel double-hung sash. The building has concrete sills and thin concrete lintels. The 2nd Avenue elevation has simple brick corbelling at the cornice.

Access to the interior of 620 2nd Avenue is through 600-618 2nd Avenue. To accommodate Gasoline Street, the structural system of 620 is steel columns and beams, not the mushroom columns of the larger building. The second floor of 620 has steel truss transfer beams projecting above the floor to carry the load of column lines that support the building over Gasoline Street (photo # 10). The steel structural system did not permit the wide masonry openings of the nine story section of the building, so 620 2nd Avenue has the vertical window openings with 2/2 hollow metal sash. The floors above the

¹ Slaton, Amy E. Reinforced Concrete and Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. p. 134-135.

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second floor in 620 have a line of steel columns approximately bisecting the floors from north to south (2nd to 1st Avenues). The ceiling is flat-surfaced concrete, and other than the columns, the floors are open.

The building underwent rehabilitation from late 2005 through mid 2007. The rehabilitation was Certified by the National Park Service as meeting the Secretary of Interior's Standards.² The work reversed the remodelings of the 1950s and '60s, and converted the building to housing. The character defining features of the building – the mushroom columns, exposed concrete floors and ceilings, multi-light windows, storefronts along 2nd Avenue, and concrete and brick exterior remain.

Integrity:

In terms of the seven elements of Integrity for National Register listing, 600-620 2nd Avenue retains its original location and setting, feeling, and workmanship. Its association with the railroads has been replaced by association with road transportation, although the now-trackless Try Street siding is still attached to the building. A small amount of its materials and design are missing, specifically the date pediment on the north elevation.

² The National Park Service rehabilitation project number is 17846.

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Significance:

The Try Street Terminal is significant under C for Architecture. Under Criterion C, the terminal is significant for its urban prominence and concrete construction. The period of significance is the construction date of the building, 1921.

In 1862 Henry B. Rea, Jr. began a produce and provision business on Liberty Avenue in downtown Pittsburgh. His business grew and evolved into pork packing. In the 1890s Henry's sons, William and Frank, purchased property at Try Street and 2nd Avenue, on the outer fringe of the southeast corner of Pittsburgh's downtown commercial "Triangle." There the brothers built a large complex to handle Rea & Company's pork packing business. The location was convenient to two rail lines and was sited on 2nd Avenue, the main thoroughfare along the industrialized north bank of the Monongahela River. Try Street ran north-south along the base of the hill that defined the east edge of Pittsburgh's downtown; in fact it was more of a path along the railroad than a street. Hogs arrived by rail, were slaughtered in Rea & Company's abattoir, and packed in adjacent buildings. A letterhead from the 1890s (photo H-1) shows a probably sanitized and enhanced version of Rea & Company's plant: a 5 by 19 bay, four story, L-shaped building, served by rail lines and street cars, with the 1863 "Panhandle" railroad bridge across the Monongahela in the background. In 1899 the Reas purchased the neighboring old gas company property and expanded their operation.

Pittsburgh's downtown business district expanded in the early 20th century. New civic and office buildings were built near the County Courthouse that occupied a block between Grant and Ross Streets. Ross Street, east of Grant and west of Try Street, became lined with office buildings, including the headquarters of the Jones & Laughlin Steel Company in 1907.¹ Rea & Company's abattoir was within a short block of the expanding business district, and was under pressure to relocate.² As the business district expanded in its direction, the Rea property became more valuable.

By the first decade of the twentieth century it was recognized that industrial Pittsburgh had enormous problems with sanitation, disease, industrial safety, overcrowding, and

¹ The 12-story building was designed by McLure & Spahr, Architects. It survives as the John P. Robin Civic Building and is owned and occupied by the City of Pittsburgh. The J&L headquarters was within 100 yards of the Rea's abattoir.

² In 1903 Pittsburgh and its soon-to-be-annexed neighbor Allegheny opened a joint stockyard / slaughterhouse complex on Herr's Island in the Allegheny River in order to remove a noxious use from properties that had higher potential value. An abattoir was not an appropriate use for a downtown Pittsburgh property. Scott, Henry Brownfield. Sesqui-Centennial and Historical Souvenir of Greater Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh: 1908. p.80.

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child labor. The Russell Sage Foundation commissioned the famous Pittsburgh Survey, and a host of other organizations studied individual problems, sponsored by committees of the city's foremost citizens. One of the important documents in planning a better Pittsburgh was a series of reports prepared by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. for the Pittsburgh Civic Commission. One of the reports, published in 1910, was titled Pittsburgh: Main Thoroughfares and the Down Town District. Olmsted made specific recommendations addressing the area adjacent to and to be occupied by the nominated building. One of Olmsted's visions was the construction of a plaza literally above the sprawling Try Street railroad siding between Ross Street and the Bluff, east of Pittsburgh's existing downtown. This proposed huge plaza would cover the north-south area between 2nd and 6th Avenues, and would be framed with civic buildings. Olmsted suggested that a long low building be constructed along the north side of 2nd Avenue at the south end of the site to hide from his magnificent plaza the practical, if less-than-beautiful property south of 2nd Avenue, which at the time of Olmsted's study included the Rea abattoir. One of Pittsburgh's identified safety problems was the city's railroad grade crossings. Olmsted's report stated "The elimination of the grade crossing of Second Avenue at Try Street is a pressing improvement." The report proposed reserving the area south of 2nd Avenue, between the street and the Monongahela River, "...from Try Street to the Tenth Street Bridge [over the Monongahela] for freight purposes." Additionally, "First Avenue and Water Street would enter the freight yard underneath the Panhandle and proposed Baltimore and Ohio local tracks; and if Second Avenue is raised to go over the Panhandle tracks, as recommended above, direct entrances can be secured to the second or third floor of a freight house with car elevators such as those of St. Louis."³ In 1913 the Panhandle Railroad Bridge was replaced with a higher-capacity span that elevated the rail tracks over 2nd Avenue, eliminating the grade crossing.

In May 1919 the estate of Henry Rea, Jr. advertised for bids for what would be the city's largest storage warehouse. The building would replace the existing Rea & Company complex between Try Street, 2nd, and 1st Avenues. The eastern bay of the building would be built over Gasoline Street to maximize rentable space. An elevated railroad siding from the new Panhandle Bridge connected the western elevation of the new building, literally over Try Street, per the Olmsted suggestion. A large freight elevator would be located near the west wall to accommodate freight arriving from the Pennsylvania Railroad via the siding above Try Street. Bernard H. Prack was the

³ Olmsted, Frederick Law, Jr., Pittsburgh: Main Thoroughfares and the Down Town District. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Civic Commission, 1910. All three quotes from p. 10. The reference to St. Louis presumably is to Cupples Station, an innovative intermodal facility built before the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair and seen by the Fair's many visitors.

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architect, and bidders included nationally-known firms: Philadelphia's William Steele & Sons, designers and builders of concrete warehouses,⁴ Turner Construction Company of New York, and Pittsburgh's Mellon-Stuart Company.

The exact cost of construction is not known, but buildings of similar size exceeded \$400,000 in construction expenses in the era.

The large warehouse was complete in 1921. At-grade sidings connected to the B&O Railroad filled the open area south of the building including much of the 1st Avenue right-of-way. The building faced north, with pedestrian entrances through storefronts on architecturally more detailed 2nd Avenue. The exposed at-grade wall of the building facing Gasoline Street and the entire south elevation facing 1st Avenue were filled with freight loading bays.

Most bulk transport to and from Pittsburgh moved by water from the city's development in the late 18th century through the arrival of the first railroads in the 1850s. The opening of the Pennsylvania Canal to Pittsburgh in 1834 provided the link to Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and other big eastern cities not served by the Allegheny-Monongahela-Ohio river system. The canal entered Pittsburgh's downtown triangle from the north via an aqueduct over the Allegheny River. A tunnel through Grant's Hill provided canal access south across the triangle to the Monongahela River. The path of the canal and tunnel roughly defined the eastern boundary of what would evolve as Pittsburgh's central business district. For many years north-south Grant Street marked the east end of the business district. Beyond Grant Street, Try Street evolved as a path near the canal, and the site of "Hardscrabble" – a village of shacks occupied by Irish immigrants. East of Try Street was a slope too steep for building that reached an area called the Bluff. The site of Try Street Terminal is near where the canal reached the Monongahela River.⁵

Railroads literally replaced the short-lived Pennsylvania Canal in the Pittsburgh area, with rail lines often being laid over the bed of the old canal. In 1863 a railroad bridge was constructed across the Monongahela River east of Grant Street. The railroad was built by the Pittsburgh and Steubenville Railway, and connected towns in the Monongahela and Ohio Valleys with Pittsburgh and Ohio. The line crossed 2nd Avenue at grade and was laid down the middle of loosely-defined Try Street. It paralleled the old

⁴ William Steele & Sons designed and built warehouses including the National Register listed N. Snellenburg Company Department Store Warehouse in Philadelphia, listed in 2003.

⁵ The Bluff became the site of Duquesne University. Try Street Terminal is very near the site of the Greenough Boatyard on the Monongahela River, possibly the yard that constructed the boat used in the Lewis & Clark expedition. A short stretch of what is today 1st Avenue was labeled Greenough Street on 19th and early 20th century maps.

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Pennsylvania Canal across Pittsburgh's Triangle, connecting through a tunnel under Grant's Hill with the Pennsylvania Union Station at 11th Street and Liberty Avenue, near the former canal basin. The Pittsburgh and Steubenville was purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad and became Pennsylvania's Panhandle Division; the existing bridge is still identified as the Panhandle Bridge. A branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad ran along the north bank of the Monongahela and crossed the Pittsburgh and Steubenville tracks near the bridge. Railroad sidings and businesses developed where the rail lines crossed, in the area where 1st Avenue lies today. An early occupant of the site was the Pittsburgh Gas Works. The Gas Works provided gas made from railroad-delivered coal to 2,000 streetlights in Pittsburgh's Triangle. Gasoline Street that runs under 620 2nd Avenue originally was named Gas Street for the gas works.

The various railroads serving the city built freight stations and freight terminals on the tip of Pittsburgh's Point, on the city's North and South Sides, and in the flat area along the Allegheny River known as the Strip District that became the city's produce yard. The B&O Railroad built a freight station two blocks south of the subject property, along the Monongahela River. These stations or terminals offered only very short-term storage, and were intended as transfer stations to receive and distribute goods to and from the specific railroad, to and from river transport, and to and from street delivery vehicles. Per the 1923 report, Railroads of the Pittsburgh District, a vital component of the system and the growth of commerce in Pittsburgh was "storage warehouses" that "...act somewhat as regulators of the flow of commodities and operate to stabilize prices. They attract traffic to lines serving them and tend to preserve a normal demand for [rail] cars."⁶ The report encouraged the railroads to build more storage warehouses to meet the need and thus allow "Pittsburgh [to] perform a very important function in the marketing of the world's goods."⁷ The report listed the twelve biggest warehouses available in Pittsburgh. The largest was the Rea warehouse with 2,820,000 cubic feet. The next largest warehouses were both railroad-owned, and were at the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie station on Pittsburgh's South Side, and a B&O warehouse on the North Side; each had 2,500,000 available cubic feet.⁸ The fact that the three largest storage warehouses in Pittsburgh were in or adjacent to downtown is an indication of the importance of these buildings to local commerce. The big warehouses were a necessity for concentrated population and businesses, and more were needed.

⁶ Citizens Committee on City Plan of Pittsburgh. Railroads of the Pittsburgh District. Pittsburgh: Municipal Planning Association, 1923. 76.

⁷ Ibid. Pittsburgh added an average of 8,000 new residents a year in the 1920s.

⁸ Both these storage warehouses are described in the Context section of this nomination. The P&LE "Central Warehouse" on the South Side is visible from the roof of Try Street Terminal. The B&O warehouse on the North Side was adjacent to the Allegheny, opposite the central business district.

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The largest tenant at the Rea warehouse's opening was the Keystone Grocery & Tea Company, a business that operated a chain of grocery stores. The company was owned by Howard L. Myers and Robert J. Hamilton of Greensburg, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.⁹ Keystone Grocery's name does not appear in the pre-construction announcements and bidding for the building so it is not known whether the firm provided the Rea family with an incentive to build the warehouse. The Keystone Grocery & Tea Company represented the new wave of grocery chain store retailing. Based on the The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) "Economy Store" model, Keystone groceries were relatively small stores in leased storefronts with a standard selection of merchandise. During the 1920s chain stores grew from 4% to 20% of the retail grocery business.¹⁰ The biggest grocery chain was A&P, which operated 15,700 stores in 1930. Keystone was a small regional operator, but it was large enough to issue its own stock. The individual groceries were called Keystone Stores, and the Pittsburgh City Directories list a half dozen or more operating in the 1920s. Through the 1920s Keystone occupied the lower half of the large warehouse, with offices and the company's presumed headquarters on the top floor. Direct shipments via either the Pennsylvania or B&O Railroad enhanced the building's appeal. For a period of time in the mid-1920s the building was known as the Keystone Grocery Building, and other tenants used "Keystone Grocery Building" in the address lines in their advertisements in the Pittsburgh city directories.

Other early occupants of the Keystone Grocery Building / Try Street Terminal included two printing firms, one with "The Most Modern Equipped Plant in Western Pennsylvania," and the General Offices of the Jeffrey Manufacturing Company of Columbus, Ohio, a company that made heavy mining and materials handling equipment. The appraised value of the building in 1929 was a substantial \$712,000.

Downtown Pittsburgh grew in a minimally-planned fashion on two intersecting mismatched grids of too-narrow streets laid out in the 18th century. A second and better planned urban center began to evolve around 1890 in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh, three miles east and above the worst industrial smoke of the "Golden Triangle's" business district. The "White City" of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair had a major influence on Oakland. Andrew Carnegie funded a large library and museum, and built

⁹ Myers was a grocer in Westmoreland County. The business did not survive long and has not been thoroughly researched.

¹⁰ Schragger Richard C. "The Anti-Chain Store Movement, Localist Ideology, and the Remnants of the Progressive Constitution, 1920-1940." University of Virginia Law School Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper Series, Paper 21. 2005.

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Carnegie Technical Schools (Carnegie-Mellon University) there. Carnegie partner Henry Phipps built a large conservatory nearby. A grand hotel, the professional baseball team's stadium, social clubs, churches, and Western University (University of Pittsburgh) soon located there. The Oakland civic center lacked a direct connection to downtown. A grand thoroughfare was proposed by Olmsted's 1910 work, and was finally addressed in the early 1920s by the construction of the Boulevard of the Allies.¹¹

In 1926 the Boulevard of the Allies finally opened. The Boulevard of the Allies widened the original 2nd Avenue from near Pittsburgh's Point to Grant Street. East of Grant Street the Boulevard was a new street. A trestle over 2nd Avenue cleared the elevated Panhandle Railroad tracks. Bidding for work on the trestle took place in 1921, the year the Rea brothers' warehouse opened. Although construction of the Boulevard did not touch the warehouse, it came within feet of the 2nd Avenue elevation, blocking from view what was intended to be the façade of the building (see photos 6 and 7). In 1928 the Liberty Bridge opened. A vehicle bridge and tunnel to Pittsburgh's South Hills had been anticipated since before Olmsted's 1910 Report. The four-lane highway bridge across the Monongahela intersected with the four-lane Boulevard of the Allies about 60 feet east of the Keystone Grocery Building. The road and bridge construction may have hidden the lower floors of the building, but it increased the building's visibility, and tied the Reas big warehouse into Pittsburgh's road network. The owners took advantage of the prominence by painting the building's name across the top concrete band of the façade (photo H-3).

Try Street Terminal

The Keystone Grocery & Tea Company foundered in the Great Depression. The company apparently entered receivership in 1931, and struggled for a few more years. The business occupied fewer and fewer square feet in the building as the decade progressed. The individual Keystone Stores disappeared from City Directories.

In 1934 the Keystone Grocery & Tea Company Building was renamed Try Street Terminal. The name change described the location of the elevated Pennsylvania siding,

¹¹ The development of Oakland and the Boulevard of Allies are summarized in Toker, Franklin. Pittsburgh, An Urban Portrait. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986, p. 21. Some of Olmsted's plans for Pittsburgh materialized, but many did not. Eliminating railroad grade crossings, new bridges, and major streets had been discussed by civic organizations from the earliest years of the 20th century. The grand plaza built over the railroad yards east of Ross Street never materialized.

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and reflected the locally well-known rail history of Try Street, now reduced to a single short block connecting 1st and 2nd Avenues beneath the railroad siding. The floors occupied by Keystone become a general freight-handling warehouse for downtown Pittsburgh operated under the Try Street Terminal name. The building continued to be a business location, and as Keystone disappeared, more small businesses leased space in it. The owners and managers of Try Street Terminal in the 1930s were all from Pittsburgh's Union Trust Company, leading to speculation that Union Trust held a mortgage or loan to the Rea family or Keystone Grocery.¹²

One of the goals of the post-World War II Pittsburgh Renaissance was the relocation of rail lines from the downtown commercial district. The creation of Point State Park, Gateway Towers, and other development removed from service the large rail yards at the Allegheny and Monongahela confluence, and also saw the removal of many small and medium sized warehouses that had been built there. Trucking replaced rail, especially in "LTC" (Less Than a Carload) freight, reducing and eventually eliminating Pittsburgh's downtown freight terminals. Try Street Terminal evolved away from serving as a railroad warehouse and found new commercial tenants in mechanical contractors staging downtown construction, small businesses that could not afford downtown rents but needed to be downtown, and as a records storage facility. Although not a prestige address, Try Street Terminal filled a need for relatively inexpensive space within walking distance of Pittsburgh's business district.

In 1990 Try Street Terminal and 12 adjacent acres of old railroad property were acquired by Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority. Try Street Terminal was sold to private owners and continued to operate as a warehouse / business address / staging building. The old railroad property on the Monongahela River side of 1st Avenue became the site of a large new county jail and courts building, a parking garage, and a new bank center. The Panhandle Bridge now carries a line of Pittsburgh's light rail transit system, and a new transit station was constructed on the raised rail line on the opposite side of 1st Avenue from Try Street Terminal. Pittsburgh's business district finally expanded to envelop Try Street Terminal.

Architecture:

Reinforced concrete was rediscovered as a building material in the late 19th century. It offered a host of benefits, including economy of construction, great strength, and

¹² A title search for the property is extraordinarily difficult. It is tangled in multiple transactions particularly by the Rea family and others involving out-of-state corporations, corporate name changes, multiple sales to family members and back to corporations, tax suits from other states, liens, etc.

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especially it was at least as fireproof as any other existing structural system. It also did not require extensive skilled labor, an important consideration in Pittsburgh where construction firms competed with heavy industry for labor. A national shortage of steel at the end of the 19th century along with engineering developments in reinforced concrete construction saw nearly a seven-fold increase in concrete production between 1900 and 1905 alone.¹³ The structural system for 600-618 2nd Avenue¹⁴ is reinforced concrete floors supported by concrete mushroom columns, called a flat slab or mushroom slab system. The system was developed by two engineers working independently, Robert Maillart, a Swiss, and Claude A.P. Turner, an American, in the first decade of the 20th century.¹⁵ Turner's first building to use the system in the United States dates from 1906. The design caught favor and was refined between 1910 and 1920, with dozens of variation in systems of construction and patented prefabricated reinforcement shapes. The advantage of the flat slab with mushroom columns is that the columns spread the floor load and allow flat ceilings which make better use of the floor-to-ceiling height of warehouse space. The flat ceilings also reflect light well, an advantage in large and minimally-illuminated buildings. The older methods of structural concrete construction used post-and-beam designs little different from heavy timber construction. The beams projecting below the ceiling interfered with the use of the full height of warehouse and industrial space. In 600-618 2nd Avenue the mushroom columns decrease in size in both the diameter of the column and the cap on the upper floors as the load decreases. The concrete skeleton of the building carries the load, and the exterior brickwork is entirely decorative. A further advantage of reinforced concrete construction is that it permits large window areas, important in factory and warehouse buildings.¹⁶ No comprehensive catalogue of this type of construction has been made in Pittsburgh.

Architect for Try Street Terminal was Bernard H. Prack (1881-1962). Pittsburgh-based Prack was one of a dozen or more prominent local architects practicing in the era of the city's greatest growth, fueled by industrial expansion. Bernard H. Prack had a remarkable practice, but it is little-known in Pittsburgh, and mostly undocumented. His most important works apparently were built in Canada.

¹³ Slaton, Amy E. Reinforced Concrete and Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. p. 134-135.

¹⁴ The seven story section of the building, 620 2nd Avenue, is constructed over Gas Street, and is of structural steel construction as described in Section 7 of this nomination.

¹⁵ Slaton, *op. cit.* 134.

¹⁶ The minimal ornamentation and stacked horizontal "trays" of windows at buildings like Try Street Terminal and in other reinforced concrete construction may have contributed to modern architecture. Per Slaton, *op. cit.* 171, "International Style" architects were influenced by America's concrete factory buildings.

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Bernard H. Prack appeared in the Pittsburgh city directories for the first time in 1898. His occupation was listed as draftsman. By 1900 Prack had his own architectural practice, though he was still being listed as a “draftsman” in early 20th century directories. The source of his training is not known.

Before 1910 Bernard Prack partnered with Ren B. Perrine and practiced under the name Prack & Perrine in a downtown Pittsburgh office. No comprehensive catalogue of Bernard Prack’s work or history of his business exists. Clearly he specialized in the design of industrial buildings, and had many design commissions with Pittsburgh-headquartered Westinghouse Corporation, including buildings in Cleveland, Ohio, and multiple buildings in Canada. Prack found great opportunities in Canada, establishing a branch office in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1910 (Prack & Perrine). The First World War created a great demand for new industrial buildings, and Prack’s firm designed many. By 1917 the firm is named Bernard H. Prack, Industrial Architect and Engineer in both Pittsburgh and Canada. In 1919 Prack had offices in Pittsburgh, Hamilton, and Toronto. The offices were managed by his three brothers, Fred, Arthur, and Walter.¹⁷

Prack established his practice when modern reinforced concrete construction was in its experimental stage. As a specialist in industrial buildings, Prack could easily follow developments in concrete in the first decade of the 20th century through periodicals and direct advertising of new systems.¹⁸ He soon mastered the new techniques, and incorporated reinforced concrete in his practice.

Bernard Prack’s three known designs from the 1910s in Pittsburgh are Try Street Terminal and two industrial buildings: one for Crucible Bronze Works on Pittsburgh’s North Side, and the second for Hubbard & Company, a hammer and tool manufacturer in the Lawrenceville section of Pittsburgh. Neither of the latter two buildings survives. There certainly are many other Prack-designed buildings in Pittsburgh.

¹⁷ The information on Prack in Canada is from Library and Archives Canada Index. In 1936 Bernard and Arthur Prack formed Prack & Prack, Architects, with offices in Pittsburgh and Canada. Arthur Prack, Jr. joined the firm in the late 1940s. Arthur Prack, Sr. died in 1979. Prack & Prack became Prack & Cerasini in the early 1980s. The firm was headquartered in Pittsburgh, Prack & Cerasini merged with Hayes Large Suckling Fruth & Wedge Architects in 1990. Arthur Prack, Jr. died in 1995. Hayes Large Architects is in business at the time of this nomination (2007). Prack & Prack in Canada became Norman Dobell Associates, Architects in 1977. In the 1950s Prack & Prack designed the Hamilton Watch Research and Engineering Building in Lancaster, PA. It was designed in the International Style. This building may be on the National Register as part of the Lancaster Watch Company National Register nomination of 1982.

¹⁸ Engineering and architecture periodicals chronicled developments in concrete and inventors of patented proprietary systems marketed their products widely. Slaton, *op.cit.* 127-146.

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In Canada Prack's firm designed commercial and institutional buildings along with many industrial commissions. His designs include the 6-story Lister Block of 1923, an office building in downtown Hamilton, the Canadian Westinghouse Building (1927 and later) a Toronto Heritage Property, and the impressive 18-story Pigott Building (1928), Hamilton's first skyscraper and also a Heritage Property.

Context:

At its zenith as an industrial city, Pittsburgh had many warehouses in and around the downtown area. A number were built at the same time as Try Street Terminal

The Crane Building is a seven-story brick-faced concrete warehouse constructed at 24th and Railroad Streets in Pittsburgh's Strip District, adjacent to the old Armstrong Cork Company complex.¹⁹ The project went to bid in May 1921. It was described as a "Branch House" for the Crane plumbing fixture company; the building's sole occupant for many years. The architect was W.J. Clark from Chicago, with local assistance from Pittsburgh's Hunting-Davis Associates Architects. The Hunting-Davis Company, Architects and Engineers, was founded in 1910 by E. N. Hunting, Engineer, and L. N. Davis, Architect.²⁰ Hunting-Davis specialized in warehouses and industrial buildings. A good record of their work from the early 1920s survives in the 1924 catalogue listed in the bibliography. A number of the works in their catalogue are steel and concrete car dealerships and sales / repair garages constructed in urban Pittsburgh. The Crane Building has a red brick facing, and originally had rolled-steel sash windows, replaced in a 1990s remodeling. The interior has mushroom-type columns. Other than the windows, the building survives in good condition and a good state of integrity. From its remodeling in the mid 1990s it has been used as an office building. In terms of Pittsburgh's commerce, the Crane Building provided a single manufacturer with its own storage facility. The warehouse fed the large local demand for plumbing fixtures in a growing city and region that had been scandalously slow to adopt modern methods of sanitation.

An exact contemporary of Try Street Terminal was the Chatfield-Woods Warehouse, which went to bid in December of 1920. This warehouse for a Cincinnati-based paper manufacturer also was built between 1st and 2nd Avenues in Pittsburgh, but very near Pittsburgh's Point in the area that became Point State Park. The building was designed by Cincinnati architect Gustave Drach with local assistance from Pittsburgher Charles Morse Stotz. Drach is primarily remembered for institutional buildings – schools and

¹⁹ The former Armstrong Cork Complex was listed on the National Register in 2004.

²⁰ Successor to the Hunting-Davis firm is Pittsburgh's Larsen & Ludwig, Inc. (2007).

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hospitals – plus two hotels and a high-rise office building, nearly all in Ohio. Architect Charles Stotz authored the seminal The Early Architecture of Western Pennsylvania in 1936, and is remembered for his work on Point State Park and the restoration of Old Economy Village in Ambridge, PA, for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. However, the bulk of Stotz's work was for businesses and institutions, although warehouses do not figure prominently in the catalogue of his designs. The eight-story, 100 x 160', brick-faced concrete building does not survive. The Chatfield-Woods Warehouse served as a single-industry warehouse and headquarters building for printing businesses.

Another approximate contemporary of Try Street Terminal was the Baltimore & Ohio Freight House, a "...seven story reinforced concrete structure of irregular shape, approximately 50 feet wide at one end, 100 feet wide at the other, and 351 feet long."²¹ It was built ca. 1920 in a block along General Robinson Street east of Sandusky Street near the Allegheny River on Pittsburgh's North Side. The architect is unknown although Hunting-Davis may have been involved.²² Unlike Try Street and the comparable warehouses above, the B&O Freight House had a concrete exterior and a minimal number of windows. The bunker-like building was imploded in a controlled demolition in the 1990s. The B&O Freight House played a very similar role in Pittsburgh's commercial activity as the Try Street Terminal. Its North Side location meant that it served that geographical area, once the City of Allegheny. Most of the facility was rented to businesses; the building did not serve the railroad exclusively.

A comparable warehouse built a few years before Try Street Terminal is the Central Warehouse at the former Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad complex on Pittsburgh's South Side. The seven-story warehouse was built in 1917-1918. The interior construction is concrete encased steel of the post-and-beam variety. The exterior is faced with red brick. The original rolled steel sash have been replaced. In the late 1970s the derelict P&LE complex was converted to Station Square, a large, early, and much-heralded historic preservation project. The Central Warehouse became Commerce Court in the rehabilitated complex, and is used as an office building. It is a Contributing building to the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Complex National Register nomination of 1978. The P&LE Central Warehouse played a very similar role in Pittsburgh's commercial activity as the Try Street Terminal. The location served the businesses of Pittsburgh's South Side, though it is a just a bridge-crossing from downtown Pittsburgh.

²¹ Citizens Committee on City Plan of Pittsburgh. Railroads of the Pittsburgh District. Pittsburgh: Municipal Planning Association, 1923. 69.

²² There is a brief note in the March 13, 1920 "Builder's Bulletin" about the bids for a Hunting-Davis designed warehouse on Sandusky Street being rejected.

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Library and Archives Canada Index
University of Pittsburgh Archives
Westmoreland County (PA) Library and Archives

Public Records:

Allegheny County Deeds
Allegheny County Tax Records

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Property Description:

All that certain piece of ground situate in the 1st Ward of the City of Pittsburgh, County of Allegheny and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, being designated as:
Block 2-J Lot 260
in the Deed Registry Office of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property contains all the real estate historically associated with the Try Street Terminal.

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1. Try Street Terminal
View: Aerial view of building
Camera Facing : NE
Date: October 7, 2006
Photographer for all photos: Charles Uhl
Negative location Historic Preservation Services
for all negatives: 6711 Stanton Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

2. Try Street Terminal
View: East and south elevations
Camera Facing : Northeast
Date: October 10, 2005

3. Try Street Terminal
View: South elevation
Camera Facing : NW
Date: October 10, 2005

4. Try Street Terminal
View: 622 2nd Avenue, over Gas Street
Camera Facing : N
Date: October 1, 2005

5. Try Street Terminal
View: West elevation, Try Street siding in foreground
Camera Facing : E
Date: October 10, 2005

6. Try Street Terminal
View: North elevation, 2nd Avenue façade, Boulevard of the Allies ramp in foreground
Camera Facing : S
Date: June 3, 2005

7. Try Street Terminal
View: Storefronts, 2nd Avenue facade
Camera Facing : SW
Date: August 30, 2005

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8. Try Street Terminal
View: 1st floor center
Camera Facing : SW
Date: August 3, 2005
9. Try Street Terminal
View: Loading dock doors, 1st floor
Camera Facing : S
Date: October 14, 2005
10. Try Street Terminal
View: 2nd floor transfer beams, 620 2nd Avenue
Camera Facing : E
Date: October 10, 2005
11. Try Street Terminal
View: 2nd floor 620 2nd Avenue, steel construction
Camera Facing : S
Date: October 10, 2005
12. Try Street Terminal
View: 4th floor SW corner
Camera Facing : SW
Date: October 10, 2005
13. Try Street Terminal
View: 7th floor center
Camera Facing : S
Date: October 10, 2005

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H-1 Rea & Company buildings from letterhead lithograph
Note Panhandle Railroad Bridge

Date: 1890s

From: Collection of Lauren S. Uhl

6711 Stanton Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15206

H-2 Try Street Terminal

View: View of Try Street Terminal across Try Street rail yard

Camera Facing : NE

Date: ca. 1930

From: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

1212 Smallman Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

H-3 Try Street Terminal

View: Try Street from East

Camera Facing : NE

Date: Late 1940s

From: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

1212 Smallman Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15222