

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Young, Smyth, Field Company Building  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 1216-1220 Arch Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Philadelphia N/A vicinity  
state Pennsylvania code PA county Philadelphia code 101 zip code 19107

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

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

#### Category of Property

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

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

DR. BRENT D. GLASS [Signature]  
Signature of certifying official  
PA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION

11/16/92  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store  
warehouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: office building

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK, GLASS, TERRA-COTTA, LIMESTONE

roof ASPHALT

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Young, Smyth, Field, and Company Building is a manufacturing and commercial loft building, located at 1216-1220 Arch Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Construction of the building began in 1901 and was completed the following year at a cost of approximately \$200,000. The general contractor was Lewis Haven's Sons. The building is situated on the south side of Arch Street and is flanked by multi-storied commercial loft buildings. The eight-story rectangular building has a frontage of approximately 73 feet and a depth of approximately 170 feet. The building's prominently glazed principal facade is comprised of various materials combined into classically inspired motifs. Although its uses have changed since its completion, the Young, Smith, Field and Company Building retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The articulation of the building's principal (north) facade is treated as bas-relief, projecting slightly from the plane of the building. The facade is vertically divided into three parts: a two-story base, a five-story middle segment, and a single story cap. The five-bay wide building is divided into three principal bays flanked by end bays. The principal bays are heavily glazed and are formed by narrow piers repeated through the facade.

The building's two-story base is composed primarily of glazed storefront windows surrounded by channeled limestone set upon an approximately eight-foot high granite water table. Each of the principal bays includes an entrance set within glazed shop windows. The east end bay includes a display window, while the west end bay incorporates a fortified steel door corresponding to fire stairs located within the bay. The first and second story glazing is interrupted by a plain terra-cotta spandrel. Second story glazing consists of glass block interrupted by small square fixed panes of clear glass. A simple limestone entablature separates the two-story base from the upper part of the building.

The middle portion of the building is comprised of five stories. A limestone base rests upon the second story cornice. The flanking end bays and the intermediate piers which rise through the middle five stories are constructed of Pompeian brick. The middle portion of the building is capped by a limestone cornice above the seventh story. Plain terra-cotta spandrels indicate the floors levels and separate the glazed areas within the principal bays. Each floor level of the flanking end bays has cut rectangular openings infilled with reinforced steel doors. Unadorned fire escape balconies extend from the west flanking bay across half a principal bay, cutting into the terra-cotta spandrels at each floor level. Fenestration is comprised of six-over-six double-hung hollow sheet metal industrial sash. The upper six window panes are further divided into thirty-six ribbed lights set within square leaded panes.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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**Young, Smyth, Field Company Building**  
Philadelphia County, PA  
Description (continued)

The eighth story of the principal facade is clad in terra cotta and expands on the theme set forth in the base of the building. Terra-cotta pilasters and flanking end bays support a full entablature including a banded fascia and frieze inscribed "Young, Smyth, Field Company". The frieze and widely overhanging cornice extend above the building's main roof line. The cornice includes a cymatium of lions heads. Antefix comprised of larger lion heads are placed at regular intervals on the cornice ridge.

The rear (south) facade repeats the fenestration pattern set in the north facade but without decorative features or a differentiation of materials. The ground floor is unarticulated except for an overhead delivery door near the west end. In 1927 the principal rear terra-cotta cornice was replaced with simple brickwork. The east and west elevations abut the adjoining buildings. Exposed brickwork above adjoining roof lines is unadorned.

The interior of the building is composed of retail and office space. The building's first story store front windows and entrance were remodeled in 1928 to incorporate additional entrances. Currently the first floor is divided into three spaces. A large undivided central section is flanked on the east by an elevator lobby serving the upper office spaces and on the west by a narrow retail space. The loft spaces on floors two through eight have incurred varying degrees of partitioning during their conversion to office use. Despite these alterations the building retains a high degree of integrity. Throughout the building exposed heavy timber beams and plank floor and concrete clad steel girders and columns reveal the building's structural components.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1902

Significant Dates

1902

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Field and Medary

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Young, Smyth, Field Company Building, located at 1216-1220 Arch Street, is significant under National Register Criterion C as embodying the distinctive characteristics of a building type, as reflective of methods of high rise building construction, and as an uncommon surviving example of a Classical Revival light industrial building in Philadelphia. Its significance is heightened for its association with Field and Medary, a prominent turn-of-the-century Philadelphia architecture firm.

The Young, Smyth, Field Company Building, completed in 1902, is a commercial loft building, a type of structure which combined ground floor retail and office spaces with industrial work areas on the upper floors. These commercial lofts were constructed in a district directly north of Market Street in Philadelphia and reflected a growing shift in business and industry away from the older commercial and industrial sections adjoining the Delaware River west toward the new City Hall and an expanding central business district that came to include both the John Wanamaker and Snellenberg department stores.

The opening of Broad Street Station in 1881 and Reading Terminal in 1893 encouraged and facilitated this shift westward. Both these railroad stations operated as embarkation points and termini, bringing workers, shoppers, and materials into the city and facilitating shipments of goods to other markets. The combination of new rail facilities and expanding retail markets made this section of the city ideal for further development. Beginning in the 1880's and continuing through 1913 the area west of 11th Street and north of Market Street developed into a district comprised substantially of light manufacturing, jobbing, retailing, and wholesaling businesses, with many buildings supporting combinations of these activities. More than a dozen six- to ten-story commercial loft buildings were erected in the area bounded roughly by Race, Arch, Eleventh, and Thirteenth streets. A majority of these buildings were constructed within the first decade of the twentieth century. Among these buildings were the A.J. Holman Building (1881), the Boyertown Building (1907), the Breintnall Building (1909), the People's Trust Company Building (1909), and the Mershon Brothers Building (1906) on Arch Street; the Niessen Building (1910) on Race Street; the Robert Young Building (1899 and 1912) on North Twelfth Street and the Steppacher Building (1902) on North Thirteenth Street.<sup>1</sup> A majority of the loft buildings that occupied sites within this area have been demolished, many to make way for the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Only a handful of commercial loft structures remain dispersed along the

<sup>1</sup>Betty Cosans-Zebooker, Richard Meyer, and Vivian Young, *Philadelphia Convention Center, Reading Site Alternative: Phase II Archeological and Architectural Investigations*. Report prepared by John Milner Associates for Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, 1985, 55-89.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

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**Young, Smyth, Field Company Building**  
Philadelphia County, PA  
Significance (continued)

south side of Arch Street, the north side of Race Street, and the west side of 13th Street. The Young, Smith, Filed Company Building is a rare surviving example of this significant turn-of-the-century Philadelphia building type.

Factors of location, use and technology combined to create the form of the commercial loft. Because of the scarcity of land near the commercial core of downtown, this land had become expensive. As a result, buildings in this area were constructed with relatively small footprints in order to minimize land use. To provide the space needed for light manufacturing, the upper stories of these buildings featured large, open spaces with sufficient structural support to permit the machinery and work force necessary to produce increasing volumes of goods. To light the deep factory floors, most of these buildings featured large banks of windows.

The form of the commercial loft was also influenced by government regulations. At the turn of the century, factory reform laws were designed to eliminate the unhealthy, exploitative conditions that existed in the smaller and older sweatshop/craftshop lofts of Old City Philadelphia and to encourage the movement of moderately sized operations to the newer, more easily controlled floors of factory/loft buildings.<sup>2</sup>

The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* noted, "It is safe to say that the cry for better housing and sanitation will be the means of bringing about a reformation in the designing of our future business buildings that will not only be a benefit to the owner and the men that work in them, but also a benefit to our city. The solution in a word will be 'Modern Loft Buildings.'"<sup>3</sup>

Changing building technology also contributed to the form of the commercial loft. The earliest lofts, typified by the A.J. Holman Building of 1881 (1222-1226 Arch Street), had brick bearing wall construction and timber framing. As the height of a masonry bearing wall building increased, the thickness of its walls also necessarily increased to support the weight of the masonry. To conserve both land and floor space and to permit construction of taller buildings, a new technology of high rise construction was developed in Chicago in the 1880's. In this new technology the masonry exterior walls of the building were hung from a steel and

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<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 1985. The Young, Smyth, Field Building, 1216-1220 Arch Street, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, "The Development of the Modern Loft Building," April 19, 1914, Section 5, 8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

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Young, Smyth, Field Company Building  
Philadelphia County, PA  
Significance (continued)

iron frame.<sup>4</sup> Examples of steel frame loft buildings include the People's Trust Company Building of 1909 - 1910 (1133-1135 Arch Street, now demolished); the Globe Ticket Company Building of 1899 and 1922 (112 North Twelfth Street, now demolished), and the Breintnall Building of 1909 (1228-1230 Arch Street).

In the early part of the twentieth century, the Philadelphia architecture firm of Ballinger & Perrot was a pioneer in a new technique of building construction, the use of reinforced concrete for structural support. Reinforced concrete construction used concrete footings, beams, columns, and floor slabs reinforced by steel bars and was touted by Perrot as an economical, fireproof, and quick method of construction.<sup>5</sup> Among the loft buildings which used reinforced concrete as a structural system were the Boyertown Building of 1907 (1211-1217 Arch Street, now demolished) and the Niessen Building of 1910 (1201-1205 Race Street), both Ballinger and Perrot designs.

The Young, Smyth, Field Building uses a transitional structural system, a system which employs elements of both the timber frame and steel frame structural systems. The building also takes advantage of the fire proof character of concrete. The structure is comprised of slow-burning, chamfered, heavy timber beams, thick plank floors, and concrete clad steel girders and columns. The Young, Smyth, Field Building is significant as the only extant loft building in the Reading Terminal area which combines elements from each of the three structural systems.

The Young, Smyth, Field and Company Building is also significant as an example of Classical Revival loft architecture. The building's principal (north) facade is a symmetrical composition. Its classically inspired details are comprised of a composite of materials including Pompeian brick, granite, limestone, terra-cotta, and glass. These materials are combined in a simple straightforward manner, resulting in a design both monumental and dignified in response to its urban context. The straightforward, simplified Classical Revival vocabulary is not found in any of the other extant lofts in the Reading Terminal area.

The earliest commercial lofts of the Reading Terminal area used architectural idioms of the Victorian era, exemplified by the A.J. Holman Building, constructed in 1881 (1222-1226 Arch Street). Its iron front, stacked layers of arched windows, and pedimented brick cornice are typical of urban commercial buildings of the 1880's.

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<sup>4</sup> Leland M. Roth. *A Concise History of American Architecture*, 174.

<sup>5</sup> Emile G. Perrot, "Reinforced Concrete in Building Construction," *The American Architect and Building News*, 84: 1484, 4 June 1904, 79-82.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

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**Young, Smyth, Field Company Building**  
Philadelphia County, PA  
Significance (continued)

By the first decade of the 20th century, Philadelphia's urban commercial buildings began to reflect the incorporate Beaux-Arts and Classical Revival stylistic elements. As noted by Richard Webster, by the early 20th century, Philadelphia "seemed addicted" to the academic classicism which had first flowered as a result of the influence of the 1893 Columbian Exposition of Chicago.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the surviving commercial loft buildings drew upon the vocabulary of academic classicism for the design of their facade. The facade design of the Steppacher Building, constructed in 1902 (146-150 North Thirteenth Street), reflects an attempt on the part of its architects to meld the eclecticism of high Victorian architecture with the classical composition of the Beaux-Arts style. Massive arcades of the third through sixth floors are topped by the main cornice featuring dentils, egg-and-dart moldings, and modillions.

The facades of later extant loft buildings elaborate on the Classical Revival architectural vocabulary of the Young, Smyth, Field Company Building. The A. H. Mershon Building (1907), located immediately to the east of the Young, Smyth, Field Company Building, features pilasters with modified Corinthian capitals, terra-cotta garlands, a two story, two bay arcade and a modillioned cornice. The Breintnall Building (1909) at 1228-1230 Arch Street features a terra-cotta enframed entrance, a first story cornice with round relief moldings and brackets, and a massive Beaux-Arts seventh story cornice with cartouche-like plaques. The Niessen Building of 1910 (1201-1205 Race Street) features triangular pedimented entrances at either end of the facade, a first story cornice decorated with a floral-patterned frieze and consoles, a pressed metal cornice with heavy modillions, and massive paired pendants. Other loft buildings which formerly stood in the Reading Terminal area used a Beaux-Arts architectural vocabulary similar to that used in the Breintnall and Niessen buildings. These included the Boyertown Building (1907) at 1211-1217 Arch Street, the Potts Building (1901-1902) at 1216-1228 Cherry Street, and the Mershon Brothers Building (1906) at 1209 Arch Street.

The simplicity of the Classical Revival facade of the Young, Smyth Field Company Building is probably due in part to the early construction date of the building. Constructed in 1902, it was one of the first examples of the use of Classical Revival motifs in a Philadelphia commercial loft building. In fact, this early construction date is contemporary with the first flowering of Classical Revival commercial architecture in Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup> It was not until several years later that Beaux-Arts inspired commercial and institutional

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<sup>6</sup>Richard Webster, *Philadelphia Preserved*, 117.

<sup>7</sup> Webster, *Philadelphia Preserved*, 116.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 5

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**Young, Smyth, Field Company Building**  
Philadelphia County, PA  
Significance (continued)

buildings came to dominate Center City Philadelphia and that most of the Classical Revival loft buildings were constructed.

The simplicity of the design may also have been a conscious decision of the building's architects, Field and Medary. These architects, who demonstrated their knowledge of academic classicism in the design of a variety of buildings in Philadelphia and its suburbs, may have decided that a sparsely ornamented facade best reflected the building's role as a functional, industrial/commercial building.

The design of the Young, Smyth, Field Company Building by the prominent Philadelphia architecture firm of Field and Medary heightens the building's significance. The partnership between Richard Littell Field and Milton Bennett Medary Jr. began in 1895 and continued until Field's death in 1906. The building was an early and rare industrial commission of the firm, a firm known for its country houses, churches, and industrial buildings.

Richard Littell Field (March 15, 1868 - August 24, 1906) attended the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture in 1887. He was enrolled as a partial student and never received his degree from the University. Little is known of Field's early architectural work. By 1894 he was listed in Philadelphia City directories as a draftsman for an undisclosed firm. In 1895 he formed a partnership with Milton Medary in the architectural firm of Field and Medary.

Milton Bennett Medary Jr. (February 6, 1874 - August 7, 1929) entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1890. During his first leave from the University he began working for Philadelphia architect Frank Miles Day. Medary never resumed his schooling and like his partner, Richard Field, never finished his university degree. Medary remained with Frank Miles Day until 1895 when he and Richard Field formed their partnership.<sup>8</sup>

Although Field and Medary was a young architectural firm and had little if any experience in designing loft buildings, they had a connection within Young, Smith, Field Company. The firm's president, John Field, was Richard Littell Field's father.<sup>9</sup> John Field appears to have influenced other members of the firm in securing

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<sup>8</sup>Biographical material collected from: Sandra L. Tatum and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1985).

<sup>9</sup>United States Enumerated Census for 1880 and Philadelphia City directories were consulted for this information.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 6

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**Young, Smyth, Field Company Building**  
Philadelphia County, PA  
Significance (continued)

the commission for Field and Medary as an 1898 letter alludes: "I would like to suggest the firm of Field and Medary ... in my judgement, which may be prejudiced a little, I admit, they have no superiors."<sup>10</sup> This was quite a boast considering that Field and Medary had been in practice for only three years and apparently had little or no experience designing this type of building when the letter was written.

The Young, Smyth, Field Company Building is important as an extant example of the commercial loft buildings that once dominated the area roughly bounded by Arch, Race, Eleventh, and Thirteenth streets in Philadelphia. Architecturally the building remains as a unique example of the commercial loft work of the prominent Philadelphian architectural firm of Field and Medary and as a well-executed, straightforward Classical Revival commercial and industrial building, unusual among Philadelphia loft buildings for the simplicity of its Classical Revival architectural vocabulary. Its importance is increased as an illustration of a transitional building technology, a technology that incorporates elements of timber frame, steel frame, and reinforced concrete construction. Historically, the Young, Smyth, Field Company Building represents the survival of an important building type associated with the rise of Center City Philadelphia as a light manufacturing and transportation center.

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<sup>10</sup>Cosans-Zebooker et al, *Philadelphia Convention Center*, 67.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Philadelphia Historical Commission

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property less than one

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the south side of Arch Street approximately 197 feet west of the southwest corner of 12th and Arch Streets; thence west approximately 75 feet to a point; thence south approximately 173 feet to a point; thence east paralleling Cuthbert Street approximately 75 feet to a point; thence north approximately 173 feet to the point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The proposed boundaries include the site that the Young, Smyth, Field Company Building has occupied since 1902.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By** Douglas C. McVarish/Project Architectural Historian

name/title Glenn A. Ceponis/Assistant Historian

organization John Milner Associates, Inc.

street & number 1216 Arch Street, 5th Floor

city or town Philadelphia

date October 16, 1991; revised August

telephone (215) 561-7637 / 14, 1992

state PA zip code 19107

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

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Young, Smyth, Field Company Building  
Philadelphia County, PA  
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Young, Smyth, Field Company  
 1216-1220 Arch St  
 Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania  
 18.486280.4422430  
 Philadelphia Area