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 by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functional 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 Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 3175 John F. Kennedy Blvd. N/A not for publication

city or town Philadelphia N/A vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Philadelphia code 101 zip code 19104

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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.)

[Signature of certifying official/Title] December 20, 2002 Date

[State of Federal agency and bureau]

[Signature of commenting official/Title] Date

[State or Federal agency and bureau]

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

______________________________
# Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building

## Name of Property

## Philadelphia County, PA

### County and State

## 5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
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<td>Contributing: 1 Noncontributing:</td>
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### 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)

- TRANSPORTATION/rail-related
- COMMERCE/TRADE/business

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/
  - Classical Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: granite
- walls: brick
- roof: synthetic
- other: terra cotta

### 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.)

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☑ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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

Property is:

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRAansPORTATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1927-1952

Significant Dates
1927

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
undefined

Architect/Builder
Graham, Anderson, Probst & White

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):

☐ 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

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository:
Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, DE
Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building
Philadelphia County, PA

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.3 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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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 Cynthia Rose Hamilton
organization Powers & Company, Inc.
date February 5, 2002
street & number 2230 Mt. Vernon St.
telephone 215-236-9006
city or town Philadelphia
state PA
zip code 19130

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.).

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 the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
The Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building at 3175 J.F.K. Boulevard in Philadelphia, is a 14-story office tower that is organized into eight registers on the primary (east and west) elevations and spans thirteen registers on the north façade. Constructed in 1927, the exterior takes on a Classical form with a four-story high limestone and terra cotta base surmounted by an E-shaped buff colored brick tower. Window openings are paired and grouped in three and are divided by tall vertical piers that project outward from the horizontal spandrels. The primary entrance is off-center on the east elevation with a secondary entrance on the same axis located on the west elevation. The building is located on the west side of John F. Kennedy Boulevard, above Market Street, and just north of the easternmost block of Lancaster Avenue in West Philadelphia. The building assumes a rectangular footprint on a flat site that spans west to N. 32nd Street. Concrete sidewalks separate the east and west facades from the streets. A parking lot is located to the north and a paved passageway separates the south façade from a neighboring unrelated building. The building remains in excellent condition and has received few alterations since its construction and thus retains integrity.

Smooth, polished granite serves as the base on the three primary (east, west and north) elevations. Dividing the bays on the lower stories of the primary elevations are tall limestone pilasters embellished with limestone circles and square panel carvings, and topped by a denticulated limestone cornice at the third story and a simpler limestone cornice at the fourth story. The lower three floors are further embellished by terra cotta spandrel panels with fluted and rosette ornamentation. Above the fourth story, the pilasters continue in buff colored brick. Narrow, secondary piers divide the individual window openings and are executed in terra cotta on the lower floors and brick above. Patterned brick spandrel panels serve as the primary embellishment on the tower shaft. The cornice does not project from the building in the traditions sense, but rather is marked by a series of belt courses and carved bands positioned above the window openings. A belt course is located above the 11th story with bands of fluted carvings above the window openings. Bands of stylized wave motifs are located above the window openings at the 13th story. Above the 14th story windows are fluted bands interrupted by the tops of the pilasters that are embellished with large circles of Art Deco inspiration. A recessed parapet contains subtle pattered brick bands that align with the tower window openings. The south elevation is utilitarian in character with a smooth stuccoed wall penetrated by window and fire tower openings that lack the symmetry and consistency established by the fenestration on the remaining elevations.

Entrances are located on the east and west elevations, in the third bay from the south end of the building. These off-center entrances mark the location of the main interior corridor. In the 1960s, flush granite entrance surrounds were installed at both entrance locations. It is uncertain whether the original limestone broken pediment entrance surrounds remain beneath the existing granite.

Fenestration throughout is provided by original 1/1 metal windows set in the original frames. One bay of 3/3 windows with wire glass on the south elevation marks the locations of the
interior elevator lobbies on each floor. The windows throughout are organized in single bays, and are paired and grouped in three.

The first floor is organized around a main east-west corridor that links the entrances. Physical evidence suggests that the east vestibule was originally an exterior space that was enclosed in the 1960s with the installation of the existing entrance surrounds. The east vestibule contains granite steps, walls clad in modern marble, and a drywall ceiling. The floor is brick and marble.

The west vestibule is similar and also appears to have been originally an exterior space. As in the east vestibule, the steps are granite, the walls modern marble and the ceiling drywall. A small lobby area that is adjacent to the west vestibule features an original terra cotta ceiling. Linking the vestibules is the main corridor which contains an original marble floor, modern marble wall cladding, and original plaster crown molding and decorative plaster ceiling. Documentary evidence indicates that the existing marble wall cladding was installed in the 1960s and replaced earlier marble, however, the original height may have been lower than the existing.

The 1st floor elevator lobby is accessed directly off the corridor and contains an original marble floor and modern marble wall cladding. Portions of a simple crown molding survive. The elevator doors are flush aluminum with aluminum trim and appear to date to the 1960s renovations. The 1st floor, like the upper floors, is largely open in plan. Typical finishes include concrete floors, plaster walls and ceiling, original metal window sills, and plastered columns. A cafeteria is located in the northeast corner and contains a terrazzo floor. The southwest corner of the 1st floor is comprised of a loading area with concrete platform, accessed through vehicular entrances with metal roll-down doors on the west and south elevations.

The first floor retains its main corridor with decorative plaster ceiling. Throughout the building, the elevator lobbies and stairs remain almost entirely unaltered since the time of construction. Floors 2-14 retain the vast open floor plans with exposed concrete columns as original conceived by the architect. The building has been little altered since its original period of construction and thus retains architectural integrity.

A single stair provides access from floor to floor and contains metal treads and risers, clad in modern aluminum, with a simple metal pipe handrail. The walls and ceilings in the stair tower are unornamented plaster. On several floors the stair landings are terrazzo.

The upper floors are almost entirely open in plan with no partitioning aside from the walls forming the elevator lobbies and stair tower. The elevator lobbies contain flush steel elevator doors with original metal trim. A few elevator lobbies contain terrazzo floors. The office areas contain concrete floors, plaster walls, plaster and acoustic tile ceilings, plaster columns, and original metal window sills. There is no original surviving baseboard or other trimwork. Lightwells are created on the 5th floor and higher as the building assumes an E-shaped plan.
The first substantive interior renovation undertaken by the Pennsylvania Railroad occurred in 1955 and involved extensive renovations to the cafeteria in the northeast corner of the first floor.\(^1\) The existing terrazzo floor in that space likely dates to those renovations. In 1963, the new owners, Food Fair Stores, undertook renovations in the first floor corridor which involved replacing the original marble wall cladding with new marble.\(^2\) At that time, the existing granite entrance surrounds were also added to the east and west elevations.

In the 1980s, a number of interior renovations were conducted which involved the demolition of partition walls by Conrail, the successor to Penn Central, according to City of Philadelphia zoning permits.

\(^1\) Application for Zoning Permit, Licenses and Inspections, City of Philadelphia, December 6, 1955.  
The Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building, located at 3175 John F. Kennedy Boulevard in West Philadelphia, has achieved significance for the essential role it served in the development of the Pennsylvania Railroad's preeminence in local and national railroad transportation. The building is also important for its architectural significance as an example of the last great period of building activity by the Company in the City of Philadelphia. Designed by the nationally significant architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, the building represents the architects' mastery of 'Commercial Classicism'; a style favored by the Pennsylvania Railroad as a reflection of their permanence and tradition in the City of Philadelphia. With a board of directors made up of the city's social elite, the Pennsylvania Railroad invariably commissioned the most prolific architects, engineers and contractors of the time as a testament to their standing at the forefront of stylistic and technological innovations. Constructed in 1927, as part of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Philadelphia Improvements Project, the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building demonstrates the company's commitment to capital improvements in the wake of declining revenues resulting from the rise in alternative modes of transportation. The Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building was designed to accommodate the company's clerical staff, which at the time numbered about 5,500. The period of significance continues from 1927, the date of construction, to 1952, to meet the National Register's fifty year requirement. The resource gains its significance in the areas of transportation and architecture and meets National Register criteria A and C.

HISTORY AND USE OF THE BUILDING

The construction of a modern, fire-proof office building at the juncture of N. 32nd Street, Market Street, and Lancaster Avenue was initiated in the Autumn of 1925 for the Pennsylvania Railroad to provide additional office space for the railroad company. Despite the immense size of the Broad Street station where the Pennsylvania Railroad had its headquarters, the Railroad rapidly outgrew that facility. The general office accommodations had grown entirely inadequate and by the mid-1920s approximately two-thirds of the office staff were quartered in locations outside of Broad Street Station.¹ Once a plan for general improvements in Philadelphia was fully developed in 1925 by the City and the Pennsylvania, the location for the PRR new office building was determined.²

According to the 1925 Pennsylvania Railroad Annual Report, this building would concentrate the office staff in one location, and thereby produce a large saving in rentals and would provide for greater efficiency and economy in carrying out work.³ Prior to the construction of the new

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¹ Office space was often leased in different parts of the City and was both costly and inefficient. "The Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Seventy-Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1925," Office of the Secretary, Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, PA.
² "The Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Seventy-Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1925," Office of the Secretary, Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, PA.
³ "The Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Seventy-Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1925."
office building, the majority of staff members were housed outside the Broad Street main building throughout the city in partly owned and partly leased quarters.⁴

When the building opened in June of 1927, the Railroad discouraged any significant publicity or coverage of the event according to memos generated by the Secretary’s Office.⁵ At the time, the Railroad was faced with having to announce to its shareholders that the company would be experiencing a second consecutive year of declining revenues in 1927, and thus it was not in the best interest of the company to celebrate the grand opening of a major office building. In a short press release accompanied by photographs issued by the Secretary’s Office, the Railroad stated that this building was the “first unit completed in connection with the development of the railroad’s large Philadelphia improvement program on the west bank of the Schuylkill River, which centers around the construction of a great new passenger terminal.”⁶ According to information contained in the press release, “Every innovation and improvement in office building design has been embodied in its construction.” It was further stated that the new office building would provide quarters for about 5,500 members of the Company’s clerical force, while the headquarters of the Company’s executive staff would continue to remain at Broad Street Station.

According to research into building and zoning permits, by 1962 the building had been acquired by Food Fair Stores, Inc., for offices.⁷ By 1973, Penn Central was listed as the owner of the building in city records.⁸ Conrail then became the owner of the building following the restructuring of Penn Central on April 1, 1976.

TRANSPORTATION SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is gained in the areas of transportation as this building was erected in 1927 for the main clerical offices of the Pennsylvania Railroad, owners of the largest railroad in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century until the evolution of the interstate highway system and advancements in air transportation in the mid-20th century.

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⁴ "The Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Seventy-Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1925."
⁵ Handwritten memo dated June 28, 1927, (names unreadable), Pennsylvania Railroad Company Manuscript Collection, Series I. Secretary’s Office, Box 5. Urban Archives, Temple University.
⁷ In the 1960s, the owner of the building, Food Fair, Inc., acquired two more properties to the south of the PRR building. An application for a zoning permit submitted by Food Fair in 1972 indicated that the parcel of land on which the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building now stands originally continued south to Market Street and included the existing parking lot and gas station that currently stands to the south. In 1978, the entire parcel was legally subdivided into two separate parcels. Application for Zoning Permit, Licenses and Inspections, City of Philadelphia, May 22, 1972; Application for Zoning Permit, Licenses and Inspections, City of Philadelphia, July 29, 1976.
The Pennsylvania Railroad

Evolving from a regional steam powered line in the early nineteenth century to the largest railroad in the world, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company played a critical role in the development of the nation, establishing a transportation network that would link distant agricultural communities with the eastern seaboard cities. The origins of the Pennsylvania Railroad can be traced to the early nineteenth century when the newly organized railroad established a freight line between Philadelphia and Columbia, Pennsylvania to compete with the success of New York’s Erie Canal. The Pennsylvania Railroad began passenger service in 1849 and in the same year began its freight service with the purchase of seventy-five freight cars. Five years later, the main line from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh was completed, carrying 250,095 tons of freight in its first year.\(^9\)

Since its inception, the Pennsylvania Railroad had a strong presence in Philadelphia with locomotives carrying freight across the city along many major streets to and from the Delaware River at the city's commercial center. Steam locomotives were used between Pittsburgh and the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, but as a precaution against fire, a city ordinance required that horses pull the cars through Philadelphia. Freight transport initially comprised the bulk of the company's business, but by the 1860s the focus turned toward passenger service.

The Pennsylvania Railroad had acquired significant real estate holdings in West Philadelphia by the mid-19\(^{th}\) century. The Railroad's first passenger station in Philadelphia was constructed at the northeast corner of 32\(^{nd}\) and Market Streets in 1864, but remained in use for only a decade when, in 1876, a new Centennial Station was erected in its place. West Philadelphia's great moment in history came as host of the country's Centennial Exposition. In an effort to capitalize on the event, street railways were built in the park area with a main Pennsylvania Railroad Depot located directly across from the festival's main entrance.\(^11\) Soon after the completion of Centennial Station, the Pennsylvania Railroad decided that a new passenger terminal nearer to the center of the city was necessary and plans commenced.

In the late 19\(^{th}\) century, both of Philadelphia's major railroads constructed new stations near Center Square in the center of the city. The Pennsylvania Railroad's "Broad Street Station," was built across from City Hall on Broad and Filbert Streets in 1881, and the Reading Railroad's "Reading Terminal" was erected at 12\(^{th}\) and Market Streets in 1893. Both of the railroad stations enabled workers and shoppers to access the entire city with ease. The Pennsylvania Railroad's location was selected for its close proximity to City Hall at the city's geographic center and its proximity to the growing commercial and residential districts that had shifted west from the Delaware River in the mid- to late-19\(^{th}\) century.

\(^10\) Geffen, 323.
The four-story, Gothic style Broad Street Station opened on December 5, 1881 with nine tracks under a double train shed that serviced 160 trains daily. While the Centennial Station (and later West Philadelphia Stations) remained one of the Railroad's principal stations in the city, the grand Broad Street Station became the heart of the Pennsylvania Railroad's operations when it opened in 1881. To avoid street crossings at grade, an elevated line was built on a massive stone viaduct that was formally designated the Filbert Street Elevated, but was commonly known as the "Chinese Wall." In only a few years, the Railroad recognized the need to enlarge the Broad Street Station, and Frank Furness was commissioned for the project. The tracks were increased to twelve and later sixteen, and the largest train shed that had ever been constructed to date (300' wide, 595' long, 108' high) was installed over the two earlier sheds, which were then removed. The Pennsylvania Railroad boasted that this was the world's largest railroad passenger terminal and that the train shed had the world's largest permanent roof. By 1910, 578 trains daily used the station, which had become renowned not only for the number of trains it served, but for its design and the quality of service afforded to passengers. With this expansion, the area surrounding the station experienced the greatest influx of commercial development.

To accommodate the increased traffic to the city, the Pennsylvania Railroad constructed a new Centennial Station at 32nd and Market Streets to serve as the primary terminal for trains to New York and the west. A fire in 1896 destroyed the building and it was replaced by the West Philadelphia Station in 1903. The Pennsylvania Railroad Office building was constructed on the site of the 1903 West Philadelphia Station.

The Pennsylvania Railroad's focus during the 1920s was on simplification and consolidation, efforts made necessary following the post World War I labor troubles and depressed revenues that plagued the company. To counter the depressed revenues, the company took steps to improve speed and performance and in 1922 and 1923 the Railroad purchased 475 new freight locomotives which were more powerful than anything running on the rails at that time. The average rate at which freight was moved over the rails increased markedly in the next few years. In conjunction with the new initiative, the company moved toward increasing the efficiency of the transfer operation and coordinating with other forms of transportation. Growing competition from highway vehicles including automobiles, buses, and trucks had begun before 1929, but was greatly accentuated thereafter. Motor transportation was made faster and more efficient with technological improvements to the vehicles and the increase in the paved mileage of roads. The city's bridge building program of the 1920s further encouraged automobile transportation and this was followed by the rise of the trucking industry. Passenger and freight

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13 Alexander, 268.
14 Alexander, 268.
16 Webster, 200.
transportation on the Pennsylvania rails had reached its peak in 1920, but by 1925 the railroad was facing declining revenues. Recognizing the impact of competing modes of transportation, the company outlined initiatives to alleviate the pressures of growing competition. In May 1929, Pennsylvania Railroad president, Gen. W.W. Atterbury, authored the feature article in the company's magazine entitled, "Looking Ahead in Transportation; Coordination of Trains, Motor Cars and Airplanes." Pennsylvania's plan would result in new facilities that would expedite the transfer of goods between evolving modes of transportation, and would eventually result in the company's investment in busing and trucking companies and in an airline.

**Pennsylvania Railroad's involvement with the Philadelphia Improvements Project**

On July 13, 1925, the Pennsylvania Railroad signed a formal agreement with the city called the Philadelphia Improvements Project, whereby it would coordinate its improvements with a large-scale exercise in city planning. The primary goal would be to provide an efficient flow of traffic while beautifying the city in the process. Under the plan, the Broad Street Station, its trackage, and the "Chinese Well," would be removed, opening up a large area of downtown land for redevelopment. In conjunction, a monumental new station for through trains running between New York and Washington would be built on the west bank of the Schuylkill at 30th and Market and linked to the Center City by a broad avenue called Pennsylvania Avenue (later renamed John F. Kennedy Boulevard). West Philadelphia was selected as the hub for through trains since the main line was already established on the west bank of the river, and the area was large enough to permit a loop track that would allow one continuous movement of trains between the north and west (the great irony of the project since this loop was never built). Project planners faced challenges in selecting West Philadelphia as the hub, since the anticipated growth of west Market Street would take time, and since the sections of the city east of Broad Street were not within walking distance of the 30th Street Station. This problem was resolved by the development of an electrified underground commuter station in Center City known as Suburban Station. This station, with its 22-story office tower, would also serve as the headquarters for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Following the precedent established by the Penn Station project in New York City, the Pennsylvania Railroad created a new unit known as "Chief Engineer Philadelphia Improvements." Robert Farnham, formerly Engineer of Bridges and Buildings, was named to the post. Under this plan, the Railroad was responsible for the major buildings and track relocation, while the City was to finance new streets and bridges, and the replacement of the Market Street elevated rail with an underground subway between 22nd and 46th Streets. The Railroad selected Graham, Anderson, Probst & White (successor firm to D.H. Burnham and

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18 Burgess and Kennedy, 599.
19 Gen. W.W. Atterbury, "Looking Ahead in Transportation; Coordination of Trains, Motor Cars and Airplanes," *Mutual Magazine* (May '29, Publication of the Mutual Beneficial Association of Pennsylvania Railroad Employees [sic], Inc.).
20 Hagley Museum and Library, Collection 915, Pennsylvania Railroad Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History of the Philadelphia Improvements Project.
21 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
22 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
23 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
Co.) of Chicago as the architects, and United Engineers & Constructors, Inc. of Philadelphia as general contractor.  

The *Philadelphia Improvements Project* was comprised of a succession of construction initiatives that were focused in West Philadelphia, where the Railroad had an established presence. That project entailed: the demolition of the Broad Street Station with its tracks and “Chinese Wall,” the demolition of the West Philadelphia freight depot, passenger station and associated shops and expansive stock yards, and the construction of 30th Street Station, Suburban Station, Pennsylvania Avenue, the main Post Office facility to the immediate south of 30th Street Station, the Produce Terminal with Cold Storage Facility in South Philadelphia, the Railroad Office Building at 32nd and Market Streets, the demolition of the freight station at 30th and Market and the construction of the Pennsylvania Railroad Freight Building at 32nd and Chestnut Streets, the construction of the Arch Street viaduct and the Market Street bridge, the channeling of the Market ell under the river and out to 46th Street, and the commencement of system-wide electrification (see attached map, “Buildings Associated with the Philadelphia Improvements Project). The estimated construction budget of $50 million proved to be a very optimistic assessment.

The *Philadelphia Improvements Project* spanned almost a decade from 1925-1933. The first element of the plan to be completed was the construction of the 14-story Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building in 1927 at 32nd and Pennsylvania Avenue to house the Railroad’s clerical offices. The new office building was placed on a site adjacent to the depot for the West Philadelphia Station. Shelter platforms and railroad tracks dominated the land surrounding the site of the new office building. As per the improvements project, a new cold storage warehouse for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company was built beside the produce yard at Oregon and Delaware Avenues in South Philadelphia in 1928. In November 1929, the Freight Building at 32nd and Chestnut Streets was opened for the storage and transfer of milk and manufactured products.

While the 20-story Suburban Station office building opened in April 1930, the underground tracks were not opened for electric commuter trains until September 1930. In September 1930, the upper level of 30th Street Station was placed in service for trains running to both Suburban Station and the old Broad Street Station which continued to be used by steam-powered locals and express trains to New York and the main line. In March 1933, one platform and two tracks on the lower level were placed in service for New York – Washington trains, replacing the old West Philadelphia Station. The main station building and concourse, though not completed, were opened in December 1933.

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24 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
25 Burgess and Kennedy, 622.
26 Chris Baer, Railroad expert at the Hagley Museum and Library Manuscripts department has the date of November 1, 1929 recorded in his personal database.
27 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
28 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
29 Hagley, Chief Engineer, Index, Brief History.
Despite the onset of the Depression, the Pennsylvania Railroad's primary initiatives were largely carried through, having been well financed and carefully planned. Struggling to cope with the economic burden of the times, the city reprioritized its initiatives and city beautification was moved to the bottom of the list. Federal labor projects and funding helped the railroad, but did little for the city's portion of the budget. The completion of the post office proved to be the federal government's only significant contribution to the project. With the advent of World War II and the shortages of supplies and labor, completion of the project was prevented. The Philadelphia Improvements Project was not restored until the 1950s when the Market Street ell was finally lowered to the subway tunnel that had sat nearly completed and vacant for two decades and the grand Broad Street Station was finally demolished.

Comparison of the Pennsylvania Railroad's office building with the Reading Railroad's office building exemplifies the contrast in corporate philosophies. The Reading Railroad's Terminal Commerce Building, located at 401 N. Broad Street, opened in 1929 and was designed by one of the city's premier designers of commercial and industrial buildings, William Steele & Sons. Like the Pennsylvania Railroad's separation of executive and clerical office space, the Reading Railroad's Terminal Station at 12th and Market Streets (constructed in 1893) continued to serve as the company's headquarters while the Terminal Commerce Building was built to house clerical staff for the Reading Railroad. Unlike the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building, the Terminal Commerce Building served multiple uses beyond the office function, and included a shipping and receiving facilities, a showroom, a parking garage, a warehouse, and freight station. The location on N. Broad Street maximized the proximity to downtown while still taking advantage of Reading rail lines through the site.

In summary, the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building served as additional space for its clerical staff and the location from where it ran the day-to-day operations to support a regionally significant transportation corporation. Like the Reading Railroad, the Pennsylvania Railroad's decision to separate clerical and executive offices alleviated the space constrictions of the downtown towers. Both selected locations outside of the downtown in an effort to reach other interests and maximize the anticipated growth of the city westward and northward.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is also gained in the area of architecture as the building exemplifies the work of a nationally significant architectural firm and the building stands as a representative example of its style.

Designed in 1926-1927 by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White Architects, one of the nation's preeminent architectural firms, the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building was conceived in the Classical Revival style, evoking the stability and tradition of the Pennsylvania Railroad in the
City of Philadelphia, and embellished with applied Art Deco ornament, reflecting the forward thinking attitude of the Railroad's Board during that period.\(^{30}\)

Graham, Anderson, Probst & White was founded in 1873 as Burnham & Root, a firm instrumental in the development of the Chicago School of architecture. With the death of John Wellborn Root during the planning of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Daniel Burnham established D.J. Burnham & Company. Upon Burnham's death in 1912, four long-time apprentices, Ernest Graham, Pierce Anderson, Edward Probst and Howard White joined Burnham's two sons, Daniel Jr. and Hubert to form Graham, Burnham and Company.\(^{31}\) In 1917, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White was formed, marking the most prolific era in the firm's history.\(^{32}\) The firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White became nationally recognized for their development of 'Commercial Classicism' through their designs of major commercial, cultural, and transportation landmarks across the nation.

In 1924, a great personal and professional loss to the firm occurred with the death of William Anderson, the firm's chief Beaux Arts trained designer.\(^{33}\) Following his death, the firm's designers began integrating new ideas into a classical vocabulary, reflecting the influence of some of the firm's younger members, particularly Alfred P. Shaw. Shaw served as chief designer after Anderson's death, having received his formal training at the Boston Architectural Club atelier. He joined Graham, Anderson in the mid-1920s and was made junior partner in 1929.\(^{34}\) Shaw was instrumental in bringing the Art Deco style into the firm's repertoire.\(^{35}\) Shaw was best known for adapting the new motifs of the Art Deco era for the ornament, while retaining the underlying planning principles of the Beaux Arts classical tradition.

The design of the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building reflects this point of transition in the firm between the Classical styles favored in the early 1920s and the Art Deco works of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Chicago's Pittsfield Building, constructed during the same period as the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building (1926-1927), also demonstrates the firm's incorporation of Art Deco elements, such as pointed finials, on a Classical form. These transition commissions set the stage for two of the firm's Art Deco masterpieces, constructed between 1927-1929, just after the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building and Pittsfield Building: The Koppers Building in Pittsburgh and the Civic Opera Building in Chicago. The Koppers Building has been recognized by architectural critics as a masterpiece of the Art Deco style.\(^{36}\) The sleek verticality of the tower is embellished with flat, geometricized ornament, popularized by the Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts in 1925.\(^{37}\) Chicago's Civic Opera Building, one of

\(^{33}\) Chappell, 276.
\(^{34}\) Chappell, 280.
\(^{35}\) Chappell, 280.
\(^{36}\) Chappell, 55.
\(^{37}\) Chappell, 55.
Graham, Anderson's greatest works, incorporates a complex organization of setbacks and transitions, marked by terra cotta finials and ornamentation.

Graham, Anderson, Probst & White's restrained Classical Revival design for the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building represents the Railroad's tradition in the city with a nod toward progressivism as represented by the Art Deco inspired ornamentation. One of the most complete works on Graham, Anderson, Probst and White features the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building as an important commission of the period. The organization of the exterior into a base, tower, and capital form, and the strong horizontal and vertical divisions created by pilasters, piers and spandrels, is typical of the firm's commercial Classical Revival commissions in the early to mid 1920s. The Art Deco ornament applied to the building's exterior represents one of the firm's earliest endeavors in that style.

The commission for the 14-story Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building was of great significance to the firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White as this represented the first completed work in the entire Philadelphia Improvements Project. This building launched the firm's reputation in the City of Philadelphia and was the first opportunity for the city to witness the architect's design framework for the project.

In the early 20th century, Philadelphia was headquarters to a number of important corporations. One such corporation was the Insurance Company of North America (INA), whose building, located at 1600 Arch Street, was designed in Classical Revival style in 1925 by Stewardson & Page Architects. Both Philadelphia architects, Emlyn L. Stewardson and George B. Page were recognized for their conservative designs in classical styles. INA's headquarters is a 16-story, brick Classical Revival building embellished with a number of limestone and terra cotta belt courses and cornices that encircle the building. The interior is arranged on a Beaux Arts inspired grid with a number of monumental public spaces, treated with classical ornamentation intended to maintain a restrained yet impressive appearance.

Like the Pennsylvania Railroad, INA sought to express a sense of permanence and tradition in the city with their design for their office building. The classical style favored by the Pennsylvania Railroad and INA successfully portrays the respective history and importance of the corporations in Philadelphia. The strict interpretation of the Classical Revival style favored by INA, reflects the conservative values of the company during that period.

Founded in 1792, INA was the oldest capital stock insurance company in the United States until its acquisition in recent decades. According to the National Landmark Nomination, throughout its existence the firm led the nation in marine underwriting. In the area of fire insurance, INA became in 1794 the first American firm to insure the contents of houses in addition to the structures themselves. Under the leadership of longtime company president Benjamin Rush, a systematic classification of marine risks was developed which changed the course of marine

36 Chappell, 207.
underwriting in the 1890s and formed the basis of administration for the Federal Government's important War Damage Corporation during World War II. INA's contributions to the insurance industry extended beyond fire and marine underwriting, as they were credited with introducing the American agency system in the early 1800s when the firm became the first to write insurance on a national scale.

Another important Classical Revival style office building contemporary with the Pennsylvania Railroad Building is the Packard Building, standing 24 stories high at the southeast corner of S. 15th and Chestnut streets. The Packard Building is a significant example of the Classical Revival style expressed in smooth dressed stone and brick over a steel frame structure. Erected in 1924 and designed by Ritter and Shay, architects, the building has a rectangular shaped footprint and a base, shaft, capital format that was typical of the Classical Revival Style. The Packard Building was constructed by the Pennsylvania Company for the Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities. The building is named for the insurance company's president at the time, Charles S.W. Packard. The architecture firm of Ritter and Shay received the commission shortly after architects Verus T. Ritter and Howell Lewis Shay formed a partnership in 1920. In 1925, the Philadelphia Chapter, AIA, honored Ritter and Shay with an award for the design of the Packard Building. During their partnership of almost twenty years, Ritter and Shay received commissions for commercial, office and school buildings in the Philadelphia region. The U.S. Custom House (1933) at 2nd and Chestnut streets and the Francis Drake Hotel (1928) at 1512 Spruce Street are other outstanding examples of Ritter and Shay designs that employ monumental, Classical design in a commercial setting. The firm also excelled in the Art Deco style, with its Market Street National Bank at 1319-25 Market Street (1930) as a premier example of a terra cotta ornamented Art Deco office building/bank.

Comparison of the Pennsylvania Railroad's office building's architectural style with the style of the Reading Railroad's office building at 401 N. Broad Street illustrates the difference in the public image projected by the top two railroad corporations. The Reading Railroad's Terminal Commerce Building, opened in 1929, was designed by one of the city's premier designers of commercial and industrial buildings, William Steele & Sons. Reading Railroad opted for the progressive Art Deco style for their new building to enhance its image as a forward-thinking firm and a supporter of the machine age. The resulting 12-story brick edifice for Reading Railroad was ornamented in colored terra cotta in the form of stylized floral patterns and geometric shapes including chevrons and zigzags.

Just a year later, in 1930, the Pennsylvania Railroad opened Suburban Station, their main center city station at 16th and John F. Kennedy Boulevard (then Pennsylvania Avenue). Pennsylvania Railroad again commissioned Graham, Anderson, Probst & White to design the new terminal in the Art Deco style, a significant departure from the image the company chose to portray in their earlier buildings. The resulting terminal remains one of Philadelphia's premier examples of Art Deco architecture. At a time when the future of train transportation was uncertain, the Pennsylvania Railroad was seemingly attempting to portray their resolve to keep the railroad at the forefront of transportation modes in the modern age.
In conclusion, the Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building stands as an intact example of the Classical Revival style, inspired by the newly conceived Art Deco style.
SOURCES

Maps And Atlases


Primary Sources

Application for Zoning Permit. Licenses and Inspections, City of Philadelphia.

December 6, 1955
July 19, 1963
May 22, 1972
July 29, 1976
August 8, 1973


"The Pennsylvania Railroad Company Seventy-Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1925." Office of the Secretary, Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, PA.

Interviews

Baer, Christopher. Railroad Expert, Hagley Museum and Library, Manuscripts Department.
Secondary Sources


BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that parcel of land with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, Situate in the 24th Ward of the City of Philadelphia, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, bounded and described according to a Plan of Property prepared by Barton and Martin Engineers dated October 12, 1999, last revised June 13, 2001, with all distances being United States Standard, as follows, to wit:

Extending from said beginning point the following nine (9) courses and distances:

1) North 11 degrees 01 minute 40 seconds East along said Easterly line of 32nd Street 204 feet to a point; the following three (3) courses and distances being by remaining land of the now or former Pennsylvania Railroad;

2) South 78 degrees 59 minutes East 173.682 feet;

3) South 11 degrees 01 minute West 16 feet;

4) South 78 degrees 59 minutes East 106.018 feet to the Westerly line of J.F. Kennedy Boulevard (90.15 feet wide); the following two (2) courses and distances being along said Westerly line of J.F. Kennedy Boulevard;

5) Southwardly on a curve to the left having a radius of 149.030 feet the arc distance of 90.367 feet to a point of tangent;

6) South 11 degrees 01 minute West 87.580 feet to a point on the Northerly line of the parcel of land conveyed to the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company; the following three (3) courses and distances being along lines of said last mentioned parcel of land;

7) North 78 degrees 59 minutes West 205.829 feet;

8) South 11 degrees 01 minute West 15.490 feet; and

9) North 78 degrees 59 minutes West 47.343 feet to the place of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries as described are the historic legal and current boundaries of the nominated property.
Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Robert Powers
November 2001
Powers & Company, Inc.

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<th>Photograph #</th>
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<td>Looking southwest at main (east) and north elevations</td>
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<td>1st floor corridor, ceiling detail</td>
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<td>1st floor elevator lobby, looking south</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1st floor lobby at west end of corridor, detail of terra cotta ceiling</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1st floor office area at northwest corner, looking northwest</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>2nd floor stair, looking southwest</td>
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<td>7th floor office area, looking northeast</td>
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SITE PLAN
Pennsylvania Railroad Office Building,
Philadelphia County, PA
n.t.s.