

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Central Trust Company Buildings

and or common Brett Building

2. Location

street & number 1210 - 18 Eleventh Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Altoona N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county Blair code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name OK Properties

street & number 39 N. Market Street

city, town Lancaster N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Blair County Courthouse

street & number 423 Allegheny Street

city, town Hollidaysburg state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The property consists of two five-story buildings, connected by a stair and elevator tower. The building, which measures about 130 x 120 feet, is located on what was once the principal commercial street in Altoona.

The earliest portion of the building is the Central Trust Company Building, a white, glazed brick structure with brownstone trim. The principal (south) facade of this portion is dominated by a massive brownstone and granite streetlevel facade. This consists of a granite base topped by smooth-faced brownstone laid in a regularly coursed ashlar pattern. The streetlevel facade is composed of a recessed central entry flanked by two large, segmentally arched windows. These bays are framed by two large brownstone piers with rusticated joints and Doric order capitals. The central entry is flanked by two Ionic order, engaged granite columns. These columns, and the two brownstone piers, support a deep brownstone entablature. The entablature arches over the central entry as an archivolt and is topped with a central, ball finial.

The streetlevel window openings have large, fixed, single light sash topped by tripartite transom sash. Both the window openings and the main entry are topped with archivolt moldings with ornamental keystones. A clock, now missing, sat within the ornamental brownstone wreath that occupies the tympanum above the main entry. The original main doors have been replaced and the original treatment of the vestibule walls has been altered.

Above the first story the south facade is divided into three bays by four tall pilasters with brownstone bases and capitals. Three round-headed arches spring from the pilaster capitals, capping the three bays of the facade and giving it a multi-storied, arcaded appearance. These arches are ornamented with molded brickwork and large, ornamental, brownstone keystones.

All the window openings on the south facade have brownstone sills. The second and third story openings are rectangular with tripartite sash. These consist of a central, 1/1 double-hung sash flanked by two, fixed, single lights. Above the transom bar is a three-light, fixed, transom sash. The fourth story windows are round-headed arches with tripartite sash. These consist of a central round-headed arch surrounded by radiating panes.

Above the fourth story a molded brownstone beltcourse runs across the south and west facades. The fifth story windows utilize this beltcourse as their sills. On the south facade these windows are rectangular, with 1/1 double-hung sash topped by a single, fixed transom sash.

The fifth story windows on the south facade are topped by a brownstone entablature with a return on the west facade. A red brick parapet wall, originally painted white, rises above the cornice. A stylized brownstone pediment tops the central portion of the parapet. It includes a carved cartouche with the initials of the Central Trust Company.

The west facade is also of white, glazed brick. The first story windows are large segmentally arched openings with brownstone sills and archivolt moldings. This brownstone has been painted. The sash for these windows have been removed, but were originally large, 1/1 double-hung sash flanked by fixed, single lights. A fixed tripartite transom sash occupied the top portion of each opening.

The upper stories of the west facade are separated from the first story by a molded brownstone beltcourse. The upper floors have paired, rectangular windows with brownstone sills. The original 1/1 sash have been replaced with glass brick.

The rear (north) facade has molded brownstone beltcourses at the sill level of the second and fifth stories. The original sash have been replaced with glass brick.

Immediately to the east of the original building is an eleven-foot wide stair tower and elevator lobby constructed in 1923 in conjunction with the erection of the adjacent Brett Building. This addition is in the same Sullivan-esque style as the Brett Building.

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The first story is finished with glazed terra cotta in a regularly coursed, ashlar pattern with rusticated joints. The entry is a round-headed arch with limestone voussoirs and an ornamental keystone. The tympanum of the arch is infilled with a fixed transom sash. There is a shallow vestibule leading to the main entry doors. Above the arched entry is a signboard and a stone beltcourse with a Greek key motif.

The upper stories are finished with a deep red tapestry brick. Window openings are rectangular, with tripartite 1/1 double-hung sash topped with tripartite, fixed, transom sash. There is a molded terra cotta beltcourse above the fifth story windows and a crenelated terra cotta parapet cap. These ornamental details match those of the Brett Building.

Adjoining the elevator/stair tower to the east is the Brett Building, a five-story reinforced concrete and brick building constructed between 1922 and 1924. The original streetlevel facade of the building was replaced about 1960 with the present concrete and aluminum installation. The Greek key motif beltcourse extending across the south facade just above the c. 1960 streetlevel facade is original.

The upper stories are finished in deep red tapestry brick laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. They are divided into three bays by four pilasters extending from the top of the first story to the top of the fifth story. The pilasters are differentiated from the rest of the facade by means of small glazed terra cotta tiles placed on their faces. These pilasters divide the facade into three bays. The central bay, consisting of three vertical window bays, is flanked by single vertical window bays.

The window openings are rectangular, with tripartite Chicago-style sash. These consist of three 1/1 double-hung sash topped with three, single light, fixed transoms. At the present time the transoms are obscured with paint.

The upper portion of the building, above the fifth story, is richly ornamented with glazed terra cotta. A glazed terra cotta beltcourse separates this portion of the building from the lower stories. Above this beltcourse are terra cotta panels with a diamond motif, cartouches, and a large plaque containing the building's name. The top of the parapet is capped with glazed terra cotta in a crenelated pattern.

The building's side walls are finished in buff brick with windows identical to those on the south facade. The rear (north) facade is of common red brick, again with large tripartite window sash.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion		
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science		
1500-1599	agriculture	X economics	literature	sculpture		
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social/		
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian		
1800-1899	X commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater		
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation		
		invention		other (specify)		

Specific dates 1905-06, 1922-24 **Builder Architect** Central Trust; Robinson & Winkler, architects
P. W. Finn, builder
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Brett Building: Jullian Millard, architect

The Central Trust Company Buildings are locally significant examples of early twentieth century commercial architecture and are associated with an important local banking institution. They constitute a rare, intact survival from a period of rapid growth and economic prosperity in Altoona.

The Pittsburgh architectural firm of Robinson & Winkler designed the Central Trust Company Building, which was constructed during 1905 and 1906 by Altoona contractor, P. W. Finn. Finn operated one of the most important contracting firms in Altoona. While working on the Central Trust Company Building his crews were also engaged in the construction of the Mislser Theatre, Rothert Building, First Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Altoona High School, all large, substantial buildings.

Architecturally, the building is an interesting combination of Richardsonian and Beaux Arts elements. The extensive use of brownstone and the arcaded upper stories are reminiscent of the Richardsonian Romanesque style of the 1880s, however the use of white, glazed brick, the smooth finish given the masonry, and the wealth of classically inspired ornamentation all seem more appropriate to the Beaux Arts. Local newspapers, it should be noted, referred to the building as "classic in style."

The building's architectural significance is enhanced by the transitional nature of its design. It represents the progressive Beaux Arts style, then popular in the urban centers of America, yet retains definite ties to the more traditional Richardsonian style recognized outside of these urban centers as the appropriate style for large commercial buildings. The Central Trust Company Building thus represents the hesitant and tentative embrace of new architectural styles by architects, owners, and builders outside the major metropolitan areas.

The first decade of the twentieth century called forth an unprecedented building boom in Altoona. The local newspapers claimed that over \$1 million worth of new construction occurred in 1905. While a number of the commercial buildings erected during this period survive, most have had their streetlevel facades altered. The Central Trust Company Building represents one of the few intact turn-of-the-century buildings in downtown Altoona. As such it offers an insight into this important and vibrant period of the city's history.

The Central Trust Company Building is also significant as the home office of an important local banking institution. The Central Trust Company traced its origins to the Altoona Bank, a private bank established in 1872. In 1875 the firm constructed a three-story brick bank building on the site of the present structure.

In 1901 the Central Pennsylvania Trust Company was organized in Altoona. The following year this firm absorbed the Altoona Bank. In 1904 the firm changed its name to the Central Trust Company and began formulating plans for a new building to replace the 1875 structure built by Altoona Bank. Work began on the present bank in 1905 and the firm moved into its new quarters in mid-1906.

The Central Trust Company served as the clearing house for Altoona's seven banking institutions. Banks were assessed a membership fee to belong to the clearing house, which cleared all checks drawn on Altoona banks on a daily basis. Checks were sorted, totaled and presented to member banks for exchange and/or payment each morning when the clearing house met at Central Trust.

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The Brett Building is a fine example of Sullivanesque architecture. It represents one of the last projects of a prominent local architect who became Pennsylvania's first supervising state architect. The building is representative of Altoona's growth during the 1920s, a period of expansion and prosperity unmatched, with the possible exception of the first decade of the twentieth century, in the city's history. The building is also illustrative of the classic rags-to-riches story of Jacob Brett, a prominent Altoona merchant.

The Brett Building is the only building in downtown Altoona exhibiting the architectural characteristics of Louis Sullivan's work in Chicago. The sharp division of the building into specific zones - ground story, intermediate stories, and roof, made even more blatant by the c. 1960 streetlevel facade - is basic to Sullivan's work. The arrangement of the intermediate stories into vertical bands, another Sullivan trademark, is evident in the stair tower and the two bays flanking the central portion of the building, but was not continued across the entire facade. Perhaps the most widely heralded aspect of Sullivan's style, his flamboyant use of ornamentation, is clearly evident on the Brett Building. The intricate weaving of linear and geometric forms and the extensive use of low-relief terra cotta ornamentation that marked Sullivan's buildings may all be seen on the Brett Building, though in a much more hesitant and conservative hand.

Julian Millard, the architect who designed the Brett Building, began his private practice in Hollidaysburg, just south of Altoona, in 1907. Born in Michigan, Millard graduated with a degree in architecture from the Boston Institute of Technology, and went into practice with his father in Phoenix, Arizona. After five years he moved his practice to Hollidaysburg and soon gained a reputation as an architect of churches and commercial buildings.

In December 1923, while the Brett Building was under construction, Millard was named supervising architect for the Commonwealth. He left Altoona to assume his new duties, which included acting as administrative officer for the state art commission, approving the proposed plans for all public buildings, and acting as consulting architect for all departments of the state government, in January 1924. The Brett Building, therefore, represents one of Millard's final designs while in private practice and is an indication of the type of work that inspired his fellow architects to propose him for the new position with the state.

The 1920s were a decade in which a number of important buildings were constructed in downtown Altoona. Three of the four surviving buildings in the Brett Building's block were constructed during this decade. The Brett Building is a tangible reminder of the city's prosperity as a railroad center and regional entrepot.

Finally, the Brett Building is symbolic of the classic American success story of Jacob Brett. Born in Lithuania in 1876, Brett immigrated to the United States at an early age and arrived in Altoona in 1891. Brett worked as a peddler in the countryside around Altoona, and in 1898 established a general merchandising business in Vintondale.

Brett remained in Vintondale until 1908, when he moved to Altoona and began a wholesale clothing store known as Snitzer and Brett. This firm dissolved in 1914 and Brett started his own store, specializing in women's ready-to-wear clothing.

In 1922 Brett purchased the former residence of the Pennsylvania Railroad's general superintendent on Eleventh Avenue for \$155,000. Brett demolished the house and constructed the present Brett Building. Brett remained in daily control of his business until 1962, and died in 1964 at age eighty-seven.

The relationship between Brett and the Central Trust Company, an important local bank, accounts for the peculiar interior configuration of the Brett Building and the adjacent Central Trust Company Building. The upper floors of the two buildings are completely interconnected, with principal access through the stair tower that separates them. In 1922, when Brett bought the site of his future building from the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Central Trust Company immediately purchased the eleven feet of land between

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their building and Brett's land in order to assure that light and air would continue to reach their freestanding building.

To secure the capital needed for erection of his building, Brett, in August 1922, entered into an agreement with the Central Trust Company. Central Trust loaned Brett \$175,000, and Brett agreed to link his building with the bank's. Central Trust would construct the first story of the connecting link and would install one of their existing elevators in it. Brett would build the upper stories of the stair tower and install a new elevator. Brett also agreed to construct his building so that the floor levels corresponded to those in the existing Central Trust Company Building. The upper floors of the Brett Building were leased to the Central Trust Company, who became responsible for their care, supervision and operation.

The agreement was modified in September 1923, with Central Trust advancing Brett another \$75,000 for completion of his building. This financial deal accounts for the fact that the name plaque on the stairtower, which was clearly constructed as part of the Brett Building, refers to the "Central Trust Building." It also accounts for the total integration of the two buildings on the upper floors.

The Brett Building is Altoona's lone example of Sullivanesque architecture, a particularly sophisticated style generally confined to larger cities. The presence of the building in Altoona reflects the community's (and Brett's) aspirations towards urban sophistication. The fact that this style did not reach Altoona until 1922 offers contradictory testimony to the architectural conservatism of the community. Both the architect and the owner of the Brett Building were locally significant individuals whose careers are encapsulated and embodied in this building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Blair County Deed Books, v. 290, p. 523; v. 312, p. 148; v. 334, p. 365.
Altoona (PA) Tribune, 28 June 1922; 12 October 1923; 18 December 1923; 6 March 1924;
20 June 1964.
Altoona (PA) Morning Tribune, 8 April 1905, 3 March 1906, 10.
Wolf, George A., Blair County's First Hundred Years: 1846-1946 (Altoona: The Mirror

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.36
Quadrangle name Altoona Quadrangle scale 1: 25,000

UTM References

A	<u>17</u>	<u>720140</u>	<u>4488370</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification Starting at a point on the northwest side of Eleventh Avenue approximately 120 feet southwest of the intersection of Eleventh Avenue and Twelfth Street. Thence along the northwest side of Eleventh Avenue in a southwesterly direction 131 feet to a point. Thence at a right angle in a northwesterly direction approximately 120

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patrick W. O'Bannon, Ph.D.
organization OK Properties date 3 July 1984
street & number 39 N. Market St. telephone (717) 299-4371
city or town Lancaster state Pennsylvania

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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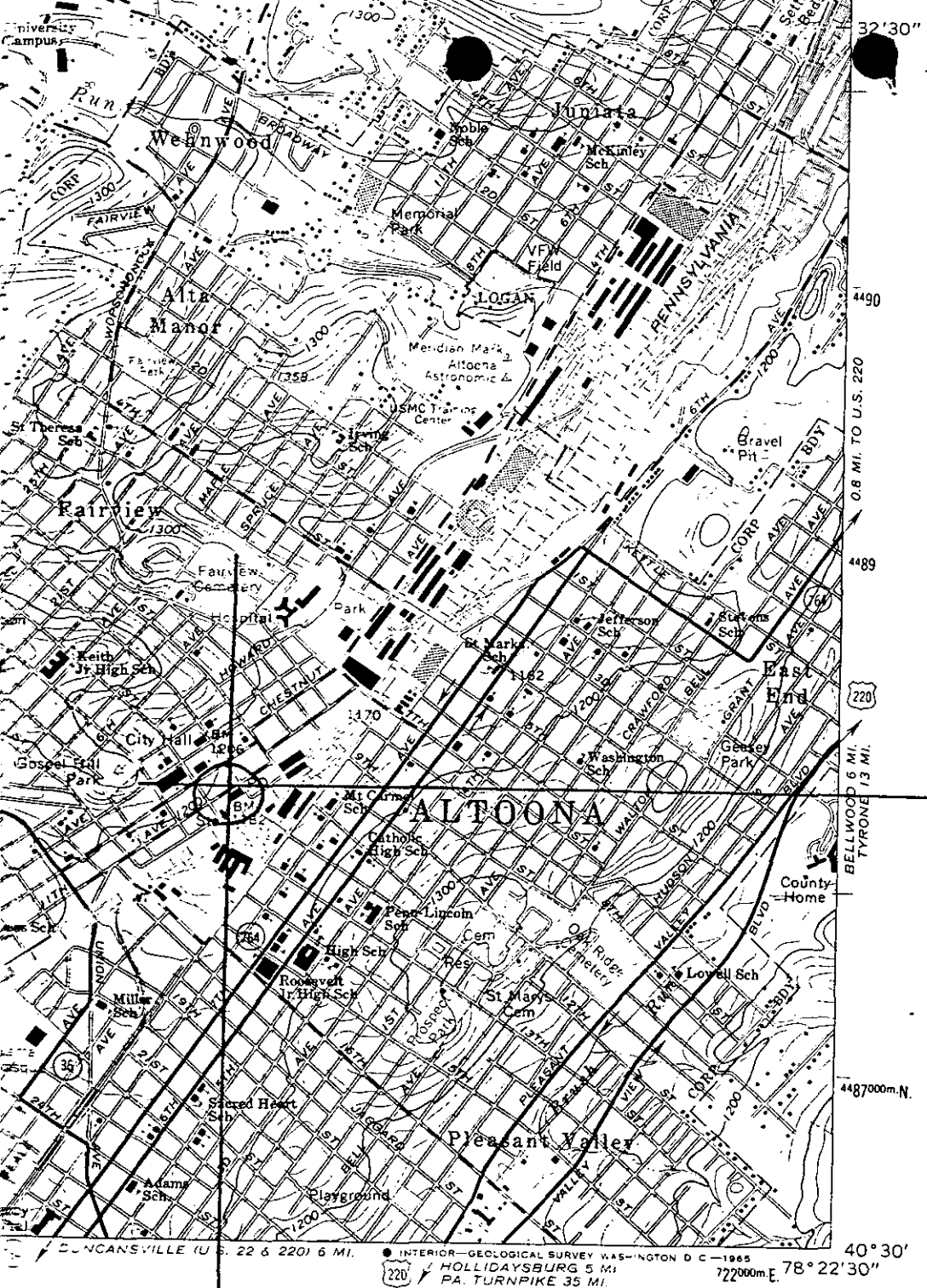


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Blair County

Press, 1945), 447.

Mid-State Bank: 1901-1976, 75th Anniversary History (1976), 21-22.



Central Trust Company Buildings
 Blair County
 Zone 17
 E720140 N 4488370

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D C—1965
 HOLLIDAYSBURG 5 MI
 PA. TURNPIKE 35 MI

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty Light-duty
- Medium-duty Unimproved dirt
- U S Route State Route

ALTOONA, PA.
 SW/4 ALTOONA 15' QUADRANGLE
 N4030—W7822.5/7.5

1963

AMS 5365 III SW—SERIES V831

(FRANKSTOWN)
 5364 N NE