

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 Wesley Building, Board of Home Missions Of The United Methodist Church

and/or common Robert Morris Hotel

2. Location

street & number 1701-1709 Arch Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Philadelphia

N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

code 42

county Philadelphia

code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied (partially)	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Soundview Group, Ltd., a New York Corporation

street & number c/o Laurence Berk, Esquire, Two Penn Center Plaza, Suite 920

city, town Philadelphia

vicinity of

state Pennsylvania 19102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, County of Philadelphia

street & number Philadelphia City Hall, Broad & Market Streets, Room 153

city, town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania 19107

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title PA. State Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date August, 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg

state Pennsylvania

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Wesley Building/Robert Morris Hotel and Philadelphia Tract Society Buildings, located at 1701-09 Arch Streets represents two magnificently executed examples of Gothic style architecture, undertaken by the architectural firms of Ballinger and Perrot/the Ballinger Company and Horace Castor, respectively. Philadelphia has long served as one of the major centers of the evangelical efforts of the Methodist Church in America; and in 1914 they first commissioned Ballinger & Perrot to design a six story office building to house their various publishing, home mission and administrative activities. The use and owner of the building is cleverly indicated by its ecclesiastical design. Moreover, the employment of a terra cotta skin, produced by the Conkling-Armstrong Terra Cotta Company, enabled the subtlest nuances of the Gothic style to be clearly delineated.

As originally constructed, the building's entrance was oriented to the Seventeenth Street elevation with a compound arched door surround. The Seventeenth Street elevation had three single light commercial windows, each with four light transoms set into a molded opening. Decorative piers with small niche capped with ornate canopies define the openings. The right and left bays had street entrances, which remain intact. A cornice band of terra cotta enhanced with quatrafoil panels completed the ground floor. Above, rises a richly detailed building three bays in width along the Arch Street elevation and seven bays along Seventeenth Street. Decorative buttresses, extending the height of the building, delineate each bay. With the exception of the second floor fenestration, the Arch Street elevation mimics the Seventeenth Street elevation, creating a fluid transition between the two. Paired Gothic arched windows with terra cotta mullions and cusp tracery panels indicate a larger public space within. The Seventeenth Street elevation also utilized the Gothic arched opening, interpreting it in smaller, tripartite sash. Above the second floor, the fenestration forms a regular pattern of four square head windows capped by Gothic decorative detailing. Above the sixth floor windows, marking the conclusion of the original Wesley Building, is an intense, repetitive pattern of Gothic detailing, below is a projecting tracery cornice which forms a rich canopy. Pinnacles with crockets, pierce the sky bringing the building to a studied conclusion.

The Ballinger Company's 1921 addition was designed and executed with such precision that the rich cornice detail at the sixth floor, provides the only moment of doubt this building was not constructed as a four story tower. However, the eye moves quickly up to the fenestration and detail, exactly replicated on these floors, and all doubt appears to vanish. Rather than destroying the elegant complexity of their original design, Ballinger meticulously matched the form and detail for the hotel addition. The Gothic cornice motif is also repeated, and the pinnacles, removed from the sixth floor, were replaced at the buildings roofline. In effect, Ballinger produced the perfect architectural compliment to the integrity and beauty of their original Gothic wonder.

The only major change to the building occurred on the Arch Street elevation, with the introduction of a new building entrance in the middle bay. In keeping with the prescribed order of business, this second access faithfully replicates the original Seventeenth Street entrance.

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The interior is subdivided down the center by corridors from Arch Street and from 17th Street that intersect at the elevators. The 17th Street entrance, opened under a four part, ribbed groined vault with heavy rib tracery and a handsome plaster boss in the center of the ceiling, from which hangs a large, elaborately formed brass lamp. Richly textured and patterned marble adds to the striking color and decor of the lobby. To the north, the lobby opens through an opening to the marble stair, with elaborately carved and gilded railings that rises to the second floor ballroom. On the south side is the Hotel desk, with offices to the rear. Of particular note are the gothic traceried doors, and a spectacularly rich gothic mail box.

The second floor elevator lobby is also richly detailed, with a slender grill of gothic tracery over the elevator bank wall. Apparently, it originally opened into a glass surface, making the mechanical apparatus visible in an early twentieth century homage to the machine. Gothic traceried doors and the wildly patterned doors continue the themes of the first floor.

The last major space of the hotel is also on the second floor, on the north side. It is a wood-paneled, gothic detailed ballroom with a massive beamed ceiling that represents, in wood, the underlying steel frame. Large plaster brackets with gothic cusped detail completes a handsome room.

The upper levels are spartan in detail befitting their use as transient hotel rooms.

Time has not compromised the architectural integrity of this building. It remains today, one of the city's most important examples of Gothic style architecture interpreted in the modern genre of high rise construction.

Horace Castor's 1922, four story addition for the Philadelphia Society lacks the finesse of the Ballinger structure, yet it shows great sensitivity to its monumental neighbor. A brick, hollow tile and terra cotta structure, Castor extrapolated the best features of the Wesley Building's design most notably the arch, tracery and niche motifs. The building is dominated by a large arched opening, at the first floor, flanked by two pier-like elements. Carved tile paneling with gothic trace highlight the ground floor. The upper stories, each five bays wide, display a much modified buttress delineating each opening. Carved stone gothic trim, similar to that found on the Ballinger building decorates the second floor window openings. Flattened stone arches punctuate the third floor openings; straight stone lintels cap the fourth. Above the fourth floor windows, a stone cornice crowns followed by a brick balustrade crowns the building. With the exception of the Wawa Food Market storefront, the exterior has not been subjected to change; and the interior only the most modest of change.

# 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1914, 1921, 1922      **Builder/Architect** Ballinger & Perrot/Ballinger Company  
 Horace Castor. Cramp & Company, Contractor

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Since the mid eighteenth century, when English revivalist George Whitefield led several successful missions to the city, Philadelphia had served as a strong religious center for the Methodist Church in America. The building complex, located at 1701-1709 Arch Street, including the Wesley Building/Robert Morris Hotel and the Philadelphia Tract Society, Methodist Church Building bears witness to this continuing tradition. The original Wesley Building, named for the movement's founder, John Wesley, was erected for use as the church's headquarters and administrative center for their various organizations including the Board of Home Missions and the Philadelphia Tract Society. The later addition of the Robert Morris Hotel, above the office space, provided modest lodgings for visiting Methodists and the traveling public.

Among the major tenets of the Methodist religion is a strong sense of personal and social morality. Their new headquarters at the corner of 17th and Arch Streets became the hub for the publication of religious materials by the tract societies and the proselytizing efforts of the Home Missions. The building's location at 17th and Arch Streets, combined proximity to the city's developing civic boulevard -- the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, with accessibility to both the Methodist Church at Broad and Arch Streets and the central business district at City Hall.

In 1914, the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church commissioned the architectural firm of Ballinger and Perrot to create a six story office structure. Constructed of steel frame and clad in a matt-glazed terra cotta finish, the building was designed in the Gothic style. This studied interpretation of ecclesiastical design was clearly selected in reverential recognition of the client's religious affiliation.

According to an advertisement published in Who's Who in Philadelphia, (vol. 2, 1925), in 1920, plans were made to double the available office space with a 6 story addition to the original building. Having determined the economic return on such a space would not warrant its construction, the Church entertained the alternative plan of installing hotel space above the existing Wesley tower. The following year, the Board of Missions commissioned the original architects, then operating as the Ballinger Company, to design an eight story addition to be known as the Robert Morris Hotel. Again, Ballinger's magnificent Gothic style, terra cotta design was employed for the additional stories. While the hotel was commissioned and financed by the Methodist Church an independent proprietor was procured to manage the operation; Adhering to religious beliefs, the Robert Morris was a "dry hotel" with no liquor served or allowed in the rooms.

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There is no evidence that Robert Morris, noted financier of the American Revolution, had any direct connection with the Methodist Church, however, the period of the hotel's construction coincided with the approaching Sesqui-Centennial celebration. Perhaps in a climate of heightened patriotism, the Church selected an historical figure, as in the case of Trumbauer's Benjamin Franklin Hotel, to denote their premises.

Having relinquished any further development rights within the Wesley Building, yet requiring additional space, the Philadelphia Conference Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, commissioned Horace W. Castor to design a four story office building (1707-Castor's 1922 structure, while not as dramatic, is compatible with Ballinger's Gothic design.

In the vein of the American Baptist Publication Society (National Register), later known as the Crozier Building and the Witherspoon Building (National Register), headquarters for the Presbyterian Publishing Society, the creation of the Wesley Building further supported Philadelphia's position as a critical center for the evangelical efforts of American's major religious denominations.

Architecturally, the significance of the Wesley Building/Robert Morris Hotel is multi-faceted. In the age of the high rise tower, modern building technology enabled the use of steel frame construction which internalized the structural support, leaving the exterior a clean canvas for the architect's design. In this instance, Ballinger employed glazed terra cotta tile, a material known for its durability and economy, to create a magnificent Gothic style skyscraper. Primarily an ecclesiastical design mode, the architect successfully translated this tyle for a church related edifice; its function clearly inferred by the tracery arch windows and delicate crockets. Moreover, the terra cotta skin handsomely highlights the delicateness and complexity of the exterior detailing.

Rising only six stories, the original Wesley Building served as a forerunner, in every respect including architectural styling, to the skyscrapers which would dominate the streetscape of the modern city. Within eight years of its construction, the Art Deco style came into vogue. During this period Gothic motifs found a peculiar, yet aesthetically satisfying relationship as a major design solution for the soaring high rise tower. Most notably, Eliel Saarinen's 1922 submission for the Chicago Tribune Building design competition, a great Art Deco Tower and Gothic overtones, captured the imagination of the architectural community. Although never constructed, his design brought the Gothic style out of the realm of "church construction" bringing it into the main stream of sophisticated twentieth century design.

While, the incorporation of additions into existing buildings is not uncommon as evidenced by the Victory Building (1007-13 Chestnut) and Ballinger Company's later efforts at Globe Ticket Company (112 N. 12th Street), the most common method was to increase the width with a side by side addition. The Wesley Building is a more unusual case of "piggy-backing" an eight story addition on top of an existing structure, a complex architectural and engineering feat. The Ballinger Company, noted for their engineering technology, succeeded in creating an exact replica of the

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building's detail, facade material and fenestration for the Robert Morris Hotel. The interlacing of these buildings is so successful that only a fleeting second of doubt occurs in the viewers mind that this building was not originally constructed as a 14 story Gothic style office tower.

The architectural significance of Horace Castor's four story addition lies, primarily, in its successful incorporation of the Gothic style and specific detail elements, linking this later addition to the larger Wesley Building.

The firm of Ballinger and Perrot, designer of the Wesley Building, one of the city's oldest and most respected architectural offices, played a major role in the history of Philadelphia architecture. The evolution of the Ballinger Company begins with the architectural engineering firm of Geissinger & Hales. Established in the 1880's, the office specialized in industrial and commercial projects. Walter F. Ballinger joined Walter H. Geissinger & Edward Hales' firm in 1889, in a business capacity. In 1895 Ballinger replaced Geissinger, as a principal in the firm. The partnership of Hales and Ballinger continued until Hale's retirement in 1901, at which time Ballinger entered into a partnership with Emile G. Perrot, formerly the chief draftsman at Hales and Ballinger.

Unlike Ballinger, Perrot received his professional training in architecture, and likely held the lion's share of responsibility for design during his 18 years with the firm. Following academic training at Spring Garden Institute, the Franklin Institute and University of Pennsylvania, Perrot worked in several office before joining Hales and Ballinger. Among his early experience was working with E.F. Durang, architect for the Catholic Church. Durang's Gothic church designs undoubtedly influenced the later work of Perrot, including the Gothic-inspired Wesley Building.

The firm of Ballinger and Perrot is credited with many innovations in industrial design, including pioneering the use of reinforced concrete, as well as the unit grid system for reinforced concrete, the latter, an invention of Emile Perrot. During the 20th century, they would expand their practice to include institutional, residential and ecclesiastical design. Early on, the partners established themselves as architects for the Methodist Church, owing, no doubt, to Ballinger's religious affiliation with the church. In the early years of their practice Ballinger & Perrot were responsible for a number of Methodist Churches in the Philadelphia area including Conshohocken M.E. Church and Sunday School (1906); Kynett Memorial Methodist Church (1902), The Methodist Hospital (1902); Mount Airy Methodist Church (1906) and the Ambler Methodist Church (1208).

The firm of Ballinger and Perrot continued until 1920, at which time Ballinger bought out the concerns of his partner and established the Ballinger Company. By 1924, the expanding company had opened an office in New York City. A prolific, architectural firm, the Ballinger Company has continued to maintain a high profile in twentieth century architectural engineering and design.

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Horace Castor also had strong ties to Methodist Church. During his career he was responsible for numerous Methodist Church buildings, including the Eppworth Methodist Church at 5540-5546 Race Street (1899), the Allison Methodist Church at 438 N. 63rd Street (1902) and the West York Street Methodist Church at 17th and York (1907-08). Castor perhaps not as well known as other Philadelphia architects, enjoyed a prolific and lucrative design career spanning almost 50 years. The early part of his career was concentrated in Frankford, where in 1895, he formed a partnership with employee George R. Sterns. The firm of Sterns & Castor continued until 1916, producing numerous designs for residences, churches, and industrial and commercial structures. Castor later worked on his own, designing structures throughout the city, including the recently demolished Scottish Rite Temple at Broad and Race Streets (1925) and the Old Terminal Building for the Municipal Airport (1940).

Better known for their industrial and commercial structures, Ballinger created a highly individual building for the Methodist Church which payed homage to the beliefs and ideals of its owner/occupant. The Wesley Building/Robert Morris Hotel is an unusual and excellent example of ecclesiastical architecture magnificently interpreted in the skyscraper mode. Designed to house the various evangelical efforts of the Church this structure is a rare surviving example of the Gothic style. Ballinger & Perrot/the Ballinger Company's design for this unique edifice is a testament to their aesthetic sensibilities and their keen understanding of the desired image, which the building projects.

# 9. Major Bibliographical Reference

SEE ATTACHED SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .2

Quadrangle name Philadelphia - N.J.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A	1 1 8	4 8 1 5	5 1 8 1 5	4 1 4	2 1 2	5 1 5 1 0
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

B						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

C						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

D						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

E						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

F						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

G						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

H						
	Zone	Easting		Northing		

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point on the northwest corner of 17th and Arch Streets; thence west along the north side of Arch Street 80 feet to the eastern property line of said lot; thence north along the east property line 117 feet to an alley 2 feet 10½ inches; thence east along

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

state	N/ A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth R. Mintz

organization ELIZABETH R. MINTZ date February 29, 1984

street & number 301 Cherry Street telephone (215) 592-0465

city or town Philadelphia state Pa.

# 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 [Signature]

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/29/84

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



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Architectural Annual of the T-Square Club, 1915 p. 171

Who's Who in Philadelphia, v. 2 1925 p. 191

City of Philadelphia Building Permit Records

Philadelphia Athenaeum - Architect's Files - Ballinger & Perrot, Ballinger Company,  
Horace Castor

Moak, Jefferson, Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination - 1707-09 Arch St.

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide - 29:11(March 18, 1914)  
36:35 (August 31,1921)

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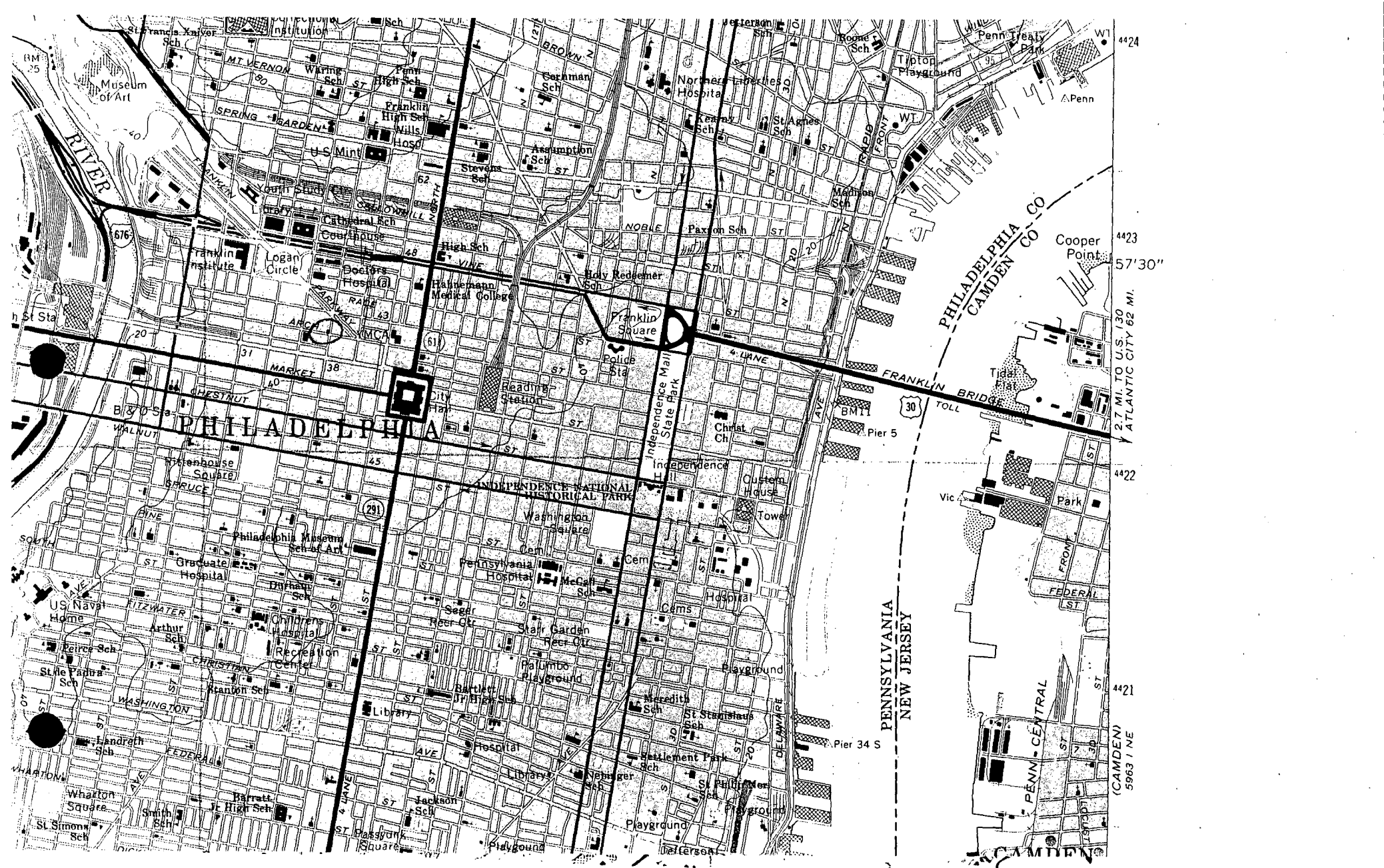
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the south side of said alley 80 feet to the outlet at Seventeenth Street; thence south along the west side of Seventeenth Street 117 feet to the point of beginning.



PHILADELPHIA

PENNSYLVANIA  
NEW JERSEY

PHILADELPHIA CO  
CAMDEN CO

FRANKLIN BRIDGE  
TOLL

PENN. CENTRAL

4424

4423

57°30"

2.7 MI. TO U.S. 130

ATLANTIC CITY 62 MI.

4422

4421

(CAMDEN)  
5963 7 NE