

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 Regent - Rennoc Court

and/or common 5100 Regent Street

USE THIS COPY
FOR DUPLICATING

2. Location

street & number 5100 block of Regent St.; 1311-1327 South 52nd Street not for publication

city, town Philadelphia 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 type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 checked="" 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 See Attached

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall

street & number Broad and Market Streets

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The nine apartment houses of the Regent-Rennoc Court occupy the 5100 block of Regent Street and the east side of 52nd Street. Unlike the surrounding two- and three-story porch front rows that repeat small scale facade elements along the surrounding streets, here the same number of living units were grouped in large six-unit flat houses, each with monumental masonry porches screening elaborately detailed facades in turn capped by large overhanging cornices. The resulting large scale rhythm unifies this block of Regent Street and differentiates it from the nearby row blocks of the streetcar suburb of West Philadelphia.

The buildings are arranged in groups of three on either side of Regent Street, and are evenly spaced so that each faces another across the street. What are seemingly independent buildings on the street front, however, are in fact joined together at the rear, where bathrooms in a vertical stack connect the buildings, and make a continuous wall across the rear property line. That perhaps is a continuation of 1890s building practice in Philadelphia for the larger rows of double houses (for example the 3900 block of Walnut Street) and it anticipates practice in the 1920s in nearby Garden Court. Two more of the buildings were built north of Regent Street, facing onto 52nd Street, while the last was built on the south side of the street, facing in the same direction. Small, front lawns, wide sidewalks and gracious front steps lead to large front porches that form a transition from the public street to the private interior spaces.

Interestingly, the buildings are composed of the same materials, in a style and form that recalls the conventional residential architecture of the region. Like the larger doubles of the 1890-1900 era, a palazzo-like block, detailed in a fashion derived from the Renaissance, is screened by a large front porch, with a projecting centered entrance. Further, the local Wissahickon stone used for the basement, and the piers of the porch is laid in alternating long and short pieces recalling the Flemish bond of the Colonial Revival. Even the centered entrance suggests the palatial residence -- but the multiple porch levels, supported on reinforced concrete slabs, carried on railroad track I-sections makes it clear that the building was in fact something new to the region -- a multi-level flat house like Boston's triple-deckers.

At each level, the facade is embellished by an architectural accent that denotes the separate units, but also contributes to the stylistic whole. The central bay is given over to the stairs and circulation, and is marked on the exterior by a gracious arched entrance. At the second story that form is repeated and provides access not to the street but to the front porch. On the third floor, the bay is marked by a Palladian window again with a centered doorway that provided access out onto the porch -- but here one sheltered by awnings in the summer. On either side of the centered

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arched portals, the living rooms of the first two stories were lighted by a three-sided bay while the living rooms of the topmost story repeated the Palladian window providing a boldly scaled motif that unifies the entire group. Pressed-metal, modillioned cornices on the porches and front facades and dentilled cornices on the side cap the exteriors.

If the style and features link the buildings to conventional design, the building's ornament is derived from up to date industrial process. The lintels and sills are cast, with panels, wave moldings and other materials from Neo-Adam, pressed into cast stone porch columns and lintels. The front bays are of pressed metal stamped with striations to simulate the groove marks of the stone dresser's chisel, while the cornice is of pressed metal worked to simulate cut stone. Only the brick is "honest", providing clear evidence of the extent to which middle class architectural values had survived the onslaught of Ruskinian theory.

The plans show the influence of contemporary flat design. The entrance vestibule ornamented with mosaic tile floor, inscribed Regent-Rennoc (Conner spelled backward), opened into a generous central hall with a simply detailed wood stair providing access to the upper apartments. A paneled wood door opens from the halls and landings into a small vestibule that leads in turn into the front living rooms, which in turn are followed by a dining room, kitchen and bedrooms, opening one after the other off a hall that runs down the inner wall, and assures the various rooms the maximum of light and air. Simple wood trim, paneled doors and baseboards are the norm in each room, while the public rooms are further embellished by elaborate window sash (twelve-over-one in the front bay) that help to clarify the spatial hierarchy of the building.

Though the buildings have fallen on hard times, enough of the trim pieces survive in-situ to make possible a convincing restoration, and one that will restore this impressive group to their original vitality.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input 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 1910 **Builder/Architect** E.A. Wilson, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Regent-Rennoc Court is an imposing group of flat houses developed by a well known local developer, James Conner, and designed by Philadelphia's principal architect of mass produced housing, E.A. Wilson. Wilson designed in excess of 20,000 residential units in the city, principally in row groups of one hundred or more, and was largely responsible for the development of the normative twentieth century housing types of the Quaker City. This is one of his more innovative experiments, which attempted to provide the amenities of the individual row with the security and larger scale of the apartment. Interestingly, too, the larger scale permitted more light and air around the perimeter of the buildings, and in an age when the importance of ventilation and light was being discovered, made them a modern and healthful residential environment. That same largeness of scale caused Wilson to essay a larger and more exuberant decorative vocabulary that gives these buildings considerable presence in their row house neighborhood. Finally, the buildings have urban significance in marking the impact of the regional streetcar network that caused the infilling of previously inaccessible land and brought the apartment dwelling to the region previously developed for single family houses. For reasons that relate to the scale and difficulties of management of aging apartment buildings, few of these buildings have survived in southwest Philadelphia. The restoration of this block will help preserve what was a significant building type, while also assisting in the stabilization of an early-twentieth century neighborhood.

The principal area of interest is as the design of architect, E.A. Wilson. Wilson first came to prominence in the 1890s as the designer of the "Typical Workingman's House" erected at the Columbian Exposition in 1893, drawings of which survive in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. By 1900, he had cornered the market in speculative housing design, with vast projects in Germantown, North Philadelphia, and especially West Philadelphia, always in close proximity to the streetcars and elevated lines of the city transit system. In each of these rows, Wilson designed a formula house given individuality by the addition of overscaled historical motifs typically from the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. That approach linked his designs to contemporary fashion and served as the basis for his few larger apartment buildings as well.

The Regent-Rennoc group was erected in 1910 with the intention of getting the same square footage and number of units of row developmet of a typical Philadelphia block -- but by enlarging the scale to provide better light and air. The corollary of the increase in size gave Wilson a field for greater decorative embellishment in keeping with the commercial need to establish identity for the group so that they could be readily rented. This he

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accomplished by the handsome overscaled facades described in Section #7. Of particular note are the massive multi-level porches that screen the front, the exuberant cast stone and pressed metal detail, and the overscaled, iconic references to the Georgian Revival.

These qualities are different from the norms of high architecture which stressed real materials, consistency of form, and relationships between the new use and the historical source. Instead, they establish a link back to the less prepossessing "low brow" architecture of such mid-nineteenth century architects as Stephan Button who used ruled stucco to simulate cut stone, or the cast iron facades with their sanded and painted surfaces in the commercial districts. This architecture is at least as vital as the high architecture -- but lacks the critical and theoretical support, and thus tends to be diminished, drastically distorting the picture of turn of the century architecture.

Finally, the buildings are of interest in marking the impact of the growing trolley car network which raised land prices sufficiently to make flat houses a reasonable alternative in the "City of Homes". These are especially handsome in suggesting the monumentality and presence that could be attained and with the adjacent library that terminates the vista of Regent Street gives focus to its neighborhood. As one of the most impressive building groups by an important designer, E.A. Wilson, and a representative of the evolving notion of middle class design that helps clarify the achievement of the early twentieth century, the Regent-Rennoc Court deserves to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Bibliography:

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide. Volume 25:11,
16 March 1910

G. W. Bromley, Atlas of the City of Philadelphia. Philadelphia; 1927,
Plate 31.

George E. Thomas, "E. A. Wilson", Biographical Note in forthcoming
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts catalogue, Fall 1986.

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REGENT STREET

5112 - 5114: Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
 1422 Chestnut Street
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
 Tax No.: 511281000

5116 - 5118: Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
 1422 Chestnut Street
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
 Tax No.: 511281100

5120 - 5122: Terrence Belmoor and Roy J. Taylor
 8322 Michener Avenue
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19150
 Tax No.: 511281200

5111 - 5113: Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
 1422 Chestnut Street
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
 Tax No.: 511280300

5115 - 5117: Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
 1422 Chestnut Street
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
 Tax No.: 511280400

5119 - 5121: Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
 1422 Chestnut Street
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
 Tax No.: 511280500

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SOUTH 52ND STREET

1311:	Emmanuel Ekeleme 1311 South 52nd Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	19143
	Tax No.: 511195900	
1313:	Emmanuel Ekeleme 1311 South 52nd Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	19143
	Tax No.: 511196000	
1315 - 1317:	Jusgwen Corporation 1327 South 52nd Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	19143
	Tax No.: 511196105	
1325:	Justin Ragsdale 1325 South 52nd Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	19143
	Tax No.: 511196300	
1327:	Justin Ragsdale 1329 South 52nd Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	19143
	Tax No.: 511196400	

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Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point on the north side of Regent Street 93' west of South 51st Street and proceeding north 80', then proceeding west on a line parallel to Regent Street, 5', and then continuing north 32' to the rear boundary of 5111 Regent Street. Then proceeding west 15' to a point and south of said point 4'. Then continuing west, on a line parallel to Regent Street 144', and south 16' to the northern boundary line of a property fronting on South 52nd Street. Then proceeding west along said boundary line 102' to the east side of South 52nd Street and south along South 52nd Street, 92' to the northeast corner of 52nd and Regent streets. Then continuing south across Regent Street and 40' to the southern boundary line of 1327 South 52nd Street. Then proceeding east along said boundary line 102' to the western boundary of a property fronting on Regent Street and then south along the latter boundary 58' to the southern boundary line of the same property. Then proceeding east along said line 160' to the eastern boundary line of 5112 Regent Street. Then proceeding north along that boundary 98' to the south side of Regent Street, and across Regent Street to a point on the north side, 93' west of South 51st Street, and the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

Including all of the buildings designed by E.A. Wilson for the Regent - Rennoc Court Development.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Attached

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Philadelphia Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	8	1	3	4	0	4	4	2	1	0	4	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

See Attached

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc. date May 12, 1985

street & number 3961 Baltimore Avenue telephone (215) 386 - 6276

city or town Philadelphia 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 Lary E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/16/85

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

PAXON

CHESTER AVENUE

CHESTER AVENUE

51ST STREET

51ST STREET

REGENT STREET

KINGSESSING AVENUE

KINGSESSING AVENUE

STREET

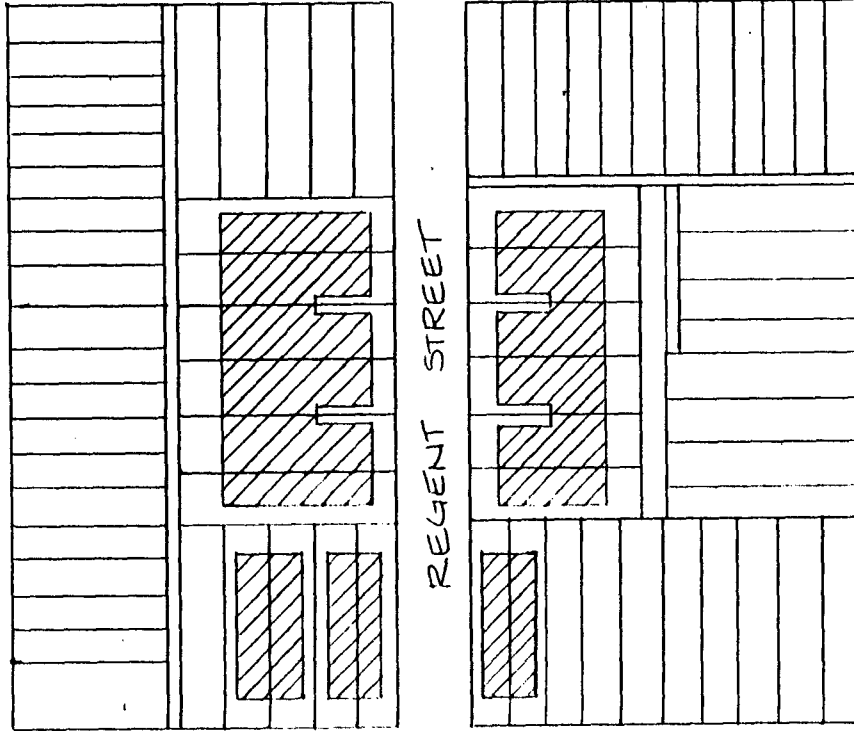
52ND STREET

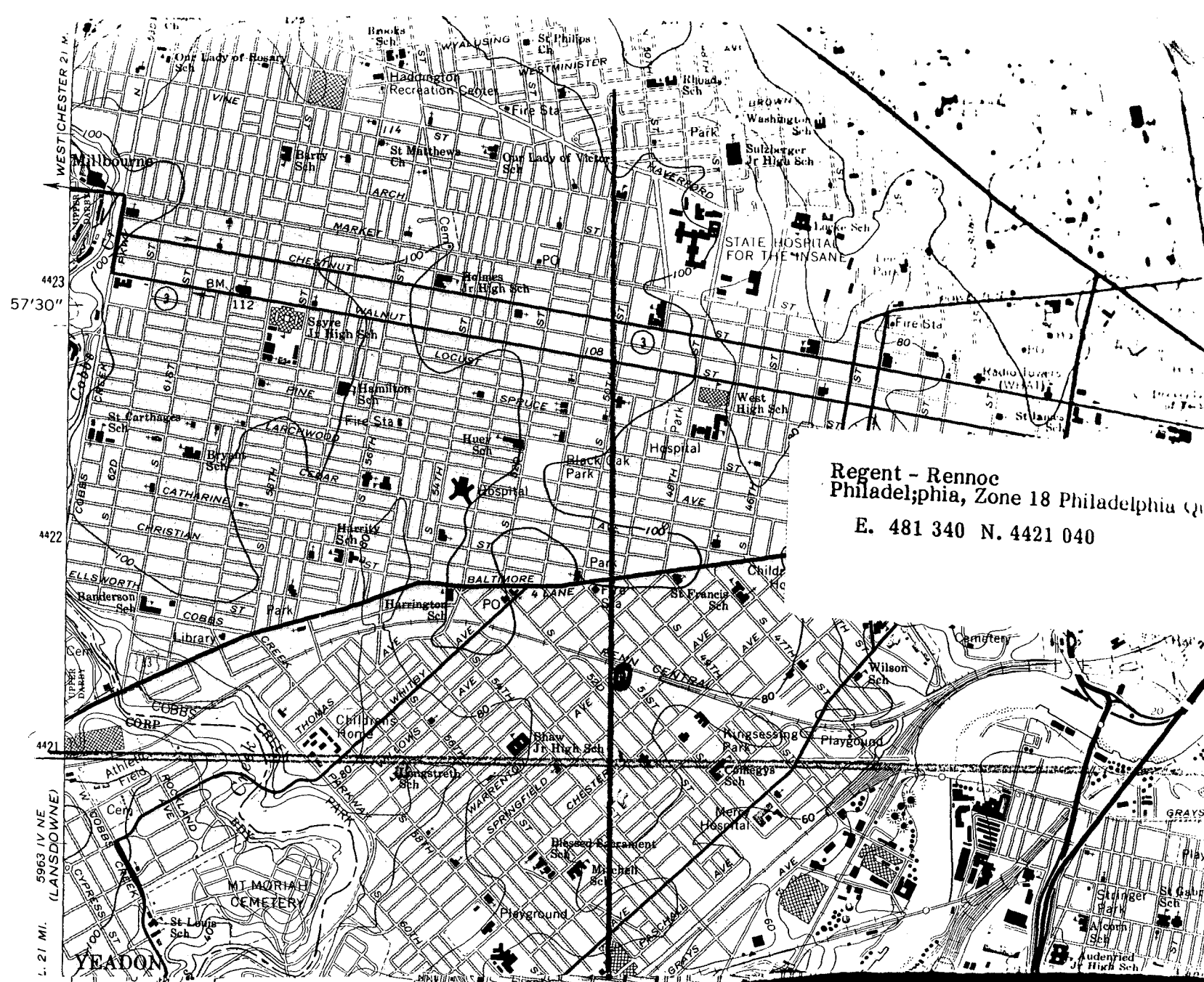
52ND STREET

WILTON STREET

WILTON STREET

REGENT - RENNOL COURT





Regent - Rennoc
Philadelphia, Zone 18 Philadelphia Co
E. 481 340 N. 4421 040

WEST CHESTER 21 N.

4423
57'30"

4422

4421

1.21 MI. 5963 IV NE (LANSOWNE)

YEADON