

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 Snellenburg's Clothing Factory

and or common 642 North Broad Street

2. Location

street & number 642 North Broad Street

not for publication

city, town Philadelphia vicinity of

state PA code 042 county Philadelphia code 101

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name P and A Associates

street & number 401 N. 21st Street

city, town Philadelphia vicinity of state PA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall, Department of Records

street & number Broad and Market Streets

city, town Philadelphia state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title North Philadelphia Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983-84 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state PA

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Snellenburg Clothing factory occupies almost the entire city block between Wallace and North streets fronting on the west side of Broad Street, and extending west nearly to Fifteenth Street. The complex is divided into two parts, the larger and more ornate building facing Broad Street and the equally long but narrower rear block facing Wallace Street. They are linked at the fourth, fifth and sixth stories by a corrugated iron clad steel bridge. Though each of the structures had utilitarian purpose, their facades were embellished with features that helped represent the public image that the Snellenburg Empire wished to present to Philadelphians, while the Broad Street facade of the main building was given public character that denoted the civic importance of Broad Street.

As could be expected from the organization of the site, the larger, and more important building was erected on Broad Street, and was constructed first. Though designed as two bracket shaped ([]) units, each of which could function separately, the central tower disguised that duality and thus in form, the main building read as a massive block. Apart from the towered composition, the main facade was also given interest by two types of architectural polychromy, one established by changes in color and the other by changes in texture. Thus, the major ornamental zones of the facade are picked out in two shades of terra cotta, one cream, the other white. These emphasize the belt courses that separate the base from the piano nobile, the polychromed jack arches and details of the water tower, and finally the massive cornice which crowns the building. Texture comes into play on the base. There, above a limestone leveling course, the brick of the basement was given mass and texture by pairs of regularly spaced courses of rough textured brick which give the effect of rustication.

The principal formal composition parallels the architectural polychromy. A base rises two and one half stories above the sidewalk, and was originally focused by a pedimented door framed by terra cotta engaged columns of the Scamozzi order. Unfortunately, that handsome feature was replaced in the 1950s, when city codes required that stoops be removed from sidewalks, necessitating reconstruction of the stair inside the building volume. Windows of the base were correspondingly smaller to emphasize its mass, and that level was crowned by a belt course ornamented with a wave motif. The next three stories are grouped together by the device of multi story pilasters that separate vertical registers of large industrial sash. At each end the main facade is terminated by pavilions that frame the Broad Street front. A bracketed cornice and an attic story cap the main volume. The center of the facade is dominated by a massive tower that breaks through the cornice and rises another two stories to a crowning clock face (since removed). That tower served a dual purpose of containing the water tank to pressurize the building's sprinkler system, but also housed the major fire tower for the east end of the building. It is a composition derived from industrial architecture, that reflects the surviving Victorian theme of the expression of separate functions, while the variety of building materials and the stylistic motifs are also derived from the Victorian revival of the North Italian architecture advocated by John Ruskin in the Stones of Venice.

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The theme of functional differentiation, represented by the management zone of the base and the work zones above, flanking the central fire tower is also apparent in the fenestration. Smaller windows light the basement; larger windows light the work areas. That same hierarchy can be observed in the increasingly plain side and rear elevations of the two buildings and even extended to the windows of each wall. The street facades were given more up-to-date rectangular windows while the side and rear elevations have conventional segmental headed industrial sash. And, the front windows had larger paned four over four sash, while the segmental headed sash of the sides and rears are small paned ten over ten sash. Two stories of windows have been altered on the Broad Street front, by modern replacement aluminum jalousie windows but the original pattern of fenestration is clearly replicable, and on so large and impressive a complex has very little impact.

The rear block, dating from two years later followed the same scheme of a base, a crowning cornice, six stories and then another cornice. Above a granite basement, the base is emphasized by recessed courses that give the effect of larger masonry units. Jack arches span the windows with an emphasized keystone in the center. The wall adjacent to the party line was unarticulated.

The interiors are correspondingly direct. As noted earlier, the main Broad Street entrance was altered in the 1950s. The new landing is industrial in character, with modern stairs that surround a central elevator. At the upper levels, the central stair tower was originally an open fire tower, without glazing in the windows. These were infilled at a later date, but the industrial character of the space is still apparent in the shallow brick vaults that span the stair landings. Doors open from the landing into the main workspaces. These are handsome versions of the typical industrial spaces of the era, framed by heavy timber columns carrying built up wood girders in turn carrying closely spaced joists, with diagonal maple mill flooring. Ceilings are covered with sheets of pressed tin in an abstract decorative pattern. At the third and fourth stories, modern partitions have been added on the Broad Street front, but the other portions of the building are in nearly original condition.

The plan is of interest as well. Because the building occupied most of its entire block, the architects were able to arrive at an original form of C or bracket ([]) shaped buildings, joined by fire towers and linked in the central lightwell by bathroom stacks located according to contemporary notions of efficiency. With the rear wing separated by an alley and surrounded by light and air from all sides, the buildings were among the best ventilated and lighted of their era and a testament to the Snellenburg claim to have provided a healthful environment for their seamstresses.

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	..... economics	..... literature	..... sculpture
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	..... education	..... military	..... social/
1700-1799	..... art	..... engineering	..... music	..... humanitarian
1800-1899	..... commerce	..... exploration/settlement	..... philosophy	..... theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	..... communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	..... politics/government	..... transportation
		..... invention		..... other (specify)

Specific dates 1903; 1905

Builder/Architect William Steele Co., Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Snellenburg Clothing Factory is of significance as a major landmark on North Broad Street, as the center of production for a prominent Philadelphia drygoods firm of Nathan Snellenburg & Sons, and as the work of one of the principal industrial architects of Philadelphia, the William Steele Company. It remains in nearly original condition, recalling by its presence the proximity of manufacturing to Philadelphia's downtown, and commemorates the era when the great retailers were also involved with production. Finally, the building provides evidence of the growing American awareness of the importance of a work environment that was healthful and suggests a growing awareness in Philadelphia of standards that had evolved in New England as a means of attracting young women to work in the mills. With its prime location on Broad Street, far removed from the sweatshops of the city, it was ideally located to attract the level of workers that were noted in the Snellenburg advertisements in the early twentieth century.

Although north Broad Street above Montgomery is thought of as a residential neighborhood for the nabobs of the industrial nouveau riche, the zone between Arch Street and Vine Street was among the best served in the city by transportation, with major rail lines crossing Broad Street at Callowhill. It was in the region that the North Broad Street station of the Reading Railroad was initially located, and later, on its site that the Reading's Terminal Commerce Building was erected at 401 North Broad. Across the street were the offices of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, and the Sellers machine shops.(1) To the north and west were other skilled industries, including the various machine shops that would attract the automotive industry in the first decade of the twentieth century. As was typically the case in the industrial city, where there was work for men, there were also work opportunities for women, typically in the manufacture of clothing. Such was the case in the region north of Vine Street. Across the street from the Snellenburg Clothing factory was Saranac Weaving mill, while to the west two blocks stood a steam dye company. Nearly directly across Broad Street were cigar and drug factories and The Book of the Bourse showed a women's trimmings plant at 643 North Broad Street, all providing work for women. (2)

But, the region had positive attributes as a zone with public character, leading Snellenburg's rival John Wanamaker to acquire land directly across North Street as a site for a boarding house for his female clerks. (Such patriarchal concern led Wanamaker to construct a summer camp for his employees at Island Heights, N.J. and characterized much of the advertising of the Snellenburg Company which emphasized the healthful work environment in which their clothing was produced). Wanamaker's hotel for his employees fell through, perhaps because he did not wish to build next to the new plant of his rival, fellow retailer, Nathan Snellenburg. But, it is also important

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to note that each of the major retailers was following similar paths in constructing modern clothing plants, in similar locations. Strawbridge's plant was at Filbert Street, east of Broad and Wanamaker had just erected a clothing mill to serve his retailing empire in the heavy industry zone on South Broad Street (Washington Avenue Historic District).

The Snellenburg retailing business had a long history in the city, reaching back into the years just after the Civil War when Joseph Snellenburg was first listed selling clothing at 318 South Street, in the heart of the old Jewish ghetto of Philadelphia. Son Nathan and his brother Samuel shortly moved to the center of retailing in Philadelphia, Market Street, where they located a store on the 900 block. They followed an unusual pattern however in retaining their foothold in the ghetto and built a new store on a narrow wedge of property extending south from Fifth and South streets along Passyunk, with an entrance at the Bainbridge Street Market at 5th and South Streets in 1882, while retaining the old 3rd Street property as a wholesale outlet. In 1888, the Snellenburgs built the first great store on Market Street that was intended as a department store, nearly filling the block between 11th and 12th streets. (Wanamaker's store, though earlier by a generation had been converted from the old Pennsylvania Railroad freight station). A generation later the Snellenburg store was so successful that it would require an additional annex building across Sansom Street, thus rivaling the Wanamaker store in area and sales. In 1894, some 2000 people were employed by Snellenburgs, at their retailing, wholesale and manufacturing operations, making them one of the largest employers of this type in the city.(3)

The importance of the factory on North Broad Street to the Snellenburg Empire is clear from an earlier report on the Snellenburg business, in The City of Philadelphia, Leading Merchants and Manufacturers which reported that in 1886 most of the Snellenburg clothing manufacturing was still handled on a piecework basis with individual seamstresses working at their homes.(4) This was typical of the great retailers of the era according to Philip Scranton's Proprietary Capitalism. Unfortunately that study of the textile industry ended at this point, though he noted that the next move was for the large retailers to begin to organize production with large mills.(5) A decade later, competitors, Strawbridge and Clothier employed 1000 in a coat factory at Tenth and Filbert streets. It was that system which the Snellenburg's new plant at Broad and Wallace streets was intended to join. As noted above, that location was significant because of its proximity to other forms of work, and to workingclass residential neighborhoods across Broad Street. In the context of scale, it should be remembered that Philadelphia was the nation's principal center of cloth manufacturing, with the clothing trades employing some 30,000 people in 1900, the majority being women.(6)

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The new building was the work of the important industrial architects, William Steele and Sons who had already been employed within the needle trades with the North American Lace company building on Glenwood Avenue (demolished). With the contemporary Ballinger Company, Steele helped to establish the modern industrial plant, which was characterized by adequate ventilation, carefully located fire towers, a modern sprinkler system pressurized by a water tank, and centrally located bathrooms on each floor. The clarity of the plan is much in evidence on the Snellenburg Building and was noted in the Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide.(7) "To give them more room at their store at Twelfth and Market streets, and to afford them better accommodations so necessary for their increasing clothing department, the firm of N. Snellenburg & Co., will erect a clothing factory at Broad and Wallace streets. Wm. Steele & Sons, builders, 1600 Arch street. will prepare plans and specifications and submit estimates. ... It will be of brick and slow burning construction. It will have tower fire escape, modern elevators equipped with automatic fire extinguishers and every up-to-date appointment." The importance of the plan features is evident in their emphasis in the elevations. The main facade was dominated by the great fire tower with its water tank at the top, while the location of the other fire towers in the corners of the building is apparent in the fire balconies and doors.

In addition to their industrial buildings, the Steele Company would gain fame as the designers of such notable structures as Shibe Park (later Connie Mack Stadium), and would devise early systems for reinforced concrete. They were also among the pioneers of the design - build method of construction which they trademarked as the "Steele System". The Snellenburg factory was an early example of this practice which made the architect-builder totally responsible for his design. This is a superb surviving example of their work, just prior to their shift into modern building technology, but at a point when they had grasped the importance of the facade as a device to represent the owner. The Snellenburgs were equally quick to grasp the potential for capitalizing on the humane environment, and the impressive building by using the building in their advertisements well into this century.

The building remained a part of the needle trades to the present, but it left the Snellenburgs' hands in the 1920s. By then, anti-trust legislation and new ideas about marketing caused most of the major department stores to end the two generations of manufacturing and to return to what they did best - retailing. The building remained a successful clothing trades building for two additional generations, outlasting the Snellenburg's retailing empire which sold its Market Street building in the 1950s, and was the first of the great department stores to close. The front half of the Market Street building facing Market Street has since been demolished, leaving only the Annex across Sansom Street.

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As a significant landmark to the centrality of the formerly great textile industry, as a monument to the success of a Jewish immigrant family which did much to shape the modern retailing environment, and as a significant work by William Steele and Sons representing the most advanced factory planning of its day, the Snellenburg Clothing Factory deserves to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Footnotes

1. G.W. and W.S. Bromley, Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1901, 1910. Plates 8, 12.
2. The Book of the Bourse, (Philadelphia, 1898).
3. Henry P. Morais, The Jews of Philadelphia (Phila.: The Levytype Company, 1896) p. 300.
4. The City of Philadelphia, Leading Merchants and Manufacturers (New York, Philadelphia and Chicago: Historical Publishing Company, 1886) p. 256.
5. Philip Scranton. Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800 - 1885 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 335.
6. John J. MacFarlane. Industrial Philadelphia from the Infant Industries of Two Centuries Ago to the Giant of Today. Reprint from Commercial America, May 1912. pp. 6-8.
7. Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide, Vol. XVIII, No. 47, 25 November 1903.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See attached)

See attached
Philadelphia

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Philadelphia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	8	6	2	2	0	4	4	2	3	7	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

See Attached.

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

state PA code PA county PA code PA

state PA code PA county PA code PA

11. Form Prepared By

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

organization Clio Group, Inc.

date 3/13/86

street & number 3961 Baltimore Ave.

telephone (215) 386-6276

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

title Dr. Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/20/86

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

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pp. 17-18.

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Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. Philadelphia: Its Location, Commerce, Industries, History and Points of Interest. 1917.

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Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at the northwest corner of Broad and Wallace streets, extending west 290 feet to a point, then north 180 feet to North Street, then east 290 feet to Broad Street, then south 180 feet to point of origin. This is the entire site of the Snellenburg factory.

