

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Strawbridge and Clothier Store
other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number E. side Old York Road approx. 200' N. of Rydal Road n/a not for publication
city, town Jenkintown n/a vicinity
state Pennsylvania code PA county Montgomery code 091 zip code 19046

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
Dr. Brent Glass, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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 _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

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determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade: department store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade: department store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granite

walls Limestone

roof Other: slag

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Strawbridge & Clothier Store in Jenkintown is a four-story Art Deco style department store completed in 1931. A three-story addition with an attached parking structure, constructed in 1954, abuts the north facade of the original building. The store is located on the east side of Old York Road approximately four miles north of the City of Philadelphia.

As constructed, the store measured approximately 130 feet by 165 feet. It is a steel-framed building clad with limestone above a polished granite base. The building is roughly square in plan, with a projecting four-story element containing service facilities on the north facade. A flat slag roof is hidden from view by a parapet wall. Heavy vertical piers delineate the chamfered corners of the building and the entries that are centered on the west and south facades. Similar piers are evident on the north facade of the building, which also contained an entry. These piers extend above the roof parapet. Thinner piers divide the north, south, and west facades of the building into window bays. These piers, along with partial piers centered on each window bay, project above the roof parapet and provide a castellated appearance. The piers are ornamented with carved geometric and floral motifs. Additional carved ornamentation is located in thin vertical bands centered within the window bays.

The west and south building entries are located within projecting two-story entry pavilions. On the west and south facades, single story flat-roofed extensions of the main building block project out to the line of the entry pavilions. These extensions originally contained three large display windows flanking each entry. They were reclad with new limestone and display window infill panels on each side of the building entries during the 1954 renovations.

A five-story tower, measuring approximately thirty-two feet on each side, is centered on the west facade and rises above the original main entry. The upper level of the tower contains a blower room. A similar tower, devoid of architectural detail and measuring approximately forty feet by thirty-one feet, is centered on the east facade and contains elevator machinery and a water tank.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window openings in the 1931 building are rectangular, with six over six steel sash. The three third story masonry openings located directly above the west entry pavilion are roundheaded arches and contain pairs of glazed doors below six-light transoms. These doors provide access to the roof of the west entry pavilion. Access to the south entry pavilion roof is provided by two rectangular masonry openings that contain pairs of glazed doors below four-light transom sash. Similar openings in the second story of the south pavilion provide access to the roof of the projecting single story element on the south and west facades.

The west and south entries, altered during the 1954 renovations, were originally deeply recessed with display windows and ornamental grillwork located within the openings. The renovation work eliminated the recessed entries and substituted aluminum and glass entry doors at the building plane with a rectangular vestibule and aluminum and glass vestibule doors located at the plane of the original entry doors. The two-story west entry was reduced in height to a single story and the original second story elements replaced with plate glass windows. New aluminum entry canopies were constructed above each entry and along the perimeter of the projecting single story element on the west and south facades.

The 1954 alterations to the original store were part of a renovation that entailed the removal of most of the building's north facade and construction of a three-story addition, measuring approximately 111 feet by 119 feet, extending north from the 1931 building. The design of this addition pays homage to the older building through its use of limestone cladding, vertical articulation, and simplified Art Deco-style ornamentation. Nevertheless, the design of the addition clearly reflects 1950s design aesthetics and retail marketing requirements. These are most evident in the projecting circular third story restaurant, with its aluminum-faced roof, in the large scale of the new north entry, and in the lack of second story window openings. Recently, the display windows along the west facade of the 1954 addition have been removed and the openings infilled with cut stone.

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
DESCRIPTION (continued)

A two-story reinforced concrete parking addition , measuring approximately 195 feet by 450 feet, was constructed at the same time as the 1954 store addition. The garage is utilitarian in appearance. Its only ornamentation is the scoring of the concrete used to delineate each bay. Because the site slopes away dramatically towards the north, the second story of the garage is able to provide access to the first story of the store. The first level of the garage appears, on first glance, to be below grade, while in reality it corresponds to the topography of the site. The garage is directly attached to the 1954 store addition.

At present the interior appearance of the building reflects the period of the 1950s, with numerous later alterations. A service stair in the southwest corner of the building, with concrete risers and a simple metal balustrade, and a public stair in the northeast corner, with marble risers and wainscoting and a simple balustrade, are the most evident vestiges of original interior fabric.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1930-1938

Significant Dates

1930-1931

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dreher & Churchman (1930-1931)

Beidler, Herbert B. (1954)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Strawbridge and Clothier Store in Jenkintown is a significant local example of the development of suburban branches by major urban department stores. Constructed in 1930-1931, the building was the second suburban branch department store constructed in the greater Philadelphia area and an integral element in a large-scale and innovative expansion of Strawbridge and Clothier retail operations formulated in the late 1920s. The development of branch department stores and suburban shopping centers in the 1920s reflects the growing importance of the automobile in American society and represents a response by urban retailers to shifting demographics. The Strawbridge and Clothier Jenkintown branch is also significant as a restrained example of Art Deco style architecture designed by one of the area's leading developers of suburban shopping centers. The building has strong associations with the significant historical trends of suburban commercial development oriented towards the automobile, and a major architect and developer of automobile-oriented commercial developments.

The department store, a retail establishment that stocked a wide assortment of merchandise rather than a specialized selection of goods, evolved during the second half of the nineteenth century as a creation of the interaction of urban development, changing patterns of consumption, women's evolving roles, and rapid industrialization. At the midpoint of the nineteenth century, American retailing conformed to two basic patterns: the rural or small-town general store that supplied the demand of the local market and the urban shop that stocked a specialized line of goods. After the Civil War a number of individuals, including John Wanamaker, Marshall Field, and Rowland H. Macy, helped initiate a new retailing era by diversifying their stock, adopting the one-price system, pledging not to misrepresent merchandise, promising exchanges for unsatisfactory goods, allowing free access to their stores without the obligation to buy, and limiting their dependence on credit

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Section number 8 Page 2

Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

in stocking their stores. By the 1890s the department store had become a fixture of American retailing.

Strawbridge and Clothier is a family-owned Philadelphia-based retail business that began as a dry goods firm in downtown Philadelphia in 1868. Quaker partners Isaac Clothier and Justus Strawbridge adopted policies that characterized those of department stores from the beginning, insisting upon quality goods and permitting no haggling over prices (Lief 1968:17). By 1878, when the firm constructed an addition to its store that tripled the size of the building and lent it a cohesive and unified facade, Strawbridge and Clothier had evolved into a full-fledged department store (Benson 1986:18). The firm's longevity and reputation led the Philadelphia Inquirer to consider Strawbridge and Clothier "as distinctly Philadelphiaian as Carpenter's Hall or the Betsy Ross House" (Lief 1968:231).

During the 1920s increased automobile ownership, coupled with the growth of suburban areas, created special problems for major downtown retailers like Strawbridge and Clothier. Suburban patrons complained about congested downtown streets and the lack of parking facilities for their newly acquired automobiles. A 1926 article in The American City noted that "traffic congestion in cities is making it increasingly difficult for the suburban customers of city stores to reach these stores and shop in leisure and comfort." Merchants striving to cope with this dilemma looked "with increasing favor on the plan of establishing branch stores in suburban areas . . ." (Anonymous 1926:214).

The first planned shopping center in the United States, Market Square in Lake Forest, Illinois, opened in 1915. In 1922 developer J. C. Nichols opened Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri, the first suburban shopping center to receive widespread national attention. Nichols constructed Country Club Plaza as the commercial center of a large residential district he was developing (Liebs 1985:31). Country Club Plaza and other suburban shopping centers of the 1920s consisted primarily of small specialty shops built to cater to area residents. Although planning and architecture journals promoted planned shopping

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

centers and branch stores throughout the 1920s and 1930s, branch department stores remained relatively rare prior to 1940 (Benson 1986:33).

In 1928 Strawbridge and Clothier determined to greatly expand and modernize their retail operations by constructing a massive new store building in downtown Philadelphia. Work began on the new store, located at Eighth and Market Streets in 1928. The following year the company determined to also expand its operations into the prosperous and growing suburbs west and north of Philadelphia. Plans were developed simultaneously for the construction of branch stores in Ardmore and Jenkintown. These stores constituted the first suburban branch department stores in the greater Philadelphia area and, according to Strawbridge and Clothier, were the first suburban branch department stores constructed in the United States. Whether or not the Strawbridge and Clothier stores antedated all other suburban branch department stores in the United States is unknown, but it is clear from examination of architectural and planning journals of the period that the Ardmore and Jenkintown stores were at the cutting edge of the movement of major downtown store operations into suburban locations.

The Ardmore store was located in Suburban Square, a planned shopping center developed by Frederick W. Dreher (ca. 1888-1960) in the heart of Philadelphia's Main Line. Suburban Square opened in 1927, only five years after Country Club Plaza. The development proved immediately successful and exerted a major influence upon subsequent local shopping center design and development (McCullough 1948:10).

The Strawbridge and Clothier branch at Ardmore was not constructed as part of the initial commercial development. Instead, it appears that Strawbridge and Clothier observed and analyzed the new shopping center and evaluated its potential profitability as a market. The firm determined that the combination of Suburban Square's ready accessibility by train and automobile, the burgeoning population of the surrounding communities, and the ample parking provided by the developer for the automobiles of suburban shoppers gave the new development a strong chance for continued success. In May 1930 the new branch store,

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Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

designed by Frederick Dreher's architectural firm, Dreher and Churchman, opened for business at Suburban Square. This four-story building, designed with minimal architectural ornamentation, was the first branch department store constructed in the greater Philadelphia area. The building's lack of architectural ornamentation may reflect a hesitancy on Strawbridge and Clothier to invest too heavily in the new phenomenon of branch stores, but it is also typical of the prevailing attitude towards these branches, which stressed the convenience of their location, rather than the grandeur of the architecture (Benson 1979:217).

While the Ardmore store was under construction, Dreher proposed to build and furnish a second branch store for Strawbridge and Clothier in Jenkintown, north of Philadelphia, for a percentage of the new store's gross sales, rather than the more customary fixed fee. This arrangement between developer and tenant, commonplace at the present time, was considered a radically innovative proposal in 1930. Strawbridge and Clothier agreed to the novel arrangement. The Jenkintown location offered many of the same locational advantages as Ardmore, although a shopping center did not already exist at the site. Major rail lines and automobile routes passed through the borough, which was located in a rapidly growing and affluent suburban area. Between 1920 and 1930 the population of Jenkintown increased by over forty percent, from 3,700 to 4,800, while the surrounding townships of Abington and Cheltenham increased by nearly seventy-five percent, from 19,700 to 34,400 (Toll and Schwager 1983:2:900; Lief 1968:186-7).

Dreher apparently envisioned the development of another Suburban Square centered on the Strawbridge and Clothier branch in Jenkintown. Three small commercial buildings were constructed immediately north of the department store as part of the initial development, but the area never became as highly developed or successful as Suburban Square, possibly due to the onset of economic hard times associated with the Great Depression.

The branch store designed by Dreher and Churchman, and erected for Strawbridge and Clothier in Jenkintown opened for business in September

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Continuation Sheet

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Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

1931. The building is a fine example of Art Deco style architecture. It is more highly articulated and detailed than the firm's first branch store in Ardmore, and is somewhat reminiscent of the Philadelphia main store, designed by Simon and Simon in 1928.

The building's design reflects prevailing attitudes towards retail marketing and branch stores. The numerous windows provided natural light to the selling floors, where sales clerks, mostly women, displayed the goods requested by individual customers. Self-service did not exist. Well into the twentieth century department store managers assumed that their customers would venture downtown to the firm's main store for major purchases, such as furniture, high fashion clothing, and furs. Branch stores were conceived of as a convenience for suburban customers and were not stocked as opulently as the main store. This is reflected in the relatively small size of the original portion of the Jenkintown store.

The architect of the Jenkintown branch of Strawbridge and Clothier, Frederick W. Dreher, is a significant figure in the local development of suburban shopping centers. Dreher first appears in Philadelphia city directories in partnership with Clarke Wharton Churchman (1877-1948) and landscape architects Arthur F. Paul and Stephen Ford in 1919. The firm's projects consisted mainly of institutional and office buildings. In 1923 Ford and Paul left the practice, which continued under the name of Dreher and Churchman until ca. 1937. The development of the master plan for Suburban Square in Ardmore in the last half of the 1920s constituted the firm's most important work (Tatman and Moss 1985:146, 218). The commission for the Strawbridge and Clothier branch stores in Ardmore and Jenkintown stemmed directly from the success of this locally innovative and significant suburban shopping center.

Dreher served as the president of the Suburban Company, which operated Suburban Square, after the dissolution of his partnership with Churchman. In his later years he was acknowledged as a recognized authority on the planning and management of shopping centers (McCullough 1948:61).

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Section number 8 Page 6

Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

In 1954 the Jenkintown branch of Strawbridge and Clothier's underwent a major renovation, including the construction of a three-story addition extending to the north of the original building. Chicago-based architect Herbert B. Beidler (1897-ca. 1966) designed this addition and the two-level parking structure north of the addition. The renovation work required removal of the north facade of the original building, recladding of the single story building extensions with new limestone panels, reduction of the size and number of streetlevel display windows, and extensive alterations to the principal building entries and interior. These changes resulted from new attitudes towards retailing requirements that became generally accepted after World War II.

The 1954 addition is sympathetic to the design of the original building in its use of limestone cladding and the simple Art Deco style detailing of the west facade that faces Old York Road. The windowless upper stories, and the smaller streetlevel display windows reflect the then current notion that direct sunlight was harmful to merchandise and should be avoided. The open floor plan and greatly increased floor area that resulted from the construction of the addition are emblematic of a major shift in retailing attitudes towards branch stores and customers. Following World War II customers were expected to serve themselves without relying upon sales clerks to fetch and display merchandise. This shift in marketing attitudes required that more merchandise be displayed on the floors. Additionally, fluctuating seasonal sales forced various store departments to expand and contract seasonally. The rather rigid floor plan of the earlier branch store caused great difficulty in coping with such seasonal changes. Finally, the recognition by retailers that many customers no longer desired to venture to the downtown store for major purchases forced branch stores to be larger and more fully stocked. The addition to the Jenkintown Strawbridge and Clothier clearly reflects these changes.

The Strawbridge and Clothier store in Jenkintown is closely associated with the early years of the planned shopping center and branch department store in the United States. The building, designed by a local pioneer in the development of suburban shopping centers, was the second branch department store constructed in the greater Philadelphia

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Section number 8 Page 7

Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

area. In design and execution it is representative of retailer's efforts to attract and hold the business of increasingly numerous and prosperous suburban customers. The building is a fine example of restrained Art Deco architecture predating the majority of suburban branch department stores in the United States.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 7.9

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The proposed boundary contains the Strawbridge and Clothier Store, its parking structure, and associated lots. The boundary includes the property originally acquired for construction of the store in 1930.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patrick W. O'Bannon, Principal Historian/Diane E. Newbury, Assistant Historian

organization John Milner Associates, Inc. date October 18, 1988

street & number 1216 Arch Street, 5th Floor telephone (215) 561-7637

city or town Philadelphia state PA zip code 19107

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National Park Service

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Section number 9 Page 2

Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
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Philadelphia County
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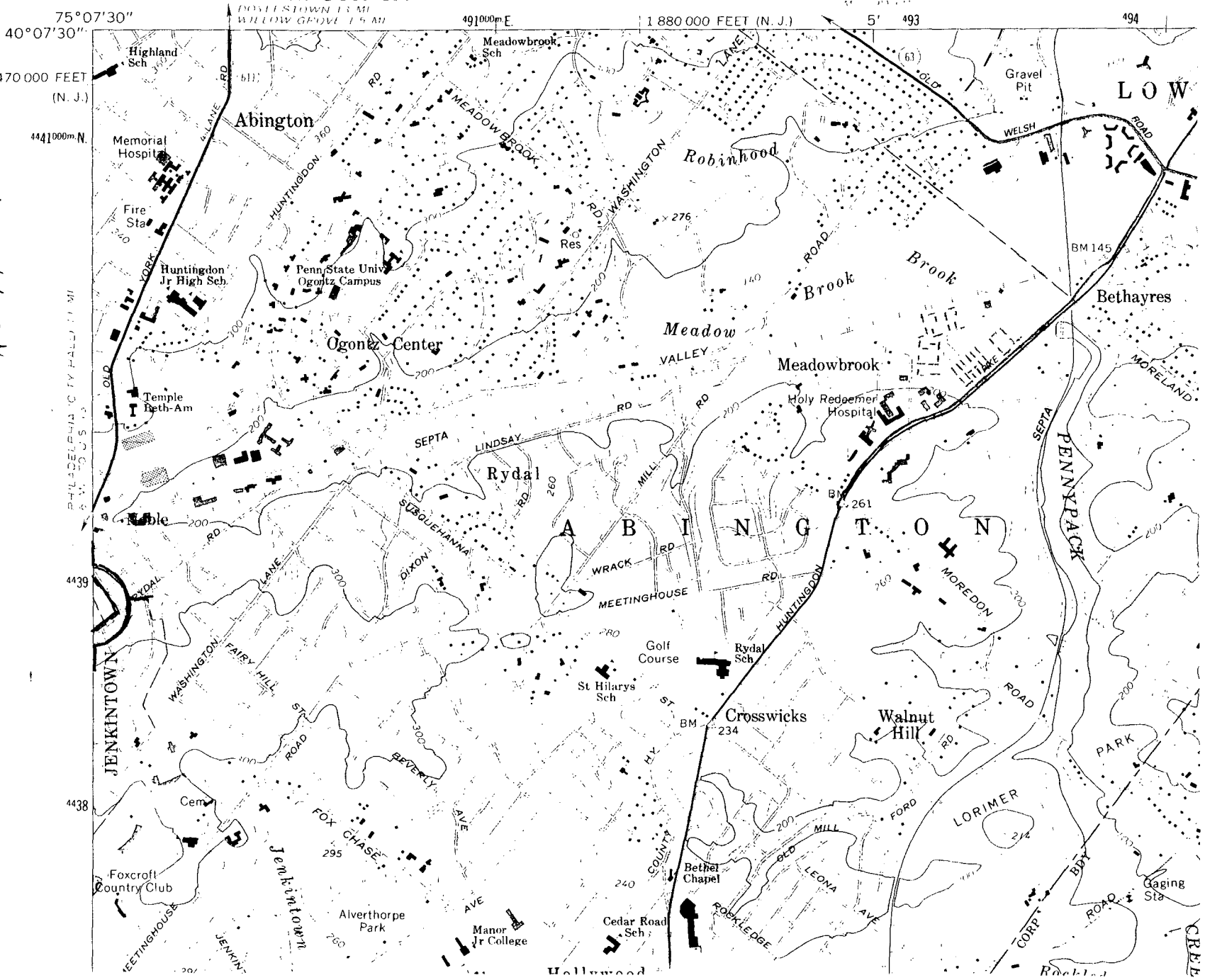
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Strawbridge and Clothier Store
Philadelphia County
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (continued)

Starting at a point on the east side of Old York Road approximately 163 feet north of the northeast corner of the intersection of Old York Road and Rydal Road; thence generally north along the east side of Old York Road approximately 1,091 feet to a point; thence N 23° 4' 30" E approximately 35 feet to a point; thence generally northeast along the arc of a circle curving to the left, with a radius of approximately 55 feet, approximately 51 feet to a point; thence generally northeast along the arc of a circle curving to the left, with a radius of approximately 140 feet, approximately 32 feet to a point; thence generally northeast, east, and southeast along the arc of a circle curving to the right, with a radius of approximately 5 feet, approximately 12 feet to a point on the southwest side of Spring Avenue; thence along the southwest side of Spring Avenue S 32° 36' 43" E approximately 293 feet to a point; thence S 57° 23' 17" W approximately 105 feet to a point; thence S 19° 42' 6" E approximately 600 feet to a point; thence S 57° 21' 34" W approximately 50 feet to a point; thence S 19° 44' 3" E approximately 141 feet to a point on the northwest side of Rydal Road; thence along the northwest side of Rydal Road S 57° 26' 20" W approximately 478 feet to a point; thence N 55° 23' 34" W approximately 130 feet to the starting point.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5966 11 NW
(AMBLER)



Frankford Quad
Zone 18
E- 489300
N- 443 8840

Strawbridge + Clothier Store
Montgomery Co.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY FALLS 11 MI

75°07'30"
40°07'30"

470 000 FEET
(N. J.)

441 000 m. N.

491 000 m. E.

1 880 000 FEET (N. J.)

5' 493

494

4439

4438

LOW

Bethayres

Rydal

Meadowbrook

A B I N G T O N

Crosswicks

Walnut Hill

LORIMER

Alverthorpe Park

Manor Jr College

Cedar Road Sch

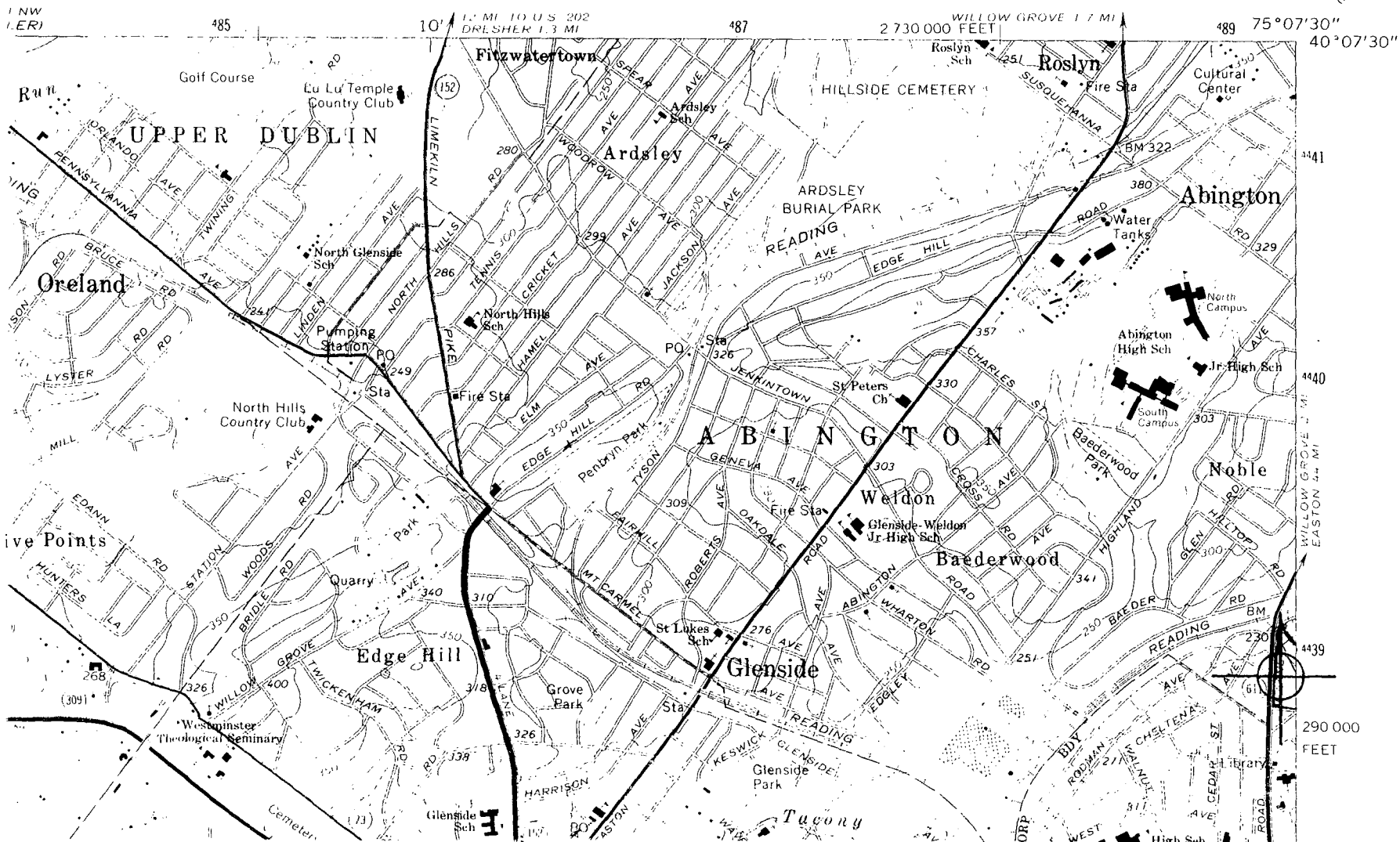
Hollywood

Caging Sta

CREE

GERMANTOWN QUADRANGLE
 PENNSYLVANIA
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5964 II NF.
 (HATBORO)



Handwritten notes:
 Cambridge
 Montgomery Co
 Abington Station
 Germantown Quad
 Zone 18
 E-489300
 N-4438840