

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Phipps-McElveen Building

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 525-529 Penn Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Pittsburgh vicinity N/A

state PA code 003 county Allegheny code 029 zip code 15222

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant     nationally     statewide x locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Exec. Dir. 3/15/2000

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. 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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously-listed resources in the cour

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Renaissance Revival  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE  
walls METAL; BRICK; CERAMIC TILE; TERRA COTTA  
roof ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Refer to continuation sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**  
c. 1896-1949

**Significant Dates**  
c. 1896

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A

**Architect/Builder**  
unknown

**Criteria Considerations**  
Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**  
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary location of additional data:**
- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other state agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	584560	4477400	3		
2				4		

N/A See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title David L. Taylor, Principal

organization Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc. date October, 1999

street & number 9 Walnut Street telephone 814-849-4900

city or town Brookville state PA zip code 15925

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Phipps-McElveen Building  
Allegheny County, PA**Section Number 7 Page 1

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The c. 1896 Phipps-McElveen Building is an eight-story commercial building of steel frame and hollow tile construction, rectangular in form and capped with a flat roof (Photo 1). Measuring c. 59' x 207' in plan, it is a restrained version of the Renaissance Revival style, whose massing in a "base-shaft-capital" arrangement was employed for many early skyscrapers of the late nineteenth-century in general and for those being erected in Pittsburgh in particular. The building sits on a corner lot, at the intersection of Penn Avenue and Cecil Alley, two blocks east of the Allegheny River, in a portion of downtown Pittsburgh which has become the cultural district of the City. Oriented on a northwest-to-southeast axis, it faces Penn Avenue, with Cecil Alley to the southwest, a parking garage behind to the northwest, and a two-story commercial building to the northeast. Despite modifications to the storefront area, the building retains integrity in that the materials, massing, fenestration, and detailing of its exterior are original and unaltered.

As originally constructed, the Phipps-McElveen Building had a storefront on the first floor, and seven upper stories punctuated with double-hung windows arranged in three vertical bays. The original appearance of the storefront is not known; the existing first-story area is veneered in polished granite, likely dating from the 1960s. Based upon evidence in a 1907 post card and a 1919 drawing in a city directory (both of which are reproduced on Continuation Sheets), between those years a remodeling of the first and second stories retained a traditional storefront on the first story but replaced the second story fenestration with a series of three large Commercial-style display window units on the facade and one on the southwest elevation, which probably served as show windows for Oppenheim, Collins, & Company (Photo 5). Each of these window units has a horizontal central window flanked by vertical sidelights and capped with a four-light transom sash. These windows are set within copper frames, ornamented with pressed copper aprons trimmed with classically-derived motifs including urns and medallions (Photo 5). This early remodeling also introduced a modillioned terra cotta storefront cornice above the second story windows and vertical terra cotta piers which separate the windows on the west elevation.

The balance of the upper facade of the Phipps-McElveen Building is entirely original and unaltered from the original and is in a good state of preservation (Photo 2). The facade is faced with buff-colored Roman brick with buttered joints and is divided into three bays, each of which contains a pair of double-hung windows on each story. The windows on the third through seventh stories are flat-topped, while those on the eighth story are round-arched (Photo 3). The bays are separated by attenuated spandrels created by stacked terra cotta blocks. Above the seventh story windows a beltcourse extends across the facade, consisting of sixteen individual terra cotta units bearing fleurs-de-lis. The eighth-floor windows are the most highly ornamented on the facade; each is articulated with rope-molded terra cotta surrounds and is capped with a stylized cartouche. Centered immediately above the eighth-floor windows are two bull's-eye windows, also trimmed with terra cotta rope molding. Despite the accumulation of dirt on the brick and terra cotta, the original polychrome effect of the contrasting materials is evident.

The southwest elevation, along Cecil Alley, is modest in its articulation. Two bays of display windows once were along the first story; they are presently in-filled with brick. Near the front of the building is a multi-story metal fire escape. Fenestration on this side is simple, with flat-topped double-hung sash, except for the eighth floor, which repeats the round-arched fenestration of the facade. This elevation bears the evidence of the previous two-story elevated walkways which linked this building to its neighbor to the

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**Phipps-McElveen Building  
Allegheny County, PA**

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southwest. The northeast elevation is punctuated by modest flat-topped double-hung windows in a random arrangement. The exterior masonry surfaces on this side have been painted.

The cornice of the Phipps-McElveen Building is original and is of terra cotta (Photo 3), in excellent condition and ornamented with dentil molding, modillions, and egg-and-dart trim.

The interior of the Phipps-McElveen Building originally contained commercial space on the first and second stories and open warehouse space above (Photo 6). Based upon surviving finishes, the interior as a whole was historically utilitarian rather than opulent. The most recent first-story use was that of a branch bank; a marble elevator lobby on the east side of the first story, likely dating from the 1940s, is the most distinctive feature of the interior. Two sets of enclosed concrete stairs, one at the front and one at the rear and ornamented with modest steel balustrades and wood handrails and lead between the floors. A single-run stair leads from the eighth floor to the roof; it retains an ornamental steel balustrade. The upper stories contain modest wood trim, and on the second story a series of stylized wood capitals cap the square enclosures which mask steel columns. The balance of the upper stories was historically used as warehouse and light manufacturing space, including some areas which housed clothing alteration workstations for the Joseph Horne Company, the department store which was located across Cecil Alley and which was associated with the Phipps-McElveen Building for nearly a century. The second through the sixth story plan was a generally open redundant plan; the seventh and eighth floors were remodeled for modern office space which appears to date from the 1960s. This space is unremarkable, and includes office partitioning, suspended ceilings, and non-demising walls creating clerical cubicles. During Horne's use of the property, two elevated walkways were constructed from this building across Cecil Alley to Horne's own building. The walkways have been removed and their openings in-filled.

The Phipps-McElveen Building is located in a densely built-up urban setting and occupies the entirety of its building lot with no associated dependencies.

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The Phipps-McElveen Building is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial life of the City of Pittsburgh. It was a c. 1896 speculative venture of Henry Phipps, a leading Pittsburgh industrialist who also became one of the City's premier philanthropists. The property was associated with the McElveen Furniture Company, the largest furniture establishment in the city at the time of its occupancy of this building (c. 1897-1918), with an East Coast-based clothier, the Oppenheim, Collins & Co. (tenancy c. 1918-c. 1934), and with a leading regional retailer, the Joseph Horne Company, whose association began before the building was fully completed and continued over the next ninety years. The property is also significant under Criterion C as a distinctive, locally-significant example of the Renaissance Revival style as it was applied to commercial design in Pittsburgh during the waning years of the nineteenth century. The c. 1896-1949 Period of Significance reflects the continuous commercial significance of the building; the National Register fifty-year guide for establishing significance was selected as the end of the Period of Significance. Although altered at the storefront level, these changes have not diminished significantly the building's ability to reflect its significance and despite the first-story alterations, the property nonetheless retains an overall high degree of architectural integrity.

The Phipps-McElveen Building was built for industrialist Henry Phipps at a time when major growth in Pittsburgh brought about a wide variety of new commercial architecture which re-defined the skyline of this industrial center. Phipps (1839-1930) was a childhood friend and protégé of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. A leading steel industrialist, Phipps was most closely associated with philanthropic endeavors, including his construction of a conservatory in West Park (now the Pittsburgh Aviary), the mammoth Phipps Conservatory in Schenley Park, and medical clinics in Baltimore and Philadelphia.

In the mid-1890s Henry Phipps became involved with commercial real estate development in downtown Pittsburgh. The Phipps-McElveen Building was the first of these speculative ventures, although unlike Phipps' other buildings, local architectural history never drew associations between Phipps and this property. In 1903-1904, he erected the Gayety (later known as the Fulton and, at the time of writing, the Byham) Theater, followed in 1905 by the Bessemer Building and the Manufacturers Building (which contained the Pittsburgh Natatorium) and the 1906 Fulton Building. The Bessemer and Manufacturers Buildings have been destroyed, but Phipps' Fulton Building at 107 Sixth Street and the Gayety Theatre at 602 Ft. Duquesne Blvd. have been sensitively rehabilitated.

Henry Phipps built this eight-story building c. 1896 on the site of a carriage factory and the Pittsburgh Safe Factory, at the southwest corner of Penn Avenue at Cecil Alley. This area had been characterized by small-scale residential buildings, but by the time of the construction of Phipps' new properties, the area had been transformed into a solid commercial district and only a few scattered homes remained along the Penn Avenue streetscape. The west side of Phipps' building lot, fronting present-day Fort Duquesne Boulevard, contained his Manufacturers Building mentioned above.

The identity of the architect or builder of the Phipps-McElveen Building is not known, despite research into local architectural history sources, newspapers, etc. A 1980 cultural resource survey form identified the architect as Peabody and Sterns, the prominent Boston firm responsible for the nearby Horne's

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### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Phipps-McElveen Building**  
**Allegheny County, PA**

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department store. However, this commission is not mentioned in published accounts of that firm's work.

Henry Phipps' new Penn Avenue building was unfinished when on May 3, 1897, a fire broke out across the street at the wholesale grocery business of T. C. Jenkins, which ran between Penn and Liberty Avenues (on the eventual site of the Jenkins Arcade). The fire spread quickly, engulfing other properties, including the nearly-new six-story store of the Joseph Horne Company, directly across Penn Avenue from the Jenkins property and across Cecil Alley from the Phipps Building. This fire was chronicled in a photo-illustrated article in *Brickbuilder*, a leading architectural trade journal of the day.<sup>1</sup> The article included a map of the area, wherein it identified the Phipps Building by name and implied that it stood as an example of prudent construction, noting that it was "fireproof, with hollow tile and open lofts" and that it was "new" and "uninjured" by the conflagration.

The loss of the Horne's building necessitated the store's temporary removal to Henry Phipps' new building, beginning a nearly century-long association with this leading Pittsburgh retailer. Phipps' building, according to an in-house historical account published in the *Horne Herald* of February, 1926, was "brand new at the time, without fixtures or elevators," which Horne's had to install. Horne's began the reconstruction of their own building immediately, and, according to *City Directories* of the day, did not remain a lead tenant of the Phipps Building.

By 1898, the McElveen Furniture Company was located in Phipps Building. McElveen's history in Pittsburgh spanned six decades, a period in which Pittsburgh grew from a small western Pennsylvania river town to a world-class industrial giant. Hugh Forbes McElveen was born in Ireland and came to Pittsburgh in 1858. He founded a furniture business which eventually grew to include manufacturing, wholesale, and retail operations. An 1890 industrial review of the City identified McElveen's as the largest retail furniture establishment in Pittsburgh. By then his company spanned thirty-five-years, "during which time it has assumed proportions which today justly entitles it to be classified as the largest in the City."<sup>2</sup> Hugh McElveen was joined in the operation of the business by his sons, Alfred C. and Gilbert, who remained with their father until the elder McElveen's death c. 1914. The McElveen Furniture Company remained in this building until 1918, when it ceased to appear in *City Directories*.

By 1919, a clothier, Oppenheim, Collins & Company occupied the building, advertising themselves as, "America's foremost specialists in women's, misses' and children's wear." In addition to their Pittsburgh outlet, Oppenheim, Collins & Co. operated stores in New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Newark, selling a wide variety of dry goods and shoes.<sup>3</sup> This business remained in the building until the late 1930s, after which time the property was occupied by a variety of retail and office tenants on the first story, including the Walgreen Drug Store, the Northern Furniture Company, the Triangle Recreational Center,

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<sup>1</sup>Wight, Peter B., "A Real Test on a Great Scale of Fire-Resisting Construction and Material," *Brickbuilder* 6:1 (1897), 117-118.

<sup>2</sup>*Industries and Wealth of Pittsburgh and Environs* (Pittsburgh, 1890), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Polk, R. L. *R. L. Polk's Pittsburgh City Directory* (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk, 1919), p. 267.



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and a branch of the Pittsburgh National Bank.

For many years, the Phipps-McElveen Building was associated with the Joseph Horne Company. Horne's was one of the largest department stores in the city and in the region. It was established by Joseph Horne (1826-1892), a Bedford County, Pennsylvania native, Horne came to Pittsburgh in 1854 and worked as a retail clerk. In 1881 he established his business at the corner of Wood Street and Liberty Avenues, trading as the Pittsburgh Dry Goods Company. At the time of his death, he was planning the construction of a six-story building at Penn Avenue and Fifth (now Stanwix) Street, which was completed in 1893 and became known as the "West Building," to contrast it from the building which Horne's occupied at the corner of Cecil Alley and Penn Avenue, adjacent to the Phipps-McElveen Building. As noted above, when Horne's four-year-old store building burned in the spring of 1897, the Pittsburgh retailer rented space in the Henry Phipps' then-unfinished building. By 1903, the Horne's 1900 "East" building had been combined with the West building and it was likely at that time that the overhead walkways were likely constructed to connect the upper stories of Horne's with the Phipps-McElveen Building. The 1927 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* for Pittsburgh indicates that Horne's was occupying the fifth through the eighth floors, while Oppenheim, Collins, & Co. were on the first four floors. Horne's used the Phipps-McElveen Building as a warehouse, as a clothing alteration center, and as offices and eventually acquired the property; during their years of ownership, the first story was rented and the upper stories were used for Horne's clothing alteration operations and warehousing, and for office space on the uppermost two stories.

The Phipps-McElveen Building is a distinctive local example of the Renaissance Revival style as applied to commercial buildings, which was in its heyday when the building was built for industrialist-philanthropist-entrepreneur Henry Phipps. Its significance is derived from its architecture and from its association with Phipps and for the years of its association with several major Pittsburgh mercantile operations. These include McElveen's, Pittsburgh's largest furniture company during the early twentieth century, Oppenheim, Collins & Co., a leading eastern clothier, and the retail empire of the Joseph Horne Company. Despite the alteration to the storefront—which will be remedied in the course of the certified rehabilitation of the building—the property retains its overall integrity of design and stands as an important representative of pattern of retail development of the City of Pittsburgh in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Viewed within the context of its environs, the Phipps-McElveen Building, while not the grandest of the late nineteenth-century commercial buildings erected in downtown Pittsburgh, is nonetheless significant as a local example of 1890s Renaissance Revival-style commercial architecture within this city. Buildings which compare to the Phipps-McElveen Building include the more highly-designed 109-115 Wood Street (the Hartje Brothers Paper Manufacturing Company complex) which was built in two sections in 1897 and 1902 and was listed in the National Register in 1996. The Hartje property is one story shorter than the Phipps-McElveen Building, but shares with it the clear Renaissance Revival detailing and the base-shaft-capital massing. Phipps' 12-story Fulton Building at 107 Sixth Street employs the base-shaft-capital massing with a distinctive multi-story recessed arch in the center of the building. At 316-322 Boulevard of the Allies is a seven-story brick and terra cotta warehouse with a tall first story, three-part windows with terra cotta mullions and spandrels, and an overhanging cornice of terra cotta.

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

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**Phipps-McElveen Building**  
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a seven-story brick and terra cotta warehouse with a tall first story, three-part windows with terra cotta mullions and spandrels, and an overhanging cornice of terra cotta.

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**Phipps-McElveen Building**  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Phipps-McElveen Building  
Allegheny Co., PA

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is bounded on the south east by Penn Avenue, the southwest by Cecil Alley the northwest by the rear property line, and the north east by the side, adjoining property line. The lot is approximately 65 feet wide by 215 deep.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the foot print of the building and adjacent sidewalks. It excludes roadways to the southeast and southwest, a modern parking garage to the northwest, and the historically different property to the northeast.



27° 30"  
4479  
28  
19  
279  
4478  
WILKINSBURG 8 MI.  
22 MI. TO PA. TURNPIKE 13 MI. TO PA. TURNPIKE  
HOMESTEAD 5 MI.  
WEST ELIZABETH 19 MI.  
4475  
25° 00"  
4474

*Phipps-McElveen Bldg  
Allegheny Co, PA  
UTM References:  
17/584500 / 447740  
Pittsburgh West Quad*