

**ADDRESS: 1628-36 CHESTNUT ST**

Name of Resource: Provident Trust Company Building

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Phila. Retail Trust 1998 LP/BRE Hotels Resorts, BRE Quad PA Owner LP

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, [daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov](mailto:daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1628-36 Chestnut Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The building was constructed in three phases: the 12-story tower (1928), and two two-story additions (1946, 1987). The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D and E. The nomination argues that the building is Georgian Revival style, satisfying Criteria C and D. Furthermore, the nomination argues that Rankin & Kellog was a leading Philadelphia architectural firm that designed large commercial and institutional buildings, satisfying Criterion E.

The Historical Commission sent notice letters to the owners of the property announcing the consideration of a designation on 13 June 2024. The Committee on Historic Designation reviewed the nomination at its 17 July 2024 meeting. None of the property owners attended the Committee meeting. Concerned that the property owners were not participating in the review, the Historical Commission continued the matter from its August to its October 2024 meeting and, after some research, sent additional notice letters to potential addresses for the property owners on 16 August 2024, inviting them to participate at the 11 October 2024 meeting of the Historical Commission.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the property at 1628-36 Chestnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D and E and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1628-36 Chestnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E, with an amended period of significance to end in 1987.



Figure 1: View of the building from Chestnut Street.



*Figure 2: View of building from 17<sup>th</sup> Street.*

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION  
OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY, 17 JULY 2024  
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM  
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING:** 00:00:00

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. The following Committee members joined her:

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., Chair	X		
Suzanna Barucco	X		
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Lavery		X	Arrived 9:53
Debbie Miller		X	
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.	X		

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

- Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III
- Heather Hendrickson, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Izzy Korostoff, Community Initiatives Specialist
- Ted Maust, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner III
- Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Alex Till, Historic Preservation Planner II

The following persons attended the online meeting:

- Allison Weiss, SoLo Germantown
- Chrissy Clawson, Chestnut Hill Conservancy
- David Traub, Save Our Sites
- Hanna Stark, Preservation Alliance
- Jay Farrell
- Kevin McMahan
- Matthew Havens
- Matthew Morley
- Nancy Pontone
- Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society
- Rev. VK Macwana
- Roz McKelvey, Wakefield 49ers Community Improvement and Development Association
- Sherman Aronson
- Steven Peitzman
- Suzanne Ponsen, West Central Germantown Neighbors
- Zachary Romanofsky

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- David Traub of Save Our Sites spoke in support of the nomination.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The nomination is thoroughly researched, well written, and illustrated. It provides the history of the building and context for firehouse design in Philadelphia during the early twentieth century.
- The nomination successfully argues for the designation of the building.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies Criteria C and D as it exemplifies the Beaux Arts architectural influences seen throughout American cities in this era.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies Criterion E, as it was designed by architect Philip H. Johnson, one of the most prominent and prolific designers of public buildings in Philadelphia during this period.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1517-19 Parrish Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E.

<b>ITEM: 1517-19 PARRISH ST</b>					
<b>MOTION: Designate; Criteria C, D, and E</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Barucco</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: Milroy</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Laverty	X				
Debbie Miller					X
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

**ADDRESS: 1628-36 CHESTNUT ST**

Name of Resource: Provident Trust Company Building

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Phila. Retail Trust 1998 LP/BRE Hotels Resorts, BRE Quad PA Owner LP

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1628-36 Chestnut Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The building was constructed in three phases: the 12-story tower (1928), and two two-story additions (1946, 1987). The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D and E. The nomination argues that the building is Georgian Revival style, satisfying Criteria C and D. Furthermore, the nomination argues that Rankin & Kellog was a leading Philadelphia architectural firm that

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION, 17 JULY 2024**

**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PRESERVATION@PHILA.GOV**

**PHILADELPHIA’S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**

designed large commercial and institutional buildings, satisfying Criterion E.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the property at 1628-36 Chestnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D and E.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING:** 1:26:58

**PRESENTERS:**

- Mr. Shachar-Krasnoff presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Hanna Stark of the Preservation Alliance and author Kevin McMahon represented the nomination.
- No one represented the property owner.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Ms. Cooperman invited representatives of the property owner to come forward and speak.
  - No owner representative was in attendance.
- Mr. McMahon noted that it is unusual to see a direct relationship between a twentieth-century building such as the Provident Trust office building and the colonial-era Christ Church.
  - Ms. Cooperman opined that it was noteworthy that the Christ Church design was virtually replicated as the top of the Provident Trust office building.
- Mr. Cohen commented that the nomination was well researched and efficiently presented. He expressed modest disagreement with some architectural terminology. He wondered about the collaboration between Rankin & Kellog and Carl Zeigler, whose role was to ensure fidelity to colonial-era Georgian Revival design.
- Mr. Laverty intoned that Ranken & Kellog deserves greater recognition for their contribution to Philadelphia architecture. He referenced the Provident Trust's brochure that extolled the appropriateness of colonial design for tall office buildings.
- Ms. Barucco questioned the period of significance ending in 1997. She noted that that date relates to the bank's history, not the design firm or the style of the building.
  - Mr. McMahon stated that the date is based upon the Provident Trust selling the building in 1987, ceasing its ownership.
- Ms. Cooperman noted that the completion of the last faithful addition in 1987 is an appropriate date to end the period of significance because that makes the date about the design of the building and not the history of the bank.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- David Traub of Save Our Sites spoke in favor of the nomination.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The building at 1628-36 Chestnut Street was constructed in three phases: the 12-story tower (1928), and two two-story additions (1946, 1987).
- The building is designed in the Georgian Revival style.
- The architectural firm of Ranken & Kellog designed the building in collaboration with Carl Zeigler.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates the building is a noteworthy structure designed in the Georgian Revival style, satisfying Criteria C and D.
- The nomination demonstrates that Rankin & Kellog was a leading Philadelphia architectural firm that designed large commercial and institutional buildings, satisfying Criterion E.

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1628-36 Chestnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E, with an amended period of significance to end in 1987.

<b>ITEM: 1628-36 CHESTNUT ST</b>					
<b>MOTION: Designate; Criteria C, D, and E, with period of significance ending in 1987</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Lavery</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: Barucco</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller					X
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

**ADDRESS: 1600-10 N 15TH ST**

Name of Resource: Siegmund Lubin House at 1608 N. 15th Street

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Beech LLC

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Alex Till, alexander.till@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1608 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. A semi-detached, three-story, brick rowhouse with a prominent Italianate cornice stands on the property. It was the home of Siegmund Lubin and from 1897 to 1899, served as his primary workplace and studio. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criterion for Designation A for its association with Mr. Lubin, an important early motion-picture pioneer, who grew to become an international icon in filmmaking, equipment manufacturing, and exhibition. In addition, the property was the primary location for some of Lubin’s earliest filmmaking experiments.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1608 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Street satisfies Criterion for Designation A.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING:** 01:42:28

**PRESENTERS:**

- Mr. Till presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Hanna Stark of the Preservation Alliance and author Matthew Havens represented

**COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION, 17 JULY 2024**

**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PRESERVATION@PHILA.GOV**

**PHILADELPHIA’S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 1628-36 Chestnut Street

Postal code: 19103

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Provident Trust Company Building

Current/Common Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building       Structure       Site       Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:     excellent     good     fair     poor     ruins

Occupancy:     occupied     vacant     under construction     unknown

Current use: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1928 to 1997

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1946, 1987

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Rankin & Kellogg; Carl Ziegler

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Turner Construction Company

Original owner: Provident Trust Company

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_



**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date February 26, 2024

Name with Title Kevin McMahon, consultant Email hstark@preservationalliance.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut Street, Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: February 27, 2024

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: June 13, 2024

Date of Notice Issuance: June 13, 2024

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Multiple owners of condominium units

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: July 17, 2024

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

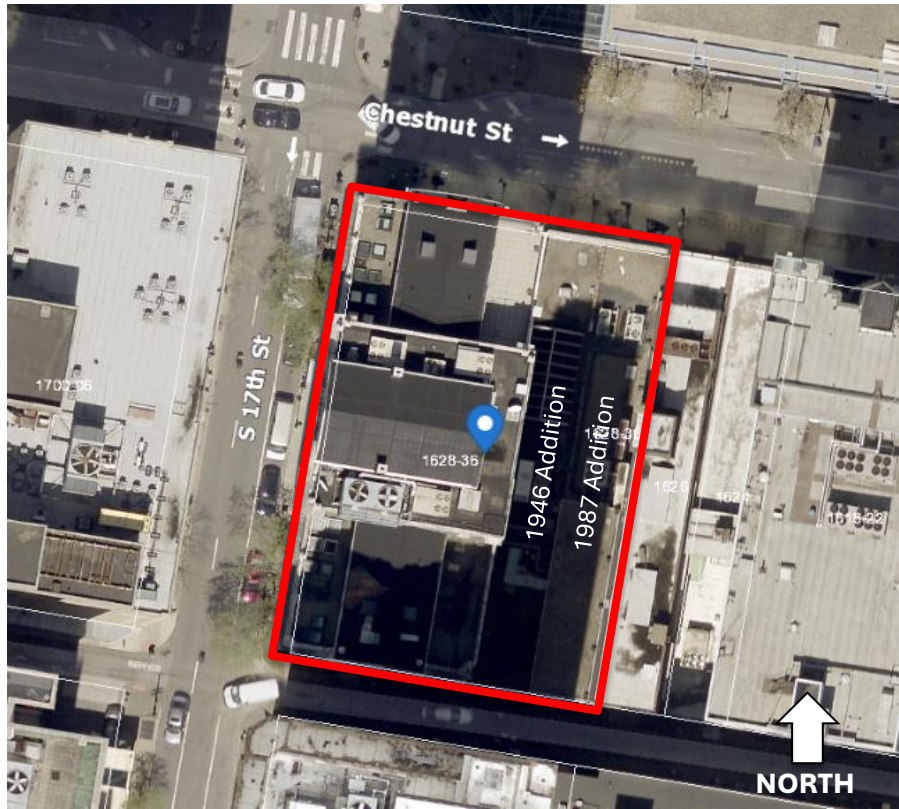
Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places  
1628-36 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA

**5. Boundary Description**

Starting at the southeast corner of South 17th Street and Chestnut Street, the property line extends eastward along the south side of Chestnut Street approximately 102', then turns south and extends approximately 145' to the north side of Stock Exchange Place, then turns west and extends approximately 102' to the east side of South 17th Street before turning north and extending approximately 145' to the starting point.



Boundary Map

OPA Account # 883704800 and 883704900

## 6. Physical Description

The Provident Trust Company Building is a twelve-story, Georgian Revival style former bank and office building at the southeast corner of South 17th Street and Chestnut Street in Center City Philadelphia. Designed by the architects Rankin & Kellogg with Carl Ziegler serving as consulting architect, the building was built between 1927 and 1928. A pair of two-story additions were built on the east elevation in 1946 and 1987, respectively. The building is framed in structural steel and has exterior walls of red brick with decorative details in white marble.



**Photo 1** – North and west elevations, looking southeast from 17th and Chestnut.

The north elevation is three bays wide except on the first and second stories where a pair of two-story additions were built in 1946 and 1987. All bays are separated by slightly projecting brick pilasters with marble bases and capitals. On the first story, the original 1927-28 building has an entrance in the center bay ([Photo 2](#)). This entrance consists of glazed aluminum double-doors, which are twenty-first century replacements but sit within an original pedimented bronze surround with sidelights. Above the entrance is a large, multi-light arched transom window, which is also bronze and is topped by a marble architrave and keystone. The entire entrance assembly sits beneath a brick pediment with a marble panel inscribed with “Provident” in the tympanum. To the left and right of the center bay, there are multi-light arched windows in bronze, which are similar but slightly smaller than the transom in the center bay. The windows have marble sills, keystones, and imposts. On the second story, each bay contains a multi-light, double-hung wood window

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with arched upper sashes. The window in the center bay has a marble sill, architrave, and keystone, while those on either side only have marble sills, keystones, and imposts. Along the top of both the first and second stories, there are brick cornices.



**Photo 2** – North elevation, showing the first and second stories. From right to left, the first three bays consist of the original 1927-28 building, the fourth bay consists of the 1946 addition, and the fifth or leftmost bay consists of the 1987 addition.

On the third through tenth floors, which consist of a flat brick wall (there are no pilasters between the bays) the center bay contains three double-hung replacement windows: an 8-over-12 unit flanked by 6-over-9 units. Each of the outer bays contains a pair of similar 6-over-9 double-hung wood windows. These windows all have marble sills and keystones, the latter set within the splayed brick lintels. Above the tenth-floor windows is a marble cornice. At the eleventh floor, the center bay contains a large Palladian window while the outer bays contain smaller multi-light arched windows topped by brick pediments ([Photo 3](#)). The center bay, which is framed by pilasters and rises above the outer bays, has a large brick and marble pediment with a more richly detailed cornice than those found on the lower stories. The outer bays are framed by shorter pilasters and have a similar marble cornice as well as a short parapet wall topped by marble finials at each corner.



**Photo 3** – North elevation, showing the uppermost stories.

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To the left of the original three bays on the north elevation, the pair of two-story additions largely replicate the material treatment, fenestration, and Georgian Revival detailing of the 1927-28 building. The 1987 addition (the easternmost bay, at far left in [Photo 2](#)), contains an entrance similar to the entrance in the original building, three bays to the west. The additions are topped by a marble balustrade.

The west elevation, which faces 17th Street, is essentially an extended, nine bay wide version of the north elevation with some minor differences ([Photos 4 and 5](#)). On the first story, the three center bays, which historically contained entrances, currently have non-historic aluminum storefronts although the original multi-light bronze transoms, which are arched, remain intact. Like the north elevation, the arched window in the center bay has a marble architrave but there is no brick pediment above. In the southernmost bay on the first story, there is a secondary entrance consisting of multi-light bronze double doors with an arched transom similar to those in the three center bays ([Photo 6](#)). Otherwise, the first-story fenestration matches the fenestration of the north elevation. The second story is also similar to the north elevation second story, except that the center bay has a Palladian window, which is topped by a marble architrave (above the arched window) and marble cornice (above the side windows).



**Photo 4** – West elevation, showing the lower stories.

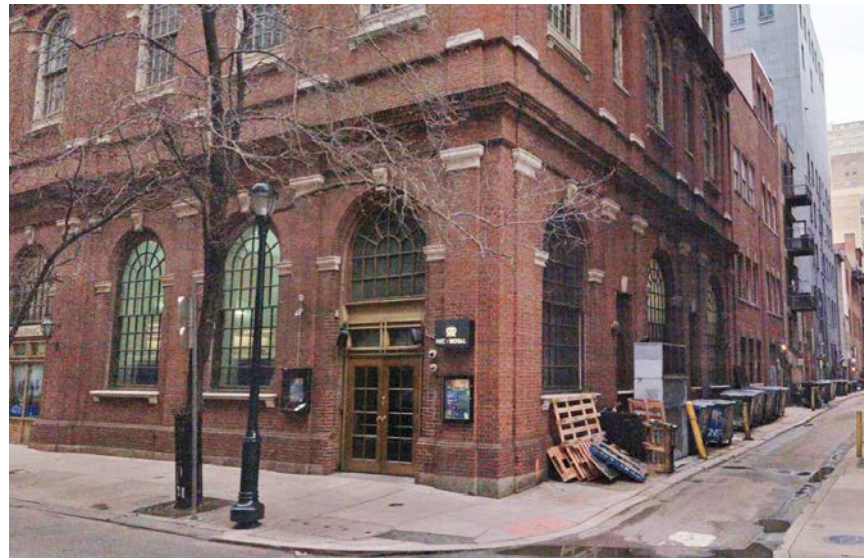
Like the north elevation, the west elevation at the third through tenth stories features flat brick walls with no pilasters, and the fenestration is very similar, consisting of double-hung replacement windows with marble sills and keystones and splayed brick lintels in each bay ([Photo 5](#)). At the eleventh story, all bays contain multi-light arched windows with brick pediments. Above the eleventh-story windows, there is a continuous marble cornice and parapet spanning the entire length of the west elevation. In the three northernmost and three southernmost bays the parapet is topped by marble finials. Above the cornice and parapet, the three center bays rise one story higher than on the north elevation. The center bay on the twelfth story contains three multi-light arched windows with marble architraves and keystones while the bays on each side contain 6-over-9, double-hung windows with marble sills and keystones in the splayed brick lintels. Above the twelfth-story windows, there is another marble cornice. Rising yet another story above the

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places  
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center bay is a gabled roof penthouse, which emulates the pedimented form of the north elevation. The penthouse has three double-hung windows with marble sills and keystones, and the gabled roofline has a marble cornice. On each side of the penthouse, there are marble consoles.



**Photo 5** – West elevation, showing the upper stories.



**Photo 6** – Photo from the Southwest corner, showing the secondary entrance on the West elevation and the South elevation along Stock Exchange Place.

The south elevation, which faces a narrow alley (Stock Exchange Place), is virtually identical to the north elevation. The only difference is that there are no entrances at the first story, and the first story contains small double-hung windows between each of the larger window bays.

The east elevation is only visible on the third story and above due to the presence of the adjacent two-story additions. Except in the center bay, which contains no windows, including at the eleventh and twelfth floors, the fenestration is similar to the west elevation.

## **7. Statement of Significance**

The Provident Trust Company Building at 1628-36 Chestnut Street was built in 1927-28 as the second permanent home of this major Philadelphia financial institution following its 1922 split from its parent company. Designed by the architects Rankin & Kellogg with Carl Ziegler serving as consulting architect, the Provident Trust Company Building is one of the most notable examples of the Georgian Revival style in Philadelphia, especially as applied to a high-rise building. Emulating the architecture of the eighteenth century, the Georgian Revival style of the Provident Trust Company Building rooted this institution in the history and traditions of Philadelphia and conveyed a sense of soundness and stability, which was especially important in an era when large commercial buildings exhibited an ever-greater exuberance in the form of the Art Deco style.

As a major work by Rankin & Kellogg, who were among Philadelphia's top architects of the early twentieth century, and as a significant work in the Georgian Revival style, the Provident Trust Company Building merits listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by satisfying the following criteria as established in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

### CRITERION C

Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

### CRITERION D

Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; and

### CRITERION E

Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

### A Brief History of the Provident Trust Company Building

The origins of the Provident Trust Company can be traced to the incorporation of the Provident Life and Trust Company in Philadelphia in 1865. Founded by a group of Quaker merchants as both a life insurance and trust company, Provident grew steadily over the late-nineteenth century, becoming one of the city's most prominent financial institutions. The company's first permanent home was situated in the center of what was then Philadelphia's financial district, the 400 block of Chestnut Street. Designed by Frank Furness, the building at 407-09 Chestnut Street, to which a taller office building, also designed by Furness, was later added, is widely considered to have been one of the architect's most significant works despite it being demolished in 1959.

In 1922, the decision was made to split Provident's life insurance and trust divisions into two separate companies: the Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company and the Provident Trust Company. In regard to the latter, by one account:

It was as though a man had been born in full-fledged maturity. Here was a trust company which at the start had behind it half a century of service. Here were officers

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who had come up from the ranks and a trained personnel in every department. The trust department had an unusual record, as it was the first in the country to develop the insurance trust; the first case being administered in 1877, and being so closely associated with the Life Insurance business, it had accumulated a very unusual and practical experience with life insurance trusts, almost certainly to a far greater degree than any other institution in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Provident Trust's reverence of its history and traditions was effectively expressed in its first permanent home as a separate company, which they built at 1508 Chestnut Street in 1924. Designed by the architect Carl Ziegler, the narrow, four-story building was widely regarded in national architectural magazines as an exceptional example of the Colonial or Georgian Revival style (Figure 1). In the October 1927 edition of *Architectural Forum*, the critic Margaret A. Law wrote, "At present American architecture...holds a firm thumb-grip on the public's pulse and follows the vagaries of changing taste with alarming speed from season to season, perpetually re-incarnating itself in new guises." But with the Provident Trust Company Building, Law continued, "Here, then, in this re-interpretation of the forms sponsored by our own colonial ancestors, there is a pleasing sense of stability" and a "welcome austerity, simplicity, freedom from the ornate, and from the strain after 'originality of style.'"<sup>2</sup> In many ways, the building's reliance on the traditional architecture of the eighteenth century presaged the much larger 12-story tower Provident Trust would build just a few years later at 17th and Chestnut Streets.



**Figure 1** – The Provident Trust Company Building at 1508 Chestnut Street (extant), designed by Carl Ziegler and built in 1925. This image appeared in the July 1925 edition of *The Architect*.

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<sup>1</sup> George Morgan, *The City of Firsts: Being a Complete History of the City of Philadelphia from its Founding, in 1682 to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: The Historical Publication Society in Philadelphia, 1926), 595.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret A. Law, "Old Philadelphia Interpreted Anew," in *Architectural Forum* (October 1927), 369-372.



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1628-36 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA

The Provident Trust Company grew rapidly at 1508 Chestnut Street and it was soon apparent that much larger quarters would be required to accommodate its business. The bank began to plan for a new building as early as the summer of 1925, when they acquired the site at the southeast corner of 17th and Chestnut Street.<sup>3</sup> In January 1926, Provident hired Rankin & Kellogg to begin design work on the new headquarters, which would consist of a 12-story tower in the Georgian Revival style.<sup>4</sup> It appears that construction, which was handled by the Turner Construction Company, began sometime in early 1927. The building was opened to the public in June 1928 (Figures 2 and 3).

**A New Home for  
An Old Philadelphia Institution**

From the four-story Colonial building at 1508 Chestnut Street—now grown too small for use as the mid-city office of the Provident—the Provident Trust Company has moved to its new building at the southeast corner of Seventeenth and Chestnut Streets. This will be the main office—other offices with banking facilities and safe deposit vaults will be continued at the former main office, Fourth and Chestnut Streets, and at Twelfth and Chestnut Streets.

We have aimed to carry out the manner of the quiet little building at 1508 Chestnut Street on a larger scale, providing amplified facilities for the transaction of banking, trust and safe deposit business with a background of distinction and charm.

The building itself with its red brick and white marble, typical of old Philadelphia, owes much to the finest in Colonial architecture as expressed in Old Christ Church, Independence Hall, and other famous buildings. Its decoration and furnishings have been inspired by the most noted examples in furniture and design of the early Philadelphia now so often forgotten.

The many friends and customers of Provident Trust Company—and its affiliate, Commonwealth Title Insurance Company—are cordially invited to inspect the new building and its interesting interior at any time during business hours.

*New Home open Monday  
June 11, Seventeenth  
and Chestnut.*

**PROVIDENT  
TRUST COMPANY**  
*with which is affiliated*  
**COMMONWEALTH TITLE  
INSURANCE COMPANY**  
AMERICA'S PIONEER LIFE INSURANCE TRUSTEE

Fourth and Chestnut      Twelfth and Chestnut      Seventeenth and Chestnut

**Figure 2** – Provident Trust advertisement in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 1928.

<sup>3</sup> "\$1,250,000 Paid for Site at 17th and Chestnut," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 12, 1925.

<sup>4</sup> "Trust Company Selects Architects," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 17, 1926.

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**Figure 3** – Two views of the Provident Trust Company Building taken shortly after the building was completed in 1928. At left, the north elevation (facing Chestnut) is pictured (from *Buildings by Turner*, 1939). At right, the west elevation (facing 17th Street) is shown (from the James Dillon Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia).

Provident Trust continued to grow over the early to mid-twentieth century and by the late 1930s began to think about its future space needs. With the aim of eventually expanding the building to the east, Provident acquired the adjacent four-story building at 1630 Chestnut Street in October 1938.<sup>5</sup> It was not until 1946, however, that Provident proceeded with building an addition on this site. In April of that year, Provident obtained zoning permission to demolish the existing building and erect a two-story, 20'-wide addition in its place.<sup>6</sup> Designed by architect Sydney E. Martin, the addition perfectly replicated the two-story base of the original 1927 building in terms of both materiality, fenestration, and the Georgian Revival detailing.

In 1958, Provident and the Tradesmens' National Bank, which was also based in Philadelphia, merged to form what became known as the Provident National Bank. The company remained at 17th and Chestnut Streets, enlarging the building once again several decades later in 1987. In this project, another two-story addition was built to the east on what had been 1628 Chestnut Street. Designed by the Kling-Lindquist Partnership, this addition also largely replicated the materiality, fenestration, and detailing of the original 1927 building, but in this case the first-story

<sup>5</sup> "Activities of Day in Real Estate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 25, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia Zoning Permit #27170 (1946).

window was made into an entrance.<sup>7</sup> The Provident National Bank, which eventually became PNC Bank, continued to occupy 1628-36 Chestnut Street until 1997, when it moved to 16th and Market Streets. PNC sold the building in 1998.

### The Georgian Revival Style in Philadelphia

The Provident Trust Company Building is a significant work in the Georgian Revival style, an outgrowth of the broader Colonial Revival that gained in popularity following the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. Reminding visitors of the country's colonial past, the Centennial Exposition exposed Americans from around the country to Philadelphia's eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century architectural landmarks. In subsequent years and decades, particularly after 1895, architects in Philadelphia – Theophilus P. Chandler, Wilson Eyre, Charles Barton Keen, and Cope & Stewardson, among others – began to develop a new form of institutional, commercial, and residential architecture, one that, in the words of architectural historian Leland Roth, was “bold in scale but the heir to European style and culture,” and “embodied a national character, rooted in the architecture of the eighteenth century.”<sup>8</sup>

Emulating the look of buildings from the Colonial period, the Georgian Revival style that appeared in Philadelphia and other cities after 1895 is generally “conceived in Italian Renaissance terms, but more often in original variations of late-eighteenth-century American Colonial classicism and that of early Federalist architects.”<sup>9</sup> In an urban setting like Philadelphia, or Boston or New York, this often, but not always, meant an emphasis on symmetry; red brick walls with contrasting white marble or limestone details, such as quoining, pediments, lintels, and pilasters; denticulated cornices; a fenestration pattern of uniformly sized and regularly spaced windows; and often flat roofs, although gabled and hipped roofs were occasionally used in smaller-scale residential projects.



**Figure 4** – Curtis Publishing Company Building, designed by Edgar V. Seeler and Spencer Roberts and built in 1907, extant.

<sup>7</sup> Philadelphia Zoning Permit #347697 (1987).

<sup>8</sup> Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 294.

<sup>9</sup> Roth, 294.

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Across the United States, the Georgian Revival style was applied to a wide variety of commercial, educational, and institutional buildings after 1895. In Philadelphia, some of the best-known, and grandest, examples are the massive Curtis Publishing Company Building at 6th and Walnut Streets (Edgar V. Seeler and Spencer Roberts, archs., 1907); the Germantown High School (Henry DeCoursey Richards, arch., 1914-15); and the Misericordia Hospital at 54th and Cedar Avenue (F. Ferdinand Durang, arch., 1915-24).<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 5** – Germantown High School, designed by Henry DeCoursey Richards and built in 1914-15, extant (Historic Germantown).



**Figure 6** – Misericordia Hospital at 54th and Cedar Avenue, designed by F. Ferdinand Durang and built in 1915-24, extant.

<sup>10</sup> The Germantown High School is listed in the Philadelphia Register, in part for its significance as a work in the Georgian Revival Style. See Oscar Beisert, *Germantown High School*, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2020.

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But the Georgian Revival style appeared in buildings of virtually every scale across Philadelphia, including slightly smaller works like the Rush Hospital at 33rd Street and Lancaster Avenue (Brockie & Hastings, archs., 1909-19); The Philadelphia Real Estate Board Building at 13th and Locust Streets (The Ballinger Company, archs., 1922); the Young Men's & Young Women's Hebrew Association at 401-11 South Broad Street (Frank Hahn, arch., 1923-24); and even much smaller buildings like the numerous branches of the Free Library built by the City during the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 7** (left) – Rush Hospital, 33rd and Lancaster, 1931, extant (Philadelphia Department of Records).  
**Figure 8** (right) – The Philadelphia Real Estate Board Building at 13th and Locust Streets in the 1920s, extant (Ballinger Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia).



**Figure 9** – The Young Men's & Young Women's Hebrew Association at 401-11 South Broad Street, as pictured in 1924, extant (Temple University Library).

<sup>11</sup> The Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association Building is listed in the Philadelphia Register, in part for its significance as a work in the Georgian Revival style.. See Ben Leech, Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association, Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2017.

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Among the Free Library branches, some of the best examples in the Georgian Revival style include the Oak Lane branch at 6622 North 12th Street (Ralph E. White, arch., 1911) and the Paschalville branch at 6942 Woodland Avenue (Henry C. Richards, arch., 1915).<sup>12</sup> With these works and many others, including a number of public libraries built around the same time, Philadelphia architects began to remake the city's built environment in the image of the eighteenth century while creating buildings that could serve a modern city.



**Figure 10** (left) – Free Library of Philadelphia, Oak Lane Branch, extant (Free Library of Philadelphia).  
**Figure 11** (right) – Free Library of Philadelphia, Paschalville Branch, extant (Free Library of Philadelphia).

In Philadelphia as in other cities, the Georgian Revival style also became popular among the wealthy who began to build new city houses to replace the older Victorian homes of their parents. By the early twentieth century, many viewed Victorian architecture as excessive and overbearing. The Colonial Revival and its subcategory, the Georgian Revival, offered a refreshing alternative that was simpler in form, more honest in its use of materials, and more rooted in the American past than, say, the Gothic Revival, Second Empire, or Queen Anne styles.

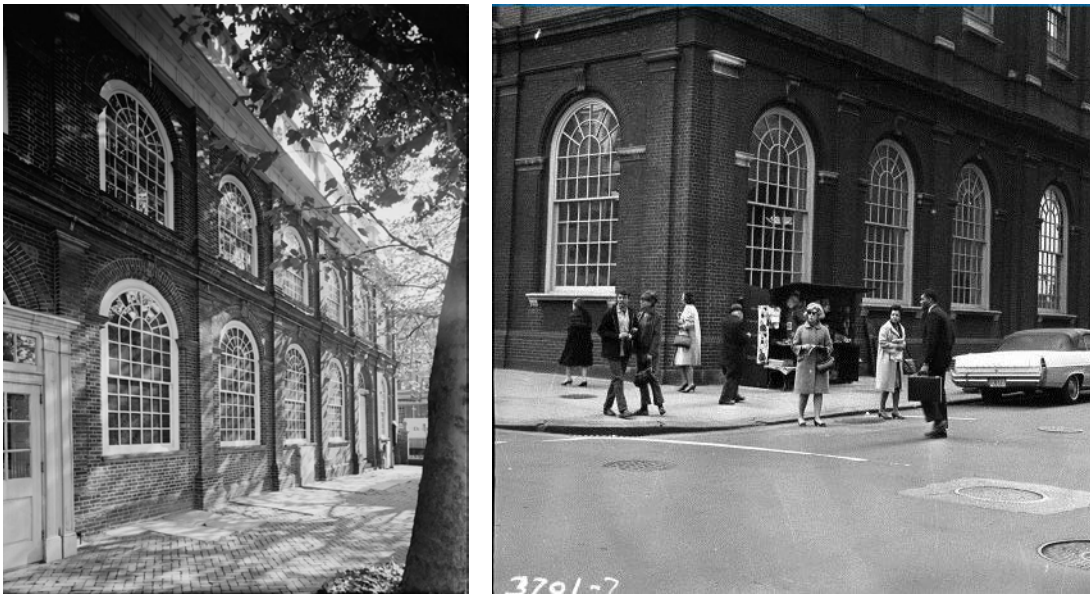
At the Provident Trust Company Building, the Georgian Revival style is on full display in one of its less common forms: the high-rise building. In the October 1928 edition of *Building*, a monthly magazine published by the Philadelphia Builders' Exchange, one observer wrote that Rankin & Kellogg's Georgian Revival treatment of Provident Trust's new building was "from an architectural standpoint...almost unthinkable, it being a direct contradiction of the established Colonial design which calls for buildings of comparatively little height." Nonetheless, the writer continued, the architects succeeded in adapting the architectural style of the eighteenth-century city for the twentieth century one, creating a work that was "eminently fitting in a city such as Philadelphia which boasts of such historic buildings as Independence Hall, Christ Church, and Carpenter's Hall."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Both the Oak Lane and Paschalville branches are located within the Carnegie Library Thematic Historic District, which was listed in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 2021.

<sup>13</sup> "Provident Trust Bldg. Effectively Retains Colonial Atmosphere," *Building* (October 1928), 12-13, 24.

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In fact, Rankin & Kellogg, working with Carl Ziegler as consulting architect, closely modeled the Provident Trust Company Building on Christ Church itself, which was one of the city's most significant landmarks of the Colonial era. At the base of the building (the first two stories), "the influence of old Christ Church is particularly apparent and the arched windows and brick pilasters are close adaptations of those in the original building. White marble balustrades and carved urns are also familiar details and the high Palladian windows near the top of the building recall the Palladian nave of this famous church" (Figures 12 and 13).



**Figure 12** – Christ Church (at left) and the Provident Trust Company Building in 1966 (at right). The photos are from the Library of Congress and the Philadelphia Department of Records, respectively.



**Figure 13** – Christ Church (at left) and the Provident Trust Company Building, pictured around 1928 (at right). The photos are from the Library of Congress and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, respectively.

Rankin & Kellogg and Ziegler were so concerned with recreating the historical detail of Christ Church that they specified the exterior brickwork at Provident Trust be made by hand using custom molds, more 400 in total, taken from actual bricks in the exterior walls of the church. Completed, the writer in *Building Magazine* concludes:

Completed, the building stands as a material evidence of the sturdy honest spirit of Philadelphia in the days of Washington and forcibly brings to the attention of all who may care to see, the great beauty of the Colonial cabinet making of such great masters of Savery, Randolph and others who were engaged in this work prior to the Revolution. Few of the original buildings of this period are now in evidence and it is therefore most fitting that a company such as 'The Provident' should so tie in the history of their own organization with that of this great city through the erection of such a splendid building.

In addition to being featured in *Building*, images and plans of the Provident Trust Company Building were included in the September 5, 1927 edition of *The American Architect*, one of the country's most widely circulated architectural periodicals, and was highly praised in the June 1929 edition of *Through the Ages*, a monthly publication of the National Association of Marble Dealers, for many of the same reasons that it had been in *Building*.<sup>14</sup>

#### Rankin & Kellogg, Architects

The Provident Trust Company Building was designed by the architectural firm of Rankin & Kellogg, which was founded in 1891 by John H. Rankin (1868-1952) and Thomas M. Kellogg (1862-1935). During the early twentieth century, Rankin & Kellogg became one of Philadelphia's best-known firms specializing in large commercial and institutional buildings, which are found not only in this city but across the United States.

Born in Philadelphia, Rankin studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1889. After working for a short time in the offices of James H. Windrim and the Wilson Brothers, Rankin relocated to New York City but returned to Philadelphia in 1891 when he and Kellogg began their partnership. Born in Washington, D.C., Kellogg was raised in Laurel, Maryland, and like Rankin, attended M.I.T., although he never graduated. He worked for McKim, Mead & White in New York City from 1884 until 1891 after which he moved to Philadelphia and began his partnership with Rankin.<sup>15</sup>

Rankin & Kellogg quickly earned a reputation for their highly refined work in the Beaux Arts style, winning such major commissions as the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office in Indianapolis (1900), which won a silver medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904; and the administration building of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. (1905/1930). Both projects, as well as many later examples of the firm's work, were prominently featured in the architectural press, including publications like *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*, bringing Rankin

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<sup>14</sup> "Keeping Alive American Traditions: Colonial Atmosphere Effectively Retained in new Provident Trust Building, in Philadelphia," in *Through the Ages* (June 1929), 29-32.

<sup>15</sup> Sandra L. Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1985), 437, 643-647.



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& Kellogg national recognition. In 1904, the architect Edward Crane joined the partnership, and the firm was renamed Rankin, Kellogg & Crane. Later, in 1925, Crane left the partnership and the firm's name reverted to Rankin & Kellogg.

Although well established as Beaux Arts designers, Rankin, Kellogg & Crane were versatile architects who adapted well to both changing tastes and their clients' stylistic preferences, particularly in their many Philadelphia projects. Among the firm's most significant and best-known local works (both before and after Crane's arrival) are the Gothic Revival-style Chambers-Wylie Memorial Presbyterian Church at 321 South Broad Street (1899-1901); the U.S. Marine Corps' Quartermaster Depot at Broad and Washington Streets (1904-08); the Philadelphia Inquirer's 18-story Elverson Building at Broad and Callowhill Streets, which they designed in a strikingly modern, highly stripped down version of the Beaux Arts (1924); the 12-story, Georgian Revival Provident Trust Company Building at 17th and Chestnut Streets (1927); and the Art Deco U.S. Post Office at 30th and Market Streets (1931-35). All five projects remain standing, demonstrating the significant, decades-long impact that Rankin, Kellogg & Crane had on the architecture of Philadelphia during the early twentieth century.



**Figure 14** – The Chambers-Wylie Presbyterian Church at 321 S. Broad Street, designed by Rankin & Kellogg and built in 1899-1901 (Athenaeum of Philadelphia).



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**Figure 15** – The U.S. Marine Corps Quartermaster Depot, designed by Rankin, Kellogg & Crane and built in 1904-08 (Athenaeum of Philadelphia).



**Figure 16** – The Elverson Building at Broad and Callowhill Streetse, designed by Rankin, Kellogg & Crane and built in 1924 (from the 1928 catalog of David Lupton's Sons).



**Figure 17** – The U.S. Post office at 30th and Market Streets, designed by Rankin & Kellogg and built in 1931-35 (Athenaeum of Philadelphia).

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