

From "Frontier" to Center City: The Evolution of the Neighborhood of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA found its permanent home at 13th and Locust Streets in Philadelphia nearly 120 years ago. Prior to that time it had found temporary asylum in neighborhoods to the east, most in close proximity to the homes of its members, near landmarks such as the Old State House, and often within the bosom of such venerable organizations as the American Philosophical Society and the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. As its collections grew, however, HSP sought ever larger quarters and, inevitably, moved westward.¹ Its last temporary home was the so-called Picture House on the grounds of the Pennsylvania Hospital in the 800 block of Spruce Street. Constructed in 1816–17 to exhibit Benjamin West's large painting, *Christ Healing the Sick*, the building was leased to the Society for ten years. The Society needed not only to renovate the building for its own purposes but was required by a city ordinance to modify the existing structure to permit the widening of the street. Research by Jeffrey A. Cohen concludes that the Picture House's Gothic facade was the work of Philadelphia carpenter Samuel Webb. Its pointed windows and crenellations might have seemed appropriate to the Gothic darkness of the West painting, but West himself characterized the building as a "misapplication of Gothic Architecture to a Place where the Refinement of Science is to be inculcated, and which, in my humble opinion ought to have been founded on those clear and self-evident Principles adopted by the Greeks." Though West went so far as to make plans for

¹ The early history of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania is summarized in J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia: 1609–1884* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1884), 2:1219–22.

refacing the building, these changes were never carried out.

When the building was offered to the Society in 1871, it retained its Gothic spirit. Designs for altering the Picture House were solicited from members Addison Hutton and Henry Augustus Sims. Both preliminary designs anticipated the Colonial Revival that would become fashionable after the Centennial Exhibition and presumably represented the interests of the membership. Sims's design lost out to a revised and notably less expensive scheme by Hutton that merged the existing Gothic detail with elements of the still fashionable Italianate style (fig. 1). On the side toward the gardens of the Pennsylvania Hospital grounds, a large three-sided bay projected out from the second floor to establish a pleasant place for reading.²

With the pending loss of its lease and the growth of its collections, the Society welcomed the opportunity to purchase the mansion and grounds of Gen. Robert Patterson (1792–1881), whose heirs placed it on the market in 1882. Though long known as the Patterson Mansion, the marble-clad house at the corner of 13th and Locust Streets had been constructed for an earlier Philadelphian, John Hare Powel, whose pedigree encompassed several of the city's notable families.³ Born John Powel Hare (1786–1850), he was the son of brewer Robert Hare, a nephew of the Powel family and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, class of 1803.⁴ In 1807, having been named the heir of his aunt, Elizabeth Willing Powel, he shifted the order of his name and found a variety of ways to express his enthusiasm for things English. Many years later Sidney George Fisher described the Powels as "high bred, pleasant people, Mrs. P. Still a beauty, Mr. P. now as always the handsomest man of his time . . . a sportsman and farmer, fond of the country & its pursuits, and also a good hater of democracy & America, for which alone I would like him."⁵

² Jeffrey A. Cohen, "Addison Hutton: Alterations to the Picture House, Pennsylvania Hospital, for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," and "Henry Augustus Sims: Design for Alterations to the Picture House, Pennsylvania Hospital, for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," in *Drawing toward Building: Philadelphia Architectural Graphics, 1732–1986* (Philadelphia, 1986), 129–32.

³ For a thorough account of the house, see Bryan Kevin Hawkins, "Grecian Splendor: The City Mansion of John Hare Powel," (master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1988).

⁴ For a lengthy and admiring biography, see Henry Simpson, *The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians Now Deceased Collected from Original and Authentic Sources* (Philadelphia, 1859), 808–19. For a biography of Powel's brother, the important chemist, Robert Hare, see 484–90.

⁵ Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher Covering the Years 1834–1871* (Philadelphia, 1967), 149. The citation is from 1843; in September 1839 Fisher had noted that Powel's son Samuel, in the English fashion, would receive the entire fortune, apparently as

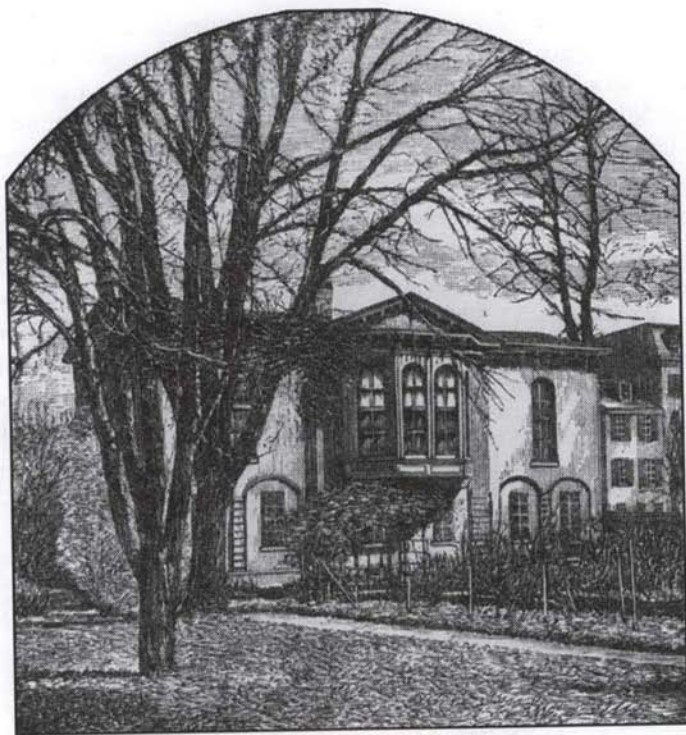


Fig. 1. "Old Historical Society Building on Spruce Street," from Scharf and Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia* (1884), 2:1220.

In 1832, having reached middle age, John Hare Powel determined to build for himself a city house that would complement his earlier mansion, "Powelton," which he had constructed overlooking the Schuylkill River above Arch Street.⁶ Built with a monumental marble Grecian portico on the river side from designs by William Strickland, Powelton was, according to Fisher:

equal to any country house I imagine in America. It is seated too, in a fine park

stipulated by Elizabeth Willing Powel in her will. His brothers were thus cut out of his will.

⁶ Charles B. Wood, "Powelton: An Unknown Building by William Strickland," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 91 (1967), 145-50.

timbered with noble old woods. If it were 10 miles from town it would be a delightful residence, but it looks on the coal wharves and mass of brick buildings on the other side of the river & is so near the city that it is constantly liable to trespass & intrusion. Mr. Powel was foolish to build it, as he will most probably never live there & has not income enough to keep it up in proper style.⁷

Powel's next venture in house building would prove no more satisfactory. Unable to afford the expensive properties of downtown Philadelphia along the wide streets of Chestnut and Walnut, Powel gambled on the lot at Locust and 13th Streets on the western edge of the city. He purchased the land from Edward Shippen Burd, whose own house was constructed on the south side of the 1300 block of Walnut Street where it remains today, bearing the upper stories of a Victorian hotel addition by Addison Hutton. That Powel was aware of the difficulties of the site is apparent from his description of the circumstances of his new residence: "I shall place myself on the frontier—although my friends condemn me for leaving what is termed the fashionable part of town, I am satisfied in having 250 feet [of street frontage] at the cost of 40 feet near the house of Mrs. Powel in Chestnut Street."⁸ Across the street was a lumber yard, and to the west was only John Haviland's classical temple for the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, which was located on the orthogonally significant but still distant Broad Street (fig. 2). At that date there was little to the north on Broad Street or west of 12th Street for that matter. Locust Street was not considered a location of importance in the city because, unlike Chestnut and Walnut Streets which were narrower only than High (later Market) and Broad Streets, Locust Street was one of the lesser streets in the original hierarchy of the Thomas Holme city plan. With the idea of rectifying this defect, Powel laid out his property with his house set back twelve feet from the street in hopes that later property owners on both sides would follow suit, thus creating a broad street. As is evident today from the dense development around the present site of the Historical Society of

⁷ Wainwright, *Diary of S.G. Fisher*, 169.

⁸ Powel's papers, in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, were surveyed by Kevin Hawkins for his study. For the Powel quote, see "Grecian Splendor," 26. Mrs. Powel's house on Chestnut Street was located at 207 Chestnut according to the old numbering system. Under the present numbering system, it would have been just below 7th Street. Hawkins determined the role of William Strickland as architect of John Hare Powel's city house. [For a different interpretation, see Susan Stitt, "The Fireproof: The Society's Building," elsewhere in this issue. ed.]



Fig. 2. John Haviland, School for the Deaf and Dumb, 320 South Broad Street, 1824-26. Now the University of the Arts. Photo c. 1880. Penrose Col., HSP.

Pennsylvania, other owners were not so civic-minded, and the blocks east and west of 13th Street took on the modest urban character that Powel had hoped to avoid.

Powel again turned to William Strickland for plans for his mansion.⁹ By 1832, Strickland was well established as the premier architect of the city, with a national practice that extended west to Pittsburgh and south to Charleston and New Orleans. He had received several federal commissions in Philadelphia, including the Second Bank of the United States and the United States Naval Asylum, and had been commissioned to execute such civic projects as the Almshouse and the new buildings for the University of Pennsylvania. These he typically designed in a variant of the classical styles,

⁹ The classism of Philadelphia is apparent in the brief paragraph allocated to Strickland by Simpson who noted his training in Latrobe's office and a few of his buildings but found him otherwise uninteresting; *Lives*, 911. In a similar vein, Sidney George Fisher characterized Strickland as "coarse and vulgar." *Diary*, 74. For a more balanced treatment see Agnes Addison Gilchrist, *William Strickland: Architect and Engineer, 1788-1854*, (Philadelphia, 1950).



Fig. 3. David Kennedy, "Southwest Corner of Locust & 13th Streets," watercolor, c. 1880. HSP.

usually with the same delicacy of touch as his master, Benjamin Henry Latrobe. The selection of Strickland as architect for the Powel house is noteworthy. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, most Philadelphia houses, even grand buildings, were designed by carpenters and masons. Powel's decision to use an architect stamped the project as unusually pretentious, though appropriate to someone who aped the English elite. Like his country house on the Schuylkill, Powel's city residence would be among the premier houses of its day, reflecting the owner's English taste in its severe Regency-style facade flanked by lower dependencies and fronted by a classical portico (fig. 3).

In 1836, as the house was nearing completion, Powel received word from friends in English banking circles that Britain was about to end its support for American currency; the resulting credit squeeze would devalue all assets. With this knowledge, Powel sold the house and departed for Europe, a

pattern that would be repeated several times in his life.¹⁰ There could have been no more wonderful irony in the next owner of the house: Irish-born, self-made merchant, and general of the militia, Robert Patterson.¹¹ Powel's beliefs to the contrary, Patterson's life exemplified the American dream. The regency mansion built for John Hare Powel remained Patterson's home until his death in 1881.

By 1882 when the Patterson mansion was purchased by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the neighborhood had evolved into a robust corner of the city befitting its proximity to Broad Street, which had become the daytime and evening center of the industrial city (fig. 4). Though the history of the neighborhood can be read as a continuous skein, it breaks into several distinct phases. The first began in the early nineteenth century, encompassed the construction of the Patterson house in 1832–36, and concluded with the laying of the cornerstone for City Hall in 1871. The second phase lasted from 1871 until the 1930s when the Great Depression and, after World War II, the construction of Penn Center, drained much of the business life from Broad Street. Since then a third phase has begun, centered around the evolution of Broad Street as the projected center of the arts and home to a burgeoning hospitality industry, with government and finance moving north and west of City Hall.

Before 1840, the future course of the district around the Patterson house was less certain, and Powel could, perhaps, be forgiven for his optimism in choosing this site for his residence. After all, new churches and large houses were being built on and near Broad Street, making it a likely center for

¹⁰ For a moment in the speculative boom of the 1830s, Strickland even proposed buying the house for his own use. Hawkins, "Grecian Splendor," 42. Fisher reported Powel's return from Britain in October 1841 at a time of tension between the two countries. *Diary*, 126.

¹¹ For a brief biography of Patterson, see Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1: 754–56. Born in County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1792, he entered service in the War of 1812 as first lieutenant in the Twenty-second Regiment of Infantry; later he served as captain of the Washington Blues, and by the 1820s had reached brigadier general. He was appointed to the rank of major-general in the 1830s, a rank he held until his resignation in 1867. He was one of the few officers to serve in both the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Between these wars, he commanded troops in the Native American riots of 1844 and was back on active duty during the war with Mexico. In civilian life he was a merchant who entered the China and India trade in 1808. In 1817 he became a wholesale grocer which, in turn, led him into the sugar and cotton trades. When cotton manufacturers defaulted on purchases, he took over their mills and became a manufacturer himself. At his death on August 7, 1881, he was one of the city's principal citizens and proof of the democracy which Powel spurned.

Philadelphia's elite community, which was being pushed out of its old neighborhood near Independence Hall by the growth of the commercial district along Market, the banking district on Chestnut Street, and the insurance and press district along Walnut Street. Had Powel looked more realistically at developments to the east, however, he would have observed the westward spread of working-class neighborhoods and their institutions heading toward his chosen location. Because most of the city's work sites were along the Delaware River, blue collar workers wanted housing on the east side of the city and valued proximity to work over other factors. The result was the construction of courts of tiny brick houses that produced a heretofore unprecedented density on the blocks west of Seventh Street. In these nineteenth-century projects, large houses often fronted the main east and west streets while the rear yards contained rows of "trinity" houses, so called because of their plan with one room on each of three floors. This planning made it possible for a single block to contain as many as 150 separate dwellings, each housing as many as six or eight residents in houses whose total area, including the basement, was less than 500 square feet.¹²

Working class institutions closely followed the westward progress of the workers' housing. In 1827—before Powel's house—the Locust Street Public School was built at 12th and Locust, indicating sufficient population by that date to require its construction. A decade before, the Salem Methodist congregation had been formed at Juniper and Lombard Streets, while an African Lutheran church was constructed on Quince Street.¹³ Atlases and maps show wagon works, shoe factories, coal yards, livery stables, and other less urbane structures in the immediate vicinity of the Powel house, uses which continued until the end of the century. Thus, Powel's hope of creating an elite neighborhood in the vicinity of his house was illusory and perhaps was another reason for his sale of the house. Another ominous clue for the future of the block could be seen by 1836. Residences and institutions of the elite had already leap-frogged across Broad Street to Fifteenth and Sixteenth

¹² See for example the 1200 block between Pine and 13th Street, G. M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia*, vol. 6, 2nd–20th, 26th & 29th Wards (Philadelphia, 1875), pl. E. Many of these houses have been demolished, but characteristic rows are still to be found in the Society's neighborhood, especially between 10th and 12th Streets.

¹³ See Franklin D. Edmunds, *The Public School Buildings of the City of Philadelphia from 1745 to 1845* (7 vols., Philadelphia, 1913), 1:77–79. Edmunds published seven volumes in this series, the last of which, in 1933, brought the school story to 1907. Church histories can be found in volume 2 of Scharf and Westcott's *History of Philadelphia*. For the Methodists, see 1394–1402.

Streets.¹⁴ With the construction of St. Mark's Episcopal Church on the 1600 block of Locust Street in the next decade and, later, Holy Trinity at 19th and Walnut Streets, Rittenhouse Square would become the destination of old Philadelphia. When Powel decided to try building another city house in 1850, his chosen location was 19th and Walnut Streets in the heart of the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood.¹⁵

Still, for a brief moment in the 1830s, while the Powel house was under construction, Broad Street, because of its width and the construction of a few large houses and churches, might have seemed a likely focus for a grand residential quarter that would sustain the city's claim to be "The Athens of America." At the outbreak of the Civil War, stone, either marble or sandstone, was as common as brick along Broad Street in such buildings as the Ionic-ordered Grecian temple for the Chambers Presbyterian Church at Sansom Street (1831), the first monumental civic building to be constructed after Haviland's classically-styled School for the Deaf and Dumb. Another imposing structure was the immense classical mansion for James Dundas at the northeast corner of Walnut Street designed by Thomas Ustic Walter in 1838. Set amidst gardens, the "Yellow Mansion" attested to the idea of Broad Street as Philadelphia's Fifth Avenue. A year later, Thomas Sommerville Stewart was commissioned to build a church for the newly formed St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal congregation on their site at 13th Street above Pine Street (fig. 5). He designed a Greek-porticoed building that was to be surmounted by an immense spire on the order of James Gibbs's St. Martins in the Fields in London; Napoleon LeBrun used a similar style and material for the Penn Square Presbyterian Church which was erected across from Penn Square on Broad Street in 1842.¹⁶ John Notman's austere late Regency design for the Academy of Natural Sciences at Broad and Sansom Street (1839) continued the classical vocabulary of Broad Street. The oddest and latest building of this classical group was the

¹⁴ By 1831, Thomas Ustic Walter had designed houses at South Penn Square, a Walnut Street row west of Broad Street, and in 1833, the Epiphany Episcopal Church at 15th and Chestnut Streets. John Haviland had projects underway across Broad Street as well. See Sandra Tatman and Roger Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* (Boston, 1985).

¹⁵ For an account of the last Powel house, see Charles B. Wood, "The John Hare Powel House: New Material on John McArthur, Jr., Hoxie and Button, and Richard Upjohn," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 26 (1967), 148-53.

¹⁶ See R. A. Smith, *Philadelphia as It Is in 1852* (Philadelphia, 1852), 294-95. For a description of T. U. Walter's Universalist Church, see Smith, *Philadelphia*, 322.

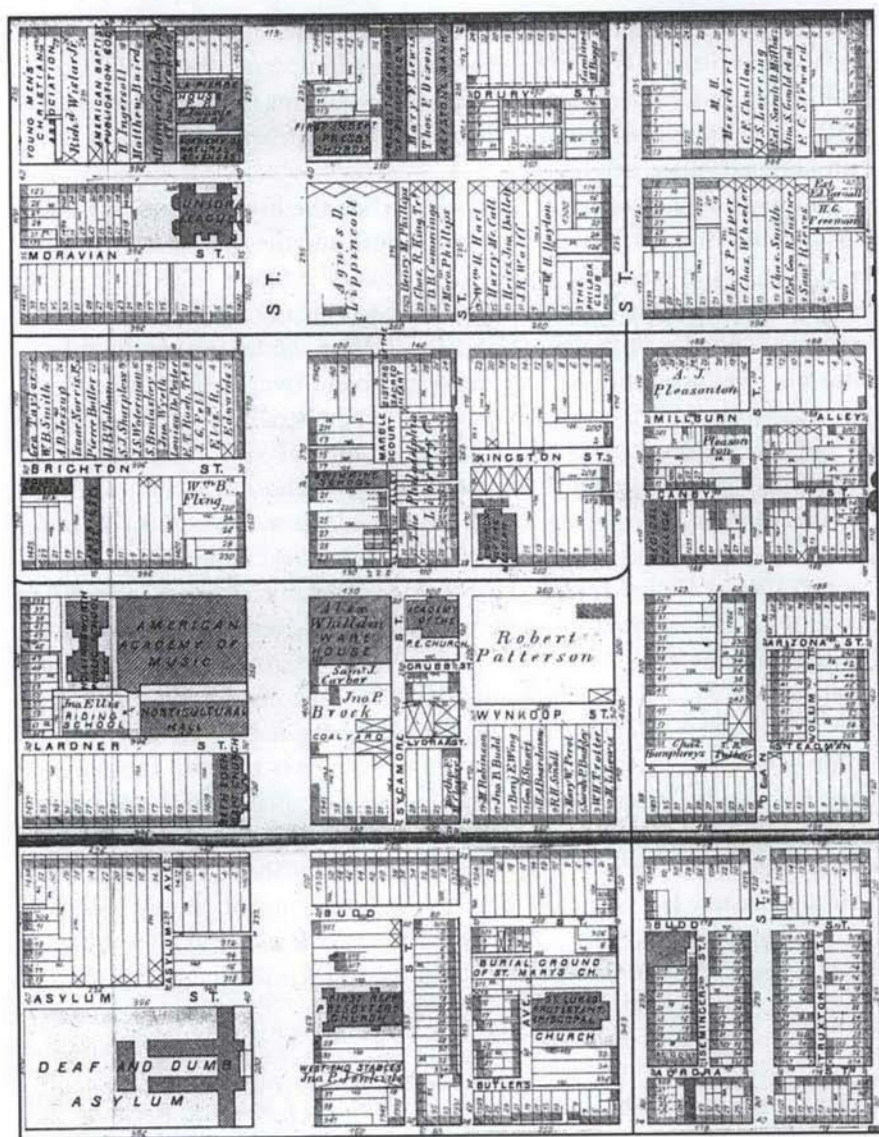


Fig. 4. G. M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1875) 6: pls. 24, 25 (detail).

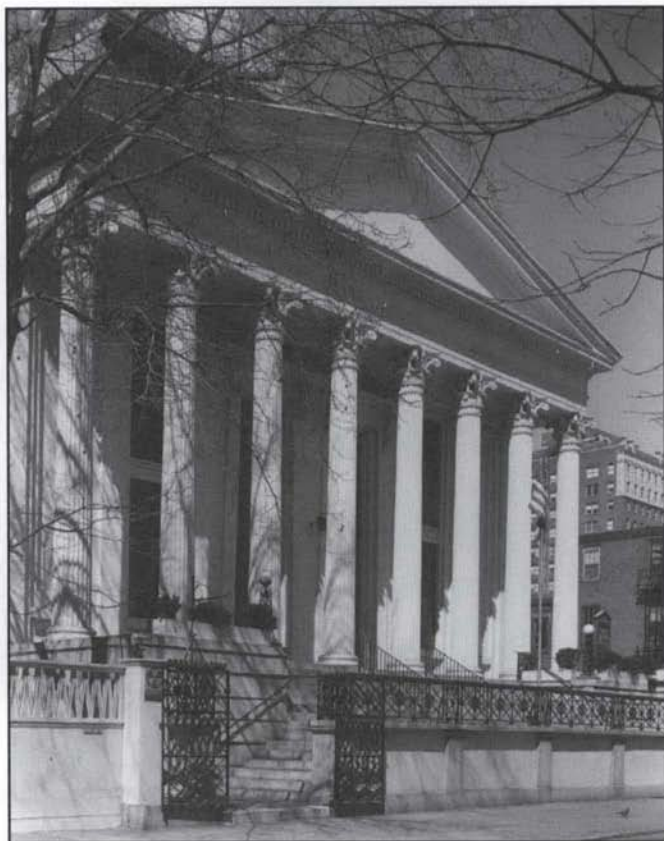


Fig. 5. Thomas Sommerville Stewart, St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 South 13th Street, c. 1840. Photo by author, 1975.

ill-sited Ridgway Building for the Library Company of Philadelphia, which was constructed after the Civil War at the will of the donor far to the south of Locust Street at Broad and Christian Streets.¹⁷ Designed by Addison Hutton in the Greek Revival style, but in a grey granite rather than the usual marble, the Ridgway (now the High School of the Performing Arts) remains

¹⁷ Elizabeth Biddle Yarnall, *Addison Hutton: Quaker Architect, 1834-1916*, (Philadelphia, 1974), 47-50.



Fig. 6. Addison Hutton, Ridgway Building, Broad and Christian Streets, 1873–78. Built for the Library Company of Philadelphia; now the Philadelphia High School of the Performing Arts. Photo by author, 1973.

visually remarkable, looking back toward the historical forms of the early republic, while adopting the materials and scale of the Victorian industrial city (fig. 6).

As the century wore on, the Gothic style found its advocates in the neighborhood for buildings whose architects and clientele confirm Locust Street's place in the hierarchy of the city. John Notman, the preferred architect of old Philadelphia families and their institutions, designed a Gothic building for the Episcopal Academy which was constructed at Juniper and Locust Streets in 1849 (fig. 7). Thomas Ustick Walter's Fourth Universalist Church, described by R. A. Smith as being in "the collegiate Gothic style," was built diagonally across the same intersection in 1851. Eight years later, the College of Physicians purchased the site at the north-

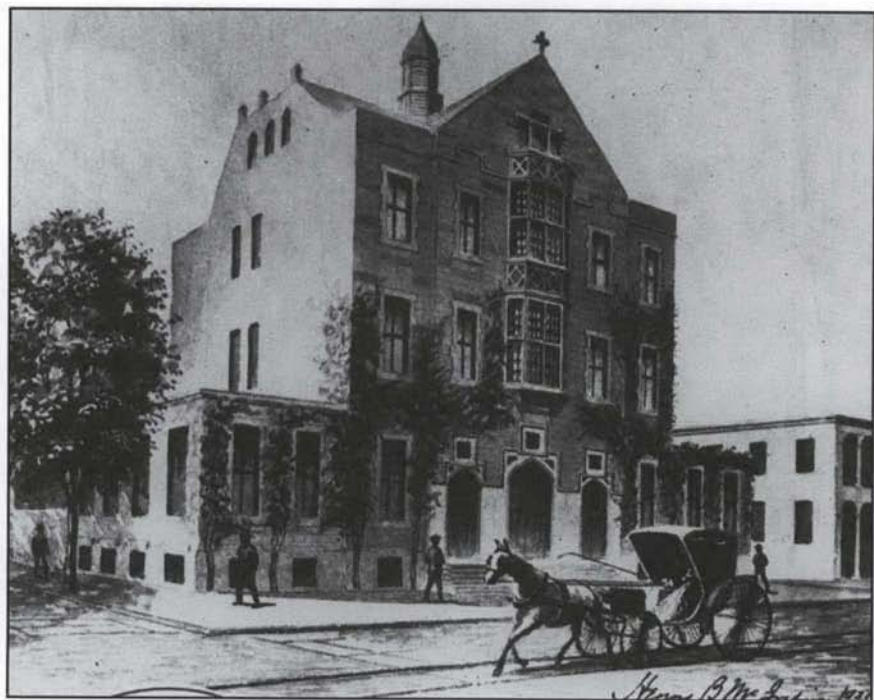


Fig. 7. John Notman, Episcopal Academy, Juniper and Locust Streets, 1849. Demolished. Drawing by Henry B. McIntire, 1935. Society Prints, HSP.

east corner of 13th and Locust Streets to house their offices and the Mütter collection of anatomical specimens. By 1864, the college had constructed a severe brick building from designs by James H. Windrim who had begun learning the architectural profession in the office of John Notman (fig. 8).¹⁸ Thus, by midcentury, Robert Patterson's neighborhood was flourishing on the western edge of the city with churches and elite institutions. With the purchase in 1850 of the Kemble house at 13th and Walnut Streets by the

¹⁸ For an account of the history of the College of Physicians, see Scharf and Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia*, 2: 1643. Its date (when Windrim was in his early twenties) suggests that it may have been Windrim's first independent commission in Philadelphia. The building was acquired by the Free Library Association in 1910, making 13th and Locust Streets the research center for the new downtown. See Joseph Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, (4 vols., Harrisburg, 1932), 3: 695–96.

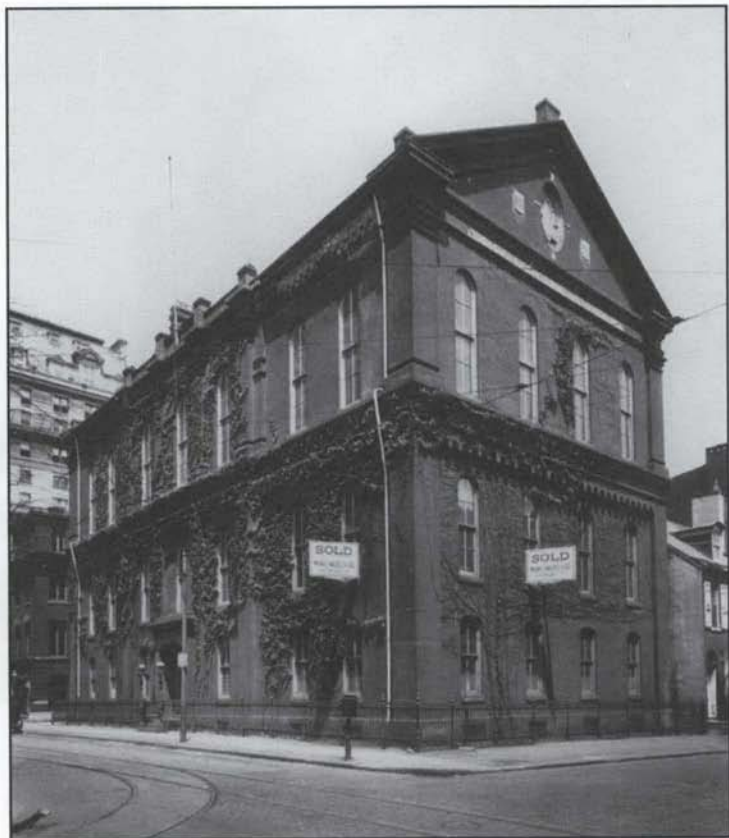


Fig. 8. James H. Windrim, College of Physicians, northeast corner 13th and Locust Streets, c. 1864. Demolished. Penrose Col., HSP.

Philadelphia Club, it would have been reasonable to conclude that Broad Street and its adjacent streets could still become the center for the Philadelphia gentry.

A clear-eyed analysis, however, would have found good evidence that the future of Broad Street would belong to the broadening society of the industrial city. Between 1850 and the Centennial, south Broad Street at Chestnut Street became an avenue of the social arts. The most sophisticated hotel in the nation, the Italianate La Pierre Hotel was constructed in 1853 from plans by John McArthur, Jr. (fig. 9) Despite its French name, it was



Fig. 9. John McArthur, Jr., La Pierre House, South Broad Street between Chestnut and Penn Square, c. 1853. Demolished. Photo, c. 1890. HSP.

surmounted by an immense American eagle that denoted the continuing strength of political imagery that had made the Greek revival so popular in the previous generation. After the Civil War it merged with the Lafayette Hotel which had been adapted from the old building of the Academy of Natural History. Commercial structures including John McArthur's Edwards Building (1852) on the west side of Broad and Walnut joined T. U. Walter's building for Charles Fletcher (1832) at the same intersection. The economic downturn of the late 1850s caused the backers of the American Academy of Music to reject marble for the red brick German "Rundbogenstil" design by Napoleon LeBrun and Gustav Runge for the exterior of their new concert hall. To the south were several eclectic stucco-over-rubble Presbyterian churches in a free-style mixture of Italianate and

Gothic, among them the First United Presbyterian at Broad and Lombard by John McArthur (1855) and the First Reformed Presbyterian at Broad above Lombard (1854).

John Fraser's red brick and brownstone, mansarded Second Empire Union League (1863) (fig. 10) and Samuel Sloan's yellow sandstone Italianate Horticultural Hall (1866; where the Merriam Theater now stands) denoted the continuing fragmentation of the earlier aesthetic unity of the avenue and the continuing expansion of the civic zone during and after the Civil War. The Venetian Gothic Beth Eden Baptist Church that stood at Broad and Spruce Streets, by New Yorker Edward T. Potter, dated from this era as well. Most telling were the architects selected for the Broad Street buildings. With the exception of the Baptist church by Edward Potter (whose father had been the Episcopal Bishop of Philadelphia), the architects of the buildings of the second half of the century were not those usually selected by elite clients.¹⁹ Instead of choosing John Notman, architect of the Athenaeum, St. Mark's Episcopal and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Episcopal Academy, or Frank Furness, architect of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Episcopalian churches including the parish house addition to St. Luke's Church, the fourth-story addition to Episcopal Academy, and downtown clubs and residences, the designers of Broad Street's new buildings were those of the middle-class commercial culture: John McArthur, Samuel Sloan, and James Windrim. By 1870 Broad Street belonged to the entire city.

This direction for Broad Street was confirmed in 1871 when, after a generation of wrangling, the decision was finally made to build City Hall at Broad and Market Streets. Instead of choosing a site in the old city near the existing centers of finance and commerce, the Penn Square site determined the future role of Broad Street as the city's new financial, retail, and government center. The significance of this decision in making it possible to preserve the old city (through neglect rather than design) cannot be overestimated. Had the modern city developed along the Delaware, Philadelphia's present form would have been very different indeed, with little of the historic city surviving. In Boston and New York, nineteenth- and

¹⁹ For architectural patronage as an indicator of social status, see George E. Thomas, "Architectural Patronage and Social Stratification in Philadelphia Between 1840 and 1920," in *The Divided Metropolis: Social and Spatial Dimensions of Philadelphia, 1800-1975*, ed. William W. Cutler III and Howard Gillette, Jr. (Westport, Conn, 1980), 85-123.



Fig. 10. John Fraser, Union League, 140 South Broad Street, 1863. Photo, c. 1890. HSP.

twentieth-century city halls built adjacent to the earlier government buildings attracted new commercial and office buildings to their vicinities, with the result that all but the most outstanding eighteenth-century buildings were demolished. In Philadelphia, the move to Broad Street meant that a new downtown could develop independent of the old city. It would become the city's daytime corporate zone, while theaters and hotels extended the bustle of the daytime world into the evening.

One burst of activity occurred around the Centennial when theatrical impresarios, the Kiralfy brothers, built Kiralfy's Alhambra Theater on the former site of John Brock's coal yard, across from the Academy of Music. Ornamented with Moorish domes and arcades across its front, it housed mass theatrical spectacles, with dancing girls, hunting dogs, fawns, and

elephants. One nuisance had been exchanged for another.²⁰ Instead of becoming a Fifth Avenue of great houses and churches, Philadelphia's post-Civil War Broad Street would combine Wall Street and Broadway with visually jarring dissonances.

Through the 1870s and 1880s, the rising bulk of McArthur's City Hall on its Penn Square site confirmed the certainty of the removal of government from Independence Hall to Broad Street. Ironically, many Philadelphians seemed determined to ignore that fact, building new banks near the old banking district around 4th and Chestnut into the 1880s and constructing the city's new bourse at Fifth Street below Market in the 1890s. While elements of the business community remained oblivious of the obvious requirement to move toward the new City Hall, institutions that had remained to the east, in the vicinity of the urban center of the Revolutionary City, began searching for new sites. Their new locations suggest that these moves were not aimed at joining an anticipated downtown, but rather had the goal of removing from their old neighborhoods around Independence Square while remaining in proximity to the homes of their supporters who had gradually moved westward. The old city had finally been abandoned to the city's ever growing immigrant population who were housed in tenements carved out of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century mansions, such as the Powel house on 3rd Street which became a cigar factory, or the rows of federal-era houses adjacent to John Haviland's St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (now St. George's Greek Orthodox Church) which were enlarged to become tenements.

Among the organizations that made the westward move after the Centennial was the Library Company. Deterred from using their recently completed Ridgway building at Broad and Christian Streets because of its distance from both the ancient and projected city centers, members of the Library Company decided to build on property that they had purchased in 1870 at Juniper and Locust Streets, when the membership were fighting in court to prevent the construction of the Ridgway building.²¹ Frank Furness won the competition for the new building which was intended to mimic

²⁰ Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters: A Pictorial and Architectural History* (New York, 1994), xviii–xix. Though not an overwhelming success for its builders, it survived as the Broad Street Theater into the 1930s. The site is now occupied by the Double Tree Hotel.

²¹ For a contemporary account of the buildings and battles of the Library Company, see Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 2: 1186–1187.

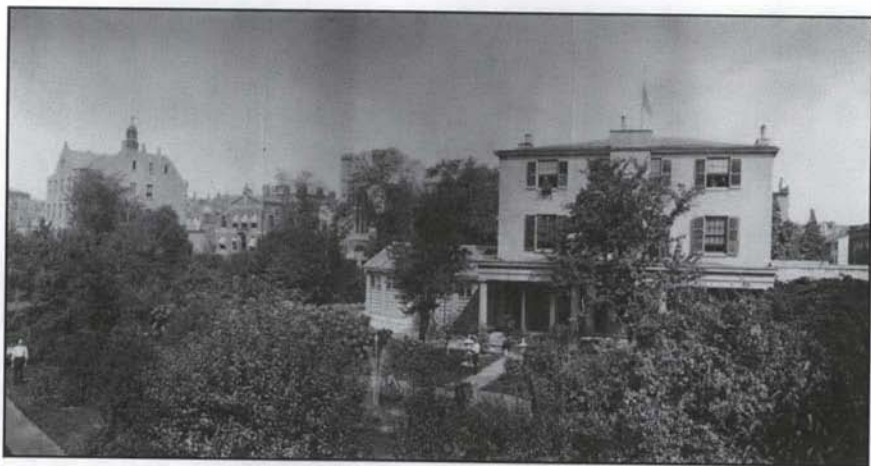


Fig. 12. Rear of the Patterson Mansion; in background, from left, Episcopal Academy, Library Company, and Church of the Messiah. Photo by Gutekunst, 1883. Society Prints, HSP.

decision to build at Juniper and Locust Streets, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania purchased the Patterson home and moved their collections to 13th and Locust Street. Though the address was the same as in Powel's day, under the impetus of the construction of the new City Hall, the neighborhood had been transformed from its state when John Hare Powel tried to save money by building "on the frontier" half a century before.

In 1882, the Historical Society raised the necessary funds from its membership to purchase the Powel/Patterson house. Photographs taken at the time of the purchase attest to the charms of the gardens to the south of the house (fig. 12) that recalled the Society's previous setting amidst the grounds of Pennsylvania Hospital. With an eye to the needs of the present, the members agreed to sell off what they perceived as surplus property to the side and rear to match state funds which paid for the construction of a lecture hall on the west side of the mansion. The ubiquitous Addison Hutton was the designer of the new wing, producing a red brick and brownstone Victorian version of the colonial style that replaced one of the

building . . . yet the new edifice is in the interior substantially an architectural copy of the former."



Fig. 11. Frank Furness, Library Company of Philadelphia, northwest corner Locust and Juniper Streets, c. 1880. Demolished. Photo, c. 1940. Pennrose Col., HSP.

something of the character of their original William Thornton building on 5th Street (fig. 11). A letter dated February 6, 1879, from the architect to Henry Wharton, Esq., chairman of the Building Committee, recorded Furness's goals: "[I am] endeavoring however to suggest the general exterior appearance of the present building in that of the building without making an exact reproduction. Those portions colored red on the drawings are to be of Philadelphia brick of dark and uniform red color; no black, glazed or dyed brick to be used, fearing that the use of such material would detract from the dignity of the building."²² In 1882, three years after the Library Company's

²² Frank Furness to Henry Wharton, Esq., Feb. 6, 1879, Library Company of Philadelphia. See also Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 2:1187, who commented on the new building's appearance. "Although bearing no very strong resemblance, so far as the superficial observer can detect, to the old



Fig. 13. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 13th and Locust Streets, c. 1890. The site includes the Patterson Mansion flanked by two fireproof additions. The recently completed Assembly Hall (1884), by Addison Hutton, is on the right. Society Col. Photo, HSP.

front dependencies and marked the boundaries of growth for the institution (fig. 13).

The sale of the adjacent land provided sites for a cluster of nine houses of remarkable architectural interest. Most if not all were certainly the work of Frank Furness. The clearest documentary evidence is for the conjoined houses at the corner of 13th and Irving Streets, numbers 242 and 240, which were built in 1882–83 for John Lewis and Edward Beale, respectively the father-in-law and brother-in-law of Furness's partner Allen Evans (fig. 14).²³ The family connections between Furness and sister Annis Lee Furness Wister and the astonishing overscaled detail of the now savagely mutilated house at the northwest corner of Juniper Street and Locust (1322 Locust

²³ John T. Lewis's daybook survives in family papers deposited at the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania. It records the purchase of the lots, the decision to hire son-in-law Allen Evans of Furness and Evans as architect, and the ongoing construction decisions.

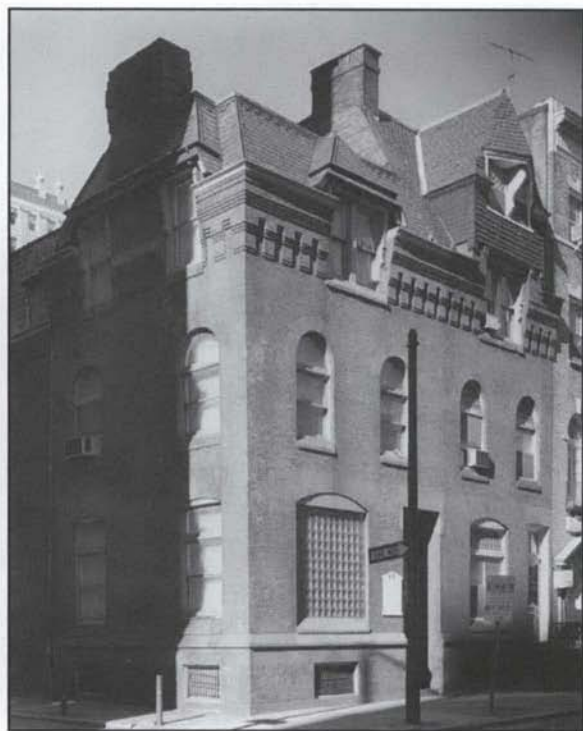


Fig. 14. Furness and Evans, Lewis and Beale Houses, 13th and Irving Streets, 1882-83, Photo by author, 1976.

Street) makes it a likely Furness and Evans project as well. Details of the facade and the interior and the iron-work of the steps, as well as Allen Evans long-term relationship with the Cassatt family, also provide evidence for 1320 Locust Street, which was built for J. Gardner Cassatt, brother of another Furness client, A. J. Cassatt, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. For many years it housed the Kean Archives. Less certain but likely are the brownstone-fronted house (demolished by the Historical Society for its 1980s expansion) at 236 S. 13th Street built for Walter Horstmann, Jr., son of the city's great manufacturer of braided silks for uniform decorations. This house showed characteristic elements of Furness's work, especially in the interior fireplaces. Another of the Locust Street houses, on the site where

the Library Company is now headquartered, was the home of Morris J. Lewis, an in-law of Allen Evans.²⁴ Irving Street became the site for stables for the new residences which reflect the Furness office's vigorous designs and rough textures. One of these, at 1317 Irving Street, served as the home for George S. McManus, Inc., purveyor of rare books for many years, drawing to its door many patrons of the Historical Society.

The new residents of the 1300 block of Locust Street and the 200 block of South 13th Street must have found their neighbors to the east unsavory, for they quickly established the Real Estate Investment Company to buy and renovate the more dilapidated houses along the 1200 block of Locust Street. In 1890 that organization hired Frank Furness to reface and upgrade 1203, -5, -7, -9, -19 and -21 Locust Street; two years later he was commissioned to work on the south side of the street as well.²⁵ The resulting upturn in the area's fortunes stimulated much additional construction. When Walter's Universalist Church was demolished in 1890, it became the site of three houses by the younger generation of Philadelphia architects (fig. 15). The first of these was the Venetian Gothic-inspired house for Clarence Moore (1890) at the corner of Juniper, by Wilson Eyre, Jr. Eyre's more historical style contrasted, for example, with the free Victorian mode of Frank Furness who Moore's parents had hired to build a house on South Broad Street, a house that Louis Sullivan described as "like a flower by the roadside," and marked an important shift in Philadelphia taste that returned the city's elite to the directions of the national mainstream. Adjacent to the Moore House, Eyre designed the brick and brownstone colonial revival house (1892) for Joseph Leidy, the antiquarian son of the famous natural historian, and still further to the east, Frank Miles Day built a brooding brick Gothic house at 1313 Locust Street (1897) for Clarence Newbold. With a handsome twin in the Venetian revival style by Day at 1213-15 Locust (1892) for the Real Estate Investment Company, John Powel's neighborhood was transformed into an architectural oasis—though with buildings advanced to the street line instead of on the set-back line of Powel's mansion.

The Library Company and the Historical Society were soon joined by

²⁴ See George E. Thomas et al., *Frank Furness: The Complete Works* (rev. ed., New York, 1996), 239-41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 303, 315. By 1895 these houses were occupied by families who made the *Philadelphia Blue Book*. The gulf between the social elite and the working classes to the east is apparent in the lack of any *Blue Book* citations between 8th and 12th Streets along Locust Street.



Fig. 15. 1320–22 Locust Street. Left, Clarence Moore house, by Wilson Eyre, Jr.; right, Joseph Leidy house, also by Eyre. The Gothic house on the far right was demolished. Photo by Philip B. Wallace, date unknown. Penrose Col., HSP.

other cultural/social institutions in the new downtown, the most dazzling of which was Frank Miles Day's poetically asymmetrical light-yellow brick and limestone Venetian palazzo for the Art Club at 222 South Broad Street (1888) (fig. 16). Its careful historical accuracy contrasted with Furness's free-style Victorian Gothic Academy of the Fine Arts north of City Hall, of the previous decade, while its location placed it among the hotels, theaters, and residences of the elite of the city, suggesting that it served daytime and evening activities. The Art Club's membership was unusually cosmopolitan for Philadelphia, with members listing home addresses in Liverpool, England, as well as Boston, New York, Washington, D.C., Louisville, Kentucky, and Chicago. Members were established artists (Colin Campbell Cooper, Charles Dana), architects (Charles M Burns, Walter Cope, Frank

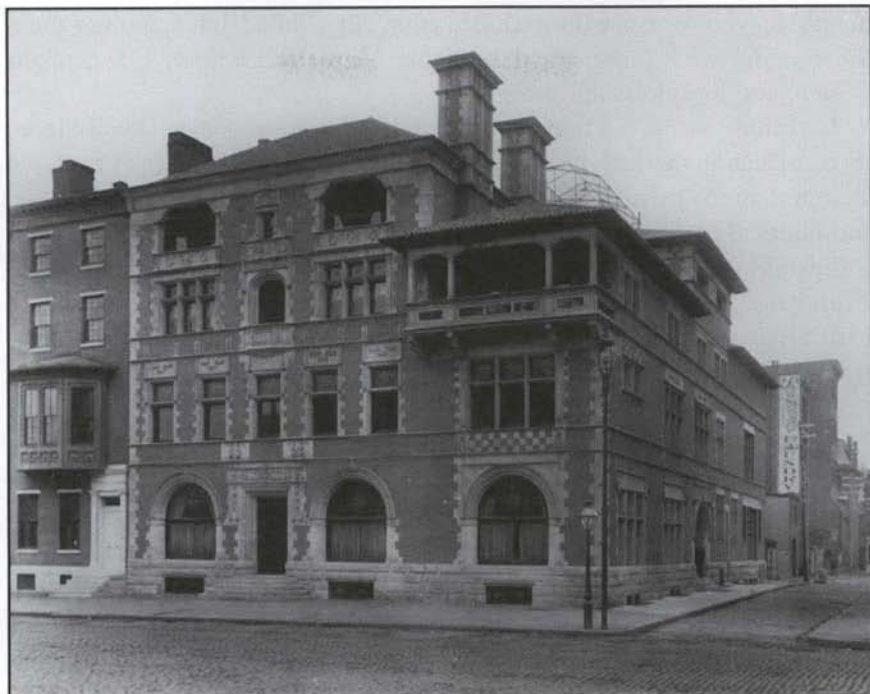


Fig. 16. Frank Miles Day, Art Club, 222 South Broad Street, c. 1900. Demolished. Penrose Col., HSP.

Miles Day), and industrialists, manufacturers, and merchants who supported the arts (William Henszey, John Wanamaker), a list which suggests that civic duty formed a part of the ethos of such clubs.²⁶

In the Victorian city, most clubs restricted membership to one sex. The Art Club, despite its subject, was a men's club. Adjacent to it was the Contemporary Club, whose members included men and women, and drew on a wider circle than the usual business and social elite. Its treasurer in 1901 was Horace Traubel, Walt Whitman's literary executor and editor of *The Conservator*, while its board included M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College. The Contemporary Club was also unusual in including

²⁶ For a brief history see GET [George E. Thomas], "Frank Miles Day," and "The Art Club," in *Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art*, ed. Darrell Sewell (Philadelphia, 1976), 428–29.

members who were usually excluded from elite Philadelphia, among them the noted Jewish jurist, the Honorable Mayer Sulzberger, Dr. S. Solis Cohen, and Joseph Rosengarten.

Civic duty was also reflected in the earlier Union League on Broad Street. Its construction marked the divided city's response to the stresses of the Civil War and afterwards remained a center of Republican politics and financial and political power. At the end of the century, it was the city's largest club and would soon be forced to add a massive rear addition (1905, by Horace Trumbauer, in a Renaissance limestone mode) that would face west onto 15th Street, marking the continued westward shift of the business district. Another important daytime club whose membership spanned industrialists and financiers was the Manufacturers' Club. Its board was a who's who of Philadelphia heavy industry and included Fayette R. Plumb and William Bement (tools), G. Martin Brill (trolleys), Edward Bromley (carpets), John Baird (locomotives), and David S. Stetson (hats). Other members included William Henszey and John Converse of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, James Dobson of the great cloth mills at the Falls of the Schuylkill, ship builders Charles and Henry Cramp, and the premier machine tool maker of the era, William Sellers. Their club had been located at 1409 Walnut Street, but in 1911 they would build a new headquarters on Broad Street, adjacent to the Union League, but in a larger Renaissance-inspired limestone-clad palazzo by Simon and Bassett. Political and economic power as represented by the Union League and the Manufacturers' Club were thus centered near City Hall and the Broad Street Station of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Other daytime clubs for less exalted purposes met at hotels. With the construction of the Bellevue-Stratford in 1902, by the Hewitt Brothers, some clubs moved their meetings to that grand French Renaissance building. These included the Philadelphia Four-In-Hand Club, whose membership was restricted to those wealthy enough to own the specialized team of horses and carriage of the sort depicted in the Thomas Eakins painting of the *Fairman Rogers Four-in-Hand* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), and the leisure time to perfect the esoteric art of driving four horses, each on separate reins.²⁷ The Clover Club, whose members largely consisted of the owners of

²⁷ Fairman Rogers wrote an instruction manual for this sport. He admonished that if a gentleman did not have enough hands to control his horses and tip his hat to a lady, he should practice until he did. The twenty-six members included A. J. Cassatt, William Elkins, A. J. Drexel, Samuel F. Houston, and H. Pratt McKean. *The Philadelphia Blue Book* (Philadelphia, 1901), 684.

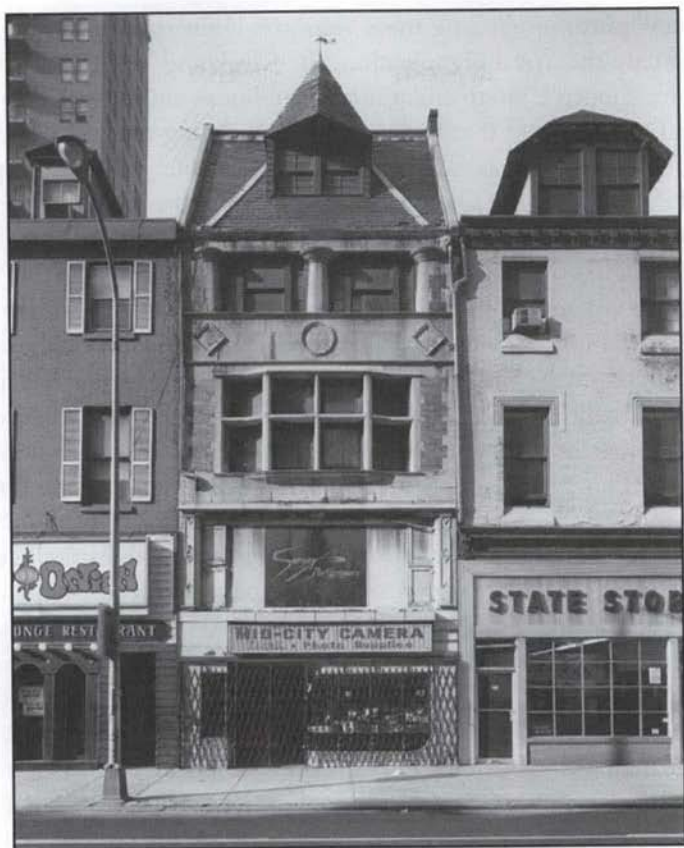


Fig. 17. Wilson Eyre, Jr., University Club, 1316 Walnut Street, 1887. Photo by author, 1975.

Philadelphia newspapers of the day, also met at the hotel.

Daytime access and proximity to the prestigious Philadelphia Club (on Walnut Street) were apparently important criteria for the University Club (1887), designed by Wilson Eyre, Jr., at 1316 Walnut Street (fig. 17). Similar goals must have directed the Princeton Club to its early-twentieth-century clubhouse at 1223 Locust Street. Adapted to the club's needs in 1915 by W. Woodburn Potter of Magaziner and Potter, it was closer in location to the literary and artistic clubs. These were largely found to the east of Broad Street in a bohemian zone in workers' rowhouses that were adapted

to their new purpose. Among these were the University of Pennsylvania's undergraduate theatrical organization, the Mask and Wig Club, which in 1893 commissioned Eyre to adapt into a clubhouse and theater a Lutheran chapel on Quince Street that had become a dissecting room for students of Jefferson Hospital and was currently serving as a stable. Though its splendid Maxfield Parrish mural of Old King Cole has recently been sold to establish an endowment for the club, its undergraduate and alumni membership remains strong.

Another similarly situated organization was the T-Square Club, comprised of young architects, which renovated a small building at 1204 Chancellor Street. In the Victorian city, architects were located near the State House, with the larger and more important offices the most centrally located, leaving the perimeter of the city to the west for the offices of the newer firms. This split was also revealed in the professional organizations of the older and younger men. The generation who matured around the Civil War joined the American Institute of Architects and fought the battles for the profession over fee structure, uncompensated competitions, and ownership of drawings—the issues that determined professional rather than craft status. In 1871 their club rooms were designed by Frank Furness in the Athenaeum, probably in the space vacated by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The new generation of architects found their interests in the artistry of their work, forming the T-Square Club in 1883 as a place for meetings, meals, conversation, and for exhibitions and study. The location on Chancellor Street placed them midway between the old city center and the new, and near the offices of the younger generation who formed its membership.

Other clubs that catered to literary and artistic groups included the newspapermen's Poor Richard Club, at 239 South Camac Street; the more literary Franklin Inn, at Camac and St. James Street, whose founding members included Horace Howard Furness, the Shakespearian scholar, and novelist and physician S. Weir Mitchell; the Philadelphia Sketch Club, at 233–35 South Camac Street, the oldest art club in the United States, founded in 1860 and chartered in 1889; the Plastic Club, at 247 South Camac Street, also for artists; and the Charlotte Cushman Club, a residence for actresses named for the first internationally known American actress. Woven into the fabric of the small north-south streets, many have remained active to the present in their original houses. The scribes of the Poor Richard Club eventually moved to the Joseph Leidy house on Locust Street, where

they remained until their clubhouse and the adjacent Clarence Moore house were acquired by their present owners, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, who carefully restored the exteriors of both buildings in the 1980s.

The region immediately east of Broad Street also served as a center of women's organizations, several of which acquired or built their own clubhouses. Of these, the most adventurous was the New Century Club which, in 1891, commissioned Minerva Parker, the city's first professional woman architect, to design its clubhouse at 124 South 12th Street, between Sansom and Walnut Streets, and across from the Episcopal Church House.²⁸ While the Church House still stands, at 12th and Walnut Streets, it has been converted to law offices; the New Century Club was demolished in the 1970s. In addition to the diocesan offices, the Church House contained the headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution who found their sisterly relationship in the accident of their ancestry. The New Century Club by contrast found its mission in advancing the cause of women with a focus on the possibilities of the twentieth century, which it presumed would bring suffrage and other rights. Parker's design for the club was vaguely Gothic in proportion and followed the light-toned color scheme of the masonry of the Art Club, but it lacked the rich overlay of detail that typified big budget buildings for male-dominated organizations (fig. 18). Other women's clubs were clustered in the same area. The Civic Club, at 1117 Walnut Street, included among its members Mrs. Owen Wister, Jr., who served as president.

In 1902, when the Historical Society of Pennsylvania decided to replace the Patterson house, its site was like those of its previous existence, an oasis amidst the bustle of the city and in close proximity to the homes of many of its members. With new clubs and houses filling in around it, the Society's leaders, perhaps justifiably, missed the portents of the coming tidal wave of change that would soon transform the character of their site quite as thoroughly as the shift toward the common culture had changed Broad Street and its immediate environs immediately after Powel built the original house. The most important evidence of change was the shift of elite

²⁸ For a brief biography of Minerva Parker, see Tatman and Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects*, 573-75. Trained at the Franklin Institute, she worked in the office of Fred Thorn and later continued his practice until shortly after her marriage in 1891. Parker's New Century Club building in Wilmington, Delaware, still stands.

recreation from the city to the suburbs. This was evidenced in the 1880s by the founding of a cluster of cricket clubs at Merion, Germantown, and Belmont, which were simultaneously matched by the establishment of golf and country clubs for those whose outdoor activities took different directions. The construction of impressive clubhouses in the 1890s by Frank Furness (Merion) and McKim, Mead, and White (Germantown) denoted the rise of suburbs as centers of year-round living and the club as the substitute for community.

Paralleling the shift toward recreational activities in the suburbs was the rapid change of Broad Street from its initial role as cultural and civic center toward its turn-of-the-century role as the center of business. Even before the official opening of City Hall on the eve of the new century, December 31, 1900, old institutions were giving way one by one to new commercial and residential towers. The Chambers Church at Broad and Sansom Streets merged with the Wylie Church, and the site of the former became the location of the brownstone-clad skyscraper by James Windrim (1899) for the newspaper the *North American*. Almost a decade earlier, in 1891, LeBrun's Presbyterian Church on Broad at South Penn Square was replaced by William Decker's Richardsonian Romanesque design for John Betz's office building. Around the same time, the Beth Eden Baptist Church was replaced by a small hotel. Long before, in the 1860s, the Academy of Natural Sciences had purchased its Logan Square site and moved from South Broad Street, leaving its site to be incorporated into the Lafayette Hotel. The old elite institutions along Broad Street and their users were being pushed out by the business interests of the city. In addition to the *North American*, other city newspapers moved to the area when the *Evening Bulletin* joined the *Inquirer* near City Hall.

Before the end of the century, three new hotels, the Walton, the Metropole, and the Stenton were constructed between Locust and Spruce Street on Broad Street. With corner towers and curving ornamental features, these hotels were the closest approximations in the city to the so-called "Style 1900," or "Art Nouveau" that gives such interest to European cities of the period. In the first years of the twentieth century, the more urbane French Renaissance Bellevue-Stratford and the English Georgian-styled Ritz hotels were constructed south of Walnut Street. Of these only the Bellevue-Stratford was by an elite architectural firm, the Hewitt Brothers. The others were designed by architects of the north Philadelphia nouveau riche, culminating with the selection of Horace Trumbauer as the architect

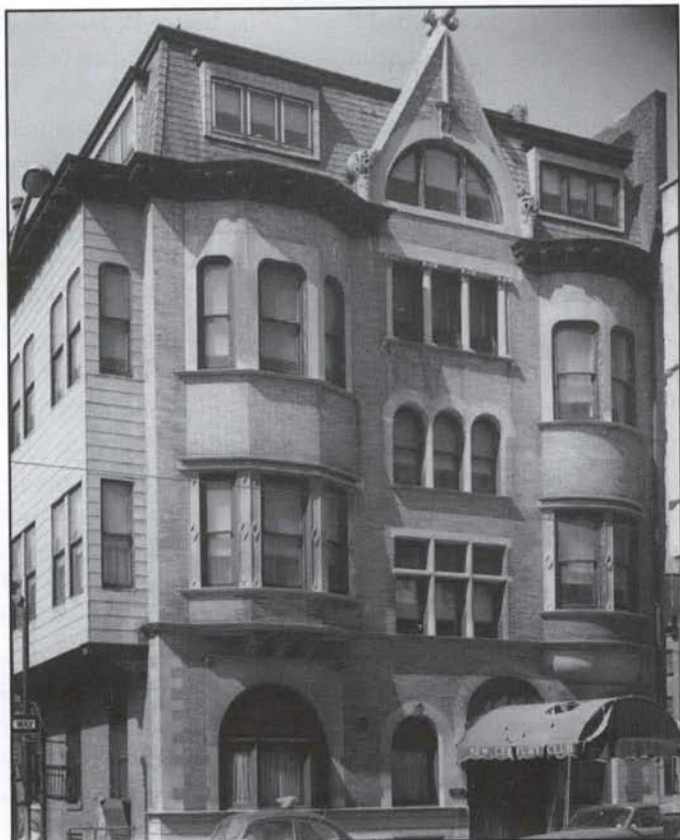


Fig. 18. Minerva Parker, New Century Club, 124 South 12th Street, 1891. Demolished. Photo by author, 1972.

of the Ritz.²⁹ With the official opening of City Hall in 1901, these new offices and commercial hotels heralded the creation of the new business district. Broad Street's future was Philadelphia's version of the canyons of Wall Street. By 1926 the Girard, the Land Title, the Western Savings Fund, the Provident, and the Pennsylvania Company had all moved their offices

²⁹ The Walton, renamed the John Bartram, survived into the 1960s. Trumbauer's Ritz was stripped of its classical front and converted to an office building in the 1970s; in its rear alley the grand columns of its original facade can still be seen.

west within a block or two of Broad Street. The last of Broad Street's great houses, Thomas Walter's Dundas house, was demolished to make way for the construction of the Fidelity Building in 1927, completing the shift from the mid-nineteenth-century Athenian unity of classically styled institutions and houses to the twentieth-century variety of offices, hotels, and places of entertainment.

Thus, at the moment that the Society determined to replace its building with the present structure, there was considerable evidence that the community around it was changing into the new downtown and that this in turn would lead to the departure of their members from the neighborhood. Nonetheless, the Society proceeded with plans for the present modern, fireproof building. Again Addison Hutton was called upon as architect and again he proposed a Victorian version of the Colonial Revival, this time of pressed red brick with Pennsylvania blue marble accents. His multi-phased design began by enveloping the earlier auditorium of 1883 and was followed three years later by the demolition of the Powel/Patterson house and the construction of the reading rooms and spaces of the present building from plans of Savery, Scheetz and Savery, the successors to Addison Hutton's firm. Though the new building was intended to provide fireproof storage, meeting rooms, and more spacious reading rooms, there were pleasures to be had in the new design. At the rear, south-facing bays opening on to the small light court recalled the grace notes of Strickland's bays facing the garden, and the French and Italian mantles that Powel had selected were incorporated into the public spaces.

By the time the Society's new building was dedicated in 1910, Broad Street had become the economic heart of the city, with railroad terminals on both sides and the Market Street subway aimed at its vicinity. Clubs that had found homes between the old downtown and the new moved west again, finding homes in the vicinity of Rittenhouse Square. Among the first to move was the University Club which, by 1901, had relocated two blocks west to 1510 Walnut Street, joining the Civic Club, which had moved from 1117 Walnut Street to 1524 Locust Street. The Engineers' Club, meanwhile, had moved from its Girard Avenue home near Baldwin Locomotive to 1317 Spruce Street, indicating a shift in membership into the offices of the downtown. At the same time Baldwin was beginning to build its new facilities near Chester. Broad Street's clubs were increasingly those of the daytime, business world.

Rivalling the departure of the social clubs as a measure of change were the

transformations being wrought by the automobile which began to crowd the city's streets, making the downtown less pleasant. Soon the shift to year-round suburban living began to drain the downtown of its elite residents. In the first generation of the new century, the residents of the lively fin-de-siècle community around the Historical Society of Pennsylvania departed for the country. As early as 1909, there was a trickle of departures; by the end of World War I there were few members of polite society still in residence.³⁰ By the 1920s, the Episcopal Academy followed its clients to the Main Line.

With the departure of the residents, new organizations and institutions continued to trickle into the neighborhood, but they lacked the exclusivity of the past. The home of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Drysdale at 1307 Locust Street was sold to the New Century Guild, which instead of being related to the club of elite ladies on 12th Street was an organization devoted to working women and their causes. (It remains today directly across Locust Street from the Society.) In the meantime, members of the College of Physicians had purchased a property on the western edge of the Rittenhouse neighborhood and commissioned Cope and Stewardson to design their collegiate building. Their old building was sold to the Free Library of Philadelphia, which would remain in that location until its new headquarters was constructed on the Parkway after World War I. Another new addition to the vicinity at 205 South Juniper Street was the picturesque brick building for the offices of the architectural firm of Mellor and Meigs. In addition to offices, the building contained a studio with a large window filling the north end gable. Its picturesque charm, introduced by Wilson Eyre, Jr., Frank Miles Day, and other architects of the post-Centennial generation, was another demonstration of the nostalgia for the past that would triumph over the progressivism of the industrial culture that had guided Philadelphia's fortunes in the nineteenth century. With the rise of organizations whose membership was dependent on heredity rather than achievement, Philadelphia's future would be in its past.

With the departure of the residential community and those institutions associated with it, new construction would take the form of offices for the still expanding business district, apartment houses for young urbanites of the 1920s, or commercial showrooms. Examples of each remain in the

³⁰ For the clearest evidence, see *Boyd's Philadelphia Blue Book* (Philadelphia, 1901), 118, and the 1909-10 edition, 106.

neighborhood. Just south of Locust Street on 13th Street is a small apartment house in the modern Lombard Romanesque style of yellow brick and limestone, designed for Lewis Cahan by Horace Trumbauer. Just across 13th Street from the Society a three-story brick Colonial Revival office building, commissioned by the Philadelphia Real Estate Board, was designed in 1922 by Gravall and Hall who were better known for modest suburban apartment houses. Four years later, the corner property directly across Locust Street from the Society's front entrance was acquired for the construction of a commercial showroom for plumbing supplies. The new building was designed by the architect of the Automat cafeterias, Ralph Bencker. One new neighbor, the Rosenbach Galleries, was appropriate to its setting. The great rare book collectors, brothers Philip and Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, opened their shop in 1897 in the houses at 1318, 1320, and 1322 Locust Street. The Rosenbachs had found their way to the vicinity of the Society thanks to the residential flight to the suburbs.

After these new additions to the neighborhood, the Depression and World War II slowed building, and with the loss of momentum of the downtown came a return to the deteriorated conditions of the neighborhood that are described in the WPA's *Philadelphia: A Guide to the Nation's Birthplace*. The neighborhood was characterized by its

chaotic depravity—four blocks of degeneracy, gangsterism, and crime. The street kept its respectability until about 1880. Then came a period of decline, and it degenerated into one of the meanest and most disreputable of streets. Until 1900, it was the scene of brawls by day and crimes by night, requiring an entire squad of the city's police to maintain order. For twenty years, the street lined with taverns and brothels, rotted in a mire of debauchery.³¹

By 1940 the Library Company had sold the site of its Furness-designed building and retreated to the Ridgway Building on South Broad Street, which at least had the merit of being out of the commercial center. With Furness's Victorian Gothic at the nadir of its reputation, the Juniper and Locust site was cleared for a new type of structure—a reinforced concrete parking garage of the sort that was being fitted into the old city to accommodate Philadelphians' love affair with the automobile.

³¹ Paul Comly French, *Philadelphia: A Guide to the Nation's Workplace* (Philadelphia, 1937), 424–25.

There was worse in store for the Society. As the 1920s ended, houses were sold for conversion into speakeasies (the Moore house at Juniper and Locust Streets became Benny the Bum's); strip joints and worse returned to the neighborhood. After World War II, the removal of much of the business district to the new Penn Center development on the site of the Broad Street Station, resulted in a downturn in the value of real estate along South Broad Street. The simultaneous urban renewal of Society Hill pushed the flophouses of the old city west; by the 1970s, the Society's neighborhood had taken a turn that Powel could not have imagined, with "adult" entertainment invading the region. Friendly ladies in short skirts and spike heels made each visit to the Society an adventure! The simultaneous change of habits of businessmen toward a shorter workday resulted in the end of the two-hour lunch at the club. Membership in daytime clubs suffered and many have closed or limp on with too few members.³²

If there was a single moment when the decline of the neighborhood was reversed, it can probably be said to have occurred in the 1960s when the Library Company of Philadelphia determined to return from its self-imposed exile at Broad and Christian Streets and constructed the present building from the plans of Martin, Stewart, and Noble. Built on the site of the Rosenbach galleries of the early twentieth century, its modern facade denoted the new role of the Library as research collection and workplace rather than as a part of the old club culture. The growth of the Philadelphia Museum School into the Philadelphia College of the Arts and, more recently, the University of the Arts, has provided a stable if visually intriguing community of artists in the vicinity.

More recently, Broad Street has been re-envisioned as the Avenue of the Arts. With construction beginning on the new Regional Performing Arts Center at Broad and Spruce Streets, the new Wilma Theater constructed just to the south of the old Broad Street Theater, and other theaters being restored, John Hare Powel's frontier is entering another phase in its history. Ironically, this occurs as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania has decided to deaccession much of its visual arts and museum collections in order to focus on its role as a research library. As the century ends, the Society's building has been restored by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates to serve

³² The Charlotte Cushman Club announced its closing in 1999. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 21, 1999.

the redefined mission. With its reopening in August 1999, the building and its members are once again ready to record the future.

Philadelphia

GEORGE E. THOMAS