

**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 ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: **1025 West Lehigh Avenue**

Postal code: **19133**

Councilmanic District: **Fifth**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Branch Bank**

Common Name: **Citizen's Branch Bank**

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: **Citizen's Bank Branch Building**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a description of the historic resource.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): **from 1923 to 1937**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1923-24**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Mellor, Meigs and Howe, George Howe**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Samuel Yellin**

Original owner: **Philadelphia Savings Fund Society**

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

Name with Title: **Janet Grace**

Email: **j.grace@athenianprop.com**

Organization:

Date:

Street Address: **3421 W. School House Lane**

Telephone: **(267)-718-7633**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19129**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: _____

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected



(West Lehigh) [A-10]

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected.

SITUATE in the 37th Ward of the City of Philadelphia described according to a Plan of Property made for Philadelphia Saving Fund Society by Barton and Martin Engineers, dated July 15, 1983 and last revised August 8, 1983 to wit:

BEGINNING at the point of intersection of the Northerly side of Lehigh Avenue (80 feet wide) with the Easterly side of 11th Street (50 feet wide); thence from said point of beginning extending along the Easterly side of 11th Street North 11 degrees, 21 minutes, East 128 feet 0 inches to a point; thence leaving the side of 11th Street and extending South 78 degrees, 39 minutes East partially thru a brick wall 65 feet 0 inches to a point; thence extending South 11 degrees, 21 minutes, West partially thru a brick wall 128 feet 0 inches to a point on the Northerly side of Lehigh Avenue; thence extending along said Northerly side of Lehigh Avenue North 78 degrees, 39 minutes, West 65 feet 0 inches to the said Easterly side of 11th Street being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

39095 505 880 0883 214
1.13
8/24/83

6. Physical Description

The Lehigh Avenue Branch of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society (now Citizens Bank), is a Renaissance Revival style bank building located at 1025 West Lehigh Avenue at the intersection of North 11th Street and West Lehigh Avenue Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The building was constructed between 1923 and 1924. It is a commercial building built on a corner lot, located on the Northeast corner of the intersection. The general plan is rectangular, and the majority of the building is finished with limestone cladding. The base is of black and white granite, and the use of various types of marbles can be seen throughout the upper portions of the building. The original building was also ornamented with a variety of Samuel Yellin ironwork.





West

South

South Elevation

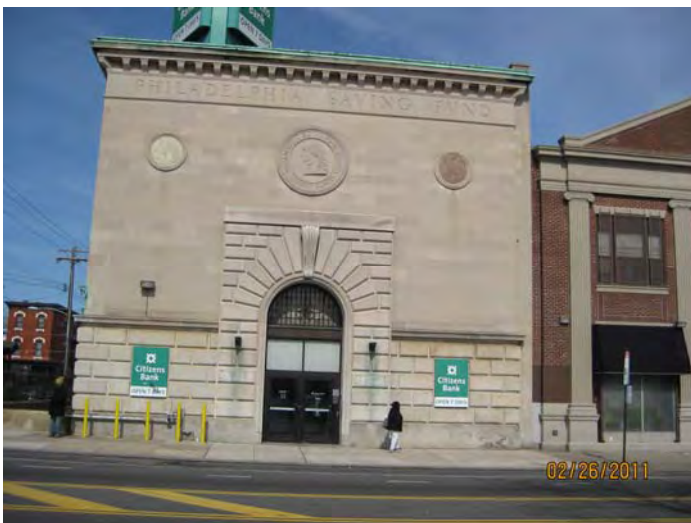
The base of the South-facing façade is black and white granite (a). Above the granite base are 5 courses of rusticated limestone blocks (b). Above the rusticated limestone courses is a belt course of limestone. The base, rusticated limestone and belt course are interrupted at the center of the façade by the building's entry (c). The entry consists of an arched opening framed by rusticated limestone. The keystone in the apex of the arch has a scroll detail. Above the keystone is a smooth rectangular limestone lintel. The entire entry sits proud of the base and the plane of the building wall. Above the lintel is a bas-relief limestone medallion with the profile of Ben Franklin circled with the text "Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Crescit Fundo" carved into the frame of the medallion. (d) The wall of the building is finished in smooth limestone with color-matched mortar. On either side of the medallion are two limestone framed roundels with a different type of marble insert in each.



(a) Black and white granite base



(b) Rusticated limestone



(c) Front façade



(d) Medallion

Above the medallion are two courses of monolithic limestone topped by a limestone frieze with the text “Philadelphia Savings Fund”. Above the frieze is a limestone cornice with brackets. (e) Copper flashing sits at the top of the cornice. The current roofing material is a black material, most likely modified bitumen.



(e) Frieze and cornice

The entry door was originally a glass and ironwork door fabricated by Samuel Yellin Ironworks. The original door has been replaced with a glass and anodized aluminum storefront. (f) The original ironwork transom remains.



(f) Detail of ironwork at door

On either side of the entry door were two plaques. The plaques have since been removed. (g) Also on either side of the door are bronze brackets with a scroll detail. (h) These brackets originally supported open ironwork globe lamps.



(g) Former location of plaques



(h) Brackets with scroll detail

One either side of the entry door are rectangular punched windows, identical to the ones described in the West elevation. Currently they are covered with flat plastic green and white signs that read “Citizen’s Bank Open 7 Days”.

West Elevation

The materials and coursing on the South Elevation transition at 90 degrees to the West Elevation. At the corner, there is a bronze bracket scroll with a bronze ring above the belt course. (j)



(j) Cooper ring detail

There are four double hung bronze single paned windows located directly above the belt course with twelve divided-lites each. There is a limestone bracketed hood at the top of the window. The belt course of limestone takes the place of a sill at the base of each window. (k)



(k)

Below the belt course set into the rusticated limestone are single pane windows with original security ironwork at the exterior. (l)



(l) Detail of window.

There are four roundels with different types of marble located between the upper windows. (m)



(m) Roundel

At the top of this elevation is a limestone frieze with the text: “The Oldest Savings Bank in the United States Founded 1816” (n and o)



(n) West Elevation



(o) West Elevation

The West Elevation is setback from the street. There were five basement windows that were directly below the windows in the rusticated limestone courses that have been closed and filled in with cement. (o) At the rear between the building and low masonry wall topped with picket iron fence is a yard paved with cement.

North Elevation

The only elements that transition from the West Elevation to the North Elevation is the limestone belt course, the frieze, and the bracketed cornice with copper flashing. There is only a return of the rustication. The exterior material is stucco with a thin layer of white paint. Above the belt course there is one window with the same proportions as those found on the West Elevation. There is an iron security Grill over the window. (p)



(p) North elevation.

Below the belt course are four double hung windows with iron security grates projecting in front of them. There is a stairway to a service door with two window openings up into the stairwell. (q)



(q) North Elevation

East Elevation

The East Elevation is a party wall to the adjacent property and has no exterior architectural features.



PHILADELPHIA SAVING FUND BUILDING, PHILADELPHIA
MULLIN, MERRILL AND HOWE, Architects, Philadelphia

(r) 1925 T-Square Yearbook

7. Statement of Significance

The Lehigh Branch of the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society at 1025 W. Lehigh Avenue in Philadelphia is a significant historic building in the City and should be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. PSFS's Lehigh Branch fulfills Designation Criteria A, C, D, and E of the Philadelphia Historical Commission Ordinance, section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code. PSFS's Lehigh Branch:

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style; and
- (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.

The classical bank building was designed by the prominent architectural firm of Mellor, Meigs and Howe and built in 1923-24, one of four similar neighborhood branches constructed between 1923 and 1927 by the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, the nation's first savings bank and one of the city's leading financial institutions of its time. All four branch banks were the work of George Howe and featured ornamental ironwork by Samuel Yellin, one of Philadelphia's most esteemed twentieth-century craftsmen and a frequent Mellor, Meigs and Howe collaborator. The Lehigh Branch was designed and built in tandem with the South Broad Branch at 2001-7 South Broad Street; this pair was followed by a later design for the West Philadelphia Branch at 52nd and Ludlow Streets, and the Logan Branch at 4947-49 North Broad Street in 1926-27. As a group, these four structures represent a significant building campaign by one of the city's leading institutions and mark the evolution of a dynamic architect-client partnership culminating in 1932 with Howe & Lescaze's landmark PSFS office tower at 1200 Market Street, the nation's first International-style skyscraper.

Philadelphia Saving Fund Society

Founded in 1816 by Philadelphia businessman Condy Raguet, the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society was the first savings bank established in the United States. Modeled after similar institutions then developing in Great Britain, the Society was established to "promote economy and the practice of saving amongst and poor and laboring classes of the community... and to render them in a great degree independent of the bounty of others" by providing easily accessed savings accounts that paid interest on small deposits.¹ The organization grew from humble beginnings, occupying rented offices and relocating frequently in the first two decades of its existence. During this time, the bank's depositor rolls grew from just 401 in 1819 to over 7,400 by 1839.² Reflecting its growing stature in Philadelphia's financial community, the Society opened its first purpose-built building in 1840—a marble-fronted Greek Revival structure

¹ Willcox, James M. *A History of the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, 1816-1916*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1916, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, pp 60, 64.

designed by noted architect Thomas Ustick Walter.³ The building still stands at 306 Walnut Street, individually listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1957 and included within the locally-designated Society Hill District.

By 1869, the bank's depositors numbered over 29,000.⁴ A new headquarters was constructed at the corner of Walnut and 7th Streets, designed by Addison Hutton in a grand Italianate style. The granite-faced bank was designed to impress: "The additional security which a fire-proof and burglar-proof building will afford to the depositors is very well calculated to inspire the entire community with implicit faith in the solidity of the Institution," wrote the bank's President Caleb Cope in the Society's 1869 annual report.⁵ Acknowledging the rapid growth of the institution's first five decades, the new headquarters was also designed for expansion, which indeed occurred in 1886 (designed by Hutton) and 1898 (designed by Furness, Evans & Co.). Directly across from Washington Square, this building likewise survives and is listed on the Philadelphia Register both individually (added 1957) and as part of the Society Hill District. The structure remained the bank's headquarters until the 1932 completion of Howe & Lescaze's PSFS tower at 1200 Market Street.

By the 1920s, much of the bank's clientele lived in outlying residential neighborhoods fed by the city's growing rapid transit system. To accommodate these clients and to compete with other banking institutions establishing themselves outside Center City, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society President James M. Willcox approved the construction of neighborhood branch offices for the first time in the Society's history. Given the relative novelty of this decision, Willcox believed the design of these new buildings would be critical to their success and hoped they would "invoke in the minds of the depositors a degree of awe mixed with reassurance similar to that produced by the venerable main office at Seventh and Walnut Streets."⁶

The firm of Mellor, Meigs & Howe was selected to design the branch banks. While all four branches employed what architect George Howe later described as a "composite modernized traditionalism" that leaned heavily on accepted Beaux-Arts vocabulary for early twentieth century bank architecture, the buildings also illustrate a growing recognition by both client and architect of the evolving nature of commercial architecture and its demands.⁷ The first two branches, Lehigh and South Broad, featured a heavy rusticated base meant to communicate the idea of a strong box, with large upper windows to provide well-lit work space inside.⁸ Massing and ornamentation were largely traditional, including bracketed window hoods, a classically-detailed entrance surround, shallow pitched roof, and a dentil cornice. Two years later, the West Philadelphia and Logan Branches employed a modified approach for the same basic building type. Howe eliminated the heavy base and traditional cornice, instead emphasizing a "large, hospitable entrance door, closed only at the bottom by a richly ornamented

³ Gallery, John Andrew. *Philadelphia Architecture: A Guide to the City* [3rd ed.]. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2009, p. 57.

⁴ Willcox, p. 78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁶ Stern, Robert A.M. *George Howe: Toward a Modern American Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975, p. 57.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸ Howe, George. "The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Branch Offices." *Architectural Forum*, June 1928, p. 881.

grille” intended to be “more inviting to a timid public.”⁹ More significantly, the buildings included what Howe described as his “first concession to the machine age” in his career.¹⁰ At the behest of Willcox, who had wanted illuminated signs added to the first bank branches, Howe designed the second branches with an innovative night illumination scheme meant to outshine the electric signs of competing banks and adjacent retail establishments. Illuminated sign panels were integrated into the building’s design, whose unbroken wall surfaces were likewise flooded by lights mounted on the building’s balconies. Wrote Howe, “This system of illumination has proved very successful in competition with the illuminated letter signs which fill the street of an evening. The great block of stone, flooded in strong white light, dominates the illumination, while at the same time the building preserves its dignity.”¹¹ Tellingly, the West Philadelphia building replaced a temporary branch housed in an existing structure prior to the new building’s construction, and Howe noted with pride “the phenomenal increase of business [which] followed the erection of the new building.”¹²

The lessons learned in the design of these four branches no doubt had a profound effect on both George Howe, who soon left the firm of Mellor, Meigs & Howe to pursue more Modernist projects, and on the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society as an institution, whose next major building campaign would be the groundbreaking PSFS tower. Though the design for that tower began as a traditional Beaux-Arts edifice, Willcox himself is credited with promoting and supporting the progressive directions Howe took in the design’s evolution.

George Howe and Mellor, Meigs, & Howe

George Howe was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on June 17, 1886. Howe spent much of his young life in Europe. After studies at Harvard, he attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. His roots, though, were in Philadelphia, as his wife and mother were both from here, and Howe chose this city as the one in which to settle and begin practicing architecture. He worked from 1914 to 1928 designing mostly suburban residential projects with the firm Mellor, Meigs and Howe.

Partners Walter Mellor and Arthur I. Meigs set up their first office in the Lafayette Building at 5th and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. Mellor & Meigs became well-known for their designs of clubs and private residences. Their early work included the more modest homes developed by the Lower Merion Realty Co., as well as large-scale undertakings such as the Princeton Charter Club, Princeton, NJ (1913) and alterations to the Pickering Hunt Club in Phoenixville, PA (1911)¹³

⁹ Ibid., p. 881.

¹⁰ Stern, p. 58.

¹¹ Howe, p. 881.

¹² Ibid, p. 881.

¹³ Maxwell Levinson, “George Howe’s Contribution to Contemporary Architecture,” U.S.A. Tomorrow October 1954, 42.



(a) Mellor and Meigs office at Chancellor and Juniper

Streets *source: Ilovebricks/blog*

In 1912, the firm moved to the southeast corner of Chancellor and Juniper Streets, Mellor and Meigs hired the construction firm of Arthur H. Williams & Sons to execute their designs and convert an existing carriage house into their offices. (a)

In 1915 the firm of Mellor, Meigs and Howe designed Samuel Yellin a new studio at 5520 Arch Street in Philadelphia where he was to remain until his death in 1940. Yellin worked on many commissions for Mellor and Meigs, including the Lehigh Branch of PSFS.

Howe left the practice to serve in the army during World War I. It was at the end of this stage of his career that the firm was asked to design a series of branch banks for the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society.

Howe designed four branch banks for PSFS, as well as a temporary bank building at 12th and Market. The first two identical structures were built in 1924 in Lehigh and South Philadelphia. Two years later, in 1926, the Logan branch was completed, along with an identical structure in West Philadelphia. Howe described the design concept for the earliest branches as that of “a magnified strongbox,”¹⁴ a design that relied highly on references to the Beaux-Arts style he had studied in Paris.

This move towards a strong yet inviting bank building was taken even further in the design of Howe’s next few projects for PSFS. In 1927 Howe designed a temporary Center City office at 8 South 12th Street. It was this building which finally pushed him to the limits of his ability to work creatively within the Beaux-Arts style.¹⁵ The breaking of this barrier was

¹⁴ George Howe, “The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Branch Offices,” Architectural Forum, June 1928, 881.

¹⁵ Stern, 64.

essential for Howe to then continue on, in 1930, to design the main branch of PSFS at 12th and Market Streets.

This structure, designed at Howe's new firm, Howe and Lescaze, is possibly Howe's single most famous achievement. It is considered "a principal landmark in the evolution of the skyscraper... the first devoid of popular fashion or connotations of the past."¹⁶ The building is strong, but stripped down and simplified, both inviting to the public but also showing the strength and stability of the company it housed and represented. It was his journey through the creation of the branch banks which led him to arrive at this point. Only through those buildings could Howe have shed his dependence on Beaux-Arts references to create a building so fresh, so lacking in "connotations of the past." It was an essential journey, and one which birthed his greatest achievement, an achievement which changed the face of architecture.

In 1934, Howe went into a nominal retirement. After that time he worked on few projects, but went on to become the Supervising Architect for the Federal Government from 1942-45 and the Chairman of the Architecture Department at Yale University in 1950.¹⁷ The PSFS building had a great impact on the architecture of America, and of the world. It is rare to see an example, other than the PSFS skyscraper, of Howe's non-residential work. The Lehigh branch is an unusual and fascinating look into the thought process of an essential architect, one that should be preserved.

Samuel Yellin

In addition, to the work of George Howe, the PSFS branch bank buildings display the ironwork of Samuel Yellin. Yellin was a prolific artist-craftsman metalworker who designed, and whose studio created, decorative iron work pieces for buildings across the country in the early twentieth century. He worked with nationally noted architects, and held a long and impressive list of clientele. Samuel Yellin's pieces can be found on some of the finest buildings in America

Samuel Yellin was born in Galicia Poland on March 2, 1885. Young Yellin's chosen profession was metalworking, a diversion from the family custom of law. He was trained in Poland as an apprentice to an ornamental metalworker. At the age of 16, he left home traveling his native continent to observe the various European traditions of metalwork.¹⁸ He came to Philadelphia in 1906. He started attending classes at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts. In 1907 the school hired Yellin as an instructor, where he continued to teach until 1922.¹⁹

In 1909 he opened his own shop at 409 N. 5th Street. But it was not until 1911, when friend and architect Frank Miles Day recommended Yellin to fellow architect C. Frank LaFarge for his current project, the Long Island Estate of J.P. Morgan. Reportedly, LaFarge was so

¹⁶ Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth, *Architecture in Philadelphia: A Guide*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1974), 74.

¹⁷ Levinson, 46.

¹⁸ Andrews, Jack: *Samuel Yellin, Metalworker*, The Samuel Yellin Foundation, Philadelphia, PA 1982. p. 1.

¹⁹ Tatman, Sandra L. *Yellin, Samuel (1885-1940)*. http://www.americanbuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/23067

enamored with Yellin's designs that he canceled his order he had previously made with an English studio.²⁰

By 1915, the demand for Yellin's craftwork was such that he hired Mellor, Meigs & Howe to design his studio and showroom on Arch Street in West Philadelphia. This building was one of only a handful of industrial designs by the firm. During the building boom of the 1920s Yellin's studio employed as many as 250 workers and housed 60 forges. He and his staff produced hundreds of designs for gates, lighting fixtures, screens, grilles, railings, doors, etc. Each piece was hand crafted and no two pieces were alike. Yellin's designs ranged from large grand scale projects to small residential fixtures. His studio produced works for public institutions such as Yale and Harvard Universities, Washington Cathedral in Washington DC, Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, as well as for the private mansion of the wealthy like Edward W. Bok, Lammont Dupont, H. H. Flagler, and Robert Goelet. These commissions brought Yellin into an elite circle of architects who worked not just in Philadelphia, but throughout the country, creating many of the most publicized buildings of the early twentieth century.²¹ Samuel Yellin died in 1940. The Samuel Yellin Metalworkers Company continues to operate today.

In addition to hiring Mellor, Meigs & Howe to design his studio, Yellin often worked with the firm supplying metalwork designs for their projects. The PSFS branch bank buildings are just four of their collaborations. For the Lehigh branch Yellin designed hardware for the main entrance door, a lunette grille, globe lamps, seven window grilles, a stair railing, guard rails and hand rails, and hardware throughout the building.²² The lunette grille, window grilles, and copper brackets remain on the building today.

Renaissance Revival

The Renaissance Revival style was a major revivalist style in the eclectic milieu of late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century architecture. The revivalist approach of Classical forms predominant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century aimed for archeological correctness rather than the more Romantic approach predominant in the early nineteenth century. The Renaissance Revival style is often associated with the Italian Renaissance. The use and interpretation of Renaissance forms and vocabulary was not restricted to just Italian forms, but the French, Spanish and Flemish Renaissance vocabularies were just as popular. Many designs of this period freely mixed elements from different subcategories.²³

The Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris²⁴ played a significant role in the spread of the style. The Ecole trained many of the most influential American architects of the late nineteenth

²⁰ Andrews, Jack: *Samuel Yellin, Metalworker*, The Samuel Yellin Foundation, Philadelphia, PA 1982. p. 1.

²¹ Tatman, Sandra L. *Yellin, Samuel (1885-1940)*. http://www.americanbuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/23067

²² Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Lehigh Branch, *American Architects and Buildings Website*. <http://www.americanbuildings.org/pab/>

²³ Baumgart, Fritz, *A History of Architectural Styles*. New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970

²⁴ Ecole des Beaux Arts: The Ecole was founded as the French Academy of Fine Arts by Cardinal Mazarin in 1648. The academy trained painters, sculptors, architects in the Classical manner. The school was reorganized by Emperor Napoleon III in 1863 and the department of architecture separated. The current name of Ecole des Beaux Arts dates from this restructuring.

century. The influence of the Ecole in American architecture, with its strong focus on archeological correctness, can be traced back to Richard Morris Hunt; the first American architect to be trained by the Ecole. The Renaissance Revival style achieved its greatest refinement in America at the firm of McKim, Mead & White. Charles F. McKim, one of the founding partners, trained at the Ecole. The firm mastered the Italian Renaissance vocabulary, favoring Tuscan, Roman and to a lesser degree Venetian precedents in their designs. Their mastery of the Italian Renaissance can be seen in their design for the Villard Houses (1883-5), The Metropolitan Club (1893) and several branches for the New York Public Library, such as the 115th Street Branch (1905) and Hamilton Grange Branch (1905). The firms of Carrere & Hastings, Horace Trumbauer, John Russell Pope, and Charles A. Platt, just to name a few, also designed superb buildings in Italian Renaissance style. The firm of McKim, Mead & White stands out as one of the earliest firms to focus on Italian Renaissance precedents and its use of archeologically correct precedents.²⁵

George Howe graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1912. His professional training was deeply rooted in the Classical tradition. The design executed by George Howe for two of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society branches continues the revivalist current initiated by Hunt and perfected by the firm of McKim, Mead & White and its contemporaries.

Howe designed two of the four branches in a text book example of Italian Renaissance style. These two branches are the South Broad branch and the Lehigh branch. The design for both of these branches utilizes key elements found in Italian Renaissance architecture of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The building was designed as a simple box with a rusticated base, clearly demarcated piano nobile above the rusticated base and bracketed cornice. The design is influenced by Tuscan and Roman urban palace designs of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

Conclusion

The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society built four branches in different areas of the city between the years of 1923 and 1927. PSFS chose George Howe as architect for this project. His thought process in the development of these bank buildings took him away from his residential projects and lead him towards one of his, and America's, greatest architectural achievements: the first truly modern skyscraper. The PSFS skyscraper changed how this nation designed the buildings in its cities. The Lehigh Avenue Branch was one essential piece of the puzzle leading up to this amazing work.

PSFS's Lehigh Avenue Branch fulfills Designation Criteria A, C, D, and E from the Philadelphia Historical Commission Ordinance, section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code. As stated in Criterion A, the Lehigh Avenue Branch has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City. It stands as a symbol of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society and its contributions to banking history. Satisfying Criterion C and D as the building embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Renaissance

²⁵ Hitchcock, Henry R., *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Revival style. Satisfying Criterion E, the Lehigh Avenue Branch is the work of an architect, George Howe, and prolific artist-craftsman metalworker Samuel Yellin.

8. Major Bibliographic References

This Nomination was prepared with major content provided by Lynn Alpert, who wrote the Nomination for the Logan Branch of the PSFS Branch Bank Building, which was placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places on November 12, 2010. Lynn Alpert gave her permission to use her written material in the preparation of this Nomination.

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Baumgart, Fritz, A History of Architectural Styles. New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970

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