

First National Bank (Now First Pennsylvania  
Banking and Trust Company, Benjamin Franklin  
Office)

315 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1011

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
241-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA  
241-

First National Bank (Now First Pennsylvania Banking & Trust Co.,  
315 Chestnut Street Benjamin Franklin Office)  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Owner and Occupant -

First Pennsylvania Banking and Trust Company (result  
of merger in 1953), Benjamin Franklin Office.

Date of Erection -

1865-67. Interior remodelled 1953. Reference: Minutes  
of Building Committee.

Architect -

John McArthur, Jr. Fee, \$3,500.

Contractor -

John Rice. Cost, \$121,300.

Date of Viewing -

January 8, 1958.

Description -

Plan - Rectangular frontage 60 x 82.  
Basement - vaults.  
Main floor - banking room.

Construction - Masonry and brick.  
Front of white Quincy granite.  
Magnificent masonry work.

Elevations -

Front (south).  
2-story, 3-bay symmetrical design.  
Flat skyline with marble balustrade.

Central round-headed door with keystone. Round-  
headed windows framed by pilasters. First story  
finished with full entablature having no ornaments.

Central 2-story projecting frontispiece on base block with outside piers and inner columns. Carved in frieze FIRST NATIONAL BANK. Second story of frontispiece framed by two pilasters framing a central window wider than side windows. A marble balustrade joins the bases on which the pilasters rest. The top cornice of the whole building has dentils and corbels and a cyma recta molding. The finishing balustrade is rhythmically divided by corner solid blocks with 12 marble balusters on each side. The frontispiece is framed by paired blocks separated by one baluster with 15 balusters in the center.

Rear - A brick addition was added. None of the original rear is visible.

West side on Oriana Street (formerly Franklin Place) constructed of brick with four large, round, arched windows on the ground floor with shutters. Rectangular windows above.

East side of stone 18 inches thick. Now a party wall with the Drive-In addition to the bank built in 1953. A brick wall has been added to the original granite wall.

#### Interior -

Completely remodelled in 1953. Original interior of marble with flagged flooring. Central area for tellers with marble base and walnut framing of windows.

Back part separated by marble balustrade for officers' desks.

The interior design repeated the exterior design by having the walls of the banking area divided into two stories with pilasters and piers on the ground floor and pilasters and columns on the second with a marble balustrade with solid blocks relieved by a rectangular coffer and supported by corbels.

History -

The site of the First National Bank of Philadelphia, now merged with the First Pennsylvania Banking and Trust Company, is that of the house inhabited by Anthony Benezet, a noted Quaker philanthropist. It was torn down in 1818, and the Congress Hall Hotel was next erected. It was demolished for the construction of the present structure.

This bank was the first chartered on June 20, 1863, after the passage of the National Currency Act of February 25, 1863. The first Federal Bank Note was issued by the First National Bank of Philadelphia on July 11, 1863.

The architectural merit of the bank building is outstanding as an example of the Palazzo facade adapted to a bank building.

The early history of the building is unusually well documented, for the Minutes of the Building Committee are preserved. The committee consisted of C. H. Clark, Chairman, W. S. Russell, Jos. A. Wright and S. A. Caldwell, Secretary. The Building Committee first met on October 10, 1865, and was discharged after its last meeting on June 21, 1867.

John McArthur, Jr. was retained as architect to furnish the exterior and interior designs, plans, elevations, sections, full-size detail drawings, specifications of the kinds of material and workmanship to be used and carried at a fee of \$3,500, paid in four installments. McArthur is best known as the architect of the Philadelphia City Hall.

John Rice was retained as the contractor to furnish all materials and workmen for the building itself. The total expenditure was \$121,300.

Farrel and Herring provided the vault, which is called a thief-proof in the minutes. The cost of the thief-proof and locks was \$16,310. Horace Lee was retained as supervisor with a fee of \$150. The casing of the thief-proof was made by Robert Wood and Co. at the cost of \$983.50. R. Wood also added the iron railing on the brick wall and also on Franklin Place.

The total cost of the bank, including clocks and carpets, was \$162,597.68. The corner stone was laid on May 23, 1866.

References -

Minute Book of Building Committee in possession of Charles Develin, Personnel Office, First Pennsylvania Banking and Trust Company, 15th and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia.

Moody's Magazine, June 1915  
"First National Bank" by A. W. Ferris.

Agnes A. Gilchrist  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
120 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pa.  
January 8, 1958