

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAY 18 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic New Century Club
and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 1014 Delaware Avenue not for publication
city, town Wilmington vicinity of ~~congressional district~~
state Delaware code 10 county New Castle code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Children's Repertory Theatre
street & number 1014 Delaware Avenue
city, town Wilmington vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds
4th Floor
street & number City/County Building, 800 French Street
city, town Wilmington vicinity of state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wilmington Cultural Resource Survey
has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1975 (CRS# N-4582) federal state county local
depository for survey records Hall of Records
city, town Dover vicinity of state Delaware

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

NEW CENTURY CLUB DESCRIPTION

The New Century Club at 1014 Delaware Avenue was designed by Minerva Parker Nichols of Philadelphia. Construction of the building began in July 1, 1892 and was completed only seven months later, January 31, 1893. The building's style is Colonial Revival with eclectic elements and with a variety of detailing found in other of Nichols' buildings, particularly the gambrel roof and Palladian windows found on the first floor. The building has excellent integrity, subject only to an addition of a kitchen, buffet room and powder room section in the 1930s. The building has been in constant use since its construction, first by the New Century Club as a meeting hall and offices until 1975, then by the Delaware Dinner Theatre until spring 1982, and most recently by the Children's Repertory Theatre and the Delaware Ballet Company.

The 2 1/2 story Colonial Revival building has a gambrel slate roof (photo #1, exterior). The building's symmetrical 3-bay northern facade--its front facade--faces Delaware Avenue. A rear wing with a cross-gambrel roof sits perpendicular to Delaware Avenue making the building appear "T"-shaped. The facade is white pebbledash, and according to the architect's drawings, is the original facade surface. Brick quoins accent the building's corners. The exposed foundation wall is also brick. The structural system combines masonry, wood joists, and some steel I-beams.

The front entrance consists of four wooden doors, each with five sunken panels. A glass transom is above the doors with painted gilt lettering, spelling "New Century Club". The architrave above the transom is decorated with garlands. Two detached wood columns set close to the wall rest on brick bases and support the pedimented frontispiece. A decoration is attached to the wall within the pediment, perhaps a club insignia.

On either side of the door are Palladian windows with a round arch center sash and a decorative wooden keystone. The smaller outer windows have wooden pilasters on the sides and a molded cornice on top. The lower sashes are all single light; the upper sash of the side windows has five lights and the center window has eight square lights in the upper sash and irregularly shaped lights above those, formed by curved and intersecting tracery in the rounded sash. The two side windows are set at an angle to the wall, making a slight bay effect which is more noticeable on the interior.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1892 - 1893 **Builder/Architect** Minerva Parker Nichols, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Statement of Significance
1014 Delaware Avenue
New Century Club House

The New Century Club of Wilmington, at the southwest corner of Delaware Avenue and Jackson Street, is an imposing Colonial Revival structure that has held a place of prominence in the area since its construction in 1893. It was the first structure in Delaware and only the fourth structure in the United States designated for exclusive use as a woman's club. The building remained a woman's club until the mid-1970s (with subsequent use as a theater). Club leaders associated with the building include local historic notables such as Emily P. Bissell, who helped design the first American Red Cross Christmas Seal and spur the nationwide campaign to fight tuberculosis, and Emalea Pusey Warner, who led the campaign for vocational education in public schools and served as the first president of the State Foundation of Women's Clubs and on the Board of Trustees of Delaware College. In addition, the New Century Club of Wilmington has the distinct honor of having been designed by one of America's early woman architects, Minerva Parker Nichols of Philadelphia, who is also known for her design of the Philadelphia New Century Club and her entry of the Queen Isabella Pavilion in the 1893 World's Fair Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. Accordingly, the New Century Club Building at 1014 Delaware Avenue is being nominated under Criteria A, B, and C--(a) being associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, (b) associated with the lives of persons significant in our past and, (c) embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or representing the work of a master, or of possessing high artistic values.

*not to be included
06/14/89*

Inspired by the Philadelphia New Century Club, which was the first exclusively female self-improvement, philanthropic and educationally oriented organization in the nation, the New Century Club of Wilmington was organized in 1890 with the stated purpose of the development of intellectual culture, moral development, literary purposes, and philanthropy. It was the first such club in Delaware and had an initial membership of 65.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Original floorplans, elevations, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington
Francis E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Eds., A Woman of the Century,
Chas. Wells Moulton, New York, 1893, pp. 536-7.
Unpublished research by Anne L. Manning (copy available at Wilmington

10. Geographical Data

Planning Office)

Acreeage of nominated property .26 acre

Quadrangle name Wilmington North Quad.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	4	5	2	3	5	0	4	4	0	0	1	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

.26 acre bounded on the east by Jackson Street, on the north by Delaware Avenue; historic and current legal boundries of the property.
SEE MAP

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia A. Maley, Planner II ; Robert Briggs, Historic Preservation Intern

organization Wilmington Planning Office date January 1983

street & number 800 French Street telephone (302) 571-4130

city or town Wilmington state Delaware

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Daniel R. Griffith

title _____ date April 27, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/16/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet New Century Club Item number 7, Description Page 2

The two outer windows on the second floor are triple, one over one, double hung sash with garlands in a large wooden panel above the windows, and topped with a molded cornice. The double center window above the door is smaller with rounded arches, one over one, double hung sash, and a wooden keystone.

The gambrel roof has a further slight roof projection into which three dormers are set. The two outside dormers have a gable roof with a pediment and are one over one. The center dormer has a double window with round arch upper sashes, a bell-shaped hood with a broken pediment, and a tall urn-like finial rising from the center. Below the pediment break is a garland decoration. The building's west side has a one-story addition which houses a kitchen, large serving room, and bathrooms (photo #2, exterior). The western wall of this addition has five double sash windows with transoms and intersecting tracery in the upper sash. These windows were apparently removed from a five-window bay on the building's original western wall and reinstalled in the new addition.

The remaining west wall of the original front section of the building (photo #3, exterior) has a shallow, three-window bay on the first floor, with a wider second floor bay above. The second floor bay has a molded cornice and balustrade. Above the cornice of the third floor center window is a fanlight which features radiating muntins and a small wooden keystone. On either side of the third floor center window are oval windows with a molded surround, radiating muntins and decorative wooden keystones on all four sides.

The east wall has a variety of window types along its entire length; single, double, some with upper sash tracery. The two and one half story rear wing has two shed dormers, one on either side of a chimney. There is also a door in the rear of the wing.

The building's exterior symmetry continues in the first floor interior. On entering the Delaware Avenue entrance, one passes through a small vestibule, through an interior set of double doors and into the main hallway. Original doors, molding and pilasters remain intact (photo #4, interior). On either side of the hallway are large airy offices with fireplaces and Palladian windows at their north ends (photo #5, interior).

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Continuation sheet New Century Club Item number 7, Description Page 3

Further down the black and white, diagonally tiled hallway to the left is a Dutch style doorway on the entry way to the bar, ornamented by an upper door part with a decorative pattern of tracery found on many of the building's windows. An adjacent gas light also remains (photo #6, interior). To the right is a side hallway leading to the men's lounge and rest room. Also to the right are the stairs to the upper floors. The stairs have the original newell post, ballusters, and vitruvian scrollwork (photos #7, #8, interior). The main hall is also graced by a brass early 20th century chandelier (photo #9, interior).

Directly ahead (looking south from the main hall) is the large assembly area and stage. The main room's flooring is oak stripping with 12 inch molded wood baseboard. A three foot high chair rail encircles the room on three walls to meet the stage at floor level (photo #10, interior). The walls are textured plaster. Entry ways have the molding and pilasters found in the front hallway. Windows retain either the palladian shape or tracery (photo #11, interior).

The stage has symmetrically placed doorways and stair approaches with curved handrails (photo #12, interior). On the east side, back stage, a non-decorative staircase rises to dressing rooms above the stage. The dressing rooms open to the musicians' balcony above the stage through pointed arch doors (photo #13, interior). The auditorium ceiling is of plaster with molding at the wall intersections along two sides of the room. The interior plaster ceiling mirrors the exterior gambrel roof shape. In the center of the ceiling is a round cast iron grill with a scroll and lattice design (photo #14, interior). On the western side of the main room is the annex added in the early 20th century for kitchen and buffet. Entry into the annex may be obtained through large double doors set in a Palladian enclosure with fluted pilasters topped with Ionic detailing (photo #15, interior). Entry into the kitchen section is obtained through either of two five-sunken panel doors. The annex shares the features of the main assembly room in floor, walls, and ornamentation. The western wall of the annex has five windows separated by fluted palasters with plain moldings surrounding the rest of the window. The windows are single hung with the bottom sash being a single light; the upper sash having the tracery found elsewhere in the building. These may be the windows from the original western wall of the building simply moved to the annex wall.

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Continuation sheet New Century Club Item number 7, Description Page 4

The upper floors retain all the original details. The second floor balcony has rows of the original wood and wrought iron chairs (photo #16, interior). The second floor front room retains the original fireplace, oak flooring, and pocket doors (photo #17, interior). The room's service bar, enclosed by Dutch doors, has access to the service elevator and dumb waiter (photo #18, interior). The third floor retains all original detailing (photo #19, interior). Entry way to the catwalk through which one may view the roof's structural beams and a large cedar storage closet, is from the third floor.

The structure's basement contains the original elevator mechanism (photo #20, interior), as well as furnace. The area below the stage has access either through a basement walkway or a trap door from the stage level for removal of chairs or scenery.

- end -

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Continuation sheet New Century Club Item number 8, Significance Page 2

The Club was the pioneer organization in women's rights in Delaware and tackled such issues as establishing a women's college (which later merged with the University of Delaware) and lobbying for and winning the State's first women's labor laws, child labor laws, compulsory school attendance laws, as well as various kinds of welfare legislation.

Club members organized the Delaware Federation of Women's Clubs early in the century. In 1907, the club members were the first to distribute tuberculosis Christmas seals, originated by club member Emily P. Bissell. During World War I, the clubhouse at Delaware Avenue was used as a hospital when the 1918 flu epidemic swept the State.

In the early 20th century, the club maintained a membership of 700 and a waiting list of an additional 100. It brought the best in theatrical and musical entertainment to the women of Wilmington, as well as world-renowned speakers such as Woodrow Wilson (before his presidency). However, the membership declined in the second half of the 20th century until the building at 1014 Delaware Avenue was too large for the club. In May of 1976, the building was put up for sale. A temporary tenant was found in the Delaware Dinner Theatre which remained until April 1982. In August 1982, the building was sold. The new projected use is the Children's Repetory Theatre of Wilmington, with the Delaware Ballet Company occupying an upper floor.

Minerva Parker Nichols (5/14/1863--11/19/1949) was born in Chicago, Illinois, where her grandfather, Seth Brown Doane, practiced architecture. After moving to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, young Minerva chose to pursue her grandfather's profession and enrolled in the Philadelphia Normal Art School for Architecture. She studied under John Boyle; then worked as a draftsman for Frederic G. Thorn, Jr. (she eventually took over his practice in Philadelphia). While the bulk of her work in the Philadelphia area was for private homes in the Philadelphia suburbs, her most noted local buildings are the New Century Club at 124 South 12th Street in Philadelphia (now demolished), and the New Century Club at 1014 Delaware Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware.

Minerva submitted the original winning design for an international women's clubhouse, the Queen Isabella Pavilion, for the 1893 World's Fair Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

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Continuation sheet New Century Club Item number 8, Significance Page 3

Although her output of work slowed after her marriage and relocation to New York and Connecticut, she continued to design individual homes and various buildings for the Brown and Nichols School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1949, during the supervision of the construction of a house she had designed for her daughter, Minerva fell from a ladder while climbing to inspect the roof. She died from the effects of the fall at age 88.

The New Century Club's architectural style is Colonial Revival, with a variety of eclectic touches throughout. Mrs. Nichols featured a front gambrel roof and first floor Palladian windows in the building, design elements she had employed in private residences in Pennsylvania. The New Century Club has a three story front section for offices, assembly rooms, dance studios, etc., and a (rear) large assembly hall with stage and balconies for audience and for orchestra. It has excellent architectural integrity, the only modification occurring early in the 20th century when a kitchen and buffet room were added.

- end -

NEW CENTURY CLUB

DELAWARE

Van Buren Street

Jackson Street

Park Place

PARK

52

