NPS Form 10-900
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

1078

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Stewart's Department Store
other names/site number Posner Building; B-2290

2. Location

street 226-232 West Lexington Street
not for publication n/a city or town Baltimore vicinity n/a
state Maryland code MD county independent city code 510 zip code 21201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide x locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____ 7-29-99
Signature of certifying official Date

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register — Edson H. Beall
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper — Date of Action: 9/3/99

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)
- _x_ private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)
- _x_ building(s)
- ___ district
- ___ site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in National Register 0
Name of related multiple property listing n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: department store
Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Renaissance Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
roof Asphalt
walls Brick; Terracotta
other n/a

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

_x_ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
____ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
_x_ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
____ B removed from its original location.
____ C a birthplace or a grave.
____ D a cemetery.
____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
____ F a commemorative property.
____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE

Period of Significance 1899-1945

Significant Dates 1899; ca. 1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
n/a
Cultural Affiliation n/a
Architect/Builder Charles E. Cassell, architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre
USGS quadrangle Baltimore East, MD
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	360330	4350210	C	18	_____	_____
B	18	_____	_____	D	18	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is described among the records of the City of Baltimore, Department of Public Works, Property Location Division as Ward 4, Section 100, Block 598, Lot 009.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property comprises the single city lot upon which the resource stands and with which it is historically associated.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Bird and Heather Ewing
organization Betty Bird & Associates date November 30, 1998
street & number 2607 24th Street, NW, Suite 3 telephone (202) 588-9033
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20008

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)
name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state ____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Stewart's Department Store (originally called the Posner Building), was designed in 1899 by architect Charles E. Cassell. It is a six-story brick and terra cotta steel-frame building detailed in a highly ornate Italian Renaissance Revival style. Its exuberant ornamental detail includes fluted Ionic and Corinthian columns, lion heads, caryatids, wreaths, garlands, cartouches, and an elaborate bracketed cornice. The building has two detailed facades that face onto Howard Street (west) and Lexington Street (south); the Clay Street facade (north) is finished in a utilitarian manner, and the east facade joins with adjacent buildings. Roughly square in plan, Stewart's has three components: a five-story late 19th-century brick building at the corner of Clay and Howard Streets (the northwest corner of Stewart's), the 1899 main block, and a ca. 1910 addition to the east, detailed to match the 1899 building. The interior of the building consists of open plan space that retains few decorative features dating to the building's period of significance. Stewart's Department Store was historically one of four major department store buildings that anchored the intersection of Howard and Lexington Streets. Today the street level of the Stewart's building is occupied on both elevations by small individual retail stores, a development undertaken after the department store closed. The upper floors of the building are vacant.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Stewart's Department Store building features two principal facades, the west fronting on Howard Street and the south on Lexington Street. The building is 11 bays on Howard by nine bays on Lexington. The Howard Street facade extends north an additional three bays to include a late 19th-century brick outhold building at the northwest corner of the lot. The bays of the main building's two principal facades are articulated by monumental brick piers capped by Corinthian capitals, framed on the bottom by ground story entrances and storefronts and on top by a short sixth story and a projecting cornice. Architect Cassell broke up the great length of the facades by means of the architectural detailing, forcing a Beaux Arts-inspired symmetrical design on what otherwise was a modular conception. The Howard Street facade is arranged into a large central tripartite bay flanked on either side by three bays; a decorative double-window bay punctuates the outer ends of the facades,

terminating with two more bays. At the north end of Howard Street facade, the design evidently anticipated the acquisition and demolition of the Clay Street outhold building, which would have provided the two bays required to complete the symmetrical composition of the west facade. This outhold building, however, was never demolished, and the 1899 block concludes at the north end with the double-window decorative bay. Ornamental pediments project from the flat roof to announce these articulated bays, a triangular pediment for the central tripartite grouping and segmented ones for the end pavilion bays. The central bay, which once contained the principal entrance to the building, is defined by two tiers of double-height Corinthian columns in antis. The decorative end pavilions are heavily ornamented on the spandrels between the floor levels. The spandrels feature terra cotta panels with caryatids, putti, floral garlands, and lion heads. At the height of the second floor, the decorative banding of garlanded lion heads carries across the entire facade, providing a pronounced horizontal element to the composition. The windows of the second through the fifth stories are one-over-one wood sash.[1] The sixth story, separated from the rest of the composition by a secondary cornice, is designed as an ornamental frieze, with small four-light horizontal windows framed by terra cotta panels. A larger and more elaborate cornice extends around the roofline, which is flat except for the above mentioned pediments.

The Lexington Street facade, which mimics the Howard Street facade in its decorative details, features a central columned entrance pavilion with a triangular pediment but no decorative end pavilion bays. It was originally designed with three bays flanking the central entrance on either side. Following Stewart's acquisition of the building in 1904, and the subsequent purchase ca. 1910 of the adjacent lot to the east, two bays replicating the detail of the original facade were added at the southeast end of the Lexington Street elevation.

At the junction of these two principal facades, on the southwest corner of the building, the second floor windows have been bricked over, an action probably taken in the 1950s or 60s. The ground floor of these two principal facades has been much altered, in a manner typical of commercial buildings. In the

[1] The present one-over-one windows may be replacement windows. The original description of the building (see Section 8) highlighted the extensive use of plate glass, and early postcards (see Bert Smith, *Greetings from Baltimore*, p. 27) show single light windows.

1930s, new entrances were inserted, featuring green marble pedimented surrounds, still extant. The original storefront windows and entrances on the ground floor have given way to a series of individual stalls and shops, part of a development in the early 1980s that transformed the ground floor into a mall. The Ionic columns that framed the alternating bay window fronts are still visible above the current shop installations.

At the north end of the building, running along Clay Street, is a five-story, ell-shaped, brick commercial building of the late-19th century, originally an outhold building not owned by Posner, but now part of the consolidated lot. The front of this building, tripartite in composition, forms the north end of the principal facade on Howard Street. The fenestration of the Howard Street bays of this outhold building features a central segmented-arch double window flanked on either side by a narrow one-over-one wood-sash window. At the fifth story level, these side windows are round-headed. Molded bricks form an ornamental cornice. With the exception of a one-bay return, the Clay Street facade of the 19th-century outhold building is detailed in a utilitarian manner. Additional windows have been punched into the Clay Street facade and the third floor windows have been lengthened.

At the northeast corner of the building lot, fronting on Clay Street, is a nine-story wing nine bays across, also finished in a utilitarian manner. Part of the original 1899 store, it has been called the Clay Street wing. The ell-shape of the brick Eastlake-influenced outhold building dictated an unusual configuration for the 1899 building footprint -- with a narrow projection extending to the east of the outhold building north to Clay Street. The Clay Street wing was originally built to a height of six stories when first constructed as part of the original 1899 building campaign. (The original cornice line is still visible at the sixth floor level on the exterior). The acquisition of the adjacent eastern lot in the first decade of the twentieth century enabled Louis Stewart to expand this wing eastward as well as vertically, gaining two bays in width and three stories in height. Window openings with simple brick sills frame six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash. Loading bays occupy the ground story. The uppermost or ninth story has no windows.

The interior of the building retains few decorative features and specialized spaces dating to the period of significance. The railing around the mezzanine level gallery, which overlooked the whole of the first

floor and contained a reception room for ladies when the building opened, still remains. On the upper floors, round columns and exposed beams express the building's structural system. The two principal stairs, with their elegant cast iron balusters, remain intact. One is located in the northwest corner of the 1899 building, and the other is situated at the southeast corner of the building. In the 1930s, the entire store was redecorated and refixtured; the elevators and the open bank of escalators along the north wall of the building presumably date from this period. The open plan floors contain some built-in areas probably dating from the 1960s and 1970s. The ground story is no longer intact, having been altered in the early 1980s to accommodate a series of small shops with a central mall corridor running east to west through the store. The interior of the ell-shaped brick outhold building has also been extensively altered. The floors of the building do not line up with the department store building, necessitating a half-flight of stairs up or down upon entering the area from the main block. Fabric and finishes dating to the 1960s divide these floors.

Significance Summary

Stewart's Department Store, designed in 1899 by noted Baltimore architect Charles E. Cassell, was constructed as a department store for Samuel Posner. Purchased by Louis Stewart in 1904, the ornate Italian renaissance revival building then became the flagship store for Stewart's Baltimore operations. Along with Hutzler's Palace Building (1888-89; listed in the National Register) and Hochschild Kohn (1897; demolished), the former Posner Building anchored Baltimore's premier downtown retail location at Lexington and Howard Streets. Stewart's Department Store meets National Register Criterion A because of its importance to the development of retailing in downtown Baltimore between 1899 and 1945. It also meets National Register Criterion C as an example of a type of major urban department store, and as a good example of the work of a major local 19th century architect.

HISTORY

The evolution of the Posner Building into Stewart's Department Store embodies the development of urban retailing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For much of the 19th century, dry goods merchants in urban areas typically operated from storehouses and shops in small two to three story commercial storefront buildings that combined both warehouse and retail functions. Retailing was often highly specialized, with one shop selling a single type of goods, like ladies' hats, or addressing a specific segment of the market, like a ship chandlers.

In the United States, various circumstances in the mid-19th century combined to accelerate both the growth and proliferation of commercial establishments, paving the way for the emergence of the department store as a distinct building type. The steam engine revolutionized the availability of goods, which could be produced more cheaply and moved more quickly and easily by rail or water. Increased population density in urban centers, the rise of streetcars, general prosperity, and the increased availability of capital all encouraged the growth and expansion of retail establishments. By the 1840s, competition among merchants was so fierce that profit was minimal.[2] More visionary shopkeepers realized that they could increase their business and their profit by offering a variety of goods in several "departments" under one roof, compensating for lower prices by higher selling volume. Department stores sold a variety of goods ranging from furniture to clothing to china and kitchen utensils. As

[2]Paul Hendrickson notes that the 1840 census recorded 57,565 retail stores with an average capitalization of $4,350. Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums: The Illustrated History of America's Great Department Stores*, p. 32.

establishments grew, merchants expanded into larger structures or neighboring buildings, often cutting openings in party walls to connect space on each floor.

The Posner brothers, Elias (ca. 1848-1885) and Samuel (1851-1940), who established the concern that eventually became Stewart's Department Store, exemplified the class of successful entrepreneurs in late 19th century Baltimore. Exposed early on to business, the Posner brothers had come to Baltimore in search of a larger market after three years running a dry goods store they had established in New Brunswick, New Jersey.[3] Baltimore provided a particularly fertile environment for the development of downtown department stores. Served by the Inner Harbor and the B&O and Pennsylvania Railroads, Baltimore was an entrepôt for the creation and shipping of goods. Its population mushroomed at the rate of 25% per decade during the second half of the 19th century.[4] The city granted its horse car franchise in 1859; by the 1870s rival streetcar companies provided reliable mass transportation to and throughout downtown. The city's prosperous middle class, newly housed in speculative rowhouse neighborhoods spawned by annexation, offered an ideal market for consumer goods. Moreover, Baltimore's economic dominance within the state meant that the city's market reach extended well beyond its geographic limits.

In Baltimore, Lexington Market became a locus of the city's retail development. The largest market in the city, Lexington Market brought Maryland's farmers together with Baltimore's wholesale and retail consumers. By 1912 it housed over 1200 stalls, with an additional 600 wagons pulled along the curb, and drew 50,000 people per day.[5] As a virtual urban crossroads, Lexington Market brought together rural sellers with urban buyers, creating enormous traffic for nearby retail establishments. By the 1850s, when Moses Hutzler opened his first store

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[3]Their father Ephraim, who like his wife had come from Posen, Germany, was a prominent manufacturer of furs in New York City. In his youth Samuel Posner had worked as a clerk, and by the age of 18, his business acumen recognized, had been placed in charge of a store on Grand Street. Biographical information comes from obituaries in vertical files at the Enoch Pratt Free Library and the Jewish Historical Society, as well as George Howard, *The Monumental City*, pp. 1085-88, and *Industries of Maryland*, p. 187.

[4]Sherry Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City*, p. 199.

[5]Lynn R. Meekins, *Collier's Magazine*, January 6, 1912 as reproduced in Marion E. Warren and Mame Warren, *Baltimore: When She Was What She Used to Be*, pp. 45-47. Meekins reveals Lexington Market's appeal to women, noting that "the wife of one of the leading men of the city" insisted on doing her own shopping rather than delegating it to servants. "'It is one of the great delights of my week. I enjoy it more than a tea or reception.'"

just north of Howard and Lexington Streets, one block east of Lexington Market, the area had become a desirable retail location. Located immediately north of Baltimore's burgeoning wholesale district, Howard Street was among the widest streets in Baltimore's commercial area and could be easily reached from the developing northern suburbs.[6]

The one-room store Elias and Samuel Posner established in 1876, upon their arrival in Baltimore, was by the end of the nineteenth century hailed as one of the largest and finest stores south of the Mason-Dixon line. The Posner Brothers opened their first store at 172 West Lexington Street, later adding 174 to the store address. In 1879, Posner's moved to 138 West Lexington Street closer to Lexington Market, expanding to three buildings within the decade (134-138 West Lexington). The idea of housing numerous different dry goods "departments" under one roof was still a relatively novel one in Baltimore, and the advantages of such an arrangement were readily apparent to the public. *Industries of Maryland* (1882) applauded the business, stating "any city would do well to imitate this example."[7] George Howard, writing of the brothers in his 1889 *The Monumental City*, proclaimed them pioneers of the new "Department Stores," and argued that Posner's "takes rank with the leading houses in the country, and is believed to be the finest and largest of its kind south of Philadelphia."[8]

Several aspects of Posner's business placed it at the forefront of this commercial development. One was their use of advertising. In 1889 George Howard argued that Posner's advertising had "confessedly proven one of the most potent agencies which have been employed by them in attaining the unprecedented popularity of the house, and the immense and increasing volume of its trade in the city and vicinity."[9] Another significant characteristic of their operation was its cash-only basis. Unlike many other retail stores of the time, Posner's established no credit systems with their customers.[10] Elias Posner, the senior partner, died in 1885 at the age of only 39, leaving a thriving business with 60 distinct departments and a workforce numbering some 250 people.[11]

Samuel Posner, who died in 1940, was praised for his careful attention to all details of the operation in subsequent years.[12] He carried on the

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[6]Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Market Center (B-1252), p. 8-3.
[7]*Industries of Maryland*, p. 187.
[8]Howard, *The Monumental City*, p. 1085.
[9]Howard, *The Monumental City*, p. 1087.
[10]Howard, *The Monumental City*, p. 1087.
[11]Obituary, vertical files, Jewish Historical Society.
[12]*Baltimore: The Gateway to the South*, pp. 105-06.

business through the turn of the century -- overseeing the construction in 1899 of a striking new purpose-built department store designed by noted Baltimore architect, Charles E. Cassell. The erection of such a monumental edifice represented a direct response to the pressures of a rapidly expanding retail industry. In 1888, one of Posner's chief competitors, Hutzler's, had constructed Baltimore's first (and now oldest extant) purpose-built department store. Designed by noted Baltimore architects Baldwin & Pennington, Hutzler's Palace Building, an eclectic Romanesque revival building situated at the center of the block at the northwest corner of Howard and Lexington Streets, spurred other retailers to erect their own department stores at this valuable intersection. In 1897, Hochschild Kohn opened their new department store (now demolished) adjacent to Hutzler's Palace. Not to be outdone, Samuel Posner constructed his new store in 1899, which was purchased by Louis Stewart in 1904. Along with Hutzler's Palace Building, Stewart's Department Store survives as one of two late 19th-century department store buildings that established the intersection of Lexington and Howard Streets as Baltimore's premier retail location. By 1925, the May Company completed their new department store on the southwest corner, diagonally across from Stewart's. Smaller, more specialized retailers and national chains like Kresge's and McCrory's flourished in the shadow of these larger retail giants.[13]

As a building type, purpose-built department stores constructed during the late 19th and early 20th century shared certain common characteristics. These buildings were characterized by their large size and grand scale, stylish architecture, open floor plans, expansive windows, and continuous storefronts along the street. The size and scale of the new department store building type signalled the depth and variety of merchandise the store offered. Along with the open floor plan, the building's size provided maximum flexibility for merchandise storage and display. The architectural panache of the department store building conveyed the store's image as a purveyor of fashionable and up-to-date goods. Style and exterior appearance also distinguished the department store from its competitors and from smaller, specialized retailers, providing an image of stability and permanence.

Architectural style, however, took a back seat to display and merchandising. Merchants insisted that sidewalk frontage be devoted entirely to storefronts, violating one of the most cherished architectural precepts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries -- that the base of a building be detailed to convey traditional notions of weight and support derived from masonry construction. Instead, massive department stores

[13]Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Market Center (B-1252), pp. 8-3 - 8-4.

appeared to rest on a glazed watertable formed by the continuous storefronts.

The Stewart's building offers a good example of turn-of-the century department stores. Rising six stories and occupying street frontage along Lexington and Howard Streets, the building dominates its corner location. Its lavish ornamentation recalls the Bon Marché in Paris, one of the most prominent early department stores. Cassell's design represented the most sophisticated and modern building technologies and amenities.[14] Each of the six floors was to function as one large open showroom, flooded with light from the extensive use of plate glass. A newspaper article about the opening of the building noted its "creamy white brick and terra cotta, with artistic ornamentation" and stated that the detailing combined with the building's "many large plate glass windows will give the building a light, airy, and graceful appearance."[15] While its ornate Italianate architectural vocabulary is one long associated with commercial architecture, architect Charles E. Cassell no doubt designed the Posner Building to contrast with the slightly heavier Romanesque architecture of Hutzler's Palace Store, its rival across the street. The Clay Street wing, projecting north at the east of the brick outhold building, in addition to housing the packing and shipping area in the basement and first story, was also equipped with a cafe in the mezzanine level of the first floor.

The feminine character of the contemporary language used to describe Posner's image -- "light, airy, and graceful" -- together with the newspaper article's description of gendered space within the building demonstrate how important providing public accommodations for women was to a department store's success:

> Projecting into the main room on the level of the mezzanine floor will be an ornamental gallery. This gallery will overlook the whole first floor of the building. It will be fitted up as a reception room for ladies, where they may rest wait for their friends, write letters and chat. On the second story of the wing will be ladies' retiring rooms, connecting with toilet rooms.[16]

In cataloguing the spacious floor plans and the modern conveniences, the article emphasized above all that the building was to be "the most

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[14]"New Posner Building," *Baltimore Sun*, March 28, 1899, attachment to the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Stewart's Department Store (B-2290), by Janet Davis of CHAP, 1986.

[15]"New Posner Building."

[16]"New Posner Building." Although this space has been much altered, the railing around the mezzanine still remains.

thoroughly fireproof structure in the city." Although the 1904 fire that devastated the eastern part of Baltimore's central business district was still several years away, the Clay Street fire of 1873 and smaller fires in the vicinity in the 1890s remained within recent memory.[17] Many contemporaneous stores resembled the old Posner store then being demolished at the site: a collection of one- or two-story buildings fitted for retail, not purpose-built and fireproof. The new Posner Building boasted wire glass in all the windows facing Clay Street and in the light wells in the main building, and almost no wood in the construction. The power house for generating the electricity for the lighting, the elevators, and the pneumatic cash system, as well as the steam heating, was located across Clay Street in a separate building -- with a tunnel under the street providing the connection to the department store -- obviating, as the newspaper article pointed out, "the necessity of having any fire whatsoever in the main building."

In 1904, five years after the construction of the new building, Posner sold the business to Louis Stewart (ca. 1855-1940).[18] Stewart was a former railroad magnate in New York who had branched out into department store retailing.[19] In 1900, Stewart had become president of James McCreery & Company, a department store chain in New York City. He also later served as president of Lord & Taylor.[20] Early in his dry goods business career Stewart had also connected with concerns in Louisville.[21] Louis Stewart

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[17] *Baltimore: When She Was What She Used to Be*, pp. 40-43.

[18] Samuel Posner's obituary states that he sold the business to an H.B. Claflin. No other mention of this name has been found. Maryland Room Biographical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[19] Paul Hendrickson could not document any relationship between Louis Stewart and the legendary mid-nineteenth century New York department store owner Alexander T. Stewart who had founded A.T. Stewart & Company in 1826. A.T. Stewart & Company by the Civil War years commanded the largest store that had yet been dedicated to the retail trade, the 1862 Cast Iron Palace, as well as the most impressive clientele; Mary Todd Lincoln's redecorating of the White House was carried out exclusively with Stewart goods. By the time Louis Stewart acquired Posner's in 1904, A.T. Stewart had been dead for over a quarter of a century. The continued attraction of his name, however, virtually synonymous with quality (Marshall Field was called the A.T. Stewart of the West), no doubt led Louis Stewart to change the name of the well-established Posner's to his own. Hendrickson, *Emporiums*, pp. 38-39, 144.

[20] Obituary, *Sun*, December 2, 1940.

[21] Isidor Blum, *Jews in Baltimore*, p. 266. In Louisville, he had made the acquaintance of two men on whom he relied to manage Stewart's: George V. Post, Vice President, and C.E. Steinkamp, Assistant Treasurer. The advertisement for Stewart's in Blum's 1910 book indicates that all three men had been connected with large dry goods houses in Louisville at one point.

reflected the emerging direction of growth for department store operations in the new 20th century. With expertise in running national-scale conglomerates, and with presumably a much larger access to capital, Stewart took the old Posner concern to a new level of business.

Within the first decade of ownership under Stewart, the building underwent a substantial renovation and expansion, as a result of the acquisition of the adjacent through lot to the east.[22] Posner's monogram, and the original name of the store playfully embedded in the terra cotta decorations of the tympana on the Howard and Lexington facades were probably replaced with Stewart & Company architectural ornament at this time. What was called the Clay Street wing, the small area that extended north to Clay Street at the east or rear of the brick outhold building, was also enlarged at this time -- both in footprint and in height. Originally six stories high, the Clay Street wing after the expansion numbered nine stories. It featured a lunchroom on the 7th floor, a kitchen on the 8th, and a cabinet/carpenter's shop on the 9th floor.

The incorporation of the 19th-century ell-shaped commercial building into the northwest corner of the store and the ca. 1910 eastern addition were typical department store expansion strategies. Because location is so important to retail success, stores expanded by acquiring adjacent property as their needs dictated and lots became available at a suitable price. Department store magnates would then construct new additions by reiterating the design module of the original store, expanding the street frontage and physical presence of the building. Louis Stewart adopted this approach for the ca. 1910 eastern addition to his store, which repeats the articulation and detailing of Cassell's original design.

In 1916, the Associated Dry Goods Corporation was formed, consolidating several department store interests across the nation. In addition to Stewart's of Baltimore, in 1937 the company's holdings comprised: Lord & Taylor's and J. McCreery & Co. of New York, Hahne & Co. of Newark, New Jersey, J.M. Adam & Co. and William Hengerer & Co. of Buffalo, Powers Dry Goods Co. of Minneapolis, and Stewart Dry Goods of Louisville.[23] The creation of this corporation presaged a sea change for the way department stores stocked and purchased their goods, representing a national consolidation and standardization of buying strategies across much of the country. The effects of this change were most strongly felt later in the century.

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[22]This information is gleaned from comparing the 1901 and the 1914 Sanborn maps.

[23]"A Message from the President of Stewart & Co. to His Associates," printed pamphlet, no date [1938]. Maryland Room Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Stewart & Company flourished through the 1920s, and although hard hit like most stores during the Depression, saw sales volumes continue to rise through most of the 1930s. Between 1933 and 1937, sales rose from $3,400,000 to $4,800,000 -- an increase of 41% over four years. In a ca. 1938 published pamphlet distributed to employees, President Thomas P. Abbott provided a financial portrait of the business in lay terms. He detailed the efforts to improve the business during the ten years since 1928, much of which entailed dedicated attention to the public appearance of the store building. Over the course of the decade all of the floors had been "refixtured and redecorated." New public spaces were created. The basement level had been opened as a sales floor in February of 1931, and in the summer of that same year had been air conditioned -- by the first such unit in a large department store in Baltimore. In 1934, the air conditioning had been extended to include the first through the third floors as well as the beauty salon. In 1936, new elevators were installed, and, on the exterior, the entrances were reworked. The central entrance was closed and new recessed entrances were installed. In that same year, to facilitate their ever increasing shipping service, Stewart's built a new Delivery and Warehouse building on West Saratoga Street. In 1937, as Abbott summarized in his pamphlet, it cost about $5,000 a day to operate Stewart's on a day it was open to the public. The employees had served over 580,000 people at the Soda Fountain and Restaurant during the year; they had mailed over 300,000 statements; and they had delivered some 1,060,000 packages.[24]

In the fiercely competitive world of department stores, keeping up with new fashions meant not only stocking the latest clothing trends but maintaining a modern and stylish facility. The extensive investment in the appearance of the building -- both internally ("refixtured and redecorated") and externally -- in a time of national depression reflected the very competitive market among downtown department stores during this period. In 1931-32, Hutzler's department store across the street underwent a major expansion. This campaign, called "Greater Hutzler's," encompassed the construction of a new and very up-to-date Art Moderne facility adjoining the original Palace building on the north, as well as the remodelling of the Palace ground floor facade to conform to the new addition.[25] James R. Edmunds, Jr., the architect for the Hutzler's modernization, also remodelled the first level of the Hochschild-Kohn store in a Deco style during this time.[26] The turn-of-the-century Renaissance Revival-style architecture of the Stewart & Company building would have been viewed as extremely dated and old-fashioned by the 1930s, especially in contrast to

[24]"A Message from the President of Stewart & Co. to His Associates."

[25]Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Hutzler Brothers Palace Building.

[26]S. Cucchiella, *Baltimore Deco*, p. 58.

the new Hutzler's building across the street. There is little doubt that the reconfiguration of the entrances, the renovation of the interior spaces, and the installation of air conditioning were intended to convey Stewart's ability to keep up with current fashions. Likewise, the renovation of the interior spaces would have served the same purpose. Stewart's opened an art gallery on the sixth floor in 1954, as part of its efforts to maintain prominence in Baltimore's retail market, advertising quality pictures -- by English, Spanish, and Italian artists, all purchased in England -- at affordable prices (between $30 and $150).[27]

Despite the apparent vigor of Baltimore's downtown retailing, the forces that were to contribute its decline were all present by the 1930s. Automobiles lessened people's dependence on the urban infrastructure of streetcars and bus lines. Small, neighborhood shopping centers housed supermarkets that siphoned customers from Lexington Market, as well as shops that provided competition to smaller downtown stores. As Baltimore's suburbs grew, national chains and local stores alike began eyeing the suburban market and developing strategies to accommodate the automobile. By 1938, Sears constructed its department store on North Avenue, some distance from Baltimore's downtown retail core, but more easily accessible to shoppers in the northern suburbs and to major automobile routes. During the 1940s, merchants built garages in the downtown area to attract shoppers downtown and to counteract suburban competition like that posed by the Edmonson Village Shopping Center, also constructed in the 1940s. The Hecht Company, Stewart's, and Hutzler's remained at the forefront of new developments, acknowledging the increasingly important role of the automobile. Quick to develop satellite stores in the new suburban malls, the Hecht Company, for example, had also been one of the first to create parking lots for downtown shoppers.

By 1945, the Market Center area around Lexington Market ceased to be Baltimore's prime retail district.[28] Lexington Market's woes further exacerbated the decline of the downtown shopping area. Destroyed by fire in the 1950s, the Market recognized the importance of the automobile by constructing a large garage when it was rebuilt. Increasing automobile traffic made downtown less and less attractive. In the early 1970s, the two blocks of Lexington Street between Park Avenue and Lexington Market were closed to automobile traffic to create a pedestrian mall. Within the

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[27]Lydia Todd, "Art Gallery Opened by Department Store," *Baltimore-American*, October 3, 1954. Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[28]Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Market Center (B-1262), p. 8-4 and 8-8. This Nomination has adopted the 1945 date derived from the survey of the Market Center District as the end date for Stewart's period of significance.

decade both Hochschild Kohn and Stewart's closed.[29] By the end of the 1980s, Hutzler's and the Hecht Company had closed their downtown stores as well.

In its last years Stewart's suffered persistent changes in management, revealing the difficulties behind keeping the store viable. Stewart's built several suburban stores; the first on York Road, built in 1953-54, was touted as having the largest display of home furnishings on one floor in Baltimore.[30] Another store was opened on Reisterstown Road. At the same time management sought to maintain interest in the downtown store with special displays and advertising. In 1974, by Mayoral proclamation, a two week period March 1-16 was declared "Stewart's Salute to Maryland Weeks," and 17 window dressings highlighted historical events. The proclamation acknowledged Stewart's as having "occupied an important place in Baltimore retailing for three-quarters of a century."[31] Within five years, however, the store had been closed and the property sold to a private developer -- 18 months after competitor Hochschild-Kohn & Company closed their downtown store. The week-long 1979 closing sale brought record numbers of shoppers to the store.[32] The suburban Stewart's stores remained open. In 1982, these stores were replaced with Caldor's, a discount chain that had been acquired by Associated Dry Goods Corporation the year before.[33] At the downtown Stewart building, the ground floor was subdivided and leased to small shops. The interior of the building is now vacant; only the street front shops occupying the ground floor perimeter are still operational.

In addition to the important role it played in Baltimore's retail history, the Posner Building (Stewart's Department Store) is also significant as a good example of local architect Charles E. Cassell's (ca. 1838-1916) work. The Posner Building, along with the Severn Apartments and the Stafford Hotel, was one of the most significant secular projects of Cassell's 1890-1900 period and a substantial contribution to the emerging streetscape of a cosmopolitan Baltimore. The newspaper article announcing its erection

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[29]"The Demise of Stewart's downtown. Why," *News-American*, January 3, 1979. Maryland Room Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[30]"Stewart's Plans Store," *Sun*, December 20, 1953. Maryland Room Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[31]Flyer from Maryland Room Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[32]"Shoppers mob Stewart's downtown to take advantage of store's closing," *Sun*, January 9, 1979. Maryland Room Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Library.

[33]"Stewart's will convert to Caldor's," *Evening Sun*, November 4, 1982. Maryland Room Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Library.

hailed it as "one of the largest and handsomest business structures in the city."[34]

One of 15 founding members of the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and a Fellow of the AIA by 1905, Charles E. Cassell was among Baltimore's most important and prolific architects at the turn of the century. Drawing on his training as an engineer, Cassell undertook large commissions like churches, apartment buildings, and hotels. Eulogized in 1916 as "a leader in the architectural world here for more than 40 years,"[35] Cassell over the course of his career in the city was responsible for a large number of residences, ranging from individual house commissions, to apartment and hotel buildings, and to blocks of rowhouse development. He designed a number of churches, including the Swedenborgian Church, the Memorial Church of the Holy Comforter, Bishop Cummings Memorial Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church on Preston Street. Cassell also designed some office buildings, including the new Law Building, where he maintained his office until his death; this was also the site of the practice he maintained with his son John (Cassell & Son), from ca. 1904 until John's premature death in 1909. He associated as well with his nephew in Norfolk (Cassell & Cassell). Cassell designed a number of buildings outside of Baltimore, in other parts of Maryland, in Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Most notable of these buildings are the Chapel of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and the Immanuel Chapel of the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria.[36]

Charles E. Cassell was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, the son of Charles E. Cassell and Sarah W. Cassell. The family, whose name had originally been Casselli, had emigrated from Genoa, Italy, to Norfolk, Virginia, in the 1820s. Charles E. Cassell was educated in Virginia, studying engineering at the University of Virginia. He fought in the Confederate Army for all four years of the Civil War, eventually serving as a captain in the Engineers' Corps under General Pickett. He was charged with treason for removing his plans for the naval waterworks at Old Point Comfort, Virginia, to keep them from falling in the hands of the Union. At the end of the Civil War he fled to Chile to avoid execution. He spent two years in Chile, becoming an ensign in the Chilean Navy, before the U.S. pardoned him.[37] In the brief period before his arrival in Baltimore in 1868,

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[34]"New Posner Building." Attachment to the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Stewart's Department Store.

[35]Obituary, *Sun*, August 30, 1916. Biographical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[36]Biographical information, other than that provided in the obituary, comes from files of Historic Architects Roundtable, Baltimore Architecture Foundation; Wells, *The Virginia Architects*; and Dorsey, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture*.

[37]Obituary, August 30, 1916. Biographical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Cassell appears to have returned to Virginia, to marry Sally Bowles, the daughter of a prominent Episcopal clergyman.[38]

Cassell, who just two years after his arrival in Baltimore was one of the founders of that city's local American Institute of Architects chapter in 1870, was clearly an obvious candidate to design Samuel Posner's new department store. In addition to his engineering and structural expertise, he possessed strong connections to both the business and religious establishments of the city.[39] Cassell created a retail confection whose image so quintessentially embodies an era in Baltimore history that Barry Levinson filmed its imaginary destruction to convey the end of an age of innocence in his movie *Avalon*.

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[38]Cassell moved to Baltimore with his wife in 1868, where they took over the residence of Cassell's brother at 1407 Park Avenue, the home in which Cassell remained until his death in 1916. They had three daughters, Mary Virginia, Sally Primrose, and Matty, as well as a son, John, who became an architect and practiced with his father from about 1904 until his premature death from flu in ca. 1909. Mrs. Cassell also died suddenly in a flu epidemic, ca. 1895-1900, and several maiden aunts from Norfolk had taken turns caring for the children, commuting on the Bay Line steamer. Anecdotal history of Cassell's career and family is taken from Peter Kurtze interview with Richard B. Carter, grandson of Charles Cassell, September 17, 1991.

[39]Cassell enjoyed other patronage within the close-knit and competitive world of Baltimore retailing, designing a house for Albert Hutzler and the Bernheimer Annex on Fayette Street. Information from a handout from the Baltimore AIA Centennial Exhibition.

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MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Periods:

Industrial/Urban Dominance, A. D. 1870-1939

Prehistoric/Historic Period Themes:

Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning

Economic (Commercial and Industrial)

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store

Known Design Source: Charles E. Cassell, architect

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