

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only
received **JAN 16 1981**
date entered

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

1. Name

historic Collins and Pancoast Hall

and/or common Collins Hall

2. Location

street & number 4-8 South Centre Street N/A not for publication

city, town Merchantville vicinity of congressional district

state New Jersey code 034 county Camden code 007

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name James J. O'Brien, P.E.

street & number 16 N. Centre Street

city, town Merchantville vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Camden County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Camden state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Camden County Cultural and
title Heritage Commission has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage

city, town Trenton state New Jersey

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Collins and Pancoast Hall is a three-story red brick late Victorian commercial and hall building that served as the office for Collins and Pancoast, Lumber and Coal Merchants, while also containing a second story auditorium and a third floor Masonic meeting room. It is located on Centre Street, the main avenue of Merchantville, adjacent to the railroad tracks that supplied the "Best Lehigh Coal, Lumber, Millwork, Hardware and Builder and Farmer Supplies". To the rear of the building were the lumber and coal yards, which remained active until 1975, when the last family member sold the property.

The principal volume of the building is of red brick, with all of its ornament concentrated on the front, while the sides are plain, articulated only by regularly spaced piers. They mark the supports of the central clear span halls, while the unarticulated front quarter marks the position of the stair and ancillary rooms. The rear portion contained the stage house and private rooms on the third floor. The front facade is subdivided into thirds by a slightly advanced central block, flanked by recessed panels, in turn framed by corner piers. Shallow reveal lines on the side panels below the windows of the second and third floors mark the stories in good Victorian fashion. The central, projecting block, shows the position of the handsome public stair by the large doors and the oversize round-headed and rectangular windows whose intermediary positions make the stair landings evident on the exterior. The round-headed windows are framed by deep brick arches that make the transition back to the plane of the wall. In between the lower window and the rectangular middle window is a handsome wood panel with a geometric overlay recalling half-timber that links the building to the contemporary Queen Anne. The wood lintel above the second floor windows is accented at the third points, continuing the subdivision of the windows and creating a unified architectural element that emphasizes the dominance of the main facade. A corbelled brick cornice caps the walls.

The building is fronted by a handsome Colonial Revival porch that replaced an earlier conventional corrugated iron roofed shed carried on slender iron columns. Early in the 20th century, the Colonial Revival porch was constructed, giving the facade a more monumental appearance. As originally developed, four Tuscan columns across the front carried a wood entablature, in turn supporting a porch balustrade on the roof. The central bay projected forward to the curb line to form a porte cochere, befitting the building's role as the auditorium and Masonic Temple of the town. In recent years, when the street was widened, the front bay and the balustrade were removed. With its original olive green and cream trim, the building presented a handsome sight.

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Two additional changes have occurred on the exterior. The original first floor 2/2 sash of similar width to the windows of the upper blocks were replaced early in the 20th century by large fixed pane windows nearly the full width of the structural bay. Four light transoms above provided ventilation and more illumination. The building also shows a short addition to the rear, containing a now removed rear stair. It was probably added to provide exits after a fire in 1893, which is still remembered as one of the largest in the history of Merchantville. Otherwise, the building has survived in excellent condition, even retaining traces of the painted sign 1893 - Collins and Pancoast - 1893 on the side of the wall toward the railroad tracks.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 c. 1887; 1893 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Collins and Pancoast Hall is a handsome and well preserved late Victorian building that occupies an important site where the main street of Merchantville, New Jersey, Centre Street, is crossed by the tracks of the railroad. The building housed an important building supply company owned by John Collins and his son-in-law, Thomas Pancoast. Collins is of special note as one of the founders and developers of Miami Beach, and for whom its famous "Collins Avenue" was named. Because of its central location, the developer's, Collins and Pancoast, designed the building to provide spaces for the growing cultural and social fabric of Merchantville, including a handsome second floor auditorium and a third floor Masonic meeting room that served the organization from the 1893 opening until the past decade. Other organizations, including the Post Office and the Merchantville Playcrafters have found homes in the building. Thus the Collins and Pancoast Hall is an architecturally imposing commercial structure that caps the most active generation of Merchantville's growth, representing the maturing of the community as it evolved towards one that sustained the arts and was unified by various social and fraternal organizations. Collins Hall's architectural importance must be assessed in two primary areas: as one of the few surviving landmarks of the generation which created Merchantville, describing their taste and aspirations, and as a nicely composed, fully developed, Queen Anne facade, with overtones of Germanic Victorian brickwork. The late 1880s and early 1890s were a time of intense institutional development in Merchantville. A new Episcopal Church, by residents Henry Macomb and Arnold H. Moses (1892), a new clubhouse for the Niagara Hose Company on Park Avenue (1892) and the "Merchantville Club", designed by resident H. Bloomfield Bair (1892) were in progress shortly after the Collins Hall began. Despite a 1964 statement by the architectural review board of Merchantville that "Colonial architecture is best for Merchantville", the town's major buildings, including the 1883 railroad station across the street and the principal houses, all are handsome Victorian designs. Collins Hall is part of that group.

At the same time, the Collins and Pancoast Hall has its own individual merit as a successful late Victorian design. Its principal facade is deftly organized Victorian composition that describes the various functions within by changes in fenestration, and by the reveal lines of the floor boards. As such it belongs to the dominant course of development of modern architecture that moved

9. Major Bibliographical References

Merchantville Historical Society Files, Merchantville, NJ
Earl P. Lewin, ed., The Centennial Yearbook, Merchantville NJ, 1974 pp. 21, 77.
M. Blanche Cordery, Merchantville Past and Present, Merchantville NJ, 1964, pp. 88-89,
131-132.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property $\frac{1}{4}$ acre

Quadrangle name Camden Quad.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at the corner of South Chestnut Street and South Centre Street, the building and its grounds occupies the site extending 74'6" to the south, then extends west, on a line perpendicular to South Centre Street 169'0", then returns north 74'6" to South Chestnut Street, then returns to the beginning point to the east.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc.

date September 27, 1983

street & number 3961 Baltimore Avenue

telephone (215) 386-6276

city or town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Myers

title Director, Division of Parks & Forestry

date January 6, 1984

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

Entered in the
National Register

date

2/16/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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away from historicizing design toward the direct expression of constructive and functional issues. While the large round arches of the windows in the center mark the stair, the regularly spaced, tall windows of the side mark the large hall rooms, and the bulk windows of the front mark Collins' store. Against that pattern of representation is the equally impressive tripartite organization of the facade, repeated in the triple subdivision of the center window.

The internal spaces, while simply detailed, are of importance both as intact survivals of an uncommon building type and as sophisticated examples of Victorian engineering. Though once a dominant building type in large and small towns, the role of the hall building has been supplanted by the meeting rooms of restaurants and hotels, while small town theater has been supplanted by television and the cinema. The hall, on the other hand, survived in the hands of the family that built it, and because it found long-term tenants -- the Masons for three-quarters of a century, and the Playcrafters for four decades -- it remained without significant changes. These and other organizations have made the hall a significant focus of community spirit.

The building has further importance in its association with coal and lumber merchant, Quaker developer and visionary John Collins. It was he who acquired the land from Senator Alexander Cattell in 1886, and shortly thereafter built Collins Hall. Early in the 20th century, Collins and a partner, Nathan Field, acquired most of the land that is now Miami Beach. After a variety of business efforts, including shipping coconuts from Cuba to introduce the coconuts palm to south Florida, the partners ended up farming their land. That agricultural development resulted in the need for better transportation, with the consequence that Collins dug what is now called Collins Canal through to Miami Harbor. Later it was his scheme to build a bridge linking his property, which he named "Miami Beach", to the mainland that sparked the early 20th-century Miami land boom.

Collins Hall warrants being placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a significant late-nineteenth century architectural design, as a major focus of Merchantville's social and cultural history, and as a major commercial building in the downtown.

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Miami Herald, "Dollars and Sand Built a City", Sunday, 4 September 1977, pp. 1D-2D

"Borough of Merchantville", G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Camden County, Philadelphia, 1877

Camden County Deed Book, 125, folio 470 ff., 7 September 1886

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, VII:3, 20 January 1893; VII 16, 27 April 1893