12665

NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
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 Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building

other names B-1363

2. Location

street & number 39 West Lexington Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Baltimore ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 11-12-03

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:
- ☒ entered in the National Register.
  - ☐ 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 the Keeper — Date of Action 12/29/03

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: office building

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Beaux Arts Classicism
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Skyscraper

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls TERRA COTTA
Granite
roof Built-up roofing
other Marble; Iron

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

Description Summary:

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building is an early twentieth-century commercial office tower located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Lexington and Liberty streets in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. It stands near the western edge of the city's central business district. It was designed by the Boston- and Baltimore-based architectural firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice, and was constructed in 1916. The nominated property is an excellent example of an early modern skyscraper, rising twenty-one stories above grade. It was built according to the developing technologies of fire-proof construction, including a structural steel skeleton and tile arch flooring structure. The exterior of the building is clad with gray granite and gray and white marble from the first through third floors (including the mezzanine) and glazed terra cotta above, which is patterned to simulate building stone. The building's exterior is eclectically ornamented in a Beaux-Arts Classical Style featuring polished granite elements, intricately carved marble panels and capitals, elaborate terra cotta cornices and molded profiles, and ornate metalwork. The exterior of the building has been preserved in very good condition and the public façades (fronting on Lexington and Liberty streets) remain largely unaltered. Substantial alterations have been made to the building's interior spaces, however, and a lower-scale modern addition was constructed linking to the south and east elevations of the original building in 1966. The original building's ornate exterior retains a high degree of material integrity and has experienced only minor alterations since its construction.

General Description:

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building contains twenty-three floors, including the mezzanine and basement, and rises to a height of nearly 300 feet above grade. It is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 85' wide from north to south by 121' long from east to west. The building occupies a corner lot at the intersection of Lexington and Liberty Streets and currently features two façades with public access (Drawing A-0). The primary façade, with its grand recessed entrance portico, fronts north on Lexington Street and is divided into five bays (Photo 1 & Drawing A-8). The secondary public façade fronts west on Liberty Street and is divided into seven bays (Photo 2 & Drawing A-9). A modern addition flanks the lower two stories of the original building along the south and east façades (Photos 3 & 4). The substantial addition was constructed in the 1960s and features a fifteen-story office tower that is linked to the original building at its east exterior wall.[1]

The superstructure of the nominated property is a steel frame skeleton with exterior masonry walls supported by a system of steel spandrel beams. The building was constructed on foundations comprised of reinforced concrete walls (24" thick) and reinforced concrete stepped footings. Typical exterior wall construction consists of brick masonry (ranging from 21" to 9" thick, graduated according to floor level) with 4" thick architectural glazed terra cotta cladding above the third floor and granite cladding below. Typical floor construction involves a system of terra cotta tile arches topped with successive layers of cinder fill, cement topping, and various floor finishes, including some original sections of terrazzo. Segments of

[1] The addition was designed by the architectural firm of Fisher, Nes, Campbell and Partners for the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company as part of Baltimore's Charles Center development project. It was constructed in time for the Company's 150th anniversary in 1966. Although the original building and the addition are joined at all levels below the sixteenth Floor, the 1966 annex building is not considered part of the nominated property for the purposes of this nomination.

original interior terra cotta partition walls also remain, although most of the interior layout has been altered from its original configuration.

In the aftermath of the Great Fire of 1904, which destroyed more than 1500 buildings within an eighty-six-block section of Baltimore's original downtown, there was much concern in Baltimore for the latest advancements in fire protection.[2] In designing the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building, architects Parker, Thomas and Rice paid particular attention to this matter, incorporating modern "fire-proof" materials and the latest high-rise construction techniques available at the time. The structure is comprised of steel, brick, terra cotta and concrete. No wood was used in the building for structural purposes; it was only used for interior decorative finishes. Other "fire-proof" measures were also taken by the architects. Automatic sprinklers were included in the original design of the building's retail showrooms, with additional exterior sprinklers installed to protect the storefronts outside. A spiral-slide fire escape that emptied to an exterior door along the east wall was also installed to aid the evacuation of occupants from every floor in case of emergency. Sections of the fire escape still remain above the fifteenth floor (Photo 18).

The architectural form of the building follows the convention of the period for high-rise construction, following the classical tripartite examples of Louis Sullivan at the turn of the twentieth century. The form is derived from the classical column with an accentuated base (first through third floors, in this case), a simple shaft (fourth through eighteenth floors), and a highly ornamented capital (nineteenth floor and above).

The figurative "base" of the building includes the first through third floors and is visually set apart from the rest of the building by the architects' façade treatment and selection of materials. These lower stories feature polished gray granite and carved white marble juxtaposed with decorative metalwork. The structural steel columns at the first through second floors are concealed behind a granite veneer designed to simulate solid masonry pilasters. The faux pilasters are further ornamented with elaborately carved marble capitals and handsome stone plinths and bases. Intricate cast ironwork surrounds the multi-story steel window assemblies that fill the intervening bays.

The exterior elements at the third floor form an entablature above the two-story columns and pilasters below, complete with granite architrave, ornamented frieze, and decorative terra cotta cornice (Photo 8). The frieze is punctuated within each structural bay with pairs of typical double-hung, 3-over-3-light, steel sash windows with elaborately carved granite mullions. The corners of the frieze are also ornamented with marble panels framed within carved granite surrounds. Fitting for the corporate headquarters of a gas and electric company, the frieze design includes an 8-foot, carved marble panel above each column and pilaster with one of four figures representing the personifications of Knowledge, Light, Heat, and Power (Historical View [HV]-9).

The fifteen typical office floors above the third-floor entablature–from the fourth through the eighteenth floors–comprise the "shaft" of the columnar form. At all four façades the exterior walls are clad with simple, unornamented terra cotta blocks glazed to resemble grey building stone. The fenestration pattern is consistent and ordered throughout these floors with pairs of typical double-hung, 3-over-3-light, steel sash windows centered within each bay. All of the building's exterior windows appear to be original.

---

[2] On February 7, 1904, the Great Baltimore Fire erupted in the historic downtown section of the City. The fire quickly spread to engulf an area that spanned nearly 140 acres. The extensively damaged area became known as the "Burnt District."

The "capital" portion of the tripartite columnar form begins at the nineteenth floor. The capital section itself can be described as an entablature with an architrave and paneled frieze, crowned by an elaborately ornamented terra cotta cornice. A projecting band of molded terra cotta wraps around the building at the nineteenth floor, forming the architrave. At each odd-numbered bay along each façade, there is a shallow balcony with balustrade that extends from the architrave band (HV-14). A two-and-a-half-story frieze above the architrave is punctuated at each bay with a two-story arch that frames the windows at the nineteenth and twentieth floors. The keystones of the monumental arches are ornamented with elaborate, projecting bracket-like elements (HV-16). The windows at theses levels are combinations of fixed metal sash and out-swinging casements set in steel frames. The windows at the nineteenth floor are further adorned with cast iron pediments and decorative pilasters (HV-14). The roof cornice is comprised of a number of cantilevered courses of terra cotta that are anchored to the brick backing and steel structure of the building. At its furthest reach, the cornice overhangs the exterior wall plane by more than six feet. Although it is nearly 300 feet above street level, the cornice profile is complicated and highly ornamented with dentils, modillions, and intricate terra cotta moldings patterned with rosette, acanthus leaf and other cast details (HV-15).

The building's primary entrance is located at the center of the Lexington Street façade (Photo 5). Access to the building at this location is gained through two revolving doors sheltered within a two-story recessed portico (HV-10). Two granite columns with intricately carved marble capitals screen the exterior vestibule. The vestibule floor is finished with square marble tiles trimmed with a marble band. The bays between the stone pilasters along the Lexington Street façade, as well as the bays within the exterior vestibule, feature metal window assemblies that rise the full height between the first and second floors. These window assemblies consist of a combination of fixed, hinged and pivoting steel casements at the mezzanine and second floors, with large storefront windows and display space behind them at the first floor. All of the windows are set in steel frames decorated with elaborate cast iron relief details and three-dimensional ornamentation (HV-12). Across the mezzanine level, black marble panels add color and texture to the ensemble (HV-13).

A secondary entrance is located at the southernmost bay of the west façade. The Liberty Street entrance is framed by an intricately carved marble surround with a marble paneled reveal (Photo 6). The original, pocketed, sliding metal gates and entrance doors have been replaced at this location with simple modern glazed doors. Along the Liberty Street façade, the six northern bays also feature typical window assemblies. At the mezzanine level directly above the entrance there is an original, three-light steel window flanked by decorative black marble panels.

The first two stories of the 1966 addition wrap around the east and south façade of the original building (HV-22). The granite and terra cotta cornice at the third floor is continued around the first bay of the east façade as originally designed (Photo 8). Segments of the original exterior east wall were removed to allow communication at the basement, first, mezzanine, and second floors, and a connecting hyphen was also added to link the building between the third through fifteenth floors with the adjacent, fifteen-story office tower annex. Passage between the 1966 annex tower and the original 1916 building is possible at all levels below the sixteenth floor. The ornamentation and decorative features of the uppermost stories and roof cornice of the original building are consistent at all façades, however, and were not altered by the addition.

Architects Parker, Thomas and Rice also incorporated many detail elements that contribute to the exceptional design of the original building's exterior. The ornamental bas-relief figures located along the third-floor entablature add elegant and

striking detail to the public façades and also express the nature of the Company's various spheres of activity (HV-9). The figures were carved out of solid slabs of Beaver Dam white marble, a high-grade stone quarried locally in Maryland. The artist employed was John Evans of Boston, a sculptor reportedly known for his many fine examples of architectural carving.[3] The four figures on the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building signify Knowledge, Light, Heat and Power. Light, Heat and Power obviously represent the products of the Company's industry, while Knowledge typifies "the centuries of human thought and investigation which have made it possible for man to steal the secrets of nature, and give to the world the great utilities which have grown out of the scientific use of energy."[4] Other designed details include several handsome cast and wrought iron flag sockets mounted above the row of fourth-floor windows along the Lexington and Liberty Street façades. Until recently, a large iron lantern fixture designed by the architects also hung inside the Lexington Street vestibule (HV-10 & HV-11).[5]

While the exterior of the building has retained a large degree of integrity, the interior has witnessed a more dramatic transformation. An incomplete, but substantial, set of the original architectural drawings delineated in 1916 by Parker, Thomas and Rice survive among the records kept by the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company's Real Estate and Facilities Services Department. The drawings provide an excellent record for comparison with existing conditions. Structural drawings delineated by the American Bridge Company in 1916 also survive. The numerous alterations and renovations to the building's interior that have occurred in the interim have not been as thoroughly documented, however. An extensive collection of drawings of the mechanical upgrades from the 1960s through the present does survive among Company records, but architectural drawings of alterations made from the same period do not.

Some interior features have survived the various renovation campaigns that the building has undergone. The freight elevator and passenger elevator bank have remained in their original locations, although the elevator cars, doors and control systems have been updated. The eight-car elevator bank is located along a central axial corridor (four elevators on each side) toward the south end of the building, within the fifth and sixth structural bays counting from the Lexington Street façade (HV-18). The freight elevator, a ventilation shaft and stack, and a spiral-slide fire-escape are still located in their original locations near the southeast corner of the building. The fire escape has been dismantled below the fifteenth floor, but sections of this original feature remain above (Photo 18). The original stair tower which serves the first through twentieth floors is located against the south wall of the building within the second structural bay behind the Liberty Street façade (Photo 16). The steel stair tower survives in good condition.

Throughout most of the building, the configuration of the interior spaces has been altered from the architects' original design and associated program due to the numerous renovations and remodeling campaigns that have occurred over the years. The basic layout of many of the floors has remained consistent with the original Parker, Thomas and Rice concept, which is indicative of the philosophy of an ordered and efficient use of space as advocated by the École des Beaux-Arts at the turn of the century. According to original drawings, each floor plan, regardless of specific function or program, followed a typical arrangement. A primary open or communal space–reception area, retail show room, display space or

---

[3] "Notes on the Sculptured Figures in the Frieze of the Lower Cornice of the Lexington Street Building," *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News,* Vol. 5, No. 10 (October 1916): 542.

[4] Ibid., 539.

[5] The lantern was removed from the vestibule sometime in the 1990s, and was placed in the Company's storage facility where it survives to date.

lobby–was located at the center of the floor to the north of the elevator bank with compartmentalized secondary spaces–managers' offices or partitioned areas for clerks and company employee–located around the perimeter. In conjunction with the abundant large exterior windows, the resulting floor plans provided ample daylight and ventilation, and negated the customary need for an interior light well. Appropriate for an energy company, the interior spaces were also lit with the latest methods of artificial electric lighting. The public and private spaces were divided by a communicating corridor. Tertiary spaces or service areas, including restrooms, file rooms, the freight elevator and maintenance closets, were located toward the south (or rear) of the building behind the passenger elevator bank. The overall plan was efficient, well-organized and logically designed, exemplifying the structured Beaux-Arts approach to planning that the principal architects had learned during their tenures in Paris.[6]

The first floor was originally designed to serve as a showroom and retail store for gas and electric appliances (HV-17). It has since been remodeled to feature a large open lobby area, a reception/security desk adjacent to the elevator bank, and a visitors' lounge along the west exterior wall (Drawing A-1; Photos 9 & 10). Interior finishes feature modern materials including a suspended ceiling beneath the mezzanine floor, and a textile mural along the west wall of the lounge. The four steel columns that interrupt the lobby space have been clad with plain white stone that matches the material used to decorate the lobby of the 1966 addition. The original display spaces and windows at the north and west walls have been concealed by partition walls and are not visible from the lobby.

The mezzanine floor has been modified to accommodate a series of offices along the west perimeter wall (Drawing A-2). No details of the original plaster ceiling over the lobby floor remain visible. The ceiling has been finished with a suspended ceiling and modern lighting fixtures have been installed. An original single-flight staircase that communicates between the mezzanine and first floors is located to the east of the elevator bank and retains its original marble treads and risers (Photo 17). Original plaster detailing, indicative of the more spectacular interior finishes throughout the building, also survive on the arched ceiling within this stairwell.

Much of the original finish fabric of the second through eighteenth floors has been removed during the numerous renovation campaigns. Current floor configurations consist of modern partitioned office spaces, open loft plans divided into workstation cubicles, or a combination of both (Drawings A-3 – A-5). Original finishes may survive beneath successive layers of "improvements," but most original fabric appears to have been lost on these floors.

The nineteenth floor was originally designed and configured as the Company's executive office space. The floor plan still includes a large Board Room, a number of executive suites including the President's and the Board Chairman's offices, a library, and administrative work areas (Drawing A-6). The central reception hall has been remodeled, but the interiors of some of the perimeter office spaces still retain a significant amount of original fabric including oak paneled walls with built-in shelves and closets, gas fireplaces with decoratively carved wood mantels and marble surrounds, and plaster ceilings with elegant ornamental plaster details (Photos 13–15). Many of the existing interior finishes at these locations are consistent with the architects' 1916 drawings.

---

[6] All three principal architects studied or worked in Paris and were influenced by the teachings of the École des Beaux-Arts. For biographical information pertaining to the architects, see John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1997).

According to an early description of the building, the twentieth floor was reserved for "special uses."[7] A historic photograph shows an appliance demonstration taking place on the twentieth floor to teach the public the myriad domestic applications of gas and electric energy (HV-19). The floor has been altered over the years, and was last remodeled in the 1990s to serve as part of the Company's law offices (Drawing A-7; Photo 12). Original finishes appear to have been removed entirely. The twenty-first floor is still used primarily for mechanical and elevator equipment although some of the spaces have been converted for office use.

Conclusion

The 21-story commercial office tower built in 1916 at the corner of Lexington and Liberty streets as the corporate headquarters and retail showroom of the newly organized Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore retains a large measure of its overall historic integrity, despite the introduction of the modern 1966 addition and the subsequent interior alterations made to the building as part of numerous renovation campaigns. The original tripartite columnar design of the exterior, the fine detail and craftsmanship evident in the Beaux-Arts Classical ornamentation, and the steel skeleton structure and "fire-proof" construction, all contribute to the significance of the edifice as an exceptional example of early twentieth-century commercial architecture in the City of Baltimore. Although few architectural elements of significance have been preserved in the interior of the building, apart from the original stair tower and the historic office interiors of the nineteenth floor, the Beaux-Arts training of the architects is still exhibited in the well-conceived layout and floor plans that were developed according to the tenets of the École des Beaux-Arts.

[7] "New Building Nears Completion," *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News*, Vol. 5, No. 10 (October 1916): 534.

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)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **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)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or 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.

Area of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1916-1953

Significant Dates

1916

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Parker, Thomas and Rice–architects

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on files (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:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:
BG&E Co. Archives

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building is significant under Criterion A because of its association with the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company and the enormous impact the institution has had on the economy and development of the City of Baltimore and its environs. Since it's completion in 1916, the building has served as the corporate headquarters of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, the direct descendant of the Gas Light Company of Baltimore, the first gas company to be established and incorporated in the United States. The building has served the Baltimore public for nearly a century at the Lexington and Liberty streets location, providing centrally located offices for business transactions, customer inquiries and complaints, as well as retail space for the display and sale of gas and electric appliances and other related merchandise. The building is also significant under Criterion C as a notable example of the architectural work of the Boston and Baltimore firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice. It is located just outside the western boundary of the Baltimore Business and Government Historic District.[8] The building remains a local landmark and a significant example of early twentieth-century commercial architecture in the City of Baltimore.

Resource History and Historic Context:

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company

On June 11, 1816, Rembrandt Peale illuminated the "Salon of Paintings" in his Baltimore Museum and Gallery of the Fine Arts with a "ring beset with gems of light" to the utter amazement of his patrons.[9] The light was produced by means of manufactured coal gas. The novelty of gaslight was said to have piqued the public's curiosity far more than the items Peale had placed on exhibit. Following the success of the dazzling display, Peale conceived of lighting the entire city with gas lamps. Having convinced some of Baltimore's elite business minds to join him in the endeavor, Peale approached city officials with his vision. On June 17, the Mayor and City Council approved the plan by passing an ordinance that permitted Peale and his partners to manufacture coal gas, lay pipes, and to contract with the city for the installation of street lighting. Thus, the Gas Light Company of Baltimore, the first manufactured gas company in the United States and direct predecessor of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, was established. The company was incorporated by an act of the Maryland General Assembly on February 5, 1817, and the first gas street light in Baltimore was illuminated on February 7, 1817 at the corner of Market and Lemon streets (now Baltimore and Holliday streets).

The Gas Light Company of Baltimore managed to survive, and eventually thrive, in spite of the many unexpected complications and unforeseen obstacles inherent in the early years of the nascent industry. Establishing the network of pipes needed for gas delivery, as well as a system of metering consumption, was labor intensive and costly.

[8] See Fred B. Shoken and Ronald L. Andrews, National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the "Business and Government Historic District" (Baltimore City, Maryland), 1987.

[9] Rembrandt Peale was the son of American portrait painter Charles Wilson Peale. He was an accomplished artist in his own right and commissioned the construction of the first "purpose-built" museum building in the United States in 1813. Its early exhibits included portraits of famous Americans and the complete skeleton of a prehistoric mastodon exhumed by C. W. Peale in 1801. The museum was the first structure in the City of Baltimore to have gas lighting.

Consequently, the company was not able to pay a dividend for ten years. It took nearly twenty years before the company could even claim two miles of gas main. Most of the city's residences were still not equipped with gas service by the 1830s, and gas light, therefore, became a distinguishing feature of affluence. Since profit was necessarily a motivating factor for the company, it was the wealthy neighborhoods that were targeted and equipped first with delivery systems. The company continued to expand elsewhere in the city, however, slowly, but steadily. By the 1840s, the Gas Light Company began showing a modest profit, as the novel commodity of gaslight was gradually becoming more commonplace.

Concurrent with the company's expansion to meet residential needs was a growing demand by industry. Factory owners quickly recognized the advantages of gas lighting and of gas powered engines. As demand grew, more and larger manufactured gas plants were constructed to meet demand. By the 1880s, four rival companies–the Consumers Mutual Gas Light Company, the Peoples Gas Company, the Equitable Gas Light Company, and the Chesapeake Gas Company–were all competing for a market share. Corporate competition proved advantageous for the consumer as the ensuing price wars produced lower consumer costs and increased demand. The companies scrambled to outdo each other in attempts to reach an ever-broadening consumer base. Unchecked competition also had ill effects upon the city. Each company operated its own gas works and constructed its own piping system which often involved the laying of parallel mains and duplicate service lines. Baltimore streets were regularly made impassable due to the frequent cycles of construction and repair. Before long, public sentiment shifted to favor increased control of competition which eventually led, by 1888, to the consolidation of the five rival companies into a single entity, the Consolidated Gas Company of Baltimore.

Meanwhile, the "Electric Age" had already begun. In 1879, Thomas A. Edison successfully tested the first commercially feasible incandescent lamp at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey. Soon after the unveiling of Edison's invention, electricity began to be seen as a prospective and viable commodity. Electric companies soon emerged throughout major U.S. cities including Baltimore. As with the development of the gas industry, however, electric companies had their share of setbacks in the early years of their development. Early power plants were typically small and inefficient; service was irregular and inconsistent. In addition, prices varied widely and distribution was often disorganized. City streets were commonly cluttered with a jumbled web of overloaded and often duplicate overhead power lines. As happened with the early gas companies, many electric companies failed, while others merged with, or were absorbed by, the more successful enterprises.

The prosperous Brush Electric Company of Ohio opened a division in Baltimore in 1881.[10] The following year, the Brush Company contracted with the city to light certain areas with electric arc lamps.[11] Due to their intense light, however, arc lamps were not practical for lighting small interior spaces. In response, the Brush Electric Company introduced Edison's incandescent lamp to Baltimore in 1888. Two years later, George Westinghouse obtained a controlling interest in the

[10] The Brush Electric Company was established in 1880 by Charles Francis Brush in Cleveland, Ohio. Charles Francis Brush (1849-1929) was an inventor and industrialist in the commercial development of electricity. His inventive genius places him among an elite group of pioneers in the field that includes Thomas A. Edison and Elihu Thomson. Brush designed and developed an electric arc lighting system that was adopted throughout the United States and abroad during the 1880s.

[11] Arc lamps function by connecting two pieces of carbon to a high amperage electricity supply; an arc of brilliant light is then "struck" between them when they are brought together and then drawn a short distance apart.

Brush Company.[12] Westinghouse advocated the use of alternating current instead of direct current, which had been the basis of Edison's system. One advantage of alternating current was that it enabled a more efficient transmission of electricity over long distances. With the introduction of alternating current, electricity became a more efficient, economical and effective source of illumination, one that would ultimately outpace and even outshine the use of manufactured (and/or natural) gas.

Through a series of mergers and consolidations, the Baltimore division of the Brush Electric Company had by 1899 evolved into the United Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore. Along with the directors of the Consolidated Gas Company, directors of the new electric company soon realized the potential of a joint utility company that could provide both gas and electric services to the general public. The promise of improved service, greater profits, and reduced management costs under a single corporate entity brought the two independent companies together. In 1906, the United Electric Light and Power Company officially joined with the Consolidated Gas Company to become the city's first fully integrated gas and electric service company–the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore.

After consolidation, Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power focused its energies on improving manufacturing and delivery systems as well as expanding the company into new territories. As the popularity and improved economy of the incandescent light grew, the practicality of lighting by gas faded. Other uses of gas were advertised and promoted, however. The company launched a vigorous campaign to promote the use of gas for cooking, boasting greater convenience and lower cost compared to the coal stoves common at the time. The company displayed, sold and financed gas appliances. In 1916, the company introduced gas-fueled central heating (along with electric heating), providing the Baltimore public options for near-effortless heat and automatic temperature control for the first time in the city's history, although the coal furnace remained dominant for decades to come.

Having completed 100 years of service without interruption of its operations, the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company celebrated its centennial year in 1916. The first public service energy corporation in the United States had grown to maturity from its fragile beginning at the historic lighting exhibit in Peale's Museum. The company's Centenary was publicized throughout the country. Distinguished scientists and engineers gathered in Baltimore for the festivities celebrating 100 years of the growth and progress of manufactured gas.[13] Centenary celebrations included a grand parade along a four-mile course through the city. Twenty-five hundred employees participated in the event. Later the same year, construction of the company's new headquarters at the southeast corner of Lexington and Liberty streets was completed in time to commemorate the anniversary.

The aftermath of World War I brought a building boom to Baltimore and, consequently, significant expansion for Consolidated. The city increased its boundaries by nearly sixty square-miles, forcing the company to rush to keep up with service demands. New electric generating plants and substations were built, and the first section of a high-voltage ring

[12] George Westinghouse (1846-1914) was a prolific inventor who obtained over 300 patents during his lifetime. His various inventions significantly influenced several spheres of industry. His most notable inventions include the railroad air brake and improvements to the electric transformer. Westinghouse also was responsible, more than any other man, for the introduction and commercial development of alternating electric current (AC).

[13] John T. King, III. *A History of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, 1816-1987.* (Baltimore: The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company), 144-145.

around Baltimore was completed by 1925. The company also opened a number of lighting and appliance stores to market the latest improvements in both gas and electric appliance technology. The retail stores featured a variety of wares from gas ranges, lamps and water heaters to electric washing machines, irons, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and radios. Promotions were also offered to attract business. Cheaper rates were introduced for substantial users, and a pictorial magazine was published by the company to highlight the seemingly limitless uses of gas and electric energy.

The years following World War II witnessed another period of rapid development in Baltimore as the "baby boom" exploded across the United States. The population increases of the 1950s coincided with record-breaking utility sales and energy production. Advancements in energy production and delivery were also developed and implemented. Over a four-month period, the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company swiftly converted its gas system from manufactured to natural gas in 1950 and added many new miles to its gas main. The company's electricity division also saw significant change during the 1950s, when the twenty-year project to convert the obsolete direct-current (DC) system to the alternating-current (AC) system was completed. In 1955, the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company was officially renamed the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company. By 1956, the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company was participating in the largest, fully integrated, electric grid in the United States, known as the Pennsylvania–New Jersey–Maryland (PJM) Interconnection.[14]

When the company celebrated its 150th Anniversary in 1966, business was thriving and Baltimore was in the midst of an urban renaissance. The city's Charles Center and Inner Harbor development projects were underway, remaking a significant section of downtown Baltimore. As part of the building boom, a new addition was added to the Lexington Street headquarters to more comfortably house the expanding corporation. Throughout the 1960s, the company attempted to keep pace with the region's rapid growth, contributing large capital investments to expand its electric and gas services. The boom of the 1960s was soon undermined, however, by the energy crisis and subsequent regulatory instability of the decades that followed. The circumstances of the 1970s encouraged the development of new technologies as the possibilities of nuclear and other alternative energies were explored. Environmental concerns also affected strategic planning in the last quarter of the twentieth century as the company began to seek new ways to supply customers with inexpensive, clean and reliable energy and, at the same time, to reduce the dependency on foreign oil. Able to weather the diverse challenges of an unpredictable energy market, the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company has continued the long tradition of energy production and delivery to the Baltimore public begun by Rembrandt Peale's pioneering Gas Light Company in 1816.

The production and transfer of energy resources has contributed enormously to the growth of the City of Baltimore, and the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company was undoubtedly a major component in the process of the city's development throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In a 1916 issue of the monthly publication, *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News*, the company included a general overview and description of its new headquarters in the Lexington Street building and affirmed its commitment and ties to the City of Baltimore. "This new home for the company's down-town offices," the company proclaimed, "will enable us to adequately stand before this community as an alert and progressive

[14] The Pennsylvania–New Jersey–Maryland (PJM) Interconnection was the world's first electric grid, and is the United States' largest and most integrated, power pool. PJM is currently the coordinating entity for buying, selling, and transmitting wholesale electricity to 25 million people in the Mid-Atlantic region, covering the bulk of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

organization devoting its every endeavor to the advancement of our city."[15] As this excerpt portended, the nominated property and the company it housed have remained inextricably linked to the City of Baltimore. The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building still stands as a monument to the company's close association with the region's industrial and commercial evolution.

The Architects

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building was designed by the Boston- and Baltimore-based architectural firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice. J. Harleston Parker (1873-1930) was the Boston-born senior member of the firm. Having graduated from Harvard University in 1893, he, like many architects of his era, went on to receive further training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, finishing four years of study by 1900. Douglas H. Thomas, Jr. (1872-1915) hailed from Baltimore and attended The Johns Hopkins University, from which he was graduated in 1893. Thomas also studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for two years and, after a brief stint with a Boston architectural firm, traveled abroad to spend two more years studying architecture in Paris and Italy. In 1900, the two architects formed the firm of Parker and Thomas. They opened dual offices in Boston and Baltimore, and shortly thereafter began work on a number of important corporate commissions. In 1907, Arthur Wallace Rice (1869-1938) joined Parker and Thomas, and the firm officially changed its name to Parker, Thomas and Rice. Rice was also from Boston and had studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which he was graduated in 1891. Like his two partners, Rice also received classical Beaux-Arts training, and worked in the ateliers of Paris.[16]

The influence of the École des Beaux-Arts was pervasive during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and profoundly affected the work of many North American architects of the period. The philosophy of the Beaux-Arts school is apparent in many of Parker, Thomas and Rice's designs. Collectively, their body of work exhibits a polished proficiency at applying classical vocabularies to historical forms while adapting them to contemporary functions. Their organized approach is directly attributable to their Beaux-Arts training. The firm was not associated with a specific building type, nor was their vocabulary limited to one historical period. Their work encompassed a wide variety of building types including apartment houses, office towers, school buildings, commercial warehouses, banks and residences, designed in an eclectic array of styles including Neo-Classical, Second Empire, Italian Renaissance, and Colonial Revival detailing. As one contemporary critic wrote of their work in 1913:

> Reference has been made to the presence in the work of this firm of an eclectic tendency, but it is only fair to add that their eclecticism is almost the inevitable result of the volume and variety of the edifices which they have been commissioned to design. . . . There have, of course, been other architectural firms the volume of whose work has been larger, but it is safe to say that there is none whose work has been more varied. . . . The plans of many of the most important office buildings both in Boston and Baltimore have been turned out from their office, while in addition they have built as many warehouses. . . . Thus there is not a single type of building . . . with the problem of which Messrs. Parker, Thomas & Rice have not had a chance to deal, and such a wide diversity of practical requirements was bound to result in the

[15] "New Building Nears Completion," *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News,* Vol.5, No. 10 (October 1916): 538.
[16] Biographical information pertaining to the architects is from John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1997).

selection of many different types of design, some of which would have to be experimental. The wonder is under the circumstances, not that the work of the firm has tended toward eclecticism, but that it has retained such a large amount of consistency.[17]

The firm was responsible for a number of significant designs throughout Baltimore and helped to shape the skyline of the city in the years following the Great Fire of 1904.[18] Several of the firm's commissions survive and still contribute to the region's architectural richness. Perhaps the grandest of their grand French-style works is the Hotel Belvedere located at East Chase and North Charles streets. The Hotel Belvedere, a Baltimore landmark built in 1903, was designed by Parker and Thomas in the style called "modern French" by architects at the time. It features elaborately embellished façades, a massive cornice, and a 35-foot-high, slate-covered mansard roof with ornate pedimented dormers. Other notable works by the firm in Baltimore include: the Alexander Brown & Sons Building (1901), the 2-story Georgian Revival headquarters of Baltimore's first investment banking institution; Gillman Hall (1904), the Colonial Revival centerpiece of The Johns Hopkins University; the Pennsylvania Railroad Company District Office Building (1905), a modest, Italian Renaissance-inspired, commercial building; the Savings Bank of Baltimore (1907), a dignified banking house in Ionic temple form; the B&O Railroad Company Headquarters Building (1904-06), a 13-story Beaux-Arts office tower; and Hansa Haus (1912), a 2½-story office building with stylized German half-timber detailing built to house the offices of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company.

Although their designs do not typically adhere to a strict academic interpretation of historical styles, they undoubtedly reflect the firm's skillful and imaginative treatment of the chosen vocabulary. The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building is consistent with the quality represented in the firm's larger body of work and represents one of the finest examples of their high-rise commercial buildings.

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building

In 1916, the architectural firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice was commissioned by the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore (later the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company) to design a corporate office tower that would enable the recently consolidated utility company to relocate its scattered departments under a single roof. Since the 1906 merger of the independent gas and electric companies, the offices of both of the former institutions had remained separate. Company directors wanted a central building that would eliminate the overcrowding of their current offices and also establish a feeling of greater unity among the disparate and scattered gas and electric departments. As a result, the public would also be better served by centrally located offices equipped to handle all consumer concerns (i.e., bill payments, customer complaints, inquiries and other business transactions). In addition to public offices, adequate retail space would be designated in the new building for the display and sale of the latest electric and gas fixtures, appliances and related merchandise.

[17] Herbert David Croly, "Notes on the Work of Parker, Thomas & Rice of Boston and Baltimore," *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (August 1913): 119-123.

[18] On February 7, 1904, the Great Baltimore Fire erupted. Eighty-six city blocks of the old downtown burned, spanning nearly 140 acres. Over 1500 buildings were destroyed throughout the area which became known as the "Burnt District."

In 1915, the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore purchased property on the southeast corner of Lexington and Liberty streets, diagonally across from one of their existing office buildings. A corporation known as the Public Service Building Company was created to manage the construction and financing of a new building for the utility company at that location. After construction was completed, the company would then lease the building from the subsidiary.[19] Prior to the company's acquisition, the site was occupied by a three-story building that housed a Read's drugstore.[20] At the time, most of the buildings in the vicinity were of similar size and massing, representing an assortment of two-, three- and four-story buildings of various styles and a few larger department store buildings which comprised the city's central shopping district. Even during the early phases of construction, the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building was touted as an exceptional design that would lead to a transformation of the city's shopping district:

> More than any other building that has been erected in Baltimore during recent years, this towering structure . . . will modify the appearance of the part of town in which it is located. . . . [The] completion of the Lexington Street Building will signalize the beginning of another and improved order of things. . . . It is thought that, once its advantages and the superiority of its up-to-date facilities are tested and proved, it will do a great deal toward stimulating the construction in its neighborhood of other great monuments to modern commerce and progress. It will conform to the best architectural standards as applied to contemporaneous offices and store construction, and will introduce a new type of building in the community, provision having been made for devoting a large part of it to the use of shoppers.[21]

Each floor of the proposed building would yield approximately 9,000 square feet of useable space. Almost immediately, however, the company realized that the building's available space was insufficient for their needs. The adjacent Yakel Building, an existing seven-story building that occupied the lot to the south of the proposed site, was purchased and annexed onto the new design. The Annex, as it was known, would be connected to the new building at the south wall by means of openings at the first through fifth floors. The Yakel Building Annex effectively increased the size of the company's headquarters, and also enabled several of the upper floors of the new building to be leased as office and retail space.[22]

Construction on the new building began in early 1916. The Lexington Building (as it was then known) was ready for occupation by December of the same year, helping mark the company's Centenary.[23] It was constructed at an estimated aggregate cost of $1,000,000. The building was advertised as having the latest amenities of convenience and comfort including fire-proof construction: a bank of eight "high-speed" elevators; a system of filtered ice-water, drinking fountains and washstands; a vacuum cleaning system; an advanced ventilation system; a sprinkler system; and the "most approved

---

[19] John T. King, III. *A History of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, 1816-1987.* (Baltimore: The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company), 137.

[20] The Read's drugstore continued to operate in the area, moving its store to another building located directly across Lexington Street at the northeast corner of the Liberty Street intersection.

[21] "Baltimore's New Public Service Building," *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News,* Vol.5, No. 5 (May 1916): 339.

[22] The construction date of the Yakel Building has not been determined. The building was demolished in the 1960s. Part of the new office tower addition designed by Fisher, Nes, Campbell and Partners currently occupies its former location.

[23] Historic photographs of the company's Centenary parade, which was held on June 16, 1916, include images of the Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. Building (Lexington Building) under construction. The photographs are in possession of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore Maryland.

type" of artificial lighting.[24] Like the building's exterior façades, the interior public spaces were elaborately decorated. Entering from the Lexington Street entrance, the main store and showroom featured marble and caen stone finishes with ornamental plaster ceilings and wrought iron mezzanine railings. It was described as containing "attractive and especially designed furnishings in American walnut, all-glass show cases, open wall cases, and display tables especially constructed for the best display of gas, electric, and related merchandise."[25] The same observer also described a "massive granite archway, flanked by suitable architectural treatment" that led to the Yakel Building Annex. The main elevator lobby was also elaborately finished with marble (or caen) finishes and featured glazed elevator doors set in an ornamental iron framework (HV-18). The basement, mezzanine and second floors were also used for retail space with various department offices situated around the perimeter. As part of the company's retail efforts, the building was outfitted with various merchandise displays on several floors. According to a published history of the company, the display stations were often quite involved:

> The whole second floor of the new Lexington Building was devoted to showing customers how they could obtain the best fixtures and the most desirable effects for home lighting. . . . Surrounding the central foyer were 12 rooms. Each had received the care and attention of the architects who had designed the building. There were colonial rooms with authentic period reproductions; mahogany and oak rooms, and bright gay rooms, so that the prospective buyer could visualize the effects that could be reproduced in his own home.[26]

The third and fourth floors were originally used for the offices of various company departments. According to the architects' drawings, the fifth through seventeenth floors were also designated as office space, but they were described as being "notable . . . marking the introduction of a feature entirely new to Baltimore."[27] On each of these upper stories, there was a retail shop centrally located to the north of the elevator bank encircled by an office corridor. The arrangement constituted "an ideal means for the display of specialties and the sale of merchandise."[28]

The company's upper-management and executive offices were located on the eighteenth and nineteenth floors and featured oak paneled walls with built-in shelving, decorative plaster ceilings and gas fireplaces. The twentieth floor was set aside for "special uses." Product demonstrations were regularly conducted at the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building to illustrate and teach the public how to use and enjoy the benefits of the latest appliance technology. A historic photograph from circa 1920 depicts one of the appliance demonstrations taking place on the twentieth floor (HV-19). Mechanical and elevator equipment historically occupied a large portion of the twenty-first floor.

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the City of Baltimore underwent an extensive urban renewal campaign to rehabilitate a thirty-three-acre section of the downtown that would become known as Charles Center. The targeted area was strategically located between the city's financial center (roughly located around the intersection of Baltimore and Calvert

---

[24] "New Building Nears Completion," *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News,* Vol.5, No. 10 (October 1916): 538.
[25] Ibid., 531.
[26] Thomson King, *Consolidated of Baltimore, 1816-1950* (Baltimore: Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore, 1950), 220.
[27] "Baltimore's New Public Service Building," *The Baltimore Gas and Electric News,* Vol.5, No. 5 (May 1916): 341.
[28] Ibid.

streets to the east) and the shopping district (roughly located around the intersection of Lexington and Howard streets to the west). In 1955, a master plan was developed to revitalize the area in anticipation of reversing the streaming exodus of residents and capital from the city to the surrounding suburbs. The guiding principle of the renewal plan was to revive and attract interest in the downtown by featuring public open spaces, separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic routes, and the establishment of a new hub or focal point for downtown Baltimore. A slogan of the project was "keep the best, renew the rest, and welcome the pedestrian."[29]

The bold plan called for extensive demolition of existing structures throughout the 33-acre zone. Only four of "the best" existing buildings were spared: the Lord Baltimore Hotel (1928), the B&O Railroad Company Headquarters Building (1904-06), the Fidelity and Deposit Company Building (1894 & 1915), and the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building (HV-20).[30] At the time, concern for historic preservation was not a motivating factor in the decision to save the buildings; economic factors made it practical to keep the buildings in service. The four buildings were in good condition despite their age and would have been very expensive to condemn. The selected office buildings, including the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building, also housed hundreds of office workers, and no one wanted business disrupted unnecessarily.[31] The aged buildings also provided an element of cohesion with the older architecture of the areas surrounding Charles Center. Regardless of the reason, the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building and its historic neighbors were spared, enabling four landmarks of the city's architectural history to escape the deleterious effects of summary demolition.

In time to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the company in 1966, a modern office annex was added to the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building (HV-22). The addition occurred as part of the Charles Center development project and dramatically increased the company's useable space at the Lexington Street location. The International-Style addition was designed by Fisher, Nes, Campbell and Partners. It incorporates a two-story base plate that surrounds the original building at the east and south elevations with a tower rising to the fifteenth floor. The tower is joined to the east side of the original building by an intervening link. The exterior walls of the addition are constructed primarily of precast concrete window panels with concrete block backing. The resulting design presents an unornamented, rectangular block of concrete and glass, characteristic of the International Style, which effectively enhances the intricate detailing of the original building by contrast.

Periodical updates to the interior spaces of the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building have occurred throughout its history. Multiple renovation campaigns and reconfigurations over the last forty years have effectively erased much of the original interior fabric to the point where almost all of the original interior finishes have either been removed or covered over by successive renovations.

---

[29] Nancy Hooper Caplan, ed., *The First 175 Years: A Pictorial History of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company from 1816 to 1991* (Baltimore: The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, 1991), 24.

[30] A fifth building, the Rennert garage at the corner of Liberty and Saratoga streets, was also slated to be kept. It provided some parking for Charles Center, but was not considered architecturally significant. It was retained largely because the owners threatened a lawsuit if the building was condemned. The garage building was eventually demolished in 1995.

[31] Marion E. Warren and Michael P. McCarthy, *The Living City: Baltimore's Charles Center and Inner Harbor Development* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002), 36-37.

Both routine maintenance and concentrated conservation efforts have contributed to preserving the original character and materials of the exterior envelope. In 1990, the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company commissioned a restoration architect to undertake an extensive survey of the exterior elements of the building, particularly the terra cotta cladding, and to develop a restoration plan for future implementation. Loose and leaking architectural elements were stabilized, and pieces identified as beyond repair were replaced in-kind. Molds were made from existing pieces and from original drawings to fashion the necessary terra cotta forms. The decorative balconies at the nineteenth floor required the most attention, where new flashing was also installed to provide added protection from the damaging effects of water infiltration.

Conclusion

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building stands as a corporate symbol designed and constructed to represent the company's ascendancy and success while simultaneously serving as the company's central office location and commercial headquarters. The building remains inextricably linked to the history of the City of Baltimore and stands as a proud monument to their mutual development. The building also represents a superior example of the mature work of the prolific architectural firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice, whose designs have contributed tremendously to Baltimore's architectural legacy. For Baltimore, the building remains a local landmark and a familiar architectural anchor marking the junction of the modern commercial plaza of Charles Center and the historic retail corridor of Lexington Street.

Period of Significance

The beginning date of the period of significance, 1916, coincides with the construction of the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building. The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company continues to occupy the property and remains a major force in Baltimore commerce; the date chosen for the end of the period of significance, 1953, is fifty years in the past and in accordance with National Register convention.

Major Bibliographical References:

The Baltimore Gas and Electric News. Vol. 5, Nos. 5 & 10. Baltimore: Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore, 1916.

Caplan, Nancy Hooper, ed. *The First 175 Years: A Pictorial History of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company from 1816 to 1991*. Baltimore: The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, 1991.

Dorsey, John R. and James D. Dilts. *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture*. 3rd Edition. Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1997.

Greater Baltimore Committee, Inc., Planning Council. *Charles Center*. Baltimore: Greater Baltimore Committee, Inc., 1958.

Howland, R. H. *The Architecture of Baltimore*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.

Hunter, Wilbur Harvey. *Century of Baltimore Architecture*. Baltimore: The Peale Museum, 1957.

"Lexington Street (39-45 West)." Pasano Historic Structures Index. Maryland Historical Society. Baltimore, MD.

Miller, Mark B. *Baltimore Transitions: Views of an American City in Flux*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Olson, Sherry H. *Baltimore: The Building of an American City*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

King, John T., III. *A History of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, 1816-1987*. Baltimore: The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, 1989.

King, Thomson. *Consolidated of Baltimore, 1816-1950*. Baltimore: Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore, 1950.

Warren, Marion E. and Michael P. McCarthy. *The Living City: Baltimore's Charles Center and Inner Harbor Development*. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002.

OTHER RESOURCES

Historic Photographs–Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, MD. Drawings–Real Estate and Facilities Services Department, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, Baltimore, MD.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	360539	4350339	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David M. Facenda / Architectural Conservator & Historian
Organization John Milner Architects, Inc. date 30 June 2003
street & number 104 Lakeview Drive telephone (610) 388-0111
city or town Chadds Ford state PA zip code 19317

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 SHPO or FPO)

name Baltimore Gas and Electric Company
street & number 2900 Lord Baltimore Drive telephone 410-528-5506
city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21244

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries for the nominated property correspond to the City of Baltimore, Department of Public Works, Tax Map for Ward 4, Section 10, Block 601, Lot 8. (See attached Tax Map). The boundaries also correspond to the lot or parcel of ground which was conveyed and assigned to the Public Service Company by Harry E. Karr and wife by deed dated September 1, 1915, and recorded among the land records of Baltimore City in Liber SCL No. 2997, Folio 551:

> "Beginning at the corner formed by the intersection of the southeast side of Liberty Street with the southwest side of Lexington Street and running thence southwesterly binding on the southeast side of Liberty Street one hundred and twenty feet and eleven inches to the southwest line of the lot which by assignment dated January 14th 1915 and recorded among the land records of Baltimore City . . . was conveyed by Harry B Bowen to Harry E Karr thence southeasterly binding on said line eighty four feet and six and one half inches to Little Sharp Street thence northeasterly binding on the northwest side of Little Sharp Street one hundred and twenty one feet to Lexington Street and thence northwesterly binding on the southwest side of Lexington Street eighty four feet and ten and three quarter inches to the place of beginning."

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property encompasses the original building site and location of the Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. Building (Lexington Building) as it was constructed in 1916 for the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

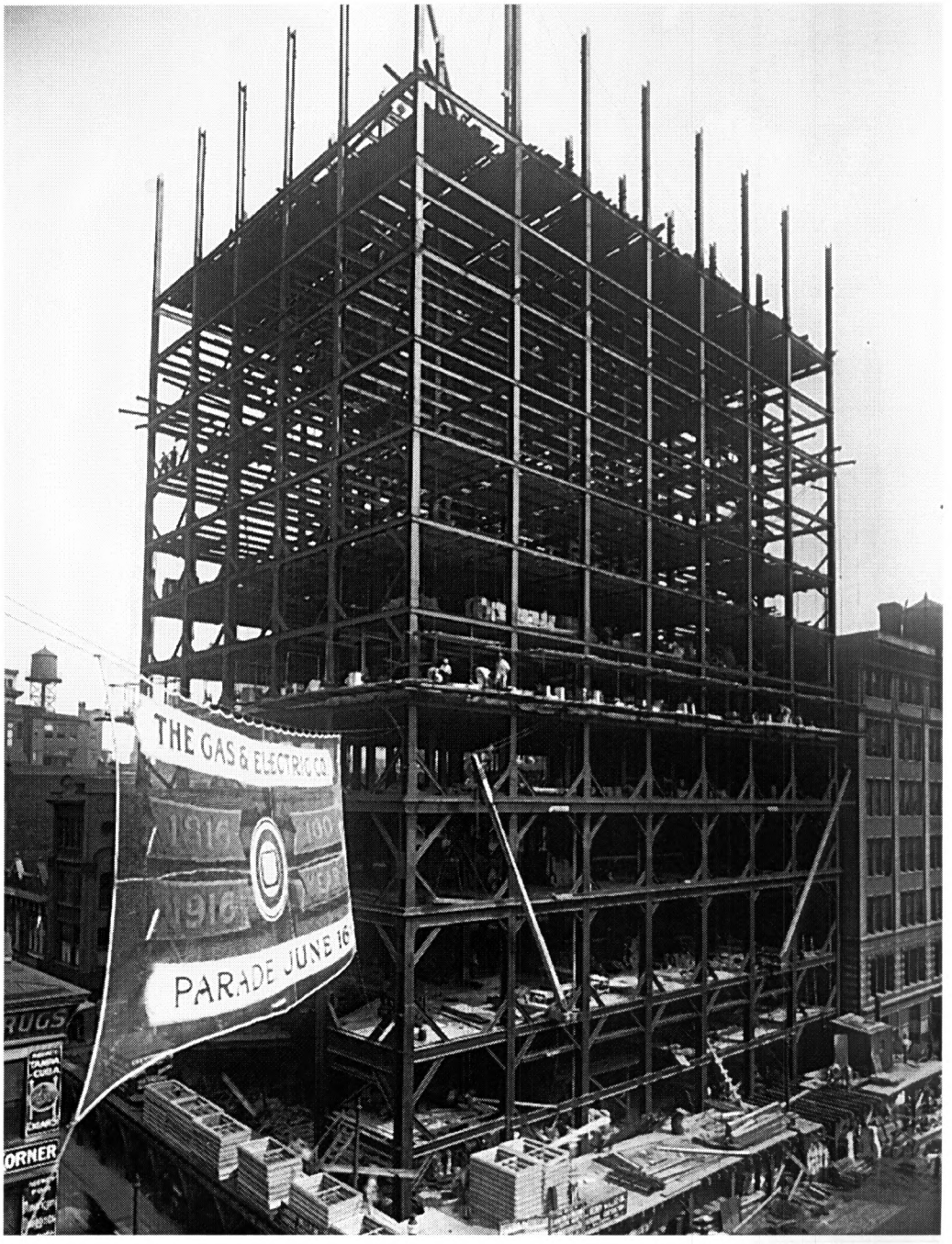
The following information applies to all photographs:

Name of Property:	Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building
County and State:	Baltimore (Independent City), Maryland
Photographer:	David M. Facenda
Original Negatives:	Held by John Milner Architects, Inc., Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania
Date Taken:	11 June 2003

1. North façade, looking south, (Drawing A-0).
2. West façade, looking southeast, (Drawing A-0).
3. South façade, looking northeast, (Drawing A-0).
4. East façade, with 1966 office tower addition in foreground, looking west, (Drawing A-0).
5. Lexington Street entrance, north façade, looking south, (Drawing A-0).
6. Liberty Street entrance, west façade, looking east, (Drawing A-0).
7. Detail view of column capital at Lexington Street entrance and Third Floor entablature above, north façade, looking south, (Drawing A-0).
8. Detail view of Third Floor entablature, east façade, looking west, (Drawing A-0).
9. Interior view of First Floor elevator lobby and part of main lobby, looking south from Mezzanine Floor, (Drawing A-2).
10. Interior view of main lobby, First Floor, looking north toward Lexington Street entrance, (Drawing A-1).
11. Interior view of Liberty Street entrance hall, First Floor, looking west, (Drawing A-1).
12. Interior view of typical elevator lobby and floor layout, Twentieth Floor, looking north, (Drawing A-7).
13. Interior view of President's Office, Nineteenth Floor, looking southwest, (Drawing A-6).
14. Detail view of fireplace in President's Office, Nineteenth Floor, looking west, (Drawing A-6).
15. Interior view of Board Room, Nineteenth Floor, looking southwest, (Drawing A-6).
16. Interior view of main stair tower, Second Floor, looking up, (Drawing A-3).
17. Interior view of stair to Mezzanine Floor, looking east, (Drawing A-2).
18. Interior view of fire escape, Twentieth Floor, looking north, (Drawing A-7).

HV-1: North façade of BG&E Co. Building and streetscape, looking south along Cathedral Street, c.1917. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-2: View of BG&E Co. Building under construction, looking southeast, May 1916. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.



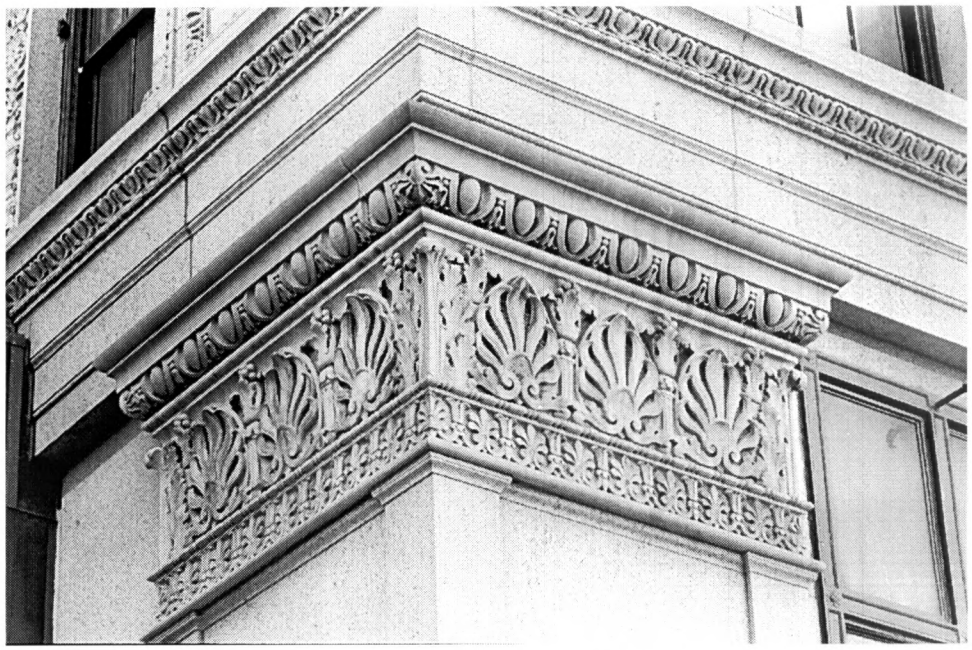
HV-3: View of BG&E Co. Building under construction, looking southeast, June 1916.
The Company's Centenary Parade banner hangs at left.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-4: View of BG&E Co. Building under construction, looking southeast, July 1916. The Yakel Building Annex is to the right of the BG&E Co. Building. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-5: View of BG&E Co. Building under construction, looking southeast, August 1916. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-6: View of street level and lower stories of the BG&E Co. Building at corner of Lexington and Liberty Streets, looking southeast, c. 1917. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-7: Detail view of marble capitals at entrance portico and portion of Third Floor entablature at Lexington Street façade, c. 1990.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland

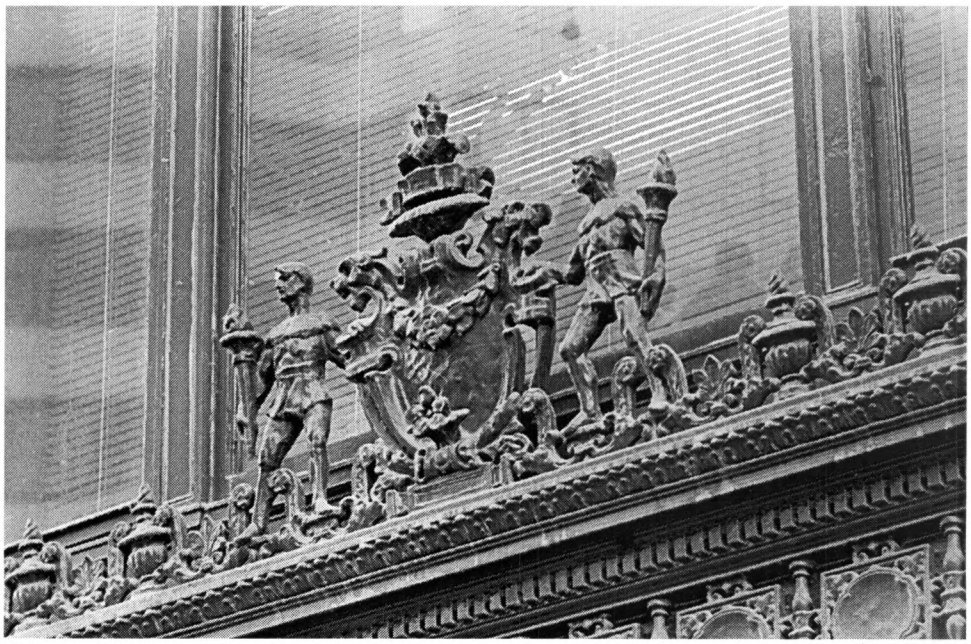


HV-8: Detail view of marble capital of pilaster at corner of Lexington and Liberty Streets, c. 1990.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

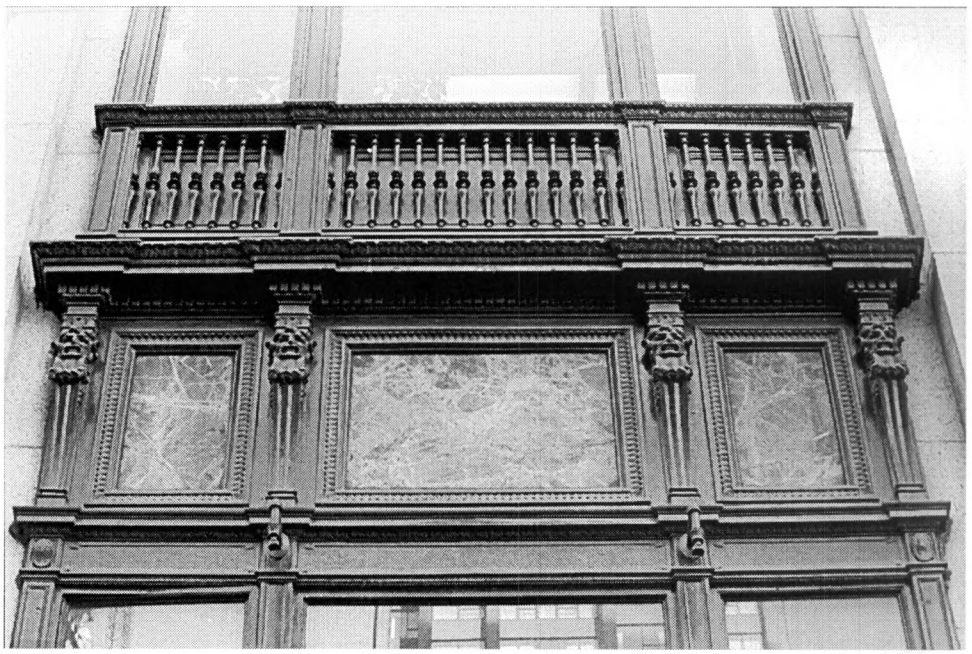
HV-9: Detail view of bas-relief marble figure at Third Floor frieze, c. 1990.
It is one of four ornamental designs symbolizing Knowledge, Light, Heat and Power.
The figure represented here signifies "Power."
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-10: Detail view of entrance portico and exterior vestibule at Lexington Street façade, looking south, c. 1920. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-11: Detail view of lantern fixture in exterior vestibule at Lexington Street façade, c. 1990. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

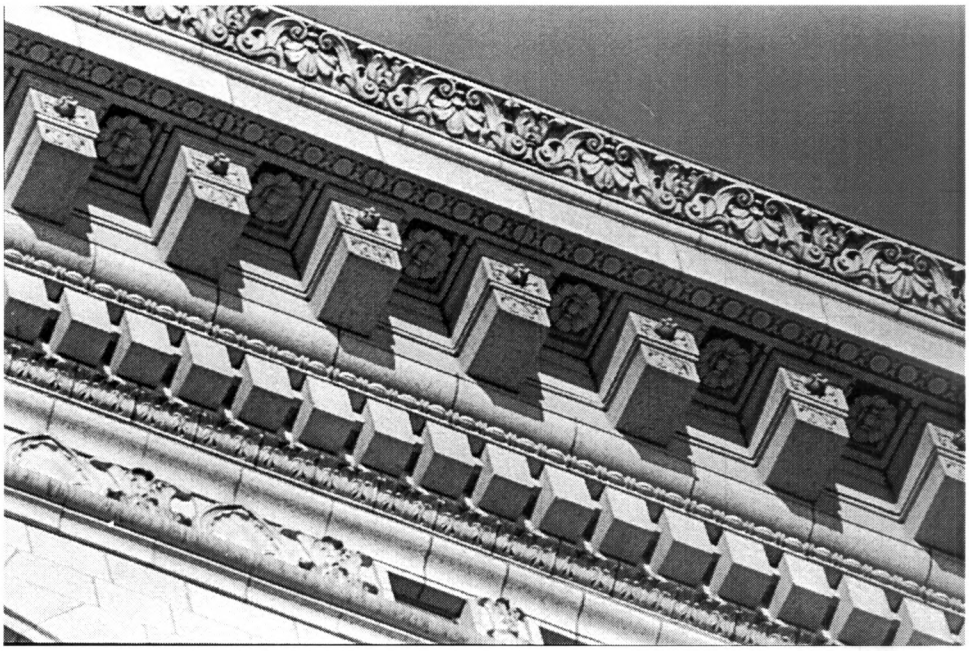


HV-12: Detail view of ironwork at window heads in exterior vestibule at Lexington Street façade, c. 1990. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

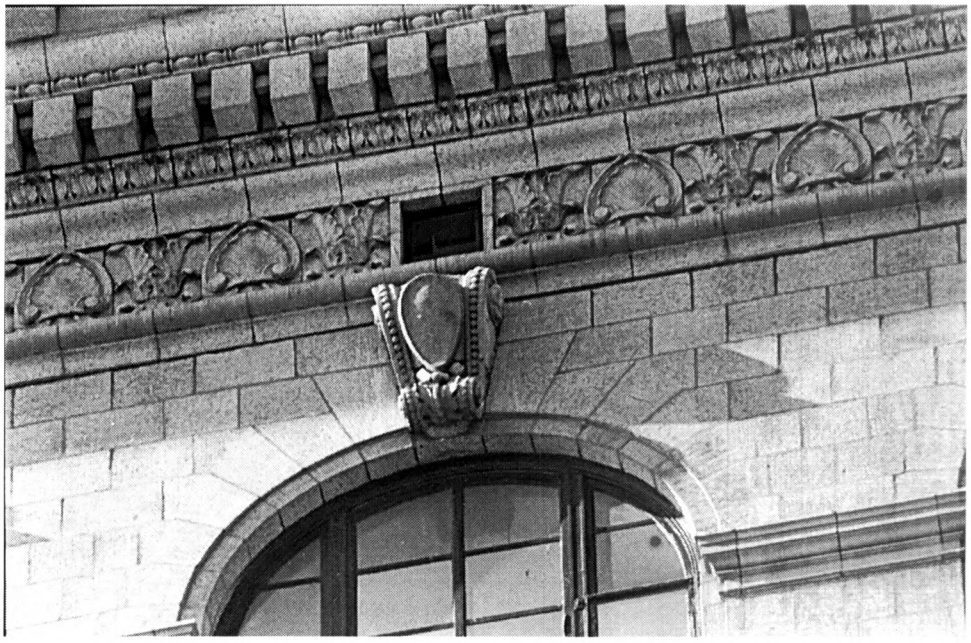


HV-13: Detail view of typical ironwork and marble panels of window assemblies at Mezzanine level, c. 1990. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-14: Detail view of typical balcony balustrade and pedimented windows at Nineteenth Floor, c. 1990. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.



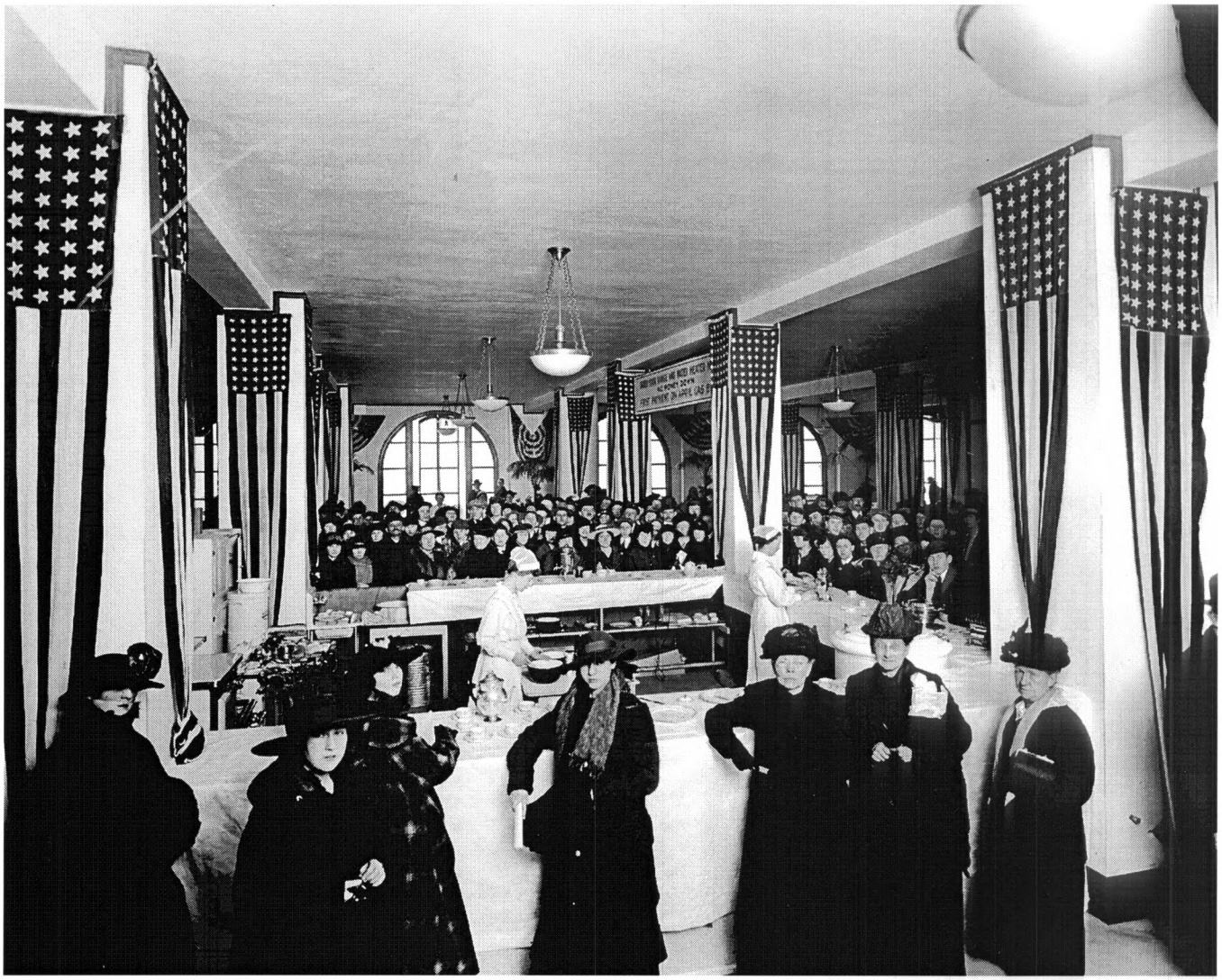
HV-15: Detail view of typical ornamental terra cotta at roof cornice, c. 1990.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.



HV-16: Detail view of typical arched window opening and ornamental terra cotta at Twentieth Floor, c. 1990.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-17: Interior view of main showroom and lobby at First Floor, looking south, c. 1920. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-18: Interior view of First Floor elevator lobby, looking south, c. 1917.
The interior of the Yakel Building Annex can be seen in the background beyond the archways.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

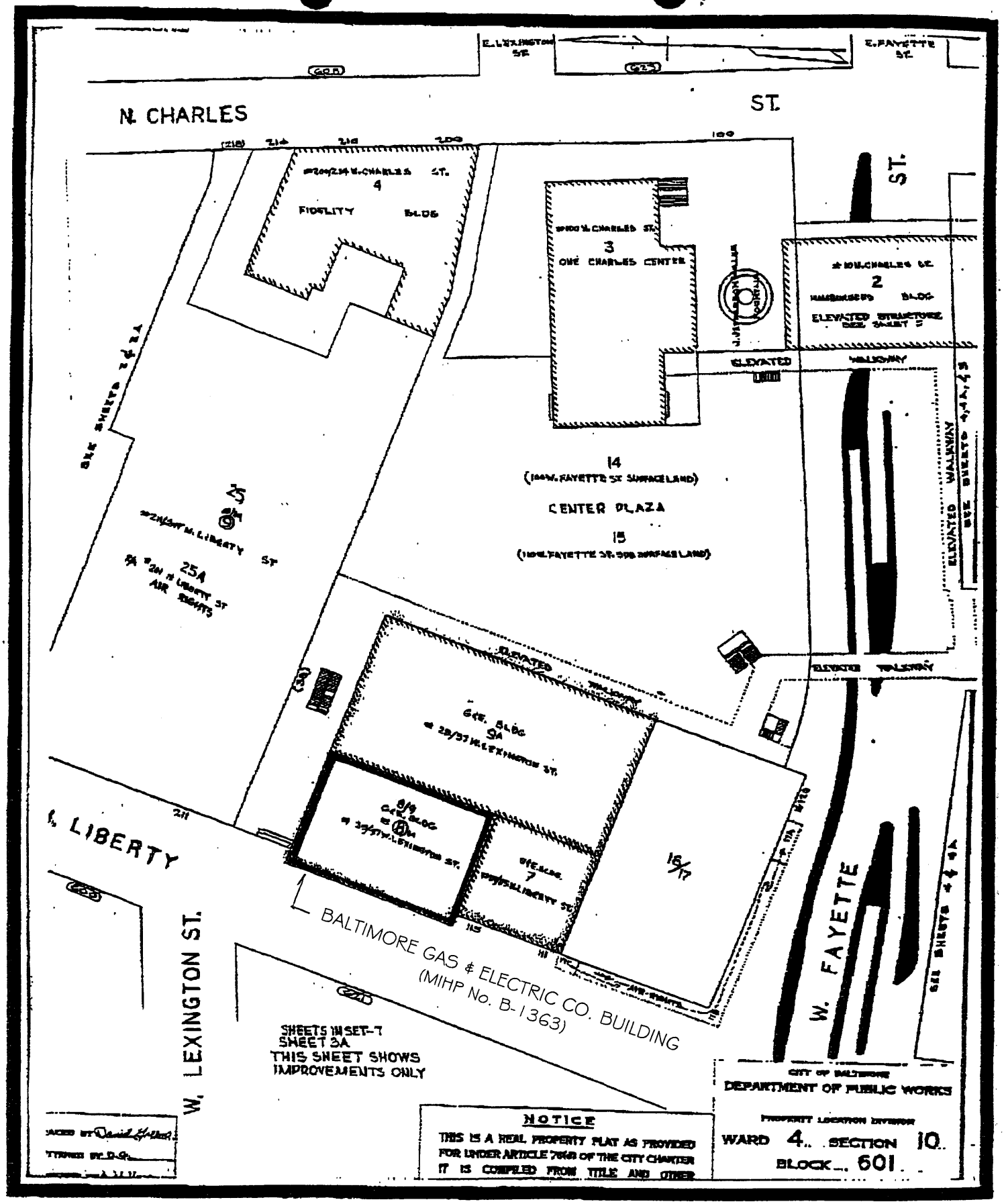


HV-19: Interior view of Twentieth Floor, looking north, c. 1917.
Appliance demonstration in progress. Sign in background reads:
"ORDER YOUR RANGE AND WATER HEATER NOW
NO MONEY DOWN
FIRST PAYMENT ON APRIL GAS BILL"
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

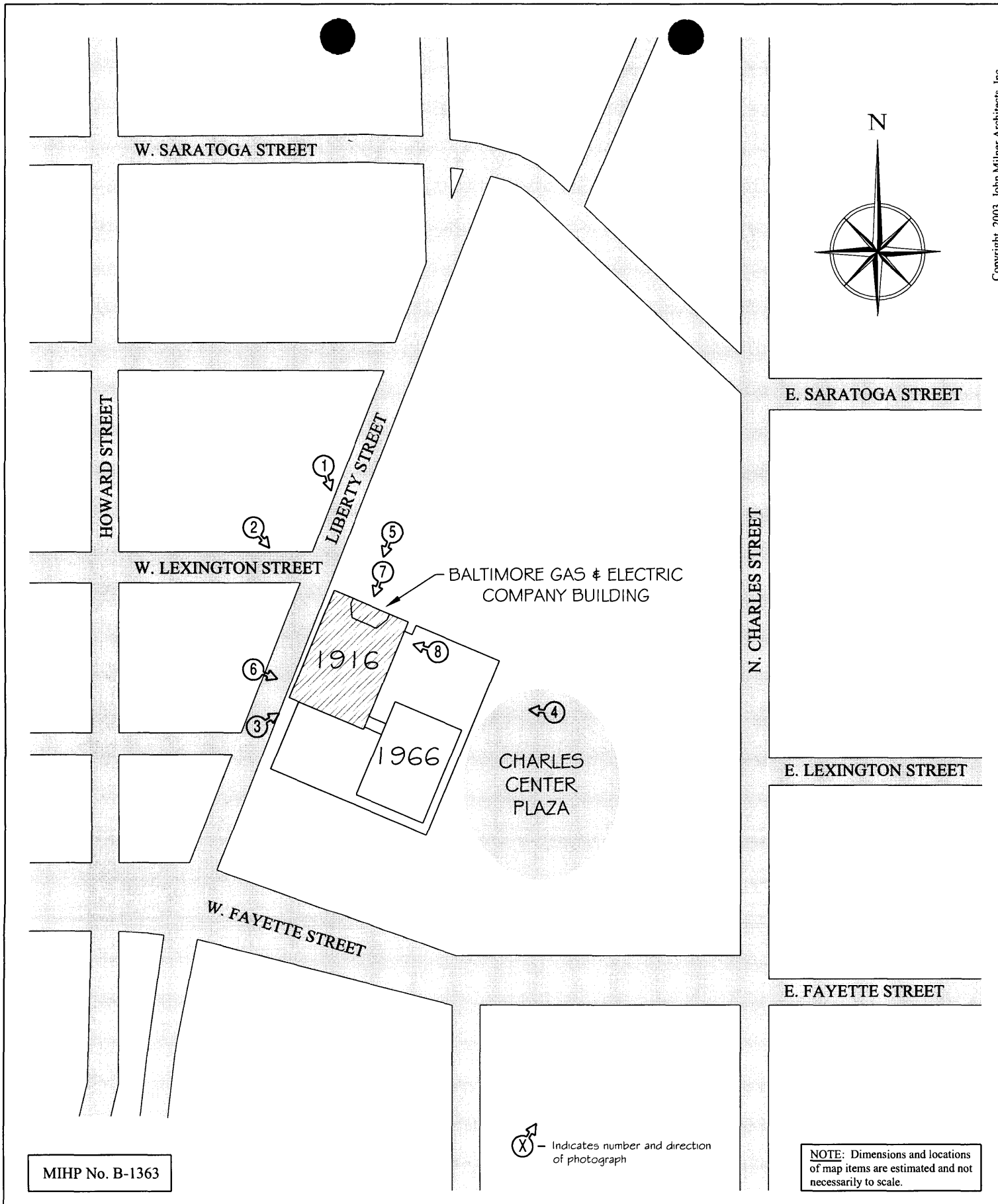
HV-20: Aerial view of downtown Baltimore, c. 1960.
The four historic buildings that survived demolition for the Charles Center development project of the 1960s are highlight with arrows: 1. B&O Railroad Headquarters Building (1904-06); 2. Lord Baltimore Hotel (1928); 3. Fidelity and Deposit Company Building (1894); 4. Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building (1916).
Base photograph courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-21: View of Lexington Street façade of BG&E Co. Building, looking south, c. 1965.
Photograph taken before construction of 1966 office tower addition.
Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

HV-22: View of south façade of BG&E Co. Building, looking north, c. 1998. The 1966 office tower addition by Fisher, Nes, Campbell and Partners in foreground. Courtesy of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.



Tax Map Location



National Register of Historic Places Nomination for

Baltimore Gas & Electric Company Building

Baltimore, Maryland

JOHN MILNER ARCHITECTS, inc.

104 Lakeview Drive, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania 19317 • (610) 388-0111

Date:	06/30/2003
Scale:	NOT TO SCALE
Drawn:	DMF
Checked:	MWD
Status:	REPORT

SITE MAP

A-0