

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JAN 23 1980
DATE ENTERED MAR 26 1980

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

Benson Building

AND/OR COMMON

IPC Building

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

4 East Franklin Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Seventh

VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

CODE

24

COUNTY

Baltimore City

CODE

510

CLASSIFICATION

(independent city)

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

X OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

X COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

X YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Investment Properties Company c/o Martin P. Azola, General Manager

STREET & NUMBER

300 Cathedral Street

*Martin P. Azola
1408 W. Johnson Rd
21204*

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE

21201

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Records Office

STREET & NUMBER

Room 601, Baltimore City Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland

21202

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

City of Baltimore Neighborhood Survey (Mount Vernon Expansion)

DATE

1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY X LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland

21202

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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This four-story, early 20th century building is located between East Hamilton and East Franklin Streets on North Charles Street, adjacent to the Mount Vernon National Register Historic District in Baltimore City. Both major facades (the west and south) are similarly surfaced with Indiana limestone. The Charles Street facade is seven bays wide, while the Franklin Street facade is three bays. The building features store windows on the first floor, large upper story windows, and a stone cornice. It has a steel frame and limestone construction.

The first floor bays are separated by piers capped with capitals, each ornamented with a geometric pendant. The contemporary recessed storefronts have bronzed aluminum infill panels above and below the glass panes. (Originally, the storefronts projected onto the sidewalk.) The four storefronts north of the Charles Street entrance each have a central panel of glass flanked by two glass doors. The other first floor window bays, two flanking the entrance and two on Franklin Street, consist of a large central light with flanking narrower windows.

There is a recessed entrance on each major facade. The entrance on Charles Street has two glass doors with a transom centered between two infill panels. The recessed entrance on Franklin Street is located in the easternmost bay and also has a pair of glass doors and a transom. Four steps lead up to the doorway on the left, while on the right there is a staircase which winds around a central wood planter and leads to the basement. The wall is surfaced in dark brown brick with white letters reading "IPC Building" and displaying the IPC logo. The piers between the bays are spanned by a flat frieze and a band course.

The North Charles Street facade conforms to the slope on the street by descending in two steps, each two bays wide, towards Hamilton Street. The change in level is apparent on all floors, but the line of the cornice and crowns of the bay arches is unbroken. The extra height is made up by lengthening the windows on the fourth floor. The breaks in the frieze and band course at the first floor are ornamented with limestone brackets decorated with stylized dentils, acanthus leaf, and sunburst.

The windows on the upper floors are grouped in vertical, slightly recessed bays, each capped by a segmental arch with large keystone. A flat band in low relief defines each bay. The windows are composed of three large panes, a central light flanked by two narrow panes and topped by three corresponding transoms. The fourth floor windows conform to the arch at the top of the bays. The windows are separated by horizontal sections of wall, each divided into three panels. The central, wider panel is decorated with an incised diamond.

The narrow frieze below the cornice rests directly upon the keystones of the bay arches. The cornice is rather severe, with dentils, modillions and moldings, but is not ornamented in any other way.

The north facade, on Hamilton Street, is surfaced in buff brick trimmed in the same stone as the front. The windows of the three upper floors are arranged in three groups of three windows. The fenestration on the first and basement floors is very irregular due to the slope of the ground and the inclusion of several doors and half-height windows. Each of the upper windows is one-over-one, double hung sash with fixed transom.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| | |
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| DATE ENTERED | 6 |

Benson Building
Baltimore City
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The building's main entrance on East Franklin Street opens up to a foyer decorated with a geometrically designed mural on a mirrored surface. A single elevator leads to upper level offices. Primary entrance on North Charles Street leads to a reception area for the office on the first floor corner, presently occupied by the John Hancock Insurance Company. Two separate entrance doors on North Charles Street next to store windows lead to a stairway and offices on the second floor. Office interiors feature accoustical tile ceilings with lights recessed into ceiling panels, wall to wall carpeting or quarry tile floors, and wall partitions with solid core doors.

The three stores on the first floor, North Charles Street facade, include an optical store, an airline agency, and a brass bed store. Each store is approximately twenty by sixty feet in area.

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/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Baldwin & Pennington

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benson Building is an excellent example of early 20th century commercial architecture in Baltimore and is important as a design of a well-known local architectural firm, the home of quality Baltimore businesses, the site of an earlier historic clubhouse, and a part of the Mount Vernon streetscape in downtown Baltimore. The building is stylistically tied to both classical architecture and the commercial style which flourished generally between 1890 and 1915. It features modern elements of its era, such as large windows and geometric ornamentation; however, its size, non-skeletal appearance, and classical elements relate to earlier architectural styles. The building was designed by the famous architectural team of E. Francis Baldwin and Josias Pennington. Baldwin and Pennington designed many important Baltimore structures, including the Marburg house in Mount Vernon Place, the Maryland Club, Old City College at Howard and Centre Streets, and Mount Royal Station.

Located just outside of the Mount Vernon National Register Historic District, the Benson Building is surrounded by historic structures, including the First Unitarian Church across Charles Street, the Basilica of the Assumption, and adjacent Franklin Street Federal-style row-houses and Hamilton Street carriage houses. It is visible from Mount Vernon Place and is an important visual landmark on Charles Street, a major corridor in downtown Baltimore.

The building, erected by Thomas O'Neill, the owner of a department store and a vice president of the National Howard Bank, was constructed by Edward Walters and Company for a cost of approximately \$75,000.00. Its name derives from C. J. Benson and Company, a local interior decorating and furniture establishment and one of its first tenants. The book Baltimore: The Gateway to the South stated in 1898: "The firm handles only the choicest productions in the various lines, and imports its own paper and paper-hanging from England, Germany and France. The firm does the highest grade work in wall paper hanging and decorating". Other early tenants of the building included the Walker and Gordon Milk laboratory, Hamilton Florists, and the Cassard Reese Company, a wholesale wine and liquor firm.

The old Athenaeum Club stood on this site from 1830 to 1910. Originally the home of William Howard, it was used by the Union Club in the Civil War era, and from 1877 it housed the Antheneum Club, which included Enoch Pratt among its members. The building, a large Greek Revival structure with four large fluted monolithic columns and Beaver Dam marble construction, was razed for the construction of the Benson Building.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Baltimore Daily Record. July 14, 1910 and August 13, 1910.

Mercantile Advancement Co. Baltimore: The Gateway to the South. Press of Guggenheimer, Weil & Co., 1898.

News American. March 13, 1955.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1993 acres, Lot size 62' x 140'

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|-------|----------|-----|-------|
| A | 1,8 | 3,6,0 | 7,0,0 | 4,3 | 5,0 | 5,8,0 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | | NORTHING | | |
| C | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|--|----------|--|--|
| B | | | | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | | NORTHING | | |
| D | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point on the northeast corner of the intersection of Charles and Franklin Streets, following Charles Street 140' to Hamilton Street, then 62' east along Hamilton, then 140' south to Franklin, then 62' to the point of beginning.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Fred Shoken, Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation

1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

100 N. Holliday Street

396-4866

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Baltimore

Maryland

21202

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

1-8-80

TITLE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 3/26/80

ATTEST: Chima Rose Sayo

DATE 3-25-80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Regional Coordinator

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

Today the Benson Building is owned by Investment Properties Corporation. In 1976 the building was renovated by J.R. Azola and Associates. Peterson-Brickbauer were the architects. The renovations included re-roofing the building and cleaning the exterior; most of the original architectural elements and ornamentation were retained. The storefronts and entranceways, which originally encroached on the sidewalk, were set back to reveal the building columns that were formerly hidden. The interior of the building was supplied with new plumbing, heating, and electrical systems, modernizing the building for today's office needs and existing City code. The Benson Building is an excellent example of one of the many adaptive reuse projects taking place in Baltimore at the present.