



Old Town Savings Bank  
Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD B-4294  
County and State

**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
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Cast-Iron Architecture of Baltimore, MD,  
1850-1904

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

ITALIANATE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Iron  
Brick  
roof Asphalt  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 1  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 1

**DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:**

The Old Town Savings Bank is a three-story loft structure located on the southwest corner of North Gay and Exeter Streets in the Old Town section of Baltimore city, Maryland. The building was designed by architect Frank E. Davis and was constructed in 1871.<sup>1</sup> Both the street facades are cast iron, four bays wide on Gay Street and eight bays wide on Exeter Street. The former storefronts have been bricked up; the cast iron framing elements remain exposed, however, and the upper stories remain virtually unchanged save for the infill of the window openings.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION:**

The original configuration of the Gay Street front is shown in a historic photograph in the collection of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.<sup>2</sup> This facade was three bays wide at street level, with the bank entrance located in the central bay under a small Classical portico, and flanked by transomed plate-glass windows in segmental-arched openings with paneling below the sills. The portico has been removed, and the street level facade has been altered by the construction of a modern glazed-brick wall, obscuring most of its original features; only the iron piers at the corners remain exposed, with a chamfered inner edge with lamb's-tongue stops. The storefront cornice, however, remains intact; at the south pier, a scrolled console supports a bracketed cornice, probably made of galvanized sheet iron, which wraps around the Exeter Street facade. On the Exeter Street elevation, the street-level openings have been infilled with brick, but the original cast iron structural elements remain expressed, consisting of slender columns framing window openings topped with segmental arches. On the upper stories of both facades, the window openings have been filled with light plywood paneling, but the structural elements are unchanged and remain fully expressed. The large window openings have rounded corners, and are flanked by piers with stylized

<sup>1</sup> Information concerning the building's construction date and architect was supplied by Carlos Avery.

<sup>2</sup> reproduced in Sherry H. Olson, Baltimore: The Building of an American City (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 114.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 2

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foliated capitals. The edges of the openings are chamfered, with lamb's tongue stops. The spandrels are enriched with foliated cartouches. The intermediary cornice between the second and third floors is simply molded; the building cornice has a deep, bracketed overhang above a plain frieze. The two cornices wrap around both facades, and end with a scrolled console at the corner of the Gay Street elevation. The building retains a relatively high degree of integrity in its essential cast iron elements despite modern alterations.

**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 patterns of our history.
- B** Property is 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1871

**Significant Dates**

1871

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Frank E. Davis, Architect

**Narrative Statement of Significance** SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 4  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References** SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 7

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 3

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**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape      Architecture/Community  
Planning;  
Economic (Commercial and Industrial)

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

COMMERCE/TRADE/bank/pharmacy

Known Design Source: unknown

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 4

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**THEME:**

Cast Iron Architecture in Baltimore, Maryland; 1850-1904

**SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:**

The building at 353 North Gay Street is significant as representing a Full Cast Iron Front building.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 5



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
MarylandSection number 8 Page 5**HISTORY & SUPPORT:**

The Old Town Savings Institution was incorporated March 2, 1858. The charter provided that the institution would be located east of the Jones Falls and north of Baltimore Street. The institution acquired the property at the southwest corner of Gay and Exeter Streets in 1861, and it first appears in Baltimore City Directories in 1868/9, on an upper floor ("over") at the present location. This is most likely a reference to a previous structure on the site. The present building was constructed in 1871 to a design by prominent Baltimore architect Frank E. Davis (1839-1921). In 1872, the name of the institution was changed to the Old Town Savings Bank of Baltimore.

The bank is shown on the Hopkins Atlas for 1876, and the tax description for that year mentions a vault, bank fixtures and furniture. The 1880 Sanborn insurance map shows an iron front structure housing the Old Town Bank, with the third floor occupied by a druggist. The druggist was presumably Franklin Metzger, whose business was profiled in the 1882 edition of Industries of Maryland: A Descriptive Review of the Manufacturing and Mercantile Industries of the City of Baltimore, which reported that this pharmacy had been one of the leading stores in the Old Town section of Baltimore since its establishment in 1854. The writer described the "handsome three-story iron structure, fifteen [sic] feet on Gay street, and running back to a depth of about ninety feet," and noted that the store was "well arranged for the business. The stock is large and varied, embracing drugs, medicines, chemicals, etc., which is supplemented by a fine assortment of fancy goods, perfumeries, toilet articles, and everything kept in a well-appointed drug store. The prescription department receives special attention. Rheumatic medicines are the specialty of the house . . . Y. "(p. 286). Tax records for 1896 show the Old Town Bank assessed for a three story iron and brick building with vault, bank fixtures and furniture. By 1920, the name of the institution had changed again, to Old Town National Bank; the Old Town Merchants and Manufacturers Association was also located in the building. The 1923 city directory indicates that the building contained the Old Town National Bank Hall, presumably public meeting space. Ownership of the property passed out of the hands of the Old Town Bank in 1927, when the institution was absorbed by the Drivers & Mechanics National Bank, a commercial bank prominently associated with providing financial services to Baltimore's needle trades.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 6

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 6

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The banking facility housed the Monumental City Bank from 1927 until 1930, when a branch of Union Trust Company was established at this address; the Old Town Merchants and Manufacturers Association also continued to occupy the building. By 1940, 353 North Gay Street no longer appears in the Baltimore City Directory. The building was acquired by the present owner in 1988, and currently houses a wholesale distributor of tobacco and confectionery.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 9 Page 7

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**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:**

Baltimore City Directories, 1860s-1940s

Industries of Maryland: A Descriptive Review of the Manufacturing and Mercantile Industries of the City of Baltimore.  
(Baltimore: Historical Publishing Co., 1882), p. 338.

Kahn, Philip, Jr. A Stitch in Time: The Four Seasons of Baltimore's Needle Trades (Baltimore: The Maryland Historical Society, 1989).

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, MD.

Olson, Sherry H. Baltimore: The Building of an American City.  
(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 114.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County.  
(Philadelphia: n. p., 1881), p. 466.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

OLD TOWN SAVINGS BANK  
Baltimore  
Maryland

Section number 10 Page 8

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

Boundaries are defined as a single city lot, specifically identified as Block 1284, Lot 11, recorded among the Land Records of Baltimore City, Maryland.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The nominated property comprises the city lot upon which the resource stands and represents the entire property historically associated with the resource.