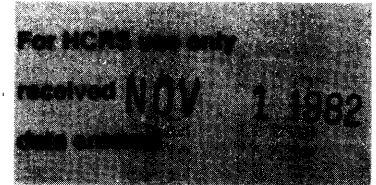


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 ~~The~~ Alex Brown Building

and/or common The Alex Brown Building

2. Location

street & number 135 East Baltimore Street N/A not for publication

city, town Baltimore vicinity of congressional district Third

state Maryland code 24 county Independent City code 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Brown Realty, Inc.

street & number 135 East Baltimore Street

city, town Baltimore vicinity of state Maryland 21202

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Courthouse

street & number Room 610

city, town Baltimore state Maryland 21202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation
Financial District Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, City Hall

city, town Baltimore state Maryland 21202

7. Description

B-117

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Alex. Brown Building, constructed in 1901, is a two-story brick building with granite and marble ornament, designed in the Georgian Revival style by the Baltimore architectural firm of Parker and Thomas. The building, facing north on the southwest corner of East Baltimore and South Calvert Streets, is three bays wide by seven bays deep (the two southernmost bays of the east facade were added in 1907). The building rests on a foundation of granite ashlar, which is surmounted by a cornice of white marble, above which is a moulded stone base for the upper floor. The first-floor window sills rest on this moulded base, and fluted marble pilasters with volute capitals spring from it to define the various bays of the facades. On the north facade, an entrance in a pedimented marble surround occupies the central bay, with a tripartite window in a keystone marble splayed-arch opening above it. Fluted marble pilasters with volute capitals frame the entrance bay; behind the pilasters, marble quoins interlock with the Flemish-bond brickwork. Each of the two flanking bays has a single window with a keystone marble splayed arch on each floor. Fluted pilasters adorn the corners of the building. On the east facade, the five northernmost bays represent the original (1901) configuration. The three central bays hold tall windows, each with a semicircular marble arch and volute keystone. Within each arch is a traceried lunette. These three bays comprise a unit, and are framed by marble pilasters. The outlying bays are similar to those on the north facade. In 1907, the two southernmost bays of the east facade were added; the design of the addition (presumably also the work of Parker and Thomas) is such that the three southernmost bays of the east facade repeat the pattern of the north facade. An alteration of the first-floor window in the original fifth bay was necessary to achieve this symmetry. The two facades of the building are surmounted by a continuous marble architrave, frieze, modillioned cornice, and balustrade. The interior of the building, which retains much rich polished marble and moulded plaster detailing, features a Tiffany dome 27 feet in diameter above the main banking floor.

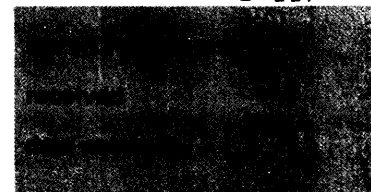
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Alex Brown Building, a two-story brick structure which faces north on the southwest corner of East Baltimore and South Calvert Streets in Baltimore, Maryland, was constructed in two stages: the original building which was completed in 1901, and the 1907 addition to the original's south wall. The original structure is three bays wide and five bays deep, whereas the addition is two bays wide. As a whole, these adjoined rectangular structures compose an ell. Since only the north and east facades are exposed, the addition is only visible from the east. However, because the two structures are continuous as a whole, in both design and construction, the addition is not apparent as such.

The primary structural elements of both sections are: granite (the foundation); white, unpolished marble (stone structural and decorative elements above the foundation); brick layed in Flemish bond (colonial-style brickwork, the major component of each bay).

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

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



Continuation sheet Alex Brown Building
Baltimore city, Maryland Item number 7 Page 1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

To insure that the building would be fireproof, no wood was employed in the structure of the building. Consequently, all window frames and sashes are made of copper, and all exterior doors are made of either cast bronze or copper sheet.

The building's design, the first commission of the later-prominent Baltimore architectural firm of Parker and Thomas, displays the influence of the Georgian Revival in its symmetrical form, materials, and Classic-derived ornament. The Alex Brown Building possesses a Georgian-style pedimented entrance in the central bay of the north facade and a similarly styled bay in the 1907 addition, employs a Palladian motif in the second bay of the east facade, and displays neocolonial brickwork throughout.

The foundation of the Alex Brown Building is made of fitted granite block. It is an integral part of the design of the building's north and east facades, thus it directly corresponds with the changes in their contours, from one bay to the next.

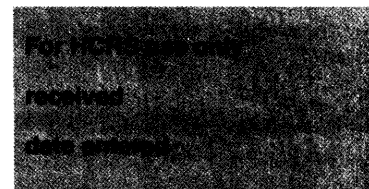
Due to both a west-to-east and north-to-south sloping of the land, the height of the exposed granite foundations increases, from one to six feet, as it proceeds from the northwest to the southeast corner of the building.

On the north facade, the granite divides at the middle bay and opens out to form two broad, shallow slopes that lead to the entrance landing. These steps are flanked by granite pedestals, each of which is surmounted by a short marble monument stone originally intended as a lamp base.

On the east facade, the widening granite is penetrated by a series of window openings and doorways that correspond with the first floor windows in each bay. In the first and second bays, the openings are relatively small, barred rectangular windows that progress in height in accordance with the north-to-south slope. In the third bay, a basement-level doorway, which corresponds to the bay window that existed above (later discussed), is set off from the granite by marble pilasters, an architrave, and a frieze surmounted by the remnants of a projecting sill (from the bay window). A basement-level stairwell spans both the third and fourth bays and, as a result, the exposed granite on these two bays begins below street level. Subsequently, the doorway in the third bay and a large basement window in the fourth are partly below and partly above street level. The basement window is barred and approximates the width of the bay window above. An unobstructed entranceway penetrates the granite on the fifth bay, and the lintel over this entrance is fitted into the section to be described next.

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

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



Alex Brown Building

Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland

Item number

7

Page

2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Surmounting the basement is a marble cornice comprised of four distinctly different decorative elements: a simple, rolled moulding; a smooth marble band of uniform height; a projecting string course with a simple bed mould; a plain sill adjoining the brickwork in each bay. It should be noted here that the string course supports the fluted marble pilasters which define the bays and adorn the corners of each facade. These pilasters have voluted capitals.

The north facade of the Alex Brown Building is comprised of a prominent, central entrance bay flanked by two narrower bays identical to one another in design. These three north bays are defined by marble pilasters (noted above) that extend from the string course to the architrave. The central bay is a Georgian revival entrance consisting of a pediment supported by two voluted brackets anchored to a frame of simple rolled moulding. The pediment houses an elaborate cartouche. A tripartite window with a flat splayed arch is set into the brickwork above the pediment. This window is partially obscured by a bronze balustrade. Marble quoins create a border between the brickwork and the adjoining pilasters.

The bay on either side of the entrance possesses a first and second story window, each with a keystone splayed arch of marble set into the brickwork. The first story window is taller than the second, which is partially obscured by a bronze balustrade (smaller than the one in the central bay).

The first (northeast) bay of the east facade is identical in every detail to the latter two just described.

The third and fourth bays of the east facade are composed of a triplet of large windows, each of which has a semicircular marble arch with a large voluted bracket projecting from the keystone. The arches are supported by marble imposts set into the brickwork which separates the three windows from each other, and from the outlying marble pilasters as well. Within each arch is a lunette with intersecting tracery. Each lunette is supported by a sill that also separates it from the large section below. The lower half of each window is protected by a wrought bronze security grill.

The fifth bay is identical to the northeast bay of the facade (having first and second story window, etc.). However, prior to the 1907 addition, this was not the case. Originally, the first story window of this bay was an elaborate bay window (similar to the Georgian revival entrance), complete with pediment, brackets, and a security grill to protect the large, tri-faceted window. When the 1907 structure was added, this window was removed and replaced by one duplicating the first story window in the first (northeast) bay).

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

B-117

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

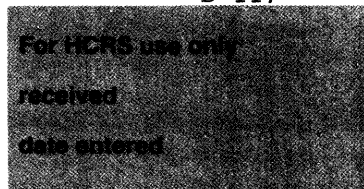
Alex Brown Building

Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland

Item number

7

Page 3



GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The first bay of the 1907 addition (the sixth bay of the east facade) restates the design of the entrance bay in the north facade. It is composed of a tri-faceted bay window (with pediment, brackets, etc.) and a second story tripartite window (less balustrade) with a flat-splayed marble arch. The marble sill of the bay window is seated in and projects from the marble section below (previously described).

The second bay of the 1907 addition (the seventh bay of the east facade) is a further duplication of the first (northeast) bay.

Together, the fifth, sixth and seventh bays of the east facade are, in effect, a restatement of the north facade. It is presumed that this was done to maintain a continuity in the design of both the east facade and the building as a whole.

The two facades are surmounted by a continuous marble architrave, frieze, cornice, and balustrated parapets, all of which maintain the established contours of the building. The balustrade is closed on the five identical bays and open on the rest.

Centered on the roof of the 1901 building is an eight-sided structure of moulded copper sheet layed over a steel and concrete substructure and roofed with heavy, reinforced glass panels. During World War II, this glass roof (skylight) was "blacked out" with a layer of tar-soaked fabric. It remains so today, but is soon to be restored to its original condition. Just beneath the glass, a steel screen is suspended to protect the Tiffany dome within. Each copper facet of the structure has a small door to provide direct access to the dome.

The Tiffany dome is 27 feet in diameter and is composed of stained glass "shapes" set in lead and supported on a bronze framework. This framework is comprised of 12 curving, vertical ribs conjoined by two concentric support bands.

On the roof of the 1907 addition is a rectangular structure with a pitched roof. It is of the same basic construction as its 1901 counterpart and is similarly blacked out. A cover for a skylight long absent from the building (dates unknown), this structure now serves no immediate purpose.

The Alex Brown Building (1901) suffered only minor, cosmetic damages as a result of the Baltimore Fire in 1904. These damages occurred only to the northwest bay (on the north facade) and were concentrated on the corner pilaster, the marble and granite elements beneath it, and the cornice above. The damaged areas were blended together and the roughened surfaces smoothed over (where possible) so as to create a less obtrusive appearance. Nevertheless, the "scars" are plainly evident to the passer-by.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4

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

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

Alex Brown Building

Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland

Item number

7

Page

5

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The interior of the 1901 structure is an ornate, spacious banking room - the Front Room - thirty-five feet from floor to ceiling, with a vestibule, an overhanging gallery, and a stained glass dome centered in the ceiling. The walls of this room are (mostly) restatements of the two facades.

The existing vestibule is a low, gazebo-like structure with a curved, sloping roof and a pair of glass doors at either opening. The original bronze vestibule (dates unknown) had two separate side doors, each of which faced the public corridor at an angle and opened from a central partition.

Until 1934, the banking floor was dominated by a large, U-shaped banking counter of polished green marble and cast bronze. This impressive fixture occupied the center of the floor and separated the actual banking room from a narrow public corridor, which led back to a series of waiting rooms and semi-private offices, and (ultimately) to a private office (left corner), a central elevator flanked by twin staircases, and a telegraph room (right corner). In 1907, the private office was extended back into the new addition and the telegraph room was halved by a hallway/entrance to that addition.

As a consequence of the firm's decision to leave commercial banking (1934), the banking counter, waiting rooms, and semi-private offices were summarily dismantled and removed from the banking floor. The room was filled, instead, with large wooden desks for the brokers of the (now strictly) investment firm.

The gallery is composed of two balconies, one at the north wall and one at the south, which are connected by a catwalk along the west wall. The balconies are each supported by two white marble columns mounted on green marble pedestals. These columns are of the Doric order, have bronze bases and capitals, and like all other "white marble" elements to be mentioned hereafter, are made of a polished white marble with dark venation (purportedly from Italy). The catwalk is supported by two large, white marble consoles that are each anchored to the bronze capital of a pilaster on the west wall.

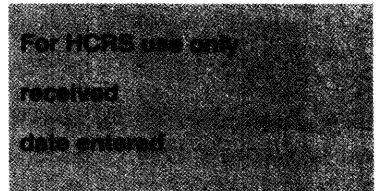
The balconies and catwalk are faced in white marble and have a cast-bronze balustrade with a wooden handrail. The marble facing, which is actually a Doric architrave, frieze (with triglyphs), and cornice, is intermittently continued on the central bay of the east wall, atop the pilasters of the three arched windows. Each balcony is one bay deep, initiating adjacent to an outermost pilaster of the central bay. The underside of the north balcony is a vaulted ceiling for the floor below.

The walls of the Front Room are separated into individual bays by white marble pilasters. Though there are exceptions, most of the bays each consist primarily of a plaster panel that is painted a deep red, decorated along the edges with a gold, Greek key-pattern, and bordered by a white marble moulding. Most of the windows are framed by the same style of moulding.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #6

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

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



Alex Brown Building

Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland

Item number

7

Page

6

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

In the central bay of the east wall, three large, marble-arched windows supplant the red panels employed elsewhere. In the third (next) bay of the same wall, dark wood-paneling covers all but the window of the private office there enclosed.

The first (northwest) bay of the west wall is dominated by a life-size portrait mural of the four original Brown brothers, who are gathered before the portrait of their deceased father, Alexander. Below the catwalk, the second (central) bay of this wall consists of three typical red panels. Above the catwalk, however, this bay shows a Palladian relevance to the opposite, arched bay, having three semi-circular niches itself. These niches, like the corresponding marble arches, are accented by round bay leaf mouldings of white plaster. Above the arches (niches) in both walls, up to the ceiling, the remaining wall space is painted red and decorated by a chain of festoons and escutcheons of white plaster.

The main feature of the elaborately decorated (plaster) ceiling is the Tiffany dome discussed earlier. The rim of the oculus of this dome is rolled and highlighted by four large, equidistant escutcheons. Proceeding out from the oculus is a network of four large, shallow vaults that curve around the rim of the opening. These four vaults are rimmed with an egg and dart moulding. The perimeter of the ceiling is decorated with a broad, bay leaf moulding.

The north balcony is glass enclosed (and has always been) and was originally a file room. It is now a modern (1970s) office space with an acoustical tile ceiling, fluorescent light fixtures, and partitions that lend a bit of privacy to a compact arrangement of desks and cabinets.

A private conference room - the Maryland Bridge Room - occupies the left (east) corner of the south balcony. This area was originally open floor space (dates unknown). Directly adjacent the Maryland Bridge Room is a staircase that descends to the first floor, and then to the basement (the vault room and "information center"). An elevator shaft opens at the center of the balcony. This shaft descends to the first floor (Front Room) and the basement. To the right of the elevator, a second staircase originally had its landing, but is now blocked off by a large filing shelf. In the far right corner of the balcony is a spiraling, wrought-bronze ladder that provides access to the roof. Just left of this is an open doorway to the second floor of the 1907 addition. This door displays the same marble moulding that decorates the windows.

The first floor of the 1907 addition is known as the Middle Room. This room today consists primarily of a private office and anteroom, a stairwell and Calvert Street entrance, a group of large wooden desks arranged on either side of a main aisle, a central fireplace on the west wall, a west-wall

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

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

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

Alex Brown Building
Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland Item number 7 and 10 Page 7

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

entranceway to an adjoining building, and a similar north-wall entranceway. The plaster walls, painted olive green, are separated by cream marble pilasters with bronze bases and capitals, and are wainscotted with green marble, as in the Front Room.

Until 1934, a green marble banking counter (as in the Front Room) dominated the floor of the Middle Room. The anteroom to the private office is all that remains of this fixture.

The ceiling of this room today consists of acoustical tiles and is inset with flood lamps. Originally, however, this ceiling was vaulted and had a skylight, which, until its removal (date unknown), was the major source of light for the Middle Room.

The fireplace centered in the west wall of the room is marble and an original fixture of the addition. The portrait of Alexander Brown is and has always been displayed above its mantel. The fireplace was originally flanked on either side by a large window, but is no longer. The "north" window of the pair was plastered over (date unknown) and the other was eliminated by the construction of a hallway to an adjacent building.

The second floor of the addition is reached via the stairwell of the Calvert Street entrance. This floor consists of three separate rooms. The first is a modern (1970s) office space that is lit by fluorescent lamps set into an acoustical tile ceiling, and it is divided into semi-private offices by low partitions. The second room is a completely enclosed, private library. The third is known as the Founders Room, which is a private office that is reached by a narrow hallway. The Founders Room is lit by two small chandeliers and consists of several large, wooden desks.

Originally the skylight was enclosed on this floor, but no further details are known about the original plan of this floor.

The 1901 building has a basement, in which are located the vault room and information center and a sub-basement, used for storage. The 1907 addition has only a basement, which is now a large conference and dining facility.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point approximately 14 feet from the southwest corner of Calvert and East Baltimore Streets, proceeding west parallel with Baltimore Street for a distance of 42 feet, 10 7/8 inches, then south parallel with Calvert 66 feet, 2½ inches, west (again) 37 feet, 9½ inches, then south 30 feet, east 104 feet, then north 100 feet, 3 inches to the point of origin.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1901 and 1907, 1934 **Builder/Architect** Parker and Thomas/Geo. A. Fuller & Co.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Applicabel Criteria: A and C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Alex. Brown Building derives significance from two sources. First, it is significant for its association with the historic firm of Alex Brown and Sons, the oldest investment-banking firm in the U. S., established in 1808. The firm has been directly involved in the financing of the development of the city of Baltimore since its first venture, the underwriting of Baltimore's first public waterworks in 1808. The building has served as the firm's main office continuously since its construction in 1901. Secondly, in the context of Baltimore's early twentieth century commercial architecture, the building is significant as a richly detailed composition embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Georgian Revival, and as the first design of the later prominent local architectural firm of Parker and Thomas. It has been maintained in excellent condition and features an unusual, large Tiffany dome on the interior.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

For over 81 years, the Alex. Brown Building has been the home office of Alex. Brown & Sons, which is now "the oldest name in investment banking" in the U. S., having been established in 1800 in Baltimore. For more than 182 years, this firm has played a major role in the history of American business, commerce, and economy. Having been designed and built especially for Alex. Brown & Sons, this building is, in effect, a living monument to that firm and its involvement in American history.

Designed to be fireproof, the Alex. Brown Building so proved itself in 1904 when it emerged from the devastation of the Baltimore Fire with only minor cosmetic damage, making it a very rare survivor of that tragic event.

This building is further significant in Baltimore as having been the first design of a local and later-prominent architectural firm, Parker & Thomas. Nationwide, the Alex. Brown Building is significant (but virtually unknown) for having been the first to be heated by electricity, rather than steam.

The firm of Alex. Brown & sons was founded by Alexander Brown, an Irish linen merchant who settled in Baltimore early in 1800. Soon after establishing the firm, Mr. Brown began enlisting his sons, one by one, as partners in his import/export business. Three of these four sons, William, John and James, went on to establish branch offices in Liverpool (England), Philadelphia, and New York, respectively. The fourth son, George, remained with his father at the parent branch in Baltimore, and upon Alexander's death in 1834, George assumed command of the business.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

B-117

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #9

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .142 acre: .0651 (1901); .0769 (1907)

Quadrangle name Baltimore East

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #7

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stuart R. Keyes, III, Personnel Clerk

organization Alex. Brown & Sons date April 28, 1982

street & number 135 East Baltimore Street telephone (301) 727-1700, ext. 444

city or town Baltimore state 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature J. Little 10-28-82

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCPS use only

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

J. Little Entered in the National Register date 12/2/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NCRS use only
 received
 date entered

Continuation sheet Alex. Brown Building
 Baltimore city, Maryland Item number 8 Page 8

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

In the very early 1800s Alexander Brown began using bills of exchange, drawn against letters of credit, in his firm's transactions with British merchants. Being originally an Irish merchant, Mr. Brown saw little risk in this since, unlike most Baltimorean merchants, he was familiar with the majority of his "foreign" business associates. The investment acumen he gained through such venturesome practices paved the way to his firm's beginnings in investment banking, and the practices themselves became the foundation of that business. In 1808, Alexander Brown and his firm acted as a major underwriter of Baltimore's first public waterworks, the Baltimore Water Company, which he had helped to found. Since then, the firm of Alex. Brown & Sons and investment banking have been inseparable.

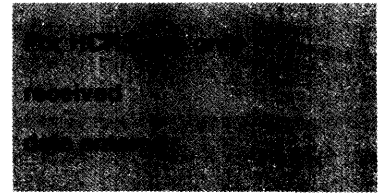
In 1824, Alex. Brown & Sons began issuing travelers' letters of credit, thus expanding its banking operation to include both investment and commercial accounts. Such dual-purpose banks were known as merchant banks and were not unusual at that time. More than a century later, however, the Crash of 1929 and the subsequent failure of the banks spawned changes in federal laws that forced the merchant banks to choose between commercial and investment banking. Since investment banking had by then become the focus of operations for Alex. Brown & Sons (despite the economy), the firm decided that it would close its commercial operation on June 24, 1934 - less than one year after becoming a member firm on the New York Stock Exchange. As a result, the "front" and "middle" banking rooms were drastically altered to accommodate the burgeoning brokerage (see Description section for details).

Today, Alex. Brown & Sons comprises twenty locations in the U.S. (the Liverpool office was moved to London in 1863 and, as Brown & Shipley, is now independent of Alex. Brown & Sons). The firm remains a partnership, and three of its general partners are direct descendents of Alexander Brown, further dramatizing a continuity unparalleled by any other similar firm still in business.

By the turn of this century, it had become common practice for many of the more prosperous companies to finance the construction or purchase of large office buildings and then occupy only part of the total office space, renting the remainder to other "outside" companies. In rejection of this convention, the firm of Alex. Brown & Sons had the building it owned (and shared) demolished, and chose to erect instead a smaller structure that would better represent the firm, the building's only future tenant. The architectural firm of Parker and Thomas was contracted for the building's design, and George A. Fuller & Co. was its builder. Construction was begun in 1900 and completed in the following year. The detailed but classical design of the Alex. Brown Building attested to the conservative yet independent nature of its financier, and the costly materials employed therein asserted and symbolized the firm's success, security and permanence.

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

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



Alex. Brown Building

Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland

Item number 8 and 9

Page 9

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

Made virtually fireproof by the exclusion of wood from its structure, the "new" Alex. Brown Building sustained only minor cosmetic damage amidst the near-total destruction of Baltimore in the Fire of 1904, and still displays the lingering scars on its facade (only a partial restoration of the damage was performed) as testaments to its own endurance and reminders of a fateful event.

The Alex. Brown Building was the first of many architectural successes for Parker and Thomas in Baltimore: The Belvedere Hotel (1903, also a survivor of the Baltimore Fire); Gilman Hall on Hopkins' Homewood Campus (1904); the Hansa House (1907); the Savings Bank of Baltimore (1907). It is presumed (as lack of documentation cannot confirm this) that Parker and Thomas also designed the 1907 addition to the south wall of the Alex. Brown Building, since it is continuous with the original in both design and construction.

To further expand its offices, Alex. Brown & Sons acquired the neighboring East Baltimore Street addresses of 119-131, through a series of purchases initiated in 1961 and completed in 1980. All of these properties are now (as buildings) interconnected with each other and with the (1907) Alex. Brown Building.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Story of Alex. Brown & Sons, 1800-1975 (second edition). Frank R. Kents and Louis Azrael. Barton-Gillet Co., Baltimore. 1975.

Illustrated Glossary of Architecture, 850-1830. John Harris and Jill Lever. Faber & Faber, Ltd., London. 1966 (copyright 1966).

A Guide to Baltimore Architecture (second edition). John Dorsey and James D. Dilts. Tidewater Publications, Centerville, Maryland 1981 (copyright 1981).

NOTE: Additional information and materials were obtained from the files of the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP), and those of Alex. Brown and Sons.