

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

John Wanamaker Store

AND/OR COMMON

John Wanamaker Store

**USE THIS COPY  
FOR DUPLICATING**

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Juniper and Market Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION 1  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Philadelphia

CODE

101

**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	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, Incorporated

Contact: Robert D. Harrison, President  
Benjamin H. Doroff, Exec. V. Pres.

STREET & NUMBER

Juniper and Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania 19107

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Division of Records

STREET & NUMBER

Philadelphia City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

Pennsylvania

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey;  
Philadelphia Historical Commission Survey

DATE

1963; 1955

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress; Philadelphia Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Washington; Philadelphia

STATE

D.C.; Pa.

## 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		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Wanamaker Store was designed by Daniel H. Burnham and erected in three stages between 1902 and 1910 by Thompson, Starrett and Company on the site of Wanamaker's Grand Depot. In addition to standing on the same ground as his first "department store," the structure is the oldest and most significant extant commercial building prominently associated with Wanamaker. Measuring approximately 480 feet long and 250 feet wide, the store covers the entire block bounded by Market Street on the north, Chestnut Street on the south, Juniper Street on the west, and Thirteenth Street on the east. From a foundation resting on bed rock, the above-ground portion of the flat-roofed building rises 12 stories on a steel frame and displays an exterior facade of limestone ashlar on floors 1 and 2 and granite ashlar on stories 3 through 12. The building has two basement levels.

Although Burnham designed the Wanamaker Store in the Commercial style, he "resolved the problem of organizing architectural elements over twelve stories," says architectural historian Richard J. Webster, by using "the traditional Renaissance division of a building into base, body, and top."<sup>21</sup> The first two stories form the base and feature giant, fluted, limestone pilasters that separate the bays, cover the steel support piers, and provide a sense of underpinning for the entire pile. These vertical members also support a massive stone entablature and dentiled cornice that pass around the building at the base of the third story. Limestone spandrels with recessed panels separate the first and second stories. Massive, fluted, Tuscan columns mark recessed entrances featuring a combination of hinged and revolving doors on each side of the structure. Stories three through nine form the body of the building. They have rusticated granite facing and display regularly spaced pairs of six-over-six sash-type windows. The end bay on each level of each facade holds a single window of similar design, while the interior bays of the ninth-story facades display round-arched triple windows set under heavy, radiating, stone voussoirs. An entablature and dentiled cornice top this section. The crown of the building consists of stories 10 through 12. This section is faced with dressed granite ashlar and relieved by a two-story arcade featuring round arches of radiating voussoirs that cap sets of 10th-and-11th-story windows linked by paneled spandrels. A stone beltcourse encircles the building between the 11th and 12th floors; small square windows illuminate the 12th story; and a heavy, dentiled cornice caps the structure.

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<sup>21</sup>Richard J. Webster, Philadelphia Preserved: Catalogue of the Historic American Buildings Survey (Philadelphia, 1976), 116-17.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Wanamaker Store ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

Inside, the John Wanamaker Store exhibits remarkably little structural alteration and shows a minimum of decorative alteration in key areas. Clearly the most striking interior feature is the Grand Court, which measures 112 feet long by 66 feet wide, rises 150 feet and several stories high, and seats 14,000 people. A series of Italian and Greek marble arches form the principal decor of the court. It was here that President William Howard Taft delivered the dedicatory address for the building in 1911. It was here also that Wanamaker installed the world's largest pipe organ in that same year. Bought at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis and transported to Philadelphia in 13 rail cars, the giant instrument has been enlarged several times and now contains 6 manuals, 451 stops, 964 controls, and 30,067 pipes. In keeping with tradition, three half-hour concerts are still played on the organ each day. The Grand Court also contains a 9-foot, 10-inch bronze eagle that has become a store symbol. Bought, like the organ, at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the bird was fabricated by German craftsmen from individual parts, including 5,000 bronze feathers.

Perhaps the most significant area of the store is John Wanamaker's office on the eighth floor. It is a large rectangular room that contains his desk, bookcases, files, and mememtos exactly as he left them. Except for the installation of a glass partition to seal off his work area from the rest of the room-- which now houses a store museum--the office is unchanged.

Also on the eighth floor is the Grand Crystal Tea Room and its adjoining dining areas. When it opened in 1911 the tea room was the largest dining room in Philadelphia, covering 22,000 square feet and seating over 1,000 persons. Virtually unaltered, it features oak woodwork, white plaster walls, and reproduced "crystal" chandeliers. Some of the adjoining rooms are somewhat more altered but the store is restoring them to near-original appearance. All continue to serve dining and assembly functions.

Other areas of special importance and relatively little architectural alteration include: Egyptian Hall, an immense second-floor auditorium with full-size stage, moving picture facilities, and seating capacity for 1,400; Greek Hall, a smaller assembly room on the same floor; and the Board Room, formerly Wanamaker's educational assembly hall for management trainees and other store employees.

(continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Wanamaker Store ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

When the store was completed, it had 50 passenger elevators located in double banks in the fire walls that separate the building into three sections running from Juniper to Thirteenth Street. Although the early cars have been replaced, on most floors the original decor of the bank facades remains under modern decorative materials. As part of a long-term plan to restore as many of the store's original features as is possible without sacrificing merchandising utility, John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, Incorporated, is slowly returning these elevator bank facades to their 1911 appearance. Store workmen are also cleaning and re-painting cornice work and other ornamental trim in the Grand Court. This restorative work and the absence of major interior structural alterations combine to give the building a historic ambiance that overcomes modern store furnishings and merchandise throughout the selling floors and most of the clerical and other areas.

Boundary Justification. The boundary includes both the entire Wanamaker Store and the sidewalks that surround it, but the sidewalks do not contribute to the building's national significance.

Verbal Boundary Description: As indicated in red on the accompanying AASLH sketch map and in black on the accompanying U.S.G.S., 7.5' Series, Pa.-N.J., Philadelphia Quadrant (1967, Photorevised 1973), a line beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Juniper and Market Streets and extending southward approximately 450 feet along the east curb of Juniper to the north curb of Chestnut; thence eastward about 275 feet along the north curb of Chestnut to the west curb of Thirteenth Street; thence northward about 450 feet along the west curb of Thirteenth to the south curb of Market; thence westward about 275 feet along the south curb of Market to the point of beginning.

# 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 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 checked="" 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 Site: 1875-present BUILDER/ARCHITECT Thompson, Starrett Co.  
 Building: 1902-present Daniel H. Burnham

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although recent scholarship has dispelled the long-popular notion that John Wanamaker established the Nation's first department store, most business historians agree with author John William Ferry that "in all the records of merchandising," Wanamaker's name "will endure as one of the greatest pioneers in . . . [its] creation."<sup>1</sup> At the turn of the century "his name was synonymous with retailing," says distinguished economic historian Robert Sobel, and according to scholar Philip J. Reilly, it is still revered.<sup>2</sup> When Fairchild News Service conducted an informal survey of leading retail executives in 1962, "Wanamaker was nearly everyone's choice to be named one of the six great merchants in United States retailing history."<sup>3</sup> He gained this stature not so much because of business genius, says Sobel, but because he took from other pioneer merchants "ideas and concepts and made them work, popularized them, and obliged others to follow his example."<sup>4</sup>

Wanamaker also contributed a number of significant innovations of his own to the evolutionary development of both the department store and retailing in general. The most important of these were in advertising, an aspect of selling in which he had no peer. When Wanamaker entered retailing "truth in advertising and merchandising claims hardly existed," says Sobel, but he "changed this. He . . . did so by advertising his creed widely, to a larger audience than that reached by any businessman before him, and then delivering his promises."<sup>5</sup> Wanamaker published the first copyrighted advertisement in America (1874); ran the first full-page mercantile advertisement in an American paper (1879); founded two successful national periodicals in the late 1870's specifically to carry his

(continued)

<sup>1</sup>John William Ferry, A History of the Department Store (New York, 1960), 108.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Sobel, The Entrepreneurs: Explorations Within the American Business Tradition (New York, 1974), 73.

<sup>3</sup>Philip J. Reilly, Old Masters of Retailing (New York, 1966), 193.

<sup>4</sup>Sobel, Entrepreneurs, 74.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 76.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Wanamaker Store ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

advertising copy--Everybody's and Farm Journal; ran full-page advertisements in such popular magazines as Century and Scribner's as early as 1880; and entered into the first annual contract for full-page advertising in a daily newspaper (1899). In addition he used the mails to send out booklets, circulars, and cards calling attention to sales and special categories of merchandise and to distribute "catalogues that were," according to his biographer Herbert Adams Gibbons, "precursors of the huge volumes now issued by mail-order houses." All these undertakings were "innovations," says Gibbons, "some in the idea and others in the style."<sup>6</sup>

The John Wanamaker Store was designed by Daniel H. Burnham and erected between 1902 and 1910 by Thompson, Starrett and Company on the site of Wanamaker's Grand Depot. Still serving its original purpose with a functional vitality that belies its age, the store fills an entire block, rises 12 stories on a steel frame, displays an almost unaltered exterior facade of limestone and granite, and houses Wanamaker's office, which has remained virtually untouched since his death. The only other significant extant Wanamaker store or residence planned or erected before 1900 is a somewhat deteriorated residence at 2032 Walnut Street in Philadelphia. Wanamaker's principal residences have burned.

#### History

The first in a family of seven children, John Wanamaker was born in Philadelphia on July 11, 1838. His parents, who were of German, Scotch, and French Huguenot stock, descended from early American settlers, and Nelson, his father, earned a better-than-average living as a brickmaker. The family moved to a farm in Indiana in 1850 but returned to Philadelphia within a year. During the next few months, young John became an avid church-goer, purchased his first book--a Bible--was converted to Christianity, and became a Sunday school teacher and temperance worker. For the rest of his life he was known variously as "Honest John" and "Pious John."

(continued)

<sup>6</sup>Herbert Adams Gibbons, John Wanamaker, (New York, 1926), II, 17.

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In 1851 young Wanamaker got his first job, errand boy for a publisher at \$1.25 a week. At age 19 he suffered from tuberculosis and traveled to the West for a cure. Upon his return in 1857 he became secretary of Philadelphia's Young Men's Christian Association. He saved most of his \$1,000 annual salary and for a time considered entering the ministry. Then he met and married Mary Brown in 1860, and after the Union Army rejected him for health reasons in 1861, he and his brother-in-law, Nathan Brown, pooled their resources and entered the men's clothing business.

Sobel suggests that Wanamaker's selection of clothing for his retail business indicates either that he "was more of a plunger than he seemed to be, or that he had a greater knowledge of American manufacturing than many of his contemporaries."<sup>7</sup> The recent development of anthropometry and practical sewing machines had made possible mass production of men's clothing, and this called in turn for mass distribution. The partners designed their small store in Oak Hall, on the southeast corner of Market and Sixth Streets in Philadelphia, with this in mind. They planned for an extensive alteration department, eventual manufacturing, and large purchases of cloth. Even before opening their doors, they hired a cutter and a tailor. Later, as the Civil War heightened and the price of wool soared, Wanamaker bought his supplies directly from shippers rather than from local distributors. The latter group's protest, says Sobel, indicates "that Wanamaker was one of the first to do this."<sup>8</sup>

Brown's contributions, beyond financial support, to the Oak Hall store remain unclear, but apparently he took little part in managing the business. According to Ferry, "John Wanamaker was the organizing genius and driving force behind the rapid development" of the store into the basis for "an enterprise that was to grow into one of the world's most famous department-store organizations."<sup>9</sup> Standard procedure in the mid-19th century called for new retail dry goods stores to begin small, plow profits back into stock, and rely on word-of-mouth advertising to attract customers. Wanamaker did the opposite. From the start he advertised heavily, sold his goods at a low markup, and put a large  
(continued)

<sup>7</sup>Sobel, Entrepreneurs, 80-81.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>9</sup>Ferry, History of the Department Store, 103.

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portion of his profit back into advertising. He bought space in newspapers, erected billboards bearing only the letters "W & B" in hope that the curious would investigate their meaning, released balloons from the roof of the store, took advertising space at the top of every page of the 1864 Philadelphia city directory, and distributed free calendars.

Although an innovator in advertising, Wanamaker was in other areas of merchandising chiefly a popularizer of the ideas of others. For example, in 1874 he announced his business policies, which he had been following since the outset, in a large newspaper advertisement. It was "the first," says Sobel, "to be copyrighted in America," and it proclaimed "Full Guarantee, One Price, Cash Payment, and Cash Returned" as the four laws governing Oak Hall's operation.<sup>10</sup> Other dry goods and department store entrepreneurs had introduced all four of these already, but according to Sobel, Wanamaker, more than the other merchants, practiced them. He "made the innovations credible, and in the process forced others to follow his example."<sup>11</sup> Wanamaker enhanced his reputation for honesty and fairness further by becoming the first to extend a money-back guarantee to clothing altered by his tailors.

As early as 1870 the Oak Hall store enjoyed annual sales of over \$2 million and a reputation as the largest men's clothing store in Philadelphia, and perhaps the biggest in the Nation. Brown had died the previous year, and now that the enterprise rested completely in Wanamaker's hands, he embarked on a program of moderate expansion. He declined opportunities to capture two major new retail markets, however. After appointing several area tailors as agents to take customers' measurements for semifitted clothing to be delivered by mail, Wanamaker stopped short of establishing a full-scale mail-order business; and, after opening branch stores in New York, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Washington, and several midwestern cities, he closed them all and thus passed up the opportunity to own the first men's clothing chain in the country. Preferring to limit his expansion to Philadelphia, where he could oversee it personally, Wanamaker concentrated on opening a new store there and making it the finest anywhere.

(continued)

<sup>10</sup>Sobel, Entrepreneurs, 86.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 87.



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Erected on Chesnut Street in 1869, it catered more to the upper middle class but was as successful as Oak Hall. According to Sobel, together the two stores earned Wanamaker "a national reputation" in retailing.<sup>12</sup>

As America's centennial approached, Wanamaker, like many other merchants, recognized that increasing growth of cities and continued technological progress and industrial development were effecting changes in dry goods retailing. Many stores began to specialize in only one or two kinds of articles, while others turned toward departmentalization. Wanamaker wanted to expand, but neither of these alternatives appealed to him. In 1874 he began negotiating to purchase the freight depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad at Thirteenth and Market Streets, which he thought might be a good site for a new Oak Hall despite its then out-of-the-way location. Before completing the purchase he took his family on a grand tour of Europe and visited large dry goods and department stores in London, Paris, and elsewhere. Upon his return, Wanamaker completed the deal for the depot and set about refurbishing it in time to house a major revival meeting led by Ira Sankey and Dwight L. Moody and then to open as a major retail center in time for the Centennial Exposition. Wanamaker hoped to rent space to other merchants and advertise the depot as a collection of speciality shops under a single roof, but failing to gain support for that notion, he opened the depot alone as a giant dry goods store. Named "The New Establishment," it offered men's and women's clothing, household linens, upholstery, and fabrics.

The New Establishment proved an immense success, drawing tens of thousands of the city's centennial visitors as customers and marking the start of a new phase of Wanamaker's career. When the centennial celebration ended, he feared that the new store would compete with his older outlets and force them out of business. Accordingly he returned to the idea of an indoor bazaar. Once more he asked other merchants to join him in putting a variety of independently owned speciality shops under a single roof, and once more his colleagues rejected the plan. Rather than shut down the New Establishment permanently, he now decided to close it temporarily, remodel it, and reopen it as the departmentalized "Wanamaker Composite Store" offering a full line of dry goods. Known variously as the "Grand Depot," the "Market Street Wigwam,"

(continued)

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 91.

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and "Wanamaker's New Kind of Store," the structure covered 2 acres and featured a circular floor plan with entrances on all four sides and eight vertical aisles leading to the center. When it opened on March 12, 1877, 1,000 clerks greeted a crowd of more than 70,000, and the future seemed promising. But the Nation was in the middle of a depression, and the people who thronged the store came to sightsee rather than to buy.

Wanamaker remained optimistic, however. During the next few years, while retaining his well-established pricing and customer-service policies, he used the latest technological developments, the growing trend toward merchandise diversification, and his considerable advertising skills to turn the Market Street complex into what Sobel has labeled "a department store in every sense of the word, and the largest in the nation."<sup>13</sup> According to historian Alex Groner, in 1878 Wanamaker became the first to install arc lights in his show windows, and as a result "night window shopping became fashionable."<sup>14</sup> More important, in 1880 the Grand Depot became "the first store," says Sobel, to use Thomas Edison's new incandescent lamps for interior lighting.<sup>15</sup> These allowed Wanamaker to open the depot's basement and galleries and, in time, to install pneumatic tubes.

To advertise his new store, Wanamaker supported two publications that developed eventually into highly successful national magazines: the Farm Journal, which he issued first in March 1877 and published for 7 years before relinquishing it to Wilmer Atkinson; and Everybody's Journal, which he brought out originally as a store paper for Oak Hall, expanded apparently to promote the Grand Depot, and saw become, under the title "Everybody's," one of the first of the ten-cent magazines. In December 1879, says Gibbons, Wanamaker took out "the first full-page mercantile advertisement in an American newspaper," and in 1880 he began buying full-page ads in such popular magazines as Century and Scribner's.<sup>16</sup> In addition he used the mails to send out booklets, circulars, and cards calling attention to sales and special categories of

(continued)

<sup>13</sup>Sobel, Entrepreneurs, 100.

<sup>14</sup>Alex Groner, The American Heritage History of American Business and Industry (New York, 1972), 179.

<sup>15</sup>Sobel, Entrepreneurs, 99.

<sup>16</sup>Gibbons, John Wanamaker, II, 15.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Wanamaker Store TEM NUMBER 8 PAGE six

merchandise and to distribute "catalogues that were," according to Gibbons, "precursors of the huge volumes now issued by mail-order houses." All these undertakings were "innovations," says Gibbons, "some in the idea and others in the style."<sup>17</sup> Later, in 1899, long after the Grand Depot was a proven success, Wanamaker entered into the first annual contract for full-page advertising with a daily newspaper. The \$100,000 that he paid the Philadelphia Record for this service was, according the Associated Press, "the largest amount involved in an advertising contract of this kind up to this time."<sup>18</sup>

At the same time that he increased his advertising, Wanamaker added new lines of merchandise. In 1878 he put in china; in 1880 carpets, sporting goods, jewelry, and refrigerators; in 1881 beds, antique furniture, optical goods, gas stoves, and art works; and in 1882 books and a soda fountain. Wanamaker began also to manufacture items other than clothing, starting with candy and moving on to mattresses and other products. He did not originate house brands, but his success with them helped popularize their production by others.

By the late 1880's, says Sobel, Wanamaker's Grand Depot was "the most famous store in the nation," and by the turn of the century "his name was synonymous with retailing."<sup>19</sup> Although between 1889 and 1900 other interests--including 4 years as Postmaster General of the United States under President Benjamin Harrison--diverted much of his attention from business, in 1896 Wanamaker bought A. T. Stewart's famous cast-iron store in New York and opened a successful branch there. By 1900 he had decided to build a new, larger, more modern store in Philadelphia, and he accomplished this between 1902 and 1910, erecting it in sections on the site of the Grand Depot without ceasing retail operations there. Described by Ferry as "an imposing feature of the city's architecture, with an interior as grandiose as any designed for a department store of such magnitude," the structure remains one of the "greatest stores ever devoted to retailing."<sup>20</sup> Today John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, Incorporated, has several branches, including one in New York, and continues to function along lines pioneered by the founder.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in ibid., 16.

<sup>19</sup>Sobel, Entrepreneurs, 73, 101.

<sup>20</sup>Ferry, History of the Department Store, 107.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

(See continuation sheet.)

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY circa 2 1/4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>486100</u>	<u>4422150</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See last page of description.)

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

George R. Adams, Director, Historic Landmarks Project

ORGANIZATION

American Association for State and Local History March 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1400 Eighth Avenue South

TELEPHONE

615-242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville,

STATE

Tennessee 37203

**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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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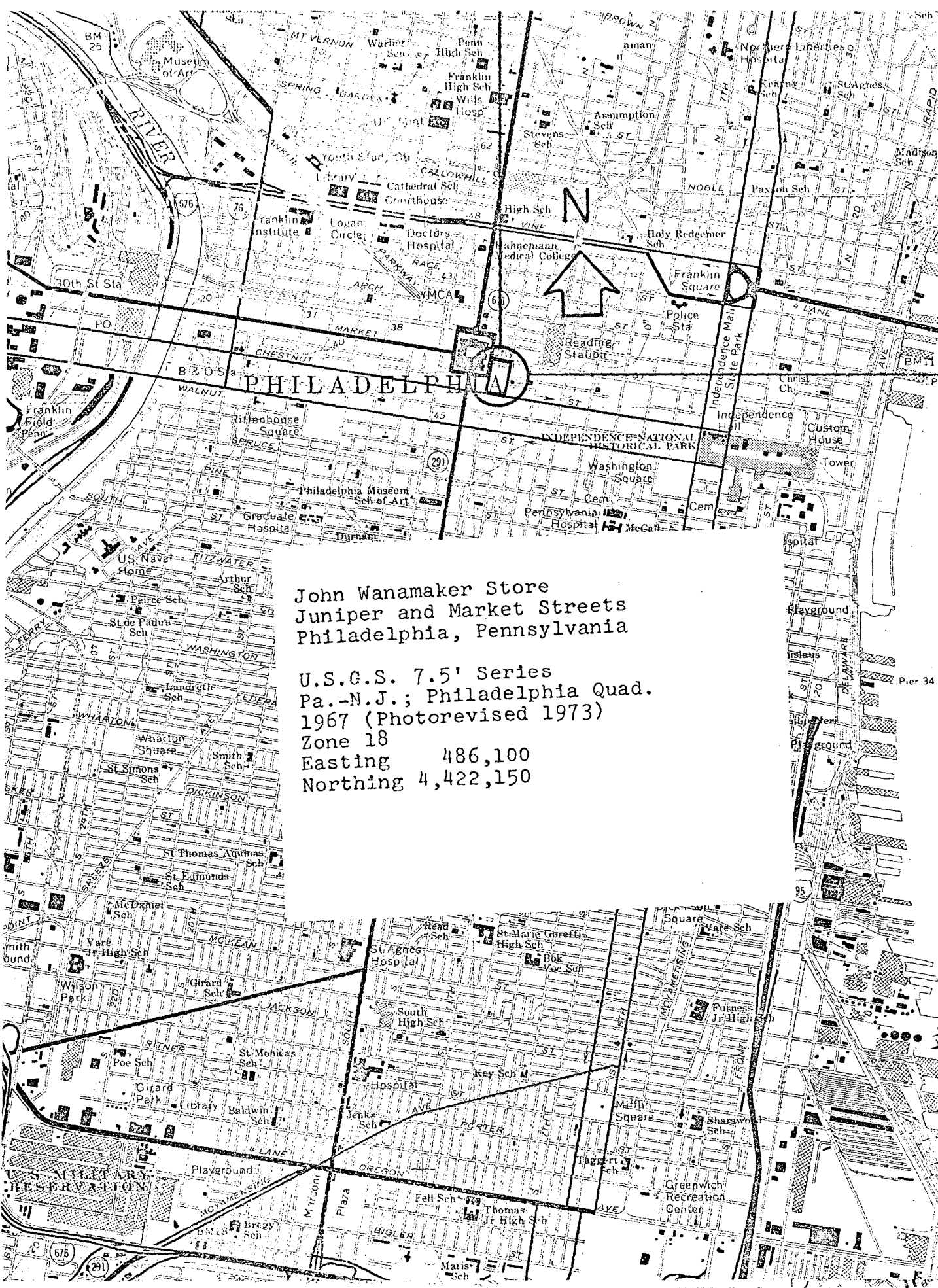
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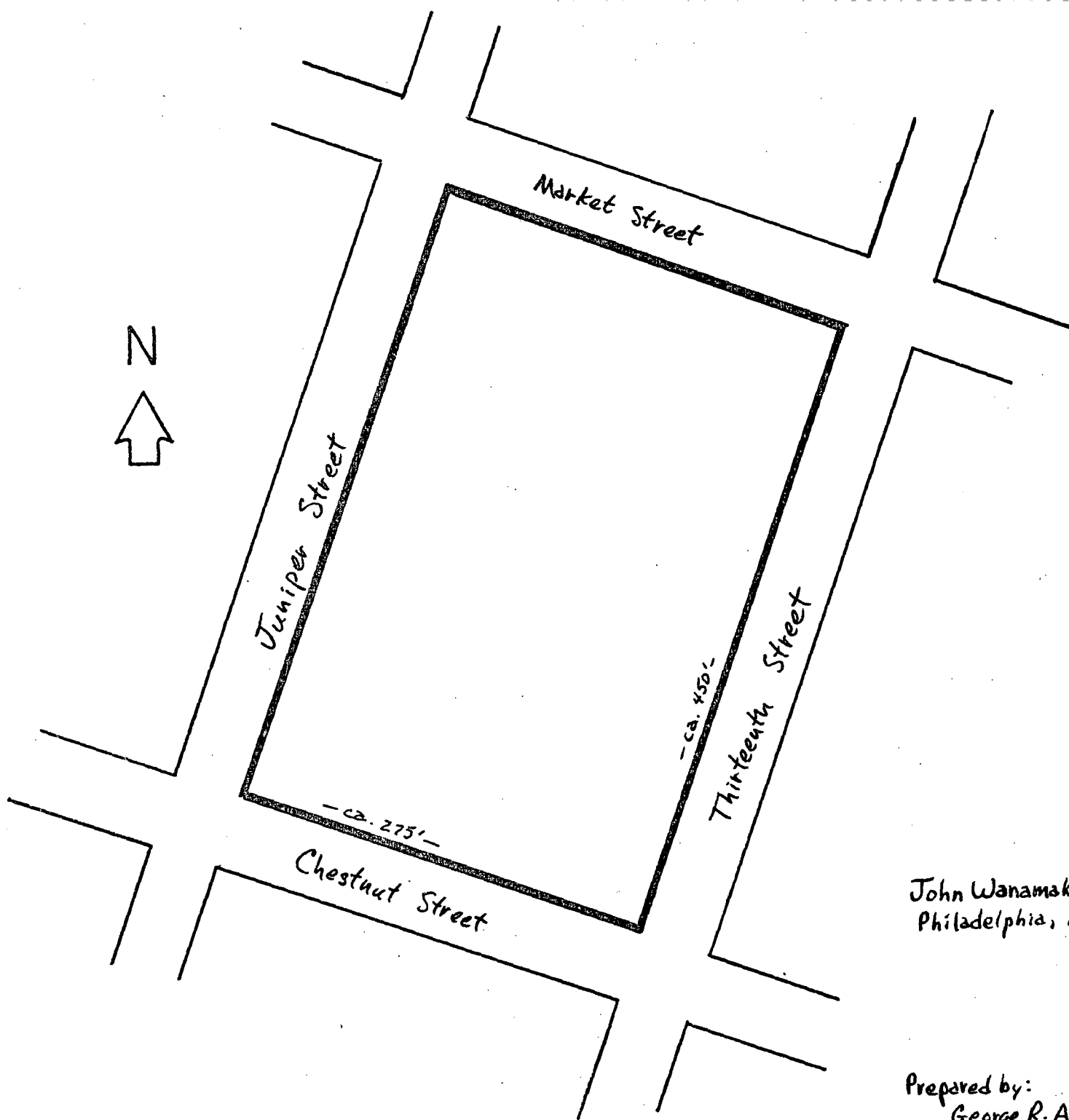
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John Wanamaker Store  
Juniper and Market Streets  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series  
Pa.-N.J.; Philadelphia Quad.  
1967 (Photorevised 1973)  
Zone 18  
Easting 486,100  
Northing 4,422,150

U.S. MILITARY  
RESERVATION



Market Street

Juniper Street

Thirteenth Street

Chestnut Street

-ca. 275'-

-ca. 450'-

John Wanamaker Store  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Prepared by:  
George R. Adams  
AASLH  
1977

NOT TO SCALE

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Added Area of Significance: Performing Arts

The Wanamaker Grand Organ, like the store itself, has a long and colorful history. The nucleus of the present instrument was a Grand Concert Organ built in 1904 by the Murray Harris Co. of Los Angeles. It was intended for exhibition at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, before being permanently installed in a Kansas City (Mo.) Convention Hall.

Builder Harris engaged organ architect George Ashdown Audsley, premier organ authority of the day and author of the monumental The Art of Organ Building to write the specifications for what was to become the largest pipe organ in the world--a herculean instrument of 10,000 pipes and 179 ranks, made possible by electrical innovations that for the first time made organs of unlimited size possible.

Audsley combined classic organ features with pipes imitating orchestra instruments--facilitating the playing of symphony transcriptions at a time when few cities could afford an orchestra. Played from a massive, five-manual drawknob console, the instrument had seven divisions: Choir, Swell, Solo, Echo and String, all enclosed; Great, partially enclosed in the Choir; and Pedal. The independent string was a first for organ building. Voicing was done by John W. Whiteley of England.

Harris invested the best in materials and workmanship in the monster instrument and even built a new factory in which to set it up--hoping for an advertising windfall from the fair. But the organ's actual cost (\$105,000) was so far in excess of its projected cost (\$67,000) that Harris was financially ruined. The company reorganized as The Los Angeles Art Organ Company--credited as the organ's official builders--with Harris's superintendent and

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director, William Boone Fleming, at its head.

At the Fair the organ, which won the Grand Prize and five medals, was housed in the exposition's focal point, Festival Hall. There it created a mild sensation, being played by virtually every major organist. Most notable was French virtuoso Alexandre Guilmant, widely regarded as the era's finest organist, who was featured in a celebrated series of ~~40~~ recitals that drew huge crowds.

But the organ's significance was not just musical. As Orpha Ochse, in her History of the Organ in the United States notes, this, "one of the most famous of the large early twentieth-century organs" would come to symbolize "the unity that improved modes of transportation and communication" had given the U.S. "The organ was designed by a man in New York" (Audsley), "built by a California firm, exhibited in Missouri" and would find a permanent home in Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup>

During the Fair the L.A. Art Organ Co. was hit with a bombshell when the Kansas City convention hall, fearing high operating expenses, backed out of its contract--which L.A. Art in the midst of reorganization had failed to ratify. Consequently, following the Fair the builders, with no takers for their dearly bought prize instrument, were forced to warehouse it.

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<sup>1</sup>Orpha Ochse, The History of the Organ in the United States (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 356.

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About four years later, John Wanamaker's son Rodman envisioned placing a monumental organ above the balcony of the new Philadelphia store's Grand Court. When the Wanamakers learned of the St. Louis organ, a store organ expert named George W. Till was sent to St. Louis in the summer of 1909 to inspect the organ and, following sales negotiations, returned to that city to pack it into an 11-freight-car train. Meanwhile Fleming, the organ's original layout designer and construction supervisor, was engaged by Wanamaker to oversee the store installation. Store architect Daniel H. Burnham designed a new organ case for the instrument--a Renaissance-style pipe-screen with three domed pipe towers, the large central one surmounted by a herald angel. Originally, the case was painted old ivory with showpipes gilded in 22-carat gold. The Echo division was erected on the 7th floor opposite the main organ, 125 feet above the Court floor.

At St. Louis, the organ was powerful enough that on one occasion it knocked plaster from the ceiling, panicking a crowd. But when first tested in the huge Grand Court open to seven floors it sounded embarrassingly puny. As a result, wind-pressures were raised and Till with a helper revoiced the entire instrument. The rejuvenated organ was inaugurated at a gala ceremony by organist J. Grandville-Smith on June 11, 1911 at the exact moment England's King George V and Queen Mary were crowned in Westminster Abbey. It has since played every business day.

But the organ--still the world's largest--continued to be judged inadequate, so Fleming and Till were engaged by Rodman Wanamaker to enlarge it along Audsley lines. This undertaking

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evolved into the Wanamaker Organ Shop, a remarkable enterprise that amounted to a private organ factory located in the store attic (12th floor Chestnut St. side). In the first enlargement the Swell, Choir, Echo and Pedal were bolstered, the old Solo was incorporated in the Swell, and above the main organ on the 7th floor a powerful, enclosed solo and fanfare division known as the Ethereal was added, bringing the organ up to 17,000 pipes and 293 ranks. Percussion additions included a piano (a Wanamaker first) and a set of Deagan Tower Chimes. Commanding the new additions was a five-manual Fleming console, with tilting-tablet stops color-coded by division for ease in registration.

In 1919 the golden age of Wanamaker after-hours concerts began with virtuoso Charles M. Courboin and Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia orchestra performing in a "Musicians' Assembly" attracting an astonishingly large crowd of 12,000 spectators from around the country--with at least as many turned away for lack of accommodation. Counters were removed converting the Court into a 6-tiered concert hall. Other famous concerts, some broadcast overseas via Wanamaker's radio station WOO, introduced to America such luminaries as Marcel Dupré, Nadia Boulanger and Louis Vierne (France); Fernando Germani and Marco Enrico Bossi (Italy); and others of note.

In the 1920s under Rodman Wanamaker, the music program was enlarged to encompass a huge collection of rare and valuable stringed instruments by Stradivari and other masters of Cremona, and an additional enlargement of the organ (schemed by Courboin, Dupré, Till, Fleming, Wanamaker music director Alexander Russell, Stokowski and others. Additions to the Choir and Swell from the first enlargement were combined to form a new Solo division; added

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to the organ were mammoth new enclosed symphonic sections (String and Orchestral organs envisioned by Rodman Wanamaker with pipes built to Wanamaker specifications by the Kimball Co.), plus a Great Chorus organ evidently modeled by Courboin on Willis organs in England. The addition of a powerful Stentor division on the fifth floor that would have included many stops on unprecedented wind pressures (75 and 100 inches) and the first example in America of a full-length 64-foot pedal stop was precluded by Rodman Wanamaker's death in 1928 (which also brought the after-hours concert series to a close).

The present 6-manual console was built by the Wanamaker Organ Shop in 1927-8 to command all these additions, totaling 28,500 pipes and 461 ranks. Located in the middle bay, East side of the Court, it consists of six ivory keyboards an Audsley-Willis pedal clavier, 10 expression shoes, a centrally placed crescendo shoe, and 729 bakelite color-coded stop tablets arranged in rows on radiating-concave (French-style) stop jambs. There are 168 color-coded combination pistons and 42 foot controls. [Only one larger organ has been built, at the Atlantic City convention hall. That organ has been only partially functional for many years.]

Celebrated musical works written for or inspired by the Wanamaker Organ include the Symphonie Passion (Marcel Dupré), the Symphonie Concertante (Joseph Jongen), an arrangement of Bach's Come Sweet Death (Virgil Fox), and Leopold Stokowski's famous orchestral transcriptions of Bach's organ works.

A superb example of the symphonic school of organ design, the Wanamaker organ is celebrated not only for its immense power, and for the quality of its workmanship and design, but for the

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richness and refinement of its tone. "Richness and mellowness," said organ authority William H. Barnes in 1933, "are results which are directly proportional to the number of subdued tones that are combined, all of which will blend into a rich ensemble. A marvelous example of this is the magnificent organ in the Wanamaker Store in Philadelphia...in some ways the finest organ in the world...One of its most satisfying features is the richness and mellowness of tone that is produced by hundreds of stops voiced with a moderate degree of power. The wealth of tonal texture is indescribable. The same volume could be secured from a small fraction of the number of stops this organ contains. Indeed, this is demonstrated admirably by a few sets of high pressure Reeds in the Ethereal Division of this same organ, which dominate the tone of ten times the number of softer registers, but produce a totally different effect."<sup>2</sup>

The Wanamaker organ is certified by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and, as of 1990, is one of about 100 instruments certified by the Organ Historical Society as being "of exceptional historic value." Its significance is captured in 1988 remarks of American Organist editor Anthony Baglivi: "The [Wanamaker Organ] came about through a unique combination of philanthropy and artistic seriousness. Many important musicians and designers were allowed to express themselves as never before

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<sup>2</sup>William H. Barnes, The Contemporary American Organ (New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1933 edition), pp. 147-8.

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to create an instrument that was an immediate success and continues today to be a landmark expression of the orchestral school of organbuilding. The Wanamaker story is also important as a record of this country's growing fascination with foreign musicians....The list of organists brought...to play the instrument...was truly impressive and ultimately influential.... One marvels at the sheer number of pipes in the seemingly endless divisions....Anyone who has stood in the Grand Court when the full organ is played cannot but be impressed as that great sound enfolds you. It is unlike any other musical experience in the world."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Anthony Baglivi "Editor's Notes: The Wanamaker Organ" The American Organist [New York: The American Guild of Organists], Vol. 22, No. 9, September 1988, p. 3.

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