FHR-8-300 (11-78)

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only
received AUG 11 1981
date entered SEP 14 1981

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic ~~The~~ Four Public Squares of Philadelphia Thematic Resources

and/or common

2. Location

street & number ____ not for publication

city, town Philadelphia ____ vicinity of congressional district 2 and 3

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Philadelphia code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
____ district	X public	X occupied	____ agriculture	____ museum
____ building(s)	____ private	____ unoccupied	____ commercial	X park
____ structure	____ both	____ work in progress	____ educational	____ private residence
X site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	____ entertainment	____ religious
____ object	____ in process	____ yes: restricted	____ government	____ scientific
	____ being considered	X yes: unrestricted	____ industrial	____ transportation
		____ no	____ military	____ other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Philadelphia, Fairmount Park Commission

street & number Municipal Services Building

city, town Philadelphia ____ vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia County Courthouse

street & number City Hall

city, town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined elegible? ____ yes ____ no

date Oct.13, 1980 ____ federal X state ____ county ____ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	x original site
x good	___ ruins	x altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The origin of Philadelphia's four public squares, and their primary unifying force, is the 1683 plan (see attached) which William Penn commissioned from his surveyor, Thomas Holme. It was Penn himself, in his effort to plan a utopia, who specified five squares, one in the center of his "green country town", the other four in the quadrants of the designated city. (Center Square subsequently became the site of City Hall, which is now a National Historic Landmark, and is therefore not included in this nomination.) Each of the four squares in the quadrants, called respectively, Southeast, Northeast, Northwest, and Southwest, was to cover eight acres and be an open green space based on London's open commons.

These four squares are basically in the same form today as shown on Holme's map, although those on the west appear to be further west than originally planned, and Franklin's area has been somewhat diminished, while that of Logan has been expanded. All of them have gone through a number of plantings, fencings, and improvements over the years, and have served a variety of purposes. Their stages of development reflect the development of the city as a whole, ranging over a period of three centuries. Each has been in and out of favor and embellished and kempt to a greater or lesser degree at various times, depending on the health of the surrounding neighborhood. Because of their geographical situation, Rittenhouse, Logan, and Washington Squares have had the most attention both in landscaping and use. They have been embellished with substantial fountains, sculptures, and plantings, while Franklin Square, because of its location, has remained sparsely furnished and static.

In spite of differences in detail and surroundings, all four Squares serve as relief from the heat, fumes, and asphalt of the city. All are green oases with trees, grass, flowers, and much used walkways and benches.

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Washington Square:

From 1816, when Washington (formerly Southeast) Square was first seeded and planted by the City, to the present, it has remained an open green space of trees, grass, and walkways. The original planting design was done by George Bridport, an English artist who also did the ceiling of the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. John Haviland was commissioned to design lamps, and seats and gravelled walks were installed. In 1825 the Square was opened as a public promenade, and in 1831 a committee of the Horticulture Society of Pennsylvania gave a glowing report describing the Square as "forming a handsome recreative and interesting promenade amongst fifty varieties of trees." (quoted in Scharf & Westcott, p. 1845). Andrew Jackson Downing called it "that really admirable city arboretum of rare trees" (quoted in Dallett, p. 25 from a statement of 1853 quoted in Downing's "Rural Essays", New York, 1869, p. 305).

Various improvements and changes have been made to the Square since its original design: fences have been put up and taken down, flagstones replaced the gravel walkways in 1880, and in 1913 the foundation of the Washington Square Imrpvement Association spurred a replanting in a geometric design by Olmsted Brothers & Co.

Washington Square as it stands today is the result of improvements designed by Edwin Brumbaugh in the early 1950's. Slate walkways crisscross the Square, but it is the grass and trees which dominate. In the center is a circular water pool and a monument to the Unknown Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolution. The focus of the monument is a life-size statue of George Washington cast in bronze from a 1790 Houdon sculpture which is now in the Virginia State House in Richmond. The memorial also includes a sarcophagus with the skeleton of a Revolutionary soldier exhumed from the northwest corner of the Square, and the inscription "Freedom is a Light for which many men have died in darkness" is chiseled in a granite backdrop. The whole is flanked by shrubs and fourteen flagpoles for the battle flags of the thirteen colonies and the first American flag. Lamps based on a design by Benjamin Franklin, and benches are scattered along the walkways, and the whole is surrounded by a four foot brick wall with brick coping on top, based on the design of Colonial church walls. At the southeast side of the Square is a small brick utility building.

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Franklin Square

At present, Franklin (originally Northeast) Square is the least attractive of Philadelphia's Squares, owing to its location, flanked by highways. Nevertheless, it retains its character as an open green space with trees, walkways, benches, and a circular water pool in the center. It also has jungle gyms for children, a small brick utility building toward the east side, and a subway stop at the southwest corner.

The Square was first levelled, planted, and enclosed in 1815, after having been an open common for many years. In the 1830's it was surrounded by an iron fence and had a central fountain with forty water jets. In the 1950's the planners of Independence Mall, to the south, envisioned it as a terminus for that extensive space. Unfortunately, since there is little to draw people in that direction, it has become somewhat of a back water. The current residential development of the surrounding Olde City area, however, may spark renewed interest in the Square.

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Logan Square:

Logan (formerly Northwest) Square was first improved and planted in 1823, and subsequently underwent variations in planting and fencing at different times. The most dramatic change occurred in 1918 when Jacques Gréber's Benjamin Franklin Parkway was opened. The Parkway is a great diagonal boulevard cut through the city's gridiron pattern and linking City Hall at Center Square with Fairmount, the site of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Logan Square was retained, albeit in somewhat altered state, as a focal point midway in the grand vista.

Today the basic layout of the Square is as Gréber planned it, with a large circle in the middle for pedestrian and vehicular traffic and green spaces to the west, north, and east. The exterior spaces serve as lawns in front of some of the institutions which surround the Square (John T. Windrim's Franklin Institute, Trumbauer's Free Library, Keast's Municipal Court, and Notman and LeBrun's Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul), and as buffers between them and the circle. All the areas have grass, trees, walkways, and benches. Flower beds surround the circle itself, and there is a small brick utility building on the south side of the circle.

The center of the circle is taken up by the Swann Fountain, or "Fountain of Three Rivers," (1924) by Alexander Stirling Calder in conjunction with Wilson Eyre. It consists of three allegorical bronze figures representing the Delaware, Schuylkill, and Wissahickon Rivers, which recline on swan-necked cornices above a series of stepped basins. The Delaware is represented by a male Indian with a fish, the Schuylkill by a woman with a swan, and the Wissahickon by a younger woman with a swan. Bronze frogs and turtles are scattered about in the basin. Curved water jets are expelled from the mouths of the fish, swans, and frogs, and additional jets rise straight up from points in the basin and from the center of the ensemble. The figures and the jets are all carefully placed to coincide with the various angles from which the fountain is seen from the circle and the Parkway. The bronze allegorical figures are 132" high on a granite base 62" above the pool. The pool itself is 124" with a plain low curb of Milford pink granite.

To the north of the central circle of Logan Square, and in front of the Free Library of Philadelphia, is a plot of ground on which stands another sculpture by Alexander Stirling Calder and Wilson Eyre, the Shakespeare Memorial of 1926. In bronze, on a black marble base, the work shows a despondent Hamlet seated and leaning on a dagger, with a laughing Touchstone at his feet. On the base is inscribed a quotation from "As You Like It": "All the world's a Stage, and all the men and women merely players." On the back is a list of ten actors and three Philadelphia scholars. The sculpture is 72" high on a 170" base. Its original site was thirty feet north of the present one, but the sculpture was moved in 1953 to accommodate the underground Vine Street extension of the Expressway.

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Rittenhouse Square

The first record of attention paid to Rittenhouse (Southwest) Square as a public space was in 1816 when City Councils acquired a loan from the surrounding neighbors to enclose and seed the area. It was not, however, until 1852 that increased residential development in this part of the city caused real interest in beautifying the Square. In the 1850's it had an iron paling fence with trees, grass, and walkways, and fountains were installed by two local benefactors at the gates at Walnut and Rittenhouse Sts. and 18th and Locust Sts. The fountains were subsequently removed by an order of Council because they produced too much mud.

In its current state, Rittenhouse Square is the work of Paul Philippe Cret, who designed a scheme of diagonal walkways among grass, trees, and flower beds, executed in 1913. The plaza is surrounded by a balustrade, broken where the walkways pass through. Pedestals and urns with a raised Greek motif stand at the entries to the plaza and the Square itself. The gateways at the 18th, 19th, and Rittenhouse St. entrances are a Cret design of 1940. The blue tiles in the pool are a later addition.

Attempts were made to establish plantings around the periphery of the Square, but they proved unsuccessful because of wear from traffic. A strip of belgian block paving now provides a barrier between the greenery and the exterior sidewalks and streets.

Rittenhouse Square is the site of a number of Philadelphia's most popular public sculptures. The best known is Albert Laessle's "Billy" (1914), set in its own plaza in front of a hemispherical stone bench in the southwest part of the Square. A 26" bronze statue of a billy goat on a 22" granite base, Billy is kept shiny by the constant attention of young riders. Paul Manship's "Duck Girl", a 61" bronze of a young girl in Greek costume carrying a duck, is in the pool in the central plaza, while Antoine-Louis Barye's 1832 allegory of the 1830 French revolution, "Lion Crushing a Serpent", a 54" high bronze, is at the other (west) end of the plaza. Cornelia Chapin's "The Giant Frog" in granite (38"high) is in the northeast section of the Square, as is Beatrice Fenton's Evelyn Taylor Price Memorial Sundial of 1947. The latter is a 59" bronze depiction of two children holding up a giant sunflower which serves as the dial.

In addition to its sculptures, the Square has a number of ornamental flower beds, well and colorfully planted in summer, trees, grass, benches, and lamp posts. It is surrounded now primarily by apartment houses dating from various parts of the twentieth century, with a few vestigial single family residences remaining from the post Civil War period when Rittenhouse Square was at the height of fashion. John Notman's 1859 Holy Trinity Church still stands at the west side.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	_x_ community planning	_x_ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	_x_ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	_x_ sculpture
_x_ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
_x_ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
_x_ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
_x_ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Philadelphia's four public squares are significant because they are among the few manifestations left relatively intact of William Penn's seventeenth century utopian dream.

Penn's intention, animated in part by the fearsome London fire of 1666, and conveyed in instructions to his commissioners, Oct. 10, 1681, was that his city "may be a green country town which will never be burnt and always be wholesome." (quoted in Scharf & Westcott, p. 88 -- see bibliography). As executed by the surveyor, Thomas Holme, the plan was based on conservation -- a grid pattern for maneuverability, with large lots and five open public squares -- and it was one of the few early American city plans made before the town was actually settled. While the large lot sizes are now gone, as well as many other of Penn's building guidelines, the Squares still remain without encroachments, even as pressures on urban land increase.

In addition to the distinction of their genesis, the Squares are associated with a number of important personalities. In 1825 City Councils resolved to give the Squares the names of four eminent early Americans connected to Philadelphia's history. Southeast became Washington Square after the patriot, general, and president; Northeast became Franklin Square after the statesman, diplomat, and man of learning. Northwest was named after James Logan, scholar, secretary to Penn, and public servant; and Southwest was given the name Rittenhouse for David Rittenhouse, astronomer, surveyor, and first director of the U.S. Mint.

Three of Philadelphia's Squares have also been associated with a number of artists, architects, and planners of international and national importance. The original plan for Washington Square in the early nineteenth century was done by George Bridport and John Haviland, and a later concept was executed in 1913 by Olmsted Brothers & Co. The current scheme of Logan Square is by Jacques Gréber, with sculptures by Alexander Stirling Calder and Wilson Eyre, and Rittenhouse Square is the plan of Gréber's colleague, Paul Cret, with sculptures by Barye, Laessle,

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 34.01

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J. Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

See Continuation Sheet

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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 Trina Voux

organization date

street & number 2103 Lombard Street telephone

city or town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national X 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

Ed Weintraub, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

title Director, Bureau for Historic Preservation date 8/5/81

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

for W. H. Bradham date 9.14.81

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

GPO 938 835

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Manship, Fenton, and Chapin.

Title for the public squares depends simply on Thomas Holme's plan, although Washington Square came to the City by patent for a public burying ground. The city government has throughout the years taken responsibility for these public amenities, either directly through the Councils in the early days, or, starting in 1915, through the Fairmount Park Commission. But in the cases of Washington and Rittenhouse Squares, the Commission has had the assistance of neighborhood improvement societies, both founded in 1913. These organizations, plus the venerable Philadelphia Fountain Society and Fairmount Park Art Association, have contributed substantially to the embellishment and maintenance of the three most popular Squares -- Logan, Rittenhouse, and Washington. All are fine examples of the contribution that civic pride, work, and financial support can make to public spaces.

The development of the Squares parallels the evolution and expansion of the city itself, from its beginnings on the Delaware River through its westward expansion. Franklin and Washington, in the old part of the city, were the first to be improved, in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Logan was next in 1823, as residential interest spread to that area, and finally the development of Rittenhouse in 1852 was in response to the growing popularity of the surrounding neighborhood prior to the Civil War.

Today the condition of the Squares still reflects their surroundings. Washington and Rittenhouse, the focal points of institutional, commercial, and residential areas, and Logan, the centerpiece of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, are all well kept. Only Franklin Square, surrounded by highways and industry, is in comparative disarray. Nevertheless, it, like the others, still serves the purpose envisioned for it three hundred years ago: an oasis of green space in an urban setting, providing cool and quiet relief from the surrounding bustle.

The importance of Philadelphia's four public squares is best attested to by the extent to which they are used by all ages and classes, from the small child sitting on the back of Albert Laessle's billy goat in Rittenhouse Square to the Chinese grandmother watching the pigeons in Franklin. They have been a joy and a source of great pride to Philadelphians for generations. Their continuing success as elements of city planning which have been maintained for three hundred years is a tribute to Penn and his Quaker utopian dream.

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Washington Square:

Washington Square has, over the years, served a number of purposes. While it appears as an open public square on Holme's map, it is the only one of the five which was granted by patent -- specifically for use as a burial ground. From 1705 to 1795 large numbers of "strangers", Revolutionary War soldiers, and victims of the 1793 yellow fever epidemic were buried here. It also was the site of the private plot of the Washington and Story family. Although the City took an interest in improving the area as early as 1802, the Square was used for cattle markets, camp meetings, and pasturage until 1815. It survived two attempts to build upon it: the first in 1805 by the University of Pennsylvania, the second in 1870 when a popular vote rejected the Square as the site for a new City Hall.

The 1816 development of Washington Square was in response to the increasing population of the area, which remained residential until after the Civil War. For the last quarter of the nineteenth century legal activities predominated around the Square, to be replaced in the first half of the twentieth century by publishing houses. Now, while some dwellings remain, most of the surrounding buildings are institutional.

Since 1745 there had been buildings near the Square, and from the eighteenth century to the present the streets overlooking it have had distinguished structures by well-known architects: Smith and Latrobe, Haviland, Notman, and Sloan, Cencker and Stonorov, among others. Notman's Athenæum of Philadelphia on the east side, Bencker's N.W. Ayer building on the west side, and Stonorov's Hopkinson House apartments on the south are mong the most predominant still standing, while some mid-nineteenth century rowhouses remain on the south, west, and north sides.

The importance of Washington Square to its neighborhood over almost two centuries has remained even as its immediate surroundings changed from residential to commercial and institutional. It is best expressed by the Horticulture Society's 1831 report: ". . .salubrity is diffused throughout the neighborhood and to the city generally, and recreation afforded to the assiduous citizen, where he may view four hundred trees in the midst of a populous and busy city. . . The whole is beautifully kept, and well illuminated at night. . . all showing the correct and liberal spirit of our city." (Quoted in Scharf & Westcott, pp. 1845-46.)

Today, as in the past, Washington Square is well and regularly used by people of all sorts: lunching office workers, playing children, walkers in search of relief, and tourists.

Franklin Square:

In its early years the development of Franklin Square was not dissimilar to that of its sisters in the other three quadrants of the city. It was at various times leased for pasturage and cattle markets. It was used as a drilling ground during the War of 1812 and was the site of a powder house during the Revolutionary War. In 1741 Gov. Thomas Penn leased a portion of it to the German Reformed Church for a burying ground, which the Germans tried to expand in 1782, prompting a long series of Court battles over the propriety of the Penn warrant. In 1835 the State Supreme Court declared the warrant illegal and the Church duly vacated the premises.

While the streets bounding Franklin Square had a residential flavor in the nineteenth century, the neighborhood became increasingly less fashionable. Warehouses, light industry, a hospital, and the Police Administration Building are now its nearest neighbors. The building of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge (1919-1926) and subsequently the Vine Street Extension of the Schuylkill Expressway and Independence Mall have somewhat isolated the Square. And its proximity to Philadelphia's "Skid Row" has made it a favorite of indigents. Nevertheless, it is also used by residents of the neighboring Chinese community, and is the only relief in an otherwise rather bleak area.

Logan Square:

The early history of Logan Square is similar to that of the other Squares. It was used as a burial ground and pasture and also, until 1823, as a public execution ground. In 1864 it was the site for the extremely successful Sanitary Fair held for the benefit of Union soldiers and sailors. The buildings from the Fair were subsequently used for a brief period to house some 3,000 convalescent soldiers, the overflow from the city's military hospitals.

The present design of the Square is significant because of its association with Jacques Gréber and Alexander Stirling Calder. Jacques Auguste Henri Gréber (1882-1962) was a French planner brought to Philadelphia to design the gardens of Edward T. Stotesbury's estate in the suburbs of Philadelphia. As President of the Fairmount Park Art Association (1909-1916), Stotesbury was instrumental in getting Gréber to design the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, a grand boulevard in the spirit of the City Beautiful Movement. Logan Square, rather than being obliterated in this plan, was redesigned, enlarged, and included as a major focal point.

The Swann Fountain was the result, in part, of an 1891 bequest to the Philadelphia Fountain Society from Maria Elizabeth Swann in memory of her husband, Wilson Cary Swann, M.D., founder and president of the Society which provided sculptured drinking fountains throughout the city for both horses and people. The money, a somewhat small sum, was invested over a period of years while consideration of its use went forward. In 1919 Logan Square was approved as the site of the Swann Fountain, and in 1921 the fund was given to the Fairmount Park Commission on the assurance that the Commission would add to it the additional monies necessary, and erect a fountain designed by Wilson Eyre (1858-1944) and Alexander Stirling Calder (1870-1945).

The Swann Fountain is among the largest and most distinguished of the many works scattered around the City of Philadelphia by the second in the line of Calder sculptors. His Shakespeare Memorial, also in Logan Square, was the result of a suggestion by another local artist, John Sartain. Both sculptures are among a number of successful examples of the collaboration between Calder and the prominent Philadelphia architect, Wilson Eyre.

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Rittenhouse Square:
Rittenhouse is the only one of the Squares which was never used as a cemetery, although it was used for pasturage. At present it retains, more than any of the others, a residential flavor, and is still filled on bright days with children, mothers, and nannies, as well as lunching office workers and elderly apartment residents taking the air and feeding the pigeons.

Since 1913 it has been watched over and groomed by the Rittenhouse Square Improvement Society, which works with the Fairmount Park Commission and the Fairmount Park Art Association to maintain and enhance the area. It is the Improvement Society, along with the Art Association, which is responsible for acquiring and placing the sculptures, and which worked with Cret on the design.

The design and embellishments of Rittenhouse Square are significant because of their association with a number of distinguished artists and designers. Paul Cret (1876-1945), French Beaux Arts architect, designed, among other things, the Pan American Union Building in Washington and the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia, worked with Jacques Gréber on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, and was Dean of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. The central plaza of Rittenhouse Square is, in particular, a good example of Cret's Beaux Arts/Renaissance Revival planning style.

Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875) was a renowned French romantic sculptor, Knight of the Legion of Honor. The original "Lion Crushing a Serpent" was ordered cast in bronze by the French Minister of State after seeing the plaster cast in the 1833 Salon exhibition. It was first placed in the Tuileries, and is now in the Salle de Barye in the Louvre. The bronze in Rittenhouse Square was made sometime between 1889 and 1891, and was possibly exhibited in the Universal Exposition of 1889.

Paul Manship (1885-1966), 1909 winner of the Prix de Rome, is known for such works as "Prometheus" in Rockefeller Plaza in New York and a number of sculptures done for the 1939 New York World's Fair. His "Duck Girl", a good example of his early work in the Classical style, won the Widener Gold Medal when it was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1914.

Albert Laessle (1877-1954) was a Philadelphia sculptor, winner of a number of local and international awards, and best known for his animal works. Beatrice Fenton (b. 1887), also a Philadelphian, has several other works in the city, many including figures of children.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Four Public Squares of Philadelphia Thematic Resources
State PA

	Nomination	Type of Review	Decision
1.	Franklin Square Ref # 81000556	Substantive Review	W.H. Brashaw 9.14.81
2.	Logan Square Ref # 81000555	Substantive Review	W.H. Brashaw 9.14.81
3.	Rittenhouse Square Ref # 81000557	Substantive Review	W.H. Brashaw 9.14.81
4.	Washington Square Ref # 81000556	Substantive Review	W.H. Brashaw 9.14.81
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