

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC THE ATHENAEUM OF PHILADELPHIA

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 219 South 6th Street

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

___ VICINITY OF

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3rd

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

191

COUNTY

Philadelphia

CODE

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"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Board of Trustees, Athenaeum

Roger Moss, Librarian (Wa 5-2688)

STREET & NUMBER

219 South 6th Street

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Department of Records

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1962

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

"The Athenaeum of Philadelphia is an outstanding Italian or "Tuscan" style building. After thirty years of sharing quarters with the Philosophical Society, the membership caused a new building to be constructed facing Washington Square, some three hundred yards from Independence Hall. The building was erected in 1845-47 from a design by John Notman following a celebrated architectural competition to which William Strickland, John Haviland, and Thomas U. Walter also submitted designs. Notman's Athenaeum gave America its first major building in the new Italianate Revival Style and one of the first in Philadelphia of brownstone. The diarist Sidney George Fisher recorded when the building opened that it was 'the handsomest edifice in the city,' an opinion shared by architectural historians to modern times. On the National Register of Historic Places, the Athenaeum is considered one of the most significant American buildings of the nineteenth century. It was published widely in other cities and often copied. Severely plain on the exterior and deceptive in scale, the Athenaeum contains principal reading rooms with 24-foot ceilings that were richly embellished with grained woodwork and marbled columns, fine carpets and gas lighting fixtures. Into these spaces has been gathered a notable collection of paintings, statuary and period furniture. The Athenaeum was one of the first institutions to take an active interest in American Empire decorative arts and owns several labelled examples that have been widely published and exhibited.

The Athenaeum remains largely unchanged. Electricity and interior plumbing were introduced in the early twentieth century. This plumbing and wiring, now inconvenient and dangerously out of date, has never been modernized; nor has the building been given a fire stair, elevator, or modern security and fire protection systems. These would allow the Athenaeum to fully admit the public to this architectural treasure while protecting both the fabric of the structure and its growing collections.

During its century and a quarter on Washington Square, the Athenaeum provided space for several other societies that have since gone on to their own buildings: the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the American Institute of Architects (who commissioned Frank Furness to redecorate their room), and the American Catholic Historical Society, to name a few. The Philadelphia Law Library was for many years on the first floor and the National Education Association was founded in the building. The demands of a continually growing collection eventually made such services impossible. Now, the new rare book stacks have been installed and the building has been beautifully refurbished and restored in the last two years."¹

¹Roger Moss.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 8	4, 8, 7	0, 4, 0	4, 4	2, 1	6, 4, 0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING						
C							D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The national historic landmark boundary is coterminous with the legal boundary of the property. The entire property is 126 feet in length, beginning at 6th Street. The building lot is 51 feet wide, while the garden lot to the rear of it is slightly wider--53 feet, 6-1/2 inches.

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

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

7-29-76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

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	DATE
ATTEST	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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The Atheneum of Philadelphia

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crowning cornice (this made of wood), the building captures the spirit of central Italian palace fronts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is a suggestion of the Massimi Palace in Rome in the simply framed windows of the top story and the tall ones with cornices on ancones (scrolled brackets) of the main floor. Here above the entrance runs a continuous stone balcony on heavy brackets.

Reacting against what was now regarded as the monotony of Greek designs, "market-house, cottage, bank, town-hall, law-school, church, brewery, and theatre . . . are all the same", Notman's generation welcomed the fresh opportunities for experiment inherent in this new style. Not the least of its attractions was that being "astylar," without columns, it dispensed with the cumbersome and needless orders that had been the stock in trade of the classicist. This was to commend it especially to the designer of facades within the narrow frontage of urban lots.

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In 1968 the Athenaeum joined with the Victorian Society in America, whose offices are in the Athenaeum's building, to offer a national program of research, publications and public lectures, tours and exhibitions devoted to nineteenth century American social and cultural history. This program has attracted scholars from all parts of the country to utilize the heretofore largely unknown rare book collections of the Athenaeum developed over the last 160 years. It has also attracted substantial new collections; in the past four years alone some one thousand architectural drawings, seven thousand photographs and several thousand rare books and manuscripts valued at nearly \$1,000,000 have been added to the materials that are made available without charge to all qualified scholars studying the last century."

The building was one of ^{the} first brownstones and probably helped create the vogue for the material. The Athenaeum still utilizes some of the first floor for offices, but the great stairwell and two large second floor chambers have been fully restored to their original beauty.

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Photographs and Their Descriptions

Location: Athenaeum, Philadelphia, Pa.

Photo credit: The Athenaeum

- Photos:
1. John Noyman's Final Design as built, 1845
 2. Vestibule
 3. Grand Stair
 4. News Room, Second floor front
 5. Main Reading Room, Second floor rear