

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Second Bank of the United States

and/or common Old Custom House

2. Location

street & number 420 Chestnut Street

not for publication

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" 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 Independence National Historical Park

street & number 313 Walnut Street

city, town Philadelphia

vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, City Hall

street & number Broad and Market Street

city, town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 28-30, 1940 federal state county local

depository for survey records National Park System Advisory Board

city, town Washington

state DC

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		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Second Bank of the United States, at 420 Chestnut Street, was designed by architect William Strickland and built between 1819 and 1824 at the cost of nearly half-a-million dollars.¹ Modeled after the Parthenon in Athens, this temple structure is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States. The huge building, measuring 86' x 140' with 16' x 10' porticoes at the north and south ends, contains 11,954 square feet of interior space. The main or north entrance is approached by a flight of marble stairs to a portico with eight large fluted Doric columns, 4' 6" in diameter, and a full Doric entablature. Coursed ashlar marble covers the three-story walls and the gabled roof is copper.

Strickland's design elevated the main floor of the bank building 9 feet above ground level and set the building off by a 14-foot-wide flagstone terrace 3 feet higher than street level. The central doorway at the main or Chestnut Street entrance opened to a vestibule with a paneled dome. On the right and left were large offices and directly ahead a central lobby or hallway leading to the banking room which occupied the center of the building. Beyond, on the south end of the building, was the stockholders room, 23' x 50', and on either end of it, committee rooms and marble stairways to the second story which was reserved for various offices.

The banking room, the heart of the Second Bank of the United States, retains many of its original architectural elements. The large 48' x 81' space still is divided by two rows of six fluted marble columns in the Ionic Order, which support three vaulted (arched) ceilings, the central of which is semi-cylindrical, 28' in diameter and 81' in length. Palladian windows give light to the room from the east and west.

The Second Bank of the United States first established itself in Carpenters' Hall in 1817, after Congress determined that a federal bank might spare the country a repeat of the financial crisis the country experienced during the War of 1812. When the magnificent marble temple was completed for the bank's use in 1824, Nicholas Biddle was serving as its president. Under his dynamic leadership the bank achieved its greatest influence and its Greek Revival design provided a model for numerous branch banks throughout the country. But active jealousy of the bank's power led to its downfall in 1836, when, following the determined leadership of President Andrew Jackson, Congress allowed the bank's charter to expire. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania granted a charter to Nicholas Biddle for a state bank in its stead. When it failed in 1841, the Port of Philadelphia took over the building as the Custom House, in which use it continued until 1934, when a new Custom House reached completion on the next block. Subsequently a movement to preserve the Second Bank building resulted in its designation in June 1939 as a National Historic Site.

During the 1940s measured drawings and partial restoration of the building were completed under the direction of the Historic American Buildings Survey and the National Park Service. Many of the window openings added to the building during the years after the bank closed were covered over, and the original terracing at the front entranceway was reinstated. The interior restoration focused on the entrance lobby, as the main banking room and side offices fortunately survived in their original appearance. The building presently houses the Independence Park Portrait Collection.

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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Constitutional
Specific dates	1824-1836	Builder/Architect	William Strickland	History

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Second Bank of the United States is primarily significant in the areas of Constitutional History and Architecture.

CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY²

The financial difficulties arising out of the War of 1812 demanded that something be done to restore order to the chaotic state of American finance. The charter of the First Bank of the United States had expired leaving no central financial institution for the United States. As a result the United States found it difficult to repay loans secured to finance the war. Foreign credit was in poor standing, there was no uniform national currency and bank notes could not be exchanged for gold. As a result of this situation, many Americans who had opposed the First Bank of the United States changed their minds and supported establishment of the Second Bank of the United States in 1816.

After a shaky start, the Second Bank settled down to become, in the decade after the Panic of 1819, a conservative, prosperous, and reasonably responsible business enterprise. Nicholas Biddle, president of the Second Bank, created an institution that soon became an effective regulator of the national economy. The bank marketed government bonds and served as a reliable depository of government funds; it was an important source of credit for the business community; its bank notes provided the country with a sound paper currency; it forced the state banks to back their notes with adequate specie reserves and thus helped to create confidence in the entire banking system of the United States. The source of its power was its control of one-fifth of the bank notes and one-third of the bank deposits and specie of the country.

Although the constitutionality of the bank seemed to have long since been settled, President Andrew Jackson criticized it repeatedly during his first term in office, made it a major target in his campaign for a second term, and gave it so much attention during his second term that he appeared almost obsessed with the desire to destroy it. In his attack on the bank, Jackson reopened the question of its constitutionality. Acknowledging the Supreme Court's affirmation of the bank in McCulloch v. Maryland (1819), Jackson discounted the significance of this decision by arguing that the political branches were not bound by the judiciary's reading of the Constitution, but rather were obliged to interpret the fundamental law themselves. Jackson pointed out that in the McCulloch case the Court said the degree of necessity of a legislative act, under the necessary-and-proper clause, was a matter of political descretion. Permitted thus to examine the bill on its own merits, Jackson described the bank as a potentially "self-elected directory" possessing monopolistic power that was capable of

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Philadelphia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	8	7	3	0	0	4	4	2	1	8	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary conforms to the outside perimeter of the building.

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 Harry A. Butowsky

organization National Park Service, Division of History date December 1986

street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone (202)343-8155

city or town Washington state DC

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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influencing elections and controlling the affairs of the nation. Especially insofar as it was connected with foreign capital, Jackson reasoned, the bank was a "danger to our liberty and independence."

At the heart of Jackson's opposition to the bill was support of the principle of dual-federalism. Dual-federalism stated the existence of mutually exclusive and reciprocally limiting spheres of state and federal power, neither of which was superior to the other in a categorical sense. Dual-federalist theory attached as much importance to the Tenth Amendment, reserving to the states or the people powers not delegated to the general government, as John Marshall did to the supremacy clause of the Constitution.

Jackson argued that by exempting the private business of the bank from state taxation, the recharter bill, "as a means of executing the powers delegated to the General Government," attacked "the substantive and most essential powers reserved to the States." The framers of the Constitution, Jackson declared, never imagined "that any portion of the taxing power of the States not prohibited to them nor delegated to Congress was to be swept away and annihilated as a means of executing certain powers delegated to Congress." The contrast with John Marshall's doctrine of national-supremacy federalism was profound: whereas Marshall held that federal power properly exercised could stop the state taxing power, Jackson's dual-federalism permitted the states to exclude the exercise of a constitutional federal power.

Perceiving himself to be the champion of the people, Jackson defied both the Congress and the Supreme Court when he thought necessary. His veto of the bank bill set forth two clear and distinct messages--that the Supreme Court was not the final arbiter of all constitutional questions, and that the President could exercise a judgment independent of Congress, upon matters of policy, presumably even where constitutional issues were not involved.

Jackson objected to the Second Bank of the United States not only on the basis of its constitutionality but also for reasons of policy. Previous presidents had vetoed bills on constitutional grounds only. Jackson's bank veto and his veto of numerous internal improvement bills changed this pattern. In addition to the dual-federalist objects already discussed, Jackson opposed the bank as an unwise and inexpedient interference with republican liberty. Jackson's veto of the bank bill anticipated later presidential vetoes and the growth of the system of checks and balances inherent today in the relationship between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

ARCHITECTURE³

The Second Bank of the United States was designed by the noted American architect William Strickland.

The Second Bank of the United States was the first architectural commission Strickland won after returning to the profession following nearly a decade of pursuing other artistic interests. The bank directors had specified that the design be "a chaste

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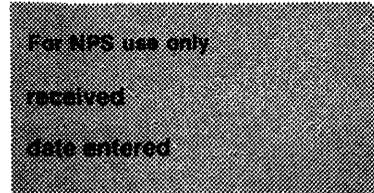
imitation of Grecian architecture, in its simplest and least expensive form," and within these bounds Strickland produced the nation's first public building based on the Parthenon. At its completion in 1824 Strickland's monumental marble Second Bank (John Struthers, marble mason) won instant and widespread acclaim and brought to age the American expression of Greek Revival architecture which had been evolving since 1798, when Strickland's mentor, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, had set the trend with his design for the Bank of Pennsylvania.

Strickland's graceful treatment of the Second Bank, with its two-story Doric octastyle porticoes at each end, inspired numerous imitations among its branch bank buildings, so contributing to the spread of Greek Revival architecture throughout the country. The interior of the bank complemented the exterior and reflected Strickland's originality. As Talbot Hamlin expresses it in Greek Revival Architecture in America, the bank's "plan was magnificently conceived and its interiors were as efficient as they were beautiful and well proportioned." Richard Webster in Philadelphia Preserved makes the statement that "the original interior was an outstanding example of classical progression of space." Historian Bray Hammond recently concluded that the Second Bank was "not merely one of the finest and most influential examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States but one of the noblest buildings in the country of any style."

The Second Bank of the United States operated from 1816 to 1836, when its charter was allowed to expire. After a rehabilitation in 1844, the building served nearly a century--1845-1934--as Philadelphia's United States Custom House. In 1939 Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes designated the building a National Historic Site. In 1948 Congress included it in Independence National Historical Park.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Material for the description was taken from the following source.

Anna Coxe Toogood, "Draft National Register Nomination Independence National Historical Park" (Unpublished Report, Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service, November 5, 1984), no page number.

² Material for the constitutional statement of significance was taken from the following sources.

Alfred H. Kelley, Winfred A. Harbison and Herman Belz, The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1983), pp. 207-28.

John M. Blum, et al., The National Experience (6th ed.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), pp. 237-40.

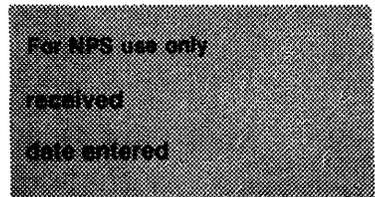
³ Material for the architectural statement of significance was taken from the following source.

Toogood, op. cit., no page number.

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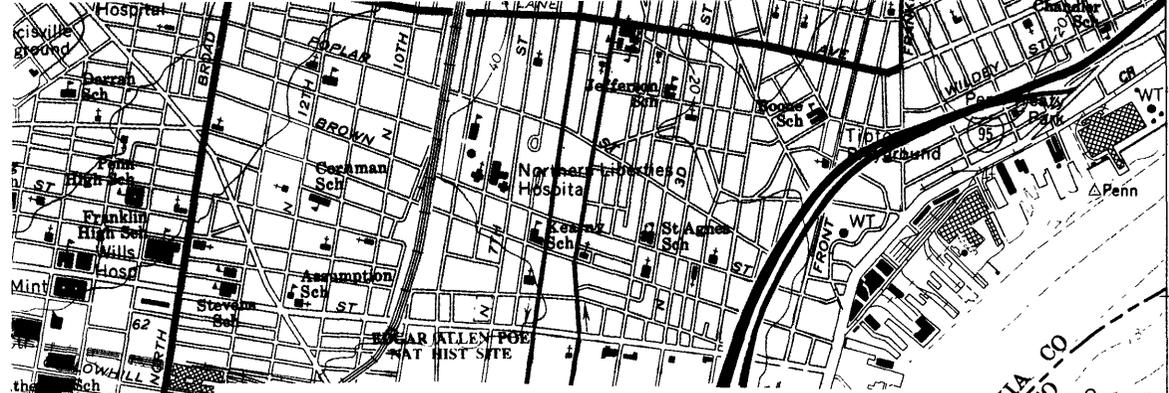
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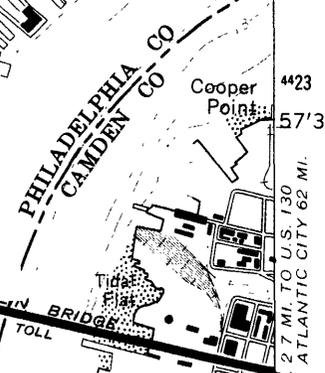
Kelley, Alfred H.; Harbison, Winfred A.; Belz, Herman. The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development. New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1983.

Toogood, Anna Coxe. Draft National Register Nomination Independence National Historical Park. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Independence National Historical Park, Unpublished, November 5, 1984.



SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES
Philadelphia Quadrangle
UTM References:

18/487300/4421850



4424
4423
4422
4421
4420
4419
4418
57°30"
2.7 MI. TO U.S. 130
ATLANTIC CITY 62 MI.

PENNSYLVANIA
NEW JERSEY

DELAWARE RIVER

PHILADELPHIA CO
CAMDEN CO

CAMDEN

CONRAIL

Kaighn Point

Cork

New York

Park

FEDERAL ST

SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES
Front View from Chestnut Street, 1986

(Independence National Historical
Park Collection)

