

Wanamaker Building Architecture
Annotated Bibliography
Heather Stewart

Appel, Joseph Herbert, and Leigh Mitchell Hodges. *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores – Jubilee Year, 1861-1911*. Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1911.

The Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores is a celebratory publication for the Jubilee year of John Wanamaker's immensely successful retail business. Along with biographical information and an analysis of Mr. Wanamaker's business and business practices, this book studies the jewels of Wanamaker's empire: his buildings in Philadelphia and New York. The section covering the Philadelphia store goes into great detail about the measurements and massiveness of the structure as well as the materials used to forge the huge edifice. It does a comprehensive analysis of all the interior architectural details, covering the columns and the detailed plasterwork on the walls. Appel and Hodges describe the structural layout of the interior including the galleries that ran around the sides of the first, second and third floors. They explain the extremely safe elevator system that originally had sixty-eight elevators and ten electric dumb waiters that assisted in moving merchandise. The book details the many fire safety components of the building including fire escapes and fire stairs that were completely smoke-free and fire-safe. It documents the basement, the ventilation system, and the Wanamaker Power Plant that made possible the enormous heating and cooling system as well as the rare fur vault and the refrigeration system. It goes into great detail over the Grand Court and its architectural elements in addition to highlighting the Egyptian Hall and Greek Hall along with their architectural details and materials. Finally it outlines the construction process and stresses the highly complicated progression from one stage of building to the next.

Brown, Denise Scott. "In Praise of Wanamaker's." *I.D.: Magazine of International Design* 35.6 (1988): 41-44.

This article describes the store through the eyes of the author Denise Scott Brown, an immigrant, former student at the University of Pennsylvania, and an enormously successful architect. Brown talks about the cultural importance of Wanamaker's and how its revolutionary department style store had attracted all of the different socio-economic groups. The customers could buy everything from inexpensive merchandise in the basement, known as "The Budget Store", to fashions from Europe. She states that the façade is Italian Renaissance and the Grand Court's colors are bright and rich with light that streamed into the store so one could see the true color of the merchandise. She explains that at some point the Wanamaker's court was closed off from the upper balconies but fortunately in 1980 the interior was restored to its former grandeur. Brown complains that the modern malls in suburban areas are very small and cramped reminding her of rat mazes. She argues that Wanamaker's is the opposite and that its lofty and open environment makes it a joy to linger and explore with the best visual merchandizing in the country. She outlines the changes to the building such as the upper floors being converted to offices, The

Budget Room being closed and an overall skimming in the breadth of product offerings. She laments these changes and expresses her fears of the store's final demise.

Dalsemer, Maxine C. Wanamaker Building Tour. Macy's Visitor Center. Philadelphia, PA. 7 July 2008.

Maxine Dalsemer works in the Visitor Center of Macy's and gives an informative tour of the Wanamaker Building. During the tour she talks extensively about the history of the Wanamaker building, its architecture, and the business conducted within. She states that the building is made up of cement and steel with a façade of granite from Maine and an interior of the finest marble. "Wanamaker," she says, "didn't think of the space in terms of dollars per square foot as most retailers do but was more concerned with the grandeur and beauty of the space." She points out that the columns on the second floor lining the Grand Court are Corinthian, the ones on the third floor are Ionic, and the columns on all the floors supporting the ceilings are Doric. She brings the tour to a vestibule to show the very intricate mosaics made of Terrazzo Marble tiles that are placed painstakingly to create the Wanamaker's logo. She claims that at one point there was a tennis court and a track on the roof but that they regrettably have been replaced with air conditioning units. As she walks through the store she reveals that most of the walls that the shoppers see are false walls used to camouflage stock rooms. She leads the tour past what used to be the Egyptian room on the 3rd floor but remorsefully declares that it has been converted to the executive offices. She explains that it once was a sales floor/auditorium that sold and auctioned off pianos. For special occasions the pianos were disassembled and stored to make room for the seating of 700 or more people. The tour is then brought to the Greek Hall also on the 3rd floor. This dark wood-paneled room with Tiffany Stained Glass Windows has intricately carved wood ceilings featuring Hellenistic patterns, molding featuring large plaster cameos of Roman generals, and elaborate inlaid wood designs on the walls.

Ershkowitz, Herbert. *John Wanamaker: Philadelphia Merchant*. Conshohocken, PA: Combined Publishing, 1999. 129-141.

This biography of John Wanamaker gives in-depth analyses of various stages in the life of this retail mogul including the rebuilding of his Philadelphia store. The book insists that Wanamaker's Philadelphia store was the social center of the city for a long time and that going to Philadelphia meant going to Wanamaker's. It explains the competition from other retailers who were building larger stores as well as a catastrophic fire on Market Street in 1896 that made Wanamaker fear for the safety of his future customers and prompted him to pursue a new building for his department store. It recalls that Wanamaker was highly criticized for choosing a Chicago architect to design his building rather than an architect from Philadelphia. It describes the three building phases that were employed in order to keep at least one part of the store open during construction. It also recalls the many set-backs endured during the eleven years of construction due to labor disputes, mechanical failures, and bureaucratic entanglements. Overall, it emphasizes Wanamaker's dedication to his store and his passionate involvement in every aspect of the building process in order to get it right.

Gallery, John Andrew, ed. *Philadelphia Architecture: A Guide to the City*. Philadelphia: The Foundation for Architecture, 1994.

This book is a review of the many exceptional architectural landmarks around the city of Philadelphia. It briefly touches on Wanamaker's Philadelphia store prior to its rebuilding and explains that the three phases of the re-building process presented the challenge of creating a seamless integration of all three parts. It compares the beautiful granite and limestone façade to an Italian Renaissance palace. The book describes the store's selling floors that are organized around its central court which rises five stories above the ground floor and remains one of the most dazzling interior spaces of any commercial building in the city of Philadelphia. The store contains two million square feet of usable space and when the department store found itself unable to employ the whole building, it leased the upper floors as offices.

Hine, Thomas. "A Center of Commerce, a Place for People." *Philadelphia Inquirer* 28 Aug. 1995: D3. *NewsBank America's Newspapers*. Drexel University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA. 21 July 2008. <<http://infoweb.newsbank.com>>

This article romantically extols the Wanamaker Building claiming that its design has "...a sense of scale that is grand but not intimidating" and "...ranks with Rittenhouse Square as one of Philadelphia's most important public spaces." Hine explains that Wanamaker's ambitious vision was somewhat of a challenge for Burnham whose repertoire included the Marshall Field's building in Chicago. The article also illuminates an aspect of their relationship of which it explains that Wanamaker paid Burnham's firm so slowly that it was forced to hire an attorney to collect its revenue.

Hine touches upon some of the unique qualities of the building such as the fact that each floor, being at least 20 ft. tall, was designed to be divisible into 2 sub-floors if needed. He also explains briefly that the Crystal Tea Room, which was restored in 1992, but remained unopened as of the time of this article, was Philadelphia's largest restaurant for eighty years, filling the entire 8th floor. It claims the design of the Crystal Tea Room was loosely based upon the house of Robert Morris, who was known as the financier of the American Revolution. The article concisely outlines the renovation of the building completed in 1992 and states that it then became Philadelphia's most substantial office building with 800,000 square feet, the size of a modern-day 32-story office building.

Hine, Thomas. "New Wanamaker's: A City Within the City...." *Philadelphia Inquirer* 11 Oct. 1992: H1. *NewsBank America's Newspapers*. Drexel University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA. 21 July 2008. <<http://infoweb.newsbank.com>>.

This is an article written directly after the renovation of the Wanamaker Building that turned the top nine floors into offices and made many other alterations throughout the building. It explains in detail how the transformation of the upper floors provides more office space than many of the new glass-façade skyscrapers in Philadelphia. It claims that the downsizing of the store, which at that point was still Wanamaker's, was inevitable because it had lost its top position in the retail

industry that it once had. It states that the many sections of the store were not profitable enough to justify their existence such as the "budget store" which was turned into underground parking and the furniture department. It uses the word "rehabilitation" to refer to the renovations and says that it has given the building a much longer future making it relevant in the changing business environment of Philadelphia. It reports that Brickstone Reality was responsible for the transformation and goes on to briefly describe the changes to the building. Among these alterations includes the restoration of the Crystal Tea Room and its atrium entrance, the addition of civil courtrooms on the top floor, and special entrances that allow for the employees of the offices above to bypass the store altogether and go directly to their elevators. The use of interior Renaissance architectural elements that were original to the building such as columns and friezes were maintained throughout the renovation process in the public spaces. At the time of the article it measured the office workforce in the building to about 1,800 people.

"The New Wanamaker building, Philadelphia, PA." *Architectural Record* 19 (Mar. 1906): 226-229.

This is an article written directly after the completion of the first phase of the three-phase construction process of the Wanamaker Building. It describes the building as covering only a portion of the block of which it now fills and refers to it as a skyscraper. It argues that its design emphasizes its verticality and its use of terra cotta is groundbreaking. It compares the building to Burnham's two other most notable buildings, the Wanamaker Building in New York and the First National in Chicago.

Schaffer, Kristin. *Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner*. New York: Rizzoli, 2003. 168-173.

This book is a biography of Daniel H. Burnham, the architect of the Wanamaker Building in Philadelphia. It describes the goals of Wanamaker in regards to the building and how Burnham translates them into the actual design and execution. It mentions the materials and some specific architectural features. It details the safety precautions integrated into the building's design at Wanamaker's request specifically in regards to fire safety. It declares that when completed the Wanamaker Building was the largest retail edifice in the world.

Tatum, George B. *Penn's Great Town: 250 Years of Philadelphia Architecture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961. 106-107, 123.

This book is a review of the most noteworthy structures erected in Philadelphia during the 250 years prior to 1961. It details the early days of Wanamaker's retail business when it was called "Oak Hill" and located at the corner of 6th & Market St. He moved it to the "Grand Depot" at 13th & Market St. which was an abandoned freight station formerly used by the Pennsylvania Railroad. It justifies Wanamaker's choice in using an architect from Chicago by arguing that Philadelphia's architects were adept at creating highly stylized universities, clubs and museums, but that Burnham and his Chicago school of architecture were proficient at resolving the

structural and aesthetic challenges of the tall building. It maintains that unlike many of his contemporaries who preferred the Classical Romanesque style, Burnham followed the Renaissance style which is illustrated in his use of pilasters on the ground floor and a cornice that surrounds the flat roof. The book makes the case that the building is the perfect compromise between the principles of Renaissance design and the requirements of modern steel construction.

Teitelman, Edward, and Richard W. Longstreth. *Architecture in Philadelphia: a Guide*.
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974. 83-84.

This gives a very brief, favorable description of Burnham's design which was turned into "one of the most enjoyable department stores in the country". It states that the style of the time was "Turn of the Century Eclecticism" which can be seen in the Wanamaker building as well as Burnham's other building in Philadelphia, the Land Title Building located at Broad and Chestnut Streets.