

ORIGINAL  
15 OCT 1990

D.C HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
APPLICATION FOR  
HISTORIC LANDMARK

APPLICATION TO:

- Designate
- Rescind
- Amend

Summary of Amendments \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL INFORMATION

Property Name Mercantile Savings Bank Building

Address 719-21 10th Street, N.W.

Square and Lot Number(s) Square 0375, Lots 0088

Present Owner Leonard J. & G. Doggett

Owner Address 722 10th Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001

Original Use Commercial

Present Use Commercial

Date of Construction 1912, D.C. Permit to Build #779, 08/15/1912

Date of Major Alteration (s) 1938, D.C. Permit to Repair #213178, 05/23/1938

Architect (s) Julius Wenig

Architectural Style/Period Classical Revival

Name of applicant D.C. Preservation League


(If applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.)

Address and Telephone of Applicant 918 F Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001

(202) 737-1519

Name and Title of Authorized Representative Patricia Wilson, Executive Director

10/15/90  
Date

  
Signature Assistant Director for P.W.

310.21 A statement of the prehistoric, historic, architectural and/or cultural significance of the property proposed for designation.

The Mercantile Savings Bank at 719-21 10th Street, N.W., is an important example of the neighborhood savings banks which appeared in Washington, D.C. after the turn of the century. Savings banks in Washington, unlike nationally chartered banks, catered to small depositors, often in, or bordering neighborhood locations. The Mercantile Savings Bank was located on the edge of the predominantly German residential area to the east. Sited at the corner of 10th and G Place (formerly known as both Grant Alley and Grant Place), N.W., the Mercantile Savings Bank was designed in 1912, by the Washington architect Julius Wenig and constructed by the Washington building firm of Charles Cassidy Company (D.C. Permit to Build #779, 08/15/1912.) This 2-story Classical Revival-style building illustrates a skilled handling of motifs and use of materials that is particularly associated with the 1910s and shows influences of the Craftsman Movement. Designed to accommodate a banking facility as well as retail space on the ground floor, the rough-textured buff brick building is elaborately conceived with classical motifs executed in light-colored stone, copper and wrought and galvanized iron. Upon announcement by the Mercantile Savings Fund Society to construct a bank building at the corner of 10th and Grant Place, the local press heralded the new building as an "Attractive improvement in the business section of the city."<sup>1</sup> Today, the building is occupied by offices of Doggett Enterprises, Inc. a business associated with the management of parking lots.

The Mercantile Savings Bank qualifies for landmark status in the District of Columbia because the building meets the following criteria as established by the final rules of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board appearing in the D.C. Register, April 12, 1985;

Criterion a (1): It is the site of significant events or is associated with persons, groups, institutions or movements that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture or development of the National Capital or the Nation;

The Mercantile Savings Bank meets this criteria as an distinguished example of the neighborhood savings bank which emerged in Washington at the beginning of the 20th century, and provided banking services for the residential communities of the city. These banks were organized and headed by prominent Washingtonians determined to provide convenient banking services at a local level.

Criterion a (3): It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles, building types, types or methods of construction, landscape architecture, urban design or other architectural, aesthetic or

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<sup>1</sup> "New bank Building -- Attractive New Building -- Mercantile Savings Fund Structure to Have Concrete Vaults." The Evening Star. October 26, 1912. Part 2. p. 3.

engineering expressions significant to the appearance and development of the National Capital or the Nation;

The Mercantile Savings Bank Building meets this criteria as a facile expression of the Classical Revival style, as expressed in Washington in the 1910s, and as a significant example of the neighborhood savings banks which were carefully designed and presented to be distinguished from the larger national and commercial banks in the financial district.

Criterion a (4): It has been identified as a notable work of craftsmen artists, sculptors, architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, builders or developers whose work have influenced the evolution of their fields of endeavor or the development of the National Capital or the Nation.

This criteria can be applied to the Mercantile Savings Bank Building as a significant example of design skills of Washington architect Julius Wenig. Although Wenig's career has not been the focus of formal study, an examination of his work in downtown Washington clearly indicates he had a major impact on the city's building stock and was an architect of choice in the early 20th century for many developers and owners. Wenig is credited with the design of 16 buildings in the downtown area.

The Mercantile Savings Bank Building should also be listed on the National Register of Historic Places with architecture as the area of significance because it meets the following National Register Criteria:

(Criteria C) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

310.22

If property is proposed for designation principally for its architectural significance, a detailed architectural description of the property, including where possible its original and present appearance.

The Mercantile Savings Bank is sited within Square 375, on lot 88, in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia. The square, bounded by 9th, 10th, G and H Streets, is bisected from east to west by G Place. The square is surrounded on three sides by contemporary, large-scale commercial and religious structures. Directly facing Square 375 from the south is the Martin Luther King, Jr. Public Library designed by the office of the noted 20th century architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in 1968-72. The First Congregational Church of Christ, at the corner of 10th and G Street, also faces Square 375 from the south. Designed by Virginia architect Milton L. Grigg in 1959, this cut stone and brick church with large tower has a strong presence at this corner. Facing the square from the north is the Washington, D.C. Convention Center built in 1976. This concrete and glass structure occupies the entire block bounded by 9th and 10th Streets and H Street and New York Avenue. To the west directly facing 10th Street, is the Grand Hyatt Hotel, completed in 1988. A parking lot faces the square from the east. The historic Calvary Baptist Church on 8th Street is the closest structure to the east. Presently, there are five extant buildings on Square 375: 746 9th Street, N.W. a modest 2-story brick structure constructed in the early 1870s; the 3-story brick Webster School built in 1881 to the design of Edward Clark; the 8-story Victor Building built in 1909, 1911 and 1925 by Victor J. Evans and designed by Appleton P. Clark, Jr. and Waddy B. Wood; the Mercantile Savings Bank Building; and the 9-story C and P Telephone Company Building dating from 1927, and designed by Joseph Baumer.

Located at 719-21 10th Street, N.W., the building was designed by architect Julius Wenig and constructed by The Charles J. Cassidy Company, Inc. in 1912, according to D.C. Permit to Build #779, August 7, 1912. The building was to be constructed of brick and stone, and the footprint was to measure 85' 4" by 30' 4".

## **ARCHITECTURAL STYLE**

Designed in the Classical Revival style with details associated with the Craftsman Movement, the structure was built by the Mercantile Saving Fund Society to accommodate the banking house as well as retail space. Bank buildings throughout Washington were constructed in variations of the Classical Revival style, a style architects and owners found appropriate to convey the stability and conservative image of a strong banking institution. Examples of the country's earliest banking institutions reflect the suitability of classically inspired designs for bank architecture. Built between 1818-24, the Second Bank of the United States designed by William Strickland is considered one of the first Greek Revival public buildings in the country, and was directly modeled on the Parthenon. The necessity for banks to portray an image of stability and financial security translated well to elements of classical architecture. This is particularly apparent in the symmetry, the use of rich and noble materials like marble and limestone, and the reliance on the classical orders of architecture.

The Mercantile Savings Bank Building required a dual role in its architectural program. Not only was the architect Wenig required to design a building reflecting the aesthetic ideals of bank architecture but the building needed to convince small investors and neighborhood residents to entrust their wages and savings with the Mercantile Savings Fund Society. Consequently, Wenig chose a rough-textured buff colored brick, a material associated with the rowhouses and dwellings in the surrounding neighborhood. Wenig also employed elements associated with the Craftsman movement which attempted to scale-down the perception of the building by substituting the Craftsmen concept of honest labor for the elitism of the strictly Classical Revival styled bank structure.

## **ORIGINAL BUILDING**

The primary elevations of the building are faced in rough-textured, buff brick laid in common bond. The base of the west elevation is faced with a thin layer of granite. The main entrance is marked by a triangular pediment with carvings of foliage supported by consoles. The door is flanked by niches, and brick pilasters with stone bases and capitals. According to the original drawings, the niches were covered with wrought iron grilles. The area above the pediment is glazed with four stationary panes. This area originally was glazed and covered by metal grilles in a fish scale pattern.

A pair of decorative, bronze, paneled pocket doors are set within the projecting main entryway. These doors are closed at night, and present a formidable and impenetrable image of the bank's security. A single, modern door of glass and steel, is set behind the bronze doors. According to the drawings filed with the Permit to Build, a pair of single-pane glass doors with wrought iron grilles were intended for the main entrance of the bank. It appears from a 1938 Permit to Repair (D.C. Permit #213178, May 23, 1938) that the original glass doors were replaced with the bronze doors, and a revolving door was installed behind the bronze doors. This arrangement of a revolving door proceeded by heavy metal doors was a typical design feature in commercial architecture in the 1930s.

A paneled spandrel of copper occupies the space above the four windows. The panel extends to the base of the spandrel at each end and is marked by guttae that seem to hang from the molding. In the space above the spandrel is a tripartite, pivotal sash window, encased by a segmental arch rising from the dripstone. The segmental arch is marked by a stone keystone carved with bell flowers and scales. A stone swag of foliage is draped above the segmental arch.

A corbelled stone beltcourse runs above the second level windows. Above the beltcourse are five courses of brick, a projecting stone architrave adorned with dentils, a frieze, a ten-course parapet wall, and a simple stone cornice. These elements appear to be part of the original 1912 design.

The two bays directly flanking the projecting entrance section, which are almost identical in elevation, were not substantially affected by the 1938 alterations to the building. The bays are framed by projecting brick quoins at each end. The first floor of each bay includes a single-

pane window with a transom space above. It appears from the original drawings that the window was a double-hung wooden sash with wrought iron grilles attached on the exterior. A stone keystone carved with bell flowers and scales marks the top of each window. The details of the rectangular spandrel, illustrating the influence of the Craftsman Movement, include a square stone at each corner, a diamond-shaped stone in the center and brick diaper work. The second floor windows, which are consistent with the original drawings, include pairs of one-over-one, double hung, wooden sash windows. Each window has a stone sill and keystone.

According to the 1912 drawings, the first floor of the north portion of the building originally included two show windows and three entrances. The base of the show windows is indicated on the drawings as marble with a wrought iron lattice motif. A copper roof covers the projecting show windows and copper set glass alternating with projecting triglyph motifs with guttae fill the transom space. One-over-one, double-hung, wooden sash windows are grouped in pairs on the second floor with a single window on the southernmost bay. The windows were embellished with stone sills and keystones.

The elevation on G Place is faced in buff brick laid in common bond. The base of the building is faced with a thin course of granite topped by stone with a smooth finish. The elevation is composed of three bays. The center bay, similar to the projecting entrance bay, is framed by raised brick quoins. The first floor of this bay includes three single-pane windows with transoms above.

A paneled spandrel of copper, identical to the spandrel on the west elevation, occupies the space above the three windows. The panel extends to the base of the spandrel at each end and is marked by guttae that seem to hang from the molding. In the space above the spandrel is a tripartite window, encased by a segmental arch rising from the dripstone. The center pivotal sash window is flanked by one-over-one, double-hung windows. The segmental arch is marked by a stone keystone carved with bell flowers and scales.

The fenestration of the flanking bays on the south elevation includes single-pane windows with transoms on the ground floor and one-over-one, double-hung wooden sash windows on the second floor. This elevation contains the same details as the 10th street facade: stone sills, keystones carved with bell flowers and scales, spandrels with diapering work, projecting brick quoins, corbelled stone beltcourse, a projecting stone architrave adorned with dentils, a frieze, a ten-course parapet wall, and a simple stone cornice. The building is intact to its 1912 appearance with the exception of the removal of the wrought iron grilles on the ground floor windows, and doors.

The east and north elevations of the building are faced with buff-colored brick laid in common bond. The east wall, which originally served as a party wall, is blank. According to the 1909 and 1913 Baist maps, the lot to the east of the bank, Lot 89, contained a structure at the time of the construction of the bank. Two one-over-one, double-hung, wooden sash windows and one square window with louvers are placed irregularly on the north elevation, which faces a narrow alley.

## 1938 ALTERATION

The west elevation of the building was altered in 1938. According to the Permit to Repair (D.C. Permit #213178, May 23, 1938), the front wall was "removed and changed." Based on analysis of historic photographs and extensive on-site study, it appears that the alterations did occur as planned. The architect for the 1938 alteration was Julius Wenig and the contractor was Walter B. Avery. Since Wenig was responsible for the designs of both the original building and the subsequent alteration, the existing composition is quite unified with only subtle clues differentiating the two building campaigns. The building as it exists today illustrates Wenig's proficiency in applying classically derived elements and in designing an integrated addition compatible with the character of the original building.

The north portion of the building, composed of four bays, was the section most altered during the 1938 repairs to the building. As presented in the original drawings, the space to be occupied by the bank was distinct from the retail spaces. The function of each space was clearly portrayed on the elevation through the use of show windows on the ground floor of the retail spaces, and columns and wrought iron grilles indicating the space occupied by the bank. The new design created a more unified facade with windows of similar size and type used across the elevation of the first and second floors. As it exists today, the north portion of the building is distinct only in that it is set back from the plane of the space originally occupied by the bank.

Today, the northern portion of the building is composed of four bays. The ground floor of the northernmost bay includes a secondary entrance inspired by the configuration of the battered walls of Egyptian pylons. The bronze entrance door has a glazed area above. The three bays to the south of the entrance bay on the first floor include single-pane windows embellished with transoms and stone keystones. The fenestration on the second floor includes a pair of one-over-one, double-hung, wooden sash windows per each bay. The northernmost bay has a single window centered over the secondary entrance. The paired windows have stone sills and keystones.

310.23 If property is proposed for designation principally for its prehistoric, historic and/or cultural significance, a description of the existing physical condition of the property and its relation to the prehistoric, historic and/or cultural significance of the property.

The Mercantile Savings Bank Building meets the criteria for landmark status in the District of Columbia as an important extant example of a neighborhood savings and loan institution building; as a skilled expression and illustration of the design abilities of architect Julius Wenig; and as an demonstration of the superior work of the Charles Cassidy Building Company. The Mercantile Savings Fund Society was established by 1904, in this city, and became an important local savings institution serving the Washington community for over 40 years. Although little to date has been uncovered about the architect Julius Wenig, data compiled from the 1981 Don't Tear It Down Downtown Survey reveals that he designed 16 buildings in downtown Washington, the second highest number of buildings designed by any architect in the survey area. His design for the Mercantile Savings Bank building is a fine expression of the Classical Revival style as expressed in the early 1900s, and as it was combined with architectural details closely associated with the Craftsman movement. Wenig's design employs the grand and dignified statement necessitated by bank architecture while creating a design more human in scale and character which would appeal and not overwhelm the small, neighborhood investor. The Charles J. Cassidy Company was one of Washington's premier building firms of the early 20th-century, establishing an acclaimed reputation for fine craftsmanship, constructing buildings on time and within budget.

#### BANKING: Early Twentieth Century in Washington, D.C.

The end of the 19th century was a period of great expansion and rapid development in the financial and economic community in Washington. This growth was reflected in the banking activity of the city, as the number of banks and banking assets increased dramatically.

National banks in the District were chartered by Congress under the National Banking Act of 1863, and were under the regulations of the Comptroller of the Treasury. These institutions were the dominant banking organizations in the city, and were devoted solely to commercial banking, accepting deposits from individuals and businesses and providing short-term loans to commercial interests. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several different types of banking institutions emerged, including trust companies and savings banks. Trust companies were established and began operations in Washington after 1890, when Congress gave the District the power to charter them. Trust companies differed from banks in that they served primarily as a depository for investment capital held by corporations, wealthy individuals, trustees or trustees of an estate. These companies made long-term loans to finance real estate development. Trust companies were required to comply with the same regulations governing national banks but were required to maintain higher levels of capital stock: one million dollars in the District of Columbia. Trust companies became a group of select institutions, catering to a wealthy and established clientele.



Savings banks appeared in the city predominantly after the turn of the century. Unlike national banks, they catered to small depositors often in neighborhood locations. Restrictions on savings banks were gradually relaxed at the end of the 19th century, and according to William Tindall's Standard History of Washington, the number of savings banks in Washington increased rapidly after 1894. Savings banks provided a place where those with smaller incomes could deposit money and earn interest. In order to protect these depositors, state governments often limited the investment of savings bank assets to secure investments such as bonds, government securities and land mortgages.

#### ORIGINAL OWNER:

#### **MERCANTILE SAVINGS FUND SOCIETY**

Little is known about the establishment or early years of the Mercantile Savings Fund Society, the bank which built and owned the building at 719-21 10th Street, N.W. The Savings Society first appeared in the Washington City Directories in 1904, located at 1006 F Street, N.W. Local Washington lawyer John D. Leonard was listed as its treasurer and his law offices were at the same address. Mr. Leonard was a native of Washington and a graduate of Georgetown University Law School. A banker, as well as a practicing lawyer, he was active in District of Columbia Bankers Association.<sup>2</sup> In 1910, The Mercantile Saving Fund relocated to 1206 G Street, N.W., where it remained until the completion of the new Mercantile Savings Bank Building on 10th Street. In 1913, the bank was listed in the City Directory as the Mercantile Co-Operative Bank, with Charles K. Koones, a prominent local physician as president, and John D. Leonard as secretary-treasurer.

In addition to practicing law and acting as treasurer of the Mercantile Co-Operative Bank, John D. Leonard worked at the War Department. He resigned from this government position in 1917, to organize the Washington Savings Bank. It is not known if at this time the Mercantile Co-Operative Bank was closed, but the last listing for the Mercantile Co-Operative Bank appeared in 1917. Perhaps, given the involvement of John D. Leonard in both banks, the Mercantile Co-Operative Bank was merged or incorporated into the new Washington Savings Bank which was established in January 1917. The founders of the Washington Savings Bank were John D. Leonard, E.H. Dyer, and Julius Wenig, the architect of 719-21 10th Street, N.W. Leonard was its first president, and Wenig its first Vice-President. Wenig's offices had been located in the building since 1914 and would remain there until 1929. The Washington Savings Bank was organized with \$50,000, although it was later capitalized to \$100,000, and it opened on March 16, 1917 in the location of the Mercantile Co-Operative Bank.

Despite the change in its primary occupant, the building remained the "The Mercantile Building" until 1919, when the name of building changed to the "Washington Savings Bank Building." The first president of Washington Savings Bank, John D. Leonard, remained active in its management until 1931. However, after three years, the presidency of the bank passed to other

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<sup>2</sup> "John D. Leonard, D.C. Banker, Dies." The Evening Star. date unknown.

individuals. Thomas E. Jarrell, a Washington, D.C. businessman involved in investments, real estate and insurance, was president of the Washington Savings Bank from 1923 until 1933. Born in Maryland in 1872, sources report that Jarrell first became involved in the real estate business in Washington and the surrounding area in 1915 and was a key figure in the development of Wynnewood Park, Woodside Park and Kensington, Maryland.<sup>3</sup> He was the president of Thomas E. Jarrell Co., a realty firm which maintained its offices in the Washington Savings Bank Building beginning in 1925.

Financial difficulties caused the failure of the Washington Savings Bank in 1932, when it paid off its depositors and closed its doors. A conservator was appointed in March 1933, and some of its assets were sold to the Hamilton National Bank in September 1933. The bank entered receivership in December 1933 and its affairs were finally concluded in January 1940. The building continued to be known as the "Washington Savings Bank Building" into the late 1930s.

### ARCHITECT:

#### **JULIUS WENIG (1872-1940)**

To date little information has been gathered on the architect Julius Wenig, although information compiled from the 1981 Don't Tear It Down Downtown Survey, reveals that he designed 16 buildings in the Downtown Survey Area. This is the second largest number of buildings attributed to an architect in the survey area.<sup>4</sup> He was born in Frankfort, Germany, and came to this country at the age of 17. Wenig reportedly lived in Chicago, Illinois for a short time prior to moving to Washington.<sup>5</sup> Wenig first appears in Washington City Directories in 1893, with his occupation listed as a draftsman and offices located at 1509 6th Street, N.W. Wenig maintained his architectural office at this location until 1900. From 1898 through 1940, Julius Wenig is listed as an architect with offices in several locations including the Mercantile Bank Building from 1913 until 1929.

The buildings identified and credited to Wenig in Washington were designed between the years 1902-1938. The majority of Wenig's buildings are located in the downtown area, although several apartment buildings and commercial structures have been credited to Wenig in the Georgetown and Foggy Bottom Historic Districts. Wenig's identified and extant buildings illustrate the architect's proficiency with a variety of styles, his adroit handling of materials, and his complete understanding of building type.

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<sup>3</sup> "Thomas E. Jarrell, 75, Prominent Realtor and Insurance Man, Dies." The Evening Star. July 23, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Traceries 1990 Downtown Survey and Historic Context Report of the 1981 Don't Tear it Down Downtown Survey.

<sup>5</sup> "Julius Wenig, Architect Here 40 Years, Dies." The Evening Star. May 10, 1940.

St. Mary's Orphanage, located at 471 G Place, and constructed in 1902, is a 3-story Gothic styled building, which continues to serve as an adjunct building for St. Mary's congregation. The main elevation is highlighted by a rich stone ornament placed above the entrance with a elaborate quatrefoil design and Gothic arch. The apartment building at 115 New York Avenue, N.W. was also designed in 1902. Wenig's understanding of apartment architecture is clearly illustrated in his use of the rowhouse form with squared projecting bays and his reliance on elements typical of Victorian architecture. In this early period, apartments were designed to appear more like rowhouses into the 20th century, to appeal to Washingtonians hesitant to adopt multi-family apartments as an acceptable form of city living. The rowhouse structures at 440-442 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. date to 1910, and are fine examples of early 20th-century residential architecture. Although constructed at a later date than the other buildings in the row Wenig carefully presents a strong design compatible in scale and detail to the other buildings. The Livingston Clothing Store located at 908 7th Street, N.W. was designed by Wenig in 1916. The architect employs the same textured buff brick, and Craftsman style brick work and patterns found on the Mercantile Savings Bank Building. He was also responsible for the design of the fine Italian Renaissance style commercial structures at 2160-62 California Street, N.W. in Sheridan-Kalorama. Built in 1917, these buildings are superb examples of the corner retail structures which are found throughout the city.

Wenig was the treasurer of the American Institute of Architects for many years, and was also active in the Washington Architectural Club, serving on the House Committee in 1902.

## BUILDER

### **THE CHARLES CASSIDY COMPANY**

Charles Cassidy was a well known and highly respected Washington builder. Born in Washington, D.C. in 1870, Charles Cassidy attended local parochial schools, and completed his education by studying drafting at night. He established the Charles J. Cassidy Company by 1907, which he continued to head until his death in 1940.

Under Charles Cassidy's leadership, the building company became an active and prolific Washington building company. The Cassidy Company worked throughout the city but was particularly associated with the Brookland neighborhood and is known for construction at Trinity and Catholic Colleges in that area. Charles J. Cassidy was responsible for the Mullen Memorial Library and the Science Building at Catholic University, and the Chapel and Refectory Building at Trinity College. At the time of his death in 1940, Cassidy was directing construction on the new Science Building for Trinity College. Among other buildings credited to his firm are the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and the First National Bank in Alexandria, Virginia.

Julius Wenig and Charles Cassidy worked together on a number of projects. Both men received numerous commissions from the Catholic Church in Washington and were probably closely associated with German Catholic community in the city. Julius Wenig was the architect for the St. Mary's Orphanage on G Place, and Charles Cassidy served as the builder. The architect builder team also collaborated on the apartment building located at 1118 7th Street, N.W. built in 1902.

## THE BUILDING:

Designed by the skilled Washington architect Julius Wenig the Mercantile Savings Bank Building, is a 2-story, mixed-use, bank and retail building, and is a competent illustration of the Classical Revival style, with details drawn from elements of Craftsman architecture. An announcement in the Evening Star describes the "Attractive New Building":

An attractive improvement in the business section is the building which the Mercantile Savings Fund Society is erecting at the northeast corner of 10th Street and Grant Place. It will be two stories in height, with granite base extending 5' above the sidewalk and faced with tapestry brick trimmed with Bowling Green white stone. The banking room will be 45'x30'. Two stores on 10th Street will have a frontage of 20' each and there will be seven office rooms on the second floor. A hot-water heating plant will be installed and the entire building will be lighted with electricity. Concrete bank vaults will be used and mahogany bank fixtures. The building will be completed about February 1. Julius Wenig is the architect, Charles J. Cassidy Company the builder.<sup>6</sup>

The prominent Washington lawyer John B. Leonard occupied one of the 2nd floor offices from 1915-17. Julius Wenig, the architect of the building, maintained his office in the Mercantile Building from 1913-1930. Other tenants included patent agents and patent attorneys, music teachers, doctors, and real estate professionals. By 1919, the Mercantile Savings Fund had dissolved and the building was occupied by the Washington Savings Bank. The bank changed hands again in 1942, and was occupied by the National Permanent Building Association. Doggett's Parking Company purchased the building in 1967, and established their headquarters there. Doggett's continue to occupy the building today.

Although the Mercantile Savings Bank appears to be Wenig's first bank design, he clearly understood the requirements of a banking institution to provide an architectural statement of security and financial stability. Unlike the national banks located along the 14th and 15th Street corridors, the Mercantile Savings Fund Society was established to provide neighborhood services, and not only required an image suitable to a financial institution but required a building which would seem approachable and comfortable to the local, small-scale investor. By employing the Classical Revival style, Wenig ensured the perception of a dignified, conservative and strong bank institution. By using rough-textured buff brick, ornamental brick details, and retail space on the ground level Wenig produces a building closely associated with the Craftsmen styled commercial structures throughout the city, particularly several of Wenig's own designs located at 908 7th Street and 720 5th Street, N.W.

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<sup>6</sup> "Attractive New Building--Mercantile Savings Fund Structure will have Concrete Vaults." The Evening Star. October 26, 1912.

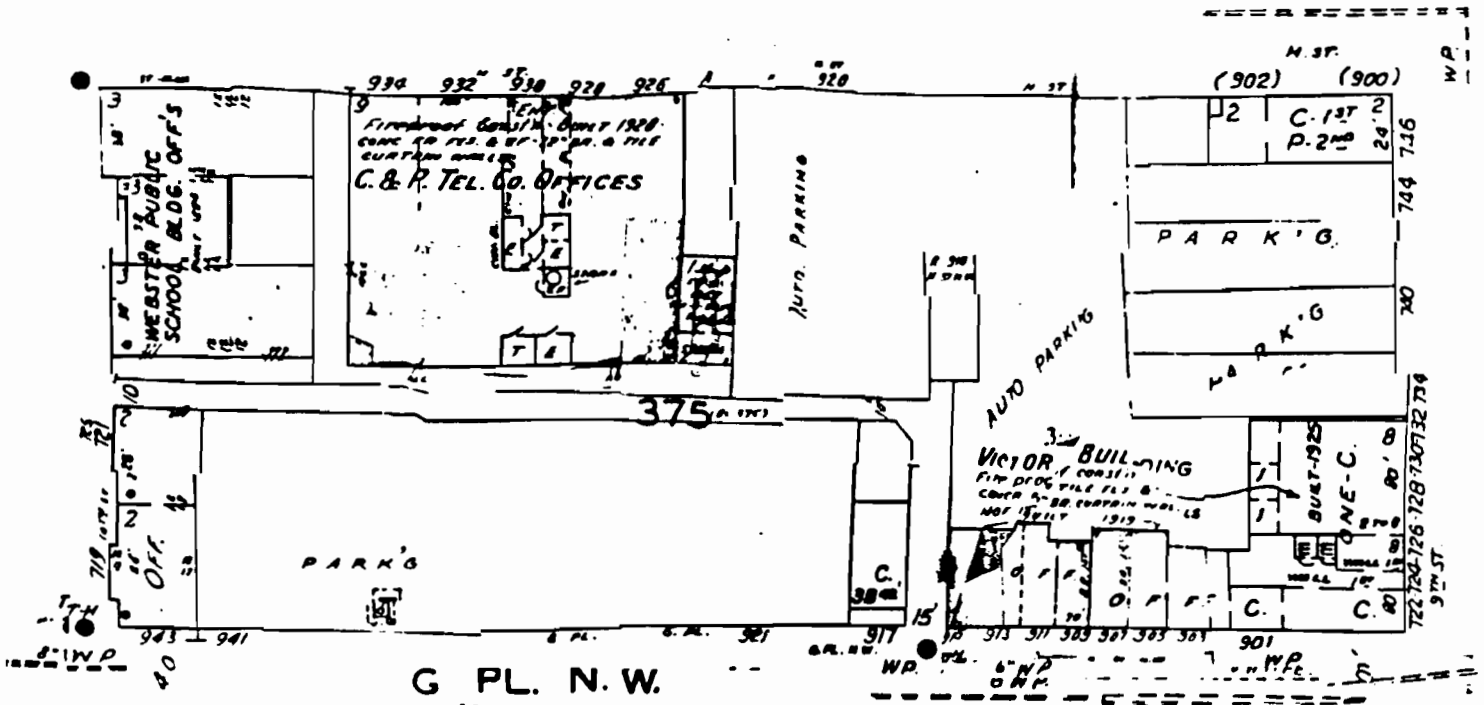
In 1938, the National Permanent Building Association purchased the building and planned extensive alterations (D.C. Repair Permit #213178, 05/23/1938.) At this time, the 10th Street elevation was completely re-designed by the original architect Julius Wenig. According to the permit, which requests permission to "take down and rebuild part of front wall", the show windows were removed and replaced with fixed single light windows, on the ground level, and paired one-over-one, double-hung, wooden sash windows replaced the single windows on the second floor. Wenig carefully orchestrated the alterations, and selected materials and moldings which matched exactly or very closely the original brick and stone. The alterations are not easily identified, and almost appear as if they are part of the original 1910 design.

Today, the building appears to be in excellent condition, continuing to serve as the headquarters for Doggett Enterprises, Inc.

Although altered in 1938, the Mercantile Savings Bank continues to reflect Julius Wenig's original design intentions. With its classical elements and solid base, the bank stands as a symbol of stability and security. The introduction of Craftsman details, including the one-over-one windows and the brick diaper work, establish an intimate scale appropriate for a neighborhood bank catering to small depositors. With the commission of the 1938 alterations, Wenig was provided an opportunity to alter his original design of the facade while maintaining the form and symbolic qualities embodied in his original building. The alterations, which help create a more unified facade, are only distinguishable through close scrutiny of the building, the original drawings and building permits.

310.24

A map showing the exact boundaries of the property proposed for designation; the square and lot number (s) or parcel number; square footage of property proposed for designation; north arrow; and contiguous streets, if any.



SQUARE 0375, LOTS 0088  
BUILDING APPROXIMATELY 1,200 SQUARE FEET

1989 Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Washington, D.C.

310.25 Contemporary good quality photograph(s) of the property proposed for designation which provide a clear and accurate visual representation of the property and its setting; specify view, date of photograph and list credits, if any. 8" x 10" glossy photographs are preferred. In addition, applicant may supply slides (Applicant shall submit two copies of each photograph or slide.

## EXTERIOR

### Photograph #1

Address: 719-21 10th Street, N.W.

City: Washington, D.C.

Name of Photographer: Laura L. Harris

Date of Photograph: September, 1990

Location of Negative: Tracerics, 702 H Street, N.W.

Description of Photograph: Exterior View, looking east

### Photograph #2

Address: 719-21 10th Street, N.W.

City: Washington, D.C.

Name of Photographer: Laura L. Harris

Date of Photograph: September, 1990

Location of Negative: Tracerics, 702 H Street, N.W.

Description of Photograph: Detail of Main Entrance, 10th Street elevation

### Photograph #3

Address: 719-21 10th Street, N.W.

City: Washington, D.C.

Name of Photographer: Laura L. Harris

Date of Photograph: September, 1990

Location of Negative: Tracerics, 702 H Street, N.W.

Description of Photograph: G Place Elevation

310.26      A list of bibliographic and other sources used to prepare the application; indicate where the reference material is archived.

### **Books**

"Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia." Washington, D.C.: R.L. Polk & Company, Publishers, 1921-1973.

Cole, David M. The Development of Banking in the District of Columbia. New York: The William-Frederick Press, 1959.

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