

2-6 East State Street (Commercial Building)
Trenton
Mercer County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-961

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NJ,
11-TRET,
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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Location: 2-6 East State Street and 2-6 North Warren Street,
Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey.

Last Owner: Looman Associates
c/o First Pennsylvania Bank
16th and Market Streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

Last Occupant: Robert Lewis Store (first floor 2 East State
Street & 2-4 North Warren Street), Lookin'Good (first
floor 4 East State Street), Jackovic Appliances
(first floor 6 East State Street), Hoagie Hamlet (first
floor 6 North Warren Street), Walters Jewelry Shop
(second floor 4 East State Street), and various
tenants in residential apartments on the upper floors.

Last Use: Commercial

The building at 2-6 East State Street was demolished in
September 1987 to make way for new commercial construction.

Significance: This building was for two decades the office
of the New Jersey State Gazette, one of Trenton's two most
important nineteenth-century newspapers. It was here, in
1847, that the State Gazette began publishing as Trenton's
first daily paper. Part of the building, now 6 North
Warren, was the first headquarters of the Mechanics
National Bank, Trenton's second oldest banking
establishment. Other small businesses operating in the
building through the 19th and 20th centuries reflected the
changes in technology and retailing from the era of the
harness and saddle shop to the stereo equipment store.

Representative of the commercial vernacular
architecture of the first half of the 19th century,
2-6 East State Street is notable for its large bracketed
cornice. Only the brick walls of the building remain
unchanged since its construction; the cornice, upper floor
windows, and the storefronts have all been altered during a
century and a half of use.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1833
2. Architect: Not Known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Chain of Title references from the Mercer County Hall of Records unless otherwise noted:
 - 1833 March 29 - Transfer from David C. Claypoole and Sarah, his wife, to Armitage Green. Hunterdon County Clerk's Office, Deed Book 54, page 278.
 - 1833 April 1 - Transfer from Armitage Green to Joseph McPherson. Hunterdon County Clerk's Office, Deed Book 54, page 346.
 - 1833 April 1 - Transfer from Armitage Green to Catharine and Ann B. Schenck. Hunterdon County Clerk's Office Deed Book 55, page 118.
 - 1833 April 1 - Transfer from Armitage Green to George Dill. Hunterdon County Clerks' Office, Deed Book 55, Page 119.
 - 1854 October 31 - Transfer from Nathaniel W. Green (son of Armitage who inherited the property by will) and Charlotte, his wife, to Samuel R. Smith. Deed Book 27, page 535.
 - 1871 October 19 - Transfer from Catharine Morse (nee Schenck) to Frederick R. and Sarah S. Wilkinson. Deed Book 144, page 36.
 - 1880 October 1 - Transfer from the executors of the estate of Samuel R. Smith to Albert D. Smith. Deed Book 129, page 63.
 - 1885 March 23 - Transfer from Sarah S. Wilkinson to Ogden D. Wilkinson. Deed Book 144, page 36.
 - 1886 January 16 - Transfer from Sarah S. Wilkinson (daughter of George Dill, inheritor of his portion of the property) to Ogden D. Wilkinson. Deed Book 147, page 362.
 - 1886 March 31 - Transfer from Joseph McPherson and Elizabeth, his wife, to Ogden D. Wilkinson. Deed Book 149, page 28.
 - 1886 September 9 - Transfer from Albert D. Smith and Mary S., his wife. to Ogden D. Wilkinson. Deed Book 150, page 398.
 - 1890 January 21 - Transfer from Louis Devoy to Ogden Wilkinson. Deed book 171, page 379.

- 1970 June 19 - Transfer from the estate of Ogden Wilkinson to Looman Associates. Deed book 1859, page 200.
- 1974 February 14 - Transfer from Cilia Graff to Louis Graff, releasing a dower interest in favor of LG, a partner in Looman Associates. Deed Book 1960, page 879.
- 1987 September 1 - Transfer from Looman Associates to DKM Properties Corp.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not Known.

5. Original plans and construction: Original plans or drawings not known to exist. Earliest view known of building dates to 1850's; shows a flat-roofed, four story commercial building with six-over-six sash windows and a first floor entry flanked by two windows (Podmore, Harry J. Trenton Old and New. Trenton, NJ: Kenneth W. Moore Co., 1927).

Physical evidence suggests that 2-6 East State Street and a contiguous building now known as 8-10 East State were built at the same time, in the same style, for the same owner, as part of a commercial "development" of the 1830's.

6. Alterations and additions: The first floor incorporating storefronts and entries to upper floors has been heavily altered, most recently in the mid-20th century.

After scattering to several different owners after construction, the ownership of 2-6 East State was consolidated in the late 1880's by Ogden Wilkinson. Physical evidence within the building suggests that Wilkinson made extensive repairs and alterations to the structure in the early 1890's, including replacement of the original window sash at the upper floors with single-pane one-over-one sash, and adding the pressed metal cornice. Perhaps these alterations were made after a more elaborate building proved infeasible - there exists a drawing by Trenton architect William Poland for a turreted Victorian Gothic office building proposed for this site. The drawing was published, along with other examples of Poland's work in 1896 and the client is listed as "O. D. Wilkinson, Esq."

A photograph of the intersection of North Warren Street and State Street taken about 1893 shows the building before the present cornice was in place. By that date the one-over-one sash windows were added, and the store-fronts feature expanses of plate glass, a more modern treatment than the original storefront configuration.

B. Historical Context: This building at the northeast corner of State and Warren Streets was constructed in 1833 on the site of an earlier structure. The building was erected for Armitage Green, who apparently sold units within the building to individual investors. Evidence in the continuous brickwork of their facades suggests that 6 East State Street was built concomitant with 8-10 East State, and the original building may also have included 2-4 East State. The coincidence of identical construction dates as well as uniformity of size, scale, rhythm of window openings, and brick patterning strongly suggests a single building campaign for 2-10 East State Street. After construction, however, the buildings were purchased and used as independent entities.

One of the earliest and most prestigious tenants in the building was the Mechanics and Manufacturers National Bank. The bank, established in 1834, occupied 6 North Warren Street after the installation of a new bank vault in the building; banking offices were on the first floor. Mechanics and Manufacturers was the second bank to open in Trenton. In 1838, they moved from this site into a new building of their own.

The following year, the corner building gained another notable tenant, the New Jersey State Gazette. The newspaper had been founded in Trenton in 1792, but it was only in the 1840's, under the direction of James T. Sherman and Henry Harron, that it began publishing daily. For nearly twenty years, the offices of the New Jersey State Gazette were in the upper floors of 4 East State Street. In 1857, a change of ownership of the paper was followed by a change of address.

This corner building served a variety of tenants over the years, with retail commercial interests generally occupying the first floor and offices occupying the floors above. At the end of the 19th century, the Western Union Telegraph Co. office for Trenton was housed here, as well as one of the city's oldest telephone exchanges, the Delaware & Atlantic Telephone Co. Other 19th century tenants included harness and saddlery shops, jewelers, druggists, insurance agents, photographers, and cigar stores.

The cigar store operated by H. F. Smith at 4 East State Street opened in 1895, and it quickly became known as

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a gathering place for local politicians. "Smithy's" patrons were often found lounging on chairs at curbside at the turn-of-the-century; it was said that "more political deals have been hatched and more fortunes won or lost" at Smithy's than anywhere else in the city (Who's Who of Trenton, 1908). A cigar store remained at this location until 1987, when the building was demolished.

From as far back as 1867, Trenton City Directories offer evidence that at least some portions of the upper floors of this building were used as apartments. One resident (from about 1903 to 1919) was Elmer E. Margerum, a notable local citizen who served as a Mercer County Chosen Freeholder in 1916, and worked as Director of the Mercer County Department of Public Buildings. No other occupants are as well-documented in the public record, but the building contains at least four apartments of generous size which are detailed ca. 1900.

In the 20th century, the building saw a succession of small commercial tenants, including shoe stores, a jeweler, and audio equipment stores. The building was condemned by the City of Trenton in 1986, and targeted for demolition as part of a large-scale commercial redevelopment of the block.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: A four story commercial building on a prominent corner location, notable for its bracketed cornice. A cut-away corner entry on the first floor takes full advantage of the building's location. The unornamented brick walls are all that survive of the 1833 building, which has been altered over time with the addition of the metal cornice and remodelled storefronts. The scale and materials of the building are typical of 19th century commercial vernacular architecture in Trenton, although it is now a rare type downtown.
2. Condition of Fabric: The corner structure is in fair condition, with some damage from roof leaks and water

infiltration at windows. Cosmetic alterations, particularly on the first floor, have obscured the structural members of the building, making an accurate determination of its condition impossible.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The East State Street facade is 66.8' long, and the North Warren Street facade is 41' long. The "L" shaped building occupies Block 4B, Lots 1, 23, 24, & 25 in Trenton. The four story building is divided into six regularly spaced bays on the North Warren Street elevation, and five regularly spaced bays plus two bays on the East State Street elevation.
2. Foundation: The foundation is not visible from the exterior of the building. The perimeter of the building is made of fieldstone, coated with cement. Interior basement partitions are brick. Each storefront has a separate basement accessible from within the shop.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are made of common red brick, laid in a common bond, and painted a creamy white color. The wall over 6 East State Street is executed in Flemish bond brick which is also painted. The two types of brickwork are carefully integrated so there is no evidence of a "seam". The Flemish bond brickwork appears to continue uninterrupted to the walls of the adjacent building at 8 East State Street. Numerous metal fasteners from hanging signs which are no longer extant are found scattered on the wall surface. A metal fire escape extends across four bays on the Warren Street side of the building. The easternmost two bays of the State Street elevation also have a simple metal fire escape attached to the walls.
4. Structural systems: The building was constructed with load-bearing masonry walls. The insertion of large storefronts necessitated addition of steel beams to support the span. The roof and internal floors of the building are framed with wood. The upper floors above the corner entry are supported on a cast iron column.

5. Bulkheads: The corner storefront is reached by a single concrete step up from the sidewalk. The other storefronts are at street level and require no step. The bulkhead beneath the corner storefront is made of a highly polished granite facing. Other storefronts use modern materials such as plastic, tile, or metal panels.
6. Chimneys: One large brick square-section chimney is located in front of the roof ridge between the storefronts at 4 and 6 N. Warren. A smaller brick chimney stands at the rear of this portion of the building, due east from the larger one. A truncated chimney covered with asphalt marks the western wall of the two-bay Flemish bond section joined to the eastern end of the building on the State Street side.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: Access to the upper floors of the building is gained through a door on the East State Street side of the building. That metal and glass door, as well as the doors and windows of the storefronts, are later replacements, and not original to the building.

The most notable door in the building is that located in the corner entry of the building, behind the cast iron support column. Its location, rather than the metal-frame door itself, is of interest.
 - b. Windows: The upper floor windows are stock wooden one over one double hung sash. They have a plain stone sill and a simple projecting pressed metal lintel with molded cornice over small brackets at either side.

Storefront windows have been replaced several times over the life of the building. The present ones are plate glass flanking a recessed center entrance.
8. Roof: A low pitched hipped roof covered with asphalt tops the structure. The roof is not visible from street level because of the high pressed metal cornice. It features a wide entablature with raised-pattern swag motif between closely paired brackets. The molded eaves extend well beyond the building wall above the brackets. Gutters are within the metal cornice, and they lead to metal down spouts fastened to each side of the building.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The building is divided into four separate storefronts, known as 6 North Warren Street, 4 East State Street, 6 East State Street, and the largest space, the corner store occupying 2 East State Street. Round steel supports divide the center of the corner store, replacing a former party wall separating 2 East State/2 North Warren from 4 N. Warren.
- b. Second floor: Divided into apartments and two stores, accessible from a hall which leads off the staircase from street level at 2 East State Street. An open air shaft extends above the second floor in the north-central part of the building. Windows open on to it from all three floors.
- c. Third floor: Divided into two apartments, with interior partitions of wallboard.
- d. Fourth floor: Divided into two apartments.

2. Stairways: Broad enclosed stairway leads from street level to the second floor. It is finished with wide (5 1/2") painted tongue and groove wooden wainscoting. A simple metal hand rail is attached to the wall.

At the head of the stairs there is a metal security grill with a gate in it, presumably installed to protect the retail jewelry store which last occupied the second floor facing East State Street.

Access to the upper floors is gained through a separate stairwell, lighted by a skylight. The stairs are arranged in a "U" shape". The wooden stairs have a square-sectioned balustrade and a simple round-topped newel post. The same wide tongue-and-groove wainscoting found on the main staircase continues here.

3. Flooring: The floors are 2 to 4 inch wide hardwood, generally covered throughout the building by linoleum tile and vinyl sheet flooring. One room on the fourth floor has wider (7") exposed wooden floorboards, which are original to the building.

4. Walls and ceilings: Original walls are finished with painted plaster over lath. Ceilings are also lath and

plaster. In the corner storefront, part of a pressed metal ceiling with a floral motif pattern remains in the separate office or "back room". Wooden tongue and groove wainscot also survives in this room. The rest of the corner storefront is finished with plywood paneling and a dropped ceiling.

The first floor shop at 4 East State Street retains a pressed metal ceiling. New partition walls in the apartments are sheetrock. Contemporary wallpaper in a second floor apartment is the only finish of note.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Typical doors in the upper floors are wooden, with a three-over-three vertical panel configuration. Several doors are modern hollow core units. The door frames in the third floor apartment over 6 East State Street are the only apparently original survivors. They have a series of finely molded parallel lines, characteristic of Federal style design. In the basement of 4 East State Street a four panel wooden door leads to a small closet. Its metal knob has a stylized floral design on it, reminiscent of Eastlake or Aesthetic movement design. It is not certain that this door is original to the building.
- b. Windows: At the rear of the second floor apartment over 6 East State Street there are two windows facing an interior air shaft. These wooden double hung windows are two-over-two sash, the upper sash having a low arch incorporated into it. A late 19th century fixed light wooden window with three vertical panes looks over the rear airshaft from a bathroom on the fourth floor. Typical window frames include a heavily molded surround with corner blocks with incised circles. The moldings on the second floor and fourth floors are narrower (3 1/2") than those on the third floor (5 1/2"). Many interior windows have been replaced with modern metal-frame sash. A skylight is located over the staircase to the upper floors. The glass skylight has a flat upper surface and hipped sides of tongue and groove wood forming a frame.

6. Decorative features and trim: There is a fireplace with extant mantel on the third floor, in the apartment above 6 East State Street. The mantel has a simple beaded

entablature and the sides are composed of a plain corner block and plinth. The mantel shelf is a replacement board. The entire unit is painted.

On the fourth floor, there is a built-in kitchen cabinet made of wide boards. The cabinet has a clear glass door over three shelves on the top; below waist level it contains three drawers. It appears to date from the early 20th century.

The oak wall cabinet along the east wall of the shop at 2 East State Street appears to date from the turn-of the century, but it has been badly altered and damaged. Its many small drawers, shelves, and pigeon holes held a number of different items. It was probably installed to hold different types of tobacco and pipes when the corner store became Smith's cigar store in 1895.

7. Hardware: No original hardware identified.
8. Mechanical equipment: The second floor hallway includes a large number of early electrical wires on both the ceiling and the walls. Most rooms in the building have simple ceiling fixtures, with fluorescent tube lights in the retail spaces and incandescent lighting in the apartments. Bathrooms are in each upper floor apartment; the bathtub in a fourth floor apartment is particularly notable for its highly sculptural clawed feet. Bathrooms containing a standard toilet and a small porcelain sink are found within the basement of each shop.

D. Site

1. General siting and orientation: The building occupies the southwest corner of the block defined by East State Street, North Broad Street, East Hanover Street, and North Warren Street in Trenton, New Jersey. This block was known in the 20th century as the "Dunham Block" for a large downtown department store which occupied much of the block. This area has traditionally been the retail and commercial core of the city. State Street is one of the oldest and most trafficked streets in Trenton, linking City Hall (which stands one block east of 2-6 East State Street) and the Statehouse (which stands two blocks to the west). In the early 1970's, two blocks of East State Street, from Montgomery to Broad and from Broad to North Warren, were transformed into a pedestrian mall called

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"Trenton Commons". Immediately adjacent to this building on the north is 8 North Warren Street, and to the east 8-10 East State Street.

2. Historic landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: Not Known.

B. Early Views:

1. Picture File - Warren Street Photograph.
"Warren Street about 1893", in the Trentoniana Collection of the Trenton Free Public Library.
2. "Warren Street about the 1850's" - Lithograph.
Published in Podmore, Trenton Old and New (p.94)
original drawing unknown.
3. "North Warren Street Today"[1927] - Photograph.
Published in Podmore, Trenton Old and New (p.95)
original photo unknown.
4. "Proposed Office Building for O.D. Wilkinson
N.E. Cor. State and Warren Streets" - Drawing.
Published in Poland, William. Some of Our
Recent Work, 1896.

C. Interviews: None

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:
 - a. Real Estate Transactions, Mercer County Hall of Records, Trenton, New Jersey.
 - b. Real Estate Transactions, Hunterdon County Hall of Records, Flemington, New Jersey.
 - c. Tax assessment records, Tax Office, City of Trenton.
2. Secondary and published sources:

a. Books

Banks, Ivy Jackson. Banks of the Delaware. Trenton, N.J.: Trenton Historical Society, 1967.

Directory of Trenton, New Jersey. Trenton, N.J. [title and publisher varies], 1854-1971.

Godfrey, Carlos E. The Mechanics Bank, 1834-1919. Trenton, N.J.: privately printed, 1919.

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Raum, John A. History of the City of Trenton, New Jersey, Embracing a Period of Nearly Two Hundred Years. Trenton, NJ: W.T. Nicholson & Co., 1871.

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Who's Who in Trenton: Being a Collection of Cartoons Which Tell the Life-Story, in Picture Form, of Many of Trenton's Foremost and Busiest Citizens. Trenton, N. J.: Harry B. Salter, 1908.

b. Maps

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Insurance Maps of Trenton, New Jersey. New York:
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Insurance Maps Trenton, New Jersey. Vol 1. New
York: Sanborn Map Company, 1908.

Sidney, J. C. Comp. Map of the City of Trenton,
New Jersey From Actual Surveys. Phila: M.
Dripps, 1849.

Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

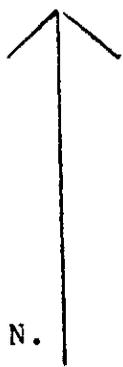
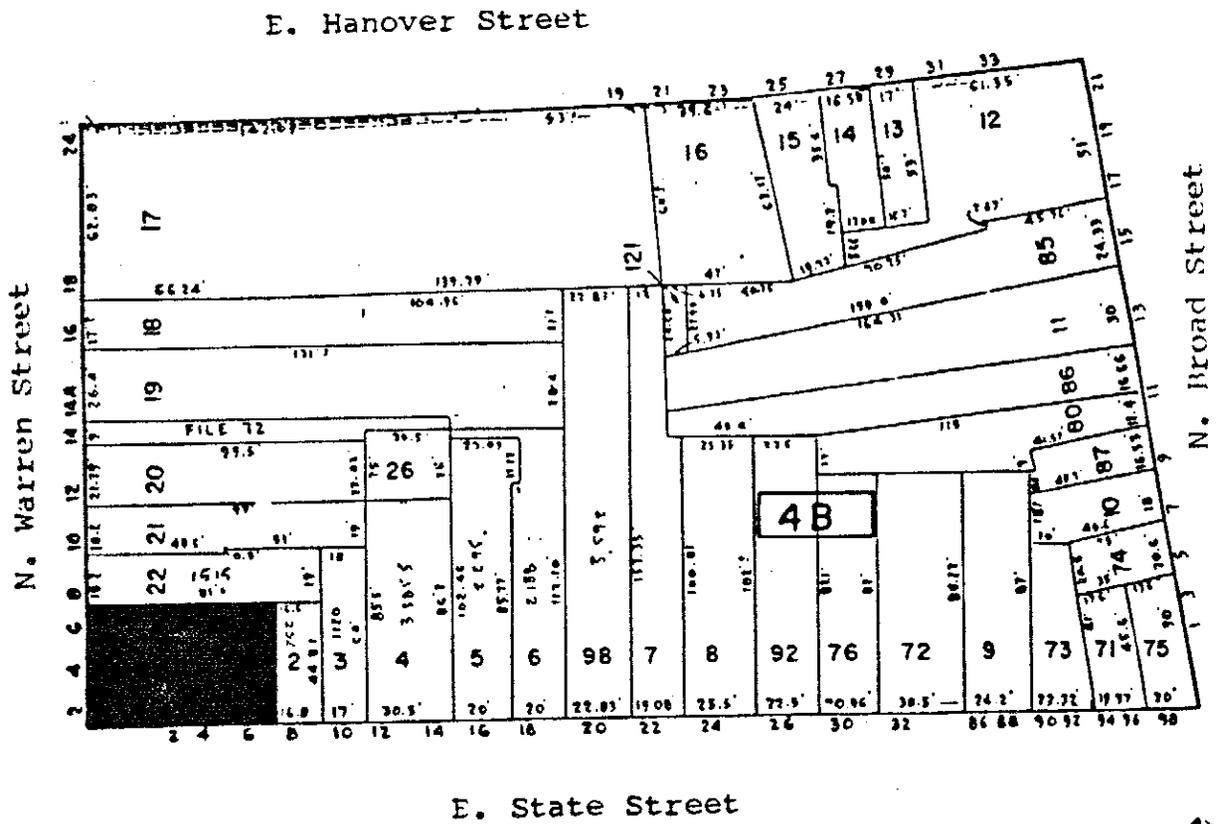
Documentation for 2-6 East State Street was prepared for DKM Properties Corp. under an agreement with the City of Trenton, the Office of New Jersey Heritage, and DKM Properties Corp. The site was recorded to HABS standards to mitigate the loss of historic buildings, impacted by a project utilizing funds from HUD through an Urban Development Action Grant. The site is under development by DKM Properties as the Capital Center project, a mixed retail and office building containing 331,000 square feet. It is scheduled for completion in 1989.

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August - December 1987.

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Site Plan



Floor Plan

