

**Baltimore City
Commission for Historical and
Architectural Preservation**

**Landmark Designation Report
March 12, 2013**



Brink's Building

231 Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Significance Summary

The Brink's Building, an Art Moderne-style commercial structure was constructed in 1947-1948 as the offices and garage for the Baltimore branch of Brink's Incorporated, one of the nation's most notable money-moving companies. The building was designed by the foremost early 20th century Cleveland architecture firm, Walker and Weeks, and this building serves as a fine example of the Art Moderne style. This building was based off a Brink's building that the firm designed in Cleveland in 1947. Brink's established its 20th branch in Baltimore in 1926, and played an important role for the city's businesses for close to 75 years.

Property History

The Brink's Building, located on the east side of the 200 block of Holliday Street, was constructed in 1947-1948 as the office building and garage for the Baltimore branch of Brink's Incorporated, one of the country's oldest money-moving companies. On March 9, 1947, the property at 231-233 Holliday Street was sold to Brink's Inc. for \$27,500 and ground rent by the William Hollingsworth Machine Company, which also owned the building immediately south at 227-229 Holliday Street.¹ A one-story brick building used as a machine shop was located on the property, according to a 1946 Sanborn map.² This building was constructed sometime between 1915 and the early 1920s. During the 1920s and 1930s, the property was used as an auto repair and tire shop by various companies.³ From 1847 to 1908, a bell foundry and brass works, and later plumbing supplies factory was located on the site. Originally known as Clampitt & Regester, it was later known by Regester and Webb, Joshua Regester, and finally, J. Regester Sons Co.⁴ The factory suffered a devastating fire in 1908, which killed three firemen.⁵ The building ruins stood on the site until 1915.⁶ It was subdivided into two lots, and the southern lot is the property described here.

After the property was sold to Brink's in 1947, Consolidated Engineering, Inc. applied for a building permit to "erect a one story addition at the front and new second story addition over entire building" designed by the firm "Walter & Weeks" for a cost of \$48,000. The building was to be used as a garage and office building.⁷ The construction was completed on March 2, 1948.⁸ The architecture firm that designed the building, misidentified as "Walter and Weeks" in the building permit application, was in fact Walker & Weeks, the foremost architectural firm in Cleveland in the early 20th century.⁹

Occupied by the Baltimore branch of the Brink's company in 1948, the building described as a "small fortress" was noted in 1950 as being one of the most modern of all of the company's buildings nationwide, incorporating "all of the latest safety devices to guard against robbery."¹⁰ These specifications included a turret tower with bullet-proof glass in the center of the building's second story, overlooking the truck entrance. This turret has three gun ports which allow an armed guard to shoot in three directions. (See Image 1) Armed guards were on duty 24 hours a day, the entrances to the building were alarmed, and the truck entrance for the company's 26 armored trucks was bullet-proof.

Other security measures were closely guarded.¹¹ These precautions were warranted, as the infamous 1950 heist of \$1.5 million from the Brink's offices in Boston was the largest robbery in America up to that point.¹²

This building served as the offices and garage for Brink's Baltimore branch for over fifty years, until it was sold in 2000 to 231 Holliday Street, LLC.¹³ The building was sold a few more times over the next twelve years, as development plans for the property did not come to fruition.¹⁴ In 2012, the building was sold to Son of Quitiplas.¹⁵ The building is slated to be rehabbed (along with the adjacent C.J. Youse Building at 235 Holliday Street) and used as a media center and theater by the Real News Network, which has selected Baltimore as its US headquarters.

The building is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is located just outside the boundaries of the Business and Government National Register Historic District.

The legislation for designating this building as a Baltimore City Landmark is being sponsored by Councilman William Cole IV.

Contextual History

Brink's Incorporated is one of the country's oldest and most successful money-moving companies. Founded by Perry Brink in Chicago in 1859 as "Brink's City Express," which delivered trunks and packages, the company was similar to the already-established American Express Company and Wells Fargo and Company, which primarily moved "packages, money, and valuables".¹⁶ The focus of these businesses changed over time, and during the late 19th and early 20th century, the business of Brink's Chicago City Express Company was shifting over to moving money and valuables, such as payrolls and bank funds.¹⁷

In 1918, in spite of the economic repercussions of World War I, the company opened its first branch office in Cleveland for the sole purpose of transporting money and valuables.¹⁸ The company then went on to open 43 branches in the U.S. and two branches in Canada during the 1920s, solidifying its national and international leadership in the money-moving business.¹⁹ It retained this rapid pace of growth throughout the 20th century. Brink's services were highly sought after by businesses, banks, and municipal governments. Prior to utilizing Brink's services, these clients had to retain their own armed guards and fleets of armored vehicles at significant cost and with associated liability and safety issues.²⁰ Although it was a private company, Brink's served an important role during the Great Depression. When all of the banks closed in 1933, Brink's guarded and moved the majority of U.S. money, keeping the nation afloat financially.²¹ Although money-moving was Brink's specialty, it also guarded and moved other "valuables" which ranged from guarding vats of beer from highjackers when Prohibition ended, to transporting the Magna Carta.²² In 1937, the company changed its name from "Brink's Chicago City Express Company" to "Brink's Incorporated."²³

By 1950, Brink's had become known as "the armored-car service whose name was virtually synonymous with impenetrable safety."²⁴ And its name was also synonymous with its armored trucks. Brink's has long been a leader in security and safety, particularly regarding its vehicles, adopting cutting-edge security measures as they were developed, such as full car armor and bulletproof glass.²⁵ After more than 150 years of existence, today Brink's Inc. is an international leader in security services, with 800 facilities on six continents.²⁶

The Baltimore Branch

The 20th national branch of Brink's Express Company was established in Baltimore on April 1, 1926.²⁷ It was originally housed in the Stock Exchange Building (now the Totman Building) at 210 E. Redwood Street, which contributes to the Business and Government National Register Historic District. Brink's was housed in that building for 22 years until it moved to its location on Holliday Street in 1948.²⁸ Its location in the downtown business district was important, as the company's list of clients included the City Government, numerous banks, and other business firms. By 1950, Brink's transported money for "most of the city's industries," according to the *Baltimore Sun*.²⁹ Brink's also had a contract with the city to collect the change from municipal parking meters.³⁰ Brink's played a crucial role in Baltimore's economic life, protecting the financial assets of the city throughout the 20th century with no mishaps, damages or losses. The company maintained its office on Holliday Street for over 50 years, selling the property in 2000.

Architectural Significance

The Baltimore branch was designed by the Cleveland architecture firm Walker and Weeks, founded by Frank R. Walker and Harry E. Weeks. Active between 1911 and 1949, this firm was one of the most prominent and prolific architectural firms in Cleveland in the early 20th century. The firm specialized in bank buildings, but also designed major commercial, public, and religious structures.³¹ Their work was mostly located in Ohio, and their most famous works include the Cleveland Public Library, Federal Reserve Bank, Allen Memorial Medical Library, and Severance Hall.³² In 1947, they designed Brink's Incorporated's Cleveland branch at 1422-30 Superior Avenue, which still exists today. The Cleveland branch was clearly the template for the Baltimore branch, despite being a much wider building.³³ (See Image 2) In 1950, the Baltimore branch was noted for being one of the most modern of all of the company's buildings nationwide.³⁴

This building is designed in the Art Moderne style. The Moderne architectural style was generally popular in the US between 1930 and 1950. This building's features are characteristic of the Moderne style, particularly the horizontal band of windows, low building height, flat roof, and streamlined, restrained ornamentation. The Art Moderne style utilized new modern building technologies and was commonly used for commercial structures. Baltimore doesn't have many extant examples of this architectural style, but the Greyhound Bus Station on N. Howard Street is a fine example and contributes to both the Mount Vernon National Register Historic District and Mount Vernon CHAP District.

The Brink's Building is also a fine representation of this style, and is also significant as an example of Brink's Incorporated's architectural design for its branches utilized during the mid-20th century.

Architectural Description

The simple Moderne-style building is adjacent to buildings on the north and south, and the rear elevation fronts on Watchhouse Alley. The two story Brink's Building façade face west on Holliday Street. This monolithic, simple façade is clad in light-colored limestone veneer, with decorative black marble granite running along the base of the building and surrounding the large central truck garage entrance on the first floor. This truck entrance is flanked by an entrance with a modern replacement door on the north, balanced by a similarly-sized blind recess to the south. The building is seven bays wide on the second story, featuring a band of windows. There is a central "turret tower", or bay window constructed of metal panels with bullet-proof windows and three gun ports. This central turret tower is flanked by three 1/1 windows on each side. "BRINK'S, INCORPORATED" is chiseled in simple capital letters above the second-story windows, and the roofline of the building has a simple stepped cornice. The north and south elevations abut existing buildings. The rear (east) elevation is located on Watchhouse Alley. The rear elevation was constructed in two periods, as evidenced by the history of the building, and the brickwork on the rear of the building serves as evidence for two separate building periods. The rear fenestration has been altered, with the window bays bricked up on the first floor, and a couple windows altered on the second floor. There is also a door on the north end of the elevation.

Staff Recommendations

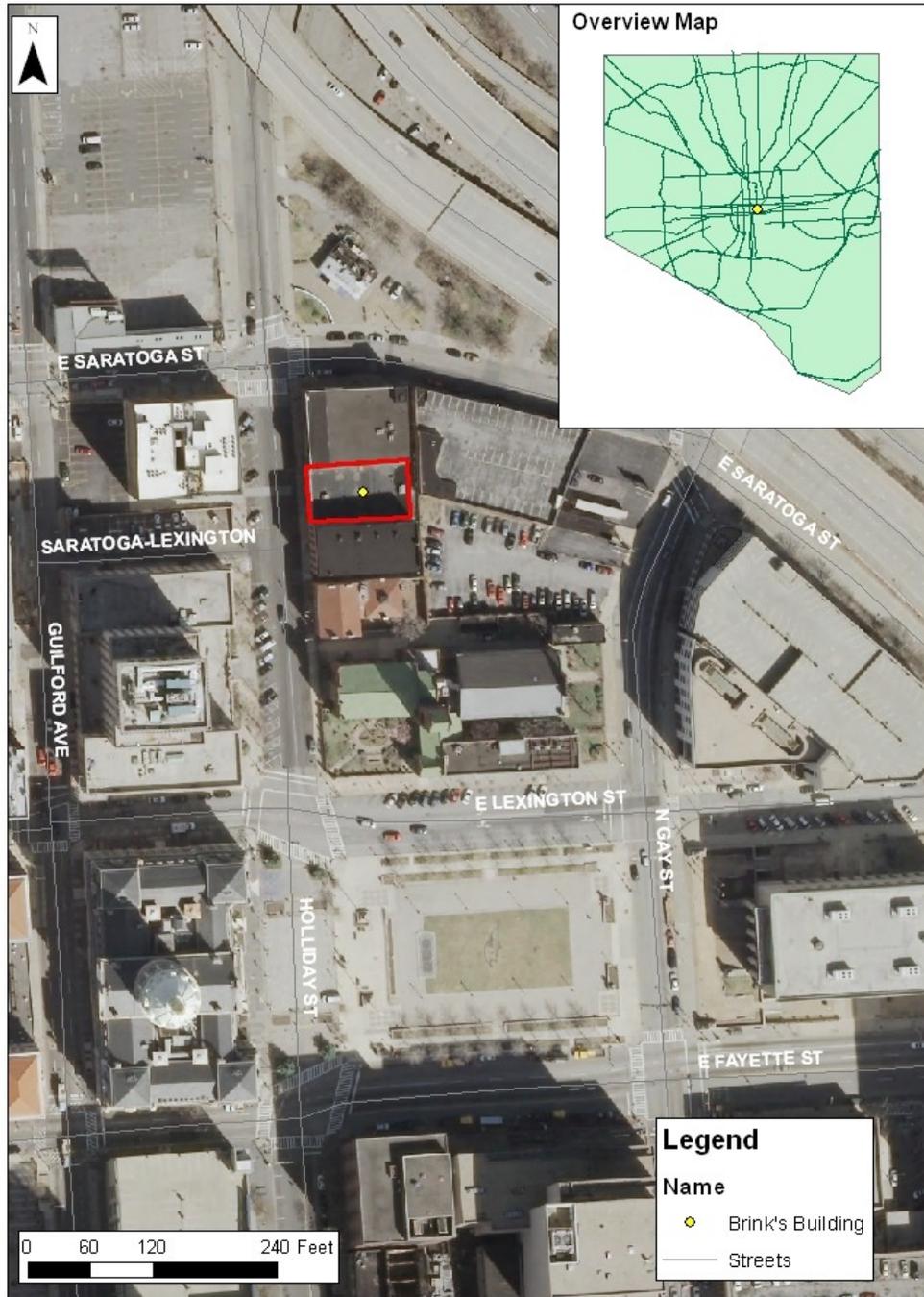
The property meets CHAP Landmark Designation Standards:

B. A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

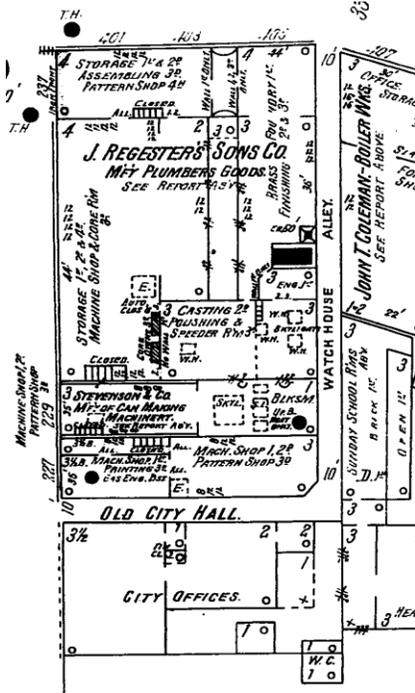
1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The Brink's Building, an Art Moderne-style commercial structure was constructed in 1947-1948 as the offices and garage for the Baltimore branch of Brink's Incorporated, one of the nation's most notable money-moving companies. The building was designed by the foremost early 20th century Cleveland architecture firm, Walker and Weeks, and this building serves as a fine example of the Art Moderne style. This building was based off a Brink's building that the firm designed in Cleveland in 1947. Brink's established its 20th branch in Baltimore in 1926, and played an important role for the city's businesses for close to 75 years.

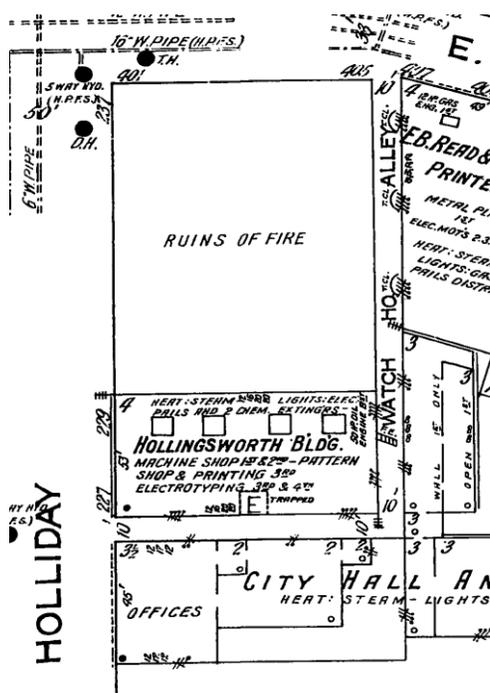
Locator Map



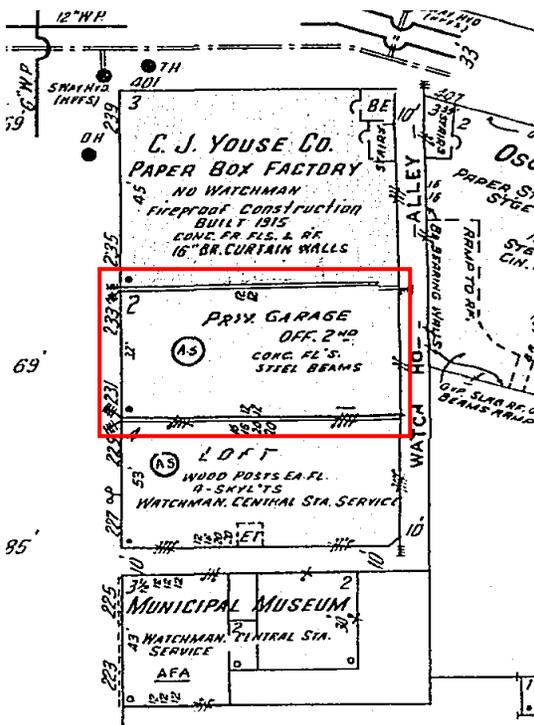
Historic Maps



1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the location of the building, then part of J. Regester's Sons and Co. plumbing factory. (Baltimore Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1901-1902, Vol. 3, 1902, Sheet 255)



1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the location of the building, then the ruins of a fire. (Baltimore Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1914-1915, Vol. 3, 1914, Sheet 223)



1952 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the Brink's Building, denoted as a 2 story private garage with offices on the 2nd Floor. (Baltimore Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1914-1953, Vol. 1A, 1952, Sheet 35A)

Images



Brink's In Baltimore—Robbery precautions here are a security secret

Image 1 - *Baltimore Sun* photo of the Baltimore branch in 1950. (“Armed Guards Are On 24-Hour Duty At Local Brink's Office”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jan 19, 1950; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 20)



Image 2 - Google Map image of the Cleveland Brink's Building located at 1422-1430 Superior Ave which served as the template for the Baltimore Branch. (An historic photo of this same building can be found at the Brink's "Armed and Armored" photo gallery. It is photo 9 in the Vintage Brink's trucks section. <http://www.brinksuscareers.com/Armed-and-amored.html#Armed-amored>)



View of the Brink's Building, adjacent to the C. J. Youse Building to the left.



The rear of the Brink's Building, exhibiting multiple alterations.

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- ¹ “Real Estate, Building News”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Mar 9, 1947; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. A13
- ² Baltimore Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Vol. 3, 1946, Sheet 223; provided by Walter Schamu.
- ³ “Classified Ad 4 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 22, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 16; “Display Ad 8 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 2, 1933; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 5
- ⁴ “Classified Ad 12 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Mar 8, 1847; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4; “Classified Ad 20 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 16, 1856; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 3; “Classified Ad 7 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Feb 7, 1867; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 3; “Classified Ad 21 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jul 17, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 3;” To Marry at 85: Mr. Joshua Register To Marry Miss Bertha Lucas She Is ...” *The Sun (1837-1987)*; May 14, 1901; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 10
- ⁵ “Three Firemen Dead in Midnight Blaze: Chief Horton Hurt In Crash Of ...”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jan 24, 1908; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 12
- ⁶ “Real Estate Transaction 1 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jun 15, 1915; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 13
- ⁷ New Building Application for 231 N. Holliday Street. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Buildings. Provided by Walter Schamu.
- ⁸ Record of Inspections for 231 N. Holliday Street, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Building Inspection. Provided by Walter Schamu
- ⁹ Eric Johannesen, *A Cleveland Legacy: The Architecture of Walker and Weeks* (Kent State University Press, 1999); “Buildings List for Architecture Firm Walker and Weeks.” Cleveland Landmarks Commission. Accessed 2/20/2013. Accessible at: http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/landmark/arch/archDetail.php?afil=&archID=260&pageNum_rsArchitects=7&totalRows_rsArchitects=335
- ¹⁰ John Van Camp “Transporting Hot Money”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Aug 20, 1949; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 8; “Armed Guards Are On 24-Hour Duty At Local Brink’s Office”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jan 19, 1950; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 20
- ¹¹ “Armed Guards Are On 24-Hour Duty At Local Brink’s Office”
- ¹² “Bandits Bag \$1,500,000 Cash: Brink’s Money-Hauling Firm in Boston...” *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jan 18, 1950; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 1; “The Million-Dollar Robbery” *LIFE*, Vol. 28, No. 5, January 30, 1950, pgs. 26-27.
- ¹³ Brink’s Incorporated to 231 Holliday Street, LLC, Deed. 2000. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber FMC 227, Folio 420.
- ¹⁴ 231 Holliday Street, LLC to Holliday Street Ventures, LLC, Deed. 2002. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber FMC 3474, Folio 159; Holliday Street Ventures, LLC to SMG-Brinks LLC, Deed. 2005. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber FMC 6537, Folio 638; SMG-Brinks LLC to RWN-235 Holliday St, Deed. 2006. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber FMC 8589, Folio 109; RWN-235 Holliday St to Holliday-Saratoga III, LLC. Deed. 2011. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber FMC 134369, Folio 327; Edward Gunts, “SMG will move into the Brink’s building ; Architecture: [Final Edition]”, *The Sun*, [Baltimore, Md] 14 Nov 2005: 1C.
- ¹⁵ Holliday-Saratoga III, LLC to Son of Quitiplas, Deed. 2012. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber 14247, Folio 191.
- ¹⁶ R.A. Seng and J.V. Gilmour, *Brink’s, The Money Movers: The Story of a Century of Service*, (Brink’s, Incorporated, 1959), pg. 19-20.
- ¹⁷ Seng and Gilmour, pgs. 30, 36.
- ¹⁸ Seng and Gilmour, pg. 44.
- ¹⁹ Seng and Gilmour, pgs. 126-128.
- ²⁰ Seng and Gilmour, pgs. 49-53.
- ²¹ Frances Levison “Brink’s, Movers of Money” *LIFE*, Vol. 18, No. 26: 46-52, June 25, 1945, pg. 48, Accessible on Google Books.
- ²² Frances Levison, pg. 48; Seng and Gilmour, pg. 65.

²³ Frances Levison, pg. 48.

²⁴ “The Million-Dollar Robbery” *LIFE*, Vol. 28, No. 5: 26-27, January 30, 1950, pg. 27. Accessible on Google Books.

²⁵ Seng and Gilmour, pgs. 67-68.

²⁶ “Brink’s History Timeline” Brink’s Incorporated. Accessed 2/20/2013. Accessible at:

http://www.brinksanniversary.com/history/History_Timeline.html

²⁷ Seng and Gilmour, pg. 126.

²⁸ *Polk’s Baltimore City Directory 1927* (Baltimore: R.L. Polk and Co.), pg. 422; “Stock exchange, Baltimore, Md.” Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-D4-19125, circa. 1906. Accessible at: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/det1994011821/PP/>

²⁹ “Armed Guards Are On 24-Hour Duty At Local Brink’s Office”

³⁰ Frank Henry, “Article 1 -- No Title”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Dec 28, 1958; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. A1

³¹ “Walker and Weeks” The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western University. Accessed on 2/21/2013. Accessible at: <http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=WAW>

³² “Architect/ Firm: Walker and Weeks.” Cleveland Landmarks Commission. Accessed 2/20/2013. Accessible at:

http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/landmark/arch/archDetail.php?afil=&archID=260&pageNum_rsArchitects=7&totalRows_rsArchitects=335; “Architects and Architectural Firms: Walker and Weeks” Architecture of Cleveland. Accessed on 2/22/2013. Accessible at: <http://www.architectureofcleveland.com/html/walker.htm>

³³ Buildings List for Architecture Firm Walker and Weeks; see Image 2.

³⁴ “Armed Guards Are On 24-Hour Duty At Local Brink’s Office”