

# bulletin



Photo by Danmarks Nationalbank

Architecture & Finance

2017

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## Dear colleagues and friends,

The association between the history of architecture and banking is as old as the profession itself. And it continues to this day. The great banking houses of Europe and North America have long sought to associate their banking prowess with representative architecture. Banks seek to inspire confidence, strength, resilience, and most importantly, trust in their clientele. The buildings in which banks house their operations are meant to reflect these values but the ways in which banks have done so is as varied as the banking houses themselves. Yet the storied and diverse history of banks and their buildings is also intimately connected to the development of technology as well as the cities in which these banks have emerged and gone on to flourish. I am pleased to present the second *eabh* bulletin on Architecture and Finance. This second bulletin continues to examine this history one case study at a time. However, the connections between these stories are unmistakable as are the legacies they have established.

Consider, for example, the history of Societe Generale, whose emergence as a premier commercial bank is intimately connected to its real estate holdings. The bank, which was founded in 1864, sought to exemplify strength and solidity and thus chose elegant stone buildings in busy commercial centres to house its offices. Yet the bank also wished to convey a personal, unique style by which it could distinguish itself from its competitors. Small architectural details such as the placement of its name on window fronts in block or gold letters; creating painted wood façades with large, two-metre-high windows and other details were designed to provide a personal touch.

Banks' decisions as to where to house their operations invariably reflect the economic development of the time as well as the commercial development of the bank. Banco

Santander, for example, chose a monumental structure to house its company headquarters. In addition to presiding as one of the most often photographed buildings in the city of Santander, the building's location underscores the city's historical economic development. Its seafront location highlights the mid-19th century trade with the American colonies, made possible by the rail line which linked Santander with the inland; and the port which offered an efficient means of trading with the Americas and with Europe.

A captivating example of the convergence between a particular area's economic and social development and banks' decisions to establish offices there concerns the Citizens' Savings Bank in New York City. The bank was established in the Bowery street in 1860, which was one of the oldest streets in New York City. One of the original roads of New Amsterdam, it connected the emerging Dutch settlement to outlying lands and villages beyond Manhattan. Eventually banks, slaughterhouses, taverns, hotels and other businesses became established in the street so that it came to be known as 'the liveliest mile on the face of the earth' and/or 'the grand avenue of the respectable lower classes.' The Citizens' Savings Bank now operates as the Chinatown HSBC Branch.

It would be remiss to not mention the historical significance of the Palazzo Turinetti di Pertengo to the city of Turin. Located in the historic district of San Giorgio, the palace was built under the regency of Christine of France as a quintessential example of Baroque architecture. The palace shaped the urban and architectural landscape of Turin in the 16th and 17th centuries and has remained an important historical landmark since then. The palace suffered significant damage during the air raids on Turin in 1942 and 1943 and was eventually acquired by the Istituto

Bancario, which decided to make it its official headquarters. In 1955 major renovations began, culminating in a faithful preservation of the Baroque façade while infusing the place with cutting edge, modern architectural features.

While banks often preferred a particular architectural style to suit their developing commercial interests, they have also been receptive to the artistic trends of the day. The Caixa Geral Depósitos of Portugal sought to construct buildings modelled on the international style of the 1930s, while retaining distinctive Portuguese architectural elements. But this style tended to change as technology became more advanced. Initially known as ‘modernising nationalism’, it came to embody the internal, functional and aesthetic organisation of the developing bank. In addition to its contemporary feel it was also a style that could be adapted to the local environment and context.

Banks’ architectural styles have often influenced architectural styles in general. This is certainly the case with the National Bank of Greece, which over the course of 175 years constructed buildings that continue to shape modern Greek architecture. Modern Greek architecture, in turn, has been influenced by leading European trends as well as other leading architects of the day. Like other banks, the architecture of the buildings comprising the National Bank of Greece also reflected the economic development of the country.

On occasion differences in the nature of the financial institution are reflected in the chosen architecture. For example, Bonn Savings Bank, an independent financial institution with a public mandate, was initially established in the baroque town hall at the market square. However, the bank’s opulent beginnings soon changed into an institution designed to cater for less affluent people. At the turn of

the century the bank erected a new building at the edge of the city centre. Its façade was of natural stone and was supported by huge pillars which sought to convey a sense of safety, dignity and trustworthiness. The contemporary building is adapted to the historical topography of the city. Its modern design meets the highest standards in terms of ecology, economy and functionality while also catering to social and cultural functions.

Technological prowess and architectural modernity are unmistakeable features of contemporary bank buildings. UBS’ London headquarters typifies these qualities both externally and internally. Designed by Ken Shuttleworth, the designer of the famous ‘Gherkin’ building, the façade of 5 Broadgate building is fashioned from 2,000 lorry loads of prefabricated panels. The bank’s internal spaces are fitted with the most up-to-date technology, seamlessly connected via 28 IT hub and equipment rooms. The building represents a pioneering effort in developing innovative, contemporary banking headquarters.

There are many other examples of these trends as well as other more individualistic architectural histories. I invite you to discover these fascinating stories in this important volume.

Yours faithfully



Carmen Hofmann  
Secretary General of *eab*

# Gothic Bank Melbourne Australia

Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited

**A**s Mike Smith, former CEO of ANZ, said, the Gothic Bank is one of Australia's most distinguished, historic buildings, of international importance to their architectural heritage. ANZ is the proud custodian of the Gothic Bank.

On the north-east corner of Queen and Collins Street in the heart of Melbourne's financial district exists a truly remarkable bank. Built between 1883 and 1887 the 'Gothic Bank', as it is affectionately known, was the Australian head office and residence of the General Manager of the English, Scottish and Australia Chartered Bank (ES&A): the forerunner of today's Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited (ANZ).

The residence, known as Verdon Chambers, majestically crowns the banking hall that has charmed Collins Street for over a hundred years. Built in Venetian-Gothic style over two floors atop the magnificent banking chamber, the residence hosts more than 17 rooms and boasts valuable artwork and lavish features that ANZ has diligently restored and maintained to preserve this iconic landmark for future generations.

## **ANZ's Commitment to the Gothic Bank by Peter Lovell, renowned Heritage Consultant.**

The ANZ Gothic Bank is regarded as Australia's finest example of the English Gothic Revival style as applied to a secular building. Within the building the Verdon Chambers contain some of the most important historic interiors in the country, the complexity and richness of which is unsurpassed.

As custodians of the Gothic Bank and Verdon Chambers, ANZ takes its responsibility to preserve the building for future generations with great honour. Both the Gothic Bank and the former Stock Exchange building have been classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) as of world significance.

The sites are included on the original Historic Buildings Register, which were gazetted 9 October 1974. The sites provide important



*Gothic Bank Melbourne, 1900*

links to the boom period in Melbourne's history as well as to the evolution of banking institutions in Australia. The buildings are examples of gothic revival construction from both a visual and functional perspective.

ANZ works closely with heritage architects to ensure that the properties are restored and conserved in exacting detail whilst also maintaining a functional use for employees and visitors to the Bank.

In conjunction with Melbourne City and the National Trust of Australia, ANZ is conserving the sites in such a way as to reveal and enhance the original work of 1883-1887. This involves exposing original decorative finishes, fittings and joinery where practicable and illustrating the lifestyle pursued by the Verdon family.

In January 2015, ANZ appointed a specialist restoration painter to preserve the highly decorative ceiling above the main

stairwell in Verdon Chambers. Using unique Porters paint products, a master painter mixed the colours on site 'by eye' to match the original.

In 2015, ANZ undertook a subsistence prevention project to ensure the Gothic Bank stands for many years to come. Contributing factors such as vibrations from nearby construction, tram and traffic pollution, the high stone to glass ratio of the Gothic Bank itself and foundations sited on a former creek bed mean that it is important to undertake geothermal x-rays and soil testing on a regular basis. These measures help to determine if the site requires underpinning to prevent any major cracking or subsistence damage.

## **Carpentry and furniture**

In 1885 Verdon accepted Mr James Bell's (a cabinet-maker) tender of 1,961 pounds





*Gothic Bank Banking Chamber*

for carpentry. Wardell had a high regard for Bell's ability, the two having worked together on the Cathedrals of Melbourne and Sydney. Verdon's particular interest in timbers expressed itself in the elaborate joinery panelling and furniture in the Gothic Bank.

Wardell specified American walnut doors, architraves and panels. Bell designed and built the magnificent linenfold (relief carved) doors in American walnut. Much of the third floor, however, was completed in deal - a wood from a coniferous tree - whilst Verdon's furniture was made from blackwood, which was a scarce and valuable in Victoria.

### Stone carving

William J Maxwell, an Adelaide stonemason, who had worked for Wardell on St Mary's Cathedral, undertook the original stone carving on the exterior of the building. In 1886, ES&A paid £1,002 sterling for the stonemasonry.

Today ANZ is spending more than a million dollars to restore the exterior of the building; the replacement carving being undertaken by hand in situ by a highly skilled local stonemason trained in Paris.

### Painting and decorating

In 1887 ES&A awarded the contract for the painting and decorating of the Gothic Bank to Lyon, Wells, Cottier and Co. The lavish decoration includes ornate stencilling, friezes illuminated in gold leaf and embossed Japanese leather and paper. Thousands of sheets of 23 karat gold leaf were beaten to a flimsy thickness by hand with the aid of a wooden maul covered with goat skin, while intricate Heraldic-Protestant style patterns adorn the ceilings.

Minton & Co., renowned porcelain and pottery manufacturers from Staffordshire England, sent a man from London to



*Gothic Bank, Banking Chamber 1928*

construct the floor of the private entrance to Verdon Chambers in elegant mosaic tiles. The palatial interior is designed to provide a contrast to the beautiful but restrained exterior of the building.

### Echoes of Venice

In his love for Gothic architecture Wardell found a kindred spirit in George Verdon. The Venetian-inspired wall-tiled loggia, a type of balcony, on the exterior showed the influence of Venetian Gothic architecture, particularly the Ca d'Oro and the Doge's Palace. At Verdon's request, Wardell designed the loggia to protect the dining room from the western sun and incorporated triple-glazed windows, putting the design technically ahead of its time.

### A visionary partnership

In 1883, Sir George Verdon, General Manager of the English, Scottish and Australia Chartered Bank commissioned the design of the Bank's Australian headquarters. William Wardell, a leader of the Gothic Revival movement and known for his work on St. Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, designed the building in a sturdy architectural style in keeping with the Bank's protective function.

Wardell's design catered to Verdon's specific and slightly eccentric requirements - including a dining room with an angle turret and spire where Verdon could see the ships coming down the Yarra River to the turning basin. He would open the window and lean out to watch for the arriving goods for which the bank had lent money.

The winning tender from builders Goss and Masson was for £42,517 sterling and construction commenced in October 1883.

The Pymont yellow sandstone building, on a Malmsbury blue stone plinth, was erected 1883-1886. Verdon and Wardell, the



*Gothic Bank Melbourne, 1912*

visionary partnership, sourced the sandstone from Saunders' Purgatory Quarry, at Pyrmont in Sydney.

#### **More than a Bank**

In 1921 the bank bought the adjacent property, the former Melbourne Stock Exchange Building (constructed 1888-1891) and the buildings were seamlessly connected in 1922 to accommodate the Bank's expansion. General Managers continued to reside in Verdon Chambers until 1933.

From 1934-1957 The Lyceum Club (for educated and distinguished women) occupied the residence, where the ladies were quick to point-out that the layout of the building (kitchen and dining on separate floors) considered poorly the practicalities of maintaining a household. As such, alterations were carried-out in 1934 for the princely sum of £2,000 sterling. When the Lyceum Club vacated the premises in December 1957, ANZ continued to use the premises for offices and hospitality.

In 1993, with the completion of a new post-modern tower at 100 Queen Street, ANZ committed twenty million dollars to the conservation and preservation of the heritage sites: Verdon Chambers; the gothic banking chamber; the Cathedral Room of the Exchange Building; and the Safe Deposit site at 99 Queens Street.

In 2012, the third floor was extensively renovated to marry the modern demands of twenty-first century banking with the finery of the historic interiors. Whilst the third floor is primarily used for learning and development activities, all of the reception rooms on the second floor of the chambers were once again restored to their former glory.

#### **Verdon the art connoisseur**

Verdon introduced the unknown Russian artist, Nicholas Chevalier, to Australia and took a keen interest in promoting his talent amongst Melbourne's elite. Chevalier's 'Mt Cook and the Southern Alps' is displayed in the hallway of Verdon Chambers and, today, is one of the most valuable pieces in the residence.

Another key piece of 19th Century art is William Strutt's 'A pilgrimage to Canterbury in the 14th Century' based on Chaucer's 'A Canterbury Tale'.

In 1887, Verdon's view from the turret down to the Yarra river would have been unobstructed and would have been similar to Jacques Carabain's 'Port of Melbourne', which hangs in the residence.

#### **Stories to tell...**

##### **A surprising beginning**

In 1837, the Crown sold the site upon which the Gothic Bank stands for £61 sterling. On that site the Angel Inn was built. It is referred to by locals as the 'groggery'. The Angel Inn was one of the first seven licences granted by the town of Melbourne and contained the first licensed billiard table. By 1840, the site's value had increased ten-fold and was purchased by William Bowman. It remained in his family's estate until it was sold to ES&A in 1880 for £60,000 sterling - increasing in value another ten-fold in 40 years.





*Gothic Bank Melbourne, 1921*



*Gothic Bank, Melbourne 2010*

### No expense spared

Verdon was known for having exquisite taste with no expense spared. The original approved budget was for “no greater than 40,000 pounds,” but on spending nearly double that amount, ES&A sent one of the Bank’s Directors to Melbourne to control spiralling costs. The Director tried to cut expenses by cancelling the orders for elaborate fixtures and trimmings. However, much of the carving and purchasing had already been done.

### A near miss for Verdon

George Verdon visited the site of the Chambers daily during construction. In 1884 a tragic crane accident led to the death of one man and seriously injured another. It was Sir George Verdon’s good fortune that day not to attend the site - the debris crashed in the same place and at the same time as he usually performed his inspection.

### Open for business

The building was to have been completed by 30 March 1886. Finally, on 31 May 1887

the bank opened for business. It was Melbourne’s first large secular building constructed in the gothic style. At 31 March 1888 the cost of the new building stood in the books at £77,393 sterling, including more than £8,000 sterling for furniture.

### Recouping some of that overspend

On completion of the Gothic Bank, ES&A decided to sell an L-shaped section of the remaining site, fronting Collins Street and returning at a right angle to the rear to face onto Queen Street. The former Melbourne Stock Exchange was built on this site and the cost of the land - £65,000 sterling - almost paid for the astronomical cost of the prestigious bank.

### A lucky escape

In 1912, a large fire broke out in a wholesale ironmongery business in Little Collins Street at the rear of the Gothic Bank. A strong north wind spread the fire to the roof of the Bank. Luckily, the daughter of the general manager at the time

raised the alarm and those staying in Verdon Chambers managed to fight the fire from the roof of the conservatory, saving the Chambers and the adjacent stock exchange. The roof incurred considerable water damage as a result of the attempt to distinguish the fire; it was left with a hole several feet wide. Repairs to the damage were made and the decoration was re-applied using the original stencils found in storage.

### A ghostly tale in the library

Security guards at Verdon Chambers are hesitant to enter the library, alone, at night. Legend has it that some years ago, a security guard felt something cold brush past him while on his nightly patrol. When he later viewed the security footage he saw a strange light glide past him as he entered the library. There are also stories of lights in the library inexplicably turning on and off. ●

All pictures: Reproduced with the permission of Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited.

# The Bulgarian National Bank building

The Bulgarian National Bank, Publications Council

Incorporated in 1879, the Bulgarian National Bank is the world's thirteenth oldest central bank.<sup>1</sup> The Bank initially leased a building on Sofia's Slavyanska street, later moving into its own premises, designed by Swiss architect of German descent Henri (Jacob Heinrich) Meyer, on Aleksandar I street. Over the two decades preceding the 1912-13 Balkan Wars, the Bank's activity expanded, leading to the need for new, more spacious and comfortable premises. The two floors added to the building on the Aleksandar I Street after the World War I failed to satisfy the need.

## The present BNB Building

The history of the current premises on Sofia's Knyaz Aleksandar I square began on 29th March 1920 when the Governing Council resolved:

*...to acquire a plot bounded by four thoroughfares, viz. an undivided city block, and to construct thereon proprietary chambers for the Bank that shall rise to its needs for more than fifty years hence.*

Alongside this, the Board endowed a Bank 'Chambers Plot Purchase and Construction Account'. The required funds were to be deducted from annual profits, commencing with the profit for 1919. As early as the following year, the account had accumulated more funds than provisioned by the Governing Council. In the event, even this was to turn out to have been short: the ultimate bill in the late thirties was to be ten times greater.

## Construction

In November 1933 the BNB Governing Council adopted Governor Nikola Momchilov's proposal of appointing architect Ivan Vasilyov to conduct the site investigation, propose design drafts for the future premises, and act as the clerk of works. Vasilyov duly toured Western Europe to study the features



The first BNB proprietary premises, designed by architect Henri (Jacob Heinrich) Meyer - BNB Archives

of central bank buildings at first hand. A tender for erecting the concrete structure ran in early 1935, and was eventually won by the Rella u. Neffe A.G. contractors. Excavations began on 1 March the same year.

In a 20th October 1935 ceremony Minister of Finance Marko Ryaskov (who had served as BNB Governor until earlier that year) laid down the building's foundation stone. Custom dictated that he deliver three hammer blows to the stone while intoning the words "May it last unto eternity!" Prime Minister Andrey Toshev and the complete Council of Ministers attended, while Sofia Metropolitan Bishop Stefan conducted Eastern Orthodox consecration rites. A special glass phial containing a scroll recording the event and presenting examples of all coins and bills ever issued by the Bank was set by the stone. Works ended in late 1940.

## Architecture and exteriors

The Bank building is an example of modern 1930s architecture combined with classical architectural proportions and Romanticist elements.

The very conception by architects Ivan Vasilyov and Dimitar Tzolov impresses: the authors rejected the idea that the Archaeological Museum building, housed in the refurbished 15th Century Ottoman period Büyük Camii mosque, should be demolished. Instead, they drew a U-shaped edifice whose open end was flanked by the Renaissance Ottoman structure. The museum building coexists harmoniously with the Bank's edifice, facing as it does all four points of the compass.

The architectural plan features modern vertical divisions and functionality. The building does not overpower, yet is seven storeys high. Four of those rise above ground level, three sinking below

1 Capie, F., G. Charles and N. Schnadt, The Development of Central Banking, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p 6.

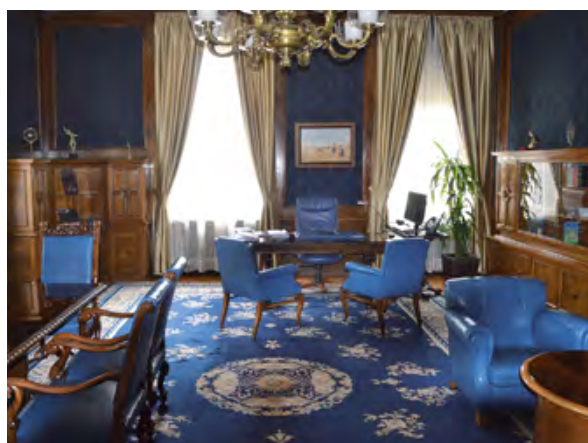




*The northwestern façade of the current BNB building architectural ensemble - BNB Archives*



*The building under construction - BNB Archives*



*The Governor's study - BNB Archives*

it. The façades are clad in limestone slabs (quarried near the city of Vratsa) and decorated with sculptures and reliefs alluding to the building's purpose.

The northwestern corner features a clock tower, while another clock sits beneath an elegant pinnacle decorating the western façades. A stone statue by Prof Lubomir Dalchev of Sveti Nikola, patron saint of seafarers, merchants, and bankers, decorates the northwestern entrance. The northern façade houses the sculpted heads of ancient deities Hermes and Fortuna: symbols of success, wealth, and commerce. Over the eastern façade entrance, a stone relief by Prof Luben Dimitrov symbolises strength and endurance: twin lions face each other with an oak leaf and twin acorns between them. The southern façade's top floor carries a large sculptural composition by Kiril Shivarov depicting Hermes and Fortuna. Beneath it, at street

level, is a granite drinking basin and fountain decorated with a bronze leonine head.

Covered in dark green patinated bronze, the four main entrance doors carry relief motifs from the seals and coinage of 13th century Bulgarian rulers Tsar Ivan Asen II and Tsar Konstantin Tih Asen.

#### **The interior**

The interior combines the designers' striving for a sense of spaciousness through the greatest possible ingress of natural daylight into the premises, and purposeful functionality.

The mezzanine facing the main entrance lobby houses the tellers' hall, topped with a huge skylight. The eastern and western wings of the first floor have open galleries over the hall; another gallery graces the fifth floor, in the tower. A discrete staircase amid the tellers' hall leads to the underground public safe deposit vault, whose

architectural elucidation, and the quality of materials and workmanship, rank among the very best of their period. Spiral staircases at each corner of the hall lead to ground level.

The numerous stairways and passages between individual areas convey a sense of spaciousness. A number of technical solutions which were advanced for their time enhance the building's functionality: the spacious safe deposit vault, lifts intended for diverse loads, and the sinuous copper piping of the pneumatic capsule pipeline.

The four grilles on the tellers' hall entrance doors feature bronze lions holding heraldic shields with diverse motifs symbolising Bulgaria's major industries at the time: manufacturing, agriculture, and commerce. They were wrought by Prof Mihaylo Parashchuk, who also decorated the face of the large clock on the southern wall of the tellers' hall and designed the exquisite



*The Governing Council Chamber - BNB Archives*



*A stained glass window by Prof Ivan Penkov; made by Franz Mayer & Co. of Munich. - BNB Archives*

Musharabiya stonework grilles. These latter are placed over internal windows facing the hall.

The decorative and monumental pieces in the bank building include a number of stained glass murals. Designed by Prof Ivan Penkov, the western staircase vitrage depicts coins minted by the Second Bulgarian Empire between the 12th and 14th centuries; images of the Tsars Ivan Asen II; Konstantin Tih Asen; Ivan Aleksandar; Ivan Sratsimir; and images of several architectural ensembles from the same period. Designed by Prof Dechko Uzunov, the governing council chamber stained glass window features motifs from Bulgarian commercial life. The chamber's interior décor, alongside that of the Governor's study, has been preserved unchanged. Both vitrages were made at the Franz Mayer & Co. workshops in Munich. A new stained glass window designed by Prof Nikolay Drachev was installed at the central staircase in 2006.

The bank building has a special corner reflecting Bulgarian history: the memorial wall and eternal flame commemorate the names of BNB staff who fell in the 1912–13 and 1915–18 Wars for Bulgarian National Unification and National Defence.

#### Art

In the tradition of significant financial institutions maintaining extensive art collections, the BNB opened its doors to the arts from its very incorporation. The first works acquired were the sculptures, entitled 'Gloire au Travail' by Henri Louis Levasseur, which won a gold medal at the 1882 Paris Salon des Beaux Arts; and Andrey Nikolov's 1916 'Detski San'. The collection encompasses works by dozens of other eminent Bulgarian artists. The predominant part of paintings, sculptures and carvings are displayed around Bank offices and halls, while the eastern wing gallery traversing governing council member

studies features the portraits of each BNB Governor since incorporation.

#### Museum

The western wing gallery houses a standing museum display. The idea for its creation arose at the end of the twenties. The first exhibition of coinage and bills was held in the teller's hall in 1969. The current display opened in 1999 as part of marking the Bank's 120th anniversary. The unique collection presents a wealth of classical and mediaeval coinage dating to the 5th century BC, and which were discovered on Bulgarian soil. Also present are: coins issued by the BNB; the history of BNB banknote issue since 1885; and the Bank's role in issuing national currency, managing cash circulation, and destroying withdrawn cash.

A landmark of the Bulgarian capital, the Bulgarian National Bank building was listed as a Nationally Significant Monument of Culture in 1978. ●





*The Eastern Wing gallery with portraits of BNB Governors since incorporation. - BNB Archives*



*The Memorial Wall listing the names of BNB staff, who fell in the wars for Bulgarian National Unification and National Defence. - BNB Archives*



*The BNB Standing Museum Display - BNB Archives*

All images: © BNB Archives

# The National Bank of Czechoslovakia building

Jakub Kunert

**W**henever the name of the Czech National Bank is mentioned today, the spectacular functionalist building designed by František Roith and built originally for Živnostenská banka, comes to mind. This building, however, has functioned as a central bank for “only” the last sixty years.<sup>1</sup> The oldest surviving monument to the history of central banking in what is today the Czech Republic is the Schebek (also Šebek) Palace, which is located at No. 936 Politických vězňů Street, formerly Bredovská Street. The palace successively housed the Austro-Hungarian Bank, the Banking Office of the Ministry of Finance, the National Bank of Czechoslovakia (the National Bank for Bohemia and Moravia and the National Bank) and the State Bank of Czechoslovakia.

The neo-renaissance Schebek Palace was erected on the site of the orphanage of St. John the Baptist. In 1868 it was sold to two leading railway entrepreneurs – Baron Jan Schebek and Baron František Ringhoffer. Baron Schebek had a new palace built on his property, which faced onto Bredovská Street. He commissioned builder František Havel and architect Vojtěch Ignác Ullmann to construct the palace. Ullmann designed a three-floor, four-wing palace with grand halls and comfortable apartments located around a rectangular inner courtyard. Vojtěch Ignác Ullmann was one of Prague’s most important architects at that time and had already completed a number of other palaces designed as status symbols and exclusive living spaces.<sup>2</sup> Historical references describe it as the most luxurious residential complex. Crown Prince Rudolf was said to have used it during his stay in Prague.<sup>3</sup>

While Ullmann’s previous buildings had been designed in the neo-Renaissance style inspired by the 16th century Venetian Renaissance, the new Schebek Palace was inspired by the Roman Renaissance. The palace attracted attention thanks mainly to its spectacular façade and its marble staircase



*Office of the governor of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia (Schebek Palace)*



*Staircase in the National Bank of Czechoslovakia building (Schebek Palace)*



*The National Bank of Czechoslovakia building (Schebek Palace)*





*Meeting room of the bank board of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia (Schebek Palace)*



*Vestibule of the Meeting room of the bank board of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia (Schebek Palace)*

leading up to the second floor, where the main ceremonial rooms were located. Besides the Grand Hall, the most important room in the palace was without doubt the Lunette Hall. Decorated by Czech painter Viktor Barvitiš, it depicted the story of the palace owner's grandparents in ten lunettes. Construction of the palace lasted two years, from 1870 to 1872. For 18 years the building was inhabited by the Schebek family. It was then bought by the Austro-Hungarian Bank, which, after making the necessary modifications, started using it as the home of its Prague branch.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the existence of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, the building fully met the requirements of the Prague branch. Prior to World War I just 28 clerks and 14 junior clerks were employed at the Prague branch.<sup>6</sup>

A new phase in the history of the Schebek Palace began after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The original branch was converted into the head office at the decision of the General Council of the Austro-Hungarian Bank of 28 November 1918, and the building was acquired by the administration of the Banking Office of the Ministry of Finance three months later (on 11 March 1919). Its headquarters and head office, essentially the branch for Prague, were located there. These institutional changes, which mirrored a huge increase in work relating to the administration of the Czechoslovak currency, were naturally reflected in an increase in the number of officials (from 62 to five times that figure).

This required an increase in the range and number of offices as well as business, storage, operational and technical rooms.<sup>7</sup>

It soon became clear that the building would not be able to properly fulfil the role of headquarters of the bank of issue. Problems arose in the area of safekeeping of valuables, as the newly built strongrooms in the basement were too small. There was also a shortage of suitable rooms for debiting services and treasury note handling and printing. This difficult situation is demonstrated, among other things, by the fact that the debiting department was moved to the attic as a makeshift measure and the directorate was located in the mezzanine. Even the meetings of the Banking Committee had to be held at the Ministry of Finance's headquarters in the Clam-Gallas Palace. It was therefore decided in 1919 to extend the palace, even though it formally belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Bank until 1924,<sup>8</sup> and to acquire the houses between Bredovská, Jindřišská and Růžová streets for banking purposes. Consequently, plans were made to build a new palace for the Banking Office, whose façade was to face onto Jindřišská Street, while maintaining the Schebek Palace. To speed up the purchase of adjoining properties, on 14 April 1920 the Czechoslovak government declared the building of a new bank of issue to be a construction in the public interest pursuant to Act No. 87/1920 Coll.<sup>9</sup> This enabled it to apply expropriation proceedings to all buildings that were useable for the future banking palace.<sup>10</sup> In the end no expropriation took

place, as the officials of the Banking Office and later the National Bank reached agreement with the other owners of the buildings between Jindřišská, Růžová and Bredovská streets regarding the purchase of their properties. However, a number of legal disputes had to be resolved. The buying-up process was not completed until 1936 and the total cost ran to more than 32.5 million crowns. The total area selected for the site of the new headquarters was more than 7,000 square metres in size and consisted of building nos. 936, 937, 938, 939 (the Deym Palace),<sup>11</sup> 940, 941, 942, 943, 946, 947 and 1511 (the former palace of Banka stavebních živností a průmyslu).<sup>12</sup>

Even before the first portion of land adjoining Růžová Street had been purchased, preparations were commenced for the construction of a building to house a future printing works for state notes (and later banknotes). Apartments for employees were to be located in the rear section of the building.<sup>13</sup> The Bank Committee passed a decision at the start of 1920 commissioning architect Josef Záruba-Pfeffermann<sup>14</sup> to design the overall layout of the block of houses surrounding the Schebek Palace in addition to the annex in the courtyard.<sup>15</sup> The building plans<sup>16</sup> were subsequently assessed by a committee of experts in printing and printing machines. They included Dr Heinrich, an expert from the Austro-Hungarian Bank who had been involved in the building of the banknote printing works in Vienna. Based on his practical experience, he



*The National Bank of Czechoslovakia building (Schebek Palace)*



*Building of the banknote printing works of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia*

declared the project to be unsuitable and in need of redrafting, and he even prepared draft plans for the future banknote printing works himself. As Pfeffermann stopped communicating with representatives of the Banking Office, the prominent Czech architect Josef Sakař, the designer of numerous grand buildings in Prague, including banks, was asked to submit new sketches.<sup>17</sup> In 1922, the design was approved by foreign experts, who went so far as to call it the most modern in Europe.<sup>18</sup> The well-known construction company, V. Nekvasil, based in the Karlín district of Prague, took on the construction work in 1924–1927.<sup>19</sup> The neoclassical building is dominated by a portal with a balcony, whose pillars bear sculptures of a printer and a photographer, with the head of the Republic in the middle. Sculptors Celda Klouček,<sup>20</sup> Karel Pavlík<sup>21</sup> and Antonín Odehnal<sup>22</sup> decorated the façade of the building.

After part of the staff and equipment were moved to the new banknote printing works, it became possible to start remodeling rooms in the Schebek Palace. This project was led by architect Josef Velflík<sup>23</sup> who had worked as a technical expert for the Banking Office and later the National Bank of Czechoslovakia. The work continued until 1928 and involved alterations to the ceremonial rooms of the palace so that they could be used fully as meeting rooms for the Bank

Board, the Governor's offices and the Directorate. Following the renovation of the interior, the portal of the Schebek Palace was also altered. Allegorical statues of a man and a woman by sculptor Josef Wagner<sup>24</sup> were installed into empty niches between two pairs of column with cannelures by the entrance.

The banknote printing works together with the adjoining buildings in Růžová Street were in fact the first dedicated premises of the Banking Office of the Ministry of Finance and subsequently the National Bank of Czechoslovakia in the area demarcated by Bredovská, Jindřišská and Růžová streets. The bank's technical department started to prepare for the construction of a new banking palace in the second half of the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> This involved a study trip by the head of<sup>26</sup> pean banks of issue and their buildings. Based on the new findings,<sup>27</sup> surveys and questionnaires were drawn up so that organisational units could specify their space requirements in the new building.<sup>28</sup> After the surveys and questionnaires were evaluated, a preliminary project was prepared. However, it was not implemented due to a lack of materials and requisite labour force during World War II.

Work on the project was revived only after the end of the occupation of Czech lands by Nazi Germany.<sup>29</sup> By then, however, it was becoming apparent that finding a definitive

solution would be no easy task. The shortage of administrative space at the bank of issue had become so acute that some of the bank's units had to be located outside its headquarters and were scattered across the centre of Prague.<sup>30</sup> Projects attempting to solve the desperate situation in new ways thus began to surface.<sup>31</sup> These recommended, for example, erecting a nine-floor building in Jindřišská Street, taking over the premises of Böhmisches Escompte Bank in liquidation (near the Powder Tower) and moving the new building to plot no. 698 at Příkopy (known as Myslbek), which at the time was owned by Böhmisches Union Bank (national enterprise in liquidation).<sup>32</sup>

Only the establishment of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia in 1950, with headquarters in the building of the former Živnotenská banka (called "Office No. 1), showed a way out of the desperate space situation. The former premises of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia, including the Schebek Palace, passed to "Office No. 2", in which some organisational units continued to operate.<sup>33</sup> The building became redundant for the State Bank of Czechoslovakia at the start of the 1960s and was thus transferred to the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1963.<sup>34</sup> The central bank, which reserved the right to use part of the premises for its purposes after the building was transferred to the ownership of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, later located its economics institute in this building. The building currently houses the Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the specialised Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education of Charles University (CERGE). ●

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### Author profile

Jakub Kunert (1977) graduated in history and archival science from Charles University in Prague in 2002. He trained at the State district archive in Prague and at the Archive of the Czech National Bank. 2004 he joined the Archive of the Czech National Bank as senior archivist. Since 2009 he has been working as a chief archivist of the Czech National Bank. He is also the representative of the Czech National Bank in the ESCB Information Management Network.

- 1 For more on the history of this building, see Jakub Kunert, The Živnostenská Banka building, in: *eaoh Bulletin* 1/2016, pp. 34–35.
- 2 Vojtěch Ignác Ullmann (1822–1897), a prominent Czech architect. Among other buildings, he built the Lažanský Palace and the Böhmisches Sparkasse Palace in Prague.
- 3 See Jaroslav Kolář, Peníze a politika. Karel Engliš, bojovník o stabilizaci. Prague 1937, p. 555.
- 4 Antonín Viktor Barvītius (1823–1901), a prominent Czech architect and designer.
- 5 Václav Ledvinka – Bohumír Mráz – Vít Vlnas, Pražské paláce (encyklopedický ilustrovaný přehled), Prague 1995, pp. 262–266.
- 6 Josef Kreysa, Technická správa. in: Deset let Národní banky Československé. Prague 1937, p. 110.
- 7 Czech National Bank Archive (hereinafter AČNB), archival holding the National Bank of Czechoslovakia (hereinafter NBČ), NBČ/987/2, Vyhlášení budov dle zákona z 3. 2. 1920, všeobecně-technické zprávy (bankovní budovy a pensijního fondu), Zvyšování činů, domovní řád – Technická správa (Statutory expropriation of buildings of 3 February 1920, General and technical reports (bank buildings and pension fund), Increase in rents, house rules – Technical administration), box no. 987.
- 8 The Banking Office became the owner of the Schebek Palace only in 1924 after purchasing all properties owned by the Austro-Hungarian Bank, which was in liquidation – and located in Czechoslovakia. The palace was valued at 479,000 Czechoslovak crowns (see AČNB, NBČ/235/1, Dohody a smlouvy, Kupní smlouva o pozemcích, budovách a zařízení filiálky Rakousko-uherské banky na území Československé republiky ze 17. 1. 1924/Agreements and contracts, Contract of 17 January 1924 for the purchase of land, buildings and equipment of branches of the Austro-Hungarian Bank in the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic/), box no. 235. Until then, however, the Banking Office fully respected the ownership rights of the previous bank of issue and consulted its representatives on all modifications (see e.g., AČNB, NBČ/1450/2, Stavební správa Bankovního úřadu, čp. 936, Zabrání budov pro účely veřejné, Dopis Rakousko-uherské banky, Vídeň na Bankovní úřad ministerstva financí č. j. 5163/1919 z 27. 12. 1919/Buildings administration of the Banking Office, building no. 936, Expropriation of buildings in the public interest, Letter of 27 December 1919 from the Austro-Hungarian Bank, Vienna to the Banking Office of the Ministry of Finance Ref. No. 5163/1919/), box no. 1450. After the National Bank of Czechoslovakia was established, it signed an agreement with the Banking Office on 2 February 1927 under which the new bank of issue took over these and other newly purchased properties. (Ibid., NBČ/207/4, Budovy v Praze, kupní smlouvy k budovám vlastněným NBČ v Praze/Buildings in Prague, contracts for the purchase of buildings owned by the National Bank of Czechoslovakia in Prague/), box no. 207 and NBČ/235/1, Dohody a smlouvy, Úmluva mezi vládou republiky Československé a Národní bankou Československou o vyúčtování a z něho plynoucí úpravě práv a závazků vzniklých pro obě strany z 2. 2. 1927/Agreements and contracts, Agreement of 2 February 1927 between the government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the National Bank of Czechoslovakia about the settlement and the resulting adjustment of rights and obligations for the two parties of 2. 2. 1927/), box no. 235).
- 9 See Act No. 87/1920 Coll., allowing a loan and establishing a building fund for new buildings of the Parliament, official central government buildings, universities and other grand state buildings.
- 10 AČNB, NBČ/1719/2, Materiál „Návrh na vypracování plánů pro stavbu tiskárny“ (Document entitled “Proposal for elaborating plans for building a printing works”), s. d. (prior to 11 May 2020), box no. 1719.
- 11 The façade of the Deym (or Harrach) Palace is a dominant Baroque feature of Jindřišská Street. Doubts about demolishing it thus arose when the project for the new Banking Office building was being prepared. Extensive historical research proved that the frontage was not an original Baroque one. Nonetheless, the Státní památkový ústav (Historic Preservation Office) long opposed the bank of issue’s plan to demolish the palace on the grounds that the first Czechoslovak government had been based there in 1919. See AČNB, NBČ/1409/1, Historie domu č. 939 Deymova paláce (dříve Harrachův palác) a písemnosti týkající se domu: historie Deymova domu (History of house no. 939, the Deym Palace) (formerly the Harrach Palace), and documents regarding the house: history of the Deym house), box no. 1409.
- 12 For more on the specificities of the land on which the new building of the Banking Office of the Ministry of Finance/National Bank of Czechoslovakia was to be built, see AČNB, NBČ/1719/2, Dopis Bankovního úřadu ministerstva financí na Státní regulační komisi z 30. 10. 1923 (Letter of 20 October 1923 from the Banking Office of the Ministry of Finance to the State Regulation Committee), box no. 1719.
- 13 The block of the building containing bank apartments included a stately apartment for the Governor and Chief Executive Director of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia. For more on the reconstruction and furnishings, see AČNB, NBČ/1611/1, Různé písemnosti týkající se novostavby tiskárny bankovek, (Various documents regarding the new building of the banknote printing works), box no. 1611 and NBČ/1608/3, Zařízení reprezentačních prostor guvernéra, Praha II. č. 947 (Furnishings of the Governor’s ceremonial rooms, Prague II, no. 947), box no. 1608.
- 14 Josef Záruba-Pfeffermann (1869–1938), Czech architect and politician, deputy of the Revolutionary National Assembly in 1918–1920.
- 15 AČNB, NBČ/1719/2, Materiál „Návrh na vypracování plánů pro stavbu tiskárny“ (Document entitled “Proposal for drafting plans for the construction of a printing works”), s. d. (prior to 11 May 2020), box no. 1719.
- 16 For more on Pfeffermann’s design, see AČNB, NBČ/1449/4, Stavební plány tiskárny BUMF, k. č. 1449 (Building plans for the printing works of the Bank Office of the Ministry of Finance, box no. 1449).
- 17 AČNB, NBČ/1719/2, Technická zpráva o vypracování plánů pro stavbu státní tiskárny na bankovky v Praze v Růžové ulici z 10. 8. 1922, k. č. 1719 (Technical report of 10 August 1922 on drafting plans for the construction of a state banknote printing works in Prague, Růžová Street, box no. 1719). Sakař was already a member of the Banking Office’s building committee. This may be why he was approached to take over Pfeffermann’s work on the project.
- 18 AČNB, NBČ/1719/2, Dopis Bankovního úřadu ministerstva financí na ministerstvo veřejných prací, odbor 3B z 30. 8. 1923 (Letter of 30 August 1923 from the Bank Office of the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Public Works, department 3B), box no. 1719. Dr Heinrich of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, Georg Nicolaus from Berlin, and Mr Hellerbart, Chief Inspector of the Vienna banknote printing works. For more on their statements, see Ibid., Zápis o schůzi stavebního komitétu konané dne 24. září 1923 (Minutes of the meeting of the building committee held on 24 September 1923), box no. 1719 and NBČ, 1694/1, Tiskárna bankovek, dobrozdání expertů (Banknote printing works, expert opinion), box no. 1694.
- 19 For more on the progress of work, see AČNB, NBČ/1462/2, Tiskárna bankovek, Zprávy pro bankovní radu o postupu stavby tiskárny bankovek v Růžové ulici z let 1923–1930 (Banknote printing works, Reports for the Bank Board regarding progress with the construction of the banknote printing works in Růžová Street from 1923–1930), box no. 1462.
- 20 Prof. Celda (Celestin) Klouček (1855–1935), Czech sculptor, stucco worker, designer and professor at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague.
- 21 Karel Pavlík (1874–1947), Czech sculptor, a student of professor Celda Klouček.
- 22 Antonín Odehnal (1878–1957), Czech sculptor and medal-maker.
- 23 Prof. Josef Velflík (1867–1943), Czech architect and professor at the State Technical School in Prague. Among other things, he was involved in the construction of office buildings for the Pension Fund of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia.
- 24 For more on the commissioning of the order, see AČNB, NBČ/3/25, Zápis o schůzi užšího výboru bankovní rady konané dne 21. 12. 1927 (Minutes of the meeting of the select committee of the Bank Board held on 21 December 1927), box no. 3. Josef Wagner (1901–1957), Czech sculptor and draftsman, professor at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague.
- 25 Departments started to be relocated to the Schebek Palace at the end of 1936 so that the buildings in place of which the new banking palace was to be built could be demolished. See AČNB, NBČ/85/10, Zápis schůze administrativního odboru ze dne 24. 11. 1936 (Minutes of the meeting of the administrative department held on 27 November 1936, pp. 13–21), pp. 13–21, box no. 85. However, the construction was delayed further because the National Bank of Czechoslovakia refused to accept a new street line set by the State Regulation Committee for Prague and surrounding areas. Under the new zoning rule, Jindřišská Street was to be widened significantly and all new buildings moved accordingly – to the detriment of the building owners, of course. See AČNB, NBČ/1549/2, Projekt nového bankovního paláce N. B. v Praze, Dopis Národní banky Československé na Státní regulační komisi pro hlavní město Prahu s okolím z 18. 1. 1938 (Project for a new banking palace of the N.B. in Prague, letter of 18 January 1938 from the National Bank of Czechoslovakia to the State Regulation Committee for Prague and surrounding areas), box no. 1549.
- 26 Jaroslav František Stockar-Bernkopf (1890–1977), a prominent Czech architect. In 1935–1945 he headed the technical department of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia and later the National Bank for Bohemia and Moravia.
- 27 He compiled a detailed report on his study trip to the banks of issue in Paris, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Berlin on 16 June–16 July 1937. The report is a remarkable summary of his findings not only about the buildings, but also about the work style and work habits of local staff. See AČNB, NBČ/1439/1, Zpráva o studijní cestě do Paříže, Londýna, Bruselu, Amsterdamu, Kodaně, Oslo, Stockholmu a Berlína a prohlídce tamních cedulových banky a jiných bank obchodních (Report on a study trip to Paris, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Berlin and inspections of local banks of issue and other commercial banks), box no. 1439.
- 28 See AČNB, NBČ/1549/2, Projekt nového bankovního paláce N. B. v Praze, Dopis technického oddělení na úvěrový odbor z 2. 12. 1938 (Project for a new banking palace of the N.B. in Prague, Letter of 2 December 1938 from the technical department to the loan department) and Ibid., Oběžník z 15. 4. 1941 (Memo of 15 April 1941), box no. 1549.
- 29 Ibid., Dopis technické správy na úvěrový odbor z 2. 4. 1947 (Letter of 2 April 1947 from the technical administration unit to the loan department), box no. 1549.
- 30 The problems with space worsened, among other reasons, because the building of the National Bank housed the Prague Commodities and Securities Exchange. It was relocated there in 1943 at the decision of the occupying authorities, as its building was taken over by the Duisburg Opera. See AČNB, NBČ/991/4, Pražská burza pro zboží a cenné papíry (Prague Commodities and Securities Exchange), box no. 991.
- 31 Relocation proposals had appeared sporadically prior to 1939. One option had been to purchase the Bankovní dům Petschek a spol. building, whose owners had decided to leave Czechoslovakia when the danger from Nazi Germany had been intensifying (see AČNB, NBČ/3/32, Zápis o schůzi užšího výboru bankovní rady konané dne 16. 1. 1939 (Minutes of a meeting of the select committee of the Bank Board held on 16 January 1939), pp. 32–33, box no. 3. Similarly, the purchase of the Česká spořitelna (Böhmische Sparkasse) building had been considered during World War II. Paradoxically, this building had also been designed by Vojtěch Ignác Ullmann (see AČNB, NBČ/1549/2, Projekt nového bankovního paláce N. B. v Praze, Technická zpráva... o prohlídce a přibližném odhadu nemovitosti Spořitelny české 13. 8. 1941/Project for a new banking palace of the N.B. in Prague, Technical report of 13 August 1941... on an inspection and an approximate assessment of property of Spořitelna česká/), box no. 1549.
- 32 Ibid., Projekt nového bankovního paláce NB v Praze, Dopis Národní banky Československé na ministerstvo financí z 3. 4. 1948 (Project for a new banking palace of the NB in Prague, Letter of 3 April 1948 from the National Bank of Czechoslovakia to the Ministry of Finance) and Ibid., Dopis Národní banky Československé na Plánovací komisi pro Prahu a okolí ze 7. 6. 1948 (Letter of 7 June 1948 from the National Bank of Czechoslovakia to the Planning Committee for Prague and surrounding areas), box no. 1549.
- 33 M, 04: For relocation. Časopis zaměstnanců Státní banky československé v Praze, II/3, p. 8. After its establishment, the State Bank of Czechoslovakia took over the rights and obligations of Czechoslovak banks by way of singular succession. In the case of property, however, this only involved operational property management by the Czechoslovak state. See, for example, AČNB, archival holding Státní banka československá – Nemovitosti (hereinafter SBČS-Nem), SBČS-Nem/30, Dům čp. 936 v Praze 2, Dopis Právního oddělení na Obvodní pobočku Praha 3, Správa nemovitostí z 14. 2. 1959 (House no. 936 in Prague 2, Letter of 14 February 1959 from the legal department to the Prague 3 District Branch, Property management), box no. 6.
- 34 Ibid., Dům čp. 936 v Praze 2, Zpráva pro ředitele správy organizační a rozpočtové SBČS L. Zrzavého, Převod budovy čp. 936 v Praze 1, Tr. polit. vězňů č. 7, do správy ČSAV z 14. 2. 1959 (House no. 936 in Prague 2, Letter of 14 February 1959 to the Director of the Organisational and Budget Administration of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia L. Zrzavý “Transfer of building no. 936 in Prague 1, Tr. polit. vězňů 7 to the management of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences), box no. 6. Similarly, the operational administration of other buildings between Jindřišská, Politických vězňů (formerly Bredovská) and Růžová streets was also transferred to other entities. See, for example, AČNB, SBČS-Nem/31, Dům čp. 937 v Praze 2 (House no. 937 in Prague 2), box no. 6.



# Danmarks Nationalbank – A monumental work of contemporary architecture

Pia Jønsson

In the very heart of Copenhagen, facing the waterfront and heritage buildings, stands a modern landmark, the central bank of Denmark. It is an accomplished building in the design of both its exterior and interior. The streamlined and stark appearance of this functionalist marble and glass structure interacts with the warm organic materials within, creating a uniquely unified whole. It was designed by the world-famous perfectionist modernist Arne Jacobsen.

After the Second World War, the premises that housed the central bank of Denmark, Danmarks Nationalbank, had become cramped, and larger facilities were needed. The bank was domiciled in a complex of buildings, while the main building was not part of a continuous block. Designed between 1865 and 1870, and lavishly ornamented in the style of Florentine Renaissance palaces, it was in keeping with venerable, heritage bank premises around the world.

## New requirements to be met

In 1961, Danmarks Nationalbank invited five prominent architects and design offices of the day to participate in a closed architectural competition. This was the outcome of a proposal to consolidate the bank's presence and activities in a single modern building complex, taking into account its various functions and its central location, which is surrounded by historical buildings, ministries and businesses alike. Given the complexity of the project, the competition programme gave the participants the scope to decide whether the existing main bank building should be preserved or demolished. The rest of the existing complex was to be pulled down. To obtain the best possible basis for evaluating the incoming proposals, each of them was analysed by experts with reference to a set of criteria. These concerned harmonising the complex with the urban environs as well as fulfilling the bank's operational requirements.



*Facing the waterfront and heritage buildings stands a modern landmark, the central bank of Denmark*

A majority of jury members named the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen's proposal the winning submission. This project entailed demolition of the existing building to create new aesthetic values through an interaction between the modern complex, the heritage buildings that surrounded it, and the waterfront. This solution met the operational requirements of the bank, while the architectural vision was convincing. Furthermore, the jury found that the concentration of the bank's departments in a tall wing offered a number of advantages in terms of layout so that large parts of the complex, facing the historic buildings, could be kept much lower.

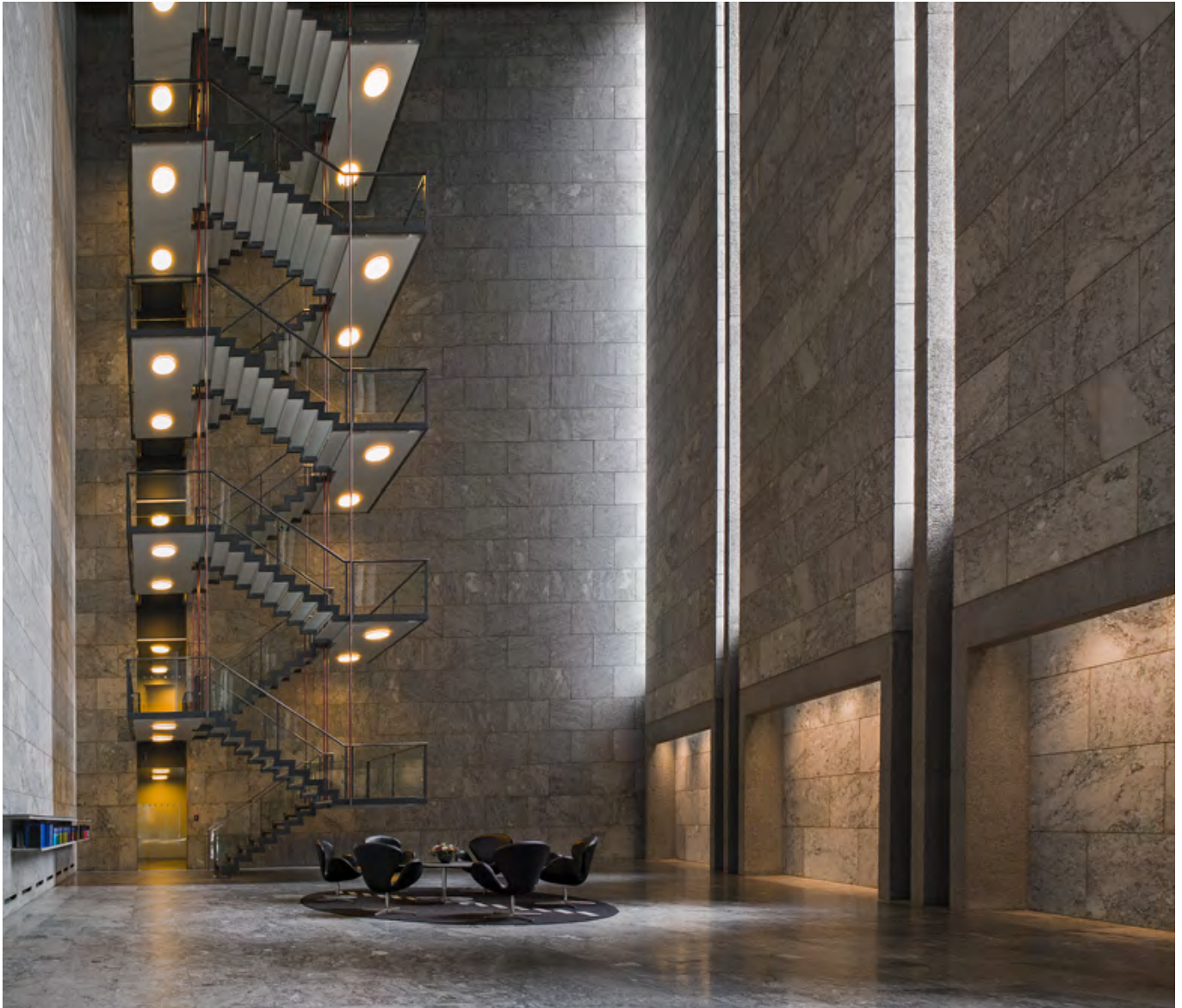
It was crucial that the bank's various operations would not be interrupted by construction of the extensive complex. The project was therefore split up into three stages, with individual bank departments to be transferred as soon as the various sections became ready.

The project planning was detailed in the extreme, with thousands of plans, each with itemised time and cost estimates. All the façades were manufactured within the first construction stage to ensure that they were ready to be fitted with glass infills at the time when they were to be installed. As a result of the strict control and detailed planning of the construction process, which involved comprehensive coordination and weekly meetings, this grand and challenging project was executed on budget and on time.

## A reputable architect and his loyal team

At the time of being awarded this commission, Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971) was already recognised as an acclaimed architect and designer internationally for the vast number of buildings, furniture and designer items to his name. These are now widely regarded as Modernist classics.

As early as in 1929, the 27-year-old Arne Jacobsen had established himself as one of



*There are almost 20 meters to the ceiling in the cathedral-like lobby. Daylight enters through tall, narrow windows between the façade pillars*

the most visionary and progressive Danish architects of his day when he was awarded the first prize for the ultra-modernistic, 'The House of the Future'. This was a concept presented at The Building and Housing Exhibition of the Danish Association of Architects in Copenhagen. Arne Jacobsen was one of the first to introduce and adopt modernism in Denmark, which was inspired by Le Corbusier.

Jacobsen's major architectural works include the Bellavista housing estate (1934), the playhouse Bellevue Teatret (1935-36), Aarhus City Hall (1938-41), Søllerød Town Hall (1942) and St. Catherine's College, Oxford (1964). In addition, his design objects include

the AJ cutlery (1957), the Vola tapware (1959), the Cyllinda-line (1967) interior design/household ware and the Banker's Clock. Internationally, Jacobsen is perhaps most famous for his iconic furniture designs, including The Ant (1952) and Series 7 (1955) stacking chairs, The Egg (1958) and The Swan (1958) lounge seating.

With his holistic and perfectionist approach to both the smallest finesse and the overall appearance of his projects, Arne Jacobsen's style and method as an architect and designer were influential internationally and continue to this day to inspire up-and-coming architects.

In 1971 Arne Jacobsen died suddenly, just after the materials for the Danmarks Nationalbank building had been selected and the first stage of construction had been completed. This comprised the northern end of the tall block and the first section of the office wing, the banknote printing works, and the technical room and canteen facilities.

The architects Hans Dissing (1926-1998) and Otto Weitling (b. 1930), Arne Jacobsen's two closest colleagues, took over and continued the project. Arne Jacobsen's design office was renamed DISSING+WEITLING. The Danmarks Nationalbank building is considered



*A versatile, pearwood-veneered storage and partitioning unit serving both the corridor side and office side with combinations of coat-rack, cabinet, drawer and shelving modules*

Arne Jacobsen's crowning architectural achievement not only in its form and function, but also in his detailed plans for how the building was to be operated; all of which were faithfully executed by the firm DISSING+WEITLING.

### **Straight lines through fundamental principles**

The Danmarks Nationalbank building is constructed from 420 x 420 cm units forming the load-bearing structure. This design made it possible to add an extra storey while preventing the building from towering above neighbouring blocks.

The modular structure pervades both the exterior and the interior of the building complex, and is characterised by multiple types of façades: the open glass-faced bays; and the closed marble fronts, which are divided up into rectangular forms; also the pearwood-veneered, double-sided cabinets that separate the wide corridors from the meeting rooms and offices, which are located in the office corridors.

The building's extensive glass façade vary in appearance depending on the weather and the time of the day, and they integrate surrounding buildings such as Holmen's Church and the classical columns of Erichsen's mansion by reflecting them. The glass bays are based on the curtain wall principle, whereby the façade is mounted on the building without being part of the load-bearing structure. The curtain walls feature triple-glazed infills consisting of insulating plate glass, sheet glass, and hardened

glass innermost with frosting to parapet level. Transparent window blinds between the inner and outer glazing units trap non-absorbed solar heat; this was a highly innovative feature in the early 1970s.

### **Unique attention to detail and materials**

The special dictates of the architectural design for streamlining and minimal building maintenance are reflected in the consistent use of materials and the clean lines of the building's structure.

Arne Jacobsen's buildings are characterised by their exceptional level of detail. For Jacobsen, continuity between the finer details and the overall impression was essential, and the Danmarks Nationalbank building is permeated by this principle. Interior furnishings such as the stackable Lily chair, the Banker's Clock, and fittings such as the Vola tapware, all of which are still in production today, were designed specifically for Danmarks Nationalbank.

Light grey Porsgrunn marble was used consistently for the façades, the lobby floor and walls and the coffee tables in the office corridors. Porsgrunn marble comes from Norway and was greatly favoured by Arne Jacobsen. With its finely detailed structure of coral patterns and fossils, the dynamic surface of this marble harmonises exquisitely with the surrounding architecture.

As a talented artist, Arne Jacobsen had a unique sense of colour, as evidenced by the façades and interiors that complement the surroundings in a colour

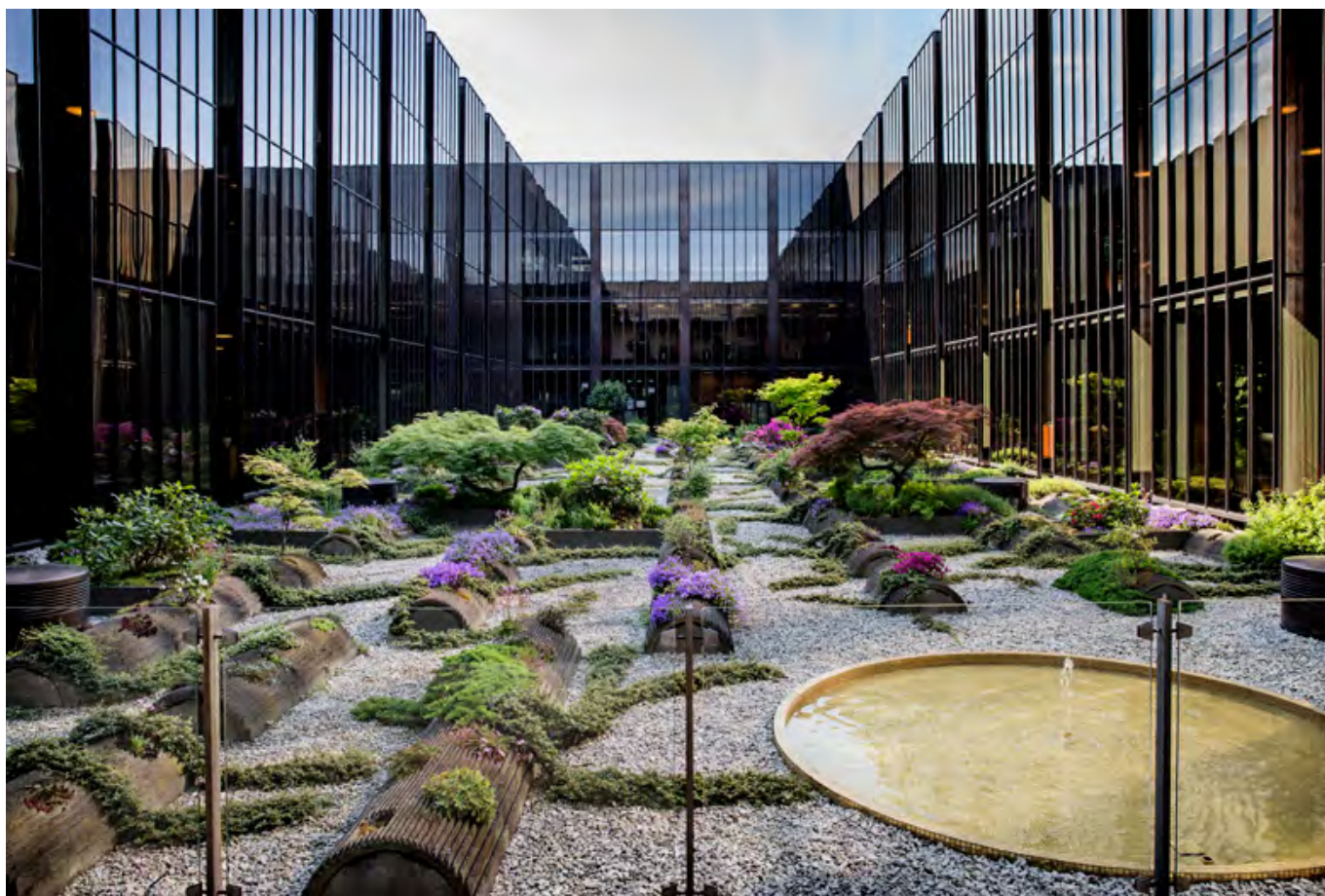
scheme dominated by shades of grey, and contrasted with the red tiles of the stock exchange building and the painted facade of Holmen's Church. Inside the building, the same consistent use of materials adds to the harmony of the building. The linoleum floors and walls of the staircases and lifts likewise testify to Jacobsen's ability to apply a colour scheme, which includes a muted yellow and a subdued turquoise that make the decor an experience in itself.

### **Architectural presence in the city**

The Functionalist Danmarks Nationalbank building is centrally located in Copenhagen, close to the 17th century stock exchange building; the Neo-Baroque Christiansborg Palace, which is the seat of the Danish Parliament; the Supreme Court and the Prime Minister's Office; the 350-year-old Holmen's Church; financial institutions; and the waterfront. Here, the central bank premises are at once both prominent and in keeping with the heritage buildings that surround them.

The bank complex comprises a low-rise and a mid-rise structure, surrounded by a single-storey-high wall. The low-rise premises with the paved, public garden in front provide a softening distance to Holmen's Church by taking its proportions into consideration. The mid-rise part of the building, facing a busy street, respects the general height of the district and ensures that the bank building harmonises with the adjacent 19th century houses.





*'Arne Jacobsen's Garden' is designed by Jacobsen personally. It is inspired by fragments of columns and by his own private garden*

### Building layout and spatial qualities

From the bank's modest main entrance, a square 'hole' in the façade, the visitor enters a wedge-shaped and cathedral-like lobby with almost 20 metres to the ceiling, from which daylight enters through tall, narrow windows between the façade pillars. The design of the lobby is inspired by the former bank building from 1870 and by the grand entrance halls of other central banks.

The lobby widens out from 4 metres at the entrance to 14 metres at the opposite end where a sculptural steel staircase, suspended from red steel wires, provides access to the six floors of the building.

A low-ceilinged passageway leads to the banking hall, a 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> low-lit interior with walls clad in knotless Central European pearwood, and with West African Doussie-wood flooring. Both materials are used consistently throughout much of the bank's interior. Originally an open-plan office with counters and desks where staff kept accounts and served

customers, the banking hall is now used as a library and lecture theatre.

The daylight filters through a narrow window band placed by the ceiling and through glass display units, the upper sections of which connect with the courtyard beyond. Similar inset display units are found around the premises and contain exotic hanging plants that were carefully chosen when the building was designed.

The dark colouring of the wooden walls and flooring, the exotic plants and low daylighting provide a quite different atmosphere to the bright meeting rooms and offices with their large windows, such as the 'R-Hall', which is used for representational purposes.

The 'R-Hall' is a 140 m<sup>2</sup> meeting room with a high ceiling that, like the newly refurbished staff canteen, offers a panoramic view of Holmen's Church and the former stock exchange building. These are the only two interiors that depart from the modular principle. A flexible arrangement

of rectangular and quarter-circle tables in the 'R-Hall' makes this a versatile venue for hosting board-of-directors meetings or press conferences for example. In the canteen, employees meet up for lunch or a brief in-house meeting, while enjoying the wide-angled view of the waterfront, heritage buildings and the dynamic urban scene.

Down the long corridors, the pearwood-veneered, double-sided cabinets variously contain wardrobes, drawers and closed bookcases made of maple. Personal belongings and supplies are stored out of sight behind a plain wooden surface, and the clean lines of the storage units and other furniture ensure that the corridors and offices remain elegantly streamlined and functional. Mobile grey partition walls enhance the flexibility of the office spaces.

Until recently, a large printing hall was in use. With its length and breadth of 25x25 metres and a floor-to-ceiling height of 8 metres, this is the largest room in the



*Two types of façades: The open glass-faced bays and the closed marble fronts, divided up into rectangular forms*

building, and in reality extends upwards by three floors. Although equipped with the necessary machines, instruments and tools for producing banknotes, the interior is elegant in its design, with a distinctive Arne Jacobsen touch.

Each room and corridor in the building has its own distinctive features, which complement the overall design. The interior abounds in refined features, testifying to the architect's assiduous attention to detail.

#### **Gardens and courtyards for reflection**

The building has two courtyards, a roof garden and a paved garden facing Holmen's Church.

These outdoor areas share common design themes with landscaping elements consisting of natural stone, water and greenery. The variety of dramatic and restrained layouts reflects Arne Jacobsen's keen interest in gardens and greenery such as succulents and leafy plants.

The primary function of the courtyards is to provide the offices with daylight and a view of the outdoors. The northern courtyard is just over 700 m<sup>2</sup> in size and features semi-cylindrical concrete drums as plant beds and four ornamental pools. It is known as 'Arne Jacobsen's Garden' because he designed it personally, inspired in part by his own private garden and by fragments of classical columns.

The southern 500 m<sup>2</sup> courtyard covers the roof of the banking hall with transverse waves, formed by stone. Laid out as a rock garden with a minimum of soil beneath the plants, this courtyard contains five reflecting water pools with water lilies and goldfish.

The largest garden in the complex is on the almost 5,000-m<sup>2</sup> trapezoidal roof covering the lower part of the building. This ornamental garden is visible from all four office floors. The pale stones covering the roof garden and the mesh of the aluminium railings hold

formations of circular skylights and planters containing creepers and taller specimens.

Outside the lower wall of the bank, encircling the roof garden at street level, an extended public pavement zone serves as a visual link between the bank and Holmen's Church. The granite plinth from the former bank building has been cut into kerbstones and reused, just as two former column capitals are incorporated in the paved garden. Just by a pool, a long granite wall winds its way around taller plants and trees to evoke 'the snake in the tunnel', the name given to the first attempt at European monetary cooperation in the 1980s. This flowing garden layout offers passers-by a tranquil sight and place to stop on an otherwise busy urban street.

#### **A heritage building**

In 2009, what is now the Danish Agency for Culture decided to list the Danmarks Nationalbank building on the recommendation of





*Corridor outside the governor's office. Walls clad in knotless Central European pearwood and floors in West African Doussie-wood – both of which materials are used consistently throughout much of the bank's interior*

the Historic Buildings Council. At that time, it was the youngest listed building in Denmark. The listing was based on the architectural and heritage merits of the building, including its architectural landmark value for the city, its layout and materials, its gardens and courtyards and fine detailing. The listing entails that the bank must apply for permission to perform any construction work other than maintenance, in order to preserve the building and its interior as a tribute to the vision of its architect.

#### Public access

The lobby of Danmarks Nationalbank is open to the public on weekdays from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and contains an exhibition of old and current Danish and Faroese banknotes and coins.

For security reasons, no guided tours are offered, and photography is strictly prohibited inside the building. ●

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About the building visit:  
[www.nationalbanken.dk/en](http://www.nationalbanken.dk/en)

About Arne Jacobsen visit:  
[www.fritzhanzen.com](http://www.fritzhanzen.com)

All photos by Danmarks Nationalbank

#### Facts at a glance

The Danish central bank building, Danmarks Nationalbank, covers an area of 48,000 m<sup>2</sup>. At the time of construction, the price per square metre was DKK 6,500, and the building cost a total of DKK 370 million.

In 2013, solar panels were installed on the roof of the building. They are arranged horizontally so that they are not visible from the street and do not detract from the façades of the building. The solar panels generate approx. 100,000 kWh a year.

#### Author profile

Pia Jønsson (b. 1958) holds an MA in Literature and Film & Media from the University of Copenhagen. She runs the agency META-FOR, [www.metafor.dk](http://www.metafor.dk), and works in the field of strategic cross media communication, texts, concept development, and visual aesthetics. Pia Jønsson is the author of 3 books, jurywoman at the Danish Book Craft Society, and committee member at the Danish-Japanese Society.

# The architecture of savings - The French saving banks at the heart of urban history

Laure de Llamby

**W**ith a few exceptions, the French Savings Banks, founded in France in the first half of the 19th century, originally took up residence in cramped and unfurnished premises on loan from city councils. As their offices were open on Sundays only, they often had to share the small room provided to them with a municipal service that required the space during the week. As their activity expanded, they were forced to move into larger and larger premises, also on loan from the city councils. The architectural heritage of the Saving Banks still bears traces of these accommodations in a sometimes remarkable municipal property portfolio; a number of these offices were still in use by smaller banks when the *Caisses d'Épargne* began to consolidate in the 1980s.

After several successive moves, the majority of the Saving Banks gradually decided to acquire their own premises. For example, in 1842 the *Caisse d'Épargne* of Paris bought *Hôtel Thoynard*, a building constructed in the 18th century, and which it still owns today. Other Saving Banks later followed suit and acquired historic buildings to house their services. The Bourges office established its premises in a house built between 1513 and 1515, known as *Maison Pelvoysin*. This building still houses the branch today.

These examples, however, are few and far between; the vast majority of the Saving Banks chose to undertake the construction of their own building. From the late 19th to the early 20th century, they carried out a widespread building programme that helped to solidify their image among the inhabitants of each region in a lasting manner that is still effective today.

The construction of these buildings reflects the importance and success of the Saving Banks. But they also demonstrate, above all, their desire to promote, through architecture, the values that underlie the savings entrusted to them. In this way, an

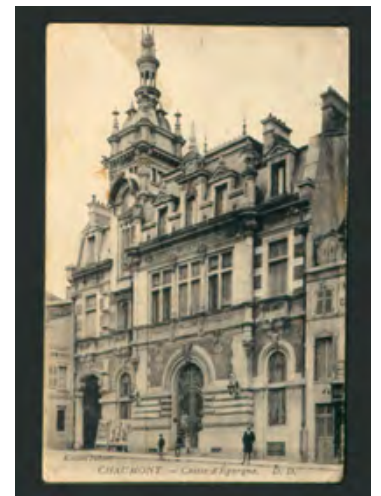


*Hôtel Thoynard in Paris, headquarters of Caisse d'Épargne Ile de France. Copyright FNCE. G Millo.*

*The Saving Bank buildings occupy a special place in urban history. As evidence of this, many of them have been made the subject of a postcard. Copyright FNCE*



*The Saving Bank buildings occupy a special place in urban history. As evidence of this, many of them have been made the subject of a postcard. Copyright FNCE*







*Launched in Paris by Charles Garnier in 1878 with the construction of the Cercle de la Librairie on Boulevard Saint Germain, the rotunda became a widespread architectural trend at the end of the 19th century. It inspired many architects who designed rotundas for the Caisse d'Epargne buildings, as shown here: the former Saving Bank branches in Langres, and Aubusson. Copyright FNCE. G Millo*



architectural style specific to the French Saving Banks was forged.

The building programme was undertaken in the context of the Haussmannisation of French cities. The buildings borrowed elements from models of public edifices – notably town halls – and banking establishments that were constructed in the same period to project an image of security and respectability. The choice of their location contributed to their status as true urban monuments. Often isolated in a public square or, barring that, at the corner of a street, these buildings are highly visible to inhabitants. In addition, many of the Caisse d'Epargne buildings are adorned with domes, rotundas, and bell towers, which further emphasises their importance.

These buildings are examples of Eclecticism, an architectural trend of the period, which consists of incorporating a mixture of elements from various styles in art history (Neo-Renaissance, Neoclassical, or even Neo-Moorish). The Neo-Louis XVI style was widely used, with colonnades often decorating building façades. A number of buildings were designed in the Neo-Gothic vein, while other rarer examples were influenced by Art Nouveau.

What distinguishes the Saving Bank buildings from other public buildings of the period are the ornaments and sculptures that decorate their pediments and façades. The motifs on display serve to promote popular savings while celebrating temperance and forethought. They depict a number of allegories relating to thrift in the manner of antiquities or cornucopias. The façade decorations are sometimes the work of renowned artists and winners of the Grand Prix de Rome, as in Marseille, for example. Allegorical sculptures, paintings, mosaic flooring, and stained-glass windows also decorate the interiors of many buildings, celebrating the virtues of economy, work, and temperance. Following the example of public authorities who commissioned wall paintings for the interiors of prefectures, libraries, and town halls, the Caisses d'Epargne sometimes commissioned paintings to decorate their Board of Directors meeting rooms. This was the case in Troyes, Marseille, and Le Puy, where a large composition by Assezat de Bouteyre represents “The family placing the fruit of its work in savings”.

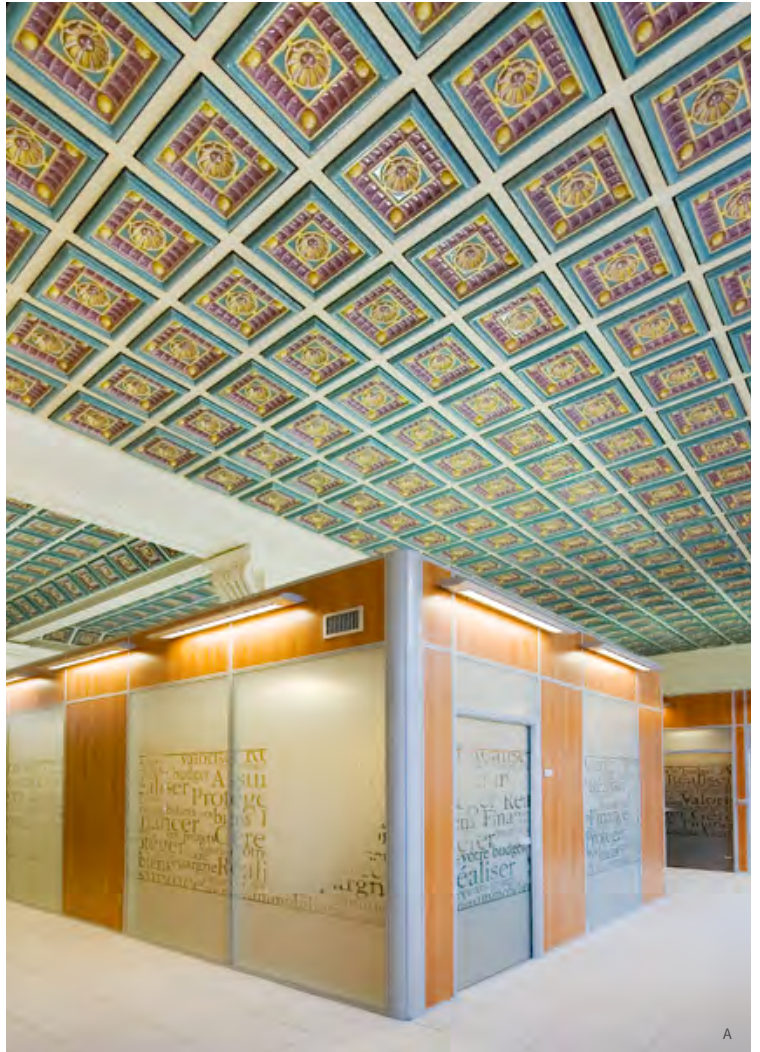


*Detail of the pediment of the Building of the Caisse d'Epargne Provence Alpes Corse*





*Panels of the wall fresco decorating the Board room in Troyes, painted by William Laparra (1873-1920), in which the artist glorifies the benefits of thrift for all, starting from the youngest age. Copyright FNCE- G. Millo*



A



*Minerva or wisdom protecting the savings chest" (1903). Marble detail by André Allar (1845-1926) located in the foyer of the Caisse d'Epargne building in Marseille, depicting the goddess of wisdom protecting a savings chest. Copyright FNCE. G Millo*



B

*Images A&B - A marriage of past and present: Caisse d'Epargne Loire Drôme Ardèche chose to integrate the contemporary activities of the Montbrison branch with the setting of its original historic building. The late-19th century wall ornamentations recall the date of the founding of the Caisse d'Epargne in Montbrison, while automated banking services are carried out nearby. This integration of past and present also guided Caisse d'Epargne d'Auvergne et du Limousin in its restoration of the Hôtel de Moulins, whose antique coffered ceiling blends harmoniously with the contemporary design of the foyer. Copyright FNCE. G Millo*





*Images A&B - The symbols of the Caisse d'Epargne can often be found inscribed on the pediments of the Saving Bank buildings, as in Montpellier and Provins. The bee and its hive also reflect the identity of their original owner, as in Toulon and Saint-Jean-d'Angely. Copyright FNCE. G Millo*



*In Arras, the former Caisse d'Epargne building houses private dwellings. One look, however, is enough to perceive the historic nature of the building. The entry gates, decorated with medallions engraved with the squirrel symbol, and the pediment still reflect the building's history. Copyright FNCE. V. Ferlicco*

A number of these historic buildings, ill-adapted to the daily activities of the contemporary bank, were sold by the Caisses d'Epargne and found new uses. Others, such as those in Toulouse and Marseille, have benefited from an exemplary rehabilitation. Behind the façades, restored to their original state, are modernised interiors meeting the latest environmental and technological standards. A number of the buildings still house branches.

Whether or not they remain the property of the Caisses d'Epargne, many of these historic buildings conserve the signature of their original owner. Their pediments bear the inscription "Caisse d'Epargne" engraved in the stone. The bee

and its hive, and later, the squirrel (the symbol of the French Saving Banks) were also frequently engraved on the pediments of these buildings.

Today, the new headquarters of the French Saving Banks reflect the banks' modernisation, their influence as large regional banks, and their reach throughout the territories. The environment, humanity and quality of life are at the heart of the banks' new projects, many of which have traded city centres for new business parks where the major figures of regional economic activity are concentrated. The Caisse d'Epargne of Auvergne-Limousin chose in 2006 to establish its offices in the ESTER Technopole, which has emerged as

a centre of development for cutting-edge companies and high-tech projects. In Metz, it was in the Amphitheatre district, at the heart of a new city centre -- a symbol of modernity and urban renewal -- that Caisse d'Epargne Lorraine Champagne-Ardenne established its offices at the end of 2013. Its new headquarters is housed in "La Halle", a building designed by the architect Nicolas Michelin, whose innovative infrastructures are designed to meet contemporary challenges, particularly those facing digital enterprises.

Then, as now, the French Saving Banks have favoured locations that place them at the heart of local activity and underscore their role as key players in these territories. ●

# Societe Generale: architecture and finance at the time of the Belle Époque

Farid Ameur

**F**ounded in 1864, Societe Generale has always sought to demonstrate its solidity, and to attract and satisfy its clients. This approach was also required due to the high level of competition amongst banks. It ultimately resulted in the bank choosing an architectural expression of its ambition based on modernity and innovation.

## At the heart of the city

Societe Generale's emergence cannot be separated from that of its real estate holdings. It began with a search for respectability. Then, at the start of the 20th century, the bank took on a monumental shape to signify a reassuring form of power.

At the turn of the 20th century, network branches – with few exceptions – had a number of features in common, the first of which was their location within the urban grid. Societe Generale wanted to mark its presence and be easily identifiable within busy commercial areas, and to have a recognizable and unique style. Just like its competitors, the bank picked locations for its offices in the downtown areas, and whenever possible, in corner buildings on squares, avenues, and boulevards, where the main business activity was taking place. While elegant stone buildings were the norm, the bank added its own touch, placing its name on the front or the windows in block or gold letters along with the company's capitalisation figures, which needed ongoing adjustment. Marble signs were affixed on each side of the entrance, announcing the services offered by the establishment. Cast-iron columns allowed for large windows on the ground floor that let daylight flood in. The façades were in painted wood with two-metre-high windows, also allowing natural light to enter while remaining too high for any passers-by to see in. Posters with the “SG” letters intertwined listed the various investment offers



*Rue de Provence in 1910. On the right side: the Societe Generale headquarters' entry.*  
© Archives historiques Société Générale



*Art Nouveau in Toulouse, 1912.* © Archives historiques Société Générale

available to customers. In some branches, grooms were present to welcome visitors, among other duties.

Before reaching the main floor, customers passed through the first open space from the street: the dispatch hall. This was the

communications and information hub for the headquarters and the branches. It was where stock market updates with the latest dispatches, daily newspapers and commentaries written in chalk on blackboards could be found. The interior architecture





*The Bourse "A" branch in Paris, 1906.*  
© Archives historiques Société Générale



*A branch in Paris, rue de Lyon, in the Bastille district, around 1912.*  
© Archives historiques Société Générale



*Art Nouveau in Chalon-sur-Saône, 1924.* © Archives historiques Société Générale



*Art Nouveau in Chalon-sur-Saône, 1912.*  
© Archives historiques Société Générale

conveyed the bank's image as a permanent, solid and active institution. A long counter in polished mahogany paneling separated the employees from the hall where the customers would congregate near the windows. This allowed each client to speak privately with his bank contact and sometimes sit on the high stools. It was a place to exchange information, separate from the employees making entries in the books. The rest of the décor was understated: sculpted wood, gas lamps and a clock comprised the main decorations. In spite of this apparent simplicity the bank did not hesitate – for example in Bordeaux, Angers and Dijon – to use new technical and architectural innovations that were the result of industrial changes. At the close of the 19th century, new techniques

and building materials were used with a mixture of iron, glass and cement to create an enclosed space crowned by glass panes, offering overhead lighting and a new aesthetic.

At the same time Societe Generale was also occupying buildings whose architecture was not in classical bank style. In some cases, such as in Alsace and Brittany, regional architectural styles were used. In Paris, branches "A" and "U" – which stood for the Bourse and Croix-Rouge – were "banking palaces" at a time when the bank was trying to enrich its brand image. Located in Paris at 134 rue Réaumur in the 2nd arrondissement, at the corner of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, the "A" branch was close to the Palais Brongniart. Construction was completed in 1901

by architect Jacques Hermant. The majestic and imposing structure stood out because of its monumental quality. It had identical motifs on either street, connected by a tower on the corner that gave it its central theme. It was topped by a domed roof and a lantern. Each wing had five floors and a balcony with a loggia. The tower had six floors, with a clock located in the central portion and a molding in the shape of a semicircular pediment. With a façade of rusticated stones to provide more depth, the building exuded respectability, power and modernity.

The U branch, located at 131 rue de Sèvres in the 7th arrondissement, was a metal frame building with balconies, a pavilion roof and bas-relief sculptures. The façade was very beautiful and the interior just as



*The Bordeaux branch in 1924. © Archives historiques Société Générale*



*Art Nouveau in Nancy, 1906.  
© Archives historiques Société Générale*

stunning. Above the entrance doors, architect Georges Balleyguier, who supervised the construction, had created a rich mosaic décor. The decorative motif in gold letters spelled out the bank's name within mixed trophies and plant-related moldings. The caduceus, a symbol of Hermès and Mercury, the Greek and Roman gods of commerce, decorated the composition. The symbol was a baton with two entwined snakes with wings. The baton represented power, the snakes stood for wisdom, the wings diligence and movement. The caduceus was mounted on a cogwheel representing industry, with horns of plenty symbolizing wealth. All these symbols referenced the bank's main purpose.

Societe Generale could be found in the most unexpected locations. As it was developing its real estate holdings, the bank sometimes opened offices in historically important buildings. These could be town houses or very simple storefronts. For example, at Pézenas it took over the Hôtel de Lacoste, famous for its spiral staircase and Gothic style vaulted ceilings. In Castres, it was the Hôtel de Nayrac, a renaissance palace with a portico decorated with family crests, mullioned windows and round towers that was selected to become a branch. At Saint-Just-Saint-Rambert, the building opened onto a grain market dating back to the Middle Ages. At Saint-Omer, the bank

bought an old municipal building called the "Conciergerie," where city magistrates would meet at the end of the 17th century. Other buildings acquired showcased national landmarks. At Aix-en-Provence, the Hôtel Mirabeau, whose staircase was a model of pure Louis XIV style, was also a branch. The same style characterised the Hôtel Terrier de Santans in the centre of Besançon, whose façade had a wrought iron balcony and Ionian pillars decorated by a coat of arms. At Rennes, the Hôtel Le Gonidec de Traissan was in the same rich style and in Saumur, imposing Atlantes sculptures framed the entrance and were just as impressive. In Reims, Societe Generale went even further when it completed an unfinished work of art. In 1910, it built a branch on the place Royale, following the blueprints, decorative elements and materials decided upon by architect Jean-Gabriel Legendre in 1755 - an initiative that was welcomed by the entire city. We should note that today the bank no longer uses these locations, some of which have been declared national monuments, or have been partially restored and may only be visited by tourists.

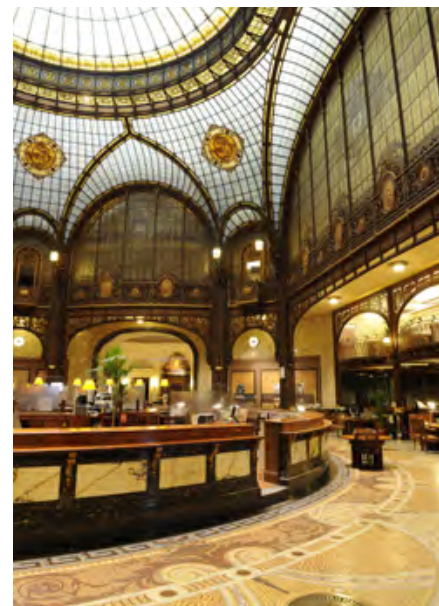
At the start of the 20th century, Societe Generale established links with Art Nouveau and built several buildings that were part of that art movement. This highly ornamental style had a flexible architecture with many floral decorative motifs, and a permanent

commitment to lighting using glass windows. The branches at Toulouse, Bressuire and Chalon-sur-Saône were in this style. The latter location had internal floral arrangements for the columns and linear woodwork with stained glass windows. External decoration was almost exuberant, as illustrated by the frontage representing a ring of cherubs serenading the bank's customers. It was in Lorraine that Art Nouveau found its best expression - at Rambervilliers, and even more at Nancy, where architect Georges Biet and carpenter Eugène Vallin combined their talents to construct a building inspired by plant motifs in 1903. The ribbed lines were part of both the structure and the décor. Strong vertical moldings were inspired by plant stems, creating a dynamic and original effect that enhanced the use of certain basic materials such as iron in the decoration. The building was made up of four beams on five levels, with a metallic front crowning the façade. The central hall was lit via a glass dome held up by metal support brackets. The carpentry was of remarkable quality, both at the teller windows in exotic wood with molded paneling and in the sculpted bronze columns that were used as windows separating the various counters. But that style became obsolete and Art Nouveau would not survive the First World War. It was replaced by Art Deco, whose neoclassical style was better suited to banking institutions.





*Exterior view of the 29 boulevard Haussmann, in Paris.  
© Jean-Marie Cras / Archives historiques Société Générale*



*Interior view of the 29 boulevard Haussmann, in Paris. © Jean-Marie Cras / Archives historiques Société Générale*

### The Central Branch: a “banking palace” of the Belle Époque

At No. 29 Boulevard Haussmann, right in the centre of Paris, the building can be found, which has served as the Group’s headquarters for the past century. It is a true architectural masterpiece, certain parts of which are now featured in the list of French Historic Monuments.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, Societe Generale made the decision to acquire new headquarters. Too overcrowded in its original offices located at 54-56 rue de Provence, the bank became interested in a nearby block of buildings located behind the Opera in Boulevard Haussmann. Competing with Galeries Lafayette, the bank officially acquired it on 2 April 1906. The Board of Directors decided to engage the services of the architect Jacques Hermant, a teacher at the Beaux-arts de Paris, to transform these apartment buildings, which occupied 2,600 square metres, into a banking establishment.

The works lasted six years. On 26 June 1912, the new headquarters was opened at 29 Boulevard Haussmann, in the presence of Baron Hély d’Oïssel, President of Societe Generale. The result exceeded all expectations. On the exterior façade, the ground floor and mezzanine are finished in horizontally rusticated masonry, punctuated by arched bays with grilles over a plinth

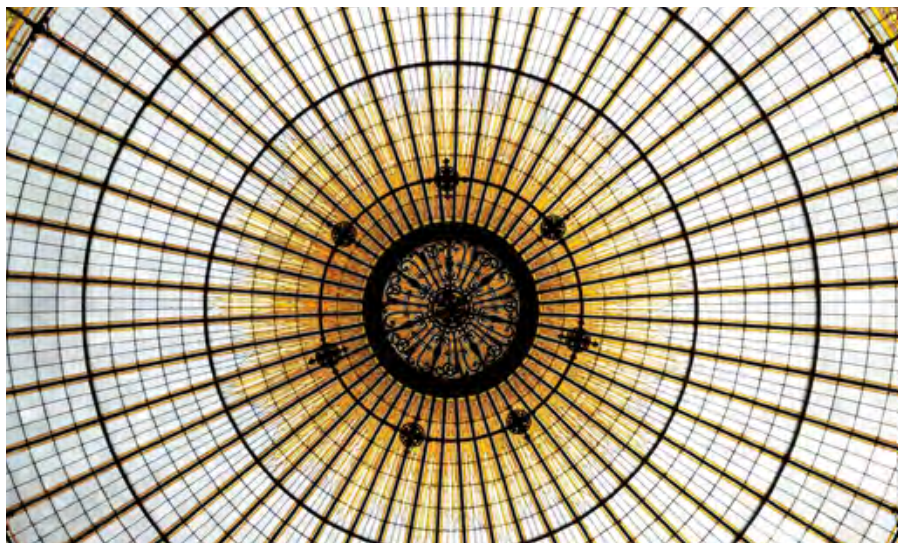
of Comblanchien stone. In the Boulevard Haussmann, by virtue of special dispensation, the centre line has been redesigned across its length in such a way as to create a pattern above the entrance of number 29. Its upper part is a pediment decorated with allegoric sculptures. On the third floor, against the pillars and between the balconies, six Corinthian style statues were installed in 1919 to illustrate various aspects of commerce and industry. Three large bays made up the entrance. Their vaults are adorned with carved grotesques.

Open on all sides, the grand central hall is of a luxurious, innovative design. The trapezoidal room occupies most of the ground floor, with a great circular counter in the centre, nicknamed “the cheese”. In 1919, a mezzanine was built to make extra space for the staff. The centrepiece of the hall is the splendid pinnacled dome which overhangs it. It is suspended 23 metres above the ground from the roof with a metal, umbrella-like structure composed of a self-supporting system of fine steel profiles. Glass and metal blend harmoniously to form an enclosed space while preserving the overhead illumination. The 18 metre diameter dome, designed by master glass craftsman, Jacques Galand, displays an elegant gradation of colours. It is made up of 51 tapered parts arranged from a central rose.

The interior decor contributes to the

charm of the building. The four arcatures each bear a coat of arms in the centre, representing the Societe Generale in Paris, Lyon, Marseille and Bordeaux. Bronze medallions decorate their bases, and symbolise the bank’s activities throughout France. The corners are embellished with the monogram “SG”. Decorative ironwork is made up of oak leaves and acorns and the whole is enclosed by a wrought iron railing. The mosaic tiled floor is the work of ceramists, Alphonse Gentil and François-Eugène Bourdet. Around the hall’s rotunda, a plant pattern of interwoven and knotted leaves forms an enormous rosette. On the floor, twelve ornamentally embossed openwork copper plaques conceal the heating and ventilation ducts.

The basement contains the strong rooms, all in steel. These are laid out on four levels, the lowest being 11 metres below the ground. An impressive circular door, clad in shiny steel with gold and silver highlights guards the only entrance. Designed by locksmiths Fichet, the piece was constructed in the Creusot (iron working centre of France), transported by rail to Paris and then brought to the Boulevard Haussmann on a dray pulled by a team of nine horses. The diameter of the exterior door is 2.76 metres. It weighs 18 tonnes, and its armour plating is 40 centimetres thick. An access drum connects it to a second reinforced door. Inside



Door of the vault room. © Jean-Marie Cras / Archives historiques Société Générale



Dome of the building. © Jean-Marie Cras / Archives historiques Société Générale

the rooms there are 399 strong rooms, accounting for a total of 8,134 safety deposit boxes and 22 safes. These basement rooms are only opened progressively for clients.

Today the Central Branch still retains its original character, to the great pleasure of clients and employees alike. It is open to the public for French Heritage Days every year on September. Since 1915, this building has housed the headquarters of the bank and, in spite of the management board having moved to the business centre in Paris-La Défense, it remains so.

### The Trocadéro complex: Societe Generale builds its own “Fort Knox”

The major construction work undertaken by Societe Generale during the golden years of France’s “Belle Époque” was prompted by new requirements for greater security. Completed in 1914, the Trocadéro complex that housed the bank’s central securities deposit is one of the most impressive examples of the work carried out. It is an ambitious monument to maximum security.

On the eve of the First World War, banks in France were faced with new security requirements. The Great Flood of 1910 in Paris and its surrounding areas had exposed the precarious structure of certain buildings, and a spate of daring armed robberies, notably by the Bonnot Gang, dominated the headlines. At Societe Generale, the inspection committees were quick to recommend the implementation of the “most effective and modern measures against the



A groom near the door of the vault room, 1920. © Archives historiques Société Générale

risk of theft, assault and fire”. The clear need to reassure customers called for tangible initiatives to convey the image of a solid and steadfast establishment. As a result, alongside the construction of its new head office at 29 Boulevard Haussmann, the bank’s management decided to build a new site to house the securities “deposited and transiting” with the bank in the 16th arrondissement, not far from the Eiffel Tower.

Nestled on the Chaillot Hill, the chosen site, located between the Place du Trocadéro, Avenue Kléber, the Rue de Longchamp and Avenue Malakoff, (now the Avenue Raymond Poincaré) was formerly home to the stables of the Compagnie générale des Omnibus. In 1911, the bank acquired the property and

demolished the existing buildings. Completed in 1914 after three years of work, the new Haussmann-style complex was designed by architect, Jacques Hermant, who had already worked on the bank’s Agence Centrale and Agence Bourse offices. Sober and modern in appearance in keeping with its surroundings, the complex formed a triangle in a district in full boom. Each of the buildings making up the three sides of the complex had its own basement, raised ground floor and another six floors, two of which were dominated by long, recessed terraces. Although the main entrance was located at 112 Avenue Kléber, the inside of the complex was divided into two separate sections, one consisting of offices and the other of





*Plan of the construction, 1910.*  
© Archives historiques Société Générale



*The Trocadéro tower under construction, in 1912.*  
© Archives historiques Société Générale



*Inside the fortified Trocadéro tower in Paris, 1957.* © Archives historiques Société Générale

private apartments. The complex had a covered courtyard, a loading bay for armoured vans and two strong towers: one that was square and average in size and which was home to “transiting” securities for transactions in progress; and another that was cylindrical and which was reserved for deposited securities and, later on, used to store all manner of valuables, objects, works of art, documents, etc.

As time went by, this somewhat unusual construction, which was first known as the “Trocadéro Tower” and then “Sogégarde”, proved to be the ultimate vault and was Societe Generale’s own “dungeon”. Unique in its genre, with an outside diameter that was 50 metres long and 34 metres high, it was made up of two circular walls in reinforced concrete and built on a composite floor with a limestone base. 15 metres below ground, a circular masonry wall mirrored by a parapet dug into the rock face was built around the perimeter to reinforce the structure and to isolate the basement from the former surrounding quarries. Any efforts to undermine the construction were to prove impossible, particularly as the peripheral section was flooded

to form an additional natural barrier rendering it impenetrable. At the end of each day, after the last employees in charge of closing the site had left, the underground passage they used was filled with 40 cubic metres of water, making it impossible to pass and also impervious to fire. In addition, the top of the tower was closed by a concrete domed cover. The ceiling was fitted with large observation panes made of reinforced glass, which, each night, were covered by slabs of thick reinforced concrete which together weighed over 500 tonnes. The basement was divided into several reinforced vaults: seven levels housed ten peripheral chambers built against the wall where the safes were located. The only access to the tower from the outside was via a single opening on the ground floor. Controlled from the inside only, it was protected by concrete slabs reinforced with a thick steel frame, a strong armour-plated door and a heavy wrought-iron gate. For decades, the tower remained an untouched sanctuary, which was regularly adapted to the latest surveillance techniques. Many referred to it as the bank’s own “Fort Knox” or one of the rare buildings in Europe capable of

withstanding an atomic bomb. In 1976, it was fitted with a radar surveillance system. In the underground floors, sound detectors were followed by surveillance cameras and soon completed with motion sensors, heat-sensitive instruments and nerve gas spray systems.

With the dematerialization of securities, the reconversion of the Trocadéro Tower to house works of art and the IT records for Sogégarde customer service would have been extremely costly given the operational constraints of the site. The building was thus sold and entirely redeveloped as part of a real estate programme in 1987. ●

#### Author profile

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# The architecture of The National Bank of Greece buildings since 1845

Dionysis Vlachopoulos

Following the London Conference of 1832 that resulted in the establishment of the modern Greek state, the relocation of the capital from Nafplio to Athens and the need to create appropriate infrastructures for the better workings of the state, the establishment of a bank became essential. The tireless efforts of Georgios Stavros, financial advisor of the first governor of the state, Ioannis Capodistrias, and the full support and guidance of the great European philhellene banker Jean-Gabriel Eynard led to the establishment of National Bank of Greece (“NBG”) in 1841, by decree of King Otto, granting the Bank the right to print banknotes. From that time onward, the development of NBG was closely entwined with the economic history of the Greek state, as it was to actively participate in the financing of many sectors of the economy.

During the 175 years of its operations, NBG, through its constructed buildings, contributed in shaping the profile of modern Greek architecture, and especially the architecture of public buildings. The buildings bought were amongst the most notable of their times, while the Bank always sought to be situated at the heart of the economic life of the cities. Around its buildings other banks or agencies that undertook similar operations were established, thereby forming a financial hub. This article describes the key phases in the development of NBG’s buildings – each phase displaying its own distinguishing features – influenced by the stylistic trends in Europe, the economic programmes for the economic development of the country, and the aesthetic preferences of the leading architects of the day.

## The key architectural periods for NBG’s buildings

### 1845-1901

In 1845, for the first time, the Bank acquired its own building in Athens, with the purchase of



*The area that later became Plateia (=Square) Loudovikou (today Plateia Kotzia). The painting is of great historical importance. On the left is the house of Domnados and on its right the “Hotel of England”, owned by Feraldis. In the background Lycabettus Hill can be seen. Oil painting by Johannes Rabe (1847), discovered in Munich. NBG Art Collection*

the two-storey residence of Kyriakos Domnados, professor of natural history at Athens University. The Domnados residence, built in 1837, was a neoclassical building, in line with the stylistic preferences of that period. Neo-Classicism had become established in Europe as the style that met the tastes of the bourgeoisie of the 19th century. The work of the English architect, Sir John Soane, who designed the Bank of England (1798), was seminal in this development, as he was a pioneer in the application of neoclassical elements on a bank building.

It was decided that the Bank should be located in the large Square of the People (“Plateia tou Laou”) as conceived in the first city plan of Athens by Schaubert and Kleanthis, so that the Bank would be situated close to the royal place and the newly developing commercial district of the city. This decision was, from the outset, a very successful one. Gradually, the NBG became a hub of development in the city’s commercial centre, centred around most



*Georgios Stavros, founder and first governor of NBG (1788-1869). Painted by Nikiforos Lytras, oil on canvas. NBG Art Collection*





*Drawing showing the consecutive purchases (from 1837 to 1965) of properties owned by NBG on the city block where its central branch is located in Athens. D. Vlachopoulos Archive*



*Coloured postcard depicting Plateia Loudovikou in the early 20th century. On the left is the central branch of NBG after the unification of the Domnados and Feraldis buildings by Eugène Troup. In the centre the Melas Building, leased today by the NBG, and on the right the old National Theater, demolished in 1939. Both buildings were designed by Ernst Ziller.*

*Archive of Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive - NBG Cultural Foundation*



*The façade of the bank's headquarters on odos (street) Eolou as it looked after completion of the unification works. NBG Historical Archive*

of the economic functions of the newly established state. The gradual expansion, at this time, of the Bank's property over the entire city block reflected the need to meet the ever-increasing demands on space and the establishment of the Stock Exchange on the same block. The model for this logic perhaps lays in the experience of the development of the building complex of the Bank of England in the City of London, a similar enterprise that began almost 70 years earlier.

Thus in 1852, with the purchase of the garden of the Domnados residence, the Bank secured its presence across the southern portion of odos (street) Georgiou Stavrou as far as odos Stadiou. In 1875, with the acquisition of the "Hotel of England" and of the adjacent two-storey house, the Bank secured ownership of the entire east side of Plateia Loudovikou (name of Plateia tou Laou after its size reduction, today known as Plateia Kotzia). The Domnados residence and the "Hotel of England", two neoclassical buildings that were built with just two years' difference between each other (1837 and 1839 respectively) looked like sibling buildings. This was particularly the case in the sense

that at the end of 1875 it was possible to easily join the two with the construction of a covered bridge with glass. This lasted until 1898, when it was decided that a major renovation of the two buildings should be undertaken so that they would merge into a single building.

During the next two years the head office was rebuilt, basically in line with the plans of the French architect, Eugène Troup. A new wing, new English manufactured safe deposit boxes (from the London-based company Chubb and Son's Lock and Safe Company Ltd), spacious water cisterns, a water-pump for fire safety, a banknote and securities destruction furnace, and an upper floor, which would serve as the governor's and deputy governor's residence were added. The interior walls were lined with wood and marble, and decorated and furnished with elegant and artistic features, while the French designer Pierre Joly designed the administration rooms. The project was supervised by the civil engineer, Nikolaos Balanos and his brother architect Aristides Balanos, who was recruited by the Bank as head of the newly established tech-

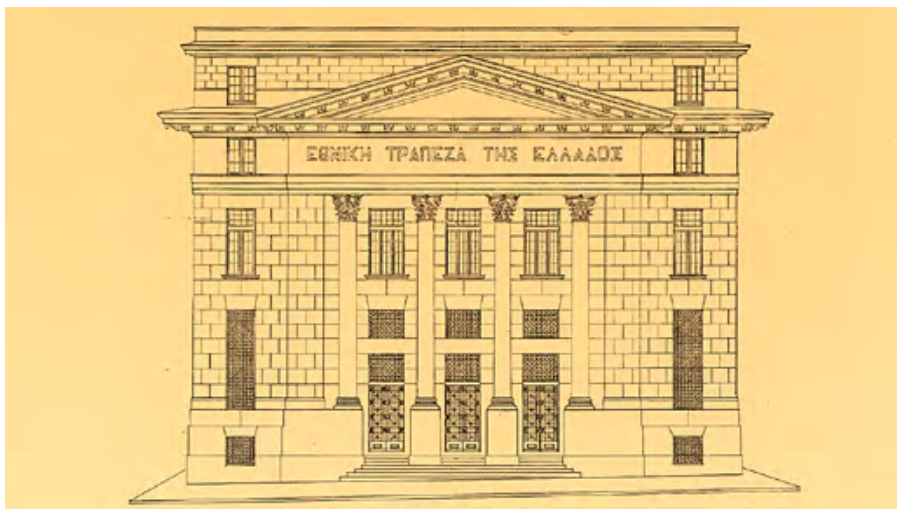
nical service department (where he remained until 1920).

The unification of the two NBG buildings was the most important architectural project implemented in Athens together with the reconstruction of the Panathenaic Stadium in 1896, for the first Olympic Games. In addition, the Bank developed its branch network outside Athens in the key urban centres of the time, including Patras, Hermoupolis (Syros island), Tripoli and Kalamata, with elegant neoclassical buildings either purchased or built on the basis of plans by external architect associates of the Bank.

#### 1901-1920

The main architectural work of this period was the successive expansion of the central building complex. The unification of the two buildings in 1898-1900 was not sufficient to meet the ever-increasing demands of the growing business of the Bank, and so more extensions were deemed necessary. The architect and head of the Bank's technical service department, Aristides Balanos, used the architectural design of Troup for the additions, and maintained the architectural style of the three-storey building located towards the end of odos G. Stavrou.

In 1902, the main customer hall on the ground floor, where the general assemblies were held, was renovated and decorated with the unique painted copies of paintings by Peter von Hess and themes from the Greek War of Independence of 1821, painted by Nikolaos



View of the NBG's main branch in Thessaloniki, odos Mitropoleos. NBG Historical Archive

Ferekidis at the request of the Bank's governor, Stefanos Streit<sup>1</sup>. In 1912, the A. D. Zachariou Technical Company, representing the German firms S. J. Arnheim and Panzer, was assigned the construction of vaults in the headquarters. In 1911, the NBG implemented a management strategy for the continuous expansion of the block of the main building. In this vein, it purchased the open space of the adjacent property and, in 1916, two neighboring houses. In 1920, the Bank acquired another two-storey property.

During the period of Aristides Balanos the NBG built or bought fine neoclassical buildings in the provincial capitals of Greece. Notable examples are the Bank's buildings in Volos, Patras and Kalamata. When in 1920 Balanos resigned from the technical service, he handed over supervision of the department to a relatively young architect, aged 32, Nikolaos Zouboulidis, who was originally from Sinassos in Asia Minor.

### 1921-1940. The Interwar years

The industrial revolution of the early and mid-19th century and the social movements that followed in the early 20th century brought significant changes in the ideas of both what is considered art and the means that can be used for its implementation. The influence on architecture was profound. By the end of the 19th century the neoclassical movement had begun to fade and new architectural ideas gradually supplanted it. The Chicago School represented

by figures such as Louis H. Sullivan, and the Vienna School represented by figures such as Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffman, Joseph Maria Olbrich and Adolf Loos, as its main exponents, as well as the ideas of Avant Garde architects in central Europe, such as Hermann Muthesius, had a formative impact on the international architectural community. Under the influence of Romanticism, efforts emerged to revive European art and architecture from perspectives that went beyond the well-trodden historical architectural styles. Thus, around 1900 the Art Nouveau movement reached its zenith, ranging from the arts and crafts movement that had already begun in Britain to its architectural application in Belgium and France, and to Spain with the iconic works of Gaudi, including his Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona (still not completed) and the Casa Batlló.

A group of Greek architects, who had studied in Germany and France, sought to convey these new ideas in Greece and to develop a different vocabulary than the architecture of classicism. Another group, represented by Aristotelis Zachos, Dimitris Pikionis, Panos Tzelepis, Aris Konstantinidis and others, sought, through the study of Byzantine and vernacular architecture, to give expression, morphologically, to the notion of "Greekness". This was a preoccupation of many Greek artists of the so-called 'Generation of the 1930s'. The first such attempts had begun in the mid-19th century, when, in 1852, Theophil Hansen designed, in Byzantine style, the building of the Eye Clinic (Ofthalmiatreion) on odos Panepistimiou. The heyday of the movement in Greece came

after the destruction of Thessaloniki from the great fire of 1917, when the Byzantine style was implemented in many of the new buildings of the city. With a view to reconstructing Thessaloniki, the Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, appointed a team of architects to work on the project. Among the architects that participated were the French architect, Ernest Hébrard, who was head of the Archaeological Service of the allied Army of the East during World War I, and the influential British architect, Thomas Mawson. The Greek architects that participated in the team were Aristotelis Zachos, an ardent fan of Neo-Byzantinism in Greece, and Constantine Kitsikis. During the interwar period the perceptions of the 19th century were still dominant in Greece, with eclecticism and historicism being the prevailing practice in architecture.

As the years passed, new needs arose, and during the interwar period the NBG – having lost its right to print banknotes after the foundation of the central bank – became a purely commercial bank. The expansion of the branch network into new territories, which were annexed after the Balkan wars, as well as the planned modernization of the branches throughout the country, impelled the Bank to expand the technical service department. The latter coordinated the entire project. The NBG's technical service department included two prominent architects: Nikos Zouboulidis, one of the most important architects of the interwar period, who was educated abroad and was a fervent proponent of Classicism; and Aristomenis Valvis, younger in age and influenced by the European Avant Garde of the time. Supported by other architects and external associates, they were able to carry out this major building programme.

During this period, the Bank, under the supervision of Zouboulidis, decided to design the central branch of Thessaloniki combining Classical and Neo-Byzantine styles. In 1928, the Merchant Seamen's Fund in Piraeus and the Athens Stock Exchange in odos Sofokleous were built, employing Neo-Classical elements. On the other hand, the hall of the savings department in the Bank's main branch followed a neo-Byzantine style. In the regional towns, both the Neo-Classical and Neo-Byzantine styles jostled for prominence. Zouboulidis and Valvis, together with the external associates, each of whom had his own aesthetic preferences, served the different modes of architectural expression with vigour, designing

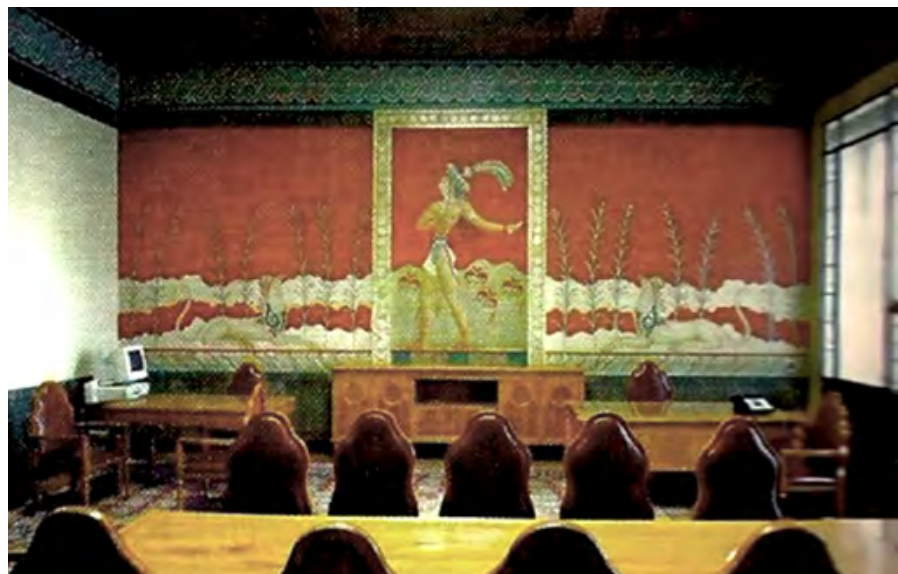
<sup>1</sup> The original paintings of Peter von Hess were destroyed during the Second World War, when the National Gallery of Munich was bombed.

buildings such as those in Serres, Drama, Xanthi and Corinth in Neo-Classical style, but also, as in the case of Florina, Edessa (Vodena) and Kozani in Neo-Byzantine style. Meanwhile, the excavations of Evans at Knossos, Crete, from 1900 to 1931, the key centre of Minoan civilization, impressed the antiquarian inclinations of Zouboulidis immensely, who then designed in Neo-Minoan style the Minoan Board Room at the Bank's headquarters; He also sought – surpassing the established standards of the time – to create a building in an early Postmodern style with his design for the Nafplio branch in Neo-Mycenaean style.

### 1960-1970. The Modernist movement

Modernism as an architectural movement emerged in the early 20th century, when in 1906 the Grand Duke of Saxony and Weimar commissioned the Dutch architect, Henry van de Velde, to head the Grand-Ducal School of Arts and Crafts in Weimar. In 1919, Walter Gropius in his Manifesto called on all artists and architects to work together in order to create “the new building of the future” and to build an industrial and artisanal construct along the strict lines of Cubism. Johannes Itten taught an introduction on form, colour and the technical processing of materials, while Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, who also taught until 1925, introduced the use of steel and glass in buildings, thus reflecting the light. Accordingly, the way was opened for industrial style to enter architectural design for buildings more generally, while the trend to build on a gigantic scale had begun. The building is now seen as a machine and functionality is viewed as the supreme value.

In Greece those ideas arrived around 1930, and some architects were bold enough to apply them in buildings during the decade. However, after the Second World War, their main representative architect, Yannis Despotopoulos, a professor at the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) and a student of Gropius, had a profound impact on the generations of architects who studied at NTUA after the war. In Greece, by the 1960s, buildings designed in line with this stylistic trend emerged on a dynamic scale. As a result of the quid-pro-quo system of construction (antiparoché) and the increase in the building coefficient for constructed floor space versus land plot area, the urgent housing needs generated by internal migration were met almost



*The Minoan Board Room in the Bank's headquarters, designed by architect N. Zouboulidis.*  
NBG Historical Archive

exclusively by private means. The lack of planning and addressing of this development led to the demolition of 80 per cent of old buildings, resulting in the contemporary landscape of Athens and, thereafter, all the provincial cities of the country. Modernism was applied superficially. Construction was not supported by specialized industrial units, but by small firms of builders who tried to emulate industrial construction, while producing little more than handcrafted buildings. However, Greek architects achieved impressive results, particularly in the private sector, while in the public sphere the lack of construction is impressive: the US Embassy by Walter Gropius, the Hilton Hotel by Emmanouel Vourekas, Spyros Staikos and Prokopis Vassiliadis, and the old Athens Airport in the Hellinikon suburb by the sea, by Eero Saarinen, are some good examples.

In 1953, the NBG merged with the Bank of Athens, while the generation of the interwar architects had mostly retired from active work. The Bank decided to further expand its branch network and at the same time undertook the initiative to finance tourist development along the Saronic (Attica) coastline, thus making it necessary to expand the technical service department. Pioneering architects behind this project were Konstantinos Dekavallas, Anastasia Tzakou and Alkis Stragalis, who were assisted by younger colleagues, Nikolaos Londos and Grigorios Tsiveriotis as well as many collaborator architects. The consequent expansion of the Bank's network brought it to every

neighbourhood and close to every home, thus covering 60 per cent of all banking operations in the country.

### 1970-1985. Critical localism

The failure of Modernism to incorporate into its buildings fine arts to the extent that this was done on a large scale in the case of earlier architectural styles; the lack of historical sensitivity that it displayed in both the built and unbuilt environment of the country; and the meeting in the cheapest possible way (and with little proper planning and provision) of the needs arising from the rapid rise in population in the country's urban centres, ultimately led to a reaction. For example, the term “critical localism” that Kenneth Frampton coined in his book, *Modern Architecture*. A critical history (1980), began to gain popularity and to influence the architecture of buildings in Greece. Critical localism signaled a desire to reject the unquestioned domination of Modernism. It aimed to foster the construction of buildings with modern technological means that are tied to their surroundings, using stylistic features and modes of construction rooted in the local tradition.

As early as 1971, Konstantinos Dekavallas had worked along similar lines with his design of the Santorini NBG branch, followed by Vassilis Bogakos, who designed the Dimitsana branch in the Peloponnese. Also in the 1970s, younger architects of the Bank continued in this mode with growing enthusiasm, with branches such as those in Parikia on the





*The NBG branch, Plateia Syntagmatos, designed by architect Konstantinos Dekavallas. K. Dekavallas Photographic Archive*



*The atrium of the NBG branch in Parikia, Paros (1978), designed by architect D. Vlachopoulos. D. Vlachopoulos Photographic Archive*



*The façade of the NBG branch in Parikia, Paros (1978), designed by architect D. Vlachopoulos. D. Vlachopoulos Photographic Archive*

island of Paros by Dionysis Vlachopoulos; the Ioannina branch by Vassilis Harisis; the Veria branch by Nikos Londos; and the Chalkidiki branch by Dimitra Tsihli. The NBG thus demonstrated that its technical staff and associates could play a role in projecting a kind of national self-awareness and care for preserving Greek popular tradition, combining architectural features of the localities where it built its premises.

#### **1985-2002. Restoration of listed buildings**

In 1964, at the Second International Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings in Venice, the Venice Charter was adopted, which expanded the idea of the conservation of historic monuments. It also stressed the importance of monumental ensembles. Also, the Amsterdam Declaration in 1975, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975 and the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada, 1985, are the key framework texts that provide international principles of restoration today, and which aid governments and experts in the conservation of the architectural heritage.

Since the early 1970s the NBG has been at the forefront of building conservation in Greece. The former Hotel Excelsior in Plateia Omonia (architect: Grigorios Tsiveriotis) was restored

and converted to an office building for its services, as well as an old Ottoman-period Athenian house located at Odos Thucydides 13 in Plaka, central Athens (architects: Alexandros S. Calligas and Aristides C. Romanos) which now houses the NBG Cultural Foundation. In the years that followed until 1989, the Bank leased and restored the Melas Building in Plateia Kotzia (architects: Dionysis Vlachopoulos and Grigorios Tsiveriotis), before the Granada Convention was integrated into Greek law in 1992. The Bank completed this large-scale project in an exemplary way. In recent years, as the owner of a large number of listed buildings the NBG became one of the country's leading organizations that took on the task of restoring such buildings with absolute attention and expertise. An extensive programme of modernization and restoration began: the Vatti Building in Piraeus (architect: Dionysis Vlachopoulos) and the Eynard Mansion in Athens (architect: Dimitra Tsihli) are among the most important; other examples include the Villa Kapantzi in Thessaloniki (professor of architecture George Lavas and restoration architect Stergios Stefanou) as well as branches in many regional towns, including Serres, Korinthos, Zakynthos island, Hermoupolis of Syros island and Samos island. This enterprise was undertaken and completed between 1980 and 2000 by the Bank's technical services division.

Besides its principal task of providing financial services, the National Bank of Greece has contributed greatly to the country's cultural development, setting up institutions such as the NBG Cultural Foundation (MIET) and the Historical Archive (NBG). Four of the Bank's finest listed buildings have been conceded, among others, to the Cultural Foundation (MIET): the Ottoman-period residence and the Eynard Mansion in Athens, the Villa Kapantzi in Thessaloniki, as already noted above, and the Thomopoulos Mansion in Plateia Georgiou Protou, Patras (built in the late 1860s and renovated by the Bank in 1994-1995). MIET is active in almost all cultural fields: it publishes widely, and many of its titles are selected each year as university textbooks; it owns a number of art collections, the Paxinou-Minotis museum, the Historical and Paleographical Archive, the Paper Conservation Laboratory, the Archive of Cartography of Greek Regions, the Cartography Archive, and the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA); and it manages scholarships, and organizes touring exhibitions and special seminars.

The NBG Historical Archive (HA/NBG) is housed in a building located at Odos Tritis Septemvriou 146 in Athens, designed by the architect Nicholas Zouboulidis. Construction began in June 1923 by Tekton Construction Company and was completed in December 1926. It was the first building in Greece constructed specifically for the purposes of housing the Bank's general archive. For this reason specific structural requirements were put in place, while the interior spaces were designed especially as storage and not as office areas. In July 2000 restoration of the building began under the supervision of the architect, Giorgos Zupas, and the Bank's technical department. In August 2002, with the completion of the restoration work, the NBG Historical Archive was installed in its premises. This building, known as the Diomidis Building (named after the Bank's governor under whose management the original building was constructed), was renovated in line with the latest construction, insulation and safety principles, while also providing for state-of-the-art storage methods for archival materials. In addition, the interior layout and design met the new working needs of the premises. Modern repositories, offices for the staff, facilities for receiving members of the public and researchers, exhibition spaces and workshop/laboratory spaces were created. Today, the HA/NBG is a multifunctional documentation centre for the economic, political,



cultural and social history of the country. It includes the Bank's archival documents and collections. Its operations (exhibitions, conferences, research and education programmes, provision of knowhow, publishing and cultural events) are addressed not only to the scientific community, but also to the general public.

### ***The Modernization plan for the Bank's buildings***

The National Bank of Greece is not concerned merely with showcasing its history. It is also a dynamically developing modern bank with its eyes on the future. It maintains an ongoing modernization program. The support of the Bank's governor, Theodoros Karatzas, played a key role. From 1997 until his death in 2004 he worked with passion and vision to promote these ends. The Bank's new buildings are an important chapter in the story of modern Greek architecture, inspiring confidence and trust in its customers.

Since 1997, when the architect, Charilaos Tzannetakis, became head of the technical services division, an extensive corporate identity upgrade programme throughout the branch network was undertaken, as well as a large-scale programme of modernization and restructuring of its services with a view to harmonizing its modus operandi with the international banking environment. In that context it was deemed necessary to develop and complete the building complex of the central branch and head office of the Bank, by holding a national architectural competition for proposals that would meet the needs of the Bank's expanding business. The construction of the notable new NBG head office by architects Irene Sakellaridou, Morfo Papanikolaou and Maria Pollani, together with consultant architect, Mario Botta, was the most significant architectural event in Athens in 2001, one hundred years after the restoration of the main building of the Bank by Eugène Troump. The discovery below the ground-floor level of part of the ancient Athenian Acharnean Way that connected ancient Athens with the deme of Acharnae, as well as the trench and ancient city defensive walls and traces of the so-called Acharnean Gate (one of the main entrance-ways into the ancient city) meant that the architects had to solve further complex design problems. There was a need to preserve and showcase the antiquities while nevertheless meeting the modern building's functional needs and purposes. They succeeded in solving the challenge in the best possible way.

Thus, 171 years after the Bank, under its



*The Melas Building. The building was leased to the NBG by the Melas Foundation in 1976, whereupon the bank undertook its thorough restoration. The building was originally constructed in 1875 according to designs by architect Ernst Ziller. The restoration work was coordinated and supervised by the bank's technical services, under architect D. Vlachopoulos. D. Vlachopoulos Photographic Archive*

first governor Georgios Stavros, purchased the property of Kyriakos Domnados in 1845, and following successive additions, adaptations and extensions, the central building complex of the NBG has become practically a concise case-history and exhibition of modern Greek architecture, in which one can observe key features of Greece's architectural past. At the same time, the Bank has continued to enhance its branch network with new buildings, designed in line with the latest concepts for providing banking services. These include: the branches in the industrial zone of Thessaloniki and the Athens-Lamia National Road by architects Irene Sakellaridou and Morfo Papanikolaou; the office building in leoforos (avenue) Athinon; and the Kifissia branch by architect Giorgos Pantopoulos. Notable also is the new state-of-the-art building in Gerakas, designed by architects Kyriacos Kyriakides and Harry Bougadellis, which houses the Bank's IT division and other administrative operations. The construction was carried out in accordance with demanding specifications, in line with ISO standards, including, for instance, seismic protection, security and provisions for uninterrupted operations in the event of emergency (disaster recovery provisions). Moreover, the building can operate autonomously, with its own power supply and telecommunications.

The Bank's architectural policies in recent years had a key impact on the management of its subsidiary companies. In 2005, Ethniki Insurance assigned architects Studio Mario Botta & Sparch – I. Sakellaridou and M. Papanikolaou with the project of designing another



*Design of the new NBG headquarters, located next to the 19th-century central branch and head office of the bank. The style of the new building expresses the modern-day business profile of the NBG Group, and it was the unanimously preferred choice in a national architectural competition. The first prize for the design was awarded to Thessaloniki architects I. Sakellaridou, M. Papanikolaou and M. Pollani, with advisor architect M. Botta. Archive of NBG Technical Services*

emblematic building (on leoforos Syngrou, Athens) that provides all its staff with a view of the Acropolis.

Looking back on the long history of the NBG's buildings it can be seen that, from the time of its establishment, the Bank was concerned to ensure that its buildings were at the centre of the economic life of the country, not only in Athens but also in the regions. It was consistent in ensuring that its buildings' architectural designs would meet not only functional requirements – facilitating the needs of both employees and customers – but also the aesthetic styles of each era, thereby frequently creating buildings of outstanding architectural quality, fit to serve as reference points on the architectural map of the country. ●

### **Author profile**

Dionysios Vlachopoulos is an architect and engineer. He was born in 1943 in Corinth. He graduated from the School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens, in 1967. He served as a reserve officer second lieutenant engineer. In 1970 he was employed by the National Bank of Greece as an architect. In 1995 he became head of the architecture studies department, and in 2000 deputy manager of the Technical Services division. He resigned from this post in 2001. He has specialized in the restoration of neoclassical buildings and has prepared a number of studies for specific technical requirements, office buildings and other private projects.

# The State Bank of India's living heritage

Abhik Ray

**S**tate Bank of India (SBI), the flagship of Indian banking, has not only pioneered but also shaped India's banking sector. The bank is also among the most prominent custodians of India's heritage. During its journey of more than two centuries, it has created some of the most imposing edifices in India, many of which hail back to the late nineteenth century. Remarkably, only a few of these edifices have undergone major changes over the years, while most remain as they were.

SBI owes its origins to the three presidency banks – the Banks of Bengal, Bombay and Madras – which were set up in the nineteenth century as the first chartered semi-government joint-stock banks in India with the privilege of limited liability conferred on their shareholders. The objective was primarily to stabilize rates of interest and mobilize credit both for the East India Company's governments in the three presidencies of British India (and later the Government of India) and the European managing agency houses operating in India. The three banks were merged in 1921 to form an all-India bank, the Imperial Bank of India, which came to be known as SBI after the Government of India nationalized the bank in 1955.

The fact that the three presidency banks occupied the apex position in the system of modern banking in India was reflected in the majestic edifices, which housed their main offices in the presidency towns of Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai). Deliberately planned, these edifices were meant to carry messages of opulence and grandeur and were in a way celebrations of the commercial spirit of the empire.

## Main offices Calcutta

The magnificent building of the Bank of Bengal overlooking the river Hooghly on Strand Road, Calcutta, for instance, was built in stages by Mackintosh Burn & Co. The building



*Bank of Bengal, Strand Road, Calcutta, in the early 20th century. © SBI*

became a landmark on the city's riverfront by about the end of the 1870s. Its baroque opulence can be seen in the broken front, ionic columns; in the onset of rustication in the corners; in the alternating pointed and curved pediments and fretted windows. These details show the classical face of the bank's architectural style – perhaps at its best.

A large hall measuring 170 feet by 45 feet with a height of 40 feet accommodated the cash department and public debt office with an adjoining hall for the treasury department, measuring 62 feet by 32 feet.

The ceiling made up of cast iron coffered panels was produced in Glasgow by George Smith & Co., Sun Foundry. It was shipped to Calcutta in 1878 with a plan detailing the configuration of the ceiling. It appears that there was a miscalculation of the weight of the large hall's iron ceiling and the trusses of the iron roof, which were designed to carry the ceiling. A light iron girder was then designed specially to carry the heavy ceiling, independent of the roof. Decorating, gilding and painting the ceiling of the large hall; hanging and fixing the coffered panels which weighed 60 tons; painting and tinting the walls of the large hall; and gilding the capitals – all entailed additional expenditure.



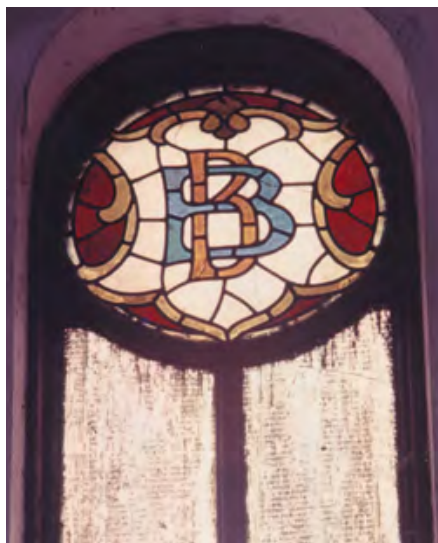
*Bank of Bengal, Strand Road office banking hall with its cast iron ceiling. © the British Library Board, Photo 108/2(10)*

In the large hall, windows with glass panes carrying the bank's cipher were delicately tinted and tastefully juxtaposed with turquoise blues, crimson reds and mauves. A majestic marble staircase added to the grandeur.

Tile pavements were supplied by M/s Minton Hollins and Co., reputed manufacturers. The cost included the pay of two skilled paviors from England and their travelling expenses, but was exclusive of labour charges and freight from England.

A new multi-storied complex replaced the Bank of Bengal building in the late 1990s.





*Bank of Bengal cipher on stained glass pane. © SBI*



*Stained glass pane in banking hall. © SBI*



*Bank of Bombay, Bank Street, Bombay. © SBI*

### **Bombay**

The foundation stone of the Bank of Bombay building in Bombay was laid in a military ceremony by the Bombay Governor Bartle Frere. The building was erected in 1866 on Bank Street amidst the High Victorian splendour of Elphinstone (Horniman) Circle. Its heavy cornice, symmetrical single-plane front, rows of regular rounded arches and a balustraded terrace represented a departure from the buildings of uniform design, which were built around the Elphinstone Circle at this time.

About half a century later the bank authorities decided to erect new head office premises on the adjacent Apollo Street. On the basis of an all-India competition, the design of Thomas Sedgwick Gregson, the eminent architect, who had designed the majestic Royal Exchange in Calcutta, was accepted by the bank. Gregson was appointed as architect of the new building and his fees were fixed at 5 per cent of the cost of the building. The construction of the Imperial Bank's Apollo Street building was completed in 1924.



*Imperial Bank of India, Apollo Street, Bombay. © SBI*



*Bank of Madras, North Beach Road, Madras, c. 1910 (courtesy: Rajan Jayakar, Mumbai)*

The imposing edifice, done in the Greek classical Ionic style and boasting of natural Bombay Malad stone for its frontage, is an outstanding landmark in Bombay's commercial zone.

### **Madras**

But by far the most grandiose of all the main offices is perhaps the Bank of Madras building in Madras. Its massive structure dominates the business-house stretch on North Beach Road even to this day. It was designed by H.C. Irwin, consulting architect of the Government of Madras, who had earlier designed the Viceregal Lodge at Simla and the Amba Vilas Palace of Mysore, amongst several others.

The agreement signed with the building contractor specified inter alia the use of Palavaram stones for stone columns, corbels, etc; Sholinghur stones for the entrance and staircase, parapets, arches and basement floor; well-seasoned Burma teak for doors, windows etc; Cuddapah slabs for cornices, floorings, etc.; and English encaustic floor tiles (Minton's) for the board room on the second floor and the public hall. Mangalore pattern glass tiles were chosen for the ceiling of the public hall on the first floor, decorated and fashioned following the example of the Connemara Public Library.

The massive building was up in a little over two years and was described by Indian Engineering of 4 February 1899 as



*Exquisite stained glass pane characteristic of the local architecture. © SBI*



*Bank of Madras, North Beach Road, banking hall. © SBI*



*A close view of a lantern on the roof. © SBI*



*Imperial Bank of India, Mount Road, Madras. © SBI*



*Tarawali Kothi, Lucknow. © SBI*

'an adaptation of Hindu-Saracenic freely treated, the details of the various ornaments being after approved specimens of existing buildings on the north'. A remarkable feature of the design was its twin towers, each consisting of a 'dome surmounted by a lantern carried by eight stone pillars and surmounted by a smaller dome terminating in a stone filial'. The red brick with black pointing, relieved by massive

stonework of the famous Cuddapah granite, lent an air of irrefragable stability so characteristic of the bank it represented. Inside, commodious halls with cupolas overhead, decorative pillars, arches and spandrels, ornamental floor tile (another Italian touch) and a profusion of stained glass panes symbolize a deliberate stride towards a hybrid Imperial style of Indian architecture.

#### **Branch offices**

The 1860s saw a vast expansion of banking activities at the presidency banks. The branch offices that proliferated all over British India at ports and inland trade centres were either housed in bank buildings or those acquired through hire or purchase.

Some of these buildings were modelled on the Palladian or Greek Revival styles, so popular in India until the middle of the





*Imperial Bank of India, Strand Street, Rangoon © SBI*



*Imperial Bank of India, Calicut. © SBI*



*Imperial Bank of India, Madura. © SBI*



*Imperial Bank of India, Simla. © SBI*



*Imperial Bank of India, Jalpaiguri. © SBI*

nineteenth century. A fine example of this early nineteenth-century colonial style is the impressive Mount Road (Anna Salai) branch erected in 1918 in spotless white with an abundance of Ionic columns all around. The six columns in front with the central four surmounted by a pediment and a terraced porte-cochere with arches in the accepted style of mixed orders makes it one of the most impressive buildings on Mount Road.

Another fine example of the neo-classical style is the Tarawali Kothi in Lucknow. Erected in the 1830s it boasts a Doric style six-column front surmounted by a bare pediment. The two-storied palatial building was built as an observatory at the initiative of Nasir-ud-din Haidar of Oudh. It was later used as a refuge by the mutineers during the First War of Independence in 1857. Tarawali Kothi was taken on rent by the bank in 1863 and eventually purchased in 1889 and is today the Lucknow Main Branch of SBI.

The bank's Rangoon (Yangon) office on Strand Street was erected in 1917 by Mackintosh Burn & Co. It comprises arched windows and openings on the ground floor, huge Ionic columns with pediments on top in the upper floors, heavy rustications, balustraded balconies and a terrace, and a raised cupola made prominent by its ornamentation. The building is a landmark of the city's main commercial artery.

SBI withdrew from Rangoon in 1963 following the nationalization of banks in Burma (Myanmar) and has only recently returned to the city with a new branch on Rangoon Road. The erstwhile branch building is today the city's stock exchange.

Many of SBI's buildings also deserve notice as illustrations of the tremendous cultural and climatic variations rather than as significant architectural achievements in their own right. What is most fascinating in them is the richness of local styles, which characterize many of these buildings.

This is most evident in branches like the one at Calicut (Kozhikode), which is characterized by its wide and airy verandah, thin columns which support rather than impress, and the porte-cochere with the terrace on top.

The one-storied building at Madura has a distinctive local character. The tropics dominate the architectural idiom and the verandah once again is a prominent feature. The heavily rusticated wall is characteristic but the hallmark is provided by the copy in stone of the pitcher-and-coconut motif on two sides of the arched entrance.

Built in 1911 with a gabled roof the formidable building of stone and timber of the Simla (Shimla) branch, resembles a Swiss cottage.

The style of tea garden building architecture complete with fixed wooden

Venetians on the upper part of the first floor verandah and the gabled corrugated iron roof is still evident at the bank's Jalpaiguri branch in north Bengal. It was built in 1899.

The dak bungalow architectural style, designed by engineers of the Government's Public Works Department, is marked by thin columns, a wide verandah, a sloping or flat roof and an occasional porte-cochere. These features are still visible in some of the branch buildings of the bank in the northern and eastern parts of India.

Today all these edifices of the bank are a symbol of its cultural identity and continuity – a part of SBI's living heritage. ●

#### Author profile

Abhik Ray, Coordinator, History Project of the State Bank of India and formerly its Deputy General Manager (History), is intimately involved in the writing of SBI's monumental history. His books include *Banking Beyond Boundaries*; *SBI's Living Heritage: Edifices and Beyond* and *The Bank of India: Hundred Years of Prudential Banking*. He has also conceptualized the banking museums of the State Bank of India and the Bank of India.

# The real estate and the architecture of the Banque de l'Indochine: an overview

Pascal Pénot

**F**irst, we must say that this subject deserves a real and complete study and as the title shows it, this article is just a beginning. The main sources are the archives of the Banque de l'Indochine and the books of Marc Meuleau (*Des Pionniers en Extrême-Orient, histoire de la Banque de l'Indochine (1875-1975)*) and Patrice Morlat (*Indochine années 20, l'âge d'or de l'affairisme colonial (1918-1928) : banquiers, hommes d'affaires et patrons en réseaux*). We also used a brochure on the history of the Banque de l'Indochine in Djibouti.

## In Paris, it took 50 years to find the final head office

In 1875 various companies created the Banque de l'Indochine (Comptoir d'escompte de Paris, Banque nationale de Paris...). By privilege of the French State, the bank was an issuing and merchant bank for the colonies of Indochina (the first branch was in Saigon in 1875). Later, it was extended to India (Pondicherry in 1877), China (some settlements in Beijing, Shanghai, Yunnanfou...), Djibouti (1908), Pacific Ocean with Papeete, Nouméa (1888) and Port-Vila (1948).

The first real estate of the Banque de l'Indochine was its head office in Paris. Initially established in the rue de la Grange-Batelière, in 1902 the company moved to a larger building in 15 rue Lafitte in order to extend its activities. The growth of the security servicing posed problems of space and, in 1913, the board of directors decided to relocate the bank's central services: in May the bank bought a building in 76 rue d'Anjou for 1,15 million francs. In July the company bought the next building, located at 96 boulevard Haussmann, for 1,25 million francs. This one, composed of apartments, was not adapted to a head office. A great redevelopment began but, in 1915, the work was blocked: 15 tons of equipment were requisitioned while there was also an



*The Banque de l'Indochine in Noumea, circa 1888*

insufficient workforce. Only in 1922 was the final head office of the Banque de l'Indochine in this great business district. Finally, the company had a local presence that was worthy of its name.

## Common points and differences between the settlements

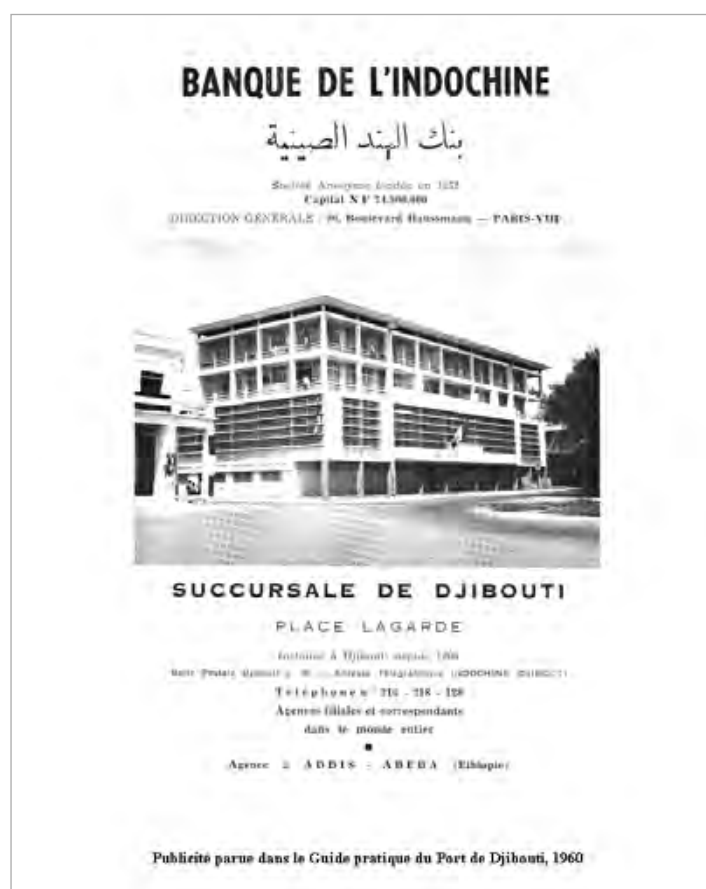
Quickly, in 1875, the Banque had to open a branch in Saigon. This affair was eased by the closure of the branch of the Comptoir d'escompte: the staff and the building were acquired by the new company. However, the director, Claude Léger announced in May that he had bought a building at the crossroads of the street Pellerin and the dock of the big Chinese stream. The house, with one level, is attractive with its square columns. It was built in stone, which was rare in the country, for security reasons. Costumers were to be impressed by this rich building without ostentatious luxury. It was to be used by the bank during its presence in Indochina and was expanded several times.

This first settlement was followed by many and we can see some common points between them. First of all, with the exception of Yunnanfou, all of them are built near a waterway to benefit from the transport business and to offer more directly its services to the merchant companies: near the Sangker river in Battambang; near the Red River in Haiphong; near the Han River; the South China Sea in Tourane, and near the customs dock in Djibouti. Obviously this location exposed properties to floods like the one that took place in Hankow<sup>1</sup> in 1931.

Another common point of these settlements was the accompaniment of the local administration. The installation of the Banque de l'Indochine was viewed as an enhancement of the colonies and the administration provided land to the company in order to erect buildings that served to affirm the French presence. In Battambang, the director, Leconte de Lisle, obtained a large land parcel of 200 meters by 100

1. Currently Wuhan.





*Djibouti, advertising brochure, 1960*



*Djibouti, headquarter of the bank, circa 1910*



*The bank in Pondicherry, circa 1880*

meters from the administration. It was the same in Djibouti, in 1907, where the authorities grant him 750 m<sup>2</sup>. Even before construction began, the local government conceded temporary buildings: always in Battambang, there was a Chinese house divided in two compartments, the ground floor for the offices and the first floor for the director and the cashier. The construction of some “paillotes” was necessary to accommodate the staff and the gatekeeper.

The Banque de l'Indochine needed three types of buildings: bank buildings, houses for directors and the staff, and warehouses. As said before, the bank building was important to show the power of the French presence. It needed to be stately but without ostentation. The use of stone was privileged to protect the bank from attacks. This aspect is, of course, very important for an issuing bank, which stocks a lot of banknotes. Another reason to employ the stone had to do with the climate: in countries with a lot of rains, the use of wood in

construction causes solidity problems, not to mention the attacks of insects. In 1921, one of the buildings of Singapore had to be destroyed because of the “white ants” which ate the wood. However, a stone building was not a guarantee of solidity: the madreporite stone of Djibouti was not able to resist the earthquakes of 1929 and 1920. Some cracks appeared on the façades.

The architectural style was mainly European. Good examples are the branches of Saigon and Hanoi which were built or extended in the 1920's by the architect Félix Dumail: these high buildings with great columns crowned by cupolas are very modern and show little in common with the local architecture. At the opposite, in 1908, in Djibouti the architect Faucon built an arcaded house in Yemenite style. So, with the exception of buildings which were constructed by the same architect, it seems that there is no style unity for the Banque de l'Indochine despite the fact that, at least in Indochina, the company delegated all the

project management of these buildings to the Crédit foncier de l'Indochine, one of his affiliate societies.

**“... in our other buildings expenditure on luxuries should be excluded.”**

The embellishment was often cosmopolitan. For example, the decoration of Hanoi in 1906 mixed French furniture, made by Viterbo, Annamite embroidered silk panels, Chinese vases and Japanese screens. Similarly, it included mixed materials of local and European origins. In Hanoi, the columns of the hall were in red marble of Tonkin and the printed glass in the angles cupolas are from Saint-Gobain (“type 31”). In Tourane, the director of the branch gave the building the appearance of a “local art museum” which was heavily criticized by Paul Gannay. In 1928 this man created the vision for the ideal decoration of the bank. He became the general inspector for the Far East branches and described the new building of Haiphong in the following way: “It is a very beautiful



*The building of Saigon circa 1890, corner of the street Pellrin and the Chinese stream*



*Hanoi, circa 1906. The decoration mixes French furniture, made by Viterbo, with Annamite embroidered silk panels, Chinese vases and Japanese screens (caption taken from Marc Meuleau, op. cit)*



*The building of Saigon, 1875*

building, severe in appearance, but not without harmony. As a whole it is successful and what is most striking is both the luxury and tasteful installation management office and apartment. You know what it costs to our overhead and, if it is appropriate to recall that in our other buildings expenditure on luxuries should be excluded, it is good to write that here they have the least not without result”.

The internal organization of buildings may also reflect the colonial organization of the society. A letter describes the future organization of the building in Hanoi in 1926 as: “The indigenous staff has a special entrance to the North. By a corridor leading in the lobby, and by 16 steps, he can enter the central bank’s cash of the hall and from there up to accounting department without crossing the space for the public. The parts which are reserved [to the indigenous staff] to the basement are widely prescribed”.

Paul Gannay had an essential role in the transformation of the real estate of the Banque de l’Indochine during the 1920’s. Always on the go to visit the branch headquarters, he gave his advice on every aspect of the working business, even on the size of the wickets and vaults used to conserve the banknotes. These scale problems emerge during this period and show the growth of the bank. A good example of this situation is

a description of the offices of the branch of Noumea in 1926: “The cashier is obliged to have an assistant who does not pay but who receives and gives him his receipts morning and evening; only the wicket width separates these two employees and the public and a violent air current could very well blow away the banknotes deposited in wood lockers. It will be essential to include in the new installation project a protected location for a payer (preferably with a grid)”.

#### **The construction of a real estate power**

So, a lot of buildings were built or renewed in the 1920’s and the Banque de l’Indochine had a large portfolio of real estate. This evolution can be followed in the annual reports: the reporting line for buildings increases every year and reflects the bank’s acquisition policy. Regularly the company indicates that it owns the majority of the buildings where it has offices. An example in 1893: “Construction work we are now doing in Haiphong, on the land that we own in recent years, will be completed during 1893. Then, we will be installed in buildings belonging to us in all cities where we have branches or agencies”. Taking advantage of the development of the colonies, the bank’s properties benefited from capital gains.

A part of these properties comprised houses for directors. These notables enjoyed

beautiful homes, which were pleasant and nice to welcome VIPs. To compensate for the fact that he lived in a difficult country, the board of directors of the bank granted 35 037 francs to the director of Djibouti to erect a beautiful house which enjoyed the sea breeze on the Plateau du Serpent. The lower ranked staff did not enjoy the same privilege: in 1912, on the boulevard Bonhoure, always in Djibouti, the bank constructed a building to accommodate European employees and their families. The ground floor is used as a warehouse “to house goods on which we agree in advance, because these operations are expected to grow”.

The construction costs of the warehouses were partly offset by rental income. In 1891, the board of directors was very satisfied with the new warehouses of Pondicherry: “The stores (...) were completed in time and to our complete satisfaction. Opened at the beginning of the current year, they are, at present, completely filled, and we are confident that the rental price will largely cover the interest of the sums allocated for their construction. We have every reason to congratulate ourselves on the decision we made, because of the security that these stores now provide the collateral of goods conferred upon us, their benefits to trade and sanitary conditions they provide to the city of Pondicherry”.





*Djibouti, house of the director on the Plateau du Serpent (circa 1939)*

### A new generation of buildings after the Second World War: the example of Djibouti

After the Second World War, another generation of buildings came into existence. Djibouti seems to be a good example of the adaptation of the Banque de l'Indochine to a new environment. The bank abandoned the privilege of issuing and became a merchant bank and a retail bank in a rapidly modernizing city. In these conditions, the Banque de l'Indochine gave up its outdated headquarters in the boulevard Bonhoure in 1954 for a new building constructed at 10 place Lagarde in the business district. Even if the façade is misdirected against the prevailing winds, this new building serves to illustrate the modernity of the place. The public discovers an important, storied building constructed of reinforced concrete and no longer of madrepore. The wooden shutters have given way, on three floors, to many sheltered and wide openings with metal sunshades. This is a flagship of functional architecture, clear, with air conditioners and telephones. However, in 1972, a report stressed that there is already a lack of space in offices. This old problem always returns in the history of the bank buildings.

As written in introduction, this article is just an overview and the archives of the Banque de l'Indochine, now retained by Crédit Agricole SA, can deliver a large amount of



*The headquarters of the bank in Hankow during the floods in 1931*

information and an important reservoir of stories. The fund of the directorate of external branches contains a large series of correspondence and reports, where real estate and architectural issues are discussed. This study can also be based on a large and unique collection of photographs, examples of which are published here. ●

All images: © Crédit Agricole SA

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### Author profile

Pascal Pénot is graduated with a master in history and a master in archival science. He worked for the NATO's archives and, later, for the French Foreign Office. In the service of historical archives of Crédit Agricole SA since 2006, is his responsible since 2016.

# The palace of Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino

Ilaria Bibollet

**P**alazzo Turinetti di Pertengo is part of the wider project that changed the urban and architectural face of Turin between the 16th and the 17th century, after the city became the capital of the State of Savoy in 1563. The palace is located in the historic district of San Giorgio, at the corner of piazza Castello and via Santa Teresa. It was built under the regency of Christine of France on a plan by Carlo di Castellamonte, the ducal architect and military engineer, who designed the entire Royal Square (Piazza Reale, currently piazza San Carlo) as an extension of the Via Nuova (today Via Roma) into the area of the “New Town” (Città Nuova).<sup>1</sup> The works were commissioned by duke Charles Emmanuel I. The Turinetti di Pertengo were “bankers in this town” and very close to the Court. They were actively involved in the construction of one of the palaces facing onto the square, in line with the uniform design conceived by Castellamonte himself as a quintessential example of Baroque, which is today the heart of the old town.

The palace was enlarged and renewed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and changed hands repeatedly over time, becoming the property of a number of aristocratic families of Turin. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the palace was purchased by count Renaud di Falçon, who undertook a partial renovation of the apartments on the piano nobile and changed the decorations.

The air raids on Turin in 1942 and 1943 significantly damaged the square and fires burned down the roofs and the wooden parts of the palaces, resulting in the loss of the original decorations and furnishings<sup>2</sup>. The façades were also severely damaged and part of the walls collapsed. Palazzo Turinetti was also severely damaged.

The reconstruction of the palace after the war was undertaken by the new owner,



*Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino (today Intesa Sanpaolo): the vault by Beaumont*

the G.I.R.E.S.C.A corporate group (Gruppi Industriale Rinnovo Edilizio S. Carlo), which had acquired the whole building in 1945 and sold it, in turn, in 1951 to Istituto Bancario San Paolo. Upon receiving authorization from the Bank of Italy, the banking institute chose Palazzo Turinetti as its official seat. In addition to an adequate main office, the banking institute also needed a new banking agency connected to conference halls, cultural venues, office space, and shops. Along with the structural renovation, the palace also required restoration of its historical parts into a harmonious whole so as to minimise subsequent interventions over time.

In 1955 the Institute appointed the architect Arturo Midana to renovate the palace

and the adjoining Caffè San Carlo. The objective was to reinstate the Baroque aspect of the square and the palace through the acquisition of pertinent decorations and furniture. Midana would be working with Mario Dezzutti, who in 1961 took over the design and supervision of the project to complete the new, modern banking office, that would be built anew in the palace's inner court.

Caffè San Carlo, one of Turin's most popular cafés, was also seriously damaged in the bombings; Midana and Dezzutti restored its 19<sup>th</sup> century appeal, following the same rationale that guided the renovation of the palace, but on a smaller scale.

The first phase of the renovation of the entire block required the demolition of lower constructions that enclosed small,

<sup>1</sup> Costanza Roggero Bardelli, *Palazzo Turinetti*. Torino, Intesa Sanpaolo, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Abram, *La sede di piazza San Carlo: acquisti, recuperi e ambientazioni dal dopoguerra agli anni Settanta*, in W. Barberis e A. Cantaluppi (a cura di), *La Compagnia di San Paolo (1563-2013)*, vol. secondo, Einaudi, Torino, 2013, pp. 568-598.





*Palazzo Turinetti in piazza San Carlo in Turin after the air raids of 1943*



*Caffè San Carlo after the air raids of 1943*



*Construction yard for the reconstruction of the headquarters of Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino in piazza San Carlo, 1970*

stifling courtyards, which were ill-suited to be reused in any way. In his effort to strike a perfect balance between ancient and modern, Dezzutti embarked on a project that comprised the various sections of the complex to be created. The restoration project aimed to restore the uniform appearance of the Baroque aristocratic residence, relying heavily on the antiques market as a source of appropriate artefacts. A coordinated effort by a large team of decorators, upholsterers, stucco workers, carpenters and craftsmen specialized in mirrors and glass was put in place to refurbish the various halls.

The ceilings of the spaces that look onto Via Maria Vittoria are the first example of a fixed decorative apparatus coming from another residence in Turin. These were purchased, transferred and reassembled in the bank's headquarters. The frescoes would be moved again in later years after the Second World War for preventive and exhibition purposes.

In parallel, the banking institute also acquired furniture that served to define the stately décor of the bank's headquarters in Turin. The artworks and furniture for the palace were purchased by the bank through Pietro Accorsi, a prominent antiquities dealer of the time. In the spring of 1960 Accorsi met with the president of the banking institute, Luciano Jona, to discuss the ambience of the new premises.

The refurbishment of the ceremonial spaces of the complex proceeded in parallel to that of the functional and service areas, including the adoption of technological solutions to perform banking operations and provide services for the public inspired by the highest international banking standards. All front office operations were mechanized. A drive-in banking and automated teller system was set up. A



*Drive-in banking service, 1968*

closed circuit television system was put in place along with pneumatic mail, safes and vaults. An exhibition gallery was designed to display the bank's historical documents, as well as a conference hall and a car parking area.

The faithful preservation of the Baroque façade and structure of the palace was accompanied by the architectural decision to position the banking facility in the courtyard, in a cutting-edge structure made of glass and steel, thus creating a single, flawless architectural vision. The overall effect perfectly reflected the bank's expectations in terms of aesthetics and pleasantness on the eye.

The new complex was inaugurated in the fall of 1963 in the presence of the President of the Italian Republic, Antonio Segni, and the Mayor of Turin, Giovanni Carlo Anselmetti. 1963 was the year that marked the fourth centenary of the establishment of the banking institute. The event was widely covered by the media and made the front page of all the local newspapers. These latter saluted the recovery of the ancient palace and the creation of a "sci-fi" banking facility. In 1964 the construction work for the Art Gallery and the Hall of the Three



*The glass and steel wing of the banking agency in piazza San Carlo, post 1963*

Hundred (Salone dei Trecento) was completed. It included a state-of-the-art conference room equipped with a projection system and translation booths. ●

All pictures: © Archivio Storico della Compagnia di San Paolo

### Author profile

Ilaria Bibollet is a freelance archivist. She has managed different types of archives including municipal, ecclesiastical, corporate archives, archives of Turin-based cultural associations, and archival funds conserved at the Turin State Archives. In 2014 she was hired as an archivist by Compagnia di San Paolo in Turin to focus on safeguarding, archiving, promoting, and consulting papers, which date from 1563, when Compagnia di San Paolo was created, until to 1991.

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# A photographic tour of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group Historical Archives: from the Group's historic buildings to its new Turin headquarters

Serena Berno

In the last special edition of the *eabh* Bulletin devoted to banking architecture we described the contribution made by the staff of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group Historical Archives to the current management of the Group's architectural heritage. In this article we will take a look at the relationship between photography and architecture, a "happy union" found in the more than 90,000 images held in the collections of the Historical Archives.

Broadly speaking, architectural photographs serve the research, planning and communication needs of designers, architects, engineers and scholars from disciplines including history, architecture, art and photography itself.

The photographic collections of the Historical Archives cover a wide time and geographical span, with images of buildings that:

- range greatly in terms of size and type, from the most important, notable edifices to smaller local structures;
- were constructed from 1872 to the present, making it possible in some cases to retrace the evolution not just of individual buildings (through photographs taken in different time periods), but also of the surrounding urban landscape;
- are located (as foreign representative offices, branches and subsidiaries) in various parts of the world, thus enabling viewers to take a virtual trip around the globe.

This wealth of materials – not typically found within a single photographic archive can help researchers gain greater insight into various aspects of banking architecture over the past 145 years. The inquiries received nearly every day by the Historical Archives regarding the photographic collections reflect just how diverse the use of these materials is.



*Palazzo Donghi, Cassa di Risparmio di Padova's headquarters in Padua, designed by Daniele Donghi in the 1920s. Unknown photographer*

External users including professors and university students avail themselves of the photographs to explore both the lives and personalities of architects, engineers and interior designers and the construction processes of the buildings they worked on. The photographic heritage is also a vital resource for the Intesa Sanpaolo Group's own people, as it provides access to documents and images that are of fundamental importance when restoring historic buildings in compliance with the guidelines of regional superintendents.

Finally, photographs are essential for communicating the corporate image and identity, and their creation has thus traditionally been entrusted to prominent photographers. This brings up the issue when considering particular photographic services of whether and to what extent their authors are influenced by the managers, who commission the work. Indeed, while photographers

are sometimes given free rein to express their own particular visual language and style, in many circumstances this artistic freedom is shaped or even curtailed by clients.

For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when banking institutions commissioned well-known artist-photographers to document architectural work, the latter tended to do so through an educational "lens", in an almost scientific manner. However, towards the end of the century banks began to take a new approach, placing greater value on the role of artist-photographers and their personal style in portraying the architecture of both historic and contemporary buildings, and using their artistic output to build up and strengthen corporate identity.

The photographic reportage of the construction of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group's new headquarters in Turin, which was inaugurated on 10 April 2015, is a good example of this more recent approach. Initially undertaken for



internal documentation purposes alone, the reportage soon began to chronicle the entire construction process and to communicate the importance of the work not only for the Group itself but also for the city (see <http://grattaciolo.intesasampaolo.com/gallery>). Press campaigns linked the cutting-edge contemporary architecture with the Group's modern corporate identity. Even though the materials are quite recent, the Historical Archives has already acquired a part of them.

### A brief description of the Intesa Sanpaolo skyscraper

Commissioned and wholly financed by Intesa Sanpaolo, the building houses the Group's Turin headquarters. It is located close to the Porta Susa railway station and the historic town centre, and looks onto a public green space that was also redeveloped by the Group. The skyscraper was designed by the Renzo Piano Building Workshop, winner of the 2006 competition to design the bank's new headquarters (Piano also designed the headquarters of Credito Industriale Sardo in Cagliari in 1992; that bank has since been merged into the Intesa Sanpaolo Group).

The Turin skyscraper is 166 metres high and has 44 floors, 38 of which are above ground. Twenty-seven of them are occupied by Intesa Sanpaolo offices, where the building's architects paid special attention to the lighting and comfort of the work spaces of employees and managers, with services including a staff canteen and nursery. There are public spaces and services on several of the bottom and top floors. On the ground floor we find a "transparent" hall, while the third and fourth floors feature a variable internal layout auditorium whose motorized platforms and customized sound system allow it to be used both as an exhibition space and a conference or concert hall. On the thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh floors there is a bioclimatic greenhouse (approximately 15,000 square meters large) incorporating a hanging garden and restaurant, an exhibition hall and a cafeteria with a panoramic terrace, all open to the public.

The result of advanced research with respect to environmental sustainability, the skyscraper features: a double-skin glass façade; ventilated interspaces between the floors; a geothermal heat and lighting system that takes advantage of surrounding natural sources of energy including solar



*The New York branch of Banca Commerciale Italiana on One William Street, designed by Francis M. Kimball and renovated by Gino Valle, 30 December 1982. Photograph by Santi Visalli*

energy captured by photovoltaic panels installed on its southern façade; and a system to harvest and utilize rainwater. It is thanks to these features, which have made it possible to cut down significantly on energy consumption, that the Green Building Council – the leading international authority on sustainable buildings – recently awarded the building with one of its first-ever Platinum LEED certifications, the highest rating issued for leadership in energy and environmental design. The skyscraper also ranks among the top ten most environmentally-friendly new high-rise buildings in the world. ●

All images: © Intesa Sanpaolo Group Historical Archives



*The Palermo branch of Banca Commerciale Italiana, designed by Studio BBPR: the monumental staircase decorated by Renato Guttuso, 2009. Unknown photographer*



*The Palermo branch of Banca Commerciale Italiana, designed by Studio BBPR: the monumental staircase decorated by Renato Guttuso, 2009. Unknown photographer*

### Author profile

Serena Berno earned her degree in Archival Science from the University of Milan in 2011 while working as a photographer's assistant. She later specialized in the preservation and management of photographic archives at CFP Bauer, a professional training institute in Milan. She has worked in the photographic section of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group Historical Archives since 2007, and also acts as editor of both the Photographic Notebooks series and the Web-based catalogs of the photographic collections.

# The Sant'Elia building in Milan

Francesca Malvezzi

In 1989 the Sant'Elia Building in Milan was inaugurated and it became clear that the efficiency of banking services could no longer exclude the rational use of IT resources. Built to accommodate and coordinate the IT services of Credito Italiano, the new Centro di Elaborazione Dati (CED) also gathered the services of collection, processing and data retention in its spaces. It required a close examination of the advanced technology and the architectural proposal of the container. The building was, in fact, intended to house automated tasks and was designed to respond to technological changes with maximum flexibility.

Otherwise, Credito Italiano (later merged into UniCredit) was one of the first banks to deal with information technology and telecommunications issues. After 1945, when technological maturity was able to accommodate the growing volume of transactions generated by the economic recovery, it was necessary to study suitable architectural solutions to increase these technologies in different work areas and for the related changes in work organization.

The introduction of the first electric accounting machines in Credito Italiano branches already had taken place in the thirties, when it had surpassed half a million current and savings accounts and the number of the entries reached ten million per year. The concentration in a data processing "centre", however, began only after the war, when the first large programmable punch card calculator also acquired not only computation, but also processing capability. It was thus possible to eliminate strenuous and repetitive activities, which presented heavy working tasks, such as: the closing of accounts, the capitalization of interest on deposits, inventories, the crediting of coupons to depositors, etc. The mechanical data processing system was replaced by an electronic one in 1960. The number of customer relationships had already exceeded one million and the number of accounting records



*The first project of the new CED headquarters, [1984], Archivio storico UniCredit*

was up to 25 million per year. Therefore, it became necessary to reduce the processing time and the space occupied by the archives. The "Accounting Centre" was centralized in Milan and had to store information from 300 branches in 150 different locations.

In the second half of the sixties, the invention of "polling", an automatic searching system, which allowed the withdrawal and return of data in "real time" by processors from multiple different peripheral points, revolutionized banking services and allowed for the growth of private banking services, such as family accounts, agreements with employees and large companies. The purchase of third-generation computers, equipped not only with magnetic tape, but also with random access and high speed drives, made it possible to handle nearly two million accounts and deposits and over 70 million transactions per year.

With the constant increase of telematic services, a reconsideration of the whole problem of Centro di Elaborazione Dati was imposed at the end of the seventies. The saturation limit had been reached and the

fragmentation of the various offices into more buildings, even very distant from each other, could not be tolerated long. This was due to the foreseeable increase of electronic installation and the high concentration of staff (more than 1,100 elements).

The CED represented the evolution of the "Accounting Centre" Department, which was allocated at its inception in 1945 into two buildings built in Via Prati (Milan). The two buildings were originally intended for use as bursars' offices and archives, and later integrated with the renovation of a third building and the construction of three other buildings adjacently located. The capacity of these properties had gradually become insufficient in connection with the growth of automation programmes for the services, so that from the 1960s the Bank was forced to find other places for rent in the city.

In addition, the building in the Via Prati area, which was located in a large agglomerate mainly intended for housing, could not be provided with optimal safety measures. The situation could only be countered with the construction of a new complex designed to answer those particular uses.



Finding a free area initially appeared impossible in the city urban fabric, even in the suburbs, so the transfer of the CED to surrounding municipalities was considered. However, the cost per square metre of the best areas served by transport had reached costs equal to the semi-central areas of the city. An open area was finally found in via Sant'Elia between Monte Stella and the Gallarate neighborhood, near Underground line 1. The solution was optimal, firstly because: it allowed the creation of a free and articulate body block; secondly, it was able to meet the requirements; thirdly, because of the safety of a modern complex; and finally, for the position in the most easily accessible urban fabric, well served by public transport and the roads.

At the meeting of 23 September, 1980, the Board of Directors therefore approved the purchase of the land. The design and construction of the complex was coordinated by the Bank's Technical Service. In particular, the project was carried out by architect Ignazio Gardella and architect Paolo Crescini. The construction site of the new CED was opened in January 1985.

The buildable volume permitted by the town plan proposed a study of a building which was concentrated in height and enclosed by a green area in order to ensure an adequate transition between the new built-up area and the surrounding urban landscape. The project involved the construction of a complex with modern technological systems so as to minimize the possibility of disruption in the operation of electronic equipment, and able to receive thousands of employees, officers and technicians. The building had to be an intelligent building, with systems and/or facilities able to ensure the its protection and operation independent of human intervention.

The first project configuration was composed on the basis of functional requirements, namely on the separation between the basic information technology installations and work areas: computers and machinery were collocated on the lower levels, whereas offices and work areas were located in the higher levels.

The designers then focused on the idea of creating a maximum sized base on which to raise a leaner structure. The severe volumetric totality was lightened in the exterior façade by the glass walls, forming a moving



*The definitive project of the new CED headquarters, [1984], Archivio storico UniCredit*



*The Sant'Elia area, [1989], Archivio storico UniCredit*

and changing surface that reflects the surrounding landscape, and by a gray granite boundary that sets the building outlines in horizontal and vertical bands, recalling the idea of a porch. The palace is in fact inserted into a predominantly residential context and the portico recalls an invitation for socializing, and the glass surface recreates the daily image of the window.

The idea of the lower porch is repeated in the smaller adjoining building designed for food service and other offices of the CED. These distinctive features of the project reflect the architectural ideas of Ignazio Gardella as "an open work", an essential vision of building. Furthermore, the ivory gray Sardinia granite slabs form a dense pattern, which breaks the uniformity without contradicting the orthogonal rhythm and give the



*The main façade, [1989], Archivio storico UniCredit*

whole form lightness. The movement of the architectural volumes of the building highlights the offset value of the granite and the glass surface, creating a series of virtual corners. Each slab is separated from the rear structure by an interspace, allowing the free movement of the same interspace. The stained-glass windows, which are bullet proof, were also designed to guarantee the thermal insulation with minimal change in colour.

The final complex has a total of 300,000 cubic metres, of which 157,000 is above ground, divided between the base of four floors and the narrow-elevated body with an additional 8 floors. The building also has 20 meters underground, where the parking garages and the deposits have been allocated, for a total of more 47,000 square meters.

The opening of the building, gatehouses, the central surveillance and the auditorium were placed on the ground floor. The auditorium was designed to host specialized conferences, briefings, and trainings for staff. The first three floors of the structure were also used for the installation of real CED. The presence of large computers imposed the realization of architectural solutions different from other plans. Soundproof ceilings were installed in the structure to refract the noise of the machinery. Particular attention was paid to the problem of lighting the environments, particularly in front of video terminals where operators worked. For these rooms, he opted for reflected light. The air conditioning system was adjusted to maintain the temperature and constant humidity so as to not damage electronic devices. Sensors, optical cells, indicators of thermal alterations and other surveillance technologies were scattered throughout the building to allow the operation of the IT areas and to ensure the automatic control of technological systems, safety and anti-crime security.

The offices on the upper floors were also equipped with soundproofed ceilings and raised floors to conceal computer cables, an innovation which had not then been introduced in all the offices in the city. The lighting in these areas was largely natural. For different floors, prefabricated vaults were also installed, able to resist to fire for three hours and preserve the storage of magnetic tapes and documents required for daily activity.

The realization of accessible green terraces in the free areas of the lower building's



*The control room, [1989], Archivio storico UniCredit*



*A new co-working area, 2015, UniCredit*



*Phone booth, 2015, UniCredit*

rooftop was an essential part of the project; today, employees still use these terraces during breaks. Credito Italiano also decided to equip the building with works of art created ad hoc by some artists. Amongst them are the bronze sculpture of Franco Zazzeri, entitled 'Parallelepipedo con frattura diagonale', which is located in the centre of the main façade; and the iron wall sculpture of Franca Ghitti, entitled 'Omaggio a Sant'Elia', which is located in the large hall of access.

With the passing of years and the new technological changes that have seen large

computers be replaced by mainframe and personal computers, which have become more efficient and compact, the space intended for the CED in the palace was progressively reduced. This resulted in a gradual rethinking of the internal structure of the Centre Sant'Elia. With the merger that took place in the 2000s, the Group has had to manage a significant property portfolio, both in Italy and abroad. This required a consolidation plan of the corporate offices and a consequent reduction in costs. In 2008, UniCredit launched





*One of the dining areas, 2015, UniCredit*



*The workstations inside the open space, 2015, UniCredit*

the so-called “town plans” by which spaces were renewed, focusing on management efficiency, greater environmental sustainability and adaptation to a new concept of work. The Sant’Elia Building has become one of the pilot projects in which the reorganization of spaces according to the principles of Smart Working is undertaken with the goal of aligning administrative work to mobility and collaboration technologies. As in the case of the new UniCredit Headquarters in Milan, the renovation moves from the more advanced structural method of architecture: maximum flexibility and adaptability to the changing of functional needs. The environments were reviewed and individual rooms were almost totally eliminated. The use of mobile walls that identify and demarcate workspaces was instituted.

The adopted model recognizes three main macro areas: the workstation area, the communication area and the functional area. The first presents the workstations inside the open space but also, for example, rooms for activities that require silence and concentration, or co-working areas for team work. The communication area, instead, defines the spaces dedicated to meetings and video conferencing, providing the most advanced technologies. The functional area is dedicated to all the “useful” spaces including personal lockers and copy centers. The

goal is to provide increasingly flexible and efficient environments, which are evenly balanced so as to support individual and team work but also conducive to socializing and relaxation.

For its structural characteristics, the palace of Sant’Elia has also hosted the Historical Archives of the Group since 2001. In anticipation of the increase of its documentary heritage due to the entry into the Group of other banks, some with an ancient tradition, UniCredit had to locate its historical archives in the most appropriate building in order to ensure the correct preservation of documents. Being designed to ensure the conservation of computers and to accommodate the printing centre, the Sant’Elia building was the perfect candidate to host the new archival headquarters. The building guarantees the presence of healthy and clean locations, equipped with apparatuses and systems that minimize the incidence of factors of degradation or damage to documents. At the same time the floors, on which the shelves for the storage of documents are located, have a suitable capacity to bear the considerable weight of paper material. The Historical Archives also have a study room open to the public in the building and offices where the documents are examined and catalogued by the archivists. ●

### Author profile

An archivist with historical training, Francesca Malvezzi reorganized the Fernando Murillo Viaña’s Archives kept at the Fondazione Feltrinelli and published several essays on Chilean history during the Pinochet dictatorship. Currently she is an archivist at UniCredit Historical Archives, where she also promotes the documentary heritage through the publication of essays and articles related to the bank’s history.

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# Banque de Luxembourg

## - The bank's architectural history

### Banque de Luxembourg

**B**anque de Luxembourg has been active in the private banking profession since 1920 and is one of Luxembourg's leading wealth managers.

It is a key partner for enterprising individuals and families, protecting their heritage for future generations and helping them to fulfil their plans with confidence.

As a human and civic-minded bank, maintaining the right balance between all its stakeholders is central to its concerns. This means taking a responsible attitude towards its clients, shareholders and staff, as well as the Luxembourg community, which, for almost a century, has given it the environment in which it has grown.

Banque de Luxembourg has an equally important responsibility when it comes to building in the urban environment, contributing to the city's architectural wealth and leaving a mark for future generations. As a result, the bank has always taken a keen interest in architecture and urban planning, and this is reflected in its flagship sites.

The bank's headquarters at 14, Boulevard Royal are now an integral part of the City of Luxembourg's architectural heritage. The building was designed by Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear of the internationally-acclaimed Arquitectonica firm ([www.arquitectonica.com](http://www.arquitectonica.com)). The original headquarters, built in 1994, were complemented in 2011 by an extension to 14A, forming a cohesive architectural unit.

Inaugurated in 1994, Banque de Luxembourg's headquarters feature a simple, modern design that welcomes clients and provides a comfortable working and living space for its employees.

#### From the outside

The bank's headquarters occupy a strategic site in Luxembourg's Ville Haute: the building stands on a curve of the Boulevard Royal at a focal point for drivers.



Headquarters on no. 14 + 14A, boulevard Royal, Luxembourg-city

Arquitectonica used a collage technique with simple, consistent, overlapping forms for both the exterior and interior design. Every element of the materials, colours and shapes has its own role to play and produces a precise effect:

- The solid mass of the black granite parallelogram is the bedrock of the building. It anchors the composition at its centre and asserts the strong foundations that reflect the bank's solid financial structure.
- The block of chassagne stone introduces the idea of tradition.
- The gleaming, curved glass tower portrays the energy of an institution that is at the very forefront of its profession.

Two shapes (square and oval), three materials (chassagne stone, granite and glass) and four colours (the black of the granite, the beige of the chassagne, the grey of the tower's structure and the blue-green of its glass) create a simple, pared-down language that conveys the bank's personality.

#### Inside the headquarters

Georges Berne's lighting ([www.8-18lumiere.com](http://www.8-18lumiere.com)) illuminates the building from within, accentuating its various shapes. The furniture is designed by French architect, town planner and designer Jean-Michel Wilmotte ([www.wilmotte.com](http://www.wilmotte.com)). It plays on the Arquitectonica design themes – veneers, colours, materials, square and oval shapes – while remaining consistent with the lines and curves of the exterior architecture.

The spacious underground car park, the "Börsencafé" reception area and individual meeting rooms are all carefully designed to deliver the high-quality service that clients should expect from a House of Excellence.

The meeting areas, individual desks and open workspaces create an ideal working environment where the bank's 200 employees can offer tailored services.



### The garden

Created by Belgian landscape architect Jacques Wirtz ([www.wirtznv.be](http://www.wirtznv.be)) and featuring sculpted box trees arranged like the spokes of a wheel with the bank at their centre, the garden links the headquarters to two eighteenth-century villas that stand behind the bank (see sections on “Villa du Parc Amélie” and “Maison Amélie”). Making the transition between the architectural styles of two different eras, it expresses the strong identity and heritage of this almost century-old institution.

### The Auditorium

Two floors below Jacques Wirtz’s gardens, the Auditorium serves as a concert hall and a venue for conferences and debates. It regularly opens its doors to music lovers, financial experts, architects, leaders in social responsibility and various other visitors. This space can hold up to 160 guests, boasts top quality acoustics and is often used by charities supported by the bank.

### Little brother

Number 14 established the bank’s reputation. 14A reinforces its image with a more youthful, less formal spirit. In contrast to its neighbour, it is a focal point for pedestrians. Its slanting façades form the angle of a crossroads, open the building to the city and make it accessible to passers-by.

Inaugurated in January 2012, after an eighteen-month construction period, the extension presented dual challenges, which were handled expertly by Architectonica and the various building trades. Firstly, the aesthetic of the original building was to be complemented by an extension whose main structure already existed when the building was purchased by the Bank and had to be preserved as far as possible. Secondly, the structure needed to meet all the requirements for the bank’s services. As a result, the two buildings on Boulevard Royal are united by a common architectural syntax, including the limestone walls and square windows. They reflect the city’s history and its topography: the headquarters, with their oval tower framed in a block of stone, refer back to Luxembourg’s historical position as a fortress, while the extension is inspired by nature, and especially by the steep valleys that crisscross and surround the city.



*The emblematic building on boulevard Royal with its recognizable glass tower and stone façade*



*14, Boulevard Royal: Symbol of Luxembourg as a financial centre*



*The extension of the headquarters, inaugurated in January 2012*



*The Auditorium*



*Reception area of the guest house Villa du Parc Amélie*



*Guest house seen from the gardens*

14A is like a crystal precisely set in stone. This image is reinforced by the lighting – which is always hidden – and the striated windows, creating an impression of light streaming out from the interior. The structure extends to eight floors underground and six above ground, accommodating 360 employees.

As it is located on the corner facing the Hamilius project, which will revamp the image of Boulevard Royal, it was essential that the building would play a role in the area's redevelopment. Accordingly, 14A also fulfils an urban design purpose as an extension of the Grand-Rue, one of the city's main shopping streets. Its luminous, all-glass

ground floor is an invitation to enter the building. Incidentally, the supporting pillars, made of five layers of laminated glass, are both a technical masterpiece and a world first.

#### **“Responsible” building**

Employees at 14A enjoy the perfect working environment: micro-perforated wooden panels for acoustic management; and a space that concentrates all the heavy equipment on the top floor, which is inspired by submarines, designed with a double hull and a floating floor screed resting on shock absorbers. The architects also made sure to maximise natural light

and to provide social spaces like coffee nooks on every floor, as well as a restaurant and a gym to enhance the well-being of the bank's employees.

14A is eco-friendly and economical to run. Its energy consumption is low, thanks to effective insulation, modern heating, air-conditioning technologies and energy-efficient workstations. A green wall at ground level helps to purify rainwater and regulate air quality as well as sheltering birds. In addition, all the terraces are covered with a green roof, which helps to reduce environmental impact while improving heat insulation and aesthetics. The plants are generally from an ocean environment, selected for their low maintenance and





*Maison Amélie, offices of Banque de Luxembourg Investments, the asset management company*



*The Chartroom on the ground level of the Villa du Parc Amélie*



*Meeting space and news corner on all floor levels, for internal use*

their resistance to inclement weather.

The two buildings are connected by corridors on the ground, second and fourth floors, in order to promote synergies and create one efficient facility at the same address. For employees, it creates a “campus” effect, while clients benefit from full access on a single site to all the expertise required by their family and wealth situation: business, tax and legal specialists as well as the credit and business services teams.

#### **Villa du Parc Amélie**

The Bank’s table d’hôte has a luxurious mansion style that contrasts sharply with the modern headquarters. Its “chart room” on the ground floor hosts a meeting space dedicated to the economic and financial lessons of the past. Individual lounges on three floors provide the perfect place to meet over dishes prepared by a devoted chef.

#### **Maison Amélie**

This mansion, completely rebuilt in its original eighteenth-century style, is home to the bank’s asset management subsidiary. The team’s skills in market analysis, securities selection and fund management determine the bank’s long-term investment strategy, which is regularly singled out for awards by international ratings agencies. ●

All Images - © Fernando Guerra

# Caixa Geral de Depósitos an architectural language

Joaquim Pombo Gonçalves & Helena Real Gomes

Its ability to adjust to the continuous evolution of the services provided, by taking into consideration customers' requirements, is one of the main characteristics of the immovable property of Caixa Geral de Depósitos (CGD).

It is within this context that we would like to give you the background of the bank's branch buildings, the creation of which was defined in the CGD Foundation Charter (1876). The management of the premises required numerous alterations and the planning and implementation of projects in accordance with the political guidelines covering their financial activity.

The initial basic objectives of the national development of a network of branches in new premises were: to gather and administer capital from the State or managed by organisations assigned to it (required securities); and the proximity of the institution to the public due to the extension of the functions of the CGD (with the creation of the Caixa Económica Portuguesa (CEP) in 1880 and the Casa de Crédito Popular (CCP) in 1918.

In this regard, legislative guidelines were created that increased the scope of the mission assigned to CGD, namely functions traditionally assigned to the Public Credit Board - Junta de Crédito Público (that was losing institutional importance) and the Banco de Portugal (that was losing its commercial status and taking on the functions of a central bank). This resulted in the creation of internal norms that sought to adjust the services to growing responsibilities.

This was achieved by showing similar characteristics in the main buildings, seeking a common pattern in the architectural lines and by organising the indoor spaces in relation to the services provided.



*Santa Comba Dão Branch, Public Room, Treasurer, no date (CGD-GPH)*

## Historical background and territorial coverage

In the Charter of 10 April 1876 the installation of the branches was established at national level, which would function in the central banks of the districts on mainland Portugal, adjacent islands (21 November 1885) and in post offices<sup>1</sup>. As a financial institution it was to receive all deposits in cash, valuables in gold, silver and precious metals, and credit notes, which, by way of legislation in force at the time, were of the responsibility of the Lisbon and Oporto public deposits departments, and of any legal trustee in other councils.

This policy of territorial coverage was reflected in the Provisional Regulation of the Institution (December 1876). It set out

that the provisions governing deposits would be successively applied to all of the mainland and islands. The CGD administration was responsible for the establishment of the services in the delegations and promoting a gradual decentralisation. These tasks were to be carried out by considering: the business practice and the stability of operations but also the convenience and interest of the locations.

With the creation of the CEP in 1880, the CGD secured voluntary deposits by way of small savings. This reflected a greater effectiveness of the network of delegations and the way in which they provided a guarantee for this new service as well as their installation in every council in the country (in 1909 there were 42 delegations). Another far-reaching measure was the creation of delegations in the working-class districts of Lisbon and Oporto, as well as the creation

<sup>1</sup> Regulamento Provisório para a Caixa Geral de Depósitos, "Carta de Lei de 10 de Abril de 1876", Emprensa Nacional, Lisboa, 1877, p. 4.



of a subsidiary in Lisbon at the centre of its trade movements.

The progressive autonomy of the Caixa was maintained as a guideline, in accordance with Decree-Law no. 4670, of 14 July 1918, where it set out that the CGD shall establish subsidiaries, delegations or branches with its own Caixa staff, wherever it considers it necessary<sup>2</sup>. This reduced the need of having to share with entities that had different services and functions in the banking sector.

Another service that the CGD incorporated as of 1918 was the CCP. It aimed at providing loans on pledges, the main purpose of which was to moderate and regulate the profits arising from pawn broking.

The reform of 1929 introduced important alterations to the nature and functioning of the CGD. It also created the Caixa Nacional de Crédito (to grant agricultural and industrial credit) and the Caixa Nacional de Previdência (for civil service retirement), which later came to be called the Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência (CGDCP).

Therefore the organisational reform of 1929 was the main driver for the building of property in order to install subsidiaries and branches and simultaneously to consolidate their functions as a credit institution. These were supervised by the Finance Ministry (Dr. Oliveira Salazar).

With the Organic Law of 1969, the Caixa Nacional de Crédito ceased to be a connected institution and was incorporated into the CGD which took over its functions.

At the same time, the CGD Regulation of 31 December 1970 determined that there would be subsidiaries and branches with categories established in accordance with the importance of the community in which they operated. Services were classified as indispensable by the CGD Management Board, depending on the number and value of the transactions carried out.

As the CGD asserted itself in the banking sector with the growing development of its services, its operations in different administrative structures were inefficient, time-consuming and transmitted little confidence to the depositors. This situation led to the need to build premises that were appropriate to the services provided.



*Guarda Subsidiary, by architect Luis Cristino da Silva, 1942 (CGD-GPH)*

### **CGDCP Architecture – a national language**

In the early 1930s, the projects promoted to construct the CGDCP buildings possessed characteristics similar to the architectural trends of the International Style adopted in Europe. The idea was to develop a national orientation by adopting elements of Portuguese constructive architecture with traits of Modernism.

In the period between the 1929 Reform and the Organic Law of 1969 21 subsidiaries and 61 branches were built from scratch for the CGDCP. This represented a huge national building programme and resulted in a total

of 82 buildings on mainland Portugal and adjacent islands.

Up to 1942 the responsibility of the definition of the projects for the CGDCP buildings belonged to the institution, by way of its professional staff or by hiring independent architects. The services initially occupied their own buildings or rented from official or private entities and were adapted according to local requirements. It was up to the management board to establish the guidelines of the works to be carried out based on the information of the managers of the agencies, to whom were given the responsibility to monitor and report

<sup>2</sup> Diário do Governo nº 159, Série I, de 18 de julho de 1918.



*Leiria Subsidiary, by architect Luís Cristino da Silva, 1942 (CGD-GPH)*

on the development of the works defined by the works and buildings section.

The assessment of the state of repair of the buildings of the network of agencies was the responsibility of CGD professionals, who allowed the works to be carried out so as to modify the areas and infrastructures to the requirements of the services. Repairs would be undertaken when the level of deterioration required it; or when a specific area of the premises was not amenable to the quality of the services to be provided; or when it was necessary to return the premises to the owner of the building. Interventions were carried out on a case-by-case basis, the execution of which conferred artistic licence to the responsible architect, who then had to take costs and deadlines into consideration.

From 1942, and as a result of a policy in which public works were centralised, the Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência Administrative Works Commission (CAOC-GDCP) was created in which all the responsibility concerning decision-making and execution of all the CGDCP buildings was vested. Engineer Duarte Pacheco, the then Minister of Public Works and Communications, established the composition and definition of this Commission.

The result of this national revolutionary policy in public works impacted a planned, well-structured and periodically analysed activity in administrative and financial terms.

The image adopted by the CGDCP reflected the modernisation process known as “Modernising Nationalism”. Modernising Nationalism sought

to embody internal organisation (laws and regulations), functional organisation (through specified projects) and aesthetic organisation (in the adoption of historicist and modernist elements).

The existence of an innovative architectural model denoting an obvious influence of the “modern movement” can be seen in the buildings designed for CGDCP until 1936. The buildings’ horizontally wide windows, almost total absence of any type of decoration, geometric volumes employed, asymmetric composition and, sometimes, a reinforced concrete terrace<sup>3</sup> reflect this architectural trend.

3 BRITES, Joana Rita da Costa, *Arquitetura da CGDCP, Filiais e Agências da Caixa Geral de Depósitos Crédito e Previdência, 1929-1970*, Prosafeita: Lisboa, 2014, ISBN 978-972-95869-7-2, p. 240.





*Faro Subsidiary, by architect António Reis Camelo, 1952 (CGD-GPH)*

This architectural model is part of a spirit of modernisation inherent to the construction of the CGDCP branches. The Management Board and its architects wished to adopt this model by way of a type of building that would be common to all agencies that were to be built after that date (e.g. the use on the main façade in most subsidiaries and agencies of the “national shield” symbol).

After 1936, the institution began to hire independent architects, not connected with the works and buildings section. This resulted in the emergence of projects that put an end to the linear course of the aesthetic model that had been followed until then. What distinguishes the architecture of this period is the adoption of contemporary construction but, at the same time, one that was adapted to the local environment

and context. It sought to construct a modern building that would translate the local aspects through regionalist elements: the references to regional (e.g. Portalegre Subsidiary) arts and crafts; and national elements, such as the historicist elements common to many agencies (armillary sphere).

With the formation of the CAOCGDCP in 1943, an assessment of on-going projects was undertaken which resulted in an adaptation of a standard-type programme. In fact, of the 24 branches assessed, 20 were carried out in accordance with the regionalist and / or historicist model; 3 followed the international-type model and 1 revealed a sober and standard-type language that became more widespread in the 1950s.

Until 1948 a mixture of architectural elements had been lent to the modern model (e.g.

oval windows and back façades) with the adoption of regionalist and / or historicist elements (e.g. chimneys and eaves, Portuguese-style tiles, Pombaline-like pyramidal turrets, and rows of decorative modillions, weathercocks and armillary spheres). The union of these constructive groups, under the responsibility of the architect, António Veloso Reis Camelo, dominated new projects and remodelling plans from 1942 until 1948.

In the period between 1948 and 1959, there was a significant increase in building (33 buildings). CAOCGDCP standardised a building model developed throughout the whole country for all projects. It was characterised by the adoption of a classical trend of regular and austere construction, with framed openings. The regionalist elements were eliminated; only the rigour projected in the chimneys and decoration by way of wrought iron railings protecting the ground floor windows were kept. In addition to the visible classical elements present in the buildings, there was an implicit standard-type of representation of power by way of the assertion of a language of order, discipline and solidity, which was very appropriate for public and private banking activity.

#### **CGDCP Building - Typology**

A standard installation programme was established that imposed a standard on CGD buildings, the spatial organisation of which maintained fundamental elements for close to 40 years. Preferably, the building would be located on a prominent corner of the town, allowing the public access to the services in accordance with their requirements. Therefore, the main entrance to the CEP building should be located at the most visible and uncongested point, as well as the point with the best access. On the other hand, the CCP entrance should be further away from the main façade in a quieter street, as people with financial difficulties who wanted loans on pledges would use it. Associated with this entrance, the interior of the building would be defined according to the bank's own provisos that would allow for these transactions to be carried out in individual cells with no communication between them (“booths for the shamefaced”). When different access to the two services referred to above was not guaranteed, the success of the branch would be compromised given the socio-economic background of the public that used the CGD (CEP and CCP) services.

With particular regard to the organisation of the space in the design of the Caixa buildings, there was a significant preoccupation regarding the relationship between the way the services operated and interacted.

The ground floor was always used for the same purpose:

- The CEP branch (required securities). In order to provide this service it was necessary to have: an office and a treasury, known as the “public room” (only 1/3 of that space was intended for the public), which were separated by a counter; a back office with no contact with the public; a manager’s office; WCs and cloakrooms for the staff; and, whenever possible, a private WC for the manager.
- The archives and vault, with two chambers (inner – with two keys, one kept by the manager and the other kept by the treasurer; outer – a key kept by the manager). These compartments could also be situated in the basement depending on the conditions of the existing space.
- If possible, there could also be an area to lease safes;
- An office for inspectors and an ‘extra room’;
- The medical panel services with their own entrance (within the scope of Caixa Geral de Aposentações);
- The CCP, with private access, was divided into four areas: a public room and auctions equipped with “booths for the shamefaced”, which were dedicated to loans services. These were situated in such a way that access to them would be private, thus allowing for their isolation; the vault with a single chamber to store pawned objects and valuables; WCs and cloakrooms for staff; and a storeroom for pawned objects, which was open to both staff and public areas.

The upper floor was used to accommodate the manager, by way of a rent, depending on the area available, without prejudice to the installation of the services. It had direct access to the street, with its own water and electricity meters; these were divided into three different areas:

- A reception (a dining room, living-room or study);
- Domestic or service areas (a kitchen, pantry, coal room, maid’s room and bathroom);
- The private areas (a sewing room or storage room, three bedrooms and a bathroom).



*Oporto Subsidiary, by architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, 1931 (CGD-GPH)*

The CGDCP branches are a focus of interest in terms of architecture but also due to the requirement of determining specific areas to be able to supervise everything that goes on inside them. Hierarchically defined, the physical area was organised as a pyramid where the “top” of the building belonged to the manager, the person who centralised the management of the branch. In the area immediately following were the staff who, in turn, were superior to the level below, where the public could be found. This was exemplified by the existence of a platform behind the counter that placed the bank employee above the level of the public, appearing as a symbol of authority. Specifically, it was the treasurer who, because he was in direct contact with the

public, was confined to a glass office because he handled money).

In the 1960s, there was a change in the project guidelines of new CGDCP buildings (11 branches). The linear trend of the 1950s was abandoned, thus allowing the authors to use their creativity and the right to imbue a personal touch. Also, in the distribution of the functional areas of the branches, there were significant alterations; namely, in the increased number of floors intended for lease and / or accommodation. This brought about the elimination of the balance between the public building and the functional residence, resulting in the image of a building for lease with the banking activity on the ground floor. However, the



subsidiaries situated in the district capitals maintained a model representing an image of firmness and security that the institution always wanted to show.

At the same time, during this decade (1960), the enhancement of the regional language was sought by setting the building within the environment in a revivalism of the international style model adopted in 1936. It reflected the stylisation of patterns adopted in the 'Old Regime'. However, this common denominator suffered a "shift" or change during the transition to the 1970s. From that time onward there was a greater concern about how the user of the branch was seen. There was concern with giving the user personalised treatment, contrary to the uniform and standardised approach: the public took on the role of "customer" and the bank employee that of the "account manager". Subsequently, this close relationship with the customer would be strengthened through the appearance of IT that would spread in the 1980s (e.g. the first ATMs).

The Caixa Geral de Depósitos (thus called since 1993) promoted the remodeling of its branches in the early 1990s. It also sought to standardise its image, giving it a contemporary layout.

### Final considerations

In this work, we endeavour to chronologically address the evolution of the most striking characteristics of the buildings in which the CGD branches were housed. It was therefore necessary to provide the historical background of the complex relationship of the institution in terms of both space and time. With the appearance of different services it became urgent to adopt effective solutions that would perpetuate the functions that the Caixa was developing, namely its credit vocation.

Subsequently, the buildings reflected a dynamic that the institution represented as a response to the growing requirements associated with the services provided. These resulted from the modernisation of banking sector activity. If initially the location of the branches was the result of a policy of expansion and national coverage, in subsequent periods it was the object of political, financial and socio-cultural decision-making manoeuvres that influenced the architectural characteristics of the buildings. The policy decision to construct new buildings,



*Oporto Subsidiary, by architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, Entrance Hall, 1931 (CGD-GPH)*

which had been carried out since the 1929 reform with responsibilities assigned to different entities, sought to maintain an economic rigour and standardisation of aesthetic options in each one of the periods referred to. The intention, regardless of the powers that be, was always to develop a policy to assert the security, trust and solidity of the CGD. ●

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### Abbreviations and acronyms

**CAOCGDCP** Administrative Works Commission of the Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência

**CCP** Casa de Crédito Popular

**CEP** Caixa Económica Portuguesa

**CGD** Caixa Geral de Depósitos

**CGDCP** Caixa Geral de Depósito, Crédito e Previdência

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# Banco Santander building at 9-10 and 11-12 Paseo de Pereda

Teresa Gómez León

One of the sights most often photographed by tourists visiting our city is without a doubt the Banco Santander Building. This monumental structure has posed for thousands of postcards and travel guide photos, along with other major buildings such as Magdalena Palace, the lighthouse on Cape Mayor, the Town Hall and Santander Cathedral.

In fact, the Banco Santander Building is situated in one of the most beautiful and busiest parts of the city, at 9-10 and 11-12 Paseo de Pereda street, formerly known as Muelle de Calderón.

The building's location facing the sea reminds us that in the mid-19th century, Santander's economic development was based on the regular maritime trade with the American colonies. This was made possible by two extremely important elements: the rail line which at that time linked the Cantabrian city with the inland area of the peninsula; and the port, whose efficiency, and especially its natural, protected site by the bay, strengthened the heavy traffic with not only the Americas, but also Europe. The quay became the epicentre of the regional economy, and above all, the transformation of the city, which was modernizing rapidly.

From their offices behind the large windows of the building mezzanine overlooking Paseo de Pereda, the principal shipping agents controlled all loading and unloading operations for the steamships, whose merchandise was then transported inland by rail.

In this atmosphere of prosperity, a select group of men with ties to the business world met at the Board of Trade one morning in January 1856. They had come together to solve the credit needs and growing demand for methods of payment resulting from the increasing import and export activity. The result was the founding of a bank of issue which would take its name from their city.<sup>1</sup>



*Numbers 9 and 10 linked by the triumphal arch to 11 and 12 Paseo de Pereda, current headquarters of Banco Santander. Juan José Pérez (PERSAN). Banco de Santander, 2 de marzo de 1968, Colección PERSAN, Centro de Documentación de la Imagen de Santander, CDIS, Ayuntamiento de Santander*

Banco de Santander first opened its doors on the morning of 20 August 1857, and although there are no sources corroborating the precise location, everything seems to indicate that the firm's first headquarters occupied the corner of the building now known as Palacio de Pombo, located between Calle Martillo and Calle Ataúlfo Argenta, previously Calle Colosía.<sup>2</sup>

From this date in 1857 until April 1923, Banco de Santander moved as many as seven times before settling in the building it currently occupies.<sup>3</sup>

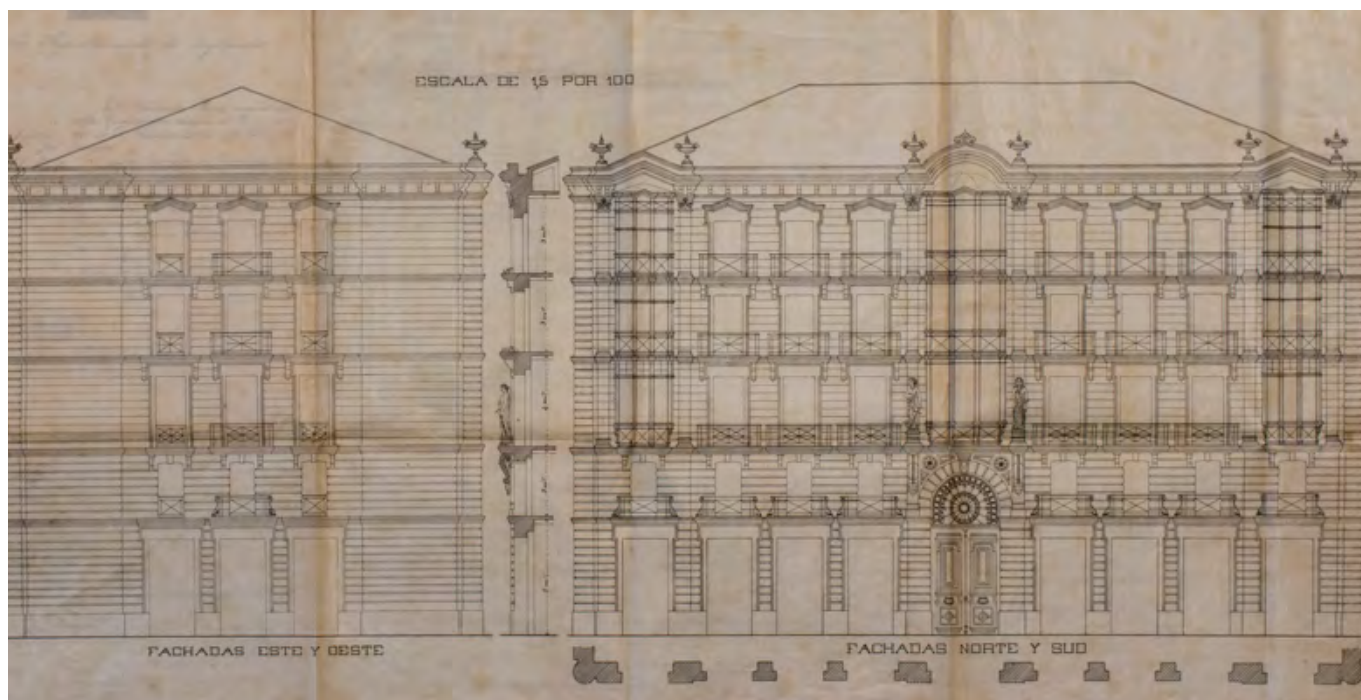
The history of Banco Santander's current headquarters began after a fire which occurred on the night of 6 October 1880. The fire destroyed the residences at 11 and 12 Muelle de Calderón, which housed the famous Café Suizo and Círculo de Recreo. Several months later, on 2 August 1881, Eduardo Pérez de la Riva, representative of Claudio López y López, brother of the Marquis

of Comillas, submitted the documents for the reconstruction of the affected lot to the Santander Works Commission.<sup>4</sup> The plans were drawn up by the famous Catalan architect, José Oriol Mestre.

The design submitted showed a building in an eclectic style made up of a ground floor plus four upper storeys. The verticality of the main façade is signalled by three sets of enclosed balconies, one at either side and one in the centre. Other noteworthy elements include the monumental entrance crowned by a voussoir arch and wrought ironwork. The horizontality is expressed by the balconies and the large windows on the ground floor. The eclectic language takes the form of modillions, vases, pilasters, Corinthian columns, garlands and cast iron sculptures flanking the central balcony.

No sooner had the building been completed than a report was submitted to the Santander works department in November





Plans by José Oriol Mestre, A.M.S. leg. G-83 no. 13

1892. It was prepared by municipal architect Valentín Ramón Lavín Casalis, who, together with architect Casimiro Pérez de la Riva, examined the stone corbels, imposts, cornices, brackets and projections with the aim of finding a solution to the surface fractures and defects which were causing small pieces to fall off. A solution had to be found in order to guarantee the safety of foot traffic. According to this report by the municipal architect,<sup>5</sup> the cause was the low resistance to the freezing of the stone used on the building, which came from the Boñar quarries in León. Among the solutions proposed by the municipal architect was replacement of the stone projections with higher quality materials; keeping the balconies, but replacing the stone corbels with others within an iron framework; and covering the floor with zinc sheets. The architect also rejected the use of ancillary elements and metal staples intended solely to prevent large pieces from coming loose, as this was not the problem in this case. He also recommended that the stone be checked periodically. From 1919, the history of this building at 11 and 12 of what was then Muelle de Calderón street has forever been tied to the history of Banco de Santander. This was when, in response to the growing need for more space, the bank



Building by José Oriol Mestre. 1881

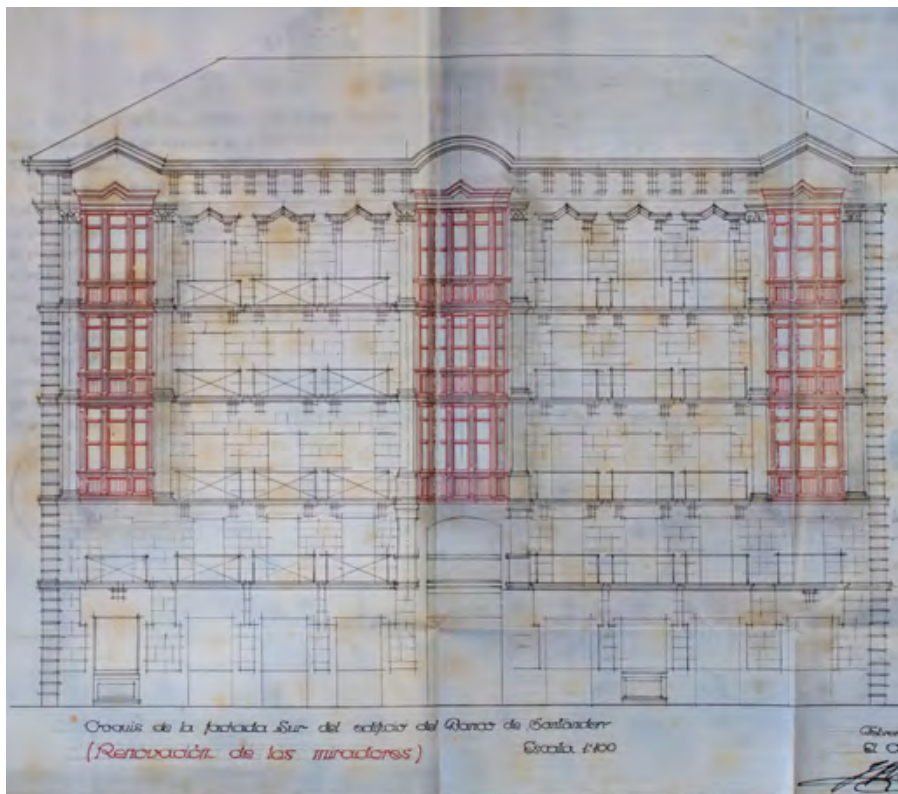
established a new company headquarters appropriate to the increasing importance of its business. And so Banco de Santander purchased the building from Eusebio López y Díaz de Quijano, nephew of Antonio López y López, the Marquis of Comillas, for the amount of one million pesetas. The sale was finalized in a deed signed on 1 September 1919, through the personal intervention of Banco de Santander Chairman Emilio Botín y López.<sup>6</sup> A few months later, on 9 March 1920, the company's director requested authorization from the Santander works department to expand the offices.

The report signed by Valentín Lavín del Noval, the municipal architect, presents a radical transformation of the layout of the



Plans for refurbishment of the basement, ground floor and mezzanine. A.M.S. leg. F-33

basement, ground floor and mezzanine. The facility plan was drawn up by architect Ricardo Bastida. The report proposes knocking down all the interior partition walls on the lower floors and mezzanine, dismantling the staircase, adding sills and grilles to the ground floor wall openings, breaking through the horizontal structures necessary to make room for new staircases, replacing the exterior enclosed balconies on the north façade with windows, and deepening and repairing the basement. The safety deposit boxes and safe for the bank's use were placed in the basement, between concrete and reinforced cement walls. The main entrance on Paseo de Pereda led to the ground floor, where there was now a spacious central



A.M.S. leg. G-304 no. 25 (unpublished plans)

lobby surrounded by various rooms separated by wood and glass screens, and dividers. These were used for the offices which required greater contact with the public, such as the accounts office and cashier's desk. Two staircases were installed on the ground floor, in the northeast and northwest corners. The first flight of steps was made of marble. On the mezzanine were workspaces and offices which required more privacy (such as those for managers and secretaries), the meeting room and the board room.<sup>7</sup>

When work was completed, the official opening of Banco de Santander headquarters took place on 31 March 1923 in the presence of the relevant local and ecclesiastical authorities, along with Emilio Botín y López, chairman of the board.

This 1921 refurbishment was followed by two smaller upgrades. Based on plans by the architect Javier González de Riancho<sup>8</sup> and approved by the city works department on 13 March 1936, they consisted of replacing the three sets of wooden enclosed balconies on the main façade.

According to the report, the other refurbishment by the same architect consisted of dividing up part of the upper floor to create

two residences to be used by the caretakers. They included three bedrooms, a living and dining room, a kitchen and a bathroom, 'with direct light and ventilation provided by new dormer windows'.<sup>9</sup>

In January 1942, the final plans for refurbishment of the main façade – this time designed by architect Pedro Mugurza – were submitted to the same Santander works department.

The report proposes the removal of the three sets of wooden enclosed balconies due to aesthetic reasons as well as to prevent possible fires which might put the rest of the building in danger. The work was carried out in 'the simplest and most economical way, keeping the existing wall openings, which contain the enclosed balconies, and adding ledges on both sides and decoration above the central balcony. These details provided the whole with the feeling of a public building, rather than the residential structure it is today'.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, part of the building was at that time occupied by residents, the Regatta Club headquarters and by a residential hotel run by Doña Paquita. When Banco Mercantil was taken over by Banco de Santander in 1946, new branches were opened to the public. As

a result, the volume of business increased, forcing the bank to once again expand its facilities in Paseo de Pereda. The process of moving the residents out began in 1945 and took some time. This delayed the acquisition of the appropriate renovation permit for the interior to adapt the building to the new functions and needs required by the company.<sup>11</sup> In relation to this, in March 1947, an application in the name of Julio Soler Jover, representative of Banco de Santander, was submitted to the works department. The application concerned the refurbishment of the ground, first and second floors of the building. The report prepared by Javier González de Riancho planned to 'completely remodel only the layout of the second storey, which at the time was divided into two residences. They were eliminated, creating a new layout, with the board room, various offices for the accounting department and branch management, lavatories and bathrooms'.<sup>12</sup> The first floor was rearranged to create space for the stock market section and offices for the company lawyers. Lavatories were installed on the ground floor and in corresponding locations on the upper floors.<sup>13</sup>

But the most important alterations which changed the appearance and personality of the 1881 building were made during the expansion project. This project created the corporate building we see today. It was the result of the ongoing development and expansion of Banco de Santander, which needed to accommodate new staff and facilities. To this end, on 24 December 1951, Emilio Botín Sanz de Sautuola López, the company chairman, submitted a request to the city to expand the corporate building, 'with a view more to the most noble and patriotic interest of enhancing the city to which we are all indebted, rather than in its own'.<sup>14</sup> The plans were commissioned from Javier González de Riancho,<sup>15</sup> who made provision for tearing down the residences at 9 and 10 Paseo de Pereda. These were located next to the corporate building to the west and purchased by the bank in 1946, in order to build an identical building on the site, with the same arrangement of floors and façades. The novel element was that the two sections of the building would become one. They would be linked by a 'grand arch which, without lessening the importance of the street separating them, lends the whole a monumental character comparable to the finest buildings in



the great foreign cities, where it is possible to admire those true triumphal arches leading to squares, large roads through public buildings from different centuries'.<sup>16</sup> The arch extends the width of Calle Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola. According to the report, it measures 11 metres and 30 centimetres, while its height to the keystone is 14 metres. 'The architectural composition is in the classic style for such arches, with an entablature divided by two pilasters with a central motif, which could be no other than the coat of arms of Santander. Above this entablature is a Greek-style attic crowned by four large marble or stone statues representing the Arts, Agriculture, Commerce and Navigation. Below there is a large frieze in high relief depicting the bank, protecting industry, blast furnaces, mining, sports and various elements making up life and national and international interests'.<sup>17</sup> The most important idea, which the company chairman succeeded in expressing, was that of beautifying the city, giving it a monumental building which was also worthy of presiding over the bank's different buildings already scattered throughout Spain's major cities'.<sup>18</sup>



A.M.S. leg. G-304 no. 25 (unpublished plans)

## Author profile

Teresa Gómez León holds a doctorate in history of architecture and urban planning from the Università degli Studi di Firenze and a doctorate from the Universidad de Cantabria. She has a master's in cultural management from the Université libre de Bruxelles and a bachelor's in art history from the Universidad de Les Illes Balears. She has worked in educational services at the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, coordinating projects to improve the permanent collections. Teresa has also managed temporary exhibitions at both the Università degli Studi di Firenze and Colegio de Empresistas de Cantabria. She is currently employed at the Banco Santander Historical Archives as an administrative assistant, hired by the Uceif Foundation.

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# The branches of Banco de España buildings and architects

Elena Serrano

**T**he Banco de España was originally the Banco de San Carlos, founded by Royal Charter on 2 June 1782. Due to a variety of circumstances, the Banco de España had to move its Madrid headquarters several times. However, in 1891, the Bank found its definitive location, where it constructed the current building in Paseo del Prado, to which several extensions were later added (most recently in 2005), transforming it into the building it occupies today.

The Banco de España began to expand territorially in 1874, establishing its branch network. It already had two branches in the eastern coastal cities of Valencia and Alicante, which had been set up in 1858 following the enactment of the 1856 Law on Banks of Issue. The circulation of notes and coins by a single bank was established by decree on 19 March 1874, granting the Banco de España the monopoly on issuing banknotes for the entire nation, and replacing the system of various banks of issue which had been in place in Spain since 1856.

Its new role as a single issuer gave rise to major changes, notably two of an architectural nature: the construction of the current building in Paseo del Prado to accommodate the new services required by the monopoly; and the establishment of a nationwide branch network (whose primary role was to distribute banknotes) which was to lead to the construction of new buildings throughout Spain. As early as 1874, twelve branches were set up in twelve cities, marking the start of a period of strong expansion that continued until the turn of the century. This brought the number of branches to fifty eight. The trend continued into the new century, albeit at a lesser pace, and peaked in 1957, with the opening of the Ceuta branch. The total number was now seventy branches, which had been established over a period of one hundred years, from 1858 to 1957. Additionally, six agencies were opened outside Spain between 1902 and 1920, three of them in



Valladolid branch, 1877. Archivo Banco de España

Europe (Paris, London and Berlin) and three in North Africa (Tangiers, Larache and Tétouan). This extended the territorial presence of the Bank to seventy six locations. In contrast, the process of closing down branches and agencies, which commenced in 1960 with the North African agencies, gradually continued until 2011. As a result, only fifteen branches remain open today.

The search for buildings to house the first branches became a priority in the final quarter of the 19th century and gave rise to a wealth of interesting correspondence between the first branch directors and the Governor, in which they not only weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of the buildings, but also assessed the areas in the cities most suited to business development. This made the collection of letters an interesting source of information about local life in those cities.

Some of the early branch buildings of 1874 had belonged to issuing banks such as Malaga, San Sebastian, Seville, Valladolid or Palma de Mallorca, which merged with the Banco de España following the issuance

monopoly decree. The Palma building, commissioned by the Banco Balear to the architect Miguel Rigo y Clar in 1872, was completed in 1880, when the Banco de España acquired it. Interestingly, the Palma de Mallorca building, in Calle de San Bartolomé, continues to be the branch office in that city, which makes it unique in the history of the branches. These have generally changed premises at least once, twice or even three times. In the cities where the Banco de España did not merge with the local bank, or had no interest in its building, it opted to rent buildings that were well suited to the needs of a bank, and then embarked on interior remodeling projects from which plans and drawings of great interest have survived to the present day.

The Banco de España soon began constructing its own branch buildings, and was thus able to adapt the design to its operational needs. However, it was not until the main headquarters in Paseo del Prado, Madrid, were built in 1883 that the idea of designing and distributing space to respond to operational needs took hold. Indeed, when establishing the bases for the construction of the





Almería branch, 1902. Archivo Banco de España

building, the works commission, together with the Bank's architects, Eduardo de Adaro and Severiano Sainz de la Lastra, gathered information from the heads of the different areas of the Bank: about the needs of each office; the space required; the interactions between offices; the more or less direct interrelations; and, in particular, about public service needs<sup>1</sup>. At the time, no prototype bank building had yet been designed to respond to a set of needs, and until then, the Bank had occupied buildings that had not been designed for their intended use and functions. The fundamental change in architectural trends of the last third of the 19th century took place precisely when buildings began to be planned on the basis of their intended functions. The form, while still essential, began to follow the function.

The Valladolid building, in Calle Duque de la Victoria, planned in 1877 by Pedro Martínez Sangrós, was the first to be purpose-built by the Banco de España. This transpired a few years before the Madrid headquarters, whose final project dates from 1883<sup>2</sup>. The building, of great architectural beauty and interest, was demolished in 1954, to be replaced with a new

branch building designed by Romualdo de Madariaga.

After the construction of the first Valladolid building, the Bank resorted less and less to renting. It began to construct new buildings, seeking to create its own, specific design from the outset and thus to avoid adaptations which were no more than temporary arrangements until better and more definitive solutions were found. In the years that followed, new buildings were constructed, each one with its own and particular style, evidencing the nonexistence of a unique and defined model. Examples from that period are San Sebastián (1881, Severiano Sainz de la Lastra), Bilbao (1883, Sabino de Goicoechea) or Segovia (1893, José María Aguilar Vela). The period marked the start of a very prolific building process that can be said to be still ongoing.

From the mid-19th century, if not earlier, the Bank had architects on its staff. Severiano Sainz de la Lastra joined the Bank in 1859 and was the institution's only architect until Eduardo de Adaro's arrival in 1872. They shared projects for twelve years, most notably the building for the headquarters in Paseo del Prado and Calle Alcalá, until the death of Sainz de Lastra in 1884.

Eduardo de Adaro had a very productive career both inside and outside the institution, where he remained until his death in 1906. He

was not only responsible for the construction of the main headquarters, but also for a number of remodelling projects and new buildings for many of the branches which, as we have already seen, began to be opened at a brisk pace in 1874. Noteworthy are Burgos (1898), Pontevedra (1900), Huesca (1902) or Logroño (1905), all of great architectural beauty and closely resembling the Madrid building with regard to the more functional aspects. In addition, Adaro undertook the remodelling of a number of rented buildings, the plans for which have survived to this day and are of great interest. José María Aguilar Vela, who had joined in 1884 to replace Sainz de la Lastra, played an important role in the Madrid construction project, and in that of several branches, such as Segovia (1893), which was unfortunately demolished in 1949 to be replaced by a new building.

José de Astiz Bárcena joined in 1898, and his first building, the Palencia branch in Calle de la Cestilla, dates from 1900. He led the construction of numerous branch buildings until 1924, when his relationship with the Bank ended as a result of disagreements with the Council regarding the Pamplona branch project. The project was later commissioned to Yáñez and Menéndez Pidal. Benito González del Valle took part, with José de Astiz, in the construction projects for the Valencia,

1 NAVASCUÉS PALACIO, Pedro (1982). El Banco de España en Madrid. Génesis de un edificio, in *El Banco de España. Dos siglos de historia. 1782-1982*, Madrid: Banco de España.

2 ALONSO, María José (1998). La arquitectura del Banco de España. Arquitectura-Tipología (1877-1921), in *Arquitectura bancaria en España*. Madrid, Electra-Ministerio de Fomento

Badajoz and Oviedo branches in 1912 and 1913.

José Yáñez Larrosa joined the Bank as an architect in 1917. He was awarded the tender for the construction of the Vitoria branch in Cuesta del Teatro, on the site of the former Vitoria Theatre, a neoclassical building by Silvestre Pérez. The architectural elements of the Vitoria building could be said to have defined the model that was to be repeatedly used from then on in many Banco de España branches: a free-standing building with a rectangular plan; its main façade on one of the shorter sides, with five recesses, three storeys and open-space offices; and characterised by a monumental and sober style, with stained-glass windows and coloured marble to add splendour. Two of Yáñez's most interesting and successful projects were the extension of the Madrid building (1928) and the Barcelona branch building in Vía Layetana (1929). The latter was shared with Luis Menéndez Pidal and is perhaps the finest of all the branch buildings in the history of the Banco de España. Yáñez worked for the Bank almost until the 1960s, his last project being the Logroño branch in 1956. Other, also very prolific, architects, shared projects with Yáñez in the central decades of the 20th century (from the 1920s to the 1960s), bearing witness to the intense construction activity taking place during those years. For a number of years, Yáñez coincided with architects such as: Luis Menéndez Pidal, whose first project was the Alcoy branch (1921); Romualdo de Madariaga and Céspedes, whose first major commission was the Albacete branch (1933); and Juan de Zavala Lafora, whose first building for the Banco de España was the Avila branch (1927).

In addition to the institution's own architects, a number of independent architects took part in new building projects on an ad hoc basis, especially in the oldest period. In the early years of the branches' existence, from 1874 onward, a number of projects were commissioned to local architects. These architects were very familiar with the cities in which they lived and worked. They were fully entrusted with the buildings' design and style and had the support of the Bank's architects when dealing with issues related to operational needs. These local architects included José Goicoa in San Sebastian (1881), Sabino de Goicoechea in Bilbao (1883), Juan Álvarez de Mendoza in Lugo (1901), Enrique



*Bilbao branch. 1918. Archivo Banco de España*

López Rull in Almería (1902), Pedro Vidal in Salamanca (1902), Julián Apraiz in Bilbao (1918) (although he came from Vitoria), Antonio Illanes del Río in Seville (1919), and Eloy Martínez del Valle in Santander (1924). Secundino Zuazo Ugalde, who designed the Granada (1933) and Córdoba (1934) branches at a later stage (two of his masterpieces), did not fall into this category as he was originally from Bilbao<sup>3</sup>.

From 1979, following the building review plan approved by the Executive Commission, the Bank decided to build eight new branches, since the existing buildings did not meet the security and service standards required at the time. The Bank commissioned these projects to renowned Spanish architects such as Rafael Moneo, for the Jaen branch; Ramón Vázquez Molezún and José Antonio Corrales, for the Badajoz building; Ramón Cañas Represa for Zamora and Oviedo (the latter shared with Nicolás Arganza); Luis and Sebastián Recasens for the Cádiz branch; Vicente Sánchez de León for Ciudad Real; Luis Clotet and Ignacio Paricio for the Gerona building; and Eleuterio Población Knappe for the Huesca branch<sup>4</sup>.

This brief look at the buildings and architects of the Banco de España allows us to gain more insight into the prolific building activity

undertaken by the institution. Between the establishment of the first branches in 1858 and the inauguration of the last building in Jaén in 1988 by Rafael Moneo, the Bank has used one hundred and ninety one buildings in seventy six cities, some rented, others owned, some refurbished and others built on new sites. As can be seen in Table 1. The data reveal the importance that the institution has attributed to the buildings' management. To this fact we owe the architectural richness of the buildings and the beauty of the plans that reflect their designs, preserved for the most part in the rich archive of the entity. ●

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<sup>3</sup> NAVASCUÉS PALACIO, Pedro. (2015). *Arquitectura del Banco de España*. In: Serrano García, E. (eds), *Planos Históricos de los Edificios del Banco de España*. Madrid y Sucursales, pp. 11-38. Madrid: Ediciones El Viso

<sup>4</sup> SERRANO GARCÍA, Elena. (ed.), (2015), *Planos Históricos de los edificios del Banco de España*. Madrid y Sucursales. Madrid: Ediciones El Viso, pp. 40-47



Location	Date of establishment	Street	Architect	Types of work
Albacete	1887	Tinte, 50		Unknown
	1894	Salamanca, 16	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	Remodeling
	1936	Martínez Villena, 21	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Alcoy	1884	Santa Elena, 4		Unknown
	1928	Laporta	Astiz Bárcena, José de; Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
Algeciras	1904	Sagasta, 10		Unknown
	1930	Regino Martínez, 16 Y 18	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	Remodeling
Alicante	1858	Amérigo con Princesa		Unknown
	1885	Victoria, 2	Guardiola Picó, José	Remodeling
	1947	Méndez Núñez, 7	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Almería	1884	Príncipe Alfonso, 39		Unknown
	1904	Plaza Circular (luego Emilio Pérez)	López Rull, Enrique	New site
	1956	Plaza Circular	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Antequera	1930	Ovelar y Cid, 10 y 12	Yáñez Larrosa, José	Remodeling
Ávila	1886	Plaza del Alcázar, 16		Unknown
	1891	San Segundo, 19-21	Sala, Felipe de	Remodeling
	1930	Plaza de Calvo Sotelo, 1	Yáñez Larrosa, José; Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Badajoz	1880	Arco-Agüero, 10	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	Remodeling
	1918	Plaza de la Soledad, 9	Astiz Bárcena, José de	New site
	1985	Antonio Masa Campos, 22	Corrales Gutiérrez, José A.; Vázquez Molezún, Ramón	New site
Barcelona	1874	Ancha, 2		Unknown
	1892	Rambla de Santa Mónica, 27	Rogent, Elías	Remodeling
	1932	Vía Layetana	Yáñez Larrosa, José; Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
	1955	Plaza de Cataluña	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Berlín	1903	Oficina Delegación de Hacienda		Unknown
Bilbao	1874	Casa de los Sres. Pelayo y Palme		Unknown
	1875	Bidebarrieta, 12		Remodeling
	1885	Matadero, luego Banco de España	Goicoechea, Sabino	New site
	1923	Gran Vía López de Haro, 10	Apraiz, Julián	New site
Burgos	1884	Plaza de Alonso Martínez, 1		Unknown
	1900	Paseo de la Isla	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	New site
	1958	Victoria, 34-38	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Cabra	1929	Martín Belda, 23 y 25	Yáñez Larrosa, José	Remodeling
Cáceres	1884	Solana, 12		Unknown
	1905	San Pedro, 15	Rodríguez, Emilio María	New site
	1959	Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Cádiz	1874	Calvario, 4, luego Antonio López		Unknown
	1983	Plaza de la Constitución	Recaséns, Luis y Sebastián	New site
Calatayud	1932	Plaza de Joaquín Costa, 15	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Cartagena	1887	Plaza del Rey, 12	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	Remodeling
	1891	San Francisco, 5		Unknown
	1900	Puerta de Murcia, s/n		Unknown
	1961	Plaza de San Francisco	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Castellón	1886	Plaza de la Paz, 2		Unknown
	1949	Plaza de la Paz, 2	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Ceuta	1957	Plaza del General García Valiño	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Ciudad Real	1884	Toledo, 24		Unknown
	1904	Plaza del Pilar, nº 3	Rebollar, Sebastián	New site
	1985	Plaza de España, 15	Sánchez de León Pachecho, Vicente	New site
Córdoba	1879	Puerta del Osario, 12		Unknown
	1939	Avenida del Gran Capitán	Zuazo Ugalde, Secundino	New site
Cuenca	1887	Calderón de la Barca, 85 al 89		Unknown
	1896	Madereros, 60		Unknown
	1925	Parque de Canalejas (San Julián)	Astiz Bárcena, José de; Martínez del Valle, Eloy	New site
Don Benito	1928	Villanueva, 41	Yáñez Larrosa, José	Remodeling
	1948	Plaza de la República, 15 y 16	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Ferrol	1945	Plaza de España, nº 2		Unknown
	1949	Plaza de España	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site

Location	Date of establishment	Street	Architect	Types of work
Gerona	1884	San Francisco, 9		Unknown
	1902	Plaza del Marqués de Camps, 13	Sureda, Martín	New site
	1989	Avenida 20 de Junio, nº 2	Clotet, Luis; Paricio, Ignacio	New site
Gijón	1884	Trinidad, 33		Unknown
	1891	Instituto, 27		Unknown
	1894	Instituto, 13	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	Remodeling
	1950	Jovellanos, 14	Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
Granada	1879	San Antón, 39		Unknown
	1887	San Antón, 38	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	Remodeling
	1942	Gran Vía de Colón, 16	Zuazo Ugalde, Secundino	New site
Guadalajara	1886	Plaza de Santa María, 1		Unknown
	1934	Plaza de don Diego García	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Haro	1892	Pardo, 1	Coello, Fernando	Remodeling
	1924	Plaza de San Agustín	Astiz Bárcena, José de; Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Huelva	1884	Ricos, 25		Unknown
	1891	Sevilla, 34		Unknown
	1941	Plaza de la Constitución	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Huesca	1884	Coso Alto, 55	Villasante, Federico	Remodeling
	1903	Coso Alto, 16	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	New site
	1988	Martínez de Velasco	Población Knappe, Eduardo	Unknown
Jaén	1884	Juego de la Pelota, 9, luego Juan de Montilla		Unknown
	1950	Juan de Montilla, 9	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
	1988	Paseo de la Estación, 57	Moneo Vallés, José Rafael	New site
Játiva	1929	Plaza del Almudín, 19	Menéndez Pidal, Luis	Remodeling
	1958	General Primo de Rivera	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Jerez de la Frontera	1875	Larga, 25		Unknown
	1907	Plaza de Eguilaz	Astiz Bárcena, José de	New site
La Coruña	1874	Riego del Agua, 37		Unknown
	1926	Durán Loriga, 16	Astiz Bárcena, José de; Mariño, Pedro R.	New site
Larache	1920	Mel-hao		Unknown
	1951	Generalísimo, 10	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Las Palmas	1889	Plaza de Santa Ana, 7		Unknown
	1897	Balcones, 11	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	Remodeling
	1952	León y Castillo, 4-8	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
León	1886	Plaza Mayor, 26		Unknown
	1890	Plazuela del Conde, 4		Unknown
	1903	Bayón, 4	Cárdenas, Manuel	New site
	1950	Ordoño II	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Lérida	1886	Fernando, 20	Aguilar Vela, José María	Remodeling
	1939	Blondel, 23	Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
Linares	1892	General Echagüe, 6		Unknown
	1904	Castillos, 2	Astiz Bárcena, José de	Remodeling
	1950	José Antonio, 66	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Logroño	1885	Mayor, 8		Unknown
	1908	Bretón de los Herreros, nº 33	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de; Astiz Bárcena, José de	New site
	1959	General Vara del Rey	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Londes	1902	Oficina Delegación de Hacienda		Unknown
Lugo	1886	Progreso, 6		Unknown
	1902	Emilio Castelar, 4	Astiz Bárcena, José de	New site
	1965	Generalísimo Franco (Emilio Castelar), 4)	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Málaga	1874	Alameda Hermosa, 7		Unknown
	1936	Cervantes, 3	Yáñez Larrosa, José	New site
Melilla	1913	Santa Bárbara	Astiz Bárcena, José de	Remodeling
	1943	Plaza de España, 2	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Murcia	1884	Saavedra Fajardo		Unknown
	1887	Plaza de Cetina		Unknown
	1895	Plaza de Monassot		New site
	1929	Gran Vía Escultor Francisco Salzillo	Yáñez Larrosa, José; Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
Orense	1886	Progreso, 75		Unknown
	1930	Vicente Pérez	Yáñez Larrosa, José; Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Oviedo	1874	Campomanes, 13		Unknown
	1923	Suárez de la Riva	Astiz Bárcena, José de	New site
	1982	Conde de Toreno	Cañas Represa, Ramón; Araganza García, Nicolás	New site
Palencia	1884	Mayor, 8 y 10		Unknown
	1903	Cestilla, 8	Astiz Bárcena, José de	New site
	1961	Generalísimo Franco, antes Cestilla	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site



Location	Date of establishment	Street	Architect	Types of work
Palma de Mallorca	1874	Plaza de Santa Eulalia		Unknown
	1880	San Bartolomé y de Escursach	Rigo y Clar, Miguel	New site
Pamplona	1874	San Ignacio, 4		Unknown
	1892	San Ignacio, 2	Aguilar Vela, José María	Remodeling
	1927	Sarasate o Valencia	Yárnoz Larrosa, José; Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
París	1902	Oficina Delegación de Hacienda		Unknown
Pontevedra	1886	Plaza del Teucro, 5		Unknown
	1893	Riestra, 37 y 38		Unknown
	1903	Michelena, 29	Adaro y Magro, Eduardo de	New site
Reus	1878	Santa Ana, 40		Unknown
	1904	Santa Ana, 59	Caselles y Tarrats, Pedro	New site
Salamanca	1884	Herreros o del Toro, 21		Unknown
	1942	Zamora, 20	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
San Sebastián	1874	Trinidad, 28		Unknown
	[1884]	Garibay, 26	Goicoa, José	New site
	1941	Garibay, 26, 28 y 30	Yárnoz Larrosa, José	New site
Santander	1875	Velasco, 3		Unknown
	1929	Alfonso XIII, 2	Astiz Bárcena, José de; Martínez del Valle, Eloy	New site
Santiago de Compostela	1886	Casas Reales		Unknown
	1918	Plaza de la Universidad		Unknown
	1949	Plaza de Platerías	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Segovia	1886	Plazuela de San Facundo, 8		Unknown
	1897	Solar de los Huertos	Aguilar Vela, José María	New site
	1952	Cronista Ildefonso Rodríguez, 1 y 3	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Sevilla	1875	Estrella		Unknown
	1928	Plaza de San Francisco, 17	Astiz Bárcena, José; Illanes del Río, Antonio	New site
Soria	1887	Plaza del Conde de Gomara, 3		Unknown
	1936	Plaza de la República (plaza de San Esteban)	Yárnoz Larrosa, José	New site
Talavera	1929	Sol, 14 y 16		Unknown
	1949	Carnicerías	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Tánger	1909	Legación de España		Unknown
	1948	Bélgica, 7 y 9	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Tarragona	1878	Smith, 6		Unknown
	1887	Apodaca, 3		Unknown
	1929	San Juan	Yárnoz Larrosa, José; Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Tenerife	1887	Marina, 9		Unknown
	1895	Castillo, 77		Unknown
	1932	Viera y Clavijo, 25	Yárnoz Larrosa, José; Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
Teruel	1887	Paz, 4	Aguilar Vela, José María	Remodeling
	1897	San Juan, 34		Unknown
	1936	Plaza de Emilio Castelar	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Tetuán	1920	Plaza de Alfonso XIII		Unknown
	1950	Plaza de Muley el Mehd	Yárnoz Larrosa, José	New site
Toledo	1884	Plazuela de San Nicolás, 4		Unknown
	1892	Cadenas, 18	Aguilar Vela, José María	Remodeling
	1954	Nueva, 16	Menéndez Pidal, Luis	New site
Tortosa	1903	San Ildefonso		Unknown
	1937	Cervantes, 13-17	Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site
Valdepeñas	1928	Pintor Mendoza, 32		Unknown
	1947	Seis de junio, 27 y 29	Yárnoz Larrosa, José	New site
Valencia	1858	Yerba, 5	Gisbert, Jorge	Remodeling
	1860	Pza. de la Congregación, 3	Gisbert, Jorge	Remodeling
	1918	Barcas, 6	Asitz Bárcena, José de; González del Valle, Benito	New site
Valladolid	1874	Duque de la Victoria, 14	Iturralde y Montiel, Antonio	Unknown
	1879	Duque de la Victoria, 28	Martínez Sangrós, Pedro	New site
	1958	Duque de la Victoria, 28	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Vigo	1885	Arenal, 66		Unknown
	1943	Policarpo Sanz, 15	Madariaga, Romualdo de	New site
Vitoria	1874	Plaza Nueva, 4		Unknown
	1880	Prado, 9		Unknown
	1920	Cuesta del Teatro, 4	Yárnoz Larrosa, José	New site
Zamora	1884	Plaza del Salvador, 54		Unknown
	1929	Santa Clara, 1	Pérez Arribas, Gregorio	Remodeling
	1985	Plaza de San Fernando, 6	Cañas Represa, Ramón	New site
Zaragoza	1874	Coso, 67		Unknown
	1935	Plaza de la Constitución, 8	Madariaga, Romualdo de; Zavala Lafora, Juan de	New site

Table 1

# Different banks, different buildings?

Jaap-Jan Mobron

**T**he origins of three of the largest general banks of the Netherlands – Rabobank, ING and ABN AMRO – are very different. It would hardly be surprising, therefore, if these differing historical origins were also reflected in the head offices that they have commissioned over the years. But is this actually the case?

These days Rabobank, ING and ABN AMRO operate in a broad and largely overlapping market of mortgages, insurance, commercial and consumer credit, domestic and international payments, investments and private banking. The distinctions that previously existed in the sector have blurred since the 1960s. Despite the current overlap, however, each of the three banks has retained a certain specialist focus. Rabobank, for instance, is the largest provider of mortgages and strongly positioned in the agricultural sector; while ING's main strength is in the retail and the small and medium-sized enterprise market (SME); and ABN AMRO has a prominent position in private banking. In each case, the special focus that gives each bank a character of its own, is attributable to that bank's individual history.

Rabobank's origins go back to the late nineteenth century, when farmers and horticulturalists across the country set up local cooperative banks to meet their own need for credit. In 1898, local banks established two umbrella organisations: the Coöperatieve Centrale Raiffeisen-Bank in Utrecht, and Coöperatieve Centrale Boerenleenbank in Eindhoven, which merged in 1972 to form Rabobank Nederland. On 1 January 2016, the local, previously independent banks, merged with each other and Rabobank Nederland to create a single legal entity.

ING (Internationale Nederlanden Groep) was created in 1991 by a merger between an insurance company (Nationale-Nederlanden, or NN) and a bank (NMB Postbank) which de-merged in 2014, turning ING into a bank again. ING's earliest predecessors, Rijkspostspaarbank of 1881 and Postchèque-en



*Coöperatieve Centrale Boerenleenbank, Dommelstraat, Eindhoven*

Girodienst of 1918 both were set up by the Dutch government to encourage lower class saving and to provide broad-ranging access to the giro payment system. These two merged in 1979, were privatised in 1986 as Postbank and merged in 1989 with the Nederlandsche Middenstandsbank (NMB) to form NMB Postbank. NMB itself was the result of a merger in 1927 of various local and regional retail banks.

Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij or NHM of 1824 is generally considered to be ABN AMRO's earliest legal predecessor, which started off as a trading company of colonial goods. Gradually it evolved into a commercial bank, alongside others such as Amsterdamsche Bank, Rotterdamsche Bank and Twentsche Bank, with a shared clientele of larger companies and wealthy private individuals. These four eventually all merged, first into ABN and Amro, and in 1991 into ABN AMRO. The bank was nationalised in 2008 and two years later merged with Fortis Bank Nederland, which had previously absorbed, among others, merchant bank

MeesPierson and savings bank Verenigde Spaarbank, or VSB. The new ABN AMRO is currently in the process of being returned to the private sector in phases.

Despite the three banks' very different backgrounds and histories, the architectures of their head offices have clearly developed along certain general lines. Until well into the twentieth century, all the banks chose to locate themselves in historic city centres, with banking districts arising mainly in the larger cities and with Amsterdam boasting the largest concentration of banks. In the early days of modern banking, and indeed for many years afterwards, very few new offices were built. Quite often a bank would open its first business premises in the home of the partner, director or cashier, with adjacent properties being added later, if needed. Bank buildings were initially no different from the buildings in their direct vicinity, and that was in fact intentional: a bank was not supposed to stand out from other buildings in the street. The idea, instead, was that it should blend in with, and so benefit



*Rijkspostspaarbank, Van Baarlestraat, Amsterdam*



*NHM, Vijzelstraat, Amsterdam*



*Coöperatieve Centrale Boerenleenbank, Fellenoord, Eindhoven*

from the calibre of, its surroundings. An early example of this, dating back to 1831, can be seen in the NHM's office at Herengracht 40 in Amsterdam, which was the first canalside house in Amsterdam to be used exclusively as an office. The property's façade, which was designed in 1790 in Louis XVI-style, was retained by NHM and so remained in keeping with its surroundings.

Having a historical façade and historical surroundings not only served as a mark of distinction, but also created an image of tradition and, therefore, continuity and reliability for the banks: a vital asset for any bank. Indeed, it remained so important for them that, when they decided to build new premises in the early decades of the twentieth century, they instructed their architects to seek inspiration from history. In 1911, for example, the Coöperatieve Centrale Boerenleenbank's Dommelstraat branch in Eindhoven was built in the 'Around 1800' style of neo-historicism. Other banks could base their new buildings on a different historical style; among them Nederlandsch-Indische Handelsbank, an ABN AMRO predecessor, which decided in 1912 to have an office built at Singel in Amsterdam in a style (although not scale) highly reminiscent of the nearby classicistic Royal Palace built on Dam Square back in 1655. This neo-classicism clearly invoked strong associations with the Dutch Golden Age of the seventeenth century and so was very popular among Dutch banks. Other banks in turn chose an eclectic mix of various neo-styles. When building a new office in 1901 close to what is now Museum Square in Amsterdam, for example, Rijkspostspaarbank selected

a design combining various neo-classicist, neo-gothic and neo-renaissance elements. And Rotterdamsche Bank did more or less the same thing in 1913, when it commissioned the building of an office at Amsterdam's Rokin.

A bank looking to convey a more dynamic, modern image could opt for a more contemporary style, such as Art Nouveau, Expressionism or Rationalism. Examples of these styles can be seen respectively in the 1901 head office of Amsterdamsche Bank at Herengracht in Amsterdam; the 1921 head office of Twentsche Bank at Spuistraat in the same city; and the 1933 head office of MeesPierson predecessor R. Mees & Zoonen at Blaak in Rotterdam. However, these examples were hardly numerous. And a modernist bank building was even rarer to find, the only cases being merely branches or buildings that were not originally designed as banks, such as the Coolsingel office of Hollandse Bank-Unie, which became part of ABN AMRO, in Rotterdam.

Although the façades usually emulated a style from the past, the building techniques applied were always extremely modern, with all the latest technical features being incorporated into the design. These could range from pneumatic postal dispatch systems to telephone exchanges, electrical lifts, central heating and early forms of air conditioning. The buildings usually had frames of reinforced concrete, which was fire-retardant and burglar-resistant. This construction material, however, was invariably hidden from view, including on the inside of the building, often masked by stucco work. Lightwells, sometimes highly decorated, and

safe deposits in the basement also became standard features of bank buildings, as evidenced by the head offices built in Amsterdam by NHM in 1926 and by the Amsterdamsche Bank in 1932. The impression created by both these monolithic buildings was that of a fortress; they represented solidity. In fact, NHM was even proud to claim that its building would be able to withstand an attack by a Zeppelin!

In many ways these two buildings were representative of their age, except in two respects. Firstly, they were both designed by renowned architects, Karel de Bazel and Hendrik Berlage, whereas most bank architects were known only in local architectural circles. Although hiring a nationally well-known master builder obviously conferred status on a bank, most bankers still had a preference for more client-oriented, less well-known architects without too much artistic ambition or temperament. Secondly, the scale of these two buildings was exceptional as, after the Second World War, few new buildings of this volume and height were ever built in the historic centre of Amsterdam. This was mainly because the City imposed stricter regulations from the 1970s onwards, reacting to ever stronger popular opposition to the city's increasing building density and the large-scale demolition of historic buildings that this often entailed.

The situation in post-war Rotterdam was completely different as the German bombing raids in May 1940 had destroyed much of the city's historic centre. Ironically, this created scope and even a need for large-scale construction work, including buildings





*Avenue of Banks on Blaak, Rotterdam, from left to right Twentsche Bank, NHM and Amsterdamsche Bank-Incasso-Bank*

for banks. Indeed, being financially strong institutions, banks were the first to be able to commission new premises. They concentrated their buildings in certain parts of the city, sometimes because they were forced to do so by the city, sometimes for practical reasons and perhaps occasionally simply by force of habit. As a result, Coolsingel and Blaak quickly evolved into a banking district, with massive buildings, at least in relative terms, erected in characteristic monumental style from the late 1940s onwards, in an atmosphere of optimism and zest for activity. This ‘age of reconstruction’ saw huge, rectangular office blocks erected by Rotterdamsche Bank at Coolsingel in 1949 and by Spaarbank te Rotterdam, a predecessor of VSB, at Botersloot in Rotterdam in 1957. By 1950 a whole avenue of banks had been built at Blaak, all with the same building line, general form, cubic contents and height, and housing Twentsche Bank, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij and Incasso-Bank, which later became part of Amsterdamsche Bank. This monumental style was also reproduced in other large cities, including when Coöperatieve Centrale Raiffeisen-Bank built a new office at St. Jacobsstraat in Utrecht in 1957. As well as being rectangular in shape, these buildings were widely embellished with ornamental wrought iron and other decorative work, usually of a symbolic nature. This included

signs of the Zodiac or a phoenix, along with designs symbolising concepts such as savings, diligence, prosperity, peace, agriculture, industry and reconstruction.

Until then, generally speaking, banks did not have particularly large workforces. Staff lived close to their work, and the number of people with cars, who therefore needed parking space, was limited. Things started changing in the 1960s, when Dutch banks began scaling up their activities, while the scope to build in cities’ historical centres was becoming ever more restricted owing to a combination of government regulations and public opinion. This was when business parks started being built on the outskirts of towns, where they were easy to reach and offered opportunities to build new offices. Most of these new buildings were near access roads (alongside roundabouts, for instance) and the city centre facilities remained close at hand. Examples of this can be seen in the head offices built by: Coöperatieve Centrale Boerenleenbank north of the centre of Eindhoven in 1967; by Postchèque- en Girodienst on the outskirts of Arnhem in 1969; and by NMB on the southern edge of Amsterdam in 1974. All these buildings were massive concrete structures, with lots of glass – transparency was the buzzword of the day – and parking places. They often also combined low- and high-rise buildings or were built on a cross-shaped grid. In terms of style, they



*NMB, Amsterdamse Poort, Amsterdam*

had much in common with the Amsterdam head office of the Dutch Central Bank (cf. *eabh* bulletin 2016, Architecture & Finance, “Unpopular icon of the 1960s” by Gert Eijkelboom): imposing, yet unapproachable. In order to soften this impression somewhat, generous budgets were made available for contemporary art, which was then displayed throughout the premises. Some banks continued to prefer large new offices in the city centre, including VSB-predecessor Spaarbank voor de Stad Amsterdam, which built new premises at the Amsterdam Singel in 1964, and ABN, which built a new Amsterdam office at Vijzelstraat in 1973. Amro, too, remained loyal, for now, to the Amsterdam city centre, with its old head office at Herengracht undergoing a radical refurbishment and expansion between 1966 and 1972.

However, building or extending offices in the city centre was anything but easy for these banks, and usually involved a series of adaptations and delays. This was why the last of the banks still in the city centre eventually decided during the 1980s to relocate to mono-functional office districts close to motorways, where they were more visible and had opportunities to expand. In this way, banks’ offices became their signboards, advertising their presence. Other reasons for their choosing to move included a desire to centralise, and so to improve the efficiency of their activities by significantly reducing their often high numbers of head office locations spread around the city.

The buildings the banks erected in these new office districts attempted to return to a more human scale, with the emphasis now being largely on the horizontal rather than the vertical. The head offices built in the south-east of Amsterdam by Amro in 1988 and NMB in 1987 were both good examples of this trend.



*ABN AMRO, Gustav Mahlerlaan, Amsterdam*



*Rabobank, Croeselaan, Utrecht  
(photo: Bertus de Ruiter)*



*Former ING House, Amstelveenseweg, Amsterdam*

Indeed, NMB was so pleased by the organic architecture of its new office Amsterdamse Poort, which was nicknamed 'The Sandcastle', that it went on to commission various new branches in the same style. The new head office opened by Rabobank in 1984 was at a walking distance from Utrecht central station. It consciously sought to emphasise breadth rather than height. As its façade was entirely covered in glass-panelling, the building quickly became known as 'The Palace of Mirrors'. Meanwhile, neighbours who complained about the panels reflecting sunlight were compensated by being given free sunblinds.

This trend continued in the years around the turn of the last century, with most new buildings or sizeable expansions being outside the historical city centres and situated close to stations and access roads or motorways. There was one difference, however, and that was the return to a clear preference – even more so than in previous generations – for high-rise buildings. The most recent examples of this were the 105-metre high tower built by ABN AMRO in Amsterdam's Zuidas business district in 1999 and the equally high Rabobank head office in Utrecht, which was built alongside the bank's old head office in 2012. An exception to this trend, but also in the Zuidas district, was ING House that was built in 2002 and was much smaller than and only half as high as the other two banks' new head offices. Whereas ABN AMRO sought to convey an image befitting a global bank through the height of its tower, its use of materials and its choice of architect (Pei Cobb Freed from New York), the other two institutions focused primarily on the originality of their new offices' edifice. That did much to explain why these buildings so quickly attracted nicknames such as 'The Binoculars' (Rabobank) or 'The Dust Buster'

(ING). From the very start, both buildings were explicitly designed to be sustainable, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly – today's buzzwords – and to reflect the now commonplace trend, the 'New World of Work' or smart working, with plenty of flexible workstations. All manner of later adaptations to the ABN AMRO head office mean that it, too, has now largely achieved these aims.

The 2007-2008 credit crisis not only had major implications for the Dutch banks themselves, but also, albeit indirectly, for their head offices. In 2013, ABN AMRO dramatically changed its classically structured entrance hall – with an impressive high ceiling extending up to the third floor, lots of empty space and abundant use of natural stone – to create a more inviting, multi-functional and less monumental working environment. It included new meeting rooms and flexible workstations, extra places to sit down and a multi levelled coffee bar. The bank's managing board felt that the old entrance hall was no longer in keeping with today's world or the current status of ABN AMRO, which the crisis had changed from a global player to a state-owned bank operating primarily in the Netherlands.

When commissioning its new head office, Rabobank had given its entrance hall a comparable lounge-style feeling, with lots of individual workstations in a relaxed atmosphere. It had also created scope in this entrance hall for a professionally designed and prominently visible art display. However, the Art Zone, as it was known, closed down in 2014 as the credit crisis meant that the bank needed to cut costs.

ING went a step further in this respect by deciding to sell its head office. In 2012, the bank's board left its prominent location in Amsterdam's Zuidas business district

and returned to the no less special, but older Sandcastle in the south-east of Amsterdam. In due course, however, they will also be leaving this building, which is going to be converted into housing. The plan now is for ING to move, in three years' time, to a new head office, which will be built opposite the current premises. ING, too, has significantly shrunk in size, both as a result of the credit crisis and the carve-out of NN, and now has fewer staff than previously and therefore less need for large office premises. Although the design of the new head office has yet to be seen, ING's decision to abandon two of the country's highest-profile bank buildings would seem to suggest that, this time, it will be aiming for greater architectural anonymity.

All in all, we can see that however different the origins of the largest Dutch banks may be, they have often made similar decisions when choosing the architectural designs and locations of their head offices. Nevertheless, certain differences can be identified, and it is these differences that make bank architecture in the Netherlands so interesting. ●

With thanks to Annette Beentjes (ING) and Jan van der Meer (Rabobank).

### Author profile

Jaap-Jan Mobron (1964) is a historian and art historian who has been affiliated with ABN AMRO Art & History department since 1993. As well as being responsible for the department's academic, popular and online publications, his activities include arranging exhibitions and tours on aspects of banking history.

# A Domesday Book for Barclays Bank: an architectural snapshot

Maria Sienkiewicz

**T**he history of banks in England and Wales is one of mergers and acquisitions. Over the course of the last 300 years, hundreds of small banks and building societies have merged, or been taken over, to evolve in to the big high street names which are now so familiar. Buildings which were once the distinctive head office of a local firm, and premises constructed by craftsmen using local materials, are now all parts of a uniformly branded network. Still more have disappeared altogether – victims of rationalisation programmes, and the increasing move away from branch banking to online services.

The pivotal moment for Barclays Bank in this process of amalgamation and take-over came in 1896, when 20 small private banks joined together to form Barclay and Company Limited. Of the records created during that process, five volumes stand out for anyone interested in architecture, the practicalities of banking, or living and working conditions in the late 19th century.

Just as the Domesday Book<sup>1</sup> forms a survey of England at the time of the Norman Conquest, these five volumes form a survey of all the premises which made up the newly-formed Barclay and Company Limited in 1896.<sup>2</sup> Bound in leather with gold tooling, each volume is 38cm high, and 25cm wide. The thickness of the volumes varies, as they are organised under the headings of the 20 private component banks. Volume one, which covers premises owned by Barclay, Bevan and Co, and Goslings and Sharpe (the only two London banks in the amalgamation) contains only 65 folios, while volume three, which covers the eight partnerships and 86 premises controlled by the Gurney family in East Anglia is considerably thicker, with 253 folios.

The surveys were all written in the same hand, and all were signed by William H Warner of Lofts and Warner, Land Agents and Surveyors of 130 Mount Street, Berkeley Square,



*Leighton Buzzard branch, designed by Alfred Waterhouse, pictured in 1962*  
© Barclays Group Archives ref 30/1618

London. Each survey was also signed by another surveyor, local to the building under consideration. Surveys of premises in Brighton, for example, were signed by Thomas Wilkinson, and surveys in Hertfordshire by E Fergusson Taylor. Notes added to some of the signatures suggest that Lofts and Warner were working on behalf of Barclay and Company Limited, while the local surveyors were representing the old private partnerships.<sup>3</sup> As the ultimate purpose of each survey was to arrive at a valuation of the premises and

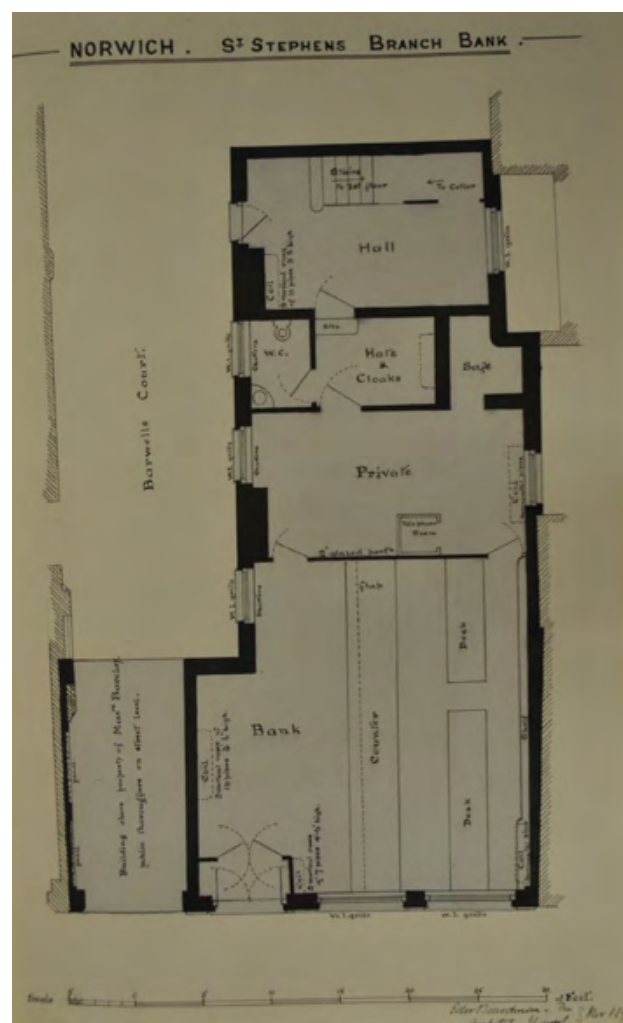
its contents, it was important that each of the constituent banks felt that their contributions in to the new company were being fairly assessed.

Each survey comprised a very detailed written description of the premises, together with a simple floor plan. 168 buildings were covered in total, from the Lombard Street premises of Barclay, Bevan and Company in London, valued at £225,000<sup>4</sup>, to the bank operated by the Gurneys at Burnham Market, valued at just £300.<sup>5</sup> The surveyors





*Goslings and Sharpe of Fleet Street, 1896*  
© Barclays Group Archives ref 38/639



*St Stephen's Street, Norwich, 1896*  
© Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641

considered the state of repair of the premises, and their potential. Goslings and Sharpe's Fleet Street premises in London, for example, were 'exceedingly old-fashioned', but 'would be of considerable value and bring in an important income' if rebuilt.<sup>6</sup> Branches which were designed by a reputable architect were noted – both Leighton Buzzard<sup>7</sup> and Darlington, High Row<sup>8</sup> were designed by Alfred Waterhouse, and Leighton Buzzard received an especially glowing review of its 'imposing appearance being built entirely of Ancaster Stone in the Venetian Gothic style'.<sup>9</sup>

A typical entry for a standard branch was that for the bank at St Stephen's Street, Norwich, belonging to Gurney and Company:<sup>10</sup> The property consists of a brick and slated Building situate in St Stephens Street, Norwich with right of way to Barwells Court. The premises contain:

#### **On the Ground Floor**

The Bank, Bank Parlour, Strong room with iron door and Lavatory. There is an Entrance Hall to Private House over occupied by the Manager containing.

#### **On the First Floor**

Two Sitting rooms, Kitchen, Scullery and Larder

#### **On the Second Floor**

Four Bedrooms, Bath room and WC

#### **On the Third Floor**

Two Bedrooms and WC

#### **In the Basement**

Cellars and Furnaces etc

- The entry for Bank Plain, the Gurneys' head office was more typical of the entries for large premises:<sup>11</sup>
- The whole property covers an area about one acre in the most important part of the City of Norwich and forms a complete block having very extensive frontages and comprises

- The Bank premises and the dwelling house occupied by the Manager situate at the corner of Bank Plain and London Street and occupying a very important position.
- The premises are brick built and slated with stone dressings.

#### **On the Ground Floor**

- The Shop, two Private rooms, Counting room, Bank Parlour, Waiting room, Consulting room, Administration room, Balancing room, Ledger room, Bank room, Waste Book room, Stationery room, Deed room, Private Telephone room, two Book rooms, Corridor with Telephone room, The Library, Partners' Lavatories, Clerks' Lavatories.
- There is a staircase leading to Partners' Dining room and Dressing room, Clerks' Dining room approached by a separate staircase.



*Ledger Room, Bank Plain, Norwich, early 1900s. © Barclays Group Archives ref 531/6*

#### ***In the Basement***

- Strong rooms with iron doors, Engine room and Engine for hot and cold air, Hydraulic Lift, Kitchen etc.
- At the rear of the Bank Building there are Stables, Harness room, covered-in carriage yard and WC, Sheds, Watchman's house and Cottage, Kitchen etc.
- The Manager's Residence approached by a private Entrance from Bank Street comprises of;

#### ***On the Ground Floor***

Entrance Hall, Kitchen, Scullery, Pantry, Outhouses etc, Back and Front Staircases

#### ***On the First Floor***

Dining room, Drawing room, Library, Study, Dressing room, Pantry and WC

#### ***On the Second Floor***

Six Bedrooms, bath room, three rooms and two Attics above.

The descriptions and plans provide a comprehensive view of the state of English banking at the end of the 19th century.

Occasional glimpses of modern technology, in the form of telephones were starting to appear, but class divides in the form of separate facilities for partners and clerks were firmly entrenched. In the larger branches, lifts were not uncommon, and, unsurprisingly, iron doors featured prominently. When valuing the properties, the surveyors assessed the location of the branches within the towns, placing tremendous value on a branch being in the most important part of town, and the ease of accessibility for those travelling by carriage. As a statement of intent, the surveys were fairly clear about the type of customers the Bank wished to attract.

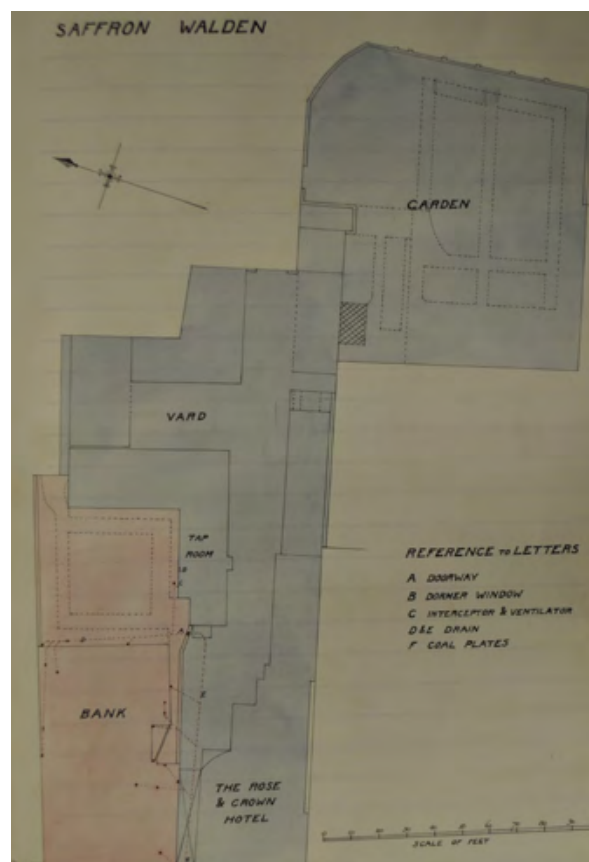
Residences incorporated within the bank property were quite common, and were usually occupied by the Manager. Occasionally, as at Halesworth<sup>12</sup>, the residence 'over the shop' was home to the Chief Clerk, and a separate house was provided for the Manager. Such separate

properties were often substantial country houses, designed to elevate the Bank Manager socially to the level of the gentry. The Manager's house at Halesworth included a dining room, drawing room, library, six bedrooms, a kitchen garden, flower garden, tennis courts, and ornamental grounds and walks, covering some 18 acres.

The surveys also provide evidence of the Bank's willingness to use property as a device to control the market. In Colchester, the Gurneys had acquired a second property in addition to their own branch at 9 High Street. 3 High Street had been the bank of Mills, Bawtree and Co, but they had defaulted in 1891, and the Gurneys had acquired much of their business. At the time of the 1896 survey, the Gurneys still owned 3 High Street, and the surveyor noted that the £7,000 valuation of 9 High Street was subject to 'confirmation ... that the other Banking Premises ... known as 3 High Street Colchester should never be used as a Bank.'<sup>13</sup>



*The Manager's Residence, Halesworth, 1896*  
© Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641



*Saffron Walden branch, including the Rose and Crown Hotel, 1896*  
© Barclays Group Archives ref 38/640

Occasionally, it emerged that the Bank owned other properties because they adjoined the branch and it was the easiest way of maintaining control of the surrounding area. In Saffron Walden, Gibson, Tuke and Gibson owned the Rose and Crown Hotel<sup>14</sup> which adjoined their bank, and it was described in detail in the survey. The surveyor noted, 'it would be desirable that the two properties should be held together ... [to] secure the premises from falling into the hands of a rival Bank or in any way becoming a nuisance.'<sup>15</sup>

Exactly how closely the surveyors' recommendations were followed would require a wider study, but at least one piece of advice was put in to action fairly swiftly. Goslings and Sharpe's former premises on Fleet Street was demolished and rebuilt in 1898. As technology advanced, and banking methods changed, other buildings met with a similar fate. The Gurney's old head office in Norwich was demolished in 1927,

and the main Barclays head office in Lombard Street was subjected to almost constant rebuilding during the 20th century. Together with other records, such as photographs, premises ledgers and building plans, the surveys provide a look back in to a disappearing world.

The 1896 surveys were created primarily as a means of assessing the value of the estate of the newly-formed Barclay and Company Limited. Careful study of them reveals so much more.

A snapshot of a bank as it moved from old family traditions to modern organisational procedures, this architectural record demonstrates how buildings reflect, respond to and influence working practices, social status and corporate ambition. ●

## Author profile

Maria Sienkiewicz has been Group Archivist of Barclays PLC for 12 years. She graduated as an Archivist from Bangor University in 1996 and worked in the public sector before joining Barclays.

## Literature and sources

1. The Domesday Book was compiled by William the Conqueror in 1086 and is held at the UK National Archives, ref E 31/2, see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/>
2. Barclays Group Archives refs 38/639 – 38/643
3. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/640, folio 79
4. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/639, folio 8
5. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641, folio 231
6. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/639, folio 60
7. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/640, folio 159
8. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/642, folio 15
9. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/640, folio 159
10. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641 folios 136-137
11. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641 folios 118-120
12. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641, folios 15-20
13. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/641, folio 105
14. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/640, folios 196-200
15. Barclays Group Archives ref 38/640, folio 199



# Documenting an Edinburgh landmark: the Bank of Scotland architectural plans collection

Sian Yates

**T**he Bank of Scotland archive is one of the most complete and wide-ranging business collections in the UK. Stretching right back to the Bank's foundation in 1695, the archive includes the original founding act; the first subscription ledger where supporters pledged money to help finance the Bank's early business; and a two metre long document from 1696 that forms the contract between the Bank and its first Governor, John Holland. In 2011, the Bank of Scotland archive 1695-2001 was inscribed on the UNESCO UK Memory of the World register.

Among the archive's many treasures, is a rich and extensive collection of architectural plans. Almost 5,000 of them survive. Spanning the 19th to 21st centuries, they offer a fascinating insight into the history of the Bank and its changing physical presence on the high street.

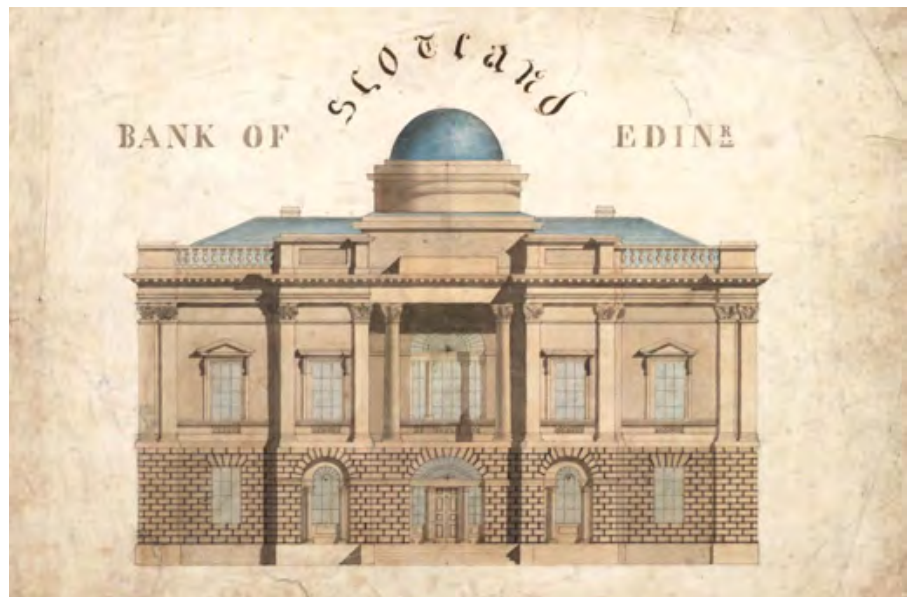
Several hundred relate to the Bank's iconic head office building on the Mound in Edinburgh. Dating from the early 1800s, when the building was originally constructed, to the most recent renovations of the early 2000s, these plans document the development of an Edinburgh landmark.

## Early 1800s: the Reid and Crichton Building

It was at the Bank of Scotland's 100th annual general meeting in 1796 that its directors first decided to commission a purpose-built head office. Prior to this, the Bank had operated out of various rented offices in the narrow closes of Edinburgh's medieval Old Town.

It took several years for a suitable location to be found. But in 1800, the Bank purchased a site on the Mound - an eminent spot at the edge of the Old Town, overlooking John Craig's elegant New Town.

Two notable architects were appointed to design the new office: Robert Reid and Richard Crichton. Both were pupils of the celebrated



*Drawing of proposed south elevation, Bank of Scotland, 1803. Thought to be by William Sibbald*



*Drawing of proposed north elevation, Bank of Scotland, 1803. Thought to be by William Sibbald.*



*View of Edinburgh Old Town by J Clark, 1812. The Bank of Scotland head office and the prominent retaining wall can be seen centre left*



*Proposed north elevation for redeveloped Bank of Scotland head office by Peddie & Kinnear, 1860 – one of four alternatives*



*Thomas Hamilton's proposed north elevation for the enlarged Bank of Scotland head office, 1852*

Robert Adam. In keeping with the times, their building was in the style of a Georgian villa, topped with a shallow dome. Construction began in 1802, and took four years to complete.

Around 20 drawings survive in our collections for the Reid and Crichton building. They include three coloured elevations (north, south, and west) by the builder William Sibbald junior.

Those of the north and south illustrate the considerable challenges that the architects faced in designing the building. The site was on a sharp slope, with a drop of around 16 metres from front to back (south to north). A more serious issue was instability. The 'earthen Mound' was a man-made hill, created from soil excavated during construction of the New Town. Slippage was a serious concern, and so a substantial retaining wall was added to the north frontage, giving it a rather unsightly appearance. Indeed a notable local figure, Lord Cockburn, later described the new office as a 'prominent deformity'.

Several floor plans also survive which provide an insight into the use and layout of the interior. At the centre of the ground floor was a 'telling room', where customers would come in to do their banking. A number of plans of this room survive dating from around 1803, showing the location of the telling tables and desks, with annotations on fittings and finishings.

### **Proposal for Redevelopment 1850s-1860s**

The Reid and Crichton building opened in 1806. By the 1850s however, it was proving deeply unsatisfactory. Not only had there been complaints about its appearance, but as the Bank's business and staff were growing, it was becoming very cramped.

The Bank's directors asked a number of architects to come up with proposals to extend the building, and improve its appearance. Among those that submitted designs were the eminent partnership of John Peddie and Charles Kinnear, and also the Greek revivalist, Thomas Hamilton.

Drawings and plans for both survive in the archive. Though quite different in style, they are along similar lines: extension of the building to the east and west, and construction of a new façade to unify the appearance of the old and new areas of the building.

Around 20 drawings are from the Peddie and Kinnear partnership. Dating from between 1858 to 1860, they include four different proposals for the troublesome north elevation.

A further 13 or so are from Thomas Hamilton. Dated slightly earlier (1851-1852) they include two magnificent colour elevations of Hamilton's proposal for the north and south views.



*Thomas Hamilton's proposed south elevation for the enlarged Bank of Scotland head office, 1852*

### **The Bryce Building 1860s-1870s**

The architect ultimately awarded the contract to redevelop the Mound was David Bryce. Born, raised and trained in Edinburgh, Bryce worked on many commercial and public buildings in the city, including the British Linen Bank head office in St Andrew Square, and the Royal Infirmary Hospital.

Bryce submitted an initial design for redevelopment of the Bank of Scotland office in 1854. It was apparently a very grand proposal, and was rejected on grounds of cost. Unfortunately only one item (a floor plan) relating to this submission appears to have survived in our collection.

A decade later, Bryce submitted a second proposal which was accepted. This new design, in Roman Baroque style, was crowned with a high central dome. On top





*Bank of Scotland head office, prospect view of the north side, by David Bryce, 1860s*

was to feature a statue of the winged goddess Victory – almost certainly a tribute to the reigning monarch, Queen Victoria.

Some 30 or so plans and drawings relating to Bryce's redevelopment of the Mound survive in the archive, including two beautiful watercolour perspectives by Bryce himself, showing the north and south views of the proposed building.

Five coloured drawings also survive showing the proposed décor of the entrance hall and the new magnificent double height telling room that Bryce placed at the centre of the building. Dating from around 1870, they are by the designer Thomas Bonnar (the younger), and provide a rare insight into what the interior of the building may have been like at that time.

It took many years for Bryce's alterations to be completed. Work began in 1864 and was only finished in 1878. Sadly Bryce died shortly before this, in 1876.

The final result however was very close to Bryce's original vision. One notable exception was the statue of Victory on top of the central dome. It should have had wings, as shown on Bryce's south perspective [image 8]. But the design had to be modified, with the wings left out; apparently they made the statue too heavy and unstable.



*Bank of Scotland head office, prospect view of the south side, by David Bryce, 1860s*

### Subsequent History

Though the exterior of the building has changed little since the late 1870s, the interior is a different story, as documented through the architectural plans.

In the mid-1890s, a life was installed, and also a furnace for destroying banknotes taken out of circulation. Electric lighting was introduced just before the First World War.

Major internal alterations were carried out in the 1920s to increase office space.

Most notably this included the installation of a mezzanine floor in Bryce's telling hall, effectively cutting it in half and concealing the ornate plaster ceiling.

Further alterations were made in the decade following. It was at this point that the living quarters for the Bank's head cashier and his family on the top floor of the building were converted into offices and a new board room.





*Proposed design for banking hall interior, Bank of Scotland head office, by Thomas Bonnar (junior), 1870s. Photograph by Antonia Reeve*



*Proposed design for banking hall interior, Bank of Scotland head office, by Thomas Bonnar (junior), 1870s. Photograph by Antonia Reeve*

The most recent changes were made in 2004-2006. A comprehensive renovation of the entire interior was carried out in order to make the building fit for purpose in the 21st century. Video conferencing and Wi-Fi facilities were installed. But the centrepiece was the restoration of Bryce's double height banking hall. The architects responsible won several awards, including for best re-use of a listed building.

The building on the Mound remains the head office for Bank of Scotland to this day, and it is also now the registered office of the Bank's parent company, Lloyds Banking Group.

It continues to be a landmark on the Edinburgh skyline and Our archive will continue to tell its story, as our collection of architectural plans continues to grow. ●

All images: Courtesy of Lloyds Banking Group Archives

#### Further information

If you would like further information on the architectural plans in the Bank of Scotland archive, or indeed any aspect of the collection, please contact us at: [archives@lloydsbanking.com](mailto:archives@lloydsbanking.com)

Our archives are available for research purposes. Further information on accessing our collections can be found on our website: <http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/our-group/our-heritage/our-archives/visit-us/>

#### Author profile

Sian Yates is based in Edinburgh and has been working as an archivist at Lloyds Banking Group since 2001.

# The Ned and its former use as the Midland Bank head office

Helen Wong

Having been the site of a Roman wharf, a medieval poultry market, the historic church of St Mildred the Virgin and the stomping ground of 16th century booksellers and printers, the land that The Ned hotel stands on today is part of a rich and compelling history. This article explores the development of the site by Midland Bank in the early 20th century and the construction of this magnificent Grade I listed building at the centre the City of London.

The early 20th century was a period of rapid growth for Midland Bank (now HSBC UK), as its branch network was steadily expanding and major amalgamations with other financial institutions were being pursued. Following the acquisition of the London Joint Stock Bank in 1918, the bank's deposits totalled nearly £300 million, making it the world's largest banking firm. This impressive growth was however exacerbating the strain on the company's administrative resources, as demand for recruitment, systems development and new premises were steadily increasing. In fact, the expansion was so great that Midland Bank was fast outgrowing its head office in Threadneedle Street, which it had occupied since 1898. A new home was required.

An ideal solution was offered in the shape of the former head office of the London Joint Stock Bank, a substantial building located on Princes Street in the heart of the City of London's lively banking community. With nearby properties including the old Poultry Chapel and the Poultry frontage between St Mildred's Court and Grocers' Hall Court, the sheer size and prominent location of the land on Princes Street led to a natural conclusion – it would be the site of Midland Bank's new and magnificent headquarters.

With many financial institutions of the 1920s becoming increasingly aware of the aesthetic and psychological importance of constructing striking feats of architecture for branch premises, the choice of the architect for the new



*The Poultry offices under construction in 1928. Courtesy of HSBC Group Archives*

head office was of crucial importance. Keen to make a statement through a building of the highest calibre and artistic design, the bank's directors commissioned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, in collaboration with the firm of Gotch and Saunders, to undertake the project. Lutyens was to be responsible for designing the front elevations, banking hall and stairways, safe deposit corridor, board room and other principle rooms, as well as certain furniture and fixtures. Gotch and Saunders were to take responsibility for the remainder of the work and to oversee the execution of the project. The construction would be completed in five stages between 1925 and

1939, executed by specialists and sub-contractors from within the bank's own customer base. At its completion, it was hailed as one of the City's most outstanding contemporary buildings and described by one commentator as "a palace of Finance".

Lutyens, who was at the pinnacle of his career having just witnessed the erection of his design of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, had already built a fruitful relationship with Midland Bank prior to this commission. With considerable support from the Chairman, Reginald McKenna, Lutyens was already working on the design of the 196a Piccadilly branch at



*The Poultry offices under construction in 1928. Courtesy of HSBC Group Archives*

this time. He would continue on to lay claim to iconic branch buildings at Leadenhall Street, London and King Street, Manchester, which were all designed in collaboration with the architects Whinney, Son and Austen Hall.

The new headquarters – known to staff and customers as ‘Poultry’ – became a cherished home for many decades. It remained Midland’s head office for some years after the bank was acquired by HSBC in 1992. But from 2002, staff were gradually moved out to HSBC’s new global headquarters at 8 Canada Square in the rapidly expanding Canary Wharf development. The flagship branch closed its doors for the final time in 2007.

The property was recently taken over by the Soho House group and has been transformed into ‘The Ned’ a luxury hotel, named in honour of Sir Edwin Lutyens. The historic collections held at the HSBC Archives were a hugely important resource for the designers of The Ned as they undertook this ambitious conversion project. The archive’s extensive photographic collection provided inspiration for the decorative artwork that can be found in the hotel rooms. Whilst a set of 70 correspondence files containing letters sent between the directors, the Premises department and various specialist and sub-contractors, provided detailed insights into the early decision-making and execution of the Grade I listed landmark.

These photographs and files reveal a great deal about the original layout and design of the building in comparison to how it is being used today. For example, they reveal that the

ground floor of the building, which the hotel’s concierge desks and restaurants now occupy, was once the site of the magnificent banking hall of the Midland Bank head office. This space was dominated by walnut-panelled counters, where the bank tellers would serve their customers, along with the columns and pilasters encased in a striking green verdite marble. The verdite, which is a rare volcanic rock from southern Africa, was sourced by the sub-contractors, H.T. Jenkins and Son Ltd, who had sent their associate on two occasions to travel for miles around, investigating every district in which green marble was rumoured to exist. An initial 30 tonnes of verdite was quarried and imported, followed by further deliveries. Since it could only be cut into small sections, the casing for each column and pilaster was matched up from around 1000 pieces of inlay.

A harmony in the design of discrete areas of the building was maintained through the repetition of certain raw materials and design motifs in the various rooms. The aforementioned walnut panelling used in the banking hall for instance, made a reappearance in the imposing board room along with the costly verdite, which was used as an inlay on the room’s four fireplaces. Now known as The Tapestry Room, its dominating feature was and continues to be the painstakingly hand-crafted tapestry which covers all of the walls above the panelling. Far from serving a merely aesthetic purpose, the tapestry was originally commissioned to combat the poor acoustics of the room, which would have severely hindered the board meetings scheduled to take place there.

Hope Bagebal, a consultant on the acoustics, recommended the use of Cabot quilting made from the fibres of a treated seaweed to reduce the echo effect; since this quilting required a textile facing, the tapestry was an aesthetically pleasing solution. Designed by H.H. Martyn and Co in association with Laurence Gotch, the tapestry features the coats of arms of around 130 towns and cities where Midland Bank had branches located at the time. After each panel had been individually traced and hand-embroidered by a team of 54 embroiders, the finished product became the largest example of tapestry ever produced in England at the time. In the November of 1989, a preliminary meeting which ultimately led to the foundation of *eabh* was held in this very room, along with a luncheon hosted by Midland Bank in the director’s dining room.

Further instances of the green verdite casing leads visitors down a staircase to the first sub-basement, where they can find the safe deposit, which now serves as a lounge bar. Extensive research was undertaken both at home and abroad in order to ascertain the most up-to-date methods of strong room construction until ultimately, the firm of Chatwood Safe & Co was selected to oversee its installation, as their scheme was considered to be ‘the work of engineers and scientifically evolved’ in comparison to alternative suppliers.

Having seen huge historical shifts, survived the Blitz and witnessed key events in banking history, the site at Poultry has entered a new and very different phase of its history as a luxury hotel. As such, it will remain an important landmark within the City of London, whilst continuing to hold a special place in the memories of all the Midland Bank staff and customers who passed through its doors. ●

#### Author profile

After completing a BA in French and German, Helen worked as an Archives Assistant at the Parliamentary Archives. In 2015 she became a qualified archivist having graduated from University College London with an MA in Archives and Records Management and has subsequently worked at the Harrods Archives and the HSBC Group Archives.

All images: Courtesy of HSBC Group Archives



# A major “move” – 5 Broadgate, UBS’s new London office building

Christian Leitz

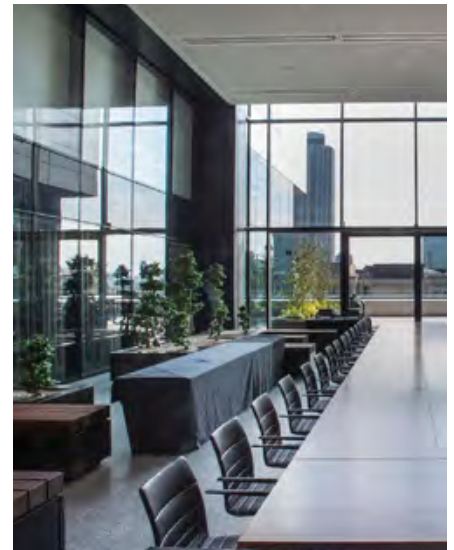
UBS was formed on the threshold of the 20th and the 21st century. Yet, the firm has a remarkably extensive historical root system with its tendrils reaching back into the 19th century and across most regions of the world. UBS’s firm historical foundations are most prominent in three countries, Switzerland – where the merger that created UBS in 1998 brought together the long-established financial firms Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC) and Union Bank of Switzerland; the US – where the acquisition of PaineWebber in 2000 sharply expanded UBS’s business reach and deepened its historical foundations; and the UK – an integral business mainstay for UBS and a major pillar of the firm’s history.

In the UK, UBS looks back upon a colourful network of corporate histories, histories that not only impressed themselves upon the business and cultural development of UBS, but indeed more broadly upon the economic history of the UK; and, more specifically, its financial centre, the City of London. As a former Governor of the Bank of England concluded on the founder of one of UBS’s most distinguished predecessor firms in the UK, “Sir Siegmund’s obvious determination was the driving force behind a highly successful merchant bank that was instrumental in launching the City in new directions in the years after the Second World War.”

S.G. Warburg, the merchant bank to which the former Governor had referred, makes up a pivotal part of the historical evolution towards UBS’s investment bank today. Yet the contribution British firms with a historical pedigree made to the development of UBS extends also to the firm’s other business divisions. Take for instance Phillips & Drew, established in the late 19th century, which provided a substantive component of UBS’s institutional asset management (in the UK). And then there are all the other histories which have left a mark upon UBS in the UK, most notably SBC, present in London since 1898; and the firms that joined forces with



UBS, 5 Broadgate, London



Interior of the building



Interior of the building

S.G. Warburg in the mid-1980s, Rowe & Pitman, Mullens, and Akroyd & Smithers.

The histories of UBS’s antecedents in the UK offer a fascinating insight into the evolution of the City of London in the 20th century, its ups and downs, its quirks and, above all, its significance to global finance. With Rowe & Pitman, we chance upon the

exemplary case of a firm that, for most of its history, thrived on the connections and ties to family, friends and acquaintances its partners had brought into the firm. With Phillips & Drew, in contrast, we meet a firm that, having followed a similarly biased path for decades, recognised at a comparatively early point the need to opt for a much more



Interior of the building



Interior of the building

meritocratic approach. With S.G. Warburg, we see the patent outsider that became a valued insider after having, in a kind of positive subversion, helped to drag a screaming and shouting City of London into modernity - and thus helped it to survive and thrive. With SBC, we encounter a foreign financial institution that recognised at a very early point in its history the importance of establishing a presence in London - and, more importantly, to become an integral part of the City, a decision many decades later, which was emulated by the Union Bank of Switzerland. With Mullens, we encounter not only the oldest part of UBS's historical root system in the

UK, but also a rather unique firm due to the government brokerage function its senior partners fulfilled for two centuries. Akroyd & Smithers, finally, was for decades among the two leading jobbing firms on the London Stock Exchange. And other firms also joined these main protagonists along the way, adding to UBS's vibrant historical quilt in the UK. And since all these firms undertook their manifold business activities in a diversity of locations across the City of London, the quilt was not solely historical but also geographical. Over time, with many of the firms joining forces, office locations were consolidated. Full consolidation finally arrived in the 21st

century after various other options, including refurbishing UBS's existing buildings, had been carefully considered - and discarded.

When the facts were in, the way forward was clear. In April of 2010 UBS's Group Executive Board committed to bringing employees together into one smart, new, collaborative space called 5 Broadgate. UBS entered an agreement with property developer British Land, which in turn appointed Make Architects, led by Ken Shuttleworth - designer of The Gherkin.

### **In 2011, the journey to 5 Broadgate commenced.**

#### **2011 - Making room to innovate**

A nine-month demolition programme began to deconstruct 2 and 6 Broadgate; piece by piece, using special cranes equipment to minimise disruption at this busy hub. 98 per cent of waste was diverted from landfill. Better still, 10,000 tonnes of hardcore from the demolition was crushed on site and reused in early construction works.

#### **2012 - Breaking fresh ground**

On 1 March, then UK Chancellor George Osborne joined 50 guests for the 5 Broadgate ground-breaking ceremony. Progress quickly gathered pace, with excavations to create a new basement level under Broadgate. Samples of the pioneering exterior were shipped from Germany in order to test colour and reflectivity.

#### **2013 - Onwards and upwards**

With the detailed design now complete, the first visible shoots of UBS's new London home appeared with the installation of four twelve-storey concrete cores housing the lifts and washrooms. The structural steel frame was erected and the various staircases began to take shape. The signature steel cladding was fully tested, signed off and its manufacture started.

#### **2014 - Dressed to impress**

Following the topping-out ceremony in March, the 5 Broadgate building that can be seen today was starting to emerge. The iconic external façade was finally finished; seamlessly fashioned from 2,000 lorry loads of prefabricated panels. The mechanical and electrical guts of the building were installed - and the first workspace mock-ups were available for UBS employees to experience in 100 Liverpool Street.



### 2015 - Superior interiors

The building works were nearly complete. It was time to turn this robust new structure into a collaborative new workspace. In February, levels 2 to 6 were handed over to UBS's contractors, ISG, who started the fit-out works. By June, the developer's construction team was finished with all twelve levels. So it was full steam ahead with the fit-outs across every floor.

### 2016 - Q1 & Q2 Smartening up

UBS's ambition was always to make 5 Broadgate more than fit for purpose; it was to make it fit for the future. From the outset, the bank's technology teams have worked tirelessly to deliver a fast, simple and flexible digital work environment. Early in the year, UBS turned its attention to connectivity. No fewer than 28 IT hub and equipment rooms were created, and data cabling got under way. A 13-week migration plan was established with around 500 people moving in each week from 30 August 2016.

### 2016 - Q3 Testing, testing

Following the installation of all the furniture into 5 Broadgate, an intense period of testing and commissioning took place. UBS made sure the building wasn't too hot or too cold, lunch tasted just right and everything worked as it should. The bank also created a range of opportunities for its employees to get a sneak peek at their new home and provide feedback.

### August - 2016 & beyond

### Welcome to 5 Broadgate

User Acceptance Testing has been taking place for each group moving into 5 Broadgate, four weeks ahead of each move. UBS is issuing move packs, preparing welcome packs, and employees are waiting with baited breath until their move date comes around. The message is going out to colleagues, clients and the bank's partners around the world: 5 Broadgate is open for business.

Embarking on the journey that led to 5 Broadgate has been a major experience to all involved. The following quotes by UBS employees involved in this major project provide a fitting conclusion to the project's successful completion.

"Having been part of this project for almost six years I can honestly say it's been a labour of love. The space at 5 Broadgate,



Interior of the building



Interior of the building

with its world-class facilities and services, makes it one of the most iconic buildings in the City of London. To have been involved in its design – from meeting rooms and audio visual to production kitchens – is really special. It's been a magnificent project working with fantastic people at UBS as well as our external architects and fit-out teams."

"Working on the 5 Broadgate project has most definitely been a highlight of my 29-year career at UBS. Over the last

four and a half years I've been helping to change the way in which people work across the London Campus with faster, more flexible, and simplified technology."

"The entire team has worked really hard in the run-up to welcoming our people into the fantastic new building, and to ensure everyone's experience is positive from day one. It's an exciting time for you and us. Our aspiration is to provide fit-for-purpose client, business and stakeholder support to complement our world-class workplace."



*Interior of the building**Interior of the building**Interior of the building***And last but certainly not least:**

“The scale of ambition demonstrated on this project, at every level and by everyone involved, has been truly phenomenal. We set out to create a special building designed to meet the very specific needs of UBS and our clients. Through hard work, imagination, boundless commitment and an outstanding mix of expertise, I believe we have achieved our goal. The results speak for themselves.” ●

**Author profile****Christian Leitz**

Secretary, UBS Corporate Responsibility Committee  
Head, Corporate Responsibility Management  
Corporate historian and Head, UBS Historical Archives

As Secretary to the UBS Corporate Responsibility Committee (CRC), one of the five Board of Directors committees, Christian assists the Committee's Chair in putting

together the agenda for the Committee and prepares the accompanying documentation. Christian coordinates UBS's corporate responsibility reporting and has particular responsibilities in the area of NGO (non-governmental organization) communications and analysis. He is also head of the UBS Historical Archives and the firm's corporate historian, acting as a centre of competence for all questions pertaining to historical issues at the firm.

All images: © UBS

# HSBC Bank USA

## 58 Bowery, New York, NY

Brigette C. Kamsler

**T**he Bowery is one of the oldest streets in New York City, having developed over four centuries. It is one of the original roads of New Amsterdam and the first road connecting the emerging Dutch settlement to outlying lands and villages beyond Manhattan and into what are now the other boroughs. Taverns, banks, slaughterhouses, hotels and other businesses have populated the street, along with personal homes. During the 19th century, the Bowery was considered “the liveliest mile on the face of the earth” and “the grand avenue of the respectable lower classes.” The Third Avenue elevated rail line was built in 1878 and added to the usefulness of the street. By the 20th century, the Bowery changed again to a “skid row” association, meaning an impoverished and disreputable area, and the elevated rail line was demolished in 1955. The area has been in a revival period since the late 1990s. A number of Landmark buildings still exist from past generations in this Historic District.

The land on which the structure at 58 Bowery stands also has historic significance. The corner lot saw plenty of foot traffic. Nearby was a tavern at 46-48 Bowery called the Bull’s Head Tavern, and the Black Horse Inn stood at 53-54 Bowery. Perhaps the most historically significant event to happen on the site occurred in late 1783. A plaque on the side of the current building reads in part: “Here General George Washington began his triumphal march into the city upon its evacuation by the British November 25, 1783.” The Bull’s Head Tavern was replaced in the mid-1820s by the Bowery Theater, and later the corner of Bowery and Canal was the site of a dry goods store owned by Peter Durando.

Some years later the street would also become home to Citizens’ Savings Bank, which was established in 1860 at No. 13 Avenue A, between First and Second Streets.



*The Manhattan Savings Bank, 58 Bowery. (Beyond My Ken - Own work. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Citizen%27s\\_Savings\\_Bank.jpg#/media/File:Citizen%27s\\_Savings\\_Bank.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Citizen%27s_Savings_Bank.jpg#/media/File:Citizen%27s_Savings_Bank.jpg))*

The Citizens’ Savings Bank was organized by publicly conscious residents to give those of small means living in the neighborhood an opportunity to deposit their savings.

Many of the first trustees were notable men of the community. George Folsom was elected President and the Vice-Presidents were Andreas Willmann and Daniel Butterfield. The bank quickly gained depositors; the first two years combined saw deposits of less than \$100,000, but by the end of the fifth year the figure totaled over \$1 million dollars. In 1866 that figure increased nearly one hundred per cent. From 01 January 1866, to 01 January 1869, the amount on deposit grew from \$1,739,349 to \$5,136,732.

The small plot the bank inhabited at Avenue A was quickly outgrown, and another solution was needed. Their eye was quickly drawn to the attractive prospect of 58

Bowery. For more than 10 years it had been home to another bank – rather confusingly named Citizens’ Bank, even though the two institutions were entirely separate! The plot was described as having “a twenty-five-foot frontage on the west side of the Bowery and extending about eighty-four feet along the southerly side of Walker Street, formerly St. Nicholas Street, and now Canal Street.” Citizens’ Savings Bank moved to the basement in 1862, and purchased the property in 1864. As business flourished, they boldly bought up adjoining lands in later years.

According to the book *Citizens’ Savings Bank: its Founders, History and Homes, 1860-1924*, the bank fulfilled its mission to cater for the residents of the neighborhood of “small means”:

“Out of 308,000 depositors who had opened accounts before 1910, nearly 78,000



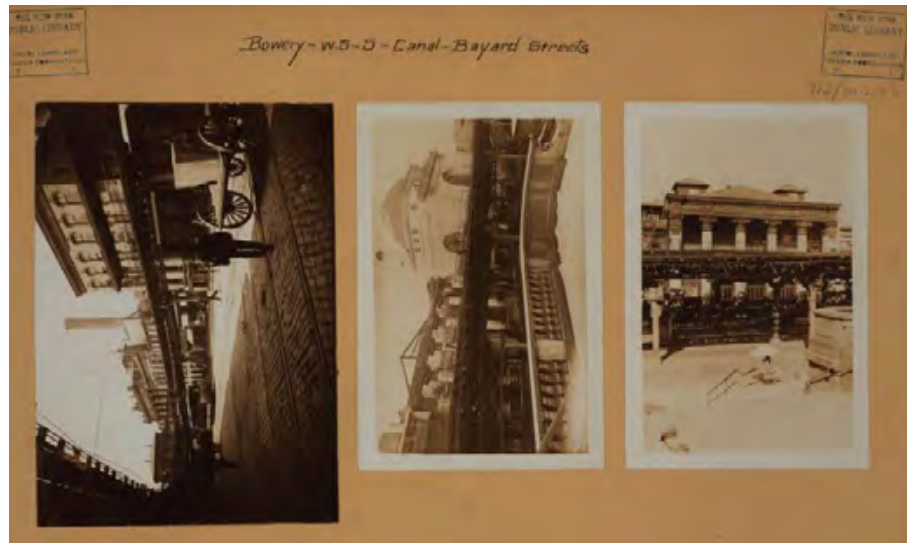
were women or minors, 42,000 were tailors, 13,500 were clerks, 12,000 were laborers, 11,600 were peddlers, 10,000 were operators and salesmen. Cigar-makers, shoemakers, bakers, butchers and grocers formed other large groups. One hundred and thirty-six pursuits or occupations were represented in the list of depositors. Germans, Russians, Americans, Poles, Austrians and Irish were the principal nationalities represented. The majority of the depositors were under thirty years of age on opening their accounts. Of the total deposits...the large majority were less than fifty dollars in amount”.

Eventually even the Citizens' Bank building at 58 Bowery became too small, and a new, larger structure was in order.

Clarence Wilson Brazer was chosen as architect of the new building, with the construction contract awarded to William L. Crow Construction Company. Brazer was mainly known for his work in Pennsylvania. Other historic buildings he designed include the State Capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota and the U.S. Customs House in Lower Manhattan. Construction began in 1922 and was completed in 1924:

“The building is approximately 110 feet high. It is surmounted by a low dome. Light Barre granite, considered the most durable of building stones and the best fitted for monumental structures, was chosen for the extension of the building. The main banking room is 75 feet wide, 85 feet deep, and nearly 70 feet high. A large horse-shoe desk encloses the great vault which is the main feature of the room a teller may make payments at the rate of two a minute. The great vault is of concrete covered with Travertine marble, and having three layers of alternate soft and hard steel, and wires concealed within layers of steel. The floor of the room is tiled with Onondaga marble, and the vestibules are ornamented with Gorham bronze. The building outside of the main banking room is well equipped for official business. On the upper floor under the dome are the trustees' board room and dining rooms for the officers and the clerks. The basement contains rest and recreation rooms and a revolver range for the clerical force”.

The façade was embellished by elaborate carved stone ornamentation, including a Native American and a Dutch Sailor, symbols of New York City, flanking a clock crowning the Bowery façade, carved beehives, monumental arches, other prominent statuary and



*Manhattan: Bowery - Canal Street. (Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library. “Manhattan: Bowery - Canal Street” The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1929 - 1904. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-235c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)*

a rusticated street level façade. Charles Keck, whose work became well-known in mid-20th century, designed the sculptures, which were intended to be visible to passengers on the former Third Avenue elevated rail line. Elements in the sculptures were drawn from Citizens' Savings Bank's seal. The monumental and impressive building was designed to instill confidence and strength in the stability of the institution, and it quickly became a distinctive feature of the Bowery landscape for generations to come, yet not overwhelm them.

Citizens' Savings Bank merged into the Manhattan Savings Institution in 1942. The Manhattan Savings Institution was acquired by Republic New York Corporation in 1990, which was purchased by HSBC in 1999. The Beaux-Arts building at 58 Bowery achieved Landmark status in 2011 by unanimous vote by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. It operates as the Chinatown HSBC Branch today. ●



*Manhattan Savings Bank 1956 (Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library. “Bowery Street #50-58” The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1887 - 1986. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-029a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)*

#### Author profile

Brigette C. Kamsler is the U.S. Corporate Archivist for HSBC. Prior to her work at the bank, she was Archivist at the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, one of the Columbia University libraries; and the Archivist and Research Center Coordinator at the Historical Society of Frederick County, Maryland.







