

Alexander Brown & Sons (Building)
135 E. Baltimore St. (at Calvert St.)

The present banking house, built in 1901 at the corner of Baltimore and Calvert streets, embodies both the traditional and enterprising characteristics of the banking firm of Alexander Brown & Sons for whom it was designed by Parker and Thomas. In its "Colonial" use of brick with stone facing and its one-story appearance belying the actual 2½ stories, it harkens back to the 1800 founding date of the firm; in the use of non-flammable brick and granite, with copper window frames and sills on the outside, and Italian marble, copper and bronze in the interior, it states a sense of the firm's permanency and expectation of continuing or adapting to meet fiscal demands of each generation of entrepreneurs.

Both the design and choice of materials for the building contributed to its successful survival of the supreme test of its permanence - the Baltimore Fire of 1904. It is theorized that the "fireproof" sky-scrapers around it burned so fiercely that a vacuum was created above its low roof and the flames did not descend. Three to four feet of bricks fell on it and helped to protect it. A hot brick, flung through the wired glass of the center dome, set the floor of a small rear room afire; some cracking and breaking of the granite facings and damage to the cornice show the effect of the intense heat. Except for this relatively slight marring, the building emerged unscathed and stood alone amid the ruins of the tall buildings around it. It seemed to state in architectural and structural terms Alexander Brown & Sons' ability to withstand the disruption of wars and the effect of business panics and vicissitudes.

In 1907 a three-story addition to the building was blended into the structure on the south side. Extensive enlargement of the firm's quarters in 1961 was accomplished by acquisition and remodeling of the adjoining building to the west. The electronic equipment and modern decor of the annex emphasize the speed and immediacy of today's business, as the main building reflects the traditional quiet and formal dignity of old-school banking.

E. D. Ehle

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