

Phila PA Chronicles

Sharing memories of people, places and events that left their mark on the Philadelphia region in the 20th century

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Keeping time by the Sears Clocktower

I can remember family shopping trips to Sears on the Boulevard when I was a child. Back in the day, Sears was one of the most reliable retailers for curtains, hardware and many of the other goods that turned a household into a home.

Sears on the Boulevard was quite a presence. Although most of Philadelphia's old-school retail temples were located downtown, Sears, Roebuck & Co. opened an outpost on Roosevelt Boulevard at Adams Avenue way back in 1920. Though its first retail store there didn't open until 1925, its warehouse facility had more than 5 million square feet when it opened—making it larger than the Pentagon.



Sears Roebuck & Co. plant on Roosevelt Boulevard. Image courtesy of [Card Cow](#).

Sears chose 40 acres of fields at the then-rural edge of Philadelphia as the site of its fourth mail-order house because it was economical—it could ship the most goods to the most people for the fewest dollars. By 1926, 126 U.S. postal clerks worked at the site to handle the mail.

Sears on the Boulevard was designed to be a grand neo-Gothic brick building with some style. Citizens who lived in the brick rowhouses that grew up around the landmark never needed a watch since they could simply glance up at its 14-story clock tower to check the time.

