

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: **15-21 S. 11th Street**

Postal code: **19107**

Councilmanic District: **1st District**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Horn & Hardarts**

Common Name: **Sound of Market Building**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: Retail

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1912 - c.1969**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1912**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **William Steele and Sons Co.**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **William Steele and Sons Co.**

Original owner: **William Steele and Sons Co.**

Other significant persons:

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

9. NOMINATOR

Name with Title: Jon Vimr, Graduate Intern

Email: jjvimr@gmail.com

Organization: Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia

Date: August 15, 2012

Street Address: 1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620

Telephone: (215) 546-1146

City, State, and Postal Code: Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: _____

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

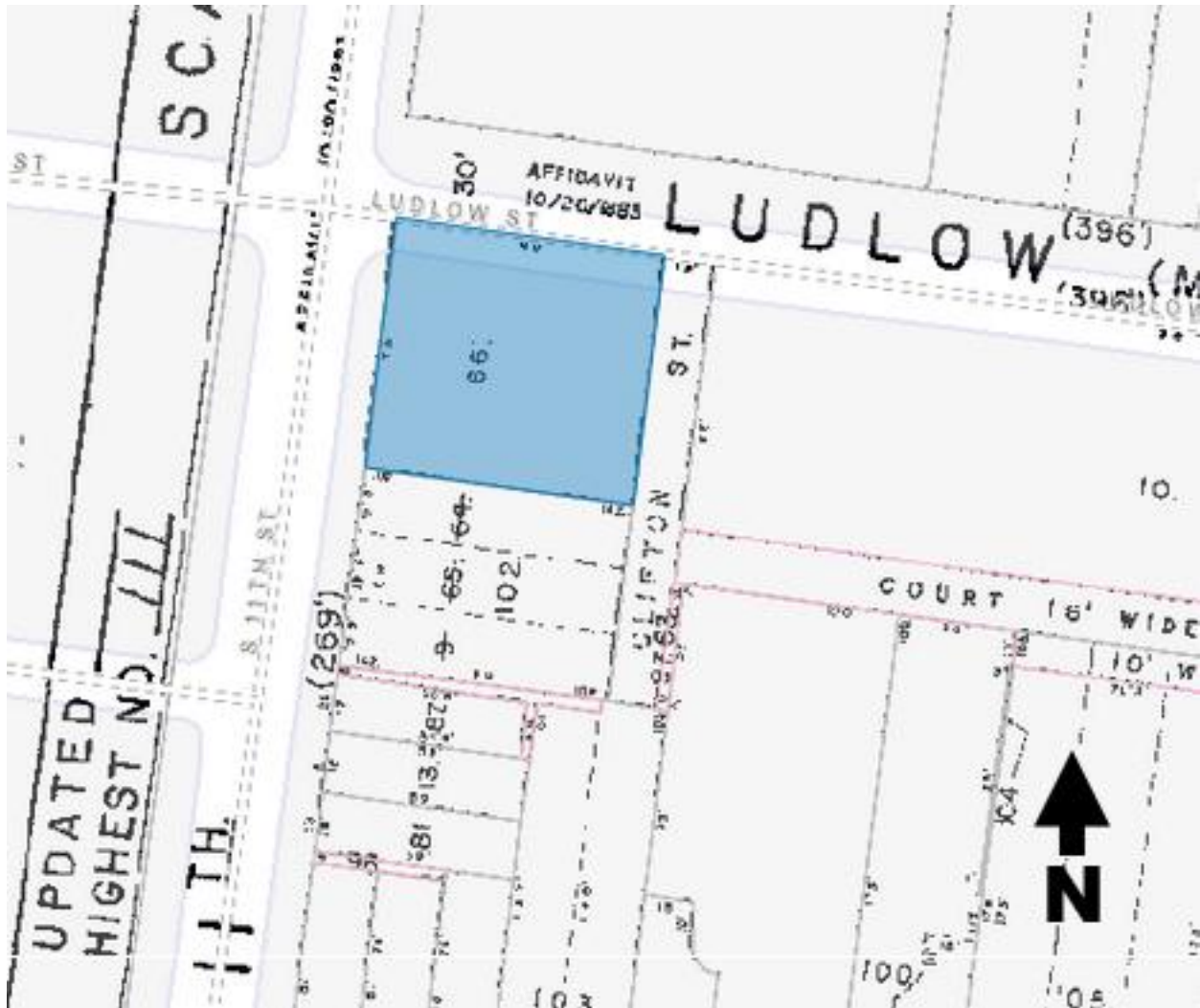
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

5. Boundary Description

Beginning at the southeast corner of 11th and Ludlow Streets, extending southwardly along the easterly side of 11th Street 75 feet; then extending eastwardly 80 feet to the westerly side of Clifton Street; then extending northerly 75 feet along the westerly side of Clifton Street to the southerly side of Ludlow Street; then to extending westwardly 80 feet along the southerly side of Ludlow Street to the place of beginning.



6. Description

The William Steele and Sons-designed 15 South Eleventh Street is a five-story, reinforced concrete commercial structure clad in brick and terra cotta with a flat roof. Filling the entirety of its square lot located at the southeast corner of Ludlow and Eleventh Streets in the Market East area of Center City Philadelphia, the structure sits directly across from the former Snellenburg Department Store Annex building (30-34 S. Eleventh Street, c. 1910). With the Philadelphia Human Resources offices, a CVS pharmacy, and a number of stores lining the street, the area is bustling throughout the day and imparts a decidedly dense urban feel not present elsewhere along Market East's numbered cross-streets. The Steele Building and the Snellenburg Annex mark the transition between the urban renewal-era development along this section of Market Street and the more intact historic urban fabric found southward along Chestnut Street.

A square structure forming the northern end of a strip of buildings between Chestnut and Ludlow Streets, the building has three freestanding elevations. Its principal, western façade faces Eleventh Street while the northern elevation faces Ludlow Street. The eastern elevation, unadorned and utilitarian, is oriented along south Clifton Street, which acts as a narrow alleyway and disposal area for the building and several of its neighbors. The south elevation is primarily a party wall. With the exception of contemporary storefronts, few changes have been made to the building's original appearance. With its polychromatic terra cotta ornament, the structure adds an exceptional presence to the area. Given its date of construction (1912) and the various stylistic influences featured on the exterior, the building is representative of a transitional period in commercial architectural styles between neo-Classical and Art Deco rarely found in Philadelphia.

Facing Eleventh Street, the terra cotta-clad western facade is the structure's most decorative elevation (Fig. 1). Its composition follows the basic base-shaft-capitol schema common in midrise and highrise commercial architecture of the early twentieth century. The street level consists of five glass and metal storefronts and various contemporary retail signage set below an ornate terra cotta cornice that runs unbroken across the façade (Fig. 2). The cornice fascia is composed of trygliphs in a pale yellow glaze and metopes detailed with green-glazed flower petal roundels in (Fig. 3). The storefronts and signage below are modern alterations, but

the historic form of a multi-tenant ground floor has been largely maintained. A Horn and Hardart restaurant and a Geuting's shoe store were the building's original ground-floor tenants. The southernmost bay featured an entrance for the upper-floor tenants. The storefronts originally featured stained glass transoms designed by D'Ascenzo Studios which were removed some time in the mid-twentieth century (Figs. 12-13). Also no longer extant are two metal canopies over the restaurant entrance at the building's northwest corner and upper-floor entrance at its southwest corner (Figs. 10-11).

The upper four stories are divided into a three-story "shaft" and one-story "capital" set apart by an ornate frieze band between the fourth and fifth floors. The verticality of the shaft level is accentuated by the stacking of windows into three-story bays delineated by a striated green and yellow frame. The bays are separated by pilasters featuring ornate geometric pier caps that appear to carry the frieze band above the fourth floor (Fig. 5). All windows on these middle floors are three-over-three double hung steel sashes set in groups of three, with coffered terra cotta spandrel panels set between them.

The frieze band above the fourth floor features a repeating tracery pattern of diamond and rectangle shapes projecting from a pale yellow field. This band serves as the base of the one-story "capital" that crowns the building. The fenestration pattern of this story follows the general proportions of the floors below, but its window sashes have been removed and replaced with plywood. Each window bay is framed by a fascies molding, and the piers separating the bays feature decorative panels of circles and half-circles set in a rectangular frame. Each pier is capped by paired consoles feature stylized, squared modillions that carry the building's crowning entablature. A fascia band of alternating yellow ovals and small green circles runs across the tops of the window heads, below narrower bands of dentil block and egg-and-dart molding. A projecting cornice features large dentil blocks set below a fascia band of green ovals and an aqua green ogee molding decorated with pale yellow fleur-de-les, palmettes, and roundels (Figs. 4, 6).

The decorative program of the four-bay west elevation turns the corner for a single bay along the northern Ludlow Street façade before transitioning to the more industrial appearance of the remaining three bays (Fig. 1). These rear bays are composed of broad multi-light steel casement factory-style windows set into a light buff brick façade. The windows feature simple terra cotta sills and jack-arch lintels. The ground floor is partially clad in flat terra cotta panels and features two former ground-floor picture windows now infilled with wood panels (Fig. 7).

Simple terra cotta belt courses run across the façade at the lintel and sill levels of the top floor, and the façade is capped by a simplified terra cotta cornice.

Composed of red brick and the exposed edges of the structure's reinforced concrete frame, the eastern elevation includes eight bays due to its smaller window sets. Six bays of paired steel casement windows compose much of the building facade with individual sash windows placed in the southernmost two bays. These windows are located along each of the upper four stories while the ground level of the eastern elevation is only of brick and cement.

Though there is little to speak of in regards to a southern elevation, a blank brick and cement building face extends up from the party wall covering the lower three stories of the structure. The southern elevation is also the tallest side of the building as the brick face extends several feet up from the roof to form a mechanical penthouse (Fig. 9).



Figure 1: North (left) and west (right) elevations as viewed looking southeast.



Figure 2: Eleventh Street storefronts.



Figure 3: Ground-floor cornice detail.



Figure 4: Upper-floor façade details.

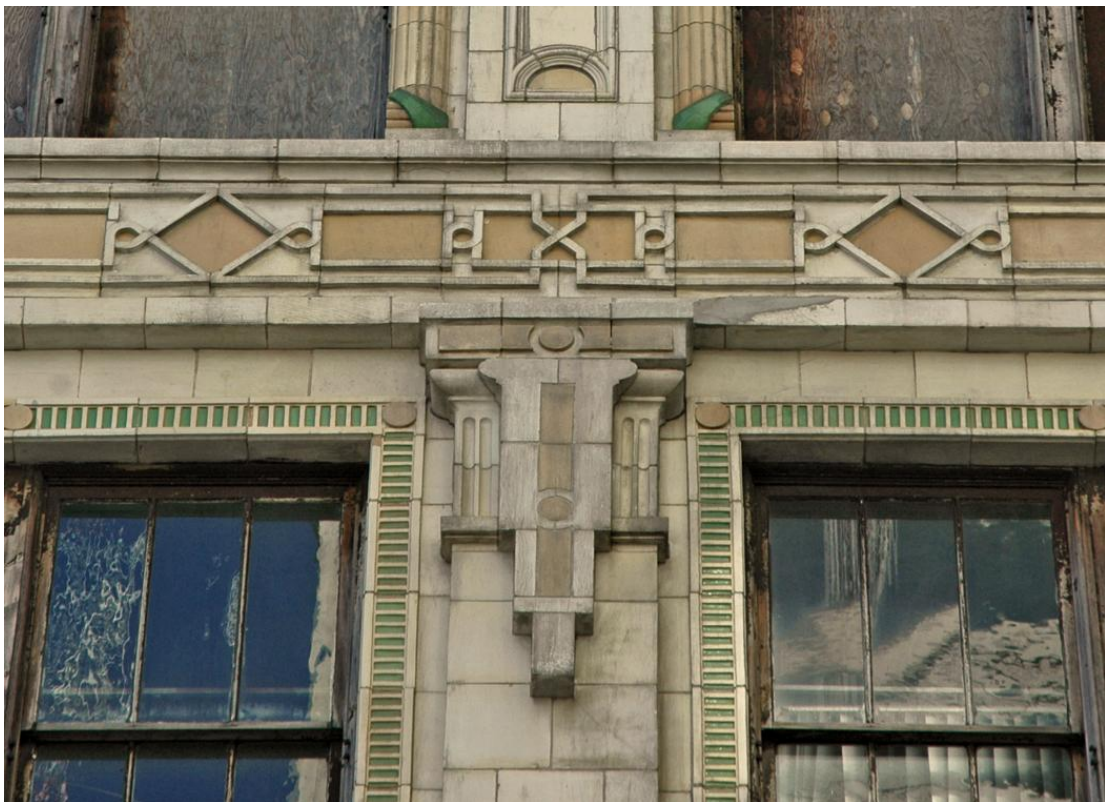


Figure 5: Pier cap, window surround, and frieze band details.



Figure 6: Northwest corner detail.



Figure 7: Ground floor of north (Ludlow Street) elevation.



Figure 8: East (Clifton Street) elevation.



Figure 9: South elevation.



Horn & Hardart Baking Company

Figure 10: Circa 1919 view of the building. *The Steele Idea*. Philadelphia: William Steele & Sons Co, 1919.



Figure 11: Circa 1936 view of building. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 3, 1936.

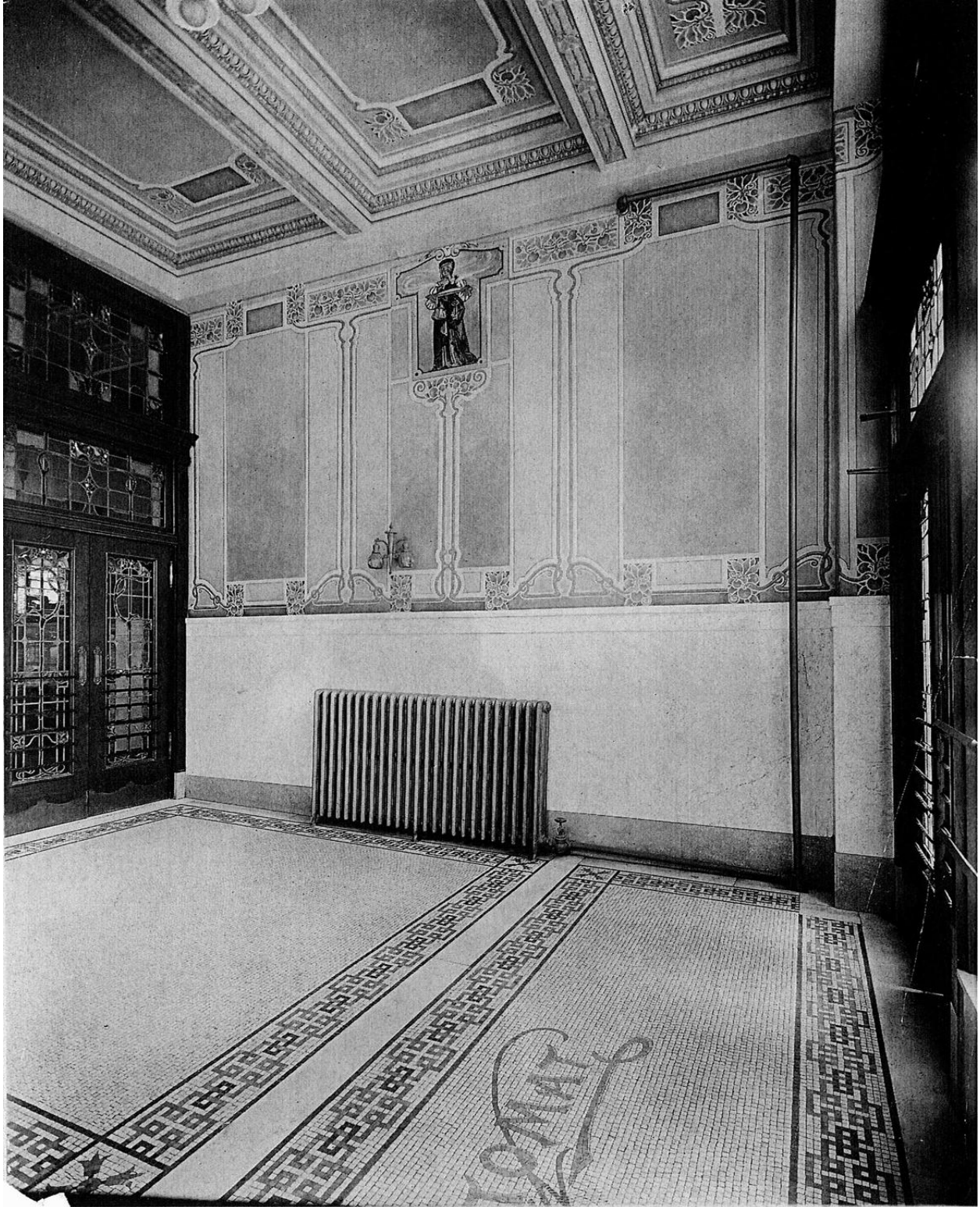


Figure 12: Undated photo of original Horn & Hardart interior (note “Automat” floor mosaic).
D'Ascenzo Studio Archives, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.



Figure 13: Undated photo of original Horn & Hardart interior. D'Ascenzo Studio Archives, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.



Figure 14: Circa 1965 view showing storefront alterations.

7. Significance

The William Steele and Sons-designed building at 15 South Eleventh Street is a rare local example of a transitional period in commercial architecture in the early twentieth century. Combining brick, reinforced concrete, and glazed terra cotta as a primary building material, the structure became and remains one of Market East's signature works and was advertised at the time of its construction to be the first structure in the city to feature polychromatic terra cotta.¹ While Steele and Sons did not enjoy the national fame of contemporaries such as Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham, and Cass Gilbert, it was nonetheless one of the most significant firms in Philadelphia throughout the first half of the 20th century. Further, the building's place as one of the first Horn and Hardart locations grants it a significant place in the social history of Philadelphia. Though smaller in stature than some of Steele and Sons' other local landmarks, the building at 15 South Eleventh is no less important.

15 South Eleventh Street meets the following criteria for designation as set forth by the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 14-2007(5) of the Philadelphia Code:

- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

¹ "Trade Review," *Brick and Clay Record*, Volume 41 No. 3, August 1, 1912, p. 117.

Criterion E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

Founded in the 1880s by Irish immigrant William Steele and his son Joseph, William Steele and Sons evolved from a modest carpentry firm in Kensington to one of the city's most prolific architectural, engineering, and contracting firms by the 1930s. Responsible for over fifty major construction projects in Philadelphia, the firm specialized in large-scale commercial and industrial structures and was particularly influential in the development of reinforced concrete construction. Though some of their commissions involved outside architects, the majority of their work included both design and construction, leading to their popular motto, "Centralized Responsibility."²

One of the firm's first major projects was the construction contract for the Witherspoon Building (Joseph M. Huston, 1893-5) located at the northwest corner of Walnut and Juniper Streets. Notable as one of the city's first steel-framed skyscrapers, the building also featured an ornate façade with ornament and sculpture designed by Alexander Milne Calder. This commission attracted the attention of many of the city's leading industrialists and entrepreneurs and polished the firm's growing reputation. The following decades brought major commissions for the Snellenberg Company Manufacturing Building (642 N. Broad Street, 1903); Shibe Park (21st and Lehigh, 1908), the nation's first reinforced concrete stadium; Lanson Monotype Company (24th and Locust, 1912-14); the Harris Building (2121 Market Street, 1914); the Snellenberg Company Warehouse (1825 N. 10th Street, 1914); the Aldine Theater (1826 Chestnut Street, 1921) Terminal Commerce Building (401 N. Broad Street, 1929); and the Market Street National Bank (1325 Market Street, 1930, with Ritter & Shay Architects), among many others.³

² "History," William Steele and Sons, accessed July 15, 2012, <http://www.wmsteeleandsons.com>.

³ "N. Snellenberg Company Department Store Warehouse," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Sheryl Jaslow, preparer, February 17, 2003. "William Steel and Sons Company Projects," Philadelphia Architects

With many of their works, including 15 S. Eleventh Street, Steele and Sons took a hands on approach that they termed ‘Centralized Responsibility.’ This meant that the firm would purchase the site, design and build the structure, and even install the necessary equipment needed inside before leaving it with the new owner or primary occupant. Having perfected the use of steel and reinforced concrete, the firm was able to erect structures at a cheaper cost, more quickly, and create buildings that were largely indestructible. In order to manage all these various objectives, the company was split into a total of thirteen departments. Included among these were: estimating, purchasing, architectural, construction, traffic, and a specific department dedicated to reinforced concrete.⁴ The usual procedure Steele and Sons followed when working on a completely in-house project began when an interested party, such as the Reading Company (in the case of the Terminal Commerce Building) or Horn & Hardart (in the case of 15 S. Eleventh Street) contacted Steele and Sons, or the firm won a competition for a commission. Steele and Sons would then go about purchasing the land on which the interested party wished to have their building; in the case of 15 South Eleventh, Horn & Hardart and Steele and Sons quickly jumped on the land after a vaudeville theater that had long occupied the parcel shut down. Steele and Sons became owners of the property in March 1910 and demolished the theater in the summer of the following year.⁵ The firm would discuss what features the interested party desired in the building and how it was to be used then worked on the overall design of the structure, staying in contact with the interested party throughout the process. Once the final design was agreed upon, Steele and Sons erected the structure in timely fashion, bought and installed all the necessary equipment needed for the building’s initial use, and then vacated the building to the interested party. In the case of 15 South Eleventh, Steele and Sons actually remained owner of the building for decades; Horn & Hardart effectively owned and operated it through a long term lease before they obtained the actual title to the structure from Steele and Sons in 1959.⁶

and Buildings, accessed July 20, 2012,

http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm/62822.

⁴ “The Steele Idea,” William Steele and Sons Company, 1919, Philadelphia Athenaeum.

⁵ Building Permit Number 4407, 1911. City Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

⁶ Deed of Transfer from Trustees of Mary J. Steele Clemmer to Horn and Hardart Baking Company, August 18, 1959, Plan Book 1143, page 83, Department of Records, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Throughout the four decades that Steele and Sons were actively involved in architectural design (they switched to strictly contracting and building in the 1930s), the firm was a local leader in the development of a commercial style that integrated modest ornamentation and structural expression into mid-sized and large-scale office buildings and factories. In the context of their overall portfolio, 15 S. Eleventh Street is noteworthy for both its high degree of architectural ornamentation and for the character of this ornamentation itself. It is one of Philadelphia's few high-style examples of a transitional period in commercial architecture in the 1910s found in the works of architects such as Burnham, Sullivan, and Gilbert in cities like Chicago, St. Louis and New York. Featuring the first major use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta in Philadelphia—a practice that would continue to be employed in their later works—the building foreshadowed the abstraction of Neoclassical design motifs into a style that would later be identified as Art Deco, especially in the case of the firm's later Terminal Commerce Building and Market Street National Bank.

Criterion F: Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

15 South Eleventh Street is innovative due to its relatively early use of reinforced concrete construction, its incorporation of terra cotta as a primary façade material, and its early use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta (a 1912 issue of the trade journal *Brick and Clay Record* identifies the building as the first in Philadelphia to feature the material).⁷

When 15 South Eleventh was erected in 1912, reinforced concrete construction was still an emerging technology. The first documented structure in the nation to use it was a house in Port Chester, New York that William E. Ward, a mechanical engineer, and Robert Mook designed for Ward and his wife in 1873-1876 (she was deathly afraid of fire).⁸ Entailing the insertion of iron beams into wet concrete, only a few architects and engineers experimented with the construction technique in the following decades. The few early innovators were led by

⁷ "Trade Review," *Brick and Clay Record*, Volume 41 No. 3, August 1, 1912, p. 117.

⁸ Amy E. Slaton, *Reinforced Concrete and the Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 16.

Ernest L. Ransome and Albert Kahn.⁹ Ransome, whose projects included industrial buildings in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, began his career in San Francisco and employed reinforced concrete construction as a means of earthquake-proof technology. As reinforced concrete allowed for higher weight stresses and therefore allowed larger floor areas with a minimum of structural columns, Ransome's factory designs featured large window expanses and were responsible for the term "daylight factories."¹⁰ When Albert Kahn started in Detroit, he designed his own early reinforced concrete building in Philadelphia, the Packard Motor Building (315 N. Broad Street, 1910). Given its reinforced concrete construction, terra cotta cladding, pronounced cornice, and large industrial windows, the Packard Building can be seen as a particularly strong influence on the design 15 South Eleventh Street, which began construction shortly after the Packard Building's completion.

Beginning their work in the late 1800s, Steele and Sons were also early adopters of reinforced concrete construction techniques. The company would mix its own concrete and transport it to construction sites using trucks complete with revolving barrels lined with blades. This prevented the gravel from settling and water rising to the top, thus producing the highest quality of cement. Through developing this process Steele and Sons invented transit mix concrete.¹¹ Reinforced concrete became more widely used during the 1900s and the Steele and Sons were at the forefront throughout with structures such as the previously mentioned Shibe Park, Lanson Monotype Company, Snellenberg Company Warehouse, and 15 South Eleventh Street.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the structure's design is its implementation of polychromatic terra cotta. Glazed architectural terra cotta was developed and improved upon throughout the first three decades of the 1900s before it went out of vogue in the middle of the century.¹² The production of glazed terra cotta involved hand casting or carving the hollow clay (mixed with sand or pulverized fired clay) units, putting on a heavy glaze, and firing the material. Glazed terra cotta proved to be durable and nearly impervious while making for clean, sharp architectural detailing as molds were cast from clay prototypes without any loss of

⁹ Slaton, 138.

¹⁰ Slaton, 17.

¹¹ "History," William Steele and Sons.

¹² "Preservation Brief 7: The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra Cotta," National Park Service, accessed August 2, 2012, <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief07.htm>.

refinement.¹³ Further, the material was thought to be both fireproof and waterproof and was significantly cheaper to produce than stone. As a result of its glazing, periodic washings were all that was needed to restore the material to its original appearance. Finally, the material allowed for subtle nuances of modeling and color.¹⁴

While prominent examples of architectural terra cotta come from architects such as Cass Gilbert, Louis Sullivan, and Daniel Burnham and include buildings such as the Woolworth Building (1913) in New York and the Wrigley Building (1924) in Chicago, it had proliferated in the first decade of the 1900s across New York City. A *New York Times* article from January 1907 notes that numerous structures making use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta had recently been completed both in the city as well as across the country.¹⁵ Another article from May 1911 continues to trace its development, noting that firms such as McKim, Mead and White were now making frequent use of the material in New York City. While it was initially used primarily for high rises (offices, hotels, apartments), by 1911 it had also become popular in theater construction, adorning both the exterior and interior spaces.¹⁶ Glazed terra cotta was believed to be particularly useful for commercial structures as it was a cost effective method of granting dignity.

Relative to other major cities in the United States, glazed terra cotta was relatively rare as a primary building material in Philadelphia. Far more common, especially in the first decades of the twentieth century, were buildings that used unglazed or buff terra cotta in imitation of stone. The aforementioned Packard Building is perhaps the city's most prominent example of a glazed terra cotta façade in a modern commercial style. Also noteworthy is the Allman Building (1701 Walnut Street, Baker & Dallett, c.1910); both the Packer and Allman are listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. 15 South Eleventh Street compares favorably to both these buildings in terms of architectural significance and integrity. In addition, unlike the uniform white facades of these other early terra cotta showpieces, 15 South Eleventh Street is further distinguished by its use of colored glazes in its decorative program. Steele and Sons

¹³ Preservation Brief 7.

¹⁴ Preservation Brief 7.

¹⁵ "Color Spreads Glories On City's Architecture," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1907

¹⁶ "Architectural Terra Cotta A Big Factor in New Building," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1911.

obtained this material from the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company, the same supplier for the façade of Cass Gilbert’s Woolworth Building in New York City.¹⁷

Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

For most of its existence, 15 South Eleventh Street was primarily associated with the Horn & Hardart Company, one of the most popular and successful commercial enterprises in the city for much of the twentieth century. The building was constructed to house the fourth Horn & Hardart Automat in Philadelphia and was the company’s first purpose-built structure.

Philadelphian Joe Horn and German-born Joseph Hardart opened their first luncheonette in 1888. Located in the still standing (and Philadelphia Register-listed) Binder Building at 39 S. 13th Street, the small cafe featured only a fifteen-seat counter. The café introduced New Orleans-style French drip coffee to Philadelphia, and the luncheonette quickly drew a loyal following. Ten years later, the pair incorporated as the Horn & Hardart Baking Company and in 1902 opened the nation’s first “Automat” at 818 Chestnut Street (also listed on the Philadelphia Register). The Automat was a new concept in dining; a vast assortment of baked items were displayed in banks of coin-operated cases. Diners would insert nickels into slots that opened glass doors to remove their selected food items, which were stocked from behind by Automat attendants. Seating was arranged cafeteria-style. Both the Automat machines and the rooms themselves were highly ornate, and the general atmosphere was one of both high style and egalitarianism.¹⁸

The success of the first Chestnut Street Automat led Horn & Hardart to open a second Automat in 1905 at 101 South Juniper Street and a third in 1907 at 909 Market Street, both in existing buildings.¹⁹ For their fourth Automat at 15 South Eleventh Street, the company maintained its high design standards by specifying a highly elaborate and colorful façade designed to draw attention from passers-by. Typical of their establishments, the building also

¹⁷ “Trade Review,” *Brick and Clay Record*, Volume 41 No. 3, August 1, 1912, p. 117.

¹⁸ Lorraine B. Diehl and Marianne Hardart, *The Automat* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2002), 29.

¹⁹ *The Automat*, 29.

featured elaborate stained glass windows and wall murals designed by the renowned D'Ascenzo Studios.

The construction of 15 S. Eleventh Street predated both the company's first New York City Automat (1912) and its aggressive expansion in both cities during the 1920s and 1930s, during which time the Automat became a cultural icon and a household name. Many of these later branches were designed by Philadelphia architect Ralph Bencker, who was responsible for the company's adoption of Art Deco and Art Moderne styles. Though 15 S. Eleventh Street predates Bencker's association with the Horn & Hardart Company, he was responsible for the later storefront alterations to the building (Fig. 14).

By 1930, a total of forty-six Horn & Hardarts made quick, affordable, and tasty food accessible to people all over the city.²⁰ In its decades as a Philadelphia institution, the company proved significant beyond the sheer amount of the built environment it occupied and the architectural value of its high-style buildings. Especially in its earlier years, the various Horn & Hardart locations served as neighborhood gathering places catering to specific groups. Government officials flocked to the 1508 Market Street location, dock workers to 234 Market, workers in Jewelers' Row to 818 Chestnut, and insurance salesmen to 6006 Market.²¹ Even during the Great Depression the city's Automats remained successful and popular. Indeed, Horn & Hardart employed over 10,000 Philadelphians throughout the Depression years.²² Climbing to eighty-five locations by 1958, Horn & Hardart's success eventually waned with the rising popularity of fast food outlets and the changing demographics of neighborhood commercial corridors. Automats slowly closed or were replaced with fast food franchises throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The Horn & Hardart Company sold 15 South Eleventh Street in 1969, though the exact date of the Automat's closing is currently unknown. The last Automat in the country to close was in New York City in 1991.

For most of its existence, 15 S. Eleventh Street was primarily associated with the Horn & Hardart Company but also housed a number of other tenants that reflected the area's status as a shopping and garment district. Listed as a commercial ('mercantile') structure on the initial building permit, the upper floors of the building acted as both retail and light manufacturing space. A historic photograph included in an early 1900s Steele and Sons monograph that shows

²⁰ *The Automat*, 45.

²¹ *The Automat*, 13-14.

²² *The Automat*, 61.

the building with a “Sol Cohn And Sons Cloaks And Suits” sign on the northwest corner of the top story (Fig. 10).²³ A lease was negotiated in November of 1912, soon after the building was completed, in which Warshav Goldman & Company negotiated a long-term lease of the fourth floor from Horn and Hardart.²⁴ Warshav and Goldman were a cloak and suit manufacturer that had two locations by 1914; coupled with the Sol Cohn and Sons store it is possible that the upper floors were serving as a suit manufacturing and retail hybrid for the first decades of the building’s existence.²⁵ The well-known shoe retailer A. Geuting Company also advertised a location in the building, presumably also on the ground floor, for many years in the 1910s and 1920s.

Conclusion

Both as a Horn & Hardart Automat and an important example of the work of William Steele and Sons, 15 S. Eleventh Street is a significant building in the context of Philadelphia’s architectural and cultural history. Situated in an area of Center City Philadelphia poised for aggressive economic reinvestment, the building survives as a testament to the area’s dynamic past and future potential. A rare local example of a transitional period in commercial architecture between traditional Neoclassicism and more progressive modern styles like Art Deco, the building merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under Criteria E, F and J.

²³ “The Steele Idea,” William Steele and Sons Company, 1919, Philadelphia Athenaeum.

²⁴ “Leases Negotiated,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 8, 1912, accessed July 18, 2012 via GenealogyBank.com.

²⁵ Philadelphia Business Directory, 1914, page 1512-1513. City Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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