

# PITTSBURGH STAINED GLASS STUDIO

## TO BE DESIGNATED AS A HISTORIC STRUCTURE

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

### Proprietors

F. C. COPPES  
*General Manager*  
A. W. WEITERSHAUSEN  
*Art Director*  
WM. W. KABLE  
*General Superintendent*  
A. T. PETERSON  
*Supt. of Installation*

## Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios

WARDEN & McCARTNEY STREETS  
WEST END · PITTSBURGH, PA.

### Art Staff

A. W. WEITERSHAUSEN  
H. G. WILBERT  
CHARLES LEE  
WILLIAM SHAFFER  
H. E. RAU  
*Asst. Manager*



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### PITTSBURGH STAINED GLASS STUDIO - HISTORIC NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

**Name of Property** ..... Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio  
**Address of Property** ..... 160 Warden Street  
**Property Owner** ..... Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios  
**Nominated by:** ..... Matthew Falcone  
**Date Received:** ..... April 12, 2024  
**Parcel No.:** ..... 19-M-17&19  
**Ward:** ..... 20th  
**Zoning Classification:** ..... LNC  
**Neighborhood** ..... West End  
**Council District:** ..... 2 – Kail-Smith

#### FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION:

1. Act on the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for Historic Designation (1 May 2024)
2. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (5 June 2024)
3. Review the Report prepared by staff for the property in question, and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (5 June 2024)

#### FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

4. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (9 July 2024)
5. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (9 July 2024)

#### FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE CITY COUNCIL:

6. Conduct a public hearing within 120 days of 9 July 2024 (6 November 2024).
7. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and the City Planning Commission and take action on the Historic Designation.

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### FACTS

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1. On 17 October 2023 the staff of the Historic Review Commission received an application for the nomination of Sal's Barber Shop to be designated as a City Historic Structure.

2. **Description of Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio** (as extracted from the nomination form)

160 Warden Street is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 49 feet wide by 110 feet deep. In form, it is an example of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century “headhouse and shed” design, in which a shallow multistory building, typically containing offices, sits in front of a much deeper, open area for manufacturing or other activities, typically containing a single story and sometimes a mezzanine. The form was readily adapted to factories, train stations, public markets and armories. 160 Warden Street follows the typical form and includes the following primary masses: Headhouse (studio, office and showroom). This is a two-story mass, approximately 49 feet wide by 18 feet deep, covered by a shallow-pitched hipped roof that is clad in brown asphalt shingles. It is constructed to the east property line at Warden Street. It contains studio space on the first floor along with stairs to the second floor, where the PSGS office and showroom are located.

3. **History of the Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio** (as extracted from the nomination form)

Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios can trace its roots to the turn of the last century when founders Axel T. Peterson, William W. Kable, Albert W. Weitershausen, and Frederick C. Coppes first began working together as employees of the glass business George Wamhoff & Company. The 1909 city directory shows the firm now operating under the name Pittsburgh Art Glass Company, even though another company of the same name had existed in the city in the 1890s.

On March 15, 1913, just two days after purchasing the Warden Street lots, Pittsburgh Art Glass was issued a building permit to construct an office and stained glass workshop. Of note, the permit was for an addition to an existing building, not wholly-new construction, meaning they intended to repurpose at least part of the existing brick warehouse.

A “release of liens” document dated July 25, 1913 indicates that all work on the new building had been completed. Of note (and no surprise), Pittsburgh Art Glass Company was listed as the subcontractor for “art glass and leading” per “F. Coppes, Manager.” Additionally, Henry Busse is listed as the architect (not just the builder), indicating that this was a “design-build” project, to use today’s terminology

A catalog printed in a number of iterations into the early 1920s that contained “hundreds of designs” in “standard sizes,” aimed at families constructing new homes and their general contractors. A supplement, printed in 1921 offered additional designs along with three pages of beveled glass options (a product line made possible by the 1913 expansion into this line of work, mentioned above, though this ceased in 1923). A May 1922 version titled “An Investment in Beauty” in the collection of the American Museum of Glass in West Virginia, part of this same campaign, advocated that this approach to providing windows would

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“encourage and speed up building . . . with no sacrifice of quality”. After all, the windows are “created by the same artists whose church window designs have made the high reputation of Pittsburgh Art Glass.” A full-color page of designs notes that even though the windows are standardized to fit certain-sized openings, all of the examples shown contained some degree of hand-painting. Additionally, PSGS offered black-and-white line drawings of various windows so that potential clients and contractors could try “coloring them according to your own personal taste”.

Contributing to the success of the company was coverage of its work in national periodicals over the decades. The first known instances occurred in September 1918 and November 1919 when the journal *The Ornamental Glass Bulletin of the United States and Canada* featured full-page images of designs by Albert Weathershausen for the Olympic Theatre (location not provided) and the Directors’ Room, Citizens Bank, Weston, West Virginia. The journal was published by the National Ornamental Glass Manufacturers’ Association.

On November 25, 1925, Pittsburgh Art Glass Company changed its name to Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios and recorded the name change. This document and the more detailed previous deed represent the current legal description for Lots 1 and 2; no further changes have occurred since 1925.

An important commission for the firm came in 1931 for windows for the present iteration of East Liberty Presbyterian Church. A second important Depression-era commission for PSGS, also with a significant architect, came in 1939. It was for windows at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill neighborhood.

Preeminent stained glass artist Charles J. Connick, writing in his 1937 book *Adventures in Light and Color*, included five PSGS windows for inclusion in his chapter “How to Share a Glassman’s Holiday,” which was his list of some of the most significant windows throughout the world. Connick’s assessment, which only includes the first quarter of PSGS’s long history, cited the following works: Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh (Howard Wilbert); East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, nave aisle windows and Wayfarer’s Chapel windows (Howard Wilbert); Second Presbyterian Church, Washington, Pennsylvania (Howard Wilbert and Albert Weathershausen); First Methodist Episcopal Church, Greensburg, Pennsylvania (Howard Wilbert); and First Presbyterian Church, Marquette, Michigan, entrance, rose, aisle and clerestory windows (Howard Wilbert and Albert Weathershausen). The firm has also worked in the international rooms at the Cathedral of Learning.

With John D. Weaver, Sr. as president and Howard Wilbert as secretary, reports in the *Minutes Book* begin to contain greater detail about the firm’s financial prospects and the progress of specific projects. While the Second World War brought challenges, the firm ultimately found ways to navigate them and stay in business. Initially, work was plentiful on the eve of American entry into the conflict, to the point that PSGS started to discourage small orders because they were getting in the way of larger ones. In March 1942, John Weaver, Sr., reported that all outstanding overhead such as taxes and interest on debt had been paid or considerably reduced during recent years, that inventory and the cash position of the company

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had been increased, and that “although faced with the possibility of curtailed production due to the war, we are in better position to meet this condition than has existed for many years.” Soon, however, restrictions would be enacted—and initially an outright ban—on the use of lead for anything other than military purposes. Additionally, severe limitations on the use of steel (used for church window ventilator panels and frames) forced a return to the types of agile responses to financial conditions last necessitated during the Depression. Also creating a challenge was the fact that a number of employees had been drafted.

June 1946 brought a significant commission to design and fabricate the chancel and front windows for the Air Base Chapel at Langley Field in Virginia (today, Joint Base Langley-Eustis). Designed by Howard Wilbert, and dedicated by the end of the year, the windows were created as a memorial to those who had given their lives and served faithfully during World War II. The windows are notable for religious themes being interwoven with symbols of flight.

From 1956 to 1961 there are inexplicably no entries in the Minutes Book. However, one important event that occurred during this time was the election of John D. Weaver, Sr. as national president of the Stained Glass Association of America for the year 1958-59. This was followed in 1964 by his being elected national treasurer of the organization, a position to which he would be reelected through 1976. In 1977, he was honored by being named a fellow in the Stained Glass Association of America.

By the mid-1960s, Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios was experiencing considerable success. The annual report for 1965, recorded on February 21, 1966, noted a number of significant events. Sales were up from the previous year, church window construction had reached a new “all-time high,” and the firm had won the design competition to create windows for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Chapel at the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North

Though major commissions were still being obtained during the 1970 and 80s, they were fewer in number, as trying economic times seriously threatened the firm. The War in Vietnam, unprecedented inflation and the collapse of the steel industry “almost killed the business,” according to current PSGS president Kirk Weaver, adding that “No one could afford windows.”<sup>195</sup> The creative solution to this decline in the market would be a transition to the preservation of existing windows as a major line of work for PSGS—an initiative spearheaded by Kirk Weaver after he joined the family business in 1982.

It was during these early years, in the midst of one of the worst business downturns experienced by the firm, that Kirk Weaver saw the potential for window restoration to benefit the company and its employees. He recalls that he “was standing in the office one day watching idle staff and wanted to help.” Bringing his science background to bear, he quickly began to educate himself in proper restoration and preservation techniques while PSGS ramped up its marketing for this new focus. He notes that “when I first became involved in the field, restoration consisted of smearing silicone over cracks, flattening bulges and installing Lexan” [plastic stained glass window covers].<sup>204</sup> That has since been replaced by a sound, consistent restoration philosophy backed by science and rooted in the fundamentals

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of the medieval craft. Kirk Weaver contributed to this improved approach, in part, by becoming engaged in the mission of the Stained Glass Association of America shortly after he left school. Working with a talented team of stained glass experts he helped evolve SGAA's 1988 Reference and Technical Manual from a cumbersome loose-leaf binder to a more user-friendly hardbound reference book: the second edition of the SGAA Reference and Technical Manual, which was published in 1992. In 1993, his efforts were recognized by the Excellence in Education Award from the Association.

In 1997, Kirk Weaver made the unprecedented decision to go on hiatus from the family business, in part, to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime career momentum. He would spend much of the next decade continuing his own hands-on education and advancing proper preservation and restoration techniques while sharing his knowledge and experience in a variety of venues. Among his many activities during this time was expanding the idea of what the Stained Glass School could be. He shared his vision in a 1999 interview in *Stained Glass Quarterly* by Richard Gross: "My idea is for the Stained Glass School to affiliate with a college or university and work towards the development of an acceptable curriculum for stained glass. The course of study would be augmented with internships in studios starting early in the collegiate career and continuing throughout the educational experience." The goal would be to attract and develop "potential artisans who have invested in their education, been exposed to the methods commonly used in professional studios and demonstrated not only an intense interest but the necessary ability."

In 2001, that became a reality when Weaver, in conjunction with the Stained Glass Association of America, helped to establish a stained glass program at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida." Weaver was close to starting a similar program at what was then Carlow College in Pittsburgh, but ultimately the details could not be worked out and the idea was abandoned. Preservation of existing windows as a major line of work for PSGS—an initiative spearheaded by Kirk Weaver after he joined the family business in 1982.

#### **4. Significance of Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio** *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. The nominator is of the opinion that Sal's Barber Shop meets several of the criteria as follows.

4. Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;

During the Great Depression, John D Weaver, Sr. was the President and General Manager of the company and under his leadership, they were able to diversify the client base by providing traditional stained-glass options to ecclesiastical customer, but also cost-effective options to architects and builders. This approach allowed the company to weather the economic downturn. Many modest Pittsburgh homes still retain the stained-glass windows installed in the 1920s and 30s. John D. Weaver Sr., not focusing

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solely on business management, showed his commitment to the stained-glass profession when he became the National President of the Stained Glass Association of America in 1958.

Because of the quality of the work the studio produced, as well as the sound marketing decisions of the past, John Weaver, Jr. was able to step into his role as Company Treasurer in the early 1960s.

By the early 1980s John D Weaver, Sr.'s grandson, Kirk Weaver joined the business. It was during these early years, in the midst of one of the worst business downturns experienced by the firm, that Kirk Weaver saw the potential for window restoration to benefit the company and its employees. He recalls that he "was standing in the office one day watching idle staff and wanted to help." Bringing his science background to bear, he quickly began to educate himself in proper restoration and preservation techniques while PSGS ramped up its marketing for this new focus. The business management approached mirrored that of his grandfather 50 years earlier in the diversification of products and services.

Kirk Weaver contributed to an improved restoration approach, in part, by becoming engaged in the mission of the Stained Glass Association of America shortly after he left school. Working with a talented team of stained-glass experts he helped evolve SGAA's 1988 Reference and Technical Manual from a cumbersome loose- leaf binder to a more user-friendly hardbound reference book: the second edition of the SGAA Reference and Technical Manual, which was published in 1992. In 1993, his efforts were recognized by the Excellence in Education Award from the Association.

Among his many activities during the 1990s was expanding the idea of what the Stained Glass School could be. He shared his vision in a 1999 interview in Stained Glass Quarterly by Richard Gross: "My idea is for the Stained Glass School to affiliate with a college or university and work towards the development of an acceptable

curriculum for stained glass." The goal would be to attract and develop "potential artisans who have invested in their education, been exposed to the methods commonly used in professional studios and demonstrated not only an intense interest but the necessary ability." In 2001, that became a reality when Weaver, in conjunction with the Stained Glass Association of America, helped to establish a stained glass program at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida."

In 2003, Kirk Weaver was honored with the SGAA President's Award, a special recognition presented by the current president to a person who, in his or her opinion, went above and beyond to further the Association's mission. Weaver was cited for two decades serving the SGAA in multiple capacities, including various committee chairs, serving as a board member for 16 years, and holding

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various offices, culminating with president. It was presented at the 100-year anniversary conference of the SGAA.

#### 5. Integrity

Staff finds that the property has sufficient integrity of location, materials, design, and craftsmanship to be eligible to be listed as a historic landmark.

#### 6. Photos



Photo 1. Front/east facade, looking northwest, showing the public entrance to the building on the left (Kirk Weaver, March 27, 2024).



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Photo 2. South facade (left) and front facade (right), looking northwest, showing the early-twentieth century “headhouse and shed” design.



Photo 3. Second-floor office space, looking southeast, showing examples of the firm’s work.

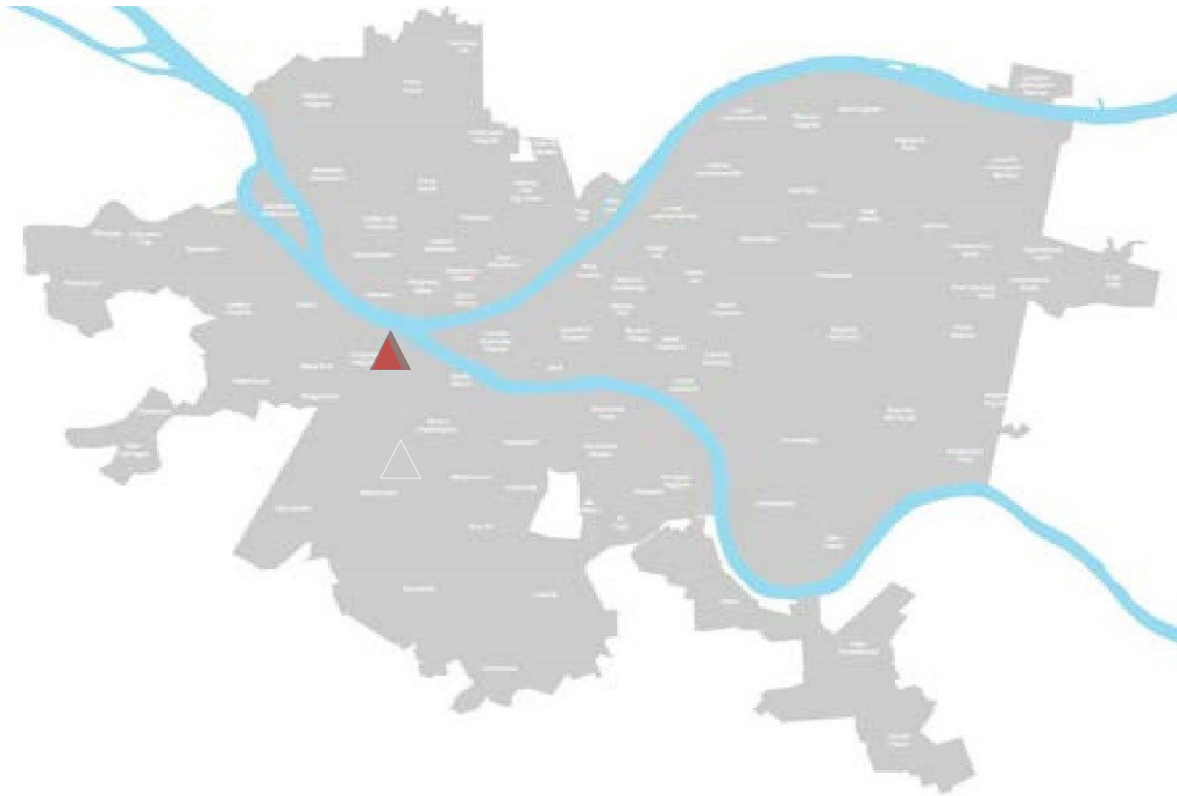
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### 7. Maps



### 8. Recommendation of the Historic Review Commission

The Historic Review Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio. On June 5, 2024 the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio as historic.

### 9. Recommendation of the City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio. On July 9, 2024 the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio as historic.

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### **10. Meeting Minutes**

**HRC MINUTES – May 1, 2024 – PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION HEARING**

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### **F. Historic Nominations**

#### **1. DCP-HN-2024-00405 – Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios**

Determination of nomination viability

160 Warden Street

Nominator: Matthew Falcone and Kirk Weaver

Public Comment: none

Motion: Positive determination that nomination does have viability.

Moved by: Hill

Seconded by: Reed

In favor: All

Abstained: None

Opposed: None

Recused: None

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RC MINUTES – June 5, 2024 RECOMMENDATION

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### **F. Historic Nominations**

#### **1. DCP-HN-2024-00405 – Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios**

160 Warden Street

West End Neighborhood

Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios, owner

Matthew Falcone & Kirk Weaver, nominator

Recommendation to City Council

Public Comment: none

Motion: Positive recommendation to City Council based on Criterion 4.

Moved by: Hill

Seconded by: Reed

In favor: All

Abstained: None

Opposed: None

Recused: None

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**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – July 9, 2024 RECOMMENDATION**

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### A. Hearing & Action

1 . DCP-HN-2024-00405 – 160 Warden Street,  
Historic Nomination of the Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios, West End

Staff: Sarah Quinn

Applicant: Matthew Falcone

Public Comment: None.

Commissioners Comments:

Motion: That the Planning Commission recommended to City Council.

Moved by: Ms Ngami

Seconded by: Mr Mazza

In favor: Ms Blackwell, Ms Burton-Faulk, Ms Dick, Ms Ngami, Mr Mazza, Ms O'Neill, Ms Ruiz, Mr Wu

Abstained: None

Opposed:None

Recused:None

CARRIED