

NOMINATION OF THE TITO HOUSE TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC LANDMARK

CITY COUNCIL REPORT



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THE TITO HOUSE - HISTORIC NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

Name of Property The Tito House
Address of Property 1817 Fifth Avenue and 1818 Colwell Street
Property Owner Heirs of James McGuire and Sal and Irene Williams
Nominated by: Dr. Brittany McDonald
Date Received: 1 October 2021
Parcel No.: 11-R-93, and 11-E-91
Ward: 3rd
Zoning Classification: UPR-8
Neighborhood Uptown
Council District: 6th - Lavelle

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION:

1. Act on the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for Historic Designation (3 November 2021)
2. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (2 February 2022)
3. Review the Report prepared by staff for the property in question, and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (2 February 2022)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

4. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (8 February 2022)
5. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (8 February 2022)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE CITY COUNCIL:

6. Conduct a public hearing within 120 days of the Planning Commission vote (8 June 2022).
7. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and the City Planning Commission and take action on the historic designation

FACTS

1. On 1 October 2021 , the staff of the Historic Review Commission accepted an application for the nomination of the Tito House to be designated as a City Historic Site.
2. **Description of the Tito House** (as extracted from the nomination form)

1817 Fifth Avenue

The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue is a 2.5-story irregular (cruciform) plan building constructed on a continuous ashlar stone foundation. Oriented to the south, the house occupies a narrow 46-foot-wide, 5,946-square-foot lot with an iron fence and stone wall along the Fifth Avenue property line. The house is reached via 11 concrete steps leading from the sidewalk to the front yard.

Clad by brick laid in common bond, the house has a gabled roof with cross gables pierced by a chimney in the rear. There is a corner tower (southwest corner) that has a pyramidal slate roof, corbel row, paired wood brackets, and bricked-in arched windows. The front gable roof is slate-clad and the remainder of the roof is clad by asphalt shingles. Stylistically, it exhibits elements of Queen Anne and Italian Renaissance.

The Fifth Avenue façade is three bays wide with an asphalt-shingle-clad hip-roof porch, supported by four wood posts. The front door and two first-story windows have been boarded-over and are not visible. The second story has three 1/1 DHS windows with a pedimented cross-gable clad in wood shingles and denticulate cornice.

The east façade is about three feet from the property line and has one boarded-over window and one window with a painted stone sill and lintel (with corner blocks) that has been filled with concrete blocks on the first floor. The northeastern corner has concrete parging to protect the foundation from water collecting between the house and a masonry wall along the property line. The second floor has two 1/1 DHS replacement windows. An attic window in the cross gable has been broken out. Visibility for this location was substantially diminished by the heavy vegetation in the adjacent lot to the east.

The north façade has a single central window in the first floor that has been sealed with concrete blocks. It has a painted stone sill and lintel with corner blocks.

The west façade rear (kitchen wing) has an inset asphalt-shingle-clad shed-roof porch supported by two brick piers set into a concrete slab (floor). The door to the kitchen and the kitchen window have been boarded over. The second story has a single 1/1 DHS replacement window. The central block has two basement windows (glass block, hopper) set in concrete wells. There are two boarded-over windows in the first story and two replacement 1/1 DHS windows in the second. The attic window in the cross-gable end wasn't visible due to vegetation attached to the façade.

The yards are heavily overgrown. Historically, there was a vegetable garden inside a low picket fence enclosure along the west side of the house; the front, east, and rear yards were grass. In the 1950s and 1960s, a metal cyclone fence separated the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue from its neighbor to the east. Prior to 1936, the rear yard extended to Colwell Street. It currently ends at a low concrete wall marking the boundary.

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The basement was divided into three spaces: a rear coal cellar with an unfinished floor; a central utility area with an enclosed “Pittsburgh” toilet and boiler; and, an area to the front of the house used for laundry and storage.

The main floor included a vestibule in the southwest corner that led to a hall. Inside the hall was an enclosed phone booth. Rona Peckich described it in a 2021 interview:

As you’d walk through the living room, if you made the left, they had this really cool, it was a telephone box inside the house. So when you’d go, it had the kind of door that would be — you know, you’d go in and talk — it was one of those kind that you’d see on the street but this was made of wood and stained glass.

The living room/sitting room occupied much of the front of the house and it included a fireplace with a “marbleized” pattern. The dining room occupied the central portion of the first floor. During the 1950s and 1960s, it was used as a parlor. Most of the social activities in this time took place in the kitchen, which occupies the rear of the house.

There were four bedrooms and a bathroom located on the second floor, which was reached by a staircase along the west wall. The master bedroom occupied the front of the house and three smaller bedrooms were connected by a hallway. Stairs located above the staircase from the first floor provided access to the attic, which during the 1950s and 1960s was used as storage.

1818 Colwell

The building at 1818 Colwell Street occupies a 2,889-square-foot lot that was carved out of the original 1817 Fifth Avenue parcel. The building is a two-story building constructed on a concrete foundation. The building is finished by brick laid in an eight-course common bond and it has a flat roof. The north (main) façade is actually the second story and has three bays oriented to Colwell Street. There is central overhead garage door flanked on the left (east) by a wood-panel door behind a metal security gate and on the right (west) by a bricked-in window. The façade has two belt courses and a parapet above the garage door. The garage door is set in a metal frame and has iron wheel guards. A metal sign bracket is mounted above the garage door.

The west façade has no fenestration.

The south façade, which faces the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue, rises two stories. Visibility was limited due to heavy vegetation in the yard and attached to the façade. One steel pivot window is visible in the façade and a second window has been filled with glass and concrete blocks. Historical photos in the Tito family show a portion of this façade, with its steel frame pivot windows in the second story and what appears to be a hopper windows in the first story.

The beer distributorship’s east façade was also concealed by heavy vegetation adjacent to the building. There are two second-story windows. One is concrete-block-filled and the second is a steel-frame, nine-light window.

3. History of the Tito House *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

1817 Fifth Avenue, 1865 to 1922

Culturally and historically, Uptown has a lot in common with the Hill District at large. Each has a long history of immigrant in-migration in the years bracketing the turn of the twentieth century: eastern and southern Europeans and African Americans from the Deep South.

The parcels where the site is located were owned until 1865 and 1866 by axe manufacturer James and Maria Lippencott. The Lippencotts sold the property to their widowed daughter-in-law, Ann (c. 17896-1886), and a woman named Emily Armes. The Lippencotts lived in a large home on the corner of Dinwiddie and Fifth Avenue. Barnett McCracken, a grain merchant, in 1881 bought the western portion of the original Lippencott property. That parcel became 1817 Fifth Avenue

Barnett McCracken and his wife, Elizabeth, appear to have owned the property when the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue was built. On October 1, 1889, they sold it to John Guntz, Jr., who paid \$9,500 in cash for “a brick dwelling of eight rooms and improvements.” At that time, the house was known as 559 Fifth Avenue. It was one of several free-standing and attached homes built in the upper part of Fifth Avenue in the 1880s, according to newspaper advertisements and historic preservation documentation on file with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Guntz had worked as a glass blower before going into the hospitality business in the 1880s. When he died in 1898 at age 44, he had owned the Hotel Wesley on Fifth Avenue downtown near the Allegheny Courthouse. “He was one of the best known hotel men in Pittsburg,” The Pittsburgh Press reported. “Mr. Guntz had the only licensed house on Fifth from the courthouse to Soho street.”

The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue appears to have been one of several Guntz owned as investments; he was living in a home on Bouquet Street in Oakland when he died. At one point in 1896, the property had been listed in Pittsburgh newspapers as being tax delinquent. At that point, the property included a two-story brick dwelling and a one-story frame stable. Real estate maps produced in this period show the home’s footprint and the stable fronting on Colwell Street at the rear of the lot.

Three months after Guntz’s death, the Allegheny County sheriff disposed of the property, along with several other parcels Guntz had owned. Between 1898 and 1912, several parties owned the house and stable at 1817 Fifth Avenue. In 1912, T. Morrison McKenna, the son of industrialist Thomas M. McKenna, bought the property as an investment and in 1917 transferred it to his family’s real estate holding firm, the McKenna Investment Company. Five years later, the firm sold 1817 Fifth Avenue to a pair of Italian immigrants, Raphael and Rosa Tito. The Titos got a \$20,000 mortgage from the Brady Building and Loan Association of Pittsburgh for the purchase.

The Tito Family

Raphael Tito (1865-1936) and his wife, Rosa (1866-1936), emigrated to the United States in 1888 from Baragiano in southern Italy. For their first few years, the Titos rented homes in the city. In 1894, they were living in a rented home on Yew Street in Bloomfield; two years later,

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they bought a house on Gazzam's Hill in Soho, near the intersection of Kirkpatrick and Fifth Avenue. In the earliest surviving documents, Raphael identified himself as a laborer and by the 1900, he was working as a streetlamp lighter.

The Titos were among a wave of Italian immigrants who settled in Pittsburgh in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. Their move to Soho in the 1890s was part of a large-scale shift in Italian immigrants from other parts of the city to the Hill District and its margins. They clustered close together in kin-based "colonies" that historians John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber suggested recreated pre-emigration village life. Between 1896 and 1930, Raphael and Rosa Tito bought multiple properties on Gazzam Hill in Allequippa and Gazzam streets; much of their extended family lived within one block of the original Tito home at 28 Gazzam Street.

Raphael and Rosa had eight children while living in Pittsburgh: five boys and three girls. Joseph, the oldest, was born in 1890 and Robert, the youngest, was born in 1905. Little material evidence survives to document Raphael and Rosa's lives. The rapid trajectory they took from being Bloomfield renters to owning multiple Soho properties suggests that they accumulated wealth quickly after emigrating.

Raphael worked in an essential trade: lighting the city at dusk. Carnegie-Mellon University historian Joel Tarr wrote that Pittsburgh had more than a thousand streetlights by 1875. Before electrification, Pittsburgh used gas and gasoline to fuel its lights, which were lit each evening by lamplighters who also refueled and maintained the lights. "A familiar figure in Pittsburgh was the lamp lighter, appointed and paid by the company under the city's direction and allocated one hour after sunset to light lamps in his defined area." At least one city directory identified Raphael Tito's employer as the Sunlight Illuminating Company.

Census schedules and city directories offer only a small window into the personal and economic lives of the Titos. "They were hucksters," Anna Tito Mecca Zizza (1894-1972) told anyone who asked about her brothers. "And a huckster in those days were people that went around selling vegetables."

Frank became a Pittsburgh police officer and Joe continued to work in the streets selling vegetables. By 1920, Joe had married Katherine Brimmer and the couple were living in a rented home on Elsinore Place in South Oakland. Frank was living with his parents and younger siblings in their home at 18 Allequippa Street.

The Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution banned the production, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors. Introduced in 1917 and ratified in 1919, the law marked the start of Prohibition. Pennsylvania's legislature ratified the amendment February 25, 1919, more than a month after Nebraska became the last state needed for full ratification. Prohibition went into effect January 17, 1920. The new law left enforcement up to the states and in Pennsylvania that was accomplished through the Snyder-Armstrong Act in 1923. Despite little guidance and poor funding for enforcement, dry agents began making headline-grabbing arrests soon after Prohibition became law.

The Tito brothers began making headlines in 1922 for hauling and hijacking liquor. In December 1922, federal Prohibition agents raided four Penn Avenue establishments seizing more than 140 stills and other bootlegging paraphernalia, including trucks observed leaving

the sites. Frank and Robert Tito were among the people arrested. Joe Tito subsequently petitioned a U.S. District Court judge to return two trucks seized. “The trucks were seized last week while it is alleged, beer was being transported in them,” reported the *Post-Gazette*. The dispute over the seized trucks spanned nearly four years and in 1927 a federal judge vacated the judgements against the Titos and others. In 1923, Joe and Frank Tito were arrested for hauling beer labeled as “syrup” away from the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad Company yards. According to the *Post-Gazette* account, Joe lived at 1817 Fifth Avenue and the brothers each got a \$100 fine. One year later, Joe Tito was sentenced to serve eight months in the Allegheny County jail for another arrest and conviction for conspiring with A. Guckenheimer & Company to transport illegal liquor.

The Tito brothers were one of several high-profile Pittsburgh families involved in bootlegging. Others included the Volpe brothers, who were based in Wilmerding; the Bazzanos; and, the syndicate led by Guisepppe Siragusa. In the early 1930s, vice became more professionalized as local, regional, and national crime syndicates formed. These syndicates, often mislabeled as “Mafia,” were dominated by extended kinship networks — families — composed of European immigrants and African Americans who moved to cities during the Great Migration.

As these criminal organizations became more formalized with leadership hierarchies and territories, violence sometimes broke out as competing families vied for profits and dominance. In 1932, John, James, and Arthur Volpe were ambushed and shot to death in a Wylie Avenue coffee shop owned by the Bazzanos. Joe Tito was one of the last people seen with John Volpe — shortly before the shooting, Tito paid for Volpe’s haircut at Frank Manna’s Fifth Avenue barbershop. “Joe Tito, friend of the Volpes and reputed kingpin of two rackets—beer and numbers—was questioned by homicide detectives,” the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* reported. Tito admitted speaking with Volpe and the investigators released him. Tito was a viable suspect because word on the street was that the Volpes had begun infringing on his Hill District and Oakland territory.

Joe Tito clearly occupied a prominent position in Pittsburgh’s organized crime hierarchy. By 1932 he might have been one of the city’s leading organized crime bosses who built his wealth and power in bootlegging and numbers gambling. Newspapers reporting on his questioning in the Volpe triple murder case recognized that he was a special case. The *Post-Gazette* reported that Tito was shown “special consideration” while being questioned: “His entrance and exit were made with the utmost concern for his privacy.” Tito achieved his powerful position in a well-established organized crime setting with roots in the mid-nineteenth century. Despite an arrest and prosecution record that spans the 1920s and 1930s, the Allegheny County Criminal Courts records division has no surviving records documenting Tito’s legal entanglements. Only one Tito family indictment remains in county criminal records: the 1924 bootlegging indictment of Robert and Ralph Tito.

Organized and Syndicated Crime History in Pittsburgh

Crime has been a part of Pittsburgh’s urban fabric since the city’s founding. The types of activities in which the Tito brothers engaged, bootlegging and numbers gambling, are part of an elaborate informal economy with ties immigrant and ethnic history. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, prostitution, bootlegging, gambling, and loansharking

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became entrenched in the Hill District, including Uptown. Organized crime is a sociological and criminal justice concept that refers to groups of people engaged in unlawful activities whose activities are structured by rigid formalized structures and positions (e.g., bosses, enforcers, runners, et al.) and specialization. Syndicated crime is a system of “power relationships” among participants working in concert in mutually profitable endeavors outside the law. According to the Pennsylvania Crime Commission, organized and syndicated crime have been part of Pittsburgh’s urban fabric since the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The commission cites the 1932 Volpe massacre as a major turning point in the city’s crime history. “During Prohibition, Bazzano successfully consolidated Sicilian, Calabrian, and Neapolitan factions within the Pittsburgh bootlegging underworld,” the investigative body wrote in its 1990 report. The Volpe massacre, the commission wrote, helped with the consolidation. Bazzano’s victory was a pyrrhic one, however. Shortly after the August 1932 massacre, Bazzano was invited to New York City to attend a testimonial dinner in his honor allegedly thrown by the newly constituted La Cosa Nostra Commission. Bazzano’s badly mutilated body was found several days later in a burlap sack dumped in Brooklyn.

Just a few days before Bazzano’s body was discovered, the *Post-Gazette* reported that he and Tito had left town for an extended period of time, possibly permanently. Several high-ranking La Cosa Nostra founders, including Albert Anastasia (a co-founder of “Murder, Inc.”), were questioned as suspects in Bazzano’s murder. Joe Tito’s roles in the Volpe and Bazzano murders was never fully resolved.

Bootlegging

Bootlegging is the illegal manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors. Bootlegging gangs appeared throughout the United States shortly after Prohibition became law. In cities like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, European immigrants dominated these gangs. Eastern European Jews, Italians, and the Irish became mob bosses in this period. They collaborated within their ethnic communities and across ethnic lines to provide beer and distilled spirits in violation of Prohibition and without taxation. African Americans also worked in and ran bootlegging rackets.

Pittsburgh had well-developed bootlegging rackets. Bootleg beer and moonshine were manufactured in illicit breweries and stills secreted in garages, basements, and warehouses throughout the city and its suburbs. Italian racketeers like Siragusa, the Volpes, and Bazzanos found a friend in Prohibition. They operated in local, regional, and national networks to make, distribute, and sell alcohol. Family and business ties to lakefront cities like Cleveland and Detroit simplified the movement of liquor from Canada into the city.

In Pittsburgh, Gus Greenlee (1896-1952) was a notable Black bootlegger who developed an early and fruitful relationship with the Tito brothers. A North Carolina transplant, Greenlee arrived in Pittsburgh in 1916 as part of the Great Migration. He worked as a taxi driver and the next year he enlisted in the Army and served in Europe during World War I. After the war, he returned to Pittsburgh and the taxi business.

The Hill District offered Greenlee a fertile field for bootlegging. In the mid-1920s, there were twelve known moonshine still sites there, according to University of Pittsburgh sociology

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student Alexander Pittler. Greenlee used the money made transporting liquor to enter the entertainment industry. Greenlee's first known brush with the law came in 1921 when he was indicted for receiving stolen goods. In 1924, he bought a defunct Hill District tavern along with boxing promoter, Thomas "Kid" Welch. They called their Wylie Avenue establishment the Paramount Inn. Greenlee went on to open several more Hill District clubs and restaurants, including the Crawford Grill No. 1 (1933) and Crawford Grill No. 2 (1945).

Greenlee appears to have been arrested at least once on a liquor charge. In 1929 he was running a restaurant called the Avenue Lunch at 1323 Wylie Avenue (it later became the Belmont Inn, a nightclub he operated with Edwin "Teddy" Horne). Pittsburgh police officers arrested Greenlee on January 26, 1929, and charged him with possessing and selling intoxicating beverages and liquors. Welch posted Greenlee's bond, using a Bedford Avenue property he owned to secure it.

In the mid-1920s, Greenlee crossed paths with the Titos. By then, Greenlee had taken up a new racket: numbers gambling. Most histories credit Greenlee and his friend, William "Woogie" Harris (1896-1967), with introducing numbers gambling to Pittsburgh. The story, however, is more complicated than the histories intimate. As Greenlee and his African American partners (and competitors) were establishing their new gambling rackets in the Hill, they taught some of the whites who were part of their bootlegging operations how to run numbers. These "students" included Hill District Jews, Harry "Kid" Angel, Frank "Froy" Nathan, and Jacob "Jakie" Lerner. Joe Tito was one of the Italians who learned from Greenlee. By 1930, numbers gambling had penetrated all corners of the city and corrupted thousands of ordinary citizens who played or worked in the rackets. Bribes, patronage, and raw power drew much of the City's elected and appointed leadership into the numbers rackets making them accomplices at best and shadow gangsters at the worst.

Numbers Gambling

Numbers gambling is a daily street lottery with nineteenth century roots. Most histories center on Harlem in the first three decades of the twentieth century as the time and place where numbers began replacing policy as the street game of choice among African Americans. Policy was also a lottery that initially relied on small-time bettors wagering on the outcomes of state lotteries. It evolved into easily fixed forms that relied on drawing numbered balls from bags, wire cages, and other containers. In his pathbreaking 1899 book, *The Philadelphia Negro*, W.E.B. DuBois wrote, "Gambling goes on almost openly in the slum sections and occasions, perhaps, more quarreling and crime than any other single cause." He then quoted a newspaper article published in 1897:

Policy playing is rampant in Philadelphia. Under the very noses of the police officials and, it is safe to say, with the knowledge of some of them, policy shops are conducted openly and with amazing audacity. They are doing a 'land office' business. Hundreds of poor people every day place upon the infatuating lottery money that had better be spent for food and clothing. They actually deny themselves the necessities of life to gamble away their meagre income with small chance of getting any return.

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DuBois's observations about Philadelphia may be applied to most U.S. cities, including Pittsburgh, at the turn of the twentieth century.

Pittsburgh newspapers began reporting on policy shops in the early 1870s. Concentrations of these establishments began cropping up in the city. One newspaper wrote in 1888 that there were 41 policy shops operating. By the third decade of the twentieth century, the Hill District, East Liberty, and the Northside had become the city's leading vice centers. Because of its dense concentration of Southern Blacks and European immigrants who relied in the informal economies of vice, the Hill District became the city's leading "vice resort." Alexander Pittler identified 40 gambling Hill District gambling sites in his 1930 thesis, with numbers the dominant game. He described them as based in "Restaurants, small stores and pool rooms" and that, "It is generally known that they are protected by the police."

The numbers game is played by bettors selecting three digits and wagering small amounts — one, five, ten, or twenty-five cents — in anticipation of payoffs up to 600 to one. The odds of winning are one in one thousand. Numbers requires a complex organizational structure with a hierarchy that includes operators (bankers/backers, writers, and runners), collaborators who run front businesses where wagering is allowed, corrupt police and government officials, and bettors.

Numbers gambling formed an important cornerstone in Black and immigrant communities. "Playing numbers is the most flourishing clandestine industry in Harlem," wrote Harlem Renaissance poet Claude McKay. "We had two people that we had to depend on in those days and that was the ministers and the number writers," a Hill District resident told WQED interviewers for the 1991 documentary, *Wylie Avenue Days*. Numbers gambling offered people historically excluded from good jobs, housing, and education employment opportunities and the chance to win big by hitting a number. Pittsburgh's twentieth century numbers bankers employed thousands of runners and writers.

Though playing the numbers drained pennies, nickels, and dimes from household that could ill afford the discretionary spending, it also created community solidarity and hope. Numbers bankers became "folk heroes" in places like the Hill District. Word of a "hit" — a big win — spread quickly in Black neighborhoods. Winners of a big hit could buy a new house in Homewood, Sugar Top, or some other neighborhood outside of the Hill. General and former Secretary of State Colin Powell's family was able to move to the suburbs because of a big numbers hit; blues musician Robert Johnson's mother was able to buy a new \$18 coat from numbers winnings; or finance a social event. Numbers bankers were community heroes and the anticipation of a big hit created hope in communities hard hit economically and psychically by anti-Black racism, poverty, etc.: "A hit also tends to give a neighborhood some sense of cohesion, and it may also be added to a common body of neighborhood tradition." The historical record is mostly silent about how Joe Tito got into numbers gambling. No arrest records survive and contemporary newspaper accounts only described him as a numbers "big shot." In 1981, University of Pittsburgh historian Rob Ruck interviewed Charles "Teenie" Harris about the history of numbers gambling in Pittsburgh and Greenlee. "Gus was by himself," Harris said. "Then Gus, later on, went in with a white fellow named Tito. Then Tito got smart and he went in for himself. Ruck also interviewed

Greenlee's brother, Dr. Charles Greenlee. "The Titos and Gus were just as tight as brother and sister," he recalled.

Tito is one of the whites that African Americans later blamed for displacing Blacks from their positions of prominence in the numbers rackets. "The whites came in and took it off them," one informant told University of Pittsburgh history graduate student Ralph Lemuel Hill. "Little by little, the whites began to move into the area where the Blacks are, and they began to get the numbers. When the Blacks looked up to see what was happening, it was too late." It was a pattern repeated in cities throughout the United States starting in the early 1930s. In 1951, *Color* magazine reported that young white punks had taken over the numbers rackets in the Wylie and Centre Avenue corridors. "Most of the old numbers joints are out of business. Those that remain now have tough Italians as operators or as partners, ringing up the cash," the magazine wrote.

Whatever the actual events were, Tito's entry into numbers gambling, perhaps as a competitor to Greenlee, doesn't appear to have significantly impacted the mens' relationship. "Gus owned 50 percent of Rolling Rock brewery. Unless they've taken his picture down, they've got a life-size picture of him out there now," recalled Dr. Charles Greenlee.

Numbers gambling is part of Pittsburgh's essential culture as well as its history. It played an essential role in capitalizing Black sports and entertainment in the twentieth century and it even played a role in white professional sports. Pittsburgh Steelers founder Art Rooney was a well-known gambler and racketeer before becoming a professional sports tycoon. Numbers gambling also determined the career trajectories of important Pittsburgh politicians (e.g., Mayor David Lawrence), police officials (Assistant Superintendent Lawrence Maloney), and even a district attorney (Robert Duggan). It was — and is — part of Pittsburgh's cultural DNA.

Latrobe Brewing Company and Rolling Rock Beer

The contours of the personal and professional relationships the Tito brothers had with Gus Greenlee may never be known. Nearly two years into their involvement in Greenlee Field, Prohibition ended on April 7, 1933. In anticipation of a reduction in their bootlegging revenues and seeing an opportunity to make their booze business legitimate, the Tito brothers used contacts they had in Latrobe, Westmoreland County, to buy a brewery.

In December 1932, the *Latrobe Bulletin* reported that Anthony Tito and Robert Zaffey bought the Pittsburgh Brewing Company's assets in that city. Zaffey was an Italian immigrant who had been living in Westmoreland County for several decades. According to the 1930 census, he emigrated to the United States in 1903 and was working as a restaurant manager in Scottdale, about 22 miles from Latrobe. In the 1920s, Zaffey had owned a 48-acre farm where he had "fifty bearing grape vines."

Zaffey's agricultural specialization —grapes— might have been his connection to Pittsburgh organized crime figures. In 1930, he was detained for questioning the gruesome gangland killing of bootlegger William Gregory. Dubbed the "barrel murder" by local newspapers, Gregory was tortured and decapitated before his body was stuffed into a barrel and dumped in the woods. According to newspaper accounts, he was suspected of stealing a load of beer and selling it and the truck in which it was being transported to a competitor of his employer.

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Gregory, the press said, had ripped off the “bootleg-brewery syndicate.” Though the Titos weren’t named in the newspaper coverage of Gregory’s murder and the prosecution of racketeer Philip DeFazio, the Titos essentially were executives in Pittsburgh’s “bootleg-brewery syndicate.”

Zaffey’s questioning in the Gregory murder case is a circumstantial, but compelling, link to Pittsburgh and the Titos. The only known documentation of the Titos’ entry into legal brewing exists in contemporary newspapers and land records. The latter show that in December 1932, the Pittsburgh Brewing Company sold the Latrobe Brewing Company to Zaffey and Anthony Tito. Six months later, Zaffey sold his interest in the business to Tito. During this period, Zaffey was the brewery’s public face, answering questions from the press and testifying before the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board in licensing proceedings.

The Latrobe Brewing Company got its license in early 1934 and began producing and distributing legal beer. Anthony Tito was the company’s president; Joe Tito its vice-president; and Robert Tito its secretary. Frank Tito managed the company’s Pittsburgh wholesale beer distributorship, which was located in the brick garage at 1818 Colwell Street.

Tito family oral history suggests that Zaffey was their connection to an otherwise obscure brewery located more than an hour outside of Pittsburgh. “Somebody’s relative lived in Latrobe,” explained Rona Peckich, Anna Tito Mecca Zizza’s great-granddaughter. “The only reason they did that was for money laundering. That’s the only reason they bought [the brewery]. They never imagined it was going to turn into this.”

Peckich’s speculation is supported by the slim historical record documenting the brewery’s business practices. The family never relied on industry standards for marketing. Instead, the Titos relied on word of mouth and company representatives “buying rounds” for consumers in local taverns.

At first, the company brewed Latrobe Old German and Latrobe Pilsner beers. Then, in the spring of 1935, Frank Tito began advertising that the company had “Latrobe Pilsener and Rolling Rock Ale” for sale at 1818 Colwell Street. The March 1935 ads mark the first time that rolling Rock beer was produced and sold, yet the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office notes that Rolling Rock was first used in commerce in 1934 and the trademark was registered in 1940. This contradicts all of the published histories of Rolling Rock beer that cite 1939 as the year the beer was first sold. The Rolling Rock Beer website reads, “In 1939, the Tito Brothers, owners of the Latrobe Brewery, decided they wanted to do their own thing. That thing became Rolling Rock.”

After Prohibition ended, brewers and merchants rushed to get Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board licenses. Pennsylvania’s post-Prohibition liquor laws created what is known as a “three-tiered” distribution system for beer: manufacturers must sell to distributors and not directly to retailers and consumers. This system was designed to prevent aggressive marketing tactics that characterized pre-Prohibition alcoholic beverage marketing. Brewers comprise the top tier; distributors the middle; and, retailers, the lower tier. The new regulatory structure created a distinctive type of Pennsylvania business: beer distributors, the only place where consumers could buy beer in volume. Because of their bootlegging

operation, with its trucks and brick warehouse at 1818 Colwell Street, the Titos were well positioned to adapt to the new laws and rules.

The Post-Racketeering Years

Raphael Tito died July 14, 1936, and Rosa Tito died five months later, December 31, 1936. In the last months of her life, Rosa Tito transferred the titles to her family's real estate holdings to her children. Joe and Katherine Tito bought 1817 Fifth Avenue for \$12,485; Frank and Gretchen Tito bought 1818 Colwell Street for \$10,000. Only Joe and Katherine were living in the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue in 1940. By then, the family had transcended its bootlegging and numbers gambling roots. The Titos became well-respected members of Pittsburgh and Latrobe society where they contributed to charities, attended arts events, and built substantial fortunes.

Rona Peckich recalled her grandmother Clara Mecca Napoleon describing the family's early years: "My grandmother Clara would tell us stories about the uncles bringing literally pillowcases full of money to the house. Literally, pillowcases full." That had changed after the brothers bought the Latrobe brewery:

These were very, very generous men and like I said, they did good in — I know there's stuff that they were involved in when there was flooding on Fifth Avenue and the schools got flooded out during the twenties and thirties and they were very instrumental in having the schools rebuilt.

The Pittsburgh *Bulletin Index* in 1944 noted that Joe Tito continued to lead the family business, even after it went into the legal brewing business despite holding the number two spot in the company:

Climbing fast to a place of importance in the brewing industry is the Latrobe Brewing Company, makers of Rolling Rock Premium Beer. Headed by energetic Vice President Joseph Tito, the "biggest little brewery in the country" ... serves notice that it intends to monopolize the premium bottle beer business in this market.

In 1947, a new modern apartment building at 5837 Darlington Road was completed and Joe and Katherine Tito moved into a unit there after selling 1817 Fifth Avenue to Joe's sister, Anna, for a nominal \$1.00. They were living in the apartment when Joe Tito died March 4, 1949. Joe was eight days away from his 59th birthday. His *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* obituary included a photo and it noted that he had lived in Pittsburgh his entire life. There was no mention of his headline-grabbing bootlegging and numbers racketeering. Joseph Tito left an estate worth \$100,346 (\$1,153,418 in 2021 dollars).

Robert Tito was 43 when he died a few months later, in May 1949. Robert succeeded (briefly) his late brother Joe as the Latrobe Brewing Company's president. His *Pittsburgh Press* obituary noted, "He was a life-long resident of the Oakland-Soho District." Like his brother Joe's obituary, Robert's failed to mention his earlier entanglements with law enforcement. Robert Tito also left a substantial estate: \$104, 547 (\$1,201,706 in 2021 dollars).

Frank Tito was the first of the five brothers to die, however. "One of the widely-known Tito brothers, [he] fell dead yesterday from a heart attack in his wholesale beer distributing

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establishment at 1919 Colwell Street,” the *Sun-Telegraph* reported July 26, 1942, after Frank died at age 50. He and his wife, Gretchen, had moved to the Northside where he owned a home. Frank left a more modest estate, just \$14,000. His widow, who continued to run the beer distributorship, petitioned the Allegheny County Orphan’s Court to sell Frank’s business assets to herself.

Frank Tito’s probate records contained a complete inventory of the beer distributorship. When he died, the business had 1,240 cases of beer in stock; two trucks; a small safe; various pieces of office furniture and equipment; and Tito’s Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board license (No. TID-146). Gretchen Tito remarried in 1947 to Malcolm Brand. The couple sold 1818 Colwell Street to their son, Frank Brand, in 1957.

Donna Brusco fondly recalls spatial and social ties that the beer distributorship had with the house. “I used to call it the beer distributor and then they’d call it the garage because they brought the beer in from Latrobe there and then that’s where the beer trucks picked up their order,” she said “Those men up there, they knew I was Annie’s granddaughter and they were always real nice. But I didn’t go in there much. It was dark.” Salesmen from throughout the Pittsburgh area would walk from the distributorship to the house where her grandmother, Anna Tito Mecca Zizza, would give them coffee.

The property at 1818 Colwell remained in the extended Tito family until 1965 when Frank and Raelene Brand sold it to Samuel, Oscar, and Meyer Mallinger. It’s now owned by the Williams family, which in past generations also historically had significant ties to Pittsburgh’s organized crime history. “A guy named Sal Williams ... he’s a big parking lot guy up by the old arena and PPG. I saw that he bought that,” Brusco said.

The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue remained in the extended Tito family until 1973, after Joe’s sister Anna died the year before. Anna Tito had married Italian immigrant Frank Mecca (1890-1940) and the couple lived in the original Tito family home at 28 Gazzam Street. Frank, whose original name was Meccio, arrived in the United States in 1905 and immediately moved to Pittsburgh. He worked as a gardener and in landscaping. In 1925, shortly after the University of Pittsburgh completed work on a new stadium, Mecca became its first “custodian of grounds.” It is unclear how much time that Mecca spent at 1817 Fifth Avenue, but his widow moved into the house after remarrying in 1943 to Alphonse Zizza (1897-1967), a shoemaker.

Zizza had been a family friend who lived in the Tito “colony” in Allequippa Street after arriving in Pittsburgh from Italy. “When my great-grandfather died in 1940, December of 1940, and my great-grandmother got married eventually to Alphonso Zizza,” said Rona Peckich. “Everybody knew everybody, you know, the Italians. So he was known to the family. He knew my great-grandfather and then eventually the two of them got married.”

Alphonso Zizza died in 1967 and Anna found herself again widowed. The Tito home at 1817 Fifth Avenue was the extended family’s social hub. Anna’s grandchildren, Rona Peckich and Donna Brusco, spent a lot of time at 1817 Fifth Avenue. Brusco, now 70, recalled spending summers and holidays in the house and playing in the yard with her cousins — Anna had fifteen grandchildren, according to Brusco. Peckich, too, remembered spending a lot of time there.

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Brusco and Peckich said that most of the family activities took place in the kitchen and the adjacent living room. “The action when I was growing up was in that center big room. My grandma kept her TV in there and the sofa because she was in the kitchen all the time,” Brusco recalled. “My grandmother was a really good cook and she had two sons living there, my uncle Ralph and my Uncle Frank so she was cooking all the time.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s April 5, 1968, assassination sparked uprisings in cities throughout the United States. Pittsburgh’s African American residents had already been planning a day of protest, dubbed “B-Day” (“Burn Day”) for May and King’s murder accelerated their schedule. The protests began on Centre Avenue and quickly spread throughout the Hill District and into other Black neighborhoods and Pennsylvania’s governor dispatched the National Guard.

Brusco’s family’s concern for their grandmother’s safety during the unrest is etched in her memory. Brusco’s father asked her to drive from their Mt. Washington home to 1817 Fifth Avenue to bring Anna to their home. “I remember my father calling Number Eight police station and said I’m sending my kids down to get my mother-in-law,” Brusco said in an August 2021 interview.

Brusco arrived at the house and her grandmother was standing on the porch. About a dozen National Guard troops were lounging around in the front and side yards. Brusco recalls her grandmother yelling, “What are you kids doing out?” Brusco explained that her father had sent her to bring Anna to Mt. Washington and Zizza replied, “You tell your dad I’m staying. I promised these boys spaghetti.”

Anna Tito Mecca Zizza died July 23, 1972. She held onto the house even after her family tried to convince her to sell and come live with them in Mt. Washington. “I think my grandmother’s house sold for six thousand dollars. It was sad,” Brusco said. The heirs sold the home one year after Zizza’s death, in July 1973. It had been in the Tito family for 51 years.

The Tito family’s descendants continue to have significant attachments to the property. “I tried to buy that house. I tried for years and years,” said Rona Peckich. “Every time I see it, it makes my heart hurt.” Peckich is the family’s informal historian. She has compiled a substantial collection of photos and newspaper articles from her family’s collections and the Internet. “I’m the oldest of the next generation and I did the family tree,” she offered in 2021. “I’m the one who just keeps finding this stuff.”

NOMINATION OF THE TITO HOUSE TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC LANDMARK

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4. **Significance of The Tito House** (*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 The Tito House meets several of the criteria as follows.

§ 1101.04 (b)(1): Location is a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity.

Between 1922 and 1933, the Tito brothers used the property as a base of operations for their bootlegging and gambling activities. Joe Tito, who lived at 1817 Fifth Avenue from the 1920s until 1947, built his booze and gambling empire from the property. After Prohibition ended, he lived there while building the Latrobe Brewing Company and Rolling Rock beer brands.

After 1933, the brick building at 1818 Colwell Street became Latrobe Brewing Company's first Pittsburgh beer distributorship. Newspaper advertisements indicate that this was the first location in the United States where Rolling Rock beer was sold (in 1935). The beer distributorship at this location survived the death of its first manager, Frank Tito, and continued under the ownership of his wife. Rolling Rock beer is widely recognized as an important brand and the brewery was a significant Southwestern Pennsylvania business.

§ 1101.04 (b)(2): Associated with an important person who contributed to history.

Prior to 1922 when the Tito family purchased the property, several notable individuals owned it. These include grain merchant Barnett McCracken, entertainment entrepreneur John Guntz Jr., and industrialist T. Morrison McKenna. These individuals appear to have purchased the property as an investment. The property does not appear to be associated with any of their contributions to Pittsburgh history. Its association with the Tito family — Joe Tito and his brothers — appears to qualify 1817 Fifth Avenue for designation as a City of Pittsburgh Historic Site under this criterion.

Joe Tito is widely recognized by historians as a key figure in Pittsburgh's early organized crime history whose contributions beyond bootlegging and racketeering include his partnership with Gus Greenlee. Their collaboration on building and managing Greenlee Field is a significant milestone in local history; sports history; and, African American history.

§ 1101.04 (b)(3): Architecture.

The two buildings that comprise this site are eligible under this Criterion. The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue exemplifies Victorian-era architecture through its Queen Anne and Italian Renaissance stylistic elements.

The former beer distributorship at 1818 Colwell Street represents a distinctive type of vernacular architecture that developed in the twentieth century as Pennsylvania made the transition from Prohibition in the 1920s to legal alcohol sales in the 1930s. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission survey files contain only three beer distributor buildings. None have been determined eligible for listing or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Bootlegging and automobile garages were inextricably connected during Prohibition. Pennsylvania's Beer Act of 1933, which responded to the federal repeal of Prohibition, required a detailed description of premises where beer distributorships were to be conducted. Some (many?) Pennsylvania beer distributorships appear to recapitulate the architecture of earlier Prohibition-era bootlegging sites, i.e., automobile garages. Pennsylvania's distinct legal and licensing system for alcohol sales (a "three-tiered system") created a separate business class for the middle tier, beer distributors, who could only sell malted beverages in "original containers" and not for consumption on the premises. These new beer distributors in turn appear to have adapted the earlier buildings and building types used during

prohibition to legal beer sales. The former Tito beer distributorship at 1818 Colwell Street, licensed at the onset of legal beer sales in Pennsylvania, is an early example of this adapted architecture.

§ 1101.04 (b)(7): Associated with important events and social aspects.

Organized and syndicated crime played key roles in Pittsburgh history. Significant events in Pittsburgh's bootlegging and numbers gambling history are associated with this site and its twentieth century owners, e.g., Joe Tito and his extended family. The property's address was regularly reported in newspaper reports on Tito family arrests in the 1920s and 1930s.

The site's associations with an Italian immigrant family and its first-generation entrepreneurs (Tito brothers) make it significant for what it can tell us about Italian-American history. The Tito family's movement from Bloomfield to Soho to Uptown reflects a recognized pattern in Pittsburgh's Italian communities. The Tito brothers' complicated business and social relationships with their African American racketeering partners and competitors further enhance the site's significance.

§ 1101.04 (b)(8): Important in neighborhood development pattern.

This site qualifies for designation for its construction during a period when the area now known as Uptown was urbanizing with the development of new housing in the Fifth Avenue corridor. The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue was constructed in a period (1880s) when other similar homes were built in the vicinity. These include fashionable Victorian-styled homes at 1827-33 Fifth Avenue that were demolished after being documented by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. It is possible that the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue was the "elegant, commodious and well-finished house on Fifth Avenue advertised for sale or rent in January 1889: "Owing to central situation on main thoroughfare and to new facilities for access, this property will soon be as desirable for professional men as Penn avenue formerly was."

§ 1101.04 (b)(10): Familiar visual feature.

The former Tito House is a familiar visual feature in the Uptown neighborhood. It is one of the few remaining late-nineteenth century homes in a corridor that has experienced substantial change in the past fifty years. Its location across from the former Fifth Avenue High School and looming presence on the north side of Fifth Avenue make it a popular photographic subject. The building's current condition, with dense vegetation attached to its facades, enhances its visibility.

5. Integrity

1817 Fifth Avenue

The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue remains legible as a home built in the 1880s with Queen Anne and Italianate stylistic elements. It remains in its original location and it retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to convey its historical significance. The property is abandoned and is experiencing impacts from vegetation adhering to building fabric and exposure to the elements (broken windows). The cultural landscape (yards, retaining walls, etc.), though overgrown, is consistent with oral histories collected from former residents.

Changes to the original design are consistent with the lifecycle of a building constructed more than a century ago. The vegetation attached to the building fabric and encroaching from the neighboring lot is reversible. Clearing the dense vegetation would restore much of the building's legibility (as demonstrated in photos taken during the winter months and posted online; see below).

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1818 Colwell Street

The former beer distributorship at 1818 Colwell Street remains in its original location and it retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to convey its historical significance as the location of Prohibition-era bootlegging activities and as a post-Prohibition beer distributorship. The vegetation attached to the building fabric and encroaching from the neighboring lot is reversible. Clearing the dense vegetation would restore much of the building's legibility.

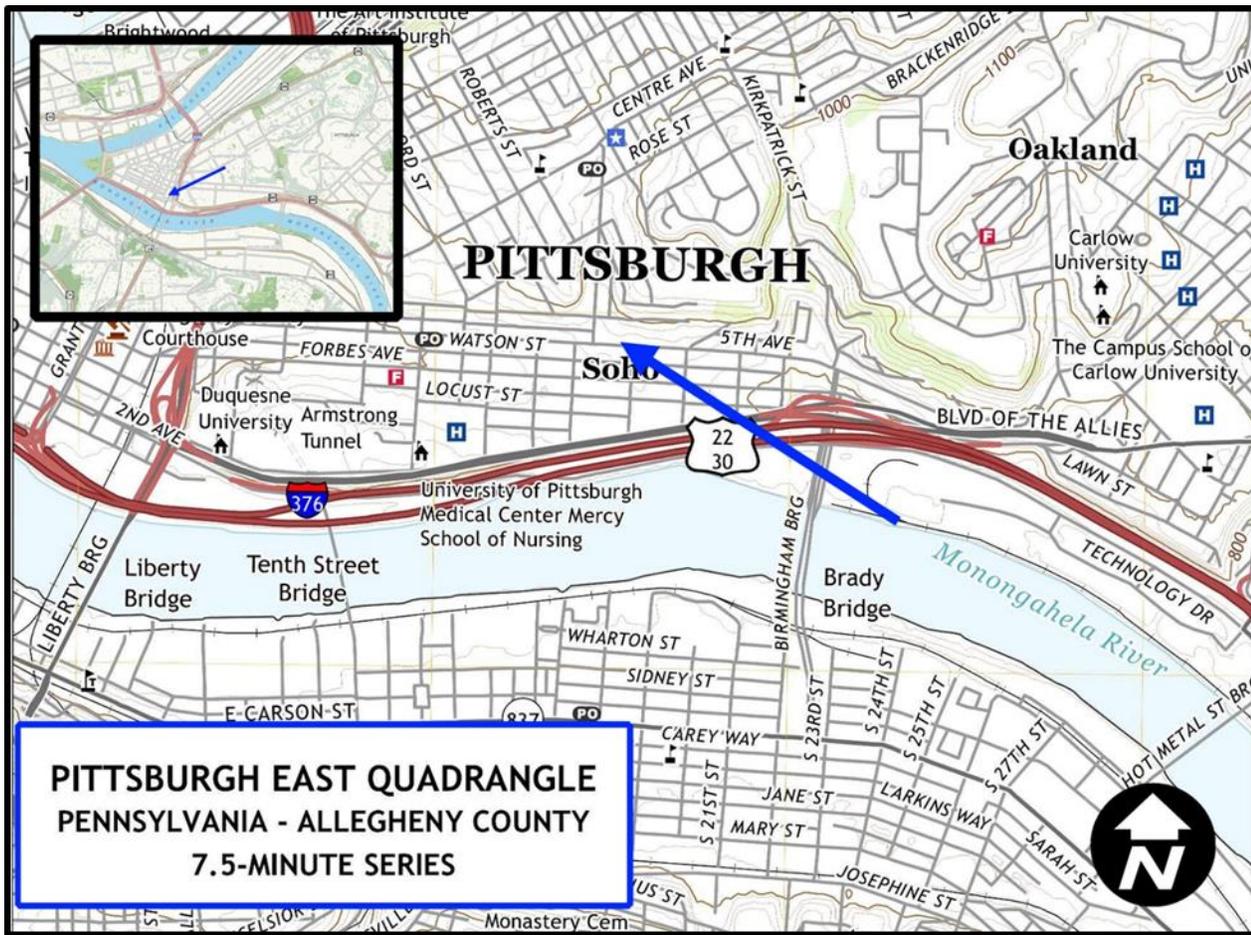
6. Photos

1817 Fifth Avenue



1818 Colwell Street





8. Recommendation of the Historic Review Commission

The Historic Review Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of The Tito House. On 2 February 2022 the Historic Review Commission voted to not recommend to City Council that it designate The Tito House as historic.

9. Recommendation of the City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation The Tito House. On 8 February 2022, the Planning Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate The Tito House as historic.

10. Meeting Minutes

HRC MINUTES -3 NOVEMBER 2021 – PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION HEARING



Minutes of the Meeting of November 3, 2021
Beginning at 12:30 PM

Held via Zoom and available to view at
<https://www.youtube.com/user/planpghvideo>

In Attendance:

<u>Members</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Andrew Dash	Sharon Spooner
Lucia M. Aguirre	Sarah Quinn
Richard Snipe	
Karen Loysen	
Matthew Falcone	
David Green	

Call to Order:

Ms. Aguirre calls role and confirms that a quorum is present.

Old Business-None.

New Business:

Approval of Minutes: In regards to the October 2021 meeting minutes, Mr. Falcone moves to approve and Mr. Snipe seconds. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.

Approval of Issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness: In regards to the issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness in October 2021, Mr. Falcone moves to approve and Mr. Green seconds. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.

Other Business:

1. Ms. Quinn and the Commissioners discuss ongoing preservation projects.
2. Ms. Aguirre asks for a motion to adjourn until 1:00pm.
3. Mr. Falcone moves to adjourn.
4. Ms. Loysen seconds.
5. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and meeting is adjourned until 1:00pm.
6. Ms. Aguirre calls the meeting back to order at 1:01pm. She calls role and confirms that a quorum is still present before moving to Hearing and Action.

Adjourn:

Mr. Falcone moves to adjourn.

Mr. Green seconds.

Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote, all are in favor and meeting is adjourned.

Minutes of the agenda items follow.

Tito House
1817 Fifth Avenue
1818 Colwell Street

Historic Nomination

Owner:

James A. McGuire
Sal and Irene Williams

Ward: 3rd

Lot and Block: 11-E-93, 11-E-91

Nominator:

Brittany McDonald

Inspector:

Council District: 6th

Nominations Received: 10/1/21

National Register Status: **Listed:** **Eligible:**

Proposed Changes: Nomination for historic designation.

Discussion:

1. Ms. Quinn gives a short presentation on the property. She states that the nominator found that the property is significant under **Criterion 1**, location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity, **Criterion 2**, identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspect of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, **Criterion 3**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, **Criterion 7**, association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, and **Criterion 10**, unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh. She states that the property retains integrity and recommends that the Commission provide a determination of positive viability.
 2. Ms. Aguirre states that Criterion 8 was eliminated.
 3. Ms. Quinn states that is a criterion that would apply more in a district rather than an individual property. She states that only one criterion needs to be met for designation, so she is comfortable with her recommendation.
 4. Ms. Aguirre acknowledges for the record the many letters received in support of and the three against the nomination. She asks for clarification of ownership issues.
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5. Mr. Dash gives some background.
 6. Ms. Quinn gives additional background.
 7. Ms. Aguirre states that she would like to see more clarification on those issues before the next hearing. She asks for additional public comment.
 8. Ms. Susie Monteverde speaks in opposition to the nomination and in support of new development instead.
 9. Mr. Dax Parise speaks in opposition to the nomination.
 10. Mr. Tom Costello speaks as the representative for one of the owners, in opposition to the nomination.
 11. Ms. Michelle Faiello and Mr. Frank Faiello speak in opposition to the nomination.
 12. Ms. Fifi Sunseri speaks in opposition to the nomination.
 13. Mr. Francois Bitz speaks in opposition to the nomination and in support of new development instead.
 14. Mr. Patrick Riga speaks as the representative for one of the owners. He provides some background information on the ownership and speaks in opposition to the nomination.
 15. Mr. David Rotenstein speaks as the author of the nomination. He thanks the Commission and states that he is confident that they will act in accordance with municipal code and base their decision solely on historical significance and what is under their jurisdiction. He states that he is available to answer any questions.
 16. Ms. Aguirre closes public testimony with 19 statements of support and 10 statements opposed. She asks for comments and questions from Commissioners.
 17. Ms. Loysen asks Mr. Dash for more information of where the property is planning-wise.
 18. Mr. Dash gives so background, and states that development applications are now essentially on hold while the nomination is in process. He also brings up the difference in purview of the HRC and PC and that some of the comments brought forward in public testimony would be more a part of the discussion at PC.
 19. Ms. Aguirre states that what happens with this property will not change what development may happen on adjacent parcels
 20. Mr. Falcone states that discussion of potential development is beyond their purview.
 21. Ms. Aguirre advises the Commissioners to focus on the nomination and criteria in
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front of them.

22. Ms. Loysen asks if there is more information on the condition of the building.
 23. Ms. Quinn clarifies that condition and integrity are two different things. She states that this building retains integrity, and the condition doesn't look as bad as some that they have seen.
 24. Mr. Falcone adds that integrity means that it can still communicate its significance. He states that the family photos were helpful in that respect and he would consider it to have good to excellent integrity.
 25. Ms. Aguirre talks about the legacy of organized crime and the negative aspects it would have had on the community. At the same time, she states that history has both good and bad characters that have had an impact.
 26. Mr. Snipe states that designation could have an impact on future development depending on how much room is needed. He also has an issue with glorifying gangsters and organized crime and does not feel that it is appropriate to celebrate it.
 27. Mr. Falcone states that these are all good points. He states that some of the criteria are stronger than others, and he has reservations about some of them. He feels that the strongest criteria are 2 and 10. He states that he also has a concern that there needs to be more context brought into the discussion regarding the Italian-American immigrant experience. He agrees with Mr. Snipe that crime is a thorny issue to base the significance on, but he states that the transition from Prohibition to legal commerce is interesting and well-documented.
 28. Ms. Quinn states that several breweries are already listed, so there could be a potential for a thematic nomination on beer and alcohol in the future.
 29. Ms. Aguirre addresses the issue of crime brought up during public comment and states that she thinks that Uptown is on its way up and is excited for its future.
 30. Mr. Green states that this is an interesting case and agrees with what has been said so far. He states that it is not often that they receive a nomination with such a colorful history.
 31. Mr. Falcone states that he would be interested to hear more from the Italian-American community.
 32. The Commission discusses the criteria for significance one by one.
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Motion:

1. Mr. Dash moves to provide a determination of positive viability based on **Criteria 1 and 2**.
 2. Ms. Loysen seconds.
 3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; Ms. Aguirre, Ms. Loysen, and Mr. Dash are in favor, Mr. Snipe is opposed, and Mr. Falcone and Mr. Green abstain. Motion carries.
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HRC MINUTES – 2 FEBRUARY 2022- RECOMMENDATION



Minutes of the Meeting of February 2, 2022
Beginning at 12:30 PM

Held via Zoom and available to view at
<https://www.youtube.com/user/planpghvideo>

In Attendance:

<u>Members</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Andrew Dash	Sharon Spooner
Lucia M. Aguirre	Sarah Quinn
Richard Snipe	
Karen Loysen	
Matthew Falcone	
James Hill	
David Green	

Call to Order: Ms. Aguirre calls role and confirms that a quorum is present.

Old Business-None.

New Business:

Approval of Minutes: In regards to the December 2021 meeting minutes, Mr. Falcone moves to approve and Ms. Loysen seconds. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.

Approval of Issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness: In regards to the issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness in December 2021 and January 2022, Mr. Falcone moves to approve and Ms. Loysen seconds. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.

Other Business:

1. Mr. Dash gives an update on the Department of City Planning's new director, Ms. Karen Abrams, and his new role as Deputy Director.
2. Ms. Aguirre asks for a motion to adjourn until 1:00pm.
3. Mr. Snipe moves to adjourn.
4. Ms. Loysen seconds.
5. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and meeting is adjourned until 1:00pm.
6. Ms. Aguirre calls the meeting back to order at 1:01pm. She calls role and confirms that a quorum is still present before moving to Hearing and Action.

Directors Report:

Adjourn:

Mr. Green moves to adjourn.

Mr. Snipe seconds.

Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote, all are in favor and meeting is adjourned.

Minutes of the agenda items follow.

Tito House
1817 Fifth Avenue
1818 Colwell Street

Historic Nomination

Owner:

James A. McGuire
Sal and Irene Williams

Ward: 3rd

Lot and Block: 11-E-93, 11-E-91

Nominator:

Brittany McDonald

Inspector:

Council District: 6th

Nominations Received: 10/1/21

National Register Status: **Listed:** **Eligible:**

Proposed Changes: Nomination for historic designation.

Discussion:

1. Ms. Quinn gives a short presentation on the property. She states that the nominator found that the property is significant under **Criterion 1**, location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity, **Criterion 2**, identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspect of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, **Criterion 3**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, **Criterion 7**, association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, and **Criterion 10**, unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh. She states that the property retains integrity and recommends that the Commission provide a determination of positive viability based on **Criteria 3, 7, and 10**.
 2. Dr. David Rotenstein makes a presentation on behalf of the nominator, Dr. Brittany McDonald, supporting the nomination based on the criteria for nomination including **Criteria 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, and 10**.
 3. Ms. Aguirre asks for additional public comment. She acknowledges for the record the letters of support and in opposition received by email.
 4. Ms. Donna Brusco speaks as one of the grandchildren of the Tito family. She speaks in support of the nomination.
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5. Ms. Dev Meyers speaks in opposition to the nomination.
 6. Mr. Patrick Rega speaks as council for the owners of the Fifth Avenue property. He outlines the owners' opposition to the nomination.
 7. Ms. Melissa McSwigan speaks in support of the nomination.
 8. Ms. Jeanne McNutt speaks in support of the nomination.
 9. Ms. Rona L. Pekich speaks as a descendant of the family. She speaks in support of the nomination.
 10. Ms. Aguirre asks for additional public comment; there is none. She asks for comments and questions from Commissioners.
 11. Mr. Hill asks if the buildings can be voted on separately.
 12. Ms. Quinn clarifies that the nomination is for a site, which includes both buildings.
 13. Mr. Hill states that the story is compelling, but overall he is not sure if he agrees that the nomination criteria apply. He addresses Criterion 3 and states that it is true that the house is the only home of that nature left on the part of Fifth Avenue. He states that he could also see a state historical marker commemorating the story rather than designation of the whole site.
 14. Ms. Loysen agrees that the story is compelling, and wonders if the significance is the story or the building.
 15. Ms. Quinn clarifies that if the story can be connected to the building, than the building is significant, which is part of the National Park Services' criteria.
 16. Mr. Green states that he doesn't have anything to add at this time.
 17. Mr. Falcone states that he has a lot of concerns about the nomination and does not feel that he is in a place to support it. He states that he understands Ms. Loysen's comments about the story, and he states that this story involves both positive aspects of the community and also negative aspects, such as the crime that would have had an effect on the community that would not always have been positive. He states that his family is not from Pittsburgh but is Italian, and he can recall stories of people in the neighborhood that had very bad experiences with what they are addressing today as numbers running and bootlegging but what was experienced as extortion and ugliness. He states that he is not comfortable with moving the nomination forward without that being addressed as part of the story. He also states that they have heard a lot of support for the nomination, but he feels that the voice of an Italian-American group is missing from the discussion.
 18. Mr. Snipe states that he did listen intently to the testimony that was given today. He agrees that it is a good story, but states that a lot of the story has not been told. He states that he was offended by the presenter's use of Black history to purify the
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Tito history, which he feels is not history to be honored. He states that he cannot support the nomination.

19. Ms. Aguirre states that she has read everything that has been submitted and presented. She agrees that it is a very colorful history, which comes through in the 120 page nomination. She states that it outlines aspects of local and American history that were new to her. She states that she would like to see the building preserved to tell the story rather than just a historic marker, which is something that is put up when the historic fabric is already gone. She also supports the comments of Mr. Falcone and Mr. Snipe, as she initially saw the nomination as emphasizing the benefits of the Tito family to the Italian-American community, potentially on the backs of the African-American community. She also addresses the organized crime aspect and how that may have affected members of the community that were not involved. She states that they have received additional information on those aspects today, as requested at the first hearing in November.
 20. Ms. Loysen states that she is concerned about how this nomination fits into the community's plans for development.
 21. Ms. Aguirre addresses comments that were made about development and properties that have been left to deteriorate in order to sell later. She states that there have been a lot of things torn down, and she feels that this is an opportunity to preserve some of the history of the neighborhood. She feels that the complicated history of the property will help diversify the city's landmarks while telling a story that adds richness and depth to the city as a whole. She also wants the Commission to consider the ten Criteria for Designation as part of the discussion. She states that for her, Criteria 2, 7, and 10 are the strongest, with other Criteria are possibilities.
 22. Ms. Loysen agrees that the building is significant for the story and not for the architecture of the building.
 23. Mr. Hill states that after the discussion of the Criteria, he could agree with Criterion 10 but is leaning towards no for the rest.
 24. Mr. Falcone states that with his concerns about the nomination he can't find any of the Criteria applicable or make a positive recommendation to City Council.
 25. Mr. Snipe agrees that he cannot support any of the Criteria or the nomination.
 26. Mr. Green states that he will be abstaining.
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Motion:

1. Mr. Snipe moves to **not provide** a positive recommendation to City Council.
 2. Mr. Falcone seconds.
 3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; Mr. Falcone, Mr. Hill, Ms. Loysen, and Mr. Snipe are in favor, Mr. Green abstains and Ms. Aguirre is opposed. Motion carries.
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PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES –8 FEBRUARY 2022- RECOMMENDATION

GUIDANCE PROVIDED BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNER

1101.03 (g) The City Planning Commission shall consider effects of designation on adjoining properties and surrounding neighborhoods within the framework of established planning, development and land use objectives for the City of Pittsburgh.

The Planning Commission adopted the EcoInnovation District Plan in September 2017 creating the first formally adopted neighborhood plan in the City of Pittsburgh. When the Planning Commission adopts a neighborhood plan, it is adopting the plan's vision statement, goals, and policies. Specific projects and programs are not formally adopted. At your request, staff have pulled the plan language that is relevant to existing structures.

Vision Statement

The adopted vision statement makes no explicit reference to existing buildings.

Goals

Adopted language: "E. Identity. Reinforce Uptown's unique character by protecting and reusing existing buildings whenever possible, promoting excellence in design for new structures and expanding local arts and community events."

Policies

Adopted language: "1.3. Build on Uptown/West Oakland's character and identify."

Supporting projects and programs (not formally adopted):

- "Preserve the community's historic character (pg. 60): Existing buildings are essential to retaining what keeps Uptown unique. Too many, unfortunately, have been demolished either out of neglect or a desire to reuse the property for surface parking. The Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) enacted by the City placed a moratorium on demolition of existing buildings in the community. The new zoning proposed for Uptown recognizes the need to preserve these structures by: 1) Requiring a formal review and engineering study to determine the need for any demolition and; 2) Providing incentives to preserve structures with new development by offering additional density."

Implementation of the plan through Zoning Code amendments:

The zoning code amendments proposed in the plan were presented to Planning Commission with the plan. You recommended the amendments on to City Council and the Mayor Office who signed them into law by December 2017. These zoning code amendments made permanent the limitations on demolition that had been in effect through the Uptown Interim Planning Overlay District, and created a height bonus to incentivize the reuse of buildings in whole or in part through the Performance Points System.

City of Pittsburgh
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2022 2:00pm, Meeting called to order by Chairwoman Christine Mondor

In Attendance

Chairwoman Christine Mondor
 Vice Chairwoman LaShawn Burton-Faulk
 Secretary, Becky Mingo

Jennifer Askey
 Sabina Deitrick
 Dina (Free) Blackwell
 Holly Dick
 Rachel O-Neill

Staff Present

Corey Layman, Zoning Administrator
 Andrew Dash, Director of City Planning
 Kate Rakus, Principal Planner
 Svetlana Ipatova, Recording Secretary

Anne Kramer
 William Gregory
 Kathleen Oldrey
 Kevin Kunak
 Sarah Quinn
 Daniel Schepcke

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3.DCP-LOT-2022-00107, Broadhead Fording Road, Major Consolidation 1, Fairywood	5
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A. Approval of Minutes

On motion moved by Ms. Burton-Faulk and seconded by Ms. Mingo, the minutes of the January 25, 2022 meeting are approved.

B. Correspondence (See Attachment B)

The Commission is in receipt of the following correspondence:

DCP-ZDR-2021-13047 – 1163 Murray Hill Avenue

- Cliff Levine

DCP-ZDR-2021-05875 - 5941 Penn Avenue

2. DCP-HN-2021-01137 1817 5th Ave and 1818 Colwell St Historic Nomination Tito House Uptown Neighborhood
 Ms. Quinn made presentation in accordance with the attached staff report.
 Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Public.

Mr. Tom Castello, attorney for house owner, informed that his client is in opposition of the proposed nomination and requested to deny it.
 Dr. Brittany McDonald, Uptown resident and application nominator, and representative of Uptown Partners presented site photos, explained criteria for historic nomination, presented the ECO Innovation District plan.
 Ms. McDonald informed that to many historical structures already demolished, subject building was abandoned for 20 years.

Ms. Nicole McGuire, property owner, stated in opposition of nomination.
 Dr. David Rotenstein, historical expert, stated about his research, and underlined building uniqueness, structure meets 7 for 8 criteria for nomination.
 Ms. Dev Meyers informed PC that she hold degree in American History, and provided some site information.
 Mr. Patrick Rega, owner representative, explained about current property conditions, not buyable for rehabilitation, cost of rehabilitation is very high.
 Ms. Mellisa McSwigen supported nomination.
 Mr. Rob Pfaffmann, architect, also supported proposed nomination.
 Ms. Jeanne McNutt stated in favor of nomination.

Chairwoman Mondor asked for questions and comments from the Commissioners.

Ms. Dick suggested preserving historical structures.
 Ms. Burton –Faulk supported Dr. McDonald, asked property owners why no site maintenance was provided.
 Ms. Mondor stated in support of application.
 Ms. Mingo agreed that building should be remain.
 Ms. Blackwell also agreed with other Commissioners.

MOTION:

That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh provides a positive recommendation to City Council for the nomination of .DCP-HN-2021-01137 1817 5th Ave and 1818 Colwell St for listing as a City-designated historic site.

MOVED BY: Ms. Burton-Faulk SECONDED BY: Ms. Blackwell
 IN FAVOR: Dick, Blackwell, Burton-Faulk, Deitrick, Mingo, Mondor, Askey, O'Neill
 RECUSED:
 OPPOSED:
 ABSTAINED:
MOTION CARRIED

D. Plan of Lots