Tito-Mecca-Zizza House
1817 Fifth Avenue and 1818 Colwell Street
City of Pittsburgh Historic Site Nomination

Report by David S. Rotenstein, PhD
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
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November 2021
INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY HISTORIC NOMINATION FORM

Fee Schedule
Please make check payable to Treasurer, City of Pittsburgh
Individual Landmark Nomination: $100.00
District Nomination: $250.00

1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY:
   Tito-Mecca-Zizza House

2. CURRENT NAME OF PROPERTY:
   1817 Fifth Avenue

3. LOCATION
   a. Street: 1817 Fifth Avenue and 1818 Colwell Street
   b. City, State, Zip Code: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15219
   c. Neighborhood: Crawford-Roberts (Uptown)

4. OWNERSHIP
   d. Owner(s): See Addendum Item No. 4
   e. Street:
   f. City, State, Zip Code: Phone: ( )

5. CLASSIFICATION AND USE – Check all that apply
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Current Use:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>X Private – home</td>
<td>Vacant/Abandoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Place of religious worship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HRC Staff Use Only

Date Received: Parcel No.: Ward: Zoning Classification: Bldg. Inspector: Council District:
6. **NOMINATED BY:**
   a. Name: Brittany McDonald
   b. Street: 1800 Fifth Avenue #L12
   c. City, State, Zip: Pittsburgh, PA 15219
   d. Phone: (412) 401-1972 Email: bmcdonald@uptownpartners.org

7. **DESCRIPTION**
   Provide a narrative description of the structure, district, site, or object. If it has been altered over time, indicate the date(s) and nature of the alteration(s). (Attach additional pages as needed)
   
   *If Known:*
   a. Year Built: See Addendum Item No. 7
   b. Architectural Style: 
   c. Architect/BUILDER:  

   Narrative: 

7. **HISTORY**
   Provide a history of the structure, district, site, or object. Include a bibliography of sources consulted. (Attach additional pages as needed.) Include copies of relevant source materials with the nomination form (see Number 11).

   Narrative: See Addendum Item No. 8

9. **SIGNIFICANCE**
   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. Describe how the structure, district, site, or object meets one or more of these criteria and complete a narrative discussing in detail each area of significance. (Attach additional pages as needed)

   The structure, building, site, district, object is significant because of (check all that apply):

   1. [X] Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
   2. [X] Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
   3. [X] Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
   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;
   5. [ ] Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;
6. Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;

7. Its 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;

8. Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;

9. Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or

10. Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

**Narrative:** See Addendum Item No. 9

**10. INTEGRITY**

In addition, the ordinance specifies that “Any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration”. (Attach additional pages as needed)

**Narrative:** See Addendum Item No. 10

**11. NOTIFICATION/CONSENT OF PROPERTY OWNER(S)**

**1.3(a)(2) Community information process.**

Preceding submission of a nomination form for a District, the Historic Review Commission shall conduct at least one (1) public information meeting within or near the boundaries of the proposed district, which shall include at least one (1) member of the Department of City Planning and one (1) Commission member, to discuss the possible effects of designation. Notice shall be given to the owners of property in the proposed district in accordance with Section 1.3(b) below. The final public information meeting shall be held no more than six months before the nomination form is submitted.

**1.3(a)(1)(a) Subsection F.**

In the case of a nomination as a Historic District, by community-based organizations or by any individual, but in either event the nomination shall be accompanied by a petition signed by the owners of record of twenty-five (25) percent of the properties within the boundaries of the proposed District.

- Please attach documentation of your efforts to gain property owner’s consent.

**The nomination of any religious property shall be accompanied by a signed letter of consent from the property’s owner.**
12. PHOTO LOGS: Please Attach

13. BIBLIOGRAPHY: Please Attach

14. NOMINATION FORM PREPARED BY:
   a. Name: David S. Rotenstein, PhD
   b. Street: 311 Pasadena Dr. S.
   c. City, State, Zip: Pittsburgh, PA 15215
   d. Phone: (412) 328-3830     Email: david.rotenstein@earthlink.net
   e. Signature: [Signature]

   David S. Rotenstein, PhD
   311 Pasadena Dr. S.
   Pittsburgh, PA 15215
   412 328-3830
david.rotenstein@earthlink.net
HISTORIC NOMINATION – INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THE NOMINATION FORM

1. Indicate the original name of the property if it is currently known by a different name; e.g. Union Station.

2. Indicate the current name of the property.

3. Indicate the street address for the property. For districts, attach a separate sheet listing the street address of each property included in the nomination and a clear street map of the area showing the boundaries of the proposed district.

4. Indicate the owner of the property and his or her mailing address. For districts, attach a separate sheet listing the owner of each property and his or her mailing address.

5. Check the classification as indicated.
   a. **“Historic Structure”** means anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires directly or indirectly, a permanent location on the land, including walks, fences, signs, steps and sidewalks at which events that made a significant contribution to national, state or local history occurred or which involved a close association with the lives of people of nations, state or local significance; or an outstanding example of a period, style, architectural movement, or method of construction; or one of the last surviving works of a pioneer architect, builder or designer; or one of the last survivors of a particular style or period of construction.

   b. **“Historic District”** means a defined territorial division of land which shall include more than one (1) contiguous or related parcels of property, specifically identified by separate resolution, at which events occurred that made a significant contribution to national, state, or local history, or which contains more than one historic structure or historic landmarks, or which contains groups, rows or sets of structures or landmarks, or which contains an aggregate example of a period, style, architectural movements or method of construction, providing distinguishing characteristics of the architectural type or architectural period it represents.

   c. **“Historic Site”** means the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure whether standing, ruined or vanished, where the location itself maintains historical or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structures.

   d. **“Historic Object”** means a material thing of historic significance for functional, aesthetic cultural or scientific reasons that may be, by nature or design, moveable yet related to a specific setting or environment.

6. Indicate the person(s) responsible for the nomination. Please note: According to the Historic Preservation Ordinance:
“Nomination of an area, property, site, or object for consideration and designation as a Historic Structure, Historic District, Historic Site, or Historic Object may be submitted to the Historic Review Commission by any of the following:

a. The Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh
b. A Member of the Historic Review Commission
c. A Member of the City Planning Commission
d. A Member of the Pittsburgh City Council
e. The Owner of Record or any person residing in the City of Pittsburgh for at least one year (for the nomination of a Historic Structure, Site or Object)
f. A signed petition of 25% of the owners of record (for the nomination of a Historic District)

7. Write a physical description of the nominated property or district. Include the following information as applicable:
   - architectural style(s)
   - arrangement of architectural elements
   - building materials
   - method(s) of construction
   - visual character
   - street pattern
   - density
   - type and arrangement of buildings
   - topography
   - history of the development of the area

8. Provide a narrative history of the structure, district, site, or object. Include the following information when available:
   - History of the development of the area;
   - Circumstances which brought the structure, district, site, or object into being;
   - Biographical information on architects, builders, developers, artisans, planners, or others who created or contributed to the structure, district, site, or object;
   - Contextual background on building type(s) and/or style(s);
   - Importance of the structure, district, site, or object in the larger community over the course of its existence.
   - Include a bibliography of all sources consulted at the end. Where historical information is uncertain or disputed, reference sources in the text.

9. Listed below are the categories and criteria for historic designation as set forth in the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance. Describe in detail how the structure, district, site, or object meets one or more of the criteria. According to that legislation in Section 1.4 of the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance, Criteria for Designation, a building must meet at least one of the following criteria in order to be designated:

   1. Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
   2. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
   3. Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
   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;
5. Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;

6. Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;

7. Its 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;

8. Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;

9. Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or

10. Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

10. In addition, the ordinance specifies that “Any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.”

11. The nomination must be accompanied by evidence that the nominator has made a good-faith effort to communicate his or her interest in the historic designation of this landmark or district to the owner(s) of these properties. Describe how this was done, and attach evidence that the owner(s) of the nominated landmark or of the properties within the nominated district have been informed of the nomination. This may include a copy of a notification letter with a mailing list, a letter confirming phone calls, or a petition signed by affected property owners.

12. Clear photographs of the nominated buildings or districts should accompany the nomination form. The applicant shall include photographs of all elevations of an individual building and its setting, or the front elevation of each building in a district. In the case of closely spaced buildings or rowhouses, several buildings may be included in one photograph. Each photograph must be labeled with the street address of the building(s) and the month and year the photograph was taken.

13. Copies of major supporting documents should accompany the nomination form. Such documents may include, but are not limited to:

- historic photographs;
- historic and contemporary maps;
- historic or contemporary texts describing the subject property or district;
- historic or contemporary texts describing people, places, or events that comprise the historic context of the subject property or district.
- Oversized materials (such as architectural drawings) and materials too fragile to copy may be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE: It is the responsibility of the nominator to provide the Historic Review Commission and its Staff with information sufficient to fairly evaluate the nomination. Incomplete nomination forms will not be accepted. Fee must be included. Nominations must be submitted in both electronic and hard-copy format.
CHECKLIST: INSERT NAME OF PROPERTY HERE

☑️ #1-6 Nomination Form: Address, Ownership, Classification, Nominator Info.

☑️ #7: Description

☑️ #8: History

☑️ #9: Significance

☑️ #10 Integrity

☒ #11 Consent of Property Owners

☑️ #12 Photographs of Property: numbered and labeled

☑️ #13 List of Supporting Documents

☑️ Fee

☑️ Hard-Copy nomination

☑️ Electronic nomination (Word Format for text).
TITO-MECCA-ZIZZA HOUSE DESIGNATION FORM ADDENDUM ITEMS

ADDENDUM ITEM 4 (OWNERSHIP)

1817 Fifth Avenue
Tax Parcel No.: 0011-E-00093-0000-00
Owner: James A. McGuire, P.O. Box 672146, Houston, Texas, 77267-2146

1818 Colwell Street
Tax Parcel No.: 0011-E-00091-0000-00
Owner: Sal and Irene Williams, 1 Swallow Hill Road, Carnegie, Pennsylvania, 15106-3028

ADDENDUM ITEM 7 (DESCRIPTION)

Two parcels comprise this historic site: 1817 Fifth Avenue and 1818 Colwell Street. The site is bounded by Fifth Avenue on the south and Colwell Street on the north. Together, the parcels represent the original 1817 Fifth Avenue parcel, a lot measuring 45 by 190 feet. The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue is situated in the center of the lot and the building at 1818 Colwell Street has a footprint that occupies the entire parcel (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Tito-Mecca-Zizza House site plan. Adapted from an Allegheny County GIS base map.
1817 Fifth Avenue
Year Built: c. 1884
Architectural Style: Queen Anne and Italian Renaissance
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Description (see Photos 1-16):

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 (See Photos 31-32); 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 (See Photo 7). Prior to 1936, the rear yard extended to Colwell Street. It currently ends at a low concrete wall marking the boundary.

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 (Photo 27).

The main floor included a vestibule in the southwest corner that led to a hall (Photo 28). 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.1

The living room/sitting room occupied much of the front of the house and it included a fireplace with a “marbleized” pattern.2 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 (Photo 29).

1818 Colwell
Year Built: 1922
Architectural Style: Vernacular/No Style
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Description (see Photos 17-26):

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

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1 Rona Peckich, Telephone Interview with David S. Rotenstein, June 7, 2021.
2 Donna Brusco, Telephone Interview with David S. Rotenstein, August 11, 2021.
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.
ADDENDUM ITEM 8 (HISTORY)

Introduction

Joe Tito (Figure 2) was a Pittsburgh entrepreneur. He was born in Pittsburgh soon after his family arrived here in the late 1880s. In the 1920s, Tito struck up a friendship and business partnership with another Hill District entrepreneur: William A. “Gus” Greenlee. Tito and Greenlee’s relationship was so close that Greenlee’s associates and surviving relatives told historians that they were like family, “brothers.” Greenlee was building an entertainment and sports empire with restaurants, nightclubs, and sports promotion. One of Greenlee’s best-known businesses, the Crawford Grill No. 2, is a beloved Pittsburgh landmark that is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1931, Greenlee bought a struggling sandlot baseball team, the Pittsburgh Crawfords. He quickly turned it into a Negro Leagues powerhouse. Joe Tito, a white Italian-American, became an officer in the Pittsburgh Crawfords organization: its vice president. Tito also became an officer and significant stock owner in the company formed to build and manage the Hill District’s Greenlee Field, often described by historians as the nation’s first Black-owned professional sports stadium.

Joe Tito’s former home at 1817 Fifth Avenue and the associated brick warehouse/garage building at 1818 Colwell Street are significant under multiple criteria for Historic Designation as a City of Pittsburgh historic site. The buildings are significant for their architecture and for their associations with individuals and events important in local Pittsburgh history, regional and state history, and national history. This section includes a contextualizing narrative documenting the site’s history and individual sub-sections that address each of the Criteria for Designation (§1101.04) that apply to the site. This evaluation is summarized in the following section (Table 1).

1817 Fifth Avenue, 1865 to 1922

The site is located in Pittsburgh’s Uptown neighborhood. Uptown is a narrow part of Pittsburgh sandwiched between Downtown, the Hill District, Soho, and Bluff. Physically, the site is located on the north side of Fifth Avenue and it falls within the Crawford-Roberts neighborhood.3 Uptown is part of what is generally known as the “Greater Hill District” and it is divided into four zones: The Bluff, Central Uptown, Soho, and Fifth and Forbes.4

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Its history as a distinct community dates to the first decade of the twentieth century and the creation of an Uptown Board of Trade. To mitigate the impacts of transportation improvements downtown that were spilling into the Fifth Avenue corridor, a diverse group of real estate entrepreneurs and other businesspersons formed the organization. “The Uptown Board of Trade is one of the most cosmopolitan public organizations in the city, its membership embracing many of the most prominent business men of all races and nationalities in that section,” wrote the Pittsburgh Press in 1910. 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 (Figure 3). 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 (Figure 4). Appendix 1 contains a summary of real estate transactions involving the property since 1865.

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Barnett McCracken and his wife, Elizabeth, appear to have owned the property when the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue was built (Figure 5). 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.

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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 (Figure 6).

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9 “Gathered to Rest,” The Pittsburgh Press, January 8, 1898.
10 The Pittsburgh Press, August 15, 1896.
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 (see Appendix 1 for a summary of transfers). 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.¹¹

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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, 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 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 (Figure 7).

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13 1894 Pittsburgh City Directory; Allegheny County Deed Book Vol. 941, p. 443.
14 U.S. Census, 1900 Population Schedules.
16 Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, 72.
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.17 “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.”18 At least one city directory identified Raphael Tito’s employer as the Sunlight Illuminating Company.19

Census schedules and city directories offer only a small window into the personal and economic lives of the Titos. “They were hucksters,” Clara Mecca Napoleon, Joe Tito’s granddaughter and

18 Tarr, 317.
19 1917 Pittsburgh City Directory.
niece told anyone who asked about her grandfather and great-uncles. “And a huckster in those days were people that went around selling vegetables.”

In 1910, Joe (Figure 8) and Frank, the oldest of the children, told census enumerators that they were hucksters working for themselves. The brothers lived with their parents and six siblings in the house that Raphael built at 18 Allequippa Street behind the original 28 Gazzam Street home.

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 (Figure 9).

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20 Peckich, Interview.
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.\(^{23}\) 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.\(^{24}\) The dispute over the seized trucks spanned nearly four years and in 1927 a federal judge vacated the judgements against the Titos and others.\(^{25}\)

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.\(^{26}\) 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.\(^{27}\)

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 Guiseppe 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.\(^{28}\)

\(^{23}\) “145 Stills Seized, 40 Barrels of Beer Taken,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 14, 1922.
\(^{24}\) “Owner Seeks Release of Trucks,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 17, 1922.
\(^{25}\) “Judge Orders Judgements on $12,000 Truck Bonds Stayed,” Pittsburgh Daily Post, June 23, 1927.
\(^{26}\) “Dry Violator Suspects Held Under $1,000 Bail,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 11, 1923.
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 (Figure 10).

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 became

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30 “Racket King Quizzed on Volpes,” Pittsburgh Sun-Telegaph, August 2, 1932.
32 “Three Grilled in Volpe Case.”
33 Indictment, Commonwealth vs. Robert Tito and Ralph Tito, Court of Quarter Sessions, No. 1108 February 1925. Allegheny County Courthouse. The arrests and prosecution were not reported in Pittsburgh newspapers. The case was dismissed for lack of evidence.
entrenched in the Hill District, including Uptown. These activities comprised a significant informal economy in Pittsburgh and other places that provided thousands of jobs to immigrants from Europe and Blacks arriving from the South in the Great Migration. Informal vice economies offered economic and social opportunities to groups that faced anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, and anti-Catholicism. Unable to land good jobs in Pittsburgh’s mills, buy and rent homes with racial and ethnic deed covenants attached to them, join prestigious social and civic organizations, and achieve the same levels of economic and social success open to other Pittsburgh residents, Pittsburgh’s early racketeers made their own parallel society in vice.

By the 1960s, organized crime had penetrated all levels of Pittsburgh society, corrupting law enforcement officers, rending rifts in families, and driving people unable to make a living into activities that society defined as “criminal.” Between 1920 and 1980, many of Pittsburgh’s most notable and respectable citizens had engaged in or been implicated in organized crime activities. The Hill District’s powerful Alderman, John Verona, was implicated in multiple acts of violence and as profiting from and directing bootlegging and gambling operations. David Lawrence similarly was implicated, but never prosecuted, in political corruption tied to the city’s lucrative gambling rackets. And finally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation compiled substantial testimony and evidence that document Pittsburgh Steelers founder Art Rooney built his sports empire in numbers gambling, sports betting, and slot machines. “Art Rooney, he was in with them guys on the North Side,” aging racketeer Sam Solomon told University of Pittsburgh historian Rob Ruck in a 1980 oral history interview. “They had the bulk of the numbers on the North Side.”

Law enforcement records document federal and state prosecutions against high-ranking Pittsburgh police officials and many politicians. Two of the most famous episodes unraveled in the late 1950s when the city’s former vice-squad leader and then-current Assistant Police Superintendent Lawrence Maloney was arrested and tried for corruption and income tax evasion. The day in 1974 that a federal grand jury indicted Allegheny County District Attorney Robert Duggan, the county’s top law enforcement died by gunshot on his family’s estate — speculation still swirls as to whether his death was a hunting accident or suicide.

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.

36 Pittsburgh’s long history as a “wide-open city” with a deeply entrenched organized crime culture is well documented in multiple Pennsylvania Crime Commission reports, contemporary press accounts, and Benjamin Haylallar’s comprehensive University of Pittsburgh PhD dissertation on the history of political corruption and organized crime in the city.
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.

No records appear to survive that document the forces that drove several Tito members into the city’s informal economies. Many of Pittsburgh’s Italian immigrant families found secure and stable industrial jobs and others established successful and dynastic entrepreneurial businesses — markets, restaurants, service firms, etc. Some found themselves participating in and working in and controlling entities in the economic sectors that we now call syndicated and organized crime: bootlegging, extortion, and gambling. Others, like McKeesport market owner Paulo Lomeo who made headlines in 1945 during a nationally-covered labor strike here, resisted sometimes violent pressure to engage in unlawful and corrupt activities. Pittsburgh’s Jews, Irish, Syrian, and Irish immigrants all experienced the same forces and all had families working on both sides of the law as well as in the gray areas that enabled and supported the city’s informal vice economies.

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39 “Sleuths Fail to Bare New Volpe Clues,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 8, 1932.


Despite extensive research in Allegheny County criminal and civil court records, newspapers, and interviews with Tito family members, no direct evidence has surfaced connecting family patriarch Raphael Tito to the informal economies that his sons embraced. In the years bracketing the turn of the twentieth century, Pittsburgh had active Italian and Sicilian criminal networks that thrived by extorting protection money from successful Italian entrepreneurs and professionals. Frequently known as the “Black Hand,” these loosely organized groups were implicated in many extortion plots, bombings, kidnappings, and other violent acts in Pittsburgh and throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania.\(^\text{42}\)

Even though those links are lost, like the direct route that led Joe and his brothers to embark on a career path that took from bootlegging to become successful and influential brewery owners, key questions remain about Raphael’s capacities to accumulate the wealth necessary to buy and develop the family’s Gazzam Hill “colony.” Surviving records show the elder Tito as a lamp-lighting company employee, not an owner or manager. Yet, while supporting a quickly growing family with a wife who did not work, Raphael was able to buy multiple Gazzam Hill lots and build homes in them. After his two sons, Robert and Ralph, were indicted and arrested in 1929, on six counts of manufacturing, processing, selling, and transporting liquor, Raphael used his house at 7 Allequippa Street to secure the bond. It was a house valued at $17,000, free from any mortgage encumbrances, and one which he indicated in the bail document that he “built himself.”\(^\text{43}\)

Though there are no known reports implicating Raphael Tito in Black Hand activities, his sudden rise from immigrant with meager means raises important questions. Pittsburgh newspapers did report on at least one Black Hand-related action involving someone living in Tito’s original Soho home at 28 Gazzam Street. In 1913, Vincent Pacillo received a letter demanding that $1,000 be left near a local bridge. If Pacillo didn’t comply, the letter’s author threatened that “his family would be murdered.” The brief newspaper report added, “The police think the organization a rival of the black hand.”\(^\text{44}\) The \textit{Pittsburgh Press} elaborated on the extortion scheme and the extortion letter, which was penned in Italian: “Read and pay attention: We ask for $1,000. If you don’t execute our command we will kill you and your family We will blow up your house and will take your wife and children.”\(^\text{45}\)

Gaetano Catena (1878-1970) was another Italian immigrant living at 28 Gazzam Street in 1913. Catena arrived in the United States in 1907 and settled in Pittsburgh. Throughout his life, Catena worked at a variety of jobs, mostly as a steel industry laborer, according to surviving documents. In addition to living in one of Raphael Tito’s Gazzam Hill homes, Catena had something else in common with the elder Tito: the same year as the Black Hand threat against Pacillo, Gaetano and his wife had a baby girl who was born October 2, 1913. Her birth certificate notes that Gaetano Catena worked as a “street lamp lighter” — the same as Raphael Tito.\(^\text{46}\)

\(^{43}\) Commonwealth vs. Robert Tito and Ralph Tito, Allegheny County Court of Quarter Sessions No. 1108, February 1929 Term.
\(^{44}\) \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Post}, August 9, 1913.
\(^{45}\) \textit{The Pittsburgh Press}, August 9, 1913. No additional information appears to survive that further identifies the victim, Vincent Pacillo.
The Catenas raised a large family in their Gazzam Hill homes (first, at 28 Gazzam Street; later, 15 Allequippa Street and 5 Allequippa Street). No ties beyond housing appear to connect Gaetano Catena and Raphael Tito and his sons. Yet, in 1939, one of Catena’s daughters (Harriett) married Richard DiPippa. Richard DiPippa was Rocco and Virginia DiPippa’s son. Rocco DiPippa is best known among Pittsburgh crime history buffs by his longtime alias: Roxie Long. Between 1917 and his death in 1983, Roxie Long racked up a stunning array of state and federal convictions ranging from petty theft to bootlegging, gambling, extortion, and hijacking. In 1922, his extradition from France made international headlines. DiPippa (Long)’s arrest and conviction record earned him the nickname Pittsburgh’s most arrested man.\textsuperscript{47} Five years after they married, Richard and Harriett DiPippa petitioned the Allegheny Court of Common Pleas to legally change their names from DiPippa to Long.\textsuperscript{48}

The research presented in this overview of the history of organized and syndicated crime in Pittsburgh is only a snapshot into the complex social and economic conditions that existed here in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Joe Tito and his family played important roles in these chapters that historian Benjamin Hayllar described as integral to Pittsburgh’s twentieth century development politically, economically, and socially.\textsuperscript{49} It’s a history that makes some people uncomfortable reading and discussing. Yet, as leading Italian-American history and culture scholar Joseph Sciorra wrote, it’s an essential part of Italian-American history and American history writ large.\textsuperscript{50} In his letter supporting this designation nomination, Sciorra wrote, “The Tito-Mecca-Zizza House nomination asks us all to pay close attention to the complicated, messy, and even nefarious aspects of our collective history that should not be ignored or swept under the rug.”\textsuperscript{51} The important, yet uncomfortable histories captured in the Tito family story are something that Joe Tito’s descendants want told widely and honestly.\textsuperscript{52}

**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


\textsuperscript{48} *The Pittsburgh Press*, August 16, 1944.

\textsuperscript{49} Hayllar, The Accommodation.


\textsuperscript{51} Joseph Sciorra, letter to Lucia M. Aguirre, Chairperson, Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission, November 1, 2021. Letter included in nomination case record.

\textsuperscript{52} Many Tito descendants submitted support letters ahead of the November 3, 2021, HRC meeting.
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; Figure 11) 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 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

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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.\footnote{Commonwealth vs. William A. Greenlee, Court of Quarter Sessions No. 135 March Session 1929. Allegheny County Courthouse. The arrest was not reported in newspapers.}

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.\footnote{Hayllar, “The Accommodation.”}

Numbers Gambling


\begin{quote}
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
\end{quote}
themselves the necessaries of life to gamble away their meagre income with small chance of getting any return.\textsuperscript{62}

DuBois’s observations about Philadelphia may be applied to most U.S. cities, including Pittsburgh, at the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{63}

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.\textsuperscript{64} 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 on the informal economies of vice, the Hill District became the city’s leading “vice resort.”\textsuperscript{65} 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.”\textsuperscript{66}

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.\textsuperscript{67}

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.\textsuperscript{68} “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, \textit{Wylie Avenue Days}.\textsuperscript{69} 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.\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{62} Du Bois, 265.
\textsuperscript{66} Pittler, “The Hill District in Pittsburgh-A Study in Succession,” 53.
\textsuperscript{67} Vaz, \textit{Running the Numbers}; White et al., \textit{Playing the Numbers}.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Wylie Avenue Days}, videorecording (WQED Communications, 1991).
\end{flushleft}
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.71 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.72 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.”73

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.”74 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.”75 Ruck also interviewed Greenlee’s brother, Dr. Charles Greenlee. “The Titos and Gus were just as tight as brother and sister,” he recalled.76

Tito is one of the whites some 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.”77 It was a pattern repeated in cities throughout the United States starting in the early 1930s.78

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72 The Colin Powell story is recounted in Vaz, Running the Numbers, 1; Robert Johnson’s surviving sister told the story about her mother’s numbers hit in response to a question I asked during a recent webinar, Annye C. Anderson, Preston Lauterbach, and Augusta Palmer, “Perspectives on the Music and Life of Blues Legend Robert Johnson” (Webinar, St. Francis College, April 20, 2021). “College Girls’ Party Started Numbers Probe: $80 Hit Provided the Money for Women’s College Spread,” Baltimore Afro-American, February 8, 1936.
73 Ulf Hannerz, Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), 144.
75 Charles “Teenie” Harris, Interview, interview by Rob Ruck, February 23, 1981.
76 Charles Greenlee, Interview, interview by Rob Ruck, June 18, 1980, History of Black Sport Oral History Collection, University of Pittsburgh Archives.
that remain now have tough Italians as operators or as partners, ringing up the cash,” the magazine wrote.\textsuperscript{79}

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.\textsuperscript{80}

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.\textsuperscript{81} 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).\textsuperscript{82} It was — and is — part of Pittsburgh’s cultural DNA.

**Greenlee Field**

Greenlee since the 1920s had been involved in professional sports. He promoted boxing events and managed boxers. He is perhaps best known for his role as a team owner and leader in Negro Leagues baseball. Greenlee in 1931 bought the Pittsburgh Crawfords, a struggling and disorganized sandlot team based in the Hill District. The team played its earliest games by renting Ammons Field on Bedford Avenue and Oakland’s Forbes Field.\textsuperscript{83}

According to Pittsburgh Courier columnist John Clark, Greenlee began looking for a site to build his own ballfield in the fall of 1931.\textsuperscript{84} Legal records, however, contradict the Greenlee Field origin legend that appears to begin with Clark’s 1938 article. Greenlee appears to have started searching in the summer of 1931, not long after the Crawfords began their first season under his ownership. Though Greenlee owned the team, he collaborated with a corporate entity to buy the land, build the stadium, and manage the property. That entity was called the Bedford Land Corporation. On July 1, 1931, the Entress Brick Company leased its Bedford Avenue property between the Lincoln Cemetery and the Municipal Hospital to the Bedford Land Corporation in exchange for $12 annual rent and $12,000 in Bedford Land Corporation stock. The lease was signed by brick company president John F. Murphy and Bedford Land Corporation treasurer Joe

\textsuperscript{79} “War on Numbers Racket Kings,” *Color*, June 1951, 32.
\textsuperscript{80} Greenlee Interview.
\textsuperscript{81} Rob Ruck, Maggie Jones Patterson, and Michael P. Weber, *Rooney: A Sporting Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 68–70.
\textsuperscript{82} Hayllar, “The Accommodation.”
Tito. Murphy also was a shareholder and president of the land corporation, which got its Pennsylvania corporate charter in July 1931 (Figure 12).  

![Figure 12. Bedford Land Corporation list of shareholders. Note Joe Tito's position and shares. Pennsylvania Bureau of Corporations.](image)

In the spring of 1932, the Bedford Land Corporation signed a nine-year lease with the Pittsburgh Crawfords. The agreement gave the team use of the stadium, “for the purpose of staging games, exhibitions, and events.” In exchange, the land company got 20 percent of all gross receipts taken in.  

The land company also signed a contract with Ralph Tito’s Cabin Grill to exclusively sell food, “lawful beverages,” and souvenirs (“notions”). The Cabin Grill, which had locations in Oakland and downtown, was one of several restaurants and bars that Ralph Tito owned and operated in the 1930s and 1940s.

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85 Pennsylvania Secretary of State, Bureau of Corporations; Allegheny County Land Records, Deed Book Vol. 2459, p. 499.
87 Allegheny County Land Records, Deed Book Vol. 2459, p. 668.
88 Ralph Tito’s establishments regularly advertised in Pittsburgh newspapers.
Greenlee Field is widely credited as a significant milestone in Black sports — the nation’s first Black-owned and Black-managed professional sports stadium.\(^{89}\) Built using 75 tons of steel, 14 carloads of cement, costing $75,000, the venue could seat 6,000 spectators for baseball games and 10,000 for boxing matches.\(^{90}\) Despite being Greenlee’s brainchild, he owned no stock in the Bedford Land Corporation and he was not an officer of the corporation.\(^{91}\) It was a sore point among Pittsburgh’s Black residents, who bristled at what appeared to be on paper, at least, the all-white control. “From a strictly Negroid viewpoint, the operating setup of the Bedford Land Company was all wrong,” wrote *Courier* columnist John Clark. “No colored person except Greenlee had the final say about anything at the field.”\(^{92}\) Despite being the home field for a signature Black team, the field typically hired white ticket takers and other employees, despite catering to a Black crowd in a neighborhood with a large Black population. Clark even called out the Titos for their oversized role in the venture: “… Tony Christiano, related to Joe Tito, served as groundkeeper and the lookout man for Tito. The concession stand was leased to Ralph Tito, brother to Joe.”\(^{93}\)

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\(^{89}\) Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons*.
\(^{90}\) “Greenlee Field Data Released,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 9, 1932.
\(^{91}\) The Greenlee-Tito business relationship was complicated. A 1933 letter from Greenlee to an Allegheny County official was produced on team letterhead. It identified Greenlee as the corporation’s president and Joseph Tito as its vice president. University of Pittsburgh Archives, Allegheny County Office of the Controller Records, AIS.1972.13. I would like to thank Rona Peckich for locating this record.
\(^{92}\) Clark, “The Rise and Fall of Greenlee Field.”
\(^{93}\) Clark.
The stadium turned out to be a money-losing venture. In 1938, the Bedford Land Corporation cancelled its concession contract with the Cabin Grill and its lease to the Pittsburgh Crawfords. The Pittsburgh Housing Authority bought the property and demolished the stadium, replacing it with the 420-unit Bedford Dwellings public housing (completed in 1940).\textsuperscript{94} The experience took a tremendous toll on Greenlee and he retreated from baseball to focus on his nightclubs and boxing.\textsuperscript{95} The only evidence of Greenlee Field that remains in the Hill District is a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission marker placed along Bedford Avenue next to the public housing (Figure 13).

**Latrobe Brewing Company and Rolling Rock Beer**

Rolling Rock beer is one of the best known and beloved products conceived and made in Pennsylvania. It joins Heinz ketchup, Hershey chocolate, Peeps, and other brands in a long list of enduring popular consumer products hailing from Pennsylvania. Rolling Rock has become such a recognizable cultural icon that it appears widely in popular culture depictions of Pittsburgh life. It was the beer of choice consumed by many of the characters featured in Michael Chabon’s critically acclaimed 1988 novel, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*. In 2006, when the brand’s new owners decided to move production out of state, National Public Radio’s Scott Simon had a lot to say:

Latrobe has been proud of its association with Rolling Rock and begun to claim the character of the beer: solid, unpretentious, and good company. Hotel and bar owner John Migyanka told the Pittsburgh Post Gazette he used to look down his bar, and boy, every person had a green bottle.

A sad week for Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Rolling Rock, the mild beer in the pale green bottle that’s carried their town’s name around the country since 1939, moved out of town. Anheuser Busch has purchased Rolling Rock and moved the production of the beer to Newark, New Jersey. It’s like moving Prairie Home Companion to Hackensack.\textsuperscript{96}

Rolling Rock was — is — as much part of Pittsburgh’s history and culture as it is Latrobe’s.

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.


\textsuperscript{95} Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons*, 163–65.

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 Scottsdale, 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. 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 (Figure 14) managed the company’s Pittsburgh wholesale beer distributorship, which was located in the brick garage at 1818 Colwell Street.

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101 “Nab Alleged Racket Chieftain in Murder,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 7, 1930.
102 Westmoreland County Land Records, Deed Book Vol. 930, p. 571; Westmoreland County Land Records, Deed Book Vol. 933, p. 381.
105 I am indebted to Uptown native John Chapman who pointed out during a June 2021 walking tour that the Colwell Street building had been the Tito beer distributor.
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 (1894-1972) 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.106

At first, the company brewed Latrobe Old German and Latrobe Pilsner beers.107 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 (Figure 14).108 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 1940.109 This contradicts all of the published histories of Rolling Rock beer that cite 1939 as the year the beer was first sold.110 The Rolling Rock Beer website reads, “In 1939, the Tito Brothers,  

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107 Stumpo.
108 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 5, 1935.
110 Stumpo, “The Latrobe Brewing Co.: Rolling Rock and More.”
owners of the Latrobe Brewery, decided they wanted to do their own thing. That thing became Rolling Rock."¹¹¹

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.¹¹² This system was designed to prevent aggressive marketing tactics that characterized pre-Prohibition alcoholic beverage marking. Brewers comprise the top tier; distributors the middle; and, retailers, the lower tier.¹¹³ 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 $10,000.¹¹⁴ Only Joe and Katherine were living in the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue in 1940.¹¹⁵ By then, the family had transcended its bootlegging and

¹¹⁵ United States Census for 1940, Population Schedules, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County.
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.\textsuperscript{116} Their contributions were not widely reported in the press — an occasional report would appear about a contribution here, raising money for World War II there — and some of that opacity may be attributed to the Tito family’s early organized crime activities. The family wasn’t completely shunned by Pittsburgh society (Figure 16). Thousands of people attended Hill District ward boss John Verona’s funeral in 1937. As close friend of the Verona family, Joe and Katherine Tito were among the mourning Verona family’s inner circle. The \textit{Post-Gazette} published a photograph of Katherine Tito helping Verona’s widow down the stairs leading from St. Peter’s Catholic Church (Figure 17).\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\linewidth]{figure16.png}
\caption{Joe Tito (right) pictured with Hill District political boss John Verona. Photo courtesy of the Verona family.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\linewidth]{figure17.png}
\caption{Katherine Tito (left) helps Daniel Verona escort John Verona’s widow at the late politician’s funeral. Photo courtesy of the Verona family.}
\end{figure}

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.\textsuperscript{118}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Pittsburgh newspapers regularly reported on Tito family activities in their social pages in the 1940s.
\item \textsuperscript{117} “Political Leaders, Hill Neighbors Pay Verona Their Last Respects,” \textit{Pittsburgh Post-Gazette}, January 16, 1937.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Peckich, Interview.
\end{itemize}
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.119

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 $1.00.120 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.121 Joseph Tito left an estate worth $100,346 ($1,153,418 in 2021 dollars).122

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.123 Robert Tito also left a substantial estate: $104, 547 ($1,201,706 in 2021 dollars).124

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 establishment at 1919 Colwell Street,” the Sun-Telegraph reported July 26, 1942, after Frank died at age 50.125 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.126

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).127 Gretchen Tito remarried in 1947 to Malcolm Brand. The couple sold 1818 Colwell Street to their son, Frank Brand, in 1957.

122 Joseph J. Tito estate, No. 1353 of 1949, Allegheny County Register of Wills.
124 Joseph J. Tito estate, No. 2463 of 1949, Allegheny County Register of Wills.
125 “Frank Tito (Obituary),” Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, July 26, 1942.
126 Frank Tito estate, No. 10297 of 1942, Allegheny County Register of Wills.
127 Frank Tito, Inventory and Appraisement.
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. Pennsylvania Bureau of Corporation records and advertisements published in Pittsburgh newspapers show that “Rock Beer Distributing Company” operated out of the building from c. 1949 until c. 1977. 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 (Figure 18) 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,

Figure 18. Anna Tito Mecca Zizza and her son Ralph Mecca in the side yard with the beer distributorship visible in the background. Photo courtesy of Donna Brusco.

128 Brusco, Interview.
130 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State, Corporation Bureau, articles of incorporation (1949 and 1962) and articles of dissolution; The Pittsburgh Press and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette carried ads for the Rock Beer Distributing Company doing business at 1818 Colwell Street starting in 1951.
132 Brusco, Interview.
133 “Pitt Stadium Loses Familiar Figure in Custodian Mecca, Known to Many,” The Pittsburgh Press, September 15, 1940.
but his widow moved into the house after remarrying in 1943 to Alphonse Zizza (1897-1967), a shoemaker.\textsuperscript{134}

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.”\textsuperscript{135}

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.

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.”\textsuperscript{136}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{kiddie_pool.jpg}
\caption{Brusco children play in kiddie pool next to house at 1817 Fifth Avenue, vegetable garden is to the right. Photo courtesy of Donna Brusco.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{134} Application for Marriage License, Alfonso Zizza and Anna Mecca. Ancestry.com.
\textsuperscript{135} Peckich, Interview.
\textsuperscript{136} Brusco, Interview.
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.\footnote{Trotter and Day, \textit{Race and Renaissance}, 104.}  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.\footnote{Trotter and Day, 104–8.}

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.”\footnote{Brusco, Interview.}

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.\footnote{Brusco, Interview; Zizza’s heirs sold the property for $7,000, Allegheny County Land Records, Deed Book Volume 5266, p. 437.}  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.”\footnote{Peckich, Interview.}  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.”\footnote{Peckich, Interview.}
ADDENDUM ITEM 9 (SIGNIFICANCE)

The Tito-Mecca-Zizza House is evaluated for its eligibility for designation as a City of Pittsburgh Historic Site. The historic context developed above supports designating the property under seven of 10 City of Pittsburgh Criteria for Designation. Each of the Criteria is discussed below and summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>§ 1101.04 (b)</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>This Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Location is a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity. The property served as Joe Tito’s home and principal place of business. From this site, Tito controlled his bootlegging, numbers gambling, and other activities associated with Pittsburgh’s historically significant informal economies. This also was Tito’s principal place of business when he was an executive with the Pittsburgh Crawfords Negro Leagues baseball team and an owner and operator of the nation’s first Black-owned professional sports stadium, Greenlee Field.</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Identified 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. Joe Tito was an entrepreneur in Pittsburgh’s informal alcohol and gambling economies who was recognized locally, regionally, and nationally for his leadership in these fields. He was directly involved in the 1932 Volpe massacre and subsequent Bazzano murder, events in organized crime history that are considered pivotal in the formation of a national crime syndicate. Joe Tito furthermore is cited as a significant figure in the history of Black sports for his partnership with Gus Greenlee and the roles that Tito played in the Pittsburgh Crawfords Negro Leagues baseball team and the construction and management of Greenlee Field, the nation’s first Black-owned professional sports stadium.</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Exemplifies an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship. The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue exemplifies Victorian-era architecture (Queen Ann and Italian Renaissance styles). The former beer distributorship exemplifies a vernacular architectural style and use unique to Pennsylvania, the beer distributorship.</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ 1101.04 (b)</td>
<td>Criterion</td>
<td>This Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exemplifies important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design or detail.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Location is a site of an important archaeological resource.</td>
<td>Unknown/Needs Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An archaeological survey/evaluation is recommended prior to any final determination under this criterion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Associated 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.</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This property has deep and wide ties to Pittsburgh’s social history in the areas of immigrant history, Black history, economic history, and sports history.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Exemplifies a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction.</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Though typically expressed in historic preservation with regard to the designation of historic districts, this property meets this criterion as what may be the last architectural example illustrating the spread of middle-class housing away from downtown and into the Fifth Avenue corridor in the 1880s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Represents a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures or objects that may or may not be contiguous.</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because of its significant ties to the legal and the unlawful manufacture, transportation, and sale of liquor and beer, this site is thematically related to other locally-designated Pittsburgh historic properties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This property occupies a prominent position in the heavily traveled Fifth Avenue corridor. It is highly visible and is used as a visual landmark by commuters, residents, and it is frequently depicted in social media posts.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

§ 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. Prior to buying the Latrobe brewery, Joe Tito’s only other fixed business address was his home at 1817 Fifth Avenue. It was the only address given in newspaper accounts reporting on his arrests and court appearances. The ways that Tito used 1817 Fifth Avenue underscore the fluid boundaries that sometimes separate private domestic space from public “professional” space. The house was both home and office for Tito, a man engaged in activities that couldn’t be advertised in contemporary newspapers or listed in business directories. If Joe Tito and his brothers were conducting “business” in the family home, they were using nearby restaurants as satellite meeting locations to conduct business. Testimony from a 1950 hearing to settle Joe Tito’s estate revealed detailed descriptions of how he and his brothers used Fifth Avenue restaurants as sites for business transactions. Readers of this nomination may be able to relate to these blurred lines after the COVID pandemic moved many people out of their workplaces and into home offices, home schools, etc.

The garage where Tito and his brothers stored their fleet of trucks used in bootlegging was part of the original property and it always was a space dedicated to commercial uses — illegal, at first, and then after Prohibition, legal ones. 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 his widow’s control. 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, a historically significant part of Pittsburgh history. Tito’s contributions to local, regional, state, and national history extend beyond bootlegging and racketeering and they include

his close partnership and friendship with Gus Greenlee. Their collaboration on building and managing Greenlee Field is a significant milestone in local, state, and national history, generally; specifically, it makes Joe Tito, a white first-generation Italian-American who was an officer in the Pittsburgh Crawfords Negro Leagues baseball and a part-owner and operator of the nation’s first Black-owned professional sports stadium, highly significant in Black history and sports 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.

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145 Butty’s Beer Distributor (Allegheny County); Cialone Beer Distributor (Huntingdon County); and, Dominic’s Beer Distributor (Armstrong County).
Bootlegging and automobile garages were inextricably connected during Prohibition.\textsuperscript{146} 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.\textsuperscript{147} Some (many?) Pennsylvania beer distributorships appear to recapitulate the architecture of earlier Prohibition-era bootlegging sites, i.e., automobile garages (Figures 20-22). 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.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{147} Beverage License Law, 1933, May 3, P.L. 252 §11(b).
\end{flushleft}
Pennsylvania’s 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 important early example of this adapted architecture.
Beer distributorship buildings are not well documented in historic preservation literature. Another Pittsburgh location may be used to underscore the significance of this vernacular building type and use. Caruso’s beer distributorship in Pittsburgh’s Northside neighborhood is another example of a garage-turned-beer distributorship (Figure 22) and it may be used here to further illustrate the distinctive nature of Pennsylvania beer distributorship vernacular architecture. Caruso Beer Distributor at 307 N. Taylor Ave. in Pittsburgh’s Northside is an excellent example of a building that housed an automobile service business from the 1920s to the 1960s (Figure 23). Angelo T. (A.T.) Lascher went into the automobile repair business in the mid-1920s after working as an engineer and motion picture entrepreneur. Lascher specialized in automobile electronics, selling and installing batteries and spark plugs, according to advertisements published in Pittsburgh newspapers. Lascher died in 1966. Sam Caruso, who had owned a beer distributorship several blocks away, bought the property and converted it into a beer distributor.\textsuperscript{148}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map}
\caption{1927 Sanborn fire insurance map showing the location where Caruso beer distributor relocated in 1966 in use as an auto repair shop.}
\end{figure}

§ 1101.04 (b)(4): Work of a significant architect and designer.

This property does not appear to qualify for designation as a City of Pittsburgh Historic Site under this Criterion. The individuals who designed and constructed the two buildings at this site are unknown.

§ 1101.04 (b)(5): Exemplifies important planning and urban design techniques.

This property does not appear to qualify for designation as a City of Pittsburgh Historic Site under this Criterion. The house at 1817 Fifth Avenue is an ordinary residence designed using a stylistic vocabulary (Queen Anne, Italian Renaissance) popular in the 1980s. It is not unique nor does it exhibit extraordinary design and detail.

§ 1101.04 (b)(6): Archaeology.

No archaeological investigations were undertaken for this evaluation. Based on the dates of construction and the type of historic property, intact archaeological contexts may be present and may have the potential to yield significant new information about the property’s history. An archaeological survey is recommended.

§ 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.

This site is a rare surviving example that speaks to a largely unwritten story about Black and white Pittsburgh residents working collaboratively and with equitable social and economic positions, albeit ones in Pittsburgh’s informal vice economies. Bootlegging, numbers gambling, and the Negro Leagues all are widely recognized important parts of Pittsburgh’s history. Joe Tito lived at 1817 Fifth Avenue while he was working with Gus Greenlee to build the Pittsburgh Crawfords into an important professional sports franchise. Joe Tito lived and worked from 1817 Fifth Avenue while making the deals to buy and grow the Latrobe Brewing Company. And, though it can make some people uncomfortable, Joe Tito lived and worked from 1817 Fifth Avenue while he was building his racketeering empire.
§ 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.” The former Tito home is one of the last, if not the last, remnant of this pattern of Victorian neighborhood development and urban expansion away from downtown and into the Fifth Avenue corridor.

§ 1101.04 (b)(9): Important thematic association

This property is eligible for designation as a City of Pittsburgh historic site under this criterion. The City of Pittsburgh has several locally-designated breweries and sites associated with the manufacture and sale of liquor and beer. In an earlier draft submitted to the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission, this property was not originally considered eligible for designation under this criterion. During the November 3, 2021, meeting to discuss this nomination’s viability to move forward to a public hearing, City of Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Planner Sarah Quinn mentioned these other properties. “You know, we’ve got potential here to do another thematic nomination in the future related to beer and alcohol production, should a nominator out there so choose. That could be something really interesting.”

Quinn mentioned the Iron City Brewery in particular as one previously City-designated historic property. In the same meeting, a commissioner added that the Guckenheimer Warehouse (125 First Avenue) is another example. Built in the nineteenth century by Asher Guckenheimer as a warehouse for the family’s whiskey business, it was sold in 1919 just as Prohibition began. The successor firm to Asher Guckenheimer’s business, A. Guckenheimer & Brothers Company (headquartered in Freeport, Pennsylvania), adapted to Prohibition by entering the lucrative bootlegging business. In fact, one of Joe and Frank Tito’s earliest arrests (in 1923) was for hauling A. Guckenheimer & Brothers liquor (see Figure 8, above, for reprinted 1923 headline).

150 Pittsburgh Dispatch, January 13, 1889.
151 Sarah Quinn, Pittsburgh HRC meeting, November 3, 2021.
§ 1101.04 (b)(10): Familiar visual feature.

The former Tito-Mecca-Zizza 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.

In recent years, there have been multiple social media posts about the building featuring photographs and comments. One example is a Flickr.com post by user Equinox27 (Figure 22):

Recently I saw a post of this house on a Historic Pittsburgh Neighborhoods page. It was identified by a descendant of a past owner who had been trying to buy it back for restoration. She reported that it had been owned at one time by the Tito family that started Rolling Rock beer and that the Pittsburgh distribution warehouse for Rolling Rock was on this property. Unfortunately it had been purchased as an investment for the land value by someone from out of town and most likely they will not sell it to be renovated even though it is recognized as having historic value by the Pittsburgh Historical Society.

It almost looks like it has replacement windows that show up every year with stickers still in the corners (?) Take a look at that gable detail. The section curving out looks like it should have windows in it but there's nothing there but old wood shingles. Next door is a very large factory building.

I checked on Streetside and found it shows up quite a few years, showing how it has gone from relatively well maintained to overgrown with vines and trees.¹⁵³

In July 2021, Jason Waltenbaugh posted a photo of the house, along with this comment (Figure 19):

I stopped to photograph this beautiful old house because it demanded someone to notice it, a diamond in the rough if you will. I love the architecture and the details. Nature has consumed it for the most part but it has incredible potential. I would love to see it cleaned up and restored.\(^{154}\)

User peeterv uploaded two photos of the house at 1817 Fifth Avenue to the iStock Getty Images online repository. The photos were uploaded in March and August of 2019 (Figure 24).\(^{155}\)


Figure 25. July 9, 2021, Facebook post featuring 1817 Fifth Avenue. September 2021 screen capture. (https://www.facebook.com/groups/359830130859339/posts/1987511744757828/)

Figure 26. iStock-Getty image uploaded by “peterv” showing 1817 Fifth Avenue in 2019. September 2021 screen capture (https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/abandoned-home-in-pittsburgh-pa-gm1137988846-303647458)
ADDENDUM ITEM 10 (INTEGRITY)

The properties at 1817 Fifth Avenue and 1818 Colwell Street retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance as a City of Pittsburgh historic site. Table 2 summarizes the site’s integrity and it is discussed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrity Aspect</th>
<th>1817 Fifth Avenue</th>
<th>1818 Colwell Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Intact; original location</td>
<td>Intact; original location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Diminished; essential fabric and physical features are present but have been altered and have deteriorated.</td>
<td>Diminished; essential fabric and physical features are present but have been altered and have deteriorated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Intact; vegetation growing in the yard is a reversible change.</td>
<td>Intact; vegetation obstructing views of the building is a reversible change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Diminished; most original fabric remains, windows have been replaced/removed.</td>
<td>Diminished; most original fabric remains, windows have been replaced/removed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workmanship</td>
<td>Diminished; finishes and construction methods remain legible but have been altered.</td>
<td>Diminished; finishes and construction methods remain legible but have been altered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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).
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.
Significant References Cited/Bibliography

“145 Stills Seized, 40 Barrels of Beer Taken.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 14, 1922.


Brusco, Donna. Telephone Interview with David S. Rotenstein, August 11, 2021.


“Dry Violator Suspects Held Under $1,000 Bail.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 11, 1923.


“Eight-Month Jail Sentence for Tito.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 12, 1924.


“Frank Tito (Obituary).” *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, July 26, 1942.


“Gigs and Saddles.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 1, 1880.


“Greenlee Field Data Released.” *The Pittsburgh Courier*. July 9, 1932.


“Judge Orders Judgements on $12,000 Truck Bonds Stayed.” *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, June 23, 1927.


“Nab Alleged Racket Chieftain in Murder.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 7, 1930.


“Owner Seeks Release of Trucks.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 17, 1922.


“Pitt Stadium Loses Familiar Figure in Custodian Mecca, Known to Many.” *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 15, 1940.


“Racket King Quizzed on Volpes.” *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, August 2, 1932.


“Scene of Torture in Barrel Murder.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 8, 1930.


“Sleuths Fail to Bare New Volpe Clues.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 8, 1932.


“War on Numbers Racket Kings.” Color, June 1951.


A Note on Sources and Research Methods

The research for this nomination was conducted in 2021 at a time when many archives remained closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The individuals discussed in this report had prolonged and repeated engagements with state and federal law enforcement agencies as well as state and federal courts. Materials related to federal cases held in National Archives facilities were unavailable due to the pandemic.

Local repositories consulted include Allegheny County civil and criminal courts records and Allegheny County property records accessible in the County Courthouse, the City-County Building, and County Building. Additional archival research was undertaken at the University of Pittsburgh Archives Center and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Documents also were obtained remotely from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Corporations, the Pennsylvania Archives, and multiple law enforcement digital repositories.
Oral histories with former organized crime figures and their descendants were conducted to collect information for this nomination. Additionally, interviews and email correspondence among multiple descendants of Joe Tito informed and enhanced this research project.

Since 2019, Dr. David Rotenstein has been conducting research into the social history of numbers gambling in Pittsburgh. The impetus to nominate the property as a City of Pittsburgh historic site originated in June 2021 during a walking tour that Dr. Rotenstein conducted in the Fifth Avenue corridor. An Uptown resident who participated in the tour suggested that Uptown Partners contact Dr. Rotenstein to discuss the potential for nominating the site as a City of Pittsburgh landmark. This nomination is a product of that contact. As of this writing, Dr. Rotenstein has published several articles deriving from his numbers gambling social history project, including “Finding Jakie Lerner: The life of Pittsburgh’s Top Jewish Gangster,” published in Pittsburgh Quarterly magazine and the winner of a 2021 Press Club of Western Pennsylvania Golden Quill Award. Dr. Rotenstein’s other articles stemming from this project have been published by the Heinz History Center, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and Pittsburgh Very Local.
## PHOTO LOG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo No.</th>
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<th>Address</th>
<th>Detail</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>Fifth Ave. façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>Retaining wall, fence, view along Fifth Avenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>Fifth Avenue (south) façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nov. 2020</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>Fifth Avenue (south) façade; photo from Flickr.com</td>
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<td>Sept. 2021</td>
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<td>Tower detail</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>East façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>East façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>East and north façades, oblique view of parged foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>East façade, window detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>North and west façades, oblique view</td>
</tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>North façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>North façade showing former window location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>West façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>West façade, kitchen wing detail</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>Kitchen porch detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1817 Fifth Ave.</td>
<td>West façade, foundation detail and basement window</td>
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<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1818 Colwell St.</td>
<td>North façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>North façade, sign bracket</td>
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<td>North façade, wheel guard</td>
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<td>North and west façade, oblique view</td>
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<td>South façade showing altered window</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>South façade showing pivot window</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
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<td>East and north façades, oblique view</td>
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<td>East façade showing former window location</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>East façade, steel-frame window</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Sept. 2021</td>
<td>1818 Colwell St.</td>
<td>East façade, steel-frame window, alternate view</td>
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LOCATION MAP AND CONTEMPORARY PHOTOS
Tito-Mecca-Zizza House Site Location Map.
Tito-Mecca-Zizzo House Site, Allegheny County GIS parcel viewer. Site is outlined in blue.
Photo 1. 1817 Fifth Avenue. Fifth Avenue façade, retaining wall, and steps. September 2021.

Photo 2. 1817 Fifth Avenue. Retaining wall, fence, view to the east along Fifth Avenue. September 2021.

Photo 5. 1817 Fifth Avenue. Tower detail showing slate roof, brackets. View to the north. September 2021.


Photo 22. 1818 Colwell Street. South facade showing intact horizontal pivot window. September 2021.

Photo 24. 1818 Colwell Street. East facade showing former window location (foreground) and steel-frame window (center frame). Note dense vegetation. September 2021.

HISTORICAL PHOTOS
AND
OTHER IMAGES
Photo 30. Undated Mecca family photo showing the south facade of the beer distributorship at 1818 Colwell Street. Photo courtesy of Rona Peckich.
Photo 31. Undated Mecca family photo showing side and rear yards, south façade of 1818 Colwell Street beer distributorship, and vegetable garden. Photo courtesy of Donna Brusco.

Photo 32. Undated Mecca family photo showing children in side yard. Visible are the vegetable garden, rear yard retaining walls, basement windows, and original turned wood kitchen porch posts. Photo courtesy of Donna Brusco.
Photo 33. Undated Tito-Mecca family photo taken along the west side of the house. Visible to the left is the kitchen and original 1/1 DHS window. Photo courtesy of Rona Peckich.

Photo 34. Undated Mecca family picture showing the original kitchen porch with turned wood posts. Pictured: Rose Catherine Mecca Evans and Robert Mecca. Photo courtesy of Donna Brusco.
Photo 35. Undated Mecca family photo taken on the front porch. Original turned wood posts, steps, and house number are visible. Photo courtesy of Donna Brusco.
APPENDIX 1

REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TABLES
<table>
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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Grantor</th>
<th>Grantee</th>
</tr>
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<td>James and Maria Lippencott</td>
<td>Emily Armes</td>
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<td>SDB 4/230</td>
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<td>Thomas Hunter, Sheriff</td>
<td>Barnett McCracken</td>
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<td>DB 653/393</td>
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<td>Barnett McCracken</td>
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<td>DB 653/395</td>
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<td>DB 663/430</td>
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<td>James McGinnis</td>
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<td>DB 660/538</td>
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<td>$9,500.00</td>
<td>Barnett and Elizabeth McCracken</td>
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<td>DB 985/582</td>
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<td>Henry Shuretz Jr. and Frederick C. Renziehausen</td>
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<td>SDB 13/151</td>
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<td>DB 1131/243</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>May 29, 1901</td>
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<td>Henry and Rosa Shuretz and Frederick C. Reinzenhausen</td>
<td>Anthony C. Dean</td>
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<td>MB 1180/409</td>
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<td>Abraham C. Stein</td>
<td>Anthony C. Dean</td>
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<td>DB 5266/437</td>
<td>1973</td>
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<td>Clara Napoleon et al.</td>
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<td>Marguerite Bell</td>
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<td>DB 10817/563</td>
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<td>Gloria Long</td>
<td>James McGuire</td>
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<td>David W. Lundy and Ruth A. Lundy</td>
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<td>October 11, 2007</td>
<td>$55,000.00</td>
<td>David W. Lundy and Ruth A. Lundy</td>
<td>Sal and Irene J. Williams</td>
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APPENDIX 2

NOVEMBER 3, 2021, PITTSBURGH
HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION
“VIABILITY MEETING” TRANSCRIPT (DRAFT)
Tito-Mecca-Zizza House (Revised)
Addendum, Page 86 of 111

November 3, 2021, Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission
Tito-Mecca-Zizza House Agenda Item
Draft transcript prepared by Dr. David Rotenstein, November 6, 2021

Parties:
Lucia Aguirre, HRC chairperson (AGUIRRE)
Andrew Dash, HRC member (DASH)
Matthew Falcone, HRC member (FALCONE)
David Green, HRC member (GREEN)
Karen Loysen, HRC member (LOYSEN)
Richard Snipe, HRC member (SNIPE)
Sarah Quinn, HRC staff (QUINN)

AGUIRRE: Moving forward with the agenda, we move to historic nominations and we have a historic nomination for determination of nomination viability. We have the Tito House, one-eight-one-seven Fifth Avenue dash eighteen-eighteen Colwell Street.

QUINN: Shall I begin my presentation?

AGUIRRE: Yes. Just as a reminder to those — before we get started, just to remind those joining us about the process is nomination that come to us, we have two reviews. The first one is to determine the viability of the nomination and if that is approved by the commission, then we move it to another review where we will actually review the actual merits of the nomination to actually be recommended yay or nay to the City Council.

AGUIRRE: After that, if it actually moves forward, it will move to — oh my gosh, it’s not the Planning Commission, right?

AGUIRRE: The Planning Commission where they will also review the nomination and form their purview, either support or not recommend the nomination. And then lastly, it will go to City Council where it will either be approved or be denied to become an actual historic property.

So here for the first step, for the determination of nomination viability, we usually only look at the application and its merits. We usually don’t allow public comments, but in this case I think because there’s been so much interest, we will. But we advise that if when we hear public comment, it will only be three minutes per applicant.

Does anybody else have something else to add? If not, we can start. We can let staff open the presentation.
QUINN: Okay. So, this property contains – this site contains two parcels. The first one, the first parcel, is 1817 Fifth Avenue, which includes a large brick Victorian house and the second parcel directly adjacent to it is 1818 Colwell Street. These were one parcel and at some point in time were subdivided.

The location can be seen on your screen on the USGS quad map. And then here are the two parcels right here. So this is Fifth Avenue. That’s 1817 Fifth Avenue during the summer. But the house is a two-and-a-half story irregular cruciform-plan building constructed on a continuous ashlar stone foundation. It’s oriented to the south and the house occupies a narrow forty-six-foot wide, five thousand nine-hundred square foot lot with an iron fence and a stone wall all around it.

You can see the stone wall here with steps leading up and under the vegetation would be the iron railing.

The garage in the rear is, as I said, addressed at 1818 Colwell Street and it occupies two thousand-eighty-nine square foot lot. Oh there’s the fence, excuse me.

More pictures of the house.

Details of the house.

The garage in the back, as we say, is on a two-thousand eight hundred square foot lot that was carved out of the original parcel. The building is a two-story building conducted on a foundation and the building is finished by brick laid in an eight-course common bond and it has a flat roof.

This building was used as a beer distributor.

Its east façade is concealed by heavy vegetation adjacent to the building and there are two second story windows: one is concrete-block-filled and one is stainless steel frame. So architectural details and trash.

There’s a view right there.

Let’s go back a little bit.

So there’s the house again.

So the parcel where the site is located was owned until 1965 by an ax manufacturer named James Lippencott. And their family sold the property to a widowed daughter-in-law after they moved out.

In 1881 a grain merchant bought it and that parcel became 1817 Fifth Avenue.

Gentleman named McCracken and his wife appear to have owned the property when the house was built. In October 1889, they sold it to Mr. Guntz, who paid ninety-five hundred dollars cash for a brick dwelling of eight rooms and improvements.

The house appears to be one of several that Mr. Guntz owned as investments, who was living on Bouquet Street in Oakland when he died.

The Tito family purchased the property after there were some deed transfers related to a sheriff’s sale.
The property was owned by Raphael and Rosa Tito, who emigrated to the United States in 1888 from Barragiano in southern Italy.

Between 1896 and 1930, Raphael and Rosa bought multiple properties on Gazzam Hill and Allequippa and Gazzam streets.

Much of their extended family lived within one block of the original Tito home at 28 Gazzam Street.

The family, they ended up having eight children while they were living in Pittsburgh and they were known as hucksters. So they were vegetable peddlers.

When Prohibition came into being, ratified in 1919, the Tito brothers began an involvement in making alcohol and they made headlines, it says, in 1922 for hijacking, hauling and hijacking liquor. So they were well-known bootleggers.

Joe Tito, who was one of the brothers, ended up occupying a prominent position in Pittsburgh organized crime hierarchy. By 1932, he built his wealth and power in bootlegging and in numbers gambling as well.

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 thirties.

It’s interesting that the county courts have no records related to any of the arrests so it appears that most of the information was obtained through newspaper clippings and other documentation, family histories, etcetera.

More importantly, I think, as related to local and regional history, is that this house and the building, the garage-slash-beer distributor at the rear of the property was one of the first distributorships for Rolling Rock beer, which was pretty interesting.

In 1933, Prohibition ended and it says in anticipation of a reduction of the bootlegging revenues, and seeing an opportunity to make their booze business legitimate, Tito brothers used contacts they had in Latrobe, Westmoreland County, to buy a brewery. In 1932, the Latrobe Bulletin reported that Anthony Tito and Robert Zaffey bought Pittsburgh Brewing Company’s assets in that city. The Latrobe Brewing Company got its license, liquor license, in Pennsylvania in early 1934 and began producing and distributing legal beer.

Anthony Tito was the company’s president. Joe Tito, bootlegger, the notorious bootlegger, was its vice president. And Robert Tito was its secretary. Frank Tito managed the company’s Pittsburgh wholesale beer distributorship, which was located in the brick garage at 1818 Colwell Street.

In the spring of 1935, Frank Tito began advertising the company had Latrobe Pilsner and Rolling Rock Ale for sale at 1818 Colwell Street. March 1935 ads mark the first time that Rolling Rock beer was produced and sold, yet the Patent and Trademark Office notes that the Rolling Rock was used in commerce in 1934.
Today, the Rolling Rock beer website reads, “In 1939, the Tito brothers owned the Latrobe Brewery. Decided that they wanted to do their own thing and that thing became Rolling Rock.”

Only Joe Tito and Catherine, his wife, were living at the house, 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.

One could perhaps draw a parallel with the Kennedys. [staffmember chuckles]

The author felt that the property met several criteria of significance.

[11:39]

The first one would be location is a site of a significant historic activity. They used the property as the base of operations for their bootlegging and gambling. Joe Tito, sort of the leader, lived at the property during this time, and the building in the back, 1818 Colwell Street, was Latrobe Brewing Company’s first beer distributorship in Pittsburgh.

So that’s pretty significant, I’d even say regionally.

The property the author felt is also associated with an important person who contributed to history. Prior to 1922 when the Tito family purchased the property, several notable individuals owned it. Joe Tito is widely recognized by historians as a key figure in Pittsburgh’s early organized crime history and those contributions beyond bootlegging and racketeering include his partnership with Gus Greenlee, a notorious gambling boss from the Hill District.

Their collaboration on building and managing Greenlee Field is a significant milestone in local history.

The author felt that the building, the house at least, is significant for its Victorian architecture.

I can tell you also criterion number seven, associated with important events and social aspects of history, 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 the twentieth century owners.

The site’s association with an Italian immigrant family and its first-generation entrepreneurs make it significant for what it can tell us about Italian-American history. The Tito family’s movement from Bloomfield to Uptown reflects a recognized pattern in Pittsburgh’s Italian communities.

And finally, the author felt that this property is a visual landmark. And I would have to agree with that simply because it’s so unique and visible compared to the other properties in the area. I believe it was our chairperson that said she sees it every day when she drives by it. On the way to work when I used to take the 71B from Highland Park, I would look at it every single day. So I think it’s definitely a visual landmark.

[14:34]
And finally, even though the property has been subject to some deterioration, both properties have physical integrity meaning that the Tito family, Joe Tito, were he alive today would be able to recognize his building. Would be able to recognize the garage. And, the buildings convey the same sort of characteristics as they did when they were significant.

So for all of these reasons, my recommendation and staff is that you provide a determine of positive viability for this and should you have any questions regarding the property, we can take the next couple of weeks until the next hearing to hopefully gain some information and answer those for you.

So, that’s what I have.

[15:35]

AGUIRRE: Thank you, Sarah, for that presentation.

And right now, the criteria that they have identified aligns with the same aspects of the application. I think the only one that doesn’t is criterion number eight: exemplifies a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history of conditions of the city whose components may lack —

QUINN: Yeah, and I apologize for not being more clear on that. That’s more of a criterion that is necessary, like would be reflected more in a district. If you think of in Mexican War Streets how there’s the very oldest section and then when you go out farther and the street grid changes just a little bit. I think that’s more of what that’s reflecting. So there would need to be more properties than just these two.

And I did want to mention that I did have a discussion with the author of the document, our pre-submittal meeting. And there was also the mention that there are potentially tunnels within this parcel that are related to the bootlegging activities, running from the house to the garage. Because that was just based on some anecdotal evidence, I didn’t necessarily think that it would be — I think it’s important to mention it, but I don’t think it would have enough strength to be considered under. I think it’s nine, for the potential to yield history.

That being said, I think — well, I know that we only need to have one criterion and these two properties, this site, certainly meets several. So for that reason, I’m very comfortable with my recommendation to you all.

[18:11]

AGUIRRE: Okay. Just wanted to make sure, that clarification.

Thank you.

QUINN: Sure.

AGUIRRE: I want to say for the record that we have been receiving a lot of comments regarding this nomination, most of them for support, and a couple opposing. And I’m just going to state those for the record and I’m either just going to state the name and the person.
We have received an email or letter of support from Melissa Marinaro, from the Heinz Center.

We received a letter of support from Gerard Boscia.

We received a letter of support from [unintelligible], who is the granddaughter of Tito.

We received a letter of support from Deborah Duffy.

We received a letter of support from Shane Henderson.

We received a letter of support from Willis J. Evans, who was a grandson of Mr. Tito.

We received a letter of support from Lorna H. Peckich.

We received a letter of support from Joseph Sciorra, PhD, from an Italian-American, I think, magazine.

A letter of support from Melissa McSwigan from Preservation Pittsburgh.

A letter of support from Sabreena Miller from Uptown Partners.

Received a letter of support from Helen Perilloux. I apologize if I’m butchering last names, deeply.

A letter of support Sean Luther from Pittsburgh Innovation District.

An email of support from Raquid Bey Ajamu-Osagbo.

An email or letter of support from Frances Corcoran Gallo.

A letter email of support from Mary Grace Perry Klehm [??]

A letter against the nomination from Chip Desmone, Registered Architect.

A letter of support from Gene McNott [??]

Another letter against the nomination from Nicole and James McGuire, who I believe are associated with the ownership of this property. And then we can look into that after I finish this.

A letter of support from Todd Keebler.

A letter of support from Marimba Milliones, from the Hill CDC.

A letter against the nomination from Stephen MacClean [??]

A letter of support from Chris Klehm.

And I think that’s all I have. I have a total of twenty-two documents that we received with only three of them being against the nomination and the balance in support.

[21:43]
So with that, as mentioned before it appears that I think something about the ownership not — I think we need some clarity.

QUINN: Andrew, would you like to just speak on that or would you like me to?

DASH: On where discussion is on a development? Is that?

AGUIRRE: Yes.

QUINN: Well, the ownership of the parcel, I believe. You had talked to maybe Jack —

DASH: I mean there’s ownership — I mean obviously as noted in the nomination, separate ownership of the Colwell Street building and then the Fifth Avenue building, there was a property certification done at the zoning office, you know, in March of this year, which typically coincides with someone looking to sell the property.

At the same time, you know, there has been a pre-application meeting that’s been filed by a developer on behalf of owners of a number of properties, including these two properties, I believe — or at least the property on Fifth Avenue. I’d have to double-check.

And then we are aware that there is — you know, whether there is a formal conservatorship filing or whether they’re going through that process, there has been discussion of conservatorship on at least the Fifth Avenue property and I believe that there are people, attendees, in the meeting that can attest to that.

AGUIRRE: Thank you, Commissioner Dash.

QUINN: If you’d like, I can share what I know because I know more different stuff than Andrew.

My understanding of the situation is that the property was owned by Mr. McClean, I believe his last name was or is, was. And he lived in Houston, Texas, and is now deceased. And then his wife lived in the property, perhaps. She is also deceased. So I’m not sure how many years it’s been right now, but it appears that according to the Allegheny County Real Estate Assessment website, that Mr. McClean is the owner, so that’s where we’ve been sending the correspondence.

I believe his heirs are involved in some court proceedings transferring the ownership at this point as well as the conservatorship. And I know this from speaking with their attorney about where they are in the process. So, you know, that’s where we are one. If the ownership changes, then we will send the correspondence elsewhere.

AGUIRRE: Okay. I mean I know that this is not a religious structure, but in terms of ownership, it doesn’t really affect the significance of the nomination. However, I think it is always important to get some clarity on that for all involved.

Now with that, we can discuss the nomination and there’s a lot of information on it.

DASH: Should we open it to public testimony, first?

[26:01]
AGUIRRE: Yes, I was going to say to open it for public comment before we do that because then we have all the different aspects of it. And as a reminder, those providing public comment, you will only have three minutes to speak and we will be very strong about it since it’s already way past our HRC bedtime. And, usually for designations, for viability, we do not hear public comments so I really advise everybody to stay within the three minutes.

If you already sent a letter that we already acknowledged, I would say if you have something new to bring to the conversation, it would be appreciated. But if it’s about the same from the letter, I think we have already heard you.

So with that, do we have our first speaker?

STAFF: Yes we should. Suzie Monteverde, you should be unmuted.

AGUIRRE: Okay Suzie, please state your name and address for the record and then you may begin your three minutes.

MONTEVERDE: Hello, can you hear me?

AGUIRRE: Yes, we can.

MONTEVERDE: Oh okay. I’m Suzie Monteverde and I believe that putting a beautiful new development on the 1900 block of Fifth Avenue would add a lot of character to the neighborhood and bring lots of amenities.

The area is blighted. There’s junkies that come down from the Hill on Diaz Way to Fifth Avenue. They leave their trash, their drugs, their needles, which I have to pay to clean up. And they have other unsavory elements of crime, also.

I own a few parcels and actually spent a lot of time in a rowhouse at 1915 Fifth Avenue with my grandmother and those have been knocked down and I just would be so proud to have a new development on that site.

AGUIRRE: Thank you for your testimony.

MONTEVERDE: You’re welcome.

AGUIRRE: So, to clarify, that’s against the nomination. Next speaker please?

STAFF: The next speaker is Veritas Legal Services.

AGUIRRE: Okay, three minutes.

[SPEAKER: Hi, yes, name is Dax Parise. My address is 1632 Forbes Avenue and I am opposed to this undertaking due to the amount of crime and the issues that are already happening. Two weeks ago, I had]
somebody throw a brick through our window and hopefully this development will help clean up this neighborhood and these senseless crimes that are happening.

And I think promoting a bootlegger is not really what the city want to show to the world of what we have to offer to people.

AGUIRRE: Thank you.

SPEAKER: That’s all. Thank you.

AGUIRRE: Next speaker, please?

STAFF: Next speaker, I think it ends in COM05.

[Delay and crosstalk as speaker gets connected]

[30:15]

SPEAKER: I don’t know, is that me? Okay, that is me. I’m sorry. I didn’t recognize how it came up.

My name is Tom Costello. I’m an attorney, my office is at 20 Fieldstone Drive, Pittsburgh, PA, 15220 and I represent Sal Williams, who is the owner of 1818 Colwell Street. Suzie Monteverde happens to be his daughter, who spoke previously, and I would join in everything that was said and by Veritas. I would indicate that I did send a letter of objection on October 22 and it hasn’t seemed to be identified as being of the record. So I will have to re-send it or email it to somebody because I did send it October 22, objecting.

I find it quizzical that this property’s been owned by my client since 2007 and it goes back as a history laid for many, many years prior to that and it’s only now that it’s under a proposed sales agreement that in fact they’re moving to have this declared an historical nomination. So I question the integrity of the request and that’s all I have to say for now. Thank you.

[31:49]

AGUIRRE: Thank you for your testimony.

Next speaker, please?

STAFF: Frank Faiello.

SPEAKER: Good evening, my name’s Michelle Faiello. I’m speaking behalf of myself and Frank Faiello. We would just like to echo all of those in opposition to the designation. We agree that development on this site would greatly improve the neighborhood and help reduce the crime in the area.

AGUIRRE: Thank you for your testimony.

Next speaker, please?

STAFF: Next individual is Fifi.
SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Fifi Sunseri. I own the pizza shop down the street from the structure. I’ve been in the neighborhood for forty years but I’ve grown up in the Uptown area so I’ve actually been in the neighborhood for fifty years. And I want to oppose the nomination because of the crime and of the taking the parents of the building and the activities of the drug use going behind the building and the prostitution and they just found a dead body back there last week. And it’s just the whole neighborhood needs help. We need development.

I mean I pay every day to clean two blocks of Fifth Avenue out of my own pocket and we need help in our own neighborhood. If somebody can please help our neighborhood, I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

AGUIRRE: Thank you for your testimony.

Do we have another speaker for us?

STAFF: Yes, next individual, Francois.

SPEAKER: Francois Bitz here. I’m with Springway Center LLC. I own a majority of the twentieth block around Fifth Avenue and I’m opposed to the historical designation. I fail to see the relevance of making a good crime story, make it a historical designation. I’m actually — so, I’m opposed to the designation and I’m just all for pro-development. I’m not sure what they’re doing on this lot, so I am not party to it, but I just see that it would be better than what it is now.

Thanks.

[34:40]

AGUIRRE: Thank you for your testimony, Francois ….

Do we have more speakers?

STAFF: Not currently.

AGUIRRE: Okay, if there’s anybody else, speak now or I don’t want to say forever hold your piece, but we would rather hear you now.

STAFF: We do have one more hand.

AGUIRRE: Okay.

[Delay and crosstalk as speaker gets connected]

SPEAKER: Patrick Rega.

AGUIRRE: Okay Patrick.
SPEAKER: I’m with the firm of Hergenroeder Rega Scotti Ewing & Kennedy, we are located at 650 Smithfield Street and our firm represents Nicole McGuire and James McGuire. As Ms. Quinn was indicating, they are the sole heirs of James McGuire and Sondra McGuire.

I wanted to correct something that Ms. Quinn indicated. She I think mentioned James McGuire’s name as James McClean, I think, and I wanted to make sure the record was clear in that respect.

James McGuire did live in Houston for a period of time. He passed, as our letter on behalf of our clients indicated, in 2014. Survived by his wife, who then passed in 2019. Sole heirs were Nicole and are Nicole and James McGuire. So we of course wanted to make that clear for the record.

Following the guidance of the chairman, I think that on behalf of our client, the objection has been submitted on their behalf and I note for the committee that, again, they were never served, notified, or advised of the nomination. And of course, they never approved of it and they wanted to be clear on the record that they not only did not approve of the submission but they object to it.

I would like to update the commission, also, plans have been submitted to the planning and zoning department. It’s under formal review for the zoning development review guidelines. There is no requirement for this contemplated project for a zoning change. It meets all of those requirements, so the project would be a project of right, oif you will. And so I wanted to make that clear to the commission.

AGUIRRE: okay. Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Rega.

Okay, do we have anybody else? Is anybody on?

[38:24]

STAFF: I don’t see any other hands. Oh, sorry. Just one more. Dave Rotenstein.

SPEAKER: Thank you. This is David Rotenstein. I’m the author of the research report and nomination and I want to thank the Historic Review Commission for taking the time to hear this case and to consider the viability of the nomination. And I am confident that you will act in accordance with the municipal code and make your decision based solely on what’s under your jurisdiction: historical significance, at this point. And, of course, I am available to to anybody with questions regarding the research and the property itself.

Thank you very much.

AGUIRRE: Thank you for your testimony, Dave.

So I think with that, I think we are going to close public testimony at this time. Per my count, including what was received via email and what was just listened to here at the hearing, we have — sorry, I’m trying to do math. Just give me one second, it’s been a long day.

So we had nineteen statements of support and ten statements opposed to the nomination, jsu tto state where the balance of that is.

So with that, I’m going to close public testimony for this viability of nomination and I would like to bring it back to commissioners to discuss the merits of the nomination.
And I welcome anybody to express their thoughts about it.

[crosstalk]

LOYSEN: I had a question for Director Dash, if he could inform us as to sort of where things stand planning wise?

DASH: Yeah, so if there’s an active historic nomination, then essentially the development review process stops and, you know, is paused until there’s completion of that historic nomination. And so, you know, there was a pre-application meeting that was held by staff with an applicant on July 30. There was a formal submission, you know, that was after the nomination was submitted for the — the historic nomination was submitted — so the response came to them stating that, you know, the completion of this nomination process would have to take place before review of their development, before review of the development could take place.

And so, and although it was noted by one of the people who testified that this is a development that is, you know that is looking to be by right, you know that review hasn’t been completed by zoning staff and, you know with the development itself being in the Uptown public realm, would automatically require a Planning Commission review and approval. But none of that can take place until after historic review, you know, makes this determination goes — and then if it is determined to be viable for nomination, then it goes through the Planning Commission and City Council process. Once City Council acts, then that would determine the next steps for any potential development on adjacent lots or these lots.

LOYSEN: And I’m not sure if this is an appropriate question or not, but is it viable that whatever plan may be contemplated would, could incorporate this site as a historic component of the development?

DASH: That would be — that’s maybe not something that I’d be able to answer. I’d be making assumptions.

AGUIRRE: I mean, the only thing that I might comment on that ism there’s — it sounds like there’s planning for things to happen in here, but nothing has been built so if we’re talking about planning, if this location and this structure and property end up being awarded a historic designation, I don’t see any issue why the rest of a development couldn’t happen if this moves forward with designation.

FALCONE: Also very much beyond our purview.

AGUIRRE: Absolutely.

DASH: And all I was going to state when Commissioner Loysen and I went to speak at the same time is that, you know, just to note and the chairwoman, you did a great job of this early on, you know with the difference between the Historic Review Commission’s purview and the Planning Commission’s purview. I know that a number of people who have testified spoke to issues of neighborhood character relative to this structure or things relative to development and that those items would be part of the Planning Commission’s purview, potentially, around a historic nomination. Around, you know, that structure being historic and, you know, how that fits within the context of a broader neighborhood. It would be more a part of the discussion that goes on at the Planning Commission, so I would — so, for people where that is the items that are kind of nearest and dearest to them as part of, you know, the
consideration of this. I would suggest that when, you know, when and if there’s a Planning Commission hearing that is scheduled for this, that those comments would possibly be more relevant to that discussion.

AGUIRRE: Okay, that’s fair. Yeah, and I guess the last thought is regardless of what happens in this lot of properties, it doesn’t detract from anything that can happen on the lots that are open or that are not being discussed here. So whatever happens in this property is not going negatively change the — the change, you know, and upgrades that happen in Uptown.

I’m actually in Uptown right now, so —

DASH: That’s right, it would not change the entitlement allowance on the other properties.

AGUIRRE: Right. It won’t affect anything whatsoever and if anything, especially by what we have heard so far from the staff, you know, it might actually make this development and this development Uptown richer, you know, if it has additional ties to the history of the community.

So with that, I think in the interest of time, I would like commissioners to focus on the nomination information and what the staff presented and the criteria in front of us.

[46:29]

LOYSEN: Well I did have one question and I — a lot of the photographs that we’ve seen are about family at the house and what I couldn’t tell from the photographs that were presented were related to the viability of the structure. And I didn’t know whether there was any assessment of that or any further documentation as to the soundness of the building and whether it could be restored.

I mean there’s a lot of little detail photographs, but it was hard for me to tell viability-wise and I didn’t see anything that was an assessment of the fact that it’s sturdy enough to be restored.

QUINN: Well, condition and integrity are two different things. So, the building can be in poor condition and still maintain integrity — like the building we saw, you just reviewed, for the demolition up in Manchester. That building was in very, very poor condition but yet it still had historic integrity.

In my opinion, I don’t think this building looks anywhere near as bad as that one in Manchester.

LOYSEN: No, but I mean so I guess maybe that’s my misinterpretation because to me, if a building’s about to fall down —

QUINN: That’s condition. Integrity is how much has it been changed from the original.

FALCONE: And it can still communicate the significance that’s being argued. So in this case, there’s several different significance arguments that are being made and whether or not this relates back to each of those different criteria.

The family photos were actually very helpful because it gives us a sense of what has changed and what has not. And although there is a tremendous amount of deferred maintenance on this, it does look like it has a tremendous amount of I think good to excellent integrity.
QUINN: Yeah, you can see like on the bottom photo here, it looks like the porch posts were spindles then up above, they’re rectangular. So that’s potentially a change that, yeah, see right there.

LOYSEN: The floorplan.

AGUIRRE: So, just to try to open more the conversation in here. What a wealth of information from what could be considered just a local person … in terms of history and what they have done, whether it’s positive or not, I mean we’re talking about bootlegging and Italians and I hate to bring up the stereotype, you know, but I mean that those were very violent times, too, when those things would happen, especially when some people had more power over others, which I think was not really covered too much, what negative aspects this could have had, you know, on the community.

But at the same time, you know, history is full of good characters and bad characters and we have to — you know, history, we cannot take sides over the other, but to learn and to see their impact on where we are currently for their contributions.

SNIPE: If I can make a comment real quick?

AGUIRRE: [Yes]

SNIPE: And this is going back to a comment you made that this building while in fact whatever else they plan for the rest of the land, that may not be true. It depends on what’s being planned and how much space is actually needed. This could have an impact on that overall plan on what someone plans to do. So without knowing what it is, we can’t make that blanket statement that it’s not going to impact the development. It could very well do that.

And then my second comment was, I personally have an issue about glorifying gangsters and people who were involved in organized crime. To me, that’s not something to celebrate. You would be arrested today for doing that. So I don’t see, just because it happened 70 years ago to celebrate it. It’s still, to me, a crime.

DASH: Commissioner Snipe, just to clarify, I wasn’t stating that nomination of these buildings would allow for what was applied for to take place. I was saying that the entitlements on the remainder of the property would not be affected, you know, whether these properties were determined to be historic or that City Council ultimately chose to vote to make these historic or not.

SNIPE: Understood that part. I was stating that if a developer has plans for the entire site, they may not moving forward until they have the entire site because of what they’re planning. So this piece of property may play a key role in that development happening is all I’m saying.

AGUIRRE: Okay.
FALCONE: There are a lot of really good points that are being raised and a lot that I had marked to bring to the nomination. I know that there are several criteria that have been identified as having significance to this site. I think that some are stronger than others and quite frankly there are some that I have very strong reservations about and I think that if we were to look at criteria that would apply to this, I would need to see a lot more justification, a lot more information, supporting them. I do think that the strongest argument is around the events and association with Joe Tito. And I also very clearly see that it is Criterion number ten. It is very much an iconic visual landmark.

One of the concerns that I had marked was that it, and I want to make sure that I get this right, it’s representative of the Italian-American immigrant kind of experience. I think that in order to make that argument, there needs to be a lot more context brought into this discussion, both around Prohibition, which adversely impacted the Italian-American community and kind of created a scenario and a situation that brought Joe Tito into this profession.

That’s largely absent here. And there was a line in the nomination that talks about Prohibition and how it’s connected to Eastern European Jews and the Italians and that’s absolutely right. But the kind of why, there needs to be a bit more of that about it.

And the other bit is that, while this is one person’s experience and one thread of I think kind of the larger fabric that is the Italian-American immigrant community, that it’s much, much larger than this. And I would be interested to have a better understanding of how Joe Tito and bootlegging related back to other Italian-Americans and immigrants and to establish that narrative more soundly.

I know it’s an incredible hill to expand upon when you’re writing a nomination like this and when it’s very much a cultural component, but you know the interplay between bootlegging and the Italian-American community was not always positive. And that I think would need to be explored in greater depth as would I think that Commissioner Snipe made earlier about crime and that throughout the nomination there are several instances that either leave a large question mark about what crimes were committed or what the arrests were for, specifically those that were related or happened on this particular site.

It’s a very thorny issue, crime and how it relates to significance. I don’t feel like I have a solid enough understanding of that in order to pursue — I think that criteria. What I do think is particularly strong, just to go back, is the connection to Prohibition and how this site is reflective of the kind of transitional moment in the Italian-American community from Prohibition to legalization. I think that that is particularly kind of well documented here and a bit of kind of fascinating commercial and residential component that exists between, you know, a dialogue between the house and the structure in the back served as from what I understand the first Rolling Rock distribution center, which then kind of catapulted, one would presume, that industry into its kind of national presence. And I think the letter of support that we received from the Heinz History Center’s Italian-American program was very eloquent and how they shone a spotlight on that particular moment and that kind of impact on commerce, in particular, and how people who were adversely impacted by Prohibition were then able to in some cases successfully transition that business into a model that, you know, not only supported them but also elevated elements in the community.

Which is the other bit of this. The nomination makes mention of how social aspects of the Titos’ lives were advertised in the newspaper. I would need to see a bit more granularity in that and that I know that although the crimes were kind of inherent in the bootlegging industry, you know, oftentimes the revenue from that would go to support kind of extended families and community institutions like social halls and
the church and charities. And I think that being able to capture a more complex narrative would suit this nomination well if those are criteria that the applicant would like to pursue.

You know, kind of that being said, I really do think that those three criteria for events, association with Joe Tito, and its kind of iconic status within the neighborhood are the strongest and I think put this nomination in pace where it’s well situated to be viable.

QUINN: If I could just make one comment to build on that that we have already on our historic register, we have the Iron City Brewery. You know, we’ve got potential here to do another thematic nomination in the future related to beer and alcohol production, should a nominator out there so choose. That could be something really interesting because we do have — I think we have a brewery on the South Side that’s listed.

FALCONE: We also have the Guckenheimer warehouse, which is in the [unintelligible] and that was a distribution center, as well, from an earlier period.

QUINN: Yeah, I was going to say, so like the Iron City Brewery is fairly earlierish and this here is much later, in the 1920s and thirties, but they all fall under that same theme, which is pretty interesting. I think there could be some interesting research done there. But I digress.

FALCONE: No, it’s an excellent point and I mean reading this nomination and kind of hearing the testimony that was collected today and through the letters, it is very apparent that this family has a story to tell and it is a very important one because it is very integrated into our experience and our past as Pittsburghers.

AGUIRRE: As long as we look at all the aspects that it impacted, for sure, and not glaze over others. Good point.

LOYSEN: I think one interesting thing to point out is that many of the negatives which we heard in testimony today were really related to the condition of the neighborhood, not to this building, and so two could be separated to a degree to say there’s things that have to happen in the neighborhood, not necessarily associated with whether this building is historic or not or whether the Titos were remarkable or not or whether Prohibition and its history and all of that is cool or not.

It seems like you could segregate the two, to a degree, and say, you know, think of them individually.

QUINN: Absolutely agreed.

AGUIRRE: And, I’ll have to say, like I have been working in Uptown for the last I think six years, so I’m very well-acquainted with some of the crime and, you know, unsightly and dangerous aspects to have happen here. But, I have to say, the neighborhood is moving up. You know, there’s so much development. There’s I think excitement within all the pain and suffering of all the construction work that we’re going through right now. So I think this talk about crime, it’s going to go away, you know, as more people are paying attention to this community and to this neighborhood.

Commissioner Green, you’ve been very quiet. I would like to hear from you.
GREEN: I don’t know that I have anything of substance to add, really. I hear the comments from everybody. I think this one is an interesting case and brings up interesting issues. I am quoting the concerns that Commissioner Snipe brought up. I don’t think it’s often that we have such a colorful history to consider.

LOYSEN: What I think is interesting about that is that not all of Pittsburgh — what’s interesting about Pittsburgh is rosy. I mean Carnegie, Frick, yeah, you know —

AGUIRRE: They have their dark sides in there, too.

LOYSEN: I mean some of the things, you know, that they’re intriguing for are not always on the sunny side, put it that way. And you know, that’s an interesting part of the history, I think, is it’s got two sides to the coin.

QUINN: It’s all about balance.

FALCONE: It brings up kind of one other observation that I had and I think something that would resonate well. I know that this is being brought to us by a community organization but inherently it has to do with a community that, with the Italian-American community, and I know Pittsburgh has a very large Italian-American population and a very active one with lodges and community organizations as well and I did not see their voice in this, with either a letter or kind of attestation or support or objection. I would be during our next commission hearing that is specifically for public comment, I would be interested to hear what the community has to say about this as well, the larger Italian-American community.

I think that it’s important that if we are considering a landmark because of its association with a larger group of people or a pattern of habitation or, you know, name it, that we hear from them as well.

[1:05:30]

AGUIRRE: Oaky, so trying to bring this back to the fold. It sounds like there is an interest in looking further into this nomination and the commissioners are feeling like there is criteria that we should continue to study and researching in order to make a recommendation with a yay or nay for this property. So in that way, I feel like we are answering our own question about trying to see the viability of this nomination.

Does that sound sort of accurate? Because if that is the case, then we should review the criteria and — sorry, it’s been a long day — review the criteria and have a consensus on what aspects do we believe this has a potential for an actual designation.

In the way that we have done this in the past, I have gone through each aspect of the criteria that have been presented and we vote if we feel that the nomination makes that yay or nay. We could do it that way. This one, we have one, two, three, four, five, maybe six aspects that could meet the — moving forward on the process.

Do commissioners feel comfortable doing that or do we feel that we need to discuss more concerns that we might have regarding the application?

[1:07:51]
LOYSEN: I have one more that I would like to raise. Because I don’t necessarily see this in the photographs which we have seen, but in particular Chip Desmone’s brief letter said that all of the architectural detail is gone. And I don’t know perhaps what he has seen that we don’t, whether his visual assessment is nearer to the current condition than these photographs. I was kind of hoping that he would be in the testimony today so that we could hear what he meant by his comment.

FALCONE: It was a bit perplexing because I think that there’s quite a lot of integrity to this and I think that especially when we are looking at materials and design, I mean obviously there’s been alterations to the porches, but to me it was remarkable that the slate roof is intact along with its pattern. And that also the — I’m sorry, it has been a long day — the wooden shingles as well in the front, I mean seem to relate and communicate the building’s past.

It doesn’t strike me that much has been lost here and if anything, I think that the transitions and some of the changes in the building, I mean even happened when the family was inhabiting this space and, you know, if you make the argument for the kind of larger Tito family, then this relates back to them and their history. And so even the original changes that might have been present as a Victorian building have been changed, but they’ve been changed by the Titos and so then they argue that the significance lies with the Tito family, then the original Victorian details are not as important as the building being able to convey the period of time when the Titos were living there.

[1:10:32]

LOYSEN: That’s why I was just curious about that particular one letter because it did not go into very much detail and that’s why I wondered if maybe — I didn’t know what it meant. And of course, out of context of the HRC, it didn’t make sense to, you know, inquire. So, we didn’t get the opportunity to clarify this evening.

AGUIRRE: I think we at this point, we should be used to the fact that we get people who oppose by the simple fact that they might just don’t want it to happen regardless of the significance, to having some significance, so I think trying to figure out what someone meant, you know, without further information, you know, that’s why we have a full hearing and we actually try to hear actual testimony for that.

But that’s a good point regarding to that.

LOYSEN: I don’t know where that leads us, but that was one thing that was kind of hanging in my brain as to what does he see that’s gone and never coming back or I don’t know.

AGUIRRE: But once again, regardless of what that means, if we only go by what the nomination has presented in terms of the history of the family in terms of the activities that have happened in here and its ties to other ramifications, you know, regardless if the building by itself has lost some of its detailing or other aspects, it will still meet the criteria.

AGUIRRE: So I don’t think that will, trying to find out what to decipher what that meant, it will make us disregard the rest of information that’s been presented.

QUINN: We can tell him to include photos in his letter next time.
AGUIRRE: Yep. Yeah. So, it is six-eleven in the afternoon and I think that this point I would like us to take a — if not quite a vote, a review of the criteria and see how we feel about it in terms of continue with the viability and see if it meets our approval or not or if it stops at this point.

[1:13:18]

Does that sound okay with everybody? Unless we can continue.

DASH: Yes, I think at this point all we need is kind of to determine that there’s reasonable cause to move this nomination forward and I think especially with some of the things that Commissioner Falcone noted, I think there’s more information that I’d like to see relative to being able to — like today, I probably would struggle to say that I would say “yes” on some of these, on some of the criteria. But I think there’s definitely reasonable cause to say that we should move it forward so we can determine next time on some of those criteria. At least that’s where I sit at this point.

[1:14:06]

AGUIRRE: I will agree with that. So we can go over the criteria and hold on, I’m making my little sheet over here.

Okay, so let me get back to my notes that I have in here. Just give me one second.

Okay, so we have Criterion number one: Location is a site of significant historic or prehistoric event or activity. And this was both identified by staff and by the nomination. Do we feel that there is a potential for this criteria, designation, for this property.

Commissioner Loysen?

LOYSEN: Read that one more time because I think I would say no..

AGUIRRE: Location is a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity and that in here, the nomination and the staff report, you know, made the comments about the Latrobe Brewing Company’s first Pittsburgh —

LOYSEN: Okay, the site of an historic event. Well yes, I would say yes.

AGUIRRE: Okay. Commission Dash?

DASH: I’d say there’s reasonable cause here, yes.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Snipe?

SNIPE: I’m saying no.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Falcone?

FALCONE: I have to think there’s reasonable cause.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Green?
GREEN: I think there’s reasonable cause.

AGUIRRE: Okay. And Commissioner Aguirre, it’s an aye. I am curious to learn, I wasn’t too sure about this in my reading of notes but I will be curious to learn more about this.

[1:16:20]

Next criteria item identified was number two. It’s identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspect of the development of the city of Pittsburgh, the state of Pennsylvania, mid-Atlantic region, or the United States. This was identified both by the nomination and the staff and here is where we have a little bit of conversation about the bootlegging and Joe Tito’s being a key figure in Pittsburgh’s early organized crime. Trying to find out more about both sides and its impact in the history.

But Commissioner Loysen?

LOYSEN: So, the way the criteria is worded versus what we think is interesting is maybe a disconnect because I think it’s interesting as to what he did but I think the wording is did he contribute — I don’t think what he did fits the description of the criteria but I think what he did was interesting in terms of Pittsburgh history.

I don’t know if that answers the question, yes or no.

AGUIRRE: Well, do you think there’s reasonable cause to try to get more information for this criteria item?

[1:18:00]

LOYSEN: I do. I do.

AGUIRRE: Okay. How about Commissioner Dash?

DASH: I think Commissioner Falcone mentioned this earlier. I think there’s a lot dots that would need to be connected that might not be connected yet, but I can say that — I would say that if they’re not, I might feel differently the next time we talk about this. But I feel that there’s reasonable cause to move it forward, yes.

[1:18:30]

AGUIRRE: Thank you. Correct me if I’m wrong, we can look at the criteria independent of the information we might pare down to — pare the information that is presented, so okay.

Commissioner Snipe?

SNIPE: No.

[1:18:46]
AGUIRRE: Commissioner Falcone?

FALCONE: Yes.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Green?

GREEN: Yes.

AGUIRRE: And Commissioner Aguirre is an aye.

Next item on the criteria, we have criterion number three. It’s an exemplification of an architectural type, style, or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

The staff and the nomination mention about being a former beer distributor and pretty much the beer distributorships.

LOYSEN: I’m a no for that. I don’t think it’s distinctive in terms of architectural style for beer distributorships or architecture. I think it’s more for its historic quirkiness, right.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Dash?

DASH: I’d say yes to the Fifth Avenue building but no to Colwell Street.

AGUIRRE: And I will agree with that, yes.

Commissioner Snipe?

SNIPE: I’m saying no again.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Falcone?

[1:20:30]

FALCONE: I would actually say the opposite, that I think there’s distinction for the garage, not the house. But, I will also say no all around on this criterion. I don’t think it’s the strongest and I also — I just don’t think it’s the strongest criterion. I think that there is a master’s or PhD thesis to be written about the beer distributor component that would really expand upon it, but for the purposes of this nomination, I don’t think that the argument is quite there for both buildings.

[1:21:05]

AGUIRRE: Thank you.

Commissioner Green?

GREEN: No.
AGUIRRE: And, this one is also a no for me. I didn’t feel that this was a strong, especially since this aspect is also associated with other criteria mentioned.

Criterion number four is not acknowledged. Criterion number five is also not in the docket, the planning and urban design. Criterion number six, it’s location as a site for important archaeological resources, I will say no. The nomination had a potential, but I don’t think that is really the case.

Criterion number seven: its 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.

The application and report talk about the organized crime playing key roles in Pittsburgh history and its associations with an Italian immigrant family entrepreneurship, which I think we will have to learn more for different sides of that potential criterion.

Commissioner Loysen?

LOYSEN: I’d say yes. I mean if it’s a part of Pittsburgh history, like it or not.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Dash?

DASH: The same on this one relative to condition two, you know where I think there’s more work to be done. But there’s reasonable cause to say yes now but there’s more work to be done before I would feel comfortable voting on that.

[1:23:11]

AGUIRRE: Okay. Thank you.

Commissioner Snipe?

SNIPE: It’s a no again.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Falcone?

FALCONE: At this point, no. I would need to see a lot more about the — a lot more narrative around the Italian-American community and [unintelligible]. At this point, no.

[1:23:34]

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Green?

GREEN: I don’t want to slow this down but isn’t this criterion about an architect, designer, engineer, or builder?

AGUIRRE: We’re on number seven.

GREEN: Oh, sorry. My bad. I am very confused here. I must have zoned out. Apologies.

I’ll say yes, that there’s reasonable cause.
AGUIRRE: Okay. And for me, I will say yes as well. I am curious — I want to learn more about it, for sure, especially for the — we need to learn more, I think, at this point.

Criterion number eight was not — it was identified by the nomination but not by the report. It’s pattern of neighborhood development, I don’t think this one applies whatsoever.

Number nine is representation of cultural, historical, archaeological, or related themes expressed in a distinctive areas. That was not identified, actually.

And criterion number ten, its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the city of Pittsburgh.

DASH: Commissioner, before we go there, in the nomination they did state with number eight, but they — the nominators said —

AGUIRRE: Yes, for number eight, they had — hold on.

DASH: They mentioned its significance in their application. I forget if — I don’t know if staff —

AGUIRRE: It says it here, staff did not feel that that this was strongly represented. The application stated the site qualifies for designation for its construction during a period 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, where other similar homes were built in the vicinity. This includes fashionable Victorian-style homes that were demolished after being documented by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. It is possible that the house was the elegant, commodious, and well-finished house on Fifth Avenue advertised for sale or rent in January 1889, owing to central situation of main thoroughfare and the new facilities for access. This property will soon be desirable for professional men as Fifth Avenue formerly was.

DASH: Yeah, I’m comfortable if you wanted to say no. I was just noting that they did.

AGUIRRE: No, they did. I mean we can put it to a vote. I mean I agree personally with what the staff had, not bringing it up in the sense that there’s other more prominent houses on Fifth Avenue that are not to the same scale and elegant as this property. So that’s why I don’t think that’s — not to say that this house didn’t happen on the same avenue, but not to the same level of elegance, Victorian mentioned on this.

Commissioners wan to discuss more about this criterion?

DASH: No, I agree.

AGUIRRE: Okay, so we’re going back to criterion number ten: it’s unique location or distinctive physical appearance represented an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the city of Pittsburgh — which technically is more like criterion eight here. Staff and the application talk about the former Tito-Mecca-Zizza House, 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, yada, yada, yada.
Commissioner Loysen?

LOYSEN: I don’t think that’s its primary feature. I think that it’s not a landmark in the city.

AGUIRRE: Okay.

Commissioner Dash?

DASH: I’d say no.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Snipe?

SNIPE: No for me again.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Falcone?

FALCONE: I’m a yes.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Green?

GREEN: No.

AGUIRRE: And Commissioner Aguirre, I will say yes on this one.

So reviewing just one moment. I’m counting the votes in here.

[1:28:18]

So in review of the criteria presented, criterion number five was seen as potential by commissioners.

This location is the site of significant historic or prehistoric event or activity. Criterion number two had five votes for its identification with a person or person who significantly contributed to the cultural history or related aspect of the city of Pittsburgh.

Criterion number four, no, number seven, association with important cultural or social aspects that was four votes from commissioners.

And then criterion number ten only had two votes for unique location or distinctive physical appearance.

So if we base for continued review, not to say that other aspects might not be discovered on the other two, I think we feel strongly about those two criteria items that we can look further into this nomination?

LOYSEN: Yes.

AGUIRRE: Okay. So then we will need a motion to move this forward.

[1:30:46]
LOYSEN: Commissioner Falcone?

FALCONE: I’m actually not comfortable making a motion on this one. I would defer to the other commissioners.

LOYSEN: It took me three times to get through my last one.

FALCONE: You can do it. I have faith.

LOYSEN: I’m deferring to somebody else.

AGUIRRE: I know that we are tired, but this is a necessary step for us to be able to continue moving forward into this date.

DASH: Then I’ll motion that there is reasonable cause to — there’s reasonable cause for the commission to determine that the proposed nomination will meet the definitions or will meet the criteria for a historic structure and do I need to put anything else in that motion?

LOYSEN: List the ones that we think we want to do.

[1:31:57]

DASH: That reasonable cause is based on the nomination’s information for criteria one, two, and seven? Are those the ones that, chairwoman, that —

AGUIRRE: We identified one, two, seven, and ten, but at this point we feel the strongest about criteria one and two.

DASH: Okay, so then on criteria one and two.

AGUIRRE: Okay, do I have a second?

LOYSEN: Second.

AGUIRRE: For the vote, Commissioner Green?

GREEN: Abstain.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Dash?

DASH: Aye.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Falcone?

FALCONE: I abstain.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Loysen?
LOYSEN: Aye.

AGUIRRE: Commissioner Snipe?

SNIPE: No.

AGUIRRE: Okay, did I mention Commissioner Dash before?

DASH: Yes.

AGUIRRE: And then Commissioner Aguirre is an aye. We have three yay, one no, and two abstain. So with three votes, nomination for viability and further research moves forward.

So with that, the next item on the agenda is director’s report.

[1:33:55]

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