

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Gill, William A., Building

other name/site number United Cigar Stores Company; Gasen's Drug Stores, Inc.; Jarman Shoe Store; Flagg Brothers

**2. Location**

street & town 622 Olive Street n/a not for publication

city or town St. Louis n/a vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis [Independent City] code 510 zip code 63101

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles MARCH 23, 2009  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____  _____	Signature of the Keeper  _____  _____  _____  _____	Date of Action  _____  _____  _____
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Gill, William A., Building  
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], MO  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

n/a

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

VACANT/not in use

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Vienna Secession

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation concrete

walls terra cotta

\_\_\_\_\_

roof asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Gill, William A., Building  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1910

**Significant Dates**

n/a

**Significant Persons**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Eyssel, M., Construction Company, builder

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

Landmarks Association of St. Louis

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Gill, William A., Building  
Name of Property

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**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 7/4/4/5/2/0 4/2/7/9/2/2/0  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

name/title Lindsey Derrington, researcher  
organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis date 31 July 2008  
street & number 911 Washington Avenue Suite 170 telephone 314-421-6474  
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63101

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

name/title S & P Holdings LLC  
street & number 1108 Olive Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63101

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Gill, William A., Building  
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

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### Summary

The William A. Gill Building stands at 622 Olive Street in downtown Saint Louis, Missouri (photograph 1). Modeled on Kansas City architect Louis Curtiss' 1908-1909 Boley Building (NR 3/9/71), the 1910 Gill Building was either designed by Curtiss himself or by its contractor, the M. Eysell Construction Company. The building stands four stories tall, plus basement, and occupies all of its 22 foot wide by 58 foot long lot. Glazed white terra cotta panels cover its exterior and conceal its steel frame structure. Each level has an open floor plan unobstructed by structural columns. The building's floors are of reinforced concrete supported by cantilevered beams. It is the only downtown commercial building done in the style of the Vienna Secession movement then active in Austria. The William A. Gill Building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

### Setting

The Gill Building was the first of a cluster of narrow, four to six story terra cotta clad buildings once listed in the National Register as the Olive Street Terra Cotta District (NR 1/2/86). At the time of the district's listing, the Gill Building was already separated from the other contributing buildings at 600-610 Olive by an eleven-deck concrete parking garage built between 1961 and 1962 (see photograph 6). The rest of the district was razed between 1986 and 1989 for a surface lot which takes up the entire southwest corner of Olive and Sixth Streets (see photograph 7). Thus the Gill Building's context has been dramatically altered. Today it is one of only two original structures on a block filled with parking structures (the other being a two-story brick building at 607 Olive Street; see Figure 1).

### Exterior

The building's exterior is clad in glazed white terra cotta panels. Only its north and west (main) elevations are finished while its south (rear) elevation is exposed and stuccoed. Its finished elevations are both asymmetrical since window placement and ornamentation give its northwest corner the appearance of a column rising from the street to terminate in a stylized capital. The roofline on its west elevation is stepped at center. The main entrance is situated at Olive and Seventh Streets at the base of this column, set into a chamfered corner with a 6 by 7 foot landing. The usual corner support column is absent because of the building's cantilevered superstructure. Two additional entrances are situated at the south end of the west elevation.

The first story is broken into two ribbons of windows, one at street level with another above which corresponds to an interior mezzanine. Steel spandrel panels and window casements frame each. At the south end of the west elevation, forming the base of the smaller southwest column, the terra cotta cladding extends down to the street level to frame an entrance which leads

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to the basement. Molded panels frame a round fanlight over this entrance and differentiate the wall planes to its either side.

The second and third stories are almost identical save for minor differences in ornamentation. An elongated egg and dart pattern alternates with molded circular medallions between each story, terminating at the "column" at the building's northwest end. This column is one bay wide on each elevation. Molded panels, geometric lines, rosettes, foliated brackets, and simulated coquillage keystones interspersed with variations of the egg and dart/medallion pattern help to visually differentiate the column above and beneath each window. Apart from the bay forming the column, the north elevation has single ribbons of four double hung windows with transoms on each story. The west elevation has the single bay on the column and, from left to right, a three-window ribbon with transoms, followed by a four-window ribbon, another three-window ribbon, and finally a two-window ribbon. The four-window ribbon is the most distinctive, with curved ornamental transom bars and eight panes between its center two sashes. The fourth story is very like the lower two though corner windows and its two-window ribbon are smaller. Throughout each story, the south end of the west elevation has ornamentation framing the two-window ribbons which mimics that on the building's column (except on the cornice line).

The building's complex ornament comes to a head in its crowning cornice (see photographs 2 and 3). Angular, almost jewel-like molded panels framing decorative shields are, in turn, framed by winged panels which protrude beyond the wall plane at three points to form the column's "capital." On the north elevation a roaring lion's head set in a roundel is framed by bands of the elongated egg and dart pattern. On the west elevation, where the roofline steps upwards, is yet another roaring lion's head, this one surrounded by foliation and positioned over a decorative, stylized entablature. A molded panel framing a decorative shield identical to those on the column portion of the cornice is above the fourth story's two-window ribbon.

### Interior

The floor plan of each level is open. Each floor measures roughly 21 by 47 feet except the first, due to the chamfered corner, and is unobstructed by structural columns thanks to the building's cantilevered construction. The building's wide windows, also enabled by its structural system, maximize sunlight throughout. The first story is accessible by the corner entrance at Olive and Seventh Streets as well as a narrow side entrance towards the building's rear on its west elevation (see photograph 4). Its ceiling height is 18 feet, allowing for a shallow mezzanine level which wraps around each wall with a cut-out atrium at its center. This mezzanine is reached by a staircase nestled in the southeast corner of the floor. The upper three stories are reached by an elevator positioned at the southeast corner of the building. Each is virtually identical save for their floor coverings, with the second story floor done in linoleum tile, the third in carpeting, and the fourth (see photograph 5) with its original wooden floors intact. The basement level is larger than those above, extending underneath the sidewalk.

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### Integrity

The building's most serious alterations have been to its windows and doorways. Its original single-paned windows have been replaced by wooden double-hung windows, and the number of windows in each ribbon have been increased on the upper three stories (see Figures 4 and 6 for comparison). The first story has been altered as well, having been partially enclosed circa 1970 and restored to something more like its original appearance in the mid-1980s. During this process, ornamentation around main and basement entrances was lost. The basement entrance has also been reduced to half its original size. Yet the building's terra cotta exterior remains in excellent shape, and its most important windows, those with the curved ornamental transom bars, are intact. The interior is devoid of any original millwork but is in good condition.

Figure 1: The map at left shows City Block 129 in 1986 with the Olive Street Terra Cotta District intact (asterisks mark non-contributing buildings). The map at right shows City Block 129 as it is

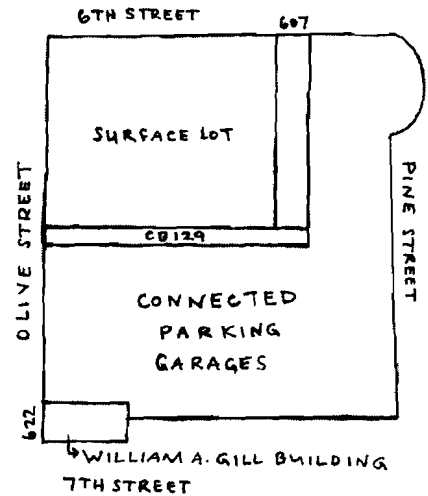
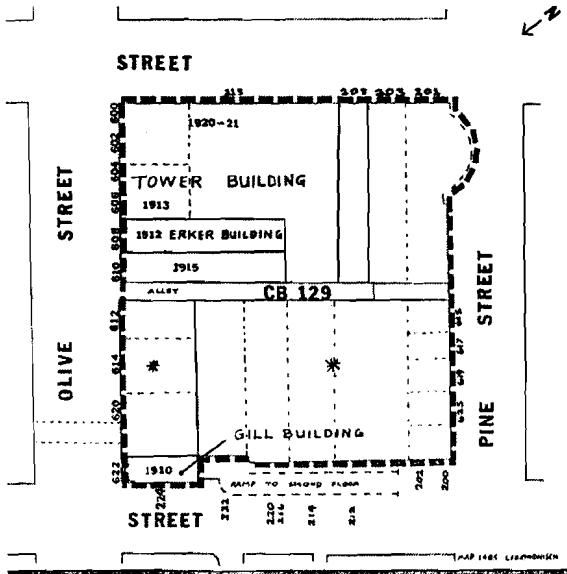
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today; the William A. Gill Building is all that remains of the former District.





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### Summary

The William A. Gill Building at 622 Olive Street in downtown Saint Louis, Missouri, is locally significant for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture. Closely modeled on famed Kansas City architect Louis Curtiss' 1908 masterwork, the Boley Building (NR 3/9/71), the four-story Gill Building was completed in 1910 as an investment for jeweler William A. Gill. Either Curtiss himself or the building's contractor, the M. Eyssell Construction Company, is responsible for its design. It is one of the city's earliest examples of an all terra cotta-clad structure and its only example of a downtown commercial building heavily influenced by the Vienna Secession. More stylistically advanced than its contemporaries, the Gill Building set the standard for new construction on the block of Olive between Sixth and Seventh Streets, which by 1920 was home to Saint Louis' most concentrated collection of terra cotta buildings. Of these, only the Railway Exchange Building, which comprises the entire north side of the block, and the Gill Building, which stands on the southeast corner of Olive and Seventh, remain; the rest of the south side of Olive, listed on the National Register along with the Gill as the Olive Street Terra Cotta District in 1986, has since been razed for a surface parking lot and a parking garage. The Gill Building is being nominated individually due to the pending delisting of this district. The period of significance is 1910, the date of the William A. Gill Building's completion.

### William A. Gill

William Aaron Gill was born in Edwardsville, Illinois, then a small town thirty miles northeast of Saint Louis, in 1860.<sup>1</sup> By 1880 he had moved to Saint Louis with his widowed mother and two sisters, working as a shop clerk before entering the watch-making and jewelry business with S. Edward Morrison at 718 Olive Street in 1888.<sup>2</sup> Around this time he married Anna Louise Scheaf and the couple welcomed sons Edmond and William in 1888 and 1889.<sup>3</sup> Gill & Morrison moved to 612 Olive, and after Morrison's departure in the early 1890s Gill continued the business in his own name.<sup>4</sup> He began dabbling in real estate investment, and on March 18, 1901 Gill purchased a ninety-nine-year leasehold on a narrow property on the southeast corner of Olive and Seventh Streets a few lots south of his store.<sup>5</sup> Though early on he neglected to "improve" this property, then home to a three-story commercial building, in 1908 he partnered with the Aberdeen Investment Company to complete a six-story office building on the southwest corner of Broadway and St. Charles Street (demolished).<sup>6</sup> Designed by Isaac Taylor

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<sup>1</sup> Death Certificate, William A. Gill.

<sup>2</sup> City directory.; United States Census, 1870, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> United States Census, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> City directory.

<sup>5</sup> St. Louis City Assessor's Office.

<sup>6</sup> St. Louis City Assessor's Office.; City Directory.; Building permits.

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and constructed by the M. Eyssell Construction Company, it was known as the Gill Building and housed his jewelry store on its first floor with offices, and a later a hotel, above (see Figure 2). The move elevated Gill's status by situating his store in the midst of a cluster of elite jewelry establishments and greatly enhanced his reputation.<sup>7</sup> He continued to purchase property both in and outside of Saint Louis, and strategically held onto his valuable Olive Street lease until the tides of the real estate market bode well for new construction.

### Evolution of Olive Street

Olive Street at this time was at the heart of Saint Louis' bustling commercial district. Its land values were the city's highest, but though a real estate boom in the 1890s had begun the trend of replacing three and four-story mid-nineteenth century structures with large-scale office blocks, re-development had slowed considerably by the early 1900s. Olive between Sixth and Seventh Streets retained its low-rise character, and city boosters and developers hungrily eyed it as ripe for new construction (see Figure 4). In July 1907 the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* proclaimed great things for this stretch of road, predicting its quick evolution into a "canyon of skyscrapers" in which an eighteen-story Revere Building on Gill's corner would feature prominently.<sup>8</sup> Plans fizzled, though by 1909 rumors of a \$2 million "large combination mercantile and office building" for the site were circulating once again.<sup>9</sup> Gill responded to these grandiose plans by commissioning something wholly unexpected, a four-story office building which, though small in scale, was unlike any other downtown.

### Louis Curtiss and Kansas City's Boley Building

The *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder* first drew attention to the jeweler's plans in February 1910:

Glass House Project: The Weisels-Gerhart Realty Co. are promoting a building to be located at the south[east] corner of Seventh and Olive streets, which will be patterned after the Boley Building at Kansas City. That is, it will be all glass and terra cotta. Just enough terra cotta being put in to cover the steel work necessary to carry the structure. The building will be four stories and will cost about \$70,000.<sup>10</sup>

The Boley Building, designed in 1908 and completed in 1909, was the groundbreaking work of Kansas City architect Louis Curtiss (see Figure 3). Born in Ontario in 1865, Curtiss likely studied either architecture or engineering at the University of Toronto in the mid-1880s, after which he is said to have studied in Paris. How Curtiss ended up working as a draftsman in Kansas City is unknown, but he began his career there with the firm of Adriance Van Brunt in 1887 before

<sup>7</sup> City Directory.; Sanborn Maps.; *St. Louis Daily Record*, 6 February 1908.; "Moritz Eyssell," *St. Louis, History of the Fourth City, 1764-1909*, 1909.

<sup>8</sup> "The New Olive Street," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 July 1907.

<sup>9</sup> *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder*, November 1909, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> "Glass House Project," *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder*, February 1910, p. 12.

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entering into partnership with Frederick Gunn in 1889. Gunn & Curtiss designed a number of impressive Revival style buildings in and around Kansas City before parting in 1899; it was during this final, independent phase of his career that Curtiss designed his most important and innovative work. Well known for his eccentricities, Curtiss drove one of the first automobiles in Kansas City, smoked personally monogrammed Turkish cigarettes, and cut his own hair. His designs during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reflected this personal nonconformity. Curtiss played with different avant-garde styles at will, liberally blending Art Nouveau, Craftsman, and Prairie School elements into his works at a time when most prominent firms strictly adhered to more academic designs based on historical models.<sup>11</sup>

Commissioned for the Boley Clothing Company, the Boley Building is seen as Curtiss' masterwork both as an engineering feat and for signaling a new direction in the development of his unique style. In order to satisfy his client's demand for "light and plenty of it," Curtiss developed a system of cantilevered floors to maximize the size of the building's windows, creating the first metal and glass curtain wall building in the nation.<sup>12</sup> Curtiss framed his massive "sheets" of glass with thin bands of terra cotta and decorated its distinctive roofline with terra cotta medallions and delicate patterns in the spirit of the Vienna Secession movement, tenets of which would forever impact his work from this point until his death in 1924.

In the years directly preceding and following the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the artists of Europe's avant-garde were rapidly transforming Western notions of aesthetics in response to the rigid historicism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Falling loosely under the umbrella of Art Nouveau, movements drawing upon the earlier works of John Ruskin and William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement arose in nearly every major European metropolis; their major figures include Antoni Gaudí in Barcelona, Victor Horta in Brussels, Charles Rennie Macintosh in Glasgow, and Hector Guimard in Paris. Each circulated its ideas throughout Europe through craft magazines and self-produced periodicals, building upon one another and giving rise to themes of organic, asymmetrical ornamentation and a belief that art and utility should be one in the same. Artists sought to apply a unifying aesthetic code to the graphic arts, applied arts, the more "traditional" artistic media, and architecture to wash away notions of the "high" and "low." The degree to which regionalism and social consciousness fueled each movement varied.<sup>13</sup>

Vienna's answer to Art Nouveau came in the form of the Secession Movement. The cosmopolitan heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna was Europe's second largest city and home to a host of Europe's leading artists and intellectuals, including Sigmund Freud. In 1897 nineteen of these artists and architects formed the Secession in revolt against Austria's established systems of training and exhibition. Gustav Klimt quickly emerged as the leading force amongst the group's artists, while veteran architect Otto Wagner served as mentor to an incredibly talented collection of young designers, including Joseph Maria Olbrich and Josef Hoffman.<sup>14</sup> The Secession published a monthly magazine, *Ver Sacrum*, to disseminate its

<sup>11</sup> Wilda Sandy and Larry Hancks, *Stalking Louis Curtiss*, p. 11-24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.; Fred Comee, "Louis Curtiss of Kansas City," *Progressive Architecture*.

<sup>13</sup> "Art Nouveau," *Grove Art Online*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Kirk Varnedoe, *Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture, and Design.*; Francois Baudot, *Vienna 1900: The Viennese*

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theories, and defiantly lashed out against the conservative cultural establishment, stating, “We do not recognize any difference between great and minor art, between the art of the rich and that of the poor. Art belongs to all.”<sup>15</sup>

Secession artists developed a more distinct, austere style than many of their European counterparts and directly laid the foundation for the Modern movement of the 1910s and 1920s. *Jugendstil* was the German term for the flowery motifs and fluid, organic forms which became the hallmark of Art Nouveau. While these elements tended to overwhelm the works of other artists throughout Europe, especially in France, the Secessionists rejected purely aesthetic notions of design in favor of a more universal aesthetic code based in functionality for everything from public transit to household goods. The lion of the movement’s architectural element, Otto Wagner insisted upon a functional basis for each design, stating that “nothing that is not practical can ever be beautiful.”<sup>16</sup> His early collaborations with assistant Joseph Maria Olbrich, who tended more towards the fanciful elements of *Jugendstil*, combined strong geometric planes, angular lines, and non-programmatic historical references with delicate organic details. Their work gave rise to a loose style which consisted of Olbrich’s *Jugendstil* superimposed upon Wagner’s neoclassicism and functionalism.<sup>17</sup> Works such as Wagner’s Majolika Haus (1898), church of St. Leopold (1903-1907), and Postsparkasse (1903-1912) and Olbrich’s Secession Building (1898) became defining touchstones of Secession architecture, presenting a “refined use of squares, and right angles that distinguished Viennese art and kept it from the excess and dubious deliquescence that *Jugendstil* sometimes lapsed into elsewhere.”<sup>18</sup> As Viennese architects continued to evolve and design into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their work grew from Wagner’s premise of the “integration of decoration with underlying forms related to building function rather than proscribed styles” which gave rise to the Modern movement.<sup>19</sup>

Curtiss had returned to Paris for an additional three months’ study in 1898 in the midst of these quickly evolving shifts in aesthetic and architectural theory. Known for his avid study of the avant-garde, several years later his works began to display the influence of the Vienna Secession.<sup>20</sup> The Boley Building’s structural system, developed in order to suit the building’s functional agenda, coupled with its ahistorical ornamentation which deferred to this agenda, bore the marks of this study.<sup>21</sup> Curtiss’ design, drawing as it did from foreign influences little known

### Secession.

<sup>15</sup> “Art Nouveau,” *Grove Art Online*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, *Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture, and Design*, p.28.

<sup>18</sup> Francois Baudot, *Vienna 1900: The Viennese Secession*, p.12.

<sup>19</sup> “Wagner, Otto,” *Oxford Art Online*.

<sup>20</sup> Wilda Sandy and Larry Hancks specifically site the Vienna Secession as a major influence on Curtiss’ style during the latter part of his career, *Stalking Louis Curtiss*, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> The belief that a building’s ornament should defer to its structure and function was, of course, also being championed in the United States by Louis Sullivan, who argued for this his 1896 article “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered.” The difference between Sullivan’s theories and those of the Vienna Secession lay in his argument that a building’s design should go even beyond functionality to directly express its interior structure. As a contemporary innovator and a student of the latest architectural theories, Curtiss shared similar influences with Sullivan and surely was familiar with his work, yet his own designs failed to embrace this fundamental tenant of the

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to the conservative Kansas City community, was "considered stark and barren, even ugly."<sup>22</sup> The Boley Building's rejection was by no means universal, as its sharp modernity soon found expression in William A. Gill's smaller project at Olive and Seventh Streets.

### William A. Gill Building

Gill took out a building permit for his project in March 1910, just a year after the Boley's completion, and commissioned the M. Eyssell Construction Company once again to serve as contractor.<sup>23</sup> The four-story Gill Building took up the entirety of its 22 by 58 foot lot and closely mimicked its predecessor in almost every way. The Gill's roofline and placement of decorative medallions as well as its arched Seventh Street entrance were taken directly from the Boley, as were the multi-paned windows with curved transoms on its Seventh Street elevation (this window design became Curtiss' signature in his later work). Structurally, it too "utilized a cantilevered system of construction."<sup>24</sup> Though the Gill Building stopped short of the Boley's vast curtain walls, its wide bands of windows approached the airiness of the Boley while thin white terra cotta spandrel panels hid its steel skeleton. A narrower, shorter structure with slightly more terra cotta and different decorative motifs, the Gill Building was nonetheless a close cousin of the original, just as fresh in Saint Louis as the other had been in Kansas City.

Whether or not Curtiss himself designed the Gill Building is unknown. Fred Comee attributes the building to Curtiss in his groundbreaking 1963 article which brought the almost-forgotten architect's work back in the national spotlight. All subsequent works on Curtiss have done the same based on this early attribution, though what primary source led Comee to that conclusion remains a mystery.<sup>25</sup> While he correctly identifies the building's date and Gill as its owner, Comee labels it the "Ideal Clothing Company Building" although no such establishment existed in Saint Louis either before or after 1910 (however, the Gill's first tenant was a clothing store by a different name).<sup>26</sup> There is no mention of Curtiss in local publications concerning the

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other's architectural philosophy. Though keeping function a high priority in a given design inevitably, to a certain extent, gives way to its outward expression, Curtiss, like those of the Vienna Secession, stopped short of intentionally foregrounding function and structure as an essential element of his designs.

<sup>22</sup> Fred Comee, "Louis Curtiss of Kansas City," *Progressive Architecture*.

<sup>23</sup> Building permits.; *St. Louis Daily Record*, 13 March 1910.

<sup>24</sup> "Unique Building," *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder*, April 1910, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> Mimi Stiritz (author, Olive Street Terra Cotta District nomination), personal letter concerning Curtiss attribution, 11 July 2008.; Larry Hancks, personal letter concerning Curtiss attribution, 17 July 2008.; Wilda Sandy, personal interview concerning Curtiss attribution, 16 July 2008.; Peter D. Foley (Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri-Kansas City), personal letter concerning contents of files on Louis Curtiss, 21 July 2008.; Tara Wenger (Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Kansas University), personal letter concerning contents of collection of Louis Curtiss materials and research donated by Fred Comee, 17 July 2008.; Correspondence by telephone with staff at the Missouri Valley Special Collections at the Kansas City Public Library, who reviewed building permit announcements leading up to March/April 1910 in Kansas City's *Stewart's Special* (trade magazine which listed permits for Kansas City architects' work locally and throughout the nation) revealed no mention of the William A. Gill Building, July 2008.

<sup>26</sup> City directory.

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building's construction, one of which identifies the M. Eyssell Construction Company as the architect as well as its contractor.<sup>27</sup> Published renderings of the Gill Building are signed by that company, pointing to the possibility that either Curtiss sold the design or that the contractor employed a draftsman to design a copy of Curtiss' work.<sup>28</sup>

The former scenario is rather questionable since Curtiss is not known to have sold his designs as a common practice.<sup>29</sup> It is also doubtful that such a strident individualist, then at the height of success and producing works throughout the nation, would allow others to take credit for his work. Known for his perpetual innovation with each project, it also seems unlikely that Curtiss would settle for simply repeating his earlier design.

The latter scenario seems more likely. Born in the German states in 1863, contractor Moritz Eyssell trained as a carpenter before immigrating to the United States with his mother and brothers in 1881. The Eyssells settled in Kansas City, where five brothers became highly successful druggists. Eyssell himself became a contractor in 1886, and in 1891 moved to Saint Louis where his business flourished. During the first phase of his career he worked with a number of prominent architects on both commercial buildings and residential ones, including five in the exclusive Compton Heights. He established the M. Eyssell Construction Company in 1907, after which he seems to have done more work independently. His firm produced homes without the aid of noted architects in the Parkview Historic District (NR 3/14/86), and the 1910 United States Census identifies Eyssell as an "architect & builder."<sup>30</sup> That such a successful firm would assume more responsibilities historically associated with architects was typical of the times. An article from the *Architectural Record* reproduced in the same *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder* issue carrying a rendering of the Gill Building deals exclusively with this trend:

In our big projects, in nine cases out of ten, the building companies or general contracting concerns finance the deal, have a large if not controlling interest and themselves dictate who the architects shall be. They tell them what is wanted, prepare a large part of the drawings and, to sum up, the architect has about as much authority there as the Vice-President has in the Senate. And to get right down to it, it is more through courtesy for the profession at large that the architect is there at all than it is through any sense of real need for him. It is only that sentiment that keeps him there. The building company could very well add a designer to its very large corps of engineers, specialists and draftsmen ... And whose fault is it if the profession has lost some of its dignity and power? Talk of "usurpation." Poppycock!<sup>31</sup>

With former professional, and strong familial, ties to Kansas City, Eyssell was likely familiar with Curtiss' work there and would have been capable of hiring a draftsman to produce a copy

<sup>27</sup> *St. Louis Daily Record*, 13 March 1910.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 13 March 1910.

<sup>29</sup> Wilda Sandy, personal interview concerning Curtiss attribution, 16 July 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Walter B. Stevens, "Moritz Eyssell," *St. Louis, History of the Fourth City, 1764-1909*, p. 696-698.; Mary Henderson Gass et al., *Parkview: A Saint Louis Urban Oasis*, p. 38, 192-193.

<sup>31</sup> "Architect vs. Contractor," *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder*, March 1910.

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such as the Gill Building.<sup>32</sup> That the *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder* specifically described the Gill as “patterned after” the Boley Building further implies that someone else is responsible for its design.

Whether Curtiss is responsible the Gill’s design or not, the smaller building emulated those crucial elements of the original which tied it directly to the theories of the Vienna Secession. Otto Wagner, whose work was the foundation of the movement, had “developed a very personal approach in his architecture, combining traditional elements with revolutionary practices and use of materials in order to meet contemporary requirements.”<sup>33</sup> From this premise, the Gill Building adopted Curtiss’ revolutionary cantilevered structural system to allow for larger windows and interiors free of structural supports, maximizing the amount of natural light and floor space for the building’s tenants (elements especially important for the relatively diminutive building). Like the works of the Secessionists, the Gill’s aesthetic program adopted select historical decorative elements (lion heads, rosettes, egg and dart patterns, coquillage keystones) yet arranged them in an ahistorical manner combined with bands of geometric patterns and molded panels. The sharp, rather gem-like ornamentation and flat wall planes are reminiscent of Wagner’s own work, and the building’s asymmetrical design, culminating in the unusual column-like formation at its one corner wall juncture, echoes the experimental nature of Secession work. The Gill’s glazed, and largely smooth, terra cotta cladding also had precedent in Vienna as well as other works of Art Nouveau architecture in Europe.<sup>34</sup> In a heavily industrial city such as Saint Louis, terra cotta was also a crucial part of the building’s functional program as the only material able to withstand the notoriously thick blanket of coal smoke which coated the city on a daily basis.

### **White Terra Cotta and the Gill Building’s Influence along Olive Street**

At this time few buildings in Saint Louis were entirely sheathed in terra cotta (by 1908 there were three; Midtown’s Metropolitan Building is the only one which remains [Midtown Historic District, NR 7/7/78]). Red terra cotta had been a popular decorative material in Saint Louis since the 1890s, blending easily with the city’s definitive red brick. The use of glazed white terra cotta was fairly new, and using it to cover a building’s exterior was seen as a way “of freeing the city from dirt due to smoke.” Saint Louis imported its coal from the mines of Southern Illinois, and once burned, this soft coal was known for cloaking the city in a thick, dark

<sup>32</sup> Curtiss and Eyssell also may have been linked through architect brothers Benno and Ernst Janssen: Curtiss’ longtime draftsman Fred McIlvain was close friends with Benno Janssen, later renowned for his work in Pittsburgh, and Eyssell had worked with Ernst Janssen, quite prominent in Saint Louis and, like Eyssell, a leader in the German American community here and member of the Liederkrantz Club. Curtiss himself was very intimate with the Janssen family, and the lost love of his life was Benno and Ernst’s cousin. With such ties of friendship and profession, again, it is likely that Eyssell knew of his counterpart’s forward-thinking work. McIlvain himself may have even been the commissioned draftsman, for he left Curtiss’ service in 1909 and designed some of his independent works in Curtiss’ distinctive style.

<sup>33</sup> “Art Nouveau,” *Grove Art Online*.

<sup>34</sup> “Terracotta.” *Oxford Art Online*.

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atmosphere of smoke. Daily doses of this smoke covered the city's buildings in an equally dark layer of soot. White terra cotta with vitreous glazing was seemingly impervious to this problem; a good rain would wash it clean, leaving the building "as white today as when it was first built."<sup>35</sup> The Gill Building's use of white terra cotta took hold on Olive more than anywhere else in the city. Two year after its completion, Mauran, Russell & Crowell's massive white terra cotta Railway Exchange Building was underway across the street (NR pending), and Will Levy's white terra cotta-fronted Erker Brothers Optical Company Building was completed at 608 Olive. Albert Groves' Tower Building at 604-606 Olive, faced in the same material, was completed in 1913, and the same architect and client executed yet another at 610 Olive in 1915. George F. Tower commissioned the final white terra cotta building for this stretch of Olive at the corner of Sixth Street in 1920. In all, this collection of buildings represented the finest and most complete use of the material the city; its use fell out of fashion soon thereafter.<sup>36</sup> The southern side of the block was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 though all but the Gill Building had been razed by 1989 (see Figure 6).

### History After 1910

The Gill Building's first tenant was Spiro & Singer Clothing which remained only two years before moving elsewhere. Florist Frederick J. Foster is listed there in 1916. That year William A. Gill incorporated the Wag Investment Company with himself as president and his sons as treasurer and secretary and transferred the leasehold of the Olive property to the new business.<sup>37</sup> He recruited a new tenant, a branch of the United Cigar Stores Company, which moved from the former site of Gill's jewelry store at 612 Olive. Gill passed away in 1925, leaving the bulk of his property to wife Annie. Ever-aware of the value of his small holding at Olive and Seventh Streets, his will specifically states Gill's "express wish" that the leasehold not be sold for less than \$100,000. Two years later Annie Gill and her sons dissolved Wag Investments and sold the leasehold to the Weil Realty Company. In 1930 Gasen's Drug Stores, Inc. replaced United Cigar, and Jarman Shoe Store replaced Gasen's ten years later. Throughout this time the Gill's upper floors were rented offices. In 1967 Weil Realty sold the building to the real estate magnates of the Dubinsky family, who in 1976 sold it to Jack Randall. By this time it was home to Flagg Brothers' Men's Shoes store (see Figure 7).<sup>38</sup> By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Gill Building stood empty and in disrepair; its current owner has undertaken its rehabilitation into restaurant space and offices.

Though the Gill Building's glazed white terra cotta cladding had a significant influence upon subsequent construction downtown, its style did not. Situated on a street lined with buildings done in a variety of Revival styles along with examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque and Chicago Commercial styles, the Gill's Vienna Secession influences began and

<sup>35</sup> "White Building Material in St. Louis," *St. Louis Realty Record & Builder*, April 1908.

<sup>36</sup> Mimi Stiritz, *Olive Street Terra Cotta District Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*, 1985.

<sup>37</sup> St. Louis City Assessor's Office.; City directory.

<sup>38</sup> Will, William A. Gill.



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ended with its own design. Of the other buildings on Olive between Sixth and Seventh Streets, the Railway Exchange's exquisite terra cotta exterior took from the Italian Renaissance while those on the south side of the block followed the Chicago School.<sup>39</sup> The Gill Building would be the only downtown commercial structure built in the vein of the Secession.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

The William A. Gill Building remains unique among Saint Louis' downtown commercial structures in its origins, design, and influence. Modeled on Louis Curtiss' Boley Building, the highly-stylized Gill introduced the Vienna Secession style to the city's downtown. The building's asymmetrical design, with a decorative program free of historical precedent, conceals the building's cantilevered structural system utilized to maximize its functional agenda. Its glazed white terra cotta cladding had a major impact upon subsequent designs along the block of Olive between Sixth and Seventh Streets, inspiring the development of the former Olive Street Terra Cotta District of which it is the only remaining contributing resource. The William A. Gill Building has no equal either stylistically or in its particular influence; standing alone, its importance deems it worthy of an individual listing.

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<sup>39</sup> Mimi Stiritz, *Olive Street Terra Cotta District Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*, 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Only two other documented structures elsewhere in the city, both residential, were done in the style of the Vienna Secession: Barnett, Haynes & Barnett's 1908 J. W. Thompson House at 17 Hortense Place in the Central West End, and Ernst Janssen's 1907 Teichmann House in Compton Heights. A 1913 Masonic hall built by the Mt. Moriah Temple Association at Natural Bridge Road and Garrison shows the influence of the Vienna Secession as well, though with a decidedly Egyptian flavor.

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Figure 2: William A. Gill's insignia.

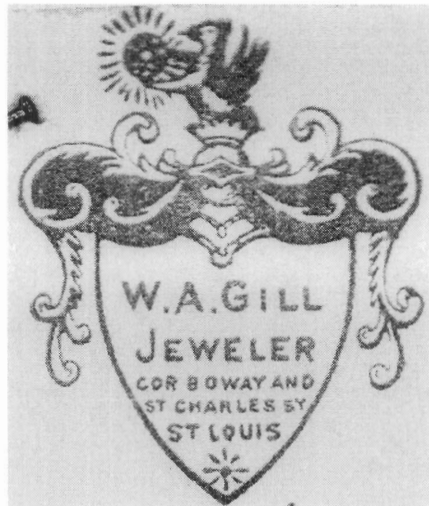


Figure 3: Boley Building circa 1970 (*Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1976*, p. 61).



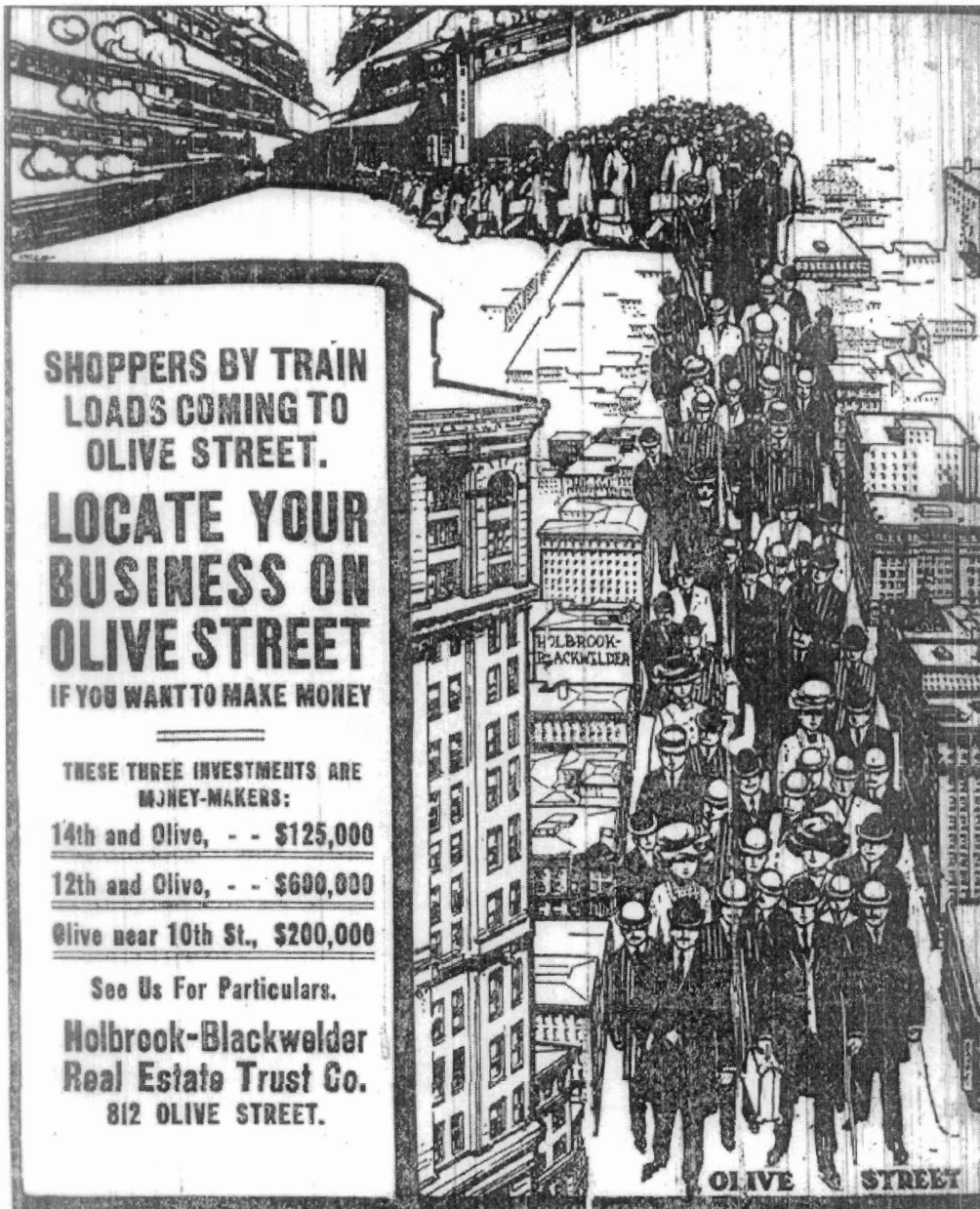
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Figure 4: Real estate advertisement from the January 9, 1910 edition of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. View shows Olive Street looking west from Sixth Street; note the low-rise, yet-to-be-redeveloped buildings to the left.



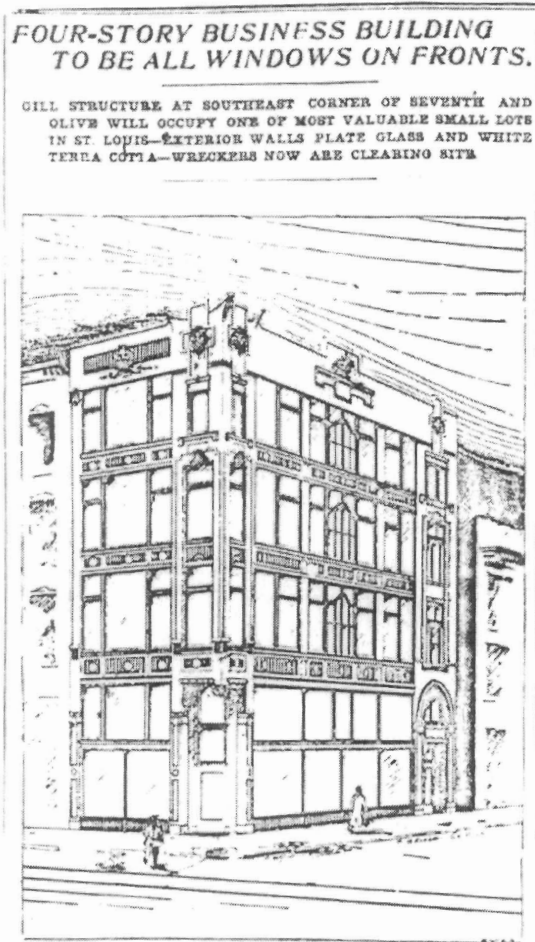
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Figure 5: Rendering published in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat on March 13, 1910.



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Figure 6: Olive Street Terra Cotta District, view from the northwest, in 1985 (compare with photograph 6).

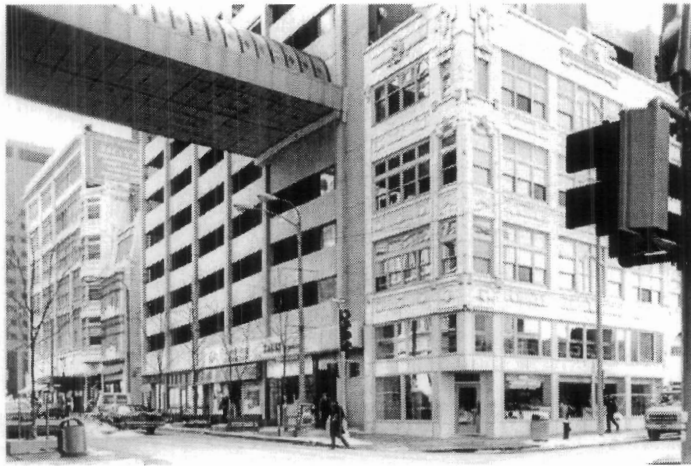


Figure 7: William A. Gill Building circa 1975.



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### Verbal Boundary Description

The William A. Gill Building is located at 622 Olive Street on City Block 129 in downtown Saint Louis. The structure's footprint comprises all of its 22.3' by 58.4' foot lot. It stands on the Chouteau-Lucas Addition on the southeast corner of Seventh and Olive Streets. The nominated property is legally known by the City of St. Louis Assessor's Office as parcel number 01290000107.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel includes all of the property historically associated with the William A. Gill Building.



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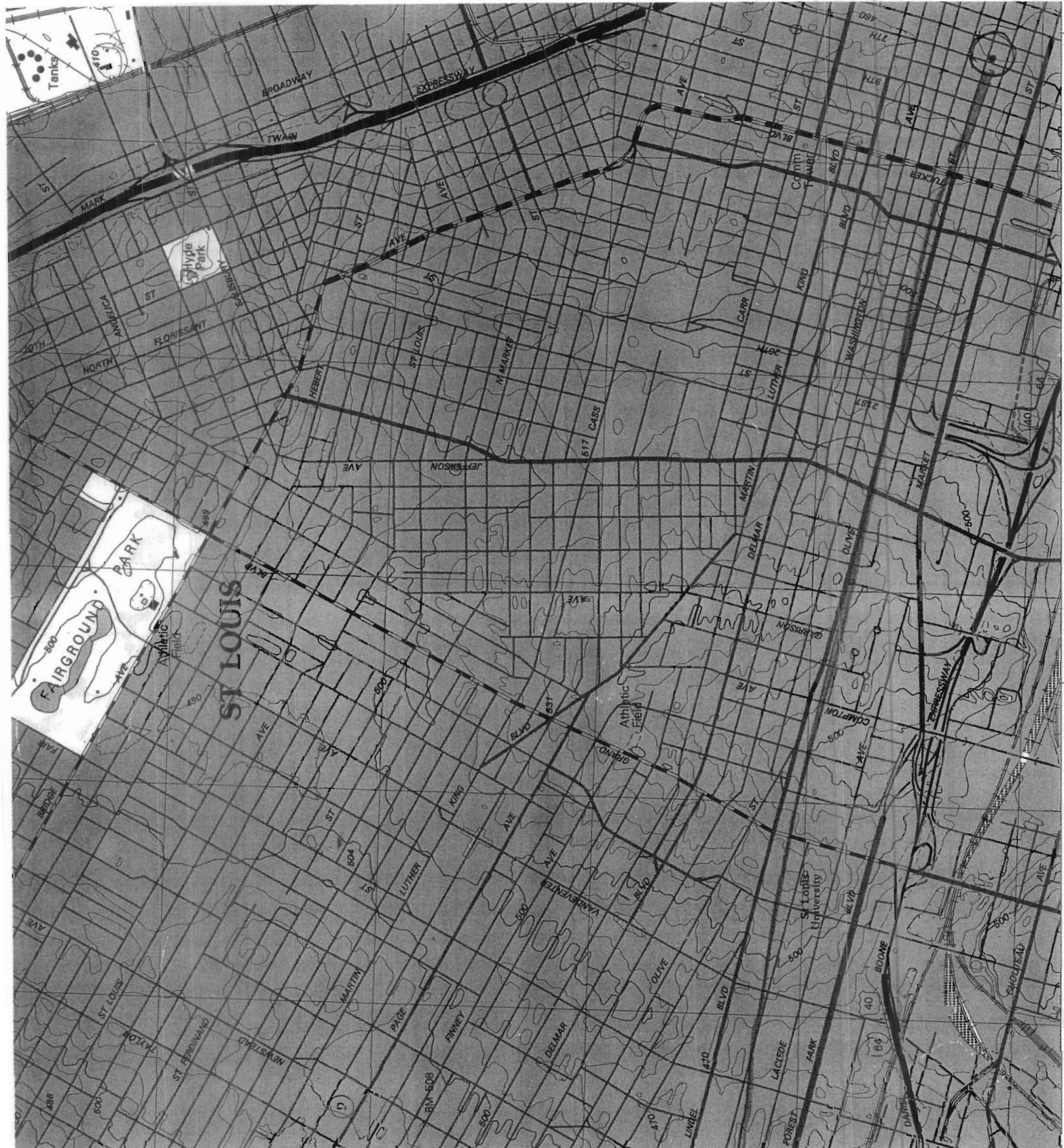
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Unless otherwise indicated, the following is true for all photographs submitted with this nomination:

William A. Gill Building  
622 Olive Street  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri  
Photographer: Lindsey Derrington  
July 2008  
Images on file at: Landmarks Association of St. Louis

The descriptions of each photograph number are:

1. Looking southeast at west (main) and north elevations from Olive Street.
2. Looking east at detail of west (main) elevation; the Railway Exchange Building is visible in the background at left.
3. Looking south at detail of north elevation.
4. Looking northwest at interior view of first floor.
5. Looking northwest at interior view of fourth floor.
6. Looking southeast along Olive Street from Seventh Street.
7. Looking southwest at the intersection of Olive and Sixths Streets where the buildings at 600-610 Olive Street once stood.



40' 483 482 481 720 000 FEET (ILL WEST) 480 479 38°37'30" 90°15' 740 741 742

*William A. Gillo Bldg  
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO*

*Zone 15  
E: 744 450  
N: 4279020*



FOR LEASE  
941-3006

VERY  
COOL  
BUSINESS  
LOFTS!

3-FLOORS  
3600 SQ.FT  
ELEVATOR  
TO ROOF!

GREAT  
DEAL  
GREAT  
LOCATION!

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100% TOP-GRADE











Historic building facade with Art Deco architectural details. The building features multiple stories of windows and decorative elements. A prominent sign on the corner reads "Macy's".

VERY COOL BUSINESS LOFTS!  
3-FLOORS 3600 SQ FT ELEVATOR TO ROOF!  
GREAT DEAL GREAT LOCATION

Macy's

Macy's

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OLIVE

PARK

DRY  
BRI  
WASH

CU