

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 Riggio Building

other names/site number The Bank

2. Location

street & number 5145-5149 Shaw Avenue [n/a] not for publication

city or town Saint Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63110

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 03/24/04
 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.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<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): _____	_____	_____

Riggio Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Beaux Arts

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

TERRA COTTA

roof RUBBER

other MARBLE

Narrative Description

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

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

ETHNIC HERITAGE/European

Period of Significance

1925-1953

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Catanzaro, Joseph B./Architect

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Riggio Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property under 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1][5]	737500	4277930	2	[][]	[][][][]	[][][][][]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	[][]	[][][][][]	[][][][][][]	4	[][]	[][][][][]	[][][][][][]

() See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen Bode Baxter, Architectural Historian; Timothy P. Maloney, Mandy Ford, Matthew Cerny Research Associates
organization Karen Bode Baxter, Preservation Specialist date October 3, 2003
street & number 5811 Delor Street telephone (314) 353-0593
city or town Saint Louis state Missouri zip code 63109-3108

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Hill Development Company, LLC c/o Walter A. Boyle, President
street & number 5147 Shaw Avenue telephone (314) 771-7820
city or town Saint Louis state Missouri zip code 63110

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 Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description

SUMMARY

The Riggio Building, located at 5145-5149 Shaw Avenue in St. Louis, Missouri, is a two-story Beaux Arts Classicism-influenced commercial building. The Riggio Building is prominently located on the northeast corner of two main commercial streets, Shaw and Marconi Avenues, within the historic Italian-American neighborhood in South St. Louis known as the Hill. Constructed in 1925 of brick laid in a running bond, it is architecturally unique within a neighborhood which consists primarily of one and two-story brick commercial buildings mixed with residential buildings. Above a distinctive first floor facade of glazed terra cotta on Shaw Avenue and wrapping around to Marconi, the second floor cornice consists of additional terra cotta detailing with distinctive modillions. The terra cotta piers and first floor entablature frame the doorways and display windows with Ionic pilasters and decorative friezes on the two primary entrances. The 5149 Shaw storefront wraps the corner and was designed to look and function as an office and bank. The 5147 Shaw storefront with its recessed entry provided retail space for another business. On the second floor, addressed as 5145 Shaw, were two residential units, one of which had an attached office. The building is under renovation as part of a historic tax credit project for Shaw Coffee, which operates a coffee house and roasting operation in the east storefront where the pressed tin ceiling and wood floors have been restored. The current renovation involves removal of late 20th Century office partitions and finishes from the west side and restoration of original features including the terrazzo floor, pressed tin ceiling, and marble-faced vault to return the storefront to its original open interior. The second floor apartments retain their original layout, trim, and many doors. The exterior retains a high degree of historic integrity, except for the replacement of the second floor sashed windows. The entries and display windows on the first floor retain their original framing, doors and marble bulkheads.

EXTERIOR

Extensive glazed terra cotta detailing, including piers along the edges of the building and between the storefronts, begins at the ground level and surrounds the doors and windows of the first floor along the primary façade and the south half of the west elevation. A terra cotta entablature with a simple projecting cornice capped with brick soldier course extends the length of the façade and continues along the south half of the west elevation to distinguish and separate the terra cotta first floor storefront from the surrounding brick walls on the second floor and the north half of the west elevation. A terra cotta belt course continues from the base of the entablature and runs the length of the brick wall on the west elevation.

The east side of the primary façade is the 5147 Shaw storefront, which has a central, recessed entry with rectangular light wood entry door flanked by display windows. The display windows retain the original transoms and the green marble kickplates below the windows. A large gold-colored awning hangs above the storefront over the clear glass transom. At the far east end is the door to the second floor 5145 Shaw apartment. The entry is slightly recessed and has a triangular terra cotta pediment above and a terra cotta surround on the sides.

Along the first floor of the west end of the primary (south) façade is the 5149 Shaw storefront (known as the Bank in the neighborhood because of its early loan services), which has paired wood framed, rectangular light doors with large display windows on either side. The display windows have green marble kickplates beneath them and ten light transoms overhead. Surrounding the paired wood entry doors engaged terra cotta Ionic columns support the terra cotta cornice. The name "RIGGIO BUILDING" is engraved in a terra cotta frieze panel above this entry cornice with a decorative cartouche flanked by cornucopia capping the cornice.

Along the south half of the west elevation, which faces Marconi Avenue, is the side entrance to the Bank that replicates the terra cotta details, display windows and paired doors of the main entrance, except for the transom windows that are each a single pane of glass. To the north of the entry, on the brick wall (with the exposed concrete foundation at the base) is a set of paired, one-over-one double-hung sash windows with a terra cotta sill and a lintel that is composed of three terra cotta blocks positioned as the keystone and corner blocks with a brick soldier course lintel in between them.

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description (continued)

Next to the paired window is a single window with a similar terra cotta keystone and brick soldier course lintel. At the north end of the wall is a slightly recessed entry that leads to the rear second floor apartment and it has another lintel comprised of a terra cotta keystone and brick soldier course.

A continuous terra cotta sill runs the length of the second floor of the building on both street elevations, designed to further separate the first and second floor visually. Dentils and a cornice extend above the second floor windows over the area that has the terra cotta surrounds on the first floor façade and west elevation, giving the appearance of an attic story. The dentil work and cornice then become a terra cotta belt course on the back half of the west elevation. The six, one-over-one, double-hung, sash windows on the second floor façade are not original but replicate the original window pattern. A smaller window with its own terra cotta sill is located at the east end. Each window has a lintel that consists of a brick soldier course with a terra cotta keystone. The south window on the west side, also not original, matches those on the façade as well. Next is a smaller, keystone, sashed window with its own terra cotta sill that is the same as the one on the east corner of the façade. To the north of that window is a set of paired, sashed windows, then a triple sashed window and another set of paired windows, all matching the façade with similar lintels of brick soldier course with terra cotta keystones and corner blocks.

The north elevation has very few embellishments and is divided into two sections. The west section is two stories in height but the east section is only one story at the back (north) wall, although it actually forms an original rooftop deck behind the second story apartment. Beginning at the northwest corner of the rear elevation, an open metal staircase leads to the roof deck on the back of the east section that retains the original terrazzo treads. The west section has two sets of paired one-over-one double-hung sash windows on the second floor that on the first floor are vertically aligned with two single one-over-one double-hung sash windows. The east window on the first floor is slightly smaller than the others and under the iron staircase. All of the windows have been replaced but match the original pattern and retain the original brick sills and soldier courses for lintels. The one-story east section of the north elevation has two folding wooden garage doors that lead into the exposed basement level from a concrete ramped driveway along the rear of the building. Above the doors are two pairs of eight-over-one double-hung wood sash windows. A round metal gutter is attached at the roofline of both sections and there is a metal railing along the roofline edge of the deck. The east elevation is void of any penetration and abuts the adjoining building.

INTERIOR

The west side (5149 Shaw) served as Riggio's offices, known by the Hill residents as the Bank. It was originally designed with an open floor plan, similar to a bank's design. The Bank was remodeled in the 1970s and converted into law offices with carpeting, wood paneling, partition walls and an acoustical dropped ceiling, dividing the space into a series of private offices. At the rear of this west section is the original, massive, marble faced safe deposit vault with chromed steel safety deposit boxes along the brass faced north wall. To the east of the vault is a short hall that led to a small bathroom. The bathroom doorway retained the original paneled, wood door and plain cap trim. During the discovery phase of the current historic rehabilitation project, other original features were found, often in fair condition. Hidden from view but still intact above the dropped ceiling was the decorative pressed tin ceiling and molding that extends throughout the Bank. Under the commercial carpeting, the original terrazzo floor was found to be intact. Even the trim around windows and doors continued above the acoustical ceiling. Both the ceiling and flooring were uncovered during the discovery phase of the rehab.

The east half of the retail first floor interior space was designed as an open space. Addressed as 5147 Shaw, this storefront retains its open space and had already been renovated recently and is therefore not part of the current historic tax credit application. Its wood floors, crown molding and pressed tin ceiling had been carefully restored. It currently houses Shaw Coffee (both a coffee shop and roasting operation) and retains a casual atmosphere. A new office was added across the back of the store, elevated by a half-flight of stairs.

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description (continued)

Both second floor residential units can be accessed through the door addressed as 5145 Shaw located at the east end of the façade and the north unit can also be accessed from the Marconi entrance at the rear of the west elevation. The straight staircase on Shaw leads to a landing with an entrance to the west for the front apartment and to the north for the rear apartment. The east hall continues and leads to a door on the north wall that opens onto the roof deck. The single light, wood panel door to the front apartment has two, single light, single-panel, false, wood doors attached to the south. To the north of the door is a narrow sidelight. Above each of the doors and sidelight is a transom forming a wood framed, lighted wall. The door leads into a large, long room with a large boxed skylight near the center of the room that was used as an office for the attached apartments. The smaller rooms of the apartment flank on the south and west sides and a pair of fifteen light, wood panel, French doors separate the two south rooms. The rear apartment is much smaller than the other unit and is L-shaped. The north wall of the living room in this apartment features an arched opening which leads to a small corridor, off of which are two smaller rooms and the bathroom. The west stairs open into the living room with a wood railing but the stairs are actually metal with original chrome risers and rubber treads. Most of the interior doors in both apartments are 2-panel, wood doors and each retains their original wood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, three-member baseboards and plain cap trim.

The basement has a poured concrete floor with wood stairs from both storefronts. The floor joists above are exposed and the wood garage doors are the most prominent features besides the bank vault that is positioned directly before the first floor vault.

ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

The current historic rehabilitation project is carefully trying to retain and restore the distinctive features of the building. While the exterior retains most of its original detailing, much of it needed repairs, especially the terra cotta, window framing, and doors. The previous owner had already replaced all the wood sashed windows with aluminum sashes but at least they retain the original one over one appearance. On the interior, the grandson and great nephew of the original Riggio Brothers, removed the safety deposit boxes (for salvage metal) before selling the building, thankfully leaving behind the rusted chrome steel plate doors to each box, which the current owner is re-installing in the vault. The pressed tin ceiling, marble vault walls, vault door, terrazzo floors, and trim have been uncovered and are being carefully cleaned and repaired to restore the historic space to much of its original sense of volume and focussing on the massive vault. Upstairs, the skylight, floors, walls and trim are also being repaired, as is much of the original ceramic tile bathroom walls, even though the apartments will be used as offices. As such, the Riggio Building retains most of its character features and decorative details and the recent renovations undertaken by the current owner are uncovering and restoring those features and details that have been hidden from view for the last generation.

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of City of St. Louis, MO

Locating Property



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National Park Service

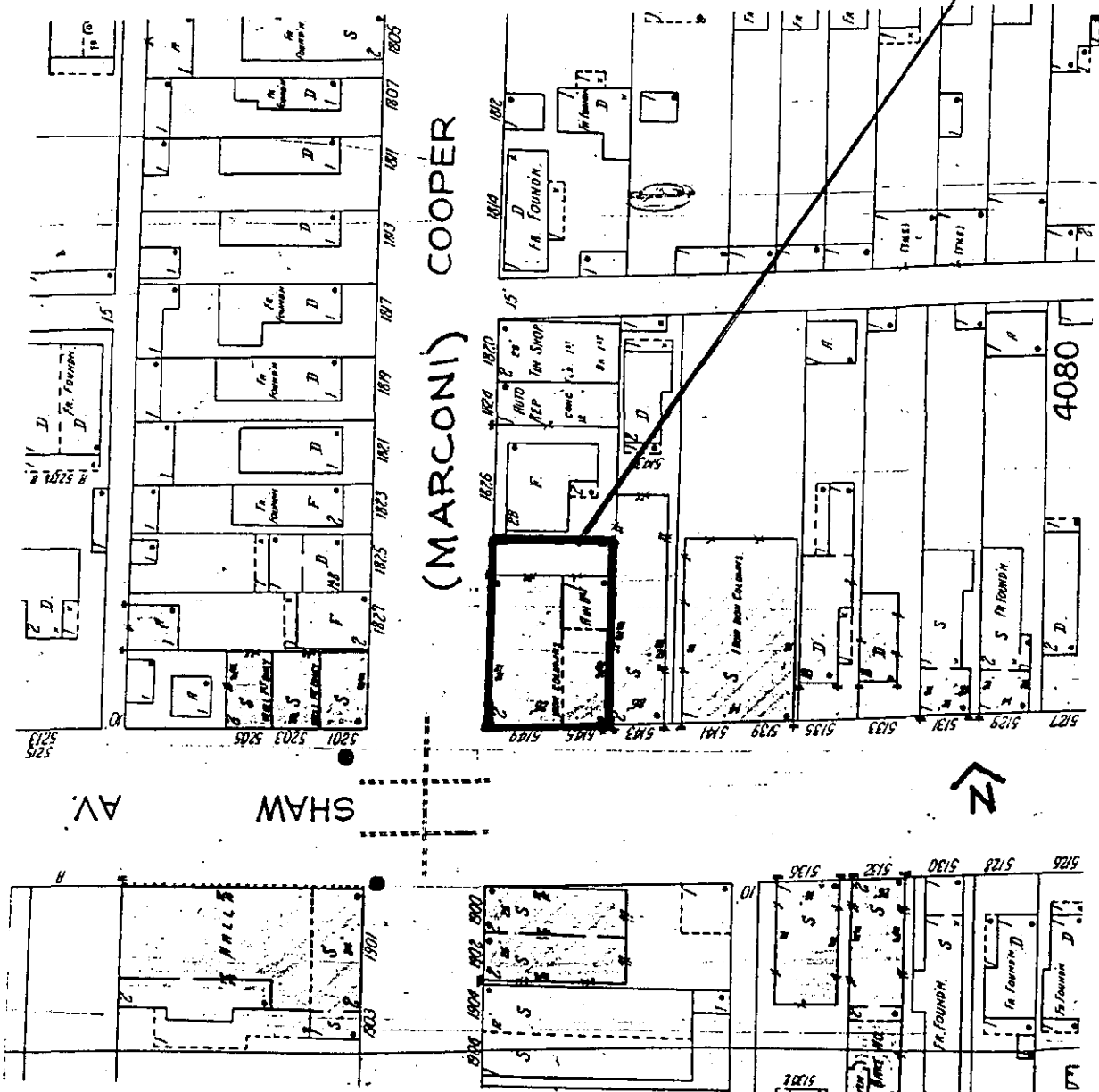
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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1926

Locating Property



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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Courtesy of Walter Boyle, Property Owner

1960s Era Photo of Riggio Building, looking Northeast



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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Courtesy of Walter Boyle, Property Owner

1950s Era Photo of 5147 Shaw Storefront



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

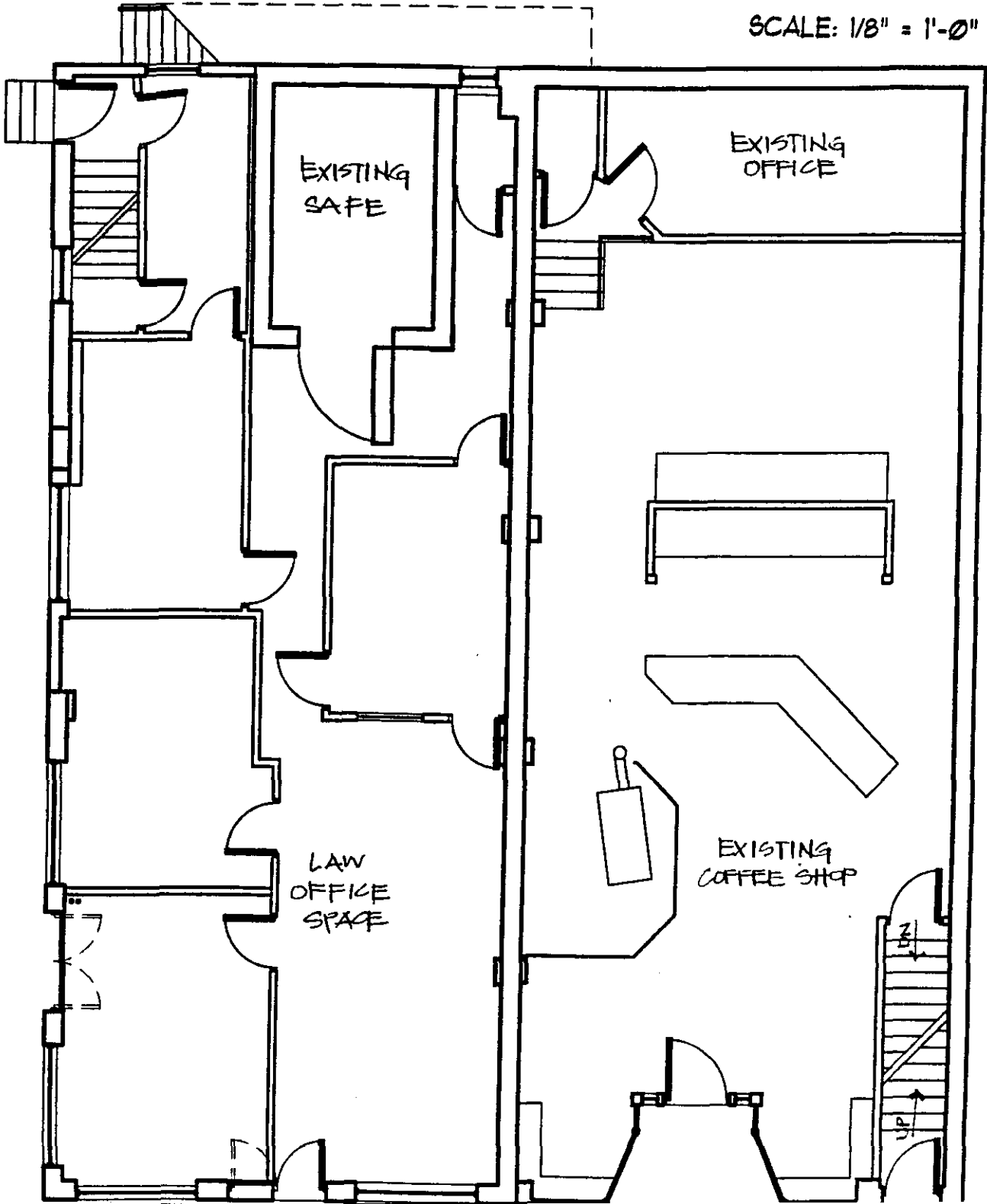
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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

First Floor Plan in 2000 (Prior to Current Rehabilitation Project)

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



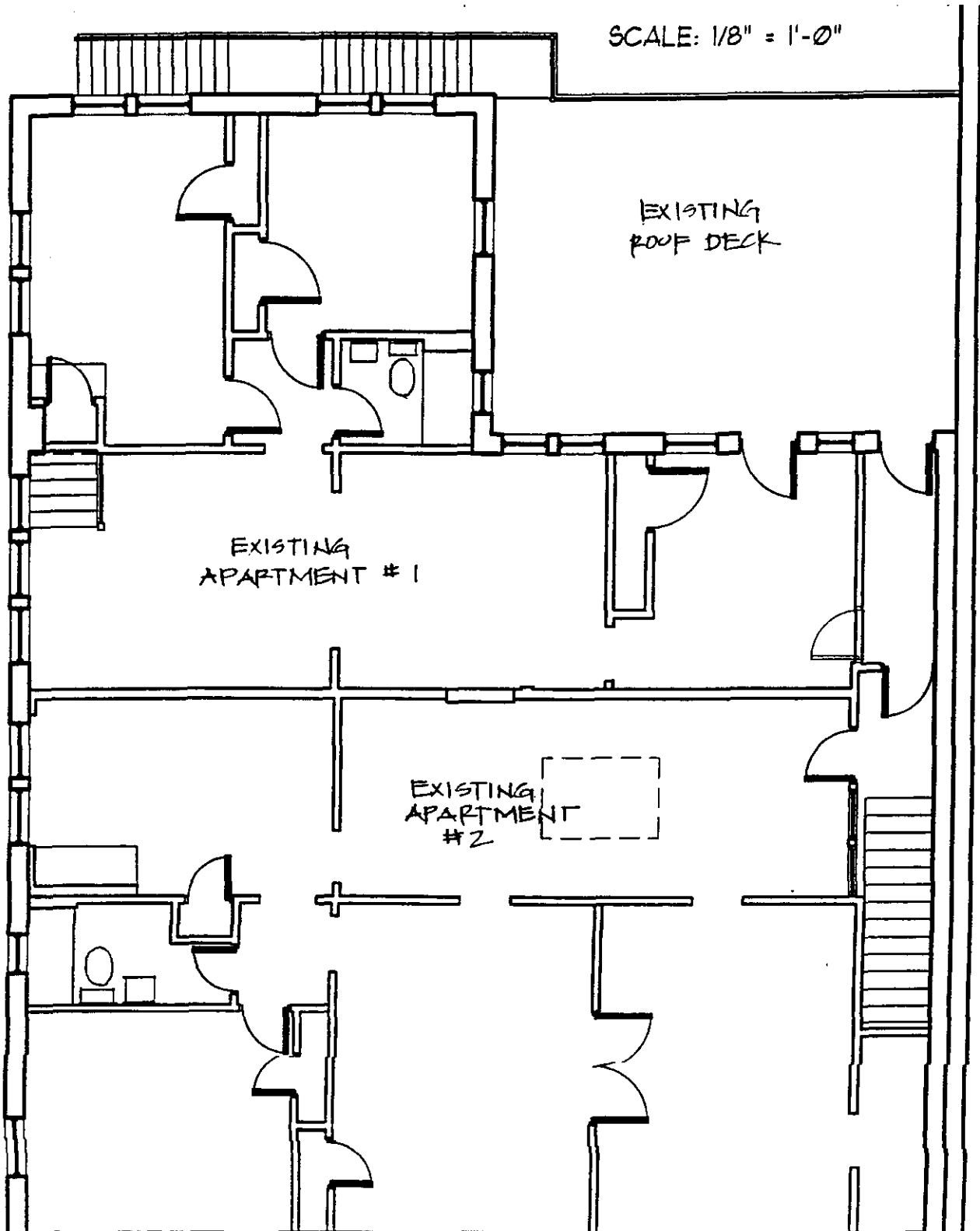
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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Second Floor Plan in 2000 (Prior to Current Rehabilitation Project)



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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance

SUMMARY

Built in 1924-1925, the Riggio Building located at 5145-5149 Shaw Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage-European, because of its importance to the history and development of the Italian-American community known as the Hill in south St. Louis. The Riggio Building is also significant under Criterion A: Commerce because of its role as the first and primary lending agency, known as the Bank, that served this community. The historic period of significance extends from 1925 when the building was completed until 1953, fifty years ago. In addition, the building is significant under Criterion C: Architecture for its distinctive Beaux-Art Classicism influenced design on a two-story neighborhood commercial building in a neighborhood otherwise filled with more common, vernacular brick architecture.

BUILDING HISTORY

In 1924, two brothers, Joseph and Ignazio Riggio, had the building constructed based on designs by local architect J.B. Catanzaro for the location of their business, Riggio Realty Company.¹ Founded in 1906, the Riggio Realty Company occupied the west half of the building, in the 5149 Shaw storefront. The Riggio brothers rented out the east storefront, at 5145 Shaw. The first known tenant was Michael Miano who ran a jewelry store at the location until 1931 (and whose father, Mario Miano, was well known for staging elaborate puppet shows, telling Italian folk tales, stories, and plays for the neighborhood children).² After that, the storefront remained vacant until the mid-1930s when the Fairmont Food Shoppe occupied the space. In 1940, the Curry Credit Clothing Company moved into the storefront and remained there for just over ten years. The Curry Credit Clothing Company was replaced by J. Viviano and Sons Italian Grocery, which remained in the storefront until 1965, when it moved to the building next door, its current location. Viviano's continued to use the 5147 Shaw storefront as a warehouse until recently when Shaw Coffee first leased the space and began renovations for their coffee roasters and retail operations.³

The Riggio Realty Company continued to occupy the west half of the building while expanding their business. The company also began to work as a travel agency, although almost from the beginning of the company Joseph Riggio had worked as a steamship agent, selling as many as one thousand tickets a year to immigrants needing passage to the United States from Italy. The company continued in the location throughout its existence. After the Riggio Realty Company was disbanded, Ignazio's son, Nicholas J. Riggio, had established his law practice at the location, which he continued there until 1999. At that time the present owner, for Shaw Coffee, purchased the property and the Riggio family severed its connections with the building for the first time.

Upstairs are two apartments that the Riggio brothers rented out. Up until 1936, Frank Riggio (relation to Ignazio and Joseph undetermined) lived in one of the apartments while working as a clerk and eventually as manager of their hardware store located next door at 5143 Shaw. After Frank Riggio moved out in 1936, the apartments were consistently occupied, but by a changing succession of tenants.⁴

ITALIANS ON THE HILL

Before 1890, there was no Italian community in St. Louis. Although there were a few Italian immigrants throughout St. Louis history, their numbers were so inconsequential throughout most of the nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, two Italian neighborhoods began to develop almost simultaneously. One neighborhood located just north of downtown, began as an Irish ghetto known as the "Kerry Patch" in the 1840s. German and Jewish immigrants followed the Irish, gradually settling through the 1870s in what became known as "Little Italy." Sicilian immigrants

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

then began moving into the area, finding employment with Genoese fruit dealers as well as clothing, shoe and furniture manufacturing companies around the downtown area.⁵ Today this small enclave is covered by the Edward Jones Dome, a huge sports arena and general purpose stadium which opened in 1995. The second Italian immigrant neighborhood, where the Riggio Building is located, commonly known as the Hill and officially known as the Fairmont District, is roughly bordered by Kingshighway to the east, Southwest Avenue to the south, January Avenue to the west and railroad tracks to the north. This neighborhood was comprised mainly of Italians from the Lombard region of Italy, along with a few Sicilians. Socially, there was almost no contact with the inhabitants of Little Italy.

The area that would come to be known as the Hill was originally populated by small clusters of homes owned by Germans, Irish, or African Americans, but during the 1890s it began to develop an Italian immigrant population and by 1910 was almost exclusively populated by Italian immigrants and their children.⁶ The Italian immigrant population originally moved into the area not because it was an Italian neighborhood, but rather because there was ample work in the nearby clay mines along Manchester and the related industrial and manufacturing enterprises. There was ample need for physical labor in the area where being unable to speak English was not an impediment to finding work. Industrial enterprises surrounded, the neighborhood from the rest of the city geographically. The industrial enterprises ranged from the mines themselves, to brick yards, the Carondelet Foundry Company, a stove manufacturer and, eventually, a pasta factory and a salami and sausage factory occupying the lands to the north, south and east. The lands to the west were still rural farmland, although technically within the city limits since 1876. To compound this isolation, a very limited number of transportation lines served the Hill. The area did not acquire intra-urban and streetcar terminals until the 1920s, and there was not a bus line in the area until 1924. The nearest streetcar line was a six block walk from the Hill.⁷ As a journalist put it for an article in the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* while writing about the Hill in 1901, "the city contributes to their daily life only the schoolhouse, the mail carrier and the policeman. They have everything else."⁸ By 1903 the Catholic diocese established St. Ambrose parish and by 1906 had opened a parish school, allowing the neighborhood to be somewhat self-reliant for the education of their children as well, although not many of the immigrant residents could afford to send their children to a parochial school. Many of their children often did not attend any school at all, instead adding to the family's income by starting to work at a young age. The area also did not receive municipal services at the time, so it had no paved streets, sewers, or streetlights, nor water, gas, or electricity connections. All of these factors combined to isolate the population of the Hill from the rest of the city, allowing it to develop as its own Italian village within the city.⁹

The isolation of the Hill from the rest of the city forced it to become a self-sufficient area in a time before the automobile. These poor immigrants had to be able to walk to the businesses where they worked and the stores where they purchased their goods. As a result, the neighborhood became self-contained, including all the mercantile enterprises necessary for life, such as grocers, butchers, and bakers, as well as those for entertainment, such as taverns and halls for the mutual aid societies and clubs the immigrants formed. The Riggio Realty Company is one of those neighborhood businesses, established in 1906, serving as a realtor, bank, and even travel agent. Once an immigrant moved to the Hill, it was not necessary for them to leave the area for any of the amenities of life. They moved there in the first place largely to find employment in the industries of the area, so for most of the immigrants their jobs were in the neighborhood or areas immediately surrounding it. This was especially true after the turn of the century when the immigration rates climbed tremendously until the outbreak of World War I, and then again in the five years after the war until severe immigration caps were put in place by Congress in 1924.¹⁰

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Despite the self-sufficiency of the area, non-Italians initially ran the small mercantile businesses on the Hill. As the neighborhood grew and the Italian immigrants saved the money they made in the clay mines and brickyards, they began to use their earnings not just to send for relatives still in Italy, but also to buy their own homes and start their own businesses. Besides the grocery stores, confectioneries, taverns, bakeries, barber shops, and drug stores that all neighborhoods need, by the 1920s immigrants on the Hill also started some of their own larger businesses, including a commercial pasta factory and a salami and sausage factory. Like others, the Riggio Brothers Realty Company was still growing larger, becoming one of the leading businesses on the Hill. As a result, they built and moved into their new building in 1925.¹¹

The new commercial enterprises started by the members of the community provided greater economic diversity and contributed to the stability of the neighborhood on the Hill. Besides offering basic services to the members of the Hill's community, the founding of these companies, such as the pasta, salami, and sausage factories, was the start of a new period of growth for the Hill. This growth brought more Italians to the neighborhood, which made it easier for the existing businesses to survive as well as for new businesses to thrive. The neighborhood also saw the number of children in school increase as fewer children began working at such an early age as previously.¹²

The Italian population on the Hill retained its ethnic identity while expressing their pride as Americans during World War II. The population of the Hill would soon face a decision that would solidify the community not only internally but also as a larger part of the city and nation. When Mussolini first came to power, many Italian immigrants and Italian Americans initially supported him as a leader who offered hope to the people of Italy and a way to pull the Italian economy out of its semi-feudal system. As Mussolini's fascist policies began to become more evident to the world, especially after the invasion of Ethiopia and allying with Hitler's Germany, the population of the Hill began to turn away from their support of their former homeland. By 1937, anti-fascist groups were forming on the Hill and when Italy went to war with France and England, there were calls throughout the Hill as people reminded one another they were American citizens first and Italian second. The response to the attack on Pearl Harbor demonstrated the effects of Americanization on the immigrant population - 1,100 men out of a total population of 6,300 on the Hill joined the armed forces, while more than 40 men joined the service just from the 5200 block of Wilson Avenue. Most volunteered for the Navy or Marines, to avoid the specter of fighting their cousins and uncles if they were sent to Europe with the Army.¹³ At home, non-naturalized Italians and Germans were required to register with the government at the start of the war, but in 1942 non-naturalized Italians were reclassified and no longer subject to these restrictions, turning over potential war materials and contraband such as guns and ammunition and even cameras. On the Hill the general atmosphere was so patriotic that the rules were greatly reduced and only laxly enforced in the area.¹⁴

Even today, the Hill retains its strong ethnic identification and associations with the working class. It is no longer the isolated neighborhood it was in the early twentieth century, thanks to the automobile, and its population has shrunk, as has the rest of St. Louis' as the second and third generation Italian Americans have moved out of the neighborhood as they became more successful. Some, however, returned to have their children baptized at St. Ambrose Church or to open businesses and even renovate homes to move back to the old neighborhood. The neighborhood works to assure that these old ethnic ties continue into the next generation and that the community retains its historic character. Its green, white, and red fire hydrants, street banners, Columbus Day parades, and popular Italian restaurants and grocery stores dot the neighborhood to visually identify the neighborhood, and while tourism forms an important component in its economy, it still retains its unique sense of community.¹⁵

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Riggio Brother's History

One of these larger enterprises on the Hill, the Riggio Realty Company, was formed in 1906 by two brothers, Ignazio and Joseph Riggio. Ignazio Riggio arrived in St. Louis in 1900, and four years later was joined by his brother Joseph. The Riggio brothers not only ran a realty company, they were also well known as steamship agents and bankers. They sold as many as a thousand steamship tickets a year to Italians looking for passage to a new life in the New World.¹⁶ By the early 1920s, The Riggio Realty Company had grown into a major real estate company, loan office, and general insurance agency.¹⁷ The company was never officially chartered as a bank, but it functioned as a bank and was the only banking institution on the Hill until Southwest Bank was organized by business leaders in and around the Hill in 1920.¹⁸

As their business grew, the Riggio brothers decided they needed a new building from which to run the Riggio Realty Company. In 1911, they hired a local architect to build a two-story brick store and dwelling at 5143 Shaw, to serve as retail space for the hardware store they also ran and for their residence, which was above the store. By 1924, the Riggio Realty Company had grown to a point where they needed their own offices for the company. In 1924, Riggio Realty Company hired J.B. Catanzano to design a new building next door at 5145-5149 Shaw. The new two-story building would have two storefronts, with the Riggio Realty Company occupying the western storefront at 5149 Shaw while the east half at 5145 Shaw would be rented out. The second floor also housed two apartments.¹⁹ The building itself was elaborately designed, with glazed terra cotta features influenced by the Beaux-Arts Classicism style, as well as marble detailing, a pressed tin ceiling, terrazzo floors, and a massive marble-faced vault (with a wall of safety deposit boxes), giving it the appearance of a bank in deference to the loan operations, one of the realty company's services.

The Riggios were something of an exception to the norm for Hill residents. Unlike most residents, who had emigrated from the Lombard region of Northern Italy, the Riggios were from Palermo in Sicily. In general, there was a great distrust between the northern and southern Italians in St. Louis, a carryover from the old country. Despite the antagonisms between the two groups of Italians, the Riggios were two of the most respected businessmen in the community. In *The Italians in Missouri*, by Giovanni Schiavo, Ignazio Riggio is described as "the most popular Italian on the Hill, where he has acquired the respect and unlimited trust of both Northern and Southern Italians, not only because of his moral and commercial integrity, but especially because he is always willing to assist and advise people in need."²⁰ Ignazio's younger brother Joseph received similar praise, as Schiavo points out that "Mr. Riggio shares with his brother the confidence and esteem of the Italian people."²¹ Often the help that the brothers offered their neighbors went well beyond their work in securing steamship passage for relatives from Italy, as unofficial bankers, and as real estate brokers. Joseph Riggio was well known for the assistance he offered to a large number of Italians in becoming American citizens, in addition to being very active in the neighborhood, through mutual aid societies and other social activities. Ignazio not only was the founder of the Principe di Piedmonte, a mutual aid society but also was one of the four men (two Lombard, two Sicilian) on the board of the St. Ambrose Building Committee, formed in 1921 after St. Ambrose church was destroyed in a fire (possibly caused by a still exploding in the basement). Residents of Hill were often heard commenting that their faith in Ignazio was only surpassed by their faith in the pastor of St. Ambrose.

They both became key members of the community, and the Riggio Building was an important visible symbol of their contributions to the immigrant community. Even after the opening of the Southwest Bank, the Riggio Building continued to be the main banking institution on the Hill, often simply referred to by local citizens as the Bank. In addition, the eastern half of the building was rented out to local mercantile enterprises. The most enduring of these was J. Viviano and Sons Italian Grocery, which is now located next-door to its former location in the Riggio Building.²²

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Riggio Building was not only the home of their realty company, but for all intents and purposes it was also a bank, maintaining the only Italian safe deposit vault in the city and containing over 500 safe deposit boxes.²³ The Riggio Building was where the Italian community would generally head when in need of financial advice and assistance or for help with the naturalization process. This was but a part of the aid the Riggio brothers offered besides their numerous economic endeavors on their own behalf. In addition to the banking services they offered, and the real estate business implied by the name of their company, the Riggio brothers also offered their service as a steamship ticket agency and foreign currency exchange, helping even more Italians come to St. Louis and further increasing the Italian population on the Hill while also helping the new immigrants adapt to their new lives in America.²⁴ Today, the Riggio Building is a tangible reminder of their significant contribution to the Italian community.

Architectural Legacy

The Riggio Building is also significant under Criterion C: Architecture. Designed by Joseph B. Catanzaro in 1924, it is an attractive example of the use of Beaux Arts Classical detailing to distinguish what might otherwise have been just another vernacular, two-story, red brick commercial building. The use of such stylistic detailing is quite unusual for a building of the Riggio Building's modest size, and it is the only example of Beaux Arts Classicism on the Hill. In fact, properties on the Hill are otherwise a combination of vernacular residential properties and small commercial buildings. "Shotgun" houses also have been prevalent on the Hill. Most of the extant "Shotguns" are of brick rather than wood frame construction. Few of the other commercial buildings on the Hill are more than typical late 19th and early 20th Century one or two-story, brick storefront buildings with few embellishments. In addition to the Riggio Building, the other distinctive building designs on the Hill can be counted on one hand: St. Ambrose Catholic Church, the Fair (a major mercantile building that recently had major alterations to its facade), and the North Italian American Mercantile Company which is catercorner from the Riggio Building. Usually this building is referred to as the Big Club Hall due to a social hall upstairs.

Joseph B. Catanzaro, the architect of the Riggio Building, had a relatively brief architectural career. He graduated from the University of Illinois College of Engineering in 1921 and went into practice part time. By 1925, Catanzaro was ending his architectural career after graduating from Saint Louis University Law School. He entered private practice as an attorney after graduating and then became a Saint Louis Police Court judge from 1941 to 1949 and then returned to private practice until his death in 1966 at the age of seventy.²⁶

The Riggio Building has a sense of grandeur and scale in keeping with its importance to the neighborhood despite its relatively modest size for a building in the Beaux Arts Classicism style. Characteristic of this style, it is more exuberantly detailed than Neo-Classical designs, in this case through the rich use of white glazed terra cotta detailing:

- to form a pronounced cornice to separate the first and second floors
- for the columns on either side of the doorways
- as the enriched entablature with cornucopias and cartouches above the Bank entries
- to form pediments above the stairway entry
- to define the piers visually supporting the entablature spanning the first floor storefronts
- as the entablature along the parapet with its pronounced cornice and modillions
- as decorative details, like continuous sills, keystones and corner blocks, to highlight the sashed windows

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The enriched classical detailing gives the building a sense of restrained wealth and solidity without the ostentatious appearance of common to many banks of the period. Although technically the offices of a realty company, the corner building, particularly when focusing on the 5149 Shaw Avenue entrances, visually resembles a bank, both inside and out. The use of a massive marble vault along the back wall of the open interior of the Bank as well as the wainscoting, counters and terrazzo flooring, further symbolized its role as a financial institution. This image is appropriate to house a company that acted as a bank without being officially chartered as one. It creates a sense of reliability and respectability fitting for the respect the people in the neighborhood had for the Riggio brothers.

The style stands out in the neighborhood, as the only example in the area, bringing even more attention to the building. Although it is only two stories tall in a neighborhood where almost all the buildings are only one or two stories, and only two storefronts wide, making it of average size, the Riggio Building still dominates the block, standing out from the structures around it. This combination of an extravagant style on a relatively small building allows the building to stand out through its detailing and design, rather than being a structure that visually dominates the surrounding landscape through its sheer size and ostentation. Instead, the building is of similar size and mass as the surrounding buildings, relying on its architectural detailing to give it the sense of majesty appropriate for a financial institution that wants to project an image of stability and integrity.

In contrast, the surrounding structures are, for the most part, relatively small and unadorned with ornamentation. A large majority of the homes in the neighborhood are brick, not surprising considering the number of people who lived in the area and worked in the brickyards or clay mines, but they are not elaborate. The Hill is known for its shotgun homes and the relatively more modern bungalow-style houses in the neighborhood are still small, although some of the later homes are two stories instead of one. The surrounding commercial buildings are similar in scale to the houses. Most are one to two story buildings, with only one or two storefronts in each building. The neighborhood is on a scale and in a style you would expect from a neighborhood built by poor immigrant laborers, without many frills or extras thrown into the design. Most of the buildings are built in vernacular styles and rarely had the benefit of an architect to design and oversee the building of a property. As a result, the Riggio Building is one of the more intricately designed and ornamented buildings in the Hill.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Building News," *Saint Louis Daily Record*, 16 August, 1924, 4; Gary Ross Mormino, *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian-Americans in St. Louis, 1882-1982*, Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002, 61.

² Carolyn H. Toft, editor, *The Hill: The Ethnic Heritage of an Urban Neighborhood*, Saint Louis: n.p., 1975, p13.

³ *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, Saint Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, Publishers, 1931, 2021; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1933-1934, 1739; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1935, 1839; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1936, 1836; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory* 1940, 1879; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1944, 1870; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1952, 431; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory* 1965, 606; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory* 1975, 409; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1980, 384.

⁴ *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1936, 1836.

⁵ James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980*, 3d. Saint Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998, 417.

⁶ Mormino, 66.

⁷ Toft, 11, 22.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

⁸ Morino 69.

⁹ Toft, 11.

¹⁰ Toft, 9.

¹¹ Toft, 11-12; *Saint Louis Daily Record*, 4.

¹² Toft, 20, 24, Morino, 99-100.

¹³ Morino, 218.

¹⁴ Morino, 217-225; Toft, 28.

¹⁵ Tim Fox, editor, *Where We Live: A Guide to St. Louis Communities* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1995), pp. 110-115.

¹⁶ Morino, 61.

¹⁷ Toft, 20.

¹⁸ Giovanni Schiavo, *The Italians in Missouri*, Chicago: Italian American Publishing Company, 1929, 60.

¹⁹ "Building News," *Saint Louis Daily Record*, 16 August, 1924, 4.

²⁰ Schiavo, 146.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Steve Bryan, "Viviano's Market Observes Its 50th Anniversary Here," *Saint Louis Post Dispatch*, 30 April, 2000, n.p. From the Saint Louis Public Library, History and Genealogy Department, Vertical File, "St. Louis Neighborhoods: The Hill.;" Ekaterina Pesheva, "Shaw's Coffee Will Expand," *Southwest City Journal*, 24 November 2002, 1.

²³ Schiavo, 106.

²⁴ Morino, 61; Schiavo, 106, 146.

²⁵ *Saint Louis Daily Record*, 4.

²⁶ "Funeral Services for Joseph B. Catanzaro." *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, 24 May 1966, no page, From the Saint Louis Public Library, History and Genealogy Department, Vertical File, "St. Louis Neighborhoods: The Hill."

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Riggio Building
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Verbal Boundary Description

The Western 50.00 feet of Lot Two (2) in Block Eight (8) of Fairmount Addition and in Block 4080 of the City of St. Louis, Missouri, having a frontage of 50.00 feet on the North line of Shaw Avenue, by a depth northwardly between parallel lines of 74.00 feet, more or less.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description. Except for public sidewalks and a small area behind the building at the back alley, the building encompasses the entire lot.

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Riggio Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Photo Log

Photographer: Todd Owyong

September 2003

Negatives with Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #1: West elevation and south façade facing northeast

Photo #2: Rear (north) and west elevations, facing southeast

Photo #3: Exterior, detail of The Bank entry at 5149 Shaw, looking north northwest

Photo #4: Interior of 5149 Shaw (The Bank), looking northwest from southeast corner

Photo #5: Detail of safe in 5149 Shaw, looking northeast

Photo #6: Exterior, detail of storefront of 5147 Shaw, looking northeast

Photo #7: Interior of 5147 Shaw, looking north from entry

Photo #8: Interior, detail of garage doors in basement (north wall), facing northeast

Photo #9: Interior, rear stairway to apartments (along west wall), looking up and south

Photo#10: Interior, second floor, back apartment, dining and living rooms looking west

WEBSTER GROVES QUADRANGLE
MISSOURI ILLINOIS
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



17 30' 35
 17 30' 36
 17 30' 37
 17 30' 38
 17 30' 39
 17 30' 40

475
 476
 477
 478
 479

RIGGIO
 BUILDING
 ST. LOUIS
 (INDEPENDENT
 CITY)
 MISSOURI
 UTM REFS
 15937500 E
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