

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES SHOULD BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. NAME OF HISTORIC DISTRICT (CURRENT/HISTORIC)

Automobile Row Thematic Historic District

2. LOCATION

Please attach a map of Philadelphia locating the historic district.

Councilmanic District(s): 1, 5, 8

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a written description and map of the district boundaries.

4. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a written description and photographs of the built and natural environments/ characteristic streetscape of the district.

5. INVENTORY

Please attach an inventory of the district with an entry for every property. All street addresses must coincide with official Office of Property Assessment addresses.

Total number of properties in district: 29

Count buildings with multiple units as one.

Number of properties already on Register/percentage of total: 1 / 3%

Number of significant properties/percentage of total: 4 / 14%

Number of contributing properties/percentage of total: 25 / 86%

Number of non-contributing properties/percentage of total: 0 / 0%

6. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1909 to 1930

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic district satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☒ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☒ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☒ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

7. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

8. NOMINATOR

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date 12/02/2019

Name with Title Kevin McMahon and Logan Ferguson, Consultants Email kevin.d.mcm@gmail.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut Street, Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 2 December 2019

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 10 January 2020/Updated 7 April 2021

Date of Preliminary Eligibility: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: 17 January 2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: June 2, 2021

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: July 9, 2021

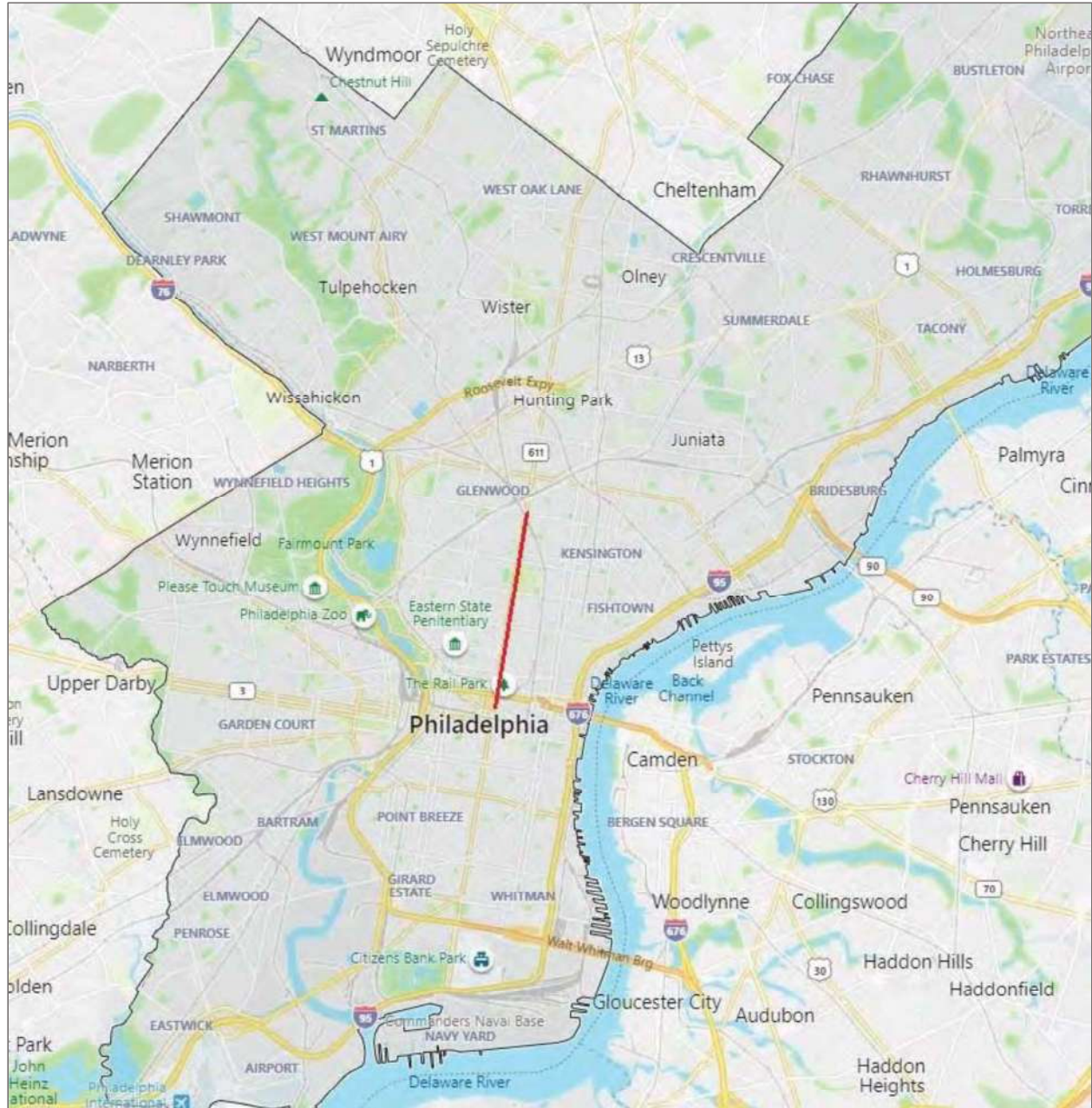
Date of Final Action: July 9, 2021. Designated under Criteria A, C, D, E, and J

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

2. Location

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District is located along North Broad Street in Philadelphia. The red line on the map below indicates the location of the historic district within the City's boundaries.



3. Boundary Description

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District covers an approximately 2.8 mile-long stretch of North Broad Street between Cherry Street (at the south end) and Lehigh Avenue (at the north end). No automobile industry-related buildings remain south of Cherry Street, which therefore serves as a logical southern boundary. At the northern end of the district, the former Ford Motor Company Service Building at Broad and Lehigh is a natural bookend due to its prominence and immense size. There are also relatively few automobile-related buildings north of Lehigh Avenue. Those that do exist are generally of marginal integrity due to significant alterations that have occurred over the years and are of limited scale in relation to their southern neighbors. The eastern and western boundaries of the district are the rear property lines of the buildings that front on North Broad Street.

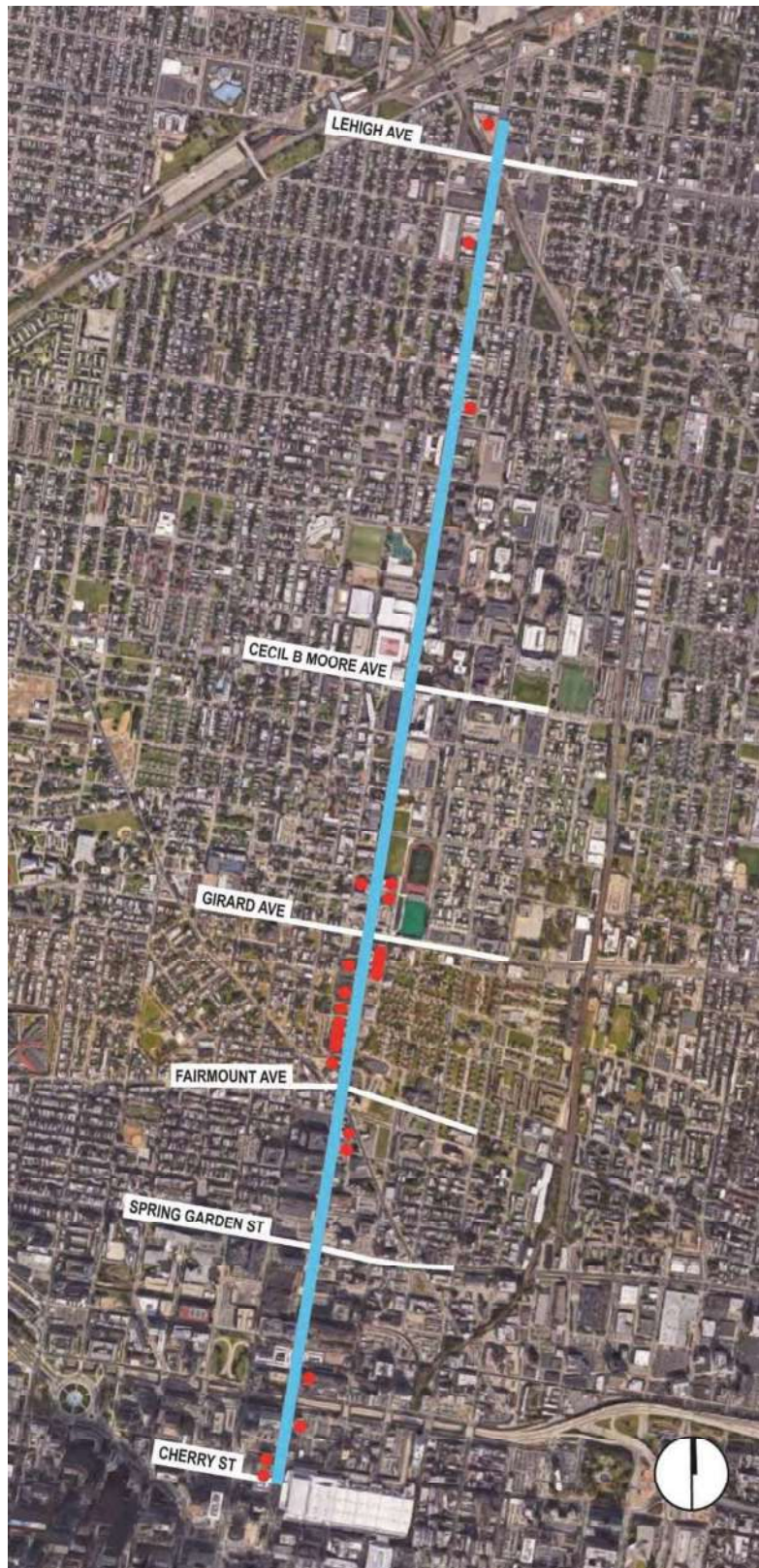


Fig. 1 Aerial view of North Philadelphia with the approximately 2.8 mile section of North Broad Street highlighted in blue. Inventoried properties are marked by red dots.

4. Description

North Broad Street was an early center for the automobile trade in Philadelphia, with numerous small and large showrooms, assembly and distribution plants, and parts and accessories stores constructed here on what was known as “Automobile Row” as early as 1906. Of the thematic district properties within the proposed boundary that are known to have been built by or for the automobile industry during the period between 1909 and 1930, four (14%) are considered *Significant* resources and 25 (86%) are considered *Contributing* resources. Reflecting the period of significance, the architectural styles that dominated the period from 1900-1930, particularly the Beaux Arts and Classical Revival, are the most common in the district. The most frequently used building materials are red or brown brick and glazed white architectural terra cotta; often, the two are used together with brick as the primary exterior material and terra cotta present as an accent.

Although today the 800 and 900 blocks on the west side of North Broad Street are the most intact and concentrated, representing a largely cohesive streetscape of showrooms, garages and parts stores, the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District is located between Cherry Street and Lehigh Avenue. Bookended by the ten-story Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Company Building (Charles E. Oelschlager, 1917) at 130-40 North Broad Street and the immense Ford Motor Company Building at 2700-2734 North Broad Street, the dozens of buildings in between represent enormous variety in scale.



Fig. 2 227-37 N. Broad Street

Characterizing the district’s earliest years of development, the highly articulated façades of the three buildings at 227-29, 231-33, and 235-37 North Broad (Watson & Huckel, 1909), which form a tripartite composition that reads as a single building, contain pilasters, engaged columns and rusticated piers separating the storefront bays at ground level, with sculptural terra cotta window frames and prominent cornices above, all highly characteristic of the Beaux Arts style.

In later examples, such as the ten-story Gomery Schwartz Autocar Building at 130-40 North Broad Street (Charles E. Oelschlager, 1917), a shift away from heavy ornamentation becomes clear (Figure 3). Although still organized with a traditional base-shaft-capital arrangement, Classical features are limited to the pilasters and cornice at the base as well as the cornices at the top of the building. In between, the shaft of the building consists of largely unornamented brick piers separating the window bays. The Oldsmobile Building at 800 North Broad Street (William Steele & Sons, 1917) is similar in treatment, although the cornice has been removed.



Fig. 3 Gomery-Schwartz Building
130-40 N. Broad St



Fig. 4 Ford Motor Company Service Building, 2700-34 N. Broad Street

The Commercial Style Ford Motor Company Service Building at 2700-2734 North Broad Street (Albert Kahn, 1913), the largest building in the district, reflects a further shift away from traditional Classical models (Figure 4). Some ornamentation, in the form of abstracted, geometric pilaster capitals, exists at ground level. The upper floors, however, are far more functional in treatment, with simple brick and terra cotta spandrels between the large window bays. This simplified aesthetic reflects the increasing utilization of reinforced concrete as a construction method for large industrial buildings. As demonstrated by the Ford Building and others, a reinforced concrete structure, which consisted simply of floor slabs supported by a grid of columns, allowed for facades with a significantly higher percentage of windows than masonry surfaces.

One of the most prominent architectural features of the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District is the use of glazed white architectural terra cotta as a primary exterior material. As explained in greater detail under the Statement of Significance, architectural terra cotta became widely popular during the early twentieth century due to its plastic nature – it had the ability to be easily molded into virtually any shape – and its low cost, relative to natural stone.

Of the buildings included in the inventory, the front elevations of eleven of the buildings are faced nearly entirely in white terra cotta. In twelve others, the material is featured prominently – as a cornice, for example, or as spandrel panels or pilaster capitals – but does not comprise a majority of the façade. In the latter category, the elevations are otherwise faced in brown, red or buff colored brick. Perhaps the most prominent example of architectural terra cotta in the district is the eight-story Packard Building (Albert Kahn, 1910) at 315-321 North Broad Street, its soaring, gleaming white façade serving as an emblem of the mode (Figure 5).



Fig. 5 Packard Building
315-21 N. Broad Street



Fig. 6 Roman Building, 681-687 N. Broad Street

Though far smaller than the Packard Building, one of the most expressive examples of the all-terra cotta buildings is the Roman Building at 681-687 North Broad Street, constructed by the Roman Automobile Company, the largest used car dealer in Philadelphia, in 1916 (Figure 6). The two-story structure, which in fact consists of four separate properties and addresses, features four wide bays divided by Doric pilasters that support a denticulated cornice and central pediment, all in glazed matte white terra cotta. In the center of the pediment remains the Roman Building marquee, a flying spokes wheel in relief.

Yet another striking example of architectural terra cotta is the row of small, 2 to 4-story commercial buildings – formerly all tire stores – located at 802-830 North Broad Street (Figures 7-8). Although each building is unique, they are similarly styled and constructed in glazed white terra cotta, forming a concentration of automobile tire stores built between about 1915 and 1920. The Michelin Tire Company was located at 802 North Broad Street, Globe Rubber Tire at 804 North Broad Street, the Republic Rubber Company at 806 North Broad Street, and the Empire Tire & Rubber Corporation at 810 North Broad Street. Although individually small in size – each building measures approximately twenty feet in width – the buildings maintain their

presence among much larger commercial structures with refined, Classically-inspired facades in glazed matte white terra cotta that include deep cornices and other Classical Revival features. The Michelin Tire Company building at 802 North Broad Street in particular, has a large denticulated cornice and a Greek key-patterned molding and spandrels that frame the front windows. In addition, the Republic Rubber Company building at 806 N. Broad Street, with its vaguely Gothic Revival façade constructed around 1920, continues the tradition of revival styles on North Broad Street in a more subtle way. Although Classical in its symmetry and denticulated cornice, the small building contains various Gothic design motifs. The trefoil arch pattern that ornaments the terra cotta spandrels between each floor, in addition to the pointed crenellation of the parapet wall above the cornice, distinguishes the Republic Rubber Company building from its more Classically inspired neighbors. The stores' large plate glass windows also demonstrate that these first-floor spaces were for selling, not for manufacturing items like tires and other automobile parts.



Fig. 7 802-808 N. Broad Street

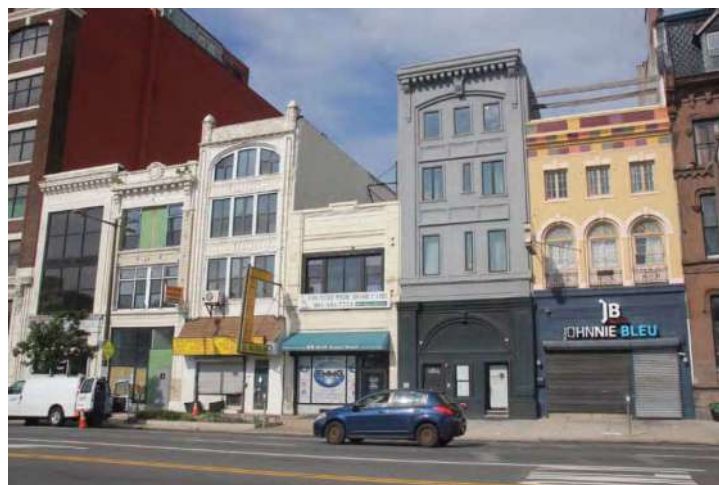


Fig. 8 802-810 N. Broad Street

Other large automobile showrooms and factories were constructed principally of brick but feature architectural terra cotta only on the first two stories or for prominent features like cornices or spandrels. Such buildings include the Oldsmobile Building at 800 North Broad Street, which features glazed matte white terra cotta pilasters between each bay that support a bracketed cornice between the second and third floors. Another, 722 North Broad Street, features terra cotta spandrels dividing the central bays vertically in addition to keystones above all of the windows in the southernmost and northernmost bays.

Integrity

The original masonry exteriors of the district's 29 resources, including most if not all of the original ornamental details in terra cotta or stone, remain largely intact. Typical of commercial corridors in all parts of the city, many of the ground floor storefront windows have been altered. Significant exceptions include the Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Building at 130-40 North Broad Street and the Packard Building at 315-21 North Broad Street, which retain their original two-story, metal-framed storefronts with large, plate glass windows. Other changes include the replacement or blocking in of original windows in the upper floors of numerous buildings. These modifications, due to their cosmetic nature, only minimally affect the integrity of these resources because they do not alter their historic masonry surfaces nor their overall Beaux Arts, Classical Revival, or Commercial Style form. Although there have been some losses in recent years – the three-story, Colonial Revival Overland Motor Company Building at 323-27 North Broad Street (1917) and its neighbor, the four-story, terra cotta-clad U.S. Tire Company Building at 329-31 North Broad Street (1911), were demolished by the Pennsylvania Ballet in 2013 and 2018, respectively – the wide variety of automobile related buildings that do remain, and the architectural quality that they represent, ensures that the significance of Automobile Row is still conveyed.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **130-140 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **772724100**

Historic Name: **Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Building**

Other Name[s]: **Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building**

Year Built: **1917**

Architect: **Charles E. Oelschlager**

Source: **National Register Nomination**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **11**

Bays: **5**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick, Limestone**

Style: **Beaux Arts**

Storefront Style: **Commercial**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

11-story building has a two-story base clad in limestone with Beaux Arts detailing, including stylized pilasters, bas-relief garlands and a denticulated cornice. The upper floors are clad in buff brick with regular window openings containing modern replacement units. Additional limestone detailing includes pilaster capitals and bases, a stringcourse above the 10th floor and a prominent cornice along the roofline.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Company; Essex-Hudson
Motor Cars; Hudson Terraplane Motor Cars



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Significant

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **227-229, 231-233, 235-237 N. Broad Street**
OPA #: **883023700, 777011550, 883024800**

Historic Name: --
Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1909**
Architect: **Watson and Huckel**
Source: **Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form**

Alteration Date[s]: --
Architect[s]: --
Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**
Bays: **9**
Roof: **Flat**
Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick, Granite, Terra cotta**

Style: **Renaissance Revival**
Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: **Determined eligible for National Register listing by PA SHPO on 3/29/83**

Description:
3-story building faced in granite on the 1st floor and buff brick with terra cotta detailing above. The east elevation is divided into three sections, the outer of which are symmetrical with regular window openings. The center section has a large, arched window on the 2nd floor and a pediment at the roofline. All three sections have a denticulated copper cornice.

Associated Automobile Companies:
Buick; Harper Used Car Market; Studebaker; General Motor; Larson Oldsmobile; Roman Automobile



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Significant

Notes:
Tripartite composition with three addresses and three OPA account numbers. William Steele and Sons, builder.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **315-321 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881041400**

Historic Name: **Packard Motor Corporation Building**

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1910-1911**

Architect: **Albert Kahn**

Source: **National Register Nomination (1980)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **8**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra Cotta**

Style: **Commercial**

Storefront Style: **Commercial**

Philadelphia Register Status: **Listed 5/7/1981**

National Register Status: **Listed 2/8/1980**

Description:

8-story building faced in glazed white glazed terra cotta, including a prominent cornice. The facades are punctuated by regular intervals of multi-light industrial windows with double-height storefront windows on the east elevation and in the eastern bays of the north and south elevations.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Packard Motor Corporation, 1911-1927



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Significant

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **681, 683, 685, 687 N. Broad Street**
OPA #: **882919165, 882919170, 882919175,**
882919180

Historic Name: **Roman Building**
Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1916**
Architect: **Max Haupt**
Source: **Building Permits #776-779 (1916)**

Alteration Date[s]: --
Architect[s]: --
Source[s]: --

Stories: **2**
Bays: **4**
Roof: **Flat**
Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra cotta**

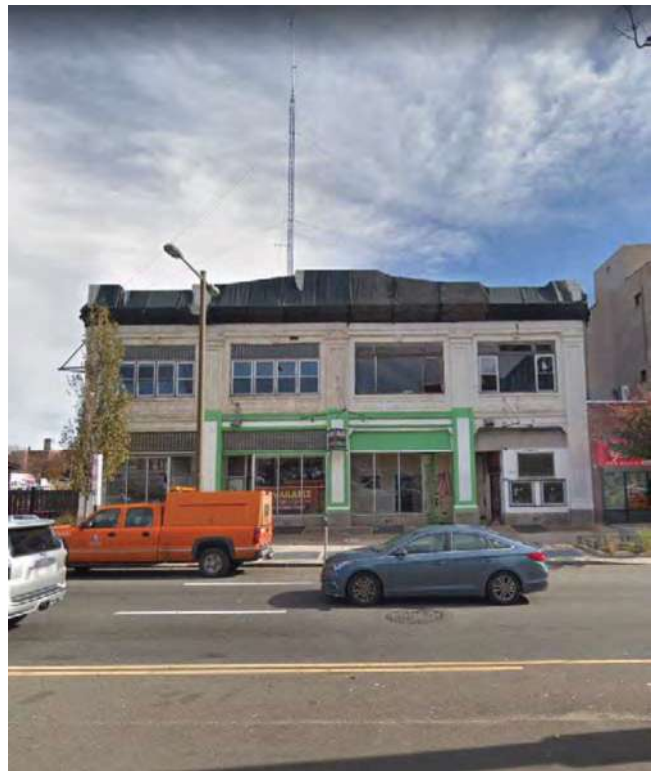
Style: **Classical Revival**
Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:
This 2-story building is faced in glazed white terra cotta with a granite water table. The Commercial Style details include paneled pilasters, bas-relief spandrel panels and a stepped parapet. Although currently concealed by netting, the name "Roman Building" with the year A.D. 1916 exists on either side of a flying spoke wheel in bas-relief in the center portion of the parapet. The storefronts and windows all consist of incompatible, modern aluminum units.

Associated Automobile Companies:
Keystone Auto Sales Corp.; Studebaker; Philadelphia Tire Sales; Pruyn Co.; Packard Tire Agency; Braender Tires



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Notes:
Although built as a single composition, the building is comprised of four properties with separate addresses and OPA account numbers. The original addresses were 673, 675, 677 and 679 North Broad Street but were later changed.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **720-722 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881041499**

Historic Name:

Other Name[s]:

Year Built: **1917**

Architect: **LeRoy Berman Rothchild**

Source: ***Philadelphia Inquirer* (November 17 1916): 13.**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **4**

Bays: **3 (west/N. Broad Street elevation)**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Limestone, brick, terra cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Commercial**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

4-story industrial building faced in limestone block on the 1st floor and brown brick above. Classical Revival style detailing includes brick pilasters with limestone bases, bas-relief terra cotta spandrel panels and a simple terra cotta cornice along the roofline. The storefronts, entrances and windows have been replaced with modern aluminum units.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Fanning-Mathis Company (Marmon distributors);

Hupmobile.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **800 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **772639050**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1917**

Architect: **William Steele and Sons**

Source: ***Philadelphia Inquirer* (29 June 1917): 16.**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **8**

Bays: **3 (east/N. Broad Street elevation)**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick; Terra cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Commercial**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

8-story, Classical Revival-style building faced in white glazed terra cotta on the 1st and 2nd floors and brown brick with terra cotta detailing above. The storefronts and window all consists of modern, aluminum replacement units and the cornice has been removed and replaced by a flush stucco band.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Studebaker; Larson Oldsmobile Co.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **802 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881442126**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1916**

Architect: **Charles E. Oelschlager**

Source: **American Contractor 37 (3 March 1916): 53.**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

3-story building faced in glazed white terra cotta, including pilasters framing the storefront on the 1st floor, a Greek fret border framing the 2nd and 3rd floor windows, and a prominent denticulated cornice. The frieze reads "Michelin Tires." The storefronts and window all consists of modern, aluminum replacement units.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Michelin Tires; Mid-City Motors; U.S. Tire Service



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **804 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **772071000**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1917**

Architect: **Private Plans**

Source: **Building Permit #1606 (1917)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

3-story building faced in glazer white terra cotta and white brick with blue glazed tile accents around the 2nd and 3rd floor windows. There is a prominent, denticulated terra cotta cornice with a centered cartouche along the roofline. The storefronts and window all consists of modern, aluminum replacement units

Associated Automobile Companies:

Globe Rubber Tire Co.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **806 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **871520520**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1915**

Architect: **Charles E. Oelschlager**

Source: **Building permit #7991 (1915)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **4**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra cotta**

Style: **Gothic Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

4-story building faced in glazed white terra cotta, including bas-relief spandrel panels with gothic arch pattern, cornice and short, hexagonal crenels at each end of the parapet. The 1st floor has an incompatible, modern storefront with shed roof awning while the upper floors bays are set within a continuous arched opening with 4-light aluminum replacement windows. The original window surrounds appear to remain underneath contemporary metal panning.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Republic Tire Co.; Pennsylvania Rubber Co.; Republic Rubber Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **808 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **882009450**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1921**

Architect: **Hoffman-Henon**

Source: **PRERBG 11/9/1921, p. 723**

Alteration Date[s]: **1941**

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: **Zoning Permit #66435 (1941)**

Stories: **2**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

2-story building faced in glazed white terra cotta with simplifield Classical detailing, including a stepped pediment. The storefront is a modern aluminum assembly and 2nd floor contains a large, four-part window with two fixed lights in the center and double-hung units on either side, all of which are later replacements.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Allen Rubber Co.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915. Originally a four-story building, the 3rd and 4th floors were removed in 1941.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **810 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881070385**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **c. 1916**

Architect: --

Source: **Philadelphia Inquirer (2 August 1916): 18.**

Alteration Date[s]: **2014**

Architect[s]: **CGI Construction, Inc.**

Source[s]: **Zoning Application #561175 (2016)**

Stories: **4**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra cotta (painted)**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

4-story building is framed by painted terra , including spandrel panels and prominent, denticulated cornice. The storefront and surrounding pilasters and blind arch are stucco and were installed in 2014, when the upper floors were painted.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Empire Tire and Rubber Corporation; Empire Rubber Products Corporation; Stanley Automobile Co.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **812 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **871520550**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1917**

Architect: **Leroy Berman Rothchild**

Source: **Building permit #2719 (1917)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Classical Revival surround**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

3-story, painted brick building. Although the storefront itself is modern, the architrave surround, which is currently painted, is original. The 2nd and 3rd floor windows are original (four-over-four double-hung wood units with fan lights on the 2nd floor and six-light double casements on the 3rd floor). There are original, wrought iron guardrails at the bottom of the 2nd floor windows. The façade is capped by a painted, pressed metal cornice.

Associated Automobile Companies:

The Powers Company; Quality Tire Company; Madrid Motors Corp.; United Motors Service; Hood Tire Company; Hood Rubber Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **818 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **871520560**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1919**

Architect: **Leroy Berman Rothchild**

Source: ***The American Contractor* 40 (1919): 66.**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick**

Style: **Commercial Style**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

3-story brown brick building with pressed metal detailing, including spandrel panels and a cornice. The 1st floor has a contemporary storefront and the large upper floor window openings contain contemporary aluminum units, although the 3rd floor frames and mullions remain.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Oxford Automobile Co.; DeBear Motor Car Co., Motor Parts Company; Erwin Chevrolet Inc.; Oakland Motor Car Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **830 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **882934805**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1916**

Architect: **Charles E. Oelschlager**

Source: **Building Permit #1641 (1916)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **2**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra Cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

2-story building faced in glazed white terra cotta with Classical Revival style detailing, including Doric pilasters and a prominent, denticulated cornice that continues around to the north elevation (facing Parrish Street). The 1st floor storefront is contemporary and while the 2nd floor openings and transoms appear to be historic, the window units have been replaced.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Cahall Motor Supply Co.; Canali Motor Supply Co.;
Norwalk Tire and Rubber Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

Part of "Tire Row," a sub-speciality of Automobile Row that developed on the 800 block of North Broad Street beginning around 1915.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **846 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **883840000**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1919**

Architect: **Private Plans**

Source: **Building Permit #4652 (1919)**

Alteration Date[s]: **1989**

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: **Zoning Permit #26868 (1989)**

Stories: **3**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Limestone**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status:

Description:

3-story building faced in limestone with Classical Revival detailing, including fluted pilasters and a denticulated cornice. The storefront and contemporary window units date to 1989.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Ajax Rubber Company; United State Motor Tire Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **900-904 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881427051**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1916**

Architect: **Mahlon H. Dickinson**

Source: **Building Permit #2808 (1916)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **6**

Bays: **3 (east/ N. Broad Street elevation)**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

6-story building faced in buff brick with terra cotta cornices above the 2nd and 6th floors. The storefront windows and recessed entrance on Broad Street contain contemporary aluminum units. The original window openings remain visible but have been partially infilled with brick and smaller aluminum windows.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Buick Motor Company; Chrysler Philadelphia Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **901-903 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **871401665**

Historic Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Name[s]: Click or tap here to enter text.

Year Built: **1920**

Architect: **Harvey B. Weldon**

Source: **Building permit #1556 (1920)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **2**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

2-story building faced in light brown brick with prominent, terra cotta cornice on the east and south elevations (facing Broad and Poplar Streets, respectively). The original storefront has been replaced and the large 2nd floor window openings have been infilled with multiple smaller units.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Philadelphia-Nash; Harris, Leroy and Clark; General Tire Company of Philadelphia; Penn Auto Supply



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **911-913 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **882919205**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1919**

Architect: **Potts Bros. & Cooperson**

Source: **Building Permit #7549 (1919)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick**

Style: **Commercial**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

3-story building faced in buff brick with red brick accents and a stepped parapet. The 1st floor storefront and flanking entrances have been replaced and the 2nd and 3rd floors each contain a single band of replacement windows

Associated Automobile Companies:

Chevrolet; Petz Motor Company, Inc.; Oakland Motor Car Co., Neiman Motors, Inc.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Notes:

For Louis J. Kolb.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **915-917 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881439502**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1919**

Architect: **Private Plans**

Source: **Building Permit #3847 (1919)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **1**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick, limestone**

Style: **Commercial Style**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

1-story building with large storefront bay enframed terra cotta pilasters (currently painted) and cornice. The storefront itself has been replaced with stucco infill and modern entrance and windows.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Dodge; Automobile Sales and Repair Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **919-921 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881439502**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1919**

Architect: **Private Plans**

Source: **Building Permit #6936 (1919)**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]:

Stories: **1**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Stucco, Brick**

Style: **Commercial**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

1-story building with large storefront bay enframed by brick and limestone bands, which have been partially painted. The storefront itself is contemporary.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Quaker City Chevrolet Sales Corporation; Cadillac
Motor Car Company; Hupmobile Used Car Depot



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **923 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881439502**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: **Penn Auto Parts**

Year Built: **c. 1930**

Architect: --

Source: --

Alteration Date[s]: **Late 20th century**

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **1**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick, Terra Cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contermpoary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

1-story, red brick building with glazed white terra cotta storefront surround and parapet detailing. The storefront has been replaced by the multi-light wood transom windows remain above.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Quaker City Chevrolet; Sneyd Auto Supply Co.; Penn Auto Parts Co.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **1227-1229 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **882008800**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1922**

Architect: **Hoffman-Henon Co.**

Source: **Building Permit #10532 (1922)**

Alteration Date[s]:

Architect[s]:

Source[s]:

Stories: **4**

Bays: **3**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra Cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

4-story building faced in glazed white terra cotta with Classical Revival detailing. The terra cotta on the 1st floor is painted, but the original entrance and storefront openings remain although the door and storefront windows themselves have been replaced with modern aluminum units. On the upper floors, all bays contain original, tripartite wood windows with transoms.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Petersen Motors, Inc. (distributors for Jordan)



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **1248 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **881146002**

Historic Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Name[s]: Click or tap here to enter text.

Year Built: **1920**

Architect: **Hoffman-Henon Co.**

Source: **PRERBG 3/31/1920, p. 339**

Alteration Date[s]: --

Architect[s]: --

Source[s]: --

Stories: **3**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Terra Cotta**

Style: **Classical Revival**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

3-story building is faced in glazed white terra cotta.

The storefront and window openings contain contemporary infill across the façade but the detailed terra cotta surround and spandrel between the 2nd and 3rd floors remain.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Auto Trade Association and Allied Motor Trade and Accessory Association; B.F. Goodrich Rubber Co.; Diamonr Rubber Co., Inc.; J.H. McCullough & Son; Herbert Brothers



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **2221-2225 N. Broad Street**
OPA #: **777692850**

Historic Name: --
Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1923**
Architect: **F.V. Warren Co.**
Source: **Building Permit #14092 (1923)**

Alteration Date[s]: **1948, 1967**
Architect[s]: **J.Y. Loux Inc.; John J. Lamb**
Source[s]: **Zoning Application #12277-B (1948),
storefront; Zoning Application #66888H (1967),
windows**

Stories: **5**
Bays: **2**
Roof: **Flat**
Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick, Terra Cotta**

Style: **Commercial Style**
Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:
5-story brick building faced in red brick with terra cotta detailing, including a bracketed cornice between the 1st and 2nd floors, stylized capitals below the roofline (north missing) and coping along the roofline. The storefront and windows have been replaced with modern aluminum units..

Associated Automobile Companies:
J.W. Parker and Son (DuPont distributors); Thornton-Fuller Co.; Gilles Cars; Faunce Oldsmobile Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Contributing

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **2512 N. Broad Street**

OPA #: **776068400**

Historic Name: --

Other Name[s]: City Temple Baptist Church

Year Built: **1920**

Architect: **Adiel Martin Stern**

Source: **Building permit #298 (1920)**

Alteration Date[s]:

Architect[s]:

Source[s]:

Stories: **2**

Bays: **1**

Roof: **Flat**

Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick, Stucco**

Style: **Commercial Style**

Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:

2-story building with large center storefront bay flanked by brick pilasters with granite bases and terra cotta capitals. The double-height center bay has contemporary stucco infill.

Associated Automobile Companies:

Quaker City Motor Parts Company



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)

Contributing

Notes:

The original façade was replaced with a storefront in 1955. The current stucco infill was added later.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Automobile Row Thematic Historic District
Inventory Form

Address: **2700-2734 N. Broad Street**
OPA #: **884067000**

Historic Name: **Ford Motor Company Service Building**
Other Name[s]: --

Year Built: **1913-1914**
Architect: **Albert Kahn**
Source: **American Architect 2/21/1915.**

Alteration Date[s]: --
Architect[s]: --
Source[s]: --

Stories: **9**
Bays: **15 (east elevation)**
Roof: **Flat**
Primary Façade Material[s]: **Brick**

Style: **Beaux Arts**
Storefront Style: **Contemporary infill**

Philadelphia Register Status: --

National Register Status: --

Description:
9-story industrial building occupies a triangular lot. All elevations are marked by vertical bays separated by brick piers and ornamented with decorative terra cotta spandrels. The storefronts and windows were replaced in recent decades.

Associated Automobile Companies:
Assembly, service, and distribution center built by the Ford Motor Company.



Classification (Contributing/Non-Contributing/Significant)
Significant

Notes:
The building was featured in the February 21, 1915 edition of The American Architect.

6. Statement of Significance

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District is a collection of automobile showrooms, manufacturing spaces, and parts and accessories stores that represent the burgeoning automobile industry in Philadelphia between 1906 and 1930. Located along both sides of North Broad Street between Cherry Street (at the south end) and Lehigh Avenue (at the north end), Automobile Row was a organic outgrowth of the general commercial and industrial activity that had flourished on North Philadelphia's "Main Street" for more than half a century. The vast number of automobile industry-related businesses that opened on North Broad Street during this period – well over 100 by 1920 – reflects Philadelphia's major role in the early automobile industry. Virtually every major national brand – Buick, Cadillac, Ford, Oldsmobile, Studebaker, among many others – was represented, as were numerous prominent local sellers, such as the Roman Automobile Company, one of the city's largest used car dealerships of the period. Not confined to the selling of cars, many of Automobile Row's facilities operated as major assembly plants and/or distribution centers for their respective brands, serving networks of dealerships in Philadelphia and throughout the region.

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District contains major works of Beaux-Arts, Classical Revival, and Commercial Style buildings by many of Philadelphia's and one of the country's best known architects of the early twentieth century. Many are faced in glazed white architectural terra cotta, comprising one of the finest collections of this popular and highly adaptable building material in the city.

As a result, the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission for inclusion in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, satisfying the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

(a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community

North Broad Street Before Automobile Row

As late as the 1840s, the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District lay within what was still only a sparsely developed country landscape. In 1836, watercolor artist David J. Kennedy wrote in a description of Broad Street that "North from Spring Garden St. there were then but two houses in the country on the west side, with about six acres covered with tall forest trees to about where Mount Vernon St. is now located." Farther north, above Fairmount Avenue, Kennedy wrote that on both sides of Broad Street were "post and rail fences out to where

Oxford Street now is,” and “open fields with cattle grazing” on both sides. Kennedy’s many watercolor illustrations confirm this written account. From 1839 through the early 1850s, the artist’s work depicts North Broad Street as a pastoral landscape of country lanes, small stone bridges, and rustic wooden fences (Figure 9). The only notable commercial or industrial presence in the area was the Bush Hill Iron Works, founded in 1816 in the vicinity of 16th and Buttonwood Streets. Otherwise, the area was home only to a small number of rural estates and scattered light industrial operations, including brickyards and lumberyards.



Fig. 9 North Broad Street in 1839 (in the vicinity of Thompson Street), a watercolor by David J. Kennedy (Historical Society of Pennsylvania)

The story of the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District’s transformation from a rural landscape to a dense, urban commercial corridor began around 1830 with the opening of the city’s first railroad depots. Attracted by its proximity to the center of the city and because it provided the space necessary to build large transportation facilities, several of Philadelphia’s first railroad lines chose North Broad Street for their depots during the early 1830s.

With the opening of the Philadelphia and Columbia Depot at Broad and Vine Streets in 1831 and the Philadelphia and Reading Depot at Broad and Cherry Streets in 1839, North Broad Street began to transform into a “vital center of commerce and industry.”¹ The new depots attracted a number of entrepreneurs and businessmen away from the city’s traditional center of commerce – east of Seventh Street and south of Vine Street – who built new warehouses,

¹ “Young, Smyth and Field Company Building, Philadelphia County, PA,” *National Register Nomination*, 1992, 8:1; “Terminal Commerce Building, Philadelphia County, PA,” *National Register Nomination*, 1991, 8:1.

stores, and small manufacturing spaces on and around North Broad Street.² The advantages were obvious: the “cluster of shops and factories of every size and kind provided that encyclopedia of supplies and services”.³ This environment made highly specialized manufacturing possible: “A machinist could send his electroplating around the corner; the plater could get his vats repaired nearby; the vat maker could get his stock milled in the district, and so the chain of interdependencies and efficiencies went.”⁴

The largest industrial complex on North Broad Street during this time was the Baldwin Locomotive Works, founded by jeweler-turned-machinist Mattias W. Baldwin following the opening of the rail depots in the 1830s. Located initially at the northwest corner of what is now Broad and Hamilton Streets, the works grew rapidly, becoming the world’s largest manufacturer of steam locomotives and anchoring much of North Broad Street’s industrial development through the early twentieth century.⁵ In addition to the Baldwin works, the railroad depots had attracted enough development – largely commercial and industrial, but also residential – for the *North American and Daily Advertiser* to proclaim in 1841 that Broad Street, “in the ‘course of time,’ will be the most magnificent avenue in this country.” With a range of “elegant public buildings, private mansions of great extent and beauty, large hotels, and more railroad depots than any one city in the Union,” the expanding thoroughfare was destined to become a fixture in almost every aspect of Philadelphia life.⁶

While the railroads resulted in the construction of many commercial and manufacturing facilities south of Spring Garden Street through the 1850s, residential development dominated in the area north of Brandywine Street (Figures 10 and 11). The industrial boom of the late nineteenth century created great wealth among families like the Disstons, Elkinses, and Wideners, who, among many other manufacturing elite constructed elaborate mansions in brownstone and brick directly on North Broad Street through the 1890s, transforming the area north of Girard Avenue into a fashionable and exclusive residential enclave.⁷

² Jeffrey P. Roberts. “Railroads and the Downtown: Philadelphia, 1830-1900,” in *The Divided Metropolis: Social and Spatial Dimensions of Philadelphia 1800-1975*, ed. William W. Cutler, III and Howard Gillette, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 28-29.

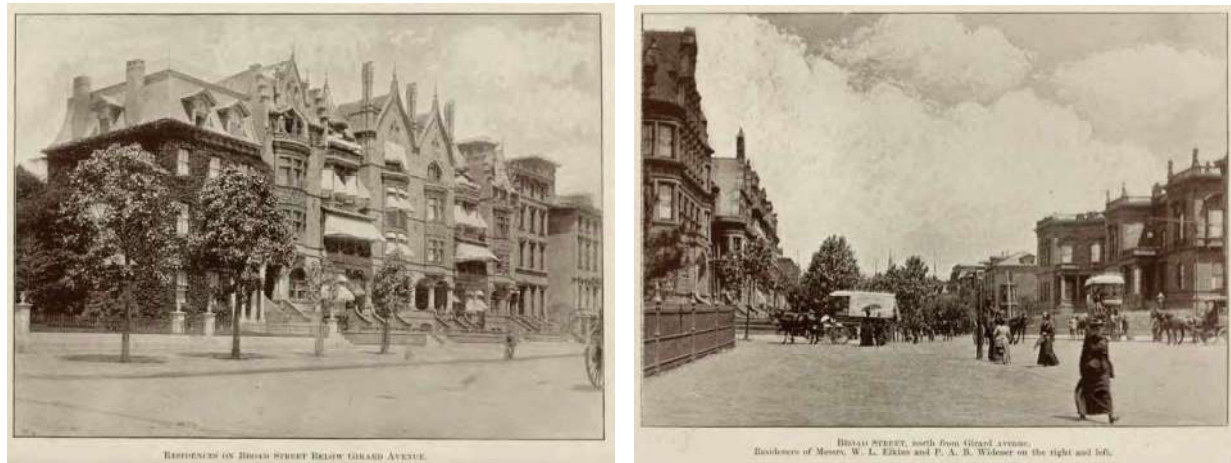
³ Sam Bass Warner. *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 169-170.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ By 1884, Scharf & Westcott’s *History of Philadelphia* noted that “Nine acres of ground are occupied by the works; the number of hands employed ranges from 2600 to 3000; the plant comprises 734 machine tools; and drawings and patterns for over 500 different sizes or styles of locomotives.” It was, Scharf & Westcott boasted, “the largest locomotive manufactory in the world.”

⁶ “Broad Street,” *North American and Daily Advertiser*, October 14, 1841, 2.

⁷ James Dabney McCabe, *Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1876), 87-88.



Figs. 10 and 11 Broad Street south and north of Girard Avenue in the early 1890s. From *Philadelphia: The Story of an American City* by George Edward Vickers (Philadelphia, 1893).

With the arrival of a large residential population on North Broad Street came many supporting religious, cultural, and educational buildings. The fact that such varied uses occurred meant that North Broad Street was becoming a complete urban corridor, a “Main Street” for North Philadelphia that served the needs not only of commerce and industry, but also those of local residents. By the late-1870s, for example, the Central Presbyterian Church at 704-712 North Broad Street had been completed, as had the original Rodeph Shalom Synagogue, designed by Frank Furness, at 609-617 North Broad Street. Banks also featured prominently on the corridor. In 1890, the American Trust, Loan, and Guarantee Investment Company was constructed at 682-686 North Broad Street, at the intersection of North Broad Street and Ridge Avenue.⁸

North Broad Street as a residential avenue reached its peak in the 1890s with the construction of the Lorraine Apartments at the southeast corner of Broad and Fairmount Streets. Although not the first apartment house in the city, the Late Victorian, French Renaissance Revival-style building, at 10 stories, “marked a significant increase in height as well as complexity” of such buildings.⁹ It ostensibly set the standard for luxurious high-rise living in Philadelphia, but opened at a time when North Broad Street’s reputation as a fashionable residential corridor had already begun to wane.¹⁰

As North Broad Street evolved through the late nineteenth century, the city’s continual economic expansion pushed commerce and industry farther north every year. By 1900, the manufacture of carriages, gas fixtures, cigars, marble mantels, windows and doors, nuts and bolts, and countless other items all occurred on North Broad Street as evidenced by the

⁸ The North American, *Philadelphia and Popular Philadelphians* (Philadelphia: The North American, 1891), 222.

⁹ George E. Thomas and Domenic Vitiello, “Lorraine Apartments, Philadelphia County, PA,” National Register Nomination Form, 2002. The nomination can be accessed at <https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS>

¹⁰ Ibid.

Bromley atlases of Philadelphia from 1895 and 1910.¹¹ This forced many of the families who still inhabited North Broad Street's large mansions to move to less congested parts of the city. Seeking quieter, more refined residential quarters, many residents moved to newly developing streetcar suburbs in West Philadelphia, or out of the city entirely to nearby suburbs like Elkins Park and Jenkintown. In turn, many, but not all of their residences were demolished for new commercial or industrial buildings.¹²

Replacing the large mansions were buildings like the Snellenburg Clothing Factory at 642-658 North Broad Street and the Mulford Building at 640 North Broad Street (both individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places). Joseph Snellenburg first opened a clothing store just after the Civil War in 1869 at 318 South Street, later expanding to a much larger store at 9th and Market Streets in the 1870s. As their Market Street store grew, the Snellenburg Company sought to build a new, modern factory to supply their store, one that would allow them to consolidate their manufacturing and to compete with their main rival, John Wanamaker. By 1905, the new factory at 643-658 North Broad Street, designed by prominent Philadelphia industrial architects William Steele & Sons, opened.¹³ The Mulford Building, originally named the Metropolitan Building, was constructed between 1913-1918 and was initially home to over two dozen separate garment manufacturers, each manufacturing a different type of garment. With a total of around 1,100 employees, the building was also home to the largest workforce of any building along North Broad Street. In 1918 the building was purchased by the H.K. Mulford Company, chemists and producers of pharmaceuticals, which operated at this site until 1929.¹⁴

Despite more and more factories appearing every year, the Baldwin Locomotive Works remained the largest industrial complex on North Broad Street. As the company grew, eventually becoming the world's largest manufacturer of steam locomotives, the plant expanded to approximately nine acres in area (Figure 12). Although demolished after Baldwin left the city for Eddystone, Pennsylvania in the late 1920s, the vast complex of buildings firmly anchored the industrial development of North Broad Street through the early 20th century.¹⁵

¹¹ G.W. and W.S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1895 and 1910.

¹² E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 191-192.

¹³ Murray Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830-1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI Publications, 1983), 268.

¹⁴ Sheryl Jaslow, "Mulford Building," National Register Nomination Form, 2003. The nomination can be accessed at <https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS>

¹⁵ By 1884, Scharf & Westcott noted that "Nine acres of ground are occupied by the works; the number of hands employed ranges from 2600 to 3000; the plant comprises 734 machine tools; and drawings and patterns for over 500 different sizes or styles of locomotives." It was, Scharf & Westcott boasted, "the largest locomotive manufactory in the world."



Fig. 12 Baldwin Locomotive Works, looking north from Callowhill Street in 1908 (Detroit Publishing Company, 1908, in the collection of the Library of Congress).

The Arrival of the Automobile Industry

While companies like Snellenburg's and H.K. Mulford continued to operate on North Broad Street through the early twentieth century, they were increasingly overshadowed by the fledgling but quickly expanding automobile industry after 1900. The tremendous growth in demand for cars resulted in the opening of dozens of automobile showrooms, manufacturing facilities, and parts stores on North Broad Street during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

Writing in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1910, William T. Taylor of Detroit observed that "Philadelphia is the greatest automobile distributing centre in the country. This has been proved by statistics of manufacturers and by actual observation made by those who have engaged in the automobile distributing business in other large cities." The reason for this supremacy, as explained by Taylor, was the city's geographical location "within a short distance of so many points where the demand for automobiles is so great as to tax the capacity of the distributor." ¹⁶

That North Broad Street became the center of the Philadelphia automobile trade was, like the larger city, due largely to its advantageous location. A natural locale for car makers and sellers, the wide avenue lay between the booming central business district of Center City and the prosperous residential quarters of North Philadelphia. North Broad Street was also the main thoroughfare connecting the downtown to the affluent suburbs north and northwest of the city, including Elkins Park and Jenkintown. Exposure to a wide swath of both the urban and suburban population was, therefore, guaranteed, as was a freedom of movement made

¹⁶ William T. Taylor, "Philadelphia Great Distributing Centre," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 16, 1910, p. 48.

possible by the generous width of the street. North Broad Street was also home to a number of large manufacturers, including the Baldwin Locomotive Works, Hoopes and Townsend Nut and Bolt factory, and numerous carriage makers, all of which traded in the types of materials and parts required for the production of automobiles. Lastly, access to the same freight rail lines relied on by existing manufacturers was key to the proliferation of automobile factories and assembly plants, with showrooms and other supporting businesses, such as parts and accessories stores, following. As early as 1906, North Broad Street became known as “Automobile Row,” and to a lesser extent, “Gasoline Row.”¹⁷



Fig. 13 Circa 1910 postcard view of North Broad Street, looking north from Race Street.

According to a directory of automobile dealers published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1907, there were already 61 showrooms in the city that year (Figure 14).¹⁸ Of that number, 50 or approximately 82% were located on North Broad Street. Many of the earliest car makers and sellers set up shop in rented garages or converted dwellings. As in other cities, the pioneers were small local firms who purchased parts from outside suppliers and assembled their own cars. As the industry grew, however, national brands like Cadillac, Buick and Oldsmobile became larger and more self-contained, purchased property, and built vast showrooms, assembly plants, and distribution facilities according to their specific needs. As early as 1906, reported *The Automobile*, “The Quaker City’s ‘Automobile Row’ is gradually assuming an appearance more in keeping with the magnitude of the business done. The hastily-altered and poorly-adapted ramshackle structures along North Broad Street are gradually disappearing.”¹⁹ In their place, auto makers built larger, more formal buildings designed by architects.

¹⁷ “Improving Quaker City’s Auto Row,” *The Automobile*, September 20, 1906, 386.

¹⁸ “The Inquirer’s Directory of Automobile Dealers,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 12, 1907.

¹⁹ “Improving Quaker City’s Auto Row,” *The Automobile*, Vol. XV, No. 12 (September 20, 1906), 386.

Initially, many of the new showrooms and garages were located south of Vine Street, but as the number of establishments increased, they grew northward into the proposed district. In fact, as the automobile gained popularity in the following years, the number of showrooms and garages exploded. According to official state industrial directories, the number of automobile related businesses on North Broad Street had grown to 85 by 1910 and over 100 by 1915.

The geographic concentration of automobile manufacturers and sellers in Philadelphia was not unique among American cities; Chicago, Detroit, New York, and even smaller cities like Kansas City and Indianapolis all had an Automobile Row. Early auto manufacturers and dealers “clustered on highly visible thoroughfares...such as Broadway in midtown Manhattan, South Michigan Avenue in Chicago, North Broad Street in Philadelphia, and East Jefferson Street in Detroit.” As on North Broad Street, automobile rows developed “on the edge of the central business district, in cheaper rent areas, along one or more major highways; its attachment is to the highway itself.” Not confined simply to the selling or assembly of automobiles, the businesses that made up Automobile Row eventually encompassed every imaginable automobile part and accessory, from tires to batteries to driving apparel.²⁰



Fig. 14 – The Inquirer’s Directory of Automobile Dealers from the March 12, 1907 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

²⁰ John Rae Bell, *The American Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 18-19, and Chauncey D. Harris and Edward L. Ullman, “The Nature of Cities,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 242 (November 1945): 15.

What set Philadelphia's Automobile Row apart from those in other cities was the sheer number and variety of businesses that opened there after 1900, encompassing virtually the entire range of national and local automobile brands. Among dozens of automobile manufacturers, Packard, Ford, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac built the largest and most architecturally notable group of commercial buildings on North Broad Street. With few exceptions, these facilities housed vertically integrated operations that combined showrooms with management offices, assembly plants, repair garages, and distribution centers supplying dealerships throughout the tri-state region. Although the largest factories within each company remained in and around Detroit or other Michigan cities, many opened branch factories or assembly plants in strategic urban centers. In this model, pioneered by Henry Ford, these branch factories would order parts from Detroit, which would be delivered by rail and assembled into automobiles. This not only reduced transportation costs – the parts for as many as twenty automobiles could fit onto a single railway car – but allowed each company to adapt to regional differences in consumer demand.²¹

Packard, which was originally represented in Philadelphia by the Keystone Motor Company at 238 North Broad Street, embarked on the construction of its own facility in 1911 (Figure 15). Like other national car makers, the continual growth of Packard sales in Philadelphia was so strong by the early 1910s that the company decided a branch office and distribution center of its own would better serve its business. Designed by architect Albert Kahn, who had overseen the design and construction of Packard's massive Detroit factory beginning in 1903, the company's new Philadelphia home was an eight-story tower of gleaming white architectural terra cotta (315-21 N. Broad Street). Opened in February 1912, the building would serve as a regional center of the Packard brand, housing not only elaborate showrooms, but also company offices, an assembly plant, and a repair garage. On its grand opening, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* remarked that "those who inspected the building left with the deeply rooted conviction that Philadelphia was indeed to be congratulated in having what is undeniably the finest building in the world for the sales and manufacture of automobiles." Although this statement could be excused as hyperbole on the part of an overeager reporter, the building did indeed signal a new path for urban automobile showroom design both in its enormous size and ornate, Beaux-Arts style exterior. Packard remained in the building until 1928, when it became a parking garage and later the headquarters of the *Philadelphia Record*.²²

Ford, initially located in a building at Broad and Buttonwood Streets, built a new home at the northwest corner of Broad and Lehigh in 1913 (Figure 16). "Activities in the Ford organization in this city...are just now at fever heat," the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported in November of that

²¹ James Ensor, *The Motor Industry* (London: Longman, 1971), 11.

²² "Formal Opening of New Packard Home," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 25, 1912. Also see George E. Thomas, "Packard Motor Corp. Building," National Register Nomination Form, 1979. The nomination can be accessed at <https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS>. The Packard Building is the only resource within the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District that is already listed on the Philadelphia Register.

year, “the company’s business having reached a point where extensive provision must be made to facilitate the transportation of its vast output to scores of distributing points from whence the smaller retail establishments are supplied.” Like the Packard Building, Ford’s new ten-story building at 2700-34 North Broad Street was designed by Albert Kahn and served as a regional headquarters of the Ford organization and supply chain, producing upwards of 10,000 cars per year for dealerships in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware. In addition, the building housed company offices, a sales room, and a garage and repair department.²³ In choosing a site much farther north than Automobile Row had reached by the early 1910s, Ford rightly anticipated that the rapid growth of the industry would require larger and larger facilities that could not as easily be built nearer to Center City. Ford occupied the building until 1925 when it moved to a new plant in Chester, Pennsylvania, and later became home to several garment manufacturers.²⁴

Oldsmobile, which was initially sold by Motor Shop, Inc. at 317 North Broad Street, moved into its own facility at 800 North Broad Street in 1919. Designed and constructed by Philadelphia-based William Steele & Sons for developer Charles W. Young, the Commercial Style building was initially leased to Studebaker (Figure 17) but did not become fully operational until purchased by Oldsmobile.²⁵ Featured in *Motor World* in 1920, the building contained a salesroom on the first floor, a used car department on the second floor, a repair shop on the fourth floor, and an assembly plant on the seventh floor. The other floors contained storage for cars awaiting sale or shipment as well as stockrooms for parts.²⁶ Oldsmobile remained in the building through the end of the 1920s. It was used later by several garment manufacturers and industrial printers, and by the late 1950s was converted for use as offices for the City of Philadelphia.

Buick, like Packard, was initially represented in Philadelphia by the Keystone Motor Company and opened its first company owned and operated branch at 235-37 North Broad Street in 1908, a building then just recently completed. Within this three-story building, Buick maintained a showroom and assembled automobiles on a small scale. By 1916, the company’s success in the city (it was now part of General Motors) led to a move to a much larger facility at 900 North Broad Street (the northwest corner of Broad and Poplar Streets), which, except for

²³ “Ford to Erect Great Building,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 8, 1913, and “Ford’s New Quarters,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 23, 1913.

²⁴ The building was featured in the February 24, 1915 edition of *The American Architect* (photo, plans, details). For an overview of the building’s more recent history, see Bradley Maule, “Broad & Lehigh’s Landmark Botany 500 Building, Awaiting Its Next Life,” *Hidden City*, September 04, 2013, accessed November 19, 2019, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2013/09/broad-lehighs-landmark-botany-500-building-awaiting-its-next-life/>.

²⁵ Shortly after the building’s completion in 1918, it was subleased to the city to house soldiers arriving in Philadelphia to await transport to Europe. For more, see *Philadelphia in the World War, 1914-1919* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia War History Committee, 1922), 74-75.

²⁶ “New Philadelphia Home of Oldsmobile Combines Serviceability and Beauty,” *Motor World* 63, no. 5 (May 5, 1920): 37.

Ford, was the northernmost of the large national brands. Designed by Philadelphia architect Mahlon H. Dickinson, the six-story building allowed Buick to expand on their existing operation, adding significant assembly and distribution capabilities as well as a more commodious showroom (Figure 18). When Buick moved yet again – this time into a massive new plant at 16th Street and Indiana Avenue in 1923 – Chrysler quickly took over the building.²⁷



Fig. 15: 315-21 N. Broad Street

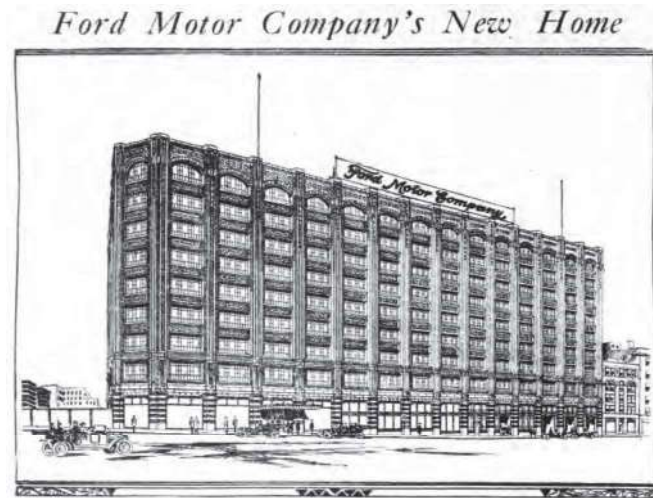


Fig. 16: 2700-34 N. Broad Street



Fig. 17: 800 N. Broad Street



Fig. 18: 900-04 N. Broad Street

Fig. 15 Packard Building (*The Packard*, January 7, 1911).

Fig. 16 Ford Motor Company Service Building (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 23, 1913).

Fig. 17 Oldsmobile Building, originally Studebaker (*Motor World*, May 5, 1920, p. 37).

Fig. 18 Buick Building (City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, 1917).

²⁷ Kevin McMahon, "Buick Motor Company Building," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Listed April 26, 2018. The nomination can be accessed at <https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS>

Other companies that are little known today but were major national players during the 1910s and 1920s chose not to build major assembly plants or distribution centers in Philadelphia but nonetheless maintained local branches and showrooms along North Broad Street. The Nash Motor Company, Eastern Motors Corporation, and the Oakland Motor Car Company, for example, had showrooms and/or repair shops at 655-57, 901-03, and 918 North Broad Street, respectively.²⁸

In addition to nationally known brands, many Philadelphia-based auto makers and sellers opened on North Broad Street between 1900 and 1930. Gomery-Schwartz, a locally owned distributor for the Detroit-based Hudson Motor Car Company, built an 11-story, Classical Revival-style building at the northeast corner of Broad and Cherry Streets (130-40 N. Broad Street) in 1917, bucking the trend of northward growth along Automobile Row. Designed by Philadelphia architect Charles E. Oelschlager, who had already designed several prominent automobile-related buildings on North Broad Street, the building emulated the vertically integrated model introduced to Philadelphia by Packard and Ford, serving as a showroom, service station, office space and warehouse.²⁹

Another notable local firm was the Roman Automobile Company, a large used car dealership at 227-233 North Broad Street. Founded around 1905, Roman claimed to be the “largest used auto house in the world,” with an inventory of 1000 models ranging from \$250 to \$3000 in the early 1920s (Figure 19). Although their used car operation was headquartered at 227-237 North Broad Street – where they would buy, tear down, rebuild, and then resell used autos in a 45,000 square foot space – the company had grown so large by 1916 that another auxiliary garage was needed. Roman chose a site within the proposed district at 681-687 North Broad Street, where they constructed the Roman Building – a 2-story classical revival composition in glazed matte white terra cotta, still standing today.

²⁸ Due to significant alterations and the absence of nearly all historic fabric, 918 N. Broad Street is not counted as a contributing resource.

²⁹ Logan McClintic-Smith, “Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Building,” National Register Nomination Form, 2007. The nomination can be accessed at <https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS>



Fig. 19 – Roman Auto Company advertisement from the March 3, 1921 edition of the *Evening Public Ledger*.

Although dominated by major national brands with often sprawling facilities, Automobile Row also contained many parts and accessories stores and local garages or smaller used car dealerships. Due to their comparatively diminutive scale, these buildings were often grouped together so as not to be overshadowed by their much larger neighbors. The best example is the west side of the 800 block of North Broad Street, where beginning in 1915 at least ten tire stores opened in three- to four-story loft buildings that were no wider than a rowhouse. This subgroup of Automobile Row, which could itself be called “Tire Row,” contained national brands still well known today, such as Michelin at 802 North Broad Street, as well as numerous other sellers who disappeared long ago, including Globe Rubber Tire (804), Republic Tire (806), Allen Rubber (808), Empire Tire (810), and The Powers Company (812), among others (Figure 20).³⁰ A similar grouping of one- to three-story buildings was built along the east side of the 900 block between about 1919 and 1930, housing a number of locally-owned sales agencies as well as part and accessories stores.

³⁰ The group at 802-810 North Broad Street was covered by Ben Leech in “Unlisted Philadelphia: Automobile Row,” *Extant* (Fall 2018). This piece is also available on *Hidden City*: <https://hiddencityphila.org/2018/09/unlisted-philadelphia-automobile-row/>. Accessed 11/18/19.



Fig. 20 – Advertisements for Michelin Tire (802 N. Broad), The Powers Company (812 N. Broad), Hood Tires (822 N. Broad) and Quaker Tires (830 N. Broad) from the *Evening Public Ledger* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* between 1915 and 1920.

Whether an automobile maker purchased and developed their own property or leased a building from a local landlord, a majority of transactions on Automobile Row were handled by a small number of real estate brokers and developers. Kahn & Greenberg (Joseph J. Greenberg), Mastbaum Brothers & Fleisher, as well as Heymann Brothers – three of the city’s most prominent real estate firms – sold property to or developed buildings for many of the automobile industry’s most prominent names on North Broad Street. Joseph J. Greenberg’s 1963 obituary claimed that he had a hand in over 80 percent of Automobile Row’s showrooms, garages and assembly plants.³¹

The rapid growth of the automobile industry in Philadelphia and the country as a whole was such that by the mid-1920s, many of the vast facilities built by the major brands were being vacated for even larger warehouses outside of the city, or at least away from North Broad Street where larger parcels were available for expansion. Buick, for example, left its home at 900-04 North Broad Street in 1923 for a new, much larger facility they leased at 16th Street and Indiana Avenue. Although Buick’s former home was quickly taken over by Chrysler, most of

³¹ “Joseph Greenberg, 79, Dies,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 17, 1963

their competitors' buildings were leased by garment manufacturers or became other types of factories, warehouses or offices. Ford, on the other hand, left its plant at Broad and Lehigh in 1927, opening a new assembly and distribution center in Chester, Pennsylvania.

North Broad Street remained heavily populated by automobile showrooms and assembly plants through the end of the 1920s, but the Great Depression soon brought major changes. In addition to the construction of the Broad Street Subway, which severely disrupted business along Automobile Row during the late 1920s, the economic turmoil of the following decade resulted in a significant decline in auto sales. The downturn precipitated an end to Automobile Row, forcing many firms to close entirely or to continue to consolidate operations in plants outside of the city. A number of dealerships remained on North Broad Street, but by the mid-1930s the number of automobile assembly plants and major distribution centers was dwindling. This trend only accelerated during the early 1940s as many large buildings on Automobile Row were given over to the production of war material. After World War II, the loss of population to the suburbs and deindustrialization prevented the industry from recovering in Philadelphia.

By the 1950s, only a few dealerships remained on the former Automobile Row, including Packard, which in 1952 opened a showroom at 1231-39 North Broad Street, in the former Roberts-Nash Motor Company Building.³² One of the rare new showrooms to open on North Broad after World War II, Packard lasted only a few years. Krouse Studebaker (later Krouse Oldsmobile), which opened at 667 North Broad Street in the 1930s, remained open until 1963. On the demise of Krouse, "the last vestige of Philadelphia's automobile row," a headline in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* declared "Old Auto Row Chugs Its Last."³³ With the decline and finally disappearance of Automobile Row, many large buildings on North Broad Street were left partially or fully vacant, while others were demolished or converted for use by manufacturers in the garment or printing industries, among others, or by various social, labor, and educational institutions.

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District also satisfies the following criteria for designation:

(c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

(d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;

³² "Packard's Back on Broad Street!," advertisement in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 6, 1952.

³³ "Old Auto Row Chugs Its Last," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1963. Due to significant alterations – the façade on the second through fifth floors was replaced with a curtain wall in 1967 – 1231-39 N. Broad Street is not counted as a contributing resource.

The Architecture of Automobile Row

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District is significant as a unique collection of early twentieth century commercial and industrial buildings that represent the significant growth of the automobile industry in Philadelphia between 1906 and 1930 and embody national architectural trends during this period. Among its 29 resources, the district contains a wide variety of architectural styles and building scales, from three-story buildings no wider than a rowhouse to massive, block-long assembly plants. The most common architectural styles represented in the district are the Beaux Arts, Classical Revival, and the Commercial Style.

Prior to 1900, much of North Broad Street was lined with dwellings and churches in red brick or brownstone. The west side of the 700 block, for example, presents a somewhat intact streetscape from this period. The imposing, Romanesque Revival church built in 1877 at 704-12 North Broad Street (the former Central Presbyterian Church, now the Greater Exodus Baptist Church) is brownstone, while the three Second Empire rowhouses directly to the north, though somewhat altered, are brick.³⁴ The Italianate-style Matthew Baird House, built in 1863 at 814-16 North Broad Street and Edwin Forrest House at 1346 North Broad Street are even earlier examples in brownstone.³⁵ Although these nineteenth century survivors were spared, after 1900 many others like them were gradually replaced by much larger showrooms, garages, and eventually massive assembly plants in a process that dramatically changed the look of North Broad Street.

Around the turn of the century, the revivalist Victorian styles of the previous fifty years, as represented by the buildings mentioned above, soon gave way to a more Classically influenced approach to design that began with the Beaux Arts style. Popularized in large part by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and the City Beautiful Movement, which prescribed the use of Classical form to bring order to the perceived chaos of American cities, the Beaux Arts style was characterized not just by formal symmetry and Italian Renaissance form, but also by a grandiose display of Greek and Roman decorative elements. The three-part building at 227-29, 231-33, and 235-37 North Broad Street (three separate buildings in a single composition), designed by Watson & Huckel in 1908, is one of the earliest in the district and perhaps the one that most strongly represents the Beaux Arts style. Its symmetrical composition is enhanced by pilasters, engaged columns and rusticated piers at ground level as well as highly sculptural terra cotta window frames and prominent cornices on the second and third floors, all typical of the highly expressive Beaux Arts mode.

As the twentieth century progressed, the tendency toward strongly articulated facades so prevalent in the Beaux Arts style transitioned into a less embellished interpretation of Classical

³⁴ The Central Presbyterian Church was listed on the Philadelphia Register in 1972.

³⁵ The Matthew Baird House and Edwin Forrest House were listed on the Philadelphia Register in 1983 and 1976, respectively.

form. As represented by numerous works in the district, including the Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Building, built in 1917 at 130-40 North Broad Street (Figure 21) and the Buick Building, built in 1916 at 900-04 North Broad Street, what can most readily be identified as the Classical Revival style is characterized by a traditional base-shaft-capital composition, including ground floor bays separated by traditional Classical pilasters or engaged columns, a cornice separating the base from the more plainly treated upper floors, and a larger, typically more pronounced cornice at the top. In addition to these larger buildings, the Classical Revival style appears in many smaller structures throughout the district. A concentration of two- to four-story, twenty-foot wide buildings exists at 802 through 810 North Broad Street and at 830 North Broad Street, all built between about 1915 and 1920. Although each building is uniquely designed – 806 North Broad Street contains subtle Gothic elements as noted above – as a whole, they represent a striking group of Classically-inspired structures, all in glazed white terra cotta. The four-story building built in 1917 for the Fanning-Mathis Company (distributors for the Marmon Motor Car Company) at 722 North Broad Street in 1917 is another important example (Figure 22).



Fig. 21



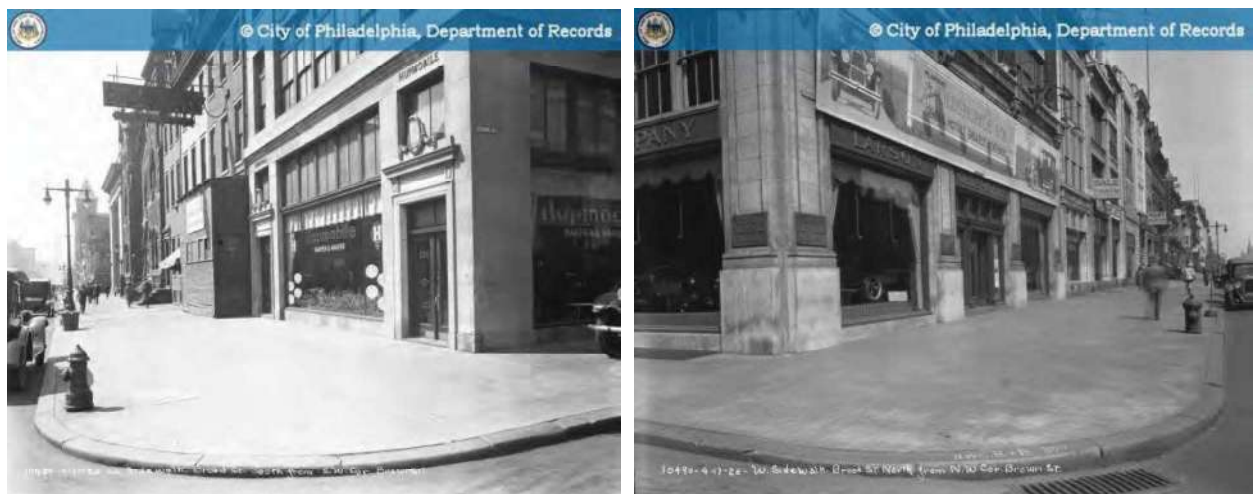
Fig. 22

Fig. 21 The Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Building, 130-40 N. Broad St., in 1925
(Philadelphia Department of Records).

Fig. 22 722 North Broad Street (from *The Journal of the Engineers' Club of Philadelphia*, May 1918).

The Commercial Style also appears in abundance within the proposed district. Known for straightforward design and visible spandrel and pier construction visible on the exterior, Commercial Style buildings are composed in a Classical manner but typically contain little or no

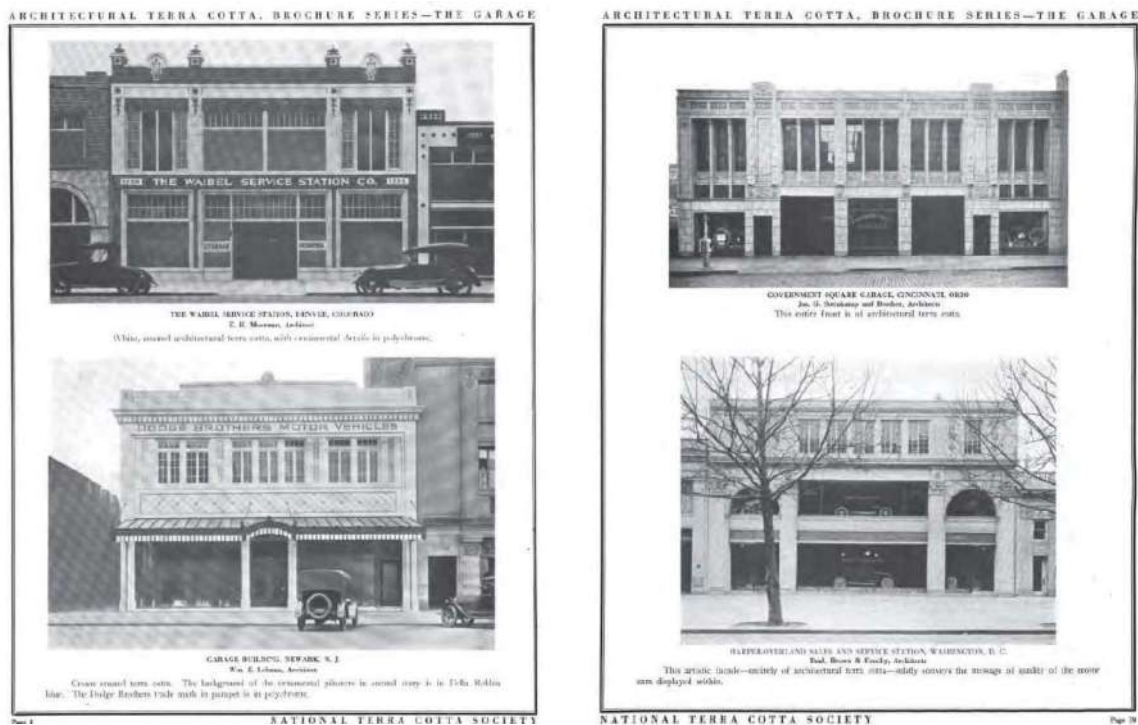
stylistic detailing. The style flourished with the use of reinforced concrete, as it allowed buildings to be functional, economical and inherently fireproof, the latter being an important consideration in spaces like showrooms and automobile warehouses where gasoline was always present. Used most notably by automobile companies, the style appears in numerous buildings within the proposed district. For example, while the ground floors and cornices of the Oldsmobile Building at 800 North Broad Street and the Ford Motor Company Service Building at 2700 North Broad Street feature a more ornate treatment in terra cotta, pilasters between bays contained simplified or abstracted ornamentation rather than the Classical orders, and the middle floors are strikingly functional in treatment. Often, particularly at the Ford building, the vertical piers that defined the façade did not terminate into a Classical cornice but projected slightly up above the parapet to create a crenellated effect.



Figs. 23 and 24 Auto showrooms at 722 North Broad Street (Hupmobile) and 800 North Broad Street (Oldsmobile) in 1925 (Philadelphia Department of Records).

While incredible variety in style, scale, materiality, and building type characterize North Broad Street's physical environment overall, several aspects of its architectural development are unique to Automobile Row. Faced with an entirely new building type, after 1900 architects grappled with how to give proper expression to the excitement and modernity embodied in the rise of the automobile, not to mention how to properly display cars in storefronts along a corridor where potential buyers would more often be traveling in a fast moving vehicle than on foot. A large proportion of glass to masonry, for example, became an essential feature of these buildings, particularly at ground level where automobile showrooms were located (Figures 23 and 24). Architectural terra cotta also became a defining feature of Automobile Row, reflecting the tremendous popularity of this building material during the early twentieth century. Although not unique to automobile showrooms and garages, terra cotta was particularly suited to the expression of stability that became so important in what was still then a very new, fledgling industry.

A fired clay product, terra cotta has been used in buildings as a structural component, fireproofing, and cladding material since antiquity. Although manufactured in the United States since the late 1860s, the use of architectural terra cotta in commercial buildings greatly accelerated after the turn of the twentieth century. Far less expensive than stone, terra cotta could be molded into virtually any form, allowing the creation of highly articulated facades, often from standardized components chosen from a catalog. The material rapidly became a defining characteristic of American downtowns after 1900 and was produced by a range of manufacturers. Companies like the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company (founded 1888 in Chicago), the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company (founded 1886), the Conkling-Armstrong Terra Cotta Company (founded 1895 in Philadelphia), among a host of others, proliferated throughout the United States to satisfy the ever growing demand for this eminently versatile material.³⁶



Figs. 25 and 26 Pages from “Architectural Terra Cotta Brochure Series – The Garage,” National Terra Cotta Society, 1915.

As demonstrated by dozens of buildings within the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District – especially the Packard Building at 315-21 North Broad Street, “Tire Row” at 802-830 North Broad Street, The Roman Building at 681-687 North Broad Street, and the Petersen Motors

³⁶ Deborah Slaton and Harry J. Hunderman, “Terra Cotta,” in *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, edited by Thomas C. Jester (Washington, D.C.: Archetype Press, 1995); and Susan Tunick, *Terra-Cotta Skyline* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

Building at 1227-29 North Broad Street (Figure 27) – terra cotta was eminently suitable for use in automobile-related buildings. In fact, several terra cotta manufacturers and trade organizations published catalogs and pamphlets directed specifically toward the automobile industry. In 1915, for example, the National Terra Cotta Society published a fifth volume of its *Architectural Terra Cotta Brochure Series*, “The Garage,” an umbrella term that the publication used for automobile showrooms and parts and accessories stores in addition to parking garages. In the forty-page pamphlet, the Society makes the case for terra cotta as a building material both in general terms and more specifically for automobile industry buildings, illustrating its use with photographs of small and large garages and showrooms across the country (Figures 25 and 26). The automobile, it proclaims, “is tangible evidence of successful modern effort...Its housing to be architecturally consistent should express in permanent form and color the service for which it was erected.”³⁷

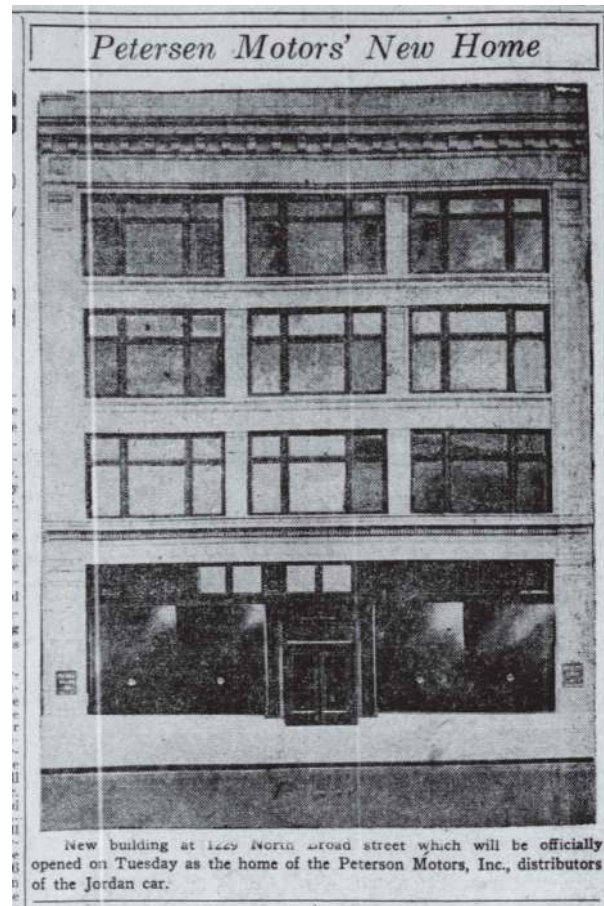


Fig. 27 Petersen Motors Building, 1227-29 N. Broad Street, on its opening in May, 1923
(from the Philadelphia Inquirer, May 6, 1923)

³⁷ National Terra Cotta Society, “Architectural Terra Cotta Brochure Series, Volume Five, The Garage,” (New York, 1915).

Terra cotta helped to give the automobile an architectural expression because it was in its early twentieth century form, a new, modern product itself. Léon-Victor Solon (1873-1957), a ceramist who is known for his sculptural tile work at Rockefeller Center in Manhattan and the polychrome pediment of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, wrote in “The Garage” that certain impressions imparted by the automobile, including “elegance in line and form, so admirably realized in chassis and body by the best automobile designers, and by beauty of texture or surface as appreciated in body finish” could be replicated or at least complemented by architectural terra cotta. Solon continued, “Elegance in line and form can be rendered in no other material with the subtlety of which this clay material is capable. For beauty of texture, nothing can be compared with a well fired glaze in either beauty or permanency.”

More pragmatically, terra cotta allowed the easy replication of historical motifs that “implied permanence and prestige in what was still an unstable industry,” in the words of historian Robert Buerglener. For example, when glazed in white or light gray, terra cotta could reproduce Classical forms in a much more efficient and cost-effective way than marble or granite. Writing of Chicago’s Motor Row, architectural historian Robert Bruegmann has explained that ornamented terra cotta façades also provided “the visual stimulation that dealers felt was necessary to convey the excitement of the rapidly changing new technology.” In Philadelphia, a city of predominantly red brick buildings, the gleaming white facades were particularly striking.³⁸

The Automobile Row Thematic Historic District also satisfies the following criteria for designation:

(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; and

Architects in the District

Numerous locally and nationally prominent architects and architectural firms produced buildings within the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District. Displaying an extraordinary amount of architectural skill within a relatively small geographical area, the buildings are a testament not only to the economic and commercial strength of the automobile industry in Philadelphia at this time but also to the importance to the industry of employing such name-brand architects as a marketing technique. As such, the district stands as a representative catalogue of early twentieth century architecture, designed around a consistent program for a centralized function.

³⁸ Robert Bruegmann, *The Architects and the City: Holabird & Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 378.

Hoffman-Henon Company Architects

A partnership of William H. Hoffman and Paul J. Henon, Jr., Hoffman-Henon were renowned designers of theatres, designing over 100 in and around Philadelphia, including the former Boyd Theatre on Chestnut Street (1928). The firm also designed a number of small and large commercial buildings within the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District and across the city. Within the district, their work includes the four-story, remarkably intact Petersen Motors Company Building at 1227-29 North Broad Street (1922), as well as two smaller but highly similar structures at 808 and 1248 North Broad Street (1920). These three buildings are some of the best examples of architectural terra cotta within the proposed district. Designed in the Classical Revival style, they demonstrate the adaptability with which terra cotta could be applied for use in commercial buildings, particularly those related to the automobile trade.

Albert Kahn

Of all the architects represented in the district, Albert Kahn (1869-1942) undoubtedly had the most significant national impact on the design of industrial buildings, combining structural innovations like reinforced concrete with sophisticated detailing to produce “an industrial modernism based on the direct, frank expression of function.”³⁹ Kahn’s Packard Building at 315-21 N. Broad St (1910-1911) and the slightly later Ford Motor Company Service Building at 2700-34 N. Broad St (1913-1914) loom over the north and south ends of the district and showcase Kahn’s mastery of reinforced concrete construction and the economical application of terra cotta ornamentation that, while highly detailed, complements rather than detracts from the straightforward composition and simple lines of his buildings.⁴⁰ Although the Ford building is at first glance more representative of Kahn’s functional approach, the Packard Building, too, despite appearing more Classical in form, is a highly efficient composition with ornamentation applied only to the narrow pilasters and spandrels between the large expanses of windows to express the underlying concrete grid.

After emigrating from Germany in 1880, Kahn settled in Detroit, founding Albert Kahn Associates in 1895. and, nearly from then on, began a career-long association with the automobile industry. Prior to his design of the Packard Building in Philadelphia, Kahn designed the revolutionary Packard Assembly Plant in Detroit in 1903 – the first to be constructed of reinforced concrete, allowing an open floor plan – as well as Ford’s Highland Park and River Rouge plants in 1909 and 1917, respectively. Henry T. Ford, in particular, appreciated the firm’s assembly-line approach to design that relied on a strict division of labor among the firm’s hundreds of engineers, architects, and specification writers.⁴¹

³⁹ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 255.

⁴⁰ For more on Kahn and his design of the Packard and Ford buildings, see Christopher R. Dougherty, “The Other Kahn,” *Hidden City*, January 14, 2014, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2014/01/the-other-kahn/>.

⁴¹ Bradley, 24.

Charles E. Oelschlager

After training at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art in the 1890s, Charles E. Oelschlager (c.1870-c.1940) completed over 200 known commissions in and around Philadelphia, including churches, movie theaters, rowhouses, garages and automobile showrooms. While many of his projects were alterations or additions to the work of other architects, he completed at least four projects within the district, including a 4-story, commercial building at 806 North Broad Street (1915); the 2-story building at 830 North Broad Street (1916); the 3-story Michelin Tires building at 802 North Broad Street (1916); and the Gomery-Schwartz Autocar Building at 130-40 North Broad Street (1917), making him one of the most prolific designers among the surviving resources of Automobile Row.

Le Roy Berman Rothschild

Rothschild designed numerous terra cotta-fronted buildings in the Automobile Row Thematic Historic District, including 720-22 North Broad Street (1917) and the Powers Company Building at 812 North Broad Street (1917), among others. Born in 1886, Rothschild graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.S. in Architecture in 1910. By 1920, Rothschild had established himself as one of the city's leaders in commercial architecture, designing the Heymann Building at 213-15 S. Broad Street (1921; extant); the 12-story, Beaux-Art style Heymann Brothers Building at 1600 Walnut Street (1922; extant); the Colonial Revival-style Sylvania Hotel at 1326 Locust Street (1922, extant); and the Beaux-Arts style office building at 1700 Walnut Street (1925; extant). Rothschild also designed numerous industrial buildings, including the Biberman Building at 611-610 North 15th Street (1919; extant) and the Buick Motor Company Building at 2917-2937 North 16th Street (1925; extant).

William Steele & Sons

Founded in 1881, William Steele & Sons pioneered the development of reinforced concrete construction, becoming prolific designers and builders of industrial buildings throughout Philadelphia. Between about 1910 and 1930, the firm was responsible for dozens of large factories, mills, warehouses, and garages in virtually every part of the city. Although much of their industrial work is purely functional in appearance – consisting of an expressed, reinforced concrete frame with brick spandrels and multi-light steel factory windows – the firm occasionally designed more high style works like the Studebaker Building at 800 North Broad Street, which they designed and built in 1917. As demonstrated by this example, reinforced concrete construction, which consisted simply of floor slabs supported by a grid of columns, allowed facades with a significantly higher percentage of windows than masonry surfaces.

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