

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: **1523 Chestnut Street**

Postal code: **19102**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Love Building**

Current Name: **Unknown**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building Structure Site Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: Commercial

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Period of Significance (from year to year): **ca.1880-1923**

Date(s) of construction: **ca.1880**

Architects: **Unknown**

Builders: **Unknown**

Original owner: **John Beresford Love**

Significant person: **Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, etc.**

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource 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.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization: **Center City Residents' Association**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian
Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Date: **3 June 2021**

Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Telephone: **717.602.5002**
Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 10 June 2021

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 17 June 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 21 June 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: 1523 Chestnut Associates

Address: B&M Leasing, 283 2nd Street Pike, Suite 110

City: Southampton

State: PA

Postal Code: 18966

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: July 21, 2021

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: August 13, 2021

Date of Final Action: August 13, 2021

Designated Rejected Criteria A and J

12/7/18

NOMINATION
FOR THE
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. The primary (south) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

THE LOVE BUILDING
BUILT CA. 1880
1523 CHESTNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

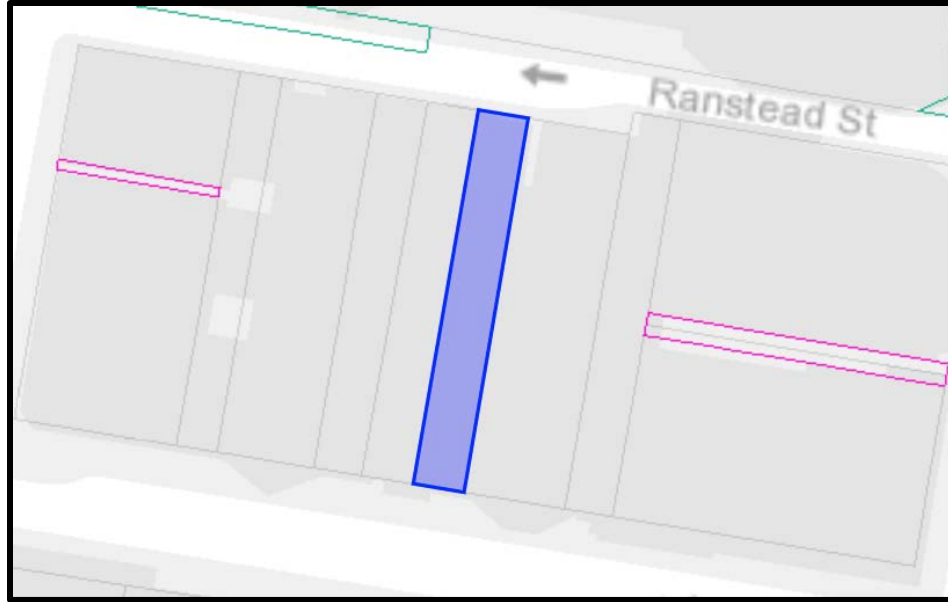


Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated by the purple line. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description of the proposed designation is as follows:

Beginning at a point on the north side of Chestnut Street at the distance of 176 feet eastwardly from the east side of 16th Street. Containing in front or breadth on the said Chestnut Street 22 feet and extending of that width in length or depth northwardly at right angles from said Chestnut Street 168 feet to Ranstead Street.

Tax Account No. **001S090105**

OPA/BRT Account No. **882032610**



Figure 3. Left: The primary (south) elevation, taken between 1882 and 1899. Source: *The Official Office Building Directory and Architectural Handbook of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: The Commercial Publishing and Directory Co., 1899), 140. Figure 4. Right: The primary (south) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Situated on a typical twenty-two-foot-wide city lot, the Love Building is a four-story masonry structure at 1523 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia. Situated on the north side of Chestnut Street, the four-story, three-bay facade features Queen Anne-style ornamentation (Figures 3 and 4). The original storefront has been replaced by a modern version. The second, third, and fourth stories are characterized by a façade of red brick with stone sills. The three-bay fenestration of the upper levels features a symmetrical arrangement of apertures that are characterized by segmental arched brick tops composed of soldier bricks. All the windows are one-over-one fixtures with segmental arched tops. The third and fourth floor windows retain original iron balustrades that are decorative in nature. The most ornate part of the façade is the frieze, which projects from the building line on a band of brick arches and brackets. The lower portion of the frieze features a grid of terracotta reliefs in square forms. At the cornice level is some sort of metal siding that may conceal the original cornice comprised of seven panels, which are delineated by eight brackets with finials that rise above the larger cornice (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5. Top: The upper stories of the primary (south) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021. Figure 6. Bottom: An historic view of the third floor, frieze, and cornice, taken between 1882 and 1899. Source: *The Official Office Building Directory and Architectural Handbook of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: The Commercial Publishing and Directory Co., 1899), 140.



Figure 7. Looking south at the rear (north) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.



Figure 8. Cover illustration from *Everybody's Magazine* in June 1902 by Violet Oakley. Source: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA).

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Love Building at 1523 Chestnut Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies 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; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance for the subject building is from 1880, the time of construction, through 1923, the last year of a documented Philadelphia artist in residence.

CRITERIA A AND J

Indicative of eclectic Victorian commercial architecture of the late nineteenth century, the Love Building at 1523 Chestnut Street retains a significant place in Philadelphia's artistic legacy, which informs the larger cultural, economic, and social heritage of the city, commonwealth, and nation. It was the creative habitat of numerous important and noteworthy artists of the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Perhaps the most famous occupants of the studio space were the "Red Rose Girls," a *romantic friendship* that included significant Philadelphia artists Jessie Willcox Smith (1863-1935), Elizabeth Shippen Green (1871-1954), and Violet

Oakley (1874-1961).¹ While the Red Rose Girls would reside in a communal lifestyle for many years, both Jessie and Violet would go on to live with same-sex life partners, and both are often interpreted as lesbians by the LGBTQ community today. The Love Building was where the Red Rose Girls came together, while also developing and blossoming in their own particular careers. Jessie Willcox Smith (Figures 12, 16, 25, and 26) was an important American illustrator during the Golden Age of Illustration, commissioned to enliven the covers and pages of *The Century Magazine*, *Collier's Illustrated Weekly*, *Leslie's Weekly*, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, *McClure's*, *Scribner's* and *The Ladies Home Journal*. Her work also included the beautifully executed illustrations for books like Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Elizabeth Shippen Green (Figures 22 and 25) too was an important American illustrator of the period, a career that included commissions for *The Ladies Home Journal*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Harper's Magazine*. The youngest and perhaps most distinctive of the three, Violet Oakley (Figures 9, 10, 14, 24, and 25) was an American artist of critical importance with Sapphic associations, excelling as a painter, muralist, illustrator (Figure 8), and portraitist, as well as an architectural and industrial designer. She was a leading figure in the milieu of the American Renaissance, an artistic movement dedicated to the cultural renewal and spiritual revitalization of American culture and life. The Red Rose Girls also shared their studio with fellow artists, Jessie Hart Dodd (1863-1911), Ellen Wetherald Ahrens (1859-1938), and others.² These important, professional women artists, as well as the artistic movement they founded, took root on the fourth floor of the Love Building, and, in essence, it represents their individual significance, an important epoch of women's history, and is associated with contemporary interpretations of LGBTQ heritage.



Figure 9. Violet Oakley in her studio on the fourth floor of the Love Building in 1898. Source: Violet Oakley Papers, 1841-1981, Archives of American Art.

¹ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 51.

² *Dictionary of Women Artists. An international dictionary of women artists born before 1900*. By Chris Petteys. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1985.



Figure 10. Top left: “A Self Portrait of Violet Oakley, The Artist in Mourning for her Father, 1900.” Source: PAFA. Figure 11. Top middle: “The Heavenly Host” (composite study for left mural at All Angels Church, New York) by Violet Oakley. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum. Figure 12. Top right: A portrait of Jessie Willcox Smith by Violet Oakley in 1900. Source: Pinterest. Figure 13. Bottom left and Figure 14. Bottom right: Violet Oakley in her studio on the fourth floor of the Love Building in ca.1900. Source: Nudelman Rare Books.

THE ARTISTIC ORIGINS OF THE RED ROSE GIRLS:

JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH, ELIZABETH SHIPPEN GREEN, & VIOLET OAKLEY, 1897-1902

“It all began in 1523...,” remembered Violet Oakley in her autobiography, clarifying, “not the year, but the Building on Chestnut Street, where our studios were side by side, on the top floor.”³ It was here that the romantic friendship that formed the Red Roses Girls, including Smith, Green, and Oakley, took root. Initially, the Oakley sisters rented the three-room studio with its high ceilings and skylight on the top floor of the Love Building in 1897. Their rent was \$18 per month, collected by Clement C. Love, a member of the family that constructed the building nearly twenty years earlier. As time went on the Love tenants would refer to their apparently lenient landlord as “Clemency Love,” which was “peculiarly fitting at times when any of his tenants were behindhand with the rent—a thing which sometimes happens in the best regulated studios.” Violet recalled this detail along with the signage on the ground floor staircase, which read “Match-boys, Peddlers, and Beggars not allowed in this building.”⁴

³ Violet Oakley Papers, 1841-1981, Archives of American Art.

⁴ Bailey Van Hook. *Violet Oakley: An Artist's Life*. (University of Delaware Press, 2016), 59.

Hester Oakley, a writer, as well as an illustrator, would only join her sister in the space for a short time, as she was between betrothals, her relationship with Ben Gilbert broken off in early 1897 and her marriage to childhood friend Stanley Ward occurred on December 14, 1898.⁵ Their studio was furnished with “a cabinet, carved chairs, a leaved mahogany table, her own cane armchair, Violet’s desk, looking glasses, trunks, curtains, and drawings” originally in their South Orange, New Jersey residence. These items, which were provided by their mother Cornelia Swain Oakley (1834-1917), being artistically arranged to create “the same cluttered, eclectic mix found in the ateliers of more famous artists such as William Merritt Chase and John Singer Sargent.”⁶ “Miss Violet Oakley gave a tea in her studio” on a Friday afternoon in early November 1897, permanently marking her occupancy.⁷

The daughter of Arthur Edmund Oakley, “an investment banker in New York, ruined in the Panic of 1893” and Cornelia Swain Oakley, Violet was originally from Bergen Heights, a section of Jersey City, New Jersey; though, eventually, her parents would move to South Orange and, later, to Philadelphia.⁸ In 1892, Violet attended the Art Students League of New York, studying briefly under James Carroll Beckwith and Irving R. Wiles. Though after just one year, she traveled abroad to England and France, where her education was continued by Raphael Collin, among others. Returning to the United States, she enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (the Academy), studying there under Cecelia Beaux (1855-1942), the important Philadelphia-born, Gilded Age portraitist. First commuting by train to attend classes, her family eventually moved to Philadelphia, where her ill father was treated with “rest cure” under the specialized care of S. Weir Mitchell, M.D.⁹ In the Quaker City, Violet eventually left the Academy, being drawn into the illustrators’ circle of Howard Pyle (1853-1911), one of the most important figures in American illustration, at the Drexel Institute. In fact, it would be Howard Pyle who would dub them as the Red Rose Girls. Soon she was engaged in commissions for illustrations for *The Century Magazine*, *Collier’s Illustrated Weekly*, *St. Nicholas Magazine*, and *Woman’s Home Companion*, in which she demonstrated the breadth of her artistic talents with works completed in various styles including the Pre-Raphaelite, for which she would become famously skilled.

During her first year in the Love Building, Violet was working with Jessie Willcox Smith to create a total of ten color plate illustrations (five per artist) for *Evangeline*, which was published that year.¹⁰ This commission proved to be a “critical success,” leading to more work for both artists. That same year, Violet completed cover illustrations for both *The Century Magazine* and *Collier’s Illustrated Weekly*, while Jessie was illustrating a novel by Maud Wilder and completing two cover illustrations for *Woman’s Home Companion*.¹¹ Their fast friendship began when Violet first

⁵ Bailey Van Hook. *Violet Oakley: An Artist’s Life*. (University of Delaware Press, 2016), 63.

⁶ Bailey Van Hook. *Violet Oakley: An Artist’s Life*. (University of Delaware Press, 2016), 60.

⁷ “Art News.,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 November 1897, 24.

⁸ Marie A. Conn and Therese McGuire, eds. *Sisterly Love: Women of Note in Pennsylvania History*. (Hamilton Books, 2014), 100.

⁹ Marie A. Conn and Therese McGuire, eds. *Sisterly Love: Women of Note in Pennsylvania History*. (Hamilton Books, 2014), 100.

¹⁰ Edward D. Nudelman. *Jessie Willcox Smith: American Illustrator*. (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1990), 139.

¹¹ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 48.

walked into Pyle’s classroom earlier that year, noticing Jessie’s confidence and skill immediately. Years later, Violet would write to Jessie, “Still a little afraid of you—as that first day in Howard Pyle’s class!”¹² Ultimately, Jessie’s success under Pyle at Drexel was marked by an offer to teach there upon the completion of her coursework. Though flattered, she declined, being “too busy” with commissions to illustrate various publications.¹³ It was no doubt that the initial intensity between Violet and Jessie led to their collaboration on *Evangeline* and, ultimately, their joint residence in the Love Building.

Another moment of this epoch in Philadelphia’s art history was the establishment of the Plastic Club in 1897 by a group of women artists, at a time when most existing organizations were still exclusive to male membership. All of the ladies who occupied the Love Building studio were among the early members to “meet, exchange ideas, and exhibit their work.”¹⁴



Figure 15. Left: An illustration for a Bryn Mawr College Calendar by Jessie Willcox Smith in 1901. Source: Bryn Mawr College. Figure 16. Middle: Jessie Willcox Smith. Source: Violet Oakley Papers, 1841-1981, Archives of American Art. Figure 17. Right: An illustration for a Bryn Mawr College Calendar by Jessie Willcox Smith in 1901. Source: Bryn Mawr College.

The daughter of Charles Henry Smith and Katherine Dewitt Willcox, Jessie was a born and bred Philadelphian, who studied at the School of Design for Women and later at the Academy under the eminent Philadelphia artist and educator Thomas Eakins (1844-1916). After finishing her studies at the Academy in 1888, Jessie began working in the advertising department of *The Ladies Home Journal* in 1889, a job that was followed by a commission to illustrate *New and True* published by Lee and Shepard. Her studies under Pyle began at Drexel in 1894, further enhancing her skill as an illustrator.

When Jessie Willcox Smith joined Violet Oakley in her studio, Jessie Hart Dodd (1863-1911) accompanied her; however, while an intimate friend of the group, she would ultimately leave the

¹² Bailey Van Hook. *Violet Oakley: An Artist’s Life*. (University of Delaware Press, 2016), 63.

¹³ Edward D. Nudelman. *Jessie Willcox Smith: American Illustrator*. (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1990), 139.

¹⁴ [About — The Plastic Club](#)

Philadelphia area before the formation of the Red Rose Girls. A native of Ohio, Dodd was a painter, decorator, and illustrator. Her career as an artist began in Cincinnati, where in 1879 and 1880 she worked with her mother, Jane Porter Hart Dodd, also an artist, on shows for the Women's Art Museum Association. Eventually moving to Philadelphia, she too studied under Pyle at Drexel. While her colleagues in the Love Building studio were budding and flourishing in their careers, Dodd suffered the fate of many artists, diverging from productivity due to self-doubt and frustration. Ultimately returning to Ohio, she eventually opened a studio there, producing illustrations for numerous books and popular magazines.¹⁵

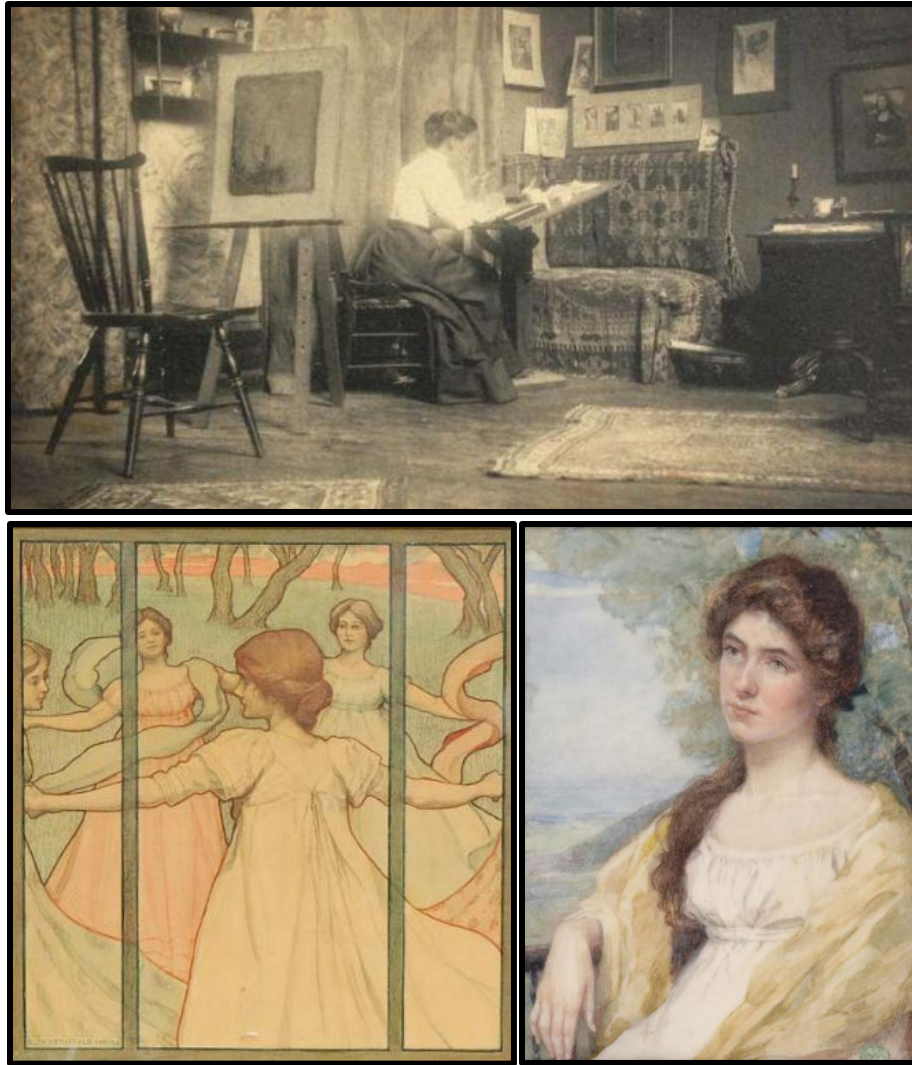


Figure 18. Top: A photograph of Ellen Wetherald Ahrens by Violet Oakley with the following inscription on the back: "This is Ellen at work in at her corner- When we are not taking photos, she has the window open beside her. The little Oriental seat in front of her made by ourselves and of old pin cushions and a packing box and two little rugs. Isn't it pretty? The back is all padded-". Source: Nudelman Rare Books. Figure 19. Bottom left: A watercolor and charcoal drawing by Ellen Wetherald Ahrens. Source: www.invaluable.com. Figure 20. Bottom right: A miniature watercolor portrait of Evelyn Nesbit in 1902 by Ellen Wetherald Ahrens. Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art.

¹⁵ Mary Sayre Haverstock, Jeanette Mahoney Vince, and Brian L Meggitt, eds. *Artists in Ohio, 1787-1900: A Biographical Dictionary*. (2001), 46.

On Wednesday, March 29, 1899, Jessie, Ellen, and Violet hosted a “studio at home” in their Love Building quarters.¹⁶ This marks the entrance of another intimate of the Love Building studio, Ellen Wetherald Ahrens (1859-1935), shown in Figure 18, who was a painter of miniatures and other works, as well as a designer and an illustrator. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, she studied at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School, the Academy, and the Drexel Institute, where she too was a devotee of Pyle. She also won a \$1,000 prize awarded by the Carnegie Institute, a silver medal at Pittsburgh, and best in show at the St. Louis Exhibition. Like Violet, she too designed stained-glass windows.¹⁷ While Ahrens was a talented artist, she would not become one of the Red Rose Girls though she was part of the milieu created at the subject property. In addition to Ellen, her sister Edith Ahrens was also artistically inclined and tangentially related to the ladies of the Love Building studio. In 1899, the unmarried thirty-year-old vanished after shopping one morning. *The Sunday Press* published an article entitled “Where is Edith Ahrens?,” which included a drawing of the missing woman, completed by Violet. Approximately four months later, Edith’s body was discovered in the Schuylkill River.¹⁸



Figure 21. Left: “Setting the Table,” 1900, by Elizabeth Shippen Green. Source: National Museum of American Illustration. Figure 22. Center: Elizabeth Shippen Green. Source: Archives of American Art. Figure 23. Right: An illustration that accompanied the poem, “The Little Post,” by Elizabeth Shippen Green, published in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* in 1903. Source: www.illustrationhistory.org via the Library of Congress.

In October 1899, Elizabeth Shippen Green replaced Violet Oakley in the original rooms of the Love Building studio, covering a portion of the \$18 rent. For Elizabeth, her new studio was quite a professional shift from the “corner of her childhood bedroom” a few blocks away at 1320 Spruce Street, “where she had worked for the previous eight years.”¹⁹ Elizabeth had already made strides in becoming an established professional even in her comfortable girlhood quarters with illustrations regularly published in *The Times* and the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. These early,

¹⁶ “Art News Exhibitions of the Week,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 March 1899.

¹⁷ *Catalogue of the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of Water-Colors, Pastels and Miniatures by American Artists*. (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1903), II.

¹⁸ Bailey Van Hook. *Violet Oakley: An Artist’s Life*. (University of Delaware Press, 2016), 67.

¹⁹ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 47.

“old fashioned” works may speak to her traditional, upper middle-class background. While not a wealthy family, it was perhaps more important in Victorian Philadelphia to hail from what society might have called “the right background,” a qualification that almost ensured social passage and promise. Her parents, Jasper Green, “a former Academy student, woodcarver, and artist-correspondent for *Harper’s Weekly* during the Civil War,” and Elizabeth Boude Green, provided their daughter with “impeccable old Philadelphia connections through the Green and the Shippen families, which provided Elizabeth with entrée into the best social circles throughout her life.”²⁰ Her elementary education began at Miss Mary Hough’s School, followed by Miss Gordon’s, during which time she exhibited her artistic powers through illustrating her class notebooks. Elizabeth would eventually enroll at the Academy in 1889, where she learned the traditional disciplines of painting and sculpture, finishing in 1893. As the Academy frowned on mechanical training (i.e. illustration), her education there simply enhanced the many years of tutelage she had gained at home from her father. In fact, it was on her eighteenth birthday that Elizabeth’s first published illustrations appeared in *The Times*, inaugurating her career in illustration even before she was fully emersed in a formal education.



Figure 24. Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Henrietta Cozens in their Love Building studio. Source: Violet Oakley Papers, 1841-1981, Archives of American Art.

While not known to have occupied the studio, Henrietta Cozens, a horticulturist, was known to have regularly frequented the space, being close friends with the Red Rose Girls. She would eventually co-habitat with the group at the Red Rose Inn, and, ultimately, with Jessie Willcox Smith until their end of her life.²¹

Violet Oakley’s career was ultimately catapulted to a new realm in 1899, when she received one of her first commissions in the decorative arts. Between 1899 and 1901, All Angles’ Church in

²⁰ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 22-23.

²¹ Henrietta Cozens Papers, Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library.

New York City engaged her to complete murals and stained glass designs for its Hoffman Memorial, which transformed that church’s chancel.²² This shift in product required additional work space, necessitating a move from the original quarters to a new studio across the hall, still in the Love Building.²³ H.M. Irwin, contractor, was commissioned by Violet to enlarge the skylight in September 1899.²⁴ Her new quarters were announced in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in October 1899, as was the fact that Elizabeth Shippen Green would be taking her place next door.²⁵ Violet’s “beautiful chancel paintings” were unveiled on Christmas Day in 1901.²⁶ It was during this time that Oakley began taking a course with religious leader Mary Baker Eddy, from which stemmed her lifelong commitment as a Christian Scientist.²⁷



Figure 25. Left: Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Henrietta Cozens in their Love Building studio. Source: Violet Oakley Papers, 1841-1981, Archives of American Art. Figure 26. Right: Elizabeth Shippen Green, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Violet Oakley in their Love Building studio. Source: Violet Oakley Papers, 1841-1981, Archives of American Art.

When Smith and Green came to the Love Building, they both worked on staff at *Ladies’ Home Journal*, though their increased success in obtaining commissions for illustrations enabled them to eventually leave the strictures of the magazine. Green completed pen-and-ink drawings for the covers of *The Scholar’s Magazine* and *St. Nicholas Magazine*, as well as in *The Saturday Evening*

²² “Of Our City Churches,” *New York Evangelist*, 26 December 1901, 5.

²³ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 October 1899.

²⁴ “Real Estate News,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 September 1899.

²⁵ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 October 1899.

²⁶ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 22-23.

²⁷ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 55.

Post. Her work was also published internationally along with renowned illustrators Edwin Austin Abbey and Maxfield Parrish, as well as Pyle. Smith illustrated numerous books during this time, including Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tales and Sketches* and *Mosses from an Old Manse*, "as well as numerous stories for *Harper's Weekly*, *Scribner's*, and *Harper's Bazaar*."²⁸

Despite Violet Oakley's removal to the adjacent studio, it appears from photographs and by all accounts from the period that the original studio remained an abode for the artistic milieu and "sympathetic companionship" of the group. Here they "shared their triumphs and failures and the everyday pressures of meeting editor's demands and deadlines," and, as a result, they formed a unique bond that would come to define their lives as artists. Howard Pyle "made it clear to them that combining a career with marriage was not an option in an age when a woman was expected to manage a household, function as a hostess, and bear children from matrimony till menopause."²⁹ As a result, the trio made a conscious decision to devote their lives to art, rather than following a traditional path.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: *Romantic friendship* in the Victorian era describes an intimate, but typically non-sexual relationship between friends of the same gender. This type of relationship was often defined by effusive affectations of admiration and love, as well as a degree of physical contact often associated with traditional romance.³⁰ In the nineteenth century, emotional and physical closeness of this kind was justified and even promoted as an acceptable bond, especially among ladies, averting any predilections towards pre-marital intercourse or relations that could be damaging to one's character and reputation. This type of justification was especially important in American society, when Judeo-Christian mores intensified to strictly govern Victorian cultural and social life. In the post-Civil War period, as more and more women of the upper classes attended colleges like the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, and Bryn Mawr College, this type of "passionate friendship" became even more apparent, being considered socially acceptable. Cindarella Gregory (1830-1896) and Frances Shimer (1826-1901), who co-founded Shimer College in 1869, comprised one such romance.³¹ The Seven Sisters (colleges), including Bryn Mawr, are perhaps most popularly associated with this growing behavioral pattern among young women. As is well known, this type of relationship proliferated beyond traditional educational institutions to art schools, organizations, and in society at-large.

²⁸ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 53.

²⁹ Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 22-23.

³⁰ Lillian Fademan. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).

³¹ Doris Malkmus. "Frances Wood Shimer, Cindarella Gregory, and the 1853 founding of Shimer College," *Journal of Illinois History*, 2003, 200.



Figure 27. Left: The Ladies of Llangollen, Sarah Ponsonby and Lady Eleanor Butler in their library at Llangollen, a Gothic house in North Wales. This is a famous same-sex couple in Great Britain. Source: Welcome Collection Gallery. Figure 28. Right: Shimer College founders Cindarella Gregory and Frances Shimer in 1869. Source: Shimer College Collection.

While terms like *affectionate friendship*, *passionate friendship*, and *romantic friendship* rightly described a specific type of plutonic friendships of the period, the concept also acted as a veil for same-sex amorous and sexual relationships, which was critical at a time when homosexuality ranked among the greatest of moral transgressions and was, more importantly, unlawful. The Love Building studio is especially important as an historic example of a place associated with both *romantic friendship* and lesbianism. While Elizabeth Shippen Green would eventually wed Huger Elliot in 1911, it is commonly known that Jessie Willcox Smith did not marry, but rather resided with her friends, eventually enjoying lifelong companionship with Henrietta Cozens. The pair lived in a house at *Cogslea* in Mt. Airy next to Violet Oakley's house. These dwellings were within a larger shared premises that had been developed for the group by the Woodward family after Anthony Drexel ejected them from their beloved Red Rose Inn in Villanova, Pennsylvania. Miss Cozens had joined in the group's residence after their removal from the Love Building. While this relationship alienated Violet Oakley from Jessie Willcox Smith to some level, she would eventually become fascinated with her young pupil Edith Emerson (1888-1981), who would become a painter, muralist, and illustrator in her own right. Their *Boston Marriage* began when Edith Emerson moved to Cogslea in 1916, a stay that would extend for the remainder of Violet Oakley's life.

66				Leary, Margaret	Head			7	W	65	A	1876	al				
67		601	8	Smith, Fannie W.	Head	0	F	7	W	55	A						
68				Cozens, Henrietta	Partner			7	W	56	A						
69				Balmer, Mary	maid			7	W	45	A	1848	al				
70		701	9	Oakley, Violet	Head	0	M	9	W	45	A						
71				Emerson, Edith	Partner			7	W	31	A						
72				Edwards, Francis	Partner			7	W	39	A	1907	7/20	1905			
73		702	10	Phillips, James	Head	1	R	7	W	39	M	1910	7/20	1908			

Figure 29. 1920 U.S. Federal Census, showing the Smith and Oakley households at Cogslea with their partners Henrietta Cozens and Edith Emerson respectively. Source: Ancestry.com

CONCLUSION: CRITERIA A & J. While Violet, Jessie, and Elizabeth would ultimately leave the Love Building entirely in 1903 for full time residency at the Red Rose Inn, the formative period of the Red Rose Girls took root at 1523 Chestnut Street. While the name “Red Rose Girls” was given to the ladies by Howard Pyle, it was this group of women who became representative of a brief, but significant artistic commune, as well as exemplars in Romantic realism.³² Despite the significance of their later residences, the Love Building was home to the artistic and professional rise of three women artists who significantly contributed to the golden age of American illustration at a time when Philadelphia was a national center of that industry. Their significance is accentuated by the fact that they were incredibly talented and successful professional women in a field long dominated by men. Individually, they comprise quintessential historic representatives of the “New Woman,” all of whom realized a feminist ideal that had emerged in the late nineteenth century.³³ As unmarried women in their twenties and thirties, their decision to occupy the Love Building as both a communal residence and a workplace represents another important aspect of the nascent phenomenon of female independence—an early example of a radical shift in American domestic life. Their domicile at their Love Building led to their residence at the Red Rose Inn and, later, Cogslea, a timeline in which Violet, Jessie, and Elizabeth continued to reside in a communal fashion. While Elizabeth would ultimately enter a traditional heterosexual marriage, both Violet and Jessie would occupy separate houses within a larger estate-like premises with life partners. Documented Boston Marriages, these same-sex relationships among successful, self-supporting professional women artists represent the fragmented histories of LGBTQ heritage—specifically that of lesbian and queer persons. The lifestyle of the Red Rose Girls—their larger story—is one marked by a divergence from the traditional life trajectory of females of the era. While not self-proclaimed lesbians, both Violet and Jessie made conscious choices to turn their back on traditional heterosexual relationships, presenting a type of social progress that would ultimately evolve to allow LGBTQ persons to live openly in amorous and sexual relationships rather than on the margins of society. An unknown beacon of art, women’s, and LGBTQ history, the Love Building is a rare surviving specimen of the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Philadelphia, satisfying Criteria A and J.

³² Alice A. Carter. *The Red Rose Girls, An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*. (The Wonderland Press, 2000), 22-23.

³³ Martha H. Patterson. *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895–1915*. (University of Illinois Press: 2005).

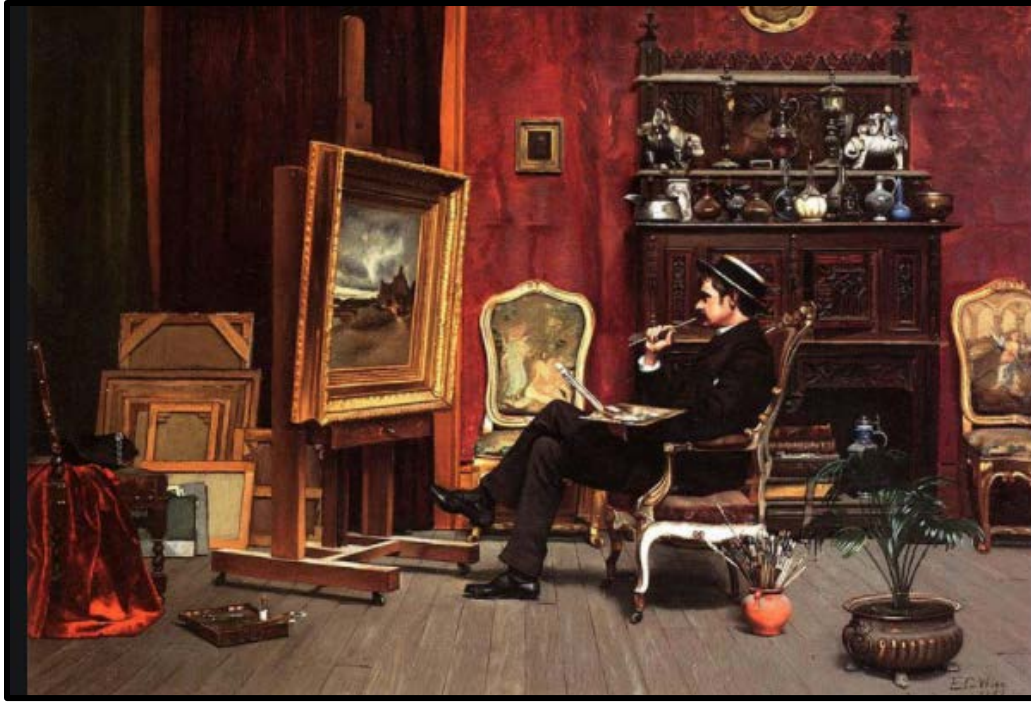


Figure 30. Milne Ramsey in His Studio, 1887 painted by Elsa G. Wise in the Love Building. Source: [Ella G. Wise - Milne Ramsey in His Studio, 1887 \(arthur.io\)](#).

CRITERION J. Beyond the Red Rose Girls, the Love Building attracted numerous important and noteworthy artists from the 1880s through the 1920s. The use of the upper floors of commercial buildings by artists for studio space is a well-known phenomenon and trend in cities across the country, a practice that spans much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Philadelphia was no different, artists populated loft space throughout the city with a specific concentration along the westerly blocks of Chestnut Street between South Broad and Twentieth Streets during this period. Cornelius Nolen Weygandt (1849-1907), a Philadelphia banker, documented the Chestnut Street enclave in his diaries during the 1880s and 1890s. Weygandt was a patron of sorts and visited the subject property, as well as the Baker Building and other nearby studios. Weygandt recorded a visit to the Baker Building at 1520-22 Chestnut Street (Figure 31) on two occasions in 1882, the second of which was on Thursday, January 12:

The top story of the Baker Building which I visited yester, is devoted exclusively to Studios for artists. There are twelve of them; and all are rented and occupied! Senat told me, that Joe S. Patterson was the person who influenced Baker to devote the floor to this purpose! The rooms have skylights and are expressly fitted up for studios. There is, in addition, a room of glass, on top of the building, where models can be posed as if in the open air. ...³⁴

³⁴ Cornelius Nolen Weygandt (1832-1907), 1882 diary. 1882. Source: University of Pennsylvania, University Archives.

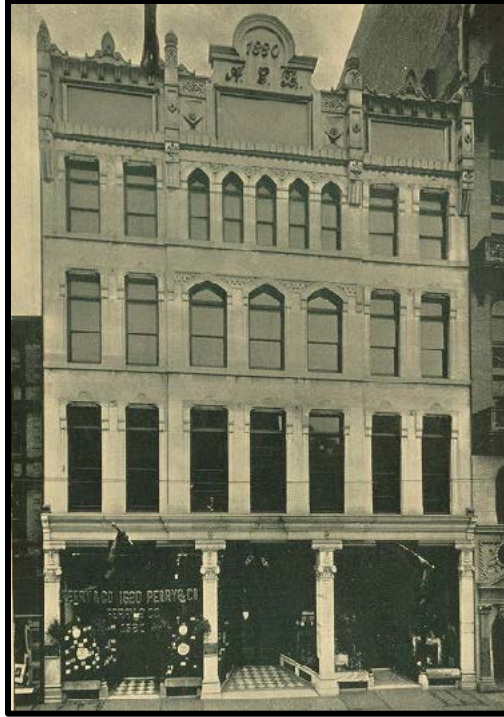


Figure 31. The Baker Building, built in 1880, at 1520-22 Chestnut Street. Source: *The Official Office Building Directory and Architectural Handbook of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: The Commercial Publishing and Directory Co., 1899), 60.

The above-referenced diary entry describes the use of a much larger building for the purpose of studio space, which was perhaps a less common occurrence. Weygandt's diaries also document a visit to Cecilia Beaux at her studio in the 1700 block of Chestnut Street on Saturday, February 8, 1896:

We looked at the lately burned buildings, in Chestnut St., below 15th St.; i.e. the Haseltine & the Baptist buildings, etc. And then to Juncker's, and paid a bread bill. And afterwards to Miss Beaux's studio tea; where we met Miss Beaux, Miss Wood, Frank Day & others; and found Miss B. agreeable & bright as usual. A portrait of Dr. Billings just begun, was on the easel.³⁵

These dairy entries, though fairly scant descriptions, provide a window into the realm of artistic spaces that existed in buildings like the subject property, as well as the range of their associated tenants.

³⁵ Cornelius Nolen Weygandt (1832-1907), 1896 diary. 1896. Source: University of Pennsylvania, University Archives.



Figure 32. “For Rent,” *The Times*, 5 December 1882, 3.

The artistic tenancy of the subject property was quite literally born out of *Love* in November 1880, when John Beresford Love (1832-1900), a prominent tea merchant, and, his wife, Sarah “Sallie” Lockey Slocum purchased what was then a dwelling house for \$27,000 from Henry H. Zucker, a strawman of sorts, from Atlanta, Georgia.³⁶ Zucker had purchased the property from the heirs of John Hoff, who had bought the house from William Reynolds in 1847 as his residence.³⁷ The house appears to have been built on the lot by Abner Elmes (1793-1950) between 1832 and 1839.³⁸ It was this building that the Loves first purchased. A few months later, in February 1881, the former Loves sold the subject property for \$11,175.74 with a \$20,000 mortgage to Thomas C. Love (b.1818) and, his son, Henry M. Love (1850-1903), both carpenters and manufacturers, operating the Crown Knitting Mills as Thomas C. Love & Son. The mortgage of \$20,000 indicates that the dwelling house previously built on the site was either substantially improved to become a commercial building or entirely demolished and replaced by a new, purpose-built structure. By 1882, the new owners began leasing space on the top floor as artist’s studios, a class of tenants no doubt subsidized by the much higher rents earned from the ground and middle floors commercial and business spaces.³⁹

³⁶ “Real Estate Investments,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 September 1881, 3.

³⁷ Deed: Mrs. Ann Catharine Knight, the widow of Dr. Isaac D. Knight and Louisa Bainbridge Hoff, widow of Henry K. Hoff to Henry H. Tucker of Atlanta, Georgia, 8 July 1880, Philadelphia Deed Book L.W., No. 122, p. 102.

³⁸ Deed: Abner Elmes, of Philadelphia, and Marie, his wife, to William Reynolds of Philadelphia, 4 November 1839, Philadelphia Deed Book G.S., No. 7, p. 298.

³⁹ The ground floor of this commercial building was leased to tenants like Gleason & Co., Tailors in the late 1880s, and Dr. Jaeger’s Sanitary Woolen System Company in the 1890s. (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 May 1885, 3.) Other tenants included the Engineering Club of Philadelphia (*The Times*, 19 September 1885, 5.), The Berlitz School of Languages (*The Times*, 21 August 1889, 4.), and The Campbell College, a secretarial school, among others renting suites of rooms for offices.



Figure 33. Top left: Little girl with dolls, etching and dry point, 1883, by Stephen James Ferris. Source: www.artnet.com. Figure 34. Top right: Stephen James Ferris, self-portrait. Source: [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com). Figure 35. Bottom left: Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Source: Geni.com. Figure 36. Bottom right: Painter and President Washington by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Source: Wayfair.com.

Shown in Figures 33, 34, 35, and 36, the Ferrises were among the first artists to become tenants in the Love Building, a father and son duo that included Stephen James Ferris (1835-1915) and Jean Leon Gerome Ferris (1863-1930), both being documented at the site in 1882 and 1884.⁴⁰ The elder Ferris was an influential painter and etcher of portraits and figure studies, who studied at the Academy and was further molded in the Paris studio of Jean Leon Gerome (1824-1904), the significant French painter and sculptor. He would go on to teach at the Academy for twenty-six years, influencing a generation of Philadelphia artists. His son, the younger Ferris, would also enter the trade, becoming best known for his series of seventy-eight scenes of American history, entitled *The Pageant of a Nation*, said to be the largest series of American historical paintings by a single artist.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *The United States Art Directory and Yearbook*. (New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin, & Company, 1882), 103.; and *The United States Art Directory and Yearbook*. (New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin, & Company, 1884), 139.

⁴¹ Roy Nuhn. "J.L.G. Ferris," *The Antique Shoppe*, April 2007.



Figure 37. Bottom left: Milne Ramsey. Source: askArt. Figure 38. Right: Still Life with Peaches, Champagne. Source: askArt.

At the same time and throughout the decade, Milne Ramsey (1847-1915), a New Jersey-born painter of landscapes, still-lives and portraits, shown in Figure 37, and, his sister, Martha Dunbar Ramsey (1858-1905), also an artist, marked their careers with studio space at the subject property. Weygandt referenced visiting several studios in Chestnut Street on Wednesday, January 11, 1882, a day which included looking at Milne Ramsey's most recent work during the time he was a tenant at the subject property:

...Left bank at 3¼ P.M., and to Senat's Studio, in the Baker Building, on Chestnut St., near 15th Went by special invitation; and saw five water colors, which are to go to the N.Y. exhibition tomorrow. Saw also some of the oil paintings which were lately at our Artist's exhibition. The water colors, I think show improvement: the dinginess is much less. A sketch in oil, of Great Head, Mr. Desert, is vigorous; and better than anything I have seen heretofore, by this artist. I called on Hahs, also; who has an adjoining studio; and was introduced by De Crano, etc. Clark came to Senat's while I was there; and I went, by invitation, with him to the Academy, and saw Milne Ramsey's collection of 92 paintings of his own, now on exhibition there. We stopped on the way at the Penna R.R. Depot, on Broad and Filbert; and looked it. It is very nice.⁴²

⁴² Cornelius Nolen Weygandt (1832-1907), 1882 diary. 1882. Source: University of Pennsylvania, University Archives.



Figure 39. Landscape with Red Roof Building, ca. 1880-1910, by Carl Newman. Source: Carl Newman, (*Landscape with Red Roof Building*), ca. 1880-1910, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Anna McCleery Newton, 1968.121.2

In the 1890s, the space was occupied by Carl Newman (1858-1932), a German American artist, who studied and taught at the Academy.⁴³ An example of his work is shown above in Figure 39. Newman was a neighbor of the Red Rose Girls during that decade and in the first years of the twentieth century.

⁴³ *Catalogue of the 59th Annual Exhibition, January 24 to March 7, 1889*. (Philadelphia: PAFA, 1889), 22.; and Philadelphia City Directory (1900), 821.



Figure 40. Left: Portrait Head Study of Mills Thompson by Violet Oakley. Source: Woodmere Art Museum. Figure 41. Right: A Holiday Occupation, 1893, by Lucy D. Holme. Source: [United States Women Painters: 1893 Exposition -page 6 \(arcadiasystems.org\)](https://www.arcadiasystems.org). Figure 42. Bottom left: Old Fisherman and His Grandson by May Audubon Post. Source: PAFA. Figure 43. Bottom middle: “Elizabeth Ann stood up before the doctor,” an illustration by Ada Clendenin Williamson in *Understood Betsy* by Dorothy Cangield Fisher. Source: Hathi Trust. Figure 44. Bottom right: Beatrice Fenton with one of her works. Source: Grave Sleuth.

After the turn of the twentieth century, new artists became tenants including William Mills Thompson, an American illustrator, painter, and writer, Lucy D. Holme, a New Jersey-born Quaker landscape, portrait (Figure 41), and still life painter, and May Audubon Post (1860-1929), a native New York artist (Figure 42) and illustrator. Both Holme and Post studied at the Academy.⁴⁴ One of the longest occupants, a tenure that began as early as 1898 and extended until roughly 1923, Donald MacGregor was an important Philadelphia painter, who ultimately founded Donald MacGregor & Company. He and his firm completed much of the decorations that grace the interior of the Pennsylvania Capitol Building (Figure 45).⁴⁵ He too was studio neighbor of Violet Oakley in the Love Building, and, because of their close proximity, it is not unreasonable

⁴⁴ *The Artists' Year Book*. (Chicago: The Art League Publishing Association, 1905), 198.; *American Art Annual*. (1903), Part II—37.

⁴⁵ *American Art Directory*. (1917), 9.; and *American Art Directory*. (1923), 34.

to think that one or the other may have influenced the Capitol commissions. An occupant for nearly a decade, Ada Clendenin Williamson (1880-1958), a New Jersey-born illustrator (Figure 43), occupied the space from as early as 1908 through at least 1917.⁴⁶ The 1910s and 1920s also saw several of influential artists, including Arthur Beecher Carles (1882-1952), an American impressionist and Beatrice Fenton (1887-1893), a native Philadelphia sculptor (Figure 44) and educator, who first studied under American sculptor Alexander Stirling Calder (1870-1945).⁴⁷

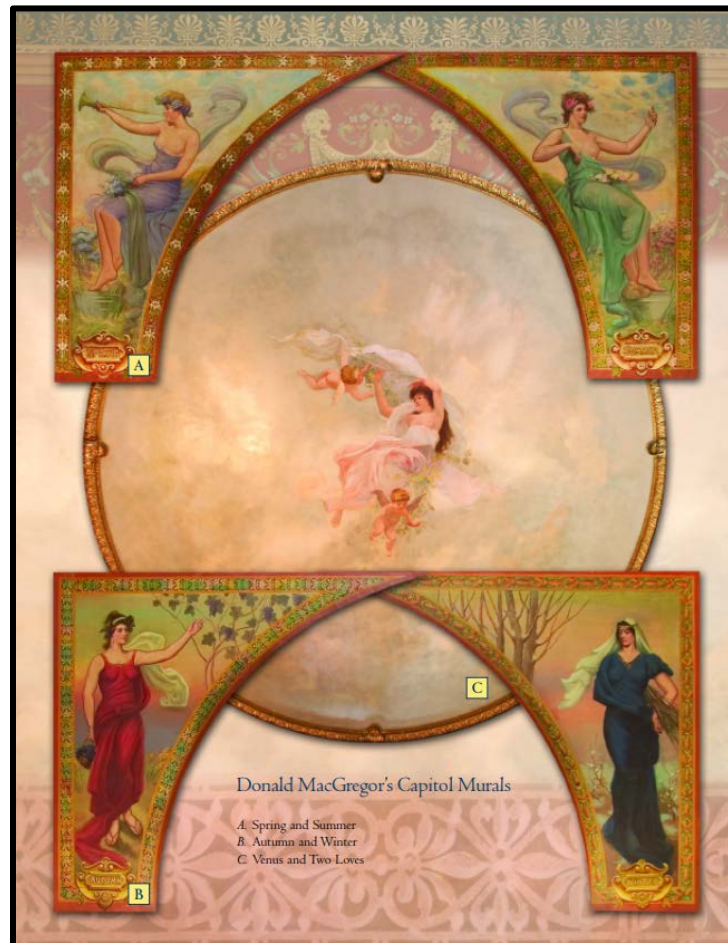


Figure 45. Donald MacGregor's Capitol Murals. Source: [Layout 1 \(pacapitol.com\)](http://pacapitol.com)

CONCLUSION: CRITERION J. Once part of a larger enclave of buildings in the westerly blocks of Chestnut Street that housed artists' studios, the Love Building is one of the few to survive and is associated with an impressive timeline of artist tenants that occupied the space when Philadelphia was one of the great artistic centers of America. The subject property satisfies Criterion J as a significant aspect of art history that informs the larger cultural, economic, and social heritage of the city.

⁴⁶ *Catalogue of the 6th Annual Philadelphia Watercolor Exhibition, November 23 to December 20, 1908.* (Philadelphia: 1908), 55.; and *American Art Directory* (1917), 31.

⁴⁷ *American Art Directory.* (1923), 34.



Figure 46. A newspaper clipping documenting the break-up of the Red Rose Girls upon the marriage of the Elizabeth Shippen Green. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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This nomination was completed for the Historic Building Preservation Task Force of the Center City Residents Association by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian and Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

- Archives of American Art
- Athenaeum of Philadelphia
- Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network
- Newspapers.com
- Proquest Historical Newspapers

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