

DIMLING-BOLAN BUILDING
428 Wood Street
Pittsburgh
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6782
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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DIMLING-BOLAN BUILDING

HABS No. PA-6782

- Location: 428 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania
The Dimling-Bolan Building is located at latitude: 40.44046, longitude: -80.00075. This coordinate was obtained on February 1, 2012, by plotting its location on Google Earth. The accuracy of the coordinate is +/- 12 meters.
- Date of Construction: ca. 1904
- Present Owner: PNC Bank
- Present Use: Vacant
- Significance: The Dimling-Bolan Building is a rare example of a commercial building designed in the Beaux Arts style in downtown Pittsburgh. After first housing a German restaurant, it housed Dimling's Candy Company until the mid-twentieth century, followed by Bolan Candies until the 1980s. The building anchors an historic commercial block at Wood and Forbes Avenue and is included in the Pittsburgh Downtown Retail National Register Historic District. The district originally included thirty-seven buildings along Fourth, Fifth, and Forbes Avenues; however, at least eleven of the buildings have been demolished. The district is significant in the areas of architecture and commerce and retains historic integrity in the areas of location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling and association. Although some original buildings have been demolished, the style, scale, and form of the remaining buildings retain integrity of design, workmanship, and association.
- Description: The Dimling-Bolan Building is a three-story stone and terra cotta building with one bay on the Wood Street façade and four bays on Forbes Avenue (former Diamond Street). The building has functioned as a commercial rental property from the time it was constructed. The flat roof has an ornate cornice featuring modillions, swags, and consoles. Pilasters with Ionic caps separate bays and define the building corners. Round arch arcades on the third floor have extended voussoirs embellished with keystones and floral designs in terra cotta. Between the first and second floors is an ornamental belt course, and there are paneled spandrels between stories. Double-hung windows of plate glass are set in original wood frames or replaced with metal frames. The first story is clad in modern materials.

The interior of the building has been gutted and remodeled for use as a jewelry store on the first floor, a beauty salon on the second floor and partitioned rooms on the third floor. An original oak and white and gray marble stairway opens onto Forbes Avenue, providing a separate entrance to the basement and second and third floors. The basement and hallway retain the original tin ceilings.

History:

The Dimling-Bolan Building was constructed ca. 1904 for Andrew Mellon, the prominent banker and United States Secretary of Treasury, who owned this city lot. The building stood at the corner of Wood Street and Diamond Street (later Forbes Avenue) after the street was widened to 50 feet in 1900-1903. Christian Dimling, a member of the prominent Pittsburgh family of confectioners, established a popular German restaurant here in 1907. The Dimling brothers - John, George, Charles, Simon and Christian – became prominent Pittsburgh confectioners. The founding father, John Dimling, was born in Bavaria in 1852 and after moving to Pittsburgh, founded Dimling's Candy Company in 1875. Dimling began the company as "Candy John" and soon his coconut cakes and lemon snaps were in such great demand that he worked day and night to fulfill orders. Dimling later distributed his pastries, taffies, almond cream bars, and other candies to restaurants and stores all over town.¹ By 1886, Dimling's lunch and ice cream parlor on Market Street was the largest in the city and advertised his "special accommodations for ladies."²

Inspired by his family's achievements, Christian Dimling's German restaurant on Wood Street was successful for over a decade and, at one time, employed eleven waiters, porters, a chef, and cashier.³ The restaurant shared the building with offices and shops located on the two upper floors.⁴ Shortly after Dimling closed his restaurant in 1918, the Dimling Candy Company opened a shop on the first floor of the building. In the 1930s and 1940s, the second floor was a dental office while the basement of the building served as a barber shop. Bolan's Candies moved to the first floor of the building in the mid-twentieth century and remained there until the 1980s.

¹ Ruth Ayers, "John Dimling was a 'sweet toothed' German upon his arrival here sixty years ago," *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 9, 1932.

² "The Globe Illustrated Annual for 1886," Breen & Ramsey, Pittsburg, 1886.

³ George H. Thurston, "Directory of Pittsburgh and Allegheny Cities," 1916, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/>, accessed on November 17, 2011.

⁴ Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, "Sanborn Insurance Company, Map of the City of Pittsburgh," 1905; R. L. Polk and Company, "Pittsburgh City Directory," 1924-1926, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/>, accessed on November 17, 2011.

After Andrew Mellon's death, the Dimling-Bolan Building was sold by his estate in 1933. The property changed hands twice until Frank Schiller purchased the building in 1977.⁵

Sources:

ENGINEERING DRAWINGS: Carnegie Mellon University's Architectural Archives and Pittsburgh History and Landmarks archives were searched for architectural drawings but none were located.

HISTORIC VIEWS: A copy of a photograph taken from the former property owner, Gerald Schiller of Verona, was provided by Pittsburgh History and Landmarks. The view dates to ca. 1940. No other photographs were found during searches conducted at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Archives of Industrial Society, and Heinz History Center.

INTERVIEWS: Arthur Ziegler of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks and Martin Aurand of Carnegie Mellon University were interviewed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Allegheny County Deed Book 5789:259

Federal Census Records from 1900 to 1930

Pittsburgh City Directories from 1900 to 1930

2. Secondary and published resources:

Ayers, Ruth. "John Dimling was a 'sweet toothed' German upon his arrival here sixty years ago." *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 9, 1932.

Hopkins, G.M. & Company. *Atlas of the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. G.M. Hopkins & Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1884-1969.

R. L. Polk and Company. "Pittsburgh City Directory." 1924-1926. <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/>, accessed on November 17, 2011.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. *Sanborn Insurance Company, Map of the City of Pittsburgh*. 1884-1969.

The Globe Illustrated. "The Globe Illustrated Annual for 1886." Breen & Ramsey, Pittsburgh, 1886.

⁵ Allegheny County Deed Book 5789:259.

Thurston, George H. *Directory of Pittsburgh and Allegheny Cities*. 1916. <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/>, accessed on November 17, 2011.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: The City of Pittsburgh Building Permit Records were reviewed but no reference to the Dimling-Bolan Building was included. An overview of the Pittsburgh Builder's Magazine was conducted, and the building was not featured in any contemporaneous articles.

Historian: Christine Davis, 2011

Project Information: The Dimling-Bolan Building Recording Project was undertaken by Christine Davis Consultants in 2011 as a mitigation project for PNC Bank. Christine Davis served as project leader and historian. Jeffrey DeNinno and Janelle Kemerer of DeNinno Architects LLC produced the drawings. Charles Uhl produced the digital photography included in the Illustrated Appendix to this report.

ILLUSTRATED APPENDIX

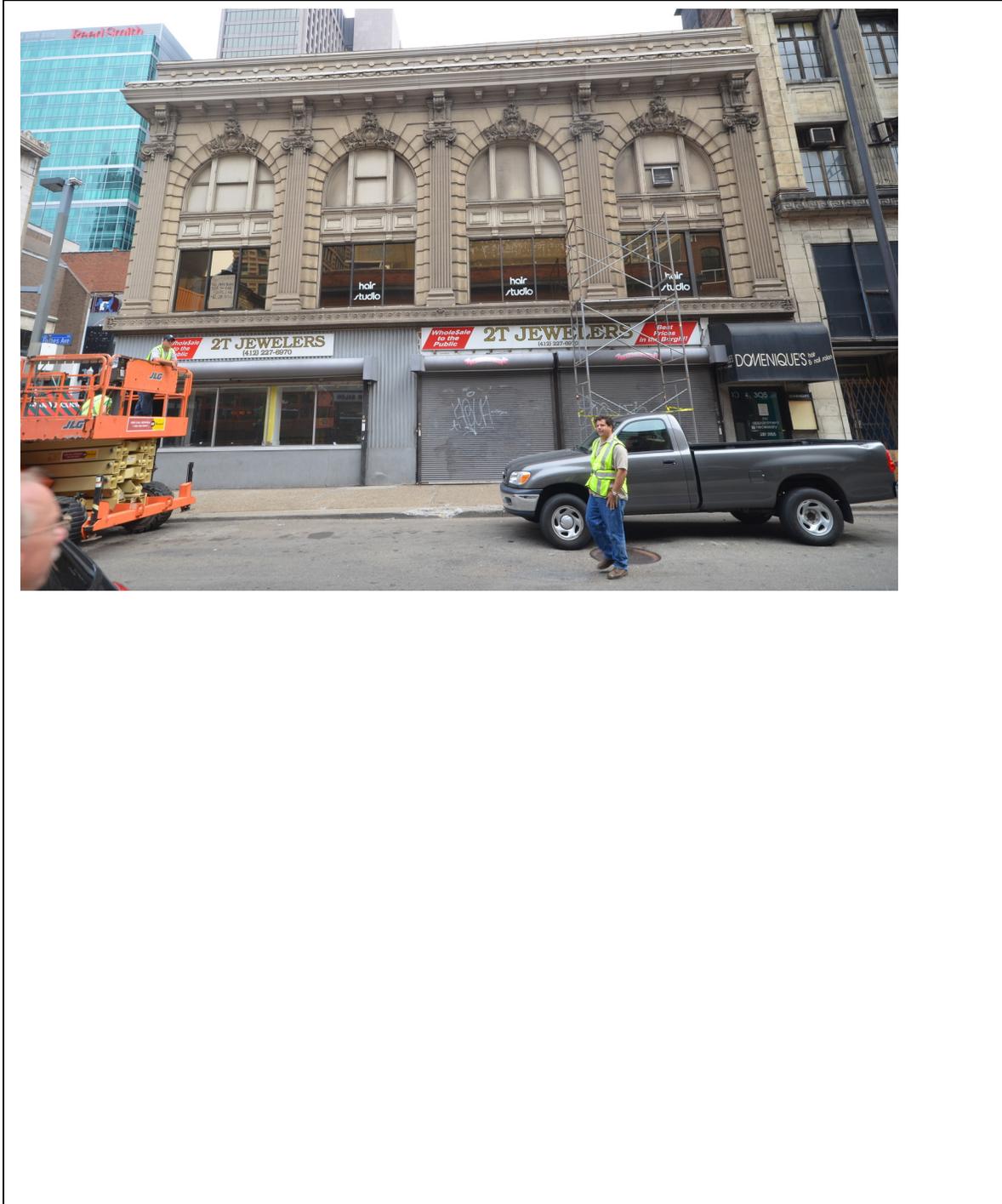


Figure 1. Dimling-Bolan Building (left), Ellis Billiards Building (right) Wood Street facade. (All digital photographs by Charles Uhl, November 2011.)

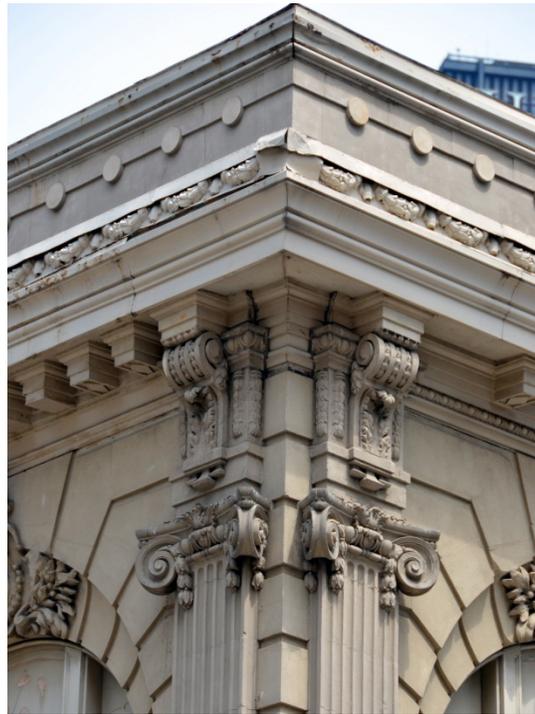


Figure 2. Detail of cornice with decorative brackets and pilasters.



Figure 3. Detail of decorative cap.

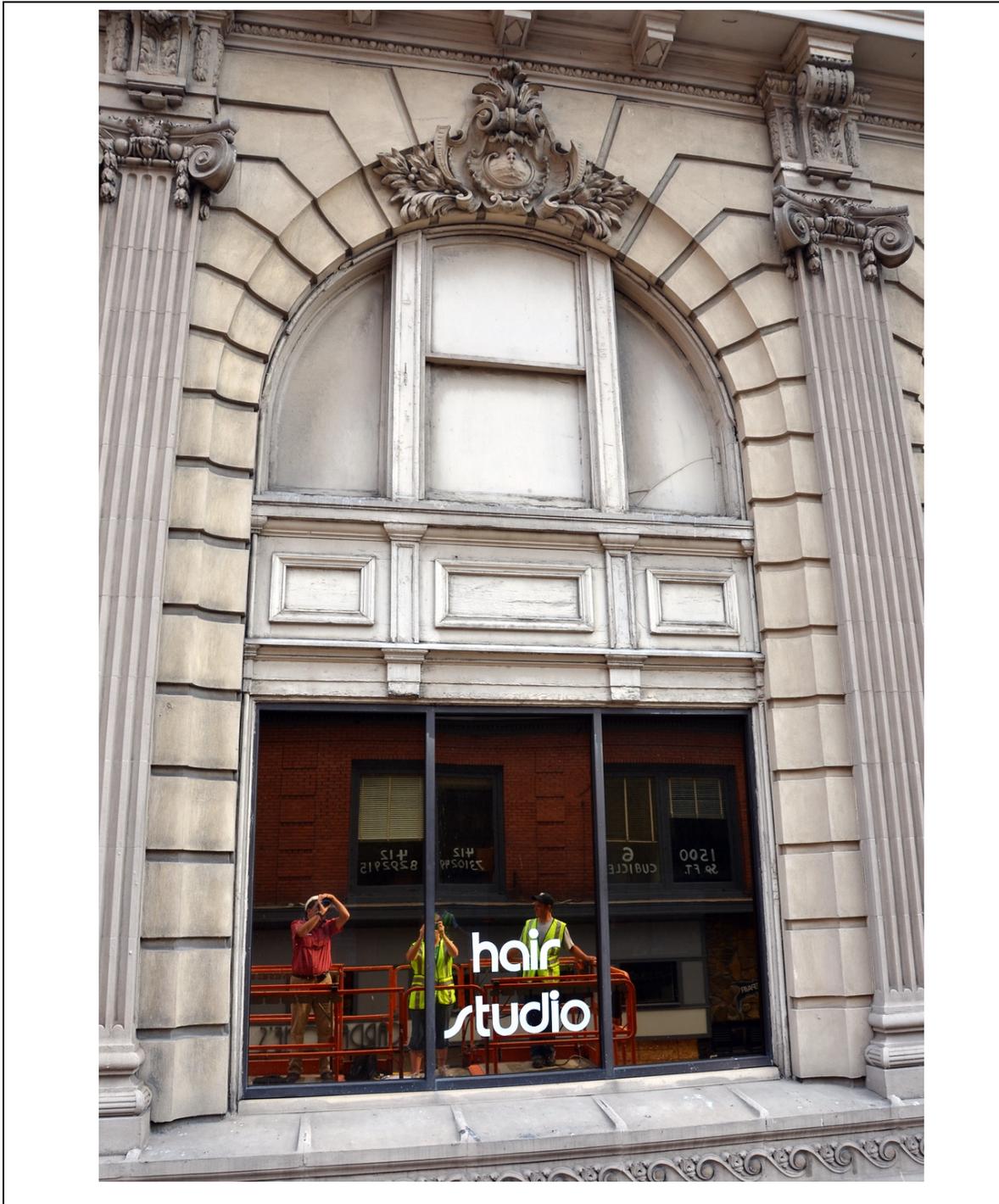


Figure 4. Detail of round arch window on third floor embellished with a terra cotta keystone.



Figure 5. Stairwell between first and second floors.
Figure 6. Tin ceiling in basement.