

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name J. Dolfinger and Company Building
other names/site number JFCD 170 Burdorf's, Inc.

2. Location

street & number 642 SOUTH FOURTH STREET N/A not for publication
city, town Louisville N/A vicinity
state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code III zip code 40202

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Louisville & Jefferson Co. MRA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: David L. Morgan
Date: 10-24-90
State Historic Preservation Officer, Kentucky Heritage Council

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
Entered in the National Register.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)
Entered in the National Register:
Signature of the Keeper:
Date of Action: 12/20/90

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: business

Commerce/Trade: professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial style

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Ceramic Tile

roof Synthetic

other Terra Cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1912-1913

Significant Dates

1912

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Louisville Free Public Library
Clipping File

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	6	6	0	8	6	4	0
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4	2	3	3	7	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

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D

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Louisville West Quadrangle

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes all of City of Louisville Block 13K-Lot 182. It measures 94' x 200'.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the lot which has historically been associated with this property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joanne Weeter, Research Coordinator

organization Louisville Landmarks Commission date August 1, 1990

street & number 609 west Jefferson Street telephone (502)625-3501

city or town Louisville state Kentucky zip code 40202

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J. Dolfinger and Company Building - Louisville, Jefferson Co., Ky.

Section number 7 Page 1

The J. Dolfinger and Company Building, constructed in 1912 in the Classical Revival Style, is an important remnant of Louisville's architectural past as distinguished by the use of monochromatic terra cotta trim on this small scale commercial structure.

The J. Dolfinger and Company Building is located toward the southern end of the Central Business District (CBD) at 642 South Fourth Avenue between West Chestnut Street and West Broadway. Louisville's CBD is located in the north-central portion of the city. The area's terrain is flat. Streets in the CBD are laid out in a grid with east-west streets generally a bit wider than those running north-south. Fourth Avenue has historically been one of Louisville's most prolific commercial corridors.

A few scattered examples of early twentieth century commercial buildings are located close by the J. Dolfinger and Company Building. The Brown Hotel (National Register, 1978) and the Heyburn Building (National Register, 1979) are multi-story commercial buildings, on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Broadway just south of 642 South Fourth Avenue. To the north along Fourth Avenue are Loew's United Artist Theater (National Register, 1978: JFCD 165), The Theater Building (National Register, 1982: JFCD 166), The Electric Building (National Register, 1985: JFCD 186), and the Wright and Taylor Building (National Register, 1984: JFCD 187).

Located on a rectangular lot with a zero setback to the sidewalk, this symmetrical four story brick structure has a box-like massing. Its facade is clad in cream colored glazed brick with white terra cotta embellishments. The first floor, greatly altered from the original, has a central glass doorway flanked by large glass commercial display windows. When constructed in 1912, the ground level had a decorative pressed metal entablature, multi-light window transoms and an ornate door hood emblazoned with a "D" for Dolfingers which signified the entrance into the building. A stone sill delineates the first floor from those above. Visually, the second and third floors form a cohesive group, unified by a band of terra cotta that embraces each set of windows. The coupled windows themselves are one-over-one and are vertically separated by terra cotta mullions. Above the third floor is another band of terra cotta ornamentation. The decorations here include egg and dart, fret work, and foliate. Cartouche with garlands of lillies of the valley are found on the ends. A metal cornice adorns the

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building's parapet and features classical triglyphs and metopes. The building was originally topped by a shed roof which sloped to the rear. However, during the 1990 renovation of the structure an additional floor, not visible from the street, was constructed making this building a total of four stories in height (photos 1,2, and 3).

The interior of the J. Dolfinger and Company Building is distinguished on the ground level by an open floor plan which originally served as a show room for this china glassware, and home furnishings retailer. The upper floors, which served as show room and storage areas, were altered in the 1920s and again in the 1960s. In c.1960 cast plaster crown molding and other decorative features were added to the third floor. Both were removed in the 1990 renovation.

In 1982 the J. Dolfinger and Company Building along with two other buildings nearby, were officially determined eligible for National Register listing in documents signed by The Keeper of the National Register. Because of the uncertainty of the role of the J. Dolfinger and Company Building in the Broadway Project no National Register nomination was prepared at that time. In January 1986, at the request of Preservation Alliance of Louisville and Jefferson County, a nomination to the National Register was prepared. However, due to complications which resulted from an incomplete transfer of title, the nomination was withdrawn from consideration by the Kentucky State Review Board. In 1990 a certified historic rehabilitation of the J. Dolfinger and Company Building was completed. Acceptance of this nomination by the Keeper of the National Register under the current integrity standards for historic properties will ensure that the owners of this rehabilitated property receive the appropriate investment tax credit if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries chosen for the J. Dolfinger and Company Building are based on the original lot boundaries historically associated with the structure and the site. Buildings in close proximity to the nominated property that have been historically and architecturally evaluated as National Register eligibility have already been listed. The remainder of the surrounding area is occupied by either surface parking or historic buildings whose loss of integrity and lack of significance renders them ineligible for National Register listing. Although intact, high style example of late victorian and early twentieth century commercial architecture can be found in Louisville's central business district, they are most commonly found standing singly or in small clusters of up to four buildings.

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Archeological Potential

Structures, of course, are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological investigations that have been conducted in the urban areas of Louisville have yielded little valuable information. Archeological survey, excavation, and/or incidental discovery or monitoring occurred at the following urban sites: The Tarascon Mill at Shippingport Island, the Cistern at the Louisville Museum of History and Science at 727 West Main Street, the site of the Will Sales/Courier Journal building in the 400 block of South Fourth Street, and the Lions Garden at 1015 South Preston Street. In each instance the investigation yielded little historic information. This was due largely to the disturbance of cultural resources by continuous urban modification. At this time no investigation has been made to discover if remains exist. However, archeological remains should be considered in any development of this property. If, in the course of work, it becomes evident that the site might reveal archeological information, it is recommended that work cease and the appropriate Kentucky Heritage Council staff be notified.

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J. Dolfinger and Company Building - Louisville, Jefferson Co., Ky.

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The J. Dolfinger and Company Building is locally significant under criterion "C" as an excellent example of commercial architecture in which the builder utilized glazed architectural terra cotta details to enrich this Classical Revival Style building's primary commercial facade.

The word terra-cotta is of Latin derivation and literally means "cooked earth". In the broadest sense of the word, terra cotta refers to a high quality weathered or aged clay that has been either mixed with sand or with ground, previously fired clay, and then molded and fired at an extremely high temperature. Glazed architectural terra cotta, a popular American building material between 1870 and 1930, was found throughout the Louisville, predominantly in the downtown core area adorning buildings which were constructed between 1900 to 1930. There were four types of architectural terra cotta used in the United States: brownstone, fireproof construction, ceramic veneer, and glazed architectural terra cotta. All four types were popular in Louisville, however, brownstone and glazed architectural terra cotta were the most prevalent.

Before the mid 1890s, in Louisville and throughout the United States, most architectural terra cotta was the brownstone variety and was glazed with slip, a liquid clay. Its reddish-brown slip-glaze color usually matched the color of the terra cotta and served to seal the surface pores which made each piece water resistant. By the mid 1890s red, slip glazed terra cotta was no longer the only color option. Buff, gray, white and cream colored glazes, many of them sandblasted to create a matte finish, were applied to terra cotta. By the turn of the century, a full array of polychromatic color options became widely available. Glazed architectural terra cotta, as it came to be called, eventually replaced brownstone terra cotta.

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J. Dolfinger and Company Building - Louisville, Jefferson Co., Ky.

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As a building material, glazed architectural terra cotta had many unique qualities: it was self cleaning, fire resistant, and inexpensive to produce and install. It could be glazed on infinite variety of colors and could even be glazed to resemble stone. It could be cast in a modular manner in any number of intricate designs. The Dolfinger building was built with brick load bearing exterior walls. Cream colored glazed brick and terra cotta trim accents were used on the primary facade. Cast iron was extensively used on the first floor storefront (altered) and pressed metal was used at the building's cornice level.

Chicago was the American city that historically had the most successful terra cotta manufacturing business. It thrived between the late 1800s and early 1900s. According to Sharon S. Darling, author of Chicago Ceramic and Glass, a Louisville builder by the name of Joseph N. Glover was responsible for starting Chicago's prolific terra cotta industry. Glover, while living in Louisville in the early 1860s, made clay imitations of stone and cast iron details such as urns and statuary. From Louisville he moved his business to Indianapolis where clay, the most important raw material used in the manufacture of terra cotta, was inexpensive and readily available. In 1868, two Chicago florists, who were interested in the manufacture of clay pots and other horticultural wares, bought Glover's terra cotta business, retained him as superintendent of production, and moved the factory to Chicago. Initially they concentrated on the production of horticultural wares but eventually they expanded their business to include terra cotta architectural elements. Their company, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company, was the first of many Chicago producers of terra cotta. They, along with a number of other manufacturers of terra cotta, enjoyed great success and prosperity following Chicago's devastating 1871 "Great Fire" after which almost the entire city was rebuilt with "fireproof"

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J. Dolfinger and Company Building - Louisville, Jefferson Co., Ky.

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building materials.

Despite Louisville's early connection with Chicago's terra cotta industry, little information exists on its manufacture locally. C.I. Caufield, listed in the 1880 City Directory under the heading "Terra Cotta Goods", sold sewer pipe, fire clay chimneys, and chimney tops as well as gas fitter supplies. Caufield most likely sold these goods rather than actually manufacturing them and they were most likely utilitarian rather than decorative in nature. Patrick Bannon and the Dennis Long Company both produced terra cotta during the late 1800s. However, the Long company produced clay pipe and sewer related items. Patrick Bannon, it appears, was the only local manufacturer of decorative architectural terra cotta products. Under various company names (The Falls City Sewer Pipe and Terra Cotta works, P. Bannon Plain and Ornamental Plasterer and Terra Cotta Manufacturer, the P. Bannon Terra Cotta Works and The Louisville Terra Cotta Company) according to an 1869 City Directory, Bannon produced brownstone terra cotta..."capitals and bases for columns, brackets and medallions for doors and cornices, window caps, gothic ornaments, chimney tops, flower pots, vases, garden fixtures, etc." Bannon in all likelihood never manufactured glazed architectural terra cotta because he went out of business circa 1900 before it came into vogue. No records exist of any terra cotta manufacturer in Louisville who produced polychromatic glazed architectural terra cotta. This was most likely because the terra cotta factory owners in Chicago and other northern and eastern cities were growing more and more skilled at the production of this material which, by that time, was inexpensively produced in stock designs that were easily transportable by rail to locations throughout the United States.

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Indications are that there were at least three terra cotta manufacturers from outside Louisville who supplied their product to Louisville-area architects, builders, and contractors. Although the origin of most of Louisville's terra cotta has not been fully researched, there is evidence that the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, Midland Terra Cotta Company and The Atlantic Terra Cotta Company conducted business transactions with Louisville builders.

Four building types in Louisville were commonly embellished with glazed architectural terra cotta: multi-story apartment buildings, commercial buildings, institutions and ecclesiastical structures. All are natural or glazed brick structures that are two or more stories in height. Terra cotta was almost never used in combination with wood or stone. Most are located in the Central Business District although some examples can be found in surrounding residential and commercial areas. Terra Cotta generally adorns only the primary facade except in instances where the building was intended to be free standing and multiple sides of the building are visible from the street. Several examples of the use of terra cotta, in which the primary facade was sheathed entirely in terra cotta, do exist. However, they are the exception rather than the rule. In most instances terra cotta was used as trim, often to call attention to important aspects of the building. The use of terra cotta brightened the facade, clearly marked its entrance, and gave the building a crisp clean look. Names, logos, and trademarks were easily executed in terra cotta, often in a variety of colors, and served as a unique form of advertisement. For instance, entryways to apartment buildings were often clad in polychromatic glazed architectural terra cotta which clearly and unmistakably called attention to its entrance. Schools and institutions were often adorned with terra cotta symbols of learning: globes, quill and pen, lamps of learning etc. were all popular. Businesses often

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used the language of architecture to create a sense of history and tradition by using elements such as family crests and shields, knights in armor and classical architectural elements. The architectural styles most closely associated with terra cotta are the Classical Revival, Beaux Arts, Art Deco and Moderne.

The J. Dolfinger and Company Building stands apart from these many examples of the local use of glazed architectural terra cotta in several respects: it is one of the few extant examples of the use of terra cotta trim on such a small scale structure executed in a monochromatic color scheme in the Classical Revival Style. Other examples in Louisville's CBD were either executed on multi-story buildings (Starks Building, National Register 1987), glazed in a color scheme which features two or more colors (the Electric Building, National Register 1985), or were designed in a style other than Classical Revival like Art Deco, Moderne, Gothic Revival, Tudor or Beaux Arts, or have not survived to the present day due to demolition.

According to newspaper accounts, Jacob Dolfinger, founder of the J. Dolfinger Company, came to Louisville in 1847 and formed a gold and silversmithing business. In 1863, the business expanded to include the retail sale of china and glass. Prior to construction of their new building J. Dolfinger and Company occupied a variety of sites in the downtown area. The terra cotta trimmed J. Dolfinger and Company Building was constructed by the Dolfinger Company in 1912.

Between 1912 and 1925 the J. Dolfinger and Company occupied just the basement and first floor of 642 South Fourth Avenue. Presumably, the upper floors were rented out. In 1925, to accommodate a substantial increase in business and an expanded target market, the interior of the structure was completely

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remodeled, elevators were added and space was created for additional stock. Sometime circa 1960, the first floor was completely remodeled.

The J. Dolfinger and Company Building was at the forefront of the trend in Louisville after the turn of the century, when the Fourth and Broadway corridors changed from a wealthy residential enclave lined with stately mansions and town houses to a thriving commercial hub. 642 South Fourth Avenue related well to its neighbors in terms of scale, style and massing. The many commercial structures that lined this important business corridor were constructed in a short period of time, mostly in the teens and twenties. They formed a cohesive grouping of three and four story brick, stone, and/or terra cotta trimmed or clad structures that exhibited a variety of building styles that represent early twentieth century commercial architecture. Virtually all of these buildings were built during the City's rapid period of commercial growth between 1900 and World War II. Each displayed a variety of styles and ornamentation typical of the era. All shared similar setbacks and block-like massing.

Many architects who designed Louisville buildings used terra cotta often in their building designs: John Ebersson, McDonald and Dodd, Dodd and Cobb, and J.J. Gaffrey to name a few. However, it was the architectural firm of Joseph and Joseph who appeared to be most comfortable with this building material. Documented primarily through promotional brochures from the 1920 to the 1940s, Joseph and Joseph designed and built at least twenty glazed architectural terra cotta clad or trimmed buildings. To date, unfortunately, no architect has been discovered for the J. Dolfinger and Company Building nor has it been determined which terra cotta manufacturer supplied the trim material. Because of the use of stock terra cotta pieces cast in

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a variety of designs that were available to architects throughout the Louisville area after being shipped by rail from the north and east, it would be impossible to attribute a given building's design to a specific architect based on stylistic factors. Certain distinct stock terra cotta designs might be tracable to a specific terra cotta supplier. However, because the stylistic influences on the Dolfingers building are Classical Revival in origin, many companies could have produced similar designs. It is hoped that when further research is conducted on the local use of terra cotta that more positive design attributions can be made.

By the late 1920s less imitation of classical forms was taking place and elaborate decorations were replaced by flat colored panels of the Art Deco and later, the Moderne style. In addition, the original terra cotta, put on buildings several decades earlier, was feeling the effects of its age. Warping and inconsistent color revealed the shortcomings of terra cotta. It also became more expensive to produce because its production was labor intensive.

The year of the stock market crash, 1929, the country fell into a severe depression. Like most of the handicraft industries, the terra cotta manufacturers' business fell drastically. The industry would never fully recover. One by one the terra cotta manufacturers closed down. Construction came to a halt and factory workers were laid off. The terra cotta industry enjoyed a short reprieve due to the building projects financed by the Works Progress Administration but, following World War II, when building activity resumed, architectural styles had changed drastically. Terra cotta was soon replaced by ceramic veneer, a much flatter material which was machine made and processed, and requires a different technology to produce.

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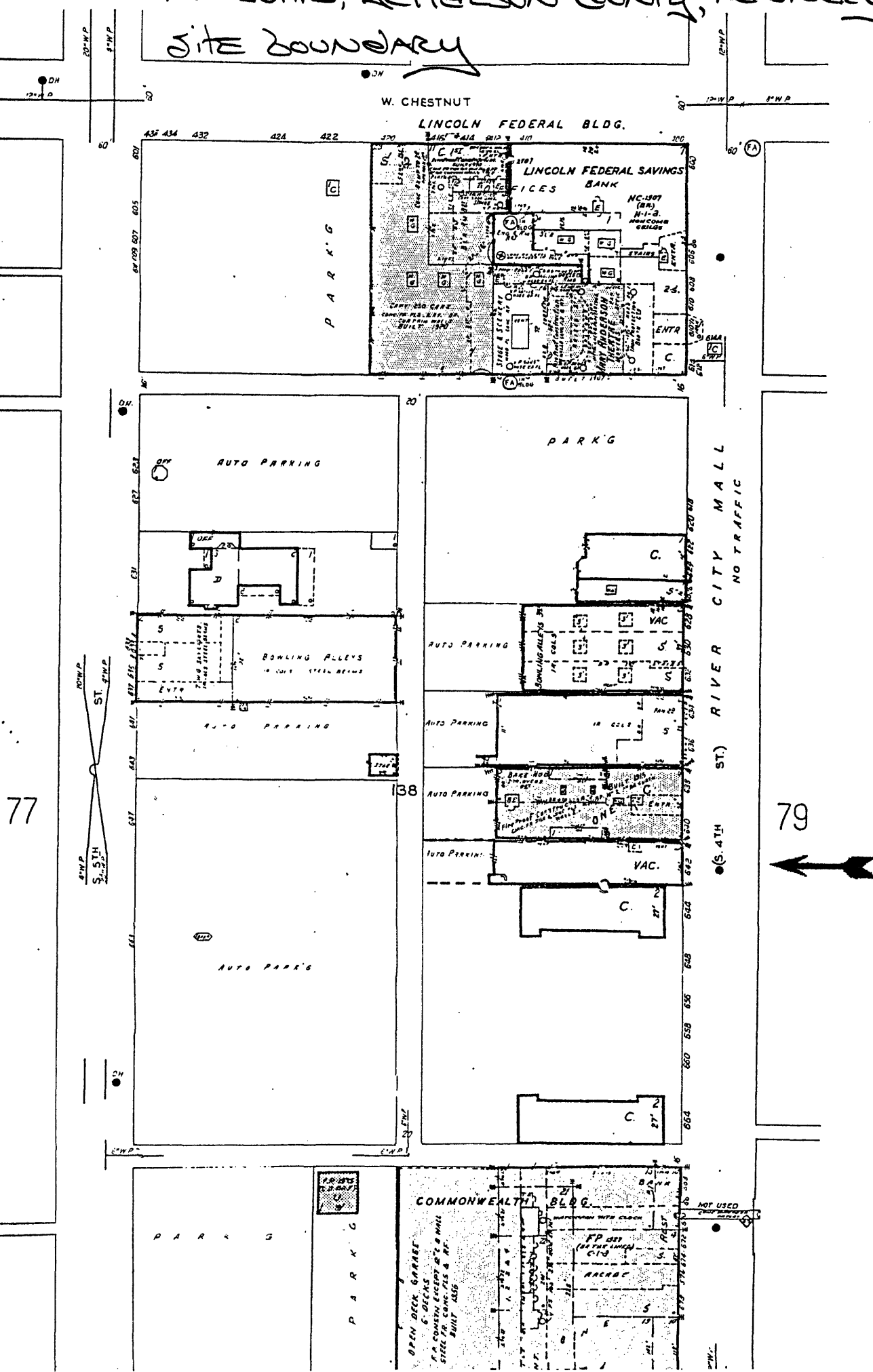
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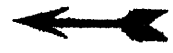
Since the decline of terra cotta as a building material in the 1930s many local examples of the use of glazed architectural terra cotta have been lost to the wrecking ball. The J. Dolfinger and Company Building is an outstanding example of how this material could be used as trim in a monochromatic color scheme, on a small scale Classical Revival Style commercial building.

J. DOLFINER AND COMPANY BUILDING
 LOUISVILLE, JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY
 SITE BOUNDARY

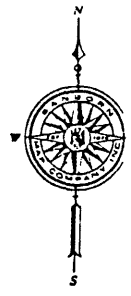


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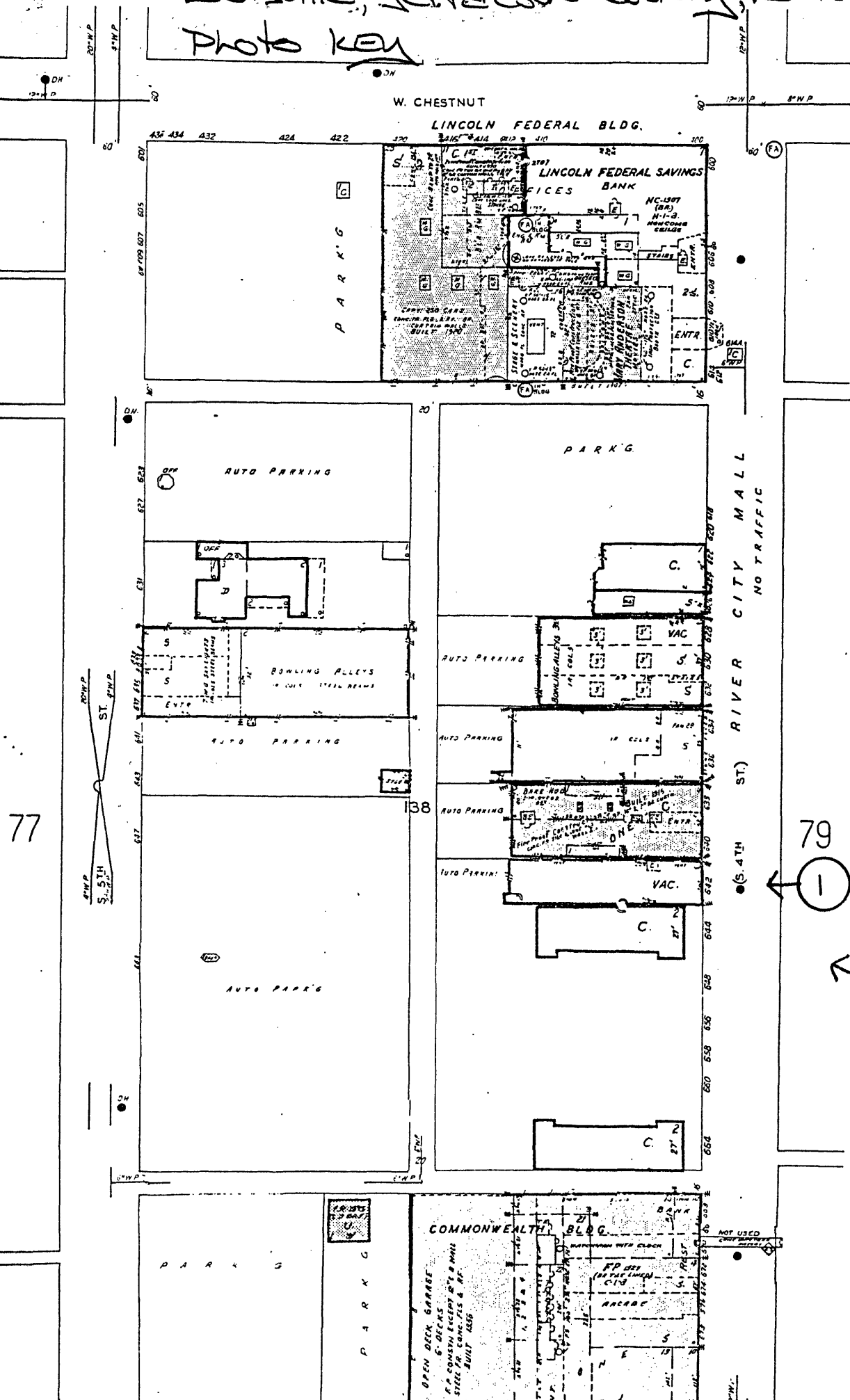


J. DOLFINER AND COMPANY BUILDING
LOUISVILLE, JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY
PHOTO KEY



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"New Dolfinger Store Opens." Louisville Herald Post, August 23, 1925.

"New Dolfinger Store Opens." Louisville Herald Post, August 23, 1925.

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Photo Identification

J. Dolfinger and Company Building
642 South Fourth Street
Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky

Joanne Weeter - Photographer
June, 1990 - Month taken
Landmarks Commission - Negative Repository

All photographs are numbered and keyed to arrows on map indicated.

- 1.) Primary Facade: Looking west
- 2.) Terra Cotta details on primary facade: Looking west
- 3.) East and South facades: Looking northwest.