

**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 ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

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

Street address: **1821-27 Ranstead Street**

Postal code: **19103**

Councilmanic District: **5**

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: **The Musical Art Club**

Other Name: **The Duse Art Theatre**

**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: **Unknown.**

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

**6. DESCRIPTION**

**SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

[See Attached Sheet]

Period of Significance (from year to year): from

**c. 1917-1927**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

**c. 1917-18**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

**Price & McClanahan**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

**Unknown**

Original owner:

**The Musical Art Club**

Other significant persons:

**Dr. W.W. Gilchrist**

**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
- X (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- X (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- X (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
- X (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography.

**SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

**9. NOMINATOR: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Name with Title **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian/Historic Preservationist**

Email [keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org](mailto:keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org) Date **24 July 2017**

Street Address **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320** Telephone **(717) 602-5002**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19107** Nominators are not the property owners.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 7/25/2017

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 8/10/2017

Date of Notice Issuance: 8/10/2017

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Bian Yu & Lia Yu

Address: c/o Robert Shusterman, 1608 Walnut St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19103

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

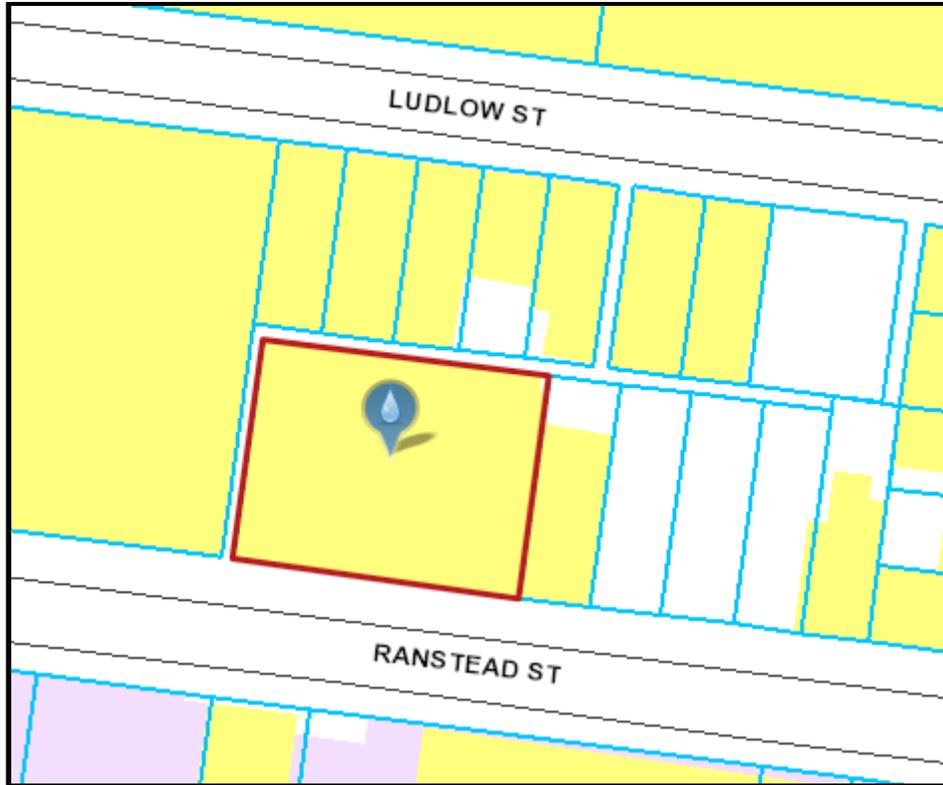
Designated  Rejected

**Nomination**  
**for the**  
**Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**



Musical Art Club entrance. Source: J.M. Duffin.

**The Musical Art Club**  
**1821-27 Ranstead Street**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**



The boundary for the subject designation is delineated in red. Source: Philadelphia Water.

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description was as follows:

**SITUATE** on the North side of Ranstead Street at the distance of 157 feet 6 inches Westward from the West side of 18th Street in the 8th Ward of the City of Philadelphia.

**CONTAINING** in front or breadth on the said Ranstead Street 62 feet 6 inches extending of that width in length or depth Northward parallel with the said 18<sup>th</sup> Street 50 feet to a certain 3 feet wide alley communicating at the Westernmost end thereof with another 3 feet wide alley leading Southward into Ranstead Street the Easternmost line of which is the Western boundary hereof and also communicating with another 3 feet wide alley leading Northward into Ludlow Street.



Primary (South) Ranstead Street elevation. Source: J.M. Duffin.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Situated in the 1800 block of the narrow, alley-like Ranstead Street, the former Musical Art Club is a two-story institutional building of load-bearing, red brick masonry construction, featuring an asymmetrical façade and a flat roof. Stylistically, the building features elements of various aesthetic movements of the period, including the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau.



Ranstead Street elevation. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Ranstead Street elevation. Source: J.M. Duffin.

### **South (Ranstead Street) Elevation**

The primary elevation, which faces south along Ranstead Street, is one defined by its red brick fascia, which is penetrated by a generous fenestration of window openings, and adorned with decorative brick, tile, and terra cotta details. Divided into three distinct sections, these components of the façade are delineated by two projecting brick piers crowned by decorative terra cotta caps that penetrate the brick parapet. The said three sections of the façade may be defined as east, west, and central. The central section is the widest expanse featuring generous apertures at both the first and second floors. The first floor contains a large central, arched window opening, which contains the entirety of its original complex window. The window features two transoms that conform to semielliptical arched openings. The window and its mullion configuration could be defined as representative of the Art Nouveau style. The lowest row

features modern sash windows, while the upper tiers are maintained beneath what appears to be a stucco cladding. The window opening is defined by a semielliptical arch and a conforming brick lintel. It is flanked by brick piers that are flush with the façade, and two small rectangular window openings that have been in-filled with modern sash windows and stucco within the transom space. Delineating the first and second floors are spandrels with stucco in-fill, mimicking the fenestration and its window openings. The second floor fenestration consists of three window openings. The central, rectangular window opening is comprised of four modern sash windows, above which original wooden transoms have been retained. Each transom maintains a three light configuration. Like the first floor, the central aperture is flanked by single window openings. This fenestration is delineated by clusters of two terra cotta columns of an olive color. The clusters of columns feature capitals decorated with floral patterns not unlike aesthetic motifs of the period. All of the windows openings on this level are defined by brick lintel and terra cotta sill courses. The tiles that form the sill course are also of the same olive green.



Eastern end of the Ranstead Street elevation. Source: J.M. Duffin.

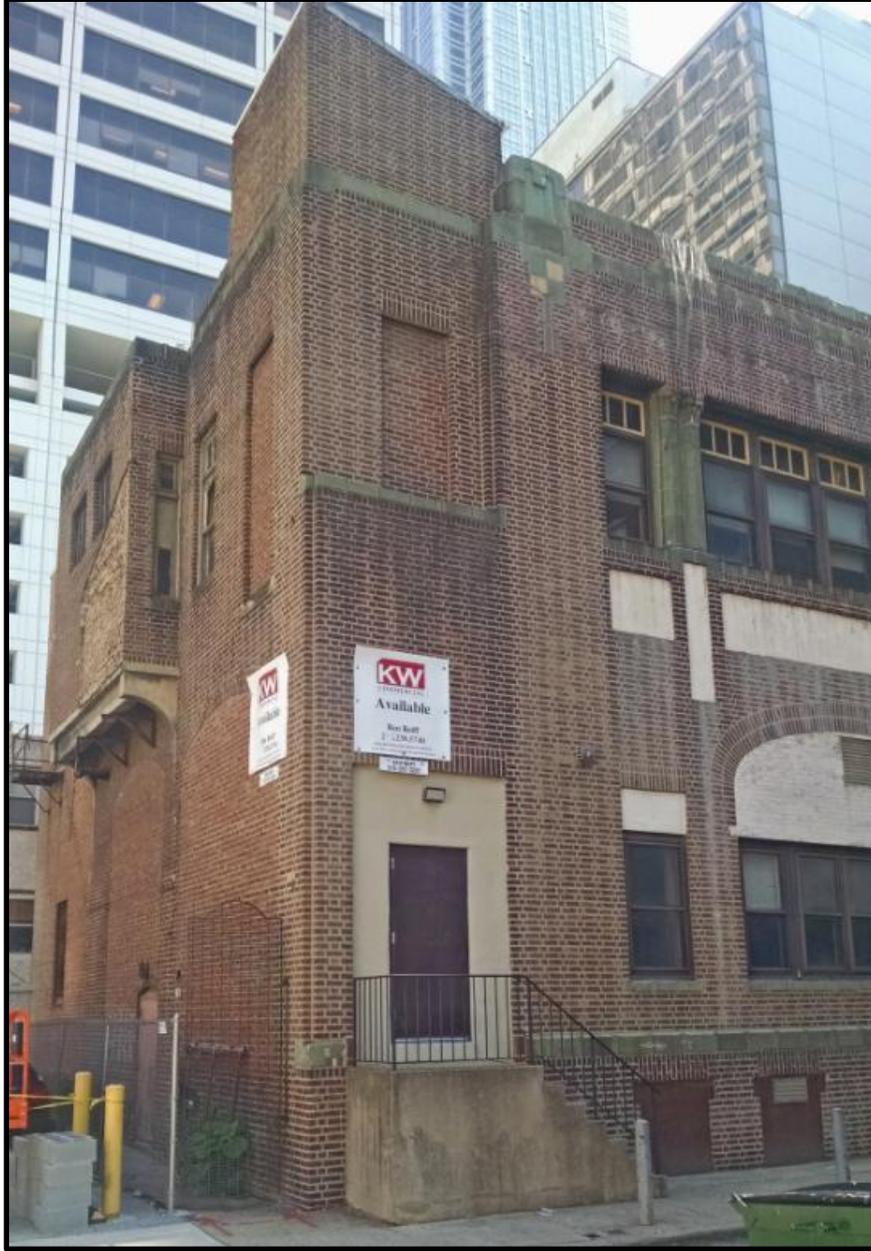
The east section of the primary elevation is a narrow expanse, featuring a double pedestrian door, opening at the ground floor. The door surround emulates the larger projecting brick piers crowned by decorative terra cotta caps. These piers are in the manner of pilasters, decorated with vertical panels that contain what is likely Mercer tile. The terra cotta caps are of the same olive coloring. The original double wooden doors have been replaced with modern versions; however, what appears to be the original wooden transom remains with Art Nouveau-inspired muntin designs. Above the doorway opening and between

the brick pilasters is a course of what is likely Mercer tile with lettering: “MUSICAL ART CLUB,” which is surrounded by the same olive colored terra cotta tiles. A larger arched opening is above this course, which has been filled with stucco. The arched lintel is brick. To the west of the doorway is a narrow, vertical window that features a brick lintel and an olive colored terra cotta sill. The window opening has been in-filled with stucco. The second floor mimics the window forms of the central elevation, but with three distinct window openings that feature modern sash windows and original transoms. The windows are divided by brick piers, featuring brick lintels and olive colored terra cotta sill coursing.



Western end of the Ranstead Street elevation. Source: J.M. Duffin.

The west section of the primary elevation is the narrowest expanse, featuring a door at the ground floor and an in-filled window opening at the second. What was likely a doorway to the rear of the property has been in-filled as a secondary entrance to the building. This entrance features a small door within a larger door opening otherwise clad in stucco. The opening features a brick lintel and is accessed by a flight of concrete steps. Olive colored terra cotta coursing delineates the first and second floors. A small-pent house or stairway access was added at some point after construction was complete.



Southwest corner of the building. Source: J.M. Duffin.

The basement level is defined by five in-filled window openings with brick sills. This level is divided from the ground floor by a course of olive terra cotta tile. A similar course of decorative, olive terra cotta tile spans the top of the building, interfacing and connecting with the terra cotta caps.



Upper floor details of the front facade. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Upper floor windows. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Looking northeast. Source: J.M. Duffin.

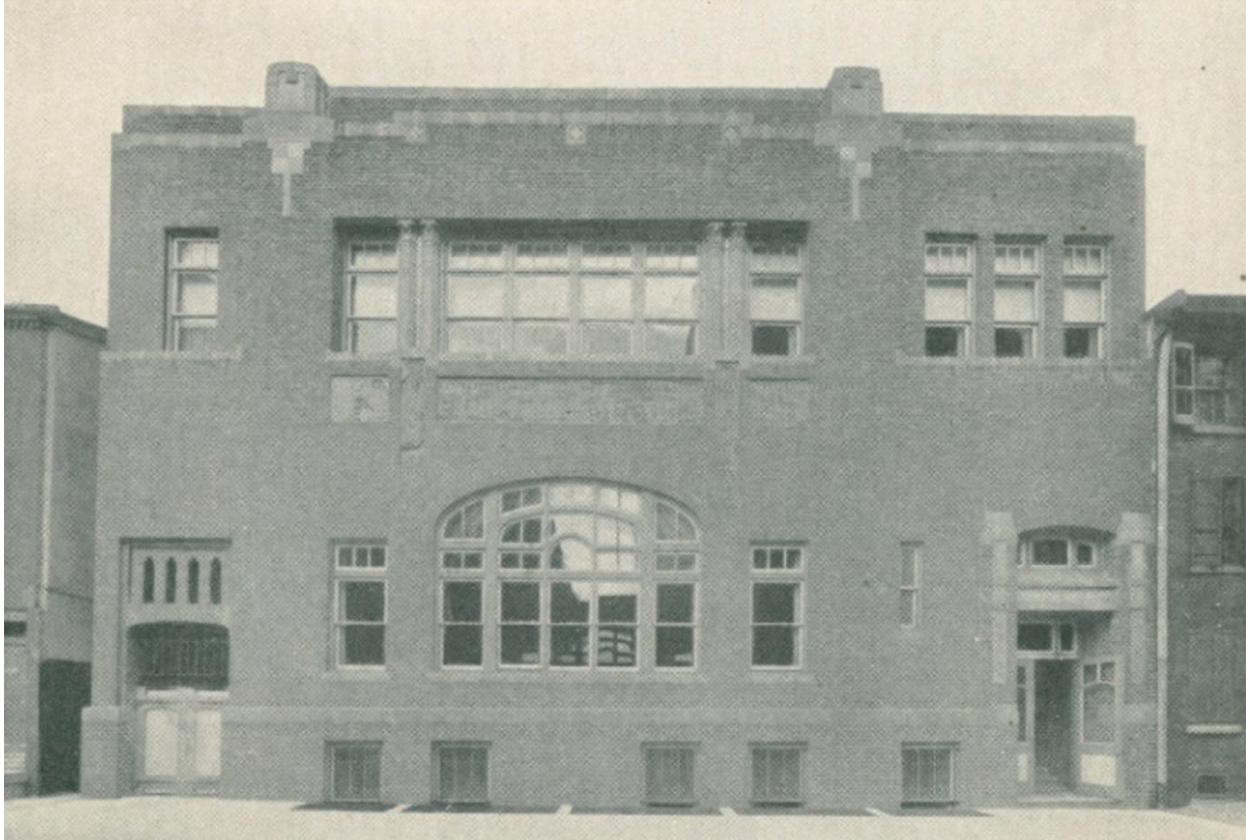


West elevation. Source: J.M. Duffin.

The rear and side elevations feature similar red brick fascia, service-related entrances and window openings that may have once had character-defining features, but have been infilled.



North/rear elevation with limited visibility. Source: J.M. Duffin.



**Figure 1: The former Musical Art Club shortly after it was constructed, c. 1918.**  
Source: Philadelphia Architects and Buildings (PAB).

## **7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The former Musical Art Club at 1821-27 Ranstead Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located near the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood between Chestnut and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia, the building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;*
- (d) *Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;*
- (e) *Is the work of an architectural firm that significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City of Philadelphia; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

The building, which was constructed in 1917 as a clubhouse for a fraternal organization known as the Musical Art Club, is significant under Criterion J as a representative of a time in which Philadelphia's musical community was striving to enlarge its capacities. Under Criterion E, the building is significant as the work of Price & McLanahan, a local architectural firm whose experimental work influenced the development of Greater Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and the Midwest. The building's unusual style embodies the culmination of Price & McLanahan's evolution to a type of "protomodernist" architecture, while still featuring Arts and Crafts elements utilized in their early work, satisfying Criteria C and D.



Figure 2: The cover of the pamphlet “A Man- and His Dream,” telling the story of the foundation of the Musical Art Club. Source: HSP.

## CRITERION J

*Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

**Constructed in 1917-18, the Musical Art Club was an established music-centric fraternal organization that served as an important clubhouse and community center for Musical Philadelphia—amateur and professional musicians and music lovers alike. The building served as a venue to host and entertain important and rising “out-of-town” musicians.<sup>1</sup> Being one of the largest clubs of its kind in Philadelphia, the former Musical Art Club building exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, or historical heritage of the music community in Philadelphia from 1917 to 1927.**

### **Historic Context: The Musical Art Club - 1907-1927**

The Musical Art Club, formally chartered in 1909, was a music-centric fraternal organization that initially poised itself as a venue to entertain “out-of-town musicians” and also serve as a center for those that comprised musical Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> The origins of the Musical Art Club seem to have sprung up as part of a larger movement in major American cities to provide clubhouse space for the musical arts. Philadelphia’s Musical Art Club appears to have begun informally in late 1907; however, it wasn’t until March 1909 that the complement of “musicians and music lovers” hosted its first official reception in its own rooms, then at the southwest corner of Seventeenth and Chestnut Streets.<sup>3</sup> At the time of its first open house, the club membership was described as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Gerson, *Music in Philadelphia: A History of Philadelphia Music, a Summary of its Current State, and a Comprehensive Index Directory* (Philadelphia: T. Presser Co., 1940).

<sup>2</sup> *ibidem*

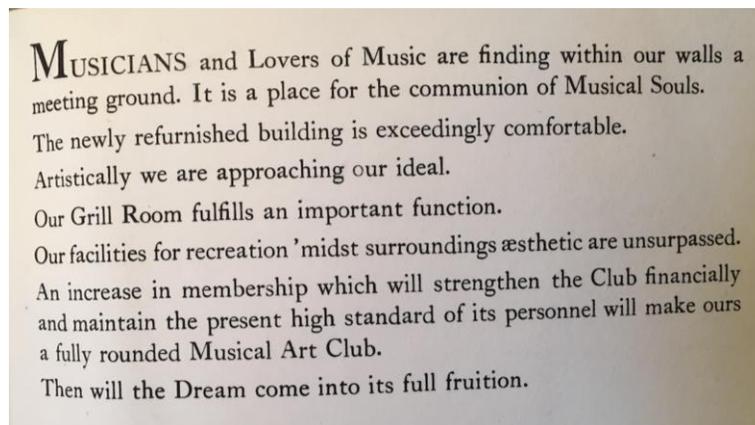
<sup>3</sup> “Musical Art Club Has House Warming, Holds First Reception at Club Rooms and Complete Plans for Organization,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 21 March 1909). p. 2.

...practically all of the prominent amateur and professional musicians of the city, besides several scores of Philadelphians, who are subscribers to the two operatic seasons, the Philadelphia Orchestra and other musical organizations.<sup>4</sup>

*The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that the founding officers were Dr. William Wallace Gilchrist, president; Dr. A.C. Lambdin, vice president; Dr. Edward L. Keffer, secretary; and Clarence Gardner, treasurer. A few weeks later, on April 1, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* announced that the Common Pleas Court No. 5 issued a charter for the Musical Art Club.<sup>5</sup> The club activities centered on hosting musical events in their rooms, and other endeavors that served the culture and social aspects of musical life in Philadelphia.<sup>6</sup> During its first few years of formal existence the organization hosted enumerable events each year, bringing both amateur and professional musicians to perform and visit Philadelphia. Performances featuring local musicians were also part of the regular host of events. Newspaper announcements and advertisements show that the club started many “annual” events, and other tradition-focused performances. Some of these actually occurred every year or even monthly, while others were immediately unpopular. Nevertheless, trial and error seemed to serve the club well and their membership increased over time, as did the frequency, quality and variety of their events and guest musicians.

The “first” concert given by the Musical Art Club was held in early 1914. By the close of 1914, it was already announced that a “second annual” concert was being planned at Witherspoon Hall. The success of these events led to fundraising, which, naturally, invoked other aspirations, including the desire for permanent space. While Philadelphia was home to all manner of clubs and organizations serving the special interests of its members, only a select portion of these entities had their own purpose-built and/or fitted clubhouses.

In 1918, the club moved into its purpose-built Arts & Crafts style clubhouse at 1821 Ranstead Street. Designed by the firm of Price & McLanahan (fl. 1903-1920), the clubhouse became integral to the life of the organization as the site of its performances, rehearsals, banquets, and games of chess and billiards. And on occasion, the club hosted receptions for composers such as Leopold Stokowski, John Philip Sousa, and Victor Herbert.<sup>7</sup>



MUSICIANS and Lovers of Music are finding within our walls a meeting ground. It is a place for the communion of Musical Souls. The newly refurnished building is exceedingly comfortable. Artistically we are approaching our ideal. Our Grill Room fulfills an important function. Our facilities for recreation 'midst surroundings æsthetic are unsurpassed. An increase in membership which will strengthen the Club financially and maintain the present high standard of its personnel will make ours a fully rounded Musical Art Club. Then will the Dream come into its full fruition.

Figure 3: A page from the pamphlet, “A Man And His Dream.” Source: HSP.

<sup>4</sup> “Musical Art Club Has House Warming, Holds First Reception at Club Rooms and Complete Plans for Organization,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 21 March 1909). p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> “Charters Granted,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 1 April 1909), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> “Musicians Tribute to Dr. Wood,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 29 March 1910), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Robert A. Gerson, *Music in Philadelphia: A History of Philadelphia Music, a Summary of its Current State, and a Comprehensive Index Directory* (Philadelphia: T. Presser Co., 1940).

When *Musical America* published an extensive article about Philadelphia’s music community on October 19, 1918, one of the subtitles was “Musical Philadelphia Sees ‘Victory Year’ At Hand,” representing not only the end of the First World War, but also the progress in “Musical Philadelphia.” The Musical Art Club was not the only development that year. The Musicians’ Club of Philadelphia also proposed a building, a rendering of which was shown in the headline of the article. A rendering of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was also said to include a musical venue of the greatest stature.<sup>8</sup> This represented a growing interest in the stature of the musical community in the 1910s. In fact, there were fifteen musical clubs in Philadelphia by 1919.<sup>9</sup> Many of these clubs had small memberships and met in rented and/or informal spaces. Others planted roots. The Musical Art Club was among the largest, with 450 members by 1919. Only the Matinee Musical Club of Philadelphia (850 members) and Columbia Gesang Verein (765 members) were larger.<sup>10</sup>

By 1918, a study had been completed on the musical community’s commercial value to the city, which projected that annual business receipts including “Sales of Music,” “Receipts from music publications,” “Piano and talking machine sales,” “From the manufacture of talking machines,” “From the manufacture of stringed instruments,” and “Recitals and other receipts,” totaled \$88,475,240. Investments by the musical community were as follows:

INVESTMENT VALUES	
Music Fund Hall .....	\$50,000
Orchestra Endowment Fund .....	800,000
Paid in past years for Orchestra .....	1,000,000
Opera buildings, etc. ....	2,000,000
Settlement School .....	200,000
Musical Art Club .....	80,000
Theodore Presser Foundation .....	1,200,000
Talking machine plants .....	10,000,000
Piano and organ factories and stores .....	2,000,000
Value of organs in the city churches and theatres .....	700,000
Value of old musical instruments, such as violins, etc....	200,000
Music publication plants and music stores.....	2,000,000
Board of Education expenditures for pianos, organs and accessories .....	86,488
Conservatories (privately owned) .....	200,000
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$20,516,488</b>

Figure 4: Investment Values published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, 1917-18. Source: Hathi Trust.

Figure 4 shows that along with the Music Fund Hall, Opera buildings, etc., the Settlement School, and the Theodore Presser Foundation, the Musical Art Club was one of the principal clubs of the city, being valued in its own right as having investments of \$80,000. As stated there were fifteen musical clubs and other such organizations published in the *Musical Blue Book of America* in 1919-1920. By 1917-18, this included several categories of “Clubs, Societies...:” “Musical Clubs and Choral Societies,” “Two Operatic Societies,” an “Orchestra,” an “Opera,” and, of course, “German Singing Societies.” The Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce stated that their total annual expenditures was \$13,127, 900. This is further explained in a section called “AN \$80,000 CLUB HOUSE,” comparing the Matinee Musical Club’s yearly expenses of \$5,000 to \$7,000 versus that of the Musical Art Club at \$20,000 for its new \$80,000 building.<sup>11</sup> Of course none of these facts about commercial value in the late 1910s speak to the mission of the Musical Art Club, rather to its importance and place in “Musical Philadelphia.”

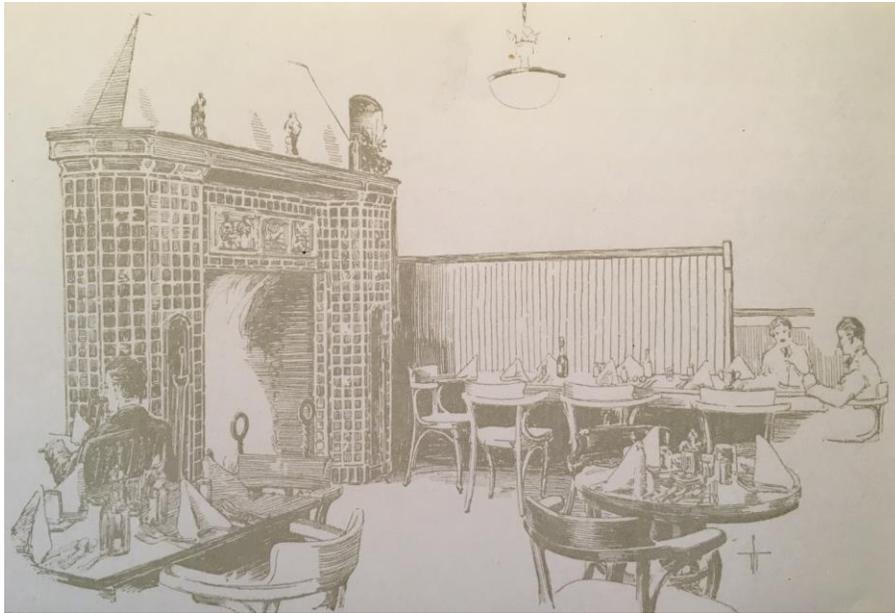
<sup>8</sup> *Musical America* (October 20, 1917).

<sup>9</sup> *Musical Blue Book of America: 1919-1920* (New York: The Musical Blue Book Corporation, 1919), 296-300.

<sup>10</sup> The Columbia Gesang Verein, or Singing Society, was listed on the PRHP on 7/8/2016. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Educational Pamphlets issued by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. (Philadelphia: 1917-18), p. 12.

The club hosted events of its own – of all kinds – and also accommodated the gatherings of others on a regular basis. The club’s own roster of events spanned the entire week, as it included both weekday and weekend happenings. For example, the club’s Entertainment Committee hosted weekday luncheons that typically featured either a speaker presenting on current events (i.e. “Forgery and Forgers of Handwriting and Typewriting,” “Dissonance and Harmony in Government,” or “The Measure of Human Capacity”) or a choral performance. Lunch was served on site at “the grill” at a minimal cost. On Sunday afternoons, the club hosted “musical teas,” showcasing both local and visiting talent. And on special occasions, it hosted holiday dances (i.e. a “Halloween Dance” and a “New Year’s Frolic”) as well as receptions for visiting musicians – who more commonly gave short talks than encore performances.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 5: Drawing of the “Grill” interior of the Musical Art Club, taken from the pamphlet, “A Man And His Dream.” Note the Mercer tile fireplace. Source: HSP.**

In addition to the world-renowned composers mentioned above, the club hosted working musicians including: Maria Jeritza, a Czech opera singer described as “a genuine 24-carat prima donna of the old school;” Fortuno Thomas Gallo, an opera singer and the owner/manager of the traveling San Carlo Opera Company; George Frederick Boyle, an Australian pianist; and Austin Conradi, pianist and teacher.<sup>13</sup>

In 1919, the club began to admit female members.<sup>14</sup> In 1922, the Franklin Chess Club merged into the Musical Art Club under the leadership of Leonard H. Kinnard (president of the Musical Art Club as well as the president of Bell Telephone).<sup>15</sup> And in 1927, the club sold its building to the Thomas Reath Post of the American Legion for \$75,000.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, for one season in 1930, the building housed the Duse Art Theater, “an experimental theater seeking to create an impression of added dimension by special planes and lighting effects.” Raphael

<sup>12</sup> Collection of Musical Art Club invitation cards. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>13</sup> Collection of Musical Art Club invitation cards. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.; “Maria Jeritza, Star of Opera’s ‘Golden Age’ Dies at 94,” New York: New York Times, 11 July 1982.; University of Minnesota, IHRC Archives, “Fortuno Gallo papers,” Accessed 24 July 2017, <http://archives.lib.umn.edu/repositories/6/resources/4153>; Hyperion Records, “George Frederick Boyle,” Accessed 24 July 2017, <http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/c.asp?c=C6007>; and Maryland: A Guide to the Old Line State, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 155.

<sup>14</sup> “Women in Musical Art Club,” Philadelphia: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 March 1919.

<sup>15</sup> “Chess and Checkers,” Philadelphia: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 December 1921.

<sup>16</sup> “Activities of Day in Real Estate,” Philadelphia: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 November 1927.

Sabatini was the interior designer. Organizationally, the Duse Art, one of Philadelphia's only art houses, had been in existence for at least six years.<sup>17</sup>

Although it had sold its clubhouse, the Musical Art Club remained active until at least 1932. In 1930, the club was renting the lobby/lounge of the Stephen Girard Hotel, 2027 Chestnut Street; and in 1932, the club was renting a suite in the Allman Building, 1701 Walnut Street.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 6: The architect's rendering for the Musical Art Club, 1917. Published in *Musical America* on October 20, 1917. Source: Google Books.

***Criterion 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***

The former Musical Art Club building is a medium-scale non-residential work of the architectural firm of Price & McLanahan, a partnership between William L. Price (1861-1916) and M. Hawley McLanahan (1865-1929) which significantly contributed to and influenced the architectural history of Philadelphia and beyond.<sup>19</sup> Prior to joining forces with real estate developer McLanahan in 1903, William Price had enjoyed a prolific career as the architect of primarily residential suburban homes and as one of the leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States. Price began his career in the offices of Addison Hutton and Furness & Evans before establishing a partnership with his brother Frank, with whom he practiced chiefly residential design. Much of the brothers' work included houses for developers Wendell & Smith of Overbrook Farms, Pelham, and St. Davids fame; the unique homes designed by various young architects for Wendell & Smith shaped the development of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century

<sup>17</sup> Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters, A to Z: A Comprehensive, Descriptive Record of 813 Theaters Constructed Since 1724*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 99.

<sup>18</sup> "Chess and Checkers," Philadelphia: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 January 1930.; and "Activities of Day in Real Estate," Philadelphia: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 January 1932.

<sup>19</sup> George Thomas. *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), p. 176.

suburban Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup> After splitting from his brother in the early 1890s to practice independently, Price successfully designed several utopian Arts and Crafts communities, including Arden, Delaware, and Rose Valley, Pennsylvania, as well as the incredible chateausque Woodmont estate in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. In 1903, Price teamed up with Hawley McLanahan, for whom he had designed a summer home in St. Davids, Pennsylvania several years earlier.

Although McLanahan held a degree in architecture, it does not appear that he practiced until he began his partnership with Price, who would remain the driving force behind the firm's designs. Price's Arts and Crafts background is evident in one of the firm's first works, the masterful, idiosyncratic Arts and Crafts department store for Jacob Reed's Sons in Center City Philadelphia (1903; PRHP: 3/29:1966). While the firm also continued Price's residential work, McLanahan's background and connections opened new doors, expanding the firm's commissions well beyond the Greater Philadelphia area. The firm soon began designing Pennsylvania Railroad stations across western Pennsylvania and the Midwest, with large private residences along the route. The designs for the Pennsylvania Railroad enabled Price to combine his interests in technology and engineering into his architectural designs. He was also able to build upon his earlier work in Atlantic City, which witnessed a radical boom in the early twentieth century. Price & McLanahan's innovative use of reinforced concrete in the massive expansions of the competitor Blenheim and Traymore Hotels in Atlantic City created two of the most distinctive landmarks in the resort town and ushered in an era of tall building construction that would come to define the oceanfront city.



**Figure 7: Jacob Reed's Sons Store, 1424-26 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA, constructed 1903. Source: Philadelphia Historical Commission.**

Following the completion of the Blenheim Hotel in 1906, Price and McLanahan visited Europe together, a traditional tour which often piqued architects' interest in, or confirmed their use of, the Beaux Arts



**Figure 8: The Hotel Blenheim, constructed 1905-06. Source: Philadelphia Buildings & Architects, from AIA/T-Square Yearbook, p. 228 (1924).**

method or Gothic Revival style. For Price, however, the trip convinced him that the best architecture was of its own period. In an address to the Ontario Association of Architects in 1907, Price argued that, "Modern architecture is not the Art Nouveau with its pulled candy motive... Modern architecture is architecture that accepts its own age and its own wants and its own feelings as its standard..."<sup>21</sup> With that ethos in mind, Price & McLanahan's designs were intended to be modern and appeal to the new middle classes who never made the Grand Tour of Europe. Price's contemporary Paul Cret identified Price & McLanahan as "among those who shaped the present tendencies of American architecture," citing their Atlantic City

<sup>20</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "William Lightfoot Price (1861-1916)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, p. 335.

hotels and the Chicago Freight Terminal, which continued to be highlighted as American landmarks of modernism for more than decade after Price's untimely death in 1916.<sup>22</sup> Architectural historian George Thomas notes that Price's designs for the Traymore Hotel "established the sinewy and structurally expressive forms that became the model for both the tapering skyscrapers and muscular mid-rise buildings that became standards of eastern cities."<sup>23</sup> Thomas argues that rather than inappropriately labeling these buildings as Art Deco, they could be considered "Price Style," or "Vertical Style," as Price's office called them.



**Figure 9: Traymore Hotel (constructed 1914-15) in 1920. Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.**

After Price's death, the firm remained known as Price & McLanahan for approximately four more years, continuing to design significant works in Price's style. In 1920, the firm name was changed to McLanahan & Bencker to acknowledge the work of chief draftsman Ralph Bencker. Although much of Price & McLanahan's larger works have been demolished—the mid-twentieth century was hard on Atlantic City as well as the railroad industry—the firm greatly impacted the development of early-twentieth century America, and the Greater Philadelphia area in particular.

***Criteria C & D: Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen***

The Musical Art Club building embodies distinguishing characteristics of Price & McLanahan's "protomodernist" style with distinctive Arts and Crafts details reflective of the transitional period in which the building was constructed. Designed the year of Price's death, and constructed posthumously, the Musical Art Club building reflects the culmination of Price's design evolution from Arts and Crafts to "modern" architecture. Price's style—and therefore Price & McLanahan's style—architectural historian George Thomas explains, defies explicit categorization, neither corresponding to the "self-imposed aesthetic limits of modernism," nor harkening back to historical revival styles popular among many architects of his day, particularly those in the northeast. While he had dabbled loosely in revivalist residential design as a lone practitioner, in his later years with McLanahan, Price's aesthetic evolved into what Thomas deems "protomodernist." Price's modernism was more in keeping with that of Midwestern architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, who also incorporated natural motifs and hand-crafted elements such as tiles into their work. This is no coincidence, Thomas believes. In his seminal book on William Price, Thomas draws a comparison between Price's modern architecture and the industrial character of Philadelphia with that of the Midwest. In the mid-nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, a split arose between designers who found inspiration for new works in historical forms and those who found models in the progressive culture of experimentation and innovation. In one camp fell architects like H.H. Richardson, McKim, Mead & White, and Daniel Burnham, who advanced historical revival designs. In American industrial centers like Philadelphia, Thomas argues, architects and artists took cues from mechanical engineers and industrial designers who tended to deviate from historical models. The first proponents of the evolving "protomodern" architecture were architects like Frank Furness and Will Price in Philadelphia and Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in the Midwest. Like

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Furness, Price was able to design and build in ways that were fundamentally modern owing to the fact that many of his clients were part of a new generation of industrialists and manufacturers.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 10 (left): Union Station, Chicago, IL, 1909. Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Figure 11 (right): Canton, Ohio station, Source: Price and McLanahan Archives, George E. Thomas Collection, from George Thomas. *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000).

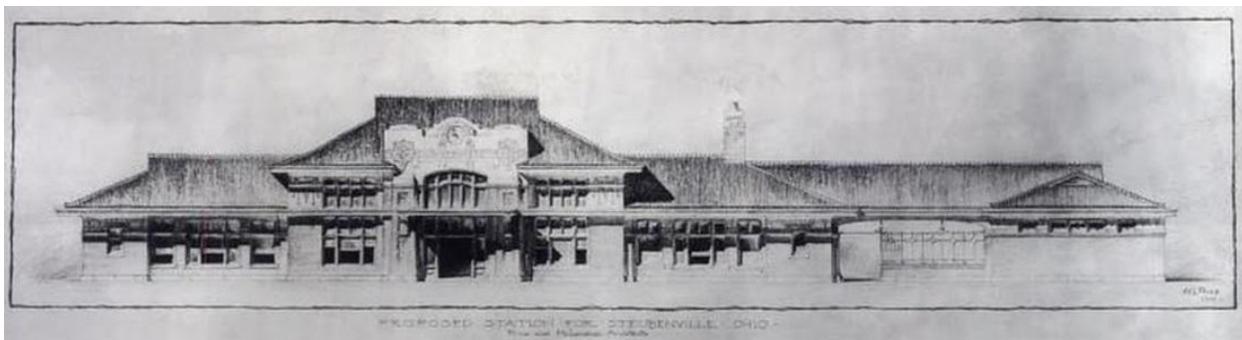


Figure 12: “Proposed station for Steubenville, Ohio.” Photographic reproduction of lost pencil elevation drawing, 1910. Note the center window, which bears a strong resemblance to the primary window used in the Musical Art Club (see Figure 14). Source: Price and McLanahan Archives, George E. Thomas Collection, from George Thomas. *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000).

Although construction began on the Musical Art Club building the year after Price’s untimely death at age 54, the design is very much in keeping with the Pennsylvania Railroad station designs that the firm had completed over the previous decade.<sup>25</sup> Price & McLanahan’s designs for many of these stations, as well as some of their hotel and residential commissions, utilized several distinctive features in particular: massing established by pier caps breaking through the parapet; a large, arched central window opening; and decorative tile work. The Musical Art Club differs from its Midwestern counterparts in that it is clad in red rather than buff brick, a nod to its Philadelphian context. Like the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Chicago Freight Terminal designed the same year (Figure 13), Price & McLanahan’s Musical Art Club building

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Price & McLanahan designed more than two dozen stations for the Western division of the Pennsylvania Railroad, only two major stations and a handful of smaller depots of which survive. In the design of the Fort Wayne, Indiana station, Price created a “personal architectural expression by combining elements adapted from historical styles with those prevalent during the American Arts and Crafts movement.” Price’s use of brick construction with the additional use of decorative brick patterns and terra cotta demonstrated his mastery of the Arts and Crafts style as well as classical styles. From:

Creager Smith, “Pennsylvania Railroad Station, 221 Baker Street, Fort Wayne, IN.” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form. Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Fort Wayne, IN, June 1997.

[https://secure.in.gov/apps/dnr/shaard/r/21c1e/NPA\\_RR\\_Station\\_Allen\\_CO\\_Nom.pdf](https://secure.in.gov/apps/dnr/shaard/r/21c1e/NPA_RR_Station_Allen_CO_Nom.pdf).

design managed its scale by dividing the facades into smaller masses established by pier caps extending through the parapet.



**Figure 13: Chicago Freight Terminal (constructed 1914-1918) in 1918. Source: Price and McLanahan Archives, George E. Thomas Collection, from George Thomas. *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000).**

The Musical Art Club building, like the Chicago Freight Terminal, featured simpler massing and flatter planes than Price & McLanahan's earlier designs (see Figures 10,11, 12), an indication of the transition towards modern architecture. Though well-proportioned, the primary elevation does not attempt to be perfectly symmetrical; instead, it lets the interior program dictate the exterior form, one of the key principles of modernist design. Indeed, the phrase "form follows function" was coined by Louis Sullivan, and became the mantra of modern architecture as it progressed through the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup>

Price & McLanahan's modernist philosophy also extended to their use of materials. "Use stone, plaster, brick, concrete, tile, anything you will," Price wrote in 1909, "but use them for what they are, and let their qualities be shown forth as well as their purpose, and above all keep ornament out, unless you can get real artisans to put it in, and even then it must tell some story of purpose or interests."<sup>27</sup> Price often revealed his Arts and Crafts background and interest through his selection of handmade tiles from Henry Chapman Mercer's Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. He even went so far as to submit his own designs for tile panels, which Mercer produced to his specifications.<sup>28</sup> Tiles, presumably from Mercer's Tile Works, are used sparingly but purposefully on the front façade, and extensively on the interior, of the Musical Art Club building (see Appendix). Price & McLanahan's transition towards modernism is evident when comparing the simplified and streamlined use of tile on the Musical Art Club as compared the firm's 1903 design of the flamboyantly Arts and Crafts Jacob Reed's Son store just a few blocks away (Figure 7).

The Musical Art Club building defies categorization into one explicit architectural style because Price & McLanahan's work was modern and experimental, freely incorporating Arts and Crafts elements with new, modern, muscular forms that the firm developed in their larger commissions for the Pennsylvania Railroad and Atlantic City hotels. Though modern architecture ultimately did not take the more organic path paved by architects like Price & McLanahan, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright, the Musical

<sup>26</sup> Kimberly Elman, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Principles of Organic Architecture," PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/flw/legacy/essay1.html>.

<sup>27</sup> *The Craftsman* XVI, no. 1 (April 1909).

<sup>28</sup> Vance A. Koehler, "Architectural Ceramics in Philadelphia" (Pennsylvania, Philadelphia), 2015, <http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Architectural-Ceramics-in-Phila-2015.pdf>.

Art Club building represents a moment on a continuum towards modernism being pursued during the second decade of the twentieth century.



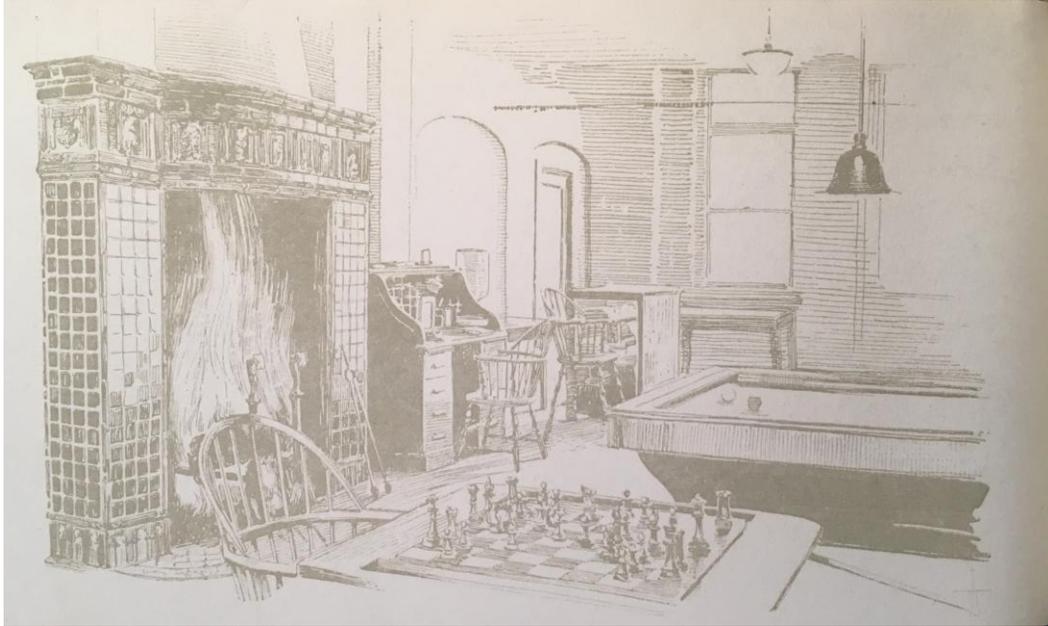
**Figure 14: Interior view of the central and primary window opening, showing that almost all of the original fabric survives, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.**

### **Conclusion**

The former Musical Art Club building represents a moment in Philadelphia in which the musical community, Musical Philadelphia, was striving to enlarge its capacities. The ideals of the period evoked a feeling of purpose and importance that led to great strides in cultural and organizational advancement. The building is unique as one of a few extant examples that of a synthesis of the period and the interrelationship between movement and music, between organization and philosophy, as articulated in a form of modern architecture. Although smaller in scale than many of their commissions, the “protomodernist” style building represents the culmination of the design philosophy of Price & McLanahan, whose work greatly impacted the Greater Philadelphia area and beyond.

## APPENDIX: Interior

The interior treatment of the former Musical Art Club is one of aesthetic interest, mimicking the Arts and Crafts interior elements of the period. The tile work is very much in the style of Henry C. Mercer.



Drawing of the interior of the Musical Art Club, taken from the pamphlet, "A Man And His Dream." Note the Mercer tile fireplace. Source: HSP.



Music Room. Source: PAB.



The Music Room. Source: PAB.



Fireplace in the Music Room. Source: PAB.



The same fireplace today, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.



Fireplace in the Grill. Source: PAB.



The same fireplace, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.



Likely Mercer tile, used in the Grill fireplace, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.



Likely Mercer tile, used in the Grill fireplace, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.



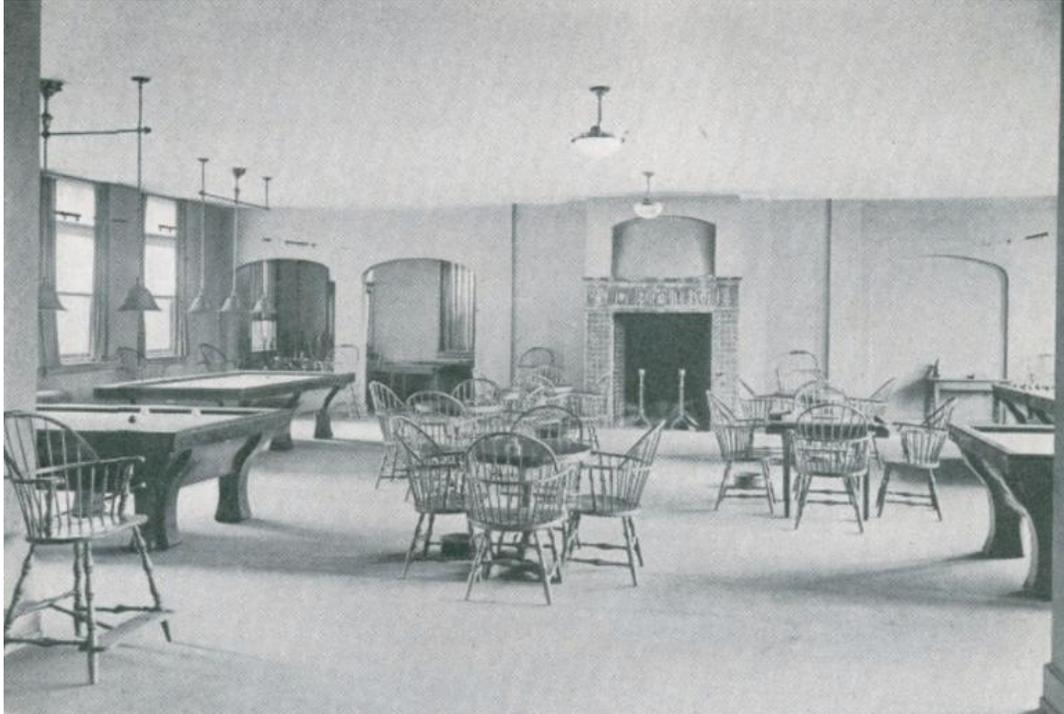
Likely Mercer tile, used in the Grill fireplace, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.



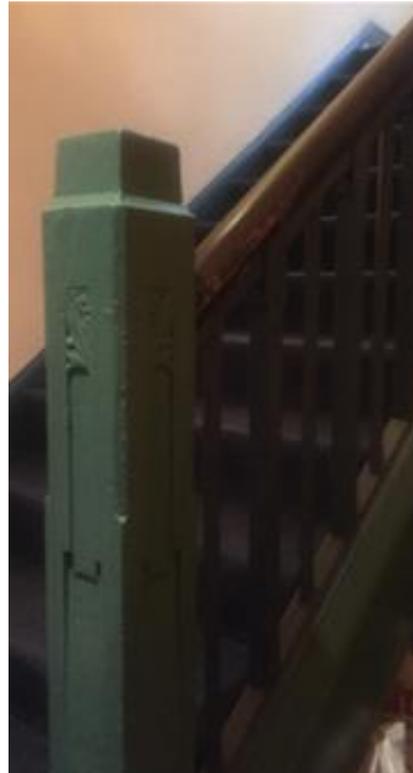
Likely Mercer tile, used in the Grill fireplace, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.



The Grill. Source: PAB.



The Game Room. Source: PAB.



Staircase. Source: PAB; The same staircase today, c. 2017. Source: Pinterest.

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