

# 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 a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: **2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue**

Postal code: **19121** Councilmanic District: **5<sup>th</sup>**

#### 2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Dox Thrash House**

Common Name: **Dox Thrash House**

#### 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:

#### 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

***SEE ATTACHED***

#### 6. DESCRIPTION

***SEE ATTACHED***

#### 7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1895-1959**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1895**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Harold Godwin**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Original owner:

Other significant persons: **Dox Thrash**

**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**

**SEE ATTACHED**

**9. NOMINATOR**

Name with Title: Chelsea Troppauer (Graduate Intern) Email: ctrop@design.upenn.edu

Organization: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date: August 17, 2012

Street Address: 1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620 Telephone: (215) 546-1146

City, State, and Postal Code: Philadelphia, Pa 19103

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 10 October 2012

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 4 December 2012

Date of Notice Issuance: 8 April 2013

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

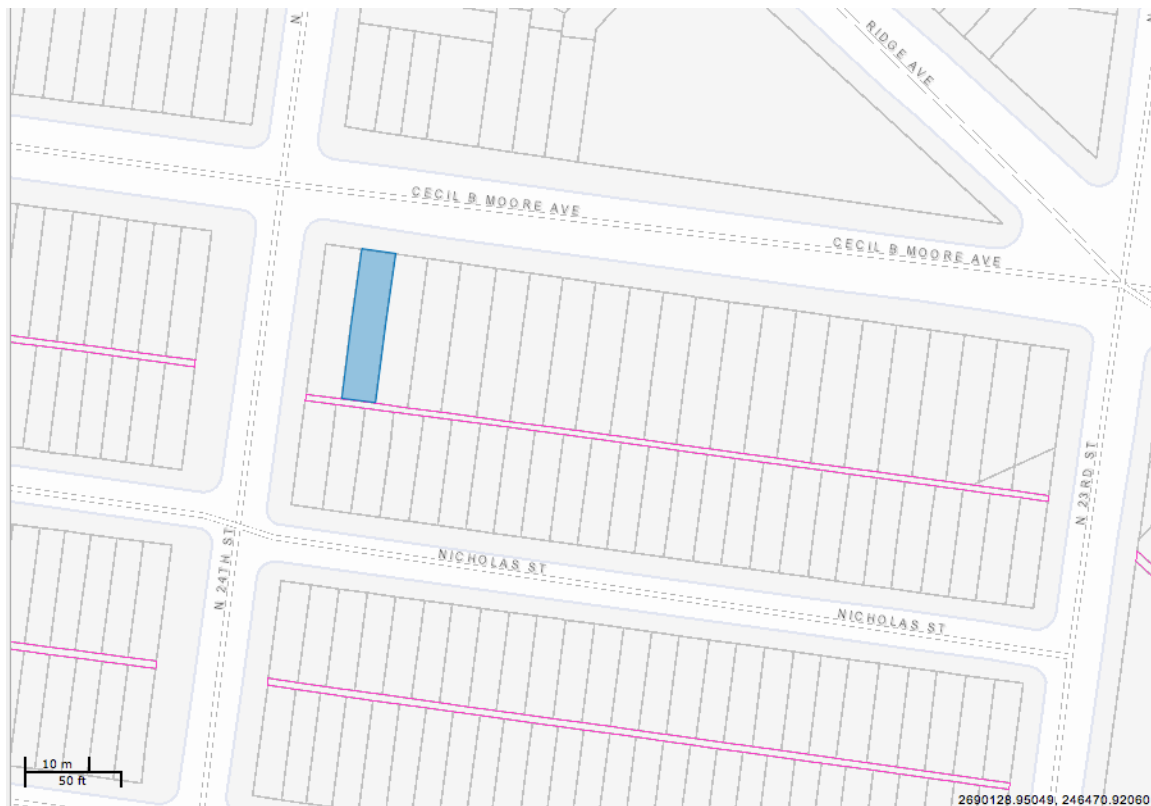
☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

3/16/07



## 5. Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the south side of Cecil B. Moore Avenue (former Columbia Avenue) at the distance of twenty five feet and three inches eastward from the east side of Twenty-Fourth Street. Containing in front of breadth on the said Cecil B. Moore Avenue eighteen feet and extending of that width in length or depth southwest between parallel lines at right angles to the said Cecil B Moore Avenue eighty feet to a certain four foot wide alley, which extends eastward and westward from Twenty-Third Street to Twenty-Fourth Street.



## **6. Description**

The former Dox Thrash residence is located at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue (formerly West Columbia Avenue), near the southeast corner of Cecil B. Moore and 24<sup>th</sup> Street in the North Central neighborhood of Philadelphia (Fig. 1). The building is a tawny Roman brick with terra cotta details on its primary north facade. It is three stories tall with a gabled wall dormer and mansard roof with a two story rear el. Originally the building was part of a block-long row and shared its east and west party walls with neighboring structures; however following the demolition of 2342 Cecil B. Moore between after 1985, the Dox Thrash house's western wall is now exposed. The building is organized with a storefront space on the first story and dwelling space in the upper stories (Fig.2).

### **North Elevation**

#### **First Story**

The first story of the building features a wood and glass storefront with a recessed entranceway offset to the west side of the façade (Fig. 3). The storefront is composed of fifteen fixed lights set in three rows of five, separated by painted wood muntins. Each light is backed by a simple decorative security screen of wrought metal half-ovals curving inward from each window's four corners. Some of the storefront panes are currently missing, but the entire window assembly is secured with plywood from behind the frames. Two leaded glass transom panels span the wood-framed storefront windows, which rest on a low base of green-veined marble. Above the storefront is a wooden fascia extending the entire width of the façade. Likely intended for storefront signage, the fascia is currently painted white.

The storefront returns at an obtuse angle to form the side wall of the recessed entranceway vestibule, where the same multilight storefront configuration with stone base and leaded glass transom is continued (Fig. 4). The vestibule includes two doors: one along the back vestibule wall that accesses a stairway to the upper stories, and one along the vestibule's side wall that accesses the ground-floor storefront space. The former is currently secured with plywood. The vestibule floor is a white ceramic tile mosaic and sits two steps above sidewalk level. A metal security door and dome-roofed cage have been mounted to the exterior of the

vestibule. This type of metalwork is common to many other properties in the immediate vicinity. A low metal railing with simple posts runs tight across the face of the building along the property line.

## **Second Story**

Above the sign fascia a terra cotta sill course runs across the entire width of the façade and separates the first and second story. The sill course's three-part design is consistent across all the surviving rowhouse units on the block. The three parts include a lower striated band, a frieze with dentils egg and dart detailing, and an ogee crown molding. The sill course curves outward to form the base of the projecting bow window directly above it (Fig. 5). The underside of the bow features a terra cotta or molded tin ornament (Fig. 6). The design is of two griffins that are floating upon a floral filigree pattern and facing each other with a circular shape in the center.

The second story bow window is three bays wide, each featuring a double-hung vinyl sash window. Set between each of the vinyl windows are geometrically patterned ornaments painted in white. A frieze of classical festoons is set above the windows, followed by a projecting cornice at the top of the bow window.

## **Third Story**

A pedimented dormer framed by narrow segments of a mansard roof dominates the third story of the north façade (Fig. 7). The dormer is two bays wide and features a pair of one-over-one, double hung windows set within painted wood brick molding. Jack-arched lintels feature an ogee-shaped chamfer along their bottom edges. The dormer is topped by gable parapet with a terra cotta cavetto cornice and decorative terra cotta pediment panel. The panel's design is of two griffins facing each other and flanking a fleur-de-lis crest within a filigree background (Fig. 8). The mansard is clad in green asphalt shingles set in a fishscale pattern.

### **West Elevation**

The west elevation of the building is a blind stucco façade (Fig. 9). A 1985 survey photo shows another building sharing the western wall, which has since been torn down. The elevation shows that the building's height steps down to two stories at approximately the midpoint of the property. Three exterior chimneys break up the otherwise blank party wall. The top of the wall forms a flat parapet and is capped by metal flashing.

### **South Elevation**

The rear of the property is accessible through a narrow alleyway covered with overgrown vegetation. The south elevation is two stories tall and two bays wide (Fig. 10). Fish scale patterned green shingles and two vinyl windows make up the second story wall. There is a wooden first story addition with a shed roof present. The majority of these walls have been covered with green asphalt shingles. The openings within the first story addition have been boarded up.



**Figure 1:** Perspective looking east from 24<sup>th</sup> Street down Cecil B. Moore Avenue.





**Figure 2:** North elevation of the Dox Thrash House, 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue.



**Figure 3:** North elevation storefront.



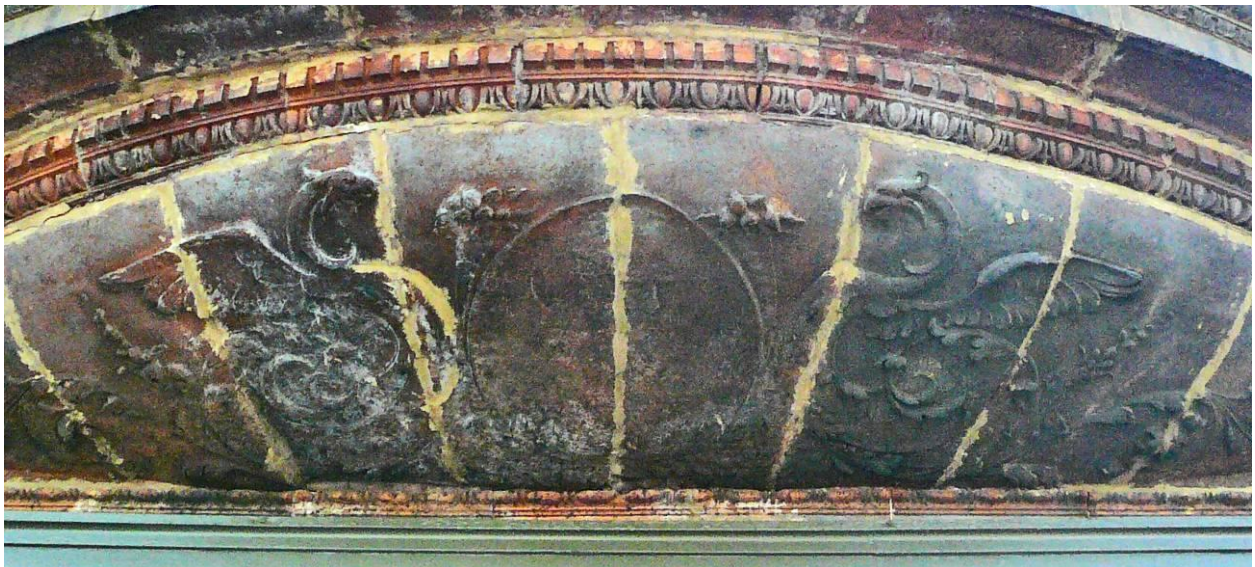


**Figure 4:** Entry vestibule detail.





**Figure 5:** Bow window detail.



**Figure 6:** Detail of low-relief ornament below bow window.





**Figure 7:** Detail of 3<sup>rd</sup> story wall dormer.



**Figure 8:** Detail of terra cotta pediment.





**Figure 9:** West elevation.



**Figure 10:** South elevation.

## 7. Significance

Dox Thrash was a distinguished African American artist, long associated with Philadelphia, and an important figure in the history of printmaking. Most widely recognized as the creator of a new printmaking process called carborundum, Thrash lived in Philadelphia from 1925 until his death in 1965. Throughout his printmaking career, Thrash documented the city and those who lived in it. Dox Thrash purchased 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue (formerly Columbia Avenue) in 1944, remaining there until 1959.

The building at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue should be individually listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, because it meets the following criteria for historic designation as stated in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 14-2007 (5) of the Philadelphia Code:

- (a) Has significant character or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City; and is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- and*
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**Criteria A: The building at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue has significant value for its association with famed African American printmaker Dox Thrash, who resided here from 1944 to 1959.**

*and*

**Criteria J: The Dox Thrash House reflects the cultural, economic and historical heritage of North Philadelphia as a center of African American culture in the early and middle twentieth century.**

When Dox Thrash purchased 2340 Columbia Avenue in 1944, he had already established himself as a prominent African American artist (Fig. 11). Born in Georgia in 1893, Thrash

travelled around the country doing odd jobs and studying art through correspondence courses, before enlisting in the United States Army during World War I.<sup>1</sup> Following his service, Thrash continued his art education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Once he obtained his degree from SAIC in 1923, Thrash expressed the desire to begin another cross-country trip. As he described it, “[I] did not get any further than Philadelphia and have remained here ever since.”<sup>2</sup>

Dox Thrash settled in Philadelphia in 1925, but his exact whereabouts were not documented until a 1929 Philadelphia Directory listed him as living at 2409 Columbia Avenue and working as a janitor.<sup>3</sup> He enjoyed initial success as a commercial artist, often designing advertisements for local North Philadelphia business establishments. One of his earliest documented works is a poster in 1930 for the Second Annual National Negro Music Festival (Fig. 12).<sup>4</sup> Thrash’s interest in prints developed following his enrollment in the Graphic-Sketch Club. By 1932, the artist began to show his prints (done in various mediums) to the public.

Thrash’s most widely recognized prints are from his tenure working for the Federal Art Project, a branch of the Works Progress Administration. The purpose of the Federal Art Project was to put thousands of artists to work and share their production with the general public.<sup>5</sup> Thrash worked in the Fine Print Workshop of the Philadelphia branch, one of only five FAP branches nationwide to have a centralized printmaking workshop.<sup>6</sup> He appears to have been the first African American assigned to the printmaking shop.<sup>7</sup> The workshop’s non-discriminatory policies and openness towards technical experimentation benefited Thrash greatly. This resulted in him developing (in collaboration with artists Hubert Mesibov and Michael Gallagher) a new printmaking technique, called carborundrum (Fig.13). The carborundum mezzotint print was a variant of the more traditional mezzotint technique that required less time and effort, but resulted in a more durable surface.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Ittmann, “Dox Thrash: ‘I Always Wanted To Be An Artist,’” in *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, ed. John Ittmann (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ittmann, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>5</sup> Cindy Medley-Buckner, “The Fine Print Workshop of the Philadelphia Federal Art Project,” in *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, ed. John Ittmann (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 43.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 48.



Thrash's discovery of the carborundum print process was hailed at the time as "one of the most important development[s] in the technique of fine print reproduction since Alys Senefelder invented lithography at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>9</sup> He also gained local recognition for his printmaking technique. In the May 1944 issue of *The Crisis*, which was devoted entirely to Philadelphia, an article boasted the contributions of Philadelphians, "many of them out-rival the oft-touted achievements of Harlem," and named Thrash as one of the city's brightest stars in the arts on a list that included artists Allan Freelon, Henry Jones, and Meta Arrick Fuller, along with more famous names of Marian Anderson and Alan Locke.<sup>10</sup>

Thrash would continue to exhibit his works nationally and locally at the nearby Pyramid Club at 15<sup>th</sup> and Girard Avenue. The Pyramid Club was founded in 1937 with the premise of promoting the interest of African Americans economically, socially and culturally.<sup>11</sup> By the 1950s, the Club became an important venue for African American artists in Philadelphia because it was the only exhibition space that was African-American-owned, operated and controlled. The Pyramid Club opened Thrash to a network of upper and middle class African American professionals who were able to support his work.<sup>12</sup>

While Thrash lived at 2340 Columbia Avenue he also worked for the Philadelphia Housing Authority from 1945 to 1958 as house painter. Thrash produced prints less frequently during the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> This is possibly because he focused more of his time to the medium of painting.<sup>14</sup> The artist still actively participated on juried selected shows for exhibits around Philadelphia, including the Pyramid Club and the Philadelphia School District.

In 1959, Dox Thrash sold his home at 2340 Columbia Avenue and moved into a modern high rise apartment building at 1220 North Broad Street.<sup>15</sup> It was also during this time that Thrash moved his studio from 2409 Columbia Avenue (where he worked since 1929) to a few

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<sup>9</sup> Quote from an article titled, "WPA Artist Discovers New Print Process for Reproductions" in the *Philadelphia Afro- American*. See Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered, ed. John Ittmann (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 135.

<sup>10</sup> Ittmann, "Dox Thrash: 'I Always Wanted to Be An Artist,'" 32.

<sup>11</sup> David Brigham, "Dox Thrash and the Pyramid Club," in *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, ed. John Ittmann (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 53.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> This can be discerned from the fact that there are limited number of prints that can be definitively dated to the 1950s.

<sup>14</sup> In the Philadelphia Museum of Art's book on the retrospect of the artist, it makes mention that the medium of painting may have become more popular with Thrash following his retirement from the Housing Authority.

<sup>15</sup> See Deed Book 1033 Page 280 and Brigham, 63.

blocks away on 2313-2315 Ridge Avenue. Dox Thrash died a few years later in 1965 in Philadelphia.

Since Thrash's death, his artwork has gained appreciation from art historians, culminating in a major retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2001. His frequent depiction of African American subject matter in a positive manner reflected the public discourse during the 1930s and 40s by African American scholars calling for artists to create a "New Negro" image (Fig. 12).<sup>16</sup> Thrash has also been credited for raising awareness of the African American female nude, which prior to the 1970s had been virtually absent within American art.<sup>17</sup> Philadelphia street scenes were another common subject in his work, particularly the neighborhood around his North Philadelphia home and studio (Fig. 14). In 2001, the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program honored Thrash's work and life with a mural at 2442 Cecil B. Moore Avenue (Fig.15). However, Thrash's tangible legacy in North Philadelphia has been threatened by the loss of the artist's long-time studio at 2409 Cecil B. Moore Avenue, as well as his later studio at 2313-15 Ridge Avenue, leaving 2340 Cecil B. Moore as the last surviving site with major ties to the artist.

Thrash purchased and resided at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue at a time when the neighborhood's demographics were undergoing significant transformation. He acquired the house in 1944 from Mary E. Mohr, who had lived there and operated a dry goods store out of its ground-floor storefront since 1909. At the time Mary and her husband Charles purchased the property, the neighborhood was predominantly white, but by 1940 had experienced an influx of new African American residents. The 1940 census describes an almost even mix of whites and African Americans residing in the neighborhood, including Thrash himself, who is listed as a resident of 2409 Columbia Avenue a block away. That Thrash purchased a house at the height of his career in close proximity to his former apartment and studio speaks to the neighborhood's importance in supporting an emerging upwardly-mobile African American middle class.

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<sup>16</sup> Kymerly N. Pinder, "'Racial Idiom' in the Work of Dox Thrash," in *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, ed. John Ittmann (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 65.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

**Criteria C: The distinctive architectural style of 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue reflects the environment of late nineteenth century North Philadelphia speculative housing developments.**

After the Civil War, Philadelphia underwent an enormous change in its urban form. With advancements in public transportation, residents no longer faced the same restrictions of living in close proximity to their places of work. By the 1870s, the community now known as North Central Philadelphia was rapidly developing as streetcar lines extended north from the city's core.<sup>18</sup> Development was initially focused along North Broad Street where by 1876 the street had become lined with elegant brownstone mansions of Philadelphia's industrialists and businessmen, including P.A.B. Widener, William Elkins and Ellis Gimbel. Unlike the more traditional areas housing Philadelphia's elite, North Philadelphia did not initially carry the same level of status and prestige. To make up for this lack of social standing, historian Robert Morris Skaler posits that North Philadelphia residents built grander homes than their equivalents in Center City.<sup>19</sup> In the last decades of the nineteenth century, a building boom of commodious row houses spanned northwards from Center City along the street car lines.

A Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey card completed by historian Michael Lewis in 1985 dates the construction of the current building at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue to 1895.<sup>20</sup> In the decades leading up to its construction, the blocks surrounding the building underwent enormous development. Maps dating to 1875 show early development already occurring within the 29<sup>th</sup> Ward, west of 23<sup>rd</sup> street (Fig. 16).<sup>21</sup> The once block-long parcels of land began to be subdivided into smaller, rowhouse parcels. Such subdivision occurred at a piecemeal rate towards the end of the nineteenth century. In the case of the 2300 block of Cecil B. Moore Avenue (formally known as West Columbia Avenue), the Union Passenger Railway Company owned the majority of the block through the 1880s, with only a few subdivided parcels along the

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<sup>18</sup> George Thomas, "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form and National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Houses at 1907-1951 N. 32nd St.", March 1993, [https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ce\\_imagery/phmc\\_scans/H099895\\_01D.pdf](https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ce_imagery/phmc_scans/H099895_01D.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Robert Morris Skaler, *Images of America: Philadelphia's Broad Street South and North*, (Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 8.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Lewis, "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey For: 2336-2342.", August 8, 1985.

<sup>21</sup> G.M. Hopkins, "Plate Y," City Atlas of Philadelphia, Vol. 6, Ward 2 Through 20, 29, and 31 (Philadelphia, PA, 1875), [http://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/GMH1875v6-plate\\_Y](http://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/GMH1875v6-plate_Y).

corners of 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and Columbia Avenue. By 1888, these holdings had expanded to encompass the 2300 block of Turner Street and were acquired by the Philadelphia Traction Company (Fig. 17).<sup>22</sup> The Philadelphia Traction Company was organized for the purpose of laying cable roads throughout the city, in effect enabling the North Philadelphia building boom.<sup>23</sup> The 2300 block of West Columbia remained the site of the Traction Company until 1895 (Fig. 18).

Following the demolition of the Traction Company buildings on the block, the site was subdivided and bisected by Nicholas Street.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the demolition of the Traction Company, the buildings along the corners of the block were also removed and replaced by block-long rowhouse developments fronting Columbia Avenue and both sides of Nicolas Street (Fig. 19). All three blocks were developed by Thomas P. Twibill, a prominent real estate developer with projects across Philadelphia.<sup>25</sup> The rows were designed by architect Harold Godwin and featured alternating iterations of an eclectic Victorian style with Romanesque and Flemish Revival details (Figs. 20-23).

Harold Godwin was an architect working in Philadelphia during the late nineteenth century. In 1886, he founded his architectural firm, Briean & Godwin, Architects and Engineers, with Mr. Josiah S. Briean in Philadelphia.<sup>26</sup> During their partnership, Godwin acted as a civil, mechanical and mining engineer while Briean was primarily responsible for the firm's design work. The firm was given a positive reception within *Illustrated Philadelphia: Its Wealth and Industries* for their attention to detail and securing owners within the best results within their budget. Godwin's engineering skills are specifically mentioned as enabling the firm to take on commissions for mill buildings and manufacturing plants.<sup>27</sup> When their business dissolved in 1890, Godwin maintained an individual practice designing residences, schools, and train depots in addition to the industrial commissions that had formerly been his specialty.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> William Baist, "Plate 19," Baist's Property Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Penna, Complete in One Volume (Philadelphia, 1888), <http://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/BST1888.Phila.026.Plate19>.

<sup>23</sup> "City Railways. The Traction Company to Lease the Market Street and Union Lines," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA, May 2, 1884).

<sup>24</sup> See 1901 Bromley Map.

<sup>25</sup> Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *University of Pennsylvania: Its History, Influence, Equipment and Characteristics*. Boston, R. Herndod and company, 1902, pp. 97-98.

<sup>26</sup> "Harold Godwin," Philadelphia Architects & Builders, accessed August 4, 2012, [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25832](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25832).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Like many Victorian-era speculative building projects, Godwin's design for these blocks of Columbia Avenue and Nicholas Street sought to establish architectural variety within an overall uniform design scheme by means of alternating and repeating design motifs. These speculative rowhouses adapted much of the same design philosophy as was found in the older brownstones and townhouses along North Broad designed by Willis G. Hale, Angus Wade and others who used various reinterpretations of historical forms and styles as a means of expressing their clients' individuality. Much of the ideology surrounding a building being the embodiment of the owner's social and moral values had ties to John Ruskin. Ruskin asserted that the house served as the most powerful expression of an individual's taste and character.<sup>29</sup> By establishing architectural variety and hierarchy within a row of essentially identical floor plans, Godwin was following the same logic in hopes of attracting status-minded, upwardly-mobile residents to these blocks—a feature common in much of North Philadelphia's late-nineteenth-century rowhouse developments.<sup>30</sup> As Michael Lewis writes in the Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form for the property, "In the hastily developed North Philadelphian neighborhoods of the 1880s and 1890s, with their upwardly mobile inhabitants, the eye-catching, idiosyncratic detail of houses such as these by Godwin, played an important representational role in communicating the past successes and future aspirations of their owners."<sup>31</sup>

An examination of 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue in the context of its immediate neighbors demonstrates this use of variety and hierarchy. The Cecil B. Moore Avenue and Nicholas Street rows all share a consistent material palate of Pompeian brick and terra cotta ornament, along with repeating design motifs like round-arched windows with needle-like keystones, gabled and stepped parapets, and projecting bays (Figs 21-22). However, the scale of the Cecil B. Moore row is clearly differentiated from that of the Nicholas Street rows. The former features three-story facades and a fenestration pattern that exaggerates the scale of the arcade-like ground floors designed for commercial use along the more trafficked Cecil B. Moore thoroughfare, while the later are more diminutive two-story structures befitting a residential sidestreet. Nevertheless, both rows share a consistent design logic: units with projecting bays are staggered in a regular pattern between flat-faced units. Units with bays consistently feature flat-

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<sup>29</sup> Orłowski, 300.

<sup>30</sup> George Thomas, "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form and National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Houses at 1907-1951 N. 32nd St.," March 1993, [https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ce\\_imagery/phmc\\_scans/H099895\\_01D.pdf](https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ce_imagery/phmc_scans/H099895_01D.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Michael Lewis, "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey For: 2336-2342.," August 8, 1985.

headed windows, while flat facades consistently feature round-arched windows. Along Nicholas Street, the bay units feature Dutch gable parapets, while the flat units feature ornate terra cotta cornices. Along Cecil B. Moore Avenue, units alternate between pedimented mansard dormers and crested terra cotta cornices, but maintain continuous second-floor belt courses across the facades.

While both the north and south side of Nicholas Street retain a high degree of integrity, the 2300 block of Cecil B. Moore has been highly altered and compromised (Fig. 23). Of the 22 units comprising the original row, only 11 remain standing (eight parcels are now occupied by the Cecil B. Moore Library and three are vacant lots). Of the surviving units, at least half have been significantly altered or have lost significant architectural features. In this context, the relative integrity of the Dox Thrash House at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue is noteworthy. The only major alteration was to the ground-floor storefront, which was reconfigured in 1929 but has itself maintained a high degree of integrity and accrued significance in its own right.

## **Conclusion**

The former Dox Thrash House at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, C, and J. It is associated with the life of Dox Thrash, an important African American artist active in Philadelphia from the 1920s to the 1950s. It is also a significant example of late Victorian speculative rowhouse development in North Philadelphia.



**Figure 11:** Dox Thrash photographed in 1945, one year after purchasing the home at 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Source: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., (via *Dox Thrash, An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*).





**Figure 12:** Various early design commissions, c. 1930. Source: *Dox Thrash, An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered.*



**Figure 13:** *Nude*, c. 1938-39, carborundum mezzotint, collection of John Warren, Philadelphia. Source: *Dox Thrash, An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered.*



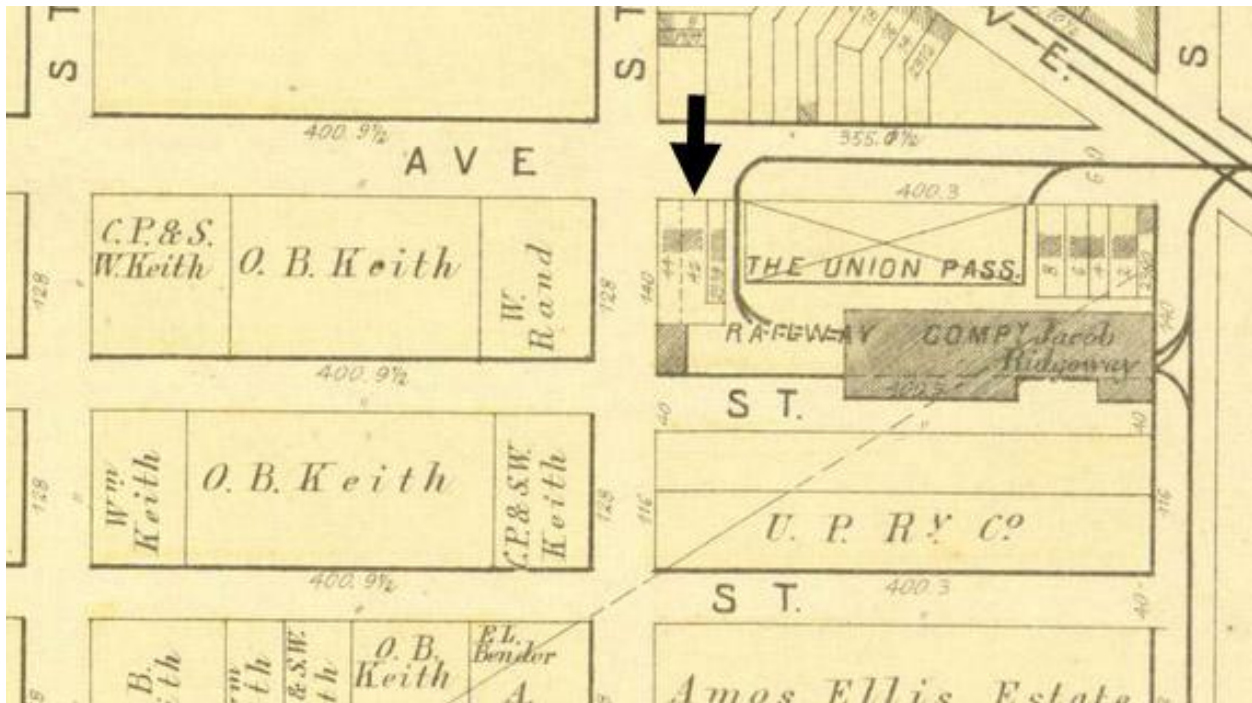


**Figure 14:** *Twenty-Fourth and Ridge Avenue*, c. 1937-39, etching, Federal Works Agency, Works Projects Administration, on deposit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Source: *Dox Thrash, An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*.

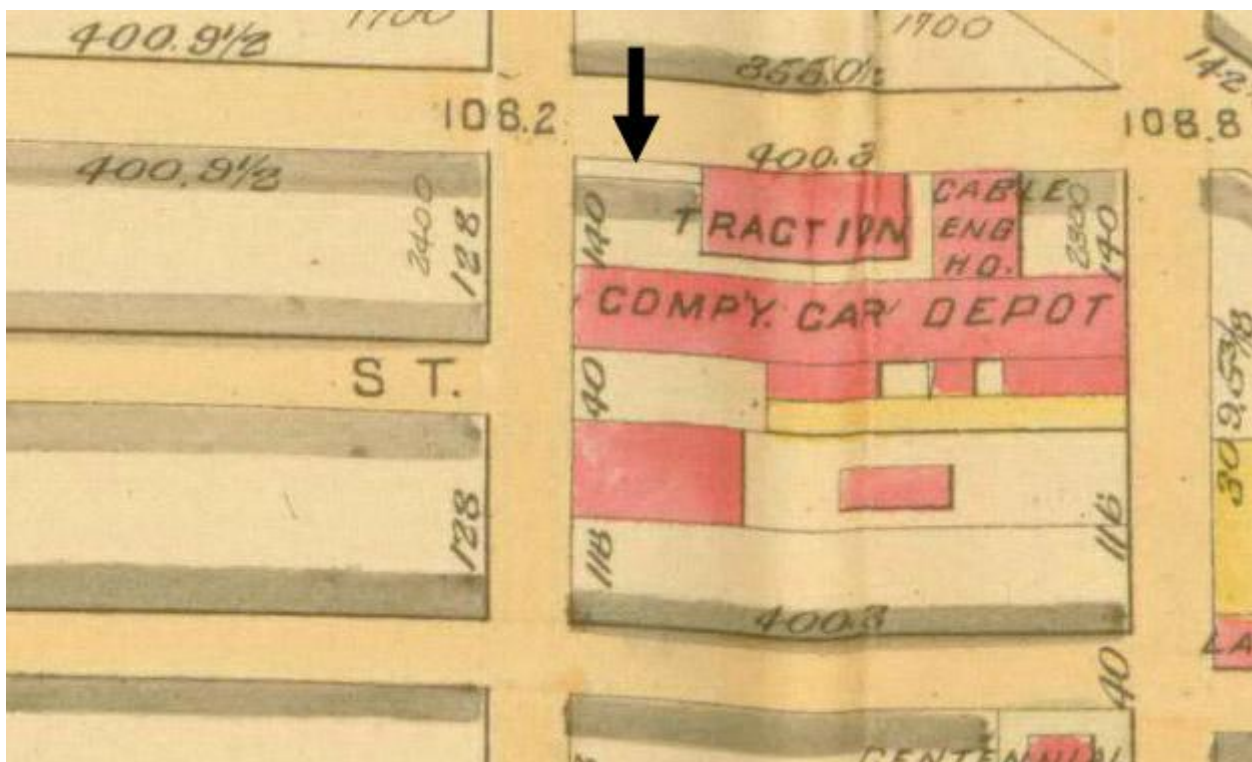




**Figure 15:** Dox Thrash mural at 2442 Cecil B. Moore Avenue.



**Figure 16:** G.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia*, “Plate Y,” Vol. 6, Ward 2 Through 20, 29, and 31 (Philadelphia, PA, 1875). Arrow points to 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue.



**Figure 17:** Baist's *Property Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, Plate 19, 1888. Note rowhouse development of surrounding blocks.



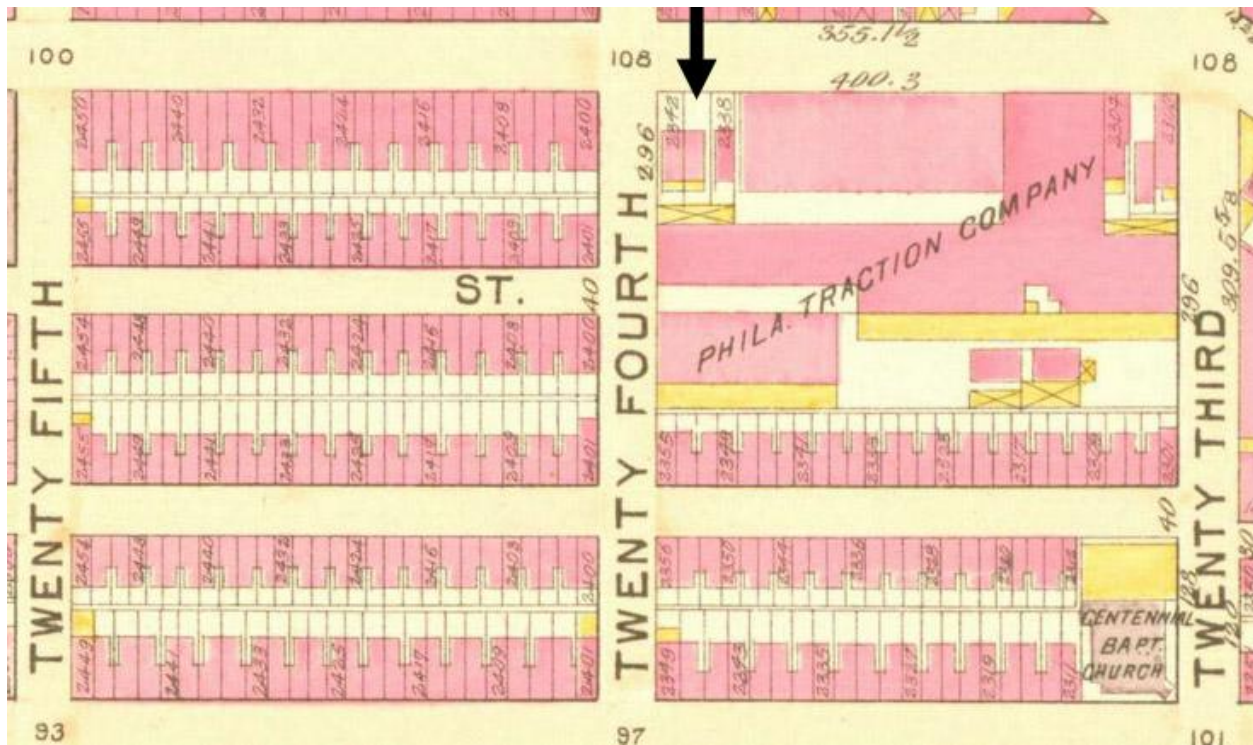


Figure 18: G. W. Bromley & Company, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, Plate 18, 1895.

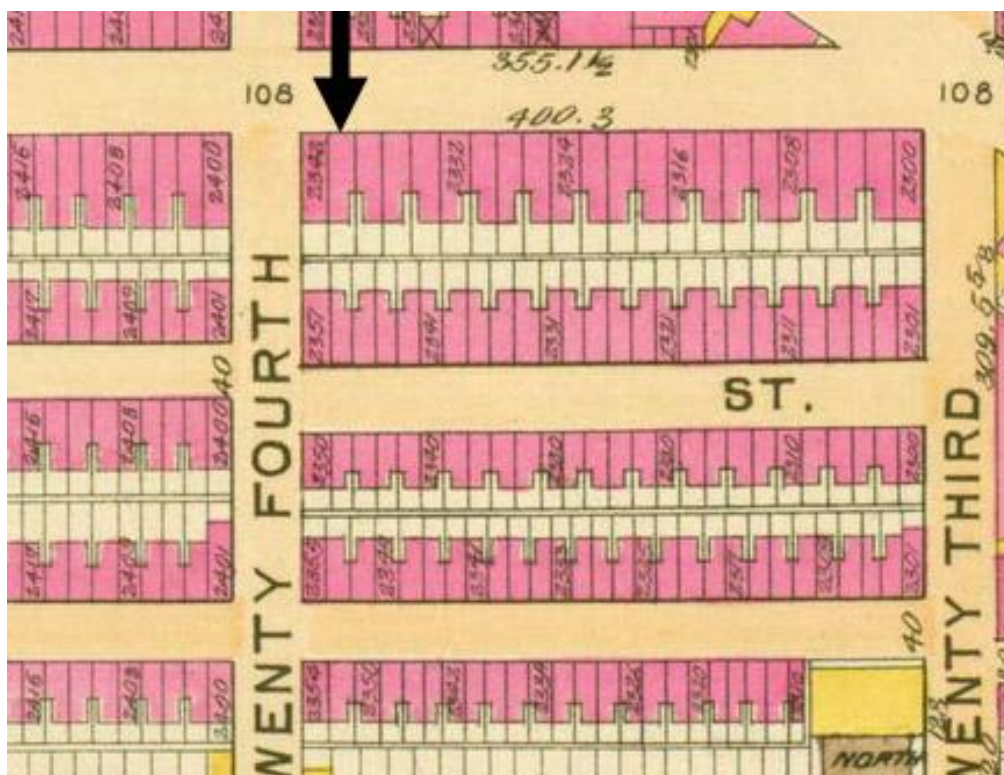
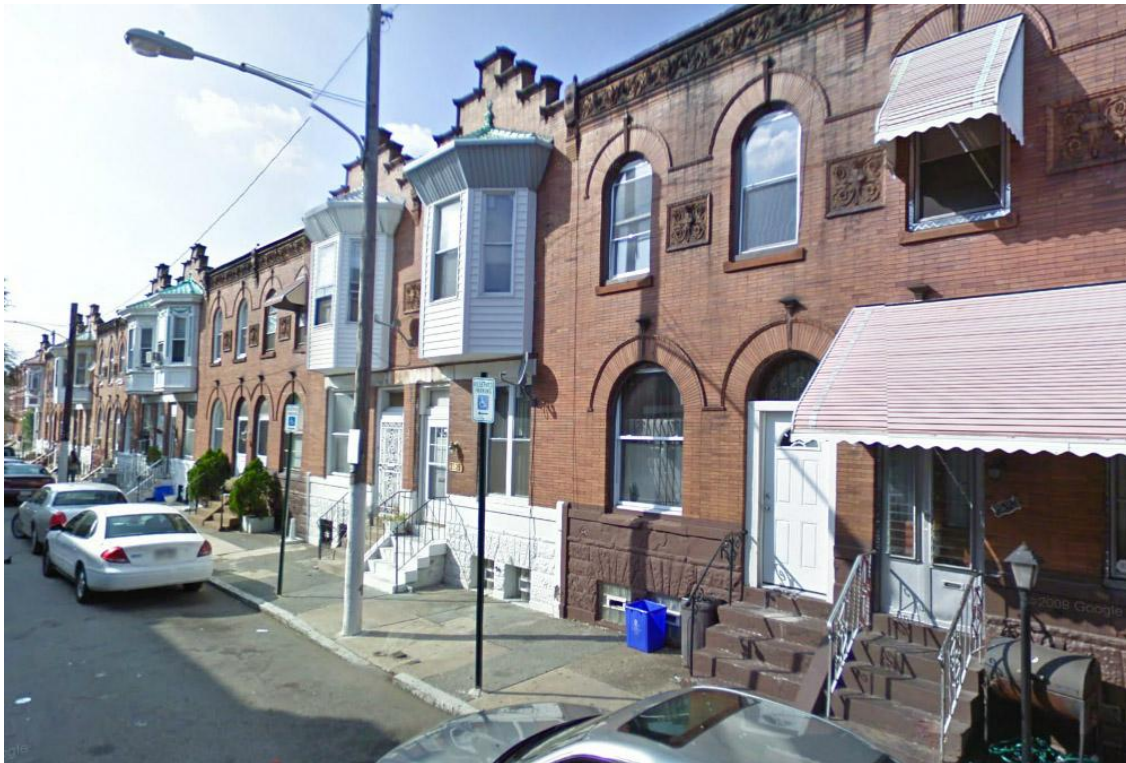


Figure 19: G. W. Bromley & Company, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, Plate 18, 1901.





**Figure 20:** Current aerial view to the south of the 2300 blocks of Cecil B. Moore Avenue (bottom) and Nicholas Street (top). Arrow points to 2340 Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Note that Cecil B. Moore Library now occupies many of the original rowhouse plots.



**Figure 21:** Typical configuration of Nicholas Street rowhouses.



**Figure 22:** Cecil B. Moore Avenue at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, looking southwest. Note similarity of round-arched window details to Nicholas Street row.



**Figure 23:** Cecil B. Moore Avenue, looking southeast towards 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Note adverse alterations to original rowhouse features.



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