

TYJESKI TILE CO.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

NEWSLETTER, JANUARY - APRIL 2020

UPCOMING EVENTS

All events, tours, lectures, workshops, are currently postponed indefinitely.

Please stay safe and healthy! Thank you.

STUDIO SNAPSHOT



Working on a donation to the Northshore Fire Dept. in Shorewood, Wisconsin. Design is inspired by ones at the Shorewood High School. Tile is intended for the renovation of the historic Henry Hengels-designed firehouse.

FEATURED BUILDING



Gorgeous corner building in the westside of Milwaukee looks like something that belongs in the Mediterranean. Constructed in 1925 with the designs of Herbert Tullgren, located at North & 60th.

BLOG POSTS

Double blog post! And more to come.

Articles will be posted more frequently during 2020. These are for your entertainment and leisure. Please enjoy these for what they are, and in case you are inspired to explore the streets on a much needed walk, please practice safety with face coverings and social distancing. Thank you.

[Blog one:](#) Featured building (above) designed by Herbert Tullgren in Milwaukee. It exhibits the more glazes than any other building in Wisconsin.

[Blog two:](#) A reflection on an ornamental design from Midland Terra Cotta and its influence in Wisconsin.





TILE & TERRA COTTA NEWS: TULLGREN'S MASTERPIECE OF GLAZE TERRA COTTA

The buildings Herbert Tullgren designed significantly shape the experience of architectural ornament in Milwaukee. While his father, Martin, employed concrete for ornament, Herbert primarily used architectural terra cotta. Some of his most recognized works featured terra cotta and remain intact today. His major landmark downtown was a two-story shop for George Watts (1925). An addition he designed for the Hotel Shorecrest (1929) and a Modern/Art Deco apartment building known as the Hathaway (1930) added elegance to the lakefront skyline. And his most valued building of artistic expression and playful craft was the Bertelson (1927) on the East Side.

Tullgren was not shy about exploiting the advantages of terra cotta. He designed with architectural terra cotta more than any other architect in Wisconsin. In Milwaukee County he had over thirty buildings erected with the product, as well as significant structures in Madison, Waukesha, Manitowoc, and Duluth. While many of these graceful works are extant, unfortunately several have been lost to the wrecking ball. Hence, it is important to recognize Tullgren's buildings and his influence on the Milwaukee built-environment.

The business block likely built as an investment property for Mr. Tullgren is an essential building to give recognition. The colors and fanciful ornament may captivate your attention as you walk by, but there is history here that may not be apparent unless you know about it. Passing by this busy intersection on the westside, the grand

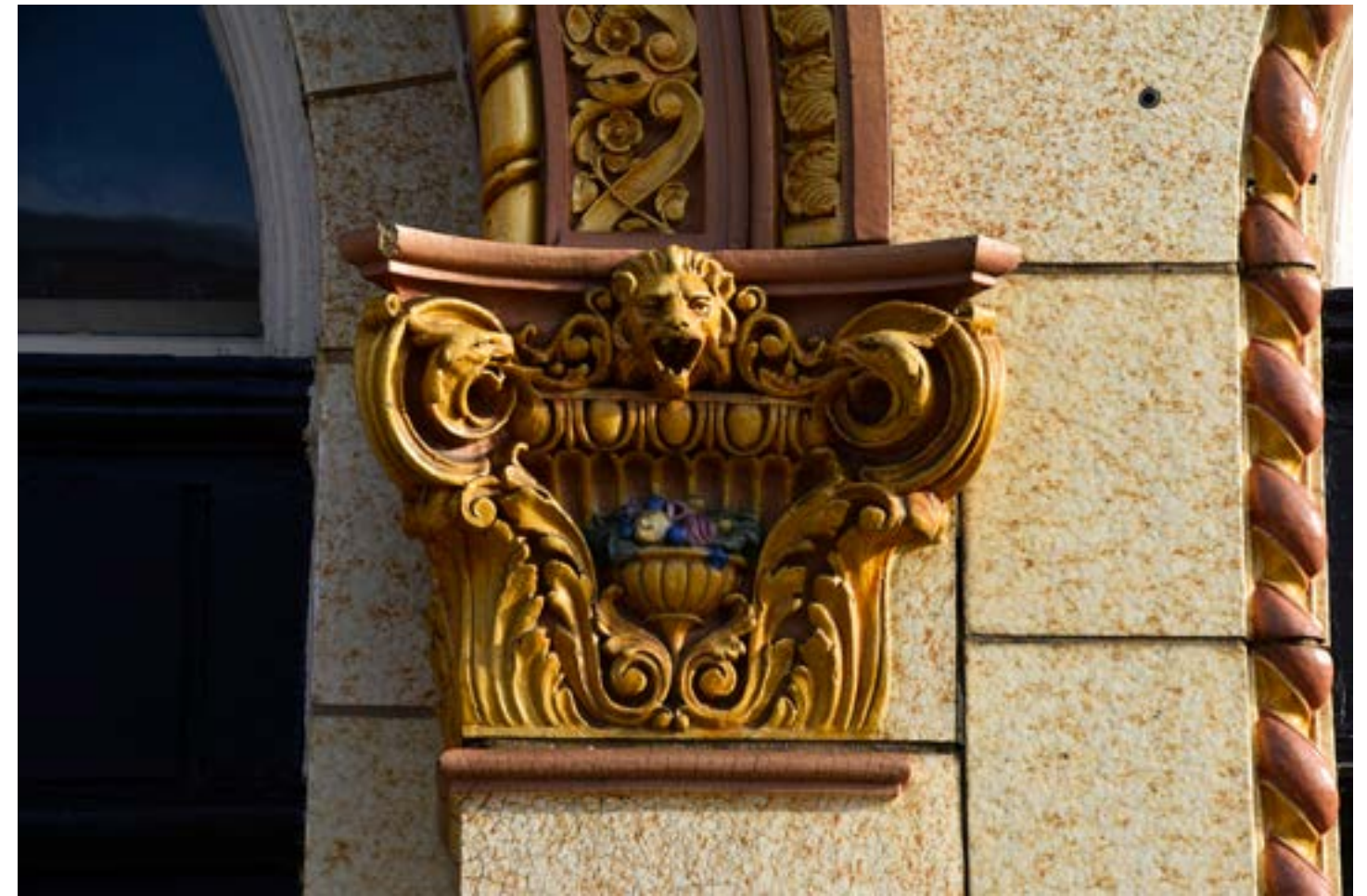
arches and elaborate parapet will strike you. Despite being tucked behind parked cars, a bus stop, and trees, the bright glazes and ornament continue to stand out.

The structure was erected in 1925. The American Terra Cotta and Ceramic Company of Crystal Lake, Illinois, manufactured the terra cotta. Their work order for the project was 3589 (according to the Statler Gilfillen index). Interestingly, the Milwaukee Sentinel stated on November 25, 1924, that bids were being taken for a five-story building in this location. What happened to those mystery "stories?"

Ornamental motifs make Tullgren's terra-cotta



A "pottery building" that exhibits fancy ornament and exceptional craft from 1925.



buildings so captivating. Common design elements by the architect, including floral medallions, urns, elaborate arches, and fantastic capitals such as the one depicted above appear on the façade. Who would imagine a lion battling two fire-breathing dragons over a basket of flowers? It cannot be said necessarily that it was Tullgren's imagination. It could have been the playful mind of a terra-cotta craftsman. Either way, it is here in Milwaukee and we can admire it on the street today.

While the motifs really make an adventure out of exploring Tullgren's facades, this building in particular

stands out because of the range of glazes it features. In fact, no other building in Wisconsin features as many glazes as this one does. In total, there are 19 unique glazes on this facade. They include semi-transparent golden amber and yellow-orange glazes, opaque and glossy black glazes, satin blues, pinks, purples, beiges, greens and copper, as well as a pulsichrome surface with buff and copper hues.

The range of glazes on this building make its preservation even more important. Overall, the building remains intact and occupied. Like mentioned in a caption, the urns are missing from the parapets. And the condi-



Superficial defects occurring along the base. On the right, a detail of two glazes on the building.

tion of the surfaces are good too. There are some defects along the base units, including some chipping of the glaze and a crack. Unfortunately, the entire base units along the north elevation have been painted. This is really tragic and does not improve the building's appearance. There could have been a more careful, isolated application of paint such as seen on the Strong Building in Beloit. Thankfully, since these are vitrified glazed units, the paint can easily be removed with some scrubbing. Otherwise, the rest of the façade has been really well preserved. Below shows a detail of the base from 2014, which clearly shows surface damage and a crack. Another detail shows the two glazes with interesting colors and textures.

The variety of glazes represented on this façade makes the business block for Mr. Tullgren his glazed masterpiece. However, whether you live on the west, north, east, or south side of Milwaukee, you can find one his terra-cotta gems gracing the street. When libraries reopen, a full list of Tullgren's terra-cotta buildings are found in my book on *Architectural Terra Cotta of Milwaukee County*. In the meantime, you can use the University of Minnesota Anderson Library, Northwest Architectural Archives as a resource for exploring Tullgren. [Click here to see the photographic collection, beginning with this building.](#) You will see other, stunning, historic photographs of his work taken for the American Terra Cotta & Ceramic Company. Several of these structures, such as Royal Loop Hotel, Belmont Hotel, and the Bills Block, are no longer standing. You can also use the [Wisconsin Historical Society](#) to look up specific property records.