

(Former) DELLA ROBBIA BAR (aka THE "CRYPT," NOW FIORI RESTAURANT), in the (former) VANDERBILT HOTEL, GROUND FLOOR INTERIOR consisting of the entrance vestibule, front dining room, rear dining room, and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, piers, Guastavino tiled ceiling vaults, and architectural terra cotta manufactured by Rookwood Pottery, 4 Park Avenue, Manhattan. Built 1910-13; Warren & Wetmore, architects. R. Guastavino Company, vault construction. Rookwood Pottery Company, architectural terra cotta.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 863, Lot 44.

On December 8, 1992, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Vanderbilt Hotel, Della Robbia Bar (The Crypt) GROUND FLOOR INTERIOR, consisting of the entrance vestibule, front dining room, rear dining room, and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to piers, Guastavino ceiling vaults, and Rookwood ceiling tiles; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty-three witnesses spoke in favor of designation and no witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received no letters opposed to designation, approximately seventy-five letters in favor of designation (including one from the local Community Board and others from around the country and abroad), and one petition with the signatures of over 1,000 people in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

Built in 1910-13, the (former) Della Robbia Bar, named after the Italian family most closely associated with ceramic art, is a rare survivor of the once-fashionable terra-cotta hotel interior. It exhibits architecturally significant Guastavino vaults featuring colorful, glazed tiles and terra cotta manufactured by the renowned Rookwood Pottery Company. The surviving space comprises the entire original Bar (now the front dining room) and two adjacent gallery bays (now the rear dining room) of the similarly decorated Della Robbia Grill, otherwise destroyed. Seemingly Rookwood's largest interior commission, the Della Robbia Grill and Bar were typical of the spacious public interiors incorporated into hotels built during the decade before World War I; nationally, very few of these spaces survive and only one or two can compete with the Della Robbia Bar, its grotto-like spatial quality and delicate surface finish resulting from the ceramic-embellished vaults. The Grill and Bar occupied much of the base of the stately Vanderbilt Hotel, designed by the prominent partnership of Warren & Wetmore, a firm remembered for its many hotel designs and particularly for its contributions to the Vanderbilt family's Terminal City redevelopment of the East Side of Manhattan. The client of the Vanderbilt Hotel was Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, sportsman, socialite, and one of the world's richest men, who had grown up in a dwelling previously on the site and occupied the hotel's luxurious roof-top apartment until his death upon the *Lusitania*. The Vanderbilt family and its railroad interests are inseparable from the history of the surrounding neighborhood of Murray Hill.

History of the Site¹

Murray Hill takes its name from the wealthy Quaker merchant and shipowner John Murray, who in the mid-eighteenth century built on his large estate a new home (near what is now the intersection of Park Avenue and East 37th Street) for himself and his new wife, Mary Lindley. At that time the area, which was actively farmed, was a considerable distance north of the growing city of New York. The household earned an international reputation for its aristocratic hospitality -- it is written that the country's first fancy dress ball was held there -- but today it is better remembered as the location from which Mrs. Murray knowingly detained British General Howe and his troops during their pursuit of retreating Continental Army forces, allowing the patriots to escape at a critical moment of the Revolutionary War. The ever-northward growth of New York City eventually reached the vicinity and the Murray family began selling off its property in the 1830s; the deeds included covenants restricting uses to "dwellings, private stables, and churches."

The urban development of Murray Hill is linked to the New York & Harlem Railway and that company's eventual owners, the Vanderbilt family. Horse-drawn cars began running along Fourth Avenue from 14th Street to the Harlem River in the early 1830s and were replaced by steam locomotives before the end of the decade. The street was graded accordingly and hills were tunneled through, including an open-cut tunnel through Murray Hill, which was entered south of East 34th Street. In the 1860s "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt took control of the railroad and then consolidated it with his extensive network of railroad companies which converged on his newly-built Grand Central Depot (1869-71) at East 42nd Street. The Vanderbilt family, which owned a considerable amount of property in the adjacent area, was among the more prominent residents of fashionable Murray Hill. That neighborhood, by the late 1870s, had become a completely developed enclave of respectable upper-middle-class rowhouses, a few clusters of private stables, and, on several corner sites, large churches -- all in keeping with Murray's restrictions. The Vanderbilts' property in the area included the eastern portion of the block between East 33rd and East 34th streets, west of Fourth Avenue, the future site of the Vanderbilt Hotel. The "Commodore's" son, railroad executive William H. Vanderbilt, acquired that site in 1864 and, beginning in 1867, divided it among several

parties, including his son Cornelius Vanderbilt II, who then built a dwelling at 72 East 34th Street (1867-68) and lived there with his family until 1880.

In 1880 the Cornelius Vanderbilt family migrated uptown like many well-to-do households. Despite the valiant efforts of millionaires J. Pierpont Morgan and George Baker to protect the existing character of their Murray Hill neighborhood, during the period from 1880 to 1910 the area became increasingly urbanized, with many elegant rowhouses and stables replaced by office buildings, hotels, retail stores (particularly B. Altman Dry Goods and J. McCutcheon & Company), the 71st Regiment Armory, and prestigious clubs (Knickerbocker, Colony, and Princeton among others). By the end of this period of transformation, Cornelius's son, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, had acquired the full site for his future hotel, completing his goal only in 1907. In 1907 and 1908 agreements were reached among many landholders in the neighborhood to release the restrictive nineteenth-century covenants. By that time, Fourth Avenue north of East 34th Street had become known as Park Avenue; in 1924 the blocks between East 32nd and East 34th streets were also renamed Park Avenue (see fig. 1).

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt²

During the last years of the nineteenth century, the enormously wealthy Vanderbilt family was headed by the "Commodore's" diligent grandson, Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1843-1899), a capable capitalist and noted philanthropist. Cornelius married a fellow Sunday school teacher, Alice Claypoole Gwynne, and reared a large family unostentatiously at No. 72 East 34th Street until a rivalry with their sister-in-law, Alva Smith Vanderbilt, forced Cornelius and, especially, Alice into showy manifestations of their superior wealth and standing. They hired two of the country's most distinguished architects to design for them two enormous residences befitting the head of the richest family in the world: a mansion at Fifth Avenue and West 57th Street (1882-93, George B. Post), now demolished, and "The Breakers" (1892-95, Richard Morris Hunt) at the highly fashionable community of Newport, R.I.

Born and raised in these circumstances was their third son, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt (1877-1915), who attended the Cutler School in New York, St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H., and Yale University, where he earned an A.B. in 1899. When his father died later that year, Alfred was on a grand round-the-world tour; returning

home, he discovered that he had been made head of the family (instead of his older but ostracized brother, Cornelius III) and thus received the bulk of his father's estate, estimated to be worth between \$70 million and \$100 million. Alfred suddenly was the richest young man in America.

Not especially devoted to his family's business interests, Alfred became a professional horseman, directing horse show associations in this country and in London. At his Oakland Farm estate in Rhode Island he raised thoroughbreds and was an avid competitor in the sport of coaching (racing between two points in a hansom coach with fresh teams of horses waiting at various stops). He also built an estate called Sagamore Lodge on a 1500-acre site around Sagamore Lake in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. In 1901 Alfred married a childhood friend, heiress Ellen Tuck French, and they soon had one son. It was rumored that Alfred, known as "the handsome Vanderbilt," consorted with several society women, and his alleged association with an actress, the wife of a Cuban diplomat, led his wife to divorce him in 1908, after which she took their son to live temporarily in the exclusive community of Tuxedo Park, New York.

In November, 1907, the *Real Estate Record & Guide*³ reported Alfred's decision to erect a twenty-one-story hotel on the Murray Hill site which had been divided up by his grandfather and had held his family's former home. Though contemporary newspaper accounts indicate Alfred spent much time abroad in connection with his sporting interests, one source claims that he "took a personal interest in the construction and furnishing" of the hotel.⁴ Meanwhile, his socially active life included the formal opening of his new residence at No. 11 East 62nd Street (built for an aunt, Margaret Louisa Vanderbilt Shepard, and later occupied by a cousin, Edith Shepard Fabbri) and his surreptitious courtship of and private wedding, in 1911, to Margaret Emerson McKim. A horse enthusiast, socialite, and daughter of a Baltimore drug clerk who earned a fortune by patenting and manufacturing the headache remedy Bromo-Seltzer, she had recently endured her own scandalous and well-publicized divorce, from the former surgeon on the crew of her father's yacht. Alfred and Margaret occupied a two-story, fifteen-room apartment of incomparable luxury located atop their recently-completed Vanderbilt Hotel. They frequently crossed the Atlantic together, until the birth of their two sons. Thus Alfred was without his family when in 1915 he sailed, *en route* to assist the British Red Cross, on the

Lusitania, which was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. Among the many fatalities of that disaster, Alfred was reported by eye-witnesses as having acted with great poise and bravery. He left behind three sons: (by his first wife) William Henry Vanderbilt III, a future banker and governor of Rhode Island; and (by his second wife) Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt II, whose three own surviving sons would be the only members of the vast sixth generation of the "Commodore's" descendants to carry on the family surname,⁵ and George Washington Vanderbilt III, a future explorer and big-game hunter.

Warren & Wetmore and the development of the new hotel form⁶

To design his new hotel, Vanderbilt hired the firm of Warren & Wetmore, prominent in New York City during the early decades of the twentieth century. Charles D. Wetmore (1867-1941), an alumnus of Harvard Law School who had also studied architecture, designed three dormitory buildings on the Harvard campus before devoting his full attention to the law. Wetmore met his future partner, Whitney Warren (1864-1943), when he consulted with him concerning the design of his own house. Warren, educated at the School of Mines of Columbia College and the *École des Beaux-Arts* and employed by McKim, Mead & White, was impressed by Wetmore's architectural ability and convinced him to leave law. The firm of Warren & Wetmore was formed in 1898; it seems Wetmore became the legal and financial specialist within the partnership, while Warren was the principal designer.

Among Warren & Wetmore's early commissions were the New York Yacht Club (1899) and the James A. and Florence Sloane Burden House (1902-05), both designated New York City Landmarks. The office developed a successful formula that it employed for its many luxurious hotel and apartment house designs: tall masonry blocks with three or four stories at the top and bottom articulated in a restrained classical vocabulary. Influenced by the work of British neo-Classical architect, Robert Adam, the firm's design for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel (1910, demolished) established an influential standard, called "Ritz Hotel Adam," characterized by delicate reliefs set against broad, smooth surfaces. Warren's family ties (he was a cousin of Alfred Vanderbilt) and his own secure social footing made the firm a favorite of New York's rich and socially prominent, including the Goeleys, Goulds, and Vanderbilts. From the latter, the firm received a number of significant commissions related to that

family's Terminal City project on Manhattan's East Side, including Grand Central Terminal itself (1903-13, in collaboration with Reed & Stem); the Hotel Belmont (1906, demolished), which was the first and most lavish hotel in the newly-developing area around the terminal; the Vanderbilt Hotel (1910-13); the Biltmore Hotel (1912-14, also in collaboration with Reed & Stem, now refaced); the Commodore Hotel (1918-20, now altered as the Grand Hyatt Hotel); and the Ambassador Residence Hotel (1921, demolished). Warren & Wetmore also received commissions for hotels in Atlantic City; Newport, Rhode Island; Honolulu; and Bermuda. In its hotel interiors, the firm accommodated the expanding social demands of well-to-do Americans by providing vast halls for promenading, lounging, and public dining. Among the most notable spaces in the firm's hotels were the elegant elliptical restaurant of the Ritz-Carlton and the cavernous Della Robbia Grill and Bar of the Vanderbilt Hotel.

The firm's later work is represented in the Stewart & Company Store (1929-30), the New York Central Building (1929), and the reconstruction of the Louvain Library (1920) in Belgium.⁷

The construction and design of the Vanderbilt Hotel and the Della Robbia Restaurant⁸

During the planning stages of the Vanderbilt Hotel, the *Real Estate Record & Guide* published conflicting reports about the new building, stating that it would be either an office-and-loft structure or a hotel, and, if the latter, it would be leased by the City Leasing Company and operated by the Ritz-Carlton Syndicate. In November, 1907, the firm of Warren & Wetmore submitted a New Building Application for a twenty-one-story office-and-loft building for the site; however, it was superseded in December, 1908, by an application for a nineteen-story hotel, estimated to cost \$2 million. The structure was erected by the William L. Crow Company between March, 1910, and March, 1913, with twenty-two stories, three full basements, and a partial fourth basement. The steel frame and concrete-arch floors rendered the building "fire proof," the most up-to-date mechanical systems were incorporated,⁹ and respected designers and craftspeople were employed to finish the interiors.¹⁰

The hotel was conceived and advertised as "An Hotel of distinction with moderate charges."¹¹ Overlooking the neighborhood's broadest avenue and rowhouse-lined side streets, the hotel was convenient to shopping, theaters,

Grand Central Terminal, Pennsylvania Station, and the subway. Tastefully sheathed in gray brick and delicate terra cotta, its crown outlined by electric lights, the building's bulk was divided into an upper section of 600 hotel rooms with private baths, organized around two light courts facing Park Avenue, and a lower section of public spaces and services, grouped within the highly ornate base of the building.¹² This lower zone of the hotel housed a spacious lobby, a Palm Garden and Tea Room, an exotic Japanese (sometimes called Chinese) Buffet, shops and services, and the Della Robbia Restaurant, divided into a Grill Room and a Bar, the latter commonly called the "Crypt" (see figs. 3 and 4).

The spatial relationship between the Grill Room and the Bar was complicated. A revolving door, located in the Park Avenue facade, fourth bay from the building's southeast corner, led to a corridor, from which one could descend three steps into the Bar (located above the basement kitchen), or proceed down a grand staircase into the main, double-height section of the basement-level Grill Room (see figs. 5 and 6), or continue to the rear of the corridor and ascend three steps to the gallery of the Grill Room. The Grill Room also had a stairhall leading to the main-floor lobby, while the Bar could be entered through a revolving door on the East 33rd Street side of the hotel.

The most striking features of the design of the Della Robbia Restaurant were its ceramic-tile finish and its thin-shell Guastavino vaults (see figs. 7, 12, and 13).¹³ On December 28, 1910, the R. Guastavino Company received from Rookwood Pottery sketches and photographs of the ceramic designs meant for the Guastavino vaults of the restaurant. On that same day drawings were made to illustrate how the elements would be assembled into bands. The final design for the restaurant was composed of a variety of shapes and colors. Arches were faced in a blue background, against which ivory-colored bands of foliated patterns framed flowers of two types,¹⁴ one of which featured grotesque heads; borders of rectangular blue tiles were edged in spindle moldings. Vaults were edged with a field of blue and aqua tiles superimposed with an outer border of ivory rope molding and an inner band of yellow, green, and red panels alternating with ivory rosettes. Six distinct rosette types were employed. The dramatic spatial effect of multiple vaults, trimmed in delicate, colorful terra-cotta patterns, and the glistening surface of salt-glazed tiles decorated with a raised interlocking key pattern and laid in a herringbone fashion (typical of the Guastavino

Company's work) were among the features which attracted customers to the Della Robbia Grill Room and Bar. The design of the Della Robbia Restaurant was praised in contemporary journals: "an example of the most successful work of this kind that has been accomplished by American potters"¹⁵; it balanced texture and color, avoided gaudiness, and accommodated ventilation registers into the overall decorative scheme.¹⁶

Architectural terra-cotta in New York¹⁷

Terra cotta, meaning "baked earth," is a term that has been used loosely since ancient Roman times to refer to glazed or unglazed ceramic ware intended primarily for architectural elements, large statuary, garden ornaments, and furniture. Employed in ancient Greece, Italy, and Egypt, the architectural use of the material was abandoned after the Fall of Rome and not revived in Europe until the fourteenth century. In fifteenth-century Italy, when polychrome glazing techniques were developed, clay worker Luca della Robbia became the medium's most celebrated artist; it is after him that the Vanderbilt's Della Robbia Grill and Bar were named. Brilliantly colored, glazed terra cotta came to be known as "faience" after the Italian town of Faenza. (Though still called faience in Britain, common American usage is simply "architectural terra cotta." For the purposes of this report, ceramic tile is a thin, flat product attached to a surface without an anchor; whereas, terra cotta refers to a thicker, more sculpted object secured to a surface with an anchor.) At first Americans imported ornamental tiles from Europe, but by about 1845 wall and paving tiles were being made in Philadelphia, and soon thereafter ceramic tile and architectural terra cotta were being produced in New York City and nearby New Jersey.

During the 1850s prominent New York architects Richard Upjohn and James Renwick, Jr., began experimenting with terra-cotta elements on the exteriors of buildings, but were hampered by the unreliable manufacture of the material and by opposition from stonecutters and masons.¹⁸ Renewed interest in terra cotta among New York builders in the last quarter of the century occurred as the public became increasingly tolerant of the material, as American manufacturers made it more available and less expensive, and as concerns increased about fireproofing buildings. Among New York's best-known terra-cotta-clad buildings which survive from that era are the Long Island (now Brooklyn) Historical Society Building (1878-81, George B. Post), the Bayard-Condict Building

(1897-99, Louis H. Sullivan with Lyndon P. Smith), and the New York Architectural Terra-Cotta Company Building (1892, Francis H. Kimball) in Long Island City, all designated Landmarks, and the Potter Building (1883-84, N.G. Starkweather).¹⁹

The early years of the twentieth century brought about significant changes in the terra-cotta industry. The popularity of the material continued to rise; between 1900 and 1912 its production quadrupled. The increased presence and improved technologies of the tile, terra-cotta, and pottery industries during this period promoted polychromatic glazed terra cotta which was popularized in New York by such projects as the Madison Square Presbyterian Church (1903-06, McKim, Mead & White, now demolished), as well as the Gainsborough Studios (1907-08, Charles W. Buckham) and the Woolworth Building (1910-13, Cass Gilbert), both designated Landmarks. Ceramic surfaces also adorned interior spaces, the best known being the elaborately finished subway stations (begun in 1903) of the IRT Subway system.

In keeping with architectural trends of the 1910s, designers began using tiles to create colorfully sumptuous (and easily cleaned) public interiors, many of which were in hotels. Among the most highly regarded interiors were several which are now demolished: the Norse Room of the Fort Pitt Hotel (Janssen & Abbott) in Pittsburgh, the College Inn of the Hotel Sherman (Holabird & Roche) in Chicago, and the Tea-room (A.B. LeBoutillier) at the Chicago & Northwestern Station in Chicago. Other highly regarded installations have been disassembled and largely destroyed: the Grand Café of the Hotel Sinton (F.M. Andrews & Co.) in Cincinnati, and the Marine Grill Room of the Hotel McAlpin (F.M. Andrews & Co.) in New York. A notable survivor is the Rathskeller of the Seelbach Hotel (F.M. Andrews & Co.) in Louisville, Kentucky. It was during this era that Warren & Wetmore designed the Vanderbilt Hotel with its ceramic-covered Della Robbia Restaurant and notable exterior terra-cotta trim at the building's crown (supplied by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company) and base (the impressive arched window surrounds at the lower facade, manufactured by the Hartford Faience Company, have been removed). The collaboration of three primary clay companies -- Rookwood, Hartford Faience, and New York Architectural Terra Cotta -- on a single building project was highly unusual.

Rookwood Pottery²⁰

The Rookwood Pottery Company was founded in Cincinnati by Maria Longworth Nichols (1849-1932), granddaughter of art patron Nicholas Longworth and daughter of Joseph Longworth, founder of the Cincinnati Academy of Fine Arts. In the 1870s Cincinnati, an industrial and commercial hub which had been bypassed by the railroads, was on the verge of decline. However, the city was transformed into a cultural capital of the American "West" through the efforts of people like Maria and her first husband, Col. George Ward Nichols. He was an early and vocal advocate of an indigenous American decorative art, founded on nature and applied to manufacturing. In 1880, with limited experience as a pottery decorator, Maria established her own workshop, its name, "Rookwood," inspired partly by her childhood home and partly by the name of the prominent china manufacturer, Wedgwood. Relying on American clay, American subjects, and, for the most part, American artists -- decorators trained locally, the majority of them women -- she began to produce aesthetically pleasing objects of high quality (each piece was unique) at a reasonable cost. Her undertaking became a quick and nationally significant success. Along with other, less revolutionary potteries, Rookwood made Cincinnati the country's center of art pottery production and the company began winning internationally prestigious awards before the close of the 1880s.²¹ In 1890 the founder transferred ownership to a general business manager, William Watts Taylor, a cotton broker who guided Rookwood to artistic and technical preeminence, and in 1892 the pottery moved into its now-famous neo-Tudor facilities on Cincinnati's Mount Adams.²²

In 1902, during its so-called "Craftsman Period" (roughly 1900 to 1915, and named after Gustav Stickley's periodical), Rookwood complemented the production of art pottery with the design and manufacture of decorative tiles and architectural terra cotta ("faience"), set in molds and processed by hand. These elements were used to create panels -- flat or in relief, for the assembly of mantels, drinking fountains, and tablets -- as well as to compose architectural fields or trim. Much of the architectural terra cotta was produced in several matte glaze colors and was designed to complement plain tiles, though it could be used with stone, brick, or stucco. The Architectural Faience Department was overseen beginning in 1904 by William Purcell McDonald, who was among the very few employees sent on a

European study tour (for seven weeks in 1898); since he remained a designer and administrator in the company until 1931, McDonald could have had some hand in the designs used for the interiors of the Della Robbia Grill and Bar. The company's first catalogue of architectural terra cotta appeared in 1907, initiating the period (1907-13) during which the department had its highest sales. Though originally limited to luxury retail stores and well-to-do homes, Rookwood's designs were becoming available to middle-class Americans who could see Rookwood products in public interiors such as the Della Robbia Restaurant or could purchase art pottery through the new mail-order arrangement.

During the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, Rookwood architectural terra cotta was the rage. In New York, Rookwood supplied decorative pieces for six subway stations, though only the Fulton Street/Broadway Station (1905, Heins & LaFarge) remains largely intact²³; lunettes over the track entrances from the lower level at Grand Central Terminal (1903-13, Warren & Wetmore in collaboration with Reed & Stem); faience for four stations of the Hudson and Manhattan Tubes (1908-09, now PATH), two of which have been closed and the other two stripped of Rookwood elements²⁴; exterior tiles for the former 41st Precinct Police Station (1904-06, Stoughton & Stoughton), a designated Landmark on Mosholu Parkway in the Bronx; terra-cotta fountains for the Hotel Prince George (1912, Howard Greenley) on East 28th Street and for the Lord & Taylor Department Store (1914, Starrett & Van Vleck) on Fifth Avenue²⁵; wainscot in the Café/Palm Room of the Hotel Devon (1903-05, Israels & Harder), now demolished, at West 55th Street; main corridor paneling, now stripped, at the West Street Building (1905-07, Cass Gilbert); mural panels, walls, and floors of the Café Savarin²⁶ (level now inaccessible) at the Equitable Building (1915, Ernest R. Graham); and the interiors of the Della Robbia Grill and Bar. Rookwood's products were so well appreciated at the time of these projects that the Newark Museum mounted an exhibition of them in 1910.²⁷ Following the subway commission, the company opened an office in New York which must have facilitated the use of Rookwood in the projects just mentioned.

Rookwood's artists continued to participate in fashionable trends by turning to new shapes and glazes during their "Modern Period" (1915-50). Though the output of commercial pottery grew tremendously, almost obscuring the company's

foundations as an art pottery, fine, signed pieces and architectural terra cotta and tiles kept up with the latest styles. Nonetheless, following 1913 the sale of architectural terra cotta continued to decline, accelerated by the Great Depression and changing aesthetic preferences. The Architectural Faience Department remained in operation until 1936. Following World War II, only the company's florist crockery retained its earlier popularity. Rookwood effectively ended its art pottery production on its seventieth anniversary in 1950, when it introduced a new line of colors on unsigned commercial forms. Manufacturing at the Mount Adams building ceased in 1960, and though some work continued in Mississippi, all production ended in 1967.

The Guastavino vaults²⁸

The vaulting of the Della Robbia Restaurant is a significant example of a construction technique associated with the father-and-son team of Rafael Guastavino y Moreno and Rafael Guastavino y Esposito. The elder Guastavino (1842-1908) was born in Barcelona; working as a foreman and untitled architect in his native Catalonian region of Spain, he perfected the centuries-old Mediterranean system of laminated board vaults. He mixed the traditional Plaster of Paris with high-quality Portland cement mortar, then applied this adhesive to curved surfaces of thin terra-cotta tiles laid with staggered joints in two or more layers. The structurally efficient "cohesive" form, essentially a cohesive beam extended into space and also called a timbrel arch, did not rely on gravity for its stability and could be erected without centering, formwork, or scaffolding.

Having emigrated to the United States with his young son, Guastavino founded the Guastavino Fireproof Construction Company in 1889. It offered innovative, fireproof, laminated tile vaulting for wide spans, resulting in unique spatial effects for many buildings erected between the 1880s and 1940s. Among the most significant interiors are several that are now designated Interior Landmarks: those at the New York University (now Gould Memorial) Library (1894-99, McKim, Mead & White), in the Bronx; the oval rotunda of the United States Custom House (1899-1907, Cass Gilbert) at Bowling Green; the City Hall Underground Station (1899-1904, Heins & LaFarge) on the IRT subway line; the Oyster Bar and smaller spaces within Grand Central Terminal (1903-13, Warren & Wetmore, with Reed & Stem); and the vaulted ceiling (1918) in the Registry Room (Great Hall) of the Main

Building on Ellis Island. Equally significant examples are the stairhall of the Boston Public Library (1887-98); the dome reconstruction (1897) of the Library at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville; the Madison Square Presbyterian Church (1903-06, demolished); St. Paul's Chapel (1905-06) at Columbia University; the Elephant House (1906-10) at the Bronx Zoo; and the crossing dome (1908-09) of Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, the largest dome ever erected without scaffolding.²⁹ The younger Guastavino (1872-1950) continued his father's work, and developed ornamented and colored ceramic tile. Before closing in the 1960s, the company had installed vaulting in over 1,000 buildings around the world and held twenty-four patents.

Subsequent history of the Vanderbilt Hotel and Della Robbia Restaurant³⁰

After Alfred Vanderbilt's death, his wife, Margaret, gave up the family hotel suite, which was taken over briefly by the newly organized Women's City Club. Soon afterward, it was occupied by operatic tenor Enrico Caruso, whose personal chef, Tiressa, became the hotel's *chef de cuisine* after Caruso's death in 1921. The Palm Garden, Japanese Buffet, and Della Robbia Restaurant were popular destinations for insurance company and garment district executives. The Bar or Crypt -- which also attracted more colorful personalities such as Caruso, actor Rudolph Valentino, and bon vivant and businessman Diamond Jim Brady -- was restricted to men until 3 p.m., after which women were admitted for cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and supper.

The Vanderbilt family sold the hotel to a syndicate, the Vanderbilt Hotel Corporation, for about \$6 million in 1925; during that year a restaurant guide noted that the hotels along 34th Street had the "most elaborate and best restaurants"³¹ of the neighborhood. A restaurant guide printed in 1939 noted that the Vanderbilt was "one of the hotels in New York that has kept its popularity for many years."³² However, the hotel's slow decline had already begun; during the 1930s it was sold at auction for about \$2.4 million. During the subsequent years, some changes were made which had no direct effect on the interior of the Della Robbia Restaurant, such as the alteration of the entrances in 1944, 1950, and 1952. Changes which seem to date from the mid-twentieth century and which affected the Bar room interior in a limited, impermanent way include refacing the piers and walls with wood wainscoting surmounted by a cap molding with a

sheet metal frieze. The floors have also been resurfaced.

In 1965 the hotel was closed and an application was filed at the Department of Buildings to substantially alter the structure into an office-and-apartment building, according to designs by the architectural firm of Schuman, Lichtenstein & Claman on behalf of John Marqusee and a group of investors. On the exterior, the four-story base was stripped of ornament and given a modern skin, deemed appropriate to the new commercial uses (offices, stores, and a garage) of those floors; the upper portion of the exterior, enveloping the residential stories, was cleaned. The basement level and most of the gallery of the Della Robbia Grill Room were stripped of their original character. However, the Della Robbia Bar and the adjacent two bays of the Grill Room gallery were spared; they remain largely intact, are entered through an East 33rd Street doorway (in the same location as the original entrance from that side), and continue to be used as a bar and restaurant. In the mid-1980s, the current occupant, "Fiori," moved into the space.

Today, the grand hotels of the 1910s have been greatly altered: not one survives in its original form, particularly in regard to interiors such as grill rooms and bar rooms, which were so characteristic of these buildings. The Mediterranean Grill of the Pennsylvania Hotel (1917-19, McKim, Mead & White) and the Marine Grill of the McAlpin Hotel (1911-12, F.M. Andrews & Co.) have been destroyed, as have all but two bays of the Della Robbia Grill Room gallery. The current joining of those remnants with the Della Robbia Bar makes the resulting space a "unique, hand-made room that survives from a period when such extravagance was understood and applauded ..."³³ The only spaces which remain in the country and resemble the Della Robbia's careful design and superlative craftsmanship are the more austere Oyster Bar at Grand Central Terminal and Rookwood's showpiece interior, the Rathskeller at the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky (now on the National Register of Historic Places). According to a modern ceramicist and student of terra cotta, changes in glaze formulation and kiln-firing conditions prevent the duplication of such work today.³⁴

Description of the Della Robbia Bar

The Bar room is largely intact (see figs. 8-11). Entered through the eastern bay of the East 33rd Street side of the building, the original Bar room

(the present front dining room) retains its historic nine-bay plan. Each bay corresponds to a vault supported on piers, which are freestanding at the center of the Bar and engaged to the walls at the perimeter of the space. Covering the soffits of the ceiling arches are bands of Rookwood terra cotta; against a blue background are ivory-colored, foliated patterns in which one type of flower alternates with another flower superimposed by grotesque heads (see fig. 13). Other bands of Rookwood terra cotta -- blue and aqua set off with ivory rope and spindle moldings and rows of ivory rosettes which alternate with yellow, green, and red panels -- trim the Guastavino tile ceiling arches. The ceiling tiles are adorned with a raised interlocking key pattern (see fig. 12). The northwestern bay is divided in half by historic partitions, one of which is pierced by an arched opening in bent plywood. The half-bay north of this division has a flat ceiling (painted black).

Changes to the original Bar room include the replacement of a freestanding bar with a similarly finished bar attached to the east wall; the removal of a small toilet room from the southwest corner of the room (the area is marked by a wood enclosure suspended from the vault at that point); the removal of a doorway to a corridor located directly north of the bar; the resurfacing of marble piers and walls with painted wood wainscoting capped by a riveted sheet metal frieze; the replacement of pier-mounted light fixtures with ceiling-mounted fixtures of brass and glass; the addition of a variety of non-historic floor surfaces -- hexagonal ceramic tile, carpet, linoleum, and vinyl asbestos tile -- over the original marble floor surface; the addition of a similar finish and of faux brick and mirrors at some of the walls; the erection at the East 33rd Street entrance of a vestibule of wood and glass; and the installation of a glass show window adjacent to the entrance.

The portion which survives of the gallery of the Grill room -- two bays plus an aisle of space to the west -- has similar Rookwood terra-cotta ornament (now painted) and the same Guastavino ceiling tiles as the Bar, although the profile of the arches is flatter and the aisle is covered by a lower, flat ceiling. Wall-mounted light fixtures are of brass and glass. Part of the former gallery is situated on a platform, two wood risers above the remainder of the interior, and edged in non-historic wrought-iron railings. The floor is covered in hexagonal ceramic tile and vinyl asbestos tile.

Report prepared by David M. Breiner

NOTES

1. *Atlas of the Entire City of New York* (New York: Geo. W. Bromley & E. Robinson, 1879), pl. 13; *Atlas of the City of New York and Part of the Bronx* (New York: E. Robinson, 1885), pl.13; *Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1898-1909), pls. 13, 22; *Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1928-61), pls. 22, 25, 32; New York City, Tax Assessment Records, Municipal Archives and Records Center [1865-68, 1892]; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Block 823; F.A. Collins, *The Romance of Park Avenue* (New York: Park Avenue Association, 1930), 14ff, 58-60, 97-101; William Robbins, "Old Vanderbilt Hotel Is Joining Murray Hill's Tall 'Dwellings'," *New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*), Mar. 12, 1967, VIII, pp. 1, 8.
2. Louis Auchincloss, *The Vanderbilt Era: Profiles of a Gilded Age* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), 41, 117, 204; Dorothy Kelly MacDowell, *Commodore Vanderbilt and His Family* (Hendersonville, N.C.: the author, 1989), 174-76; Jerry E. Patterson, *The Vanderbilts* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 227, 242, 277; Arthur T. Vanderbilt, II, *Fortune's Children: The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1989), 180-83, 223, 332, 392; James Trager, *Park Avenue: Street of Dreams* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), 44-45; *Who's Who in New York City and State*, ed. John W. Leonard (New York: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1909), 1318-19 and (1914), 729; *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 1 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1943), 1268.

Among the many articles about Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt in the *New York Times*, see in particular: "Alfred Vanderbilt Gives Charity Fete," *NYT*, July, 7 1910, p.7; "Vanderbilt Lunch in Brideless Home," *NYT*, Nov. 10, 1910, p.7; "M'Kim Agrees Not To Sue Vanderbilt," *NYT*, Feb. 22, 1911, p.1; "Mrs. M'Kim To Join Vanderbilt Abroad," *NYT*, Feb. 23, 1911, p.1; "A.G. Vanderbilt Weds Mrs. M'Kim," *NYT*, Dec. 18, 1911, pp.1-2; "Vanderbilt's Apartment," *NYT*, Dec. 20, 1911, p.5; "Vanderbilt Left His Wife at Home," *NYT*, May 8, 1915, p.4; "Vanderbilt Saved Woman," *NYT*, May 10, 1915, p.1; "Vanderbilt's Marriages," *NYT*, May 30, 1915, p.5.
3. *Real Estate Record & Guide* (hereafter, *RER&G*) 80, no. 2070 (Nov. 16, 1907), 790, 801; 80, no. 2072 (Nov. 30, 1907), 881, 882.
4. Trager, 45.
5. As of 1989, Alfred alone had twenty-two great-grandchildren, not to mention the descendants of his siblings and paternal cousins. See MacDowell, *passim*.
6. Dennis McFadden, "Warren and Wetmore," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Adolf K. Placzek, ed.-in-chief (New York: The Free Press-Macmillan, 1982), vol. 4, 377. See also: Landmarks Preservation Commission [hereafter LPC], *Metropolitan Museum Historic District Report* (LP-0955), (New York, 1977); LPC, *Grand Central Terminal Interior Designation Report*, report prepared by Nancy Goeschel (LP-1099), (New York, 1980); and LPC, "Architects' Appendix," *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1051), (New York, 1981).
7. Other works (with designated buildings and buildings in historic districts indicated with an asterisk) in New York by Warren & Wetmore include: the Birdsall Otis Edey Residence (1901) at 10 West 56th Street; the Chelsea Piers (1902-07); the Marshall Orme Wilson and Caroline Astor Wilson Residence * (1903, now the New India House) at 3 East 64th Street; the R. Livingston Beekman Residence * (1905, later Yugoslav Mission to the U.N.) at 854 Fifth Avenue; Seaman's Church Institute (1907, 1919, 1929, now demolished) at 25 South Street; Aeolian Hall (1912, redesigned in 1970 as the City University Graduate Center of CUNY); No. 927 Fifth Avenue Apartment House * (1917); The Crown Building (1921, later the Heckscher/Genesco Building); Steinway Hall (1925, now the Manhattan Life Insurance Building); Tower (1926) of the Consolidated Gas Company Building (now Consolidated Edison Company Building); the Erlanger/St. James Theater * and interior * (1927). See Elliot Willensky and Norval White, *A.I.A. Guide to New York City*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), *passim*.
8. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 863, Lot 44 (formerly lots 40-47) [NB 772-1907 (superseded); NB 561-1908]. *The Vanderbilt Hotel, Hilliard Hotel Company, Thirty Fourth Street East at Park Avenue* (New York: s.n., 1913).

9. These included Thomas's "Acme" Air Purifying and Cooling System and a pneumatic-tube messenger system.
10. Walton H. Marshall, "The Vanderbilt Hotel, Messrs. Warren & Wetmore, Architects," *Architecture & Building* 44 (Jan., 1912), 145-47, lists the consultants as follows: Davis Brown, ornamental plaster & Caen stone; Robert E. Mackay Co., painting and decorating; Tiffany Studios, bronze grille work; Bollentin & Thompson, rugs; Edward Caldwell Col., lighting fixtures; The Gorham Co., silver service.
11. *The Vanderbilt Hotel, Hilliard Hotel Company* (1913), n.pag.
12. The exterior of the building is not subject to this designation.
13. Guastavino Tile Company Archives, Drawings Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University, photograph of several ceramic pieces and index card no. 284c illustrating nine different units. See also the Warren & Wetmore Archive at the same Collection, particularly historic photographs by Robert W. Tebbs of the Della Robbia Restaurant interior, and drawings labeled R. Guastavino & Co., 34th St. Hotel Grill Room, No. 10 (Dec. 28, 1910) and No. 18 (May 19, 1911).
14. Half of the large flowers appear to be chrysanthemums or asters and the other half resemble sunflowers with grotesque heads.
15. William Hagerman Graves, "The Use of Tile in the Interior Finish and Decoration of Hotels," *Architectural Review*, ns 2 (Apr., 1913), 46.
16. Marshall, "The Vanderbilt Hotel, Messrs. Warren & Wetmore, Architects," 144-152. One issue in particular, *Architectural Review*, ns 2 (Apr., 1913), highlighted the Vanderbilt Hotel in several articles: Charles D. Wetmore, "The Development of the Modern Hotel," 37-39; Graves, 44-48; Werner Nygren, "Modern Practice in Hotel Heating and Ventilating," 49-51.
17. On the history of terra cotta in general and its impact on New York City, see: Walter Geer, *Terra-Cotta in Architecture*, 3rd ed. (New York: Gazlay Bros., 1891), esp. 11-19; Geer, "The Story of Terra Cotta (Chapters XVI and XVII)," in *Sites* 18 (1986), 42-56; James Taylor, "The History of Terra Cotta in New York City," *Architectural Record* 2 (Oct.-Dec., 1892), 137-148; Taylor, "A Review of Architectural Terra-Cotta [sic]," in *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City* (1898; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1967), 512-24; "The Ornamentation of the New Subway Stations in New York," *House and Garden* 5 (Feb., 1904), 96-99, 287-292; Herbert D. Croly, "Glazed and Colored Terra Cotta," *Architectural Record* 19 (Apr., 1906), 315-323; Sturgis Laurence, "Architectural Faience," *Architectural Record* 21 (Jan., 1907), 62-72; "Color Spreads Glories on City's Architecture," *NYT*, Jan. 27, 1907, pt.3, p.3; Graves, 44-48; Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States: an Historical Review of American Ceramic Art* (Watkins Glen, N.Y.: Century House Americana, 1971), 284-297, 338-345; Susan Tunick, "Rhapsody in the Blue: Terra-Cotta Skylines," pamphlet for Sept., 1983, exhibit, LPC files; Tunick, "Architectural Terra Cotta: Its Impact on New York," *Sites* 18 (1986), 4-38; Tunick, "The New World," in Hans Van Lemmen, *Tiles. 1,000 Years of Architectural Decoration* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 166-197.

The LPC thanks Susan Tunick, president of the Friends of Terra Cotta, for her interest in the (former) Della Robbia Bar and her assistance in the preparation of this report.

18. Upjohn incorporated it as keystones in his Trinity Building (1852, demolished) at 111 Broadway, though they were disguised as brownstone, and as the cornice of his Corn Exchange Bank Building (1855, demolished) at the northwest corner of William and Beaver streets, which failed during its first winter. Renwick used terra-cotta belt courses and cornices on the Tontine Building (1855, demolished) at the northwest corner of Wall and Water streets, the St. Denis Hotel (1851?-52, later altered and enlarged) at 797-801 Broadway, and a row of houses at 37-41 West 9th Street (c. 1853-55, demolished). See Geer, *Terra-Cotta*, 16-18; Taylor, "The History of Terra Cotta," 141; Taylor, "A Review," 512-14; Tunick, "Rhapsody," n.pag.; Tunick, "Architectural Terra Cotta," *Sites*, 6-7; Phoebe B. Stanton, "Upjohn, Richard," *Macmillan*, vol. 4, 236-43; Selma Rattner, "Renwick, James," *Macmillan*, vol. 3, 541-49; Lois Severini, *The Architecture of Finance: Early Wall Street* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: U.M.I., 1983), 65, 68.

19. The history of the Potter Building is intertwined with the development of New York's architectural terra-cotta industry. The terra-cotta cladding of the building was manufactured in Boston, pointing out the need for sources more accessible to New York, and Orlando Potter eventually lured James Taylor to New York to organize the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company, which had its Manhattan offices in the Potter Building. Tunick, "Architectural Terra Cotta," 9, and conversation with Ms. Tunick, April, 1994.
20. Rookwood Pottery Company, *Rookwood Pottery* (Cincinnati: The Co., [1902]), 9, 17, 39; *"Sweet's" Indexed Catalogue of Building Construction. 1906* (New York-Chicago: The Architectural Record Co., 1906), 368-70; Rookwood Pottery Company, *Rookwood Pottery, Cincinnati, USA. Faience Tile* (Cincinnati: s.n., 1925); "Storer, Maria Longworth," *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 1, 1194; Denny Carter Young, "The Longworths: Three Generations of Art Patronage in Cincinnati," Kenneth R. Trapp, "Toward a Correct Taste: Women and the Rise of the Design Reform Movement in Cincinnati 1874-1880," and Kirsten H. Keen, "Rookwood Pottery at the Turn of the Century: Continuity and Change," all in *Celebrate Cincinnati Art: in Honor of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Cincinnati Art Museum, 1881-1981*, ed. Kenneth R. Trapp (Cincinnati: The Museum, 1982), 29-47, 48-70, and 71-89 respectively; Trapp, *Toward the Modern Style. Rookwood Pottery. The Later Years: 1915-1950*, introduction by Vance Jordan, 10-11, and catalogue of exhibition, Mar.-May, 1983 at the Jordan-Vance Gallery (New York: The Gallery, 1983), 13-16; Anita J. Ellis, *Rookwood Pottery: the glorious gamble* (Cincinnati-New York: Cincinnati Art Museum-Rizzoli, 1992), 14, 23-27; Ellen Denker (ceramics historian and museum consultant) of Wilmington, Del., Testimony given before the LPC at a public hearing, Dec. 8, 1992, Item No. 5 (LP-1904); Herbert Peck, *The Book of Rookwood Pottery* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Galleries, 1991), esp. 94, 161-164.
21. Among Rookwood's early awards: [unspecified award] (1887), London; Gold Medal, Exposition Universelle (1889), Paris; Gold Medal, World's Columbian Exposition (1893), Chicago; Grand Prix (1900), Paris; Grand Prix (1901), St. Petersburg; Highest Award (1901), Buffalo; Highest Award (1902), Turin; Grand Prizes (1904), St. Louis.
22. Following the death of Col. Nichols in 1895, Maria married attorney Bellamy Storer, who became a congressman and ambassador to Spain and Austria-Hungary; they subsequently spent little time in Cincinnati and Maria died in Paris in 1932.
23. See Philip Ashforth Coppola, *Silver Connections* (Maplewood, N.J.: Four Oceans Press, 1983), esp. II, 560-72, and a letter, now in the LPC Files, from Philip Ashforth Copp [sic] to the LPC. According to him, the subway contract comprised decorations at six stations: Fulton Street/Broadway (1905), which remains largely intact; Wall Street/Broadway (1905), which may have lost several large pictorial panels on the east platform; 23rd Street/Park Avenue South, 79th Street/Broadway, 86th Street/Broadway, and 91st Street/Broadway (the last was abandoned in 1959), which have lost varying amounts of their architectural terra cotta. The contract is confirmed by Peck (1991), 72, who, however, is unaware that the stations are now on different lines. See also LPC, *IRT Subway System Underground Interior Designation Report*, report prepared by Marjorie Pearson (LP-1096), (New York: City of New York, 1979).
24. See Philip Ashforth Copp, letter to the LPC, now in the LPC Files, which states that the PATH stations at 14th and 23rd streets have been shorn of their Rookwood faience. Stations at 18th and 28th streets have been closed.
25. The Hotel Prince George is currently undergoing extensive renovations. Although the elaborately embellished lobby retains much of its historic character, its faience fountain is not visible from the vestibule and so its survival is undetermined. Of the fountains installed in the Cut Flower Department of Lord & Taylor, only one survives and it is no longer visible from the selling floor.
26. Kurt Heppe, "Savarin Restaurant Combines Many Types of Eating," *The American Restaurant* [Chicago] 4 (May, 1921), 19-21.
27. Regarding the exhibition at the Newark Museum, see the letter from Ulysses G. Dietz, curator of decorative arts at that institution, to the LPC, now in the LPC Files.
28. For the elder Rafael Guastavino's own writings, see: *Essay on the Theory and History of Cohesive Construction Applied Especially to the Timbrel Vault*, read before the Society of Arts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, 2nd ed (Boston: Ticknor, 1893); *Lecture Written for the Congress of Architects, in Connection with*

the Columbian Exposition, on Cohesive Construction, Its Past, Its Present; Its Future? (Chicago: s.n., 1893); *Prologomenos on the Function of Masonry in Modern Architectural Structures* I (New York: the author, 1896); II (Boston: the author, 1904).

See also: "Sweet's" *Indexed Catalogue of Building Construction*. 1906, 82-83; Rafael Guastavino obituary, *NYT*, Feb. 3, 1908, p.9; Rafael Guastavino [son] obituary, *NYT*, Oct. 20, 1950, p.27; George Collins, "The Transfer of Thin Masonry Vaulting from Spain to America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 27 (Oct., 1968), 176-201; LPC, *IRT Subway System Underground Interior Designation Report* (1979); Collins, "Guastavino y Moreno, Rafael, and Guastavino y Esposito, Rafael," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, vol. 2, 280-281; Willensky and White, 24, 50, 243-44, 312; LPC, *Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District Designation Report*, LP-1647 (New York: City of New York, 1990), III, 433, 438.

29. Other examples of the firm's work in New York City include the soffits under the porch roof of the Whitehall Ferry Terminal (1906-09, Walker & Morris, now the Battery Maritime Building), the plaza arcades at the base of the Municipal Building (1907-14, McKim, Mead & White) and the pedestrian arcades of the Barclay-Vesey Building (1923-27, Ralph Walker, architect in charge, McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin). Guastavino tile construction was also used to create the roof of the former Tiffany Building (1903-06) at 397-409 Fifth Avenue. Nos. 121-131 and 118-134 West 78th Street (1885-86 and 1886, respectively), included within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, were designed by the elder Guastavino, as was B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue (1884-85, demolished) on Madison Avenue.
30. NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 863, Lot 44; Trager, 45. Regarding the building's conversion, see also: William Robbins, "Old Vanderbilt Hotel Is Joining Murray Hill's Tall 'Dwellings,'" *NYT*, Mar. 12, 1967, sect. VIII, pp.1, 8; Harry V. Forgeron, "For Some at the Old Vanderbilt, The Check-Out Time is Never," *NYT*, May 28, 1967, sect. VIII, p.1; "Sealed Hotel Room Mystifies Builder," *NYT*, Sept. 24, 1967, sect. VIII, pp.1, 14. See also: James Buchanan (Diamond Jim) Brady obituary, *NYT*, Apr. 14, 1917, p.13; "Caruso, Enrico" and "Valentino, Rudolph," *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 1, 201, 1276 respectively.
31. George S. Chappell, *The Restaurants of New York* (New York: Greenberg, 1925), 86-87.
32. Diana Ashley, *Where to Dine in Thirty-nine. A Guide to New York Restaurants, To which there is added A Cook Book of recipes by famous chefs* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1939), 116. At that time the *chef de cuisine* was E. Bourquin.
33. Ellen Denker, Testimony given before the LPC at a public hearing, Dec. 8, 1992, Item No. 5 (LP-1904).
34. Heather Blum, Testimony given before the LPC at a public hearing, Dec. 8, 1992, Item No. 5 (LP-1904).

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the (former) Della Robbia Bar (aka The "Crypt"), in the (former) Vanderbilt Hotel, has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the (former) Della Robbia Bar interior, designed and built in 1910-13, retains its trim of colorful, glazed architectural terra cotta, manufactured by the famous Rookwood Pottery Company of Cincinnati; that the space also retains salt-glazed ceramic tiles formed into a technologically significant vaulted ceiling by the R. Guastavino Company, whose founder, perfecting the centuries-old Mediterranean system of laminated board vaults, pioneered the use of curved surfaces of thin clay tiles laid with staggered joints in multiple layers; that the Della Robbia Bar and adjacent, similarly decorated double-height Grill exemplify the spacious public interiors incorporated into hotels built during the decade before World War I; that the existing Bar, comprising the entire original Bar (now the front dining room) and two gallery bays of the Grill (now the rear dining room), results in an architecturally significant interior that is a rare survivor of the once-fashionable ceramic-embellished public interior, and especially of a Rookwood-finished space; that the spatial character of the present Bar remains intact and that its original ceramic finishes are intact; that the Bar and Grill were significant spaces in the stately Vanderbilt Hotel, designed by the prominent partnership of Warren & Wetmore, a firm remembered for its many hotel designs and particularly for its contributions to the Vanderbilt family's Terminal City redevelopment of the East Side of Manhattan, of which the hotel was one component; that in constructing the hotel, millionaire sportsman Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt carried out a tradition of family interests on the site; and that the interior continues to be accessible to the public as the Fiori Restaurant.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the (former) Della Robbia Bar (aka The "Crypt"), in the (former) Vanderbilt Hotel, Ground Floor Interior, consisting of the entrance vestibule, front dining room, rear dining room, and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to piers, Guastavino tiled ceiling vaults, and architectural terra cotta manufactured by Rookwood Pottery; 4 Park Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates as its Landmarks Site Manhattan Tax Map Block 863, Lot 44.

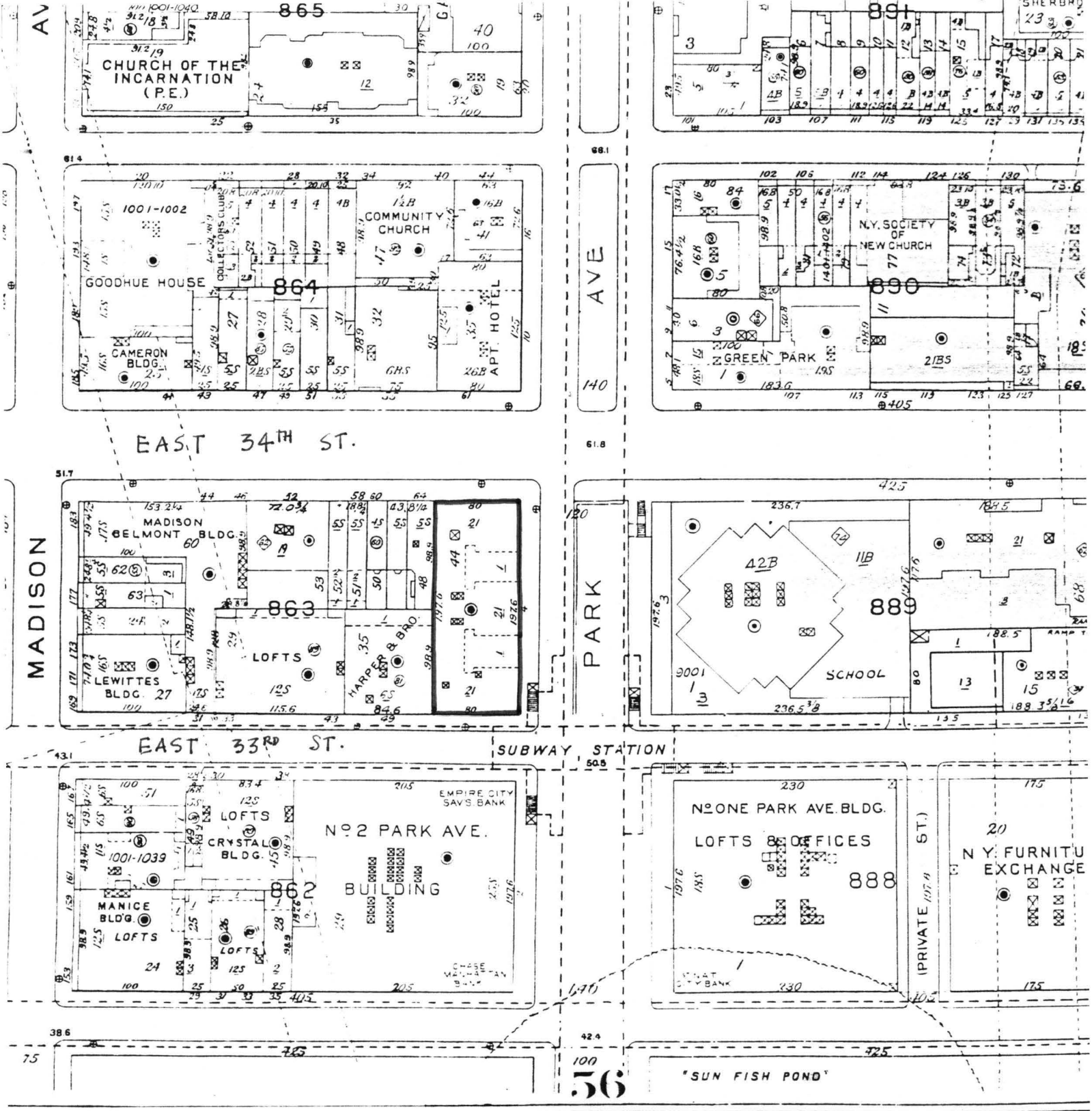
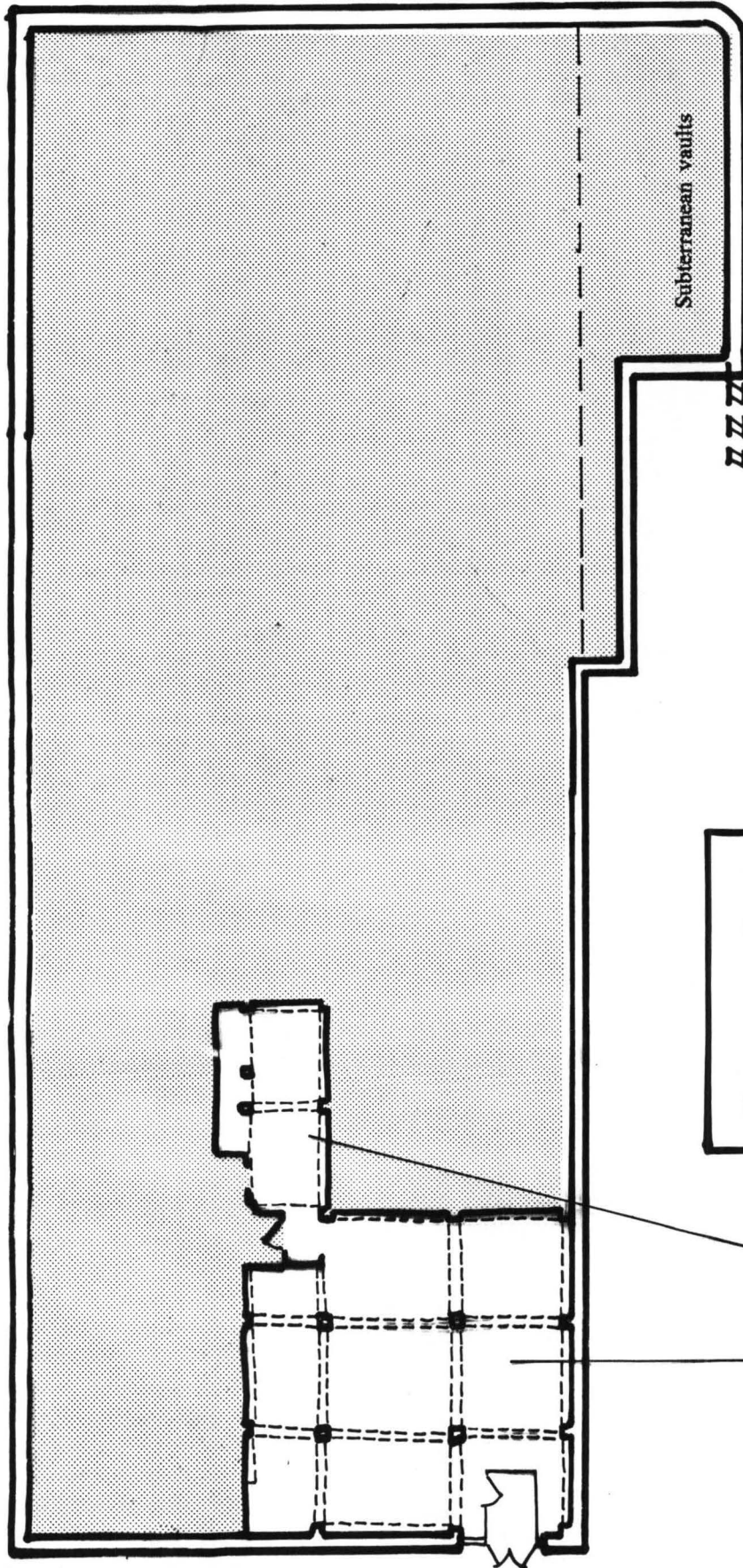


Fig. 1: (Former) Della Robbia Bar (aka The "Crypt"), in the (former) Vanderbilt Hotel, Ground Floor Interior, 4 Park Avenue, Manhattan

Landmark Site: Manhattan Tax Map Block 863, Lot 44
 Graphic Source: Sanborn Manhattan Land Book (1992-93), pl. 61

EAST 34TH STREET




Subterranean vaults

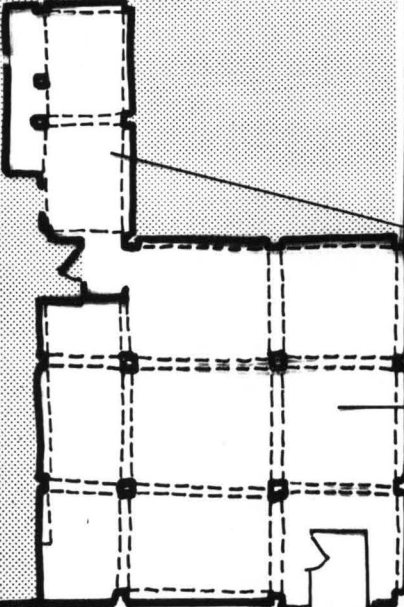
PARK AVENUE


(Former) DELLA ROBBIA BAR
(THE "CRYPT") of the
(Former) VANDERBILT HOTEL

GROUND FLOOR INTERIOR
4 Park Avenue, Manhattan

Designated: April 5, 1994
Landmarks Preservation Commission

 Not designated

 Former Gallery of the
Della Robbia Grill Room

 Original Della Robbia Bar



EAST 33RD STREET

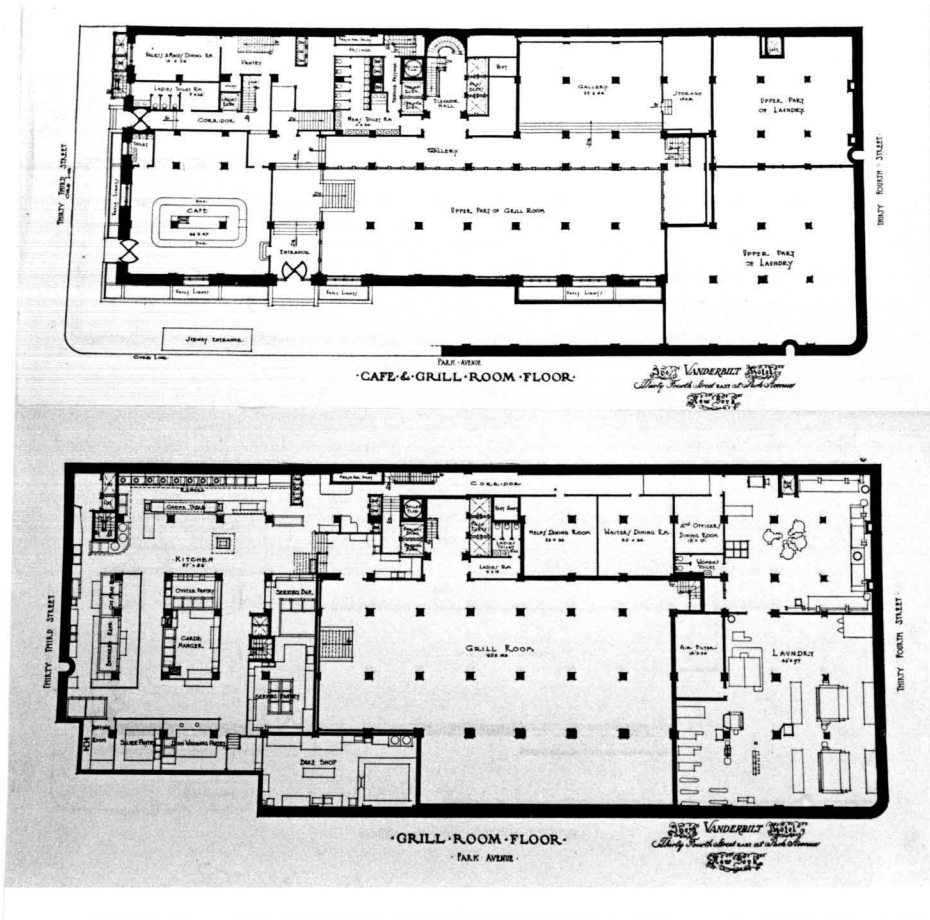


Fig. 3: Historic plans of the Ground Floor ("Café & Grill Room Floor") and Grill Room Floor



Fig. 4: Historic Photograph (Robert W. Tebbs) of the Vanderbilt Hotel Showing East 33rd Street entrance to Bar Room



Fig. 5: Historic photograph showing view from Grill Room, through corridor, to Bar Room

Fig. 6: Historic photograph showing length of Grill Room

Columbia University, Avery Library, Drawings Collection (Robert W. Tebbs)



Della Robbia Bar

Archival Photo

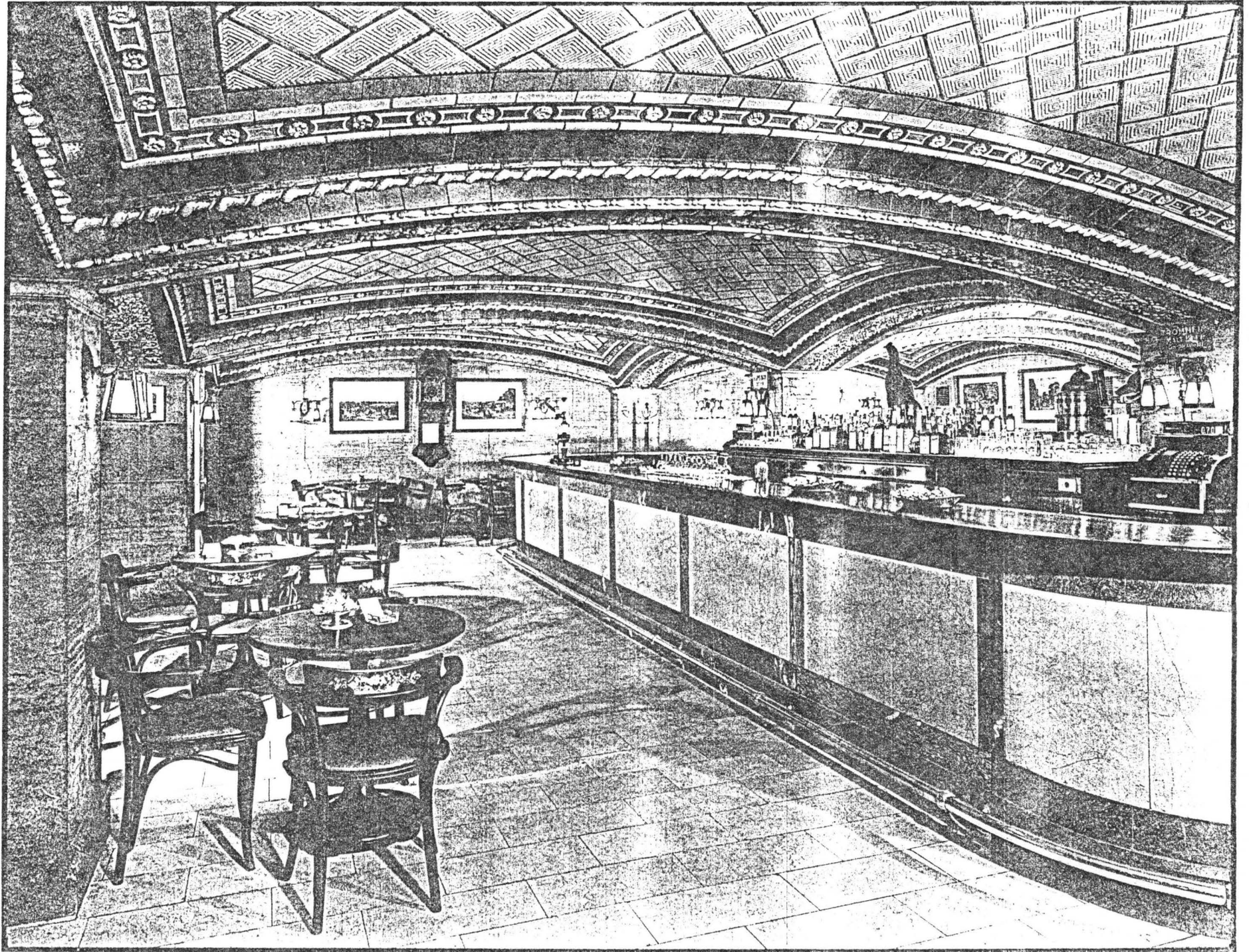


Fig. 7: Historic photograph of Della Robbia Bar

Cincinnati Historical Society (Richard Averill Smith, photographer)

Richard Averill Smith



Fig. 8: Current photograph of front dining room

(Carl Forster)



Fig. 9: Current photograph of front dining room, view toward entrance

(Carl Forster)



Fig. 10: Current photograph of front dining room

(Carl Forster)



Fig. 11: Current photograph of rear dining room

(Carl Forster)



Fig. 12: Detail photograph of ceramic surface

(Carl Forster)



Fig. 13: Detail photograph of ceramic surface

(Carl Forster)