

Karl Theodore Francis Bitter, 1867-1915

A Finding Aid for  
Maquette for a Pediment for the Broad Street Station,  
Philadelphia, 1893.  
The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania

## Archival Description

### Descriptive Summary

- Title: Maquette for a pediment for the Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, 1893.
- Coll. ID: 162
- Origin: Karl Theodore Francis Bitter, 1867-1915, sculptor.
- Extent: 1 model.
- Repository: The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania  
102 Meyerson Hall  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6311  
(215) 898-8323
- Abstract: The collection comprises one plaster maquette for a terra cotta relief panel in an exterior pediment of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Broad Steet Station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bitter was commissioned by Frank Furness of Furness, Evans & Co. for the project, which included an elaborate clock and several allegorical panels. The Broad Street Station was demolished in 1952.
- Indexes: This collection is included in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project, a searchable database of architectural research materials related to architects and architecture in Philadelphia and surrounding regions:  
<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org>
- Cataloging: Collection-level records for materials in the Architectural Archives may be found in WorldCat, an international union catalogue of library and archival holdings. The record number for this collection is 231694509.

**Biographical/Historical Sketch**

Born in a suburb of Vienna, Austria, Karl Bitter was trained as a sculptor at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, from 1885 to 1888. After active service in the Army, Bitter immigrated to the United States, arriving in New York City in November of 1889. Within weeks of his arrival, Bitter was engaged by the American architect, Richard Morris Hunt (1825-1895). He worked on projects for the Astors and Vandberbils in New York City and at the Biltmore Estate, for William H. Vanderbilt, Ashville, NC, 1893-95. Bitter's work soon expanded beyond the domestic to include major civic works at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1891 under Hunt, the Pennsylvania Railroad's Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, 1892-95, by Architect, Frank Furness (1839-1912), and the Wisconsin State Capitol, 1910-12 by George Post (1837-1913).

**Scope and Content Note**

The collection comprises one plaster maquette for a terra cotta relief panel in an exterior pediment of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Broad Steet Station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bitter was commissioned by Frank Furness of Furness, Evans & Co. for the project, which included an elaborate clock and several allegorical panels. At a length of 50 feet and a height of over 10 feet, this was thought to be the largest terracotta work in the ancient or modern world. Allegorical figures included in the panel were intended to evoke the spirit of the railroad. At center, Mercury stands as a symbol of wealth and commerce. Minerva, "Founder of Cities", represents the new towns that sprung up around railways. The spirits of Fire and Water are harnessed to the chariot Minerva rides in by two male figures standing on train tracks as a representation of steam power. Other symbols represent the City of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Railroad. The Broad Street Station was demolished in 1952.

## Sources:

"The Bitter Panel." *The Philadelphia Times* 9 April, 1894.

"A Fitting Decoration." *The Evening Telegraph* 5 April 1894.

Dennis, James M. *Karl Bitter: Architectural Sculptor, 1867-1915*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967.

**Access Points for Indexing (Controlled Vocabulary)**

Pennsylvania Railroad - Buildings  
Railroad Stations  
Relief (Sculpture), American  
Pediments - United States  
Sculptors - United States  
Furness, Evans & Co. - client  
Pennsylvania Railroad – client

### **Administrative Information**

Restrictions on access: This collection is available for research by appointment only.

Preferred collection citation: Karl Bitter Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Acquisition: Gift of the Estate of Pauline Savage Furness, 1979. Provenance: Frank Furness; Horace Howard Furness; George Wood Furness; Mrs. George Wood Furness (nee Pauline Savage).

Processing: The collection was processed and the finding aid prepared by William Whitaker and Nancy Thorne, with the assistance of Melissa Steeley.

## Container list

Call#	Descriptive Title
162.1	Plaster maquette