

POWERS & COMPANY

HISTORIC PRESERVATION SERVICES

September 7, 2016

Dr. Jon Farnham
Philadelphia Historical Commission
One Parkway, 13th Floor
1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Jon,

As recently discussed with your office, this application is being submitted with the intent to clarify the boundary of the historic Belfield property in Germantown. The address of the subject property, which is owned by LaSalle University, is 2101 W. Clarkson Street. The existing parcel encompasses what historically were two separate parcels/properties: 1) Belfield, an 18th century house and surrounding grounds with numerous outbuildings, all located south of Clarkson Avenue; and 2) The Mary and Frances Wister House, a house located north of Clarkson Avenue. The following information, along with the attached maps and photos, is presented for review by the Committee on Historic Designation at their October 21, 2016 meeting and subsequently by the full Historical Commission on November 10, 2016.

Belfield was listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1956. No nomination and therefore no official boundary exists, although the June 1956 minutes of the Advisory Commission on Historic Buildings indicate that the property was on Clarkson Avenue east of Stenton Avenue, or what is today Wister Street. Despite such ambiguity, it is our opinion that the Historical Commission intended only to designate Belfield and its associated outbuildings as the historic resource. First, as indicated on a 1950 Sanborn fire insurance map, Belfield and the Wister House were located on two separate parcels. If we follow the conventional practice of designating by parcel, the Wister House would necessarily have been excluded. Secondly, when the Belfield property was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1966, the official National Register boundary, although slightly larger than the parcel (then known as 2100 Clarkson), also clearly excluded the Wister House.

Although Belfield's exact date of construction is unknown, it is estimated to be around 1755. The rear kitchen wing, believed to date to 1708, is the earliest surviving structure and was attached to the main house in the early twentieth century. Despite its 18th century origins, the house and grounds are primarily significant for their association with seminal American artist Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827), who owned and lived in the house between 1810 and 1820. The National Historic Landmark Nomination limits the property's period of significance to these years. Additionally, the June 1956 minutes of the Advisory Commission on Historic Buildings state the date of construction as 1708-1810, encompassing alterations made by Peale but excluding the construction of later buildings such as the Wister House.

The Wister House was built in 1868 by William Rotch Wister (1827-1911), the son-in-law of William Logan Fisher, who had purchased Belfield from Peale in 1826. Despite its connection to a later owner of Belfield, the Wister House bears no relationship to the development of Belfield as an 18th century farm or gentleman's estate and has no association with Charles Wilson Peale, with whom Belfield is most strongly identified.



We believe the evidence provided above clearly demonstrates that the Historical Commission did not intend to include the Wister House within the boundary of the Belfield property as designated in 1956. Therefore, we request that the Commission officially limit the boundary of the designated property to that portion of 2101 W. Clarkson which encompasses Belfield and all associated outbuildings. The proposed boundary is indicated in the attached maps and includes the seven resources listed below, recent photographs of which are included with this letter. This documentation will ensure that this significant property will be protected in the future and will continue to serve as an important part of Germantown's history.

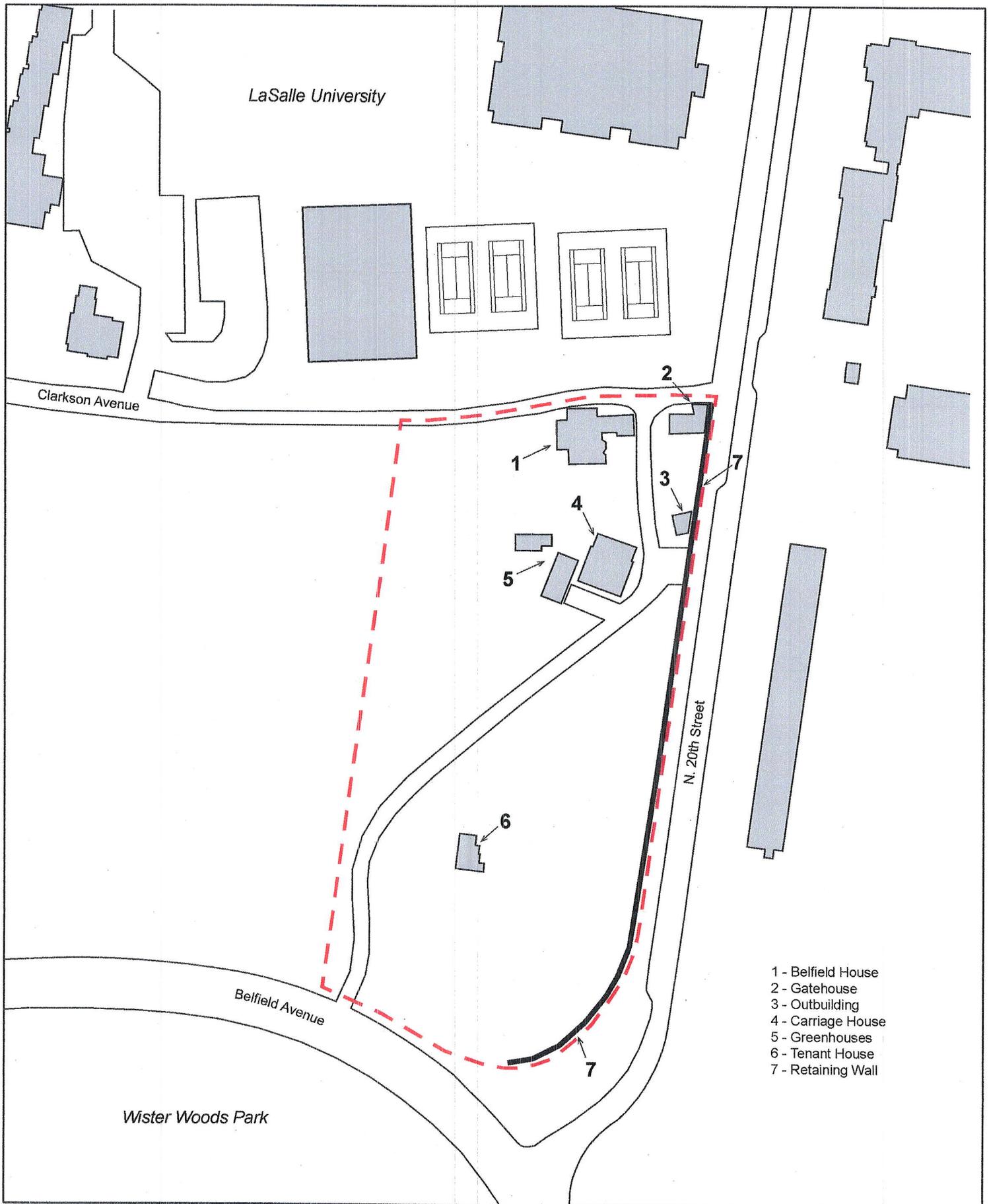
Resources included within the proposed boundary:

1. **Belfield House** 1708-1810
2 ½ story, five-bay stucco house with one-story front porch and gambrel roof. A two-story, T-shaped kitchen wing extends from east elevation.
2. **Gate House** 19th Century
2 ½ story, three-bay stucco house with gable roof. Abuts the retaining wall on the east side of the property.
3. **Outbuilding** 19th Century
2 story fieldstone building with front porch and shallow gable roof. Abuts the retaining wall on the east side of the property south of the gate house.
4. **Carriage House** c. 1850
2 ½ story, three-bay stucco carriage house in the Gothic Revival style. The primary or north elevation features a wood framed carriage door on the first floor and Gothic pointed window in the center bay on the second floor.
5. **Greenhouses** 19th Century
Two wood greenhouses with stone foundations and brick walls are located west of the carriage house.
6. **Tenant House** 19th Century
2 ½ story stucco house
7. **Retaining Wall** c. 1922
Built in the 1920s when N. 20th Street was cut through, this schist retaining wall, portions of which are coated in stucco, runs along the entire east side of the property.

Sincerely,

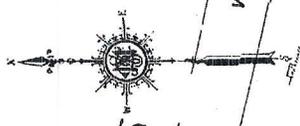


Robert Powers
President



Proposed Philadelphia Register Boundary for Belfield
 2101 W. Clarkson Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
 Powers & Company, 2016

PHILADELPHIA, PA. Vol. 28 (703-715-716-717-Vol. 28) (897-Vol. 33)
WARD 2260
SCALE 100 FT TO INCH



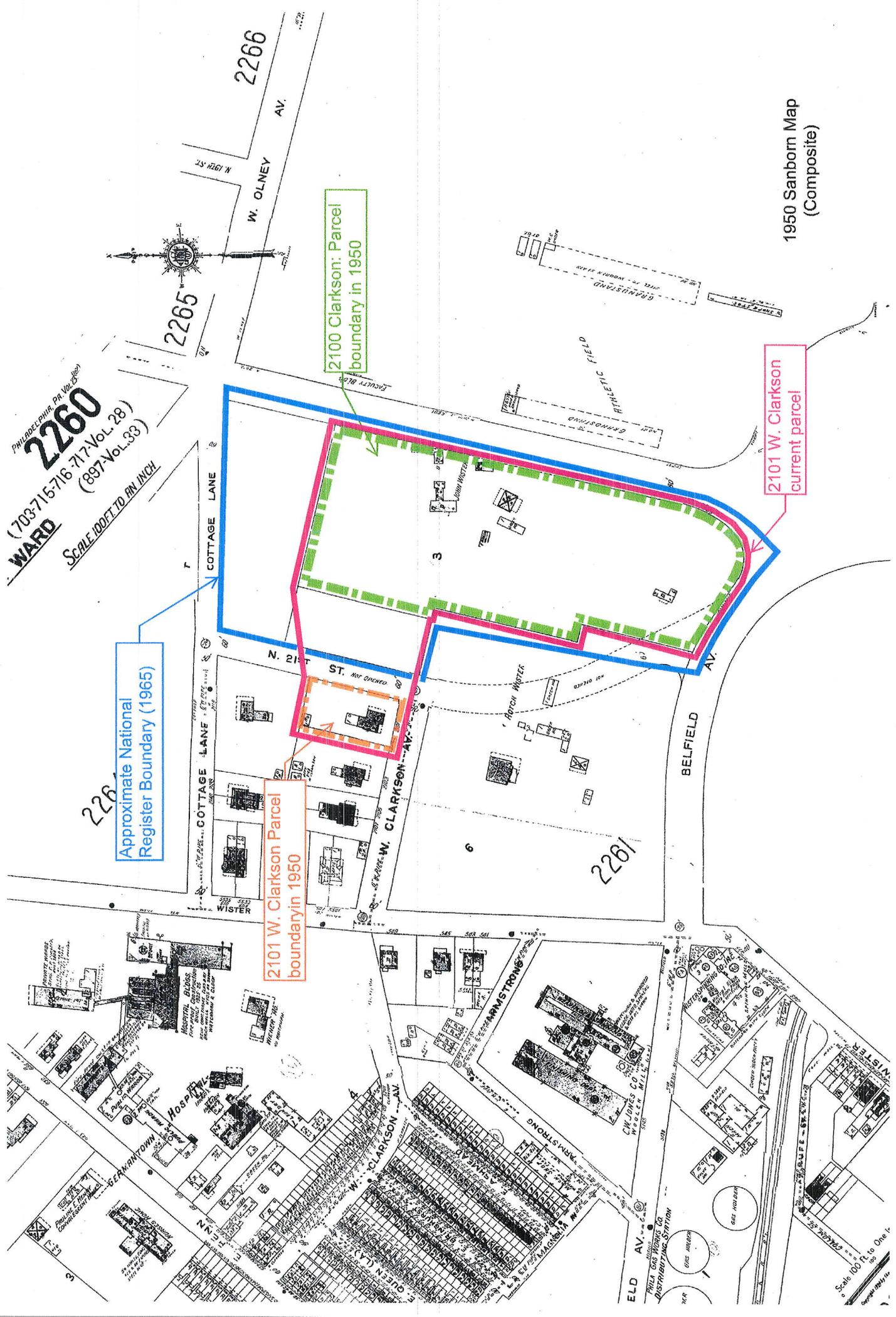
1950 Sanborn Map (Composite)

Approximate National Register Boundary (1965)

2101 W. Clarkson Parcel boundary in 1950

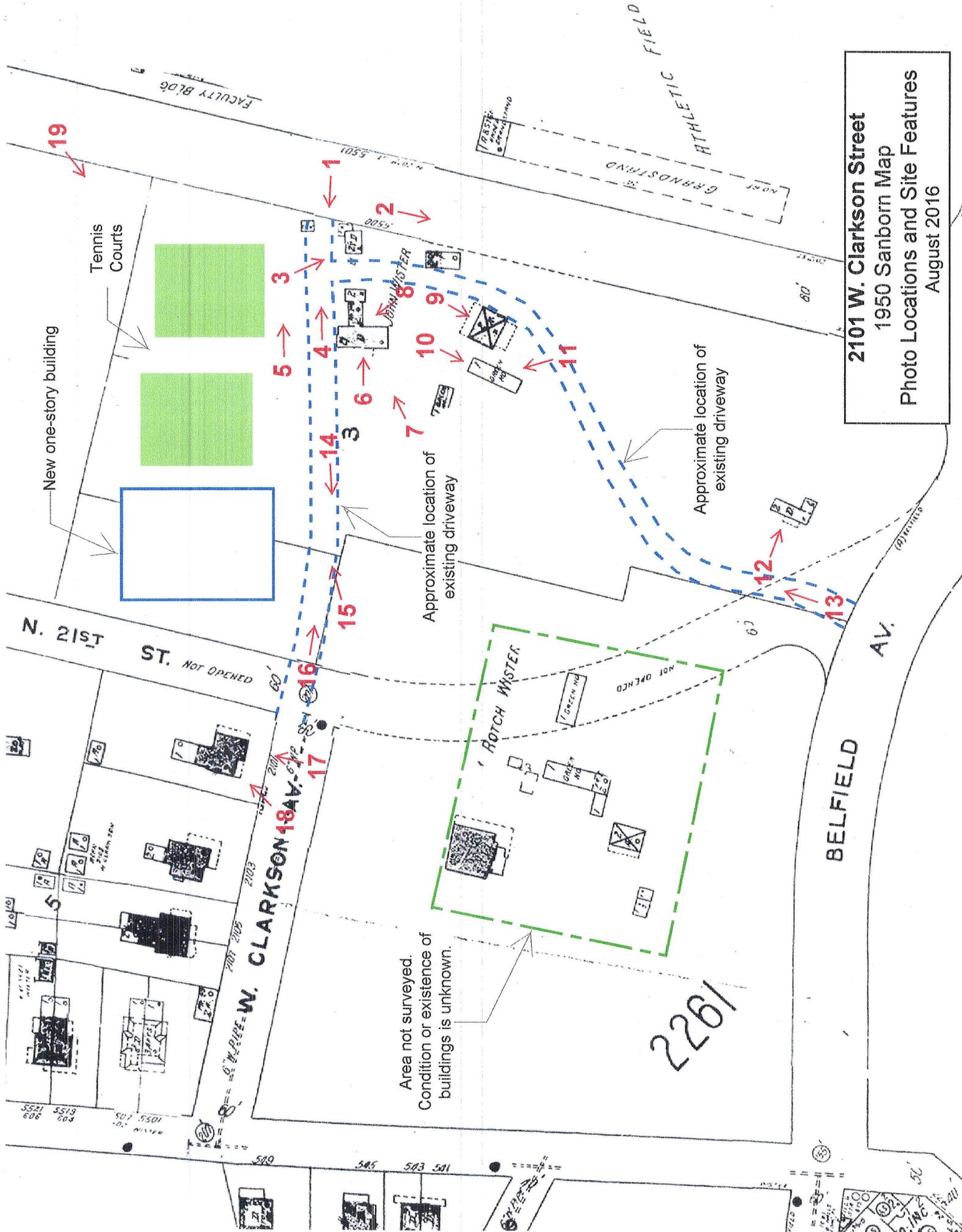
2100 Clarkson: Parcel boundary in 1950

2101 W. Clarkson current parcel



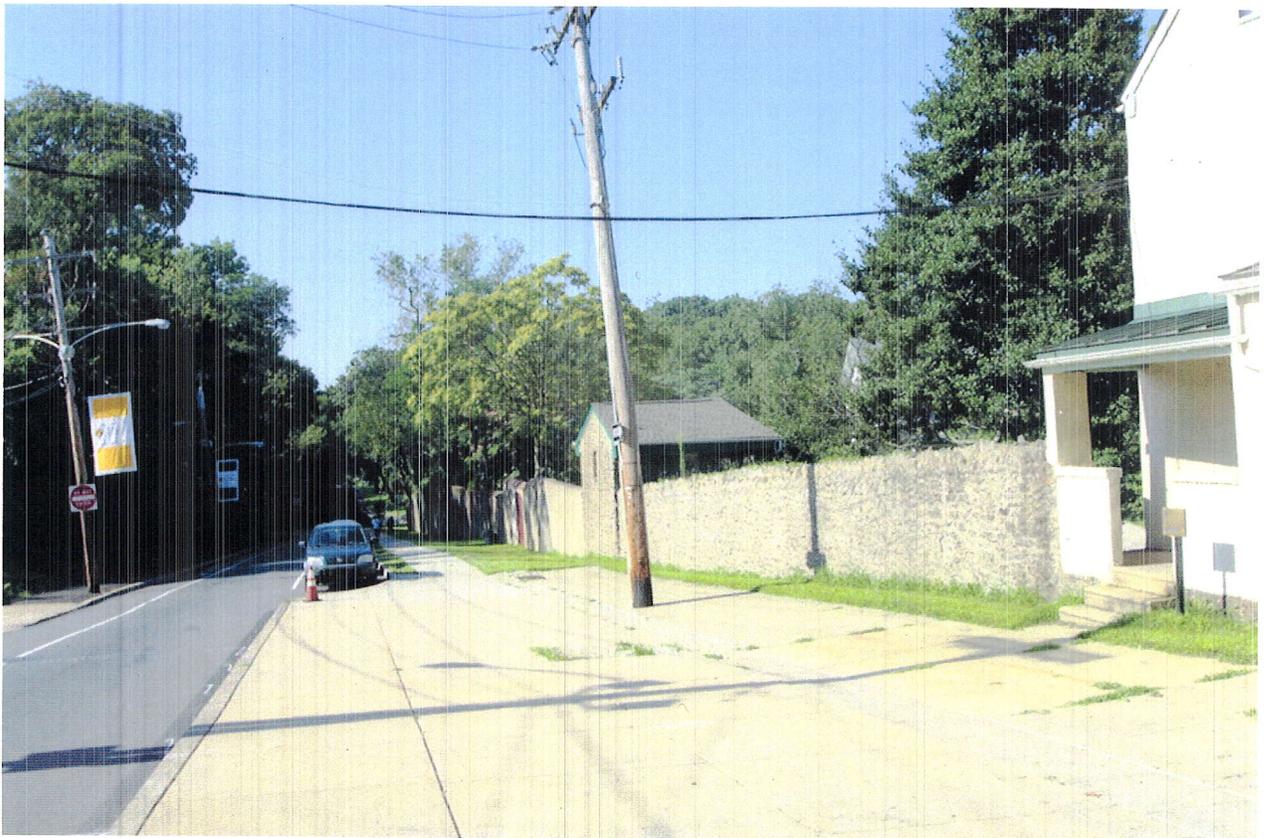
Scale 100 ft to One in.
Copyright 1950

2101 W. Clarkson Street
1950 Sanborn Map
Photo Locations and Site Features
August 2016





1



2



3



4



5



6



7



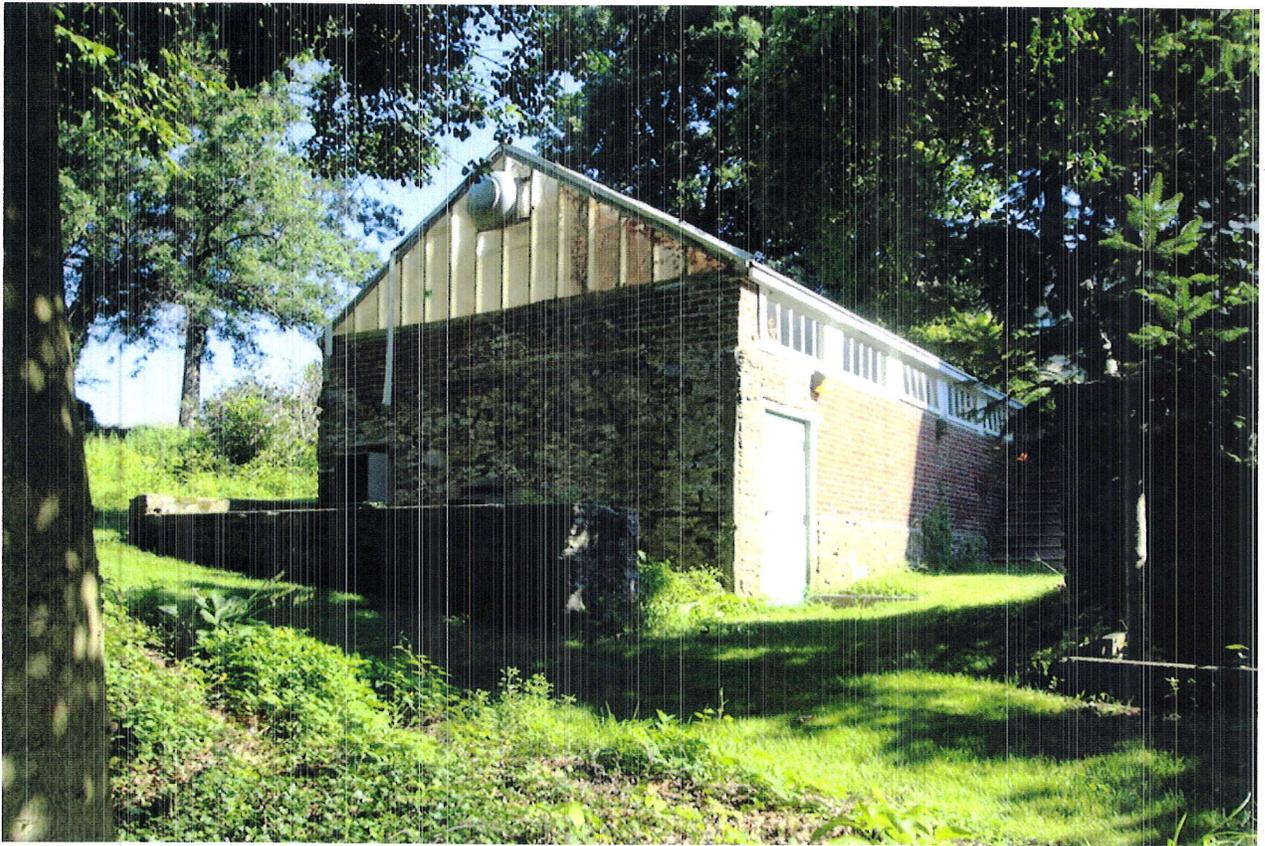
8



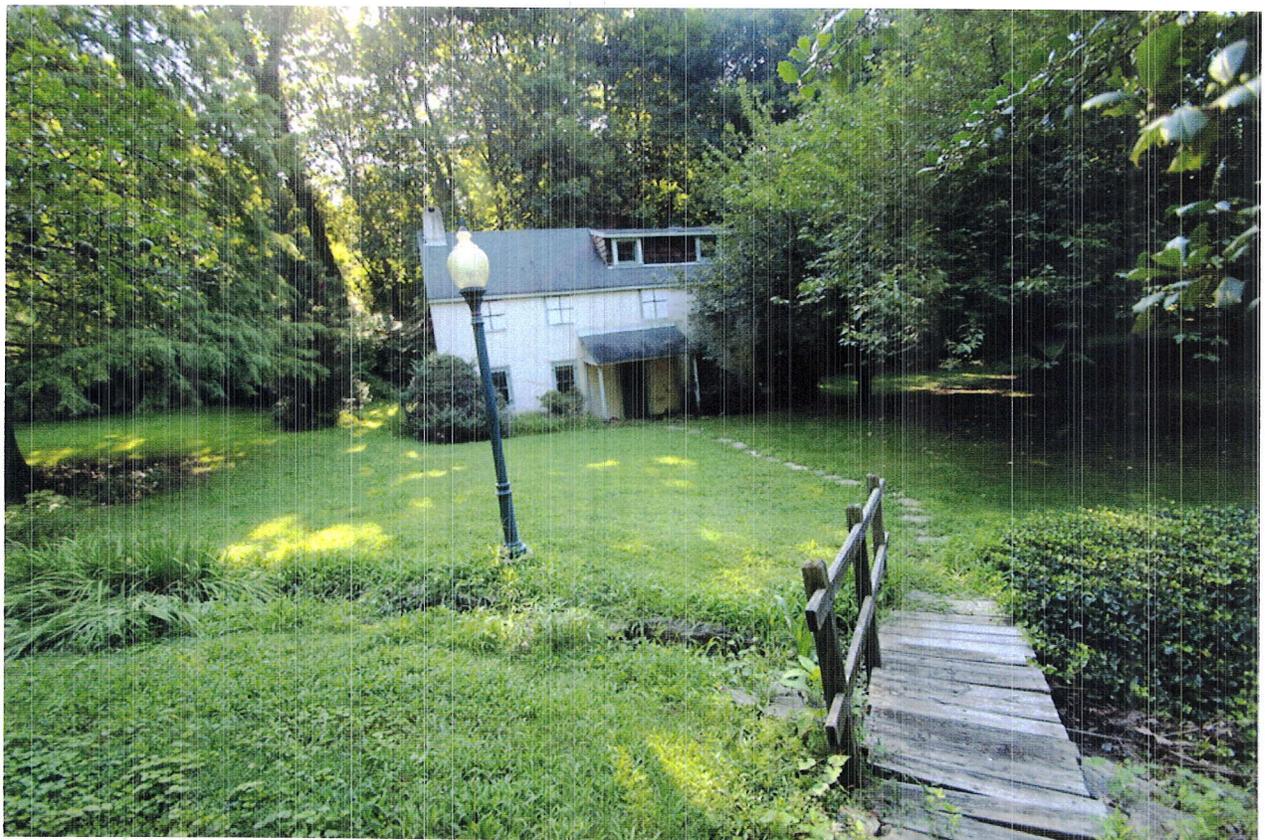
9



10



11



12



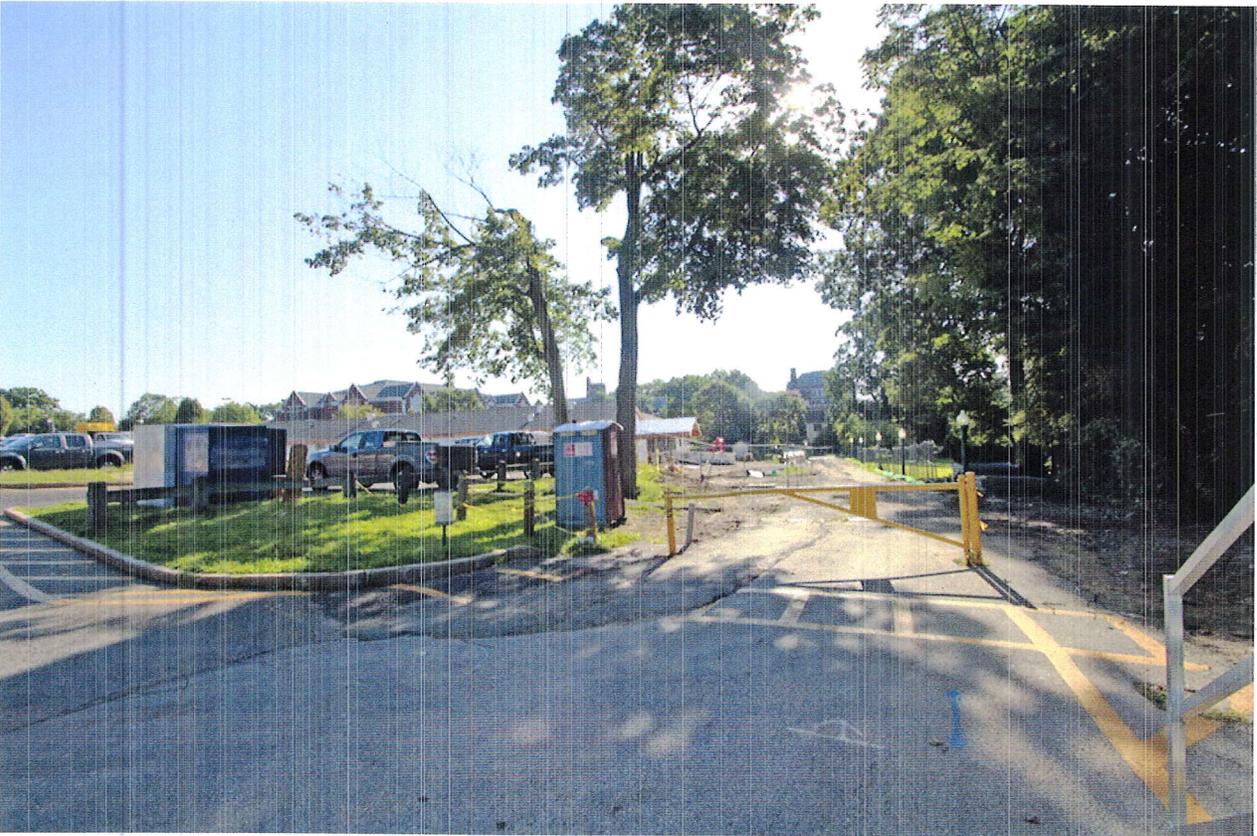
13



14



15



16



17



18

