

**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 an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **5250 Wayne Avenue**

Postal code: **19144**

Councilmanic District: **8**

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: **Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate**

Common Name: **New Covenant Baptist Church**

**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: **Vacant**

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

**6. DESCRIPTION**

**SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

[See Attached Sheet]

Period of Significance (from year to year): from

**1910 to 1970**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

**1910-12**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

**Wilson, Harris, & Richards, Architects**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

**Thomas Reilly, Contactor**

Original owner:

**M.E. Church of the Advocate**

Other significant persons:

**Henry A. Romberger (1854-1925)**

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- X **(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
- X **(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,
- X **(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
- X **(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.**

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography.

**SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

**9. NOMINATOR: PENN KNOX NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

Name with Title	<b>Sue Patterson, President</b>	Email	suepatterson1@gmail.com
	<b>Oscar Beisert, Author</b>		keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org
Street Address	<b>6 E. Johnson Street</b>	Telephone	<b>717.602.5002</b>
City, State, and Postal Code:	<b>Philadelphia, PA 19144</b>	Date	<b>20 April 2016.</b>
Nominator <input type="checkbox"/> are	<b>X</b> are not the property owners.		

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 10/26/2016

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 11/14/2016

Date of Notice Issuance: 11/14/2016

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: New Covenant Baptist Church Missionary

Address: 5250 Wayne Ave

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19144

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

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

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

Designated  Rejected

*Nomination for the  
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places*



Looking southwest, the primary elevation. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

**The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate**  
*Featuring the Romberger Tower*  
5250 Wayne Avenue  
Germantown  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate  
5250 Wayne Avenue, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2016–Page 1*

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description of the proposed designation is as follows:

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected.

Situate in Germantown in the 12th Ward formerly part of the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia and described according to a survey made by Joseph C. Wagner, surveyor and regulator of the ninth district, on thirtieth day of April A. D. 1900 as follows to wit:

Beginning at the southerly corner of Wayne Avenue and Queen Street; thence extending along the south east side of said Queen Street thirty-nine degrees, fifty-nine minutes and fifty-five seconds west two hundred and eleven feet, eleven inches and seven-eighths of an inch to an angle or bend in said Queen Street and then still further along Said Queen street., South forty degrees, nineteen minutes and three seconds west two feet, two inches and three quarters of an inch to ground now or late of Laura Disston and thence partly along to the said ground now or late of Laura Disston and partly along ground now or late of the Estate of Charles Disston, deceased, South fifty degrees, twenty-eight minutes and fifty-seven seconds east ninety-nine feet, ten and seven-eighths inches to a point; thence North thirty-nine degrees, fifty-nine minutes and fifty-five seconds east two hundred and eighteen feet, one inch and one quarter of an inch to the southwest side of Wayne Avenue and thence along the said Wayne Avenue, North fifty-two degrees, forty-two minutes and thirty-five seconds west one hundred feet of the place of beginning.



Proposed boundary delineated in red. Courtesy Philadelphia Water.



Looking south, the subject building at the corner of the Wayne Avenue and W. Queen Lane.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

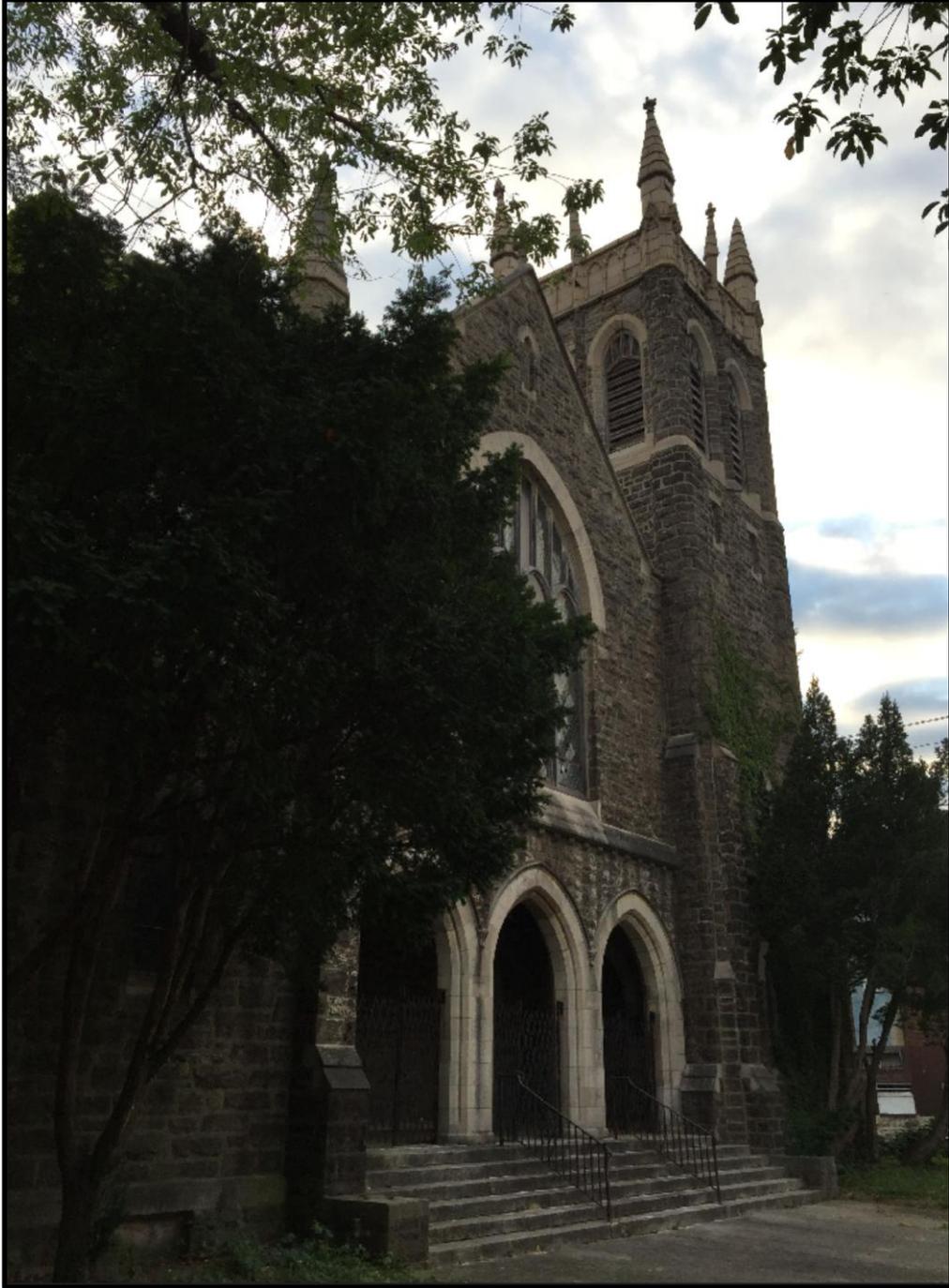
The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate is an impressive Gothic Revival church at 5250 Wayne Avenue (at the corner of W. Queen Lane) in Germantown. Built between 1910 and 1912, the church stands in a dense section of Germantown that largely consists of residential and institutional properties from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Built entirely of local, Holmesburg stone, the subject building is defined by a wide central entrance and side tower, embodying both form and massing that evidence the continued influence of the Victorian taste in ecclesiastical architecture. Like earlier Gothic Revival designs, the massing emphasizes horizontality, being set off by a tower, as many similar buildings were in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The gracious central entrance is within the gable front including the primary entrance set within a Galilee porch at the first floor and a large, central leaded-glass window occupying the upper floors. The Galilee entrance porch is essentially a loggia recessed within the main structure of the building and is accessed by a short flight of five stone steps. A line of three blunt arches form the pedestrian openings to the porch, which are fully delineated by architraves made of limestone blocks. Within the loggia are several sets of double wide entrances. Within the north-facing elevation there are two arched openings, and an addition set of double doors exist at the east- and west-facing elevations of the loggia. Each of the double-door entrances feature arched openings with wooden,

*Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate  
5250 Wayne Avenue, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
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panled doors and large arched, wooden transoms with a muntin profile emulating tracery. There are remnants of mosaic tile around the parameter of the floor within the porch interior. On the east-facing wall of the tower within the porch is a copper plaque dedicating the tower to Henry A. Romberger.



Looking west, the primary elevation. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

The large, central arched window contains a wooden Gothic window with simple  
*Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate*  
*5250 Wayne Avenue, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*  
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perpendicular tracery and a large expanse of leaded glass. A small, but visible section of the leaded glass has been damaged and is open to the elements. Indiana limestone delineates the haunches of the arch, as well as the massive sill, which also separates the lower from the upper floors. A small arched niche rises above the window at center. The haunches of the arch and the sill is also delineated by Indiana limestone. A simple limestone hip knob is present in the form of a poppyhead at the pinnacle of the west work's gable end. At the east end of the gable is a spire of Indiana limestone.



Looking southwest, the primary elevation. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

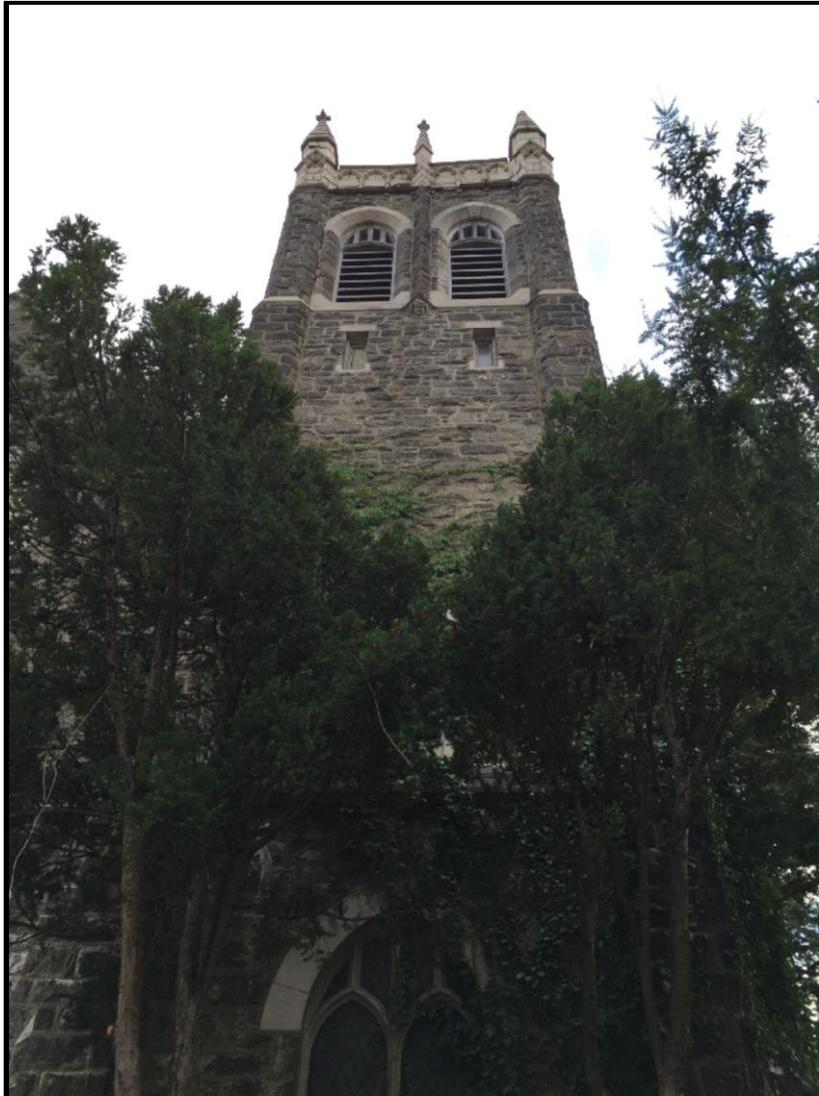
The central section of the primary elevation is flanked by a low section at the east and the Romberger Tower at the west. Between the central and eastern sections of the primary façade are two buttresses that feature amortizements. At the termination of the buttress is a slender tourelle in the form of a pepperbox turret with limestone shingles and a poppyhead finial.

The low section at the east is a simple, but fortified façade that features two apertures. The lower floor retains rectangular window, while the upper floor features a small arched window with a leaded glass sash. The haunches of the arch and the sills are delineated by limestone. Buttresses are also present at the northeast corner of the building. The Romberger Tower is

The Romberger Tower is set within the northwest corner of the edifice, dominating corner of Wayne Avenue and W. Queen Lane. The tower is essentially just over three

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stories in height. Angle buttresses with amortizement features at each story are present at each corner of the structure. At the center of the primary elevation of the Romberger Tower is a small arched window at the first floor, and a slightly larger window within the second floor. The third level of the tower features a pair of arched louvered windows, set off by the limestone haunches and sills. At the termination of the angle buttresses is a slender tourelle at each corner of the tower in the form of a pepperbox turret with limestone shingles and a poppyhead finial. At the center of each elevation of the tower are individual limestone spires. One of the spires has fallen off the building and is laying in the grass to the west of the tower.



Looking southwest, the Romberger Tower. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southwest, the date of completion at the corner of the Romberger Tower.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

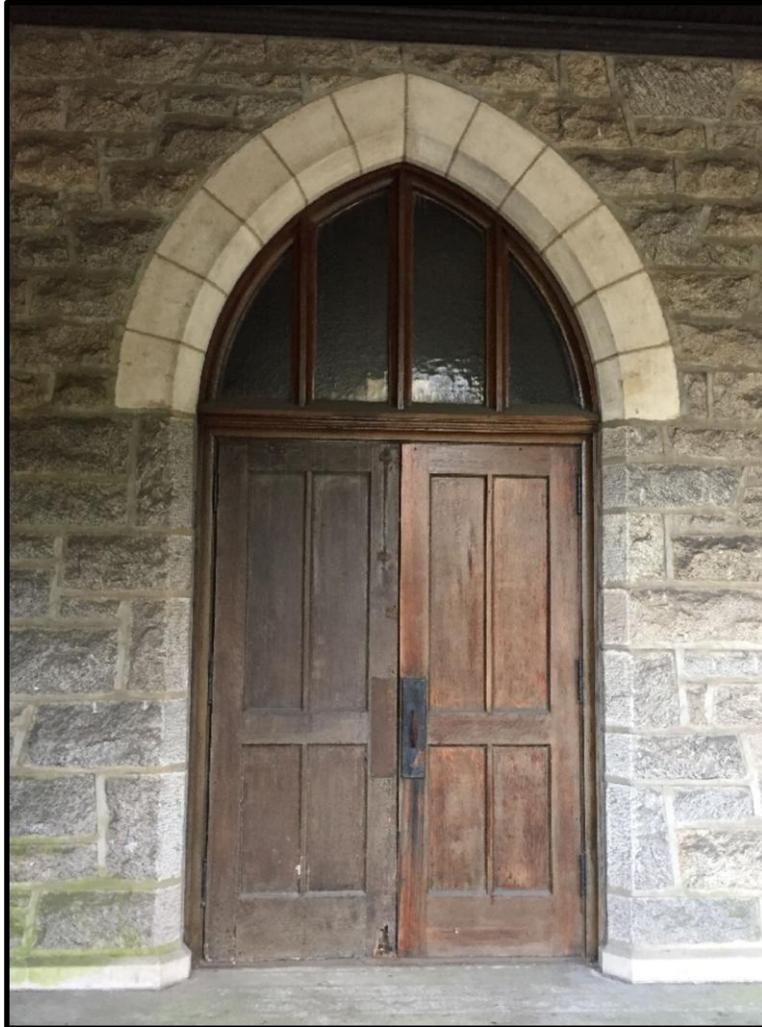
At the northwest corner of the Romberger Tower is a buttress facing north that features a limestone amortizement beneath which is a smooth faced limestone plaque, bearing the date of construction—1911.



Looking southwest, the primary elevation of the subject building. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southwest, the Galilee porch of the subject building. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



Looking southeast, a primary entrance within the Galilee porch.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southeast, the arched openings of the Galilee porch. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

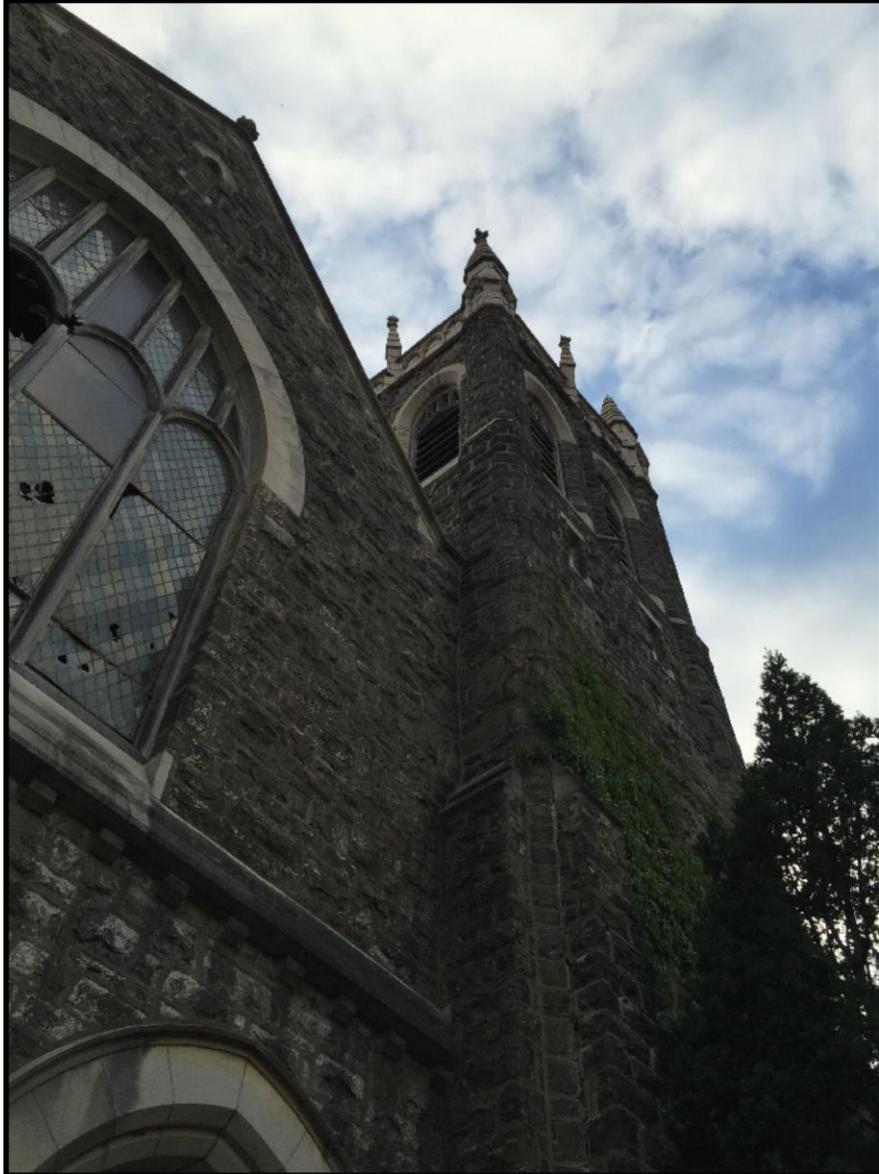
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Looking northwest, the dedication plaque for the Romberger Tower within the Galilee porch.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Taken within the Galilee porch showing the mosaic tile border. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

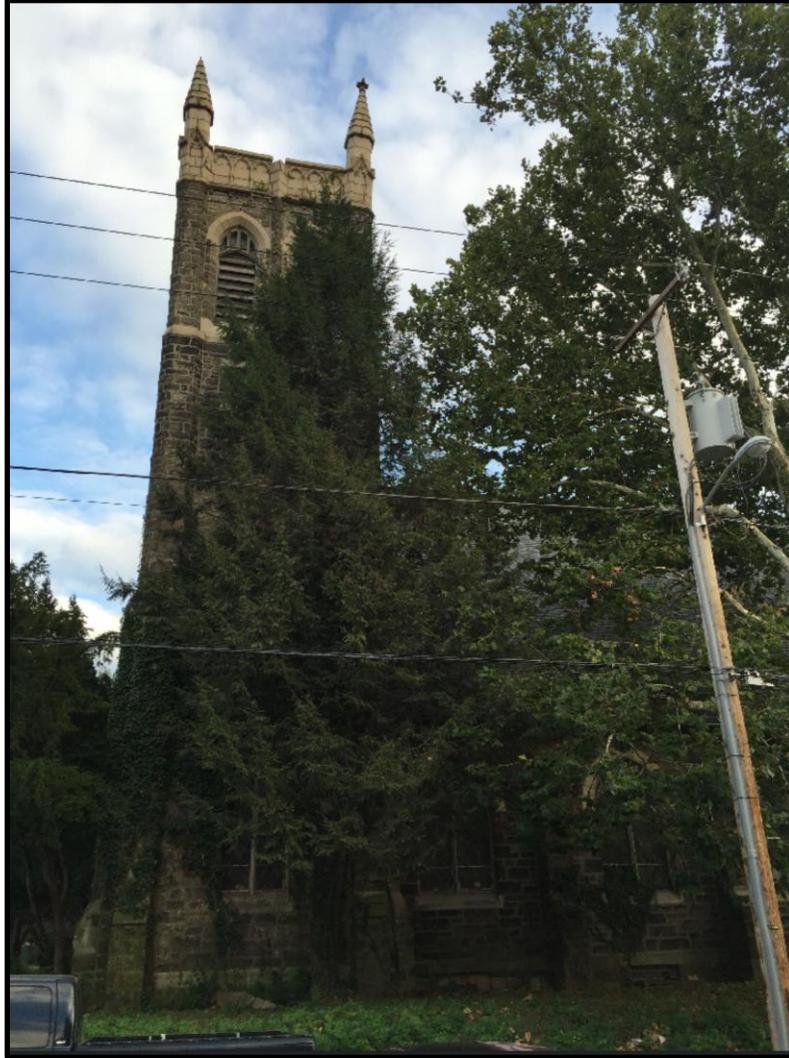


Looking west, the Romberger Tower. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking south, the primary elevation. Courtesy Oscar Beisert

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Looking southeast, the Romberger Tower. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking northeast, the Romberger Tower. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

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Looking southeast at broken spire (arrow pointing to spire location below).  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Courtesy Oscar Beisert..



Looking northeast, the Queen Lane elevation of the church. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

Beyond the primary elevation the east and west facades of the nave retain vibrant Gothic Revival fenestrations of arched windows with tracery. There are five large windows per side. The two northern and two southern most windows feature leaded glass within the tracery, while the central window on each side features stained glass. This fenestration is delineated further by buttresses that mimic those found within the primary elevation. The haunches of the arches and the sills are also delineated in limestone.

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Looking northeast, the Queen Lane elevation of the subject church. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

At the southeast and southwest corners of the nave are slender tourelles that have been articulated in the form of a pepperbox turret with limestone shingles and a poppyhead finial.



Looking southwest, the dividing line between the house of worship and the educational facilities.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southeast. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

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Looking southeast, standard window type within the house of worship. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

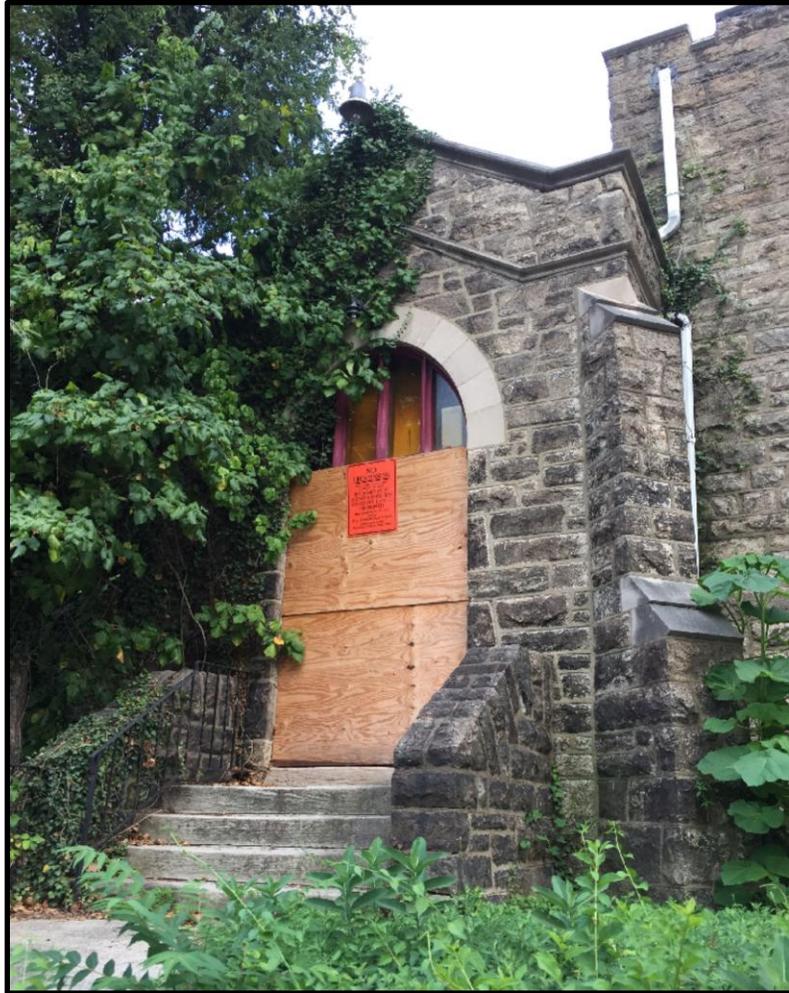


Looking southeast, standard basement window within the house of worhsip. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southeast, standard window type within the educatinal facility. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

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Looking east, primary entrance to the rear, educational section of the building.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southeast, educational facility of the building. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southeast, the educational facility of the building. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking east, the educational facility of the building. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southeast, gateway at rear of the building. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert



Looking north, the rear of the primary elevation. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert



Looking northwest, the side elevation showing the view of the primary elevation. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert



Looking west, the dividing line between the house of worship and the educational facility.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert



Looking southeast. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



Looking north, the rear of the house of worship. Courtesy Oscar Beisert



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking north, the rear of the house of worship. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking west, the side elevation of the educational facility. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking west, the rear of the educational facility. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

The secondary structure appending the nave for the purpose of the former congregation's Sunday School and other programs. This is a complicated section of the building in terms of apertures and is essentially stylized in the same manner.



Looking southwest, a side entrance to the educational facility. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking west, the educational facility. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



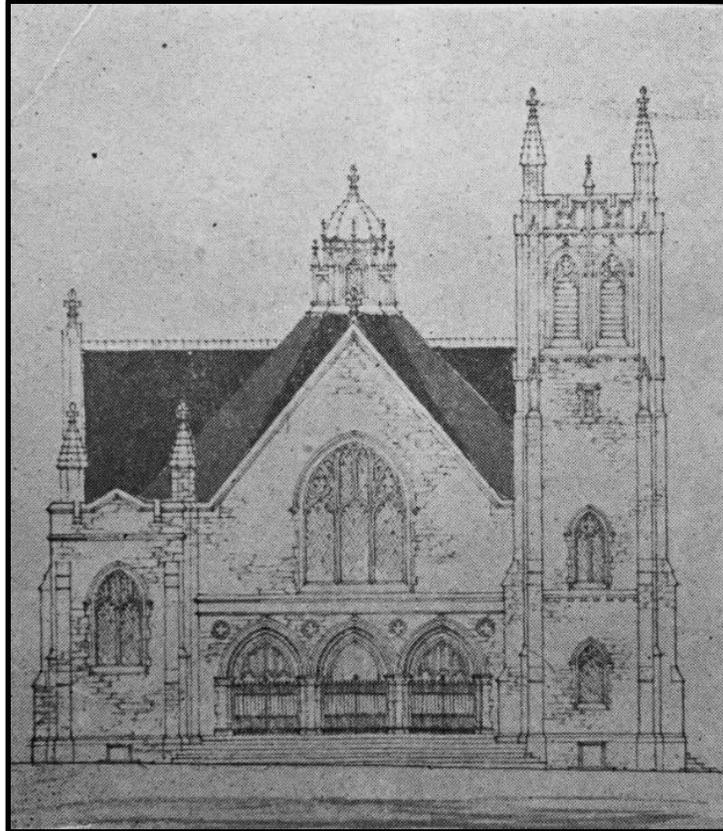
The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking northwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



The red circle placed upon this aerial of the subject building shows the location of the above photograph.  
Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Queen Street Elevation of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate by Wilson, Harris & Richards, c. 1907. This design was only partly realized. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate at 5250 Wayne Avenue is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia, the building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- 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;*
- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;*
- (e) *Is the work of an architectural firm that significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City of Philadelphia; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

*The period of significance is from for the aforementioned criteria is 1907-1970.*

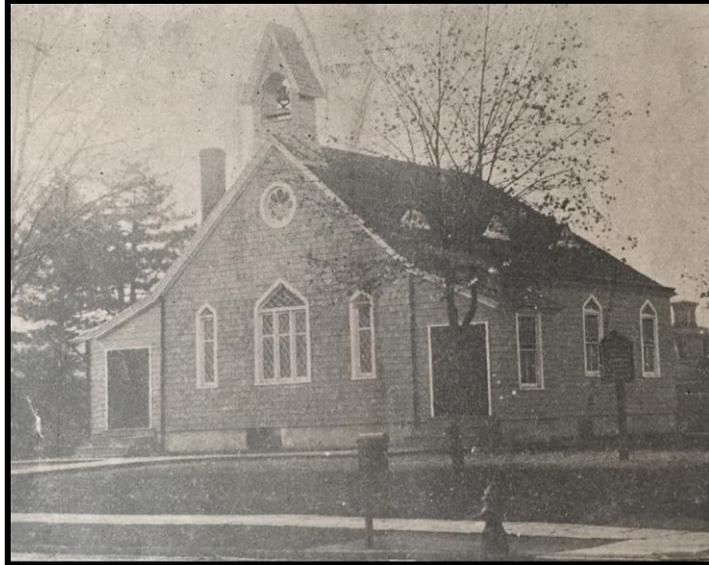
## **CRITERION J**

The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate at the southeast corner of Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social and historical heritage of a Methodist Episcopal congregation in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. With a period of significance between 1910 and 1970, the congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate was an incredibly vibrant religious institution of Germantown. Beyond serving as a place of worship in the neighborhood, the congregation of more than 700 parishioners was involved in the following programs: apportioned benevolences, Christian stewardship, education—both general and religious, the “Education of Negroes,” the examination of local preachers, home and foreign missions, musical performance and education, providing the proper medical care to all through hospital, and the temperance movement. In the age before vast social services provided by the Federal, state and local governments, the services provided by large congregations were essential to a community’s health and vibrancy. The history of the congregation that took place between 1910 and 1925 represents the cultural, political, economic, social and historical heritage of Methodist Episcopalians in Germantown and the relationship of the congregation to the community through the services it provided.

## **CRITERION A**

As the City of Philadelphia grew in the late nineteenth century and Germantown became a densely populated suburb, Sunday Schools of various denominations were established and enlarged. Some of these establishments were to enlarge the capacity and services of the denomination, while others were wrought out of religious differences. The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate has significant character, interest and value as part of the development of Philadelphia, representing the enlargement of Germantown through its essential religious institutions—in this case, the Methodist Episcopal Church. The building was first a “low frame building” and later an impressive Gothic Revival facility, which represents the enlargement of this specific congregation, but also the larger development of Germantown as one of the most important suburbs of Philadelphia. The list of members by 1925 evidences a diverse membership that includes both Old Philadelphia families, as well as those more recently known in Germantown.

In addition, the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate was built by the oldest Methodist congregation in Germantown. Interestingly, the church is also a rare example of a congregation erected by its own congregation rather than through a direct sponsorship of its mother church.



The Ethel Memorial Chapel of the West Side Mission at W. Penn and Morris Streets, Germantown, c. 1890s. Pamphlet: *The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Germantown and the Thirty-Second Anniversary of the Sunday School, Organized and Conducted for Seven Years by St. Stephen's Church. Program of Services and Events to be held Sunday, December Fourth, to Sunday, Eleventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-one.* Privately published. Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

### **Historic Context: West Side Mission—Ethel Memorial Chapel**

The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate was founded in the fall of 1889 as a Sunday School of St. Stephen's Methodist Episcopal Church on the west side of Germantown.<sup>1</sup> Four or five members of St. Stephen's Methodist Episcopal Church (now called Advocate St. Stephen's United Methodist Church) started holding services in a "private house," a modest two-story row house at 405 W. Queen Lane.<sup>2</sup> The founding congregation, St. Stephen's Methodist Episcopal Church, is at present the oldest Methodist congregation in Germantown, and was founded in 1856 by Chestnut Hill Methodist Episcopal Church (now Chestnut Hill United Church).<sup>3</sup>

Originally known as the "West Side Mission of St. Stephen's Church," the congregation soon outgrew its first meeting place, and eventually rented two rooms for its purposes.<sup>4</sup> The first recorded meeting of the congregation was January 2, 1890.<sup>5</sup> It is said that there

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<sup>1</sup> "Germantown Church is Now 25 Years Old, Week's Observance of Advocate Church Begins Tomorrow," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 3 December 1921.

<sup>2</sup> "Methodists To Open Beautiful Church, Advocate Congregation Will Begin a Week of Special Services on Sunday, Child's Gift Started It," *The Germantown Independent-Gazette*. (Philadelphia: October 1912). Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>3</sup> "Philadelphia Letter," *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 16 June 1921.

<sup>4</sup> "Germantown Church is Now 25 Years Old, Week's Observance of Advocate Church Begins Tomorrow," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 3 December 1921.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffers, Miss Elsie M., Deaconess, and Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D., Pastor, *Directory, Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.* (1925), p. 17. Found

were just twenty members.<sup>6</sup> On January 15, 1891, Ethel Shingle of the Primary Department, died, making a bequest of money to the Sunday School.<sup>7</sup> Residing at 214 Queen Lane, her mother transferred the bequest to the Sunday School, which amounted to thirty-seven cents.<sup>8</sup> Despite the relatively immaterial amount of Ethel Shingle's savings, this bequest became a sort of moral seed for the congregation's future buildings.<sup>9</sup>

This [Ethel Shingle's bequest] became the nucleus for the building fund, and the name of the enterprise became officially known as the Ethel Memorial Church.<sup>10</sup>

A lot situated at the corner of Penn and Morris Streets was subsequently purchased and according to the church history, a frame church was erected there in the summer of 1895. Before the erection of the chapel, the Sunday School did not have a regular minister. However, by the time the building was complete in November 1895, a "regular minister" was appointed; however, this minister only served a few weeks. Finally, in March 1898, Rev. W. L. Shaw was appointed. The following succession occurred during the first twenty-five years:

1899, Rev. George L. Shaffer; 1901, Rev. S. M. Thompson; 1904, Rev. Henry S. Noon; 1907, Rev. W. H. Bisbing; 1910, Rev. Gladstone Holm; 1916, Rev. J. Purman Shook; 1923, Rev. Robert C. Wells.<sup>11</sup>

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in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup> "Build New Church Around Old One," Unknown Publication. (Philadelphia: 1910). Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society. Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffers, Miss Elsie M., Deaconess, and Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D., Pastor, *Directory, Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.* (1925), p. 17. Found in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>8</sup> "Broke Ground for New Church," unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 28 March 1910). Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup> "Build New Church Around Old One," unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 1910). Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffers, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> "Germantown Church is Now 25 Years Old, Week's Observance of Advocate Church Begins Tomorrow," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 3 December 1921. Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

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Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2016—Page 40



Left to right: 1901, Rev. S.M. Thompson; 1904, Rev. Henry S. Noon; 1907, Rev. W.H. Bisbing; 1910, 1916, Rev. J. Purman Shook; 1923, Rev. Robert C. Wells. Pamphlet: *The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Germantown and the Thirty-Second Anniversary of the Sunday School, Organized and Conducted for Seven Years by St. Stephen's Church. Program of Services and Events to be held Sunday, December Fourth, to Sunday, Eleventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-one.* Privately published. Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

The Ethel Memorial Chapel at the northwest corner of W. Penn and Morris Streets was a "California shingle clad frame chapel" that was built by the membership of St. Stephen's Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>12</sup> The chapel was situated upon land owned by the Pennsylvania Railroad, which was rented to the congregation for a "moderate" fee.<sup>13</sup>

During the pastorate of Rev. Samuel Thompson (1904-1907) the church enlarged its capacity both "spiritually and financially" so much so that it purchased a lot at the southeast corner of Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane.<sup>14</sup> On behalf of the congregation, Trustees Edwin Gillinder, Edward Perry, and Edward Lukens purchased the site from Robert P. Braun and wife on April 28, 1905 for \$16,500.<sup>15</sup>

Under the new leadership of Rev. Noon, the congregation removed there in 1905:

The old church is a low frame structure, which first began serving the congregation in 1890 at 10<sup>th</sup> and Morris Streets. It was moved from there on rollers to Wayne Ave. and Queen lane., five years ago and rapid growth necessitated the new church, followed.<sup>16</sup>

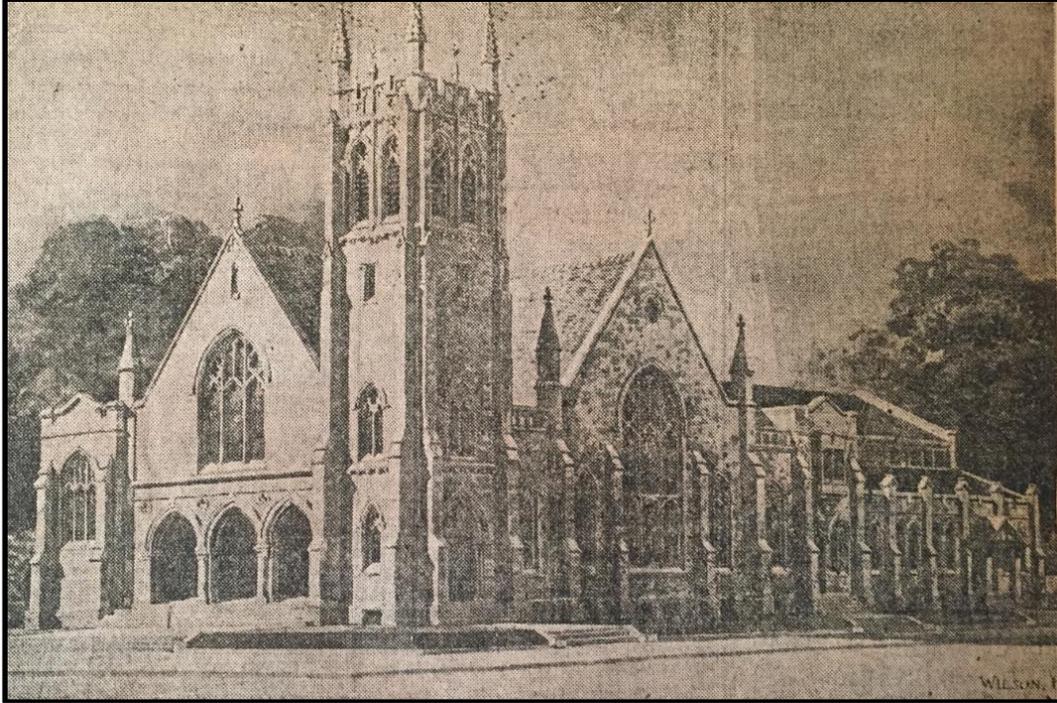
<sup>12</sup> "New Churches and Parsonages," Minutes and Missionary Report, 109th Session of the Philadelphia Conference. Philadelphia: 1896, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffers, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Deed: Recorded on 28 April 1905 in Philadelphia Deed Book W. S. V. No. 400 p. 338.

<sup>16</sup> "Build New Church Around Old One," unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 1910). Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.



Architectural Rendering of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate by Wilson, Harris & Richards. Published on November 10, 1907. This design was only partly realized. Source: Scrapbook on churches in Germantown. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

### **Historic Context: The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate**

At the time of their relocation in 1905, the growing congregation was incorporated as the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate. Trustees Edwin Gillinder, Edward Perry, and Edward Lukens transferred it to the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate on December 2, 1905 for the sum of one dollar. No buildings stood on the site at the time of purchase.<sup>17</sup>

On the new site, the chapel was enlarged at a cost of \$3,200.<sup>18</sup> Contractor M. C. Warren completed the work of erecting a one-story frame addition to the existing building.<sup>19</sup> Despite these improvements, the congregation planned to erect a new house of worship once they had raised the funds.

On November 10, 1907, it was announced that the architectural firm of Wilson, Harris & Richards (fl. 1902-1910) had prepared plans for a “\$100, church and Sunday school” fronting 80 feet on Wayne Avenue and 170 feet on Queen Lane. A first floor auditorium was designed to seat 600 persons. In the basement, a lecture room was designed to seat 650. The Sunday School section of the building was designed to accommodate 250 in a main room with an infant room for 100 children.

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<sup>17</sup> Deed: Recorded on 2 December 1905 in Philadelphia Deed Book W. S. V. No. 545 p. 471.

<sup>18</sup> “Philadelphia Conference,” Official Journal and Yearbook of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, One Hundred Nineteenth Session. Philadelphia: 1906, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> “The Latest News in Real Estate Business...,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 25 September 1896.

Designed in the Gothic style, it will be built of a light stone, and will have an imposing church tower...<sup>20</sup>

The article also announced that construction was to begin in spring of 1908; however it appears that fundraising took much longer. The congregation would spearhead its own fundraising efforts to pay for its new house of worship. This is atypical. Most commonly, congregations founded and sponsored by well-established, Mainline Protestant ‘mother churches’ did not build permanent houses of worship on their own. Rather, mother churches both acquired property and erected permanent houses of worship on behalf of their ‘daughter churches’ before those daughter churches became independent congregations.

Even before construction of its new building began, the congregation was highly active with a Board of Trustees, a Board of Stewards, a Sunday School, an Epworth League, a Men’s Association, a Ladies’ Auxiliary, a Women’s Foreign Mission Society, a Women’s Home Mission Society, a Young Women’s Foreign Mission Society, a Queen Esther Circle, a King’s Herald Club, and the Choir.<sup>21</sup> The church also had its own publication, *The Advocate Herald*, which was published under the leadership of the Young Men’s Bible Class. Charles E. Chapin served as editor in the years before the new building was constructed. The Associate Editors included John R. Chapin, Sunday School; Howard E. Towner, Senior Epworth League; Miss Hazel Ward, Junior League; Harry S. Griffith, Men’s Association; Mrs. Charles Riday, Ladies Auxiliary; and Miss Margaret Mitchell, Women’s Foreign Mission Society. The Subscription Managers were Leon W. Scott and Miss Nellie Horn. The Staff Stenographers were Miss Elsie Firth and Chauncey Smith, Jr. The Business Manager was Benjamin R. Ballentine, listed at 5112 Marion Street, Germantown. The Christmas publication mentioned the following about the new building:

The plans for a new church building have materialized in such an encouraging manner as to be beyond our most sanguine expectations, although we know that all things are possible with God. If we did not seize the present opportunity, we would be remiss to the trust imposed upon us.

It is either forward or backward. We must go forward. Forward in the Master’s name to spend and be spent in His service, as it is presented to us in our Church Home.

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<sup>20</sup> “Proposed Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. (Philadelphia: 10 November 1907). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>21</sup> Pamphlet: Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Germantown, Philadelphia, Calendar For Sunday, April 13, 1913 and the week following... Privately published. Found as a program in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

A congregational meeting has ratified the action of the Trustees in awarding the contract for a new structure. Sound business ethics, marked by a spirit of conservatism has characterized the attitude of the Board. One and all may feel satisfied that a stately edifice will be erected, consistent with the needs of our organization for years and years to come and at the same time not be a financial burden to bear.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Germantown Independent Gazette, between 1910 and 1912, the congregation raised \$26,500. These efforts were partly attributed to the pastorate of Rev. J.P. Shook, who assumed his position in 1910.<sup>23</sup>

As part of the planning efforts to construct a “permanent building” a committee was established, which included the following members: F. F. Mitchell, E. F. Lukens, E. B. Gillinder, and E. R. Perry. Five years after purchasing the site, the congregation’s dream of erecting a new, permanent house of worship was finally being realized. The building contract was awarded to Thomas Reilly for \$75,000, an evolving total cost of construction.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Chapin, Charles E. “Christmas Number,” *The Advocate Herald*. (Philadelphia: December 1909), p. 4. Found in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>23</sup> “New Pastor at Advocate Church,” unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 1910). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>24</sup> “Contract for New Church,” Unknown Publication. (Philadelphia: n.d.). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.



“Breaking Ground For New Church In Germantown, Mrs. Dearnley Lifting First Shovel Of Earth” Published in 1910. Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the church scrapbook of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

Ground for the new building was broken on Saturday, March 26, 1910. Emma Dearnley, the oldest member of the congregation, took the first “spadeful of dirt” at the groundbreaking ceremony.<sup>25</sup> The following day, *The Christian Advocate*, a Methodist Episcopal journal, reported:

The building will be of local stone, in the Gothic style of architecture, with a frontage of 67 feet on Wayne Avenue and a depth, including the Sunday school structure, of 167 feet... At the corner, where the two streets intersect, will rise a stately tower.<sup>26</sup>

The sanctuary section of the building measures 55 by 70 feet, and can seat up to 600 (including the capacity of the balcony).<sup>27</sup> Designed by Wilson, Harris & Richards, the Gothic Revival style building was constructed of local Holmesburg granite with Indiana limestone trim.<sup>28 29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “Break Ground for New Church in Germantown, Mrs. Dearnley Lifting First Shovel of Earth,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. (Philadelphia: n.d.). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>26</sup> “A Fine Beginning,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 7 April 1910.

<sup>27</sup> “A Fine Beginning,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 7 April 1910.

<sup>28</sup> PHMC Cultural Resources Database, “Methodist Church of the Advocate.” Inventory Identification No. 53600.

One drawback of new construction was locating a temporary worship site. In planning for the new building, the congregation decided to remain in its chapel during construction. The story was reported by several newspapers of the day:

The new church is being built around the old one. When the congregation decided, recently, to build a new church, it had plenty of money for the project and plenty of ground, but didn't know what to do for a place of worship while the new edifice was going up. It wasn't until somebody at one of the meetings suddenly thought of having the new church built up around the old one that the way out of the difficulty was seen.

The plan was worked out by the architect, and now the church is growing up to its newer form out of the old one, are placidly going on using the chrysalis, undisturbed by the process of growth.

During the process of building not a service or a weekly prayer or society meeting has been interrupted. On recent Sundays—since the four walls have been up—passerby in the neighborhood at church time have been puzzled by the bell that calls the flock together. The belfry is entirely hidden by the new walls, and the sound of the bells, coming from a rough, unfinished structure, gives rise to amazement in the breast of the passing stranger.<sup>30</sup>

The congregation began worshipping in the building in 1910—although the dedication ceremony would not take place until June of 1911, when the building was fully completed. When fully completed, the building included a sanctuary outfitted with an organ, a hall for gatherings, and “the accessories needful to a modern Sunday school.”<sup>31</sup>

In February of 1912, a week-long celebration of “Opening Services” began. The special services were led by Bishop W. F. Anderson of Chattanooga, Tennessee and Rev. Gladstone Holm, pastor of the subject congregation.<sup>32</sup> The festivities raised roughly \$21,000 to make a total of \$47,500 in donations and subscriptions in just two years. The celebration included all manner of activities, dinners, and worship services, as described through one example below:

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<sup>29</sup> “Church of the Advocate,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 16 June 1910.

<sup>30</sup> “Build New Church Around Old One,” unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 1910). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>31</sup> “Church Activities,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 15 December 1910.

<sup>32</sup> “Methodists To Open Beautiful Church, Advocate Congregation Will Begin a Week of Special Services on Sunday, Child's Gift Started It,” *The Germantown Independent-Gazette*. (Philadelphia: October 1912). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

On Tuesday evening the well-equipped gymnasium, under the charge of Charles E. Chapin, physical instructor, will be formally opened. Professor Frederick Findeley, physical instructor at Girard College will make an address and the wrestling and gymnasium teams of the University of Pennsylvania will give exhibitions in their respective fields of physical education.<sup>33</sup>

On a Wednesday evening, a love feast and praise service was held to close the dedication services. On Thursday, the Ladies Auxiliary held a chicken supper. On Friday, the fourth quarter conference was held. All of these activities and more were held in celebration of the opening of the new building.<sup>34</sup>



The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, c. 1918. Jeffers, Miss Elsie M., Deaconess, and Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D., Pastor, *Directory, Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.* (1925), p. 17. Found in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>33</sup> “Raised \$21,000 at Opening of Church,” *Germantown Independent-Gazette*. (Philadelphia: 18 February 1912). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>34</sup> “Raised \$21,000 at Opening of Church,” *Germantown Independent-Gazette*. (Philadelphia: 18 February 1912). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

The Germantown Independent Gazette estimated that the entire cost of the building and its lot was \$105,000. At the time of completion, the Building Committee included Edward R. Perry, Edwin B. Gillinder, Frederick Y. Shoyer, Edward F. Lukens, Amos Wakelin, and Frank F. Mitchell. The church was described as follows at the time of its completion:

The church is a free treatment of English Gothic.<sup>35</sup>

In 1916, Rev. Gladstone Holm—who had served the congregation since 1910—moved on. Holm is credited with building the current structure. Although plans for it had been prepared and a contractor had been selected prior to his pastorate, no funds for construction had been raised. He was also credited with positioning the congregation for “aggressive work along all lines” and a “future full of the promise of great usefulness.”<sup>36</sup>

Rev. J. P. Shook took Holm’s place, beginning a successful pastorate in which “the people have captured the preacher’s heart and he has captured theirs.”<sup>37</sup> After one year of serving the congregation, the membership increased Shook’s salary five hundred dollars; and after two years of serving the congregation, the membership increased his salary another two hundred fifty dollars.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to serving Church of the Advocate as pastor, Shook delivered five sermons per week for six weeks annually during the summer at Camp Sevier and Camp Jackson—both WWI training camps (and later WWII training camps) in South Carolina.<sup>39</sup>

Year after year, Shook welcomed new members into the church. Between 1916 and 1921, four hundred fifty individuals became members and over one hundred sixty thousand dollars was raised for the purposes of doing community-serving programming as well as caring for the building.<sup>40</sup>

In 1917, Henry A. Romberger, a wealthy hosiery manufacturer and Germantown resident, offered to match \$10,000 if the church could raise the funds, which was intended for use in purchasing a parsonage site.<sup>41</sup> That same year, the congregation paid

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<sup>35</sup> “Methodists To Open Beautiful Church, Advocate Congregation Will Begin a Week of Special Services on Sunday, Child’s Gift Started It,” *The Germantown Independent-Gazette*. (Philadelphia: October 1912). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>36</sup> “Philadelphia Conference,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 6 April 1916.

<sup>37</sup> “Philadelphia Conference,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 29 June 1916.

<sup>38</sup> “Philadelphia Conference,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 6 June 1918.

<sup>39</sup> “Philadelphia Conference,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 5 September 1918.

<sup>40</sup> “Philadelphia Letter,” *The Christian Advocate*. New York: 10 March 1921.

<sup>41</sup> “Offers Church \$10,000,” unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 1917). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

off the remaining debt associated with its new building. A total of \$37,000 had been raised, including the \$10,000 donation from Romberger.<sup>42</sup>

In 1919, a commemoration of WWI was created within the walls of the subject building. One publication described the memorial as follows:

As a tribute to the sixty-three members of the Methodist Church of the Advocate who served in the war, a bronze tablet bearing their names was unveiled in the church, Wayne avenue and Queen lane, last Sunday night.

The auditorium was decorated with a profusion of United States flags. The flags of the allies were banked behind the pulpit, and a portrait of Roosevelt also had a conspicuous place, in recognition of his birthday.<sup>43</sup>

By 1920, Romberger, then president of the Board of Trustees, had given more than \$50,000 to the congregation. In turn, the congregation memorialized his contributions with a plaque that was installed in the church.<sup>44</sup> Later, the church would memorialize his contributions by naming its tower after the generous benefactor.

In 1921, the congregation celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, which included an extensive program of activities, dinners, and religious services. Details of the festivities were described by the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*:

In the evening the speaker was the Rev. Dr. John G. Wilson, superintendent of the Northwest District. A feature of the evening program was the gradual illumination of a huge cross behind the pulpit, which was so arranged that it grew to great brilliancy as the auditorium was darkened.<sup>45</sup>

The anniversary celebration lasted for one full week—with a program taking place on Sunday, December 4—a full day of activities and religious services; Tuesday, December

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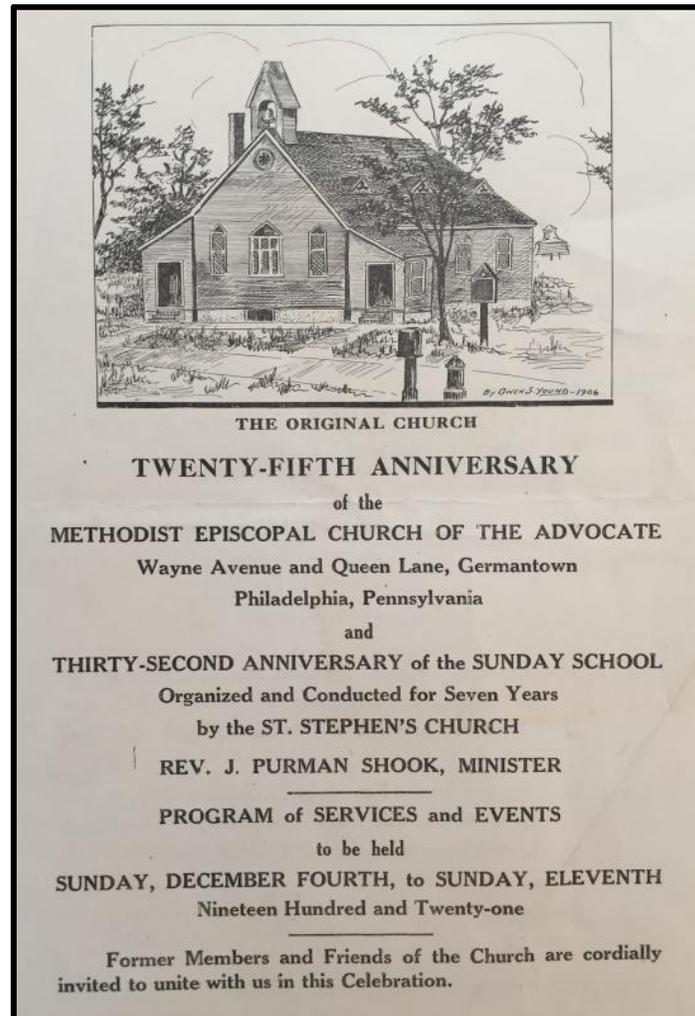
<sup>42</sup> “Advocate Church Pays Debt,” unknown publication. (Philadelphia: 1917). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>43</sup> “Tablet in Church for Its Soldiers,” unknown publication. (Philadelphia: October 1919). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>44</sup> “Donor of \$50,000 Honored in Church, Advocate Methodist Congregation Unveils a Tablet as a Tribute to H.A. Romberger, Bishop Berry Speaks,” unknown publication. (Philadelphia: June 1920). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>45</sup> “Church Marks 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. (Philadelphia: 8 December 1921). Found as a clipping in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

6: Anniversary Banquet; Wednesday, December 7: Union Service; Friday, December 9: Young People's Night; and Sunday, December 11: Former Pastors' Day.<sup>46</sup>



Pamphlet: The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Germantown and the Thirty-Second Anniversary of the Sunday School, Organized and Conducted for Seven Years by St. Stephen's Church. Program of Services and Events to be held Sunday, December Fourth, to Sunday, Eleventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-one. Privately published. Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

By 1925, the congregation was under the leadership of pastor Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D. and deaconess Miss Elsie M. Jeffers. The events and services of the church were reflected in their official directory. The administrative structure included the Minister; the Financial

<sup>46</sup> Pamphlet: The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Germantown and the Thirty-Second Anniversary of the Sunday School, Organized and Conducted for Seven Years by St. Stephen's Church. Program of Services and Events to be held Sunday, December Fourth, to Sunday, Eleventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-one. Privately published. Found as a clipping in the file on the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate" in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

Secretary—A. J. Keil; the Church Treasurer—Edward Fell Lukens; the Sexton—John Myers. A weekly calendar included Morning Worship, Bible School, Young People’s Meeting, and Evening Worship on Sundays; Gymnasium for the Boys on Monday nights; Gymnasium for the Girls on Wednesdays; and Mid-week Fellowship Service. The Official Board included Rev. William H. Ford, D. D., District Superintendent; Preacher-in-Charge, Rev. Wells; Rev. Peter Provost, Retired Minister; and Deaconess, Miss Jeffers. The Trustees included President Romberger; Frank F. Mitchell—Secretary; Edward F. Lukens—Treasurer; G.F. Townsend; Frederick J. Shoyer; Charles E. Riday; A. J. Keil; Willard S. Boothy; and Howard S. Roberts. There was a long list of official Stewards. In addition to the organizations mentioned in 1909, there were numerous committees: Apportioned Benevolences, Christian Stewardship, Foreign Missions, Home Missions and Church Extension, Tracts, Temperance, Education, Education of Negroes, Hospital, Church Records, Auditing, Parsonage and Furniture, Church Music, Examination of Local Preachers, Foreign Language Obligations, Religious Education, Tiers of Appeals, Estimating Ministerial Support, and Pastoral Relations.<sup>47</sup> At this time the church had a large membership, totaling nearly seven hundred or more persons, including locals as well as some living outside of town.<sup>48</sup>

### **Recent Past**

The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate now stands vacant, however, the congregation that built it lives on as Advocate St. Stephen’s Methodist Episcopal Church—the product of the merger of mother church St. Stephen’s and daughter Church of the Advocate. This merger took place in the 1970s.<sup>49</sup>

In 1983, Advocate St. Stephen’s United Methodist sold the building to New Covenant Baptist Church, a Missionary Baptist Church. The congregation paid one hundred thirty thousand dollars.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Jeffers, Miss Elsie M., Deaconess, and Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D., Pastor, *Directory, Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.* (1925), p. 15. Found in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffers, Miss Elsie M., Deaconess, and Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D., Pastor, *Directory, Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.* (1925), p. 25-41. Found in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>49</sup> Mote, Christopher. “Top Ten Significant, Vulnerable Churches,” Hidden City Philadelphia. Philadelphia: 19 April 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Recorded on 10 May 1983 in Philadelphia Deed Book E. F. P. No. 731 p. 258.



Left: a famous church of Center City, the Arch Street Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1862 at Arch and Broad Streets, is designed in the Gothic Revival style, as popular in the mid-nineteenth century. Despite this early date, the basic form of the primary elevation and the tower, not including the steeple, is quite similar to that of the subject building. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbooks. Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Right: a famous church of Germantown, the First Methodist Church, Germantown Avenue and High Street, has a similar tower and primary configuration to the subject building, while the entrance is through the tower. Source: Scrapbook of Germantown Churches. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

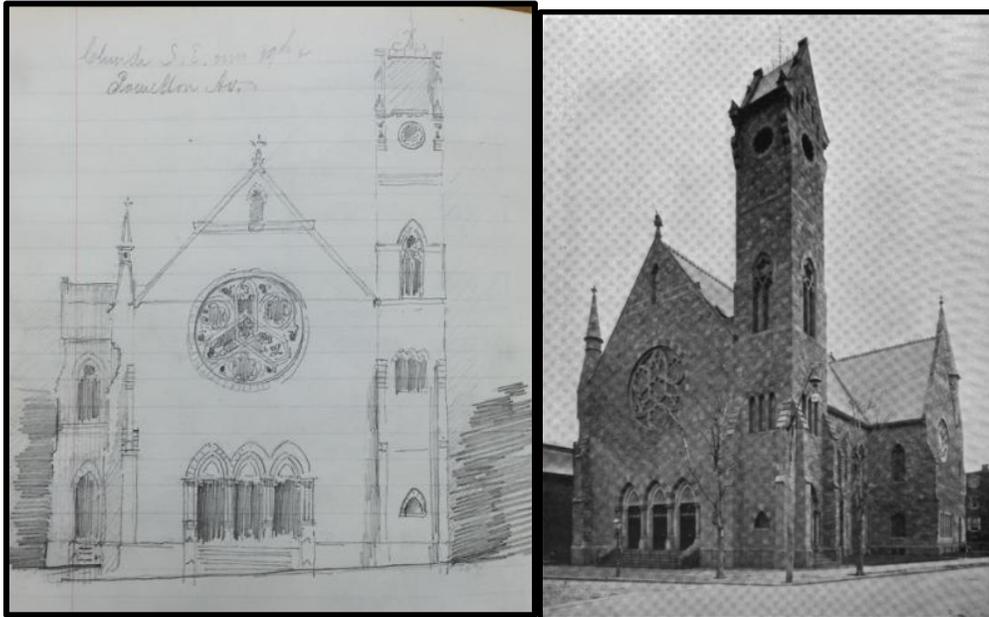
### **CRITERION C**

**The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate reflects the environment in an era of religious architecture that was characterized by the Gothic Revival style. Representing a transition stylistic period from Victorian to Neo-Gothic Revival, building was first designed in 1906-07, which was honed to the current appearance completed between 1910-11. The building is a unique combination of traditional academic and emerging modern forms of its period of construction. As a result, the subject building stands as an a distinctive example of the Gothic Revival style as reflective of context of religious architecture throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.**

At the turn of the twentieth century, modern forms began to emerge in church design that steered away from the motifs that were popular in the Victorian period. This transition is evident in stylistic details of the subject building, including the use of a Galilee porch in the design. This type of narthex was used historically in church design to allow penitent to wait in a semi-enclose area before admission. However, this feature had long been out of fashion and its use in the subject building might be viewed as a modern feature of a

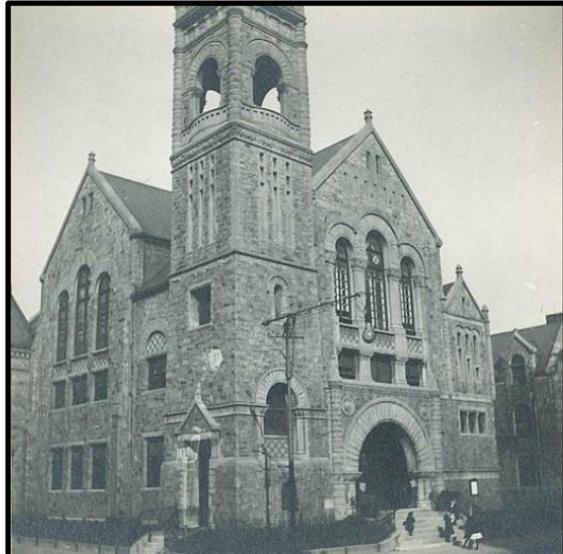
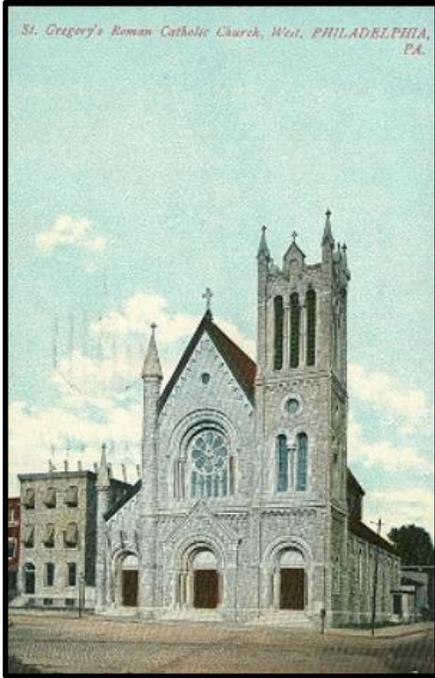
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Gothic Revival church edifice. Another characteristic that diverged from traditional design practiced in the Victorian period was the type of tracery used in the windows.



Princeton Church, built between 1858-1860 at the corner of Saunders and Powelton Avenues. Left: architectural rendering of Princeton Church. This mid-nineteenth century example of a Gothic Revival church has similarities in form and some stylistic details as the subject building. The tower is a prominent corner feature, but more indicative of the time of construction stylistically. The wide entrance features three arched openings like the subject church beneath a large central window, niche and finial within the gable end. Source: Manuscript Collection Number 359: Collins & Autenrieth Architectural Works. Courtesy University of Delaware. Right: photograph of Princeton Church. Source: *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia*. Courtesy Hathi Trust.

The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate is defined by a wide central entrance and side tower, embodying both form and massing that evidence the continued influence of the Victorian taste in ecclesiastical architecture. Like earlier Gothic Revival designs, the massing emphasizes horizontality, being set off by a tower, as many similar buildings were in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.



Left: St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church, West Philadelphia, c. 1900. Right: Union Church, c. 1900. Found in the Jane Campbell Collection. Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Earlier designs influenced all Gothic Revival church buildings. Philadelphia certainly has many examples of earlier and contemporary churches that were designed and constructed with similar forms and stylistic applications. The Arch Street Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1862 and is certainly a denominational antecedent to the subject building. It is similar in form with a massive tower and a central, gabled front. Another early example, built between 1858-1860, the Princeton Church in West Philadelphia is decidedly mid-nineteenth century in style; however, an original rendering shows the striking similarities between it and the subject building. It's important to note its primary entrance in the form of three arched openings within a gable front.

On October 3, 1884, the cornerstone of the Tabernacle Church was laid at Thirty-seventh and Chestnut Streets in West Philadelphia. This building featured a prominent tower at the corner with spires not dissimilar to the subject building. However, unlike the subject building, Tabernacle Church was designed with an entrance through the tower. A period design that included a similar form and massing is Grace Epiphany Episcopal Church at 224 East Gowen Avenue. This design dates to the 1880s—its cornerstone being laid in 1888 with consecration the next year.

Stylistic details of the subject building that derive from nineteenth century design and fashion include the spires found within the tower and at the rear of the sanctuary's roofline. The Calvary United Methodist Church is an earlier transitional building that represents Victorian-era form and massing. Completed just as the subject building was being designed in 1906, Calvary United Methodist Church features a tower with spires that manifested as diminutive conical towers.

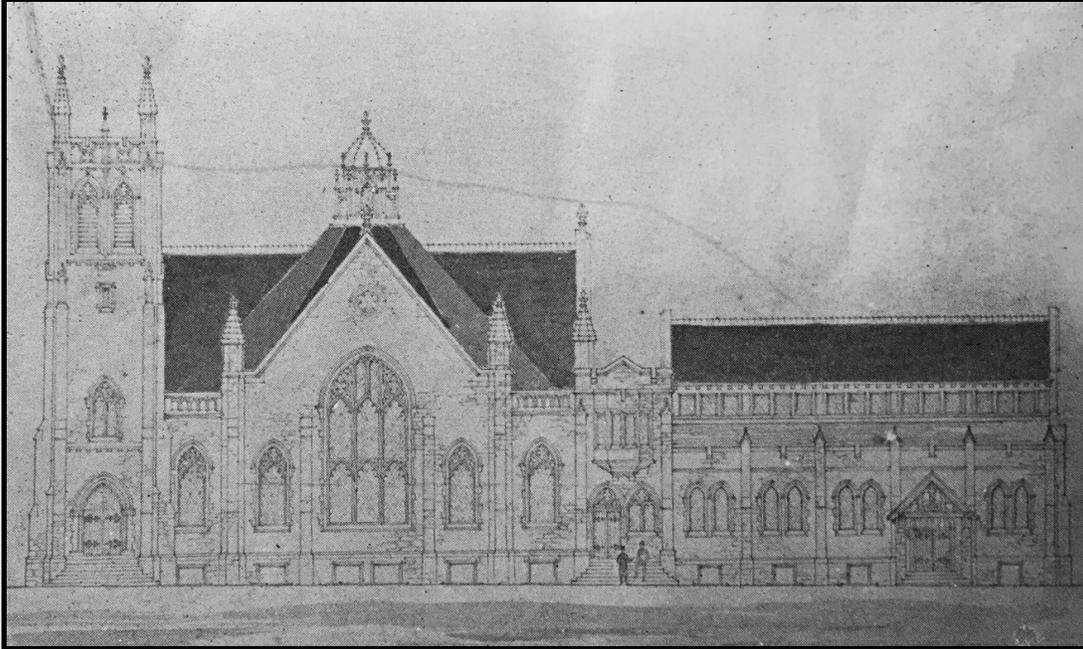


Grace Epiphany Episcopal Church at 224 East Gowen Avenue, Mt. Airy. The design of this church is quite similar in form to the subject building. Although an earlier example of the Gothic Revival, Grace Epiphany Episcopal Church features a massive tower that is similarly ornamented with spires and finials. Found in the article on Grace Epiphany Episcopal Church. Courtesy Wikipedia.



The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, c. 1918. Jeffers, Miss Elsie M., Deaconess, and Rev. Robert C. Wells, D.D., Pastor, *Directory, Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Wayne Avenue and Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.* (1925), p. 17. Found in the file on the “Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate” in the pamphlets collection of the Germantown Historical Society. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

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Queen Street Elevation of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate by Wilson, Harris & Richards in 1907. This design was only partly realized. Courtesy the Germantown Historical Society.

## **CRITERION E**

**The Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate is an important work of the architectural firm of Wilson, Harris & Richards, a firm that significantly contributed to and influenced the architectural history of Philadelphia. Wilson, Harris & Richards existed from 1902-1910; however, the origins of which include Wilson Brothers & Company, existing from 1876-1902. Many of the buildings designed during the period of Wilson Brothers & Company were enlarged and improved by Wilson, Harris & Richards, as the successor firm. Wilson Harris & Richards also designed a number of important buildings during their tenure.**

### **Historic Context: Wilson, Harris & Richards**

The firm of Wilson, Harris & Richards succeeded the firm of Wilson Brothers & Company (fl. 1876-1902), which was established during the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Though best known for their institutional and commercial projects, Wilson Brothers & Company designed buildings of almost every type, including residential and religious properties. Its successor firm, Wilson, Harris & Richards was organized in 1902 upon the death of namesake John Wilson, to add civil engineer Henry W. Wilson, architect John McArthur Harris, and architect Harris S. Richards.<sup>51</sup>

Due to the wide range of talent in the employ of Wilson, Harris & Richards, the firm's atelier includes a wide range of important buildings in Philadelphia and beyond: Additions and Alterations to the Academy of Natural Science, ca. 1907-1909; the

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<sup>51</sup> Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Wilson Brothers & Company (fl. 1876-1902)," by Sandra L. Tatam. Accessed October 15, 2016, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21576](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21576)

American Baptist Publication Society at the northwest corner of S. 17<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut Streets (demolished), ca. 1907; the Baldwin Locomotive Works Office Building at the southwest corner of N. Broad and Spring Garden Streets, ca. 1906-07 (demolished); Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad Stations in Charlottesville (Virginia), Charleston (West Virginia), and Staunton (Virginia); the Drexel Building at 432-34 Chestnut Street (demolished); the Fels Company, various buildings—a factory, a warehouse, etc.; the Girard Avenue Title & Trust Bank at the northwest corner of 18<sup>th</sup> Street and W. Girard Avenue; the Hebrew Literature Society at 310-312 Catharine Street; the Hebrew Orphans Home in S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street near Bainbridge; Mount Saint Joseph Academy in Northwestern Avenue near Stenton, including various projects on the campus; the Presbyterian Home for Aged Couples & Men at 4700 City Avenue; St. Vincent de Paul Society Summer Home for Children in Upper Merion Township; the United Gas Improvement Company (various buildings); etc. One of the firm's most important buildings was the Banking House of Drexel & Co. First designed by Wilson Brothers, the subject firm continued to work on the building as it evolved in the early twentieth century. In fact, the evolution of both the firm and its buildings appear to have been continually connected in more cases than the Drexel Building.<sup>52</sup>



The Drexel Building, c. 1900. Source: the Jane Campbell Scrapbooks.  
Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Wilson, Harris & Richards continued their work designing institutional and commercial properties; however, religious buildings—particularly buildings for religiously affiliated beneficial institutions and organizations—comprise a significant portion of their portfolio. The firm's list of clients includes: the American Baptist Publication Society,

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<sup>52</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 19, n. 51. (Philadelphia: 21 December 1904), p. 8251; and *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 20, n. 3. (Philadelphia: 18 January 1905), p. 37.

the Hebrew Literature Society, the Hebrew Orphans' Home, the Presbyterian Home for the Aged, Princeton Theological Seminary, Mount St. Joseph Academy, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.<sup>53</sup> The firm also designed religious buildings for the explicit purpose of worship. Somerville Presbyterian Church (1909), and the Hunter Memorial Chapel (for the Presbyterian Home for the Aged, 1906-1907) are two known examples.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Wilson, Harris & Richards (fl. 1902-1910)," by Sandra L. Tatam. Accessed October 15, 2016, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21568](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21568)

<sup>54</sup> Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Wilson, Harris & Richards – Projects." Accessed October 15, 2016, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display\\_projects.cfm/21568](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm/21568)



Henry A. Romberger (1854-1925)

A portrait of H. A. Romberger from a souvenir book from "Philadelphia, its founding and development, 1683-1908. Including the complete program of the two hundred and twenty-five anniversary celebration of the founding of the city government, October fourth to tenth". Source unknown. Courtesy findagrave.com.

#### **CRITERION A**

**The former Methodist Episcopal Church of the Advocate and the Romberger Tower is associated with and represents Henry A. Romberger, a person significant in the past in the Germantown section of Philadelphia and the local Methodist Episcopal community. Romberger was not only a prominent and wealthy local manufacturer, he was also a noted philanthropist and supporter of the Methodist Episcopal church.**

#### **Historic Context: Henry A. Romberger (1854-1925)**

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Philadelphia had one of the greatest hosiery textile production records in the world. At one time the output of hosiery in Philadelphia equaled that of Great Britain. Some say that Philadelphia was the largest producer of hosiery in the world. As a result, many of the manufactures of hosiery represent the highest type producers.



H.A. Romberger Manufacturing Co., Middletown, Pa. Source unknown.  
Courtesy findagrave.com.

Romberger was among the leading hosiery manufacturers in Philadelphia and beyond. His offices were in the Philadelphia Bourse, Room 336 with extensive sales offices in New York City, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Chicago. The following was said of his mills and business interests:

Mr. Romberger's mills are extensive and more numerous than those of the average manufacturer. He operates three up to the minute plants, one each in Newport, Middletown and Wisconisco, Pennsylvania. In these mills are manufactured men's, women's and infants' hosiery in all the popular lines and of the highest grades. The goods are known where the best in hosiery is sold and are distributed into virtually all parts of the United States and into many foreign countries.

Mr. Romberger has three mills in this State, located at Middletown, Newport and Wiconisco, maintains offices in Rooms 336 and 338 The Bourse, and has selling offices in New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Chicago.

Romberger opened his first mill in 1895 with a capital of \$7,500, which led him to own no less than six mills in Pennsylvania. This eventually led to an income of more than \$67,000 per year. In Philadelphia, Romberger owned and operated the Romberger

Knitting Company, among other important businesses. Romberger retired in 1923 with \$2,000,000.<sup>55</sup>

Most importantly to this nomination, Romberger also a noted philanthropist and supporter of the Methodist Episcopal church. He donated large amounts of money to the subject congregation, and, as a result, they named the in his memory. Romberger was also a trustee of the Methodist Hospital and the treasurer of the Methodist Home for the Aged. During the winter, he and his family lived in Pasadena, California, where they had a beautiful home and also helped the Methodist Episcopal Church in that locality.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to his religious commitment and charities, Romberger appears to have also served as Vice President of Temple University. In 1924, Romberger founded “the movement” that led to the Society for the Promotion of the Spirit of ’76, which endeavored to “...revive and perpetuate the historic spirit and aims of the founders of this county...” Romberger’s involvement was through the City Club, which he was a member. He was also the first president of the society. In relationship to the City Club, Romberger is quoted as follows:

We wish to foster a rebirth of the Spirit of ’76, and have it set up against radicalism, sectionalism, factionalism and everything that is alien to the historic essentials of American institutions.<sup>57</sup>

On a personal note, Henry A. Romberger was born on November 6, 1854 to Peter Francis Romberger and Mary Ann Bonawitz. Peter Romberger was a miner. And Romberger, himself, was an apprentice to a printer at fifteen, at which time the family was living in Wisconsin, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania.<sup>58</sup> He married Georgiana Romberger Couch. He had three children: Robert Burton Romberger; Henry Alfred Romberger, Jr.; and Melville A. Romberger.

At the time of his death on May 10, 1925, Romberger lived at 240 W. Tulpehocken Street. According to both *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Evening News*, he had amassed a fortune.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “Henry A. Romberger, Formerly of Wiconisco, Dies in Philadelphia, *The Evening News*. (Harrisburg: 13 May 1925), p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> “Donor of \$50,000 Honored in Church, Advocate Methodist Congregation Unveils a Tablet as a Tribute to H.A. Romberger.” Unknown publication. (Philadelphia: June 1920).

<sup>57</sup> “Citizens Form Society To Promote ’76 Spirit, Organization Designed to Revive Historic Aims of Nation’s Founders,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 15 November 1924), p. 12.

<sup>58</sup> 1860 U.S. census, population schedule. NARA microfilm publication M653, 1,438 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.; and 1870 U.S. census, population schedules. NARA microfilm publication M593, 1,761 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

<sup>59</sup> “Henry A. Romberger, Formerly of Wiconisco, Dies in Philadelphia, *The Evening News*. (Harrisburg: 13 May 1925), p. 2.; and “Henry A. Romberger,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 13 May 1925), p. 26.

Included in the estate are bonds of the city of Philadelphia, valued at \$582,690; bonds of the school district of Philadelphia, valued at \$20,900; 233 shares of Market Street Title and Trust Company, valued at \$61,994, and 200 shares of McGroory Store Corporation, \$21,000.<sup>60</sup>

His burial took place in West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Estate Exceeds Million, Late Henry A. Romberger, Hosiery Manufacturer Leaves \$1,249,739," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 31 July 1925), p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Find A Grave*. Find A Grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

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