

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF
HISTORIC PLACES

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DATE ENTERED

29 January 1986

TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1. NAME

HISTORIC

Diamond Street Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER

Diamond Street between Broad and Van Pelt Streets

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | | <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Vacant |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

See letters to owners in file

STREET AND NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

ZIP CODE

5. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Diamond Street between Broad and Van Pelt Streets

See enclosed map.

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form
North Philadelphia Survey

DATE

1985

FEDERAL STATE LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

CITY, TOWN

Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Diamond Street between Broad and Van Pelt Streets boasts a grand collection of large row houses interspersed with several elaborate churches, all built between 1875 and 1897. These buildings include fine examples of the work of specific architects, examples of post Civil War Victorian styles and the popular vernacular tradition. This portion of Diamond Street, one of the widest streets in North Philadelphia, measures seventy feet across. The many blocks of houses which line the street exhibit more generous proportions than those on the surrounding parallel streets. They all rise at least three stories in height, span two bays or more in width and have paired entryways and stoops. Within this context, the houses vary widely, displaying the great variety of Victorian detail and composition.

The earliest houses on Diamond Street represent relatively pure examples of the styles prevailing at the time. The houses on the south side of the 2100 block of Diamond Street, built in 1875 remain exemplars of the Second Empire style. This collection of serpentine faced structures is ornamented with projecting bays, segmental arched dormers and slate covered mansards. Several rows, built slightly later, utilize the Italianate style with its heavily bracketed cornice, window hoods and arched door openings. This versatile style suits the row house particularly well since most Italianate design elements can be expressed on a single flat facade. The purest examples of the Italianate style along Diamond Street can be found on the north side of the 1600 block and both sides of the 2000 block.

Various other rows executed in a vernacular tradition utilize the basic form of a three-story, two bay row house dressed with ornament and detail of the builders choice. On Diamond Street in the late 1880s, brick corbelwork was the common means of decorating the row house form. Possibly derived from North German building traditions, corbelwork had become by 1880 so much a part of the American vernacular tradition that it can be found throughout North Philadelphia. Very fine examples of brick corbelled cornices and fire wall divider strips can be found on the rows on the south side of the 1400, 1500 and 1800 blocks, on north side of the 2000 block and both sides of the 1700 and 1900 blocks.

The third type of row house encountered in the Diamond Street district are those planned and designed by architects. They creatively combined and interpreted both vernacular and stylistic elements into an unique aesthetic. Frank Furness designed such a row for the north side of the 1600 block of Diamond Street. These brick row houses manifest the typical three-story, two bay row house form enriched by a heavily rusticated water-table and scroll-like pinnacles projecting above each fire wall. Other rows designed by architect Willis Hale depart more radically from the norm. In the north side of the 1800 block, Hale mixed styles and materials to create several related variations. On the watertable he used a combination of smooth and rusticated stone to achieve on two houses a basketweave pattern and on others an alternating series of horizontal bands. For the doorway and windows, Hale employed the Moorish keyhole arch on a pair of the houses while a rectangular or rounded appears on others. These individual designs are united at the cornice level with a corbelled cornice wrapped over a horseshoe arch. Other fine examples of architect designed rows include Hale's Gothic, Moorish and Colonial Revival influenced row on the north side of the 1900 block, and Angus Wade's Gothic row on the north side of the 1400 block.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY- PREHISTORIC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1601-1700 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY- HISTORIC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1701-1800 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1801-1850 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1851-1900 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1901-1950 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1951- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS |

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/ SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify) <u>community</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT | <u>development</u> |

SPECIFIC DATES 1875-1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Several

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Diamond Street from Broad Street to Van Pelt Street possesses significance as the most intact grand avenue of speculative Victorian townhouses in North Philadelphia and as an expression of the architectural and residential aspirations of the city's nouveau riche during the expansive era of post Civil War industrialization. Like much of North Philadelphia west of Broad Street, Diamond Street became developed between 1875 and 1900 as a response to the dramatic growth of the city's population, the marked changes in the scale of capital and the transformation of Philadelphia's economic base conjoined with the extension of the public transportation system. Diamond Street stands out in this context owing to its extraordinarily large, often architect designed, row houses and churches erected to attract the elite of the new entrepreneurial and upper middle classes.

Even before the construction of any houses here, Diamond Street was planned as the grandest east-west avenue in North Philadelphia. When the ubiquitous street grid for this area first appeared on paper in 1838 as a part of Penn Township, the street received the name Lebanon, following the pattern of denominating the east-west streets of North Philadelphia for Pennsylvania counties. In this period, farmland, crossed only by the occasional unpaved road, characterized this section of the City. The long since demolished 18th century Kohn Mansion occupied a site at 18th and Diamond and the Punch Bowl Tavern stood near the corner of Diamond and Broad Streets. In 1858, following the consolidation of the City and County of Philadelphia, the street became Diamond, rather than Lebanon and was drawn on the plat at 60 feet in width, equal to the other main east-west arteries such as Columbia or Susquehanna Avenues. In 1872, the portion of the street between Broad Street and Fairmount Park actually materialized as a paved thoroughfare and had its name changed to Park Avenue because it led to a main entrance to Fairmount Park. At the same time, the width of the street grew to seventy feet making it, along with Broad Street, the widest Street in North Philadelphia. Although the name reverted back to Diamond in 1895 to avoid confusion with the nearby north-south street also called Park Avenue, it bore the designation Park Avenue during the era of development.

The emergence of Diamond Street reflects the tremendous increase in the managerial and service related middle and upper middle classes that resulted from the growth of Philadelphia's industrial base in the decades after the Civil War. During the second half of the 19th century, Philadelphia became the second largest industrial city in the country.

The industries created not only blue collar jobs for the swarms of native born moving into the city and the thousands of immigrants streaming in from Europe, but also managerial positions to administer the factories. This in turn led to augmentation in the demand for professional services by lawyers, bankers and physicians as well as in an expansion of retail businesses. The larger number of relatively high paying employment opportunities created a class of people that could afford to purchase substantial new houses. Developers built Diamond Street for this market.

Even with the increased demand for new housing, Diamond Street could not have developed as a purely residential neighborhood without the extension of the streetcar system. Relatively few Philadelphia families possessed the wherewithal to maintain horses and carriages, and the cost of riding the streetcars before electrification proved prohibitive for the working classes, consuming from nine to twenty-six percent of the average laborer's daily wage. Thus most Philadelphians walked to work and, of necessity, lived within a reasonable distance of the factory or shop. The route to work contributed much to the form and composition of many neighborhoods with dwellings and manufactories in close proximity to one another. Diamond Street assumed a different shape however. To be sure, as demonstrated by the utter absence of carriage houses and even of livery stables, the rather affluent occupants of Diamond Street did not keep horses and equipage. They, could, however, afford to ride the horsecar lines, and the development of Diamond Street as a substantial middle-class and upper middle-class boulevard coincided with the penetration of streetcar routes along Fifteenth and Seventeenth Streets north to Susquehanna Avenue, just one block north of Diamond Street. This facilitated commutation to Center City and other places of employment; indeed, it made Diamond Street as Diamond Street possible.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10. FORM PREPARED BY

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| NAME/TITLE | |
| Randal Baron | |
| ORGANIZATION | DATE |
| Philadelphia Historical Commission | 29 October 1985 |
| STREET AND NUMBER | TELEPHONE |
| 1313 City Hall Annex | MU6-4543 |
| CITY OR TOWN | STATE |
| Philadelphia | PA |

7. Description

The architect designed churches of Diamond Street represent some of the finest examples of their respective Victorian styles, Romanesque and Gothic Revival in the City of Philadelphia. The Jones Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Church, formerly the Methodist Episcopal Union Church, executed in light colored stone affords a classic example of the Romanesque Revival made popular by the architect H. H. Richardson. The composition of the front facade of the church consists of; a central gabled nave containing a great arched entryway surmounted by three large arched windows, a four-story tower with open belfry and pointed steeple on the left, and a two and a half story stair tower on the right side. The building has rusticated voisoirs, medieval stone carving and polychrome banded stonework, all hallmarks of the Richardson Romanesque.

The New Jerusalem Baptist Church, formerly the Park Avenue Baptist Church, at 22nd and Diamond Streets serves as a good, though relatively simple, expression of the Gothic Revival parish church. The church complex, built of a red brown random-coursed ashlar, unrelieved by carvings, is composed of a gable roofed nave, a truncated square tower, a polygonal Sunday school wing and a one story office block capped by a stepped gable. To Diamond Street the church presents its gabled nave end pierced by one large stained glass lancet window and the single stage bell tower which rises to a heavy modillioned cornice.

The work of Charles M. Burns, The George W. South Memorial Church of the Advocate at 18th and Diamond Streets stands as a superlative demonstration of the French Gothic style. Burns had the three part complex of church, school and chapel constructed of random coursed stone. The church, a tall cruciform structure has buttressed walls pierced by multiple stained glass lancet windows and an apse ambulatory with radiating bays. The interior contains a clerestoried nave with flanking aisles and an authentic vaulted stone roof.

The row houses and churches of Diamond Street represent one of the most grand and stylistically intact avenues of Victorian architecture in the City of Philadelphia.

8. Significance

An examination at the 1884 City Directory reveals a picture of the first generation of Diamond Street residents as white collar commuters. The role of industry in creating a class of affluent middle-class homeowners is exemplified by such Diamond Street residents as Jerome Sheip of 1730 Diamond, co-owner of the firm of Sheip and Vandegrift which made wooden boxes at 215 Race Street; Theodore Benade of 1910 Diamond Street listed as a company foreman; or Hugh Donahue, metermaker of 1435 Diamond Street. Other Diamond Street occupants made their livings from retail stores which sold the products of the flourishing industries. Chester Griesemer of 1542 Diamond Street was co-owner of the clothing store Geiger and Griesemer at 1209 Market Street. Isaac Hopkins of 1502 Diamond Street operated a furniture store at 227 N. 10th Street. All of these work addresses were within the Central Business District and necessitated a commute to work. Only a few of the street's residents, such as Hermann Voshage, a druggist who lived above his store at 1946 Diamond Street or North Philadelphia real estate developers and builders, such as Thomas A. Parks of 1800 Diamond or Samuel Pennypacker of 1901 Diamond, lived near their places of employment. In any case, all of these Diamond Street homeowners illustrate the changes in economic and employment patterns after the Civil War in Philadelphia.

The builders and developers of the houses on Diamond Street made their money from the pent up demand for housing following the Civil War and themselves represent this newly prosperous class. The earliest builder in the area, John B. McMillen, constructed nine Second Empire row houses at 2100 to 2116 Diamond Street in 1875. The development continued at the western end of the district with a row of six brick houses, 2006-2116 erected by Samuel Kirkpatrick in 1876 and eight marble-faced Italianate houses, 2003-2015 by Stephen Humphreys in 1877. Mr. Humphreys, like most of the developers of Diamond Street, had both his house and office in North Philadelphia. He appears in the City Directory as head of the firm Humphreys, McDonnell and Cornell, builders, at 1836 North 9th Street, and lived at 1947 North 11th Street. The two most important developers of Diamond Street, in terms of sheer volume of buildings, were John Sharp and John Stafford. Beginning at the east end of the district, the developer/builder John Sharp erected 128 row houses, over half of all the houses in the district, between 1886 and 1889. John Stafford constructed two rows in the 1400 and 1700 blocks between 1887 and 1900. These two builders grew wealthy as developers of block after block of row houses throughout North Philadelphia and of downtown hotels at the turn of the century. John Sharp resided in the exceptionally decorative row house at 1833 Diamond Street which he also used as his office, while John Stafford dwelt in an enormous mansion still located a few blocks south at 2000 North Broad Street.

8. Significance

The City Directories list only one developer as having a downtown business address. The Page Brothers, developers of the sixteen hundred block north and south sides, and the north side of the seventeen hundred block of Diamond Street appear in the City Directory as having a real estate business at 140 S.4th Street. The Pages lived at 1820 Chestnut Street. These downtown based developers chose the architect Frank Furness to design their row at 1601 to 1641 Diamond Street. Furness was an architect of preference for Philadelphia's more established wealth residing south of Market Street. The interest of downtown real estate developers commissioning these rare examples of Frank Furness's work in North Philadelphia suggests a high level of refinement achieved on Diamond Street.

The speculative real estate developers who built the houses of Diamond Street took full advantage of the potential grandeur of this wide avenue to the Park to erect large scale, high fashion houses to attract the nouveau riche home buyer. The three-story houses of Diamond Street stand 18 to 20 feet in width and 65 to 80 feet in depth, while the more common two-story houses of the surrounding streets measure 15 to 16 feet wide and 58 to 60 feet long. Although the houses on Diamond Street share brick construction with those found throughout the city, there is a higher proportion of houses faced with stone, serpentine, brownstone and marble, than on most other streets in North Philadelphia. Descriptions of the interior of the houses found in insurance surveys give an image of houses detailed with expensive materials and equipped with the latest technological innovations. An 1894 survey for a house in the 1400 block of Diamond Street described several stained glass windows, oak wainscoting throughout the first floor, brass fixtures in the bathrooms with sink tops of "Mexican Onyx" or "colored marble". Technological features included enameled tile walls in the kitchen for easy cleaning, a single oven range, hot and cold running water, porcelain lined iron sinks and tubs, and gas heat piped through 15 registers.

The earliest rows on the street, while probably not architect designed, represent elegant renditions of popular styles such as Second Empire, 2106-2116 Diamond, and Italianate, 2001-2011 and 2016-2026 Diamond. Many of the rows of later houses in the district came from the offices of well known Victorian architects who imaginatively interpreted the latest modes to produce attractive and fashionable buildings. Some of the outstanding designs were produced by Willis Hale and Angus Wade, two architects who designed many ornate row houses and commercial buildings in North Philadelphia and often worked with the developers John Stafford and John Sharp. Both architects used an eclectic mix of current styles such as Gothic, Moorish, and Romanesque revival to produce flamboyant designs that would be attractive to the upwardly mobile middle class buyer.

8. Significance

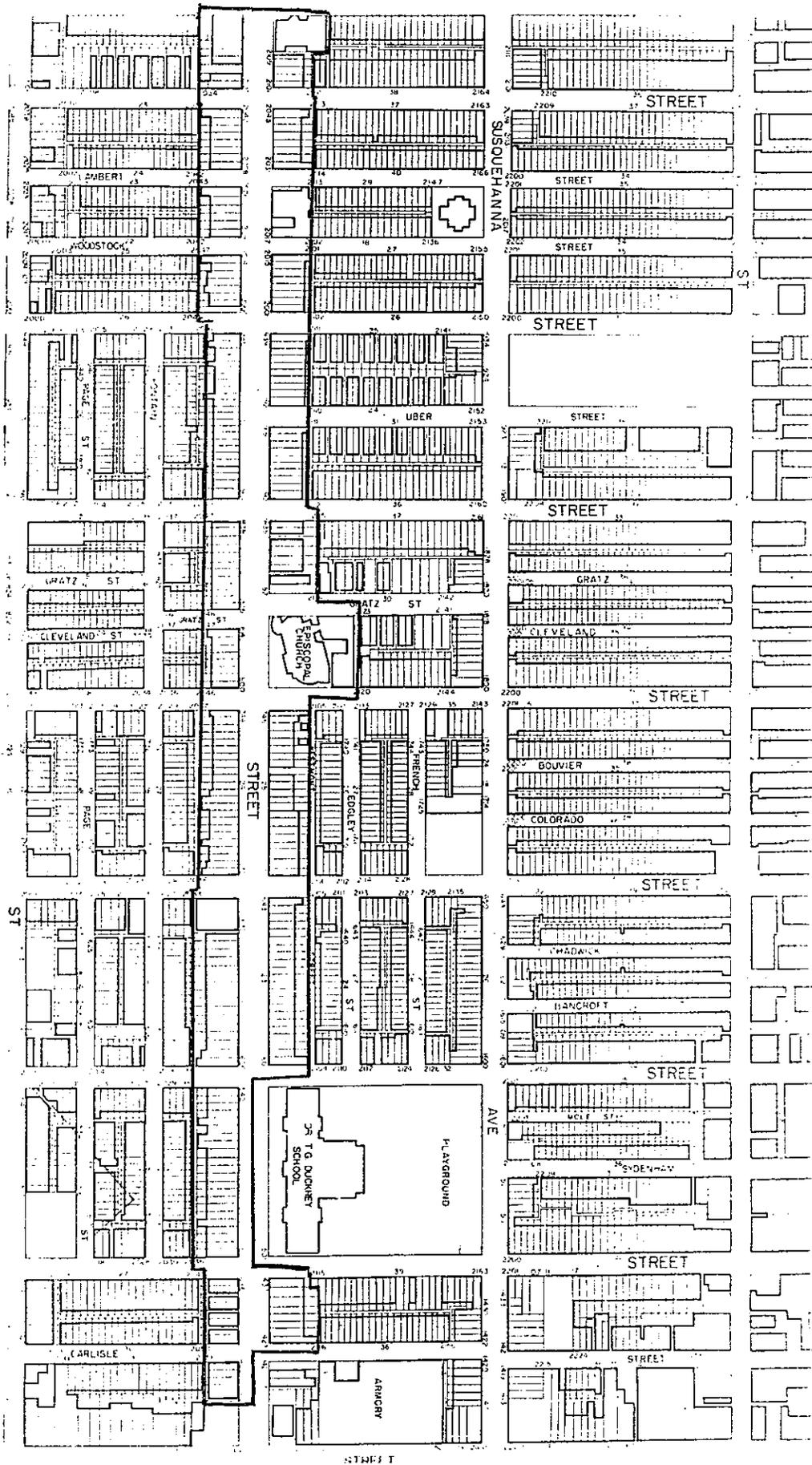
The 10 row houses at 1921-39 Diamond Street by Willis Hale for John Sharp serve as an especially decorative example of this. They form a radical mix of stylistic elements including a fourth floor loggia of Moorish influenced arches, Beaux Arts classical swags on the pressed metal cornices and door pediments as well as vaguely Romanesque first floor arched windows. Angus Wade executed another row for John Sharp, 1823-1833 Diamond Street with Moorish horseshoe arches in the cornices, heavily rusticated watertables in a basket weave pattern and circular window openings. Many of the simpler rows have brick facades ornamented with a brownstone watertable and a decorative corbelled brick cornice. These, too, reveal grandness in their height and repetition of architectural elements.

As a major east-west street, Diamond Street provided a natural location for several important North Philadelphia churches. The churches reflected the wealth of their congregations with lavish designs by important Philadelphia architects. The Park Avenue Baptist Church and Sunday School at 2017-2029 Diamond Street by Hazelhurst and Huckel, built in 1885, brought an English Gothic parish church to the neighborhood. The Union Methodist Episcopal Church at 2017-2019 Diamond Street, also by Hazelhurst and Huckel, and built in 1887, stands as one of the rare fine examples of the Richardson Romanesque in Philadelphia. Hazelhurst and Huckel had a national reputation for their churches and mansions. The French Gothic Episcopal Church of the Advocate by Charles M. Burns soars as literally the outstanding edifice on Diamond Street in 1887. This building, planned by "Philadelphia's leading designer of Episcopal churches and former pupil of American Gothicist F. L. Withers," offers the finest example of French Gothic architecture in Philadelphia. This trio of churches attests to the role of Diamond Street as a showplace of wealth and architectural grandeur. Because of the nature of Diamond Street as an area of fashionable housing for a rising class of entrepreneurs, the neighborhood experienced rapid social change. Within ten years after the initial occupation of the houses, a turnover occurred as the original owners moved on to more newly fashionable neighborhoods and a second generation of homeowners arrived. The 1900 census lists a class of people possessing a lesser social standing than the original owners. For example Blackburn Jones, a clerk at the U.S. mint, owned 1509 and Frederick Floyd, a paymaster owned 1607 Diamond Street. Several Jewish families established residence on Diamond Street as well. These included Moses Krauss at 1533 and Harry Stern at 1609 Diamond. Many of the Diamond Street buildings, housed unrelated boarders who rented rooms. After 1900 the Biographical Directory of Philadelphia Architects 1700-1930 indicates the conversion of a number of the Diamond Street houses into apartments. In the period following the Second World War many white residents moved to developing neighborhoods further North. In their place, a newly emerging black community entered and resettled the area. In recent years, the houses along Diamond Street

8. Significance

have suffered significant deterioration owing to the high incidence of poverty and unemployment that afflicts the neighborhood, absentee ownership and the costs associated with maintaining these large houses as well as adequate public funding to assist in their preservation rehabilitation. Fortunately, a private non-profit organization, the Advocate Community Development Corporation, has developed a strategy for a renewal of the street. Plans for the rehabilitation of the Diamond Street buildings to provide low and moderate income housing for the area's residents have received wide acclaim.

Diamond Street between Broad and Van Pelt Streets has historical significance as a streetcar-dependent residential area that developed between 1875-1895 to house Philadelphia's post Civil War upper middle-class. It possesses architectural significance both as a showplace for buildings that constitute fine examples of particular styles and the work of particular architects and more importantly for the grandeur of its largely intact Victorian streetscape that is unique in the City of Philadelphia.



STREET

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