

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 (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 1430- 2 East Passyunk Avenue

Postal code: 19147 Councilmanic District: First

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: The Philadelphia County Prison--PART I

Current/Common Name: Moyamensing Prison

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☐ Building ☒ Structure ☐ Site ☐ Object

No contributing properties, but wall remnants

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Occupancy: n/a ☐ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Property boundary; remnants inside impound lot.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1831 to present

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1832 to 1835

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1887)

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: _____

Original owner: City of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: John Haviland (1792-1852); John Howard.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

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

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR

Organization _____ Date _____

Name with Title Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA Email _____

Street Address 1234 South Sheridan Street Telephone 215.334.6008

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19147-4820

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 25 April 2018

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 8 Nov 2018

Date of Notice Issuance: 12 Nov 2018

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Philadelphia Parks + Recreation Dept

Address: 1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor

City: Phila State: PA Postal Code: 19102

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 12 Dec 2018

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 11 January 2019

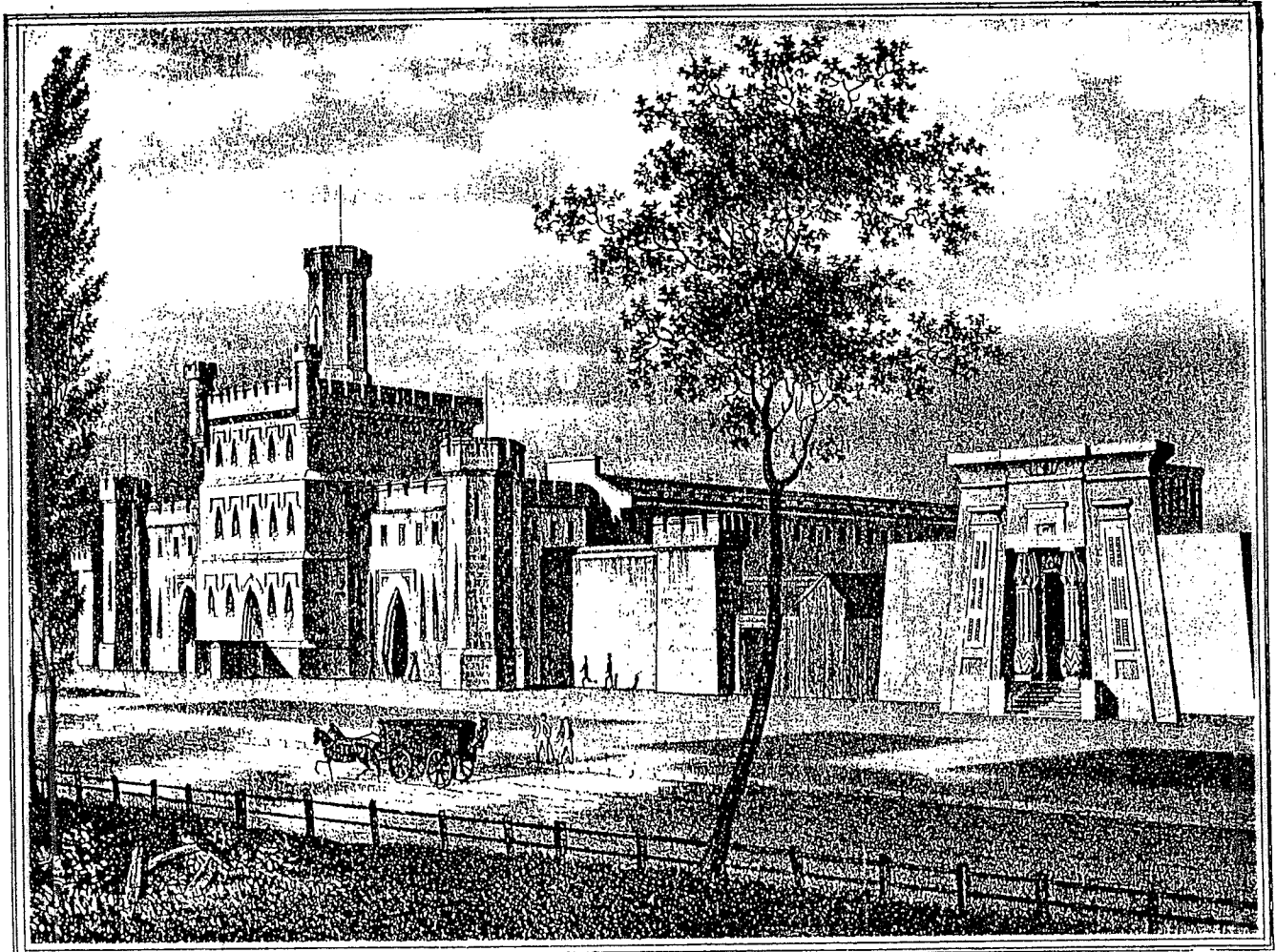
Date of Final Action: 11 January 2019

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

3/12/18

The lithograph below by "J.C. Wild" in 1838 captured the County Prison, or "Moyamensing Prison" with its English Gothic "castle-jail" design on left from which the SOUTH wall derived. On the right is the "Debtors' Apartment" (or "Wing"), the starting point and reason why the NORTH wall continued its Egyptian Revival Style with red sand stone over the granite on the facade. The prison was designed by architect Thomas Ustick Walter and its construction began in 1832, ending in about 1839 at the north end.

Pl. 9



On Stone by J.C. Wild

MOYAMENSING PRISON.

PHILADELPHIA.

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1838 by J. T. Bowen in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

All that certain lot or piece of ground situated in the 1st Ward of the City of Philadelphia described herein from the subdivision Plan made for the Department of Public Property by John Stefano, Surveyor and Regulator on July 5, 1978 to wit:

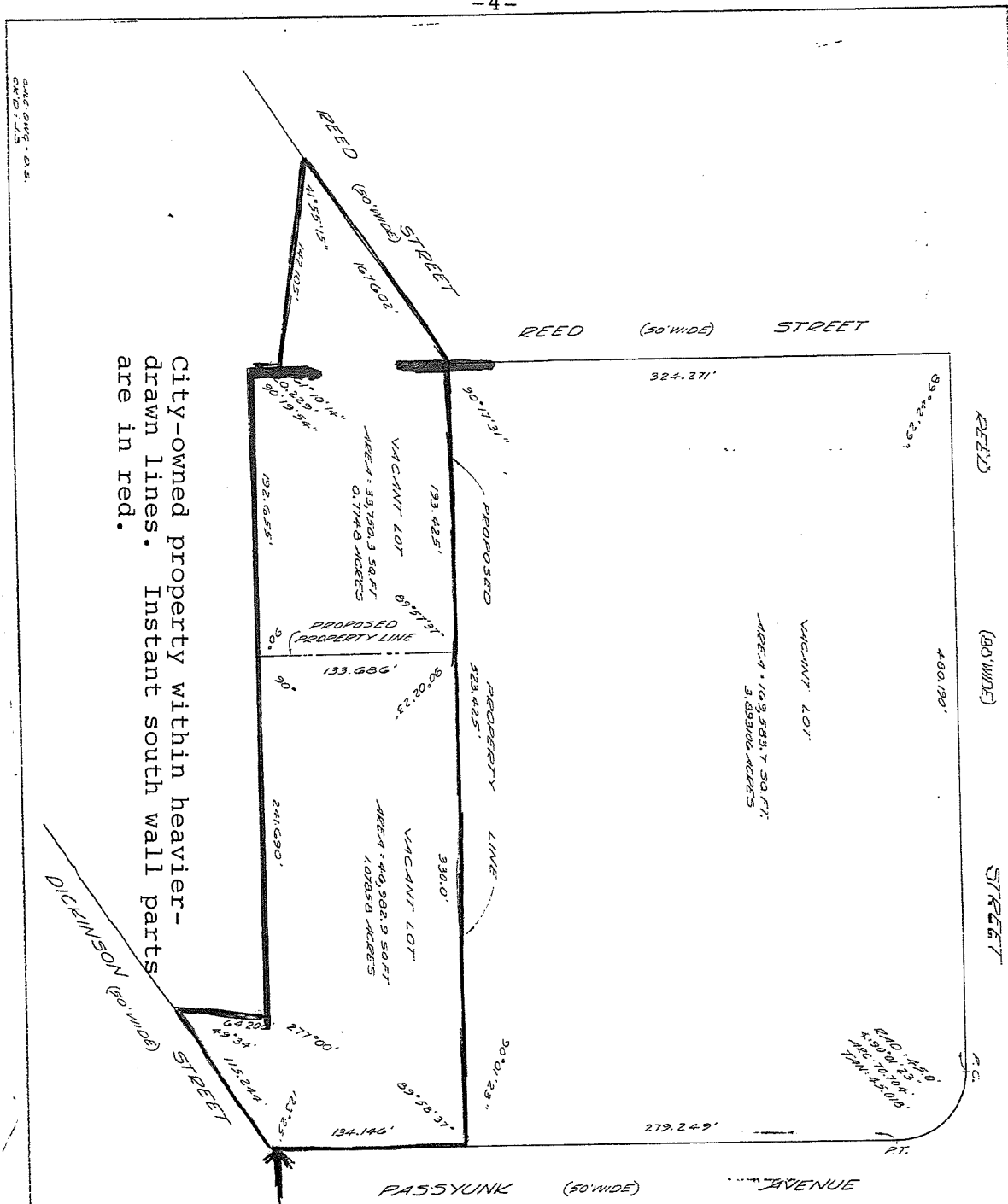
BEGINNING at a point of tangent on the Southwesterly side of Passyunk Avenue which point of tangent is measured in a Southwesterly direction at 115.244 feet to Dickinson Street at an angle of 49.34 degrees to a point 64.205 feet northwardly thence westward at 277 degrees for 434.345 (192.655 + 241.690) feet to a point at 90.19 degrees northwardly for 20.229 feet to a point thence westward 142.105' to an angle 41 degrees 55 minutes and 15 seconds to a point, thence northeasterly 167.602 feet to a point at a 29" (inch) high and 41 deep granite stone wall, thence Easterly from the 90 degree 17 minutes and 31 seconds angle for 523.425 feet (193.425 + 330.0) to a point on Passyunk Avenue thence Southerly at an angle measuring 89 degs.58 minutes and 37 seconds for 134.146 feet to a point thence Southwesterly at an angle of 123 degrees and 25 minutes being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

BEING: 1430-1432 East Passyunk Avenue.

B O U N D A R Y D E S C R I P T I O N

1978

Boundaries

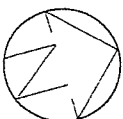


City-owned property within heavier-drawn lines. Instant south wall parts are in red.

PLAN OF PROPERTIES

MADE FOR -
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PROPERTY
1ST WARD - PHILADELPHIA

ATTENTION IS CALLED TO THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS IN THE PHILADELPHIA CODE:
SECTION 11-1101, AS PER INSTRUCTIONS OF THE PHILADELPHIA ARCHITECT.
UPON THE FILING AND RECORDING OF A DEED OR AGREEMENT FROM THIS PLAN WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA THE LINE(S) SHOWN AS "PROPOSED" SHALL BECOME ACTUAL AND DECLARED.



SCALE: 1" = 40 FT



CONVEYOR AND APPROVAL
SECOND SURVEY DIVISION
JULY 5, 1978.

JOS V. TOGAT

IN 116

Subd. 115.001 Plat
Applic # 9083



Imagery ©2017 Google, Map data ©2017 Google United States 50 ft

Black lines define parcel owned by City of Philadelphia in which the nominated remnants of Moyamensing Prison's wall exist (in red.)

Below is contemporary news photo of the nominated wall, partly razed.



Source: "The Philadelphia Inquirer," Feb. 10, 1968.

Description of the South Wall Sections:

Presently, the nominated remnants of Moyamensing Prison's south walls vary in height, depth and length. Images attached specify the locations where the higher wall extends as the rear boundary to the rowhouses along the 1100 block of Gerritt Street; the lower wall nominated within the City-owned property is situated emanating from the 90 degree angle of the higher wall continuing in a north-northeast direction towards Eleventh from Reed.

Dimensions* of the instant walls are indicated on the pages where corresponding images show where situated.

Walter used dark granite, dressed by his masons and set in mortar. (Specimens from the wall are available to examine.) No source was found among Walter's papers on from where the granite was quarried. Unlike the sections of the wall in the other nominated "north wall," there was none of the red sand stone which Walter purchased from Connecticut that was cut to his specifications and then laid upon the granite as a veneer or facing--this nomination on the City-owned property had no red facing stone.

A sample of the mortar used to set the stones does not seem in composition much different than mortar used today: lime, sand, cement. The poor condition of the walls in the impound lot allow for broken mortar and granite to fall onto the ground and cause further degradation with more exposure to potential damage.

The higher walls are more intact and appear stable. A recent conversation with Mr. Richard Geppert (b.1937) of Geppert Bros., the demolition company hired in 1967 to raze the prison resolved some questions to why some parts of the walls exist and where they do; why are some shorter, less deep; and the south wall lowered to that height. Mr. Geppert's response was that "the City" had

*

Dimensions are approximations with measurements made by the nominator with a Stanley No.X226 standard four way extension.

directed him and his crew from November of 1967 to about March of 1968 on each phase of the demolition. Mr. Geppert's company* (with his three brothers) was awarded the contract; he supervised this job and tried to recall particulars. He could not remember where his trucks hauled away architect Walter's granite and the Connecticut "red sand stone." It seemed that the instant south wall's depth was original, but its height shortened to a levelled city-regulated height for privacy. The remnants of the wall that are inside the impound lot connect to the approximate 7' high wall that is the Gerritt Street homes' rear boundary but decrease in height at the 90 degree angle where it measures about 8" and increases to about 29" at the entranceway. The wall is interrupted at this entranceway and had originally continued for about 23' to a cyclone fence that acts as the boundary line between this city-owned parcel and the corporate-owned one adjacent to it where the wall continues for another 28 feet inside the corporate-owned lot. (Refer to page 9, herein.)

Mr. Geppert could not provide any information on the depth of any part of the wall at the foundation level and architect Walter left no record on how deep this wall was dug to sustain a 20' high granite wall. The Geppert crew did not excavate any part of the prison or wall. Where severed, the tops and sides of the walls have applications or "patches" of concrete.

The lower walls are located in a lot where damaged police vehicles are left. Overall, the "fair" condition of this lower wall inside of the lot is more vulnerable to harm than the boundary wall behind the Gerritt Street homes. There are loosened granite and mortar at this lower wall and material continues to fall. Although the depth of 41" keeps the walls erect, both sides of the wall need sealing against further harm.

*Geppert Brothers often competed in demolition jobs with R.W. Morrello Co., my mother's brother's firm and this conversation/interview was productive. Gepperts also handled the demolition of Connie Mack Stadium(Shibe Park) and the "MOVE" block on Osage Avenue.

Images from vantage at East Passyunk Avenue by Dickinson Street, westwardly.

Wall section below is behind first private residence closest to Passyunk Avenue. Here, south wall has hinges attached to gate entrance to in-ground pool.

Height: 6.35 - 7. Depth: 68" ±



W↑

Wall's length: approx. 434.345'
(Refer to "Boundary Description"
and 1978 Surveyor Plan wherein
"192.655 + 241.690 = 434.345'.")

Image below of lot on south side of
South Philadelphia Older Adult Cen-
ter with front facing Passyunk.
Note other residences with wall as
rear boundary. Impound lot, rear.



Image below shows section of wall crossing into City-owned property from corporate-owned adjoining back lot/loading/trash for ACME Supermarket.

The location of this wall is at the "angle" where South 11th Street merges into Reed Street, with westward traffic to 12th.

Height: 29" \pm Depth: 41" \pm

Length from boundary to end of this section: 23' \pm

privately-
owned wall

← N



city-owned
wall

SE ↑

28' \pm 1 X 36"h
41" deep



To Paupark

near yards of Bennett St. houses

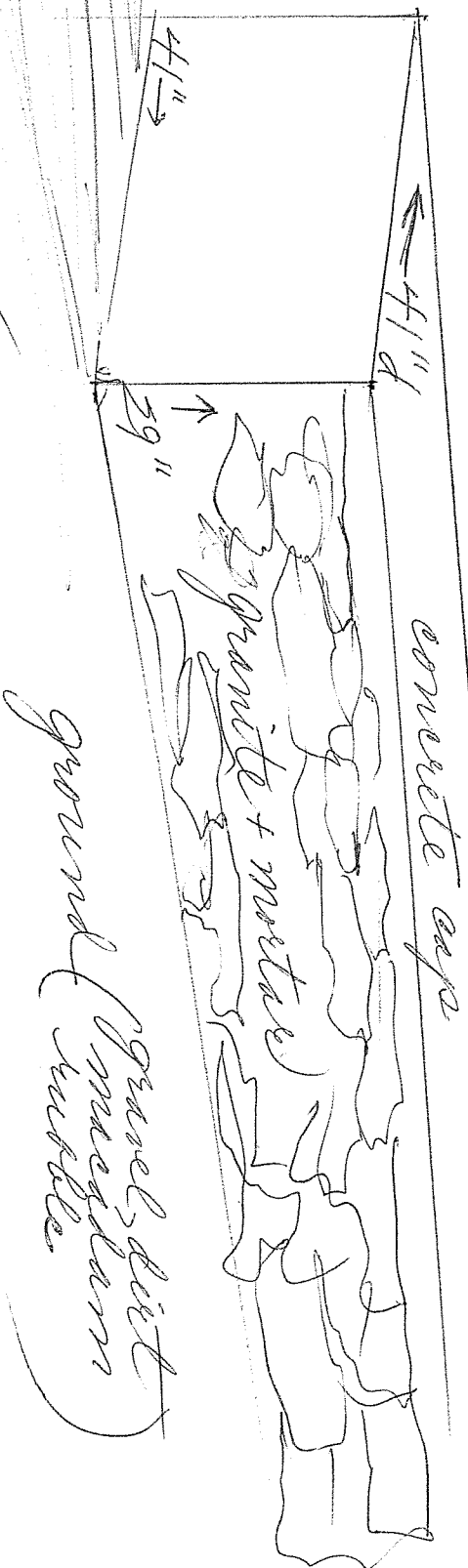


-10-

inbound lot
(city-owned)

Dimensions of walls from inside lot.

To meet @ 89° angle →
← 8" to 29" →



Statement of Significance

This nomination discusses the merits of the extensive, but broken wall remnants once encircling the former Philadelphia County Prison, also known more familiarly as "Moyamensing Prison." The prison complex began in 1832 along the south boundary from Passyunk Avenue near Dickinson Street with all subsequent construction ending in about 1839 on the northern boundary at Reed Street. The prison conformed to the "Pennsylvania" or "solitary" system of incarceration in form, which required separate cells for each prisoner (or "penitent") to ponder his or her offense(s). This prison was an early example of an institutional building, of which only the remnants here attest to. These walls also reflect how the American penal system depended upon developments in social reform in England in the years before and during the Industrial Revolution. It was the English model of the penitentiary where a convicted individual was sent to atone for the sin of the crime and to be warehoused away from law-abiding society.

Designed by Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1887), Moyamensing Prison was influenced by the English "castle jail" model in the use of the walls nominated herein. Walter understood that the "castle jail" penitentiary construction seen in the county districts in rural England used the English version of the Gothic which he copied in Moyamensing Prison's southern boundary wall. The intent of the walls around these castle jails in England was for the physical isolation of the prisoner/penitent from others, not for defensive purposes, the original use in medieval times. Walter's first building at Moyamensing was his "centre building," an English Gothic structure near Dickinson Street from which the nominated wall emerged to the south, traversing westward. This wall was attached to the "centre building" and had a dark granite color in contrast to the wall that Walter designed later, directly inspired by an architect with more experience, as well as a reputation as a prison designer, John Haviland (1792-1852).

Haviland was not only responsible for the revolutionary axis plan at Eastern State Penitentiary in the 1820s, but also for New York City's jail, "The Tombs," and the Egyptian Revival designs in the prisons in Trenton and Newark, New Jersey. The latter were the models for Walter's "Debtors' Wing" building constructed at the southwest corner of South Tenth Street at Passyunk Avenue where crossed with Reed Street. This stunning building was the first structure one saw when travelling southward from Center City to the prison. Now gone, Walter's "Debtors' Wing" was "considered the first archaeologically based Egyptian Revival building in America." * Apart from its design, the "Debtors' Wing" was distinguished by its reddish stone veneer which continued in the wall that derived from its western side along Reed Street, evidenced today traversing towards Eleventh Street where the only "bastion" designed by Walter remains. The masonry of this northern wall is also different than at the southern boundary wall. Moreover, the northern, red stone-faced walls hold underground evidence of early water and sewer systems which should initiate further study as these are among the first utilities to extend into Philadelphia's former county township. Documentation and research by Cornelius would not only support the collaboration of Walter and Haviland here, but how individual lines for scores of prison cells were created for the flow and output of water for prison use.

The nominated wall remnants were the only subject of historical interest in the area south of Washington Avenue, east of Broad Street by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). Moyamensing Prison and Walter were approved by the official Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission for markers in 2008 and 2009 respectively: The nominated walls are derived from their importance.

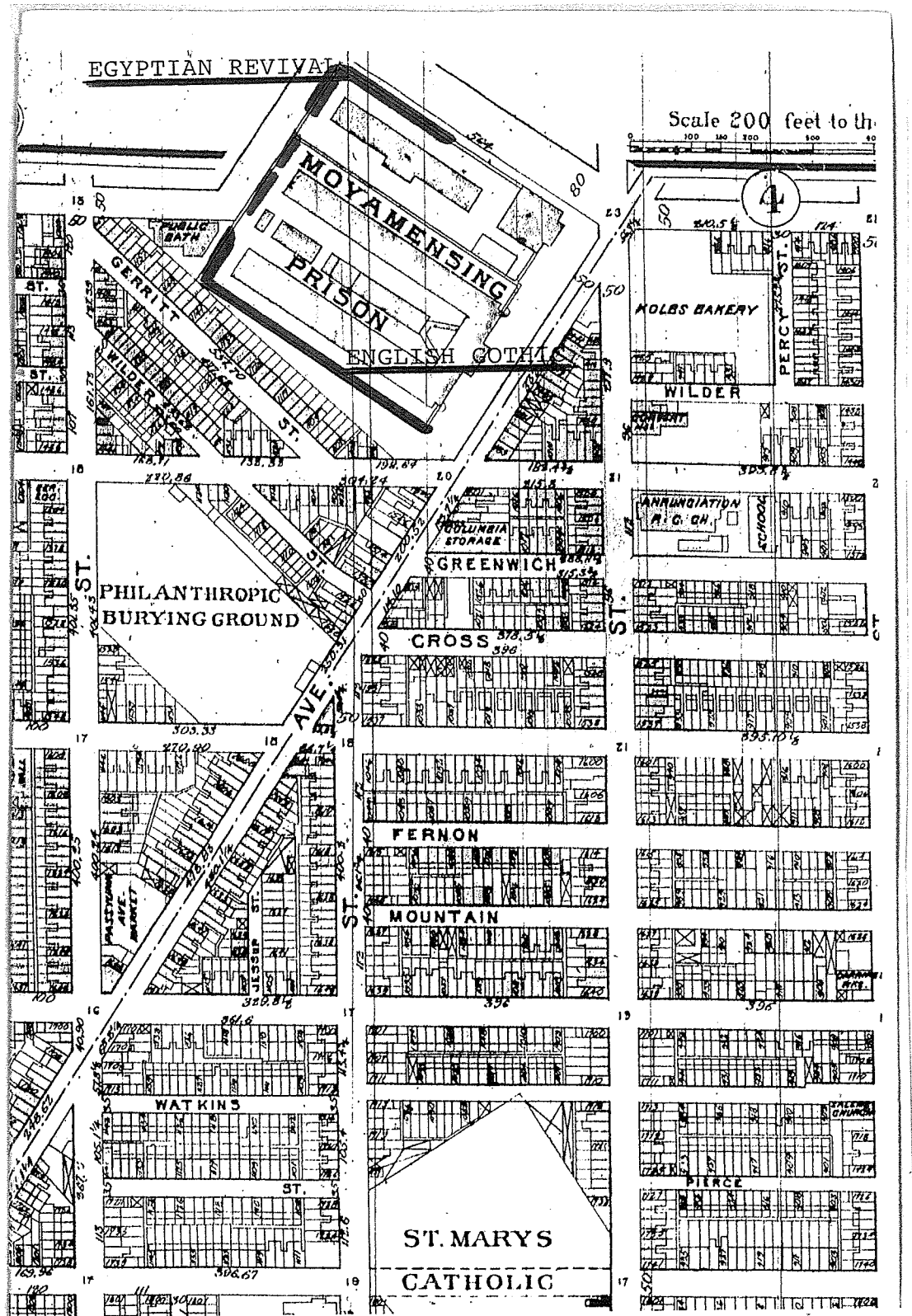
* Webster, Richard, Philadelphia Preserved. Phila.: Temple Univ. Press, 1981, page 183.

** Cornelius, David Gergory, The Institutional Building Systems of John Haviland. Final Report. Phila.: Athenaeum, 1999.

This nominator submitted these subjects; the "Moyamensing Prison" marker is at the site.

Red markings on this map from 1910 indicate locations of SOUTH (English Gothic) wall and the NORTH (Egyptian Revival) walls.

(Source of unmarked map: Free Library, Map Collection, Phila.)



The (south) walls at the site of the former Moyamensing Prison:

(a) have significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation, or are associated with the lives of persons significant in the past.

As the second-largest English-speaking metropolis in the late eighteenth century, next to London, Philadelphia's origins were based upon the Quaker faith and Quakers here continued to exchange thoughts with their English counterparts on how to improve each's social environments. The peaceful Quakers in both countries actively communicated during and after the War for Independence, with one Quaker reformer, John Howard (1726?-1790) publishing his thoughts on penal reform in England. At the time of his **State of the Prisons** (1777), America and England were at war, but Howard nonetheless was able to articulate the principles for a "penitentiary" which "enforced a new conception of the social distance between the 'criminal' and the 'law-abiding.'" ¹ In England, Howard's ideals on prisons and punishments would be integrated into the Penitentiary Act of 1779. Soon, the "solitary" system, later called the "Pennsylvania system" of confinement would be realized when Howard and two others selected William Blackburn, an architect, to construct the first "penitentiaries" ² with one cell for each inmate, living in a "castle jail" in the English countryside, separated from temptations in order to reform by penance and work. The first of these penitentiaries were privately financed and operated in Gloucestershire and Sussex counties.

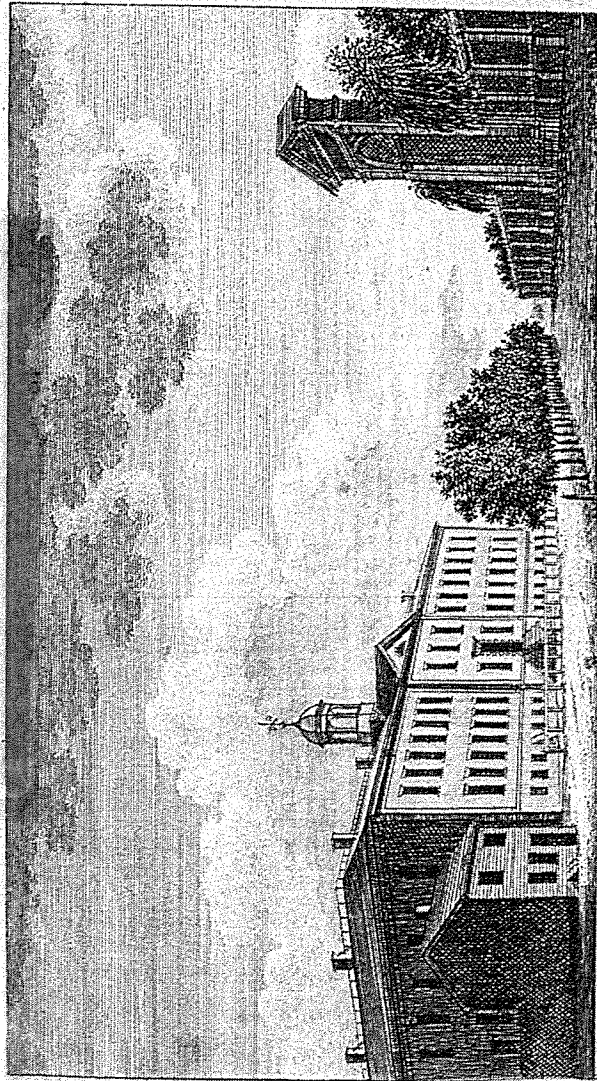
Philadelphia's jails were as those in London, warehousing men and women together. There were several small jails in Philadelphia until the Walnut Street Jail was built for offenders of "various degrees of atrocity," ³ when opened in 1776.

¹ Ignatieff, Michael, **A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850**. London: Penguin, 1989, p.102.

² Ibid., p.95. Ignatieff used the term, "castle jail," to describe Blackburn's designs, the first constructed in 1779. (p.99).

³ "The U.S. Gazette," September 19, 1835.

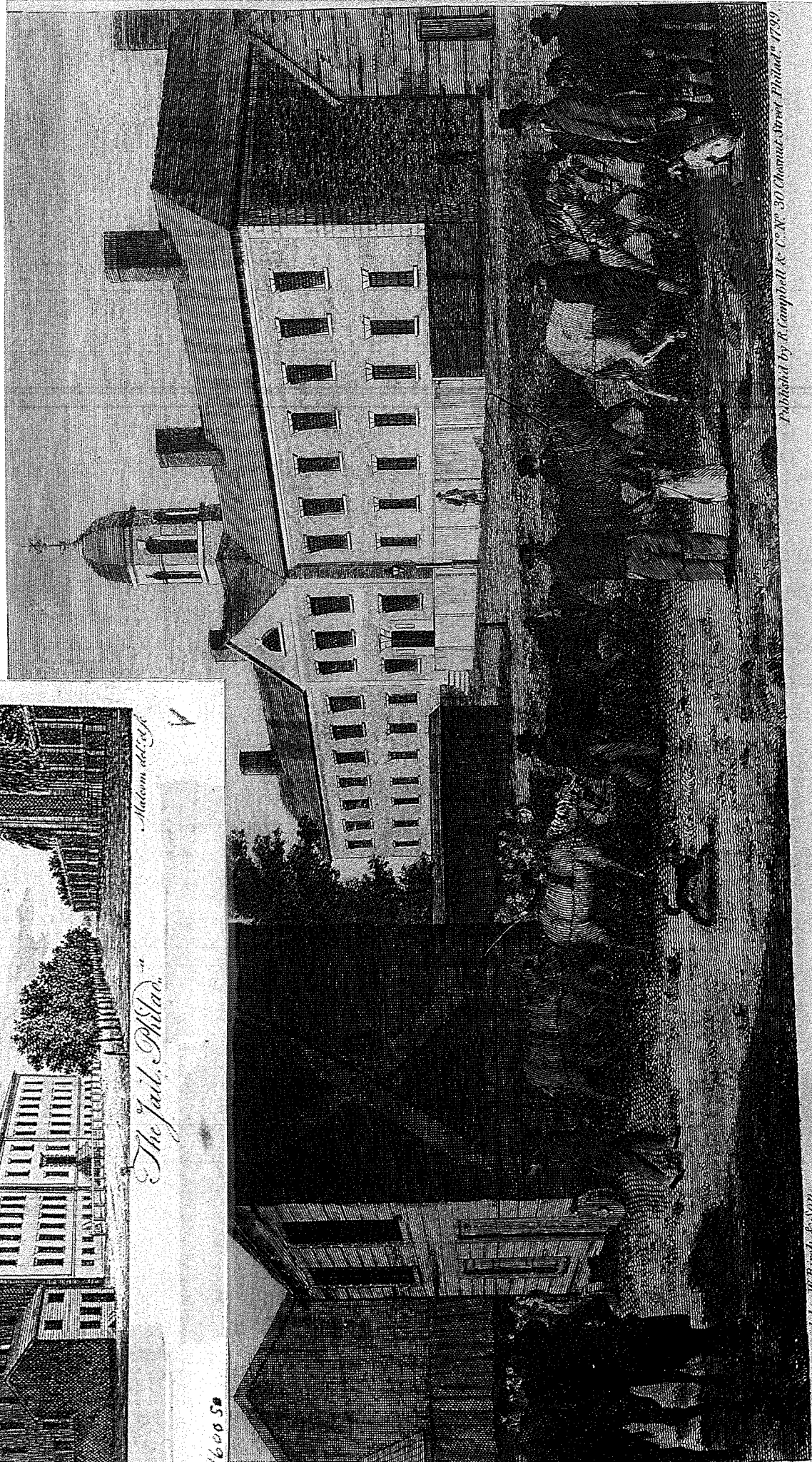
Two contemporary views of the Walnut Street Prison depict a wall on the 5th Street side on Malcome's engraving (left) and Birch's in rear, from southeast vantage below. Both were **privacy walls**, not security walls. These walls appear about six(6) feet high.



The Jail, Philad.

Malcome del. & sc.

4600 50



Engraved by W. Birch & Son.

Published by R. Campbell & Co. No. 30 Chestnut Street, Philad. 1799

After the Revolutionary War, the Walnut Street Jail was modified to become a "penitentiary house," by Act of April 3, 1790. Women were separated from men; new laws defined first and second degree murder and what offenses were truly "atrocious" apart from those apprehended as debtors, vagrants (homeless, unemployed and drunks), and misdemeanants. At the Walnut Street Jail, prisoners were in separate cells and worked when not praying for forgiveness as well as a future in social conformity. The Jail was designed by architect Robert Smith, with some suggestions from Howard. (Refer herein to pages 15 and 23.)

An increase in what an individual's actions were defined as "criminal" in the early 1800s brought the State Legislature to decide to close the Walnut Street Jail and for two penitentiaries to be built for those convicted of state offenses and the other as a "city and county prison." In the latter, short-term sentences would be served in the same prison as those awaiting adjudication, witnesses, vagrants and debtors. These institutions were to apply Howard's "solitary system" where the inmate would be alone in his/her cell, behind high walls.

PHILADELPHIA'S WALLED "CASTLE JAILS"

"...the Quaker State really pioneered the concept of solitary (or separate) confinement for felons," wrote sociologist Negley K. Teeters. Moyamensing Prison descended from this principle that began in the United States at the Walnut Street Prison, but Moyamensing did not hold only felons (who were there awaiting death at the gallows.) The fact that Moyamensing Prison was intended and by act, ordered to be a detention for short-term convicts and the innocent somewhat compromises an argument on comparing this prison with Eastern State Penitentiary with its long-term felons.

⁴Teeters, Negley, K., "Prison Architecture in the 19th Century," written for the "Germantown Crier," a Philadelphia newspaper for the Summer and Fall issues, 1969. Also found at Temple University Urban Archives, Teeters Papers, Folder 1, Box #4, AR94-9-1, p.28. Also refer to Sellin in "Philadelphia Prisons of the 18th century," in Historic Philadelphia, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, pp.326,330. Volume 43, Part 1, 1953.

Indeed, the English "castle jails" in the rural areas were of a construction design familiar to the English people: the castle is part of the history of England, and source of pride. It was also practical for housing hundreds of prisoners. Locating these castle prisons far from the corrupting urban streets also had some value:

"Walled away inside Gloucester, 'deviants' lost that precarious membership in the community implied by the free access once allowed between the old jail and the street."⁵

The castle design warranted an encircling wall, a defensive wall to obstruct external forces from entering. The Tower of London, designed by William the Conqueror's "architect," a monk named Gundulf (b.1024 in Rouen, France) was the first use of the Norman plan from the continent. By the early 1500s, with King Henry VIII, the Tower became an official prison, a "castle jail" with its wall's purpose for those inside. Blackburn's penitentiaries in Gloucester had high, thick walls in the late 1780s and 1790s⁶ foreshadowing a new phase in the development of prison architecture with the national penitentiary situated in London, the Millbank, begun in 1812 on the banks of the Thames River.

The English had been concerned with the visual impact of architecture upon individuals with the castle jail model. Prison reformer Jeremy Bentham reacted thus:

Morals reformed--health preserved--industry invigorated...
all by a simple Idea in Architecture.⁷

Many early 19th century social and economical developments had influenced the closings of the English rural castle jails by the 1820s. Consequently, Millbank too would soon fail. But as rejected as this prison design was in England, it would transfer to the U.S., through Philadelphia and John Haviland, Eastern State Penitentiary's architect and a native of England.

⁵

⁵Ignatieff, op.cit., p.102.

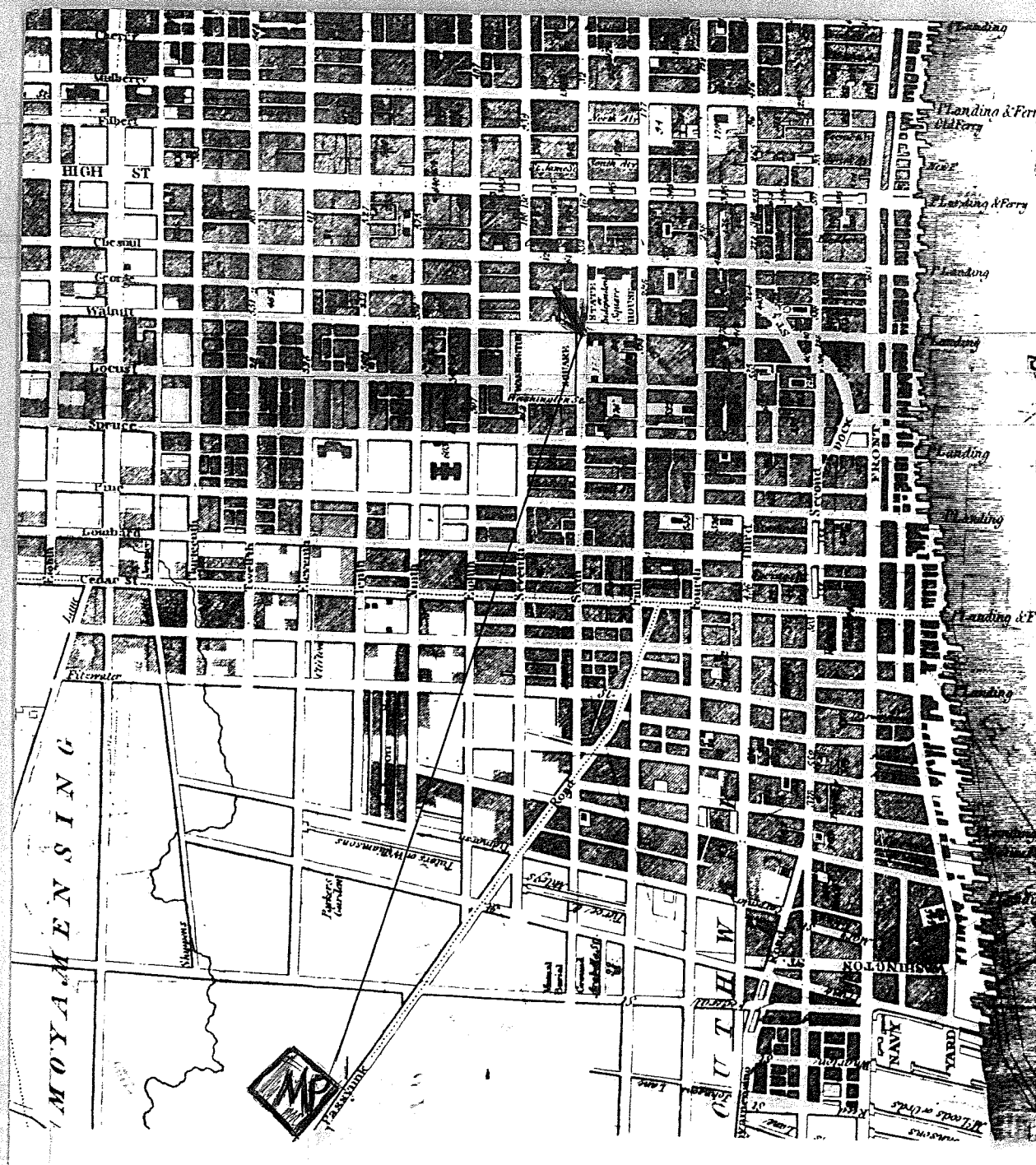
⁶Ibid., p. 101. Gloucester "had an 18 foot wall" around it.

⁷Bentham, **Panopticon**, (1791), printed in England, p. 109.

⁸Ignatieff, op.cit., p. 193.

Moyamensing Township, 1834

This, and following copies of maps show development around prison.



Site of Moyamensing Prison--already under construction in 1834--has nominator's mark and line drawn from Walnut Street Prison. Residential development was far from prison and no streets had yet been surveyed. Water was piped from Passyunk "Road," as were other transported materials and products.

By the Act of March 21, 1821, the Commonwealth legislated for Eastern State Penitentiary to be built in Philadelphia, for this half of the state, after William Strickland designed Western State Penitentiary in the Pittsburgh area. The commission for the new prison went to Haviland, who had only been in the city since about 1816.⁹ His design would be revolutionary for this country and in penal history. The English Gothic castellated design for Eastern State's exterior, though not in use abroad would set an architectural trend for institutional buildings in the United States through the nineteenth century.

Teeters, the sociologist had written a published paper with a subtitle, "How Original was Haviland?"speculating "There is reason to believe that Haviland borrowed most, if not all of his ideas ...from some houses of correction and mental hospitals constructed during the decade 1790-1799 in his native country, England."¹⁰ The Blackburn penitentiaries date earlier, but Haviland would have known about the London-based castle-jail, Millbank which was in construction while Haviland was in that city.¹¹ (Image herein, p.20.) Millbank had not only a wall, but also a moat¹² to isolate the penitentiary from the rest of London, a twist in utility where distance sufficed in the rural counties.

Situating Eastern State Penitentiary and Moyamensing Prison in "pastoral setting(s)" only was appropriate for size, and we know how immense the former prison is now, covering a city block, or approximately "670 feet" on each side.¹³ Moyamensing's north side was "504 feet." Walnut Street Jail's length was "400 feet," across the street from the State House ("Independence Hall") in the city though not with as many cells as the later penitentiaries or with the same or similar interior plan for such wide space.

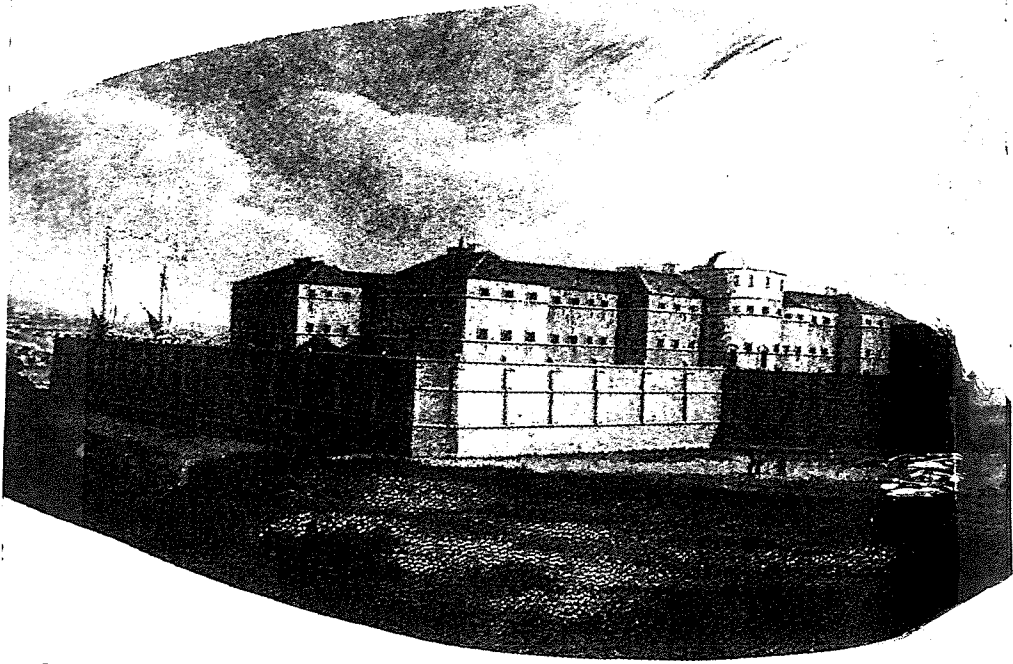
⁹Scharf & Westcott's **History of Philadelphia**. Phila.: Everts, 1884, iii 1834-1835; Amundson, Jhennifer (Ed.), **Thomas U. Walter: Lectures on Architecture, 1841-53**, p.5. Haviland worked for architect James Elmes in London prior to moving to Philadelphia.

¹⁰Teeters, op.cit., p.34.

¹¹Ignatieff, p. 171. Millbank opened in 1817.

¹²Ibid.

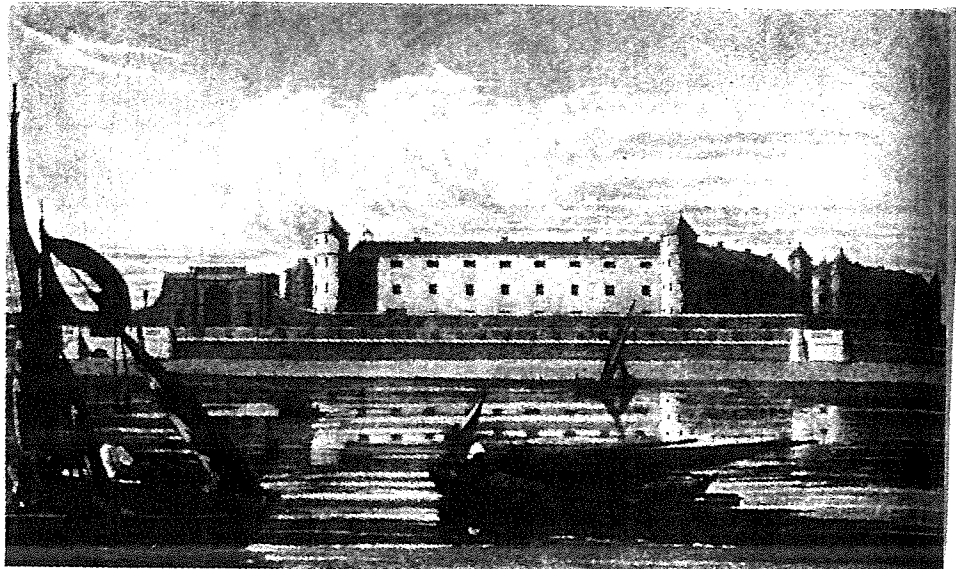
¹³Scharf & Westcott, op. cit., iii1835.



8. Gloucester Penitentiary, exterior view, 1795.

These images used in Ignatieff's *A Just measure of Pain* offer a timeline for England's "castle jail" penitentiaries which were constructed before American penitentiaries. Millbank (below) was finished by 1817 in London and would have been known to John Haviland who designed Eastern State Penitentiary by 1821.

Moyamensing Prison's exterior design had only adapted the wall apparently to conform with the "castellated" English Gothic, used by Haviland at Eastern State and not from these examples in England. The English design was to accommodate hundreds more than in U.S.



20. Millbank Penitentiary from the Thames, 1820s.

Thomas Ustick Walter's entry for the commission of the new prison is below, from which the south wall is derived.

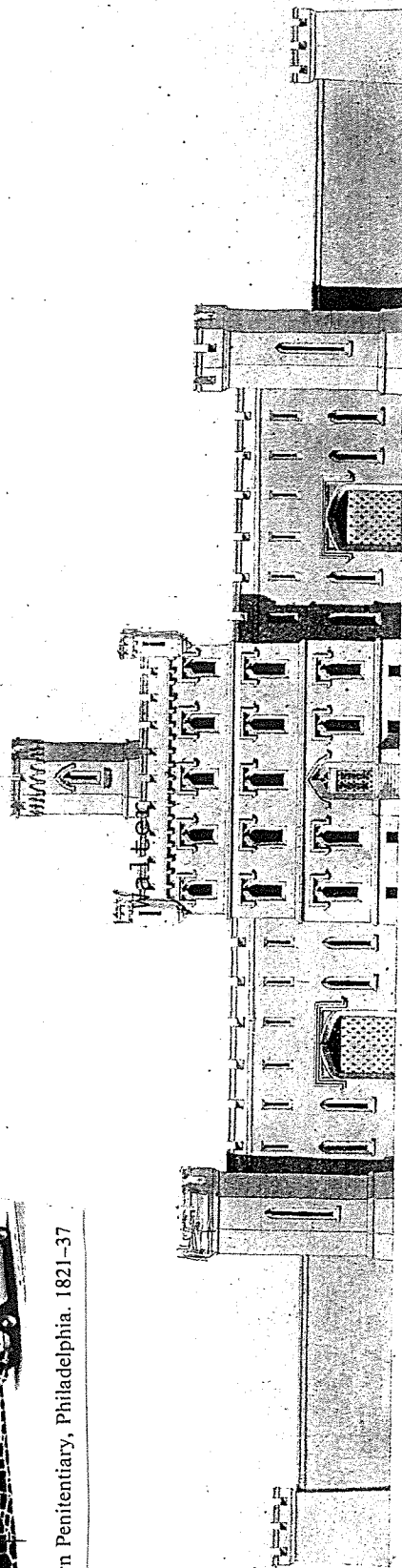
Walter's design for Moyamensing Prison had many elements in common with Haviland's Eastern State Penitentiary only on the exterior, with the "English Gothic" castellated design.

Haviland's granite walls were more relevant for this penitentiary's "lifers" living in the maddening "solitary" system.

-21-

John Haviland. Eastern Penitentiary, Philadelphia. 1821-37

south
wall



WALLS: FORM versus FUNCTION

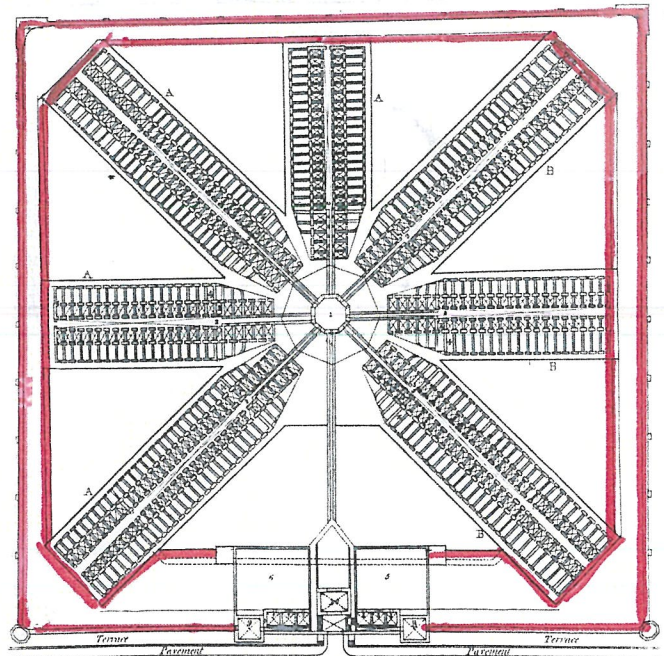
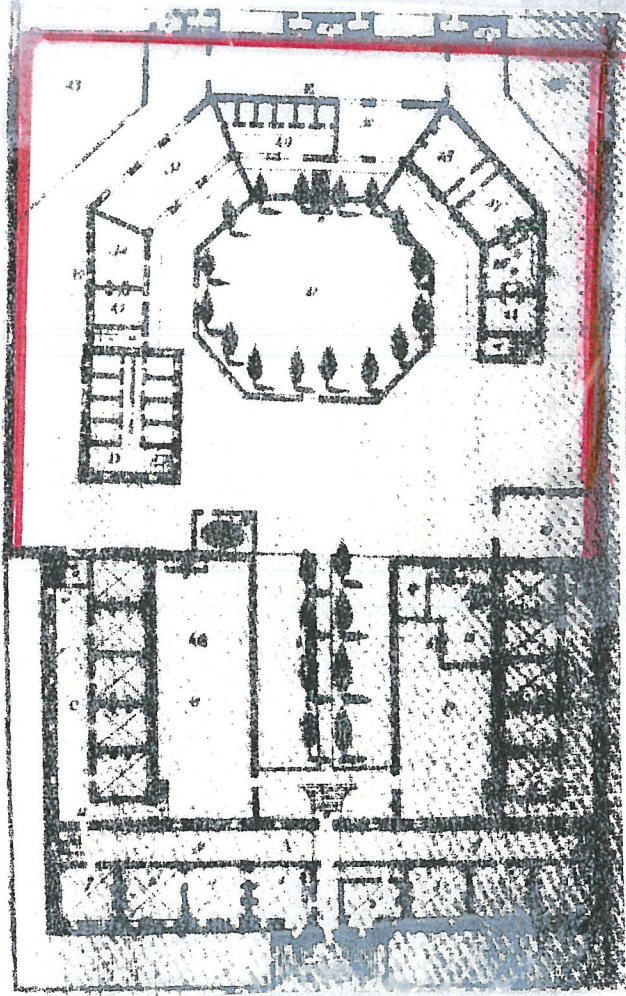
Much of the significance in the Moyamensing Prison walls can be discussed through their purpose and whether they served solely for esthetic or security reasons. What is evident, thus far, is that the American interpretation of the English castle-jail for Philadelphia at Eastern State Penitentiary was more consistent than at Moyamensing Prison. Moreover, the issue of the exterior walls as related to the interior plans of the prisons has different, but equally significant value.

The floor plans of the Walnut Street Jail, Eastern State Penitentiary and Moyamensing Prison on the next page show the rows of cells for inmates from the years, 1795 through 1840. Stone walls are noted in red. Images of the Walnut Street Prison herein on page 15 denote a kind of "privacy" wall about six feet high. About two decades later, when John Haviland obtained the commission for his plan of Eastern State, there are not one but two walls encircling the rows of cells radiating from the center. The inner wall buttressed the wall of the cell block at the ends. For his castellated exterior and this interior plan, Haviland became, to art and architectural historians, an innovator with his "rationality of plan and spareness of form."¹⁴ It was nearly impossible to escape from this penitentiary over its walls. (Recall that one of Eastern State's main "celebrity prisoners" was escapee Willie Sutton who dug out from the ground level.) The walls, then, functioned to detain from the inside, as Haviland planned for this early "maximum security" prison.

Moyamensing Prison, alternatively, was famous for inmates fleeing over its walls. The instant south wall, in fact, allowed prisoners to drop into the backyards of the Gerritt Street homes.

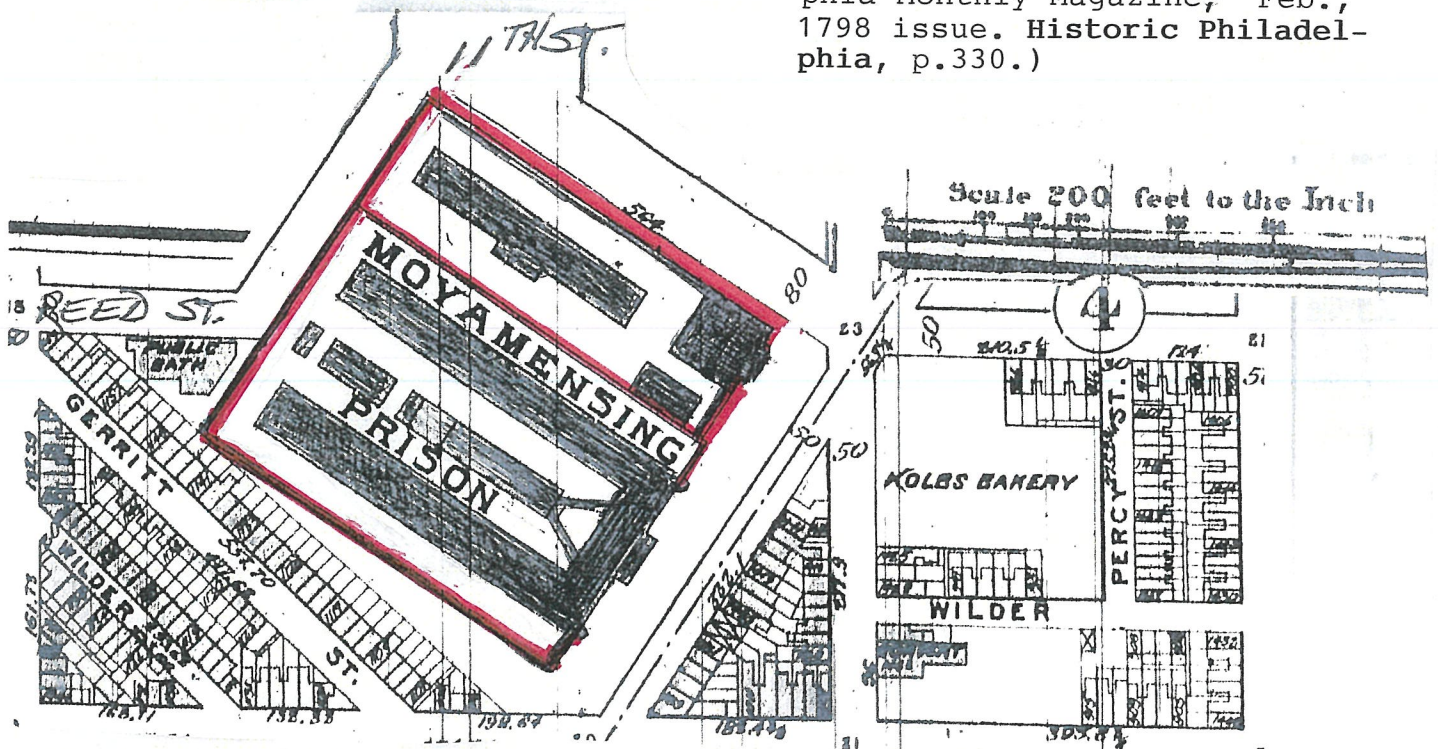
¹⁴ Brown, Milton, *American Art*. NY: Abrams, 1979, pp.176;178. The art historians did not consider how well the Haviland design effected a psychological deterrence to crime by the prison's exterior, or how the radial rows of cell blocks assisted in controlling the inmates.

FLOOR PLANS of PHILADELPHIA PENITENTIARIES



John Haviland. Plan, Eastern Penitentiary, Philadelphia. 1821-37. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Walnut Street Jail (left) in 1798. (Source: "The Philadelphia Monthly Magazine," Feb., 1798 issue. Historic Philadelphia, p.330.)



For the instant prison, Walter encountered more than only designing his version of the English rural castle jail in the undeveloped Moyamensing Township. Overseen by a group of Commissioners,* Walter was obligated to design a floor plan conforming to the "Pennsylvania" or "solitary system," originally used in those same castle jails in England. Haviland successfully posed rows of cell blocks in a radial plan, similar to Bentham's "Panopticon" in England. The objective was in having a minimum number of staff control a maximum, multiple times number of inmates through this particular radial plan. Haviland's design of single cells for hundreds emanating from the central guard house had enforcing walls connecting the cell blocks in the interior. The walls surrounding Eastern State Penitentiary, as planned by Haviland, were then the last impenetrable barrier holding the inmates inside. There was no means for an inmate to go from the roof of the cell block and onto this wall because of distance, height differences and inability to "connect" from one point to another. Haviland's interior floor plan seemingly forced the inmate into his cell and into hopelessness.

Eastern State Penitentiary's exterior and interior plans, and the Haviland-designed prisons in Newark and Trenton (New Jersey) and "The Tombs" in New York City became the "texts" from which Walter learned and made modifications at Moyamensing Prison. (Haviland's prisons earned recognition in American art histories, but not Moyamensing.) Walter noted how Haviland achieved at either Pennsylvania or New York (State) what the English conceptualized that architecture could do in rehabilitating the deviant inmate. Haviland gave equal, if not more consideration to the interiors. This was an important prison feature, though not to Walter.

*The Prison Commissioners were, in 1837: Jesse B. Burden, Jacob Frick, William E. Schau (Schuran?), William G. Alexander, Samuel Palmer and Joseph Price, according to the "Agreement."

Below, Walter referred to the "old system" of incarceration in Pennsylvania, which is the "solitary confinement." From his travels in New Jersey or in New York to study the Haviland prisons simultaneously under construction with Moyamensing, Walter knew of the "silent system" first implemented at the upstate New York prison in Auburn by 1817. If this was "new" it predated Eastern State Penitentiary's continued use of what had been at the Walnut Street Prison since 1790.

Visit to the Penitentiary, Mr. Long has made some valuable improvements in the building, but they are on the old system. Nothing will do but solitary confinement.

(Source: Walter's Diary entry of October 20, 1835.)

The "Auburn system" was the alternative to the "Pennsylvania" model of incarceration. It was part of Haviland's genius to create exterior and interior prison plans for either penal system. With Walter, his strength was in exterior architecture, expressing esthetics, which prison interiors were not, nor were wont to be. So, while Haviland was able to execute prison interiors in accordance to the respective penal systems and their philosophies, at Moyamensing Prison, the "solitary confinement" was fated not to endure its purpose, just as its walls. There was no sense of timelessness at Moyamensing and no flexibility in Walter's plan to allow the process of detention to move beyond the 1830s.

Walter's walls have a relationship to the parallel rows of cells blocks whose heights allow for escapes from the roofs and onto the walls for the 20 foot jump below. At least that was how inmates described their escapes, in this May 2, 1959 "Evening Bulletin" article:

"For the escape route, a hole was chipped in the masonry ceiling of the top-floor cell. This gave access to an air vent and then to a ventilator through the roof. Once on the roof Jenkins and Rawlins shed their prison garb...dropped to the roof of a tower near the intersection of Passyunk ave., 10th and Reed..."

Walter's instant wall, though mimicking Haviland's at Eastern State, did not function in the same manner. The nominated wall was about $6\frac{1}{2}$ ' feet deep, like a walkway. "Once on the roof of the cell block, it's a simple task to make the wall," said one observer quoted in "The Evening Bulletin" in 1957.¹⁵ In addition, "Anyone with an escape plan has an opportunity to reach the wall once outside the buildings. (Cell blocks.)" It was more than clear that Walter's plan for the cell blocks had failed because he disassociated the purpose of the design to its function. With Haviland, he articulated design to justify a form and its purpose. Walter's preference was for his design to articulate, to express, regardless of its purpose. What the walls in both prisons had separately shown was how the interior buildings' orientations (to the walls) determined the walls' effectiveness in confining and controlling the inmates. For Walter's walls, they held no function except to block one's view of the residential neighborhood at eye-level. Furthermore, where guards could be better positioned at Eastern State, Walter's long rows called for more staff that the city could never provide. It is ironic that of the praise given to Walter for Moyamensing Prison, that the part of this complex that was weakest in its function, is the one that survives *in situ* to tell Moyamensing's story of its past.

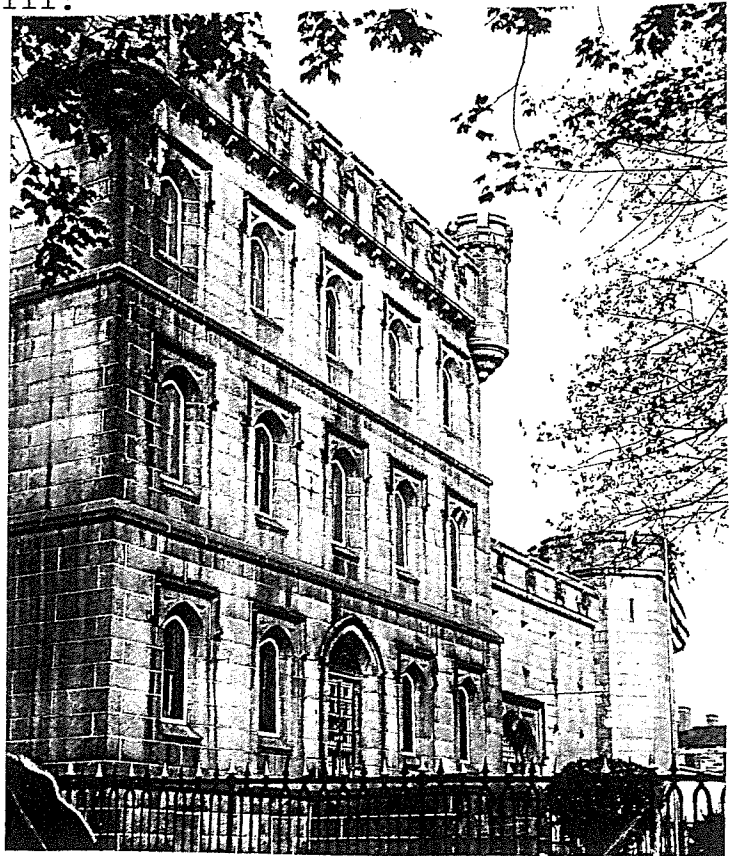
¹⁵All news items from the former Temple University Urban Archives and copied from clippings, often unintelligible for exact dates.

The record on Moyamensing Prison's history is not as voluminous as Eastern State's where Haviland interpreted long abandoned prison architectural designs for the exterior and interior of English castle jails. For this body of work on his prison designs, Haviland received acclaim in establishing precedents not only in penitentiary/prison designing, but in American institutional architecture. In many examples seen (now only in images and photographs) at Moyamensing Prison, Walter relied upon Haviland's knowledge and skill. But Walter would never design a state or large-scale prison for felons who required maximum security.

As the first prison designed by Walter, Moyamensing Prison was an overwhelming series of complicated tasks that called for experience and a full understanding of Pennsylvania's "solitary system." At Moyamensing Prison, the floor plan, along with the dimensions of the buildings closest to the peripheral wall had disregarded the issue of prison security. Separation from others was the underlying principle to reform inmates and Walter's plan faltered, especially at the south wall addressed herein. What Walter did indicate at Moyamensing Prison--that would define him--was his preference to stress "gracefulness and beauty" through architectural forms, a useless effort with regards to prison interiors.

The instant walls on the south side of Moyamensing Prison's "centre building" would have been visible in the 1830s until the residences were built on the 1100 block of Gerritt Street by the early 1870s. These are two-story red brick rowhouses, much smaller than other "Victorians" on larger streets. In Walter's lifetime, he could have seen these houses rise so close to obscure his walls. But, his "centre building" a stately three-story of 50' high and 52' wide was described rather well in the ¹⁶History of Philadelphia to laud Walter's skill:

The corner-stone of the new prison was laid on the 2d of April, 1832. The plans for the building were prepared by Thomas U. Walter, architect. He chose for it the castellated Gothic style, and was successful in the design of a bold and exceedingly striking front, the effect of which was much increased by the heavy, dark color of the syenite granite which was selected for the building material. The façade was set back from the road, at the distance of fifty feet from the line of the sidewalk. The centre building, fifty feet in height, is of three stories, with a front of fifty-two feet at the base and a height of fifty feet. Circular warders' towers, supported on large corbels, are at the corners, and rise above the roof, being crowned with projecting embattled parapets. The centre building also is surmounted by parapets pierced with embrasures. The whole front is ornamented with architraves, corbels, labels, etc., peculiar to the style. On each side of the centre building are wings receding ten feet, and fifty feet wide, surmounted by a parapet pierced with embrasures. Entrance gates, ten feet wide and seventeen feet high, secured at the top by



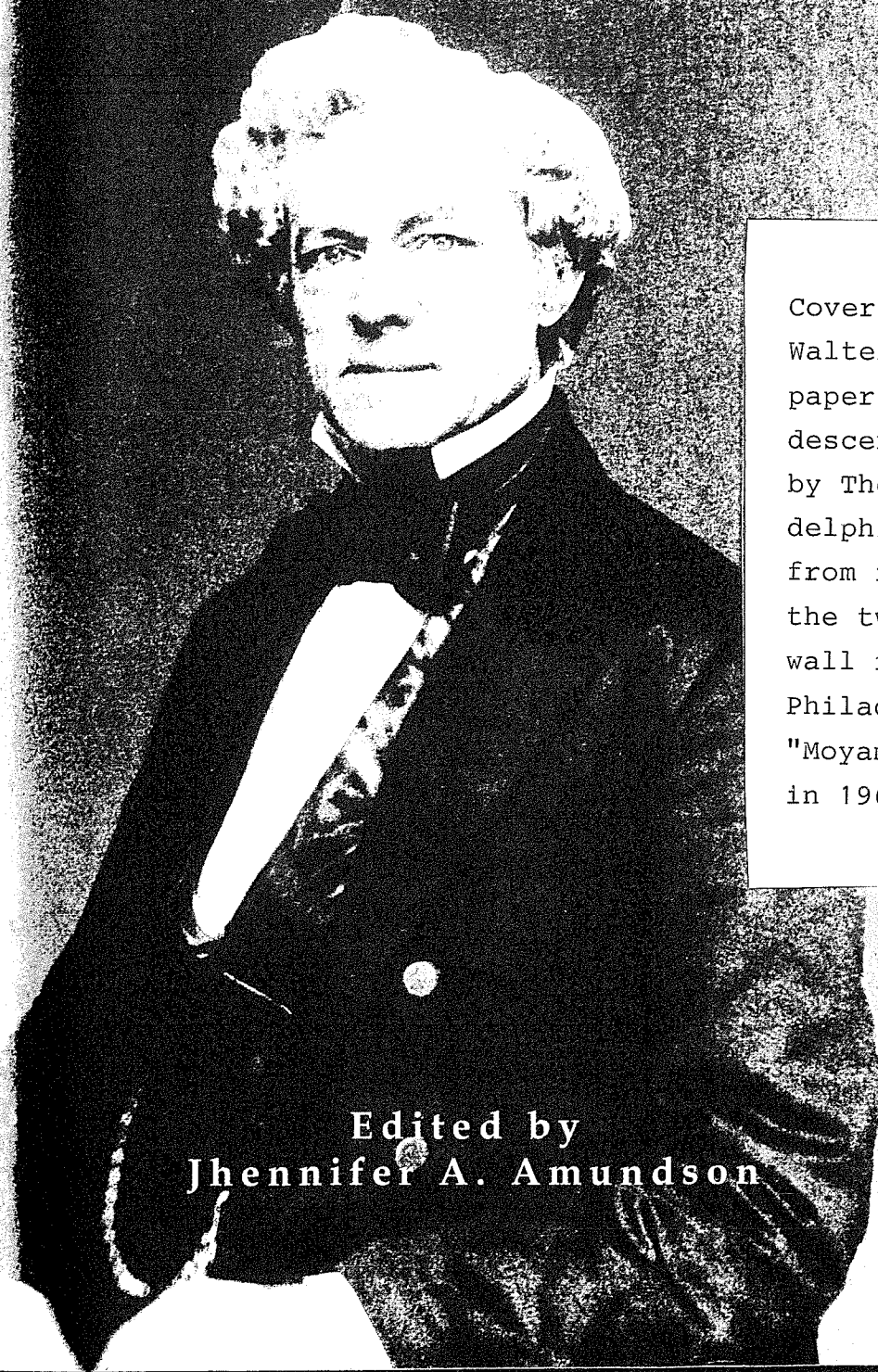
"The Centre Building."¹⁷

¹⁶ Scharf & Westcott, op.cit., p. 1836 iii.

¹⁷ Image from White, Theo B. (Ed.), Philadelphia Architecture in the Nineteenth Century. Phila.: The Art Alliance Press.

THOMAS U. WALTER

The Lectures on Architecture, 1841-1853



Cover of compilation of Walter's Lectures. His papers, passed down to descendants, were acquired by The Athenaeum of Philadelphia and have been copied from relevant sections for the two nominations on the wall remnants from the Philadelphia County (or "Moyamensing") Prison, razed in 1967 to 1968.

Edited by
Jhennifer A. Amundson

The south wall remnants from Moyamensing Prison...

(e) are 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.

Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1887) was the Philadelphia-born architect who designed the Philadelphia County Prison in the English Gothic castellated" style in 1831. Walter had "abruptly replaced" one of his instructors from the Franklin Institute's "Drawing School," John Haviland reputedly because of unspecified "political machinations."¹⁸ Walter became acquainted with building construction and perhaps some design under his father, Joseph S. Walter, a master brick layer and mason. Walter was an apprentice under William Strickland who left many Neoclassically-designed buildings in Philadelphia such as the Second Bank of the United States and the Merchants' Exchange where he relied upon ancient Greek precedents. Attached are brief biographies on Walter and Haviland written by Roger Moss, formerly of The Athenaeum of Philadelphia which holds the largest collection of Walter's personal papers. This nomination cites many of these papers, copies of the original plans of the county prison and copies of selected pages from Walter's Diary.

Walter's career began by following the styles and architectural trends of the time, with "revivals" of styles from antiquity. Of Walter's rather extensive list of designs, his most notable one is the Capitol dome in Washington, D.C. As with many of his plans, Walter drew on master architects and our Capitol's dome has reflected Sir Christopher Wren's 17th century St. Paul's Cathedral in London. On this dome, Walter wrote of its "unity of design...har-

¹⁸Baigell, Matthew E., "John Haviland," Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965, p.24, 46n citing letter from Samuel R. Wood, to Joseph B. Collins, November 14, 1834. Refer to entire Wood letter attached herein. His comments on Walter's incompetence at Moyamensing Prison came as Wood was warden at Eastern State Penitentiary, designed by Haviland.

mony and repose....a majestic centre..."¹⁹ Walter's dome was a continuation of what earlier architects had established at the capitol city in creating an architectural affinity in this country to ancient Greece and Rome, the sources (respectively) of democracy and republican ideals. The American Neoclassical trend was already decades old when Walter submitted his plan for a cast-iron tiered dome, which was completed just before the Civil War began.

The Philadelphia County Prison/Penitentiary was said to have a design that brought local attention to the 27 year old Walter. Baigell's research held that Haviland was already at the prison site, "supervising"²⁰--perhaps at the instant south wall--until some problem caused his dismissal from the project and Walter assigned. This would imply that Walter's entry design for the prison was not the first choice, especially with Haviland's success at Eastern State Penitentiary's interior radial plan and exterior that carried his native England's "castle jail" model. Haviland had a greater understanding of the "Pennsylvania system" of removing the "sinner" from society and allowing rehabilitation through penance and work--alone. For the felons at Eastern State, Haviland's ingenuity produced in the United States what had been tried in England but improved with interior utilities for hundreds of inmates. Haviland integrated the "Pennsylvania" or "solitary" system into a living arrangement for those condemned while making all other parts of his architectural elements function. Cornelius reported that Walter had Haviland as his "consultant"²¹ for Moyamensing Prison, not for the exterior (although Moyamensing has attributable elements to Haviland's Eastern State), but for the interior's system of pipes for water, sewer, ventilation and heating.

¹⁹ Amundson, op.cit., p. 184, "Lecture V."

²⁰ Baigell, op.cit. p.23.

²¹ Cornelius, David Gregory, **The Institutional Building Systems of John Haviland**. Phila.: The Athenaeum, 1997-1998, p.88. Also refer to "Letter to the Commissioners for Erecting a County Prison" 1 March 1832 in the Haviland Papers 2:264-5, cited *ibid.*, p.104, 130n, which supports Haviland's role at Moyamensing Prison.

A contemporary source, Eastern State Penitentiary's warden had opined in 1834 that the county prison was a "failure" because Walter "knew nothing of the requisites of a prison for separate confinement."²² This is certainly true in the futility of the walls designed by Walter to resemble Eastern State's. There were no security enhancements from the faulty interior floor plan. Plus, the heights of the facility buildings were unwisely too congruent to the (nearby) walls in Walter's immature prison plan.

Of course, Walter would rather have Haviland make plans on how to dispose of human waste at the county prison. But Walter was reminded of Haviland's superiority in the dual roles of interior architect/designer, not restricted to exteriors every time Walter rode up to Girard College, one of his commissions in the Classical Greek style he emulated again and again. Girard College was in construction and so near to Eastern State Penitentiary that Walter had to be blind so not to be reminded of Haviland's greatness.

Walter's Diary also noted his other designs underway while Moyamensing Prison prepared for Walnut Street Penitentiary's inmates. These too, were his preferred Greek or Neoclassical designs which were more fit to Walter's personality: Matthew Newkirk's residence and the Biddle family's "Andalusia." Both appeared as ancient temples to worship the pagan gods, not residences. Walter's Lectures emphasized his opinion that "...the ancient Greeks, they arrived at a degree of perfection" in "all the architectural efforts..."²³ For the young architect, the Greek ideals were expressed in architecture, as he had seen in William Strickland's interpretations of the Parthenon (at the Second Bank) and Monument to Lycurgus (Merchants' Exchange). As Strickland's apprentice, Walter

²²Baigell, op.cit., p. 24.

²³Amundson, op.cit., p.76, "Lecture II."

could be present to hear the public reaction to the American re-creations of Greek Golden Age designs on buildings planned in this county, just as the Industrial Age was well in progress. Rhetorically, there was some justification to revive the architectural styles of western civilization, but the sense of American nationalism was also present during the Jacksonian years too. Nevertheless, American-born architects like Thomas Ustick Walter focussed on ideals and the county prison seemed to be a very frustrating venture which suppressed his desire to design all buildings in the classical Greek.

For Walter, his designs were intended to be viewed from the exterior on all sides, as if to walk around in continued awe. The prison, by contrast, had one public side to show his prowess; the interior buildings and wall seemed of no consequence to him, just as their interior designing. In his Lecture VI: "Principles of Architectural Composition.....," Walter admitted that architecture "depended on...utility and durability...entirely of practical, or mechanical nature," but dismissed any discussion: "We shall pass them over."²⁴ The monotony of the instant wall and how the interior buildings related to the wall, in Walter's mind, interfered with his intent to design beautiful exteriors.

Meanwhile, in one of his philosophical "retreats" Walter noted on "Thursday 20" (October of 1835) in his Diary, of "forming an American Institute of Architects."

(Mr. Tatolow dined with me, a charming young man — Saw Mr. Long at his office talked about forming an American Institute of Architects visit to the Penitentiary. Mr. Long...)

²⁴ Amundson, op.cit., p. 208.

Walter would become the Institute's first president.

In the years of supervising the construction of Moyamensing Prison, Walter received recognition to be invited to become a member of the Academy of the Natural Sciences (1835) and the American Philosophical Society (1839),²⁵ both of which claimed associations with the most skilled intellectuals. Members of these elite societies stressed experience, experiments and to publish one's findings to attribute new information to innovators. This means would also form a basis for professionalism, which Walter sought for architects throughout the United States.

Overall, Walter's own recording of what was transpiring at the county prison site from the laying of the cornerstone in 1832 to the prison's expansion northward that would continue to about 1839 is very sparse. Walter's brief entries, "visited prison" or "met prison commissioners" have no explanations, but had been repeated for months. There are no indications on any progress--or problems that Walter, the 27 year old architect, discussed in this first prison/penitentiary commission. The reader of Walter's Diary can infer that he chose not to memorialize anything "ugly"--so indicative of his naivete in his selfish way. Other records, (used more for the second part of the wall's nomination), suggest that others had to be hired to assist Walter because of his inexperience in "practical" or "mechanical" architecture. But it seems that Walter did not exhibit any further interest in the "mechanical" in his later designs, depending on other architects rather than do his own exploring and trials.

Nevertheless, Walter's role in the construction of the instant south walls offers merit for their certification.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA
April, 2018

²⁵
Ibid., p. 7.