

**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: **6950 Germantown Avenue (formerly 6926 Germantown Avenue)**

Postal code: **19119** Councilmanic District: **8**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Leibert House**

Common Name: **“Infant Home” of the Orphans’ Home and Asylum for the Aged & Infirm
of the Evangelical Lutheran 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: **Institutional**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See attached.

6. DESCRIPTION

See attached.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year):

c. 1800-1808 to 1902

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

Built: **c. 1800-1808**; Enlarged: **c. 1810-1811**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Unknown

Original owner:

William Leibert

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,
- X** (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- X** (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
- X** (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached.

9. NOMINATOR: The Keeping Society of Phila

Email: Keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Authors: **Oscar Beisert & J.M. Duffin**

Date: **16 March 2018**

Street Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320**

Telephone: **(717) 602-5002**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Nominator is **is not** the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 3/16/2018

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 6/1/2018

Date of Notice Issuance: 6/1/2018

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Germantown Home, Inc

Address: 6950 Germantown Avenue

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19119

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 2/8/2019

Date of Final Action: 2/8/2019

Designated Rejected

4/11/13

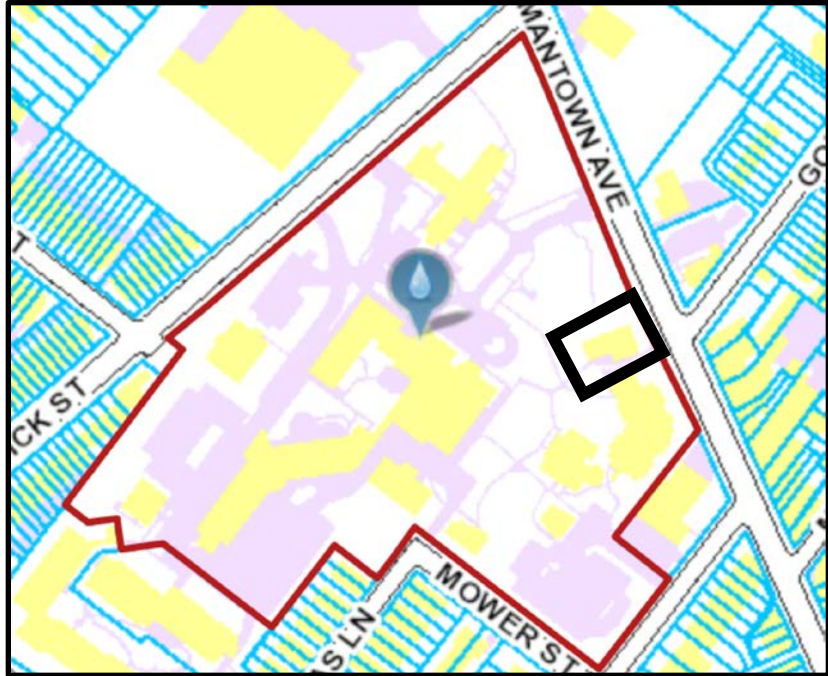
**Nomination
for the
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**



Looking southwest, the Leibert House. Source: Brad Maule.

**The Leibert House
6950 Germantown Avenue
Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Prepared by Oscar Beisert and J.M. Duffin
Edited by the Historical Commission Staff**

*The Leibert House, 6950 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, March 2018 – Page 1*



While this designation will pertain to the large parcel delineated above in red, the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Historical Commission shall be limited to the section of that parcel that is further delineated by the black rectangle, which includes the Leibert House and its immediate grounds. Source: Philadelphia Water Department.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located within the old campus of the Lutheran Home at Germantown and therefore the larger boundary of that parcel is shown in the image above in red and further below described below. The specific designation only pertains to a portion of the property known as the Leibert House, which is circled in the image above within the larger boundary and delineated more carefully in the image below.



A detail of the area of the larger parcel that is subject to the designation. Within the black rectangle shown above is the Leibert House and its immediate grounds. Source: Philadelphia Water.

BEGINNING at a point formed by the intersection of the Northeasterly side of Mower Street and the Northwesterly side of Carpenter Street; thence extending North forty-eight degrees fifty-two minutes forty-two seconds West along the Northeasterly side of Mower Street the distance of three hundred forty-four feet three and three-eighths inches to a point on the Northwesterly side of Gorgas Lane; thence South forty degrees thirty-nine minutes fourteen seconds West along the Northwesterly side of Gorgas Lane ninety-six feet no inches to a point; thence North forty-nine degrees twenty minutes forty-six seconds West eighty feet ten and three-quarter inches to a point; thence South forty degrees thirty-nine minutes fourteen seconds West partly crossing the bed of Cresheim Road four hundred twenty-two feet two and three-quarter inches more or less to a point on the Northeasterly side of Cresheim Road within the bed of Cresheim Road; thence Northwestwardly along the Northeasterly side of Cresheim Road within the bed of Cresheim Road crossing former Sedgwick Street three hundred fifty-six feet four and three-quarter inches more or less to a point; thence North forty degrees fifty-five minutes six seconds east partly re-crossing the bed of Cresheim Road ten feet more or less to a point on the Northeasterly side of said Cresheim Road; thence North fifty-two degrees five minutes thirty-four seconds West along the Northeasterly side of said Cresheim Road one hundred forty-one feet six and three-eighths inches to a point on the Southeasterly side of Sedgwick Street; thence North fifty-two degrees forty-five minutes forty-three seconds East along the said Southeastern side of Sedgwick Street one hundred thirty-six feet eight and five-eighths inches to a point on the Southwesterly side of a driveway which leads Southeastwardly from said Sedgwick Street leading Northeastwardly; thence South fifty-two degrees five minutes thirty-four seconds East along the Southwesterly side of said driveway one hundred thirteen feet five and one-eighth inches to a point on the Southeasterly side thereof; thence North forty degrees fifty-five minutes six seconds East passing along the Southeasterly side of said driveway, crossing said Mower Street being stricken from City Plan the Southeast of this line four hundred two feet more or less to a point on the Northeasterly side of Mower Street; thence Northwestwardly along the Northeasterly side of said Mower Street twenty-eight feet ten inches to a point on the Southeasterly side of said Sedgwick Street; thence North fifty-two degrees forty-five minutes forty-three seconds East along the said Southeasterly side of Sedgwick Street six hundred ninety-five feet eleven and five-eighths inches more or less to a point on the Southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue; thence Southeastwardly along the said Southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue South twenty degrees twenty-three minutes thirty-five seconds East five hundred four feet six and three-eighths inches to an angle point; thence South twenty degrees fifty minutes forty-two seconds East along the said Southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue one hundred forty feet one and one-half inches to a point; thence South forty-one degrees twelve minutes forty-four seconds West two hundred three feet eleven and one-half inches to a point; thence South forty-eight degrees fifty-eight minutes twenty-nine seconds East one hundred one feet seven and one-quarter inches to a point on the said Northwesterly side of Carpenter Lane; thence South forty-one degrees one minute thirty-one West along the said Northwesterly side of Carpenter Lane one hundred seventy-one feet four and one-half inches to a point on the Northeasterly side of said Mower Street being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

OPA Account No. 881450000

Philadelphia Deed Registry No. 120N07-0081



Looking west at the Primary Elevation of the Main block. Source: Brad Maule.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Situated at what was historically known as 6926 Germantown Avenue and which is now part of the larger property at 6950 Germantown Avenue, the Leibert House is a commodious Federal-style “Mansion House” with later Gothic Revival stylistic embellishments. The building stands two-and-one-half-stories, is of stone masonry construction and is L-shaped in form with an intersecting gable roof. Physically the building could be divided into three sections—the main block, the rear wing, and the additions.

Main block—Primary Elevation (Germantown Avenue)

Featuring a side gable roof, the main block stands two-and-one-half-stories, spans five bays in width, and is of stone masonry construction with a roughcast finish. The front elevation is symmetrical, with a central arched entrance, delineated by a surround of stone keystones and quoins. The entrance features a single, paneled wooden door with a fanlight above. A stone threshold set into a linear stone base course separates the front wall from the tiled porch.



Looking west at the Primary Entrance within the Primary Elevation. Source: Brad Maule.

To either side of the central entrance are two windows that feature original wooden architraves and heavy keystone lintels that also appear to be of stone. A full-width porch spans the first floor with a hipped roof that is dominated by a central gable front that is defined by its broken, Greek Revival pediment. Verge boards and other bracketed details adorn the projecting gable that is

supported by original wooden posts. The porch roof is supported by five (formerly six) wooden posts finished with large brackets on each elevation. At each end of the porch are pilasters set upon the façade that mirror the corner porch supports. The porch support at the southerly corner has deteriorated and was recently removed. The entire porch features a cornice defined by heavy brackets.¹



Looking west at the primary elevation of the main block from Germantown Avenue. Note the damage to the porch, the stone lintels and door surround. Source: Brad Maule.

Mimicking the floor below, the fenestration of the second is articulated in the form of five symmetrically placed windows that retain original wood frames. The third, half-story consists of the cross gable roof that is dominated by a central gable at the center, which features a small window defined by a Gothic arch and matching hooded lintel. The central gable also features verge board details at the center. A front gable such as this was not unknown in the Federal period, but this feature appears a Victorian-era improvement. Flanking the gable, within the pitch of the roof, are prominent arched, Federal-style dormers, one on each side. The windows in the building are obscured by modern storm windows. Red brick chimneys pierce the roofline on each end of the building.

¹ It should be noted that during the week of May 28, 2018, while this nomination was under review, the porch was removed with a make-safe permit.



Looking west at the main block and the rear wing. Source: Pictometry, City of Philadelphia.



Looking north at the rear wing, the rear additions, and the main block. Source: Pictometry, City of Philadelphia.

Main block—Side Elevations (North and South)

Both side elevations, including the north and south, of the main block are simple with two windows on the first and second floors flanking the chimneystack with a single window on the third, half story. Both gables are adorned with verge board details.



Looking northeast at the rear wing and the rear additions. Source: Brad Maule.

Rear Wing

At the northerly end of the main block and appending from its rear elevation, the rear wing stands two-and-one-half-stories and is of stone construction with a roughcast finish. Facing the interior of the L-shape created by the main block and the rear wing are two dormers similar to those set upon roof of the primary elevation. The gable of the roof faces southwest with one window per floor.

Rear Additions

Within the L-Shape of the main block and the rear wing are two-story additions that appear to have been added historically. A single-story addition with a hipped roof appends the rear of the rear wing.



Looking south. Source: Pictometry, City of Philadelphia.



Looking northeast at the rear of the subject building. Source: Pictometry, City of Philadelphia.



“A. Liebert House, now part of Lutheran Home, no. 6926 Germantown Road [6950 Germantown Avenue], opposite Gorgas Lane,” c. 1890. Source: Thomas H. Shoemaker Germantown and Philadelphia portraits and views collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Liebert House at 6950 Germantown Avenue is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It is classified as a *significant* property in the 1987 Colonial Germantown National Historic Landmark District Boundary Increase inventory.² Located in the Mt. Airy neighborhood of the larger former German Township, the subject building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;*
- (d) *Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

² The building is called the Liebert House, Lutheran Home – Schmidt Cottage, 6926 Germantown Avenue in the inventory.

Criterion C

The Leibert House at 6950 Germantown Avenue reflects the environment in an era characterized by the Federal style, representing the original period of construction between 1800 and 1808; and the Gothic Revival style, representing the Victorian improvements that took place at some point between c. 1840 and 1880.

According to the National Register nomination, there is a 240-year difference between the oldest and newest buildings within the boundaries of the district. At the time the nomination was written in 1987, the Leibert House was one of 18 buildings on the campus of the then-Lutheran Home with construction dates ranging from the late eighteenth-century to the early-1970s.³ Such an expanse of time is well documented in the changes to the area's structures, as is the case with the Leibert House.

William Leibert built a stone house on the property sometime between 1800 and 1808.⁴ He then transformed or expanded the subject house in 1810/11 and established it as his primary residence. The 1810 tax list lists describes the building as "1 Stone House," assessed at \$350 and occupied by a renter.⁵ The following year the house is described as "1 – 2 St[ory] St[one] House" valued at \$900 occupied by Leibert.⁶ In 1818 the house was assessed at \$1,180 and included a stone barn.⁷

At first glance even the keenest architectural historian is almost at once at home with a Gothic Revival style house, being taken in by the central and side gables; the verge boards with cross bracing, likely denoting a post-1860 appearance; and the one-story full-width porch with Victorian-era details.⁸ Yet, upon further inspection, many of the hallmarks of a vernacular Federal-style building are present, including a side-gable roof; the "windows typically five-ranked and symmetrically balanced with center door..." featuring a fanlight; and the curved dormer (c. 1810) that flank the central gable, which may have replaced a third, central dormer.⁹ Both the original vernacular Federal style and the later Gothic Revival embellishments represent a common hybrid of architectural styles that speak to the larger nineteenth century architectural history of Germantown Avenue, the German Township, and the larger Philadelphia region. The subject property's transformation from the Federal style into the Gothic Revival style supports how the original National Register district was described in the revised nomination from 1982:

³ Jefferson M. Moak, "Colonial Germantown Historic District – Boundary Increase." *National Register of Historic Places Form*. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1987, 3.

⁴ Germantown Township, 1800, p. 22, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP; Germantown Township, 1808, p. 51, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP. The lot is vacant in 1800 and has a house on it in 1808. There are no surviving tax lists for the years in between.

⁵ Germantown Township, 1810, p. 52, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP.

⁶ Germantown Township, 1811, p. 30, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP. Another two story stone house with comparable assessed value (\$800) that still exists is 7406 Germantown Avenue (vide Francis Bockius, Germantown Township, 1811, p. 64, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP).

⁷ Germantown Township, 1818, p. 48, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP.

⁸ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 265–269.

⁹ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 216–218.

“While largely consistent in scale and material, the stylistic range of the district fully parallels the changing tastes of American Architecture from the Colonial to the Modern period.”¹⁰

In its later/current iteration, the house also reflects the environment in the 1830-1860 era characterized by the said Gothic Revival of architecture. Common building types in the Gothic Revival style include houses like the subject building. Several of the identifiable features of the Gothic Revival style are extant in the subject building: Pointed arches as decorative element and as window shape; front-facing cross-gables with decorative incised trim (vergeboards or bargeboards); porches with turned posts or columns; steeply pitched roof (in the front, central gable); and gables topped with finials or cross bracing.¹¹



Examples of Gothic Revival style houses.

Source: “Gothic Revival Style 1830–1860,” in *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, PMHC

Criterion D

With an early-nineteenth-century construction date, the Leibert House originally contained the style and appearance of a Federal mansion typical of other nearby Germantown properties constructed during the same period. Though certain detailing was lost during the property’s mid-nineteenth-century Gothic renovation, the Leibert House retains many features that allow it to continue to embody distinguishing characteristics of the Federal style. Common at that time, and reflected in the general massing of the Leibert House, these buildings typically stand two-and-a-half stories in height with side gables and gable-end chimneys. Symmetry is also a strong defining feature of these structures, and the Leibert House reflects its symmetry through its central entryway, which is flanked by two windows on each side, and paired arched dormers with pilastered fronts at the roofline. The original segmental-arched, six-over-six, double-hung windows survived in the dormers until at least 1910. The building’s first story further maintains significant Federal characteristics through the extant keystone lintels above the four windows and the fanlight over the entry door.

¹⁰ Moak, 1.

¹¹ “Gothic Revival Style 1830–1860,” in *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, last modified August 26, 2015, <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/gothic-revival.html>

Since the mid-nineteenth century, however, the Leibert House has projected a Gothic Revival appearance, masking its Federal origins in favor of the later style. Stucco now conceals the early stone walls, though the building retains its massing and general configuration. The centered gable and elaborate porch provide the greatest stylistic changes. Of these most defining Gothic Revival features, the centered gable pierces the roofline between the paired Federal dormers and is decorated with a cross-braced pendant and lancet window. The deep eaves adjacent to the centered gable allow for a bracketed cornice reflective of the Gothic mode.¹² The side gables historically contained the same Gothic detailing as the centered gable, though alterations to the chimney and windows have led to the loss of these features. Though no longer extant, the high-style porch significantly contributed to the building's Gothic Revival style with its decorative scroll detailing at the columns and the cross-braced pendant in the central pediment that mimicked the gable above. The pediment itself served as a classical detail, potentially as a means to acknowledge the building's Federal-style origins. Despite the loss of the porch, the Leibert House continues to embody a blend of distinguishing characteristics from both the Federal and Gothic Revival periods.

CRITERION J

The period of significance for the subject building extends from 1808 to 1902, which encompasses the ownership, construction, occupancy, and evolution of the subject site and the associated “Mansion House” of the Leibert family of Germantown. Through its extant architectural and physical characteristics, the subject building exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of Germantown community, including the section that eventually came to be known as Mt. Airy. The Leiberts were longtime members and leaders of the Church of the Brethren, as well as established bookbinders and printers in Germantown in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Leiberts were an integral and vital part of Germantown's German printing heritage as both printers and bookbinders during the period when Germantown was a national and regional printing center. The subject property represents the only surviving home and workplace of Germantown bookbinders during this peak German printing period, and is also the only surviving early home of the Leibert family. The subject property represents not only 100 years of that family's history but also, and more importantly, the culmination of their success in America.

Historical Context: Germantown's Age of Printing

Through much of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, Germantown was a center of German-language printing and bookselling in British North America. It began with Johann Christoph Saur/Sower [I] (1695–1758) establishing a printing business in 1738 with German Fraktur type imported from Frankfurt am Main and a press, ink and equipment which he built himself. Though other printers, including Benjamin Franklin, had printed German books in America before him, he was the first to use the Fraktur type to which German readers were more accustomed. Saur's business grew rapidly. The key to this success can be seen from the first

¹² Downing, Andrew Jackson, *Cottage Residences* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1842), 95, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/cottageresidence00downrich>.

major publications he undertook in 1738 and 1739: an almanac (*Der Hoch-Deutsch Americanische Calendar*), a hymnal (*Zionitischer Weyrauchs-Hügel*), and a newspaper (*Der Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Geschichts-Schreiber*). The three publications were the mainstays of his business. In 1743 he printed the first bible in British North America in a European language.¹³ The almanac and newspaper had a very wide distribution among the German-speaking settlers of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. It resulted in Saur having a substantial political and respected cultural influence particularly since he was known for his complete disregard of what might today be considered “fake news.”¹⁴ He was also known for his pacifist leanings, support of the Quakers, and anti-slavery views which frequently appeared in his newspapers.¹⁵

After his death in 1758, Saur’s son, Christopher Saur, the younger, (1721–1784) took over the printing business at the family home which formerly stood at 5253–63 Germantown Avenue. He continued his father’s printing and publishing program. In addition to publishing two more editions of the bible in 1763 and 1776, Saur also published the first religious periodical in America. The Saur press was responsible for the largest share of German-language texts published in British North America during the colonial period.¹⁶ Though a member of the Church of the Brethren (akaDunkers), he published religious texts of all groups.¹⁷ His active participation in Pennsylvania politics supporting the Quaker party and pacifism created public tensions for him and contributed to his business not surviving the American Revolution. He decided to retire in 1777 and turned over the business to his sons Christopher [III] and Peter who were supporters of the British cause and moved to Philadelphia during the British occupation. Though their father tried to save the printing establishment in Germantown, it was confiscated by the state authorities in 1778 after Sauer had been attained as a traitor. The stock of unpublished bibles, books and printing equipment was sold at public auction and most of it purchased by the Philadelphia printer John Dunlap.¹⁸

¹³ The first printed bible was in 1663 in the Algonquin.

¹⁴ He was known for his strong stance on printing stories based verifiable facts rather than rumors.

¹⁵ The best summary and accurate biography of Saur is found in: Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Sauer (Sower, Saur), Johann Christoph I,” in *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1983).

¹⁶ A. Gregg Roeber, “Part Two: German and Dutch Books and Printing,” in Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, ed., *A History of the Book in America, The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 304.

¹⁷ Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Sauer (Sower, Saur), Christopher II,” in *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1983).

¹⁸ Clarence S. Bringham, ed., “William McCulloch’s Additions to Thomas’s History of Printing,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s. 31 (1921): 154–55.



Die Germantauer Zeitung, 22 February 1785, No. 2. Published by Leibert and Billmeyer.
Source: the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Germantown's national prominence in German-language printing did not end with the demise of the Saur press in 1778. In 1784 Peter Leibert (1727–1812) and his son-in-law Michael Billmeyer (1752–1837) established a new printing business at Leibert's home in the Beggarstown section of Germantown (today part of upper Germantown and Mount Airy).¹⁹ Leibert was a bookseller and bookbinder who worked for Saur and was a minister in the Germantown Church of the Brethren.²⁰ Michael Billmeyer was a Lutheran minister who worked partly as a bookseller in York, Pennsylvania for his father-in-law before coming to Germantown to start the printing business.²¹ Like the Saur, Leibert/Billmeyer's business grew rapidly. One of their first contracts was to publish the journals of the Pennsylvania General Assembly in German, a contract they held for several years. In 1785 they started a biweekly newspaper called the *Germantauer Zeitung*, and published a new Lutheran hymnal. For reasons unknown Leibert and Billmeyer decided to split their business and publish independently in 1787. Though Leibert continued to publish books until 1800, the main business continued under Billmeyer.²²

¹⁹ Leibert's home formerly stood at Germantown Avenue. Vide infra n. 17.

²⁰ Leibert was also connected indirectly through marriage to Saur. Christopher Saur, the younger's wife was a Sharpnack, sister of Leibert's neighbor Henry Sharpnack whose wife was a sister to Leibert's wife.

²¹ Michael and Andreas Billmeyer's Account Book, 1774–1783, Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. See in particular pp. 34, 36, 101.

²² Dieter Schug, "German-Language Printers in the United States from 1800 to 1801: A Study in Cultural Leadership," (PhD diss., College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1998), 60–62.



Advertisement for Leibert and Billmeyer's almanac, *Der Hoch-Deutsche Americanische Calender*, in their newspaper, *Die Germantowner Zeitung*, 1786, No. 2. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Michael Billmeyer's press held national prominence similar to that of the Saur. Billmeyer became a "major publisher and supplier of German-language books in America."²³ In 1789, Billmeyer moved his business out of his father-in-law's house to a house across the street at 6505–07 Germantown Avenue where it would remain the rest of his life.²⁴ Building on Saur's model, Billmeyer published newspapers, almanacs, bibles, hymnals and religious books. He also continued to print the German edition the Pennsylvania General Assembly proceedings. Between 1787 and 1830 he published 177 different titles, averaging roughly four book titles a year in addition to the printing of newspapers and journals and small-run print jobs such as broadsides.²⁵ It is difficult to determine exactly how many copies of the titles he printed but surviving account records suggest they were fairly large.

Another important area of Billmeyer's business was the selling and reselling of books. It was not uncommon for printers to also be booksellers in the colonial period, but by the early nineteenth century these roles become more distinct. Billmeyer followed a path similar to that of the larger English language printers who would eventually become publishing houses in the modern sense in the first half of the nineteenth century. As Rosalind Remer describes it:

²³ Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 86; Robert E. Cazden, *A Social History of the German Book Trade in America to the Civil War*, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture, vol. 1 (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1984), 47–48 .

²⁴ Schug, "German-Language Printers," 60 n. 233. Billmeyer acquired this house in 1789 (Deed: Jacob Schreiner, of Germantown Township, skin dresser, to Michael Billmeyer, of Germantown Township, printer, 7 February 1789, Philadelphia Deed Book [hereafter PDBk] D., No. 22, p. 323, City Archives of Philadelphia [hereafter, CAP]).

²⁵ Karl John Richard Arndt and Reimer C. Eck, *The First Century of German Language Printing in the United States of America*, Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society [vol. 22], vol. 2 (Göttingen: Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, 1989): 1220.

[Billmeyer] established himself as a wholesale supplier for the German-speaking nation ... [and] sat at the center of the German book network in Philadelphia. ... Billmeyer resembled many mid-nineteenth-century publishers who had taken to specialized publishing and who spent their energies selling and distributing books through channels. It would be many years before his English-language colleagues would follow his lead.²⁶

Billmeyer's business depended upon a number of other trades, the most important of which was that of the bookbinder. It was the Leibert family, specifically his brother-in-law William Leibert, who filled that role for him.

The Leibert Family and the Book Business

The bookbinder and printer Peter Leibert (1727–1812) was born in Germany, the eldest child of Michael Leibert and Anna Barbara Rente. His parents came to Pennsylvania in 1727 and eventually settled in the city of Philadelphia in 1742 where his father died the same year.²⁷ Sometime around this time Peter moved to Germantown, perhaps for an apprenticeship, and soon married Mary Nice (1729–1816).²⁸ In 1751 he purchased a house and half-acre lot at the upper end of Germantown on the northwest side of Germantown Avenue near present-day Pomona Street where he and his family lived until the 1760s when they moved to their final home which Peter purchased in 1758, located across the street from his brother-in-law Henry Sharpnack and the Church of the Brethren.²⁹ Peter and his wife were members of the Church of the Brethren. He served as a trustee of the church property and was also a minister in the church.³⁰

²⁶ Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital*, 86.

²⁷ Katherine M. Faul, ed., *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750–1820* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997): 87–89. Peter's father was Roman Catholic and his mother Protestant and later a member of the Moravian Church in Philadelphia. Anna Barbara Rente was born in Erstett in the Palatinate, Germany.

²⁸ The earliest reference to Peter in Germantown is a 1749 deed in which acquires land from his father-in-law (Deed: William Neus, of Springfield Township, yeoman, and Mary, his wife, to Peter Libert, of Germantown, turner, 31 August 1749, PDBk R.D.W., No. 107, p. 555, CAP). He married Mary Nice in December 1749.

²⁹ Deed: James Armitage and Sara, his wife, to Peter Libert, 2 August 1751, recited in PDBk I., No. 10, p. 498; Deed: Jacob Kauffman, of Oley Township, Berks Co., yeoman, and Hannah, his wife, Daniel Yoder, of Berks Co., yeoman, and Ann, his wife, Martin Shenkel, Oley Township, Berks Co., yeoman, and Mary, his wife, and Nicholas Losher, Oley Township, Berks Co., yeoman, and Barbara, his wife, to Peter Leibert, of Germantown, turner, 22 November 1758, PDBk H., No. 10, p. 1, CAP. Their first house was located roughly near 6334–40 Germantown Avenue and was sold in 1772 (Deed: Peter Leibert, of Germantown, turner, and Mary, his wife, to John Libert, of Germantown, turner, 25 April 1772, PDBk I., No. 10, p. 498, CAP). Peter sold part of the Kauffman property in 1759 to Henry Sharpnack (Deed: Peter Leibert and Mary, his wife, to Henry Sharpnack, 19 January 1759, PDBk G.W.C., No. 2, p. 391, CAP).

³⁰ Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Leibert, Peter," in *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1983).



Left: Peter Leibert. Source: Thomas Shoemaker Papers, HSP. Right: A German Reformed Hymnal printed by Peter Leibert of Germantown in 1791.

Peter Leibert started out as a wood turner. In 1756 he proudly announced that his home had a sign hanging in front of it with a picture of a bible and spinning wheel and that he was taking over Christopher Saur, the younger's bookbinding business.³¹ By the late 1760s Leibert identifies himself almost exclusively as a bookbinder. Leibert likely did his primary bookbinding work for both Saur's (father and son). The connection to Christopher Saur the younger was fairly strong because both were members and ministers at the Germantown Church of the Brethren and related by marriage.³² The large output of books from the Saur press would have kept Leibert busy for much of the year – particularly the larger books, like the bibles. In addition to binding books Leibert appears to have also have been a bookseller in the 1770s.³³ The multiple dimensions of his occupation were fairly common for people in the book trades in the eighteenth century. Part of this was by necessity when printers often short of cash would pay bookbinders with books rather than cash which the bookbinders could then sell on their own. Many printers, such as Benjamin Franklin and both Saur's, worked as bookbinders at some point

³¹ *Der Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Geschichts-Schreiber*, November 13, 1756. The advertisement states: Peter Leibert wohnhafft am obern End Germanton, das 2te Hauß unter Antoni Gilbert dem Cronen-Wirth wo eine Bibel und Spinrad zum Schild außhängt, macht hiermit bekant; Weil Christoph Saur der junge vor gegenwärtig keine alte Bücher mehr annimt zu binden, so können künfftighin bey mir dem gemeldten Peter Leibert beydes alte und neue Bücher aufs beste gebunden werden vor billigen Preiß.

[Peter Leibert resident at the upper end of Germantown, the second house below the Crown Tavern of Antoni Gilbert, where a sign of a bible and spinning wheel hangs, makes it known: Because Christoph Saur the younger no longer takes old books to bind at the present, both and new books can be bound by me the said Peter Leibert for a cheap price.]

In an ad from 1755, Leibert is still described as turner (*Der Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Geschichts-Schreiber*, April 1, 1755).

³² Leibert was also named as one of the trustees in an early draft of Christopher Saur, the younger's will (Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *The Brethren in Colonial American: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century* [Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1967], 389–95).

³³ Michael and Andreas Billmeyer's Account Book, 1774–1783, Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia.

in their careers and also were involved in selling books.³⁴

Leibert's transition to a printer in 1784 is consistent with the practice of the period. Leibert saw the void created in the German speaking community by the abrupt closing of Saur's press as an opportunity to expand his own business. Because of Leibert's close working and social/spiritual connections to Saur, he was able to tap into Saur's networks of Germantown craftsmen, such as the type founder Justus Fox and bookbinders George Schreiber and John Weaver (all Dunkers), as well as broader business contacts in the German-speaking community of Pennsylvania and beyond. This was critical to the success of his and later Michael Billmeyer's business and their commercial edge over the Philadelphia German printers of this period.³⁵

As mentioned in the previous section, Peter Leibert continued to print books under his own name until 1800. Between 1787 and 1800, Leibert published 29 separate titles.³⁶ One these titles was the first Church of the Brethren hymnal, *The Christian's Duty*, printed in 1791, which became more popular in the early nineteenth century as English services began spread among the Dunkers.³⁷ Peter retired from printing while in his 70s but still held on to his printing equipment until his death in 1812. His will included a bequest that gave "all the implements types &c. belonging to my printing office" to his son William.³⁸

³⁴ Bringham, ed., "William McCulloch's Additions," 147–148.

³⁵ Though there were a number of German printers in Philadelphia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century works on Billmeyer cited in the previous section all indicate that his business in Germantown was by far the dominant one in the County of Philadelphia.

³⁶ Arndt and Eck, *The First Century of German Language Printing*, 2:1220.

³⁷ *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Publishing" (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1983). A later and expanded edition of this was published by John Leibert in 1816.

³⁸ Will of Peter Leibert of Germantown, printer, dated 4 December 1802, codicil 4 July 1810, proved 17 June 1812, Philadelphia Will Book 4, p. 151, Philadelphia Register of Wills. The bequest includes a proviso that if William did not want the equipment it would go back to the estate. In the end it appears that Michael Billmeyer decided to take it (Settlement of the estate of Peter Leibert, 14 June 1814, Estate of Peter Leibert, Book 24, p. 434, July 1814, No. 1198, Philadelphia Orphans' Court).

William Leibert, Bookbinder

Peter's son William Leibert (1753–1830) continued the family business into the nineteenth century. He followed in his father's footsteps as a bookbinder and was also an active Dunker, being a new member of the board of trustees by 1784.³⁹ His service to the Church of the Brethren continued into the nineteenth century when in 1804 he was one of nine trustees who purchased a lot in the rear of the church to enlarge the burial ground.⁴⁰

1812		Germantown	
February 19	To Amount brought from Lays & Co. 38		230 00
July 3	To 100 Menonist Bibles in Sheets 55		75 00
" 5	To 200 Suth. Bibles 67		134 00
			439 00
<hr/>			
September 8	To 200 Testaments 80	80 00	
" 14	To 200 Suth. Bibles case 130	130 00	210 00
" 14	To 1500 " A.B.C. Books 4 1/2	6 75	
" "	To 100 Bibles	4 50	
" "	To 50 Testaments	20 00	31 25
			211 25

William Leibert's entry in Michael Billmeyer's account books, 1812.
Source: Michael Billmeyer Ledger D, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

One of the earliest records of William Leibert's independence occurred in 1787, when he was individually listed as a bookbinder, owning seven acres and a dwelling.⁴¹ From the 1780s to 1810s he is consistently listed in Germantown tax lists as a bookbinder.⁴² He probably did all the bookbinding work for his father's printing business and likely for his brother-in-law Michael Billmeyer during this period. By the 1810s, William was doing all of Billmeyer's bookbinding work. This work was quite substantial. In 1813 alone he bound over 6,000 books, almanacs and other assorted printed materials for Billmeyer. Like his father, William was also paid in books rather than cash for part of his work. In 1812 he received 1,922 books and in 1813 1,182 books

³⁹ Deed of Trust: Alexander Mack, of Germantown, stocking weaver, and Peter Leibert, of Germantown, bookbinder, to Thomas Langstroth, of Northern Liberties, tanner, Garret Clemens, of North Wales, yeoman, William Leibert, of Germantown, bookbinder, Adam Weaver, of Germantown, carpenter, John Weaver, of Germantown, bookbinder, Michael Keyser, of Germantown, carpenter, Justus Fox, of Germantown, letter founder, Christian Lashet, of Germantown, shopkeeper, and Peter Keyser, of Germantown, tanner, 10 October 1784, PDBk E.F., No. 17, p. 16, CAP.

⁴⁰ Charles S. Keyser, *The Keyser family: descendants of Dirck Keyser of Amsterdam* (Philadelphia: unknown, 1889), 96.

⁴¹ Germantown Township, 1787, Tax and Exoneration Lists, Series No. 4.61, Records of the Office of the Comptroller General, RG-4. Pennsylvania State Archives, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission. (hereafter, Tax & Exoneration Lists, PSA).

⁴² Germantown Township, Tax & Exoneration Lists, PSA; State Tax Assessment Ledgers (1.8), Office of City Commissioners Records, Record Group 1, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereafter, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP).

from Billmeyer for the work he did.⁴³ No doubt using contacts his father had long established, William was able to sell these books to add to his income. He also did binding for other printers.⁴⁴ The business relationship between William and Billmeyer likely lasted until William's death in 1830.

William Leibert was the last large scale bookbinder in Germantown by the 1810s. There were never more than three or four people listed as bookbinders in the Germantown tax lists from the 1760s to the 1810s and most of them were members of the Church of the Brethren. In 1772 and 1774 only there are only two bookbinders, George Schreiber and Peter Leibert, and in 1786 just one, John Weaver, appear in the tax lists.⁴⁵ In 1800 there were Philip Weaver and William Leibert.⁴⁶ Perhaps a sign of the prosperity of the trade can be seen in the 1811 tax list that has the highest number of book binders listed: William Leibert, Peter Leibert, Daniel Macknet (a renter), Jacob Moyer, and Philip Weaver.⁴⁷ Unfortunately of the all the bookbinders whose names appear in this period, the only home and workplace of a Germantown bookbinder to remain is that of William Leibert.⁴⁸

William Leibert lived at several locations in the Beggarstown area of Germantown Township (now considered part of Mount Airy). The tax records in the early 1780s list him living with his parents in their home on Germantown Avenue near present-day Sharpnack Street. After his marriage to Catharine Gorgas around 1782, he owned a house and close seven acres at northwest corner of present-day Carpenter Lane and Cresheim Road which his wife had inherited.⁴⁹ He may have lived at that location for a few years but returned to his parent's property by 1790.⁵⁰

⁴³ Michael Billmeyer Ledger D, pp. 74–75, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. There are no other entries in this ledger for bookbinders.

⁴⁴ A book published in 1826 notes William as the bookbinder (Hezekiah Burhans, *Critical Pronouncing Spelling-book* [Philadelphia: John Holmes 1826]).

⁴⁵ "A Transcript of the Fifteenth Eighteen Penny Provincial Tax Assessed the 13th Day of March 1772, for the City and County of Philadelphia," Germantown Township, Am .338, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia County Tax, 1774, p. 262, 263, Tax & Exoneration Lists, PSA; Germantown Township, 1786, p. 239, Tax & Exoneration Lists, PSA.

⁴⁶ Germantown Township, 1800, pp. 17, 22, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP.

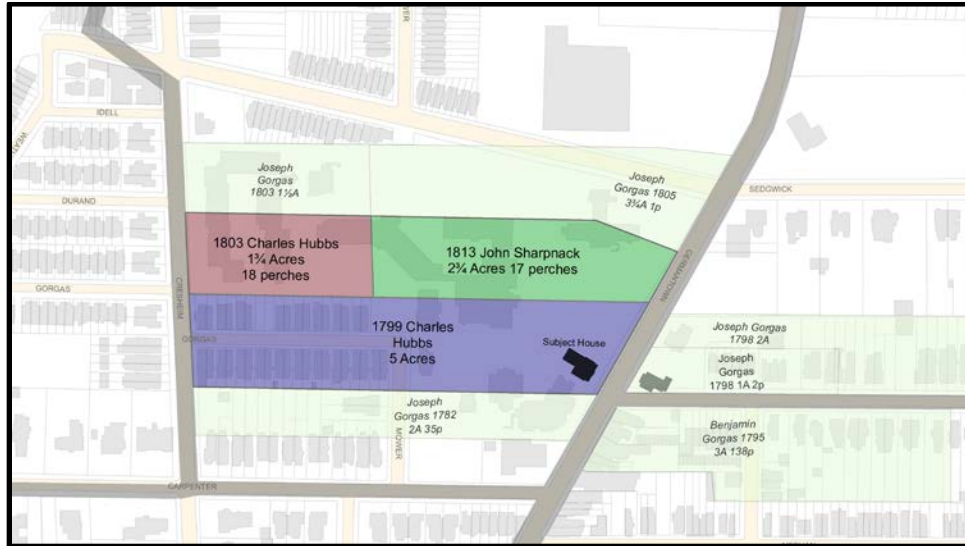
⁴⁷ Germantown Township, 1811, pp. 19, 27, 29, 30, 59, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP. Moyer was assessed \$2,540; Weaver \$2,615; Peter Leibert \$7,970; William Leibert \$2,145; Macknet \$25

⁴⁸ The original Leibert family home opposite Sharpnack Street was demolished around 1905. Macknet was a renter who lived in several places. Jacob Moyer's home was demolished around 1915 and stood at 6147–53 Germantown Ave. (Deed: Charles Ottinger and Mary, his wife, Elizabeth Moyer, Susanna Moyer, Sarah Fryhoffer and William Fryhoffer and Esther, his wife, to Jacob Moyer, 1 April 1811, PDBk A.M., No. 25, p. 480, CAP). Philip Weaver's home was demolished in the mid-1890s for the Pelham development and stood near 6700–08 Germantown Ave. (Deed: Garrett Rittenhouse, of Germantown Township, yeoman, and Elizabeth, his wife, to Philip Weaver, of Germantown Township, bookbinder, 10 December 1799, PDBk G.W.R., No. 3, p. 305, CAP).

⁴⁹ Deed: William Leibert, of Germantown Township, bookbinder, and Catharine, his wife, and Rachel Gorgas, Joseph Gorgas and Susanna Gorgas, all of Germantown Township, to Jacob Baker, of the City of Philadelphia, merchant, 11 January 1794, PDBk D., No. 39, p. 385, CAP; Mildred Goshow, *The Gorgas Family: Descendants of John and Psyche Rittenhouse Gorgas of Germantown* (Roxborough: By the author, 1966), 15–16, 35–37.

⁵⁰ His is enumerated next to his father in the 1790 census.

He remained on their property for another twenty years.⁵¹ The 1802 text of Peter Leibert's will, he mentions that William was living in "the new house" next door to Peter which he bequeathed to William after his wife's death.⁵² Likely around the time of the death of his mother in 1816, William Leibert moved to the subject house and property.



Plan of properties purchased by William Leibert showing the date of purchase, name of seller and acreage as well as location of adjacent Gorgas family property. Prepared by J.M. Duffin.

William Leibert bookbinder.		
Personal	.....	40
5 Acres Land	.....	250
2 Cows	.....	20
		270

Owen Gillispy Carter	Personal	.....	25
3 Houses	.....	240	
1 Cow	.....	10	250
And for			
William Leiberts Est.	6 3/4 Acres Land	.....	405
	1 Stone House	.....	350
	1 d ^r . Barn	.....	175
			930
Joseph Gorgas Lumber merchant			

1800 (right) and 1808 (left) Germantown tax list entry for subject property showing vacant lot and lot with house. Source: State Tax Assessment Ledgers, City Archives of Philadelphia.

⁵¹ Both the 1800 and 1810 census enumerated William next to his father.

⁵² Will of Peter Leibert of Germantown, printer, dated 4 December 1802, codicil 4 July 1810, proved 17 June 1812, Philadelphia Will Book 4, p. 150, Philadelphia Register of Wills.

The subject house stands on a property William Leibert purchased from his wife's brother-in-law, Charles Hubbs, in April 1799 for £750.⁵³ The vacant property contained five acres. It had a frontage of 246½ feet on southwest side of Germantown Avenue that stretched all the way back to Cresheim Road (see illustration). It was located across the street from the new house of William's brother-in-law, Joseph Gorgas, at the northeast corner of Germantown Avenue and Gorgas Lane.⁵⁴ William built a stone house on the property sometime between 1800 and 1808.⁵⁵ The house was rented out to Owen Gillespy from 1808 to around 1810. In 1803, William added an additional 1.75 acres to this property and in 1813 he purchased a wooden house and 2.75 acres next door.⁵⁶

The tax records document that the subject house was likely constructed by William Leibert between the time of the 1800 and 1808 tax assessments (see illustration). This is consistent with the nineteenth century local histories that discuss the building:

William Leibert, son of Peter Leibert, erected a house opposite Gorgas lane, and lived there until his death. The house is now the residence of his great-grandson, William Leibert. This is one of the old families of Germantown.⁵⁷

William Leibert and his family continued to live in this house the remainder of his life. He also remained a bookbinder for the remainder of his life.

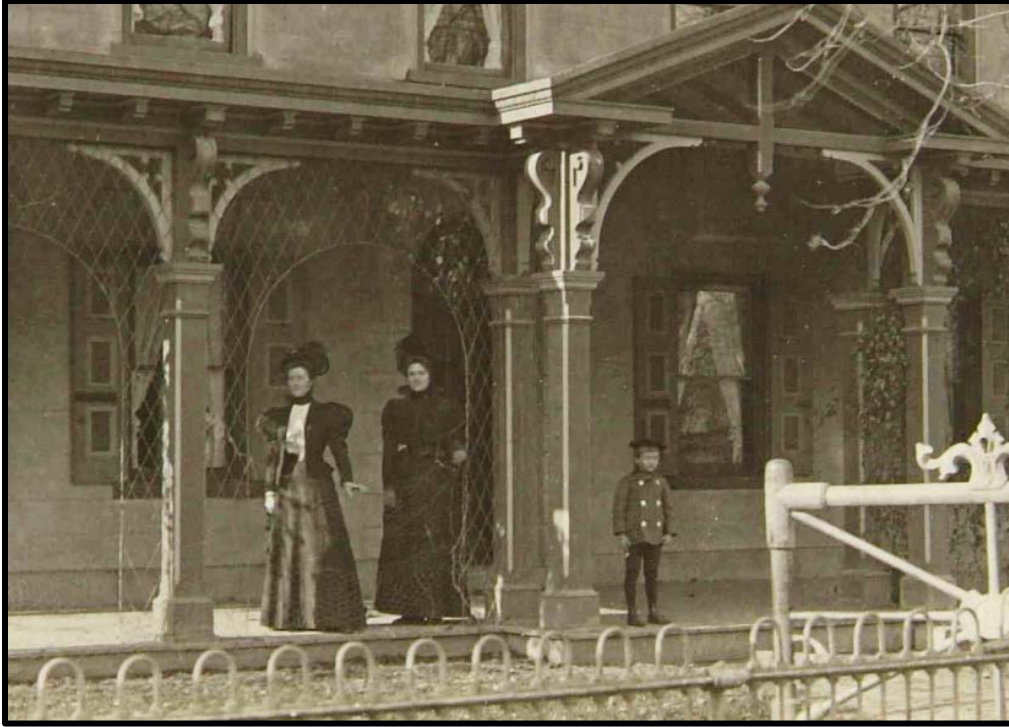
⁵³ Deed: Charles Hubbs, Germantown, lumber merchant, to William Leibert, Germantown, bookbinder, for £750, 2 April 1799, PDBk E.F., No. 1, p. 82, CAP.

⁵⁴ Harry M. Tinkcom, Margaret B. Tinkcom and Grant Miles Simon, *Historic Germantown From the Founding to the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century: A Survey of the Germantown Township*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 39 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1955), 115.

⁵⁵ Germantown Township, 1800, p. 22, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP; Germantown Township, 1808, p. 51, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP. The lot is vacant in 1800 and has a house on it in 1808. There are no surviving tax lists for the years in between.

⁵⁶ Deed: Charles Hubbs, of Worcester Township, Montgomery Co., apothecary, and Susanna, his wife, to William Leibert, of Germantown Township, bookbinder, for £85.13.6, 14 April 1803, PDBk E.F., No. 28, p. 724; Deed: John Sharpnack, of Roxborough Township, inn holder, and Margaret, his wife, to William Leibert, of Germantown Township, book binder, for \$2,200, 12 June 1813, PDBk I.C., No. 29, p. 304, CAP. The 1808, 1810 and 1811 Germantown Township tax lists the 2.75 acre as having a "1 Frame House" (Germantown Township, 1808, p. 51, 1810, p. 53, 1811, p. 59, State Tax Assessment Ledgers, CAP).

⁵⁷ Samuel Fitch Hotchkin, *Ancient and modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill* (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1889), 356. Shoemaker repeats a similar account: "William Leibert, son of Peter, became a bookbinder, and built the house still owned by his grandson, W.M. Leibert, No. 5566 [N.B. old address] Germantown Avenue" (Thomas H. Shoemaker, "A List of the Inhabitants of Germantown and Chestnut Hill in 1809," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 15 [1891]: 470). It should be noted that William Leibert's location on the 1809 list is still by or at his father's house opposite Sharpnack Street.



Members of the Leibert family stand in front of their home, c. 1890. Note the stone base course, door surround and lintels appear to be extant, but concealed to some level by paint and/or stucco. In addition, the stucco was scored at the time of this photograph. Source: Thomas H. Shoemaker Germantown and Philadelphia portraits and views collection, HSP.

After William Leibert's death in 1830, the subject property passed to his widow Catherine Gorgas Leibert, who remained in the family home until her death on August 23, 1848.⁵⁸ After the death of their mother, the heirs conveyed the William Leibert's "Mansion house" to sisters Mary and Elizabeth Leibert.⁵⁹ In 1850, the sisters and their unmarried brother John Leibert, all in their 50s, were rustivating in the subject house with an elderly relative, a fifteen year old boy, and a young maid. Each of the Leibert siblings boasted important sums in their personal estate assessments.⁶⁰ Mary Leibert died in 1857. Elizabeth Leibert died three years later in 1860. After another three years passed, John Leibert died in 1863. Of William and Catherine Leibert's children, only two appear to have married and produced offspring—Peter and William Leibert.

⁵⁸ William and Catharine had the following children: Mary Leibert (1783–1857); Elizabeth Leibert (1785–1860); Peter Leibert (1789–1842); Rachel Leibert (1791–1844); John Leibert (1794–1863); Sarah Leibert (1797–1798); Joseph Leibert (1797–1798); and Joseph Leibert (1802–1803).

⁵⁹ Deed: John Leibert, of Germantown Township, in his own right and as trustee of Elizabeth L. Keem now Jordon, James Manderson, of Kensington, and Mary, his wife, and William W. Leibert, of Kensington, James F. Jordon, of Rock Bridge County, Virginia, and Elizabeth L., his wife, to Mary Leibert, of Germantown Township, single woman, 6 September 1848, PDBk A.W.M., No. 86, p. 217, CAP.

⁶⁰ Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, National Archives Microfilm Publication M432; Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

As part of settling the estate of the three Leibert siblings the subject house passed to William W. Leibert, through William McCallum, in May 1863.⁶¹

Following the larger trend of upper and upper middle class families in Philadelphia, William W. Leibert established a company that manufactured and sold “Iron Bars,” producing roughly 107 tons of his product in 1863 at 1200 Marlborough Street in Fishtown and a similar amount in 1866 at 1201 Beach Street near the Delaware River.⁶² Around the time he inherited the subject property, William W. Leibert married Ella Jones Watkins (1845–1911) and it was here that they had at least five children, only two of which survived to adulthood. The children included William M. Leibert (1864–1865), William W. Leibert (1866–1866), Harrison Leibert (1867–1877), Ella Bertha Leibert (1870–1962), and Lillie Bertha Leibert (1879–1970).⁶³ The Philadelphia city directories demonstrate that the manufacture and sale of iron bars occupied much of William W. Leibert’s life. With both the accomplishments of his ancestors and the success of his business endeavors, William W. Leibert would retain ownership of the family house in Germantown, the subject building; own a large house at 500 S. 42nd Street in Philadelphia, and a “summer residence” at what was formerly known as 1501 Grand Avenue in Asbury Park, New Jersey for the majority of his life. He also owned investment properties in Philadelphia, including “seven houses and lots on Market Street East of Fifty-eighth Street and fifteen houses on Fifty-ninth Street North of Market Street.”⁶⁴

While his last will and testament of 1898 retained reference to the subject property at the time it was probated in 1903, the house was sold to the Orphans’ Home and Asylum for the Aged and Infirm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on August 8, 1902.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Deed: William W. Leibert, surviving executor of Mary Leibert and Elizabeth Leibert, to William McCallum, 23 May 1863, PDBk A.C.H., No. 97, p. 315; Deed: William McCallum to William W. Leibert, 23 May 1863, lot and “mansion house,” PDBk A.C.H., No. 94, p. 512, CAP. McCallum served as a strawman to pass clear title to Leibert.

⁶² U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862–1918 [database on-line], Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008. This specific information came from the assessment conducted in 1866.

⁶³ Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Death Certificates, 1803–1915.” Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2008, 2010. Additional information about the Leibert family: Ella Bertha Leibert married John Alexander Brown (d. 1899), and the couple had one child, Beatrice Brown (1891–1981), who married Stanley Heist Pursell. Stanley and Beatrice Pursell had two children Stanley L. Pursell (1920–1983) and William Leibert Pursell (1923–1994). Lillie Bell Leibert (1879–1970) married Charles Street Mills, M.D. (1878–1954) and had one child, Mildred Eleanor Mills (1898–1995). Mildred Eleanor Mills married Samuel Roger Gale (1896–1951) and had one child, William Leibert Gale (1918–1990). William L. Gale married Catherine Schwartz and had William L. Gale of Waretown and Joan Gale Smith of Forked River.

⁶⁴ Wills, No. 719–744, 1903, Pennsylvania, Wills and Probate Records, 1683–1993 [database on-line], Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

⁶⁵ Deed: William W. Leibert and Ella, his wife, to the Orphans Home and Asylum for the Aged and Infirm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 8 August 1902, PDBk W.S.V., No. 59, p. 557, CAP.



The former Leibert House, in the 1910s, after it was opened as the new “Infant Home” of the Orphans’ Home and Asylum for the Aged and Infirm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Source: Germantown Historical Society.



The former Leibert House, in the 1910s, after it was opened as the new “Infant Home” of the Orphans’ Home and Asylum for the Aged and Infirm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Source: the Germantown Historical Society.

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