

**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: 4619-25 Longshore Ave

Postal code: 19135 Councilmanic District: 6

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Tacony Club

Current/Common Name: Tacony Club

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: Social Club

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 1908 to 1937

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1908

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Clyde S. Adams

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Edward Fay & Son

Original owner: Tacony Club

Other significant persons: Magistrate Thomas W South & Peter E. Costello

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 Tacony Community Development Corporation Date 1/3/2019

Name with Title Alex Balloon, Executive Director Email alex@taconycdc.org

Street Address 6742 Torresdale Ave Telephone (215)501-7799

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19135

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 3 January 2019

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 4 February 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 5 February 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Tacony Club

Address: 4619-25 Longshore Avenue

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19135

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 17 April 2019

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 10 May 2019

Date of Final Action: 10 May 2019

Designated Rejected

roof has a single dormer facing Longshore Avenue, which is encased in siding. See Figure 1.



Figure 1. South façade along Longshore Avenue. Photograph by Alex Balloon, 2018.

The west (side) façade facing Marsden Street is similar in style to the main façade. The first floor features two pronounced bays, both encased in siding, and three arched window openings. The second floor has eight arched window openings similar to those on the main façade. These include similar decorative keystones and are either completely or partially infilled with siding. The façade continues the same rusticated stone base and brick upper floors with quoining and a decorative belt course as is found on the primary façade. At the roof, three hipped dormers are encased in siding. A decorative iron fence wraps around this façade. *See Figure 2.*



Figure 2. Southwest corner showing west façade facing Marsden Street and south façade facing Longshore Avenue. Photograph by Alex Balloon, 2018.

The north (rear) façade is the least ornate of the building. It is brick and unadorned with no rusticated base, no quoining, and no decorative belt course. There are seven arched window openings varying in size that are entirely infilled with siding. The roof has a simple dormer, encased in siding. *See Figure 3.*



Figure 3. North façade. Photograph by Alex Balloon, 2018.

The east (side) façade, which faces onto a parking lot, continues the rusticated base, quoining, and decorative belt course for several feet, until a termination at a brick chimney. Those decorative elements are omitted beyond the chimney. This section of blank façade features seven window openings of various sizes, many of which are infilled. The roof has three hipped dormers, encased in siding. *See Figure 4.*



Figure 4. Southeast corner showing east façade facing Marsden Street and south façade facing Longshore Avenue. Photograph by Alex Balloon, 2018.

Statement of Significance

Criterion J

In 1887, Tacony's prominent businessmen founded the Tacony Club as a social and political organization. Magistrate Thomas W. South was the Club's founding president, which boasted approximately one hundred members at its inception. The Club expanded quickly as the neighborhood became more populated, and by 1890 the Tacony Club's membership had tripled to three hundred members.¹

Seeking a formal home, the Club first announced plans for a new headquarters in 1892.² But the plans to build did not advance beyond ideation until 1899 when the Club engaged architects Stearns & Castor to build its new home at Longshore Avenue and Marsden Street. Plans described an "Italian Renaissance style of architecture, of granite and Pompeian brick, with copper bay windows, plate and stained glass windows. (sic) The interior will be finished in hard woods, tile work, steam heat, etc. and the building will be equipped with all the necessary requirements to make the club house a model one in every particular."³ See *Figure 5*. While the plans were grand, the Building Committee was ultimately unable to build the Stearns & Castor design.

¹ "A Place to Live and Work" by Harry Silcox. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994, p. 59

² "The Building World," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 7 February 22, 1892

³ "For Idle Hours," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 11 May 7, 1899

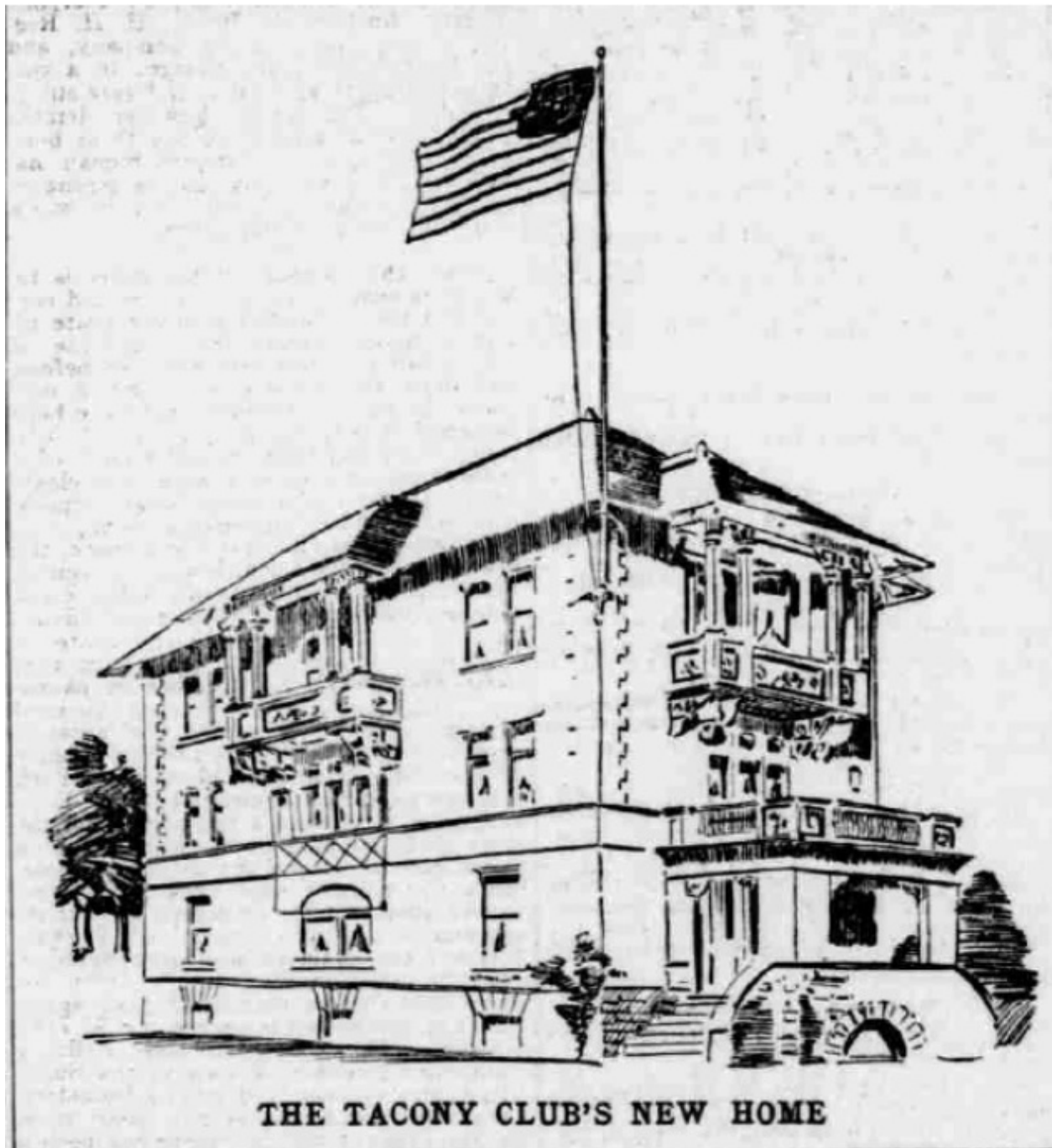


Figure 5. Drawing from "For Idle Hours" Philadelphia Inquirer, 1899.

At the time of the 1899 plans, prominent members included "Magistrate Thomas W. South, Select Councilman Joseph H Brown, Common Councilmen P. E Costello and Charles Barton, Inspector General E. deV. Morrell, Port Warden William L. Martin, Thomas Harbot of the Register of Wills' office, Samuel Lane, of the Orphan's Court; Horace L. Davenport of the Bureau of Building Inspection, William Lee Childs, of the Recorder of Deeds' office; Chris Fuhrman of the City Controller's office, ex-Councilman

William H. Hill, James Bannister, Chief Engineer at City Hall; Police Sergeants Daniel Lanard, Harvey Atkinson, J. Ellsworth Semple and many leading business men.” An article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* added, “The club exerts a controlling influence upon the politics of that section of the city.”⁴

One such member of the Club’s power elite was Peter E. Costello. Described as the “most forceful politician of the era,” he rose to prominence like many other Club members. He moved to Tacony in 1874 and worked at the Disston Saw Works for eleven years. By 1888, he transitioned to building construction and real estate, building homes and buildings for Disston workers. He won the support of the Disston family with his political career, and extended his business interests further. He would go on to partner with club member Thomas South to begin new business endeavors.⁵

Along with other prominent members, Costello and South formed the Tacony Fuel Gas Company in 1888 with a meeting at South’s home.⁶ Costello went on to found the Suburban Light Company in 1891 to provide electricity to the community with the Disston family’s support.⁷ Costello built and funded the first trolley line into Tacony—the Holmesburg, Tacony, & Frankford Railroad Company, which was the first trolley line to link the growing communities of Holmesburg, Tacony, and Frankford. He gained local investors including funds from the Disston family.⁸ As these men and others amassed wealth, the Club was able to fund its new headquarters in 1908.

At that time, the Club engaged prolific Philadelphia-area architect Clyde Smith Adams to design the new building, described in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as “the largest and best equipped club in the neighborhood and will be two and one-half stories high, with a basement. It will cover an area measuring 40x90 feet and will have an exterior of brick and stone, being erected at a cost of \$20,000 exclusive of furniture. The interior will contain reading rooms, library, game rooms and an auditorium.”⁹ The contract was let to builder Edward Fay & Son on May 5, 1908.¹⁰ The Adams design was not nearly as ornate as the Stearns & Castor design, but still contained elements of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture. *See Figure 6.*

⁴ “For Idle Hours,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 11 May 7, 1899.

⁵ Silcox, p. 58.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 35.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 36.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 58.

⁹ “The Latest News in Real Estate,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p 5 March 14, 1908.

¹⁰ “The Latest News in Real Estate,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p 9 May 5, 1908.

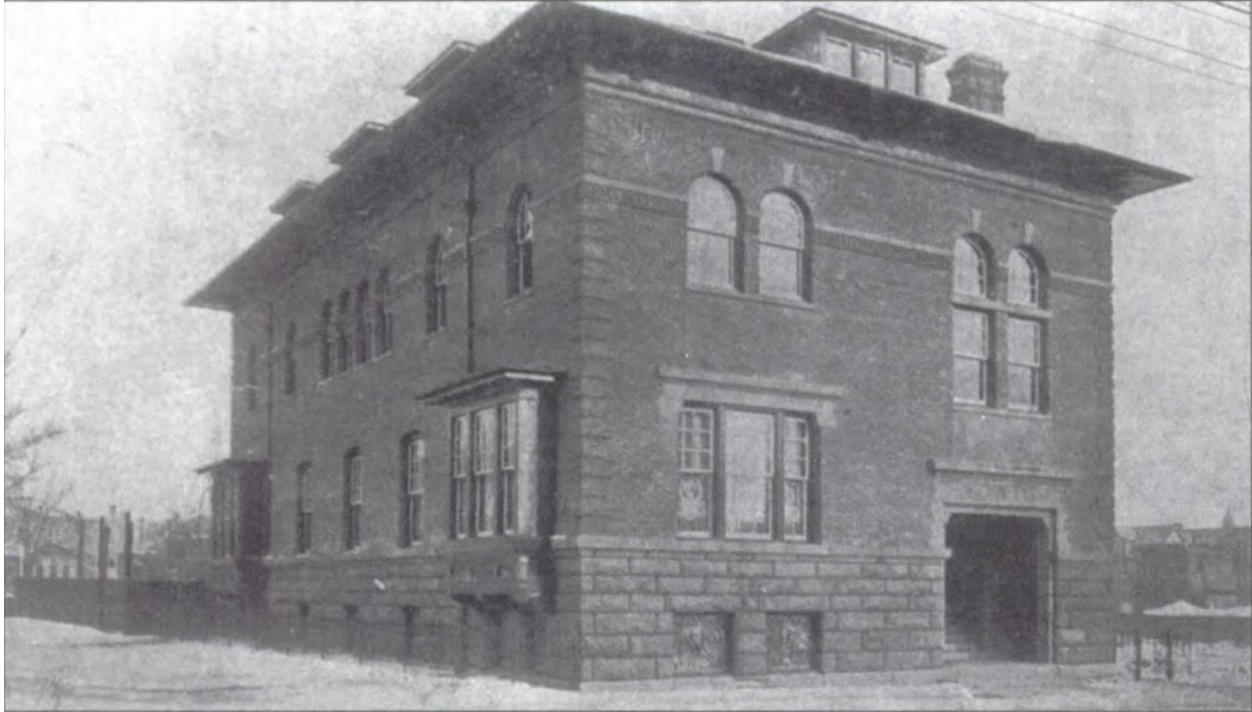


Figure 6. Tacony Club photograph, date unknown. Source: *Images of America: Tacony*, 34.

When the building was completed, it joined several cultural and institutional buildings constructed during Tacony's development as a "company town" for the Disston Saw Works. (For an excellent history of the development of Tacony, see "Tacony Disston Community Development Historic District" National Register nomination). Located along the neighborhood's main street of Longshore Avenue, the Tacony Club was nearby other major facilities. These included the Tacony Methodist Church (1883), Tacony Music Hall (1887, *See Figure 7*), Tacony Trust Fund Building (1893, *See Figure 8*), and the former Mary Disston School (1900-01).¹¹

¹¹ National Register Nomination "Tacony Disston Community Development Historic District" sec. 7, p.7, 2016.



Figure 7. Tacony Music Hall. Photograph by Alex Balloon, 2018.



Figure 8. Tacony Trust Fund. Photograph by Alex Balloon, 2018.

The club continued as a social and political organization well into the twentieth century. However, as the Disston Company closed and the neighborhood changed over time, membership declined. The Club's 50th anniversary photo shows the types of social activities that took place there well into the period. *See Figure 9.* **The Tacony Club satisfies Criterion J for “exemplifying the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.”** The Tacony Club was the building where wealth, political power, and social ties came together to shape the future of Northeast Philadelphia and the Tacony neighborhood.



Figure 9. "50th Anniversary Tacony Club," 1937. Source: Tacony Historical Society.

Criterion C

The Tacony Club embodies elements of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture, which was popular from approximately 1890 through 1930 in Pennsylvania. The building's design evolved from 1899-1908 with a number of changes between two architects, but the final design was distinctively Italian Renaissance Revival.

Carol Rifkind describes the style succinctly: "Characteristic of the Renaissance [Revival] are arched openings, rusticated masonry laid with deep joints to give the appearance of massiveness, and strong horizontal lines. Cornices are finely detailed and moldings are crisply drawn."¹²

The Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission also emphasizes the strong massing and horizontality of the style. "The most predominant feature of this style is its imposing scale and formal design incorporating classical details such as columns and round arches and balustrades. This style can take several distinct forms, but all variations are almost always of masonry (usually stone) construction. [...] Another common feature for this flat roof version of the Italian Renaissance Revival style is a rusticated stone first floor with upper floors having a smooth finish. [...] The other most

¹² "A Field Guide to American Architecture," by Carole Rifkind. New York: New American Library, 1980, p.220.

common form of this style features a hipped roof, often of clay tiles, with broadly overhanging, bracketed eaves.”¹³

The Tacony Club contains all of the aforementioned design elements, and despite alterations throughout the years, the building still displays the strong character-defining features embodied by the Italian Renaissance Revival style. **The building satisfies Criterion C, as it “reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.”**

In conclusion, the building located at 4619-25 Longshore Avenue, known as the Tacony Club, is significant as a historic resource and should be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, under Criterion C for its reflection of the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style, and under Criterion J for exemplifying the cultural, political, economic, social, and historical heritage of the Tacony neighborhood of Philadelphia.

¹³ Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide “Italian Renaissance Revival Style 1890-1930”
<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/italian-renaissance.html>.

Major Bibliographical References

"A Place to Live and Work" by Harry Silcox. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

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"A Field Guide to American Architecture," by Carole Rifkind. New York: New American Library, 1980.

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"Images of America: Tacony," by Louis M. Iatarola and Siobhan Gephart. Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.