

**ADDRESS: 4649 UMBRIA ST**

Name of Resource: Levering Smick Arbuckle House

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Umbria Commons LLC

Nominator: Ridge Park Civic Association

Staff Contact: Meredith Keller, meredith.keller@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 4649 Umbria Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criterion for Designation J. Under Criterion J, the nomination argues that the building and the original land associated with it preceded the neighborhood's development, and that several prominent owners over the course of a century contributed significantly to the neighborhood's growth and its current appearance.

This property is slated for redevelopment. The property owner plans to demolish the building and construct a multi-family residential building. The property owner began seeking permits for the project prior to the submission of the nomination or issuance of the notice to the property owner announced the consideration of the nomination.

Section 14-1005(6)(f) of the preservation ordinance governs the Historical Commission's jurisdiction during the consideration of a designation. The provision prohibits the Department of Licenses & Inspections from issuing any building permit for any property being considered for designation "where the building permit application is filed on or after the date that notices of proposed designation have been mailed" unless the Historical Commission approves the building permit application or fails to complete its designation process within 90 days.

The question in this case is whether a building and demolition permit applications were "filed" with the Department of Licenses & Inspections prior to the mailing of the notice letters. If they were, then the Department may issue the permit without the Historical Commission's review and the project may proceed regardless of any designation.

The Department of Licenses & Inspections issued a zoning permit (1033928) on 5 March 2020 for the complete demolition of an existing structure and for the erection of a detached building for use as multi-family household living with 30 units. A building permit application for the new construction (1055503) was submitted to the Department of Licenses & Inspections on paper on 5 March 2020. Owing to the COVID shutdown, it was superseded by a new eCLIPSE electronic building permit application for the new construction (CP-2020-000875) on 15 April 2020. A demolition permit application for complete demolition (DP-2020-000377) was submitted in eCLIPSE to the Department of Licenses & Inspections on 29 April 2020.

The Historical Commission closed its office owing to the COVID pandemic on 18 March 2020 and cancelled its April Historical Commission meeting and March and April Committee on Historic Designation and Architectural Committee meetings. The Historical Commission announced that it would begin holding remote public meetings on 1 May 2020 and held its first public meeting, a Historical Commission meeting, on 8 May 2020. The Historical Commission was unable to issue notice letters announcing the considerations of designations between 18 March and 1 May 2020, owing to the shutdown and the inability to schedule public meetings.

The nomination was received by the Historical Commission on 13 April 2020. The notice letters announcing the consideration of the designation were sent on 15 May 2020.

The executive director and attorney for the Historical Commission met with the deputy director in charge of permitting at the Department of Licenses & Inspections to verify the permitting timeline. The new construction and demolition permit applications were filed with the Department of Licenses & Inspections on 15 and 29 April 2020, prior to the mailing of the notice letters on 15 May 2020. Therefore, the Department of Licenses & Inspections determined that it was not obligated to refer the permit applications to the Historical Commission for its review. The permit applications are currently under review at the Department of Licenses & Inspections and may be issued without the Historical Commission's approval.

The Committee on Historic Designation reviewed the nomination and recommended that the property at 4649 Umbria Street satisfies Criterion for Designation J, as the nomination argues, and also satisfies Criterion I, the archaeology criterion, which is not mentioned in the nomination. It should be noted that the new construction permit application, which is not subject to the Historical Commission's review, proposes significant site work that may disturb archaeological artifacts.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the Historical Commission decline to designate the property because permit applications for the demolition of the existing structure and new construction were filed prior to the mailing of the notice letters.



**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: **4649 Umbria Street**

Postal code: **19127**

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: **The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House**

Current/Common: **Unknown**

**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: **Apartment House**

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): **from c1770 to 1867.**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **Built before 1770; Enlarged in the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Unknown**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Unknown**

Original owner: **Benjamin Levering; George Washington Smick (1778-1857)**

Other significant persons: **Daniel T. Arbuckle (1813-1891)**

**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 a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR: RIDGE PARK CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**DATE: 6 APRIL 2020**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian**

Email: [keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org](mailto:keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org)

Org. Contact: **Marlene G. Schleifer, President**

Email: [ridgeparkcivic@gmail.com](mailto:ridgeparkcivic@gmail.com)

Street Address: **PO Box 35066**

Telephone: **216.482.2402**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19128**

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: April 13, 2020

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: May 15, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: May 15, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Speakeazy Partners

Address: PO Box 29123

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19127

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

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

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

Designated  Rejected

# NOMINATION

FOR THE

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. Top: A 1931 aerial photograph showing the subject property circled in black. Source: Dallin Aerial Surveys, Hagley Library. Figure 2. Bottom: A contemporary aerial photograph showing the subject property circled in black. Source: Pictometry, City of Philadelphia.

## The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House

—  
Erected c1770-1843  
—

4649 Umbria Street  
Mount Vernon  
Manayunk  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19127

*Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination  
The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, c.1770-1843  
4649 Umbria Street, Mount Vernon, Manayunk, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



Figure 3. The boundary of the subject property is articulated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

## 5. Boundary Description

The boundary for the subject property is as follows:

BEGINNING at a point on the Northeasterly side of Umbria Street at the distance of fifty four feet seven inches Southeastwardly on a line parallel with said Hermitage Street one hundred feet three and one-half inches to ground of Peter Ferguson; thence Southeastwardly along said Ferguson's ground thirty five feet five inches to a point, thence North fifty nine degrees six minutes East two hundred forty three feet and one-half of an inch to a point, thence South thirty degrees fifty six minutes East sixty four feet five and three-eighths inches to a point, thence South sixty three degrees thirty one minutes West three hundred twenty six feet two and three-quarter inches to a point on the said Northeasterly side of Umbria Street, and thence along the same North thirty degrees fifty five minutes West seventy five feet five inches to the place of beginning.



Figure 4. The northeast side of Umbria Street in what was historically the Mount Vernon section of Manayunk. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

## 6. Physical Description

Referred to in this nomination as the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, the three-story stone building at 4649 Umbria Street is an unusual surviving detached dwelling in what was historically the Mount Vernon section of the Manayunk neighborhood in Philadelphia. Built prior to 1770 and likely substantially enlarged in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, this large house, once occupied by a prominent mill owner, is set back slightly from the street, speaking to its early position as one of the only buildings on the now dense northeast side of Umbria Street.



Figure 5. Left: Looking south at the primary (north) elevation of the subject property. Figure 6. Right: Looking north at the rear (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.

*Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination  
The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, c.1770-1843  
4649 Umbria Street, Mount Vernon, Manayunk, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



Figure 7. The primary (southwest) elevation of the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

While the building may or may not have started as a two or two-and-one-half-story structure, earlier in the nineteenth century, the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House contains both the larger main block and two rear ells. The main block stands three full stories in a square form with two communicating ells at the rear. Each component of the structure features a low-slung hipped roof. The primary (southwest) elevation is five bays in width, which is also present on the raised basement, which is clad in smooth marble, though the small windows have been infilled. The first floor features a central entrance, which is accessed by steps at each side. The entrance is flanked by two windows on each side. The same fenestration is repeated symmetrically in windows above. Most of the windows have been replaced though they appear to retain their original opening size, as well as their early architraves and sills.



Figure 8. Left: The marble basecourse and facing at the basement level, as well as the infilled windows therein. This view also shows the marble threshold on left at the base of the primary entrance. Figure 9. Right: The stone foundation at the side (southeast) elevation, also showing an infilled basement window. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.





Figure 10. Top: The side (southeast) elevation of the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, showing both the main block on left and elevations of the rear ells at center and on right. Figure 11. Bottom: The rear ells of the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

Both side elevations of the main block are similar featuring single windows per floor at each end due to what was likely a chimney stack at the center of each side masonry wall. While the windows have been replaced, the original opening size and the architraves and sills appear to be extant. Appending the main block, two two-story rear ells are present—south and north, featuring irregular fenestrations unlike the primary (southwest) elevation of the main block. An early side entrance is present where the south ell connects to the main block featuring an original paneled wooden door. Other doorways and/or larger windows have been reconfigured over time. Steps and a porch run between the two ells at the rear of the building, where an original balustrade is present with turned balusters. The north ell features a similar fenestration. An oriel window projects from the rear wall of the main block above the south ell. At least one stone retaining wall is present near the rear of the building. Appending the southeast wall of the main block and the south ell is a driveway that leads to a long narrow lot, which extends behind the residences facing onto adjacent streets, creating a court, which is devoted to parking.

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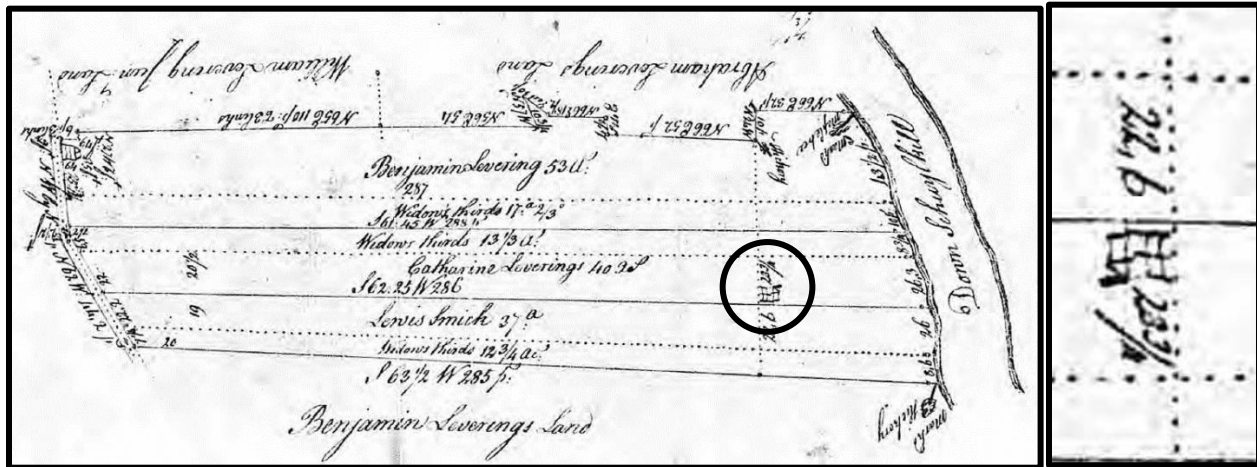


Figure 12. Partition of Benjamin Levering's Land, 29 October 1770, Philadelphia Orphan's Court Docket, Vol. 9, p. 171. with what appears to be the subject house circled in black and shown in detail on right. Source: City Archives of Philadelphia.

## 7. Statement of Significance

The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House at 4649 Umbria Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The building satisfies Criterion for Designation J of Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code.

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

The period of significance is from c1770 when a house appears at the site of the subject property, then owned by the descendants of Benjamin Levering, through 1843 when the subject house appears on a local atlas or plan, then under the ownership of George W. Smick, through 1859, when the Arbuckle family buys the house, ending finally when they sold the house in 1867.

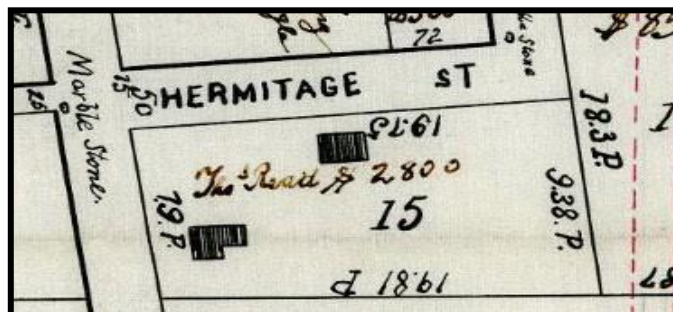


Figure 13. Detail of the Plan of a tract of land in Roxborough in the 21st Ward of the City of Philadelphia, the estate of George W. Smick dec'd. to be sold at public sale without any reserve on the premises on Thursday Dec'r. 16th 1858 at 12 o'clock precisely by order of the heirs...James A. Freeman, Auct'r. 422 Walnut St. Philada., 1858. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

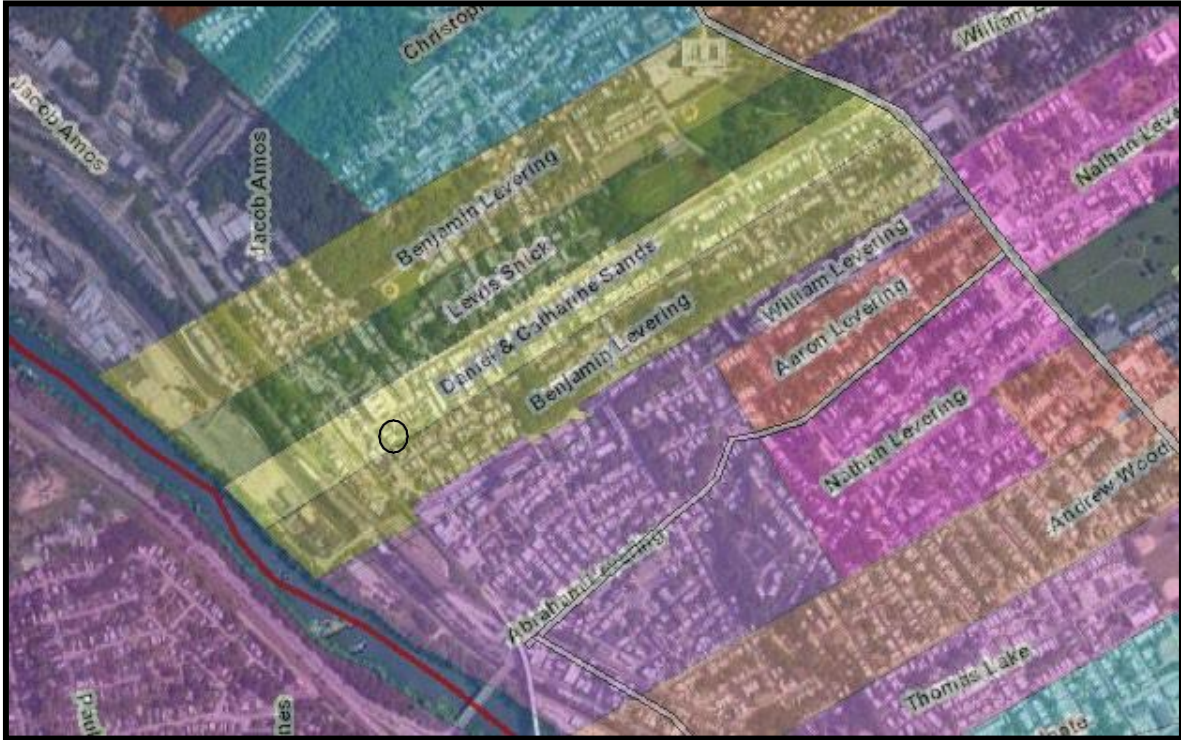


Figure 14. The Levering family properties in Manayunk and Roxborough, as configured in 1777 with the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House circled in black. Source: Duffin, J.M. Mapping West Philadelphia, Landowners in October 1777, updated 4 November 2019.

## Criterion J

Representative of the historical heritage of the neighborhood’s initial period of development, as well as the economic and social history of the people that founded and formed the community, the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House is one of the few surviving residential properties dating to the early development of the Levering family lands, as well as the foundational period of the “Mount Vernon” neighborhood through the subdivision of the George W. Smick Estate in the Township of Roxborough and, later, the Borough of Manayunk. This 177- to 200+-year old dwelling speaks to both the colonial origins and the later industrial history of the area. Several subdivisions, including the “Plan of Mount Vernon”, was developed on part of a 200-acre tract that Wigard Levering (c1648-c1744-45<sup>1</sup>), the German-born settler, purchased from William Penn in 1692, after arriving at Philadelphia seven years earlier.<sup>2</sup> Progenitor of the Philadelphia Leverings, his lands were subdivided throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries among his heirs, their heirs, their heirs’ heirs, and so forth. However, while the initial macro subdivisions of the larger acreage into 20- to 40-acre tracts had occurred over time, the physical landscape that Wigard Levering

<sup>1</sup> 1843 Philadelphia County Atlas by Charles Ellet, Jr. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Horatio Gates. *The Levering Family, Or, A Genealogical Account of Wigard Levering and Gerhard Levering: Two of...* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1858), 17.

knew had not undergone its primary period of residential development by the second quarter of the nineteenth century. However, on the 1770 Partition Plan of Benjamin Levering's (1723-1763) Land, a house appears on the detail of the partition located approximately at the site of the subject property, representing an early phase of development when the descendants of Wigard Levering were building houses that deviated from those located on the Ridge Avenue frontage. As the nineteenth century approached its mid-point, the tract historically associated with the subject property, along with its neighboring tracts, was slowly evolving from its agrarian origins to the beginnings of an urban village that would eventually contain dense rows of houses for industrial laborers, reflecting the broader development patterns of many early towns and villages in Philadelphia County that eventually necessitated consolidation in 1854. Poised on rising ground between Manayunk and Roxborough, the subject property, shown on a map of the area in 1843, is representative of the period in which the Mount Vernon neighborhood was developed, standing, in its early days, on open, undeveloped Levering land and likely home to a descendant of Wigard Levering, only later to be hemmed in by a subdivision that led to dense development that continues to define so much of the local built environment today.

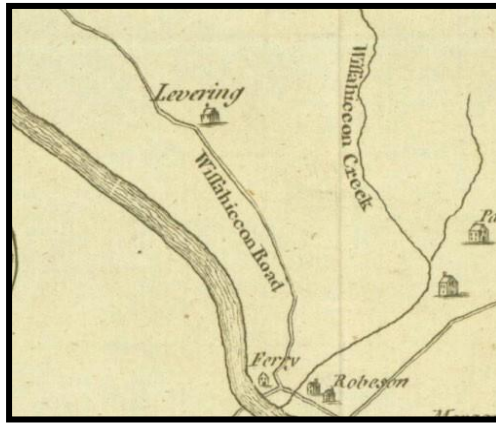


Figure 15. Detail showing Roxborough Township between the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek with the Wissahickon or Ridge Road, from Scull & Heap, Map of Philadelphia and Parts Adjacent, c. 1750. Source: Chantry, Kim. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Ridge Avenue Historic District. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Historical Commission, 2018).

In the eighteenth century, much of the land that comprises this section of Manayunk, including, most importantly, Mount Vernon, from the Schuylkill River to Washington Street (formerly, Block Road, now Umbria Street), and thence to Ridge Avenue was owned by Wigard Levering, being passed on to his descendants.<sup>3</sup> A legacy memorialized in Leverington Avenue, Wigard Street, etc., the Leverings are one of the local founding families, significant to the establishment and growth of both Manayunk and Roxborough. Their stronghold endured long enough to represent not only the early history, but also the period in which these primitive origins evolved into a substantial

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<sup>3</sup> The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House is located on Umbria Street, which was formerly known as Washington Street, and will henceforth, in this nomination, be referred to as Washington Street, as it was named during most of the period of significance.

community of diverse and varying physical characteristics. By the mid-nineteenth century, the humble environs of Ridge Avenue had developed into a small-town-like center, while what some sources called Washington Street in Mount Vernon was only partly developed on the riverside, as it was a growing industrial community. Local lore tells us that the thoroughfare known as Washington Street, later Umbria, was originally known as Block Street, presumably providing egress to the area known as “The Blocks” a neighborhood north of the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, a name supposedly directed from the early Swedish settlers and their block or frame houses.<sup>4</sup> In close proximity to the Schuylkill River, the Manayunk Canal, the various mills, and the Philadelphia & Norristown Railroad right-of-way, Mount Vernon and its principal thoroughfare, Washington Street, were both products of the Levering family’s decision to both develop and release their holdings from the waterfront to the ridge, effecting the formation of several communities and development landscapes.

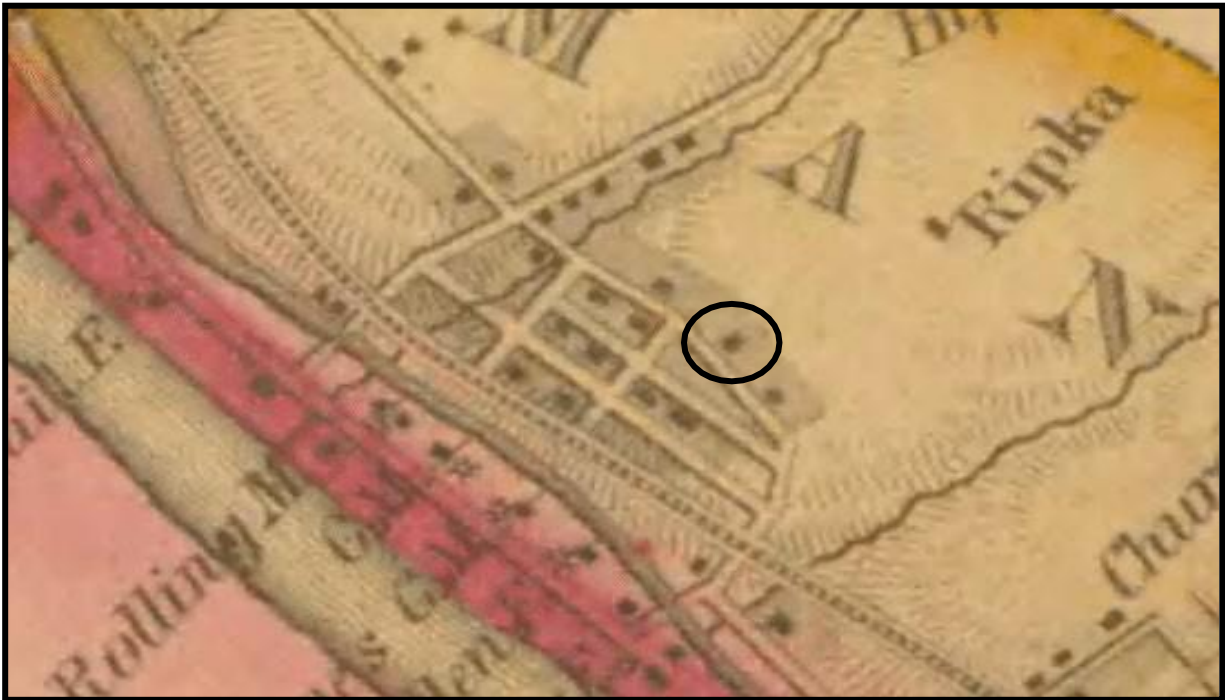


Figure 16. 1843 Philadelphia County Atlas by Charles Ellet, Jr., showing the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House circled in black. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Grandson of Wigard Levering and son of William Levering (1679-c1745-46), Benjamin Levering died at an early age. Following the custom of the time, he left his wife, Elizabeth (Jones) Levering, a life estate at his residence on Ridge Avenue.<sup>5</sup> Apart from this, Benjamin Levering

<sup>4</sup> Collo, Deborah Cel. *Roxborough*. (Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, Horatio Gates. *The Levering Family; Or, a Genealogical Account of Wigard Levering and Gerhard Levering: Two of the Pioneer Settlers of Roxborough Township, Philadelphia County (Pennsylvania), and Their Descendants and an Appendix Containing Brief Sketches of Roxborough and Manayunk*. (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1858), 43.; and Ancestry.com.

bequeathed all his real estate to his surviving, but married children: Rachel Levering (1749-1829), who married Lewis Smick; Katharine Levering (1750-1814), who married Daniel Sands (1749-1800); and Benjamin Levering, II (1753-1846), who married Abigail Levering. The subject property was part of a larger 40-acre tract that the Estate of Benjamin Levering deeded to Daniel and Katherine (Levering) Sands in 1770, where they started their family of what was eventually become eight children.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the subject 40-acre tract was conveyed to Lewis and Catherine (Levering) Smick on March 1, 1778. Aside from a small component part on the Schuylkill River, southwest of Washington Street, the Smicks retained ownership of the 40-acre tract until the death of Lewis Smick in 1816, at which time the 40-acre tract was conveyed to their son, George Washington Smick (1778-1857). Founder of the “first flour mill in Manayunk” in partnership with Samuel Gorgas as Smick & Gorgas, George W. Smick was likely one of the masterminds behind the laying out and planning of the Mount Vernon neighborhood, as it no doubt happened during his period of ownership. The development of Mount Vernon was clearly coming along by 1843, when the Controllers of the local education system rented what would become known as “The Block School” from George W. Smick. The building was described by the Controllers as a two-story rough-cast stone building, partly of wood construction, on the northeast side of Block Road (later Washington, now Umbria) at the northwest corner of Jefferson Street. With the ongoing development, the Controllers purchased the Block School in 1849, paying annual ground rents to the Smick and his heirs through 1913. After purchasing the school, the Controllers invested roughly \$1,350 in renovations to the building. Changing its name from the Block School to the Schuylkill School, the newly renovated building opened in 1850—it was demolished in 1870 for a “modern” school building.<sup>7</sup> Despite this development, the Block School and the subject property were among the very few on the northeast side of Washington Street in the 1840s and 1850s, Smick’s 40-acre tract remaining largely undeveloped.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Also in 1770, the Estate of Benjamin Levering also conveyed 37-acres to the northwest of the subject 40-acre tract to Lewis and Rachel (Levering) Smick, and a 53-acre tract to the southeast of the subject 40-acre tract to Benjamin Levering, Jr. Source: Deed: Estate of George W. Smick to Horatio Gates Jones, attorney-at-law, 16 June 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 78, 114.

<sup>7</sup> Edmunds, Franklin Davenport. *The Public School Buildings of the City of Philadelphia from 1845 to 1852*. (Philadelphia: 1915), 77.

<sup>8</sup> Plan of the Borough of Manayunk as surveyed by John Levering. Published by M. Dripps, Pleasant St. below 13th St., Philadelphia, 1848. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



Figure 17. Plan of the Borough of Manayunk as surveyed by John Levering. Published by M. Dripps, Pleasant St. below 13th St., Philadelphia, 1848. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

As shown above, the Plan of Mount Vernon appears to have been commissioned at some point between 1816 and 1843, and was likely, at least partly, the work of George W. Smick.<sup>9</sup> A small section of the 40-acre tract between Washington Street and the Philadelphia & Norristown Railroad right-of-way below what was then known as Jefferson Street had clearly been subject to the plan, which had been implemented with subdivision, sale, and construction. The various new owners, some of whom are identified on Figures 15 and 16, paid ground rent to Smick.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Deed: Estate of George W. Smick to Horatio Gates Jones, attorney-at-law, 16 June 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 78, 114.

<sup>10</sup> Deed: Estate of George W. Smick to Horatio Gates Jones, attorney-at-law, 16 June 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 78, 114.

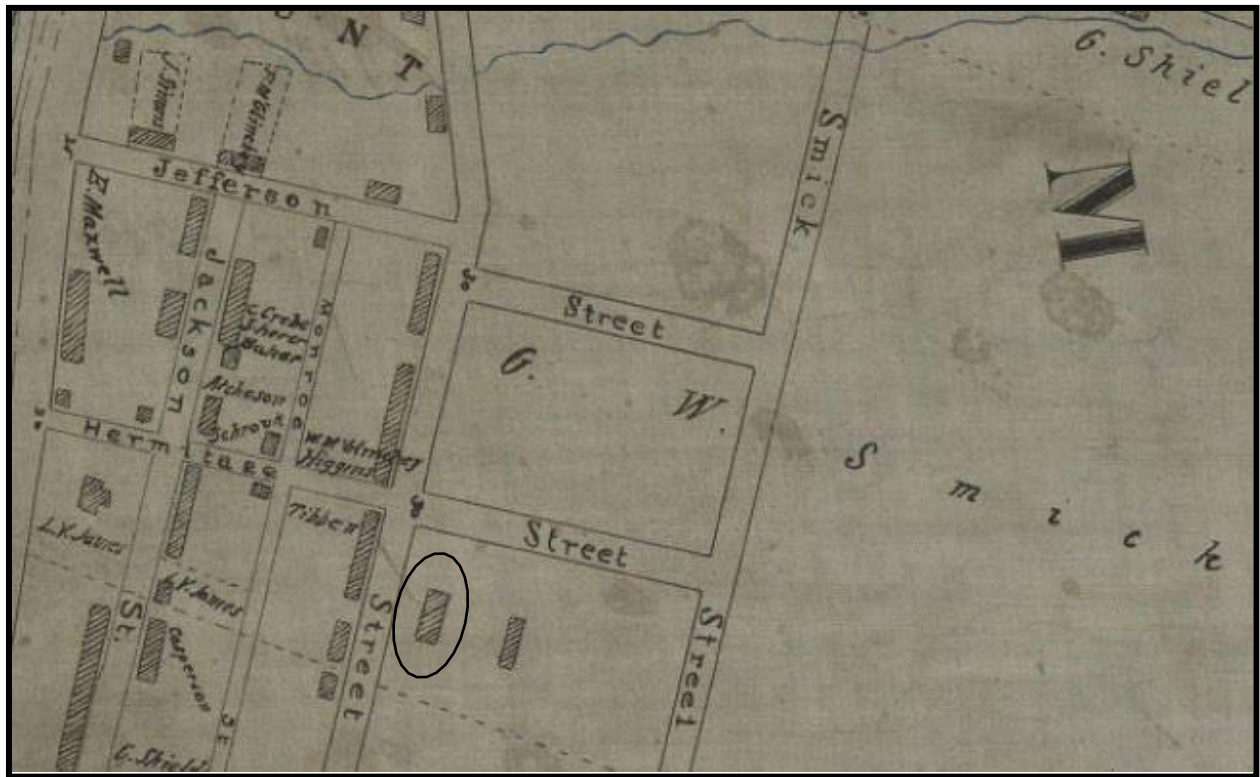


Figure 18.A detail of the Plan of the Borough of Manayunk, showing the area of Mount Vernon owned by George W. Smick with the subject property circled in black, as surveyed by John Levering. Published by M. Dripps, Pleasant St. below 13th St., Philadelphia, 1848. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



**JAMES A. FREEMAN, Auctioneer,**  
**No. 422 WALNUT Street, above Fourth.**  
 Extensive Absolute Sale, on the premises,  
 Estate of George W. Smick, deceased.—By order of  
 Heirs.  
**VALUABLE COUNTRY PROPERTY, WITH  
 IMPROVEMENTS, AND COTTAGE LOTS,  
 ROXBOROUGH, AND BUILDING LOTS,  
 MANAYUNK.**  
 We will sell, on the premises,  
**ON THURSDAY,**  
 December 16th, at 12 o'clock, noon, precisely,  
**A VALUABLE TRACT**, containing 11 acres 19  
 perches, with large double two-story stone Dwelling,  
 stone and frame Barn, on the Ridge Turnpike,  
 at the 7 mile stone.  
**A TRACT** adjoining, containing 4 acres 1 rood.  
**A TRACT** adjoining, containing 9 acres 3 roods.  
**A TRACT** adjoining, containing 7 acres 3 roods.  
**A COTTAGE LOT** adjoining, fronting on Jefferson  
 street, 1 acre 99 perches.  
**9 COTTAGE LOTS** adjoining, fronting on Jefferson  
 street, 1 acre each.  
**A COTTAGE LOT** adjoining, fronting on Hermitage  
 and Washington streets, containing 1 acre 10  
 perches.  
**7 COTTAGE LOTS** on Jefferson streets, each 2  
 acres.  
**A COTTAGE LOT** on Jefferson street, 3 acres 24  
 perches.  
**99 BUILDING LOTS**, Jefferson, Penn, Smick  
 and Washington streets, Manayunk.  
**2 LOTS**, with Improvements, Washington street.  
**A VALUABLE STRIP OF LAND**, opposite  
 Hermitage and Penn streets, between the Railroad  
 and the Canal.  
 Sale peremptory, to close the estate.  
 Lithographic plans and full descriptions may  
 be had at the Auction Store. de4-104

Figure 19. Auction Notice for the 40-acre tract as subdivided and sold by James Freeman for the Estate of George W. Smick. Source: *Public Ledger*, 4 December 1858, 4.

Like some of the Levering descendants such as George Washington Smick, the nomenclature of the neighborhood memorialized the founding fathers and at least one of their plantations: Washington Street for George Washington and his beloved Mount Vernon, the name of the neighborhood; Monroe Street for James Monroe; and Jefferson Street for Thomas Jefferson, and, oddly enough, another more recent (at that time) president, Jackson Street for Andrew Jackson and his plantation: The Hermitage—oddly enough the only name to have been preserved.<sup>11</sup> Local names, such as Lea, Ogle, and Smick, were also used early-on, among others that replaced the names of the founding fathers.

While only some new buildings would appear between the 1843, 1848, and 1858 surveys of

<sup>11</sup> Plan of the Borough of Manayunk as surveyed by John Levering. Published by M. Dripps, Pleasant St. below 13th St., Philadelphia, 1848. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Manayunk and, specifically, Mount Vernon, the death of George W. Smick in 1857 would necessitate the further subdivision of the 40-acre tract, as illustrated in Figures 19 and 20.<sup>12</sup> Dying unmarried and without issue, Smick's heirs would include his 11 nieces and nephews: Samuel Knightlinger; Jesse Castner, Jr.; Elizabeth Nightlinger, wife of Adam Stull; Susan Nightlinger, wife of William Gilbert; John W. Smick; Mary Ann Smick, wife of John McHay, Jr.; Lewis Smick; Rachel Smick, the wife of John Slough; Sarah Smick, wife of Ethelbert A. Lobb, and Henry Naylor. His heirs also included 8 grand nieces and nephews, including Susan, wife of George W. Ash; Mary, wife of John Piper; Adam Nightlinger; Elizabeth Mervine, wife of Thomas Belville; Sarah Nightlinger; Catherine, wife of John McCorkhill.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 20. Top: Plan of a tract of land in Roxborough in the 21st Ward of the City of Philadelphia, the estate of George W. Smick dec'd. to be sold at public sale without any reserve on the premises on Thursday Dec'r. 16th 1858 at 12 o'clock precisely by order of the heirs...James A. Freeman, Auct'r. 422 Walnut St. Philada., 1858. Figure 21. Bottom: Detail of Figure 20, showing the subject property and a large portion of the subdivision. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

<sup>12</sup> Plan of a tract of land in Roxborough in the 21st Ward of the City of Philadelphia, the estate of George W. Smick dec'd. to be sold at public sale without any reserve on the premises on Thursday Dec'r. 16th 1858 at 12 o'clock precisely by order of the heirs...James A. Freeman, Auct'r. 422 Walnut St. Philada., 1858.

<sup>13</sup> Deed: Estate of George W. Smick to Horatio Gates Jones, attorney-at-law, 16 June 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 78, 114.

The Committee of the Estate of George W. Smick included Charles Thomas Jones of Philadelphia, who managed certain aspects of the committee and the estate. Smick's 40-acre tract was subdivided, as shown above in the Plan illustrated in Figures 20 and 21. The subject property was located on Lot 15, which has been circled in black. This plan also shows that the subject property was extant on the block with one additional building. On June 16, 1859, the Estate of George W. Smick conveyed the subject property to Horatio Gates Jones, Jr. (1822-1893), a businessman, historian, politician, and prolific writer, as well as a Levering descendant.<sup>12</sup> On the same day, Jones sold the subject property to Samuel John Arbuckle (1845-1916), the oldest son of Daniel T. Arbuckle, who will be described below.<sup>14</sup>

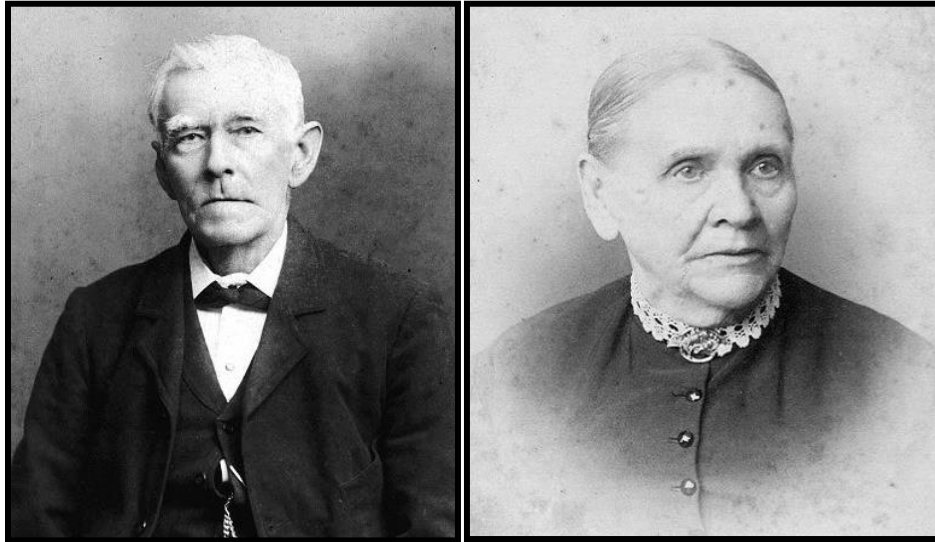


Figure 22. Left: Daniel Arbuckle. Figure 23. Right: Mary (Simpson) Arbuckle. Source: Doug Arbuckle.

Just before the Civil War began, the subject property appears to have become the home of Daniel T. and Mary (Simpson) Arbuckle, and their family. "Daniel Arbuckle" is listed on "Washington Street" in 1861, and, specifically, at "4649 Washington" as early as 1864.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Daniel T. Arbuckle (1813-1891)***

Born in what was the Borough of Frankford in Philadelphia to Daniel Arbuckle (c1769-70-1859) and Ester/Esther Miller (1776-1844), Daniel T. Arbuckle was a significant manufacturer, mill owner, and employer in Manayunk during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Arbuckle owned what was, by 1850, the largest producer of mixed-goods in Manayunk, generating 350,000 pounds of spun cotton on average per year. His product, primarily spun cotton, was used for carpets, fabrics, etc. One of five such spinning mills in Manayunk, the other four produced a combined 600,000 pounds

<sup>14</sup> Deed: Horatio Gates Jones, Jr., Roxborough Township, attorney-at-law, and Caroline B., his wife, to Samuel Arbuckle, 16 June 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 78, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia, From Actual Surveys, 1861, Plate 4-B: Southeast Suburbs. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.; Philadelphia City Directory, 1862.; and Philadelphia City Directory, 1864.

per annum.<sup>16</sup> During Arbuckle’s manufacturing eminence, the larger realm of textile manufacturing at Manayunk included 24 textile firms, which employed roughly 1,966 workers (940 females and 1,026 males), and produced a total product value of \$1.6 million.<sup>17</sup> All of the firms were powered by water or stream, and there were no documented handlooms operating in the area. This represented the eminence of the factory or mill system and its dominance of an industry that had once been the territory of small producers.<sup>18</sup> That said, the yarn used by these firms was likely supplied by small, local producers. The factory or mill system enabled manufacturers like Arbuckle to own and operate a mill that led to a substantial profit, making him a capitalist through and through. In fact, in 1850 alone, Arbuckle purchased \$90,000 of woolen yarn, accounting for one-third of Manayunk’s total output.<sup>19</sup> He also added looms to his 1850 mill, increasing the firm’s abilities to “weave a million yards of cassimeres” per year by 1860 in his enlarged facilities.<sup>20</sup> One sign of this was his ability to move from Main Street uphill to Mount Vernon, where he occupied what appears to have been the largest house, the subject property, in the neighborhood.



Figure 24. Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia, From Actual Surveys, 1861, Plate 4-B: Southeast Suburbs, showing the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, labeled “D. Arbuckle”. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Daniel T. and Mary Simpson (Magargle) Arbuckle appear to have lived in the subject house from approximately 1861 to 1874, where they raised the following children: Samuel J. Arbuckle, who married Catherine M. Kuhn (1845-1923); Daniel Thomas Arbuckle (1852-1927); Paul Thurlow Arbuckle (1854-1919); Philip Ricards Arbuckle (1856-1933); and Ella May Arbuckle (1861-1882). In 1867, Samuel J. Arbuckle sells the subject property to John Conry, Doctor of Medicine

<sup>16</sup> Scranton, Philip. *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 243.

<sup>17</sup> 1850 Manufacturer’s Census, Philadelphia County, 84-87.

<sup>18</sup> Scranton, Philip. *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 243.

<sup>19</sup> 1850 Manufacturer’s Census, Philadelphia County, 473.

<sup>20</sup> 1860 Manufacturer’s Census, Philadelphia County, 470.

for \$10,000.<sup>21</sup> The Arbuckles retired from manufacturing, moving to a farm in Cecil County, Maryland.

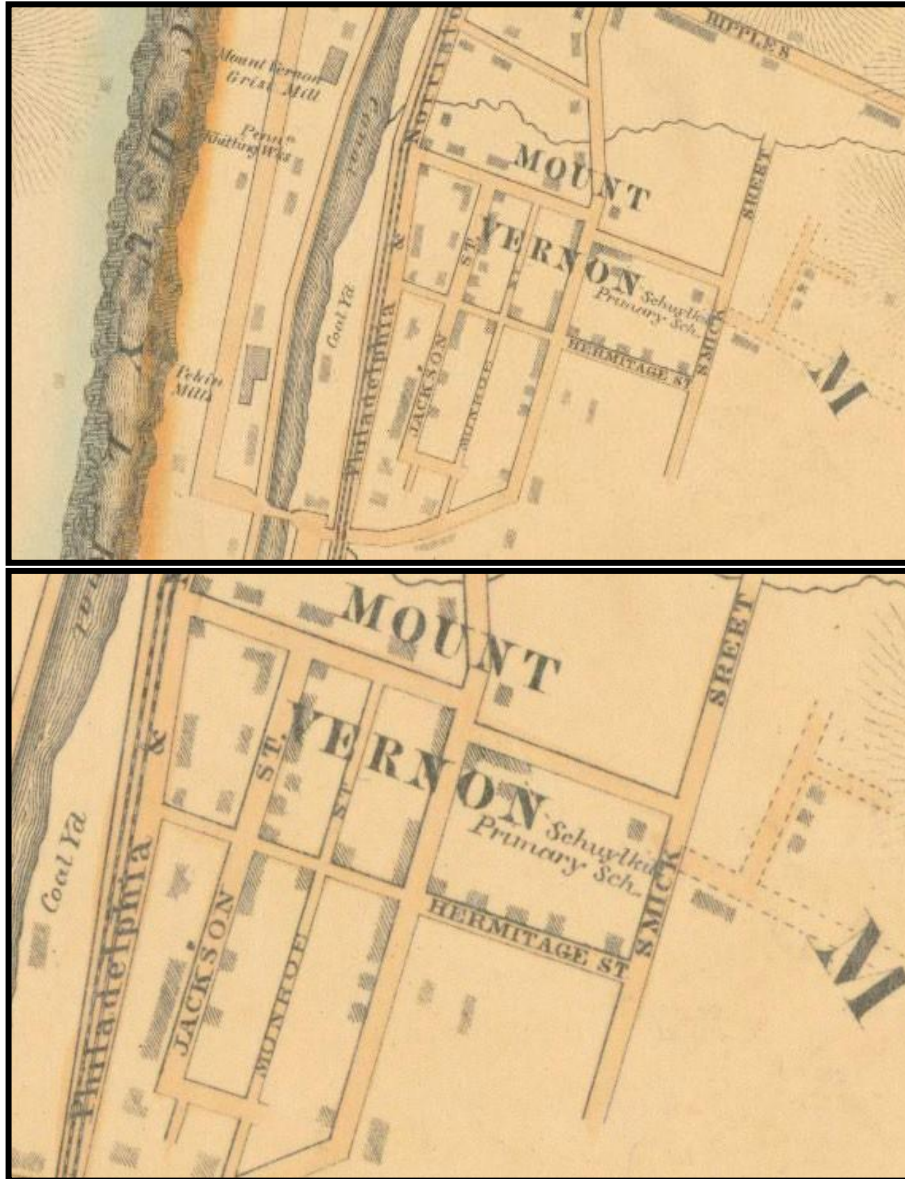


Figure 24. Top: Samuel L. Smedley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1862, Section 22. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co.). Figure 25. Detail of Figure 24, showing the subject property and its immediate environs. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

<sup>21</sup> Deed: Samuel Arbuckle, manufacturer, and Maria, his wife, to John Conry, Doctor of Medicine, 17 August 1867, Philadelphia Deed Book J.T.O., No. 74, 450.

Arbuckle Archibald, skindresser, 104 Green  
 Arbuckle David, watchman, 1027 Pearl  
 Arbuckle Daniel, manuf. woollens, Manayunk, h  
 Washington Myk  
 Arbuckle Eliza, widow Joseph, 1013 Wood  
 Arbuckle Henry, weaver, 1225 Shackamaxon  
 Arbuckle James A., dealer, 1113 Shackamaxon  
 Arbuckle John, boilermaker, Kressler ab Norris  
 Arbuckle Margaret J., widow, 608 S 13th  
 Arbuckle Samuel, 915 Warnock  
 Arbuckle Samuel, blacksmith, 45 Laurel  
 Arbuckle Thomas, coppersmith, 1705 Lombard  
 Arbuckle Thomas W., blacksmith, 2016 Froerman

Arbergast Charles, tailor, h r 844 Orchard  
 Arbuckel Henry, weaver, h 1225 Shackamaxon  
 Arbuckel Margaret, janitrix, h 1212 Palmer  
 Arbuckel Margaret J., h 608 S 13th  
 Arbuckle Daniel, h 4649 Washington, Myk  
 Arbuckle David, watchman, h r 1133 Vins  
 Arbuckle Henry J., printer, h 105 Brown  
 Arbuckle Margaret, wid Archibald, h 333 New  
 Market  
 Arbuckle John, boilermaker, h r 1732 Lombard  
 Arbuckle John R., machinist, h 323 New Market  
 Arbuckle Samuel, h 1943 Poplar  
 Arbuckle Samuel J., flour, 4483 Main, Myk  
 Arbuckle S. W., tobacconist, 919 Poplar  
 Arbuckle Thomas, stoves, 1711 Lombard  
 Arbuckle William J., farmer, h r 1311 Rodman  
 Arbuckle William Z., boilermrk, h 1212 Paluser  
 Arbuckle & Everman (Samuel J. Arbuckle &  
 James Everman), flour, 4483 Main, Myk  
 Arburthnot James, baker, 832 Ellsworth

Figures 26. And 27. References to Daniel Arbuckle on Washington Street and 4649 Washington Street in Manayunk. Source: Philadelphia City Directories.

Anderson Christa	Green Lane	Income	241	295.00	5	14	75	1	00	5
do	do	Watch	272			1	00	15	75	✓
do	do	Income	241	398.00	5			14	80	✓
Arbuckle David	Washington	do	241	1808.00	5	90	60			
		2 Carriages	212			2	00			
		2 Watches	272			2	00	96	10	✓
Arroll William	Ridge av	Income	341	4400.00	5	220	00			

Figure 28. Ancestry.com. U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1865 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008.

## 7. Major Bibliographical References

**This nomination is being sponsored by the Ridge Park Civic Association. The document was authored by Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian.**

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Deed: Horatio Gates Jones, Jr., Roxborough Township, attorney-at-law, and Caroline B., his wife, to Samuel Arbuckle, 16 June 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 78, 118.

Deed: Samuel Arbuckle, manufacturer, and Maria, his wife, to John Conry, Doctor of Medicine, 17 August 1867, Philadelphia Deed Book J.T.O., No. 74, 450.

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Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia, From Actual Surveys, 1861, Plate 4-B: Southeast Suburbs. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Philadelphia City Directory, 1862.

*Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination  
The Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House, c.1770-1843  
4649 Umbria Street, Mount Vernon, Manayunk, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Philadelphia City Directory, 1864.

Plan of the Borough of Manayunk as surveyed by John Levering. Published by M. Dripps, Pleasant St. below 13th St., Philadelphia, 1848. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Plan of a tract of land in Roxborough in the 21st Ward of the City of Philadelphia, the estate of George W. Smick dec'd. to be sold at public sale without any reserve on the premises on Thursday Dec'r. 16th 1858 at 12 o'clock precisely by order of the heirs...James A. Freeman, Auct'r. 422 Walnut St. Philada., 1858.

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Public comment received by  
the Philadelphia Historical Commission  
regarding the nomination of 4649 Umbria Street

**Fwd: 4649 Umbria Street**

Marlene1 &lt;mgschleifer@verizon.net&gt;

Wed 4/29/2020 11:42 AM

To: Jon Farnham &lt;Jon.Farnham@phila.gov&gt;

**External Email Notice. This email comes from outside of City government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.**

---

Dear Dr. Farnham: Can you please provide me with an update on this matter? The property is most definitely at risk, and the neighbors are justifiably concerned. Has a hearing been scheduled?

Many thanks.

Marlene Schleifer, President  
Ridge Park Civic Association

Sent from my shoePhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Marlene1 <mgschleifer@verizon.net>

**Date:** April 27, 2020 at 3:11:22 PM EDT

**To:** kim.chantry@phila.gov

**Subject: 4649 Umbria Street**

Hi, Kim - I understand that Oscar Beisert nominated the above property for historic designation a couple of weeks ago. He did do on behalf of the Ridge Park Civic Association, of which I am President. Can you give me some idea of what happens now and what the timetable looks like? Thanks!

Marlene Schleifer  
Cell: 215-206-6386

Sent from my shoePhone

## Levering Smick Arbuckle House - 4649 Umbria Street

mspro@comcast.net <mspro@comcast.net>

Fri 5/1/2020 10:21 AM

To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>; Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>

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Jon & Kim,

Marlene Schleifer gave me your names, and I am aware that her org, Ridge Park Civic Association, recently submitted application for the subject house to be given historic designation. I am one of the neighbors with a keen interest in seeing it preserved.

My husband and I bought our home on 149 Hermitage Street in August 2019. We are aspiring empty nesters (we still have one in college), who raised our kids in the suburbs, but wanted the city experience for our active retirement years. We chose this neighborhood for its proximity to a walkable Main Street, bike trails, and train stations. We chose our house for its simple, yet elegant old world (built in 1894) working class style, and deep window sills. As I sit in my 3<sup>rd</sup> floor office, I look out on the subject apartment building. While it is older than my house, there is no doubt that my house, and all of the other houses surrounding it, were modelled on the Levering Smick Arbuckle House.

Since moving to Manayunk, my husband and I have spent countless hours walking its beautiful, interesting, hilly streets. We see and appreciate the many textile mills, infrastructure, and housing that defined this area for earlier generations. Our parents and grandparents were part of this scene, and it feels good reconnecting with it. Our neighbors who have lived here for generations have told us stories of the changes they've seen, the bakeries, supermarkets and grand old houses demolished for newer dwellings. There is a sad sense of fatalism about it. Despite that, the history of the Levering Smick Arbuckle House, its early German settler aesthetic, and its connection to the surrounding neighborhood make it a building worth preserving, in a neighborhood worth preserving. I hope the Commission will agree and give it the designation of Historic Significance.

Thank you,  
Mary Spross  
215-480-9903

## Historical building on Umbria Street Manayunk

rookies145@aol.com <rookies145@aol.com>

Fri 5/1/2020 4:10 PM

To: Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>

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This old building has been there all my life I am 59 years old. And my Grandparents used to go there and dance years ago. This building is from the 1800. And we have been looking at this and other old things in this area forever. Old buildings is what Manayunk stands for cobble stones Streets and keeping are old historical buildings where they are. They are what gives Manayunk it's charm.

Sent from AOL Mobile Mail

Get the new AOL app: [mail.mobile.aol.com](mailto:mail.mobile.aol.com)

**4649 Umbria St.**

Tyler Gunsenouser &lt;tylerguns91@gmail.com&gt;

Thu 5/7/2020 9:28 PM

To: Jon Farnham &lt;Jon.Farnham@phila.gov&gt;

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Good evening Jon,

I am writing you concerning the proposed development at 4649 Umbria St. It would be greatly appreciated if your commission would establish the existing building as a historical site. Being that this building holds significant architectural importance to the neighborhood of Manayunk, I think it would be beneficial for the school children at Dobson elementary to learn and see how houses we're built in the 1700s. This could also be a point of interest for people who visit Marchiano's bakery. and even for people of the community to see and learn about How every other building in this neighborhood was modeled after this one, which ties into the blue collar history of the neighborhood.

On the same note, the over development in this neighborhood puts enormous stress on the infrastructure. The tightly packed houses and thin streets are what give this neighborhood its charm. More congestion, in my opinion, will only open the option for more demolition and destroy the foundation and origins from which this neighborhood was developed. Large projects, run by non responsible contractors, are only built to gain profit with little to no regard for the current inhabitants. If this project is allowed to continue, a main through way street would be partially blocked, putting stress on residents as they commute. The proposed 30 unit structure would only accommodate 10 parking spaces, which will add more cars on the street and will most surely enable people to park illegally on sidewalks and other places. In addition, this project will most likely be built by non union trades which will go against Philadelphia's proud Pro union history. the tax payers of this community will most likely be the ones paying for most of the repairs to the road after they inevitably dig up this important road to connect services. I hope that you and your team are able to keep this part of history standing and safe.

Tyler Gunsenouser

## Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House

Ryan Criswell <ryancriswell@gmail.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 11:48 AM

To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>; Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>

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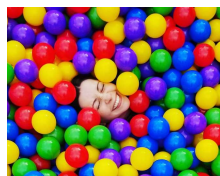
Dear Jon, Kim, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission,

Please save the historic Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House by adding it to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. This building was the first one built in the neighborhood in the 1700s and has a rich history that should be protected. As a Manayunk resident who lives across the street, I would hate to see this building demolished to make way for a modern apartment building with not enough parking spaces to accommodate all the tenants, on an already congested street. Please preserve history and add the Levering-Smick-Arbuckle House to the Register.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warmly,  
Ryan Criswell

--



**Ryan Criswell | Remote Project Manager**

Pronouns: they/them/theirs

[Schedule](#)

[time on my calendar](#)

Cell: 512-963-2580

## The Smick-Arbuckle House, 4649 Umbria Street, Philadelphia 19127

Sue Syrnick <sue.syrnick@gmail.com>

Mon 5/18/2020 9:42 PM

To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>; Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>

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Philadelphia Historical Commission

The Smith-Arbuckle House  
4649 Umbria Street

Umbria Street has changed in many ways since I moved here, in the late 70's, into the house that my great-grandmother had built and that my father was raised in.

The Smick-Arbuckle House is a testament to the mill town that Manayunk once was and the contribution its owners made to the history and economy of Philadelphia.

Its owners formed this neighborhood and were responsible for Manayunk's development. Many families of Italian, Irish, German and Polish decent were able to prosper here because of Manayunk being the mill town that it was. This building is one of the last remaining buildings from that time of prosperity.

To have such a historic building with a rich history is a treasure. It should not be demolished.

Susan Syrnick  
4822 Umbria Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19127

## House at 4649 Umbria St Phila PA 19127

Bob Malin <bmalin77@yahoo.com>

Wed 5/27/2020 10:17 PM

To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>; Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>

Cc: Mary Spross <mspro@comcast.net>

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---

Hello,

I am writing about the house at 4649 Umbria Street, Philadelphia PA 19127 known as the Levering-Smith-Arbuckle house.

A little background on myself. I came to Manayunk from Folcroft, Delaware County. I rented what was the smaller of the apartments in the building after seeing a few pictures of it online. I was around 30 at the time. I loved the exposed brick, the hardwood, the high ceilings, the big windows and doors. I could see that my apartment had been a part of history, but I really never knew much about the house until Mary shared the write up about the property. The entire time I lived there, I always wondered who came and went through this big house, who spent time here, who had birth here, who died here. On some of the doorways in my apartment (Apt 4), you could see there used to be doors where there no longer were doors. I thought to myself, was this a restaurant, was this a place where a cook made food for a speakeasy and maybe had those big swinging doors that you just don't see on kitchens any more? Just so many things I wondered about that place.

Sadly, the prior landlord let a lot of the house lapse. It needed repairs. And not repairs that would require a lot of time or energy. Mostly cosmetic maintenance and just maintenance to be safe. I think their lapse and lack of care lead to the current state is in now. I watched as tenant after tenant asked for things that were never done. Things that should've been done by the landlord per code (safety and habitation). I have dealt with a few landlords in court over 15+ years and there are just things the state of PA requires a landlord to do for safe habitation. We all asked for things to be done and we were rejected.

I read Mary's pdf about the history of the house. I am seriously just in shock that a house that has been here since the last 1700's, is possibly the oldest house here, has ties to just about every prominent family in the area by street name, is possibly going to be torn down. That would be a travesty. And while I am all about change and I have witnessed this area change a lot in the 12 years I have lived here from 30 to 42, there is a line that you shouldn't cross. I am not even saying to keep every house, but there has to be some qualifiers of what should be kept and what should not. I mean, this house has so much history; if anything, the developer should be informed that if it goes on the historical register, it can qualify for other things.

I now live in the building right next door, so again, I have spent the last 4 years near my former residence. This was not planned. The old owners were terrible and after I asked for windows to be replaced and an exterminator, they asked me to leave the residence. Rather than pay a lawyer, I got away from them and moved.

At 42, I know my history. I am a fan of history. I am a fan of architecture and have visited 10 countries and 62 cities. I have seen some of the oldest buildings in the UK. I am appalled to think that we have to knock a building that represents so much, in our little part of the world, to appease some developer clearly out for a money grab and for incoming people who would move there without ever knowing what was destroyed for them to live there.

There has been a windfall of development and new housing units built in the last 5 years. Let those tenants populate those places. Save this space as a part of history for Manayunk and Philadelphia and really, for our country. Put some funds into repairing it and let that developer keep pulling in rent; that alone should make them happy.

Best Regards,

Bob Malin  
4651 Umbria St.  
FL 2  
Phila., PA 19127  
610-986-7880