

**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: 1615 Walnut Street

Postal code: 19103

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House

Current/Common Name: New Balance

**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: Commercial/Residential

**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 1892 to 1931

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: c.1836; alterations/additions 1892-93, 1911

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Addison Hutton (1892); Ballinger & Perrot (1911)

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Frederick A. Havens & Company (1911)

Original owner: John Butler (1836); Clarke & Sarah Merchant (1892)

Other significant persons: Clarke Merchant

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

Organization Center City Residents' Association Date 4 August 2020

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian Email keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717-602-5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

### PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 4 August 2020

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 18 September 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: 18 September 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Honey Nuts LLC

Address: 430 Park Avenue, 5th Floor

City: New York State: NY Postal Code: 10022

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. The primary (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

**THE CLARKE & SARAH  
MERCHANT HOUSE**

—  
**DESIGNS BY ADDISON HUTTON, ARCHITECT, IN 1892  
&  
BALLINGER & PERROT, ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS, IN 1911**

—  
**1615 WALNUT STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Summer 2020  
The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House, 1615 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

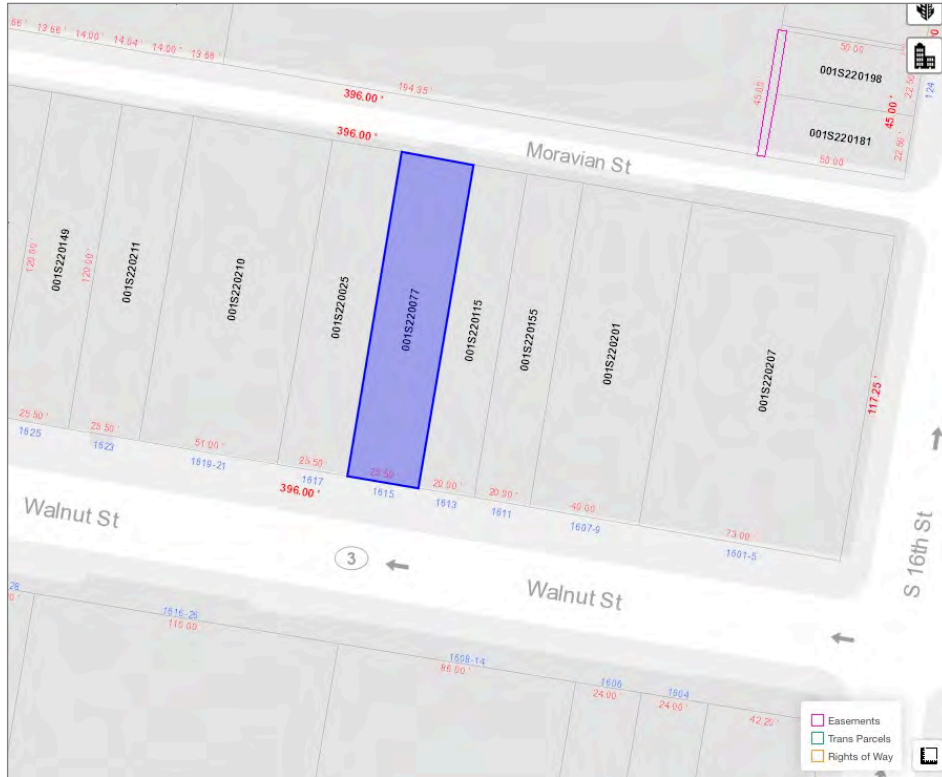


Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2020.

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the designation of the subject property is as follows:

Beginning at a point in the North side of Walnut Street (57.25 feet wide) said point being located 153.0 feet from the Westerly side of 16<sup>th</sup> Street (50 feet wide); thence (1) turning a deflection angle to the right of 90 degrees, 20 minutes for a district standard distance of 117.25 feet to a point in the Southerly side of Moravian Street; thence (2) turning an interior angle of 89 degrees, 40 minutes for a district standard distance of 25.50 feet to a point; thence (3) turning an interior angle of 90 degrees, 20 minutes for a district standard distance of 117.25 feet to a point in the Northerly side of Walnut Street; thence (4) turning an interior angle of 89 degrees, 40 minutes for a district standard distance of 25.50 feet to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

BEING known as No. 1615 Walnut Street.

Map Registry No. 001S220077

OPA Account No. 871268300

*Source for boundary description: City of Philadelphia, PhilaDox, Document ID 53144044, Deed documentation dated 22 November 2016 and recorded 2 December 2016.*



Figure 3. The primary (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Tim Kerner, 2020.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Situated on the north side of the 1600 block of Walnut Street, the Clarke & Sarah Merchant House is a four-story masonry building with physical features that speak to its residential and commercial past. In form, the building is like many others in Philadelphia with its primary (south) elevation cladding a rectangular mass that, in this case, occupies the entire parcel between Walnut and Moravian Streets.

The primary (south) elevation features an historic storefront alteration at the ground floor with a large open shop window occupying the two bays at the west and a single, pedestrian entrance at

the east as the third bay. While the doorway has changed dramatically since the building was a residence it remains in its original location, featuring an entry door of modern design and metal materials. Above the commercial storefront and the residential entrance is a four-part transom window. The fenestration at the first floor is delineated by historic or aesthetically sensitive copper cladding, which includes pilasters at each end of the first floor, mullions within the transom level, a cornice and other trimmings.

The second and third floors feature three-part mullion windows with symmetrically placed transoms. The second and third floor are delineated by a spandrel that is finished with simple detail that emulates paneling. The entire two-story fenestration features a copper frame that is presented in the form of a molding. The mullions and the spandrel are also finished with the same copper material. The aforementioned two-story window is set within the larger stone-clad façade. The eastern-most bay at the second floor features an original one-over-one window that is set off by a stone architrave and molding with a matching sill. The third-floor window rises directly above the second, though it represents a lower ceiling height. This one-over-one window features the same stone surround, but instead of a sill, a decorative cantilevered balcony is present with a decorative iron railing.



Figure 4. The fourth floor of the subject property showing the loggia. Source: Google Streetview.

The fourth floor is almost entirely original to the residential period. The fenestration features the continued two-bay fenestration theme at the west, which is presented in the form of a loggia. The opening is flanked by pilasters or cantons, facing Walnut Street and the interior of the loggia. These pilasters feature abstracted crocket capitols that are reminiscent of the transitional style of Romanesque architecture. Rising above the two pilasters is a header in the form of a raised molding that terminates just below the cornice line. Dividing the opening into three relatively equal sections, there are two columns featuring similarly abstracted crocket capitols, as well as cushion bases. Matching precisely, the opening is guarded between the pilasters and columns by three panels of iron railing. At the east, the third bay features a small one-over-one window, the architrave of which features columns that appear to be diminutive versions of the two placed equally within the loggia opening. The columns rest on a simple stone sill. Heading the window is

a simple, but projecting block of stylized stone. The pilaster motif that flanks the loggia appear again at each side of the fourth-floor fenestration.

The cornice is an elaborate piece of the larger design, featuring a bracketed or corbeled arcade, the miniature barrel vault-like components of which feature shell detailing. A simple copper cornice rises above the stone portion. The building features a relatively flat roof. A dormer rises above at the center of the roof, representing the fifth, half-story and possibly the earlier history of the building, when most houses in Philadelphia featured central dormers within the top, half-story.



Figure 5. Left: Looking northwest at the primary (south) and side (east) elevations. Figure 6. Right: Looking southeast at the rear (north) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

Facing east and west, the side elevations are enveloped by the attached buildings, which are both two stories. Blind red brick walls rise above the adjacent rooflines. Facing onto Moravian Street, the rear (north) elevation is four-and-one-half-stories with a stair or elevator tower that creates a rooftop egress rising above the primary roofline. The red brick façade of the rear (north) elevation features a pedestrian door and enclosed windows at the ground floor, followed by three additional enclosed windows on the second. A two-story projecting oriel window adorns the two eastern bays and is clad with copper like that discussed on the primary (south) elevation. The oriels feature two windows per floor, which are delineated by paneling on all sides, creating an unusual copper-clad fenestration. Enclosed windows adorn the third, western most bay, corresponding with the tower.



Figure 7. The rear (north) elevation of the subject property, facing onto Moravian Street.  
Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.



Figure 8. The primary (south) elevation of subject property as shown in the insurance survey, which was completed after 1904. Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House at 1615 Walnut Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

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

The period of significance dates from the time the subject building was brought to its last residential appearance in 1892, ending in 1931 when the building was sold out of the Merchant family.

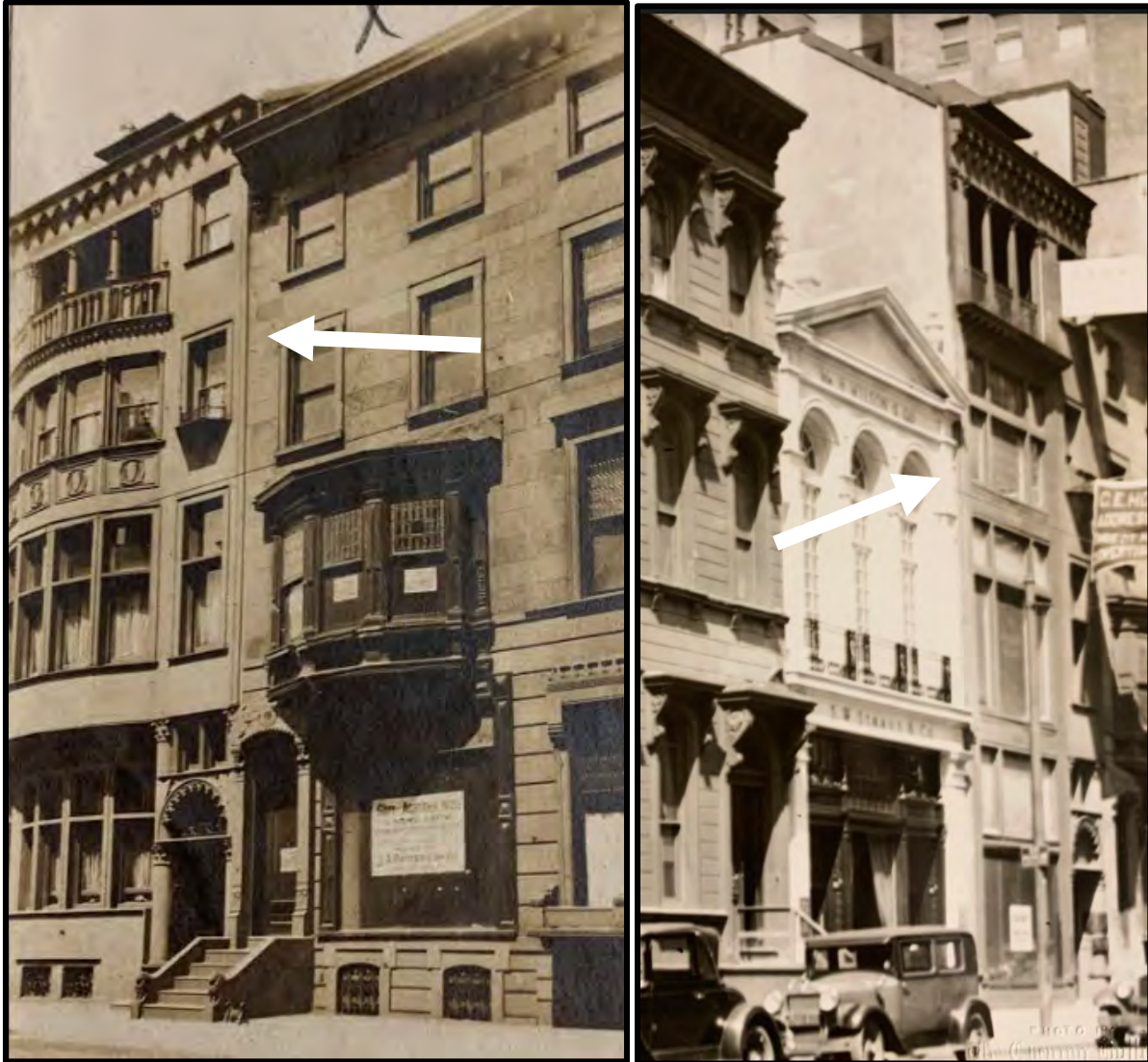


Figure 9. The primary (south) elevation of the subject property as shown on left in the photographs from the insurance survey for 1613 Walnut Street, completed between 1900 and 1910. Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Figure 10. The subject building in the 1920s, during the ownership of Powell Evans. Source: Boies Penrose Collection, HSP.

## CRITERION J

The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House is a rare surviving urban mansion of the attached, “town house” variety in the context of a principal street that now largely consists of purpose-built commercial structures. Clark Merchant (1836-1904), the founder of Merchant & Co., a preeminent dealer in metal and tin plate, purchased the property at 1615 Walnut Street from the Estate of Edward M. Hopkins on April 13, 1892.<sup>1</sup> Built ca.1836 by the Butler family, Merchant commissioned Quaker architect Addison Hutton to design major renovations to the subject

<sup>1</sup> Deed: George W. Gray, et. al., to Clarke Merchant, 13 April 1892, Philadelphia Deed Book T.G., No. 234, p. 535. Source: City Archives of Philadelphia (CAP).

property.<sup>2</sup> The design process began in March 1892 with “Plans and Alternate Elevations”, and continued through August. This, ultimately created the highly eclectic, Venetian-inspired façade shown in Figures 8 and 9.<sup>3</sup> After construction was completed, Merchant deeded to the subject property to his wife, Sarah Schoenberger Watts Merchant (1839-1937), via Charles Barry, with a \$35,000 mortgage.<sup>4</sup>

Projected to be “one of the handsomest private residences of the city,” the Merchants occupied the subject building as a single-family house for a fleeting decade.<sup>5</sup> During this time, the house was noted for its beauty and luxury related to certain family events:

A house wedding of great interest to the fashionables of Philadelphia society was that of Miss Estelle Merchant to Powell Evans, which took place yesterday morning. The residence of the bride’s father, 1615 Walnut Street, was filled yesterday morning by a throng of well-known people. The house was beautifully decorated with palms, potted plants and white flowers.<sup>6</sup>

Further descriptions of the house may be found in Appendix A of this nomination. Soon after Clarke Merchant’s death in 1904, Sarah Merchant, removed to a less pretentious, but similarly commodious city house at 2028 Spruce Street.<sup>7</sup> Despite her new domicile, she retained the subject building as a commercial property, which was leased to various commercial and institutional tenants over the years.

After the building was repurposed for commercial use in 1905, early tenants included the Automobile Co-operative Association of America, the Civic Betterment Association, the Civic Club, Miss Hart’s Training School for Kindergartners, etc.<sup>8</sup> In 1911, Sarah Merchant engaged the eminent Philadelphia firm, Ballinger & Perrot, architects and engineers, to devise plans for alterations to the subject building to create “stores” for potential tenants. Frederick A. Havens & Company, contractors of 845 North Ninth Street, completed the project at a cost of approximately

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<sup>2</sup> The subject house appears to have been built by John Butler in 1836, after he purchased a vacant lot from William A. Rhodes. Source: Deed: William A. Rhodes to John Butler, 19 October 1836, Philadelphia Deed Book S.H.F., No. 11, p. 434. The subject property was deeded to Peirce Butler in 1846 and then from Peirce Butler to Edward M. Hopkins in 1856. Source: Deed: John Butler, et. al. to Pierce Butler, 31 December 1856, Philadelphia Deed Book G.W.C., No. 76, p. 336.; and Deed: Pierce Butler to Edward M. Hopkins, 8 November 1856, Philadelphia Deed Book, R.D.W., No. 103, p. 552. All of these deeds were obtained from CAP.

<sup>3</sup> Addison Hutton. Ledger of the Architectural Firm of Addison Hutton, Architect. (Philadelphia: 1892), 33. Source: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

<sup>4</sup> Deed: Clarke Merchant to Charles Barry, Trustee, 17 March 1893, Philadelphia Deed Book T.G., No. 279, p. 476. Source: CAP.; and Deed: Charles Barry, Trustee, to Sarah S. Merchant, 17 March 1893, Philadelphia Deed Book T.G., No. 245, p. 547. All of these deeds were obtained from CAP.

<sup>5</sup> “Tete-a-Tete”, *The Times*, 8 October 1892, 4.

<sup>6</sup> “Pretty Home Wedding”, *The Times*, 27 November 1898, 4.

<sup>7</sup> “Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Death Certificates, 1803–1915.” Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2008, 2010. From originals housed at the Philadelphia City Archives. “Death Records.”; and Anita M.E. Bolling. *The Memoirs of Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling*. (Devon, Pennsylvania: Unpublished Manuscript, 1973), 15-16. Source: Lee Adams, a descendant of the Merchant family.

<sup>8</sup> “To Fight Consumption”, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 November 1905, 1.; “Coupons Leveled Against Smoke”, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 March 1906, 2.; *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 August 1906, 13.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 September 1909, 37.

\$14,000.<sup>9</sup> This was likely when much of the heavily fenestrated stone façade, shown in Figures 8 and 9, was replaced with the copper-clad version extant today. Obliterating the carriage house and yard, the addition at the rear of the building was likely completed at this time as well, after which time the building occupied the entire lot.<sup>10</sup> This copper-clad, commercial fenestration was no doubt a product created and/or sourced by Merchant & Co., which, by the time this renovation occurred, was known as the Merchant & Evans Co., having passed from the hands of Clarke Merchant to Powell Evans (1868-1948), the husband of Julia Estelle Merchant (1868-1965) and the son-in-law of Clarke and Sarah Merchant. By 1911, Merchant & Evans Co. was manufacturing and importing “brass and copper” in all forms, largely including architectural and building materials.<sup>11</sup> After the renovations were undertaken, the property attracted commercial tenants that rendered a greater return on a building likely seen entirely as an investment property. Beyond the written record of the subject building, Figures 10 and 11 illustrate that the current appearance of the building was created during Sarah Merchant’s additions and alterations in 1911.

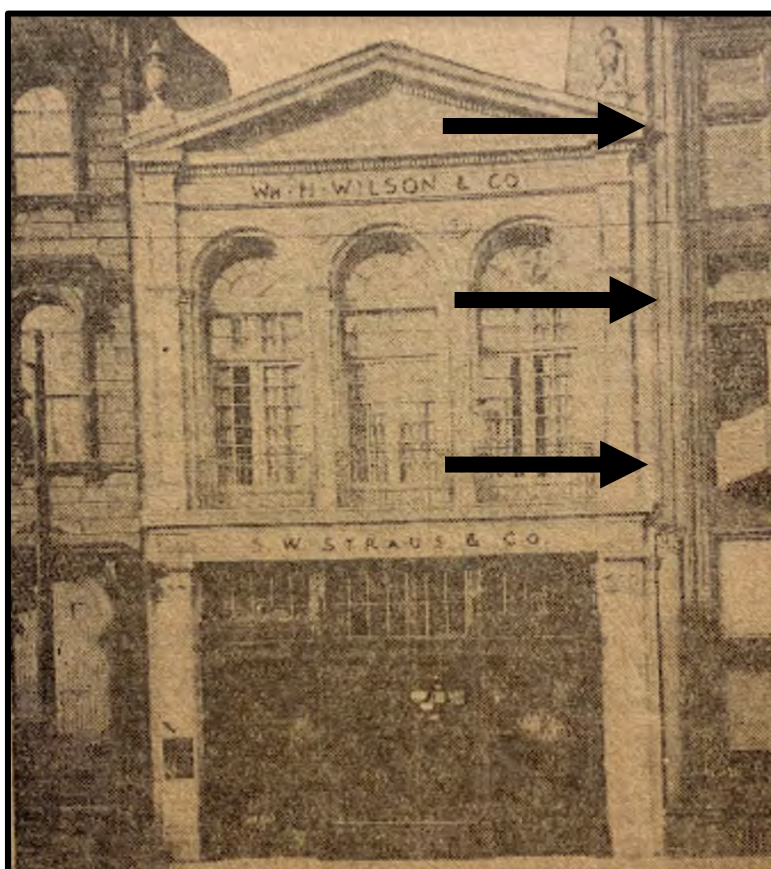


Figure 11. This image of S.W. Straus & Co. at 1617 Chestnut Street was published in 1922, showing that the commercial, copper-clad fenestration was extant at that time and no doubt completed by Ballinger & Perrot, Architects & Engineers. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, HSP.

<sup>9</sup> “Alterations and Additions”, *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, 20 December 1911, 878.

<sup>10</sup> “Alterations and Additions”, *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, 20 December 1911, 878.

<sup>11</sup> Letter: Merchant & Evans, Co. to R.H. Norris Hdwe. Co., Childress, Texas, 8 April 1911. Source: <https://imetco.com/merchant-evans-inc/>

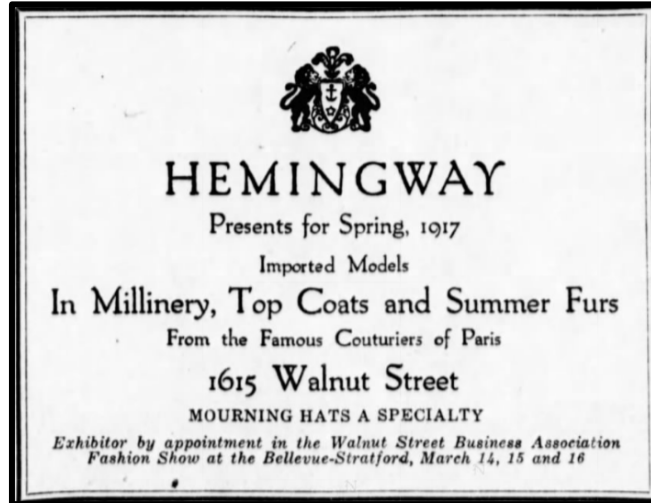


Figure 12. An advertisement for Hemingway, a milliner, published in 1917. Source: *Evening Public Ledger*, 14 March 1917, 9.

Sarah Merchant's commercial tenants would widely vary over time, though most were representative of the type of high-end businesses that served the middle to upper class residents that occupied private houses and apartments nearby. Kapnek & Kapnek, specializing in skin treatment and other beauty products, were one of the first serious commercial tenants, secured in 1913, occupying the fourth floor at first, moving to a lower floor over the years.<sup>12</sup> Another tenant, Hemingway, a millinery importer with a primary store in Paris, opened in the subject property by 1915, serving the community for several years.<sup>13</sup>

Prolific architect, Charles E. Oelschlager (1873-1954), leased a portion of the subject property starting in 1917, and continued his practice in this location until 1935-36. While he initially designed churches, Oelschlager's oeuvre included modern building types such as movie theaters and all manner of auto-related buildings, ranging from the Gomery-Schwartz Building at 130-140 North Broad Street to filling stations located all over the city.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 June 1913, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Evening Public Ledger*, 15 March 1915, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Sandra L. Tatman. "Charles E. Oelschlager", Philadelphia Architects & Buildings Database.



Figure 13. Top left: An advertisement for Kapnek & Kapnek’s Salon at the subject property. Source: *Evening Public Ledger*, 14 February 1917, 8. Figure 14. Top right: Advertisement for Rita A. Kraus’ Marinello, A-1 Beauty Salon. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 September 1921, 41. Figure 15. An advertisement for Hemingway, Importer of Millinery, at the subject property in 1915. Source: *Evening Public Ledger*, 15 March 1915, 10.

Sarah Merchant retained ownership until she deeded the subject property to her daughter and son-in-law, Estelle Merchant and Powell Evans on January 2, 1920.<sup>15</sup> During their ownership, the fourth floor was leased to the Academy of Hair Dressing and Beauty Culture.<sup>16</sup> Kapnek & Kapnek remained in house until their business purchased and succeeded by Rita A. Kraus’ Marinello A-1 Salon.

<sup>15</sup> Deed: Sarah Shoenberger Merchant to Estelle Merchant Evans, 2 January 1920, Philadelphia Deed Book J.M.H., No. 763, p. 274. Source: CAP.

<sup>16</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 March 1921, 55.

We offer

**A 7% Guaranteed Preferred Stock  
at 91**

wherein

An	Investment of	brings	Quarterly Dividend of	or a	Total Income Each Year of
	\$ 91		\$ 1.75		\$ 7.00
	455		8.75		35.00
	1,001		19.25		77.00
	2,002		38.50		154.00
	5,005		96.25		385.00
	10,010		192.50		770.00

Send for Description

**SCHIBENER, BOENNING & CO.**  
Investment Bonds

1615 Walnut Street Philadelphia  
Members Philadelphia Stock Exchange

Bell, Locust 7460 Keystone, Race 3200

Figure 16. Advertisement for Schibener, Boenning & Co., Investment Bonds, Members of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange, published in 1922. Source: *Evening Public Ledger*, 24 February 1922, 25.

Reflecting the economic trends of the neighborhood, tenants eventually included prominent members of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange. As discussed in the 2019 Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Stock Brokerage House of Hano, Wasserman & Co., 1513 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, there was a “definitive shift in domicile of the financial community” which took place over time in the 1910s and 1920s. Perhaps the first major step occurred in 1914, when the Philadelphia Stock Exchange opened for business at 1411-1415 Walnut Street in their impressive, Horace Trumbauer-designed office building with all of its Neo-classical pretense. However, it was not until the 1920s, when many more banks relocated from the 300, 400, and 500 blocks of Chestnut and Walnut Street near Independence Hall to South Broad Street and westward along Walnut Street. The Merchant-Evanses certainly benefited from this cultural, economic, and social shift, attracting tenants from the financial community.<sup>17</sup> Schibener, Boenning & Co., Stock Brokers, dealing in investment bonds, certainly followed this trend, removing from their old offices at 512-14 Walnut Street to the subject property in 1922.<sup>18</sup> The partnership was dissolved in 1926 when Charles F. Schibener retired. This led to the new trading name of Boenning & Co., which included Henry D. Boenning, Daniel S. Blackman, and Arleigh P. Hess.<sup>19</sup> Soon after the

<sup>17</sup> Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Stock Brokerage House of Hano, Wasserman & Co., 1513 Walnut Street, Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2019), 25-26.

<sup>18</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 January 1922, 16.; and *Evening Public Ledger*, 24 February 1922, 25.

<sup>19</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 November 1926, 20.

firm moved to 1606 Walnut Street.<sup>20</sup> Another firm, L.L. Winkelman & Co., Stock Brokers of New York City, also occupied the subject property by 1923.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 17. An advertisement for the “M.&E. Electric Automatic Refrigerator”, showing that the building was in use by Merchant & Evans Co. in 1927, likely when the stock brokers had most to other premises. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 February 1927, 28.

At least one portion of the building was employed by the owner in 1927, when the Merchant & Evans Co. advertised their “M.&E. Electric Automatic Refrigerators” though this enterprise appears to have been short-lived. The Merchant-Evans ownership endured for just over a decade, when it was sold to Benjamin Canter on April 1, 1931.<sup>22</sup>

While the 1892 façade was historically altered, the features that remain illustrate both the residential and commercial heritage of Walnut Street, as it evolved from one of the most fashionable residential thoroughfares to the commercial hub of Philadelphia. Interestingly, the representative aesthetic transition of the subject building appears to have been entirely controlled by the Merchant family—later including Powell Evans, which informs the tradition of preservation and reuse in the Quaker City, a convenient and conservative endeavor that led to long term, attractive results. Few surviving buildings of this size and scale embody such an intriguing picture of both the residential and commercial trends that predominated in Center City and throughout Philadelphia’s built environment as does the subject building—a unique specimen that continues to stand today.

<sup>20</sup> *The Wilkes-Barre Record*, 10 August 1928, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *The Tribune*, 10 April 1923, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Deed: Powell Evans, Estelle Merchant Evans, et. al., to Benjamin Canter, 1 April 1931, Philadelphia Deed Book J.M.H., No. 3345, p. 209. Source: CAP.

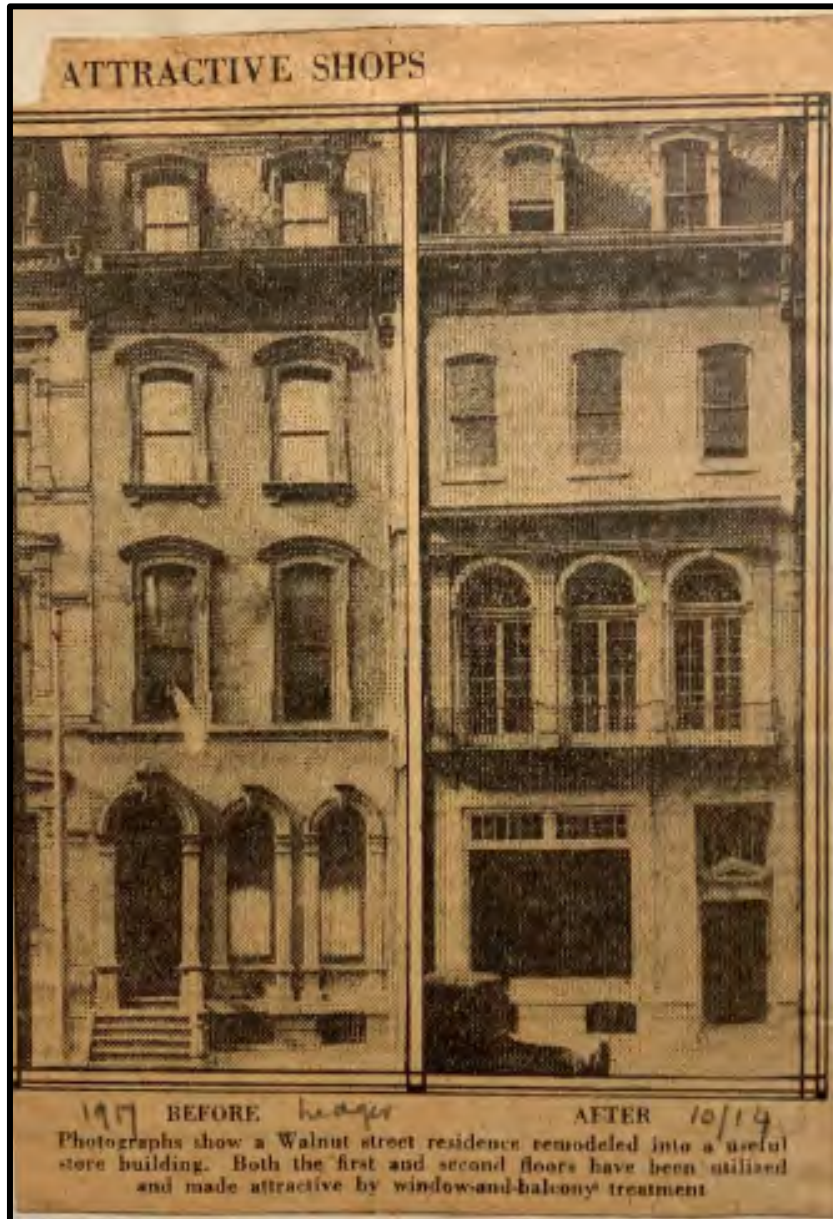


Figure 18. A “before” and “after” visual of a Walnut Street residence that was converted to a commercial building in 1917, illustrating the trend described in this nomination. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, HSP.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**EXAMPLES OF RESIDENTIAL TO COMMERCIAL CONVERSIONS IN PHILADELPHIA**

The statement of significance presented above contends that the conversion of single-family residences to commercial buildings was a common practice in Philadelphia. This historic context is essentially a photographic demonstration that this was a common practice that was part of the cultural, economic, and social history of the Quaker City.



Figure 19. Top left: The 1200 block of Chestnut Street, formerly a fashionable residential address in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, features houses with first floor storefronts, showing the residential to commercial transition that occurred on this principal street. Figure 20. Top right: Once a single-family house at the southwest corner of Sixteenth and Chestnut Streets, the building was converted to a store at some point shortly before this photograph was taken. Figure 21. Bottom left: The entire row of Georgian style houses was adapted for commercial use, including those with renovated commercial fronts for the Perpetual Fire Insurance Company. Figure 22. Bottom right: Another row that may have recently transitioned from residential to commercial retaining the scale of the row, as well as existing buildings. Source: Frank H. Taylor, Photographer, via the Free Library of Philadelphia.

*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Summer 2020  
 The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House, 1615 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



Figure 23. The block shown is clearly in transition from residential to commercial, showing buildings from an earlier period through the Victorian era, at least one of which has been altered not long after it was built for commercial use. Source: Frank H. Taylor, Photographer, via the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Both Chestnut and Walnut Streets, west of South Broad Street, underwent a metamorphosis of single-family residential conversions to commercial and/or mixed-use. Early on, the changes primarily included renovating existing buildings into attractive commercial spaces. In some cases, the larger, purpose-built commercial buildings, occupying multiple-row lots, took the place of early residential buildings. These changes began in the first decade of the twentieth century in a small way with some houses changing very little on the exterior. Near the subject property, one early and somewhat discreet conversion included 1519 Walnut Street (demolished), which had turned from house to store by 1907.<sup>23</sup> The adjacent houses seemingly remained single-family at that time, though all of the buildings would become commercial overtime, including the houses at

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<sup>23</sup> Fire Insurance Policy: 1519 Walnut Street, 21 May 1907. Source: HSP.

1515 and 1517 Walnut Street (Figure 24), which still stand today with storefronts at the ground floor and their residential bones above on the second and third floors. Much like the story of the subject property, the dramatic renovation and improvement of storefronts seems to have truly taken hold by the 1910s and, definitely, in the 1920s. In 1917, the *Public Ledger* showed a before and after shot of a house on Walnut Street, which illustrates the type of transition that was common.<sup>24</sup> As shown in Figures 28 and 29, *The Philadelphia Record* published another example in 1918, which showed a double townhouse on Walnut Street, being renovated to include storefronts on each side of the front door.<sup>25</sup> While the replacement of three- and four-story townhouses with larger buildings seems logical, there was also a trend to demolish larger buildings for smaller two-story commercial structures. One example, next to the subject property, was the banking house of S.W. Straus & Co., replacing a first period townhouse.<sup>26</sup> By the 1930s, despite the fact that many of the townhouses had been retained, there were blocks wherein every single building had been subject to ground floor alterations that went well beyond the delicate storefront windows of the early 1900s. The entire 1700 block of Walnut Street is one example, as shown in Figure 27.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 24. Left: A townhouse at 1517 Walnut Street has undergone very minor alterations within the primary (south) elevation to allow for a store in 1907. Figure 25. Right: Another block of Walnut Street, this view shows a recently converted townhouse with discreet alterations in 1907. Source: Fire Insurance Surveys, HSP.

<sup>24</sup> “Attractive Shops”, *Public Ledger*, 14 October 1917.

<sup>25</sup> “Business Claims Famous House”, *Philadelphia Record*, 15 February 1918.

<sup>26</sup> “New Home of Bankers”, *Public Record*, 15 October 1922.

<sup>27</sup> Ph. B. Wallace. Photograph of the S. Side of Walnut Sts, looking East from 1714, Feb. 1935. The Boies Penrose Collection, HSP.



Figure 26. Left: On right are two houses on the south side of Walnut Street that had clearly been converted from residential to commercial in the years prior to this photograph being taken. Dominated by Samuel T. Freeman & Co.'s purpose-built auction house at the southwest corner of Twelfth and Walnut Streets, the two single family dwellings on right appear almost like they did when they were built in the first half of the nineteenth century as private houses, except for their attractive, yet simple alterations for storefronts at the ground floor. Source: Frank H. Taylor, Photographer, via the Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 27. The 1700 block of Walnut Street in 1935, showing that the entire block of townhouses had been converted from single-family residential to commercial. Source: Ph. B. Wallace. Photograph of the S. Side of Walnut St, looking East from 1714, Feb. 1935. The Boies Penrose Collection, HSP. Figures 28. and 29. Bottom left and right: A first generation double townhouse on Walnut Street, during and after its commercial conversion. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbook and Penrose Collection, HSP.

*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Summer 2020  
The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House, 1615 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

		Owner <i>Clarke Merchant</i>			Scale	
		Building <i>Alterations and Additions</i>	<i>1615 Walnut Street, Phila.</i>			
<i>1892</i>						
<i>Mar. 30</i>	<i>1.</i>	<i>Plans.</i>			<i>1/8 in = 1 in</i>	<i>Inscribed lines 8-15-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>Alternative Elevations, Designs A &amp; B.</i>	<i>5 1/2 x 10</i>		<i>1/4 in = 1 in</i>	<i>Traced on linen 9/12/92</i>
<i>April 16</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>Two Elevations (back building)</i>	<i>14 x 10</i>		<i>1/4 in = 1 in</i>	<i>original on linen</i>
<i>May 4</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>Staircase &amp; Entrance details</i>	<i>2 1/2 x 10</i>		<i>1/4 in = 1 in</i>	<i>Bond.</i>
<i>May 5</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>Details of Dining Room &amp; Library</i>			<i>1/4 in = 1 in</i>	
<i>May 18</i>	<i>6.</i>	<i>Cut stonework, mainly relative to windows 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> Story</i>			<i>Full size</i>	<i>Copied - 5-19-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>7.</i>	<i>Cut stonework, plans of columns on 1<sup>st</sup> story.</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" - 5-19-92</i>
<i>" 20</i>	<i>8.</i>	<i>Details of Window Sashes &amp; Cellar Windows</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" - 5-24-92</i>
<i>" 21</i>	<i>9.</i>	<i>Details of Arch and transom; Front Entrance</i>			<i>Full size</i>	<i>Copied 5-23-1892</i>
<i>" 21</i>	<i>10.</i>	<i>Section of Stone Coruice; Walnut St front</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>Copied 5-21-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>11.</i>	<i>Profile and face view of corbeling, bet. 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, first</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-23-92</i>
<i>" 23.</i>	<i>12.</i>	<i>Profile of jamb and head of headlight over Entrance</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-25-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>13.</i>	<i>Capitals on door-jamb and flanking columns 1<sup>st</sup> story</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>Copied 5-24-1892</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>14.</i>	<i>Profile of mullion 5<sup>th</sup> story out, jamb 4<sup>th</sup> story window and</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-25-1892</i>
<i>" "</i>		<i>sills of 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> story</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-25-1892</i>
<i>" 24</i>	<i>15.</i>	<i>Coruice and balustrade on first</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-25-1892</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>16.</i>	<i>Capitals; plan of flanking jamb, and 1<sup>st</sup> story column</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-25-1892</i>
<i>" 25</i>	<i>17.</i>	<i>Kitchen &amp; Laundry Doors &amp; Frames</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-20-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>18.</i>	<i>Sashes to Bay Window in Dining Room</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 5-21-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>19.</i>	<i>Details of Chimney Stack</i>			<i>" "</i>	<i>" 6-2-1892</i>
<i>June 1</i>	<i>20.</i>	<i>Door between Stair-tail &amp; Yard First Story</i>			<i>1/2 in = 1 in</i>	<i>" 6-2-92</i>
<i>" 1</i>	<i>21.</i>	<i>Elevations and Section of Main Entrance</i>			<i>1/4 in = 1 in</i>	<i>Bond Paper</i>
<i>" 1</i>	<i>22.</i>	<i>Classical Window details</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>Copied 6-2-92</i>
<i>" 2</i>	<i>23.</i>	<i>Details Office Bays &amp; Cornice</i>			<i>F.S. 7/4</i>	<i>" 6-2-92</i>
<i>" 3</i>	<i>24.</i>	<i>Bay Window to Porch</i>			<i>F.S. 7/4</i>	<i>" 6-4-92</i>
<i>" 4</i>	<i>25.</i>	<i>Skylight &amp; Ceiling light</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 6-6-92</i>
<i>" 9.</i>	<i>26.</i>	<i>Carriage panels, front exit, under third story window</i>			<i>Full size</i>	<i>" 6-9-92</i>
<i>" 10</i>	<i>27.</i>	<i>Details of East Window (Third Story)</i>			<i>1/4 in = 1 in</i>	<i>" 6-11-1892</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>28.</i>	<i>Details of Vestibule doors to Entrance</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 6-13-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>29.</i>	<i>Details of Entrance doors</i>			<i>F.S. 7/4</i>	<i>" 6-14-92</i>
<i>" 16</i>	<i>30.</i>	<i>Details of Mansueting &amp; general Skirting</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 6-13-92</i>
<i>" 15</i>	<i>31.</i>	<i>Detail sashes &amp; sittings to Parlor 1<sup>st</sup> story</i>			<i>F.S. 7/4</i>	<i>" 6-16-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>32.</i>	<i>Door &amp; Window details on Balcony</i>			<i>F.S. 7/4</i>	<i>" 8/23/92</i>
<i>July 6</i>	<i>33.</i>	<i>Detail of Column on Loggia</i>			<i>1 1/2 in = 1 in</i>	
<i>" 25</i>	<i>34.</i>	<i>Decorations to Spandrels Main Ent. Arch</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 7-25-92</i>
<i>August 10</i>	<i>35.</i>	<i>Staircase details</i>			<i>F.S. 7/4</i>	<i>" 8-13-92</i>
<i>" 11</i>	<i>36.</i>	<i>do do (Newells)</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 8-13-92</i>
<i>" 15</i>	<i>37.</i>	<i>Finish to opening between Parlor &amp; Hall</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 8-16-92</i>
<i>" 15</i>	<i>38.</i>	<i>Finish to opening over Stair Hall</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>Copied 8-15-92</i>
<i>" 16</i>	<i>39.</i>	<i>Finish to opening passage to Dining Rm. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 8-17-92</i>
<i>" "</i>	<i>40.</i>	<i>Finish to door opening between Landing Stair to passage</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 22 "</i>
<i>" 18</i>	<i>41.</i>	<i>Columns in Dining Room</i>			<i>F.S.</i>	<i>" 4/21/92</i>

Figure 30. The ledger of the architectural firm and works of Addison Hutton, showing the subject property in 1892. Source: Addison Hutton. Ledger of the Architectural Firm of Addison Hutton, Architect. (Philadelphia: 1892), 33. Via the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

## CRITERION E

### ADDISON HUTTON & THE DESIGN OF THE CLARKE & SARAH MERCHANT HOUSE

The architectural firm of Addison Hutton was engaged by Clarke Merchant from March 1892 through August 18 that same year to complete no less than forty-one sets of drawings, plans, and specifications for “Alterations and Additions” to the subject building.<sup>28</sup> Always busy working for Quakers, and a Quaker himself, Hutton was no stranger to the practicality of reuse as part of his

<sup>28</sup> Addison Hutton. Ledger of the Architectural Firm of Addison Hutton, Architect. (Philadelphia: 1892), 33. Source: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

usual repertoire, a skill that he and his firm perfected during the third and fourth quarters of the nineteenth century.

The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House represents a significant example of Hutton's ability to redesign an existing building to a fantastic end. The surviving components of the 1892 facade continue to exhibit the overall form of the second, third, fourth, and fifth floors, despite alterations, with specific extant features at each level that remain as unique elements of the Hutton design. The fourth floor is and always was the most evocative level and remains intact, featuring a romantic and yet somehow mysterious loggia among other details. The stylized dormer in the fifth, half-story is also extant. Nevertheless, the features of the Hutton-designed primary (south) elevation represents the breadth and diversity of his oeuvre as an architect and that of his architectural firm.

The house was clearly distinctive even in its day, so much so that Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling, the granddaughter of Clarke and Sarah Merchant, was able to record a description of the building and its interior for posterity more than five decades after moving from the subject property:

My earliest recollection was the move from our country summer home to Philadelphia to my grandfather's house at 1615 Walnut Street, where I spent my first three winters. It was a double "brownstone" with a big stable in the back alley. The house is still there – even to the small balcony on the fourth floor. The ground floor now has a huge glass shop window and, I suppose the rest are offices or "walk up" apartments.<sup>29</sup>

She also recorded her recollections of the fourth-floor interior that existed beyond the loggia:

When I came home from my daily romp in the Square I was whisked up the backstairs to my aerie on the fourth floor, to the bedroom I shared (it seems forever) with nannie. The room had been my mother's when she was a girl. I have never seen this room since I was four years old – but – it is as fresh in my mind today – more than half a century – as if I had left it only yesterday.

It was large, heavy with Victorian furniture, the ceiling was decorated with "putti" (cherubs) flying, on pink tinted wings against a blue sky, artistically picked out with fluffy clouds. They swung from pale blue ribbons, with roses draped around their fat, naked stomachs. I wonder if the "putti" are still flying?<sup>30</sup>

Among Hutton's unique redesign projects are several important dwellings and mansions of prominent Philadelphians. One residential transformation was the redesign of an eighteenth-century mansion for Justice Strawbridge in Germantown. Situated on a large estate at School House Lane and Wissahickon Avenue, Hutton created an eclectic and sprawling Victorian pile at the root of which was a large eighteenth century, Georgian box. The mansion, known as *Torworth*, has since been demolished, but remains one of Hutton's most interesting projects.<sup>31</sup> Further east across Germantown Avenue, Hutton was commissioned by Marmaduke Cope in 1876 to greatly

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<sup>29</sup> Anita M.E. Bolling. *The Memoirs of Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling*. (Devon, Pennsylvania: Unpublished Manuscript, 1973), 12. Source: Lee Adams, a descendant of the Merchant family.

<sup>30</sup> Anita M.E. Bolling. *The Memoirs of Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling*. (Devon, Pennsylvania: Unpublished Manuscript, 1973), 15-16. Source: Lee Adams, a descendant of the Merchant family.

<sup>31</sup> Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Francis R. Strawbridge House, 5710 Wissahickon Avenue, Germantown*. (Washington, D.C.: Oscar Beisert, 2015), 27-29.

enlarge Lloyd Mifflin’s cottage at 48 East Penn Street. While a much simpler work, the Cope-Mifflin House is also a unique design example of Hutton’s ability to transform residential properties.<sup>32</sup> The same sort of transformation occurred at 5708 Germantown Avenue. In this case, Hutton was commissioned by the prominent Quaker-owned grocery store chain, Mitchell, Fletcher & Co., Inc. to entirely reimagine a typical two-and-one-half-story dwelling into a distinctive commercial building. The design was a radical treatment of Flemish parapets to disguise the gable-ends, replete with balustrades, mullions, and other flourishes that created another completely unique building and site that stands to-date.<sup>33</sup>

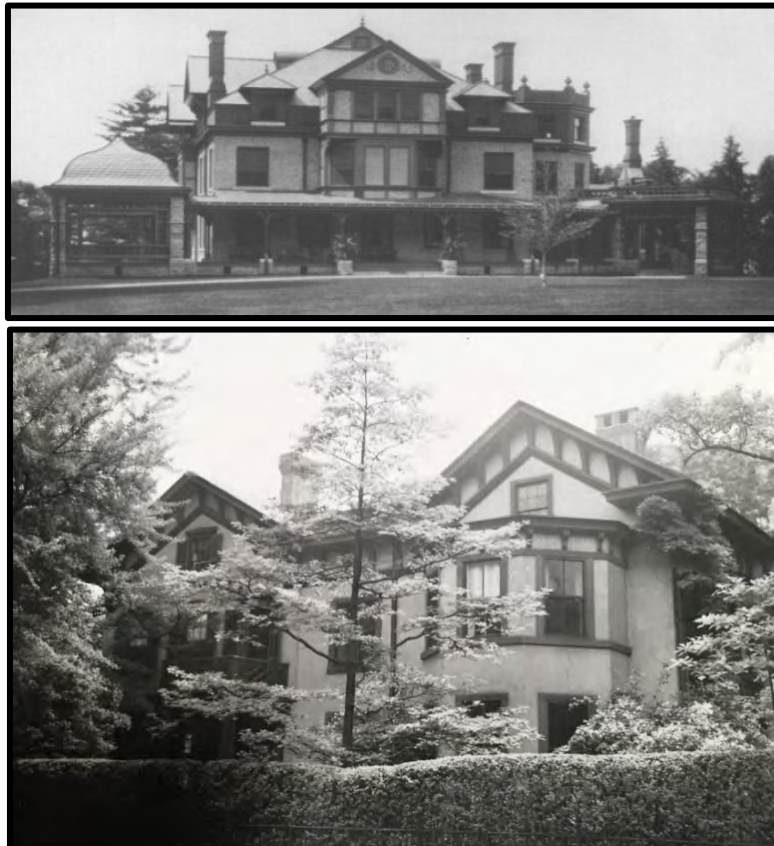


Figure 31. Top: “Torworth”, the Mansion of Justice C. Strawbridge, designed by Addison Hutton. Source: Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Francis R. Strawbridge House, 5710 Wissahickon Avenue, Germantown.* (Washington, D.C.: Oscar Beisert, 2015), 27-29. Figure 32. Bottom: The Cope-Mifflin House, 48-62 E. Penn Street, Germantown, Philadelphia. Source: Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Cope-Mifflin House, 48-62 E. Penn Street, Germantown.* (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2015), 21-27.

<sup>32</sup> Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Cope-Mifflin House, 48-62 E. Penn Street, Germantown.* (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2015), 21-27.

<sup>33</sup> Oscar Beisert. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Mitchell, Fletcher & Co., 5708 Germantown Avenue, Germantown.* (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2019).



Figure 33. Left: Clarke Merchant. Source: Charles Morris, ed. *Men of the Century, An Historical Work*. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly, 1896), 310. Figure 34. Right: Clarke Merchant and, his granddaughter, Elizabeth “Bessie” Merchant, posing in his horseless carriage. Source: Lee Adams, a Merchant family descendant.

## CRITERION A

The subject building is associated with the life of Clarke Merchant, a man whose career as a manufacturer and merchant of metal and tin plate architectural and building materials made a significant impact on the built environment of Philadelphia and beyond.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT: CLARKE MERCHANT (1836-1904)

Like many of his economic and social equals of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Clarke Merchant settled with his parents in Philadelphia, where he pursued a career in business. He established himself in the lucrative trade of metal and pig iron, which enabled him to build a small fortune.<sup>34</sup>

“From a distinguished and patriotic stock,” his grandfather was George Merchant (1757-1830), a soldier in the War of 1812, and later Mayor of Albany, New York.<sup>35</sup> Born in 1836 at the Oglethorpe Barracks in Savannah, Georgia, Clarke Merchant was the son of Charles Spencer Merchant (1795-1879), one of the first cadets admitted to West Point, later rising to the rank of brigadier-general.<sup>36</sup> Following in his father’s footsteps, Clarke Merchant too started out in the service, entering the United State Naval Academy as a cadet and graduating as a midshipman in 1852.<sup>37</sup> In his first years he served in the East Indies, China, and Japan, during which time he was eventually

<sup>34</sup> “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *The Metal Worker, Plumber and Steam Fitter*, 14 May 1904, 69.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Morris, ed. *Men of the Century, An Historical Work*. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly, 1896), 310.

<sup>36</sup> “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *The Metal Worker, Plumber and Steam Fitter*, 14 May 1904, 69.

<sup>37</sup> “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *Carpentry and Building*, June 1904, 192.

appointed as Master on the sloop-of-war “Germantown.”<sup>38</sup> He was later sent to the Mediterranean on the “Susquehanna,” a steamer, but was reappointed to the “Pensacola” upon the outbreak of the Civil War. He served in various naval capacities throughout the Civil War, his highest rank being that of a lieutenant commander.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 35. Top left: The façade of Merchant & Co., 517 Arch Street, Philadelphia, demolished for Independence Mall. Source: Frank Taylor, Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 36. Top right: *The Illustrated Catalogue and Price List of Merchant & Co., Inc.* Source: Internet Archive. Figure 37. Bottom: The letterhead of Merchant & Co. Source: Ebay.

<sup>38</sup> “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *The Metal Worker, Plumber and Steam Fitter*, 14 May 1904, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Morris, ed. *Men of the Century, An Historical Work*. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly, 1896), 310.; and “Mrs. Anita Sanders,” *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, 31 August 1893, 3.

After resigning from the navy in 1865, Clarke Merchant came to Philadelphia, where he joined the firm of Carman, Merchant & Shaw, the Philadelphia agents of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.<sup>40</sup> Upon the discovery of coal in the Pacific states, the interests of the said firm were divided and the partnership came to an end, at which time Merchant went into business for himself. He served as the agent for the New Bedford Copper Company, primarily dealing in metal sheathing. A short time past when he added sheet copper to his products and, as a result, his business grew exponentially. This led him to take a large store in 1868 at 517 Minor Street. He later moved to 507 Market Street, where he remained for more than a decade. During this time, he added tin plate to his product line, which led to an agreement with the tin manufacturers of Wales in the United Kingdom. This arrangement allowed him to gain “a controlling position” in the industry. By the end of the nineteenth century, his firm was dealing “the entire product of some of the leading brands of roofing tin.”<sup>41</sup> This led him to take a much larger space at 525 Arch Street. He eventually erected his own store at 517 Arch Street, which was designed “to bear the great weight of brass, tin, iron, and other metals,” the primary materials that comprised the firm’s products. Merchant was one of the first in his trade to “guarantee the brands of tin plate handled by him, and to stamp the grade, size, and weight on the plates, so that purchasers would know precisely what they were buying”. This system “revolutionized the tin trade,” allowing Merchant & Co. to steadily grow as a leader in the architectural and building metals industry, eventually opening offices in New York, Chicago, and London.<sup>42</sup>



Figure 38. At center is the Merchant & Co. Building (demolished) at 517 Arch Street. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey.

<sup>40</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 October 1865, 8.; and “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *The Metal Worker, Plumber and Steam Fitter*, 14 May 1904, 69.

<sup>41</sup> “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *Carpentry and Building*, June 1904, 192.

<sup>42</sup> Clarke Merchant. Source: Charles Morris, ed. *Men of the Century, An Historical Work*. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly, 1896), 310.

Beyond the business of Merchant & Co., Clarke Merchant was involved in numerous other business affairs and investment. One testament to his acumen, he was elected president of the Schuylkill Traction Company in 1901, which was a firm that “operate[d] 28 miles of electric railway through Mahoney City, Shenandoah, Girardville, Ashland and other points in Schuylkill County, PA.” The type of products imported and manufactured by Merchant & Co. naturally led the firm to become a source for fireproof architectural and building materials. As a result, Merchant would gain controlling interest in the International Sprinkler Company, a leading concern of its kind in the country.<sup>43</sup>



# THE BUILDER

VOLUME XI. NO. 5 MAY, 1904. ST. LOUIS, U. S. A.

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F. W. CHOISEL,	MANAGER
CYRUS JOHNSON	EDITOR

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THE greatest of all World's Fairs has duly celebrated "opening day" and the people of all nations are invited to come to St. Louis and behold a highly pleasing architectural panorama, composed of many huge palaces filled with interesting exhibits of all kinds. There will be many to come simply to be able to say: "Yes, I was there—very beautiful." There are even many fools who go to Europe just to say: "I seen it," but the man, woman or child who comes just for a day to walk or ride through and go home with a bewildered idea of the biggest picture ever presented makes a great mistake. It is the specialist



struggling in vain for recognition. Mr. Merchant was always the friend of the publisher and his kindly criticisms and suggestions will long be remembered. Acting on his suggestion the editor of *The Builder* has always tried to keep in touch with those who support the paper. It has resulted if not in the accumulation of great wealth at least in the making of many friends.

Figure 39. An ode to Clarke Merchant in *The Builder* by its editor, recognizing his impact on the architectural and building industry and its associated trades. Source: *The Builder*, May 1904, 1.

<sup>43</sup> "Death of Clarke Merchant," *The Metal Worker, Plumber and Steam Fitter*, 14 May 1904, 69.

As a private citizen, Clarke Merchant was a member of the Philadelphia Club, the Union League, and the Loyal Legion. He also “interested himself in yachting”, owning “one of the finest boats of the Inlet fleet at Atlantic City.” In 1903, he built “a handsome private boat house at Atlantic City on the Barrett tract, adjoining the Atlantic City Yacht Club.”<sup>44</sup> Merchant died on May 7, 1904 after a short bout of pneumonia.<sup>45</sup>

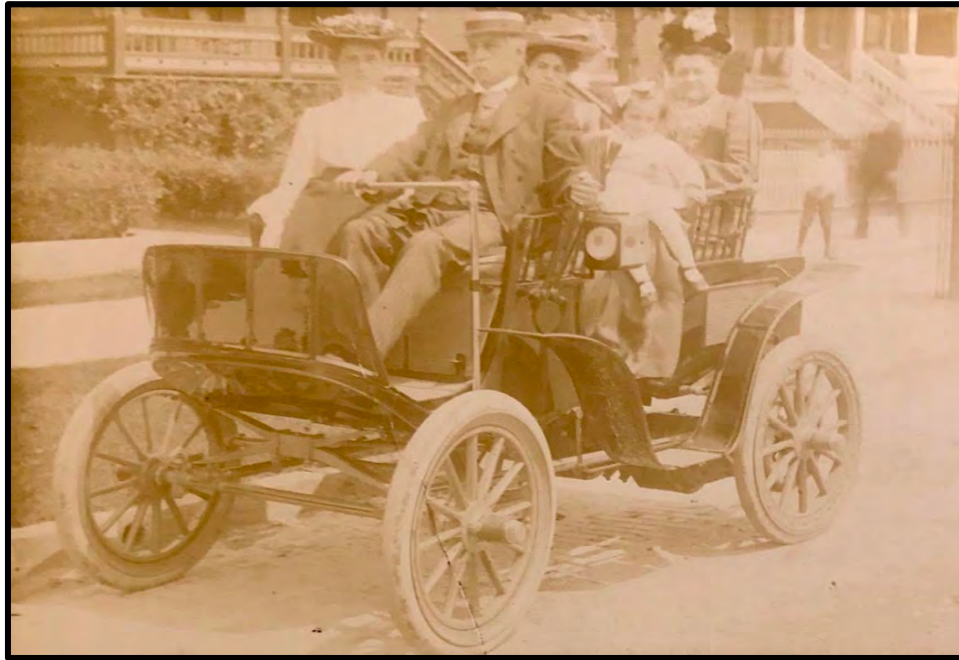


Figure 40. Left: Three generations of the Merchant family, posing in their horseless carriage. Source: Lee Adams, a Merchant family descendant.

Merchant was married to Sarah Schoenberger Watts of Philadelphia, the daughter of the Honorable Henry M. Watts, United States Minister to Austria, and Anna S. Schoenberger, with whom he had three children: Henry Watts Merchant (1864-1900), who married Elizabeth Waln Wister McMurtrie (d. 1893) and had one surviving child—Elizabeth McMurtrie Merchant, who married Thomas Humphries, Jr.; Anita Watts Merchant (1867-1893), who married Dallas Sanders (1848-1910), a prominent lawyer with whom she had twins—Anita Sanders Muller (1893-1953) and Estelle Dallas Sanders Lawson (1893-1942); and Julia Estelle Merchant (1868-1965), who married Powell Evans in the parlor of the subject property and had one daughter—Anita Evans.<sup>46</sup> Henry W. Merchant, was very active in the family business, serving as Treasurer of Merchant & Co.; however, he died of an illness in 1900 at Phoenix, Arizona, seeking a more healthful climate.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “Death of Clarke Merchant,” *The Builder*, May 1904,

<sup>45</sup> “Obituary: Clarke Merchant,” *The Iron Age*, 12 May 1904, 39.

<sup>46</sup> *Twenty-Third Annual Festival*. (Philadelphia: New England Society of Pennsylvania, 1903), 102-103.; “Pretty Home Wedding,” *The Times*, 27 November 1898, 4.; and “Judge Make Appointments,” *The Times*, 7 March 1893, 4.; and Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. (NARA microfilm publication T625, 2076 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>47</sup> “Supply Trade Notes.” *Railway Master Mechanic*, 1900, 103.

Ultimately, Powell Evans would take over the firm, leaving it to his own son.<sup>48</sup> While there have been major changes over the years, the business still exists as IMETCO.<sup>49</sup>



Figures 41. and 42. Top left and top middle: Julia Estelle Merchant Evans and her daughter, Anita Merchant Evans. Source: Cherie Adams Gaehde and Lee Adams, descendants of the Merchant family. Figure 43. Top right: Powell Evans. Source: Find-a-Grave Memorial. Figures 44. and Figure 45. Bottom left (exterior) and right (interior): “The Terraces” at Devon. Source: Lee Adams, a descendant of the Merchant family.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Commissioned by the Historic Preservation Committee of the Center City Residents Association, this nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian and Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian. The Keeping Society

<sup>48</sup> Anita M.E. Bolling. *The Memoirs of Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling*. (Devon, Pennsylvania: Unpublished Manuscript, 1973). Source: Lee Adams, a descendant of the Merchant family.

<sup>49</sup> IMETCO. <https://imetco.com/> Accessed on 29 July 2020.

of Philadelphia is grateful for materials provided by the grandchildren of Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling: Lee Adams, Cherie Adams Gaehde, and Julia (Merchant) Adams Dattilo.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Newspapers.com

Proquest Historical Newspapers

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Figure 46. Portraits of mother and daughter, Julia Estelle Merchant Evans and Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling, 1913 and 1914. Source: Cherie Adams Gaehde, a descent of the Merchant family.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **A DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY**

Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling, the granddaughter of Clarke and Sarah Merchant, recorded a description of the building and its interior for posterity roughly five decades after her grandmother left the house in 1904:

My earliest recollections was the move from our country summer home to Philadelphia to my grandfather's house at 1615 Walnut Street, where I spent my first three winters. It was a double "brownstone" with a big stable in the back alley. The house is still there – even to the small balcony on the fourth floor. The ground floor now has a huge glass shop window and, I suppose the rest offices or "walk up" apartments.

One entered a green marble vestibule, into the immense lobby through double plate glass doors. There were two huge Chinese pottery jars, spilling over with apidestras. Past the lobby was the "best parlor" glowing with deep pile pale Oriental rugs, stiff Victorian chairs, straight-backed sofas – all covered with soft colored French damasks, the long drapes of matching material, behind which – against the window glass, were fine Austrian lace curtains.

The room was a-clutter with ornaments, the marble mantel had much Sevres, Limoges, Dresden and a brass French clock that chimed musically. My great-grandfather had been Ambassador at the Court of Emperor Franz Josef and Empress Elizabeth of Austria who had much loved my great-grandfather, so the room was filled many objects d'art of the mid 1800 period.

There was an almost lifesize marble statue of "Schonebrun" (Beautiful Spring) a replica of the fountain of the same name at the beautiful Palace of Schonebrun, in Vienna. Also there were bronze miniatures of the Marley Horse of Paris – several copies stood in Place [sic.] gardens in Vienna. (I have these "miniatures" now on my terrace in Bryn Mawr, Pa.) There were full length gold framed mirrors, Italian art treasures and a portrait of the Empress commissioned for my grandmother as her "farewell" gift by Winterhalter (also now in my living room). She was so young, so beautiful (quite "naughty") and unhappy. Her lustrous reddish hair hands in curls and her throat has strings of beautiful pearls – a rare sight of beauty to look at.

The "back parlor" was more "informal". It had a stylish "Turkish Corner" beloved by the ladies of the period. A box-like sofa was tucked into a corner, draped with "turkey red" curtains, heavily embroidered in Eastern design in colored silks. On the sofa were piles of cushions, gold embroidered with tiny glittering mirrors embedded in the stitchery. A few "contributions" were added – one embroidered with many childish mistakes by a devoted granddaughter, another one Aunt Tilly had sent from Breton Woods, stuffed with evergreens, saying "I" 'pine' for you and 'balsam'. There was also a fringed leather one, with an Indian Head "burnt in", that came from where???

Tea was served each afternoon to intimate friends and family on a delightful tea-table. It was semi-round with a small brass-trimmed top shelf, for the cups. (I wish I knew where IT had vanished with many family treasures). Tea was served from precious egg-shell thin cups of red, embossed with silver dragons. I still have them, but for "décor" only – they would not last a week in the dishwasher. My grandmother, after the guests had departed, would have two bowls of hot water brought in (one quite soapy) and dipped them and dried them herself – "Katie would break one a day" she was heard to say.

My grandmother – like the ladies of her day – "poured Tea" for instance, "the first Monday in January – the third Tuesday in February" etc. – each one of the Social Set consulting together in the fall season and setting their sacred hour. This, a formal affair – often attended by the gentlemen also, was served in the "front parlor" with maids in rustling black dresses, lace-edged aprons, cuffs and caps, hurrying about. There was an embroidered cloth laid on the lavishly laid out table – very "Olde England" with thin cucumber sandwiches, paper-like "bread and butter" slices, "jumbles", "scones", gooey layer cakes. There was a silver salver in the hall, where all left their "cards". In came the butler bearing a tray the size of a billiard table, laden with the silver "tea set". He must have been the "circus lifter" to carry, with dignity – and no puffing – such an enormous contraption...

In the great dark paneled dining room there was a corner table laid for me where I was offered some noisome “pap” called “children’s supper!”. The butler and parlour maid were bustling about setting all the glories of Dresden, Bavarian glass and lacy napkins at the sumptuous table being made ready for my family and their guests...

When I came home from my daily romp in the Square I was whisked up the backstairs to my aeirie on the fourth floor, to the bedroom I shared (it seems forever) with nannie. The room had been my mother’s when she was a girl. I have never seen this room since I was four years old – but – it is as fresh in my mind today – more than half a century – as if I had left it only yesterday.

It was large, heavy with Victorian furniture, the ceiling was decorated with “putti” (cherubs) flaying, on pink tinted wings against a blue sky, artistically picked out with fluffy clouds. They swung from pale blue ribbons, with roses draped around their fat, naked stomachs. I wonder if the “putti” are still flying?

The bath was a masterpiece of décor. In fact the “bath” on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of a Philadelphia house was indeed “deluxe” as few houses of those days ever had more than one bath in the entire mansion. The washbasin was set in a wooden and it had a Chinese “willow ware” bowl, decorated with a lovely Japanese lady, swaying in front of a temple under the willowy leaves of a tree, as she walked over a little hipped bridge. The bath – and say that again – was a monstrous, deep affair of zinc, set on “lion-clawed feet” and rimmed with a wide bend of splintery wood. There were brass spigots – held down, by hand, while the water “flowed”?? Water pressure above the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (and often today, as well) was a moot question in Philadelphia. Seldom more than a cupful spluttered. Many times a day a maid had to struggle up the stairs with a bucket to “flush” the toilet.

There was little electricity in homes, then. We had flickering gas lights, some brighter with “Wellsbach” burners that “blew out” more than once a day. In parts of the house there were only oil lamps or candles.

I remember my grandfather’s library very well. He had been a Captain in the Navy, with duties in the Far East, so his room was a treasure house of ivories, teak carvings, temple jars and embroidered hangings. After the “War” (Civil) he had served in, he went into the Copper Plate business. In this my father soon joined, after he married my mother in 1898 and today – the firm still stands (over 100 years) with my son the owner.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Anita M.E. Bolling, *The Memoirs of Anita Merchant Evans Adams Bolling*. (Devon, Pennsylvania: Unpublished Manuscript, 1973), 12. Source: Lee Adams, a descendant of the Merchant family.



Figure 47. The Primary (South) Elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

**APPENDIX B**  
**ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY**

*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Summer 2020*  
*The Clarke & Sarah Merchant House, 1615 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



Figure 48. The Primary (South) Elevation of the subject property, showing the first-floor storefront. Source: Tim Kerner, 2020.