

ADDRESS: 3412 HAVERFORD AVE

Name of Resource: The Julia A.A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin

Proposed Action: Designation

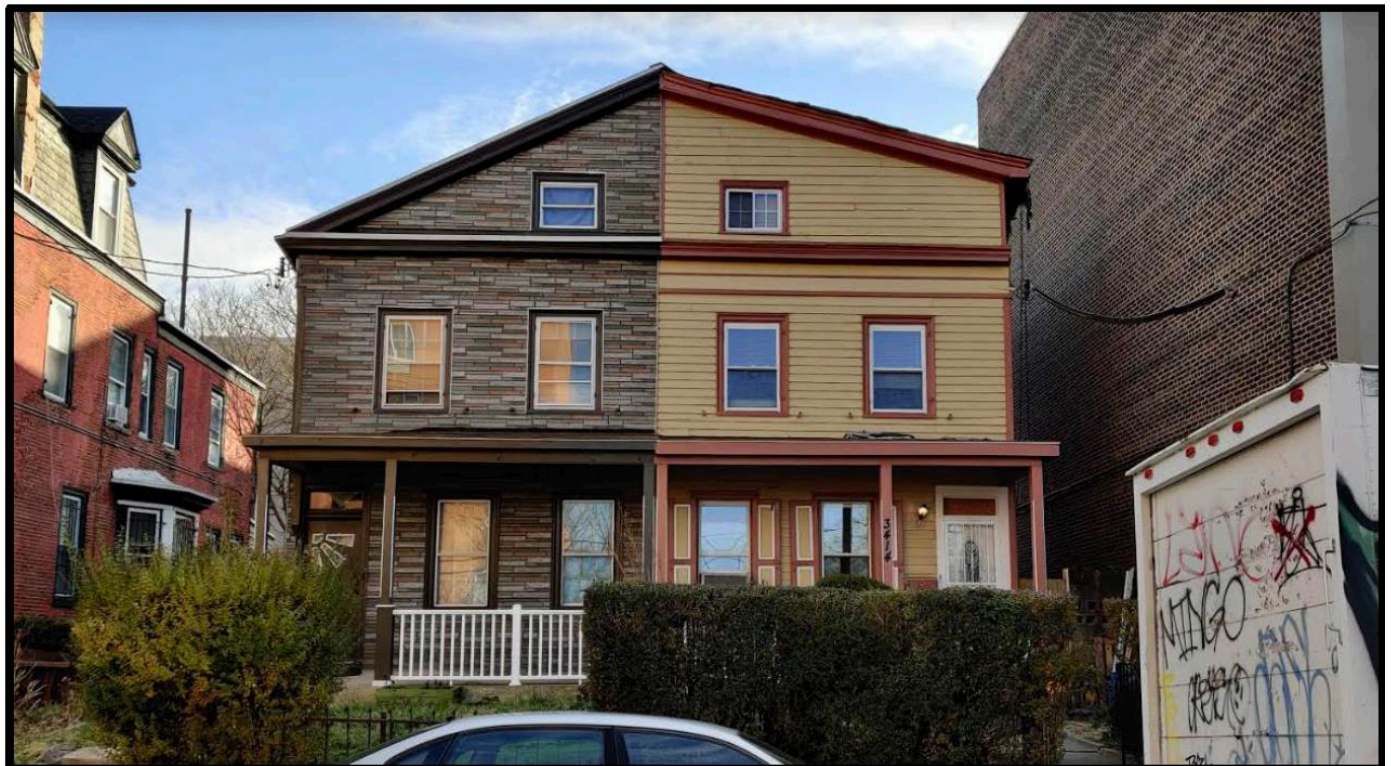
Property Owner: Mary E. Drummond

Nominator: University City Historical Society

Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt, megan.schmitt@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 3412 Haverford Avenue and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criterion for Designation J, in part because it is representative of “the historical heritage of the neighborhood’s initial period of development, as well as the economic and social history” of the community’s founders. The nomination also contends that “the subject property is representative of the early development of the Mantua neighborhood, as well as a once common house type that has largely vanished from the built environment of West Philadelphia.”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 3412 Haverford Avenue satisfies Criterion for Designation J. The staff, however, recommends against naming the resource for its associated developer, Julia A.A. Blodget Britton.



The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The building stands as an early twentieth-century commercial representation of the Italian Renaissance style, satisfying Criterion D.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1617 Walnut Street satisfies Criterion for Designation D.

ITEM: 1617 Walnut St MOTION: Designate, D MOVED BY: Cohen SECONDED BY: Milroy					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Douglas Mooney	X				
Total	6				

ADDRESS: 3412 HAVERFORD AVE

Name of Resource: Frame Twin

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Mary E. Drummond

Nominator: University City Historical Society

Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt, megan.schmitt@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 3412 Haverford Avenue and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criterion for Designation J, in part because it is representative of “the historical heritage of the neighborhood’s initial period of development, as well as the economic and social history” of the community’s founders. The nomination also contends that “the subject property is representative of the early development of the Mantua neighborhood, as well as a once common house type that has largely vanished from the built environment of West Philadelphia.”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 3412 Haverford Avenue satisfies Criterion for Designation J. The staff, however, recommends against naming the resource for its associated developer, Julia A.A. Blodget Britton.

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:52:05

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Schmitt presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Attorney Michael Mattioni and architectural historian Gideon Fink Shapiro represented the property owner.

- George Poulin and Oscar Beisert represented the nomination.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Mattioni asked if 3412 and 3414 Haverford Avenue could be heard at the same time.
 - Ms. Cooperman responded that since they were two separate properties they would be heard separately.
- Mr. Mattioni explained that he had the same testimony for both properties.
 - Ms. Cooperman suggested that he could abbreviate his testimony for 3414 Haverford Avenue when it was time to review that property.
- Mr. Mattioni explained that he was there to request that 3412 Haverford Avenue not be placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. He recognized the effort of the nominator in preparing the nomination but pointed out that it discusses wood-frame houses in Mantua and also Fishtown and Northern Liberties.
- Mr. Mattioni stated that the subject property differed greatly from many of the examples that were used in the nomination to support significance. He reiterated that the nomination provides information about the history of wood frame houses in Fishtown and Northern Liberties but not Mantua.
- Mr. Shapiro stated his qualifications.
- Mr. Shapiro provided background about Mantua Township in 1850-53, the period of significance that was identified by the nominator. Mr. Shapiro argued that the most critical period of Mantua's development occurred after the 1860s when the commuter trains expanded into the area. He also stated that it was his opinion that row houses, not wood-framed houses, were the predominate type of housing of Mantua.
- Mr. Shapiro described the modifications that he saw had happened to the property, and commented that these modifications needed to be considered when evaluating the properties for designation.
- Mr. Shapiro said that he did not believe that the properties at 3412 and 3414 Haverford Avenue were exemplary of Mantua's development.
- Mr. Mattioni asked Mr. Shapiro if he believed that the subject property was a particular exemplar of a specific architectural style.
 - Mr. Shapiro said though the property had some vaguely Greek Revival-style features, it was not a good exemplar of that style.
- Mr. Mattioni asked Mr. Shapiro if he agreed with the statement made on page 11 of the nomination that wood-frame houses were a common and familiar house type in West Philadelphia.
 - Mr. Shapiro responded that this statement was narrowly true, arguing that wood-frame houses did not define Mantua's housing type. He stated that the social and cultural heritage of Mantua did not crystalize until after the period of significance argued by the nominator. Mr. Shapiro argued that row homes were likely more exemplary of the neighborhood's working and middle-class culture than wood-frame houses.
- Mr. Mattioni asked Mr. Shapiro if the four frame dwellings in Laniganville shown in Figure 11 was typical of the early built environment of Mantua.
 - Mr. Shapiro responded that it was not, pointing out that Laniganville was a different neighborhood that developed differently from Mantua.
- Mr. Mattioni asked Mr. Shapiro if the images shown in figures 15 and 17 of the nomination were representative of the subject property.

- Mr. Shapiro responded that they were not. He said that he did not believe that the subject property related to the exemplars provided throughout the nomination.
- Mr. Shapiro commented that he did not agree with the nomination's claim that the subject property represented the first generation of the Mantua neighborhood. He argued that that the first generation of development in the area occurred before the period of significance but the most significant period of construction occurred afterwards.
- Mr. Mattioni asked Mr. Shapiro if the subject property was evocative of Mantua's economic and social history.
 - Mr. Shapiro said no, and that Mantua's economic and social history was better reflected in the two-story brick row houses of the neighborhood. He explained that he did not believe that the subject property represented anything larger about Mantua's history as the nomination tried to claim.
- Mr. Shapiro said that he did not believe that the subject property was exemplary of Mantua's cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage. He stated that he believed that the Committee on Historic Designation should recommend against designation of the property.
- Ms. Cooperman informed Mr. Mattioni that they would consider the testimony they just heard about 3412 Haverford Avenue as applicable to 3414 Haverford Avenue as well.
- George Poulin spoke on behalf of the University City Historical Society. He argued that these were some of the last remaining wood-frame houses in the area. Mr. Poulin said that despite some alterations, the overall massing, setbacks, and fenestration communicate that these houses are from another time.
- Mr. Poulin said that there were not currently any buildings in the neighborhood of Mantua that were listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. He questioned why this was the case, noting that nearby Powelton Village had many designated buildings.
- Mr. Beisert stated that he stood by his arguments in the nomination. He reminded the Committee on Historic Designation that the building was being nominated under Criterion for Designation J, and no argument was being made for its architectural style.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Debra McCarthy spoke in support of designation.
- Steven Peitzman spoke in support of designation.
- Paul Steinke of the Preservation Alliance spoke in support of designation.
- Mark Brack spoke in support of designation.
- Dana Fedeli spoke in support of designation.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The building at 3412 Haverford Avenue was constructed ca. 1850-1853.
- The house should not be named for the owner of the property at the time of construction, Julia A.A. Blodget Britton.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- Wood frame houses such as the subject property represent working-class Philadelphians, further contributing to its significance under Criterion for Designation J.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 3412 Haverford Avenue satisfies Criterion for Designation J, and that the name of the resource should be changed to “Frame Twin.”

ITEM: 3412 Haverford Ave					
MOTION: Designate, J; Resource name to be “Frame Twin”					
MOVED BY: Barucco					
SECONDED BY: Cohen					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Laverty	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Douglas Mooney	X				
Total	6				

ADDRESS: 3414 HAVERFORD AVE

Name of Resource: Frame Twin

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: LINA Holdings LLC

Nominator: University City Historical Society

Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt, megan.schmitt@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 3414 Haverford Avenue and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criterion for Designation J, in part because it is representative of “the historical heritage of the neighborhood’s initial period of development, as well as the economic and social history” of the community’s founders. The nomination also contends that “the subject property is representative of the early development of the Mantua neighborhood, as well as a once common house type that has largely vanished from the built environment of West Philadelphia.”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 3414 Haverford Avenue satisfies Criterion for Designation J. The staff, however, recommends against naming the resource for its associated developer, Julia A.A. Blodget Britton.

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 01:41:15

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Schmitt presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.

- Attorney Michael Mattioni and architectural historian Gideon Fink Shapiro represented the property owner.
- George Poulin and Oscar Beisert represented the nomination.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Mattioni and Mr. Shapiro's previous testimony regarding 3412 Haverford Avenue was applied to 3414 Haverford Avenue.
- Mr. Shapiro clarified that he did not have anything further to add to the discussion for this property. He reiterated that he was recommending against listing 3414 Haverford Avenue on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.
- Mr. Beisert explained the reason he named the subject properties after the developer.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The building at 3412 Haverford Avenue was constructed ca. 1850-1853.
- The house should not be named for the owner of the property at the time of construction, Julia A.A. Blodget Britton.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- Wood frame houses such as the subject property represent working-class Philadelphians, further contributing to its significance under Criterion for Designation J.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 3414 Haverford Avenue satisfies Criterion for Designation J, and that the name of the resource should be changed to "Frame Twin."

ITEM: 3414 Haverford Ave					
MOTION: Designate, J; Resource name to be "Frame Twin"					
MOVED BY: Barruco					
SECONDED BY: Milroy					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Laverty	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Douglas Mooney	X				
Total	6				

ITEM: 210-12 N 12th St.

MOTION: Continue and remand to next CHD meeting

MOVED BY: Lavery

SECONDED BY: Barucco

VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Douglas Mooney	X				
Total	6				

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee on Historic Designation adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Minutes of the Committee on Historic Designation are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the video recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

§14-1004. Designation.

(1) Criteria for Designation.

A building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for preservation if it:

- (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;
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant innovation;
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park, or other distinctive area that should be preserved according to a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- (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.

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: **3412 Haverford Avenue**

Postal code: **19104**

Councilmanic District: **3rd**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Julia A. A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin**

Current/Common Name: **3412 Haverford Avenue**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Residence

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1850 to 1853**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1850 to 1853**

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

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

Original owner: **Julia Ann Allen Blodget Britton**

Other significant persons: **John Britton, Jr.**

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR: UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**DATE: 31 DECEMBER 2019**Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian**Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**UCHS Representative: **George Poulin, UCHS President**Street Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320**Telephone: **717.602.5002**City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.**PHC USE ONLY**Date of Receipt: December 31, 2019☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-IncompleteDate: January 28, 2020Date of Notice Issuance: January 29, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Mary E. DrummondAddress: 3412 Haverford AvenueCity: PhiladelphiaState: PAPostal Code: 19104

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated☐ Rejected

3/12/18

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

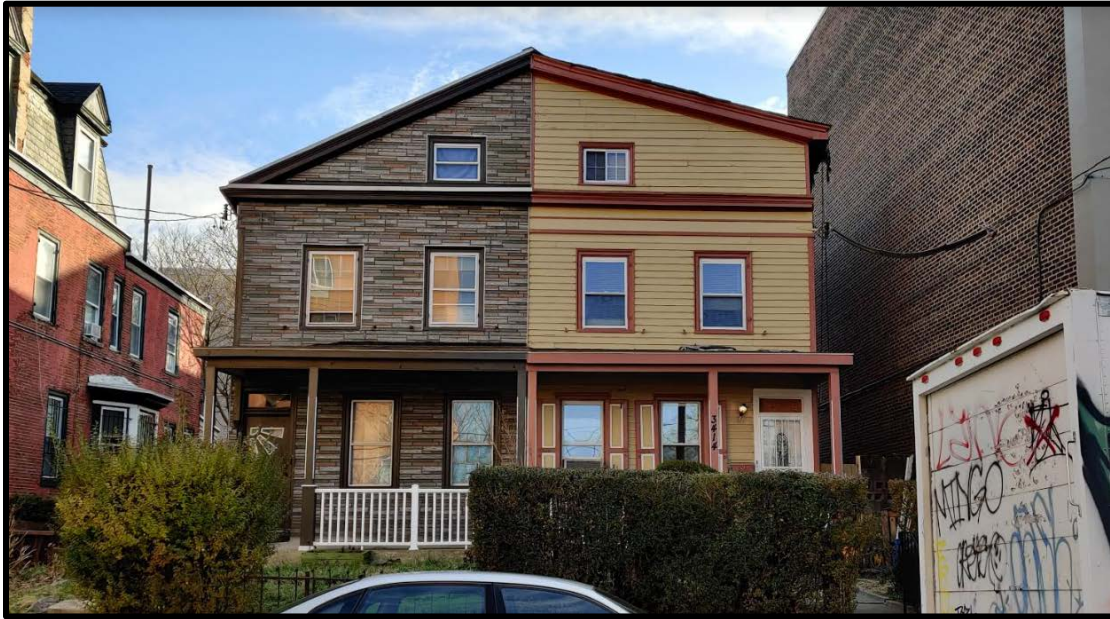


Figure 1. The primary (north) elevation of the subject property at 3412 & 3414 Haverford Avenue Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

THE JULIA A.A. BLODGET BRITTON FRAME TWIN

—
ERECTED 1850 TO 1853
—

**3412 & 3414 HAVERFORD AVENUE
MANTUA
WEST PHILADELPHIA
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19104**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

3412 Haverford Avenue

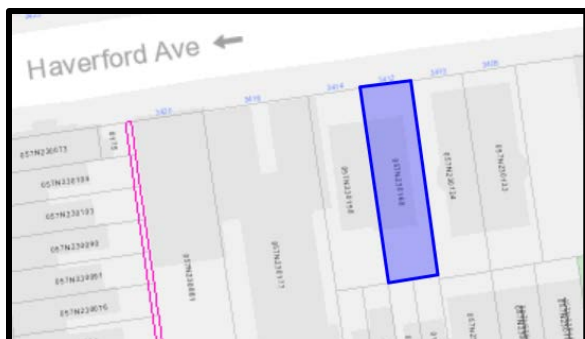


Figure 2. The boundary of 3412 Haverford Avenue is articulated in blue. Source: Philadelphia Water.

All that Certain Lot or Piece of Ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, Beginning at a point on the South side of Haverford Avenue at the distance of 150 feet westward from the west side of North Thirty-Fourth Street, Containing in front or breadth on the said Haverford Avenue 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth southward between lines at right angles 95 feet. Being 3412 Haverford Avenue
Map Registry No. 057N23-0168 OPA Account No. 242034500

3414 Haverford Avenue

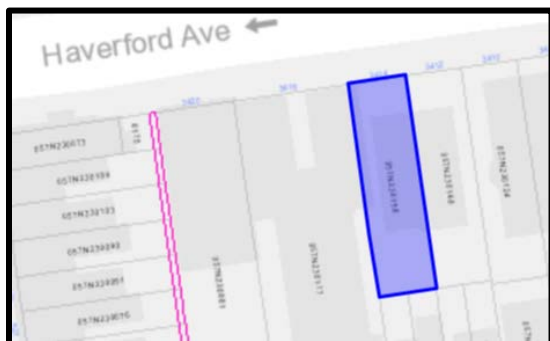


Figure 3. The boundary of 3414 Haverford Avenue is articulated in blue. Source: Philadelphia Water.

All that Certain Lot or Piece of Ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, Situate on the South side of Haverford Avenue at the distance of 175 feet westward from the west side of North Thirty-Fourth Street, Containing in front or breadth on the said Haverford Avenue 25 feet and extending of that width in length or depth southward between lines at right angles 94 feet 5 inches. Being 3414 Haverford Avenue
Map Registry No. 057N23-0158 OPA Account No. 242034600



Figure 4. Left: Looking south at the subject property's primary (northeast), and northwest elevations.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The two and one-half story twin dwelling at 3412-14 Haverford Avenue is a rare, surviving Greek Revival residence from the antebellum period of the nineteenth century. The wood frame building is situated in West Philadelphia's Mantua neighborhood. It represents one of the former Blockley Township's last remaining vernacular and working-class housing types from a period encompassing the neighborhood's transformation from farmland to middle class suburban enclave.

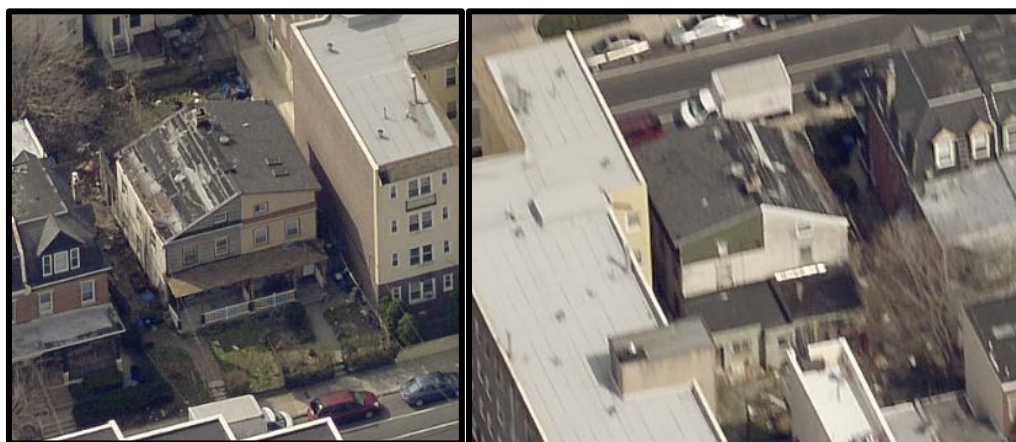


Figure 5. Left: Looking south at the primary (north) elevation of the subject property. Figure 6. Right: Looking north at the rear (south) elevation of the subject property. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.

The building contains several surviving details that are particular to the Greek Revival style of residential architect typical of its circa 1850 construction era. There is a heavy entablature at the cornice line; a low-pitched roof with a front-facing pediment; small chimneys; simple moldings; 6/6 double-hung windows; and off-center entrances.

The building is recessed in its lot at the south side of Haverford Avenue by several feet. Both residences have lawn and shrubs supported by low retaining walls at the sidewalk right-of-way, with concrete steps and walkways leading to identical front porches that span the width of the building. A hairpin iron fence divides the two front yards. Both houses have entry doors at the outer edges of the north, primary elevation, aligned with the sidewalks and porch railing openings.



Figure 1 repeated. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

3412 Haverford Avenue

The residence at the east side of the building more noticeably reflects many of the alterations that have taken place at the building. A low, concrete retaining wall supports the lawn and is capped by a low, wrought iron fence. Four deteriorated concrete steps lead to a brick walkway that leads to the porch.

The north elevation is covered in an asphalt sheet siding made to resemble an ashlar pattern of narrow masonry units. At the porch, there is one step up to a concrete slab. Wood piers are capped by slender columns whose only detailing is slight chamfering at each corner; the columns have no capitals. The hip roof has a low slope, rests on a simple, shallow entablature, and is devoid of detailing. The railing contains simple, un-turned spindles. The entire porch construction is painted a dark brown with contrasting white at the chamfers and railings. Despite material changes at the walls, the wood trim at the door and window openings is intact.

At the ground level there is a single-leaf door of recent vintage and clear, rectangular transom within trim surround at the furthest east with two double-hung 6/6 windows within trim to the

*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, November 2019
The Julia A.A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin, 3412 & 3414 Haverford Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

west of the door; each window has exterior storms installed. The solid door has a sunburst pattern in contrasting trim with glazing. At the second level there are two double-hung 6/6 windows within trim centered within the elevation, not aligned with the openings below and covered by storm windows. There is a heavy cornice line painted in dark brown to match all other trim above which is a pitched roof. This roofline does not hang over the heavy cornice trim indicating that it is likely modified, especially as it contrasts greatly with the lower pitch of the roof at 3414 that stops a couple of feet above the horizontal cornice line which runs across the entire north elevation of the building at the same level. Within the gable space of the third level, there is a small, square window opening with a non-historic, double-hung 1/1 window; this opening is aligned with the westernmost window at the second level.

The main volume of the east elevation is covered in a light pink, asphalt shingle siding that is showing severe moisture damage. There is a one-story lean-to at the rear of the building. At this east elevation, there are two window openings at the ground level within the main volume and three window openings at the second level. All windows have exterior storms installed. The eave of the roofline has deteriorated and is largely missing. The roof has sustained severe damage rendering it barely functional. There is a parged chimney of modest height at the roof ridge toward the rear of the building with a galvanized vent pipe extending above; presumably, this lone chimney's location at the party wall indicates that it serves both residences.

The rear or south elevation was not accessible, however, according to satellite mapping, there is a one-story lean-to at the rear which spans the width of the residence.



Figure 7. Left: the primary (north) elevation of 3412 Haverford Avenue. Figure 8. Middle: The primary (north) elevation of both 3412 and 3414 Haverford Avenue. Figure 9. Right: The primary (north) elevation of 3414 Haverford Avenue. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

3414 Haverford Avenue

The residence at the west side of the building retains most of the building's classical Greek Revival details, including horizontal clapboard siding at all three levels, shutters at the ground level windows, and an original roofline.

At the sidewalk right-of-way, two courses of ashlar-cut schist capped by a schist slab coping comprise a retaining wall; shrubs matching the height of the front porch's railing beyond provide a dense screen at the lawn. Three concrete steps bound on either side by twentieth century iron handrails leads to a concrete path toward the front porch. The porch construction is a mirror image of that of 3412 with simple but chamfered wood columns atop wood piers, open railings and a low sloped roof with a simple entablature. The two window openings at the ground level have wood shutters and non-historic 1/1 windows although the wood trim is exposed as at 3412. There is a window unit within the easternmost window. The door and transom are intact and a contemporary storm door has been installed. Next to the door is a modern light fixture above a mailbox.

The second level contains two window openings, each with non-historic 1/1 windows and wood trim. There is a window unit within the westernmost window. Above the second level windows is a simply expressed entablature capped by a heavy cornice that extends the width of the building. The third level contains a single, square window that is aligned with the easternmost window at the second level. The roofline at 3414, unlike that at 3412, has a very low pitch since the walls of the lower floors extend well above the cornice line, allowing for windows at the third level of the side elevation, unlike at 3412.

The west elevation was difficult to view but appears to have the same general appearance as the east elevation of 3412 with the window openings at the first and second levels mirroring those at the other residence. The walls are covered in non-historic siding. The roof seems to be covered in dark, asphalt shingles.

The rear or south elevation of the house was inaccessible but according to satellite mapping, there is a one-story lean-to that spans the width of the house.

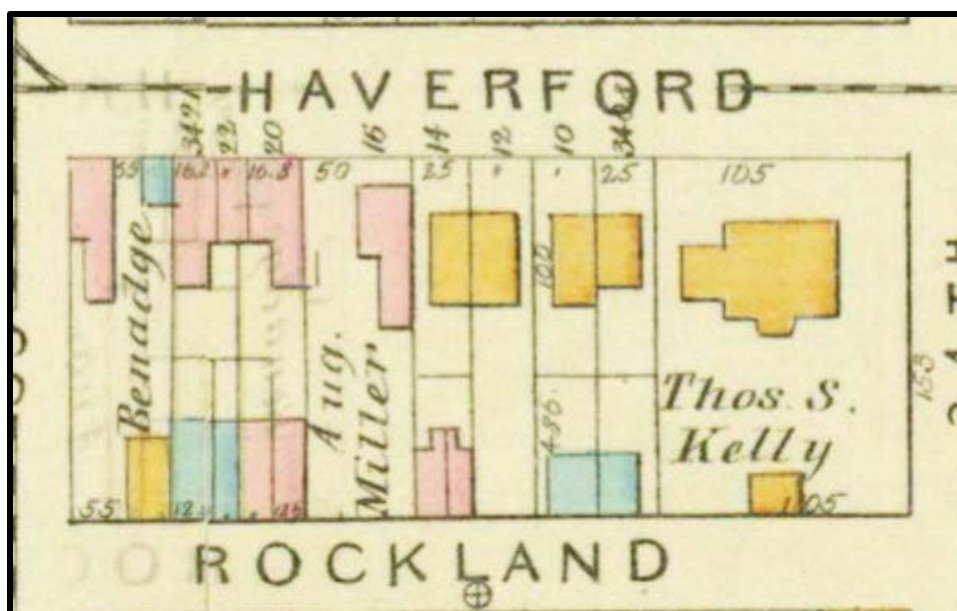


Figure 10. 1878 Philadelphia Atlas. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Julia A. A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin at 3412 and 3414 Haverford Avenue comprise 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 1850 to 1853 when the subject property was built by Julia Ann Allen Blodget Britton.¹

¹ The 1850 deed describes the property as an unimproved lot 50 feet wide and the 1853 deed describes the same property having “two Messuages or tenements thereon erected.” Sources: Deed: Stephen R. Bowen, of the Borough of West Philadelphia, gentleman, and Harriett E., his wife, to Julia Ann Britton, of the same place, gentlewoman, for \$226, 25 October 1850, PDB T.H., No. 115, p. 326; and Deed: Julia A. Britton, of the District of West Philadelphia, widow, to Mary Y. Britton, of the same, single woman, for \$3,200, 3 March 1853, PDB T.H., No. 39, p. 472, CAP.



Figure 11. Four frame dwellings at “Laniganville, near Thirty-Eighth and Poplar Streets” just before demolition c1903 (*West Philadelphia Illustrated* [1903]). This figure shows other examples of frame dwellings that once characterized the early built environment of West Philadelphia.

CRITERION J

Representative of both 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 this early community, the Julia A. A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin is one of the few surviving wooden dwellings dating to the mid-nineteenth century in West Philadelphia. This 169-year old duo speaks to the foundational period of Mantua, as it evolved from a sparse settlement to an urban neighborhood that would be densely constructed, reflecting the broader development patterns of many early towns and villages in Philadelphia County to be part of the consolidated metropolis in 1854. Despite the common misnomer that Philadelphia was a city that mandated masonry construction, the wooden house was a dominant building type in the Quaker City from the time of its settlement until brick and stone became absolute in the late-nineteenth century. While few traces of these early, first period buildings survive, West Philadelphia was no exception with frame dwellings as a part of the first phase of its suburban or village-era development. In turn, the subject property is representative of the early development of the Mantua neighborhood, as well as a once common house type that has largely vanished from the built environment of West Philadelphia.

The prevalence of wooden houses in Philadelphia is shaped by necessity and ease of access to building materials in the foundational period; cultural, economic and social factors throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and, finally, diminished by regulations related to a growing concern for fire prevention, as well as property values, and the eventual prominence of larger buildings and masonry construction. One of the first official regulations to prohibit the

construction of new wooden houses occurred in 1796, barring these structures in the old river wards of Philadelphia proper. This coupled with certain economic factors, such as the development of both the Delaware River and the Schuylkill River waterfronts and the growth of Philadelphia as an industrial powerhouse, led to the disappearance of wooden houses in Old City and Society Hill. At that time, the construction of frame dwellings was commonly practiced in other parts of the city, with Frankford, Kensington, Northern Liberties, and South and West Philadelphia being areas where this building and construction type prevailed with varying degrees of potency.

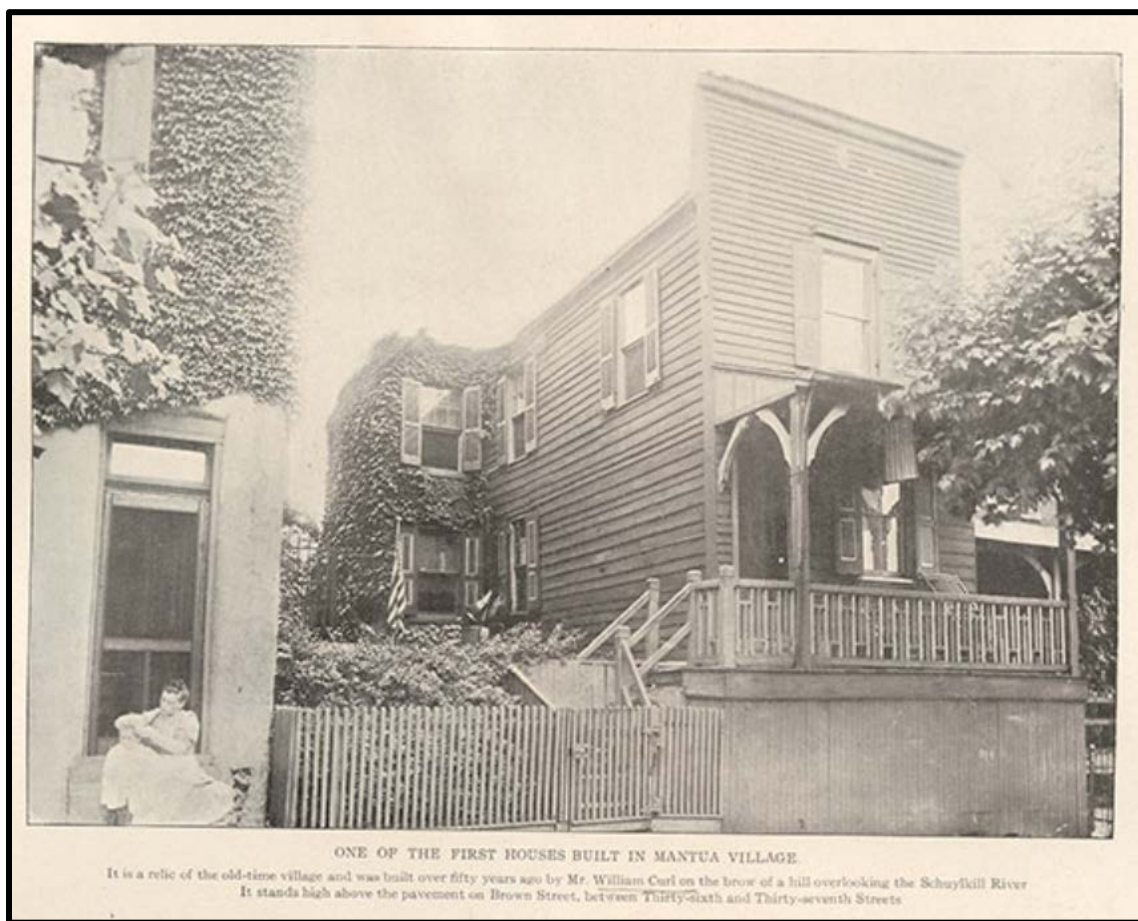


Figure 12. The William Curl House, once located in Mantua, was in 1903 referred to as “one of the first houses built in Mantua Village.” (*West Philadelphia Illustrated* [1903]).

“Mantua Village,” as it was known, was no exception. Between 1809 and 1859, Mantua’s sparse, village-like built environment largely consisted of detached and semi-detached brick and frame dwellings for working to middle class people.² These buildings were likely the result of nascent development activity that began in the early nineteenth century and continued through the 1850s at a graduated pace. The village was created around 1809 when Judge Richard Peters (1744-1828) subdivided his estate, located on the north side of Haverford Avenue, to sell building lots,

² Smedley, Samuel L. *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (1862).; and Scott, J.B. *Atlas of the 24th and 27th Wards, West Philadelphia* (1878).

boasting the “advantages required for business or retirement.”³ Peter’s neighbor to the south, John Britton, Jr. (1770-1838), a local builder and developer, did the same thing with his family property starting in 1812 with advertising for building lots in “Mantua Village,” describing the local transportation amenities, as well as that “choice lots” were “for sale or to let on ground rent” (Figure 14).⁴ The ground rent system offered working to middle class Philadelphians of some means the chance to own a home or develop a property without purchasing a lot.⁵ The sale of Britton’s lots was slow and didn’t really take off until after Britton’s death. His widow Julia Anne Allen Blodget Britton (1798-1877) took up the sales in 1848 when she published a plan of “Mantua, West Philadelphia” (Figure 13). The daughter of Samuel Blodget and Rebecca Smith, and the granddaughter of William Smith (1727-1803), the former Mrs. John Britton, Jr. was not new to real estate development.⁶ The plan illustrated building lots spanning approximately ten blocks with Haverford Street (now Haverford Avenue) at the north, Schuylkill Street (now the line of the railroad right-of-way) at the east; Bridge Street (now Spring Garden Street) at the south; and the Philadelphia & Lancaster Turnpike at the west (now Lancaster Avenue). The plan indicates that only about sixteen houses stood in that range. All of these houses were attached or semi-detached, like the subject property.⁷ During the first and second quarters of the nineteenth century, rows of dwellings were also built sporadically throughout the neighborhood, but the age the masonry rowhouse blocks and the primary period of urban development was not to take hold until after the establishment of the Hestonville, Mantua and Fairmount Passenger Railroad Company in 1859.⁸ In fact, just over a decade after Britton’s 1848 Plan, the 1862 Philadelphia Atlas shows a sparsely developed “Mantua Village” just as public transit became a viable option for the neighborhood.⁹ By 1878, nearly twenty years after the railway was installed, the neighborhood was more densely developed, and, as a result, much of the neighborhood’s wooden housing stock had already been replaced, as there were only about thirty-one wooden houses in Mantua.¹⁰

³ “Mantua Village,” *Poulson’s Daily American Advertiser*, 3 October 1809.

⁴ Advertisement for “The Plan of Mantua” by John Britton, Jr., *Aurora General Advertiser*, 22 April 1812. Britton inherited this property which stretched from roughly the present-day railroad lines to Lancaster Avenue along the south side of Haverford Avenue. His father acquire the property in 1777 (Deed: John Flower, by his attorney Daniel Williams, Cornelius Clarkson and Mary, his wife, and Thomas Assheton and Hannah, his wife, to John Britton, 17 April 1777, Philadelphia Deed Book [hereafter PDB] E.F., No. 7, p. 724, City Archives of Philadelphia [hereafter CAP]).

⁵ Beisert, Oscar. “Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Sloan House: Second Associate Presbyterian Church Court, 1527 N. Front Street, Philadelphia.” (Philadelphia: 2016), 31-32. This nomination provides a brief historic context on the Ground Rent Estate in Philadelphia.

⁶ Beisert, Oscar and Duffin, J.M. “Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Greenville: 3514-3530 Lancaster Avenue, West Philadelphia, Philadelphia.” (Philadelphia: 2016). This nomination provides a detailed history of the Blodget and the Smith families, as well as additional information on the early development of West Philadelphia.

⁷ Britton, John, Jr. “Mantua, West Philadelphia.” (West Philadelphia: 1848), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁸ Jackie, Robert Carl. “Philadelphia Across the Schuylkill: Work, Transportation, and Residence in West Philadelphia, 1860-1910.” PhD diss., Temple University, 1985, 45.

⁹ Smedley, Samuel L. *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (1862).

¹⁰ Scott, J.B. *Atlas of the 24th and 27th Wards, West Philadelphia* (1878). The extant wooden houses in 1878 are enumerated below by plate: Plate I: 26; Plate F: 20; Plate G: 10; Plate K: 44; Plate D: 21; Plate C: 0; Plate A: 5; and Plate B: 22.



Figure 13. Britton, Julia A. Plan of “Mantua, West Philadelphia.” (Philadelphia: 1848). Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Figure 14. Julia Ann Allen Blodget Britton. Source: Amber Hathaway by descent from Julia Ann Allen Blodget Britton.

By the early twentieth century, the face of West Philadelphia had changed so dramatically that there were even fewer early buildings surviving at that time. A history of West Philadelphia, as well documented by local historians, chronicled the disappearing “ancient houses” and landmarks that were being replaced by dense residential development. In 1906, *West Philadelphia Illustrated* published a photograph of “One of the First Houses Built in Mantua Village” (Figure 12), which was a small detached or semi-detached frame dwelling, perhaps slightly smaller, but similar in age to the subject property.¹¹ It appears that this building, known as the home of William Curl, no longer stands in the urban landscape. Other wooden buildings of the area are shown in Figure 11. Of the thirty-one frame dwellings that survived in “Mantua Village” in 1878, only three appear to survive to-date, two of which include the subject property. Being one of the few extant wooden houses from the period, the Julia A. A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin is representative of a common and familiar house type in West Philadelphia. This former concentration of wooden dwellings was built by the earliest individuals and developers in

¹¹ Vierra, M. Lafitte, *West Philadelphia Illustrated: Early History of West Philadelphia and Its Environs, Its People and Its Historical Points* (Philadelphia: Avil Printing Co., 1903).

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Mantua and the larger context of West Philadelphia, representing the cultural, economic, and social heritage of the city's working and middle classes in the foundational period of this part of the city. Additionally, the subject property was developed between 1850 and 1853 by Julia Ann Allen Blodget Britton (Figure 14), widow of John Britton, Jr., providing an additional relationship to the foundational period of Mantua. Roughly 169 years old, the Julia A. A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin is one of the rare surviving buildings, representing the first generation of development in the neighborhood, and is, thereby, evocative of its economic and social history of its people, as well as a building tradition that adheres to a typology of frame buildings in Mantua, and the larger built environment of West Philadelphia.



Figure 15. Advertisement for “The Plan of Mantua” by John Britton, Jr., published in the *Aurora General Advertiser* on 22 April 1812.

Historic Context: The Establishment and Development of Mantua in West Philadelphia

Referred to historically as “Mantua Village” and also “Mantuaville,” the development of the Mantua neighborhood appears to begin in about 1809 when Judge Richard Peters, owner and resident of Belmont Mansion in today’s Fairmount Park, drafted a plan for the area (Figure 16).¹² As previously stated, Judge Peters’ property was located on the north side of Haverford Avenue.¹³ Haverford Road (now Haverford Avenue) was to be a principal street, as referenced in

¹² “Mantua Village,” *Poulson’s Daily American Advertiser*, 3 October 1809; Leon S. Rosenthal, *A History of Philadelphia’s University City* (Philadelphia: West Philadelphia Corporation, 1963), p. 24.

¹³ “Mantua Village,” *Poulson’s Daily American Advertiser*, 3 October 1809.

the plans, and the majority of the east-west streets were planned, if not actually opened.¹⁴ Bridge Street (known today as Spring Garden Street) was opened in 1812, spurring the first few development proposals.¹⁵ Advertisements published in the *Aurora General Advertiser* in 1812 were commissioned by John Britton, Jr. for “The Plan of Mantua Village” (Figure 13). As previously mentioned, south of Haverford Road, Britton was selling his familial legacy.¹⁶ Being one of the first to realize this plan in the long run, Britton lived in a large house on the southside of Haverford Road in the newly established village, among the lots he was marketing for residential development.¹⁷



Figure 16. The “Plan of the Proposed New Borough of Mantua” in West Philadelphia. Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁴ Rosenthal, *A History of Philadelphia's University City*, p. 26.

¹⁵ Rosenthal, *A History of Philadelphia's University City*, p. 26.

¹⁶ Advertisement for “The Plan of Mantua” by John Britton, Jr., *Aurora General Advertiser*, 22 April 1812. Britton inherited this property which stretched from roughly the present-day railroad lines to Lancaster Avenue along the south side of Haverford Avenue. His father acquire the property in 1777 (Deed: John Flower, by his attorney Daniel Williams, Cornelius Clarkson and Mary, his wife, and Thomas Assheton and Hannah, his wife, to John Britton, 17 April 1777, Philadelphia Deed Book [hereafter PDB] E.F., No. 7, p. 724, City Archives of Philadelphia [hereafter CAP]).

¹⁷ Rosenthal, *A History of Philadelphia's University City*, p. 26.

Despite these early plans and some successful projects, development of Mantua progressed slowly. In fact, even as late as 1843, Charles Ellet Jr.'s map of Philadelphia County, depicts a sparsely populated neighborhood with Bridge Street as its southern boundary, the Schuylkill River to the north and east and the "Falls of Schuylkill River Road" (now the site of the railroad right-of-way) running roughly parallel to and to the west of North 41st Street as its western edge.¹⁸ That same map shows "Haverford Street" (now Haverford Avenue) as the northernmost road in Mantua, with the future site of the subject property located near the intersection of Fifth and Haverford Streets. Based on advertisements from the first half of the nineteenth century, the neighborhood was composed of dwellings and other buildings constructed of brick, stone, and wood, and were of varying size and scale, much like any area that was established as a village near a large city. Four years later J.C. Sidney's survey would show the extension of Mantua's grid westward.¹⁹

As previously stated, John Britton, Jr.'s plan, "Mantua, West Philadelphia" (Figure 13) was improved upon by his widow, Julia Ann Allen Blodget Britton in 1848, which further detailed building lots. This plan shows a ten-block range that contained sixteen dwellings. All of these houses were attached or semi-detached, like the subject property.²⁰ Julia developed Lot No. 44, the subject property, between 1850 and 1853, which is shown on the plan that had been published just a few years earlier.²¹ Subdividing the parcel into two building lots, the twin was built in the restrained Greek Revival style, which was popular during the period and not unknown in Mantua (Figure 17).



Figure 17. The "Residence of R. Glendenning, Sr., Esqr." in Mantua. Source: This drawing was completed by D.J. Kennedy on April 4, 1864, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Less commonly employed in Philadelphia at-large,

¹⁸ "A Map of the County of Philadelphia from Actual Survey," 1843. Charles Ellet Jr.

¹⁹ "Map of the Circuit of 10 Miles Around Philadelphia." J.C. Sidney, Surveyor, Robert P. Smith, publisher. 1847.

²⁰ Britton, Julia A. "Mantua, West Philadelphia." (West Philadelphia: 1848), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²¹ Deed: Stephen R. Bowen, of the Borough of West Philadelphia, gentleman, and Harriett E., his wife, to Julia Ann Britton, of the same place, gentlewoman, for \$226, 25 October 1850, PDB T.H., No. 115, p. 326; Deed: Julia A. Britton, of the District of West Philadelphia, widow, to Mary Y. Britton, of the same, single woman, for \$3,200, 3 March 1853, PDB T.H., No. 39, p. 472, CAP. The 1850 deed describes the property as an unimproved lot 50 feet wide and the 1853 deed describes the same property having "two Messuages or tenements thereon erected."

the fully articulated gable-front form was clearly not unknown in Mantua with its understated Greek Revival details. This house is similar in form to the subject property.

In 1850, the *Public Ledger* reported that the state legislature had consolidated Mantuaville, Hamiltonville, Greenville and Westminster into the Borough of West Philadelphia, itself created only six years earlier out of Blockley Township.²² The newly formed West Philadelphia was geographically, if not demographically, larger than the City of Philadelphia, Northern Liberties, and Spring Garden combined with a population of over eleven thousand people, but its development still lagged greatly behind its eastern neighbors.²³ By the Act of Consolidation of 1854, the boundaries of Mantua were further delineated, being the area bound by the northwest corner of the Market Street Bridge, west to Lancaster Avenue, thence along Lancaster Avenue to Westminster Avenue, and thence northerly to the Schuylkill River.²⁴ Mantua was beginning to fill in its boundaries - an article in an 1850 edition of the *Public Ledger* mentioned development as far north as Westminster Street as far west as Logan Street (now 41st Street), as well as the construction of “[a] number of neat small cottages ... built on the Haverford Road.”²⁵ The development project that created subject property is representative of the aforementioned cottages. Despite all of the plans that both created and portended “Mantua Village,” it wasn’t until the establishment of the Hestonville, Mantua and Fairmount Passenger Railroad Company in 1859 that development and construction truly boomed in the neighborhood. This led to the primary period of urban development between 1860 and 1880, which is described in detail in Robert Carl Jackie’s Thesis: *Philadelphia Across the Schuylkill: Work, Transportation, and Residence in West Philadelphia, 1860-1910*.²⁶ This further verifies that the subject property dates to the earlier history of the neighborhood, when it was known as “Mantua Village.”

²² “A Large and Improving Borough,” *Public Ledger*, September 2, 1850.

²³ “A Large and Improving Borough,” *Public Ledger*, September 2, 1850; Rosenthal, *A History of Philadelphia’s University City*, p. 6

²⁴ Rosenthal, *A History of Philadelphia’s University City*, p. 23

²⁵ “A Large and Improving Borough,” *Public Ledger*, September 2, 1850.

²⁶ Jackie, Robert Carl. “Philadelphia Across the Schuylkill: Work, Transportation, and Residence in West Philadelphia, 1860-1910.” PhD diss., Temple University, 1985, 45.

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This nomination is being sponsored by the University City Historical Society. The document was authored by Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist; J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian; and Amy Lambert, Architectural Historian and Architect for the Keeping Society of Philadelphia.

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Seen between like wooden houses, the Georgian doorway in the lithograph is what remains of this like-style dwelling. In the background on right is a wooden house with a gambrel roof. This is on a whole a court of wooden houses depicted in *The little homeless one or "no one to kiss me good night."* Lithograph by P.S. Duval, Philadelphia, 1867. Source: the Library Company of Philadelphia.

APPENDIX A

The following historic context provides additional information on the wooden house in Philadelphia, as well as Northern Liberties and Fishtown. This narrative was taken from the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Joseph Paxson Frame Dwelling & Store, c. 1827-1839, 1250 E. Palmer Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which was listed in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places based on this and additional material in 2018.²⁷ Additional information on frame dwellings may also be gleaned from the following nominations: Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Jacob Deal Half-Gambrel Frame House (c1833), 228 E. Richmond Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Jacob Deal Frame Dwelling, 227 E. Allen Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.²⁸ Both of

²⁷ Beisert, Oscar. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Joseph Paxson Frame Dwelling & Store, c. 1827-1839, 1250 E. Palmer Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia: 2017). Accessed 17 December 2019. < <http://keepingphiladelphia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/1250-E-Palmer-nomination.pdf> >

²⁸ Beisert, Oscar. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Jacob Deal Half-Gambrel Frame House (c1833), 228 E. Richmond Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia: 2016). Accessed 17 December 2019. < http://keepingphiladelphia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/228_Richmond_St_7-25-16.pdf >; and Beisert, Oscar. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Jacob Deal Frame House (c1833), 227 E. Allen Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia: 2016). Accessed 17 December 2019. < http://keepingphiladelphia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/227_E_Allen_St_7-25-16-1.pdf >

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these nominations were determined eligible for listing by the Committee on Historic Designation and the Philadelphia Historical Commission, although the two buildings were not designated for various reasons.



Old wooden houses, extending southwardly from the corner of Marble Street, on the west side of Tenth Street, to Miss Sally Keene's, late Maj. Lennock's property and residence, built by "Col." Peter L. Berry. N.W. corner of Chestnut and Tenth streets. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia. Note: These buildings are being used for both store and dwelling, given the shopfront façade.

The Frame Dwelling in Philadelphia, the Northern Liberties and Kensington

When William Penn and the Quakers arrived at Philadelphia in 1683, they encountered a small community of Swedes, which largely consisted of subsistence farmers living in log hewn and timber frame houses. Beyond their own cave dwellings, the first houses built by Quakers likely included temporary wooden structures. And while brick soon became the standard in Philadelphia, frame dwellings, dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were common in the city.

In 1749, Swedish Naturalist Peter Kalm noted the following frame dwelling “preserved” in the Philadelphia landscape, which represented the early European settlement of the area:

"A wretched old wooden building is preserved, on a hill near the [Delaware] river, located a little north of Wicaco . . . on purpose as a memorial to the poor condition

of the place before the town was built on it. It belonged formerly to one of the Svensons. . . ."²⁹



Wooden House at the Corner of 12th and Spruce. Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The Great Fire of London was all too familiar to William Penn and, as a result, there was an immediate effort to establish brickmaking in Philadelphia. The natural resources of the region led to the use of brick and stone in building construction and this is demonstrated in the extant historic built environment of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, frame dwellings were both cheap and quick to construct, which made them appealing options to immigrants and landlords. These dwelling types were built in all parts of the city through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and even later.

According to James Mease, there were roughly 6,351 brick houses to 2,523 wooden ones in 1811—a ratio of three to one.³⁰ Interestingly, the general claim, as noted by Historian Carole Shammas, is that houses were constructed at “an average of 228 per year between 1760 and 1800,” which had created the 1811 statistic.³¹ Close inspection of early images and insurance surveys provides insight as to the physical appearance of these buildings. Many of these houses were entirely without pretense or style and others took on the Georgian antecedents of their

²⁹ John Fanning Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in Olden Time*

³⁰ Margaret B. Tinkcom, “Southwark, a River Community: Its Shape and Substance,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 114 (1970), 327–342.

³¹ Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Space in the New American Republic* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2008), 25–26.

brick, stone, and wooden primates across the Atlantic in England. North and south of the old municipal lines, the prevalence of the frame dwelling was greater and the forms and styles of Philadelphia's wooden houses developed into its own vernacular language.

Many of these were built of wood long after better-off Philadelphians' houses were routinely built of brick. Older-type structures that combined artisans' workshop and living quarters remained scattered throughout the city, but were particularly common near the waterfront.³²

Perhaps the most compressive and representative ensemble of frame dwellings survives in Kensington. While some extant houses date to the late eighteenth century, most were built in the first half of the nineteenth century.



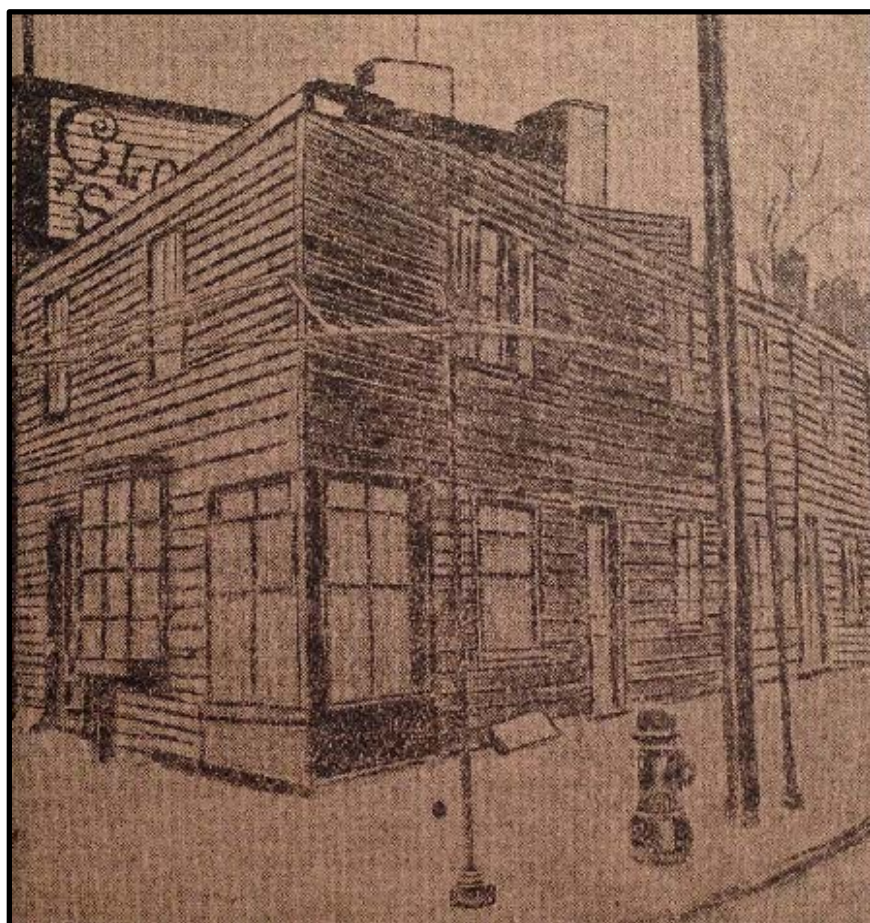
Left: Early Log Dwelling—"One of the oldest houses in Phila," Warren Street above Beach Street, Kensington. Right: Early Wooden Dwelling, which stood at the southwest corner of Belgrade Street and Montgomery Avenue on the grounds of the Palmer Cemetery. Source: Jane Campbell Collection, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Note: the building on left is being used as a store and dwelling, like the subject building.

Early high style examples of architecture in Kensington appear to be limited to a few important Georgian-inspired dwellings owned by elite Philadelphians, as well as some successful shipwrights along the Delaware River. The Fairman Mansion is the most famous building of the area and represents its agrarian roots. Other houses emerged in brick—the Jehu Eyre House was present near the Fairman Mansion by 1770, but was an urban style building, fronting on Beach Street. The oldest known brick house in Kensington today, the Frederick J. Rapp house was built in 1786–1787 in the 1000 Block of Frankford Avenue. These three brick dwellings tell a representative story of early Kensington, but they do not represent what historically the primary building type in the area.

The progression or "progress" of wooden houses does not appear to be as obvious in terms of architectural style. Although, there were no doubt more impressive and stylized frame dwellings in the area that have long since been lost to memory. Local lore tells us that the oldest of the vernacular wooden houses to survive into the nineteenth century was the tiny log hewn dwelling

³² Upton, *Another City: Urban Life*, 25.

in the 1500 or 1600 Block of Richmond Street—now the site of an I-95 on ramp. Shown above, the captivating, but staunch old lady sold ice, no doubt being very good with a pick, living in “the oldest house in Philadelphia,” which was a nickname given to many ancient-appearing dwellings in the city. Later covered in lapped siding, other houses of this scale were known in Kensington, including one shown above in Belgrade Street. The Belgrade Street house features a Georgian style dormer, conforming to the taste of the time in a modest format, while the ice lady’s home has absolutely no pretense. These dwellings represent what was likely the oldest house type in the area—a primary feature being that the house was one-story.



“Old Penn Homestead Will Be Destroyed,” an unusual row of wooden tenements is shown, which was interestingly purported to be “The Penn Homestead,” particularly of Richard and Mary Masters Penn. This wooden “Penn” house was said to date to about 1775 but more likely after 1812 and was located at 951 Frankford Avenue. Just who lived there originally or the precise age of the building is not known, but buildings of this material were certainly more commonly found to be present in the early built environment of Kensington.³³ Source: Miss Jane Campbell and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Note: like the subject building, the frame, corner building had been used as a store and dwelling.

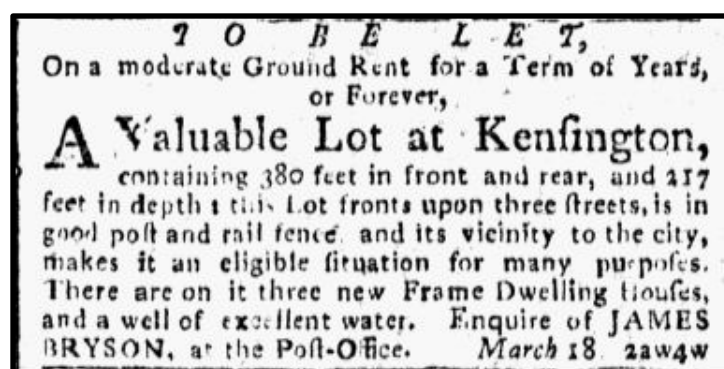
The development of Kensington progressed slowly throughout the eighteenth century with the construction of frame dwellings being the most common house form. Shipwrights were in the area along the Delaware River prior to the Revolution. Shipbuilders often lived in wooden houses near the shipyard. And, naturally, all of the shipyards were associated with water lots

³³ “Old Penn Homestead Will Be Destroyed,” 1901, Scrapbook Collection of Jane Campbell, HSP.

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with Richmond Street addresses. Germans arrived in America in the eighteenth century, many of which were from the Rhine Palatinate and it was primarily a group of these immigrants who became the fishermen of Fishtown. Germans knew frame dwellings from the old country and fishermen seem to have occupied these dwellings in Kensington, along with all manner of maritime peoples.

According to James Robinson and John A. Paxton's survey of 1810, Kensington's built environment consisted of about 615 houses. There were roughly 431 frame dwellings and 184 brick ones. This means that in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the housing stock in Kensington was 70 percent wood. By this time Kensington was distinguished as its own section of the larger Northern Liberties, but earlier the number of dwellings are more difficult to ascertain due to the lack of distinction. The same survey shows that Northern Liberties possessed a total of 2,998 dwellings, almost half of which were frame. Timber frame construction was used for other building types in Kensington as well. In 1810, there were nine storehouses in the area, eight of which were frame. With a mere ten manufacturing buildings, it is interesting to note that more of these were masonry—a ratio of five to five. Public buildings were wooden as well. In Northern Liberties nine out of nineteen were frame, while in Kensington it was three wooden to one brick. Ninety-four percent of the stables and workshops in both Northern Liberties and Kensington were frame, but that was more common in this building type, as shown in the Philadelphia statistic of 66 percent.³⁴ Interestingly, this 1810 analysis of the buildings in Philadelphia, Northern Liberties, Penn Township, Kensington, Southwark, and Moyamensing Township combined to show that wooden buildings made up forty-eight percent.



Advertisement for “A Valuable Lot at Kensington” which includes “free new Frame Dwelling Houses.” Published on April 3, 1789 in the *Pennsylvania Packet*. Source: Proquest Historical Newspapers.

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling is a side gable (single pitch), double pile vernacular Georgian style timber frame store and dwelling with dormers. The form, scale, style, and dual historic function make it a rare surviving building type in Philadelphia. This was one of five houses built by Joseph Paxson, a house carpenter, in the immediate vicinity of E. Palmer and Thompson Streets between 1818 and 1839 that were to remain in his family after the partition of his estate in 1857.

³⁴ James A. Paxton, *The stranger's guide: an alphabetical list of all the wards, streets, roads, lanes, alleys, avenues, courts, wharves, ship yards, public buildings, &c. in the city and suburbs of Philadelphia, with references for finding their situations on an alphabetical plan* (Philadelphia, 1811), 18–20

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, November 2019
The Julia A.A. Blodget Britton Frame Twin, 3412 & 3414 Haverford Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Older house forms appear to have been duplicated in the 1790s and through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. For example, the “half house” or flounder type was built in greater numbers than one would suspect. At one time the half house was even a known form in Northern Liberties. For example, William Ball sold a small lot to John and Adam Mintser in April 1796, which appears to have been unimproved.³⁵ Two years later, John Mintser was living on the lot in a “two-story” [a two-hand-one-half (2-1/2) story] frame dwelling with the typical measurements of a half house.³⁶ This is no doubt the same building that is shown in the famous image of Commissioners Hall. There are a few examples of this house type extant in Kensington—particularly Fishtown, while most have been lost over time.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, increasing concern related to fire and its relationship to wooden houses, as well as the poor state of maintenance of older frame dwellings led to the passage of laws to mitigate the problems of absentee landlords and fire hazards. An ordinance of June 6, 1796 declared that no “wooden mansion-house, shope, ware-house, store, or carriage or stable” should be erected in the City of Philadelphia between the Delaware River and Sixth Street, Vine to South Streets.³⁷ While the ordinance may have sent the proper message to certain Kensington builders, it likely had minimal effects on the construction of wooden houses outside of its mandated boundaries. Three decades later in 1826, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gave the City of Philadelphia the power to prohibit the construction of any building of the following description: “...the walls that are not completely composed of incombustible materials...”³⁸ Finally, the City of Philadelphia passed an ordinance on June 8, 1832 that brought the follow into effect:

From and after the passing of this ordinance, it shall not be lawful to erect or construct within the city of Philadelphia, any wooden, framed, brick-paned, or other building, whereof the walls are not composed wholly of incombustible materials.³⁹

The statistics from 1810 confirm that the initial ordinance of 1796 had little impact on Kensington. It certainly did not deter the construction of wooden houses, but over time this house type diminished as the neighborhood’s density intensified. No measures were taken in Kensington in regards to frame dwellings until 1833. This law only regulated the importation wooden houses into the district.

Advertisements also show the range of house types and customers over time. On April 3, 1789, the *Pennsylvania Packet* advertised wooden houses as a feature of “A Valuable Lot at

³⁵ Deed: William Ball and wife to John and Adam Mintser, 1 April 1796, Philadelphia Deed Book E.F., No. 28, p. 216, CAP.

³⁶ *United States Direct Tax of 1798: Tax Lists for the State of Pennsylvania*. M372, microfilm, 24 rolls. Records of the Internal Revenue Service, 1791–2006, Record Group 58. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁷ John C. Lowber and C.S. Miller, *A Digest of the Ordinances of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia; and of the Acts of Assembly Relating thereto* (Philadelphia: R. Desilver, 1822), 255–56.

³⁸ Frank F. Brightly, *A Digest of Laws and Ordinances of the City of Philadelphia from the Year 1701 to the 21st of June 1887*. (Philadelphia: Kay & Brother, 1887), 168.

³⁹ *A Digest of the Ordinances of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: S. C. Atkinson, 1834), 310–311.

Kensington,” referencing “three new Frame Dwelling Houses.” These houses were clearly built as rentals for a business owner or landlord. Other advertisements appear to have been geared towards owner-occupants. On April 14, 1819 the *Franklin Gazette* advertised a “Kensington Property” as “The Frame House, Kitchen and lot...” and this advertisement seemed to be formatted to attract someone to the house itself, leaving out potential rental discussion and lot size.⁴⁰ These are two of numerous examples of the variation of advertisements that further explain that wooden houses were once an important and primary component of Kensington’s built environment.



Left: Advertisement for a Frame House in Kensington. Published on January 17, 1812 in the *Democratic Press*. Right: Advertisement for a Frame House in Kensington. Published on April 14, 1819 in the *Franklin Gazette*. Source: Proquest Historical Newspapers.



These standards influence the size and styles used in the construction of wooden houses. By 1830, the ubiquitous red brick two-and-one-half story vernacular Georgian style house with a central dormer was perhaps the most fashionable building type used by developers in Kensington. Yet wooden houses continued to be built. The following description shows that by 1845 frame dwellings continued to be built, but making up a smaller portion of the overall construction than they had in the past.

Kensington—In this District a large number of buildings have been put up without permits having been taken out; the new buildings erected during the past season will number at least 160 three story brick dwellings and stores, 2 churches and 20 frame dwellings, &c., altogether about 182.⁴¹

In 1844, there were 183 buildings constructed in Kensington, but the specific number of wooden buildings was not referenced.⁴² One can suspect that it was a smaller percentage than years past, as reflected in the 1845 statistic. After the Civil War, the construction of frame dwellings was not unknown, but, even in Kensington, houses were likely to be masonry.

⁴⁰ “Advertisement.” *Franklin Gazette*, 4.

⁴¹ “Growth of Philadelphia.” *The North American and Daily Advertiser*, 8 January 1845, 1.

⁴² “Philadelphia.” *The North American and Daily Advertiser*, 5 October 1844, 1.