

↑ADDRESS: 208-10 REX AVE

Name of Resource: William L. Hirst-H. Louis Duhring Residence

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Virginia, William, and Hewson Baltzell

Nominator: Chestnut Hill Conservancy

Staff Contact: Laura DiPasquale, laura.dipasquale@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 208-10 Rex Avenue in Chestnut Hill and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination argues that the house, constructed about 1857-60, with alterations around 1893 and a substantial rear addition in 1927, satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and E. Under Criterion A, the nomination contends that the property has significant character as one of the early prominent suburban villas constructed in the first period of the development of the suburban character of the Chestnut Hill section of the city after the extension of the first railroad to the area. The nomination also argues that the building is significant under Criterion A for its association with architect H. Louis Duhring, who owned and lived in the house between 1919 and 1946, and under Criterion E as a representative example of Duhring's influential architectural work. The nomination also contends that the property is significant under Criterion C as reflecting the environment of both the period of its original Italianate construction and its Arts and Crafts addition.

The property currently known as 208-10 Rex Avenue is a single tax parcel composed of two deeded parcels (map registry numbers 128-N-11-50 and 128-N-11-22; 208 and 210 Rex Avenue, respectively). At the Committee on Historic Designation meeting, the attorney for the current property owner suggested that the 60-foot wide deeded parcel known as 210 Rex Avenue was not part of the historic property and should be excluded from the designation. The staff agreed to undertake deed research to determine the extent of the property during the period of significance of 1857 to 1946. Through this research, the staff determined that the current tax parcel boundary is consistent with that of the historic property. Historically, the entire parcel (Map Registry number 128-N-11-4) was known as 208 Rex Avenue and contained 238 feet 8 inches in width along Rex Avenue. In 1946, after the period of significance, ownership of the property passed to Duhring's nephew, Jean P.J. Baltzell, who subdivided the property into four parcels (map registry numbers 128-N-11-50 (208 Rex Ave), -22 (210 Rex Ave), -25 (located in the right of way of Crefeld St), and -40 (now part of 122 Hilltop Rd).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 208-10 Rex Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and E.



ADDITIONAL MAPS & FIGURES:

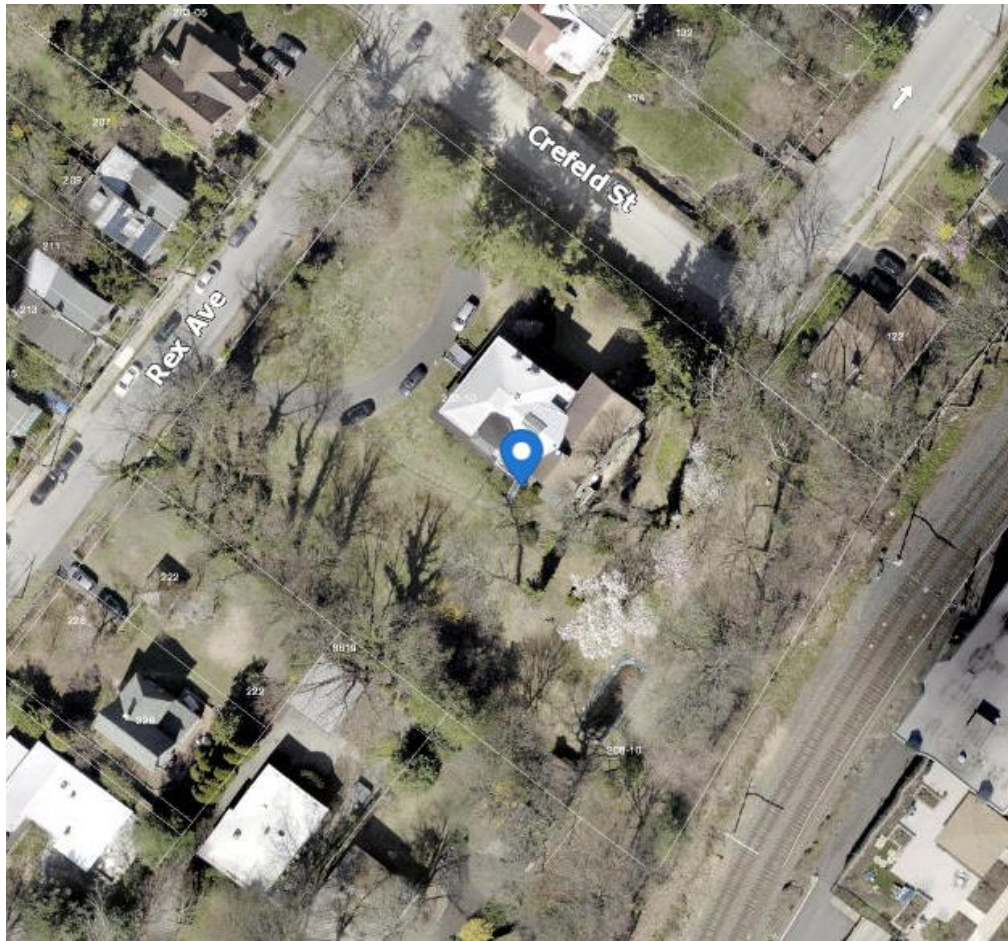


Figure 1: Current aerial of 208-10 Rex Avenue.

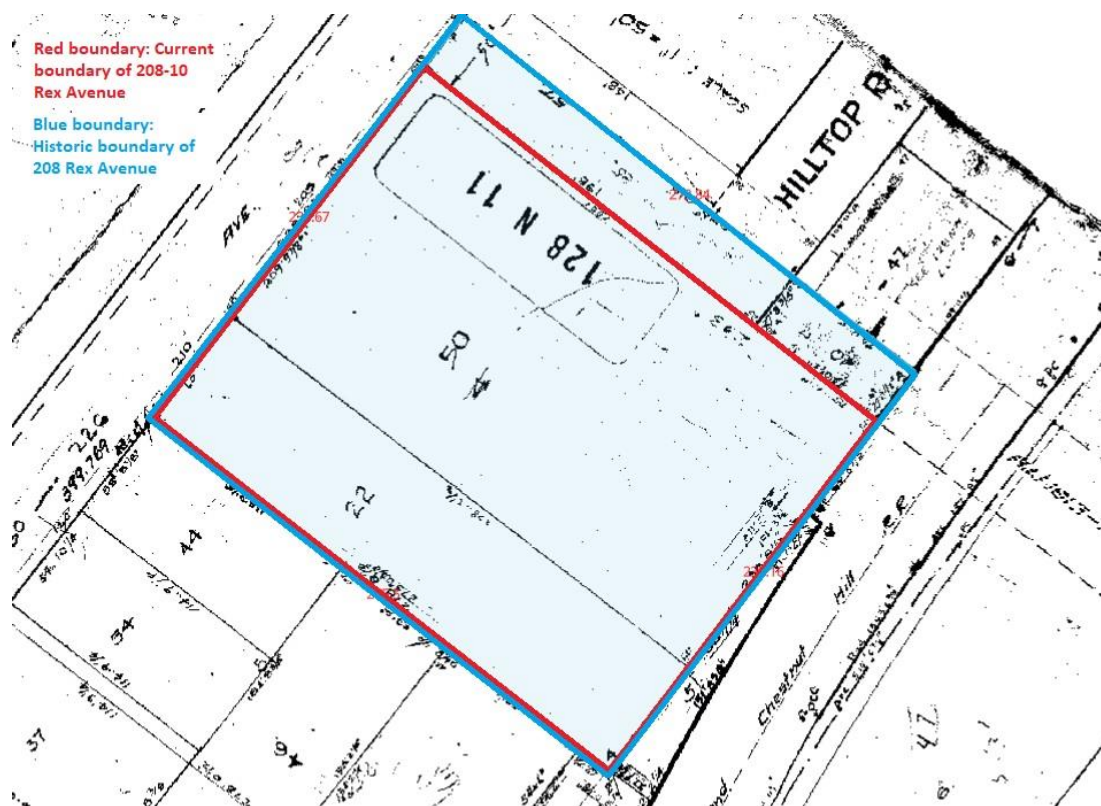


Figure 2: Historic registry map showing original parcel 128-N-11-4, and subsequent subdivision into map registry numbers 50, 22, 25, and 40.

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Figure 3: Original Map Registry ledger sheet showing early ownership of parcel 128-N-11-4, 208 Rex Avenue.

128-N-11-4

TRANSFERS					
NO.	OWNER	DATE OF DEED	OWNER	DATE OF DEED	OWNER
1	Elizabeth B. Norris	May 1, 1871	Walter C. Lee	Mar 13, 1904	
2					
3					
4	William H. Bryan, et al	Feb 19, 1892	Phila. Savings Fund Soc.	Feb 18, 1893	Daniel Goodman

Figure 4: Second transfer sheet for map registry number 128-N-11-4.

128-N-11-4

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TRANSFERS					
NO.	OWNER	DATE OF DEED	OWNER	DATE OF DEED	OWNER
1					
2					
3					
4	H. Louis Kuhring	June 23, 1933	William H. Meier, et al	July 17, 1943	H. Louis Kuhring

Figure 5: Third transfer sheet for map registry number 128-N-11-4.

128-N-11-4

TRANSFERS					
NO.	OWNER	DATE OF DEED	OWNER	DATE OF DEED	OWNER
1					
2					
3					
4	Jean P. J. Baltzell	July 31, 1946	Sub sec 22-25-40		

Figure 6: Fourth transfer sheet for map registry number 128-N-11-4, showing subdivision by Jean P.J. Baltzell in 1946.

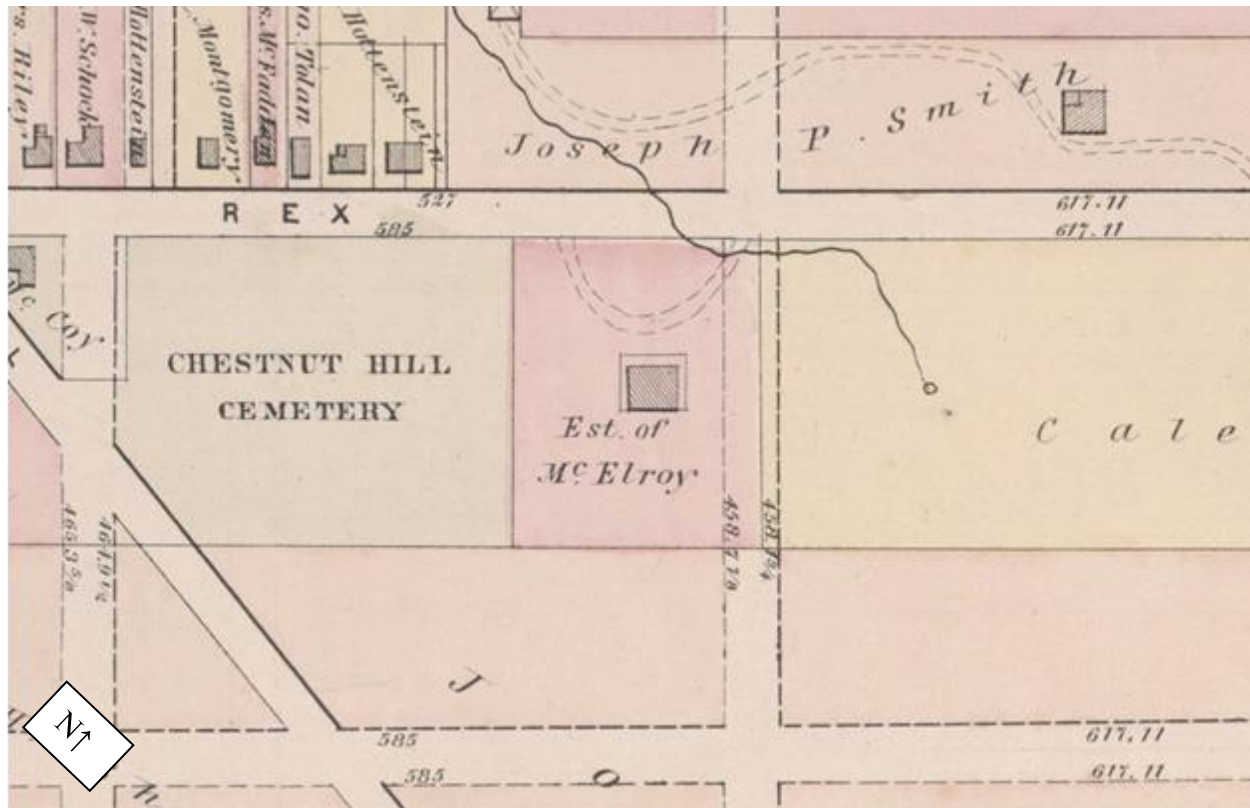


Figure 7: Detail of 1876 City Atlas of Philadelphia, 22nd Ward, Plate C. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.

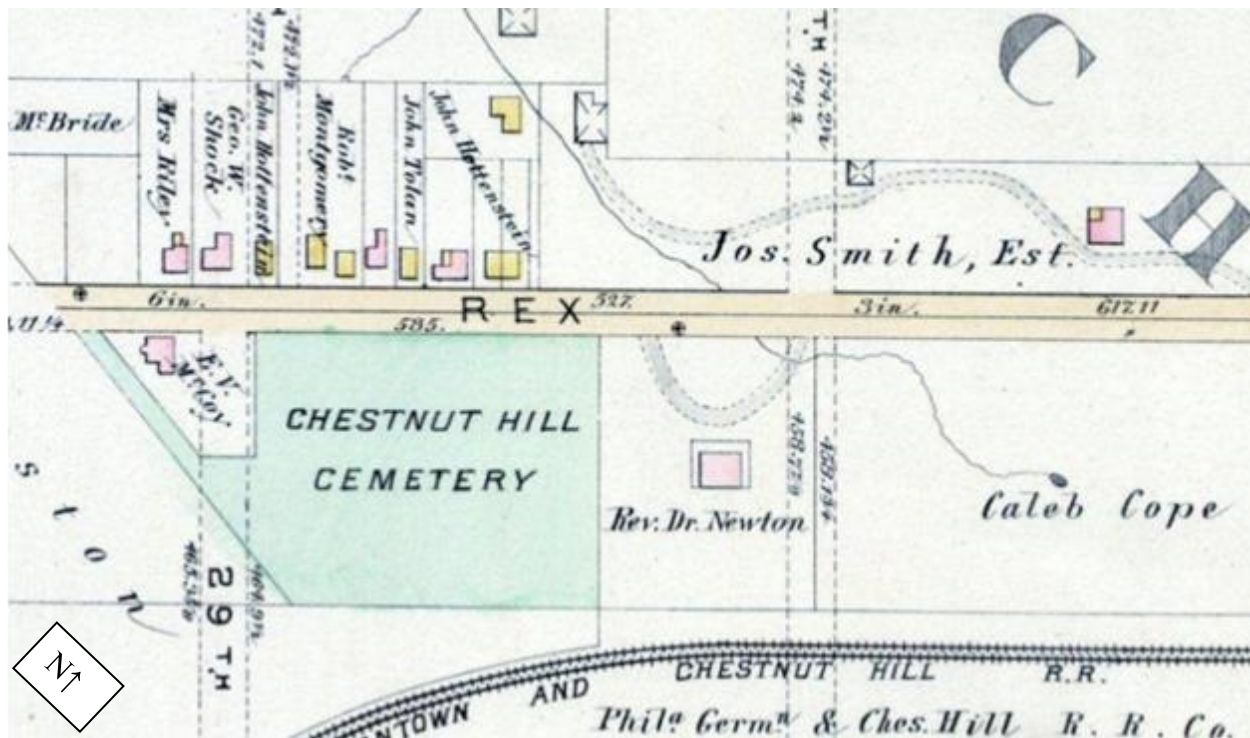


Figure 8: Detail of 1885 G.M. Hopkins map, Ward 22, Plate 003. Source: Historic Map Works.

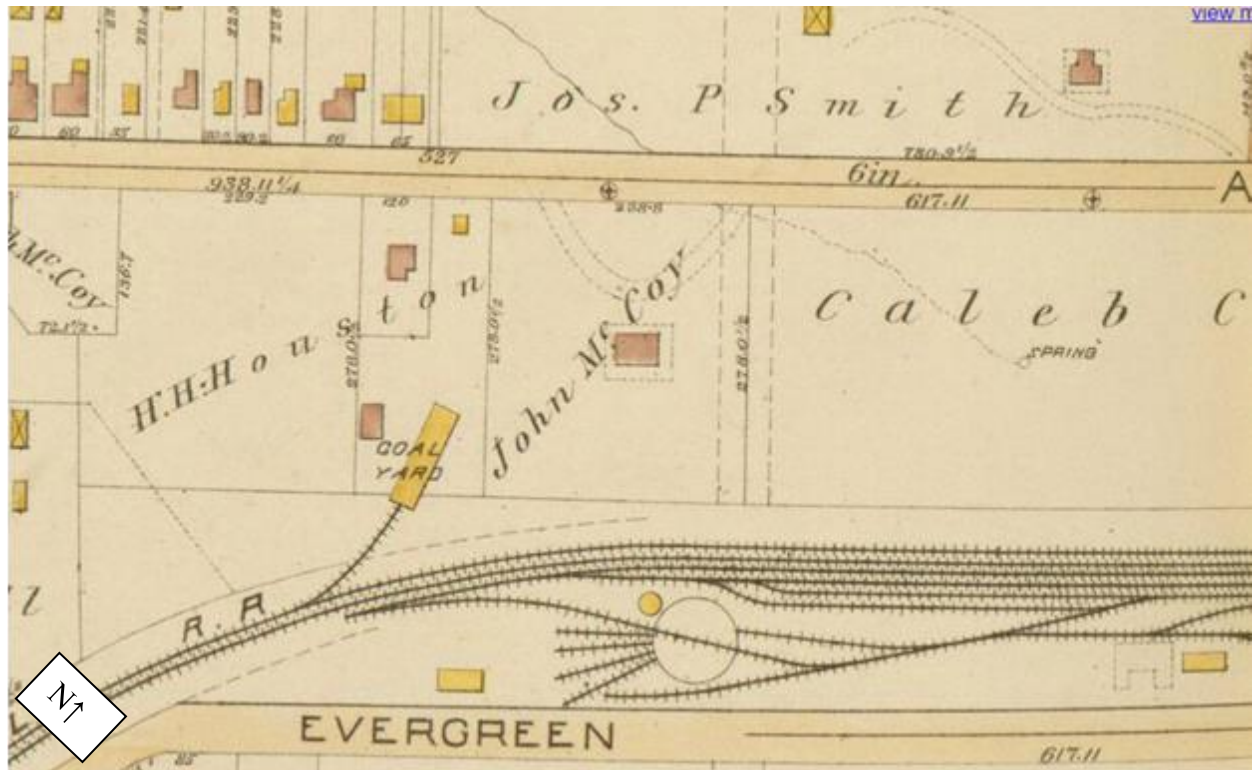


Figure 9: Detail of 1889 Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Volume 7, 22nd Ward, Plate 19. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

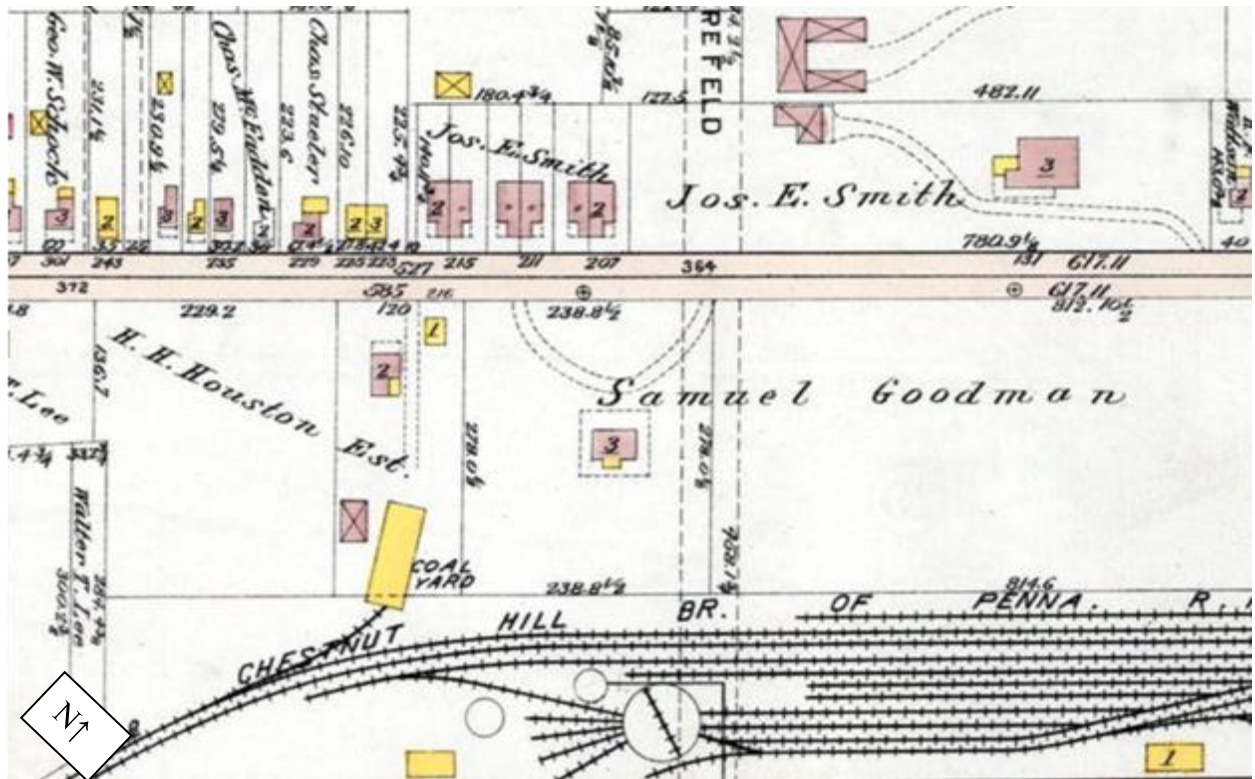


Figure 10: Detail from 1911 G.W. Bromley and Co. atlas, Ward 22, Plate 032. Source: Historic Map Works.

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: **208-210 Rex Avenue**

Postal code: **19118** Councilmanic District: **8th**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **William L. Hirst Residence; H. Louis Duhring Residence**

Common Name:

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:

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year): **c.1857-1946**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **c.1857-60; c.1893, 1927**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **H. Louis Duhring (1927)**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Original owner: **William L. Hirst**

Other significant persons:

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

SEE ATTACHED

9. NOMINATOR

Name with Title: Chestnut Hill Conservancy (nomination author – Benjamin Leech, consultant, edited by Emily T. Cooperman) Email: emily.t.cooperman@gmail.com

Organization: Chestnut Hill Conservancy

Date: 4/24/2017

Street Address: 8708 Germantown Avenue

Telephone: (215) 247-9329

City, State, and Postal Code: Philadelphia, PA 19118

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 4/24/2017

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 4/24/2017

Date of Notice Issuance: 4/24/2017

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: William H., Hewson, and Virginia Baltzell (alt: Hewson and Virginia Baltzell)

Address: 208-10 Rex Avenue (alt: 1006 Kater St, 19147)

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19118

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission:

Date of Final Action:

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

3/16/07

5. Boundary Description

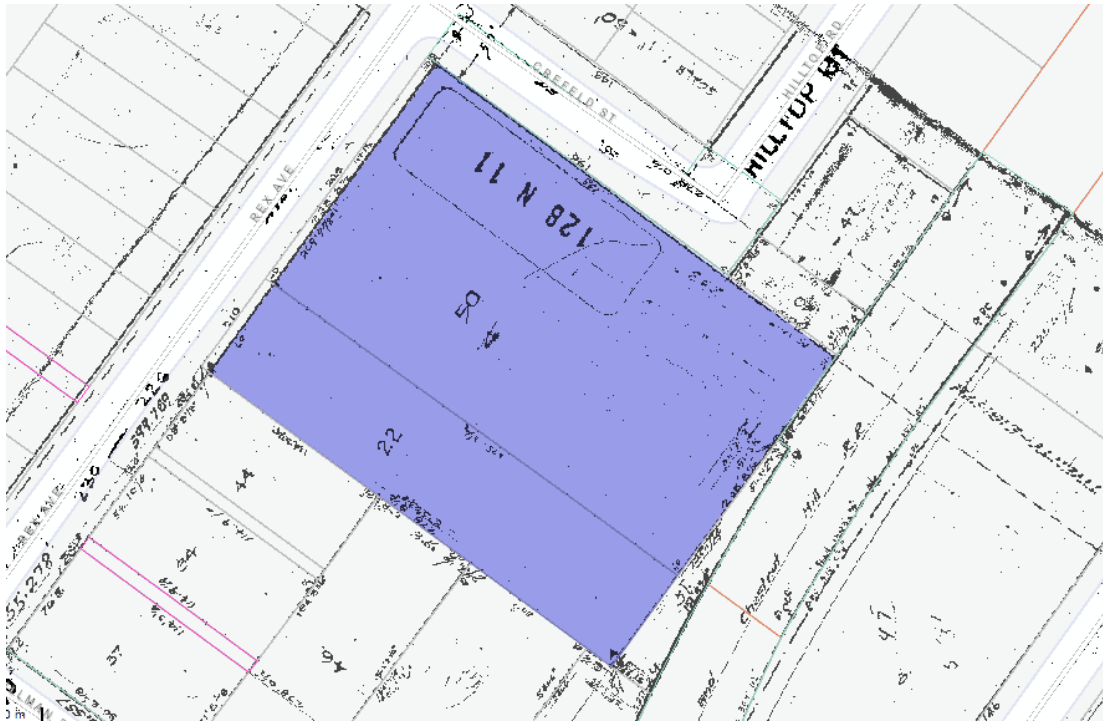
Note: OPA property #092217910, 208-210 Rex Avenue, includes two adjacent legally-described parcels: 128-N-11-0050 (208 Rex Avenue) and 128-N-11-0022 (210 Rex Avenue).

Parcel 128-N-11-0050: Beginning at the intersection of the Southeasterly side of Rex Avenue (legally opened forty feet wide) with the Southwesterly side of Crefeld Street (fifty feet wide); thence extending South forty-eight degrees, eight minutes, forty-one seconds East along the Southwesterly side of Crefeld Street two hundred and three feet to a point; thence extending South forty-eight degrees three minutes, forty-one seconds East crossing a fence seventy-five feet one-quarter inch to a point; thence extending South forty-one degrees, fifty-six minutes, nineteen seconds West one hundred fifty-one feet three and one-half inches to a point; thence extending North forty-seven degrees, forty-eight minutes, forty-one seconds West crossing a stone set in the Southeasterly side of Rex Avenue (fifty feet wide) two hundred seventy-eight feet and three-eighth inches to a point on the Southeasterly side of Rex Avenue (forty feet wide); thence extending North forty-one degrees, fifty-six minutes nineteen seconds East along the Southeasterly side of Rex Avenue (forty feet wide) one hundred forty-nine feet nine and one-half inches to the first mentioned intersection and place of beginning.

Parcel 128-N-11-0022:

[Note: No separate deed for this parcel has yet been located, but its bounds, as described below, can be transcribed from measurements included on the attached parcel register map]

Beginning at the Southwest corner of the adjacent Parcel 128-N-11-0050 along the Southeasterly side of Rex Avenue, the property extends in a Southwest direction parallel to Rex Avenue for a breadth of 60 feet 0 inches, and in a Southeast direction perpendicular to Rex Avenue for a depth of 273 feet and 3/8th inches.



Phila.Gov Parcel Explorer



City of Philadelphia Records Department (via Philadelphia Water Department Stormwater Map)

6. Description

The subject property includes a three-story Italianate stone house sited near the center of an ample, 1.4-acre parcel at the south corner of Rex Avenue and Crefeld Street in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia. The house was originally constructed approximately 1857-60 for Philadelphia attorney William L. Hirst, who owned the property from 1857 to 1866. A large rear addition in the Arts and Crafts style was added in 1927 by noted architect H. Louis Duhring, who owned, worked, and resided at the property from 1919 to 1946. Both portions of the building retain substantial integrity and reflect their two distinct periods of construction.

The original main wing of the building is rectangular in plan and measures roughly forty-five feet and five bays wide across its primary, northwest elevation facing Rex Avenue. Its exterior walls are quarry-faced Wissahickon schist laid in a random ashlar bond. An overhanging bracketed cornice and raised first-floor porch originally wrapped all four sides of the building; these remain on all but the rear, southeast elevation, which now attaches via a wide hyphen to the 1927 rear addition. The roof of the 1857-60 volume is a shallow, hipped pyramidal pitch largely invisible from ground level. Aerial photographs indicate a flat square area at the roof's apex, likely indicating the original presence of a central cupola, which would have been conventional for the period and area. Two tall, stucco-coated chimneys rise along the northeast edge of the roof.

The composition of the main elevation is symmetrical [Fig. 1] and is organized in five bays and retains wood window sash and doors. Visual evidence strongly suggests the sash, doors and shutters on this elevation date to the first period of construction. The high, shallow-pitch, hip-roofed, one-story front porch on brick piers is accessed via centered wood stairs leading to the centered main entrance, which includes a tall set of double-leaf, round-arch, paneled wood doors flanked by narrow three-light sidelights and topped by a flat, four-light transom. The evenly-spaced bays on each side of the central doorway feature tall, windows or French doors partially concealed by storm sash, capped with two-light transoms and with sills set at porch level [Fig.2].

Paneled shutters flank each window bay. The porch includes simple, square-plan, chamfered posts, a railing with flat, scroll-cut wood balusters, and a latticework skirt.¹

The five evenly-spaced bays of the second floor each feature four-over-four, double-hung sash windows with wood sills, stone lintels, and louvered shutters. The third floor windows include short, two-light, double-leaf casement sashes in the three northeastern bays; the two southwestern bays appear to have replaced with two-light replacement sashes. The scroll-cut wood brackets supporting the overhanging roof eave are aligned to the jambs of the third-floor windows.

The fenestration details of the main elevation generally continue along each side elevation of the main block, though the symmetry of the front is replaced by a more informal composition of windows, side doors, and projecting bays. Some of this is the result of later alterations, particularly a prominent oriel addition towards the rear of the southwest side [Figs. 3-4, 7]. Archival records suggest this was added c.1893 by an unknown architect for then-owner Samuel Goodman.² It features a bevel-cornered second-floor bay rising from the porch roof on a stucco-faced base, with tall sets of divided-light casement windows and fixed transoms set between wood mullions. A square-cornered, stucco-faced third-floor bay sits farther outward, extending proud of and breaking the original cornice line. Three sets of eight-light casement windows are centered below a hipped gable roof capping the oriel. To the left (northwest) of this addition, the remainder of the original southwest elevation remains intact, featuring a single bay of first-, second-, and third-floor windows matching the configuration of the front elevation, along with a shorter first-floor double-hung window located beneath the oriel. The opposite, northeast side elevation of the original Italianate wing is similarly composed, with intact front fenestration and projecting rear bay additions, though it is largely hidden from the public right-of-way by a tall hedgerow and fence [Fig. 5].

¹ A building permit (#18245) was issued in 1976 for the replacement of “rotted porch beams, joists, and flooring.” However, the existing porch configuration and details closely match a 1954 photograph of the site [Fig. 9].

² Chestnut Hill Historic District Files, Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 208 Rex Avenue (Hirst, William L.) https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ho_display.cfm/728020 It is also possible that this was a later alteration by Duhring, though his 1927 building permit application for the rear addition makes no explicit mention of this.

Behind the main Italianate block, a rear hyphen connects to a substantial three-story gable-roofed addition measuring approximately twenty-two feet by fifty feet. The hyphen itself rises two stories in plane with both its flanking wings, with a glass-enclosed porch at ground level and a set-back, shingle-clad third floor [Fig. 7]. The porch roof supports a small deck area accessed by a flight of exterior stairs. The second floor of the hyphen is faced in stone and features a transom-topped doorway accessing the porch area alongside a set of divided-light casement windows matching the configurations present in the adjacent rear addition. The hyphen's third floor is lit by a small pair of double-hung windows.

The rear addition stretches more than the full length of the front block, standing proud of its northeast elevation to form an overall el-shaped building footprint. Gable end-walls face southwest and northeast. The rear southeast elevation of the addition is minimally visible from the public right-of-way.

The first two floors of the addition's southwest end gable are clad in quarry-faced random ashlar schist [Figs 4, 7-8]. Stone corner piers bracket the third-floor gable end walls, which are wood-shingle-clad and slightly pitched in the manner of a mansard roof but set beneath an overhanging gable roof supported by exposed purlins. A small shed roof projects from the center of the southeast gable elevation, sheltering a semi-enclosed at-grade porch area. A paired set of double-hung divided light ground-floor windows are set to the left (northwest) of the porch area; two smaller windows and a door pierce the remainder of the ground floor elevation. Three evenly-spaced bays of divided-light casement windows light the second floor. The shingle-clad third-floor gable wall is pierced by a central bay of four tall divided-light casement windows framed by a slightly projecting wood surround. The northwest gable wall features a monumental arched masonry opening that rises from an iron Juliette second-floor balcony to nearly the gable peak of the third floor, lit by a large expanse of steel sash windows and outlined with schist voussoirs [Fig. 6]. The long rear elevation, minimally visible from the public right-of-way, features an informal arrangement of doors and windows in a variety of configurations.

The house's surrounding landscape contributes to the overall integrity of the site. A gentle slope rises from Rex Avenue to the rear border of the parcel along the Chestnut Hill West railroad

embankment. An informal perimeter of mature trees and hedges surround large expanses of lawn, occasionally traversed by low stone retaining walls and paths. An in-ground swimming pool added in 1988 inconspicuously occupies the southeast corner of the lot.³ A semicircular drive, likely original to the site, connects to both Rex Avenue and Crefeld Street, and a brick-paved sidewalk stretches the length of the site's Rex Avenue frontage. A contemporary, low, flat-slatted open picket fence also runs along Rex Avenue and portions of Crefeld Street, and a tall contemporary closed-slat fence spans the remainder of the Crefeld Street frontage. In 1954, Crefeld Street was widened from a narrow lane to its current width and a portion of original property was yielded [Fig. 9]; otherwise the parcel boundaries are substantially identical to the original period of construction.



Figure 1: Primary northwest elevation facing Rex Avenue.

³ Application for Zoning Permit #020452, Oct. 17, 1988.



Figure 2: Front elevation detail



Figure 3: Front (northwest) and side (southwest) elevations as viewed from Rex Avenue.



Figure 4: Southwest side elevation detail.



Figure 5: Northeast side elevation facing Crefeld Street.



Figure 6: Northeast side elevation, rear addition detail.



Figure 7: Southwest side elevation, c. 2014.

Photo via <http://www.phillymag.com/property/2014/06/26/h-louis-duhring-chestnut-hill>

NOTE: View not accessible from the public right-of-way



Figure 8: Southwest side and southeast rear elevations, c. 2014.

Photo via <http://www.phillymag.com/property/2014/06/26/h-louis-duhring-chestnut-hill>

NOTE: View not accessible from the public right-of-way



Figure 9: Property in 1954 during widening of Crefeld Street. Photo via PhilaHistory.org.

7. Significance

The three-story Italianate stone house at 208-210 Rex Avenue is a well-preserved and significant example of Chestnut Hill's architectural heritage. Known variously over time as the Hirst Residence, McElroy Residence, and Duhring Residence, the structure dates to c.1857-60, with alterations c.1893 and a substantial rear wing added in 1927. This later addition was designed in the Arts and Crafts style by Philadelphia architect H. Louis Duhring, who owned and resided in the house between 1919 and 1946. The property meets Criterion A for designation as defined by City of Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 14-1000, Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia zoning code for its significant character as a prominent suburban villa of the first period of the development of the suburban character of this portion of the city in the aftermath of the introduction of the first railroad from Center City. It also meets Criterion A for its association with Duhring as his residence and studio, and Criterion E as a representative example of his influential architectural work. Finally, the property meets Criterion C as reflecting the environment of both the period of its original construction and its addition.

Duhring rose to national prominence in the early twentieth century as a partner in the firm of Duhring, Okie & Ziegler. One of the firm's most consequential clients was Chestnut Hill developer George Woodward, who continued to retain Duhring for scores of local commissions following Okie's and Ziegler's departures (in 1918 and 1924, respectively) from the firm. As one of the chief architects of Woodward's storied vision--largely realized--of Chestnut Hill as a model twentieth-century suburban development, Duhring helped shape much of the architectural character of the community in which he lived for the majority of his active career. This period of the property's significance complements and enhances its already substantial character as an intact Italianate villa dating to the earliest years of Chestnut Hill's suburban development, which was spurred by city consolidation and the opening of the Chestnut Hill Railroad in 1854. As such, the property clearly merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

William L. Hirst and Early Suburban Chestnut Hill

The house first appears in Chestnut Hill property atlases in 1862, with Samuel L. Smedley's *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* marking a structure labeled "Hirst" located along a sparsely-developed stretch of Rex (originally Church) Avenue a few blocks southwest of Germantown Avenue [Fig. 10]. Five years earlier, in March 1857, one William L. Hirst acquired the then-undeveloped property through a ground rent agreement with Mary Ann Rex et. al., and by 1860, an attorney by the same name first appears as a resident of Chestnut Hill in *McElroy's Philadelphia City Directory*. One can therefore safely conclude that the house in question was constructed circa 1857-60 by this prominent Philadelphia attorney. The area at this time was beginning to evolve from a small hamlet of modest farmhouses, shops and taverns that first developed along Germantown Avenue beginning in the 1700s into a larger and more self-consciously "suburban" residential enclave following the introduction of the first rail line into the area in 1854. Most of this development first occurred north and east of Germantown Avenue, though a scattering of new houses also rose to the south.⁴



Figure 10: *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1862, Section 20 detail.

⁴ Contosa, David R. *Suburb in the City: Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, 1850-1990*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992, p. 37ff.

Hirst's known biographical details reinforce the common characterization of Chestnut Hill's first suburban residents as typically affluent, professional, well-connected, and wholly dependent on the region's emerging railroad network to maintain close ties to central Philadelphia. Born in Philadelphia in 1804, Hirst began his long and accomplished law career as a Court of Common Pleas clerk before passing the bar in 1827. He established a thriving private practice with offices near Washington Square, and by the 1850s was active in local politics. Elected president of the Democratic State Convention in 1853, he was also an early and vocal proponent of city consolidation and a long-time member of the Board of Trustees of the Philadelphia Gas Works.⁵ At the time of his Chestnut Hill purchase, he was also the head of a large and growing family; his 1860 census entry lists a household that included six children ages 9-24 and three domestic servants.⁶ Hirst maintained a law office at 211 S. 6th Street for the entirety of his Chestnut Hill residency, which ended following his sale of the property to Archibald McElroy, the longtime publisher of *McElroy's Philadelphia City Directories*, in 1866.⁷

Hirst purchased his Chestnut Hill property shortly after the Chestnut Hill Railroad Company (later the Reading Railroad) established the first direct passenger rail connection into central Philadelphia in 1854. This was also the year in which the City and County of Philadelphia consolidated into a single municipal entity, drawing formerly independent or unincorporated outlying communities like Chestnut Hill into official city limits. While these two events were perhaps coincidental to each other, both had an indisputable impact on the area's development, which soon experienced a building boom. Much of this development took the form of picturesque "rural villas" for wealthy clients influenced by the immensely popular pattern books and writings of Andrew Jackson Downing, Alexander Jackson Davis, Samuel Sloan, and other advocates for a newly-emerging suburban lifestyle. As recounted by one Philadelphian of the time,

Villa and cottage life has become quite a passion and is producing a complete revolution in our habits. It is dispersing the people of the city over the

⁵ "Obituary: William L. Hirst, Esq." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 1, 1876.

⁶ 1860 United States Federal Census for William L. Hirst, Philadelphia Ward 5 Northern Division.

⁷ Deed Book L.R.B. 171, p 235, William L. Hirst to Archibald McElroy; *McElroy's Philadelphia City Directory*. Philadelphia: E. C. & J. Biddle & Co., various editions 1837-1867; "Obituary: Mr. Archibald McElroy," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 30, 1875.

surrounding country, introducing thus among them, ventilation, cleanliness, space, healthful pursuits, and the influences of natural beauty, the want of which are the sources of so much evil, moral and physical, in large towns.⁸

The villas populating the pattern books of the era were typically freestanding houses in picturesque landscapes, presented in a wide variety of architectural styles-- Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Tudor Revival, Italianate, etc.-- intended to flatter the individuality of each prospective owner. Hirst's new Rex Avenue residence, while potentially architect-designed, presents a simplified iteration of an Italianate style that was heavily promoted in pattern books of the era and which was duplicated with some frequency and variation throughout Chestnut Hill and other emerging suburbs in Philadelphia and across the East Coast. Its defining characteristics include an overall emphasis on symmetry, a hierarchical fenestration pattern of tall lower-floor windows and short upper-floor windows, wide projecting eaves with ornamental brackets, shallow pyramidal roofs, and substantial wrap-around porches.⁹

H. Louis Duhring and Early Twentieth Century Chestnut Hill

Just as the building's first period of development reflects a significant and consequential era in the development of Chestnut Hill and Philadelphia as a whole, its subsequent history embodies the continuation of this development into the twentieth century. Following Archibald McElroy's death in 1876, the property passed through a series of owners of relatively minor consequence until 1919, when it was purchased by H. Louis Duhring, a renowned Philadelphia architect with close ties to George Woodward, the prolific and visionary developer responsible for much of Chestnut Hill's twentieth-century built character. Duhring lived in the Rex Avenue house from 1919 until 1946, and constructed a substantial rear addition in 1927 reflecting key characteristics of the Arts and Crafts movement, an influential design philosophy inspired by the nineteenth-century writings of English theorists A.W.N. Pugin, John Ruskin, and William Morris. Both Woodward and Duhring were heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement and its

⁸ Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed. *A Philadelphia Perspective, the Diary of Sidney George Fisher*. Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967, p. 327, as quoted by Detweiler, Willard S. Jr. *Chestnut Hill: An Architectural History*. Philadelphia: The Chestnut Hill Historical Society, 1969, p. 20.

⁹ Detweiler, p. 48.

progressive social dimensions. Though it was only one of many architectural styles promoted by Woodward and adapted by Duhring and his contemporaries for projects across Chestnut Hill and the wider region, its presence in a major addition to Duhring's own home and studio is a significant reflection of its popularity and influence during this era.

Herman Louis Duhring, Jr. (1874-1953) was a native Philadelphian who studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and began his professional career in the drafting room of Furness, Evans & Company. He was awarded the Stewardson Traveling Scholarship in 1897 and spent a year in Venice, Italy before returning to Philadelphia and entering private practice. In 1899 he entered into partnership with R. Brognard Okie and Carl A. Ziegler; the resulting firm of Duhring, Okie & Ziegler soon gained national attention through a series of well-received Colonial Revival residential commissions.¹⁰ By the early 1910s, the firm was closely associated with what some critics called the "Pennsylvania Type," a regional Colonial Revival variation inspired by the forms and materials commonly used in Pennsylvania farmhouses and other vernacular structures. According to critic C. Matlack Price, one of the main champions of the movement, the Pennsylvania Type was "characterized by its almost rugged simplicity, its frank use of local material and local tradition as to the use of this material, by its ever-present expression of domesticity, and above all by its remarkable consistency."¹¹ Other prominent architects associated with the style were Mellor and Meigs, Edmund B. Gilchrist, D. Knickerbocker Boyd, and Savery, Sheetz & Savery, all of whose careers were sustained in large degree by suburban commissions for wealthy clients.

Duhring, Okie, & Zeigler's early output was no different, but one of their wealthy suburban clients-- George Woodward-- helped push the firm, and Duhring in particular, in slightly different directions over the course of their long association. The firm was first engaged by Woodward in 1909 as the architects for what Woodward characterized as a "slum" redevelopment on Benezet Street in Chestnut Hill. In his memoir, Woodward recounted that a deaconess of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the church commissioned by his father-in-law Henry H.

¹⁰ Tatman, Sandra L. "Duhring, Herman Louis, Jr. (1874-1953)." *American Architects and Buildings Database*, https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22482

¹¹ Price, C. Matlack, "The Development of a National Architecture: The Pennsylvania Type [Concluding Article]." *Arts & Decoration*, Vol. 3, no. 11 (September 1913), p. 364.

Houston at the intersection of West Willow Grove Avenue and St. Martin's Lane as a cornerstone of his own Chestnut Hill suburban development, persuaded him to take on the project of creating new, "modern, semi-detached dwellings" for "working people" on this block. Woodward asserted that these were specifically intended not to be rented to "white collar class" tenants.¹² The Benezet Street redevelopment resulted in long row of three-story Colonial Revival twins along the north side of Benezet Street in Chestnut Hill, followed in 1910 by prototype "quadruple" houses for the south side of Benezet which were equally progressive for their time in terms of planning. The project signalled a major departure from the predominant pattern of detached single-family dwellings on large lots which characterized much of Chestnut Hill's nineteenth-century development, introducing a carefully-planned density that was inspired both by economics and by idealism. Woodward recognized the growing demand for this type of housing amongst an increasingly affluent and mobile middle class population, and at the same time was heavily influenced by the progressive housing theories of London's Octavia Hill Association and the English Garden City movement.¹³ A number of additional Woodward commissions followed for a variety of building types in a variety of revival styles, as the developer refined and expanded his vision for a twentieth-century model suburb. Even after Okie (in 1918) and Ziegler (in 1924) left the firm, Duhring remained one of Woodward's chief designers, sharing commissions and often collaborating with fellow Woodward architects Robert McGoodwin and Edmund Gilchrist into at least the 1930s.¹⁴ Duhring's ensemble groups of rental houses for Woodward from this later period are particularly important contributions not only to the aesthetic environment of this portion of the city, but also to the ongoing progress of innovative planning for "group housing" that pre-dated, and perhaps influenced such later developments as the better-known Mackley Houses. Duhring's 1923-26 work at Winston Court (7821-31; 7833-35; 7901; 7903-09), the so-called "Half-Moon" houses (7919, 7921/23, 7925 Lincoln Drive), and Roanoke Court (8014/16/18, 8020/22, 8024/26/28 Roanoke Street) were clothed in simplified historicist, rather than International Style garb, and their accomplishments as planned groups has been under-recognized, but is no less significant for its period than the later examples.

¹² George W. Woodward, *Memoirs of a Mediocre Man* (Philadelphia: Harris & Partridge, Inc., 1935), pp. 105-06.

¹³ Contosa, pp. 101-103.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 109

His own Rex Avenue addition is less historicist than many of the early Woodward commissions, which typically employed a range of Colonial, English Tudor, Cotswold, Norman, and other revival vocabularies. The addition is located along the rear of the original Italianate structure and sits beneath an overhanging gable roof supported by exposed purlins, similar in configuration, if not scale or material, to a California-style frame bungalow. Each gable end wall is treated uniquely; the northwest end rises in a full-height Wissahickon schist facade pierced by a single monumentally-scaled archway glazed with industrial steel sash windows. The southeast end features a two-story schist base and corner piers, but the third-story gable wall is clad in wood shingles and slightly pitched like a mansard set beneath the projecting gable roof. This experimental, almost playful juxtaposition of elements represents a significant architectural expression of the Arts and Crafts movement's interest the aesthetic qualities of natural materials, adaptation and manipulation of traditional building forms, and personal artistic expression.

Conclusion

The property at 208-210 Rex Avenue satisfies Criteria A, C, and E for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. First, it possesses substantial historic character and interest as an intact mid-nineteenth-century Chestnut Hill suburban villa and through its associations with owners William L. Hirst and H. Louis Duhring (Criterion A), the latter of which significantly influenced the architectural development of the city (Criterion E). Finally, the property incorporates distinguishing architectural characteristics of two distinct architectural styles, each reflective of a significant period of development (Criterion C).

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