

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: 5151 Wissahickon Avenue

Postal code: 19144

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Robeson Lea Perot Residence

Current/Common Name: American Legion Post 263

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: Club house

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

6. DESCRIPTION

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

7. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1905 to 1913

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1904-05, 1906, 1913 (Criterion D)

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Robeson Lea Perot, architect

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: John Duncan

Original owner: Robeson Lea Perot

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

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization The Keeping Society Date 16 September 2020

Name with Title Steven J. Peitzman, Oscar Beisert Email peitzmansj@gmail.com

Street Address 2911 Wood Pipe Ln Apt D Telephone 215-840-5637

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19129

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: September 29, 2020

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: December 17, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: December 18, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: North City Post 263 American Legion

Address: 5151 Wissahickon Avenue

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: January 20, 2021

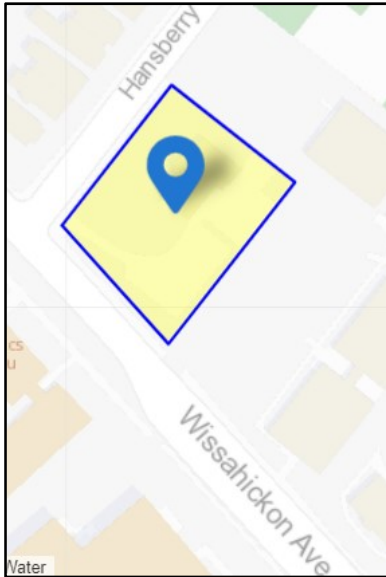
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: February 12, 2021

Date of Final Action: February 12, 2021

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected Criteria D and H

12/7/18

5. Boundary description



For the purpose of this nomination, following the street numbering in the area, northwest will be deemed “north” (Wissahickon Avenue is considered a north-south Street), and northeast will be deemed “east” (Hansberry is considered an east-west street), southeast as “south,” and southwest as “west.” Parcel 046N1500 is irregular, in that its west and north boundaries are parallel to Hansberry Street and Wissahickon Avenue, but these are not at exact right angles to each other. The parcel’s east and south boundaries are at right angles.

A description of the parcel, taken from a February, 1949 Zoning or Use Application (#14323B), near the time when the parcel and house were acquired by American Legion North City Post 263, reads as follows:

“All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate in the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia, beginning at a stake on the southeasterly side of Hansberry Street (fifty feet wide) at the distance of four hundred, sixty-two feet southwesterly from the southwesterly side and at right angle to ground of Germantown Cricket Club; then on the line south fifty

degrees, fifteen minutes, forty-four seconds east one hundred, fifty three feet, to a stake; thence south thirty-nine degrees, forty four minutes sixteen seconds west two hundred five feet, four inches to the northeasterly side of Wissahickon Avenue (fifty feet wide); thence extending along the said Wissahickon Avenue north forty degrees, forty-seven minutes, seventeen seconds, west one hundred fifty-five feet, one and three-eighths inches to the southeasterly side of Hansberry Street; thence extending along the said southeasterly side of Hansberry Street north thirty-nine degrees, forty-four minutes, sixteen seconds east one hundred, seventy nine feet, three and five-eighths inches to the place of beginning.”

Currently, only the subject house stands on the parcel. A remnant of some structure of unknown age is discernible at the southeast corner of the lot. A 1924 Sanborn map shows a structure keyed ‘A’ for “auto house” or garage at this corner (figure 1).



Figure 1 Sanborn map, v. 23, sheet 2205, 1924. By this time, Perot no longer owned the house. The footprint matches the current configuration.



Figure 2. Aerial view showing context: apartment buildings to south, Germantown Cricket Club tennis facilities to the east.

6. Description

The former home of architect, soldier, and history enthusiast Major Robeson Lea Perot, designed by him, stands impressively on the slope of a hill at the southeast corner of Wissahickon Avenue and Hansberry street in the southwest section of Germantown. Figure 3 shows its general appearance looking south and east, upward from sidewalk). Its front faces Hansberry Street and several modest developer's twin houses. The west façade looks over busy Wissahickon Avenue to a national guard property. When the house was built in 1905 and for many years after, occupants would look from their high perch across Wissahickon Avenue to a green array of estate properties with handsome houses, now all gone. Adjoining the property to the south are parking areas for neighboring low-rise apartment buildings. To the east lies more parking, then the west border of the Germantown Cricket Club (figure 2). Though considerable lawn remains, the property and immediate surroundings look somewhat bleak and forlorn. At one time trees enhanced the lot. But the lawn and the placement of the house, set back on the highest point of the property, remain essential to appreciation of the architecture and sense of place.



Figure 3 The subject house, looking east and south. All contemporary photos by Steven Peitzman unless otherwise noted.

Contractor John Duncan built the core of the house in 1905 for Perot.¹ A building permit from 26 May 1906 refers to a second-story room, 12 by 12 feet, supported on iron columns, these on stone piers; its likely location will be described below.² A building permit dated 16 April 1913 describes a three-story “rear” addition, the first story to be an open porch with the stories above supported on stone piers and “diagonal buttresses.”³ This would seem to refer to the present west end (not rear) of the building: figure 4 shows the house before this addition, and figure 5 shows the front façade with the demarcation of the addition indicated. Another permit from 1913 calls for adding a “sleeping porch” on a “reinforced concrete slab.”⁴ This probably refers to a location at the east end of the residence to be described later.

¹ *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, 1905, v. 20, p. 483.

² Building permit 3871, 26 May 1906, City Archives

³ Building permit 3034, 16 April 1913, City Archives

⁴ Building permit 4 June 1913, City Archives



Figure 4 The Perot house from Arch. Rec. v. 29, 1911, p. 262.

As it appears now, the footprint of the 2 ½ story house is basically rectangular, with an ell extending to the south from the easternmost part of the main block. The main block is side-gabled. The front-facing gabled salient occupies almost half the width of the house, while projecting 5 feet from the main section's front plane. The width (east-west dimension) is 61 feet and the depth including the ell 47 feet. It is about 40 feet high from ground to ridge of the roof of the main block. The masonry is roughly coursed stone (schist) for the first level, and brick for the second. The second story shows ornamental half-timbering over brick on the front (north), west, and some of the south and east elevations. The white areas between the wood boards may be in some areas a sort of white board material rather than actual stucco. Though originally slate, the roof now consists of modern asphalt and fabric, not in very good condition. The style is obviously what is usually referred to as Tudor Revival. Most attention in the description will address the prominent north (front) and west elevations and the features of particular interest.



Figure 5 North or front elevation, showing where the 1913 addition begins.

North Elevation (front, facing Hansberry Street)

A comparison of figures 4 and 5 shows that little has changed in the overall appearance of the front façade since 1911 other than the expansion to the west and considerable deterioration. At the east end, what had been an open area under the second-floor sleeping porch has been infilled. Quatrefoil figures ornament the parapet of the second floor porch. The **first story** of the main body of the house shows walls of coursed rubble. Viewing from left to right (east to west), five apertures are seen, the first three within the wall of the gabled salient. First is a small lancet window (now some sort of vent) with a stone arch; next a small rectangular window with an oversized flat arch; next the entry porch and door; then a double transomed window with leaded glass lights in a diamond pattern above the transom (figure 6). Some of these and similar leaded panes in other windows might well be original. At the west end one sees the stone arch work of the west porch, and one of two sloping diagonal buttresses. The **entry porch** (figure 7) comprises a gabled roof over open framing, forming a pediment with a half-timbered tympanum; this composition rests on two short octagonal pillars and two engaged half-pillars. These in turn sit on stone work adjoining the steps. The two-leaf recessed door with lights, and its surround form a “Tudor arch.” The exposed rafters and other elements of the porch suggest some arts and crafts influence.



Figure 6 Window of first story, north wall.



Figure 7 Entry porch and door.

Above a projecting wooden belt course or molding, with something like small modillions (meant to suggest a breastsummer and jetty beams?), the brick **second story** offers four windows, or groups of windows, integrated within decorative half-timbering. All are transomed with at least some surviving leaded lights with quarrels in diamond pattern. The large window above the entrance projects forward slightly (figure 8). It is fitted below the level of the other windows: its lower edge and sill interrupt the belt course, though the sill continues its pattern. Perhaps it was intended to suggest a shallow bay window or oriel. The **third or half-story** includes the gable of the salient, forming, with a cornice below, a pediment. Within the pediment a set of three windows, below a Tudor-arched wood head, is integrated into the half-timbering. A simple pendent of wood hangs from the ridge of the gable. A small shed dormer and a two-window gabled dormer (with a small pendent) pierce the sloping roof of the main block. The overhanging eaves reveal exposed rafters.



Figure 8. Projecting window at second story, north elevation.

West elevation (facing Wissahickon Avenue, figure 9, below)



Figure 9 West elevation.

Stone arches, forming a three-arch ensemble when seen looking *en face*, parallel to and about ten feet from the west wall, support the two upper levels (or story and $\frac{1}{2}$), and thereby create a ground-level porch.⁵ The masonry here seems hewn and squared, and more formally coursed than that of the north wall, approaching ashlar. The arches are either Tudor or 4-centered. The previously mentioned diagonal buttresses contribute to a visual message of solidity and strength. The second level, above the continuing belt course, is, or was, well-lit inside by four two-leaf transomed windows in a 1-2-1 symmetric arrangement. As on the front of the house, some comes and quarrels survive. Loss of stucco in several places uncovers the structural brick. The gable of the third, of half-

⁵ There may have been an elevated surface for a leisure porch in this area, suggested by the change in dimension of the piers, and the level of entry to the first floor interior judged by the obviously more recent *ad hoc* vestibule. We thank Joshua Lessard for this suggestion.

story, shows within the pediment a complex array of windows reaching to the ridge. These share wood framework that again forms Tudor arches. As with the side gable, a wooden pendent has managed to hang on.

South elevation (rear)



Figure 10 South Elevation



Figure 11 Detail of balcony, south elevation

For this elevation it is easier to refer to the three obvious segments (figure 10). From west to east (left to right), the main block continues with stone masonry of the first story. A three-window ensemble including aprons below and leaded sections above projects slightly from the plane of the wall and nestles closely to the gabled adjoining section. The second story of this western-most section contains a two-leaf window to the west. About five feet to the east of this window, a set of double doors opens onto a concrete slab balcony, supported by what look like concrete brackets (figure 11). Later, this small balcony became part of a fire escape: it appears a sheet metal platform on top of the concrete deck is supported by metal struts.⁶ Oddly, another door exists just east of the double doors. Projecting from the sloping roof of this section are, to the west, a derelict dormer, gabled with two windows; and a few feet to the east, remnants of a small shed dormer. These dormers exactly correspond to those on the north slope of the roof.

The south-facing gabled section is largely faced in stucco, probably a late alteration. It projects forward from the plane of the main block about 16 inches. Stone shows at the base to a level about 3 feet from the ground. The first level of this gabled section

⁶ It is likely that the fire escape was added when the house was purchased by the American Legion post in 1950. The building permit index cards collection on microfilm at City Archives shows a listing for 1950, not consulted by the authors. Of course, other adaptations for clubhouse use likely were effected.

contains three evenly spaced windows, probably replacement double-hung. At the second level, three earlier windows, taller with mullions and transoms, match the first-level windows in horizontal placement. Up in the gable, a door has been inserted as part of the fire escape plan, flanked by two now blind windows. Possibly this door replaced a third window. Above the door, a small aperture appears just below the ridge. Next, to the east, a viewer sees a 12 by 12 foot ell rising two and one-half stories, surfaced with white stucco. We believe that the second floor of this small wing is the added second-story room, once supported on posts, referred to by a 1906 building permit.⁷ At some point, the volume below this room has been walled in and a south-facing door and small window added. The 1906 added second-story room receives light from a nine over one sash window centered facing south, and two small side windows. As with other components of the house, the small ell owns a pitched roof, whose bargeboards form a pediment with the molding below. In the pediment resides a set of three casement windows just above the cornice, and a small window tucked up near the ridge.

East Elevation (figures 12 and 12a):



Figure 12 East elevation looking north



Figure 12a East elevation

Not visible from any street, the east elevation will be described briefly. North of the added ell, the first story wall is again of stone, with one 9 over 1 sash window. As noted earlier, the once open area under the second floor sleeping porch has been enclosed. The second story above the belt course is ornamentally half timbered with two inset windows. The sleeping porch employs octagonal pillars, similar to those of the entry porch, connecting the parapet to the roof above. Extending from the sloping roof of this east section of the building is a large, three-window hipped dormer.

The robust brick stack of the interior chimney rises from the east end of the house; a corbelled expansion dresses the chimney head (figure 13).

⁷ Building permit 3871, 26 May 1906, City Archives



Figure 13 Chimney stack

Running along the north and west borders of the property is a stone retaining wall of coursed cut stone similar to that in the arches. The wall is capped with stones ornamentally set upright, a popular enhancement in the Philadelphia area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Figure 14 A section of the retaining wall

7. Significance

The Perot residence at 5151 Wissahickon Avenue in southwest Germantown is a relatively early (1905 for main block) and in some ways “archeological” exemplar of the Tudor Revival style in America, which was on its way to filling up suburbs throughout the country, though often in only lightly suggested form. It was designed by notable Germantown architect Robeson Lea Perot to be his home, one of several similar Tudor houses he would design. It counts as one of the very few grand houses in its section of Germantown to survive. Perched on the slope of a hill, its size and its west elevation facing Wissahickon Avenue offer enough drama to attract the eyes of those driving by; and when leaves are off the trees, can be seen for quite a distance westward on Queen Lane. We believe the property meets these criteria for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places:

D. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.

and

H. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City.

D. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.

Although competing terms such as “Early English” or “Jacobethan” have been proposed for the style, we will stay with the familiar “Tudor Revival,” or just Tudor for short. According to the dissertation by Gavin Townsend on the Tudor style in the United States, the earliest Tudor house in Germantown was a double house for Clement W. Williams by McKim and Bigelow from 1878-1879, no longer standing.⁸ This did not quickly lead to a flurry of Tudor houses, if for no other reason than much of the older sections of Germantown were already built up with Victorian

⁸ Gavin Townsend, “The Tudor House in America, 1890-1930,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1988, p. 151. No acceptable photograph has been located for this nomination. We have not attempted to verify this statement (earliest Tudor style house in Germantown).

and earlier dwellings. In 1904, Robeson Lea Perot, a Germantowner in architectural practice for ten years, owned and lived in a developer's twin on Hansberry Street east of Wissahickon Avenue. Having acquired in 1905 a small lot at the nearby corner of Hansberry Street and Wissahickon Avenue on which to build a house for himself and family, he chose the Tudor Revival style, and took it seriously. The *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* list these defining attributes:⁹

- Steeply pitched roof
- Cross gables
- Decorative half-timbering
- Prominent chimneys
- Narrow multi-pane windows
- Entry porches or gabled entry
- Patterned stonework or brickwork
- Overhanging gables or second stories
- Parapeted or Flemish gable

The roofs of the subject house are not particularly steep, and there are no parapeted or Flemish gables, nor patterned masonry, but all the other features apply. In this and other Tudor Revival dwellings which Perot designed (see appendix), overhanging second stories are not jettied, but rather supported on stone arches, forming porch areas at ground level. Another detail reflecting the Elizabethan-Jacobean period is the grouping of transomed windows made up of leaded glazing in diamond pattern. One prominent window of the north (front) façade can be construed as a shallow bay window or oriel, also characteristic of the Tudor Revival. A subtle enhancement is the use of small modillion-like fixtures in the belt course which imitate the ends of jetty-beams, though there is no true jetty. A surviving 15th-century building in Tenterden, England, though no doubt much conserved and curated, shows jetty-beam ends, shallow bay windows at the upper story, transomed windows with leaded glazing below (though unlikely original), and, of course, what one hopes is *actual* half-timbering. (figure 15). Fine houses of the early 16th century in England often continued some Gothic motifs, and Perot included one pointed window (north façade), and quatrefoil ornament at the second-story sleeping porch on the east section. Small octagonal pillars, seen in both the entry porch and the sleeping porch, recall those common in Early English construction.¹⁰ The house displays as well a variety of Tudor arches in stone and wood. Finally, the clustered brick main chimney with corbelled brickwork, though not enormous, is consistent with the Tudor Revival.



Figure 15 A surviving, though restored, "Tudor" structure in Tenterden, UK. Nancy Pontone photo, September, 2019.

⁹ An on-line publication of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2015, <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/index.html>. We are not claiming that the Perot Residence was the next Tudor Revival house in Germantown.

¹⁰ John Henry Parker, *A Concise Dictionary of Architectural Terms* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004-2019; facsimile republication of the 12th edition of 1910; first published in 1846 at Oxford, England), pp. 198-199.

Available biographical information about Perot does not include visits to Great Britain, though other Philadelphia architects “had strong ties to England through travel and education.”¹¹ These included Walter Cope, Frank Miles Day, and Wilson Eyre. Throughout the 1890s, many Tudor houses arose in Philadelphia’s suburbs, including Chestnut Hill; and others could be viewed as drawings at the T-Square Club, including some obtained from England. In a short report on the Perot residence, George Thomas suggested that one source of ideas for Perot’s house on Wissahickon Avenue had to be William L. Price’s “Kelty” in Lower Merion (1897/1898), at least for the grouping of three stone arches (ie, an arcade) and buttresses supporting the upper levels (figure 16). Perot had spent six months working for Price.¹² But this motif appears earlier and elsewhere in the Philadelphia region, as in a Tudoresque pharmacy and residence on Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, dated 1891-92 in the documentation for the Chestnut Hill National Historic District, and attributed to another Germantown architect, George T. Pearson¹³ (figure 17).

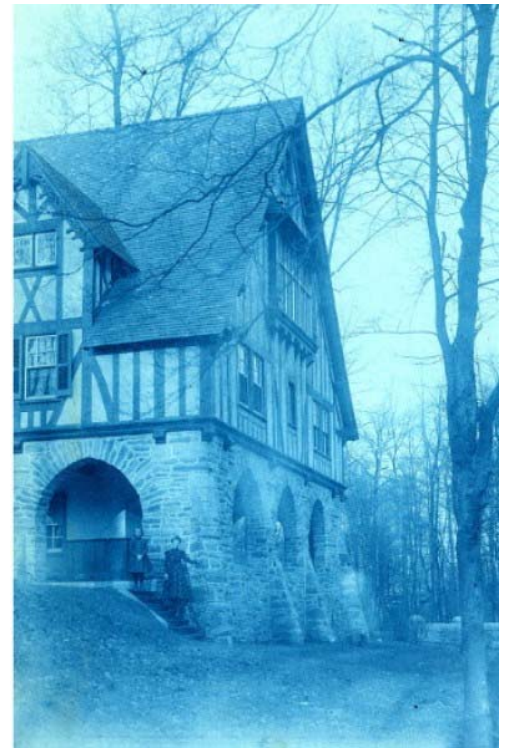


Figure 16 East side of "Kelty House" by William L. Price, showing the set of three arches fronting a porch and supporting the gabled mass above. Note also the buttresses. The house is extant but this section is not seen from the street. From The Athenaeum, General Collections, accessed via the PAB Project.



Figure 17 On Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, this building also shows three arches, at the front elevation, forming a porch and supporting gabled stories above. It is dated to 1891-92 and attributed to George T. Pearson.

¹¹ Townsend, “The Tudor House in America,” p. 152.

¹² G. Thomas, Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form, Office of Historic Preservation, survey code 041-84060-0515 (Clio Group index 0006560, 11 May 1983).

¹³ “Information on Buildings in the Chestnut Hill Historic District, National Register of Historic Places,” p. 125. Accessed from the website of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy, <https://chconservancy.org/historic-district>.

Of course, the three-arch motif can be traced back to the earliest Italian Renaissance churches, such as the Cathedral of Pienza. What is clear is that Perot took advantage of the abundance of stone in the Delaware Valley for his house and others. Stone for the first level with fake half-timbering over brick or over frame above became something of a regional pattern for Tudor houses.¹⁴ In sum, he knew the look of current Tudor Revival buildings, and likely of their English originals, whether or not he had viewed them directly.

Robeson Lea Perot's residence at 5151 Wissahickon Avenue stands as more than just one Tudoresque house among many in the Philadelphia region. The structure carefully adduces many historically correct details into an harmonious design.

H. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City.

The Perot residence might be considered a stately home without an estate: it was built on a small lot (about two thirds of an acre).¹⁵ With a few exceptions, by 1905, when Perot bought the ground and built the house, most of the Cricket Club area of southwest Germantown had been subdivided; and both old and new streets were seeing the erection of row houses and twins--though most larger and more ornate than the two and three-story brick developments known to the north and west sections of Philadelphia. Multi-acre estates, such as "Cedron" of the Taylor family, survived on the west side of Wissahickon Avenue, visible from Perot's high west-facing windows, as was the twenty-year old Pennsylvania Railroad Chestnut Hill rail line, and the 1895 Queen Lane Reservoir (figure 18). In fact, the view from the windows of the west-facing gable must have been pleasing, with something of a "machine in the garden" flavor. Large estates with fine houses endured particularly along still sequestered West School House Lane, from Wissahickon Avenue almost to the river. But even where the very large country retreats were mostly gone, and development underway, in 1905 substantial single houses from the 1880s – 1900 still stood on modest sized properties along Wissahickon Avenue, Manheim Street, and streets south of it.¹⁶ Today (2020), few of these single houses survive in the area; several are found along McKean Avenue from Manheim to Clapier, and we have Perot's dwelling on Wissahickon Avenue. McKean Avenue (deemed an "avenue" only to distinguish it from the presumably older McKean Street in South Philadelphia) is actually a small street, easily overlooked. But perched on a hill, Perot's essay in Tudor Revival, with the bold stone arches and complex half-timbered upper levels, cannot but be seen and (one hopes) admired, despite its decrepit condition, by walkers or riders along busy Wissahickon Avenue. This has been so for over 110 years, since before the first Model T's attempted the upgrade to the crest at Manheim Street. When leaves have fallen from trees, the house can be seen from a considerable distance west on Queen Lane. This visibility, and the linkage with the ideal of the "country house," depend upon the placement of the house on a slope, and the presence of open lawn on the north and especially west sections of the property.

¹⁴ Townsend, "The Tudor House in America," pp. 146-147.

¹⁵ Here I am not equating "stately" mainly with immense size, but rather with dignity, substance, evident attention to design.

¹⁶ These statements are based mainly on inspection of Bromley atlases from 1895, 1901, and 1910, as well as walking around the neighborhood.

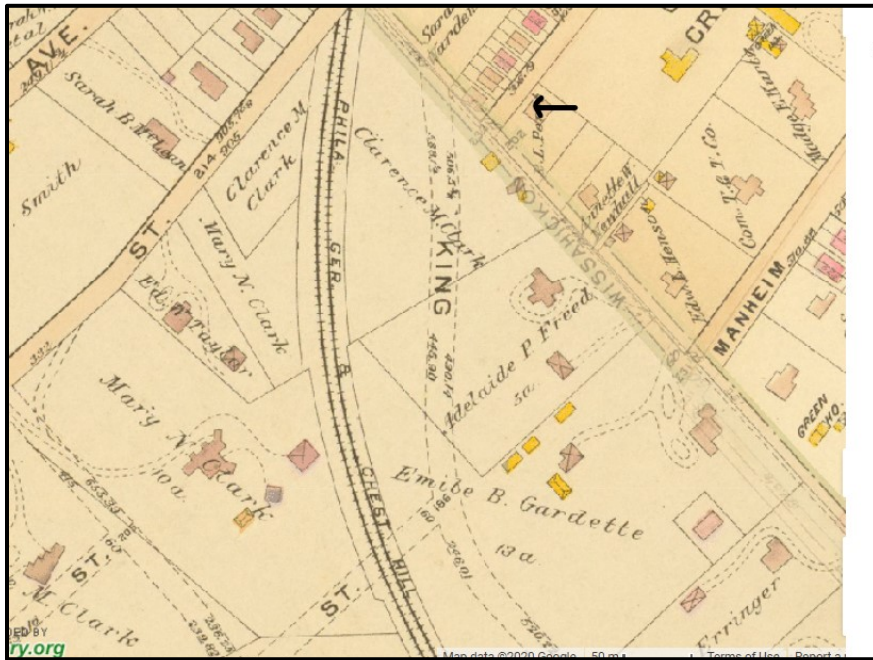


Figure 18 From Perot's house (arrow), occupants looking west and south in 1910 saw mostly suburban estates with large houses, and the steam powered commuter trains to and from Chestnut Hill. (Bromley Atlas, 1910, via Philageohistory of the Athenaeum).

Conclusion:

More than many Tudor Revival homes, Robeson Lea Perot's design for his own dwelling is exemplary of the style which saturated American suburbs, and some suburb-like city neighborhoods, during the first third of the twentieth century. More than most, the house at 5151 Wissahickon Avenue shows clear attention to historical, or at least historicizing, detail. Elevated above busy Wissahickon Avenue on a hill in what is one of Philadelphia's highest locations, the Perot House with its striking half-timbering and array of windows on the upper levels has provided a dramatic sight since 1905. Perot was a busy and capable architect, a contributor of homes and other buildings from the DuPont colonies of north Delaware to the peak of Chestnut Hill. He was among a group of respected architects who called historic Germantown their home. Although we also cannot claim that his large Tudor house on a hill directly catalyzed the subsequent spread of this style in nearby parts of Germantown, it certainly made a statement that this was a "look" meant to convey taste, stability, and even authority.

Appendices

Robeson Lea Perot (1872 – 1944)

A lifelong resident of Germantown, where he was born, Perot attended Germantown Academy and then the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁷ He entered as a freshman, but left after one year, to somehow return as a senior in the architectural department in 1893. He played cricket and baseball, and was on the architectural music committee and in the sketch club.¹⁸ Following apprenticeship time with Germantown architects Mantle Fielding and then William L. Price, Perot entered practice, for some years with his cousin, Elliston Perot Bissell. He married Eleanor Ball DuPont in 1897, and this led to considerable work among the DuPonts in Delaware and

¹⁷ The main sources for biographical information about Perot are the entry in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project of the Philadelphia Athenaeum, and an obituary in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 July 1944. There is a collection of Perot papers at the Germantown Historical Society, including his published writings on the history of Germantown Academy and the Lea and Perot families, but little relating to his work as an architect. Other information came from usual sources such as on-line census records.

¹⁸ University of Pennsylvania, Yearbook for 1893, accessed on line via Ancestry.com.



adjacent Pennsylvania. But he also designed houses in Germantown, Chestnut Hill, Lower Merion Township, and New Jersey. The list of his projects in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project of the Athenaeum, in part based on notices in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, shows that he also worked on churches, an office building for the DuPont Company, and quite a few garages, no doubt for new automobile owners in the 1910s and 1920s. Perot was a busy and highly capable practitioner.

Figure 19 Robeson Lea Perot. Photo from ancestry.com, contributed by a subscriber

He served during World War I with rank of Major, and maintained an enduring interest in military affairs. He was also for a time president of the Germantown Historical Society. Perot and his wife divorced in 1919, and eventually she owned the house at 5151 Wissahickon Avenue (as Eleanor DuPont Taney, having married Cecil Taney). Perot was a member of the T-Square Club, the AIA, the Huguenot Society of America, and other organizations.

Other Tudor Revival houses by Perot

Of course, Robeson Lea Perot designed other Tudor Revival houses, some likely not yet identified. Close to the time he was planning his own house on Wissahickon Avenue, in 1904 he designed a Tudoresque double house on Summit Street in Chestnut Hill, extant and looking in good shape (figure 20). Its façade shows brick at the ground floor, then half timbering above, probably over brick. As at 5151 Wissahickon, the course or cornice at the base of the second story uses imitation jetty beam ends as ornament. The Morice residence near Buck Road in Haverford from c. 1909, a single home, shows Perot again supporting upper-story mass on arches, presumably stucco over stone or brick (figure 21).



Figure 20 Tudor style double house in Chestnut Hill.

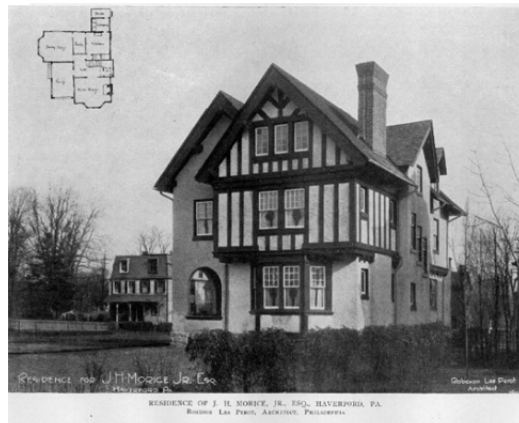


Figure 21 Morice residence in Haverford, AIA/T-Square Yearbook, 1910

Subsequent Tudor Revival Buildings in Southwest Germantown and Adjacent East Falls

Though probably not stimulated by the 1905 Perot Residence on Wissahickon Avenue, in the 1910s and 1920s *faux* half-timbering proliferated in nearby streets, as old single homes disappeared along Manheim Street and the roads opening into it, to be replaced by twins and rows. In addition, several new streets were laid out, and similarly developed. Tudor styling appeared on twins and rowhouses throughout the Cricket Club area of Southwest Germantown, but with enough variation and quality to make for a still attractive and visually lively neighborhood. “Tudor Gothic” design was also applied to several apartment houses among the many built near the Queen Lane train station (at Queen Lane and Wissahickon Avenue)—the Cloverly Apartments on School

House Lane just east of Wissahickon, and the larger courtyard Marchwood Apartments on Wissahickon across from Alden Park. The Marchwood, and probably the Cloverly, were designed by the firm Stetler and Deshler, among the most productive architects doing apartment blocks in Philadelphia. Farther north and west, builders and some good architects were making Lincoln Drive into an upscale winding cord of new dwellings, many of which displayed attributes of the trending Tudor Revival.

Just at the time Perot was settling into his new house, across Wissahickon Avenue and just to the north, the well-known developers Wendell and Smith were beginning to populate “Queen Lane Manor” on land sold by the family or estate of William G. Warden, who had made a fortune in the oil business. In this residential enterprise, centered between Coulter and Queen Lane, east of McMichael Street—an area in 1910 still thought of as Germantown—mostly young architects in the 1910s and 1920s went about creating fine houses, singles and twins, in the dominantly popular Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival styles. Many of those in the Tudoresque manner reward the eye seeking arts and crafts details, including exposed rafters, *faux* exposed purlins, porches with complex roof supports, even inclined buttresses here and there. West of Henry Avenue, elegant rows on Midvale Avenue, Penn Street, and Queen Lane, built in the late 1920s, were recognized in 2009 with the creation of the Tudor East Falls Historic District.

Southwest Germantown



Tudoresque double houses on Manheim Street, c.1910-1920



Cloverly Apartments, West School House Lane, c. 1928, showing Tudor and Gothic design elements.

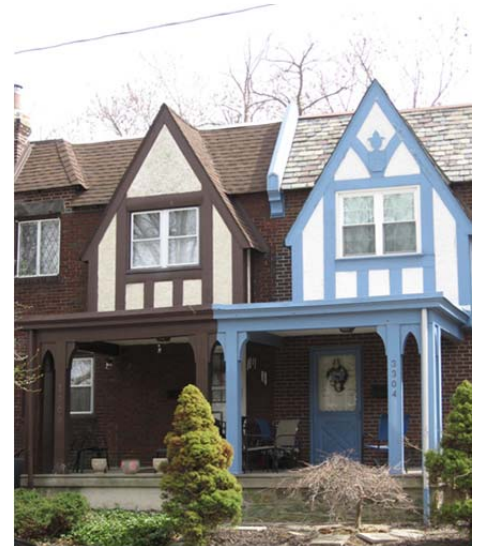


Row houses on West Abbottsford Street near McKean. A slightly Tudor variant of a Philadelphia favorite: bay window over porch. C. 1920s

Former “Queen Lane Manor” District and East Falls



Large Tudor house on West Coulter Street near Stokely (formerly in “Queen Lane Manor”), with two cross-gables, 1911. Architect unknown.



Row houses, 3300 block of Tilden Street, East Falls, c. 1920s.



Tudor style house with cross-gables and arts and crafts features, on Midvale Avenue and Fox Street in the former "Queen Lane Manor" district, c. 1907. This house was featured in advertisements by the developers of Queen Lane Manor. Architect unknown.

Addendum:

A photograph recently identified:



*The family has gathered at the east porch, later enclosed, in 1908.
From West Family History., <http://publicfamilyhistory.weebly.com/west-family.html>*

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Public comment received by
the Philadelphia Historical Commission
regarding the nomination for 5151 Wissahickon Avenue

Support 5151 Wissahickon Ave

awfromhh/aweiss <awfromhh4@gmail.com>

Tue 1/19/2021 10:12 PM

To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>; preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>; Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>; Shannon Garrison <Shannon.Garrison@Phila.gov>; Allyson Mehley <Allyson.Mehley@Phila.gov>; Laura Dipasquale <Laura.Dipasquale@Phila.gov>; Meredith Keller <Meredith.Keller@Phila.gov>; Megan Schmitt <Megan.Schmitt@Phila.gov>

 1 attachments (16 KB)

supportcontinentalfinal.doc;

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Support 5151 Wissahickon Ave
below and attached

SoLo/Germantown Civic Association (RCO)

Southwest Central Lower Germantown

CLEAN GREEN SAFE

Wayne Ave Merchant Association (WAM)

Registered Community Organization (RCO)

A Weiss BC Organizer 215 843 5555 awfromhh4@gmail.com

Jan. 17, 2021

Philadelphia Historical Commission

1515 Arch St.

Phila., PA 191

Attn: Jon Farnham, Executive Director Jon.Farnham@phila.gov

Re: Support 5151 Wissahickon Ave.

Dear Dr. Jon Farnham:

We fully support the nomination of 5151 Wissahickon Ave., to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. This striking Tudor style building is a landmark. It occupies a prominent highly visible location on the south east corner of Wissahickon Ave. and Hansberry St. It is striking overlooking the heavily trafficked Wissahickon Ave. and Hansberry St.. As long as anyone can remember it has been there. It is a great part of the history and character of our community.

We have the opportunity to recognize and preserve this important building. We must take action to ensure future generations will benefit and learn from its presence.

5151 Wissahickon Ave., the American Legion Continental Post #263 as it is commonly known now is important and deserves the recognition and protection accorded to a property listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Allison Weiss

BC Organizer

cc: preservation <preservation@phila.gov>, Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@phila.gov>, Laura.dipasquale laura.dipasquale@phila.gov, Shannon Garrison <Shannon.Garrison@phila.gov>, Meredith Keller meredith.keller@phila.gov, Allyson Mehley allyson.mehley@phila.gov, Megan Schmitt megan.schmitt@phila.gov

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