

REPORT ON 514 S 4TH STREET
PREPARED BY MEREDITH KELLER, 19 APRIL 2021

In response to the request submitted by the property owner of 514 S. 4th Street to reclassify the property from significant to non-contributing in the Society Hill Historic District, the staff is providing the Committee on Historic Designation with documentation of the property. The district inventory describes the property as consisting of two buildings (A and B): a three-story building fronting S. 4th Street (A); and a 2 ½-story building at the rear (B). The inventory notes that numerous alterations and additions occurred to the buildings over time. The inventory states:

514 A,B 3-story, 2-bay, painted brick, vernacular building. Central shopfront with 9 large lights and flanking pedimented doorways, each with different transoms and doors; 2nd and 3rd floors have 6/6 wooden sash; storm sash; fake louvered shutters at 2nd and 3rd floors; corbelled brick cornice.

North elevation: stucco.

South elevation: stucco 2 ½-story building with multiple additions at rear of lot; ½ gambrel roof; added porch and new side wall; 1/1 replacement windows; new metal overhang for wrap-around porch; stepped parapet walls; shed dormer.

Built c. 1760. Alterations: c. 1920 front section. Significant.

The following report proffers several corrections to the inventory data and provides photographs of the property at the time of designation compared to its current condition.

Timeline of Construction and Alteration

1791-98: Construction of three-story S. 4th Street building:

The district inventory presumably dates both buildings on the property at 514 S. 4th Street to c. 1760, though the source of that information is unknown. The earliest deed located for the property (Deed D-78-182) dates to 1 March 1791 and describes the property as consisting of a “lot of ground.” The dimensions of the lot were given as 20-feet in breadth on 4th Street and 100-feet westward in depth. The dimensions described in this 1791 deed match the dimensions of the current property. The property’s boundary has remained unchanged since 1791.

By 1 January 1798, a deed (Deed D-78-183) indicates that Philip and Christiana Young sold a “brick messuage or tenement and lot or piece of ground” to Adam Shetzline. The brick messuage or tenement referenced in this deed appears to indicate the construction of the three-story building fronting S. 4th Street. The rear 2 ½-story building is explicitly referenced in a later deed, though not in the 1798 deed. It is assumed that the rear building was not yet constructed in 1798.

Pre-1846: Construction of rear 2 ½-story building with half-gambrel roof:

A deed dated 18 February 1832 (Deed AM-25-665) records the sale of the property to Joseph Levy; however, this deed also makes no mention of the rear structure. In 1846, Levy insures the property, and the survey notes the presence of a “brick house on the rear of the same lot” with a “broken pitch shed roof.” This survey provides the first evidence of the 2 ½-story structure with a half-gambrel roof constructed at the rear of the property.

No historic photographs that show the original front façade of the 4th Street building have been located. However, the 1846 insurance survey and historic maps confirm that the original

structures remain. The insurance survey and 1917 Sanborn map identify the building fronting S. 4th Street as consisting of a main block with a piazza, three-story kitchen, and two-story addition (Fig. 1). The main block, piazza, three-story rear kitchen, and two-story frame addition remain visible despite subsequent additions and alterations (Figure 2). Though no longer visible from the exterior, both the survey and map show that a 3-foot alleyway at the south provided access to the building at the rear of the property, identified as 514 ½ S. 4th Street on the Sanborn map.

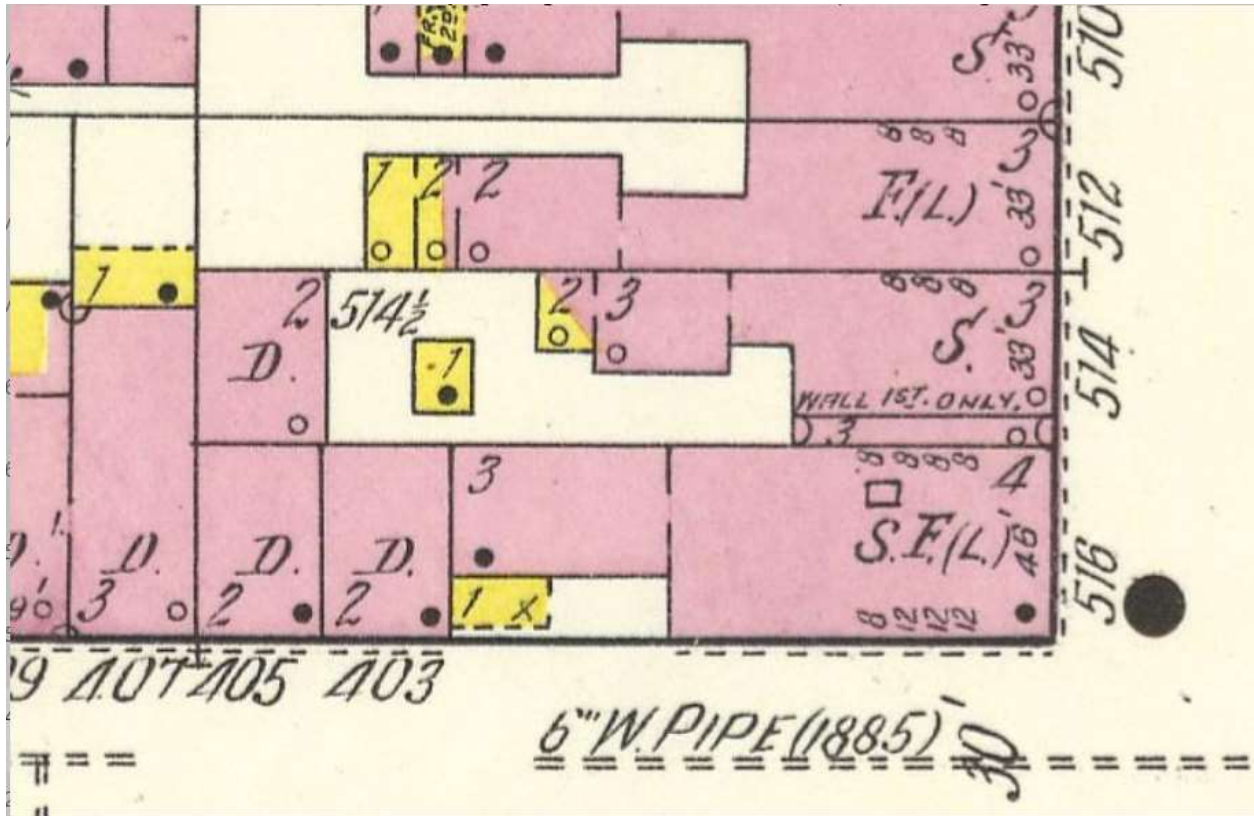


Figure 1: 1917 Sanborn map showing 514 and 514 ½ S. 4th Street with a 3-foot wide alley, piazza, and kitchen.



Figure 2: Rear of the three-story building fronting S. 4th Street, showing the main block, piazza, and three-story kitchen.
Source: Cyclomedia.

1951: Façade replacement of main structure:

The district inventory inaccurately dates the changes to the main structure's façade to c. 1920. However, zoning records indicate that the front façade was reconstructed in 1951. At that time, the building was listed as vacant and the work was described on the permit application as: "Repairs to roof, install new front and general interior repairs. No additions." A 1959 photograph shows the reconstructed façade (Figure 3).



Figure 3: 514 S. 4th Street in 1959, 9 years after the façade was reconstructed. Source: Department of Records.

Pre-1978: Construction of rear additions:

A 1978 zoning document shows that the building achieved its current form by this date, though the date of construction of the one-story addition that connects the main structure to the rear building remains unknown.

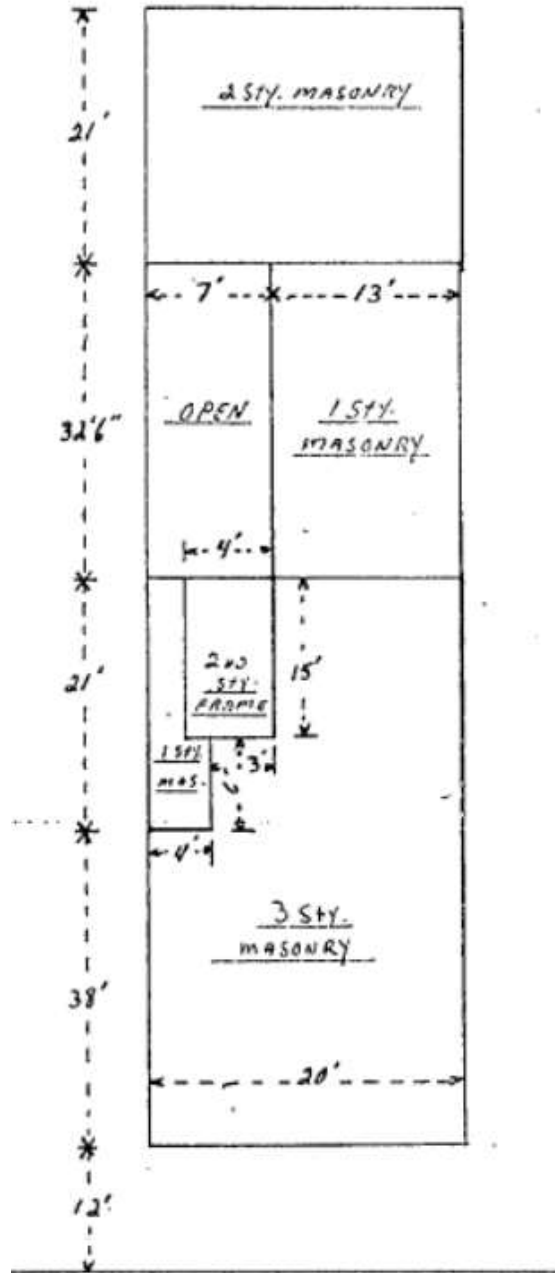


Figure 4: A 1978 zoning document showing the property had acquired its current form by this date. Source: Atlas.

Designation and Current Photographs

The property at 514 S. 4th Street was designated as a significant resource in the Society Hill Historic District on 10 March 1999. While the Historical Commission has the authority to reclassify properties, there has been no loss or destruction of the qualities that caused the property's original entry on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The images below show that changes to the property have been minimal over the last 22 years since designation.



Figure 5: 1999.



Figure 6: 2020.



Figure 7: 1999.



Figure 8: 2020.



Figure 9: 1999.



Figure 10: 2020.

Conclusion

The district inventory entry for 514 S. 4th Street should be corrected to clarify that the three-story main structure fronting S. 4th Street was constructed between 1791 and 1798 and that the rear two-story building was constructed separately, though no later than 1846. Research shows that neither building was constructed by 1760, the date currently recorded in the inventory. The entry should be further revised to show that the front façade of the main structure was reconstructed in 1951 rather than 1920, as evidenced by zoning documents.

The staff concludes that while there are errors in the dates of the district inventory regarding the construction and alteration of the buildings at 514 S. 4th Street, those errors have no impact on the property's significance. The staff attributes the property's significance to its early period of construction and the continued retention of its forms, which include the main block with piazza, three-story kitchen, and two-story frame addition that comprise the structure fronting S. 4th Street, and the 2 ½-story structure with a half-gambrel roof at the rear. The alterations to the main structure's façade and to the rear of the property had occurred prior to designation and were identified in the inventory entry. Little visible change has occurred since designation. Because the qualities that caused the property's original entry on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places survive, the property should remain classified as significant in the Society Hill Historic District.