

Comment from nominator received by the
Philadelphia Historical Commission regarding
the nomination for 318 E. Durham Street

Response to PHC Staff Comments – 318 E Durham St. Historic Nomination
Paula & Kelly O'Day, 6/28/21

1. "... this building's connection to Tourison is tenuous at best. The fact that Tourison reportedly renovated this building does not qualify it for historic designation."

Alexander Bartlett, Germantown Historical Society Archivist/ Librarian¹, has provided additional information on the 4-photo before – after collage of the conversion of the former 7131 Sprague St. stable/ barn to the 318 E Durham St. house that was included in the December 2020 nomination submission. Exhibit A shows a most recent scan of the before- after collage provided by the Germantown Historical Society. Mr. Bartlett reports "... that these photos are from the collections of Joseph Eddleman, Jr., who was the great grandson of Ashton Tourison."

Jim Duffin² received a copy of Mr. Bartlett's 6/22/21 email and commented that "I notice Lisabeth Holloway's handwriting there and even my own -- the address number in brackets." He goes on to say "Unfortunately I wasn't around when the Edelmanns let the GHS copy the images. They are great and a wonderful example of what was the common way of doing real estate development in Philadelphia up to WWII -- reusing existing structures."

The provenance of the 4-photo before-after collage of the 318 E Durham St. house is very strong:

- The 4-photos before-after collage was found in Joseph Edelson's, Ashton Tourison's great grandson's, collection at the Germantown Historical Society archives by Alexander Bartlett.
- The handwritten notes on the before-after collage have been attributed to Lisabeth Holloway by JM Duffin who recognized her handwriting.
- JM Duffin recognizes the address number in brackets "[318 ?]" on the photo collage as his own.
- JM Duffin recalls that "Unfortunately I wasn't around when the Edelmanns let the GHS copy the images."

The following image shows a copy of a May 11, 1900 real estate advertisement in the Philadelphia Inquirer for the sale of the 7131 Sprague (aka 300 E Durham St.) property, including the 12-room house, stable and tree acres of land.

May 11 1900	7131 Sprague St Property for Sale Advertisement	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 11 May 1900, Fri • Page 11	
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This real estate advertisement demonstrates that there was a stable/barn on the 7131 Sprague St. property in May, 1900. Mr. Henry Lehnert, the owner of 7131 Sprague St. property, did not sell the property and house in 1900; he continued to live in it until his death in 1916.

¹ Email from Alexander Bartlett to Elise Rivers dated 6/22/21.

² Email from JM Duffin to Alexander Bartlett dated 6/22/21

The 4-photos collage clearly demonstrates that the 318 E Durham St. house was remodeled by Ashton Tourison from a barn/stable on the then 7131 Sprague St. property owned by Henry Lehnert.

2. *“This particular building does not illuminate Tourison’s body of work”*

Tourison was an active builder for many years and his early work would not be as impressive as his later work. Master builders do not start their careers as master builders. They need to gain experience and skill. Some of Ashton Tourison’s early work included building and rehabilitating stables/ barns.

A search of newspaper accounts of Tourison stable construction and rehabilitation work yielded 8 example projects of his stable construction/ reconstruction work. These example Tourison stable/barn projects are in Exhibit B.

318 E Durham St. is one of Ashton Tourison’s early career projects and should be protected as both an example of Tourison’s work and as an example of the early 1900s practice of reusing – repurposing older buildings.

JM Duffin points out the importance of the building reuse – repurposing issue when considering the merits of the 318 E Durham St. house, it shows a “... *great and a wonderful example of what was the common way of doing real estate development in Philadelphia up to WWII -- reusing existing structures.*”

3. *“The connections to former owners are likewise tenuous. This building was an outbuilding on the property, not the main building, which was located to the west on Sprague Street, and therefore has limited connections to former owners. ”*

It appears that Staff have misunderstood the issue of former residents of the 318 E Durham St. house. Dr. Louis Grossman, known as the father of endodontics, owned the 318 E Durham St. house when his ground breaking book, ***Endodontic Practice*** was first published in 1940. He later sold the 318 E Durham St. house to Major Gravell. Both Dr. Grossman and Major Gravell owned and lived in the 318 E Durham St. house, not the 7131 Sprague St. house implied by the staff comments.

Dr. Louis Grossman purchased 318 E Durham St. on February 19, 1940 and sold it to WH Gravell on December 29, 1944. William Gravell was the Pennsylvania State Administrator of the Public Works Administration in the early 1930s. He had previously been a Major in the US Army Corp of Engineers. He later taught at Drexel and was the head of a consulting engineering firm that bore his name.

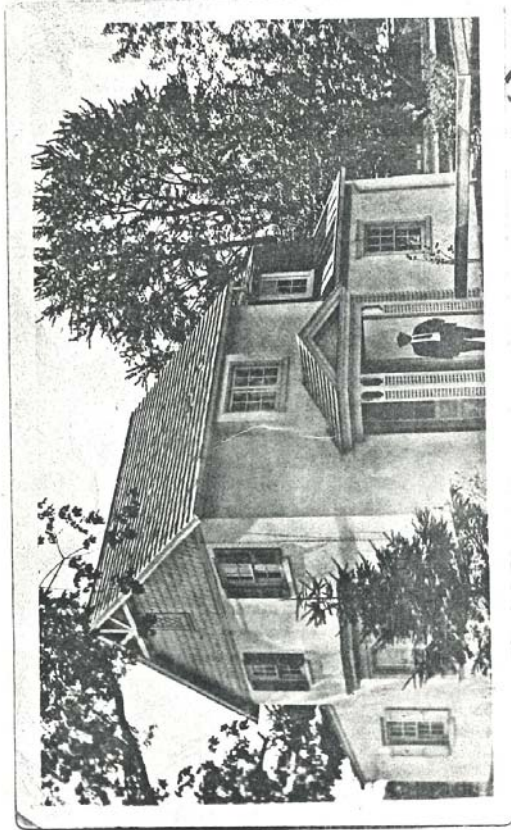
Dr. Grossman and Major Gravell lived-in and owned the 318 E Durham St. house so it is not valid to claim “... ***The connections to former owners are likewise tenuous.***”

4. ***“The staff questions the identification of this building on the 1901 Bromley map and contends that the yellow spot on the map that is interpreted as this building is nothing more than a smudge. The spot is the wrong size and shape, is in the wrong location, is not outlined in black like other wood-frame buildings on the map and does not appear on the 1910 Bromley map. ”***

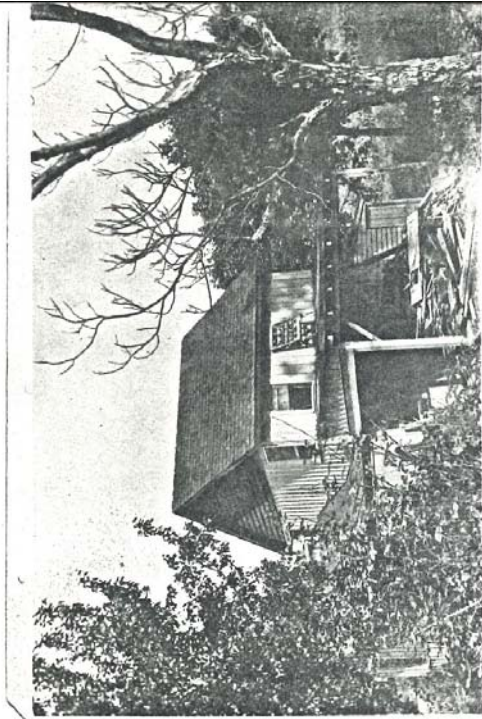
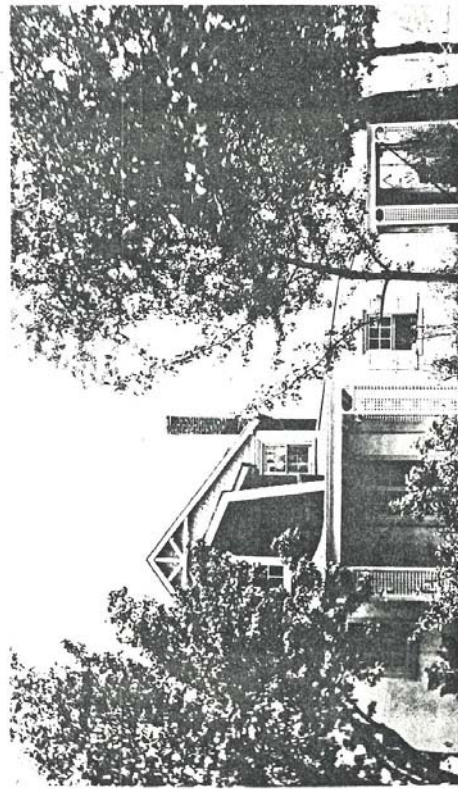
The staff concerns about the validity of the yellow spot indicating the 318 E Durham St. have merit. It is interesting to note that the yellow color is the correct color code for a wood building as shown in the “Explanations” list of colors and corresponding building types for the 1901 map.

We now have more information on the about the stable and the provenance of the 3-photo before-after collage so that the yellow mark/possible smudge on the 1901 Bromley map is less important in dating the stable/barn and linking it to linking Ashton Tourison. From more recent findings, we now know:

- The original 3-acre 7131 Sprague St. property had a stable in May 1900 based on the May 11, 1900 Philadelphia Inquirer real estate advertisement.
- The 4-photo before – after collage is from Ashton Tourison’s great grandson’s collection at the Germantown Historical Society.
- Lisbeth Holloway wrote the ***“original barn remodeled by Ashton Tourison”*** note on the 4-photo before – after collage.
- JM Duffin advises that he is the source of the “[318?]” pencil notation.



This house, E. Durham (300 block) [3182]
is the end result of the remodelling



↑ Two views of original barn, remodelled
↓ by Ashton Lowison into house for

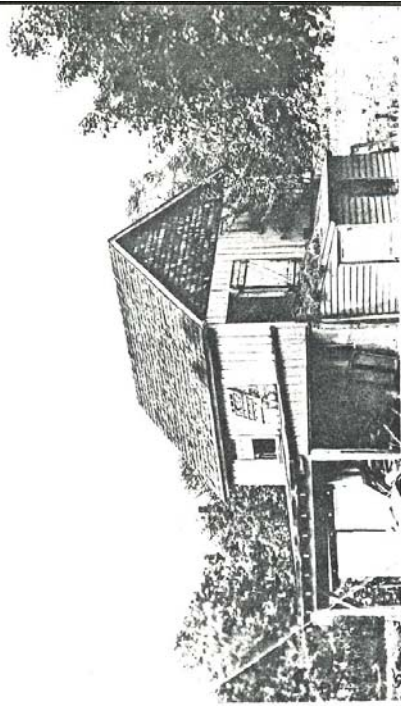

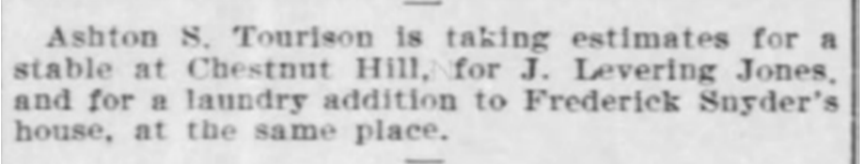
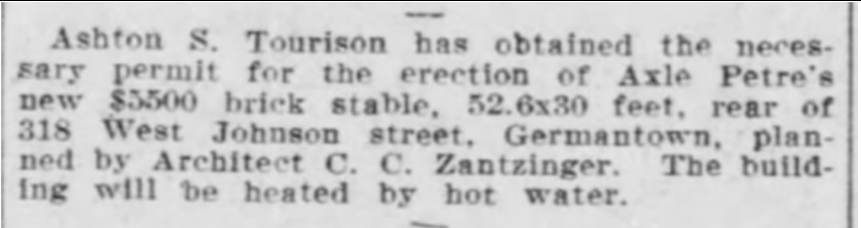
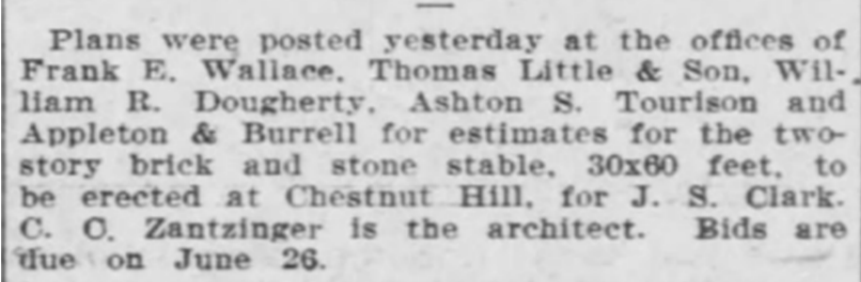
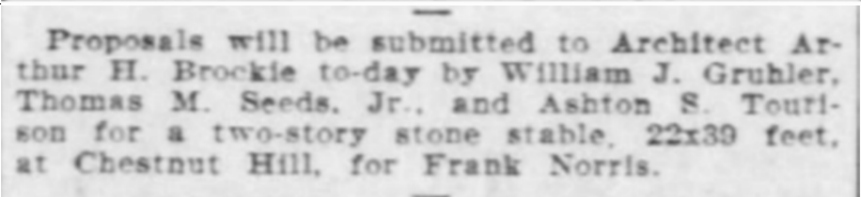
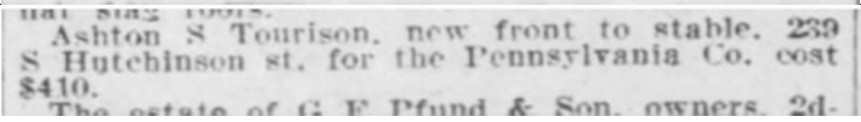
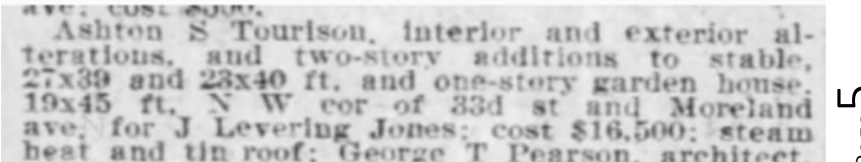


Exhibit A: 4-Photo Before – After Collage of 318 E Durham St.

Exhibit B: Ashton S. Tourison Early Career: Example Stable Construction Work			
Date	Description	Newspaper Clipping	Clipping
Oct. 1899	1521 Filbert St. for Penn RR	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 31 Oct 1899, Tue • Page 9	
June 1902	Chestnut Hill for J Levering Jones	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 30 Jun 1902, Mon • Page 7	
May 29, 1903	318 W Johnson St, rear	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 29 May 1903, Fri • Page 15	
June 17, 1903	Chestnut Hill for JS Clark	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 17 Jun 1903, Wed • Page 5	
Sept 1903	Chestnut Hill for Frank Norris	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 10 Sep 1903, Thu • Page 6	
Sept. 1903	239 S Hutchinson St	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 25 Sep 1903, Fri • Page 5	
Nov. 1905	NW Corner 33d St. and Moreland Ave for J Levering	The Philadelphia Inquirer Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 04 Nov 1905,	

	Jones	Sat • Page 15	
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Source: Newspapers.com