

Owner response received by the
Philadelphia Historical Commission regarding
the nomination for 318 E. Durham Street

Evaluation of PHC Nomination for 318 E. Durham Street

prepared for

Richard C. DeMarco
Zarwin Baum DeVito Kaplan Schaer Toddy, P.C

prepared by

CivicVisions LP

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Executive Summary:

This review of the nomination for 318 E. Durham Street agrees with the assessment of the nomination by the staff of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. The property does not meet Criterion A for its association with Ashton S. Tourison, whose work in the immediate vicinity for Sedgwick Farms is of vastly different character in its scale, materiality, and architectural ambition. The subject property shows none of the characteristics for which Sedgwick Farms is identifiable. Nor is the ownership of the subject property by Mrs. Amelia Lehnert of significance. As noted in the staff report, the building supposedly had its beginnings as a stable, but the Lehnert family obviously would have actually lived in the brick residence facing Sprague Street. Initially **Mr. Lehnert's** musical instrument factory was in the German craft district of old city where he also lived during the formative years of his business. Mr. Grossman in fact is recorded by the 1940 US census in another residence several blocks away; the actual residents of 318 E. Durham Street from 1930 ff. can be determined from the US census and telephone and city directories.

Similarly the nomination badly misinterprets the development history of East Mount Airy. Sedgwick Farms is not as claimed **"the beginning of the development of East Mount Airy."** In fact the development of East Mount Airy had begun a full generation earlier in the 1880s in nearby properties subdivided and developed by the president of the Reading Railroad, Franklin Gowen, who had laid out the railroad stations through his property that set the stage for East Mount Airy and began its subdivision. Other developers, notably Frank Mauran preceded Tourison in large scale building activities in the immediate vicinity under the name of Stenton Farms, initiated when Mauran purchased the Stenton Country Club in **1905, three years before Tourison's project was announced.** Thus Tourison followed rather than led the development.

Criteria E, G, and J are not met as well in that the subject building is **unlike Tourison's** better known work, being either a partial renovation of an earlier stable, or a modest service residence replacing the previous barn rather than new, purpose-built suburban housing. It is a minor building, that in materials, scale, and social ambience is drastically different than **Tourison's Sedgwick Farms** project which consisted of new houses constructed in historical styles on spacious suburban lots, creating a unified architectural and economic community. The renovation as dated in the nomination c. 1900 would have been accomplished prior to the creation of the third Tourison business that was formed when **Ashton's son, G. Bartle Tourison**, trained as an architect at Cornell who graduated in 1905, joined his father in the building firm. If it was built prior to 1905, it would not be the work of the firm that created much of the Sedgwick Farms neighborhood because that firm had yet to be established; instead it appears to be a minor service building that began as a frame structure and later was modified and largely rebuilt but again in it is tiny original footprint. The building has lost integrity in the removal of much of its original detail.

Further, the building does not meet Criterion H as an established and familiar feature. The building itself is of modest size being considerably smaller than its surrounding buildings, largely screened by hedges and is now set amidst a full city block of apartment houses and parking lots developed in the 1960s by builder, John McShain.

Finally the house is strikingly at odds with the buildings of its context in a block that is now largely filled with 1960s apartment houses. It is not representative of the large houses of the regional development and is at odds with the community patterns that would meet Criterion J. Thus, the summation of the Philadelphia Historical Commission staff (following) accurately captures the failures of the nomination and designation of this minor building is not appropriate.

PHC Staff review:

“OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 318 E. Durham Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that the subject property is closely associated with Aston S. Tourison, an important developer of the Sedgwick Farms neighborhood in East Mt. Airy. It also suggests that the land's prior association with Henry Lehnert, a well-respected maker of musical instruments, and Louis Grossman, **“renowned in the field of medical science,”** also support the subject property's significance under Criterion A. Under Criterion C, the nomination argues that the **subject property “records the beginning of the development in East Mt. Airy...built along the Reading Railroad commuter train line at the turn of the 19th century.”** Under Criterion E, G and J, the nomination suggests that Tourison's business, Ye Old Sedgwick Farms Company, was responsible for constructing most of the houses that still remain on the 300 and 500 blocks of East Durham Street. The nomination argues that Tourison was a pioneer in residential development in East Mt. Airy who designed in a wide range of architectural styles across a wide range of home prices. Under Criterion H, the nomination describes the subject property as an established and familiar feature to the current residents of both the block and the surrounding **streets, many of whom “consider [it] an asset to the legacy, social fabric, design, and character of this community-oriented walking neighborhood.”**

“Tourison is unquestionably an important figure in the history and development of Mt. Airy, but 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. Tourison constructed and renovated hundreds of buildings in northwest Philadelphia. This particular building does not illuminate Tourison's body of work. 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. Moreover, this building fails to evidence the development of East Mt. Airy; the planned developments like Sedgwick Farms are certainly worthy of designation, but this one is not. Finally, this small building cannot be considered an established and familiar visual feature; it is not large, tall, or located in a prominent place. 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 building does not merit historic designation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination fails to demonstrate that the property at 318 E. Durham Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, E, G, H or J.”

Documentation:

In the case of this nomination, the purpose of the nomination as stated in the introduction is the attempt to resolve a city planning conflict by using Philadelphia Historical Commission processes despite the lack of merit of the structure that is nominated. The

following corrections and new information support and amplify the conclusion of the PHC staff that the building in question, 318 E. Durham Street, does not merit designation.

Criterion A: The fact that Tourison owned the property at some later date does not make it the Ashton Tourison house **nor does it give it the proposed name, "Anchor House."**

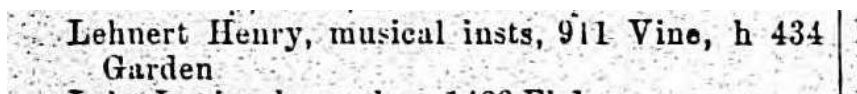
- In the early twentieth century, Tourison was living at 32 E. Sedgwick Street, near Germantown in the area developed by the Gowen Estate. Later, Tourison's place of residence moved to **houses of his business's design in Sedgwick Farms**, facts which can be confirmed by US census, city directories, and property atlases.

Conclusion: Although Tourison owned the property at a later date it remained in the ownership of the Lehnert family after 1910 (Bromley Atlas, 1910) and in fact as proven in the death notice of Henry Lehnert until after his death at the end of 1916 (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 December 1916). The fact that it was owned by a developer does not necessarily confer significance – unless the building design or the later owner is of special consequence. In this case neither case for significance can be made.

The lack of importance of 318 E. Durham to the life and career of musical instrument manufacturer Henry Lehnert can also be readily determined.

- **Lehnert's career is readily discovered**, beginning with nearly a decade in Boston before moving to the old city neighborhood of Philadelphia in the 1860s.
- **Mr. Lehnert's business operations** were centered in the northern part of Center City Philadelphia in the metal crafting district of the city.
- In 1870 his workplace was listed as 911 Vine Street, while his residence was a few blocks away at 434 Garden Street.¹ This conforms to the pattern of many industrialists who lived near their workplace to keep an eye on production.
- **By the 1890s the Gopsill's City Directory lists his factory at 427 N. 9th Street** while his residence is listed at the corner of Sprague near E. Mount Airy.²
- **The house is listed as owned by Lehnert's wife and then was deeded to daughters in anticipation of Amelia Lehnert's death in a will dated November 2, 1891.**
- The Lehnert family would have resided in the brick house shown in various atlases fronting on Sprague Street and not in the stable to the rear at the location of 318 E. Durham.

Conclusion: The staff's **evaluation that the stable was not Lehnert's residence** and has at most a peripheral association with him is accurate and given the lack of clear dating on the building, the building in its present condition may not have even existed during the years that Lehnert lived at the property.



1870 *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory*, p. 912. Lehnert's factory on Vine Street and his home a few blocks away on Garden Street.

¹ *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory*, 1870, p. 912

² *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory*, 1897, p. 1156.



Hopkins Atlas of Philadelphia, 1875. Green outlines at Lehnert business at 911 Vine Street (bottom) and residence at 434 Garden Street (top)

In 1885, Lehnert had moved his factory to 427 N. Ninth Street and was living in "Mt. Airy." In the 1890 directory the address was refined to Sprague Street near E. Mt. Pleasant.³

Lehnert Henry G., music insts, 427 N 9th, h Mt A
Gopsill's Philadelphia Directory, 1885, p. 1086

Lehnert Emma, segars, 1209 N 12th
" Henry G., musical insts, 427 N 9th, h Sprague
n E Mt Pleasant, Mt A

Gopsill's Philadelphia Directory, 1890, p. 1084.

³ *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory*, 1885, p. 1086; 1890, p. 1084.

A second claim is made for significance on the grounds that the house was later the home of Louis Grossman, a dentist with publications about endodontic dental practice.

- The US census record for 1940 finds Grossman living at 348 E. Meehan Street.⁴
- In the 1930s Grossman lived at 135 S. 54th Street, near his professorship at Penn.⁵
- Grossman's military draft card for 1942 also lists 348 E. Meehan Street.
- For his research, his University of Pennsylvania Dental School professorship where he created modern endodontic practice would be the site best associated with his articles and textbook, *Root Canal Therapy* (1940).
- Grossman may have owned 318 E. Durham Street but he never lived at this site.
- In the 1930 and 1940 censuses the building at 318 E. Durham was occupied by a William Gravell and his wife Dorothea. Property records list the house as being sold by Dorothea Gravell in the 1950s after her husband's death.
- Gravell's occupancy is further documented by city and telephone directories.

1940 US Census, Ward 22, block 27: Louis Grossman address: 348 E. Meehan Street, occupation dentist; Grossman, dentist, lived at 3402 Baring Street according to the 1930 *Polk's Philadelphia City Directory*, p. 608.

US census, 1930, enumeration district -51-6-12: Gravell listed renting at 318 E. Durham Street; Gravell is also listed in the *Polk's Philadelphia City Directory* for 1930 at the same address.

⁴ United States Census, 1940, for Grossman, Ward 22, block 27, sheet 11 A: for Gravell, Ward 22, block 13-14, ED 57-460 sheet 2 A.

⁵ "Louis Grossman, 86, Professor..." obituary, *New York Times*. March 26, 1988, Section 1, Page 38. 1930s Philadelphia telephone directories list his address at 135 S. 54th in proximity to his teaching at Penn which began in 1926. (Philadelphia Telephone Directory, 1931, p. 270: Library of Congress. Accessed 7.21) <https://www.loc.gov/resource/usteledirec.usteledirec08084/?sp=148&r=-0.056,0.08,0.569,0.325,0>

1940 US Census, Ward 22, block 14 William Gravell address: 318 E. Durham Street – Gravell's family would continue to reside here until 1954 when the building was sold by Gravell's widow, Dorothea Gravell.

When significance is claimed under Criterion A for a builder / designer or resident / owner the building must meet the tests of the PHC criteria not as average or ordinary but as “significant [to] ... the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city” or for association with a significant person. Neither test is met.

Criterion A is claimed for the building itself:

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;

Conclusion:

As demonstrated above Criterion A is not met for 318 E. Durham Street as representative of the work of Ashton S. Tourison, being neither exemplary of the type of work for which he is known in the Sedgwick Farms district nor for its role in the careers of its later tenants. It is further claimed in the supplement to the nomination that this building is crude because it is an early project.

- Tourison had been active as an independent builder since 1877, first as Tourison Brothers, then under Ashton S. Tourison after 1886. This was not an early project.
- He already had built sophisticated structures such as Henry Houston's Druim Moir mansion in Chestnut Hill, the elegant townhouses for Beauveau Borie at 1017-19 Spruce Street designed by George C. Mason in 1888, and also for Mason, the US Navy War College's Luce Hall at Newport, RI in 1892.
- This is a low-budget rehab but it is not an important example.

Criterion C.

Criterion C's requirement that a building or structure "reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style" is similarly not met.

- The building at 318 E. Durham Street is minor and out of keeping with the large stone-faced houses that were advertised as Sedgwick Farms.
- Instead it is a servant building to an earlier residence that appears to have been designed independent of Tourison's development business c. 1908.
- Further, the present context of 318 E. Durham Street, now consisting of multiple 1960s apartment houses recently painted grey and white, and their attendant parking lots, is so altered as to remove whatever integrity and value the building may have had.



318 E. Durham Street, aerial context (Google) surrounded by 8 apartment blocks and parking; street view looking SW (photo: G. Thomas)



Parking lot setting of 318 E. Durham Street (photos: G. Thomas)

Criteria D, E. and F are claimed for the building as well. They require that a building:

- (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*;

- These criteria are not represented by 318 E. Durham Street whose size, materials, and style are all of far lesser quality than the houses in its vicinity.
- Though evidently owned at one point after 1916 by Tourison, it does not meet Criterion E as a significant work that influenced either the immediate vicinity or the development patterns of the vicinity.
- Nor does it meet Criterion F in demonstrating that the building contains elements of design which “represent a significant innovation.”
- Moreover, if the early twentieth century date is accurate, then 318 E. Durham was from Tourison’s builder practice prior to establishing his development business which occurred after 1905 with his son as architect / designer. Because it was owned by the Lehnert family, it was not part of Tourison’s Sedgwick Farms project.
- Most of the original wood trim has been either removed or covered with aluminum sheathing, further reducing the interest of the building.
- The evidence of advertisements for Sedgwick Farms demonstrates that Criteria D., E. and F. are better met by the stone houses on large lots across the street that embody the “Sedgwick Farms” idea as exemplified in their advertisements that proclaimed “Suburban houses, 12 and 14 rooms, (2 baths); large lots; stone dwellings...” or like the ad (below) with “graceful and satisfying lines.”⁶ In every way, 318 E. Durham does not meet this standard, with five rooms, 1 bath, and modest interior materials in a simple stucco house that is not representative of a significant style and contains no examples of “significant innovation.”



Advertisement for Sedgwick Farms house *Evening Public Ledger*, September 14, 1915, p. 20.

⁶ *Philadelphia Inquirer* September 4, 1909, p. 11.



Large houses across E. Durham Street (photo: G. Thomas) Google Earth view of large houses of neighborhood.

Examination of the house finds that it was cheaply built.

- Much of the building was built above a crawl space that has damaged the framing such that the south room and the room above both have a clearly observable downslope toward the south wall.
- Further, it was constructed with undersized 2"x4" roof rafters, spaced 16" on center that have cracked and are failing.
- The lot size is far below the norm of the Tourison development comprising 4,400 sq. ft where the typical lot for a Sedgwick Farms house is twice as large.



Cracks entirely through undersized roof rafter. Every rafter inspected had similar problems.

Conclusion: The character of the building, its initial purpose as a service building and the economy of its construction are in accord with the evaluation of the PHC staff. The building does not merit designation by the standards of Criteria E, F, and G.

- Clearly 318 E. Durham does not attain the significance of Tourison's documented work as a builder.
- With a career dating back to the mid-1870s, Tourison was already a skilled builder when he did the rebuild of 318 E. Durham Street.
- He was documented as building numerous houses attributed to Frank Furness's firm for the Gowen estate that are listed in the *Builder's Guide* in the late 1880s.
- Other examples of Tourison's work as a builder include such true landmarks as the Germantown Cricket Club by McKim, Mead & White (1890), George C. Mason's twin houses at 1017-19 Spruce Street for Beauveau Borie (1888) and Luce Hall for the US Navy War College, Newport, RI (1891) also designed by George C. Mason.⁷



Documented earlier building projects by Ashton S. Tourison (that firm active 1886 ff.), left: 1017-19 Spruce Street for Beauveau Borie, designed 1888, by George C. Mason; right: Mannheim Cricket Club, designed 1890, McKim, Mead & White.

⁷ Each of these projects are documented in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*



Luce Hall, United States Naval War College, Newport RI (1891), designed by George C. Mason.

Criterion H:

It is claimed in the nomination that 318 E. Durham Street meets criterion H:

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

This criterion in essence calls for a building to be a landmark by which a community orients itself. This would be the case for a prominent house, or perhaps a school or a church such as the nearby Grace Epiphany Episcopal Church a few blocks to the northwest in the center of the Gowen Estate development.⁸ Location also matters in meeting this criterion with a prominent site and visibility critical to its purpose.

- In the case of 318 E. Durham Street, the building is mid-block, set back from the street, and largely screened by high hedges reducing its visual impact.
- Further, it is set amidst 1960s apartment houses and their parking that form the dominant image of the block.



Lack of street presence of 318 E. Durham Street (photos: G. Thomas)

Conclusion: The physical evidence of the site confirms the PHC staff analysis that the building does not meet Criterion H.

⁸ H. Donald Putney, "Grace Epiphany," Church, National Register Nomination, November 1996.

The nomination claims that 318 E. Durham Street meets Criterion J:

Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

This criterion addresses the issue of regional development and its character. The nomination claims that the building at 318 E. Durham Street was Ashton Tourison's **first** documented commission in the region. As the builder of many of the houses of the Sedgwick neighborhood, this leads in turn to the claim that it was Tourison who originated the development of East Mount Airy that "... defined the turn of the (last) century use and architectural character of the immediately surrounding area."

- In fact, the East Mount Airy neighborhood is far more directly the result of the development activities of Franklin B. Gowen, president of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, who placed commuter stations in the vicinity of his own properties and began the subdivision of his property with the goal of making a "homogenous upper - and upper-middle-class population that would be drawn by architect- designed houses with well-landscaped grounds, generous open spaces, convenient transportation...."⁹
- The Gowen project began in the mid-1880s before Gowen was ousted from his position as president of the railroad, and included the subdivision and development of many houses just to the west of the Sedgwick Farms development.
- Further it was the Gowen family that gave the site to Grace Episcopal (now Grace Epiphany) church, creating an important institution of the community.



Baist's Map Showing the Development of the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia (1897) detail pl. 6 showing Gowen Estate (green arrow) development (red oval) in the vicinity of Mt. Airy and Mt. Pleasant (now Sedgwick Station) preceding Tourison's development by 10 years.

⁹ Putney, section 8, p. 6

Moreover, Tourison was not even the first important developer to work in the immediate Mt. Pleasant Station / Stenton area. Beginning in 1905, Frank Mauran (also known for being an owner of the Wilson Eyre-designed Neill and Mauran house in the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood) had acquired a large tract of land comprising the former Stenton Country Club along the border of Philadelphia and laid out a development that by 1910 had already produced “more than fifty homes ... since it was first laid out a few years ago.”¹⁰ This confirms that Mauran’s work preceded that of Tourison.



“Historic Germantown: City’s Oldest Suburban Section Still Growing After 200 Years,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 27, 1910, p. 46.

¹⁰ “Stenton Property to be Auctioned,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (23 March 1924) has long history of Mauran’s project in East Mount Airy, providing accurate dates of purchase and the scale of his operation.

Notably, the page in the November 10, 1910 *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the suburbanization of Germantown discussed multiple developers and their projects with a section specifically devoted to Frank Mauran's projects, but Tourison was ignored apparently because he had yet to make sufficient progress to merit comment in the article.¹¹

STENTON REFINED SUBURBAN SECTION

STENTON, Frank Mauran's operation on the northern border of Germantown, is one of the most beautiful suburban residential localities of its size within the city limits. Laid out with the highest degree of artistic taste and dotted here and there with homes of the most magnificent styles of architecture, it presents a picture seen only in the localities which have been developed after being planned by the hands of artists.

More than fifty homes of the highest type of design and construction have been erected in attractive Stenton since it was first laid out a few years ago, and its beauty will be further enhanced by the stringent restrictions which have been placed on land there.

Stenton is only twenty-five minutes from the Reading Terminal. An excellent train service at moderate fare is maintained between the centre of the city and the pretty section, and first-rate automobile roads from points downtown make traveling in these conveyances most easy and enjoyable. The suburb has an elevation ranging from 300 to 360 feet above Broad and Market streets, thus affording an ample circulation of pure air in all seasons of the year.

STENTON'S DWELLINGS

Completed dwellings in Stenton range in price from \$8000 to \$15,000. All have large lots with plenty of room for garage. The construction of the houses will bear the most critical examination. Streets have been carefully and neatly laid out. All are of macadam and evenly curbed. With a few exceptions, all of the houses are built separately, with ample space between. The architecture is of every conceivable type, and all of the houses are of separate and distinct designs.

The progress of Stenton has displayed the great demand for exclusive suburban neighborhoods. Its future expansion is assured.

"Historic Germantown: City's Oldest Suburban Section Still Growing After 200 Years," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 27, 1910, p. 46.

¹¹ "Historic Germantown: City's Oldest Suburban Section Still Growing After 200 Years," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 27, 1910, p. 46.



G. W. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (1910) detail plate 9. This shows the Gowen developments to the left (red oval) with "Stenton Farms," Frank Mauran's development (green oval) on the right. Although Tourison was acquiring future development sites, "Sedgwick Farms" was not sufficiently underway to be noted in the atlas.

Without going into extensive detail, East Mount Airy's development begins with the Gowen Estate subdivision, then was followed by Frank Mauran's Stenton Country Club project to the north, and then followed by Tourison's project.

Newspaper advertisements make clear that by 1908 as Tourison's project was getting underway, Mauran already had numerous houses constructed in the neighborhood:




Philadelphia Inquirer, November 18, 1908, p. 13. Mauran has numerous houses completed by this date.

The character of Mauran's buildings continued the pattern of the large houses of the Gowen Estate reaching back into the 1880s and proves that Tourison's work was a third stage in the development of East Mount Airy and not, as claimed the origin of that development.

GERMANTOWN GERMANTOWN

STENTON



**READING RAILWAY
STENTON STATION
CHESTNUT HILL BRANCH**

\$13,000 Elizabethan
Architecture

70 foot front, seven bedrooms,
three baths, marble shower,
open fireplace in living room.
Oak floors and tiled kitchen.
Hot water heating, electric
light, gas—modern plumbing,
5 minutes from Stenton Station

**OTHER DWELLINGS FOR
\$8,000.00 to \$17,500**

ELEVATION OVER 300 FEET 61 TRAINS DAILY 9 CENT FARE
Just above Germantown Station. Send for beautifully colored map

HOUSES AND OFFICE OPEN AT STENTON

FRANK MAURAN - - 239 Land Title Bldg., Phila.

Philadelphia Inquirer, September 24, 1910, p. 11

SEDGWICK FARMS

Suburban houses, \$35 to \$65; 12 and 14 rooms
(2 baths); large lots; old shade; all conven-
iences; one square from Sedgwick Station,
Reading R. R., and Germantown ave. trolleys.

**SEDGWICK FARMS COMPANY,
7014 BOYER STREET.**

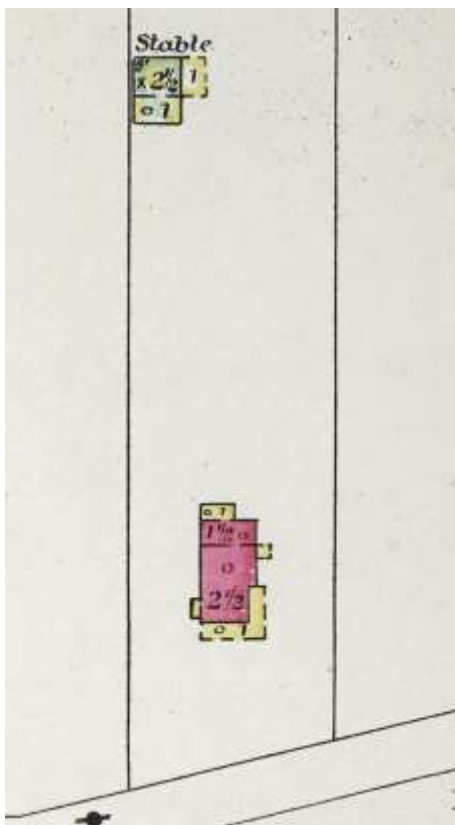
STENTON—SEVERAL DESIRABLE STONE
dwellings, containing thirteen and fifteen
rooms, two bath rooms, will be rented at
\$55 and \$60 per month; open for inspection
every day, including Sundays. Trains to Stenton
Station, Reading Railway.

FRANK MAURAN, 239 Land Title Building.

Philadelphia Inquirer, September 4, 1909. Mauran's houses were larger and typically more expensive.

Other claims about the history of the neighborhood are factually wrong.

- There is no evidence of the name “Anchor house” and indeed this was not among the first buildings of the neighborhood.
- The claim on pgs. 3 and 12 that Tourison “built Sedgwick Street himself” is factually wrong. The street was named and laid out many years earlier, appearing on maps before the Civil War. Sedgwick Street was already opened above Germantown Avenue by 1901 (Bromley Atlas) and was laid out by that date beyond the city limit.
- The servant building adaptation at what became 318 E. Durham Street was not a part of the Sedgwick Farms development in date, building type, and mode of design and construction. It is not what is described in the nomination as “**custom single detached homes as well as individualized row and twin houses**” (p.3). It is apparently an earlier renovation of a minor stable into a service house for a now demolished or altered house facing Sprague Street.
- The claim that the stable was built in 1901 is inaccurate in that it is clearly represented on the Hexamer Atlas of 1896 in essentially the same footprint, suggesting that the building had been constructed as a **stableman’s residence and attached stable**. The fact that there is a basement under the 2 ½ story wing demonstrates that this portion was not a barn.



Hexamer Atlas, 1896, showing main house facing Sprague Street and rear 2 ½ story stable with one story side and rear wings.

- The renovated stableman’s house has nothing to do with the descriptions in Tourison’s promotional 1920 article “What People Want When they Come to Buy a House...” and the magazine article is mis-dated as January 1920 when it is in fact in

the May issue.¹² The preferred house as described in the article is larger than this converted servant house.

- The “still standing single-family homes at Sprague and E. Durham” in the 1889 Baist atlas shows a brick twin with a dividing line between the units. That house appears to change again in the 1890s, and again in the 1920s indicating that it was rebuilt several times. The present house now faces E. Durham Street, is faced in stucco and is certainly a new construction or a massive rebuild.

Condition:

Contrary to the assessment in the nomination, the building is unoccupied and in poor condition with extensive termite damage evident in the basement, sagging floors in the southmost room on the first and second stories, and the roof structure is failing with undersized 2x 4 rafters that are cracked in multiple places where visible.



House as renovated: Joseph Eddleman, Jr. Collection, Germantown Historical Society; present house June 2021

As evidenced in the undated photographs of the house in the Joseph Eddleman, Jr. scrapbook at the Germantown Historical Society, the house has lost much of its original detail including the Victorian trusses and shingles in the gable ends, the lattice piers supporting the front porch, shutters, a side porch which has since been infilled, and other detail. The central window of the second floor has been reconstructed, projecting forward; the gable shingles have been replaced with clapboards and most if not all of the original sash have been replaced with modern sash and now are clad in aluminum.

¹² <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015037072470&view=1up&seq=789> (Accessed 6.27.2012)

Conclusion:

The nomination does not provide evidence that the building in any way meets the criteria of the Philadelphia Historical Commission for historic designation. The additional documentation provided in this review of the nomination reinforces the PHC staff conclusion and adds additional documentary materials that further disprove the claims made in the nomination.

- The subsequent addendum to the nomination is even less accurate and should be disregarded in its entirety.
- The building at 318 E. Durham Street is not a part of the Sedgwick Farms project, is not the type of work that is exemplary of either the building practice nor is it a good example of the type of design work of the Tourison builders or developers.
- Its various residents attained their fame at other sites or are completely misidentified as inhabiting the site.
- The building is so modest as to not be a significant identifying structure.
- Finally the history of the neighborhood is such that this building does not effectively tell the story of the community development.

For these reasons, as demonstrated with both documents and factual information, the nomination should be rejected as the PHC staff makes clear in their conclusions.