

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: **7600 Germantown Avenue**

Postal code: **19119**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **St. Martins Coal Company Office**

Current Name: **Unknown**

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: Commercial

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): **1916**

Date(s) of construction: **1916**

Architects: **John T. Windrim, Architect**

Builders: **Unknown**

Original owner: **Walter C. Shipley**

Significant person: **John T. Windrim, Architect**

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.

Added by [redacted]
CHD and HC
for J.T. Windrim

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization: **Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian
Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Date: **24 May 2021**

Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Telephone: **717.602.5002**
Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 5/24/2021

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 6/17/2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 6/21/2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: John Mascaro

Address: 7600 Germatown Ave

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19119

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 7/21/2021; rec. Criteria C, D, E, and J

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 8/13/2021

Date of Final Action: 8/13/2021; Criteria C, D, E, and J

Designated Rejected

12/7/18

NOMINATION
FOR THE
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



ST. MARTINS COAL COMPANY
WALTER. C. SHIPLEY
7600 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
MT. AIRY, PHILADELPHIA

Figure 1. The primary (east) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020. *Figure 2.* Bottom: *The American Cricketer*, March 1916.

THE ST. MARTIN'S COAL CO. OFFICE
ERECTED 1916
7600 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
MT. AIRY/CHESTNUT HILL
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

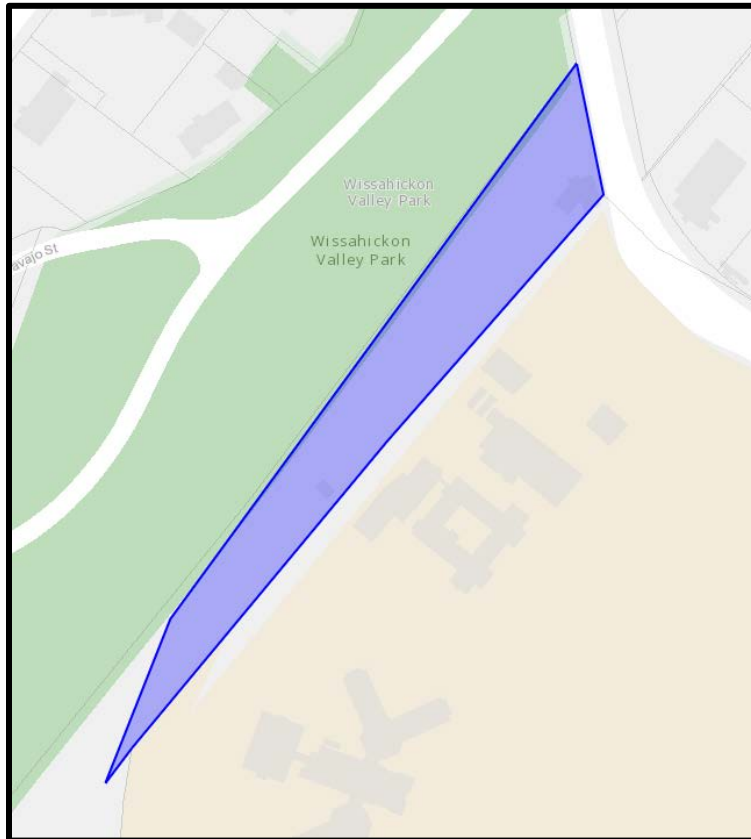


Figure 3. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated by the purple line. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description of the proposed designation is as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the westerly line of Germantown Avenue (70 feet wide) distant 19.233 feet southeastwardly, at right angles from the line established as the center line of railroad of the Connecting Railway Company, known as the Fort Washington Branch; extending from said beginning point, the following five courses and distances, the first two thereof being along said westerly line of Germantown Avenue; (1) South 9 degrees 58 minutes 55 seconds East, 85 feet 9-3/4 inches to a point of curve; (2) Southwardly, on a curve to the left, having a radius of 150 feet, a central angle of 2 degrees 59 minutes 51 seconds, an arc length of 7 feet 10-1/8 inches; (3) South 40 degrees 16 minutes 53 seconds West by land now or formerly of Pennsylvania Institute for the Deaf, 836 feet 0-3/8 inches to a corner of said mentioned land; the following two courses and distances being by remaining land of said Railway Company; (4) North 25 degrees 42 minutes 25 seconds East, 267 feet 6-1/2 inches; and (5) North 39 degrees 50 minutes, 50 seconds East, parallel with and 19.233 feet southeastwardly, at right angles from said center line of railroad, 636 feet 9-7/8 inches to the place of beginning.

Tax Account No. **087N180006**

OPA/BRT Account No. **211447600**



Figure 4. The primary (east) elevation. Source: Brad Maule, 2020.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

One of the Colonial Revival jewels of Mount Airy, the St. Martin's Coal Company Office stands as an important architectural landmark at 7600 Germantown Avenue near the crossroads of Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia. From Gowen Avenue to Mermaid Lane, the setting of the subject building along Germantown Avenue is one of converging architectural, cultural, landscape, and social heritage. The subject building sits just south of the Germantown Avenue Bridge of the former Pennsylvania Railroad's Fort Washington Branch right-of-way, which passes just below scenic Cresheim Valley Drive.

The St. Martin's Coal Company Office is a one-and-one-half-story commercial building constructed of Wissahickon schist with a side gable roof. The main block also features a one-story porch at the south and a one-story rear addition at the west. Emulating the earliest stone dwellings of the region's colonial period in its structural massing, the main block of the subject building is two bays in width, featuring an elaborate fenestration on its quaint form. The primary (east) elevation is comprised of a single window at the south and a pedestrian doorway at the north. Set within a one-story façade of Wissahickon schist, the southerly opening contains an original or period appropriate double-hung wooden sash window, with a typical six-over-six pane configuration that features relatively slim glazing bars and fully visible sash boxes. A fairly elaborate stone header or lintel crowns the opening with a keystone at center flanked by groups of four stones, including key blocks at each end. The window is flanked by paneled wooden shutters. The northerly half of the façade is dominated by one of the most distinctive Georgian-inspired doorways along Germantown Avenue. Set within this fully-articulated doorcase and surround, an original or period-appropriate wooden door provides pedestrian access, featuring a single panel in its lower half with six lights rising above. Over the door is a beautifully executed, yet relatively

simple fanlight with spokes that radiate from a semi-circular light to form two full tiers of individual lights. This opening is set within two tiers of pilasters, moldings and paneling with a central keystone rising above the outer fanlight molding. Elegant iron balustrades extend from the paneling on each side of the door to the extent of the stone threshold and entrance stoop, further detailing the ceremonious entry. The doorway is framed and shaded with a bodacious surround, dominated by a projecting segmental broken pediment that is further accented with modillions. The hood is cantilevered on a pair of stylized brackets that extend from Tuscan pilaster supports that rest on low stone plinths. The pediment is joined by cornice, which extends to the north and south to each corner of the building. At the primary elevation, the pitch of the roof extends to the first floor, where it splays to form a slightly wider expanse, emulating a pent eave. A low-slung stone chimney stack rises from the northern gable piercing the interior of the roof structure.



Figure 5. The Colonial Revival doorway of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

The south elevation includes a one-story side porch that is stylized to appear as a pergola. The porch structure is supported by two stone posts at the primary (east) elevation, one of which is part of a group of three at the south elevation. A low exposed stone foundation connects the posts at the primary (east) and south elevations. Each post is comprised of Wissahickon schist with simple wooden cornices that extend from a larger wooden cornice. The primary (east) and south elevations

feature projecting wooden brackets that create the look of a pergola. The south elevation of the main block features a single door that is flanked by small windows. These apertures contain units that mimic a continuous Colonial Revival motif and may also be original materials. A single multilight casement window pierces the south gable, containing a sash that is either original or architecturally sensitive. The north elevation is largely obscured by the rise of the adjacent bridge approach, though the chimney stack is visible as a central feature, projecting in part from the façade. The rear elevation is entirely obscured by an addition, though the pitch of its roof features a dormer, as well as what appears to be a modern skylight.



Figure 6. The south elevation, showing the porch styled to appear as a pergola. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020.

Extending to the west from the rear elevation of the main block, the rear addition is a low, shed-like structure of concrete or masonry blocks with a flat roof. The south elevation features a three-part mullion window that appears to contain six-over-six sash windows, which further expresses the larger Colonial Revival motif. To the west of this aperture is a pedestrian doorway. A simple cornice is present along this entire elevation.

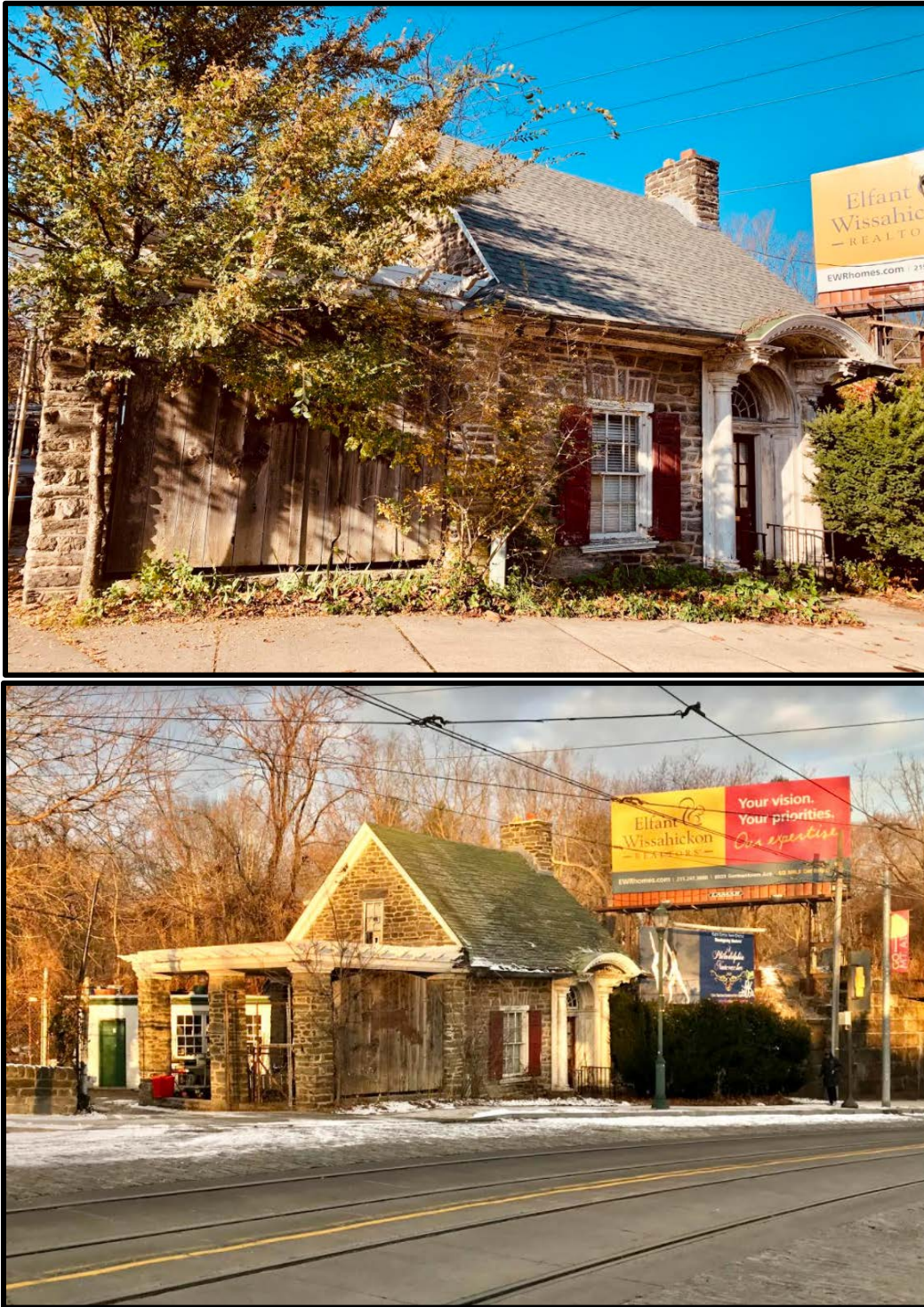


Figure 7. Top: The primary (east) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2020. Figure 8. Bottom: The primary (east) and side (south) elevations. Source: Brad Maule, 2020.

To the south of the porch addition is an open driveway that leads to a deep, yet somewhat narrow parcel that is largely vacant.

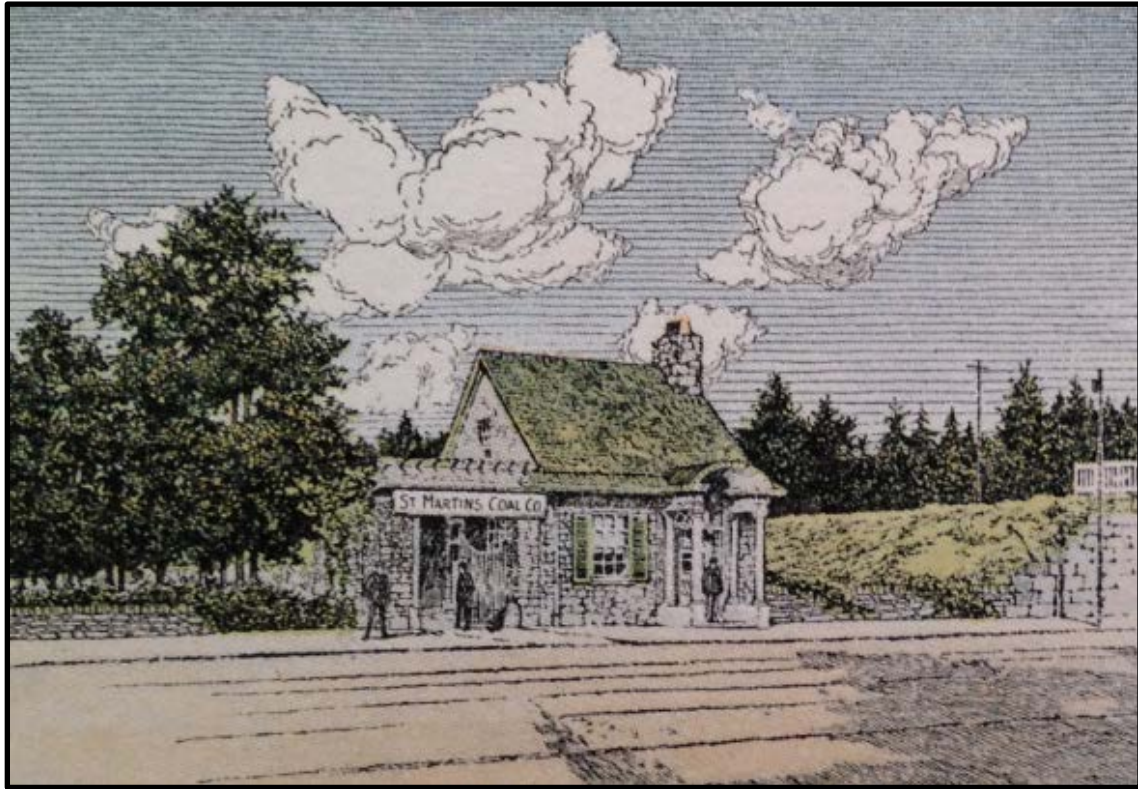


Figure 9. An illustration of the Office of the St. Martins Coal Company around the time that it was constructed in 1916, which was included on an advertisement blotter. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The St. Martins Coal Company Office at 7600 Germantown Avenue near the border of Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia, the building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;*
- d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
and*
- j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

The period of significance for the subject property dates to the time of construction in 1916.

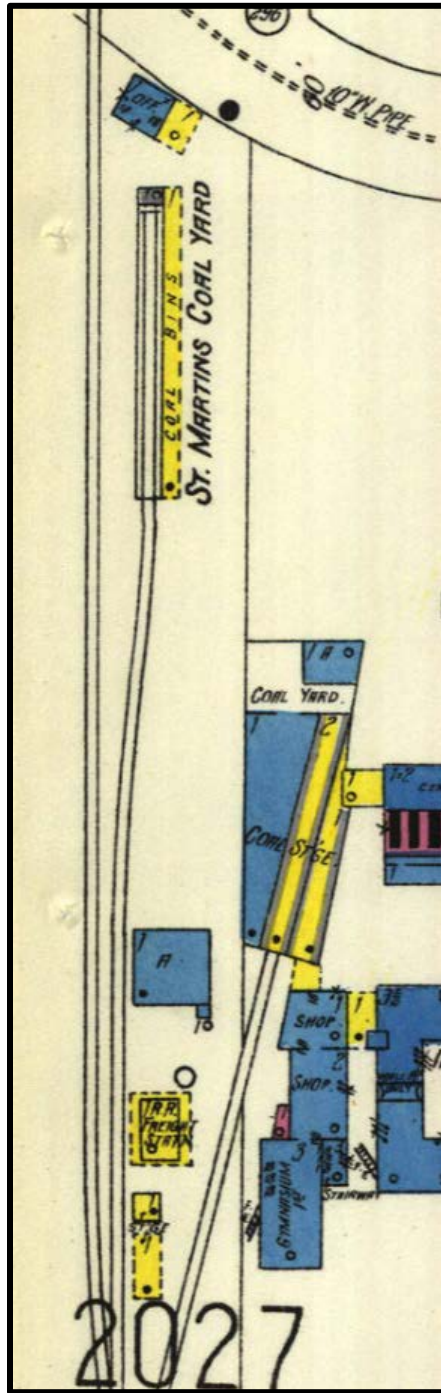


Figure 10. The St. Martins Coal Company site in 1925 on an insurance map by the Sanborn Map Company. Source: Penn State Digital Collections.

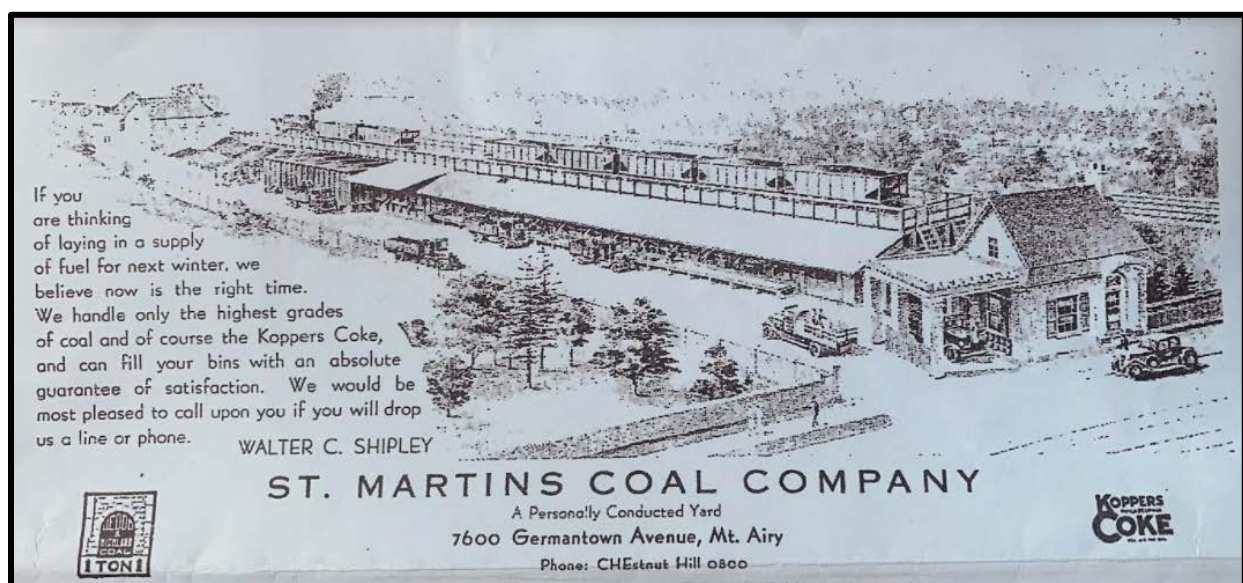


Figure 11. The letterhead of the St. Martins Coal Company, showing the entire site. Source: Samuel Shipley by descent.

CRITERIA C, D, AND J

Satisfying Criterion C, the St. Martin’s Coal Company Office at 7600 Germantown Avenue is reflective of an era characterized by the Colonial Revival style, as applied to commercial and office buildings of a domestic and colonial period scale, specifically during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the larger Mount Airy neighborhood and throughout Philadelphia. Under Criterion D, the subject building is a particularly compelling specimen of the Colonial Revival style, which, in this case, served the commercial purposes of a well-known coal dealer—an industry that was an historic staple of every community. Located immediately upon Germantown Avenue, the building emulates the form and scale of an early Germantown dwellings of the colonial era, while also presenting an elaborate Colonial Revival doorway to accompany many older and other imitations along that thoroughfare. Furthermore, under Criterion J, the St. Martin’s Coal Company Office represents the cultural, economic and social heritage of the city as an historic office building form and type known throughout Philadelphia that began in the eighteenth century, becoming increasingly popular through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While never a ubiquitous building type, there were known specimen in most neighborhoods; however, few survive today, and the subject building is one of the most outstanding examples ever constructed in Philadelphia.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, coal served as the nation’s principal power source for the purposes of industry, transportation, and, most importantly, heat. The coal mines and their associated companies harvested this product and retail establishments served as their salesmen in cities and towns across the country. Retail coal company offices were often located adjacent to or near railroad lines and, in some cases, occupied parts of station buildings. For many years Walter Cresson Shipley (1868-1956), a Germantown native of Quaker abstraction, was a prominent coal dealer at the venerable juncture of Germantown Avenue and Price Street, where his office was within the former Reading Railroad Depot (Figure 12/Demolished). There he conducted “a large retail coal business” and gained “good will” in the neighborhood, cultivating an impressive clientele. In 1912, the George B. Newton Coal Company was officially incorporated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to facilitate “purchasing and consolidating a number of

retail coal businesses in the City of Philadelphia,” a process that was managed by agents J. Ernest Richards, Howard F. Hansell, Jr., and F. Wilson Prichett.¹

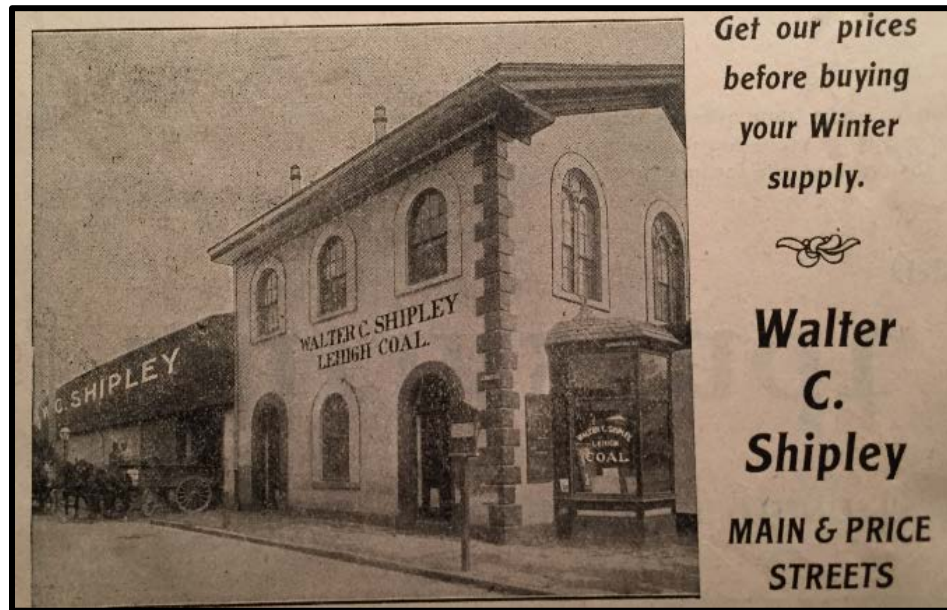


Figure 12. An advertisement for Walter C. Shipley's Lehigh Coal when he occupied the Reading Railroad Station at the southeast corner of Germantown Avenue and E. Price Street. Source: Germantown Historical Society.


Representing the Lehigh Valley Coal Company's product, the Newton firm was established in 1874 at Philadelphia.² The consolidation of 1912 included the Black Diamond Coal Co., George W. Edmonds & Co., George B. Newton & Co., B. Rowland & Bro., Inc., Robert Henderson & Co., McCaulley Bros., Mason Coal Co., McKee & Co., Chalfant Bros., W.C. Kirk & Co., and Walter C. Shipley. An agreement of sale was executed among the relevant parties on November 22, 1912, a legally binding contract restricting Shipley's ability to operate as an independent retail coal dealer. His signature meant that he would not "be or become directly or indirectly engaged in or be connected with any retail coal business" for a period of two years in Philadelphia and for a period of five years within two miles of his former location in central Germantown. As part of the transaction, Shipley immediately became an employee of the George B. Newton Coal Company, a position he held until late December 1915. Despite this new situation, his professional role did not change much, as he continued to manage the affairs of his former retail coal business, only in a restricted status under the newly formed corporation.³

¹ *Pennsylvania State Reports*. (United States: West Publishing Company, 1917), 136-140.; and Deed: The Connecting Railroad Company to St. Martins Coal Company, Inc., May 1956, \$12,740.50, Philadelphia Deed Book C.A.B., No. 308, p. 378, City Archives of Philadelphia (CAP).

² Trade Card: George B. Newton & Co. (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Bros. Co., ca.1880). Source: Library Company of Philadelphia.

³ *Pennsylvania State Reports*. (United States: West Publishing Company, 1917), 136-140.

THE ST. MARTINS COAL COMPANY



OFFICE OF ST. MARTINS COAL CO.

WALTER C. SHIPLEY
7600 Germantown Avenue

The yard, which adjoins the office, has a siding three hundred feet long, from the Pennsylvania Railroad, Whitmarsh Branch. It is modern in every detail, having eight pockets and ground storage.

It is conveniently situated for delivery in all parts of Germantown, Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill.

PHONE: Chestnut Hill 51

Figure 13. A ca.1916 blotter advertising the St. Martins Coal Company and its newly built coal office by Walter C. Shipley. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, HSP.

In January 1915, Walter C. Shipley proposed the subject property at 7600 Germantown Avenue to the George B. Newton Coal Company as a potential location for future business operations. As part of this process, he negotiated a lease with the Philadelphia, Germantown, & Chestnut Hill Railroad Company, the owner of the parcel since 1892.⁴ While this proposal was ultimately rejected by the Newton firm, Shipley understood the potential commercial viability of the site, knowing that many of his peers were moving from Germantown to Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill for new suburban domicile. While he had initially offered the site to his employer, Shipley's own contingency cannot be ignored, as he had engineered the potential office and coal yard location just a few hundred feet beyond the restricted distance stipulated in his 1912 agreement of sale. By the summertime, Shipley took it upon himself to "equip and fix" the subject property "as a coal yard," ultimately leaving Newton's employment before the close of the year in late December.⁵ As night follows day, Shipley established the St. Martins Coal Company, exploiting the unsuccessful Newton lease and the site's convenient location for his own purposes. The name St. Martins was used in the early twentieth century to describe the southwest section of Chestnut Hill so that Shipley was unofficially working to extend that neighbor further south. A building permit was filed late in 1915, and, by May 1916, construction of a "one-story brick and stone coal office, together with storage bins" was underway.⁶ Interestingly, *The Retail Coalman* reported that Shipley's development necessitated the demolition of a notable, 150-year-old tree.⁷ Designs for the office amounted to a very attractive, diminutive Colonial Revival style coal office by the eminent Philadelphia architect John T. Windrim (1866-1934).⁸ The facility was completed in 1916 at a cost of approximately \$1,500.⁹ Shipley began advertising for his new firm immediately, a campaign which included a beautifully executed blotter (Figure 13) for his potential customers.

⁴ *Atlantic Reporter*. (United States: West Publishing Company, 1917), 457.

⁵ *Pennsylvania State Reports*. (United States: West Publishing Company, 1917), 136-140.

⁶ "Pennsylvania," *The Retail Coalman*, May 1916, 67.

⁷ *The Retail Coalman*, 1 September 1915, 1000.

⁸ "Richards v. Shipley," *Atlantic Reporter*, 101 (1917): 456-57; Philadelphia Building Permit No. 8051 of 1916, CAP.

⁹ "Pennsylvania," *The Retail Coalman*, May 1916, 67.

This surviving ephemera includes an idyllic drawing (Figure 9) of the subject building and a description of Walter C. Shipley’s new coal yard.¹⁰



Colonial-era dwellings on or near Germantown Avenue that the St. Martins Coal Company Office emulates in its design. Figure 14. Top left: The Neglee House at the southeast corner of Germantown Avenue and Berkley Street (demolished). Source: The Germantown Historical Society. Figure 15. Top center: The Old Weaver House stood in the rear of the Dunkard Parsonage at 6611 Germantown Avenue (demolished). Source: Drawing by John Richards, Germantown Historical Society. Figure 16. Top right: The Wolf House at 7358 Germantown Avenue, 18th century. Source: The Shoemaker Collection, HSP. Figure 17. Middle left: The Dunkard Parsonage at 6611 Germantown Avenue (demolished). Source: HSP. Figure 18. Middle center: The St. Martins Coal Company Office at 7600 Germantown Avenue. Source: Brad Maule, 2020. Figure 19. Middle right: The Didier House, ca. 1737, at the southeast corner of E. Logan Street and Germantown Avenue (demolished ca.1868). Source: Drawn by John Richards, HSP. Figure 20. Bottom left: The Papen-Johnson House ca. late 17th Century, at the northwest corner of Germantown Avenue and W. Johnson Street (demolished). Source: Castner Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 21. Bottom center: The Walder-Essig House, ca.1740, at 6671 Germantown Avenue. Source: Castner Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 22. Bottom right: The Tillman House, Queen Lane (demolished). Source: Drawn by John Richards, HSP.

CRITERION D. Perhaps a grand gesture for a coal company office, the subject building appears very much in the spirit of an architectural folly that one might find in a great park or on a grand estate. The St. Martins Coal Company Office is a unique specimen of architecture, possessing

¹⁰ Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, Vol. 36, HSP, 64.

distinguishing characteristics of the Colonial Revival style, satisfying Criterion D. Borrowing from the diminutive, vernacular stone houses of colonial-era Germantown Avenue, the building appears to emulate the quaint domiciles of the community’s earliest residents and settlers. While perhaps not the perfect size for a long-term residence, these crude dwellings were theoretically an ideal size for a small business operation like the St. Martins Coal Company. Even though many of these one- and one-and-one-half-story houses were absent of architectural detail, the application of a Georgian entrance with real architectural gusto made the building stand out from its few remaining and much older one-story predecessors on Germantown Avenue. Ultimately, when Walter C. Shipley commissioned the John T. Windrim to design his office, it united two revered elements of Germantown’s heritage—the passing colonial-era dwelling and grander Georgian and Classical style doorways. While the building is not an archaeological reproduction in any way, it speaks to well-known examples. These characteristics alone embody the spirit of the Colonial Revival style as it continued to be a constant staple of Germantown and Philadelphia landscape.



Germantown Avenue’s Colonial and Federal period doorways. Figure 23. Top left: The doorway of 5430 Germantown Avenue. Source: Shoemaker Collection, HSP. Figure 24. Top center: Doorways of the 5400 block of Germantown Avenue below School House Lane. Source: Castner Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 25. Top right: The doorway of the William Ashmead House, ca.1790, at 5450 Germantown Avenue (demolished). Source: Shoemaker Collection, HSP. Figure 26. Bottom left: Situated in the rear of the First Methodist Church and the Pastorius-Dunton House on High Street, this doorway was reused on this outbuilding from the Bensell/Bensil House at Germantown Avenue and School House Lane. Source: Caster Collection, HSP. Figure 27. Bottom center: A contextual view of the rear of the First Methodist Church on Germantown Avenue at 25 E. High Street, a combination residence and outbuilding in the rear, shown in Figure 25, and the Pastorius-House at 25 E. High Street, formerly at the northeast corner of Germantown Avenue and High Street. Source: Castner Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. Bottom right: The doorway of the Pastorius House at 25 E. High Street. Source: Shoemaker Collection, HSP.

In addition to its Wissahickon schist, stone walls and its elaborate doorway, other distinguishing characteristics of the Colonial Revival style included a wooden door with nine lights over a large single panel, six-over-six, double hung wooden sash windows, stone lintels, a side porch with brackets emulating a pergola, iron balustrades, a stone chimney, penetrating the roofline, and a dormer at the rear.



Building inspired by the Colonial Revival along Germantown Avenue that relate stylistically to the subject property. Figure 28. Top: The Carnegie Library in Vernon Park was designed in the Colonial Revival style with two doorways that relate to the aesthetics of the subject property. Source: Castner Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 29. Middle left: The Germantown YWCA. Source: NWPhilly.com. Figure 30. Middle right: The west elevation of Germantown High School facing the park along Germantown Avenue. Source: Nicholas Covolus, 2018. Figure 31. Bottom left: The Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 32. Bottom right: The Mermaid Inn. Source: retroroadmap.com.

The design for Shipley’s new office was not just about uniting old building forms and styles to create an attractive edifice, it was essentially an effort to market identity to a local, “Old Philadelphia” clientele. His advertisements assured his potential customers of his innate cultural and social connections to Chestnut Hill through employing the name St. Martins, which

represented the southwest portion of the neighborhood. With this name, along with his own—“Walter Cresson Shipley,” a known Germantown family—he presented a calling card that assured consumers that the “personally conducted” coal yard was the business of someone the community could trust, ultimately attracting an elite group of customers of the larger German Township. Naturally, the physical embodiment of this type of business model came packaged in a Colonial Revival aesthetic, an architectural legacy linked to Philadelphia’s seemingly endless pride in all things eighteenth century. Ultimately, Shipley commissioned Windrim to create an office building that conveyed a sense of identity and place, which resulted in the distinctive Colonial Revival style structure that still stands today.

CRITERION C. Satisfying Criterion C, the St. Martins Coal Company Office was not the only building to exhibit the Colonial Revival along Germantown Avenue, rather it is related to a larger stylistic movement that shaped local architecture for decades. Because of the rich heritage of the earlier German Township and Philadelphia at-large, the taste for the Colonial Revival style in architecture was omnipresent from the time of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 to the mid-twentieth century. While there are archaeological specimens among other copies in the area, some of the most creative and monumental designs borrowed from history, though managed to produce attractive, distinctive, and even unique buildings like the subject property.



Figure 33. The Efficiency House was built in 1940 in the Colonial Revival style, as it was influenced by modernism. Source: Google.

In fact, the many civic buildings constructed along Germantown Avenue in the first decades of the twentieth century were designed in the Colonial Revival style. Around Vernon Park in Central Germantown there were at least four buildings construct in the first half of the twentieth century that reflected a mania of sorts for this aesthetic. These buildings include the Carnegie Library, built 1905-07 in Vernon Park; the Germantown YWCA, built ca.1915, immediately adjacent to the north of Vernon Park at 5820-24 Germantown Avenue; the Germantown YMCA, built in 1928, across from Vernon Park at 5722-28 Greene Street; and the Efficiency House, built in 1940, at 5730 Green Street. The small Greene Street dwelling is like the subject property in that it too presents a dramatic Colonial Revival style doorway to the public street. All of these Central Germantown examples present strong Georgian- and Classical-inspired doorways like the subject property, though these buildings are hardly alone in the larger corridor.

Standing at the historic juncture of Germantown Avenue, and the Bethlehem and Reading Turnpikes near the subject property, the present building 7673 Germantown Avenue replaced a much earlier Mermaid Inn that was demolished at the turn of the twentieth century. The Mermaid Inn that we see today relates to the subject building in paying homage to the past, while also being its own modern building of the time it was constructed. Among Chestnut Hill's many other Colonial Revival buildings, the Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia, built in 1907, stands at 8711 Germantown Avenue. These are just a few examples that rival the St. Martins Coal Company, showing that the Colonial Revival style did in fact influence the built environment of Germantown Avenue during the first half of the twentieth century.

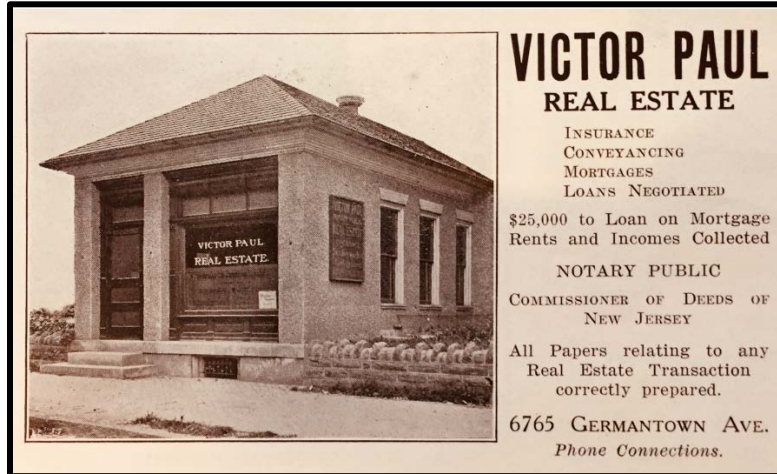


Figure 34. Top left: Office of the Glenwood Nurseries at Morrisville, Pennsylvania. Figure 35. Right: The real estate office of Victor Paul at 6765 Germantown Avenue. Source: Germantown Historical Society. Figures 36., 37, & 38. Bottom row: Various office building examples in Philadelphia. Source: HSP.

CRITERION J. While the St. Martins Coal Company Office may be among the most unique examples of its building type and form, office buildings of a domestic and even diminutive scale were known long before its construction and constitute a known building form and type that represents the cultural, economic, and social history of individual neighborhoods and the larger City of Philadelphia, satisfying Criterion J. Often detached or semi-detached, the small, one- and occasionally two-story office building was usually constructed for specific business and/or commercial purposes in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early-twentieth centuries. While the size

of office buildings would greatly increase during the city's history, the subject property represents a diminutive example that usually included just one or two small rooms. Common business uses included: coal (Figure 59), construction, industrial (Figures 44, 45, 47, & 48), legal, medical, and real estate (Figures 35, 53, 54, 55, 56, & 58), among others (Figures 34, 36, 37, & 38).

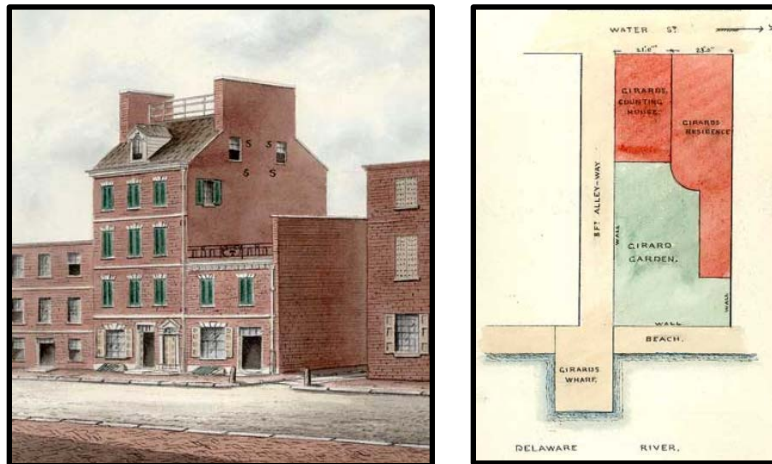


Figure 39. Left: Stephen Girard's Residence and Counting House in Water Street. Figure 40. Right: A layout of Stephen Girard's Complex in Water Street. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia.

One of the most prominent, historic examples of an office of a domestic scale is the long demolished counting house (Figures 39 and 40) of the eminent Philadelphia banker Stephen Girard, which stood on Water Street. This two-story edifice was part of a complex of buildings. Girard's large townhouse was built immediately upon Water Street in the typical urban format with a two-story counting house attached at the south. The grand Georgian style duo achieved an elegant presence, featuring a separate business entry, as well as an interior connection.¹¹



Figure 41. Left: A house, office, and stable at 141-43 Susquehanna Avenue, Norris Square, Kensington. Figure 42. Center: An office and house at 2354-56 N. Eighth Street, North Philadelphia (demolished). Figure 43. Right: The house and office of a prominent contractor at 510-12 W. Norris Street, Kensington. Source: Google Earth.

While there were enumerable examples that have been long lost to history, the most known, surviving specimen of the small office building exist in the dense sections of Philadelphia, being primarily built between 1850 and 1910. Most of these buildings represent middle to upper-middle class Philadelphians who served neighborhood professionals. Several examples survive in Kensington and North Philadelphia: a house and office at 2354-56 N. Eighth Street (Figure 42), North Philadelphia (demolished); a house, office, and stable at 2114 N. Hancock Street, Norris

¹¹ Edwin Wolf, 2nd, *Philadelphia: Portrait of an American City* (Philadelphia: Stackpole Books, 1975), 117.

Square, Kensington; the house and office of a prominent contractor at 510-12 W. Norris Street (Figure 43), Kensington; a house and office at 1355-57 N. Second Street, Kensington; a house, office, and stable at 141-43 Susquehanna Avenue (Figure 41), Norris Square, Kensington; and a house and office at 2176-78 E. York Street, Kensington.

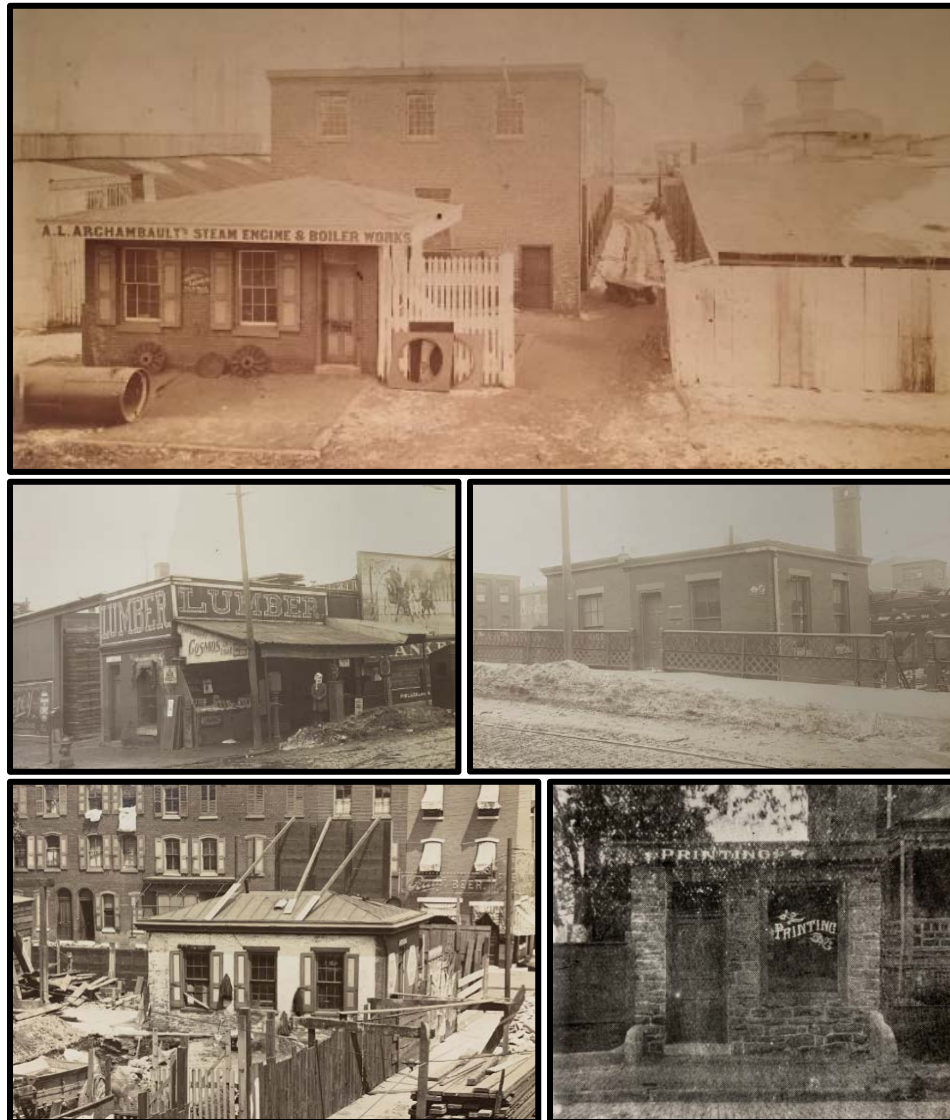


Figure 44. Top: The office of A.L. Achambault’s Steam Engine & Boiler Works at Kensington. Source: HSP. Figure 45. Middle left: The office of Rambo Lumber at the northeast corner of Tenth Street and Columbia Avenue in North Philadelphia. Source: Hagley Library. Figure 46. Middle right: The office of the Ridgeway Stone Yard at the northwest corner of Ninth Street and Columbia Avenue in North Philadelphia. Source: Hagley Library. Figure 47. Bottom left: A one-story office building in North Philadelphia. Source: Hagley Library. Figure 48. Bottom right: The “Little Print Shop” on Jefferson Street above Duval in Germantown, noted in a Souvenir of the neighborhood as being built by an African American contractor. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

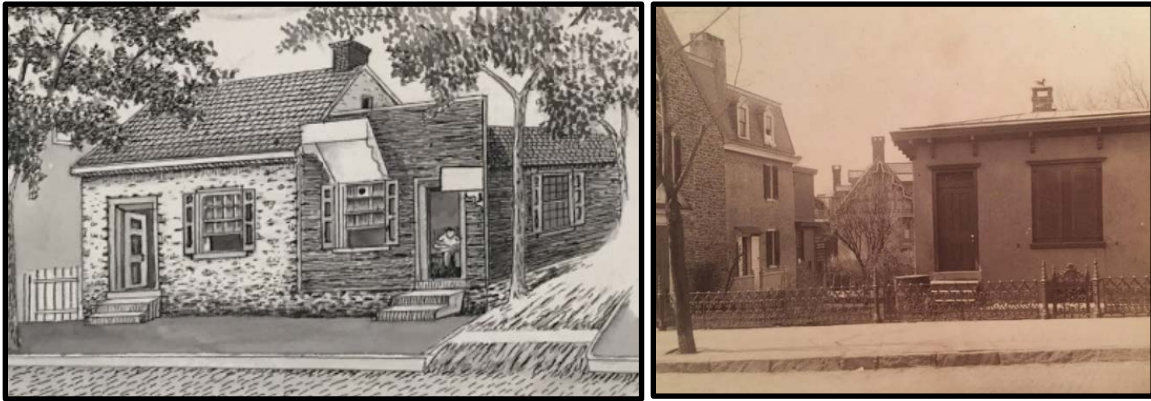


Figure 49. Left: Post Office, Germantown Avenue, Germantown, c. 1871. Source: John Richards Sketch Book, HSP. Germantown Water Company's Office, Germantown Avenue, below Tulpehocken Street, Germantown, c. 1890. Figure 50. Right: A Detail of the Germantown Water Company's Office, Germantown Avenue, below Tulpehocken Street, Germantown, c. 1890. Collection V86: Thomas H. Shoemaker, Germantown and Philadelphia Portraits and Views Collection (1863-1922), HSP.

In Germantown or other suburban and town-like sections of Philadelphia, these small commercial buildings were usually detached or semi-detached, occasionally co-located with dwellings, but also separate like the subject property. Perhaps the oldest example was the old post office (Figure 49) at Germantown, which was clearly an early house converted for commercial use by the United States Postal Service.¹² The stone portion of the building was two bays in width with a side-gable roof. The wooden section of the building was constructed along the primary elevation like a shed. On the west side of Germantown Avenue at the corner of Tulpehocken Street was a small one-story office building that served the Germantown Water Company (Figure 50) in the second half of the nineteenth century. The building featured a hipped roof and was three bays in width with a central window flanked by two doors.¹³ By 1910, this building was demolished.¹⁴



Figure 51. Left: The *Germantown Telegraph* Office at 5155 Germantown Avenue Source: Germantown Historical Society. Figure 52. Right: The Captain Albert Ashmead House with a nineteenth century office addition, 5430 Germantown Avenue. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia.

The Philip R. Freas House and *Germantown Telegraph* Office (Figure 51) is another well-known example. The newspaper began as the *Village Telegraph* in 1830, after which time an office was built on the north side of the house at 5151 Germantown Avenue. Less common, the *Germantown*

¹² John Richards Sketch Book, HSP.

¹³ Collection V86: Thomas H. Shoemaker, Germantown and Philadelphia Portraits and Views Collection (1863-1922), HSP.

¹⁴ Collection V86: Thomas H. Shoemaker, Germantown and Philadelphia Portraits and Views Collection (1863-1922), HSP.

Telegraph office was a three-bay, two-story building. While the Freas house survives, the office was demolished in the early twentieth century to make way for a larger building.¹⁵ Two other examples stand in the 5400 block of Germantown Avenue in the vicinity of Market Square. The Captain Albert Ashmead House at 5430 Germantown Avenue (Figure 52) is a typical Federal-style house with a side-gabled roof. Attached at the south is a small one-story office addition. Situated across from Market Square, the Thomas Armat House at 5450 Germantown Avenue is a typical Georgian- and/or Federal-style house with a side-gabled roof. Like the Ashmead House, this dwelling was also constructed at some point in the eighteenth century “by one Morgan.” Attached at the south is a one-and-one-half story addition that appears very much like an office.

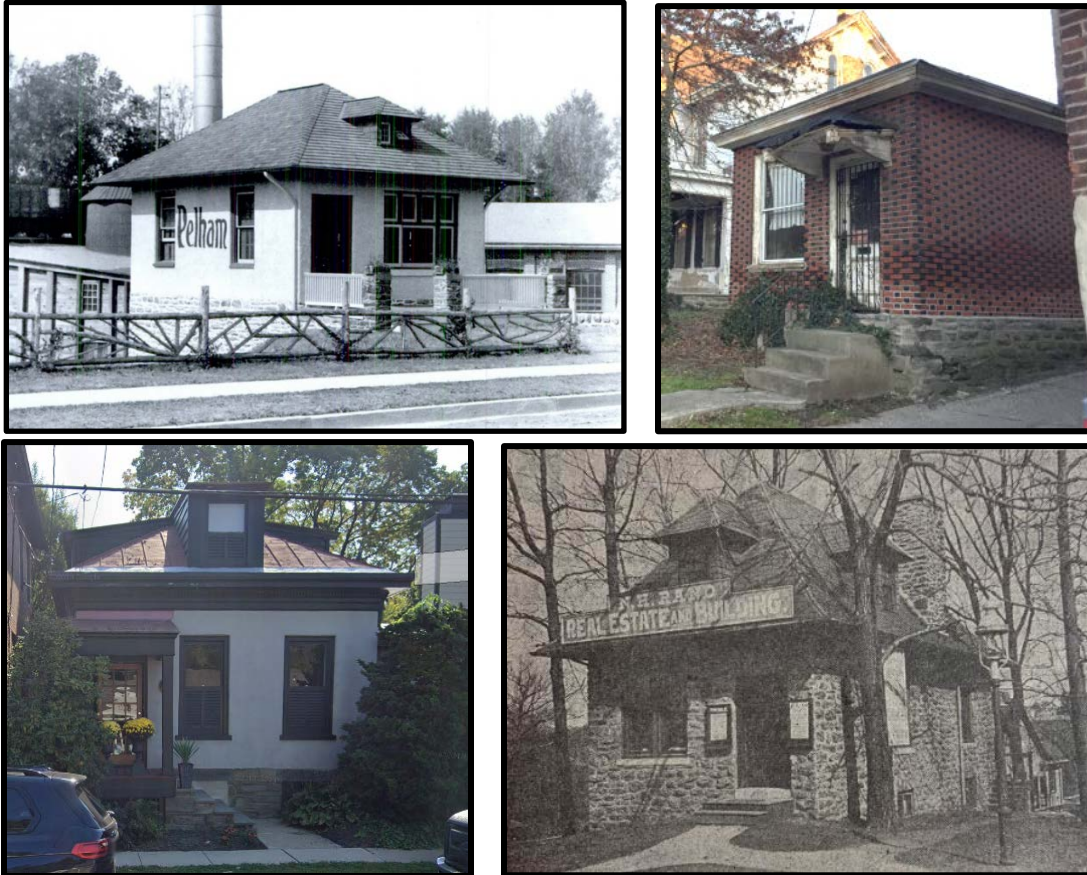


Figure 53. Top left: The office building of the Carpenter Land and Improvement Company at 515 Pelham Road in Mount Airy. Source: HSP. Figure 54. Top right: The office of Samuel Harting, a contractor and builder, at 18 E. Johnson Street in Germantown. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2016. Figure 55. Bottom left: An office 42 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue in Chestnut Hill. Source: Google Earth. Figure 56. Bottom right: N.H. Rand’s Real Estate Office, Oak Lane. Source: Unknown newspaper, Germantown Historical Society.

A real estate office was one of the most common uses in and around the German Township for the commission of this small commercial building type. In 1893 the Carpenter Land and Improvement Company subdivided one hundred acres of the former George Carpenter Estate, which led to the

¹⁵ Naaman Henry Keyser, et al., *History of Old Germantown: With a Description of Its Settlement and Some Account of Its Important Persons, Buildings, and Places Connected with Its Development* (Germantown: H.F. McCann, 1907), 450-52.

development of the suburb in Mount Airy known as Pelham. The company built an office and a steam power plant. The office still stands at 515 Pelham Road (Figure 53). Other examples include the office of Samuel Harting, contractor and builder, built in 1907 at 18 E. Johnson Street (54) in Germantown; an office at 42 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue (Figure 55) in Chestnut Hill; the real estate office of N.H. Rand (Figure 56) in nearby Oak Lane; and the office of “Ye Sedgwick Farms Co.” (Figure 58) at 7014 Boyer Street in Mt. Airy.¹⁶ Similar examples were also used by nurseryman such as the office of Thaddeus N. Yates & Co. at 7356 Germantown Avenue (Figure 57) in Mt. Airy and the Glenwood Nurseries at Morrisville, Pennsylvania.



Figure 57. Top left: The office of Thaddeus N. Yates & Co., Nurserymen, at 7356 Germantown Avenue. Source: Germantown Historical Society. Figure 58. Top right: The office of “Ye Sedgwick Farms Co.,” at 7014 Boyer Street. Source: Jane Campell Scrapbooks, HSP. Figure 59. Bottom: A small office building at Germantown used for both lime, plaster and cement, as well as Lehigh Coal. Source: HSP.

The examples shown above illustrate the prominence of the said building type as part of the cultural, economic, and social history of Philadelphia and neighborhoods like Germantown. These buildings were usually one-story, sometimes two, but were almost always designed specifically in relation to a neighborhood context whether that be an industrial site, a dense urban neighborhood or a suburban road. The St. Martins Coal Company Office represents that built heritage, satisfying Criterion J.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Farmer Jarvis. *Mount Airy*. (Arcadia Publishing, 2008), p. 119.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: ST. MARTINS COAL COMPANY. The attractiveness of Shipley’s newly built office to serve his St. Martin’s Coal Company likely quell the contention created when he removed from the George B. Newton Coal Company. In fact, this action would lead to Richards, et. al. v. Shipley, which was first before the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia County and later before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.¹⁷ Despite Shipley’s legal troubles, he would go on to operate the St. Martins Coal Company from the subject property for roughly forty years until ca. 1954, when it was sold to F.C. Haab, Inc. The sale took place just two years prior to his death on February 16, 1956. The St. Martins Coal Company purchased the subject property from what had become The Connecting Railway Company just a few months later on May 9, 1956.¹⁸ A successor to the St. Martin’s Coal & Oil, Inc., F.C. Haab, Inc., continued to own the subject property until 2002.¹⁹

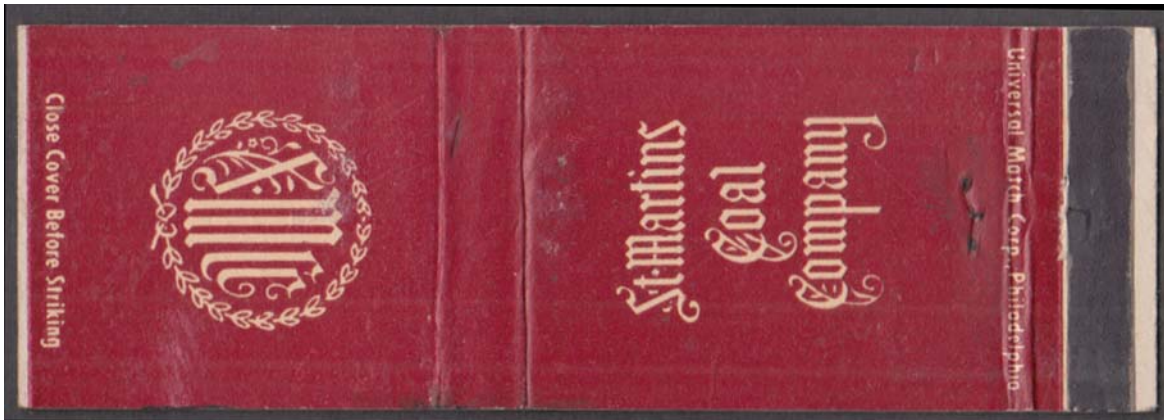


Figure 60. A match cover advertising the St. Martins Coal Company. Source: Julia Shipley by descent.

¹⁷ *Atlantic Reporter*. (United States: West Publishing Company, 1917), 458-58.

¹⁸ Deed: The Connecting Railroad Company to St. Martins Coal Company, Inc., May 1956, \$12,740.50, Philadelphia Deed Book C.A.B., No. 308, p. 378, City Archives of Philadelphia.

¹⁹ Deed: F.C. Haab, Inc., Successor by Merger to St. Martin’s Coal & Oil, Inc., to John Mascaro and Margaret C. Fitch, 13 May 2002, \$112,000, 50458901.

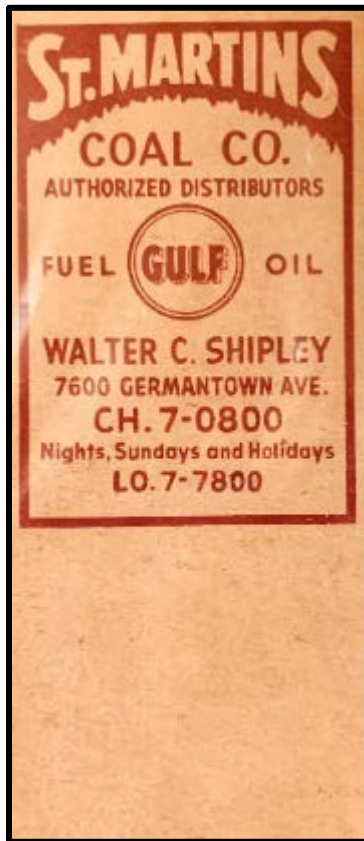


Figure 61. Interior advertisement of the match book for the St. Martins Coal Company. Source: Julia Shipley by descent.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian, and Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian. The Keeping Society of Philadelphia is grateful for materials provided Samuel Shipley and Julia Shipley, direct descendants of Walter C. Shipley, as well as Brad Maule for providing photographs of the subject building.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Germantown Historical Society
Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Newspapers.com
Proquest Historical Newspapers

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Figure 62. Left: The south elevation. Source Brad Maule, 2021. Figure 63. Right: Looking through the gate to the former coal yard. Source: Brad Maule, 2021.