

**ADDRESS: 8835 GERMANTOWN AVE**

Name of Resource: Julia Hebard Marsden Residence

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Chestnut Hill Hospital LLC

Nominator: Chestnut Hill Conservancy

Staff Contact: Jon Farnham, [jon.farnham@phila.gov](mailto:jon.farnham@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the former Julia Hebard Marsden residence and stable, two buildings on the Chestnut Hill Hospital campus, at 8835 Germantown Avenue and list them on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the buildings satisfy Criteria for Designation C, D, E, and J.

Under Criteria C and D, the nomination argues that the house and stable are highly representative examples of the Colonial Revival “country houses” that appeared in Chestnut Hill following the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Under Criterion E, the nomination contends that the buildings were designed by the nationally significant and Philadelphia-born architect Charles Barton Keen. Under Criterion J, the nomination argues that the residence and stable contributed to the neighborhood’s status as an elite residential enclave at the turn of the twentieth century.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the former residence and stable at 8835 Germantown Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, E, and J.



**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: 8835 Germantown Avenue (formerly 8811 Germantown Avenue)

Postal code: 19118 Councilmanic District: 8th

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Julia Hebard Marsden Residence

Current/Common Name: Chestnut Hill Hospital Women's Center

**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: Medical Center

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1903 to 1944

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1903; 1912

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Charles Barton Keen

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Thomas M. Seeds

Original owner: Julia Hebard Marsden & Biddle Reeves Marsden

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name with Title \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, and Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Notice Issuance: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

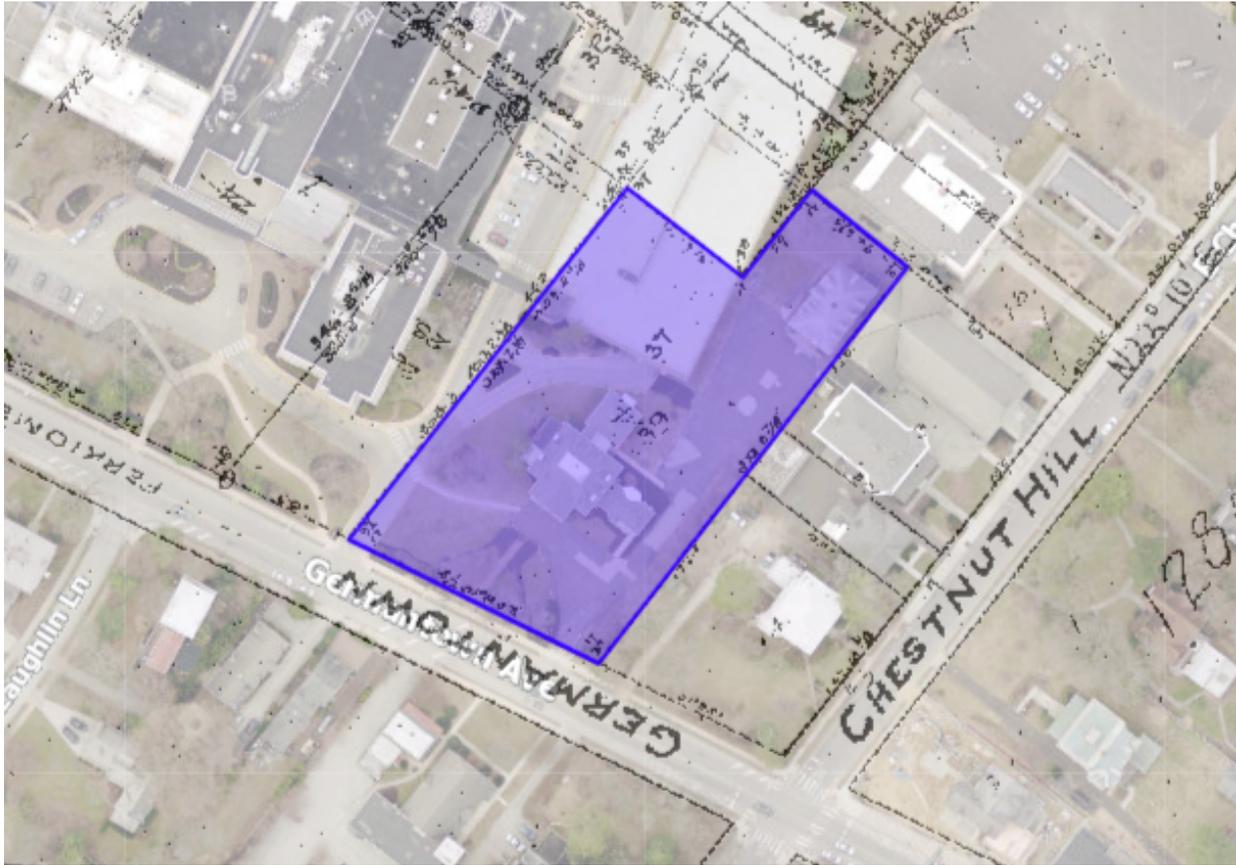
Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

## 5. Boundary Description



Beginning at a point on the Northeast side of Germantown Avenue (60 feet wide), at a distance of 152 feet 10 inches Northwestward from the Northwest side of Chestnut Hill Avenue (50 feet wide); thence extending North 58 degrees 53 minutes 7 seconds West, along the said Northeast side of Germantown Avenue, 208 feet 10- $\frac{7}{8}$  inches to a point; thence extending North 42 degrees 44 minutes 3 seconds East 329 feet 2- $\frac{3}{8}$  inches to a point; thence extending South 48 degrees 47 minutes 52 seconds East 111 feet 3- $\frac{1}{8}$  inches to a point; thence extending North 42 degrees 11 minutes 28 seconds East 79 feet 8- $\frac{7}{8}$  inches to a point; thence extending South 48 degrees 40 minutes 17 seconds East 90 feet 6- $\frac{1}{8}$  inches to a point; thence extending South 42 degrees 10 minutes West 372 feet  $\frac{7}{8}$  inches to the said Northeast side of Germantown Avenue, the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

*Note: The above boundaries reflect the historic dimensions of 8811 Germantown Avenue (Parcel 087N-19-0039), which has since been consolidated into a larger legal parcel (OPA# 775001000) known as 8835 Germantown Avenue. These historic boundaries include two contributing historic buildings (the main house and detached carriage house) and a portion of a non-contributing contemporary parking garage.*

## 6. Description

The former Julia Hebard Marsden House, now known as the Chestnut Hill Hospital Women's Center, is a two-and-one-half-story, five-bay Colonial Revival residence located at 8811 Germantown Avenue (now consolidated as 8835 Germantown Avenue and part of the Chestnut Hill Hospital campus) in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia [Fig. 1]. The building is set back approximately 100 feet from the northeast side of Germantown Avenue on a mid-block parcel located approximately 150 feet northwest of Chestnut Hill Avenue. The building was designed by architect Charles Barton Keen and constructed in 1903. The property includes a Keen-designed carriage house at the rear of the parcel, also constructed in 1903.



*Figure 1: Front (southwest) elevation as viewed from Germantown Avenue.*



Figure 2: Southwest elevation detail



Figure 3: Rear (northeast and southeast) elevations



*Figure 4: Rear (northeast) and side (northwest) elevation details of northwest wing addition (1912).*

The building's primary southwest elevation features a two-story, tetrastyle Doric portico carrying a modillioned, lunette-lit pediment [Fig. 2]. Behind this portico, the building's main block is red Flemish-bond brick with projecting brick water table, corner quoin blocks, and belt course. Double-hung multi-light windows (six-over-nine on the ground floor and six-over-six on the second floor) feature brick jack-arch lintels with limestone keystones and wood sills. The hipped roof is clad in asphalt shingles and lit by a pair of hipped gable dormers. Paired chimneys bracket the roofline, and additional paired dormers light the hipped roof's side pitches.

The main block is flanked by a three-bay, one-story side wing to the southeast, a one-bay, two-story side wing to the northwest, and a raised two-story, three-bay rear ell attached to the main block by a two-story hyphen [Figs. 3, 12]. The southeast side wing is original to the house, and is detailed in the same Flemish-bond red brick and capped by a hipped side-gable asphalt shingle

roof. A central doorway is marked by a cross-gable arched pediment carried on consoles. The doorway is served by a contemporary concrete access ramp. A pair of six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows light the wing's front (southwest) facade, one lights its southeast side end wall, and five light its rear (northeast) facade, three of which are set into a rear octagonal bay projection. A triangular louvered dormer pierces the wing's rear roof.

The northwest side wing was added in 1912. Also designed by Keen, it replaced an original one-story pergola [see Fig. 14] with an enclosed, stucco-clad one-story side wing and a second-floor sleeping porch [Fig. 4]. The stuccoed ground floor is lit by a single nine-over-six double-hung window on each of its three exposed sides; the flat-roofed sleeping porch is set back from the front facade and features Ionic columns and multi-light casement windows.

The Flemish-bond red brick rear ell is original to the house [Fig. 3]. It is composed of a square, two-story (plus raised basement) hipped roof block attached to the main house by a two-story hyphen and a one-story southeast-facing brick arcade. Each of the ell's three exposed faces is lit by three bays of six-over-six wood windows. A raised wood porch extends from the rear of the ell.

An original detached one-and-one-half-story carriage house is located approximately 150 feet behind the main house, also designed by Keen and completed in 1903 [Figs. 5-6]. It measures three bays wide and five bays deep. In 1911 it was converted from a stable to a garage, and attic living quarters were added in 1926. It features Flemish-bond red brick walls and a hipped gable roof crowned by an octagonal domed cupola with an ornate wrought iron weather vane. Its front (southeast) facade features a recessed entrance flanked by Doric columns and surrounded by multi-light side lights and transom. Its northwest side elevation features an oversized wall dormer (likely an original hay loft) now accessed by a contemporary iron fire escape. Hipped gable dormers light all four roof pitches.

The property originally featured a wood picket fence along its Germantown Avenue sidewalk, with large brick and limestone gate posts framing the driveway entrance. While the fence no longer survives, the gate posts remain standing (though one has been moved from its original

location to mark a newer driveway entrance). A smaller pair of gate posts and an iron pedestrian gate, presumably original, also survive on site [Figs. 7-8].



Figure 5: Carriage house, southwest (front) elevation.



Figure 6: Carriage house, northwest (side) elevation



*Figures 7-8: Driveway gatepost details*



*Figure 9: Walkway gatepost and iron gate*

## 7. Significance

Designed in a Georgian-influenced Colonial Revival style by the accomplished and prolific architect Charles Barton Keen (1868-1931), the former Julia Hebard Marsden House is a significant architectural resource located along a prominent stretch of Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, an affluent, bucolic residential enclave characterized by large estate houses constructed from the mid-19th through the early 20th centuries. Built in 1903 for wealthy socialite Julia Hebard Marsden and her husband Dr. Biddle Reeves Marsden, the house is a distinctive and characteristic example of the Colonial Revival style as applied to the suburban “country house” of the early 20th century, and a significant local example of the work of Philadelphia native Charles Barton Keen. The property is included as a significant resource within the Chestnut Hill Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. It likewise merits individual listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by meeting the following criteria for designation as established in Philadelphia’s Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 14-1004 (1):

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

### **Colonial Revival “Country Houses” of the Early 20th Century**

The Marsden House is a characteristic example of the Colonial Revival style, a design movement which strongly impacted residential, commercial, and institutional architecture across America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The style’s origins are commonly traced to Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition of 1876, where a renewed interest in the history of the

American colonies inspired a widespread appreciation for and documentation of the nation's 18th-century building stock. With varying degrees of fidelity, architects soon began to adapt elements from high-style Georgian and Federal-era buildings into new designs, particularly for large new "country houses" in the rapidly-developing railroad suburbs of Philadelphia and other East Coast cities. Such elements included simplified and symmetrical massing, classical porticos and pediments, Flemish-bond "colonial red" brick facades, exaggerated corner quoins, cornice dentils, and jack-arched lintels. By the turn of the 20th century, the Colonial Revival style had decisively supplanted eclecticism and the picturesque Queen Anne styles of the late 19th century.<sup>1</sup>

Philadelphia architects and clients-- particularly the affluent and style-conscious patrons of Chestnut Hill and the Main Line suburbs west of the city-- played an early and influential role in the spread of the Colonial Revival movement. In Chestnut Hill, the style first appeared in the late 1880s and early 1890s with architect George T. Pearson's designs for Keewaydin (1889) and the J. Levering Jones House (1894), the latter of which featured a prominent front portico that was noted at the time as "the first mansion with a portico of [its] kind built near Philadelphia for about ninety years."<sup>2</sup> Other prominent architects soon followed suit, both in and beyond Chestnut Hill, including Cope & Stewardson, Durhing, Okie & Ziegler, Brockie & Hastings, Savery, Sheetz & Savery, and Charles Barton Keen.

In 1903, Julia Hebard Marsden and her newlywed husband Dr. Biddle Reeves Marsden commissioned Keen to design a new home for a plot of land she purchased, while still single, earlier the same year.<sup>3</sup> The land was formerly part of the sprawling Richard Norris estate along Germantown Avenue northwest of Chestnut Hill Avenue, an area then at the periphery of Chestnut Hill's increasing turn-of-the-century suburbanization [Figs. 10-11]. The commission was one of Keen's earliest large country houses, and was widely published in national

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<sup>1</sup> Foster, Gerald. *American Houses: A Field Guide to the Architecture of the Home*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Nolan, Thomas. "Recent Suburban Architecture in Philadelphia and Vicinity," *Architectural Record*, Vol. 19 no. 3, March 1906, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Deed Book WSV 140, p. 353.



Figure 10: Site in 1895, prior to subdivision of the Norris estate. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, G.W. Bromley & Co., 1895, plate 35 (detail).

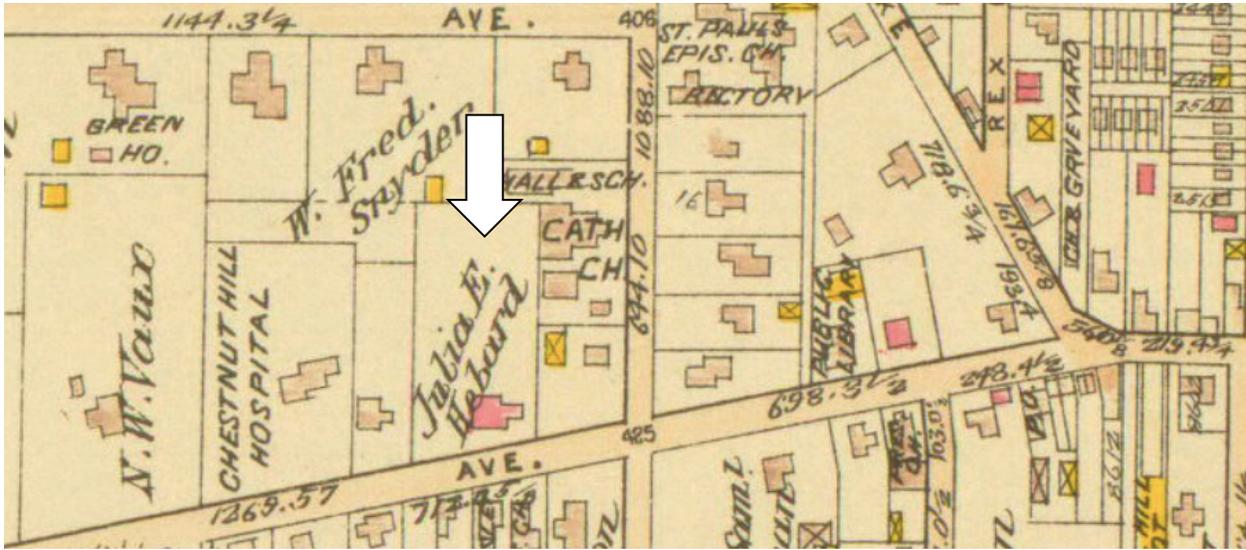
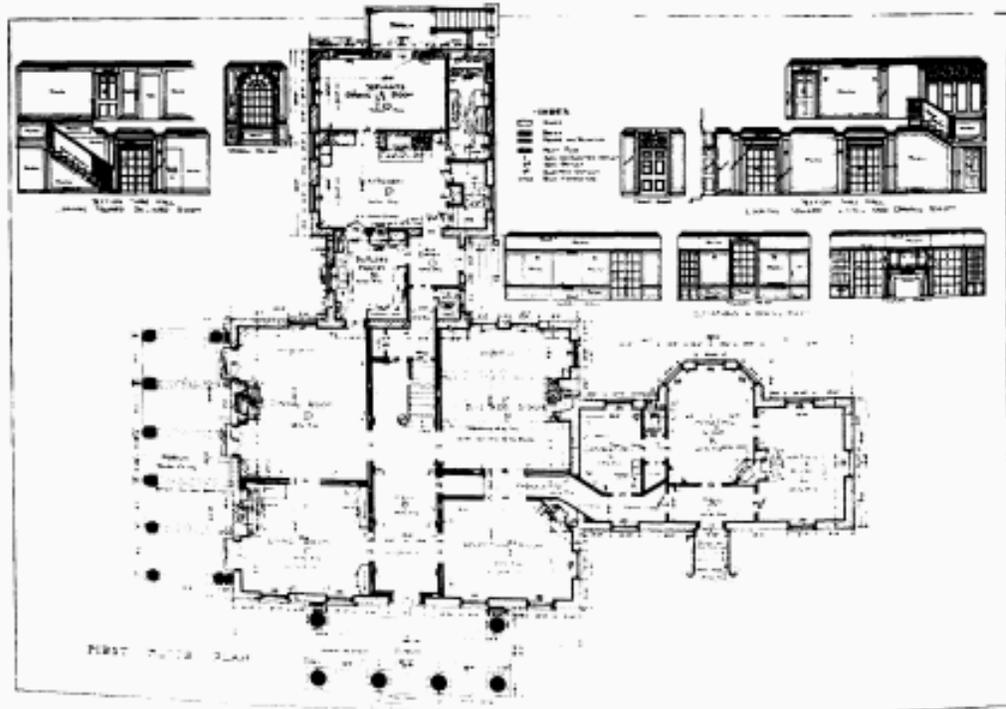
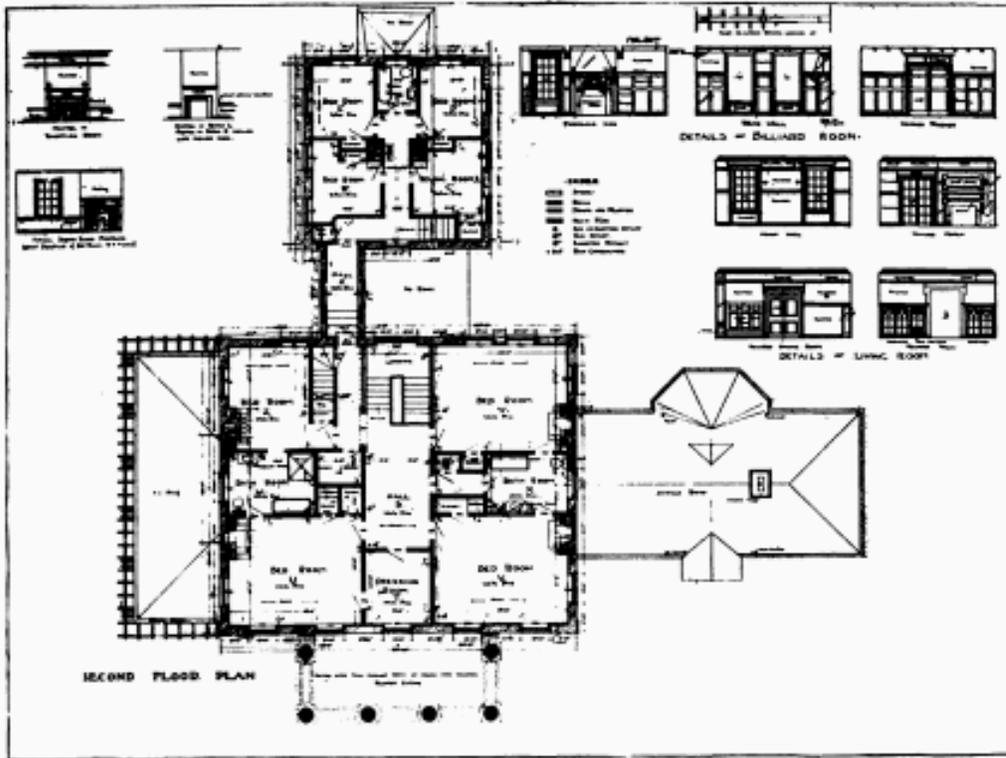


Figure 11: Site in 1910 (note the inaccurate rendering of the footprint and location of the new residence's footprint and location relative to Germantown Avenue). Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, G.W. Bromley & Co., 1910, plate 35 (detail).

architectural journals and publications upon its completion, including *House and Garden* (April 1905), *Architectural Record* (March 1906), *the New York Architect* (May 1909), and *One Hundred Country Houses: Modern American Examples* (1909) [Figs. 12-14]. Praised as a “logical adaptation of old Colonial work to our present-day needs,” the design featured a red



Charles Barton Keen  
Architect

RESIDENCE OF DR. B. R. MARSDEN  
CHESTNUT HILL, PA.

Figure 12: New York Architect, Vol. 3, no. 5, May 1909.



STREET FAÇADE, DR. MARSDEN'S HOUSE, CHESTNUT HILL, PHILADELPHIA  
CHARLES BARTON KEEN Architect

*Figure 13: House and Garden, Vol. 7 no. 4, April 1905*

brick Georgian Revival main block fronted by a grand two-story Doric portico. Colonial details included its Flemish-bond brick walls, corner quoins, jack-arched lintels and limestone keystones, which one critic described as “an earnest desire to reproduce some of the fine feeling and spirit of the Southern Colonial or Georgian houses, as far as the conditions of the site and the climate would permit.”<sup>4</sup> According to one published account, the home’s large front portico was added at the insistence of the Marsdens themselves, and the side wing was designed to accommodate offices for Dr. Marsden’s medical practice.<sup>5</sup> Keen also designed a rear stable building, later converted into a garage and apartment loft, and oversaw the replacement of the original side pergola [Fig. 14] with a small addition and sleeping porch in 1912.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Barber, Donn. “Modern American Country Homes,” *The New York Architect*, Vol. 3, no. 5, May 1909.

<sup>5</sup> Nolan, p. 188; Embury, Aymar. *One Hundred Country Houses: Modern American Examples*. New York: The Century Company, 1909, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Building Permits 2408 (1903), 5839 (1903) 3839 (1911), 5989 (1912), 9115 (1926), Philadelphia City Archives.

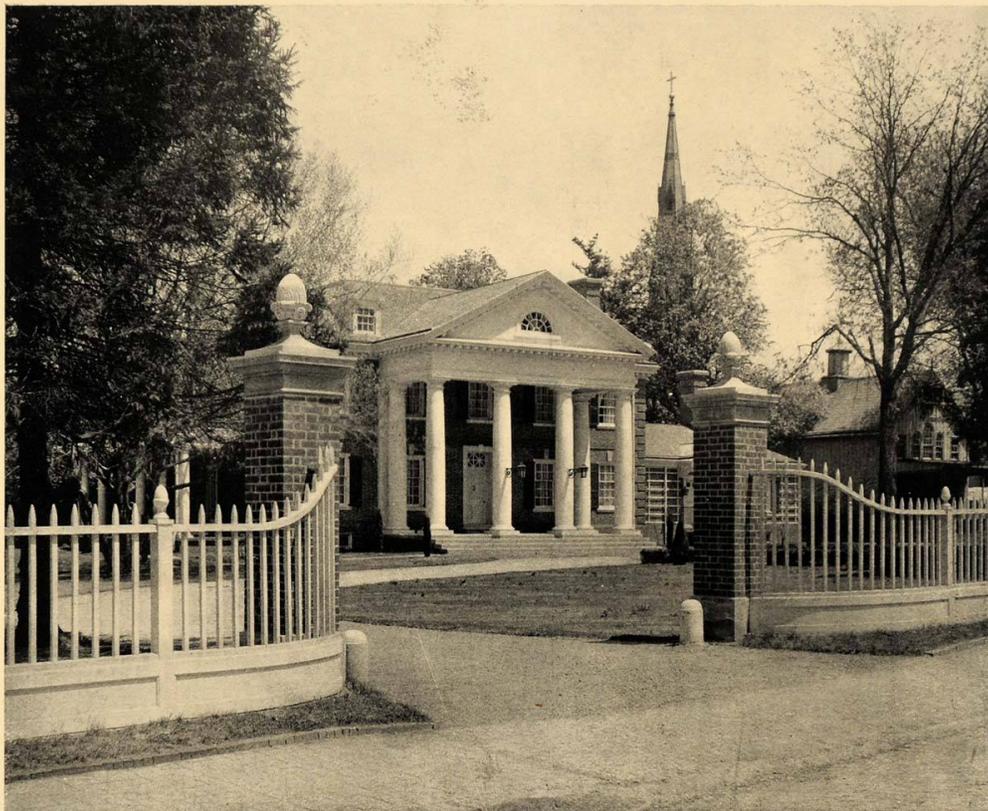


Figure 14: *New York Architect*, Vol. 3, no. 5, May 1909. Side view of northwest elevation with original pergola replaced by 1912 addition.

Nicknamed “Brickhouse” by its owners, the Marsdens’ home occupied a place of prominence along Germantown Avenue and among Chestnut Hill’s high society circles. A childless couple (Julia was 44 and Biddle was 39 at the time of their marriage), the Marsdens hosted regular social events and were active members of the nearby St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. After Biddle’s death in 1926, Julia maintained ownership of the property, travelled extensively throughout the United States and Europe, and served for many years on the Board of Managers of Hahnemann Hospital.<sup>7</sup> Following Julia’s death in 1944, the house passed through a series of private owners

<sup>7</sup> “People You Know,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 25, 1926; “Mrs. B.R. Marsden,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 18, 1944

before its eventual acquisition by Chestnut Hill Hospital, which converted the home into seven staff apartments in 1959.<sup>8</sup> Today it serves as the hospital's Women's Center. Though portions of the interior have been substantially altered, the house's exterior retains a high degree of integrity reflecting the period of Julia Marsden's ownership from 1903 to 1944.



HOUSE FOR DR. MARSDEN  
CHESTNUT HILL  
CHARLES BARTON KEEN, ARCHITECT

*Figure 15: One Hundred Country Houses: Modern American Examples. New York: The Century Company, 1909. Note the original placement of the gateposts.*

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<sup>8</sup> Deed Abstracts, *Parcel 087N-19-0039*, Philadelphia City Archives; Building Permit 2432 (1959), Philadelphia City Archives.



Figure 16: Postcard c. 1910, Philip H. Moore, Photographer and Publisher. Library Company of Philadelphia, Print Department, P. 9505.1

### Charles Barton Keen

Born in Philadelphia in 1868, Charles Barton Keen graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1889 and began his architectural career as a draftsman in the offices of Theophilus P. Chandler (1889) and Frank Miles Day (1890-92) while continuing his education at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art. He established an independent practice around 1893, and the following year entered into a partnership with former classmate and fellow Frank Miles Day draftsman Frank Mead. Keen & Mead designed a number of single-family homes and duplexes for speculative

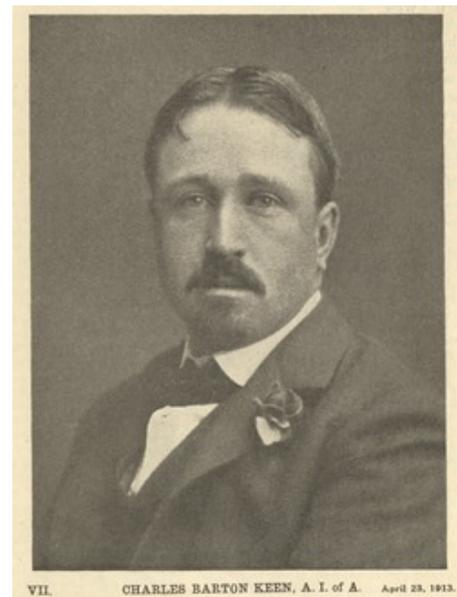


Figure 17: Keen c. 1913. Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, April 23, 1913.

developers in Germantown, Overbrook, and suburban Montgomery County before Mead relocated to California, dissolving the partnership in 1901.

Keen returned to independent practice with a number of large residential commissions in the early 1900s, including the Marsden Residence. The success of these early works helped launch a career that would eventually span the East Coast. Remembered today as one of his generation's "most prolific and popular designers of the country house," Keen designed scores of Colonial Revival estates for wealthy clients from Maine to Florida.<sup>9</sup> By the early 1910s, much of his work was centered in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he served as the favored architect of tobacco baron R.J. Reynolds. Keen maintained offices in Philadelphia and Winston-Salem through the 1920s. He died in 1931. Given its prominent and highly visible location along Germantown Avenue and its role in helping establish Keen's national reputation, the Marsden House is among the most significant of Keen's designs in Philadelphia, his native city.

## **Conclusion**

The former Julia Hebard Marsden House, now known as the Chestnut Hill Hospital Women's Center, is a significant work of notable Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keen and a highly representative example of the Colonial Revival style. Built for a wealthy client on a prominent site in Chestnut Hill, the house also exemplifies the neighborhood's status as an elite residential enclave at the turn of the 20th century. The property therefore satisfies Criteria C, D, E, and J for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

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<sup>9</sup> Tatman, Sandra L. "Keen, Charles Barton (1868-1931)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Database, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm?ArchitectId=A0748](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm?ArchitectId=A0748)

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