

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: **5008-10 Germantown Avenue**
 Postal code: **19144** Councilmanic District: **8**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Reser-Royal House; The Baltes Reser House; and The Royal House**
 Current Name: **NA**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Site ☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Occupancy: ☐ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☒ unknown
 Current use: **Commercial**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): **ca.1727-45 to 1969**
 Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **ca.1727-45; 1910 (Addition 1); & ca.1910-24 (Addition 2)**
 Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Unknown**
 Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Unknown**
 Original owner: **Bernhard Reser**
 Other significant persons: **Baltes Reser and Edward Royal**

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.

*Criterion I
added by
Committee
on Historic
Designation

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR: KEEPING SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian**

Date: **24 January 2022**

Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Street Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320**

Telephone: **717.602.5002**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 24 January 2022

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: February 22, 2022

Date of Notice Issuance: February 24, 2022

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Nai Liang Li

Address: 5008-10 Germantown Ave

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: April 20, 2022

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: May 13, 2022

Date of Final Action: May 13, 2022. Designated under Criteria for Designation A, I, J.

☒ Designated

☐ Rejected

3/12/18

NOMINATION
FOR THE
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. Looking south at the primary (northeast) and side (northwest) elevations of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

THE RESER - ROYAL HOUSE
ALSO KNOWN AS THE BALTES RESER HOUSE
BUILT CA. 1727 – 45
5008–10 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
GERMANTOWN
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



Figure 2. The boundary for the designation of the subject property is outlined in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description of the proposed designation is as follows:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon, situated on the southwest side of Germantown Avenue in the City of Philadelphia, County of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at the distance of 439 feet, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches Southeastwardly from the Southeasterly side of Manheim Street, extending Southeastwardly in front along the said Germantown Avenue, 43 feet, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches to a corner of land now or late of Conrad Schmipf; THENCE extending along the Northwesterly line of said Schmipf's land, 100 feet to the Northeastwardly side of a certain 18 feet wide street; THENCE Northwesterly along the Northeastly side of said 18 feet wide street, 44 feet, 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches to a corner; THENCE North 41 degrees, 26 minutes, East 100 feet more or less to the place of beginning.

BEING No. 5008–10 Germantown Avenue.

Tax Account No. 871517780

Philadelphia Deed Registry No. 048N050108



Figure 3. Looking south at the primary (northeast) and side (northwest) elevations of the Reser House. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Located just northwest of W. Seymour Street on what is colloquially known as the “west side” (the southwest side) of Germantown Avenue, the Reser-Royal House at 5008–10 Germantown Avenue is a substantial semi-detached house that was built as a free-standing dwelling, which, in time, included a Main Block (significant), Rear El (significant), Shed Addition 1 (contributing), and Shed Addition 2 (contributing). Records indicate that the present Main Block stood in its current form as a five rank, two-and-one-half story volume by 1774 (Figure 9), likely first being built between 1727 and 1745.¹ The former chimney stack also provides documentation as to the buildings age, as discussed on page 12. The Main Block is of rubble stone, Schist construction with a side-gable roof. The Rear El was present in 1798 (Figure 30), as the tax assessment provides the measurements, which align with the current structure.² The Rear El is a two-story volume of rubble stone and Schist construction that is clad in stucco and features a shed roof. Shed Addition 1 began as a porch (as seen in Figures 8 and 41) but was rebuilt as an addition in 1910 under the ownership of John Geltz by P.J. Gaffney & Co., contractors.³ While the building was altered over time to suite varying commercial uses, the second floor retains its original fenestration, though two of the openings have been altered to create a mullion window. A storefront was added to the northerly side, serving 5010, of the building’s first floor no later than 1896 though it may even date to the 1880s due to the presence of commercial tenants at 5010.⁴ The second, southerly storefront, serving 5008, was likely installed soon after. Shed Addition 2 was present by 1924 though it could have been added as early as 1910 when Shed Addition 1 was completed (Figure 62).⁵

¹ Deed: Dirck Jansen, yeoman of Gtn. and Margaret, his wife, to Bernhard Reser, baker of Gtn., 150, 27 January 1727, Philadelphia Deed Book F-10, p. 134.; and Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Gtn, £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.

² Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., U.S. Direct Tax Lists, 1798* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. This collection was indexed by [Ancestry World Archives Project](#) contributors.

³ Permit No. 3833, 7 June 1910, 5020 Germantown Avenue, Bureau of Buildings, City of Philadelphia. Source: City Archives of Philadelphia.

⁴ “Our Cycle Route No. 34,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 October 1896, 7.

⁵ Shed addition 2 is present in the 1924 Sanborn Atlas for the 22nd Ward without an update.

The primary (northeast) elevation of the main block features a two-and-one-half-story, five-bay façade which is partly clad in form stone at the second floor. The ground floor was substantially altered in the early twentieth century to accommodate two storefronts, the lower of which remains open with modern glazing, while the upper has been enclosed by concrete block. Between the two storefronts is a single pedestrian door, which is just slightly off-center. The second floor expresses a five-rank fenestration with three original openings and one two-part mullion window, likely an alteration related to an interior renovation. A commercial cornice rises above the second floor. Clad in some type of asphalt roofing material, the upper floor features two historic dormers that retain early gable-front details. The dormer window openings are concealed by plywood. Fragments of the original chimney stacks survive at each end of the Main Block. The side (northwest) elevation faces unto a narrow pedestrian alley and the façade appears to be entirely clad in stucco, though the original apertures at the first and second floors are present, being boarded. It appears that the window within upper, half-story is concealed by stucco. A truly distinctive feature marking the age of the house is the characteristic sag of the roofline often associated with this specific building form and age.



The two figures shown compare the intact upper floors of the Reser-Royal House in ca.1875 and 2019. **Figure 4a.** Shown in full detail in Figure 37, the Reser-Royal House ca.1875, when it was known simply as the Royal House. Source: Germantown Historical Society. **Figure 4b.** Bottom: The primary (northeast) and side (northwest) elevations of the Reser House. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.



Looking south at the subject property's primary (northeast) and side (northwest) elevations in 1890 and 2019. **Figure 5.** Top: Shown in full detail in Figure 43, the Reser Royal House, ca. 1890, at 5008–10 Germantown Avenue. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia. **Figure 6.** Bottom: Looking north at the subject property's primary (northeast) and side (northwest) elevations. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Figure 7. Left: Looking from above at the side (northwest) and rear (southwest) elevations of the Main Block (shaded in blue), the Rear El (shaded in yellow), Shed Addition 1 (shaded in green), and Shed Addition 2 (not shaded). Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018. **Figure 8.** Inset on Right: Shown in full detail in Figure 41, the Reser-Royal House, ca. 1875, showing the side (northwest) and rear (southwest) elevations of the Main Block, Rear El, and what would become Shed Addition 1, then an open porch. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

The rear (southwest) elevation of the Main Block is largely obscured by additions, but the second floor is visible as is the rear portion of the roof. The second floor contains original openings that have been boarded. The upper, half-story features a central dormer that appears to be eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The two-story Rear El appends the west corner of the Main Block, occupying about one-third of the rear elevation. Only the upper floor is visible, being obscured by Shed Addition 1 and Shed Addition 2. Shed Addition 1 is a small one-story volume that appends the rear (southwest) elevation of the Rear El and is entirely clad in stucco. The court created by the rear of the Main Block, the Rear El, Shed Addition 1 and the party wall of 5006 Germantown Avenue is infilled with Shed Addition 2, which is also clad in stucco. While the building at present has been clad with modern materials, it is largely intact and readable as an eighteenth century house in Lower Germantown.

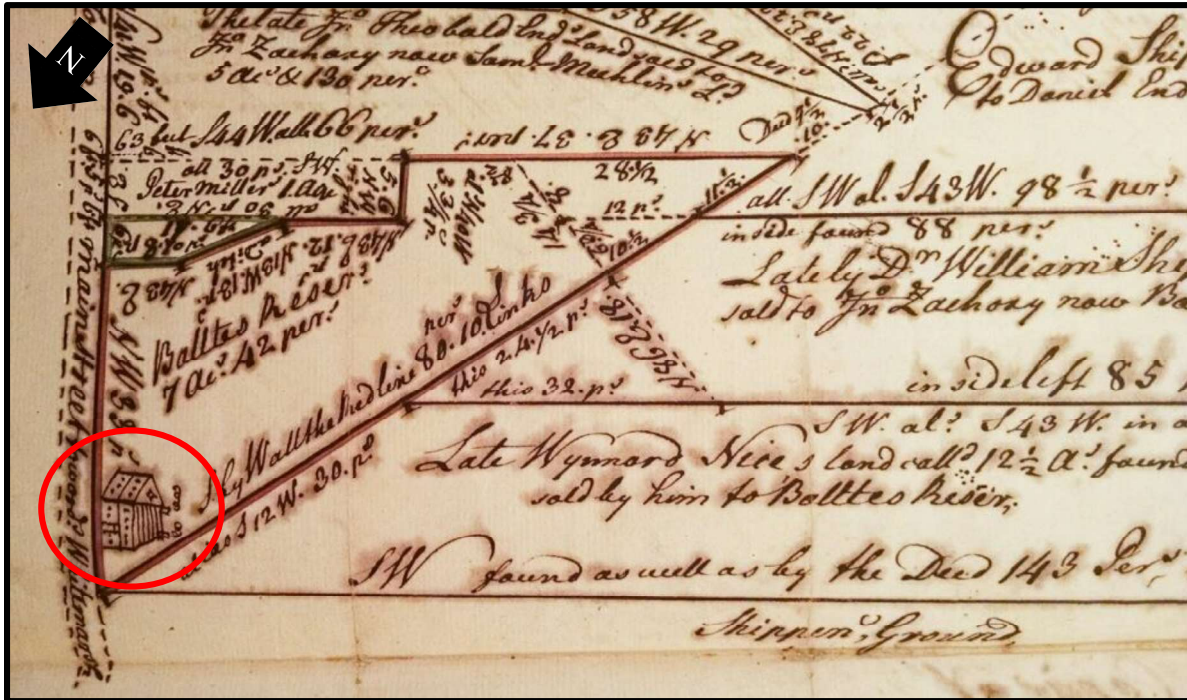


Figure 9. A survey by Christian Lehman of the subject property, when it was composed of “7 ac., 42 per.,” including a depiction of the subject building in 1774. Source: Christian Lehman. Survey of Baltes Reser’s 7 Acres, 42 perches at Germantown, Philadelphia. (Philadelphia: 6 August 1774). Christian Lehman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Reser-Royal House at 5008-10 Germantown Avenue 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 subject building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- 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; and
- j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance extends from ca.1727–45, the period in which the subject house was constructed by the Reser family, to 1969, when Jack Korson, a longtime owner of a fruit store in the subject building, sold the property.⁶

⁶ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Gtn, £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.



Figure 10. A simulation of the subject house as it stood on largely undeveloped, 11-acres of land in 1777, when under the ownership of Solomon White. As shown the house was likely the only major building along this part of Germantown Avenue from the time of its construction ca.1727–45 until 1868, when a substantial portion of the eleven-acre tract was subdivided for commercial and residential real estate development. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

CRITERIA A & J – THE RESER FAMILY (1727 TO 1777)

The Reser-Royal House is an important representative dwelling of the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century development and heritage of Germantown, satisfying Criterion A. While many of the famed colonial-era structures of the neighborhood have been lost over time, Germantown Avenue's development patterns remain visible through individual examples and vignettes of two- and three-story buildings of rubble schist construction, defined by side-gable roofs, featuring symmetrical fenestrations, and characteristic dormer windows set upon half-stories. While suffering from neglect and insensitive alterations, the subject building continues to exemplify the basic form and features of a ubiquitous Germantown house. It also exemplifies the commercial, economic, political, and social heritage of Germantown Avenue and Germantown, as it evolved from a German village in Philadelphia County to a lush residential suburb and on to a dense residential neighborhood in the consolidated City of Philadelphia, satisfying Criterion J. The subject house stands as part of this vestigial heritage of Germantown and its "Main Street."

The Reser-Royal House is remnant of a larger estate assembled between 1727 and 1734 at the lower end of the original Germantown settlement by Bernhard Reser (ca.1690–1761), a German-born baker and early colonist at Germantown.⁷ Baptized Johann Bernhard Röser, he was the only child of Johannes Röser, also a baker. The Resers were members of the Reformed Church at Elsoff and lived in Schwarzenau, a village that was part of the County (*Graffschaft*) of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein in the present-day German state of North Rhine Westphalia. Under Count Henrich Albrecht (1658–1723), the small mountainous county became the home of numerous religious refugees particularly radical pietists such as Alexander Mack and his followers

⁷ The name Reser, which the author has elected to use, was spelled Röser prior to the family coming to Germantown, and was later spelled Reser, Raser, Reiser, Rasor, Razor, Rezer, etc.

who established the Church of the Brethren in Schwarzenau. It also attracted free-thinkers such as Christopher Sauer (1695–1758). The German records reveal that Bernhard Reser and his wife in Schwarzenau had a son, Baltes Reser, baptized as Johann Balthasar Röser, in 1720 and another son in 1722 and a daughter in 1724.⁸

When Count Henrich Albrecht, who had a residence in Schwarzenau, died in 1723, there was an uncertain economic future due to the threat of a less tolerant political climate for religious separatists.⁹ Perhaps seeing the handwriting on the wall, Alexander Mack (1679–1735) and his Brethren community left in 1719 for Friesland and some under Peter Becker (1687–1758) came to Pennsylvania (via Krefeld, Germany), settling in and near Germantown. Matters came to head in 1725 when Christopher Sauer, his family, and roughly 390 souls were believed to have “secretly absconded and afterwards gone to Pennsylvania,” ultimately settling at Germantown.¹⁰ In preparation for emigration, Bernhard Reser petitioned the local court for permission to sell his property, which included a bakehouse, justifying the proposed sale with financial hardship. Since the Resers sought relief to sell their property, it is unlikely that they emigrated with the group of 390 in 1725. According to *Our Raser Family*, the Resers arrived at Germantown when Pennsylvania in 1726.¹¹ It is quite possible that the Reser family came over in the same ship as Johann Adam Gruber (1693–1763) leader of the group called the Community of True Inspiration (later known as the Amana Community) who also lived in Schwarzenau and settled in Germantown along with fellow Inspirationist Blasius Daniel Mackinet.¹²

⁸ Germany, Elsoff Evangelische Kirche, Taufen 1669–1689, 1692–1694, 1671–1752, 1699–1701, Westfalen: Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelische Kirche

⁹ Thomas A. Bartolosch, Corenlius Neutsch, Karl Jürgen Roth, *Siegerländer und Wittgensteiner in der Neuen Welt: Auswanderung im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Siegen: Universität Siegen, 1999).

¹⁰ Hedwig Mundel, “A 1725 Wittgenstein Emmigrants” *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine* 26 (1970): 133

¹¹ Edward John Raser, *Our Raser Family* (Monroe County, NJ: 2011).

¹² Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Johann Adam Gruber: Pennsylvania-German Prophet and Poet,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 83 (1959): 382–408.

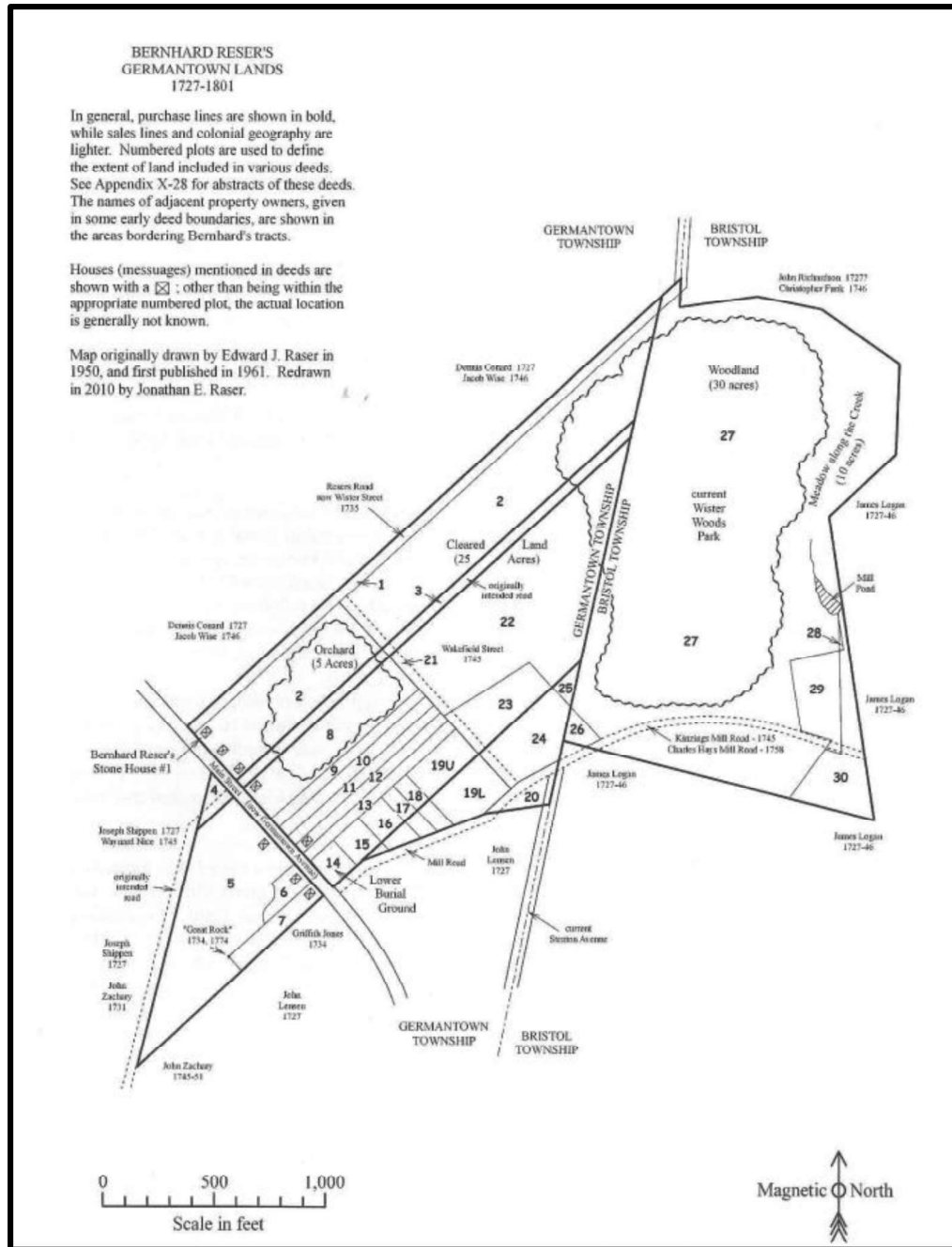


Figure 11. Map of Bernhard Reser's properties in lower Germantown between 1727 and 1801. The numerical labels shown on the map correspond with a description in *Our Raser Family*; however, Nos. 1, 2 & 8, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 relate to the subject property and its immediate historic context. The numerical labels represent the following: 1. Reser's Road (now E. Wister Street). 2. & 8. Bernhard Reser's land, which includes his primary residence; 3. An abandoned road; 4. A small portion of the subject property; 5. The primary, subject property, which included the subject house; 6. A neighboring property, immediately to the southeast; and 7. The site of the Wachsmuth-Henry House. Source: Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011).

Landowners in Germany, the Resers entered the New World with the means to purchase property at Germantown. Between 1727 and 1732, Bernhard Reser assembled significant acreage (between 80 and 96 acres) in Southeast Germantown. Soon after his initial purchase, it appears that he constructed a house at the southeast corner of present-day Germantown Avenue and E. Wister

Street, the latter being known for many years as Reser's Lane. The building that stands on that site today, known as the former Farmers & Mechanics Hotel, may contain a portion of the original Bernhard Reser House. He would go on to establish a bakery in this locality, which remained in operation until about 1746. By the 1730s, records indicate that he was among the largest landholders in Germantown.¹³

Part of an assemblage of acreage, the subject property was purchased by Bernhard Reser from Dirck Jansen, a yeoman of Germantown, and, his wife, Margaret for £150 around 1727. While most of this purchase was on the west side of Germantown Avenue, the subject property was historically comprised of 7 acres, 42 perches (Figure 9), but later was enlarged.¹⁴ Between ca.1727 and 1745, the Main Block of the Reser-Royal House was constructed, as the subject building is referenced in a 1745 deed.¹⁵ Based on a sketch dating to 1774, the subject house no doubt appeared like other known period dwellings on Germantown Avenue, including the Wagner House (1747) at 4840 Germantown Avenue (demolished); the Conyngham-Hacker House (1755) at 5214 Germantown Avenue; the John Bechtel House (1742) at 5226 Germantown Avenue; the Deshler-Morris House (1752–72) at 5442 Germantown Avenue; the Clarkson-Watson House (ca.1745) at 5275–77 Germantown Avenue; the Engle House (ca.1759) at 5932–42 Germantown Avenue (demolished); the Pastorius House (ca.1748) at 6019 Germantown Avenue; the Keyser House (ca.1738) at 6205 Germantown Avenue (demolished).

On the contrary, local lore, published in books and newspapers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, clearly states that “George Royal built the house in 1747 for his son Edward.”¹⁶ While this story conflates the later ownership of the Royal family with the eighteenth-century ownership of the Resers, there may be a thread of truth in their dating of the building, which certainly aligns with many similar houses listed above. In fact, the records of the subject property are copious enough to shed light on the age of the house, along with visual evidence. The aforementioned 1774 survey is remarkable. It depicts the subject building, a two-and-one-half-story, five rank dwelling with chimney stacks at each gable-end.¹⁷ A later photograph, taken during the latter years of the Royal family's ownership, shows an original chimney stack, serving the lower gable, which is similar in style and form to chimneys seen in photographs of the Slate Roof House (ca.1687).¹⁸ And perhaps the most important evidence of the age of the subject house is that Baltes Reser purchased a substantially-improved property from his father in 1745, the value for which did not change significantly during his ownership or through the time of the 1774 survey.¹⁹

¹³ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 23-25.

¹⁴ Deed: Dirck Jansen, yeoman of Gtn. and Margaret, his wife, to Bernhard Reser, baker of Gtn., 150, 27 January 1727, Philadelphia Deed Book F-10, p. 134.

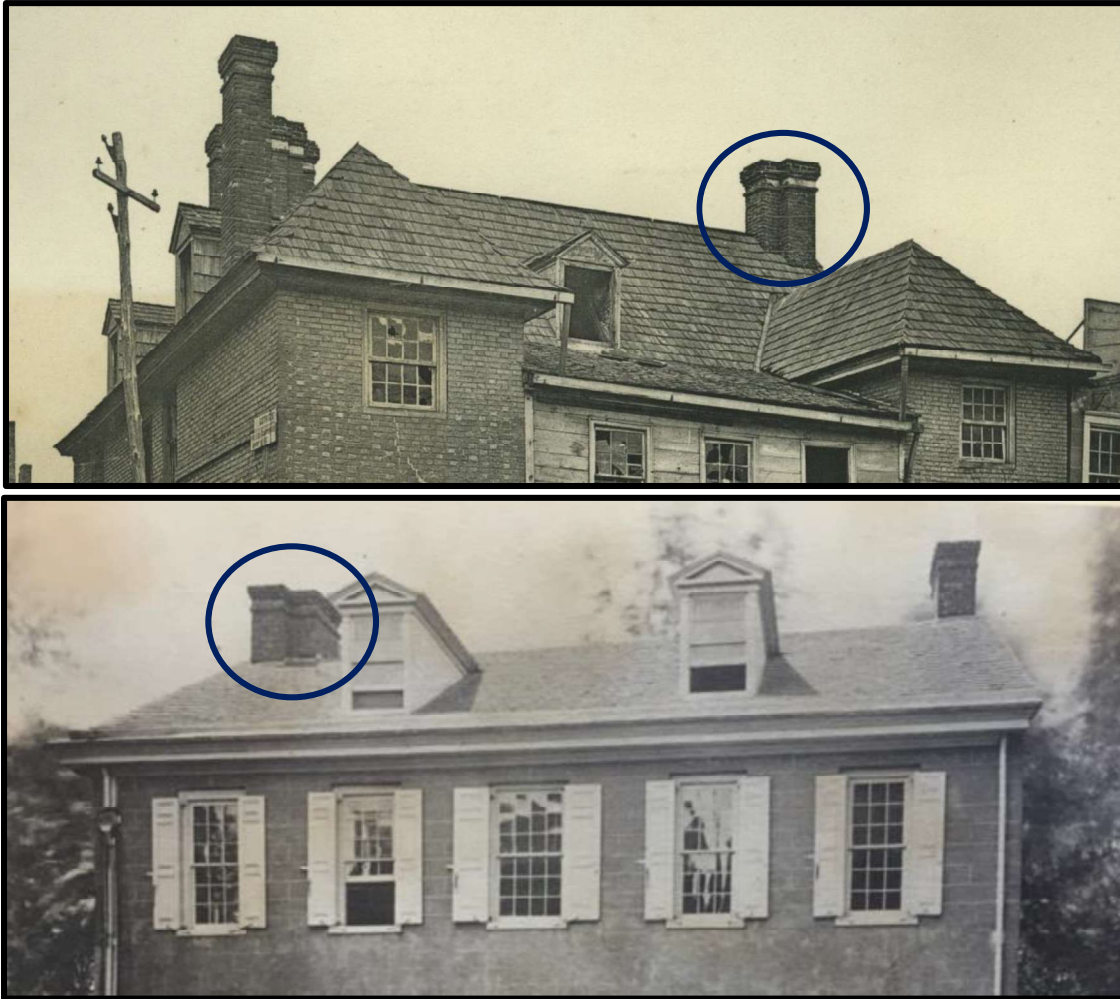
¹⁵ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Gtn, £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.

¹⁶ Garber, John Palmer, 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*. (Philadelphia: H. F. McCann, 1907), 183.; and Hotchkin, Samuel Fitch. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*. (Philadelphia: P. W. Ziegler & Company, 1889), 53.

¹⁷ Christian Lehman. Survey of Baltes Reser's 7 Acres, 42 perches at Germantown, Philadelphia. (Philadelphia: 6 August 1774). Christian Lehman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁸ John Fanning Watson. *Watson's Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: 1857).

¹⁹ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Gtn, £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.; and Christian Lehman. Survey of Baltes Reser's 7 Acres, 42 perches at Germantown, Philadelphia. (Philadelphia: 6 August 1774). Christian Lehman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



The two figures shown above illustrate the similar chimney stacks that once served the Slate Roof House, built in the late seventh century, and the Reser-Royal House, built between 1727 and 1745. While the stack has been removed from the Reser-Royal House, its former presence documents the probable early date of the building's construction. **Figure 12.** Top: Taken ca.1867 by F. Gutekunst, Photographers, this photograph of the Slate Roof House, built in the late seventeenth century for William Penn, has been cropped to show the upper portion for the purposes of comparing the chimney stacks of this historic building to that of the subject property. **Figure 4a.** (repeated), shown in full detail in Figure 37, the Reser-Royal House ca.1875, when it was known simply as the Royal House. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

While the subject building could have been built as a tenant house, it may also have been commissioned by Bernhard Reser for his son, Baltes Reser, and his daughter-in-law, Mary Lukens (1725–1762). She was the daughter of Matthias Lukens and Anna Johnson Lukens—the former being the son of Jan Lucken (the Lucken name appears to have been later changed to Lukens), who, along with twelve other families from Krefeld, emigrated in 1683, becoming the original settlers of Germantown.²⁰ Diverging from his Reformed faith, Baltes Reser was recorded as having “Quaker persuasions” at the time of his naturalization in 1740.²¹ He and Mary Lukens were married in the spring of 1743 in a ceremony of the Society of Friends. Their union would produce

²⁰ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 23-25.—there is no Monroe county NJ FYI

²¹ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 23-25.

the following children: Matthias Reser (1744–1803); John Reser (ca.1746/47–1747); Baltes Reser (ca.1747/52–1773); Daniel Reser (abt.1750–1792); and Elizabeth Reser (born abt.1750).²²

At some point prior to 1745, Baltes Reser established a tannery on the subject property.²³ The work of a tanner was not unknown in the neighborhood, as John Legrom, currier and tanner, had operated a tannery nearby, to the southeast since ca.1734, now the site of the Wachsmuth-Henry House at 4908 Germantown Avenue.²⁴ It is possible that John Legrom taught Baltes Reser the tanning trade, as various forms of evidence suggest that the families were closely related.²⁵ As part of the argument for Criterion J, it is important to note that “tanners were a vital part of life” in the eighteenth century. Marcia Falconer, Ph.D. described the importance of the trade in “A Tanner in Pennsylvania, 1765–1806,” published in *Penn Pal*, a publication on the “Palatines to America:”

Leather was needed for an incredible amount of everyday items; saddles and bridles for horses, cases for rifles, aprons for blacksmiths, bellows for hearths, book bindings, britches and vests, cloaks, shoes of all sorts, and even straps to hold things together—all these and more were made of leather.

The process of tanning—turning the hides of animals into leather—appears simple. Since the farmer was required to give the tanner half of all hides brought for tanning, many decided to tan their own hides instead. Almost all failed and the few who managed to produce something similar to leather realized that the time and effort involved far exceeded any financial gain they achieved. And so tanning and tanners remained a significant trade in the pre-industrial era.²⁶

Dr. Falconer also described the arduous eighteen-month process of manufacturing animal skin into leather, which can be found in the aforementioned article. Tanning was an important business in Germantown, as made apparent with the substantial list of Germantown tanners in the Tax and Exoneration Lists of Philadelphia County. In 1769, Germantown tanners included John Jones, Jacob Hill, Peter Keyser, John Johnson, Charles Engle, Leonard Nuts, and Samuel Mechlin, along with Baltes Reser.²⁷ The Reser-Royal House is one of the earliest surviving buildings associated with that industry.

Bernhard Reser disposed of most of his Germantown lands between 1745 and 1746, around the time that he moved to Milestown, where he lived until his death in 1761.²⁸ An advertisement of sale for the larger estate illustrates the types of buildings and improvements that existed on the Bernhard Reser property in 1746.²⁹

²² Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 23-25.

²³ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Gtn, £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.

²⁴ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Gtn., and wife Elizabeth, to John Legrom, currier of Gtn, £15, 17 May 1734, Philadelphia Deed Book I.W., No. 3, p. 286.

²⁵ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 35.

²⁶ Marcia Falconer, Ph.D. “A Tanner in Pennsylvania, 1765-1806,” *Penn Pal*, February 2017, 1-4.

²⁷ 1769 Tax & Exoneration List. Source: Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

²⁸ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 39.; and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 5 November 1761, 4.

²⁹ “To be SOLD,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 3 July 1746, 4. Via Newspapers.com.

To be SOLD,

BY BERNARD REISER, his Place in the German-Town, containing about 70 Acres, 30 of which is Woodland, about 26 cleared, 5 Acres Orchard, and 10 Meadow; having about 20 Perches front on the great Road, and fronting besides on other Roads; with a large Stone Dwelling House, two Brick Dwelling Houses, a Stone Barn with a Dwelling House in it, and a Frame Barn, a Stone Stable, and framed Cyder Press House, with a Press in it. For the Title and Terms of Sale, enquire of Balthas Reiser, living on the Premises. ⊕

On Monday the 20th day of October next, being the Fair day at Germantown, will be exposed to publick sale by vendue, at the dwelling-house of Bernard Reiser in Germantown: the sale beginning at 10 o'clock in the Forenoon:

FIVE lots of land, on the north east side of the main street of Germantown, aforesaid; the one of them containing in breadth on the said street six perches, and in length 53 perches, wherein the dwelling house stands, which being of stone contains forty foot front, and about thirty foot deep, two stories high, besides two barns, both very large, the one of stone, the other a frame building, with other out-houses, and a good orchard; on the north westerly side is a 40 foot lane or street, lying between this and Jacob White's land, and on the northerly end or side is also a 40 foot lane: The other four lots contain each 50 foot front to the aforesaid main street, and 53 perch rear, extending to the aforesaid 40 foot lane backwards, each of which hath two rows of bearing fruit trees thereon, and two of them have also messuages or tenements thereon erected. At which time and place will also be exposed to sale, as aforesaid, divers other lots of land, lying on the said first mentioned 40 foot lane or street, running from the aforesaid main street by Jacob White's land, call'd mill street.

One years credit without interest will be given to the purchasers, on giving security to satisfaction, if required; and two or three years further credit also will be given, paying interest, on giving such security as aforesaid. Concerning the title to the premises, enquire of Mr. Charles Brockden, in Philadelphia. ○

Philadelphia, Sept. 24. 1747.

On Tuesday, the 20th of October next, at the house where Bernard Reiser lately lived, at the lower end of Germantown, will be sold to the highest bidder,

THe said stone-house, and severai other buildings, a barn, and eleven lots of land; 3 of the said lots fronting Germantown main street, on one whereof the stone-house (of 2 stories high, and 40 feet front) stands, having 3 perches and 12 feet front, and 20 perches and 12 feet back, adjoining all the way to a 40 feet street, having some other large buildings thereon. The other 2 front lots, having each 3 perches and one foot front, and 20 perches and twelve feet deep, with some stone buildings on one of them. The other 8 lots are all a young thriving orchard of the best fruit, fronting the said 40 feet street, having each 4 perches front, and ten perches and ten feet deep; all of them being conveniently situate for any tradesman or publick business. The sale will begin at ten o'clock, and reasonable credit will be given by the owner

Joseph Marks.

Figure 13. Three advertisements for the sale of Bernard Reser's Germantown properties in 1746 and 1747. Top: An advertisement for the sale of Bernard Reser's (spelled Reiser) in 1746. Source: "To be SOLD," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 3 July 1746, 4. **Figure 13b.** Bottom left: *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 18 September 1746, 4. **Figure 13c.** Bottom right: *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 24 September 1747, 4.



Figure 14. Detail from a survey by Christian Lehman showing the subject house and its location, when it sat upon “7 ac., 42 per.” in 1774. Source: Christian Lehman, Survey of Baltes Reser’s 7 Acres, 42 perches at Germantown, Philadelphia, 6 August 1774, Christian Lehman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Constituting just a fraction of his family’s Germantown lands, Baltes Reser officially purchased the 7 acres, 46 perches, the subject property, from his father on August 8, 1745, a parcel which included “...all messuages, tenements, buildings, improvements, tann yards [sic.], orchards, gardens, meadows, swamps, ways, waters, watercourses, woods,” etc.³⁰ Figure 15 identifies this initial purchase of 7 acres, 46 perches as Parcel Nos. 5X, 61, 62, and 63. In the years afterwards, Baltes Reser would grow his holdings immediately adjacent to the subject property to approximately 31 acres, 120 perches. The additional purchases are identified on Figure 15 as Parcel Nos. 64, 65, and 66, a description of which is included in *Our Raser Family*.³¹ Baltes Reser resided in the subject building with his wife, Mary Lukens Reser, and their children until her death in 1762.³² Balters Reser remarried to Catherine Colladay on October 5, 1763 in a non-Quaker ceremony.³³ As recorded in the records of the Society of Friends at Abington, he was warned and then subsequently “read out of the Friends Meeting on July 30, 1764.”³⁴ His second wife was the daughter of Jacob Colladay and Catharina Juliana Rubenkam. *Our Raser Family* describes the familial connections:

³⁰ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Germantown, for £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.

³¹ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 35.

³² *Find a Grave*. Find a Grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

³³ *Pennsylvania Marriage Records*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Archives Printed Series, 1876. Series 2, Series 6.

³⁴ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 39.

Jacob Colladay had come to America in 1710 as a young child with his widowed mother; they lived in New York state for some years before relocating to the Germantown area. Catharina Juliana Rubenkam had come to America in 1726 with her widowed mother, in a party that probably included Baltes Reser, his parents and grandfather. Jacob Colladay married Catharina Rubenkam in Philadelphia in 1727; after Jacob's death in 1750, his widow married Blasius Daniel Mackinet. This was the same Mackinet with whom Johannes Roser was living in Schwarzenau in 1722! Strong ties continued between the Mackinet, Colladay and Reser families over the decades. Sometime after 1760, at the request of Sarah (Colladay) Meng-Catharine (Colladay) Reser's younger sister-Blasius Daniel Mackinet wrote a fascinating account of the immediate German origins of the Colladay and Rubenkam families.³⁵

The union of Baltes Reser and Catherine Colladay Reser produced the following children: Bernard Reser (1764–1804); Susannah Reser (1767–1853); Sarah “Sally” Reser (abt. 1771–1793); and Catharine “Caty” Reser (born abt. 1772).

In addition to his personal affairs, Baltes Reser was instrumental in establishing the “Germantown Potters’ Field or stranger’s burying ground,” purchasing 140 perches of land from Samuel Morris, High Sheriff, for £5.10 on July 23, 1755.³⁶ The burial ground was located on the north side of Queen Lane west of Pulaski Avenue, being established for “all strangers, negroes or mulattoes” in Germantown.³⁷ While the establishment of the cemetery was thought of as a charitable endeavor in 1755, it was also an act that marginalized those for whom the cemetery was founded. It was, however, part of the foundational history of Germantown as a settlement and established community. In 1759, Baltes Reser was also among the founders of the Germantown Academy, which remains the oldest non-sectarian day school in the United States. He was one of the original members of the school’s subscription committee along with Christopher Meng, Christopher Sower, Daniel Mackinet (spelled Machinett), John Jones, and Daniel Endt. Baltes Reser also served on the Germantown Academy Building Committee, which convened in January 1760. He later served as one of the “Managers” of the building, along with Christopher Meng, Conrad Weaver, Jacob Coleman, Peter Seibert, John Bringham, and Jacob Engle.³⁸

³⁵ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 39.

³⁶ *Year Book of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies: And Acts and Proceedings of the ... Annual Meeting*. (Harrisburg Pub. Company, State Printer, 1916), 89.

³⁷ Edward W. Hocker. *Germantown 1683-1933: The Record that a Pennsylvania Community Has Achieved in the Course of 250 Years; Being a History of the People of Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*. (Philadelphia: 1933), 79.

³⁸ William Travis. *History of the Germantown Academy: Comp. from the Minutes of the Trustees, 1760 to 1877*. (Ferguson Bros. & Company, 1882), 8-10.

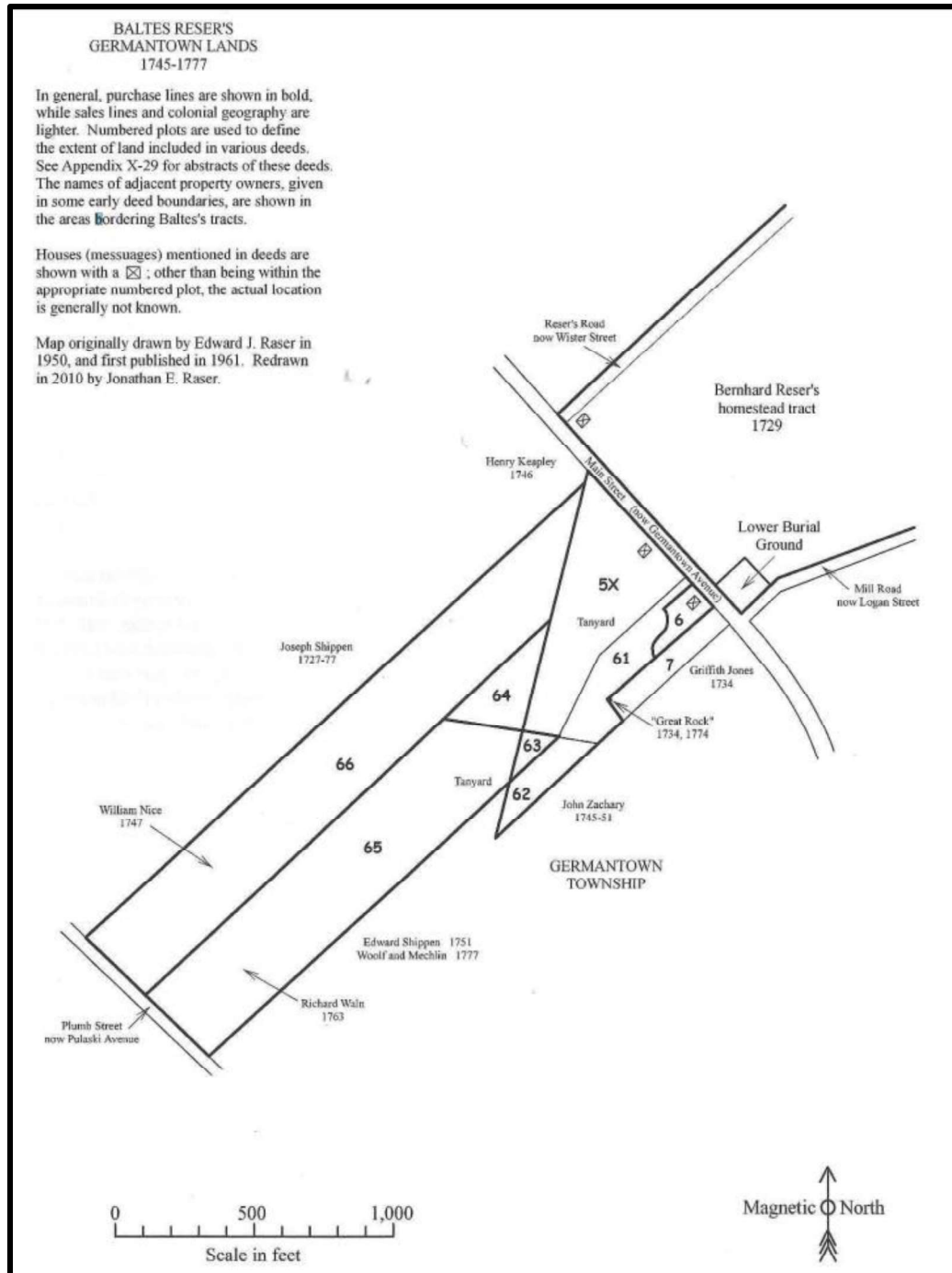


Figure 15. Map of Baltes Reser's properties in lower Germantown between ca. 1745 and 1777. The numerical labels shown on the map correspond with a description in *Our Raser Family*, illustrating the various purchases made by Reser to bring the subject property to its largest configuration. Source: Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011).

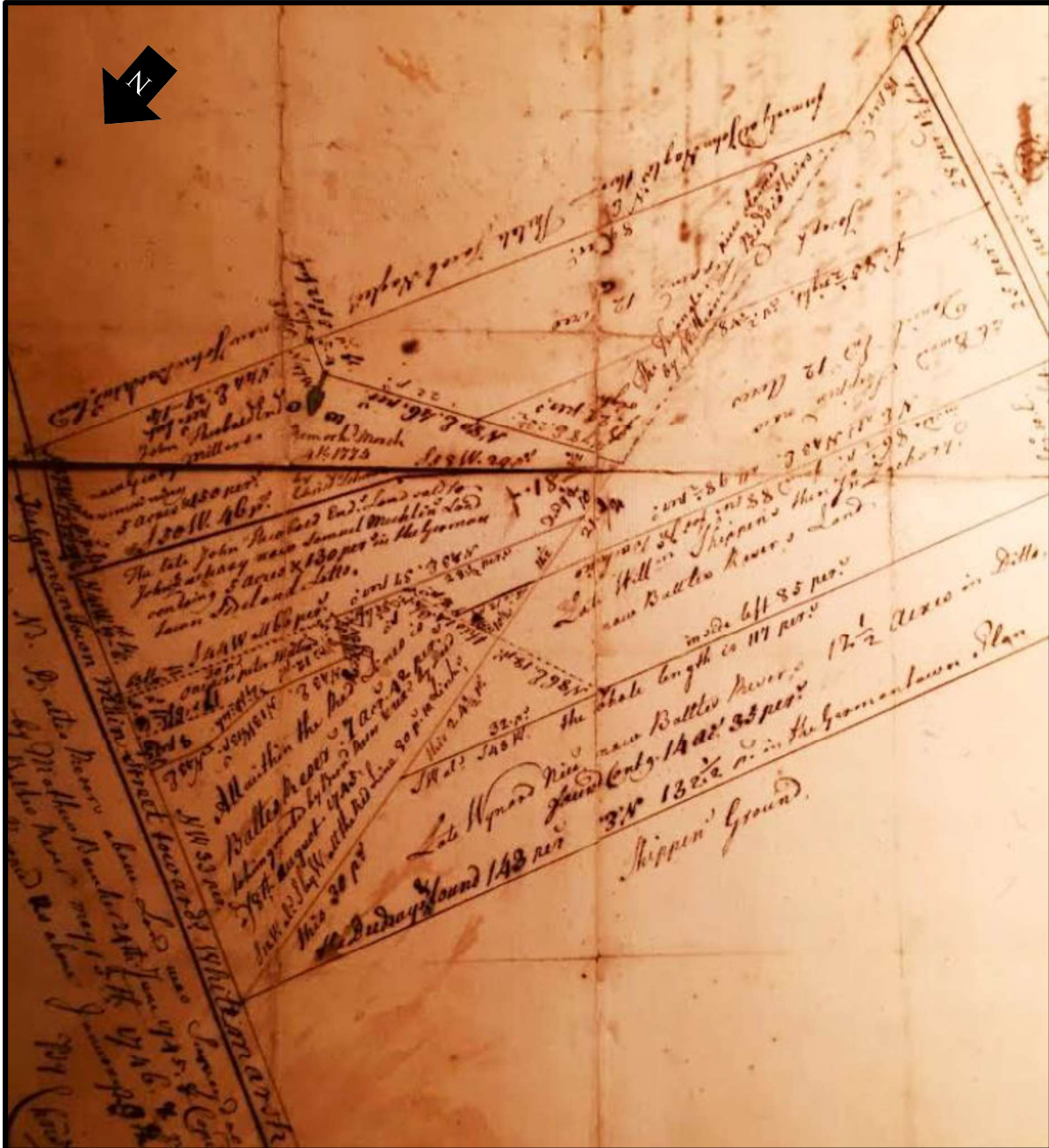


Figure 16. A survey illustrating the parcel lines in the vicinity of the subject building including the subject property, when it was 7 acres, 42 perches, in 1760. Source: Christian Lehman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The image shows two handwritten tax records. The left record is dated 30 and lists property for Baltes Razor, Tanner. It includes 35 Acres and Dwell £35, 4 Horses, 3 Cows, 3 Negroes, and £10 Rent for a House. The total is £42 13 4. The right record is dated 28 and lists property for Baltes Razor, Tanner. It includes 36 Acres and Dwell £35, 2 Servants, 1 Negro, 3 Horses, 3 Cows, and £15 of George Glane. The total is £40. Both records are marked 'Incumbered'.

Item	Value	Total
30 Baltes Razor Tanner		
35 Acres and Dwell	£35	21 " "
4 Horses, 3 Cows		3 13 4
3 Negroes		12 " "
£10 Rent for a House	6 " "	
Total		£42 13 4
Incumbered		

Item	Value	Total
28 Baltes Razor Tanner		
36 Acres and Dwell	£35	21 " "
2 Servants		3 " "
1 Negro		4 " "
3 Horses		2 " "
3 Cows		1 " "
£15 of George Glane	9 " "	
Total		£40 " "
Incumbered		

Figure 17. Left: 1767 Provincial Tax showing the Baltes Reser (spelled Razor) property with three enslaved Africans and/or African Americans at the subject house. Source: Tenth Eighteen Penny Provincial Tax On the Inhabitants of the City and County of Philadelphia, Pa., 1767, University of Pennsylvania Library. **Figure 18.** Right: 1769 Tax and Exoneration List. Source: Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., Tax and Exoneration, 1768–1801* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

CRITERIA A AND J - ENSLAVED AFRICANS AND/OR AFRICAN AMERICANS (1767, 1769, AND 1772)

Encompassing both Criterion A and Criterion J, the subject house also exemplifies the American institution of human chattel slavery, which comprised the enslavement of Africans and African Americans during the colonial period. Occupied by Baltes Reser and his wives Mary Lukens Reser and Catherine Colladay Reser, the subject building represents a local eighteenth century dwelling where enslavers owned and enslaved Africans and/or African Americans in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. While long associated with the “first protest against slavery” in 1688, Germantown was still home to wealthy enslavers such as Benjamin Chew, among others; however, there were also prosperous, local enslavers, who’s enslaved Africans and/or African Americans lived and worked in Germantown.³⁹ While primarily represented by the American South, it is critical to recognize the economic and social impact and significance of urban slavery in places like Germantown, eighteenth century towns that existed within and served larger cities like Philadelphia.⁴⁰ In fact, “slavingowning in Pennsylvania was predominantly an urban phenomenon.” In fact, “the Seven Years’ War in 1756 marked the onset of a decade in which slavery and slavetrading reached their height in colonial Philadelphia.” In his 1973 article “Slaves and Slaveowners in Philadelphia,” Gary B. Nash becomes one of the few historians of the past to study and contextualize slavery in Colonial Philadelphia, highlighting the third quarter of the eighteenth century:

The shift to black slave labor is reflected both in the shipping records and in the annual bills of mortality in Philadelphia. Importation of slaves, which according to a recent study had averaged only about twenty a year in the 1740s and about thirty a year in the early 1750s, began to rise sharply. Although precise figures are not available, it appears that at least one hundred slaves entered Philadelphia in 1759. By 1762, probably the peak year of slave importations in the colony's history, as

³⁹ Stephanie Grauman Wolf. *Urban Village: Population, Community, and Family Structure in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1683-1800*. (Princeton University, 1976), 13.

⁴⁰ Gary B. Nash. “Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, April 1973, 223-56.

many as five hundred slaves may have arrived, many of them directly from Africa. In each of the following four years between one and two hundred disembarked.⁴¹

As part of analyzing the subject property and its relationship to slavery in Germantown, a comprehensive study was undertaken of the 1767, 1769, and 1772 U.S. Tax and Exoneration Lists, documenting each household in the area along with those that included enslaved persons. Nash did the same thing, but for Philadelphia County at-large:

Calculating the number of households in Philadelphia at about 2,655 (80 percent of the total number of taxpayers) and the number of slaveowners at about 590, we can estimate that slaves resided in the homes of more than one in every five families in Philadelphia in 1767.

In sharp contrast to the towns of the colonial South, most slaveowners in Philadelphia held only one or two adult slaves. Of the 521 slaveowners appearing on the 1767 tax list, 57 percent owned only a single slave between twelve and fifty years of age and another 26 percent owned but two (Table V). If slaves under twelve and over fifty years of age were included, these figures would be somewhat, but probably not significantly, changed. In all likelihood, this pattern of ownership reflects the limited possibilities for employing slaves in gang labor in a city where most of the productive labor, outside of ship building and a few enterprises such as bakeries, brickyards and ropewalks, was still carried out in the small shop of the individual artisan.⁴²

While there are limited records on slavery in Germantown, tax records of the period identify that Baltes Reser enslaved several people during the late 1760s and early 1770s, including three in 1767; one in 1769; and two in 1772.⁴³ Enslavers were generally taxed at a value of £4 for each enslaved person. And on average enslavers in Germantown were taxed for “1 negro” per household, though a handful of Germantown householders enslaved more than one person at a time.⁴⁴ In the case of Baltes Reser, he was a tanner and it is likely that those enslaved supported that business, along with other work related to farming and land ownership during that period. However, enslaved persons may also have served in a domestic capacity.

⁴¹ Gary B. Nash. “Slaves and Slaveowners in Philadelphia,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, April 1973, 230-31.

⁴² Gary B. Nash. “Slaves and Slaveowners in Philadelphia,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, April 1973, 243-45.

⁴³ An evaluation of the 1767, 1769, and 1772 Tax & Exoneration Lists. Source: 1767 Tax & Exoneration Lists for Philadelphia County, Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania.; Tax & Exoneration Lists, 1762–1794. Series No. 4.61; Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.; and Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁴⁴ An evaluation of the 1767, 1769, and 1772 Tax & Exoneration Lists. Source: 1767 Tax & Exoneration Lists for Philadelphia County, Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania.; Tax & Exoneration Lists, 1762–1794. Series No. 4.61; Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.; and Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Year	Slaves between 12 and 50	Estimated Slave Population ^a	Approximate Total Population	% Slave
1767	905	1,392	16,000	8.8
1769	856	1,270	16,850	7.9
1772	774	1,069	18,225	5.9
1773	669 ^b	945	18,700	5.1
1774	658	869	19,175	4.5
1775	450	672 ^c	19,650	3.4

Notes: ^a Based on estimates that 30% of slave population were under 12 and 5% over 50 in 1767 and that these ratios changed steadily for the next eight years by which time those under 12 composed 15% and those over 50 7.6% of the slave population.³²

^b The Galloway report indicated 608 slaves for the city. This number has been increased by 10% to include Southwark where in 1772 and 1774 slaves represented 10.4% and 9.7% of the total number of slaves in the city.

^c The total for the city has been increased 10% to include Southwark. The number of slaves of all ages in the city was 611, of whom 418 were between 12 and 50 years of age, as reported on the constables' returns.

Table 1. The Enslaved Population in Philadelphia in 1767, 1769, 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775. Source: Gary B. Nash.

Roughly 3% of Germantown households were enslavers, though the practice does represent national trends of those at the top of the socioeconomic order during the American colonial period. Approximately 482 households were assessed for taxation in 1767, which included both Germantown and Cresheim, later known as Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill. The tax assessor evaluated enslaved Africans and African Americans as human chattel along with cows, dogs, sheep, and physical property. The assessment accounted for a total of twenty-four enslaved Africans and/or African Americans, those individuals being associated with fourteen households: those of Samuel Mechlin, Baltes Reser, Joseph Shippen, William Ashmead, Sarah Mackenet, John Engle, Christian Warner, Leonard Stoneburner, Godfrey Deal, Jacob Hall, Jacob Engle, Melchoir Meng, Charles Bensell, and Wickard Miller.⁴⁵

In 1769, approximately 425 households were subject to the assessment for taxation in Germantown, which included twenty-two enslaved Africans and/or African Americans. The enslavers included Melchior Meng, Christian Minnick, Sarah Mackanet, Lydia Warner, Jacob Hall, Samuel Mechlin, Martin Showaker, Wickard Miller, Baltes Reser, William Shippen and John Engle. Leonard Stoneburner, a builder, was assessed for “5 negros.” Godfrey Deal was assessed for “3 negroes.” Joseph Shippen was assessed for “2 negros.” Fourteen of 429 households were enslavers, continuing the 3% representation. Baltes Reser is assessed in 1769 for “1 negro.”⁴⁶

Of approximately 482 householders assessed for taxation in 1772, there were fifteen enslaved Africans and/or African Americans. Those enslaved were associated with twelve Germantown households, being represented by the following: Leonard Stoneburner, Anthony Bidden, John

⁴⁵ 1767 Tax & Exoneration Lists for Philadelphia County. Source: 1767 Tax & Exoneration Lists for Philadelphia County, Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania.

⁴⁶ 1769 Tax & Exoneration List. Source: Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

Engle, Lydia Warner, Sarah Mackenet, Samuel Medly, Baltes Reser, Joseph Shippen, Jacob Hall, Benjamin Engle, Wigard Miller, and Jonathan Paul.⁴⁷ Again, roughly 3% of Germantown households were enslavers.

This data indicates that the subject building withholds the histories of those Africans and/or African Americans held in bondage on Germantown Avenue in Germantown, representing the cultural, economic, political, and social heritage of those enslaved historically in the community. Of the enslavers assessed in 1767, 1769, and 1772, only a few of their associated dwellings survive, including the Leonard Stoneburner House at 6377–69 Germantown Avenue and possibly the Pastorius House (ca.1748) at 6019 Germantown Avenue, where Sarah Mackenet once resided with enslaved persons that she had inherited from her deceased husband Blasius Daniel Mackenet. The Reser-Royal House is one of the few and perhaps one of the oldest eighteenth century buildings on Germantown Avenue that can be documented as being associated with and/or the home and/or workplace of enslaved Africans and/or African Americans, satisfying Criterion A and Criterion J.⁴⁸

CRITERIA A AND J – INDENTURED SERVANTS (1769 AND 1772)

Additionally, the subject house represents the cultural, economic, and social heritage of indentured servitude in America, a system well known in the colonial period, this being a contractual arrangement wherein individuals were bound to work for a specified number of years. “Passage to the new world wasn’t cheap,” making the cost of emigration a primary motivator for someone to enter indentured servitude. “Terms of indenture varied.”⁴⁹ And while this was often a voluntary contractual arrangement, some people were forced into servitude to satisfy a debt or as punishment. Tax and other records of the period illustrate that Baltes Reser controlled at least one indentured servant between 1746 and 1751; two indentured servants in 1769; and one indentured servant in 1772.⁵⁰ In mid-August 1746, Baltes Reser paid Nathaniel Ambler £15.15 for five years of service from an indentured servant, one Thomas Duke, who had recently arrived from Ireland on the *George*. Baltes Reser was obligated to “teach Duke the trade of tanner and give him customary duties at the expiration of his service.”⁵¹ With an expiration of service stipulated, indentured servants were valued in the local tax assessment at £1.10 each.

Of the 429 households subject to the tax assessment at Germantown in 1769, there were thirty-four indentured servants, representing a one-to-one, household-to-servant ratio. In 1772, 482 households were assessed, within which there were twenty-six indentured servants, representing twenty-two households. The Reser-Royal House is one of the few and earliest known eighteenth century buildings on Germantown Avenue that can be documented as the home of indentured servants, satisfying Criterion A and Criterion J.

⁴⁷ 1772 Tax Exoneration List. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁴⁸ Perhaps more than any area of historical significance of the subject property, the fact that enslaved Africans and/or African Americans can be documented as related to the subject building is of the most critical.

⁴⁹ Anderson Cooper and Katherine Howe. *Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty*. (2021).

⁵⁰ 1772 Tax and Exoneration List. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵¹ Edward John Raser. *Our Raser Family*. (Monroe County, NJ: 2011), 39.

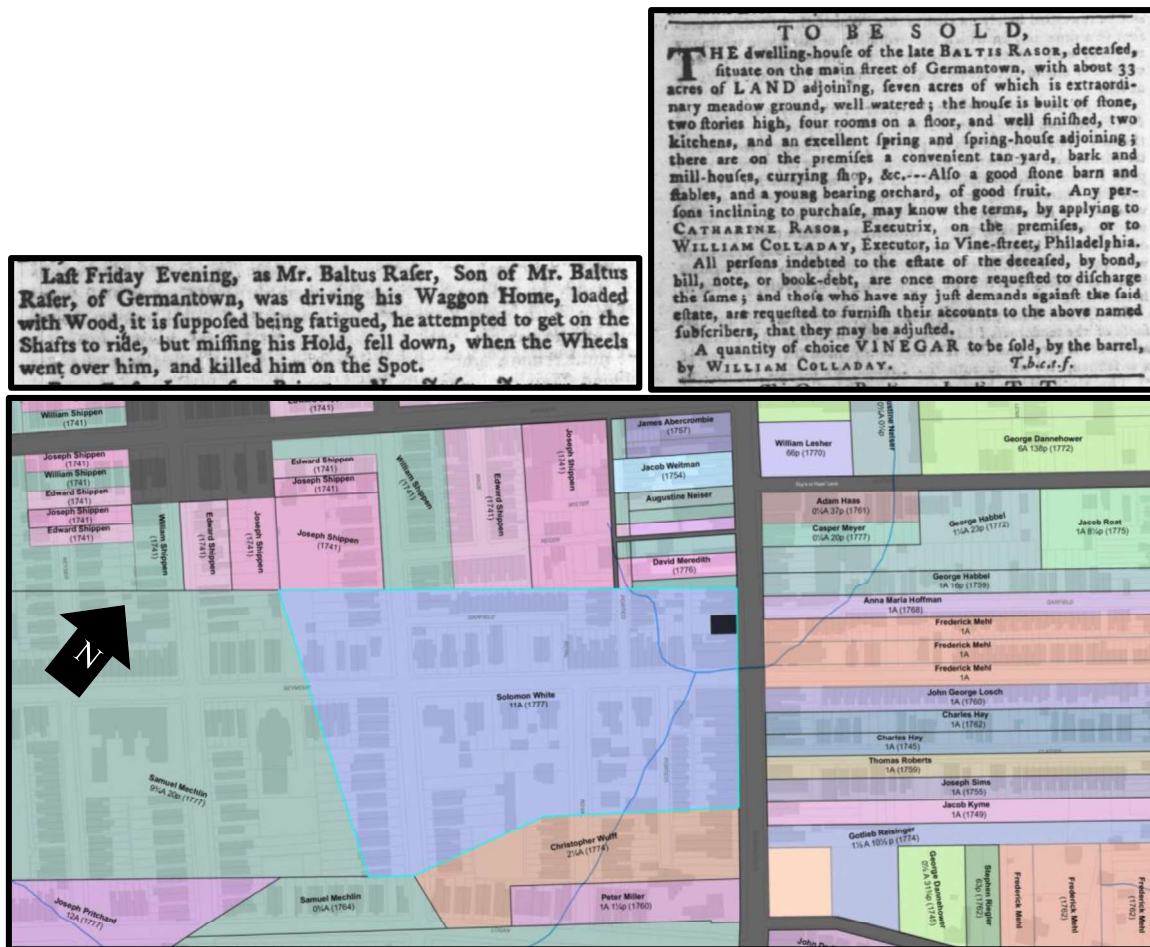


Figure 19. Top left: A brief published in 1773 on the death of Baltes Reser (spelled Raser), the younger in 1773. Source: *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 3 February 1773, 3. **Figure 20.** Top right: An advertisement for the sale of the Reser-Royal House, Baltes Reser's property, in 1774. Source: "TO BE SOLD," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 27 April 1774, 1. **Figure 21.** Bottom: Property plan of landowners in 1777 and dates of purchase. The subject building as a black rectangular on Germantown Avenue and its associated eleven acres. Courtesy of J.M. Duffin.

CRITERIA A AND J – GERMANTOWN—A BATTLEGROUND AND A RESORT

Even after the Reser family disposed of this asset, the subject property continued to represent the development patterns of Germantown Avenue and Germantown, specifically from the period of the American Revolution through the early Republic, as Germantown's identity transformed from urban village to a place that offered small country seats for men of means from Philadelphia. The evolution of the community is that of large agrarian-oriented parcels being subdivided and developed, as was done with the subject property in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, reflecting the local cultural, economic, and social heritage.

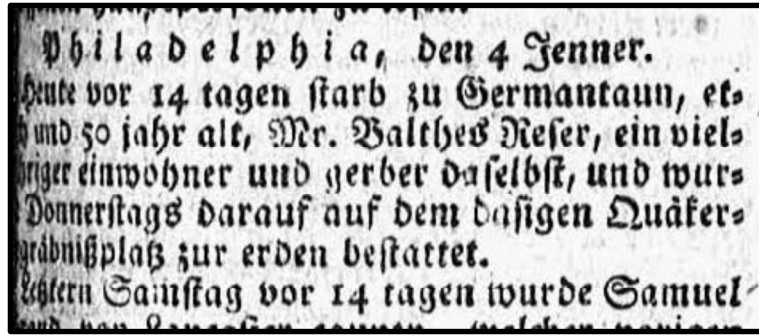


Figure 22. Death notice of Baltes Reser, 1775. Translation: Philadelphia, the 4th of January. Today, 14 days ago, Mr. Balthes Reser died [?] and 50 years old, a inhabitant and tanner there for many years, and was buried in the earth on Thursday in the Quaker burial ground there. Source: *Wochentliche Philadelphische Staatsbote*, January 4, 1774.

After Baltes Reser's death in 1773, the estate was settled by his wife Catherine Colladay Reser (spelled Rasor) and William Colladay, her brother, disposing of "live stock and farm implements, etc."⁵² The subject property was sold by the Widow Reser on May 1, 1777 to Leonard Nuts, a local farmer, for £1255.⁵³ Just four days later, Nuts had carved off twenty acres and sold the subject house with a reduced landscape of eleven acres for "£1300 Pennsylvania money" to Solomon White, gentleman, on May 5, 1777, during which time the American Revolution was underway.⁵⁴ The new owner appears to be the same Solomon White (1739–1809), a prominent Quaker merchant, who married Hannah Abbott at the Philadelphia Meeting in 1770.⁵⁵ The appearance of the subject house and its eleven acres would have comprised an agrarian setting at that time, as shown in Figure 21. Just a few months after White's purchase, American forces were defeated in the Battle of Brandywine in September 1777, after which time the British Army captured Philadelphia. British General Sir William Howe positioned two brigades, one of which was "a contingent of Hessian mercenaries under the leadership of General Wilhelm von Kynphausen. The Hessians and ultimately a British force of 9,000 descended upon Germantown. According to various sources, the subject property, thought of in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as that of later owners—the Royals—is said to have been home to an encampment of British troops. Samuel Fitch Hotchkin, a local historian, relays the tale in his 1907 book—*Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*:

Logan's Run crosses the Henry property [in 1777, two properties below the subject property]. Royal's charming meadow [then owned by Solomon White] was nearby, where sheep used to diversify the picture. The British built huts for calvary around it. They used rails covered with sod.⁵⁶

Incidentally, the Battle of Germantown took place on October 4, 1777. While Hotchkin, along with other historians, conflate the Royal ownership of the nineteenth century with other earlier

⁵² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 19 January 1774.

⁵³ *Brief of Title To A Tract of Land on the Southwesterly Side of Germantown Avenue and on both sides of Seymour Street in the Twenty-Second Ward Belonging to Edwin S. Richards* (Philadelphia: Siddall Brothers, Printers, 1874), 5.

⁵⁴ *Brief of Title To A Tract of Land*, 6.

⁵⁵ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy, Vol I–VI, 1607-1943* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.; and Ritter, Abraham. *Philadelphia and Her Merchants: As Constituted Fifty Seventy Years Ago : Illustrated by Diagrams of the River Front and Portraits of Some of the Prominent Occupants, Together with Sketches of Character and Incidents and Anecdotes of the Day*. United States, author, 1860.

⁵⁶ Hotchkin, Samuel Fitch. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*. (Philadelphia: P. W. Ziegler & Company, 1889), 53.

families, it no doubt relates to a thread of truth given the large meadow described in advertisements and later accounts of the subject property. This means that the house may have been subject to occupation and/or use by the British during the period surrounding the Battle of Germantown, further relating it to the important revolutionary heritage of the community.



Figure 23. An advertisement for the subject house in 1780, during the ownership of Solomon White. Source: “To Be Let,” *Dunlap and Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser*, 6 June 1780, 4.

As Germantown grew in the eighteenth century, it became home to many small to medium size estates used by gentlemen from Philadelphia. A scene developed, making Germantown a resort for Philadelphians seeking rural retreat. White was a wealthy man, taking over the subject property possibly for person use, which appears to have been “a summer retreat for a Gentleman.” He advertised the place in *Dunlap and Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* in June of 1780, a potential lease which included “part of a HOUSE, GARDEN and STABLING,” as shown in Figure 23.⁵⁷ While there is evidence that Germantown was a resort for many decades prior, this trend culminated at the time of the 1793 Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic, which even brought General George Washington, then the first President of the United States, to take a summer house on Market Square. This building still stands, being known as the Germantown White House, as well as the Deshler-Morris House, though in 1793 it was owned by Colonel Issac Franks (1759–1822), a Jewish merchant.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ “To Be Let,” *Dunlap and Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser*, 6 June 1780, 4.

⁵⁸ Find a Grave. Find a Grave. [Col Isaac Franks \(1759-1822\) - Find A Grave Memorial](#)

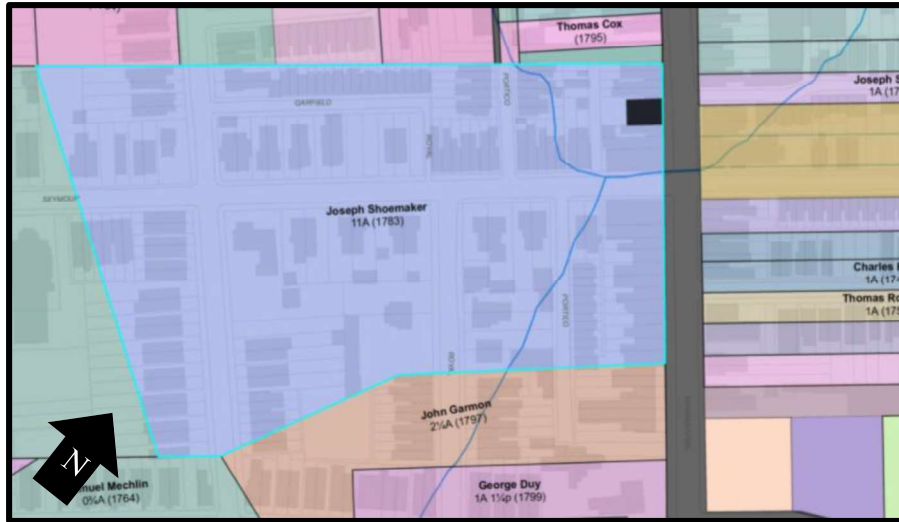


Figure 24. Property plan of landowners in 1798 and dates of purchase along with location of the original streams. The subject building as a black rectangular on Germantown Avenue and its associated eleven acres. Courtesy of J.M. Duffin.

On December 29, 1783, Joseph Shoemaker, a merchant and gentleman, paid “£1000 in gold and silver coin” to Solomon and Hannah White for the subject property, which continued to include the subject house and its associated eleven acres. The composition of the property had been entirely maintained from when it changed hands in 1777, as shown above in Figure 24, identified as “Joseph Shoemaker 11A (1783).” This map depicts the subject house, a black rectangle at Germantown Avenue, in the context of the eleven-acre tract, which extends to the south, showing what would have been an agrarian setting, where more than 100 snug homes were subsequently developed. The son of Isaac Shoemaker and Dorothy Penrose, Joseph Shoemaker was born at Shoemakertown in Cheltenham Township, then part of Philadelphia County. He started in a trade as a tanner, which may have drawn him to the subject property, as it had included tanning facilities since prior to 1745.⁵⁹ However, Shoemaker would eventually become a merchant at Philadelphia. He was married to Abigail Jones, the daughter of John Jones of Plymouth and Catharine Marie Williams Jones. Joseph and Abigail produced the following children: Joseph Shoemaker, who “died young;” John J. Shoemaker (d. 1785); Ann Shoemaker Janney (d. 1857); Rebecca Shoemaker Cope (b. 1781); and Abigail Shoemaker (1786–1861).⁶⁰

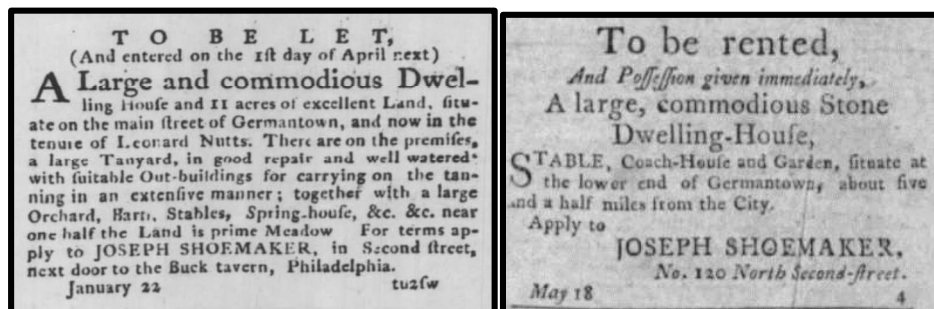
<p><i>Leonard Nutt</i> <i>3 1/2 Acres & Dwelling £350</i> <i>1 Horse 10</i> <i>2 Cows 11</i> <i>Occupation 30</i> <i>And for</i> <i>Joseph Shoemaker's Est.</i> <i>10 Acres, Dwelling &c. £900</i></p>	<p><i>Leonard Nutt. — Tanner.</i> <i>3 1/2 Acres & Dwelling 350.</i> <i>2 Horses 12.</i> <i>2 Cows 6.</i> <i>And for</i> <i>Joseph Shoemaker's Est.</i> <i>10 Acres, Dwelling &c. £750.</i></p>	<p><i>Leonard Nutt. — Tanner.</i> <i>3 1/2 acres & Dwelling 350.</i> <i>2 Horses 12.</i> <i>2 Cows 6.</i> <i>And for</i> <i>Joseph Shoemaker's Est.</i> <i>10 acres, Dwelling &c. £750.</i></p>
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Tax and Exoneration Lists for Germantown. **Figure 25.** Left: 1783, **Figure 26.** Middle: 1786, and **Figure 27.** Right: 1787. Source: Tax & Exoneration Lists, 1762–1794. Series No. 4.61; Records of the Office of the Comptroller General, RG-4. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

⁵⁹ Deed: Bernhard Reser, baker of Bristol Township, and wife Anne Elizabeth, to Baltes Reser, tanner of Gtn, £320, 8 August 1745, Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 1, p. 101, City Archives of Philadelphia.

⁶⁰ Benjamin H. Shoemaker. *The Shoemaker Family of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1903), 107.

Tax assessments of 1783, 1786, and 1787 account for the “Joseph Shoemaker Est.” as “10 acres, Dwelling, &c. [sic.],” valued at £900 in 1783 (Figure 25) and £750 in both 1786 (Figure 26) and 1787 (Figure 27). The figures shown above demonstrate that the subject property was leased to Leonard Nuts (spelled Nutz), also a tanner, with his own, smaller acreage and dwelling—his personal real estate valued at £350 in 1783, £380 in 1786, and £375 in 1787. Since Baltes Reser had developed tanning facilities on the site prior to 1745, Nuts no doubt leased the subject property for that purpose, operating the existing tannery. He leased the property in some form from 1783 until at least 1787, as indicated in the 1787 advertisement (Figure 28). However, he may have occupied the site in some form from the time of the Shoemaker purchase in 1777, when he too briefly owned the subject property. While his tenancy appears to have been drawing to a close in 1787, he continues to live adjacent as evidenced in various tax assessments of the 1790s. Since the tax assessments account for a separate dwelling owned by Nuts, and the Shoemakers do not appear to be living on their property at Germantown, it is likely that the subject house served primarily as a country house during the 1780s, which they may have let on various tenancies over the years.



Advertisements for the subject property, including **Figure 28** (left) and **Figure 29** (right). Source: *Dunlap and Claypoole's Daily American Advertiser*, 23 January 1787, 3.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 May 1797, 2.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Richard Mathers occupied the site, likely as a tenant of Joseph Shoemaker. The 1798 U.S. Direct Tax provides characteristics of the subject building, as well as other structures that once occupied the eleven-acre site. Shown in Figure 30, the house measured “39 by 26” feet, being of stone construction, standing two stories with seventeen windows, which were comprised of 294 lights.⁶¹ The Main Block of the subject building is of the same dimensions, being a two-and-one-half-story, stone volume. Also shown in Figure 30, the “Kitchen” was a two-story, stone volume, measuring “15 by 15” feet, all of which aligns precisely with the present Rear El.⁶² As shown in Figure 30, the property also included a stone barn (Figure 42), measuring “59 by 21” feet with nine windows comprised of 80 lights; and a “Stone Bark house,” measuring “21 by 21” feet. These structures were valued £1,450 total.⁶³

⁶¹ Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., U.S. Direct Tax Lists, 1798* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. This collection was indexed by [Ancestry World Archives Project](#) contributors.

⁶² Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., U.S. Direct Tax Lists, 1798* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. This collection was indexed by [Ancestry World Archives Project](#) contributors.

⁶³ Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., U.S. Direct Tax Lists, 1798* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. This collection was indexed by [Ancestry World Archives Project](#) contributors.

[illegible]

Figure 30. The 1798 U.S. Direct Tax List for Germantown Township. Upper portion: Schedule A documenting the house. Lower portion: Schedule B documenting the outbuildings. Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, U.S., U.S. Direct Tax Lists, 1798* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

While Richard Mathers occupied the site in 1798, the Shoemakers appear to have maintained some form of access based on Joseph Shoemaker’s advertisement (Figure 31) for “A Fresh Quantity of CASTOR OIL” being sold for a period of time in September 1799 at the “Lower end of Germantown.”⁶⁴

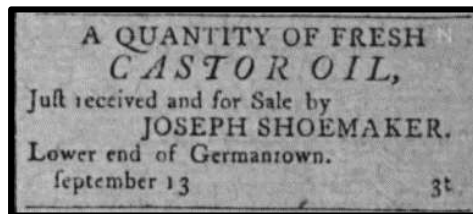


Figure 31. *The North American*, 14 September 1799, 3.

⁶⁴ *North American*, 14 September 1799, 3.

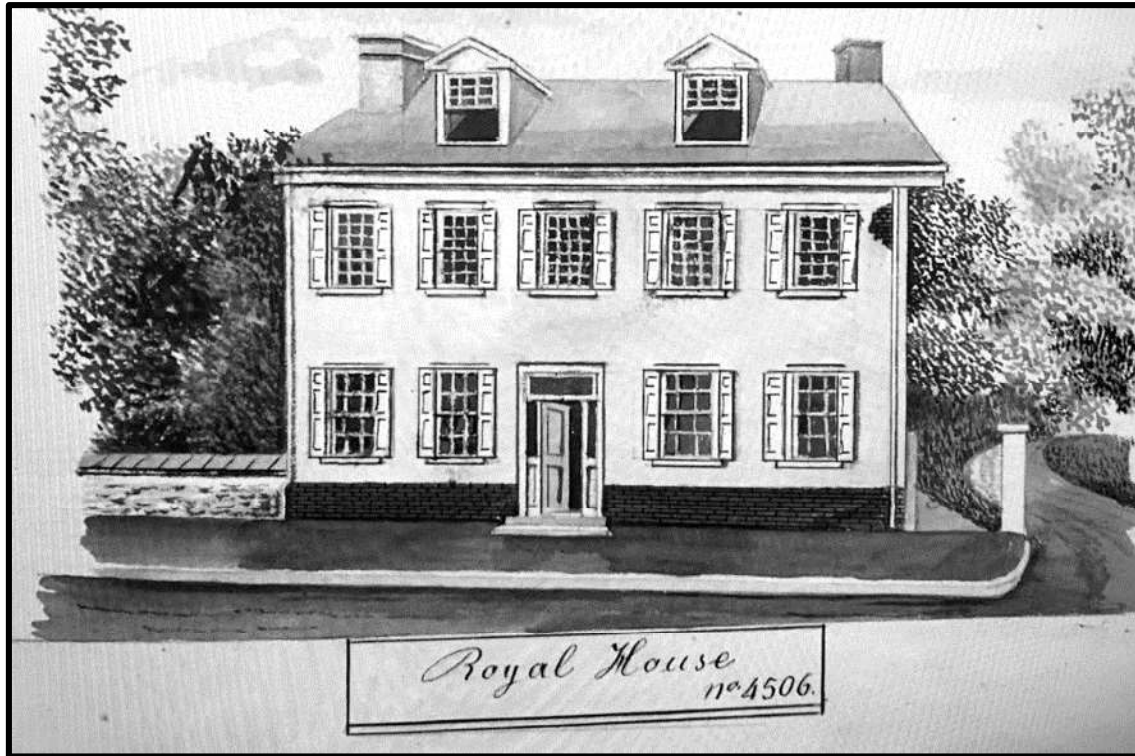


Figure 32. Dating to ca.1870-80, this is a drawing of the Reser-Royal House at 5008–10 Germantown Avenue, known earlier as 4506 Main Street. Source: John Richards, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

CRITERIA A AND J – THE ROYAL PERIOD (1828–1889)

Germantown grew considerably during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, especially with the advent of commuter rail lines and the associated suburbanization that took place through the development of new residential streets. Despite the cultural, economic and social shift that occurred, the subject property came into the possession of Edward Lewis Royal (1800–1866), a prosperous butcher and Germantown native, in 1828, serving him both as residence and place of business until his death in 1866. During this time, the subject property, still roughly eleven acres, was preserved as a small farm on Germantown Avenue. After nearly a century serving tanners, the Reser-Royal House became home to a prominent butcher, and the associated land served his purposes to raise livestock for commercial purposes. In the age prior to refrigeration, Germantown residents needed butchers in close proximity to their homes. Equally convenient was the facility of a butcher to raise livestock in close proximity to his place of business, as most relied upon outside product beyond the urban village. Edward L. Royal was the first in a long line of butchers to occupy the site, representing the cultural, economic, and social heritage of the Germantown community. He continued the tradition of butchering that had been prominent along Germantown Avenue since the eighteenth century. Historian Stephanie Grauman Wolf, in her book, *Urban Village*, contextualized the trade:

Ironically, there was one way in which the poor quality of the Great Road played a positive role in the development of Germantown as an urban area, for it made the job of reaching Philadelphia from up-country so great that many rural dwellers had no urge to try. Therefore, “great stores” were opened all along the Germantownship stretch of the road, often in association with an inn, where farmers from the north and west could trade their loads of produce in return for salt, fish, seeds, and other

groceries and dry goods. This provided Germantown not only with a grain storage business but also with an active butcher trade for the cutting, curing, and storing of meat. In the 1780 tax returns sixteen butchers represented the largest number of taxables engaged in any trade (not counting farmers or laborers) and ranked fifth in average income on a listing of seventeen different trades.⁶⁵

Edward L. Royal's parents were butchers in Germantown during that generation; however, he would represent the continuation of that trade in both the agrarian and urban commercial sense that was less and less common along Germantown Avenue in the nineteenth century.

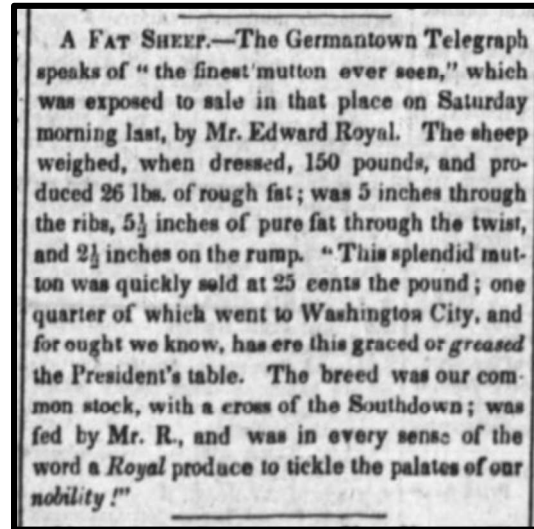


Figure 33. “A Fat Sheep,” *Public Ledger*, 14 February 1839, 2.

One sign of Edward L. Royal's success in his profession was the continued ownership and use of the eleven-acre site as a butcher and later a farmer at a moment when development pressures and property values were on the rise in Germantown. In addition, it is likely that the Royal family brought the house to the appearance that is shown in most historic photographs. The refacing and/or alteration of eighteenth-century houses on Germantown Avenue to reflect Federal and/or Classical Revival period fashions was commonly known in Germantown. This involved removing pent eaves, replacing doors and windows, and creating a sleek aesthetic with smooth-faced, scored stucco over exposed stone. Illustrated in Figures 39 and 40, the subject property underwent this type of physical “improvement” along with many others along Germantown Avenue, including, perhaps the best-known example, Grumblethorpe (Figure 40), the Wister House, which has since been restored to its eighteenth-century appearance. These alterations are part of and related to the aesthetic development of Germantown, as well as the trend of reusing earlier, eighteenth century houses during the nineteenth century.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Stephanie Grauman Wolf. *Urban Village: Population, Community, and Family Structure in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1683-1800*. (Princeton University Press, 1976), 26.

⁶⁶ Oscar Beisert and J.M. Duffin. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: King-Green House, 5112-14 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144. (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2017).

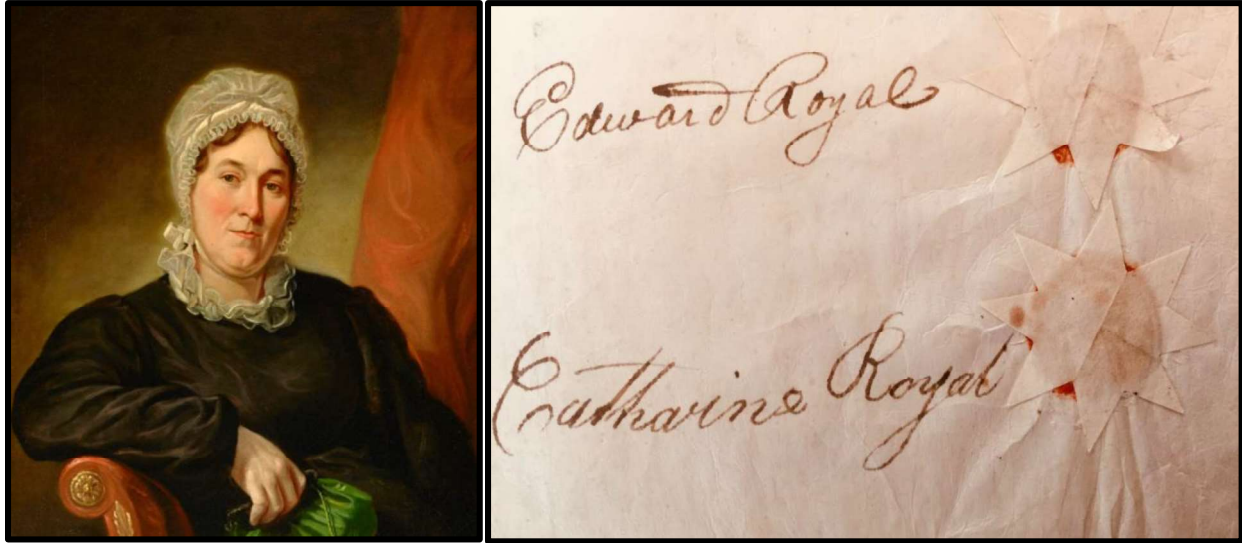


Figure 34. Left: Anna Maria Sommers Royal. Source: The Philadelphia Museum of Art. **Figure 35.** Right: Signatures of Edward Royal and Catherine Royal on a deed for a family property. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

Even after the death of both Joseph and Abigail Jones Shoemaker, their heirs, including Ann Shoemaker Janney, Rebecca Shoemaker Cope, and Abigail Cope, would continue to maintain ownership until they finally sold the subject property to Edward L. Royal on March 1, 1828 for \$3,500, which continued to include the subject building, the aforementioned outbuildings, and the eleven acres.⁶⁷ Once the Royal name became associated with the house, local historians were wont to conflate the family's half-century tenure with tales of much earlier owners, as shown in most local histories published on Germantown. Nevertheless, Edward L. Royal was the son of George Royal (1765–1817) and Anna Maria Sommers Royal (1772–1821)—Figure 34, both natives of Germantown, having grown up just opposite the subject property at the Royal House, which still stands at 5011 Germantown Avenue. The young butcher married fellow Germantown native Catharine Hansberry (1801–1854)—Figure 35, the daughter of William Hansberry (1773–1828) and Mary Hamer Hansberry (1781–1863). Edward and Catharine produced the following children: Isabella Provost Royal Sorber (1827–1907); Mary Royal Binder (1829–1851); Edward Lewis Royal (1830–1910); William C. Royal (1833–1900); Catharine Antionette Royal Binder (1834–1912); Alexander P. Royal (1837–1897); Harriet Royal Hunt (1838–1858); and Charlton Henry Royal (1840–1909).⁶⁸

⁶⁷Brief of Title To A Tract of Land on the Southwesterly Side of Germantown Avenue and on both sides of Seymour Street in the Twenty-Second Ward Belonging to Edwin S. Richards. (Philadelphia: Siddall Brothers, Printers, 1874), 5.

⁶⁸ Find a Grave. Find a Grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

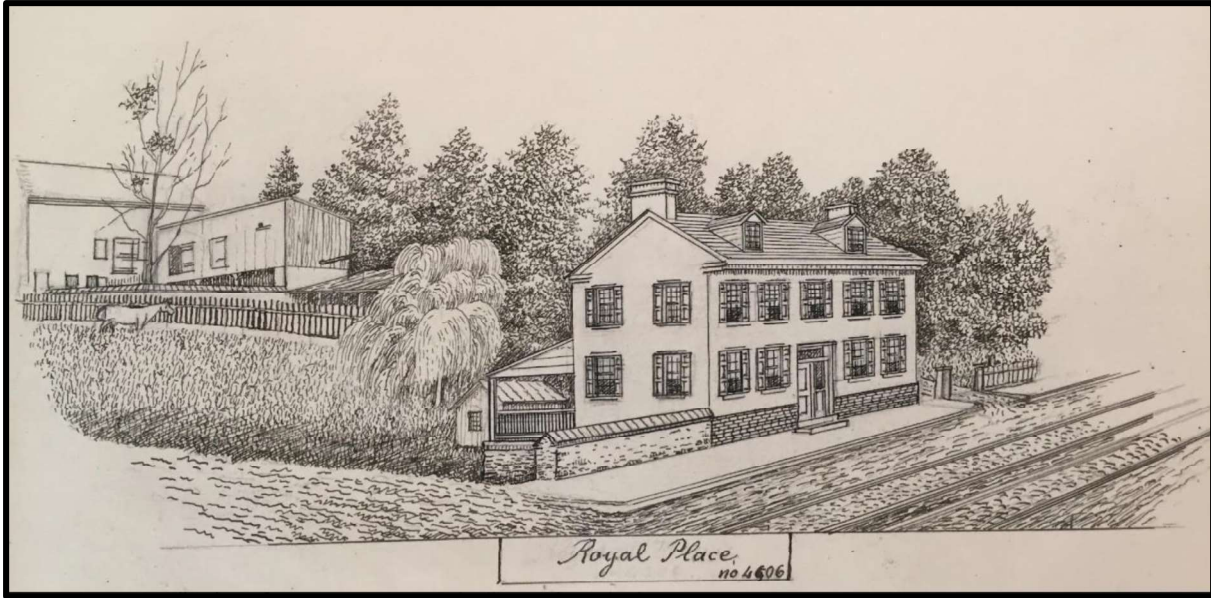


Figure 36. The subject property at the time it was owned by the Royal family in the mid-nineteenth century. Source: Sketch by John Richards, Germantown Historical Society.

As a butcher, Edward L. Royal was quite prosperous, ultimately being assessed at \$7,000 in 1850, at which time he resided in the subject building, being approximately fifty years of age. In addition to him, the subject house then included: Catherine Hansberry Royal; Isabella Royal; Mary Royal; Edward Royal; William Royal; Catharine Royal; Alexander Royal; Harriet Royal; and Charlton Royal.⁶⁹ In *A Biography of Deceased Butchers, and A Narrative of Facts*, he is described as follows:

Old Edward Royal, deceased, was a Germantown butcher; he was a stout man and a jovial fellow; him and his brother Jacob were great laughers, and they proved the truth of the old saying, “Laugh and grow fat.” Edward was the father of the present Bill and young Edward Royal. I wish to mention of a very severe fall Edward got, in my presence, which I regretted very much; it occurred on the hill above Shoemakertown at young Charles Shoemaker’s place, the son of Dickey Shoemaker. He was looking at a horse with a view to purchasing it; as he came around the barn (Figure 42), a big stone was laying in the way, his foot came in contact with it, which caused him to fall, and his head struck the ground and cut his nose; as his weight was about 250 pounds, it was a heavy surge. Mrs. Shoemaker done her part as a lady, took him into the house, and washed the wounds. I always thought that led to his death.

Jacob Royal, deceased, also a Germantown butcher, was the father of the present Theodore and George Royal. These men were called Royal men, and people used to say that they carried Royal beef.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, 1009 rolls); m Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁰ George Bates. *Deceased Butchers, And a Narrative of Facts*. (Philadelphia: Thos. E. Bagg, Printer, 1877), 34-35.

By 1860, Edward Royal, then a farmer, had real estate valued at \$20,000 with an additional \$500 in personal estate. His son William Royal, living and working on the property as well, was listed as a butcher, perhaps having taken over his father's business. He had real estate valued at \$10,000 with an additional \$300 in personal estate. The subject house also included Kate Royal, not employed; Alexander P. Royal, a coachmaker; Charlton H. Royal, a clerk; and Josephine Cooper, a domestic servant.⁷¹ In January 1863, Edward L. Royal owned thirteen horned cattle, one calf, nine hogs, and forty-eight sheep, which were housed at the subject property. George H. Royal, who resided across the street at the aforementioned Royal House (at 5011 Germantown Avenue) had similar livestock, though a smaller quantity.⁷²

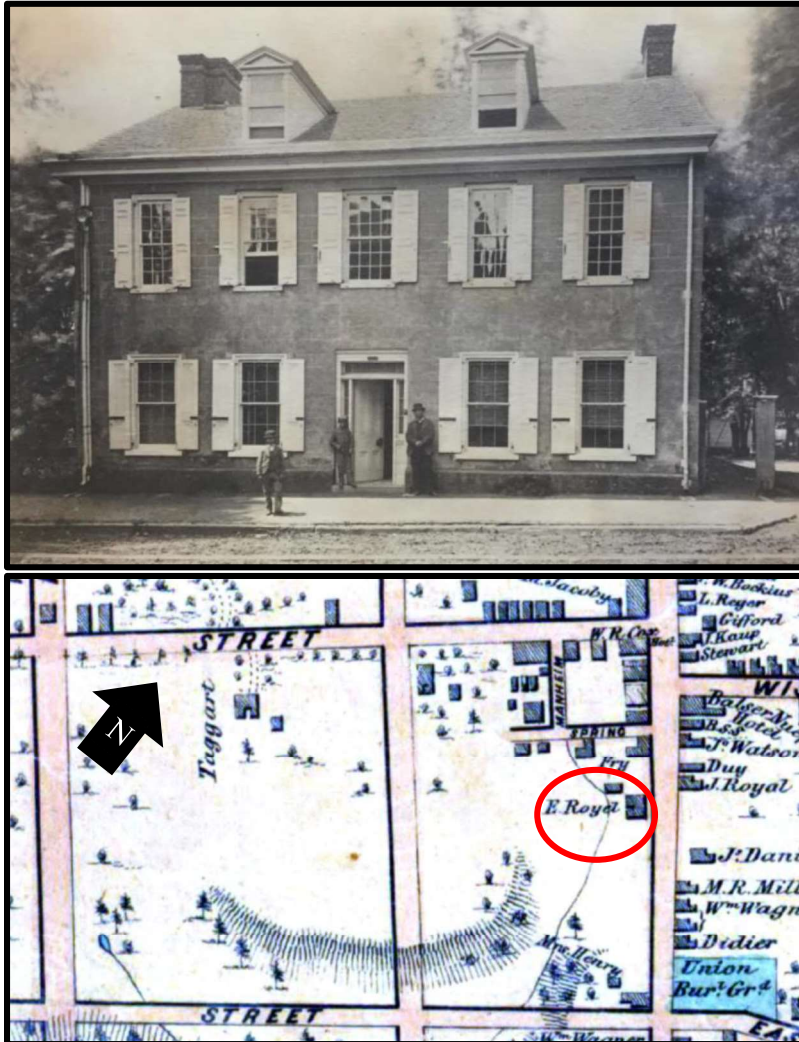
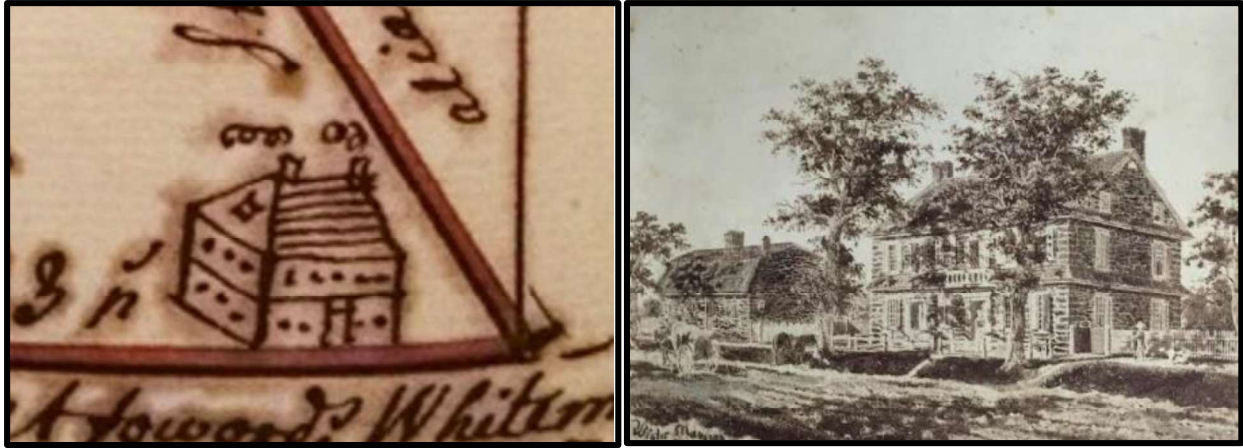


Figure 37. Top: The Reser-Royal House ca.1875, when it was known simply as the Royal House. Source: Germantown Historical Society. **Figure 38.** Bottom: The subject property in 1851 with the Reser-Royal House circled. Source: "Map of the Township of Germantown, Philadelphia County, Penna., 1851," Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

⁷¹ 1860 U.S. census, population schedule. NARA microfilm publication M653, 1,438 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

⁷² *Records of the Internal Revenue Service*. Record Group 58. The National Archives at Washington, DC.



These two illustrations show the approximate appearance of the subject property in the eighteenth century, **Figure 39** (left), showing the Reser-Royal House in 1774, and **Figure 40** (right), an illustration of Grumblethorpe, showing how the Reser-Royal House might have looked in 1774. Source: Figure 38 (left) Detail from a survey by Christian Lehman of the subject house, when it sat upon “7 ac., 42 per.” in 1774. Source: Figure 39 (right) Christian Lehman. Survey of Baltes Reser’s 7 Acres, 42 perches at Germantown, Philadelphia, 6 August 1774, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; right, An illustration of Grumblethorpe in the eighteenth century. Source: Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

While the 1777 illustration of the house shows a pent roof along the primary (northeast) and side (southeast) elevations of the subject house, the building was likely “modernized” during the ownership of Edward L. Royal after 1828. Photographs and illustrations depict the same five-bay fenestration clad in smooth-faced, scored stucco (Figure 37). While the fenestration appears not to have changed significantly, the front door and possibly the windows were changed during this period of ownership. One important aspect of the subject building and its associate acreage was that most of the original land remained during Royal’s period of ownership.

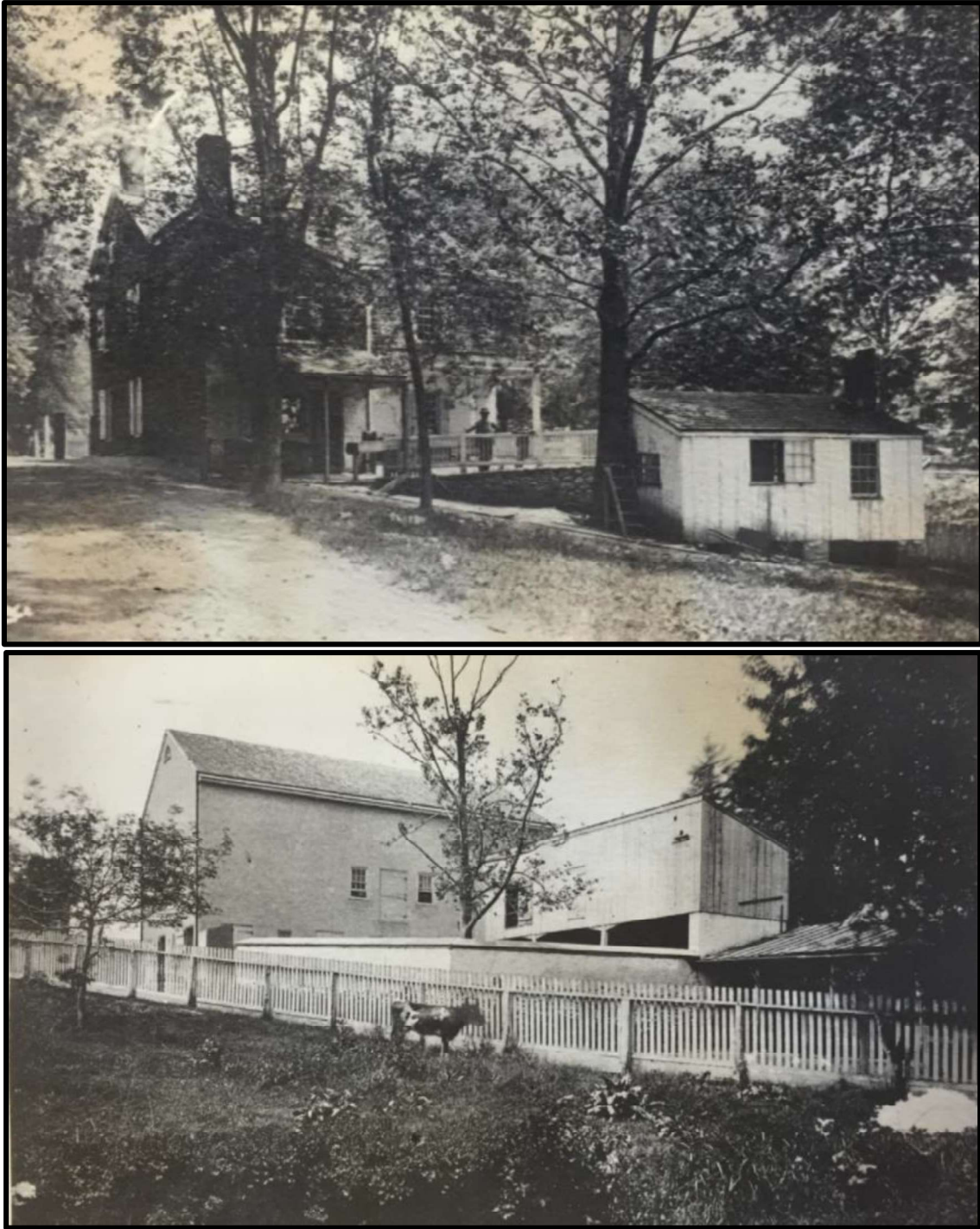


Figure 41. Top: A rear view of the Reser-Royal House ca.1875. **Figure 42.** Bottom: A view of the barn of the subject property ca. 1875. Source: Germantown Historical Society.



Figure 43. The Reser Royal House, ca. 1890, at 5008–10 Germantown Avenue set within a dense streetscape. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia.

CRITERIA A & J — THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE RESER-ROYAL HOUSE

From the time of the first European settlement of the property in the mid-eighteenth century through 1868, the frontage on Germantown Avenue between the subject building at 5008–10 Germantown Avenue and the Wachsmuth-Henry House at 4908 Germantown Avenue had been the only building set upon the old road in an otherwise agrarian setting. Illustrated in Figure 38, the existence of the subject house, as well as the Wachsmuth-Henry House represents the development of Germantown Avenue, as it shifted from a German village to a commercial main street in an ever-growing suburb. Two major phases of development forever transformed that stretch of Germantown Avenue. After the death of Edward L. Royal in 1866, his heirs carved up the subject building's associated eleven acres. In 1868, Edwin S. Richards (1825–1901), a developer, merchant, farmer, and gentleman, developed the lower portion of the eleven-acre tract, as related to the development of W. Seymour Street. This led to the construction of a several blocks of post-Civil War-era twins and rowhouses. Above the Wachsmuth-Henry House at the southwest corner of Germantown Avenue and W. Seymour Street, Edwin S. Richards built "Richards' Row," which included thirteen three-story Italianate rowhouses. The architectural typology of this development reflected the broader development patterns of Philadelphia rather than the traditional architecture of Germantown. And while the development was seen as foreign to many longtime Germantown residents, developers like Richards lived where they worked. In fact, for many years, Richards lived nearby along Wister Street at the Bristol Township Line with his wife Jeannette Haines Richards (1825–1911) and their only daughter Anna Elizabeth (Annie) Richards (1860–1932), who would die unmarried at their last family home in 1932 at 54 W. Seymour Street (demolished) just west of Richard's Row.

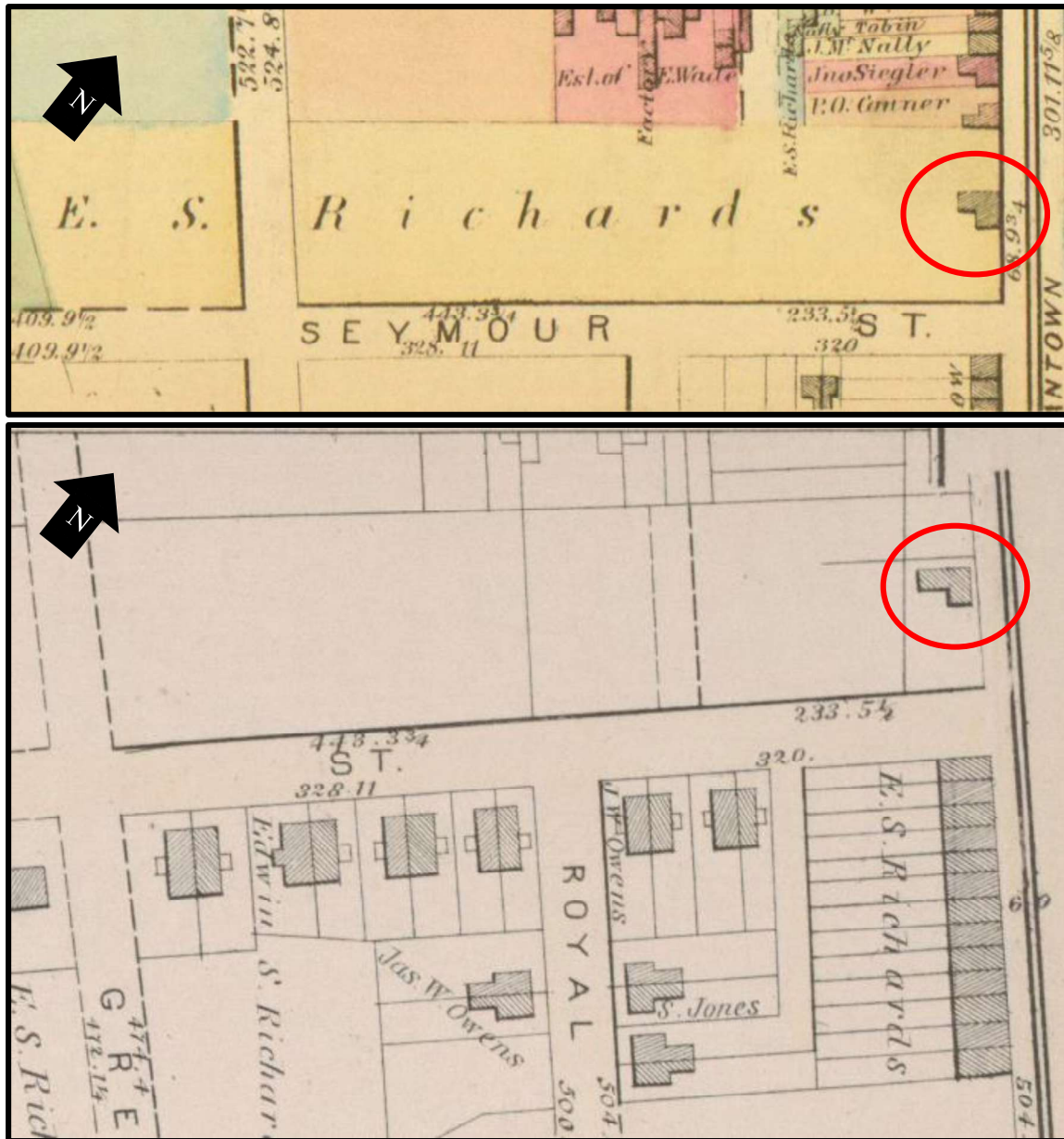


Figure 44. Top: Detail from the 1871 Germantown Atlas that shows the subject property. **Figure 45.** Bottom: Detail from the 1876 Germantown Atlas that shows the subject property. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

The G.M. Hopkins Atlas (Figure 44) for Germantown (1871) shows both Richard's Row and at least one twin on W. Seymour Street, though the Reser-Royal House still retained open land back to Greene Street. Between 1871 (Figure 44) and 1876 (Figure 45), the south side of W. Seymour Street was developed with Second Empire style twins from the rear of Richard's Row at Germantown Avenue to Greene Street; however, the subject building remained on open land. Between 1876 and 1889, the immediate landscape of the subject building changed dramatically. The subject house would continue to exist on much small lot, allowing just enough room for the building and a pedestrian alley to the rear. Four other lots were created in the space that once existed between W. Seymour Street and the neighboring property to the north. The façade of the Reser-Royal House did not immediately change, though it was now set within a dense town-like

streetscape of handsome two-story, Victorian-era row buildings with commercial fronts. The only gentele feature that the old house was afforded was a rear cartway or alley, extending from W. Seymour Street to the former northerly boundary of the subject property. Between that alley and Greene Street to the west, more than fifty homes were developed, obliterating the barn and any other outbuildings that once served the Reser-Royal House.

Beyond the development component, the physical commercialization of eighteenth-century houses on Germantown Avenue reflects the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Germantown Avenue as a main street and the further evolution of Germantown. Altering the residential appearance of older houses on Germantown Avenue was a common economic and social trend throughout the history of the area, but it became especially popular in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. This was primarily achieved through the introduction of a storefront at the ground floor. The Reser-Royal House was certainly not the earliest specimen, nor would it be the last, but it does exemplify this architectural and commercial trend that occurred as part of the history of Germantown Avenue's built environment.



Figure 46. *Legal Intelligencer*, 22 February 1867, 59.

A butcher like Edward L. Royal best served his clientele with livestock in the rear; however, even after his death, the building continued to be used by butchers and provisioners though perhaps in a more modern fashion. A storefront was added by 1896, being observed by *The Philadelphia*

Inquirer in “A Zigzag Ramble Through Historic Germantown.” The article noted: “What is left of that round-top portico at No. 5010, L, is alone sufficient to attract our attention. Edward Royal’s house, half of which has been modernized into a store, went back to 1747.”⁷³ This makes sense given commercial tenants were occupying the subject building by 1886, at which time Moritz Gerschel was operating a millinery business at the subject property, indicating that the northerly side of the building was first to include a storefront, the southerly side being modified for commercial use later.⁷⁴ Between 1889 and 1909, the subject house passed through a series of owners, including Edwin M. Spencer from 1889 to 1890; the Phoenix Building & Loan Association from 1890 to 1891; Thomas B. Dewees from 1891 to 1897; James W. Paul from 1897 to 1909; and Jacob F. and Fannie C. Otterstetter for just a few months in 1909.⁷⁵ These owners used the place for business and residential purposes, most of them being butchers, grocers and provisioners, which continues an economic and social trajectory that had evolved on site since 1828. Between 1890 and 1907, the following tenants occupied the subject building: Kasper Smith, a butcher and William F. Mullen, a grocer, in 1892; M. Harr & Bro. grocers in 1895; Milton K. Harr, a salesman, living at the subject property, in 1896; Forrest B. Royal, a salesman, returning to his ancestral home, in 1900; Thomas B. Dewees of Dewees & Donahue, meat, living in the subject house, in 1900; and Thomas B. Dewees, produce, operating at “5010,” in 1907.⁷⁶

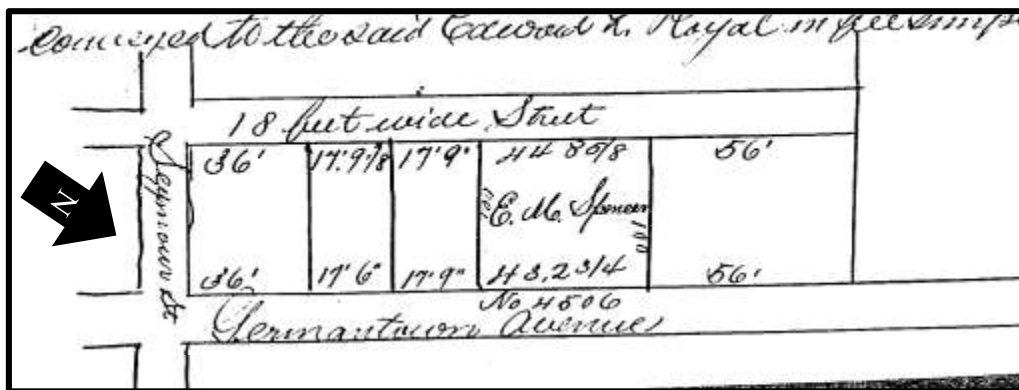


Figure 47. The final subdivision of the subject property. Source: Edward L. Royal, and Janet L., his wife, to Edwin M. Spencer, 1889, Philadelphia Deed Book G.G.P., No. 455, p. 496–498.

⁷³ “Our Cycle Route No. 34,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 October 1896, 7.

⁷⁴ “A Judgement and an Execution,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 January 1886, 3.

⁷⁵ Deed: Edward L. Royal, and Janet L., his wife, to Edwin M. Spencer, \$15,000, 1889, Philadelphia Deed Book G.G.P., No. 455, p. 496-498.; Deed: Charles H. Krumbhaar, Esquire, high sheriff, by deed poll to Phoenix Building & Loan Association, 12 July 1890, Sheriff Deed Book, No. 136, p. 434.; Deed: Phoenix Building & Loan Association to Thomas B. Dewees, \$1,500, 9 April 1891, Philadelphia Deed Book T.G., No. 40, p. 177.; Deed: Thomas B. Dewees to James W. Paul, 4 September 1897, Sheriff Deed Book, No. 209, p. 233.; Deed: Frank W. Paul, et. al. to Jacob F. Otterstetter, 14 April 1909, Philadelphia Deed Book W.S.V., No. 1152, p. 293.; Deed: Jacob F. Otterstetter and Fannie C., his wife, to John H. Geltz, 8 October 1909, Philadelphia Deed Book W.S.V., No. 1236, p. 106, City Archives of Philadelphia.

⁷⁶ The occupants were determined through an analysis of Philadelphia City Directories of 1891, 1892, 1893, 1895, 1896, 1900, and 1907.

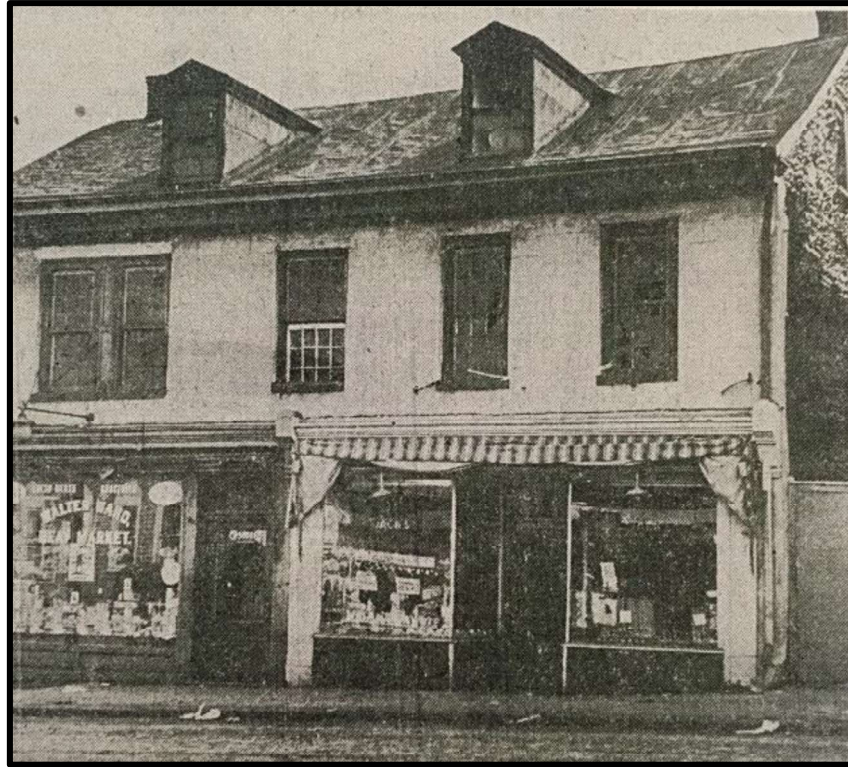


Figure 48. The subject building in the 1930s. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

On October 8, 1909, John H. Geltz (1866-1931), a well-to-do butcher, merchant, and prominent citizen, purchased the subject building. Geltz owned three prominent meat markets on Germantown Avenue, all of which made him a wealthy man. It is possible that his purchase of the subject property signified a potential fourth location that was never realized under the Geltz name. Nevertheless, Geltz would retain ownership of this property through the time of his death in 1931, which his heirs retained until 1955. During the Geltz ownership, the subject building included two stores at the ground floor at 5008 and 5010 Germantown Avenue, which led to other alterations and renovations, including an addition and reconfiguration at the rear of the property. This period of ownership also fostered numerous occupants, which continually included butchers, grocers and provisioners. The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company was one occupant in the 1910s.⁷⁷ Almar, a grocer, occupied the subject building in the 1920s.⁷⁸ By the 1930s, a meat market and a produce merchant operated in the subject building, including Walter Ward.⁷⁹ And by the 1940s, Jack Korson's Fruit Market had been installed, which he appears to have purchased from the heirs of John H. Geltz in 1955. His fruit market would remain in operation at the subject building until 1969.⁸⁰ The subject property had provided food for the neighborhood from 1828 to 1969.

⁷⁷ *Monthly Review of the Dairy and Food Division: Issued Monthly*. (United States, State Printer of Pennsylvania, 1919).

⁷⁸ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 September 1929, 16.

⁷⁹ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 February 1937, 17.

⁸⁰ "Thieves Hungry, Bananas Eaten In Looted Store," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 August 1946, 11.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 October 1969, 52.

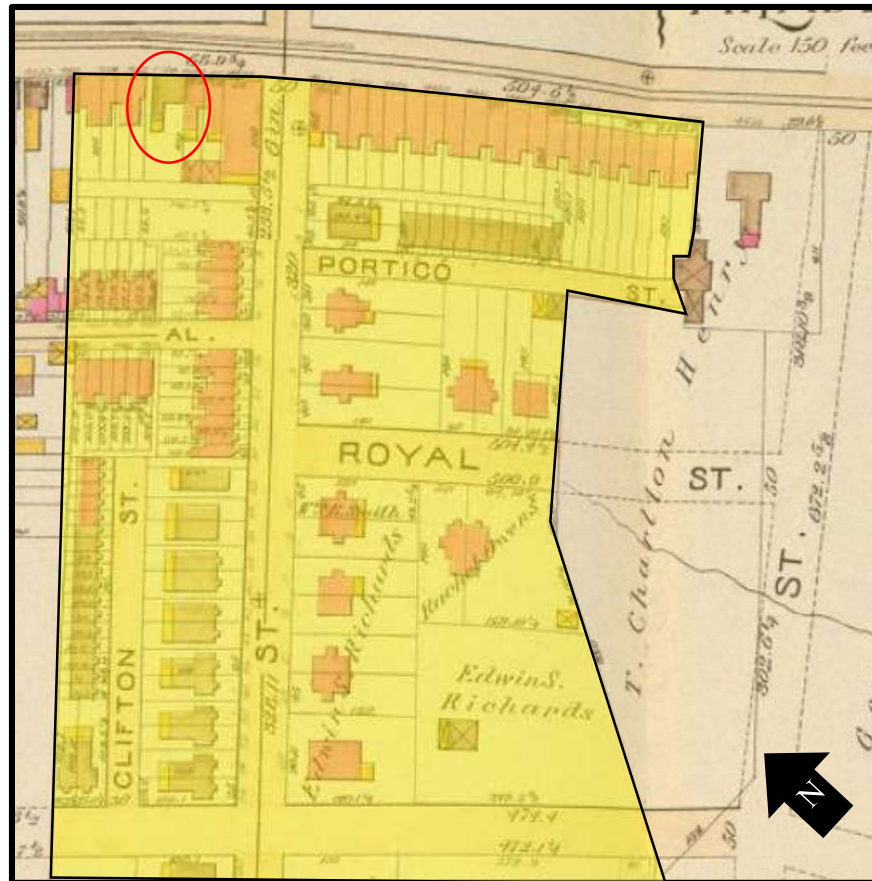


Figure 49. 1889 Bromley Atlas of 22nd Ward, highlighting the development that had occurred at the subject property with the Reser-Royal House circled at the top left. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Aside from the subject house, many other dwellings on Germantown Avenue were commercialized over the years. One of many early examples of more simple commercial alterations may be found in the King-Green House (ca.1740s) at 5112–14 Germantown Avenue, an early house that was minimally altered during the nineteenth century to accommodate a small storefront for its owners, who were well-known hatters.⁸¹ Other similar commercial conversions occurred all up and down Germantown Avenue.

⁸¹ Oscar Beisert and J.M. Duffin. *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: King-Green House, 5112–14 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144*. (Philadelphia: Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2017).



The transition of the King-Green House (ca.1740s) at 5112–14 Germantown Avenue. **Figure 50.** Top left: The King-Green House as depicted by John Richards. Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. **Figure 51.** Top right: Taken in the late nineteenth century, the King-Green House during the Charles U. Green period of ownership with a small storefront addition. Source: The Castner Scrapbooks, The Free Library of Philadelphia. The drastic transition of the Channon House (ca.1818–1857) at 5708 Germantown Avenue. **Figure 52.** Bottom left: The Channon House in the 1870–80s. Source: The Shoemaker Collection, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. **Figure 53.** Bottom middle: The Channon House as converted to serve as Vernon Groceries in 1894, including a full storefront across the entire first floor. Source: The Germantown Historical Society. **Figure 54.** Bottom right: Mitchell, Fletcher, & Co. ca.1898 after a major renovation from its appearance as Vernon Groceries. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.



Figure 55. Left: Chester A. Asher's Confectionary was installed in a typical dwelling on Germantown Avenue below Cheltenham, which had undergone first floor alterations to include a storefront on the first floor. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, The Germantown Historical Society. **Figure 56.** Right: Dwellings with storefront alterations stood at 5419 and 5412 Germantown Avenue, just below the Masonic Hall. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

At what would be known today as 5419 and 5421 Germantown Avenue were two early houses that both had storefront alterations at the time they were demolished to enlarge the property of Saint Luke's Episcopal Church. Another specimen is the Channon House (ca.1818–1857) at 5708 Germantown Avenue that was first altered to accommodate Vernon Groceries between 1894 and 1895 by Hiram C. Himes. The building was later dramatically altered on designs by architect Addison Hutton to serve the high-end grocers Mitchel, Fletcher, & Co. in 1898.⁸²



Former dwellings near the subject property that underwent similar commercial conversions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. **Figure 57.** Left: The Dr. Theodore Ashmead House, also known as the Owen Wister Birthplace at 5203–05 Germantown Avenue, which was one part of the subject property. **Figure 58.** Right: The west side of Germantown Avenue below Queen Lane shows the commercial transition that was occurring at the turn of the twentieth century with storefront alteration on left followed by an intact house with a new, one-story store on right in place of a two-and-one-half-story stone dwelling that defined the rest of the block. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

⁸² Oscar Beisert and J.M. Duffin. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Mitchell, Fletcher, & Co., 5708 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144. (Philadelphia: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia, 2020).



The commercialization of the Engle Block, 5932 to 5954 Germantown Avenue, Germantown. **Figure 59.** Top: A late nineteenth century view of the Engle Block, showing the Engle House at 5932–40 Germantown Avenue; the Albertus Engle House at 5942 Germantown Avenue; and an early Engle family house at 5944–46 Germantown Avenue. **Figure 60. Figure 61.** Bottom: Taken in 1906 after a commercial transition, including the Charles Building (1906) at 5932–42 Germantown Avenue; an early Engle family house at 5944–46 Germantown Avenue, which has undergone a storefront alteration like the subject property; and the Engle Building at 5948–54 Germantown Avenue. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

The block above the Germantown Town Hall was one that saw intense commercialization in the first years of the twentieth century. The age-old Engle family of Germantown propelled the development, with the construction of the Engle Building at 5948 Germantown Avenue (at the corner of Harvey Street). However, the most significant change came when the famous old Engle House was moved by its resident descendants to the rear of the lot to accommodate the Charles Building, a row of one-story brick stores at 5932–42 Germantown Avenue. This also necessitated the demolition of the Albertus Engle House, a wooden house and store that stood directly above the Engle House at what was likely 5942 Germantown Avenue. The Albertus Engle House had long since been converted to a store. It appears that this development was completed by Charles Chipley, the son of Thomas L.M. Chipley and Isabella M. Engle. The before and after of the block shows a largely residential block that transitioned to one dominated by storefronts. As part of the evolution, the house at 5944–46 Germantown Avenue also lost its original first floor to a storefront, which mimics the commercial transition that occurred at the subject property.⁸³

These are just a few of many examples of the commercialization of dwellings to store buildings on Germantown Avenue, during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁸³ This information was gleaned from an album of the Chipley family, which is at the Germantown Historical Society.

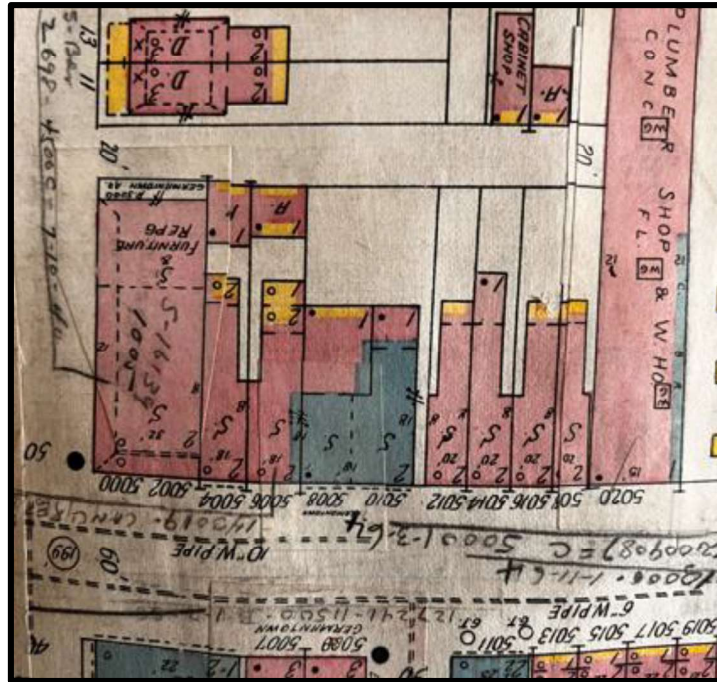


Figure 62. A view of the subject property as illustrated on the 1924 Sanborn Atlas for the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia. Source: J.M. Duffin.

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This nomination is the result of the pro bono research and writing efforts of Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, and J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian. The nomination was edited by Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian. There were also various efforts made by Allison Weiss of SoLo/Germantown Civic Association (RCO).

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**APPENDIX A
THE ROYAL HOUSE
5011 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
BEFORE AND AFTER**



Before and After: The Royal House at 5011 Germantown Avenue. Source: Jordan-Ferrarini.

Opposite the subject property, the Royal House at 5011 Germantown Avenue was in a similar state until recent years; however, it was successfully rehabilitated, which is a result of it being historically designated.