

ADDRESS: 5920 GREENE ST

Name of Resource: The Thomas C. Potter, M.D. House

Review: Designation

Property Owner: K and A Insurance Agency

Nominator: West Central Germantown Neighbors

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 5920 Greene Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the Colonial Revival dwelling, constructed in 1892, satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E. Under Criterion C, the nomination contends that the Potter House reflects the environment of suburban, residential architecture of the upper classes of Germantown and Philadelphia in an era characterized by the Colonial Revival style. Under Criterion D, the nomination outlines how the building embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Colonial Revival style. Lastly, under Criterion E, the nomination states that the Potter House is the work of Mantle Fielding, Jr., an architect who significantly influenced the architectural development of Northwest Philadelphia.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 5920 Greene Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E.



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: **5920 Greene Street**

Postal code: **19144**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Thomas C. Potter, M.D. House**

Current Name: **The Mansion Banquet Hall**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☐ good ☒ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☐ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☒ unknown

Current use: Commercial

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1892**

Date(s) of construction: **1892**

Architects: **Mantle Fielding, Jr.**

Builders: **Unknown**

Original owner: **Thomas C. Potter, M.D.**

Significant person: **Mantle Fielding, Jr., Architect**

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

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

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization: **West Central Germantown Neighbors**

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

Date: **29 September 2021**

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

Telephone: **717.602.5002**

Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 29 September 2021

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 19 October 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 28 October 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: K and A Insurance Agency

Address: 502 W. Springer St.

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19119

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. Looking southeast at the primary (northeast) and side (northwest) elevation of the subject house. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

THE THOMAS C. POTTER, M.D., HOUSE

BUILT 1892

5920 GREENE STREET

GERMANTOWN

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

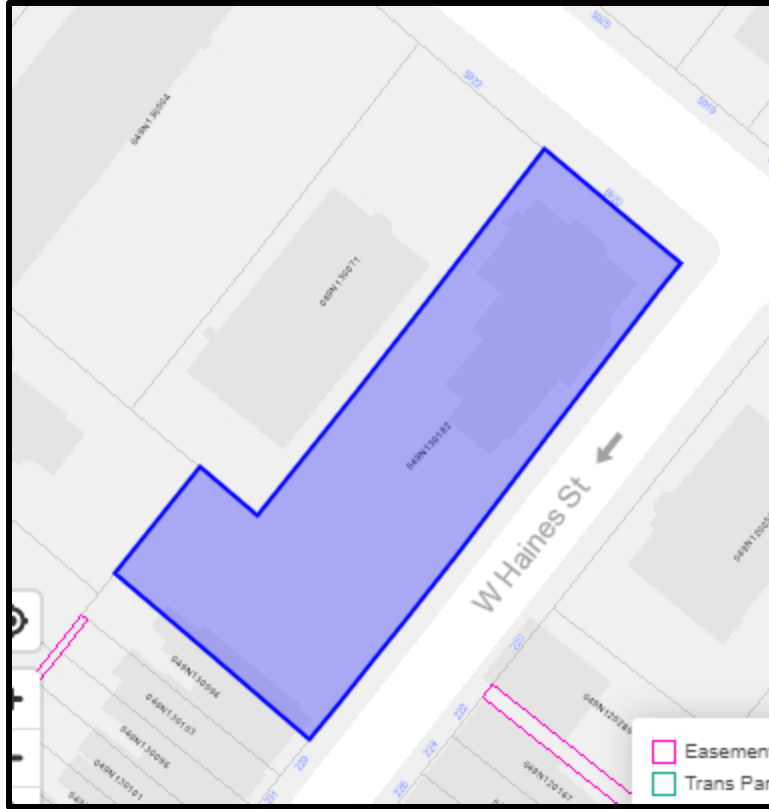


Figure 2. The proposed designation is subject to the parcel delineated above in highlighted line (blue). Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the subject designation is as follows:

BEGINNING at a point at the distance of 187 feet southeast from the south side of Harvey Street; thence south 42 degrees, 20 minutes, 6 seconds west 175 feet to a point; thence north 46 degrees, 17 minutes west 29 feet 4 inches to a point; thence South 42 degrees, 29 minutes, 22 seconds west 50 feet to a point; thence south 46 degrees, 17 minutes, east 96 feet to a point in the northwest line of Haines Street (formerly called Lafayette Street); thence along the same north 42 degrees, 29 minutes 22 seconds east 225 feet to the southwest side of said Greene Street; thence along the same north 46 degrees 17 minutes west 67 feet 1 ½ inches to the place of beginning, in the Germantown neighborhood of the City of Philadelphia.



Figure 3. Top: Looking southwest at the subject property. Figure 4. Bottom: Looking north at the subject property.
Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The two-and-a-half-story residence at 5920 Greene Street is a classic Colonial Revival dwelling constructed at the end of the nineteenth century rendered in vernacular building stone and Wissahickon schist. Designed by architect Mantle Fielding, the corner property displays the stylistic characteristics of late nineteenth-century revival styles by incorporating fanlights, Doric and Ionic columns, Palladian windows, pediments, and dentils. The three-bay façade at Greene Street is well-balanced and perfectly symmetrical from its chimneys to its concrete entry path. The residence retains a high degree of architectural integrity despite its conversion into a catering hall.



Figure 5. The primary (northeast) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

PRIMARY (EAST) ELEVATION

The elevation at Greene Street is recessed approximately twenty feet from the public sidewalk. A short retaining wall of ashlar cut schist with capstone surrounds the property at the right-of-way and is the same height of the lawn. Two steps leading to a concrete entry path to the front door divide the wall. A central railing bisects the steps in the center. At the front porch, three stone steps lead to the entry door. At the north end of the property, the wall is cut yet again for access via a slate path and two steps to a side door with a small overhang with hipped roof and brackets that leads to the doctor's office.

The façade is three bays wide and has a principal plane of Wissahickon schist. The outer two bays at the first story each contain Palladian windows with elaborate tracery in the fanlights and upper sashes. Those windows are each embedded in a stucco field surrounded by schist arches in an Adamesque fashion. The second-floor windows above those at the ground floor are rectangular double hung with tracery in the upper sashes.

The center bay is composed of a two-story porch with pediment at the roof level; the pediment's eaves and soffit blend into those of the main volume. Deeply elongated but otherwise rather plain, the dentils create a visual staccato pattern at the roofline. The entry door is embedded in wood paneling about a foot deep and is composed of a large, flat fanlight in a "spider-web" pattern that is the width of two entry doors that are bisected by a center panel; the panel and both doors are

“French” or in a divided light paneling. This door is located below an overhang with a convex curve profile supported by two Doric columns. Two Doric pilasters are also located on either side of the door at the wall plane. The curving entablature has some vinyl encasements hiding original fabric and the ceiling of the porch has a light fixture. The second-story balcony features Ionic columns, decorative urns, and a centered door with tracery in the upper light. This assembly is embedded in wood paneling not unlike at the first story. The center pediment acts as a roof over this second-floor balcony and contains a half-moon light with “spider-web” tracery and the same dentils as at the roofline. At either corner of this elevation are two downspouts with registers embossed with “1892,” the year the house was built.

The roof as seen at this elevation is hipped and covered in asphalt shingles. There are two dormers, each on either side of the center pediment but not aligned with the windows in the wall plane below. There are two brick chimneys that each rise at the ridge of the roof. The chimneys are centered between the dormers and the pediment, creating a balanced façade, with a bit of visual entasis, or a narrowing of elements the further up they are located and with a strong and wide base.



Figure 6. The primary (northeast) and northwest elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.



Figure 7. Top: The central bay of the primary elevation.

Figure 8. Bottom: the southeasterly bay, showing a window installation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.



Figure 9. The southeast elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

SOUTH ELEVATION

The south elevation faces Haines Street and like the Greene Street façade is recessed from the right-of-way. This elevation is of the two-story rear ell of the house as it extends back from the main mass at Greene Street. This elevation has a hipped roof with a dormer aligned with the southernmost chimney in the main volume. This dormer has a peaked gable roof and incorporated pilasters; the window is infilled and not original. The deeply elongated dentils continue at the roofline all the way across.

At the easternmost register, there are two rectangular windows, one at each story, each with a double hung window embedded; the first-story window has tracery in the upper sash. To the west is a schist bay projection with three facets, each of which has a window (the two at the angled walls are rectangular and the center window has an arched top; all have tracery at the upper sashes). There is a small window opening at the basement level under the arched window with glass block infill. Above this projection is a balcony accessed from a center door in an elaborately headed encasement and flanked by two rectangular window openings each with a double hung window. All three openings have upper sashes or lites with tracery.

To the west of this bay projection is an upper bay projection that is rectangular and boxy, covered in replacement shingles with windows in the side portions only; the roofline with its dentil decorations articulates the bay projection. This bay is supported by elongated brackets and is above a small, rectangular first floor window with plywood infill and a small basement window with glass block infill. The next window set to the west of this upper bay projection has a rectangular

window opening with double hung window over another window opening that like its twin to the east is infilled with plywood and a small louver; a basement window with glass block infill completes this vertical set.

To the far west of this elevation is another set of rectangular windows at each story above a basement window. The first-story window is infilled with a louver; the second-story window opening has a double hung window with divided lites in the upper sash. Between the last two sets of windows is a wide plane of wall with a downspout, a chimney at the roof level, and a grease vent protruding from the upper part of the first story indicating the building's last use as a catering hall with on-site commercial kitchen. At the farthest end of this elevation is a downspout at the schist wall before terminating in a vinyl-covered, one-story shed. There is a concrete path that leads from the perimeter retaining wall and terminates at the rear shed.



Figure 10. Left: Details of the southeast elevation. Figure 11. Right: Details of southeast elevation, including the second-story bay window and the first-story oriel window. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.



Figure 12. The southwest elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

WEST ELEVATION

The west elevation features three wall planes: one of the rear ell of the building, another of the rear of the main volume that fronts Greene Street, and a third that is a construction at the junction of the “L” of the floor plan. The west elevation faces a parking lot accessible from Haines Street. The L-shaped floor plan has a concrete walkway leading from the rear parking lot to the rear door at the main volume and the area within this “L” is grassy and contained away from the street, giving it privacy.

The main volume has a dormer with peaked gable roof and double hung window at the roof plane and below the northernmost chimney. Below it and the roofline with deeply elongated dentils is the schist wall plane with two openings, one at each story. The upper window is a rectangular opening with a double-hung fixture with divided lites at the upper sash. The lower window is more of a “Chicago-style” with a main opening flanked by two side light windows all encased in wood casing with entablature; all upper sashes have divided lites.

There is a one-story, shed-roof addition that is located to the north of the central element in the crease of the L and has a non-original panel door. The central element resembles the main volume as it is constructed in schist capped with a roofline with dentils and a hipped roof. There is a pair of double-hung windows in a cased opening, each with divided lites in the upper sashes. The west elevation of the rear ell is also of schist with two separate, rectangular window openings with double hung fixtures (divided lites at the upper sashes) above the rear shed construction that is clad in vinyl and has a paneled door for access. To the north of the rear ell extension is a one-story porch that has corner columns and is enclosed.



Figure 13. The northwest elevation, showing the office entrance. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

NORTH ELEVATION

The north elevation of the main volume at Greene Street has three bays and features an entry door to the original doctor's office portion of the house at the east. This door is under a peaked roof overhang construction with deep brackets and non-original columns; above the door is a rectangular opening with a double hung window that has upper sash lites. A dormer window that resembles all others directly below the northernmost chimney caps the center register of this elevation. In this central part of the main wall plane is a small square window at the second story. At the westernmost bay of this volume are two rectangular window openings at both stories each with a double-hung fixtures that has divided lites in the upper sashes.

The north elevation of the central mass has a small square window capped by the dentiled roofline. The north elevation of the rear ell is above the enclosed porch with Doric columns. The two second-story window openings each contain a double-hung fixture with divided lites at the upper sashes.



Figure 14. Looking south at the 5900 block of Greene Street in ca.1960-70. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

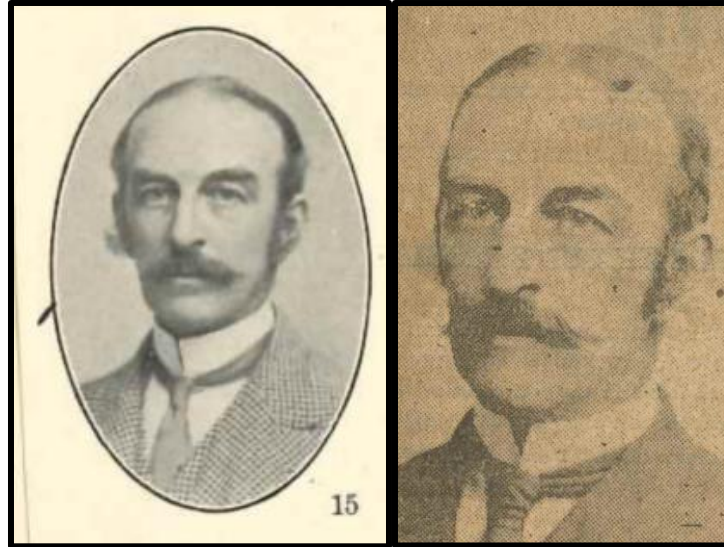
7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thomas C. Potter, M.D., House (The Potter House) at 5920 Greene Street in Germantown comprises a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;*
- (d) *Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;*
and
- (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 of Philadelphia.¹*

The period of significance for the subject house is 1892, the year of its construction.

¹ The significance of Mantle Fielding, Jr. as an architect has been officially stated by the Committee on Historic Designation of the Philadelphia Historical Commission in the review of Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nominations for the Germantown Boys' Club at 25 W. Penn Street and Boxwood at 125 W. School House Lane. Fielding's significance as an architect was further solidified when the Philadelphia Historical Commission designated Boxwood in 2020, a nomination which included Criterion E.



Figures 15. and 16. Thomas Clifford Potter. Source: University Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Initial plans for the Potter House appear to have been conceived in 1892, when Thomas Clifford Potter, M.D., Germantown purchased the subject property at the west corner of Greene and Haines Streets. Soon after, he commissioned prolific Colonial Revival style architect, Mantle Fielding, Jr., to design the subject house. The building was to include a residence and a doctor's office.²

Born to Thomas Evans Potter and Mary Reigert Baker at Fisher's Lane near N. Second Street, Dr. Potter attended Rev. Dr. John W. Faires' Classical Academy on Camac Street in Philadelphia and Russell's Military Academy in New Haven, Connecticut.³ At fifteen, he entered the United States Army, serving in Co. H, Gray Reserves, from 1863 and 1864. He served officially in the Union Army from April 11, 1865, to July 31, 1865, eventually becoming sergeant-major of the 215th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. Three years after the war ended, Dr. Potter began the study of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, receiving his degree in 1871. He served as a resident physician for eighteen months at the Philadelphia Hospital, but ultimately established a private practice at Germantown. He was active in the establishment of the Germantown Hospital, serving for many years on its staff.⁴

In 1876, Dr. Potter married Mary Marshall Philips, the daughter of Moro Philips, from whom he later divorced. The marriage produced one son, Thomas Clifford Potter, Jr. He remarried to Santa Elizabeth Bond Reed, widow of Judge Henry Reed.

Dr. Potter's "untiring administration to the sick and poor began to tell upon him the last few years of his practice," as he suffered a severe attack of angina pectoris. While "he rallied from this attack

² *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, 27 January 1892, i.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 January 1892, 7.

³ *The Alumni Register* [University of Pennsylvania], January 1906, 457.

⁴ "Death of Dr. T.C. Potter," *The Evening Bulletin*, 8 January 1906.

and returned to Germany later in the year to take the baths,” the physician ultimately died at Germantown on January 7, 1906.⁵

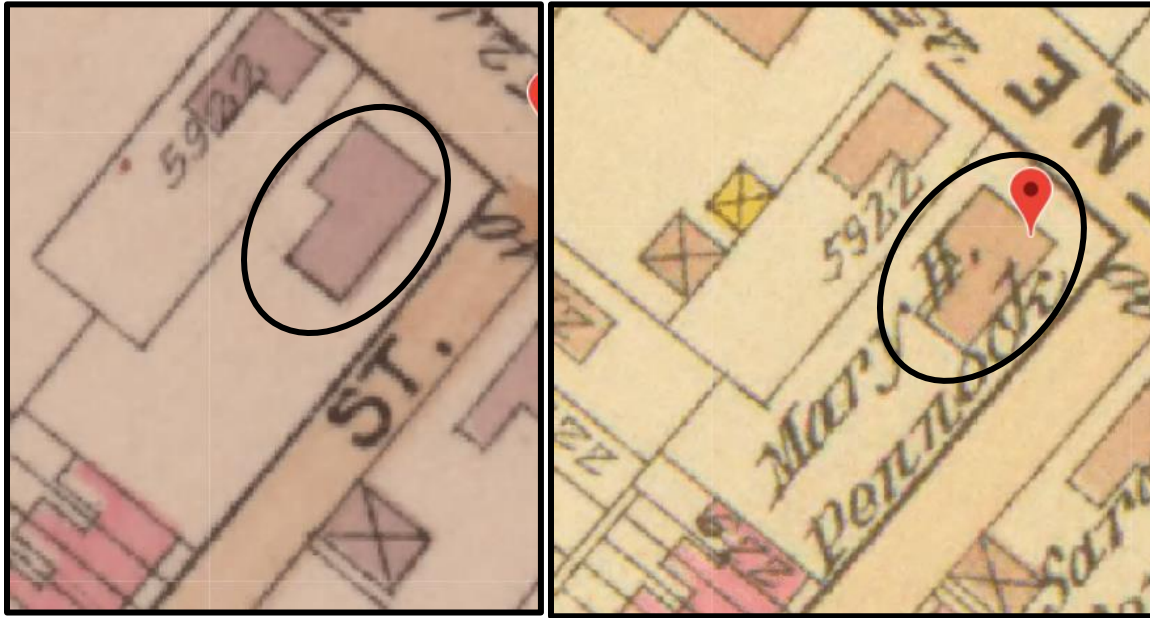


Figure 17. Left: 1895 Philadelphia Atlas. Figure 18. Right: 1910 Philadelphia Atlas. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

⁵ “Death of Dr. T.C. Potter,” *The Evening Bulletin*, 8 January 1906.



Figure 19. The primary (northeast) and northwest elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

CRITERION D

Built in 1892, the Potter House is a distinctive, architect-designed example of the Colonial Revival style as applied to suburban residences of the upper classes in Germantown and Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century. Derived from Georgian motives, the subject house features a characteristic array of features and hallmarks of the Colonial Revival, as described in the *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* published by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and *A Field Guide To American Houses* by Virginia Savage McAlester.⁶

As detailed in the PHMC *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, the Colonial Revival Style, which was prevalent between 1880 and 1960 is “...one of the most frequently produced and enduring popular styles in America...”⁷ While always a continuous aspect the Quaker City’s built environment, the style enjoyed renewed popularity after it was showcased at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia. The style was further revived by the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. Like other revivalist movements, the Colonial Revival did not always produce period Georgian replicas, but, instead, inspired the employment of the stylistic characteristics and

⁶ The Colonial Revival Style 1880-1960, *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, published online by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Accessed on 20 December 2017. < <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/colonial-revival.html>>; and Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 408–432.

⁷ The Colonial Revival Style 1880-1960, *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, published online by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Accessed on 20 December 2017. < <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/colonial-revival.html>>

features in new and innovative ways.⁸ Mantle Fielding’s design for the subject building represents a period of the style that Architectural Historian George Thomas characterized as “a moment of Colonial whimsy.” In reference to the E.V. Douglas House (1895) at 124 W. Chestnut Hill Avenue, Thomas’ comment describes not only this architect and his unique work, but a period of Colonial Revival style architecture that came out of the Victorian era.⁹

The PHMC *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* also identifies residences as a primary building type designed in the Colonial Revival style. The subject property is in fact distinctive of an era in Philadelphia that was defined by large suburban houses designed in the “Colonial” style, a tradition which persisted through the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰



Figure 20. The primary (northeast) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

The PHMC *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* also describes twelve major “identifiable features” that were commonly associated with the Colonial Revival style. The subject building possesses all but one (numbers align with the style guide):

- No. 1: Columned porch or portico
- No. 2: Front door sidelights
- No. 3: Pedimented door, windows or dormers
- No. 5: Pilasters
- No. 6: Symmetrical façade

⁸ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 408–432.

⁹ George E. Thomas. *The Buildings of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, Buildings in the United States*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011.

¹⁰ The Colonial Revival Style 1880-1960, *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, published online by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Accessed on 7 September 2021. < <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/colonial-revival.html> >

- No. 7: Double-hung windows, often multi-paned
- No. 8: Triple windows often with incised patterns
- No. 9: Wood shutters
- No. 10: Decorative pendants
- No. 11: Side gabled or hipped roofs
- No. 12: Cornice with dentils or modillions¹¹

Exhibiting distinguishing characteristics of the Colonial Revival style, the subject property satisfies Criterion D.

¹¹ The Colonial Revival Style 1880-1960, Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide, published online by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Accessed on 7 September 2021. < <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/colonial-revival.html> >

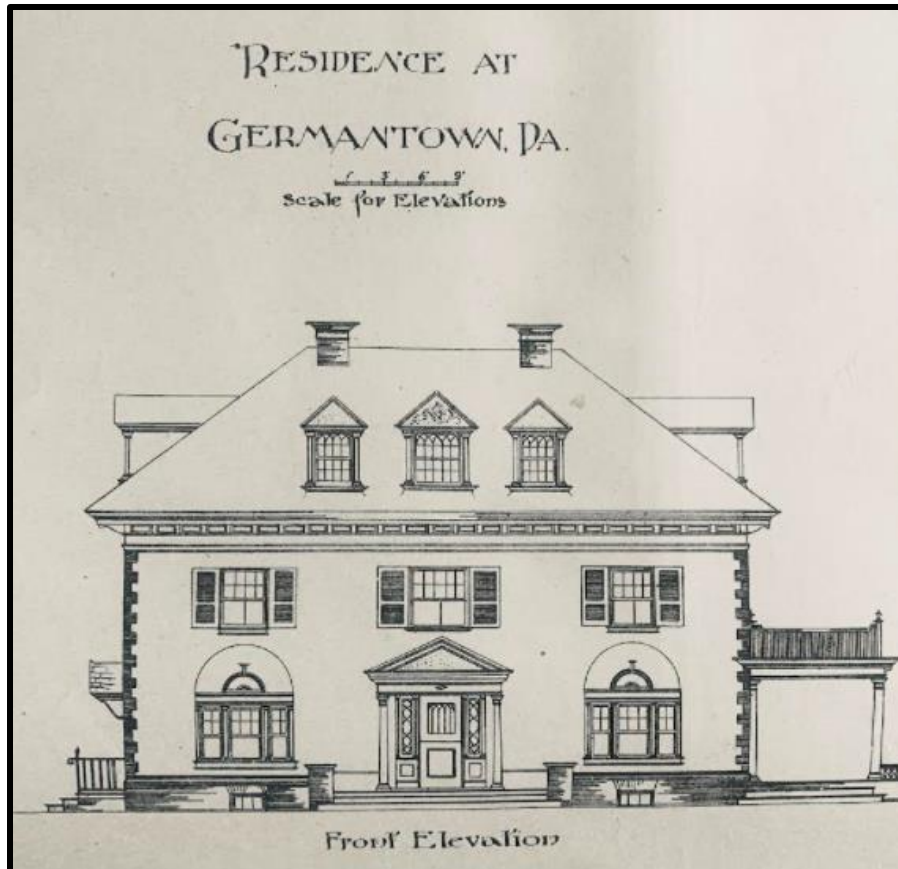


Figure 21. Design for a Residence at Germantown, PA. Source: *The Architectural and Building Monthly*, September 1891, Plate 172.

CRITERION C

The Potter House reflects the environment of suburban, residential architecture of the upper classes of Germantown and Philadelphia in an era characterized by the Colonial Revival style. With innumerable historic, colonial, Georgian and Federal period examples that inform characteristics of the subject house, the subject property represents an important period in Colonial Revival design that led to a rendition of the “modern Colonial,” borrowing from the past in both design and material composition, while also creating distinctive and often unique works. Throughout Germantown, Philadelphia, the larger region, and even nationally, the taste for the Colonial Revival influenced domestic architecture, and the subject house exemplifies this period of architectural design and its influence on suburban dwellings.



Figure 22. Top left: Built between 1723 and 1730, Stenton, also known as the James Logan House, is located at 4601 N. 18th Street in the Logan neighborhood, near Germantown in Philadelphia, featuring a hipped roof like the subject property. Source: Google. Figure 23. Top right: Taken in 1908, the Port Royal House, built in 1762 by Edward Stiles, features a similar central fenestration to the subject property, as well as hipped roof and dormers. Source: Hagley Digital Library. Figure 24. Bottom left: Built between 1763 and 1767, Cliveden, the Benjamin Chew House, stands at 6401 Germantown Avenue in Germantown, Philadelphia. It features a central pediment and dormers, a similar stone façade, and like chimney massing to the subject building. Figure 25. Bottom right: Located on Germantown Avenue above Cheltenham, Vernon Park was built in 1803 by James Matthews, being the longtime home of John Wistar. The building features a hipped roof, a central pediment and dormers like the subject building. Source: Library of Congress.

The Potter House is a distinctive design that exemplifies a period defined and even dominated by the Colonial Revival style in Philadelphia. Shown above are eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century houses that include features often employed by Colonial Revival-era architects to embellish their designs for suburban residences. Shown above in Figure 22, Stenton is a two-and-one-half-story house with a hipped roof that shares those basic features with the subject property. Port Royal at Frankford, shown in Figure 23, also includes a hipped roof, as well as a central pediment and dormers much like the Potter House. A central pediment flanked by dormers is repeated on two famous Germantown houses—Cliveden (Figure 24) and Vernon Park (Figure 25). The former features a stone façade like the subject building, while the latter features a hipped roof. These old houses influenced the designs of architects like Mantle Fielding.



Figures 26. and Figure 27. Both designed by George T. Pearson for John T. Roberts in 1887, the Annie T. Hoyt House on left and the John T. Roberts House on right exhibit features and forms of Pearson's work that derive from the Colonial architecture of Germantown. Source: Oscar Beisert.

Because of the rich aesthetic and historical heritage of Germantown and Philadelphia at-large, the taste for the Colonial Revival style in domestic architecture experienced an increased presence from the time of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 through the mid-twentieth century. While there would be more archaeological specimens to come in the early twentieth century, the late nineteenth century included some of the style's most creative designs, which were produced in a period of stylistic transition that represents the passing of the Victorian era to the slightly more restrained Edwardian period. In Germantown, architects like George T. Pearson coined their own "local antique Germantown style" with unusual designs that incorporated local Wissahickon schist and red brick with a Flemish bond, as well as a seemingly endless number of Georgian architectural features. Pearson designed four houses for John T. Roberts and his three daughters on Wingohocking Terrace or Heights in 1887, which were all interpreted as of a modern Colonial style. Illustrated above in Figures 26 and 27, the Roberts family compound was a unique place where all four houses and a stable were of the same stylistic inspiration, but "dissimilar in in design."¹² As the Colonial Revival style evolved in the late nineteenth century, architects like Mantle Fielding emerged on the local design scene. Visually, it is no surprise that Fielding apprenticed with Pearson prior to starting his own practice. And while the older architect influenced his protégé, Fielding entered upon a new phase of the stylistic application representative of his own vision, as well as the aesthetic trends of the 1890s. As Pearson had done, Fielding produced resplendent Colonial Revival style buildings that borrowed from history, while also being distinctive, often unique, works. He diverged from Pearson's diverse pallet of building materials that included Wissahickon schist, red brick with Flemish bond, shingle, and terracotta tile, to buildings largely composed of native stone. This meant a divergence from the highly eclectic tastes of the 1870s and 1880s to more overtly Colonial Revival motif. That's not to say that Fielding did not take creative license with the style, but his effusive use of Georgian features were usually reserved to a more predictable stylistic building form like a five rank rectangle or box with varying roof styles. His additions or service wings were more restrained and regular within the Philadelphia vernacular. The subject building is a perfect example of that with its main block and rear wing. These familiar building forms were then decorated with blind arches, brackets,

¹² *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, 24 January 1887, 30.

columns of varying orders, dormers, hoods, Palladian windows, pediments, pilasters, porches, porticos, tracery, swags, etc. to name just a few of Fielding's constant, go-to features. While not quite as demonstrative as Fielding, other architects shaped this period of design as well, including Lindley Johnson (1854-1937), Thomas P. Lonsdale (1855-1900), Charles Barton Keen (1868-1931), Minerva Parker Nichols, and even the ever-evolving Addison Hutton (1834-1916). These architects along with Fielding worked for some of the wealthiest and most fashionable Philadelphians of the late nineteenth century, which can be seen in the domestic architecture illustrated in King's *Views of Philadelphia*.



Figure 28. Top left: “The Porches,” Residence of Edwin f. Schively, School Lane and Pulaski Avenue in Germantown. Figure 29. Top right: Residence of Henry S. Weiser at Pelham. Figure 30. The Residence of James F. Fahnestock, Jr. at Johnson and McCallum Streets in Germantown. Figure 31. The Residence of William J. Montgomery, Greene Street below Tulpehocken in Germantown. Source: *Handsome Homes of Germantown, Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy, and Pelham*. (Press of Germantown Independent-Gazette, 1899).

Commissioned by Edwin F. Schively, “The Porches” (Demolished), shown in Figure 28, at School House Lane and Pulaski Avenue in Germantown fits into the 1890s with Palladian windows, a complex entrance porch, pediments, a miniature bay window, etc. Compared to “The Porches,” the residence of Henry S. Weiser, shown in Figure 29 at Pelham is perhaps simpler at first glance, but it too has a full, one-story front porch with columns galore, as well as a central pediment and dormers like the subject property. There is even a bay window at the center of the second floor, as well as a fanlight in the pediment. Yet all of these Georgian-inspired features are set upon a

standard Colonial-era building form not unlike Port Royal and Vernon. Shown in Figure 30, the residence of James F. Fahnestock, Jr. at W. Johnson and McCallum Streets is another version of the evolving Colonial Revival of the 1890s. Set upon its rectangular building form, its gambrel roof diverges from the climbing and robust predecessors to a true broken pitch that is perhaps less useful to the occupant, but more suited to Edwardian taste. It too features numerous Georgian-inspired architectural features. The residence of William J. Montgomery on Greene Street between Walnut Lane and Tulpehocken Street is a perfect specimen of the period in question. Its aesthetic flamboyance is achieved through the employment of an impressive, highly elaborate porch, Gothic window openings with windows that feature tracery, and dormers with exaggerated, yet traditional details.

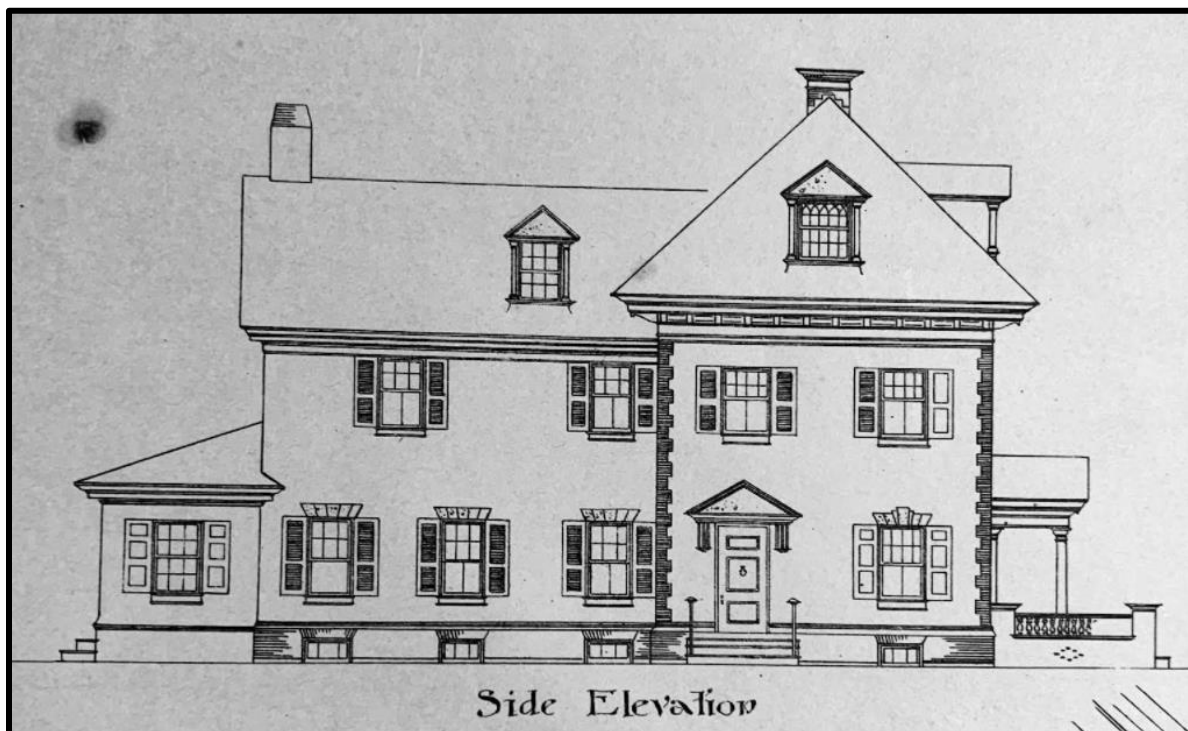


Figure 32. Design for a Residence at Germantown, PA. Source: *The Architectural and Building Monthly*, September 1891, Plate 172.

The examples shown in Figures 21 through 32 not only represent the work of Fielding and other architects of his ilk and period, but also show the type of Colonial Revival style suburban residences that would come to form a definitive period of local architectural history in Northwest Philadelphia. Satisfying Criterion C, the subject property fits into that context as a stellar example.

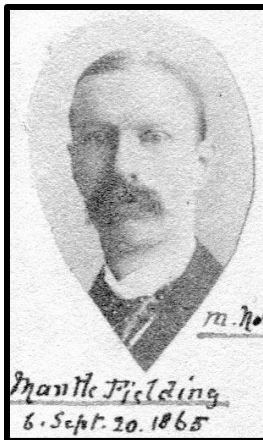


Figure 33a.: Above left: Mantle Fielding. Source: Ancestry.com. Figure 33b. Above right: “The Barn House,” an early reuse and historic preservation project, completed in 1891 by Mantle Fielding. Caption from photograph: Exterior view of west and north facades of dwelling, once the Wyck barn, built in 1796 by J. Frederick Thomas. Architect Mantle Fielding converted the old barn into a residence circa 1891. Recessed porches with wooden banisters are visible on both stories of the west elevation. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia. Figure 34. Below (right): The barn at Wyck prior to its conversion. Source: Country Life, Google Books.

CRITERION E: MANTLE FIELDING, JR.

The Potter House is the work Mantle Fielding, Jr., an architect and designer whose work significantly influenced the architectural and cultural development of the Northwest section of the City of Philadelphia, specifically Germantown and the larger German Township. Shortly after converting the eighteenth-century barn of Wyck House to his own residence in 1891, Fielding’s architectural career was catapulted into orbit. His oeuvre was defined by the Colonial Revival style, as is exemplified in his design for the subject property.





Figures 35. and 36. Boltz House, Pelham Road, Mt. Airy, designed by Mantle Fielding in 1894. Source: Laura Kicey, *Philadelphia Magazine*.

Born to Mantle Fielding (1837-1890), an English-born bank clerk, and Anna M. Stone (1838-1906) in 1865, Mantle Fielding, Jr. was a slender and flamboyant aesthete, who would become a well-known architect and art historian in the Philadelphia region.¹³ Heritage appears to have been a significant influence and interest throughout Fielding's life, a passion that he poured into his work. After graduating from the Germantown Academy in 1883, it is said that Fielding studied architecture for one year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. If this happened, it likely occurred between the fall of 1883 through the spring of 1884.

Fielding's absence from Philadelphia appears to have been short-lived, as he was working in the offices of George T. Pearson (1847–1920), the prolific Victorian-era architect of Philadelphia, in March 1885.¹⁴ By 1886, he was listed independently as an architect in the city directory.¹⁵ From that time through 1891, Fielding completed various design- and construction-related commissions. However, it was not until he converted the 1796 barn at Wyck to his private residence that he gained steam as an architect, specifically in the Colonial Revival style. Fielding lived in “The Barn” from 1891 through the 1930s.¹⁶ Fielding did the unthinkable with this residential conversion, which was not only an early example of reuse, but the embodiment of his interest in all things related to early American Colonial architecture, design, and history. Fielding's philosophy in the reuse of The Barn was detailed in *Country Life*, in an article published several years later, in 1906:

In altering the barn the design was prepared with the idea of retaining as much as possible of the original structure, not only for the saving in money but to keep the character of the old work to a great extent. In this case the original stone walls (with the exception of slight building in and cutting of several large view windows) must have meant a saving of from three to four thousand dollars in the cost of the work. There was also a saving of at least a thousand dollars by retaining the old roof construction and a large number of the original floor beams and girders.

¹³ As an art historian, Fielding was a prolific author, producing works such as *American Engravers Upon Copper and Steel*; *Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors & Engravers*; and *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully (1783-1872)*.

¹⁴ Diary, March 3, 1885, Cornelius N. Weygandt Papers, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania. Weygandt notes that Fielding was “studying architecture under Pearson.”

¹⁵ *Philadelphia City Directory* (1886).

¹⁶ John L. Cotter, Daniel G. Roberts, and Michael Parrington, *The Buried Past: An Archaeological History of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 326.

The inside of the house is of the Colonial period of the time of Sir Christopher Wren; and the old ideas have been carried out as far as it was possible to comply with modern ideas of comfort. In the remodeled building the first floor was laid largely on the original white oak girders that support the main barn floor, and when it is remembered that in the Colonial period these buildings were used largely to store grain, it will be seen what tremendous floor weights they are capable of holding.¹⁷

While certain features of the original structure were retained, the interior largely resembled an attractive, high-end Colonial Revival residence with its own panache. It was in this design that Fielding evolved from the chaotic and often highly intricate designs of his predecessors to a more orderly, yet highly creative Georgian-inspired palette.



Figure 37. Left: Designed in 1895 for Edward Varian Douglas by Mantle Fielding. Source: Edward Varian Douglas Residence. Moses King, *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians*. (New York: Blanchard Press, Isaac H. Blanchard Co., 1901), p. 84. Figure 38. Right: The Edward Varian Douglas House at 124 W. Chestnut Hill Avenue, designed by Mantle Fielding. Source: Chestnut Hill Historical Society.

After his success with *The Barn*, Fielding established his architectural mastery in the Colonial Revival style with a wide array of house types and unique applications of the style based on a variety of period examples. In 1892, Fielding added to the quaint, but revered campus of the Germantown Academy with his commission for a gymnasium, improving the facility with a respectful but distinctly modern Colonial Revival style design.¹⁸ The subject property was designed for Thomas C. Potter that same year.¹⁹ In 1894, Fielding was commissioned to design the Boltz House on Pelham Road, which was markedly different from his adaptation of *The Barn* and the Germantown Academy Gymnasium.²⁰ As in the case of the 1894 commission on Pelham Road, Fielding was asked to design a Colonial Revival style mansion for Edward Varian Douglas in 1895 at 124 W. Chestnut Hill Avenue in Chestnut Hill.²¹ This building is “a two-and-one-half

¹⁷ Mabel Tuke Priestman. “The Barn That Found Itself,” *Country Life* (March 1908): 522-23.

¹⁸ George E. Thomas, *The Buildings of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania*, Buildings in the United States (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 139.

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²⁰ Laura Kicey, “Under Renovation: Mantle Fielding Home Built in 1894,” *Philadelphia Magazine*. (Philadelphia: 2013).

²¹ Edward Varian Douglas Residence: Moses King, *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians* (New York: Blanchard Press, Isaac H. Blanchard Co., 1901), 84; and Jefferson M. Moak, Inventory, Chestnut Hill National Historic District, 1985. On file at Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and Chestnut Hill Historical Society.

story, three-rank stone... dwelling with a gabled roof with a balustrade and two gabled dormers,” as described by George Bryant for the Chestnut Hill Historical Society. His description reads: “The pedimented center rank possesses an open porch...the outer ranks contain two-story bowed sections with broken pedimented lintels.”²² The Boltz House and the said characteristics of the Douglas House represent the more ornate specimens of Fielding’s oeuvre, which present an interesting juxtaposition when compared to his more conservative projects. While much of this evolving landscape relates to client preference and the evolving fashions of the times, Fielding is clearly, from The Barn to the Douglas House, creating his own unique products and a certain mastery that represents an important transition within the saga of the Colonial Revival style.



Figure 39. Top: The 1898 Boys’ Parlors Association building at 25 W. Penn Street, Germantown. Photograph by Marriott Canby Morris. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia. Figure 40. Bottom: The Boys’ Parlors Association of Germantown, as completed by Mantle Fielding in 1909. Source: Hidden City Philadelphia, 2017.

In 1897, Fielding exemplified his creative, but controlled bravado, after the largely Quaker leadership of the Boys’ Parlors Association of Germantown commissioned him to design a

²² George Bryant, “Discovering Chestnut Hill: An Architectural Stroll Down West Chestnut Hill Avenue” (Philadelphia: 4 June 2016), 5. Published online: <http://www.chhist.org/wp-newsite/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CHHS-W-CH-Ave-Tour-2016.pdf>

clubhouse that was rendered in a traditional, yet somehow whimsical product. While a large addition would forever change the design in 1909, the building's original composition was a miniature ideal of older, historic meeting house and church designs with what one might call Colonial Revival fret work. The later addition was far more institutional and less dramatic, but yet in keeping stylistically with the original building.



Figure 41. "Residence of Robert Newhall, Esq., Germantown," designed by Mantle Fielding. Source: *The American Architect*. (3 November 1906), 144.

In time, Fielding's work became more and more controlled, hinting at the more gracious and refined era that arrived in early twentieth century Colonial Revival design. By 1906, Fielding's commission for the residence of Robert Newhall, Esq. in Germantown was being widely discussed and published. Unlike his design of the Boltz and Douglas Houses, the Newhall residence was far more historic in form, appearance and bearing, which exemplified the commodious manner of such houses in the twentieth century. Though its massing and effect was overall more conservative, the Newhall residence was replete with modern features of the high style Georgian, as well as local vernacular influences. The dormers featured elaborate Georgian gable fronts, while the lintels were inspired by Federal period motifs. Yet even with certain fanciful embellishments, an evolving, modernizing of the Colonial Revival comes out in the doorway, which has a local, vernacular air with a hood not unlike that related to the pent roofs of Germantown in the eighteenth century.

This specific design did not mark a retirement from Fielding's more Edwardian and entirely modern commissions like the James N. Stone, Esq. house at Chestnut Hill, which was reviewed and well-received in *The American Architect* in October 1906.²³ In fact, the early twentieth century offers more commentary on Fielding's designs. Critic Mabel Tuke Preistman, clearly a fan of Fielding's work, provided a representative description in *Artistic Homes* in 1910:

A House of simple Colonial design, of good architecture and well adapted for the suburbs or country, has been built in Germantown. It was designed by Mantle Fielding, whose Colonial houses have given him such a wide reputation, and is distinctly interesting, with its beautiful hooded doorway in the centre of the house.

²³ *The American Architect*. (13 October 1906), 122.

A double piazza is placed at one end. From the upper porch a beautiful view is obtained of the Wissahickon Valley. The lower porch will eventually be glassed in, adding to the warmth of the house during the winter months.²⁴

While Priestman is clearly impressed by Fielding's work, she describes a house with features that represent various historic features of "Colonial design," but also one that is "interesting" and thoroughly modern, all of which made his work relevant at the time.

These examples of Mantle Fielding, Jr.'s unsung, but distinctive and productive career depicts his aptitude and command of architecture and the Colonial Revival style. These examples of his larger oeuvre depict his accomplishments and influence during a transformative period of Philadelphia architecture that spanned from the traditions of earlier architects like Frank Furness and George T. Pearson into the markedly evolved future of H. Louis Daring, Jr., Carl Ziegler, and R. Brognard Okie, where Philadelphians became truly comfortable in the Colonial Revival style.²⁵ Held up to other master architects of the period, Fielding remains one of the foremost Colonial Revival architects, whose work significantly influenced the local architecture of Germantown and the larger built environment of Northwest Philadelphia. Of that larger body of works, the Potter House comprises significant work of a master Colonial Revival architect and designer, who employed a variety of Georgian-inspired features to create a unique design, satisfying Criterion E.²⁶



Figure 42. "House of James N. Stone, Esq., Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.," designed by Mantle Fielding, Architect. Source: *The American Architect*. (13 October 1906), 122.

²⁴ Mabel Tuke Priestman, *Artistic Homes* (A.C. McClurg & Co., 1910), 1.

²⁵ Oscar Beisert. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: Boxwood, 156 W. School House Lane, Germantown, Philadelphia 19144. (Philadelphia: Penn Knox Neighborhood Association, 2019).

²⁶ Oscar Beisert. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: The Germantown Boys' Club, 23 W. Penn Street, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144. (Philadelphia: Penn Knox Neighborhood Association, 2017).



Figure 43. The Frederick W. Taylor, Esq. House at Chestnut Hill, was published in the T-Square Yearbook in 1910. This the ultimate mansion of Fielding's grand spectrum with its Georgian and Colonial Revival, even Neoclassical, features, including the simplicity of the house, despite its size, and the influence of local vernacular and high style design.²⁷

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This nomination was sponsored by generous neighbors and volunteers of the West Central Germantown Neighbors. This nomination was authored and prepared by Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, and Amy Lambert, Architectural Historian and Architect, with assistance and research from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian, and Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian.

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