

**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: **4811 Germantown Avenue**

Postal code: **19144**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Name: **Adamson Mansion; St. Michael of the Saints Roman Catholic Church**

Current Name: **Wayne Junction Campus**

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): **ca.1874-76 to 1916; 1924 to ca.1982**

Date(s) of construction: **House (Built ca.1874-76); Church (Built 1951-52); Convent (Built 1955-56); and Grotto (Built ca.1950s)**

Architects: **Louis C. Gambone, Architect (Church, 1951-52) (Convent, 1955-56)**

Builders: **Peter Roth, Roth Construction Co. (Church, 1951-52); Conway and Ryan (Convent, 1955-56)**

Original owner: **William Adamson and Eleanor Frances Prescott Adamson**

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: GERMANTOWN REVITALIZATION NOW TWO, LP

Date: **31 May 2023**

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

Email: **Keeper@KeepingPhiladelphia.org**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 31 May 2023

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: June 13, 2023

Date of Notice Issuance: June 15, 2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Germantown Revitalization

Address: 4701 Germantown Avenue

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: July 19, 2023

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: August 11, 2023

Date of Final Action: August 11, 2023

Designated

Rejected

12/7/18

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. The primary (southwest) elevations of the Adamson House, the Church, the Convent, and the Grotto. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

ST. MICHAEL OF THE SAINTS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

FORMERLY

THE ADAMSON MANSION

**4811 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
GERMANTOWN
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19104**

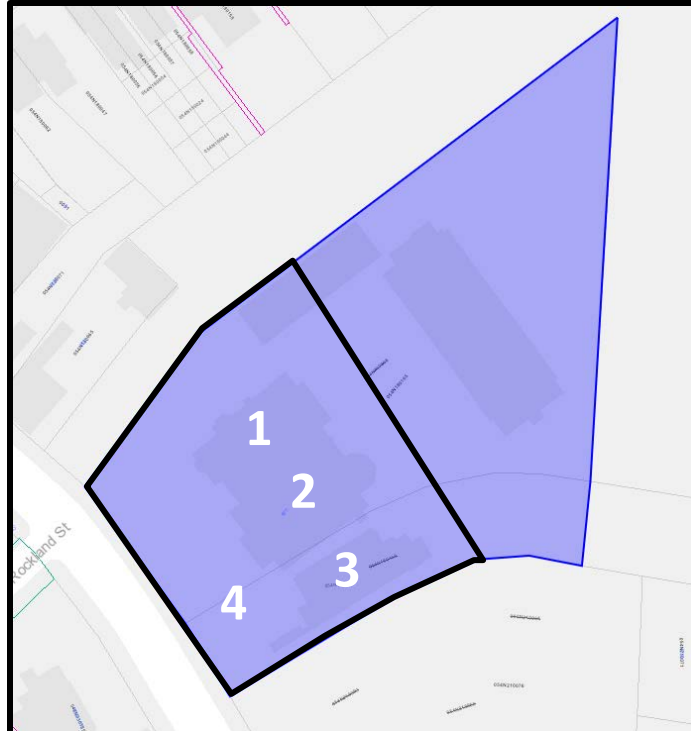


Figure 2. The boundary of the proposed designation is delineated in black while the larger property is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia. Please note that the resource numbers for the subject property have been included above.

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the proposed designation is as follows:

BEGINNING at a point on the northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue (on City Plan, 60' wide, Legally Open) at the distance of 292.385' southeastwardly from the Southeasterly side of East Logan Street (on City Plan 33' wide, Legally Open); THENCE extending north 38 degrees, 11', 57" east the distance of 141.802' to an angle point; THENCE extending north 64 degrees, 52', 2" east the distance of 394.260' to a point; THENCE extending south 04 degrees, 48', 52" west the distance of 351.861' to a point on the northerly side of Wyneva Street (on City Plan, 60' wide, Legally Open); THENCE extending and crossing the Westernmost end of said Wyneva Street south 11 degrees, 21' west, the distance of 60' to a point on the southerly side of said Wyneva Street; THENCE extending south 78 degrees, 39' east the distance of 25.360' to a point of curvature; THENCE extending southwestwardly along the arc of a circle curving to the left having a radius of 150' the arc distance of 106.222' to a point of tangency; THENCE extending South 60 degrees, 46', 34" west, the distance of 158.881' to a point on the said northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue; THENCE extending along said northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue north 29 degrees, 25', 26" west the distance of 97.562' to an angle point; THENCE extending still along said northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue north 36 degrees, 44', 46" west the distance of 89.646' to an angle point; THENCE extending still along said northeasterly side of Germantown Avenue north 46 degrees, 12', 3" west the distance of 3.073' to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.



Figure 3. The primary (southwest) and partial southwest elevations of the Adamson Mansion, the Church, the Convent, and the Grotto. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

4. DESCRIPTION

The former campus of St. Michael of the Saints Roman Catholic Church, known earlier as the Adamson Mansion and its grounds, is an historic place that is situated at 4811 Germantown Avenue on the incline of “Neglee’s Hill” in Lower Germantown. The subject property is one with distinctive character, featuring several significant structures of cultural and historical importance to the Germantown community. Due to its siting on the incline of Neglee’s Hill and the set back from Germantown Avenue, the site retains a suburban, marginally rural, domestic character that harkens back to the history of the Adamson Mansion as a private house set within ample grounds. And while Adamson Mansion is more than 75 years older than the other resources on the site, the employment of Schist masonry construction marks an architectural and cultural continuum that pervades many historic places and institutions in Germantown.

The extant buildings historically associated with the subject property include the following sources:

Resource No., Name, Date of Construction, and Status

1. Adamson Mansion (ca.1874-76), Contributing
2. St. Michael of the Saints Roman Catholic Church (1951-52), Contributing
3. Convent (1955-56), Contributing
4. Grotto (ca.1950s), Contributing

The set back of Resources 1, 2, 3, and 4, as well as the stone retaining walls and posts, and the iron fencing are part of the contributing resources.



Figure 4. The primary (southwest) elevations of the Adamson Mansion, the Church, the Convent (on far right), and the stone walls and iron fencing along Germantown Avenue. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2022.



Figure 5. Top: The primary (north) elevation of the Church, the Grotto, and the Rectory through the gateway to the Grotto. Figure 6. Bottom: The side (west) elevation of Building 3. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.



Figure 7. Looking northeast at the Adamson Mansion. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

ADAMSON MANSION/CHURCH AND RECTORY

Built in 1874-76, the Adamson Mansion, later the Church and Rectory of St. Michael of the Saints is a large, asymmetrical, three-story masonry mansion house that stands at the upper end of three historic buildings at 4811 Germantown Avenue. The subject building is situated on an eminence at the crest of Neglee's Hill in Lower Germantown. In fact, when originally a free-standing suburban residence, it no doubt commanded one of the best landscape vistas in the area. A stone retaining wall and piers, connected with iron fencing, provides a regal demarcation between the sidewalk and the elevated ground that forms the front lawn of the subject building. The stone retaining wall and iron fencing is just below a wide driveway at the northwest. These features continue along the driveway for roughly fifteen feet, terminating at a granite post that appears in an 1886 painting of the property, at which time it served the carriageway. Most of the other stonework and iron fencing appears to date to the St. Michael of the Saints period of ownership. At the center of the street frontage, from the public right-of-way, a flight of approximately six concrete steps, delineated by a stepped stone retaining wall, leads to a sidewalk that is centered on the primary entrance.

The Adamson Mansion is a large mansion house that was designed in the Second Empire style as a suburban residence for William Adamson in the mid-1870s. The subject house is built largely of masonry construction, being largely composed of rusticated, square-cut Wissahickon schist ashlar with marble and wood trim. The subject building is composed of the original main block; the southeast addition; and the rear (northeast) addition. The primary (southwest) elevation of the main block is defined by three sections. The central section contains the primary entrance, which is contained a one-story, enclosed stone entrance porch.



Figure 8. Top: The primary (southwest) elevation of the Adamson Mansion. Figure 9. Bottom: A detail of the primary (southwest) elevation of Adamson Mansion, showing the transom that was installed once the building was renovated to serve the St. Michael of the Saints. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

Emulating an aedicule, the projecting entrance porch features a round arch opening with a keystone beneath a pediment that is supported by pilasters in the form of brackets. The pediment is comprised of a proper cornice and tympanum and rests upon a frieze. Historically, the pediment supported a roof structure that included a decorative balustrade, which has been removed. The primary entrance is served by double replacement doors with a stained-glass transom above that reads: “St. Michael of the Saints.” The words stretch across a scroll or banner above a gold and blue cross. Recessed between the two outer sections of the primary (southwest) elevation and

above the entrance porch, the second floor features a single round-topped opening that is infilled by a replacement window. The opening is delineated by a marble architrave with occasional quoin-like details. Rising above on the third floor is the Mansard roof level with an elegant round-topped dormer that is flanked by decorative panels. A molded cornice separates the second-floor masonry façade from the Mansard roof, which terminates in a simple cornice. The southerly section of the primary (southwest) elevation is comprised of a three-story tower that formerly included its own mansard roof structure, which has since been removed. The basement level is also partly exposed in this location and includes a single aperture topped by a segmental stone arched lintel. The first and second floors of the tower façade feature single openings served by replacement window units. Tall and narrow in design, both window openings are delineated by marble architraves with occasional quoin-like details topped by a segmental arch. The third floor of the tower features a tripartite window delineated by marble architraves with round-topped openings that are served by one-over-one replacement units. The tower terminated with what appears to be a simple wooden molding. The northerly section of the primary (southwest) elevation projects from the central section, being three-stories in height, including the Mansard roof. The first floor features a three-part bay window that is clad in marble with a wooden cornice. The three tall, narrow openings within the bay feature replacement windows. The marble cladding includes recessed paneling below each window. The bay window also includes three basement windows that also feature replacement units. The roofline of the bay window originally included additional details, which have been removed. Rising above the bay window, the second floor features a two-part mullion window served by two replacement units. The paired opening is delineated by a continuous marble architrave with occasional quoin-like details topped by a segmental arch at each opening. Separating the stone façade from the Mansard roof is a bracketed cornice. The concave Mansard roof features a single dormer at the center that also emulates an aedicule. The opening is served by a one-over-one replacement window. The mansard roof appears to be clad in asphalt shingles. The roof terminates in a simple cornice.

Built ca. 1951-52, a one-story stone addition with a flat roof appends the side (southeast) elevation of the Adamson Mansion. It appears to connect the Adamson Mansion to the Church. The primary (southwest) elevation of the southeast addition is largely a façade of Wissahickon schist. The elevation features a single opening at center, being a tall and narrow window that emulates those used in the tower section of the Adamson Mansion's facade. Similar marble trim, as well as a replacement window, serves the opening. This addition occupies the space that once included a large, ornate one-story wooden porch. There is also an English basement entrance in this location.



Figure 10. The northwest and primary (southwest) elevations of the Adamson Mansion. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

The side (northwest) elevation of the Adamson Mansion includes three three-story sections. The westerly section is a fenestration of two windows per floor, including the basement. Likely due to the placement of a chimney stack, the windows are placed at each end of this section, employing the same details as the windows in the first and second floors of the tower's primary (southwest) elevation. The dormers are more restrained architecturally than those serving the primary (southwest) elevation, being open gable front versions. The Wissahickon schist façade, the cornice, and the Mansard roof all continue into this elevation. The central bay of the side (northwest) elevation includes a side entrance. The three-story volume projects from the larger main block by approximately six feet. There is one opening per floor. The first floor is centered on a pedestrian entrance, which features period or period-appropriate, paneled wooden door with side lights, featuring original decorative glass. The doorway is accessed by a flight of four marble steps, and shaded by an original wooden awning with brackets that speak to the Victorian era. Modern signage is affixed to the front of the awning. The second floor features an opening with a double mullion window served by modern units. The architrave and mullion appear to be original. The cornice continues to this elevation, separating the stone façade from the Mansard roof. A single dormer serves the third floor, being the same as described in the previous section. The third section features three openings on the first and second floors. Two small, narrow windows, one per floor, are set immediately upon the line between the eastern and central sections. These two openings are not aligned with the others on the first and second floor, likely serving a staircase. The other openings are similar in size and placement to the westerly section, but without the marble surround. The easternmost window on the first floor has been converted to a door, which is accessed by a flight of concrete steps. The dormers in the Mansard roof are also similar.



Figure 11. Looking southwest at the side elevation and the entrance porch roof of the side (northwest) elevation of the Adamson Mansion. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

The rear (northeast) elevation of the Adamson Mansion features two sections, the northerly of which features a single bay, while the southerly is comprised of three bays. Two one-story stone additions append the rear (northeast) elevation, including an earlier, smaller one-story addition and a ca.1951-52 addition. Unlike the addition at the primary (southeast) elevation between the

Adamson Mansion and the Church, the one-story addition at the rear (northeast) elevation is out of character with the Adamson Mansion and is non-contributing to its historic appearance. A two-part mullion window and a single window serve the rear (northeast) elevation of the addition. The second floor of the Adamson Mansion is visible, featuring a chimney stack and a single window within the northerly section, which projects from the larger main block. The marble surround is again present, as well as the segmental arch top. A pedimented dormer rises above on the third floor. The upper floors are connected by a continuous cornice. The southerly section features two openings on the second floor, including a mullion window and a single window. All of the details are consistent with the previous window described. The Mansard roof includes a double dormer rising above the mullion window, which is pedimented like those on the primary (southwest) elevation. Another stack rises from the Mansard area, which is followed by a single pedimented dormer.

The side (southeast) elevation is largely concealed by the one-story stone addition; however, a projecting three-story stone component projects from the larger main block. The windows and other details mimic the remainder of the house.



Figure 12. Top: The rear (northeast) and side (northwest) elevations of the Adamson Mansion. Figure 13. Bottom: The rear (northeast) elevations of the Church and the Adamson Mansion. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.



Figure 14. The primary (southwest) elevation of the Church. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

THE CHURCH

Built in 1951-52, the Church of St. Michael of the Saints is a five-bay, one-and-one-half-story masonry building that stands at the center of three historic buildings at 4811 Germantown Avenue (formerly 4809 Germantown Avenue). The subject building is situated on an eminence nearing the crest of Neglee’s Hill in Lower Germantown. A stone retaining wall and piers, connected with iron fencing, provides a regal demarcation between the sidewalk and the elevated ground that forms the front lawn of the Church. From the public right-of-way, a flight of approximately ten steps, delineated by a stepped stone retaining wall and metal railings, leads to a sidewalk that is centered on the primary entrance.

The Church is a medium size Roman Catholic chapel that was designed in a restrained Romanesque style, as interpreted by Louis C. Gambone in the mid-twentieth century. The parish proudly commissioned the employment of rough-cut Wissahickon schist Ashlar, laid in a random, irregular bond for the entire Church building. The sections of the building include a two-stage, enclosed porch-like entrance structure at the front; the larger one-and-one-half-story chapel, and additions at the rear. A structural steel system carries the ceiling and roof.¹ Rising above the main volume, the entrance and much of the primary (southwest) elevation is housed in a two-stage stone volume that is three bays in width, being narrower than the main volume of the one-and-one-half-story chapel itself. The primary (southwest) elevation is the most ornate portion of the entire building, centered on a round-arch entry recessed within vertical and horizontal corbeling, which includes a distinctive cornice. The recession is framed by a bold limestone molding and displays “St. Michael of the Saints” at the center of its horizontal member. Shallow buttresses flank the central section and are topped with limestone coping. Rising above the doorway is a tripartite window, featuring round-arch openings, the largest at center, which is flanked by two smaller, like-size windows. This central feature is articulated by restrained limestone molding with paired panels beneath each window. The central window in the set is flanked by small pinnacle reliefs. The two-stage elevation features large buttresses that form recessed vertical panels at each side of

¹ “Blessing of New Church, Sunday,” *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 30 May 1952, 7.

the façade. The upper story terminates in a simple triangular parapet. At the west corner of the entrance volume near the base is the cornerstone, which reads “Anno Domini 1951.” The side elevations of the entrance volume each feature pairs of buttresses that flank single vertical windows on the first and second stages. The side walls of the entrance volume terminate at the primary (southwest) elevation of the main volume of the Church. All that is visible of this larger volume is the portion of the façade that represents the isles, being identical on each side. The first stage is dedicated to a pedestrian entrance, featuring double doors, which are metal replacement units. Above the door is a projecting stone lintel with distinctive horizontal lines, reflecting architectural treatment of the period. Rising above the doorway is a pair of round arch openings featuring replacement windows.

The side (southeast) elevation of the Church features six round arch windows that may have once included stained or decorative glass, but now feature replacement windows and infill. Near the end of this fenestration is a pedestrian doorway, featuring a replacement metal door. Rising above the doorway is a pair of small arched windows. All the windows on this elevation feature limestone sills. A retaining wall of Wissahickon schist sits just below this elevation, protecting the elevated ground of the church. The side (northwest) elevation of the Church is not visible from the exterior of the building. However, a stone chimney stack rises from this elevation near the rear of the building.

The rear (northeast) elevation of the main volume features a blind stone wall, projecting from which is a five-sided apse-like structure that is comprised of largely blind stone walls. A non-contributing one-story addition at the southeast appends the building between the nave and the rear wall of the main volume. A one-story stone addition is visible between the Church and the Adamson Mansion and is contributing to the designation. The rear (northeast) elevation of the said addition is served by two windows, which feature replacement units.

The side (At the primary (southwest) elevation all that is visible of the main volume of the chape are the stone walls that flank the central section, being representative of the isles. These like-facades feature within a recession of corbeled reliefs. The primary entrance is defined by its round arch opening, which is formed by stone voussoirs. The doorway features double replacement doors and a round-arch transom.



Figure 15. The cornerstone of the Church. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.



Figure 16. Top: The primary (southwest) elevation of the Church, showing the said Parish name carved above the doorway. Figure 17. Bottom: The northeast and primary (southwest) elevations of the Church and the Convent. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

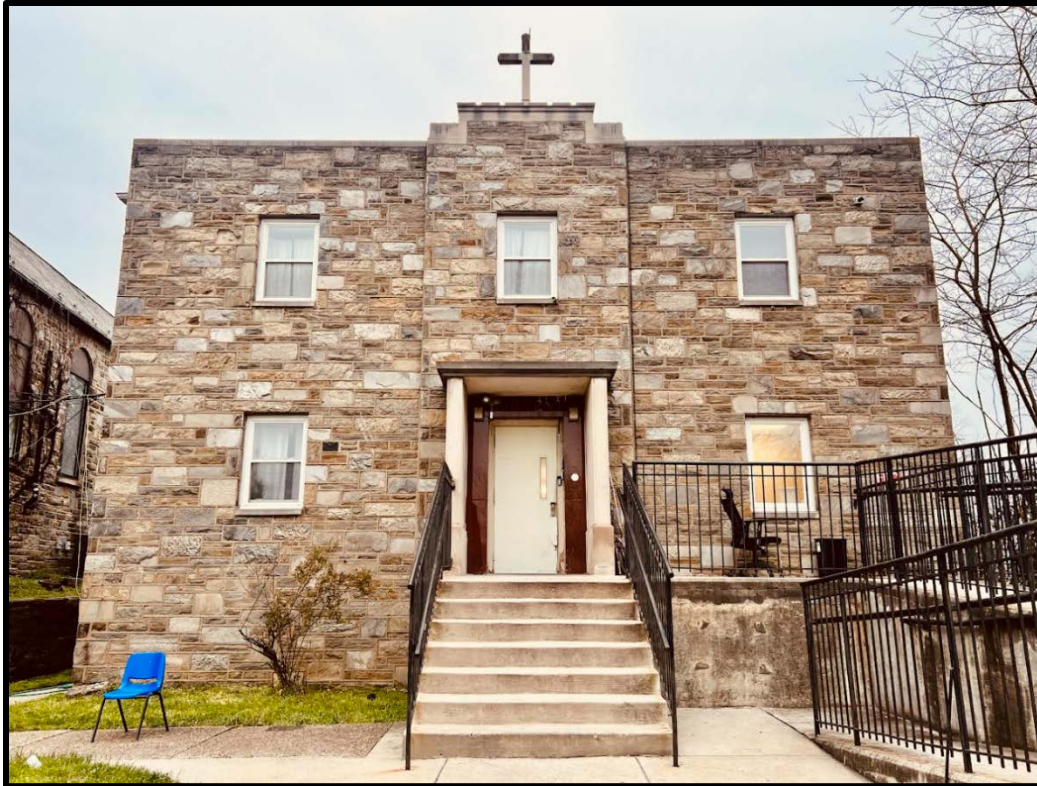


Figure 18. The primary (southwest) elevation of the Convent. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

THE CONVENT

Built in 1955-56, the Convent, designed in a Modernist style, is a two-story masonry building with a main block and a rear wing that stands at the lower part of the property at 4811 Germantown Avenue. The building is set back from the main street with a large lawn in front, which is an important feature of the site. Described below as a separate resource, the front lawn features a stone Grotto. The primary (southwest) elevation is a three-bay façade that is comprised of rusticated, square cut Wissahickon schist ashlar. The central bay projects slightly from the larger elevation, featuring a primary entrance with a single pedestrian door that appears to be a contemporary metal replacement. The entrance is shielded by a one-story porch comprised of Indiana limestone. The doorway itself is flanked and surrounded by panels of red granite, in which “Convent” is carved over the door. The second floor of the central bay features a single window with a one-over-one replacement unit. The primary entrance is accessed by concrete steps and a large wheelchair ramp that occupies a large portion of the southeasterly part of the front lawn. The central bay rises above the larger roof line by a few feet and is capped by limestone trim that terminates in a cross that signifies the building’s former religious affiliation. The central bay is flanked by continued elevations of Wissahickon schist with one window per floor. All of these windows appear to be one-over-one replacement units. At the south corner of the being is a cornerstone that bears the date of construction: “1955.” The main block features a flat roof, though a parapet is topped by what appears to be limestone coping along each elevation.

The side (northwest) elevation of the main block is also characterized by a façade of Wissahickon schist with approximately seven bays on the first, second, and basement floors. The basement fenestration features seven single, one-over-one replacement windows. Symmetrically placed above the basement windows, the first-floor fenestration aligns with the seven bays above and

below, though the second bay from the front is omitted. The first three openings on the first-floor feature two-part mullion windows with one-over-one replacement units. The last four openings on the first-floor feature single windows with one-over-one replacement units. Directly above the first floor windows, the second-floor fenestration features five two-part mullion windows and two single openings. The second window from the front features a small, single opening with a one-over-one replacement unit. The first window from the rear is also a small, single opening with a one-over-one replacement unit. The first, third, fourth, fifth, and seventh bays feature the two-part mullion windows with one-over-one replacement units. All the first and second floor windows are finished with limestone sills. The side (southeast) elevation of the main block is comprised of a similar fenestration.

The rear (northeast) elevation of the main block is largely occupied by the rear wing, though it is also characterized by a Wissahickon schist facade. The rear wing is a two-story masonry structure that appends the main block at the rear (northeast) elevation. The second floor is only half the depth of the first, the remaining square footage atop the first-floor roof being devoted to a covered porch. The entire rear wing is characterized by its Wissahickon schist construction. The side (northwest) elevation of the rear wing features an open side porch accessed by steps from a rear sidewalk. There is also an exterior basement staircase at this location. The side porch features a single pedestrian door with a replacement unit. This single-bay elevation defines the depth of the two-story portion of the rear wing, featuring a single one-over-one replacement window directly above the pedestrian door. To the northeast, along the side (northwest) elevation is an arched opening providing egress to a storage area. The rear (northeast) elevation of the one-story portion of the rear wing features a single pedestrian entrance to the storage area near the north corner of the structure. The fenestration also features two like-size single window openings with one-over-one replacement units. These two openings are defined by limestone architraves. The Wissahickon schist façade of the rear (northeast) and side (northwest and southeast) elevations of the rear wing rise above the first floor to form a balustrade for the covered porch. This is detailed with limestone coping. Within the rear (northeast) elevation the stone wall rises to form the base of another cross, again signifying the former religious affiliation of the building.



Figure 19. The "1956" cornerstone of the convent. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.



Figure 20. Top: The primary (southwest) elevation of the Convent. Figure 21. Middle: The primary (southwest) elevation of the Convent. Figure 22. Bottom: The primary (southwest) elevation of the Convent. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

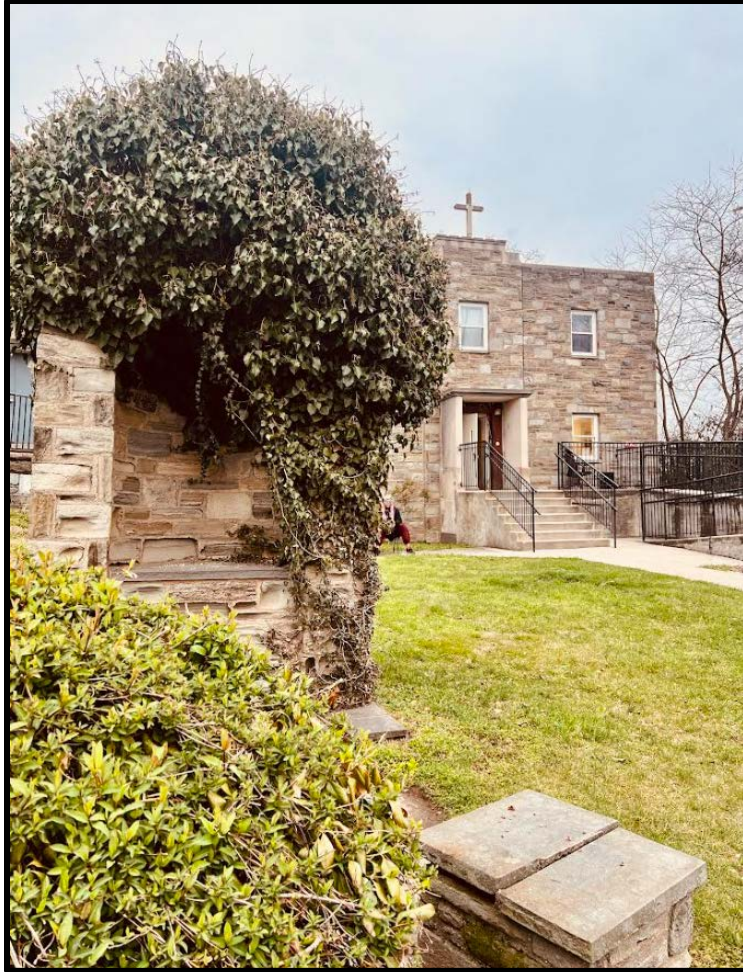


Figure 23. The Grotto with the primary (southwest) elevation of Convent in the background. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

GROTTO

Built in the 1950s, the Grotto of St. Michael of the Saints is small masonry structure that stands in the northerly section of the front yard of the Convent at 4811 Germantown Avenue (formerly 4809 Germantown Avenue). Stone piers, connected with iron fencing, provide a regal demarcation between the sidewalk and the ground that forms the front lawn of the Grotto. The Grotto is a small structure built of Wissahickon schist, built to house a niche for a figural religious statue. The niche is essentially an arched opening that emulates a cul-de-four. The statue has been removed from the niche. A stone bench is situated in front of the larger stone structure.



Figure 24. The Adamson Mansion at 5811 Germantown Avenue in October 1884 by Augustus Kollner. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia

6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former campus of St. Michael of the Saints Roman Catholic Church, which includes the former Adamson Mansion, comprise a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located in Lower Germantown, the property and its identified, contributing resources satisfy 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;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance for the Adamson Mansion as it relates to architectural style is limited to ca.1874-76. The period of significance for the Adamson Mansion as it relates to the Adamson family begins with their initial occupancy in ca.1874-76 through the family's occupancy, which extended to 1916. The period of significance for the Adamson Mansion as it relates to the Parish of St. Michael of the Saints Roman Catholic Church extends from 1924 to ca.1982. The period of significance for the other buildings is as follows: the Church from 1951-52 to ca.1982; the Convent from 1955-56; and the Grotto from the ca.1950s to ca.1982.



Figure 25. The former Lorain House, prior to 1863, occupied by William Adamson prior to its demolition. Source: Thomas H. Shoemaker Collection, HSP.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: THE ADAMSON PERIOD OF OWNERSHIP, 1863 - 1916

The story of the subject property, as it appears at the time of this nomination in 2023, took root in the mid-1860s, when William Adamson (1823-1879), a wealthy manufacturer and presbyterian benefactor, purchased two parcels that came to form the subject property from William C. Royal in March of 1863 and Gustavus G. Logan in February 1866.² At the time of the purchase, the subject property included a two-and-one-half-story stone house with a side-gable roof, which was situated at the west corner of the site immediately upon Germantown Avenue. The first in a row of five detached and semi-detached stone houses, the old dwelling was known historically as the Lorain House, which is said to have been erected shortly after the American Revolution. In fact, in 1777, the subject property was comprised of a 1.25-acre tract, which had been acquired by Samuel Biddis in 1768. While a house may have been present on the site at that time, local lore indicates that the earlier house was either expanded or replaced by what was later known as the Lorain House. After Samuel Biddis, the property was owned for a time by James Stokes, who sold the place to John Lorain on January 1, 1803 for \$4,000. Given the location of the building at the margin of the parcel, the landscape appears to have been largely devoid of structures, as was the parcel located just below along Germantown Avenue. Lorain and his eight daughters occupied the property as a dwelling site for many years. While some of his daughters married, at least two—the Misses Lorain—operated a school in the old Shoemaker Mansion on Germantown Avenue above present-day East Penn Street.

According to one written narrative entitled “Concerning Houses in Germantown,” the subject property and/or its environs was also associated with Native American, indigenous people, who passed through the neighborhood in the 1820s. Jacob Duy, who was a child of Germantown in that period, associated at least one Native American tribe with “Lorraine’s Place,” remembering

² Reg. Plan 54-N-B-18-A, City of Phila.; Deed: William C. Royal, et. un., to William Adamson, 23 March 1863, Philadelphia Deed Book A.C.H., No. 87, p. 442, CAP.; and Deed: Gustavus G. Logan, et. un., to William Adamson, 28 February 1866, Philadelphia Deed Book L.R.B., No. 162, p. 95.

“...then on the present open field south E. of this place [the Lorain House], Indians passing through the town used to sit down...” Duy recalled that the Native Americans would “...make huts & stay a whole year, making baskets...&...good fiddles...” He remembered that they “...shot squirrels & birds with bow & arrows...”³ Such scenes in the locality of Neglee’s Hill were also recalled in Watson’s Annals.⁴ After the death of John Lorain, the house was occupied by John Grigg, who is said to have remained in residence until the place was sold to William Adamson.

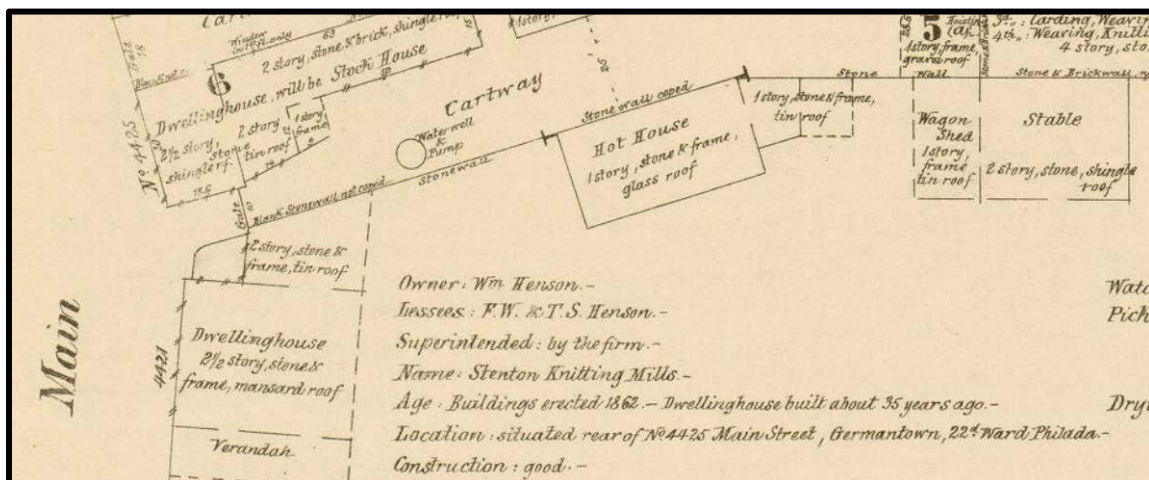


Figure 26. A detail of the “Stenton Mills” Hexamer General Survey of 1854, which depicts the upper portion of the subject property during the ownership of William Adamson. Source: “Stenton Mills,” Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 9, 1874. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Upon purchase, William Adamson, like many wealthy manufacturers before him, used the suburban dwelling like one would a country place, making alterations and additions to the Lorain House, which included enlarging the traditional side-gable roof with a full Mansard roof. The improvements also included a verandah at the southeast elevation. By 1874, the subject property featured a one-story frame and stone hot house; a one-story frame wagon shed; a two-story stone stable; a one-story frame chicken house; a two-story frame cow stable; and a large garden.⁵ After the publication of the 1874 *Hexamer General Survey* and before the 1876 *Hopkins Atlas*, William Adamson commissioned a large three-story stone mansion, known in this nomination as 1. Adamson Mansion, on the subject property. Unlike the Lorain House, the imposing Second Empire style mansion was set back from Germantown Avenue at the crest of Neglee’s Hill. The tower and the verandah were both on the south side of the building, offering the occupants great views of the Quaker City. The Adamson Mansion is one of the most important examples of the Second Empire style constructed along Germantown Avenue. The construction of the Adamson Mansion ultimately led to the demolition of the Lorain House, which occurred after the publication of the 1876 *Hopkins Atlas* and before the 1879 *Hexamer General Survey*. In fact, the 1879 survey shows a driveway where the Lorain House once stood. In addition to the new mansion, the site included a two-story stone and one-story frame stable and hay loft; a fenced poultry yard; a one-story frame

³ Concerning Houses in Germantown (handwritten document), William Parker Foulke Papers, 1840-1865, American Philosophical Society.

⁴ John Palmer Garber, Naaman Henry Keyser, C. Henry Kain, and Horace Ferdinand McCann. *History of Old Germantown*. (H.F. McCann, 1907), 154.

⁵ “Stenton Mills,” Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 9, Plate 767, 1874. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

carriage house; a one-story frame chickenhouse [sic.]; a two-story frame cow stable; and a new hot house.⁶ As part of the improvements, the Adamsons purchased a building or a portion of a building from the Centennial Exhibition grounds in West Philadelphia, and moved it to their property, where it was repurposed as a greenhouse.⁷ No doubt the landscape was revised somewhat when the new house was built; however, no records were available at the time of this nomination.



Figure 27. Left: The subject property as depicted in the 1871 Hopkins Atlas. Figure 28. Middle: The subject property as depicted in the 1876 Hopkins Atlas. Figure 29. Right: The subject property as depicted in the 1889 Bromley Atlas. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. Figure 30. Bottom: A detail of the “Stenton Mills,” Hexamer General Survey of 1879, which depicts the upper portion of the subject property after the Adamson Mansion was completed. Source: “Stenton Mills,” Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 15, Plate 1372, 1879, Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Just as William Adamson was settling in at his newly revised Germantown redout, he passed away suddenly while commuting to Philadelphia.⁸ He had moved to the subject property with his second wife, Eleanor Frances Prescott (1834-1916), who he married in 1861, two years after the death of his first wife, Elizabeth Harvey (1822-1859). His first marriage had produced at least four children, while his second led to an addition seven.⁹ All the Adamson children were raised at the subject

⁶ “Stenton Mills,” Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 15, Plate 1372, 1879. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

⁷ “The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Opening of the Centennial Exhibition,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 May 1901, 34.

⁸ “Obituary—William Adamson,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 June 1879, 2.

⁹ Adamson Family Tree, Ancestry.com.

property, and the family remained there long after William Adamson's death in 1879. In fact, the Adamsons were the only property owner to occupy the Adamson Mansion as a residence. After the death of William Adamson's second wife in 1916, the property remained vacant for roughly eight years, during which time it fell into disrepair.



Figure 31. The Adamson Mansion in the 1890s. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbook, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

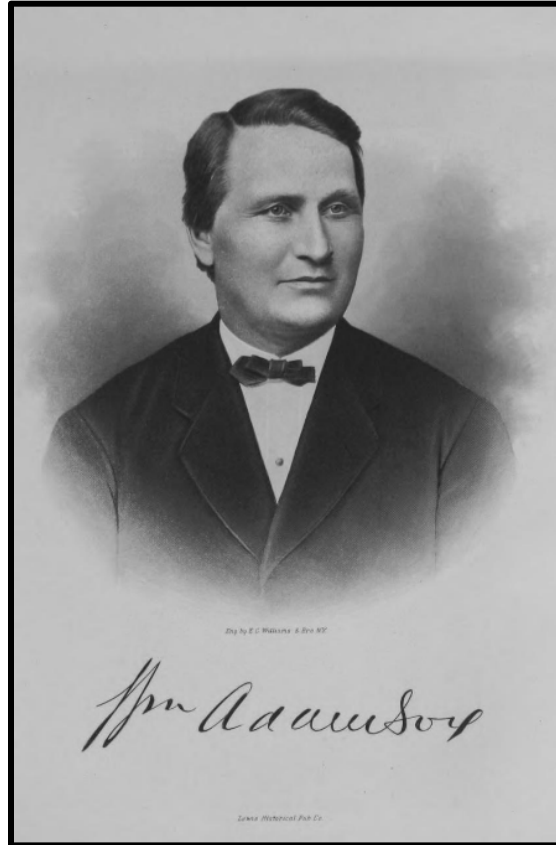


Figure 32. A portrait of William Adamson. Source: *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924).

CRITERIA A AND J

The Adamson Mansion is significant under Criteria A and J as the home of William Adamson, an important manufacturer and philanthropist in Germantown and the larger City of Philadelphia. Under Criterion A, the Adamson Mansion was built by and home to William Adamson, a person significant in the past. William Adamson, Eleanor Frances Prescott Adamson (1830-1916), his wife, and their large family occupied the house from the time of construction in ca.1874-76 to 1916. Under Criterion J, the Adamson Mansion was home to a family that made significant contributions to the cultural, economic, social and historical heritage of the Germantown community and the larger City of Philadelphia.

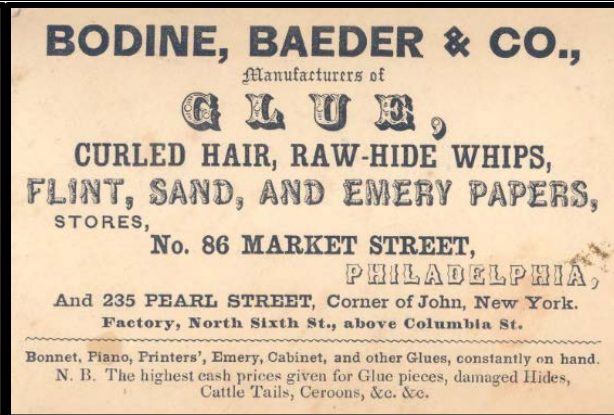
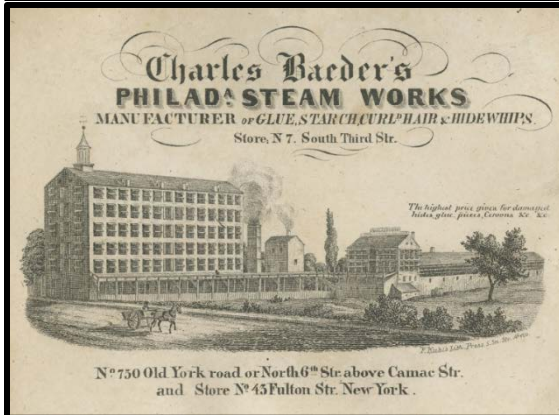


Figure 33. Top: Charles Baeders Glue Factory in 1843 by Augustus Kollner. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 34. Bottom left: Charles Baeder's Philadelphia Steam Works, Manufacturer of Glue, Starch, Curled Hair and Hide Whips, in ca.1844, around the time that William Adamson entered the business. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia. Figure 35. Bottom right: Bodine, Baeder & Co. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.

A native of the Quaker City, William Adamson was born on March 7, 1823, at Germantown to immigrant parents James Adamson, Sr. (1795-1870), from Dumfries, Scotland, and Sabena Baeder (1803-1888), from Wuerttemberg. At eight or nine years old, the ambitious lad entered the establishment of his uncle, Charles Baeder (1807-1886), then a manufacturer of “glue, curled hair, and raw-hid whips.”¹⁰ Baeder had started the business a few years earlier in 1828, being, like his sister, Sabena Baeder, of Germanic origin. After a few years, the Adamsons removed to New

¹⁰ “Obituary—William Adamson,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 June 1879, 2.; and “Charles Baeder,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 September 1886, 2.

Orleans, Louisiana, being “then in straitened circumstances,” where young William Adamson is said to have worked for a time in a cotton mill. With a feeling that he was “called to the ministry of the gospel,” he spent some years of his youth endeavoring to “prepare himself for the office and work of the Presbyterian clergyman.” In time, this “cherished project” was abandoned for business and trade, though Adamson’s zeal for the Presbyterian faith would continue to guide him throughout the entirety of his life. While in New Orleans, he also engaged in learning the printing business, another short-lived professional endeavor.

In 1839, William Adamson returned to Philadelphia, where he reentered the employ of his uncle, Charles Baeder, serving as a clerk for several years.¹¹ At that time, it appears that the company’s industrial complex was in the 1700 block of Old York Road (eventually known as North Sixth Street). Charles Baeder established several business partnerships over the years, including Baeder & Beuhler; and Bodine, Baeder, & Co.¹² In time, William Adamson was promoted to superintendent. Employing his keen business abilities and inventive powers, he substantially contributed to expanding the company and improving its products. In 1845, Charles Baeder entered into partnership with Charles Delaney and William Adamson to form Baeder, Delaney, & Adamson, at which time the firm engaged in the manufacture of “glue, curled hair, sand paper, and other commodities.”¹³ Ultimately this partnership would also be dissolved, leading to the partnership of Baeder & Adamson in ca.1860.¹⁴

From the time of his clerkship on to being a partner in the firm, William Adamson was responsible for roughly forty-nine inventions, “some very valuable and many intended for his own branch of the business, notably one affording peculiar facilities for the manufacture of sand-paper.”¹⁵ Ultimately, Baeder & Adamson would become one of the most successful firms in their line of business, expanding from Philadelphia to establish branch factories in Newark, New Jersey and Woburn, Massachusetts. The firm also opened branch stores in New York, Boston, and Chicago.¹⁶ As the business grew, the firm was again renamed, Baeder, Adamson & Co. The expansion of the business necessitated a new industrial plant, which was built in 1866 at Allegheny Avenue and Richmond Street in Port Richmond. By the time William Adamson died in 1879, the Riverside Glue Works was a massive facility, employing between 300 and 400 hands to manufacture “Glue, Curled Hair, Cowhide Whips, Flint and Sand Paper, and Emory Cloth,” contributing greatly to the economic heritage of the Port Richmond community and the City of Philadelphia.¹⁷

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924), 11.

¹² *Men of the Century*. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1896), 105.

¹³ *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924), 11.

¹⁴ “Obituary—William Adamson,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 June 1879, 2.

¹⁵ *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924), 11.

¹⁶ *Men of the Century*. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1896), 105.

¹⁷ “Baeder, Adamson & Co., Riverside Glue Works, 25th Ward, Philadelphia.” Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 15, Plate 1429-1430. Source: Greater Philadelphia Geohistory Network.

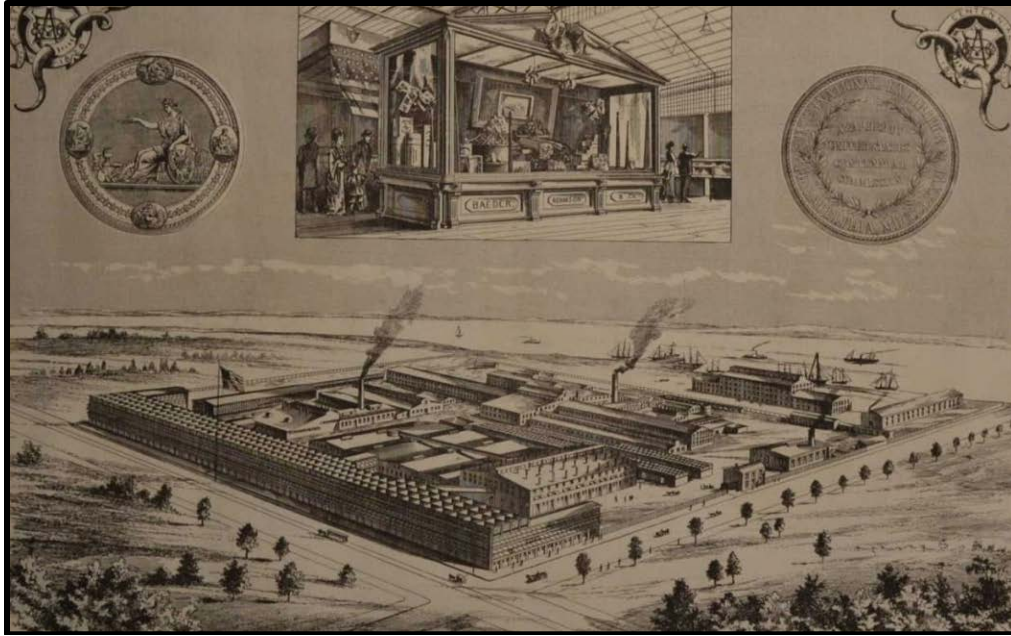


Figure 36. Baeder, Adamson & Co's Philadelphia Works and Centennial Display in 1876. Source: *The Daily Graphic*, 8 November 1876.

In addition to manufacturing, William Adamson was an important civic leader and philanthropist in Germantown. A “Ruling Elder” for many years, he was highly active in the First Presbyterian Church of Germantown and was involved in the erection of its present building on Cheltenham Avenue, just west of Germantown Avenue.¹⁸ William Adamson is credited as founding of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) of Germantown in 1871.¹⁹ When the First Presbyterian Church of Germantown removed to the said new building in W. Cheltenham Avenue, it was Adamson, then President of the Germantown YMCA, who secured their old building for the Germantown YMCA at 5021 Main Street with his own funds. The building was subsequently renovated to serve their purposes.²⁰ While the former First Presbyterian Church was eventually replaced with a new structure, the Germantown YMCA eventually moved to its last building in Greene Street opposite Vernon Park.

¹⁸ *Manual for the use of the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown.* (Philadelphia: 1872), 22.

¹⁹ Samuel Fitch Hotchkin. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill.* (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1889), 138.

²⁰ Samuel Fitch Hotchkin. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill.* (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1889), 138.

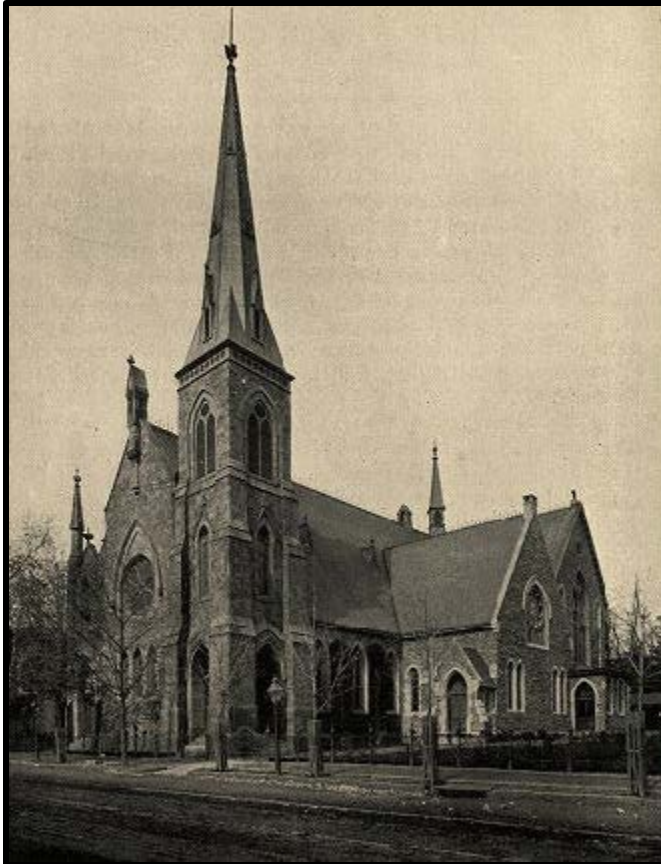


Figure 37. Top: The First Presbyterian Church of Germantown's earlier building on Germantown Avenue above Price Street, which was purchased by William Adamson for the Germantown YMCA in 1873. Source: Shoemaker Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Figure 38. Bottom: The First Presbyterian Church, W. Cheltenham Avenue, which William Adamson helped to build in the early 1870s. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

Along with Calvin Pardee, William Adamson was an ardent supporter and trustee of Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, endowing the Chair of Chemistry in the sum of \$30,000.²¹ He was also a Director of the Girard Bank of Philadelphia, as well as the Germantown Savings Fund.²²

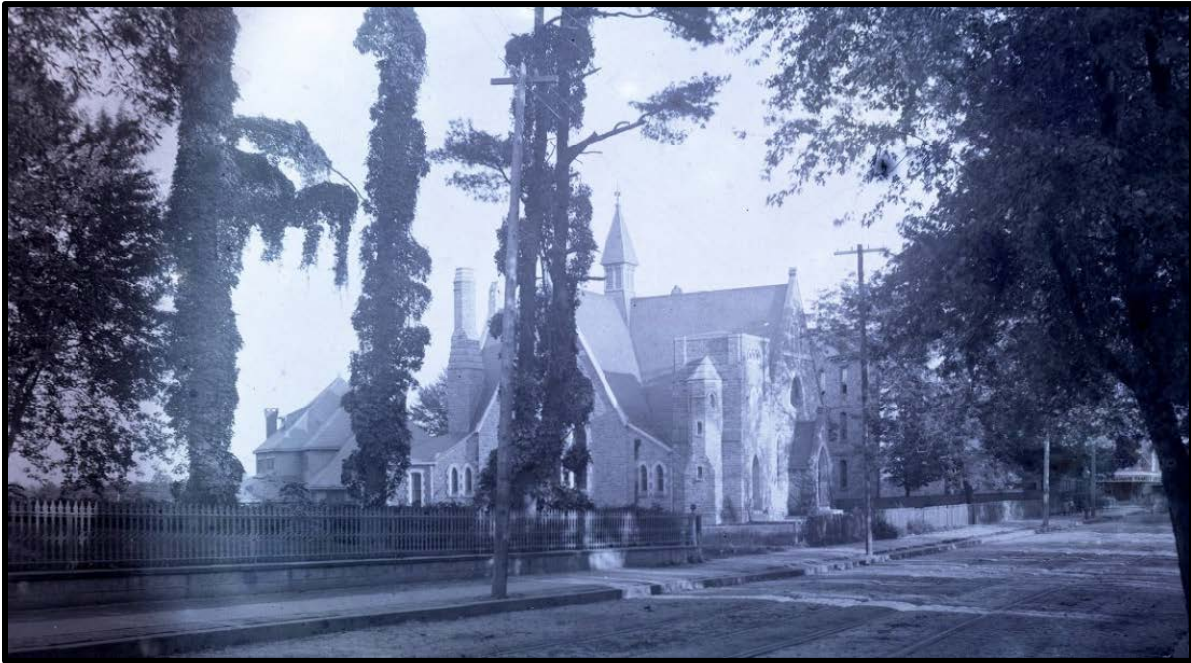


Figure 39. The Wakefield Presbyterian Church (demolished in 2012) with the iron fence of the Adamson Mansion on left in 1888. Source: Marriot Canby Morris Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia.

William Adamson was instrumental in the foundational history of the Wakefield Presbyterian Church, which began as a mission at the Wakefield Mills on Fisher's Lane (now East Logan Street). He became the second superintendent of that mission church on November 6, 1864.²³ After ten years, the mission officially became the Wakefield Presbyterian Church on May 4, 1874, at which time William Adamson was considered the founder.²⁴ He transferred his membership from the Second Presbyterian Church of Germantown to the newly formed congregation. William Adamson donated the land below the subject property on Germantown Avenue, where the Wakefield Presbyterian Church's permanent building was eventually erected. In fact, it was during his term as Chairman of the Executive Committee, that he led the effort to erect a frame chapel building on the new site.²⁵ In 1876, rather than erecting a new building, William Adamson purchased a frame structure from the Centennial Exhibition Company and moved it to the site for

²¹ *The Lafayette College Journal*, July 1879, 332.

²² Josiah Granville Leach. *The History of the Girard National Bank of Philadelphia, 1832-1902*. (J.B. Lippincott Co., 1902), 102.

²³ John Palmer Garber, Naaman Henry Keyser, C. Henry Kain, and Horace Ferdinand McCann. *History of Old Germantown*. (H.F. McCann, 1907), 153.

²⁴ Thomas Murphy. *The Presbytery of the Log College*. (1889), 413.

²⁵ *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City*. (Allen, Lane & Scott, 1895), 151.

use by the Wakefield Presbyterian Church. It was eventually employed as the Sunday School Infant Class.²⁶

After the death of William Adamson in 1879, his widow Eleanor F. Adamson, along with his other heirs, “fulfilled all his [William Adamson] promises” to the Wakefield Presbyterian Church, which included the said lot and \$6,000 towards the construction of a stone church. The cornerstone of the Wakefield Presbyterian Church (Demolished in 2012) was laid on September 11, 1880, and the building was dedicated debt free on September 17, 1882.²⁷ His widow and children would continue to be involved in the congregation for the remainder of their time at the subject property. Eleanor F. Adamson donated a large stained-glass window in honor of her husband, which was installed in the newly built church. She had been involved in the Wakefield Presbyterian Church since its time as a mission, when began operating the Sunday School. Mrs. Adamson was also instrumental in establishing the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Germantown, serving as an officer for many terms.²⁸ The Adamson children would also contribute to the various causes that had been important to their patriarch.

²⁶ Francis B. Reeves. *A Brief Historical Sketch of Wakefield Presbyterian Church and Sunday School*. (Germantown: 1910), 9.

²⁷ Francis B. Reeves. *A Brief Historical Sketch of Wakefield Presbyterian Church and Sunday School*. (Germantown: 1910).

²⁸ *Fourteenth Annual Report of The Women’s Christian Association of Germantown, Philadelphia*. (Germantown: The Guide Steam-Power Job Print, 1885).



Figure 40. Left: Adamson Mansion, October 1884, by Augustus Kollner. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.
 Figure 41. Right: The primary (southwest) elevation of the Adamson Mansion. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

CRITERION D

The Adamson Mansion, constructed between 1874 and 1876, embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Second Empire style. According to Virginia & Lee McAlester’s *A Field Guide To American Houses (McAlester Field Guide)*, the Second Empire style enjoyed widespread popularity in American architecture from 1855 to 1885, constituting a distinctive and significant aesthetic period in the Victorian era. In keeping with national trends, the style enjoyed widespread popularity in Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission Pennsylvania’s Architectural Field Guide (PHMC Field Guide) describes the “Second Empire/Mansard Style” as being popular between 1860 and 1900, which is 15 years longer than the national trend defined by the *McAlester Field Guide*. The *PHMC Field Guide* recognizes that the Second Empire style gained immense popularity in the 1860s and 1870s, as influenced by the “well-attended exhibitions in Paris in 1855 and 1867,” becoming a modern architectural movement rather than a revivalist style like so many others. The *PHMC Field Guide* identifies commercial, residential, and public/government as the common building categories to be constructed in the Second Empire style.²⁹

Despite the alterations and additions that have occurred over the past 150 years, the Adamson Mansion is still one of the finest examples of the Second Empire style on Germantown Avenue and in the larger Germantown neighborhood. The *PHMC Field Guide* lists the most “identifiable features” of the style, almost all of which were once attributes of the Adamson Mansion, many of which remain:

1. Mansard Roof

The main roof of the Adamson mansion retains a concave Mansard roof. There is also a section of the existing Mansard roof that appears to be straight. Historically, the tower featured its own convex Mansard roof.

2. Patterned shingle roof (removed)

²⁹ “Second Empire/Mansard Style,” Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide, accessed 24 April 2023. <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/second-empire.html>

Historically, the concave Mansard roof of the larger Adamson Mansion featured patterned slate.

3. Iron roof crest (removed)

Historically, both the concave and the convex Mansard roofs of the Adamson Mansion featured iron roof cresting that has since been removed.

4. Decorative window surrounds and dormers

The first and second floors of the Adamson Mansion feature decorative, granite window surrounds that features quoins. Additionally, the Mansard roof features several dormers, which include both pedimented and round-arch surrounds.

5. Eaves with brackets

The cornice of the Adamson Mansion features a row of large dentils or brackets.

6. One story porch (removed)

A one-story Italianate style porch formerly graced the side (southeast) elevation of the Adamson House; however, it was removed with the building was enlarged.

7. Tower

The Adamson Mansion features a grand, off-center tower that remains, but has lost its individual convex Mansard roof.

8. Quoins

The granite window surrounds of the Adamson Mansion, on the first and second floors, features quoins.

9. Balustrades (removed)

The oriel window on the primary (southwest) elevation of the Adamson Mansion featured a low balustrade that has since been removed.

The Adamson Mansion embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Second Empire style, satisfying Criterion D.



Figure 42. The Adamson Mansion in ca.1926 after the congregation purchased and renovated the Adamson Mansion. Source: *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: ST. MICHAEL OF THE SAINTS PARISH, 1924 - 1982

In 1924, Cardinal Dougherty, D.D., “gave his approval to purchase an old and abandoned looking building located at 4811 Germantown Avenue.” Rev. J.D. Nevin, Pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church at Logan and Greene Streets, had been lobbying the Archbishop “to provide for the spiritual welfare of the Italians” of South Germantown. As St. Francis of Assisi Church was an Irish Catholic Parish, it no doubt did not attract the substantial, nearby Italian Catholic community that was increasing in size as the neighborhood shifted from suburban to dense rowhouse development. As part of forming this new parish, Cardinal Dougherty placed the nascent establishment into the hands of the Most Holy Trinity Fathers. Once Cardinal Dougherty gave his ascent, one of the Trinity Fathers engaged a Mr. Di Renzi of Bristol, Pennsylvania to negotiate with the property owner. The price of \$45,000 was agreed upon and a \$5,000 deposit was accepted. Within a month, the newly formed parish had secured a \$40,000 loan from the United Security

Trust Company at Germantown Avenue and Wayne Junction. This bank also loaned the parish an additional \$12,000 for renovations, leaving a balance of \$57,000.³⁰



Figure 43. Left: Rev. E. C. Nusca, O. SS. T., Ph.D., Pastor. Figure 44. Right: Rev. V. B. Chicca, O. SS. T., Assistant Pastor. Source: *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

Soon after the property was secured, the new parish was named St. Michael of the Saints in honor of a Saint of the Holy Trinity Order.³¹ Rev. E.C. Nusca was appointed Pastor and Rev. V.B. Chicca was appointed Assistant Pastor. The official “Boundaries of the Parish” were for “All the Italians within the following territory:”

Beginning at Broad Street and Hunting Park Avenue, west on north side of Hunting Park Avenue to Wissahickon Avenue; thence, north on east side of Wissahickon Avenue to Midvale Avenue; thence northeast on south side of Midvale Avenue to Coulter Street, thence east, south side of Coulter Street to Belfield Avenue; thence southeast on the west side of Belfield Avenue to Broad Street; thence, south on the west side of Broad Street to Hunting Park Avenue.³²

The Holy Trinity Fathers took possession of the subject property on a Friday afternoon, November 19, 1924. Fathers Nusca and Chicca immediately began living in the Adamson Mansion; however, it “was in very bad condition.” The building was “not heated and water was leaking from the roof all over the house.” As the newly formed parish began to take shape, F. Durang, architect, was

³⁰ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, 1974). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

³¹ “New Italian Church Named,” Unknown Germantown Publication, 1925. Source: Clippings on St. Michaels of the Saints Roman Catholic Church, Germantown Historical Society.

³² *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

commissioned to “put down the plan of alteration.”³³ Under Durang’s direction, the work was completed by John Roman, contractor, in three months’ time.³⁴ The alterations included renovations and repairs to the building, as well as the installation of a chapel on the first floor of the Adamson Mansion.³⁵

After nearly 20 years, the parish underwent a major change in leadership from the Trinity Fathers to secular clergy. On June 21, 1943, Rev. Peter J. Cavalucci was appointed Pastor, and Rev. Benjamin J. Mattarazzo the Assistant Pastor. It was under Father Cavalucci that the parish and its facilities would grow exponentially. At the suggestion of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Chestnut Hill, Father Cavalucci took immediate steps to establish a parochial school for the parish, which was opened on September 1, 1944 with 118 children, ranging from the first to the sixth grades. The Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph were officially in charge of the school with Mother Francis Anita Joseph Leonore and Sister Miriam Edward on staff. The sisters lived nearby in a convent at 65 W. Logan Street. According to the parish history, “A new church, a new school, a new convent, and an addition to the rectory was built with in a period of six years.”³⁶



Figure 45. “At Ground-Breaking for New Church,” St. Michael of the Saints, Germantown, in January 1951. Source: *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 5 January 1951.

Between 1950 and 1952, the new church building, St. Michael of the Saints Church, was designed and constructed as the primary house of worship for the parish. Louis C. Gambone, Architect, was commissioned to complete the design. *The Catholic Standard and Times* reported the following on December 29, 1950:

³³ *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

³⁴ “At Ground-Breaking for New Church,” *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 5 January 1951.

³⁵ *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

³⁶ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., on the occasion of The Fiftieth Anniversary*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints, 1974).

The design trend of the church will be Romanesque treatment to obtain pleasant simplicity in architectural taste. Exterior construction will be a local building stone to match the present stone work enriched by having limestone trim around the front doors and windows.³⁷

Despite this announcement, it took nearly a year to break ground. In fact, the official ceremonies wouldn't take place until December 24, 1951, with various dignitaries present for the event.³⁸ Peter Roth of the Roth Construction Company was commissioned to construct the building.³⁹

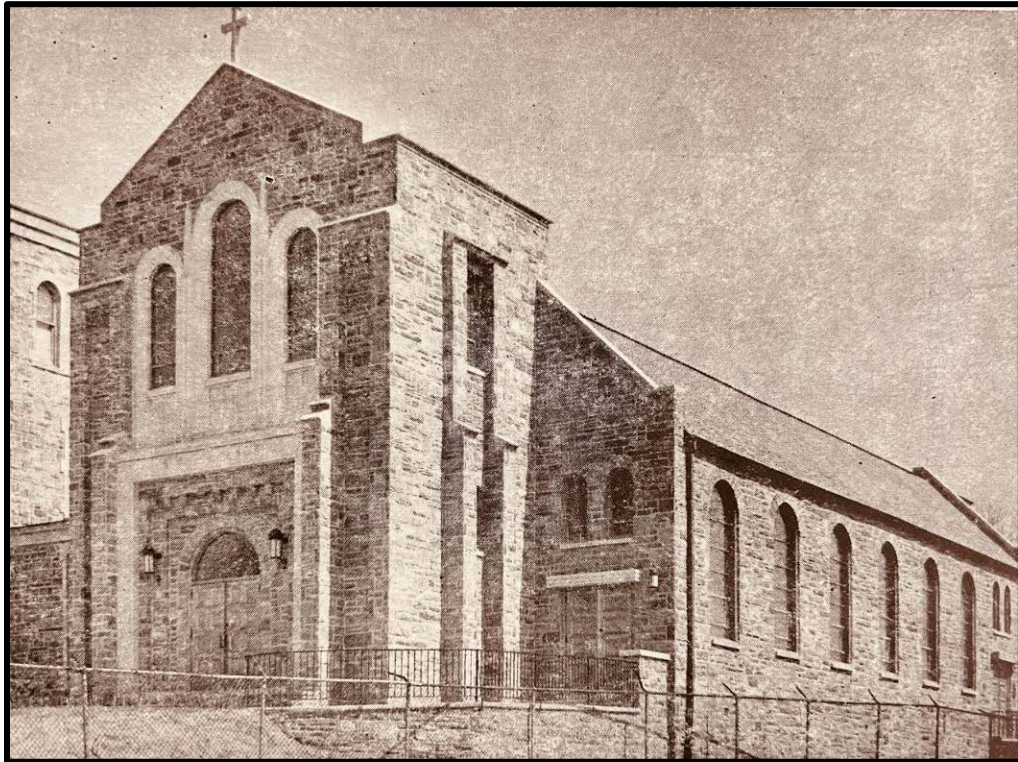


Figure 46. The newly built "Church of St. Michael of the Saints, Germantown" in May 1952. Source: "Blessing of New Church, Sunday," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 30 May 1952, 7.

Once completed, *The Catholic Standard and Times* described the new building as follows in May:

The design trend is a modification of the Romanesque type of architecture with the introduction of present-day taste. The church structure is 49 feet wide and 117 feet in depth. Local building stone is used for the exterior with trim and Indiana limestone. The roof is made of long-lasting Vermont slate. The interior design is one of very pleasant taste with very fine acoustical properties. The central portion over the nave is a high arch rising 30 feet from the nave floor level. The sanctuary ceiling is a quadrant of a sphere with a circular apse. In the church proper there is very little use of ornamental plaster and there are no columns to obstruct the view of the altar. The ceiling and roof are carried on a very economically designed

³⁷ "Ground Broken for New Church in Germantown," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 29 December 1950.

³⁸ "At Ground-Breaking for New Church," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 29 December 1950.

³⁹ "Ground Broken for New Church in Germantown," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 29 December 1950.

structural steel system which made it possible to obtain a great saving in this period of high construction costs. The side altars have been arranged to have a niche above for placing the statues of the Sacred Heart and of the Blessed Mother, while the statue of the patron saint of the church is located in a niche over the main altar. The main and side altars are made of Italian marble. The main seating capacity is 460 with provision for 40 additional seats in the choir loft.⁴⁰

The church building was perhaps the most important improvement made by the congregation, it being the first major new commission of several that would occur in the 1950s.



Figure 47. Top: "Ground-Breaking For New School in Germantown" in 1952. Source: *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 12 December 1952. Figure 48. Bottom: "New School For Germantown Parish" at the time it was officially blessed in September 1953. Source: *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 25 September 1953.

Between 1952 and 1953, a purpose-built parochial school, identified as 3. School, was erected. Louis C. Gambone was again commissioned to complete the design of the building, which featured a granite façade for the primary elevation and Wissahickon schist for the side and rear walls. The new building included eight classrooms, an office, and additional facilities. D.W. O'Dea and Son

⁴⁰ "Blessing of New Church, Sunday," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 30 May 1952, 7.

was commissioned to complete the construction.⁴¹ The groundbreaking took place in December 1952.⁴² At the time it was blessed, and the cornerstone installed by Most Rev. J. Carroll McCormick, D.D., the new building was described as follows:

The school is of ranch-type construction with eight classrooms and facilities on the ground floor level.

The classrooms have been arranged around the central entrance corridor and the connecting main school corridor, with vestibules and exit doors at each end of the main School corridor.

The classrooms have been arranged with continuous blackboards on the focal wall and the corridor wall over which has been placed cork chartboards, treated with a straight-line pattern over the rear school room walls which have a built-in wardrobe front with closets at either aide. All walls are painted in pastel shades.

The floors are of concrete over which has been placed asphalt tile of different patterns for the corridors and the classrooms.⁴³

The new school was the second in a series of new buildings constructed by the parish in the 1950s.

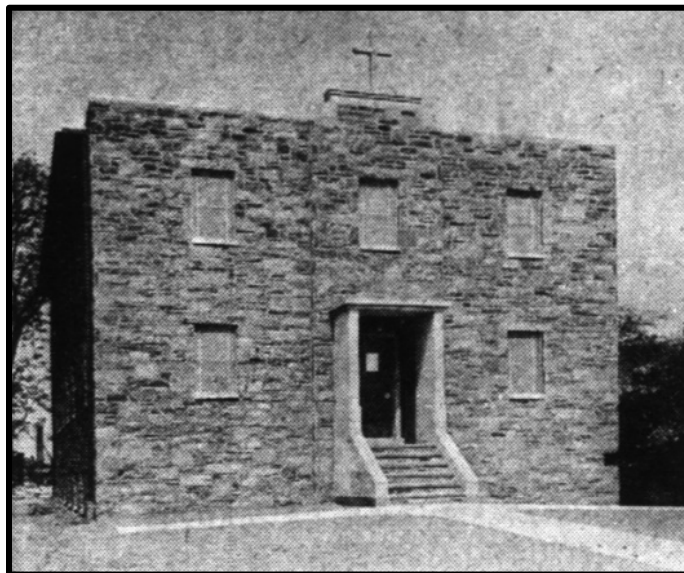


Figure 49. The newly built Convent of St. Michael of the Saints Roman Catholic Church, as it appeared in June 1956. Source: "Archbishop to Bless New Convent," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 8 June 1956.

In 1955-56, a purpose-built convent, identified as 5. Convent, was erected for the resident Sisters of St. Joseph. This design too was completed by Louis C. Gambone.⁴⁴ The Most Rev. John F. O'Hara, Archbishop of Philadelphia, "blessed the cornerstone and dedicated the new convent" on

⁴¹ "Ground-Breaking For New School in Germantown," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 12 December 1952.

⁴² "Ground-Breaking For New School in Germantown," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 12 December 1952.

⁴³ "St. Michael of Saints New School to be Blessed Sunday," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 25 September 1953.

⁴⁴ "New Convent for Gtn. Parish," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 4 August 1955.

June 17, 1956. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on Sunday, July 24, 1955. Construction was completed by Conway and Ryan.⁴⁵ According to *The Catholic Standard and Times*, "The two-story stone structure houses nine Sisters of St. Joseph." While "of contemporary architecture," "the building is of stone construction to match the stone work on the adjacent church structure." Naturally, the convent is constructed of Wissahickon schist. Additionally, the "main entrance of the convent" was treated with "red granite and Indiana limestone." The convent was finally completed and blessed by the Archbishop of Philadelphia in June 1956.⁴⁶

The mortgage on the property was satisfied and burned in June 1969. The parish school closed in 1974. The parish closed in ca.1982.⁴⁷



Figure 50. The Sacred Heart Sodality, an organization for female members of the parish, assembled in front of the Adamson Mansion in ca.1926. Source: *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, "St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia." Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

CRITERION J

Comprising a distinctive vista on Germantown Avenue, St. Michael of the Saints, including the Adamson Mansion, the Church, and the Convent, represents the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the historic Italian immigrant community of Lower Germantown, Nicetown, and the vicinity. Between 1890 and 1920, Philadelphia's Italian population increased dramatically from 10,023 to 136,793.⁴⁸ While the primary concentration was in South Philadelphia, the Upper Northwest, including Germantown and Chestnut Hill, was home to small, but distinctive Italian colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁹ In the late 1910s and early 1920s, a small Italian immigrant community took root, which ultimately led to the formation of the parish

⁴⁵ "Groundbreaking for Convent," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 19 August 1955.

⁴⁶ "Archbishop to Bless New Convent," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 8 June 1956.

⁴⁷ "History of the Parish," *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, 1974). Source: Parish file, "St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia." Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

⁴⁸ Donna J. Di Giacomo. *Italians of Philadelphia*. (Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 76-77.

⁴⁹ Joan L. Saverino, "Italians of Northwest Philadelphia: Remembering a Community's Past," *Germantown Crier*, Vol. 50:2 (Fall 2000): 44-70.

that came to be known as St. Michael of the Saints. According to Norman Giorno-Calpristi, local historian, this settlement was comprised of Italian immigrants from Reggio, the southernmost region of Calabria, specifically from the provinces of Friuli-Venezia, Salerno and Avellino; though additional research would be required to determine the origin of the larger parish population.⁵⁰ Like so many other immigrants, Italians settled in the area in search of economic prosperity, which realized through the formation of a community. As part of that, St. Michael of the Saints became the primary cultural and social touchstone for their parishioners, representing historical heritage of the community.



Figure 51. Top: The Holy Name Society of St. Michael of the Saints in front of the southeast elevation of the Adamson Mansion in ca.1926. Figure 52. Bottom: The Pages of the Blessed Sacrament of St. Michael of the Saints in front of the primary (southwest) elevation of the Adamson Mansion. Source: *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

In early November 1922, Marie McGovern, an Irish Catholic living at 4923 Germantown Avenue and attending St. Francis of Assissi Parish, keenly observed that more than 150 Italian families were living near her in Lower Germantown. She noted that these wayward Catholics had no nearby church to attend, which led her to boldly write a letter to Cardinal Dougherty on the matter. Ms. McGovern noted that “a woman living write [right] in the very same house” as her was successfully

⁵⁰ Donna J. Di Giacomo. *Italians of Philadelphia*. (Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 76-77.

recruiting the said Italians to attend “a Gospel Mission...on Germantown Ave.” She implored Cardinal Dougherty to establish an “Italian Catholic Church & School.”⁵¹ Soon after the letter was received his Eminence consulted her priest, Rev. Jeremiah Nevin, Rector, Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Germantown, who agreed with his parishioner that a “New Italian Parish” was needed at Germantown. The consultors of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia resolved “that a separate and independent Italian parish” be established in Lower Germantown.⁵² Around the same time, “New Italian Parish” communities were also established in both West Philadelphia and Minersville, Pennsylvania.⁵³ After the Adamson Mansion was purchased, the parish commissioned renovations that led to the employment of the building for all purposes, including as a chapel and rectory from 1924 and 1952, and afterwards as a rectory.

By 1926, the *Souvenir of St. Michaels of the Saints*, featuring advertisements of the parishioners, illustrates that the parish was the cultural and social center of an established Italian community. Under the leadership of the Most Holy Trinity Fathers, the community founded and participated in the following organizations: the Holy Name Society; the Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality; the Pages of the Blessed Sacrament; the Sacred Heart Sodality; etc. These organizations were dedicated to religious and community service mission. Within the neighborhood, there were an impressive number of businesses owned and operated by members of the parish. The D’Ambrosio Bros. operated a perfumery at 165 West Seymour Street. Guerra and Scarpello operated a real estate firm at 5043 Wayne Avenue, working in “conveyancing and mortgages.” Construction firms included L. Lombardi & Bros. at Wakefield and Wister Streets; Razzano & Guarinello, Inc. at 4914 Keyser Street; Michael Venditti at 185 W. Logan Street; Julio DiPasquale at 4931 Wayne Avenue; etc. Alexander Buono operated a painting establishment at 179 W. Logan Street. Several local Italians were cement contractors, including Louis C. Bria at 223 E. Ashmead St. and Michael Malagieri at 28 E. Ashmead Street. E. Palo & Sons conducted a business for “Grading and Howling,” as well as “Cellar Digging.” Several parishioners operated grocery stores in the area, including A. Colella at 2925 Wakefield Street and Enrico Mariotti at 315 E. Collom Street. P. Solla operated a hardware store at 4369 Wayne Avenue. Tailoring establishments in the neighborhood included D. Pistoria at 4841 Germantown Avenue, and Joseph D’Ambrosio at 4564 Wayne Avenue. There were also several Italian barbers in the neighborhood, including Nick Loggia at 5220 Wakefield Street; Ralph A. Siani at 5009 Wayne Avenue; and Antonio Cataldi at 4367 Wayne Avenue.⁵⁴ Parishioners without their own business concern appear to have been employed as masons and/or generally in construction, as well as in the nearby factories at Wayne Junction.⁵⁵

As previously discussed, the Most Holy Trinity Fathers were relieved of their obligations to parish in 1943, when Father Cavallucci was appointed Pastor of St. Michael of the Saints. His

⁵¹ Letter: Marie McGovern to Cardinal Dougherty, 6 November 1922. Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia

⁵² Consultors Minute Book, January 1922 to June 1924, Chancery of Philadelphia, 63. Source: Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia

⁵³ Consultors Minute Book, September 1924 to September 1926, Chancery of Philadelphia, 6-7. Source: Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia

⁵⁴ *Souvenir of St. Michael of the Saints Church*. (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, July 1926). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

⁵⁵ Donna J. Di Giacomo. *Italians of Philadelphia*. (Arcadia Publishing, 2007).

appointment marked a major turning point in the progress of the parish, as he was their champion for the dramatic improvements that would soon be underway.⁵⁶



Figure 53. A presentation of an award to St. Michael of the Saints Vocational School on July 28, 1944. The photograph captures Rev. Peter J. Cavallucci, Abram Orlow, and Daniel Goffredo, a pupil of the Religious Vacation School. Source: *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia 44, Pa. on the occasion of The Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of this Parish and The Dedication of our Parochial School.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, October 1944). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

On the twentieth anniversary, the *Souvenir and Program of St. Michaels of the Saints* (1924-1944), illustrated that an Italian community continued to grow in the neighborhood, further exhibiting that the parish was its cultural and social center. An “Honor Roll” was published in the pamphlet, recognizing those parishioners that had served in World War II. One really important epoch occurred when the parish established a parochial school on September 1, 1944, which began in a small, one-story masonry building (no longer extant) to the north of the Adamson Mansion. The Sisters of St. Joseph administered the school and lived nearby at their newly acquired convent at 65 W. Logan Street.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., on the occasion of The Fiftieth Anniversary.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints, 1974).

⁵⁷ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia 44, Pa. on the occasion of The Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of this Parish and The Dedication of our Parochial School.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, October 1944). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.



Figure 54. St. Michael of the Saints Parochial School in ca.1944 with the Sisters of St. Joseph in attendance. Source: *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia 44, Pa. on the occasion of The Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of this Parish and The Dedication of our Parochial School.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, October 1944). Source: Parish file, "St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia." Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

Between 1926 and 1944, additional organizations had also been ignited within the parish, including the Societa del Sacro Cuore di Gesu; and the Children of Mary. Outside the church, the local Italian American Balbo Boccista Club was located at 268 E. Ashmead Street, along with the Young Italo American Democratic Club of East Germantown at 5549 Devon Street. The local Italian business community continued to flourish, serving the neighborhood in a variety of ways. Angelo Guerra continued to offer services in "Real Estate and Insurance" at 2958 N. 22nd Street. The Superior Bakery, owned by John Nigro, was established at 161 W. Logan Street. Italian contractors continued to work in the neighborhood, including the D'Angelo Bros., Inc., at 266 E. Queen Lane, a firm still well-known in Philadelphia today; Jerry Vassallo at 5034 Wayne Avenue; Felix Cantono & Bro. at 1720 W. Cayuga Street; Anthony Razzano and Son at 177 W. Logan Street; etc. A relative of the D'Angelo Bros., Tony D'Angelo & Son, "General Blacksmith Work," was located at 4917-19 Wayne Avenue. Michael Venditti, a stone mason, was at 5031 Wayne Avenue. The J. La Rocca Coal Company was located at 20th and Logan Streets, Fisher's Station. C.A. Garofano operated the California Fruit Market at 4330 Germantown Avenue. Various markets served the parish, including Paul Dobija's meat market at 1827 W. Cayuga Street; Fiore Abbamondi's Modern Fruit Market at 5141 Germantown Avenue; and C. Santo's grocery store at 1601 West Hunting Park Avenue. Other grocers included Alfred Zeccardi at 149 Hansberry Street; and Fasano's Market at 4907 Wayne Avenue. D. Pistoria, "Tailors, Furriers, Cleaners, Dyers," continued the business at 4841 Germantown Avenue. Nick Giordano, the "Wayne Junction

Tailor,” operated at 4439 Germantown Avenue. The Northeast Shoe Repairing Co., owned by Patsy Intreieri, operated at 5056 Germantown Avenue.⁵⁸ The presence of so many Italian businesses in the neighborhood, owned by many of the parishioners, illustrates the sense of community that once existed.

In the 1950s, the parish expanded its campus exponentially, which included the construction of the Church, School, and Convent. The Adamson Mansion, the Church, and the Convent were united in an historic vista along Germantown Avenue. In fact, the people of the parish were very proud of the employment of native Wissahickon schist in the improvements. The following was stated in the “History of the Parish” in 1974:

These buildings were built of stone which is more costly than brick. Five Hundred Thousand Dollars were spent for the honor and glory of God.⁵⁹

The Church was used for worship from the time of its construction in 1951-52 until ca.1982 when the parish closed. The Convent was built to house the Sisters of St. Joseph, who administered the parish’s parochial school, from the time of its construction in 1955-56 until ca.1982.⁶⁰ In the spirit of the parish itself, all of the new buildings were designed by Louis C. Gambone, an architect of Italian heritage.

The new buildings were also completed in a period where progressive leadership, shown by Father Cavallucci, established a “credit union in the parish.” On December 16, 1955, the Rosary Federal Credit Union was granted a chartered. In time, more than \$120,000 in loans were given, largely for the purpose of enabling home ownership among parishioners in the neighborhood. This made the subject property a true economic center for the parishioners, which also speaks to the historical heritage of the community.⁶¹

The *Souvenir Program Book, Fortieth Anniversary of the Founding of St. Michael of The Saints Parish* (1964) demonstrates that the subject property continued to serve as the cultural and social center of the Italian community within the parish boundaries. Angelo Guerra was still a realtor at 2958 N. 22nd Street. Contractors D’Angelo Bros., Inc. continued their successful business, then located at 68 E. Bringham Street, as did Tony D’Angelo & Son in their blacksmith shop on Wayne Avenue. Anthony V. Coppola provided local “Plumbing and Heating” services at 4643 N. Sydenham Street, and E.T. Cammarota also had a similar business at 4935-37 Germantown Avenue. Other building contractors included S. Primus, who specialized in “Custom Cabinets,” at 112 W. Wyneva Street; Felix Maier, Jr., carpenter and cabinet maker, at 120 W. Seymour Street; Carmen R. Garoppo, a paperhanger, was listed at 175 Wyneva Street; and John Barba, contractor, at 75 E. Logan Street. D’Angelo’s Auto Services operated at 4800 Germantown Avenue. Scrap

⁵⁸ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia 44, Pa. on the occasion of The Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of this Parish and The Dedication of our Parochial School.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints Church, October 1944). Source: Parish file, “St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia.” Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.

⁵⁹ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., on the occasion of The Fiftieth Anniversary.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints, 1974).

⁶⁰ “Archbishop to Bless New Convent,” *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 8 June 1956.

⁶¹ *Souvenir and Program Book of St. Michael of the Saints Church, 4811 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., on the occasion of The Fiftieth Anniversary.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints, 1974).

Iron was the business of A. Pero Sons at 215 E. Collom Street. R. De Masi operated a wholesale candy company at 5143 Wakefield Street. Alfred J. Scarpello operated an apothecary at 4939 Germantown Avenue. The Louis Pharmacy, operated by Louis L. Cetrullo, B.Sc. was at 5054 Wayne Avenue. Grocery Stores were locally owned by C. Santo at 1601 W. Hunting Park Avenue; Anges Palo, specializing in fruits and vegetables, at 4913 Wayne Avenue; Fasano's Market, "Sea Food," at 4907 Wayne Avenue; etc. Nicoletti's Variety Store served the community at Wister and Wakefield Streets. The Scalea Italian Bakery served the neighborhood at 5161 Wakefield Street. Frank Goffredo's "Shoe Repair Service" was at 4941 Germantown Avenue. Italian barbers also still served the larger community with Ralph A. Siani, Jr. at 5009 Wayne Avenue, specializing in "Children's Hair Cutting;" Almerico Abbamondi, "A Well-Known Barber," at 4424 Germantown Avenue.; etc. Anthony Foglietta offered musical instruction at 417 E. Wister Street.⁶² The continued presence of so many Italian businesses in the neighborhood, again owned by many of the parishioners, illustrates the ongoing sense of community that was once fostered by the parish.

While the parish would ultimately close in ca.1982, St. Michael of the Saints, including the aforementioned buildings, represents the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the Italian Catholic community that spanned Lower Germantown, Nicetown, and vicinity.

⁶² *Souvenir Program Book, Fortieth Anniversary of the Founding of St. Michael of The Saints Parish.* (Philadelphia: St. Michael of the Saints, October 1964). Source: Parish file, "St. Michael of the Saints, Philadelphia." Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.



Figure 55. Top: Looking northeast at the former St. Michael of the Saints R.C. Church, including the Adamson Mansion, the Church, and the Convent. Figure 56. Bottom: Looking north at a similar view. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2023.

CRITERION H

The former St. Michael of the Saints R.C. Church, including the Adamson Mansion, the Church, and the Convent, built between ca.1874-76 and 1956, comprises an established and familiar visual feature of Lower Germantown and the larger Germantown neighborhood. Set upon an eminence known historically as Neglee’s Hill, the subject property is uniquely placed to serve as a visual landmark in the community. Furthermore, the site includes its placement along Germantown Avenue, which is one of the oldest and most historic roads in Philadelphia. Not only is this property elevated by its unique location, all three of the buildings are set back from the street in a purposeful alignment, which speaks to the suburban and rural heritage of the subject site, as well as Germantown Avenue, long before the property was fully developed. All these features, being related to location and setting, add to the site’s attributes as a visual landmark in the neighborhood. While the three buildings differ greatly in style, evidence demonstrates that the continued employment of Wissahickon schist as the primary building material was purposeful and integral to the development of the site over a 100-year period. All these factors demonstrate that the subject property satisfies Criterion H.

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This nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian, Kelly Wiles, Architectural Historian. A special word of thanks to Celeste Morello, Historian, for generously providing research materials and contextual information.

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Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

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