

**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: 401 N Salford St

Postal code: 19151

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Wilt Chamberlain Childhood Home

Current/Common Name: _____

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: Residential

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): from 1939 to 1963

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1898

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: _____

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Daniel Main, Thomas Marshall

Original owner: Caroline C. Oberlies

Other significant persons: Wilton N. Chamberlain

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 Philadelphia Historical Commission Date June 15, 2023

Name with Title Jon Farnham, executive director Email Jon.farnham@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor Telephone 215-686-7660

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19102

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: June 15, 2023

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: June 15, 2023

Date of Notice Issuance: June 15, 2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Latiechrie White

Address: 401 N. Salford St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19151

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

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

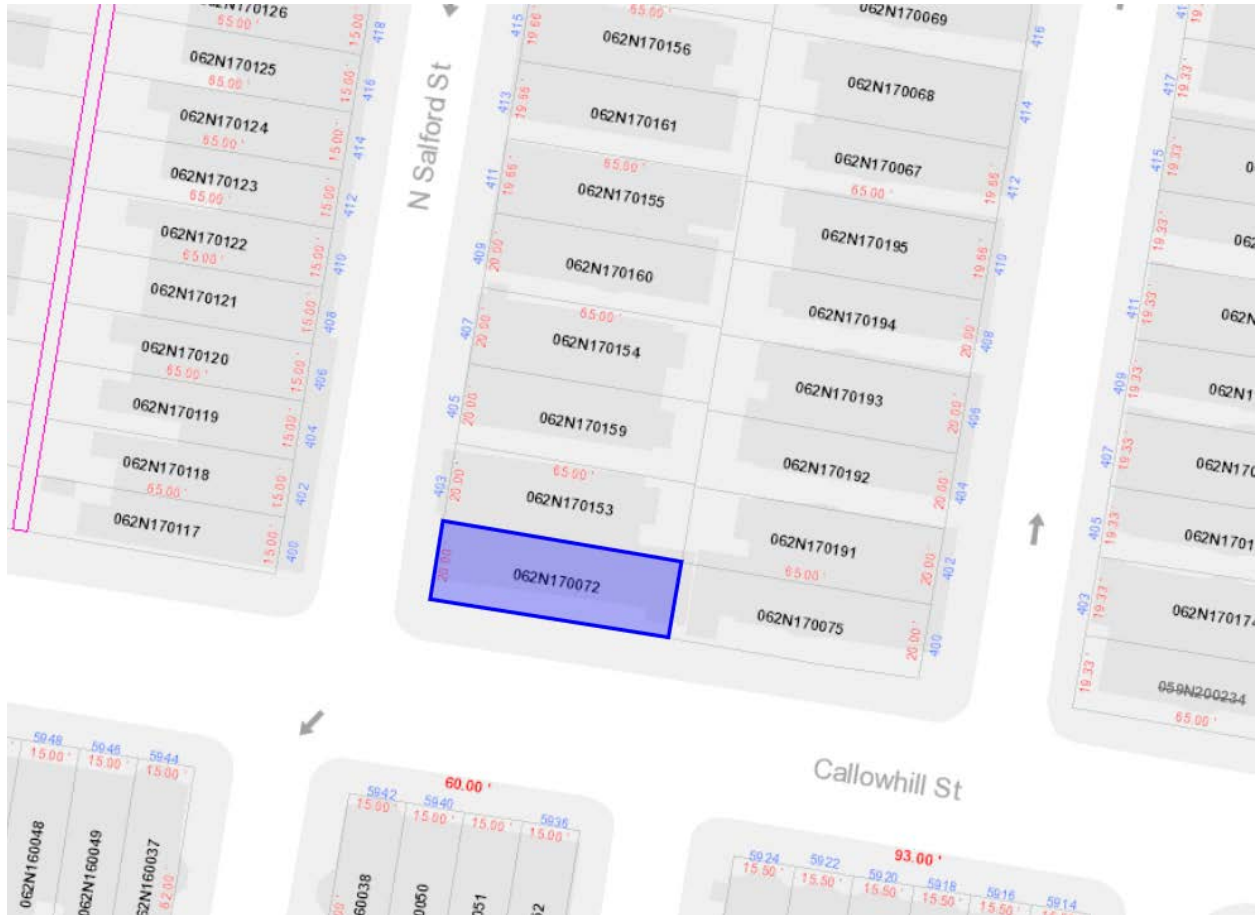


Figure 1. A parcel map with the parcel at 401 N. Salford Street highlighted. Source: Atlas.

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE at the Northeast corner of Salford Street and Callowhill Street in the 4th Ward of the City of Philadelphia CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said Salford Street Twenty feet and extending of that width in length or depth Eastward between parallel lines and along the North side of said Callowhill Street Sixty-five feet BEING the house number 401 North Salford Street.

Parcel: 062-N17-0072
OPA Account: 042258400

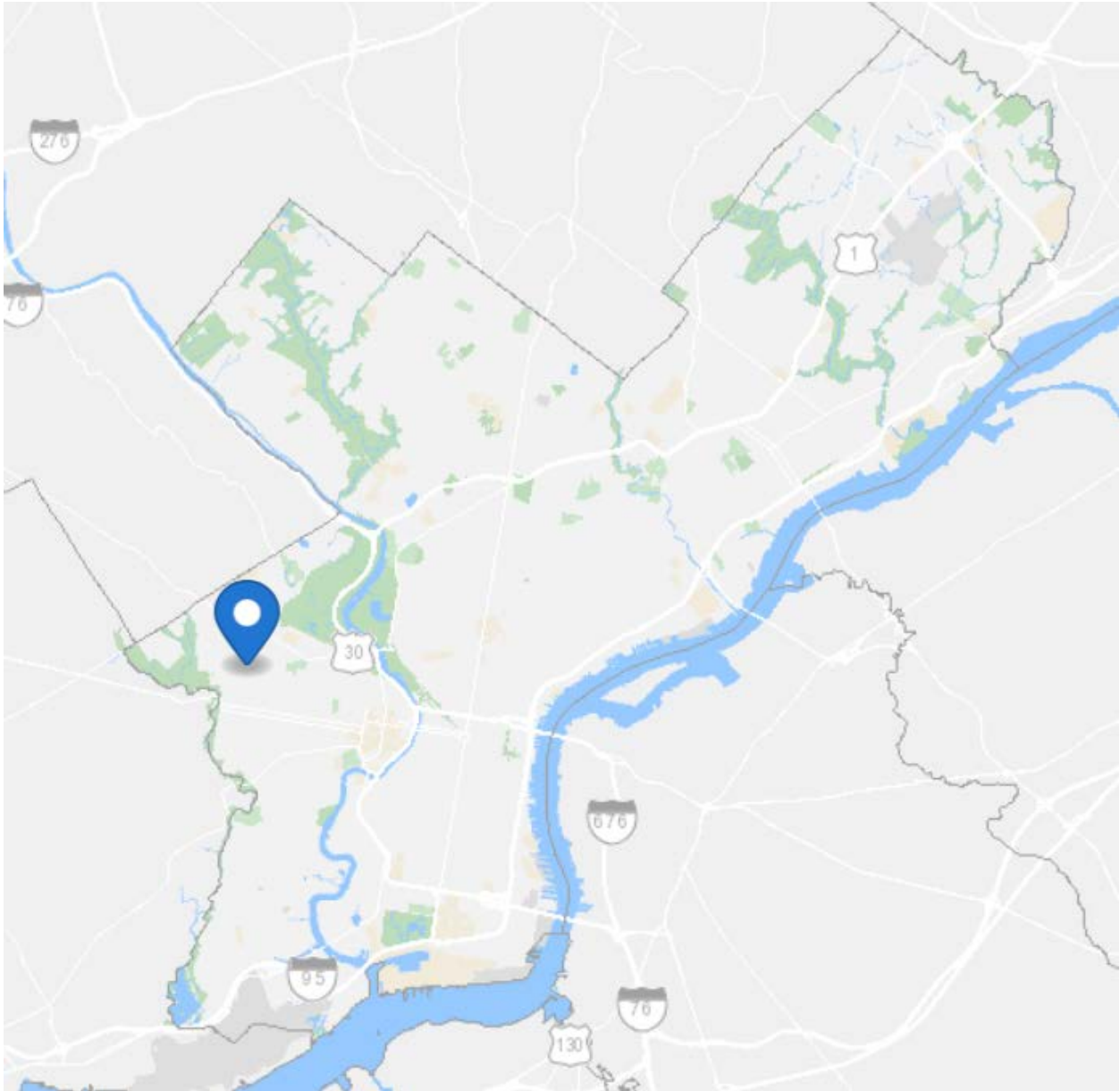


Figure 2. The location of 401 N. Salford Street in the City of Philadelphia. Source: Atlas.

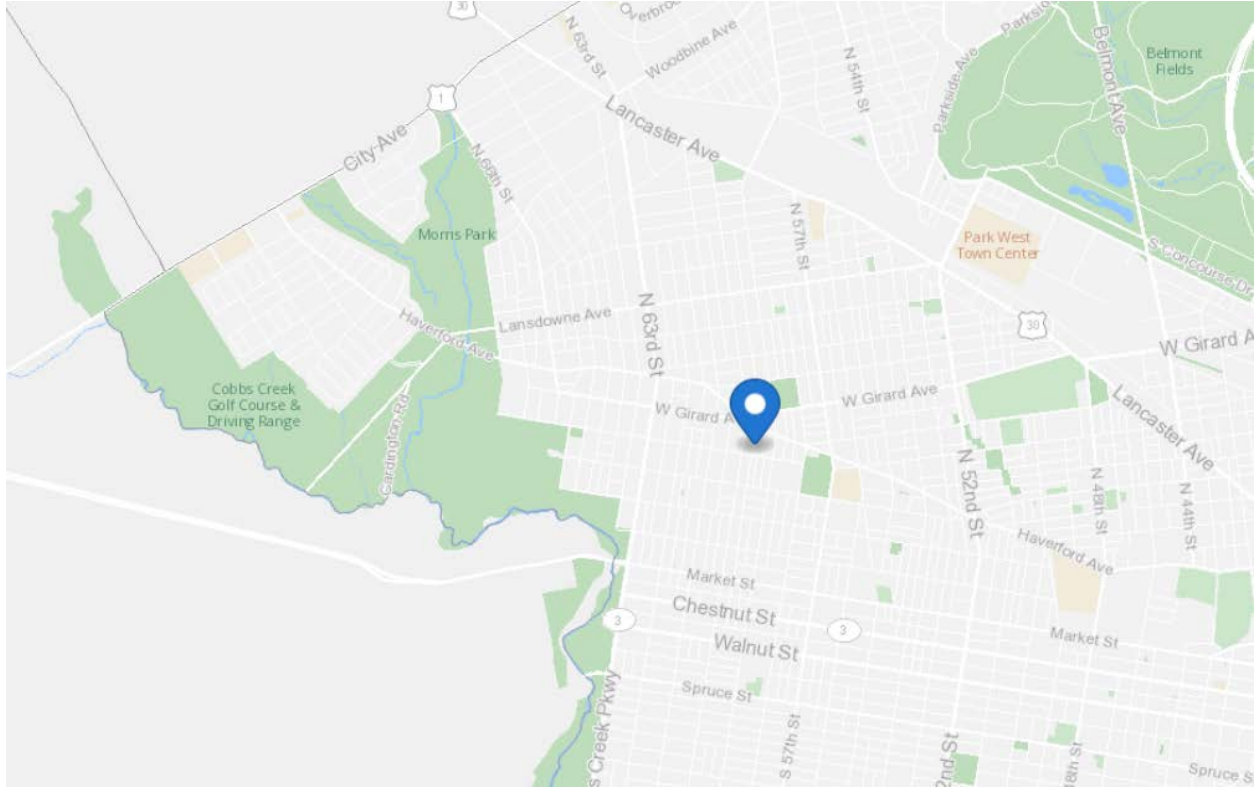


Figure 3. The location of 401 N. Salford Street in the Haddington neighborhood of West Philadelphia. Source: Atlas.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



Figure 4. View of the rowhouse at 401 N. Salford Street (on right) looking northeast, December 27, 2022. Source: Cyclomedia.



Figure 5. View of the rowhouse at 401 N. Salford Street looking north, December 27, 2022. Source: Cyclomedia.

The property at 401 N. Salford Street is located at the northeast corner of N. Salford Street and Callowhill Street in the Haddington neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The blocks around the property are lined with dense rows of two-story houses, rowhouses and twins, punctuated by larger institutional buildings, primarily houses of worship and schools.

The twin, semi-detached house at 401 N. Salford Street is a two-story, corner structure that is clad in brick. It faces Salford Street and is coupled with a mirroring house to the north. The house has a projecting, open, one-story front porch. The front façade is topped with a cornice with a small pediment above. It has a nearly flat roof that is slightly pitched to the rear. A shallow, frame bay that is clad in siding projects off the rear. A one-story garage opening onto Callowhill Street stands at the rear of the property. The front façade is two registers wide with the main entrance and arched window openings. The side façade includes arched window openings and a two-story, three-sided bay window. The rear projection has a door at the first floor and a bay window at the second floor. The first-story brick and the trim are painted a dark green color.

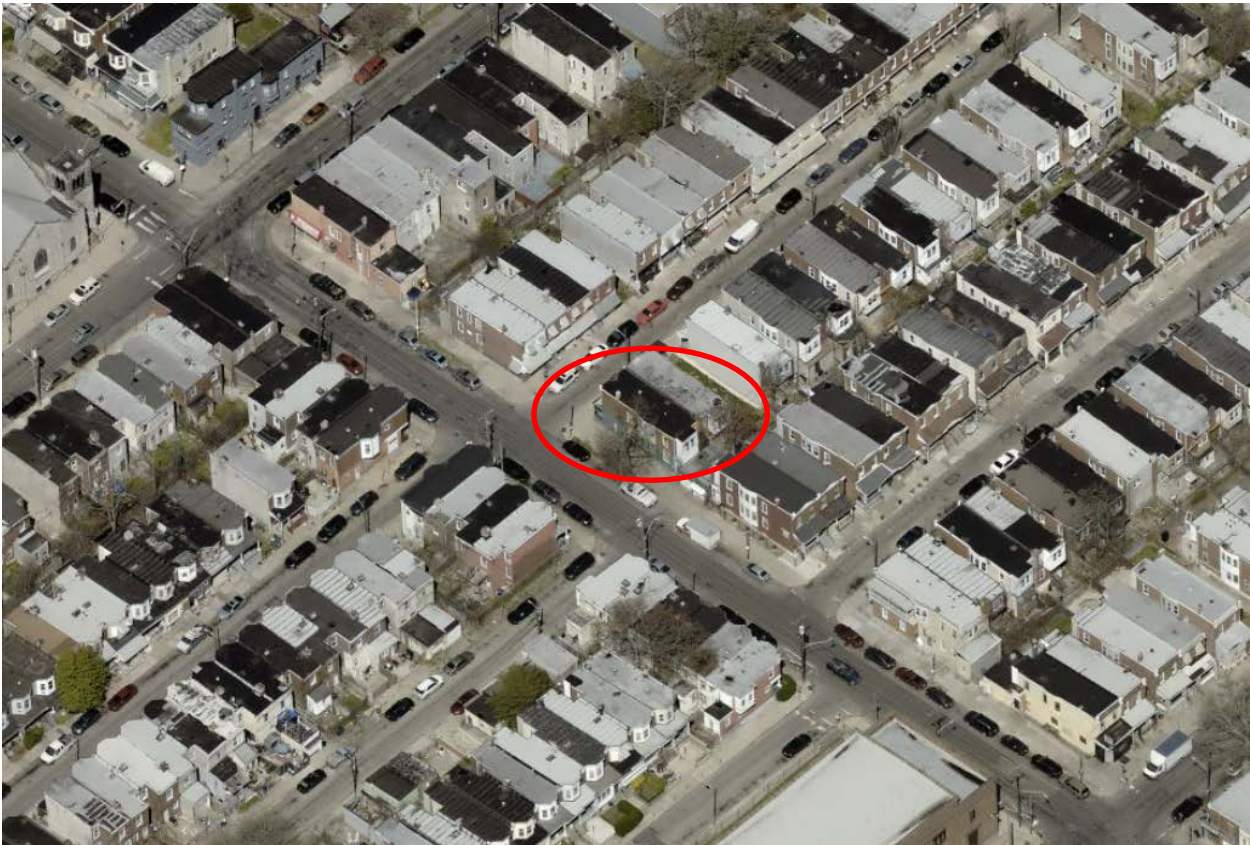


Figure 6. Aerial view of 401 N. Salford Street and surrounding neighborhood looking north-northwest, April 6, 2020. Source: Pictometry.

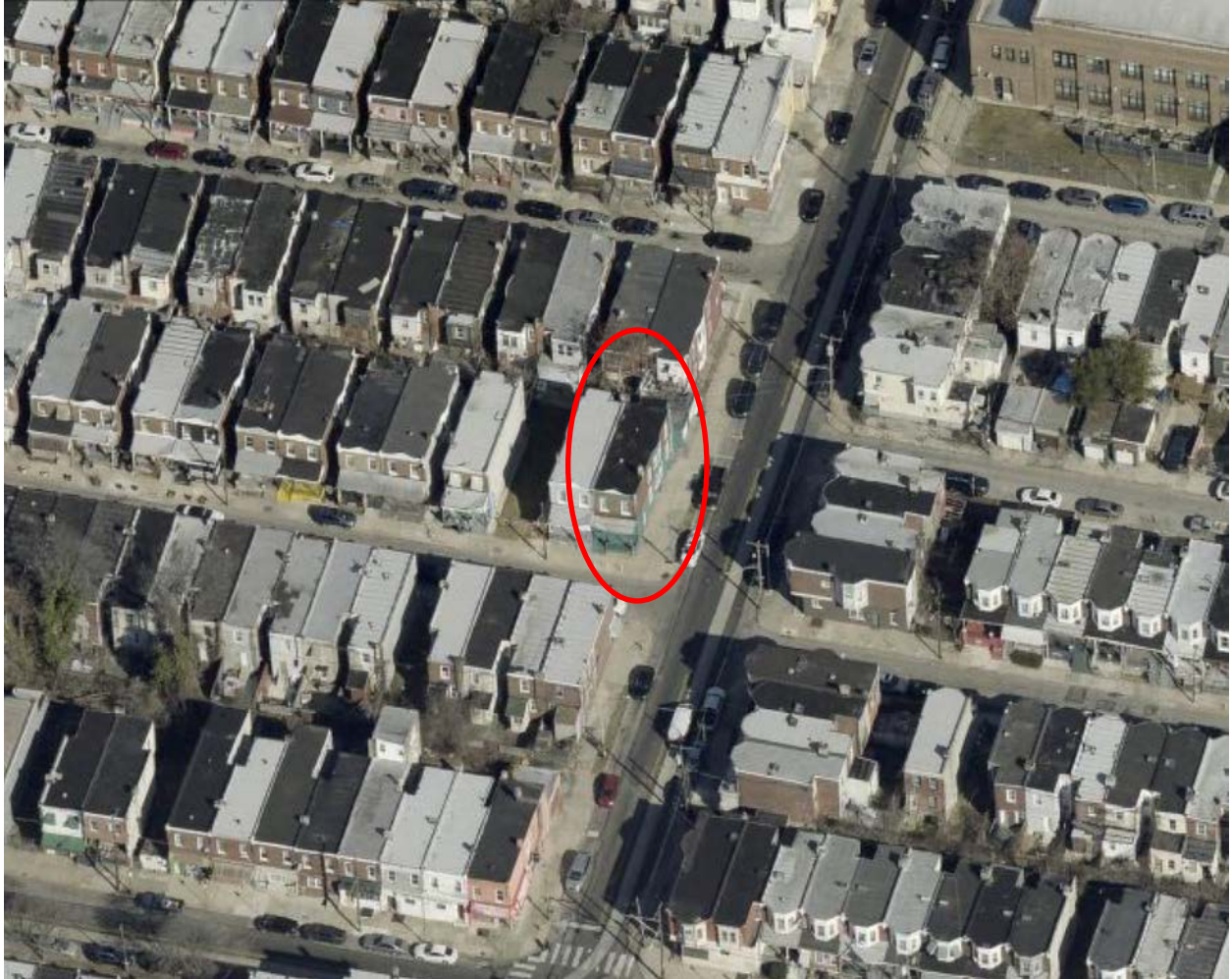


Figure 7. Aerial view of 401 N. Salford Street and surrounding neighborhood looking east, March 4, 2022. Source: Pictometry.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The property at 401 N. Salford Street, known as the Wilt Chamberlain Childhood Home, is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies Criterion for Designation A as delineated in Section 14-1004(1)(a) of the Philadelphia Code; the property “is associated with the life of a person significant in the past,” Wilt Chamberlain, one of the all-time greatest basketball players.

BACKGROUND ON THE PROPERTY AT 401 N. SALFORD STREET

In 1895, attorney Lucius S. Landreth purchased a large piece of open land at the southeast corner of 60th Street and Haverford Avenue for residential development for \$10,000 from brickmaker Henry C. Carroll.¹ Landreth agreed that Carroll “may dig for and remove all clay” from the property until January 1, 1897, provided he did not “dig to a greater depth than seven feet below the curb line of Haverford Avenue” and provided he removed “all buildings, kilns, fixtures, machinery, and implements” from the property by January 1, 1897.² Carroll “was considered one of the foremost men in this line [of manufacturing bricks] in the country.”³

Landreth transferred a portion of the land to builder Thomas Marshall in 1896.⁴ In 1897 and 1898, Marshall, builder Daniel Main, and real estate agent John Megran further subdivided the land and constructed houses on the lots (Figure 8).⁵ The City opened Salford Street between Callowhill Street and Haverford Avenue in 1897.⁶ The *Inquirer* reported in March 1897 that “Daniel Main is preparing for an operation comprising forty-two two-story brick dwellings, each 16x45 feet, to be built in West Philadelphia. These houses will be erected in pairs; eighteen on the west side of Redfield street, south of Haverford street; eighteen on the east side of Salford street, south of Haverford street, and six on the south side of Haverford street, west of Fifty-ninth street.”⁷ Main’s construction operation was so large that the *Inquirer* reported in March 1897 that he was erecting a “temporary frame tool house” at 59th Street and Haverford Avenue to support the effort.⁸ In May 1897, the *Inquirer* noted that Main was erecting “eighteen two-story brick dwellings ... on the east side of Salford Street, north of Callowhill.”⁹ The *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide* also reported on the development project, stating that Main, “builder and owner,” was constructing 42 houses with “Pompeian brick fronts and

¹ *Inquirer*, December 30, 1895, p. 11.

² Deed, Henry C. Carroll to Lucius S. Landreth, December 16, 1895, JJC-138-556, Philadelphia Department of Records.

³ “Three Generations Greet Their Venerable Parent,” *The Times*, March 26, 1900, p. 3.

⁴ Parcel 062-N17-0041, Lucius S. Landreth to Thomas Marshall, August 25, 1896, WMG-100-221, Philadelphia Department of Records.

⁵ John Megran’s occupation is listed as “real estate” in the 1900 US census. He resided in Yeadon, Pennsylvania. Thomas Marshall and Daniel Main are described as “builders” in the deeds. Deeds for Parcel 062-N17-0045, Thomas Marshall to John Megran, February 20, 1897, WMG-146-177. Parcel 062-N17-0045, John Megran to Daniel Main, February 23, 1897, WMG-163-50. Parcel 062-N17-0062, Daniel Main to Thomas Marshall, April 26, 1898, WMG-261-549, Philadelphia Department of Records. The *Inquirer* reported on the transfer of the development project from Daniel Main to Thomas Marshall for \$37,300 with \$78,200 in mortgages. See: *Inquirer*, May 7, 1898, p. 13.

⁶ See Philadelphia Streets Department, Street Card for the 400-block of Salford Street; <https://s3.amazonaws.com/streets-legal-cards/LegalCards/LC012809.JPG>

⁷ *Inquirer*, March 5, 1897, p. 11.

⁸ *Inquirer*, March 18, 1897, p. 10.

⁹ *Inquirer*, May 11, 1897, p. 10.

porches, and all the modern comforts on interior.”¹⁰ In June 1898, builder Thomas Marshall sold the completed house at 401 N. Salford Street to Charles and Caroline Oberlies.¹¹ After several intervening owners including the purveyor of Mme. French’s Whooping Cough Syrup, William N. and Olivia R. Chamberlain purchased the property at 401 N. Salford Street on September 23, 1939 (Figure 9).¹²

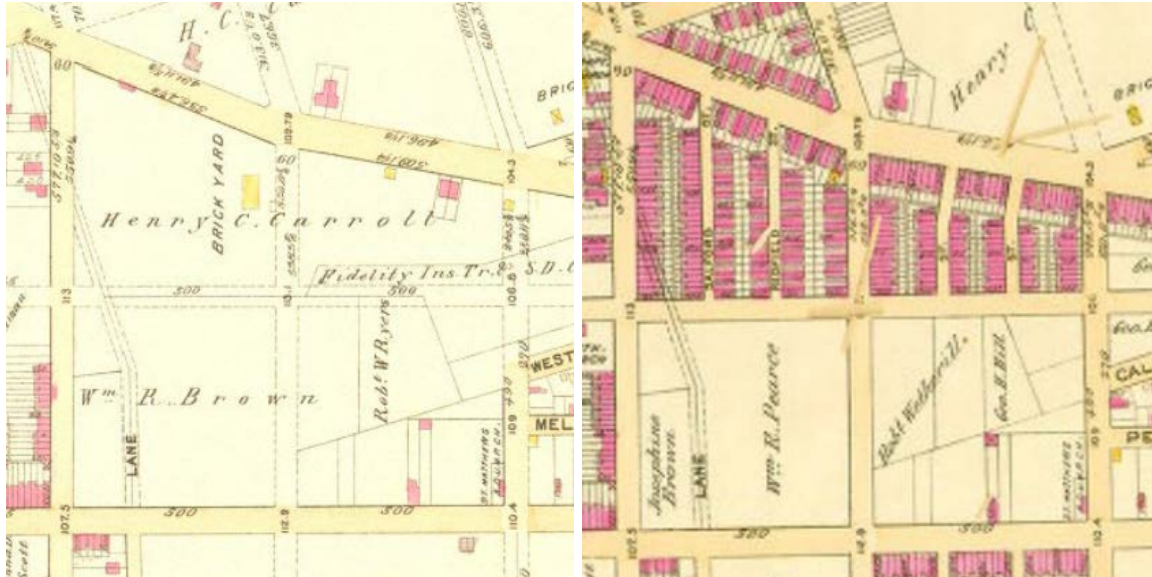


Figure 8. The area between 58th Street and 60th Street, between Vine Street and Haverford Avenue, was largely undeveloped in 1895 (left) but was built out north of Callowhill Street by 1901, as is shown by these details from Plate 22, George W. & Walter S. Bromley, Civil Engineers, Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895 and 1901. Source: Phila GeoHistory.



Figure 9. Advertisement for “Mme. French’s Whooping Cough Syrup,” *Inquirer*, August 27, 1916, p. 29.

¹⁰ *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, v. 12, March 10, 1897, p. 149.

¹¹ Deed for Parcel 062-N17-0072, Thomas Marshall to Caroline C. Oberlies, June 20, 1898, WMG-292-467, Philadelphia Department of Records.

¹² Deed for Parcel 062-N17-0072, E.J. Garrett to William Chamberlain, September 23, 1939, DWH-788-21, Philadelphia Department of Records.

THE CHAMBERLAIN FAMILY AND 401 N. SALFORD STREET

In 1930, William N. and Olivia R. Chamberlain and their infant daughter Dolores resided in a two-story rowhouse at 2432 N. Chadwick Street in North Philadelphia (Figure 10). William, age 29, had been born in Virginia and worked as a janitor at a mail-order house. Olivia, age 27, had been born in North Carolina and was a homemaker. Their parents had been born in Virginia and North Carolina respectively.¹³ It appears that the Chamberlains resettled in Philadelphia as part of the Great Migration.

NAME	AGE	SEX	BIRTH	ETHNICITY	RELATIONSHIP
William N. Chamberlain	29	M	VA	White	Head
Olivia R. Chamberlain	27	F	NC	White	Wife
Dolores Chamberlain	5	F	PA	White	Daughter

Figure 10. William N. and Olivia R. Chamberlain's listing in the 1930 U.S. Census.

Wilton N. Chamberlain was born on August 21, 1936. Three years later, on September 23, 1939, the Chamberlains purchased the twin house at 401 N. Salford Street to accommodate their growing family.¹⁴ Biographers of Wilt Chamberlain have wrongly assumed that he grew up in a rented house, perhaps not believing that a Black family would have the means to purchase property in Philadelphia in the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁵ According to the U.S. Census, the Chamberlains had eight children by 1940, six daughters and two sons, from oldest to youngest, Dolores, Shirley, Wilburt, Margaret, Selina, Wilton, Barbara, and Yvonne (Figure 11).¹⁶ The house had four bedrooms, one for the parents and three for the children.¹⁷ At the time, William Chamberlain worked as a porter at the Sears and Roebuck department store on Roosevelt Boulevard.¹⁸ Of his parents, Wilt Chamberlain noted their “strong work ethic” and observed that “How the two of them raised all of us without a day of hunger and with a permanent supply of clean clothes is beyond my comprehension.”¹⁹

¹³ 1930 U.S. Census. Ancestry.com.

¹⁴ Deed for Parcel 062-N17-0072, E.J. Garrett to William Chamberlain, September 23, 1939, DWH-788-21, Philadelphia Department of Records.

¹⁵ See, for example: Gary M. Pomerantz, “Wilt, 1962,” *New York Times*, June 12, 2005; <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/12/books/chapters/wilt-1962.html>

¹⁶ 1940 U.S. Census. Ancestry.com.

¹⁷ John Taylor, *The Rivalry: Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, and the Golden Age of Basketball* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2006), p. 44.

¹⁸ William Chamberlain's occupation is listed as “porter, department store” in the 1940 U.S. Census and his place of employment is listed as Sears, Roebuck and Co. at 4640 Roosevelt Boulevard on a 1941 military registration card. Ancestry.com.

¹⁹ Quoted in William K. Marimow, “Chamberlain's musing and scoring: book review of *Wilt Chamberlain: A View from Above*,” *Inquirer*, November 19, 1991, p. 62.

4	401	27	0	1500	Chamberlain William N.	head	0	M	NEG	40	M	NO	8	8	Virginia	21	Same house
5					— Elvira	wife	1	F	NEG	32	M	NO	8	8	North Carolina	16	Same house
6					— Belores	daughter	2	F	NEG	10	S	yes	4	4	Penna	7	Same house
7					— Shirley	daughter	2	F	NEG	8	S	yes	3	3	Penna	7	Same house
8					— Wilbur	son	2	M	NEG	7	S	yes	2	2	Penna	7	Same house
9					— Margart	daughter	2	F	NEG	6	S	yes	0	0	Penna	7	Same house
10					— Selina	daughter	2	F	NEG	4	S	NO	0	0	Penna	7	
11					— Wilton	son	2	M	NEG	3	S	NO	0	0	Penna	7	
12					— Barbara	daughter	2	F	NEG	2	S	NO	0	0	Penna	7	
13					— James	daughter	2	F	NEG	1	S	NO	0	0	Penna	7	
14	401	28	0	2500	Oliver Whelan S.O.	head	1	M	W	56	M	NA	H-1	7	Penna	7	Same house
15					— Ethel	wife	1	F	W	52	M	NA	H-1	7	Penna	7	Same house

Figure 11. William N. and Olivia R. Chamberlain's listing in the 1940 U.S. Census.

The 1950 U.S. Census unfortunately failed to record the Chamberlain family, but William Chamberlain was listed as residing at "401 N Salford" in the Philadelphia telephone book for 1950 (Figure 12).

Chamberlain warrentee L 636 N 46 BA ring 2-6044
 Chamberlain Wm 401 N Salford GR anit 4-5769
 Chamberlain Wm F 5830 Cedar Av SH erud 7-6444

Figure 12. William Chamberlain listed at "401 N Salford" in the Philadelphia telephone book for 1950.

In 1955, William Chamberlain obtained a zoning permit to replace the wood floor of the front porch with a cement floor at the house at 401 N. Salford Street. He is listed on the permit application as the owner of the property (Figure 13).²⁰

William Chamberlain
 Owner Architect or Engineer
 Address 401 N Salford St
 Phone GR 4-5769

Figure 13. William Chamberlain's signature on a zoning permit application for 401 N. Salford Street, 1955. Source: Atlas, Zoning Archive.

Wilt Chamberlain's childhood friend Vince Miller recounted that:
 The Chamberlain household [at 401 N. Salford Street] was always a fun place to be. It was a central meeting place for the Overbrook [High School basketball] players and neighborhood guys. One of the reasons, I'm sure, was that Wilt had six sisters. All the guys wanted to hang out there. That was where most of us learned to dance. Wilt's mother and father were very open and friendly to us. They'd let us come over on Saturday mornings and feed us big breakfasts. Six pancakes. Mounds of fried potatoes. Great food from great people.²¹

Agreeing with Miller, Wilt Chamberlain once said of his childhood home: "It was like the corner chapel. I had six good-looking sisters, so every guy in the world came to my house."²²

²⁰ Zoning permit application 0923F, July 11, 1955, for 401 N. Salford Street. Source: Atlas, Zoning Archive.
²¹ Vince Miller, "A Friendship That Never Wilted," TedSiliary.com, undated, <http://www.tedsiliary.com/archive/wilttribute.htm>
²² "Philly's Greatest High School Basketball Player: Wilt Chamberlain," *Daily News*, May 20, 1999, p. 106.

The Chamberlains continued to reside at 401 N. Salford Street until they sold the property in December 1963.²³ Wilt Chamberlain grew up at 401 N. Salford Street, moving there in 1939 at age 3 and residing there until going to the University of Kansas in 1955. In October 1959, Wilt Chamberlain, who was playing basketball professionally by that time, purchased a rowhouse for himself at 6135 Walnut Street.²⁴ By 1962, he was living at 6205 Cobbs Creek Parkway.²⁵

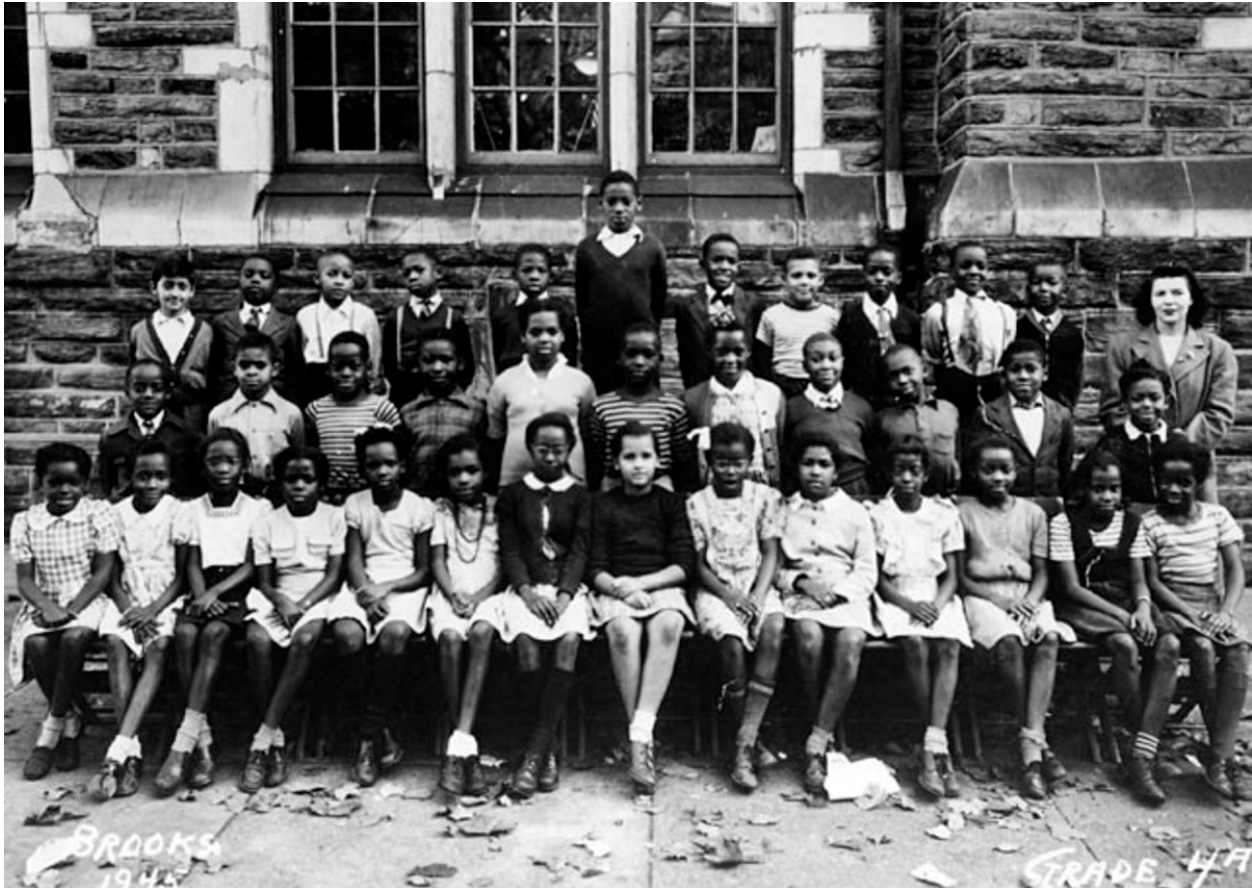


Figure 14. Wilt Chamberlain (top center) with his fourth-grade class at George Brooks Elementary School. Source: "Rare Wilt Chamberlain Photos," *Sports Illustrated*, March 8, 2012; <https://www.si.com/nba/2012/03/08/08rare-wilt-chamberlain-photos>

²³ Deed, William N. Chamberlain and Olivia R. Chamberlain to Crozell E. Bartell, December 26, 1963, CAD-88-9, Philadelphia Department of Records.

²⁴ Deed, Young & Company to Wilton N. Chamberlain, October 19, 1959, CAB-1198-163, Philadelphia Department of Records.

²⁵ "Wilt to Leave Car at Home," *Inquirer*, May 2, 1962, p. 49.

WILT CHAMBERLAIN

Wilt Chamberlain is considered one of the greatest, if not the greatest, basketball players of all time and is credited, along with Bill Russell, with ushering in the modern era of basketball. He averaged an incredible 30.1 points per game over his NBA career and holds (or held) numerous NBA records, including for most points scored in one season (4,029) and most points scored in a single game (100). He was the first NBA player to score more than 30,000 points during his professional career. He was selected 13 times to the NBA All Star team (1960-1969, 1971-1973) and lead his team to two NBA Final Championships (1967, 1972). Chamberlain was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1978.

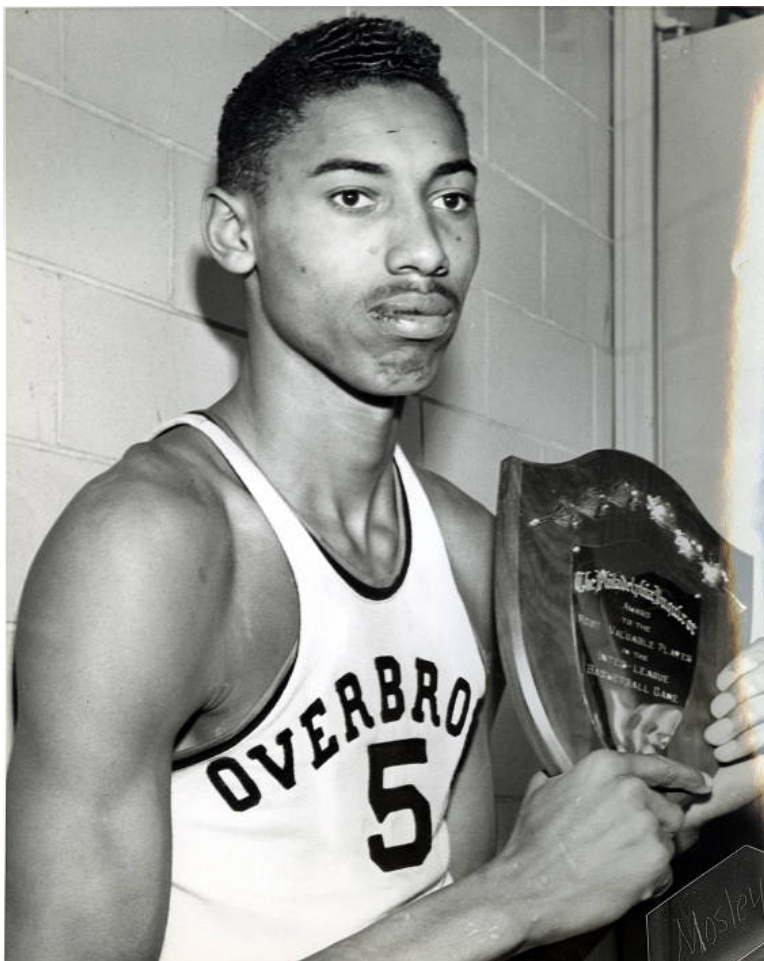


Figure 15. Wilt Chamberlain holds the Inquirer Award for the Most Valuable Player in the Inter League Basketball Game, undated, c. 1955. Source: Temple University Libraries, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, John W. Mosley Photograph Collection; <https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p15037coll17/id/795/>

Wilt Chamberlain grew up at 401 N. Salford Street in the Haddington neighborhood of West Philadelphia, just a few blocks west of the Haddington Recreation Center, now called the Shepard Recreation Center. Chamberlain was always tall, reaching a height of 6'-0" by age 10, and 6'-11" by high school (Figure 14). He eventually grew to be 7'-1" tall. His many nicknames derived from his stature. Wilt Chamberlain detested the nickname "The Stilt," which was coined by *Bulletin* sportswriter Jack Ryan. He preferred "The Big Dipper," "Dippy," or Dipper." At age

10, he was playing with friends in an abandoned house. After hitting his eye on a low-hanging pipe in the basement, he was admonished by his friends for not dipping under the pipe. His preferred nickname was quickly coined.²⁶ One profile described him as follows: "Towering Wilt Chamberlain, a fun-loving but sometimes moody and reticent youth, is one of nine children, the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Chamberlain, 401 N. Salford st."²⁷

Vince Miler, who described Wilt Chamberlain as his "best friend for over 50 years," recounted the basketball star's early years and his transition to basketball.

I met Wilt in 1945 when my family moved from North Philadelphia to West Philadelphia. I lived at 54th and Girard and he lived at 401 N. Salford. Having transferred, I was put in his third-grade class at George Brooks Elementary and, being the two tallest, we always wound up together at the back of the line. We were probably best friends from the first day we met. Track and field was our main interest at first; Wilt even ran in the prestigious Penn Relays. But around the sixth grade, when we were ready to graduate from Brooks, basketball started to become a big part of our lives. In 1949, we started at Shoemaker Junior High and basketball was now very big. Track and field was starting to fade out some. We played for our class team in games after school and our love for the game started to take over and we found ourselves trying to play basketball every moment we could. ... During the summers, we would work out at Haddington Recreation Center. The rec department would close up the centers. They wanted all the activity to take place outdoors. We would beg Blinky Brown, who worked for recreation and later became a vice principal at Overbrook, to let us in. It would be 100 degrees in that place. We'd tell Blinky, "Let us go in, lock it up and come back in two or three hours." We worked on basketball endlessly, trying to improve our skills. ... In the ninth grade, Wilt started going over to Overbrook [High School] to practice with the team. The coach at that time was Sam Cozen, and he got the word that a great, 6-foot-10 player was at Shoemaker. So, even as a ninth grader, Wilt would go to Overbrook and practice with the varsity. Sam WANTED him. In 10th grade, Wilt immediately made the varsity. I did not. I was on the JV. Even in his first game, Wilt was a big success, scoring and rebounding and blocking shots. The word about what a great player he was quickly got around the city. In that year, Overbrook lost just two games, to Ben Franklin in the Public League and to West Catholic in the City Title game.²⁸

Chamberlain was a standout basketball player at Overbrook High School, where he played on the varsity team for three years. In his sophomore year, Chamberlain led Overbrook High School to a perfect 19-0 record, winning the city championship (Figure 17). In his senior season, he continued his success by scoring 74, 78, and 90 points in three consecutive games, leading his team to a second straight city championship (Figure 16). While in high school, Chamberlain scored 2,252 points, breaking the all-time high school scoring record, and averaging 37.4 points per game (Figure 19 and Figure 20). He also played for the Christian Street YMCA team, which he led to the National YMCA Basketball Championship in 1953. He was named to the YMCA National All-American Team that year.²⁹

²⁶ Ted Silary, "At Overbrook, Instant Impact," *Daily News*, March 18, 1991, p. 112.

²⁷ "Dipper Likes Speed," *Inquirer*, January 8, 1957, p. 22.

²⁸ Vince Miller, "A Friendship That Never Wilted," TedSilary.com, undated, <http://www.tedsilary.com/archive/wilttribute.htm>

²⁹ "Christian St. 'Y' Courtmen Feted," *Inquirer*, April 21, 1953, p. 33.

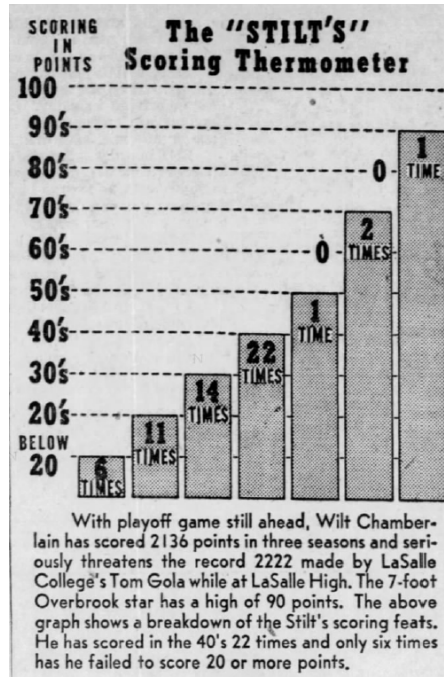


Figure 16. A graph of Wilt Chamberlain's scoring in high school games, showing that he scored, for example, between 30 and 39 points in 22 games during his high school career, and 90 points in one game. Source: Les Ribler, "Wilt (Stilt) Chamberlain Nears Schoolboy Scoring Mark of Gola," *Inquirer*, February 28, 1955, p. 22.



Figure 17. Overbrook High School basketball team with Wilt Chamberlain at the bottom right, 1952-53 season. Source: Ted Silary, "At Overbrook, Instant Impact," *Daily News*, March 18, 1991, p. 112.



Figure 18. Overbrook High School basketball team with Wilt Chamberlain at the far right, 1953-54 season. Source: <https://www.sportscollectorsdaily.com/only-overbrook-high-school-basketball-team-photo-with-wilt-chamberlain-up-for-auction/>

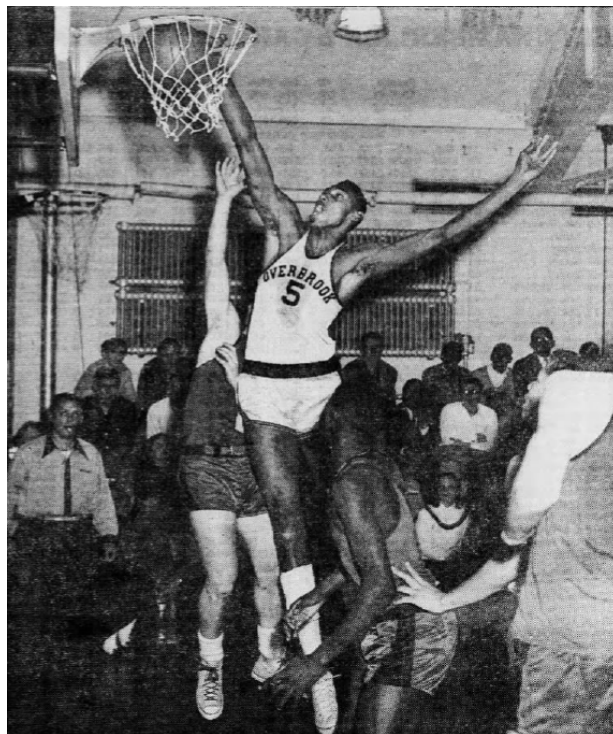


Figure 19. Wilt Chamberlain dunking in 1955. Source: Ted Silary, "At Overbrook, Instant Impact," Daily News, March 18, 1991, p. 112.

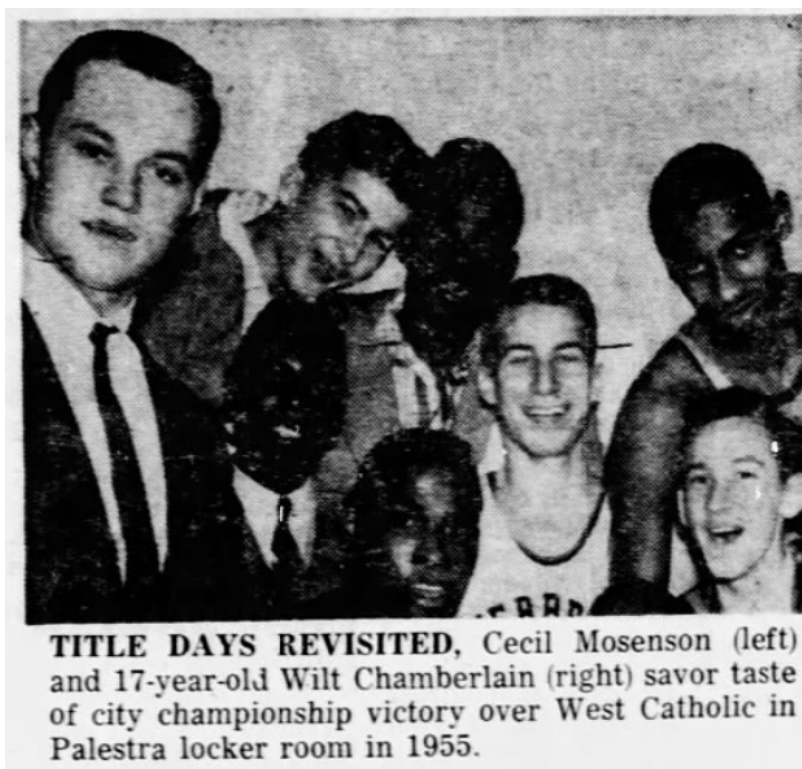


Figure 20. Source: Bill Shefski, "Old Coach: Wilt + 76ers = Title," *Daily News*, January 28, 1965, p. 52.

Vince Miller, his lifelong friend, reported that "In high school, Wilt resumed his interest in track and field. He also ran cross country. I believe he wanted to show he was more than a one-sport man. I think he would have been a great athlete in any sport he chose."³⁰ For example, Wilt Chamberlain won the High Jump competition at the citywide Public League Championship at Franklin Field in 1953 (Figure 21).³¹ He also won the Public league Championship for shot put and high jump in 1955.³²

1.	Wilton Chamberlain, Overbrook;
2.	tie between Gerald Smith, West Philadelphia, and Lonnie Statton, Bartram;
4.	tie between Roland Twymon, Bok, and Dick Seeds, Lincoln;
6.	tie between Lawrence Moses, Central, and Herbert Williams, Dobbins;
8.	tie between Arthur Russell, Northeast, and George Boggs, Southern;
10.	Paul Kauffman, Olney;
11.	tie between James Brame, Franklin, and Charles Cohen, Germantown;
13.	Robert Hansbury, Frankford. 5 ft., 10 ins.

Figure 21. Wilt Chamberlain won the High Jump competition at the citywide Public Championship at Franklin Field in 1953. Source: John Dell, "Bartram Titlist on 'Vault Relay' Record," *Inquirer*, May 24, 1953, p. 67.

³⁰ Vince Miller, "A Friendship That Never Wilted," TedSiliary.com, undated, <http://www.tedsiliary.com/archive/wilttribute.htm>

³¹ John Dell, "Bartram Titlist on 'Vault Relay' Record," *Inquirer*, May 24, 1953, p. 67.

³² "Philly's Greatest High School Basketball Player: Wilt Chamberlain," *Daily News*, May 20, 1999, p. 106.

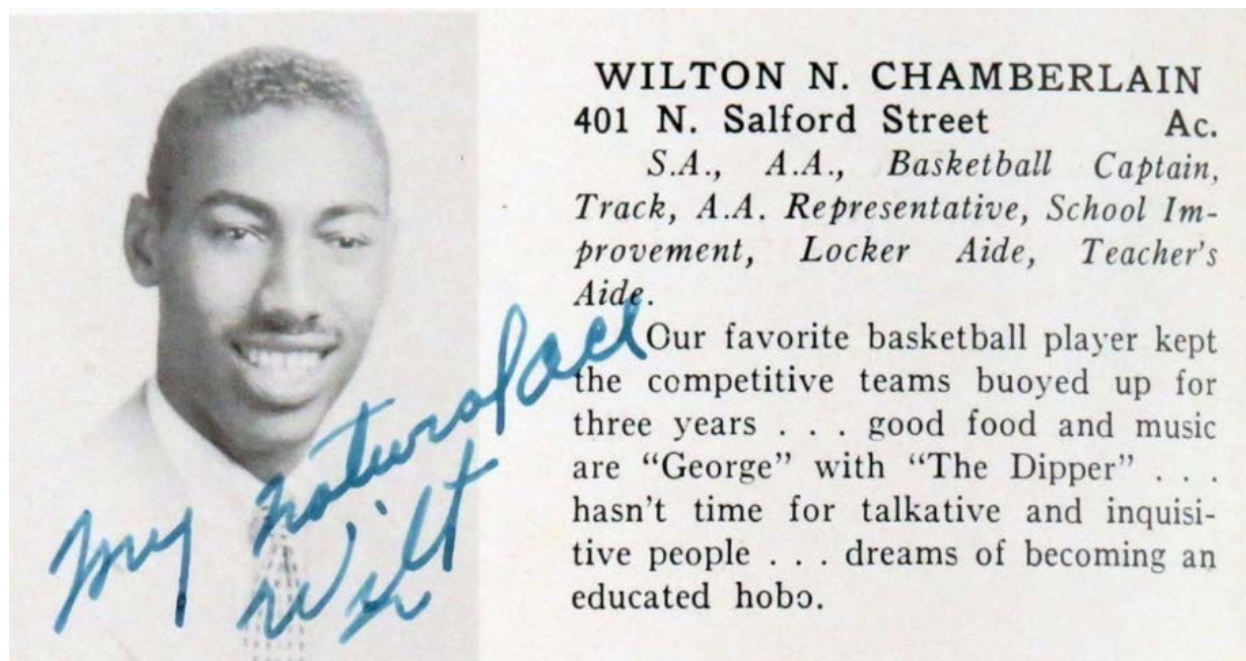


Figure 22. Wilt Chamberlain's entry in the Overbrook High School Yearbook for 1955. Source: <https://chinese.fansshare.com/gallery/photos/13649699/wilt-chamberlain/?displaying>

When it came time for college, Chamberlain was sought after by many top college basketball teams. He chose to attend the University of Kansas, making his college basketball debut with the Jayhawks in 1956, and leading the team to the NCAA finals in 1957 (Figure 23). The Jayhawks were defeated by the University of North Carolina in double overtime in the NCAA finals, but Chamberlain was named "Most Outstanding Player" of the tournament. Continuing to excel, he made the all-America and all-conference teams the following season. As a freshman at the University of Kansas, Wilt Chamberlain continued with track and field, tying for second place in the high jump in the Kansas Relays, running the 440 in 49.0 seconds, and putting the shot 48 feet.³³ When he arrived in Lawrence, Kansas in 1955, Chamberlain was surprised to see racial segregation. Chamberlain ignored the segregation by eating in formerly all-white restaurants and going places where African Americans were not permitted. His presence in the city, coupled with his star basketball status, ultimately led some businesses to change their policies about Black patronage.

Chamberlain left Kansas after his junior year in 1958 but had to wait one year before playing in the NBA, owing to the league's rules. He chose to spend the next season performing with the Harlem Globetrotters (Figure 24). In 1959, Chamberlain joined the Philadelphia Warriors, which paid him \$30,000, the highest salary in the NBA. He played his first professional game in New York City against the Knicks, scoring 43 points. His impressive debut season netted him several prestigious honors, including the NBA Rookie of the Year and NBA Most Valuable Player awards. During this season, Chamberlain began his famous rivalry with Celtics defensive star Bill Russell. The two were fierce competitors on the court, but they developed a friendship away from the game.

³³ "Dipper Likes Speed," *Inquirer*, January 8, 1957, p. 22.



Figure 23. Wilt Chamberlain dunking while playing for the University of Kansas Jayhawks. Source: <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/wilt-chamberlain/12007>



Figure 24. Wilt Chamberlain while playing for the Harlem Globetrotters in 1959. Source: Fred Palumbo, staff photographer, *World Telegram*.

Chamberlain's most famous season, however, came in 1962. That March, he became the first NBA player to score 100 points in a game, setting a league record for the highest number of points scored in a single game, which he still holds today (Figure 25). By season's end, Chamberlain racked up more than 4,000 points, becoming the first NBA player to do so, scoring an average of 50.4 points per game. At the top of his game, Chamberlain was selected for the All-NBA first team for three consecutive years: 1960, 1961 and 1962.



Figure 25. Wilt Chamberlain after scoring 100 points in the Philadelphia Warriors victory over the New York Knicks on March 2, 1962. Source: Paul Vathis/AP Images.

Chamberlain stayed with the Warriors as they moved out to San Francisco in 1962. He continued to play well, averaging more than 44 points per game for the 1962-63 season and almost 37 points per game for the 1963-64 season. Returning to his hometown, Chamberlain joined the Philadelphia 76ers in 1965. There he helped his team score an NBA championship win over his former team. Along the way to the championship, he also assisted the Sixers in defeating the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Division Finals. The Celtics were knocked out of the running after eight consecutive championship wins. Crowds gathered to watch the latest match between two top center players: Chamberlain and Bill Russell. Chamberlain was traded to the Los Angeles Lakers in 1968 and helped the Lakers win the 1972 NBA championship, triumphing over the New York Knicks in five straight games. He was named the NBA Finals MVP for that series.



Figure 26. Wilt Chamberlain sports trading cards.

By the time he retired in 1973, Chamberlain had amassed an amazing array of career statistics. He had played in 1,045 games and achieved an average of 30.1 points per game, the NBA points-per-game record until Michael Jordan broke it in 1998. After 14 seasons in the NBA, Chamberlain was the all-time leader in points scored (31,419) and rebounds (23,924). He held more than 40 league records. Chamberlain also remains notable for never fouling out of an NBA game. His dominance of the game precipitated several rule changes, including widening the lane, prohibiting goaltending, and changing inbounding of the ball and the shooting of free throws.³⁴ In 1978, Chamberlain was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. He was named one of the top all-time 50 NBA players in 1996 and to the 75th Anniversary NBA Team in 2021.

Throughout his life, Chamberlain explored other opportunities beyond playing basketball. He published his autobiography, *Wilt: Just Like Any Other 7-Foot Black Millionaire Who Lives Next Door*, in 1973 and his memoirs, *Wilt Chamberlain: A View from Above*, in 1991. He coached basketball for a time. He invested in stocks and real estate, played professional volleyball, ran marathons, and co-owned Smalls Paradise, a Harlem night club.³⁵ He was a popular pitchman for commercials and later branched out in acting, appearing in the 1984 action film *Conan the Destroyer* with Arnold Schwarzenegger (Figure 27 and Figure 28).

³⁴ "Rule Change: Wilt Found Loophole," *Inquirer*, January 8, 1957, p. 2.

³⁵ On Smalls Paradise, see: Gary M. Pomerantz, "Wilt, 1962," *New York Times*, June 12, 2005; <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/12/books/chapters/wilt-1962.html>



Figure 27. Wilt Chamberlain in a 1979 Volkswagen advertisement.



Figure 28. Wilt Chamberlain in a Purina Cat Food celebrity calendar, 1986. Source: "Rare Wilt Chamberlain Photos," *Sports Illustrated*, March 8, 2012; <https://www.si.com/nba/2012/03/08/08rare-wilt-chamberlain-photos>

Chamberlain died of heart failure on October 12, 1999, at his Los Angeles home. His Philadelphia memorial service was held at Mount Carmel Baptist Church at 58th and Race Streets on October 21, 1999. The church, where Wilt went to Sunday School and where he mourned after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was a short walk from his childhood home at 401 N. Salford Street.³⁶



Figure 29. Wilt Chamberlain and Michael Jordan, the only NBA players to score 3,000 points in one season, at the NBA's 50th anniversary celebration in 1997. Source: "Rare Wilt Chamberlain Photos," *Sports Illustrated*, March 8, 2012; <https://www.si.com/nba/2012/03/08/08rare-wilt-chamberlain-photos>

"Wilt was one of the greatest ever, and we will never see another like him," said basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar on his death.³⁷ Shaquille O'Neal said: "I met him a couple of times. I wish we would've had the chance to sit down. I wish he could've shown me some of his tricks. When I was first coming up, my father always said, 'Be like Wilt.' ... That's why I am who I am today. It's because I had people to look up to."³⁸ His former rival Bill Russell told the press that "he and I will be friends through eternity." "I don't think he ever lost his roots," said Cecil Mosenson, his high school coach in 1953-54. "Wherever he went, he wore the Overbrook

³⁶ Ted Silary, "His Biggest Fans," *Daily News*, October 22, 1999, p. 7.

³⁷ Press release on Wilt Chamberlain's death. Quoted in: Bernard Fernandez, "Kareem, Shaq oft critiqued," *Daily News*, October 15, 1999, p. 174.

³⁸ Quoted in: Bernard Fernandez, "Kareem, Shaq oft critiqued," *Daily News*, October 15, 1999, p. 174.

jacket. His fondest memories, his greatest memories, were not all the games he played with the NBA, but the ones he played at Overbrook High School.”³⁹

CONCLUSION

In summary, the property at 401 N. Salford Street, known as the Wilt Chamberlain Childhood Home, is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies Criterion for Designation A as delineated in Section 14-1004(1)(a) of the Philadelphia Code; the property “is associated with the life of a person significant in the past,” Wilt Chamberlain, one of the all-time greatest basketball players. According to *Inquirer* sportswriter Frank Fitzpatrick in his 2002 assessment of the legends of “PhillyBall,” Wilt Chamberlain:

is the towering figure in Philadelphia’s basketball history. A shy kid born in Depression-era Overbrook, Wilton Norman Chamberlain, called “Dipper” by his closest friends, went on to alter permanently the game and the NBA’s record books. Almost undoubtedly the city’s greatest athlete ever, the 7-foot-1-inch Chamberlain played for both of Philadelphia’s NBA teams – the Warriors and the 76ers – in a memorable NBA career that stretched from 1959 to 1973.⁴⁰

In 2006, Fitzpatrick placed the Wilt Chamberlain childhood home at 401 N. Salford Street at the top of his list of “eight of this area’s sporting treasures that need to be preserved as long as Billy Penn stands atop City Hall.”⁴¹

³⁹ “Wilt was Philadelphia's greatest athlete,” ESPN.com, October 13, 1999; <https://www.espn.com/nba/news/1999/1012/110852.html>

⁴⁰ Frank Fitzpatrick, “Legends of PhillyBall,” *Inquirer*, February 6, 2002, p. H06.

⁴¹ Frank Fitzpatrick, “8 Local Sports Landmarks to Cherish,” *Inquirer*, May 26, 2006, p. D08.

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