

**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: **724 Locust Avenue**

Postal code: **19144**

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Name: **Heartsease—Hannah Ann Zell's Gothic Cottage**

Current Name: **Unknown**

**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): **1777 (Criterion I); 1866 – 1911 (Criteria A and J)**

Date(s) of construction: **1866-67**

Architects: **Unknown**

Builders: **Unknown**

Original owner: **Misses Jane Meng Zell and Hannah Ann Zell**

**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: **Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian**

Date: **23 December 2022**

Email: **Keeper@KeepingPhiladelphia.org**

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 23 December 2022

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 12/28/2022

Date of Notice Issuance: 2/9/2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Kosa Properties Inc.

Address: 410 Brighton Pl.

City: Elkins Park State: PA Postal Code: 19027

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 6/21/2023

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 11/10/2023

Date of Final Action: 11/10/2023

Designated  Rejected

# NOMINATION

FOR THE

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

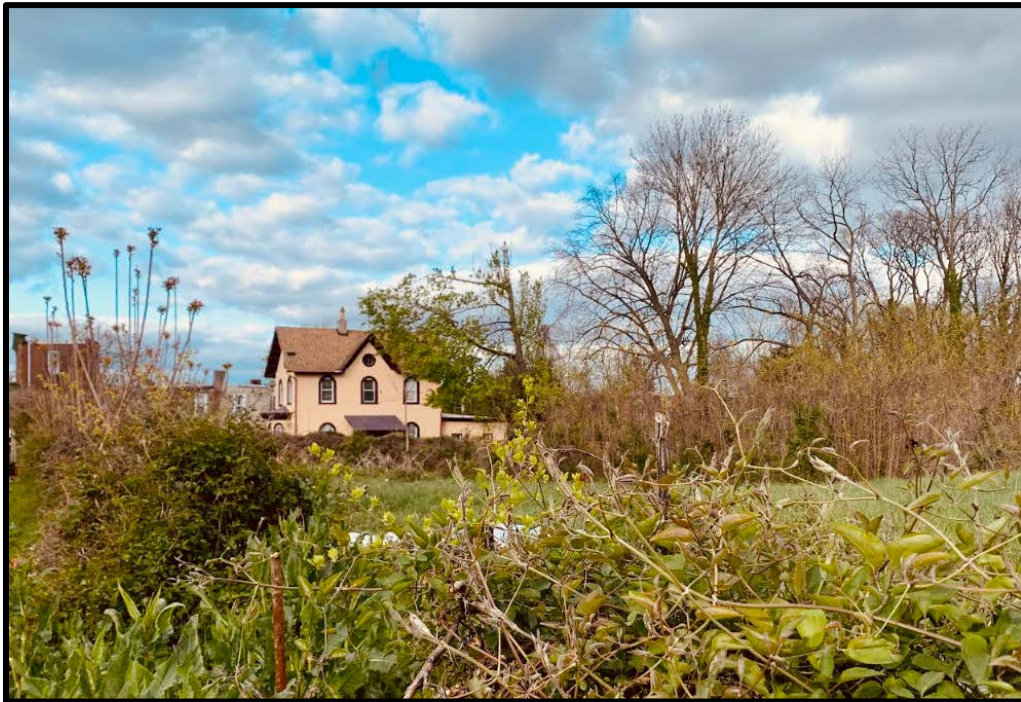


Figure 1. Looking northeast at the primary (southwest) elevation, which faces the interior of the subject property at 724 Locust Avenue. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

### ***HEARTSEASE***

**HANNAH ANN ZELL'S GOTHIC COTTAGE**

**ERECTED 1866-67**

—

**724 LOCUST AVENUE**

**GERMANTOWN**

**PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

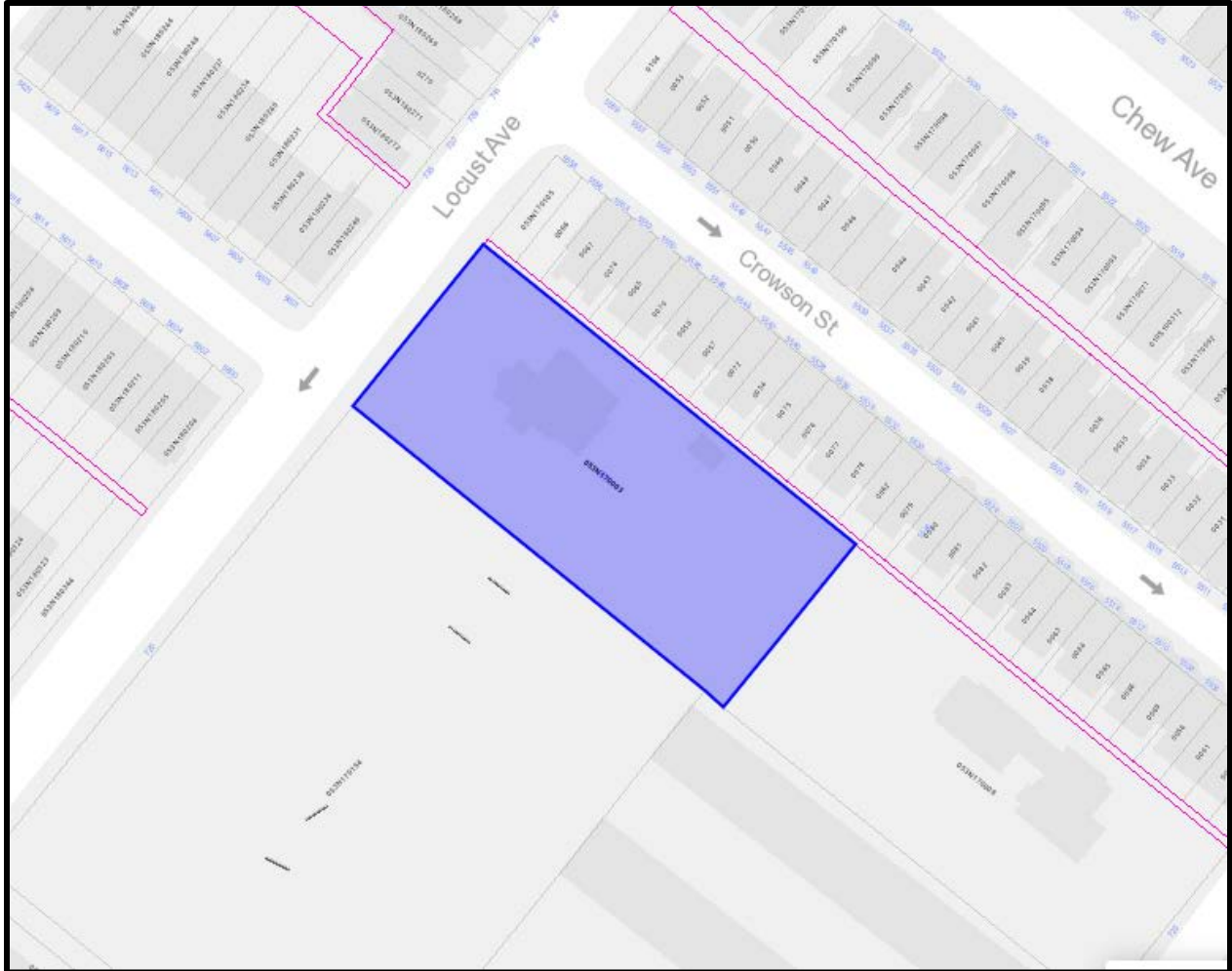


Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary for the designation of the subject property, known as 724 Locust Avenue, is as follows:

Situate on the Southeasterly side of Locust Avenue at the distance of fifty-four feet ten and one-eighth inches Southwestwardly from the Southwesterly side of Crowson Street, containing in front or breadth on the said side of Locust Avenue one hundred feet, and extending of that width in length or depth Southeastwardly between parallel lines at right angles with the said Locust Avenue two hundred twenty-five feet. Being known as 724 East Locust Avenue.

OPA No. 122064130





Figure 3. Top: Looking north at the environment of the subject property, which is the only detached house in the photograph. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia. Figure 4. Bottom: Looking east at the side (northwest) and primary (southwest) elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Built 1866-67, *Heartsease* is a two-and-one-half-story frame dwelling clad in smooth-faced stucco and designed in the Gothic Revival style. The quaint cottage is recessed from Locust Avenue by at least forty feet with its primary elevation facing southeast towards the interior of the parcel, a commonly known orientation trend in the siting of Germantown’s suburban dwellings. With the house situated closer to Locust Avenue, the 22,383 square foot lot contains open space towards the southeast and aligns in width with the adjacent property at 723 Church Lane. Originally, 724 Locust Avenue was owned by the Misses Jane Meng Zell and Hannah Ann Zell, while 723 Church Lane was owned by their brother Colonel Thomas Elwood Zell. Only the former building is subject to this nomination.





Figure 5. Top: Looking northeast at the primary (southwest) elevation in context. Source: Redfin.com. Figure 6. Middle: The side (northwest) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2021. Figure 7. Bottom: Looking east at the rear side (northwest) elevations. Source: Redfin.com.

Based on the well-known format of a bracketed cottage, the stucco-clad, frame building stands two-and-one-half stories with gable-ends at the primary (southwest), and side (northwest and southeast) elevations of the Main Block. As is common in this building type, the side (northwest and southeast) elevations are integral to the form and structure of the house, while the front gable

is secondary in size, built slightly lower than the highest roofline, though equally integral to the aesthetic character. The Main Block is unusual in that all the windows feature round-arch architraves with original round molding. As part of this theme, the gables of the Main Block feature small roundels, one per elevation, which are also a less common motif.

The primary (southwest) elevation is three bays in width, featuring a replacement front porch at the primary entrance. The doorway is at center flanked by single round arch openings with original architraves, round molding, and sills, as well as replacement windows. The second floor of the primary (southwest) elevation features three windows, symmetrically placed above the first-floor openings, also defined by round arch openings with original architraves, round molding, and sills, as well as replacement windows. The third, half-story of the primary (southwest) elevation features a single roundel with its original architrave and round molding. The primary (southwest) gable includes a generous eave with exposed, decorative rafter tails.



Figure 8. Looking northwest at the primary (southwest) and side (southeast) elevations in context. Source: Redfin.com.

The side (northwest) elevation features a bay window at the first floor which protrudes from the façade with a three-part hipped roof that is aligned with the three-sided structure below. Each of the three facades of this structure features a round arch aperture with original wooden architraves, round molding, and sills, along with replacement windows. The bay window features a bracketed cornice. Rising above the bay window, two symmetrically placed windows comprise the second-floor fenestration, featuring original wooden architraves, round molding, and sills, along with replacement windows. At the center of the third, half-story is a roundel, which retains its original wooden architrave and a round molding. A modern vent rises above the oculus. The roofline is defined by a generous eave with exposed, decorative rafter tails.

The side (southeast) elevation of the Main Block features a single-story addition. This structure obscures the original first floor section of the Main Block. The second floor of the side (southeast) elevation features one window with what appears to be an original architrave. The third, half-story features a single roundel at center with an original wooden architrave and round molding.





Figure 9. Hannah Ann Zell stands in front of the door on left of the Billmeyer House at Germantown Avenue and Upsal Street. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heartsease at 724 Locust Avenue in Germantown is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance for Criteria A and J dates from the time of the design and construction of the subject house in 1866-67 through the period of occupancy of Hannah Ann Zell, who died in the house in 1911. The period of significance for Criterion I dates to 1777, at the time of the Battle of Germantown.





Figure 10. A carte de viste of Hannah Ann Zell, taken in February 1862 by O.H. Willard at 1628 Market Street in Philadelphia. Source: The Mary Pancoast Prichett (1845-1924) Albums, in possession of Leslie Coulson, via Laura Bligh of Cassidy-Fagan Cousins.

### **CRITERIA A & J: HANNAH ANN ZELL (1820-1911)**

From 1868 to 1911, *Heartsease* was the quaint cottage and dear home of Miss Hannah Ann Zell (1820-1911), a “Prominent Germantown Woman,” a single Quakeress, who devoted her long life to charity, civic affairs, historic preservation, libraries, and various advocacy and fundraising efforts for all manner of causes. While not of great wealth, the comfortable, upper middle-class station to which she was born endowed her with the ability to make significant contributions to both the City of Philadelphia, where she was born, and the local Germantown community, where her ancestors witnessed the Battle of Germantown and she resided for most of her adult life. *Heartsease* represents its original owner and longtime resident, Miss Zell, who lived a life that involved making important contributions to society, directly influencing the cultural, political, economic, social and historical heritage of the community.



Figure 11. The 800 block of Market Street, including 800 Market Street, which may have been the building where Thomas Zell conducted his hardware business. Source: Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Database.

At the time of Hannah Ann Zell’s birth in 1820, her parents, Thomas Zell (1792-1848) and Hannah Ogden Zell (1789-1873) resided in the heart of Philadelphia, near the corner of Eighth and Market Streets, where at 272 High Street (later Market Street) her father was a successful hardware merchant. Born at Walnut Grove, a farm adjacent to the Merion Meeting House in Montgomery County, Thomas Zell (shown in Figure 12), in addition to his commercial endeavors, was governed by a strict moral compass that would influence his offspring. He was a founder of the Spruce Street Meeting, an early donor to and longtime officer in the House of Refuge, a Manager of the Provident Society for the Employment of the Poor, and a highly active leader in other charitable causes, including feeding and housing the poor and homeless.<sup>1</sup> In addition to Hannah Ann Zell, he and Hannah Ogden Zell (shown in Figure 13) had four other children: Jane Meng Zell (1815-1875); Margaretta Esther Zell Smith (1817-1900); Mary Dorothea Zell Colahan (1822-1899); and Colonel Thomas Ellwood Zell (1828-1905).<sup>2</sup>



Figure 12. Left: A post-mortem photograph of Thomas Zell in 1848. Figure 13. Second from left: Hannah Ogden Zell in 1863. Figure 14. Third from left: Margaretta Zell Smith. Figure 15. Fourth from left: Pemberton Smith in 1866. Source: The Mary Pancoast Prichett (1845-1924) Albums, in possession of Leslie Coulson, via Laura Bligh of Cassidy-Fagan Cousins. Figure 16. Fifth from left: Mary Dorothea Zell Colahan. Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant. Figure 17. Right: Thomas Elwood Zell, dressed in his uniform, in 1862. Source: The Mary Pancoast Prichett (1845-1924) Albums, in possession of Leslie Coulson, via Laura Bligh of Cassidy-Fagan Cousins.

<sup>1</sup> *A Brief Memoir of Thomas Zell.* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, Printers, 1859).; “Provident Society,” *The National Gazette*, 13 January 1826, 2.; “Obituary Notice of Thomas Zell,” *Burlington Gazette*, 3 November 1848.; and Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell.* (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>2</sup> LC Bligh Family Tree, Ancestry.com.

In time, Thomas Zell removed to 298 High Street (likely later 800 Market Street), situated at the southwest corner of Eighth Street—likely the building shown in Figure 11, where he continued his business, eventually entering into partnership with his son-in-law, Pemberton Smith (1816-1873), who married his daughter Margaretta Esther Zell (shown in Figure 14) in 1838. The partnership was known as Thomas Zell & Company, and later as Zell & Smith.<sup>3</sup> Due unto his poor health, Thomas Zell retired, leaving the business in the hands of Pemberton Smith (shown in Figure 15). This transition included building a house at Burlington, New Jersey in 1847, where he lived briefly until his death in 1848.<sup>4</sup> All of these details regarding Miss Zell’s father certainly shaped her life and long-term financial situation.

Like her father, Hannah Ann Zell was a lifelong Quaker, a religious devotion that included her primary education at the Friends School associated with the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting. According to an unpublished biography, Miss Zell studied “in the school of that great educator Sarah Pugh” (1800-1884), the American abolitionist, activist, suffragist, and teacher. In 1827, at just seven years old, Miss Zell witnessed the great schism that occurred within the Society of Friends over Elias Hicks and, ultimately, an official position on Slavery. Two factions of Quakers emerged: Orthodox and Hicksite.<sup>5</sup> Due to the Zells’ eventual, longtime membership in the School House Lane Meeting at Germantown, it appears that the family was part of the Hicksite faction. The great schism also led Sarah Pugh to open her own school in 1829, temporarily at a Walnut Street location, which she achieved with the assistance of her friend Rachel Peirce. In 1831, the small, nascent school was moved “to Cherry Street below Eleventh, in the second story of Jacob Peirce’s commodious school-house (his boys’ school was on the first floor).”<sup>6</sup> Hannah Anna Zell appears to have attended Sarah Pugh’s new school, which is supported by the following passage in the aforementioned unpublished biography:

This school was self-governed. At the end of each week each pupil was obliged to answer in writing the question, “Have I been careful to do unto others as I would have them do unto me”? [sic.] Thus the law of kindness instead of the spirit of selfishness was made to govern my actions.<sup>7</sup>

While her formal schooling was largely in Philadelphia, various sources indicate that Hannah Ann Zell “was sent abroad to complete her education.”<sup>8</sup>

The values of her father Thomas Zell were clearly aligned with those of her teacher Sarah Pugh, as the former “required that each child should become a member of some society for the relief of

---

<sup>3</sup> *Genealogical and family history of western New York*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912), 201.; and *M’Elroy’s Philadelphia Directory for the Year 1840*. (Philadelphia: 1840), 284.

<sup>4</sup> “Hannah Ann Zell A Notable Woman,” *The Public Ledger*, 5 February 1911.

<sup>5</sup> A History of Green Street Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia.

<https://greenstreetfriendsmeeting.org/about.php#:~:text=A%20History%20of%20Green%20Street%20Monthly%20Meeting%20of%20Friends%20of%20Philadelphia> Accessed on 18 December 2022.

<sup>6</sup> *Memorial of Sarah Pugh: A Tribute of Respect from Her Cousins*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1888), 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Memorial of Sarah Pugh: A Tribute of Respect from Her Cousins*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1888), 13.

<sup>8</sup> “Miss Hannah Zell is 91. Venerable Member of Noted Family Believer in Hard Work.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 January 1911, 16.



the poor, thus giving his children a chance to remember others in life.”<sup>9</sup> Hannah Ann Zell was just seventeen in 1837 when she became affiliated with the Western Association of Ladies for the Relief and Employment of the Poor, one of the earliest job training programs for indigent women in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Serving as Secretary of the institution for approximately sixteen years, during the 1850s and 1860s, she took minutes and drafted many organizational reports.<sup>11</sup> Thus her lifelong commitment to community and social services was established.

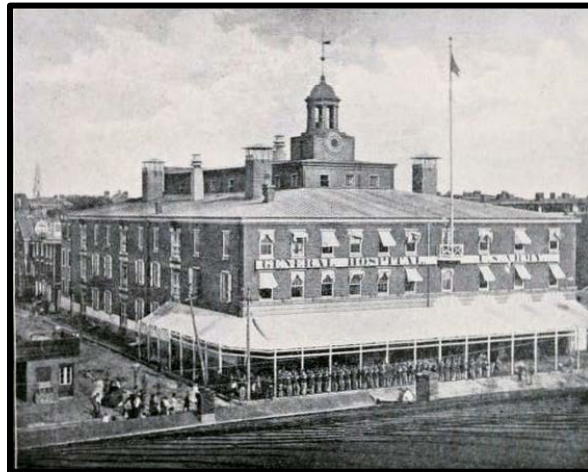


Figure 18. The old General Hospital at Broad and Cherry Streets, where Hannah Ann Zell served as nurse during the early years of the Civil War. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

When the American Civil War broke out, Hannah Ann Zell and her family proved to be “devoted to their country.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, Thomas Ellwood Zell, the only son and brother, enlisted in the Union Army, ultimately rising to the rank of Colonel. While the war raged, Miss Zell served as a nurse for wounded soldiers under “Dr. Neill, a most splendid officer,” in the old General Hospital at Broad and Cherry Streets (Figure 18).<sup>13</sup> “The hours were from 9 in the morning until 6 at night every day, rain or shine. Many letters from the dying boys were written, and many heart-breaking scenes were witnessed.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>10</sup> Roy Ziegler. *Unfaltering Trust: How Pilgrim Edward Fitz Randolph Jr. and His Descendants Helped Build America*. (United Kingdom: iUniverse, 2019).; and *A Brief Sketch of The Female Association of Philadelphia for the Relief of the Sick and Infirm Poor with Clothing, &C.* (Philadelphia: Friends Book Association, 1879), 8.

<sup>11</sup> *A List of Some of the Benevolent Institutions of the City of Philadelphia and Their Legal Titles: Together with a Form of Devise and Bequest to Them*. (United States, Henry B. Ashmead, 1859).; *City Directory*. (Philadelphia: 1863).; Hannah Ann Zell. *Report of the Board of Managers of the Western Association of Ladies for the Relief and Employment of the Poor*. (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw, 1854).; Hannah Ann Zell. *Report of the Board of Managers of the Western Association of Ladies for the Relief and Employment of the Poor*. (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw Publisher, 1866).; and Roy Ziegler. *The Parrys of Philadelphia and New Hope*. (United Kingdom: iUniverse, 2011), 90.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.



Figures 19, 20 and 21. Top: The Zells, including Hannah Ogden Zell, Jane Meng Zell, and Hannah Ann Zell, as they appeared in 1862, just before their removal to Germantown. Source: The Mary Pancoast Prichett (1845-1924) Albums, in possession of Leslie Coulson, via Laura Bligh of Cassidy-Fagan Cousins. Figure 22. Bottom: Cuyler Hospital, Town Hall, Germantown, ca. 1864-65. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

Between 1863 and 1864, Hannah Ogden Zell (shown in Figure 19) and her unmarried daughters, Jane Meng Zell (shown in Figure 20) and Hannah Anna Zell (shown in Figure 21), moved from Center City to Germantown, initially occupying a house in East Price Street.<sup>15</sup> The Zells began attending the School House Lane Meeting (shown in Figure 23), now known as the Green Street Monthly Meeting. Just a block from the Orthodox Friends, this faction of Quakers purchased the School House Lane site in 1828 after the schism in order to provide a meeting place for the Hicksites of Germantown.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> “Miss Zell Active Until Her End At 91,” *The Post-Gazette*, 3 February 1911.

<sup>16</sup> A History of Green Street Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia.

<https://greenstreetfriendsmeeting.org/about.php#:~:text=A%20History%20of%20Green%20Street%20Monthly%20Meeting%20of%20Friends%20of%20Philadelphia> Accessed on 18 December 2022.



Figure 23. The School House Lane Meeting, now the Green Street Monthly Meeting. Source: Pictures of Meetinghouses - City of Philadelphia --<https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/hcmc-911>.

In later years, Miss Zell would recall visiting the site of the School House Lane Meeting when it was undergoing improvements:

When it was decided to build the new school house on Greene Street, the old one was torn down, and although the appearance of the grounds was greatly improved, yet many felt a regret to see the old landmark removed.<sup>17</sup>

Moving to Germantown also led Miss Zell to join the local Field Hospital Association. She transferred her nursing services to Cuyler Hospital, a temporary facility installed in the Town Hall at Germantown (shown in Figure 22). There she worked with women like Catherine Keyser to care for soldiers wounded at Gettysburg and other battles.<sup>18</sup> She was eventually appointed Secretary of the Field Hospital Association, occupying that office until the close of the Civil War. This naturally propelled her involvement in organizing the Great Central Fair, a Sanitary Fair, that took place in June 1864 at Logan Square in Philadelphia, an event put on to “contribute material aide to the relief and comfort of the soldier.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, after the Civil War, in the fall of 1865, Miss Zell was involved in organizing a fundraiser at the Academy of Music, which raised money for the

---

<sup>17</sup> Charles F. Jenkins, President. *Germantown History: Consisting of Papers Read Before the Site & Relic Society of Germantown*. (Germantown: The Society, 1915).

<sup>18</sup> Eugene G. Stackhouse. *Germantown in the Civil War*. (The History Press, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Charles J. Stille. *Memorial of the Great Central Fair for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, held at Philadelphia, June 1864*. (Philadelphia: U.S. Sanitary Commission, 1864).; Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.; and “Special Notices,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 April 1864, 5.



Soldiers' and Sailors' Home.<sup>20</sup> These are just a few examples of her involvement with the Field Hospital Association during the Civil War.

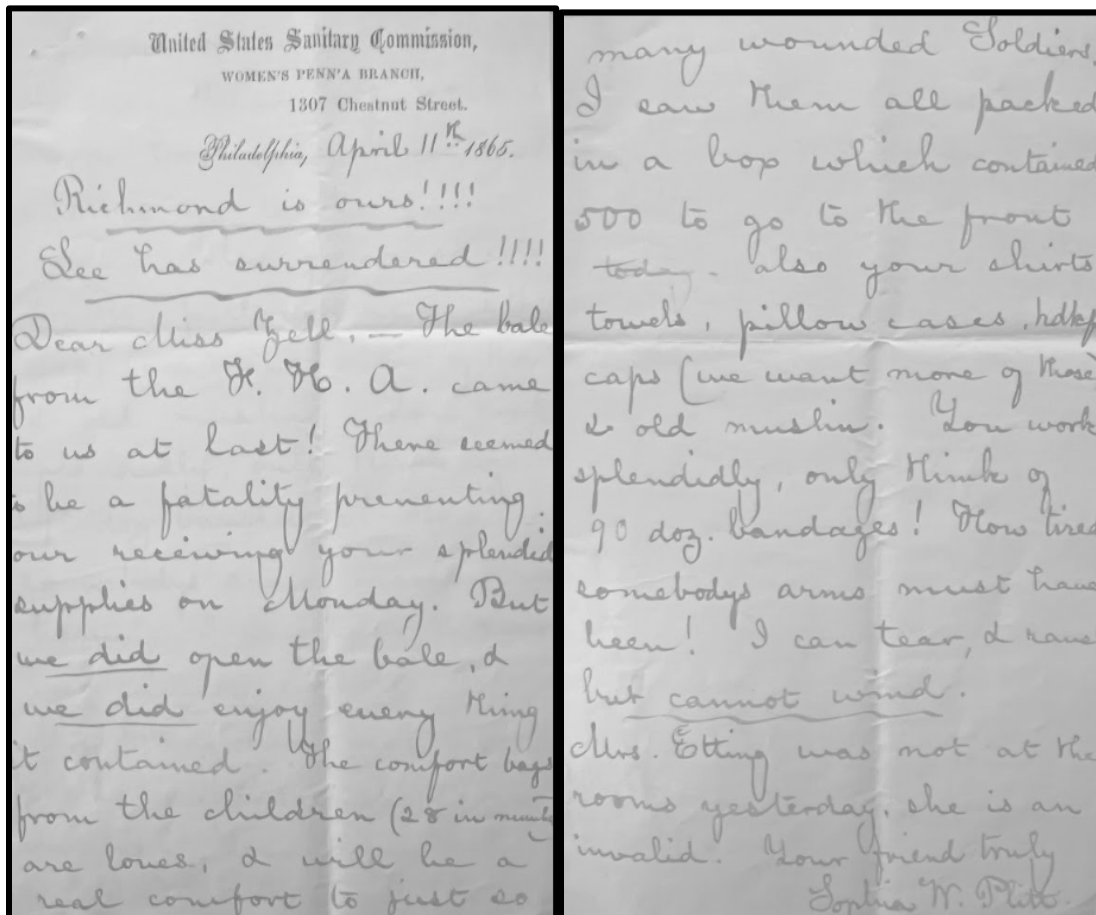


Figure 24. A letter demonstrating the type of work Hannah Ann Zell conducted as part of the Field Hospital Association. Source: Letter: Sophia W. Platt to Hannah Ann Zell, 11 April 1865, via the Germantown Historical Society.

Like U.S. President James Buchanan (1791-1868), Hannah Ann Zell contended that her “fiancé” died before the relationship could be solemnized, and, as a result, she resolved never to marry anyone else or so the story goes.<sup>21</sup> Her great-nephew, L.E. Fagan, Jr., preserved a carte de visite labeled “Benoni Sprague, fiancé of Hannah Zell, my great aunt.”<sup>22</sup> The photograph is actually of William Sprague, IV (1799-1856), the fourteenth Governor of Rhode Island, who was married in 1821, when Hannah Ann Zell was just one year old. Mrs. William Sprague, IV remained his wife until her death in 1885. That said, the man depicted had a son named Benoni Sprague (1830-1855), who died unmarried at age twenty-five.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that there was some confusion as to why Miss Zell never married. This is important to note because of the positive and negative aspects associated with being a single woman in the nineteenth century. While she was able to

<sup>20</sup> “The Fair.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 October 1865, 1.

<sup>21</sup> “Miss Zell Active Until Her End At 91,” *The Independent-Gazette*, 3 February 1911.

<sup>22</sup> This photograph was posted to the Cassidy-Fagan Facebook page by Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>23</sup> The Wilson Family Tree, sponsored by Linda Dey, Ancestry.com.

keep and control her own financial resources, Miss Zell almost certainly experienced the hardships associated with her untraditional path, which she appears to have successfully overcome.

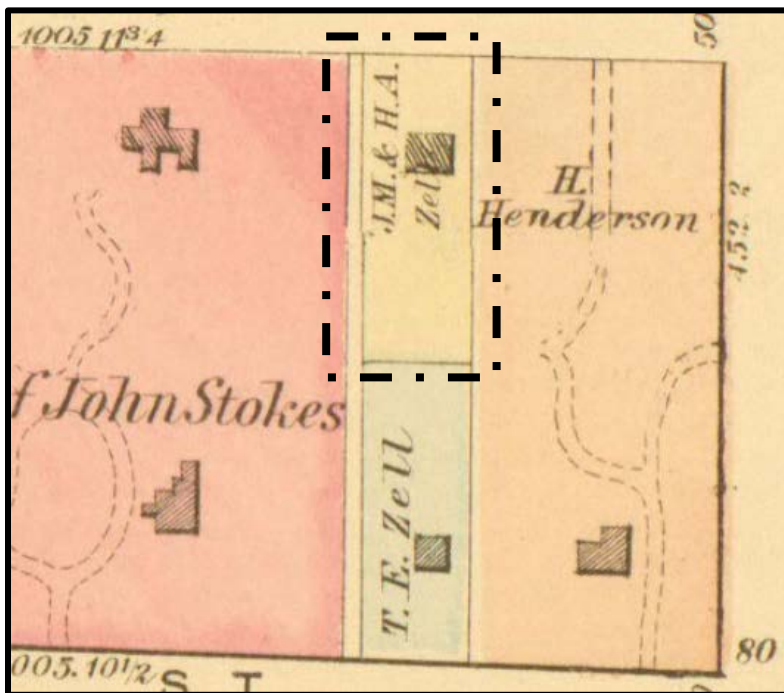


Figure 25. 1871 Germantown Atlas, showing *Heartsease*, the subject property at the top center, facing Locust Avenue, with Colonel T. Elwood Zell’s house below, facing Church Lane. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

In January 1866, the Misses Zell, including Hannah Ann Zell and her sister Jane Meng Zell, purchased a lot at 724 Locust Avenue (then known as Armat Street) from brothers Abraham R. and Samuel F. Bockius for \$166.66 under certain terms and conditions in the newly developed subdivision of Linden Place.<sup>24</sup> The large lot, measuring 100 feet front by 225 feet in depth was designed for one detached cottage, being immediately adjacent to the property of Colonel Thomas Ellwood Zell at 723 Church Lane. Soon after, a charming Gothic Revival cottage, the subject house, was constructed on the site, perhaps on designs by an architect like James Charles Sidney (1819-1881) or even from a revered pattern book. The Zells appear to have been in residence by 1868. The house was lovingly named *Heartsease*, because, according to Miss Zell, “it was surrounded by friends.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Deed: Abraham R. Bockius, et. al. to Jane M. Zell and Hannah Ann Zell, 1 January 1866, Philadelphia Deed Book J.T.O., No. 19, 124.; and Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

**T**HE GERMANTOWN LIBRARY ASSOCI-  
ation was organized at their room, No. 4808  
Main street, Dec. 11, 1869. The following ladies  
were elected a Board of Directors:  
MISS H. A. ZELL, President.  
MRS. S. C. FERGUSON, Secretary.  
MRS. RED. F. WARNER, Treasurer.  
Mrs. Hodman Wharton, Miss Elizabeth Dorsey,  
Miss E. Stevenson, Miss Annie W. Evans,  
Miss Sarah Pugh, Mrs. Moses Brown,  
Mrs. J. Henry Tilge, Mrs. J. Blandy,  
Miss E. R. Fisher, Miss Sarah F. Corlies,  
Mrs. J. L. Baily.  
The Library will be open on Wednesdays  
from 10½ A. M. to 12½ P. M. On Saturdays  
from 3 to 4½ P. M. Shares \$5, with annual sub-  
scriptions of \$2 each.

Figure 26. An advertisement for the Germantown Library Association, showing Hannah Ann Zell as the first president. Source: *The Daily Chronicle*, 15 December 1869, 4.

Rather than simply rusticate at *Heartsease*, Hannah Ann Zell found that her newly established residence at East Germantown had certain deficiencies, which led her to establish the Germantown Library Association in 1869 (Figure 26). Miss Zell was the first and only president until her death in 1911.<sup>26</sup> In fairness, she actually established the organization with her sister Jane Meng Zell, who initiated the conversation: “Hannah, I think it’s a shame that Germantown has no public library and I am going to see that it gets one.”<sup>27</sup> The Misses Zell set out to start the library and did indeed accomplish that goal with Hannah Ann Zell proving to be the more active of the two sisters. “When founded it served a useful purpose,” this being Germantown’s first library, “there being few public libraries in the city at that time.”<sup>28</sup> Much like the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, the Library of Company of Philadelphia, and other membership and subscription organizations, the new Germantown Library Association “started with 100 members who each bought one share of stock,” the printed certificates being furnished by Colonel Thomas Ellwood Zell, who was, by then, a prominent publisher.<sup>29</sup> In organizing the Germantown Library Association, Miss Zell conferred with the Lloyd Pearsol Smith of the Library Company of Philadelphia, who kindly provided advise on subscription libraries.<sup>30</sup> An article on the Germantown Library Association includes the following details on its foundational history:

In starting movement for a more general library the Misses Zell found no trouble in interesting many of their friends and soon 100 shares of stock at five dollars a share was subscribed for. A little room over a dry goods store was acquired and with a single bookcase, containing forty-eight volumes, the library made its bow to Germantown.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Library Journal*, January 1914, 65.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 December 1869, 3.

<sup>27</sup> “From The Women, By The Women, Such is Germantown’s Successful Public Library and Historical Association, Founded in a Bookshelf, The Volunteer Librarians Are Delightful Women—Not an Officer of the Sterner Sex—Was Miss Zell’s Work,” Unknown Newspaper, ca.1894. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>28</sup> *Library Journal*, January 1914, 65.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell*. (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

<sup>30</sup> Letter: Lloyd Pearsol Smith, Library Company of Philadelphia, to Miss Zell, February 1870. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

<sup>31</sup> “From The Women, By The Women, Such is Germantown’s Successful Public Library and Historical Association, Founded in a Bookshelf, The Volunteer Librarians Are Delightful Women—Not an Officer of the Sterner Sex—Was Miss Zell’s Work,” Unknown Newspaper, ca.1894. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.



Despite the ownership of shares, the organization offered free reading rooms, which were generally open daily.<sup>32</sup> Like her work on other important causes, including Civil War hospitals, Hannah Ann Zell powered this small institution through the volunteer efforts of other charitable-minded ladies.<sup>33</sup> Adding to the library's collection of books and magazines little by little, there were 6,809 volumes by 1900.<sup>34</sup> Miss Zell's keen interest in local history propelled her to begin a collection on Germantown's heritage in 1882. The organization was soon re-incorporated as the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society.<sup>35</sup> A newspaper article on the organization and its history includes the following details:

Another interesting feature of the library is its historical department, which although in its infancy has already secured a valuable collection of pictures of some of the historical time honored places of Germantown. Several volumes of old books have been presented to the library, and are carefully preserved. In their last annual report the directors say on this point "The directors have done their best to make the library an attractive spot wherein to preserve the memorials of ancient Germantown and would be most thankful for further donations to this department, either in books, documents, pictures, china or furniture, which may now be stored away in some attic uncared for."<sup>36</sup>

Miss Zell, along with her fellows, would continue to compile items related to Germantown's history for the remainder of her life. In 1901, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt (1832-1907), a prominent Germantown resident, captured one such specific instance of Miss Zell's collecting in his diary:

Lucy and Miss Zell went in our wagon, this morning to Megarge's, on Mermaid Lane, and obtained some relics of the past for the Germantown Library; viz. a rifle, a gun, waffle irons, tongs, etc. The rifle is said to have belong to Francis Daniel Pastorius! As he was Quaker? These things are gifts to the Library.<sup>37</sup>

Subsequent to the establishment of the Germantown Library Association, at least three other libraries were open to the residents of Germantown by the close of the century, which ultimately caused Miss Zell's organization to disband in January 1915.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the "historical department" was transferred to the Site & Relic Society, an organization to be discussed later in this nomination.

Like most communities in the nineteenth century, aide for the poor was administered in Germantown through "churches, lodges, and the like;" however, no specific agency or society was

---

<sup>32</sup> *Boyd's Co-Partnership and Residence Business Directory*. (Philadelphia: C.E. Howe Company, 1900), 90.

<sup>33</sup> *Library Journal*, January 1914, 65.

<sup>34</sup> *Boyd's Co-Partnership and Residence Business Directory*. (Philadelphia: C.E. Howe Company, 1900), 90.

<sup>35</sup> *The Germantown Crier*, Fall 1991, v.43, no.4, 89.

<sup>36</sup> "From The Women, By The Women, Such is Germantown's Successful Public Library and Historical Association, Founded in a Bookshelf, The Volunteer Librarians Are Delightful Women—Not an Officer of the Sterner Sex—Was Miss Zell's Work," Unknown Newspaper, ca.1894. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Cornelius Nolen Weygandt. Diary (1901), 4 November 1901, Diary, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt Papers 1849-1907, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>38</sup> *Library Journal*, January 1914, 65.

founded until 1873, when Rev. Charles G. Ames “outlined a plan to form an association of charitably disposed persons who could meet privately [to] consider the needs of persons who were passing through a period of stress.” Chief among those charitable-minded Germantown citizens was Hannah Ann Zell, “who became the first President of the Germantown Relief Society,” described as follows in an article on the organization published in *The Beehive* in 1928:<sup>39</sup>

Living quietly in her beautiful cottage, still standing at 704 Locust Avenue [sic.], she usually was first to be on hand when distressing circumstances made it necessary. Miss Zell and a coterie of her friends preferred to do their work quietly.<sup>40</sup>

The Germantown Relief Society went on to be associated with 21 Harvey Street for many years, celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the time of the aforementioned *Beehive* article.<sup>41</sup>

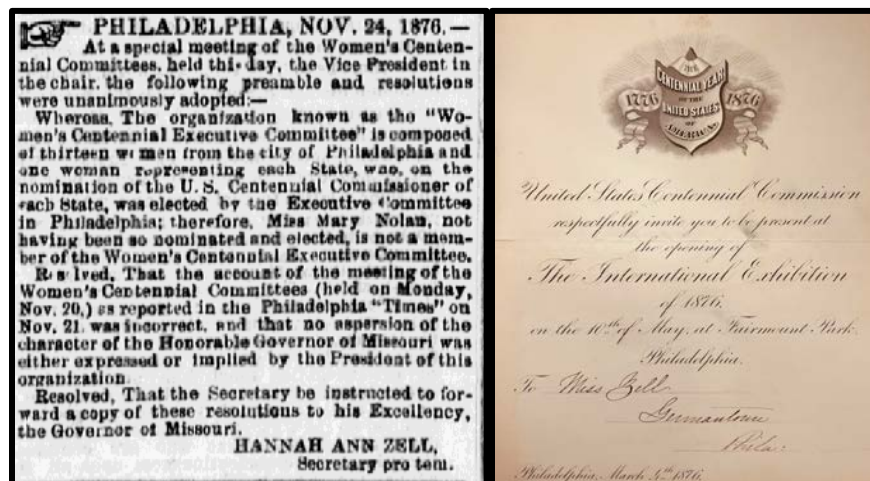


Figure 27. Left: A notice regarding the Women’s Centennial Committees, written by Hanna Ann Zell. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 November 1876, 4. Figure 28. Right: Hannah Ann Zell’s invitation to the opening of the International Exhibition of 1876. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

After the death of her mother in 1874 and, soon after, her sister in 1875, Hannah Ann Zell would live on her own income, likely from inheritance, at *Heartsease*, as a single lady—in those days being rather unkindly labeled a spinster. As she matured in age, so did her personal discernment for charitable endeavors, evolving from commonly known Quaker causes to civic matters including arts, culture, and heritage. The general spirit in anticipation of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in her native city led Miss Zell to active membership in the Women’s Centennial Committee, where she served first as “Secretary pro tem” and, later, appointed on March 24, 1876, as the official 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward leader and representative.<sup>42</sup> This instigated an official invitation and her

<sup>39</sup> Paul L. Taggart. “Germantown Relief Society, Oldest Relief Society in the United States,” *The Beehive*, March 1928.

<sup>40</sup> Paul L. Taggart. “Germantown Relief Society, Oldest Relief Society in the United States,” *The Beehive*, March 1928.

<sup>41</sup> Paul L. Taggart. “Germantown Relief Society, Oldest Relief Society in the United States,” *The Beehive*, March 1928.

<sup>42</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 November 1876, 4.; and Letter: Caroline E. White, Secretary of the Women’s Department of the International Exhibition, to Hannah Ann Zell, 26 March 1876. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

attendance at the opening ceremonies of The International Exhibition of 1876 on May 10 in Fairmont Park, also known as the Centennial Grounds.<sup>43</sup> Hannah Ann Zell's scrapbook, now in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, contains a telegraph from Elizabeth Duane Gillispie to Miss Zell, requesting her attendance at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Women's Pavilion (shown in Figure 29). The scrapbook even includes remnants of soil, which she preserved from the "first spade full" at the groundbreaking ceremony (shown in Figure 29).<sup>44</sup> Mrs. Gillispie's position as President of The Women's Centennial Committee (Figure 30) was no doubt at least partly based on her place in society as the great granddaughter of Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. As a result, it appears that Miss Zell had great reverence for Mrs. Gillispie. During her time as Chairman of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward, she organized and attended numerous events, including, but not limited to "The Presentation of Flags;" The Opening Ceremonies of The International Exhibition in 1876; The Opening Ceremonies of The International Exhibition of 1877; etc.<sup>45</sup>

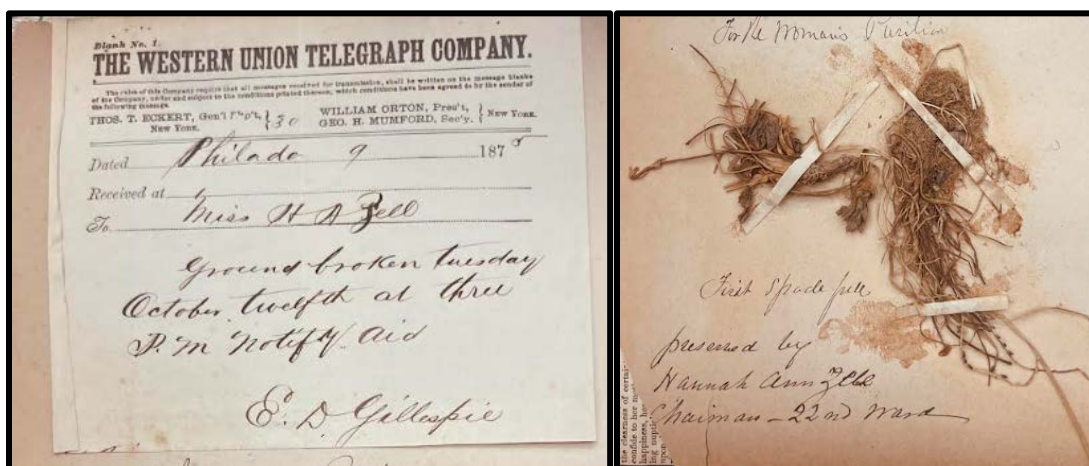


Figure 29. A page out of the Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, showing her telegraph from Mrs. Elizabeth Duane Gillespie (on left) and the "first spade full" of dirt from the groundbreaking for the Women's Pavilion (on right). Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Invitation: United States Centennial Commission to Miss Zell, Germantown, Phila., 4 March 1876. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>45</sup> Invitation: International Exhibition Company to Miss Zell of Philadelphia, 2 April 1877. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.





Figure 30. The Women's Centennial Committee with Elizabeth Duane Gillispie, Chairman, at center. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

After the Centennial, the special interest in a permanent exhibit would naturally parlay into Hannah Ann Zell's lifelong affiliation with the Associate Committee of Women, which served the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, which would ultimately become the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>46</sup> Miss Zell was included in a small party that met President William McKinley in June 1897, among numerous other events.<sup>47</sup> She was also instrumental in organizing innumerable fundraisers for their cause over the years.

---

<sup>46</sup> *Report of the Associate Committee of Women, 1910-1911*. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, 1910-11), 58-59.

<sup>47</sup> Letter: F.S. Magee, Secretary of the Trustees of the School of Industrial Art, to Hannah Ann Zell, June 1897. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

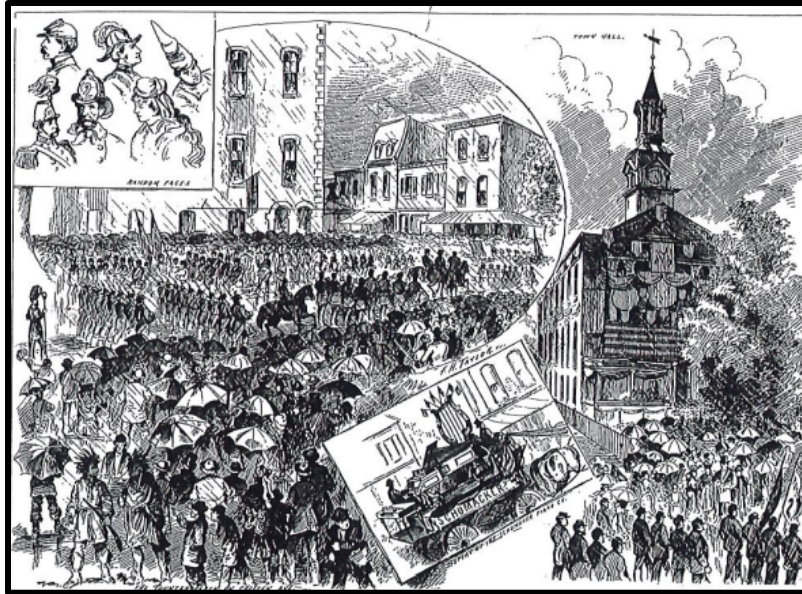


Figure 31. “A sketch by a special artist for *The Daily Graphic*, New York, October 9, 1877, showing Germantown’s centennial celebration of The Battle.” Source: *The Germantown Crier*, Fall 1991, v.43, no.4, 89-91.

It was during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that she became an important voice for historic preservation and public history in Germantown. A descendant of Melchoir Meng (1726-1812) and Anna Maria Magdalena Colladay (1731-1764), Miss Zell preserved the recollections of her grandmother, Anna Dorothea “Dorothy” Meng (1754-1844), who witnessed the Battle of Germantown in October 1777 from her family home on the site of what is now Vernon Park. Relaying these memories on many occasions over the years, Miss Zell would go on write “How Grandmother Dorothy Meng Saw The Battle of Germantown,” an account on the subject, printed in various publications and delivered in several public orations.<sup>48</sup> No doubt propelled by this connection, it was “the historically minded Zell who led a committee of local women in organizing a centennial celebration of the Battle of Germantown in October 1877” (Figure 31).<sup>49</sup> “Like the fete for Lafayette a half a century before, the day featured a large procession up Germantown Avenue to the Chew mansion.”<sup>50</sup> Miss Zell preserved many of her own family’s heirlooms, and worked to exhibit them in the public realm on many occasions. In 1893, some of her “Colonial Relics” were on display at the Columbian Exhibition at Chicago.<sup>51</sup> The *Record-Union* of Sacramento, California highlighted Miss Zell’s efforts related to the “Colonial exhibits” that were “unveiled in the rotunda of the United States Government building,” also known as the Temple of the Republic, a building that figured significantly in the White City.<sup>52</sup>

In 1901, Miss Zell’s inclination towards historic preservation was exhibited when her Germantown Library Association and Historical Society stated in the *North American*, a Philadelphia

<sup>48</sup> Charles F. Jenkins, President. *Germantown History: Consisting of Papers Read Before the Site & Relic Society of Germantown*. (Germantown: The Society, 1915).

<sup>49</sup> *The Germantown Crier*, Fall 1991, v.43, no.4, 89-91.

<sup>50</sup> *The Germantown Crier*, Fall 1991, v.43, no.4, 89-91.

<sup>51</sup> “Colonial Relics,” *Intelligencer Journal*, 15 April 1893, 1.

<sup>52</sup> “At the Fair.” *The Record-Union*, 13 June 1893, 6.



publication, that Cliveden, the Chew Mansion, the site of the Battle of Germantown, should be “taken for a public park, as a memorial of the Battle of Germantown.” This idea was soon squelched by the longtime residents—the Chew family.<sup>53</sup>



Figure 32. The portrait of Hannah Ann Zell, painted in 1896 by Caroline West Van Helden (1847-1924). Source: Germantown Historical Society.

Nevertheless, Hannah Ann Zell was ultimately one of the strongest proponents for the preservation of historic, Colonial-era buildings in Germantown. While the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society would always be maintained under her auspices, she also a founding member and officer of the Site & Relic Society of Germantown when it formed in 1900. In fact, it

---

<sup>53</sup> Cornelius Nolen Weygandt. Diary (1901), 15 October 1901, Diary, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt Papers 1849-1907, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

was Cornelius N. Weygandt who informed this largely male group that Miss Zell should be appointed as Vice President.<sup>54</sup> The official charter was granted in February 1901 by Common Pleas Court No. 3, after being petitioned by more than 150 residents of Germantown.<sup>55</sup> Despite being 81 years old and, by this time visually impaired, she was indeed appointed one of the first Vice Presidents.<sup>56</sup> The Site & Relic Society was responsible for erecting numerous “bronze tablets,” historic markers, in Germantown, which ennobled many historic landmarks that still stand today.<sup>57</sup> Miss Zell was certainly part of this movement, as is remember by Cornelius N. Weygandt in this 1901 diary entry:

In the evening at 8. o'clock, I had a meeting at our house of the Tablet Come. of the Site & Relic Society, of which I am Chairman. Present besides me G. Moore, Revd. Mr. Hill of Mt. Airy (Episcopal), Barrett & Poley. Just a quorum. We amended & adopted an inscription for the Middleton house on the Limekiln Pike, and accepted the lettering for several tablets, viz. Market Square Church, the Rittenhouse Paper Mill, the house of David Rittenhouse, and the Monastery. I presented Miss Zell's appeal to have the names of the founders placed on the Academy tablets, and it was resolved to place the subject before the Trustees of the Academy.<sup>58</sup>

Figure 9 also demonstrates her involvement in the placement of historic markers and tours of Germantown, where she stands at the center of the stoop of the famous Billmeyer House with a crowd gathered below. On April 18, 1902, she delivered an address to the Site & Relic Society on “The School House Lane Friends Meeting.”<sup>59</sup> On May 29, 1903, she delivered an address to the Site & Relic Society on “How Grandmother Dorothy Meng Saw the Battle of Germantown.”<sup>60</sup> Both of these would later be included in *Germantown History*, a collection of papers, published in 1915 by the Site & Relic Society. The Site & Relic Society of Germantown would ultimately merge with the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society to become the Germantown Historical Society, affiliated today with Historic Germantown.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Cornelius Nolen Weygandt. Diary (1902), 18 March 1902, Diary, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt Papers 1849-1907, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>55</sup> “Will Keep Historic Memories Fragrant,” *The Philadelphia Times*, 9 February 1901, 3.

<sup>56</sup> “Will Keep Historic Memories Fragrant,” *The Philadelphia Times*, 9 February 1901, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Charles F. Jenkins, President. *Germantown History: Consisting of Papers Read Before the Site & Relic Society of Germantown*. (Germantown: The Society, 1915).

<sup>58</sup> Cornelius Nolen Weygandt. Diary (1902), 18 March 1902, Diary, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt Papers 1849-1907, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>59</sup> *The Philadelphia Times*, 26 April 1902, 13.; and Charles F. Jenkins, President. *Germantown History: Consisting of Papers Read Before the Site & Relic Society of Germantown*. (Germantown: The Society, 1915).

<sup>60</sup> Charles F. Jenkins, President. *Germantown History: Consisting of Papers Read Before the Site & Relic Society of Germantown*. (Germantown: The Society, 1915).

<sup>61</sup> “The Site and Relic Society of Germantown,” *The Germantown Crier*, Winter 1989-90, 2.





Figure 33. An article on Hannah Ann Zell’s involvement in working to preserve Vernon Park. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

While Vernon Park was saved through the efforts of Councilman Thomas Meehan on behalf of Germantown residents when it was made a public park in 1892, the fate of the “Wister Mansion” or “Vernon House” and several features of the landscape remained under threat for many years.<sup>62</sup> Hannah Ann Zell was one of the principal advocates for preserving the historic integrity of the property, and her zeal for this cause was demonstrated in a fiery Letter to the Editor of the local *Independent-Gazette* in January 1904.<sup>63</sup> As noted in other publications, her efforts were backed by the Site & Relic Society and the City History Club.<sup>64</sup> As a woman who was born and died long before the advent of historic preservation laws, Miss Zell no doubt leveraged her considerable influence and local renown to recognize the rich eighteenth-century history of Germantown and safeguard as many of its historic buildings as possible.

Hannah Ann Zell was always a great fundraiser and event planner. One of her noted parties was in June 1885, when the Board of Directors of the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society held a fundraiser at Torworth, the “beautiful shady inclosure [sic.] in Germantown, recently purchased by Mr. Justus [sic.] Strawbridge.” This event took the form of a “Germantown Lawn Fete.”<sup>65</sup> That same year she one of a few women to organize a “dancing party” at Parker’s Hall in Germantown, yet another fundraiser for the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society.<sup>66</sup> In 1893, Miss Zell was instrumental in organizing the “annual play” in Germantown, reflecting on “Colonial Days,” which was held to raise funds for the People’s Institute of Germantown.<sup>67</sup> In February 1896, she was one of eight women who organized and hosted the “Midwinter Performance” of the Philadelphia Amateur Comedy Club at the “Manheim Casino,” known today as the Germantown Cricket Club, to raise money for Hahnemann Hospital.<sup>68</sup> In April 1899, the Germantown Dramatic Club presented “Robertson’s delightful comedy,”

<sup>62</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 July 1892, 7.

<sup>63</sup> “Miss Zell Protests.,” *The Independent Gazette*, 30 January 1904.

<sup>64</sup> “Save Vernon Park,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 7 February 1904.

<sup>65</sup> “Germantown Lawn Fete,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 June 1885, 2.

<sup>66</sup> “In Society.” *The Times*, 18 January 1885, 2.

<sup>67</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 March 1893, 15.

<sup>68</sup> “Our Regiment,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 February 1896, 7.

“David Garrick” at St. Vincent’s Hall in Germantown to raise funds for the Germantown Hospital. Miss Zell was among the patronesses.<sup>69</sup>

In January 1896, Hannah Ann Zell was immortalized by the Germantown community when a large portrait of the great lady was commissioned to be displayed in the rooms of the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society. Illustrated in Figure 32, the portrait was painted by Caroline West Van Helden (1847-1924), a Philadelphia-based artist known for her portraiture. The picture was originally displayed at Earle’s gallery for one week before being installed in the rooms of the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society.<sup>70</sup> As shown in this nomination, the painting was reproduced in many newspaper articles of the period. Like most of the “Historical Department,” Miss Zell’s large portrait was transferred to the Site & Relic Society of Germantown; it now dominates the Pat Henning Library of the Germantown Historical Society.

During the twilight of her life, she is said to have founded approximately sixteen libraries in small towns across Pennsylvania, likely employing the same model she had used in 1869 with lessons learned. It was also around this time that she was a charter member of the Welcome Society, an organization founded to unite and honor the descendants of those who arrived with William Penn on the Welcome in 1683. In her eighties she was fortunate to have her niece Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, the granddaughter of Mary Dorothea Zell Colahan, in residence at *Heartsease* as a caregiver. This extended family may have included her niece’s husband, Hugh Gilbert Cassidy (1865-1933), and some of their children.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> *The Philadelphia Times*, 9 April 1899, 20.

<sup>70</sup> “Woman’s Interests.,” *Unknown Newspaper*, 30 January 1896. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910 (NARA microfilm publication T624, 1,178 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

## WOMAN GIVES TEA ON 90TH BIRTHDAY



MISS HANNAH ANN ZELL

### Miss Hannah Ann Zell, of Germantown, Entertains Her Many Friends to Com- memorate Anniversary

**Y**EARs are no barrier to the entertaining qualities of Miss Hannah Ann Zell. Yesterday, to observe the ninetieth anniversary of her birth, Miss Zell, whose vitality is remarkable, gave a tea to her many friends at her home, 724 Locust avenue, Germantown.

Mrs. James Bayard, Mrs. Edward Miller, Mrs. J. McArthur Harris and Miss Colahan assisted Miss Zell in receiving, while tea was poured by Mrs. J. B. Colahan, Jr., and Miss Marian Price.

Miss Zell began her annual teas when she was seventy years of age and since then has entertained each year on her birthday anniversary. Miss Zell, considering her age, has a remarkably alert mind. She is president of the Germantown Library and Historical Society, vice president of the Site and Relic Society, a

member of the Welcome Society and belongs to numerous other organizations.

Miss Zell has established sixteen libraries in various parts of the country, chiefly at summer resorts. At one time she was a Red Cross nurse. She is an honorary director of the School of Industrial Art.

Miss Zell was secretary of the Field Hospital Association during the Civil War and took an active part in the fair in Logan Square which was attended by Abraham Lincoln. For sixteen years she was secretary of the Western Home of Employment.

Miss Zell was born on Market street, just west of Eighth. She is the daughter of Thomas and Hannah Ogden Zell, and her father was prominent as a merchant. Miss Zell attends nearly all the meetings of the societies of which she is a member.

Figure 34. An article and photograph of Hannah Ann Zell on her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Source: "Woman Gives Tea On 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Miss Hannah Ann Zell, of Germantown, Entertains Her Many Friends to Commemorate Anniversary," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 January 1910, 2.

Hannah Ann Zell's events and fundraisers, including performances, fetes, and teas, culminated in the annual celebration of her birthday, a tradition which began when she was about 70, continuing through the end of her life. One of her most significant parties was the celebration of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at *Heartsease* on January 17, 1910.<sup>72</sup> Her status as a nonagenarian was lauded not only through the annual tea, but with several feature articles in local papers on her accomplishments as well as the fact that she was "still vitally interested in various public spirited enterprises."<sup>73</sup>



Figures 35 and 36. Articles about Hannah Ann Zell continuing in civic affairs at age 91. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

Nearing her last birthday, several articles were published on Hannah Ann Zell, again recounting her life and accomplishments, emphasizing that a "woman of 91" was still presiding over meetings of the Germantown Library Association and Historical Society. On January 17, 1911, she hosted her last tea, celebrating the 91<sup>st</sup> anniversary of her birth. On the following Saturday, Miss Zell came down with pneumonia and "died where she had lived for forty-seven years, at her home,

<sup>72</sup> "Woman Gives Tea On 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Miss Hannah Ann Zell, of Germantown, Entertains Her Many Friends to Commemorate Anniversary," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 January 1910, 2.

<sup>73</sup> "Miss Hannah A. Zell Ninety Years Old, Prominent Germantown Woman Will Celebrate Her Birthday Anniversary on Monday," *The Independent Gazette*, 14 January 1910.



“Heartsease,” 724 Locust avenue.” The funeral was held the following Tuesday at the School House Lane Meeting House, and the interment was made at the Merion Meeting House near her father’s birthplace.<sup>74, 75</sup> When her Last Will and Testament was probated, Miss Zell’s estate was valued at \$7,200, the bulk of which was bequeath to her caregiver and grand-niece Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy.<sup>76</sup>

At the time of her death in 1911, she was lauded for her considerable accomplishments and personal interest by local papers, being lamented as follows: “Germantown has lost its ‘grand old woman’ and Philadelphia, at large, one of its most interesting personalities” (Figure 37).<sup>77</sup>



Figure 37. An article on Hannah Ann Zell’s life at the time of her death. Source: “Hannah Ann Zell A Notable Woman, *Public Ledger*, 5 February 1911.

<sup>74</sup> “Miss Zell Active Until Her End At 91,” *Germantown Post-Gazette*, 3 February 1911.

<sup>75</sup> “Miss Hannah Ann Zell Dead.,” *Germantown Guide*, 4 February 1911.

<sup>76</sup> *Germantown Guide*, 18 February 1911.

<sup>77</sup> “Hannah Ann Zell A Notable Woman,” *The Public Ledger*, 5 February 1911.

## CRITERIA A & J: CONCLUSION

Hannah Ann Zell was a significant person of the past in Germantown and Philadelphia, who made important and meaningful contributions to both her community and city, satisfying both Criteria A and J. Hannah Ann Zell also represents a significant personage in the realm of local women's history, coming of age when Queen Victoria ascended the throne of England, she, against all odds, attained a position of prominence in her community and city, doing so despite the challenges that aspiring female leaders faced during the nineteenth century. Beyond the tranquility often associated with the Victorian-era, she was a stalwart of her own place in the world, which, as a single woman, was significant, serving all of her causes with notable ability and influence, bringing incredible passion and success to her civic and community endeavors for the general public good.



Figure 38. Left: This is an excerpt from the larger “A sketch of the Battle of Germantown, fought on 4 October 1777...” illustrating the presence of troops along the easterly blocks of Church Lane in the neighborhood of the subject property. Source: A sketch of the Battle of Germantown, fought on 4 October 1777 between the British and Hessians, commanded by the Commander-in-Chief, William Howe, 5th Viscount Howe (1729-1814) and the Americans, commanded by General George Washington (1732-99), resulting in a British victory. *American War of Independence (1775-83)*. Via the Royal Collection Trust. *Figure 39*. Right: An article on the findings of bodies related to the Battle of Germantown that took place at 723 Locust Avenue. Source: “Sell Historic House,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 May 1910, 9.

## CRITERION I

The parcel associated with 724 Locust Avenue is significant under Criterion I as it has a high potential to contain intact archaeological resources that in all probability may be likely to yield information important to history, specifically the Battle of Germantown, as part of the American Revolution. The Battle of Germantown took place in Germantown on October 4, 1777, between the British and the Hessians, commanded by Commander-in-Chief, William Howe, 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount Howe (1729-1814), and the American patriots, commanded by General George Washington (1732-1799). According to the map shown above in Figure 37 conceived in 1777, which is a primary source manuscript housed in the Royal Collection Trust at Windsor, and various accounts of the Battle of Germantown, there was significant activity along the easterly blocks of Church Lane.<sup>78</sup> While the precise locations along Church Lane cannot be determined by written record,

<sup>78</sup> A sketch of the Battle of Germantown, fought on 4 October 1777 between the British and Hessians, commanded by the Commander-in-Chief, William Howe, 5th Viscount Howe (1729-1814) and the Americans, commanded by General George Washington (1732-99), resulting in a British victory. *American War of Independence (1775-83)*. Via the Royal Collection Trust.



there was significant activity in this locality based on previous findings associated with 723 Church Lane. In 1866, when Colonel Thomas Elwood Zell commissioned his dwelling, which still stands on that site, the construction activities unearthed “the skeletons of twenty soldiers who fell in that battle where found.”<sup>79</sup> Given the close proximity and the undeveloped land of the subject property at 724 Locust Avenue to the adjacent property at 723 Church Lane, it is probable that any future ground disturbance may be likely to yield archaeological resources including human remains associated with the Battle of Germantown. As a result, the subject property is likely significant under Criterion I for its archaeological potential.

**INCIDENTS OF REVOLUTION AS  
EMBALMED IN OLD COPY-BOOK**


Reminiscent Sketch by Octogenarian President of the Germantown Historical Association.

*By Hannah Ann Zell.*

This sketch of my grandmother was written several years ago, and I have thought it best not to make any alterations or rewrite it. Some of the incidents have changed and times and places.

She was the wife of Hugh Ogden and daughter of John Melchoir Meng, who was prominent in the early history of Germantown. He was the son of John Christopher Meng, who was born in Manheim, Germany, in 1697. His son Melchoir was also born in Manheim. We have a German Bible still extant in the Historical Society of Philadelphia, over one hundred and twenty-five years old, with the records of births and deaths written in German. It is placed there for preservation.

John Melchoir Meng and his son Christopher, among others, established the Germantown Academy, and in 1759 and 1760 were on the committee to raise funds for that purpose, themselves contributing. Melchoir, Christopher and Wolfig Meng were also trustees. Melchoir was so interested and so closely associated with the Academy that an old song, beginning, “Melchoir Meng the bell doth ring, Melchoir Meng school is in,” was daily heard. When a descendant of his years after addressed a daughter of the Rev. Samuel Harvey he told her of his relationship to Melchoir Meng. She said “he was a myth; there was no such person.” There was also another old song respecting the church on Market Square, the German Reformed, at



*Hannah Ann Zell*

The accompanying paper by the octogenarian president of the Germantown Library and Historical Association was read at the last meeting of the Site and Relic Society, held a few days ago. The meeting was well attended, the program being “Old-Time Songs From Other Countries” by Mrs. Sarah MacDonald Sheridan, of Atlanta, Georgia, and this account of the battle of Germantown as described by an eye-witness, who told her granddaughter, Miss Zell, of the day’s fight.

that time, which he attended:

“When the church was letting in,  
Melchoir Meng began to sing,  
When the church was letting out,  
Melchoir Meng began to shout.”

He was so devoted to his German

The Battle of Germantown as Narrated by One of Those Who Was an Eye-Witness of the Conflict.

tongue that when they commenced to preach in English he left there and never entered it again. He resided on the Main street in a house which is at this time converted into a tin store, founded by Oliver Jester. There was a house adjoining it, standing back, which is now torn down. They were occupied as one residence. The meadow was sold to John Wister to build his house upon.

There is another saying that is still afloat among the old people, that when Melchoir Meng mowed his meadow it rained, which is still said of the Wister meadow. Their lots extended beyond Greene street. At that time each residence had a town lot and country lot. The ancient apple trees are still standing on the grounds of Reed A. Williams, Esq. The fine large trees over-shading the gateway were planted by him. He was much interested in horticulture and imported many fine trees. On a summer afternoon he was generally seen leaning on the gate. The late Howard Williams told me that he remembered seeing him there on fine afternoons. At that time the picturesque old spring house was a romantic feature. The city authorities into whose hands it fell, not appreciating the time-honored, picturesque spot, under the willows, with the stream of water running over the white marble slab, where the milk pans stood of old, and the roof covered with moss, had all removed, and no trace of it is left, to the regret of many.

My grandmother was an eye-wit-

CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE.

Figure 40. Article on the family artifacts and memories of the American Revolution of Hannah Ann Zell. Source: Hannah Ann Zell. *Incidents of Revolution as Embalmed in Old Copy-Book*, Unknown Publication, Unknown Date. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

<sup>79</sup> “Sell Historic House,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 May 1910, 9.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Submitted by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia, this nomination was sponsored by a kind friend of the organization. The primary author was Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian, Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Cassidy-Fagan Facebook Page  
Germantown Historical Society  
Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network  
Newspapers.com  
Proquest Historical Newspapers

### MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- A Brief Memoir of Thomas Zell.* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, Printers, 1859).
- A Brief Sketch of The Female Association of Philadelphia for the Relief of the Sick and Infirm Poor with Clothing, &C.* (Philadelphia: Friends Book Association, 1879), 8.
- A History of Green Street Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia. <https://greenstreetfriendsmeeting.org/about.php#:~:text=A%20History%20of%20Green%20Street%20Monthly%20Meeting%20of%20Friends%20of%20Philadelphia> Accessed on 18 December 2022.
- A List of Some of the Benevolent Institutions of the City of Philadelphia and Their Legal Titles: Together with a Form of Devise and Bequest to Them.* (United States, Henry B. Ashmead, 1859).
- “At the Fair.” *The Record-Union*, 13 June 1893, 6.
- Boyd’s Co-Partnership and Residence Business Directory.* (Philadelphia: C.E. Howe Company, 1900), 90.
- Charles F. Jenkins, President. *Germantown History: Consisting of Papers Read Before the Site & Relic Society of Germantown.* (Germantown: The Society, 1915).
- Charles J. Stille. *Memorial of the Great Central Fair for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, held at Philadelphia, June 1864.* (Philadelphia: U.S. Sanitary Commission, 1864).
- City Directory.* (Philadelphia: 1863).
- “Colonial Relics,” *Intelligencer Journal*, 15 April 1893, 1.
- Cornelius Nolen Weygandt. Diary (1901), 4 November 1901, Diary, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt Papers 1849-1907, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.
- Cornelius Nolen Weygandt. Diary (1902), 18 March 1902, Diary, Cornelius Nolen Weygandt Papers 1849-1907, University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.
- Deed: Abraham R. Bockius, et. al. to Jane M. Zell and Hannah Ann Zell, 1 January 1866, Philadelphia Deed Book J.T.O., No. 19, 124.
- Eugene G. Stackhouse. *Germantown in the Civil War.* (The History Press, 2010).
- “From The Women, By The Women, Such is Germantown’s Successful Public Library and Historical Association, Founded in a Bookshelf, The Volunteer Librarians Are Delightful Women—Not an Officer of the Sterner Sex—Was Miss Zell’s Work,” Unknown Newspaper, ca.1894. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.



*Genealogical and family history of western New York.* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912), 201.

*Germantown Guide*, 18 February 1911.

“Hannah Ann Zell A Notable Woman,” *The Public Ledger*, 5 February 1911.

Hannah Ann Zell. *Report of the Board of Managers of the Western Association of Ladies for the Relief and Employment of the Poor.* (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw, 1854).

Hannah Ann Zell. *Report of the Board of Managers of the Western Association of Ladies for the Relief and Employment of the Poor.* (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw Publisher, 1866).

Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

“In Society.” *The Times*, 18 January 1885, 2.

Invitation: International Exhibition Company to Miss Zell of Philadelphia, 2 April 1877. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

Invitation: United States Centennial Commission to Miss Zell, Germantown, Phila., 4 March 1876. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

LC Bligh Family Tree, Ancestry.com.

Letter: Caroline E. White, Secretary of the Women’s Department of the International Exhibition, to Hannah Ann Zell, 26 March 1876. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

Letter: F.S. Magee, Secretary of the Trustees of the School of Industrial Art, to Hannah Ann Zell, June 1897. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

*Library Journal*, January 1914, 65.

Letter: Lloyd Pearsol Smith, Library Company of Philadelphia, to Miss Zell, February 1870. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

*M’Elroy’s Philadelphia Directory for the Year 1840.* (Philadelphia: 1840), 284.

Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy. *Biography of Hannah Ann Zell.* (Unpublished, 11 January 1910). Source: Mary Knowles, a direct descendant of Mary Dorothea Fagan Cassidy, Hannah Ann Zell’s grandniece.

*Memorial of Sarah Pugh: A Tribute of Respect from Her Cousins.* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1888), 13.

“Miss Hannah Zell is 91. Venerable Member of Noted Family Believer in Hard Work.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 January 1911, 16.

“Miss Hannah A. Zell Ninety Years Old, Prominent Germantown Woman Will Celebrate Her Birthday Anniversary on Monday,” *The Independent Gazette*, 14 January 1910.

“Miss Hannah Ann Zell Dead.,” *Germantown Guide*, 4 February 1911.

“Miss Zell Active Until Her End At 91,” *Germantown Post-Gazette*, 3 February 1911.

“Miss Zell Protests.,” *The Independent Gazette*, 30 January 1904.

“Obituary Notice of Thomas Zell,” *Burlington Gazette*, 3 November 1848.

“Our Regiment,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 February 1896, 7.

Paul L. Taggart. “Germantown Relief Society, Oldest Relief Society in the United States,” *The Beehive*, March 1928.

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Bureau for Historic Preservation. “Gothic Revival Style 1830–1860,” in *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, last modified August 26, 2015, <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/gothic-revival.html>

“Provident Society,” *The National Gazette*, 13 January 1826, 2.

*Report of the Associate Committee of Women, 1910-1911.* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, 1910-11), 58-59.

Roy Ziegler. *The Parrys of Philadelphia and New Hope.* (United Kingdom: iUniverse, 2011), 90.

Roy Ziegler. *Unfaltering Trust: How Pilgrim Edward Fitz Randolph Jr. and His Descendants Helped Build America.* (United Kingdom: iUniverse, 2019).

“Save Vernon Park,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 7 February 1904.

“Special Notices,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 April 1864, 5.

“The Fair.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 October 1865, 1.

*The Germantown Crier*, Fall 1991, v.43, no.4, 89-91.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 July 1892, 7.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 March 1893, 15.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 December 1869, 3.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 November 1876, 4.

*The Philadelphia Times*, 9 April 1899, 20.

*The Philadelphia Times*, 26 April 1902, 13.

“The Site and Relic Society of Germantown,” *The Germantown Crier*, Winter 1989-90, 2.

The Wilson Family Tree, sponsored by Linda Dey, Ancestry.com.

Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910 (NARA microfilm publication T624, 1,178 rolls).  
Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide To American Houses.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

“Will Keep Historic Memories Fragrant,” *The Philadelphia Times*, 9 February 1901, 3.

“Woman Gives Tea On 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Miss Hannah Ann Zell, of Germantown, Entertains Her Many Friends to Commemorate Anniversary,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 January 1910, 2.

“Woman’s Interests.,” *Unknown Newspaper*, 30 January 1896. Source: Hannah Ann Zell Scrapbook, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.