

ADDRESS: 7716 NAVAJO ST

Name of Resource: Adams House

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Samuel M. and Kate E. Earle

Nominator: Chestnut Hill Conservancy

Staff Contact: Jon Farnham, jon.farnham@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination argues that the Adams House, designed by architect Herbert C. Wise in 1910 as part of the development of west Chestnut Hill as an affluent suburb of Philadelphia, is a unique example of the Italian (or Tuscan) Villa architectural style in the United States, and includes a patio designed by locally renowned landscape architect Frederick Peck. The nomination contends that the house embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, satisfying Criterion D, and exemplifies the heritage of the community, satisfying Criterion J.

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy submitted the nomination. The staff has discussed the nomination with both the nominator and the property owner and understands that they may be exploring alternative preservation mechanisms to listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The owner asserts that the nomination is incorrect regarding architectural style. He contends that it is a California Bungalow Arts and Crafts style building but was later altered with the addition of Doric and Corinthian columns and other features that might be considered indicative of the Italian Villa style.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 7716 Navajo Street satisfies Criterion for Designation J but withholds a recommendation on Criterion D until the discussion at the Committee on Historic Designation meeting. The building is clearly architecturally distinctive, but more information may be required to determine its original architectural style.



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: 7716 Navajo St

Postal code: 19118

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Adams House

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 1910 to 1978

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1910

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Herbert C. Wise

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: George C. Herbert

Original owner: William and Louise Shattuck Adams

Other significant persons: Fred Peck

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 Chestnut Hill Conservancy Date January 30, 2025

Name with Title David Gest, Executive Director Email david@chconservancy.org

Street Address 8708 Germantown Ave Telephone 215-247-9329

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19118

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: January 30, 2025

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: January 31, 2025

Date of Notice Issuance: February 5, 2025

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Samuel M and Kate E Earle

Address: 7716 Navajo St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19118

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: April 16, 2025

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: May 9, 2025

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION



Figure 1. The subject property at 7716 Navajo Street, shown in blue. Source: atlas.phila.gov.

Address:
7716 Navajo Street
Philadelphia, PA 19118
OPA# 092287410

BEGINNING at a point on the Southwesterly side of Navajo Street (60 feet wide) which point is measured South 47 degrees 59 minutes 20 seconds East along the said Southwesterly side of Navajo Street the distance of 296 feet 8-1/4 inches from a point formed by an intersection of the said Southwesterly side of Navajo Street and the Southeasterly side of Springfield Avenue (60 feet wide); thence extending from said point of beginning, South 47 degrees 59 minutes 20 seconds East along the said Southwesterly side of Navajo Street crossing a variable width Macadam Driveway the distance of 200 feet to a point; thence extending South 42 degrees 00 minutes 40 seconds West the distance of 167 feet to a point; thence extending North 47 degrees 59 minutes 20 seconds West the distance of 96 feet 6- 1/2 inches to a point; thence extending North 34 degrees 59 minutes 00 seconds West the distance of 106 feet 2-1/8 inches to a point; thence extending North 42 degrees 00 minutes 40 seconds East the distance of 143 feet 1-1/4 inches to a point on the said Southwesterly side of Navajo Street, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



Figure 2. Aerial view of 7716 Navajo Street. Source: atlas.phila.gov.

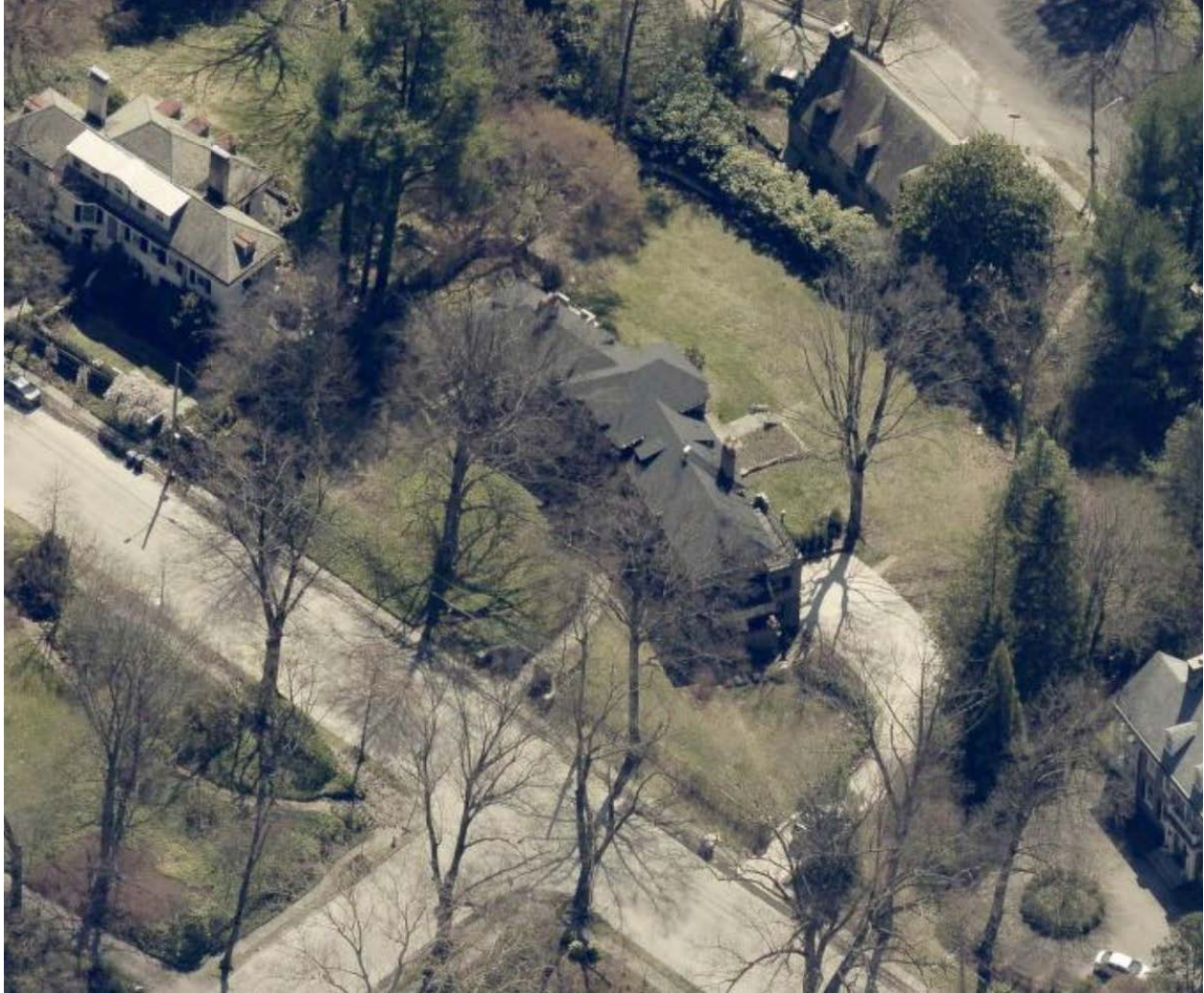


Figure 3. Aerial view of 7716 Navajo Street, looking south. Source: Pictometry.

The Adams House is a two-and-a-half-story stucco-clad building in the Italian (or Tuscan) Villa style. The house is located on the southwest side of Navajo Street in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia, mid-block between Cross Lane to the southeast and West Springfield Avenue to the northwest. The Adams family hired architect Herbert C. Wise to design the building, which was constructed in 1910.

The house is composed of three volumes. Two-story, pitched roof volumes at the northwest and southeast are connected by a central, three-story volume that includes the main entrance to the residence. The house is clad in stucco with brick beltcourses, with a hipped roof.



Figure 4. Northeast façade (facing Navajo Street). Source: Bright MLS.



Figure 5. Northeast façade detail. Source: Bright MLS.

The northeast, stucco-clad façade of the building, facing Navajo Street, includes two two-story volumes connected by the central, three-story entrance volume.

The central volume includes a projected, gabled pavilion with a broken pedimented doorway, and a hipped roof with exposed brackets, a frontgabled wall dormer and two shed dormers. The main entrance on the first floor is framed by a columned portico and includes one-over-one windows on either side. The second floor of the central volume includes the broken pedimented doorway, a small balcony with a wooden balustrade, and two-by-four muntin windows on either side. The third floor features a central, two-part, two-by-four muntin window.

The southeast volume of this façade includes a hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves and three bays, with three one-over-one windows with brick sills and wood shutters on the second floor, brick beltcourses between the floors, and, on the first floor, a four-part, two-by-five muntin window to the southeast and, to the northwest, three distinct three-by-three muntin over single light windows with brick sills. This volume also includes a brick beltcourse at grade, and a prominent chimney topped by three brick arches.

The northwest volume of this façade includes a hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves and three bays, with three one-over-one windows with brick sills and wood shutters on the second floor, brick beltcourses between the floors, and, on the first floor, two three-by-three muntin over single light windows with brick sills, a smaller two-by-two muntin over single light window with a brick sill, and three three-by-three muntin over single light windows with wood shutters and brick sills. This volume also includes a brick beltcourse at grade, and a prominent chimney topped by three brick arches.



Figure 6. Southwest façade (facing toward Lincoln Drive). Source: Bright MLS.



Figure 7. Northwest façade with partial view of southwest façade. Source: Bright MLS.

The southwest, stucco-clad façade of the building, facing toward Lincoln Drive, includes two two-story volumes connected by the central, three-story entrance volume.

The central volume includes a hipped roof with exposed brackets; on the third floor, a small balcony with a wooden balustrade around a recessed opening and brick beltcourses; on the second floor, three one-over-one windows with brick surrounds and a brick beltcourse; and on the first floor, a pitched overhang over three arched, muntined windows. The southeast volume of this façade has a shed dormer within the hipped roof and the aforementioned chimney; on the second floor, three three-by-three muntin over one windows over a brick beltcourse, and a projecting bay with two two-by-five muntin windows and a central two-part two-by-five muntin window, surrounded by a porch; and on the first floor, two-by-seven muntin windows on either side of a two-part two-by-seven muntin window and a projecting terrace to the southeast surrounded by stone columns with ionic capitals. The northwest portion of this façade includes a shed dormer within the hipped roof and the aforementioned chimney; on the second floor, three three-by-three muntin over single-light windows over a brick beltcourse, and on the first floor, under a brick beltcourse, a tripartite three-by-three muntin over one window. Farther to the northwest, this façade includes a projecting volume at the first floor with a terrace at the second floor. The first floor includes four one-over-one windows and the volume includes a stone-clad two-car garage at the basement level.

This rear façade also includes a brick beltcourse at grade, and features Arts and Crafts style external lamps, although it is not clear if these are original to the building.



Figure 8. Southeast façade. The patio designed by Frederick Peck is in the foreground.
Source: Bright MLS.



Figure 9. Southeast façade with alternate view of Peck patio. Source: Bright MLS.

The southeast, stucco-clad façade of the building includes a shed dormer within the hipped roof, two three-by-three muntin over one windows with wood shutters on the second floor, two brick beltcourses (one straight and one arched) and the side of the second floor terrace with low stone walls and a central ornamental metal fence, and, on the first floor, a tripartite window with a large single light window at center with two-by-six muntin windows on either side, a brick sill, and a flat, latticed overhang at top. This façade also includes the side of the first floor stone terrace with stone columns.

In front of this façade is an octagonal patio designed by landscape architect Frederick Peck. The northwest end of the patio is flush with the stone-columned terrace, and extends approximately 30 feet from the terrace to the southeast property line. The patio features a central bluestone double-octagonal pattern surrounded by eight cobblestone extensions encompassed by a bluestone octagon border.



Figure 10. Northwest façade. Source: Bright MLS.

The northwest, stucco-clad façade of the building includes a shed dormer with the hipped roof, a single three-by-three muntin over one window with brick sill, and a projecting porch with brick trim and stairs leading to a stone-clad portion of the façade with a single window at basement level. The porch includes a canvas overhang with two three-by-three muntin over one windows, and the side of the projecting rear volume described above.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Adams House, designed by architect Herbert C. Wise in 1910 as part of the development of west Chestnut Hill as an affluent suburb of Philadelphia, is a unique example of the Italian (or Tuscan) Villa architectural style in the United States, and includes a patio designed by locally renowned landscape architect Frederick Peck. Consequently, as described in more detail below, the Adams House merits listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by satisfying the following criteria established by Philadelphia Code Section 14-1004(1):

- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

For most of the 19th century, much of the land southwest of Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill was still quite rural and undeveloped, with occasional farms dotting the landscape. This included the farm of Mary France, which included a house built for John Hinkle circa 1800 that remains extant at 7801 Cresheim Road.¹ The farm stood in a small valley, with a tributary to Wissahickon Creek crossing the property. In 1884, Pennsylvania Railroad executive Henry Howard Houston saw an opportunity to make a large profit by developing much of west Chestnut Hill. Starting in the early 1880s, he purchased parcels on the west side of Chestnut Hill and his estate would eventually purchase the France farm. Houston convinced the Pennsylvania Railroad to open a line to Chestnut Hill; the line opened to passenger trains in May 1884 and is now known as SEPTA's Chestnut Hill West line from its Regional Rail Division. The arrival of the train line opened up much of the west side of Chestnut Hill to development, both by Houston and by other builders. The presence of Wissahickon Heights station nearby (renamed St. Martins in 1906) made the area of the subject property particularly attractive to development, and by the turn of the 20th century, most parcels within a five-minute's walk of the station had been developed. However, this development through 1900 mostly omitted the France farm parcel.

¹ George W. and Walter S. *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1895, plate 35.



Figure 11. Excerpt from plate 35 from George W. and Walter S. Bromley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895, with Mary France's farm visible at center. Visible towards lower left corner is the Pennsylvania Railroad's line to Chestnut Hill; parallel to this at upper right is the 7700 block of Navajo Street. The house at 7716 would be built on this block, in 1910. Source: phillyhistory.org / the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

In 1895, Henry Howard Houston died; his son-in-law, Dr. George Woodward, assumed ownership of most of Houston's properties, almost all of which consisted of rentals. Woodward continued to develop west Chestnut Hill, and by 1910 he worked to open Lincoln Drive through the France Farm.² This new road would provide access to additional open space suitable for development, leading to the development of much of the surrounding area by 1910, including the subject property.

By June of 1910, members of the Adams family had purchased the parcel at 7716 Navajo Street, and William and Louise Shattuck Adams made plans to build a house shortly thereafter. Plans for the proposed house were described in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as consisting of ". . . a large stone and brick house to be built at Navahoe [Navajo] street and Lincoln drive for W. Adams, Jr., . . . being drawn by Herbert C. Wise.

² George W. and Walter S. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1910, plate 35.

It will be 2 ½ stories high and will measure 100 x 28 feet.”³ The architect Herbert C. Wise lived at 5955 McCallum Street in Germantown, less than two blocks from the Adams’ previous residence at 228 West Rittenhouse Street.⁴ According to later owners, Charles and Dorothy Pilling, Adams wanted the house to have the appearance of an Italian villa; he therefore sent Wise to Italy for inspiration and ideas.⁵ On August 15, 1910, the City of Philadelphia issued the permit for the construction of the house at a cost of \$20,000, with George C. Herbert listed as contractor.⁶

Architect Herbert C. Wise

Herbert Wise worked for several well-known Philadelphia architects, including Wilson Eyre, Jr., Cope & Stewardson, and Frank Miles Day. He then worked for Frank Miles Day at the firm Day & Klauder. In 1898, at the age of 25 years old, Wise applied for a passport to travel abroad and return “within one year.”⁷ His residence was 3324 Sydenham Street and his occupation was listed as architect. On November 28, 1898 he was a passenger on the ship Belgenland. In 1901, Wise was an editor, along with Day and Eyre, of the House and Garden magazine. In 1908, he married Katherine Earle Dorsey (1877-) in Winchester Massachusetts. At the time, he was living in Germantown and working as an architect.⁸ After their marriage, they resided at 5955 McCallum Street.⁹ They had two children, Ralph Earle Wise (1913-1994) and Hildegard Wise (1918-deceased.)

Wise maintained his own firm through 1916. In 1914, Wise designed 114 W Moreland for Theodore L. MacDowell. Located across Navajo Street from the Adams residence, the 2 ½-story pebble-dashed stucco dwelling was designed in a Mediterranean style with brick beltcourses, with a 1-story bay in the left rank, stone arched frontispiece, hipped roof, two hipped dormers and a hipped clipped gabled wall dormer with front balcony. He retired in 1940 and died in 1945. During his time with Day and Klauder his focus was on collegiate architecture.

³ “Much work for City Contractors,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 17, 1910, p.15.

⁴ 1910 Federal Census.

⁵ Letter from Charles and Dorothy Pilling to Shirley Hanson, February 10, 1976. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

⁶ “Permits Issued Yesterday,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 16, 1910, p.13.

⁷ “United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89X7-474S?view=index> : Jan 23, 2025), image 567 of 621; United States. National Archives and Records Administration.

⁸ “Massachusetts, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-6LHK-CM?view=index> : Jan 23, 2025), image 664 of 1173; Massachusetts. State Archives.

⁹ “Pennsylvania, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RKH-4G9?view=index> : Jan 23, 2025), image 479 of 1120; United States. National Archives and Records Administration.



Figure 12. Excerpt from Plate 30 of George W. and Walter S. Bromley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia: 22nd Ward, 1911, showing the area of Mary France's former farm developed with single and twin houses. Lincoln Avenue [Drive] is visible at center, with the newly-built house at 7716 Navajo Street owned by its first owner, Louise S. Adams, shown towards the center. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

The parcel of land formerly owned by Mary France offered an advantageous location for building with its position between the newly opened Lincoln Drive and Cresheim Creek below.¹⁰ The sloping landscape provided idyllic locations for wealthy residents to construct large homes. Prior to the construction of the Adams' residence, Samuel Porcher hired architect George T. Pearson (1847-1920) to design a 2 1/2 story, 6 rank, stuccoed stone Georgian Revival dwelling with hipped roof at 7708 Navajo. Porcher worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and along with his wife, Maria Porter and their three children, lived in the house until the mid-1940s.

Upon the completion of 7716 Navajo, the Adams had just given birth to their first child, Janet, and were expecting the birth of a second.¹¹ The Adams' new house in Chestnut Hill was much larger than their previous home on Rittenhouse Street, and would have likely been necessitated by their growing family. This may also explain a 10 x 18-foot addition of a garage and room above the house, also designed by Wise and completed in 1914.¹²

¹⁰ American Suburbs, November 1914.

¹¹ 1910 Federal Census.

¹² Chestnut Hill National Register District Inventory.



Figure 13. The house at 7716 Navajo Street as it appeared in 2018. Source: atlas.phila.gov.

In 1918, William Adams died, leaving Louise Adams a widow; it is not clear as to how William died. According to the 1920 Federal Census, Louise remained at the house with her daughter, Janet, and her son, Sterling. An “adopted son,” Lewis Wallace, was also listed on the census.¹³ Two servants, Nana Galen and Annie Valentine, were also retained at the house.¹⁴ In October 1920, Louise married “Lew” in a secret marriage and they moved to La Jolla California, where she committed suicide on April 3, 1921.¹⁵ The house was then sold by the trustees and executors of the Adams estate to Benjamin F. and Jenny S. Myers.

The Myers were in their mid-50s when they moved into the subject property at the end of 1921. They would lead a quiet existence there and Benjamin would remain at the house after Jenny died in 1931.¹⁶ Benjamin later married Maria Andrews; they remained at the house until he passed away, in 1937.¹⁷ Maria then sold the house to William Wallace and Virginia Fink Kellett, at the end of 1940.¹⁸

¹³ 1920 and 1930 Federal censuses.

¹⁴ 1930 Federal Census.

¹⁵ “W.W. Adams’ Widow Shoots Self After Marrying Ex-Sailor,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 9, 1921, p.1.

¹⁶ Death certificate of Jenny Myers, July 29, 1931. Source: Ancestry.com.

¹⁷ Death certificate of Benjamin F. Myers, Dec. 1, 1937. Source: Ancestry.com.

¹⁸ Property chain of title. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

The Kelletts owned 7716 Navajo Street for approximately seven years, renting the property to a Jacob Disston. Notably, William Wallace Kellett was the founder of the Kellett Aircraft Corporation, which produced autogiros, the forerunner to the helicopter. The Kelletts' businesses boomed through the end of World War II,¹⁹ after which the Kelletts sold the house to Charles J. and Dorothy Miller Pilling, on May 29, 1947.



Figure 14. The front [north] façade of the house at 7716 Navajo Street as it appeared in 1947. Source: The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, policy folder 37921.

Members of the Pilling family would own the house for over 30 years. When they purchased the house, it had apparently been neglected for some time and was in “poor condition.” Between 1947 and 1976, the Pillings made no “major” alterations to the house but added a picture window in the “garden room” with a patio outside. The latter was designed by locally renowned landscape architect Frederick Peck (see Figures 8 and 9, above).²⁰

¹⁹ <https://prabook.com/web/william.kellett/3768093#> (Accessed January 18, 2025).

²⁰ Letter from Charles and Dorothy Pilling to Shirley Hanson, February 10, 1976. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

CHAS. J. PILLING, JR.
7718 NAVAJO STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19133

February 10, 1976

DEAR MRS HANSON

IN REPLY TO YOUR LETTER RE: 7716 NAVAJO ST
INFORMATION WE HAVE KEPT IS AS FOLLOWS:

ARCHITECT: HERBERT C. WISE
34 S. 16TH ST PHILA. N.Y. 1910 ON A COPY
OF BLUEPRINT
BUILDER UNKNOWN EXCEPT WE BELIEVE IN
MARCH 1911 WE SAW MARKS IN ATTIC
OWNER WHEN BUILT MR W. W. ADAMS JR.
HE SENT ARCHITECT TO ITALY TO COPY
AN ITALIAN VILLA.

HE SOLD A MR MYERS THEN TO WALLACE
KELLETT WHO RENTED TO JACOB DISSTON
DURING W.W.I. ~~world war~~
THEN IN 1947 SOLD TO PRESENT OWNER.
WE HAVE LIVED 28 YEARS.

LANDSCAPE OR GROUNDS UNKNOWN.

BLDG WAS IN POOR CONDITION WHEN WE
MOVED IN. NO MAJOR ALTERATIONS
WE PUT A PICTURE WINDOW IN GARDEN ROOM
AND THEN GROUND OUTSIDE OF PICTURE
WINDOW WAS REDESIGNED WITH A PATIO
BY FRED PECK,

SINCERELY
Mrs. Dorothy M. Pilling Chas. J. Pilling Jr.

Figure 15. Letter from Charles and Dorothy Pilling to Shirley Hanson, February 10, 1976.
Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

Frederick William Gunster Peck (1909-1998)

Frederick W.G. Peck was born in 1909, in Wayne, PA. He earned his B.A. in Landscape Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1933 and began his landscape architecture firm a short time after. Peck is best known for his design of the original Azalea Garden in Fairmount Park, as well as Pastorius Park in Chestnut Hill (1933).

Peck designed many public spaces in Chestnut Hill including at the Chestnut Hill Hospital (1981-1986), Top of the Hill Plaza, Water Tower Recreation Center, Valley Green Inn (1952), and Springside School Arts Courtyard.¹ He also practiced as a landscape architect for many private residences in Chestnut Hill, including the Esherick House at 204 Sunrise Lane, designed by Louis Kahn, and his own garden at Boxly, located at 8420 St. Martins Lane. Peck worked for Woodward from 1976 to 1983, during which time Peck designed landscaping for the Hartwell Lane Residences and both Peck and Woodward's offices at 8301 Germantown Ave.

At some point between 1976 and December 1978, Charles Pilling died, leaving Dorothy a widow. On December 21, 1978, fire broke out in the primary bedroom. Dorothy Pilling was asleep at the time; she had been using an old and frayed heating pad which caught fire. The resulting fire gutted the primary bedroom, and Mrs. Pilling died on the scene with the probable cause being smoke inhalation. The fire resulted in almost \$20,000 in damages; much of this cost was associated with smoke damage throughout much of the home's interior.²¹ The house was repaired and was then sold to Perry and Phyllis N. Black.²² The couple only lived in the house for a short time; by December 1983, they had moved to 22 Summit Street.²³

Criteria for Designation D

The Adams House, designed by Herbert Wise, embodies distinguishing characteristics of a simplified, modernized Italian (or Tuscan) Villa architectural style. It is clad in stucco with brick beltcourses, and includes low, pitched roofs with widely overhanging eaves, shed gables, single-story porches with entry porticos, arched windows, and a stone-columned terrace.

In fact, the Adams House is part of a stylistic continuum of comparably designed homes in the area, part of the larger evolution of revival architectural styles developed in Chestnut Hill from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. The earliest examples of Italian-inspired design in the area exist primarily along Summit Street (e.g., 17, 18, 22, and 32 Summit Street), which are more Italiante / Italian Villa in design, by architects such as Andrew Jackson Downing and Samuel Sloan. Around the turn of the 20th century, hundreds of Italian laborers, principally stone workers, emigrated to Chestnut Hill to work in the residential building boom there.²⁴ The design of Italian style homes in the area eventually included both "country living" designs and railroad-commuting, family-oriented home life.

In this context, the design most similar to the Adams House is another residence designed by architect Herbert Wise, located across the street, at 114 W. Moreland Avenue (also known as 7711 Navajo Street), which features a similar Italian Villa style.

²¹ The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, policy folder 37921.

²² Property chain of title. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

²³ Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy Community directories, December 1982 and December 1983. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

²⁴ See generally Chestnut Hill National Register District narrative and inventory.

The Chestnut Hill National Register Historic District inventory describes this residence, built in 1914, as a “2 ½-story, pebble-dashed stuccoed dwelling designed in a Mediterranean style with brick beltcourses, a 1-story bay in the left rank, stone arched frontispiece, hipped roof, two hipped dormers and a hipped clipped gabled wall dormer with front balcony. A 2 ½ wing extends to the south.”



Figure 16. Elevation of southwest façade of 114 W. Moreland Avenue, also known as 7711 Navajo Street and located across the street from the Adams House. Both residences were designed by Herbert C. Wise. Source: Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections / John P.A. Todd Associates (1997, in connection with a garage addition).

The Adams House thus exemplifies the early 20th century phase of the evolution of Italian villa style homes in Chestnut Hill.

Criteria for Designation J

The Herbert Wise-designed Adams House is an excellent example of the construction of single-family homes in Chestnut Hill in the decade prior to World War I. It is also important to the narrative of regional migration patterns, as many families gained affluence in Germantown during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and eventually moved to Chestnut Hill into larger pre-existing houses, or they would commission new homes to suit the needs of their growing families and increased wealth. The house and those in the surrounding area bear testimony to the importance of status to those moving to Chestnut Hill and to their ability to display this status to their friends, neighbors, and associates. The construction of the Adams House near then newly-opened Lincoln Drive also attests to the increasing importance of the automobile as a primary mode of transportation and status symbol, with the addition of a garage in 1914 underscoring this importance.

The landscaping surrounding the house and the Pillings' addition of the Frederick Peck-designed patio also contributes to the visual appeal of the house, making the house appear even more massive and prominent. As Peck was well known and respected for his use of local Wissahickon Schist in the design of many of his projects, including such local projects as the Top of the Hill Plaza, Pastorius Park, the Water Tower Recreation Center, and numerous residential projects surrounding Pastorius Park and Woodward properties (including Louis Kahn's Esherick House), his work at 7716 Navajo Street would have been immediately recognizable to affluent members of the community. For this reason, the Pillings' choice of Peck is consistent with the architecture of the house and of the social history of the area.

The Adams House thus exemplifies the historical heritage of the Chestnut Hill community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission: Italianate Villa/Italianate Style 1840 – 1885; accessed at <https://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/italianate.html>.

George W. and Walter S. Bromley, Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895.

Letter from Charles and Dorothy Pilling to Shirley Hanson, February 10, 1976 (source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy).

American Suburbs, November 1914.

Chestnut Hill National Register District Inventory, 1987.

W.W. Adams' Widow Shoots Self After Marrying Ex-Sailor," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 9, 1921.

The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, policy folder 37921.

Letter from Charles and Dorothy Pilling to Shirley Hanson, February 10, 1976. Source: Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

"The CHHS Celebrates Frederick Peck." *Life on the Hill*, May 2011.