

Analysis of Nomination of 6807 Ridge Avenue

prepared for

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prepared by

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The Amendment to the Roxborough Thematic District identifies the significance of 6807 Ridge Avenue as “part of a larger complex labeled as the “Lafayette hotel.” These and other errors in the nomination make designation inappropriate.

Summary of Nomination Claims for 6807 Ridge Avenue

History: Building constructed between 1884 and 1892. 1884 Philadelphia Atlas (G.M. Hopkins) shows property is owned by Hugh Hallowell with a number of buildings on the parcel. The building that stands today at 6908 Ridge Avenue first appeared on the 1892 Philadelphia Atlas (G.W. Bromley). It was originally part of a larger complex labeled as the "Lafayette Hotel" and was owned by William Wein.

Description: Three-story masonry building with mansard roof clad in slate shingles. Building is clad in stucco. A one-story masonry building was added to north elevation between 1910 and 1923. Based on historic maps, the rear two-story and one-story additions were constructed after 1908. 1949 photograph shows building and addition similar to 2025 appearance (City of Phila. DOR archive).

Source: Amendment to the Roxborough Thematic Historic District

The critical facts on which the designation of 6807 Ridge Avenue (mis-identified in the amendment as 6908 Ridge Avenue) is proposed as part of the amendment to the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District Amendment are incorrect.

- In the 1884 *Philadelphia Atlas* that is used to identify the property, the subject building did not exist and is not depicted.
- From a clearly detailed historic drawing, created in the 1920s, the hotel complex differed in every regard than the house at 6807 Ridge Avenue.
- The original buildings that were the hotel and its stable, barn, and wagon house complex were distinguished by being built of local stone, like most of the early Roxborough buildings.
- According to the 1900 US census, from its earliest occupancy, the building at 6807 Ridge Avenue was a private residence occupied by a tradesman not by a hotel staff member.
- The house was separated from the hotel property and was separately owned.
- The entire hotel and stable complex were demolished pre-1949 as evidenced in the 1949 city photograph and the 1950 Sanborn atlas.
- Finally, 6807 Ridge has been drastically altered from its appearance in the 1923 Sanborn and even more from the 1949 photograph, with the removal of significant character-defining features as described below such that only the mansard remains.

Staff Recommendation:

*the staff questions the appropriateness of adding heavily altered properties with very low integrity to the district. The buildings at 7238 and 7350 Ridge Avenue have a fairly high level of integrity, but others like those at 6600 and **6807 Ridge Avenue** have been significantly altered and may be unable to sufficiently represent the history of Ridge Avenue in Roxborough. The staff recommends inclusion of the properties that expand and enhance our understanding and appreciation of the historic Ridge Avenue corridor, **but not those with little or no integrity.***

Conclusion: None of the buildings or structures of the Lafayette Hotel remain. 6807 Ridge Avenue is listed in the 1900 U. S. Census as being owned by a plumber, Augustus Wein. It was always a single-family house with separate ownership. There is no evidence that the house was ever part of the hotel. When the hotel was demolished before 1949, the house was separate.

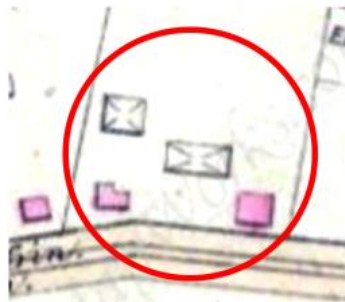
Further, in its present significant altered condition that has affected every surface and feature, 6807 Ridge, as the commission staff notes, adds nothing to the Ridge Avenue District and should be excluded from the amendment.

Historical Evidence:

**"1884 Philadelphia Atlas shows property owned by Hugh Hollowell...
... part of the larger complex labeled as the "Lafayette Hotel..."**

Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District Amendment

Address	6807 RIDGE AVE	DPA Account Number	871527990
Basement	No	Registry Number	090N150196
History	Building constructed between 1884 and 1897. 1884 Philadelphia Atlas G.M. Hopkins shows property is owned by Hugh Hollowell with a number of buildings on the parcel. The building that stands today at 6807 Ridge Avenue first appeared on the 1892 Philadelphia Atlas (G.W. Bromley). It was originally part of a larger complex labeled as the "Lafayette Hotel", and was owned by William Wein.		
Description	Three-story masonry building with mansard roof clad in slate shingles. Building is clad in stucco. A one-story masonry building was added to north elevation between 1920 and 1923. Based on historic maps, the rear two-story and one-story additions were constructed after 1908. 1949 photograph shows building and addition similar to 2025 appearance (City of Phila. OCR archive).		
Bldg Configuration	Semi-Detached	Building Type	Multiple Dwelling
Architectural Style	Second Empire	Stories	3
Roof Shape	Mansard	Roof Material	Slate
Facade Material	Stucco	Foundation Material	Unknown
Structural System	Masonry	Sidewalk Material	
Use	Mixed Use	Use Type	Current
Activity Type	Built	Activity Date	1/1/1890
Classification	Contributing		



1884 G. M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 2nd Ward, pl. 14 (detail).
Historic Map Works

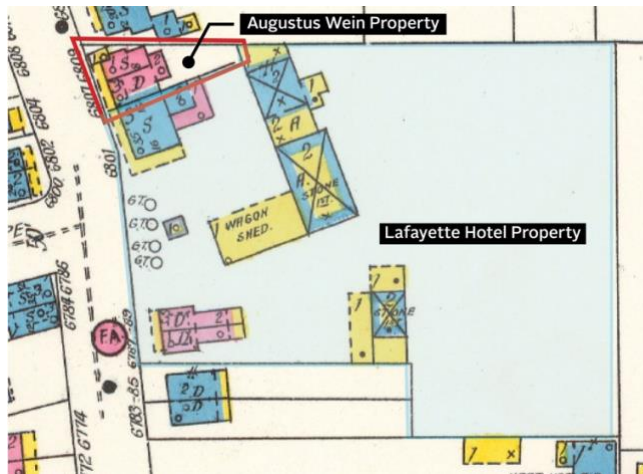


The Hopkins *Atlas of Philadelphia 21st Ward* (1884) cited in the Amendment shows only the L-shaped hotel and stable buildings to the rear on the Hollowell property. The evidence for the historic complex is best presented in plate 1969 of volume 20 of the Sanborn Atlases of Philadelphia (1923, below). That plate clearly shows the stone, three-story hotel with surrounding porch with a commercial function indicated by S[tore]. The adjacent brick domestic building (#6807) to the northwest was denoted with a different function, with a D[welling] and with a separate property line between the hotel and the residential building.¹

In the Sanborn *Atlas of Philadelphia*, plate, v. 15, pl. 1969 (1923), the hotel and its adjacent stables and wagon shed to the south and east, filled most of the property. The materials of these buildings are denoted by color; blue for stone; red for brick; yellow for frame construction. The number of stories for both the stone and brick buildings fronting on Ridge Avenue was denoted by the number 3 for three stories. The stables and wagon shed are similarly described with yellow frame portions and blue stone portions with "1" and "2" denoting one and two-story portions of the service buildings. Their particular

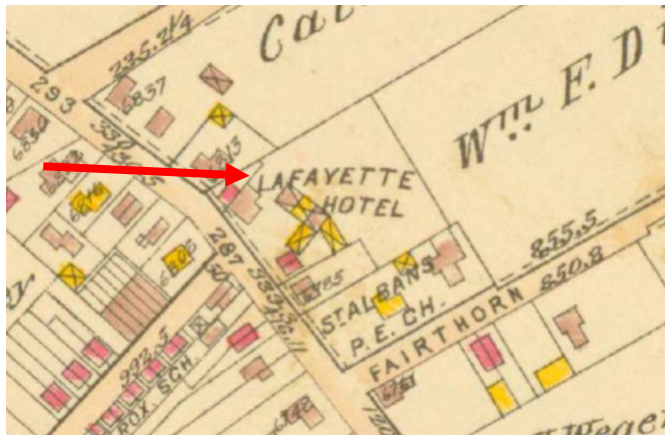
¹ Property lines are an essential part of the mapping. See Sanborn *Surveyor's Manual* (1937) <https://www.historicalinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/SurveyorManual.pdf>

purpose is evidenced by the X that spans the structure and in the Sanborn key was used to denote stables or barns.



Sanborn Atlas, *Philadelphia*, v. 15, pl. 1969 (1923). The plumber's house is shown with a separate property boundary and the hotel complex is shown as it existed in 1923.

The Sanborn plate labels the adjacent brick structure to the northwest with a D for dwelling / residential use and is separated by a property line from the hotel. The Sanborn plate describes the stable buildings as two-story structures, that to the top of the map, is entirely of stone and that to the south shows a stone first story and frame above. The frame wagon shed is labeled as such. The hotel boundary also includes a brick twin residence to the south with another stable to the rear. These buildings survive as 6789 and 6787 Ridge Avenue with 6787 being in nearly original condition.



George Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (1910) pl. 34 (detail) Property line between hotel property and 6807 Ridge Avenue marked by red arrow.

The 1900 United States census lists the building as owned by its resident, Augustus Wein, a plumber. The 1910 Bromley Atlas (above) shows 6807 as a separate property from the stone hotel. The Bromley map shows the same group of buildings and materials as in the 1923 Sanborn plate, albeit with less spatial accuracy, with the stable mislocated to the south. The Sanborn plate is more carefully measured but the building forms and materials (for the Bromley atlas brown = stone; red = brick, yellow = frame) are identical.

6807 Ridge Avenue: Augustus Wein, Owner & Plumber 1900

S. P. WATKINS, JR.
BUILDING.
OPTICS,
1031-1033 CHESTNUT STREET.

Augustus Wein
Plumber
6809 &
h 6807 Ridge Av

1900 Gopsills Philadelphia Directory
6807 Ridge Avenue had same owner in 1894 & 1895

TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.
SCHEDULE No. 1.—POPULATION.

City of Philadelphia

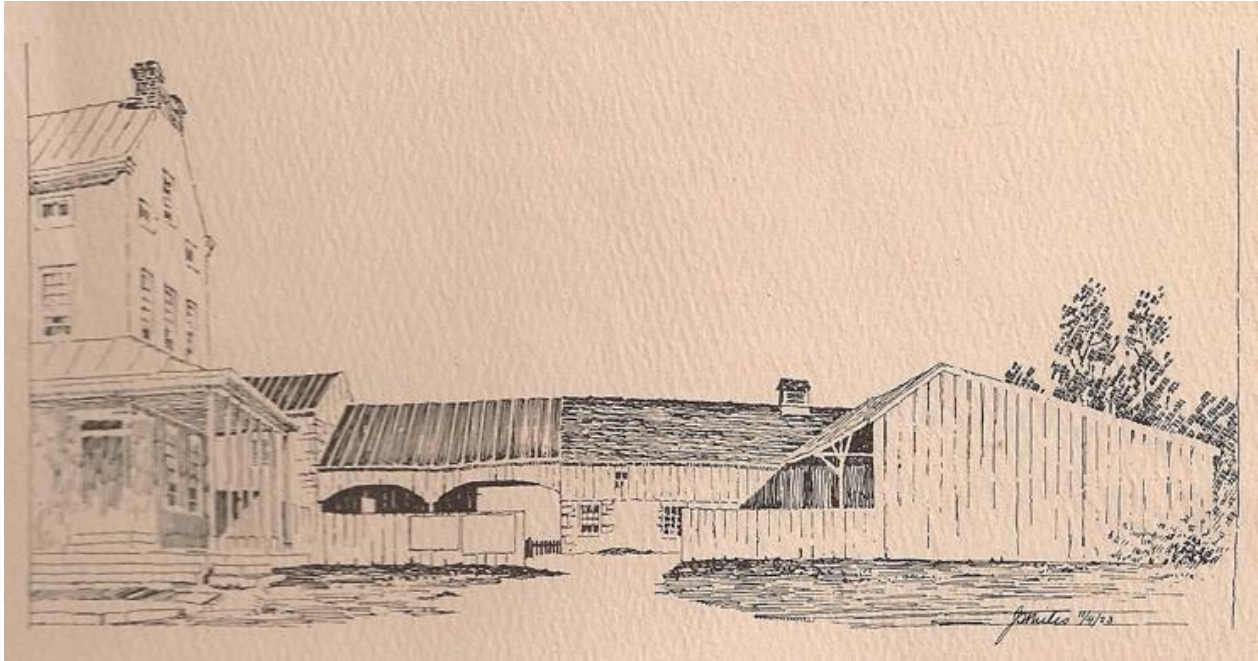
6807 Ridge Avenue
Augustus Wein
Plumber
Owner

1900 *Gopsills Philadelphia Directory* and 1900, Twelfth Census of the United States with Augustus Wein, a plumber, shown as resident and owner. Earlier directories also list Wein as the resident in the 1894 and 1895 *Gopsills Philadelphia City Directory* (Philadelphia, 1894, 1895) pp. 2081 and 1968, respectively.

The 1910 Bromley Atlas confirms the separate property line in the 1923 Sanborn Atlas and the ownership as in the 1900 census; the D on the Sanborn Atlas confirms the different use. Based on the 1900, 1920 and 1930 US censuses, 6807 Ridge was separately owned and was used as a private residence. It was not in hotel use.

The second important document that enables us to understand the site is a carefully drawn perspective view dated 11/4/1923 by Roxborough architect and resident, Joseph Miles (1876-1931).² This image corresponds with the 1923 survey date for the Sanborn plate. Miles' sketch depicts the porch-fronted, gable-roofed, three-story hotel with paired chimneys at the gable, exactly corresponding to the information on the Sanborn Plate. Particularly telling is the gable roof and porch roof, both by then apparently clad in tin as evidenced by the expressed seams, and the small pane sash, all of which are consistent with the early 19th century buildings of Ridge Avenue.

² Miles illustrated the local historical publication that was published after his death. See *A Historical Sketch of Roxborough, Manayunk, Wissahickon, Compiled from the Records of Joseph Starne Miles and Reverend William H. Cooper* (Philadelphia: G. Fein & Co. 1940). Miles has a brief biography in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings website with no individual projects. The illustration is from a collection of Miles' sketches digitized by PhilaNet.Com.



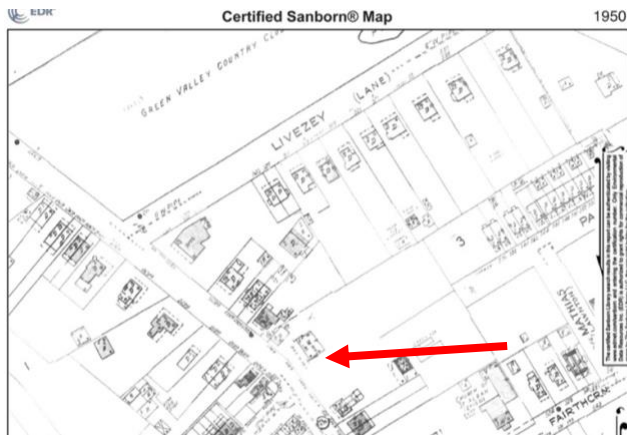
"Lafayette Hotel," Joseph Miles, 11, 4, 1923

As shown in Miles' sketch, the north (left, rear of hotel) stable building is entirely stone while the right (south) stable building is of stone on the first story and frame above – exactly corresponding to what is shown in the Sanborn atlas plate. Further, the frame structure between the two stables is open on both sides making it a covered passage, and the wagon shed on the south (right) is of frame – again what was shown on the atlas plate. Thus the two documents corroborate each other. The Sanborn site plan also distinguishes between the stone hotel portion and the later, brick, domestic structure and adjacent one-story shop that stands on a separate property at 6807-9 Ridge Avenue. With its separate property line and separate uses, the house was not part of the hotel.

The failure to adequately research the property is also evident in the difficulty establishing an approximate date for the hotel. Apart from not finding Miles's perspective that makes clear the early 19th century design of the building, the amendment does not reference Miles historical study of Roxborough that described a trip in the early 1880s in which he passed "... an old inn – the Lafayette Hotel" whose "... inn yard was surrounded by a stone barn, a stone stable, carriage sheds and a shed large enough to accommodate two wagons loaded with hay."³ Miles' description makes it clear that it was already old in the 1880s.

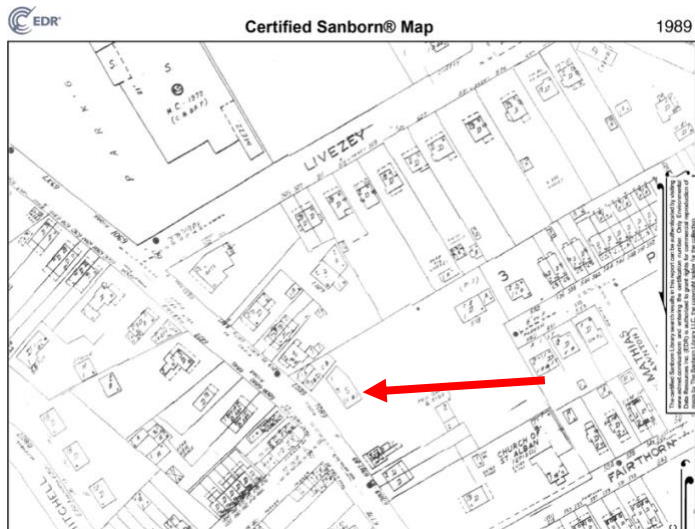
All of the structures in the Miles perspective and description are now gone. Nothing in the present building that is proposed for designation is a part any of these features and structures. The sites of the hotel and the stables were cleared before 1949 for an Esso gas station and are now the site of the one-story dental clinic, setback from the street with parking in front. It has been on the site for forty years. Hence 100% of the buildings that, according to the designation proposal, gave the site its name and purpose have been demolished.

³ Miles, *Historical. Sketch of Roxborough ...* p. 9.



Certified Sanborn Map, 1950 showing 6807 next to the service station property with hotel completely demolished.

More recently the house and shop at 6807-9 (red arrow) was reincorporated into the gas station property as part of a project that was reviewed by the city in the early 2020s and delayed by the Covid-19 virus.

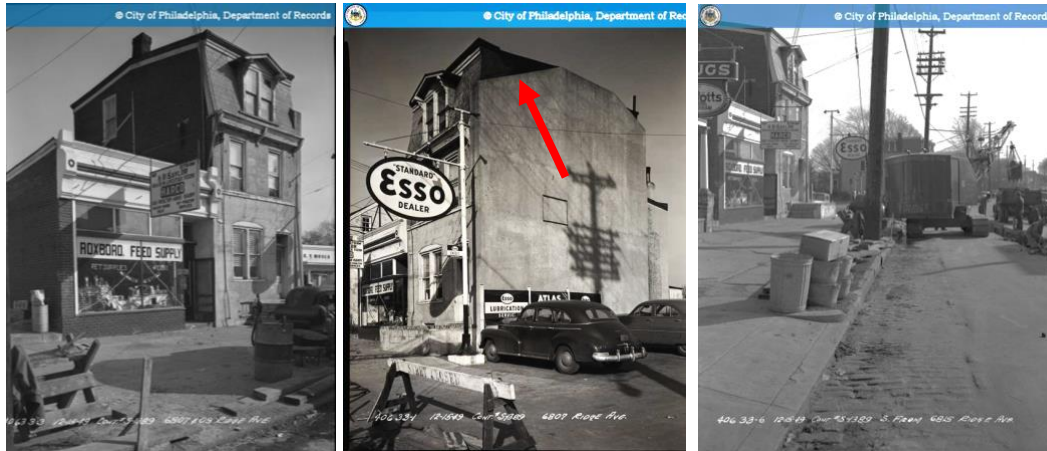


Certified Sanborn Map, 1989 with gas station demolished and beginning of shop row set back from street, separated from 6807-9.

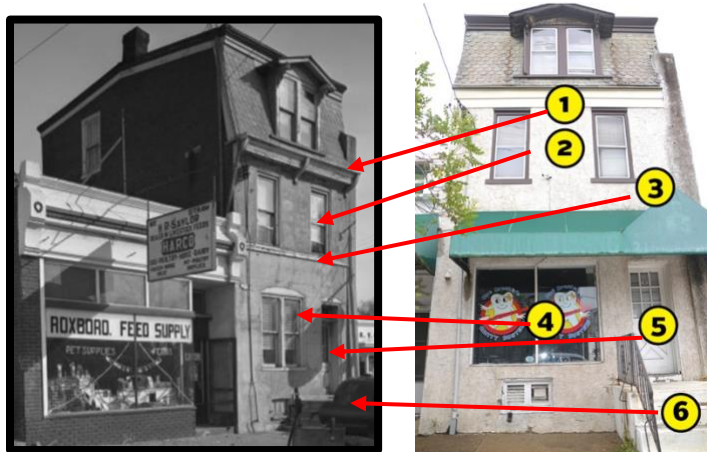
As is evident in the documents, the buildings at 6807 and 6809 Ridge Avenue are not part of the hotel, were constructed in the late 19th century long after the hotel, and given its loss of integrity, have no historical significance either as part of the hotel or on their own. As noted below, the residential building (6807) proposed for adding to the Ridge Avenue district has been massively altered and disfigured and has lost integrity of siting and design.



6809 and 6807 in 2025; 6807 from front; 6807 from south showing modern (1986) office building and parking lot on former site of hotel and stable.



6807 Ridge Avenue in 1949 with Esso garage to right; 6907 showing outline (red arrow) of demolished Lafayette Hotel on wall (PhillyHistory, 12.15.49)



Comparison of alterations since 1949 – in addition to alterations to almost all of the features of the façade since 1949, the characterizing feature of the front porch was already gone in 1949.

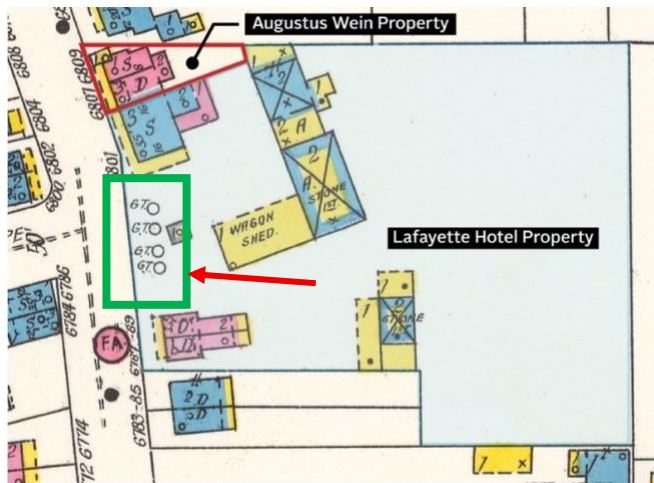
As can be seen in the comparison between the present state and the situation in 1949, 6807 Ridge Avenue has been crudely altered. Its bracketed main façade cornice has been removed (1.), the windows have been replaced (2.), the wood band denoting its removed porch roof has been removed (3.), its arch-headed, first-floor double window has been altered to larger square-headed, metal-framed shop windows (4.), its arch-headed door opening has been altered into a square-headed standard door (5.), the street-front porch has been removed and replaced with a front stoop (6), and finally the entire

façade has been slathered in gloppy stucco that was done to mask the façade alterations. While the volume of 6807 and the mansard and dormer remain, they are cut off from the main volume by the horizontal planks that replace the cornice. 6809 has been similarly altered, and clad in gloppy stucco though retaining its cornice and modified shop window. Built after the 1910 Bromley Atlas, 6809 post-dates the period of significance. As a result of these alterations, the building has lost its design integrity and as noted in the staff report brings nothing to the Ridge Avenue district.

Conclusion:

- Contrary to the claims of the nomination, 6807 Ridge Avenue was not part of the Lafayette Hotel complex and in its present deteriorated and altered state 6807 Ridge Avenue lacks historic merit.
- As evidenced in Philadelphia city directories, from its earliest date after it appears on an atlas, it was occupied by Augustus Wein, a plumber.
- In the 1900 US census, the first after its construction, it is listed as owned by Mr. Wein, a plumber.
- Similarly in 1920 it is also owned by its occupant. It was not part of the hotel.
- The US censuses in 1900, 1920, and 1930 confirm the separate use of the building and the separate ownership of the property while the atlases show the separate property lines, confirming its different ownership.
- The site has been massively disrupted multiple times beginning with adding gas tanks in front of the hotel and stables when the site was first used as a gas station; then again prior to 1949 when the Esso station was built and gas tanks were sunk into the rear of the site, then again in the 1980s and 1990s when the gas station was demolished, the new offices were built and later extended and the site was excavated and later paved.
- Given its altered condition and its lack of connection to the Lafayette Hotel, 6807 Ridge Avenue should not be included in the addition to the Ridge Avenue Thematic District.

Extent of Site Alteration – the property has been massively altered multiple times beginning in the 1920s when gas tanks were located adjacent to the hotel, and in the 1930s when a gas station was reported on the site. These may have been the gas pumps located in front of the hotel on the 1923 Sanborn Plate:



1923 Sanborn plate with four "G.T." (gas tanks, red arrow).

These tanks would have been removed when the gas station was constructed before 1949.



(L.) The gas station had large gasoline tanks at the rear of the property for which excavation was undertaken to sink the tanks below paving level. These were removed prior to the 1980s building project. (R.) Excavation toward 6807 Ridge Avenue side wall (red arrow) on site of former hotel walls.



1980s site excavation, looking toward rear of property, site filled for rear paving with clay below



(L.) Site excavation, phase 2, 1992, rear of site toward new addition and Ridge Avenue; (R.) 1992 wing excavation and fill toward 6789 Ridge Avenue



1992 site looking N. E. from Ridge Avenue with stable to rear of 6789 Ridge Avenue on right (since demolished)

Integrity of site: The site has been altered multiple times since its initial occupation in the early 19th century. Traces of the earlier uses would have been removed or disrupted in the initial construction of the pre-1923 gas tanks; the demolition of the hotel and excavation and construction of the pre-1949 gas station that included large gas tanks at the rear of the site; the demolition of the gas station and excavation for the present north wing of 6801 Ridge Avenue in 1986 with site excavation for paving for front parking and finally, the 1992 excavation and construction of the present south wing. The immediate vicinity has been further disrupted by the demolition of the rear stable behind 6789 Ridge Avenue that remained in the 1990s when the last photo was taken but now is the site of rows of modern houses on either side of the extension of Parker Avenue.

In 2021, plans were commissioned for further work on the 6801 site and the Streets Department was consulted for traffic management. Those plans were delayed by Covid-19 but remain active.

[illegible]

By the 1920 census, the house is occupied by a salesman, with similar uses in following censuses. Again, Mr. Albany owned his house.

[illegible]

By 1930, the Wein family is no longer part of the ownership of any property on the census page; the pair of brick houses at the east end of the hotel property are now occupied by the Edwards and Ashworth families; Ashworth owns his house while the Edwards family and the Richard family at 6807 are renters; the separate property of the hotel had been turned into a rooming house.