

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2025
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

CALL TO ORDER

START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. The following Committee members joined her:

Committee Member	Present	Absent	Comment
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., Chair	X		
Suzanna Barucco	X		
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Lavery		X	
Debbie Miller	X		
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.	X		

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III
Heather Hendrickson, Historic Preservation Planner II
Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner III
Joshua Schroeder, Historic Preservation Planner I
Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, Historic Preservation Planner II
Alex Till, Historic Preservation Planner II

The following persons attended the online meeting:

Allison Weiss, SoLo Germantown
Abbey Lewis
Amy Lambert
Craig Marvel
David Traub, Save Our Sites
Hanna Stark, Preservation Alliance
Jack O'Hara
Jay Farrell
Julia Hayman
Marcie Turney
Mary McGettigan
Meredith Trego, Esq., Ballard Spahr
Nancy Pontone
Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society
Paul Steinke, Preservation Alliance
Sherman Aronson

Stephen Varenhorst
Steven Peitzman, East Falls Historical Society
Suzanne Ponsen, West Central Germantown Neighbors
Valerie Safran

DRAFT

AGENDA

ADDRESS: 5001-11 LANCASTER AVE

Name of Resource: The Manufacturing Building of the United Lutheran Publication House

Review: Designate

Property Owner: Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania

Nominator: Oscar Beisert

Staff Contact: Josh Schroeder, joshua.schroeder@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 5001-11 Lancaster Avenue, the Manufacturing Building of the United Lutheran Publication House, and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The two-story rectangular manufacturing building composed of brick, reinforced concrete, and structural steel with a brick façade containing limestone features was constructed from 1929 to 1930. The building's exterior generally retains its original appearance, with infilled windows, doorways, or bays consisting of the most significant alterations.

The proposal argues that the Lutheran Publication House Manufacturing Building satisfies Criterion J because it is representative of Philadelphia's historical prominence as a center of the United States' publishing and printing industry. The proposal further argues the building's historic significance for its connection to Philadelphia's once-vibrant religious print industry. Finally, the nomination highlights the building's connection to the Lutheran denomination in Philadelphia, whose origins are traced to seventeenth-century Swedish colonists predating the city's founding.

The proposal also contends that the Lutheran Publication House Manufacturing Building satisfies Criterion E as representative of the work by Harris & Richards, Architects and Engineers, a prominent firm known for designing industrial and institutional buildings during the interwar period. Harris & Richards was the successor to Wilson, Harris & Richards, a continuation of Wilson Bros. & Co., one of the most important architectural and engineering firms of the late nineteenth century.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 5001-11 Lancaster Avenue satisfies the Criteria for Designation E and J.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:09:01

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Schroeder presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Oscar Beisert represented the nomination.
- No one represented the property owner.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Cohen and Ms. Cooperman discussed the nomination's justification for Criterion E. They noted that Harris & Richards was the final incarnation of an important firm and that the building at 5001-11 Lancaster Avenue was designed well after the firm's peak of prominence. They were ultimately satisfied that the nomination supported Criterion E, as the building is characteristic of a distinct era in that significant firm's history. Mr. Cohen noted the building's blend of traditional and modern trends of

architecture while Ms. Milroy and Ms. Barucco observed that the building retains much of its original appearance.

- Mr. Cohen also remarked the nomination may have mistakenly identified George Pearson as George Peterson.
- The members of the Committee praised the nomination for highlighting West Philadelphia's history of modest-sized industrial firms, which is often overlooked.
 - Ms. Milroy noted the building highlights the mixing of industrial and residential buildings that characterize that portion of Lancaster Avenue.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Amy Lambert of the University City Historical Society commented in support of the nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- Harris & Richards, Architects and Engineers, is part of the lineage of the Wilson Bros. & Co. architectural and engineer firm, which was extremely significant.
- Small-scale industry was a significant component of West Philadelphia's historical development.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates that the property at 5001-11 Lancaster Avenue satisfies Criterion E as representative of the work of Harris & Richards, Architects and Engineers, a successor to Wilson Bros. & Co.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property at 5001-11 Lancaster Avenue satisfies Criterion J as representative of the industrial heritage of West Philadelphia, especially along the Lancaster Avenue corridor, and for its association with Philadelphia print industry and the Lutheran Church.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 5001-11 Lancaster Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation E and J.

ITEM: 5001-11 Lancaster Ave					
MOTION: Satisfies Criteria E and J					
MOVED BY: Cohen					
SECONDED BY: Barucco					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery					X
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

ADDRESS: 723 CHURCH LN

Name of Resource: T. Ellwood Zell House

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Francis L. Bruno II

Nominator: Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Alex Till, alexander.till@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 723 Church Lane and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The two-and-a-half-story Wissahickon schist residential building was constructed in 1866 as the home of Lt. Col. T. Ellwood Zell. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, I, and J.

The nomination argues that the house reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style and embodies many of the distinguishing characteristics of early Victorian Romantic architectural styles as seen on residential buildings, blending elements of the Gothic and Italianate, satisfying Criteria C & D.

The nomination also contends that the property satisfies Criterion I. The nomination asserts that the parcel is largely undisturbed land that may contain archaeological resources that may yield information important to history, specifically related to the Battle of Germantown, which occurred during the American Revolution in 1777. The claim of archaeological significance in the nomination is predicated on a newspaper article published in 1910 that reported that 20 skeletal remains of Revolutionary War soldiers were discovered on the site when the extant house was built in 1866. In December 2024, in a case known as Nadlan Properties v. Philadelphia Historical Commission, the Court of Common Pleas overturned the Historical Commission's determination that two properties in Germantown satisfied Criterion I; the Court opined that the decision "lacked sufficient evidence, and was broadly based on pure speculation." The staff suggests that the very short section on Criterion I in the current nomination, which is based on a very short newspaper article from 1910, is not sufficient to demonstrate that the property is likely to yield important information. To demonstrate that a property "may be likely to yield information important in pre-history or history" to the degree that the courts are requiring, a successful nomination of an archaeological site should provide an analysis that is equivalent to a Phase 1A archaeological assessment. This nomination fails to provide such an assessment. Moreover, the nomination proposes a Period of Significance of 1866 to 1905, which does not include the Battle of Germantown of 1777.

Finally, the nomination contends that the property satisfies Criterion J for its association with T. Ellwood Zell whose work and life impacted the economic, political, social, and historical heritage of the community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 723 Church Lane satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and J. The staff recommends that the nomination does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the property satisfies Criterion I.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:22:39

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Till presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Oscar Beisert represented the nomination.
- No one represented the property owner.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Beisert commented on the nomination. He described the property as a wonderful little cottage with some alterations but still very much intact. He compared it to a property that he nominated at 724 Locust Avenue. He went on to say that the house is both architecturally significant and that the owner, Lt. Col. T. Elwood Zell was a locally important person. He added that he included Criterion I for archaeology here as he did on the nomination for 724 Locust Ave and stated that he was unaware that the staff would recommend that more research needs to be done to demonstrate that that criterion applies. In addition, he claimed the fact that bodies may have been discovered on the property is valuable knowledge for any future owner to know.
- Mr. Farnham commented that in addition to sending out the required notice letters for this review, he also reached out to the current listing real estate agent for the property and provided a copy of the nomination and information on the meeting. The staff has received no responses to date from the owner or real estate agent.
- Ms. Milroy complimented the nomination and described its case that the house may be associated with architect J.C. Sidney as “persuasive”.
- Ms. Barucco commented that the nomination was well written and highlighted the two-story bay on the rear with a brick first floor and a wood second. She questioned how and when it was built and called it an “interesting” feature.
 - Ms. Cooperman and Mr. Cohen agreed that the bay is an interesting detail and a “visual surprise.”
 - Mr. Cohen continued to comment on other architectural features of the property, highlighting the brackets on the gabled front and the details on parts of the stonework as well as the “rocket ship” dormers. He added that some of these features are similar to features on J. C Sidney designs. He also questioned the use of the term “vernacular” applied to the house and described many of its design elements as commonplace in Germantown in the mid nineteenth century.
- Ms. Cooperman commented on the staff’s recommendation concerning Criterion I. She understands that the staff is responding to a legal case and that there is no current specific standard cited in the Historical Commission’s Rules and Regulations describing archaeological assessment that is required to apply the Criterion, but there also are no specific documentation standards outlined for architectural importance or social history either. She continued to say that she thinks that in this case a Phase 1A archaeological assessment would not add a whole lot more substantive information beyond what is already present in the nomination. Specifically, it cites the location of encampments for the Battle of Germantown as well as a newspaper article reporting that bodies of soldiers were found on the site. She added that the exact location of burials like the ones in question are notoriously difficult to confirm. She stated that she received a briefing on the referenced legal case from the Historical Commission’s attorney and understands the concerns expressed by the staff about the inadequacy of the current nomination. She emphasized that Criterion I included in the ordinance for a good reason and that archaeological remains provide a voice to those who had no voice in past. In addition, one of main issues with archaeology in general is that there is rarely a written record so the only way to determine for sure if there is any archaeological significance is to look below ground. A published article on bodies being found at the site is as compelling a documented reason as you are going to get. She concluded by stating that she is not sure what the best answer is to clarify the Commission’s approach to Criterion I, but that the Criterion and associated power to designate for

archaeology are including the ordinance and archaeology is crucial to the understanding of undocumented aspects of history.

- Ms. Miller also commented on the Criterion I concerns. She explained that the same level of research applies to establishing archaeological potential as it does for any other aspect of history for a site. A researcher looks at maps, reads articles and more. It is not difficult to determine whether something could have been located on a property or could have occurred there. She added that when the subject of human remains comes up in relation to a property, there is usually some amount of truth to it. She cited the example of the First Baptist Church, when archaeologists pointed out that a cemetery had been located there and then bodies were later found. She continued to explain that, in the case of the subject property, it is confirmed that the 1st Battalion Light Infantry was encamped on the spot during the Battle of Germantown because there is a map that shows it and there are books that detail the battle. She claimed that 600 men camped at the site, and, after the battle, there were over 500 British casualties. Those bodies were buried in various places all over the neighborhood and she believes that, if this parcel is developed, they will find evidence of those burials. She went on to say that archaeology seems to be held to a different standard than other aspects related to preservation because most of the time nobody wants to incur the cost of conducting a Phase 1A analysis. She added that the house itself is lovely but is not that outstanding compared to many other similar examples of Gothic cottages in Germantown and the potential for archaeologically important artifacts on this property, particularly related to human remains, is much more significant than the house itself.
 - Ms. Milroy commented that she is curious to know if the legal case mentioned could be appealed.
 - Mr. Cohen suggested that the location of the house be added onto the 1777 map of the Battle of Germantown labeled as Figure 44 in the nomination.
 - Ms. Miller agreed with the suggestion and noted that historian Thomas J. McGuire has written a three-volume book on the Battle that could be used to add details of the battle. She commented that the nomination does include the location of a Church Lane on the battle map and that there was a lot of movement during the battle. She argued that nominations should include more information and resources in their archaeology sections.
 - Ms. Cooperman commented that there is nothing constraining the Committee from recommending in favor of Criterion I.
 - Ms. Miller acknowledged that the argument for Criterion I is lacking information in this nomination compared to the portions covering other criteria. She stated that arguments for archaeological potential should be held to the same standards as those for other criteria. She concluded that she sees high potential for archaeological significance at this property. Frequently, when such recommendations are ignored, evidence is found when excavation starts.
- Mr. Farnham commented on the staff's recommendation concerning Criterion I. He explained that they are not asserting that there is not archaeological significance at the site, but that the nomination does not provide sufficient evidence to support a claim of archaeological significance. He pointed out that the section in the nomination on Criterion I is almost identical to the section on Criterion I in the Germantown Urban Village Historic District nomination that was explicitly rejected by the court. Both nominations were written by the same nominator and the sections on Criterion I are nearly identical. In this nomination, the nominator added a citation to a short newspaper article that claims bodies were found on the site. However, the

- short article was published 50 years after the bodies were ostensibly discovered. He added that he does not believe a court will accept this level of evidence and would likely demand documents from 1866, when the bodies were allegedly discovered, that demonstrates that bodies were in fact found on this property. The staff does support nominating archaeological sites in general and there may be archaeological artifacts on this property, but the staff contends that this nomination does not provide sufficient evidence to convince a court that archaeological artifacts are likely. The staff is encouraging future nominators to provide more information to support their arguments for Criterion I than was provided here.
- Ms. Cooperman, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Milroy agreed with Mr. Farnham's comments about the level of documentation in the nomination.
 - Ms. Milroy offered a few corrections to the nomination. First, on Page 17, the nomination refers to Colonel Zell raising a brigade when the proper term would be a regiment or a battalion. Then, on Page 23, it refers to a naval engagement at Fort Monroe whereas the proper terminology would be the naval engagement at Hampton Roads, as observed from the fort, which is on land. Boats typically do not sail on land.
 - Ms. Cooperman asked about Colonel Zell's enlistment in the army and how that was received by his Quaker meeting and if he was read out as a result.
 - Ms. Barucco responded that the meeting took him back.
 - Mr. Beisert confirmed that he was not read out, but they did hold a trial.
 - Ms. Barucco commented on the subject of archaeology. She agreed with the statements made so far by other Committee members and added that it appears that they all agree that research at the Phase 1A level is likely beyond what most nominators would be able to provide. She also commented that, in the event that a designated site is developed, the Historical Commission should regulate for archaeological resources. She added that it appears there is more work to do on the subject, and they need to clarify what designation under Criterion I means in terms of what is expected of nominators as well as what is expected as oversight from the Historical Commission.
 - Ms. Milroy responded to highlight that the text for Criterion I specifically reads "has yielded, or may be likely to yield". It does not say that proof needs to definitively documented in the nomination.
 - Ms. Barucco responded that research does have to show that the potential exists. The nomination needs to demonstrate that archaeological resources are likely to satisfy Criterion I.
 - Mr. Cohen commented that it would be helpful for every map included in the nomination to be oriented in the same way and include the same footprint to help indicate that there was not major construction in the past that would eradicate subsurface elements.
 - Ms. Barucco commented that this particular site appears to be undisturbed. It is a large, open site with a house and parking lot, so the likelihood of survival of underground elements is greater. She argued that, even if a court negatively received the same general research for a different site, this one appears to be different than that, and it cannot be assumed that a judge would not receive this nomination differently.
 - Others disagreed with Ms. Barucco and noted that a large building was constructed at the rear of the historic building around 2004.

- Mr. Cohen commented that the nomination refers to Linden Place without any explanation. He stated that some contextual information should be provided for the reader.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Suzanne Ponsen, the president of West Central Germantown Neighbors, commented in support of the nomination.
- Steve Peitzman commented in support of the nomination.
- Allison Weiss of SoLo Germantown Civic Association commented in support of the nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The property at 723 Church Lane was owned by Lt. Col. T. Ellwood Zell, who was an influential citizen of Germantown and Philadelphia.
- The T. Ellwood Zell House is a good example of mid nineteenth-century Victorian Romantic architectural styles featuring both Gothic and Italianate details.
- The nomination provides sufficient evidence that there is a likelihood of intact archaeological remains below the surface on the site.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates that the property at 723 Church Lane satisfies Criteria C and D in that that the house reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style and embodies many of the distinguishing characteristics of early Victorian Romantic architectural styles as seen on residential buildings, blending elements of the Gothic and Italianate.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies Criterion J for its association with T. Ellwood Zell, who impacted the economic, political, social, and historical heritage of the community.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies Criterion I in that it has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history, specifically with regard to human remains associated with the Battle of Germantown.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 723 Church Lane satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, I, and J.

ITEM: 723 Church Ln MOTION: Satisfies Criteria C, D, I, and J MOVED BY: Barucco SECONDED BY: Milroy					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery					X
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

ADDRESS: 419 W CLAPIER ST

Name of Resource: Service Buildings for the Dodge Estate

Review: Designate

Property Owner: Shelby Lane LLC

Nominator: SoLo Germantown

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

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 419 W. Clapier Street, near McKean Avenue in southwest Germantown, and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination argues that the property satisfies Criteria A and J, owing to its association with the Dodge family, which included mechanical engineers and an artist. The nomination describes four structures at the site, referred to as a “gardener’s cottage” and the interconnected “garage,” “stone building,” and a “solarium.” The structures were service buildings associated with the Dodge family, who resided in a large house at 5000 McKean Avenue, adjacent to the property in question. The house and service buildings once stood on the same parcel, but it was subdivided into 5000 McKean Avenue and 419 W. Clapier Street in the mid-1950s. The property with the Dodge family house is not designated and but was proposed for designation on 7 October 2025, after the current review process was underway.

The nomination provides very little information about the design, construction, dates, or uses of three of the four structures at 419 W. Clapier Street. The nomination reports that the cottage was designed by architect J.L. Connaroe and erected in 1923 for use by a gardener. The nomination speculates that the garage “may contain a workshop or other non-car storage functions in addition to car storage.” It notes that “the date of construction is unknown, but the building appears in a 1930 photograph.” The nomination observes that “the construction date or purpose of the [stone] building is unknown, but it was likely a barn or carriage house.” The nomination proposes that the structure called a solarium “was likely constructed sometime in the early twentieth century... The building’s purpose is unknown but it could have been a solarium and/or artistic studio.”

The nomination asserts that the property is significant owing to its connection to the Dodge family, husband and wife James Mapes Dodge and Josephine Kern Dodge and their son Kern Dodge. The nomination states:

The Dodge family made international impacts in engineering and children’s literature. James Mapes Dodge and his wife Josephine owned 5000 McKean Avenue (then

including the subject property of 419 W. Clapier Street) from 1890 to 1954; their son Kern Dodge lived at 425 W. Clapier until 1958.

The nomination is unclear about several key facts. For example, the Dodges purchased the property on September 19, 1891, not 1890 as the nomination claims. Husband James died in 1915. Wife Josephine died in 1953. James and Josephine did not own the property in 1954, as the nomination claims. Son Kern resided at 5000 McKean Avenue from 1891 until 1901, when he graduated from the Drexel Institute. No records indicate that Kern lived at the property in question after 1901, when he would have been 21 years of age. Kern purchased 5135 Pulaski Avenue, several blocks away, in 1906, and records indicate that he resided there during the formative years of his career until he sold the property in 1922, but this fact is not mentioned in the nomination. Kern eventually moved to 425 W. Clapier Street, a property adjacent to the nominated property. The nomination implies that Kern moved directly from his childhood home to the adjacent property at 425 W. Clapier Street; he did not. Kern did not live at the nominated property as an adult. Moreover, his residence at 425 W. Clapier Street does not bestow any significance on the nominated property at 419 W. Clapier Street.

The nomination documents the Dodges' neighbors and neighborhood as well as their family members and business associates in great detail. The nomination provides a biography of the mother of James, Mary Mapes Dodge, who was a prominent children's author and editor, but who resided in New Jersey, not at the property. The nomination provides information on the careers of James and Kern, who were engineers, but fails to document or explain how the service buildings might relate to their engineering careers. Kern lived at the property for approximately one decade, from age 11 to 21, before he launched his engineering career. After his mother's death in 1953, when he was about 73 years of age, Kern inherited the property at 5000 McKean Avenue, subdivided it into two properties including the property in question, and sold them. If any significance vests in a property owing to its association with James and Kern Dodge, it is the house at 5000 McKean Avenue, where James lived from 1891 to his death in 1915 and where Kern lived during his teen years until 1901, not the service buildings at 419 W. Clapier Street including the gardener's cottage built in 1923.

The nomination provides little information about the service buildings, when and why they were built, and how they were used, but implies that they represent the extended Dodge family and their network of friends, associates, and neighbors and convey the historical significance of the disparate group of people.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination fails to demonstrate that the property at 419 W. Clapier Street satisfies any Criteria for Designation.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:58:30

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Farnham presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Allison Weiss of SoLo Germantown and near neighbor Amy Lambert represented the nomination.
- Craig Marvel of Shelby Lane LLC represented the property owner.

DISCUSSION:

- Ms. Weiss introduced herself and then introduced Amy Lambert, a near neighbor who undertook much of the research for the nomination. Ms. Weiss stated that they

nominated the service buildings because they believe that they are historic. She added that they submitted a nomination for the Dodge House at 5000 McKean Avenue after submitting a nomination for the property in question. She stated that, together, the buildings represent an estate that was once owned and occupied by the significant members of the Dodge family. She added that the subject property represents the suburban and country house ideal that embodies much of Germantown's history. She claimed that it is the most comprehensive collection of outbuildings to survive in Germantown but did not provide any evidence. She said that the buildings are representative of a community that was once filled with similar structures that no longer survive.

- Ms. Lambert stated that she lives around the corner from the nominated property and has been gathering up information and research about the neighborhood out of her own curiosity. She reported that she was happy for the opportunity to share some information about the neighborhood.
- Mr. Marvel stated that he represents Shelby Lane LLC, the owner of the property. He stated that he and his partners are opposed to a historic designation of the property. He reported that they purchased the property in January 2025 and have done significant remediation. They evicted squatters and addressed environmental concerns including removing 3,000 to 4,000 tires left at the property by the occupants. He stated that they have spent significant money bringing the property into compliance with the City. He observed that they appreciate the research that was done on the property, and the work of the Committee on Historic Designation, but respectfully request that the Historical Commission decline to designate the property.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- David Traub of Save Our Sites stated that the property is a very interesting site that has a lot of character architecturally and visually. He described the site from a photograph being shown during the meeting and concluded that it is very charming and lovely. He acknowledged that the architect of the house is not well known.
- Steven Peitzman claimed that he knows "this little corner of the world pretty well." He observed that the grand houses nearby on McKean Avenue are sizable and handsome structures. He said that it is an attractive neighborhood. He stated that it would be unfortunate to lose any part of the neighborhood, even these little dependency buildings.
- Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society stated that this property is a remarkable survivor. He mentioned the "barn," "gardener's cottage," and the "greenhouse building, or the plant-related building." He remarked that, even without the house, it is a great collection of buildings. He noted that there used to be greenhouses everywhere in Germantown, but only a few survive. He added that the early house across the street from this property is special.
- Suzanne Ponsen of West Central Germantown Neighbors stated that this is a charming site and thanked Allison Weiss for nominating it.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

- Ms. Barucco asked if the house associated with these service buildings is designated.
 - Mr. Farnham explained that the house at 5000 McKean Avenue is not designated. He noted that the house at 5000 McKean Avenue was nominated after the nomination for the service buildings at 419 W. Clapier Street was posted

on the Historical Commission's website with a staff recommendation asking why these buildings were nominated but the main house was not. Mr. Farnham noted that the nomination for the house has not yet been determined to be correct and complete. He added that the house and service buildings are owned by different parties.

- Mr. Cohen agreed that mid nineteenth-century estates in Germantown did often include outbuildings. He observed that the nomination does not put these outbuildings into context. He stated that the nomination should have related to these buildings to others of the same type. The nomination should have provided an understanding of a barn and a carriage house. He observed that the nomination calls one building a "solarium," but suggested that that was unlikely its actual use. He stated jokingly that he doubted that it was "a place where people worked on their tans." He stated that the buildings should have been better documented, which would have made the nomination "much more intelligible."
 - Ms. Cooperman agreed with Mr. Cohen and stated that the building was not a solarium.
 - Ms. Milroy asked if it was a greenhouse.
 - Ms. Cooperman responded that it does not have a glazed roof. She suggested that it might be a cold house, or even a mushroom house. She concluded that the nomination does not provide sufficient information.
 - Ms. Milroy stated that the nomination provides no context for these structures. She stated that she was very confused by these structures because the nomination provides little information about them.
 - Ms. Miller suggested using Sanborn maps and other documents to better understand these buildings.
 - Ms. Milroy observed that maps seem to indicate that some of these buildings were constructed by a former owner, not the Dodges, but no information about that former owner is provided in the nomination.
- Ms. Cooperman concluded that the documentation of the buildings is insufficient.
- Ms. Miller stated that her takeaway from the nomination is that there are "a lot of words, but if they don't say anything it's not useful." She added that this nomination is "really, really full of facts. It was very well researched, but at the end of it, there's not really any there there." She stated that the nominator has a responsibility to interpret the facts and explain why the site is important and what the buildings tell us about who lived in them and used them. She concluded that this nomination never makes an argument.
- Ms. Barucco stated that the service buildings should not have been nominated separately from the house. The current nomination provides no context for the service buildings.
- Ms. Cooperman stated that the nomination provides no context, no way of understanding these buildings, who occupied them, or how they were used. It provides no information about similar buildings in the city. She asserted that she is having trouble supporting this nomination.
- Mr. Cohen suggested that the buildings could have been put in context by reviewing fire insurance surveys for related buildings in Germantown. Looking at information about related buildings would have helped the nominator to understand the buildings on this site. He added that the nomination includes biographies of the Dodge family members but cautioned that their success in business does not necessarily bestow significance on the buildings.

- Ms. Cooperman opined that even if the family members were significant, the buildings do not illustrate that significance.
- Ms. Barucco stated that an argument for the significance of the buildings is not made in the nomination.
- Ms. Cooperman asked for a motion from the Committee.
 - Mr. Farnham interrupted Ms. Cooperman and indicated that Ms. Lambert had raised her hand and wished to speak.
 - Ms. Lambert contended that these service buildings “are very much associated with the Dodge family.” She claimed that “their lives and their interests and their passions were deeply intertwined with these little buildings” even if a case was not made in the nomination. She stated that the family members were mechanical engineers, artists, tinkers, gardeners, and car owners. The buildings reflect the family’s interests.
 - Ms. Cooperman then called on the property owner, Mr. Marvel, because she had allowed the nominator to speak out of turn during the formulation of a motion.
 - Mr. Marvel stated that the buildings are not special or significant. He said that they are just odd buildings that were repurposed for strange living quarters.
- Ms. Milroy asked if a new nomination could be submitted for the property if this nomination is rejected.
 - Ms. Cooperman indicated that a new nomination could be submitted in place of this one.
 - Ms. Barucco stated that she would encourage the nominator to submit a new nomination.
- Mr. Farnham stated for the record that the nominators submitted what they called an addendum to the nomination on 7 October 2025, nearly one month after the Historical Commission sent the notice letters to the property owner. He informed the Committee that he had refused to provide the addendum to the Committee, property owner, or public for today’s review because it sought to put new facts and argument on the record days before the Committee’s meeting. Providing the new information at that point in the process would have rendered the 30-day notice period meaningless and would have fundamentally violated the rights of the property owner, who has 30 days in which to review the claims made for designation. Mr. Farnham reported that he explained to the nominators that they could request to withdraw the nomination, incorporate any additional information into a new nomination, and submit it for review by the Historical Commission, but they declined to do that and asked instead to move forward with the original nomination without the addendum.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The nomination fails to provide sufficient information about buildings at 419 W. Clapier Street. It fails to provide information on who occupied the buildings and how they used them. It fails to put the buildings in context by comparing them to similar service buildings in the area. It fails to explain how the purported significance of the members of the Dodge family is reflected in the buildings. It fails to provide information about earlier owners of the property, who may have constructed some of the buildings.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination fails to demonstrate that the property at 419 W. Clapier Street satisfies any Criteria for Designation, with no prejudice toward a possible resubmission of a revised nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination fails to demonstrate that the property at 419 W. Clapier Street satisfies any Criteria for Designation, with no prejudice toward a possible resubmission of a revised nomination.

ITEM: 419 W Clapier St MOTION: Fails to satisfy Criteria for Designation MOVED BY: Milroy SECONDED BY: Cohen					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery					X
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

ADDRESS: 4024-34 APALOGEN RD

Name of Resource: Tulipwood

Review: Designate

Property Owner: Valerie Safran & Marcie Turney, Northwestern Revocable Trust

Nominator: East Falls Historical Society

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

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 4024-34 Apalogen Road and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination argues that the property with the Modernist house known as Tulipwood satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and D. The introductory paragraph in the Statement of Significance announces that the property “meets Criteria A & C” but does not mention Criterion D; however, Criterion D is checked on the form and mentioned elsewhere in the nomination. Architect Elizabeth Hirsh Fleisher designed the house in the Mid-century Modern style in collaboration with her landscape architect and husband Horace Teller Fleisher as their residence in retirement and constructed it in 1954. They lived in the house until his death in 1964 and hers in 1975.

The nomination provides biographies of Elizabeth Hirsh Fleisher and Horace Teller Fleisher and a brief discussion of the design of the house and the development of Apalogen Road. The nomination notes that architect Thaddeus Longstreth and artists Wharton Eshrick, Paul Evans, and Phillip Lloyd Powell contributed to the house, but does not catalogue their contributions except to mention Eshrick’s fireplace surround, which has been removed from the house. The nomination never explicitly indicates how the property satisfies Criterion A. If the association with architect Elizabeth Hirsh Fleisher is the basis for the claim of the satisfaction of Criterion A, then Criterion E, the work of an influential architect, may be more appropriate.

The current property owner purchased this property in June 2024. At the time of the sale, the City of Philadelphia issued a Property Certificate indicating that the properties were not designated as historic. After purchasing the property, the owner engaged numerous consultants to plan for the redevelopment of the property including the demolition of the existing structure and the construction of a new dwelling. The property owner has spent \$436,000 in addition to the land acquisition costs to date preparing for the redevelopment. The property owner has submitted an affidavit to the Historical Commission attesting to these facts. The nomination was submitted to the Historical Commission on 8 September 2025. The Historical Commission issued its notice letters announcing the consideration of the nomination on 11 September 2025.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends to the Committee on Historic Designation that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 4024-34 Apalogen Road satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E, but not Criterion A, for which no clear argument is articulated.

The staff recommends that the Historical Commission acknowledge the significance of the property but decline to designate it. The uncontested record clearly shows that the property owner made a significant material commitment to the redevelopment project before the issuance of the notice letters. A designation at this point in the redevelopment process would unjustly frustrate the owner's investment-backed expectations for the property and open the City to potential liability.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 01:39:47

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Farnham presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Steven Peitzman and Amy Lambert represented the nomination.
- Attorney Meredith Trego, and property owners Marcie Turney and Valerie Safran attended the review.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Peitzman stated that he does not have strong feelings about whether the property is found eligible under Criterion A or Criterion E. He stated that the nomination cites Criterion A because the nominators contend that Elizabeth Fleisher is a person significant in the past. He asserted that she was a very early woman architect, probably the first registered woman architect in Philadelphia. For a professional woman in a new profession for women to succeed required considerable determination, talent, and some good fortune as well. Elizabeth Fleisher qualifies as a person significant in the past for her architectural work and her early entry into the profession. Mr. Peitzman stated that he did not know if she was influential on other architects, or trends in architecture. He asserted that Tulipwood, the Modernist house, is important not only for its own merits, but also as part of a remarkable ensemble of Modern houses in a woodland setting, the Apalogen Road enclave.
- Ms. Lambert stated that she was thrilled to be able to work on a nomination on the first woman architect to be registered in Philadelphia, and the fourth in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. She praised the design and placement of the house on Apalogen Road as part of a group of Mid-century Modern houses.
- Ms. Trego introduced her clients, the property owners Marcie Turney and Valerie Safran.

- Ms. Turney stated that she and Ms. Safran invest in and revitalize the commercial area along S. 13th Street in Center City, Philadelphia, where they have opened 12 different businesses, seven of which are currently operating. She stated that they have also purchased five commercial properties on the 1300 block of E. Passyunk Avenue. She stated that they purchased the Apalogen Road property for the wooded area, the privacy, the beautiful road, and the fact that it is near their daughter's school. She stated that they were about to demolish the building in question to construct a new house when they were blindsided by this nomination.
- Ms. Trego stated that they would not argue that Elizabeth Fleisher was not a noteworthy architect. They would, however, argue that designating this property now would result in an outcome that really can only be described as unjust, given the investment the property owners have already made in this property. Ms. Trego provided some background. She recounted that the owners purchased the 2.37-acre property in June 2024 for more than \$1.8 million. At the time of their acquisition, the property was not listed as historic and had never been nominated for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. She added that there are currently no properties on Apalogen Road that are designated as historic. She noted that significant changes had already been made to the building at the time of the owner's purchase, including the painting of the entire exterior black. Ms. Trego stated that her clients purchased this property for the land, for the property itself, and to be close to their daughter's school. They purchased it with the intent of building a new structure on the property that better fits their family's needs. They are and were entirely within their right to proceed down that path because, at the time that they started down that path, the property was not nominated or designated as historic. In July 2024, the owners had the land surveyed, and they signed a letter to engage Varenhorst Architects to design a new residence for the property. The architects independently confirmed that there was no nomination pending or designation of this site. The owners worked with an auctioneer to remove certain elements of the home including parts of a fireplace, a wall-mounted cabinet, and a credenza. Between July 2024 and September 2025, during the more than 14 months between when they purchased the property and when the nomination was submitted, the owners took significant steps to advance their project for the design and construction of a new residence. Over those 14 months, the owners engaged an interior design firm, an architect, civil engineers, a landscape architect, septic contractor, a kitchen designer, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, an MEP engineer, a general contractor, and an environmental testing agency. The owners and their consultants undertook and completed or obtained the following studies, plans, and permits over those 14 months, including a site survey, schematic design, soils testing, landscape plans, conceptual stormwater management plans, septic design plans that were submitted to the Department of Health, standard penetration tests, structural design, an Act 537 exemption application, which was approved in September of 2025, a geotechnical report, an arborist report, an environmental report, and a Streets Department pre-zoning approval. All of these were required for the construction of a new residence on this property. All of these are required to submit and secure zoning and building permits. The zoning and building plans were ready for submission by the first week of this month, a couple of weeks after the nomination was submitted. During the 14 months of work, the owner spent more than \$436,000 for the studies, consultants, designs, and testing, costs that were incurred prior to any historic nomination of the property. The Historical Commission's staff recommends to the Commission that it decline to designate if the designation would prevent the owner from achieving its

investment-backed expectations established prior to the issuance of the nomination notice letters. The owner spent significant time and money in a good faith effort to develop this property that they own to suit their needs prior to any nomination. Designating this property now would truly result in a gross unfairness to the property owners.

- Ms. Trego raised a second issue. She stated that all of the building-specific images included in the nomination, Figures 7 through 29, appear to have been attained by illegal trespass onto the property, including onto the attached deck, beneath the attached deck, and within a fenced backyard area, which can only be accessed by going through a gate. She noted that photographs were available online on the Zillow listing, making the trespass unnecessary. There was no reason for anyone to trespass onto the property. She asserted that nominating the building, designating the building now, on the basis of this nomination, with these photographs that were taken without the owner's authorization, without any notification that someone was entering their private property, would reward these illegal actions.
- Ms. Trego concluded that improving Philadelphia is the life's work of her clients. They purchased the property to make it into their family home. They spent more than one year and over \$400,000 advancing a project, completing all of these steps and spending all of this money, before any nomination was submitted. Within weeks of being able to file for building permits, this nomination was submitted using photographs that were obtained illegally without the permission of the property owners. For these reasons, Ms. Trego respectfully requested that the Committee recommend against designation. Designating at this time would be inappropriate given the work, time, and money that has been spent by the owners in good faith efforts. Designating the property would only reward the inappropriate behavior of the nominators, who trespassed to take the photographs.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Julia Hayman stated that she is currently finishing up her Master's in Historic Preservation at Jefferson University, where she was a graduate assistant at the Center for the Preservation of Modernism. She stated that this house is architecturally significant. She asserted that the investment that the owners have made in the city does not entitle them to special treatment. She claimed that the owners knew at any point that the property could be nominated, especially if the owners were aware of its historical and architectural significance. She opined that the owners are welcome to sell this property and recover their investment. She posited that they have ample resources to do so. She contended that this architecturally significant property should not be demolished.
- Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society supported the nomination and asked the owners to reconsider and add onto the historic building rather than demolishing it.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

- Ms. Trego stated that Section 6.9.a.10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations gives the Historical Commission and its advisory committees discretion to consider factors like executed contracts, substantial design development, and other evidence of material commitment to development in consideration of a designation. It would not be special treatment to employ a regulation. It is fully within the Committee's scope and purview, pursuant to the regulations, to consider these facts. Ms. Trego then rejected the assertion that simply because her clients were able to spend the money to buy the property and plan for its redevelopment that they

have the means to scrap all of it. She stated that their savings and their family's wellbeing are tied up in this project. There will be real financial implications if this property is designated or if they are forced to sell it. Her clients have significant investment-backed expectations with regard to this property. A designation at this point in the process would be unjust.

- Ms. Barucco stated that there is no question in her mind that this property is worthy of designation. The nomination demonstrates the significance of the house. The situation, however, is unfortunate. The houses along Apalogen Road are significant and it is disappointing that they were not nominated for designation earlier.
- Mr. Farnham asked Julia Hayman, who spoke during the public comment period, to please stop making inappropriate comments about the property owners in the Zoom Q&A section.
- Ms. Cooperman stated that the Committee does not have enough information to determine whether the nominators trespassed at this property, but she strongly discouraged nominators from trespassing in the future. She stated that it does not help the nomination or the process.
- Mr. Cohen remembered a tour of the houses on Apalogen Road with the late architect Charlie Evers. He stated that he found the late 1950s and early 1960s houses on Apalogen Road to be incredible. Mr. Cohen praised the nomination. He stated that the Committee on Historic Designation is charged with assessing significance. He concluded that this property is extremely significant.
- Ms. Cooperman remembered being a student at Germantown Friends School and visiting the houses on Apalogen Road. She stated that the property satisfies the Criteria for Designation.
- Ms. Milroy agreed with her colleagues on the Committee and asserted that the property satisfies the Criteria for Designation. She asked about the Horace Fleisher designed landscape.
- Ms. Miller agreed with her colleagues on the Committee.
- The Committee members agreed that their task was to determine whether the nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies one or more of the Criteria for Designation. The Historical Commission has a broader purview and will take the property owners' claims about material commitments to a redevelopment project into account.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The property at 4024-34 Apalogen Road with the house known as Tulipwood was designed by architect Elizabeth Fleisher and landscape architect Horace Fleisher as their home in 1954.
- Elizabeth Fleisher was a pioneer among women architects. She was one of the first female architects licensed to practice in Pennsylvania.
- The house known as Tulipwood is an excellent example of the Mid-century Modern style of architecture.
- The current property owners have been planning to demolish the house and construct a new house at the property since they purchased the property on 12 June 2024. To date, they have spent more than \$436,000 in addition to the land acquisition costs of \$1,850,000 on the redevelopment project.
- The nomination was submitted to the Historical Commission on 8 September 2025. The Historical Commission issued its notice letters announcing the consideration of the nomination on 11 September 2025.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies Criteria A and E, owing to its association with architect Elizabeth Fleisher.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property satisfies Criteria C and D, owing to its Mid-century Modern style of architecture.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 4024-34 Apalogen Road satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, D, and E.

ITEM: 4024-34 Apalogen Rd					
MOTION: Satisfies Criteria A, C, D, and E					
MOVED BY: Barucco					
SECONDED BY: Cohen					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery					X
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	5				1

ADJOURNMENT

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 02:22:25

ACTION: The Committee on Historic Designation adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Minutes of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and its advisory Committees are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the video recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.
- Application materials and staff overviews are available on the Historical Commission's website, www.phila.gov/historical.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

§14-1004. Designation.

(1) Criteria for Designation.

A building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for preservation if it:

- (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;
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION, 15 OCTOBER 2025

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PRESERVATION@PHILA.GOV

PHILADELPHIA'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant innovation;
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park, or other distinctive area that should be preserved according to a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- (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.