

ADDRESS: 5000 MCKEAN AVE

Name of Resource: Suburban House

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Kimberly Blockett

Nominator: SoLo Germantown

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

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 5000 McKean Avenue in southwest Germantown and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. A nineteenth-century suburban house stands on the property. The house was associated with some outbuildings on the adjacent property at 419 W. Clapier Street but those buildings were recently demolished after the Historical Commission declined to designate them on two occasions, finding that they did not have sufficient historical significance to warrant designation.

The nomination for the house at 5000 McKean Avenue argues that the property satisfies Criteria C and J. The nomination asserts that the property satisfies Criterion C for two reasons. First, it claims that “together with the associated Carriage House, Coachman’s Residence, Gardener’s Cottage, Greenhouse, Garage and Grounds on the adjoining parcel at 419 West Clapier Street, the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate remains the most complete surviving suburban ensemble in Germantown, satisfying Criterion C.” Regardless of the veracity of the claim at the time that the nomination was written, the claim is now untrue because the outbuildings have been demolished and the two properties cannot be construed as a “complete surviving suburban ensemble.” Second, the nomination asserts that the house “is a distinguished example of Germantown’s domestic architecture from the last half of the nineteenth century, exemplifying the Italianate houses of the era with stylistic embellishments added in the later Victorian period.” While the house is Italianate in style with some later alterations by Mantle Fielding Jr., it is unremarkable. It is no longer an excellent example of the Italianate style or Fielding’s oeuvre because it has been significantly altered. The entire rear wall of the house was reconstructed with stucco and non-historic windows, and the side porch has been removed. Numerous better examples of the Italianate and Fielding’s work, many not designated, survive throughout Germantown and Northwest Philadelphia. The nomination asserts that the “property’s continuous occupation by upper-middle class and affluent Philadelphians of professional and civic distinction underscores Germantown’s historic significance as a domestic retreat for the city’s mercantile and industrial elite” and thereby satisfies Criterion J. A house cannot be historically significant simply because its occupants were affluent; affluence alone is not a measure of significance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 5000 McKean Avenue fails to satisfy Criteria C and J.



Figure 1. This photograph looking north from W. Clapier Street documents that the buildings at 419 W. Clapier Street had been demolished by July 9, 2026. The rear of the house at 5000 McKean Avenue can be seen at the right of the photograph.

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: 5000 McKean Avenue

Postal code: 19144

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge 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: Residence

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 1855 to 1954

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: ca.1855-63, 1891, 1902

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Mantle Fielding (1891)

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: H.H. Hudson (1902)

Original owner: Hampton L. Carson; George S. Strawbridge; James Mapes Dodge

Other significant persons: _____

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 SoLo Germantown Date November 23, 2025

Name with Title Allison Weiss Email awfromhh6@gmail.com

Street Address 4908 Wayne Avenue Telephone _____

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19144

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: November 23, 2025

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: December 10, 2025

Date of Notice Issuance: December 16, 2025

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Kimberly Blockett

Address: 5000 McKean Avenue

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: January 21, 2026

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: February 13, 2026

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected



NOMINATION OF

5000 MCKEAN AVENUE

**The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House at the Carson-
Strawbridge-Dodge Estate**

TO THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NOVEMBER 2025

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

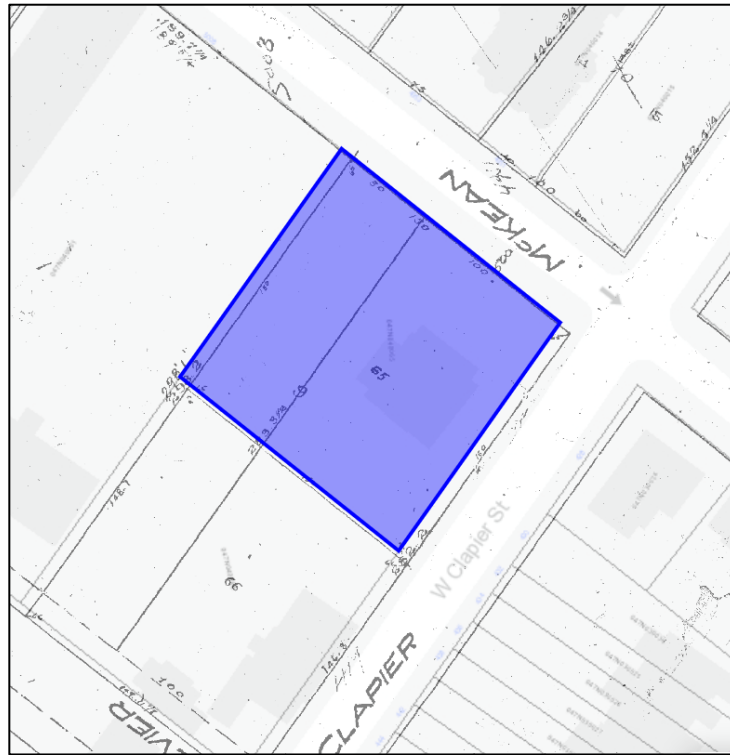


Fig. 1. Parcel map of 5000 McKean Avenue from the website of the Office of Property Assessment, City of Philadelphia. The original parcel extended in the same length and breadth southeasterly to the abandoned Sevier Street easement and included 419 West Clapier Street.

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected. Situate in the 13th Ward of the City of Philadelphia and described according to a survey and plan thereof made by John T. Campbell, Esquire, Surveyor and Regulator of the 9th District dated the 31st day of December AD 1928 and last revised by Israel Serota, Esquire, Surveyor and Regulator of the 9th District dated the 7th day of August AD 19532 [sic] as follows, to wit. Beginning at the point formed by the intersection of the Southwesterly side of McKean Avenue (50 feet wide) and the Northwesterly side of Clapier Street (50 feet wide); thence extending south 37 degrees, 10 minutes, 34 seconds West along the said side of Clapier Street 150 feet to a point; thence extending North 49 degrees, 47 minutes, 4 seconds West 150 feet to a point; thence extending North 37 degrees, 10 minutes, 34 seconds East 150 feet to a point on the Southwesterly side of McKean Avenue aforesaid; thence extending South 49 degrees, 47 minutes, 4 seconds, East along the said side of McKean Avenue 150 feet to the first mentioned point of indication and place of beginning. Being 5000 McKean Avenue.

The property is known as Parcel No. 047N040065, Office of Property Assessment Account No. 133149800.

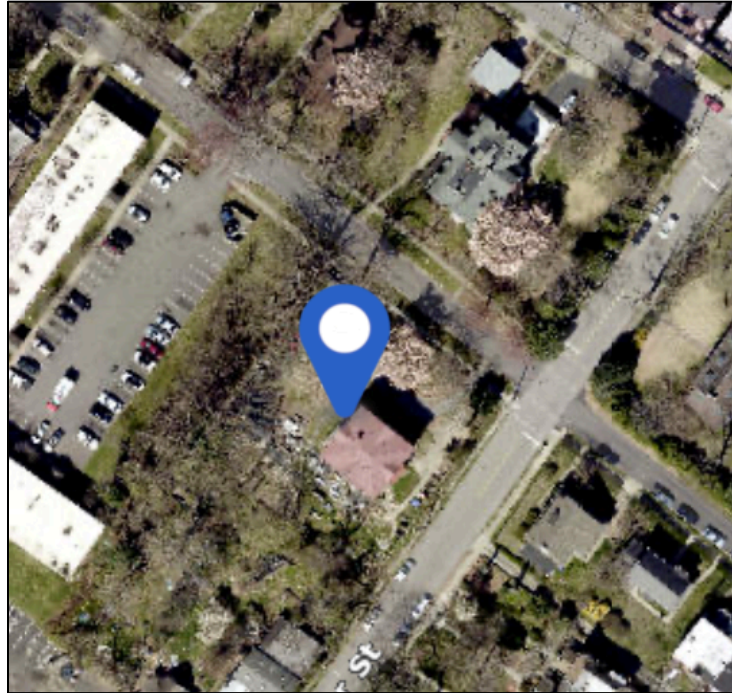


Fig. 2. Aerial photo of 5000 McKean Avenue. North is at the top of the photo. Source: Pictometry, the Office of Property Assessment, City of Philadelphia. Accessed September 13, 2025.

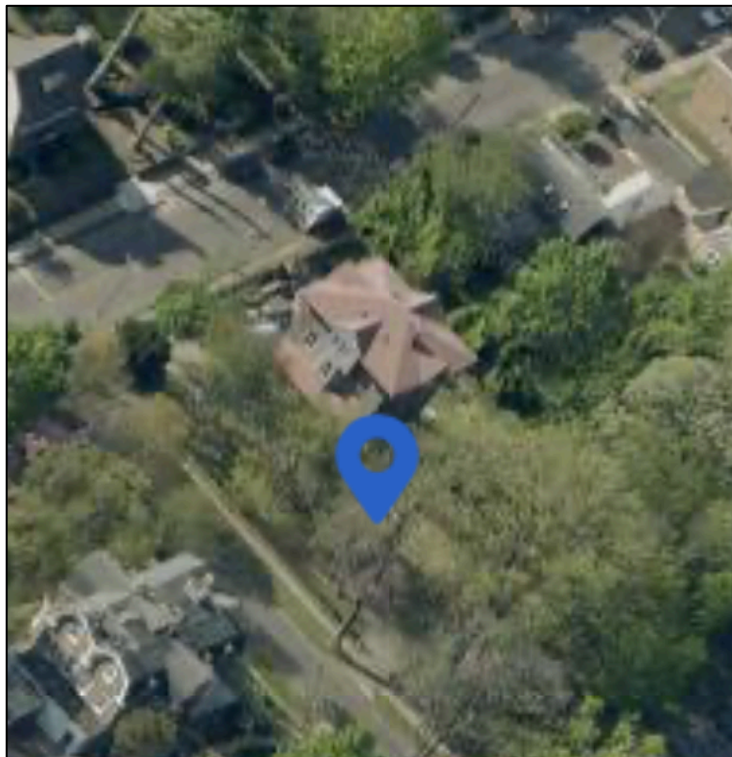


Fig. 3. Aerial oblique photo of 5000 McKean Avenue from the north. Source: Pictometry, the Office of Property Assessment, City of Philadelphia. Accessed September 13, 2025.



Fig. 4. Key to Site Plan and Features for the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate. Source: Zillow.com

Buildings on the parcel at 5000 McKean Avenue

1. Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House, constructed ca.1855-62;¹ alterations, 1891 by architect Mantle Fielding.
2. Perimeter schist wall, approximately 48" tall, constructed after 1915.²

Buildings on the parcel at 419 W. Clapier Street (see separate nomination)

3. Greenhouse, constructed completed ca.1905-10.³
4. Carriage House, constructed ca.1855-62.⁴
5. Garage, constructed ca.1906-1911.⁵
6. Coachman's Residence, constructed ca.1885-1889.⁶
7. Brick Courtyard, constructed ca.1885-1899.⁷
8. Gardener's Cottage, constructed 1923, architect J. Liner Connaroe.

¹ *Plan of A Lot of Ground Situate in the 22nd Ward, City of Philadelphia*, Surveyed June 30, 1855, by Joseph King, Jr., Surveyor (King Survey 1855). Source: Collins & Autenrieth Architectural Works (MSS 0359), University of Delaware Special Collections; and Philadelphia Atlas (Philadelphia: Samuel Smedley, 1862).

² This date is based on photographic evidence from April 1915 that does not show the perimeter wall between the Greenhouse frontage along Clapier and the McKean Avenue corner.

³ A notice was published in November 1905 addressing the construction of the one-story structure. However, the Greenhouse is first indicated on the 1910 *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1910).

⁴ This date range is based on visual evidence and the Carriage House's presence on the 1862 *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Samuel Smedley, 1862). Casey Weisdock from the International Masonry Institute has indicated that the random course, rubble schist typology of the Carriage House (and House at 5000 McKean) is common in pre-industrial quarrying, concurrent with ca.1855-1862 (Interview, October 23, 2025).

⁵ The Garage is an enclosure of the south entry to the Carriage House with its large roof overhang. It appears initially on the 1911 Bromley Atlas.

⁶ The Coachman's Residence was the first addition to the property after the initial ca.1855-1862 build. It appears on the 1889 *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 22nd Ward. (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co.).

⁷ The Brick Courtyard was installed as early as ca.1885-1889 when Strawbridge built the Chauffeur's Residence creating a courtyard accessed from Clapier, abandoning the driveway bisecting the Grounds.

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The subject property at 5000 McKean Avenue is a one-half acre lot with a 3-story Italianate stone residence in the Germantown neighborhood of Northwest Philadelphia. Built ca. 1855-1862, the house is estimated to be a pre-Civil War dwelling due to its pre-industrial quarry stone in a random course, rubble pattern. The property was subdivided into a one-acre lot as designated by an 1855 survey and appears on the 1862 Smedley Atlas with its Carriage House in a similar construction. The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House is square in plan with a near-pyramidal, standing seam metal hip roof symmetrically punctuated at each elevation by a central gable with an off-center brick chimney.



Fig. 5. Primary elevation of the subject property facing McKean Avenue. Photo: SoLo Germantown, March 2024.

Site

Situated on the cardinal west (southwest) side of the intersection of McKean Avenue and West Clapier Street in Southwest Germantown, the property is one half acre in size with one stone building facing McKean. The McKean Avenue side of the property is slightly above street grade; behind the house, the property grade drops significantly to the rear boundary. There remain a few specimen trees, including a large pin oak at least one hundred years old near McKean Avenue at

the adjacent property line.⁸ The subject parcel was from 1863 until 1954 one half of a full acre parcel, connected to the existing half-acre parcel at 419 West Clapier Street.⁹

The McKean Avenue frontage contains a non-historic metal fence running the entire length, attached to, and opening at, two pairs of granite newel posts, each holding sentry at each end of a gravel governor's driveway. Around the corner on West Clapier Street, there is non-historic, wood perimeter fencing above a schist retaining wall. There is a break in this stone wall halfway down the property frontage that contains a few steps up to a gate, allowing for Clapier side access to the property. Along the entire McKean Avenue and Clapier Street frontages, there is a bluestone slab sidewalk.



Fig. 6, left. A view northwest along McKean Avenue showing the bluestone sidewalk. Fig. 7, right. A view from cardinal north to the house showing the primary elevation (left) and the side garden elevation (right). Photos: SoLo Germantown. Left, September 2025; right, August 26, 2025.

The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House

The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House at the northern end of the parcel is a 3-story Italianate dwelling, square in plan, and clad in a random coursed, rubble schist. The wall plane on all four sides peaks in the center, matched by the roof. The metal, near-pyramidal hip roof is of a standing seam variety, red in color that has likely been replaced within the last few years; the roof has a deep overhang with exposed brackets at all four elevations. The chimney is off center toward the west side of the house. The dwelling embodies a pared-down version of the Italianate

⁸ John T. McNeill, "Great and Historic Trees of Philadelphia County." *Germantowne Crier*, Vol. 20, Number 1, March 1968, p. 21-29.

⁹ Deed dated May 24, 1954, Lot 66 (subdivision of 9), 22nd Ward. Grantee: Kern Dodge and The Pennsylvania Company for Banking and Trusts, Trustees; Grantor: O.C. No. 566, Estate of Josephine Kern Dodge by will.

style rendered in a vernacular building stone. It was characteristic of many area houses of the same vintage, with an echo of the gothic revival in its center gable peaks at each elevation.

Northeast (Primary) Elevation

The northeast elevation of the stone residence faces McKean Avenue and a governor's driveway. The dwelling contains 3 bays with the center bay containing the primary entrance. There is a one-story, open porch across the width of the elevation. The low-slung roof is upheld by four unadorned columns that are spaced to frame the three bays. The painted columns are positioned at the front edge of the porch slab and there is a deep overhang of the roof structure above.

The entrance opening contains a pair of doors and they are flanked on either side by two windows. The westernmost window has a sill that meets the porch and contains a window that likely traces to the 1891 alterations by Mantle Fielding with a decorative upper sash. The easternmost window opening has a higher sill and a more contemporary window.



Fig. 8. The primary elevation of the residence with its central bays over a porch at the primary entrance. Photo: SoLo Germantown, September 2025.

At the second level, there are two window openings each with a double-hung window (likely contemporary) that flank a center bay of painted wood that has three facets projecting from the stone wall plane. Each of the three windows contains contemporary double-hung windows. Where the bay meets the stone wall plane on either side, there is a vertical column of square paneling before the window opening.

At the third level, again, there are two window openings (smaller than those at the second level) which each contain contemporary, double-hung windows. These window openings span the stone wall plane and the wood cornice of the roof overhang, opening between two brackets. In the center bay, there is a projection that continues in the same plane as the furthest projecting bay below and spans the width of the gable peak of the roofline, the same width as the full bay below between each vertical paneling trim on either side. This painted wood bay of flat shingle siding has scalloped ends at each edge, defining the triangular void created from the angled bay facets below.



Fig. 9. South elevation of the 1923 Cottage showing the driveway and brick wall (left side of photo) of the Erringer Place Apartments to the south. Date: March 28, 2025.

Southeast (Clapier Street) Elevation

The southeast elevation of the residence has the same roofline but the center gable is not infilled with a bay; rather, it contains the full wall plane and is capped by the same deep, roof overhang as the other elevations. This elevation shows the downward slope the grade takes along W. Clapier Street. While the entry door at the northeast elevation is at grade, that same level is above the back garden.

At the first level, there is a central bay with a standing seam, metal shed roof that may date from the 1891 Mantle Fielding alterations. The bay is clad in round shingled siding and contains a

large window with a decorative, small upper sash. The rest of the first level contains no openings in the stone wall plane except for a small opening that has been infilled to the north of the bay.



Fig. 10. The house as seen from the intersection of McKean Avenue (right and foreground) and West Clapier Street. Photo: SoLo Germantown, September 2025.

At the second level, there are only two window openings. One rises above the shed roof of the bay below and is off center to the north; it contains a contemporary, double-hung window. The other opening begins to the south side of the shed roof and its sill is lower than the other window, meeting the lower edge of the roofline below in two-dimensions. There is one plate of glass or plexiglass in this opening. The sill is simple and there is no header except for hidden a metal lintel.

At the third level, there are three equally spaced window openings. The center opening contains two windows, each a contemporary double-hung window with air conditioning units. This center window is capped by a half round window located high in the gable end of the roof overhang. There are two windows on either side of the central gable end and they match those at the third level at the primary elevation: they straddle the schist wall and the wood cornice and are each located between two brackets.



Fig. 11. View of the dwelling from West Clapier Street looking at the south (rear) elevation with a layer of stucco and contemporary windows in the historic, 3-bay configuration. The perimeter schist wall extends from McKean Avenue (right) along the entire Clapier St. frontage. Photo: SoLo Germantown, March 2024.

Southwest (Rear) Elevation

The southwest or rear elevation of the residence has been altered from its historic appearance in recent years. The entire elevation has received a coat of light-colored stucco over the historic schist masonry. In spite of the more contemporary materials, including windows, the three bays remain identifiable. At each of the three upper levels, there are window openings in each of three bays. At the uppermost level, the two outer window openings are in their historic locations (matching those at the other elevations); the center window is contained within a shallow projecting bay.

The outer window openings at the first and second levels each contain four vertical, operable windows. Those at the first level have two sashes per window while those at the second level have only one sash. The middle window openings at these two levels contain contemporary double-hung windows.

This is the only level of the house that has windows expressing the lowest level of the residence. To the viewer's left, or to the most western side of the cellar level, is a round window below the side porch slab on the northwest elevation of the building. This is the only component at this elevation that retains its historic schist appearance.



Fig. 12. Photo of the south (rear) elevation with its non-historic stucco coat and windows. To the left is the garden side porch slab with its cellar-level round window. Photo: SoLo Germantown, March 2025.



Fig. 13. Photo of the west (side garden) side elevation of the house with its historic porch slab but without a roof structure indicated by the ghosting on the masonry wall. Photo: SoLo Germantown, September 2025.

Northwest (Side) Elevation

The elevation at the side of the house that faces the side garden and the adjacent property at 5008 McKean Avenue seems to mostly be reflective of its historic appearance with 1891 alterations. The first level contains two openings, each with a sill that leads to a porch slab that no longer has its roof structure. The ghosting of the overhang structure is still in place, however. The opening closest to the north side of the elevation contains a double hung window with a smaller upper sash and likely a pocket in the wall above to contain the lower sash when it is opened to access the porch. The upper sash contains decorative mullions indicating it might be from the 1891 alterations by Mantle Fielding. The other opening contains a contemporary window the full length of the opening.



Fig. 14. The west (side garden) elevation from 5008 McKean Ave. Photo: SoLo Germantown, September 2025.

At the second level, the three bays are expressed by three openings. The two outermost openings are historic; the northernmost opening has its simple wood frame, sill, and shutter hardware

while the other does not. Both are infilled with contemporary double-hung windows. The center bay contains what may have been altered to be a door opening onto the (now gone) porch roof. There is a window and transom located in non-historic wood framing.

At the third level, the window configuration matches that at the opposite elevation at the southeast. There are two windows at the outer bays straddling the roof cornice and in between two brackets. These windows each contain a contemporary double-hung window. The center opening is filled with two windows which are contemporary double-hung and each have an air conditioning unit. This center window is capped by a half round window above in the gable end of the wall under the peaked roof overhang.



Fig. 15, left. View of the house from McKean Avenue and the western entrance to the governor's driveway between its historic, granite newels. Photo: SoLo Germantown, September 2025. Fig. 16, right. The same view of the house showing more of the hipped roofline in standing seam metal and off-center chimney indicating the existence of a belvedere at one time. Photo: SoLo Germantown, November 2025.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Part of the larger Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate, the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House and its grounds at 5000 McKean Avenue is a significant historic resource in Philadelphia and meets Criteria C & J for designation on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia zoning code:

(c) Reflect the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House is a distinguished example of Germantown's domestic architecture from the last half of the nineteenth century, exemplifying the Italianate houses of the era with stylistic embellishments added in the later Victorian period. Built of schist characteristic of pre-industrial quarrying, the commodious residence retains its original scale, massing, fenestration, and material composition. Subsequent alterations express the evolving architectural tastes of the nineteenth century and the continuous adaptation of Germantown's suburban estates. Situated on a half-acre parcel and approached by its original governor's drive, the House remains enveloped by mature trees that recall the once-pastoral character of lower Germantown.

Together with the associated Carriage House, Coachman's Residence, Brick Courtyard, Garage, Greenhouse, Gardener's Cottage, and Grounds on the adjoining half-acre parcel at 419 West Clapier Street (as discussed in the companion nomination), the Estate constitutes one of the most intact suburban residential ensembles surviving in Germantown. Similar neighboring estates have mostly since been removed in favor of denser housing development. The subject property emulated larger estates that were nearby such as Fernhill, the estate developed in 1817 by wealthy merchant Louis Clapier and continued in 1848 by Henry Pratt McKean, a grandson of US founding father Thomas McKean, governor of Pennsylvania. The Fernhill estate included a remarkable Italianate mansion, two cottages, a large barn and multiple greenhouses; only one building of this estate survives. The subject property was historically occupied by upper-middle class and affluent Philadelphians whose professional and civic prominence reflected Germantown's stature as a desirable suburban community for the city's elite citizens. As a unified complex, the Estate represents the economic, social, and historical heritage of the Germantown community and its development as a suburban district.

The Carson family occupied the subject house when it was relatively new, from 1863 to 1882. During this period, the property included both the subject house and the Carriage House within the combined, one-acre grounds of the subject parcel and the adjacent property at 419 West Clapier Street. Dry goods merchant Hampton Lawrence Carson, along his son Joseph, both graduates of Germantown Academy, met the profile of Philadelphia's business elite. During the family's nearly two decades of ownership, the Carson family made no documented additions to the property. They used the Carriage House for vehicle storage – a luxury in the third quarter of

the nineteenth century, when limited suburban homes in Germantown included such auxiliary structures – and perhaps for staff accommodations. The 1866 Tax Assessment confirms Carson's ownership of two carriages, and according to the 1870 US Census, William Morgan, a gardener, lived with the family and may have occupied the Carriage House loft as his residence, as a male gardener likely would not have lived in the main House. The presence of both a Carriage House and extensive Grounds demonstrates the Carsons' elevated economic and social standing within the Germantown community. Their tenure maintained the estate's architectural integrity and preserved its semi-rural setting at a time of increasing suburban infill.

The Strawbridge family occupied the subject house from 1882 until 1891. George Stockton Strawbridge, a prominent Quaker merchant and businessman, was part of the family firm – Strawbridge and Clothier, founded in 1868, one of the most important department stores in Philadelphia commercial history. His brother and business partner, Justus C. Strawbridge, lived next-door at 5008 McKean Avenue until 1886 at an estate long since demolished. George and his wife Clara Stetson, niece of the eminent hat manufacturer John Stetson and member of nearby Calvary Episcopal Church, used the property as a private residence for a much shorter time than the Carsons yet made significant additions that underscored the elevated social status of the Estate's residents.

By ca.1885-1889, the Strawbridge family had enlarged the Carriage House with a Coachman's Residence, an extension of the Carriage House that provided living accommodations. By orienting that rectangular building close to the garden side and extending south from the Carriage House, this new construction immediately created an arrangement of buildings that reoriented the vehicular approach to the Estate and created zones of privacy for the family and the staff. The commissioning of the Coachman's Residence and Brick Courtyard (as well as a small cottage, demolished and replaced in 1923) reflected their affluence and social prominence. Their tenure expanded the Estate's auxiliary uses and created a more private and hierarchical arrangement of auxiliary buildings within a pastoral suburban setting.

The Dodge family acquired the property around 1891, maintaining ownership until 1954. Upon acquisition, the Dodges commissioned the final architectural expansion of the Estate, continuing the perimeter cluster of buildings to focus attention on the Grounds and to provide for the family's keen interest in automobiles. Architect Mantle Fielding was hired to execute stylistic updates to the main House, and a local carpenter was used later for updates to the front and side porches.

James Mapes Dodge was the president of the Link-Belt Company nearby in Nicetown and the inventor of the silent chain drive coal storage system that revolutionized coal storage and distribution. Like many prosperous industrialists of the period, Dodge was an automobile enthusiast who owned several cars over the years, which he proudly photographed around the neighborhood. Reflecting this new vehicular modernity, the family commissioned a Garage ca.1906-1910 by enclosing the south porch of the Carriage House, converting the structure into

one suitable for car storage to accommodate their automobiles. The Garage and Coachman's Residence were clad in the same siding to allow both spaces to read externally as one, L-shaped building around a courtyard. Additional improvements to the estate included the construction of a Greenhouse and a Gardener's Cottage, reinforcing the estate's role as a symbol of early twentieth-century domestic sophistication and economic success.

The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House is one of many Italianate style houses that was updated with stylistic improvements in the late nineteenth century, including those of immediate neighbors in their emerging wealthy, suburban enclave. Originally designed in the Italianate style, the home of Justus C. Strawbridge from ca.1870 to 1886 (Fig. 51), was next door to the subject property at 5008 McKean Avenue and later upgraded under Henry Steele's residency from 1886 until after 1923 as Victorian architecture became more eclectic (Fig. 52). Around the corner on Manheim Street, the John F. Stoer House (demolished), originally designed in the Italianate style, was altered to add a wraparound porch and other improvements. Also on Manheim were the J.L. Erringer Residence (demolished), designed in the Italianate and Gothic Revival styles; the Judge F. Carroll Brewster Residence (demolished) designed in the Italianate and Second Revival styles; and "Mapledale," the Italianate residence (demolished) of prominent paint manufacturer Nelson Z. Graves at Wissahickon Avenue. The 1858 Chancellor House on Seymour at Morris Street is a surviving Italianate with belvedere in the neighborhood (Fig. 61). These examples demonstrate that the subject house represents an architectural evolution that was once commonplace in the immediate community, satisfying Criterion C.

Together with the associated Carriage House, Coachman's Residence, Gardener's Cottage, Greenhouse, Garage and Grounds on the adjoining parcel at 419 West Clapier Street (reference the companion nomination), the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate remains the most complete surviving suburban ensemble in Germantown, satisfying Criterion C. The property's continuous occupation by upper-middle class and affluent Philadelphians of professional and civic distinction underscores Germantown's historic significance as a retreat for the city's mercantile and industrial elite, satisfying Criterion J.

Period of Significance

The Period of Significance is from ca.1855-62 to 1954 spanning the time during which the subject property was documented as a one-acre parcel inclusive of the adjacent property at 419 W. Clapier (see companion nomination) with the main House and Carriage House as its initial constructions. Currently, the subject property is one half-acre in size.

Ca.1855-1862 marks the last survey of the subject parcel before owner Benjamin Godfrey subdivided approximately four acres on McKean Avenue between Manheim and Clapier Streets. Such a subdivision would have primed the subject property to receive a stone residence and carriage house making it attractive to buyers. By 1862, the House and Carriage House appear on the Smedley Atlas. In 1954, the one-acre parcel was equally subdivided into two half-acre parcels by will of Josephine Kern Dodge, the immediate past owner.

Historic Context: An Overview of the Site Evolution and the Neighborhood

The southwest corner of Germantown was far enough away from the main Avenue to have avoided the narrow and deep lot partitions that defined those located along Main Street in the eighteenth century. Instead, the subject property had been whittled down over the course of the nineteenth century from larger plantations. In 1777, far southwest Germantown had been owned by members of the powerful Shippen family to the north, and mariner John Ashmead to the south and adjacent to James Logan's land, according to the Duffin map. In 1817, William Shippen sold most of his property in the area to the French-born marine merchant Louis [alternately Lewis] Clapier (1765-1837), who then became the chatelain of Fern Hill.¹⁰ According to an entry in American Aristocracy online, Fern Hill "lay four miles northwest of the city limits, beautifully situated on the first ridge of ground of that long succession of ridges, which, mounting constantly higher, run parallel with each other with short undulating intervals through Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill, some five miles distant on the west and north, where the ground then falls away to the beautiful White Marsh Valley."¹¹ Clapier's land holdings extended from Fern Hill up to (and in some cases, past) Manheim Street between Township Line Road (Wissahickon Ave.) and Morris Street.



Fig. 17, left. The 1777 Duffin map of Germantown land ownership showing Shippen family ownership of the subject property. Source: Germantown Historical Society. Fig. 18, right. The 1777 map of the Battle of Germantown by Archibald Robertson showing the extreme topographical ridge of the plateau where Fern Hill Park is located. Source: Royal Collection Trust online, accessed August 20, 2025.

Over a decade after Clapier's 1837 death, his widow Mary (née Heyl) and four daughters (Theresa Clapier, Caroline [Mrs. Henry] Chancellor, Dorothea [Mrs. Charles] Norris, and Mary

¹⁰ Deed dated December 6, 1817 Grantor William Shippen et. ux. to Grantee Louis Clapier, Deed Book M.R. Book 17 page 294.

¹¹ www.americanaristocracy.com, "Fern Hill Germantown," accessed July 27, 2025, based upon the Henry McKean obituary in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 6, 1894, p1, accessed August 10, 2025.

Louise [Mrs. Edward Jenner] Coxe) sold the southern parcel – south of approximately what is now Abbottsford Avenue - to Henry Pratt McKean who kept the boundaries of the large parcel more or less intact south of Abbottsford and west of Morris Street.¹² He retained Clapier’s barn, “which from its size and unique character, and great ship which acts as a vane above it (was) one of the best-known features of the country round about” located close to Morris Street, in recognition, it seems, of its notable presence in the neighborhood, but demolished Clapier’s residence in favor of a remarkable Italianate stone dwelling designed by John Notman in 1852, setting his own taste standard and one that would ripple throughout the neighborhood.



Fig. 19, left. The 1848 J.C. Sidney map indicates Clapier’s enduring presence at the end of a street (presumably what would become McKean Avenue) allowing access to Fern Hill from Manheim Street to the north. Fig. 20, right. The 1855 Barnes map shows that H.P. McKean has taken on ownership of Fern Hill and the city is planning through-streets around it. Benjamin Godfrey’s homestead is indicated on the south side of Manheim. Godfrey owned the subject property at this time.

The large McKean estate south of Abbottsford Avenue set the tone for the emerging suburban neighborhood to the north. The new Fernhill was described by Nancy Holst as “a model of modern taste and beauty – a showcase built to satisfy the highest ideals of the American villa.”¹³ Based on Richard Upjohn’s designs for the Edward King Villa in Newport, Rhode Island, the grand house H.P. McKean built to replace Clapier’s house nonetheless took somewhat of a backseat to the gardens and vistas of the estate. The former were tended by Martin Baumann and his sons, including Louis Clapier Baumann, named to honor the previous sire, and continued by a cabal of other capable gardeners including those with experience in the neighborhood’s

¹² Deed dated June 4, 1851, Grantor Mary Clapier et. al. to Grantee Henry Pratt McKean, Deed Book T.H. Vol. 71 page 150.

¹³ Nancy Holst (2008), PhD diss., “Pattern Books and the Suburbanization of Germantown, Pennsylvania, in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” University of Delaware, 2008, 354.

commercial greenhouses.¹⁴ Opened to the public on Sundays and public holidays by Mr. McKean, this place above the first rise in the Atlantic Fall Line in Northwest Philadelphia was known for its imported pear trees and rare plant species. In addition to a large main house, the property included an expansive barn from Clapier's ownership and several greenhouses. Fernhill seemed to set a pastoral and romantic model for the enclave to its immediate north (including the subject property) to follow suit with the same collection of residential and supportive auxiliary buildings on smaller, but still expansive, suburban parcels.



Fig. 21, left. The 1885 Hopkins *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 22nd Ward showing the many buildings of Fern Hill toward the bottom of the page and the subject property at the top of the page under George S. Strawbridge's ownership. Source: Germantown Historical Society. Fig. 22, right. A ca.1890 photograph of the main residence at Fernhill with a greenhouse immediately beyond. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

Germantown, certainly between Louis Clapier's death in 1837 and the 1850s when his heirs partition and transfer their land holdings, was becoming recognized as a desirable location for city residents of certain means to establish country seats. The landscape was open, green, and pastoral in feel, providing a rural counterweight to the city five miles to the south. According to Holst, the pre-suburbanization of Germantown "indicate[d] a complex process of interaction between old and new patterns"¹⁵ forging a tension between nostalgia for its romantic landscape with market interest. Real estate transfers were made locally, often among business or church associates, with a relative few controlling the ownership of several parcels, keeping the enclave's population tightly controlled among business associates and social equals. In the immediate neighborhood of the subject property, this was certainly the case. On McKean Avenue, Francis Reeves bought property from Justus C. Strawbridge, who named his eldest son after his friend

¹⁴ Edwin Jellett, *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners*. (Germantown, PA: Horace F. McCann, 1914), 45.

¹⁵ Nancy Holst (2008), PhD diss., "Pattern Books and the Suburbanization of Germantown, Pennsylvania, in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," University of Delaware, 2008, 3.

Reeves who had an estate at McKean and Clapier. Reeves sold a decade later to wool merchant William Tatem Tilden, for example. Tilden and Reeves were not just neighbors, but leaders at the Wakefield Presbyterian Church on the Avenue, demonstrating the closeness of the neighbors.

Additionally, existing stone dwellings and auxiliary buildings were often modified and adapted to suit new tastes, making a priority of renovation that combined ideas from the era's popular pattern books with a frugal and practical re-use ethic. The unique arrangement of existing buildings and landscapes with local ownership is a theme of the subject neighborhood's development, including especially at the subject parcel. The tight relationships among residents seem to have contributed to the enclave's professional and social profile through the early years of the twentieth century, as real estate transfers in the immediate area often happened through personal association.

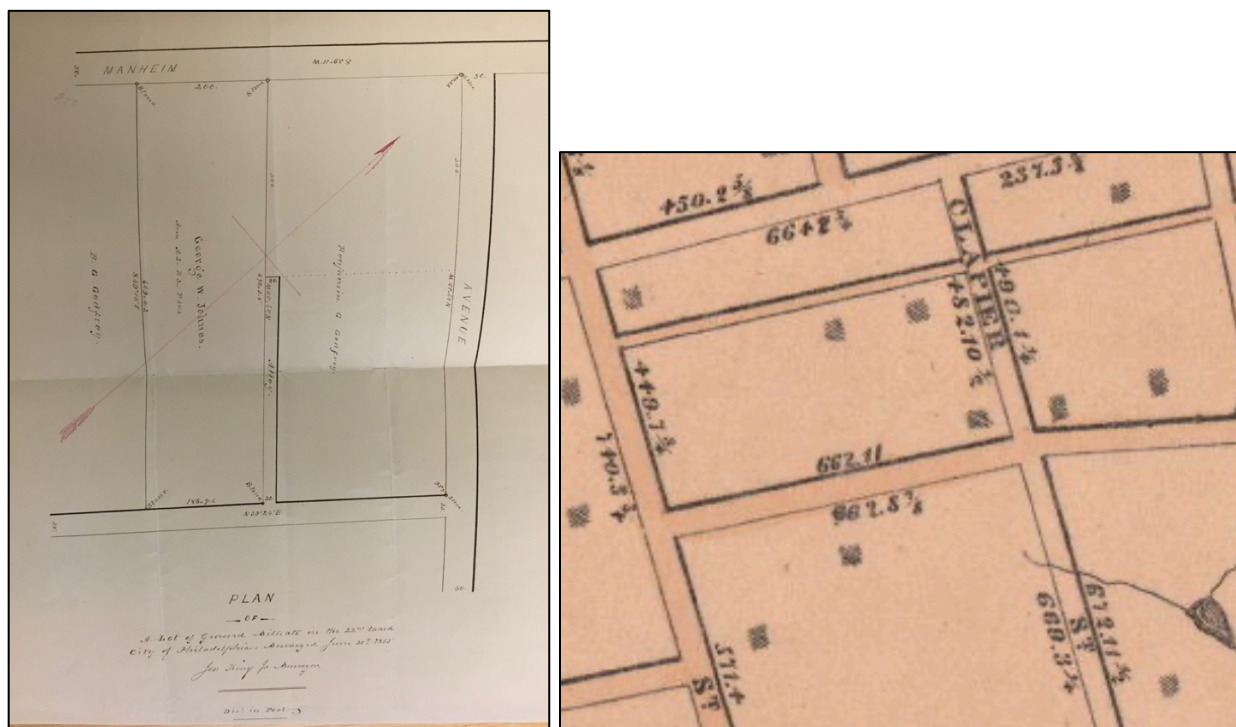


Fig. 23. 1855 survey by John King, Jr. of the subject property when it was owned by Benjamin G. Godfrey. It was part of a large parcel of approximately 4 acres that extended from Manheim Street to the north down the west side of McKean Avenue to Clapier Street. Godfrey's primary residence was located on a parcel facing Manheim Street. Fig. 24. The 1862 Smedley *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* shows the subject property fronting McKean Avenue at Clapier Street with a rear building that is likely the Stable as discussed in the nomination for 419 West Clapier Street. 1862 marks the first time the subject property was depicted on an atlas.

Benjamin Granger Godfrey (owner 1853-1863)

Above the Fernhill estate, the northern part of Mr. Clapier's parcel was quickly subdivided into large suburban parcels for stylish Philadelphians which looked toward Fern Hill in terms of

erecting similar complexes of residences with auxiliary buildings, albeit on relatively smaller parcels. In 1853, merchant Benjamin Granger Godfrey (1822-1900) purchased the subject parcel near a property he inhabited facing Manheim Street, which was, at that time, one of the only streets allowing access to the neighborhood.¹⁶ Godfrey was a devout Episcopalian and served as Chair of the Building Committee for Calvary Episcopal Church a block away on Manheim at Pulaski Avenue.¹⁷ J.C. Sidney was the architect of that (now demolished) 1859 church and himself embraced the picturesque Italianate designs that were popular in this era.

Benjamin Godfrey may have been engaging in some early speculative development at the subject property. Perhaps it was in anticipation of filling some pews since Godfrey was a devout Episcopalian and an organizer in 1859 of Calvary Episcopal Church a block away on Manheim at Pulaski Avenue. The subject house was most likely constructed after 1855, the date when Godfrey's land holdings of four acres on the south side of McKean Avenue between Manheim and Clapier Streets were subdivided. That 4-acre parcel was divided equally into one-acre parcels, two facing McKean (5000 & 5008), and the other two facing Manheim. After the 1855 subdivision, Godfrey likely commissioned the construction of the House and Carriage House to make the site more attractive to potential buyers of means. Manheim Street was macadamized in 1860 making access to the neighborhood easier (Fig. 27).

The subject house appears initially on the 1862 Smedley Atlas. It is a three story, three bay, square plan volume, a stern but straightforward Italianate dwelling using masonry of local irregular schist in a random course pattern. Rubble masonry uses rough, uneven stone at the outer walls of a structure. It is typical of pre-industrial quarrying whereby the individual stones were not cut to specific sizes or shapes, thus the pre-Civil War era dating of the House is concomitant with the building's presentation. The boxy, square-plan volume of the structure along with its deep roof overhang and moderately decorative brackets are typical, straightforward characteristics of the Italianate. It also contains at each elevation an identical central wall peak matched by a central gable in the roofline, the House also exhibits a hipped roofline, not unlike other surrounding properties, with an off-center chimney, indicating it may have once held a stylistically appropriate belvedere.

¹⁶ Deed dated May 12, 1853 Grantor Mary Clapier to Grantee Benjamin Godfrey, Deed Book T.H. Vol. 80 p. 555.

¹⁷ Rev. S.F. Hotchkin, M.A. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*, (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1889), 279.

second ward, \$410.
 Elegant country seat, about three acres, southeast corner McKean avenue and Clapier street, Germantown, \$11,300.
 Handsome stone cottage residence, southeast side of Clapier street, \$4000.
 Handsome modern three-story stone residence, Clapier street, Germantown, \$9200.
 Tract of land Sullivan county, Pa., \$140.
 Large and valuable residence and coach house, No. 278 S. Third street, \$17,100.



Fig. 25, left. An advertisement from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* dated March 27, 1867, for stone cottages and residences on Clapier Street or near its intersection with McKean Avenue. Fig. 26, right. A photo of 452 W. Clapier Street from the motor court at 419 W. Clapier. This property consists of an eighteenth century build with a nineteenth century addition. It is attributed to Sallie Knight in late 19th century maps and where she ran a school for neighborhood girls. Date: August 11, 2025.

Hampton Lawrence Carson and heirs (owner 1863-1882)

The neighborhood's shapeshifting into suburban estates from Clapier's consolidated parcel continued to be met with growing interest by Philadelphia's business elites. In November 1863, Godfrey sold the subject property in its one-acre configuration to merchant Hampton L. Carson (1809-1874) as 5000 McKean Avenue. Carson purchased his one-acre parcel with a "stone messuage and other improvements" which describes the House (and its Carriage House as discussed in the companion nomination for 419 West Clapier Street).

Improvements at Germantown.—Manheim street, Germantown, is now being macadamized by the Highway Department; a large portion of the expense to be paid by the property owners. A number of fine buildings are to be erected on this street the present season. A proposition is now before the Committee on Highways from the property owners on School-house lane and Tioga street. The owners along School-house lane propose to pay \$5,000 to have the lane macadamized from the Ridge avenue to Germantown road, if the city will pay the balance, and those on Tioga street will pay \$500 towards having two squares of that street put in order. West Logan street, and McKean avenue, are now being graded, the owners of property on each having agreed to pay a portion of the cost, which will amount to about \$1500.

Fig. 27. A notice in the *Public Ledger* from April 10, 1860, six years after Germantown became a part of the City, that Manheim Street was undergoing macadamizing or paving with crushed stone, an improvement leading to greater development and better transportation.

When they lived at the subject property between 1863 and 1882, the Carsons had a dry goods business at 102 Chestnut Street near the Delaware River.¹⁸ Carson's nephew was the influential attorney Hampton Lawrence Carson, named for his uncle, who argued numerous cases before the Pennsylvania and United States Supreme Courts in addition to being a professor, scholar, and historian. His father Joseph – the brother of the owner of the subject property – was a professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and botanist. The Carson men were all educated at Germantown Academy, confirming membership in an upper social class and early neighborhood ties.

At the time of Carson's residency, and as the 1862 Atlas indicates, the neighborhood was beginning to fill in with stone residences and country seats, indicating the rural character of the neighborhood and the elite patina that Fernhill was casting over it. An 1867 advertisement for stone residences in the immediate neighborhood (Fig. 25) gives indications that the area had taken on a well-to-do character wrapped in a vernacular, rural palette of schist structures within verdant property expanses. The 1871 *Atlas of the Borough of Germantown* indicates Carson's ownership and shows the subject property's House as accessed from McKean Avenue from a governor's driveway. Both assets are extant even if the rear, first floor extension from the main volume of the House (Fig. 36) is no longer present.

H.L. Carson died in 1874 but his son Joseph moved into the subject property carrying on Carson residency as well as the family mercantile business. Despite a nearly two-decade presence at the subject property, the Carson family did not make any documented changes to the Estate. As dry goods stores evolved into department stores, it seems logical that Joseph Carson would sell the subject property in 1882 to a Strawbridge – after all, by 1870, Strawbridge & Clothier Store owner Justus, who founded his store two years prior, had been living at the adjacent parcel at 5008 McKean Avenue. In 1882, Justus's brother George Stockton Strawbridge and his wife Clara purchased the subject property next door to Justus on McKean Avenue.

¹⁸ *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory*. Philadelphia: A. McElroy, 1867, p161.

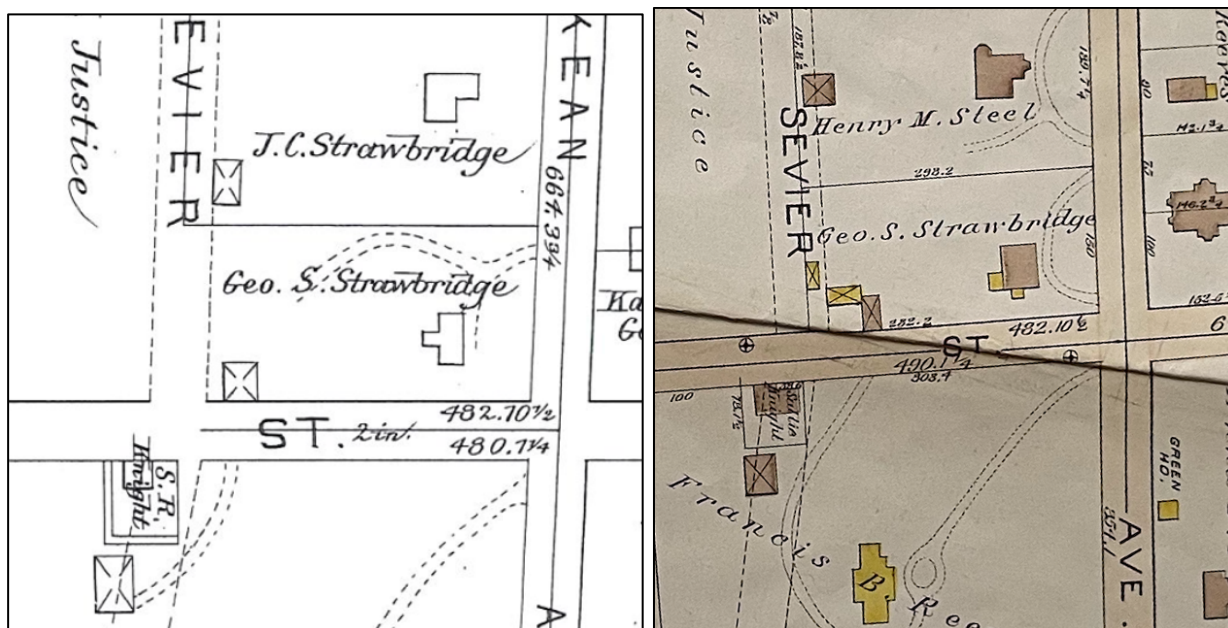


Fig. 28, left. The 1885 map of the property under George Strawbridge's ownership shows the House in the same configuration as during Carson's residency. Fig. 29, right. The 1889 Atlas shows that Strawbridge added an Addition to the Carriage House and a rear structure of unknown use until replaced in 1923 by the Dodge family (see companion nomination for 419 West Clapier Street).

George Stockton Strawbridge (owner 1882-1891)

George and Clara Strawbridge were active members of Calvary Episcopal Church two squares away from the subject property, continuing to worship in the Sidney-designed church that former neighbor (and owner of the subject property) Benjamin Godfrey was instrumental in creating. Clara Stetson Strawbridge was the niece of hat manufacturer John Stetson whose Elkins Park estate Idro contains a model of estate buildings not unlike the admittedly smaller Carson-Strawbridge Dodge Estate. Clara and George had two sons, neither of whom survived childhood, the last one passing in 1890.

The Strawbridge couple may have had the shortest tenure at the subject property, but they made a few significant changes at the Estate and in doing so, significantly reoriented the spatial uses and hierarchies at the site. One change made was the apparent abandonment of a driveway extension that connected the governor's drive off McKean Avenue – the primary access point for visitors – and the Carriage House at the rear of the property as can be depicted in the 1885 map of the property (Fig. 28). This erasure of a vehicular path that bisected the rear yard reclaimed space for gardens and plantings (Fig. 29).

That reorientation of accessing the Carriage House from inside the property to Clapier Street seemed to come with the construction of the Chauffeur's House and a small cottage since the building additions created a courtyard (see the companion nomination for 419 West Clapier

Street). Such a building ensemble reinforced the public and private spaces at the property as well as created hierarchical zones for the family and staff forever altering spatial relationships on site.

James Mapes Dodge (owner 1891-1953)

In 1890, perhaps in a state of mourning for his son, George Strawbridge began negotiating the sale of the subject property to James Mapes Dodge.¹⁹ Dodge was already the father of two children, Kern and Fayette, and living on Arch Street when he decided to move closer to his place of employment at the southern base of Fernhill. Dodge was the President of the Link-Belt Company in Nicetown, in buildings wedged into a part of the larger Midvale Steel complex, making his commute to work much shorter.

According to correspondence, Jamie Dodge – as he was called in the family – wrote to his mother already in May 1890 about the new homestead, “yesterday we visited our new home – it’s a beautiful place and I am sure you and Fayal will like it - the children are so happy when there that they don’t want to come back to Arch Street.”²⁰

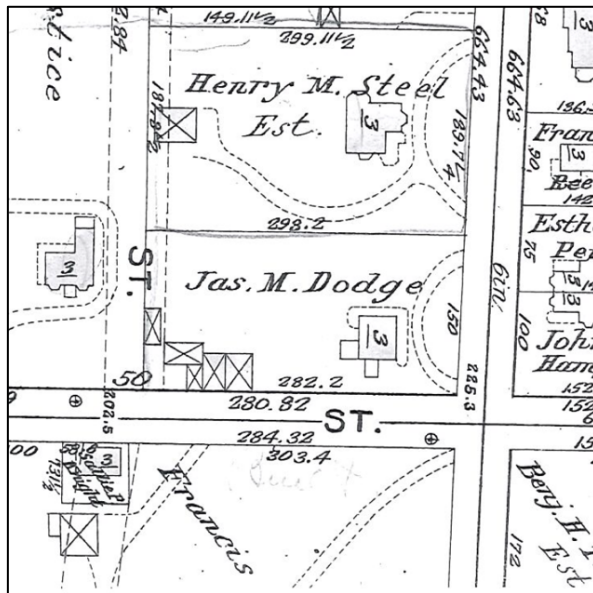


Fig. 30, left. The 1911 map of the subject property shows the governor’s driveway in its same configuration with auxiliary buildings discussed in the companion nomination for 419 W. Clapier Street.

The Dodge family moved into the House in 1891 after having commissioned architect Mantle Fielding to undertake alterations.²¹ These alterations are not documented but a visual inspection of the property and of historic maps gives a few clues. Fielding seemed to have added a Victorian sheen to the House. He most likely changed several of the windows as indicated by

¹⁹ Letter from James M. Dodge to his mother Mary Mapes Dodge, May 12, 1890. Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University. The family’s address at the time of the letter was 2027 Arch Street.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Notice in *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, August 5, 1891. Accessed May 11, 2025.

two extant windows that have decorative upper sashes not unlike other 1890s windows, especially in the colonial revival or Queen Anne style. In addition, the central bay additions at the second and third levels of the primary elevation have a colonial revival flavor that matches Fielding's style. Mantle Fielding also undertook alterations to a house at 138 West Walnut Lane that demonstrates similar qualities in the center bay of the primary elevation, particularly at the intersection of a bay window under a boxed infill within a gable (Fig. 31).

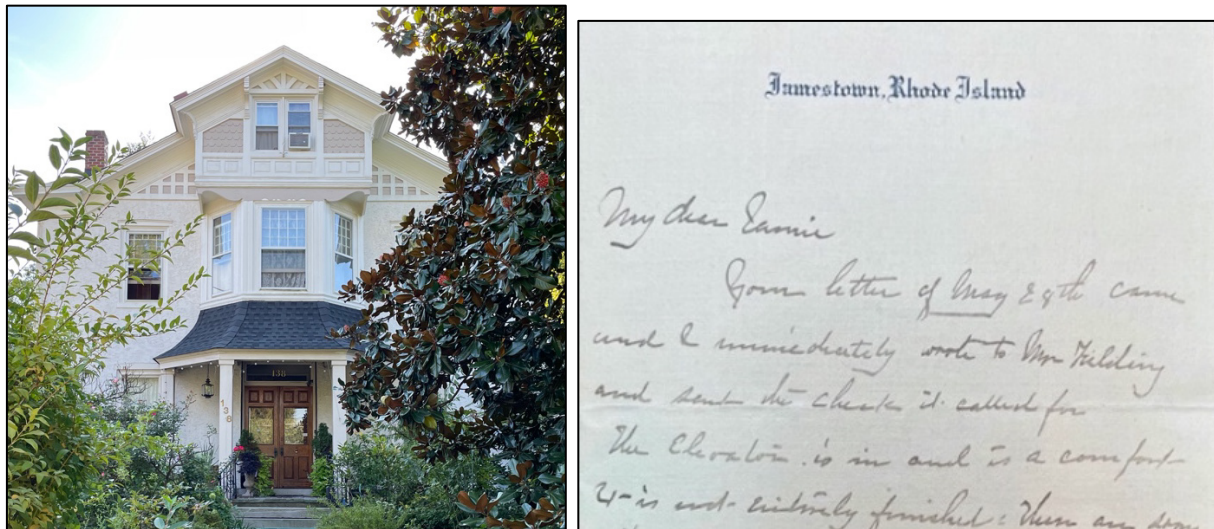


Fig. 31. The house at 138 West Walnut Lane in Germantown that received alterations by Mantle Fielding in 1893. The central bay at the second and third floors is recognizable in its similarity to the subject property. Photo: SoLo Germantown. Fig. 32. Undated letter from Mary Mapes Dodge to her son Jamie written from Jamestown, RI. The letter references payment she made to architect Mantle Fielding as directed by her son in a letter to her dated May 28th, presumably 1891 based on Fielding's involvement in the alterations to 5000 McKean Avenue.

The Dodges undertook several subsequent construction projects at the subject property, many of which relate to the auxiliary buildings in the rear parcel (see companion nomination for 419 West Clapier Street). But they also added porches to the House. The 1906, 1911, and 1923 maps all show a porch across two full elevations of the House, the primary elevation along the governor's driveway and the west elevation and wrapping the corner. These seem not to have been included in Mr. Fielding's alterations. Rather, a 1902 notice in the *Philadelphia Times* indicates that Germantown carpenter H. H. Hudson would be building the front and side porches. While the maps indicated one L-shaped roof, photographs indicate two separate porches.

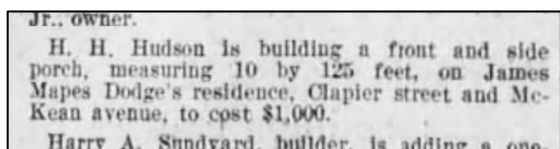


Fig. 33. The February 2, 1902, *Philadelphia Times* indicating H.H. Hudson had been contracted to build "a front and side porch" at 5000 McKean Avenue. Source: Newspapers.com

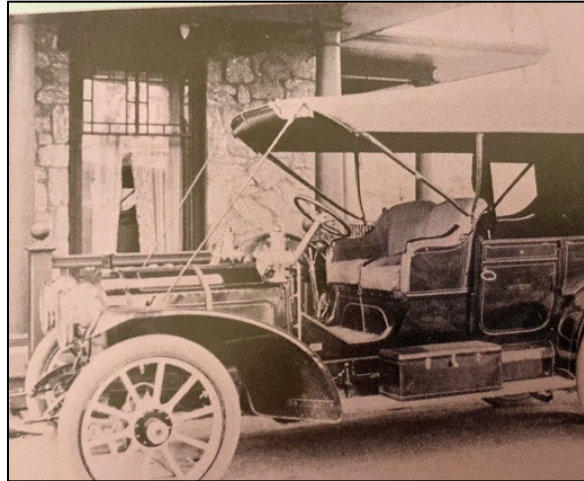


Fig. 34, left. A contemporary photo of the westernmost window at the primary elevation under the 1902 porch. Fig. 45, right. A photo of the front and side porches from the governor's drive indicates they are two separate porches. The upper sash of the window next to the front door is the same as the left photo. Photo: "Kern Dodge: Pioneer Automoblist" by Barron H. Bohnet. *Antique Automobile*, Nov.-Dec. 1978.

The rear of the property is currently covered entirely in stucco with contemporary windows in larger openings than they were historically. The only photo documentation of the rear elevation is its capture in the background of a 1915 photograph (Fig. 36) of one of the Dodge family's



Fig. 36. This photo from April 1915 was taken from a driveway across Clapier Street from the subject property and shows the rear elevation of the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House on the right. The rear elevation shows shuttered windows and a rear extension as indicated on early maps from the Carson era.

automobiles. Taken from a driveway across Clapier Street with the house in the background to the right (and the Greenhouse to the left, as further described in the companion nomination for 419 West Clapier Street), the photograph shows the rear elevation with its shuttered windows punched into the rubble-schist wall with an elaborate rear extension supported by a cellar-level plinth accommodating the drop in grade from McKean Avenue (beyond to the viewer's right).



Fig. 37, left. An undated photograph of the Dodge family posing at the west or garden side elevation of their house under a no longer extant porch overhang. The upper sash of the window closest to the primary elevation can be seen here. Source: Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University. Fig. 38, right. The location today with the same window sash intact and ghosting of the porch construction.

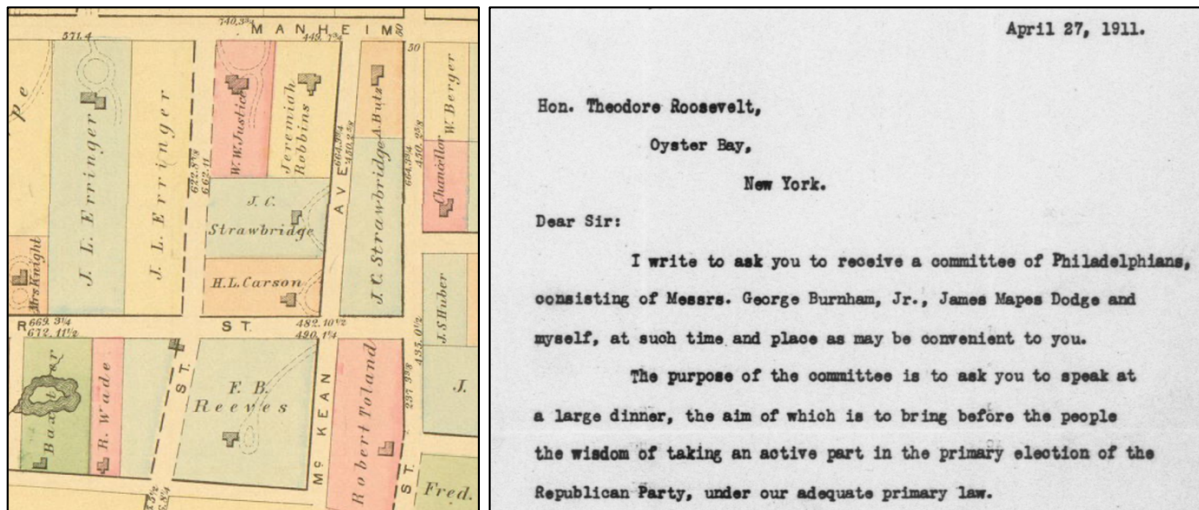


Fig. 39, left. The 1871 Atlas of the Borough of Germantown indicates H.L. Carson's residency at the subject property and the elite neighbors surrounding him. Fig. 40, right. A 1911 letter to former president Theodore Roosevelt from William Wirt Justice on behalf of himself and neighbor James Mapes Dodge of the subject property. Source: Theodore Roosevelt Center, Library of Congress.

Neighboring Estates and their Residents

The 1871 Hopkins *Atlas of (the late Borough of) Germantown* confirms that suburban residential estates have filled in the open space depicted on the 1862 Atlas thereby demonstrating the neighborhood's transition from rural farmland to a pastoral yet suburban setting for stylish and comfortable Philadelphians, as the biographies of the names on the latter atlas would attest. The

neighbors of the residents of the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate were other wealthy men of means and prominence (Figs. 39, 40). Not only were these neighbors engaged as executives in successful business pursuits, but their houses also tended to share some basic stylistic elements. Like the subject House, several of the early residences in the immediate area were stone Italianates with various degrees of gothic revival elements, mostly expressed in peaked wall dormers, and accessed by governor's drives, the easiest way to accommodate carriages.

The Francis Brewster Reeves Estate between the subject property and Fernhill was developed by 1862 and occupied by the family until 1923 when the multi-acre estate was sold to developer John McClatchy for dense residential properties. Francis B. Reeves was a grocer, a devout Presbyterian leader at Wakefield Church, and president of Girard National Bank. His Italianate house Immergrün (Fig. 47) sat within a garden setting that caught the attention of Edwin Jellett's knowledgeable eye. The property included a Carriage House and an Ice House (according to the 1910 Bromley Atlas). None of these buildings survive. For its entire existence, the Reeves Estate was wrapped around a small parcel containing a ca.1713 dwelling with a nineteenth century addition called Evergreen; the property survives as 452 W. Clapier (Fig. 36).

Along Western Manheim Street, or "back the lane," as it was referred to locally, the gardens expanded the further out from the Avenue one traveled. The stone house at 412 Manheim was owned in 1871 by Jeremiah Robbins. This property was later purchased by John F. Stoer, president of the fabric and clothing business, Alburger Stoer and Company. The since demolished dwelling on manicured grounds was a 3-story Italianate cube with a 3rd floor frieze, two wall dormers with sharp gothic peaks at the outer two bays of the 3-bay residence, and a front porch that extended the full width of the primary elevation, turning back toward a full height bay (Fig. 42).

Next door was the residence of William Wirt Justice, a wool merchant and leader in some of the era's reform movements, for which he found partners among his immediate neighbors (Fig. 43). Further down Manheim toward Wissahickon Avenue was the residence of J.L. Erringer, the president of the Philadelphia Trust, Safe Deposit and Insurance Company (Fig. 41). The E. B. Gardette Estate on Wissahickon Avenue where Manheim ends was owned by two generations of dentists who tended abundant gardens. The Gardette residence was the first place in Philadelphia to have shown the tomato plant and the first place in America to have grown melons by seed having been brought from Tripoli by Commodore James Barron who lived on Manheim Street.²²

²² Edwin Jellett, *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners*. (Germantown, PA: Horace F. McCann, 1914), 66.

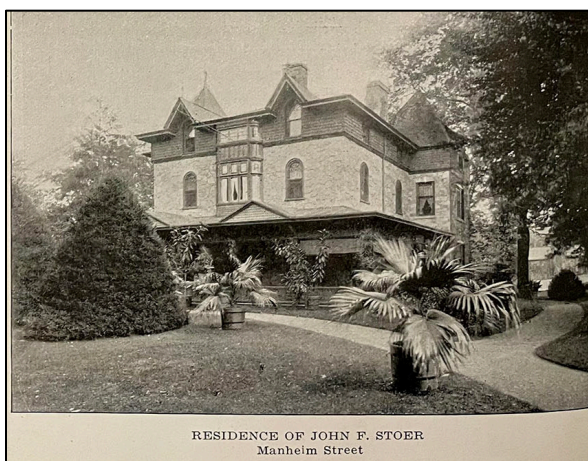
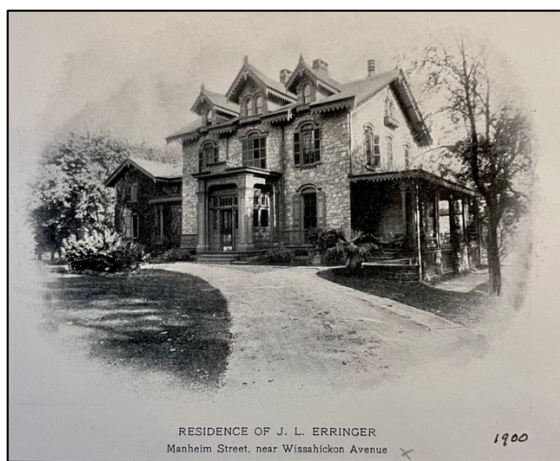


Fig. 41, top left. The residence of banker J.L. Erringer. Fig. 42, top right. The residence of fabric merchant John F. Stoer, formerly Jeremiah Robbins' residence. Fig. 43, lower left. The residence of wool merchant William Wirt Justice. Fig. 44, lower right. Fernhill. Source: Germantown Historical Society.



Fig. 45, left. The residence of Nelson Z. Graves, "Mapledale," on Manheim at Wissahickon Avenue. Source: "Handsome Homes," *Art Supplement of the Germantown Independent-Gazette*, 1899. Fig. 46, right, residence of Dr. James Gardette and E.B. Gardette on Wissahickon Avenue, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 13, 1912. Source: Jane Campbell Scrapbook, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



Fig. 47, left. This ca. 1899 photograph shows Immergrün, the property of Frances B. Reeves, across Clapier from the subject property. Reeves arranged for the sale of his estate after his death in 1922 to the builder John McClatchy who constructed several cottage-style rowhouses on the perimeter of the large property. Fig. 48, right. A 1922 advertisement for new, “Picturesque” houses on the former Reeves estate. The houses rendered in this advertisement are extant across Clapier from the subject property.

While business elites moved into the immediate neighborhood, clustering together in an exclusive enclave, the neighborhood’s rural character was part of the attraction. In a remembrance of engineer Charles Day (1879-1931), who grew up between Abbottsford Avenue and Clapier Street, his widow Margaret writes “where [Charles and his brother] experienced the joy of open spaces... and the steep grades and unusual depth of the property giving just the necessary qualifications” for skiing and sledding in the winter, and kite-flying when warmer. “Germantown at that time (1888) was a true suburb, sparsely settled, with meadows, woods and streams within easy reach.” Mrs. Day details the house as the scene of an engaging childhood: “Abbottsford Avenue had been occupied ten years and, in that time, had become a dearly loved home. Its old-fashioned spaciousness gave infinite possibilities for the hobbies of the younger generation and on every side was evidence of ingenious devices. The third story, literally in the treetops, with a commanding view of the entire neighborhood, ... heard bursts of merriment.”²³

The Day residence, acquired in approximately 1878, is depicted in undated photographs in the biography. The House resembles the subject property, a block away, in several ways: it is a square-plan, 2 ½ story stone residence, perched at the top of a steep grade incline to maximize views and green space. A side gable dwelling, it has center gables at the rear elevation above an open porch at the ground floor spanning the width of the house, giving a gothic revival touch to the property and exhibiting a transition between colonial era, vernacular building types and the

²³ Margaret Dunning Day, “Charles Day: A Memory,” Philadelphia 1934, 3. Printed by Day & Zimmerman, Inc. Germantown Historical Society.

mid-nineteenth century trend toward Romantic and Picturesque architectural expressions, perfectly befitting the pastoral charm of the neighborhood (Fig. 50).

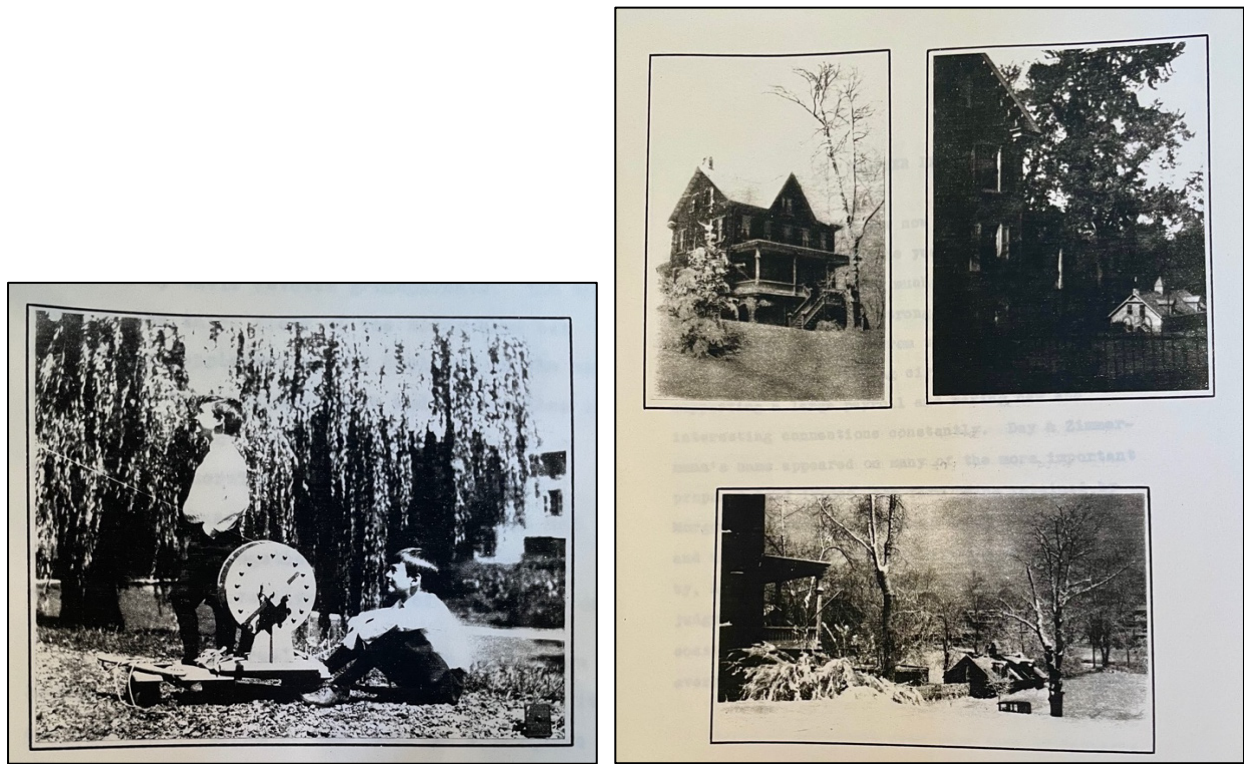


Fig. 49, left. A 1919 photograph of William L. and Charles C. Day with a box kite-flying reel mechanism made in J.M. Dodge's Link-Belt shops, as reproduced in a memoir of their father's life on Abbottsford Avenue. Fig. 50, right. From the same memoir, photos of the Day family's Abbottsford Avenue house where they lived until approximately 1923. Source: Germantown Historical Society.

In his address for the Centennial of Germantown Academy in 1859, the diarist, lawyer and historian Sidney George Fisher described the character of the neighborhood. "German thrift, morality, steadiness and good feeling prevailed also, and their impress on the neighborhood is yet visible in the manners of the people and the substantial, comfortable and prosperous look of the houses of the old time, many of which remain. Their rich gables, projecting eaves and cornices, hipped roofs, and pleasant sheltered porches...yet there are houses in Germantown and its neighborhood, a century old, which in picturesque effect and the expression of solid respectability and home comfort and refinement, are at least equal to any of their modern rivals."²⁴ The description of the neighborhood matches the Italianate designs that were scattered across a part of the city that still had quite a rural and pastoral character. It also handily addresses the spirit of re-use that seems to be a guiding ethic for those who were compelled to maintain and

²⁴ Rev. S.F. Hotchkin, M.A. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*, (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1889), 240.

add onto existing buildings. These traits are certainly on display at the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate.



Fig. 51, left. Undated photograph of the stone house of Justus Strawbridge at 5008 McKean Avenue in a style that incorporated elements from gothic cottages. Son Francis was born here in 1876. Fig. 52, right. Circa 1900 photo of the same dwelling after it had been altered to a Colonial Revival style under the ownership of Henry M. Steele who purchased the property in 1886. The house was demolished in the 1930s.



Fig. 53, left. In this undated photograph, James Mapes Dodge and his family are photographed in the extant governor's driveway at 5000 McKean. The gambrel roofline of the Henry Steele house is in the background. Source: "Kern Dodge: Pioneer Automobilist" by Barron H. Bohnet. *Antique Automobile*, Nov.-Dec. 1978. Fig. 54, right. 452 West Clapier Street dated ca. 1713. Photo: SoLo Germantown.

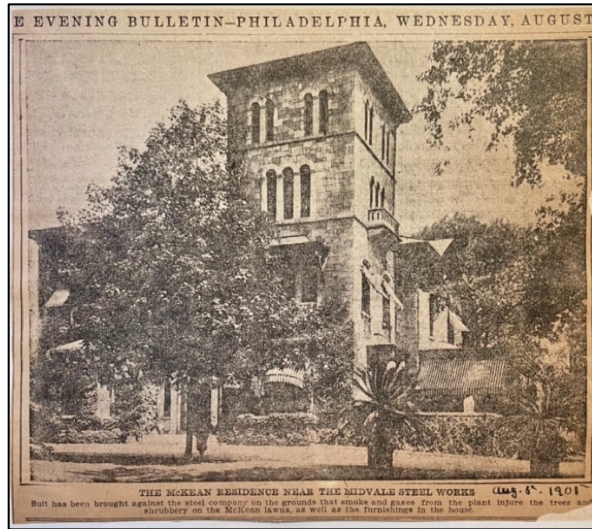


Fig. 55, left. This 1910 map shows the area between the Link-Belt headquarters on Nicetown Road (now Hunting Park Avenue) and the Germantown Cricket Club north of Manheim Street. In between is Fern Hill, the Henry Pratt McKean estate, now Park, and the subject property in its neighborhood setting north of the park. Fig. 56, right. A clipping from the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin in 1901 states that the owner of Fern Hill (Thomas McKean at this point) was suing Midvale Steel Works for damage to his gardens and trees, indicating the growing tension between the industrial area and the subject property's formerly bucolic neighborhood. Source: Campbell Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Concurrent with the arrival of the Dodges in 1891 and confirming the wealthy enclave bona fides of the area, the Germantown Cricket Club moved from Nicetown to its current location on the north side of Manheim Street, on the former Littell and Price Estates (most pre-Club buildings now demolished), opposite McKean Avenue. They had been pushed out by the expansion of Midvale Steel in an act of industrial foreboding for the neighborhood. The club hired Gilded Age architects McKim, Mead & White design a large clubhouse in the Colonial Revival style. The second oldest cricket club in the nation, its arrival in the southwest Germantown neighborhood truly cast the area around the subject property as one of the most elite suburban enclaves in the region. It became the northern frame to a neighborhood defined in part by Fernhill to the south. Several of the neighborhood families were members of the club where families regularly hosted luncheons, dances, and teas for various celebrations, often noted in the society pages of the day.

The neighborhood around the subject property seemed to constantly be in real estate transfer as parcels were bought, sold, and carved up, often by those who live in the immediate area. The narrow strip of land between McKean Avenue and Morris Street was owned in part by Justus Strawbridge who sold the parcels that became 5005 and 5015 McKean Avenue to Francis B. Reeves whose estate Immergrün (Evergreen) was at the southeast corner of McKean and Clapier, just north of Fern Hill and Abbotsford Road. Reeves commissioned a (extant) George T. Pearson-designed house as a wedding present for his eldest daughter Mary Primrose when she married George Hartley Deacon at 5005 McKean. The adjacent property to the northwest, 5015

McKean Avenue, was sold by Reeves after 1893 to William Tatem Tilden who commissioned Pearson to design “Overleigh.” The twins at the northwest corner of McKean and Clapier were constructed in the 1870s and have had relative quick turnover among owners for their entire existence. Reeves’ son lived at 469 Abbottsford Avenue from 1897 to 1927 (Figs. 47 & 48).

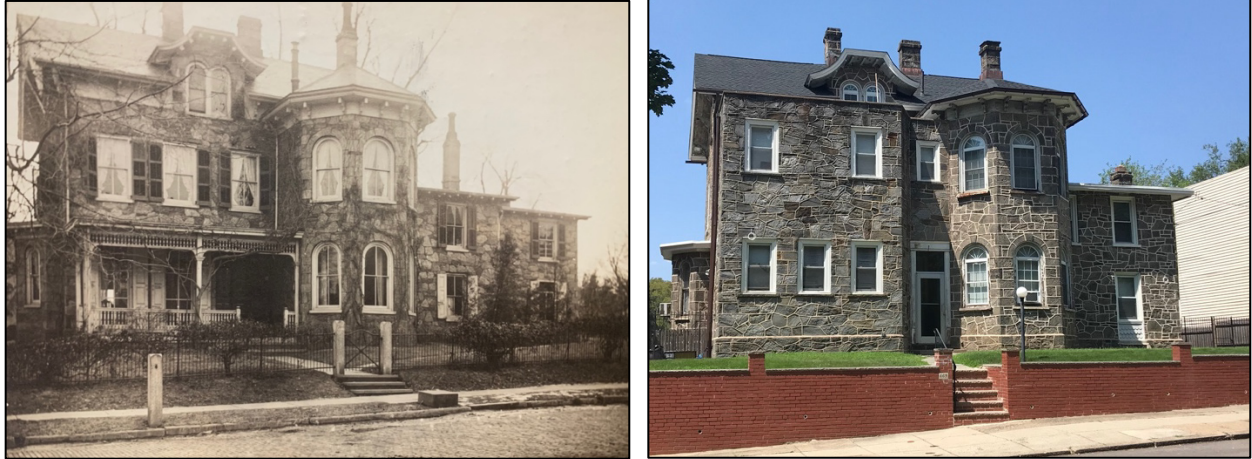


Fig. 57, left. The Italianate house at 469 W. Abbottsford Avenue was once the home of Frances B Reeves, Jr., and his family. It is situated across from Fern Hill and overlooking a steep incline toward Clapier Street in the rear of the property. Fig. 58, right. The building in its modified form with the wooden porch replaced by a two-story enclosed addition. Photo: August 11, 2025.

In the memoir of her husband’s life, Mrs. Charles Day made a prediction about the changing nature of the neighborhood when she mentions “occasionally, however, the desire to own a permanent home arose, one in a neighborhood where there would be no anxiety for the future. After the sale of the beautiful Reeves Estate on the corner of McKean Avenue and the building of the McClatchy operation houses, things took on a different aspect. It felt definitely that this was not the place to settle permanently.”²⁵

Indeed, in 1923, a year after the death of Francis Reeves, his estate Immergrün across Clapier Street from the subject property was developed by John McClatchy with rowhouse development, in an agreement Reeves facilitated with the builder and one that certainly changed the feel of the neighborhood. Although the advertising for the new houses was targeted toward middle-class buyers, the marketing pointed to the proximity of its Tudor-styled properties to the Germantown Cricket Club, a place that may not have been at the time as egalitarian in its membership rolls as the neighborhood around it was becoming. Perhaps McClatchy indulged in a bit of up-marketing and based his designs on the large 1895 Tudor revival house on McKean, Overleigh. The new

²⁵ Margaret Dunning Day, “Charles Day: A Memory,” Philadelphia 1934, 175. Printed by Day & Zimmerman, Inc. Germantown Historical Society. The Days ultimately moved to a Woodward property on St. George’s Road in Mt. Airy at the Cresheim Ravine, imitating somewhat the landscape of the nineteenth century Fern Hill environs.



Fig. 59, left. The rear of 469 W. Abbottsford Avenue, the former residence of Francis B. Reeves, Jr., looking east from Ellinger Street, past rowhouses in the foreground. Date: August 9, 2025. Fig. 60, right. The rear of the subject property from the garden. The 1870s stone twins at 4951 and 4953 McKean Avenue are in the background. Date: March 28, 2025. Both photos show the extreme grade changes in the area around the subject property.

rowhouses didn't dissuade everyone still interested in this corner of Germantown, however. Across McKean Avenue from Reeves' former estate, businessman Rushton Marot purchased the former Benjamin Tatem lot at 408 W. Clapier in 1923 and built the extant stone Colonial Revival residence designed by Druckenmiller, Stackhouse & Williams.

The construction of rowhouse, semi-detached, and apartment houses in the neighborhood continued apace after McClatchy's deal with Reeves. By the 1960s, the large suburban estate lots had been converted into dense residential development. The Dodge family, after having arrived in 1891 continued their residency in the subject property until 1953 when family matriarch Josephine Kern Dodge, wife of James Mapes, died at home. In the following year, her will outlined a formal subdivision of the subject property into two half-acre parcels: 5000 McKean and the rear portion at 419 West Clapier Street. Oldest son Kern Dodge continued to live in a ca.1891 colonial revival house at 425 West Clapier until his death in 1958 marking the end of the Dodge family tenure in Germantown.

Italianate Houses: A Typology

The Italianate style began in England as part of the Picturesque movement, a reaction to the formal classical ideals in art and architecture that had been fashionable for about two hundred years. The American expression of the style originated in the rural models of the Picturesque and was adapted and modified into a hybridized form that Andrew Jackson Downing popularized in his influential pattern books in the 1840s and 1850s. The austere stone cube, with little detailing beyond cornice bracketing – a faint echo of the early Renaissance-era Palazzo Medici Ricardi - is

the purest form of the Italianate style.²⁶ The Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House embodies this stern but commodious mood.

As detailed in the section on site context, this style was popular with the neighborhood's residents in its various iterations concerning symmetry, towers, and decorative details such as window surrounds and porches. The style often mingled with gothic revival features (a style conterminous with the Italianate) in the neighborhood's as well as often one of adaptive reuse of existing residences and auxiliary buildings such as barns. These were stylistic and practical choices that were indicative of the era especially in the hands of the wealthy residents of the Civil War period. They established the architectural foundation of the late Victorian suburb in Germantown.

The 1862 Smedley Atlas indicates the presence of an extant Italianate house at 337 West Seymour Street at Morris Street that was constructed in 1858 by the Chancellor family who were related to Louis Clapier of nearby Fernhill. Today, this stucco'd, 3-story, 3-bay cube with abelvedere and rambling, rear additions that continues to exist on an over half-acre parcel.



Fig. 61, left. 337 West Seymour Street is an 1858 Italianate house with a belvedere, quoins, and flattened arch window hoods. Photo: Fig. 62, right. The belvedere of 337 Seymour can be seen beyond the (extant) 1870s twins on McKean Avenue that face the subject property in a December 1925 photo. Source: "Kern Dodge: Pioneer Automoblist" by Barron H. Bohnet. *Antique Automobile*, November-December 1978.

Philadelphia's preeminent architect of the Italianate style was Samuel Sloan (1815-1884). His pattern books and architectural commissions set the standard for gracious designs in the mid-nineteenth century. *The Model Architect*, a pattern book published in 1852, presented various designs for "Italian Residences" that offered a general appearance displaying "finely that half-town and half-country expression so essential to handsome suburban dwellings."²⁷

²⁶ Virginia McAlester and A. Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to America's Historic Houses*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 212-214.

²⁷ Samuel Sloan, *The Model Architect: A Series of Original Designs for Cottages, Villas, Suburban Residences, etc., Volume I*. (Philadelphia: E.S. Jones & Co., 1852), 28.



Fig. 63, left. An Italianate twin house designed by Samuel Sloan for the Woodland Terrace development in 1851. Fig. 64, right. The 1859 former Germantown Orphans Home. Photos: SoLo Germantown.

Sloan's designs for the Asa Packer Mansion in Jim Thorpe, PA, in 1861, exhibit a highly decorative form of the Italianate that matches the less ornate Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House in its 3-story, symmetrical cube presentation with central gable peaks in the center of all elevations (Fig. 65). The Packer Mansion, not unlike the subject property, is built at the peak of a steep incline, advantaging the views from its belvedere. The similarities of both houses and rooflines speaks to the possibility that the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House may have originally had a belvedere construction taking advantage of incredible views back to the city (Figs. 66, 16). While no architect has been attributed to the subject property, Sloan's pattern book design ideas were floating around at the time of its construction and finding favor with other suburban developers and builders, including in West Philadelphia where Charles Leslie developed Woodland Terrace with Sloan's designs. It is not unlikely that inspiration for Godfrey's small-scale Germantown speculative development was modeled, at least in part, by Sloan's ideas.

Alternatively, perhaps James Charles Sidney (1819-1881) had something to offer regarding the design of the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House. Sidney's commission in 1859 for Calvary Episcopal Church at Manheim and Pulaski came from Benjamin Godfrey who chaired the church's building committee.²⁸ Sidney's influential 1850 publication *American Cottage and Villa Architecture* offered views and plans of residences "with hints on landscape gardening, laying out of grounds, planting of trees, etc." Such ideas beyond the bounds of just a house would have been appealing to the wealthy elite with interest in becoming the seigneurs of small estates that were emerging in lower Germantown in a liminal space Sloan described as half-town

²⁸ Rev. S.F. Hotchkin, M.A. *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill*, (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1889), 279.

and half-country where proximity to the city contrasted favorably with the hilly base of the Wissahickon Valley.



Fig. 65, left. The 1861 Asa Packer Mansion, Jim Thorpe, PA, designed by Samuel Sloan. Fig. 66, right. The hipped roof of the Asa Packer Mansion with its symmetrical folds at center gables and its belvedere. Sources: The Asa Packer Mansion website, accessed November 15, 2025.

The Thomas Drake estate in Germantown was also a Sloan design and located on one entire block of Washington Lane at Morton Street with auxiliary buildings on an expansive piece of land. Though more ornate than the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate, the 1863 Drake compound embodies the same Italianate expression of a symmetrical cube with central gables at the hipped roofline. Sloan reflected the era's stylistic aspirations in this Germantown country seat that included a Carriage House, Greenhouses, and other buildings on a large parcel. None of these buildings survive.



Fig. 67. "Residence of Thomas Drake, Esq., Germantown, Pa.," by Thomas Lester Cernea, artist, ca. 1865. Source: The Library Company, Print Department.

As the period's architectural tastemaker, Sloan also saw the Italianate as an appropriate typology for school houses. In *The Model Architect*, Sloan calls for the desired exterior appearance of a School House to reflect the public and pedagogical benefits of education within a single

building. He accompanies his description with a design for a symmetrical Italianate whose main volume is a cube supplemented by exterior stairwell bays and is capped by a deep roof overhang with cornice brackets below a hipped roof with belvedere. The 1873 David Farragut School in the West Kensington section of Philadelphia embodies this spirit. It quite closely resembles the subject property. Rendered in random-course brownstone, the central gable peaks of its three-story structure echo the stylistic elements of the subject property.



Fig. 68, left. A School House from Samuel Sloan's 1852 *The Model Architect*. Fig. 69, right. The David Farragut School in West Kensington, Philadelphia.

Conclusion

The property at 5000 McKean Avenue merits designation as a suburban residence that serviced the social and civic pursuits of some of Philadelphia's most prominent families. A remarkably intact surviving parcel, the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge Estate is a reminder of an elite enclave of early suburban dwellers in Germantown in the shadow of the Fernhill estate when the neighborhood residents supported the domestic lives of the social elite of the city, satisfying Criterion J.

The Italianate house reflects the layered evolution of Germantown's built environment – from a semi-rural landscape of scattered country seats to a mid-nineteenth century enclave of prosperous merchants, and finally to a twentieth-century neighborhood of civic leaders and industrialists. Its survival offers rare insight into how Philadelphia's elite adapted and modernized earlier suburban dwellings rather than replacing them, thereby extending the life and relevance of Germantown's architectural legacy. As an adaptively reused residence representing an era distinguished by an architectural style, the property satisfies Criterion C.

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ADDENDUM

Remarkably, a few interior photographs exist of the interior of the Carson-Strawbridge-Dodge House. They illustrate the domestic lives of the Dodges and date from after their 1891 ownership of the property through Christmas 1933.



Fig. 70. Josephine Kern Dodge in a parlor with her two oldest children Kern and Fayelle. Undated. Source: Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection, Princeton University.



Fig. 71. Josephine Kern Dodge at her bedroom toilette. Undated. Source: Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection, Princeton University.



Fig. 72. Kern and Fayette Dodge at Christmas. Undated. Source: Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection, Princeton University.



Fig. 73. Christmas tree in a corner of the House. Source: Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection, Princeton University.



Fig. 74. 1933 Christmas Day celebrations at the subject property. Kern Dodge in the butler's pantry. Source: Karl Dodge Glass Slide Collection. Courtesy: Don Dodge.



Fig. 75. 1933 Christmas Day celebrations at the subject property. Source: Karl Dodge Glass Slide Collection. Courtesy: Don Dodge.



Fig. 76. 1933 Christmas Day celebrations at the subject property. Source: Karl Dodge Glass Slide Collection. Courtesy: Don Dodge.



Fig. 77. 1933 Christmas Day celebrations at the subject property. Kern Dodge and sister Josephine Dodge Wharton, center. Source: Karl Dodge Glass Slide Collection. Courtesy: Don Dodge.



Fig. 78. A December 1933 photograph of Kern Dodge standing in the extant governor's drive looking out to the corner of McKean and Clapier. The Morris Street rowhouses in the background arrived in the 1920s and are still standing. Photo: Karl Dodge Glass Slide Collection, courtesy Don Dodge.