

**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: 138 W. Walnut Ln

Postal code: 19144

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Dr. John E. Fryer House

Current/Common Name: _____

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: Residential

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1972 to 2003

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1860, 1893

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Mantle Fielding

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: _____

Original owner: Benjamin Franklin Van Dyke

Other significant persons: John E. Fryer

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,
- Crit. E added by CHD** (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 Philadelphia Historical Commission Date December 17, 2021

Name with Title Jon Farnham, Executive Director Email Jon.farnham@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor Telephone 215-686-7660

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19119

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: December 17, 2021

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: December 17, 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: December 17, 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Gloria Del Piano

Address: 138 W. Walnut Ln

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: January 19, 2022

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: March 11, 2022

Date of Final Action: March 11, 2022

Designated Rejected

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected. Situate in the 59th Ward of the City of Philadelphia, described as follows, to wit:

Beginning at a point on the Southeasterly side of Walnut Lane (49 feet wide) measured along the same, North 44 degrees 26 minutes 00 seconds East, 230 feet 0 inches from the Northeasterly side of Greene Street (50 feet wide) thence extending along the said Southeasterly side of Walnut Lane North 44 degrees 26 minutes 00 seconds East, 75 feet 0 inches to a point; thence South 45 degrees 34 minutes 00 seconds East, 219 feet 6-3/4 inches to a point; thence North 44 degrees 23 minutes 05 seconds East, 7 feet 10-1/2 inches to a point; thence South 45 degrees 28 minutes 29 seconds East, 69 feet 5-7/8 inches to a point; thence South 44 degrees 31 minutes 31 seconds West 45 feet 0 inches to a point; thence North 45 degrees 28 minutes 29 seconds West, 69 feet 4-1/2 inches to a point; thence South 44 degrees 23 minutes 05 seconds West, 37 feet 10-1/2 inches to a point; thence North 45 degrees 34 minutes 00 seconds West, 219 feet 7-1/2 inches to a point on the Southeasterly side of the aforementioned Walnut Lane, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

Being No. 138 W. Walnut Lane.

OPA Account #: 593060600



Figure 1. The boundary of the property proposed for designation is outlined in red. Source: Philadelphia Atlas.

6. DESCRIPTION

Built about 1860 and significantly modified in 1893 by architect Mantle Fielding, the dwelling at 138 W. Walnut Lane is a detached, residential structure set in a suburban environment. The structure is comprised of a 2-1/2-story, three-bay, cross-gabled main block with a large rear ell. Chimneys project from the east and west ends of the primary ridge of the main block. A two-story, brick carriage house stands at rear of the property. A driveway runs along the east side of the house to the carriage house; it widens at the front and rear to provide parking. Sidewalks run from the street to the building on axis and at the west property line. A side and rear terrace and greenspace with several large trees occupy the remainder of the lot.



Figure 2. 138 W. Walnut Lane. View southeast from W. Walnut Lane, 17 April 2018. Source: Cyclomedia.



Figure 3. Birdseye views of 138 W. Walnut Lane. Left: View of property, looking southeast. Right: View of rear of property, looking northwest.



Figure 4. Front elevation of 138 W. Walnut Lane, May 2019. Source Philadelphia Historical Commission.



Figure 5. 138 W. Walnut Lane, 2017. Source Philadelphia Historical Commission.

North or Front Elevation

The building faces north onto W. Walnut Lane. It is clad in stucco with decorative stick and shingle overlays. The original Gothic Revival or Italianate building was updated in 1893 with a projecting three-sided bay at the second and third floors. Until about 1973, a front porch extended across the entire front façade of the building and onto the driveway at the east, where it transformed into a porte cochere. The porch was pedimented over the central entrance. In 1973, property owner John Fryer removed the large porch and porte cochere and installed the smaller, central porch that survives today.¹ The windows at the first and third floors are one-over-one double-hung windows. The windows at the second floor are Queen Anne windows with small panes in the upper sash and a single large pane in the lower sash.

West Elevation

The west elevation is comprised of the gable end of the main block and the side façade of the rear ell, which projects out of the main block. From front to back, the west elevation is enlivened with a one-story, open porch with a half-gable roof; two two-story, three-sided bays, one of which includes a projecting entrance at the first floor; a tall, thin brick chimney, and a two-story porch at the rear.

¹ See Philadelphia zoning permit #20003 to remove existing open front porch and construct new open front porch, 14 August 1973.



Figure 6. Front or north and west facades.



Figure 7. Views of the west and south or rear facades of the building.

South or Rear Elevation

The south or rear façade consists of a two-story porch projecting from the gable-roofed rear. The first floor of the porch is open and screened. The second floor of the porch is glazed.



Figure 8. Terrace at rear.



Figure 9. Looking south along the west façade at rear terrace.

East Elevation

The east façade, along the driveway, is comprised of the gable end of the main block and the side façade of the rear ell.

Rear Yard

The rear yard separates the house at the front from the carriage house at the rear. It is landscaped with grass and plantings.



Figure 10. Rear yard looking toward the rear of the house.



Figure 11. Rear yard looking toward the front of the carriage house.

Carriage House

The carriage house is a two-story, brick structure with a rectangular plan and flat roof. At the front façade, the carriage house has two large openings at the first floor and one, a hay loft opening, at the second. It has paired and single double-hung windows and a corbelled brick cornice.



Figure 12. Front facade of the carriage house.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

The property at 138 W. Walnut Lane is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code. The property satisfies Criterion for Designation A because it “is associated with the life of a person significant in the past.” From 1972 to 2003, the property at 138 W. Walnut Lane was the home of Dr. John E. Fryer, a psychiatrist and a national leader in the gay civil rights movement whose advocacy was instrumental in convincing the American Psychiatric Association to end its classification of homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder in the early 1970s. Satisfying Criterion A, the property is associated with the life of John E. Fryer, a person significant in the past (Figure 13).



Dr. John Ercel Fryer: LGBTQ medical crusader. ASSOCIATED PRESS

Figure 13. Dr. John E. Fryer.

Background of 138 W. Walnut Lane

The property at 138 W. Walnut Lane was historically part of the Wyck farm, the Wistar and Haines family estate that was established on the west side of Germantown Road in Germantown about 1690. At the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, John S. Haines began selling off portions of his family’s land for suburban development in an area that came to be known as Tulpehocken. One of the first suburban developments in the United States, Tulpehocken was made possible by the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown rail line, which connected the City of Philadelphia with Germantown in 1832. By the 1840s, wealthy Philadelphians, who had summered in Germantown since the eighteenth century, were commuting by train between Philadelphia and Germantown.

An 1851 map of Germantown shows that W. Walnut Lane had been planned, but not yet opened as a public street (Figure 14). The land west of Wyck along the line of Walnut Lane was undeveloped.² By 1862, as the Smedley map shows, the 100-block of Walnut Lane had been opened and six houses had been constructed along it, three on each side near the intersection with Greene Street, including the house at 138 W. Walnut Lane (Figure 15).³



Figure 14. Detail from A.E. Rogerson and E.J. Murphy, Civil Engineers, *Map of the Township of Germantown, Philadelphia County, Penna.*, 1851.

² A.E. Rogerson and E.J. Murphy, Civil Engineers, *Map of the Township of Germantown, Philadelphia County, Penna.*, 1851.

³ Samuel L. Smedley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Section 21*, 1862.



Figure 15. Detail from Samuel Smedley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, Section 21, 1862.

Benjamin Franklin Van Dyke purchased the property at 138 W. Walnut Lane from John S. Haines and the extended Haines family on October 8, 1858.⁴ The deed does not state that a messuage or tenement stood on the lot, indicating that it was likely open land. Van Dyke was a 35-year-old stockbroker at Van Dyke & Co., a firm that he ran with his brother Frederick out of offices at 52 S. 3rd Street.⁵ Van Dyke's brother and their father, Frederick Sr., a prominent physician, moved to houses on the same block of Walnut Lane at the same time. Van Dyke was a captain in the Fourth Regiment, Infantry Battalion of the Reserve Brigade of the First Division Pennsylvania Volunteers in 1861, and a lieutenant colonel in 1862.⁶ In 1862, Benjamin Van Dyke transferred the property at 138 W. Walnut Lane to his wife, Rebecca W. Parker, presumably because he was mobilizing to fight in the Civil War. Van Dyke died on October 22, 1863. Less than three years later, Parker, Van Dyke's widow, sold the property to John Roberts, a real estate agent in Germantown, on February 13, 1866. Roberts, in turn, sold the property to brothers and liquor merchants John J. and Charles F. Stadiger on April 27, 1868 (Figure 16).

⁴ John S. Haines and others to Benjamin F. Van Dyke, October 8, 1858, Deed Book ADB-40-113.

⁵ City Directory, 1861, p. 1012.

⁶ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 July 1861, p. 8; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 September 1862, p. 8.

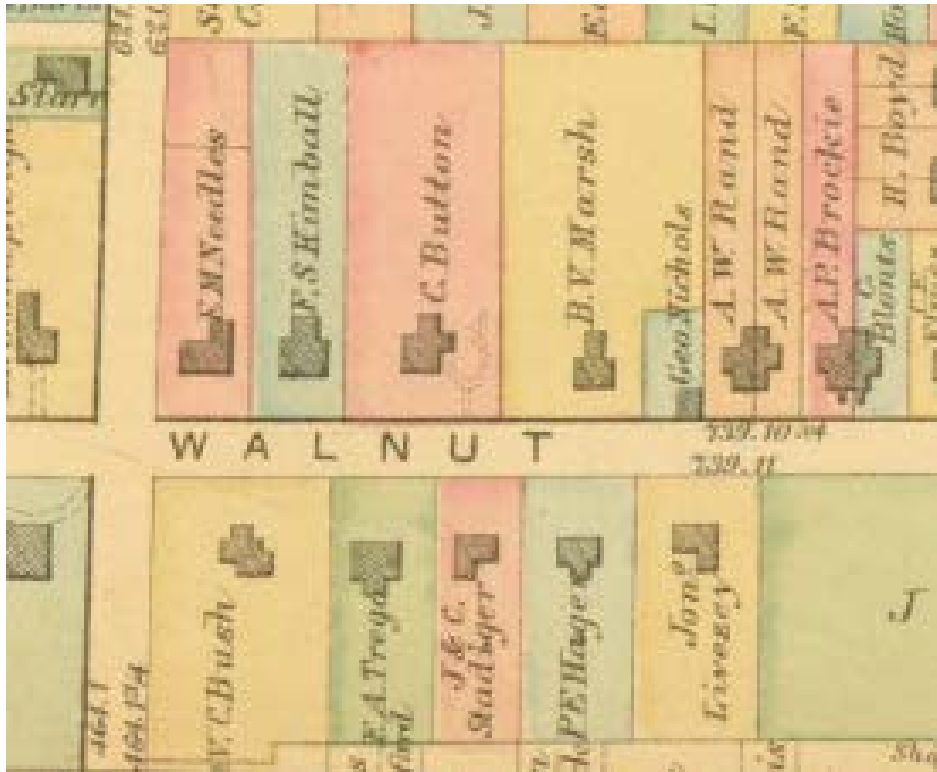


Figure 16. Detail showing the property during the ownership of J. & C. Stadiger, from G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the Late Borough of Germantown, 22nd Ward, City of Philadelphia*, Plate 6, 1871.

The property changed hands a couple of times in the 1880s before Barzillai Ridgway purchased it in 1889.⁷ Ridgway owned a stone yard at 9th Street and Columbia (now Cecil B. Moore) Avenue. In 1890, Ridgway purchased portions of the rears of the properties at 141 and 143 Harvey Street, where the carriage house now stands, and incorporated them into the property at 138 W. Walnut Lane.⁸ Maps indicate that the carriage house was constructed between 1895 and 1901. In 1893, Ridgway retained architect Mantle Fielding to prepare for alterations and additions to the house at 138 W. Walnut Lane.⁹ Fielding lived only one block to the east at 28 W. Walnut Lane. The architect reimagined the Italianate house as an up-to-date Queen Anne dwelling with projecting porches and bays, small-paned windows, scalloped shingles, and decorative trim. Excepting the replacement of Fielding’s front porch and porte cochere with a smaller central front porch, the house appears as it did after its Queen Anne makeover in the early 1890s.

Paul S. Reeves, a wealthy brass founder, owned the property in the first decades of the twentieth century, but passed to his son-in-law and others when he faced financial troubles and the bankruptcy of his company. After Reeves died, physician Harry Bond Wilmer, an allergist at Germantown Hospital, purchased the property in 1915.¹⁰ In 1917, former Philadelphia Mayor Rudolph Blankenburg and his wife rented the house from Wilmer, who was in Europe working as a doctor in the United States Army. Blankenburg, who was known as “The Dutch Cleanser” for his reform efforts and who served as Mayor from 1911 to 1916, had vacated his house on Logan Square because it was being demolished for the construction of the Parkway.¹¹ Contractor William C. Wright & Son undertook \$2,000 worth of “general

⁷ John E. Frymier to Barzillai Ridgway, June 1, 1889, Deed Book GGP-508-478.

⁸ Walter J. Crowder et al to Barzillai Ridgway, June 30, 1890, Deed Book GGP-691-63.

⁹ *Philadelphia Real Estate and Builders Guide*, March 22, 1893, v. 8. No. 12, p. 174.

¹⁰ William Brooke Rawle, trustee, to Harry Bond Wilmer, April 9, 1915, Deed Book ELT-461-436; “Dr. Harry B. Wilmer Victim of Stroke,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 17, 1943, p. 26.

¹¹ “Blankenburg in Suburb,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1917, p. 10.

alterations” to the property for Wilmer in 1925, but the house retained its Queen Anne appearance.¹² Physician W. Lawrence Cahall, also at Germantown Hospital, purchased the property in 1943, after Wilmer’s death.¹³ In 1972, the Cahall family sold the property to yet another physician, John E. Fryer, a psychiatrist.¹⁴



Figure 17. Photograph of the property in 1963. Note the front porch, which extends to the east as a porte cochere. Source: Philadelphia Historical Commission.

¹² *Philadelphia Real Estate and Builders Guide*, February 4, 1925, v. 40, no. 5, p74-75.

¹³ Helen Lewis Wilmer to W. Lawrence Cahall, July 29, 1943, Deed Book CJP-288-445.

¹⁴ W. Lawrence Cahall and Annetta McGrath Cahall to John E. Fryer, July 13, 1972, Deed Book DCC-146-172.

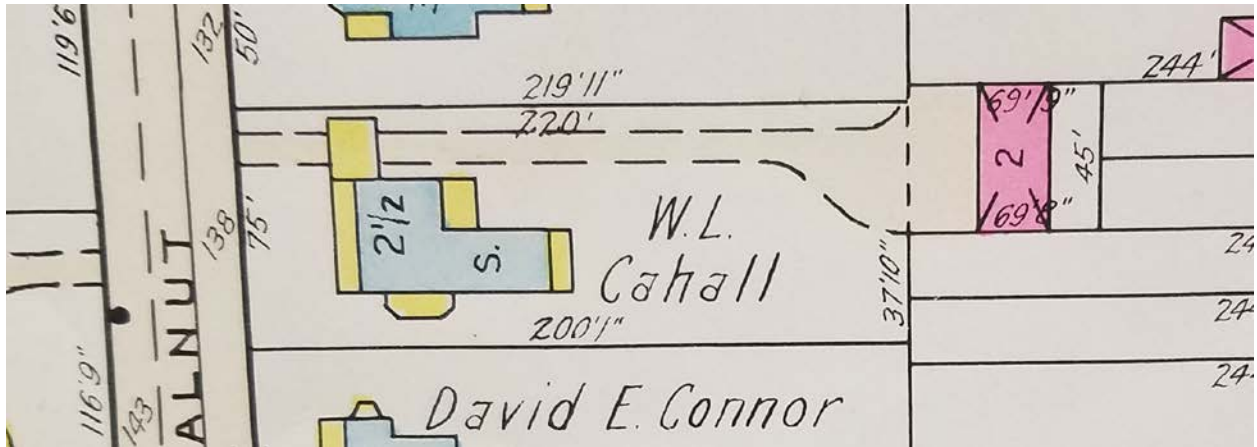


Figure 18. Detail from Franklin Survey Company, Atlas of the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia, 1955. Note the full-width front porch and porte cochere, which were removed in 1973.



Figure 19. Photograph of the property in 1963. Source: Philadelphia Historical Commission.



Figure 20. Photograph of the property in 1963. Source: Philadelphia Historical Commission.

C APPLICATION FOR ZONING PERMIT AND REGISTRATION PERMIT
 DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING & INSPECTIONS
 PHILADELPHIA

NOTE: The requirements for this permit are in addition to all others required by law or regulation. The issuance of this permit does not imply that a building permit or other permits will be issued if the applications do not conform with the Building Code, Plumbing Code, Heating Code, Fire Code and all other pertinent laws or regulations.

Application made for the permit or permits required by the Philadelphia ordinance before commencing the use or the work as shown on accompanying plan.

LOCATION OF PROPERTY (Street and House Number)
 138 W. Walnut Lane

situated on _____ side of _____ Street
 at the distance of _____ feet _____ inches from _____ side of _____ Street

Front _____ feet _____ inches. Depth _____ feet _____ inches.

If lot is irregular in shape, give deed description below.

RECEIVED
 DEPT. OF LICENSING AND INSPECTIONS
 AUG 14 1973
 PERMIT ISSUANCE

EXPLAIN ANY ALTERATIONS OR PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION
 Remove existing open front porch
 60' x 10' x 10' Construct new open porch
 10' x 10'

APPLICATION NO. 20009
 DISTRICT DESIGNATION R-2-1A
 ZONING DISTRICT R-2-1A
 P. A. VOL. PL. 177
 WARD 22-12119
 PREVIOUS APPROVAL NO. 118
 CALENDAR NO.

ZONING REQUIRED
 USE REQUIRED
 APPEAL
 APP. GRANTED CERT.
 APP. REFUSED CERT.
 REC. TO B. OF A.
 REC. GRANTED CERT.
 REC. REFUSED CERT.

THIS SPACE FOR DESIGNER'S STAMP
 DESIGNER'S NAME
 DEPT. OF LICENSING AND INSPECTIONS
 CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
 ISSUES UNDER NO. 2073-47
 DATE 8-14-73
 PERMIT ISSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ZONING

HEIGHT	EXISTING BUILDING			PROPOSED ADDITION, ALTERATION OR NEW BUILDING		
	FRONT	SIDE	REAR	FRONT	SIDE	REAR
In Feet						
In Stories	2					

TABULATION OF USES

FLOOR NO.	PRESENT USE	LAST PREVIOUS USE	DATE LAST USED
	Single Family Dw.		

FLOOR NO.	PROPOSED USE OF PRESENT BUILDING	PROPOSED USE OF ADDITION OR NEW BUILDING
	Same	

Additional use information, if required

OWNER: John Fryer ADDRESS: 138 Walnut Lane PHONE
 ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER ADDRESS: PHONE
 CONTRACTOR: Dennis Sigovich ADDRESS: 637 State St. Andalusia Pa. PHONE
 APPROVAL: Dennis Sigovich ADDRESS: 837 State St. Andalusia Pa. PHONE

81-16 (Rev. 12/63)

Figure 21. Zoning permit for John Fryer to remove and replace the front porch at 138 W. Walnut Lane, 14 August 1973.

John E. Fryer, Psychiatrist and a National Leader in the Gay Civil Rights Movement

John Ercel Fryer was born in Winchester, Kentucky in 1937 and received his medical degree from the School of Medicine at Vanderbilt University in 1962. He started his residency at the Menniger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, but left after suffering from depression resulting from the homophobia he encountered at the clinic and school of psychiatry. Fryer moved to Philadelphia and began a residency program at the University of Pennsylvania but was forced to resign when the university became aware of his homosexuality. He completed his residency at the Norristown State Hospital in Norristown, Pennsylvania in 1967 and joined the medical staff at Temple University Hospital as an instructor in psychiatry. In 1972, he was appointed to the staff of Friends Hospital, a psychiatric institute in Philadelphia.¹⁵ The same year, 1972, Fryer purchased the property at 138 W. Walnut Lane, and moved into the house.¹⁶ A gay psychiatrist, Fryer played a fundamental role in changing the way in which psychiatry conceptualized and classified homosexuality and, more broadly, played a fundamental role in the gay civil rights movement.



Figure 22. Dr. John E. Fryer, *Inquirer*, 19 February 1970, p. 67.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or DSM is a publication of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) that provides a standardized classification of mental disorders. First published in 1952, the DSM is used, primarily in the United States, by clinicians, researchers, drug regulators, health insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, the legal system, and policymakers as the authoritative taxonomy of mental disorders. The DSM does not simply provide classifications for mental disorders but also determines how the intertwined medical, insurance, pharmaceutical, legal, and governmental systems administer populations with those disorders, and, more fundamentally, determines how society distinguishes between healthy and unhealthy, normal and abnormal, moral and immoral, legal and illegal, and a long string of related dichotomies. The original edition, DSM-1, published in 1952, listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance. The APA's classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder was used to justify myriad discriminatory practices. Though the diagnosis was based on the homosexual's departure from social norms, it stamped homosexuals as emotional deviants and lent medical authority to laws that made homosexual acts and even public gatherings of homosexuals illegal. As early as 1956, psychologist Evelyn Hooker presented evidence that the APA's correlation of homosexuality with mental illness was not supported by empirical evidence. Publishing her findings in a paper entitled "The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual," Hooker demonstrated that there was no discernable difference between the mental adjustment of homosexual and heterosexual men. The second edition of the DSM, DSM-2, which was published in 1968, retained the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder.¹⁷

For many years, the classification of homosexuality remained unchallenged by mainstream psychiatrists and others with the expertise to dispute it. Gay members of the medical profession were silent, fearing that objections to the classification would result in their ostracization from the field. In 1970, protestors

¹⁵ For a basic biography of Fryer, see Dudley Clendinen, "Dr. John Fryer, 65, Psychiatrist Who Said in 1972 He Was Gay," *New York Times*, March 5, 2003, sec. C, p. 13.

¹⁶ W. Lawrence Cahall and Annetta McGrath Cahall to John E. Fryer, July 13, 1972, Deed Book DCC-146-172.

¹⁷ For a thorough review of the APA's classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, see Jack Drescher, "Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality," *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 4, December 2015, pp. 565-575.

directly confronted the APA about its classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, when the organization of psychiatrists held its annual convention in San Francisco. Activists from the Gay Liberation Front and other groups, but not members of the APA itself, disrupted the conference, objecting to discussions of treating homosexuality with drugs as well as aversion and electroshock therapy. Barbara Gittings, a lesbian activist from Philadelphia, was one of the leaders of the protest movement.

The following year, in 1971, at the APA's convention in Washington DC, Gittings organized a panel discussion on "Lifestyles of Non-patient Homosexuals," which was chaired by gay Harvard University astronomer Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, who had lost a job with the federal government owing to his homosexuality. Kameny's protests of psychiatry's labelling of homosexuality as a mental disorder dated back to at least 1964, when he appeared on television to declare that being gay was "not a disease, a pathology, a sickness, a malfunction or a disorder of any sort." Kameny had written in *Psychiatric News* that "we object to the sickness theory of homosexuality tenaciously held with utter disregard for the disastrous consequences of this theory to the homosexual, based as it is on poor science." At the APA's 1971 convention, in a planned demonstration, protesters seized the microphone and Kameny yelled at his audience of psychiatrists that "Psychiatry is the enemy incarnate. Psychiatry has waged a relentless war of extermination against us. You may take this as a declaration of war against you."¹⁸

Attempting to mollify its critics in the gay community, the APA invited Gittings and Kameny to participate in a panel discussion entitled "Psychiatry: Friend or Foe to the Homosexual? A Dialogue" at the association's 1972 annual meeting in Dallas. While planning for the event, the gay rights activists pointed out that the panel included homosexuals who were not psychiatrists, and psychiatrists who were not homosexuals, but no homosexual psychiatrists. To fill the lacuna, Gittings set out to find a gay psychiatrist who would be willing to serve as a panel member. She asked several gay psychiatrists who were not open about their sexuality to participate, but all declined because of the adverse effects the revelations would have on their careers. After concluding that no one would participate and that she would read letters from gay psychiatrists without revealing their names, she spoke with Fryer, who unexpectedly agreed to appear if he could be disguised to protect his identity.

Fryer was listed on the Gittings and Kameny panel at the APA's 1972 annual convention as "Dr. H. Anonymous," and was later referenced as "Dr. Henry Anonymous." Fryer appeared on the stage before his fellow psychiatrists wearing a mask, wig, and a baggy tuxedo to hide his identity and spoke through a device that disguised his voice (Figure 23). In 1972, Fryer was a faculty member at Temple University, but did not have the security of tenure and was therefore at risk of losing his position if identified. The fear of professional ostracization if recognized as a homosexual was not abstract; he had already lost a residency at the University of Pennsylvania and was later forced to leave Friends Hospital because of his sexual orientation. Psychiatrists were not used to hearing from homosexuals who felt sane and normal. When Fryer, as Dr. H. Anonymous, began his presentation at the 1972 conference, he announced "I am a homosexual, I am a psychiatrist" (Figure 24). His fellow therapists were reportedly riveted. Fryer told the audience that more than 100 gay psychiatrists were attending the convention "and several of us feel that it is time that real flesh and blood stand up before you and ask to be listened to and understood, insofar as that is possible." Fryer electrified his colleagues with his speech by telling them that he, a psychiatrist, a member of the APA, was a homosexual at a time when homosexuality was classified as a mental illness. Panelist Judd Marmor, the APA's vice president at the time and later president, agreed with Fryer that the stance of the psychiatric establishment toward homosexuality was wrong. During the

¹⁸ The roles of Gittings and Kameny in early protests of the APA are recounted in: Mark Moran, "Activists Forced Psychiatrists To Look Behind Closet Door," *Psychiatric News*, vol. 41, no. 21, 3 November 2006, p. 17.

discussion, he said that “I must concede that psychiatry is prejudiced as has been charged. Psychiatric mores reflect the predominant social mores of the culture.”¹⁹



Figure 23. John Fryer in disguise giving his famous speech at the APA convention in Dallas in 1972, New York Public Library, Digital Collection.

Fryer’s courageous effort to speak out as a homosexual psychiatrist against psychiatry’s decision to pathologize homosexuality changed the APA’s position, a major shift with ramifications in myriad realms from medicine to the law that marked a key point in the gay civil rights movement. In December 1973, the board of the APA voted to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders and to urge that “homosexuals be given all protections now guaranteed other citizens.” The members of the APA ratified the decision in April 1974. Work began on DSM-3 in 1974 and the manual was published in 1980, without classifying homosexuality as a mental disorder. Barbara Gittings, the gay rights activist who had convinced Fryer to speak at the 1972 convention, said that he had helped to bring about the change: “His speech shook up psychiatry. He was the right person at the right time.”²⁰

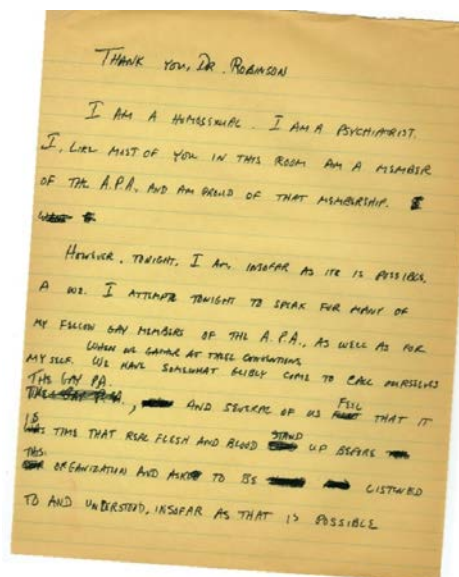


Figure 24. The first page of John Fryer’s famous speech, delivered at the APA convention in Dallas in 1972, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁹ Fryer’s famous speech in disguise at the 1972 APA convention is recounted in many articles. See, for example: Dudley Clendinen, “Dr. John Fryer, 65, Psychiatrist Who Said in 1972 He Was Gay,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2003, sec. C, p. 13; Robert DiGiacomo, “Dr. H. Anonymous, ‘Instant cure’ recalled, Being gay was an illness 30 years ago,” *Philadelphia Gay News*, 2002. Fryer’s papers are housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See the website “Anonymous No More: John Fryer, Psychiatry, and the Fight for LGBT Equality,” at <http://digitalhistory.hsp.org/anonymous-no-more>.

²⁰ Jeanne Lenzer, “John Fryer,” *British Medical Journal*, 2 March 2003, p. 662.

Although some of his colleagues knew Fryer's identity at the time of his speech, Fryer did not formally acknowledge having been Dr. Anonymous until the APA's 1994 convention in Philadelphia. Fryer later explained that he had agreed to participate on the panel because "I had been thrown out of a residency because I was gay. ... I lost a job because I was gay. It had to be said. But I couldn't do it as me. I was not yet full time on the faculty."²¹

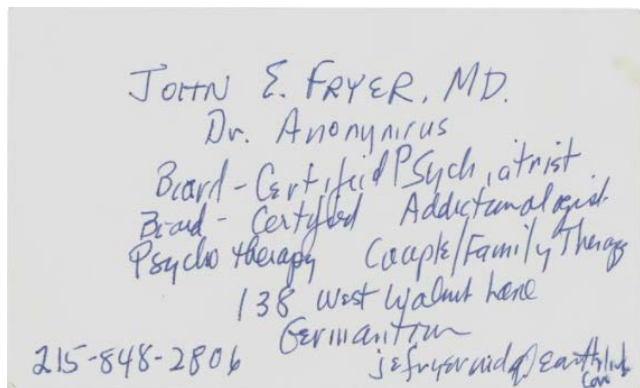


Figure 25: John E. Fryer, MD, handwritten business card, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

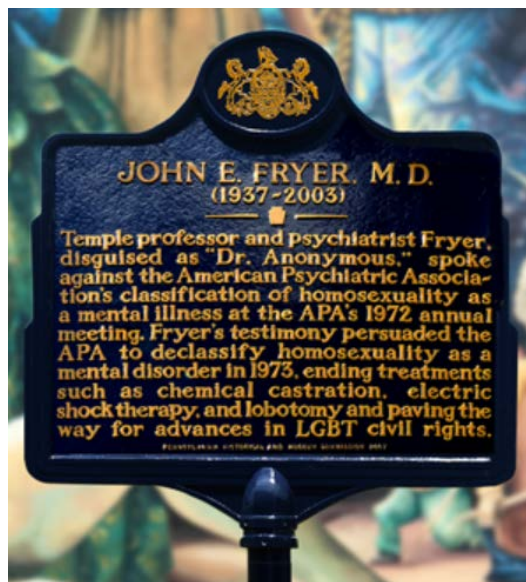


Figure 26. John E. Fryer, M.D. historic marker, 13th and Locust Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Fryer continued to live in the house at 138 W. Walnut Lane until he died in 2003. His obituary in the *Inquirer* called his speech at the 1972 American Psychiatric Association convention "a seminal moment the history of the gay-rights movement."²² In 2002, on the 30th anniversary of his speech, he received a distinguished alumnus award from the Vanderbilt University Medical School and a distinguished service award from the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Foundation endowed the John Fryer, M.D. Award, which honors an individual whose work has contributed to the improvement of the mental health of sexual minorities.²³ In 2014, the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine established an annual lecture series in Fryer's honor. In 2016, Gordon Ain staged an award-winning play on Fryer called the "217 Boxes of Dr. Henry Anonymous." In 2017, a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission historic marker honoring Fryer was installed near the location of his archives at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at 13th and Locust Streets in Philadelphia (Figure 26).²⁴

Katherine Fryer Helmbock, Fryer's sister, said after his death: "To people who knew John, this was only one of the many things he did, but changing *DSM* was a momentous thing. This label, mental illness, was one of the bases for treating gay people badly. This took away a huge cudgel used against gay people for so many years."²⁵

²¹ Quoted in: Dudley Clendinen, "Dr. John Fryer, 65, Psychiatrist Who Said in 1972 He Was Gay," *New York Times*, March 5, 2003, sec. C, p. 13

²² "John E. Fryer, 65 psychiatrist," *Inquirer*, 26 February 2003, p. B13.

²³ "American Psychiatric Foundation Helps Endow Fryer Award," *APA NEWS*, 18 December 2013. Accessed at <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.pn.2013.12b15>

²⁴ Daniel Craig, "Philly honoring psychiatrist who challenged designation of homosexuality as mental illness," *PhillyVoice*, 2 October 2017.

²⁵ Jeanne Lenzer, "John Fryer," *British Medical Journal*, 2 March 2003, p. 662.

Conclusion

From 1972 to 2003, the property at 138 W. Walnut Lane was the home of Dr. John E. Fryer, a psychiatrist and a national leader in the gay civil rights movement whose advocacy was instrumental in convincing the American Psychiatric Association to end its classification of homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder in the early 1970s. Satisfying Criterion A, the property is associated with the life of John E. Fryer, a person significant in the past.



Figure 27: Photograph of the property in 1983, during Fryer's ownership, after he replaced the front porch. Source: Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form, Photograph GT-NWP(G)-5-17.



Figure 28: Sign from John E. Fryer's medical office, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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