

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: 3343 W. School House Lane

Postal code: 19129-5517

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Samuel Tobias Wagner Residence

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: none

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 1896 to 1897

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1896-97

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Horace Trumbauer, Architect

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: not known

Original owner: Samuel Tobias Wagner

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 East Falls Historical Society Date 28 August 2023

Name with Title Steven J. Peitzman Email peitzmansj@gmail.com

Street Address 2911 Wood Pipe Ln Apt D Telephone 215 840 5637

City, State, and Postal Code Phila PA 19129

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: August 28, 2023

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: September 12, 2023

Date of Notice Issuance: September 12, 2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Thomas Jefferson University

Address: 1101 Market Street, 20th Floor

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19107

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: October 18, 2023

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: June 14, 2024

Date of Final Action: June 14, 2024 Designated; Criteria D and E (no Criterion J)

Designated Rejected

NOMINATION

To the

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

3343 West School House Lane

A Stone and Shingle House by Horace Trumbauer

Built for engineer Samuel Tobias Wagner in 1896-97



Introduction

This nomination aims to add a house at 3343 West School House Lane to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It was designed by Horace Trumbauer, one of numerous mid-sized houses authored by the prominent architect, and built for Samuel Tobias Wagner, a civil engineer who once held a senior position with the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, in 1896 or 1897. Though far from claiming “mansion” status, and sitting on only a one-acre parcel, it represents the line of country estates that once occupied a largely isolated stretch of School House Lane from Wissahickon Avenue to Ridge Avenue. Very few of these houses survive. The distinctive house at 3343 West School House Lane displays elements of the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles, entirely consistent with its period (late 1890s). This nomination contends that the property fulfills criteria D (as an example of Queen Anne style), E (designed by Trumbauer), and J (as an example of the country estate houses which once lined West School House Lane).

5. Boundary Description (and location)

Figure 1 shows the location of School House Lane (formerly Bensell's Lane) in northwest Philadelphia. It runs from just east of Germantown Avenue to Ridge Avenue along the Schuylkill River in East Falls. The subject of this nomination is on the north side, several hundred yards west of Henry Avenue. Figure 2 shows the context of the house: to the east and across School House Lane are properties of Jefferson University East Falls, including a softball field.

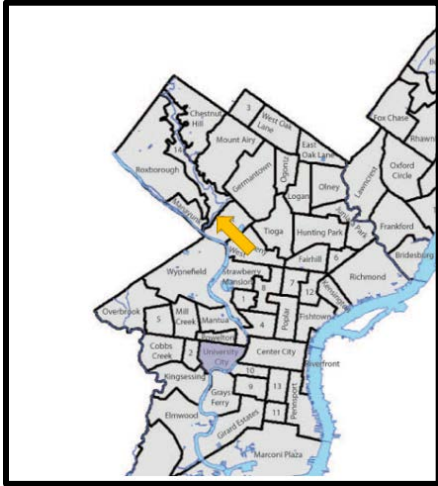


Figure 1



Figure 2 (Google maps)

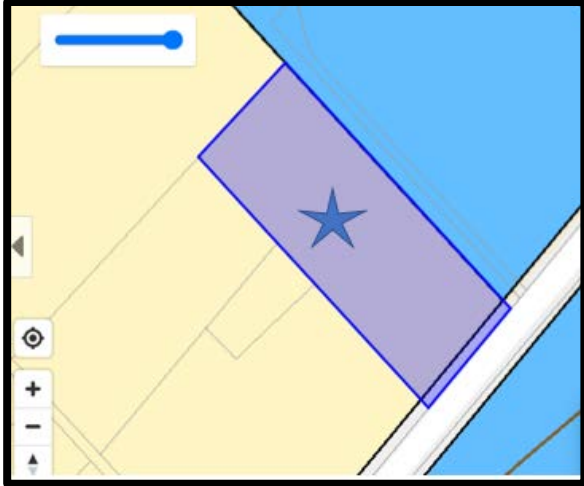


Figure 3 (atlas.phila.gov)

Figure 3 shows the parcel. The white diagonal is School House Lane. The deed description is as follows, for parcel 137N090057:

Beginning at a point on the northwestern side of School House Lane which point is measured south 41 degrees 36m minutes above-mentioned along the said northwesterly side of School House Lane, the distance of 388 feet 4 and 3/4 inches from a point of intersection of the northwesterly side of School House Lane and the center line of Henry Avenue; thence extending south 41 degrees 56 minutes 15 seconds west along the said northwesterly side of School House Lane 152 feet 3/4 inches to a point; thence

north 40 degrees 36 minutes 04 seconds west crossing a marble stone and crossing the northwesterly side of School House Lane 421 feet 1-7/8 inches to a point on a stone then north 40 degrees 26 minutes 35 seconds east 154 feet 3 1/8 inches to a point on a stone thence north 44 degrees 26 minutes 35 seconds east 154 feet 3-1/8 inches to a point on a stone then south 40 degrees 57 minutes 25 seconds east crossing the northwesterly side //of School House Lane and crossing a marble stone 414 feet 8 and 1/4 inches to a point on the northwestern side of said School House Lane being the above mentioned point and place of beginning.¹

The above metes and bounds describe, as seen in figure 3, an irregular near-parallelogram just above 150 feet wide in the dimension parallel to School House Lane, and just above 400 feet in length along a dimension approximately, but not exactly, perpendicular to School House Lane. Its southeast corner, the starting point in the above deed description, is situated about 388 feet along the side of School House Lane from a center line of Henry Avenue, which is to the east of the parcel. Between the parcel and Henry Avenue is a driveway and a softball field of Jefferson University, East Falls Campus. It is curious that the parcel actually extends slightly beyond the official “side” of School House Lane. The description above from the recent 2022 deed replicates one based on a 1967 survey. One (marble) marker stone is still visible, now flush with the surface (figure 4; shown only as a curiosity).

¹ Philadelphia deed dated 22 January 2022, recorded 17 February 2022, for 3343 W SCHOOL HOUSE LN Parcel: 137N09-0057, Debra Renee Cruz grantor, Thomas Jefferson University grantee,

The house sits about centrally in the parcel, just over 170 feet from the north side of School House Lane, with a moderate amount of open ground in front and behind it. The parcel slopes to the rear (north), and the house sits on a built-up terrace. The coordinates of the house are: 40.01997 lat, -75.1940 long.

Though School House Lane is situated on a southwest – northeast diagonal (and the front of the house faces actual southeast), it is considered an east-west roadway on the city plan, and for simplicity this orientation will be adopted here.



Figure 4 A boundary marker stone found at the southeast corner of the parcel.



Figure 5 The house seen from above (Google maps)

As seen in figures 5, 10, 12, the house is roughly rectangular but comprises an abundance of protuberances of various sorts. The lower right in the photograph (fig. 5) is the front, facing south. The main, south-facing volume contains two and one-half stories under a hipped roof with multiple hipped-roof dormers and a gabled dormer facing east. A gabled roof extends from the rear (north) slope

of the hipped roof to protect the smaller volume to the rear (north); and the west side of the gable extends at a lower slope to cover a small projecting volume which may be a latter addition. This is more easily seen in a view of the rear elevation, figures 12 and 14 below. In addition, a tiny gablet can be discerned at the peak of the hipped roof, not well seen in photographs, probably serving a ventilating function.

6. Description (photographs by the nominator unless otherwise indicated)

Front (south-facing aspect; figure 6):



Figure 6 Front of the house (south façade, looking north)

The visible fabric of the house is stone for the first level and shingle above. The **first level** south aspect (its front) is dominated by the porch, or verandah, to the west, which wraps around the main volume under a skirt roof, with an added small gable atop that part of the porch in front of the main door. The stonework of the turret* to the east, and that of the actual front wall, differ, that of the wall being partially dressed and of a tan or even rust color (figure 6, 7). Neither the stone of the wall nor turret appears to be the expected schist, though this is not clear. The stonework is roughly coursed. The patio area going partly around the turret shows several short piers, but a presumed balustrade which once connected them is lost. Entering onto the porch, one sees to the west (left) a double-hung window with white wood shutters, then a single-leaf wood door. The door is glazed with a circular window to which adhere carved (and curved) figures left and right, looking somewhat mermaidish, though the intent may be something else (figure 7). Below is paneling made up of a polished wood square set in a square frame with “ears,” and this

fits within a larger square border. It would seem likely that the door is original.

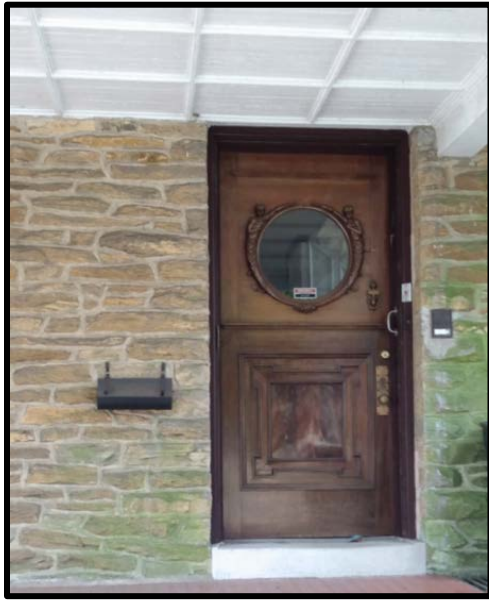


Figure 7: Front door and part of stone wall Figure 8: Stonework of first level of turret.

The **second story** of the front (south) façade from west to east (left to right) shows a 12-over-1 double-hung window, then an oval or elliptical, vertically set, cameo window (figure 9). Its actual inset light comprises five panes including a central lozenge shaped by curved muntins.

*The term “tower” is often used in describing Queen Ann houses, though here the structure does not rise much above the overall height of the house, if at all.



Figure 9 Cameo window on front façade.

Next one sees the turret, clad in shingle, like the second-story front wall. Its interior is given light by two 12-over-1 double-hung windows with wooden sills below and lintels above. The glazing, and even the external storm windows, are radiused, to conform with the turret’s shape.

The external features of the **attic level** of the front (south aspect) comprise the front segment of the hipped roof, which shows a considerable overhang, and a slight flare. A small gabled dormer suffers from a badly chosen and installed replacement window. Next to the right (east) one sees the conical shingled roof of the turret, from which emerges an oddly placed rectangular chimney composed of some sort of tightly bonded brick. Possibly some later owner

craved a fireplace in the interior of the turret, likely at the first-floor level. A review of numerous Queen Ann style houses in McAlester's *Field Guide to American Houses* and other sources reveals no instance of this sort.²

East aspect (looking west)



Figure 10: The east façade of the dwelling.

Viewing the east-facing side of the house, the viewer sees (from left to right, south to north), on the **first-floor level**, the turret and another 9-over-1 double-hung curved window. Next, as one of the dominant visual attractions of the home, a large composite window rises from the first-floor stone wall almost to the overhanging roof. Below a broad, probably wood, panel three square and three rectangular panes make up the largest part of the window. Above the panel rises a semi-circular group of lights in the Diocletian pattern. This complex window very likely illuminates the main staircase. Placed centrally on the stone first level are two cameo windows; though small, along with the cameo on the front of the building and rear, these provide some continuity and unity in the overall design of the house.

A 1-over-1 leaded glass window is seen next, then a 4-window polygonal bay. Each comprises panes of delicately leaded clear glass, with a lozenge pattern above, and depiction of a plant in vase below (figure 11, below). The single window to the left shows the same pattern. The large

² Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018); John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*. 2nd. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

arched window also comprises lights of leaded glass. The overhanging eave of the bay is continuous with the roof of the rear porch.

The **second-floor level** of the east side (back to figure 10) shows, south to north, the turret with a radiused sash window, the upper segments of the large arched window, then two sash windows. A small 8-over-1 fits over the bay.

This east aspect of the dwelling offers the most attractive design features and overall appearance. The protruding mass of the turret to the left (south) and the sizeable bay to the right serve as design counterpoints to provide a sense of balance and stability. The leaded glazing offers elegance, more so no doubt when viewed from an interior parlor or dining room.



Figure 11: The large bay window on the east wall of the house, showing the leaded glass patterns.

Rear (north aspect of the house (figure 12) The features of the rear of the house are as follows:



Figure 12. Rear of house

An open porch extends out from the **first floor** of the house. A lattice-work railing (not original) provides protection from falls, and matching panels above seem aimed perhaps at achieving a balanced appearance. Three posts support the porch's gabled roof with horizontal extensions to provide more shade. The appearance of this porch roof assembly nicely echoes the pattern seen above in the rear gable with its flared eaves. Below this porch, a wide non-historic window gives light to the basement.

At the **second-floor level** below the overhanging roof, from left to right

(east to west) one appreciates a polygonal 3-window bay, and then another cameo window. The wall is clad in shingles.

The **attic gable** shows a small round-headed opening with a modern square-headed replacement fitted within the original opening (this is not clear in the photograph unless expanded).

A deck with lattice-work siding extends rearward from the first floor, perhaps from a kitchen. It would seem to be a later addition.

West aspect (looking east):



Figure 13. West aspect (looking east)

A viewer looking at the west façade will see from north to south (left to right in the photograph, figure 13) the lattice-work deck just mentioned; then, at the basement level, a variety of windows. The **first-floor level** shows to the rear two sets of non-historic laterally sliding windows or storm windows. Next is another 3-window polygonal bay. To the south two double-hung windows, one within the porch area, have shutters, not common in the Queen Anne style. At the **second floor**, two 12-over-1 windows presumably give light and air to bedrooms. One expects another cameo window between them, but none is seen. Its hypothetical location might conflict with an internal partition wall. The west-facing section of the **attic level** or roof contains two hipped-roof dormers symmetrically placed. A chimney reaches through this part of the roof, and another is seen to the left (north) emerging from the gable roof, from which also extends a shed-roof two-light dormer.



Figure 14: Looking east and south.

Figure 14 shows the northwest corner of the building. Including the previously mentioned deck structure, one confronts rather a hodge-podge of elements, and it is difficult without earlier photographs to make full sense of them. Above the corner section (likely original) with the two sliding windows there sits a shingled, shed-roofed volume, which perhaps opens to an *ad hoc* deck behind some lattice-work fencing. This assembly was added by later owners.

Building History

The house was built for Samuel Tobias Wagner (1861-1931), a civil engineer who rose to the position of chief engineer of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. The land had been in his family (of German origin) since 1794. Johann Christian Wagner, a wool importer, in that year purchased a large tract between the Wissahickon Creek and School House Lane, then in Roxborough Township, about one and one-half miles southwest of the center of Germantown. It was to serve as a country estate for the family.³ Johann (he later used John), was Samuel's great grandfather. Samuel's grandfather, also named Samuel (1792-1876) was a brother of William Wagner, founder of the Wagner Free Institute. Samuel Tobias Wagner's father, John (1824-1902) deeded the small parcel on which stands the nominated house to Samuel in 1897. For Samuel, the location was conveniently close to the School House Lane station of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad on the Norristown Line (former Philadelphia, Germantown, and Norristown Railroad, on 999-year lease to the Reading), making for an easy commute to downtown Philadelphia.⁴

Samuel Tobias Wagner received his early education at Germantown Academy and at the Academy of the Protestant Episcopal Church. In 1877, he entered the University of Pennsylvania in the arts department, but soon moved to the Towne Scientific School and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree as a civil engineer. For some years, Wagner worked for the Phoenix Iron Company in Phoenixville, ascending from draughtsman to increasingly responsible positions. Moving back to Philadelphia, he worked for the city in the Bureau of Surveys, helping design the Pennsylvania Avenue railroad subway and tunnel, then moving on to improve water filtration. From 1902 until his death, he worked for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad on projects including "abolishment of many grade crossings, the Reading's Susquehanna River Bridge at Harrisburg, and changing the course of the Schuylkill River at Port Clinton." Apparently, a good civil engineer could do anything in Wagner's day. He rose to become Chief Engineer for the Reading, and later, consulting engineer. Samuel T. Wagner died in 1931, very sadly from a fall from a ladder at his home, the subject resource of this nomination. He seems to have been much respected as a practitioner, and as an authority on reinforced concrete and on roofing and water-proofing materials.

He was a member of the expected engineering societies, including the American Society for Testing Materials and the American Society of Civil Engineers. Beyond his employment, he taught science subjects and served on the board of the Wagner Free Institute, faithful to a family enterprise. In 1888 he married Mary Clara Reeves. The couple had four children.

Following Mr. Wagner's death in 1931 the family continued to reside at 3343 W. School House Lane. In 1937, Samuel's widow, Mary, deeded the property to one of her sons, John Jr. (as listed

³ Information about the Wagner family including Samuel Tobias Wagner is from John Woolf Jordan, *Colonial Families of Philadelphia* (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1911), v.2, pp. 1575-84. Other sources include "Samuel Tobias Wagner, Noted Engineer, Dies," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 August 1931, as well as census records and other matter found via Ancestry.com.

⁴ Deed book WMG 209, pp. 75-77, 30 June 1897

in the deed).⁵ Eventually the house left family ownership. Zoning records (found at atlas.phila.gov) suggest that in 1967 Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, the predecessor of Philadelphia University and Jefferson University East Falls Campus, applied for a zoning variance as “equity” owner to use the then vacant house for seminar rooms and a library. The variance was not granted. The house was returned to use as a private residence. A notorious recent owner was so-called “man about town” Harry Jay Katz. Jefferson University purchased the property on 14 January 2022 (date of deed as shown on atlas.phila.gov). The details of ownership following the Wagners are not relevant to the designation criteria claimed in this nomination.

⁵ Deed book DWH 371, pp. 401-402, 23 June 1937

7. Significance

D. Embodies distinguishing features of an architectural style or engineering specimen

Most accounts of the origin of the American Queen Anne style – and these can partly differ in their interpretation—refer to the work of later 19th-century British architects Richard Norman Shaw ((1831-1912), Philip Webb (1831-1915), J. J. Stevenson (1831-1908) and others, and their associated networks of artists and designers. The British “Queen Anne” broadly speaking aimed to move beyond the Gothic (though keeping some of its features) to a freer, somewhat “lighter” and very eclectic mode of design. It favored asymmetry, return to some earlier forms (e.g. Elizabethan), bays and dormers, plentiful windows, ornament (especially sunflower motifs), muscular chimneys, and much else to please the eye. Classical touches were not forbidden. Of course, interior design was not ignored, nor its relationship to the exterior.

Whereas the relationship of British ‘Queen Anne’ to the American style which gained that name seems only approximate, both sought to delight, perhaps amuse, and in the extreme American rendition, astound. Key principles seemed to be asymmetry, avoidance of dull flat surfaces, variety of elements such as windows, and complexity of the roof, often rooted in the hipped form. The English and the American styles also shared the use of dormers, bays, and oriels, applied ornament, and small panes in some window arrangements. The generous open porch or veranda, and the corner turret, seem to be homegrown American, the veranda reflecting climate.

The Queen Anne style in the United States came to dominate domestic architecture in the period 1880s-1900, supplanting the Gothic Revival, Second Empire, and even the Italianate. It aimed to better satisfy the “picturesque” sensibility. It spread throughout the country, according to most accounts, through pattern books and other media sources. In a modest form, built of wood, it was within grasp of the middle class; while the affluent businessman or professional could display his (occasionally her) wealth, but also investment in family, through a larger, highly elaborated and embellished, comfortable house. The latter sort of dwelling became the visual embodiment of “Victorian” for Americans (and this may have been true for the late phase of British Queen Anne as well).

Though not quite showing the “opulent profusion of elements” associated with the full display of the Queen Anne style, the Samuel T. Wagner house clearly falls into this category – though with a strong layer of the Shingle Style. Its design does not go to excess in ornamentation, whether reflecting budget or wishes of the client – or architect. Michael C. Kathrens in *American Splendor: The Residential Architecture of Horace Trumbauer* stated that “even in his early work he eschewed the highly ornamental style that was in vogue.”⁶ In Philadelphia, the tradition of building in brick or stone, with good building stone readily available, may have favored a more formal, or ponderous, approach to the style (e.g. the stone base of the turret of the subject

⁶ Michael C. Kathrens, *American Splendor: The Residential Architecture of Horace Trumbauer*. rev. ed. (New York: Acanthus Press, 2011), p. 13.

property). Beyond that, McAlester points out that the most opulent extremes of Queen Anne housebuilding arose more in the South and West than in the Northeast cities.⁷

Relying on the online *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* and other sources⁸, these are the attributes of the Samuel T. Wagner house that are indicative of the American Queen Anne style, though none are entirely specific (“pathognomonic” as said in medicine); the most representative are in bold:

Asymmetry

Hipped roof with secondary gabled roof (i.e, irregular or complex roof)

Varying surface material (stone for first floor, shingles above)

Prominent front porch (or verandah) extending around one side

Corner turret (or tower)

Projecting bay windows

Multiple dormers

Double-hung sash windows with multiple small panes above, single pane below

Use of figured leaded glass in selected windows

A prominent large composite window illuminating the main staircase

Together, these features (and also the cameo windows) achieve the desired “picturesque” effect, in a balanced and generally cohesive design.

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

The subject house was designed by Horace Trumbauer, whose architectural standing in Philadelphia and well beyond is unquestioned.

This is an entry in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* for 11 March, 1896; v. 11, p. 201:

Horace Trumbaur, architect, 310 Chestnut Street, has made plans for a fine house at Ashbourne, Pa., for John J. Morton, to be stone and shingle work, three stories high, 45 x 36 feet, 'and Interior fitted with steam heat, electric work, best plumbing and hard wood, also all modern conveniences, etc. Also plans for another at same place for Jos. P. Truitt 38 x 56 feet, three stories high and same materials. Also drawings for five houses to be erected at Poughkeepsie, N. Y. for Mr. S. N. Howell. Cost \$5,000 each. Also plans for a residence on School Lane,

⁷ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018) p. 350.

⁸ *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide* (phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/index.html; McAlester, *A Field Guide* (n. 6 above); John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*. 2nd. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981); John C. Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, and Nancy R. Schwartz, *What Style Is It?* (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1981); Lester Walker, *American Homes* (New York City: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2014. For the British “Queene Anne”: Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1977); Trevor Yorke, *The Victorian House Explained* (Newbury, Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2005).

Germantown, for Samuel T. Wagner, to be stone and shingle, slate roof, 'steam heat,' electric work and best modern conveniences, etc. (11 March 1896; v. 11, p. 201).

This entry appears in the Trumbauer firm ledgers held at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, dated 23 April 1896:

Date	Description	Amount	Total
April 23rd	To plans specifications details & superintendence for a country house situated on School Lane Germantown costing \$1996.00		
	Contract price	1996.00	
	Heating	260.00	
	Plumbing & Bath	60.00	
	Bells	25.00	
	Total	\$8341.00 @ 5%	\$417.05

Figure 15

(The following is taken in part from the nomination of another Trumbauer product, the Hahnemann Medical College building of 1938, 225 North 15th Street in Philadelphia, written by Oscar Beisert and Steven Peitzman; the section on Trumbauer was written by Peitzman)

Probably most Philadelphians who have set foot in Center City, and countless visitors from outside the city and the country, have also set foot in a Horace Trumbauer building – the Free Library, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Jefferson Hospital, even the Union League extension. Likely millions of people have tramped through “The Elms” since the Edward Berwind “cottage” in Newport became a house museum. “By Trumbauer” applies to a seemingly endless list of palatial mansions, lesser but handsome houses, office buildings, schools, hospitals, art galleries, stables, a few churches, some mausoleums, at least one railroad station, libraries, and anything else with walls and a roof. Almost all styles appear, though classicism informs the grandest of these. Yet Horace Trumbauer (1868 – 1938) remains Philadelphia’s enigmatic architect.⁹ Could he really have designed all these structures? As is well

⁹ Surprisingly little has been written about Horace Trumbauer. The available sources include: entry by Sandra L. Tatman in the digital service *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings* of the Philadelphia Athenaeum (philadelphiabuildings.org); Frederick Platt, “Horace Trumbauer: A life in architecture,” *Penna. Mag. Hist. Biog.* 125(2001):315-349; Bruce Laverty and Karen Chernick, “Reassessing Horace Trumbauer,” *Hidden City*, April 22, 2016, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2016/04/reassessing-horace-trumbauer>; acc 19 July 2020. There are two books dealing with Trumbauer’s work: Rachel Hildebrandt and the Old York Road Historical Society, *The Philadelphia*

known, he was born in the Frankford section of Philadelphia, grew up partly in Jenkintown when his middle-class family bought a home there, attended (as best one can tell) public schools but no college, and as a teenager entered the architectural firm of George W. Hewitt and William D. Hewitt. That was it: no degrees, no visits to Europe. At his job/apprenticeship with the Hewitt brothers, he evidently showed ability and gained a superior foundation of knowledge and skills. He set out as an independent architect at the age of twenty-one. Some of his first houses were designed for developers Wendell and Smith, and quite a few still serve families in Overbrook Farms, Wayne and other areas. His “breakthrough” was the commission to design “Grey Towers” for William W. Harrison, built in 1893, a large, chunky castle which later became the center of Beaver College (now Arcadia University).

Trumbauer grew from there as he enjoyed the opportunities to design immense residences in classical and picturesque styles in the Cheltenham region for the Elkins and Wideners and some of their friends. Jobs arose in Newport, New York, Colorado, West Virginia, etc., but he retained popularity among moneyed Philadelphians and local institutions for elegant designs showing little or no unwanted eccentricity. Of course, he hired draftsmen and several excellent designers such as Frank Seeburger and Julian Abele. Skeptics have doubted that later in his career Trumbauer actually designed anything; others don’t insist on his hand in every drawing, but believe he oversaw it all, knew what his eye wanted, and that he was the boss. Recent opinion credits Abele with much of the finer, especially French flavored, design work. Abele clearly was the preeminent designer for the Duke University campus, working on it years after Trumbauer died. For the purposes of this nomination, however, we are agnostic: when we refer to “Trumbauer,” it is to the firm and its head.

Though known for the enormous residences (and their ample stables) and civic buildings favoring the classical and “old English” (or Tudor Revival) traditions, the firm did design many houses of modest size. Some of these, as noted, were for the important developers Wendell and Smith, known for Overbrook Farms, Pelham (in Germantown), areas within Wayne, and—though *not* well known—the Queen Lane Manor section of East Falls in Philadelphia. Some of the houses for Wendell and Smith express attributes of the Queen Anne style, or the glide from Queen Anne to Shingle Style. The following are some examples.

Area Architecture of Horace Trumbauer (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009; and Kathrens, *American Splendor* (n. 5 above)



Figure 16

This home (above) for Wendell and Smith from 1891 is in Wayne. It is simplified Queen Anne, showing an intersecting gable roof, robust chimney, generous porch for the house's size, and corner turret.¹⁰ Below, the residence of Frederick H. Treat, like the subject house, uses stone below and shingles above. It would seem more Shingle Style than Queen Anne though it exudes protuberances.¹¹ It is not extant.



Figure 17

¹⁰ Hildebrandt, *Philadelphia Area Architecture of Horace Trumbauer*, p. 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Below is another house in Wayne designed by Trumbauer for Wendell and Smith in 1892. Again, one sees the formula of substantial stone below (visually suggesting worthiness to support the large mass resting on it, though perhaps just barely), shingles above. A turret, a large dormer extending from the lengthy slope of the main gable roof, a pointed arch opening at the first-floor level, and a Palladian window in one gable at a presumably third-floor level, make for an eclectic picturesque but “muscular” presentation.¹²



Figure 18

In sum, archival evidence persuasively indicates that the house at 3343 West School House Lane was designed by Horace Trumbauer; and other of his designs for residences of moderate magnitude utilized the stone below-shingles above plan, and incorporated features associated with the American Queen Anne style as it inflected toward or met the Shingle Style in the 1890s. Criterion E calls for an architect who has “significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.” Trumbauer may not have directly influenced the work of subsequent architects as an innovator, but his monumental edifices as well as his many homes of moderate aspiration have clearly left a mark on Philadelphia, its western and northern suburbs, and, at least episodically, well beyond.

¹² Ibid. p. 50.

J. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

(Some of the following is taken from the writer’s 2022 nomination for the Edward T. Steel stables and carriage house, a surviving part of the Woodside estate on West School House Lane, address 3001)

When Samuel T. Wagner built his house on School House Lane in 1896-97, some of his current and future neighbors included: chemical manufacturer and landowner William Weightman¹³; the family of Weightman’s late partner Thomas Powers; iron foundry owner William H. Merrick; distiller Daniel Carstairs; Cotton and Woolens manufacturer Caleb J. Milne; sugar refiner Joseph Lovering; woolens mill owner Edward T. Steel; commercial insurance broker Henry W. Brown; retail merchant Justus Strawbridge; lawyers James B. Kinley, Harold M. Sill, and William J. Turner; and others.¹⁴

Beginning mainly in the late 18th century – the Wagner family being among the earliest--and extending as late as the 1920s, affluent Philadelphians created country estates of varying size along both the south and north sides of School House Lane (earlier known as Bensell’s Lane, or

as School Lane), from Wissahickon Avenue (Township Line Road) almost to the Schuylkill River. Emulating British customs, they invented lyrical, arboreal names like Torworth, Woodside, Oakley, The Pines, Blythewood, The Chestnuts, Netherfield, etc. for their retreats. These signified spaces green and air clear, away from the crowded and smoky grid. Contributing to the almost rural milieu of this distinctive segment of Philadelphia, which was so attractive to these (mostly) businessmen, were the physical characteristics of School Lane itself – narrow and only partly fitted with curbs and sidewalks until relatively recently. The stretch of about 1.3 miles from Ridge Avenue to Wissahickon

SCHOOL-HOUSE LA.	GERMANTOWN.	SKYMOUR ST. 337
"Ivy Cottage" Mrs. J. Warner Johnson Miss Mary Johnson	"The Chestnuts" Redwood F. Warner Mrs. Morton Lewis Miss Josephine B. Wright	"Red Gate" Mr. & Mrs. F. J. Kimball
"Oakley" Edward N. Wright Miss Elizabeth P. Wright Mrs. William K. Bray	"Glenwood" Mrs. George L. Harrison	"Springmead" Mrs. Edward E. Denniston
"Pinchurst" Miss Sally M. Wain Miss Reba T. Case	"Ravenswood" Mr. & Mrs. J. Campbell Harris Thomas Powers Harris Alan Campbell Harris Henry Frazer Harris	"Ravenhill" William Weightman Mr. & Mrs. Richard Wain Meira
"Shenley" Mr. & Mrs. Harold M. Sill Mrs. John T. Sill	"Roseneath" Mr. & Mrs. William H. Merrick Miss Harriet Frances Merrick	"Windrush" Joseph Wright Miss Katharine Craig Wright Miss Josephine Deshong Wright W. D. Craig Wright
"The Pines" Mr. & Mrs. Thos. Harvey Dougherty Miss Helen E. Dougherty	"Torworth" Mr. & Mrs. Justus Clayton Strawbridge Frank R. Strawbridge William J. Strawbridge	"Four Oaks" Mr. & Mrs. John Wagner Miss Sarah Wood Wagner John Wagner, jr W. Worrell Wagner Joseph Wood Wagner
"Roxboro" Mr. & Mrs. Moses Brown	"Malvern" Miss Fannie de L. Welsh	"Roslyn Manor" Caleb J. Milne
"Schomack" Mr. & Mrs. Thomas de Quartel Richardson	"Blythewood" Mrs. Joseph S. Lovering Corbit Lovering Gilpin Lovering	
"Woodside" The Misses Steel		

Figure 19. Residents on West School House Lane (1898 Boyd’s Philadelphia Blue Book). S.T. Wagner does not appear.

Avenue was surprisingly secluded: until Henry Avenue reached it c. 1910, no street connected the range of estates to other parts of the city.¹⁵

¹³ Weightman’s exuberant mansion “Ravenhill” survives, and is now owned by Jefferson, on its East Falls campus.

¹⁴ The names and occupations are derived from atlases 1900-1920, and census records.

¹⁵ A pathway called “Cedar Lane” did extend southward almost to Midvale Avenue once that was in place; and Gypsy Lane reached north but only to the Wissahickon Creek and park.

The “snip” from the 1898 *Boyd’s Philadelphia Blue Book* shows some of these named retreats along School House Lane near the time Samuel T. Wagner hired Horace Trumbauer to design a dwelling. It’s not clear how many of these estates were full-time residences and how many summer places, and of course the use might change for a given family.

Some of the owners were of old Philadelphia families, such as the Merricks and Milnes; some were Quakers or of Quaker heritage, such as the Strawbridges, Brown family, and Redwood Warner. The nineteenth-century owners of the School House Lane properties were part of the rising industrial-mercantile Philadelphia aristocracy of the nineteenth and early 20th centuries, in some cases rooted in the old elites. Some were highly influential in city affairs through wealth and service to various institutions and boards.¹⁶ Wagner served on the board of the Wagner Free Institute, Edward Steel presided over the Philadelphia Board of Education for many years, Redwood Warner was a “corporator” of the Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania, William H. Merrick held the position of treasurer of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and was a manager of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society. Other examples could be cited.

It should be mentioned that an inspection of census sheets for the stretch of School House Lane here under discussion during the nineteenth and early 20th centuries attests to another resident population: hundreds of maids, gardeners, stablemen, coachmen, nurses, and other workers and servants, the great majority of Irish background. Investigating even a sample of these people, and the futures of their children, would be a valuable, though difficult, undertaking.

The moneyed estates of Philadelphia, including their owners and workers, constitute a part of the city’s cultural and visual heritage, even if historiography now (rightly) looks more broadly. Summer retreat to the high and green grounds of School House Lane, long thought of as part of Germantown, goes back to the eighteenth century, as those who could flee the heat and, in some years, yellow fever of the port city. The sequestered double-loaded range of estates along School House Lane formed an early and probably unique phenomenon in Philadelphia. Other Victorian “suburbs within the city” arose, in Germantown proper, West Philadelphia, Chestnut Hill, and Oak Lane. But most houses in these areas were not set in sizeable tracts, some with large stables. Yet with two rail stations nearby by the 1880s, the owners could readily get to business in the downtown, making year-round residence possible.

Samuel T. Wagner admittedly is a somewhat aberrant figure among the School House Lane estates of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was a salaried professional employee, not a major business owner or even lawyer – though rising to the post of chief engineer of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad during the heyday of railroading was no small thing. His house was not a mansion, its grounds far from sprawling. Census records from 1900 to 1920 show his family employing only one or two maids. He seems to not have assigned a romantic

¹⁶ The School House Lane residents in the time of the Samuel T. Wagner’s occupancy did not include names of the oldest Philadelphia families of note, such as Cadwalader, Biddle, Morris, Coxe, Drinker, Logan, etc. For some years, Mr. Guckes’ brewery did business at one parcel on the south side of the Lane, to the western end near the railroad and the Falls of Schuylkill industrial community. Further socioeconomic analysis of the School House Lane families in the late nineteenth century is beyond the scope or needs of this nomination. Architectural historian David Breiner is nearing completion of a book on the architectural and social history of School House Lane from Wissahickon Avenue to Ridge Avenue which will stand as the definitive work.

name to his house, perhaps a conceit not comfortable to his engineer's mind. Still, he and his house do represent the social and historical heritage of West School House Lane and the range of country estates as described above. It should be added that of the thirty or so former "country" properties along West School House Lane, only ten of the houses still stand, making 3343 an uncommon survivor.

The property at 3343 West School House Lane warrants placement on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and the consequent recognition and protection, based on its architectural merits as designed by Horace Trumbauer, and its history within the onetime remarkable linear community of "country" residences along one of the oldest roads in Northwest Philadelphia.

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