

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. NAME OF HISTORIC DISTRICT

__Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District_____

2. LOCATION

Please attach a map of Philadelphia locating the historic district.

Councilmanic District(s): __4_____

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a map of the district and a written description of the boundary.

4. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a description of built and natural environments in the district.

5. INVENTORY

Please attach an inventory of the district with an entry for every property. All street addresses must coincide with official Office of Property Assessment addresses. Total number of properties in district: __188_____

Count buildings with multiple units as one.

Number of properties already on Register/percentage of total: __13___/ __7%___

Number of significant properties/percentage of total: __13___/ __7%___

Number of contributing properties/percentage of total: __175___/ __93%___

Number of non-contributing properties/percentage of total: __0___/ __0%___

6. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from __1681___ to __1908___

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic district 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.

7. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

8. NOMINATOR

Name with Title_Historical Commission staff_____ Email__jon.farnham@phila.gov____
Organization_Historical Commission_____Date_July 9, 2018_____
Street Address_1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor_____Telephone__215-686-7660_____
City, State, and Postal Code_Philadelphia, PA 19102_____

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: __July 9, 2018_____
 Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: __July 9, 2018_____
Date of Notice Issuance: __July 9, 2018_____
Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: __September 12, 2018_____
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: __October 12, 2018_____
Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District is comprised of 188 tax parcels, each of which is defined by a metes and bounds description in its deed. A list of the 188 tax parcels comprising the district can be found in the district inventory.

DESCRIPTION

TOPOGRAPHY

The northwestern section of Philadelphia including Roxborough is located in a geological region known as the Piedmont Upland Section of the Piedmont Province. The bedrock in Roxborough is primarily mica schist, but becomes trap rock with veins of serpentine stone at the northwest along the Montgomery County line (Figure 1).¹ Roxborough is located on a steep ridge formed by the Wissahickon Creek to the east and the Schuylkill River to the west. The ridge runs from the confluence of the Schuylkill and Wissahickon at East Falls or the Falls of the Schuylkill northwest for approximately five miles, where it crosses into Montgomery County. Historically, streams drained the land on the ridge, running east to the Wissahickon and west to the Schuylkill. Most of the streams have been culverted. Ridge Avenue, the primary thoroughfare in Roxborough, leaves East Falls at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek, runs up a steep slope more than 200 vertical feet to the top of the ridge, and then along the ridge to the northwest into Montgomery County. The section of Ridge Avenue between the Wissahickon Creek and the Montgomery County line is approximately five miles in length. The highest point along Ridge Avenue is approximately 420 feet above sea level, in the stretch between Cathedral Road and Manatawna Avenue.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The area along and around Ridge Avenue in Roxborough between the Wissahickon Creek and the Montgomery County line is primarily a residential corridor with a commercial core from Martin Street to Hermitage Street and several traditional, shopping center, and strip mall commercial developments scattered throughout (Figure 2). Most buildings are detached and semi-detached, but some are row buildings. With the exception of a few institutional buildings, nearly all structures along the corridor are three stories or shorter. The residential buildings are both single and multi-family. Most, but not all, properties include some green space. Ridge Avenue is a major, two-lane thoroughfare for most of its length in Roxborough, but expands to six lanes west of the intersection with Henry Avenue.

Most of the buildings included in the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District were historically and are currently used for residential purposes. Many of the others are commercial or mixed-use commercial and residential. The district includes five churches, some with cemeteries, one stand-alone cemetery, one public park, one school building and one former school building, and several institutional buildings (Figure 3).

¹ Charles Edward Hall, *The Geology of Philadelphia County and of the Southern Parts of Montgomery and Bucks* (Harrisburg: The Board of Commissioners for the Second Geological Survey, 1881).

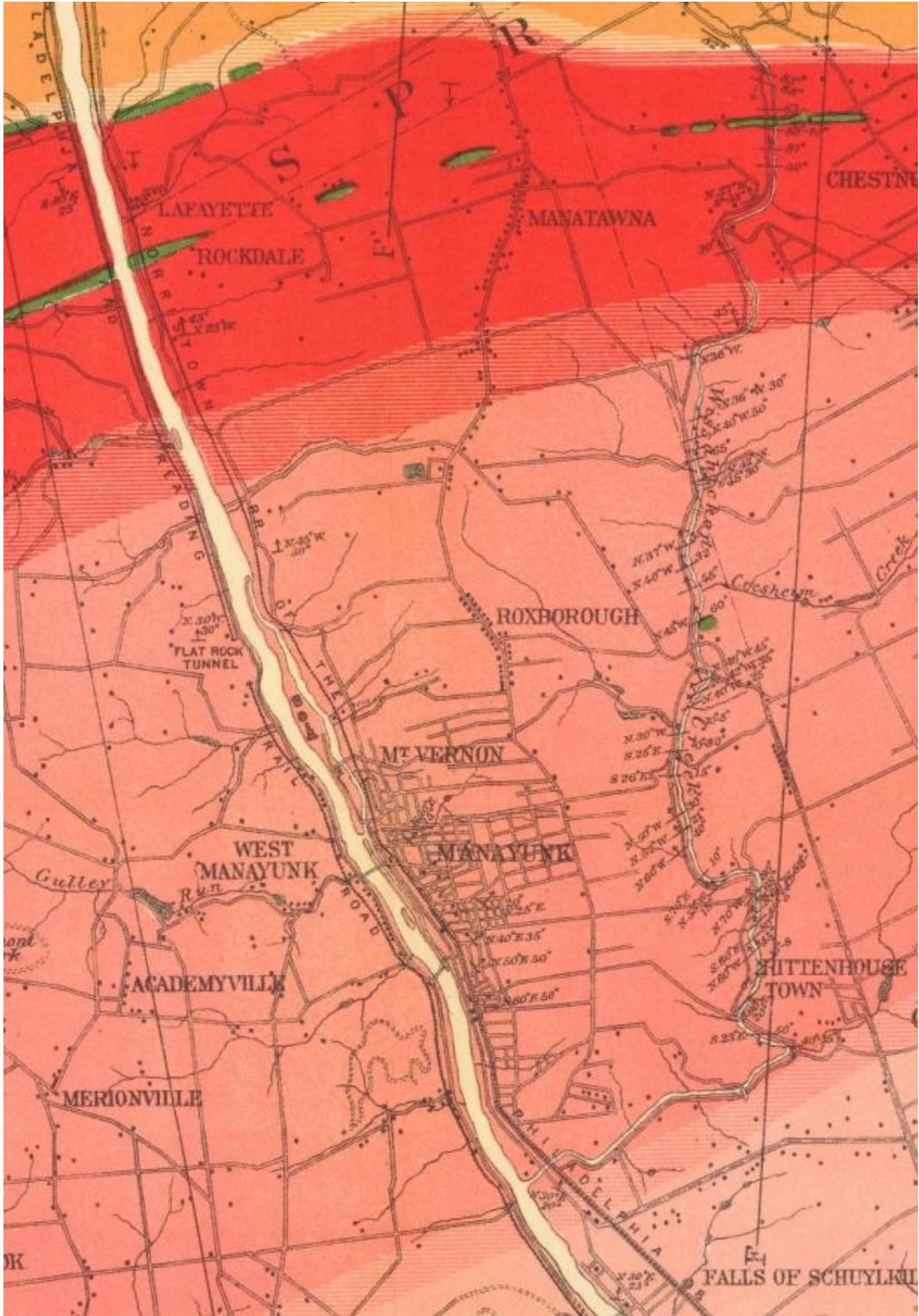


Figure 1. Geological map of Roxborough; dark pink indicates schist, red indicates trap rock, and green indicates serpentine stone; from Charles Edward Hall, *The Geology of Philadelphia County and of the Southern Parts of Montgomery and Bucks*, 1881.

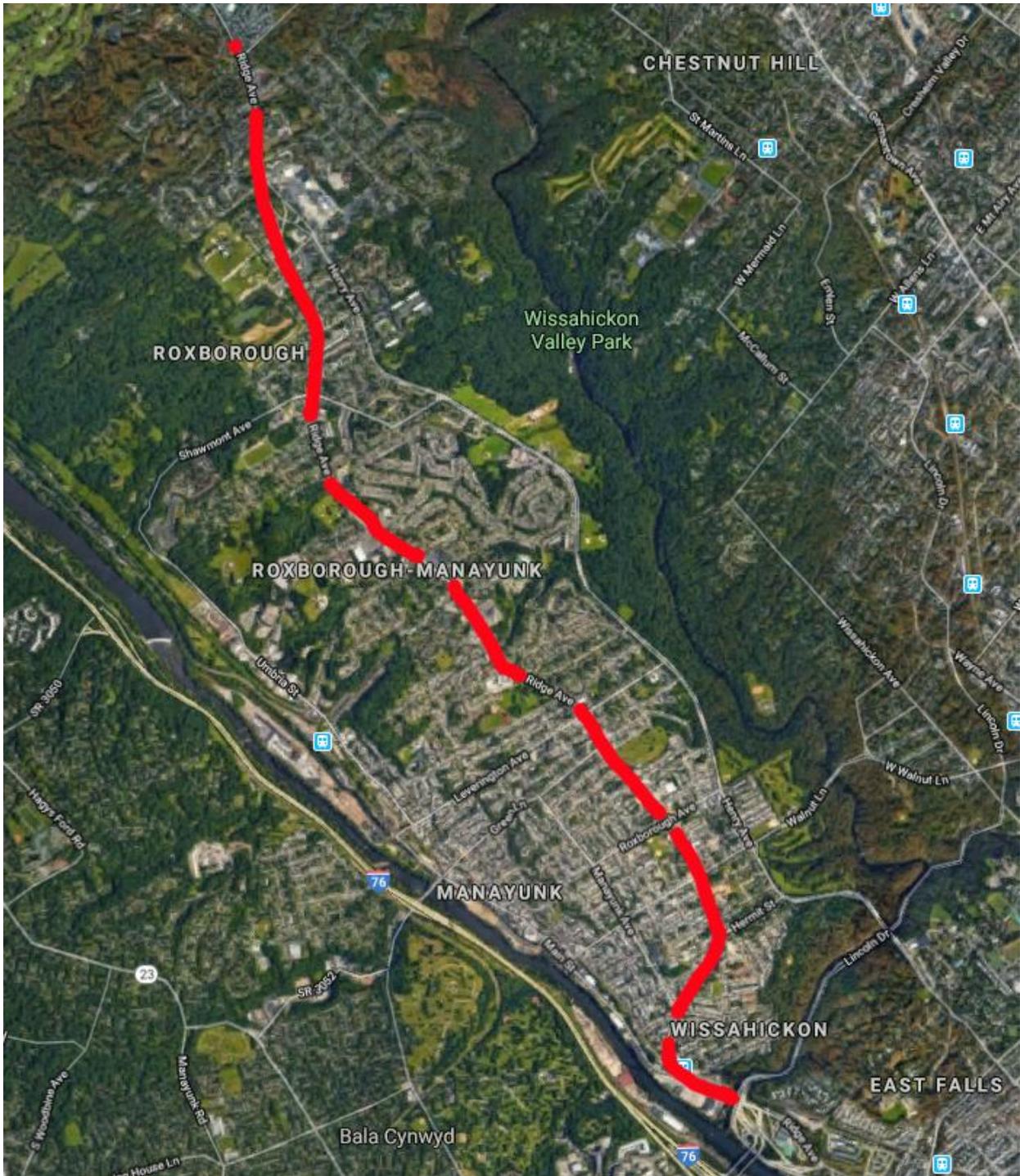


Figure 2. Aerial view of Lower Northwest Philadelphia with five-mile section of Ridge Avenue through Roxborough highlighted.

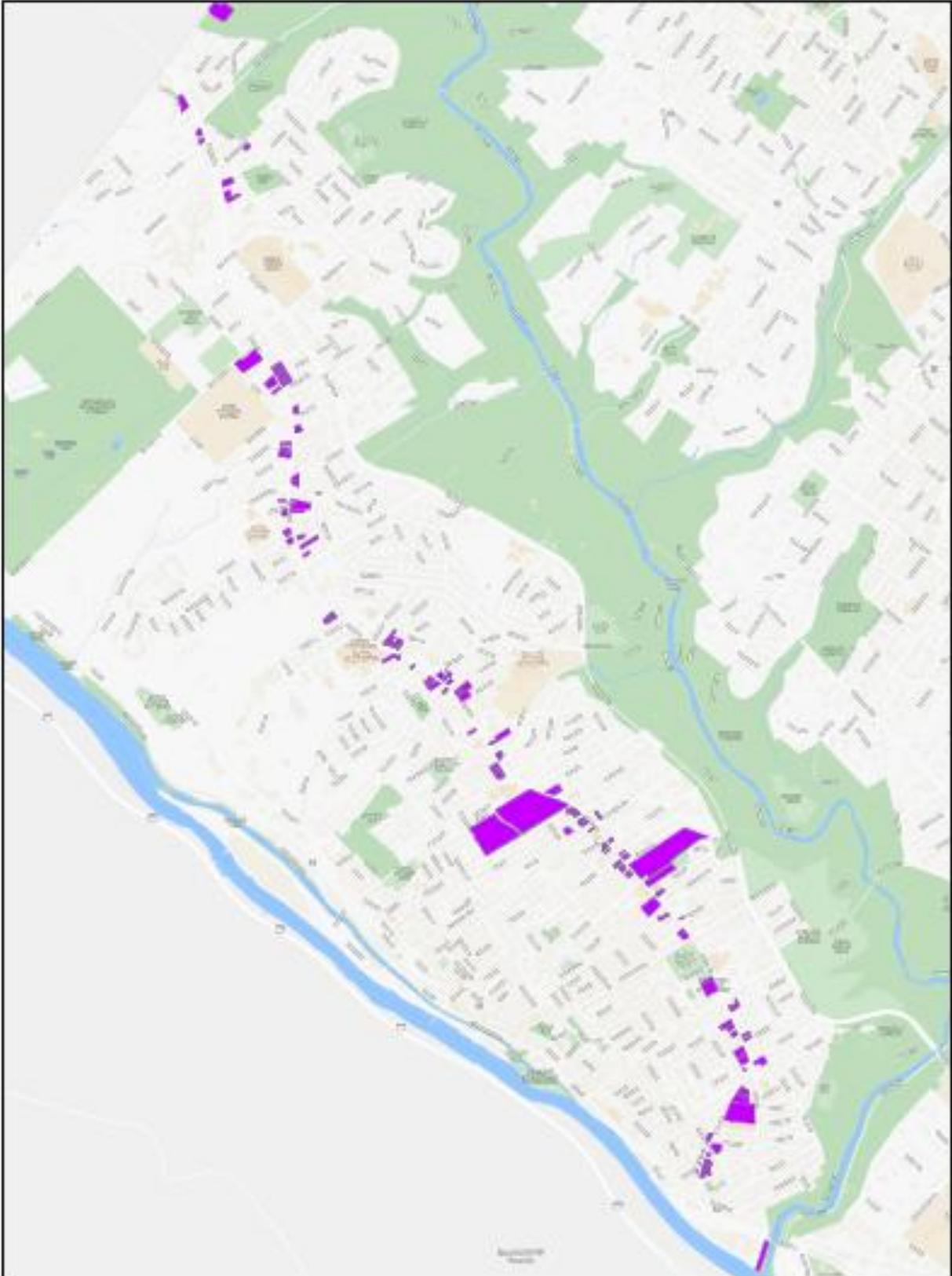


Figure 3. The properties in the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District are highlighted in purple.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District satisfies four Criteria for Designation (a, c, d, and j) as delineated in Section 14-1004(4) of the Philadelphia Code, the City's historic preservation ordinance. Paraphrasing the Criteria, the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District:

- (a) Has significant character, interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth and Nation and is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by distinctive architectural styles;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles and engineering specimens; and,
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social and historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance of the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District spans from 1681, when William Penn began conveying land to the original purchasers, to 1908, the dawn of the automobile age, when the completion of the Walnut Lane Bridge opened the southeastern section of Roxborough to new forms of residential development. From 1681 to 1839, Roxborough persisted as a linear village along Ridge Road with an economy based on agriculture, milling, and providing services to travelers. From 1839 to 1908, Roxborough slowly transitioned from a linear village surrounded by large tracts of open land to a suburban community of homes for managers, business people, and artisans who travelled by foot and on omnibuses, trolleys, and trains to jobs in Manayunk and beyond.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Prior to the European settlement, Native Americans from the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Nation inhabited the area that the settlers named Roxborough. A Native American trail predating William Penn and his establishment of Pennsylvania, known as the Perkiomen Path, ran along the line of what is today Ridge Avenue. The Perkiomen Path connected the area around the confluence of the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers where Penn later established Philadelphia with the Native American village at Manatawny, now Pottstown, and lands farther to the west. Like Ridge Avenue, the trail ran up from the Falls of the Schuylkill, along the ridge rising between the valleys of the Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek, and into what is now Montgomery County.²

Through his surveyor Thomas Holme, William Penn purchased the land between the Schuylkill River and Pennypack Creek, including the area that would become Roxborough, from a group of Lenni Lenape leaders in July 1684 (Figure 4). Although Swedes and other Europeans had settled in the Delaware Valley in the mid seventeenth century, it does not appear that any Europeans had established permanent settlements in the Roxborough area prior to the 1684 purchase.

² Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indian Paths of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1965; reprinted, 1998), p. 127-128.

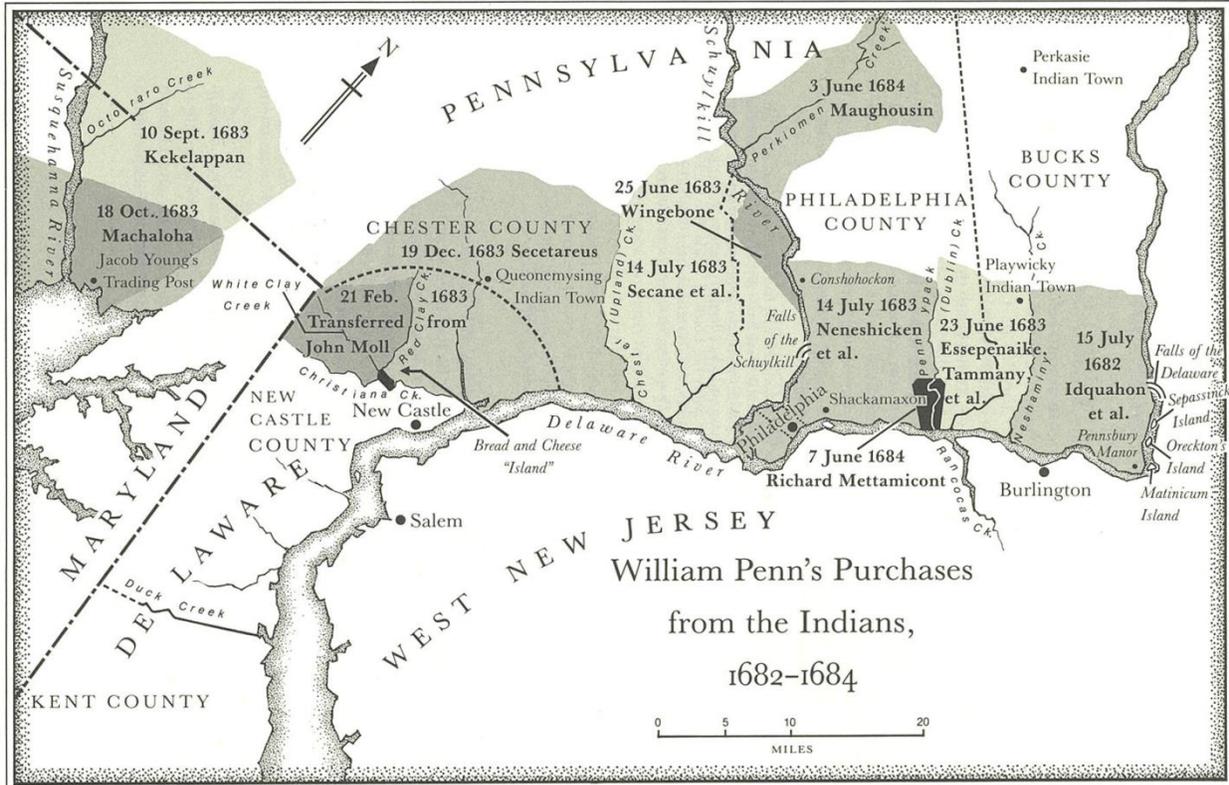


Figure 4. William Penn's Purchases from the Indians, 1682-1684, from Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn, Volume 2: 1680-1684*, 1982.

ORIGINAL PATENT HOLDERS AND EARLY SETTLERS IN ROXBOROUGH

Between 1681 and 1685, William Penn conveyed more 4,000 acres of land in lower northwest Philadelphia to 11 original purchasers. Most of the land was located to the northwest of the Wissahickon Creek, in what is now known as Roxborough and Manayunk, but a small portion of the original 11 parcels was located to the southeast and east of the creek, in what is now known as East Falls and Mt. Airy. The names of several of the original purchasers are identified on Thomas Holme's *Map of improved part of Pensilvania in America, divided into counties, townships and lotts.* of 1681 (Figure 5). The original purchasers did not settle the land between the Wissahickon Creek and Schuylkill River, but instead held the properties as investments. Over the next six decades, the original 11 parcels were subdivided numerous times, and by 1741 had been carved into 43 lots. Europeans began settling in the area in the 1690s.

In 1676, Andrew Robeson, his wife Elizabeth, and their son Samuel emigrated from Great Britain, settling in Gloucester, South Jersey. Robeson served in South Jersey as the Surveyor General and Judge. In 1690, they moved to a property called "Shoomac Park" near the mouth of the Wissahickon Creek, in what is now East Falls. They obtained the estate from Joshua Tittery, who had obtained it from Robert Turner, William Penn's original grantee. Robeson erected a house and renamed the estate "Roxburgh," after his birthplace, Kelso, Roxburghshire, Scotland. Robeson became Chief of Justice in Pennsylvania and was instrumental in the establishment of Roxborough as a township. Robeson also operated a flour mill on the Wissahickon. After the deaths of Robeson, his wife, and son in the 1690s, the property passed to nephew Andrew Robeson Jr. The Robeson family held the property until 1864, when John and James Dobson, the well-known carpet manufacturers, purchased it. The old mill burned in 1866. The Fairmount

Park Commission took much of the property in 1872 for the Wissahickon branch of Fairmount Park.³ The old Robeson house was used as a hotel and public house known as the High Bridge Mansion in the late nineteenth century and as a restaurant in the twentieth century. In 1956, the Fairmount Park Commission approved its demolition, concluding that it had “no particular architectural design nor historical significance.”⁴



Figure 5. Detail showing original land purchasers in Roxborough, between the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek, from Thomas Holme, "Map of improved part of Pensilvania in America, divided into counties, townships and lotts.," 1681.

John Kelpius, a Bavarian religious leader who espoused millennial and universalistic doctrines, arrived in Philadelphia in 1694. He and his followers settled and lived as hermits in small huts in the woods adjacent to Wissahickon Creek, near Roxborough's present day Hermit Lane.⁵ The

³ Kate Hamilton Osborne, *An Historical and Genealogical Account of Andrew Robeson of Scotland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and of his Descendants from 1653 to 1916* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1916), 6-14.

⁴ "Park Commission OKs Destruction of Shoomac Mansion," *Inquirer*, 12 December 1956, p. 17; "Senator Stiefel Sues to Preserve Shoomac House," *Inquirer*, 20 December 1956, p. 19.

⁵ John Fanning Watson and Willis Pope Hazard, *Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time: or, Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of Philadelphia and Its Inhabitants from the Days of the Founders* (Philadelphia: E.S. Stuart, 1899), 458-460.

hermits conducted religious services in the wooded area overlooking the Wissahickon.⁶ Kelpius died in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and his followers eventually disbanded.⁷ Although the name Roxborough, or Rocksburrow, has been attributed to Kelpius, who wrote about "foxes burrowing in rocks," the area was named by Robeson for his native land, Roxburgh, Scotland.

Brothers Gerhard and Wigard (Wickert) Levering arrived in Pennsylvania from Holland during the summer of 1685 and first settled in Germantown. Wigard Levering purchased 200 acres in Roxborough in 1691 and moved to the area, where he farmed. He purchased another 300 acres in 1697 in the area that came to be known as Leverington. He prospered and died a wealthy man in 1744.⁸ Wigard's eldest son William was born in Germany in 1677 and came with his family to Pennsylvania at the age of eight; he was 15 when his family moved to Roxborough. In 1717, Wigard gave William a large tract of land, which consisted of the unsold portions of Wigard's speculative land holdings in Roxborough. William was a farmer like his father, but engaged in other ventures as well. He built the Levering Hotel, Roxborough's first hotel, in 1731. He also gave land on which Roxborough's first school was built in 1748.⁹ He died in 1746, having amassed a valuable estate.¹⁰ Wigard's son Jacob was the first of his 12 children to be born in Roxborough. In 1717, Wigard granted Jacob 85 acres of land, which abutted the along the Schuylkill River in the area of Green Lane, extending to Levering Street and comprising much of present-day Manayunk. Jacob lived on this land, first in a log cabin, and then in a stone house that he built in 1736 on the northwest side of Green Lane. Besides farming, Jacob was also engaged in industrial undertakings. He owned a distillery in Roxborough and a saw mill on the western side of the Schuylkill River in what is now Montgomery County. Jacob died in 1753 with an estate valued at the substantial sum.¹¹

Wilhelm Rittinghausen, born in 1644, learned the papermaking trade in Mulheim, Germany, while working at his uncle Mathias Vorster's mill. The two men later went to Holland, where they were employed in a Gelderland mill near Arnhem. In 1688, Mr. Rittinghausen, by now a Dutch citizen, immigrated to British North America and changed his name to William Rittenhouse. In 1690, he established a paper mill in Roxborough on the Paper Mill Run or Monoshone Creek, a tributary of the Wissahickon Creek. The mill was located near the confluence of Paper Mill Run and the Wissahickon, about 1.6 miles above the point where the Wissahickon flows into the Schuylkill.¹² Joining him in the venture were three partners, Robert Turner, Thomas Tresse, and a printer named William Bradford. Rittenhouse developed a successful mill, owing to his ability

⁶ Horatio Gates Jones, *The American Historical Record, and Repertory of Notes and Queries Concerning the History and Antiquities of America and the Biography of Americans*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Samuel P. Town, 1873), 3.

⁷ J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 1319.

⁸ Horatio Gates Jones, *The Levering Family; or, a Genealogical Account of Wigard Levering and Gerhard Levering, Two of the Pioneer Settlers of Roxborough Township, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1858), 3-12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22-25. This nomination draws liberally from Emily Cooperman and Claire G. Schmieder, "Historic Context Statement for Neighborhood Cluster 2," prepared for the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, 2009.

¹² James Green, *The Rittenhouse Mill and the Beginnings of Papermaking in America* (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia and Friends of Historic RittenhouseTown, 1990), 5; Horatio Gates Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Papermill; the First Erected in America, A.D. 1690," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 20 (1896): 317.

to organize financial backers as partners and a printer-partner as a contractual customer for the products. Previous to Rittenhouse's operation, all paper was imported from Europe and taxed accordingly. The new mill provided a local source of printing, writing, and wrapping paper, as well as pasteboard. All of the mill's fiber for hand papermaking was obtained from discarded rags and cotton. The paper that came from the Rittenhouse mill during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was made by hand, each sheet crafted separately. First, workers pounded rags into pulp in stone or iron mortars using trip-hammers. After pulp was placed in frames, it needed several days to dry completely. The final product carried the Rittenhouse watermark. In 1706, Rittenhouse bought out the other partners and became sole proprietor of Rittenhouse Paper Mill. Rittenhouse proved that papermaking in America could be a viable, economically sound business. Rittenhouse died in 1708 and left the paper mill to his son, Claus. The business prospered at the site, and was operated by six generations of family descendants. Rittenhousetown grew up around the mill. For 20 years, Rittenhouse Paper Mill was the only paper mill in the Colonies. In 1710, William Dewees, who was married to Claus Rittenhouse's sister, built a mill nearby in Chestnut Hill, having learned the trade at Rittenhouse Paper Mill. In 1729, the Willcox Ivey Mill was built in Chester County. Forty years after the founding of Rittenhouse Paper Mill, the number of printers and paper mills grew exponentially. The Rittenhouse family monopoly in paper was over, but Rittenhouse's descendants continued making paper on the Monoshone Creek until the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution, when the development of the Fourdrinier, with its endless web and cylinder papermaking, changed the industry forever.¹³ Among the many prominent members of the Rittenhouse family, David Rittenhouse (1732-1796) was an astronomer, inventor, clockmaker, mathematician, surveyor, fabricator of scientific instruments, and public official. Rittenhouse was a member of the American Philosophical Society and the first director of the United States Mint. Several eighteenth and nineteenth-century buildings survive at the Rittenhouse Paper Mill site including the Rittenhouse Homestead (1707), the Bake House (1725), the Abraham Rittenhouse Home (1720), and the Enoch Rittenhouse Home (1845) (Figure 6). The Rittenhouse complex was not included in this thematic district because of its distance from Ridge Avenue, but it precisely represents both the early mill culture and early architectural styles in Roxborough Township.¹⁴



Figure 6. The Rittenhouse Homestead (1707), the Bake House (1725).

Between 1746 and 1747, Joseph Gorgas built one of Roxborough's more impressive surviving residences on a large tract of land bordering the Wissahickon Creek, which he purchased from Benjamin Shoemaker. Gorgas was a Seventh Day Baptist and wished to have an isolated

¹³ Green, *The Rittenhouse Mill*, 3-5; Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Papermill," 322.

¹⁴ Rittenhouse Town was designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places on 26 June 1956 and on 7 June 1973.

residence for meditation and solitude, as well as for pursuing his grist mill business. The stone house is three stories, with an adjoining grist mill and saw mill. When it was built, it was one of the largest residences in the area and may have been one of the first three-story homes in the immediate vicinity of Philadelphia.¹⁵ The Gorgas property was not included in this thematic district because of its distance from Ridge Avenue, but it certainly represents a high point of Georgian architectural achievement in Roxborough Township.¹⁶



Figure 7. The Joseph Gorgas House, 1747.

Other early Roxborough families included the Righter, Livezey, and Houlgate families.¹⁷ The earliest settlers were primarily engaged in farming and milling. Grist mills, located on the Wissahickon and its tributaries, were the most common type of industry in eighteenth-century Roxborough. In 1779, there were at least eleven mills in the area, eight of which were grist mills.¹⁸ Glen Fern, the Thomas Livezey House, still stands on the east bank of the Wissahickon. Constructed in 1733-39 and added to later in the eighteenth century, the house evidences many characteristics of the Georgian style. Livezey, who purchased the property in 1747, operated one of the largest mills in the colonies. In addition to the house, the foundation of the mill and the associated dam survive. Glen Fern was not included in this thematic district because of its distance from Ridge Avenue, but it precisely characterizes both the early mill culture and early architectural styles in Roxborough Township.¹⁹

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the HABS data pages for The Monastery are not among the documents in the Library of Congress' Historic American Building Survey collection. Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742: A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers* (Philadelphia: P.C. Stockhausen, 1899), 284-285.

¹⁶ The Joseph Gorgas House, the Monastery, and associated outbuildings was designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places on 26 June 1956.

¹⁷ Information about the original and early purchasers as well as "Map Showing the Roxborough Tracts Bought by the First Purchasers" and "Map Showing the Roxborough Tracts Purchased by Early Settlers" is provided in: Joseph Starne Miles and Rev. William H. Cooper, *A Historical Sketch of Roxborough, Manayunk, and Wissahickon* (Philadelphia: George Fein & Co., 1940), p. 75-79.

¹⁸ The grist mills were owned by the Robeson family, John Vanderen and Martin Rittenhouse, Nicholas Rittenhouse, William Rittenhouse, Abraham Rittenhouse, Peter Care, John Gorgas, and Thomas Livezey. The Rittenhouse papermill was in operation, as well as a fulling mill owned by Matthew Houlgate and Christian Snyder and an oil mill owned by Benjamin Gorgas. Jones, *The Levering Family*, 187.

¹⁹ Glen Fern was designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places on 26 June 1956.

RIDGE ROAD

In 1686, before Europeans settled Roxborough, Mary Farmar, the widow of Major Jasper Farmar, discovered large deposits of lime on her 5,000-acre estate in Plymouth Township, Montgomery County. In 1687, the residents of Plymouth Township petitioned the Court of the Quarter Sessions to lay out a roadway from Philadelphia to the Township to transport the lime, which was valuable as a building material, especially in a city where brick construction would become predominant. The residents of Plymouth Township again petitioned the Court of the Quarter Sessions “to grant them a common Cartway or Road to extend from Wissahickon Mills [where the Wissahickon flowed into the Schuylkill] up into the Perkioming Creek” [in Collegeville] in March 1706. That same year, surveyor Thomas Fairman certified that he had laid out the road as ordered by the Court. In June 1706, the Court directed Fairman to survey the road leading from the City of Philadelphia at 6th and Sassafra (Arch) Streets to Wissahickon Mills so that it could be confirmed. In 1707, Fairman reported to the Court that he had surveyed the road, which had existed but had not been confirmed. In 1709, the road was extended from Collegeville west to Manatawny (Pottstown). Ridge Avenue was known by many names during its first century including the Great Road, King’s Road, Wissahiccon Road, Plymouth Road, Manatawny Road, and Reading Road.

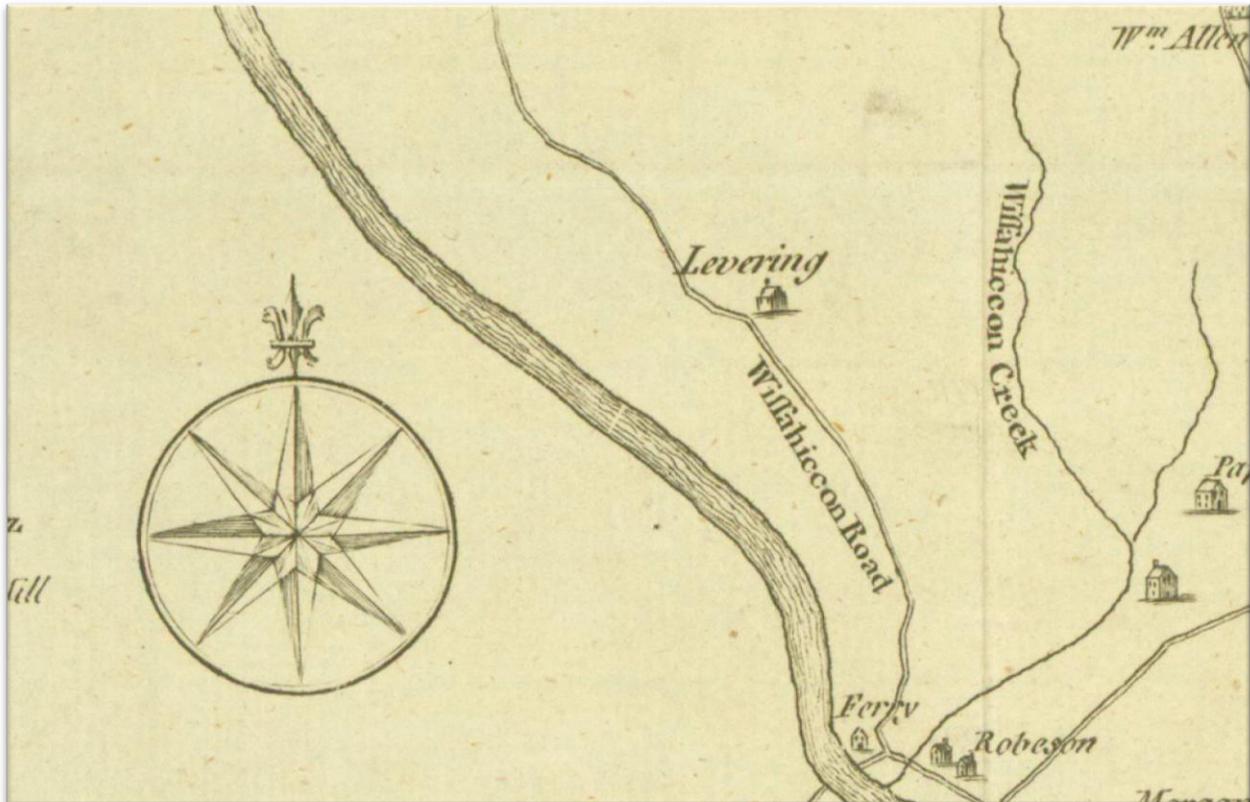


Figure 8. Detail showing Roxborough Township between the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek with the Wissahiccon or Ridge Road, from Scull & Heap, Map of Philadelphia and Parts Adjacent, c. 1750.

At several points during the eighteenth century, in 1723, 1753, 1786, and 1797, the route of the Ridge Road from the western bank of the Wissahickon to the top of the ridge, where Ridge, Righter, and Hermit intersect today, was shifted to ease travel up the steep hill. By the end of

the eighteenth century, this section of the Ridge Road was established on its current line (Figure 9).²⁰

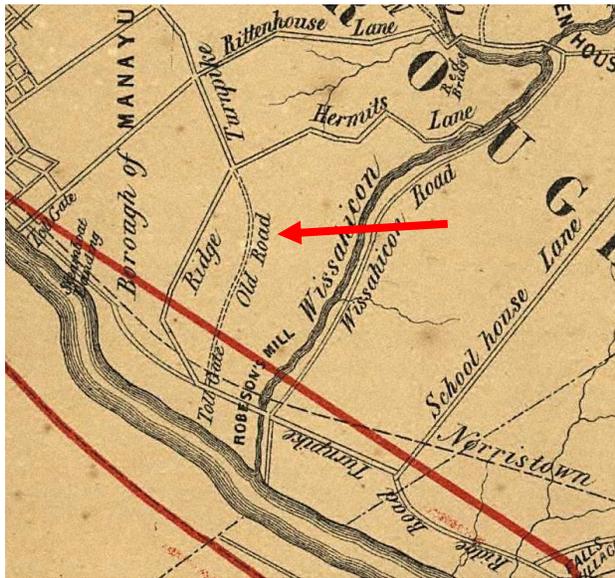


Figure 9. An 1857 map of Roxborough showing the old and current lines of Ridge Road.

To help orient travelers, milestones marking the distance from the City of Philadelphia were placed along Ridge Road in the middle of the eighteenth century. On 12 August 1768, Jacob Hiltzheimer noted in his diary that he “Went up the Wissahickon Road to set milestones.”²¹ A *Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs Surveyed by John Hills* of 1808 identifies the locations of some of the milestones along Ridge Road. The Milestone 6 was located immediately west of the bridge across the Wissahickon. Milestone 7 was located near the intersection with Rittenhouse Lane, now Walnut Lane. Milestone 8 was located near the current intersection on Ridge Avenue and Gates Street. Milestones 9, 10, and 11 were not depicted on the map, but would have been located west of Domino Lane, at Port Royal Avenue, and at the Montgomery County line, respectively. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the milestones on Ridge Road were used like addresses. For example, in 1837, the *National Gazette* advertised a farm for rent “on the Ridge road, near the eight mile stone... The location of this property is on the most elevated part of Roxborough, and for salubrity and fertility cannot be excelled by any in the vicinity of the city.”²² In 1841, John Parker and David Millar offered a \$2 reward for “a brown COW, some white on her forehead with large horns,” which had strayed away “in Roxborough township, Ridge Road, near the seven mile stone.”²³

Ridge Road was an important trade route, providing access to the interior of Pennsylvania and beyond. Freight was hauled in Conestoga wagons (Figure 10). James Logan, secretary to William Penn, appears to have coined the term Conestoga wagon in 1717. Logan ran freight wagons between Philadelphia and the Conestoga Valley in Lancaster County. In 1787, Benjamin Rush described the Conestoga wagon as “a large strong waggon covered with linen

²⁰ See Joseph S. Miles and William H. Cooper, *A Historical Sketch of Roxborough, Manayunk, Wissahickon* (Philadelphia: G. Fein & Co., 1940). P. 17-19.

²¹ Joshua L. Bailey Jr., “Old Milestones about Philadelphia, Illustrated,” *Bulletin of the Friends’ Historical Society of Philadelphia*, vol. 9, no. 2, November 1919, p. 46-62; Jacob Cox Parsons, ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer: Of Philadelphia. 1765-1798* (Philadelphia: Wm. F. Fell & Co., 1893), p. 15.

²² *The National Gazette*, 2 February 1837, p. 3.

²³ *Public Ledger*, 27 September 1841, p. 3.

cloth is an essential part of the furniture of a German farm. It is pulled by four or five large horses of a particular breed, and will carry 2000 to 3000 pounds." The Conestoga wagon's curved shape prevented cargo from shifting as it traversed rough terrain. The large, broad wheels allowed the wagon to maneuver in ruts and mud. Rush noted that, during the fall harvest season, "on the road between Philadelphia and the Valley you'll see 50 to 100 [Conestoga wagons] a day." Wagon traffic was significant. More than 10,000 wagons made the trip to Philadelphia annually by 1775. Convoys sometimes included as many as 100 wagons on a single train. As historian David McCullough has noted:

the crowds and noise [in the center of eighteenth-century Philadelphia] seemed overwhelming ... on market days, Wednesdays and Saturdays, when German-speaking country people came rolling into town in huge farm wagons loaded with produce, live chickens, pigs, and cattle. The "thundering of coaches, chariots, chaises, wagons, drays, and the whole fraternity of noise almost continually assails our ears," complained a visiting physician. [Continental Congress] delegate Stephen Hopkins from Rhode Island counted one day seventy farm wagons on Market Street.²⁴



Figure 10. Benjamin Franklin depicted a farmer's Conestoga wagon on the frontispiece in *his Plain Truth: or, Serious Considerations on the Present State of the City of Philadelphia, and Province of Pennsylvania*, 1747.

As the population expanded westward, Conestoga wagons leaving Philadelphia took one of three main routes: over the Appalachian Mountains to Pittsburgh where the freight was then shipped downriver into the Ohio Valley; along the National Road connecting Baltimore and Frederick, Maryland with Wheeling, West Virginia and eventually to Vandalia, Illinois by 1852; and down the Great Wagon Road through the valley of Virginia into North Carolina. Wagoners with horse-drawn Conestoga wagons carried supplies and finished goods westward on three- to four-week journeys and returned with flour, whiskey, tobacco, and other products. In addition to the long-distance trade, wagoners moved cargo locally and regionally, hauling agricultural products, lumber and other building materials, and various other goods. Shipping companies, like Philadelphia's Inland Transportation Office, hauled "Goods, Mdze. &c., by waggons to ...

²⁴ David McCullough, *American History E-book Set* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), n.p.

Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Lancaster, and all other parts of the Western Country" (Figure 11).²⁵ As one witness reminisced:

When Conestoga wagons roamed the highways of Pennsylvania before freight trains appeared, Ridge road was the direct route to and from that astonishingly fat region, the Schuylkill Valley. From Berks, Lebanon, and Montgomery poured an endless string of Conestogas, hauled by great horses—often four to a team. Down that valley poured the output of America's first iron works. At certain seasons Ridge road was white with lime wagons from the kilns about Bridgeport. Indeed, a great part of the city's bread and butter flowed down the Ridge.²⁶



WAGGON AND HORSES.

THOMAS HARPER,
AGENT FOR INLAND TRANSPORTATION,
RECEIVES AT HIS STORE, NO. 467, MARKET ABOVE TWELFTH STREET,
MERCHANDIZE INTENDED FOR PITTSBURG,
AND ANY OF THE TOWNS ON THE MAIN ROADS LEADING THERETO
AND FOR ALL THE PRINCIPAL TOWNS
IN THE
SOUTHERN, WESTERN OR EASTERN STATES,
WHICH ARE FORWARDED WITH THE UTMOST CARE, & ON THE MOST REASONABLE TERMS.
THE convenience of an *establishment* where single packages or larger parcels can be dispatched without delay, has been long
wanted in this city. The obvious utility of it therefore requires no comment.
March 8 tuths0t

Dec. 27—dt4j President.

Inland Transportation Office,
No. 6, South Seventh Street.

T THOMAS HARPER, Agent for the
Inland Transportation of Merchandize, informs
the public that he receives goods for Baltimore and
Washington Cities, which he will forward with the
utmost despatch. He also receives goods for the
Westward, which he will forward as usual.

THOMAS HARPER,
Dec 19...3t Agent.

Figure 11. Advertisements for the Inland Transportation Office, Philadelphia, c. 1825.

²⁵ See, for example, advertisements for the Inland Transportation Office, *National Gazette*, 27 December 1823, p. 2; *National Gazette*, 9 January 1824, p. 3.

²⁶ *Inquirer*, 9 April 1829, p. 10.

Inns and taverns along Ridge Road provided food and shelter for travelers. The first, the Leverington Hotel, was erected in 1731 at what is now the southeast corner of Ridge Ave. and Leverington Street. It was demolished by real estate mogul Albert M. Greenfield in 1925.²⁷ Located at the top of the steep hill at the eastern edge of the ridge, where Ridge, Hermit, and Righter intersect today, the Plough Tavern was constructed in 1746. After housing travelers on the Ridge Road, the building was used for many purposes including as an almshouse and church. It was abandoned in 1925 and demolished in 1937.²⁸ The Sorrel Horse Tavern, located on Ridge Road above Port Royal, was erected in 1785. When it sold in 1867, the “valuable hotel property, known as the ‘Old Sorrel Horse Tavern’” was described as “a 2½-story stone house, 4 rooms and a large hall on the first floor, 4 rooms on second floor, and 3 rooms on third floor; a large stone barn, stabling and shedding sufficient to accommodate 30 to 40 horses, ice house, and 3 wells of never-failing water.”²⁹ In 1878, the Sorrel Horse Inn was described as “once famous, but now empty.”³⁰ The tavern was used by the Roxborough Passenger Railway Company, but eventually demolished.

During the eighteenth century, Ridge Road was poorly maintained and passage could be difficult, as is evidenced by this account by the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt:

On the twentieth of April [1795] Mr. Guillemard, Caleb Lownes, and myself, set out on horseback from Philadelphia, through Ridge Road, on our way to Norris Town. This road, like all the public roads in Pennsylvania, is very bad, for provision is brought to that city from all parts in large and heavy laden wagons. The constant passage of these wagons destroys the roads, especially near the town, where several of them meet. Ridge Road is almost impassible.³¹

In response to the poor travel conditions, the Ridge Turnpike Company was founded to improve Ridge Road (Figure 12). Chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on 30 March 1811, the company was authorized to sell 1,500 shares of stock at \$50 per share and to build a macadamized road, not less than 40 feet, nor more than 60 feet in width, from the intersection of 10th and Vine Streets at the edge of the City of Philadelphia to the bridge over the Perkiomen in Montgomery County. The Company was also responsible for all of the road’s maintenance and repairs.³² Construction of the 23½-mile road was completed in 1816 at a cost of \$7,500 per mile. The Ridge Turnpike was never profitable, in part because of the competition of the nearby Germantown Turnpike, which also led to the Perkiomen Bridge, and in part because teamsters avoided the steep grade up the ridge to the west of the bridge over the Wissahickon. In 1825, the Ridge Turnpike Company collected about \$10,000 in tolls, but faced about \$10,000 in expenses. That year, the company paid no dividends and carried about \$140,000 in debt.³³

The numbers of Conestoga wagons in the United States increased year after year until the 1830s, when canals began competing with them for freight hauling. In the east, railroads

²⁷ “Northwest Expect Realty Boom Soon,” *Inquirer*, 19 July 1925, p. 55.

²⁸ “Famed Inn Must Go,” *Inquirer*, 25 October 1937, p. 17.

²⁹ *Inquirer*, 30 October 1867, p. 8.

³⁰ “An Old Tony Weller: The Tales He Tells of the Coaching Days of Yore,” *The Times*, 3 May 1878, p. 1.

³¹ Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797, with an Authentic Account of Lower Canada* (London, 1797), vol. 1, p. 2-3.

³² “Ridge Avenue Passenger Railway Company v. City of Philadelphia,” July 15, 1897, *The Atlantic Reporter* 37 (May 5- August 25, 1897): 910.

³³ Donald C. Jackson, “Turnpikes in Southeastern Pennsylvania,” in Judith A. McGaw, ed., *Early American Technology: Making and Doing Things From the Colonial Era to 1850* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 232-233.

replaced Conestoga wagons and canals by the 1850s. However, the prairie schooner, a lightweight, flat variant of the Conestoga wagon, carried pioneer settlers from Missouri to the West Coast. And the Conestoga wagon remained in use on farms in Pennsylvania well into the twentieth century (Figure 13).



Figure 12. Ridge Turnpike Company stock certificate, 1813.



Figure 13. A Conestoga wagon outside a blacksmith shop on Ridge Avenue on the western bank of the Wissahickon, 1881. Photograph by John Coates, Print Department, Library Company of Philadelphia.

EARLY ROXBOROUGH

Roxborough was officially recognized as a township by 1706, but it remained sparsely populated throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the following chart shows.³⁴

Roxborough Population	
1741	175
1753	290
1779	600
1788	700
1790	778
1799	1000
1800	1048
1810	1252
1820	1682

Until significant transportation and industrial advances in the 1820s, Roxborough remained a linear village with pockets of development located on and very near Ridge Road. The only significant developments off Ridge Road were several mills, which, by necessity, were located along the watercourses, the Wissahickon and its tributaries. Very few people lived to the west of Ridge Road, on the steep slopes down to the Schuylkill. Most Roxborough residents made their livings in agriculture, milling, selling stone, timber, and other building materials, or providing services to the wagoners and others who travelled along Ridge Road. As noted earlier, at least three taverns serving travelers stood on Ridge Road by the end of the eighteenth century, the Leverington Hotel of 1731 (Figure 14), the Plough Tavern of 1746, and the Sorrel Horse Tavern of 1785.

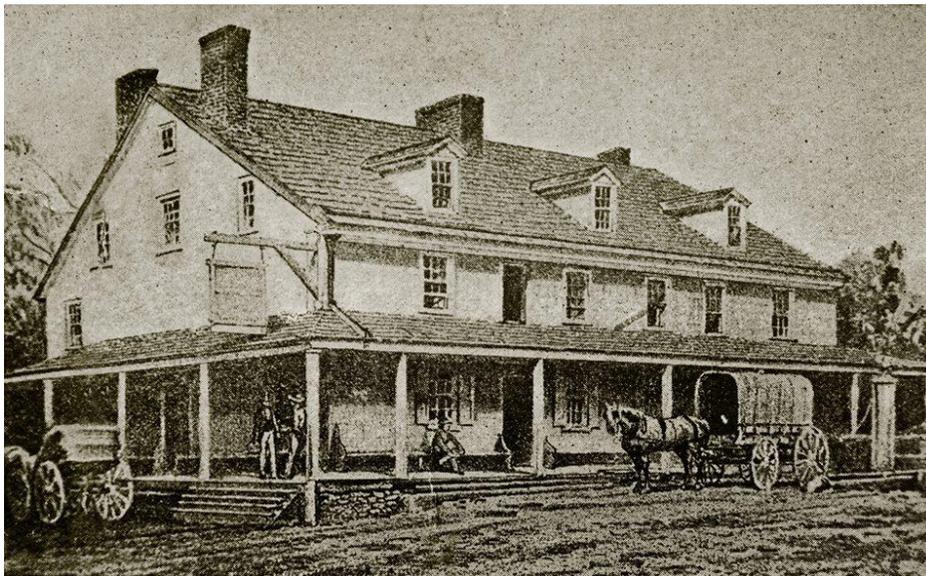


Figure 14. The Leverington Hotel, formerly at southeast corner of Ridge Ave. and Leverington Street, 1731.

³⁴ Road Docket, June 1706, vol. 2, p. 31. Population data taken from Jones, *The Levering Family*, Appendix A, 189; and John Daly and Allen Weinberg, *Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivisions* (Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, 1966), p. 94.

Although Ridge Road is and has been Roxborough's primary thoroughfare since its establishment in the first years of the European settlement of the area, other roads were laid out and opened in the eighteenth century, especially to access mills on the Wissahickon. Typically, these roads were first laid out informally, and then later formally surveyed and opened by the Court of the Quarter Sessions, after they had been in use for a while. Most of the early secondary roads in Roxborough ran east from Ridge Road to mills along the Wissahickon and then on into Germantown, the nearest population center. No roads were officially opened from Ridge Road west to the Schuylkill until the early nineteenth century. School House Lane, which marked the southeastern boundary of Roxborough and still runs on its original line from Ridge Road to Germantown Road, was constructed about 1702, but not officially opened until September 1765.³⁵ School House Lane and Ridge Road are the only two roads in Roxborough depicted on the Scull & Heap *Map of Philadelphia and Parts Adjacent* of about 1750 (Figure 8). Township Line Road, now known as Wissahickon Avenue, which marks the boundary between Roxborough and Germantown, was officially opened on the east side of the Wissahickon Creek in December 1763.³⁶ The extension of Township Line Road on the west side of the Creek, in what is now called Andorra, from Wise's Mill to Ridge Road, was officially opened four years later, in September 1767.³⁷ A road on the line of Roxborough Avenue in Roxborough and Kitchen's Lane and Carpenter Lane in Mt. Airy ran from Ridge Road, across the Wissahickon, and on to Germantown Road as early as 1761.³⁸ Gorgas Mill Road (now Gorgas Lane and W. Mt. Airy Avenue), which ran east off Ridge Road, across the Wissahickon, and up to Township Line Road (now Wissahickon Avenue), was opened in December 1764.³⁹ Rittenhouse Lane, which connected Ridge Road to the Rittenhouse Paper Mill, partially along the current line of Walnut Lane, was officially opened in December 1767.⁴⁰ Shawmont Road (now Avenue), from Ridge Road to Wise's Mill, was opened in June 1786.⁴¹ Although probably laid out about 1738, Spruce Mill Road, now known as Thomas Mill Road in Chestnut Hill, was officially opened from Ridge Road to Germantown Road in June 1793.⁴² That same month, Manatawna Road was opened, running east from Ridge Road.⁴³ The roads that crossed the Wissahickon Creek at dams and small bridges were often swept away during flooding.⁴⁴

Early tax rolls for Roxborough Township provide unique insights into the wealth, occupations, and numbers of the residents. The rolls for the 1769 proprietary tax list 91 taxpayers for Roxborough Township, 40 of which were landowners. The taxpayers include only one woman, Elizabeth Levering. The landowners owned an average of 68.9 acres. William Levering was the largest landholder, with 250 acres. The smallest holding was but one acre. Of the 91 taxpayers listed in 1769, 26 were associated with occupations, including four grain millers, two paper

³⁵ School House Lane, Germantown Road to Ridge Road, September 1765, Road Dockets, vol. 3, p. 337.

³⁶ Township Line Road (Wissahickon Avenue), December 1763, Road Dockets, vol. 3, p. 312.

³⁷ Township Line Road from Ridge Road to Wise's Mill, September 1767, Road Dockets, vol. 3, p. 378.

³⁸ Kitchen's Lane (Roxborough Avenue), Ridge Road to Cresheim Road or Germantown Road, December 1761, Road Dockets, vol. 3, p. 278.

³⁹ Gorgas Mill Road (Gorgas Lane and W. Mt. Airy Avenue), Ridge Road to Wissahickon Avenue, December 1764, Road Dockets, vol. 3, p. 333.

⁴⁰ Rittenhouse Lane (Walnut Lane) from Ridge Road, December 1767, Road Dockets, vol. 3, p. 389.

⁴¹ Shawmont Avenue, Ridge Road to Wise's Mill, June 1786, Road Dockets, vol. 4, p. 175.

⁴² Spruce Mill Road (Thomas Mill Road), Ridge Road to Germantown Road, Road Dockets, June 1793, vol. 4, p. 303.

⁴³ Manatawna Avenue from Ridge Road, June 1793, Road Dockets, vol. 4, p. 301.

⁴⁴ Thomas' Mill Road, Livezey Mill Road, and Rittenhouse Road are located within present day Wissahickon Park. Joseph D. Bicknell, "The Wissahickon in History, Story and Song," paper read before the City History Society of Philadelphia, October 10, 1906, in *Philadelphia History: Consisting of Papers Read before the City History Society of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: City History Society, 1917), 6.

millers, two millers, two butchers, two coopers, two tanners, two weavers, and one of each of the following: flour miller, ferryman, taylor, innholder, cordwainer, smith, ropemaker, sadler, stonecutter, and hatter. Most of the remaining taxpayers were presumably farmers. The 91 taxpayers owned 119 horses and 148 head of cattle, but several persons owned neither horses nor cows. Only eight servants were listed among the 91 households. The 1774 provincial tax rolls list 105 taxpayers in Roxborough Township, 14 more than five years earlier. The 1774 rolls list very few occupations, but they do include a joiner, an occupation not noted in 1769. The 1779 effective supply tax rolls list 106 taxpayers in Roxborough Township.⁴⁵

Real estate and other advertisements offer insights into eighteenth-century life in Roxborough. For example, the plantation of Jacob Cook was auctioned in June 1763 to pay his creditors. It was located “in Roxborough Township, Philadelphia County, about eight Miles from the City, on the great Road leading to Plymouth, and about one Mile from Schuylkill.” The property included: upwards of 14 Acres of Upland and Meadow, ... a Dwelling-house, two Stables, a Smoke-house, Coopers Shop, an exceeding good Stone Vault, and a Well of excellent Water, also a Run of Water, with a never-failing Spring, a young bearing Orchard, with Apple, Peach, Quince, Cherry and Pear Trees, a good Flower and Kitchen Garden paled in, and a young Nursery of Apple and Pear Trees; about one Half the Premises Woodland; it is in good Repair, and well fenced in, pleasantly seated on high Ground, and very suitable for a Gentleman’s Country Seat, or a Store.

The same advertisement offered for sale “a Mare, a Cow, two Hogs, a Plow and Harrow, a Cart and Gears, and sundry Implements of Husbandry.”⁴⁶ Most households in eighteenth-century Roxborough were largely self-sufficient, raising their own food and selling or trading excess production with neighbors or in Germantown and Philadelphia.

A similar advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1755 announced the sale of recently deceased Henry Shellenberg’s dwelling house and mill in the Township of Roxborough. In addition to the buildings and property, Shellenberg’s heirs offered for sale household furnishings, “two guns,” horses, cows, sheep, swine, various miller’s tools and supplies, “a young likely Negro man, a likely young Negro woman, [and] two or three Dutch mens times of servitude.”⁴⁷ Slave and indentured labor worked the mills and fields in Roxborough. Two years earlier, in 1753, Benjamin Levering of Roxborough Township offered a 20-shilling reward and expenses for the return of a “Dutch servant lad, named Michael Haun, a taylor by trade, about nineteen years of age,” who had “run away.”⁴⁸ Indentured servants were not the only ones fleeing in eighteenth-century Roxborough. In 1783, Jacob Amos gave public notice “that my wife Elizabeth has eloped from me, therefore I forwarn all persons from lending her or letting her have any thing on my account, as I will not pay any debts for her from the date hereof.”⁴⁹ In 1758, Isaac Cook offered a 40-shilling reward for the return of stolen goods and an additional 40 shillings for apprehending the thief. He explained that, during the night of 30 June 1758, his house “was broke open, and robbed” of numerous items including garments, bed linens, table linens, a pair of gloves, and a large pewter teapot with feet.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ William Henry Egle, ed., *Proprietary, Supply, and State Tax Lists of the City and County of Philadelphia for the Years 1769, 1774, and 1779* (Harrisburg: State Printer of Pennsylvania, 1897).

⁴⁶ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 9 June 1763, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 April 1755, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 August 1753, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *The Independent Gazetteer*, 19 April 1783, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 6 July 1758, p. 3.

A real estate advertisement published in 1788 offered a large property in Roxborough, “on the road leading from Philadelphia to Reading, about 9 miles from the city, containing 248 acres and 137 perches.” The advertisement is especially interesting because it provided several suggestions for the development of the property, providing a glimpse into the commercial activities in Roxborough. The advertisement highlighted the parcel’s proximity to Germantown as well as Plymouth Meeting’s “sundry lime-kilns”; suggested that the timber on the property was valuable and, if the timber was harvested, the cleared land would be excellent for farming; noted that the “Wissahickon Creek, running through this tract, affords an excellent mill-seat; its being situate on a road leading into one of the best wheat countries on the continent”; and even promoted the notion of shipping the processed wheat to market down the Schuylkill, which ran along the western edge of the property.⁵¹

An advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1754 pointed to another industry in Roxborough. It announced that John Stanaland, stone cutter, had removed from his freestone quarry in Roxborough to a shop in Philadelphia, where “all persons may be supplied with various kinds of freestone work ... both in regard to cutting and setting; such as steps for doors, window cases, door cases, battlements, pediments, &c.” The advertisement noted that, despite Stanaland’s departure for the city, Edward Harding continued to operate the quarry in Roxborough.⁵²

With a small population, few institutions were established in eighteenth-century Roxborough. On 1 April 1748, William and Hannah Levering donated to the township a parcel of land on the west side of Ridge Avenue, south of the current Monastery Avenue, for the construction of Roxborough’s first school building.⁵³ A one-story stone school building, known as the Roxborough School, was erected on the site that year. An 1895 newspaper article on the history of the school explained:

This structure being the only public building in the vicinity, met all of the demands of the place for fifty years, not only for school purposes, but also for public meetings, elections and religious services. In it the Baptist people of Roxborough held services from 1754 until October 24, 1790, the Roxborough Baptist Church having been organized in the school house on August 23, 1789. In 1776 an enthusiastic patriotic meeting was held there to secure volunteers for the American Army.⁵⁴

The school building was enlarged with a second story for an additional classroom and a wing for the school master in the 1790s (Figure 15).⁵⁵

The first church in Roxborough, the Roxborough Baptist Church, was officially organized by 32 residents in August 1789. The group had met informally for religious services at the Roxborough School since 1754. In October 1789, the church was officially received into the Philadelphia Baptist Association. Nathan and Sarah Levering donated a parcel of land for a church building

⁵¹ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 29 October 1788, p. 1.

⁵² *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 23 May 1754, p. 2.

⁵³ William and Hannah Levering and Andrew and Elizabeth Wood donated two additional parcels for the school’s use on 30 March 1771.

⁵⁴ “Levering School and Its History,” *Inquirer*, 3 February 1895, p. 7.

⁵⁵ See Franklin Davenport Edmunds, *The Public School Buildings of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: 1913), p. 5-7; “The New Levering School,” *The Times*, 28 July 1895, p. 4; “News and Gossip of the Schools,” *Inquirer*, 8 March 1896, p. 7. The school was renamed the Levering School in 1847. The school building was badly damaged by a tornado on 12 April 1856 and replaced with a new school building in 1857. That building was in turn replaced in 1895. A large annex to the 1895 school building was constructed in 1929.

on the east side of Ridge Road, about 500 feet north of the school, and a small church building was erected. The church building burned down on 17 January 1830 and a new church was erected by September of that year (Figure 16).⁵⁶ The second Roxborough Baptist Church was replaced by a third church building in 1870. The third church building burned in 1876 and was replaced by the fourth, which still stands today, but has been significantly altered.



Figure 15. *The Roxborough School House. Founded by William Levering, 1748, rebuilt 1795, P.S. Duval & Son, lithographer, 1858.*

⁵⁶ Rev. David Spencer, *The Early Baptists of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: William Sichelmoore, 1877), p. 147-148; "A Century and a Decade of Life for Roxborough Baptist Congregation," *The Times*, 24 August 1899, p. 2. The 1830 church building was enlarged in 1846. A new church building was begun in 1868 and completed in 1870. It was lost to a fire in 1873. A new church building was completed in 1878.

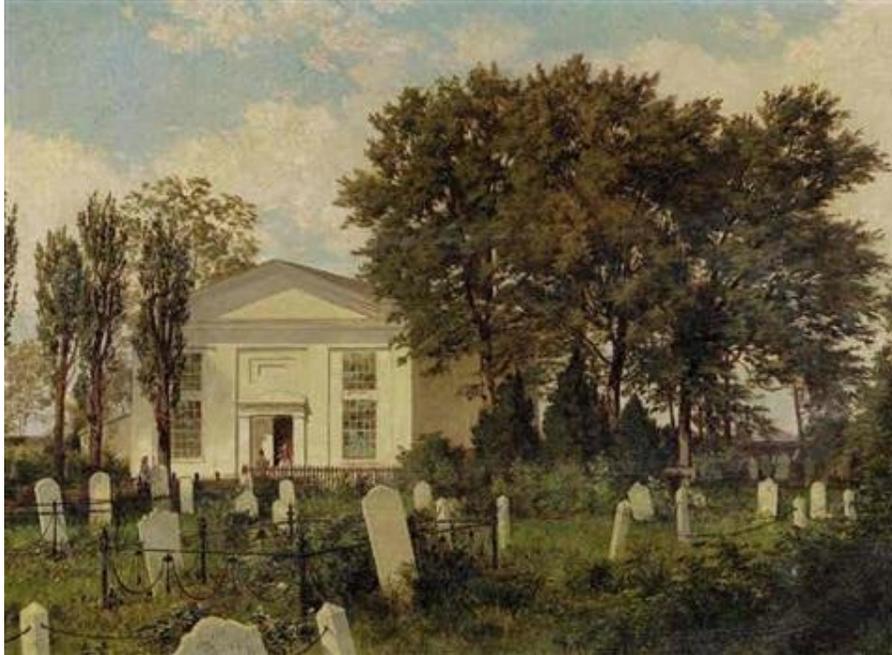


Figure 16. William Trost Richards, Painting of the second Roxborough Baptist Church, 1861.

The Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs by John Hills, a detailed map of Philadelphia County 10 miles out from the city's center, indicates that Roxborough remained sparsely settled in 1808. Only three roads, unnamed on the map, ran west from Ridge Road toward the Schuylkill River; they were Green Lane, Hipple Lane (now Fountain Street), and Ship Lane (now Port Royal Avenue). No development or roads were shown along the Schuylkill River in what is now Manayunk. The Roxborough School, Baptist Church, Sorrel Horse Inn, a few unnamed mills, a few property owners, and a soap stone quarry along the Schuylkill at the county line were called out on the 1808 map. No neighborhood names were called out on the map.

GEORGIAN AND COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

The Georgian style was the dominant architectural style of the English colonies from the early eighteenth century to about 1780, but forms of the style persisted in some areas to as late as 1830. Although the style derives its name from England's King George, the buildings in this style in Roxborough probably owe as much to Germany as to Britain, and therefore may be more appropriately referred to as simply Colonial in style. Georgian or Colonial style houses were typically side-gabled, two-story boxes with windows and doors arranged in strict symmetry. Additions were often constructed to the sides or rears as new needs arose. Georgian houses in northwest Philadelphia were typically constructed of Wissahickon schist. Relatively simple buildings, they were typically ornamented with molded cornices, door surrounds, and, in the early years, with pent eaves. The buildings typically featured shed or pedimented dormers.

The Georgian vernacular farmhouse at 900 Northwestern Avenue is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Roxborough (Figure 17). The ancient farmhouse stands with an early barn on a rural lot at the northern edge of Roxborough, providing an impression of township during its bucolic, farming days. The house has been dated to 1690 and the barn to 1700 by one local historian. While dates for the buildings have not yet been thoroughly documented, they more

likely are situated in the 1720s, when Hans George John owned the property.⁵⁷ The whitewashed stone house with shake roof, which sits very low to the ground, includes many of the features of early German Colonial buildings in southeastern Pennsylvania: pent eaves, shed and gabled dormers, large chimneys, and multi-paned windows. The tall stone barn with steeply pitched roof is typical of early German-American construction.

The twin house at 7549 and 7551 Ridge Avenue is an excellent example of a Georgian vernacular building (Figure 18). It is a symmetrical, side-gabled, two-story, stone building set low to the ground with a steeply pitched roof. Although the buildings include informal date stones on the front facades reading 1717 and 1784, it appears that the building was not constructed as early as 1717, but was actually constructed at some point after 1764. While marketing the 179¼-acre property, which was roughly bounded by Ridge Road and the Wissahickon Creek and the current lines of Shawmont and Wigard Avenues, for sale in 1764, John Malcolm advertised it as:

A Valuable Plantation, in Roxborough Township, about nine miles from Philadelphia, containing 180 Acres, 100 of which is well wooded, the rest clear, and under Fence, with a good Log-house, Barn and Stable, 6 acres watered meadow, and more may be made, a Well of excellent Water by the Door, an Orchard of the best Newtown Pippins. The Situation is exceedingly high, commands an extensive Prospect.⁵⁸

Malcolm made no mention of the two-story stone house on Ridge Road in his 1764 advertisement offering the property for sale, but only mentioned a log house, barn, and stable. Malcolm sold the property in 1764 to Andrew Crawford. The property was held by members of the Crawford family during the later eighteenth century, when the existing two-story, stone, twin building was likely constructed.⁵⁹



Figure 17. Hans George John House, 900 Northwestern Avenue, c. 1720.

⁵⁷ Jim Duffin kindly provided his research into the property, which concludes that the house was likely built by Hans George John in the 1720s, not the 1690s, as others have claimed.

⁵⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1 March 1764, p. 3.

⁵⁹ The 180-acre property was sold by the Pennsylvania Land Company to John Malcolm in 1763 (Deed Book H-19-202); from John Malcolm to Andrew Crawford in 1764 (Deed Book H-19-213). It passed by will to Hugh Crawford and then to Ann, Mary, Jane, and Hugh Crawford Jr. by will in 1783.



Figure 18. 7549 and 7551 Ridge Avenue, c. 1785.

Several other significant eighteenth-century buildings stand along Ridge Avenue in Roxborough including the twin houses at 6633 and 6635 Ridge Avenue, the twin houses at 7616-18 Ridge Avenue, the buildings at 6835 Ridge Avenue and 7625 Ridge Avenue. All are two-story, side-gable, stone buildings with dormers. The vernacular stone building at 7701 Ridge Avenue is an unusual survivor; dating to about 1790, the small, side-gable, stone building has 2-½ stories with half-height windows at the top floor, a fenestration style that would become prevalent in the middle third of the nineteenth century.

ROXBOROUGH DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The British Army led by Sir William Howe, and the Continental Army, under George Washington fought one another in the Battle of Germantown, a major engagement in the Philadelphia campaign of the Revolutionary War. Although centered in Germantown on the east side of the Wissahickon Valley, the battle raged across northwest Philadelphia including Roxborough. After defeating the Continental Army at the Battle of Brandywine on 11 September 1777, and the Battle of Paoli on 20 September, Howe outmaneuvered Washington, seizing Philadelphia, the capital of the colonies, on 26 September. Howe left a garrison of some 3,000 troops in Philadelphia, while moving the bulk of his force to Germantown. Learning of the division, Washington determined to engage the British. His plan called for four separate columns to converge on the British position at Germantown. The ambition behind the plan was to surprise and destroy the British force, much in the same way as Washington had surprised and decisively defeated the Hessians at Trenton. In Germantown, Howe had his light infantry spread across his front as pickets. In the main camp, General Wilhelm von Knyphausen, second in command of the Hessian mercenaries in North America, led the British left, while Howe himself personally led the British right.

After dusk on 3 October 1777, the American force began the 16-mile march southeastward toward Germantown in complete darkness. The Americans remained undetected by the pickets, and the main British camp was, subsequently, unaware of the American advance. However, the

darkness made communications between the American columns extremely difficult, and progress was far slower than expected. At dawn, most of the American forces had fallen too short of their intended positions, losing the element of surprise they otherwise enjoyed. One column, under the command of General John Sullivan, moved down Germantown Road. A column of New Jersey militia under Brigadier General William Smallwood moved down Old York Road to attack the British right. General Nathanael Greene's column moved down Limekiln Road.

The Pennsylvania Militia, led by Brigadier General John Armstrong Sr., marched down Ridge Road from the west and engaged von Knyphausen's Hessian troops, who had dug in on the east side of the Wissahickon in the Falls of Schuylkill. The Pennsylvania Militia advanced down the Ridge Road to the confluence of the Wissahickon Creek and Schuylkill River and set up its artillery at the top of the ridge on the west bank of the Wissahickon. The Pennsylvania Militia fired ineffectively on the Hessians before withdrawing back up the Ridge Road (Figure 19). Armstrong's Pennsylvania Militia played no further part in the battle, which raged in Germantown.

Owing to confusion and miscommunication, the Continental Army failed to rout the British and Hessian soldiers at Germantown. Many on both sides were killed, especially during the failed American assault on British soldiers in the Chew House on Germantown Road. At the end of the day, Washington's troops retreated back to Valley Forge, where the army encamped for the winter of 1777-1778. Of the 11,000 men Washington led into battle, 30 officers and 122 men were killed, and 117 officers and 404 men were wounded. British casualties in the battle were 71 killed, 448 wounded and 14 missing. Howe eventually resigned his command and his replacement, General Henry Clinton, abandoned Philadelphia for New York in June 1778.

A few months after the Battle of Germantown, a famous Revolutionary War incident occurred in Roxborough. On 19 December 1777, 40 members of Light Horse Harry Lee's Virginia Dragoons were patrolling in Roxborough. Lee, the father of Civil War general Robert E. Lee, was not present. At nightfall, they arrived at the house of Andrew Wood and asked for shelter. After they were fed, some bedded down in the house, while others slept in the barn. Members of the British 16th Light Dragoons were also on patrol in Roxborough and discovered the American troops on the Wood property. Wood led the troopers staying in the house out the back door to safety. The troopers in the barn were not so fortunate. The British set fire to the barn and, as some of the troopers tried to exit, they were shot down. Others remained in the barn and were burned to death. A total of 18 Virginia troopers were killed that night. In 1860, the remains of the troopers were transferred to Leverington Cemetery, where a large monument to the victims of the massacre was erected.

After the Revolutionary War, every township in the Commonwealth estimated the costs of the damages caused by the British troops. In Roxborough, 19 property owners sustained damage totaling \$3,228.99. Not surprisingly, Andrew Wood, whose barn had been burned when the Virginia Dragoons were massacred, sustained the greatest damages, estimated at \$674.26.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Joseph Starne Miles and William H. Cooper, eds., *A Historical Sketch of Roxborough, Manayunk, and Wissahickon* (Philadelphia: George Fein & Co., 1940), p. 50.

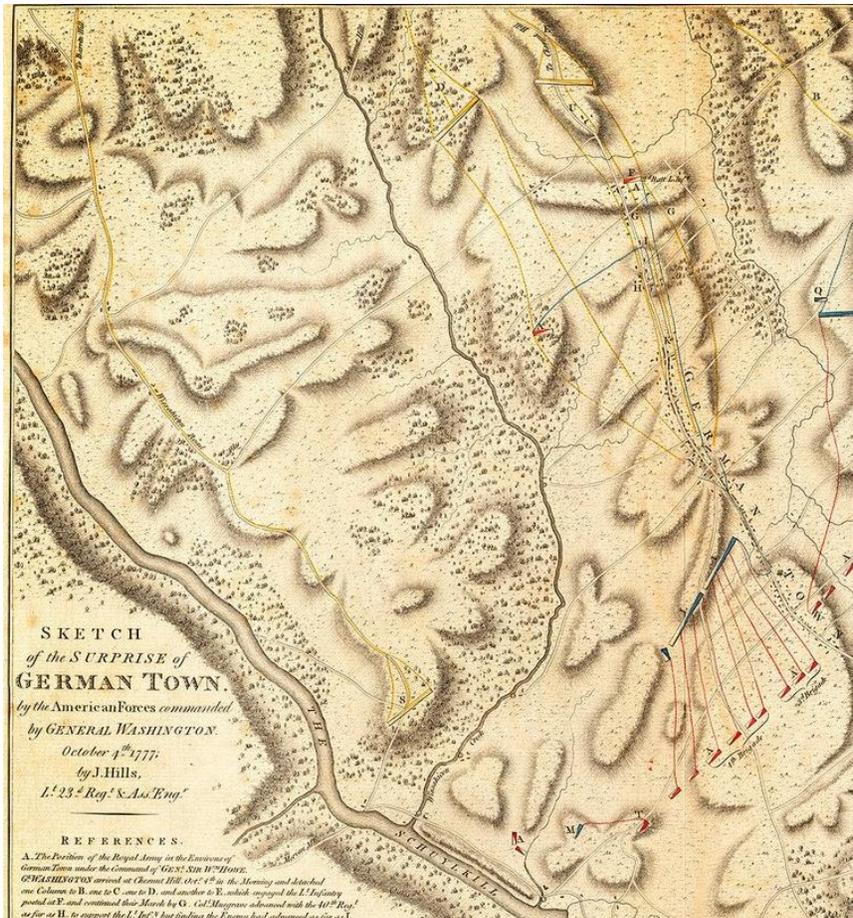


Figure 19. This detail shows the locations of the American and British forces facing off on either side of the Wissahickon Creek during the Battle of Germantown. By John Hills, the map is titled *Sketch of the surprise of German Town by the American forces commanded by General Washington October 4th 1777*, and was published in London in 1784.

FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

The Federal style of architecture, which emerged after the Revolutionary War, is closely related to the earlier Georgian or Colonial style, but Federal buildings are lighter and more delicate than their predecessors, which were generally weighty with stout detailing. Like the earlier houses, Federal houses are generally side-gabled, two-story, symmetrical boxes. Wissahickon schist remained the predominant building material, but the stone was sometimes faced with stucco. The Federal style was employed in Roxborough Township from the 1780s through the 1820s.

The Levering-Jones House at 6341 Ridge Avenue, which also served for a short time as the General Washington Tavern, is an excellent example of the Federal style (Figure 20). Built about 1796 by William and Martha Levering, the house was converted to a tavern in the early nineteenth century. It was later converted back to a residence and was the boyhood home of prominent historian Horatio Gates Jones Jr. The house was restored to its original appearance in the twentieth century. Its side-gable, symmetrical façade, pedimented door surround, and pedimented dormers with Gothick windows are all hallmarks of the Federal style.

The Starne-Smick House at 7552 Ridge Avenue, built about 1795, is another good example of a Federal style house in Roxborough. Although without the high-style embellishments of the Levering-Jones House, the Starne-Smick is a large, well-preserved, significant example of the style. The Joseph Ozias House of 1811 at 7953 Ridge Avenue is another example of a well-preserved Federal style house. The cut-stone front façade with quoins at the corners is an interesting feature of this otherwise modest residence.



Figure 20. Levering-Jones House, 6341 Ridge Avenue, 1796.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANAYUNK

As the John Hills map shows, the land in Roxborough Township along the Schuylkill River was virtually uninhabited in 1808. Almost all development in Roxborough at the time was located along Ridge Road and around the several mills on the Wissahickon Creek. Manayunk had not yet been established in the first decade of the nineteenth century. However, with the discovery of anthracite coal in 1790 in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, 80 miles upstream on the Schuylkill River, and the subsequent discovery of a method for igniting anthracite coal in 1808, development of the Schuylkill bank in Roxborough progressed quickly in the early nineteenth century. In 1810, the Flat Rock Bridge was constructed at the base on Domino Lane across the Schuylkill River to Montgomery County.⁶¹ Domino Lane, which ran down from Ridge Road, was officially confirmed in 1819.⁶² In 1815, the Manayunk & Flat Rock Turnpike Company was chartered to build a roadway along the Schuylkill from Ridge Road west of the Wissahickon Creek to the Flat Rock Bridge, thereby opening Manayunk for development. Most significantly, in 1815, the Pennsylvania Legislature chartered the Schuylkill Navigation Company to build a system of canals, dams, and slackwater pools along the Schuylkill River from Philadelphia to the coal mining region at Pottsville, Pennsylvania. The company built 120 locks and the first ever canal tunnel. The Flat Rock Dam in Roxborough, a part of the canal system, was completed in 1819 and not only facilitated transportation on the river, but also served as a significant source of water power for mills. Despite several financial and technological setbacks, the canal system

⁶¹ The Flat Rock Bridge was washed away in a freshet in 1850 and not rebuilt. "Some Quaint Old Bridges," *The Times*, 7 June 1896, p. 20.

⁶² Domino Lane, Ridge Road to Schuylkill River, 24 June 1819, Road Dockets, vol. 8, p. 96.

between Philadelphia's Fairmount Water Works and Reading became navigable in 1824. The first boatload of coal arrived in Philadelphia in 1825. An extension of the canal to Port Carbon, at the mouth of Mill Creek in Schuylkill County, completed in 1828, made the Schuylkill River Pennsylvania's most efficient mode of transportation for anthracite coal for the following decade and a half. By the early 1840s, some 500,000 tons of anthracite coal was being transported annually to Philadelphia using the Schuylkill River (Figure 21).

Taking advantage of the water power furnished by the Flat Rock Dam, John Towers built the first mill in Manayunk in 1819, the year the dam was completed. Charles Hagner built a second mill in 1820. Two mills were erected 1821 and five more in 1822. Almost overnight, the mill village of Manayunk emerged along the east bank of the Schuylkill in Roxborough Township. From 1817 to 1824, the population of Manayunk grew from 60 to nearly 800 people, and by the late 1820s the community had become known alternately as the "Lowell of Pennsylvania" and the "Manchester of America." In 1827, engraver C.G. Childs noted the rapid development of Manayunk, reporting that:

The thriving little vilage [of Manayunk] is situated on the banks of the river and of the canal, at the distance about six miles from Philadelphia. It derives its name from the aboriginal title of the Schuylkill, and owes its origin to the improvements which have been made upon that stream. Within the last twelve years, the spot which it covers was singularly wild and secluded. High and barren rocks overhung the river, crowned by thickets which were scarcely broken; and the broad projecting cliff, which gave for a time the name Flat Rock to the early settlement, remained nearly inaccessible, as when it was the chosen encamping ground of the Indian hunter. Manayunk is now [in 1827] the scene of active and extended business. It contains sixteen manufactories, five of which give motion to sixteen thousand spindles, and to two hundred and fifty power looms,—two schools, a neat and capacious place of worship, four taverns, and about two hundred tenements, which accommodate some fifteen hundred inhabitants.⁶³

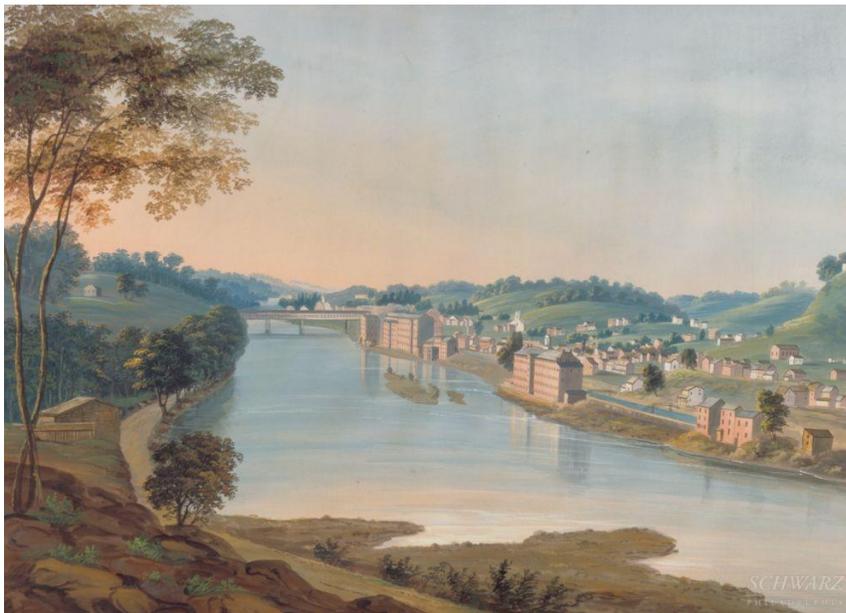


Figure 21. Painting of Manayunk with the Schuylkill River and Canal and the Flat Rock Bridge, Nicolino Calyo, *Manayunk*, c. 1835.

⁶³ *Views of Philadelphia and Its Vicinity Engraved from Original Drawings* (Philadelphia: C.G. Childs, 1827), n.p.

Following on the heels of the development of the canal system and the concomitant water power system that ran the mills, a second early nineteenth-century technological breakthrough advanced the development of Manayunk. In 1832, the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad initiated train service between 9th and Green Streets in Philadelphia and the center of Germantown, one of the first train lines in the country. By the fall of 1834, the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad had constructed a branch into Manayunk. Horses pulled the first trains into Manayunk, owing to a lack of available steam engines. By the spring of 1835, the Manayunk line had been extended to Norristown along the east bank of the Schuylkill River. The trains not only transported raw materials and finished goods to and from the mills of Manayunk, but also significantly reduced the travel time between Roxborough Township and the City of Philadelphia, portending the suburban development that began in the middle of the nineteenth century (Figure 23). During the 1830s and 40s, textile manufacturers built mills in Manayunk and the Falls of Schuylkill at a feverish pace.⁶⁴ In the short term, Roxborough Township remained primarily rural even while the land around the Manayunk mills was quickly and intensively developed for industrial, residential, and commercial uses. Evidencing its growth, Manayunk was erected as a borough in Roxborough Township on 11 June 1840. The official boundaries of Manayunk did not correspond with established streets, but would roughly correspond to the current lines of Hermit Street at the south, Pechin Street at the east, Parker Avenue at the north, and the Schuylkill River at the west. On 31 March 1847, Manayunk Borough was separated from Roxborough Township. In 1830, Roxborough Township including Manayunk had a population of 3,334. By 1840, it had grown to 5,797. In 1850, after Manayunk was separated from Roxborough, Manayunk had a population of 6,158, while Roxborough's was only 2,660, even though Roxborough was geographically much larger (Figure 22).⁶⁵



Figure 22. Joseph Ripka's *Mills, Manayunk*, printed by Wagner & McGuigan, Philadelphia, 1856. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Note the houses on the ridge in the background.

⁶⁴ Cynthia J. Shelton, *The Mills of Manayunk*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

⁶⁵ John Daly and Allen Weinberg, *Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivisions* (Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, 1966), p. 6, 7, 94.

FOURTH OF JULY EXCURSIONS
—PHILADELPHIA, GERMANTOWN
AND NORRISTOWN RAILROAD—
FARE REDUCED.—WISSAHICON,
MANHYUNK, SPRING MILL AND NORRISTOWN.—Leaves
Philadelphia at 7 and 9 o'clock, A. M., 3, 5 and 7
o'clock, P. M.
Leaves Norristown at 7, 9 and 11 o'clock, A. M.,
and 5 and 7 o'clock, P. M.

GERMANTOWN.

Leaves Philadelphia at 7½, 8½ and 9½ o'clock, A.
M., and 2½, 4½, 6½, 7½ and 8½ o'clock, P. M.
Leaves Germantown at 7½, 8½ and 9½ o'clock, A.
M., and 1½, 3½, 5½, 7½ and 8½ o'clock, P. M.

FARE.

Excursion between Philadelphia and Norristown,	50 cts.
Do. between Philadelphia, Germantown, Wissahicon and Manhyunk,	95
Do. between Philadelphia and Spring Mill,	30
Do. between Norristown and Spring Mill,	30

Jyl-4th
By order.

JOS. S. KITE, Agent.

Figure 23. Advertisement for the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad, from the Public Ledger, 3 July 1844, p. 3.

GREEK REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

The Greek Revival style of architecture was the dominant style for American domestic architecture between about 1825 and 1850. Archaeological investigations of the Classical World including Ancient Greece in the early nineteenth century as well as Greece's war for independence (1821 to 1830) aroused interest in Greek architectural forms in the United States. Americans associated the forms with their new democracy. Philadelphia was the first city in the United States to adopt the Greek Revival style, as evidenced by Benjamin Latrobe's Bank of Pennsylvania of 1801 and William Strickland's Bank of the United States of 1818. Pattern books and carpenter's guides by Asher Benjamin, Minard Lafever and others spread the style. Greek Revival buildings typically have gabled or hipped roofs of shallower pitches than their predecessors, broad cornices, and entry or full-width porches supported by classical columns.

The Valentine Keely House at 8144 Ridge Avenue is the most stylistically pure Greek Revival building in Roxborough (Figure 24). Built in 1844, the symmetrical, five-bay Valentine Keely House has a portico supported by Doric columns, a hipped roof with a shallow pitch, and half-height third-floor windows separated by a string course from the façade below to give the appearance of a classical entablature. Advances in roofing technology in the early nineteenth century, especially the development of metal roofs, allowed for roofs with shallower pitches. Earlier cedar shake roofs required a steep pitch to effectively shed water. With the shallower pitched metal roofs, rooftop dormers gave way to half-height third-floor windows, creating more usable space in garrets. The half-height third-floor windows became a hallmark of houses constructed in rural areas around Philadelphia in the decades leading up to the Civil War.



Figure 24. Valentine Keely House, 8144 Ridge Avenue, 1844.

Numerous examples of Greek Revival houses with half-height third-floor windows can be found along and around Ridge Avenue. The houses are usually three or five bays wide and often have open, full-width front porches. They are built of Wissahickon schist, which is either left uncovered or finished with smooth stucco. They often have double, gable-end chimneys. Good examples can be found at 5635 Ridge Avenue and 7101 Ridge Avenue (Figure 25).



Figure 25. 7101 Ridge Avenue, c. 1850.

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROXBOROUGH

Despite the explosive growth in Manayunk in the first half of the nineteenth century, Roxborough remained during these decades a linear village along Ridge Road with an economy based largely on agriculture and milling. However, many Roxborough farms were diversifying, supplementing their incomes with stone quarrying, lumbering, and other commercial activities. Real estate advertisements offer a window into activities in Roxborough. In 1836, a 40-acre property near the six-mile stone on Ridge Road was offered for sale. It included a three-story stone house, a stone barn with stabling for four horses and 12 cows, a grain house, cart house, poultry house, hog house, corn house, two apple orchards, and a “kitchen garden, well set with Strawberries, Raspberries, &c. [from which] 170 quarts have been picked in one day.” The property included several acres of timber and “quarries of excellent turnpike stone.”⁶⁶ In 1839, “a valuable small farm,” a 57.5-acre property on “the Philadelphia and Norristown turnpike road” at the western edge of Roxborough Township, was offered for sale. It included a stone dwelling, “a good large barn with stabling sufficient for eight cows and four horses,” an apple orchard, three springs, and land “in a good state of cultivation and all under good fence.” The property also included “3 acres of good young thriving timber” and “a good Stone Shop, formerly occupied as a Weaver Shop.”⁶⁷ Also in 1839, a 33-acre farm, “situate on the Ridge Turnpike Road, in Roxborough township, nearly opposite the Sorrel Horse Tavern,” was offered at public sale. The advertisement declared that the “land is in a good state of cultivation and has a body of valuable timber.”⁶⁸ Hinting at changes, an 1844 advertisement offered a 22-acre farm in Roxborough Township “on a public road leading from Ridge pike to Flat Rock Bridge and Manayunk,” that, in addition to the usual stone house, barn, and spring house, included “a stream of water running through the Farm, sufficient for steam machinery.”⁶⁹

At about the same time that the farm was advertised with a water source sufficient for steam machinery, omnibus lines connecting Roxborough and the City of Philadelphia with reliable, relatively inexpensive, daily transportation were initiated.⁷⁰ A line was established in 1840 with omnibus service every day but Sunday leaving Amy’s Hotel in Roxborough at 8:30 a.m. and returning to Roxborough from the Black Bear Inn on S. 5th Street near Market Street at 3:30 p.m. The fare was 20 cents (Figure 26).⁷¹ A line was established in 1842 with omnibus service leaving the Sorrel Horse Inn in Roxborough for the City of Philadelphia via Wissahickon, Falls of Schuylkill, and Laurel Hill at 6:30 a.m. and returning to Roxborough from the Merchants’ Exchange at 3rd and Walnut Streets at 1:45 p.m. The fare to Roxborough was 25 cents.⁷² While the first of the two omnibus lines was named the Farmers’ Line, its primary customers would not have been farmers, who carted their fruits, vegetables, and meats to market in wagons. Instead, the riders would have been a new breed of Roxborough residents who had frequent and sometimes daily business in the city. While the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad had facilitated commuting from Manayunk and the lowest reaches of Ridge Road to the

⁶⁶ *Public Ledger*, 3 December 1836, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Public Ledger*, 19 January 1839, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Public Ledger*, 30 October 1839, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Public Ledger*, 24 December 1844, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Stagecoaches had travelled Ridge Road since the eighteenth century. For example, in 1834, a stagecoach line ran regular service between the City of Philadelphia and Norristown, leaving the City at 3:00 p.m. daily and arriving in Norristown “early the same evening,” and leaving Norristown for the City at 7:00 a.m. An announcement of the line noted that “Passengers will be taken up and set down in any part of Philadelphia or Norristown.” *Philadelphia As It Is* (Philadelphia: P.J. Gray, 1834), p. 125.

⁷¹ *Public Ledger*, 14 November 1840, p. 3.

⁷² *Public Ledger*, 7 July 1842, p. 3.

City of Philadelphia as early as the mid 1830s, the omnibus lines of the early 1840s opened up all of Roxborough to commuting.⁷³



Figure 26. Advertisement for Farmers' Omnibus Line on Ridge Road, *Public Ledger*, 11 November 1840, p. 3.

The introduction of the omnibus lines on Ridge Road in the early 1840s indicated that Roxborough, which had been a farming and milling community for nearly 150 years, was transitioning. As early as 1839, the beginnings of suburbanization were evident in Roxborough. That year, Charles Jones and T. Mason Mitchell advertised development lots for sale on Green Lane, just off Ridge Road, that were measured in square feet, not acres. The 50-foot wide lots, which were between 150 and 250 feet deep, were promoted as having attractive views, a healthful environment, convenient to the railroad and turnpike, and in the proximity of several churches and the Village of Manayunk. The advertisement promised: "The Lots will, when built upon, be sufficiently large for handsome gardens attached to each. This, on viewing the neighborhood, will prove a desirable and safe investment to many persons, either for summer or permanent residences."⁷⁴ The advertisement made no mention of barns, meadows, fruit trees, spring houses, or other farm accoutrements. The development lots on Green Lane were intended for commuters, who walked to Manayunk or took the train or omnibus to the city. They may have been the first suburban housing lots laid out in Roxborough Township.

Although the omnibus lines and suburban house lots portended changes coming to Roxborough, Charles Ellet's *Map of the County of Philadelphia from Actual Survey of 1843* indicates that Roxborough remained a linear village running along Ridge Road (Figure 27). The map clearly shows that, outside of densely developed Manayunk, Roxborough Township was sparsely populated with few roads running east and west off the main spine. The Ellet map of 1843 identifies the main commercial and institutional sites in Roxborough. It depicts four inns, all on Ridge Road: the Leverington Hotel near Green Lane, Roxborough Hotel at Gorgas Lane, Buttonwood Tavern at Livezey's Mill Lane, and Sorrel Horse Tavern above Ship Lane. The 1843 map depicts three manufacturing facilities associated with the textile industry: the Gorgas Cotton Factory on Gorgas Lane at the Wissahickon Creek; Haley's Dye Works on Gorgas Lane; and Rees' Print Works on Eliza's Lane. The map calls out five mills along or near

⁷³ Competing with the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad for commuters to Manayunk, J.W. Funck offered a combination rail and boat service to Manayunk as early as 1848. He operated railroad passenger cars from 3rd and Willow Streets to Fairmount, where passengers connected with a steamboat to Laurel Hill and Manayunk. The service ran at 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. and then every 30 minutes from 1:30 p.m. through the afternoon. See *Public Ledger*, 21 June 1848, p. 4.

⁷⁴ *Public Ledger*, 24 April 1839, p. 1.

the Wissahickon: Wise's Mill and Livezey's Mill on the upper Wissahickon; a spice mill and the Rittenhouse Paper Mill at the confluence of the Wissahickon with Paper Mill Run; and Robinson's (misspelling of Robeson's) Mill on the Wissahickon at the crossing of the Ridge Road. The map notes the Roxborough Poorhouse in the Old Plow Tavern on Ridge Road below Shur's Lane. It calls out the Baptist Church as well as the German Reformed Church at Ship Lane. The German or Dutch Reformed Church was founded in 1835 and transitioned to the Roxborough Presbyterian Church in 1854. The map identified a schoolhouse at the intersection of Wise's Mill Road and Livezey's Mill Lane. The school, known as the Heiss or Yellow School House, was established in 1812. The map called out the hall of the Roxborough Masonic Lodge, No. 135, located on Ridge Road at Shur's Lane. The fraternal organization had been founded in 1813.⁷⁵ An 1851 inventory of tax-exempt property in Philadelphia County listed all such properties in Roxborough, again portraying the rural area as sparsely populated. The 1851 inventory included the Roxborough Baptist Church and Burial Ground, Dutch Reformed Burial Ground, Lutheran Church, a volunteer fire brigade called the Good Intent Engine Company, the poorhouse or almshouse, three schoolhouses, and two tollhouses associated with the Ridge Road Turnpike.⁷⁶

Like Ellet's map of 1843, John Levering's *Plan of the Township of Roxborough* of 1848 depicts Roxborough as a linear village along Ridge Avenue, but also shows the very beginnings of suburban development along Green Lane as well as High Street (Lyceum Avenue).⁷⁷ Houses on relatively small lots on a grid of streets first appear in Roxborough on the 1848 map. Suburban development was occurring along Ridge Avenue as well, especially in the lower section near the Wissahickon railroad station and other transportation options. For example, in 1850, a real estate advertisement offering a property at the corner of Ridge and Hermit Lane (now 559 Righter Street) extolled its easy access to transportation. "The situation is high and healthy, with a daily communication to and from the city, by Stages passing the door, or by Omnibuses connecting the Railroad at Wissahickon Railroad Bridge, and half a mile therefrom, and within half a mile of the Manayunk Steamboat Landing, affording an hourly conveyance to of from the city—thereby making it a desirable private Country Residence, or for a man of business, whose location is in the city."⁷⁸ While men of business may have commuted to Manayunk for managerial positions in the mills as early as the early 1840s, by 1850, men of business were living in Roxborough and commuting to the business center in the heart of Philadelphia.

⁷⁵ Horace H. Platten and William Lawton, *The History of the Roxborough Masonic Lodge, No. 135* (Philadelphia: The Centennial Committee of the Roxborough Masonic Lodge, No. 135, 1913).

⁷⁶ Elihud Tarr, *Memorial of the Commissioners of the County of Philadelphia to the Legislature upon the Subject of the Laws Exempting Certain Property from Taxation, Together with a Schedule of Exempt Property* (Philadelphia: The County Commissioners, 1851).

⁷⁷ John Levering, *Plan of the Township of Roxborough with the property holders' names &c. Manayunk*, published by M. Dripps, 1848.

⁷⁸ *Public Ledger*, 26 July 1850, p. 4.

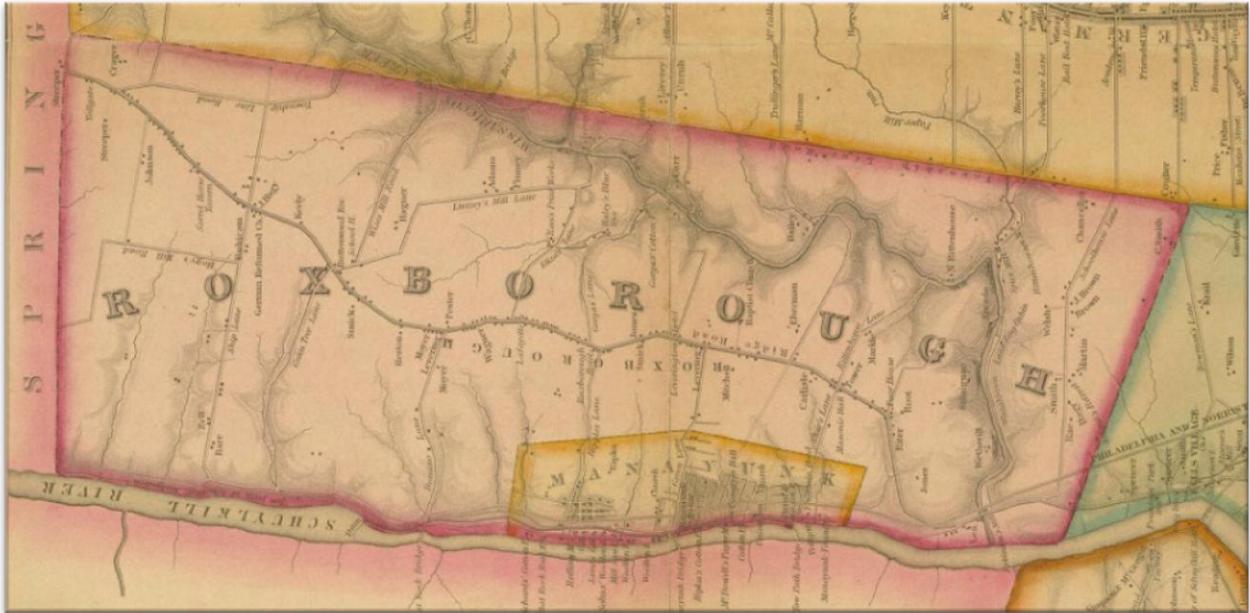


Figure 27. Detail of Roxborough and Manayunk from Charles Ellet, *Map of the County of Philadelphia from Actual Survey*, 1843.

As Roxborough began its transition in the 1840s from a farming and milling community to a suburb for the industrial area flourishing at nearby Manayunk, several institutions were established to support the growing population. In 1841, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Roxborough Lodge, No. 66, was established. The fraternal organization erected a hall at the northwest corner of Ridge and Lyceum. The Roxborough Lyceum, an educational organization that housed a consortium of libraries, was chartered in 1854 and erected a building on Ridge across from the Odd Fellows Hall in 1856. The Lyceum became the Roxborough Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia in 1896. The German Lutheran Church was established in 1845 at Pechin and Martin Streets, on the boundary of Manayunk and Roxborough. The current church at the site dates to 1902. The Ridge Avenue Methodist Church was established in 1847. The first Methodist services were held in Yellow School House, before a church building was erected at Ridge and Shawmont. St. Timothy's Episcopal Church was established in 1859 and a large church complex on Ridge near Shur's Lane was begun in 1862, when the sanctuary cornerstone was laid. The Church was consecrated 1863 and a tower added in 1871. The church was enlarged and a parish building constructed in 1874. The church was enlarged again in 1885 (Figure 32). Farther to the north, St. Alban's Episcopal Church was established in 1859 and a church building was erected on Fairthorne, just off Ridge, in 1861.

In 1854, the City and County of Philadelphia were consolidated, ending more than a century and a half of independent government in Roxborough Township and incorporating the emerging suburb into the City of Philadelphia. With the consolidation, the newly annexed portions of Philadelphia were divided into wards. Roxborough comprised part of the 21st Ward, which included Roxborough, Manayunk, and Penn Township (East Falls and Allegheny West). In 1860, the 21st Ward had a population of 17,159. Samuel Smedley's *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* of 1862 shows that during the decade leading up to the Civil War, Leverington had emerged as a neighborhood in its own right within Roxborough, with twelve blocks of suburban development bounded by Ridge, Krams, Manayunk, and Martin on the west side of Ridge and more subdivision and construction along Leverington on the east Ridge (Figure 28).⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Samuel L. Smedley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1862).

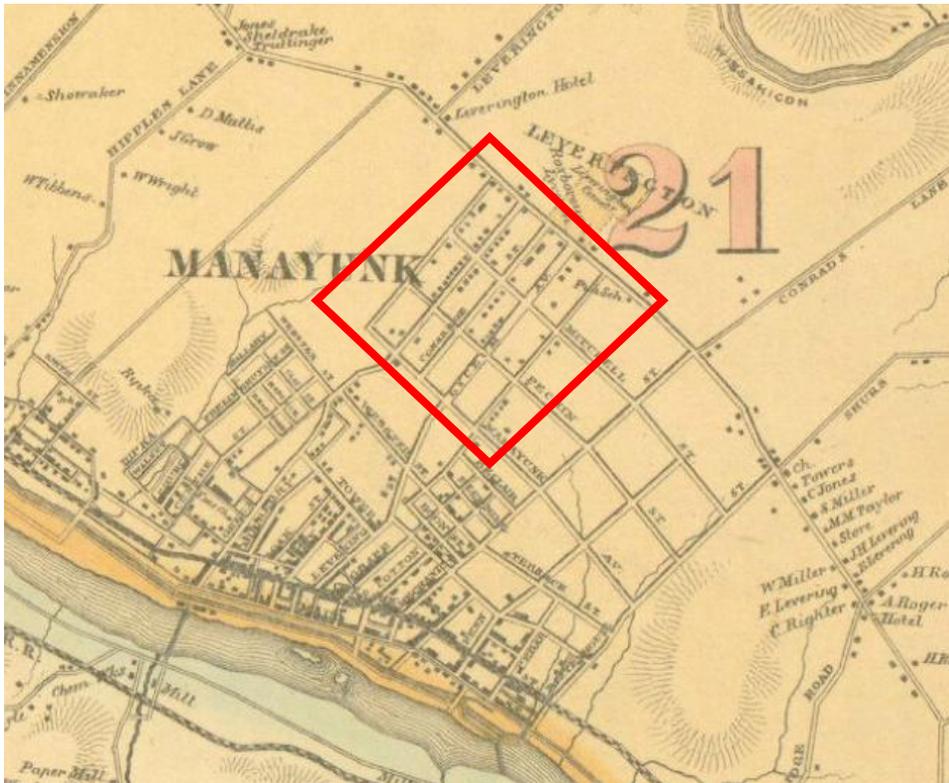


Figure 28. Detail showing the Leverington neighborhood in Roxborough, from Samuel Smedley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, Plate 20, 1862.

GOTHIC REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

The picturesque Gothic Revival style was popularized by landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences*, first published in 1842 and reprinted in many editions in the mid and late nineteenth century. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, American architecture styles, including Georgian, Adam, Federal, and Greek Revival, were predicated on Classical forms and vocabulary. In the early nineteenth century, as industry grew, rural areas transitioned into suburbs, a middle class emerged, and the field of architecture was professionalized in the United States. Those architects proposed a new architectural vocabulary appropriate for housing in suburban environments. In 1837, architect Andrew Jackson Davis (1803-92) published *Rural Residences*, in which he drew from British sources to champion the Gothic Revival style for domestic architecture for the first time in America. *Rural Residences* was influential, but the Gothic Revival style for American domestic architecture was catapulted into collective national consciousness by landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-52), a friend and collaborator with Davis, who published *A Treatise of the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841), followed by *Cottage Residences* (1842), and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850). In his books, Downing popularized the modest-sized, inexpensive detached cottage in a suburban or rural setting. Downing's pattern books provided multiple design suggestions for this type of dwelling, ranging from a small suburban cottage to a villa in the Italian style. By the mid-1840s, the picturesque Gothic or Gothic Revival style of architecture began to increase in popularity for residences, largely due to Downing's pattern books. Downing's *Cottage Residences* is considered "one of the most widely used books in American

architectural literature.”⁸⁰ Downing’s *The Architecture of Country Houses*, a companion to *Cottage Residences*, has been called a “seminal” book in American architecture. According to the National Historic Landmark nomination for the Rotch House, a Gothic Revival house in New Bedford, Massachusetts designed by Davis in 1845, “the publication and eventual dissemination and popularity of Downing’s *Country Houses* became a watershed event in the evolution of American domestic architecture, and today cultural historians recognize the book’s significant consequences for the shaping of popular taste in the pre-Civil War period.”⁸¹ While his books included many details of house and landscape designs, Downing provided the designs as suggestions, which a builder could adapt to the site and the needs of the homeowner. Downing’s books, in collaboration with Davis, who provided many of the architectural designs and illustrations, inspired the design of numerous cottage residences in rural and suburban settings, leading to an era characterized by these types of Victorian cottage residences. A rural, rather than urban, setting was considered important to the Gothic Revival style, as the building was intended to be compatible with the natural landscape, not situated on a narrow urban lot.⁸²

The primary distinguishing characteristic of the Gothic Revival style is the centered cross gable roof with decorated barge boards. Other characteristics include finials, steeply pitched roofs, pointed arch lancet windows extending into the gables, and open entry and full-width porches with flattened, pointed Gothic arches.

One of the best examples of the Gothic Revival style in Roxborough is the Amos Barnes House at 559 Righter Street, at the intersection of Ridge, Righter, and Hermit. Constructed of Wissahickon schist about 1856, the Barnes House effectively represents the Gothic Revival style with Victorian Cottage elements, as reflected in the center cross gable decorative barge board at the roofline. Originally, the building had a full-width front porch and lancet window at the gable (Figure 29). Other excellent examples of the Gothic Revival style on Ridge Avenue include the houses at 5508 Ridge Avenue, which includes the centered cross gable, arched gable windows, and full-width front porch; and 8029 Ridge Avenue, which includes the centered cross gable, lancet windows, and a highly ornamented, full-width, front porch. The building at 8029 Ridge Avenue is unique in that it is clad in wood shiplap siding rather than masonry. Also, rather than decorative bargeboards, it has bracketed cornices, linking it to the Italianate style as well.

⁸⁰ Adolf K. Placzek, “Preface to the Dover Edition,” in Andrew Jackson Downing, *Victorian Cottage Residences* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1981), p. iii.

⁸¹ Peggi Medeiros and William E. Krattinger, National Historic Landmark Nomination for William J. Rotch Gothic Cottage, designated February 17, 2006, p. 9.

⁸² Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), p. 100-103; Virginia & Lee. McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 200.



Figure 29. Amos Barnes House, 559 Righter Street, 1856.

ITALIANATE ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

Like the Gothic Revival style, the Italianate style began in England as part of the Picturesque movement, a reaction to formal classical ideals in art and architecture that had been fashionable for about 200 years. The movement emphasized rambling, informal Italian farmhouses, with their characteristic square towers, as models for Italian-style villa architecture. The first Italianate houses were built in the United States in the late 1830s; the style was popularized by the influential pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing published in the 1840s and 1850s. By the 1860s, the style had completely overshadowed its earlier companion, the Gothic Revival. Most Italianate examples date from 1855 to 1880. The hallmarks of the style are low-pitched roofs with wide eaves supported by decorative brackets; tall, narrow four-over-four or two-over-two double-hung windows, sometimes arched, often with crowns or other decorative hoods; cupolas or towers; double doors with bolection mouldings; and decorative door surrounds and porches elaborated with brackets.⁸³

“Houghton,” the grand residence of J. Vaughan Merrick Jr. at 5301 Ridge Avenue, which was built about 1860, is the best example of the Italianate style on Ridge Avenue (Figure 30). The mansion includes all of the character-defining features of the Italianate: a tower, bracketed eaves, large porches supported by square pillars, and four-over-four double-hung windows.

The urban, rowhouse variant of the Italianate style can be found at the row at 6109 to 6115 Ridge Avenue. The three-story, mixed-use buildings have bracketed cornices at the storefronts and rooflines, brick facades with butter joints, and windows with stone lintels and sills.

⁸³ Drawn from Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 210-214.



Figure 30. Houghton, J. Vaughn Merrick Residence, 5301 Ridge Avenue, 1860.

ROXBOROUGH DURING AND AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

During the Civil War, manufacturing generally and textile manufacturing specifically flourished in Manayunk and throughout Philadelphia, creating great wealth and effecting great change. “In Philadelphia, which was perhaps the largest center of manufacturing in the country, 58 new factories were erected in 1862, 57 in 1863, and 65 in 1864; and the building inspectors reported that those erected in the last-named year were generally very large.”⁸⁴ In Manayunk, for example, Seville Schofield’s carpet and yarn mill, which made blankets for the Union Army during the Civil War, employed 32 and was capitalized at \$15,000 in 1860, but, by 1870, employed 314 and was capitalized at \$200,000.⁸⁵ As industrial Manayunk burgeoned, the managerial class, which ran the mills, pushed up the ridge into Roxborough, building their residences beyond the dirt and noise of the factories and the crowded rowhouses of the millworkers.

As the mills expanded, traffic between the city and northwest Philadelphia increased. The section of Ridge Road running through North Philadelphia, just outside the downtown, began to be called Ridge Avenue in the 1850s. By the 1860s, the name Ridge Avenue began to be used in Roxborough. An advertisement in the *Inquirer* in July 1861 for “Country Boarding at Roxborough ... for the Summer, in a private family, on Ridge avenue, above the sixth mile stone” may be the first use of the name in print to refer to the section of the road in Roxborough.⁸⁶ The Ridge Avenue passenger railway line was started in 1858 and became fully operational the next year. It ran from Arch Street at N. 2nd Street to Manayunk by way of Ridge Avenue. The Ridge Avenue Passenger Railway Company was on formed 8 March 1872 by the

⁸⁴ Emerson Fite, *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North during the Civil War* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), p. 94-95.

⁸⁵ Cited in Table 8.1 in Philip Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1883), p. 296-297.

⁸⁶ *Inquirer*, 13 July 1861, p. 5.

consolidation of the Girard College Passenger Railway Company, which was incorporated in 1858, and the Ridge Avenue & Manayunk Passenger Railway Company, which was incorporated in 1859. Under a proviso in the charter of the Ridge Avenue Passenger Railway Company of 1872, the railway company purchased the Ridge Turnpike Company for \$15,000. Subsequently, the Court of Quarter Sessions freed the turnpike from toll, signifying that the thoroughfare was transitioning from a country road into a city street.⁸⁷ The Roxborough Passenger Railway Company was chartered on 15 April 1869, granting it the right to construct a trolley system from the Wissahickon Station on the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad line to the Sorrel Horse Tavern north of Port Royal or Ship Lane. Train travel to northwest Philadelphia increased as well. In 1847, 69,443 passengers passed through the Wissahickon and Manayunk stations of the Philadelphia, Germantown & Norristown Railroad. By 1860, the annual ridership at the two stations had jumped to 211,883. By 1870, the annual ridership had more than doubled during the ensuing decade, climbing to 455,542.⁸⁸

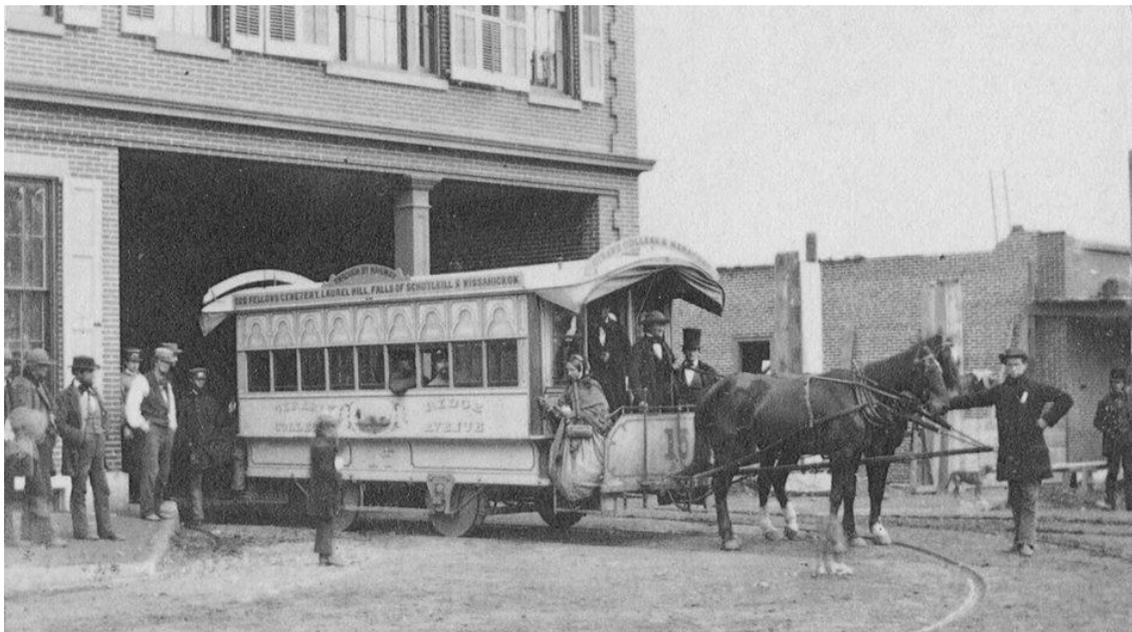


Figure 31. Circa 1865 view of a horse-drawn railway car at the Ridge Avenue car barn, making stops at Odd Fellows Cemetery, Laurel Hill Cemetery, Falls of the Schuylkill, and Wissahickon. The Library Company of Philadelphia.

On 9 April 1873, the state legislature chartered the Manayunk & Roxborough Incline Plane and Railway Company, authorizing it to construct and operate a standard streetcar line powered by “horse or dummy engine” on Ridge Avenue from the Wissahickon to Barren Hill in Montgomery County. The new company was also authorized to construct and operate “an inclined plane from any point on Levering Street, in Manayunk, to extend to the top of the hill in Roxborough ... and to run and haul cars by a stationary steam engine up and down said inclined plane.”⁸⁹ The novel inclined plane proposal was celebrated. “This will be something new for this city, it being the first

⁸⁷ “A Defiant Corporation,” *Inquirer*, 12 June 1888, p. 2; “The Ridge Line Leased,” *The Times*, 1 July 1892, p. 1; “The Ridge Line Leased,” *The Times*, 19 August 1892, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Cited in Table 2-2 in Jeffrey P. Roberts, “Railroads and Downtown: Philadelphia, 1830-1900,” in William W. Cutler III and Howard Gillette Jr., eds., *The Divided Metropolis: Social and Spatial Dimensions of Philadelphia, 1800-1975* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 41.

⁸⁹ *Laws of the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1873* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), p. 883-884.

road of its kind that has ever been built here. ... At first undoubtedly the timid ones will be afraid to patronize the new road, but after they have learned that the inclined planes in the western part of the State have been in operation for a long time without a single accident ... they will ride up and down in the queerly shaped cars with the same feeling of comfort and security that they now experience in a street car."⁹⁰ Despite the enthusiasm for the novel technology, only the standard streetcar line on Ridge Avenue was constructed. The inclined plane up Levering Street from Manayunk to Roxborough was never built.



Figure 32. Postcard of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Roxboro near Wissahickon, Philadelphia, Pa., 5712 Ridge Avenue, c. 1910.

On 14 April 1868, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania approved a measure to take much of the land bounding the Wissahickon Creek in Philadelphia as an addition to Fairmount Park to ensure the protection of the purity of the water and the preservation of the beauty of its scenery. Over the next several decades, the Fairmount Park Commission acquired more than 2,000 acres of land in the creek valley and systematically demolished most of the industrial facilities as it returned the Wissahickon Valley to its natural appearance. In the 1930s, the Works Project Administration, a New Deal agency, demolished the remaining mill buildings, removing the last traces of what had been one of the most industrialized landscapes of eighteenth-century America and constructing rustic buildings for recreational uses.⁹¹

⁹⁰ "Proposed New Railway from Manayunk to Roxborough," *Inquirer*, 25 April 1874, p. 2. See also "New Passenger Railway," *Inquirer* 12 August 1873, p. 2; *Inquirer*, 4 January 1875, p. 6; *Inquirer*, 9 September 1893, p. 2.

⁹¹ David R. Contosta and Carol Franklin, *Metropolitan Paradise: The Struggle for Nature in the City - Philadelphia's Wissahickon Valley, 1620-2020* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2010).

At about the same time the City began acquiring the valley of the Wissahickon Creek to protect the Schuylkill River's water quality, it also began construction of a reservoir system in upper Roxborough. By the end of the 1850s, the Philadelphia Water Department determined that the northwestern section of the city, including Roxborough, Manayunk, and Chestnut Hill, would need to be served by its own water works. The high ground in this area was far above the reach of existing reservoirs in the city, which supplied water by gravity. Wells in populated areas were becoming unpalatable and in many cases unhealthy. "Manayunk and Roxborough [contain] a population numbering about twelve thousand," Henry P.M. Birkinbine, chief engineer of the Philadelphia Water Department, wrote in a report to City Councils on 8 September 1859. "Of these, at least three thousand are operatives employed in the different factories. This part of the city is much in need of a supply of water for culinary, manufacturing and sanitary purposes, and for protection against fire, as the property in the manufactories is of great value, and now almost entirely without protection against fire.... From the dense population of parts of the district, the wells have become so contaminated, that the water in but few of them is now fit for culinary purposes. The necessity of a supply for manufacturing and mechanical purposes is evident." Birkinbine proposed a water works along the Schuylkill, with a pumping station above the Flat Rock Dam at Shawmont and reservoirs located higher up the steep banks of the river, which would provide water by gravity through distribution mains in the streets. This system would serve not only the immediate vicinity, but other areas of the city as well. Construction began on these works after the end of the Civil War, with the pumping station at Shawmont completed in 1869. The steam-powered pumps forced water uphill into a reservoir (about 366 feet above city datum) located at present-day Eva and Dearnley Streets in Roxborough. To increase the capacity of the Roxborough Works and allow water to flow by gravity to a larger part of the city, the pumping station on the Schuylkill was expanded in the 1890s, and a much larger reservoir was built higher up the ridge (the Upper Reservoir, about 414 feet above city datum), along Port Royal Avenue about a block from Ridge Avenue. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the City constructed slow-sand filter plants at the Lower and Upper Roxborough Reservoirs. Once it went into operation citywide in 1909, the filtration system greatly reduced the incidence of water-borne diseases such as typhoid fever, which had been transmitted by the untreated (and sometimes sewage-tainted) river water. By the 1940s, rapid-sand filters began to supplant slow-sand filters as the technology of choice for water purification systems. By the early 1960s, filtration plants elsewhere in the city had been updated with this new technology as well as other automation features. More efficient and powerful electric pumps also meant that water could be delivered to the highest parts of the city from other pumping stations and reservoirs. "Unsuited to the needs of a modern city, the [Roxborough] water works were rapidly becoming obsolete and their capacity was too limited to meet future community growth," stated the 1962 annual report of the Water Department. That year, the pumping station and two filter plants were closed down, and the upper reservoir was drained of its 147 million gallons. Today, underground storage basins at the Upper and Lower Roxborough sites are now filled by the pumps of the Queen Lane plant.⁹²

⁹² Adapted from Adam Levine, "Watershed History: Roxborough Water Works," *Watersheds Blog*, Philadelphia Water Department, 19 May 2011.

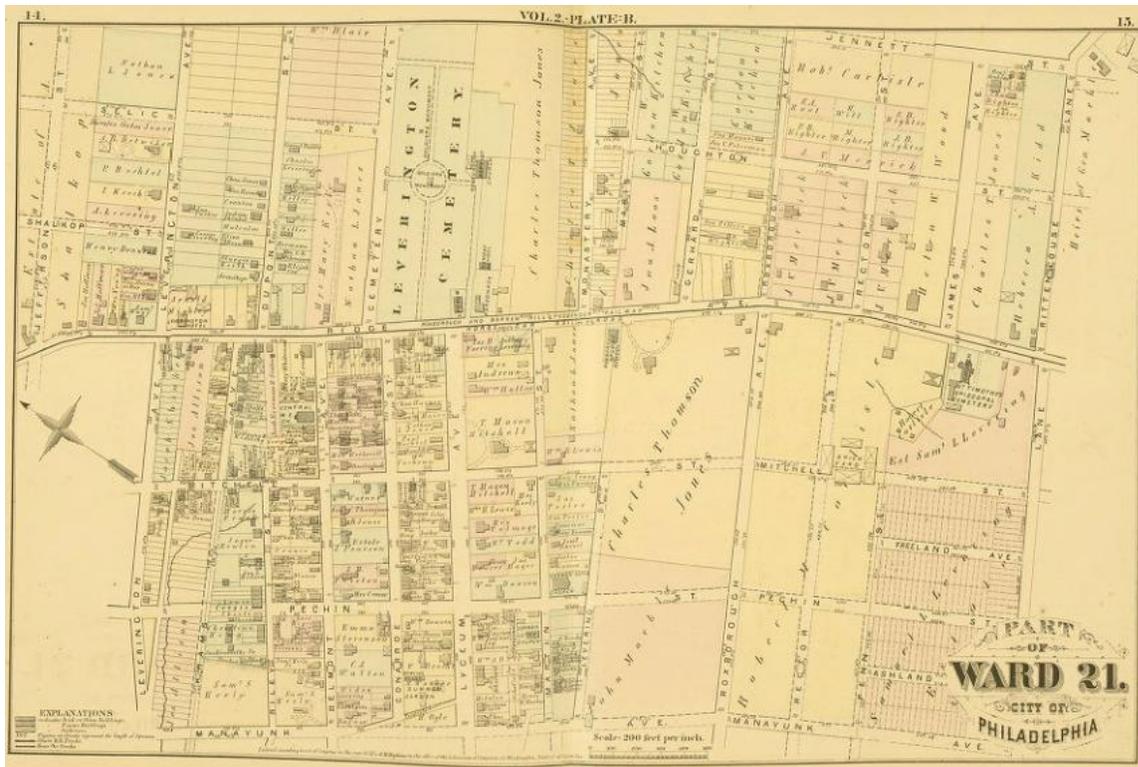


Figure 33. This map evidences the development of the Leverington neighborhood after the Civil War, from G.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia*, Vol. 2, Wards 21 and 28, Plate B, 1875.

The City Atlas of Philadelphia by G.M. Hopkins clearly shows that Leverington had emerged as an identifiable suburban residential district by 1875 (Figure 33).⁹³ West of Ridge Road, between Levering Street at the south, Leverington Avenue at the north, and Manayunk Avenue at the west, a highly developed suburban neighborhood of large detached and semi-detached houses was nearly built out by 1875. East of Ridge, large suburban houses were depicted on the 1875 map on Leverington and other streets. Smaller suburban houses, primarily twins, were evident on Dupont, Monastery, Roxborough, and other streets extending east from Ridge. In 1875, large estates including those of Dr. William Camac and J.V. Merrick occupied southernmost tip of the ridge in the Wissahickon neighborhood, mirroring the grand estates across the valley, on the southern bank of the Wissahickon along School House Lane. Little had changed in the remainder of Roxborough, which persisted as a linear village along Ridge Road surrounded by farmers' fields. The 1875 map depicted the Wissahickon & Barren Hill Horse Railway running the length of Ridge Road out into Montgomery County, with a horse car barn west of Port Royal or Ship Lane, at the former Sorrel Horse Tavern.

The population of the 21st Ward grew considerably in the late nineteenth century, from 13,861 in 1870; to 18,699 in 1880; to 26,900 in 1890; to 32,168 in 1900.⁹⁴ In the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, much of the remaining open land adjacent to Manayunk in the Wissahickon and Leverington sections of Roxborough, south of Fountain Street was subdivided and built upon, primarily for residential use. For example, by 1885, large single and twin Second Empire houses

⁹³ G. M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia*, Vol. 2, Wards 21 and 28, 1875.

⁹⁴ In 1867, the former Penn Township portion of the 21st Ward, with School House Lane as the dividing line, was split off to form the 28th Ward. Act of 14 March 1867, §1, P.L. 460. Population numbers from: John Daly and Allen Weinberg, *Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivisions* (Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, 1966), p. 100.

lined Sumac and Rochele in the Wissahickon neighborhood, provided elegant housing for managers associated with Manayunk's textile mills and the Pencoyd Iron Works, which was located across the Schuylkill River in Montgomery County, but linked to Roxborough by bridges. However, large pockets of open land remained south of Fountain, especially to the east of Ridge Avenue. Commercial and institutional buildings were primarily located on Ridge Avenue. To the north of Fountain Street, Roxborough remained a linear village along Ridge Avenue with zones of denser development around Shawmont Avenue and Manatawna Avenue. Away from Ridge Avenue, north of Fountain Street, the land continued to be farmed as it had for nearly 200 years.

During the decades after the Civil War, numerous religious and other institutions were established in the Leverington and Wissahickon neighborhoods of Roxborough to support the growing population. The Central Methodist Episcopal Church was established on Green Lane west of Ridge Avenue in 1870. The Leverington Presbyterian Church was established in 1878 and consecrated its first church building at Leverington and Ridge in 1880. The Wissahickon Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1882; the congregation consecrated its church building at Terrace and Salaignac Streets in 1883.⁹⁵ The Wissahickon Baptist Church, on Terrace near Dawson, was established in 1884 at a mission chapel. The church building was erected in 1889.⁹⁶ St. Stephens Episcopal Church at the corner of Terrace and Hermit was established in 1886 from a mission that was formed in 1871. The Talmage Reformed Church at Pechin and Rector was formed in 1889. Wissahickon Presbyterian Church at the intersection of Ridge and Manayunk was organized in 1892 and the church building was completed in 1894. The Galilee Baptist Church, an African-American congregation, incorporated in 1899 and constructed a church building to designs by architects Kennedy & Kelsey at the corner of Roxborough Avenue and Mitchell Street in 1901.⁹⁷ During this period, only one church was established to the north, in the sparsely populated rural section of Roxborough; the Manatawna Baptist Church on Ridge Avenue was established in 1872.⁹⁸

In addition to churches, several religious-based social service agencies were established in the southern sections of Roxborough during the late nineteenth century. St. Timothy's Working Men's Club and Institute was founded in 1872 to provide social and educational opportunities for working men. The club's building, located at the intersection of Ridge Avenue, Terrace Street, and Vassar Street, was designed by architect Charles M. Burns Jr. and completed in 1877 (Figure 34). It included a library with reading and billiard rooms. The club hosted baseball and cricket teams and offered free night classes in mechanical drawing, engineering, and chemistry. The club ceased operations in 1912 owing to declining membership. The Roxborough Home for Women was established in 1887 on East Leverington to provide housing and support for Protestant women. The Memorial Hospital and House of Mercy of Saint Timothy's Church, Roxborough opened in 1890. By 1896, the name was changed to St. Timothy's Memorial Hospital and House of Mercy, Roxborough and, in 1920 to the Memorial Hospital, Roxborough. Located at Ridge Avenue and James Street, the hospital was built on

⁹⁵ "Wissahickon M.E. Church," *Inquirer*, 30 October 1883, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Inquirer*, 11 January 1889, p. 7.

⁹⁷ "Baptist Church Can Incorporate," *The Times*, 29 December 1899, p. 3; "The Latest News in Real Estate," *Inquirer*, 24 November 1900, p. 15; "New Church to Cost \$13,000," *The Times*, 3 December 1900, p. 11.

⁹⁸ *Inquirer*, 18 May 1872, p. 2.

land and with funds donated by J. Vaughan Merrick. The hospital was under the control of St. Timothy's Protestant Episcopal Church until 1920.⁹⁹



ST. TIMOTHY'S WORKINGMEN'S CLUB AND INSTITUTE,

ROXBOROUGH, PHILADELPHIA.

Figure 34. St. Timothy's Working Men's Club and Institute, 5164 Ridge Avenue, Charles M. Burns, architect, 1877.

As George W. and Walter S. Bromley's *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* of 1895 shows, Manayunk and Lower Roxborough, south of Fountain Street, continued to be densely developed during the later nineteenth century as a suburban residential district for people employed in Manayunk and downtown Philadelphia. Commercial activity in Roxborough was primarily confined to Ridge Avenue. Away from Ridge Avenue, Upper Roxborough as well as the eastern reaches of Lower Roxborough along the Wissahickon, which were inaccessible to commuters, remained open land.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ "A Generous Gift," *The Times*, 19 March 1890, p. 6; "The Merricks' Munificent Gift," *Inquirer*, 12 June 1890, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ George W. & Walter S. Bromley, Civil Engineers, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co., 1895), plates 32-34.

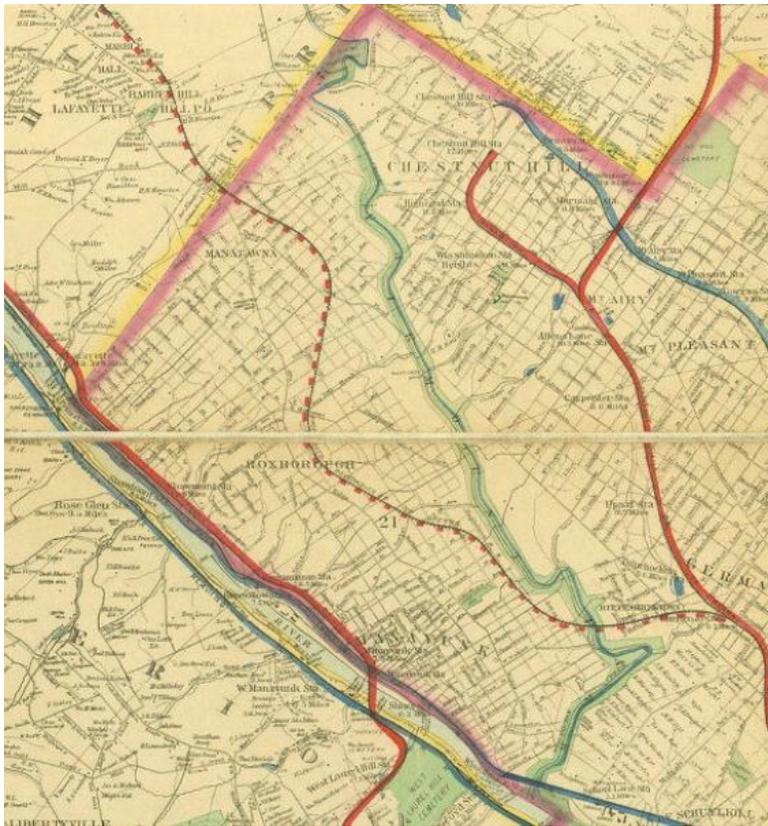


Figure 35. Map showing the proposed route of the Roxborough Railroad as a dashed red line, c. 1895.

In the late nineteenth century, Henry Houston, a wealthy businessman and real estate investor with connections to the Pennsylvania Railroad, began to acquire large tracts of open land in Upper Roxborough.¹⁰¹ Houston also held large tracts of land in Germantown, Mt. Airy, and Chestnut Hill and had built the Philadelphia, Germantown & Chestnut Hill Railroad (now the Chestnut Hill West line) in the 1880s to provide easy access to the land west of Germantown Avenue for suburban development.¹⁰² About 1890, Houston and others began promoting a suburban commuter rail line in Roxborough to open the rural land for suburban development. In July 1891, William F. Dixon, a paper manufacturer, City Councilman, and 21st Ward powerbroker was granted a charter for the Roxborough Railroad Company, which authorized it to build a line 10 miles long from the Philadelphia, Germantown & Chestnut Hill Railroad line at Cheltenham Avenue and Pulaski Street in Germantown, across the Wissahickon, through the eastern and northern reaches of Roxborough, and into Montgomery County, where it would connect with the Trenton cut-off (Figure 35).¹⁰³ As Dixon explained, the railroad was intended to “open up a territory of the city which is now virtually isolated, and one which is badly in need of railroad facilities.”¹⁰⁴ Survey work and negotiations for the right-of-way were initiated in the

¹⁰¹ On Henry Houston, see J.M. Duffin, *A Guide to the Henry Howard Houston Estate Papers, 1698-1989* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, The University Archives and Records Center, 1989).

¹⁰² The Philadelphia, Germantown & Chestnut Hill Railroad was incorporated on 2 January 1883 and 6.75-mile line between Germantown Junction and Chestnut Hill was constructed in 1883 and 1884.

¹⁰³ “William Dixon’s Railroad,” *Inquirer*, 18 July 1891, p. 3; “Surveys for a New Road,” *Times*, 23 July 1891, p.4; “The New Trenton Cut-Off,” *Inquirer*, 10 September 1891, p. 4; “Roxborough’s Railroad Extension,” *Inquirer*, 11 September 1891, p. 8; “Roxborough’s New Railroad,” *Inquirer*, 29 October 1891, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ “Councils’ Committee at Work: The Roxborough Railroad Seeking a Route,” *Times* 11 September 1891, p. 6.

summer of 1891. In 1892, the Pennsylvania Railroad, which also operated the Philadelphia, Germantown & Chestnut Hill Railroad, agreed to manage the Roxborough line. The railroad project, however, hit several snags including property owners who “demanded exorbitant prices” for their land. Evidencing the troubles, the police were called to prevent the railroad from breaking ground in 1893.¹⁰⁵ The project languished. In 1910, the Pennsylvania Railroad abandoned the Roxborough Railroad project because “it was finally determined that the costs of the right of way would be far in excess” of \$80,000, the amount the railroad had agreed to pay in 1892. Charles E. Pugh, the First Vice President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, explained to Philadelphia’s Mayor John Reyburn that “the advent of electricity has made the trolley car the proper medium for doing this character of work, and the facilities of the steam railroads, already very crowded, should be depended upon for taking care of long distance travel.”¹⁰⁶

SECOND EMPIRE ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

The Second Empire style was a dominant style for American houses constructed between 1860 and 1880, although the first examples were built in the 1850s and late examples were not uncommon in the 1880s. The contemporaneous Italianate and Gothic Revival styles were part of a Picturesque movement which looked to the romantic past for inspiration. In contrast, the Second Empire style was considered very modern, for it imitated the latest French building fashions. The distinctive roof design of the style was named for the seventeenth-century French architect François Mansart. Its use was extensively revived in France during the reign of Napoleon III (1852-70), France’s Second Empire, from which the style takes its name. Exhibitions in Paris in 1855 and 1867 helped to popularize the style in England, from whence it spread to the United States. The boxy roof line was considered particularly functional because it permitted a full upper story of usable attic space. For this reason, the style became popular for the remodeling of earlier buildings as well as for new construction. The Second Empire style was used for many public buildings in the United States including Philadelphia’s City Hall. It passed from fashion following the panic of 1873 and the subsequent economic depression. The Second Empire style is characterized by its distinctive roof, a steep, dual-pitched, hipped roof with dormers and molded cornices at the base and peak. Below the cornice line, the Second Empire style shares much with the Italianate style including decorative brackets, ornate door and window surrounds, double doors, and one-story porches.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ “A Railroad Checked,” *Inquirer*, 17 May 1893, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ “Roxborough Line Will Not Be Built,” *Inquirer*, 25 June 1910, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Drawn from Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 239-243.



Figure 36. Second Empire house at 5504 Ridge Avenue, c. 1880.

Numerous detached and semi-detached houses in the Second Empire style were constructed in Roxborough in the years after the Civil War, as the area transitioned from a linear village to a suburb. Houses with the distinctive mansard roofs can be found throughout the lower northwest section of Philadelphia, but are especially prevalent in the Wissahickon and Leverington neighborhoods, which were intensely developed following the war. The Second Empire house at 5504 Ridge Avenue, which dates to about 1880, is an excellent example of the style (Figure 36). The gracious home is set on a large corner lot with a schist retaining wall. The three-story schist house displays many of the character-defining features of the Second Empire style including a concave mansard roof with fish-scale slate cladding and dormers with decorative hoods, bracketed wood cornice, segmental-arch windows, wraparound porch supported by Doric columns, two-story bay window, and tall windows at the porch. The Second Empire twin at 5550-52 Ridge Avenue is also an excellent example of the style and shares many of the same character-defining features as its relative to the east at 5504 Ridge Avenue. Notable are its arched dormers with two-over-two arched windows. The Second Empire twin at 8155-57 Ridge Avenue is likewise an excellent example of the style, even though the southern half has lost its bracketed porch. Notable is the cornice with broad entablature and large brackets.

QUEEN ANNE ARCHITECTURE IN ROXBOROUGH TOWNSHIP

The Queen Anne style was the dominant style of domestic building in the United States from about 1880 to 1900; and persisted with decreasing popularity through the first decade of the twentieth century. The style was named and popularized by a group of nineteenth-century English architects led by Richard Norman Shaw. The name is rather inappropriate, for the historical precedents used by Shaw and his followers had little to do with Queen Anne or the formal Renaissance architecture that was dominant during her reign between 1702 and 1714. Instead, they borrowed heavily from late medieval models of the preceding Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. The half-timbered Watts-Sherman House built in Newport Rhode Island in 1874 is generally considered to be the first American example of the style. A few high-style examples followed in the 1870s and, by the 1880s, the style was being spread throughout the country by pattern books and one of the first architectural magazines, *The American Architect and Building*

News. Large-scale manufacture of pre-cut architectural details and the expanding railroad network by which they were shipped aided in the growth and popularization of the style.¹⁰⁸

Queen Anne buildings are generally comprised of multiple, intersecting volumes, resulting in more complex forms than their predecessors. These asymmetrical, complex forms are created by combining various volumes including cross gables, engaged towers and turrets, steeply pitched roofs with irregular shapes, and bay windows. Queen Anne buildings often include decorative brick or stonework, ornate gable detailing, shaped slate or wood shingle patterning, large porches with complex woodwork, multi-paned windows with clear and colored glass.

The twin buildings at 6222 and 6224 Ridge Avenue, which date to about 1885, are excellent examples of the Queen Anne style as applied to semidetached buildings and have some detailing that might be better classified as the Stick style, a variant or close relative to Queen Anne (Figure 37). The three-story buildings are stone at the first floor, and fish-scale shingles at the second floor and mansard. The shingles create a vibrant pattern of light and shadow. The dormers in the mansard have highly unusual hoods or crowns supported by large brackets. The cornice is also supported by brackets and features fish scales. The second-floor windows are double hungs with small and large panes in the upper sash. The porch has turned posts with arched latticework panels between them. Other buildings in the saw-tooth row of twins also have Queen Anne features, but none characterize the Queen Anne style with the exuberance of those at 6222 and 6224 Ridge Avenue.

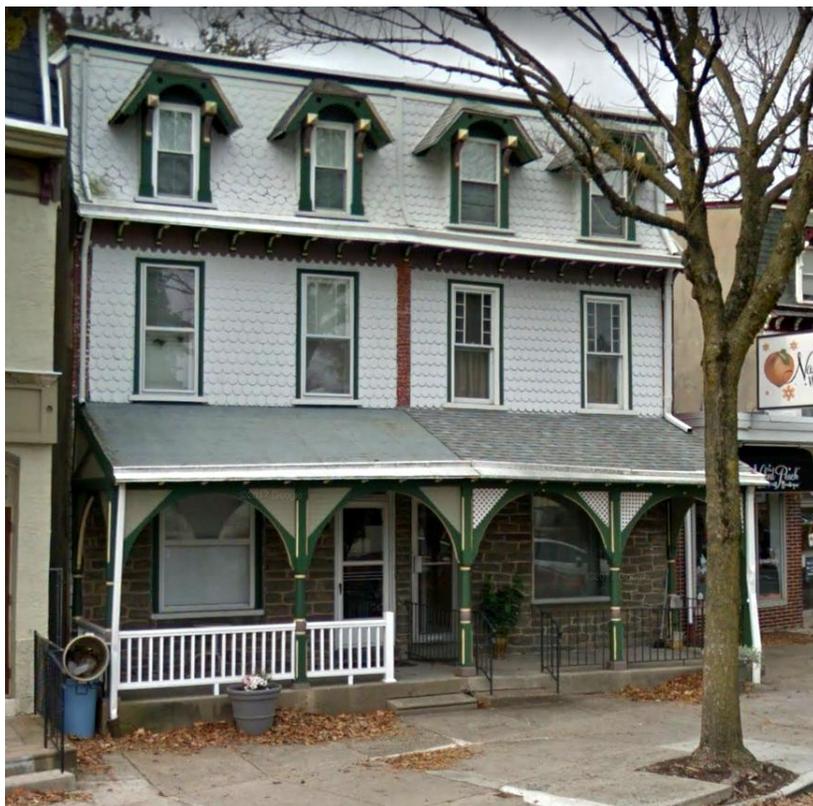


Figure 37. Queen Anne buildings at 6222 and 6224 Ridge Avenue, c. 1885.

¹⁰⁸ Drawn from Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 262-268.

The house at 5535 Ridge Avenue, with its corner turret topped by a conical cap and finial, is another good example of the Queen Anne style. In addition to the turret, the mansard roof, bracketed dormers, and wrap-around porch all characterize the style. The house at 6904 Ridge Avenue is likewise an example of the Queen Anne style, owing to its turret, oversized dormer, and wrap-around porch.

ROXBOROUGH AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Although the Roxborough Railroad failed to provide access to the rural sections of Roxborough for suburban development, the construction of the Walnut Lane Bridge over the Wissahickon in 1907 and 1908 did better connect Roxborough to Germantown and open the way for development of the open land overlooking the valley (Figure 38). Until the bridge opened at the dawn of the automobile era in 1908, traveling between Germantown and Roxborough required the steep descent into the gorge and the equally steep climb out of it, an extremely difficult task in the era of horse-drawn carriages and wagons. Constructed by engineers of the City of Philadelphia, the concrete arch bridge, the longest single-span masonry arch in the world when completed, was considered an engineering marvel.¹⁰⁹

While the Walnut Lane Bridge offered a convenient connection to Germantown, Roxborough's boosters still wanted a direct connection to burgeoning North Philadelphia and to the downtown beyond that did not require negotiating the steep hill up the Ridge from the Schuylkill or the deep Wissahickon gorge. The Henry Avenue Bridge, which carries Henry Avenue over the Wissahickon and Lincoln Drive, was contemplated as early as 1912 as part of a subway extension plan, but was not implemented for nearly two decades. By the time it was implemented, the automobile had supplanted all other forms of transportation. After many years of planning and false starts, the bridge was designed by prominent engineers Ralph Modjeski and Frank Masters in collaboration with renowned architect Paul Cret in 1927, constructed in the early 1930s, and completed in May 1932. At the same time, Henry Avenue was extended from East Falls, across the Wissahickon, and through Roxborough to Ridge Avenue in the Andorra section. The wide, four-lane boulevard, which runs along the western boundary of the Wissahickon section of Fairmount Park, was designed for automobiles, not horses or trolleys, and opened the remainder of Roxborough for suburban development. Although the mass transit

¹⁰⁹ Contemporary accounts of the Walnut Lane Bridge also include "The Walnut Lane Bridge Across the Wissahickon Valley," *The Press*, 27 April 1907; "Bridge Over the Wissahickon Creek and Its Main Span," *Public Ledger*, 11 July 1907; "Bridge False Work Collapses; One Dead," *Public Ledger*, 28 December 1907. On the design and construction, see George S. Webster, "Annual Report of the Board of Surveys," in *Second Annual Message of John E. Reyburn, Mayor of the City of Philadelphia ... for the Ending December 31, 1908* (Philadelphia, 1909), II, 328-329; George S. Webster and Henry H. Quimby, "Walnut Lane Bridge, Philadelphia," *Transactions of the American Society of Civil Engineers* 35, no. 6 (August 1909): 587-625; "The Walnut Lane Bridge, Philadelphia," *Engineering Record* 54, no. 20 (17 November 1906): 542-544; "Moving the Centering of the Walnut Lane Arch at Philadelphia," *Engineering News* 58, no. 7 (15 August 1907): 168; "The Walnut Lane Bridge, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia," *Engineering Record* 56, no. 9 (31 August 1907): 222-226; J.A. Stewart, "The New Bridge Over the Wissahickon at Philadelphia," *Scientific American* 97, no. 22 (30 November 1907): 392-393; George Maurice Heller, "The Design of the Centering for the 233-Ft. Arch Span, Walnut Lane Bridge, Phila., Pa.," *Proceedings of the Engineers' Club of Philadelphia* 25, no. 3 (July 1908): 257-278; "The Effect of Temperature on the Walnut Lane Concrete Arch," *Engineering News* 62, no. 15 (7 October 1909): 376; "Walnut-Lane Bridge, Philadelphia, Pa.," *The Builder* 98, no. 3516 (25 June 1910): 727-730; "The Largest Single-Span Concrete Bridge in the World," *World To-Day* 15 (December 1908): 1293; Frederic Blount Warren, "The Walnut Lane, Philadelphia, Bridge: A Majestic Concrete Structure," *Scientific American Supplement* 66, no. 1715 (14 November 1908): 306.

facilities were built into the bridge, no transit line was run along Henry Avenue and the bridge's transit facilities were never used. Even before the bridge was completed, real estate agents were marketing suburban homes along Henry Avenue. For example, in 1927 real estate agents Mason & Bruhns advertised an "exceptional home 'In the Open Suburbs of Philadelphia,' 613 Walnut Lane at Henry avenue, adjoining the Wissahickon Valley and proposed golf course. New Henry Avenue Bridge will enhance value."¹¹⁰

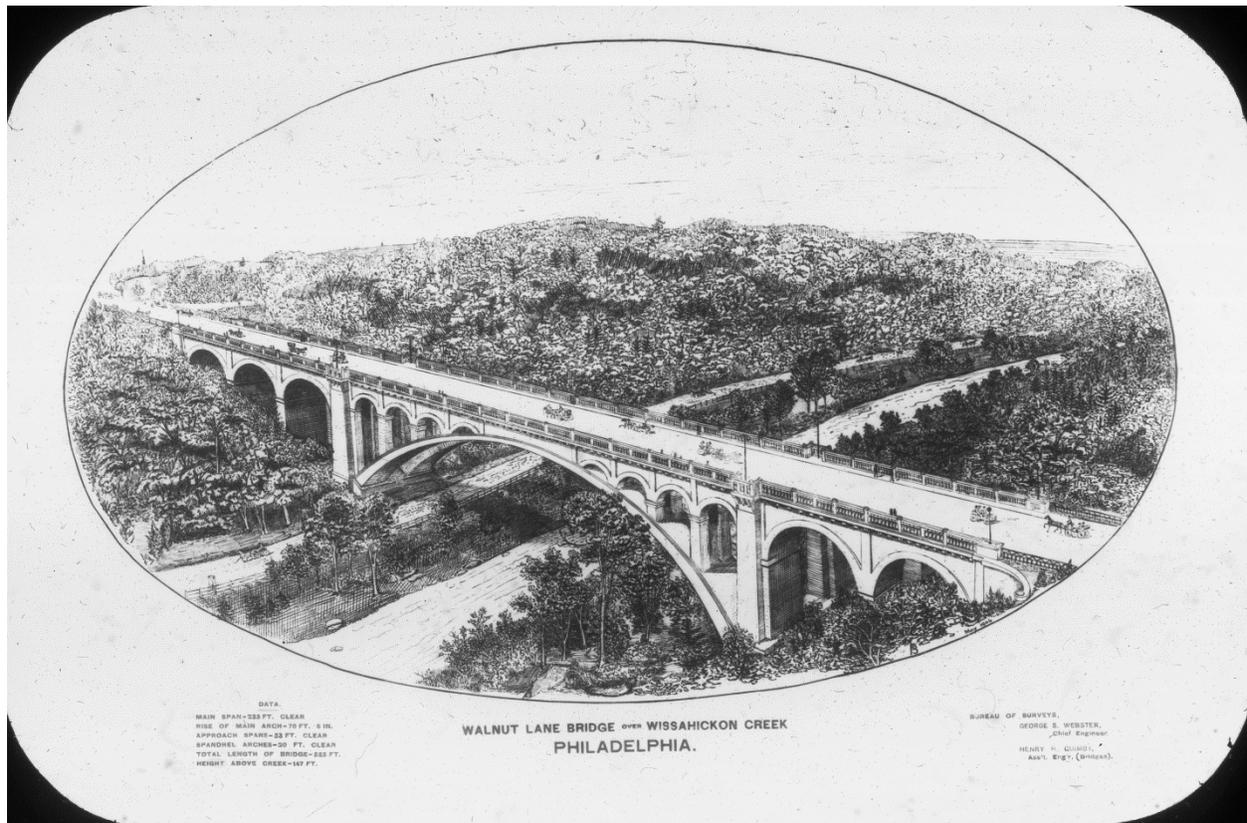


Figure 38. Walnut Lane Bridge over the Wissahickon Creek, 1908.

In 1907, while the Walnut Lane Bridge was under construction, Fowler & Kelly published an aerial view of Roxborough from West Laurel Hill Cemetery drawn by Thaddeus Mortimer Fowler (Figure 39). The bird's-eye, which includes the incomplete Walnut Lane Bridge, depicts Roxborough, with its dense suburban development in Wissahickon and Leverington and its open rural land to the north and east, in its final moments before the automobile would forever alter development patterns and the built environment in the lower northwest section of the city.

¹¹⁰ *Inquirer*, 27 November 1927, p. 69.



Figure 39. Thaddeus Mortimer, *Birds Eye View of Manayunk, Wissahickon-Roxborough from West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1907*, published by Fowler & Kelly, Morrisville, Pa., 1907.

CONCLUSION

The Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District satisfies four Criteria for Designation (a, c, d, and j) as delineated in Section 14-1004(4) of the Philadelphia Code, the City's historic preservation ordinance. Paraphrasing the criteria, the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District:

- (a) Has significant character, interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth and Nation and is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by distinctive architectural styles;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles and engineering specimens; and,
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social and historical heritage of the community.

The Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District warrants the Philadelphia Historical Commission's designation, protection, and preservation.

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