Forgotten Philadelphia
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Lost Architecture of the Quaker City

THOMAS H. KEELS

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Introduction

I repeat your glory, BROAD STREET STATION!
The proper shrine, the true Main Line,
Of Immortality the Intimation;
Such offsteam blowing,
Such bells, and hells of coming and going,
Suburban couscatchers' dainty snouts,
Beautiful barytone All ahoora board shouts,
Drive wheels, and firebox glowing... .

Goodbye, Goodbye! No wonder I
Preserve in pure imagination
My memory of BROAD STREET STATION.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY
"Elegy in a Railroad Station: Obit for Broad Street, Philadelphia, 1952"

At 9:57 PM on Sunday, April 27, 1952, the last train rolled out of Philadelphia’s venerable Pennsylvania Railroad Station, better known as Broad Street Station. Although regular service had ended the day before, an eighteen-car train, the Philadelphia Orchestra Special, was scheduled as part of the closing ceremonies for the landmark that had dominated the northwest corner of Broad and Market streets for seventy years.

Seven hundred passengers presented souvenir tickets to ride the Special as far as North Philadelphia Station. Among them was eighty-four-year-old Mrs. Henry P. Baily of Overbrook who, on Opening Day, December 5, 1881, had boarded a train out of the new station, its exterior bright red brick and shiny terra cotta, the glass panes of its vaulted train shed clear and unclouded. Besides the passengers, 3,000 observers packed the station floor and boarding platform on that rainy April night in 1952, catching their last glimpse of the landmark before demolition began.

Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, who had treated the crowd to a special concert, were guests of honor on the eponymous train. As orchestra members played “Auld Lang Syne” from the rear platform of the observation car, passengers and spectators sang along, filling the vast station with their voices. After the train departed along the elevated viaduct known as the Chinese Wall, heading west to Thirtieth Street before turning north for its final trek, the now-silent witnesses disappeared into the rainy night, leaving Broad Street Station dark and deserted.

This ceremony was the culmination of a long farewell to the station, a prolonged mourning for a soon-to-be-razed building unique in Philadelphia history. Even though an agreement to demolish Broad Street Station had been in place since 1925, the destruction of the building (postponed by the Depression and World War II) took countless Philadelphians by surprise, much like the death of an elderly but vital aunt whom one had assumed would live forever. Philadelphians’ sorrow transcended the loss of a familiar, lifelong locale, the scene of countless memorable meetings, arrivals, and departures.

Facing page: Crowds wait for the departure of the Philadelphia Orchestra Special at Broad Street Station on the evening of April 27, 1952. At far right, behind the entrance gates, the orchestra serenades the throng of passengers and well-wishers. (Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives, Philadelphia.)
Many mourned the loss of an important symbol in their city’s life. Broad Street Station represented the Pennsylvania Railroad—known simply as “the Railroad” to the consternation of its older competitor, the Reading—when that company reigned supreme as the largest and richest corporation in the world. The Railroad employed thousands of Philadelphians, enriched thousands more through its rock-solid bonds and stock, and provided comfortable bourgeois enclaves with its development of the Main Line, Chestnut Hill, and other suburbs. The Railroad was the epitome of what sociologist E. Digby Baltzell called “a very Proper Philadelphian business enterprise.”

The Railroad’s presence was a talisman clutched by Philadelphians as their city stumbled through the treacherous postwar world. Its technological and industrial prowess reinforced Philadelphia’s status as the Workshop of the World, while the city’s employers fled, leaving their empty factories to decay. As the largest and busiest passenger terminal in the United States, Broad Street Station reassured Philadelphians that their city was a major crossroads, even as it gained a reputation as a provincial backwater. As long as the Railroad’s iron tentacles stretched from Broad Street to cover the United States east of the Mississippi, Philadelphians knew they exerted influence over the nation, even as they fell further behind New York, Chicago, and even, Los Angeles. While Broad Street Station stood, the stable, secure, soot-covered Philadelphia of the past century—with its immutable fixtures of Rittenhouse Square, the Union League, the Girard Bank, the Assemblies, the Bulletin, and a solidly Republican City Hall—remained intact.

Perhaps it was the realization that this late Victorian city was already in its death throes that led even the most nostalgic Philadelphians to accept Broad Street Station’s destruction as inevitable. Aside from a few wistful letters to the Bulletin and Inquirer, no organized attempt was made to preserve the station, unlike later campaigns to save the Jayne Building and other nineteenth-century landmarks. The day the last train pulled out of Broad Street Station, an Inquirer editorial called the terminal’s closing “a new chapter in civic progress,” noting that this event opened the way not only for the redevelopment of Center City, but for the consolidation of train service at the modern and commodious Thirtieth Street Station.

The following morning, Monday, April 28, 1952. Mayor Joseph S. Clark expressed the city’s general ambivalence when he told reporters: “I’m sorry to see the station go, in a way, but it’s in the interest of progress. What else can I say without sounding corny?” Then, as press cameras flashed, Clark and Matthew H. McCloskey Jr., whose demolition firm would raze the station, smiled as they wedged a crowbar into a terra cotta railing atop the rain-swept roof of the building and pried out a brick. Below, workers ripped up rails from the Chinese Wall, removed brass stairway railings, and began to dismantle the massive clock that stood over the main entrance at Broad and Market streets.

McCloskey was smiling because his firm was being paid $157,500 to demolish Broad Street Station, plus all the materials it could salvage and sell. Clark was smiling because, less than four months after taking office as the first Democratic mayor in decades, he was clearing the way for one of the largest urban renewal projects in U.S. history. Broad Street Station and its Chinese Wall would give way to Penn Center, a modern complex of office blocks, parking garages, sunken terraces, and pedestrian walkways. Narrow Filbert Street, crowded with warehouses and express offices, would become expansive Pennsylvania Boulevard, lined with gleaming glass-and-steel towers like New York’s Park Avenue.

In the minds of progressive (and Democratic) Philadelphians, Clark was liberating the city from its corrupt (and Republican) past. To them, the Railroad represented not power and prestige but political chicanery (including the scheme that had rammed the Chinese Wall, 2,000 feet long and 55 feet wide, through the center of the city), inefficiency (trains had to back out of the stub-end station, slowing travel time, to a more modern and comfortable station less than a mile away), and corporate indifference.

By exorcising the ghosts of his city’s past, Clark was bringing Philadelphia into the twentieth century only fifty-two years late.
With that crowbar, Clark struck a blow against the Dickensian city of smoke-belching locomotives, soot-encrusted brick, endless miles of decrepit rowhouses, sweaty laborers, and crooked ward bosses. In its place would rise a bright new world, where white-collar professionals would drive shiny automobiles from neat suburbs along modern expressways to sparkling, glass-walled offices, generating taxes to enable an army of competent, scrupulous bureaucrats to move the city closer toward perfection.

And after the bulldozers finished with Broad Street Station, Clark and his planning czar, Edmund N. Bacon, would have them cross the street to City Hall and raze that symbol-encrusted Victorian pile (except for its tower), replacing it with a public plaza to further symbolize Philadelphia’s new transparency, modernity, and civic virtue.

The divergent emotions triggered by the destruction of a venerable landmark like Broad Street Station—grief over the loss of an irreplaceable historic and architectural gem, versus a strong faith in progress and pride in the embrace of the modern and new—is one of the central themes of *Forgotten Philadelphia: Lost Architecture of the Quaker City*. It is a theme that reverberates throughout Philadelphia history, from the filling in of the caves along the Delaware that sheltered the area’s seventeenth-century settlers, causing older inhabitants to sigh over the loss of their village’s innocent ways, to the 2006 dismantling of Romaldo Giurgola’s Liberty Bell Pavilion, viewed by some as a masterpiece of modernist architecture and by others as a dated eyesore.

Modern Philadelphians—motivated by nostalgia, aesthetics, architectural appreciation, historical awareness, or a combination of these factors—look at the destruction of a Broad Street Station or a Slate Roof House and wonder how their forefathers could have been so shortsighted or self-centered as to permit the loss of such relics. Greed and myopia certainly played a major role in the death of many buildings in this book. In other cases, however, the destroyers were driven by a sincere desire to substitute a functional and
modern structure for one rendered obsolete by population growth and movement, technological advances, changes in the size and scale of enterprises, evolving social needs, or some other shift.

By studying the stories of Philadelphia’s demolished structures, *Forgotten Philadelphia* explores the symbiotic relationship between the city’s architecture and the political, economic, and social forces that have shaped the city since its founding. While many books describe the reasons behind the creation of memorable buildings, far fewer examine the factors leading to their destruction (the most notable being Nathan Silver’s 1967 classic, *Lost New York*). Instead of simply offering a nostalgic glimpse of things that aren’t there anymore, *Forgotten Philadelphia* attempts to define the changes in the city’s history capable of turning a building from landmark to landfill, often in only a few years.

As the first book to focus specifically on Philadelphia’s demolished architecture, *Forgotten Philadelphia* also challenges the relatively static architectural image of our city. Mention Philadelphia to most Americans, and the first images that come to mind are Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, possibly followed by Carpenters Hall, the

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*By November 1952, demolition of the station was well under way and the ornamented columns of the Frank Furness–designed waiting room were exposed to the sky.*

(© Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives, Philadelphia.)
Betsy Ross House, and Christ Church. Thanks to these structures and to the city’s possessing, in the form of Society Hill, the largest American collection of existing colonial and Federal buildings, there is a perception that Philadelphia has never torn down a single building. Unlike its dynamically destructive neighbor New York, Philadelphia is seen as preserved intact, like a prehistoric insect in a lump of amber.

In reality, Philadelphia has destroyed as many notable buildings by important architects as has any other world-class city. Its explosive and continuous growth during the first 250 years of its existence—from a few thousand inhabitants in 1700 to over two million in 1950—made widespread destruction inevitable, just as it did in most older U.S. cities. As architectural historian George B. Tatum pointed out in 1961 (when official Philadelphia was busy obliterating the city’s Victorian heritage), such destruction cleared the ground for constant invention and innovation:

However much we must regret the continuing destruction of important structures that has gone on almost from the founding of the city, there is something heartening in this steadfast refusal of earlier Philadelphians to content themselves with preserving the architectural monuments of their illustrious past. . . . Because they were not afraid of new ideas, whether in the field of politics, social reform, or the arts, Philadelphians were among the first to try new architectural forms and theories. They produced the most advanced hospitals, the most progressive prisons, several of the most ambitious churches, and some of the earliest and most beautiful municipal parks. Their bridges were longer, wider, and deeper than others of their day. Whenever a new style made its appearance in America it was apt to be found in Philadelphia first; here were a number of the earliest and finest Federal buildings, the first examples of the Greek and Gothic styles, the first and most numerous Egyptian structures, and one of the largest and handsomest buildings in the Moorish manner.4

Selecting fewer than 200 structures to profile out of the thousands Philadelphia has lost over the past 350 years meant making choices that may appear random and arbitrary. The structures that I finally selected for *Forgotten Philadelphia* all met at least one of the criteria in the National Register for Historic Places guidelines, freely adapted:

* They were outstanding examples of American architectural design. Admittedly, this is a very broad and subjective standard. Few architectural historians, however, would dispute the importance of such works as Latrobe’s Bank of Pennsylvania, Johnston and Walter’s Jayne Building, and Furness & Hewitt’s Guarantee Trust and Safe Deposit Company.

* While not necessarily noteworthy structures, they were designed by noted architects. The original Library Company was one of the few local structures by William Thornton, the amateur architect who would design the first U.S. Capitol. Oskar Stonorov’s Schuylkill Falls Apartments attempted to adapt Le Corbusier’s utopian principles to U.S. public housing, with mixed results. Louis I. Kahn’s Medical Services Plan Building represented a transition between his earlier work and his later designs for the Alfred Newton Richards Medical Research Building and Jonas Salk Institute.

* They introduced major architectural or technological innovations. The Chestnut Street Theatre was the first U.S. playhouse illuminated by gas. The Permanent Bridge over the Schuylkill River, completed in 1805, was the longest wooden covered bridge in the world at the time and opened the way for the city’s westward development. The Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane featured an echelon design that became standard in nineteenth-century U.S. hospitals.
• They played an important role in the city’s political, industrial, economic, or social history. The caves and cabins dug into the banks of the Delaware by early inhabitants are not traditional architecture, but they represent an early foothold by European settlers in Penn’s Woods. The former blacksmith’s shop where Richard Allen formed the Bethel Church gave birth to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The ramshackle warren of buildings that housed Palumbo’s served as the social and political center of Italian American life in Philadelphia for most of the twentieth century.

• They were associated with notable Philadelphians. The Slate Roof House, Benjamin Rush birthplace, Breinntall/Benezet House, and Fairhill were more important for their association with famous Philadelphians of the colonial era than for their architecture. The Peter A. B. Widener mansion on North Broad Street was remarkable not just for Willis Hale’s over-the-top German Renaissance design, but as an emblem of the social aspirations of the foremost robber baron of Philadelphia’s Gilded Age.

• They were representative of a class of structures that played a major role in the city’s history. When the construction of Interstate 95 obliterated hundreds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century structures on the Delaware waterfront, much of Philadelphia’s maritime heritage disappeared. The Baldwin Locomotive Works and Stetson Hat Factory, while undistinguished architecturally, represented Philadelphia’s manufacturing supremacy during the nineteenth century.

• Their life and death illustrated important shifts in the history of the city. Samuel Sloan’s mansion for Joseph Harrison marked the emergence of Rittenhouse Square as an enclave for the wealthy; its demolition for a club in the 1920s indicated changes in twentieth-century residential patterns. The swanky Sheraton Hotel on Pennsylvania Boulevard and Holiday Inn on City Avenue symbolized Philadelphia’s hopes during the heady 1950s and 1960s, while their gradual decline paralleled the city’s financial constrictions during the shaky 1970s and 1980s.

These broad guidelines allowed me to cast as wide a net as possible, capturing not only buildings, but also caves, cemeteries, utilities, bridges, airports, athletic fields, and other edifices that illustrate important facets of Philadelphia’s history. Since one can tell as much about a society by its unfulfilled plans as by its physical reality, the final chapter (“Projected Philadelphia”) presents fifteen structures that might have changed the face of the city had they ever been constructed.

As I write this introduction in September 2006, Philadelphia is experiencing an unprecedented building boom that is transforming the city once again, with dozens of luxury condominiums, office towers, and casinos proposed or under construction. In the midst of this growth, Philadelphia—in 1954 the first U.S. city to pass a municipal preservation ordinance—attempts to maintain the delicate balance between preservation and stagnation, creation and destruction.

Should Philadelphia preserve a 1950s pastiche of a Federal house because its owner, the late Richardson Dilworth, helped establish Society Hill, or should it allow a new condominium designed by world-famous architect Robert Venturi to either replace or overshadow Dilworth’s home? Is it worth destroying Philadelphia’s aging but architecturally significant public schools—150 of which are on the National Register of Historic Places—to provide up-to-date but spartan facilities for the city’s children? Can Philadelphia realistically expect poor, inner-city congregations to preserve their elaborate Victorian churches, relics of a more prosperous era, or should the congregations be allowed to demolish or develop their properties as they see fit?
Despite such complex questions, Philadelphia is uniquely poised among U.S. cities to learn from its mistakes and, by combining its best older buildings with new and original designs, to create an architectural mosaic that will enrich the lives of its inhabitants while attracting new residents, businesses, and visitors. In this context, a thoughtful and consistent policy of historic preservation makes sense not only aesthetically, but also financially and commercially. Since we can learn as much about our heritage from the buildings we have lost as from the buildings we have saved, it is my hope that *Forgotten Philadelphia* will not just entertain readers but help inform future decisions about the preservation of historic structures in this city.
CHAPTER 1

Penn’s Green Country Town
(1682 to 1775)

William Penn had a clear vision for his great town well before it existed. Six months after a royal charter made him lord proprietor of 45,000 square miles in America, Penn sent his three commissioners a detailed layout of Philadelphia. They were to set aside 10,000 acres along the Delaware River for a large town of widely spaced houses stretching fifteen miles along the waterfront. Penn’s own house would stand in the middle of town, near the main wharf and commercial buildings. With memories of London’s great plague and fire of 1665–66 in mind, Penn recommended: “Let every house be placed, if the person please, in the middle of its plot as to the breadth way of it, that so there may be ground on each side for gardens or orchards or fields, that it may be a green country town, which will never be burnt and always be wholesome.”

Like all visionaries, Penn soon ran headlong into reality. His commissioners reached Pennsylvania to find much of the province’s riverfront already occupied. Instead of 10,000 acres, they had to settle for 300 acres along the Delaware, a few miles north of the mouth of the Schuylkill River. Penn was able to acquire a mile of river frontage along the Schuylkill parallel to his Delaware property. This still left him with a rectangle of 1,200 acres, only 12 percent of the space he had expected. Penn was forced to juggle the land grants promised to the First Purchasers, giving them liberty lands north and west of the city to compensate for their reduced city lots. Penn also assigned less desirable lots along the Schuylkill River to the First Purchasers who did not emigrate immediately.

Thomas Holme, Penn’s surveyor-general, reworked Penn’s original layout to accommodate the 1,200-acre rectangle. Holme’s 1683 map “A Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia” shows the familiar grid of streets between the two rivers, bordered by Vine Street at the top and Cedar (South) Street at the bottom. The grid was divided into four quadrants by two arteries a hundred feet wide, the north-south one named Broad, and the east-west one named High (today Market). Placed in the middle of each quadrant was an open square meant to serve as public land.
for the surrounding community. A central square at the intersection of Broad and Market streets would serve as the town's municipal and religious center.

Even before Holme's map reached potential buyers in London, reality interfered with Penn's plans once again. Penn had expected the first Philadelphians to settle equally along both the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers, gradually moving toward the center of town. Instead, they clung to the Delaware, leaving the Schuylkill nearly deserted. The Quaker meetinghouse that had been boldly built on the central square was abandoned, while another meetinghouse was hastily constructed farther east.

With Delaware waterfront property at a premium, wharves and warehouses soon covered Penn's projected riverside promenade. The sizable lots were quickly subdivided, bisected by alleys and crowded with houses, a far cry from Penn's dream of spacious, green grounds. While Penn may have mourned his lost town, he could hardly complain: Philadelphia might have been his vision, but it was also a real estate investment: "Though I desire to extend religious
freedom,” he wrote in 1681, “yet I want some recompense for my trouble.” Penn needed to sell land to cover his mountain of debts, and what was good for Philadelphia business was good for Penn.

Unrestrained growth offered other compensations. When Penn first viewed his future city in 1682, he saw a few cleared acres and a handful of houses around a sandy inlet, surrounded by an endless vista of forest, thicket, and swamp. On Penn’s second visit in 1699, he found a bustling town of 5,000 souls, with 400 houses, at least six churches and the same number of taverns, three breweries, an open-air market, a brickyard, four shipyards, and numerous wharves and warehouses. Before he returned to England in 1701, Penn gave Philadelphia a new charter that, among other benefits, raised its status to that of city.

Aside from a few downturns, Philadelphia’s growth continued unabated during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Its mercantile wealth made it home to the grandest and most innovative buildings in North America, such as the State House, Pennsylvania Hospital, and Christ Church. The small brick houses of early days gave way to gracious Georgian town houses, while the surrounding countryside was peppered with the estates of the town’s elite.

Not surprisingly, construction and architecture became leading occupations in the fast-growing city. The Carpenters’ Company of the City and County of Philadelphia, the oldest builders’ organization in the United States, was founded in 1724 “for the purpose of obtaining instruction in the science of architecture and assisting such of their members as should by accident be in need of support.” Gentlemen-designers like John Kearsley and Andrew Hamilton worked closely with master carpenters like Edmund Woolley to create the city’s great public buildings. By the end of the colonial period, professional builder-architects like Robert Smith, capable of managing both design and construction, had begun to emerge.

The rapid expansion and increasing prosperity of Philadelphia guaranteed that its earliest buildings would soon be at risk. While the city was spreading in all directions, its densest development continued to be in the blocks surrounding the Delaware River. This concentration of residential, commercial, and municipal functions within a small area triggered the cycle of demolition and replacement that would characterize Philadelphia and other older American cities. By 1760, larger, more modern structures had superseded older buildings like the Great Meeting House, the original Christ Church, and the Court House and Town Hall.

In 1774, Philadelphia was the largest, richest, and most centrally located city in the American colonies. It was the obvious meeting place for the Continental Congress convened to determine how to handle the growing governmental crisis with Great Britain. As the congressional delegates arrived in the metropolis of 16,500 inhabitants and 6,000 houses and viewed the imposing tower of the State House, they may have felt for the first time the apparently limitless possibilities of being American.
Old Block House/First Swedes’ Church

Location: 916 South Swanson Street, near Columbus Boulevard
(site of current-day Gloria Dei Church)
Completed: ca. 1666 (converted to church 1677)
Demolished: 1698
Architect/BUILDER: Unknown

Decades before William Penn landed in America, Swedish, Dutch, Finnish, and English settlers lived along the banks of the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers. The Dutch explorer Cornelius Hendricksen had established a trading post and stockade on the future site of Philadelphia by 1623. Beginning in 1638, Swedish immigrants established outposts at Fort Christina (Wilmington), Upland (Chester), Tinicum Island, and Wicaco, a former Indian village located nearly a mile south of Dock Creek. As Sweden’s dreams of an overseas empire faded, its colonists peacefully accepted Dutch and then English control of their province.

For protection from attack by Indians and other Europeans, the Swedish pioneers at Wicaco built a square, one-story blockhouse around 1666. Made of tree trunks notched at the end and cross-laid, this common Scandinavian structure would be the model for other early buildings in the region. Instead of windows, the Old Block House had narrow slits from which defenders could fire on attackers. The blockade stood on a bluff overlooking the Delaware River, a short distance from the log cabin of Sven Sener, the settler who donated the land for the structure.

The Block House was also used for Lutheran religious services, with Pastor Lars Lock paddling upriver from Upland each Sunday to preach. As the threat of attack receded, the Block House was converted to a full-time church in 1677 with the addition of a pavilion roof and a central spire or steeple. The former fortress became the first church within the region that is present-day Philadelphia. The same year, the Swedes’ Church received its first resident ordained minister, Jacobus Fabritius, a Dutchman. Fabritius proved less than satisfactory, due to his shaly command of the Swedish language, his near-blindness, his temper, and his drunkenness.

When Fabritius’s successor, Andrew Rudman, arrived from Sweden in 1697, he found the Swedes’ Church neglected and time-worn. After much discussion, Wicaco was chosen as the location for the main church for all Swedish settlers in the region, beating out Tinicum and Passyunk. Under Rudman’s guidance, the Old Block House was dismantled, and a one-story brick church with a wooden steeple was erected on its site. The new church was dedicated on July 2, 1700. Near the waterfront at Columbus Boulevard and Christian Street, Gloria Dei, or Old Swedes’ Church, still stands, the oldest extant church in the city of Philadelphia.
Original Caves and Cabins
on the Delaware River

Location: Front Street, between Market and Spruce streets
Constructed: ca. 1680–85
Demolished: By 1687
Architect/Builder: Various

Some of Philadelphia’s earliest inhabitants were cavemen. When Penn’s first settlers arrived in 1681 and 1682, they found only a few crude huts and cabins, most clustered in the clearing around the Dock Creek inlet. Faced with the need to create shelters quickly in the wilderness of Penn’s Woods, these pioneers burrowed into the soft soil of the high bluffs overlooking the Delaware River.

While an illustration from John Fanning Watson’s *Annals of Philadelphia* depicts men in sizable caverns just above the waterline, the reality was less dramatic. Usually, the caves consisted of holes three to six feet deep, dug in the ground at the top of the riverbank along Front Street. The settlers lined the holes with low walls of sod and brush and covered them with roofs formed of tree limbs overlaid with sod or bark. They built chimneys of stone and river pebbles mortared with clay and grass.

Primitive as they were, these caves provided warmth and protection to the early settlers, who often sold them to later arrivals. Francis Daniel Pastorius, one of the original founders of Germantown, described his first home in America: “The caves of that time were only holes digged in the Ground, Covered with Earth, a matter of 5. or 6. feet deep, 10. or 12. wide and about 20. long; whereof neither the Sides nor the Floors have been plank’d. Herein we lived more Contentedly than many nowadays in their painted and wainscotted Palaces, as I without the least hyperbole may call them in Comparison of the aforesaid Subterraneous Catatumbs or Dens.”

As soon as possible, hard-working Philadelphians traded their “Subterraneous Catatumbs” for sturdier housing. At first they built square, one-room log cabins modeled on those of the Swedes. By 1685, however, two- and three-story brick houses were rising along the riverfront. The abandoned caves were usurped by the town’s “lower sort” to be used for taverns and other unwholesome purposes. Soon caves of ill repute sprawled along the Delaware, such as the Crooked Billet, Owen’s Cave, and Townsend’s Court.

By 1685, William Penn, dismayed by the reports of Sodom-on-the-Delaware reaching England, directed the provincial council to purge the caves of their inhabitants and admonished the city fathers to “let vertue be cherisht.” Penn might have been more concerned with land values than with virtue, since he still retained ownership of the riverfront and was anxious to lease the land for development.
The provincial council reacted quickly, directing the town constables and undersheriffs to “forthwith pull down & demolish all empty Caves as they shall find” on Front Street.\(^5\)

In April 1687, the provincial council ordered all remaining cave dwellers to “provide for themselves other habitations, in order to have the Caves Distroy’d.”\(^6\) By this time, Front Street was crowded with the wharves and warehouses of Samuel Carpenter, Robert Turner, and other merchants. Within a few years, the rapid development of the Delaware riverfront had obliterated all traces of Philadelphia’s Barbary Coast.

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**Blue Anchor Tavern**

**Location:** Northwest corner of Front and Dock streets  
**Completed:** ca. 1682  
**Demolished:** 1828  
**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

Before Penn established Philadelphia, the land where Dock Creek (today Dock Street) met the Delaware River was home to about forty Dutch, Swedish, and English families. The hub of their settlement was the Blue Anchor Tavern, located 146 feet north of Dock Creek, in the middle of current-day Front Street. The Blue Anchor stood on a bluff overlooking the Swamp, a tidewater basin formed where the Dock, a natural harbor in the Delaware River, flowed inland to become Dock Creek. From the Swamp, various branches of Dock Creek extended north to Market and Fifth streets, west to Washington Square, and south to Pine Street.

The date of the founding of the Blue Anchor is uncertain. Some historians place its erection as early as 1671. Others, including John Fanning Watson in his *Annals of Philadelphia*, state that the tavern was still under construction when Penn first visited Philadelphia in autumn 1682. According to early accounts, the Blue Anchor was a one-story brick building, about twelve by twenty-two feet, with ceilings about eight and a half feet high. The building was set on a lot measuring sixteen feet on Front Street by thirty-six feet on Dock Creek. According to tradition, the Blue Anchor Tavern was the first building Penn entered in Philadelphia, after disembarking on a sandy beach nearby.

Besides being “Victuallers and Tappers of strong drink” with sturgeon and sea turtle on its menu, the Blue Anchor became Philadelphia’s commercial exchange and transportation hub.\(^7\) Watson called the tavern “the proper key of the city, to which all new-comers resorted.”\(^8\) At the Blue Anchor, goods were traded from all ships anchored in the Dock. Ferries carried passengers to New Jersey, to Windmill Island where a windmill ground their grain, and across
Dock Creek to Society Hill. Farmers tied their boats to the trees lining the Swamp and sold their produce to local housewives.

A 1691 citizens' petition asking that the Blue Anchor's landing be made a free harbor signified its pivotal role in early Philadelphia. Penn obliged by designating the Blue Anchor wharf one of two permanent public landings in his 1701 city charter. By this time, unfortunately, Dock Creek was changing from open water to an open sewer, polluted by the waste of nearby tanneries, lumberyards, and slaughterhouses. (Between 1767 and 1784 the entire creek was covered over to create Dock Street.)

When the city was laid out in 1683, the Blue Anchor was moved to what is now the northwest corner of Front and Dock streets. About 1690, the tavern was purchased by Thomas Budd, who made it the southernmost of a row of ten houses he constructed along Front Street known as Budd's Long Row. At this time, the original tavern was rebuilt as a two-story, half-timbered structure to fit in with the rest of the Long Row. As the city's center shifted toward Market Street, the Blue Anchor's role as an exchange passed to newer hostleries like the London Coffee House. Renamed the Boatswain and Call, it continued to serve waterfront denizens well into the eighteenth century.

According to Watson, the much-altered tavern survived until the 1820s, when it was "pulled down to build greater" and replaced by a tobacco warehouse. Watson preserved some of its timbers as relics, as he did with other historic buildings destroyed during his lifetime. The warehouse was replaced in turn by a four-story brick building, the Garman House, which housed a hotel named the Blue Anchor during the late nineteenth century. (During this period, another Blue Anchor Tavern operated on Walnut Street.) In the early 1960s, the Garman House and nearby buildings were demolished as part of the Washington Square East redevelopment project. Today, I. M. Pei's Society Hill Towers stand on the original site of the Blue Anchor Tavern.
To w n s e n 's  ( R o b e r t s )  M i l l

Location: Church Lane and Lambert Street, East Germantown
Completed: 1683
Demolished: 1874
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Dozens of streams and creeks once threaded through Philadelphia’s landscape. This was especially true of the settlements ringing Philadelphia, from Kensington southward to the Falls of Schuylkill. Germantown, founded in 1683 by Francis Daniel Pastorius and thirteen families from the German province of Krefeld, was especially rich in waterways. Besides the Wissahickon Creek along its southern border, the Wingohocking, Cresheim, and dozens of smaller creeks flowed through the Township. Beginning in 1683 with the founding of Townsend’s Mill, Germantown quickly emerged as one of the region’s milling centers.

Richard Townsend, a Quaker who sailed on the Welcome with William Penn in 1682, brought a disassembled mill with him from London, which he set up along the Chester Creek. The following year, he established a second mill north of Germantown, shortly after the township was laid out. The gristmill was located along Wingohocking Creek, which ran east through Germantown until it merged with Tacony Creek in what is now Northeast Philadelphia. The fieldstone mill with its overshot wheel and pond stood on the north side of Church Lane (also known as Mill Street), one mile northeast of Germantown’s Market Square. Writing in 1727, Richard Townsend recalled the isolated, primitive community that his mill served: “As soon as Germantown was laid out, I settled my tract of land, which was about a mile from thence, where I set up a barn and a corn mill, which was very useful to the country round. But there

The Roberts Mill as it appeared shortly before its destruction in 1874. (Collection of the author.)
being few horses, people generally brought their corn upon their backs, many miles. I remember, one had a bull so gentle, that he used to bring corn upon his back."

Thanks to the Townsend Mill and others like it, Philadelphia became the colonies’ breadbasket. Between 1730 and 1745, Pennsylvania’s production of flour grew from 38,750 barrels to nearly 166,000. A pound of flour cost nine shillings and sixpence in Philadelphia, compared to fifteen shillings in New York and twenty-eight in Boston.

After Townsend retired from milling, his mill passed through a number of owners before being acquired by the Roberts family in 1811. Renamed the Roberts Mill, it continued to operate until 1858. By then, modern mills run by steam engines could grind more grain in a day than the colonial-era mill could in months, and as Germantown had developed, the Wingohocking Creek had grown too shallow to power the millwheel.

The Roberts Mill remained in place until 1874, a decaying reminder of Germantown’s water-powered past. Hugh Roberts, its last owner, sold it to an “improvement association” (real estate developer), which drained the millpond and tore down the mill. A mansion built around 1812 by the first Roberts to own the mill stood until 1904, when it too was demolished. Today, two-story row houses stand on the site of Philadelphia’s first gristmill, while the Wingohocking Creek flows beneath them through sewer pipes.

High Street Market Sheds

Location: Center of High (Market) Street, from the Delaware waterfront to Seventeenth Street.
Completed: ca. 1683–1835
Demolished: 1859
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Within a year of Philadelphia’s founding, an open-air market was established at Front and High streets where farmers and fishermen could offer the bounty of the surrounding river and country to the fast-growing town. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, vendors drove their wagons in from Germantown and Frankford, or rowed their boats across from New Jersey, to sell produce, meat, and fish. A bell tower at Second and High streets announced the opening of market. Soon, wooden stalls stretched down the middle of hundred-foot-wide High Street from Front to Second Street.

In 1707, a brick head house was erected at the head of the market at Second and High streets. While its upper stories served as the Town Hall and Court House, its arched ground floor became the first permanent market building in Philadelphia. Behind the new municipal center, more sheds soon stretched to Third Street. Philadelphia’s market was such a hub of activity that High Street acquired the nickname “Market Street.”

In 1720, the town councils resolved to replace the wooden market stalls with brick arcades, designed to harmonize with the Town Hall. The spacious new sheds, consisting of square columns supporting a gable roof, let both shoppers and fresh air circulate. Each shed was roughly twenty feet wide and sixteen feet long, separated by a four-foot space from the next shed. Lanterns hung from the high arched ceilings. Vendors displayed their wares on shelves placed between the columns, hanging meat or fish on hooks suspended overhead. Wide projecting eaves sheltered vendors and customers from bad weather.
In addition to being user-friendly, the High Street Market was orderly and well run. A clerk of the market was appointed as early as 1693 to regulate sales and keep conditions wholesome. Vendors were forbidden to sell their goods before market hours or on their way to market. For buyers’ convenience, sellers of meat, fish, and produce were grouped in specific locations.

As Philadelphia’s population spread westward, so did its market. The sheds reached Third Street by 1759, Fourth Street by 1786, Sixth Street by 1810, and Eighth Street by 1821. By then, the market boasted a separate structure for fishmongers, denoted by a shad on its gable, and for Jersey produce farmers, whose head house was a round clock tower decorated with cornucopias. In 1834, a market house was erected in High Street between Schuylkill Eighth and Seventh (Fifteenth and Sixteenth) streets. Architect William Strickland submitted a cutting-edge design with iron columns and a low-pitched metal roof. All subsequent market houses were built in metal rather than brick.

On December 8, 1853, Philadelphia City Councils gave High Street the official name of Market Street during a major street renaming campaign.* By this time, ironically, the market sheds were on their way out. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, High Street had changed from a residential boulevard to a commercial thoroughfare lined with stores and warehouses. Since the 1830s, the Columbia and Pennsylvania Railroad had run down both sides of Market from Eighth to Third streets. Merchants and business owners lobbied to have the sheds removed to relieve the snarl of wagons, drays, omnibuses, and railcars on Market Street.

In 1859, the City Councils ordered all market buildings on Market Street to be demolished, from the Jersey Market on the water-

*As part of the same campaign, Mulberry became Arch Street, Sassafras became Race, Cedar became South, and all streets west of Broad Street were renumbered, from Schuylkill Eighth (Fifteenth Street) to Schuylkill Front (Twenty-second Street).
front to the newer iron sheds that reached Seventeenth Street. To replace them, private developers built large, enclosed markets throughout the city. Although many of these ventures failed, the Philadelphia Farmers’ Market at Twelfth and Market streets proved so popular that when the Reading Railroad Terminal replaced the Samuel Sloan–designed market house in the 1890s, it incorporated the Farmers’ Market into its building, where it remains today.

Today, the New Market head house and market sheds on South Second Street, constructed between 1745 and 1804 to service Society Hill, offer a truncated version of High Street Market during its eighteenth-century glory.

Slate Roof House

**Location:** Southeast corner of Second and Sansom streets

**Completed:** ca. 1684

**Demolished:** 1867

**Architect/Builder:** Attributed to James Porteus

By the end of the seventeenth century, multistory brick houses began to replace the caves and cabins of the original settlers. One of the first great houses built in the frontier town was the Slate Roof House, which served as William Penn’s home during his second visit to Philadelphia. In the nineteenth century, its threatened removal prompted one of the first coordinated, widespread efforts to preserve a historic structure in Philadelphia. Unlike an earlier campaign that saved the State House from destruction, the Slate Roof House effort ended in failure.

In 1684, Samuel Carpenter acquired land that stretched from Front to Second Street along a narrow alley, Hatton Lane (later known as Norris’ Alley and then Sansom Street). Carpenter, who had arrived in Philadelphia from Barbados only the previous year, quickly became one of the town’s largest landowners. Besides the first and largest wharf on the Delaware, his holdings included warehouses, a tavern, a limekiln, farms in the Northern Liberties, and mills in Bucks and Chester counties.

After acquiring his town lot, Carpenter commissioned James Porteus, a cofounder of the Carpenters’ Company, to design a house on the Second Street end of the property. Porteus produced a modified-H design, similar to one in Stephen Primatt’s book *The City and Country Purchaser*, published in London in 1667. The two-story brick house featured two projecting wings, or “bastions,” framing a recessed entryway, which gave it a fortresslike appearance. The house’s most prominent feature, a hipped roof covered with slate, gave the house its nickname. (Slate roofs were relatively rare in seventeenth-century Philadelphia.) Since Carpenter occu-
pied a town house on the eastern end of his lot, he may have intended to use the Slate Roof House for rental income.

The Slate Roof House’s first resident was proprietor and governor William Penn, who rented it from Carpenter for eighty pounds a year during his second visit to Philadelphia. Penn, his second wife, Hannah, and his daughter Letitia moved into the house in January 1700. Less than a month later, the house witnessed the birth of John Penn, known to early Philadelphians as “the American.” During Penn’s occupancy, the Slate Roof House served as the de facto seat of the provincial government, where Penn met with the council and other leaders. There, Penn composed the Charter of Privileges, a guarantee of religious and civil freedom for the inhabitants of his province that would influence the writers of the Constitution.

Besides the Penns, the Slate Roof House was home to James Logan, Penn’s secretary and successor as governor. After the Penns returned to England in 1701, Logan lived at the house until 1704, when Carpenter sold it to William Trent (founder of Trenton, New Jersey) for £850. By 1708 it was on the market again, but the asking price of £900 was too high for the financially strapped Penn.

Instead, Isaac Norris purchased the property. The Norris family owned the Slate Roof House until 1864 but did not live there after 1732, when Isaac Norris Jr. moved to his country estate, Fairhill. By the 1770s, it had become a “superior” boarding house, patronized by John Adams and other members of the Continental Congress, as well as by British officers during the 1777–78 occupation.

During the late eighteenth century, as the waterfront district became heavily commercial, the Slate Roof House began a slow decline. In 1801, its ground floor was occupied by the shops of engravers, watchmakers, and silversmiths; by the 1860s, dealers in secondhand clothes and used furniture had replaced the artisans. An oyster cellar operated in the basement of one of the wings, and a sign painter used the second floor as a workshop. The area between the two wings was filled in to create more commercial space.

Appalled, some Philadelphians attempted to rescue the Slate Roof House from oblivion. During the 1820s, John Fanning Watson commissioned the artist W. L. Breton to paint the house as it had appeared in its early glory. When Watson published his Annals of Philadelphia, he included a lithograph of Breton’s painting and beseeched his readers to honor Penn’s memory by restoring the house.

Spurred by Watson’s plea, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania attempted to purchase the Slate Roof House for $10,000 in 1844, but the Norris family refused to sell. In 1864, Charles and Anna Knecht bought the house for $20,000.

W. L. Breton’s 1836 watercolor of the Slate Roof House as it appeared in colonial days indicates the extensive gardens behind the house. (The Library Company of Philadelphia.)
and announced their plans to demolish it. The Historical Society offered the Knechts $30,000 for the house, but unfortunately, opponents of the purchase within the society forced a withdrawal of the offer. Despite efforts by private citizens, newspapers, organizations, and the City Councils, the Slate Roof House was demolished in August 1867. The house was studied, sketched, photographed, and measured before its destruction, in one of the first systematic efforts to document an endangered building.

The Commercial Exchange Building erected on the site burned within a year of its construction. Its replacement, designed by James Windrim, stood on the site from 1870 until its demolition in 1976, housing the Keystone Telephone Company and its successor, Bell of Pennsylvania. The National Park Service, which acquired the site that year, considered constructing a replica of the Slate Roof House on it.

Instead, the Friends of Independence National Historical Park commissioned the firm of Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown to create a memorial to William Penn in 1982 on the 300th anniversary of his founding of Philadelphia. Today, a miniature version of the Slate Roof House stands atop a pedestal in Welcome Park.
Benjamin Rush Birthplace

**Location:** Intersection of Keswick Road and Rayland Drive, north of Red Lion Road, Torresdale section of Northeast Philadelphia

**Completed:** ca. 1690

**Demolished:** 1969

**Architect/Builder:** Various

Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence, delegate to the Continental Congress, abolitionist, medical pioneer, father of American psychiatry, director of the U.S. Mint, and a fervent if misguided advocate of bloodletting as a panacea, was born at the family farm in Byberry Township on January 4, 1746.* The farm on the Poquessing Creek had been established by Rush’s great-great-grandfather, who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1683—John Rush, a horse trooper under Oliver Cromwell.

The two-and-a-half-story fieldstone farmhouse, built around 1690, housed five generations of the Rush family. When Benjamin Rush was five, his father John died. His mother, Susanna, was forced to sell the 500-acre Byberry farm, along with other property of her late husband’s, and move with her six children to Philadelphia. There, she opened a grocery shop and liquor store, the Blazing Star, which was successful enough for her to send Benjamin first to West Nottingham Academy and then to the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University).

The early loss of his childhood home remained painful for Rush throughout his illustrious career. In July 1812, a year before his death, Rush visited his former homestead and viewed the upstairs room where he was born, the apple orchard his father had planted, and the family graveyard where four generations of Rushes rested. Later, Rush described his visit to his friend John Adams:

“The building, which is of stone, bears marks of age and decay. On one of the stones near the front door, I discovered with some difficulty the letters J.R. Before the house, flows a small, but deep creek, abounding in pan-fish. The farm consists of ninety acres, all in a highly cultivated state. I knew the owner to be in such easy circumstances, that I did not ask him his price for it; but begged, if he should ever incline to sell it, to make me or one of my surviving sons the first offer, which he promised to do.11

The house Rush visited was much changed from the one he had left sixty years earlier. Sometime around 1765, a stone addition doubled the size of the dwelling, changing it from a square, two-bay

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*December 24, 1745, in the old-style or Julian calendar, which was replaced by the Gregorian calendar in England and the American colonies in September 1752.
house to a rectangular, four-bay, center-hall house. During the nineteenth century, a three-story frame addition was built on the north side, a porch was run along the front of the house, and the floors, joists, and stairways were replaced.

The area of Northeast Philadelphia where the Rush birthplace lay remained fairly rural and isolated until the mid-twentieth century. By the 1960s, time and urban sprawl had caught up with the dilapidated homestead, and abandoned cars filled its garden.

Through a series of bureaucratic blunders, the Benjamin Rush birthplace was slated for restoration by one city agency and condemned by another. In early 1969, a bulldozer knocked down the only historic structure in the far Northeast. At the time, some fragments were reportedly transferred to the Philadelphia State Hospital for the Insane (Byberry) for safekeeping.

In June 2002, a state historical marker was erected at the site of Benjamin Rush’s birthplace. Rush is also commemorated in his native Northeast by the Benjamin Rush State Park, a large tract of meadows and woods on the former grounds of Byberry Hospital, where some historians hope to rebuild his house from the remaining fragments stored on the hospital grounds.

### Great Meeting House

**Location:** Southwest corner of High (Market) and Second streets  
**Completed:** 1695  
**Demolished:** 1754  
**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

### Greater Meeting House

**Location:** Southwest corner of High (Market) and Second streets  
**Completed:** 1755  
**Demolished:** 1804  
**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

For the Quakers who established Philadelphia, one of the first requirements was a meetinghouse for community worship and discussion. Holding their early meetings in private homes, they began construction on houses at Front Street above Sassafras (Race), near the banks of the Delaware, and at Centre Square (today the site of City Hall). Neither was a success. The first decayed quickly and was removed by 1698, while the second was too far from the riverfront for regular use.

For their third try, the Quakers chose a site in the middle of town: High and Second streets, across from the busy market. The Great Meeting House, the largest gathering place for Friends at the time, was erected in 1695. The simple square structure stood fifty by fifty feet and had a sloping roof topped by a square glass cupola to light the interior. It was designed to resemble a residence rather than a church, which the Quakers disdainfully called a “steeple-house.”

Among the notable Philadelphians who entered the Great Meeting House was then unknown Benjamin Franklin on his first day in his adopted city in October 1723. After gorging himself on...
penny rolls, exploring the town, and spying his future wife in a doorway laughing at him, he returned to High Street:

Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meetinghouse of the Quakers, near the market. I sat down among them, and, after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy thro’ labor and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep, and continued so till the meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me. This was, therefore, the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia.12
By 1754, when a survey of the Great Meeting House revealed the need for major repairs, the Quakers decided to replace it with a larger structure. Their decision may also have reflected trepidation over the Anglicans’ rebuilt Christ Church farther north on Second Street. When the Great Meeting House and the original Christ Church were erected in the 1690s, the Quakers were the dominant group in Philadelphia, and their brick building outshone the Anglicans’ small wooden church. By the 1750s, Quakers constituted only about a quarter of Philadelphia’s population, while Anglicans were its wealthiest and most socially powerful segment. A grander meetinghouse may have represented the Quakers’ attempt to reinforce their presence in the face of the Anglicans’ new church, the most elaborate steeplehouse in the colonies.

In 1754–55, the Great Meeting House was replaced by the Greater Meeting House, a two-and-a-half-story brick building measuring seventy-three feet along High Street and fifty-five feet along Second Street. Although considerably larger than the Great Meeting House, it was still a simple structure with few architectural details. Among those who worshipped there were such Quaker Saints as the antislavery crusaders Anthony Benezet and John Woolman.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the area around High and Second streets had become a noisy commercial district, far from conducive to the Quakers’ quest for the light within. In 1803, the decision was made to tear down the Greater Meeting House and sell the land, using the profits to build a new meetinghouse on the south side of Arch Street between Third and Fourth, on the outskirts of town. The following year, the Greater Meeting House was dismantled and the property sold for $76,000. Despite this substantial return, the thrifty Quakers recycled materials from the Greater Meeting House into their new structure. Today, Arch Street Meeting House is still the city’s principal meetinghouse and the site of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Naglee House, Germantown

Location: 4518 Germantown Avenue, Germantown (between Berkley Street and the SEPTA R7 tracks)
Completed: Before 1708
Demolished: 1965
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Built in the early eighteenth century, the Naglee House stood across the Great Road to Philadelphia (Germantown Avenue) from Stenton, the Logan family mansion, and was reputedly one of the oldest buildings in the district. Its use over the years as a farmhouse, tannery, coal yard, and florist’s shop, and its final replacement by a gas station, mirrors Germantown’s transition from an independent agricultural community to a bustling commercial and industrial district, and finally to a declining urban neighborhood.

Land records show a house on the site by 1708, when Peter Keurlis sold 120 acres of farmland to George Gray. In 1727, the Germantown farmer John Naglee (whose name also appears as Neglee, Nagley and Negley) purchased the property for £285. The land lay just within the southern boundary of Germantown Township, near the Great Road to Philadelphia. Originally, the fieldstone house consisted of one room, roughly fifteen by twenty-six feet, with an attic. It was a typical example of early Germantown architecture, a utilitarian design notable for its small size, low ceilings, and rough-hewn masonry and woodwork. According to early Germantown historian Naaman H. Keyser, James Logan lived in the Naglee house during the construction of Stenton across the Germantown Road from 1727 to 1734, although no documentation exists to support this claim.

By 1752, when John’s son Jacob insured it with the Philadelphia Contributionship, the house had been enlarged to two stories and four rooms, with a cellar. The property now included a number of outbuildings, as well as “Tan Yards Tan Pitts Vatts, etc.,” since Jacob was a tanner. The location of the Naglee house in an isolated area
south of the center of Germantown would have been appropriate for a smelly business like a tannery. The house stood at the base of Naglee's Hill, a lonely and densely wooded place plagued by highwaymen and reputed to be haunted. For many years, the house served as the threshold to ancient Germantown.

The first railroad in Philadelphia, completed in 1831–32, ran from Ninth and Poplar streets to Shoemaker’s Lane in Germantown. Just south of the Naglee house, a bridge conveyed the railroad over the Germantown Road. With the advent of the railroad, the Naglee’s Hill neighborhood grew largely industrial. By the 1870s, the Wayne Junction Station of the Reading Railroad stood about a hundred feet from the house’s south side, and Berkley Street had been cut through on its north side. In 1885, the New Glen Echo Mills carpet factory went up on land behind the Naglee house. By then, the house was occupied by the yard and office of Lee and Shallcross, sellers of “Lehigh and Schuylkill coal, sand, lime, plaster, cement, plastering hair, building material general.”

In 1895, the Kulp family purchased the house and used it as the office and greenhouse for their florist business for about the next seventy years. In 1904, after the family sold the property, the Sun Oil Company announced plans to demolish the Naglee house and expand an adjoining Sunoco gas station. The City Historical Commission, the National Park Service, and the Germantown Historical Society all protested the destruction of what some historians considered the oldest house in Germantown and the third oldest in Philadelphia. They recommended renovating the property as “the gateway to historic Germantown” and using it as a visitors’ center for the proposed Germantown National Historic District.

Despite the efforts of city and private agencies, no funds were available to acquire the property. The Naglee house was demolished in April 1965. According to one observer, demolition took several days, since a bulldozer pulling a steel cable was unable to tear down the sturdy built walls. Despite Sun Oil’s promise to build a “colonial” gas station, a modern building with blue and white porcelain panels stood on the site by February 1967.
Breintnall House/Benezet House

Location: 325 Chestnut Street (today the northwest corner of Chestnut and Orianna streets)
Completed: ca. 1700
Demolished: 1818
Architect/Builder: Unknown

A brick town house at 325 Chestnut Street (historically 115 A Chestnut) built for the wealthy Quaker merchant David Breintnall was one of the first substantial houses in Philadelphia. Above the two-story structure, eighteen-and-a-half feet wide on Chestnut Street and twenty-six feet long, a hipped gable roof formed an attic. A pent roof extended over the first story, and eaves extended over the second story in a similar fashion.

According to Watson’s Annals, Breintnall considered the house “too fine for his plain cloth and profession” and rented it to the governor of Barbados, who was visiting Philadelphia to recover his health. A branch of Dock Creek ran across Chestnut Street along the path of current-day Orianna Street, so the governor could be rowed from the Delaware River to his own front door. After Breintnall’s death in 1731, his widow moved back into the house, where she ran a tavern, the Hen and Chickens.

In 1753, the house was acquired by Anthony Benezet, a French-born Quaker educator and philanthropist who has been called “America’s first great humanitarian reformer, the epitome of all that was comprehended in the phrase ‘the good Quaker.’” Benezet convinced the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends to take an official position against owning and trading slaves and in 1775 organized the first meeting of the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. He also formed a society called the Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures.

Benezet established schools dedicated to teaching African Americans, Native Americans, and poor females, which he ran out
of his Chestnut Street house until his death in 1784. In his will, he left his house and lot, as well as the remainder of his estate, to the support of “a religious-minded person, or persons, to teach a number of negro, mulatto, or Indian children to read, write, arithmetic, plain accounts, needle work, etc.”

Despite the terms of Benezet’s will, a succession of small businesses rented his house, including a bonnet maker, a broker, and a currier (leather processor), reflecting the transformation of lower Chestnut Street from a residential to a commercial district. In 1816, Joseph Keen bought the Benezet house and announced his intention to demolish it and replace it with a three-story office building.

Roberts Vaux, a prominent Quaker who had edited the memoirs of Anthony Benezet, wished to create a memorial to the late Quaker Saint and commissioned architect William Strickland to draw the street elevation of the Benezet House before its demolition in March 1818. Strickland’s drawing appeared as a frontispiece in the October 1818 edition of the Port Folio of Philadelphia. The accompanying article, while misjudging the age and uniqueness of the Benezet House, confirmed that some Philadelphians realized how quickly their architectural heritage was vanishing: “It is but a few months since one of the oldest, if not the first brick house erected in Philadelphia, was torn down, to give space to a more spacious structure, and we believe that edifice to have been the last specimen in this city, toward which the curious inquirer in these matters, might have been directed.”

Today, a 1954 office building houses the Philadelphia Maritime Museum on the site.

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London Coffee House

Location: 100 Market Street (southwest corner of Market and Front streets)
Completed: ca. 1702
Demolished: 1883
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Selling liquor was one of the great growth industries in colonial Philadelphia. The number of taverns increased from 7 in 1683 to 117 in 1758, with more than 20 on Second Street alone. At the top of the social ladder were coffeehouses, genteel establishments that served coffee, tea, and lemonade in addition to wine, beer, and spirits. Popular in England since the 1650s, the first coffeehouses opened in Philadelphia in the early eighteenth century. Like their British counterparts, and like the earlier Blue Anchor Tavern, coffeehouses became centers of commerce and politics.

In 1754, to fill the gap left by the retirement of Widow Roberts, whose coffeehouse on Front Street below Blackhorse Alley was the city’s most popular, more than 200 Philadelphia merchants subscribed £348 to finance the London Coffee House. As its proprietor, they selected William Bradford, a well-respected printer and publisher, who promptly applied to the governor and council for a liquor license.

The London Coffee House opened in April 1754 at the southwest corner of Front and High streets in a three-and-a-half-story brick building built as a private residence in 1702. Its most noticeable feature was its roof, with two high-pitched hipped gables intersecting at right angles. The first floor held the bar and a large public room where British and American newspapers were available. The upstairs held smaller rooms for private meetings.

Thanks to its corporate sponsorship and a location near the docks and market, the London Coffee Shop quickly became the city’s commercial and financial exchange. Crops, carriages, horses, houses, and human beings were bought and sold under the shelter of its...
wide, wraparound awning. The coffeehouse hosted frequent slave auctions, like this one advertised in the July 18, 1765, edition of the Pennsylvania Gazette: "TO BE SOLD, On Saturday the 27th Instant, at the London Coffee House, TWELVE or Fourteen valuable NEGROES, consisting of young Men, Women, Boys and Girls; they have all had the Small Pox, can talk English, and are seasoned to the Country. The Sale to begin at Twelve o’Clock."

Before long, the London Coffee House was home to the Philadelphia Board of Brokers, forerunner of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange. The house also functioned as the Palm Restaurant of its day, where the governor, council, ship captains, merchants, bankers, and other power brokers met at noon in their regular stalls to drink and cut deals.

Before the American Revolution, the London Coffee House was a hotbed of anti-British agitation. William Bradford, a leader in the Sons of Liberty, opposed the Stamp Act and other forms of British taxation, as did many of his profit-minded investors and customers. In 1765, bonfires burned before the Coffee House, fueled by parchment and paper bearing the hated stamp.

As the rift with Britain widened, the coffeehouse was where royal officials were burned in effigy and where Tories were forced to acknowledge their sins publicly or risk being tarred and feathered. When the Continental Congress was in session, John Adams, Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, and other revolutionary leaders met there to discuss strategy. On July 8, 1776, after the Declaration of Independence was publicly read for the first time, the royal arms were ripped down from the supreme court chamber at the State House, carried to the coffeehouse, and burned before a cheering mob.

When the Revolution began, William Bradford closed the coffeehouse and joined the Continental Army. Badly wounded at the Battle of Princeton, he never fully recovered from his injuries. He returned to Philadelphia in 1778 to find his establishment’s role as business exchange usurped by the City Tavern, a more modern and elegant facility that had remained in business during the British occupation. Opened in 1773 on Second Street between Walnut and Chestnut, the City Tavern (later the Merchants’ Coffee House) would function as the city’s exchange until the 1830s.

After competing against the City Tavern for two years, Bradford relinquished his proprietorship to the building’s owner in 1780 and retired.

The London Coffee House closed its doors in 1793. After serving as a dry goods store, the building housed a tobacco shop from 1817 until 1883, when the owner demolished the historic but outmoded structure, replacing it with the five-story office building that currently occupies the site.
The Court House and Town Hall did triple service as the political, judicial, and commercial center of Philadelphia. Built in 1707–10 between Christ Church and the Great Meeting House, the brick building combined the city’s market head house with its courthouse, an ancient British tradition. It served as the seat of government for the city and county of Philadelphia, as well as for the province of Pennsylvania, until these functions were transferred to the State House in 1748.

The impetus for the building came in 1706, when the provincial assembly threatened to leave the city for either Bucks or Chester County unless Philadelphia built them a more suitable meeting place than the alehouse they were obliged to use. After much wrangling, the Court House and Town Hall was erected at the eastern end of the High Street market shed between Second and Third streets. It stood on the site of the town bell, which was rung to open and close the market and to announce proclamations.

The Great Towne-House, or Guild Hall, was the first piece of civic architecture in the young city. Modeled on the medieval market/courthouses of England and Scotland, the brick building stood two-and-a-half stories high, with its steeply pitched gable roof forming a garret. The town bell was relocated to a wooden steeple in the middle of the roof, which gave the structure a churchlike appearance. The arcaded first floor, one arch wide on Second Street and three arches long on High Street, housed the town jail as well as market stalls. The second floor and garret became the seat of the city, county, and provincial governments, and the meeting place of the provincial assembly, legislature, municipal council, mayor’s court, county court, orphans’ court, and supreme court.

Outside stairways on the north and south sides of the building snaked around to the Second Street façade, joining at a covered balcony on the second floor, the site of public announcements and speeches, as well as elections. Enfranchised freemen ascended the stairs to vote or blocked them to keep their opponents from casting their ballots. In an October 1742 election between the Proprietary and Governor’s parties, supporters of the royal governor enlisted sailors to hold the stairs. Proprietary partisans, mostly Quakers, used fists, sticks, stones, and clubs to drive the sailors back to their
ships. Perhaps to discourage similar brawls, the outside stairs were removed before the Revolution.

When the new State House (now Independence Hall) was completed in 1748, it became the site of all judicial and governmental functions for the city, county, and colony. The old Court House survived for nearly another century, its space occupied by market stalls, an auction gallery, and shops. In June 1828, *The Casket* magazine noted with condescension: “This once venerable building, long diverted of its original honours, had long been regarded by us and others, as a rude and undistinguished edifice. . . . This structure, diminutive and ignoble as it may now appear to our modern conception, was the chef d’oeuvre and largest endeavor of our Pilgrim Fathers.”

Responding to tradesmen’s demands for more market space, the city passed an ordinance for “doing away with the Court House” on September 1, 1836. Despite the opposition of John Fanning Watson and other early preservationists, the Court House was dismantled in March and April 1837. In its place rose one of the modern iron market sheds designed by William Strickland, which would itself be demolished in 1859.
Bleakley House/Cannon Ball House

**Location:** Penrose Ferry Road, South Philadelphia  
**Completed:** ca. 1715  
**Demolished:** 1996  
**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

The Bleakley, or Cannon Ball, House stood in Kingsessing Township, in the far southern reaches of the city. The two-and-a-half-story brick farmhouse had some features associated with Swedish vernacular architecture, including a steep, hipped gable roof, a wooden pent roof across the gable ends, and a flat, elongated chimney. The original house stood nearly thirty-six feet long by nineteen feet wide; a later kitchen wing added to the back, measuring twenty-six by twenty feet, transformed it into an L-shaped structure. At one time, it was thought that the house dated from the mid–seventeenth century and belonged to a Swede named Peter Cock. More recently, historians have placed the date of the house’s construction at 1715–20, despite some features that seemed to belong to an earlier period.*

By the time of the Revolutionary War, ownership of the property had passed to John Bleakley. In October 1777, the British navy laid siege to Continental forces at nearby Fort Mifflin, who were preventing their ships from sailing up the Delaware to supply the king’s forces in Philadelphia. The British built a land battery in the rear of the Bleakley house, placing it in the direct line of fire between Fort Mifflin and the battery.

According to legend, the Bleakleys ignored orders to evacuate until November 11, 1777, when a cannonball from Fort Mifflin crashed through the south side of the house and passed over their heads as they sat down to dinner. In fact, the house had already been commandeered by the British, as shown by a diary entry by John Montresor, chief engineer for the British, for that day: “One corporal and two seargeants wounded at Bleakley house, it being in the line of fire.” From that time on, the Bleakley house was nicknamed the Cannon Ball House. After the Revolution, the cannonball’s entry and exit points were bricked over but kept whitewashed as a souvenir of the house’s battle service.

During the late nineteenth century, the City of Philadelphia acquired the Cannon Ball House and then forgot about it. The 1937

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*In *Portrait of a Colonial City* (1939), Eberlein and Hubbard stated that the house “could have been built as early as 1657–60, certainly by 1668” (29). The Historic American Buildings Survey PA–134 (August 1937) specified the building period as 1668–1715 on its plans. On the summary report for the same survey; however, District Officer Joseph P. Sims placed the date of construction as “about 1750.” Robert Smith, in “Two Centuries of Philadelphia Architecture, 1700–1900” (in American Philosophical Society, *Historic Philadelphia* [1953]), stated that the house “may antedate the founding of the city”; “the greater part of the present structure seems to date, however, from between 1714 and 1720” (289).
Historic American Buildings Survey noted that “the house has long been unoccupied and is in deplorable condition.” In 1947, a fire left only its walls standing. The house remained in its semi-ruined state until 1975, when the city needed room to expand the nearby Southwest Sewage Treatment Plant.

City officials spent nearly $200,000 to move the shell to a site near the entrance to Fort Mifflin, a mile away, where it was left to decay on I-beams in a muddy, weed-filled lot for twenty-two years, while the Water Department, Recreation Department, and other city agencies bickered over who should maintain it. In November 1996, workers from the Department of Licenses and Inspections knocked down the ruins. The head of that department insisted that notice of the Cannon Ball House’s pending demolition had been submitted two months earlier to the Philadelphia Historical Commission, which denied receiving such notice. Dori McMunn, then executive director of nearby Fort Mifflin, salvaged some bricks, molding, handmade square nails, and other artifacts from the house. The rest of the historic—and supposedly historically protected—structure became landfill.

Fairhill

Location: Marshall Street between York and Cumberland streets, North Philadelphia
Completed: 1717; rebuilt, 1787
Demolished: Original house burned by the British, 1777; rebuilt house demolished, 1885
Architect/Builder: Richard Redman and John Hart

William Penn expected Philadelphia’s larger property owners to adopt the habits of England’s landed gentry and spend more time at their country estates than at their town houses. Penn himself set the standard by establishing a plantation at Pennsbury Manor in Bucks County, traveling by barge down the Delaware to his rented quarters in town. Men of means followed his lead, creating about 150 country estates within a twelve-mile radius of the city by 1750. Along with the surviving Stenton, Fairhill (or Fair Hill) was among the earliest examples of a Philadelphia country estate.

Isaac Norris Sr., a Quaker planter who moved from Jamaica to Philadelphia in 1693, became a trusted associate of Penn’s and one of the city’s wealthiest merchants. In 1709, after buying the Slate Roof House, he began to purchase land on the Germantown Road north of the city. By 1713, Norris had assembled 804 acres and had begun to build a mansion, which he named after the nearby Quaker meetinghouse of Fair Hill.

His builders designed an H-shaped structure fifty-six feet wide by forty-five feet deep. The house consisted of a raised basement, a first floor, and a second story or garret under a high-pitched, cross-gabled roof. A recessed entrance led into a central hall, which in turn opened into four rooms, two in each wing. A balcony ran across the top of the recessed central section of the house and a square tower rose from the middle of the central gable. From these vantage points, Norris could enjoy views of the Delaware River and the distant city. Visitors arriving along the tree-lined drive from the...
Germantown Road saw an imposing brick façade; the less visible side walls were composed of cheaper rubble stonework.

While many early country houses were little more than cabins, Norris spared no expense on his. He ordered locks, hinges, sashes, and window glass from England, as well as much of the furniture. Black and white marble slabs lined the floor of the front hall, while the front parlors were wainscoted with oak and red cedar. The finishing touch was a large weathercock atop his tower, connected to an interior compass.

Despite its handsome furnishings, Fairhill was a working farm with numerous outbuildings, including a kitchen, stable, brew-house, milk house, smokehouse, granary, greenhouse, corn house, cider house, and barn. An orchard provided various fruits, a kitchen garden produced a variety of vegetables (including English beans, a gift from proprietor Thomas Penn), and an apiary yielded honey.

In 1717, Isaac Norris made Fairhill his year-round home, turning the Slate Roof House over to his son, Isaac Jr. The younger Norris moved to Fairhill in 1742, six years after his father’s death. Reflecting the growing wealth and leisure of the colony, Fairhill became less a working farm and more a gentleman’s residence under Isaac Jr. The greenhouse was converted to house the largest library in Pennsylvania after James Logan’s. Norris added formal

![Illustration of Fairhill](image-url)
gardens with parterres and gravel walks and beautified the surrounding woods and waterways according to the picturesque aesthetics of English landscape design.

These improvements continued after Isaac Jr.’s death in 1766, when the house passed to his daughter Mary and her husband, lawyer and politician John Dickinson. After dining at Fairhill in 1774, John Adams wrote: “Mr. Dickinson has a fine seat, a beautiful prospect of the city, the river and country, fine garden, and a very grand library.”

Fairhill’s halcyon days ended with the American Revolution. Although Dickinson had declined to sign the Declaration of Independence, he supported the American cause and served as a brigadier general in the Pennsylvania militia. The family abandoned the estate during the British occupation of Philadelphia and the surrounding area. In November 1777, the British army burned Fairhill and other country houses as part of a scorched-earth campaign to make the Northern Liberties unusable by American forces. Deborah Logan, granddaughter of the original owner, later wrote: “From the roof of my mother’s house, on Chestnut Street, we counted seventeen fires, one of which we knew to be the beautiful seat of Fairhill, built by my grandfather Norris and owned by his family, but in the occupation of the excellent John Dickinson, who had married my cousin.”

After the Revolution, the house lay in ruins until 1787, when Isaac Norris III built a simpler, one-story structure incorporating the remains of the original walls. The Norris family used the property as a summer residence until 1841. After that, it became a tavern under such names as the Old Revolution Inn and Fairhill Beer-Garden, where “merry Teutons quaffed the beverage of Cambrianus beneath the fine old trees of the Norris estate.” In 1885, Marshall Street was opened through the property and the last traces of Fairhill were destroyed, at length replaced by the endless row houses of North Philadelphia.

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**Second Presbyterian Church**

**Location:** Northwest corner of Arch and Third streets  
**Completed:** 1752  
**Demolished:** 1837  
**Architect/Builder:** Robert Smith; Thomas Nevell (steeple)

As Philadelphia expanded, so did the variety of sects and denominations enjoying Penn’s policy of religious tolerance. Houses of worship increased in number from about six at the start of the eighteenth century to eighteen by the time of the Revolution. Fueled by the growth in Scots-Irish immigration, Presbyterianism surged in popularity during this period; by 1745, there were nearly as many Presbyterians as Quakers in Philadelphia.

In the 1730s, the religious revival known as the Great Awakening created a schism among Philadelphia’s Presbyterians. The First Presbyterian Church, at High Street and Bank Alley, was the home of the conservative Old Lights. The New Lights, inflamed by the passionate preaching of the Reverend George Whitefield, sought a faith that was more emotional and fundamental. Many of the New Lights were recent Scots-Irish immigrants, who felt divided from the more established Old Lights on social and economic, as well as religious, grounds.

In 1743, about 140 Presbyterians split from the original church to organize the Second Presbyterian Church. Originally, they met in the New Building on Fourth Street below Arch, later the birthplace of the University of Pennsylvania. When the New Building was sold in 1747, the Second Presbyterian Church was forced to find a new home. The New Lights purchased a lot at the northwest corner of Arch and Third streets and laid a cornerstone on May 17, 1750, for a church designed by Robert Smith, Philadelphia’s leading architect-builder. The brick church, measuring sixty feet on Arch Street by eighty feet on Third, featured a classic Georgian façade with a pedimented front door framed by arched windows; a Palladian window on the second floor, also framed by arched...
windows; an oculus in the gable; and urns at the gable peak and ends. Inscribed in gilt letters on its eastern pediment were the words “Templum Presbyterianum, annuente numine, erectum. Anno Dom. MDCCL” (“Presbyterian Temple, erected with divine approval in the Year of our Lord 1750”).

A notable feature of Smith’s design was an imposing steeple, one of the few to compete with the spire then rising over Christ Church on Second Street. It would take eleven years and at least two lotteries to raise sufficient funds to erect the spire. When it was finally completed in 1761, the church elders had discarded Robert Smith’s original design for a simpler tower created by Thomas Nevell, as shown in the William Birch print of Arch Street. By this time, their exertions had prompted one anonymous wit to compose a sneering verse:

The Presbyterians built a church,
And fain would have a steeple;
We think it may become the church,
But not become the people.25

Despite this mockery, the Second Presbyterian Church had been steadily gaining in membership and prestige. After the Revolution, it counted Benjamin Rush, David Rittenhouse, Peter S. DuPonceau, and Elias Boudinot among its members. George Washington worshipped at the church occasionally, in his own President’s Pew. In 1789, the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was held at the Second Presbyterian Church.

In 1802, the church’s troublesome steeple was removed, after its wooden supports were discovered to have rotted. A few years later, the building was enlarged and its interior redesigned to accommodate a growing congregation. Despite this overhaul, the need for a new facility was inescapable by the 1830s. Not only was the church too small, but its neighborhood had grown commercial and noisy, especially after the repeal of a law permitting the church to close Arch and Third streets to traffic on Sundays. In 1837, the building was sold and torn down, and the congregation moved to “a beautiful marble front church” on Seventh Street below Arch. It remained there until 1872, when it moved farther west to Walnut and Twenty-first streets. The church, which rejoined the Old Lights in 1949 to become the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, still occupies that site.
According to legend, the first child born to European parents in Philadelphia, John Drinker, arrived on December 24, 1680, in a log cabin along Dock Creek. After a long and varied career elsewhere, he returned to Philadelphia and in 1751 purchased a lot measuring twenty-six by fifty feet at the northeast corner of Walnut and Second streets, a location believed to be either on or near the site of his birthplace. Drinker, who lived to be over a hundred, loved to point out sites where Indians once camped and to reminisce about being taken as a toddler to see William Penn arrive at the Dock. While in England on a diplomatic mission, Benjamin Franklin was asked how long Americans lived. He responded that he could not tell until John Drinker died.

Sometime between 1751 and 1760, Drinker built two adjoining, three-and-a-half-story brick houses on his property. Although he may have intended them to be used as a double house, Drinker sold them separately in 1760. The corner house (135 Walnut Street), measuring forty-six feet along Second Street and thirteen feet on Walnut Street, was a gable-roofed, two-bay building with a pedimented gable on the Second Street side. At some point, a three-story, flat-roofed addition was constructed in the rear of the house.

After Drinker sold the corner house, it belonged to several owners before being acquired by the McCalla family, who owned it for eighty-nine years. In 1839, a gunsmith, John Krider, rented the back addition, taking over a business that Prosper Vallée had run since 1826. When the McCalla family died out in 1856, Krider purchased the property and moved his gun shop to the front room. Krider’s Gun Shop was in the middle of a busy commercial district and close to the Walnut Street wharves, where Cope’s Steamship Line brought a fresh flood of passengers to its doorstep every day.

Besides selling guns, Krider dealt in fishing and hunting equipment, sporting goods, and taxidermy. During the Civil War, his gun
shop also served as a cartridge-loading station. By the 1870s, advertisements described Krider’s as a “sporting depot” that provided the same services for Philadelphia’s hunting, shooting, and riding folk that Abercrombie & Fitch offered to New Yorkers.26

Krider’s business occupied the entire house, with the shop on the first floor, a gun-manufacturing room on the second, and fishing equipment on the third. After Krider’s death in 1886, the business was sold to his protégé, John Siner, and stayed in the Siner family until the death of John Siner’s son Leandro in 1944. As factory-produced firearms flattened the market for custom-made guns, the staff shrank from eleven gunsmiths to one repairman.

After the gun shop closed, the ground floor of the building housed a luncheonette. When the lunchroom owner died in 1952, the National Park Service debated buying the property but was unable to proceed because it was outside the park area authorized by Congress. Instead, John Taxin, owner of Old Original Bookbinder’s Restaurant at 125 Walnut Street, purchased both the Krider Gun Shop (133 Walnut Street) and its neighbor (135 Walnut Street) for $15,000. Charles Peterson, resident architect for the National Park Service, asked Taxin to consider rehabilitating the two Drinker houses as a gun museum. Unfortunately, surveys of the structures conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Department of Licenses and Inspections concluded that they were in poor condition.

In 1955, with the city’s permission, Taxin had 133 and 135 Walnut Street demolished to expand Old Original Bookbinder’s. Grant Miles Simon, chair of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, designed a structure to house the restaurant’s Hall of Patriots banquet room and Signers dining room. His design—a three-and-a-half-story, gable-roofed brick building—was a stylistic salute to the vanished Drinker houses rather than an accurate copy. Today, the recently reopened Old Original Bookbinder’s still occupies the site. (Over the years, the Taxin family would continue to clash with preservationists over their demolition of such historic structures as the McCrea houses in 1984 and the Elisha Webb Chandlery in 1993.)

**Friends’ Almshouse**

- **Location:** South side of Walnut Street between Third and Fourth streets
- **Completed:** 1729
- **Demolished:** 1841 (main building); 1876 (cottages)
- **Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**First Philadelphia Almshouse**

- **Location:** Square bounded by Third, Fourth, Spruce, and Pine streets
- **Completed:** 1732
- **Demolished:** 1765
- **Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Second Philadelphia Almshouse**

- **Location:** Square bounded by Tenth, Eleventh, Spruce, and Pine streets
- **Completed:** 1767
- **Demolished:** 1834
- **Architect/Builder:** Robert Smith

Guided by Quaker principles of charity and social responsibility, Philadelphia was a pioneer in public welfare. In 1713, the city’s Quakers founded the Friends’ Almshouse, the first institution of its type in the American colonies, in a small house on Walnut Street between Third and Fourth. In 1729, the house was replaced by a substantial brick building; behind this central structure, a number of small cottages stood within a central courtyard. The main Almshouse accommodated indigent Quakers for 112 years until its...
replacement by offices in 1841. The cottages, known as the Quaker Nunnery for the elderly ladies inhabiting them, survived until 1876, when Walnut Place was run through the block.

By the early eighteenth century, the number of poor and needy in Philadelphia necessitated municipal involvement. In 1730 the mayor and aldermen paid £200 to purchase the square bounded by Third, Fourth, Spruce, and Pine streets. The Philadelphia Almshouse was erected on the site in 1731–32, taking the name Green Meadows from its bucolic setting. Little is known of the brick structure other than that it resembled the Friends’ Almshouse, with its main entrance on Third Street and a “great gate” on Spruce, and a porch running around the building. Besides housing and feeding the poor, the Almshouse offered an infirmary and hospital for the sick and insane, their only refuge until the opening of the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1751.

By the 1760s, the Almshouse was overwhelmed, with 220 paupers seeking refuge in a building designed for less than half that number. In 1764, the Overseers of the Poor reported that four to six men were squeezed into a room no larger than ten feet square. The city turned to its citizens for support, raising funds to purchase...
a lot on the edge of the city, one block west of Pennsylvania Hospital. The former Almshouse property was sold and subdivided into lots for Society Hill town houses, including the historic Hill-Physick-Keith house.

Robert Smith was hired to design the new facility, which was completed in 1767. The complex featured two buildings: the Almshouse fronting on Tenth Street, and a workhouse, or House of Employment, fronting on Eleventh. The buildings were identical two-story brick structures, L-shaped, 180 feet (on Tenth and Eleventh streets) by 40 feet (on Spruce Street), with four-story corner towers. On the back of the buildings, arched cloisters provided outdoor shelter for inmates. Many early prints, possibly copying Smith’s design rather than the actual building, show a central pavilion on Spruce Street connecting the two wings. A later print by William Birch shows no central structure, leading modern historians to conclude that it was never built.

During the American Revolution, the Continental Army appropriated the Almshouse for a hospital for wounded soldiers, and all the inmates were crowded into the House of Employment. When the British occupied the city in September 1777, they forced the managers to vacate the House of Employment as well. Of the 200 dislocated inmates, more than half died before the British evacuation in June 1778. Shortly after the British left, the Almshouse and House of Employment reoccupied the buildings, despite their wretched condition.

By the early nineteenth century, the number of poor, sick, and insane in the growing city had overwhelmed the resources of the Almshouse and House of Employment. The value of the buildings’ location had increased as the city moved westward, as had the public desire to remove their inmates from a prosperous residential district. A new almshouse and a bettering house (or workhouse) were built in the open country at Blockley (later West Philadelphia) in 1835. Cypress and Clinton streets were opened through the property and, once again, elegant residences occupied the former refuge of society’s rejects.
The Cliffs

Location: Columbia Avenue, near Thirty-third and Oxford streets, East Fairmount Park
Completed: 1753
Demolished: 1986
Architect/Builder: Unknown

The bluffs overlooking the Schuylkill River, both above and below the city, became a favorite spot for country estates. Wealthy Philadelphians could reach these houses easily from town via a cooling barge ride. Because of their proximity (compared to the rigorous journey to Germantown or Frankford), many river houses, such as Woodford, Ormiston, and the Cliffs, were built on a relatively modest scale.

In 1753, the merchant Joshua Fisher, whose grandfather sailed with William Penn on the Welcome, acquired several parcels of property from the Mifflin family on the east bank of the Schuylkill. There he built a two-and-a-half-story country house with a hipped roof, measuring roughly thirty-six by twenty-two feet. The house was built of rubble stone and covered with stucco scored to look like ashlar. The compact structure contained a basement kitchen, parlor, and dining room on the first floor, two bedrooms on the second, and a full attic. Fisher named his house the Cliffs after his grandfather’s country seat near Wakefield, England.

The Cliffs was probably meant to be used as a summer house for short excursions from the Fisher city house at 110 South Front Street. Its two bedrooms and attic could not easily accommodate Fisher, his wife, seven children, and servants for an extended stay. Although the use of simple materials, such as the rubble exterior, pine floors, and oak beams, reflected Fisher’s Quaker restraint, the Cliffs was elegantly finished, with wood paneling and details such as dadoes and chair rails.

The Fisher family owned the property until 1868, occasionally renting it out to tenants such as Sarah Franklin Bache, who in 1789...
wrote her father, Benjamin Franklin, about “this small, charming house.” In 1868, the Fairmount Park Commission acquired the property as part of its campaign to protect the city’s water supply, an effort that had the added benefit of preserving a number of early houses.

While housing park employees, the Cliffs served as an important model for the restoration of other historic buildings. The soapstone steps leading to its front and rear doors served as examples for the new steps at Independence Hall in the 1950s, while its interior details guided restoration of the Todd House and Bishop White House. The Cliffs was certified as an historic structure by the Philadelphia Historical Commission in 1956 and added to the Pennsylvania Register of Historic Buildings in 1971.

In 1968, the Fairmount Park Commission vacated the Cliffs, leaving it to the mercy of vandals and the elements. Three years later, opposition from members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and Independence National Historical Park halted a proposal by the cash-strapped commission to demolish the “obsolete” house. Their actions saved the Cliffs from immediate destruction but failed to produce a long-term solution.

In February 1986, a fire gutted the vacant building, leaving only the walls. Firefighters watched helplessly as flames consumed the house, unable to approach because the mud surrounding the Cliffs would not support their trucks. (Dirt had been brought in to transform a nearby garbage dump into parkland.) A 1987 assessment of the Cliffs and other historic structures in Fairmount Park by Kieran, Timberlake & Harris estimated that stabilization of the remains would cost between $15,000 and $25,000. The Fairmount Park Commission never took action, and today only a few ruins remain.

In evaluating the future of the Cliffs in 1987, Kieran, Timberlake & Harris might have composed its obituary: “The Cliffs testifies both to the grace of Philadelphia’s eighteenth-century architecture and the city’s neglect of its cultural resources in the twentieth century.”

### Benjamin Franklin House/Franklin Court

**Location:** Orianna Street south of Market Street, between Third and Fourth streets  
**Completed:** 1765  
**Demolished:** 1812  
**Architect/Builder:** Robert Smith and Samuel Rhoads

In 1763, fifty-seven-year-old Benjamin Franklin had returned to Philadelphia after a seven-year stint as colonial agent in London. Comfortably retired from his successful printing business, Franklin had become Philadelphia’s leading mover and shaker, cofounding the Pennsylvania Hospital, the American Philosophical Society, the Library Company, and a host of other institutions. Having lived in thirteen rented properties during thirty-three years of marriage, he and his wife, Deborah, were ready to settle down in their own house.

Rather than build a country estate, Franklin wanted to stay in the city, near the State House, the commercial district, and the many institutions he had brought to life. The Franklins had assembled a large lot on the south side of High (Market) Street between Third and Fourth, extending nearly to Chestnut Street. Just as construction began, Franklin was appointed agent for the Province of Pennsylvania to the English government, leaving Philadelphia on November 7, 1764. He had no way of knowing that of the remaining twenty-seven years of his life, he would spend only seven in his own house.

Before leaving for England, Franklin selected Robert Smith as the master carpenter for the house and appointed his friend Samuel Rhoads as agent to supervise construction. They built a three-story brick structure, thirty-four feet square, with three rooms to a floor and a basement kitchen. A chimney rose at each end of the wood-shingled roof. The house stood in a courtyard about 200 feet back from High Street, to minimize noise from the busy marketplace, and was further shielded by three brick houses fronting on High Street, which Franklin had built to generate rental income.
By May 1765, the house was sufficiently completed for Deborah Franklin to move in with her daughter Sarah. The house bore the signs of Franklin’s inventive nature, with his own Franklin stoves and lightning rods, a trap door to the roof to facilitate firefighting, a furnace, and in the kitchen “several Contrivances to carry off Steam & Smell and Smoke.” Soon its rooms were papered and carpeted, and filled with the elegant possessions Franklin had collected in England.

Franklin did not return to his house until May 1775, after the death of his wife, to live with his daughter and her husband, Richard Bache. In October 1776, with the country at war with England, Franklin was dispatched to France to negotiate a treaty. During the British occupation of 1777–78, General Sir Charles Grey and Captain John André lived in his house. When the British officers decamped, they stole Franklin’s books, electrical equipment, musical instruments, and portrait, but otherwise left the residence intact.

Franklin returned to Philadelphia for the final time in September 1785, a hero for his role in winning French support for the American cause. To accommodate his daughter’s growing family, he added an extension, eighteen by thirty feet, to the house’s eastern end. Along with two bedrooms and two attic rooms, the addition created a long room for Franklin’s library and scientific instruments, and a spacious drawing room where Franklin could entertain fellow members of the American Philosophical Society.

During this time, Franklin rearranged his holdings to provide security for his family. He tore down the three houses on High Street and replaced them with two modern rental properties, built another building at the northwestern edge of the property, and added a print shop north of the house for his grandson. For his own...
pleasure, he surrounded the house with an ornamental garden, full of shade trees and flowering shrubs. In his later years, the ailing Franklin often held court under a mulberry tree in the rear of the property.

After Franklin's death in 1790, his daughter and son-in-law sold his possessions at auction and rented the house to the Portuguese minister to the United States. Over the next decade, the house served as a boardinghouse, a female academy, a coffeehouse, and the home of the African Free School. After the deaths of Sarah and Richard Bache, their descendants sold the property. In 1812, Franklin's house was demolished, along with the printing shop. Orianna Street was run through the property; with houses lining both sides of the street.

In 1954, the federal government acquired the property as part of Independence National Historical Park. After conducting extensive historical and archaeological investigations on the site, the National Park Service decided to recreate Franklin Court for the nation's bicentennial. The well-documented properties on Market Street were reconstructed by John Milner as the United States Postal Service Museum, the Franklin Print Shop, and the office of the Aurora, the newspaper edited by Franklin's grandson. Aside from two rough sketches of floor plans by Franklin himself, however, no authentic image of Franklin's house existed. The only known picture of the house, an early nineteenth-century watercolor by James Thackara, disappeared in 1948.

Faced with this lack of visual documentation, architects Robert Venturi and John Rauch designed “ghost houses”—open steel frames outlining the dimensions of the Franklin house and print shop on their original sites. Beneath the house, an underground museum presented a multimedia history of Franklin's life and contributions. The rest of the courtyard was developed as a small urban park, with plantings, pergolas, and benches evoking an eighteenth-century garden. Franklin Court opened in April 1976, one of the few Bicentennial projects to be realized and to survive to the present.
CHAPTER 2

Athens of America
(1776 to 1820)

For much of the period between 1776 and 1820, Philadelphia was the true center of the new United States, not just politically and culturally, but geographically. From 1769 to 1800, U.S. longitude was calculated from the Meridian of Philadelphia, determined by David Rittenhouse as being 75 degrees, 8 minutes, and 45 seconds west of Greenwich. The Meridian of Philadelphia ran through the observatory in the State House yard from which Rittenhouse first tracked the Transit of Venus in 1769.

In the early days of the Revolution, Philadelphia enjoyed a burst of wartime prosperity as the seat of the Continental Congress and as the hub of American maritime traffic and military provisioning. Its status changed swiftly when the British Army, under General Sir William Howe, occupied the city in September 1778. The army used many of the city’s public buildings and churches as hospitals, barracks, or stables and requisitioned its larger houses for officers’ quarters. During the harsh winter of 1778–79, Philadelphians desperate for fuel chopped down trees and tore down fences and old houses. Before the British left in June 1779, they demolished, gutted, or vandalized many buildings, leaving behind “a wanton desolation and destruction” filled with “dirt, filth, stench, and flies.”

Wartime deprivation left Philadelphia semi-ruined for years after the British left. When the American victory at Yorktown in October 1781 effectively ended hostilities, prosperity began to return to the devastated city. Men like Henry Hill, Robert Morris, and William Bingham, whose wealth had been enhanced rather than diminished by the war, were soon building handsome residences.

When the Constitutional Convention was convened at the State House on May 25, 1787, Philadelphia returned to the national spotlight. Its status was further elevated by the Residence Act, which moved the federal government from New York to Philadelphia while the new Federal City, or District of Columbia, was being created. The act, brokered by Robert Morris, called for Philadelphia to serve as the national capital from 1790 only until the first Monday in December 1800. Many Philadelphians, of course, hoped that...
after a decade of soft living in their metropolis, the new government would forget about moving to the malarial wilderness of Virginia.

To entice the government to remain, Philadelphia gave itself a much-needed facelift, covering the open sewer that was Dock Creek to create Dock Street and planting trees in the overcrowded Strangers’ Burying Ground (today Washington Square) near the State House. The city erected new accommodations for the government, including buildings for the Supreme Court and Congress, a presidential mansion, and facilities for the First Bank of the United States and the U.S. Mint.

These structures were part of a citywide construction boom that included handsome public buildings like the Pennsylvania Hospital and Library Hall, as well as magnificent private residences like the Hill-Physick-Keith House, the Bingham Mansion House, and the Woodlands. Many of these buildings were designed in the Adam brothers’ classical manner, imported from Britain to become the Federal style in America. Rows of modest houses spread across the Northern Liberties, which had been subdivided and sold off by the state legislature after the Revolution.

Between 1790 and 1800, the population of Philadelphia grew from 28,500 to over 41,000, making it the second largest city in the United States. While New York had more people, Philadelphia was the center of American politics, finance, trade, industry, and culture to a degree unrivaled by any single U.S. city since then. Even after the federal government departed on schedule, Philadelphia retained its financial, mercantile, and intellectual supremacy for another two decades.

Foreign visitors expecting a provincial backwater were stunned to find a dazzling capital comparable to London or Paris. In 1791, the Vicomte de Chateaubriand wrote of the “elegance of dress, the luxury of equipage, the frivolousness of conversations, the inequality of fortunes, the immorality of banking and gaming-houses, the noise of ball-rooms and theatres.”

Every day brought an exciting novelty or invention: the first American monthly magazine, the
Columbian; the first gaslights, advertised as “a grand fire-work by means of light composed of inflammable air”; even a steam-powered vehicle called the Orukter Amphibolos that traveled unaided on both water and land.\(^3\)

English immigrants like Benjamin Henry Latrobe and John Haviland brought the latest architectural styles and techniques from Europe, which were quickly adopted by native sons like Robert Mills and William Strickland. This first generation of professional architects established new standards of sophistication, innovation, and technical expertise. Despite the conservative influence of the Carpenters’ Company, these trendsetters made Philadelphia the undisputed leader in U.S. architectural design. Under their sway, the favored Georgian and Federal modes gave way to experimental styles like Greek Revival and Gothic Revival.

By the early nineteenth century, the city boasted such impressive structures as the Centre Square Water Works, the Bank of Pennsylvania, the Chestnut Street Theatre, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Philadelphia, a town of plain red brick when this period began, was changing into a city of neoclassical gray marble as it ended. When Benjamin Henry Latrobe, in an 1811 address to the Society of Artists of the United States, foresaw that “the days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America, and Philadelphia become the Athens of the Western world,” his words sounded like an accurate forecast rather than a utopian vision.\(^4\)

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**Philadelphia Waterfront**

**Location:** Front and Water streets and adjacent streets along the Delaware waterfront.

**Built:** ca. 1770–1830

**Demolished:** ca. 1839–1980

**Architect/Builder:** Various

From its earliest days until the mid-nineteenth century, Philadelphia was a maritime city, its commercial life focused on the Delaware River. This was especially true after the Revolution, when Philadelphia emerged not just as the country’s leading political and mercantile city, but as the center of U.S. shipping and naval power. Its waterfront bristled with wharves, shipyards, and the masts of sailing vessels. Front and Water streets were jammed with the business of maritime life: warehouses, countinghouses, chandleries, breweries, taverns, and inns.

By the late eighteenth century, many who earned their living from the water lived a little distance from it; most merchants preferred the spacious yet convenient retreat of Society Hill. Those further down the ladder—mariners, sailmakers, coopers, carpenters, rope makers, and riggers—concentrated south of the city, in Dock Ward and Southwark. Front, Water, Catherine, Queen, and Swanson streets were lined with uniform rows of redbrick houses, two and three stories high, with keystone window lintels, white shutters, gable roofs, attic dormers, cellar doors, and white marble steps.

Successive waves of improvements demolished many of these buildings, which themselves had replaced structures erected by earlier settlers. In 1839, the waterfront was extended eastward for the construction of fifty-foot-wide Delaware Avenue (today Christopher Columbus Boulevard) from Vine to South streets. Financed by Stephen Girard’s estate, Delaware Avenue was meant to handle the mercantile traffic that had overwhelmed narrow Water Street. Soon, large commercial structures replaced many of the eighteenth- and

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\(^3\) Athena of America

\(^4\) Athena of America
early nineteenth-century brick houses between South and Vine streets. From 1897 to 1899, Delaware Avenue was widened to 150 feet and extended north, destroying other parts of the waterfront, especially in previously untouched areas like Kensington. Around 1906, more buildings along Front Street were demolished for an elevated railroad.

The pace of demolition quickened after World War II, when Philadelphia’s dormant waterfront fell victim to urban renewal. After the removal of the wholesale food distribution center to Packer Avenue, all structures in the block bounded by Dock, Walnut, Front, and Second streets were demolished in the 1960s. Society Hill Towers (completed 1964) and the Sheraton Society Hill (completed 1984) now occupy much of this space.

The most widespread destruction was triggered by the construction of the Delaware Expressway (Interstate 95) in the 1960s and 1970s. The federally financed highway cut a gash through three centuries of Philadelphia maritime history, leveling hundreds of structures and thrusting an eight-lane asphalt barrier between the city and its river. Even in Society Hill and Center City, where community and political pressure forced I-95 underground between Delancey and Chestnut streets, the river seems far from the city. In fact, the approaches and bridges built over the sunken portion of I-95 forced the removal of more early buildings along Front and Market streets.

The Southwark district, where a Federal-era waterfront community had remained largely intact for over a century, was especially devastated by I-95. Starting in November 1967, 131 historic houses were demolished, despite a two-year struggle by residents and preservationists. Nearby Queen Village organized to preserve the buildings that remained, forcing the relocation of access ramps.
to I-95 planned for their area. In 1972, the Southwark Historic District was established, providing some protection for the remaining 600 buildings bordered by Delaware Avenue, Washington Avenue, Fifth, Lombard, Front, and Catherine streets.

Philadelphia’s long-term attempts to define and rationalize Penn’s Landing—a work in progress since 1967—illustrate its struggle to reconnect with its river heritage. While current plans to erect casinos and luxury condominiums along the area north of Vine Street suggest a waterfront renaissance, these massive structures may place another barrier between the city and the river, except for a few lucky residents or gamblers.

Walnut Street Jail

Location: Southeast corner of Walnut and Sixth streets
Completed: 1776
Demolished: 1836
Architect/Builder: Robert Smith

As Philadelphia’s population exploded, so did its crime rate. With a night watch consisting only of two paid constables and twelve unpaid volunteers, thefts and assaults grew more frequent. The Old Stone Prison at Third and High streets was a poor deterrent; fourteen inmates escaped by scaling its walls between 1729 and 1732 alone. To stop Philadelphia’s crime wave, the Pennsylvania Assembly passed a law on February 23, 1773, authorizing the erection of “a commodious, strong, and sufficient gaol, workhouse, and house of correction, with a good yard to each of them, inclosed by a wall of proper height and strength.”

The Walnut Street Jail was built between 1773 and 1776 at Walnut and Sixth streets, across from State House Square (Independence Square). The two-story structure, made of gray, rough-cast stone, ran 184 feet along Walnut Street and 32 feet along Sixth. Two perpendicular wings, each about 90 feet long, extended from the rear of the building toward Prune (Locust) Street. Its front elevation, with a projecting center section, bore a strong resemblance to architect Robert Smith’s 1754 design for Nassau Hall at the College of New Jersey (today Princeton University). Atop the building stood a cupola with a weathervane in the shape of a gilded key. A two-and-a-half-story stone workhouse stood at the southern end of the lot, facing Prune Street, and a brick wall twenty feet high surrounded the entire lot.

Smith’s design introduced numerous innovations over earlier prisons, which thrust inmates into a common, filthy pen. At Walnut Street, prisoners would live in separate cells, each with a privy flushed by a roof cistern. Male and female prisoners would be housed in different wings, and hardened criminals would be separ-
rated from lighter offenders. There were dining rooms, baths, and an infirmary. Tile floors supported by stone groin vaults made the prison both fireproof and, supposedly, escape-proof.

The construction of the Walnut Street Jail coincided with the early days of the Revolution. When the jail opened in January 1776, its initial 105 inmates included Tories and prisoners of war in addition to felons and debtors. Later that year, Congress requisitioned the new prison for the confinement of captured enemy personnel and collaborators.

When British forces occupied the city in 1777, the jail became the British provost prison, housing American prisoners of war. Under the sadistic watch of Provost Marshal William Cunningham, inmates were deprived of food, clothing, and blankets. Starving prisoners ate rats, leather scraps, and wood chips; in winter, they shivered as snow and air poured through the open windows. Hundreds of American soldiers were executed or perished from disease, exposure, and malnutrition. Their bodies were buried in mass graves across Sixth Street in the Strangers’ Burying Ground (later Washington Square).

But even after the prison returned to civilian use, it resembled the hellholes it had been designed to replace. In 1787, the Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons (today the Pennsylvania Prison Society), organized to inspect and reform the Walnut Street Jail, called it “an Augean stable of filth and iniquity,” run by a former tavern owner who prospered selling liquor and collecting bribes from his inmates.6

The society agitated to separate the sexes, ban liquor, provide proper food and clothing for prisoners, separate hardened convicts

In this William Birch print, created ca. 1800, two constables armed with clubs lead a group of miscreants to their new lodgings in the Walnut Street Jail. (The Philadelphia Print Shop.)
from untried prisoners, close the dungeons, and introduce religious instruction. By 1810 conditions had improved: No more than thirty men slept in a room, and each had his own blanket.

In 1791, the first penitentiary in the United States was established in the rear of the jail yard. The “penitentiary house” was a rectangular, two-story brick structure, supported on arches to ensure that prisoners would not tunnel out. The building contained sixteen cells, each six by eight feet, with one small window and no beds. In these cells, prisoners were kept alone to meditate upon and repent for their sins. In addition to solitary confinement, the penitentiary pioneered the use of religious study and productive labor to rehabilitate inmates. As part of what would later be called the Pennsylvania System, workshops erected in a half-octagonal structure behind the original jail in 1795 allowed prisoners to work as weavers, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, and stone carvers; fire destroyed the shops in 1798.

As both the city and its social problems grew, the Walnut Street Jail became densely overcrowded. Between 1791 and 1822, the number of inmates in the main part of the prison jumped from 143 to 804. Escapes and riots grew commonplace. A new prison opened on Arch Street (on the current site of the Municipal Services Building) in 1816, followed by the Eastern State Penitentiary in 1830 and the Philadelphia County (Moyamensing) Prison in 1835.

In 1836, the Walnut Street Jail was demolished and the property sold to John Moss for $299,000. When Moss’s proposal to erect a luxury hotel fell through, the lot was cut up into building sites and Adelphi Street run through the property. In 1845, John Notman’s Athenaeum was erected on what had been the west side of the prison yard. Ironically, the prison site itself became a string of law offices known as Lawyers’ Row. In 1913, Lawyers’ Row was demolished for the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company headquarters, which still occupies the site. The only surviving trace of the Walnut Street Prison is its key-shaped weathervane, which resides today at the Atwater Kent Museum.

### Carlton

**Location:** 2932 Midvale Avenue (south side of Midvale at Stokley Street)

**Built:** 1780

**Demolished:** 1948

**Architect/Builder:** Isaac Tustin

In 1771, wine merchant Henry Hill, whose Madeira was one of Philadelphia’s favorite postprandial tipples, acquired a 31-acre tract on the border between lower Germantown and Roxborough Township. Despite the upheavals of the Revolution, Hill expanded his holdings between 1776 and 1792, assembling a 180-acre estate he named Roxborough Plantation. An early eighteenth-century farmhouse there served as headquarters for George Washington before and after the Battle of the Brandywine in August–September 1777. In October 1777, Hessian General Wilhelm Knyphausen occupied the house during the Battle of Germantown.

In 1780, Hill constructed a two-story, stucco-over-stone structure, fifty-two by twenty-three feet, that incorporated or replaced the war-ravaged farmhouse. A tablet placed in a nearby stone wall noted that the house was:

Ruined by the war of 1777  
Rebuilt more firmly 1780 by  
The trusty Isaac Tustin.

When peace arrived, Hill added a two-story brick structure to the west of his original house, possibly for one of his six sisters. During this period, Hill also built a new city residence on part of the former Almshouse property at 321 South Fourth Street, known today as the Hill-Physick-Keith House. After Hill’s death from yellow fever in 1798, Roxborough Plantation was divided among his sisters.

In 1830, John Craig acquired the house and ten acres of land and named his new purchase Carlton, after one of Queen Elizabeth’s castles. He added two frame wings on either side of the orig-
inal structure, connecting the 1780s addition. By 1840, Carlton was a sprawling country house 128 feet long, its original façade sheltered by a wide verandah and graced by a massive Palladian window on the second floor. Craig used the property as a stock farm, constructing a racecourse for his horses.

Carlton survived until 1948, when it was doomed by the demand for affordable postwar housing. During the early twentieth century, the surrounding neighborhood had grown more suburban, as East Falls spread north and Germantown spread south. Carlton’s 3.6 acres were one of the few large parcels of open land in the area. In February 1948, a real estate developer demolished Carlton and its colonial barn to erect three apartment buildings as part of the Queen Lane Manor housing project. An article detailing Carlton’s destruction bore the headline, “Germantown Mansion Bows to March of Progress.”

![The north façade of Carlton, also known as the Carlton-Smith Mansion, in 1913. (The Library Company of Philadelphia.)](image)

**Bingham Mansion House**

**Location:** West side of South Third Street between Walnut and Spruce streets

**Completed:** 1787

**Demolished:** ca. 1850

**Architect/Builder:** John Plaw

When Philadelphia shone as the brightest star in the young American galaxy, its domestic architecture achieved new magnificence. Wealthy merchants and entrepreneurs like Robert Morris and Henry Hill competed in building extravagant city houses. The acknowledged winner, however, was the Bingham Mansion House on South Third Street, the most lavish residence in Philadelphia and possibly in the new nation.

Starting as an agent for American privateers, William Bingham became a successful banker, land speculator, and politician who married the lovely heiress Anne Willing. After the Revolution, the Binghams spent four years in Europe, where they grew enamored of English styles and status. When they returned home in 1786, they decided to build a larger version of the London house of the Duke of Manchester on Third Street, the most fashionable thoroughfare in Society Hill.

The three-story Mansion House stood forty feet back from Third Street, shielded by a brick wall and reached by a circular carriageway. One of the first Philadelphia structures built in the full Federal style, the symmetrical mansion featured a massive front entrance framed by a rusticated stone arch, topped by a Palladian balcony window on the second floor. A large lunette window on the third floor mirrored the fanlight over the front door. Carved marble plaques decorated the space above the slender side windows on the second floor. Matching two-story wings topped by marble balustrades framed the central structure.

But the Mansion House’s true glory lay in its interior design. Visitors entered a soaring center hall with a marble floor in a mosaic...
pattern, the first of its kind in the country. Passing the banqueting room and ballroom, they ascended a self-supporting staircase to the piano nobile, a high-ceilinged suite of public rooms on the second floor. After a liveried servant announced their names, the dazzled guests entered a drawing room lined with mirror-covered folding doors and lit by glass chandeliers. Tall windows offered a view of the three-acre garden, stretching to Fourth Street, bordered by Lombardy poplars and filled with statues, exotic plants, and parterres. The house was decorated with French carpets and furniture, damask curtains, Italian paintings and sculptures, and arabesque wallpaper by Reveillon.

When Philadelphia became the nation’s capital in 1790, Anne Bingham quickly established herself as its leading hostess. Her salons attracted Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and other members of the “Republican Court,” along with foreign dignitaries like Talleyrand and La Rochefoucauld. According to John Fanning Watson, the Binghams hosted the first masquerade ball in the United States. William Bingham’s magnificent residences at Third Street and at Lansdowne, his country estate, reflected his status as a U.S. senator and a director of the First Bank of the United States.

The Binghams and their mansion also drew censure from visitors who considered both too imperially glamorous for a young republic. In 1789, architect Charles Bulfinch wrote that the Bingham house “would be esteemed splendid even in the most luxurious parts of Europe” but found it “far too rich for any man in this country.” (His feelings didn’t stop him from copying the house’s design for the Benjamin Otis House in Boston.) Peter Markoe wrote a poem lampooning Bingham’s ill-gotten wealth, “wring’d . . . by arts, which petty scoundrels would abhor,” and his mansion, to which “wits and fops repair, to game, to feast, to flatter, and to stare.”

After enjoying a glorious decade as America’s social arbiter, Anne Bingham was carried from the house in April 1801 suffering from a “serious affection of the lungs.” She sailed with her husband for Bermuda, her coffin in the ship’s hold, and died the following month at age thirty-seven. The grief-stricken William retired to England, where he died in 1804 at the age of fifty-two.

After Bingham’s death, the mansion became the Mansion-House Hotel, the city’s most luxurious hotel, charging its guests an astronomical ten dollars a week. From 1813 to 1816, the Washington Benevolent Society, a mutual aid group for the poor and unemployed, occupied the mansion and erected Washington Hall next to it when the house grew too small for its needs. Damaged by a fire in 1823, the mansion reopened as Head’s Mansion House, a hotel popular with actors Charles and Fanny Kemble. A second fire in 1847 ruined the mansion beyond repair, and it was demolished around 1850. It was replaced by a row of brownstones built by Michael Bouvier, great-great-grandfather of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, several of which still stand.

Elegant Philadelphians promenade in front of the Bingham Mansion House in a 1799 print by William Birch. (The Philadelphia Print Shop.)
The first circulating library in America was founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and other members of the Junto, young tradesmen and mechanics bent on self-improvement and self-advancement. Unable to afford their own books, the fifty original members each subscribed forty shillings, plus ten shillings a year, to buy books and maintain a shareholder’s library. For most of its first sixty years, the Library Company rented quarters in the west wing of the State House (1740–1773) and Carpenters’ Hall (1773–1790). With its extensive collection in history, law, and politics, the Library Company served as the first Library of Congress for delegates to the two Continental Congresses and the Constitutional Convention.

In 1789, the directors of the Library Company purchased land on Fifth Street, directly across from the American Philosophical Society’s newly opened Philosophical Hall on State House Square. They announced a competition for a new building that would be seventy by forty-eight feet, two stories, and “as elegant as the unavoidable frugality of the Plan will admit.” The winner was William Thornton, a physician who would later design the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Sounding like the epitome of an eighteenth-century gentleman architect, Thornton later recalled: “When I traveled, I never thought of architecture, but I got some books and worked a few days, then gave a plan in the ancient Ionic order, which carried the day.”

Thornton created a simple yet elegant Palladian brick structure with a hipped roof. Four white pilasters with Ionic capitals supported a central projecting pediment on the front façade. A balustrade decorated with urns extended on both sides of the pediment, while a curving double flight of steps led to an imposing doorway. The cornerstone—with text mostly composed by the Library Company’s most illustrious founder, Benjamin Franklin—was laid on August 31, 1789. Franklin did not live to see Library Hall open on January 1, 1791. In his honor, a marble statue of Franklin in a toga was placed in a niche above the doorway in 1792. Carved by Francesco Lazzarini, the statue was donated by William Bingham at a cost of more than 500 guineas.

Between 1792 and 1794, an east wing was added to Library Hall to house the Loganian Library, formerly located on South Sixth Street. James Logan, William Penn’s secretary and later governor of Pennsylvania, had left his private collection to the public as the Loganian Library, the first free library in America, after his death in 1751. Logan’s sole descendant and trustee arranged for the Library Company to take custody of the older library’s 4,000 volumes and to ensure that it was kept intact and separate within its new home.

By the 1860s, Library Hall—also known as the Old Philadelphia or Franklin Library—contained nearly 100,000 volumes, as well as the 10,000 books of the Loganian Library. In addition, the building held such treasures as William Penn’s desk and grandfather clock, James Logan’s library table from Stenton, and a huge bust of Minerva that had once graced the House of Representatives at Sixth and Chestnut streets.

By this time, shareholders were concerned about the building’s age, small size, and flammability. In 1869, Dr. James Rush (son of Benjamin Rush) left the Library Company a million dollars for a large, fireproof building at Broad and Christian streets. A decade later, the Library Company moved into the Parthenon-like Ridgway Library (today the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts). Since many members objected to traveling so far south to borrow books, the Library Company commissioned Frank Furness to design a modern, angular version of its original...
building as a branch at Juniper and Locust streets. (This building was demolished in 1940.)

Shortly after the Furness branch opened, the Fifth Street property and building were sold. In 1887, Library Hall was replaced by the Drexel Building, which was in turn torn down for Independence National Historical Park in the 1950s. In 1954, the American Philosophical Society commissioned the firm of Martin, Stewart and Noble to recreate the 1789 design on the original site, complete with a replica of the Lazzarini statue of Franklin, for its own library.

Today, the original Franklin statue resides in the latest home of the Library Company of Philadelphia, a 1964 Carroll, Grisdale & Van Alen building at 1314 Locust Street. The Library Company still houses the books ordered from London in 1732, along with 500,000 books and printed volumes, 75,000 graphics, 160,000 manuscripts, and a priceless collection of early American art and artifacts.
One of the first priorities of the central government established by the 1787 Constitutional Convention was the creation of an American currency. After the Revolution, trade was conducted not only in Continental dollars, but in “Pennsylvania pounds,” English pounds, French livres, Spanish pieces of eight, and other European currencies. Merchants and tradespeople had to memorize a dozen different exchange rates, and currency conversion manuals were best sellers. Besides causing confusion, the lack of a strong single currency helped fuel the monetary inflation and speculation that plagued the new country.

In February 1791, the Bank of the United States was chartered as the country’s national bank. As the next step, an act passed in April 1792 established a national mint that would produce coins using the decimal system, rather than the British method of pounds, shillings, and pence. President George Washington appointed astronomer and inventor David Rittenhouse as its first director.

Rittenhouse purchased two lots on Seventh Street north of Sugar Alley (later Farmer Street and then Filbert Street). Within a few months, the three structures of the U.S. Mint were in place. The main building, a three-story brick double house fronting on Seventh Street, contained offices, precious metal vaults, an assay laboratory, and rooms for deposits and weighing. Behind it stood the two-story coinage house, where the coins were struck. At the rear of the lot stood a one-and-a-half-story smelting house, where
a furnace purified metallic ore and a rolling mill produced metal sheets. These were the first public buildings authorized by the U.S. government.

In November 1792, with George Washington present, the U.S. Mint struck its first coins, half-dimes (five-cent pieces). The first coin actually circulated by the mint was the 1793 copper “chain cent,” with the Goddess of Liberty on the front and a chain of fifteen links (for the fifteen states) on the reverse. By 1795, the mint was producing a full range of coins, from copper halfpennies to ten-dollar gold eagles.

Unfortunately, the mint was unable to meet the growing demand for coinage. With only men and horses to power its mills and presses (the first steam engine was installed in 1816), production was limited. Yellow fever epidemics shut down the mint repeatedly. It was forced to buy metals at above-market rates, meaning that a coin’s raw materials often cost more than its face value. To cope, merchants used British currency in tandem with U.S. coins until November 1800. Congress, unhappy with the mint’s erratic productivity, introduced bills to abolish it in 1800 and 1802.

When the federal government moved south, the U.S. Mint stayed in Philadelphia—partly to placate the city for its loss of status, but primarily to help the cash-strapped government save money. In 1828, an act of Congress guaranteed that Philadelphia would keep the mint “until otherwise provided by law.” The mint remained on Seventh Street until 1833, when it moved to a larger, modern facility at Chestnut and Juniper streets. In 1836, the government sold the Seventh Street property at auction for $8,100. After housing the Apprentices’ Library, the buildings were occupied by a series of shops and businesses. One of its last owners painted the words “Ye Olde Mint 1792” on the main building’s façade.

In 1907, Frank H. Stewart purchased the property, demolished the smelting house, and announced plans to destroy the remaining structures for an office building to house his electrical supply business. In 1911, Stewart offered the main and coinage buildings to the City Councils, provided that the city move them from his property. Since Stewart made his offer in July, when the councils were on vacation, it was no surprise that the city did not act in time to save the buildings.

A month later, Stewart demolished the main and coinage buildings, replacing them with a six-story steel and concrete structure he called The Old Mint Building. The mint’s original marble steps and doorsills were smashed, except for the sill to the front door of the main building, salvaged for a lawn ornament by a New Jersey dentist. Stewart later cast himself as the mint’s memorialist, writing its history and commissioning a painting of the original complex by Edwin Lamasure.

The Old Mint Building stood until 1968, when it was demolished along with other buildings on its block for the William J. Green Jr. Federal Office Building and the U.S. Courthouse. During the same period, the fourth and current U.S. Mint was constructed on the east side of Independence Mall, two blocks from the site of the first mint.
President’s House/Masters-Penn House

Location: 526–530 Market Street (south side, between Fifth and Sixth streets)
Completed: ca. 1768
Demolished: 1832 (some portions survived until 1951)
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Presidential Mansion

Location: West side of Ninth Street, between Market and Chestnut streets
Completed: 1797
Demolished: 1829
Architect/Builder: attributed variously to Pierre Charles L’Enfant, William Williams, and John Smith

During its interregnum as the national capital, Philadelphia had two president’s houses (four if you include the Dove and Deshler-Morris Houses in then separate Germantown). The Masters-Penn House was home to the Washington and Adams households from 1790 to 1800. The grandiose Presidential Mansion built for them was never used.

The real President’s House at what was then 190 High Street was built by the wealthy Masters family in 1767–68. The three-and-a-half-story brick mansion stood forty-five feet wide on High Street and fifty feet deep. One of the largest and handsomest buildings in the city, it was given to the daughter of the owner on her marriage to Richard Penn, grandson of William Penn and lieutenant governor of the province. During the British occupation of 1777–78, General Sir William Howe commandeered it as his residence and headquarters. After the Revolution, military governor General Benedict Arnold rented the house during the time he began his treasonous arrangement with Great Britain. After Arnold departed, the French consul lived in the house until a fire burned out the top stories on January 2, 1780.

In 1781, the Penns sold the ruined house to financier Robert Morris, who rebuilt and expanded it. Morris increased the height of the house, adding a steeply pitched roof to create a full attic. A back building connected to the main house by a piazza held the kitchen, washhouse, bedrooms, and a bathing room. Behind the back building stood the stable yard, stable, coach house and ice-house. A walled garden ran along the west side of the lot.

During the Constitutional Convention, George Washington stayed at the house as the Morrices’ guest. When he prepared to return to Philadelphia as president in 1790, the city offered him the house for his official residence, and the Morrices moved next door. More alterations were made, including the addition of bow windows in the rear, an enlargement of the servants’ hall, and the erection of quarters for the nine African slaves Washington brought from Virginia. Despite this expansion, the Washingtons still found the house far too small for their thirty-person household when they took possession in November 1790.

During Washington’s administration, the President’s House was one of the centers of Philadelphia social life, with weekly president’s levees (formal receptions) and state dinners, in addition to public receptions on holidays. After the Washingtons returned to Mount Vernon in 1797, President John Adams and his family occupied the house until 1800, when they moved to Washington, D.C.

After the Adames’ departure, the President’s House became Francis’s Union Hotel. As Market Street between Fifth and Sixth
grew commercial, the house was stripped of much of its architectural detail, the ground floor was converted to shops, and the upper floors became a boardinghouse. In 1832, the building was gutted, leaving only the side walls and foundations, and three stores were fitted into the Market Street frontage. The stores and part of the western wall were demolished between 1935 and 1941. Ironically, the remaining walls of the President's House were torn down in 1951–52 to create Independence Mall, and a restroom was erected on the site in 1954.

In 2000, the National Park Service announced its plans for the new Liberty Bell Center, with an entrance covering the rear of the Presidential Mansion lot on the site of the smokehouse where most of Washington's slaves were quartered. After criticism of these plans reached the U.S. House of Representatives, the National Park Service agreed to revise its design to include a memorial to the house and its residents, including Washington's slaves. In 2007, ground was broken for a $5.2 million President's House memorial, designed by Kelly/Maiello Architects & Planners, which will be the first national commemoration of American slaves.

Three blocks west of the President's House stood the "President's House that never was," authorized by the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1791 as an official presidential residence. Many Philadelphians hoped that building a magnificent mansion, even on the outskirts of town, would persuade the government to remain after the Residence Act expired in December 1800. They might have sensed the futility of their gesture when Washington, anxious to move the government to his native Virginia, skipped the groundbreaking.
The mansion was unlike anything ever built in Philadelphia: an immense, three-story, five-bay square edifice of brick trimmed with marble, more than twice the size of the State House. At the center of its hipped roof was a glass dome and cupola topped by a gilded eagle. The façade featured twin Palladian windows on the end bays, and eight Corinthian pilasters rising from a marble belt between the first and second floors.

The first floor consisted of seven large, high-ceilinged public rooms. At its center was a domed, circular hall with double stairs leading to a gallery supported by eight Corinthian columns. The second and third floors contained the presidential apartments. The entire building was decorated with a profusion of carved and painted designs, including acanthus leaves, festoons of fruits and flowers, cornucopias, and other classical motifs.

Completion was delayed for almost three years when the state legislature refused to provide additional funds. When it was finally finished in March 1797 (at a cost of over $110,000), it was offered to incoming President Adams at a rent he might obtain on “any other suitable house in Philadelphia.” Despite this handsome offer, Adams declined. The federal government departed as planned, and the Presidential Mansion sat empty for five years.

In July 1800, the University of Pennsylvania bought the Mansion and its sizable lot at auction for $41,650. The university occupied the mansion in 1802, later hiring Benjamin Latrobe to remodel it and build the Medical School next to it. When the school required more space, it demolished the Presidential Mansion in 1829 and commissioned William Strickland to design two new buildings on the site. After the University of Pennsylvania moved to West Philadelphia in 1872, Alfred Mullett’s Victorian post office stood on the site from 1873 to 1884, in turn replaced in 1935 by the current U.S. Post Office and Federal Building.

Today, the cornerstone for the President’s House, noting that it was laid on May 10, 1792, “when Pennsylvania was happily out of debt,” resides in Room 200 of College Hall on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

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First Chestnut Street Theatre

**Location:** 603–609 Chestnut Street (northwest corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets)

**Completed:** 1794

**Demolished:** 1820

**Architect/Builder:** John Inigo Richards (later work by Benjamin Latrobe)

From 1790 to 1830, when New York’s Times Square was still a wilderness, Philadelphia was the theatrical capital of America. Thanks to Quaker censure, drama got off to a slow start in Philadelphia. The first players’ troupes to visit were either run out of town or forced to perform outside the city limits in Southwark. Yet Philadelphia (or rather its southern border) was home to one of the first American theaters, the Southwark at South and Apollo (Leithgow) streets. On April 24, 1767, the first play by an American writer to be produced on an American stage, Thomas Godfrey’s *The Prince of Parthia*, premiered at the Southwark.

By 1791, Philadelphia was the nation’s capital, and a far more worldly and wealthy city than it had been before the Revolution. The last law prohibiting plays and players had been repealed in 1789, clearing the way for a theatrical renaissance. Actor-manager Thomas Wignell and musician Hugh Reinagle raised funds by selling shares to Robert Morris, William Bingham, Henry Hill, and about a hundred other leading citizens. With their revenues, they commissioned the Chestnut Street Theatre, the largest and most lavish playhouse in North America. Using the Royal Theatre at Bath for a model, architect John Inigo Richards created a three-and-a-half-story brick structure with a large central Palladian window on the second floor and a pedimented gable decorated with a lunette window. A wooden awning protected theatergoers from the elements.

The theater had a seating capacity of 1,165 in three horseshoe galleries and a thirteen-row parquet. Fluted and gilded Corinthian
columns supported the galleries, which were decorated with crimson drapes and pale rose panels. Above the stage, an eagle hovering over a classical figure represented America encouraging the drama; below the painting were the words, “For useful mirth or salutary woe.” The stage was lit with oil lamps, which were raised or lowered depending on the mood of the scene.

Begun in 1791, the Chestnut Street Theatre did not open until February 17, 1794, because of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. A troupe of British actors proved immensely popular in a repertoire that included works by Shakespeare, Richard Sheridan, and John Otway. George Washington and his family were frequent visitors, occupying a stage box decorated with the U.S. seal. On December 23, 1799, the theater presented a special evening of music and drama to mourn its presidential patron, who had died at Mount Vernon nine days earlier.

Soon, other theaters like Rickett’s Circus began to compete with Old Drury, as the Chestnut Street Theatre was called. Its managers hired Benjamin Henry Latrobe to freshen up the theater in 1801. Latrobe added a new front entrance, with a Corinthian colonnade running between two projecting marble wings ornamented with sculptured panels. Statues of Comedy and Tragedy, carved by William Rush, were placed in niches on either side of the Palladian window (today they are in the Philadelphia Museum of Art). The managers’ taste exceeded their purse: The Corinthian columns were made of wood and papier-mâché, and four years later Latrobe complained bitterly that he had still not been paid.

In 1816, the Chestnut Street became the first U.S. theater to install gas lighting; the managers noted that audiences would surely appreciate its “superior safety, brilliancy, and neatness.” On the evening of Easter Sunday, April 2, 1820, a fire broke out at the theater, possibly caused by a gas leak. Besides Rush’s statues of Comedy and Tragedy, the only items salvaged were the green-room mirror, a ship model, and the prompter’s clock. In the grand tradition of “the show must go on,” the managers were soon selling shares for a new Chestnut Street Theatre designed by William Strickland, which opened on the site on December 2, 1822.
African Church of Philadelphia
(African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas)

Location: Southwest corner of Fifth and Adelphi streets
(St. James’ Place)
Completed: 1794
Demolished: 1887
Architect/Builder: Unknown

Bethel Church (Mother Bethel
African Methodist Episcopal Church)

Location: 419 Richard Allen Avenue (northeast corner of Sixth and Lombard streets)
Completed: 1794
Demolished: 1805
Architect/Builder: Unknown

After the Revolution, more free African Americans lived in Philadelphia than in any other U.S. city. In 1787, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, former slaves and lay ministers at St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church, founded the Free African Society, a mutual aid organization serving the social, financial, and religious needs of their community. While many blacks attended Methodist services because of John Wesley’s staunch opposition to slavery, Allen and Jones felt that a distinctly nondenominational church was needed to strengthen the black community. Their movement gained momentum when the white elders of St. George’s insisted that its black members sit in a newly built upper gallery and physically removed those sitting downstairs during services.

In response, Allen, Jones, and other black Methodists left St. George’s en masse and established the African Church of Philadelphia, which historian Gary Nash has called “the first free black church in the northern states of the new American republic.” With the support of the Society of Friends, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, and private citizens, they purchased land at Fifth and Adelphi streets and began construction.

In his autobiography, Benjamin Rush writes of attending the roof raising of the African Church on August 22, 1793. After Rush and a hundred other whites sat down to dinner at an outdoor table and were served by members of the African Church, they changed places, and the whites served the blacks dinner. Rush offered two toasts to the joyful crowd: “Peace on earth and good will to man,” and “May African Churches everywhere soon succeed African bondage.” Work on the church was suspended during the yellow fever epidemic that began in September. During the epidemic, Allen, Jones, and other African Church members served heroically...
as nurses, gravediggers, and death-cart drivers, under the mistaken belief that blacks were immune to yellow fever.

By spring 1794, the church was finished, a simple yet handsome two-and-a-half-story brick building with a gable roof and a Roman arch door and windows. An Old Testament text, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2), was etched in marble above the church doors. The church held its first service on July 17, 1794.

At this time, a majority of the church’s members decided to affiliate with the Episcopal Church, and the African Church was renamed the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. Richard Allen declined the post of minister, saying that he could not leave the Methodist church despite his treatment at St. George’s. Instead, his friend and associate Absalom Jones became the first minister. In 1795 Jones was ordained as deacon and in 1804 became the first black Episcopal priest in the new nation.

The church remained in its first home until 1887, when rising property values compelled it to sell its property to a commercial developer. After several moves, the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas is now located at 6361 Lancaster Avenue, in the former St. Paul’s Overbrook church.

After leaving St. Thomas’s, Allen used his own money to purchase a wooden blacksmith’s shop on the grounds of the Walnut Street Prison and had it hauled to a plot he owned at Sixth and Lombard streets. The converted blacksmith’s shop was dedicated on July 29, 1794, less than two weeks after the first service at St. Thomas’s. At its dedication, Methodist elder John Dickins prayed that the church might be a Bethel, or house of God, to thousands of souls, giving the church its name, Bethel Church. In June 1799, Allen was ordained as the first black Methodist deacon.

By 1805, church membership had increased to nearly 500, more than twice what the building could handle. It was replaced by a second church called the Roughcast because it was built from rough cinder blocks. In 1816, this building was the site of the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America, which resulted in the church’s being known as “Mother Bethel.” A red-brick building similar to St. Thomas’s replaced the Roughcast in 1841 and was replaced in turn by the present Romanesque Revival church, designed by Hazlehurst & Huckel and completed in 1890.

Today, Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, which W.E.B. DuBois once called “the vastest and most remarkable product of American Negro civilization,” stands on the oldest piece of property continuously owned by African Americans in the United States. Founder Richard Allen and his wife, Sarah, are entombed in a crypt in the church basement.

Facing page: In this 1799 William Birch print, teams of horses pull the former blacksmith’s shop that would serve as the first home of the Bethel Church to its new location at Sixth and Lombard streets, where the current church still stands. (The Philadelphia Print Shop.)
Many fortunes were won and lost in the rollercoaster economy of the 1790s, with investors speculating wildly on the unseen frontier lands of the new Republic. One of the most dramatic cases was that of Robert Morris, financier of the American Revolution. One of only two men (the other was Roger Sherman) to sign all three of the Republic’s founding documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution—Morris ended his illustrious career in debtor’s prison.

As superintendent of finance for the Continental Congress, Morris was responsible for financing the American rebellion. Besides lending large amounts from his own fortune, he established the Bank of North America as the country’s first national bank. As head of the Secret Committee of Commerce, Morris procured, with no oversight, arms and supplies for the Continental Army, cutting deals that made him the wealthiest merchant in America. While many Americans hailed him as a founding father, others reviled him as a self-serving war profiteer.

After the Revolution, U.S. senator Morris vied with William Bingham for the title of wealthiest Philadelphian. The completion of Bingham’s Mansion House in 1787 may have inspired Morris to build his own dream house. Morris sold his Market Street holdings, including the President’s House, to purchase an entire block of land in the western section of the city for £10,000. As a lover of French culture (his French chefs were the envy of Philadelphia), Morris hired Pierre Charles L’Enfant to design his house, a decision he lived to regret. L’Enfant was an early “star-architect,” dismissed by George Washington from his post as planner of the District of Columbia because of his dictatorial manner and cost overruns.

For Morris, L’Enfant designed a two-story mansion in the style of a Parisian hôtel. Historian Thompson Westcott estimated that the house stood between eighty and one hundred feet wide on Chestnut Street, and forty to sixty feet deep. A large central doorway framed by columns stood in the center of the Chestnut Street façade, with porticoed entrances at the four corners. Marble window surrounds, moldings, and carvings decorated the brick walls. Two large cupolas were planned but never completed. The mansion featured details borrowed from French urban architecture, including ornamental iron railings and perhaps the first mansard roof in the United States.

Ground was broken in 1794, but construction proceeded slowly. In 1796, when the building was still an empty shell, Morris
complained bitterly to L’Enfant about the intolerable “delay and accumulation of Expense.” Construction ceased completely when the bankrupt Morris went into hiding in 1797 to escape his creditors. Local moralists seized upon “Morris’s Folly” as the cause of his ruin. John Fanning Watson later wrote that the ruined Morris “has been heard to vent imprecations on himself and his lavish architect.”

While the mansion may have contributed to his ruin, Morris was actually bankrupted by the collapse of speculative real estate investments in Washington, D.C., and on the American frontier. His holdings and possessions were sold to satisfy his creditors, and Morris was imprisoned for debt at the Walnut Street Jail from 1798 until 1801. The only inhabitants of his unfinished mansion were women prisoners from Walnut Street quarantined there during the 1798 yellow fever epidemic.

When no one bought “Morris’s Folly” at auction, the white elephant was dismantled and its materials sold separately in 1800, shortly after William Birch had drawn the only existing picture of the structure for his *Views of Philadelphia*. William Sansom, who bought the plot and opened Sansom Street through it, recycled some of the materials into Sansom Row, one of the first planned row-house developments in Philadelphia.

Traces of “Morris’s Folly” decorated other local buildings for years. Bas-reliefs of Tragedy and Comedy, carved by Jardella, were added to the wings of the Chestnut Street Theatre during Benjamin Latrobe’s redesign. Two marble dogs meant to guard the Morris mansion stood in front of Fritz’s Marble Yard on Race Street between Sixth and Seventh streets.

For many years, a beautiful marble plaque from Morris’s house decorated a fieldstone farmhouse on Butler Pike near Plymouth Meeting. The four-foot bas-relief showed two cherubs, representing art and literature, supporting a central medallion with a portrait of the Madonna. When the “Angel House” was pulled down in 1927 by the Philadelphia Electric Company for a high-tension line, a company official took the plaque for his Maryland home.

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**St. Augustine Roman Catholic Church**

**Location:** West side of Fourth Street, between Vine and Race streets  
**Completed:** 1801  
**Demolished:** 1844  
**Architect/Builder:** Nicholas Fagan (later work by William Strickland)

Thanks to the religious freedom guaranteed by William Penn, Philadelphia was the first city in the English-speaking world where eighteenth-century Catholics could worship openly. By 1790, the city was home to one of the largest Catholic populations in the country, and to three Catholic churches, all located south of Walnut Street: St. Joseph’s (founded 1733), St. Mary’s (founded 1763), and Holy Trinity (founded 1789).

In 1796, Matthew Carr, an Augustinian friar at St. Mary’s, called for the establishment of a new church to serve the growing Irish Catholic community in the Northern Liberties. In June 1796, Carr purchased a lot on Fourth Street south of Vine and opened a subscription list to build the first Augustinian church in Philadelphia. The initial subscribers included President George Washington, as well as such prominent Catholics as Commodore John Barry, merchant Stephen Girard, and publisher Matthew Carey. Despite their support, construction dragged on for five years.

When St. Augustine’s was finally dedicated in June 1801, it was the largest of the city’s four Catholic churches, measuring 62 by 125 feet. Unlike the earlier churches, whose original entrances were set away from the street, St. Augustine’s presented a handsome classical façade on Fourth Street. A recessed central pavilion featured a large pedimented door surrounded by tall arched windows and framed by two square corner towers, each of which also had a pedimented doorway topped by Palladian windows.

By 1828, the growing church served several thousand parishioners. William Strickland redesigned its façade, adding a new spire that rose to 188 feet. Above the steeple’s clock tower stood a domed
cupola surmounted by a gilded cross. Since Strickland was rebuilding the State House tower at the same time, he may have facilitated the sale of the old State House clock and bell to St. Augustine’s. The bell, used to ring the hours after the first bell (later the Liberty Bell) proved unsatisfactory, was called the Sister Bell. The church boasted frescoes and an altarpiece by Nicola Monachesi, and a wooden sculpture of the Crucifixion by William Rush.

On nearby Crown Street stood St. Augustine’s Academy, a church school founded in 1811 and the forerunner of Villanova University. Among the school’s prize possessions was a 3,000-volume theological library, one of the largest in the country. During an 1832 cholera epidemic, both this school and the Augustinian convent were converted to hospitals, where physicians ministered to several hundred patients of all faiths.
As immigration brought thousands of European Catholics to the United States, resentment toward the newcomers grew among native-born Protestant Americans. The 1840s saw the emergence of the Nativist (also known as Native American or Know-Nothing) party in Philadelphia and other cities. On May 3, 1844, Irish Catholic workers broke up a Nativist meeting in Kensington, touching off a violent, week-long reprisal. On May 8, after burning down a Catholic church, school, rectory, and female seminary in Kensington, Nativists turned their sights on St. Augustine’s Church.

Despite the presence of Mayor John M. Scott, Sheriff Morton McMichael, the police, and the First City Troop Cavalry, members of the mob set St. Augustine’s on fire. The mob also burned the academy, destroying its priceless library, and smashed gravestones in the churchyard. Within a few hours, nothing was left of St. Augustine’s except a blackened shell. On the western interior wall, above where the high altar had stood, the words “The Lord Seeth” were still visible.

Within three months, a temporary Chapel of Our Lady of Consolation was erected on the site. The Augustinian order brought suit against the city, claiming it had failed to protect the church’s property. After a long court case, the Augustinians were awarded damages of $47,434, roughly one-half of their total losses. Despite this setback, the case confirmed the rights of Roman Catholics to religious freedom under the U.S. Constitution.

With their award in hand, the Augustinians began to build a new church on the foundations of the original structure in 1847. To represent the phoeniclike resurrection of their church, the salvaged fragments of the Sister Bell were recast and sent to newly founded Villanova College as its college bell (today, the Sister Bell is on display in Villanova University’s Falvey Memorial Library).

Designed in the Italian Revival style by Napoleon LeBrun (with a steeple by Edwin F. Durang added in 1867), the current St. Augustine’s Church was completed in 1848. Unlike the original building, with its spacious windows and multiple doors, the façade of the new church presented a forbidding, fortified appearance, with no front windows and a single entrance.
Bank of Pennsylvania

**Location:** 134–136 South Second Street (west side, between Lodge Street and Gold Street)

**Completed:** 1801

**Demolished:** 1867

**Architect/Builder:** Benjamin Henry Latrobe

As the financial center of the country until the 1830s, Philadelphia was home to the First and Second Banks of the United States, forerunners of the Federal Reserve Bank; the U.S. Mint; and the nation’s first stock exchange, founded in 1790. Under the leadership of financial innovators like Robert Morris, Stephen Girard, and Clement Biddle, Philadelphia was also home to numerous private banks with semi-governmental functions. Realizing that appearance was all-important, each bank strove for a distinctive architectural style that would make it appear substantial yet progressive.

One of these institutions was the Bank of Pennsylvania, founded in 1793, which acted as the central reserve bank for the state. In April 1798, a recent arrival from England, architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, met with bank president Samuel M. Fox, who told Latrobe that his fast-growing bank would soon need a new building. Latrobe made a quick sketch of a domed structure in the “stripped classic” manner, reminiscent of John Soane’s recently completed Bank of England. By November, the bank had accepted Latrobe’s proposal, and the new building was soon under construction. The Bank of Pennsylvania was Latrobe’s first commission in Philadelphia and his second, after the Virginia State Penitentiary in Richmond, in the United States.

The Bank of Pennsylvania has been called the first major neoclassical or Greek Revival structure in the United States, with elements drawn from such ancient structures as the Erechtheum at Athens and the Temple of the Muses on the Illyssus River. Dignified and elegant despite its small size and cramped location, the

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*This William Birch print shows the recently completed Bank of Pennsylvania, with a huge cupola illuminating the main banking room. To the left stands the City Tavern, built in 1773, demolished in 1854–55, and rebuilt by the National Park Service for the nation’s bicentennial. Partly visible at right is the former mansion of merchant David Franks. (The Philadelphia Print Shop)*
Bank of Pennsylvania firmly established the Greek temple as the appropriate architectural model for U.S. financial institutions.

The rectangular structure, roughly 50 by 120 feet, had porticoes on either end, each with six Ionic columns. The eastern portico faced Second Street and served as the public entrance, while the western one opened onto a small private park for bank officers. A large glass cupola in the low domed roof illuminated the 45-foot rotunda below that served as the main banking room, augmented by arched windows on the northern and southern walls. The bank's broad dome, sophisticated vaulting, and fireproof construction reflected Latrobe's training as an engineer and his familiarity with techniques still new to the United States.

The pale, cool gray of the exterior marble gave way to a rich, Adamesque color scheme inside the bank. The walls of the banking room were "warm oker," with white paneling and a white-and-russet frieze along the top, while the dome was in alternating shades of blue and white. Smaller rooms were in more dramatic colors: the entrance vestibule walls were brown with a ceiling of white, pale blue and red. The directors' and president's rooms had gray walls with pale blue ceilings and ornamented bands of red and yellow.

The Bank of Pennsylvania occupied Latrobe's structure until 1857, when the bank failed during a financial panic. The building stood empty until the Civil War, when it was used as a federal prison. By this time, the building was considered too small and antiquated, and the neighborhood too unfashionable, for a modern bank. Latrobe's masterpiece was demolished in 1867, the same year the Slate Roof House came down directly across Second Street. In its place rose commercial buildings, including the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. One of its Ionic columns was salvaged and given to G.A.R. Post No. 8 to be used as a memorial for Civil War dead at Glenwood Cemetery. Others were incorporated into the 1871 Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument in Wilmington, Delaware. Since 1933, the Ritter & Shay–designed U.S. Custom House has occupied the site.

This 1867 John Moran photograph shows the Bank of Pennsylvania during demolition, soon to be replaced by modern commercial buildings similar to Napoleon LeBrun’s 1855 Lening building (to the left, with the statue). In the foreground, construction equipment sits among the ruins of the Slate Roof House, also demolished in 1867. (The Library Company of Philadelphia.)
Water Works Engine House

Location: Centre Square (later Penn Square, site of Philadelphia City Hall)
Completed: 1801
Demolished: 1828
Architect/Builder: Benjamin Henry Latrobe

Before his death in 1790, the prescient Benjamin Franklin had bequeathed his fast-growing city £100,000 to develop a supply of water to “insure the health, comfort and preservation of its citizens,” noting that “in Philadelphia everyone has a cistern and a well, and the two are becoming indistinguishable.” During the following decade, Philadelphia’s dreams of becoming the permanent capital were dashed, in part, by a string of devastating epidemics. Demand grew even stronger for a source of wholesome water, as much to wash the town’s filthy streets as to maintain its citizens’ health.

The Delaware and Schuylkill Canal Navigation Company proposed a scheme to bring Schuylkill River water to Philadelphia through a canal to the river’s northern reaches. In 1798, architect-engineer Benjamin Henry Latrobe recommended instead that the Schuylkill be tapped at the city itself, and that its water of “uncommon purity” be distributed via aqueducts and steam engines.

According to Latrobe’s plan, water would flow from a settling basin along the riverbank at Chestnut Street through a tunnel to a well in Centre Square on the city’s western edge. There, it would be pumped by steam power to a second aqueduct, from which another steam pump would raise it to a tank high enough to let gravity distribute it throughout the city by wooden pipes. While water would be free to the poor at street hydrants, businesses and homes would pay to receive water directly.

Impressed by Latrobe’s report, the city Watering Committee accepted his plan and appointed him chief engineer. After numerous setbacks, equipment failures, cost overruns, and critical attacks, the Philadelphia Water Works began operation on January 27, 1801.

By the end of the year, Schuylkill water was flowing from Centre Square to sixty-three houses, thirty-seven public hydrants, four breweries, and one sugar refinery.

The heart of Latrobe’s system was the Centre Square Engine House, a sixty-foot-tall brick structure sheathed in white marble. An elevated water-storage tank and smokestack, hidden by a domed cylindrical tower, emerged from a square base that housed the coal-burning pumping engines. Smoke from the engines was vented through an oculus in the top of the dome. Greek Revival details, including twin Doric porticoes and recessed arched windows, provided minimal decoration to the functional design. This unique structure combined modern technology with classical architecture that was, thanks to its unorthodox combination of geometric shapes, equally cutting-edge.

To showcase one of Philadelphia’s most important public buildings, its grounds were landscaped with walkways lined with Lombardy poplars. In 1809, the first public fountain in Philadelphia, William Rush’s *Water Nymph and Bittern*, was placed atop a base of native rocks before the building’s east entrance. Even Thomas Cope, one of Latrobe’s most persistent critics, had to admit by 1804 that “many also objected to the circular form given to the Centre Square & to the erection of the House in the middle of it who are now highly pleased with both. The shady walks already afford a refreshing retreat.” Soon, the Centre Square Water Works became the favored site for public parades and festivals, including the Fourth of July celebrations memorialized in paintings by John Lewis Kimmel and Paul Svinin.

Within its chaste casket, unfortunately, Latrobe’s system malfunctioned on a regular basis. The inadequate steam engines and boilers frequently broke down, caught fire, or exploded. Wooden conduits rotted and had to be replaced with iron pipes. Deficits mounted as the anticipated subscriptions to cover construction and maintenance costs never materialized; after a decade of operation, only 2,127 Philadelphians out of 53,722 paid for their water. While the Water Works made Latrobe’s reputation as an
architect and engineer, it almost ruined him financially because of his investments in it.

In 1811, Water Works superintendent Frederick Graff recommended a pumping station and reservoir at Morris Hill, later called Fairmount. The new works were constructed between 1812 and 1822. By 1815, they were serving the city so well that the Centre Square Engine House was retired.

In 1827–28, Latrobe’s structure was demolished so that Market and Broad streets could be run through the recently renamed Penn Square, which remained empty until construction began on City Hall in 1871. The Engine House’s Doric columns were recycled into the portico of William Strickland’s Congregational Unitarian Church at Tenth and Locust streets, where William Henry Furness was minister. Rush’s statue of Water Nymph and Bittern was moved to the site of the new Water Works. In 1854, after the wood had begun to rot, it was cast in bronze. Rush’s statue remained on the banks of the Schuylkill until 1940, when it was moved to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Sedgeley

Location: Sedgeley Drive below Girard Avenue (east bank of the Schuylkill River, north of Lemon Hill, in Fairmount Park)

Completed: 1803
Demolished: 1857
Architect/Builder: Benjamin Henry Latrobe

After introducing the neoclassical style to Philadelphia, Latrobe helped launch the Gothic Revival with Sedgeley, a country estate built between 1799 and 1803 for merchant William Cramond. Originally, Sedgeley was part of the Robert Morris estate, the Hills, where the bankrupt Morris hid from his creditors. After his arrest, the Hills was divided up and sold at sheriff’s sale in 1799.

The southern section became Lemon Hill, the Henry Pratt estate, and Cramond purchased the northern twenty-eight acres.

Latrobe designed a Gothic villa to stand on a promontory eighty feet above the Schuylkill River that commanded wonderful views of the surrounding countryside. The two-and-a-half-story rectangular, five-bay house with a red hipped roof featured a one-story porch on all four sides and corner pavilions marked by tall arches. Other Gothic detailing appeared in the cornices, window moldings, and porch posts. With its colonnaded porticoes and open arches, Sedgeley was designed to expose its owners to the beauties of nature in the best Romantic manner. Contemporary portraits show the house in a naturalistic, parklike setting, indicating the adaptation of the latest trends in English landscape design to the American countryside.

The front façade of Sedgeley, engraved in 1828 by C. G. Childs for his Views of Philadelphia. Childs’ engraving emphasizes the picturesque setting of the mansion, with stylized trees lining the path to the front door. (The Philadelphia Print Shop.)
While some architectural historians consider Sedgeley the earliest Gothic Revival country residence in the United States, others view it as an essentially Federal building overlaid with Gothic details. Latrobe himself was unhappy with the final product, claiming that it had been butchered and its details blown out of proportion by contractors from the Carpenters’ Company. Despite the architect’s dissatisfaction, Sedgeley became one of the city’s showpieces, appearing on a polychromatic amphora produced by the Tucker Porcelain Factory. The home also kicked off a craze for Gothic buildings in Philadelphia; by 1808, the Bank of Philadelphia, also designed by Latrobe, would grace the corner of Fourth and Chestnut streets with its pointed arches and rose window.

William Cramond was able to enjoy Sedgeley for only a few years before his business failed, and the property was sold at sheriff’s sale in 1806. Next owned by the Mifflin and Fisher families, Sedgeley was acquired in 1836 by Isaac Lloyd, a real estate speculator, who chopped down many of its trees and laid out streets and building lots. When Lloyd’s venture failed, a consortium of private citizens bought the property in 1856 and presented it to the city. Sedgeley was reunited with the former Lemon Hill estate to the south, which had been dedicated as a public common in September 1855. Together with the Fairmount Water Works, these two properties formed the nucleus of Fairmount Park in 1858.

Latrobe’s mansion was demolished shortly after the city acquired the property. According to historian Thompson Westcott: “By this time the Sedgeley Mansion was much decayed, and no effort was made to save it from destruction; so that when the Park authorities directed that it should be taken down there was little difficulty in carrying out their command, for the work was already half accomplished.”

The surviving porter’s lodge, on Sedgely Drive (at some point one of the E’s disappeared) below Girard Avenue, was used as the headquarters of the Fairmount Park Guards until 1972. Built in a style similar to the adjoining mansion’s but later Victorianized, the lodge was recently restored to its original appearance.

## Permanent Bridge

**Location:** Schuylkill River at Market Street  
**Completed:** 1805  
**Demolished:** 1875  
**Architect/Builder:** Timothy Palmer and William Weston (engineers); Adam Traquair, John Dorsey, and Owen Biddle (bridge cover)

Until 1805, the only way to cross the Schuylkill River was by ferry or the flimsy pontoon bridges at the Upper Ferry (Spring Garden Street), Middle Ferry (Market Street), or Lower Ferry (Grays Ferry Road). From 1750 on, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Smith, Thomas Paine, and other visionaries advanced schemes for a permanent bridge. In the first years of the nineteenth century, their vision was realized with the Market Street Permanent Bridge, one of the engineering marvels of the age. The completion of the bridge marked Philadelphia’s turn westward, toward both the interior of Pennsylvania and new technology, and away from the Delaware and its traditional reliance on maritime commerce.

The repeated destruction of the temporary bridges by spring floods made a permanent bridge necessary. In 1798, the Pennsylvania Legislature created the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge Company, headed by Judge Richard Peters. After considering a stone bridge, Peters decided on a three-span structure of pine timber resting atop two masonry piers. An English engineer, William Weston, designed the caissons, while Timothy Palmer of Massachusetts designed the wooden superstructure. The cornerstone for the bridge was laid on the eastern bank at Market Street on October 18, 1800. Work on the two stone piers and their wing walls and abutments alone took two years. Caisson work on the piers reached bedrock forty-two feet below the river level, a record for the time.

The bridge opened to traffic on January 1, 1805, after five years and $300,000 in expenses. It was considered the largest wooden bridge in the world, reaching 550 feet from shore to shore, with an additional 750 feet of abutments and wing walls. Its forty-foot width...
permitted two lanes for vehicular traffic flowing east and west, with separate pedestrian walkways. At a tollbooth in the center of the bridge, a collector accepted tolls from both directions, although the bridge company did not show a profit for many years.

By the end of 1805, a decorated cover was added to the bridge to preserve it from the elements. Although Judge Peters took credit for the general concept and design of the cover, he acknowledged the assistance of draftsman Adam Traquair and architects John Dorsey and Owen Biddle. The cover, lit by elliptical windows, was painted to resemble cut stone topped by paneled sections with blind doorways.

In 1812, William Rush carved two recumbent figures for the pediments at both ends of the bridge, representing Commerce (over the Philadelphia entrance) and Agriculture (over the West Philadelphia entrance). During the same period, a stone obelisk inscribed with the bridge’s history and key statistics was erected near the western approach. Some time after 1840, the obelisk was moved to the northeast corner of Twenty-third and Market streets, where it stood until the 1930s.

The Permanent Bridge enabled heavy traffic to cross the river in all weather and spurred the development of West Philadelphia and Blockley Township. Soon a cluster of inns and taverns stood at the western end of the bridge, surrounded by country estates. By 1840, the district of West Philadelphia consisted of roughly 150 buildings, including numerous furnaces and manufactories.

That year, the city acquired the permanent bridge for $110,000, ending tolls and making it a free passage. Ten years later, the city rebuilt the bridge to accommodate the tracks of the Columbia and Pennsylvania Railroads. The Market Street Railroad Bridge lasted until November 20, 1875, when a fire caused by a leaky gas main destroyed it in half an hour. Two other spans—a temporary wooden bridge built in twenty-one days, and an iron cantilever bridge completed in 1888—took its place before the current Market Street Bridge was erected in 1932.
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Location: North side of Chestnut Street, between Tenth and Eleventh streets
Completed: 1807
Demolished: 1845
Architect/Builder: John Dorsey (rebuilt by Richard A. Gilpin, 1845)

Home to such artists and architects as Thomas and William Birch, Gilbert Stuart, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, William Rush, Thomas Sully, and the Peale family, Federal Philadelphia warranted its title as the “Athens of America.” In August 1805, three of these artists—Charles Willson Peale, his son Rembrandt Peale, and William Rush—met with a group of art-loving lawyers and businessmen to draw up plans for a society “to promote the cultivation of the Fine Arts in the United States of America.” This society was incorporated in March 1806 as the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

To house the Academy, its members selected the design of one of their own founders, the merchant John Dorsey. An amateur architect who contributed to the design of the Permanent Bridge cover, Dorsey was a thorn in the side of Philadelphia's professional architects. After Dorsey's design was selected, a despondent Benjamin Latrobe wrote:

John Dorsey has now no less than 15 plans now in progress of execution, because he charges nothing for them. The public affront put upon me as a professional man, in the erection of the Academy of Art from the design of John Dorsey, —by a vote of all the men who pretend to patronize the arts in this city, — would have driven any Artist from it.

The original Academy was a simple, square building with neoclassical elements, including a round dome with an oculus and two Ionic columns framing a recessed entrance. An American eagle clutching an artist's palette and brushes, possibly carved by Academy member William Rush, glared down from above the entrance. Two sphinxes stood guard on the piers flanking the front steps. The Academy, which stood one hundred feet back from Chestnut Street, was the first art museum in the nation.

The Academy's principal room was a circular chamber forty-six feet in diameter lit by a skylight, where plaster casts of classical statues were displayed. The nude casts were removed on Mondays, which were set aside for female visitors exclusively. Through bequests and direct purchases, the Academy began to assemble a notable collection of paintings, including Gilbert Stuart's “Lansdowne” portrait of George Washington (donated by William Bingham) and Benjamin West's King Lear and Cordelia. By 1810, the Academy had proven so popular that a north gallery was added to the rear of the original building. In 1820, a sculpture gallery was constructed on the east side of the building, followed by a director's room and a library in 1823. During this time, the sphinxes and their piers were removed from the front.

In 1845, a catastrophic fire set by a deranged “incendiary” destroyed most of the building except for the central rotunda. Benjamin West's Death on a Pale Horse, which the Academy had purchased for $7,000 in 1836 after mortgaging its building, was cut from its frame and saved, as was the “Lansdowne” Washington. Many other paintings were lost, as were the sixty statues in the sculpture gallery and the contents of the library.

Despite the submission of designs from John Haviland and John Notman, the commission to rebuild went to Richard Gilpin, whose brother Henry served on the Academy's Building Committee. Gilpin reconstructed Dorsey's rotunda, adding a larger entrance with Ionic columns supporting a classical pediment. Long picture galleries with skylights framed the central pavilion. The new building opened to the public in May 1847, and gradually, the Academy rebuilt its collections, ordering new plaster casts and acquiring paintings from Joseph Bonaparte and other private collectors.
During the 1840s and 1850s, the Academy went through a period of rapid growth in both membership and visitors. By 1860, it was apparent that the aging facility was unable to handle the Academy's larger collections and increased attendance. In 1865, a special committee reported to the board that the Chestnut Street building "in its present condition, not only impedes the operation of the Academy, but is rapidly hastening to destruction [sic] the works of art contained in it." The Academy's Chestnut Street frontage had been sold off, and now a jumble of stores and signs nearly hid the building from view. In 1870, the Academy sold its original site for $135,000 and purchased its current site at Broad and Cherry streets. Furness & Hewitt's polychromatic masterpiece would open its doors at that location in 1876.

In 1871, shortly after Furness & Hewitt were awarded the commission for the new Academy, Fox's American Theater replaced the Chestnut Street building. Today, the original Dorsey building and its 1845 replacement survive only in the John Sartain engravings that grace Academy stockholders' certificates.

Masonic Hall

**Location:** North side of Chestnut Street, between Seventh and Eighth streets

**Completed:** 1811

**Demolished:** 1855

**Architect/Builder:** William Strickland

Philadelphia played a critical role in the history of the fraternal organization of the Masons. The first Masonic Hall in America was constructed in 1755 on Norris Alley near Second Street, although reports of lodge meetings in Philadelphia date back to 1715. Many of Philadelphia's leading citizens were Masons, including Benjamin Franklin, Philip Syng, Joseph Shippen, and George Washington.

Given this rich heritage, it's not surprising that Philadelphia has a tradition of elaborate Masonic Halls, starting with William Strickland's structure of 1809–11. The building was Strickland's first commission, awarded before his twenty-first birthday. Begun shortly after Latrobe's Philadelphia Bank was completed, Masonic Hall was another early example of the Gothic Revival style. Like Sedgeley and the Philadelphia Bank, however, Masonic Hall appeared to be a symmetrical Federal building with Gothic details applied. The Hall, which took two years to complete, not only testified to the financial clout of Philadelphia's Masons, but also illustrated the former builders' guild's awareness of the latest architectural style.

Masonic Hall, 82 feet long by 169 feet deep, was a two-story brick structure encrusted with marble pilasters, surrounds, and

*Latrobe himself was not a fan of Strickland's creation. Writing to David Hare on May 30, 1813, he sneered: "The Free Mason's Hall, which is anything but Gothic, has made me repent a thousand times that I ventured to exhibit a specimen of that architecture. My mouldings & window heads appear in horrid disguise from New York to Richmond." (Quoted in Hamlin, *Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, 248.)*
moldings. Pointed tracery windows, pin-
nacles, statues in niches, and a battlement
gave it a suitably Romantic appearance.
A multitiered tower, also decorated with
Gothic arches and topped by a large
weathervane, rose 180 feet from the cen-
ter of the roof.

Inside, a grand saloon or ballroom
featured an ornamental plaster ceiling
and a music gallery. Statues of Faith,
Hope, and Charity, carved in wood by
William Rush and painted to look like
bronze, decorated the room. A “geomet-
rical” staircase of mahogany and curly
maple led to private lodge and banquet
rooms on the second floor.29 The Masons
opened the Hall on St. John the Baptist’s
Day, June 24, 1811, with a church service
and parade of lodge members, followed
by a grand ball and banquet.

In March 1819, a fire caused by a
faulty flue destroyed the Hall’s tower and
interior. Strickland rebuilt the Hall in a
simpler style, but the massive tower was
never replaced. The repaired Hall was
one of the first buildings in Philadelphia
to be lit by gaslight and was the scene of a

A dramatic depiction of the conflagration of William
Strickland’s Masonic Hall, published three months after
it occurred. The engraving’s publishers “respectfully
dedicated” it to “the active and much esteemed fire
engine and hose companies” that saved the Hall from
total destruction. (The Philadelphia Print Shop.)
reception and dinner for the Marquis de Lafayette (himself a Mason) in September 1824.

During the 1820s and 1830s, the grand saloon hosted numerous exhibitions, lectures, and concerts. Visitors could see Sinclair’s celebrated grand peristrephic (moving panorama) of the Battle of Waterloo, study Daguerre’s magical pictures, hear African American trumpeter Frank Johnson, or meet six Indian chiefs from the Rocky Mountains.

Despite this activity, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was in serious financial trouble. In addition to the heavy debt incurred in restoring the Hall, membership was dropping due to a wave of anti-Masonic sentiment. Sometime after the Hall’s restoration, the Masons sold its Chestnut Street frontage, and one-story shops then obscured most of the building’s ground floor. In 1835, the Grand Lodge was forced to sell the Hall, which was bought by the Franklin Institute, and moved to Washington Hall on Third Street.

When the Franklin Institute defaulted on its mortgage in 1852, the Grand Lodge repossessed the building. In 1855, the Masons replaced Strickland’s structure with a new Masonic Hall, a Gothic brownstone building designed by Samuel Sloan and John Stewart. The Masons occupied the Sloan & Stewart structure until 1873, when they took possession of their current Hall on North Broad Street.