

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT  
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

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

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 1003 Frankford Avenue

Postal code: 19125

Councilmanic District: ~~3rd~~

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: The Frederick J. Rapp House

Common Name: 1003 Frankford Avenue

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building

Structure

Site

Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied   under construction  unknown

Current use: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary.

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1785 to 1793

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Constructed 1785-1787

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Unknown

Original owner: Frederick J. Rapp

Other significant persons: NA

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography.

**9. NOMINATOR**

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian & Email Oscar.Beisert@gmail.com

Organization J.M. Duffin, Archivist Date October 6, 2015

Street Address Rochelle Avenue Telephone 717.602.5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Notice Issuance: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

**Proposed for Historic Designation in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**



**The Frederick Rapp House, Fishtown. Courtesy the City of Philadelphia.**

**The Frederick J. Rapp House  
1003 Frankford Avenue  
Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**



*The Frederick J. Rapp House, 1003 Frankford Avenue, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2015 – Page 1*

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvement thereon erected, situate on the east side of Frankford Avenue, beginning at the distance of 26 feet 9 inches Northward from the North side of Richmond Street, thence extending Eastward on a line at right angles to Frankford Avenue 31 feet 3 inches to a point, thence North 67 degrees 2 minutes East 13 feet 4 inches to a point, thence South 85 degrees 24 minutes East 5 feet 9.25 inches to a point, thence South 21 degrees 24 minutes East 6 feet 10 inches to the North side of Richmond Street, thence along the same North 65 degrees 13 minutes East 2 feet 3 inches to a point, thence North 21 degrees 24 minutes West 6 feet to a point, thence North 1 degree 36 minutes East 5 feet 3.25 inches to a point, thence North 88 degrees East 2 feet 9.25 inches to a point, thence North 16 degrees East 10 feet 10 inches to a point, thence North 88 degrees 24 minutes West on a line at right angles to the said Frankford Avenue 54 feet to the East side of said Frankford Avenue, thence South along the same 21 feet 9 inches to the place of beginning. The property is known as 1003 Frankford Avenue, Parcel No. 017N03-0142, Office of Property Assessment Account No. 181001200.



## 6. Building Description

Constructed between 1785 and 1787, the Rapp House is a two-and-one-half story brick dwelling, measuring roughly twenty-one feet, nine inches (21'-9") front with a maximum depth of thirty-one feet, three inches (31'-3"). The building is located at 1003 Frankford Avenue just north of the intersection of Richmond Street in what is now the Fishtown section of the larger Kensington neighborhood. Despite it originally having been built as a fully detached house, the unprotected historic property is now situated as a row house upon an irregular lot.

As stated, the Rapp House stands two-and-one-half stories, featuring a side-gabled roof. The simple façade is characteristic of a vernacular Georgian plan, which features design elements that suggest that it once had an entirely symmetrical fenestration. The primary elevation of the building, facing southwest, is of load bearing masonry construction. The red brick of the façade is laid in a Flemish bond, in which the headers and stretchers alternate in each course. The headers are distinctive in that a wood other than Oak was likely used to fire the bricks, resulting in glazed black headers—a Philadelphia distinction. This allows for the illusion of an understated diaper pattern within the two floor façade. The building features water table base coursing along its façade.

The three bay façade at the ground floor has been altered to accommodate one large three-part mullion window and a doorway. The façade, no doubt, originally included a symmetrical fenestration in concert with the second floor. The doorway has been partly filled with redbrick in an entirely unsympathetic manner to accommodate a smaller, replacement door. Two slightly projecting courses, two courses apart, form horizontal belts between the second and third floors. The second floor retains a symmetrical fenestration of three windows, which feature low-grade replacement windows. The architraves are obscured by insensitive metal flashing.

The roof is of a pitch that could be described as being of moderate to steep. Penetrating this elevation at the center is an enlarged gable-fronted dormer that features a two part mullion window, the entirety of which is sheathed in unsympathetic, low-grade faux materials.

From Richmond Street there is access to the rear of the building through a narrow pedestrian passage, which is now surrounded at the southeast, northeast and northwest by other parcels, buildings. The rear of the main block is visible from Richmond Street and features a shed dormer, which is likely period. The rear walls of the building are covered in "pizza shop" stucco, which is highly insensitive to the character of the building. The rear ell is also sheathed in the same stucco.



Looking north.

*The Frederick J. Rapp House, 1003 Frankford Avenue, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.  
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Looking north. Note the Rapp House is second from the corner.



Looking northeast.

*The Frederick J. Rapp House, 1003 Frankford Avenue, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.  
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Looking northeast.



Looking northwest.



Looking northeast. Note the infill and continuation of the base coarse.



Looking southwest. Note the Rapp House is on right featuring the shed dormer.



Looking southwest. Note rear, shed dormer and ell.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rapp House at 1003 Frankford Avenue is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The building satisfies Criteria for Designation a, c, and j of Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code. The Rapp House, an unprotected historic property:

- (a) *Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;*
- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

The Rapp House was constructed between 1785 and 1787 and is significant as an average to slightly above-average house type of the late eighteenth century in Kensington, within the larger post-Revolution context of Philadelphia. The Rapp House is merely a stone’s throw—two houses and a small lot to the southeast of the path of I-95, surviving over two hundred years as one of Kensington’s few remaining eighteenth century buildings within a largely nineteenth and early twentieth century built environment.

While earlier and/or period dwellings may exist in the neighborhood of this house, the Rapp House is the oldest known dwelling in Fishtown and the larger Kensington Neighborhood. On a local level, this house *has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Philadelphia*. Kensington’s original development as an urban space occurred in the pre- and post-Revolutionary period and the subdivision of lots allowed for the development of the dense built environment that comprised the neighborhood in the nineteenth century, much of which is extant to-date. The Rapp House is one of the early houses constructed in this format, along Frankford Avenue, and represents the initial development of Kensington, and, incidentally, the enlargement of Philadelphia into the Northern Liberties. Furthermore, the Rapp House may well be the oldest house on Frankford Avenue south of Frankford Creek.

The Rapp House was constructed between 1785 and 1787 as a four room dwelling, excluding the basement and garret, in a period when this many rooms was considered a comfortable size urban abode. Citing similar examples in this Philadelphia “outskirt” and in similar areas of London, of the late eighteenth century, the building *reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style*. While more common in Society Hill or Old City in Center City Philadelphia, the Rapp House is an unusual survivor of a brick, vernacular Georgian style dwelling in Fishtown and the larger Kensington neighborhood.

Lastly, the Rapp House was the home of a doctor and a German soldier, hired as a mercenary by the British State, likely providing medical services with his university training, and represents the type of dwelling that was economically feasible for a physician and a former prisoner of war who was released to settle on a local level. Few dwellings known to be associated with Hessian, German mercenaries exist in Philadelphia from the post-Revolutionary period and, as a result, this house is significant. The building *exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

The Period of Significance for aforementioned Criteria as related to this building is 1785–1793.

### **Fishtown Section of Philadelphia**

The Rapp House is located in the Fishtown section of the larger Kensington neighborhood in Philadelphia. The current neighborhood traces its origins to the 1730s when Anthony Palmer decided to carve up his 191½-acre Delaware River front property. Palmer laid out streets and sold lots in the area that now compasses East Columbia Avenue (late Hanover Street), the Delaware River, Norris Street and Frankford Avenue. He called this new community Kensington. Palmer's immediate neighbor to the southwest, Benjamin Fairman, followed Palmer's lead by laying out streets on his river-front property that extended Kensington from East Columbia Avenue to roughly Frankford Avenue. In spite of the development project that the new streets and lots portended, the actual settlement of the area ended up forming only along the bank of the Delaware River. The interior lots would have to wait for the expansion of population in the city to move north in the 1820s and 1830s before a large community would form here. However, a smaller community sprang up earlier.

The area immediately to the southwest of both Palmer and Fairman's Kensington was owned by Thomas Masters. In 1718 Thomas Masters purchased from Mary Fairman, widow of Robert, 256-acres along the Cohocksink Creek and the Delaware River, covering the beginning of Frankford Road.<sup>1</sup> Masters was a wealthy Quaker merchant in Philadelphia who served several terms as mayor, and as a member of both the Provincial Council and Assembly. He acquired several tracts of land in this area and made it his country estate "Green Spring."<sup>2</sup> Thomas's son William inherited the land in 1724 and, like his father, was active in Pennsylvania government, and also invested in land near the family estate. At William's death, the "Green Spring" estate (which included the area along the Delaware River called Point Pleasant) passed to his daughters, Mary Masters, who married Gov. Richard Penn, and Sarah Masters, who later married Turner Camac. Mary Masters Penn and Sarah Masters Camac went before the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas to have a division of the estate made in 1775.<sup>3</sup>

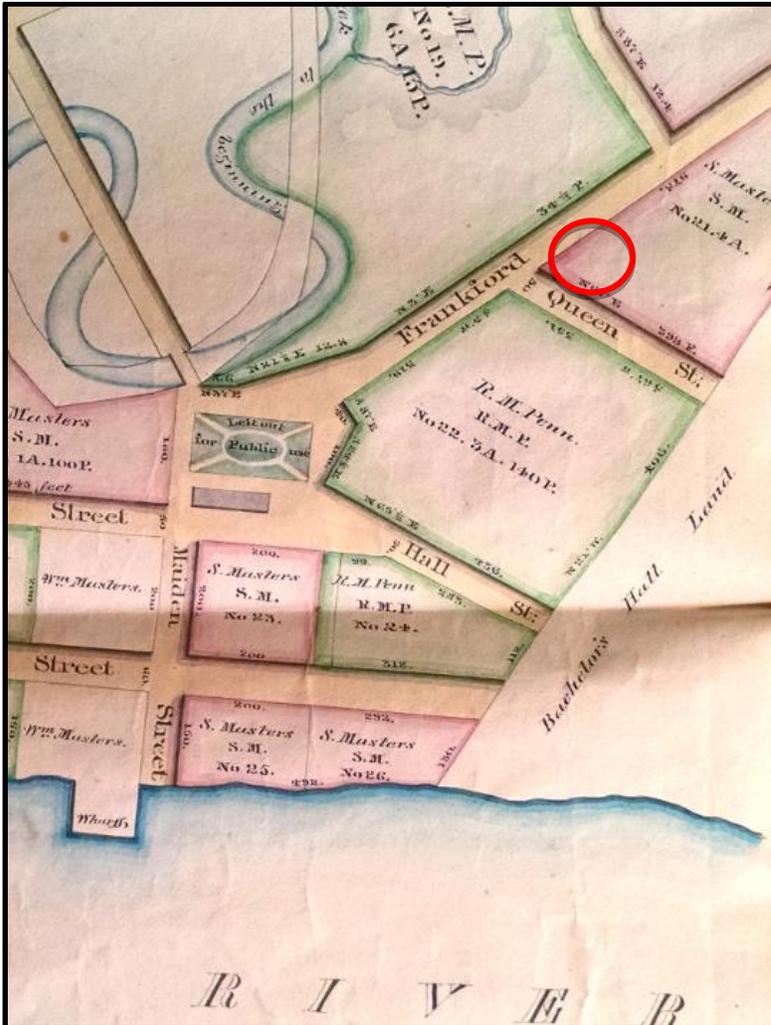
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<sup>1</sup> Deed: Mary Fairman, Richard Hawkins and Joseph Willet to Thomas Masters, 20 December 1718, Philadelphia Deed Book F., No. 2, p. 76, CAP,

<sup>2</sup> *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Craig W. Horle, vol. 1, 1682–1709 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 534–37.

<sup>3</sup> *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Craig W. Horle, vol. 3, 1757–1775 (Harrisburg: House of Representatives, 2005), 843–54.

Sometime shortly before the Revolution, the Masters family moved to London. Their affairs in Philadelphia were handled by a number of agents. In the 1780s, Tench Francis was chosen by Mary Masters Penn and Sarah Masters Camac to act as agent. At some time in 1783 or 1784, Francis began to subdivide the property of both sisters along Frankford Avenue, and sold them off in the form of 10,000 year leases. Roughly twenty lots were sold to a mix of people, most of whom possessed names of German derivation.<sup>4</sup> By 1794, eighteen buildings were constructed on these properties, of which, it appears, the Rapp House is the only extant one.<sup>5</sup>



Map, 1775 Partition Plan of the Thomas Masters Estate. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of these long term leases see Box 27, folders 10, 15, 16, Box 27, folders 23–25, Cadwalader Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP).

<sup>5</sup> A.P. Folie, *To Thomas Mifflin, Governor and Commander in Chief of the State of Pennsylvania, This Plan of the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia Is Respectfully Inscribed By the Editor* (Philadelphia?: s.n., 1794).

## Frederick Jacob Rapp (1742–1795)

Frederick Jacob Rapp was born on February 7, 1742 in the village of Wittenweier, Bishopric of Strasburg (present-day Baden-Württemberg), Germany.<sup>6</sup> He was one of the thirteen children of Pastor Johannes Rapp and Maria Salome Bauer.<sup>7</sup> Johannes Rapp was the pastor the Lutheran church in Wittenweier from 1735 until the time of his death in 1758 and, prior to that, from 1728 to 1735, home was Waldersbach in Alsace.<sup>8</sup> In spite of Pastor Rapp's death, the family appears to have done well. At least two children were able to attend a university. Rapp and his younger brother Georg Gottfried Rapp both chose to seek medical training. Rapp matriculated at the University of Heidelberg in November 1769, three months after his brother; however, he did not receive a degree.<sup>9</sup> Five years later, in November 1776, Rapp matriculated in the medical school of the University of Strasburg for the 1776–1777 academic year but did not receive a degree.<sup>10</sup>

Rapp's medical training, however, appears to have been adequate enough for him to find a position as a military surgeon. Sometime in 1777 or shortly after, Rapp joined the army of the Principality of Ansbach-Bayreuth. He served as the regimental surgeon (*Regimentsfeldscher*) of the First Ansbach Infantry Regiment under the command of Col. Friedrich August Valentin Voit von Salzburg, which fought for the British Army during the American Revolution.<sup>11</sup> About 2,459 men from the Principality served in America. They arrived in New York in 1777, and spent time in Philadelphia, Newport, and Yorktown.<sup>12</sup> Rapp was probably not part of the original deployment, but likely came with some of the reinforcement troops that were sent throughout to war.

Rapp was with the regiment when it was part of the British forces that surrendered at the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781.<sup>13</sup> Rather stay a prison of war and be returned to Germany, Rapp chose to remain in America. According to one German source, Rapp and his servant wanted to go back to Philadelphia and settle in Germantown.<sup>14</sup> This desire was made official on November 17, 1781, when Joseph Carlton of the War Office gave Rapp written release as a prisoner of war and provided permission for Rapp to reside in "German Town."<sup>15</sup> However, whether or not he ever actually resided in Germantown is

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<sup>6</sup> Eugen Eble and Bernd Sandhaas, *Ortssippenbuch Wittenweier, Landkreis Lahr in Baden* (Grafenhausen bei Lahr/Baden: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1970), 196.

<sup>7</sup> Eble, *Ortssippenbuch Wittenweier*, 196; Régistres des Baptisés, depuis le 3e. 7bre. 1722, Waldersbach, Paroisse protestante: a pour annexes Le Bambois, Bellefosse, Belmont, Fouday, La Hutte, Solbach, Le Trouchy et les fermes et maisons forestières isolées, Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin, Strasbourg.

<sup>8</sup> Eble, *Ortssippenbuch Wittenweier*, 196; A. Salomon, "Les prédécesseurs de Stouber et d'Oberlin: Dans L'Église De Waldersbach," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 76 (1927): 465.

<sup>9</sup> Gustav Toepke, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg*, v. 4 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1903): 250–51.

<sup>10</sup> Gustav C. Knod, *Die Alte Matrikeln der Universität Strassburg 1621 bis 1793*, vol. 2 *Die Matrikeln der medicinischen und juristischen Facultät* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Tr über, 1892): 109, 187.

<sup>11</sup> Erhard Städtler, *Die Ansbach-Bayreuther Truppen in Amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg, 1777–1783*, Freie Schriftenfolge der Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in Franken, 8 (Nürnberg: Kommissionsverlag Die Egge, 1956), 166; Bruce A. Burgoyne, *Diaries of Two Ansbach Jaegers* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Harold E. Selecky, ed., *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006) 1: 421–23; Gregory Fremont-Barnes and Richard Alan Ryerson, ed., *Encyclopedia of the American Revolutionary War: A Political, Social and Military History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006) 2: 502–04.

<sup>13</sup> Henry J. Retzer, "Johann David Schoepf, M.D.: Staff Physician of the Brandenburg-Ansbach-Bayreuth Regiment," *Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association*, 7 (2002): 19.

<sup>14</sup> Städtler, *Die Ansbach-Bayreuther Truppen*, 166.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Carlton to All To Whom It May Concern, 17 November 1781, Bradford Army Prisoners Correspondences, box 24, folder 7, Bradford Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

not documentable at this time.

New Office Nov 17th 1781

Doctor Frederick Rapp a prisoner of war to the United States, has permission to reside at German Town in the State of Pennsylvania, under the sanction order of this Board.

By order of the Board  
J. M. Wether

To the Honorable the Board

Letter of Release as a Prisoner of War. Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

By 1783, “Doctor FREDERICK RAPP, SURGEON and PHYSICIAN” advertised in the *Pennsylvania Journal*. Rapp was then living in Arch Street across from the Second Presbyterian Church. In addition to his work as a surgeon and a physician, Rapp also made bandages for “ruptures of every kind” and sold “Doctor Shippen’s Golden Tincture.”<sup>16</sup>

Doctor FREDERICK RAPP,  
SURGEON and PHYSICIAN,  
Formerly from the city of Strasburg in Germany, but late  
from the city of New-York.

BEG G leaves to inform the public in general, and his  
friends in particular, that he hath lately removed from  
Arch-Street, opposite the Presbyterian Meeting-house, to the  
west side of Second-Street, the fourth door below Pine Street,  
where he may be consulted in all cases of SURGERY and  
PHYSIC, and especially in Midwifery.

He also makes bandages for ruptures of every kind, and  
prepares that excellent medicine called "Doctor Shippen's  
Golden Tincture."

1783 Advertisement from the *Pennsylvania Journal*. Courtesy Proquest Historical Newspapers

<sup>16</sup> *Pennsylvania Journal*, 20 December 1783, 3.



While taxed again in the Mulberry Ward in 1786 and 1787, Rapp appears to have lived in the house on Frankford Avenue as early as 1787 through the end of the decade, but perhaps kept an office in his earlier location.<sup>20</sup> In 1788, the state tax list shows Rapp living in the Northern Liberties. The tax provides the following account of his property: House & Lot – £350; one horse – four pounds; one cow – three pounds; one chair – five pounds; his profession – sixty pounds; and a vacant lot – £120.<sup>21</sup>

Frederick Rapp - Doctor  
 House & Lot ..... 350  
 1 Horse ..... 4  
 1 Cow ..... 3  
 1 Chair ..... 5  
 Occupation ..... 60  
 Vacant Lot ..... 120  
 -----  
 542  
 Pays £22 g.r. 220  
 And lot £322

1788 State Tax & Exoneration List, Northern Liberties East, Philadelphia County. Courtesy Pennsylvania State Archives.

In 1789, the tax list shows Rapp owning property in the Northern Liberties, but the enumeration does not go into the subject of Rapp’s possessions, probably because he had already moved to Annapolis, Maryland: House & Lot – £325 – an above average house value even after the Revolution; and the cost, value of the ground rent – £150 – Rapp paid fifteen pounds annually to Sarah Masters.

Doct. Rapp's Est.  
 House & Lot ... 325  
 pays £15 g.r. 150  
 -----  
 £175  
 & for  
 Sarah Masters's g.r. £150  
 Cash'd to him self

1787 County Tax Assessment, Northern Liberties East, Philadelphia County. Courtesy the City Archives of Philadelphia.

<sup>20</sup> Tax & Exoneration Lists, Microfilm Roll: 338.

<sup>21</sup> Tax & Exoneration Lists, Microfilm Roll: 336.

Despite the difficulties of achieving success in the medical world of Philadelphia as an outsider, it appears possible that at least one “man of note” respected Rapp’s work.

Sir [Frederick J. Rapp]—I sincerely rejoice to hear of your success in curing cancers. The opposition you have met with should always be expected, where men apply those remedies to cure of any one disorder above any other, and more especially when they conceal their medicine.

I have too good an opinion of your education, to believe that your knowledge is confined to cancers only or that you will conceal your method of curing cancers. I return by Mrs. Rapp the treatises on Chemistry [sic] and the Materia Medica you was so kind as to lend me.

With sincere wishes for your success, and for the health and happiness of your family.

I am, sir, your most ob’t, servant,  
(signed) BENJAMIN RUSH.  
Philadelphia, July 21, 1789

P.S. Mrs. Rapp applied to me for a bill for attending your son; I beg you would accept of my services, as a token of my friendship, and regard I bear you in medicine. B.R.<sup>22</sup>

Years later, Rapp’s son, William A. Rapp, published the above letter in the *National Messenger*, living in the City of Georgetown, District of Columbia. He also published a letter from Elizabeth Rattie, who lived in High Street (now Market), in Philadelphia. Rattie explained that she had been treated by Dr. Frederick J. Rapp for her “cancer” and that her ailments had been cured.<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Rush had a special interest in cancer and cancer treatments having published on the topic.

Rapp appears to have been one of roughly thirty-seven people in Philadelphia to purchase a fire insurance policy from the Philadelphia Contributionship in 1789, perhaps as he was preparing to leave Philadelphia for Annapolis, Maryland.<sup>24</sup>

The house, itself, being so close to Frankford Road (now Frankford Avenue), as well as the configuration of the lot, appears to be part of the larger plan develop the Kensington as an outlying urban center in Philadelphia County. This is further evidenced in this situation by Rapp’s ownership of a vacant lot and the appearance of the area on the 1794 Map, housing lining various of the streets in the neighborhood.

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<sup>22</sup> Letter: Benjamin Rush to Frederick J. Rapp, Philadelphia, July 21, 1789 in *National Messenger*, 19 January 1818, 4.

<sup>23</sup> “The Cancer Cured,” *National Messenger*, 19 January 1818, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Policy No. 2364, Survey, 1789, Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire Records.

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**Dr. FREDERICK RAPP,**

**FROM STRASBURG.**

X S. Late from PHILADELPHIA,  
**R**ESPECTFULLY informs the public, that he now resides in this city, and presents himself to the service of all who may please to employ him as DOCTOR of PHYSIC, SURGERY and MID WIFERY. As he has by long experience (being more than twenty years in the army) became well acquainted with the practic part of the different branches, as well as the theory, he hopes to be a useful member of community. As the doctor has effected many cures of the cancer, and is particularly well acquainted with that disease, and has credentials for his superior abilities in curing all cancers, whether internal or external, he hopes to be of service to all who may make application to him for his prescriptions. W 3

N. B. There is now, in this city, some on whom he has been successful enough to effect a cure, though thought beyond all hope. The doctor has medicine for practice. 3 X

Notice of Frederick Rapp relocating to Annapolis, *The Maryland Gazette*, 4 June 1789, p. 3.

In 1789, Rapp removed to Annapolis. In a notice in the 4 June 1789 issue of *The Maryland Gazette*, published in Annapolis, Rapp stated that he:

Respectfully informs the public, that he now resides in this city, and presents himself to the service of all whom may please to employ him as DOCTOR of PHYSIC, SURGERY and MID WIFERY.<sup>25</sup>

By 1791, Rapp had moved to Baltimore. It was reported that:

...he intends to practice PHYSIC, SURGERY, and MIDWIFERY, in Baltimore. He has taken route, in Frederick-street, near Mr. George McCandless's, where he may be found...<sup>26</sup>

However, Rapp is soon found practicing in Baltimore, which was the last chapter of his life between 1791 and 1795. He sold his house on Frankford Road in 1793.<sup>27</sup> According

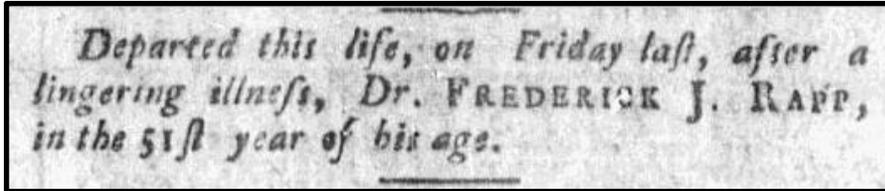
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<sup>25</sup> Notice of Frederick Rapp relocating to Annapolis, *The Maryland Gazette*, 4 June 1789, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> "Dr. Frederick Rapp," *Maryland Journal*, 16 August 1791.

<sup>27</sup> Deed: Frederick Jacob Rapp, Town of Baltimore, Maryland, doctor of physic, and Elizabeth, his wife, to Joseph Thietrick, city, gentleman, 6 July 1793, Philadelphia Deed Book D., No. 34, p. 510, CAP.

to sources, he died of a lingering illness in late April, early May 1795.<sup>28</sup> A detailed inventory of his personal belongings was created during the probate of his intestate estate. His real and personal property was valued at £400 and he was owed an additional £400 from various people.<sup>29</sup>



Death Notice of Frederick J. Rapp, 6 May 1795, Baltimore, Maryland. Courtesy Proquest Historical Newspapers.

Many years after the death of Rapp, his son, William A. Rapp published “The Cancer Cured.” In the *National Messenger*, a paper of the City of Georgetown, District of Columbia. In this article, William A. Rapp relates his father’s experience and success as a surgeon to a “cure for cancer[s], which he pled to have in his possession.” Whether or not the article had merit is beyond the scope of this work, but is certainly an interesting piece of the Rapp story.

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<sup>28</sup> “Death Notice,” *Federal Intelligencer and Baltimore Daily Gazette*, 6 May 1795.

<sup>29</sup> Baltimore County Inventories, No. 17, pp. 533 – 38, Maryland State Archives.



The 1000 Block of Frankford Avenue. Note that the Rapp House is second from the corner, on left. Courtesy Archives of the City of Philadelphia.

### **The Frederick Jacob Rapp House**

Just east of the gridiron for which Philadelphia is known to be one of the first planned cities in the new world is the small village we know today as Fishtown. Across much of this runs an important old thoroughfare—the Frankford Road, now Frankford Avenue. At the jagged corner of that Road and Richmond Street—formerly Point Road, as well as Queen Street, just one lot north was a lot purchased (or leased) by Rapp in 1785. The property was part of a number of lots which were part of the large Thomas Masters estate, which extended from the Delaware River northwest as far east as the present-day Broad Street. When the estate was divided among Masters’ children in 1775, the land along Frankford Avenue, of which the Rapp House was part was assigned to Sarah Masters. Beginning in 1784, Sarah Masters, who was living in London at the time, began to subdivide her properties along Frankford Avenue and sold them off in the form of 10,000 year leases. In July 1784, Masters’ agent Tench Francis leased the lot just north of Richmond Street to a German named George Krousekop.<sup>30</sup> Six months later, George Krousekop, of the Northern Liberties, a carpenter, and his wife Mary, transferred the lease to a lot of ground known as the “Krousekop Lot” to “Dr. Frederick Jacob Rapp,” of the City of Philadelphia, “practitioner in physic and surgery” for £40 gold and silver money. This transaction first came about on February 24, 1785.<sup>31</sup> It appears that between 1785 and 1787, Rapp constructed a dwelling house, where he likely lived and saw patients. In May 1785, Rapp took up the lease from Sarah Masters of the adjacent vacant

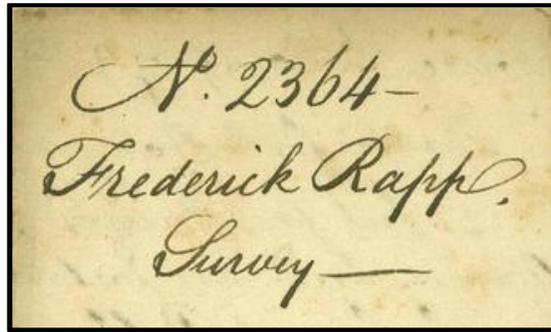
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<sup>30</sup> Lease: Sarah Masters, Cavendish Square, Middlesex Co, Great Britain, spinster, by her attorney Tench Francis, city, merchant, to George Krousekop, Northern Liberties, house carpenter, for the term of 10,000 years, Philadelphia Deed Book L.C., No. 1, p. 248, CAP.

<sup>31</sup> Deed: George Krousekop, Northern Liberties Twp, carpenter, and Mary (signed by mark), his wife, to Dr. Frederick Jacob Rapp, city, practitioner in physick and surgery, 24 February 1785, Philadelphia Deed Book L.H., No. 3, p. 329, CAP.

lot at the corner of Frankford Avenue and Richmond Street.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps to help pay off the construction costs, Rapp took out a mortgage of £360 on the house and two lots in February 1789.<sup>33</sup>

As the tax lists indicate, Rapp was most certainly in residence by 1787 on Frankford Avenue. His insurance policy with the Philadelphia Contributionship describes the extant house at 1003 Frankford Avenue in its original form.



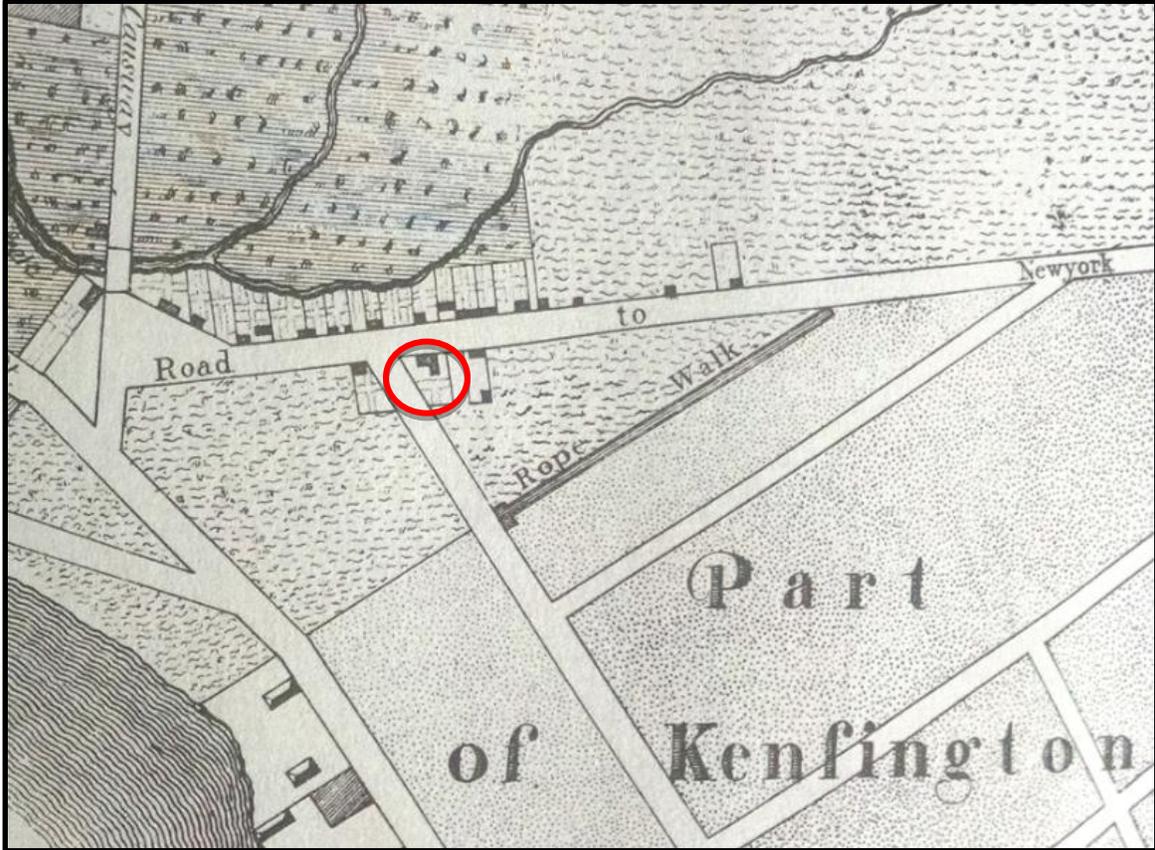
No. 2364—Frederick Rapp Survey. Courtesy the Philadelphia Contributionship

Survey of a House belonging Frederick Rapp. Situate on the Frankford Road [now Frankford Avenue] in Kensington near the Rope Walk — 22 feet front and 32 ft deep. Two storys high — two rooms and an Entray [entry] on a floor — 9 inch party walls, the frount Pallor [Parlor] finish<sup>d</sup> With a Mantle & truses & Mouldings Broke Round — back parlor a plane [plain] brest and plastered paniles [panels] and a plane [plain] Mantle. Surbace & Skirting Round the Whole Lower Story & Single Cornice Round the Entry — the Second Story — frount Chamber—a Brest Mantle-S[?]-led truses & Tablet. Mouldings broke Round the Whole & a Tabernickle [tabernacle] frame and a single Cornice Round. Back Chamber a brest small mantel—& Surbace & Skirting round the whole of this story — two Pair of Open Newell Stairs a plane string with banister &c. — one flight. Surbace & Skirting up the wall. Painted in and out side the Whole Nearly New and Iron Rails on the top —  
N—B their [sic] is a wooden shed adjoin[in]g on the Back-end a door opening it to it from the House—  
NB—Garret not plaistered—  
July the 7<sup>th</sup> 1789— Joseph Rakestraw  
House £300 at 40s-  
If the premises take Fire occasioned by the Wooden Building Back, the Ensurance [sic] to be Void—<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Lease: Sarah Masters, Cavendish Square, Middlesex Co, Great Britain, spinster, by her attorney Tench Francis, city, merchant, to Dr. Frederick Jacob Rapp, city, practitioner in physick and surgery, for the term of 10,000 years, 30 May 1785, Philadelphia Deed Book I.C., No. 1, p. 251, CAP.

<sup>33</sup> Mortgage: Doctor Frederick Jacob Rapp, of Northern Liberties Township, practitioner in physic and surgery, and Elizabeth, his wife, to Barbara Seybert and Casper Seybert, executors of the will of Sebastian Seybert, 2 February 1789, Mortgage Book M., No. 5, p. 451, CAP. The mortgage was satisfied in 1793 shortly after Rapp sold the property.

<sup>34</sup> Policy No. 2364, Survey, 1789, Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire Records.



Detail from 1794 Map of Philadelphia by A.P. Folie, Showing intersection of Frankford Avenue and Richmond Street. Rapp House is outlined in red.



1000 Block of Frankford Avenue. Note the Rapp House is at the very far right.  
Courtesy the Archives of the City of Philadelphia.

### **The Georgian Style House in Late Eighteen-Century Kensington, Near Philadelphia**

As stated in Morrison's *Early American Architecture*, the middle colonies utilized the building resources of the region, which included ledge stone, clay, and lime, leading to the use of brick (primarily), and stone that came to define Philadelphia's built environment. Starting in Philadelphia and on to Germantown, the materials of the region incidentally suited the austere simplicity of Quaker life, as seen through the largely red brick and stone flush facades of urban Philadelphia. Nonetheless, this architectural severity was reinforced, in part, by the emigrants from Moravia and the Rhenish Palatinate. The brick and stone dwellings, buildings of Philadelphia took on a distinctive quality in their own right.<sup>35</sup> Because of the English origins of Quakers, who set the time-honored precedent for Philadelphia architecture, the early buildings appear to have largely retained Georgian antecedents. While the German immigrants from the Rhenish Palatinate built stone houses in Germantown, those in town chose to take advantage of the clay soils the city sat on and use red brick and follow the Quaker fashions of the period. The Rapp House, the subject building of this nomination, is no different, featuring a simple, but characteristic vernacular Georgian façade.

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<sup>35</sup> Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture, From the First Colonial Settlement to the National Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952).



Drawing of the “Treaty Tree and Fairman’s House” by Edward Mumford. Note beyond the Fairman Mansion is perhaps the Eyre House or another like dwelling, which is not dissimilar in scale to the Rapp House, but appears as being only two bays wide. Courtesy the Library Company of Philadelphia.<sup>36</sup>

Prior to the Revolution, the brick high style and/or vernacular Georgian style house in Kensington appears to be limited to a few important dwellings owned by elite Philadelphians, as well as shipbuilders along the Delaware River. With many later prototypes and potential-period examples, most houses of the middling sort and even those of the wealthy were wooden—yes, even, dare say it, in the environs of Philadelphia. Houses for working people in Kensington appear to commonly have been constructed of wood. As a result, few insurance policies exist that reference eighteenth century Kensington and Frankford Road. However, a greater study should be conducted of the area to ascertain the number of brick dwellings that were extant pre- and post-revolution period. Mansion houses included the well-known Fairman Mansion, which stood near the site of the Treaty Elm and was owned by Thomas Fairman. This was a substantial building in comparison to the Rapp House, as the Fairman Mansion predates the subdivision of the large parcels that came to comprise Kensington. As a result, a house like that of Thomas Fairman’s represents the pre-urbanization of Kensington, the agrarian roots of the neighborhood, as part of the English Colonization. Whereas, the Rapp House represents the founding of a new nation and the earliest urban development in Kensington.

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<sup>36</sup> Edward Mumford, “Treaty Tree and Fairman’s House,” *Views of Old Philadelphia*. P.8758.13. Courtesy the Library Company of Philadelphia.



Beach Street, facing onto Penn Treat Park. Note the Eyre House is at the far left of this image.  
Courtesy the Jane Campbell Collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

An earlier house that was more closely related to the Rapp House was constructed in its immediate proximity—the Eyre House. While this building was considered a substantial dwelling at the time of the Revolution in Philadelphia, it was certainly smaller in comparison to the Fairman Mansion. Nevertheless, the Eyre House was constructed much like a row house in the sense that it was on a narrow lot and fronted what became Beach Street, nearly adjacent to the Fairman Mansion and across from the Treaty Elm. Jehu Eyre purchased a lot, fronting Richmond Street and extending to the Delaware River, in 1770, which would have been just west of Columbia Avenue today around the site of the open wiring of the power plant, which is enclosed by brick pillars and iron fencing in a mundane, but respectable Colonial Revival format.<sup>37</sup> According to an article written by Jane Campbell, Eyre built a house on this site in 1768, but, more likely, it was around 1770. Jehu Eyre, along with his two brothers, had come to work for Charles Wright slightly early, and Jehu and his brother Manuel married two of the Wright sisters, becoming very successful shipwrights like their father-in-law. Images show that the Eyre House was certainly larger and less vernacular than the Rapp House, as one might expect, since it built by a successful shipwright, but the house's scale, size, style, and type were

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<sup>37</sup> Deed Tripartite: Deborah West, of Deptford, Gloucester Co, West New Jersey, widow, Charles West, of the city of Philadelphia, merchant, Joseph Warner, of the same, boat builder, (acting executors of the will of Thomas West, Deptford, yeoman), first part, and Sarah West, of Philadelphia, widow of Charles West, of Northern Liberties, shipwright, second part, to Jehu Eyre, of Northern Liberties, shipwright, **Error! Main Document Only**.8 September 1770, Philadelphia Deed Book I., No. 9, p. 78, CAP.

characteristics not completely unrelated to the subject dwelling.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, while grander and featuring more Georgian stylistic elements, the Rapp House's style is not completely removed from that of the Eyre House. However, we are certain that the Eyre House was designed and existed as a completely detached and fully articulated urban dwelling in the Georgian tradition. At this time, we cannot be sure if the Rapp House had this distinction, nor did it feature the same elements of stylistic grandeur, particularly the stone lintels featuring vibrant keystones.



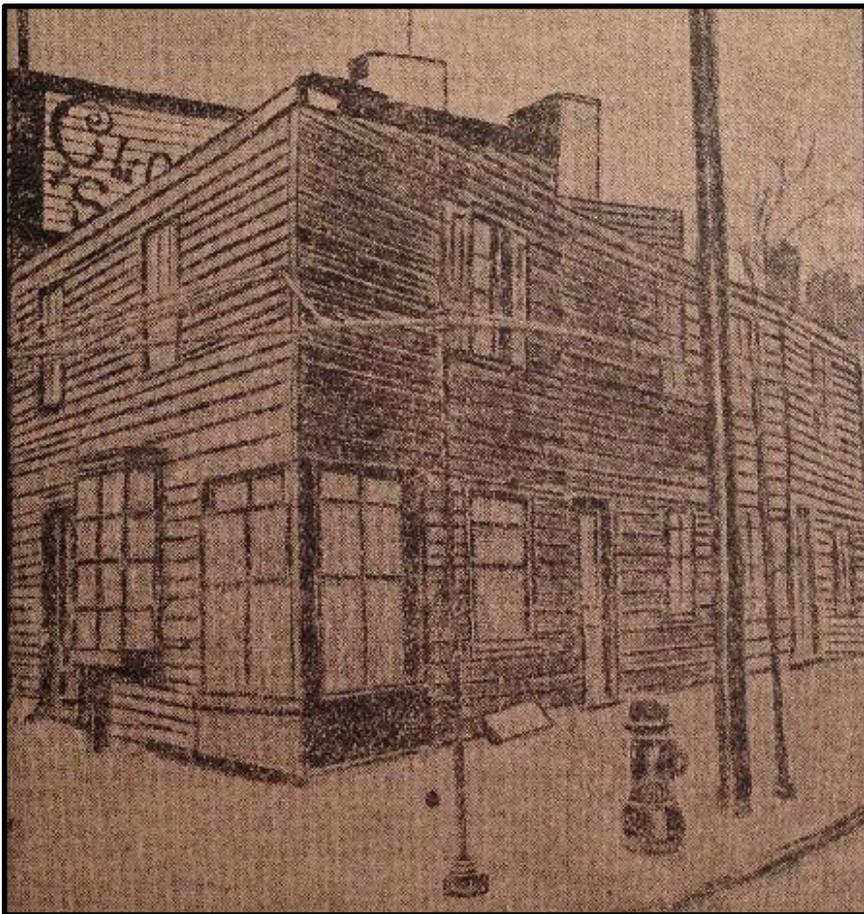
The Eyre House, Circa 1901. Courtesy Jane Campbell and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Wooden houses were the norm in Kensington, especially in this early period. Also found in one of Jane Campbell's scrapbooks, an unidentified article—"Old Penn Homestead Will Be Destroyed," an unusual row of wooden tenements is shown, which was interestingly purported to be "The Penn Homestead," particularly of Richard and Mary Masters Penn. This wooden "Penn" house was said to date to about 1775 and was located

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<sup>38</sup> Jane Campbell, "The Old Eyre House," *Philadelphia Record*, 7 October 1907.

at 951 Frankford Avenue. Just who lived there originally and/or the precise age of the building is not known, but buildings of this material were certainly more commonly found to be present in the early built environment of Kensington.<sup>39</sup> Houses in the Georgian and/or Federal format—attached and semi-detached side-gabled houses, two-and-one-half stories houses with rear and front dormer windows—were commonly built of wood and are extant to date. These houses likely date to the last years of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, but, certainly, there were and may be extant examples of earlier wooden houses. Another standard type in Kensington and even in Northern Liberties is the “half-gambrel, gable-front” house type, which exist in semi-detached twin style building formats, but also in single rows, appearing in “flounder” and half-built format, much like the Wetherill House, a brick version in Delancey Street, Society Hill.



“The Penn Homestead,” 951 Frankford Avenue, Circa 1901.  
Courtesy Jane Campbell and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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<sup>39</sup> “Old Penn Homestead Will Be Destroyed,” unknown newspaper. (Philadelphia, 1901), Scrapbook Collection of Jane Campbell, HSP.



Left: Early Log Dwelling—"One of the oldest houses in Phila.," Warren Street above Beach Street, Kensington. Right: Early Wooden Dwelling "in Belgrade Street." Courtesy Jane Campbell Collection, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Sharon V. Salinger found the average sizes and values of pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia houses included dwellings of 1,167.0 square feet at the lowest in the Mulberry Ward and 1,748.8 square feet in the Lower Delaware Ward at the highest. In the Northern Liberties Ward, closest in proximity to the location of Rapp's house post-Revolution, the average house size was 1,303.3 square feet. The average value in this section was £256. If compared to the Northern Liberties Ward in the pre-Revolutionary period, the average size house being 1,303.3 square feet, the Rapp House would be slightly above average at roughly 1,408 square feet.<sup>40</sup>



Left: Wooden Half-Gambrel, Gable-Front House at 228 Richmond Street. Note the single dormer projecting to the side of the lot and that a house at the same recessed position is peaking out on right. Courtesy the City of Philadelphia. Right: Extant Wooden Half-Gambrel, Gable-Fronted House at 228 Richmond Street. Note the same building appears on left to-date.

The records of the Philadelphia Contributionship show other houses in the neighborhood that were similar to the Rapp House that were issued policies for fire insurance. For example, Casper Souder owned "a house and kitchen" on the "Road to Frankford" at

<sup>40</sup> Sharon V. Salinger, "Spaces, Inside and Outside, in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 26 (1995), 1-31.

Shackamaxon Street. The house stood two and one-half stories, measuring eighteen feet, six inches (18'–6") in width and thirty-four feet, six inches in depth (34'–6"). This house was insured in 1771, and appears to be no longer extant.<sup>41</sup> Another in Kensington, William Pearson's "dwelling house" was also two-and-one-half stories, measuring twenty-six feet (26') front by seventeen feet (17'). The building was insured in 1773, and appears to be no longer extant.<sup>42</sup> While few surveys of houses insured by the Contributionship exist in the neighborhood of the Rapp House, both of these houses, while a decade earlier, were smaller, yet still important to insure. And by 1789, when Frederick J. Rapp purchases a fire insurance policy from the Philadelphia Contributionship, the dwelling is under one of thirty-seven new policies opened that year.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly enough, Philadelphia's English antecedent—London has numerous historic examples of similar house types, both in size and style. As London grew, sections immediately adjacent to the center saw tremendous development in the late eighteenth century. Resembling earlier houses found in industrial sections of London, the house is similar to specific known, survey houses that were built as a row houses, but not in rows of like-dwellings, rather attached and semi-detached buildings built by individuals and/or developers in ones and twos. Found in the incredible book, *The Small House in Eighteenth Century London*, are other examples include No. 61 Fopton Street, West Bermondsey.<sup>44</sup> Another example from London and roughly 110 years earlier, No. 150 Deptford Street, Depford was a four-room brick house of c. 1680, which is mimicked in some ways in this specific Kensington house.<sup>45</sup> A more contemporary row of houses that has remarkable similarities to the Frederick Rapp House was built between 1770–72—King's Yard Row, once on the site of Nos. 2–46 Prince Street, which are no longer extant. These houses have a similar form to the Frederick Rapp House, as well as the water table between the first and second floors.<sup>46</sup> Featuring a double dormer near the time of its construction, No. 36 Deptford High Street appeared as a two and one-half story house with a basement, making an "eight room" house with garret and basement rooms.<sup>47</sup> This house was built between 1789–92.

Vernacular Georgian in style and average to above average in size, the Rapp House is an important early dwelling type of the Fishtown section of the larger Kensington neighborhood in Philadelphia.

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<sup>41</sup> Policy 1441, Souder, Casper, Insurance Survey, 1771 Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire Records.

<sup>42</sup> Policy 1690, Pearson, William, Insurance Survey, 1773, Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire Records.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of the Board of Director, 1774 – 1791, Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire Records.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Guillery, *The Small House In Eighteenth Century London, A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 141.

<sup>45</sup> Guillery, *The Small House*, 205.

<sup>46</sup> Guillery, *The Small House*, 209.

<sup>47</sup> Guillery, *The Small House*, 210.

## Conclusion

The Rapp House, was constructed between 1785 and 1787 and is significant as an average to slightly above-average house type of the late eighteenth century in the Fishtown section of the larger Kensington neighborhood, within the larger post-Revolution context of Philadelphia. The Rapp House is merely a stone's throw—two houses and a small lot to the southeast of the path of I-95, surviving over two hundred years as an emblem of the eighteenth century in a largely nineteenth and early twentieth century built environment.

While earlier and/or period dwellings may exist in the neighborhood of this house, the Rapp House is the oldest known dwelling in Fishtown and the larger Kensington Neighborhood. On a local level, this house *has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Philadelphia*. Kensington's primary development occurred in the pre- and post-Revolutionary period and the subdivision of lots into an urban format allowed for the development of the dense built environment that comprised the neighborhood in the nineteenth century, much of which is extant to-date. The Rapp House is one of the early houses constructed in this format, along Frankford Avenue, and represents the development of the neighborhood, and, incidentally, the enlargement of Philadelphia. Furthermore, the Rapp House may well be the oldest surviving house on Frankford Avenue below Frankford Creek.

The Rapp House was constructed between 1785 and 1787 as a four room, excluding the basement and garret, building in a period when this many rooms was considered a comfortable size urban dwelling. Citing similar examples in both Philadelphia and London, of the late eighteenth century, the building *reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style*. While more common in Society Hill or Old City in Center City Philadelphia, the Rapp House is an unusual survivor of a vernacular, brick Georgian style dwelling in Fishtown section of the larger Kensington neighborhood.

Lastly, the Rapp House was the home of a doctor and a German soldier, hired as a mercenary by the British State, likely providing medical services with his training, and represents the type of dwelling that was economically feasible for a physician and a former prisoner of war who was released to settle on a local level. Few, if any, dwellings known to be associated with German mercenaries exist in Philadelphia from the post-Revolutionary period and, as a result, this house is significant and *exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community*.

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After several weeks of research and study, the Frederick J. Rapp House appears to be the oldest house in the old Kensington District of Philadelphia. We feel strongly that houses of this age and level of importance should be legally protected by the Philadelphia Historic Commission.

Both individuals put a great deal of time and effort into the completion of this nomination:

Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist  
J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian

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