

**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: **1250 E. Palmer Street**

Postal code: **19125**

Councilmanic District: **5**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Joseph Paxson Frame Store & Dwelling**

Other Name: **1250 E. Palmer Street**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: **Single Family Dwelling**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED SHEET.

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

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

[See Attached Sheet]

Period of Significance (from year to year): from

c. 1827-1921

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

c. 1827-1839

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Joseph Paxson, House Carpenter

Original owner:

Joseph & Margaret (Miller) Paxson

Other significant persons:

Unknown

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

- X (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
- X (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
- X (j) **Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.**

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

SEE ATTACHED SHEET.

9. NOMINATOR: KENSINGTON OLDE RICHMOND HERITAGE, LLC

Name with Title **Oscar Beisert, Author/Historian & Andrew Fearon, Executive Director**

Email afearon@korheritage.org Date **3 August 2017**

Street Address **PO Box 3703** Telephone **(917) 450-6113**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19125** Nominators are not the property owners.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 4 August 2017

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 15 September 2017

Date of Notice Issuance: 18 September 2017

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Joseph M Purcell and Julie A Ciotti

Address: 206 Logan Court AKA 2213-25 Race Street # 206

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19103

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

4/11/13

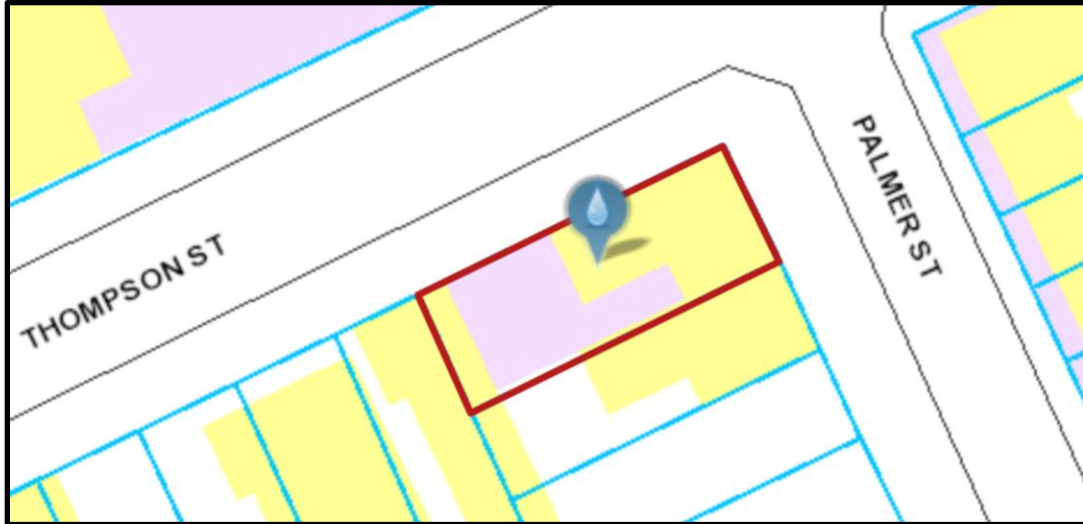
**Proposed for Designation
in the
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**



Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling, Fishtown. Source: Michelle Shuman.

**The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling
c. 1827-1839
1250 E. Palmer Street
Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

*The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling
1250 E. Palmer Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, August 2017 – Page 1*



The boundary for the subject designation is outlined in red. Source: Philadelphia Water.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The parcel and building portion subject to this nomination for Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling at 1250 E. Palmer Street is limited to the following boundaries:

ALL THAT CERTAIN Lot or piece of ground with the frame message or tenement thereon erected. SITUATE on the Southwesterly side of Palmer Street and the Southeasterly side of Thompson Street in the 18th Ward of the City of Philadelphia.

CONTAINING in front on the said Palmer Street 24 feet and extending Southwestwardly of that width in length or depth and along the said Thompson Street 64 feet.

BEING known as No. 1250 E. Palmer Street.

The property is known as Parcel No. 017N17-0074, Office of Property Assessment Account No. 181129600.



Looking south. Source: Andrew Fearon.

*The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling
1250 E. Palmer Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, August 2017 – Page 3*



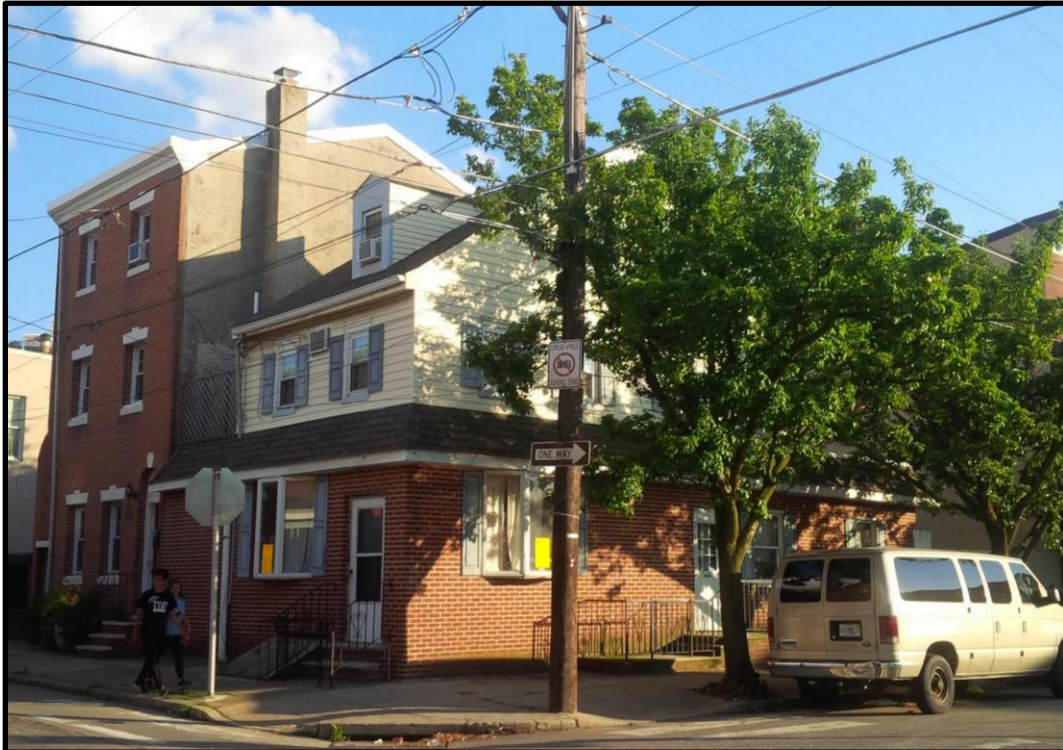
Looking southwest. Source: Michelle Shuman.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Constructed in the 1830s, the Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling is a two-and-one-half story timber frame building, measuring roughly sixteen feet (16'-0") front with a depth of roughly thirty-three feet (33'-0")—this being the original portion of the house. The building is located at 1250 E. Palmer Street in the historic Fishtown section of the larger Kensington neighborhood in Philadelphia. Once a more common form, this is one of the few extant frame store and dwelling situated on a corner lot in Philadelphia.

The detached frame building stands two-and-one-half stories and is a double pile house, featuring a side-gabled roof. The house sits atop a basement, which is likely comprised of a brick and/or rubble stone foundation. The primary elevation is characteristic of a vernacular Georgian plan with a symmetrical fenestration. Generally, the house has been altered at the ground floor with the addition of a red brick fascia at both E. Palmer and Thompson Streets, concealing what was likely a discontinuous storefront, which is not unlike many early buildings in Society Hill that were designated for preservation. While the window and door types have been changed on the ground floor, the placement is

generally correct with a door near the corner and towards the rear. Likely a later, revivalist feature, the first and second levels of the building are delineated with a pent roof that spans both the E. Palmer and Thompson Street elevations. Based on similar buildings in the neighborhood, the subject property likely retains nearly all of its original clapboards on the second and third, half levels, which are sheathed in faux siding of a light yellow coloring. Original materials may also be present beneath the brick fascia.



Looking southeast. Source: Michelle Shuman.

The ground floor of the E. Palmer Street elevation features a two-part, projecting picture window and a single pedestrian door, all of which likely replaces and/or reconfigures a store window and/or entrance. An exterior basement entrance is at center. The second floor features two symmetrically placed window openings with replacement windows and flanked by faux shutters of a blue color. The second and third levels are delineated by simple cornice that appears to be concealed by faux siding. The third, half-story features a gable-front dormer at the center of the pitched roof. The original materials are likely beneath the faux siding that sheathes the dormer.

Since most wooden buildings that stood on a corner lots were long ago removed for more substantial building improvements, the Thompson Street elevation is an unusually gracious expanse to be observed in an old wooden house. The ground floor of the Thompson Street elevation features the following apertures: a duplicate picture window; the original residential entrance, a single pedestrian; and two window openings with one-over-one sash replacement windows flanked by faux shutters in a blue color. Again, the ground and second floors are delineated by the aforementioned pent roof. The second and

third floors retain the original fenestration. The gracious elevation at the second floor is comprised of four window openings that feature the original wooden architraves and replacement one-over-one sash windows that are flanked by faux shutters of a blue color. The windows were precisely placed to give off a symmetrical appearance from Thompson Street, which is less usual in wooden buildings of this size and period. The third, half-story features two window openings that feature the original wooden architraves and replacement one-over-one sash windows that are flanked by faux shutters of a blue color. The windows were precisely placed to give off a symmetrical appearance above the windows within the second level below.

The rear elevation is largely concealed by a one-story addition, as well as other improvements. However, the original form of the house has been retained, even at this elevation. The third, half-story features a gable-front dormer at the center of the pitched roof. The original materials are likely beneath the faux siding that sheathes the dormer.



Looking southeast. Source: Andrew Fearon.



Looking east. Source: Andrew Fearon.



Looking north. Source: Andrew Fearon.

Physical Integrity

Association: The form of the subject building and its vernacular architectural style are informants sufficient for integrity of Association.

Design: While the street-facing elevations have undergone alterations within the ground floor fenestration, the basic form of house, as well as the majority of its apertures appear to be intact. The addition of two picture windows dominate the first floor fenestration; however, it is essentially the replacement of two shop windows. The entrances, as well as the other areas of the fenestration, the outline of the house, its roofline, the gable dormers, its obscured, but extant wood siding, its wooden frame, and, side elevation embody the primary elements of the roughly 180+ year old design.

Feeling: Because the building is sheathed in a topical siding, integrity of feeling is temporarily compromised. However, integrity of feeling is not irrecoverable nor do the faux materials completely diverge in style and form from the original appearance.

Location: The subject building retains integrity of location.

Materials: Because the subject building is sheathed in a topical siding, the appearance does not immediately allow for registration of the historic materials. However, nearly all of the original materials that comprised are likely extant.

Setting: Surrounded by nineteenth century houses along E. Palmer and Thompson Streets, as well as two other wooden houses immediately to the south fronting on Thompson Street, the building retains integrity of setting.

Workmanship: Because the subject building is sheathed in a topical siding, integrity of workmanship is obscured. However, integrity of workmanship does exist.

The subject building retains integrity of association, design, location, and setting. Integrity of materials and workmanship are obscured, but do exist. Integrity of feeling is somewhat diminished, but not lost. The subject building retains integrity sufficient to convey its historical significance.



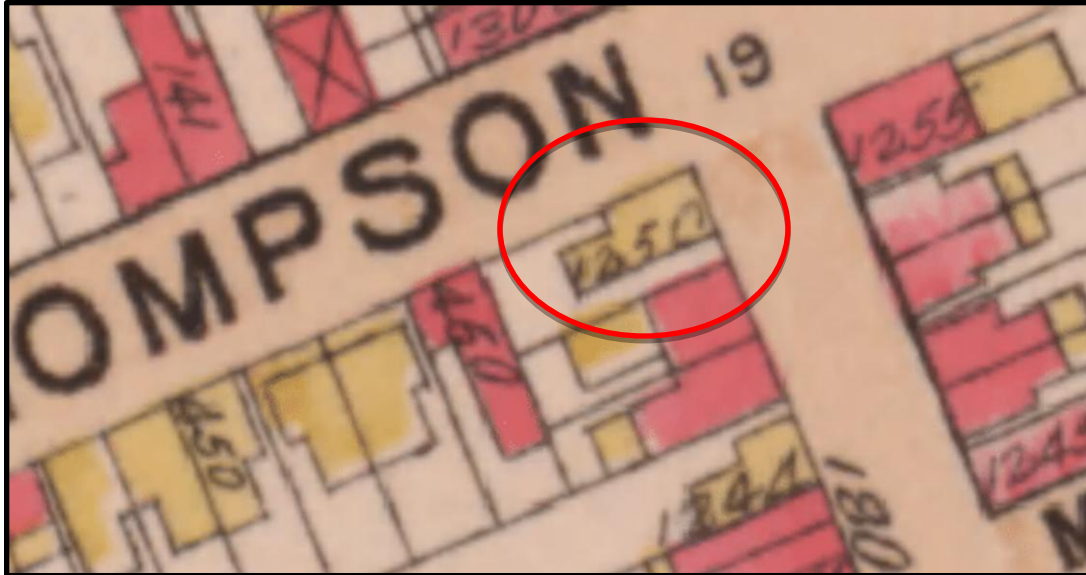
A larger version of the subject frame store and dwelling, which once stood at the corner of N. Front and Green Streets in Northern Liberties. Demolished. Source: HSP. Note, the corner commercial entrance for the store and the side, rear residential entrance.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling at 1250 E. Palmer Street 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 Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling meets the following criteria:

- (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 Period of Significance for aforementioned Criteria as related to this building is ca. 1827 to 1921.



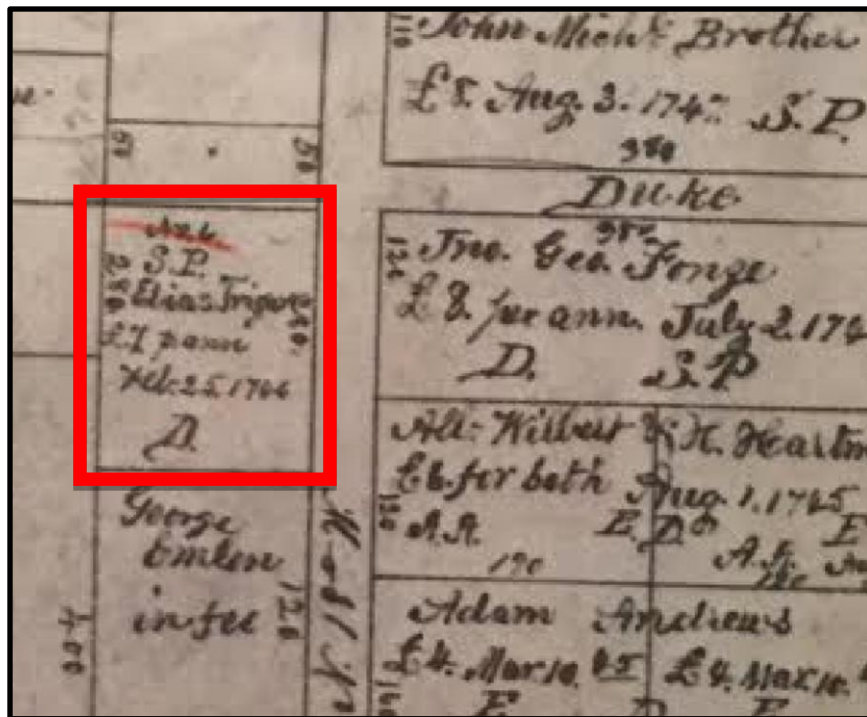
1895 Philadelphia Atlas, G.W. Bromley. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

CRITERION A and CRITERION J

Representing both the development, as well as the economic, social and historical heritage of Fishtown, in Kensington, and the larger realm of Philadelphia's river wards, the Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling's form, historic use, and retained placement is one in a very small collection of late-eighteenth to early nineteenth century wooden buildings that served as both store and dwelling, being located on a prominent corner lot for nearly two hundred years. Frame houses were commonly associated with the early development of Philadelphia and were home to many working to middle class Philadelphians. In fact, at one time there were so many wooden houses in the older waterfront-neighborhoods that an ordinance was passed prohibiting new frame buildings in 1796. Hundreds of wooden houses once dotted the urban landscape of Philadelphia and its river wards. Only a fraction of these houses survive today.

The subject house is situated on a lot that was once part of a larger parcel, measuring 280 feet north to south on Palmer Street with a depth of 144 feet east to west that Elias Trigar, a gardener, purchased from Anthony Palmer in 1746. Between 1746 and 1783, that same lot came into the ownership of Johann Georg Krauskopf (1728-1783), which nearly thirty years after his death was then divided evenly into seven lots in 1810. Lot No. 7 was bequeathed to children of his daughter Margaret Krauskopf, the wife of Conrad Miller: Catherine (Miller) Till and Margaret Miller, who soon after married Joseph Paxson, a house carpenter. Joseph and Margaret (Miller) Paxson eventually gained ownership of the Lot No. 7, and, later, at least part of Lot No. 6, immediately to the south on Palmer Street. Between 1818 and 1839, Joseph Paxson appears to have built at least five "frame message" buildings on these and other lots at the juncture of E. Palmer and Thompson Streets, which were divided among his and Margaret's heirs in 1857. The subject house among them, this property remained under the ownership of Joseph Paxson,

Jr. until his death in 1895, and then in the possession of his descendants until the property was sold out of the family in 1921. The Joseph Paxson Store and Dwelling represents the development, as well as the economic, social, and historical heritage of Fishtown, in Kensington, and the larger realm of Philadelphia. Beyond being an important representative historic building form and style, the subject property was under the same family ownership from at least 1783 until the time the parcel was subdivided in 1810, after which it, like other adjacent parcels, was developed and subject to building construction by house carpenters like Joseph Paxson, who lived in and/or near the subject building. After the death of Joseph Paxson the house was used as both store and dwelling; however, it is not known when exactly this transition took place. For example, the shop was home to a father and son shoemaker in 1865, among other later tenants.



Copy of a Plan of Property in Kensington by L. Evans, c. 1746. Source: HSP.

Historic Context:

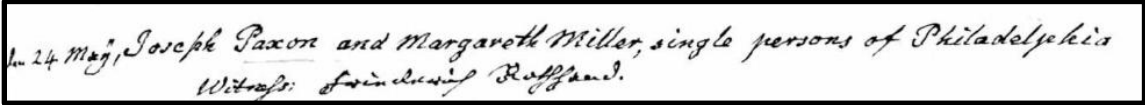
Ownership and Development of the Trigar Parcel—Lot No. 7—1783-1921

The subject lot at 1250 E. Palmer Street was subdivided from a larger lot or piece of ground, which Elias Trigar, a gardener, purchased from the Anthony Palmer in 1746.¹ The lot measured 280 feet on Palmer Street with a depth of 144 feet.² Between 1747 and 1782, the subject parcel came into the ownership of Johann Georg Krauskopf—better known as George Krouskop, who was a house carpenter of Northern Liberties. Nearly

¹ Deed: Anthony Palmer of Kensington (formerly called Shackamaxon) in the Northern Liberties, to Elias Trigar, Gardiner of the same place. 25 February 1746, Philadelphia Deed Book S.F.H., No. 8, p. 488, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereafter CAP).

² Copy of a Plan of Property in Kensington by L. Evans, c. 1746. Source: HSP.

three decades after his death in 1783, the parcel was subdivided into seven lots by his heirs—Lot Nos. 1-7. One of his oldest daughters, Margaret Krouskop had married Corad Miller and they had two daughters Catherine and Margaret Miller.³ The subject property, Lot No. 7, was deeded from Krouskop to his granddaughters Catherine (Miller) Till and Margaret Miller. Lot No. 7 included forty feet front on Palmer Street at the east; 144 feet at the south, bordering on Lot No. 6, belonging to Susanna Rhoades; forty feet at the west, bordering on land formerly owned by the late Widow Lacey; and 144 feet at the north, bordering on land of the late Anthony Palmer.⁴ Originally, the Miller sisters, Catherine and Margaret inherited their mother’s share of the Krouskop Estate. Catherine Miller was then married to William Till, a shipwright, while her sister, Margaret Miller was single. Apparently the deed had already been filed when Margaret Miller married Joseph Paxson, a house carpenter, on May 24, 1810 at Saint Michael’s and Zion Lutheran Church, Philadelphia.⁵



On 24 May, Joseph Paxson and Margareth Miller, single persons of Philadelphia
Witness: Andrew Buffland.

A record of the marriage of Joseph Paxson (Paxson) to Margareth Miller, May 24, 1810.
Source: Ancestry.com.

In 1818, Lot No. 7 was partitioned by William and Catherine Miller Till and Joseph and Margaret Miller Paxson, the former having rights to the southern half and the latter to the northern.⁶ In 1827, Joseph Paxson purchased the southern half of Lot No. 7 from the Tills for \$200.⁷ This is the earliest date that the subject house is likely to have been built. Two years later, Paxson purchased a release of the ground rents from Horatio B. and Elizabeth Pennock for \$50 in 1829.⁸

In on January 9, 1837, likely after much debate and planning, the Court of the Quarter Sessions appears to have awarded Joseph Paxson the sum of \$1600 for “the opening of Duke Street Kensington,” which were considered damages at the time.⁹ The subject house likely existed at that time being considered below Duke Street before it opened to the west, as Duke Street existed prior to that time east of Palmer Street. However, it is also probable that Paxson used his \$1600 to construct a new house.

³ Descendants of Johan Georg Krauskopf <http://www.beckfoot.info/JGKrauskopf1_3.htm>

⁴ Deed: Johann Krouskop, et. al. of Northern Liberties, a house Carpenter, et. al., to Margaret Miller, et. al. 5 April 1810, Philadelphia Deed Book G.W.R., No. 8, p. 604. CAP.

⁵ Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1669-1999* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

⁶ Deed of Partition: William Till to Joseph Paxson. 20 May 1818, Philadelphia Deed Book G.W.R., No. 37, p. 382. CAP.

⁷ Deed: William Till, et. ux., to Joseph Paxson. 4 October 1827, Philadelphia Deed Book S.H.F., No. 7, p. 319. CAP.

⁸ Deed: Horatio B. Pennock to Joseph Paxson. 16 May 1829, Philadelphia Deed Book G.W.R., No. 37, p. 380.

⁹ Letter: To the Honorable Judge of the Court of Quarter Sessions in and for the County of Philadelphia from Henry M. Phillips. Not Dated. CAP.

To the Honorable the Judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions
in and for the County of Philadelphia.

In the matter of the damages \$1600, awarded to Joseph
Paxson for the opening of Duke Street Kensington, as assigned
absolutely by your honor on the 9th day of January 1837,
the Auditor appointed to inquire and report to whom
the fund should be paid respectfully Reports

That the pro-
perty for appropriation of which to public use these
damages were awarded, belonged to Joseph Paxson (House
Carpenter) and Margaret his wife, having been conveyed
them by William Hill and wife, by Indenture dated May 10
1818, recorded in Deed Book F. W. R. 37 p. 382p. subject to
a yearly rent charge which was released to Joseph Paxson
and thereby became extinguished, by Indenture dated
May 10 1829, recorded in Deed Book G. W. R. 37 p. 382, so that
the whole fee was in Joseph Paxson and Margaret his wife.

The certificates herewith presented marked A B & C,
show no encumbrances in the office of the Supreme Court, the
County District Courts of United States & Recorder of Deeds.

That of the District Court (marked D.) has several
judgments, but by the endorsement, it will be seen that
they have no claim upon this fund.

That of the Court of Common Pleas (marked E.)
also exhibits several judgments, but the endorsement
explains that they have not any claim upon this fund,
all of which appear to belong to Joseph Paxson.
Joseph Paxson. Seven hundred dollars \$1600

Respectfully submitted
Henry M. Phillips
Auditor

Letter: To the Honorable Judge of the Court of Quarter Sessions in and for the County of Philadelphia from
Henry M. Phillips. Not Dated. CAP.

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling
1250 E. Palmer Street, Fishtown, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, August 2017 - Page 13

Paxon P., clerk, 114 High, h 15 Sch 7th	P
Paxon Margaret, Palmer ab Duke (K)	P
Paxon Benjamin, stonecutter, Duke bel Palmer (K)	P
Paxon Edmd. machinist, Carroll ab 15th	P
Paxon Edwd., attorney at law, 158 N Front	P
PAXSON GEO., lumber mer. Willow ab Broad, h Callowhill bel Sch 5th	P
Paxon H. K., b. h., 56 Marshall	P
Paxon John, cabinetmr. 276 S 2d, h 306 Pine	P
Paxon Joseph, carp., Palmer bel Duke (K)	P
Paxon Joseph S., mer., 209 High, h N E Sch 4th and Mulberry	P
Paxon Maria B., teacher, 112 S 9th	P
Paxon Nelson, carp. Carlton ab Sch 3d	P
Paxon Richard, mer., 209 High	P
Paxon Richard, jr., mer., 209 High, h 13 City row	P
Paxon Richard & Sons, hardware, 209 High	P
Paxon Sarah, 33 Dean	P
Paxon W. J., dry goods, 106 N 8th	P
Paxon Joseph R., atty. & coun., 48 S 4th	P

Philadelphia City Directory, 1837. Source: Archive.org.

In 1838, in a deed regarding the property, from William Rotan, et. al. to Joseph Paxson, indicates that a “certain frame messuage or tenement” was located on Lot No. 6, which was purchased by the Paxsons. On October 22, 1839, “Mr. Joseph Paxson, sr.,” died. The following notice was published in the *Public Ledger*:

this afternoon. at 2 o'clock.
 On the 22d inst., Mr. Joseph Paxson, sr., in the 51st year of his age.
 His friends, and those of the family, are respectfully invited to attend his funeral, from his late residence, corner of Palmer and Duke streets, Kensington, this afternoon, at 2 o'clock.
 On the 23d inst. Hannah Ann Middleton in the

“Died,” *Public Ledger*. (Philadelphia: 24 October 1839), p. 2.

Paxson’s death notice makes very clear that “late residence” stood at the corner of Palmer and Duke Streets.¹⁰ In his will, Palmer makes very clear that his residence at Palmer and Duke Streets was to remain in the possession of his wife with stipulations. Incidentally, it seems that the house may have been rented out soon after his death as the Paxsons do not appear at that address in the city directory in 1839 or 1840.

In 1857, the subject property was deeded by the Last Will and Testament of Joseph Paxson to Joseph Paxson, Jr., who owned the premises until 1895 at the time of death. The property then passed on to his descendants, and remained under family ownership until 1921.¹¹

¹⁰ “Died,” *Public Ledger*. (Philadelphia: 24 October 1839), p. 2.

¹¹ Deed: Joseph R. Paxson, et. al. to Sam McNair, et. ux. 21 November 1921, Philadelphia Deed Book J.M.H., No. 1184, p. 544.

After the death of Joseph Paxson, physical evidence and city directory listings evidence that the building likely served as both store and dwelling; however, the precise date of this dual use is not known. As early as 1863, the building was rented to William Benner, a shoemaker, being that he was listed in the city directory at “1250 Palmer” in 1863.¹² Two years later, his son, William Benner, Jr. had joined his father’s business, as both were listed at the subject address.¹³ While a history of the tenancy would be interesting, it is not necessary to show that the building served a dual purpose. Throughout the nineteenth century, many corner buildings, in dense neighbors like Fishtown, were ideal for small business venues. We see that things hadn’t changed much by the turn of the century, when, in 1900, Chalkley Howell was selling “cigars” at the venerable juncture.¹⁴

Historic Context: Fishtown Section of Philadelphia

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling is within the late eighteenth and nineteenth century residential section of Fishtown in larger Kensington neighborhood. 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.

¹² McElroy’s Philadelphia City Directory (1865), p. 611. Source: Google Books. Note: this listing refers to a William Penner, shoemaker, but later references show that Benner was the likely spelling.

¹³ McElroy’s Philadelphia City Directory (1865), p. 7. Source: Google Books.

¹⁴ Boyd’s Co-partnership and Residence Business Directory of Philadelphia (1900), p. 354. Source: Google Books.



Seen between like wooden houses, the Georgian doorway in the lithograph is what remains of this like-style dwelling. In the background on right is a wooden house with a gambrel roof. This is on a whole a court of wooden houses depicted in *The little homeless one or "no one to kiss me good night."* Lithograph by P.S. Duval, Philadelphia, 1867. Source: the Library Company of Philadelphia.

CRITERION C

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling is representative of a frame dwelling type as articulated in the said style. The frame dwelling type was known to be constructed throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Philadelphia. Frame dwellings were once a common house type in Philadelphia. While obscured by modern materials, the Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling appears to retain much of its material composition, form, and other features reflective of vernacular building traditions of a transitional era and a shift in population density. In Kensington, wooden houses made up 70 percent of the dwellings by 1810, a statistic that enlarged over time. These frame dwellings were home to the common working to middle class Philadelphians, and, this house appears to have been built between 1818 and 1839 by Joseph Paxson, a house carpenter, as one of five houses that he owned, occupied and rented in the immediate vicinity. Built upon a lot that his grandfather-in-law had purchased by 1782, the subject house remained in the Paxson family until 1921. Historically it was one of many frame dwellings of its kind. Only a fraction of these buildings survive today. The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling represents a distinctive architectural type and style as related to vernacular Georgian style frame dwellings in Philadelphia. Furthermore, the house is an unusual surviving specimen as a

frame dwelling built upon a corner and being fully detached, making it further distinctive for its rarity in survival.



Old wooden houses, extending southwardly from the corner of Marble Street, on the west side of Tenth Street, to Miss Sally Keene's, late Maj. Lennox's property and residence, built by "Col." Peter L. Berry. N.W. corner of Chestnut and Tenth streets. Source: the Library Company of Philadelphia. Note: all of these buildings are being used for both store and dwelling, given the shopfront façade.

The Frame Dwelling in Philadelphia, the Northern Liberties and Kensington

When William Penn and the Quakers arrived at Philadelphia in 1683, they encountered a small community of Swedes, which largely consisted of subsistence farmers living in log hewn and timber frame houses. Beyond their own cave dwellings, the first houses built by Quakers likely included temporary wooden structures. And while brick soon became the standard in Philadelphia, frame dwellings, dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were common in the city.

In 1749, Swedish Naturalist Peter Kalm noted the following frame dwelling “preserved” in the Philadelphia landscape, which represented the early European settlement of the area:

"A wretched old wooden building is preserved, on a hill near the [Delaware] river, located a little north of Wicaco . . . on purpose as a memorial to the

poor condition of the place before the town was built on it. It belonged formerly to one of the Svensons. . . "¹⁵



Wooden House at the Corner of 12th and Spruce. Source: the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The Great Fire of London was all too familiar to William Penn and, as a result, there was an immediate effort to establish brickmaking in Philadelphia. The natural resources of the region led to the use of brick and stone in building construction and this is demonstrated in the extant historic built environment of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, frame dwellings were both cheap and quick to construct, which made them appealing options to immigrants and landlords. These dwelling types were built in all parts of the city through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and even later.

According to James Mease, there were roughly 6,351 brick houses to 2,523 wooden ones in 1811—a ratio of three to one.¹⁶ Interestingly, the general claim, as noted by Historian Carole Shammas, is that houses were constructed at “an average of 228 per year between 1760 and 1800.,” which had created the 1811 statistic.¹⁷ Close inspection of early images and insurance surveys provides insight as to the physical appearance of these buildings. Many of these houses were entirely without pretense or style and others took on the

¹⁵ John Fanning Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in Olden Time*

¹⁶ Margaret B. Tinkcom, “Southwark, a River Community: Its Shape and Substance,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 114 (1970), 327–342.

¹⁷ Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Space in the New American Republic* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2008), 25–26.

Georgian antecedents of their brick, stone, and wooden primates across the Atlantic in England. North and south of the old municipal lines, the prevalence of the frame dwelling was greater and the forms and styles of Philadelphia's wooden houses developed into its own vernacular language.

Many of these were built of wood long after better-off Philadelphians' houses were routinely built of brick. Older-type structures that combined artisans' workshop and living quarters remained scattered throughout the city, but were particularly common near the waterfront.¹⁸

Perhaps the most compressive and representative ensemble of frame dwellings survives in Kensington. While some extant houses date to the late eighteenth century, most were built in the first half of the nineteenth century.



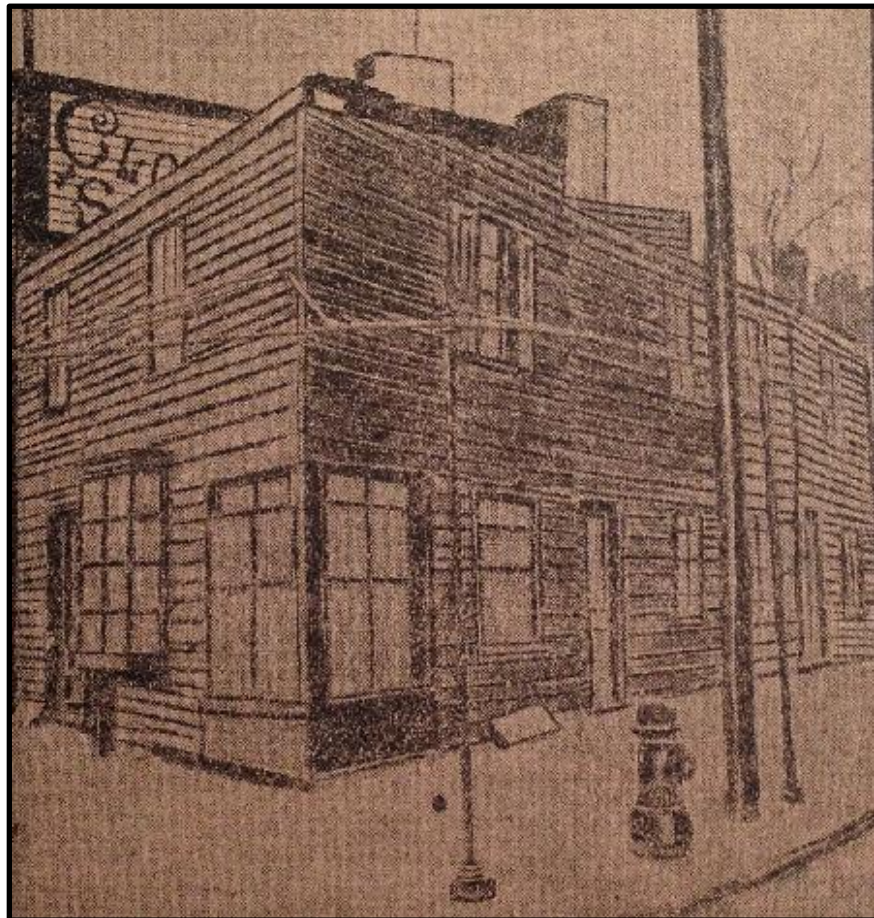
Left: Early Log Dwelling—"One of the oldest houses in Phila.," Warren Street above Beach Street, Kensington. Right: Early Wooden Dwelling, which stood at the southwest corner of Belgrade Street and Montgomery Avenue on the grounds of the Palmer Cemetery. Source: Jane Campbell Collection, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Note: the building on left is being used as a store and dwelling, like the subject building.

Early high style examples of architecture in Kensington appear to be limited to a few important Georgian-inspired dwellings owned by elite Philadelphians, as well as some successful shipwrights along the Delaware River. The Fairman Mansion is the most famous building of the area and represents its agrarian roots. Other houses emerged in brick—the Jehu Eyre House was present near the Fairman Mansion by 1770, but was an urban style building, fronting on Beach Street. The oldest known brick house in Kensington today, the Frederick J. Rapp house was built in 1786–1787 in the 1000 Block of Frankford Avenue. These three brick dwellings tell a representative story of early Kensington, but they do not represent what historically the primary building type in the area.

The progression or "progress" of wooden houses does not appear to be as obvious in terms of architectural style. Although, there were no doubt more impressive and stylized

¹⁸ Upton, *Another City: Urban Life*, 25.

frame dwellings in the area that have long since been lost to memory. Local lore tells us that the oldest of the vernacular wooden houses to survive into the nineteenth century was the tiny log hewn dwelling in the 1500 or 1600 Block of Richmond Street—now the site of an I-95 on ramp. Shown above, the captivating, but staunch old lady sold ice, no doubt being very good with a pick, living in “the oldest house in Philadelphia,” which was a nickname given to many ancient-appearing dwellings in the city. Later covered in lapped siding, other houses of this scale were known in Kensington, including one shown above in Belgrade Street. The Belgrade Street house features a Georgian style dormer, conforming to the taste of the time in a modest format, while the ice lady’s home has absolutely no pretense. These dwellings represent what was likely the oldest house type in the area—a primary feature being that the house was one-story.

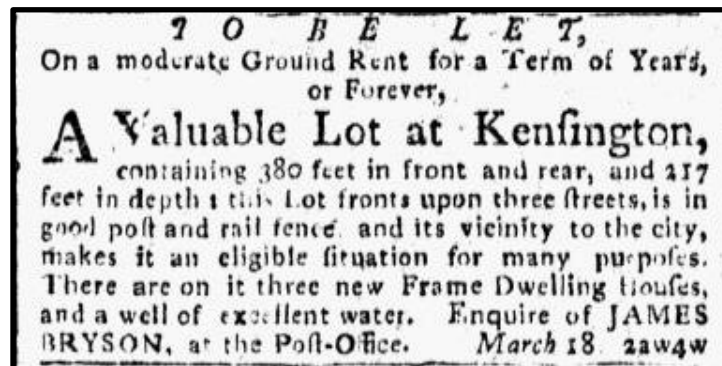


“Old Penn Homestead Will Be Destroyed,” an unusual row of wooden tenements is shown, which was interestingly purported to be “The Penn Homestead,” particularly of Richard and Mary Masters Penn. This wooden “Penn” house was said to date to about 1775 but more likely after 1812 and was located at 951 Frankford Avenue. Just who lived there originally 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.¹⁹ Source: Miss Jane Campbell and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Note: like the subject building, the frame, corner building had been used as a store and dwelling.

¹⁹ “Old Penn Homestead Will Be Destroyed,” 1901, Scrapbook Collection of Jane Campbell, HSP.

The development of Kensington progressed slowly throughout the eighteenth century with the construction of frame dwellings being the most common house form. Shipwrights were in the area along the Delaware River prior to the Revolution. Shipbuilders often lived in wooden houses near the shipyard. And, naturally, all of the shipyards were associated with water lots with Richmond Street addresses. Germans arrived in America in the eighteenth century, many of which were from the Rhine Palatinate and it was primarily a group of these immigrants who became the fishermen of Fishtown. Germans knew frame dwellings from the old country and fishermen seem to have occupied these dwellings in Kensington, along with all manner of maritime peoples.

According to James Robinson and John A. Paxton's survey of 1810, Kensington's built environment consisted of about 615 houses. There were roughly 431 frame dwellings and 184 brick ones. This means that in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the housing stock in Kensington was 70 percent wood. By this time Kensington was distinguished as its own section of the larger Northern Liberties, but earlier the number of dwellings are more difficult to ascertain due to the lack of distinction. The same survey shows that Northern Liberties possessed a total of 2,998 dwellings, almost half of which were frame. Timber frame construction was used for other building types in Kensington as well. In 1810, there were nine storehouses in the area, eight of which were frame. With a mere ten manufacturing buildings, it is interesting to note that more of these were masonry—a ratio of five to five. Public buildings were wooden as well. In Northern Liberties nine out of nineteen were frame, while in Kensington it was three wooden to one brick. Ninety-four percent of the stables and workshops in both Northern Liberties and Kensington were frame, but that was more common in this building type, as shown in the Philadelphia statistic of 66 percent.²⁰ Interestingly, this 1810 analysis of the buildings in Philadelphia, Northern Liberties, Penn Township, Kensington, Southwark, and Moyamensing Township combined to show that wooden buildings made up forty-eight percent.



Advertisement for “A Valuable Lot at Kensington” which includes “free new Frame Dwelling Houses.” Published on April 3, 1789 in the *Pennsylvania Packet*. Source: Proquest Historical Newspapers.

²⁰ James A. Paxton, *The stranger's guide: an alphabetical list of all the wards, streets, roads, lanes, alleys, avenues, courts, wharves, ship yards, public buildings, &c. in the city and suburbs of Philadelphia, with references for finding their situations on an alphabetical plan* (Philadelphia, 1811), 18–20

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling is a side gable (single pitch), double pile vernacular Georgian style timber frame store and dwelling with dormers. The form, scale, style, and dual historic function make it a rare surviving building type in Philadelphia. This was one of five houses built by Joseph Paxson, a house carpenter, in the immediate vicinity of E. Palmer and Thompson Streets between 1818 and 1839 that were to remain in his family after the partition of his estate in 1857.

Older house forms appear to have been duplicated in the 1790s and through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. For example, the “half house” or flounder type was built in greater numbers than one would suspect. At one time the half house was even a known form in Northern Liberties. For example, William Ball sold a small lot to John and Adam Mintser in April 1796, which appears to have been unimproved.²¹ Two years later, John Mintser was living on the lot in a “two-story” [a two-hand-one-half (2-1/2) story] frame dwelling with the typical measurements of a half house.²² This is no doubt the same building that is shown in the famous image of Commissioners Hall. There are a few examples of this house type extant in Kensington—particularly Fishtown, while most have been lost over time.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, increasing concern related to fire and its relationship to wooden houses, as well as the poor state of maintenance of older frame dwellings led to the passage of laws to mitigate the problems of absentee landlords and fire hazards. An ordinance of June 6, 1796 declared that no “wooden mansion-house, shope, ware-house, store, or carriage or stable” should be erected in the City of Philadelphia between the Delaware River and Sixth Street, Vine to South Streets.²³ While the ordinance may have sent the proper message to certain Kensington builders, it likely had minimal effects on the construction of wooden houses outside of its mandated boundaries. Three decades later in 1826, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gave the City of Philadelphia the power to prohibit the construction of any building of the following description: “...the walls that are not completely composed of incombustible materials...”²⁴ Finally, the City of Philadelphia passed an ordinance on June 8, 1832 that brought the follow into effect:

From and after the passing of this ordinance, it shall not be lawful to erect or construct within the city of Philadelphia, any wooden, framed, brick-paned, or other building, whereof the walls are not composed wholly of incombustible materials.²⁵

²¹ Deed: William Ball and wife to John and Adam Mintser, 1 April 1796, Philadelphia Deed Book E.F., No. 28, p. 216, CAP.

²² *United States Direct Tax of 1798: Tax Lists for the State of Pennsylvania*. M372, microfilm, 24 rolls. Records of the Internal Revenue Service, 1791–2006, Record Group 58. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

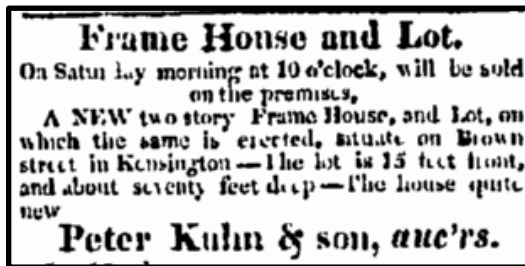
²³ John C. Lowber and C.S. Miller, *A Digest of the Ordinances of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia; and of the Acts of Assembly Relating thereto* (Philadelphia: R. Desilver, 1822), 255–56.

²⁴ Frank F. Brightly, *A Digest of Laws and Ordinances of the City of Philadelphia from the Year 1701 to the 21st of June 1887*. (Philadelphia: Kay & Brother, 1887), 168.

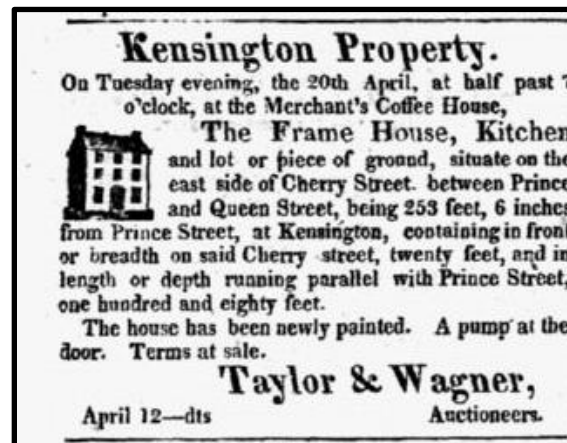
²⁵ *A Digest of the Ordinances of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: S. C. Atkinson, 1834), 310–311.

The statistics from 1810 confirm that the initial ordinance of 1796 had little impact on Kensington. It certainly did not deter the construction of wooden houses, but over time this house type diminished as the neighborhood's density intensified. No measures were taken in Kensington in regards to frame dwellings until 1833. This law only regulated the importation wooden houses into the district.

Advertisements also show the range of house types and customers over time. On April 3, 1789, the *Pennsylvania Packet* advertised wooden houses as a feature of "A Valuable Lot at Kensington," referencing "three new Frame Dwelling Houses." These houses were clearly built as rentals for a business owner or landlord. Other advertisements appear to have been geared towards owner-occupants. On April 14, 1819 the *Franklin Gazette* advertised a "Kensington Property" as "The Frame House, Kitchen and lot..." and this advertisement seemed to be formatted to attract someone to the house itself, leaving out potential rental discussion and lot size.²⁶ These are two of numerous examples of the variation of advertisements that further explain that wooden houses were once an important and primary component of Kensington's built environment.



Left: Advertisement for a Frame House in Kensington. Published on January 17, 1812 in the *Democratic Press*. Right: Advertisement for a Frame House in Kensington. Published on April 14, 1819 in the *Franklin Gazette*. Source: Proquest Historical Newspapers.



These standards influence the size and styles used in the construction of wooden houses. By 1830, the ubiquitous red brick two-and-one-half story vernacular Georgian style house with a central dormer was perhaps the most fashionable building type used by developers in Kensington. Yet wooden houses continued to be built. The following description shows that by 1845 frame dwellings continued to be built, but making up a smaller portion of the overall construction than they had in the past.

Kensington—In this District a large number of buildings have been put up without permits having been taken out; the new buildings erected during the past season will number at least 160 three story brick dwellings and stores, 2 churches and 20 frame dwellings, &c., altogether about 182.²⁷

²⁶ "Advertisement." *Franklin Gazette*, 4.

²⁷ "Growth of Philadelphia." *The North American and Daily Advertiser*, 8 January 1845, 1.

In 1844, there were 183 buildings constructed in Kensington, but the specific number of wooden buildings was not referenced.²⁸ One can suspect that it was a smaller percentage than years past, as reflected in the 1845 statistic. After the Civil War, the construction of frame dwellings was not unknown, but, even in Kensington, houses were likely to be masonry.



A crude version of the subject building type, a Side-Gable, Double Pile Frame Vernacular Georgian Style House, N. Front Street, Kensington. Source: Phillyhistory.com.

The Vernacular Georgian Style House

The Joseph Paxson Frame Store and Dwelling is representative of an era characterized by a distinctive architectural form, style, and type. Vernacular Georgian Style houses were built with a variety of physical features: single and double pile; attached, semi-detached, and detached; front- and/or side-gabled; one-, two- and three-one-half stories; with front, rear and side dormer windows. Less realized in Philadelphia, is that these houses were commonly built of wood, some of which are extant to-date. These houses likely date to the last years of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, but, certainly, there were examples of earlier wooden houses of the same form and style.

Furthermore, the Joseph Paxson Store and Dwelling is a frame building that stands at a prominent corner, being historically of mixed use. While many old frame buildings were both commercial and residential, few of the prominent corner buildings of this type survive due to the fact that many were replaced historically with more substantial improvements. Corner buildings in the Vernacular Georgian Style may be found in several representative photographs throughout this document. Above, a crude example of the Vernacular Georgian Style store and dwelling once stood nearby on N. Front Street in

²⁸ "Philadelphia." *The North American and Daily Advertiser*, 5 October 1844, 1.

Kensington. While this building is no longer extant it shares many of the extant features of the subject property.



Left: frame dwelling above the Town Hall on Germantown Avenue, c. 1859. Right: the same frame dwelling post-1859. Note: the dwelling has been converted to store and dwelling, its side entrance widened and its front windows replaced with a shop window. Source: HSP.

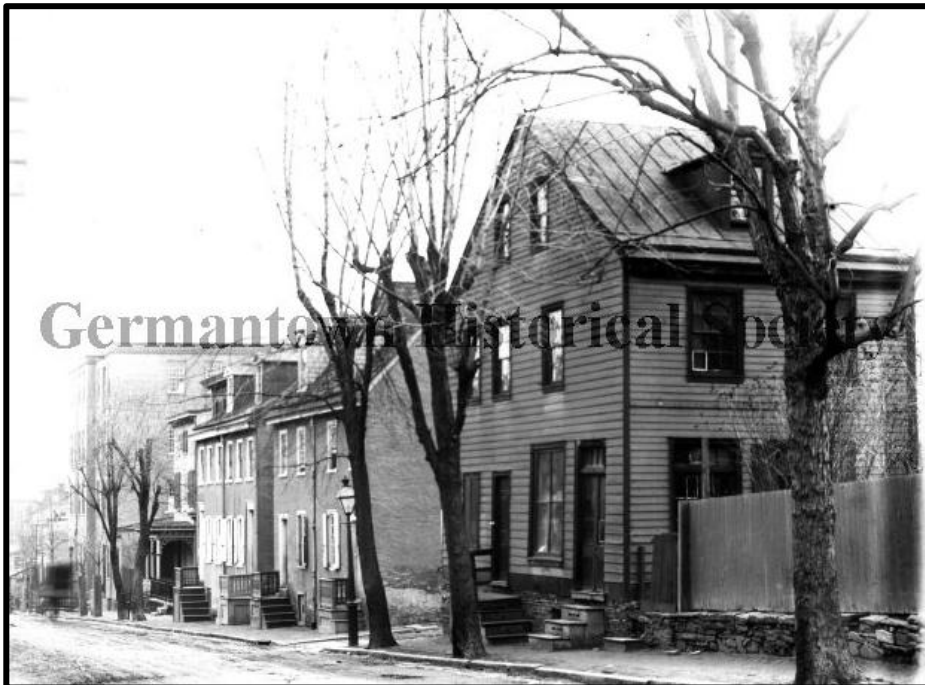


Comparison between a period photograph of a nearby house and the subject building.

Above is a comparison of the subject building to a similar specimen that once stood on N. Front Street. Like the example, the subject building historically had a store entrance at the corner with a residential entrance at the rear of the side elevation. Below are smaller, attached versions of the frame store and dwelling, also buildings that have largely vanished from the urban landscape.



Side Gable, Double Pile Frame Vernacular Georgian Style store and dwelling (far left) and other wooden store and dwelling buildings, N. Front Street. Source: Phillyhistory.com.



Side Gable, Double Pile Frame Vernacular Georgian Style Store and Dwelling, Owned by George Axe, Church Lane, Germantown. Source: the Germantown Historical Society.

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