

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: **6671 Germantown Avenue (formerly 6669, 6671, & 6679 Germantown Ave)**

Postal code: **19119**

Councilmanic District: **8**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown**

Other Name: **Walder-Essig House ("Beggarstown School")**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Buildings

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: **Various uses.**

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. 1728-2016

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

c.1728 (Burial Ground); c. 1740 (Walder-Essig House); 1855 (Parsonage); 1886 (Sunday School); 1896-97 (Church)

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

See attached.

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

See attached.

Original owner:

St. Michael's Lutheran Church

Other significant persons:

See attached.

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
- (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,
- X (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: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Name with Title **J. M. Duffin, Archivist/Historian**

Email keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org Date **24 July 2017**

Street Address **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320** Telephone **(717) 602-5002**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19107** Nominators are not the property owners.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 7/25/2017

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 8/10/2017

Date of Notice Issuance: 8/10/2017

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Trustees of St. Michael's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Address: 6671 Germantown Ave

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19119

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

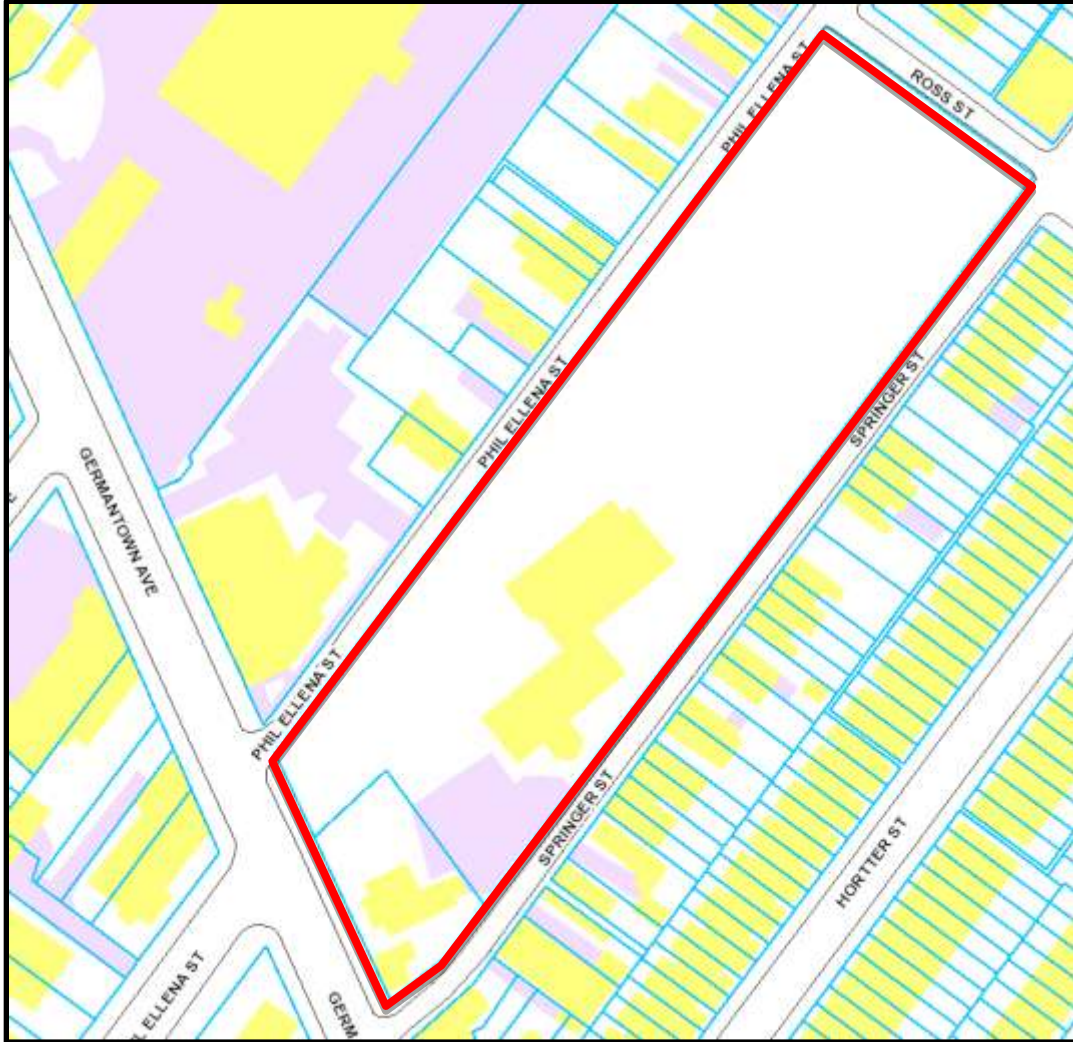
Nomination
for the
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places



St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown.
Taken by Wallace, c. 1910-20. Source: HSP

St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown
6671 Germantown Avenue
Beggarstown, Mount Airy
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown, 6671 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, July 2017—Page 1



The boundary is delineated in red. Source: Philadelphia Water Department.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the improvements thereon erected, bounded on the Northeast by Ross Street, on the Southeast by Springer Street, on the Southwest by Germantown Avenue, and on the Northwest by Phil-Ellena Street.

Philadelphia Deed Registry Parcel 052N08-0318
OPA Account No. 775164005



Looking north, St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown. Source: Bing.com.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown, is an "ancient" religious landmark at 6671 Germantown Avenue in the Beggarstown section of Mount Airy, which is located in the former Germantown Township at Philadelphia. It occupies the entire block bounded by Germantown Avenue to the southwest; East Phil-Ellena Street to the northwest; Ross Street to the northeast; and Springer Street to the southeast. St. Michael's Lutheran Church pre-dates all of the streets that bound its property, except for Germantown Avenue. Springer Street (opened in the 1870s) was once known as Church Lane, which took its name from the presence of the church. Among the ancient institutions of the Germantown Township, this is one of the oldest, predating its slightly younger neighbor, the Church of the Brethren. It is, in fact, one of the oldest continually used German Evangelical Lutheran Church sites in Pennsylvania, and perhaps in America.

The complex is comprised of the following resources:

1. The Burial Ground
2. The Walder-Essig House (aka 6669 Germantown Ave, PRHP: 6/26/1956)
(also known erroneously as the Beggarstown School or the Sexton's House)
3. The Parsonage
4. The Sunday School (also known as St. Thomas Hall)
5. The Church

1. The Burial Ground

The Burial Ground of St. Michael's Lutheran Church dates back to the very founding of the church. While lore tells us that one of the earliest burials took place in 1728, the oldest tombstone was that of Harmon Grothaus buried in 1743.¹ No figures exist as to the total number of burials in the cemetery but it is likely in the thousands.² Beginning in 1828, a section of the cemetery was set aside for distinct family lots.³ The Burial Ground itself starts at Germantown Avenue to the northwest of the buildings and continues to the northwest alongside the Sunday School and the Church taking up the entire rear section of the lot between Springer and East Phil Ellena Streets terminating at Ross Street. The tombstones and vaults were designed and constructed in a wide range of styles from the eighteenth through the twentieth century.



Looking northeast. Source: MinistryLink of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ECLA

¹ Rev. John W. Richards list it his history written in the 1840s the as the oldest tombstone and it still extant in 1930s when transcriptions were done of the tombstones (John W. Richards, "A Historical Sketch of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Michael's Germantown, Pa.," 1845, manuscript, p. 77, Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia [hereafter LACP]). The inscription was in German. Richards notes that he oldest stone in English is from 1748 (the stone for the wife of Chestnut Hill resident and church elder Wigard Miller).

² Richards notes that there were 3,475 burials recorded in the St. Michael's registers between 1751 and 1845 (Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 76, LACP). Because there were two public cemeteries in Germantown since the 1690s and St. Michael's also served residents outside of Germantown (such as Lower Merion, Whitemarsh and Upper Dublin) only a portion of the recorded burials were in the church cemetery.

³ John W. Richards, "A Historical Sketch of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Michael's Germantown, Pa.," 1845, manuscript, p. 57, LACP.



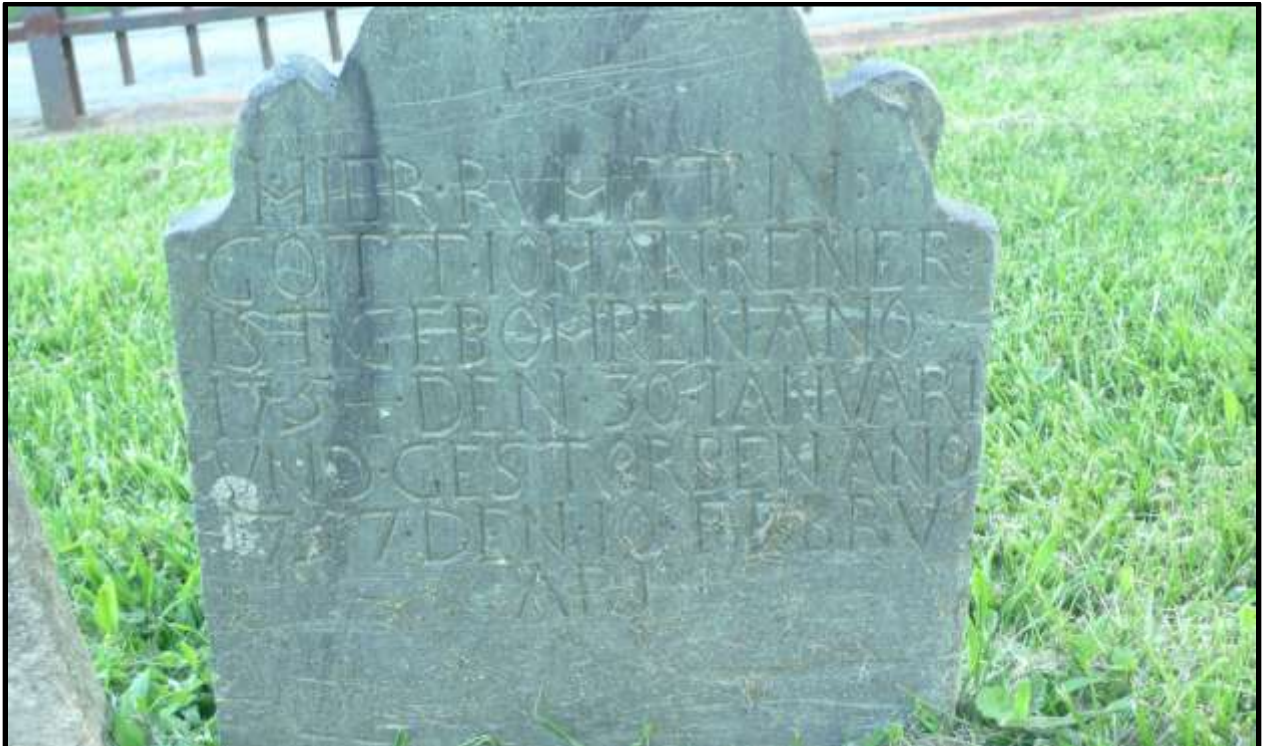
Looking south towards the burial ground. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Looking southwest through the burial ground. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Looking north through the burial ground. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Slate gravestone from 1757 for Johann Rener in the graveyard. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Cradle graves at the foot of a tree in the graveyard. Source: J.M. Duffin.

**2. Walder-Essig House (PRHP: 6/26/1956)
(aka erroneously as the Beggarstown School or Sexton's House)**



Primary elevation along the Germantown Avenue right-of-way. Currently occupied by a bakery.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beggarstown_School#/media/File:Beggarstown_School.jpeg

The one and a half story Walder-Essig House is sited at the right-of-way along Germantown Avenue. This west and primary elevation is clad in Wissahickon schist laid in a coursed ashlar pattern. The façade is symmetrically broken into four openings: three windows and a door each in a wood surround, the headers of which are aligned just under the eave of the roof above. The wood windows are all 6 over 9 double hung. Each window opening has a pair of painted shutters which are paneled in the open position. The wood door is topped by a transom window with vertical muntins dividing the transom into four lights. Above the eave is the side of the pitched roof, today covered in thin slate shingles with no gutter.

The south elevation of the House is a gable end with the high pitch roofline trimmed in painted wood. The main field is painted stucco. The Wissahickon schist from the west elevation turns the corner into the south elevation the depth of the stone. In the gable end at the upper level is a rectangular 6 over 6 wood window.

The east elevation is the rear of the House. It is covered in painted stucco at the ground level. Above the eave is the side of the roof, covered in slate shingles. Across the eave line at this elevation is a hanging gutter with a downspout at the SE corner. There is a rectangular 6 over 6 wood window at the south end of the elevation and at the north side is a small, stucco addition with lean-to clad in decorative siding at its south elevation. A red brick chimney penetrates the lower roof of the main block where the lean-to meets the House.

The north elevation of the House is similar to the south elevation. The Wissahickon schist from the west façade turns the corner the depth of the stone, but the field of the elevation is painted stucco. There is a 4 over 4 rectangular wood window in the gable end at the upper level. The stucco is showing signs of rising damp at the lower level.

3. The Parsonage



The primary elevation of the Parsonage facing Germantown Avenue. Source: J.M. Duffin.

The Parsonage is a three story, five bay building facing Germantown Avenue, but set back approximately 25 feet from the right-of-way. The façade is the west elevation and is clad in painted stucco. It has a one story porch that covers the middle three bays, including the centered double doors flanked by 6 over 6 wood windows. The porch has a tin shed roof and turned posts with simple brackets and a railing with square profile spindles; all elements are painted. The sides of the porch contain a modified fish scale siding above the posts.

The four windows at the lower level are all 6 over 6 and larger than the five 6 over 6 windows at the second level. The third level windows have nearly square openings and are 3 over 3. Each of the third level windows is flanked by a roof bracket from the low eave line above. The low pitched roof can be seen above the wood eave with internal gutter; downspouts are positioned at each end of this elevation. The roof is clad in non-historic asphalt shingles. In keeping with the symmetry of the façade, there are two brick chimneys penetrating the roof just inside either gable end. The north chimney has one chimney pot and the south chimney has two.

The north elevation of the Parsonage is a gable end and contains two, 6 over 6 windows at the first and second levels, each set to either end of the building within the field of stucco. At the third level is a pair of windows centered in the elevation, separated by a wood mullion. All windows contain non-historic, exterior storm windows.

The rear of the Parsonage contains an addition at the south end. The main block is exposed at the north end of the rear elevation and contains two third level windows, one second level window and a door at the first level with full length wood shutters. The sill of the door opens to a concrete slab that reaches over to the addition and a door in its north face. To the east of this door is a rectangular 6 over 6 window at the first level topped by one at the second level. Mounted on the stucco wall of the addition is a contemporary overhead light. Under the first level window is a cellar door within concrete cheek walls. The side of the asphalt-shingle roof is exposed above the eave and hanging gutter that is connected to a downspout at the rear corner.

The east elevation of the Parsonage addition has a one-story wooden lean-to at the lower level and two rectangular windows in the gable. There is a stucco-clad chimney that rises from the peak of the roof. The lean-to has a standing seam shed roof, one infilled window opening on either side, and at the east elevation, a painted wood door next to an infilled window opening. The structure is sagging and seems compromised at the sill.

At the south elevation of the Parsonage, the main block and the addition are in the same plane. The gable roofline of the shorter addition runs into the wall of the main block beyond. A downspout from the gutter of the main block falls to meet the pitched roof with hanging gutter of the addition. The entire wall is clad in painted stucco. The addition has two evenly spaced rectangular windows at the upper level, and one at the east side of the lower level; all are 6 over 6 wood windows with non-historic exterior storm windows. The south gable end of the main block contains a double window separated by mullion at the upper level. At each of the two lower levels, there are three openings in the same position at each level. Only one of the openings at the lower level has full length, painted wood shutters. All windows are 6 over 6. The east and west eaves each have a short return at this elevation; the same condition is found at the north elevation.



The southwest elevation of the Parsonage showing the side gable. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Northwest elevation of the Parsonage showing the side of the north porch. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Southeast elevation of the rear of the Walder-Essig House and that of the Parsonage. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Photo showing the rear of the Parsonage. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The Parsonage with its rear addition and lean-to. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The rear of the Parsonage showing the different volumes. Source: J.M. Duffin.

4. The Sunday School (also known as St. Thomas Hall)



Oblique angle of the northwest & southwest elevations of the Sunday School. Source: J.M. Duffin.

The Sunday School building, also known as St. Thomas Hall, is a one and a half story, gabled structure composed primarily of Wissahickon schist with red decorative brick trim. The building's features present an interesting blend of coursed local stone and a low-grade Ruskinian gothic aesthetic detailing. The Sunday School is set back from Germantown Avenue, which it faces, by an expanse of the graveyard and partially hidden by the Parsonage.

The primary façade is the west gable end of the building. The entry door is centered and accessed by a set of concrete steps and accessible ramp with switchback to the south. The wood paneled double entry doors are topped by a tripartite stained glass transom and are embedded in a Gothic arch opening that is articulated by decorative red bricks. At the keystone, an overhead lantern has been mounted. The entry is flanked on either side by two window openings, each with stained glass and all four topped by brick arches, in a low pitch point as in the Tudor style. Above the entry door are two square, decorative brick panels on either side of the centerline; each is angled at 45 degrees and contains brick with floral patterning as if a quilt square. Above this, and just below a pediment in the gable of decorative brick laid in a lattice pattern, is a pair of rectangular windows with heavy sill stones. Along the eave line is a band of decorative red brick in a stepped pattern connecting the lattice pediment to the eave line of roof where it ends at the north and south elevations. At the basement level, there are window openings under the northern two windows at the lower level.

The north elevation of the Sunday School building contains a wall of coursed Wissahickon schist broken in the middle by a chimney in schist at the lower level and corbeled red brick above the eave. The side of the slate shingle roof contains two triangular dormer windows at either end of the roof. There is a band of snow guards at the lower end of the roof. The chimney is supported by an enormous cricket inset with

decorative shingles. At the wall below the eave is a horizontal band of red brick under which are the tops of window openings that match those at the first level of the west elevation. The windows are topped by brick arched lintels and have sloping stone sills. The windows are stained glass. There are three windows west of the chimney and five windows north of it. Two of the windows contain window-mounted A/C units.

The east elevation of the building is obscured by a contemporary, one-story addition with flat roof. Above this newer construction, the gable end of the Sunday School building is exposed and matches that at the west elevation, with a decorative brick “pediment” and a pair of small, rectangular windows.

The south elevation of the Sunday School building is similar to that at the north elevation, with two triangular dormer windows in the slate roof plane and identical windows. However, in place of the chimney is a one-story addition in schist with a faceted, apse-like end that projects toward the property line. This projection has a roofline that follows the facets of the schist walls below. The roof has a triangular dormer at the east and west elevations. Decorative brick is found below the roofline and at the window lintels, as on the other elevations. Each elevation contains one window opening; each has a stained glass window.



The southwest and southeast elevations of the Sunday School. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The southwest and primary elevation of the Sunday School. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Detail at the southwest gable of the Sunday School showing decorative brickwork. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The northwest elevation of the Sunday School building. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Northwest elevation of the Sunday School with centered chimney. Source: J.M. Duffin.



Photo from E. Phil-Ellena Street showing Sunday School building to the right, the Church to the left and the graveyard in the foreground. Source: J.M. Duffin.

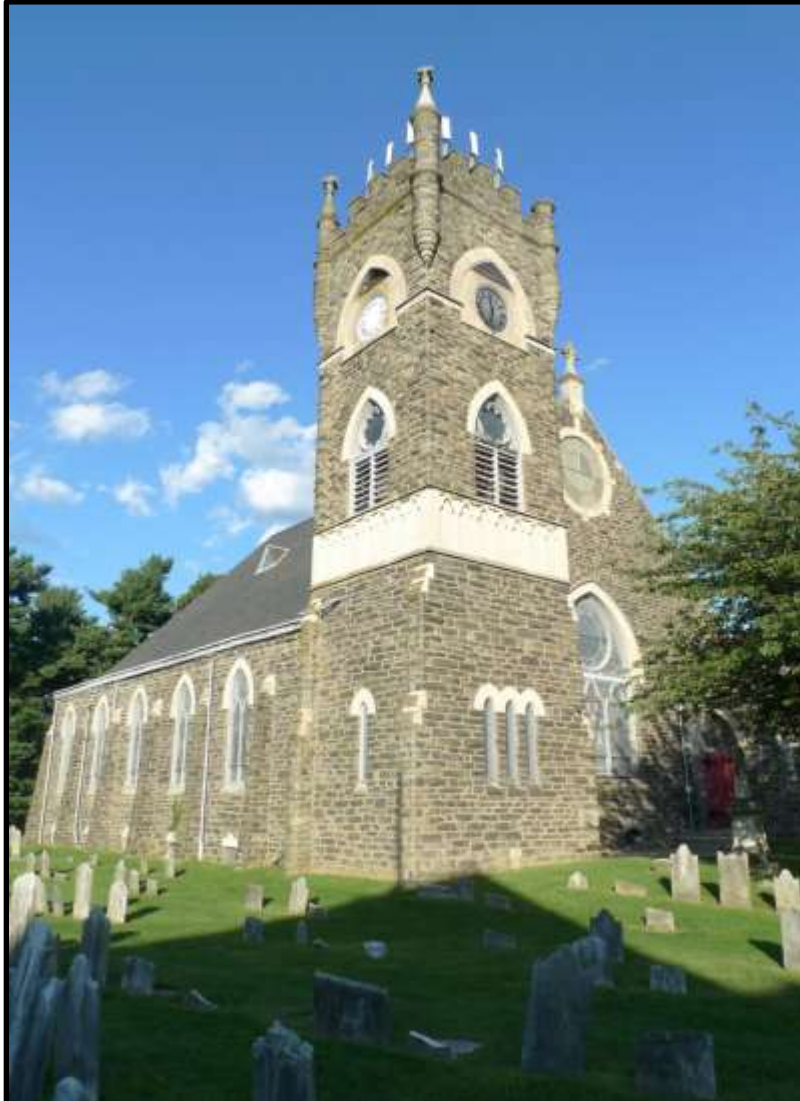


The northwest elevation of the Church. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The northwest elevation of the Church tower with the Sunday School beyond. Source: J.M. Duffin.

5. The Church



An oblique view of the Church tower. Source: J.M. Duffin.

The Church is sited to the north of the Sunday School building, and nearly completely set further east; both buildings meet at the SW corner of the Church and NE corner of the Sunday School building. The Church is constructed of coursed Wissahickon schist with limestone trim. The primary elevation of the Church faces west and contains a central gable end wall with a corner tower to the north. The main wall contains a large window with limestone pointed arch at the lower level capped by a round window within the gable end. The peak of the gable is capped by a limestone pedestal for a stylized cross. The round window is segmented by a center mullion and surrounded by limestone with eight articulated keystones. There is a projection at the south side of this elevation that contains an entry door facing north; the tower has an entry door facing south. These doors, not visible on the approach to the west elevation, provide the main entry points to the Church.

The project to the south of the primary elevation contains two pointed arch window openings with stained glass windows centered in the south elevation. The arches are of limestone that contrasts with the schist.

*St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown, 6671 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, July 2017–Page 19*

Above these openings in the gable end is a rectangular window opening with a heavy flat lintel and sill; the window has been infilled with painted plywood. There is a narrow limestone coping along the gable. A corbeled projection at the north disguises the entry: heavy double doors of vertically laid wood with decoratively scrolled iron hinges, topped by a stained glass transom, all embedded in a pointed arch of limestone. A lantern is mounted in the keystone of the arch. Opposite this door is a mirror replica in the tower wall to the north. The tower wall above the door extends to a thick, limestone belt course with a gothic arcade motif above which is a field of schist; at the upper level is a limestone pointed arch that has been infilled and contains a clock. The tower end is in a square plan with crenulation and round corbeling at each corner. The tower is taller than the Church roof and today contains a collection of cellular equipment. The west face of the tower contains a cornerstone dating the building to 1898 and at the lower level a tripartite arched window opening with small stained glass windows; at the upper level, the west tower elevation also contains a clock within an arched opening.

The north elevation of the church faces the graveyard. At the west is the north side of the tower which is in the same plane as the church walls. The tower contains a small lancet window opening with pointed limestone arch at the lower level; above this is the same limestone belt course as on the other elevations, a pointed arch opening with wood louvers capped by a scalloped oculus. Above this is the same clock configuration as at all other elevations. The north wall of the church is pierced by five large, pointed arch window openings each separated by six integrated schist buttresses capped with limestone; the buttresses reach the midpoint of each arch, falling short of the roofline. There is a basement window under each sanctuary window; these basement windows have articulated limestone jack arches. The north elevation shows the side of the pitched roof of slate shingles. To the east is an apse, recessed from the north plane; this apse end as a pitched roof that is lower than the main roof and contains a triangular dormer window. A schist chimney rises from the east peak of the roof of the apse.

At the rear of the Church, the east elevation contains the apse projection from the main volume. This gable end contains a large pointed arch window with an arched lintel in schist; the window is stained glass. Above the window, in the peak of the pitched roof is a stone chimney. The gable end of the main roof beyond contains slate shingles with two rows of "fish scale" patterning. Below the large window are two basement windows each with schist lintels, spaced on either side of the wall. At the north side of the east wall in the main volume is a pointed arch opening that has been infilled with schist. At the south side of the east wall is a lancet window above a basement window similar to those at the apse wall.

The south elevation is a mirror of the north elevation except where the tower exists is the Sunday School building. Another difference is the addition of a pointed arch window at the far end of the wall toward the apse; this opening has been infilled with wood. There is also a cellar door below the easternmost window of the main volume.



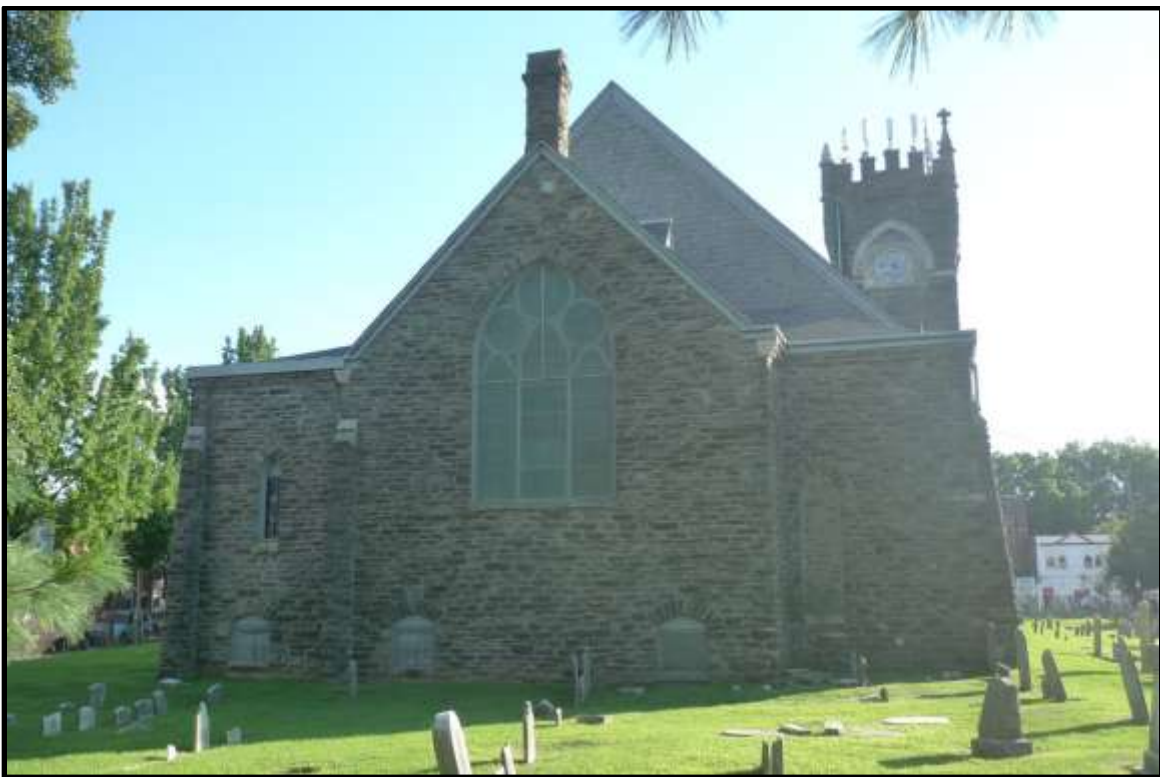
The southwest and primary elevation of the Church. Source: J.M. Duffin.



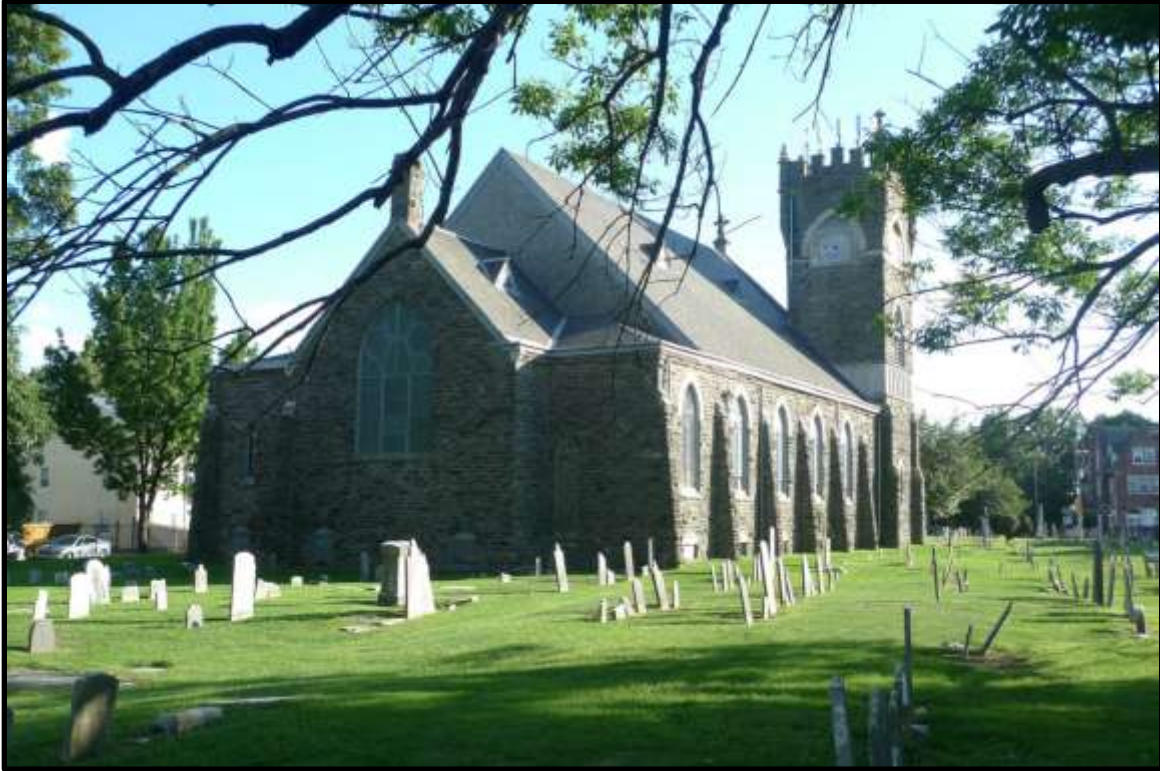
The cornerstone near the northwest entry door. Source: J.M. Duffin.



View of the Church's northwest elevation from the east. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The apse end or northeast elevation of the Church. Source: J.M. Duffin.



View of the rear of the Church from the graveyard. Source: J.M. Duffin.



The southeast elevation of the Church. Source: J.M. Duffin.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Michael's Lutheran Church, located at 6671 Germantown Avenue, is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation:

- (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;
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history

Period of Significance: 1728-2016.

The property is part of a U.S. National Historic Landmark District, the Colonial Germantown Historic District. This district was designated in 1965 and expanded (to include the block containing St. Michael's Lutheran Church) in 1987. All three buildings on the site are classified as SIGNIFICANT to the Landmark District in the 1987 Boundary Increase.

CRITERIA A and J

Until its closure in 2016, St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown was the oldest continually operating Lutheran church in Philadelphia, as well as being among the oldest German Lutheran congregations in the country. Retaining its original site, the complex of buildings proposed for designation was constructed by St. Michael's Lutheran Church between 1855 and 1897. This includes the Parsonage (1855), the Sunday School (1886), and the Church (1896-1897). The oldest building on the property is the Walder-Essig House, a dwelling built c. 1740, which was purchased by the congregation in first years of the nineteenth century and was individually listed on the Philadelphia Register in 1956. The subject property represents the early years and the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century development of the Lutheran church in Philadelphia. Furthermore, St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown, represents the cultural, social and historical heritage of German Lutherans in Philadelphia, as one of the oldest institutions in the city to serve that population.

The German Lutherans and St. Michael's Lutheran Church

Since their arrival in the late seventeenth century, German-Americans have played a major role in the development of the city, commonwealth, and nation. As is typical of immigrant populations, their houses of worship played an indispensable role in preserving and shaping cultural identity in the New World. Throughout the eighteenth century, the majority of German immigrants to Philadelphia identified as either Lutheran or German Reformed – and founded or joined congregations of these denominations.⁴

The peak periods of German emigration between 1830 and 1932 occurred: 1846-1857, 1864-1873, and 1880-1893. These peaks correspond with the founding and expansion of German immigrant institutions in Philadelphia during the nineteenth century.⁵ While the majority of Philadelphia's German-born population into the 1880s originated in southern German provinces (unique compared to other American

⁴ Lesley Ann Kawaguchi, "The Making of Philadelphia's German-America: Ethnic Group and Community Development, 1830-1883" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1983), 111 – 14.

⁵ Klaus J. Bade, "German Emigration to the United States and Continental Immigration to Germany in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Central European History* 13 (1980): 354.

cities) and, as a result, were Roman Catholic, the “most represented province” was the predominately Protestant Kingdom of Württemberg.⁶

German Lutherans – who first settled in Northern Liberties and Germantown – were a minority in Germantown from its establishment in 1683 until about 1740. Germantown’s earliest residents were Quaker and Mennonite; however, the Lutheran presence was in Germantown from the beginning. One of the main founding groups of Germantown, the Frankfurt Company, was formed by a group known as the Saalhof pietists in Frankfurt am Main who conducted private prayer and bible study under the direction of the Lutheran minister Philip Jacob Spener (the founder of the pietist movement in Lutheranism). In 1690, there were several Lutherans reported as living in Germantown.⁷ And before long, the Quakers and Mennonites were joined by adherents of other German denominations (Moravians, Dunkards, German Reformed).⁸ With the increasing waves of German-speaking immigrants to Pennsylvania beginning in the late 1720s, Germantown’s religious landscape evolved; and the Lutheran and German Reformed denominations became the largest and “most important of the religious institutions in Germantown.”⁹

Communion and confirmation lists provide clues to the relative size of the Lutheran and German Reformed churches of Germantown. In 1750, for example, the Lutheran Church reported 265 communicants while the German Reformed Church reported 170. Between 1760 and 1770, the Lutheran Church baptized 349 children while the German Reformed Church baptized 141. Between 1780 and 1790, the Lutheran Church baptized 203 children while the German Reformed Church baptized 104.¹⁰

By the mid-nineteenth century, there were ten Lutheran congregations in Philadelphia with a total of “9,520 seats.” Not all of these congregations served German immigrants, but German immigrant congregations certainly comprised the majority. In 1850, the German Reformed Church numbered only four congregations and “3,800 seats.”¹¹

St. Michael’s Lutheran Church, Germantown, 1728-1855

The exact founding date of St. Michael’s Lutheran Church, Germantown is difficult to establish as no records associated with its beginnings survive. A range of dates from 1728 to 1737 have been used by the congregation for the basis of anniversaries.¹² What is known is that the Lutherans in the Germantown area were ministered to by Rev. Casper Stoeber (1685-1739) and Rev. Anthony Jacob Henckel (1668-1728) beginning in 1720s. The more recent accounts of St. Michael’s history attach their founding date to the burial of Rev. Henckel on the site after his sudden death in 1728.

⁶ Lesley Ann Kawaguchi, “The Making of Philadelphia’s German-America: Ethnic Group and Community Development, 1830-1883” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1983), 111 – 14.

⁷ Charlotte Boecken, “Mennoniten und andere Nicht-Quäker im frühen Germantown: Klärendes zu Widersprüchen in der Rezeption eines frühen Dokuments,” *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 41 (1984): 72–77.

⁸ Mark Frazier Lloyd and Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, “Three Hundred Years of Germantown History: An Exhibition Celebrating the Tercentenary of this Community,” *Germantown Crier* 35 (1982): 7.

⁹ Stephanie Grauman Wolf, *Urban Village: Population, Community, and Family Structure in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1683-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 210. The main periods of German -speaker immigration to Pennsylvania were 1683 to mid 1720s with about 20,000 settlers, 1727 to 1748 with close to 26,000, and 1749 to 1754 with close to 35,000 (Marianne S. Wocke, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* [University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999], 39-47).

¹⁰ Stephanie Grauman Wolf, *Urban Village*, 214.

¹¹ Table, Growth of Lutheran Churches in Philadelphia, 1720–1975, in Donald W. Beetham, “Summary of Findings of Study of Building History of Philadelphia Lutheran Churches,” paper for Art History Course, University of Pennsylvania, George E. Thomas instructor, 1975, LACP.

¹² For example, the program for the cornerstone laying ceremony and newspaper accounts for Sunday school building (St. Thomas Hall) in 1886 state it was the 150th anniversary of the congregation (clippings and programs in church register, St. Michaels, Germantown Records, LACP).

Anthony Jacob Henckel is considered the founder of the German Lutheran Church in the Pennsylvania field. He was born in 1668 in Merenberg, Germany, and ordained in 1692 in Eschelbronn. After 25 years as a Lutheran minister in Germany, he immigrated to America with his immediate family in 1717 during one of the early peaks in German immigration. From 1717 until his death in 1728, Henckel resided in New Hanover, Pennsylvania, and served the scattered German Lutheran population by rotating through a circuit of fledgling German Lutheran congregations – just as later pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg would do with great success.¹³ He is credited with founding the New Hanover Lutheran Church – considered the first German Lutheran congregation in Pennsylvania – as well as the congregations at Trappe, New Goshenhoppen, and Germantown. The association of his burial at St. Michael’s comes from his death resulting from a fall from a horse somewhere near Chestnut Hill in August 1728 and dying in the house of Herman Grotehausen in Springfield Township, Montgomery County.¹⁴ His place of burial was unknown until the marked grave of his widow at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church was opened in 1910 and her remains were found cohabiting with the skeleton of a man believed to be him.¹⁵

The earliest piece of hard evidence for the establishment of St. Michael’s is the purchase of a property for the church on April 7, 1738. Peter Shoemaker and wife Margaret sold “a piece of land on the east side of the great road leading toward Plymouth, in breadth on the east 2 perches, on the said road 2¼ perches, in length 40 perches, west bounded by same road, south with Jacob Walder’s land, east and north by land of Peter Shoemaker” to a group of church trustees, including George Wensell, Jacob Beilert, and George Rieger (later known as Rex) of Germantown and John Grothouse of Springfield. The deed specified that the land was “a place to erect a house of religious worship for the use and service of said congregation” and “for a place to bury their dead.”¹⁶ This property covers close to the central portion of the subject site. The purchase established St. Michael’s as the first Lutheran congregation in Philadelphia to own property and establish a graveyard and the longest continuously used property for Lutheran worship and burial in Philadelphia.¹⁷ In January 1739, the congregation secured permission from the Governor of Pennsylvania, George Thomas (c. 1695-1774) to raise funds to build a church. Dozens of individuals, many of significant standing in the colonies, contributed funds for construction – including Governor Thomas Penn, future Chief Justice William Allen, Benjamin Franklin and James Logan. These contributions largely came from Philadelphia, Lancaster County, and Germantown itself.¹⁸ With this money the congregation was able to build “a stone church of moderate size” in 1738/39 near the front gate.¹⁹ The building was 24 feet wide and 28.5 feet deep.²⁰ The Rev. Johan Dylander, the recently arrived pastor of Gloria Dei Swedish Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, was their pastor and helped them during

¹³ “History of St. Michael’s Lutheran Church.” Accessed 1 July 2017, <http://ministrylink.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/St.-Michaels-Germantown-History.pdf>

¹⁴ The account of Henckel is taken from: Charles H. Glatfelder, *Pastors and People: German Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Pennsylvania Field, 1717–1793*, vol. 1 *Pastors and Congregations* Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society, Volume 13 (Breinigsville, PA: Pennsylvania German Society, 1980): 59-61.

¹⁵ The account of the grave opening is detailed in the church register of St. Michaels around 1910. One of Rev. Henckel’s sons, Anthony Henckel Jr., owned property and lived in present-day Mount Airy around Germantown and Gowen Avenues and it is believed Anthony’s widow lived with him.

¹⁶ Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 8, LACP. The deed is unrecorded but the original survives in the St. Michael’s Germantown Records at the LACP and is recited in a later 1771 deed (Philadelphia Deed Book I., No. 8, p. 379, CAP).

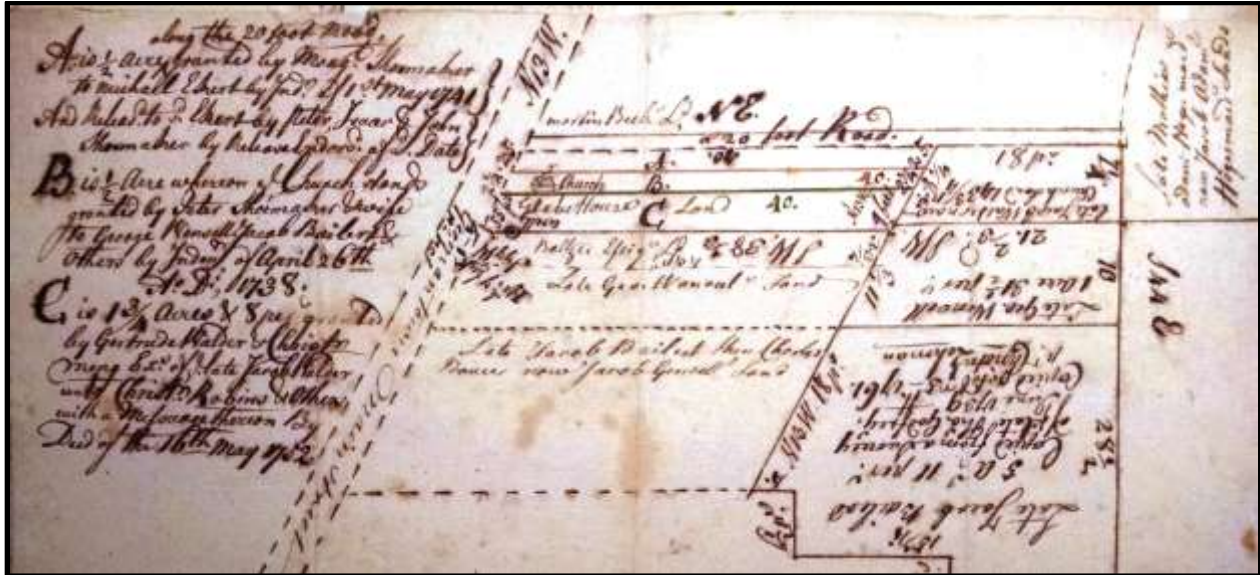
¹⁷ The congregation in the original City of Philadelphia, St. Michael’s and Zion Lutheran Church, can be firmly established as a congregation in 1733 but it shared a rented slaughter house on Arch Street with the German Reformed congregation until the Lutherans acquired their own lot on N. 5th Street in 1743 (Glatfelder, *Pastors and People*, 1: 412-13). It should be noted that Gloria Dei Church, established as a Swedish Lutheran church at its current location in 1677, became Episcopalian in 1845.

¹⁸ Frederick S. Weiser, “Donors to the Lutheran Church in Germantown in 1738 and Records of Baptisms There 1741 and 1742,” *Journal of the Pennsylvania German Society* 19, no. 1 (1985): 1-14.

¹⁹ Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 9, LACP.

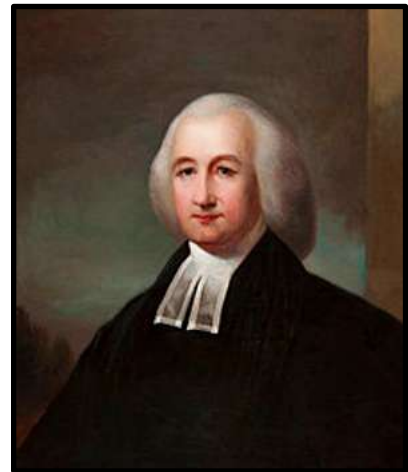
²⁰ Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 18. LACP (quoting a 1740s document still in the archives).

these important formative years.²¹ The church soon became the center of a section of Germantown to which it helped lend the name of Bettelhausen (Place of Prayer).²²



Detail from ca 1765 plan by Christian Lehman showing location of original church and acquisition of the church property. Lot B is the original 1738 purchase, Lot A was acquired in 1747, and Lot C (the parsonage site) was acquired in 1752. The Baltzer Essig lot and its house was acquired in 1803. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

In 1743, in response to the congregation’s request, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787), who is known today as the patriarch of the American Lutheran Church, accepted St. Michael’s into his charge of the United Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Pennsylvania and became St. Michael’s fourth pastor.²³ Born in 1711 in Einbeck, Germany, Muhlenberg is credited with founding the Lutheran Church as an institution in North America, particularly through the creation of the German Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of North America – the first Lutheran synod in America. Here, he provided leadership to existing congregations – from New York to Maryland – and established new congregations between the years of 1742 and 1787.²⁴ Muhlenberg followed Rev. John Valentine Kraft (1680-1796), who had served Lutheran church in Philadelphia for just one year before being dismissed by the congregation.²⁵



Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787). Source: Google.

From 1743 until 1745, Muhlenberg served “his first three congregations” in addition to St. Michael’s Lutheran Church,

²¹ Dylander was well regarded among the Lutherans in Pennsylvania particularly for his skill in being able to preach in Swedish, German and English (Theodore Emanuel Schmauk, *A History of the Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania, 1638 – 1820* [Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1903] 1:58).

²² The name was translated into English as Beggarstown

²³ Glatfelder, *Pastors and People* 1: 408. The United Congregations were New Hanover, Trappe, and Philadelphia, so-called because they sent a joint request to Germany.

²⁴ Milton Rubincam, “Henry Melchior Muhlenberg’s Early Labors in Pennsylvania: 1742-1760.” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 10 (1943): 178-192.

²⁵ John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 1419.

Germantown, which numbered six regular members by 1742.²⁶ His other churches included: Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe, Pennsylvania; New Hanover Lutheran Church in Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania; and Old Zion and St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia.²⁷ At St. Michael's, he preached one well attended service per month, and remained in the city during the following week, to minister "to the spiritual wants of his people."²⁸

Of Muhlenberg, Rev. John W. Richards wrote:

November 25, 1742 he arrived at Philadelphia, from which period we may date the foundation of the Lutheran Zion in America upon a solid basis. With comprehensive and well directed views for the benefit of the whole church, and with indefatigable zeal he commenced and continued to labor for nearly half a century. And it may be well said of him, during that period (as also of his earliest coadjutors), that like Paul he was in journeying often in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the weather, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren...²⁹

The congregation flourished as German immigrants arrived in Pennsylvania. By 1746, the congregation numbered seventy families, necessitating the subsequent enlargement of the existing church. Pastor at the time, Rev. Peter Brunnholtz wrote the following:

April 15th of this year (no. 1746), in the name of God, we laid the cornerstone of the new building of the Lutheran Church in Germantown. The church will be enlarged 30 feet in length and 6 feet in breadth. This is estimated to cost about £116 ... Pennsylvania currency.³⁰

This church included an organ purchased from Dr. Christopher Witt.

As the congregation grew, it made further acquisitions to the original property. In 1747, a 41.25-foot wide lot was acquired extending the church's property to present-day E. Phil-Ellena Street.³¹ In May 1752, the congregation purchased a lot and half of a well southeast of the church from Gertrude Walder, widow of Jacob Walder, for £187 10s.³² This 1.75 acre lot had a stone house on it which became the parsonage.³³ Later improvements and additions were made to the church such as adding a sacristy.

The church was formally dedicated on October 1, 1752 in the presence of ten Lutheran ministers, including the Swedish minister of Gloria Dei Church, who were at St. Michael's attending a German

²⁶ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 13, LACP.

²⁷ Rubincam, "Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's Early Labors in Pennsylvania," 178-192.

²⁸ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 13, LACP.

²⁹ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 3, LACP.

³⁰ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 17, LACP.

³¹ Deed: Michael Ekert, of Germantownship, mason, and Margaret, his wife, to Jacob Beilert, of Germantown, rope maker, George Rieger, of Germantownship, smith, Anthony Hinkel, of Germantownship, yeoman, Wigard Miller, of Germantownship, blacksmith, Michael Auge, of Germantownship, stocking weaver, George Syder, of Germantown, baker, John Groethousen, of Springfield Township, yeoman, Christopher Robin, of Whitemarsh, yeoman, Caspar Singar, of Whitemarsh, yeoman, George Wood, of Roxborough Township, taylor, Daniel Berndolar, of Roxborough Township, yeoman, and Martin Swartz, of Upper Dublin Township, yeoman, 14 December 1747, original deed in St. Michael's Germantown Records, LACP; also recited in Philadelphia Deed Book I, No. 8, p. 379, CAP. Ekert, who was a member of the congregation, purchased the property in 1741. It is not clear if he acquired it for his own use or that of the church.

³² In May 1751 Johan Friedrich Handschuh became the first resident pastor living but having to rent two different houses in his first year, the congregation decided to purchase a house for him (Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 24-25, LACP).

³³ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 25, LACP.

Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of North America meeting. The dedication ceremony included the baptism of a local 30 year old enslaved African, Christian Gotthilf, who was instructed by the pastor, Rev. John Frederick Handshuh.³⁴

Like a number of other German Lutheran congregations at this period, St. Michael's experienced some internal conflict over Muhlenberg's work to create a standard church structure for Lutherans in Pennsylvania. The large influx of recent immigrants, particularly Swabian, who did not have the same liturgical traditions as Muhlenberg and his Saxon German sponsor, the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle an der Saale, Germany, caused tension and resistance to attempts to impose the church order of Muhlenberg's Ministerium. St. Michael's split in 1753, forcing Handshuh and a small group of long-time congregants loyal to Muhlenberg to leave the church and property to the larger group of newer members who hired an independent Lutheran minister. This situation continued until 1765 when the Ministerium regained full control over the church.³⁵

The reunited congregation did well until the Revolution. The number of communicants numbered between 401 and 318 people between 1770 and 1774.³⁶ The Revolution, however, had some severe effects on the congregation as well as the buildings. According to historian John Thomas Scharf:

During the Revolutionary War the Lutheran congregations suffered greatly. Many of their members joined the patriots, and their property was not spared. At Germantown they plundered Rev. Mr. Schmidt's house, and forced him to leave with many of his parishioners. The church was also injured, and the organ was destroyed. It is said that during the Revolution this church was used for a battery by British troops, soldiers being quartered in the building. At one time they were dislodged by a charge of Americans coming from Mount Airy.³⁷

In the 1780s and 1790s the number of communicants averaged around 190 and baptisms between 60 and 80 a year. By 1800, however, baptisms were over 100 a year and communicants rose to 269 in 1809.³⁸ This growth led the congregation to buy more property. In 1803, the congregation purchased the Walder-Essig House, c. 1740, for \$1,300, which was used as the sexton's house—known today erroneously as the Beggarstown School.³⁹ The expanded property helped when the Synod of Pennsylvania held its annual meeting at St. Michaels in 1805.⁴⁰ In 1785, the church was incorporated through an Act of Assembly.⁴¹

In 1819, under Rev. John C. Baker – the congregation's sixteenth pastor, who served the church from 1812 until 1828 – the second building was erected on the plans of William Wagner, Sr., of Philadelphia,

³⁴ "Luther's Followers, An Interesting Account of Its Establishment in Germantown," *Germantown Independent*. 17 April 1886; W.J. Mann and B.M. Schumucker, ed., *Nachrichten von den vereinigten deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in Nord-America, absonderlich in Pensylvanien* (Allentown: Brobst, Diehl & Co., 1895) 2: 90-92.

³⁵ Thomas J. Müller-Bahlke, *Kirche zwischen zwei Welten: die Obrigkeitsproblematik bei Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg und die Kirchengründung der deutschen Lutheraner in Pennsylvania* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994).

³⁶ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 74, LACP.

³⁷ Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1423.

³⁸ Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 74, LACP.

³⁹ Deed: Christian Bosbyshell, taylor and shopkeeper, and Elizabeth, his wife, to the Minister, Trustees, Elders and Deacons of the German Lutheran Congregation of the township of Germantown, 1 October 1803, Philadelphia Deed Book E.F., No. 15, p. 462, City Archives of Philadelphia; Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 50, LACP. This building was built and occupied as a house in the eighteenth century (appears in the 1798 Direct Tax as a house and in a 1752 estate inventory as "a small stone house"). Sometime after Ziegenfuss' 1905 history, the building began to be incorrectly associated with the parochial school that was run by St. Michael's since the 1740s. As Richards' 1845 history states that the parochial school occupied a building on the parsonage lot.

⁴⁰ Richards, "A Brief and Succinct History," 51.

⁴¹ "Luther's Followers," *Germantown Independent*. 17 April 1886.

at a cost of \$8,236, replacing the original church (built 1730-1737, enlarged 1746-1752). The cornerstone of new church was laid on March 25, 1819. In hopes of maintaining a sense of continuity, the builders attempted to transition the old church bells into the new building. The bells were broken in the process – rendering the congregation too disheartened to follow through on its plan to erect a tower or belfry.⁴²



The second church building of St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown.
Source: Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History of St. Michael's* (1905).

Two years prior, in 1817, the congregation organized a Sunday school. Overseen by two members of the church, within about a year, the Sunday school replaced its “parochial school.”⁴³ The parochial school, which notably served both members of the congregation and the community at large, had been organized by the congregation c. 1740.⁴⁴

As the century progressed, the German population became increasingly assimilated to life in the United States. This cultural shift is reflected in the history of St. Michael's. At the time of its founding and well into the early nineteenth century, St. Michael's was a predominantly German-speaking congregation. English services were first introduced in 1813 every other Sunday but by 1822 German services shifted to only one Sunday a month.⁴⁵ During the early- to mid-nineteen century, English took hold:

The English service had become quite interesting even to some of the strictest Germans, so that in 1822 a change was easily effected by which the English secured two Sundays out of three, leaving one for the German.⁴⁶

By 1846, the German language services were “abandoned” as “there were very few, even among the older families, who did not understand and appreciate an English sermon more than a German.”⁴⁷ St. Michael's

⁴² Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 53, LACP; Rev. S. A. Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History of St. Michael's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germantown, Pennsylvania 1730-1905* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1905).

⁴³ Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History*.

⁴⁴ Richards notes in his history the school house building was next to the parsonage and in 1798 expanded by adding a story and a cellar and in 1831 was incorporated into the parsonage building (Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 50, 58, LACP).

⁴⁵ Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 56, LACP.

⁴⁶ Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History*.

⁴⁷ Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History*.

did, however, start a mission church in 1855, called St. Thomas German Lutheran Church, to serve the immigrant German Lutherans in Germantown at Herman and Morton Streets.⁴⁸

Just as Germantown was about to enter a new stage with the coming of the railroad, St. Michael's found itself in the midst of controversy. The continued use of German and a larger role for women contributed to a split in 1835/36. A slightly more progressive church council tried to make English the language all Sunday morning services and relegate German to one Sunday afternoon a month. When the change was presented to the congregation, they flatly rejected it. A battle ensued between the council and congregation which resulted in the pastor resigning and the congregation electing Rev. John W. Richards (a grandson of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg) as their new pastor. A majority of the more progressive council members resigned and soon formed their own church in lower Germantown – Trinity Lutheran.⁴⁹

Beginning in latter half of the nineteenth century, St. Michael's had an important influence on a number of Lutheran institutions in Philadelphia. It started St. Michael's power couple – Rev. Dr. Charles William Schaeffer (1849-1896) and his wife Elizabeth Fry Ashmead Schaeffer (1812-1892).

Elizabeth F. Ashmead Schaeffer was from an established Germantown family and baptized at St. Michael's. She was active at St. Michael's in a number of women's organizations prior to her marriage to Rev. Schaeffer in 1837.⁵⁰ Shortly after her husband became pastor of St. Michael's in 1849, she was inspired to found the Orphans' Home and Asylum for Aged and Infirm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (later known as the Germantown Home) after meeting with Rev. William A. Passavant who started similar institutions in Pittsburgh. It took eight years for her to organize Lutheran women throughout Philadelphia to establish the Home in 1859.⁵¹ Elizabeth served on the Board of Lady Managers and as "Directress" of the home into the 1860s and her brother, George Ashmead, as treasurer from 1864 to 1872.⁵²



Elizabeth Fry Ashmead Schaeffer, founder of the Germantown Home.
Source: Kretschman, *The Church's Treasure* (1923).

St. Michael's close connection with the home continued after Elizabeth Schaeffer's time. As the one history stated in 1923:

Through its ... proximity to St. Michael's Church it was but natural that that congregation should feel itself a foster-mother of the institution, and be deeply interested and active in all that pertained to its welfare. ... For sixty years St. Michael's Church has worked faithfully

⁴⁸ "1728, Programme Bi-Centennial Celebration of St. Michael's Lutheran Church at Germantown October 28 to November 11, 1928," 26; 1855-1930, *St. Thomas-Bote Fest-Ausgabe Anlässlich der Feier des Fünfundsiebzigjährigen Jubiläums der Ev.-Luth. St. Thomas-Gemeinde Herman und Morton Str. Germantown-Philadelphia, PA 30. November 1930* (Philadelphia: St. Thomas's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1930). St. Thomas eventually merged with St. Michael's in 1957 bringing its German-speaking pastor, Rev. Kurt E.B. Molzahn, who reintroduced German services at St. Michael's.

⁴⁹ Edward W. Hocker, *History of Trinity Lutheran Church, Germantown, Philadelphia, 1836-1936* (Germantown: Trinity Lutheran Church, 1936), 22–29. The dispute stemmed in part from internal disagreements over the management of the previous pastor, Rev. Benjamin Keller (Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History*, 30-31). According to Richard's history there were even some election irregularities with women members voting – something that was not allowed at that time (Richards, "A Historical Sketch," 61).

⁵⁰ *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Elizabeth Fry Ashmead Schaeffer," last modified June 10, 2017.

⁵¹ T.W. Kretschmann, *The Church's Treasures: A History of the Orphans' Home and Asylum for Aged and Infirm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, Pa* (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman Company, 1923), 1-5.

⁵² Kretschmann, *The Church's Treasures*, 52. Until the Home became a Ministerium-run institution in 1869, the Board of Lady Managers had full control over the management of the home and the male Board of Trustees.

St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown, 6671 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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and zealously for the Home through its Dorcas Society. Generously it did provide a burying place for the deceased inmates of the Home, as long as it could, in its rapidly filling graveyard. It was the regular place of worship for the inmates of the Home until the Asylum, with its chapel, was ready for use In 1890 it was reported in the preceding sixteen years 121 persons were received from the Home into St. Michael's by confirmation. And even after the services were introduced in the Home the children were taken by St. Michael's Sunday-school on its annual picnic.⁵³

These ties continued well into the twentieth century. Confirmations for orphans were continued at St. Michael's. Rev. Walter Raith Harrison who served as president of the Germantown Home from 1941 to 1984, also served as a de facto assistant minister at St. Michael's during his term.

St. Michael's nineteenth pastor, Rev. Dr. Charles W. Schaeffer, had several connections to the church prior to his pastorate. His grandfather, Rev. Frederick D. Schaeffer, and step-father, Rev. Benjamin Keller, were pastors and he was confirmed at St. Michael's.⁵⁴ His greatest influence on local Lutheran institutions came in 1864 when he helped to found the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now the United Lutheran Seminary).⁵⁵ He was elected to the faculty of the Seminary in 1864 and served as an assistant professor until 1873 when he became a full professor. He became chair of the faculty shortly after he left the pastorate of St. Michael's to become a full-time professor in 1875.⁵⁶ His and Elizabeth's children, Rev. William Ashmead Schaeffer and Kate Schaeffer, donated the Schaeffer-Ashmead Memorial Church to the Seminary in 1903.⁵⁷ Rev. Schaeffer also served on the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania from 1858 to his death in 1896.⁵⁸



Rev. Dr. Charles William Schaeffer, founder of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Source: Chamberlain, *University of Pennsylvania* (1901).

Connections with the Seminary continued well into the twentieth century. Commencement exercises for the Seminary were held at St. Michaels from the 1890s into the 1990s.⁵⁹ Several faculty members at the Seminary had close ties to St. Michael's as members of the congregation, such as Rev. Dr. Emil Fischer who taught dogmatics from 1920 to 1942, Rev. Dr. Charles M. Cooper who taught the Old Testament courses from 1936-1951, and Rev. Dr. Luther D. Reed, president of the Seminary from 1939 to 1945.⁶⁰ Rev. Dr. Charles P. Sigel who served as pastor from 1972 to 1978 was an assistant professor at the Seminary prior to receiving his call. Dr. Sigel was the last pastor to hold German services at St. Michael's.

In addition to the Lutheran Home and Seminary, St. Michael's had a number of important connections with the Ministerium of Pennsylvania (today Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod ELCA) and related synods. The first was through Rev. Charles W. Schaeffer who served as president (today called a bishop) of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the U.S.A. in 1859 and the General Council

⁵³ Kretschmann, *The Church's Treasures*, 26-27.

⁵⁴ Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History*, 35.

⁵⁵ Theodore G. Tappert, *A History of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 1864-1964* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1964), 27-31.

⁵⁶ Tappert, *A History*, 49-50.

⁵⁷ Tappert, *A History*, 59. This church served as the home of the congregation of the Church of the Ascension in Mount Airy.

⁵⁸ Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *University of Pennsylvania: Its History, Influence, Equipment and Characteristics* (Boston: R. Herndon Co., 1901) 1:339.

⁵⁹ Tappert, *A History*, 69; "Plan Commencement," *Philadelphia Inquirer* 14 May 1932, 10.

⁶⁰ Tappert, *A History*, 80, 101-02, 125; "A Church With A Past: Ben Franklin Signed Its Register," *The Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine* 24 October 1953, 33.

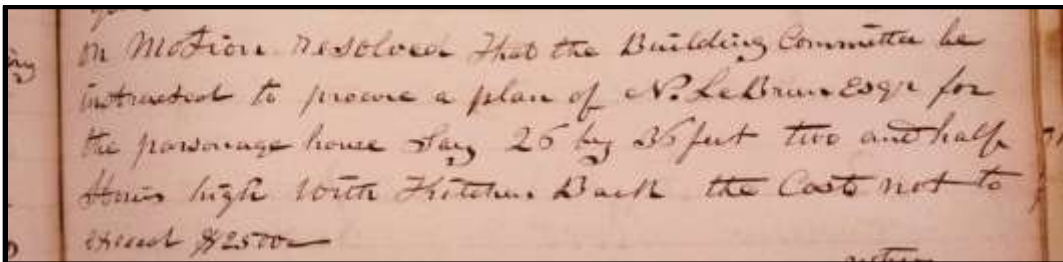
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America in 1868.⁶¹ As one author put it, a third of Schaeffer's career was spent as either president or treasurer of these synods.⁶² Congregation members in the 1940s to 1960s Rev. Dr. Emil Fischer and Rev. Dr. Charles Muhlenberg Cooper were presidents of the German Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States.⁶³ Also Rev. Claude E. Schick, secretary of the Ministerium, Dr. Arthur Getz, executive secretary of the Board of Parish Education of the United Lutheran Church of America, and Dr. Ernest Armbruster of the Board of Publications of the ULCA were all members in the 1950s.⁶⁴



The Walder-Essig House (c. 1740). Source: The Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia.

Physical History of St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown

The present is comprised of the Burial Ground (c. 1728), the Walder-Essig House (c. 1740), the Parsonage (1855), the Sunday School (1886), and the Church (1896-1897).



Excerpt from the Church Council Minutes of St. Michael's Lutheran Church of 1855, detailing plans for the new Parsonage. Source: The Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia.

The Burial Ground of St. Michael's dates back to the very founding of the church. It is believed that Rev. Anthony J. Henckel was buried on the site in 1728. The oldest tombstone was that of Harmon Grothaus

⁶¹ Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952) 3:413-14.

⁶² Tappert, *A History*, 50.

⁶³ Cooper served from 1953 to 1961 (Tappert, *A History*, 125).

⁶⁴ "A Church With A Past," 33.

buried in 1743.⁶⁵ No figures exist as to the total number of burials in the cemetery but it likely in the thousands.⁶⁶ Beginning in 1828, a section of the cemetery was set aside for sale of distinct family lots.⁶⁷

In 1803, the congregation purchased the Walder-Essig House, c. 1740, for \$1,300, which was used as the sexton's house—known today erroneously as the Beggarstown School.⁶⁸



The Parsonage (c. 1855) designed by Napoleon LeBrun.
Source: Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History of St. Michael's* (1905).

The Parsonage was built under the leadership of Rev. C.W. Schaeffer in 1855. Plans for the Parsonage were furnished by “N[apoleon]. LeBrun, Esq.” The cost was not to exceed \$2,500.⁶⁹ Notably, Rev. Schaeffer, who served the congregation from 1849 until 1875, followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Dr. F.D. Schaeffer, and his stepfather, Rev. B. Keller, both of whom had served as pastor of St. Michael's.⁷⁰ No previous pastor had served as long as Schaeffer (twenty-six years), who remained invested in the church even after his pastorate. In 1886, Schaeffer presided over the congregation's one-hundred fiftieth anniversary celebration (assuming that it had been founded in 1736 rather than 1728).⁷¹

⁶⁵ Richards lists this as the oldest stone in the church in 1840s and still extant in 1930s when transcriptions were done of the tombstones (Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 77, LACP). The inscription was in German. Richards notes that the oldest stone in English is from 1748 (the stone for the wife of Chestnut Hill resident and church elder Wigard Miller).

⁶⁶ Richards notes that there were 3,475 burials recorded in the St. Michael's registers between 1751 and 1845 (Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 76, LACP). Because there were two public cemeteries in Germantown since the 1690s and St. Michael's also served residents outside of Germantown (such as Lower Merion, Whitemarsh and Upper Dublin) only a portion of the recorded burials were in the church cemetery.

⁶⁷ Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 57, LACP.

⁶⁸ Deed: Christian Bosbyshell, taylor and shopkeeper, and Elizabeth, his wife, to the Minister, Trustees, Elders and Deacons of the German Lutheran Congregation of the township of Germantown, 1 October 1803, Philadelphia Deed Book E.F., 15, p. 462, CAP; Richards, Richards, “A Historical Sketch,” 50, LACP.

⁶⁹ “Minutes of the Vestry of the Lutheran Church in Germantown,” 8 April 1855, St. Michael's, Germantown Records, LACP.

⁷⁰ Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History*.

⁷¹ “Old St. Michael's, One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the Ancient Church in Germantown,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 15 November 1886.

The Sunday School was erected in 1886, the very year that the congregation celebrated its one hundred fiftieth anniversary (again, assuming that it had been founded in 1736 rather than 1728). Rev. J.P. Deck was pastor at the time. Theopolus H. Smith was the school's superintendent, which numbered 25 teachers and 350 students by 1886.⁷²

Consecrated on November 14, 1886, the Sunday school building was described by local reporters who covered the anniversary celebration and consecration, which took place on the same day:

The building is a beautiful structure, standing at the southwest corner of the old church. Its exterior presents a strikingly attractive appearance, being of the Gothic order with segmented windows. It is built of Germantown stone with brick cornice, and is one story in height. Its dimensions are 40x70 feet. The whole being sheltered by a beautiful pitched slate roof which is a specimen of the skill of Mr. Dominick Phillips of Germantown. The interior of the building will defy criticism and attract the eye of the most cultivated artist. It is finished in natural wood and contains four apartments communicative with each other when desirable by sash partitions. Chief among these is a large room used for the main school in which there are ten stained glass windows...

On the south side of the main building is an annex for the Bible-class, 22 feet square, which has four stained glass windows... The infant classroom on the southeast end is a beautiful and cheerful apartment, large enough to accommodate 125 children, being also adorned with stained glass windows, and is furnished with little chairs. Looking out on the churchyard from the northeast side is an intermediate room, back of which, by the main entrance, is the library room. The entrance is on the rear of the building, and a hallway passing between the infant and intermediate rooms leads into the main room...

The most striking feature of the structure is the conscientious character of the work. It is a prime sample of skill in mechanism. Martin Hetzel, of this place, is the builder. The masonry is by John Shingle, whose hammer and trowel have fashioned an unsurpassable and substantial monument to his handiwork. The plastering is in Mr. Archey's accustomed taste and neatness. In every part of the building the woodwork attests the joiner's art and Mr. Hetzel's careful superintendence whilst all parts of the structure calling for the brush were touched up in admirable style by Jacob H. Seipp, painter.⁷³

The congregation's minutes reveal that the building was indeed architect-designed – as there is reference to paying for design services – however, the architect's name is not mentioned.⁷⁴

Ten years after the completion of the present Sunday School building, construction of the third and present church – which replaced the 1819-built church (in terms of both use and siting) – began. The cornerstone was laid on September 5, 1896, with the ceremonious use of a hammer that had already been used to lay the cornerstones of twelve churches, including that of nearby Ashmead Schaffer Memorial Lutheran Church. A zinc box was placed inside the stone – which contained: copies of important works such as the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism; the names of those involved in the planning and

⁷² "Luther's Followers, An Interesting Account of Its Establishment in Germantown," *Germantown Independent*. 17 April 1886.

⁷³ "For the Workman, 1736 – A 150th Anniversary – 1886," 1886, undated newspaper clipping in St. Michael's Germantown Records, LACP.

⁷⁴ Church Council Minutes, 8 December 1886, St. Michael's Germantown Records, LACP. The fee was \$100 for a building that cost \$8,035.

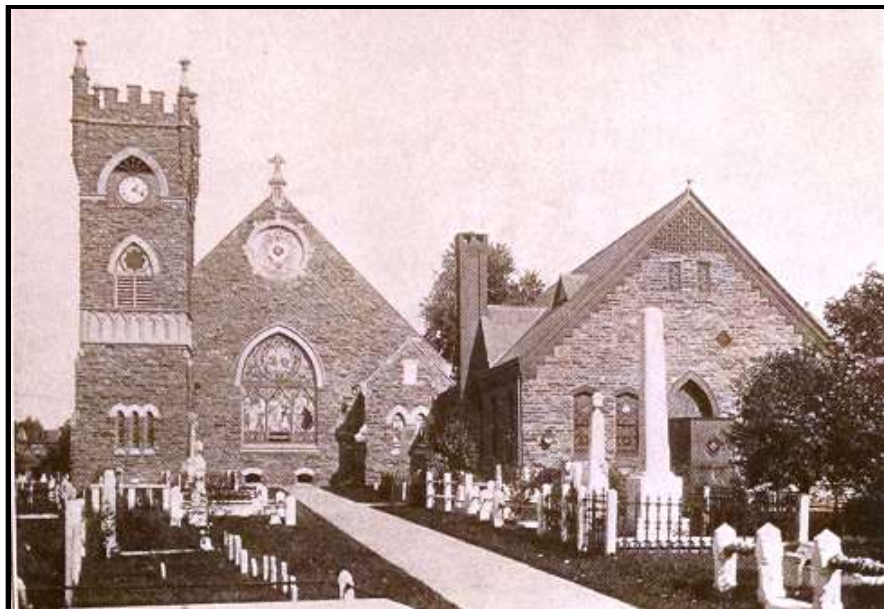
construction of the building; coins dated 1886; and local newspapers including the *Germantown Telegraph* and the *Germantown Guide*.⁷⁵

In anticipation of the new church's completion, it was reported:

The new building is to be of Germantown Greystone with Indiana limestone trimmings, and will be in the Gothic style of architecture. It is to be 101 by 60 feet in dimensions, 20 feet high to the square, and the roof will have a pitch of about 30 feet. At the northwest corner of the structure will be a tower 16 feet square and 65 feet high, with artistic battlements on top. The tower will contain two upper stories, the topmost being intended for a belfry. There will be four entrances to the building, two at the front part of the building, one of which will be through the tower. The other two entrances will be at the side and rear of the building. The ceiling will be of paneled yellow pine, as will the floor, and the pews and other finishing will be of chestnut wood, all to be finished in oil. The floor will have a pitch from the front of the building to the rear of about ten inches. The pews will be arranged in angular form, those on the right and left being placed in such a position as to slightly face the centre row, which will be straight. The seating capacity will be about 600...

To the left of the choir loft will be the pastor's room. A sewing room will be built in the basement of the building. Arrangements will be made to have the building lighted by electricity or gas, and the structure will be heated by steam.

The building, which will be joined to the chapel [Sunday school building] at the southeast corner, is being built on the site of the old church."⁷⁶



The third and present building of St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown.
Source: Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History of St. Michael's* (1905).

⁷⁵ "St. Michael's New Church, Impressive and Interesting Exercises at the Laying of the Corner-stone," *Germantown Guide*. undated newspaper clipping in St. Michael's Germantown Records, LACP.

⁷⁶ "New Lutheran Church, The Corner-stone of St. Michael's, Germantown to be Laid Tomorrow," *Public Ledger*, 5 September 1896.

Dedicated on May 17, 1897, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported:

The new edifice stands on the site of the first building erected by the congregation in 1730. It is erected of Germantown graystone with Indiana limestone trimmings and is of the Gothic style of architecture. The dimensions are 101 by 60 feet. A tower graces the northwest corner and is 16 feet square and 65 feet high, surmounted by artistic battlements. The ceiling is of paneled yellow pine, in which are placed, at regular distances, triangular-shaped colored windows intended for ventilation. The main entrances are through the tower and the south porch, the latter connecting with the parish building. All the many stained glass windows in the sanctuary are memorials, and many sacred gifts have been donated by members of the church and classes in the Sunday school.⁷⁷



An interior view of the third and present building of St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown.
Source: Ziegenfuss, *A Brief and Succinct History of St. Michael's* (1905).

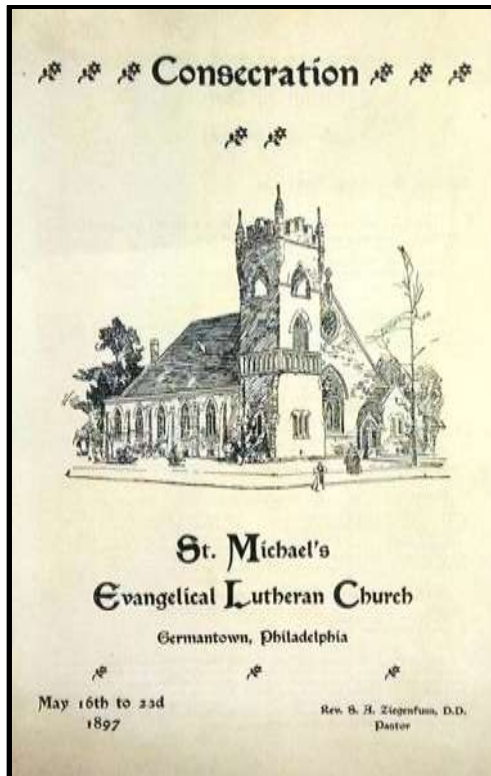
The dedication was well attended by prominent Lutherans from throughout Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, and culminated in a sermon by Rev. Dr. Theodore L. Seip, President of Muhlenberg College in Allentown.⁷⁸

The architect of the building was T. Franklin Miller (designer of nearby Ashmead Schaffer Memorial Lutheran Church) and the builder was Martin Hetzel, of Martin Hetzel & Company.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "Two Dedications out in Germantown, Dunkards and Lutherans Formally Open New Houses of Worship," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 17 May 1897.

⁷⁸ "Two Dedications out in Germantown," 1887.

⁷⁹ "New Lutheran Church, The Corner-stone of St. Michael's, Germantown to be Laid Tomorrow," *Public Ledger*, 17 May 1886.
St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Germantown, 6671 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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Consecration Program for 1897 church. Source: Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia.

Thomas Francis “Frank” Miller was born in Cecil County, Maryland and educated in Philadelphia. Although Miller maintained an active practice through which he designed buildings of various types, little about him is known.⁸⁰ He is the architect of number of area churches, particularly Lutheran churches, including:

- 1889: Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Collins and Cumberland Streets
- 1889: Eden Methodist Episcopal Church, 4th Street near Lehigh Avenue
- 1890: West Hope Presbyterian Church, 4052 Aspen Street
- 1890: Zion German Presbyterian Church, 28th Street near Girard Avenue
- 1891: St. John’s Protestant Episcopal Church, Cemetery Road near Frankford Avenue
- 1893: Eleventh Baptist Church, 21st and Diamond Streets
- 1894: Bethany Lutheran Church, 25th Street and Montgomery Avenue
- 1898: Tabor Lutheran Church, 4860 N. Mascher Street
- 1904: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Allegheny Avenue at Harley Street
- 1906: Beth Eden Evangelical Lutheran Church, 24th and Cumberland Streets⁸¹

The vast majority of Miller-designed churches have since transitioned into the hands of other congregations – as the congregations that built and first occupied the above listed properties migrated from the inner city to suburbs and in the process, transitioned their buildings to congregations of other faiths, denominations, and cultural backgrounds. St. Michael’s Lutheran Church, which is among

⁸⁰ *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*, s.v. “Miller, Thomas Francis or Frank (d. 1939),” by Sandra L. Tatman, accessed July 1, 2017.

⁸¹ *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*, s.v. “Miller, Thomas Francis or Frank (d. 1939),” by Sandra L. Tatman, accessed July 1, 2017.

Miller's later works, remained in the hands of the congregation that built it, on a site that it had owned since 1737, until 2016.⁸²

In 2016, unable to buck the trends affecting Mainline Protestant denominations throughout the United States, St. Michael's Lutheran Church closed its doors. At that time, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church assumed ownership of the historic property.⁸³

CRITERION I

In addition to burials dating from the eighteenth century, including the remains of prominent Revolutionary War veterans, the St. Michael's property is likely to yield information regarding the historic Battle of Germantown.⁸⁴ An 1893 article describing the congregation's desire for a new church structure notes that, "after the battle of Germantown during the Revolutionary war the church yard was utilized as a temporary hospital field."⁸⁵ The original church itself was also used as a barracks and later as a hospital as well during the battle.⁸⁶ Excavation anywhere on the site, including beneath the existing structures, has the potential to yield artifacts.



1848 Detail of the *Map of the Township of Germantown* by J.C. Sidney showing the church's proximity to the Battle of Germantown, which made it a logical location for a field hospital. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

⁸² "The closing of St. Michael's Lutheran Church," *Philadelphia Sunday Sun*, 9 September 2016.

⁸³ "Historic Mt. Airy church closes after 288 years," *Chestnut Hill Local.*, 7 September 2016.

⁸⁴ Sarah F. Goldsmith, "St. Michael's Lutheran Church," PhilaPlace, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Available: <http://www.philaplace.org/story/1050/>

⁸⁵ *The Times*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 17 June 1893, 7.

⁸⁶ F.C. Johnson, ed. "Lutheran Jubilee." *The Historical Record* VII (1899), 273.

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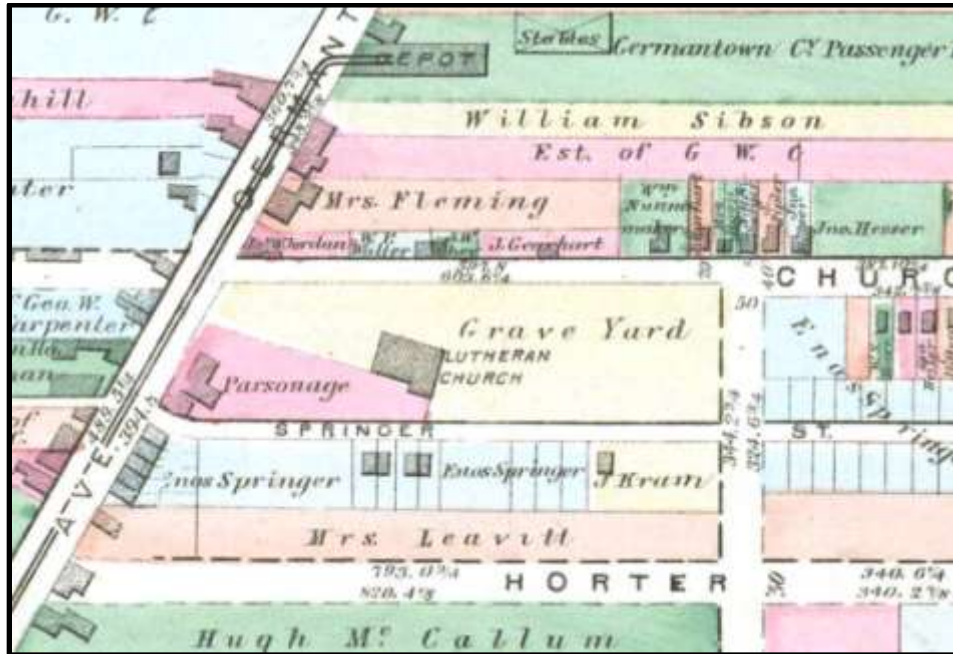
This nomination was researched and written by friends of the Keeping Society of Philadelphia:

Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist

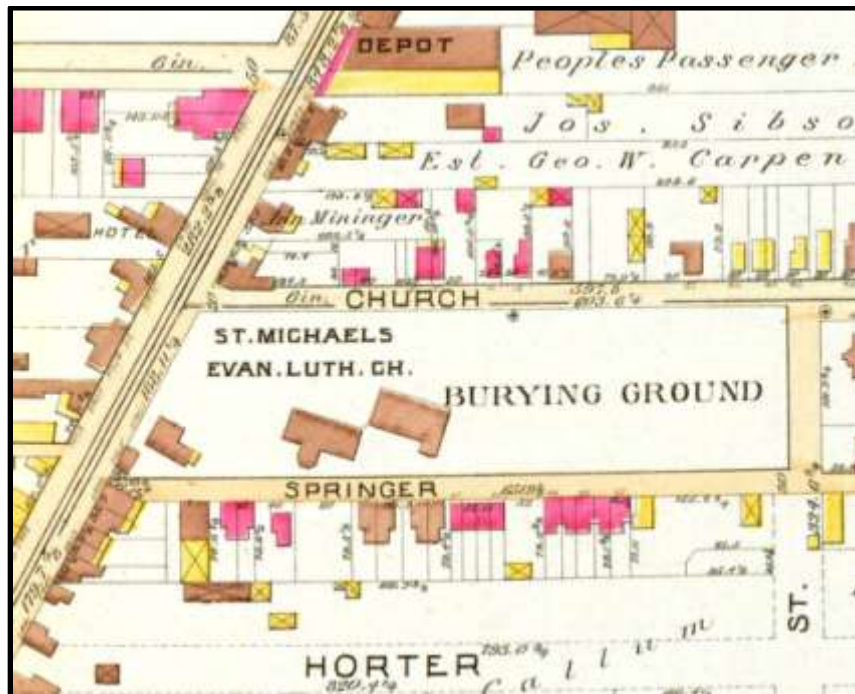
J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian

Amy Lambert, Historic Architect

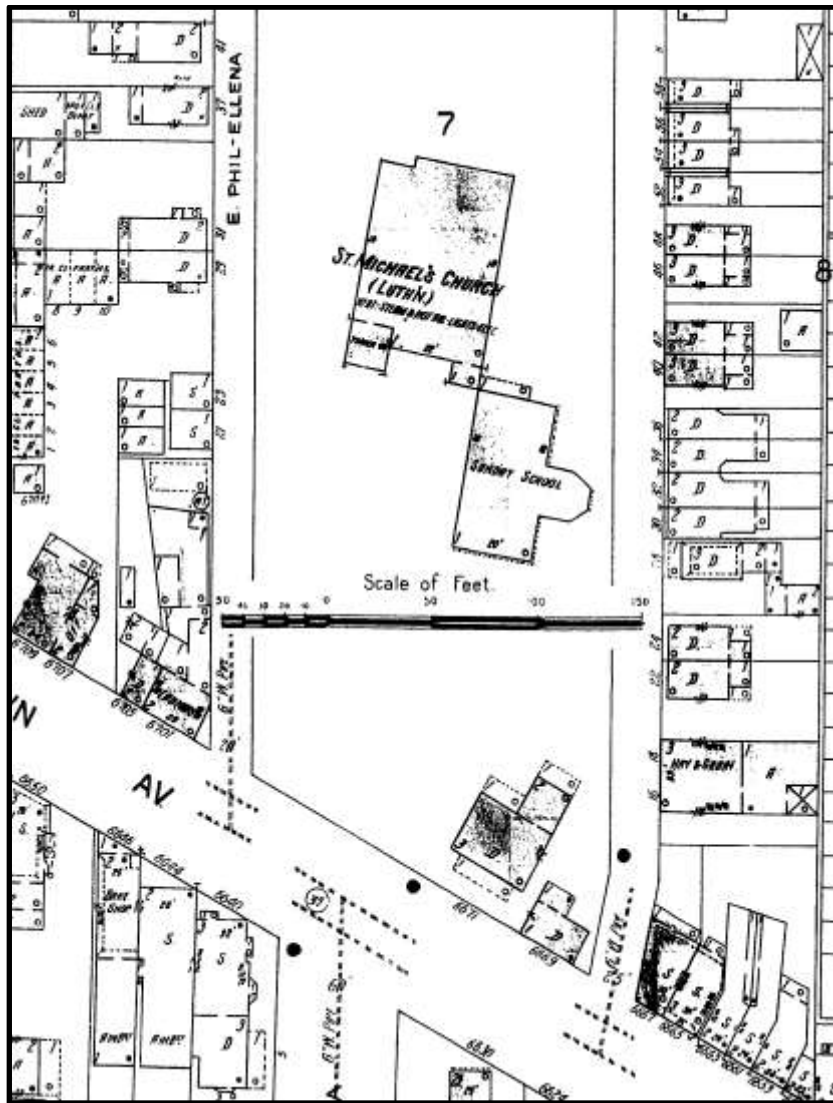
APPENDIX A
Additional Property Atlas Plans of the Site



1871 *Atlas of the Late Borough of Germantown, 22nd Ward, City of Philadelphia*, by G.M. Hopkins. Shows the location of the 1819 church. Courtesy Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



1889 *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Volume 7, 22nd Ward* by George W. and Walter S. Bromley. Show the location of the 1819 church in relation to the 1886 Sunday School Building (aka St. Thomas Hall). Courtesy Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



1926 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Philadelphia, Vol. 22. Shows location of current buildings on the site. Courtesy ProQuest.



Dates of Acquisition of Properties Encompassing Current St. Michael's Germantown Site (outlined with dashed blue lines). Prepared by J.M. Duffin.