



# LOWER GERMANTOWN AVENUE MINI TOUR

This walking tour features a collection of historic buildings along Germantown Avenue, photographed on a recent neighborhood walk by local preservationist Oscar Beisert.



## **LOUDOUN MANSION**

4650 Germantown Avenue  
1801, expanded 1829, 1850, 1888

Built by Thomas Armat for his son, the name Loudoun comes from Loudoun County, VA where Armat first settled. The house is a good example of Federal and Greek Revival architectural styles and sits amidst a spacious landscape.

Check out the link at the end of this document for a look at an amazing photo album featuring circa 1900 interior photographs of Loudoun.



## **CHARLES SCHAEFFER SCHOOL**

4701 Germantown Avenue  
1876

Schaeffer school was designed in the Sloan Plan created by celebrated architect Samuel Sloan, which dominated public school design in Philadelphia from about 1850 through the 1870s. The building had a single large space on each floor, which could be subdivided by means of movable partitions to create the greatest possible flexibility of use.

After years of vacancy and neglect, the school building was recently rehabilitated by a local, mission-driven developer.

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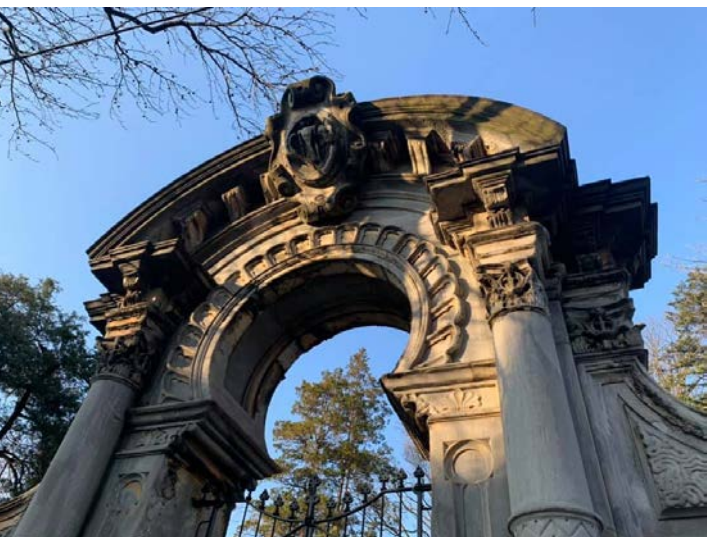
## **WILLIAM ADAMSON MANSION**

4811 Germantown Avenue

1874

Adamson's spacious home was alter circa 1925 to serve as a chapel for a newly established Catholic parish. The adjacent church was constructed in 1929.

The multi-building complex was rehabilitated by a local, mission-driven developer and serves as home-base for 14 companies.



## **HOOD CEMETERY**

4901 Germantown Avenue

Land set aside 1692

One of Germantown's oldest historic sites, the cemetery was originally known as the Lower Burial Ground. The land was set aside as a secular burial ground for residents of lower Germantown. It is estimated that more than 1000 persons are buried within its two acres, including many of the earliest settlers of Germantown and a number of prominent Philadelphians. There are also many veterans' graves, including those of 41 Revolutionary War soldiers, and veterans of subsequent conflicts.



## **ROYAL HOUSE**

5011 Germantown Avenue

Circa 1798

Named for George Royal, a butcher. This was one of many houses owned by members of the Royal family in Lower Germantown.

Long neglected, this historic building was purchased in 2018 by local organization Trades for a Difference. The organization utilized this building as a "hands-on training center" for TFAD's student and apprentice programs.

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## **FORBES-BAYNTON HOUSE**

5208 Germantown Avenue

Circa 1795

Daniel Sinkit, a yeoman, sold this property to William Forbes in 1795. The Baynton's purchased the home in 1827. In 1956, the home served as a library for the Germantown Historical Society which had its office next door.

Currently the property is owned by a non-profit social service organization.



## **CONYNGHAM-HACKER HOUSE**

5814 Germantown Avenue

Circa 1750

This property was owned by Theobald Endt from 1745-1765. Owned in the late 18th century by innkeeper Philip Gabel, the property was sold to William Forbes in 1795.

This served as the main office for the Germantown Historical Society for a number of years, and now is owned by a non-profit social service organization.



## **HOWELL HOUSE**

5218 Germantown Avenue

Circa 1795

5218 Germantown Avenue is known as the Howell House, for an early 20th-century owner Edward I.H. Howell. Constructed circa 1795 by William Forbes, the Howell House stands in amidst a row of highly intact 18th-century dwellings along Germantown Avenue.

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## **ENDT-HANDBERRY HOUSE (LEFT)**

5222-24 Germantown Avenue  
Circa 1730, rebuilt after fire 1802

Site of the first unity conference of the German protestant churches and sects in America. Count Zizendorf arrived in 1741 to support the unification efforts, but these were unsuccessful due to differing opinions.

## **JOHN BECHTEL HOUSE (RIGHT)**

5226 Germantown Avenue  
1742, rebuilt after fire 1802

John Bechtel, for whom this house is named, was pastor of the Reformed Church in Market Square from 1733-1744. In 1746, the Moravians opened a school for girls in the home.



## **GRUMBLETHORPE AKA WISTER'S BIG HOUSE**

5267 Germantown Avenue  
1744

Built as a summer residence by Philadelphia merchant and wine importer John Wister, the fertile land supported a productive working farm. It became the family's year-round residence when they withdrew from the city during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793.

Botanist Thomas Nuttall named the 'wisteria' plant after the Wister family, whom Nuttall was close friends with.

In 1777, during the Battle of Germantown, the Wisters were staying in another home and British General James Agnew occupied the house as his headquarters during the confrontation. He was wounded and died in the front parlor, where his blood stains can still be seen on the floor.

Photo: Smallbones, via Wikimedia Commons

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## **CHRISTOPHER SOWER HOUSE**

5300 Germantown Avenue

Circa 1723, additions 1755, 1795, 1870

Born in Germany, Sower and his family, his wife and at least one son, immigrated to Philadelphia in 1724. Sower lived on Germantown Avenue, at what is now the site of Trinity Lutheran Church, and worked as a pharmacist. Despite his career in this field, Sower became best known for his printing activities, which he began in the late 1730s after receiving printing machinery from Germany. He began printing works in German for other local German immigrants. He produced the nation's first German-language Bible in 1743 and would print its first German newspaper as well. He printed and published over two hundred works in German and English before his death in 1758. ~ Historical Society of Pennsylvania



## **TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

5300 Germantown Avenue

1856

Constructed by a growing congregation, as an expansion of an 1836 building located nearby, Trinity Lutheran Church was designed and built by Jacob and George Binder. In 1858 the clock was added to the steeple, this addition was the first of its kind in the community and was considered a great innovation.

A cemetery surrounds the church, containing graves of local residents from approximately the same time of the church's construction.

Trinity Lutheran remains an active and welcoming congregation proud of its history.



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## **CLARKSON-WATSON HOUSE AKA BANK OF GERMANTOWN**

5275-77 Germantown Avenue

Circa 1745, alterations and additions 1775, 1825, 1870

Beginning as a private home, the house served as the residence of Matthew Clarkson, former Mayor of Philadelphia, from 1792 to 1796. During the Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1793, the offices of the federal government were located in Germantown. In this time, the Clarkson home was visited by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Edmund Randolph who served as the first Attorney General of the United States.

The building was adapted to serve as the Bank of Germantown from 1825 to 1868. Germantown resident John Fanning Watson worked at the bank as a cashier and while there became interested in the Colonial history of the area. In 1830, Watson published an 800-page book "Annals of Philadelphia" which endures as a valuable reference to researchers.

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## MAP OF SITES ON THIS MINI TOUR



Germantown features many more historic sites and cultural resources than we included here. A great tour of Germantown is available in *Philadelphia Architecture, A Guide to the City* by John Andrew Gallery (available at your local bookstore).

Link to photo album of interior images of Loudoun Mansion [linktr.ee/PAGP](https://linktr.ee/PAGP)

Follow us on Instagram to see more photos of these buildings @presalliancephl and tag us in your photos when you visit them!