

African American Heritage Guide to Philadelphia's Historic Northwest

By Gloria Davis Goode, Ph.D.

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Introduction

The African American Heritage Guide to Philadelphia's Historic Northwest highlights selected sites relevant to African American history from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century in the greater Germantown area incorporating the communities of Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill. These sites have their locations on or near Germantown Avenue, have importance in city and state history, as evidenced by Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission Markers (PMHC), and have unique historical or cultural significance within the African American Germantown community. The information contained in this tour guide was gleaned from oral interviews and manuscripts drawn from archival deposits at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Germantown Historical Society, the American Philosophical Society and the National Archives. Oral interviews were conducted by members of the Germantown Historical Society and the African American Genealogy Group.

Historical Background of the Community

Africans who were slaves of the Dutch were present along the Delaware River for almost a half century before the founding of Philadelphia, the "greene countrie towne" in 1681 by William Penn; however, the African American presence in Germantown began in 1683, when the old German Township was settled by an independent community of linen weavers and merchants along the Great Road or Germantown Road, once a part of a Lenni Lenape Trail. While the colonial city of Philadelphia with a few thousand residents was a walking city, stretching from the Delaware River to Seventh Street and from South Street to Vine Street, Germantown, six miles to the Northwest, was a community of cottage industries and farms which stretched out east and west from the Great Road. Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the small metropolis, Germantown provided a serene rural setting, reachable by carriage with unique opportunities for individual growth and development.

The original settlers preferred German-speaking immigrants as indentured servants who after working off their debts would eventually become land owners. When some members of the Germantown Society of Friends decided to purchase Africans who they would hold in bondage as laborers and domestic servants for life, four members with an aversion to slaveholding expressed themselves on moral grounds in the earliest North American protest against slavery, the Germantown Petition of 1688. This protest was drafted at the home of dyer and trader, Thones Kunders, penned by Francis Daniel Pastorius, German-American lawyer and first mayor of the German settle-

ment, signed by two more brethren, and witnessed by a small group who opposed the importation, sale, and ownership of slaves. In this document they stated their objections to the "trafficking of mensbody."

We shall doe [sic] to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are.

This seminal anti-slavery petition signed only by members of a small religious community of Quakers, Dunkards, and Mennonites, was thought to be "too weighty a matter" to promote in 1688 by the Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings. However, today it is recognized as an important document which can be considered a prologue to the abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century.

That Germantown property owners, in spite of the 1688 petition, traded, bought, and sold slaves as human chattel is evidenced in a slave sale and a runaway advertisement of the eighteenth century. An advertisement from the Pennsylvania Gazette of 1747 indicates that, "a young Negroe man fit for town or country business, to be sold or hired, is a taylor by trade," and that interested parties should inquire of John Johnson, sadler, in Germantown. Another settler purchased a woman who had experienced first-hand the brutality of the slave trade in the Caribbean as evidenced in this runaway ad in the Pennsylvania Gazette of 1753:

"Runaway...from the subscriber living in Germantown, a Negro woman, named Phillis, about twenty-five years of age, of middle stature... much marked about the neck and back with large whales or lumps....which she received in Barbadoes; had on when she went away an ozenbrigs (coarse linen cloth) jacket and petticoat, with a striped ditto over it, new black grained shoes, has a shrill voice, and when in good humor very talkative, much inclined to company."

Before the American Revolution, the Quaker Monthly and Quarterly Meetings pressured the Yearly Meeting to prohibit the buying of slaves when the number of slaves was at its peak in Pennsylvania. In 1754 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issued an Epistle of Caution regarding the owning of slaves and four years later, the Yearly Meeting forbade all members from importing or purchasing slaves as property or chattel. Over a period of time, the Quakers as a religious community took the lead in anti-slavery activities, ending their own practice of slave holding and pressuring the members of their monthly meetings to grant private manumissions. Thus, finally free from slaveholding, they could begin to take measures to convince the outside community to follow their lead. On the eve of the Revolution the slave population of Philadelphia and its environs was dwindling due to fewer importations and the small yet important number of private Quaker manumissions. Although the Quakers and other anti-slavery advocates had succeeded in the passage of laws levying heavy taxes on slave importation, they had not affected Pennsylvania's position on the legality of slavery. In 1780, the Pennsylvania Legislature passed a law for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, thus becoming the first state to abolish slavery by legislation. This act provided for the freedom of slaves when they reached the age of twenty-eight years. By 1800, there were some sixty free blacks and seven enslaved blacks living in Germantown.

Robert Clymer, a free African American in Germantown who had been manumitted in 1761 and given a parcel of land by his owner, physician Christopher Witt, became a soldier and enrolled in the Pennsylvania militia, an army that was called out when the state was menaced. Clymer, a private in the sixth class of Christian Snyder's Battalion in Philadelphia from 1778 to 1780 was on duty in Germantown at the time of the British invasion of Pennsylvania from June 1777 to 1778. George Washington planned to attack the British stationed at Germantown. According to Germantown lore, Clymer, trained in medical and surgical procedures by his owner, removed a bullet from a British General, James Agnew, who was wounded by Washington's marksmen near the Mennonite Church on Germantown Avenue.

Most African Americans who had not yet reached the age of twenty-eight were placed on consignment or indentured as apprentices to serve out their years until freedom. Thus, Ann Eliza Jenkins, listed in her indenture contract of 1842 as a "colored orphan," with the consent of her guardian, Sarah Coates, was bound to the Wister family of Germantown to serve for eight years.

During the nineteenth century, Germantown, like other small northern localities that had free black populations, became a haven for runaways from the South. In 1833, black and white abolitionists from nine states met in Philadelphia to form the American Anti-Slavery Society, whose purpose was to promote and coordinate anti-slavery activity in the free states in the North. William Still, Philadelphia luminary and black abolitionist, became an agent in this organization and aided runaway slaves from the South who came through Philadelphia, some on their way to Canada. Fugitives lived and worked in relative freedom in Germantown until they were discovered by former plantation owners.

One such story recounted by Charles J. Wister was told to him by John Knight, a slave himself who witnessed the following events by following the carriage of the arrested fugitive into Philadelphia. The case of Margaret Brooke Lemon, also called Pegg, who reputedly ran away from the plantation of John O. Price of Baltimore, Maryland in the 1820s was published in local newspaper accounts. In 1837, three men and a Philadelphia constable arrested Lemon at her home in Germantown next door to the Rock House on East Penn Street. After a brief trial in Philadelphia, featuring several witnesses for the prosecution, she was sent to prison to await a further hearing. She was subsequently charged with being a runaway and was carried off to Baltimore as a slave; her sale price was advertised as \$500. A number of Germantown citizens raised the \$400 to secure her freedom from her former owner who also contributed \$100 and Lemon was returned to her home and family in Germantown. In another case, A United States Marshall appeared on the doorstep of the Rock House where a free man named Moses Lewis lived with his wife and their three children. The Marshal produced a requisition from the so-called owner and demanded that Mrs. Lewis be returned to slavery. The good people of Germantown once again rallied around Moses Lewis and in a short time raised the twelve hundred dollars necessary to satisfy the slave owner, thus rendering the family free.

The United States Congress in the Compromise of 1850 enacted the Fugitive Slave Law, a more stringent measure which required the return of runaway slaves to the South without a trial. The Johnsons, a well-known Quaker abolitionist family, helped to shelter many slaves in Germantown as they journeyed northward. According to tradition, both William Still and Harriet Tubman visited the Johnson House. Escaping slaves, whisked by abolitionist agents to safety in Germantown, were hidden in the basement, attic, or the barn of the farmhouse. Today, the Johnson House site is a documented station dedicated to the Underground Railroad History of Germantown. William Still published the oral narratives of fugitive slaves who escaped through Pennsylvania in an 1872 volume entitled *The Underground Railroad*.

African American homeowners in Germantown were few during this period. A handful of residents were able to purchase real estate but most were renters and boarders. In 1860, An African American farmer, originally from Delaware listed as "mulatto," owned \$5700 worth of real estate and George Johnson, coachman, owned property worth \$1800. In 1854, Germantown Borough became the twenty-second ward of the City of Philadelphia. As a part of this political and demographic change, subdivision and development continued in Germantown. One subdivision became a neighborhood called Pulaski Town at the southern end bordered by Wayne Avenue, Morris Street, Queen Lane, and Coulter Street. With Civil War industrial development came the building of large homes and the promotion of working class housing. This community was made accessible by the construction of the Chestnut Hill Railroad and trolley car service from Queen Lane through Pulaski Town up to Evergreen Avenue at the end of Chestnut Hill.

After the Civil War, African Americans began to move into Pulaski Town. The 1880 Census records seventy nine African Americans, mostly Pennsylvanians, working primarily as laborers and servants, among its four hundred residents. The majority of black extended family groups arrived between 1900 and 1920, during the peak of "The Great Migration." Some were recruited by newspaper advertisements and Northern agents in Southern states. There was a need for workers to replace the jobs that immigrants had previously filled prior to World War I. While some large groups of migrants flocked to the city proper where there were more manufacturing jobs, smaller numbers of African American families came to Germantown to better their economic conditions. By 1900, Pulaski Town's population had grown to over twelve-hundred fifty, including four hundred African Americans, some who had purchased their own homes.

The Industrial Home for Colored Women, an interdenominational outreach program located in West Germantown on Armat Street, established in 1905 trained many young African American women for service and domestic occupations such as table-setting, waiting tables, sewing, embroidery, knitting, and all lines of housework. Although some women worked at home as laundresses, African American women were largely employed by wealthy white and a few black families of Germantown.

By 1910, the total Germantown population, including that of Pulaski Town, swelled to 70,245; of these 4,799 were black.

The population was linked to that of Philadelphia by trains and trolley lines through which flowed raw materials for Germantown's cottage industries. A few African Americans worked in the garment industries and knitting mills while others worked in the stone quarries cutting Wissahickon mica schist to a specified shape and style to be used as the material for the construction of commercial buildings, huge mansions, and working-class housing. These skilled stone cutters, descendants of freed Virginia slaves from the 1850s, worked in quarries on Penn Street, Wayne Junction, Mermaid Lane and Wissahickon Avenue.¹

Upon the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1913, J. Gordon Baugh, a printer of color, intending to show black progress in the community, printed a series of illustrations. In his introduction, he stated, "The beautiful suburb of Germantown is located in the county of Philadelphia, about seven miles northwest from the City Hall, easily reachable by two railroads and four trolley lines." Within this "suburb" of which he speaks, there were three African American neighborhoods. In addition to Pulaski town and West Rittenhouse Street near McCallum, a black community was emerging on Sharpnack Street east and west of Germantown Avenue. These three communities owned \$160,000 worth of real estate. They were served by eleven churches - 5 Baptist, 3 Methodist, 1 Episcopal, 1 Catholic, and 1 Presbyterian Church all worth \$180,000 in assessed value.

Although Baugh described the black population of Germantown as composed largely of migrants from Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware who were employed in menial jobs, a socio-economic stratification is evident. The upper income group consisted of physicians, dentists, real estate agents, school teachers, and morticians. For leisure time activities they participated in twelve fraternal organizations, two baseball clubs, and one orchestra. The middle class of skilled entrepreneurs included dressmakers, hairdressers, milliners, tailors, barbers, upholsterers, cabinet makers, printers, restaurant owners, landscapers, grocers, and postal employees. Members of the working class, consisting of newly arrived migrants from the South, were employed as servants at the Coulter Inn, the Cresheim Arms and as laborers at Elders Mill, Woods and Logans Manufacturers, and Midvale Steel Works. Baugh states that there were seldom beggars seen on the streets; the Poor House in the West Rittenhouse community had only 3 African Americans out of 75 inmates.

From 1920 through the Depression up to the end of World War II, migrants from the South continued to settle in Germantown. Lower Germantown was dominated by commercial buildings and the hub of business was centered at Cheltenham Avenue around large companies, theaters, banks, and department stores. Until World War I, Germantown communities appeared to be integrated; white neighborhoods and businesses surrounded black blocks. From 1920 on, segregation permeated all areas of life - residential, social, economic, and religious. Real estate agencies followed covenants, abiding by segregation ordinances that

¹ The United States Census of 1850 is the first census in which free African Americans are listed by name and race with their ages, family members, educational levels, and occupations. Some free black Virginians whose families later came to Pennsylvania are listed in this census as stone cutters working in quarries.

designated certain blocks as "black pockets" in all-white neighborhoods. Because of this color line, well-to-do African Americans lived side by side with the working class; physicians' homes were intermingled with the modest homes of laborers.

The families of the elite belonged to the local branches of the NAACP and the Urban League; they were members of the YMCA and YWCA. They provided their daughters with piano lessons and gave them social encouragement to succeed in school so as to avoid the exploitation that came with domestic jobs. They sent their sons to prestigious universities such as the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and traveled with their families to Europe. Their children were groomed for leadership within the race and were expected to become advocates for social justice. They were affiliated with the Catholic, Episcopal, or Presbyterian churches. The middle income and working class blacks attended the Baptist and Methodist churches. Their daughters became upwardly mobile women who worked outside the home; they trained as teachers, nurses, and social workers. The majority of the black population worked as servants, domestics, or laborers.

African Americans could only be served in one or two restaurants reserved for them; the finer restaurants even those run by African Americans catered only to whites. One African American physician had separate waiting rooms for blacks and whites. The "Pick of the Pictures" at the Rialto Theater at Germantown and Tulpehocken Street in 1915 was D. W. Griffiths' spectacle *Birth of a Nation*. African Americans entered by a side door and sat in the balcony or a special section designated for blacks. In the department stores on Cheltenham Avenue, they were forbidden to try on garments or shoes.

The black elite sent their children to private and parochial schools. The Philadelphia Board of Education established separate public schools for African American children in the lower grades—the Hill School in the West Rittenhouse community and the Meehan School in Pulaski Town. African Americans applied and were met with resistance at the Emlen School in the Sharpnack community. The Hill School was known as a rigorous academic school with well prepared teachers like Olivia Yancey Taylor, who also tutored at the local Boys' Club. Graduates from the Hill, Meehan and Emlen then went on to study business or vocations in three integrated secondary schools—Roosevelt Junior High, Germantown High, or Simon Gratz High.

After school and weekend activities revolved around the Wissahickon Boys Club in Pulaski Town. Founded just after the Civil War as the Pulaskitown Free Kindergarten, it served the sons of domestic workers. The club's aims were to engage youth by involving them in sports, job skills training, and academics. William Coleman (the father of William Coleman who served in the United States Government as Secretary of Transportation) was the first executive director of the Boys Club.

The spiritual life of African Americans was also segregated; most blacks who had a "church home" worshipped in denominational churches with members of their own race. These churches, established from outreach missions of already established congregations, date from the late nineteenth century. They not only ministered to the spiritual

needs of the congregations but served as platforms for the airing of political and social injustices. They became mutual aid societies and educational centers, ministering to the poor and providing resources for the community.

New Bethel AME Church, the oldest black church in Germantown, was organized in 1859, over seventy years after Rev. Richard Allen established the seminal congregation, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in center city. Established from a mission group, meeting at the Colored YMCA in 1871, Mt. Zion Baptist Church constructed a building on Rittenhouse Street and hired its first minister, Rev. Morton Winston, a former slave and stonecutter from



Mission of St. Barnabas for Colored People – Conference of church workers circa 1916; this group is the precursor of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

Virginia. Janes Methodist Episcopal Church (today Janes United Methodist Church), a mission of Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church, was organized in 1872. Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church was organized by Rev. James D. Brooks in 1876. In the early twentieth century Faith Tabernacle was established in 1904 from Tioga mission. The St. Barnabas Mission was established as an outreach congregation of St. Luke's Episcopal Church. St. Peter's Episcopal Church and St. Vincent de Paul, the mother parish of Germantown established St. Catherine of Siena, a church and school for "Colored Catholics," in Pulaski Town in 1912. Grace Baptist Church of Germantown, which grew out of an 1888 mission, was organized in 1915 and Canaan Baptist Church was organized in the mid-twentieth century. These and other congregations have, for the most part, continued to the present day.

After 1954, with the integration of schools and the desegregation of public facilities, African Americans were destined to be included as equal members of American society. However, it was the passage of the Fair Housing Acts between 1968 and 1970 which prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, federally insured or underwritten, that prompted the expansion of the African American population in Germantown. The black elite sought homes in the Pelham Park and the Lincoln Drive communities, or the suburbs. The middle-incomers from other areas in the city, augmented by the arrival of new immigrants in the 1970s from Africa and the Caribbean moved to Germantown. Their communities radiated from Germantown Avenue, with its southern boundary at Johnson Street and northern boundary at Cresheim Valley

Drive, to integrate the neighborhoods of East Mount Airy and West Mount Airy. In East Mount Airy, spanning Germantown to Stenton Avenues, African Americans purchased twin homes and single dwellings, largely made readily available by the phenomenon of "white flight" to the suburbs; by 1990 over ninety percent of its population was African American. West Mount Airy, spanning Germantown to Wissahickon Avenues, on the other hand, a community of middle-income residents in the Northwest, continues to serve as a model for stable racial integration, with the exception of the public schools which remain de-facto segregated. A handful of African Americans have established businesses on the Avenue in Chestnut Hill and have purchased or constructed upscale homes in the fashionable areas.

The legacy of the African American experience in Philadelphia's Historic Northwest abounds in oral, written, material, and spiritual culture. Whereas oral narratives represent the collective memory of ancestors who journeyed from South to North to settle in this new area recounted in the narratives of their descendants, written manuscripts from archives document historical events by eye-witnesses, first-hand as they happened. Material culture in the form of artifacts, photographs, and architecture demonstrate the physical evolution of the community which was constructed in part by the labor of African Americans. The spiritual legacy which is present in today's church ministries and congregations, is a testimony to African Americans in Germantown, who in the face of adversity, have continued to find solace in a higher power. In spite of increasing disparities in wealth, the struggle to succeed speaks to the endurance of the African American people as they preserve and celebrate their heritage in Philadelphia's Northwest.

This guide allows you to trace the African American community's history in your car and on foot. Many stops on this tour may be residential, so please be respectful of personal property and private spaces.

GERMANTOWN TOUR

Germantown Historical Society

5501 Germantown Avenue

This society is an informational and educational resource center that preserves and interprets the rich history of the German Township's diverse cultural heritage. The society maintains a museum, archives, and a library dedicated to the history of Germantown. The library houses a small collection of historical manuscripts related to the African American experience.

Start at Germantown Avenue at Church Lane across from Germantown Historical Society, 5501 Germantown Avenue and proceed South on Germantown Avenue.

The Female Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia (PHMC marker)

5427 Germantown Avenue

Abigail Alcott, mother of Louisa May Alcott, who was born here in 1832 and who later wrote *Little Women*, was a member of the anti-slavery society. Amos Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa, ran a progressive school here. Louisa became an ardent abolitionist and volunteered as a nurse in the Civil War. The building, on the site of the Alcott house and school, is now home to the Cunningham Piano Company.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

5421 Germantown Avenue

The present-day African American congregation of St. Luke's Episcopal Church grew out of the St. Barnabas Mission on West Rittenhouse Street which ministered to the community in the area of West Germantown. In the 1960s, the Mission merged with the church into one parish under the visionary spirit of Fr. Robert W. Hill, Rector of St. Luke's, and Fr. Charles L. L. Poindexter, Rector of St. Barnabas. In 1968, the members of St. Barnabas proceeded in solemn procession from Rittenhouse Street down Germantown Avenue to St. Luke's. St. Barnabas became an elementary school on the grounds of St. Luke's Church but recently closed its doors. Today, St. Luke's is a predominantly African American congregation under the leadership of Rev. Canon H. Gregory Smith, Rector.

Christopher Sauer House Site

5300 Germantown Avenue

Christopher Sauer printed one of the first anti-slavery tracts in 1760, written by Anthony Benezet, a French Huguenot refugee who became a Quaker schoolteacher in Philadelphia. In 1750, Benezet, believing that emancipation alone would not solve the problems of freed Africans, sought education as a remedy by opening the first school for African American children in center city. His main contribution to the anti-slavery cause was a tract entitled, "Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes," published by Christopher Sauer in Germantown just before the Revolution.

First Written Protest Against Slavery (PMHC marker)

5109 Germantown Avenue

This historical plaque was placed here by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to commemorate the 1688 Germantown Protest against slavery by four Quakers. It is near the site of the home of Thones Kunders, one of the original signers. This first protest preceded by 92 years Pennsylvania's passage of the Gradual Abolition Act.

Follow Germantown Avenue to Windrim Avenue, turn left, and turn right at 18th Street

Stenton Mansion (PMHC marker)

4601 N. 18th Street

Stenton was built by James Logan, Secretary to the founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn. During the American Revolution, Dinah, an African American servant to the James Logan family, is credited with saving Stenton Mansion from the British who issued an order to burn all mansions between Germantown and Philadelphia. Although seventeen houses were burned, Dinah's quick thinking saved Stenton. Two British dragoons who came to burn the home went to the barn to get some straw to start the flames. While they were gone, a British officer rode up looking for deserters. Dinah, in answer to his inquiry, said that she had seen two men who looked like deserters go into the barn. When the soldiers returned, the officers seized them and marched them off to the provost guard, despite their indignant protests. Stenton Mansion is an historic site and tours are available daily from 1:00 to 4:00 PM or by appointment.

Turn left on Windrim Avenue and go to Wayne Avenue, make a right, turn left on Manheim Street and right on Pulaski Avenue

PULASKI TOWN TOUR

(Wayne Avenue to Morris Street and Queen Lane.



By 1876, the Coulter estate had been subdivided and further development was taking place. The city of Philadelphia bought a piece of land at Coulter and Morris Streets which was later used for the Keyser public school.



Typical Pulaskitown houses at Penn and Priscilla Streets

This Germantown community called Pulaskitown developed in response to the growing need for working class housing after the Civil War, was the core of the African American settlement in lower Germantown prior to World War II. While a few African Americans came to work as laborers and in-service domestics from 1880 to 1920, the bulk of the African American community arrived during the "Great Migration," from the South to the North during the 1920s. African American residents lived on Priscilla Street (formerly Patton), near Queen Lane and Penn Street.

Potters Field

Pulaski Avenue and Queen Lane

This was a cemetery where blacks were buried. The origin of the term "Potter's Field," is taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew (27:3-8) and means a public burial ground for poor, unknown persons, or strangers. The old record book of the Germantown Hood Cemetery, written in 1738, states that there should a "Suitable Spot of Ground in Germantown for a Common Burial Place to Strangers and Negroes." The Potter's Field was replaced by the Queen Lane Apartment building, a high rise public housing project, in 1955.

Faith Presbyterian Church

5331 to 5335 Pulaski Avenue

Formed around 1903 as the Tioga Mission, the congregation built Faith Presbyterian Church here in 1914. In 1965, it merged with the Second Presbyterian Church to become the Germantown Community Presbyterian Church which is today located at Greene and Tulpehocken Streets. The New Mt. Moriah Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Nathan L. Hasty has occupied the site for the last thirty-eight years.

Turn left on Penn Street and proceed to King Street

St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church and School

444 to 448 Penn Street

This large stucco church building cornerstone was laid in 1912. The congregation was the project of Mother Katherine Drexel, of the prominent Philadelphia Biddle family, who founded a number of schools for African American and Native American children. The African American Catholic community sent their children to this school in the early and mid-twentieth century. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the



This school for "Colored Catholics" was organized as a mission of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church.

Apostolic Faith under the pastorate of Bishop Shelton Rapha Chabash Luke now occupies the site. Mother Katherine Drexel died in 1965 and has since been beatified and made a saint. She also founded the Blessed Sacrament Church at Broad and Fairmount Streets in Philadelphia.

Turn left on Queen Lane and left on Pulaski Avenue

Thomas E. Meehan Public School

Pulaski Avenue and Penn
Street

The growth of the African American population, the protests from the white community over blacks attending the neighborhood Keyser School, and the 1897 Supreme Court decision that separate but equal school facilities for African Americans were constitutional led to the erection of this school in 1901. A few blacks still attended the predominantly white Keyser School at Morris and Coulter Streets for kindergarten through the fourth grade.



This school at Penn Street and Pulaski Avenue was erected in 1901 to serve the colored children of Pulaski Town.

Wissahickon Boys Club

Pulaski Avenue and Coulter
Street Northeast Corner



An early twentieth-century sports team at the Boys Club.

The Wissahickon School Club was organized by Quakers in 1885 as an African American Boys' club under the leadership of William S. Coleman. Early activities included sports

such as long-distance running, trades like upholstery, shoe repair, basketry, gardening and academic activities such as debates. In the 1950s, the young Wilt Chamberlain, Bill Cosby, and John Chaney played at the club.

Canaan Baptist Church

5430 Pulaski Avenue

The original founders of Canaan Baptist Church purchased a building at Belfield and Haines Streets where they remained until 1972. The congregation under the pastorate of Rev. Gus Roman secured this present day site from the Westside Presbyterian Church. Here the church was able to add new services, expand existing programs in missions, personal growth, and health care. Today, the church continues to support Christian education as well as outreach programs which emphasize spiritual and civic responsibilities. The current senior pastor is Rev. Derick Brennan.

Turn right on Schoolhouse Lane, right on Wayne Avenue and right on Coulter Street

Coulter Street Colored Schools' Site

Wayne Ave. and Coulter Street



Blackboard exercises at Coulter Street School at Coulter Street near Wayne Avenue in the 1890s. The principal was Elizabeth T. Woodson.

W.E. B. DuBois mentions these two schools in his book, *The Philadelphia Negro*. According to his research in 1895, there were 88 registered in the night school and 84 (45 boys and 39 girls) in the day school. These numbers are comparable to those of the J. E. Hill Public School, where there were 84 boys and 89 girls.

Walter C. Beckett Funeral Home

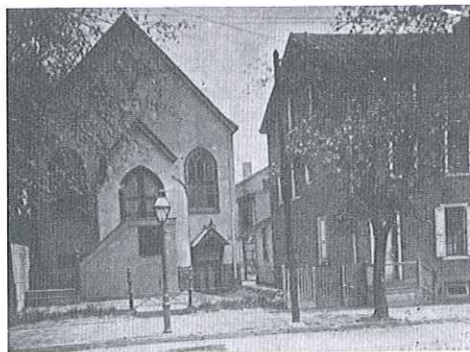
216 Coulter Street

Walter Beckett was an African American mortician active in the AME Church, community organizations, business enterprises, and fraternal organizations. His manuscript collection is housed at Temple University Archives.

Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church

235 W. Coulter Street

This congregation was founded in 1879 under the leadership of Rev. James D. Brooks, a former slave who joined the Union Cavalry at age eleven and later graduated from Howard University. During the late twentieth century, the



Organized in 1879, the value of the church's real estate, including the Home Missionary Building to the west side, adjoining was \$15,900.00.

congregation grew to several thousand and today its members worship in the new sanctuary on Cheltenham Avenue under the pastorate of Rev. Alyn E. Waller. Some services, weddings, and funerals are held in this historic Coulter Street site.

Wissahickon Boys and Girls Club (PHMC marker)

328 W. Coulter Street

This site is the new club which is housed in the building of the former Keyser Elementary School. Renamed the Wissahickon Boys and Girls club in 1981, it moved here from Coulter Street and Pulaski Avenue in 1985.

Turn right on Morris Street, right on Schoolhouse Lane and left on Germantown Avenue

Kappa Alpha Psi

5521 Germantown Avenue

This fraternity is one of nine African American national Greek-lettered organizations. The Philadelphia Alumni Chapter has established the Achievement Academy at this site. This program draws young boys from ages eight to eighteen from around the city to a mentoring program directed by professional African American males who volunteer their time to this initiative. The boys work closely with tutors on home assignments, prepare for standardized testing, attend weekend workshops, and go on excursions outside of the city in order to expose them to unique opportunities and careers.

Trower Catering Company

5706 Germantown Avenue

John Trower owned this company which catered to some of Philadelphia's wealthiest families. Born in 1849 in Virginia, Trower worked as an oysterman in Baltimore, Maryland and eventually came to Philadelphia to work in a taproom. He began to sell food to taprooms and went on to open his own catering business. During his lifetime, he was extremely generous, offering mortgages and loans to members of his



Portrait of Germantown caterer, John Trower (1849-1911)



A 1913 photograph of John Trower's Catering Company at 5706 Germantown Avenue

church and to his employees. He funded the building of the First African Baptist Church and the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Germantown. He organized a building and loan association for African Americans near Downingtown. He owned a great deal of real estate, including his restaurant and catering business in Philadelphia and properties at the Jersey shore. In his obituary of 1911, he is said to have been the wealthiest black in Philadelphia. In 1925, the restaurant became an exclusive catering business used only at society parties.

High Grade Catering and Confectionery

THIRTY-SIX years in business, serving the best families with the choicest delicacies in the line of **Catering and Fine Confectionery**, finds us better prepared than ever before to supply your wants. Weddings, Parties, Receptions, Teas and Private Families served in the most satisfactory manner.

JOHN S. TROWER
5706 MAIN STREET
GERMANTOWN TELEPHONE CONNECTION

Caterer John Trower's advertisement in *Germanopolis* (1908) published by the Independent Gazette

ACES Museum

5803 Germantown Avenue

This museum, under the auspices of curator Dr. A. V. Hankins is the site of a dance hall for African American soldiers during World War II. Today it houses a collection dedicated to black and minority World War II Veterans and their families. A community outreach program incorporates the history and research of the artifacts, costumes, and illustrations of the period.

Turn left at Rittenhouse Street

Mt. Zion Baptist Church

41 West Rittenhouse Street

This Baptist congregation had its early beginnings in the homes of some worshippers in Germantown, under the direction of Hiram R. Revels, an AME preacher. In 1871, the church purchased a piece of land at 30 West Rittenhouse Street. During this time, the church began meeting at the Germantown YMCA. In 1892, the church acquired the property at 41 West Rittenhouse Street, on which was situated a building that served the County Poor House. John Trower donated some of the funds to make this purchase and in 1896, the church building was completed. Stone for the building was donated by William Byrd, a church member, who owned a stone quarry in East Germantown. Byrd was a building contractor and one of the area's most successful businessmen. William Stonewall Jackson, Sr. donated the



A Stained glass window donated by John Trower to Mt. Zion Baptist Church

stained glass window above the front door and Trower donated the stained glass window at the rear. The church retains its original facade. Some of Philadelphia's greatest singers and musicians trained here, including the Dixie Hummingbirds. The current pastor is Dr. Bruce N. Alick.

Joseph E. Hill School

110 West Rittenhouse Street



Elementary school class at the Hill School founded in 1868 by William Cole. This was the first Germantown public school for blacks.

Founded in 1868 by William Cole and renamed for a pioneer African American educator, the Hill School was the first public school for African Americans in Germantown. Although they could legally attend any public school after 1881, the majority continued at the Hill School into the 1930s. The school has since been demolished but a historic marker can be seen inside the parking lot at the site.

Mission of St. Barnabas for Colored People

110 West Rittenhouse Street

(The front and rear buildings are part of Mt. Tabor Baptist Church under the pastorate of Rev. Melvin McAllister)

Dr. Samuel Upjohn, Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and a group of white Episcopalians joined Theodore S. Rumsey of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in his desire to establish a mission for people of color. In 1904, services began here at the former Zion Evangelical Church. In 1907 Rev. E. Sydnor Thomas became the pastor of St. Barnabas and served for almost fifty years. In 1968, the mission church closed and St. Luke's and



Portrait of the Rev. E. Sydnor Thomas, D.D. Rector of St. Barnabas Church who served the parish for forty-eight years.

St. Barnabas became one. Bishop Barbara Harris attained local and national status when she was ordained as the first African American woman Bishop of the Episcopal Church in 1989, breaking a long tradition. She had been a business-woman in Germantown and active for most of her life in the ministry. Her mother was at one time the Choir Director of St. Barnabas Church.

The Colored YMCA (near Greene Street)

132 West Rittenhouse Street

Because the YMCA did not admit African Americans until the 1950s, the black community built the Colored YMCA in 1920. This YMCA also provided lodging for visiting blacks who were excluded from other hostels.

Turn right on Greene Street and continue to Harvey Street and turn right

Dr. William Warrick's Home and Office

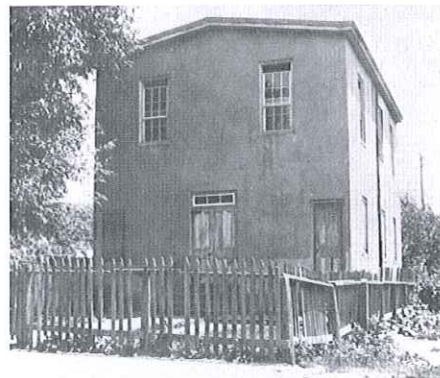
31 West Harvey Street

Dr. Warrick was one of the first African American graduates of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He was a respected physician during his forty-six year practice in the community, treating both black and white patients; however, white patients used the front door and blacks used the back door to his office. His sister Meta Warrick Fuller of Framingham, Massachusetts, studied under Parisian sculptor Auguste Rodin.

Turn left on Germantown Avenue, turn right on High Street, right on Morton Street, and right on Haines Street

Janes United Methodist Church

47 E. Haines Street



Janes ME Church occupied this modest structure until 1898 when it was replaced by a more imposing edifice, which in turn was outgrown by 1926. This plain frame building represents the humble beginnings of one of Germantown's most important churches.

This congregation, originally known as Janes Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1872 as a mission of Zoar M.E. Church, the "pioneer church of African Methodism." It occupied a modest structure until 1898,

when it was replaced by a more impressive edifice, which in turn was outgrown by 1926. The site of the plain frame building represents the humble beginnings of one of Germantown's most important churches. The current pastor is Rev. Dr. Albert D. Mosley.

Turn right on Germantown Avenue

Germantown High School

5819 Germantown Avenue

This predominantly African American High School sits on part of the property of Robert Clymer, the freed slave who inherited a parcel of land from his former owner, Christopher Witt, a Germantown physician. Clymer, who was trained as the physician's assistant, was given the house, land, as well as his freedom at Witt's death.

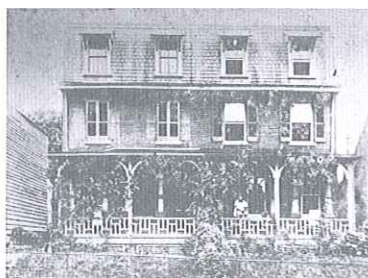
William Fisher Tavern and David Knight Barber Shop

5827 Germantown Avenue

Two early African American businesses stood here. Beginning in 1852, William Fisher operated a tavern while David Knight operated a barbershop in the basement.

George W. Deane Real Estate

5914 Germantown Avenue



These twin houses on East Haines Street near Germantown were pictured in a pamphlet in 1913 to show that black families lived in a dignified and respectable fashion.



This is the office of real estate agent, George W. Deane

This African American real estate agent listed the rental properties that were the first homes in Germantown for many families migrating from the South.

The Colored YWCA (PMHC marker)

6128 Germantown Avenue
(Settlement Music School)

This YWCA for African American women, known as Branch Y, was located here in 1938. Alice Coachman Davis, the first black woman to win an Olympic Gold Medal in track, played and trained on its tennis courts. Membership in other YWCAs was opened to all in 1946 and Branch Y closed in 1952. A historic marker was placed here to commemorate Ora Washington, "Queen of Tennis," and women's basketball star.

Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust (PMHC marker)

6133 Germantown Avenue

This stone structure replaced the original log meetinghouse which dated from 1708. Here meetings were held and taught by the Mennonite minister, Christopher Dock. Inside the Meetinghouse, visitors can see the table upon which the first protest against slavery was signed at the home of Thones Kunders. Tours are available by appointment.

St. Mary's School for Girls

6138 Germantown Avenue
(now an empty lot)



This school for homeless girls was founded by an Episcopalian order of nuns.

This school for homeless African American girls was founded in 1919 by an Episcopalian order of nuns.

New Bethel AME Church

6151-53 Germantown Avenue

Organized in 1859, Bethel AME is Germantown's only pre-Civil War African American congregation. Their first church building was located at Morton and East Rittenhouse Streets. The current church, under the leadership of Dr. Maurice Hughes, is an example of the urban renewal movement of the late 1960s. The church was built over the Rialto Theater, where before integration, African Americans were required to sit in the balcony.

Douglass House Site

6200 Germantown Avenue

John Douglass, a shoemaker and cordwainer, and his wife, Lucy, lived here in a two story log house in the late 1800s. Douglass was an African American abolitionist who subscribed to *The Liberator* published by William Lloyd Garrison. He was a wonderful storyteller and his garden, well known to be a bower of roses and other flowers, was maintained in the very best condition.

Turn left on Washington Lane, left on Wayne Avenue and left on Tulpehocken Street

OICI

260 W. Tulpehocken Street

OIC International was founded by the late Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in the Tioga section of Philadelphia. OICI is based on the principles of his original organization, Opportunities Industrialization Center, a training and manpower center, designed to prepare high

school graduates for trades in the workplace. After establishing OIC in several cities, Sullivan saw the need for people in developing countries to be trained in mechanics, trades, and computer information systems. In 1960, a generous benefactor donated the Italianate Palazzo Mansion, built in 1892, to Reverend Sullivan who trained workers and teachers for Africa. After Sullivan's death in 2003, the mansion remained as part of the Sullivan Trust and was eventually given to IOCI. Today, OICI has branches in Africa, Europe, and Asia. The spinoff organizations from OICI are Teachers for Africa, IFESH (International Foundation for Education and Self Help), and the Sullivan Foundation dedicated to preserving the principles of Leon Sullivan.

Turn left on Germantown Avenue

Mount Airy Tour

Johnson House
(PMHC marker)

6306 Germantown Ave.

The Johnson house, built in 1768, was home to generations of the Johnson Quaker family whose members were active in the abolitionist movement in Philadelphia. During the nineteenth century, the family transformed their home into a safe place where escaping men, women, and children from the southern states could find shelter and refresh themselves as they headed north to freedom. Some escapees told their stories to William Still, the Secretary of the Abolition Society in Philadelphia and he chronicled them in *The Underground Railroad*. This historic home in Philadelphia's Germantown section is a museum and one of the only intact Underground Railroad sites which can be toured.

Cliveden of the National Trust (PMHC marker)

6401 Germantown Avenue

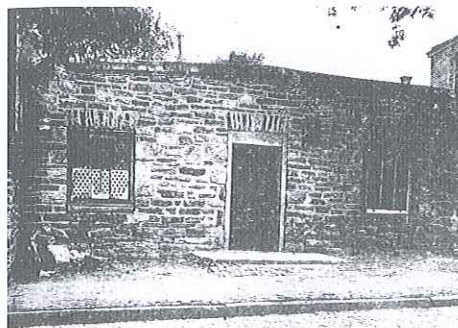
(View from the SE corner of Germantown Avenue and Johnson Street)

Cliveden, built in the 1760's by Benjamin Chew, a Loyalist, was the summer home of the Chew family. The mansion, considered to be one of the most lavish homes of the colonial era sits on six acres. In 1972, the site was donated by the Chew family to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. During his childhood, the African American minister, Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, and his family were held in bondage in Delaware by the Chew family. Richard Allen was subsequently sold to Stokeley Sturgess from whom he purchased his freedom. Cliveden, the site of the Battle of Germantown between the British and the Continental Armies, hosts the annual Revolutionary Germantown Festival, which features a reenactment of the battle. African Americans fought in the Continental Army and at least eight fought in the Battle of Germantown. In the reenactment a Continental soldier named Ned Hector is portrayed by reenactor Noah Lewis. Guided tours are available on a walk-in basis four days a week from April through December, and on request.

Turn left and proceed west on Johnson Street

Grace Baptist Church of Germantown

25 W. Johnson Street



This original mission on East Sharpnack Street was built in 1913. In the 1960s, the church built its new edifice on West Johnson Street.

In the fall of 1888, a small prayer group met on the Keyser Estate. After realizing that the meeting room had become inadequate, they established "Grace Mission," under the care of Zion Baptist Church. The Mission became Grace Baptist Church of Germantown. An edifice on East Sharpnack Street was built in 1915 and due to an increase in membership, the church sought its new site on West Johnson Street in the 1960s where it has remained a leading church in the Germantown community. The Church Community Christian center, a multi-service agency funded by the congregation, has been in operation since 1981. The current pastor is Rev. G. Daniel Jones.

Turn left and proceed west on Johnson Street, turn right on Wayne Avenue and right on Westview Street

Lincoln Drive Community

During the mid-twentieth century, the Lincoln Drive community became a fashionable neighborhood for middle-class and professional African Americans. The large spacious homes and the green country setting provided a suburban-like atmosphere for doctors, lawyers, ministers, and educators. Family names such as Nix, Norris, and Alexander were well known in the Philadelphia circle of movers and shakers in city government and politics.

Sadie Tanner Alexander Home (PMHC marker)

700 Westview Street

Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, niece of the African American painter Henry O. Tanner, was a civil rights leader and activist for women. She was the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in Economics, to be awarded a law degree by the University of Pennsylvania, and to practice law in Pennsylvania. She served as Philadelphia's Assistant City Solicitor from 1928-1930 and from 1934-1938. In 1946 she was appointed to the President's Commission on Civil Rights. In 1978 President Carter appointed her the Chair of the White House Conference on Aging. In 1923,

Sadie Tanner Mossell married Harvard law student, Raymond Pace Alexander, a member of one of the "Old Philadelphia" black families. After receiving her law degree, she joined her husband in private practice. In the 1960s, Raymond Pace Alexander was elected a judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

Turn right on Greene Street, left on Lincoln Drive, left on McCallum

C. Dolores Tucker Home 6700 Lincoln Drive (PMHC marker)

C. Dolores Tucker (1927-2005) was the first African American Secretary of State in the nation. She spearheaded the Commission on the Status of women and championed the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Amendment, policies on affirmative action, and voter registration by mail. In the 1990s, she led a successful campaign critical of the music industry and lyrics demeaning to women, African Americans, and children.

Turn right on Allens Lane, left on Germantown Avenue

Lutheran Theological Seminary 7314 Germantown Avenue

This seminary is one of the hosts of the Annual Preaching With Power Forum which focuses on Black Theology and Preaching. The Forum features distinguished African American preachers and theologians hosted at local churches within the Germantown community. The seminary has launched an academic Chair in honor of Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright, Sr. (former pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Germantown). This Chair for African American Studies assures that an Afrocentric theological perspective is the goal of this initiative.

Chestnut Hill Tour

Approaching Chestnut Hill

New Covenant Church 7500 Germantown Avenue

Situated on a thirty-eight acre campus, once home to the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and Spring Garden College, the New Covenant is a non-denominational church of several thousand members. The church which dates from the 1970s, was founded by a visionary minister and native of Guyana, Bishop Milton Grannum and his wife, Dr. Hyacinth Bobb Grannum. The campus includes the Sanctuary, classrooms for public, private, and charter schools, the Institute for Financial Success, and a Senior Citizen complex.

Chestnut Hill Historical Society

8707 Germantown Avenue

This society works to preserve the unique architectural community and natural resources of Chestnut Hill. The research collection includes information about African American families in Chestnut Hill and Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper of 1864 with references to African American troops during the Civil War.

Turn left on Chestnut Hill Avenue and right on Crefeld Street

Crefeld School

8836 Crefeld Street

The Wilson family is known as one of the first African American families of Chestnut Hill. The original settler, Wesley Wilson, born in 1902, was a migrant from the South with less than a sixth grade education. After arriving in Philadelphia at a young age, he hauled junk, did odd jobs, and attended the Wissahickon Boys Club. He later worked as a school bus driver and caretaker at the Stevens School, which was located on the site presently occupied by the Crefeld School. The Wilson family which included his wife and three children, lived on the school property in the Carriage House. At the time that the Wilson children attended the Jenks public school in Chestnut Hill there were only one or two other students of color. Wesley developed his own small business of lawn care. His son, William, building on his early experience as a helper to his father, became a Landscape Architect and businessman. The firm that he founded, Synterra, Ltd. is composed of architects, site development planners, project consultants, and construction managers with experience in the United States and abroad.

Return to Germantown Avenue for End of Tour

Beyond Chestnut Hill

Eagle Hotel - Edge Hill Tavern on Limekiln Pike

32 Limekiln Pike

In 1682, William Penn gave a land grant of 200 acres to Humphrey Morrey. Morrey's son, Richard left the property to his freed slave mistress, Cremona, and their five children. One of their children, Cremona, married John Montier, another freedman, and in 1772 they built a home on Limekiln Pike, which is now part of a larger private estate. The area, known as Guineatown*, was one of the first African American settlements in this country. It later became known as Edge Hill.

*During the 18th and 19th centuries, small African American communities in both urban and rural areas were referred to by Caribbean and African place names.

This site behind the Maulsby House was built in 1858 by George Corson in order to give abolitionists a place to speak and air their views. The hall could hold several hundred people. Among the abolitionists who spoke here were William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator* and Lucretia Mott, the Quaker minister.

Selected Sites Not On the Tour Route

(Please feel free to visit these sites)

Beckett-Brown Funeral Home	5618 Baynton Street
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Douglass Political Club	E. Sharpnack and Musgrave Streets
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Charles Young Post, American Legion/ War Veterans	Sharpnack and Ross Street
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Upper Germantown Pelham Community

Pelham Road west of Germantown Avenue

Townsend Funeral Home	6610-12 Germantown Avenue
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Historical Tennis Associations

Philadelphia Tennis Club	422 Locust Avenue
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Woodford Tennis Club	424 Wister Street
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Chestnut Hill Businesses

Sans Appelle
(Women's apparel) 7942 Germantown Avenue

Jahaya's Bath and
Beauty (spa) 8138 Germantown Avenue

Portobello Inc.
(antiques and vintage) 9 W. Highland Avenue

Specialty Restaurants

Dahlak (Ethiopian) and
Desi Village (Indian) 5547 Germantown Avenue

Rib Crib (African
American) 6333 Germantown Avenue

Geechee Girl Rice Café
(Southern) 6528 Germantown Avenue

Photographs courtesy of:

Butler Prestige
Photography 6336 Germantown Avenue

Germantown Historical
Society 5501 Germantown Avenue

Layout and Graphics courtesy of:
Stephen Paulmier

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Manuscript and Archive Collectons of:

Germantown Historical Society

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

National Archives and Records Administration

American Philosophical Society

Cover:(top)

Wissahickon Boys Club

(bottom left)

Mt. Zion Baptist Church

(bottom right)

Johnson House

Back cover:

Mennonite Church on Germantown Avenue

Notes

Observations