

Lemon Hill  
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

PA 1010

HABS  
PA  
SI-PHILA,  
234-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Pennsylvania-1

Historic American Buildings Survey

ADDENDUM

100 photos

Lemon Hill  
Lemon Hill Drive  
Fairmount Park East  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1010

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA  
234-

Addendum to:

Lemon Hill  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania  
(as originally recorded)

PHOTOGRAPH

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY
PENNSYLVANIA	PHILADELPHIA	PHILADELPHIA
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME)		HABS NO.
LEMON HILL		PA-1010
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)		
Lemon Hill Drive, Fairmount Park		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
ca. 1799		
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE)		
A good example of a Federal style country house, now restored and open to the public. One of its first owners was Henry Pratt, a well known merchant and horticulturist. The house received its name from the lemon trees, which were among the many varieties of citrus trees grown in the property.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS)		
Stucco on stone walls with dressed granite base and wood trim.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE)		
Approx. 60' (three-bay front) X 40'; two stories on raised granite basement.		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
Front facade: Federal entrance with large fanlight, sidelights, double doors; pair of curving entrance stairs and railing with arrow-shaped balusters; Palladian window at second floor, above entrance. Rear facade: oval pavilion. Porches on both sides of the house.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)		
Center-hall floor plan. Oval parlor and bedrooms in rear portion of the house.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
Restored ca. 1925-26 by Fiske Kimball, the first Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and owner from 1926 to 1955. Restored again 1976		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
The house is presently the headquarters of the Colonial Dames of America, Chapter II.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.)		
Webster, Richard. <u>Philadelphia Preserved</u> . Philadelphia: Temple University. 1976. Leaflet. <u>Lemon Hill</u> , published by Colonial Dames of America, Chapter II.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION	DATE	
Susan McCown, editor, Historic American Buildings Survey	April 18, 1984	

ADDENDUM TO  
LEMON HILL  
Lemon Hill Drive  
Fairmount Park  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1010

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA  
834-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
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Washington D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Addendum to:

one page previously transmitted to the Library of Congress

Location: On a lot encircled by Lemon Hill Drive on all sides but the northeast which is bounded by Sedgley Drive, East Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

Significance: Built around 1800 by Philadelphia merchant Henry Pratt, Lemon Hill is one of the most historically and architecturally important houses in Fairmount Park. Pratt's large, Federal-style villa was designed to serve as a sylvan retreat and stood upon an idyllic site that had once been part of Robert Morris' estate "The Hills." The City of Philadelphia purchased the property in 1844, a decision that ultimately precipitated the formation of Fairmount Park and extended the benefits of a private pleasure ground to the public at large. Fiske Kimball, the Philadelphia Museum of Art's first director, adaptively restored Lemon Hill in 1925 and lived there for three decades.

Description: Standing next to a driveway that extends approximately 225' east of Lemon Hill Drive, Lemon Hill is a two-and-a-half story, hipped-roof house built primarily of stuccoed stone. Its highly-symmetrical, Adamesque plan consists of five rectilinear spaces disposed around one side of a large oval space. At ground level, a high basement made of dressed granite ashlar extends one bay further east and west than the upper stories, allowing it to support porches on these sides. The two stories above are faced with stucco scored to imitate ashlar. With the exception of the south (garden) facade, all walls are three bays wide and pierced by six-over-six-light windows. Sidelights and a large fanlight surround the main entrance, forming a pattern that is echoed above by a Palladian window. The south facade is divided into five bays, employs nine-over-nine-light windows on the first floor, and protrudes to accommodate the oval rooms within. Tuscan-columned porches capped by balustraded decks project from the east and west walls, and a balcony spanning the south wall continues the porches' latticework chinoiserie. On the north (entrance) facade, a double-flight, semicircular staircase leads to the front door. Four evenly-spaced chimneys rise around the center of the roof and a modillioned cornice adorns the roof line. Despite numerous alterations, the interior still contains original fireplaces, moldings, and a marble entrance hall floor. No early outbuildings remain on Lemon Hill's grounds but east of the house lie steps and a pool, apparently built in the 1860s, that may have replaced similar features in the original garden. A ca. 1870 pavilion and several turn-of-the-century recreational buildings are located to the north.

History: Before signing the Declaration of Independence or helping to finance the American Revolution, patriot Robert Morris had started to amass large land holdings in the Northern Liberties, then a rural area outside Philadelphia. He began acquiring property there in 1770 and gradually transformed much of it into a farm and garden that he called "The Hills." By 1799, Morris had gone bankrupt and Henry Pratt bought roughly 43 acres of The Hills at a sheriff's sale. The property included Morris' expansive greenhouse and nearby gardens, assets which Pratt, a successful merchant and real estate speculator, would soon exploit. Pratt's primary residence was in Philadelphia but, like many of his peers, he apparently wished to establish a country retreat on the banks of the Schuylkill River. Within months of purchasing the Northern Liberties lot, he erected Lemon Hill on a site near the greenhouse, overlooking the river (Robbins, p.31).

How much time Pratt spent at his villa is unclear, but an 1825 source testifies that his visits were infrequent by then. In the meantime, he enlarged and embellished Lemon Hill's gardens, arousing so much public interest that he began issuing admission tickets to would-be sightseers. Eager to further capitalize on the riverfront lot, he sold it at great profit to New York merchant Knowles Taylor in 1836. The latter intended to construct coal-shipping wharves along the property's shoreline and may have collaborated with Isaac S. Loyd, a speculative developer whom several nineteenth-century sources credit with advancing the plan. Over the next year, however, a sudden downturn in the economy sent real estate values plummeting and Taylor's wharves remained unbuilt. Neglected since the start of the venture, Lemon Hill deteriorated still further after the Bank of the United States acquired it in trust at an 1840 sheriff's sale.

By 1843, the bank was facing serious financial difficulties and City Councilman Thomas P. Cope perceived that the estate's low market value presented an opportunity: the site was located just north of the municipal waterworks, and by purchasing it the City could avert the sort of industrialization that was contaminating Philadelphia's water supply at other points along the Schuylkill. With the support of numerous citizens, he proposed the establishment of a committee empowered to buy Lemon Hill "on behalf of the city" (Keyser, p.4). The resolution passed, and one year later the City owned the property.

During the 1840s and 1850s, the City rented out Lemon Hill to various tenants including a concessioner who operated a successful beer garden there. Yet the grounds continued to disintegrate, and by about 1854 Morris's greenhouse was a charred ruin. Starting in the Pratt era, Lemon Hill had become

increasingly public in character; though early tenants seem to have been highly territorial, it may have been the tradition of public access as much as growing national interest in urban green-space that finally prompted City Council to officially designate the property a public park in 1855. The City then named the space Fairmount Park, added the neighboring Sedgley estate to it in 1857 and adopted the landscape architects Sidney and Adams' "Plan for the Improvement of Fairmount Park" two years later. This called for Pratt's villa to be repaired and surrounded on all sides but the north by an enormous porch or "piazza." The firm proposed a facelift for the grounds as well, and believed an "old cottage" (perhaps occupied by Robert Morris but no longer standing) to be worth renovating. While the Civil War seems to have interfered with efforts to implement some of Sidney and Adams' recommendations, 1860s photographs show that Italianate features including a piazza were added to the exterior of the house. It is also possible that the course of Lemon Hill Drive and nearby paths was established at this time.

Prior to 1870, two gazebos were erected north of the mansion, and in time for the Centennial a large theater known as the Lemon Hill Music Pavilion was built where Pratt's gardens had once flourished. Concessioners sold refreshments from the house throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, continuing a practice that had started at Lemon Hill and caught on at other villas within the bounds of Fairmount Park. Aside from steps taken to facilitate public use (adding the piazza and basement lavatories), the building underwent few major modifications during the first seventy five years of City ownership.

Fiske Kimball, an architectural historian whose work fueled the Colonial Revival, became the Philadelphia Museum of Art's first director in 1925 and received permission to reside at Lemon Hill. Before moving in, he performed a major "restoration" that entailed replacing the Victorian porches, stairs and cornice with their present counterparts. Although the basis for these changes seems to have been an 1857 illustration, Kimball's work generally reflected as much concern for modern convenience as historical accuracy. Inside, he reopened several original fireplaces but shifted the locations of doorways and mantelpieces, installed bathrooms and a false fireplace, and converted the west porch basement into a garage. The project reached completion in 1926, and Kimball occupied the house until his death in 1955, installing an elevator when climbing the stairs became difficult for him. Meanwhile, a spectacular 1936 fire obliterated the Music Pavilion. In 1957, the Colonial Dames of America assumed stewardship of Lemon Hill and later cooperated in a city-sponsored restoration that occurred in preparation for the Bicentennial. This time, most of the work took the form of re-

roofing, re-stuccoing and smaller repairs, but Fiske Kimball's elevator was also removed. Since then, the Colonial Dames have maintained their commitment to the property.

Sources:

Ives, Amy Cole. "Lemon Hill, Fairmount Park," a report compiled for University of Pennsylvania Professor Roger W. Moss, 1994; includes substantial bibliography and the following appendices: National Register nomination (also by Ives), annotated chain of title, seven nineteenth-century descriptions of Lemon Hill, and Sidney and Adams' Description... (see below).

Keyser, Charles S. "Lemon Hill in its Connections with the Efforts of Our Citizens to Obtain a Public Park," in Lemon Hill: The Papers of Charles S. Keyser and Thomas Cochran Relative to a Public Park for Philadelphia, 1856. Philadelphia: Horace J. Smith (reprint), 1872.

Lemon Hill Files, Fairmount Park Commission, Office of the Park Historian, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Raley, Robert. "Lemon Hill Report." Unpublished manuscript, Fairmount Park Commission.

Robbins, Owen Tasker. "Toward a Preservation of the Grounds of Lemon Hill in Light of Their Past and Present Significance for Philadelphians." University of Pennsylvania Masters Thesis, 1987.

Sidney and Adams. Description of Plan for the Improvement of Fairmount Park. Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, 1859.

Historian: Aaron Wunsch, HABS Summer Historian, 1995.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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