

KEASBY & MATTISON CO., THREE-STORY DOUBLE
HOUSE, PARAPETED GABLE ROOF TYPE
312-314 Randolph Avenue
Ambler
Montgomery County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-6048-AD

HABS
PA
46-AMB,
10AD-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: 312-314 Randolph Avenue, Ambler, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Significance: This house and the others on Randolph Avenue were built in the mid-1920s by the Keasbey & Mattison Company as some of the last units built by the company. These houses were intended for upper-level factory workers and lower-level foremen.

Description: The two-unit duplex is three-stories high, three bays per unit and three bays deep, with a two-story rear block measuring two bays by two bays. The foundations and walls are of locally quarried, rough-cut stone set in irregular courses. The duplex has a full porch on the front elevation, which serves both units and was originally supported by four stone pillars. The porch now consists of masonry or concrete covered in stucco while the deck itself is poured concrete. The frame porch roof is covered in asbestos shingles. On the north side of the building are two side porches, one for each unit, located at the intersection of the two-story ell and the main block.

The building has three chimneys, two of which are brick with beltcourse. This chimney detail is typical of two or three story level Keasbey & Mattison houses. The third, a two-flue chimney, is located along the rear parapet, as is typical of the other houses on Randolph Avenue. The chimney is of unknown material.

The main entry doors of the two-unit duplex are set close together and are covered by the front porch. Each door is topped by a one-light transom. Side doors are found in the two-story rear sections through the side porches. The majority of the windows in both units are one-over-one double-hung sash replacement windows. Exceptions are the basement windows which are a mix of single pane replacement and older three pane awning windows. The rear fenestration is composed of two sets of paired windows on the third floor, two windows on each floor of the two story addition, and two between the two basement doors on the north wall of the two-story rear section.

The building has a gable roof with parapets in each gable end. Four different parapet styles are found on Randolph Avenue, all of which are adorned with wooden moldings and metal flashing. In three of the styles, a round window opening is found in the center of the parapet. This opening is cased with stone matching that in the walls; originally a round two-over-two window was found in each opening. (At 312-314 Randolph Ave. the window has been removed and the opening covered over and a keystone shaped plaque is mounted in the window opening.) In the fourth parapet style, a tall narrow window opening resembling the

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letter "I" is found. There are a pair of gable-roofed wall dormers on both the west and east walls at the third floor level, flanking the brick chimney.

History: The various styles of three-story double houses on Randolph Avenue were constructed during the housing campaign of the 1920s and were designed by Philadelphia architect John Bothwell. Part of a large building boom by Keasbey & Mattison, the duplex at 312-314 Randolph Ave. was one of the houses built in the final stage of the company town's development. The roof style, with slight variations, was borrowed from an earlier era of company housing. This house and the other three-story duplexes of various styles enforce the standardization in housing styles typical of Keasbey & Mattison houses by drawing on earlier examples of similar style. Simultaneously, this house represents design innovation which may be attributable to the involvement of a trained architect.

The parapeted gable duplex-type was adopted on Rosemary Avenue houses, ca. 1900. However, the parapet shapes on Rosemary and Randolph avenues are slightly different. In addition, the Rosemary Avenue houses have entry rather than full front porches, though each has the same side porches. The three-story duplex on Rosemary Avenue measures six bays by six bays, having more windows though they are the same approximate dimensions as those on Randolph Avenue. Rather than the paired windows found on the third-floor rear of the Randolph Avenue examples, these have two single windows, one for each unit on the third floor rear. Also in the rear, the Rosemary Avenue houses have basement doors set close together in the middle of the rear wall. The doors are sunken and reached by steps as on Randolph Avenue. On Rosemary Avenue there is a pyramid roofed enclosure with stone walls. A pair of louvered windows set in a single opening is found in the south wall of one enclosure. The chimneys, too, are arranged differently on Rosemary Avenue. All three are closest to the front (or north) facade. A stone chimney rises from the center of the parapet, and is flanked by two brick chimneys with similar brickwork to Randolph Avenue.

The housing along this street was intended for factory employees, though, not necessarily for those working in the manufacturing sections of the plant. The rent for these houses would be slightly higher than those just behind on Lower Church Street, but would have indoor plumbing and garage stalls in a common garage on the rear alley.

Sources: Sanborn Insurance Maps. Map of Ambler, 1909, 1916.

Newton Howard, interview by author, Summer 1994.

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Historian: Thomas Heard, HABS, summer 1994.