

TACONY

Neighborhood is bounded by Delaware River, Cottman Ave., Magee St., &
Frankford Ave.
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6692

HABS
PA-6692

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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TACONY

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NOTE: Tacony's street grid does not lie true to the compass. For the purpose of locating buildings in this report, the roads running NE to SW (ex. Keystone Street and Torresdale Avenue) will be the N-S axes and those running SE to NW (ex. Longshore Avenue and Disston Street) will be E-W axes. See field notes for maps.

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Significance: The area within the City of Philadelphia known as "Tacony" is historically significant for its mid-nineteenth-century foundation as the southern terminus of the Philadelphia and Trenton Railroad, but more so in its physical reconception and enlargement as a model industrial village integrally linked to the Keystone Saw Works. The saw works was founded by Henry Disston in 1840 and he began relocating the business to Tacony in 1872. In the twentieth century, the physically independent industrial town was overtaken by municipal expansion, however Tacony maintains an urban rhythm and density—and consequently an identity—distinct from the rest of the city.

Description: The Tacony neighborhood is located in the southern part of northeast Philadelphia. It is roughly bounded by the Delaware River, and Cottman, Magee, and Frankford avenues.

Historical and Architectural Information:

Rural Town: Pre-Industrial Tacony

Described as "a village of Swedes and Finns on the west bank of the [Delaware River] river" in 1679, until the mid-1840s Tacony remained a pastoral hamlet.¹ While the bulk of wealthy Philadelphians' fine eighteenth-century estates were positioned northwest of the city along the Schuylkill River and in the direction of Germantown, the open land north/northeast of the city generally evolved as the location of a scattering of country houses as well as a variety of more modest farmsteads. These residences and the neighboring working farms were casually positioned in the landscape and tied together by a tangle of country roads. Their form and location was based more on property divisions and topography than on the rational linearity of the urban grid to the south. While the dominant landscape for well over a century, this bucolic mix of farms, country houses, and rural lanes began to change in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

¹Harry C. Silcox, "Chapter 1," *The History of Tacony, Holmesburg, and Mayfair: An Intergenerational Study*, ed. Harry C. Silcox (Philadelphia: Brighton Press, Inc., 1992), 1.

Tacony's first movement towards denser growth occurred in 1846 when William H. Gatzmer received a charter for the Philadelphia-Trenton Railroad.² The residents of Kensington—south of Tacony—initially blocked the railroad's passage through their community into Philadelphia proper.³ As a result of this situation, the railroad stopped in what became known as "Tacony Station."⁴ At Tacony Station, the railroad tracks turned towards the river and stopped at a depot. Passengers boarded ferries at a nearby wharf for transport to docks in Philadelphia; a large hotel—the Washington—was constructed by the railroad near the depot and dock for the convenience of railroad customers.⁵ In anticipation of Tacony's new importance as a transportation hub, William Gatzmer and three associates purchased most of the land between the new railroad and the Delaware River.⁶ An 1849 map of the area depicts blocks platted in the area, however, beyond the hotel, a tavern, a handful of houses, and transportation-related structures, nothing else particularly substantial was constructed in Tacony at this time.⁷

The next chapter in Tacony's pre-industrial history was the foundation of the St. Vincent's Society, intent on founding a Catholic orphan's asylum (orphanage). The Society—with members drawn from two German Catholic parishes in Philadelphia—purchased forty-nine acres of land in Tacony between October 3, 1855 and January 1856; ten acres were purchased from William Gatzmer's holdings.⁸ In order to obtain funds for a building, they subdivided the land into blocks based on the modest existing town grid and advertised the lots as the "Tacony Cottage Association;" two-hundred were sold by November 22, 1855.⁹ An 1856 newspaper advertisement encouraged buying land in Tacony in this manner:

You can find there also the most beautiful and select river-cottage lots, that means building lots for pleasure-gardens and summer homes along the Delaware...Here one can finally create a second paradise on earth. Far from us be all cheating. Every gain that comes from the sale of these lots, will be used for the erection of an Orphan Asylum, School, etc. Therefore, the buyers have nothing to do with land-speculators, doing rather a good work out of which a great benefit will result for them and their families. The situation of the land is most beautiful and very healthful. It offers a splendid view of the surrounding territory and the Delaware. This new settlement, with every advantage is connected, is accessible at each hour of the day, by Railroad and by Steamboat, a depot and wharf being nearby. There is also a plankroad, which will run through the streets of the town.

Ye workingmen and citizens, go to Tacony on May 13, and the cramps caused by too much sitting will leave you forever. Ye all who pay high

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴S. F. Hotchkin, *The Bristol Pike* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1893), 57, for terminus and 63, for place-name "Tacony Station."

⁵Silcox, "Chapter 1," 2.

⁶Hotchkin, 63.

⁷As reproduced in "A Century of Service: A Pictorial History of Saint Leo Church in Tacony, Philadelphia," 1984, 14, Tacony Branch Library, Free Library of Philadelphia.

⁸Francis Xavier Roth, *History of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, Tacony, Philadelphia: A Memoir of its Diamond Jubilee, 1855-1933* (Philadelphia: "Nord-Amerika," Press, 1934), 20.

⁹Ibid. See field notes for an early plan of the lots sold by the Tacony Cottage Association.

rents in a silly corner of the city and breathe pestiferous air, soon losing dollars and life, come to Tacony!

Ye doctors, who have become the second nature of the present generation, but put the people under the earth many years too early with your sweet and sour quack-pills go to Tacony! And if you are men of learning, you will soon discover where the salt- and sulphur-fountains are to be found, from which alone people can expect a natural restoration to health.

Ye innkeepers, who have failed, go to Tacony likewise! Start gardening, and work that you won't get too fat. The land is very good and the fruit of the smallest melon is much larger than that of the thickest and highest oak-tree. You need not wrap up sausages for the afternoon; Lagerbeer waits for you with a ready table. And finally, honest people only are invited, for then Tacony will always be free of lawyers.¹⁰

Despite the brisk sales, institutional development, ultimate connection of the railroad to Philadelphia, and favorable press regarding the healthfulness and peacefulness of the locale, growth in Tacony remained sluggish. In 1862, a platted and semi-graded street grid roughly eight blocks by four blocks extended between the railroad and the river.¹¹ About forty residences were scattered throughout the grid. The railroad station, a public school, "City Hotel & Store," a lumberyard, a wheelwright shop, and St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum were the only other structures depicted in Tacony. The Tacony Plank Road connected the town to Wissinoming and Frankford to the south and Holmesburg to the north. It ran parallel with the railroad to its west except for a bypass around the Tacony grid; at the time only two of Tacony's roads ran west through open farmland to intersect the Bristol Pike (Frankford Avenue). A late-nineteenth-century interview with John Morgan, a longtime Tacony resident noted: "when he came here from Southwark [in 1847] he found simply farms and residences of gentlemen."¹² Tacony's landscape remained decidedly rural in nature and somewhat isolated until after the Civil War and the arrival of Henry Disston and his saw works.

Tacony and Its Industrial Reconception¹³

Henry Disston founded the Keystone Saw Works in Philadelphia in 1840. By 1859, business had grown to include 150 men at his Front and Laurel streets factory, many of whom he brought over from iron-working regions of his native England. Disston was introduced to the Tacony area when his brother purchased lots from the Tacony Cottage Association in the mid-1850s. Presumably after the family ceased summering in Tacony, Henry Disston

¹⁰"Advertisement," *Philadelphia Democrat* 10 May 1856, as quoted in Roth, 20–21.

¹¹Samuel L. Smedley, *Smedley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1862). Five sets of maps—drawn from atlases and fire insurance publications—were reviewed in researching Tacony. These maps were published in the years 1862, 1876, 1888, 1910, and 1928. The first reference to a particular map will include a full citation. Following these initial notations, citations for the maps will not appear in the text. Unless otherwise noted, the information related to that year has been drawn from the aforementioned map.

¹²Hotchkin, 59.

¹³Unless otherwise noted, information in this section, "Tacony and Its Industrial Reconception," is condensed from Harry C. Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work: The Disston Saw Works and the Tacony Community of Philadelphia* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

decided to begin moving his entire saw operation to Tacony and began to do so in 1872, a decision expedited by the cramped quarters in center city and a massive fire in 1864. In preparation for this move, the Disstons purchased as much Tacony acreage as possible.

In moving Henry Disston & Sons Keystone Saw Works to comparatively remote Tacony, Disston gained room to physically expand his plant as needed, however, he was also able to found and nurture an insulated industrial community. While his motives for this goal are not wholly known, it has been suggested that Henry Disston's familiarity with English utopian experiments as well as the devout Presbyterianism practiced by the family contributed to its development. Regardless of the impetus, Henry Disston might be considered among the most socially conscious of the urban industrial elite coalescing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Prior to the move to Tacony, he wrote of the owner-worker relationship:

This [company and community of workers] is what I live for. We all ought to live and make each other happy. God knows the greatest desire of my life is to see all that I am connected with happy. And I believe to this day that there is not a happier or more contented family in the world. I say family because I consider you and myself of one and the same family. There has (sic) never been any wants that I could afford to alleviate but that I have endeavored to do so as I would my nearest kin...The object of men and Boss should be mutual, the Boss to give all he can when times will permit, and the men under a close competition to be willing to help meet the market...Whatever money I make is spent in improvements to facilitate us in putting goods into the market at such prices that we will have work as long as any house.¹⁴

After Henry's 1878 death, the Disstons maintained close associations with their workers as most of the male family members apprenticed in the saw works shops and afterward they frequently visited the town and industrial complex. To reinforce worker loyalty, Disston assured religious freedom—not always the case in remote industrial communities—offered limited benefits in times of sickness and death, and established a system of hereditary apprenticeship and job placement. The Disstons believed that contented workers were better workers and their involvement in bettering the lives of their employees through industrial paternalism moved beyond the walls of the factory and the realm of wages. While labor unrest did crop up from time to time, the relatively healthful and lower-density community and its labor force remained comparatively quiet.

Henry Disston did not move his entire saw works to Tacony in one campaign. He opened an experimental saw factory in 1872 and over the next twenty-seven years moved all of the operation's components—including steel making—to the town. Accordingly, Tacony grew in response to increased industrial capacity. In 1876, virtually all development was contained within the original street grid between the railroad and the river; the population at the time was around 200.¹⁵ The blocks west of the railroad were platted by that time, however except

¹⁴Henry Disston to his "fellow workers," 13 November 1867, as quoted in Silcox, *A Place...*, 15–16.

¹⁵*City Atlas of Philadelphia by Wards, Complete in 7 Volumes*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1876); Silcox, "Chapter 1," 4, for population.

for a few blocks of Tulip Street and what would become Keystone Street near their intersections with Franklin Street (Longshore Avenue), none of these roads were opened. The first saw works buildings were located on the south side of Penn Street (Knorr Street). The Disston holdings did not yet include the property to the north, which included the old railroad spur extending to the river. This glimpse of early industrial Tacony did not last—in the following decade Tacony blossomed.

A major feature of this growth was increased residential construction stemming from a population increase as the Keystone Saw Works expanded and other industries located to Tacony. After 1876, the center of Disston Tacony moved west across the railroad tracks, though, for the time being it remained east of Torresdale Avenue. The Disstons set up a building and loan association in 1874 that offered relatively easy terms for mortgages. This institution was so successful and grew so large that by 1892 a second one had to be established by law. Upon moving to Tacony, workers and their families had three options in residence choice. They could purchase a lot from the Disstons and build their own house, or they could rent or buy a house constructed by the Disstons. Ultimately, the Disstons built around 600 houses of varying size and arrangement. Associated with all of the property sold or rented by the family were restrictions aimed at making the residential side of Tacony more peaceful. The residential deed restrictions, later described as “anti-urban,” included such provisions as no alcohol sale or consumption and no foul-smelling or steam-driven production. Other provisions barred churches from ringing bells and, generally, the construction of a courthouse in order to lessen the possibility of politically-driven disturbances. A Music Hall was privately constructed in 1885 on Longshore Street (Longshore Avenue) at Edmund Street. This structure included three storefronts on the ground floor, a large community hall on the second floor, and meeting rooms and library space on the third floor. It anchored Tacony’s commercial and civic life for a number of years.

By 1888, open space, which ultimately became “Disston Park,” was secured in two blocks along the railroad between Jefferson Avenue (Tyson Avenue) and Longshore Street.¹⁶ Many of Tacony’s local elite built houses along the park including Jonathan Marsden, Superintendent of the Steel and Rolling Mills, at the northwest corner of Longshore and Keystone streets, and Thomas South, police magistrate and Disston real estate agent, at the corner of Washington Street (Disston Street) and Keystone Street. An 1893 history of the area noted:

Nearly all of the gentlemen named have their residences fronting or adjacent to the Park. This is a feature in the view of Tacony worthy of notice...it is the first thing that attracts a visitor when leaving the [train] cars and makes a pleasing foreground to display the fine houses which front upon it.¹⁷

¹⁶*Baist's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Complete in One Volume* (Philadelphia: G. Wm. Baist, 1888). The park was elongated early in the twentieth century by Hamilton Disston, one of Henry Disston’s sons who for a time held a position as Fairmount Park commissioner. The park’s northern and southern boundaries are currently Princeton Avenue and Levick Street, respectively. Iatarola, 102.

¹⁷Hotchkin, 58.

In addition to blocks of houses large and small, Tacony also boasted a police substation by 1888—located east of the railroad near the railroad station, a new elementary school—the Henry Disston Memorial Public School, and no fewer than five churches, including the Disston Memorial Presbyterian Church, St. Leo the Great Catholic Church, Episcopal Church of the Holy Innocents, Tacony Baptist Church, and Tacony Methodist Church. St. Vincent’s Orphan Asylum continued to expand on its site occupied since 1855. Two years later, on a petition by local residents, a firehouse was constructed adjacent to the police substation for an engine and company.¹⁸

Developed first to service the industrial plant, from early on the Disston Water Company provided limited service to the town. Henry Disston initially had water piped in from springs a few miles away and stored in large tanks located west of the railroad tracks around what would later become the intersection of Disston and Glenloch streets.¹⁹ These tanks provided a gravity feed for a water main along Longshore Street, then Tacony’s principal thoroughfare.²⁰ By 1889, another water supplier, the Tacony Water Company, had been founded and was negotiating the purchase of “the Disston water plant” with plans to extend the network of mains.²¹ Whether this consolidation occurred is uncertain as an 1890 article notes that the Disston Water Company was adding tanks for better service.²² A Tacony historian has noted that the Disstons controlled the Tacony Water Works when it was sold to the City of Philadelphia in 1922. Regardless of the company designation, it appears that from the beginning the Disstons had continued controlling interests in the town’s water service. Similarly, a conglomerate headed by Disston right-hand man Thomas South founded the Tacony Fuel Gas Company in 1888 and controlled it until municipal service amalgamation in the twentieth century. Hamilton and Jacob Disston, and Thomas South, and a few others were also involved in the chartering of the Suburban Electric Light Company of Tacony in 1890.²³ Despite \$200,000 in capital and claims that “3,000 lights would be assured at once,” very few people were ultimately able to have their houses wired until the first decades of the twentieth century with the founding of the Disston & Sons electrical plant in 1911, mainly created to service the Disston shops.²⁴ The bulk of the earlier electrical installation appears to have been restricted to some of the factories, streets, and civic buildings.

While the town’s initial industrial growth was tied directly to Henry Disston & Sons—which by 1899 had entirely relocated to Tacony—its association with production soon attracted other companies. In 1888, Gillender & Sons Glassworks, located just south of Aramingo Road (State Road) at Magee Street (Magee Avenue), was the only other major industry in Tacony. By 1910, roughly fourteen blocks in the vicinity of the river from around the Lardner Point Pumping Station—whose new buildings went up starting in 1904—to Bleigh

¹⁸*Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide* (hereafter PRERBG), 22 May 1889, for petition, and 19 March 1890, for location.

¹⁹*Take a Trip through Time: Northeast Philadelphia Revisited*, ed. Lillian M. Lake and Harry C. Silcox (Holland, PA: Brighton Press, Inc., 1996), 183.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹PRERBG, 30 January 1889.

²²PRERBG, 8 October 1890.

²³PRERBG, 20 August 1890.

²⁴PRERBG, 23 July 1890, for figures.

Avenue—one block west of Cottman Avenue—were jammed with industrial plants.²⁵ These included: Philadelphia Leather, Philadelphia Rubber, Tacony Crucible Works, Suburban Electric, Lardner Point Pumping Station, Tacony Iron Company, Erben-Harding Company Woolen Mills, Disston Iron and Steel Works/Saw and File Works, Delaney & Company Glue Manufacturers, and L. Martin Company, Lamp Black. The location of so many manufacturers in the area was only possible with the opening of streetcar service to Tacony in 1894, which brought in the necessary additional workers.²⁶ While many people began traveling to Tacony daily for employment, many non-Disston workers also moved there and increasingly took up residence in blocks outside of Disston-owned-and-rented Tacony. These blocks were purchased by housing speculators and, for better or for worse, Disston control over the new housing market was reduced. These factors lessened the isolated nature of Disston Tacony, though the loyalty of and benefits for Disston workers remained largely in place until the company's sale outside the family in the middle of the twentieth century.

The first decades of the twentieth century saw the filling-in of previously vacant blocks, largely west of Torresdale Avenue, with unbroken rows and groups of twins and that part of Tacony began to take on a character more like other regions of the industrial city. After World War II, like many other places dependent on industrial employment, the Tacony neighborhood experienced economic decline. Late in the 1950s and early in the 1960s, the construction of Interstate 95 effectively severed “residential Tacony” from its former industrial counterpart along the river. Despite these physical and mental changes, the core of Disston's company town, west of the Interstate and railroad remains intact and well-kept, and a distinct section of northeast Philadelphia.

Commercial Tacony

After 1872, the Disston “reinvention” of Tacony established Franklin Street (Longshore Avenue) as the center of commercial activity in Tacony. The blocks west of Tulip Street became filled with all types of business including a department store, bakeries, restaurants, a bank, a music hall, and early in the twentieth century, an early movie house.²⁷ In 1894, the streetcar linked Tacony to the rest of the city. In addition to allowing for a less insulated social and work life for people inside and outside Tacony, it also worked to reorient the commercial focus of Tacony.²⁸ A 1928 map depicts four solid blocks of commercial establishments between Tulip Street and Torresdale Avenue along Longshore Avenue, however the blocks of Torresdale Avenue north and south of Longshore were also filled-in with unbroken rows of stores.²⁹ Generally speaking, the newer Torresdale structures were larger than their earlier counterparts and reflective of both popular period revivals early in

²⁵ *Atlas of the 23rd, 35th, & 41st Wards of the City of Philadelphia: Compiled from Private Plans, Actual Surveys & Official Records in the Bureau of Surveys* (Philadelphia: J. L. Smith, 1910); Louis M. Iatarola and Siobhán Gephart, *Images of America: Tacony* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 38, for date of the new pumping station.

²⁶ Silcox, “Chapter 1,” 8.

²⁷ See Iatarola for various views and descriptions of commercial Longshore Avenue.

²⁸ Iatarola, 43.

²⁹ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Maps for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*, vol. 27 (New York, 1928), 2636, 2637, 2655, 2656.

the century as well as more modern trends in building design. In addition to stores, the recently constructed “new” Liberty Theatre—the “old” one having been on Longshore between Vandike and Hegerman streets—emphatically proclaimed the ascendancy of Torresdale Avenue as Tacony’s main street.³⁰ Torresdale Avenue remains the major local thoroughfare through Tacony and continues to be lined with a variety of commercial establishments.

Residential Tacony

As with any urban neighborhood, housing stands as an important characterizing feature. Initially conceived in the mid-nineteenth century as a collection of rural cottages and summer houses, it became distinctively urban by early in the twentieth century. Between Torresdale Avenue and the railroad the housing stock was balanced between single houses, row houses, and twins. West of Torresdale Avenue in the direction of the Mayfair neighborhood, the open space of Disston Tacony was somewhat reduced with the construction of unbroken rows and sets of closely spaced twins throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Photographs associated with this report highlight some of Tacony’s variety in residence type.

- 4900 block, Knorr Street, north side between Tulip and Keystone streets.³¹

Originally known as “Mary”—likely after Mary Disston, Henry Disston’s wife and a major landowner in the area after his death—in 1876 this street was one of the few open, but still unnamed, west of “old Tacony” across the railroad tracks. Given that the road was open so early and the houses are both of frame construction (not the norm in Tacony) and have abstracted Gothic window details in the attic level, it is likely that this group of six twin houses was constructed not long after 1876. Both sides of the block were fully developed by 1888.

The houses each contain two principal stories with an attic half-story. The first floor appears to contain two rooms in the house proper and a single-story third room, presumably the kitchen, at the rear.³² The second floor is likely laid-out similarly to the first floor in terms of principal rooms. As is the case with older frame dwellings, the twins on this block of Knorr Street have born a great deal of cosmetic change, but appear to be decently cared for. All of the houses have received new sheathing that ranges from asphalt shingle to vinyl siding. Roofs, windows, doors, and porches have all been replaced as well. Within each pair, the presence of two separate dwellings has been made more evident through these alterations.

³⁰Iatarola, 48, for location of original Liberty Theatre.

³¹*Sanborn*, 2636.

³²In the “Residential Tacony” section, speculative information about house plans is derived from photographs and the 1928 *Sanborn Maps*.

- Jonathan Marsden House, 4921 Longshore Avenue, northwest corner of Longshore Avenue and Keystone Street.³³

Franklin Street (Longshore Avenue) became the main street for Henry Disston's utopian vision. It contained many of the important early civic, commercial, and religious structures and extended westward from a point near the Keystone Saw Works. Jonathan Marsden moved to Tacony in 1875 to oversee the planning and construction (1875–1879), and later the operation, of the Disston steel works; his family moved there shortly thereafter.³⁴ In 1876, Franklin Street extended west to the Bristol Pike and a few blocks total of Tulip Street and the as-yet-unnamed Keystone Street south of Franklin were opened. It is likely, then, that the block of Keystone north of Franklin was opened around 1876. Similarly, the movement of Marsden's family to Tacony surely required the construction of a house. Given these developments, and the Marsden House remaining an excellent example of Second Empire residential architecture—still in vogue in the decade or so following the Civil War—it is likely that his house was constructed sometime shortly after 1876.

While fully free-standing, the form of the Jonathan Marsden House takes its cues from contemporaneous attached or semi-attached single-family dwellings. The house is composed of what was referred to as “two buildings,” a front and a back. The front building is three stories and appears to be two-rooms deep. It likely has a passage running along the west side that includes the stair. The rear building is two stories and covered by a shed roof. The arrangement of the front and back buildings, with one continuous wall (west) and one setback wall at the back building (east), is identical to the footprint of attached rows, in which case the setback allowed for light and ventilation in interior rooms. As a free-standing house, the setback is filled-in with a covered porch. The only other feature taking advantage of the large lot and detached nature of the house is a three-sided bay window on the first floor facing east towards the park. The front building contains features typical of Second Empire design—a mansard roof underpinned by a bracketed cornice and robust window hoods on the third floor. The front porch, facing Longshore Avenue, is articulated with thin piers with gothic-like spandrel tracery between and delicate scrollwork extending up to the cornice. The house sits about five feet above the street and is surrounded by a rusticated stone wall topped by a chain-link fence.

- 6700 block, Marsden Street, west side between Unruh Avenue and Knorr Street, “Battleship Row.”³⁵

The row, whose nickname is drawn from its seemingly impregnable presence on the west side of Marsden Street, was located on a street honoring Jonathan Marsden, the first Superintendent of the Disston steel works. The block's presence would have been particularly notable when constructed as it was the first large row built west of

³³*Sanborn, 2637.*

³⁴*Silcox, A Place...*, 8.

³⁵*Sanborn, 2653, 2654.*

Torresdale Avenue.³⁶ Virtually nothing was constructed on the west side of Torresdale Avenue in 1888 aside from these houses, indicating that it was probably constructed sometime around that year. The row was built by the Disstons for sale to or rent by their employees and a post-1888 photograph depicts a neat line of modest two-story brick structures.³⁷ (fig., Iatarola, 12) The row is comprised of what were originally twenty-five attached two-story, four-room brick dwellings. The houses are simply articulated, though they do have corbelled brick and pressed metal cornices. Differentiation between the units was initially achieved through the pairing of uniform wood porch openings and corbelled brick and pressed metal pinnacles breaking through the parapet line. The porches have been heavily altered, some have been replaced with masonry bases and metal supports. A rusticated stone wall, present since the row's construction, runs along Marsden street, broken periodically by stone piers framing the steps up to the porches. The row remains well cared for and appears to be fully occupied. Some of the brick fronts have been painted.

- 6600 block, Tulip Street, west side between Magee and Unruh avenues, "Castle Row."³⁸

This grouping of three rows gained its nickname from their previously castle-like appearance, only vestiges of which remain today. As originally constructed, each row contained nine attached houses unified in one composition. They were completed by 1888. (fig., Iatarola, 13) The two end units were three stories, with the third floor contained under hipped roofs with front-facing parapet crow-step gables. The center dwelling was a full three stories and further emphasized with a large parapet gable. Each of the two flanking two-story houses had a decorative parapet rising almost a full story. These three central units were further emphasized with second-story oriel windows. The intermediary units were two stories and topped by a crenellated parapet wall. This parapet wall, when coupled with the eclectic "towers" at the center and ends resulted in a vaguely castle-like ensemble.

Overall, these houses were larger and more finely articulated than many of their contemporaries. Very few of the rows and groupings of twins in Tacony display this degree of inventiveness, and they may have been directed towards rental and purchase by Disston supervisors or better-paid workers. They contain two and three stories with single story rooms appended to the rears. While still maintained and inhabited, many of the dwellings' whimsical elements have been lost. Independent expression has overcome a desire to maintain each group of nine houses as a single ensemble. Most of the parapet walls and oriel windows have disappeared and some of the houses have been stuccoed or covered in formstone; varied windows, doors, awnings, and other details further obscure the units' former relationship.

³⁶Iatarola, 12.

³⁷Iatarola, 12.

³⁸*Sanborn*, 2635.

- 4800 block, Rawle Street, south side between Hegerman and Tulip streets³⁹

Originally known as “Hamilton”—probably after Hamilton Disston, one of Henry Disston’s sons—this offset block of Rawle Street contains five sets of identical twins that have been almost uniformly altered since their construction, which occurred sometime between 1876 and 1888. An historic photograph of this block depicts what were five-room side-by-side brick duplexes. (fig., Iatarola, 11) A rectangular two-story core one room wide and two rooms deep was backed by a small single-story room, probably the kitchen, followed by a frame rear porch on the first floor. Each of the houses was entered by means of a small single-story vestibule appended to the middle of the long exterior wall. A small frame porch extended between the vestibule and the front wall of the house.

The walls are laid in common-bond brick with a corbelled pinnacle breaking through the brick corbelled cornice, underscoring the presence of two separate houses. The front-facing second-story windows are topped by decorative brick segmental arches. The original front-facing windows were large double-hung windows with decorative upper sashes and two-pane lower. These have been replaced with a variety of multiple window arrangements. The picketed fences surrounding the houses in the early photograph have given way to decorative iron ones. All of the houses have had their porches extended around to the front and now bear L-shaped plans. Almost all of the dwellings have seen the single-story vestibule raised another story, probably in order to contain later bathroom construction. These five twins remain in fair-to-good condition.

- 6940 and 6942 Keystone Street, west side between Knorr and Disston streets⁴⁰

Constructed sometime between 1888 and 1893, this double house—designed to mimic free-standing suburban dwellings popular at the time—is the finest expression of Queen Anne residential architecture in Tacony. (fig., Iatarola, 12) An 1893 publication noted that “George Fredericks and Hugh Muller occupy the double house with its higher tower belonging to Judge South, and near his own residence.”⁴¹ Thomas South’s large Second Empire dwelling—with a formerly turreted single-story Queen Anne addition fronting Disston Street—stands on an adjacent lot. All three residences front onto Disston Park.

Nos. 6940/42 Keystone Street contains two houses with similar footprints individualized by means of a turret, gables, and an oriel window. At its base, the overall footprint is cruciform with each dwelling having an L-shaped “front building” of three stories with a two-story recessed “back building;” both houses have a single-story room at the rear. The overall composition is dominated by an asymmetrical massing of parts. The southern unit is dominated by a three-story turret, octagonal on the first and second stories and circular on the third. The turret was originally topped by a now-missing open porch covered by a tall conical roof. A ground-level porch wraps around the turret and provides access for the set back front door. The northern unit is dominated by a large

³⁹*Sanborn*, 2636.

⁴⁰*Sanborn*, 2637.

⁴¹*Hotchkin*, 57.

half-timbered front-facing gable at the third story, which overhangs a half-timbered oriel window on the second. A small side porch—now enclosed—provided access to this unit. The first two stories of the entire structure are of brick with the third and attic stories covered in fish-scale shingles and half-timbering. The brick is nicely laid with corner quoins and decorative window surrounds. Fanciful corbelled brickwork survives on the chimneys. The structure remains in good condition. Nearly all of the original window sash survives—in most cases bearing multiple lights on the upper sections and single panes on the lower.

- 6700 block, Hegerman Street, west side between Rawle and Knorr streets.⁴²

This row of nine modest attached houses was constructed some time between 1888 and 1910. Given their affinity to other two-story houses from the first and second decades of the twentieth century, they were probably constructed sometime shortly before 1910. (see fig., Iatarola, 22) The eight extending along the block from Rawle Street are all two stories. They have a slightly larger footprint than other houses of this type containing, perhaps, three rooms from front to back on the first floor—the center room being lighted on account of the ell—and two or three on the second floor. They have simply articulated fronts arranged in two bays; the window lintels are brick segmental arches. Extruded brick corbelling starting between the first and second floors terminates above the cornice line in what were once decorative pinnacles. The ninth house, on the north end of the row, was built at the same time given that the exterior details and overall dimensions are similar. It is entered on its long side by means of a small extruded vestibule extending out into a side yard present in lieu of a rear yard. Beyond casing in the cornices and pinnacles and changes to windows, doors, and stoops, the row remains in good condition and has had little change exacted on it.

- 6600 block, Vandike Street, west side between Magee and Unruh avenues.⁴³

This block of Vandike Street contains modest two-story brick houses common throughout Tacony in both pairs—as on this block—or in longer attached rows. Like the 6700 block of Hegerman Street, west side, these twins were likely constructed sometime in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Historian: James A. Jacobs

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⁴²Sanborn, 2636.

⁴³Sanborn, 2635.

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