

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 4200-06 Ridge Avenue
Postal code: 19129 Councilmanic District: 4

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Odd Fellows' Hall; Palestine Hall; Prince Hall Masonic Temple
Current/Common Name: _____

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building Structure Site Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown
Current use: Unknown

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1868 to 2003

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1868; alts. 1913; reno. 1940

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: _____

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Henry J. Becker

Original owner: Independent Order of Odd Fellows

Other significant persons: _____

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Philadelphia Historical Commission Date 3/12/2018

Name with Title Staff of the Historical Commission Email Laura.DiPasquale@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch St, 13th Floor Telephone 215-686-7660

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 3/12/2018

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 3/16/2018

Date of Notice Issuance: 3/16/2018

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Mark E. Sherman

Address: 3502 Scotts Lane

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19129

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for parcel 067N090015 at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue begins at the southwest corner of Ridge and Midvale Avenues. The boundary extends approximately 66 feet west along the south side of Ridge Avenue; thence approximately 140 feet to the south; thence following the curve from E River Road onto and along Midvale Avenue approximately 175 feet to the place of beginning.



Figure 1: Parcel boundary of 4200-06 Ridge Avenue. Source: City of Philadelphia Dept. of Records, CityGeo.

The most recent deed of sale (from the Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons Prince Hall Origin to Mark E. Sherman, recorded 1/23/2003), which identifies earlier landmarks and land owners, describes the property as such:

All that certain lot or piece of ground, situate on the Southwest side of Ridge Avenue, as now laid out of the width of 60 feet at the Falls in the 38th Ward of the City of Philadelphia. Beginning at a point on the side of said Avenue and the center of the arch of a stone bridge over a small river being a corner of land now of Michael Arnolds; thence extending by said Arnolds land 37 degrees 38 minutes West 58 feet 8 ½ inches to a stone; thence by the same South 7 degrees 30 minutes West 66 feet 3 1/8 inches to a point; thence by ground of Louis Lissot [sic] North 61 degrees 16 minutes West 79 feet to a point a corner of ground conveyed by said Louis Lissot and wife to John T. Wilson, M.C.; thence by said ground of said John T. Wilson North 28 degrees 44 minutes East 150 feet to said Ridge Avenue and thence along said Ridge Avenue South 61 degrees 16 minutes East 66 feet to the place of beginning.

6. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION



Figure 4: Oblique view of the former Odd Fellows' Hall, situated at the intersection of Ridge and Midvale Avenues (all photographs from August 2017, unless otherwise noted).

The former Independent Order of Odd Fellows' (I.O.O.F) Hall at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue, constructed in 1868, is a freestanding three-story stuccoed stone building with a front-gabled roof and projecting first-floor storefront. It is located at the prominent corner of Midvale and Ridge Avenues, just northeast of Kelly Drive and the Schuylkill River, in the East Falls neighborhood of Philadelphia. The main block of the building—the portion located beneath the gable roof—is four bays wide by seven bays deep with a nearly double-height second floor, causing it to stand out in the context of the primarily two and three-story rowhouses that comprise the mixed-use blocks of East Falls' core. A slightly recessed three-story section with a flat roof extends from the rear of the main block. Although the massing and fenestration of the building are relatively simple, smooth-stucco corner caps (formerly quoins, see Figure 5 and Figure 6), window hoods over the front windows, and deep eaves provide additional architectural definition to the building.



Figure 5: A c.1900 photograph of Odd Fellows' Hall shows an early configuration of the storefront. It also shows exposed quoins and a stone panel inset below the peak of the roof. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Chadwick Collection (Collection 1844), "Pictures: Falls of Schuylkill. No. 3."



Figure 6: Odd Fellows' Hall c. 1917 showing storefront alterations. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Chadwick Collection (Collection 1844), "Pictures: Falls of Schuylkill. No. 3."

North Elevation



Figure 7: The primary, north, elevation faces Ridge Avenue.

The primary elevation along Ridge Avenue is four bays wide, with a projecting first-floor storefront, and a prominent front-gabled roof with flared eaves. The storefront, which extends the full width of the first floor of the front elevation and curves around the corner onto the east elevation, features a paneled base and large plate-glass windows topped with transom windows. A central first-floor storefront entrance is currently boarded up and blocked with a metal railing, leaving a corner entrance as the primary access point for the first-floor space. The storefront was altered to its current configuration between 1900-1917 (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). The second and third floors each feature four regularly-spaced, six-over-six, wood, segmental-arch windows topped with projecting segmental window heads. While roughly the same width, the second-floor windows are considerably taller than those at the third floor. A tall gable end with projecting eaves caps the front façade.

East Elevation



Figure 8: East elevation along Midvale Avenue.



Figure 9: Side entrance along Midvale Avenue. Historically, this entrance was used to enter the fraternal hall space upstairs, as indicated by the drawing on the right, which was included as the cover image of the *History of Palestine Hall* pamphlet created by the Freemasons of the Palestine Lodge that utilized the space from 1870 to 1975.

Along the east elevation (Midvale Avenue), the main volume of the building is six bays wide. On the first floor of the north end, the projecting storefront extends for two bays. A non-historic aluminum door with transom and sidelite, accessed by a set of concrete steps, aligns with the third column of windows above. Three one-over-one segmental arched windows finish the first-floor of the main block. The slope of the ground along the east elevation reveals a slightly-projecting smooth-stuccoed base. Two infilled basement windows and a cellar bulkhead are visible along this elevation. A shallow three-story addition is set back from the plain of the main block. The only penetration of the east elevation of the addition is a pedimented entrance with pilasters which surrounds a set of double doors accessed by a series of concrete steps.

South Elevation

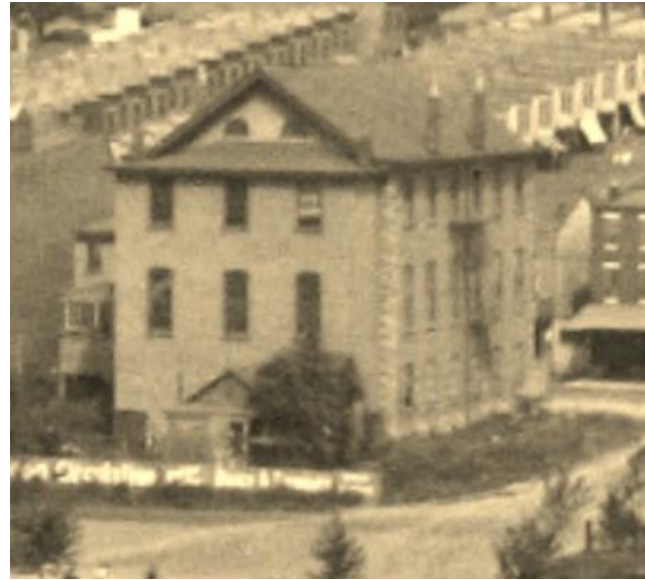


Figure 10: (Left) South elevation facing E River Road and Kelly Drive, 2017. (Right) South elevation c. 1905. Source: Frederick Reith Photograph Album, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Collection No. Bd.86.R.2782.

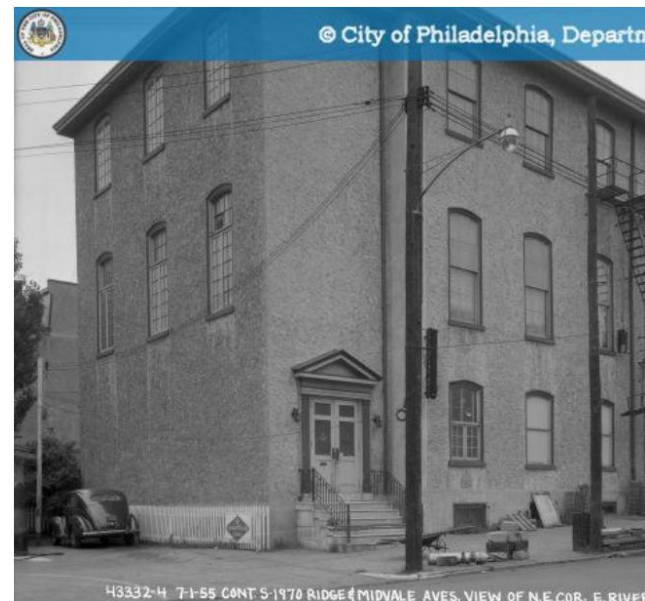


Figure 11: (Left) Bird's-eye view of 4200-06 Ridge Avenue, looking north, 2017. Source: Pictometry. (Right) "Ridge & Midvale Aves. View of N.E. Cor. E River Rd & Midvale Ave." July 1955. Source: Phila. Dept. of Records.

The rear, south elevation of the building is dominated by the three-story extension, which also features a tall brick chimney. The gable roof of the main block is visible above the slightly hipped roof of the addition. Two half moon windows are set into the visible gable end. The south elevation of the addition is three bays wide, with no windows at the first floor, and segmental arched window openings at the second and third floors into which are set several different patterns of windows. A photograph from 1955 (Figure 11, right) suggests that the original windows on the second floor were 20-lite casements topped with eight-lite transoms, with 20-lite casements at the third floor. A central one-story entrance bay with gabled roof used to append the rear of the ground floor, and a low wall formerly divided the building from the street (Figure 10, right). The remainder of the parking lot behind the building has never been built upon.

West Elevation



Figure 12: West elevation, as visible from Ridge Avenue.

The west elevation of the main block is six bays deep, and dominated by rows of regularly-spaced, arched, six-over-six windows at the second and third floors. At the first floor, the first and second bays do not contain windows, and the window in the sixth bay has been infilled, as evidenced by the remaining sill.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The property at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code, the property satisfies Criteria for Designation H, I and J. The property:

- (H) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City;
- (I) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history;
- (J) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

Constructed in 1868 for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and owned and used by several different fraternal organizations, community groups, and commercial tenants, the building at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue exemplifies the social, economic and historical heritage of the East Falls community, satisfying Criterion J. Under Criterion H, the large building stands out in the context of primarily two and three-story rowhouses and is situated prominently at the intersection of Ridge and Midvale Avenues—the heart of the East Falls community. Under Criterion I, the property may be likely to yield archaeological information owing to its position at the historic confluence of the Ridge Avenue (a Native American trail and early road), a creek (now Midvale Avenue), and the Schuylkill River.

Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fraternal organizations were ubiquitous. In addition to playing an important role in the social lives of millions of Americans, fraternal organizations contributed to the stability and vitality of communities nationwide by providing mutual support and insurance to their members in the days before trade unions, employer health insurance, and government-sponsored welfare programs.¹ Fraternal halls themselves often served as community anchors, renting or donating space for community events, political rallies, dances, plays, and other gatherings. Typically located along communities' primary thoroughfares, fraternal halls often featured ground-floor commercial or retail space, allowing organizations to supplement their income and contribute to the economic life of their communities. Such was the case with 4200-06 Ridge Avenue, which was constructed by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in 1868 and used simultaneously by the Odd Fellows and Freemasons, as well as numerous other fraternal organizations and community groups, for over a century.

While fraternal organizations existed in early America, membership was limited and did not have widespread appeal. Based on British models, the earliest "friendly societies" in America were the Freemasons (est. 1715) and Odd Fellows (est. 1817), which accounted for the majority of fraternal membership in the country until after the Civil War, when the number and size of fraternal organizations increased dramatically.² The postbellum period was one of immense social and cultural change in the United States. As immigration grew and the country transitioned from an agrarian to an industrialized society, fraternalism in America expanded. Scholars argue that the popularity of fraternal organizations was, in part, a reaction to increasing

¹ Paden Vargo, "Vale Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall." National Register of Historic Places Form. Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2016.

² Harriett W. McBride, "The Golden Age of Fraternalism: 1870-1910," *Heredom* 13 (2005), accessed February 20, 2018, <http://phoenixmasonry.org/Golden%20Age%20of%20Fraternalism.pdf>.

individualism, isolation, and danger in the new American economy.³ With their focus on hierarchy, secret rituals, and social solidarity, fraternal organizations (or secret societies, as they were otherwise known), provided “asylum from a disordered and uncertain world.”⁴ In addition to more general goals of promoting friendship, community, and character development, most fraternal orders also provided material benefits to members and their families in the form of insurance to cover sickness and funeral expenses, paid for by annual dues.⁵ Before the inception of government programs such as Social Security, only churches rivaled fraternal organizations as large-scale providers of social welfare in the United States.⁶ The *Odd Fellow's Companion*, published in 1869, explained the importance of sickness and death benefits to the overall community, not just the individual members:

The improvident man and the spendthrift, it is true, will be no charge on the community while health prevails; but when sickness overtakes him, and bad habits predispose him for numerous attacks to which the temperate and industrious are less liable—the public must keep him and his family; and should he die, the people must bury him. Odd Fellowship and its kindred saves the people this burden, for while in health provision is voluntarily made against such certain events.⁷

Men of all social and economic classes joined fraternal organizations. Despite the explicit intent of fraternity, organizations were largely segregated by both race and gender, and often were grouped along religious or ethnic lines as well.⁸ Separate African American lodges formed, and women's auxiliaries appended local orders or established their own societies.⁹ By 1901, there were approximately 600 fraternal organizations in the United States, with an aggregate membership of five and a half million, almost half of which were members of the Freemasons, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, or the Knights of Pythias.¹⁰ Just twenty years later, in 1920, approximately eighteen million Americans (or approximately one-third of all adults) belonged to a fraternal society.¹¹ It is important to note that membership in one fraternal organization did not preclude membership in another; in fact, most of the new orders formed in the 1870s and on were founded by men who already belonged to another society.¹²

In East Falls (known historically as Falls of Schuylkill, or, earlier, Falls Village), the development of the community and the fraternal organizations therewithin mirrored national trends. Owing to its ideal position along the Schuylkill River and just to the south of Wissahickon Creek, the early history of East Falls was one of fishing and small-scale industry. Prior to the arrival of European settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, East Falls had been home to a Lenni

³ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 389.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Donald Swartz, review of *A Young Man's Benefit: The Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Sickness Insurance in the United States and Canada*, by George Emery and J.C. Herbert Emery, *Labour / Le Travail*, Vol. 48 (Fall, 2001), pp. 292-294.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "The Odd Fellow's Companion: Devoted to the Interests of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and General Literature," Vol. IV (1868-1869), 756.

⁸ Mary Ann Clawson, "Fraternal Orders and Class Formation in the Nineteenth-Century United States," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 04 (1985), 673.

⁹ B. H. Meyer, "Fraternal Beneficiary Societies in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 5 (1901): 656-57.

¹⁰ Meyer, 650.

¹¹ David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill N.C.: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹² Albert C. Stevens, *Cyclopaedia of Fraternities* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1907), 284; and Arthur Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1924), 442.

Lenape fishing settlement. Early European settlers constructed mills along the Wissahickon and utilized Ridge Road to connect various fishing and milling locations with Philadelphia.¹³ The 1730s saw the peak of stagecoach travel along Ridge Road (now Avenue)—“the Great Road from Philadelphia to Reading.”¹⁴ A tavern and inn were constructed at the foot of Indian Queen Lane and Ridge Road to serve travelers. A resort fishery called Fort St. David’s was established by a group of wealthy Philadelphians in 1732 and remained in operation until after the Revolution.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the year-round population remained relatively sparse until the advent of railroad lines through East Falls in the 1830s and 1840s brought the possibility of additional industry—and employment—to the area. In 1848, Powers, Weightman & Harrison Chemical Company opened on Ridge Avenue, followed a few years later by Dobson Mills on Scotts Lane. As was common for the time, both Powers & Weightman and Dobson Mills built homes for their employees.¹⁶ Several breweries were also established in the Falls. Homes were followed by churches, businesses, schools, and, in 1868, a fraternal hall.



Figure 13: Detail from John Hills' 1808 *Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs*. Source: Zebooker Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

¹³ Steve Fillmore, "East Falls Timeline," East Falls House, accessed March 13, 2018, <http://www.eastfallshouse.com/east-falls-timeline/>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Cecilia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael Gubicza, comps., *East Falls Historical Society Photograph Album and Scrapbook Collection* (Philadelphia, PA: Historical Society of Pennsylvania Hidden Collections Initiatives, 2012).



Figure 14: Detail from 1862 Samuel Smedley *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Section 20* showing the early development of East Falls, including Powers & Weightman's Chemical Works, several breweries, a hotel, and churches of various denominations. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Map Collection.



Figure 15: Detail from 1868 *Map of Farms and Lots Embraced Within the Limits of Fairmount Park*. The newly-constructed Odd Fellows' Hall is visible at the center of the map. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia, Item #:MFMPAA00001. Available: <http://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/zoom/40473>

Although lodges of various orders began organizing in the Falls of Schuylkill in the 1850s and early 1860s, construction of any large, purpose-built meeting space appears to have been postponed until after the Civil War. Established in 1852, the Falls of Schuylkill Lodge No. 467, International Order of Odd Fellows, commissioned the construction of a fraternal hall at the intersection of Ridge Avenue and Midvale Avenue in 1868. Henry J. Becker, the builder of many of the original homes in the Falls, was responsible for the construction of the Hall.¹⁷ Inspired by the Odd Fellows, Becker and a group of 30 other local Freemasons—who had previously journeyed to neighboring Roxborough, Manayunk, or Germantown to attend meetings—petitioned to form a Masonic lodge in the Falls.¹⁸ Assuming the name “Palestine Lodge,” the Freemasons began holding their meetings in a small room on the third floor of the Odd Fellows’ Hall in 1870.¹⁹

Palestine Lodge quickly invested in their meeting space, purchasing \$100 worth of stock in Odd Fellows’ Hall Association in 1871.²⁰ Although the Freemasons began thinking about securing a new meeting space in the 1890s, and again in the early 1900s, they continued to jointly occupy the Hall with the Odd Fellows for decades. It was standard practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for multiple fraternal lodges to share one meeting space, and for men to be members of multiple fraternal societies at once.²¹

With fraternal activity at an all-time high in the Falls of Schuylkill (and the country) in the 1890s, in addition to the well-established lodges of the I.O.O.F and Palestine Lodge Freemasons, lodges of the Improved Order of Red Men (Wyalusing Tribe), I.O.O.F Manchester Unity, Knights of the Mystic Chain, Ancient Order of Foresters of America, Junior Order of United American Mechanics, and the Daughters of Liberty all took advantage of the large meeting space at the Odd Fellows’ Hall.²² During this period, newspapers focused entire sections on the goings-on of secret societies and other fraternal and community organizations. The popularity of fraternal organizations in lower northwest Philadelphia was highlighted in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article from February 1894 titled, “Secret Societies: How Manayunk, Falls and Roxborough Lodges are Flourishing.” The article noted that around 400 representatives from various lodges were in attendance at a recent “smoker” given at the Odd Fellows’ Hall.²³

In addition to holding events of the various lodges that utilized the space, Odd Fellows’ Hall played host to a variety of events and mass meetings for the East Falls community. For decades, Odd Fellows’ Hall acted as a de-facto town hall for the 28th (later 38th) Ward, hosting mass meetings for both Democratic and Republican political parties.²⁴ One-off events such as a “well-rendered musical and literary programme [sic]” presented by St. Bridget’s Young Men’s Literary Institute in 1888, or a “bounteous New Year’s supper” for 200 children put on by the

¹⁷ William Thorpe Jr., *History of Palestine Lodge No. 470 Free and Accepted Masons A.D. 1870-1934*(1934).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. The *History of Palestine Lodge No. 470* explains that the origin of the name Palestine Lodge was lost on the members as of the date of publication in 1934.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Moore, 122.

²² Numerous newspaper articles from the 1890s-1910s identify the Falls of Schuylkill Odd Fellows’ Hall as the meeting place for various other fraternal organizations. “Up The River: Work of the Lodges at Manayunk and Roxborough,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia), November 19, 1893. “Secret Societies: Up The River. How Manayunk, Falls and Roxborough Lodges Are Flourishing,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 11, 1894, 14.

²³ “Secret Societies: Up The River. How Manayunk, Falls and Roxborough Lodges Are Flourishing,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia), February 11, 1894, 14.

²⁴ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27, 1879, 8; *The Times* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), October 4, 1882, 3; *The Times* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), October 12, 1897, 12; “Patriotism and Party Politics,” *The Times* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Nov 1, 1901, 7.

Salvation Army in 1896 were the spice of life in a small community.²⁵ And, at least twice, in 1891 and 1903, Odd Fellows' Hall served as the meeting place for strike negotiations between textile workers and their employers at Dobson Mills, negotiations that were widely reported and highly contentious.²⁶

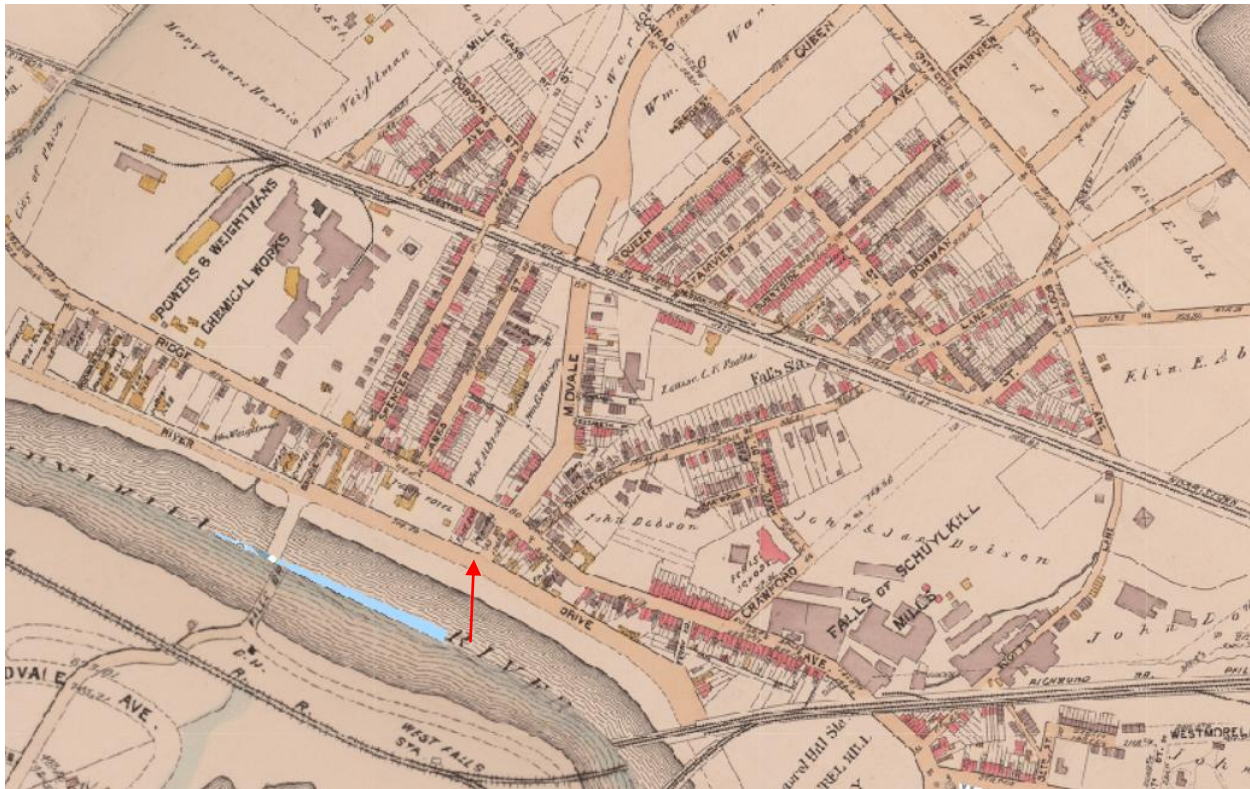


Figure 16: Detail of the 1895 G.W. Bromley *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, showing Odd Fellows' Hall's placement along the primary intersection of the Falls community, and roughly equidistant between Dobson's Falls of Schuylkill Mills and Powers & Weightman's Chemical Works. Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Beyond contributing to the social, cultural, and political life of the Falls, the mixed-use nature of Odd Fellows' Hall allowed the building to contribute to the economic vitality of the community. Writing in 1916, prominent Masonic architect Harry Percy Knowles explained the logical reason for designing mixed-use buildings, rather than halls devoted solely for fraternal use.²⁷ He noted that, "The object of the stores and offices is to provide additional revenue... to care for the upkeep of the building without burdensome taxation of the lodge members."²⁸ Throughout its early years, a barbershop, haberdashery, and photography studio occupied Odd Fellows' Hall. In 1913, Palestine Lodge—which had purchased controlling stock in the Odd Fellows' Hall Association the previous year—commissioned architect Matthew E. Dunlap to prepare plans for

²⁵ "Enjoyable Entertainment at the Falls," *The Times* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) · 15 Feb 1888, Wed · Page 2; *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) · 01 Jan 1896, Wed · Page 6

²⁶ "Strikers Counterplotting," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 18, 1891, 3. "Break in Textile Strikers' Ranks," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 28, 1903, 4; "Break in Textile Strike: Nearly 30,000 Persons in Philadelphia Likely to Return," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 28, 1903, 2. "Textile Workers' Strike Broken," *Altoona Times*, July 14, 1903, 1.

²⁷ Note that not all fraternal buildings were mixed-use, but for smaller communities such as East Falls, the mixed-use nature of such buildings was practical.

²⁸ Meyer, 658.

alterations and/or additions to Odd Fellows' Hall.²⁹ Although those alterations are not specified, early photographs suggest that the present curved storefront was constructed at that time (see Figure 5Figure 6), and the entrance to the hall shifted from the rear to the side of the building. By 1917, at least, the simply-named "Falls Hardware," had set up shop in the ground-floor commercial unit, a space it continued to occupy well into the mid-twentieth century.

In 1924, having secured a controlling interest in the Odd Fellows' Hall Association, the Palestine Lodge Freemasons officially took control of the Hall, renaming it "Palestine Hall."³⁰ While the reason for the dissolution of the Odd Fellows' Falls of Schuylkill lodge is unclear, the closure followed national trends. Between 1920 and 1930, membership in the Odd Fellows declined nationwide, suffering further blows with the advent of the Great Depression and the introduction of the New Deal. Many people could not afford membership fees, and once the social reforms of the New Deal began to take effect, the need for the social work of the Odd Fellows declined.³¹ Unlike the Odd Fellows, membership in Masonic orders such as Palestine Lodge did not peak until the late 1950s.³² Palestine Lodge continued to operate until 1974, when the Association dissolved, and the building was sold. Its place in fraternal history did not end there however. The Palestine Hall Association sold the building to the Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons Prince Hall Origin of Philadelphia, a black fraternal organization, better known as Prince Hall Masons, who have a deep and rich history in Philadelphia.³³ Little information is available on this particular lodge, but the Prince Hall masons occupied the Hall until 2003, when it was sold to a private owner, and the Hall's role in the fraternal lives of the East Falls community came to an end.

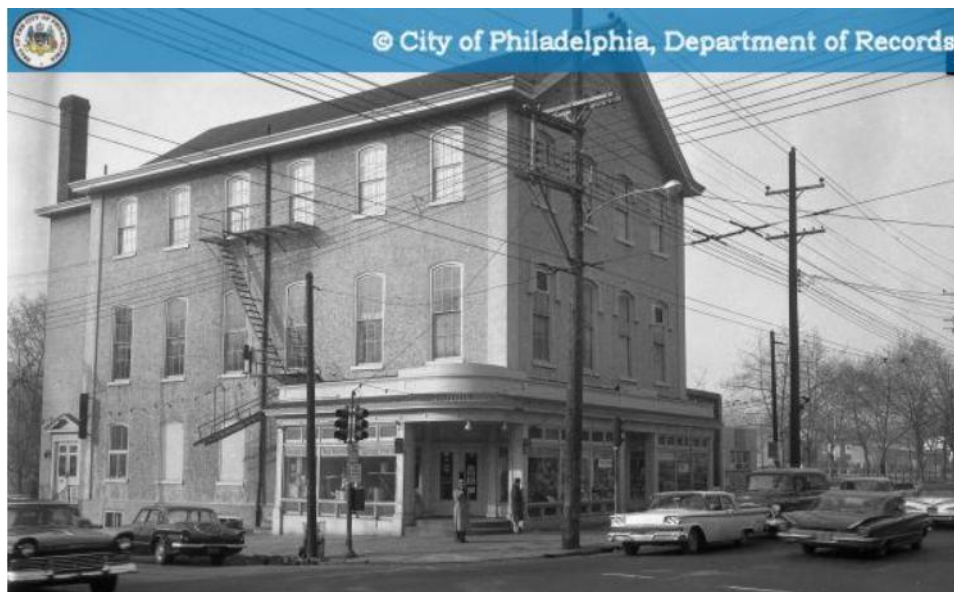


Figure 17: 4200-06 Ridge Avenue in 1961. Source: Philadelphia Department of Records.

²⁹ *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 28, n. 30, p. 480 (7/23/1913), Matthew E. Dunlap (1881-1970), preparing plans (alterations and/or additions), Odd Fellows' Hall Association.

³⁰ Thorpe, 34-35.

³¹ Stephanie Müller, *Visit the Sick, Relieve the Distressed, Bury the Dead and Educate the Orphan: the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. A Scientific Work in the Field of Cultural Studies*. vol. 10, Cultural Studies in the Heartland of America Project (Trier: Wiss. Verl. Trier, 2008).

³² "Masonic Membership Statistics 1924-2016." Masonic Service Association of North America. Accessed February 15, 2018. <http://www.msana.com/msastats.asp>.

³³ Philadelphia County Deed Book DCC 576, p. 387, 2/19/1974; <http://www.princehall-pa.org/history-phms2.html>; <http://mason.gmu.edu/~ihs/s92essay.html>

Criterion H: Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City.

The former Odd Fellows' Hall at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue is the gateway to the East Falls community. Situated at the prominent intersection of Ridge and Midvale Avenues, the large, free-standing building stands out in a context of primarily two and three-story rowhouses. In the core of East Falls, only church buildings exceed the Hall in scale. Currently, as historically, it is the largest building along Ridge Avenue between Ferry Road and Calumet Street. Largely unchanged since its construction in 1868, the Hall is an established visual feature of the neighborhood.



Figure 18: c. 1905. Source: Frederick Reith Photograph Album, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Collection No. Bd.86.R.2782.



Figure 19: View towards the rear of Odd Fellows' Hall from Kelly Drive and Midvale Avenue.

Views of Odd Fellows' Hall from Midvale and Ridge Avenues, the primary arteries of the East Falls neighborhood:



View south along Midvale Avenue.



View west along Ridge Avenue.



View east along Ridge Avenue.

Criterion I: Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history

The property at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue may be likely to yield information in pre-history or history owing to its position near known Native America settlements, at the confluence of an historic creek and the Schuylkill River, and along Ridge Avenue, an early Native American trail turned colonial turnpike. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the area around present-day East Falls was home to the Lenni Lenape villages of the Nittabakonck and Coaquannock.³⁴ Writing in the 1860s, historian Charles V. Hagner claimed that the Falls was “no doubt...the last place deserted by the Indians who inhabited this part of the country; it being the head of tide-water, and, consequently such fine fishing ground...”³⁵ Hagner further stated that the significance of the “Falls of Schuylkill” to the Native Americans “...is proved by the fact of innumerable Indian relics that have been found in the vicinity.”³⁶ The property is located along Ridge Avenue, a former Native American trail known as the Perkiomen Path, which was later turned into a colonial turnpike.³⁷ Early maps and deed descriptions indicate that the property was located adjacent to a creek/culvert (in the area of Midvale Avenue, Figure 21), which connected to the Schuylkill River immediately to the south of the property. Furthermore, a portion of the property at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue has never been built upon. Although Midvale Avenue was widened in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the rear portion of the property—closer to Kelly Drive and the Schuylkill River—has remained undeveloped, creating a greater archaeological potential.

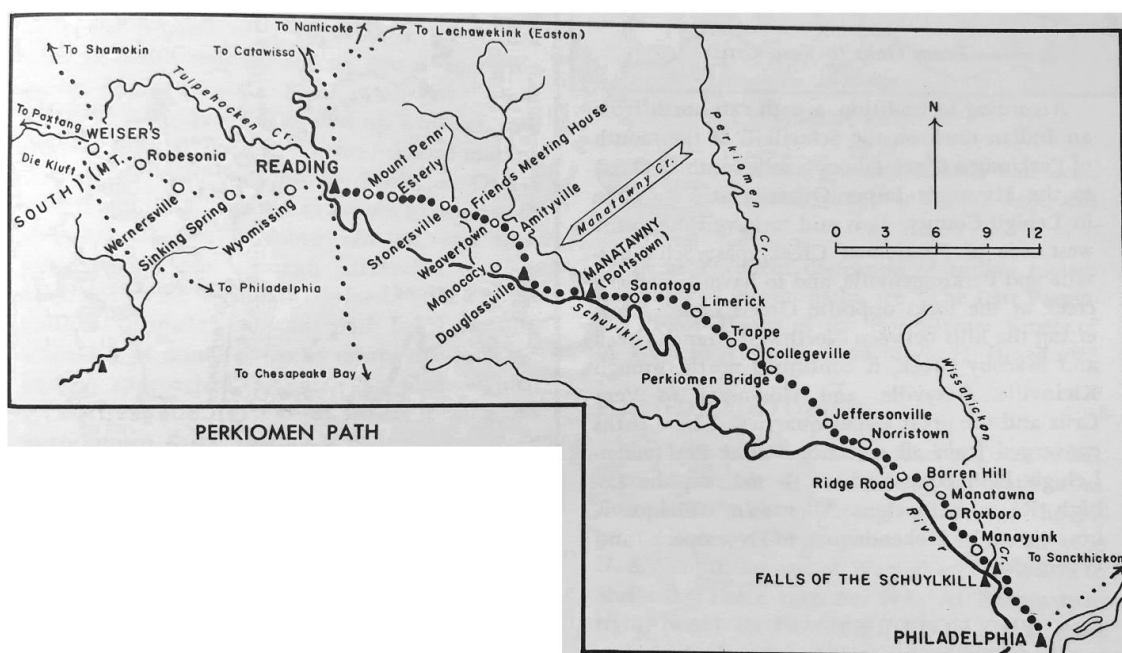


Figure 20: In present-day Philadelphia, the Native American Perkiomen Path aligned with Ridge Avenue from Franklin Square on Race Street in Philadelphia to the Falls of the Schuylkill (East Falls), the Wissahickon, Roxborough, and Manatawna, before exiting Philadelphia and extending northwest to Reading and beyond. Source: Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indian Paths of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1987), 127.

³⁴ John L. Cotter, Daniel G. Roberts, and Michael Parrington, *The Buried Past: An Archaeological History of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 27;

³⁵ Quote from Charles V. Hagner, *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Manayunk, Schuylkill and Lehigh Navigation Companies, Fairmount Waterworks, etc.* (Philadelphia, Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1869), 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indian Paths of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1987), 127.

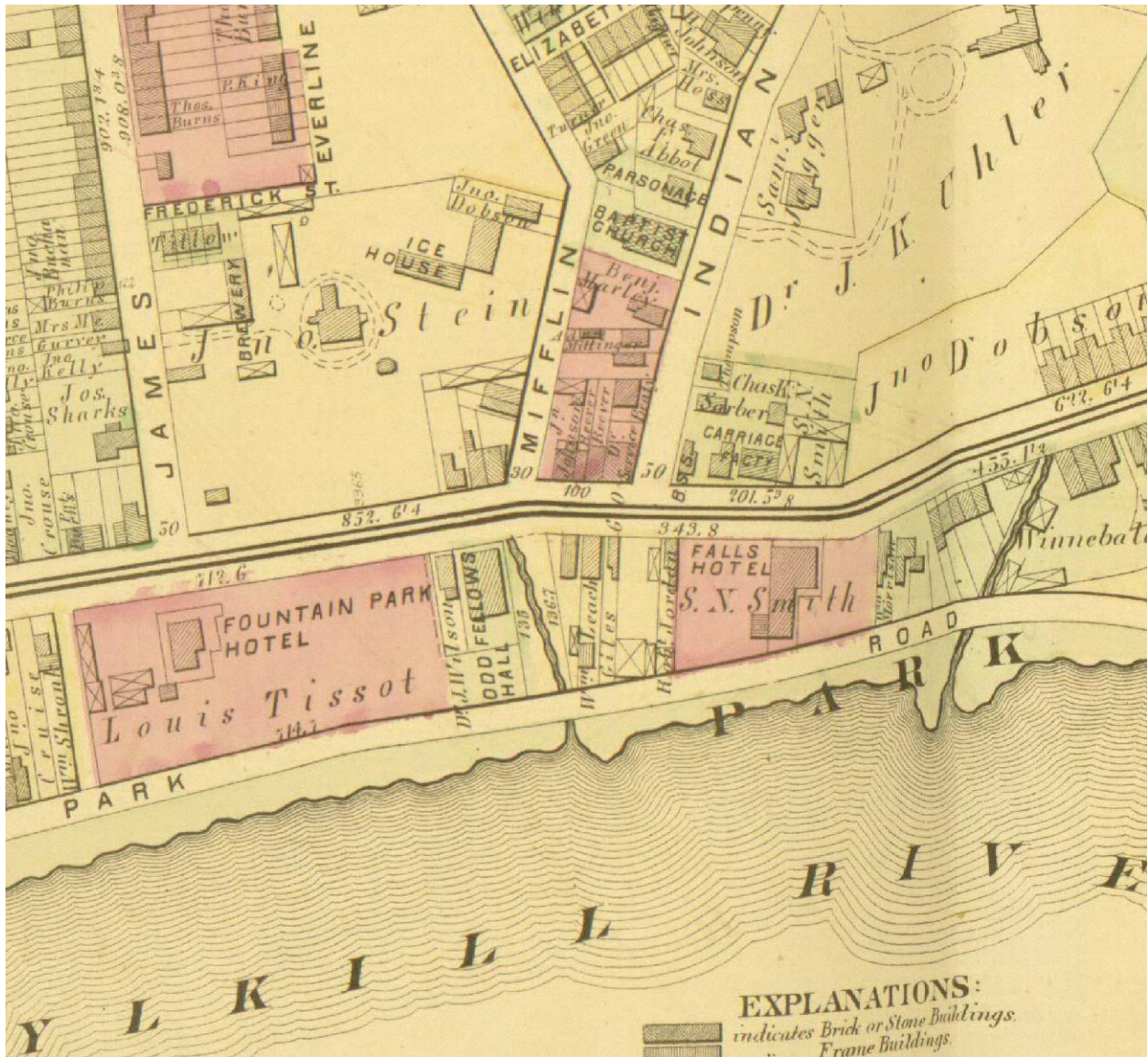


Figure 21: Detail from 1875 G.M. Hopkins City Atlas of Philadelphia, Vol. 2, Wards 21 and 28, Plate K. Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Conclusion

The imposing building at the corner of Ridge and Midvale Avenues has been an anchor of the East Falls community for the past 150 years. Known originally as Odd Fellows’ Hall, and later as Palestine Hall, the building at 4200-06 Ridge Avenue is significant as the meeting place for myriad fraternal organizations, community events, and commercial enterprises that formed the lifeblood of the East Falls neighborhood for over a century. Constructed on a piece of ground in a known Native American settlement and fishing site, as well as along a popular early road, beyond the building itself, the site may be likely to yield several centuries of information.

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