



HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CLUSTER 2 **ROXBOROUGH AND MANAYUNK**

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Cluster 2 consists of a pair of neighborhoods at the northwest limit of the city, bracketed by Montgomery County on the northwest, the Schuylkill River on the southwest. On the east and south, the Wissahickon section of Fairmount Park forms a break in the city's urban fabric between these neighborhoods and East Falls to the south and Germantown, Mt. Airy, and Chestnut Hill on the east.

Two substantial portions of these neighborhoods lie within existing National Register Historic Districts: the Manayunk Main Street Historic District¹ and the Upper Roxborough Historic District². The Historic Context Statements that follow make reference to these districts, but concentrate on areas outside of them.

Because of its relative isolation from Center City, these neighborhoods remained less densely developed and more connected to areas immediately around them than to Philadelphia's original settlements into the early nineteenth century. For example, land ownership and original settlement patterns in the area by German speaking immigrants in the earliest period reflected connections to Germantown across the Wissahickon Valley. Equally, because of the barrier of the Schuylkill Falls below the mouth of the Wissahickon and distance to the original city, both goods and people moved across the river back and forth to Montgomery County far more often than along the length of the watercourse until the establishment of the Schuylkill Canal.

The earliest European settlers arrived in this area of the city in the 1690s, although land speculation had begun in the early 1680s with the creation of the Pennsylvania Colony. Generally, Roxborough has been more sparsely populated than many of Philadelphia's other neighborhoods. Much of the land in Roxborough through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was put to agricultural use. Further, and in contrast to other portions of the former Philadelphia County closer to the original city, the area was little developed by spillover from Philadelphia proper: Roxborough progressed independently of the city until the 1854 consolidation.³ The area's terrain made it relatively difficult to build a network of roads to connect Roxborough with neighboring areas, and Center City was sufficiently distant that it was not easily reached without such amenities as train service, which never reached the upland portion of Roxborough (in contrast to the area along the Schuylkill River bank). Before the advent of the good roads and railroads, even river access was

¹ Elizabeth Mintz and Kay Smith, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Manayunk Main Street Historic District," 1982 (On file with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg).

² Emily T. Cooperman, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - Upper Roxborough Historic District," 2001; Domenic Vitiello, "Upper Roxborough Historic District (Boundary Increase)," 2002 (On file with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg).

³ Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *Roxborough-Manayunk Area: A Pre-Planning Study*, 1955, <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.4/5986-record> (accessed 1 August 2009), 5.



relatively difficult given the steep slopes of the Schuylkill's banks in most of the area and the barrier of the falls that prevented easy passage of goods and passengers beyond East Falls until the creation of the Fairmount Waterworks. River connections to Montgomery County on the western side were more readily established

Until the 1840s, Roxborough Township was a single entity, when Manayunk officially separated from the township and became an independent borough.⁴ Through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Roxborough remained an agricultural enclave, with pockets of industry along the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek.

Manayunk is located adjacent to the southeastern section of Roxborough in northwestern Philadelphia, six miles from Center City, and is bordered by the Schuylkill River on the southwest. Until 1824, Manayunk was locally known as Flat Rock because of a large, flat rock shelf in the river.⁵ In 1824, the residents of Flat Rock held a town meeting and changed the name of the area to Manayunk, an adaptation from the Lenni Lenape word "manaiung," which meant "for the place where we drink water."⁶ In contrast to more rural Roxborough, Manayunk was a robust manufacturing community. This industrial development began in the 1820s, when the Schuylkill Navigation Company completed the Manayunk Canal and commenced selling water power rights to prospective manufacturers along the Schuylkill River. Prior to the canal's construction, the population of Manayunk was quite low, with only eleven houses along the Schuylkill River.⁷ The waterfront property in Manayunk at that time was farmland, owned primarily by the Levering and Tibben families.⁸ Jacob Levering purportedly built the first residence in Manayunk, a stone building, in 1736.⁹ Benjamin and Michael Tibben owned a shad fishery and each owned a small, stone house in between the canal and Main Street.¹⁰ When the Schuylkill Navigation Company began selling water power rights along the canal, Manayunk's industrial complex began a steady climb. The area's population followed in due course.

Manayunk's industry was anchored in textiles, especially yarns, between the middle of the nineteenth century and the Great Depression of the 1930s. An industrial directory of Philadelphia showed that there were at least fifty separate companies or individuals producing goods in 1919.¹¹ During the Great Depression, however, Manayunk's industrial strength began to vanish as

⁴ Please see the historical context study on Manayunk for the area's history.

⁵Ibid., 52.

⁶ Nicholas Myers, *Milestones in History, 1690-1990: Roxborough, Manayunk, Wissahickon, Andorra* (Philadelphia: The Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Historical Society, 1990), 23.

⁷ Charles V. Hagner, *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Manayunk, Schuylkill and Lehigh Navigation Companies, Fairmount Waterworks, Etc.* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, & Haffelfinger, 1869), 55.

⁸ Horatio Gates Jones, "Historical Sketch of Roxborough & Manayunk," in *Manayunk, Roxborough, and Falls of Schuylkill Directory for 1883* (Philadelphia: R.W. Givin, 1883), 21.

⁹ Ibid., 21. Please see the Roxborough Context Study for more details regarding the Levering Family, and specifically Jacob Levering, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ Hagner, *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Manayunk, Schuylkill and Lehigh Navigation Companies, Fairmount Waterworks, Etc.*, 55.

¹¹ *Third Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania, 1919* (Harrisburg: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1920), entire text.



companies failed and jobs disappeared. After World War II, the last of Manayunk's surviving industry also left the area.

Topography

The section of Philadelphia that encompasses the current neighborhoods of Roxborough and Manayunk lie in the Piedmont physiographic province, and is characterized by topography that constitutes some of the highest land above sea level of the city. The upland area is largely defined by a ridge on which, aptly, Ridge Avenue is located as its spine. The land between the top of the ridge and the Schuylkill River (on one side) and Wissahickon Creek (on the other) is characterized by steep slopes and ravines. All of these ravines formerly held small streams conducive to small-scale mill operation. Although many of these have been culverted over, particularly in Manayunk where urban development is denser, several open streams feeding into the Schuylkill survive in Upper Roxborough.

The soil, hospitable to agricultural exploitation, remained in agricultural use well into the twentieth century in many parts of Roxborough. Deposits of various types of stone that underlie the upland of this region of the city were relatively easily attained through quarrying, which began in the eighteenth century.

Periods of Development

First Period of Development: ca. 1690- 1820

Settlement, farming, and small mills

This section of the city saw significant European settlement begin at the end of the seventeenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century, milling along the Wissahickon at the southern end of Roxborough and on other ravine streams was established. The majority of the area was devoted to farming, however, including the large estate of the Levering family. Because of the relative difficulty of access from the principal Philadelphia settlement along the Delaware River waterfront, the area did not see development of country seat estates, in contrast to the Schuylkill downstream and the Delaware north of the original city.

Second Period of Development: 1820-ca. 1930

Internal improvements and the development of Manayunk

The second decade of the nineteenth century saw a group of developments that led to the creation of Manayunk as an industrial village. The most important of these was the establishment of the Schuylkill Canal and the Flat Rock Dam, which provided the scale of water power source needed for large industrial operations. The early nineteenth century also saw the first railroad established into the area, also along the river, and the first bridge across the Schuylkill at Flat Rock.



Industrial and concomitant residential development in Manayunk grew very rapidly, and the village quickly became a center of textile manufacturing in the city. While Manayunk continued to swell with immigrant workers as its industry prospered, Roxborough remained relatively rural for the most part, although by the end of the nineteenth century, large tracts of this neighborhood had been purchased for speculative purposes by developers. Particularly notable among these was Henry H. Houston, who built substantial portions of Chestnut Hill.

Manayunk's industry began to decline significantly with the advent of the Great Depression, although the residential area did not depopulate as in other portions of the city.

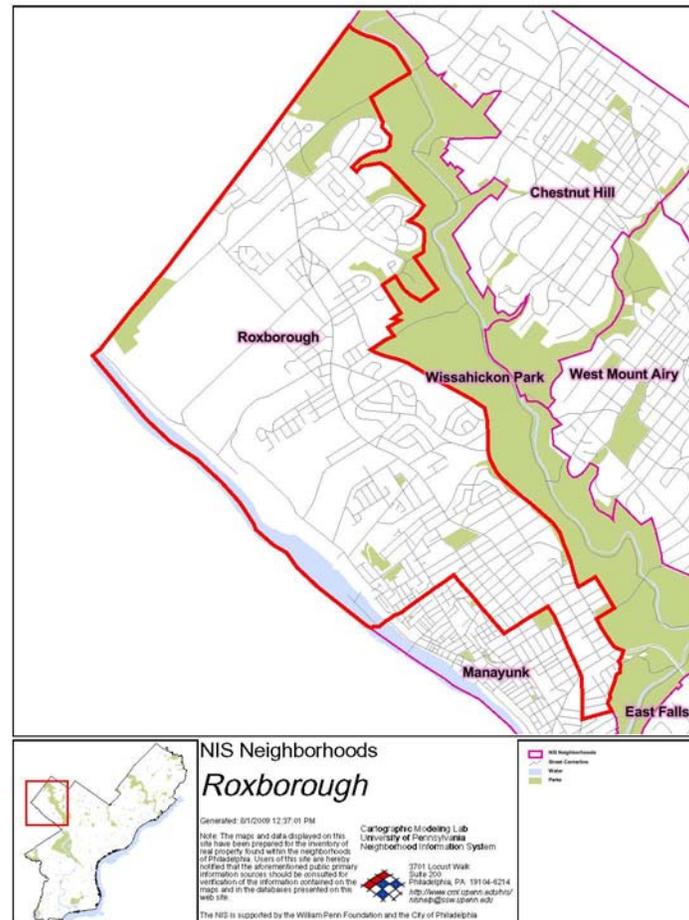
Third Period of Development: ca. 1930-present

Despite the decline of Manayunk's industry, the area did not see the loss of community in the twentieth century. Instead, both Roxborough and Manayunk continued to see development, particularly after World War II. The post-war development of Andorra and the establishment of Henry Avenue as a major artery spurred continual residential growth in the 1950s and 1960s in Roxborough. As one of the few areas of the city with open land, the neighborhood continued to see large scale residential development through the end of the twentieth century. Although Manayunk continued in stasis through the 1970s, substantial gentrification beginning in the 1980s brought substantial investment in the built environment and considerable rehabilitation of existing fabric, both industrial and residential.



ROXBOROUGH

By Claire G. Schmieder, M.A.



Roxborough's Early History, c. 1680 to c. 1800

Kelpius and the Hermits on the Ridge

Both historical documentation and anecdotal evidence provide the story of Kelpius and the Hermits on the Ridge. Kelpius was a Bavarian religious leader who espoused millennial and universalistic doctrines. In 1693, he sailed for America with about forty followers, which Kelpius recounted in his journal, written in Latin. His ship arrived in Philadelphia in June 1694, and he and his followers settled in the woods near Wissahickon Creek, remaining there for about ten years.¹²

¹² John Fanning Watson and Willis Pope Hazard, *Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time: or, Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of Philadelphia and Its Inhabitants from the Days of the Founders* (Philadelphia: E.S. Stuart, 1899), 458-460.



They apparently held religious services in the forest and other settlers from the area would come to hear Kelpius' sermons. One source claims that they provided some education for the area's children, and "doubtless their aid in this respect was gladly sought by the early settlers, who were desirous to have their children receive the rudiments of an education."¹³ The Hermits on the Ridge were Pietists, and thus doctrinally aligned with Lutherans and Protestants. Their religious philosophy was that the progression of the soul took place in three stages: the barren, the fruitful, and the transcendent. The Hermits also believed that a "woman of the wilderness," imagery taken from the book of Revelations, would arrive as a representation of the coming millennium. Kelpius and his followers lived in small huts on present day Hermit Lane, in between Ridge Road and the Wissahickon Creek. Kelpius died in 1704, and his followers eventually joined other churches; some joined the Ephrata Brethren, or Tunkers, and others joined the Roxborough Baptist Church.¹⁴

First Land-Patent Holders in Roxborough

Between 1683 and 1684, William Penn sold over 4,200 acres in Roxborough to eleven individuals. While these men were the first land-owners in Roxborough, their interest in the area was purely speculative. Within fifty years, the first eleven patents were divided and resold to at least forty people, with tracts ranging in size from thirty to four hundred acres. This second set of sales was more permanent; six of what would become Roxborough's most influential families bought land at this time: the Cooks, the Houlgates, the Leverings, the Righters, the Rittenhouses, and the Woods.¹⁵ The Leverings and the Rittenhouses were, however, the only two families who remained in Roxborough long-term. Members of both these families were engaged in the two activities that marked land use and development in Roxborough in this first period and which continued to influence its development well into the twentieth century: agriculture and industry.

The Levering Family

Gerhard and his brother Wigard Levering arrived in Pennsylvania from Holland during the summer of 1685 and first settled in Germantown. Between 1691 and 1692, Wigard moved to Roxborough; within a decade, he owned five hundred contiguous acres of land in Roxborough and began farming. He prospered and died a wealthy man in 1744.¹⁶ Wigard's eldest son William was born in Germany in 1677 and came with his family to Pennsylvania at the age of eight; he was fifteen when his family moved to Roxborough. In 1717, Wigard gave William a large tract of land, which consisted of the unsold portions of Wigard's speculative land holdings in Roxborough. William was a farmer like his father. When he died in 1746, his estate was valued at £70.13.6.¹⁷

¹³ Horatio Gates Jones, *The American Historical Record, and Repertory of Notes and Queries Concerning the History and Antiquities of America and the Biography of Americans*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Samuel P. Town, 1873), 3.

¹⁴ J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 1319.

¹⁵ "Map Showing the Roxborough Tracts Bought by the First Purchasers" and "Map Showing the Roxborough Tracts Purchased by Early Settlers" from Joseph Starne Miles and Rev. William H. Cooper, *A Historical Sketch of Roxborough, Manayunk, and Wissahickon* (Philadelphia: George Fein & Co., 1940), inserts.

¹⁶ Horatio Gates Jones, *The Levering Family; or, a Genealogical Account of Wigard Levering and Gerhard Levering, Two of the Pioneer Settlers of Roxborough Township, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1858), 3-12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-21.



William built the Levering Hotel, Roxborough's first hotel, in 1731. He also gave land on which Roxborough's first school was built in 1748.¹⁸ Wigard's son Jacob was the first of his twelve children to be born in Roxborough. In 1717, Wigard granted Jacob eighty-five acres of land along the Schuylkill River, which ran above and below Green Lane and extended to Levering Street. This land comprises much of present-day Manayunk. Jacob lived on this land, first in a log cabin, and then in a stone house on the northwest side of Green Lane that he built in 1736. Besides farming, Jacob was also engaged in industrial undertakings. He owned a distillery in Roxborough and a saw mill on the western side of the Schuylkill River in what is now Montgomery County. Jacob died in 1753 with an estate valued at the substantial sum of £594.01.¹⁹

The Rittenhouse Family and the Paper Industry

William Rittenhouse was one of the most prominent members of the early generations of the Rittenhouse family in the United States. Born in Germany in 1644, his family earned a living in the country's paper-making industry, a trade that allowed the dissemination of the ideals of the Protestant Reformation throughout Europe. In the late 1680s, William immigrated to America, living first in New York, where he met and married his wife, Wilhelmina de Wees.²⁰ A few years later, William, along with four other investors, William Bradford, Robert Turner, Samuel Carpenter, and Thomas Tresse, formed the company that would build one of America's first paper mills.²¹ They constructed the mill in Roxborough in the early 1690s on a small stream called Paper-Mill Run. The stream emptied into the Wissahickon Creek about two miles above its intersection with the Schuylkill River.²² By 1705, William bought out the other investors and became the sole proprietor of the papermill.²³ After he bought out the other investors, William conferred ownership of the mill to his son Claus. In 1708, William Rittenhouse died. Claus continued to run the mill, supplying paper to Philadelphia, Germantown, and parts of New York.²⁴

The mill was simply-built, powered by a wheel that hung over Paper Mill Run and turned with the movement of the water through the stream. This type of structure was called an undershot mill, and while easy to construct, was at the mercy of the water currents: if the water flow decreased, so did the power to the mill; and, if the water flow suddenly increased because of a flood, the wheel could easily break under the intensified pressure.²⁵ The paper that came from the Rittenhouse mill during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was made by hand, each sheet crafted separately. First, workers pounded rags into pulp in stone or iron mortars using trip-hammers. After pulp was placed in frames, it needed several days to dry completely.²⁶ The final product carried the

¹⁸ Ibid., 187.

¹⁹ Ibid., 22-25.

²⁰ James Green, *The Rittenhouse Mill and the Beginnings of Papermaking in America* (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia and Friends of Historic RittenhouseTown, 1990), 3-5.

²¹ Horatio Gates Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Papermill; the First Erected in America, A.D. 1690," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 20 (1896): 322.

²² Green, *The Rittenhouse Mill*, 5; Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Papermill," 317.

²³ Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Papermill," 322-323.

²⁴ Ibid., 329.

²⁵ Green, *The Rittenhouse Mill*, 23.

²⁶ Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Papermill," 324.



watermark of the Rittenhouses. Their first watermark was the word “Company,” which referred to the initial company that built the mill. The second watermark used at the mill was “WR” for “William Rittenhouse” on one half of the sheet and a logo of a crown and a shield with a clover on it with the word “Pensilvania” beneath it on the other half of the sheet.²⁷

In either 1700 or 1701, a flood in Paper Mill Run destroyed the original mill. William Rittenhouse chose a new site in 1702 that was a short distance from the first mill, and constructed a stronger, larger mill. William recycled some of the building and paper-making materials from the first mill, primarily the wood beams, but also water troughs, the “Presse,” and over two hundred and fifty pounds of iron. By reusing these materials, William saved £17.14.4, a large sum of money in the early eighteenth century.²⁸

Other Early Industry in Roxborough

Another of the earliest mills in the Roxborough area was “Robeson’s Mill,” also known as the “Wissahickon Mill” and found on the south side of the creek at its mouth. A deed dated 1691 shows that John Townsend, a millwright, and Robert Turner sold fifty three and one-half acres to Andrew Robeson; the property included a house and a saw-and-grist mill.²⁹ After his death in 1719 or 1720, his will stipulated that his oldest son would take charge of “all land and tenements belonging to the Roxborrow [sic] Mill and Bolting Mill.”³⁰ Grist mills were the most common type of industry in eighteenth-century Roxborough. In 1779, there were at least eleven mills in the area, eight of which were grist mills.³¹

Transportation during Roxborough’s Early History

Although small-scale industrial production was enabled by the streams found in the Schuylkill upland ravines, industry in Roxborough was limited in scale through the eighteenth century not only because the hilly, rocky terrain made constructing an industrial building and railroad lines difficult, but also because the population of the area was low. The chart below illustrates Roxborough’s modest population and moderate growth over the second half of the eighteenth century.³²

Population in Roxborough, 1741 to 1810	
1741	175 residents
1753	290 residents

²⁷ Ibid., 324-325.

²⁸ Ibid., 326-328.

²⁹ T.A. Daly, *The Wissahickon* (Philadelphia: The Garden Club of Philadelphia, 1922), 13.

³⁰ Jones, *The Levering Family*, 187.

³¹ The grist mills were owned by the Robeson family, John Vanderen and Martin Rittenhouse, Nicholas Rittenhouse, William Rittenhouse, Abraham Rittenhouse, Peter Care, John Gorgas, and Thomas Livezey. The Rittenhouse papermill was in operation, as well as a fulling mill owned by Matthew Houlgate and Christian Snyder and an oil mill owned by Benjamin Gorgas. Jones, *The Levering Family*, 187.

³² Data taken from Jones, *The Levering Family*, Appendix A, 189.



ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH AND CULTURAL HISTORY
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1779	600 residents
1788	700 residents
1799	1000 residents
1810	1400 residents

One important factor in the slow population growth was the difficulty of access to the area, including the limited number and poor conditions of the roads in Roxborough. The first thoroughfare through Roxborough was Ridge Road, constructed in 1706, and named for its course over the ridges of the hills between the Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek. When it was built, it ran from the Wissahickon Mills to Philadelphia and it was the only real artery from the city proper into Roxborough.³³ During the eighteenth century, Ridge Road was widened to fifty feet in order to allow the passage of market wagons. Despite the fact that Ridge Road was a major conduit through Roxborough, its condition was often quite poor, with deep ruts and mud, making travel along the road inconvenient.³⁴ In fact, in the early 1800s, frequent traffic from heavy wagons made the road impassable in areas, which forced many people to cross through to Germantown's turnpike (Germantown Avenue) in order to reach Philadelphia.³⁵ In response to the poor travel conditions along Roxborough's only major road, the Ridge Turnpike Company was founded to improve Ridge Road. The company acquired the rights to build a macadamized road, not less than forty feet, nor more than sixty feet in width, with a summer road running alongside it. The Company was also responsible for all of the road's maintenance and repairs.³⁶ In March, 1811, construction on the road began; Ridge Road was complete in 1812.

Although Ridge Road was the only conduit between Roxborough and Philadelphia proper, many other smaller roads crisscrossed the area, principally connecting to the area's mills and farms to Ridge Road. These roads typically also provided passage to the largest estates in Roxborough. School House Lane, which was constructed around 1702, ran along the southern edge of the Roxborough Township. Thomas' Mill Road, in Upper Roxborough, was laid out sometime between 1738 and 1739. Rittenhouse Road, known as Red Bridge Road when it was built, was constructed in either 1767 or 1768, and was in the southeastern part of Roxborough. All of these roads crossed the Wissahickon Creek at dams or small bridges that were often swept away during flooding, which only exacerbated residents' ability to travel freely through the borough and into Germantown and Philadelphia.³⁷

³³Ridge Avenue remained the only major artery between Roxborough and Philadelphia until the construction of the Schuylkill Expressway in the mid-twentieth century. Carl A. Sundstrom, *A Short History of Roxborough and Manayunk*, part of an address delivered by the author on Thursday, February 11, 1909 at the Lyceum Hall, Roxborough, Pennsylvania, 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³⁶ "Ridge Avenue Passenger Railway Company v. City of Philadelphia," July 15, 1897, *The Atlantic Reporter* 37 (May 5-August 25, 1897): 910.

³⁷ Thomas' Mill Road, Livezey Mill Road, and Rittenhouse Road are located within present day Wissahickon Park. Joseph D. Bicknell, "The Wissahickon in History, Story and Song," paper read before the City History Society of Philadelphia, October 10, 1906, in *Philadelphia History: Consisting of Papers Read before the City History Society of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: City History Society, 1917), 6.



The Gorgas House – The Monastery

One of Roxborough's more impressive surviving residential properties is Joseph Gorgas' residence the Monastery. Between 1746 and 1747, Gorgas built his residence on a large tract of land bordering the Wissahickon Creek, which he purchased from Benjamin Shoemaker. Gorgas was a Seventh Day Baptist and wished to have an isolated residence for meditation and solitude, as well as for furthering his grist mill business. The stone house is three stories, with an adjoining grist mill and saw mill. The main section of the house is thirty-three-by-thirty-two feet with a kitchen extension on the eastern side; the main section has a hollow cornice roof between the second and third stories. When it was built, it was one of the largest residences in the area and may have been one of the first three-story homes in the immediate vicinity of Philadelphia.³⁸

The Roxborough Baptist Church

The first church in Roxborough was the Roxborough Baptist Church, organized in 1789 by thirty-two residents who had been dismissed from the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia.³⁹ Initially, the group met in the Roxborough school building. Then, in September 1789, the Philadelphia Baptist Association met and officially recognized the church and gave approval for its constitution. At this point, a thirty-by-forty foot, two-story, stone building was erected on a lot on Ridge Road, given to the church by Nathan Levering. The construction of the church cost nearly £600. In October 1790, the church building was dedicated, free of debt. The Roxborough Baptist Church was, for the residents of Chestnut Hill, the closest Baptist church; the few Baptists in Chestnut Hill usually attended the services in Roxborough rather than traveling into Philadelphia on Sundays.⁴⁰

Nineteenth-Century Roxborough

Most of Roxborough remained in agricultural use during the nineteenth century. Many of the grist mills and paper mills of the previous century continued to produce goods until the creation of the Wissahickon portion of Fairmount Park.⁴¹ In contrast to Roxborough's neighbor, Manayunk, the area continued to be relatively inaccessible and rural. Civil engineer Charles Ellet, Jr.'s 1843 survey of Philadelphia County shows Roxborough to be open land, with large, contiguous areas owned by a handful of individuals.⁴² Surveys of Roxborough during the late nineteenth century also

³⁸ Unfortunately, the HABS data pages for The Monastery are not among the documents in the Library of Congress' Historic American Building Survey collection. Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742: A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers* (Philadelphia: P.C. Stockhausen, 1899), 284-285.

³⁹ The reason for the dismissals has been elusive. Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, vol. 2, 1309.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1309; Rev. David Spencer, *The Early Baptists of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: William Sichelmoore, 1877), 147-148.

⁴¹ Charles Ellet, Jr.'s 1843 map of Philadelphia County shows that, for all intents and purposes, no new industrial ventures had developed in Roxborough by the middle of the nineteenth century. Charles Ellet, Jr., *A Map of the County of Philadelphia from Actual Survey Made under the Direction of Charles Ellet, Jr., Civil Engineer, and in Accordance with the Act of Assembly Passed June 30th, 1839*, West Philadelphia Community History Center, <http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/maps/map1843ellet.html> (accessed 23 July 2009).

⁴² Ibid.



show a largely undeveloped swathe of land, although entrepreneur Henry Houston (who was responsible for building up substantial sections in Chestnut Hill at the end of the century) began to purchase large tracts in the northern end of the neighborhood beginning in the 1880s.⁴³ Two exceptions to this rural character should be noted. The first of these was the establishment of the Riverside Mills along the Schuylkill near the Montgomery County border, which extended industry at Manayunk's scale into the adjacent neighborhood. The second of these was the establishment of the Roxborough Pumping Station and reservoir, created in the 1860s to supply this growing adjacent industrial village with a residential water supply. The establishment of reliable train service along the river spurred the creation of a small number of country seats along the Schuylkill.⁴⁴

Society in Nineteenth-Century Roxborough

According to Federal Census data, between 1800 and 1840, the population of Roxborough (including Manayunk) grew from approximately 1,000 residents to about 5797 residents.⁴⁵ The largest spike in population occurred between 1820 and 1830, with a jump from 1,682 residents to 3,334 residents. Most of the population upsurge occurred in Manayunk, where the lion's share of the township's industrial development took place; with the increase in manufacturers came an increase in employment opportunities, and thus an increase in population as laborers came to Manayunk to work in a variety of trades.⁴⁶ Around 1860, the area's population was about 4,000 people. In 1870, Roxborough and Manayunk's combined population was almost 14,000 people, almost two-thirds of which were born in the United States.⁴⁷

With an increase, albeit small, in population, Roxborough residents started to benefit from the amenities of more organized local services. The Good Intent Fire Company was established in Roxborough in May, 1819.⁴⁸ The fire company received their act of incorporation in May, 1857.⁴⁹ The Roxborough Post Office opened in 1823 with Aaron Levering as its first Postmaster; the branch name was changed to Leverington Post Office in 1831.⁵⁰

⁴³ C.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia by Wards, Complete in Seven Volumes: From Official Records, Private Plans and Actual Surveys. Based upon Plans Deposited in the Department of Surveys*, vol. 2 (21st and 28th Wards)(Philadelphia: C.M. Hopkins, 1875); George W. & Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Volume 12, Twenty-first Ward: From Actual Surveys and Official Plans of the Survey Department* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1892). Cooperman, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - Upper Roxborough Historic District," section 8, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Cooperman, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - Upper Roxborough Historic District," section 8, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Sherman Day, *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania Containing a Copious Selection of the Most Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Etc. Relating to Its History and Antiquities, Both General and Local, with Topographical Descriptions of Every County and All the Larger Towns in the State* (Philadelphia: George W. Gorton, 1843), 543.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 543. Please see the Historical Context Study for Manayunk for data relating to the growth and development of industry in that area.

⁴⁷ Horatio Gates Jones, "A Historical Sketch of Roxborough and Manayunk," *Manayunk, Roxborough and Falls of Schuylkill Directory for 1883* (Philadelphia: Burk & McPetridge, 1883), 21.

⁴⁸ Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, vol. 3, p. 1905.

⁴⁹ *Laws of the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania at the Session of 1857 in the Eighty-First Year of Independence* (Harrisburg: A. Boyd Hamilton, 1857), 501.

⁵⁰ Jones, *The Levering Family*, 188.



Churches in Roxborough in the Nineteenth Century

During the first half of the nineteenth century, residents of Roxborough could attend services at four churches: the Roxborough Baptist Church, the Dutch Reformed Church of Upper Roxborough, the German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Manayunk and Roxborough, and the Ridge Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church of Roxborough. The Dutch Reformed Church of Upper Roxborough, renamed the Roxborough Presbyterian Church in 1854, was an outgrowth of the Manayunk Dutch Reformed Church, which was organized by twelve residents in 1835. It was also known as Hagy's Church because John Hagy of Upper Roxborough donated the land for the church, located at Ridge Road and Port Royal Lane.⁵¹ The German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation was organized in 1845. The Ridge Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church of Roxborough was founded in 1858.⁵² After 1850, five more churches opened their doors in Roxborough: St. Timothy's and St. Alban's Protestant Episcopal Churches (1859); Roxborough Central Methodist Episcopal Church (1871); and the Manatawna Baptist Church of Philadelphia in Upper Roxborough (1872); and the Leverington Presbyterian Church (1878).⁵³

Social Organizations and the Park

While Roxborough's population was low, residents could join a number of beneficial societies. The Masons organized the Roxborough Lodge in 1813.⁵⁴ Before 1860, when the Masonic Hall in Manayunk (at Main Street below Cotton Street) was complete, the Masons of Roxborough met in a number of different venues. The lodge's first meeting was at Aaron Levering's house; Levering continued to host the meetings until 1829. Then meetings moved from the Manayunk Hotel, to the Sons of Temperance Hall, and then to the Odd Fellows Hall.⁵⁵ The International Order of Odd Fellows instituted Roxborough Lodge, Number 66, in 1841, and the Roxborough Encampment six years later; members met at Odd Fellows Hall, located at the corner of Ridge and Lyceum Avenues.⁵⁶ The Grand Army of the Republic organized their Hetty A. Jones Post 12 in 1866, meeting at Beaumont's Hall.⁵⁷ Another important development in the mid-nineteenth century was Fairmount Park, 850 acres of which borders Roxborough.

Transportation in Nineteenth-Century Roxborough

Transportation in Roxborough improved in the nineteenth century. The construction and upkeep of Ridge Road by the Ridge Turnpike Company was an important step in making travel in

⁵¹ Thomas Murphy, *The Presbytery of the Log College; or, the Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1889), 387; "Fifty Years of Consolidated Philadelphia," *The Year Book of the Pennsylvania Society*, Barr Ferree, ed. (New York: The Pennsylvania Society, 1905), 184-185.

⁵² Further information on these churches has been elusive.

⁵³ Jones, "A Historical Sketch of Roxborough and Manayunk," 20.

⁵⁴ *Manayunk, Roxborough and Falls of Schuylkill Directory for 1883* (Philadelphia: R.W. Givin, 1883), 70.

⁵⁵ <http://www.pagrandlodge.org/district/135/history.htm> (accessed 27 July 2009).

⁵⁶ As of 1883, this lodge had two hundred members. *Manayunk, Roxborough and Falls of Schuylkill Directory for 1883* (Philadelphia: R.W. Givin, 1883), 68-69.

⁵⁷ *Manayunk, Roxborough and Falls of Schuylkill Directory for 1883* (Philadelphia: R.W. Givin, 1883), 65.



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Roxborough more convenient.⁵⁸ Livezey's Mill Lane, now portions of Henry Avenue, was built in 1818 and ran adjacent to the Wissahickon Creek from Wise's Mill to Livezey's Mill; in 1822, the road was widened and lengthened to Allen's Lane by crossing the creek. Domino Lane opened in 1819 and was thirty-three feet wide. Green Tree Lane, later renamed Shawmont Avenue, opened in the late 1820s and led from Ridge Avenue to the Schuylkill River. In 1829, Cinnaminson Avenue was complete and measured twenty feet wide. Wissahickon Drive, located within Wissahickon Park, opened in 1853 along the creek. Manatawna Road in Upper Roxborough came into existence in 1855 and ran from Ridge Avenue to Hagy's Mill Road.⁵⁹ Flat Rock Bridge, the only bridge in Roxborough to cross the Schuylkill River, was built in 1810 at the foot of Domino Lane.⁶⁰ Even more significant, in 1815, the Schuylkill River Navigation Company received their act of incorporation. The company completed construction on the canal about one year later in what would become Manayunk.⁶¹

Railroad access to the area came in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Pennsylvania Legislature approved the establishment of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (P&RR) line between Reading and Manayunk in the early 1830s. Construction began in 1835 and the line was completed in 1842. In the late nineteenth century, the Manayunk and Roxborough Inclined Plane Railway received its charter. Construction on the line began in August 1874. By November of the same year the track, which measured five and one-half miles long, was complete at a cost of \$8,100 per mile. The line ran from Ridge Avenue's Wissahickon Station of the Norristown branch of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad to Barren Hill in Montgomery County.⁶² In 1895, this railway company merged with the Chestnut Hill and Norristown Passenger Railway Company.⁶³ The Wissahickon Electric Passenger Railway Company was another rail line in Roxborough. Chartered in October 1890, it was built to create a rail connection between Wissahickon and Roxborough as well as between Manayunk and Roxborough. The route from Wissahickon to Roxborough ran along Manayunk Avenue; the route between Roxborough to Manayunk ran along Leverington Avenue to Wood and Levering Streets. The route between Wissahickon and Roxborough opened in September 1893 and the other half of the route opened in May 1894.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Please see page 7 of this document for more information on the Ridge Turnpike Company and the construction of Ridge Road.

⁵⁹ Jones, "A Historical Sketch of Roxborough and Manayunk," 10-11.

⁶⁰ Carl A. Sundstrom, *A Short History of Roxborough and Manayunk*, 10.

⁶¹ Please see the Manayunk Context Study for further details regarding the Schuylkill Navigation Company.

⁶² *Annual Reports of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Part IV: Railway, Canal, Navigation, Telegraph and Telephone Companies* (Pennsylvania: Clarence M. Busch, 1895), 500-501.

⁶³ *American Street and Railway Investments: A Supplement to the Street Railway Journal* (New York: The Street Railway Publishing Company, 1899), 208.

⁶⁴ *Annual Reports of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 579-580.



Roxborough's Late History, c. 1900s to 1950s

In the early twentieth century, industry in Roxborough was almost non-existent with the exception of the large Riverside Mills complex, with only six reported manufacturers in the area in 1920.⁶⁵ In fact, as of the late 1930s, over fifty percent of the land in Roxborough remained in agricultural use. A survey of the twenty-first ward in Philadelphia in 1929 clearly illustrates that while Upper Roxborough underwent a surge of residential development during the early twentieth century, the majority of land in Roxborough remained in farms.⁶⁶ While nineteenth-century owners were typically individuals or family estates, this shifted in the twentieth-century Roxborough, when large tracts were generally owned by large land holding companies, such as the Hilltop Land Company and the Roxborough Land Company.⁶⁷ Another considerable force in the residential land development of Roxborough, especially in Upper Roxborough, was the Houston family of Chestnut Hill.⁶⁸

The Houston Family in Upper Roxborough

H.H. Houston began purchasing agricultural land in Upper Roxborough in the 1880s, and members of his family established two large estates at the northern end of the neighborhood.⁶⁹ His first strategy was to build an upper-class railroad suburb along the lines of his parallel efforts vastly to expand the elite neighborhood of Chestnut Hill. For this plan to succeed, Houston needed to convince the Pennsylvania Railroad to build a rail line running parallel to Ridge Avenue (as he did with in Chestnut Hill with what is now the R8 Chestnut Hill West line). The projected line in Roxborough would have carried upper-class residents from their homes in Upper Roxborough to their jobs in downtown Philadelphia. However, Houston failed to accomplish this goal when his overtures to the Pennsylvania Railroad failed to achieve their intended result. Even with the growing number of automobiles in the first quarter of the twentieth century, access to Upper Roxborough remained relatively limited. The only direct route between the area and Chestnut Hill was a narrow bridge that crossed Wissahickon Creek at Bell's Mill Road; travel into Philadelphia was difficult as well, with Ridge Avenue being the only path to the city, which forced commuters to drive through some of the "worst areas" in Philadelphia.⁷⁰

During the first half of the twentieth century, Samuel, Henry Houston's son, made a number of attempts to sell land in Roxborough to large institutions. In 1921, he offered Roxborough as a potential site for the United States' Sesquicentennial celebration, which was scheduled for 1926.

⁶⁵ This is in stark contrast to at least fifty separate manufacturing outfits in Manayunk during the same year. *Third Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1920), 178, 183, 250, 453, 897.

⁶⁶ Frank H.M. Klinge, *Atlas of the 21st Ward of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: From Official Plans and Records and Actual Surveys* (Lansdale, PA: Frank H.M. Klinge Engineers and Publishers, 1929), plates 9-27.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, plates 17, 18, 22, 23, 24.

⁶⁸ Cooperman, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Upper Roxborough Historic District," section 8, page 2.

⁶⁹ Cooperman, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Upper Roxborough Historic District," section 8, page 8.

⁷⁰ David R. Contosta, *A Philadelphia Family: The Houstons and Woodwards of Chestnut Hill* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 118.



When this failed, Houston sold portions of that tract to the Episcopal diocese for a cathedral. The church, designed by William H. Thompson, was only partially realized and was destined not to fulfill its intended role, although it continues to be used as St. Mary's church. In the early 1940s, Houston attempted to sell more land in Roxborough to the Veteran's Administration (VA) for a new hospital; the VA opted for a site closer to the University of Pennsylvania. Houston then sought to sell 600 acres to the United Nations for the site of their permanent headquarters. During negotiations, however, the Rockefeller family donated property in New York City. Finally, in the late 1940s, Houston tried to lure Temple University into Roxborough. While Temple's founders were considering a move away from northern Philadelphia, the city officials offered the university a considerable financial incentive to stay at their old location.⁷¹

After these failed attempts at upper-class and institutional development in Roxborough, the Houston family decided to use the area for middle-class residential development. In 1948, Houston began planning the large development in eastern upper Roxborough, eventually calling it Andorra after the Andorra Nurseries in Chestnut Hill. Samuel Houston hired Philadelphia architect Walter K. Durham to design the neighborhood's plan and Robert Rhodes McGoodwin to design houses, which were slated to include duplexes, single-family homes, and apartment buildings. The initial plan was to construct over 5,000 individual residences. In March 1950, the construction began on Andorra.⁷² Only four hundred of the single-family homes and duplexes were built, and Houston sold portions of his property to developers.⁷³ When Samuel Houston created the neighborhood, he also drafted an Indenture of Covenants, which he required every homeowner to sign. The Indenture was a set of community rules to ensure visual continuity in the neighborhood and to keep nuisances to a minimum. For example, one guideline stated that no signs of any kind were allowed in the yards of Andorra homes, with the exception being one sign no more than one square foot in size. The document also prohibited any "noxious, dangerous, or offensive behavior" and the raising of any livestock on the properties of Andorra's residents and guests.⁷⁴ When Houston died in 1952, his estate's lawyers transferred the Indenture over to the community, with the stipulation that all rules outlined in the document be adhered to as per Samuel Houston's original plan for Andorra. Thus, the Andorra Homes Civic Association was formed to ensure all residents conformed to the directives in the contract.⁷⁵

Besides real estate investment, Samuel Houston also used his money to assist community institutions in Roxborough, especially during the Great Depression. One example of this support is Houston's temporary backing of the Green Valley Country Club in Roxborough in the early 1930s. The Green Valley Country Club is located between Ridge Pike and East Germantown Pike, near the Montgomery County border in Upper Roxborough. In 1919, one hundred and fifty men met to discuss the establishment of a Golf Club, even though none of them had ever played the game. They purchased the Harry Sacks mansion and one hundred and forty-five adjoining acres on which to build the golf course. Two years later, the course and clubhouse opened. During the 1920s, the club

⁷¹ Ibid., 118-119.

⁷² Ibid., 119-120.

⁷³ Carole Boynton, *Andorra: The Diary of a Community* (Philadelphia: The Andorra Homes Civic Association, no date), 23.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 49-51.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 49.



slowly grew and plans for additions costing about \$200,000 were in the works. When the Great Depression hit in 1929, the country club fell on hard times. Membership drastically declined and the club was unable to pay the mortgage on the property, which led to foreclosure. Samuel Houston stepped in and purchased the property during the foreclosure proceedings. He allowed the club's board of directors to occupy the property rent free for a number of years. When club membership began to increase in the late 1930s, the Club obtained a ten-year lease on the property from Houston and eventually bought the property back from him at a discount.⁷⁶

Not long after Houston's death, a substantial change came to Roxborough in the late 1950s with the laying out of Henry Avenue as a four-lane road running the length of the neighborhood. The Henry Avenue Bridge was completed over the Wissahickon in 1932, and Henry Avenue appears on plans of the period. Construction north of the bridge was not undertaken until 1955, however, and was complete in 1957.⁷⁷ The completion of Henry Avenue, along with connections to the area enabled by the completion of Schuylkill Expressway, spurred post-War development in the neighborhood, particularly along this artery. Among the first of these was the Andorra Shopping Center at Cathedral Road, where Henry and Ridge avenues merge.

While Upper Roxborough has continued to see housing development into the end of the twentieth century, a large portion of the Houston lands west of Ridge Avenue was given to create the Schuylkill Valley Nature Center (now the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education) in the mid-1960s.

Demographics in Twentieth-Century Roxborough

A 1936 Works Progress Administration (WPA) real property survey of African-American housing in Philadelphia provides insight to the amount and quality of available housing in Roxborough and Manayunk in the Great Depression era. According to the study, only two percent of families in Roxborough and Manayunk were African-American, with almost all of those families living in the southwestern section of Manayunk.⁷⁸ While the survey does not delineate between the data from Roxborough and Manayunk, it provides useful information regarding the amount of housing in Philadelphia's 21st Ward.

A 1942 Land Use map of Philadelphia shows Roxborough to be primarily undeveloped land, especially in the southwestern corner bordering the Schuylkill River and Montgomery County. While a small residential enclave existed near Andorra's future locations, most of the area in the map is

⁷⁶ "History of Green Valley Country Club," <http://www.memberstatements.com/tour/tours.cfm?tourID=5211> (accessed 18 July 2009).

⁷⁷ The construction of the road is well documented in photographs from the Philadelphia City Archives. See <http://www.phillyhistory.org>.

⁷⁸ Federal Works Progress Administration for the Commonwealth of Philadelphia, *Philadelphia Real Property Survey: Colored Housing, Manayunk and Roxborough, District E, Ward 21*, Philadelphia Surveys, WPA Project 4744 (Philadelphia: Bound by the Free Library of Philadelphia, 1936), 2.



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empty.⁷⁹ In 1955, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission conducted a study of the Roxborough-Manayunk area. The study authors wrote that “because of its natural amenities, Roxborough-Manayunk is and can continue to be one of the most desirable areas of Philadelphia in which to live. It is one of the few parts of the City in which there is a combination of a settled community with roots in the past and a sizeable amount of undeveloped land.”⁸⁰ In fact, the report further states that of the 2,231 acres of land in Upper Roxborough, only 687 acres were developed.⁸¹ Most of the population in Upper and Lower Roxborough were white, with non-white ethnicities making up only one percent of the total population in both areas.⁸²

⁷⁹ Plans & Registry Division, Bureau of Engineering Surveys & Zoning, Department of Public Works, Federal Works Progress Administration for Pennsylvania, *Philadelphia Land Use Map, 1942: Land-Use Zoning Project No. 18313*, Map Collection at the Free Library of Philadelphia, 1942, Plate 7-1.

⁸⁰ Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *Roxborough-Manayunk Area: A Pre-Planning Study*, 1955, i.

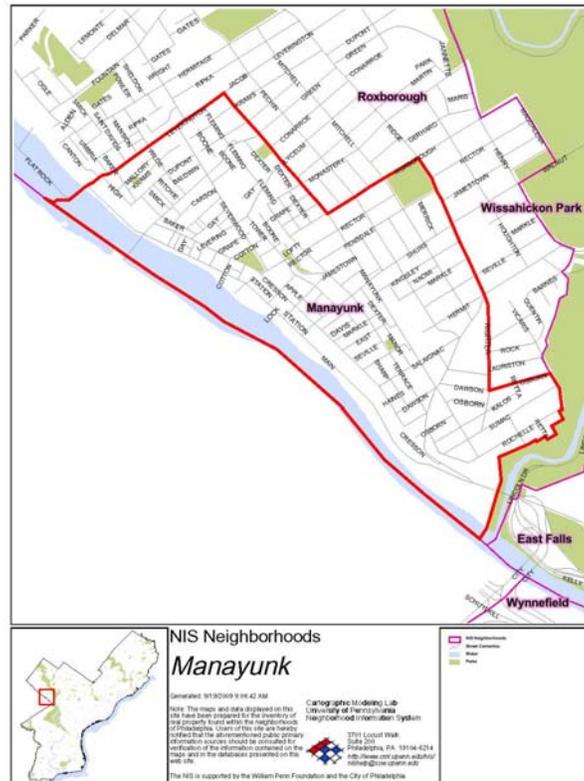
⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 10.



MANAYUNK

By Claire G. Schmieder, M.A.



Nineteenth-Century Manayunk

*Industrial Development*⁸³

The Schuylkill Navigation Company enabled and shaped industrial development in Manayunk along the Schuylkill River. Because the Company owned the water rights along the canal, manufacturers needing water power for their machinery were required to rent water in “inches” to take advantage of the Schuylkill River’s current. An inch of water was defined by the company as the volume that “will pass through an aperture one inch square under a head or pressure of three feet,

⁸³ Most of Manayunk’s industry was clustered along Main Street, the road running parallel to the Manayunk Canal. Since this area lies within the National Register of Historic Places, this section will present a broad overview of manufactures in Manayunk, with special attention paid to the more influential mills and their owners. For a more detailed history of the area, please see Elizabeth Mintz and Kay Smith, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Manayunk Main Street Historic District,” 1982, on file at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg.



measured from the surface of the water to the centre [*sic*] of the aperture.”⁸⁴ In 1822, the company provided water at a rate of six dollars per cubic inch per year.⁸⁵ Thus, maintaining a mill on the banks of the Manayunk Canal could quickly become an expensive proposition, especially for smaller manufacturers. Development along the canal became a matter of economy of scale: most of the factories along the canal in Manayunk were large industrial complexes with high levels of production, for which the steep rental fees of the Schuylkill Navigation Company. As steam and coal power took the place of water, the canal was used for shipping goods in and out of the area.

The Schuylkill Navigation canal system was not (and was never intended to be) continuous. Rather, it was a succession of smaller canals built to circumvent impassable sections of the Schuylkill River. Josiah White’s discovery of the method for burning hard anthracite coal (liberating its potential both steam power and the manufacture of steel) was the most powerful stimulus behind the canal’s construction. When built, the canal eventually reduced the cost of conveying anthracite coal from Reading, Pennsylvania to industrial complexes along the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. In 1815, the Pennsylvania legislature approved the charter for the Schuylkill Navigation Company, which would take on the construction of the entire canal. The Manayunk section of the canal is the only section of the system that is still intact within the city of Philadelphia. The company began building the Manayunk Canal in 1815 with the creation of the Flat Rock Dam, and finished the work in 1818. The canal opened for travel in 1822.⁸⁶

Manayunk’s industrial development expanded in earnest in 1819 with John Tower’s cotton mill, locally known as the “Yellow Mill” because of the color of its walls. The mill changed hands several times through the next thirty years.⁸⁷ Charles V. Hagner built the second mill in Manayunk. Hagner already owned a drug mill in Falls of Schuylkill (East Falls), which he had built in 1812. Hagner pioneered the milling of drugs in the United States by substituting machinery for the mortar and pestle. By speeding up the process by which ingredients for drugs were ground, and improving the quality of drugs by grinding them more finely, larger quantities of substances used in pharmacology were available to the markets in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.⁸⁸ In 1820, Hagner rented fifty inches of water from the Schuylkill Navigation Company and began to produce ground drugs and pharmaceutical oils. Shortly thereafter, he added a fulling mill for cleaning and thickening cloth. Hagner ran the mills until 1839, when he sold them to Joseph Winpenny, who converted the buildings into wool factories.⁸⁹

Cotton and wool mills quickly became the dominant industry in Manayunk. In 1828, seven out of ten factories in Manayunk were producing cotton and woolen goods. Those ten factories

⁸⁴ Hagner, *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Manayunk, Schuylkill and Lehigh Navigation Companies, Fairmount Waterworks, Etc.*, 57.

⁸⁵ “Report of a Committee of the Stockholders of the Conestogo Navigation Company, Made July 1, 1822,” *Hazard’s Register of Pennsylvania* 10.4 (28 July 1833): 58.

⁸⁶ Mintz and Smith, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Manayunk Main Street Historic District,” section 8, pages 1-3.

⁸⁷ Jones, “Historical Sketch of Roxborough & Manayunk,” 22.

⁸⁸ J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co, 1884), 2277.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2304.



employed over six hundred individuals. Moreover, four mills were under construction, two of which were slated to produce fabrics. In fact, Manayunk's cotton factories proliferated so quickly during the 1820s that the area was sometimes called the "Manchester of America," a nod to the cotton manufacturing area of England.⁹⁰ Similar to the Manchester laborers, working conditions for mill employees in Manayunk during the nineteenth century were difficult. Long hours, noise, and hard labor were only a few of workers' complaints. Beginning in 1828, laborer unrest in Manayunk factories was common, and efforts to organize women laborers began as early as 1833. That same year, the Manayunk Working People's Committee was formed to advocate for better working conditions for the men, women, and children who worked in Manayunk's mills. The group's most significant concerns were a proposed twenty percent cut in pay and the long hours. Apparently, employees worked "from 5 o'clock in the morning until sunset, being fourteen hours and a half, with an intermission of half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner, leaving thirteen hours of hard labor."⁹¹

By 1829, factories and worker housing had taken over the land adjacent to the canal. And the demand for laborer housing kept rising because of the steadily increasing numbers of residents employed in Manayunk's various industries.⁹² In 1832, nine hundred and sixty-one of Manayunk's residents worked in one of the local cotton mills.⁹³ Many of these employees were children, usually, but not always, over ten years old.⁹⁴ Charles Hagner, the drug-grinding entrepreneur, was one of the few industrialists who did not depend on child labor. He initiated the move toward opening Manayunk's first school in 1824, the same year the Manayunk town council was formed. Most of the members of the council were canal factory owners. Hagner was also a member of the council and he used his social and industrial status to attempt easing the labor burdens of children by opening a school. The other members of the council supported Hagner in theory. However, if school interfered with their supply of cheap child labor, they dissented.⁹⁵ Thus, Hagner's lobby against children working in the mills had limited success.

Worker housing constructed during the nineteenth century consisted of stone rowhouses, typically in either the Vernacular Italianate or Federal styles.⁹⁶ The homes were squeezed in every available space in the blocks adjoining Main Street. One visitor to Manayunk wrote that

"...the homes of the operatives rising in full streets along the steep hill-sides, together with the more pretentious residences which crown them, constitute a

⁹⁰ "Extracts of an Oration Delivered at the Church in Manayunk, July 4, 1828 by Dr. J.A. Elkinton," *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania* 2.1 (19 July 1828): 14-15.

⁹¹ Helen L. Sumner, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States, Volume IX: History of Women in Industry in the United States*, 61st Congress, 2nd Session, Document No. 645 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 32.

⁹² Cynthia J. Shelton, *The Mills of Manayunk: Industrialization and Social Conflict in the Philadelphia Region, 1787-1837* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 87-88.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

⁹⁶ Mintz and Smith, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Manayunk Main Street Historic District," section 7, page 2.



picture that strikes the eye of the traveler with an agreeable sense of gratification, realizing, as he must, that he beholds before him the Birmingham of America.”⁹⁷

The 1875 Hopkins survey of the 21st Ward supports Feather’s description of the Manayunk landscape. Every block between Leverington Avenue and Shur’s Lane is full of stone or brick rowhouses.⁹⁸ Because of their proximity to the mills, these houses were generally the residences of factory employees. Presumably, the noise, dirt, and odors produced by so many large industrial complexes in a relatively small space would have made the area undesirable for members of the upper classes.

During the 1850s, industrial growth occurred at a fast pace in Manayunk. By the late 1850s, at least eighteen textile mills were situated in Manayunk, along with many other paper mills, carriage manufacturers, and rolling mills.⁹⁹ Many factories opened their doors during this decade, employing thousands of Manayunk’s residents. One such factory was the Flat Rock Mills, owned by Martin Nixon, which produced paper. Nixon built the mill over the course of the nineteenth century, with the original section dating to 1844. In the 1850s, Nixon improved the French process of using straw to manufacture paper and began providing the Philadelphia newspaper *The Ledger* with this paper in 1858. Nixon’s straw-based newsprint was the first of its kind in the United States.¹⁰⁰ Before Nixon changed the way newsprint was made, all paper was made with cloth rags as the main binding ingredient. In the 1850s, Flat Rock Mills was reputed to be the largest paper mill in the world. At that time, the factory stood on ten acres; the main building was constructed of stone and brick and was one thousand feet long and three-hundred-and-fifty feet wide. Nixon spent \$500,000 building the mill, which produced between ten to fifteen tons of paper pulp every day.¹⁰¹

In 1875, mills and factories crowded the banks of the Manayunk Canal and the Schuylkill River. The Hopkins survey from that year shows at least twenty-six large-scale manufacturing complexes.¹⁰² The majority of these factories produced textiles, ranging from cotton fabrics to heavy wool plushes. The Ripka Cotton Mills was one of the largest factories in Manayunk during the second half of the nineteenth century. An 1883 Hexamer survey of the mill shows it to be an enormous complex of eight buildings, ranging from one to five stories in height, with construction dates between the 1830s and the 1880s. The Ripka Cotton Mills employed five hundred and fifty

⁹⁷ A.G. Feather, “Up the Schuylkill,” *American Monthly: An Illustrated Magazine of History, Literature, Science and Art* 16.113 (May 1881): 388.

⁹⁸ C.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia by Wards, Complete in Seven Volumes: Volume 2, 21st and 28th Wards. From Official Records, Private Plans and Actual Surveys. Based upon Plans Deposited in the Department of Surveys* (Philadelphia: C.M. Hopkins, 1875), plate A.

⁹⁹ Edwin T. Freedley, *Philadelphia and Its Manufactures: A Hand-Book Exhibiting the Development, Variety, and Statistics of the Manufacturing Industry of Philadelphia in 1857. Together with Sketches of Remarkable Manufactories and a List of Articles Now Made in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Edward Young, 1859), 141-504.

¹⁰⁰ J. Leander Bishop, *A History of American Manufactures from 1608 to 1860: Comprising the Origin and Growth of the Principal Mechanic Arts and Manufactures, from the Earliest Colonial Period to the Adoption of the Constitution; and Comprising Annals of the Industry of the United States in Machinery, Manufactures and Useful Arts, with a Notice of the Important Inventions, Tariffs, and the Results of Each Decennial Census*, vol. 2, 3rd edition (Philadelphia: Edward Young & Co., 1868), 494.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 496.

¹⁰² C.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia by Wards*, plates A, B, C, and D.



people when it was surveyed, and only one-third of those employees were male.¹⁰³ At the time of the survey, the factory was owned by R. Patterson. It was originally built by Joseph Ripka in the 1830s. Ripka was an Austrian immigrant who built his first factory in Manayunk in 1828. Within that first building were ten tenant factories that employed over six hundred people. Eventually, Ripka would own five mills in Manayunk, one in the Northern Liberties neighborhood of Philadelphia, one in Delaware, and one on the Pennypack Creek (located about fifteen miles northeast of the original city of Philadelphia). His factories employed over 1,200 people and grossed \$1,000,000 annually in the 1860s.¹⁰⁴

Demographic and Society in Nineteenth-Century Manayunk

In 1819, Manayunk’s population was about sixty people. As the industries of Manayunk prospered, the borough’s population grew steadily.¹⁰⁵ In the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the residents of Manayunk worked in one of the area's many factories.¹⁰⁶

Population in Manayunk between 1824 and 1850	
1824-1825	800
1827-1828	1,300
1830	1,800
1850	6,158

In response to the burgeoning numbers of families moving to the area for jobs, Peter and Jonathan Robeson gave land for the first school in Manayunk. Funds for the school’s construction were raised by subscription and the school was finally built in 1824.¹⁰⁷ The Manayunk branch of the Post Office opened in November 1825.¹⁰⁸

In the first half of the nineteenth century, four churches were established in Manayunk. The first was the Mount Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, whose members began meeting in homes and at the Manayunk school house in the 1820s. Mount Zion’s church was built in 1834 on Levering Street. The Methodist Episcopal faith was popular with the laboring class because of its focus on spiritual egalitarianism, which is the belief that all people are spiritually equal regardless of social standing.¹⁰⁹ The Mount Zion congregation closed in 1922, and the building was demolished in 1969.

¹⁰³ Ernest Hexamer, “Ripka Mills,” plates 1811 and 1812 of the *Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 19*, 1883.

¹⁰⁴ J. Leander Bishop, *A History of American Manufactures from 1608 to 1860*, note 1, pages 253-254.

¹⁰⁵ Please see the table below for population growth data. Population statistics taken from Jones, “Historical Sketch of Roxborough & Manayunk,” 22.

¹⁰⁶ Eli Bowen, *The Pictorial Sketch-Book of Pennsylvania, or Its Scenery, Internal Improvements, Resources, and Agriculture*, 8th edition (Philadelphia: W. White Smith, 1854), 42.

¹⁰⁷ Hagner, *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Manayunk, Schuylkill and Lehigh Navigation Companies, Fairmount Waterworks, Etc.*, 86.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, “Historical Sketch of Roxborough & Manayunk,” 22.

¹⁰⁹ Shelton, *The Mills of Manayunk*, 106.



In 1832, the Presbyterian leaders in Philadelphia proper came to Manayunk and reorganized the Dutch Reformed Church as the First Presbyterian Church of Manayunk. The congregation was ethnically mixed, with members of Scotch-Irish, English, and German descent, with most members being mill employees. The first meetings took place at the home of James Darrach, a local factory owner. Soon thereafter, the thirty-five initial members began meeting in Darrach's mill, in a room Darrach set aside for church services. A few years later, the church built a one-story, stone building. Reverend Charles Brown led the congregation and took steps to increase the church's parishioners by holding local prayer meetings and by establishing a Sunday school program in Manayunk and Roxborough.¹¹⁰ Another church from this period was St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, currently located at the corner of Rector and Cresson Streets. St. John's was the first Catholic Church in Manayunk. The church was built in 1830 and the early congregation was predominantly Irish immigrant laborers. Jerome Keating, a one-third owner of the Schuylkill Factory in Manayunk, organized the church, and many of the factory's employees were parishioners. In fact, the first church building was on land donated by Keating, which abutted factory housing.¹¹¹ In the late 1880s, when the congregation outgrew the original building, a new church was built and was officially consecrated in 1894.¹¹²

The final church built in the first half of the nineteenth century was Saint David's Episcopal Church. Whereas the congregations of the other churches built during the same period were generally composed of immigrant laborers, Saint David's drew in Manayunk's entrepreneurs, small-scale proprietors, and farmers. The church's location was one reason for the socially elite make-up. It was in the northern section of Manayunk, away from the mills and factories of Main Street. Its location also made the church accessible to Roxborough's Episcopal residents, and thus provided networking opportunities for the established merchants of Roxborough and the industrialists of Manayunk.¹¹³ Industrialist Charles Hagner and Reverend Robert Davis organized the church in the early 1830s. Saint David's first church was built in 1832, and was enlarged in 1857. A fire destroyed the church in 1879 and a second church was built one year later. Located at Saint David's and DuPont Streets, architect James Stafford designed the second church.¹¹⁴

In the second half of the nineteenth century, at least eight more churches opened their doors to the residents of Manayunk. Ebenezer Methodist Church, located at Gay and Mansion Streets, was organized in 1847. In the 1880s, the church had a large following of over three hundred and fifty members.¹¹⁵ Three Catholic churches were established in this period, each one focused on a different ethnic group. The Church of Saint Mary of the Assumption was a German Catholic church, organized in 1847. The Church of the Holy Family, founded in 1885, had a principally Irish membership. Finally, the Church of Saint Josaphat, which was established in 1898, had a primarily

¹¹⁰ Thomas Murphy, *The Presbytery of Log College; or, the Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1889), 335-337.

¹¹¹ Shelton, *The Mills of Manayunk*, 108-109.

¹¹² <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~dynamo53/Manayunk/ManayunkChurches.html> (accessed 5 August 2009).

¹¹³ Shelton, *The Mills of Manayunk*, 109-110.

¹¹⁴ Scharf and Westcott, *The History of Philadelphia*, vol. 2, 1352; <http://www.stdavidsmanayunk.org/history1.html> (accessed 5 August 2009).

¹¹⁵ Scharf and Westcott, *The History of Philadelphia*, vol. 2, 1399.



Polish congregation. The year of organization of these three Catholic churches corresponds to periods of peak influx of immigrants of the respect ethnic groups to Manayunk. A wave of German immigrants came to Manayunk in the 1840s, necessitating the establishment of a German Catholic church. While the Irish already had a Catholic church in Manayunk when the Church of the Holy Family was founded, their numbers quickly became so great that another church became necessary. At the very end of the nineteenth century, Polish immigrants appeared in Manayunk as eastern Europeans increasingly made their way to the United States. Shortly after their arrival, the Church of Saint Josaphat was established.

Transportation in Nineteenth-Century Manayunk

The Manayunk Canal was the main transportation route for goods in and out of the Philadelphia area. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the canal was the only shipping method available. The Schuylkill Navigation Company took advantage of their monopoly and pushed shipping rates to exceedingly high levels. In response to the problem of expensive transportation for goods along the canal, the Pennsylvania Legislature approved the establishment of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (P&RR) line between Reading and Manayunk in the early 1830s. Construction began in 1835 and the line was completed in 1842. By 1844, more coal was transported by rail than by the canal. The Schuylkill Navigation Company lowered their shipping rates in response to this competition and widened the canal to allow for heavier traffic. In the 1850s and 1860s, the canal business turned its greatest profit and moved the most coal, topping out at 1.7 million tons.¹¹⁶

Although technically outside the neighborhood but nonetheless an important aspect of its historic context, one of the P&RR's more significant structures is the Flat Rock Tunnel in West Manayunk. This has been recorded as the ninth railroad tunnel built in the United States, constructed in 1840; it was the third, and final, tunnel built by the P&RR for the line between Philadelphia and Reading. Engineered by Moncure and Wirt Robinson, laborers hand-drilled the tunnel through gneiss and blasted with black powder. Building the tunnel cost almost \$10,000. The entrance and exit to the tunnel are identically constructed, with stilted elliptical arches of concrete. Decorating the portals are "V-shaped grooves to represent joints between rusticated voussoirs and rusticated ashlar stonework."¹¹⁷ In the late 1850s, and again in 1875 and 1884, the P&RR widened the tunnel to make room for wider-gauged tracks and larger railcars.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ "Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, Flat Rock Tunnel," *Historic American Engineering Record*, HAER No. PA-539, pages 1-3, from the Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hh:2:/temp/~ammem_n6CX:: (accessed 6 August 2009); Mintz and Smith, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Manayunk Main Street Historic District," section 8, pages 2-3.

¹¹⁷ "Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, Flat Rock Tunnel," *Historic American Engineering Record*, HAER No. PA-539, page 2, from the Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hh:2:/temp/~ammem_n6CX:: (accessed 6 August 2009)

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pages 4-6.



Twentieth-Century Manayunk

Throughout the 1910s and the early 1920s, at least fifty manufacturing companies or individuals conducted business in Manayunk.¹¹⁹ Industries ranged from large-scale textile and paper factories to smaller furniture and rug makers. Most industries were clustered on or near Main Street. Textiles, specifically yarns, were the most common industry during the early twentieth century.¹²⁰ Paper manufacturing, which had been so dominant in Manayunk during the nineteenth century decreased in importance in the twentieth century.¹²¹ In fact, after the 1920s, “no significant new industrial development occurred in Manayunk.”¹²² During the Great Depression, many of Manayunk’s factories closed and Main Street’s role as a shopping district became less significant. After the easing of economic hardship, retail development began on Ridge Avenue.¹²³ What little industry was left in Manayunk after the Great Depression closed after World War II, such as the American Bridge Company and the Pencoyd Iron Works.

Although jobs vanished when Manayunk’s factories closed, many of the area’s residents remained. The area continued to be dominated by the working class. J.M. Brewer’s 1934 map, which provided data about real estate in Philadelphia for lenders, realtors, and appraisers, designates significant portions of Manayunk as a middle- and lower-class residential zone.¹²⁴ Further, Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps from 1936 and 1937 also describe Manayunk as an area “definitely declining.”¹²⁵ The area description for the 1936 map further states that “almost all of the mills have been closed for some years and most of the population has found employment in other parts. In spite of this, its population has remained more or less static, due partially to racial reasons and partly to religious ones.”¹²⁶ The 1937 HOLC gave Manayunk a security rating of “D” because of the age of the dwellings in the area, many of which dated to the middle of the nineteenth century.¹²⁷ The area description for this map also states that forty percent of Manayunk residents were foreign-born Polish.¹²⁸

A 1955 City Planning Commission report on Manayunk further characterizes the decay of the neighborhood, chiefly because of the departure of industry from the area. The report asserts:

¹¹⁹ *First Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania*, Department of Labor and Industry (Harrisburg: Bureau of Statistics and Information, 1914), entire source; *Third Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania*, Department of Labor and Industry (Harrisburg: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1920), entire source.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Mintz and Smith, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Manayunk Main Street Historic District,” section 8, page 4.

¹²² Ibid., section 8, page 6.

¹²³ Ibid., section 8, page 7.

¹²⁴ J.M. Brewer, *Map of Philadelphia*, 1934, <http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/brewer.html> (accessed 6 August 2009).

¹²⁵ Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, *Security Map of Philadelphia*, 1936, http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/HOLC_1936.html (accessed 6 August 2009),

<http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/PDFs/HOLC1936/libroE.pdf> (accessed 6 August 2009).

¹²⁶ Ibid., <http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/PDFs/HOLC1937/libroD5.pdf> (accessed 6 August 2009).

¹²⁷ Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, *Security Map of Philadelphia*, 1937, http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/HOLC_1937.html, <http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/PDFs/HOLC1937/libroD5.pdf> (accessed 6 August 2009).

¹²⁸ Ibid., <http://cml.upenn.edu/redlining/PDFs/HOLC1937/libroD5.pdf> (accessed 6 August 2009).



“The land use and type of residential structure in Manayunk are typical of those from the early days of industrial expansion, inefficient and unpleasant from the present day point of view. The Schuylkill cannot be employed for recreation because it is separated from the community by a barrier of mills and railroads. One of the problems of the area is the redevelopment of land presently occupied by derelict or abandoned factories...Other problems to be faced in Manayunk include the over-expanded, blighted commercial development along Main Street and the housing problem. The bulk of dwelling units in Manayunk was constructed 50 years ago and many are in need of repair.”¹²⁹

Despite the neighborhood’s mid-twentieth-century seeming deterioration, especially the areas adjacent to the Main Street industrial area, Manayunk still offered its residents support services. Two community centers, the North Light Boys Club on Green Lane and the Mount Vernon Community House on Umbria Street, offered children and adults with a variety of activities, such as music, sports, mothers’ clubs, and adult education. The Northern Home for Children, which served all of Pennsylvania in the 1950s, was an institution for parentless and neglected children. The Nazarene Home for the Aged on Flamingo Street in West Manayunk provided elder-care for women over sixty-five years old.¹³⁰ Further, in the 1950s, Hamilton Park, located at Fountain and Fowler Streets, became available for Manayunk residents. The park offered a baseball diamond and field house, swings and other play equipment, and a basketball court.¹³¹

Despite the industrial exodus of the 1930s, Manayunk was still the home of some large factories that provided many jobs for area residents in the 1950s. The Container Corporation of America was the largest of the factories, employing over 1,000 people. While the Container Corporation was by far the largest enterprise in Manayunk, the most dominant industry was still textiles, especially yarns. Mercer Yarns and F.S. Nelson Yarns were two of the larger yarn mills, employing somewhere between one hundred and one thousand employees.¹³²

The most significant economic change in Manayunk after World War II began in the 1980s, when gentrification and revitalization began to affect both the existing residential building stock as well as commercial properties on and near Main Street, changing the profile of retail to boutiques and up-market restaurants. In the early 2000s, this trend continued.

Conclusion

¹²⁹ City Planning Commission, *The Roxborough-Manayunk Area: A Pre-Planning Study* (Philadelphia: City Planning Commission, 1955), 1, digitized by The Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image in the University of Pennsylvania, http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/pages/index.cfm?so_id=5986&pageposition=1&level=2 (accessed 6 August 2009).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³¹ The park cost \$125,000 to build. *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³² Unfortunately, more exact data to the number of employees cannot be had from this source. *Ibid.*, 32.



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Manayunk's most significant historical period took place during the middle of the nineteenth century. Industry grew rapidly, transportation lines for shipping and travel criss-crossed the landscape, and the area's population surged with English, German, Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants. These aspects of nineteenth-century Manayunk are its most unique characteristics, and thus, the most important developments in the area's history. When the Great Depression hit the United States in the late 1920s, Manayunk suffered along with the rest of industrialized America. Factories closed and jobs vanished. Yet, Manayunk's population persisted through the middle of the twentieth century, choosing to find employment in other areas of the city while remaining in the neighborhood. Because Manayunk's development was, to some extent, separate from the rest of Philadelphia, there was a strong sense of neighborhood identity which kept the community in Manayunk long after the driving force behind its settlement disappeared. The character of the neighborhood has changed with gentrification beginning in the 1980s, but it remains a vital section of the city with substantial amounts of historic fabric in place to convey its historic periods of development.



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