

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE: Pennsylvania  
 COUNTY: Philadelphia  
 FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 ENTRY DATE

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Elfreth's Alley (Historic District)  
 AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Elfreth's Alley (Historic District)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
North of Arch Street, between 2nd and Front Street  
 CITY OR TOWN: Philadelphia CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3rd  
 STATE: Pennsylvania CODE: 42 COUNTY: Philadelphia CODE: 101

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: administered by the Board of Directors, The Elfreth's Alley Association, Inc.  
 STREET AND NUMBER: 126 Elfreth's Alley  
 CITY OR TOWN: Philadelphia STATE: Pennsylvania CODE: 42

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Philadelphia City Hall  
 STREET AND NUMBER: Broad and Market Streets  
 CITY OR TOWN: Philadelphia STATE: Pennsylvania CODE: 42

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey (19 sheets, 1940, from Survey, Philadelphia Chapter, AIA, 1931  
 DATE OF SURVEY: 1940  Federal  State  County  Local  
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress/ Annex  
 STREET AND NUMBER: Division of Prints and Photographs  
 CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

By the time the alley came to be known by Elfreth's name, most of the present dwellings on the south side and two on the north side, at the west corner of Bladen's Court, had been built. Of these, the two oldest surviving dwellings on the entire alley are No. 120 and No. 122 on the south side. Undoubtedly, Benjamin Franklin frequently visited the latter house, for William Maugridge, the tenant from 1728 to 1731, was one of the original members of Franklin's Junto.

The next oldest house is probably No. 108, built sometime after 1725 and before 1750 by Thomas Wells, a shipwright. Across the street on the north side, the two-story house at the northwest corner of Bladen's Court, No. 117, was probably built about 1734 by William Parker, a young blacksmith; the house next door, numbered 119, was built between 1737 and 1747. This house was purchased in 1757 by Matthias Meyer, a German potter from Hilsbach. His daughter Hannah was married here in 1770 to Rev. John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, the "fighting parson" of Revolutionary fame.

Next in age are the two houses numbered 130 and 132 across the alley on the south side near Second Street. These were built for income-producing purposes shortly after 1741 by Adam Clampffer, a German shopkeeper who lived on Second Street nearby. He and his heirs rented both properties to a succession of tenants until after the Revolution. By the middle of the 19th century, the narrow little house now No. 134 had replaced the original frame tavern and shop erected long before the Revolution. Sometime between 1753 and 1755 Richard Hall, a house carpenter, built the house numbered 118. Jeremiah Elfreth built No. 124 and the original dwelling at No. 126 between the years 1741 and 1762, when he sold both properties.

Down toward Front Street, Nos. 110, 112, and 114 were erected sometime between 1757 and 1762 by Thomas Patterson, another house carpenter. The three-story house at No. 116 represents the post-colonial period. It was built in 1785-86 by the brothers Benjamin and Enoch Taylor, who were bricklayers and masons. Across the street, No. 137, near Second Street, was built in 1789 by the cabinet maker Josiah Elfreth, a grandson of Jeremiah Elfreth. The house adjoining on the east, No. 135, is known as the Coach House from the high arched passage that originally led back to stables belonging to Jeremiah Elfreth's house on Second Street. In 1811 the premises were described as "brick stores" owned by a distiller, John Angue, who had purchased the frame shops and the Elfreth dwelling, fronting on Second Street, in 1805. Whether the present house is identical with the brick stores or was erected after 1811 has not been definitely established.

Apparently the first dwelling built on the north side of the alley, erected between 1713 and 1727, occupied the sites of the lots now numbered 129 and 131. The present dwellings on the site, No. 129 and

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1702-04

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The dwellings fronting Elfreth's Alley are a unique representation of Philadelphia architecture. Half of those now standing were erected either before the middle of the 18th century or before the opening years of the Revolution, while the other half were constructed in the post-colonial and Federal years. For more than 250 years Elfreth's Alley has been continuously occupied. The population today numbers almost 100 persons.

The houses, of two and three stories, are typical urban dwellings of the period with their facades flush on the sidewalk, low ceilings and deep cellars. Elfreth's Alley is a remarkable survival of colonial America which can be viewed today in an unexploited, authentic atmosphere.

HISTORY

Elfreth's Alley itself was opened between 1702 and 1704 by mutual agreement between Arthur Wells and John Gilbert, both of whom lived on Front Street. Wells donated 5 feet of land extending from Front to Second Streets on the south side of the intended alley, while Gilbert, who owned the land on the north, donated 10 feet. Because Arthur Wells died shortly after the alley was laid out, it was first known as Gilbert's Alley. After his death it came to be called Preston's Alley, for Paul Preston, who had married Gilbert's widowed daughter-in-law. Not until about 1750 was it commonly called Elfreth's Alley, for Jeremiah Elfreth, who then lived on Second Street just north of the alley. His first wife had been a sister of Paul Preston's wife, and his fifth wife was the widow of a grandson of Arthur Wells. Through these two wives, Elfreth had acquired title to land on both sides of the alley at its Second Street end. From this time the alley has been known by his name.

It is obvious that none of these little houses were the dwellings of wealthy merchants or prominent members of society but were occupied by artisans and tradesmen. Many of them stayed here only a year or two, although others lived out their lives on the alley. Yet the houses themselves have survived, practically unchanged, while the city

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**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Historical Society of Philadelphia, City Hall Annex, Philadelphia, Pa  
 Elfreth's Alley File  
 Murtagh, William, "The Philadelphia Row House," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. XVI, No. 4, December 1957.  
 Simon, Grant M. The Beginnings of Philadelphia in the Province of Pennsylvania, 1682, Philadelphia, 1957.  
 Jackson, Joseph, Encyclopedia of Philadelphia, Harrisburg, PA, 1932.  
 Watson, John F., Annals of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, 1830.  
 Report on Elfreth's Alley, Pennsylvania, Number A41, no author listed, Mid Atlantic Region.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		UTM	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		0 ' "	0 ' "	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "		0 ' "	0 ' "	
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "		0 ' "	0 ' "	
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "		0 ' "	0 ' "	
				18.487810.4422290		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3.5

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmark Review  
 Project: from report from Mid-Atlantic Region

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, NPS DATE: 1/29/75

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L. Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Landmark Designated: 059, 1960  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, date \_\_\_\_\_

Boundary Certified: Patricia Heintzelman  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys, date: 7-2-75

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register, date: 7/3/75

Boundary Affirmed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, OAHIP, date: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description second page

131, presumably were built between 1796 and 1798. At the opposite end of the alley on the same side, the two houses numbered 109 and 111 appear to have been put up by John Pechin, a carpenter, possibly about 1811.

The next two houses, Nos. 113 and 115, were probably built between 1805 and 1809 by Ephraim Haines. Haines had purchased the two lots in the autumn of 1805, at which time they included two brick stables. That on No. 113 had been erected in 1763, while the one on No. 115, standing since 1748 when the premises included "a large smith's shop . . . with four good forges, good stable and garden behind the same, " was then owned by the blacksmith William Parker, who was living in No. 117.

Bladen's Court, separating these last two properties, was opened between 1749 and 1753 by Abraham Carlile and Thomas Maule. The latter had recently purchased No. 117 from Parker but lived in Front Street north of the alley and next door to Carlile. Both their Front Street properties extended west this far. Carlile had the dubious distinction of being one of the two Loyalist Quakers hanged in 1778. During the British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777, he had served the British as a keeper of the city gates at the north end of town. A house carpenter and original member of the Carpenters' Company, he may have built the Spinning" Wheel House at the north end of the court, for it stands on what was once his property. The remaining houses in the center of the north side of the alley represent the Federal period of domestic architecture.

Until 1775, the sites of the present Nos. 125 and 127 may have been occupied by the "pot-house and potter's kiln," which were adjuncts of the property in 1741. The land was vacant, however, when Daniel Trotter purchased these two lots and the two to the west in 1793. He built a frame shop on No. 125 and in 1798 a second shop on No. 127. These were purchased by Barney Schumon a turner, in 1810. Before his death he may have built the present No. 127, as his executors in 1819 sold a "message" and lot here. The dwelling now No. 125--the only four-story house on the alley--was not erected until after 1836.

The most perfect existing examples of the City house type of row house plan occur in these Elfreth's Alley houses, especially at numbers 113, 115, 130 and 132. In these structures the door is placed as usual in one side of the street facade and gives entrance to the front building. This is one room deep with fireplace located on the rear or side wall, opposite the door. The stairs are not in this chamber but in an area behind called the "piazza." This element is often narrower than the back buildings and forms a connecting link between them and the front block. By their slimmer proportion these backbuildings create a long yard or alley. Access is gained to the rear yard and backbuildings by a passage between houses, a characteristic of all but the Bandbox plan of the Philadelphia row house.

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(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

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7. Description third page

Elfreth's Alley Registered National Historic Landmark is about 475 feet long from west to east, 285 from north to south, and covers about 3 1/2 acres, as show on the attached property map.

Starting at the northwest corner of the landmark, the boundary lies along the back property lines of the 15 buildings on the north side of the alley which have been certified by the City of Philadelphia; thence east and parallel to Quarry Street and approximately halfway between the latter and the alley, to a point approximately 185 feet west of Front Street; thence south, parallel to Front Street, to a point approximately halfway between Arch Street and Elfreth's Alley; thence west and parallel to the alley along the back (south) property lines of the 13 buildings on the south side of the alley which have been certified as historical by the City of Philadelphia, to a point approximately 185 feet east of Second Street; thence north to the beginning point.

Between the west boundary of the landmark and Second Street non-historic buildings have been razed to eliminate fire hazard and provide parking. Similarly, on the east end of the alley the property between the east boundary of the landmark and First Street has been acquired by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the buildings therein razed for the I-95 project and associated minor relocation to the west of Front Street.

Pennsylvania

COUNTY

Philadelphia

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(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
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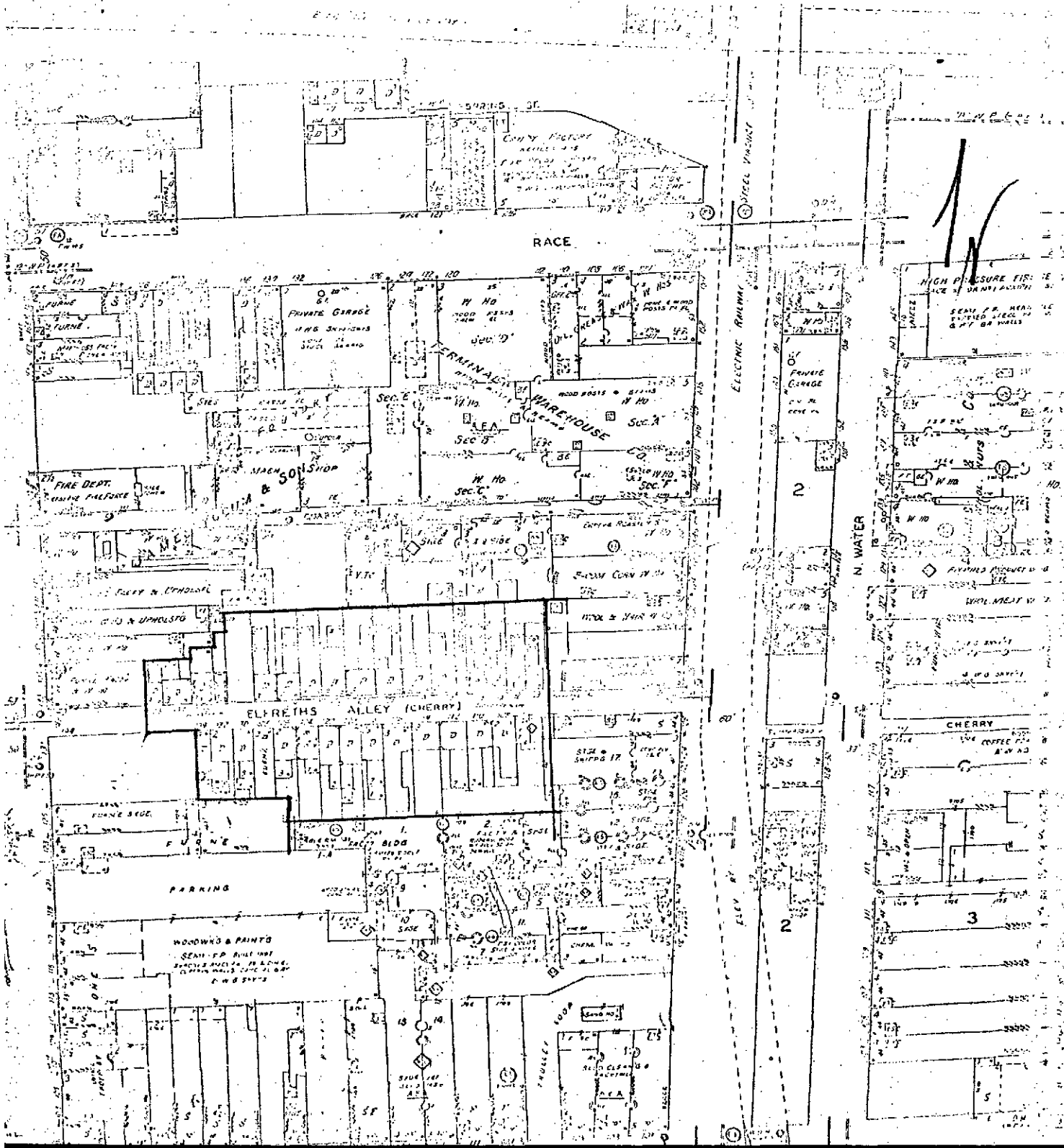
8. Significance second page

around them has altered to such an extent that only a vestige of its original character remains, leaving the alley a present witness of the past.

To preserve the alley as one chapter in the annals not only of Philadelphia but of America, the Elfreth's Alley Association was established in 1934 as a non-profit organization, its membership open to all. In succeeding years, the association acquired title to the two easternmost houses on Bladen's Court: No. 1 and 2, better known as the Spinning-Wheel House, No. 114, where Daniel Trotter lived for 30 years; and No. 124, occupied by the chair makers Gilbert Gaw and John B. Ackley in the 1790's. The rental income derived from these four properties is used for their maintenance and for the upkeep of the association garden in the rear of Bladen's Court.

Late in 1957 the association, believing that tradition and legend should be bolstered by fact, agreed to engage a researcher to investigate the history of the alley and its colonial residents. Title searches were made to establish the physical development of the alley and definitive historical and genealogical research begun to determine the background, relationships, and activities of the people who lived on and were associated with Elfreth's Alley.

Records: Philadelphia Historical  
Commission  
Scale: Not determined





COOPER 14423  
ELFRETH'S ALLEY, PHILADELPHIA, PA  
USGS 7.5' Series, Philadelphia Quadrangle  
UTM 18.487810.442290

