

MARY WOOD PARK HOUSE  
128 E. Fifth Avenue  
Conshohocken  
Montgomery County  
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-6020

HABS  
PA  
46-CONSH,  
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: 128 E. 5th Avenue, Conshohocken, Montgomery Co., Pennsylvania.

Significance: The Mary Wood Park House is a high-style Queen Anne house with Gothic Revival detailing built for the prominent Conshohocken industrialist, Alan Wood, Jr.

Description: The Mary Wood Park House is a three-story, asymmetrically massed house facing southwest on a large park site. The first and second stories are of Conshohocken stone partially covered with stucco while the third story is of frame construction. Several major additions were made to the house ca. 1879 which involved adding Queen Anne massing and Gothic Revival decoration to the original structure. The additions included a corner tower, projecting bay windows, and Gothic Revival gable detailing with crossbracing. The single, paired and ribbon windows are currently one-over-one-light double-hung sash, although originally they varied from one-over-one-light to six-over-six-light double-hung sash. The principal entrance is located in the eastern portion of the front facade. Both the wood glazed double doors and the Colonial Revival entry porch are later additions. Originally there were frame porches that wrapped around much of the first floor and tile on the major portion the roof. This tile is still extant on the tower's roof.

The first floor plan consists of a center hall flanked by a dining room to the east, a parlor to the west and a double kitchen (the back kitchen constructed of frame with a shingle roof) to the rear. The staircase, that originates at the rear of the center hall, rises one flight to a landing and then splits to two shorter flights. There is a closet, pantry and entrance hall leading to a porch east of the stair hall. In ca. 1879, a library, study and vestibule were added to the front of the dwelling, increasing the size and altering the appearance of the house significantly. The second floor consists of four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a central hall. The third floor is divided into three bedrooms and a central hall. Much of the original material, including Italian marble mantels, built-in bookcases and wardrobes, tile fireplaces, wood (walnut, butternut, pine and oak) wainscoting, stained-glass windows and plaster moldings remain throughout the house. In ca. 1909, plumbing, heating, lighting and electrical improvements were made to the house. A detailed description, including floor plans, appears in the Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Company Policy # 10947, Mary H. Wood, August 12, 1879, and updated June 3, 1909.

History: The Mary Wood Park House, built ca. 1860, was the home of Alan Wood, Jr., co-founder of the Schuylkill Iron Works (later the Alan Wood Iron and Steel Company) and his wife Mary Wood. Alan Wood, Jr.'s uncle, James Wood, started the Conshohocken Iron

MARY WOOD PARK HOUSE  
HABS No. PA-6020 (page 2)

Works in 1832. He headed the successful Wood iron business for the next forty years while playing a leading role in the founding of Conshohocken in 1850. The family won international acclaim through the "Woods Process," a procedure which duplicated highly-polished Russian sheet-iron. The sheet-iron also and won a prize at the 1857 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London. Alan, Jr. and Mary occupied the Mary Wood Park House from 1861 until 1876, when Alan Wood, Jr. was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He served one term in Washington and then returned to Conshohocken. The Woods lived in the house until 1894, when they moved into Woodmont, their Gladwyne mansion designed by architect William L. Price. Alan Wood, Jr. died in 1902, at which point Mary Wood returned to her house in Conshohocken. Upon her death in 1918, she bequeathed the house and the surrounding park to the Borough of Conshohocken. Today it houses the Conshohocken Historical Society and is used as meeting space by various non-profit groups.

Sources:

Conshohocken Historical Society files.

Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Company. Policy # 10947 , Mary H. Wood, August 12, 1879 and updated June 3, 1909.

Trumbull & Wiesenthal Consultants. "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form: Mary Wood Park House." June 1989. This survey form provided the date of construction and much of the family history.

Wolf, M.L. (Brandywine Conservancy). "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form: John Wood Manufacturing Company." February 1987.

Historian: Janet G. Blutstein, HABS Historian, 1994.