

John Clement Stocker House
402 South Front Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1068

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

JOHN CLEMENT STOCKER HOUSE

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Address: 402 South Front Street, Philadelphia,
Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority.

Present Use: Vacant. Recently used as a fish processing
plant. Threatened by the proposed Delaware
Expressway.

Brief Statement
of Significance: A good example of a large Philadelphia row house
of the Federal period. There are many fine details
typical of the period including an unusual front
cornice and entrance frontispiece capitals, both
of which survive only in photographs. The house
is located in what was one of the most stylish
neighborhoods at the very summit of Society Hill.
John Clement Stocker, the owner, was a wealthy and
influential merchant, and his son, J. C. Stocker
the second, was a prominent citizen.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners as described in property transfers:
 - a. November 1768. Joseph Potts, gentleman, and his wife Sarah (late Sarah Powel) to Francis Trumble, joiner, a lot 41' wide by 100' deep, "for a yearly rent of 20 pounds 10 shillings." (I, 5, 311).
 - b. March 1791. James Ash, Sheriff from Francis Trumble, to John Clement Stocker, merchant, "...a lot sit W s Front Street between Pine and Cedar [South] Sts. 'with the Messuages and Buildings thereon erected', for 417 pounds current gold and silver money of Pa." [Common Pleas C 210]

John Clement Stocker (Feb. 18, 1760--Oct. 10, 1813), son of Anthony Stocker, merchant, and Margaret Phillips; married Mary Katherine Rutter (1762-1813) of Potts Grove was a wealthy export-import merchant in the China trade. City alderman (1795-1811), one of thirteen of the original trustees of the Mutual Assurance Society (1784-90, 1809-13), Director of the Bank of Pennsylvania,

and Vestryman of Christ Church (1795-1813). He lived at 402 South Front Street from 1793 to his death. Both he and his wife are buried in St. Peter's churchyard at Third and Pine Streets, Philadelphia. As alderman, he wrote the warrant of commitment in 1798 against Patrick Lyon, locksmith, who was unjustly charged with the robbery of the Bank of Pennsylvania. [Sources B.7, Eberlein and Lippincott; B.9, Ritter; B.10, tombstone, St. Peters; B.12, Philadelphia directories; B.13, report from Mutual Assurance Society].

- c. John Clement Stocker to John Clement Stocker, II and to Anthony Stocker by will, [LRB 124 294]. J. C. Stocker, the second, (Aug. 30, 1786 to July 28, 1833) was a manager of the Union Canal Company of Pennsylvania; one of the original fifteen trustees of Girard College; Director of the Bank of North America (1828-1833); trustee (1814-33), and treasurer (1829-33) of the Mutual Assurance Society; one of the founders (1813), and Secretary (1825-26) of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society.

He married Louise Carolina Francoise de Tousard, daughter of Louis de Tousard, colonel in the Continental Army. Portraits of both he and his wife were painted by Sully in 1814. [Sources, Department of Records, Philadelphia City Hall, Wills book; B.6, LRB 124 294; B.8. abc, Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography B.B., report from Mutual Assurance Society].

- d. December 3, 1831, Anthony Stocker to his wife, Elizabeth H., by will [LRB 124 294]
- e. May 6, 1832. John C. Stocker, II, to his wife, Caroline, by will. [LRB 124 294]
- f. August 13, 1834. Elizabeth H. Stocker to Caroline Stocker, John C. Stocker, III, Carolina L. Stocker, Anna Maria Stocker, Henry H. Stocker, Anthony E. Stocker, Laurette T. Stocker, Martine D. Stocker, Emily E. Stocker and Louis T. Stocker, all by will. [LRB 124 294]
- g. [No date given]. John C. Stocker, III, to John C. Stocker, IV, by will.
- h. May 13, 1865. Anthony E. Stocker to Caroline Stocker. (District Court 62, page 30). [LRB 124 294]

- i. March 19, 1866. Louisa Caroline Elbert (Caroline Stocker); Martine and Louis French (Martine Stocker); Laurette and Alfred Cox (Laurette Stocker); John Clement Stocker, IV, and his wife Katharine M.; Louis T. Stocker; Mary K. Stocker; Anna Maria Stocker; and Emily E. Stocker; to John G. Fleck, liquor dealer. "2 continuous lots and mansion for \$6,300.00 house sit W s Front St. between Pine & Cedar Sts."
Front: 41'
Depth: 100' [LRB 124 294]
- j. June 14, 1873. John G. Fleck, by Sheriff to Joseph M. P. Price. *
- k. March 15, 1876. Joseph M. P. Price to William Ross. *
- l. April 21, 1877. William Ross to Samuel R. Shipley. *
- m. December 18, 1919. The Provident Life and Trust Company, executors and trustees under the will of Samuel H. Shipley to Thomas Donaghie. *
- n. July 15, 1935. Martha Donaghie, widow of Thomas to Joseph Rabinowitz. [JMH 3984 493]
- o. August 3, 1936. Joseph Rabinowitz to Harry Granoff, Morris Belovsky and Jacob Sklaroff. Northern part of lot, 26'-7" by 100'. *
- p. July 26, 1948. Martha Belovsky to Jacob Sklaroff and Harry Granoff. *

*From records of transfer, Registry Unit, Department of Records, plan 3 S 4, lots 60 and 190, Philadelphia City Hall.

2. Date of erection: Between 1768 and 1795; c. 1790-95, probably.
3. Builder: Probably Francis Trumble, Joiner. (See A.1a above).
4. Original plans and construction: No drawings are known, but five early documents of the Mutual Assurance Society describe the building and its additions: "... being twenty seven feet front, fortytwo feet deep and Three stories high..." Also mentions "Cellar." [Policies Nos. 585 and 586, September 1795, each of which insure one half of the house for £ 500]. "...The StairCase being eighteen feet by ten feet, three stories high, Kitchen twenty feet by fifteen feet and three stories high..." [Policy 587, September 1795, insuring piazza and kitchen for £ 500]. "Survey of John Clement Stockers New two story Wash house, situate in the Rear of his Dwelling...[indiscernible]...Dimensions 13 feet

by 16, Lower Story hath washboards, surbase, windows cased, the floor is Paved with Brick, and no Cellar, Chamber, Mantle Closets washboards, surbase, and windows cased...." [Survey, March 1803, attached to Policy 1477, February 1803].

NOTE: This policy also mentions "liberty to Weatherboard said house..." apparently referring to whole house.

5. Notes on alterations and additions:

- a. Property. An adjoining house was built after 1860 on what was until then only a lot, probably the Stocker house garden. The Hexamer and Locher Insurance Survey Map of Philadelphia, 1860, shows the southern part of the property empty. That house has since been replaced by a garage, possibly at the time of the lot's subdivision into two properties in 1936.
- b. Front building. In the nineteenth century, a large shop window and sidewalk-level door replaced the two probable original windows, possibly sometime after the building passed out of the Stocker family's ownership in 1866. In 1936, the building, together with several of the surrounding ones, became part of a fish processing plant. Several brick partitions were removed at that time, the first floor covered with concrete and ceramic tile, four fireplaces bricked-in and the first floor fireplaces removed, all of the carved woodwork removed, including the unusual cornice, the entrance frontispiece, door and steps, four and possibly six mantelpieces, and the stair, which may not have been original.
- c. Piazza. The piazza is so completely changed that only some of the original window frames, sash and hardware remain and most of them are in new locations having been moved vertically. At some undetermined date the second floor level was removed and two new floors added, making three spaces where there had been only two before. None of the original piazza stair remains.
- d. Backbuilding. In 1936 the third floor roof was removed, the third floor replaced by a roof, the second floor replaced by a reinforced concrete one in a lower position, the first floor replaced by a concrete one and the cellar filled with earth. Original shutter dogs in their original positions on the south wall indicate that the second floor

level was lowered about 2 1/2'. Then also, the original wall between kitchen and washhouse was removed, and the north and west party walls removed, thus opening the backbuilding to adjoining ones. Probably at that time again, a one-story shed was added, south of the backbuilding.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Photograph of street facade and description: Hubert C. Wise and H. Ferdinand Beidleman, Colonial Architecture for Those About to Build (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1913), pp. 77-78, illus. p. 80.
2. Photographs of second floor mantels: Philip B. Wallace, Colonial Houses of Philadelphia in the Pre-Revolutionary Period (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc., 1931), pp. 229-234.
3. Elevations and details of two, second floor fireplace walls: Joseph Patterson Sims and Charles Willing, Old Philadelphia Colonial Details (New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1914), plates 22-25.
4. Mounted photograph of street elevation showing original frontispiece: The Shoemaker Collection, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Undated, but appears to be turn-of-the-century.
5. Insurance policies of the Mutual Assurance Company: Policies 585, 586, 587 (September 1795); 1477 (February 1803). Insurance survey of washhouse (February 1803).
6. Records of Transfer, Registry Unit, Department of Records, City Hall, Philadelphia. Plan 3S4, lots 60 and 190. Deed books I-5 311, JMH 3984-493; Will records LRB 124-294; and Common Pleas records C 210.
7. Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Horace Mather Lippincott, The Colonial Houses of Philadelphia and its Neighborhood. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1912), p. 33.
8. Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
 - a. B. B. Lehman, "Notes: Relics of the Union Canal Company of Pennsylvania," Vol. 15 (1891), p. 377.
 - b. "Mr. Nicholas Biddle and the Architecture of Girard College," Vol. 18 (1894), p. 359.

- c. Charles Henry Hart, "Thomas Sully's Register of Portraits, 1801-1871," Vol. 33 (1909), p. 183.
- d. "Notes: For Sale, Pine Forge and Farm," Vol. 43 (1919), p. 191.
9. Abraham Ritter, Philadelphia and Her Merchants. (Philadelphia, A. Ritter, 1860), p. 199.
10. Tombstone in churchyard of St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church at Third and Pine Streets, Philadelphia.
11. Receipt book of J. C. Stocker (1807-1913) in possession of Herbert S. Casey of Conestoga Road, Devon, Pennsylvania, contains no information specially pertinent to 402 South Front Street.
12. Philadelphia Directories from 1791 to 1866.
13. Biographical sketches on J. C. Stocker I, J. C. Stocker II, and other members of the family by the Mutual Assurance Society.

Brief review of manuscript collection of Historical Society of Pennsylvania yielded no information.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Three-and-a-half-story, three-bay, brick house in the Federal style with a typical Philadelphia house-row plan. All the original carved woodwork has been removed with only the plainer work remaining. Major partitions are brick from basement through attic. All stairs but one have been removed and/or relocated, fireplaces bricked, many sash replaced, floor levels in the piazza and back buildings changed, and partitions removed and added.
2. Condition of fabric: Structure is sound, and remaining finishes are relatively untouched, except for repainting.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: 27' x 100'. Front building 27' x 45', piazza 18' x 11', back building 37' x 17' (original kitchen 22' x 17', original washhouse 15' x 17').

2. Foundations: Rubble; that part which is the south party wall of 400 South Front Street is built of cobblestones. The original rubble is now exposed above grade on all three sides by an average of 9". Basement partitions have three-centered arches.
3. Wall construction: Red brick, 1'-0" thick on party walls, 1'-6" thick on east and west elevations and 9" thick inside (brick partitions extend from basement through attic).
4. Street elevation: Red brick laid in Flemish bond, with black-glazed headers; marble belt courses, molded marble base course, and lintels with simulated keystone and voussoirs incised.
5. Stoop: Marble with molded nosings, four steps, now removed. Bulkhead: modern steel hatch to cellar.
6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys on south wall for original fireplaces, are not webbed. No other original chimneys remain. Modern single flue on north wall rises from second floor level.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance doorway has round arch, now bricked-in. Original frontispiece, now missing, was pedimented with paneled jambs and arch soffit, had a key-block and 3/4-round engaged, fluted columns, and apparently unique capitals of no recognizable order but most resembling a flat Ionic (believed to be now in the possession of Joseph Kindig, antique dealer, York, Pennsylvania). The fanlight, shown in the old photographs (I, A. 1. and 4.) had only two lights, each equal, and was probably a nineteenth century replacement. The original door was six-paneled. The original doorway from piazza to garden has been bricked-in and became a window, but the width is evident and the marble sill, extant. No other doors or door information remains.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Present front building windows have double-hung sash, large panes; the third floor front three-over-three light; second floor front four-over-four light; third floor back three-over-six light; second floor back, six-over-six light. Piazza and backbuilding sash: piazza third floor, six-over-six light; piazza second floor nine-over-nine light; piazza first floor six-over-six light; kitchen, first floor (the only original backbuilding sash) twelve-over-twelve light. Original second floor front shutters were three-paneled and louvered; these have been re-

moved and no other information on shutter remains.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Main house; double pitch to the street and back slope about 8/12. Wooden shingles covered with modern tar paper. Piazza: shed roof, tar paper. Backbuilding: flat, built-up.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Present front cornice, sheet metal, twentieth century; original front cornice was wooden with consoles and garlands; original and present piazza cornice, wood, simple molding. (Back cornice is now sheet metal and may cover old one).
- c. Dormers: Front dormer, arched and pedimented with gable. Original sash six-over-six light with Gothic light. Back dormer, gabled window with new casements. Cheeks and roofs, front and back, are tar-papered.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Front and back rooms with flanking hall on north. Openings arched. Piazza originally had winding stair in back corner; now has metal stair. Arch from piazza to kitchen cellar now blocked and backbuilding cellar filled.
- b. First floor originally had front and back rooms connected by a door and flanked by an entrance hall on north. Partitions between front and back rooms and between rooms and hall are brick. Front room had two windows to street and fireplace, both of which are now removed; the street wall now having a double door and a pair of windows with double-hung sash, both nineteenth century. The back room had two windows to the rear, one of which is now a door, and a fireplace flanked by windows to the garden. The fireplace, garden windows, and wall between back room and hall are now removed. The piazza has a modern stair replacing the original one and rising to the front rather than to the back. The backbuilding is one large room, the kitchen back wall, and washhouse party and rear walls having been removed. One of the original kitchen windows is now a door to the shed on the south. There is a plaster impression in the north-east corner indicating a counter-clockwise winding stair.

- c. The second floor plan is similar to the first, but with a larger front room extending across entire front of house, the hallway extending only from front room to piazza, and the front room divided by thin modern partitions. As on the first floor, the major partitions are brick. Each of the two fireplaces is bricked-in and the back one has recessed breast closets. One of the two, rear-facing, back room windows is now a door to the fire escape. This room had one other window in a closet facing south, now bricked in. The piazza contains a stair and a dressing room, both modern. The backbuilding plan is the same as the first floor one, minus the modern door opening to the south. The plaster impression of a winding stair continues in the northeast corner on this floor.
- d. The third piazza level, a modern addition, below the main third floor, has a stair, a dressing room and a stair entrance to the second floor backbuilding.
- e. The third floor plan includes three rooms, two front and one back with a two-part connecting hall and the original 1/4 turn stair. Major partitions are brick here, too. The hall has two closets: one under the stair and the other ceiling-height, with shelves and wide opening (originally had double doors). Each of the two fireplaces, located over the corresponding ones on the floors below, is flanked by recessed breast closets, and, is also bricked-in. The back room has two windows to the rear, (one now an exit to the fire escape) and one window now bricked-in, in the closet facing south.

The piazza is unpartitioned except for a closed stair in the northeast corner which is probably modern. There is a door to the present roof which would have been the third floor of the kitchen addition originally; whether this opening is original is questionable.

- f. The attic consists of a front room with plaster-vaulted, round-end dormer, open fireplace and a window to the south; a back room with dormer window to the south, the chimney from the rooms below, and a steep ladder to the loft; and a stair hall with a modern skylight and doors to the rooms.

- g. The loft is a single room, its two inclined ceiling planes meeting at the ridge, a small casement window to the south.

There is an original hatch to the roof.

2. Stairway from third floor to attic and ladder to loft are the only original stairs which remain. The stair is open with square newel posts and 1/4 turns at both top and bottom. Spindles are rectangular, square set, stringer is closed, plain and projects beyond plaster below. The ladder is made of beaded boards mortised into the stringers.
3. Flooring: Flooring throughout, where original, seems to be pine, is always random width and becomes gradually wider the higher the floor. The boards run east to west in all rooms except in the front half of the third floor, in the attic, and in the loft. Concrete has replaced wood in the first floor and in the second-floor backbuilding.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster where original, and the first floor has modern ceramic tile wainscot. Some closets have one wall of vertical tongue-and-groove, beaded boards. The basement ceiling joists with plaster (recessed) between; this seems to be nineteenth or twentieth century.
5. Doorways and doors: All on the first floor have been either filled-in or enlarged. All doorways in the upper floors of the front building except those in the thin, modern partitions, are original with original doors and trim. The door from the third floor hall to the small, front room has a three-light transom; that from the attic hall to the back room, a four-light transom. The doors in the attic are four-paneled; all others are six. There are no original doors or doorways in either the piazza or the backbuilding, except that from the first floor to the outside (now a window).
6. Trim: The window and door trim in the second and third floor front is narrow with a prominent cavetto. There are narrow baseboards, dados, and, in the second floor, composition cornices and wooden wainscoting (both removed in the front room).

The third floor windows and second floor back window have original, inside, folding shutters, three folds per side.

The attic has narrow baseboards and door and window trim. The stair to the attic has rectangular spindles, square set, a closed stringer, and turned newel.

The loft has plain baseboards, 14" wide and tangent to the ceiling.

There are only two areas in either the piazza or the backbuilding where the trim is original: on the original windows, where it is identical to that in the front building and the vertical tongue-and-groove wainscot on the south (garden) wall of the kitchen (only a few linear feet of this remains). The rest is modern, either plain or repetitiously fluted.

The four very elaborate, second- and third-floor mantels have been removed. The fireplace openings on the third floor are rimmed with plain, white tiles which are probably modern. The hearths on second and third floors have not been removed but may not be original; they are of red tiles 5" x 5".

The ceiling of the piazza had a central, oval, applied plaster medallion of radial design, now removed but evident in the thickness of the paint, suggesting that the original main stair was in the piazza and terminated on the third floor.

7. Hardware: Several "curled rattail" shutter dogs remain on the east and south elevations. The remaining original doors have their old butt hinges and tiny escutcheons but have lost their locks and/or handles. Several turned wooden clothes pegs remain in the under-stair closet. There is a spiral-twisted hook and staple on the loft's roof hatch.
 8. Lighting: No indication of original lighting; only fixtures are later gas wall lamps and electric ceiling outlets.
 9. Heating: Central, radiator, supplied by furnace in adjoining building. Fireplace chimneys have been pierced for stove pipes.
- D. Site: General setting is a city street, now in the soon-to-be-demolished produce and warehouse district; but in the eighteenth century, the most fashionable neighborhood. The house is now flanked by other buildings and exposed only on its eastern end (street elevation).