

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**

**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)**

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: 30 West Chestnut Hill Avenue

Postal code: 19118

Councilmanic District: 8

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Edward. V. Douglas House

Common Name: 30 West Chestnut Hill Avenue

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building

Structure

Site

Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied  vacant  under construction  unknown

Current use: *Residential dwelling, single family*

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*SEE ATTACHED*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*SEE ATTACHED*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*SEE ATTACHED*

Period of Significance (from year to year): 1887-1930

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1887-88; ca. 1930.

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Theophilus P. Chandler

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Contractor: George Hearst

Original owner: Edward V. Douglas

Other significant persons:

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

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

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

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*SEE ATTACHED*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Name with Title: James A. Ounsworth, neighbor (prepared by Emily Cooperman, PhD)

Email: flashpython@aol.com

Organization: Neighbors of 30 West Chestnut Hill Avenue

Date: 1/12/2016

Street Address: 8717 Shawnee Street

Telephone: 610-291-2303

City, State, and Postal Code: Philadelphia, PA 19118

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Notice Issuance: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

## 5. Boundary Description

The Edward V. Douglas House is located at 30 West Chestnut Hill Avenue in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia. The boundaries of the parcel follow:

Beginning at a point on the southeasterly side of Chestnut Hill Avenue at the distance of 304 feet 11 ½ inches southwestwardly from the southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue (a.k.a. Perkiomen Turnpike, 50 feet wide); thence extending along the southeasterly side of Chestnut Hill Avenue, south 41 degrees 57 minutes west 100 feet to the northeasterly side of Shawnee Street; thence extending along the northeasterly side of Shawnee Street 48 degrees 5 minutes east 150 feet to a point; thence extending along a line parallel with Chestnut Hill Avenue 41 degrees 57 minutes east 100 feet to a corner; thence extending on a line parallel with Shawnee Street north 48 degrees 5 minutes west 150 feet to the southeasterly side of Chestnut Hill Avenue and the place of beginning (see Figure 1).

## 6. Description

The Edward V. Douglas house (photos 1, 2), designed in 1887 by noted Philadelphia architect Theophilus P. Chandler and built by contractor George Hearst, is a 2 ½-story, Queen Anne-style dwelling clad in random-ashlar, quarry-faced Wissahickon Schist and historic, shaped wood shingles, and is picturesquely irregular in plan and asymmetrical in its elevations. The complex roof (photo 3) relates to the interconnected blocks of the building. The windows in the stone-clad portions of the building include limestone sills. The front, northwestern section, entirely clad in stone, is cross-gabled, with flat stone coping on the gable ends. This block is backed on the southeast by a full-width, hipped-roof block clad on the first floor with stone and with historic wood, fish-tail-shaped shingles on the second on the side (northeast and southeast) elevations and by matching shingles on the rear, southeast elevation. The second floor of this block is marked on both side elevations by a roof kick with brackets below the shingles. This second block is backed in turn by a slightly lower, hipped-roof block clad in the same shingles. A 1-story, hipped-roof, open, rear porch projects from the south corner of the building, and a 1-story, hipped-roof, partial-width rear el on stone piers with stucco infill between projects from the rearmost block. The majority of the roofs are clad in historic slate, with the exception of the rear slope of the rearmost block, and the two, 1-story rear volumes, which are all clad in asphalt shingle, and include projecting, decoratively shaped historic brackets.

The house is located at the approximate middle of its lot, with the main, northwest elevation facing Chestnut Hill Avenue. The lot also fronts on Shawnee Street on its southwest. The front elevation (photos 1, 2, 4) is marked by a 3-sided, 2-story bay on its northeast half that rises to a hipped roof. Shaped brackets mark the roofline and the roof of a hipped dormer to the southwest of the bay. The main door, on the southwest side of the bay, is fronted by a flight of stone steps with iron railings. A historic replacement hood on scrollwork iron brackets projects over the door. The historic, paneled wood door retains its historic iron scrollwork decoration in the fixed upper light. The southwestern register of the elevation is lit by double windows on all floors, including in the dormer. The segmental-arch first floor window group is topped by stone voussoirs with a larger, central keystone, and includes 1/1, double-hung, historic wood sash in historic wood frames. The second floor window group is topped by a stone jack arch and includes historic, double-hung wood sash with multi-light, Chinese Chippendale motifs consisting of a central elongated octagon with muntins radiating from its corners in the upper sash and a single light below. The third floor, dormer windows include replaced vinyl sash. The northeastern, projecting bay is fenestrated with single windows. The 2 on the first floor are round-arched and feature stone voussoirs with large keystones. The outer registers of the bay are lit on both floors with double-hung, historic wood sash with an extended lozenge pattern in the muntins of the upper sash and a single light below. The central first floor window includes 3 elongated ellipses in its upper sash muntin pattern, and is located below a stuccoed blind panel on the second floor.

The southwest, side elevation (photo 5) includes an interior, slope chimney rising from the southeast gable line of front block. The gable line is marked by projecting stones and the chimney is clad in masonry matching the main wall. The northwesternmost bay, under the gable, includes a 2-sided, triangular-plan, hipped-roof oriel with an asphalt-shingle roof and shaped historic wood shingles below its 1/1, double-hung, wood sash. The second floor window also includes 1/1 sash. The third floor window includes a round-arch window with replaced, vinyl sash. The side of the middle block is lit on the first and second floor by double windows and includes a hipped-roof dormer with decorative front and roof brackets. Shaped brackets are also found at the main roof line. The first floor is lit by double-hung, wood windows with extended-lozenge sash as on the front elevation. The second floor windows include a square motif and radiating muntins in their upper sash. The dormer window includes a replaced, vinyl sash. The rear block and el are unfenestrated on this elevation. The projecting porch, supported by stone piers, retains historic, chamfered, bracketed, wood posts and railing, and shaped brackets at the roofline as on the other roofs.

The northeast, side elevation (photo 2) includes a 3-sided, hipped-roof oriel on the first floor with fixed, upper window sash featuring a horizontally-oriented elliptical motif and radiating muntins in its fixed upper sash. The second floor window above the oriel includes a stone jack arch in the opening and a diaper, multi-light muntin pattern in the upper sash, and replaced, vinyl sash in the third floor window with radiating voussoirs below the gable. A chimney rises from the gable at its end. A small, narrow, double-hung, round-arched window with an elongated, vertical ellipse motif in the upper sash lights the interior stair landing to the southeast of the oriel. The rear portion of the building is lit by triple windows on the first and second floors. A hipped dormer matching the one on the southwest elevation includes a window with replaced vinyl sash. The first floor windows include a limestone lintel as well as sill, and historic, 9/1, double-hung sash. The second floor windows include multi-light upper sash with a central square surrounded by smaller ones. The rear el includes a double, historic wood, segmental-arch casement window with diaper-pattern muntin sash in an opening with stone voussoirs. The roofline is marked by a stone soldier course, and the southeast end of the wall projects in an S-curve with projecting stones in the manner of battlements to support the stair (photo 6).

The rear, or southeast elevation (photo 6) is lit on the first and second floor by double-hung, 1/1, wood windows except in the rear of the el, which includes a central, double jalousie window flanked on the southwest by a small window covered by a louvered shutter and on the northeast by the main rear door, which appears to be a replacement. A basement hatch is located adjacent to the el on the southwest. A double-leaf, historic French door with 3 fixed lights survives under the rear porch, and is surmounted by a 3-light, historic transom. An exterior stone chimney is centered on the rear block and is partially covered by the rear el. The site has recently been cleared of all trees and shrubs with the exception of a group of hemlocks at the edge of the property facing Shawnee Street (photo 7). A historic, low, stone perimeter wall with corner posts, dating to the period of construction of the house, survives

along both street frontages (photos 1, 2, 7). The driveway entrance from West Chestnut Hill Avenue retains historic Belgian block (photo 8). The sidewalk Chestnut Hill Avenue retains its historic bluestone and the one on Shawnee retains historic brick.

### **Integrity**

The Edward V. Douglas House retains the historic integrity required to convey its significance as a significant work of important architect Theophilus P. Chandler. It retains integrity of location, having not been moved. It retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, having sustained only relatively minor alterations, and retains such key details as most of its elaborate historic windows, shaped shingle cladding, and historic front and rear French doors. The property retains integrity of setting, which retains its rhythm of scale and open space.

## 7. Statement of Significance

The Edward V. Douglas House meets Criteria C, D, and E for designation on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, as defined by the City of Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 14-1000, Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia zoning code. The Douglas House meets Criterion C as a reflection of the distinctive architectural style of the environment of the 1880s in the more suburban parts of the city in its scale, details, lot size, and relationship to the streetfront. The Douglas House meets Criterion D as an embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of the suburban Queen Anne style. Finally, the Douglas House meets Criterion E as a representative work of Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr., one of the most important architects working in the Philadelphia region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Douglas house is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a Significant resource in the Chestnut Hill National Historic District.

### *Development Summary*

Edward Varian Douglas (originally Douglass) was born in Chicago on November 23, 1853. U. S. Census data indicate that he had moved with his parents Richard and Eliza to Philadelphia by 1870, when they were living in West Philadelphia. His family included his mother's parents, Edward and Margaret Varian, and his younger brother Walter. By 1880, Douglas's father had died, and Edward and his brother were working as coal merchants.

Around 1885, Douglas married Philadelphia native Cora Tilge (1855-1947), the daughter of importer and banker Henry Tilge, and commissioned a design for the house from the prominent Philadelphia architect Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr. (1845-1928) in 1887. The commission was announced in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* in July, the same month that Chandler's office began to produce drawings for the project.<sup>1</sup> The office continued to produce drawings through August of that year, although they are not known to survive and are unlocated. The house was probably finished the following year and stood nearly alone on its block

The completed house (figure 2) was one of the first to be built on this section of Chestnut Hill Avenue (figure 3). An image ca. 1905 (figure 2) shows the house and surrounding property much as it appears today with the exception of its front porch, which was removed at an undocumented date. Visual evidence suggests that this took place in the early twentieth century.

The Douglasses continued to live in the house until 1895. During their time in the house, Edward Douglas's business clearly prospered, since he was characterized by Moses King in 1902 as "a prominent financier and president of the Consolidated Lake Superior Company, a great

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<sup>1</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* 25 July 1887; Chandler List of Drawings Sent Out, available through [philadephiabuildings.org](http://philadephiabuildings.org).

manufacturing concern, embracing many plants and allied companies.”<sup>2</sup> Notably, Douglas remained nearby, commissioning a larger house further to the west on Chestnut Hill Avenue (124) from the architect Mantle Fielding.<sup>3</sup>

*Significance under Criterion (c): Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style and Criterion (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen*

The Douglas House set an important precedent on this section of Chestnut Hill Avenue, defining the character of its development in the coming decades, and continuing the pattern that had been established by the first elite residences completed in the area on East Chestnut Hill Avenue, Norwood Avenue, Summit Street, and Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike after the introduction of the first railway line (now SEPTA’s Chestnut Hill Railroad) in the mid-nineteenth century. This pattern came to define a significant portion of the built environment of Chestnut Hill: substantial but not overwhelmingly large houses on relatively small lots that have an important visual connection both to the street and to their neighbors. This pattern creates a pedestrian-scale cultural landscape in which the plantings and buildings of individual properties merges into the streetscape because of a continuity of materials. The palette of Wissahickon schist, slate roofs, and brick details is echoed in bluestone and brick sidewalks; street trees and grass edges connect private property to public space. The architecture of Chestnut Hill is primarily a suburban one, not only in the number of detached dwellings, but also in the rustic materials and their treatment. The use of local schist is widespread, and it is most often used in the manner of the Douglas House – its relatively rough treatment bespeaks the semi-rural character of this suburb prized in the 1880s and 1890s for its cooler temperatures and expansive landscape views.

The Douglas house reflects this rustic approach, which is also manifest in the picturesque qualities of the building: its irregular massing and plan, and the variety of its window sash patterns. The roots of these stylistic elements are fundamentally English, as is the Queen Anne style. The Douglas house represents and retains many key aspects of this important historicist style of the period in its various multi-light windows, projecting bays, bracketed rooflines, shaped shingle cladding, prominent chimneys, roof skirts, and bracketed rear porch.<sup>4</sup>

*Significance under Criterion (e): Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation*

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<sup>2</sup> Moses King, *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians* (New York, 1902), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Jefferson Moak, Inventory, Chestnut Hill National Historic District, 1985. On file at Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and Chestnut Hill Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> On the variations in the Queen Anne style, see Janet Foster, *The Queen Anne House: America’s Victorian Vernacular* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2006).

Sandra Tatman has remarked that

the importance of T.P. Chandler to the architectural profession in late nineteenth-century Philadelphia cannot be overestimated. Not only as a conveyor of high-style design, often based on European models, but also as the founder of the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Architecture, Chandler substantially affected the architectural climate in Philadelphia and raised the role of architect to new heights of professionalism.<sup>5</sup>

Reinforcing Chandler's significance in Philadelphia's architecture in the late nineteenth century, George Thomas has noted that Chandler shared with Frank Furness the "role of architect for elite Philadelphia society."<sup>6</sup> The Douglas House is an important example of the architect's work at this particular scale, and includes many of the signature elements of his style.

As Thomas's remark suggests, many of Chandler's residential projects are found on the Main Line.<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, within the city, the majority of Chandler's dwellings are clustered around Rittenhouse Square, including the well-known Scott-Wanamaker house at 2032 Walnut Street (figure 4). Not surprisingly, Chestnut Hill also represented the other concentration of Chandler's work within the boundaries of the city. Chandler's projects in Chestnut Hill, all of which represent a more rustic approach to massing and materials in contrast to Chandler's Philadelphia urban work, included Compton, the John and Lydia Morris's estate house on what is now the Morris Arboretum, contemporary with the Douglas House (figure 5), the Charles Taylor House of 1880, and the George Dunn House at 8310 East Gravers Lane (figure 6) of 1888.<sup>8</sup>

These important Chestnut Hill commissions share key details with the Douglas House, including their exterior masonry and its treatment, the prominence of chimneys, the lively, picturesque forms of their massing, prominent gables, and multi-light, varied windows. Unfortunately, both the Taylor House and Compton, the two largest of these Chandler projects, have both been demolished. Only the Dunn House and the Douglas House remain to represent this important category of Chandler's work within the city of Philadelphia. The Douglas House alone survives to testify to Chandler's ability to work not only at a grand, mansion scale, but also at a more modest size, with liveliness and artistic flair. The Douglas House thus represents an important aspect of Chandler's legacy within the city of Philadelphia.

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<sup>5</sup> Sandra Tatman, "Chandler, Theophilus Parsons, Jr. (1845-1928)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/22836](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22836), accessed 12 January 2016.

<sup>6</sup> George E. Thomas, "Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr., FAIA (1845-1928)," in James F. O'Gorman et al., *Drawing Toward Building: Philadelphia Architectural Graphics, 1732-1986* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> See project list available at [philadelphiabuildings.org](http://philadelphiabuildings.org).

<sup>8</sup> Project information from [philadelphiabuildings.org](http://philadelphiabuildings.org) and Clio Index.

## 8. Major Bibliographical References

Bromley, Geo. W. and Walter S. *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Volume 7, 22nd Ward*. Philadelphia, 1889.

T. P. Chandler Project Lists, available at [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org).

Foster, Janet. *The Queen Anne House: America's Victorian Vernacular*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2006.

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Tatman, Sandra. "Chandler, Theophilus Parsons, Jr. (1845-1928)." Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/22836](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22836), accessed 12 January 2016.