

Bike Tour April 17th

Security: Helmet

Bathrooms:

Chestnut Hill West Station

Chestnut Hill Business Association office at 16 E Highland Avenue

Will stop at every stop sign, Monika in the lead, Carolyn at the end.

Keep distance and watch the person in front of you.

At Chestnut Hill West station:

Welcome to Chestnut Hill, a community of about 10,000 people in the upper Northwest corner of Philadelphia.

Till 1854 Chestnut Hill was viewed as a part of Germantown Township, there were 10 townships within Philadelphia County) at that point. It is the highest point in Philadelphia, 446 feet at Summit Street, hence the name Chestnut Hill.

The name Chestnut Hill has been in use since earliest European land transactions.

Chestnut Hill was divided into three land divisions

SOMMERHAUSEN (Mermaid Lane to Chestnut Hill Avenue)

- Named after Sommerhausen, a town in Bavaria near Wuerzburg

KRISHEIM or Cresheim along the creek from Carpenter Lane on north

- Named after Krisheim, a town in the Palatinate

CREFELD Chestnut Hill Avenue to Northwestern Avenue

Germantown Ave

- Named after Krefeld, a town in North Rhine Westphalia

In the 1700s, the population was mainly of German origin. While they farmed some of their land for their own consumption, and maybe some for profit, they

were mainly craftsmen, millers, tradesmen, carpenters, weavers, dyers, paper manufacturers, hatters, masons and so on. Along the Wissahickon we had about 50 mills in the early 19th Century.

Two roads connected Chestnut Hill to the back country. Many people who were unable to get to Philadelphia used Chestnut Hill for trade and services which helped to develop Germantown Avenue and to give rise to trading centers in Chestnut Hill. One was the dry goods store of Abraham Rex at 8031 Germantown Avenue, which provided farm supplies, dry goods, groceries and was used as a wholesale market to Philadelphia merchants.

With the arrival of the railroad in the 1854, Chestnut Hill made a leap forward and became a transportation hub adding a trolley line a few years later.

The Chestnut Hill West Line was brought to Chestnut Hill in 1884 by Henry Howard Houston, a director of the railroad company and entrepreneur in the field of real estate.

Henry Howard Houston bought land in Chestnut Hill and built quite a few developments of various sizes. He built Drum Moir for his own use, behind the Springside campus of SCH. It formerly had a tower, but this was removed during World War II, due to maintenance costs.

We will encounter his name and that of family members at many stops during our ride.

The architecture of Chestnut Hill goes back 300 years and ranges from early block house construction to stone, Wissahickon Schist, and stucco in a variety of styles. During the British occupation many buildings were destroyed but we can still see some of the earlier houses in some places. There is an abundance of significant buildings built in the 1800s.

Today though we want to focus on the INTRUSIONS in Chestnut Hill, meaning houses built mainly in the 1950s and 1960s and not conforming with the older 1800s buildings and too young to be on the register for historic houses at that time.

Many, more or less famous, architects have built houses in Chestnut Hill.

Our first stop will be 204 Sunrise Lane, a house designed and built by Louis Kahn 1960-61, for Margaret Esherick . It is a two-story concrete block contemporary dwelling. The owner of the house (recently purchased) will talk to us.

Louis Kahn (1901-1974) was born Itze-Leib Schmuilowsky in Estonia, his father emigrated in 1904 and the family followed in 1906. Kahn got his architecture degree from The University of Pennsylvania where he was mentored by Paul Cret. After graduation he worked on various projects, traveled to Europe (1928-29) and opened his own firm in 1935. In 1947 he started a teaching career at Yale University (10 years) and became a professor at U Penn after that. He also taught in Rome at some point.

While at Yale he designed the Yale Art Gallery (1953).

One of his masterpieces is the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas.

Internationally he designed a building in Ahmedabad, Dhaka and the National Capital in Bangladesh which is regarded as one of his most admired buildings.

2) 8330 Millman

Vanna Venturi house (1963), designed and built by Robert Venturi Jr. and Denise Scott Brown for his mother. A predecessor of the shed style, one of the premier examples of modern residential architecture. Ms. Venturi moved into the house at the age of 70 and wanted to live on one floor even though the upstairs bedroom, which clearly was designed as the Master, has beautiful views to the outside.

Robert Venturi was born and raised in Philadelphia a Quaker. After graduation from Princeton in 1947, he worked for Eero Saarinen and Louis Kahn. In the early 1950s he won the Rome Prize Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome, he spent two years in Europe. Beginning in 1954 he taught at U Penn as teaching assistant of Louis Kahn, this is where he met Denise Scott Brown, an architect and planner. They later married. Later he taught at Yale University and was a visiting scholar at Harvard together with his wife. In 1991 he was awarded the Pritzker Prize, the most prestigious prize for architecture. His wife Denise was not mentioned. This has stirred up the female architect society which claims that *"the Pritzker Prize was based on the fallacy that great architecture was the work of a 'single lone male genius' at the expense of collaborative work."*^[14]

-The first woman to ever receive the Pritzker was Zaha Hadid who just died.

3) 8220 Millman (1938 – 1939)

“KENNETH MACKENZIE DAY (1901-1958), a native of Chestnut Hill, designed 8220 Millman in 1938 for Charles Woodward. As the most prominent example of the International Style in Chestnut Hill, the house embodies many of the characteristic formal qualities of the movement including an emphasis on abstraction, a rejection of applied ornamentation and decoration, and a belief in the potential of machine age technology and materials.

(William Whittaker)

We are now riding along stately estates on the West side of CH. through Hartwell Lane, Seminole Rd, Willow Grove Ave., crossing the tracks at St. Martins station, St. Martins Lane. Moreland and entering Cherokee Village from Mermaid Lane.

Also look out for the trees in bloom.

4) Cherokee Village (1953 – 1954)

This development was built by Donald and Gertrude Dodge, daughter and son in law of Charles Wolcott Henry and his wife Sally Henry Houston, on the site of the former STONEHURST mansion.

The architect of this development, and also of some of the houses we are going to see on Davidson Road, is Oscar Stonorov. Born in Frankfurt, he moved to the US in 1929. He studied in Florence and Zurich before coming to the US. Since he was not registered as an architect in the US the principal architect of his firm was William Pope Barney. For some time in the 1940s Stonorov worked with Louis Kahn with whom he also wrote a book. He died in 1970 in a plane crash in Michigan.

709 Davidson Rd. – 1956

716 Davidson Rd. – 1963

721 Davidson Rd. - 1955

725 Davidson Rd. – 1956-1957

All of these houses were built between 1955 to 1963, they are of a contemporary International style with a flat roof.

From here we are riding through Cherokee Village, around SCH a private school, which started out as two single sex schools girls, boys. The elementary grades are still single sex, the high school is coed. The Boys school formerly CHA is located in the former Wissahickon Inn , Hewitt designed, also build by the Houstons.

5) Wissahickon Heights. On the left are fields of SCH and the Philadelphia Cricket Club. The Club, the oldest country club in America was also designed by the Hewitt brothers, George and William. The third building in this section of Willow Grove is St. Martins in the Fields, another Hewitt design and commissioned by Houston.. Henry Houstons vision was to build amenities and have people ride the railroad out here.

From here we are riding along St. Martins Lane to W Gravers to the Cricket Club Loop. Again you can see houses/estates of various sizes and ages

6) Cricket Club Loop at Gravers / Cherokee

In the summer of 2015 the land of the Cricket Club was put under a conservation easement, meaning no development can take place. The easement is owned by the NATIONAL LANDTRUST. The property belonged to the Woodward family till the transaction last summer

7) 717 Glengary Rd. – 1963

This house was built for Mrs. Thomas Raeburn White, designed by Mitchell and Giurgola Associates. It is a two story International style contemporary house.

Romaldo Giurgola, born in Italy and studied at Columbia, came to Philadelphia to teach at U Penn in 1954.

Ehrman Mitchell born in Pennsylvania studied at U Penn after WW2. In 1958 they founded Mitchell and Giurgola Associates (MGA). Very soon they became well known in national and then in international circles.

In 1966 Giurgola left Penn for Columbia and founded a branch of MGA there in NY.

In 1978 they were chosen to build the Australian Parliament in Canberra, at which point they opened an office in Sydney, Australia.

The American College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania (formerly The American College of Life Underwriters), illustrates the firm's work over a period of more than twenty years. From Huebner Hall (1959-1961) to the Graduate Studies Center (1976-1981), the firm designed the entire campus in twelve projects, including two master plans (1960 and 1976) and a lake (1968). The firm's MDRT Foundation Hall for The American College received the American Institute of Architects Honor Award in 1973.

Several of the firm's other important projects are also particularly well documented. Academic buildings include Lang Music Building at Swarthmore College, and at the University of Pennsylvania the University Museum Academic Wing, Museum Garage, and Walnut Street Parking Garage. Office buildings include INA Tower, Penn Mutual Tower and United Fund Building, all in Philadelphia, and the Competition for the American Institute of Architects National Headquarters Building in Washington, DC. Public buildings represented include Boston City Hall Competition, Tredyffrin Public Library, Tredyffrin Township, Pennsylvania, and two projects for the National Park Service: the Visitor Center at Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina and the Liberty Bell Pavilion at Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia.

8) 725 Glengary Rd. – 1961

A one story house designed by Montgomery Bishop for Walter Philips.

Newcomb Montgomery, and Robert Bishop both from Philadelphia, formed a partnership in 1952.

Montgomery started an independent practice in 1945 after serving with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the British Isles in World War II and became a member of the national AIA in 1946. He was among a group of architects who worked in association to design the Liddonfield Housing Project for the Philadelphia Housing Authority in the early 1950s, including [Robert Bishop](#), with whom he formed a partnership in 1952. Montgomery's wife, the former Dorothy Schoell (1904-1980), was a founder of Americans for Democratic Action in Philadelphia and the Managing Director for the Philadelphia Housing Association in 1933-37 and 1944-65. She was also Vice-Chairman of the Philadelphia Housing Authority. The Montgomerys were residents of Germantown, where [Montgomery & Bishop](#) completed several projects.

Robert Bishop 1908- 1984, was born in Philadelphia raised and educated in Swarthmore including his college. His architectural training began in the office of [W. Pope Barney](#), and in evening classes at the Drexel Institute and with the T-Square Club. Inspired by lectures given by [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) at the University of Pennsylvania in November 1931, Bishop went to Taliesen in Wisconsin the following July, where he remained as a fellow for three years.

One of a number of strong works by Montgomery & Bishop in Northwest Philadelphia, the house presents a long schist wall viewed as one enters the drive. The wall is deliberately set at an angle to the street in order to address the sloping site and it frames both the arrival court and entry spaces of the house. The use of wissachickon schist, a traditional, local material, ties this Modern building to the 19th- and early 20th-century architecture of the area.

9) 614 St. Andrews Rd. – 2015

Our last stop will be one of the newest International style houses in Chestnut Hill. Built and designed by and for SoMD, owner Elie-Antoine Atallah and his wife Maureen. Elie is going to talk to us about this project.

Syracuse University, B.Arch.

Universita di Macerata, Italy

Harvard University, Graduate School of Design

Elie-Antoine Atallah is the founder of Studio of Metropolitan Design. His experience as designer and project architect on a variety of projects is extensive, spanning twenty-eight years.

He held a faculty position at Philadelphia University from 1995 to 1999 and at The Boston Architectural Center from 1986 to 1988. He lectured at the University of Arkansas. He frequently serves as guest critic at several schools of architecture around the country.

Elie-Antoine Atallah is a member of the American Institute of Architects, a member of SCUP (Society for College and University Planning). He is a trustee of the Woodmere Art Museum. He served on the board of directors of the Coalition of Commercial Real Estate Association and the Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He is the former Chair of the Housing Committee for the East Mount Airy Neighbours and former member of the Community Design Collaborative and Central Germantown Council.

His work has been exhibited at the Lubin House Gallery, New York, NY; Lowe Gallery, Syracuse, NY; AIA Architectural Showcase, The Court at King of Prussia and the Young Architects Forum, Philadelphia, PA, AIA Philadelphia Gallery, and The National Museum of Beirut, Lebanon.

Mr. Atallah is a registered architect in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and 7 other states. He is NCARB certified.