

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

USE THIS COPY

FOR DUPLICATING

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORM
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Alden Park Manor

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER School House Lane & Wissahickon Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Philadelphia

CODE

101

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Alden Park Associates

Alden Park Manor

STREET & NUMBER

School House Lane & Wissahickon Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

PA

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Philadelphia City Hall, Department of Records

STREET & NUMBER

Broad and Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

PA

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1980

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

CITY, TOWN

Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Alden Park consists of six highrise apartment towers of various complex shapes arranged in three groups of three, two and one, placed on some thirty acres of the Wissahickon heights, there they command views of center city, the Wissahickon, Fairmount Park, as well as forming one of the principal landmarks when viewed from the surrounding hills. The property which included until recently the splendid Victorian house by Addison Hutton, for Justus Strawbridge, of the local department store fame, takes advantage of the cooling breezes of its hilltop location--which has long made the area a favorite of aristocratic Philadelphians for summer and year round houses.

The prospectus that announced the Alden Park group suggests that the developers were well aware of its prestigious location, and traded on it. They wrote, "The luxury of Alden Park, its unrivalled location its spacious grounds, and private estate character suggest a standard of living that ordinarily is possible only for the wealthy.

"Beyond question Alden Park provides an ease and style of home life for cultured people that elsewhere would be possible only at extremely high costs." In recent years, many of the gardens, and other public spaces have yielded to the pressure of the automobile, but, the idea of the cluster of apartment towers, in a country setting remains intact.

It is the buildings that are of greatest interest, both in their complex form which denies their enormous size, while providing a wide variety of room shapes, vistas, as well as good ventilation, and for their decoration in the manner of Jacobean and Stuart architecture of the 17th century in England. That detailing is, of course, the stylistic complement to the names of the towers, the Cambridge, the Kennilworth, and the Manor, associating the residents with English gentry which Philadelphians have always imitated.

The most prominent of the tower clusters, is the Manor, fronting on Wissahickon Avenue, which is the largest--with three towers grouped around a handsome octagonal one story hall. Save for orientation, the three towers are essentially similar, being 9 story reinforced concrete cruciform planned buildings. The exteriors are clad in a coarse ruddy brick, laid in a variety of patterns that more or less correspond to the textures of a stone wall, with here and there, projecting brick to catch light like the roughened surface of a modern oil painting. Here the medium becomes a part of the message suggesting the curtain wall nature of the masonry skin.

These broad surfaces are framed by massive corner quoins and broken by numerous belt courses and bays outlined in a pink terra cotta, again reducing the sense of mass, very much in the manner of the local collegiate gothic developed by Cope and Stewardson in the 1890s. Pinnacles, segmental pediments, cartouches, and shields interrupt the parapets, while small towers--some formed by crowning bays with elaborate roofs, further enliven the silhouette. This unifying exterior

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vocabulary is utilized for all the original buildings from the tiny gate houses on Wissahickon Avenue to the immense garage that services and houses the automobiles for the group.

The Kennilworth, like the Manor is again a tower group--here two Y plan towers, again attached to a gracious one story high entrance hall. Where the manor entrance hall was square in plan, with the three distant corners essentially penetrating into the volume of the three flanking towers, here the connection is less elaborate--with centered doors on the parallel side walls opening into the flanking towers. The same form is continued in the single Cambridge tower--but here the entrance is reduced in size, and on axis with the center of the one building.

Just as the three major apartment clusters share the common coarse, textured, elaborately coursed brick, and terra cotta detailing inspired by the English 17th century, so too, the great entrance halls continue the stylistic vocabulary, using a common palette of materials. The themes are initiated in the Manor Great Hall, which provides entrance to three towers--at opposing corners. Here reinforced concrete columns, carry massive beams, in turn supporting numerous joist--ornamented with plaster capitals, neckings, moldings, and the like. On axis with the front entrance is a massive fireplace, in turn backed by a grand double stair which screens the interior to one tower. English dark Oak wainscotting covers all lower surfaces.

Because the Kenilworth entrance only serves two towers, it is somewhat less elaborate, but, the elements are similar to the Manor--oak covers the lower walls to above head height and is divided into alternating large and small panels, capped by a carbed oak leaf border. Above, the ceiling is articulated by the framing systems of modern technology which are overlaid with a decorative plaster surface that relates the hall to the civilized tradition of the Anglo American house. The Cambridges' single tower is correspondingly downscaled in the entrance--to an oak paneled room which opens onto the elevator lobby on axis with the door, and provides smaller sitting areas on either side. The decorative ceiling patterns emphasize the subdivision of the space.

One further note about the public spaces--with few exceptions, their furnishings and fittings also survive from the opening of the building. Great wrought iron chandeliers hang in the Manor hall; handsome sconces decorate the Kenilworth; elegant bronze chandeliers and sconces embellish the Cambridge. With late Jacobean revival case pieces, end tables Queen Ann chairs and sofas, and patterned carpets over tile floors, the interiors match the architectural finish.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES: 1925 ff. BUILDER/ARCHITECT: Edwin Rorke, Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Alden Park is one of the most remarkable building groups of its age, combining the Le Corbusian idea of the city of towers in a garden setting with the style, and detail of traditional architecture. Indeed, Werner Hegemann, cites the project in City Planning Housing: A Graphic Review of Civic Art III (New York, 1938) p.153, noting the similarity to Le Corbusier, "A private development of high rental apartments built on a large suburban country estate...Compare this with theoretical design of apartment towers by Le Corbusier...."

For half a century, Alden Park has appealed to a broad cross section of Philadelphians, who have perceived in its traditional detail an accomodation to sentiment and association lacking in much contemporary design, even as it accomodates the vital forces of modern life--the automobile, proximity to center city, the hastened pace that makes gardens difficult to care for. Finally, Alden Park is one of the spectacular landmarks of the city, an orienting device quite as imposing as the center city business tower, that organizes our perception of space.

It is as an American version of the visionary "Radiant City" of Le Corbusier that Alden Park is most important--though whether Rorke was aware of the Swiss architects concept is questionable. Vers Une Architecture of 1923 was published in English tradition in 1927, after Alden Park was begun. So, it is probably reasonable to see this as a contemporary, and independent development, based on the same ingredients of the automobile, which permitted spatial separation from the city core, modern building system which permitted greater height and a significant change in attitude toward housing in the upper class, who finally differentiated between the landed gentry's responsibility of ownership and the mere enjoyment of land and gardens. The impact of all of these elements had already been perceived piecemeal--in various high rise apartments in the great American cities, and in the suburbs engendered by the automobile. It merely remained for Rorke to combine them with enough wit and grace to charm the local gentry.

It is this last point which is generally dismissed by historians of contemporary architecture, who find the idea of modern technics clad in traditional detail to be "untruthful" in the language of Ruskinian morality. But, it is this very selection of traditional English detail that has guaranteed the long term popularity and success of the buildings, for they fit into the personal myths and value systems of their tenants far more successfully than the heroic mechanisms of International modernism. Indeed, it was this very accomodation of the forms and scale of modernism to the client that marks the essential genius of Rorke's conception.

A second area of interest is the extent to which the Alden Park buildings accomodate the forces of contemporary life. By selecting a location overlooking the then

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Apartments have an extraordinary variety of spaces--thanks to the various bays, with simple plaster surfaces, ornamented by modest cornices. Many apartments have fireplaces and other amenities which reiterate the developers intension "to provide a standard of living that ordinarily is possible only for the wealthy."

One final descriptive note, the Addison Hutton designed Justus Strawbridge Mansion, which was integrated into the complex as a great restaurant, recently burned to the ground, and thus is no longer a part of the group.

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new Wissahickon Drive, the developers assured ready access by car to center city. But, Rorke also included buildings to serve the new steeds of the century, a garage with parking, complete with service bays and gas pumps and, instead of making the buildings follow the mechanistic imperative, he civilized the machine by treating the garage in the same detail and form as the rest of the group. It would be the solution of the next generation of American buildings.

With dining rooms, lobbies, theaters, and pools, in addition to the liberally dimensional and well planned apartments, Alden Park has been for half a century, one of Philadelphia's best places to live, demonstrating that accomodation to the clientele is an art well worth reintegrating into modern architecture. Indeed, unlike most modern buildings which are merely tolerated, Alden Park is discussed with genuine affection by its residents. It is that affection which accounts for the nearly perfect state of preservation of the buildings, and the interiors.

Finally, Alden Park is a landmark for the city, one that adds a note of romance as its parapets rise above the tree line. It is this that gives the group its impressive recognition factor around the city, and has imprinted them on the consciousness of the regions populace.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Werner Hegemann, City Planning Housing: A graphic review of Civic art 1922-37, (NY 1938, p.153).
- Webster, Richard: Philadelphia Preserved (Philadelphia, 1976, p.255).
- Mumford, Lewis. "The Skyline: Philadelphia-1", The New Yorker, April 28, 1956 p. 121-2.
- Philadelphia Real Estate Record XL:18 (6 May 1925)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 30 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Germantown, PA

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,8 | 4,8,4,4,5,5 | 4,4,3,0,3,9,0

B 1,8 | 4,8,4,2,6,0 | 4,4,3,0,6,2,0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 1,8 | 4,8,4,0,6,0 | 4,4,3,0,5,3,5

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 1,8 | 4,8,3,8,8,0 | 4,4,3,0,7,1,5

E 1,8 | 4,8,3,7,7,8 | 4,4,3,0,6,2,5

F 1,8 | 4,8,3,8,4,2 | 4,4,3,0,4,4,0

G 1,8 | 4,8,4,0,0,0 | 4,4,3,0,5,3,5

H 1,8 | 4,8,4,2,2,0 | 4,4,3,0,2,7,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

North west along Wissahickon Avenue from School House Lane-994' 3 1/2", south west along the property of Francis Strawbridge 350' 11 3/4" at 103° from Wissahickon Avenue,

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION

Clio Group, Inc.

DATE

10 January 1980

STREET & NUMBER

3920 Pine Street

TELEPHONE

386-6276

CITY OR TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

PA

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

[Signature] 6/24/80

TITLE ED WEINTRAUB

DATE

State Historic Preservation Officer

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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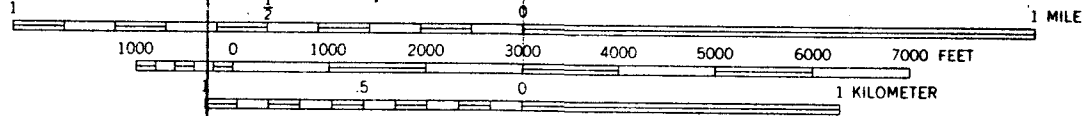
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northwest 125' parallel to Wissahickon, south west 236' at 103° from Wissahickon Avenue, north west parallel to Wissahickon Avenue 812', south west on 105° from Wissahickon Avenue 487', then south east, parallel to Wissahickon Avenue, 344', south west 273' 6", at 103°, south east 312' 4" parallel to Wissahickon; north east 576' on 103° from Wissahickon, south east 1059' 3" to School House Lane, north east 885' 3" to Wissahickon Avenue point of origin.



482 12'30" 2.3 MI. TO U.S. 30 (PHILADELPHIA) 5963:1 NW 485 10' 486

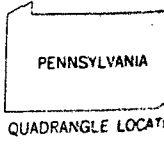
SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

0°07' 2 MILS
MAGNETIC NORTH
CENTER OF SHEET

Alden Fork



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST