

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Roslyn Place Historic District

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 506-523 & 525 Roslyn Place

City or town: Pittsburgh State: PA County: \_\_\_\_\_

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national          statewide          local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

    A          B          C          D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of commenting official:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title :**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government**

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:   
Public – Local   
Public – State   
Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)   
District

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Structure   
Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>19</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>20</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling  
TRANSPORTATION/ road-related

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling  
TRANSPORTATION/ road-related

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Colonial Revival

Georgian Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, WOOD

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

Roslyn Place is a residential neighborhood surrounding a Nicholson-wood-paved cul-de-sac street in Pittsburgh's Shadyside neighborhood. The street extends in a northerly direction from its intersection with Ellsworth Avenue, between S. Aiken Avenue and S. Graham Street. The street itself measures roughly two hundred and fifty (250) feet long by eighteen-and-a-half (18 ½) feet across. The district is roughly bounded by Ellsworth Avenue on the south, small parcels of land that abut the Martin Luther King Jr. East Busway on the north, and by several, privately-owned properties on east and west. This district is comprised of 10 privately owned buildings, divided among 18 privately owned lots, and the publicly owned street right of way. All buildings in the district are in the Colonial Revival style, with a particular emphasis on Georgian stylistic elements (Figures 1-4). All buildings, except for one, are two-and-a-half stories tall with red brick facades, trimmed with wood, and half gable roofs, interrupted by one or more dormers, covered in slate shingles, with a hemispherical hood over the entranceways (Figure 5). The exception to this pattern has a stucco façade but follows the same architectural form as the remaining buildings. The properties which flank the east and west sides of the street itself have a small yard fronting the street. A wrought-iron, decorative fence divides the

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properties of Roslyn Place from Ellsworth Ave. and two posts with iron plaques reading “Roslyn Place” frame the entrance to the street (Figures 6 & 7).

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**Narrative Description**



**Figure 1: 522, 520, 518 & 516 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

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Figure 2: Roslyn Place looking south from 507 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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**Figure 3: Roslyn Place looking North, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**



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Figure 4: Roslyn Place facing north, November 1, 2019.

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Figure 5: Door and Door hood, 512 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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**Figure 6: Roslyn Place plaque, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

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**Figure 7: Fence along Ellsworth Avenue, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

The street surface of Roslyn Place is wooden-paved (Figures 8-11). The street is a small cul-de-sac that extends north for roughly two hundred and fifty (250) feet from Ellsworth Avenue between S. Aiken Avenue and S. Graham Street and measures roughly eighteen-and-a-half (18 ½) feet across. The street is surrounded by a small curb, sidewalk, and seventeen connected homes (as well as one independent house). The oak blocks that compose the street are laid perpendicular to the length of the street and a small asphalt strip, roughly a half of an inch in width, runs the entire length, down the middle of the street. There are roughly 26,000 blocks in the street in total, most of which measure 4x8 inches a piece.

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**Figure 8: Roslyn Place (Taken from East Side of Cul-de-Sac, Facing West), November 1, 2019. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

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**Figure 9: Roslyn Place (Taken from East Side of Cul-de-Sac, Facing West), November 1, 2019. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

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**Figure 10: Roslyn Place (Taken from Eastern Sidewalk, Facing West), November 1, 2019. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

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**Figure 11: Roslyn Place, Street Detail, November 1, 2019. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.**



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While each building looks similar to one another, there are five subtle architectural variations.

### 522, 523, & 525 Roslyn Place

Free-standing single-family houses with symmetrical facades oriented towards Roslyn Place. A running bond pattern is used on the brick façade, and a string-course of headers divides the half-basement from the first floor. Two four-over-four, double-hung windows on left and right of the entranceway interrupt this row. The first floors are comprised of two window-openings flanking a central doorway. In 522 and 523 (Figures 12 & 13), the window openings on left are comprised of three sashes containing six-over-six windows and those on right comprised of three sashes, one six-over-six, double-hung windows flanked by two, four-over-four double hung windows. The window order is reversed in 525 Roslyn Place (Figures 14). There is a centrally located door and four brick steps capped by a limestone slab lead to each doorway.

Each doorway is framed by decorative brickwork and situated under a hemispherical, coffered wooden canopy with decorative brickwork framing a rounded patch of stucco underneath. The main entry door on each differs. The second floor of each is similarly symmetrical, with eight-over-eight, double-hung windows flanking a central six-over-six, double-hung window situated above the doorway. Exterior, slatted shutters are present on each window in 523 and 522 Roslyn Place but are absent on 525 Roslyn Place. Brick headers and lintels frame each window opening. On each, a painted wooden cornice divides the roof on each, which is comprised of asphalt shingles. A single dormer, with a six-over-six, double-hung window with rounded-top is centrally situated and sided by painted, wooden shingles. Two chimneys rise from the roofline of each, one parallel and one perpendicular to Roslyn Place.

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Figure 12: 522 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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Figure 13: 523 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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**Figure 14: 525 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

### 521 Roslyn Place

Entirely detached house oriented north-south, with its western façade facing the street (Figure 15). This two-and-a-half storied stucco façade is symmetrical, with two, bi-fold, ten-paned windows framed by a white trellis affixed to the façade. The second story is comprised of two, two-over-two windows. A wooden cornice delineates the hipped, asphalt-shingled roof from the façade below. A stucco, rectangular chimney, that runs parallel to Roslyn Place, rises from the roofline. According to plat maps, this house was originally clad in wood clapboard and later covered with stucco.

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**Figure 15: 521 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

#### 511, 513, 515, & 517 Roslyn Place

These houses are semi-detached and are the most aesthetically distinct of the district. The two-and-a-half story façades are divided into two bays. The first stories are defined by a wooden porch, with peaked roofs over the entryways and shed roofs over window opening with two, six-over-six, double-hung windows. In 511 and 513 Roslyn Place (Figures 16 & 17), double sets of Doric, wooden columns support a wooden coffered ceiling while iron piers with decorative foliage act as supports in 515 and 517 Roslyn Place (Figures 17 & 18). A wooden coffered wall divides the porches of each of the properties. The second story of these houses contains two, six-over-six, double-hung windows in each bay flanked by slotted shutters. A wooden cornice divides the pitched roof, out of which a dormer, with a six-over-six, double-hung window rises from the center of each house. A single rectangular chimney, perpendicular to Roslyn Place, rises between each property.

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Figure 16: 511 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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Figure 17: 513 & 515 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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Figure 18: 517 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.



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### 506-509 Roslyn Place

These houses share a nearly identical visual typology with 522, 523, and 525 Roslyn Place (Figure 19) but are all attached row homes. Metal downspouts and chimneys that rise from the apex of the roof provide a visual divide between the properties, which are symmetrical. A rectangular opening between 507 and 508 Roslyn Place serves as a walkway to the rear of the properties and is gated by a single, wooden gate comprised of decorative spindles and crowned with a chip-and-dale pediment. The downspout that runs the length of the second story divides above this passageway and frames it on right and left. Each house has two dormers, situated in the right and left bay of each building. The window openings on the first floor of each contain three window sashes, a central, six-over-six, double-hung window flanked by four-over-four, double-hung windows.



Figure 19: 506, 507, 508, 509 & 511 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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510, 512, 514, 516, 518, 520 Roslyn Place

These houses are visually similar to 522, 523, and 525 Roslyn Place with the key distinction that they are semi-detached. Other differences in design include the presence of metal downspouts on the right and left of each building as well as a central chimney arising from the center of the roof. The dormer windows of each are six-over-six, double-hung, are the windows of the second story. The windows on the first story of each vary and include six-over-six, double-hung, eight-paned, single hung, triple casement, and single hung, stationary, stained glass windows. Entryway doors of each also vary, ranging from single, six-paneled to double entryway doors. In each example windows and doors conform to existing openings. Decorative, slatted shutters are present, although also varied, throughout these houses.



**Figure 20: 508, 509, 511 & 513 Roslyn Place, November 1, 2019, Matthew W.C. Falcone.**

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1914-1916

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Thomas Rodd

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Roslyn Place Historic District is locally significant under both Criterion A for its association with Community Planning and Development and under Criterion C as an historic district for its distinctive urban design, composed of a collection of good examples of residential buildings in the Colonial Revival style, and the rare method of construction of its street. Roslyn Place was a speculative residential development designed and built by Thomas Rodd, the Chief Engineer for the Pennsylvania Railroad Co., between 1914 and 1916 on land which he subdivided but retained under his ownership. The historic district is composed of a mix of single family and twin houses, 10 buildings in total, that sit on 18 separate lots, executed in the Colonial Revival style, and arranged around a 250' long cul-de-sac. The central, wood-block paved street is additionally contributing to the historic district, as it was originally surfaced, c. 1914 with creosote-saturated wood-blocks, a technology known as Nicholson paving, and is the last of its kind in Pittsburgh.

In May of 1913, Thomas Rodd designed the plan for the Roslyn Place community that was approved and accepted by Pittsburgh City Council ordinance in 1914. Construction of both the street and its buildings started that same year. The period of significance for the Roslyn Place Historic District begins when construction started in 1914 and ends with the completion of construction two years later, in 1916.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **History**

The 1872 and 1890 plat maps (Figures 21 & 22) identify the lot that would become Roslyn Place as belonging to J.W. Friday, which contained a main house made of wood occupying the center of the lot and four wooden outbuildings. By the 1904 plat map (Figure 23), this same property now belonged to "Thos. Rodd" and sits adjacent to and southwest of property that was the home of the Rodd family, at the time belonging to "M.W. Rodd". The 1911 plat map (Figure 24) shows that ownership of the two properties remain the same but two additional lines, which roughly match the current location of Roslyn Place now appear in pencil over on the map itself. An illustration that dates from the same year (Figure 25) shows how Roslyn Place street was constructed.

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Figure 21: Twentieth Ward, Pittsburgh, Plate 63, G.M. Hopkins & Co., 1872. Red lines indicate the boundaries of future Roslyn Place.

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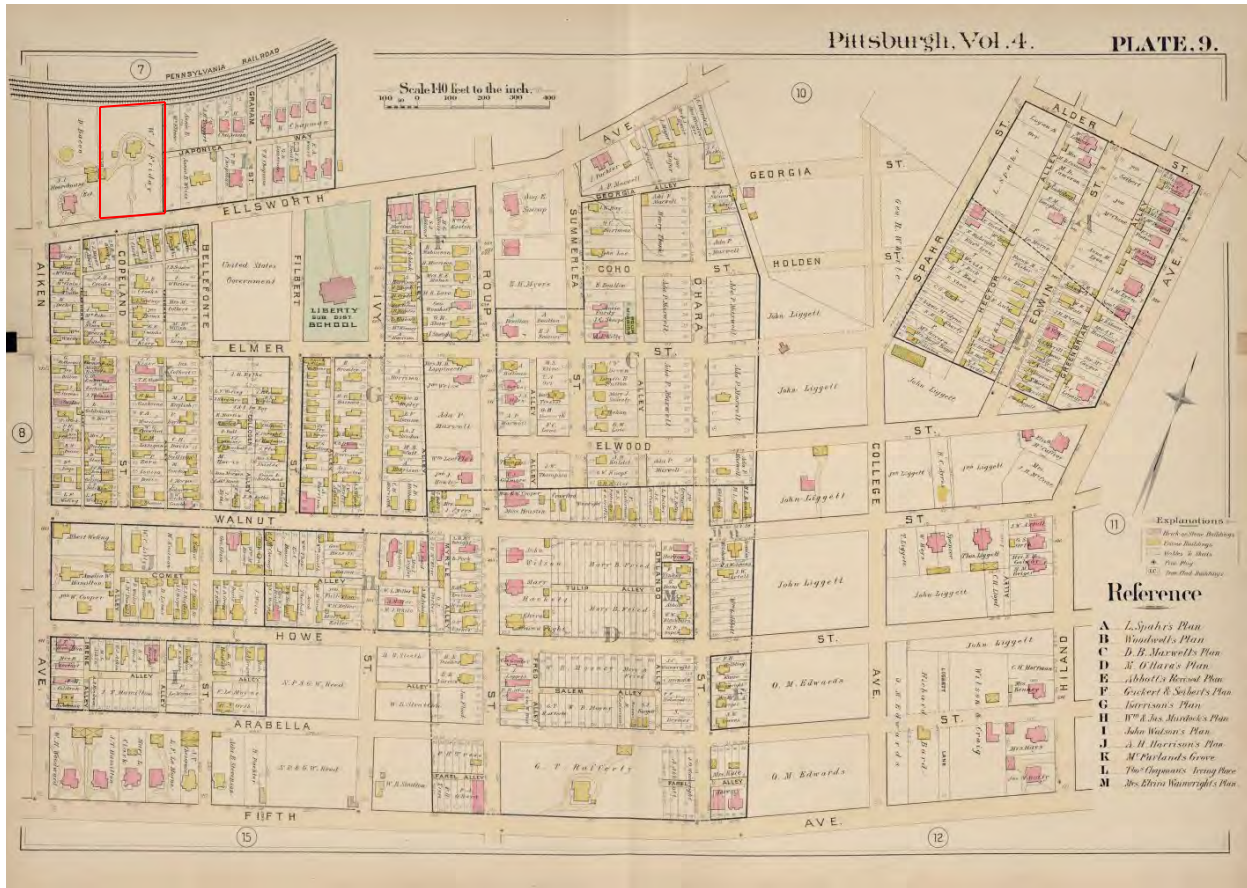


Figure 22: Pittsburgh, Vol. 4., Plate 9, G.M. Hopkins & Co., 1890. Red lines indicate the boundaries of future Roslyn Place.

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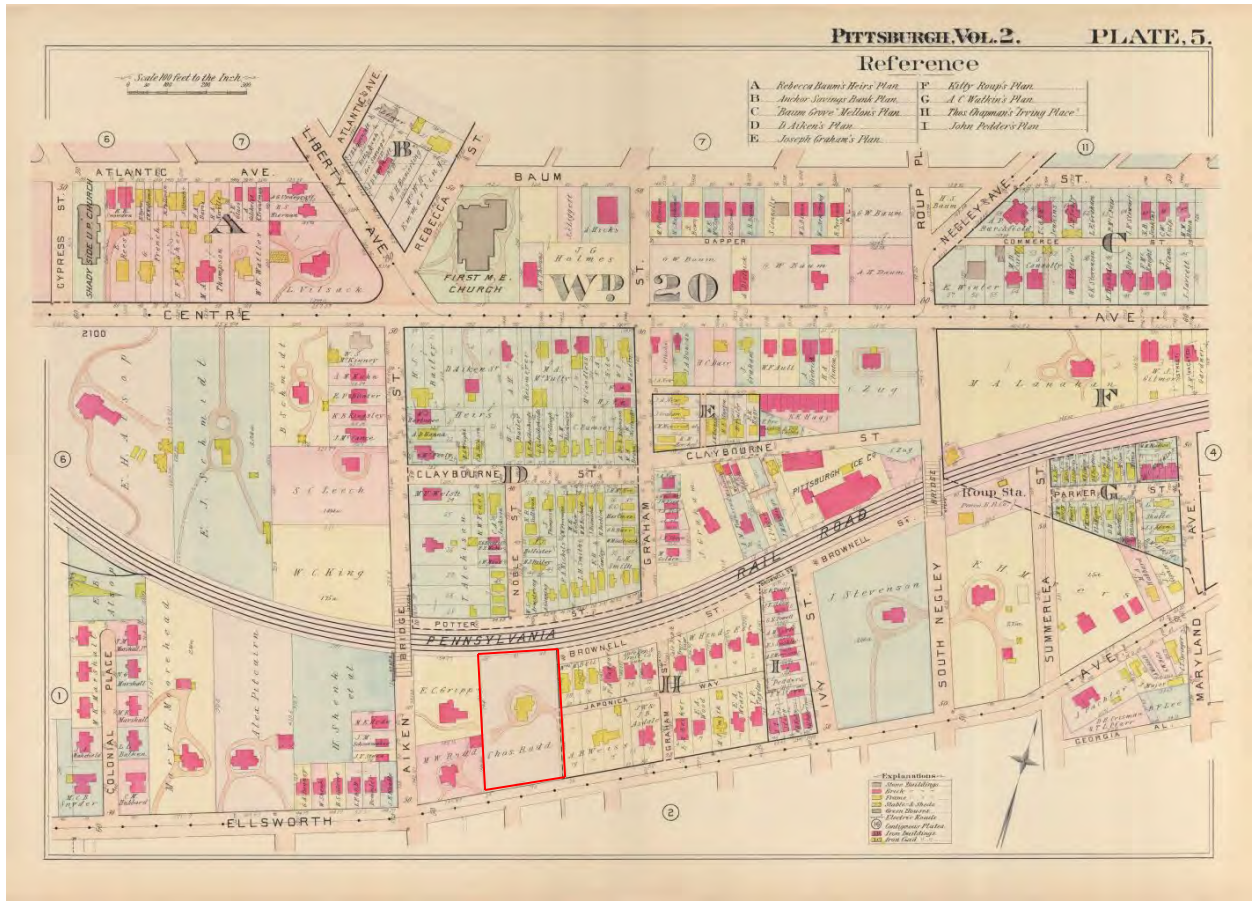


Figure 23: Pittsburgh, Vol. 2, Plate 5, G.M. Hopkins & Co., 1904. Red lines indicate the boundaries of future Roslyn Place. Note the former Friday Mansion is now owned by "Thos. Rodd".



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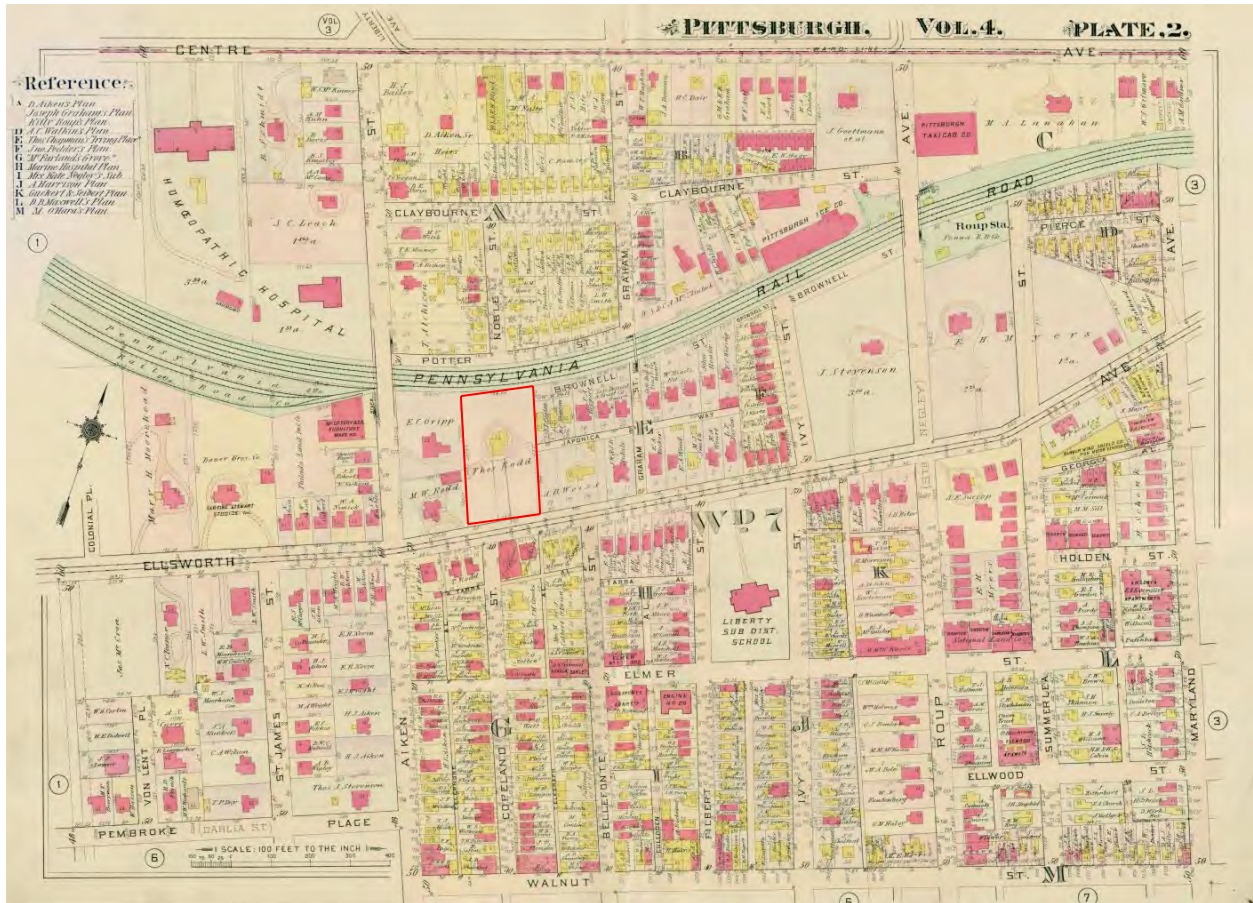
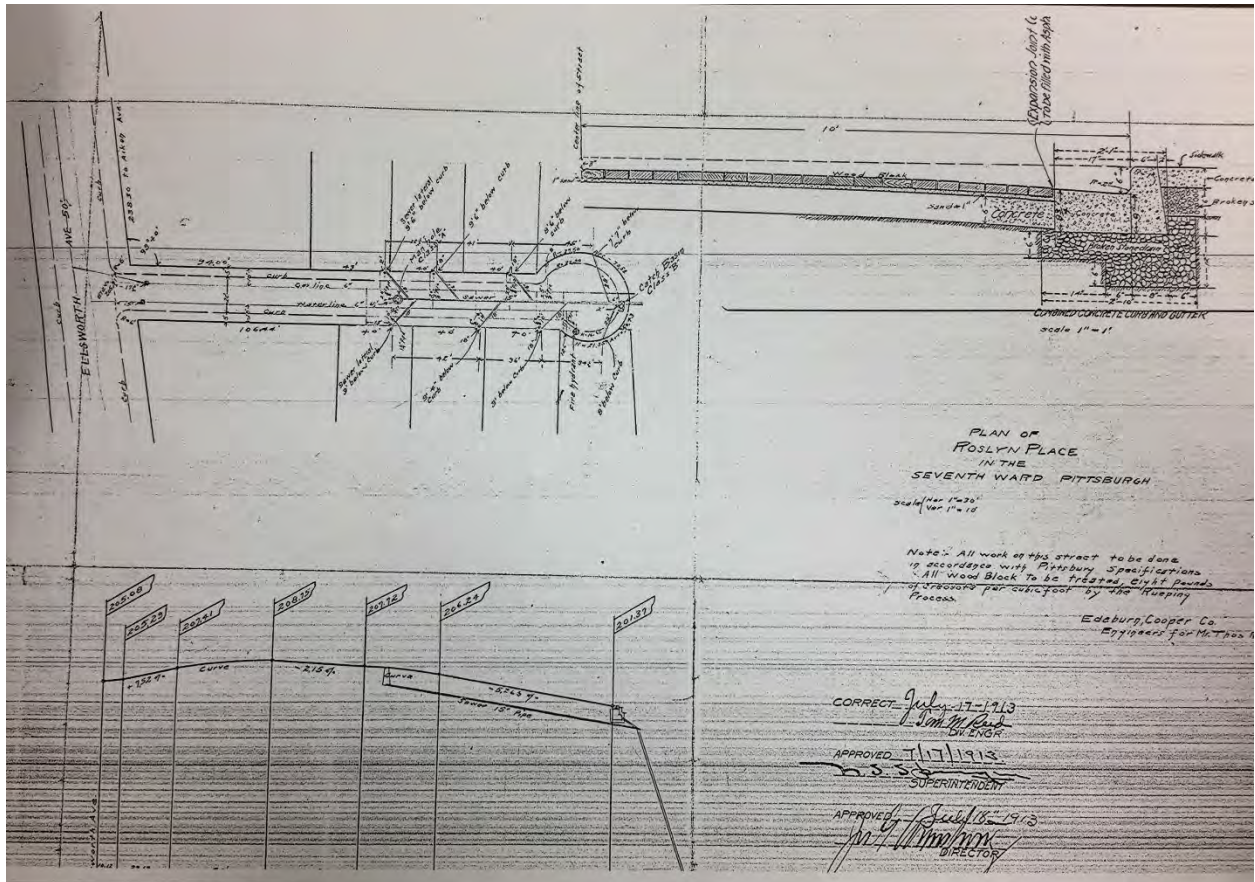


Figure 24: Pittsburgh, Vol. 4, Plate 2, G.M. Hopkins, 1900, Philadelphia, Pa., 1911. Red lines indicate the boundaries of future Roslyn Place. The pencil lines that correspond to the current wood-block street appear to be a later addition to the map.

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**Figure 25: The Plan of Roslyn Place in the Seventh Ward Pittsburgh. 1913. Provided by Pittsburgh’s Department of Public Works.**

In 1914, Pittsburgh City Council passed ordinance No. 181, “...approving and accepting Roslyn Place Plan of Lots, in the Seventh ward of the City of Pittsburgh, laid out by Thomas Rodd, May 1913, and approving and accepting Roslyn Place shown therein.”<sup>1</sup> Later that same year, ordinance No. 240 was passed “Authorizing the purchase from Thomas Rodd, Jr., of a water pipe line laid by him on Roslyn place in the Seventh ward of the City of Pittsburgh,” the latter ordinance indicating the quick progress of construction and the high level of modern convenience provided to the new development.<sup>2</sup> The first advertisements for the new development would be published prior to the commencement of construction of Roslyn Place but the construction of all of the future homes along the street occurred quickly, over the next two years.<sup>3</sup>

The 1923 plat map (Figure 26) shows significant changes to the former “Thos. Rodd” parcel. By 1923, the lot was subdivided into twelve smaller parcels with ten structures sitting on top. The plan of Roslyn Place is similar to nearby residential developments off of Ellsworth Ave. to

<sup>1</sup> Official Pittsburgh, No. 181, The Pittsburgh Daily Post. May 30, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> No. 240, Pittsburgh Daily Post, July 13, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Lots, Pittsburgh Post-Post Gazette, August 30, 1913.

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the west, namely Colonial Place, Moorhead Place, and St. James Place. Like Roslyn Place these residential enclaves reflect a transition in Shadyside from predominantly large estates to more densely developed neighborhood plan, however key stylistic and design differences exist between them. Unlike Roslyn Place, all three developments have houses of a grand scale that line only two sides of the street. St. James Place and Moorhead Place dead-end while Colonial Place has a modest cul-de-sac at the end of its run. None of these developments, which predate Roslyn Place, share cohesiveness of overall design, employ a unified architectural style, or are constructed around a Nicholson Pavement street. On the same 123 plat map, the collection of homes surrounded Roslyn Place and belonged to “T. Rodd et. al.”, with one exception. One parcel belonged to “H. Childs”. Notably, the property adjacent and southwest was previously listed as belonging to “M.W. Rodd”, is now also listed as belonging to “T. Rodd et. al.”. Also of note, by 1923 the property adjacent and to the north, belonged to noted Pittsburgh architect F.J. Osterling, a frequent collaborator with T. Rodd.

Thomas Rodd would pass away on August 3, 1929 and the properties would pass to his son, Thomas Rodd Jr. (the 1939 plat map lists the buildings as being held by the “Commonwealth Trust Company” trustees, Figure 27). According to long-time neighbors, and confirmed by chain of title research, the houses on Roslyn Place would remain as rental properties owned by the Rodd family until after January 6, 1950 when they were conveyed to Harry S. Kalson & Samuel M. Rosenzweig for \$146,000. A sampling of titles from 511 Roslyn Place and 514 Roslyn Place illustrates that after this transfer, individual homes were sold to private owners (who were largely comprised of long-time renters) over the next several years. 521 Roslyn Place is the exception to this narrative as the chain of title research shows that after its original construction it remained privately owned and has changed hands twelve times in its history.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Cohen, Personal Interview, September 23, 2017. Notes with Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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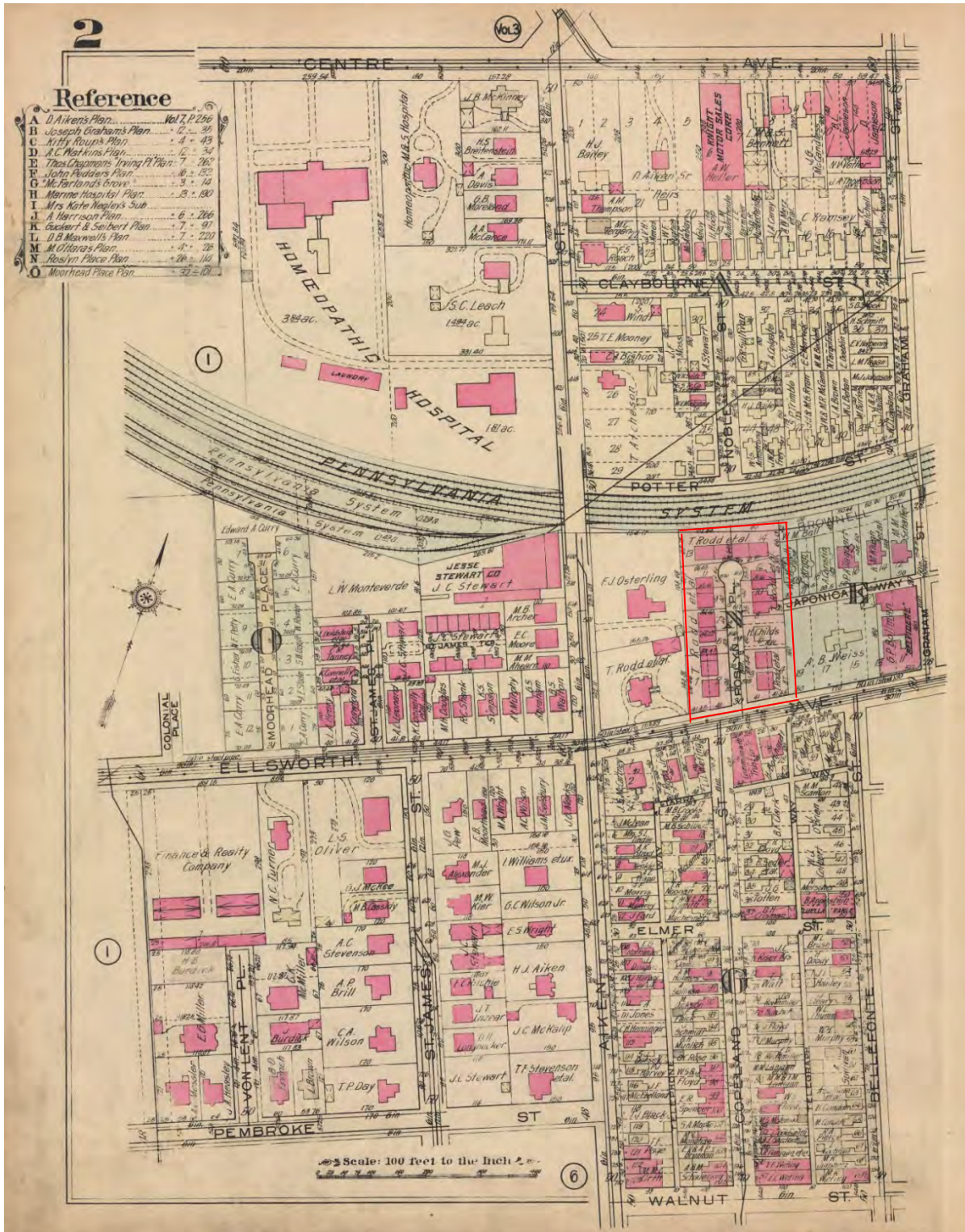


Figure 26: Plate 2 B. G.M. Hopkins & Co., 1923. Red lines indicate the boundaries of Roslyn Place. Note all buildings marked as being owned by "T. Rodd et al" with the exception of 521 Roslyn Place, which is marked as being owned by "H. Childs". Its light color indicates the exterior is comprised of wood clapboard.

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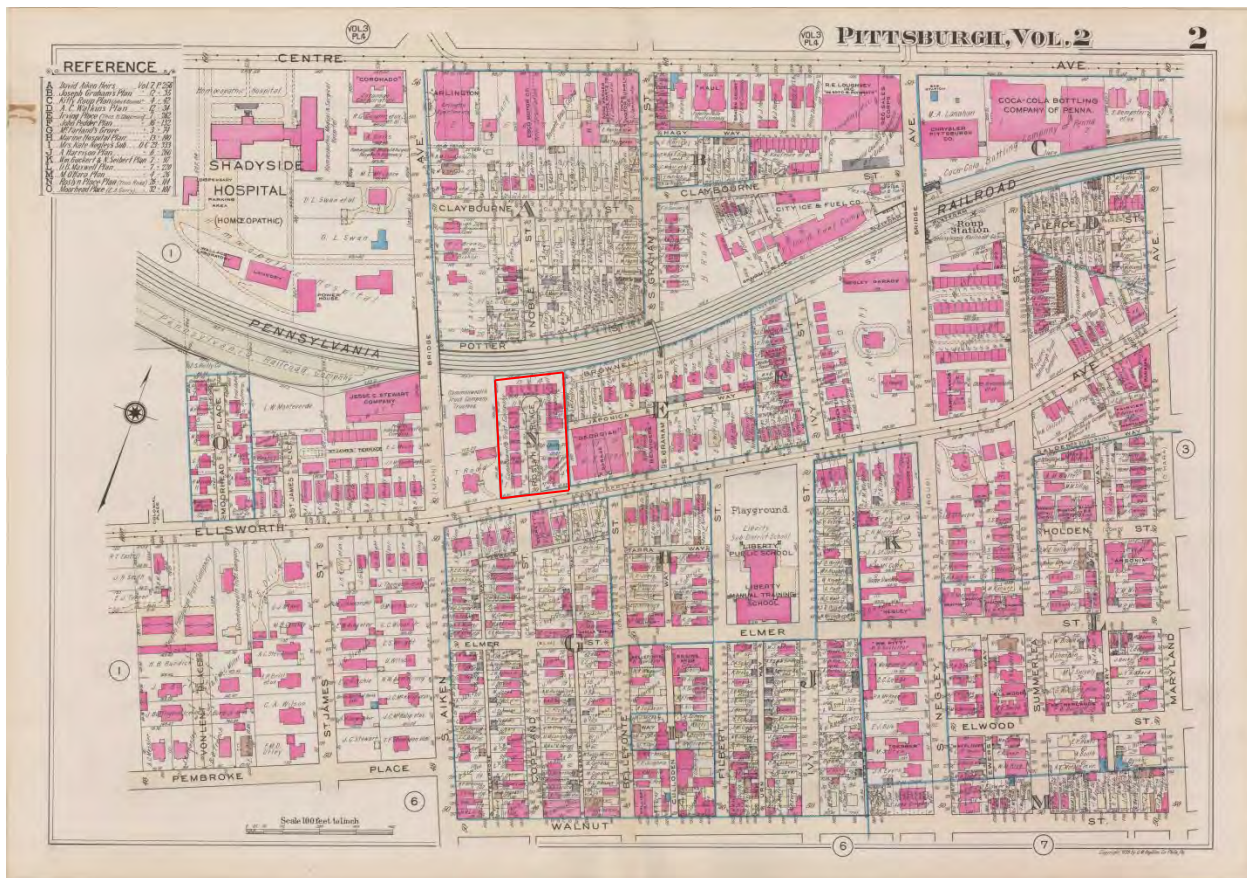


Figure 27: Plate 2. G.M. Hopkins & Co.,1939. Red lines indicate the boundaries of Roslyn Place. The blue coloration of 521 Roslyn Place indicates the exterior of the building was covered in stucco.

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### **Thomas Rodd**

Thomas Rodd (Figure 28) was born in London, England and immigrated to America with his parents at age five. He studied at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis before serving as an officer in the navy during the Civil War. After the war he served in the City Engineer's Office in Philadelphia before joining the Pennsylvania Railroad (P.R.R.) Company in 1872 as a rodman. He would serve in a multitude of engineering positions in the P.R.R. and in 1889 was appointed chief engineer to all lines West of Pittsburgh.<sup>5</sup> It was at this time that Mr. Rodd moved to the city, where he and his family would play an important role in shaping several of Pittsburgh's cultural institutions. In Pittsburgh, Rodd and his family became prominent members of the city's social elite. He became a member of the Pittsburgh Club, the Duquesne Club, the Allegheny County Club, the Pittsburgh Golf Club, the University Club of Pittsburgh, the Metropolitan Club of New York and the Chicago Club. As a sign of the Rodd family's social status in Pittsburgh, their vacations and the work travel of Mr. Rodd were frequently reported in prominent Pittsburgh newspapers. The destinations listed also help provide a context for the Thomas Rodd, and the Rodd family's social standing, as they traveled to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Paris, West Virginia's White Sulpher Springs, Florida, Lakewood, N.Y., and Watch Hill, R.I.<sup>6</sup> The Rodd family's social activities within Pittsburgh were also frequently reported and their association with other prominent Pittsburgh families like the Howes, Childs, and Laughlins again helps to contextualize their social standing.<sup>7</sup>

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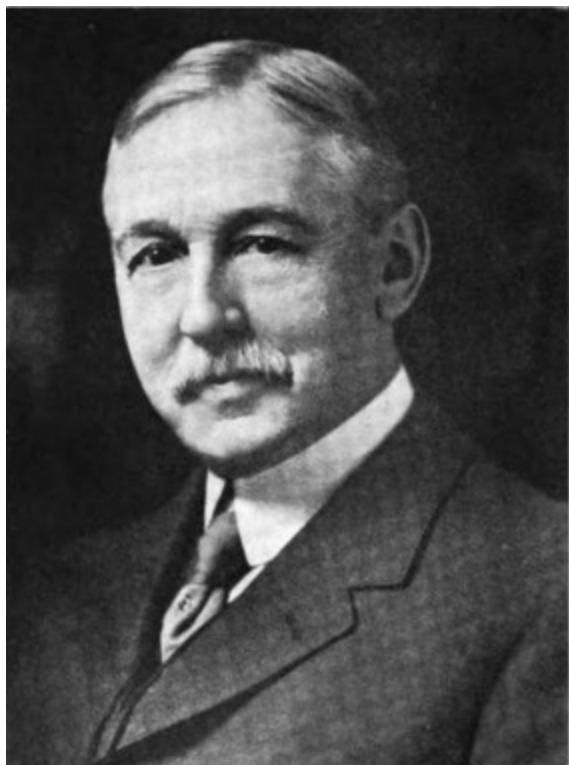
<sup>5</sup> Thomas Rodd. *The Book of Prominent Pennsylvanians: A Standard Reference*. Pittsburg Leader. Leader Publ., 1913.

<sup>6</sup> "White Sulpher Springs." *The Pittsburgh Press*, August 24, 1896; "Capt. And Mrs. J.J. Vandergrift." *The Pittsburgh Press*, February 15, 1897; "Lakewood is Booming." *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 11, 1897; "Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rodd." *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 3, 1894; "Mrs. William M. Herron." *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 2, 1893; "Chief Engineer Thomas Rodd." *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, April 14, 1900.

<sup>7</sup> "Sport at the Links." *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, July 18, 1898; "Mrs. James Robb Wilson." *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, February 27, 1898.

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**Figure 28 Thomas Rodd, from the Book of Prominent Pennsylvanians: A Standard Reference.**

Thomas Rodd made significant architectural and engineering contributions to Pittsburgh, Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other points west. He was an active member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association, and the Engineer's Society of Western Pennsylvania. As Chief Engineer for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Rodd had the opportunity to design and create important structures across Western Pennsylvania and the Midwest. While many of the structures he designed no longer exist, records exist of some of his more notable works. Among these is the passenger station for East Liverpool, Oh. and the passenger station for Wilmerding, Pa. of Rodd's remaining existing work, the Indianapolis' Union Station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Roslyn Place (street) is listed as a City of Pittsburgh historic landmark<sup>8</sup>

Rodd also owned and operated his own design and engineering business outside of his work with the P.R.R. through which he designed several notable structures around Western Pennsylvania and in the City of Pittsburgh. Perhaps most significant among these designs was a collaboration with Frederick Osterling on the Westinghouse Building that stood at the corner of Penn Ave. & 9th Street, in downtown Pittsburgh. Rodd is also responsible for designing

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<sup>8</sup> National Park Service, Union Station, Indianapolis, In., Source:  
<https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/indianapolis/unionstation.htm>

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the Union Switch & Signal Company plant in Swissvale, the Westinghouse Forge & Steel Casting Plant in East Pittsburgh, and the Westinghouse Machine Shops in Brinton, Pa.<sup>9</sup> According to Toker, Rodd also collaborated with Frederick Osterling in the design and creation of the Westinghouse Air Brake Company General Office Building in Wilmerding, Pa.<sup>10</sup>

### Architectural Style

The houses of Roslyn Place are an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, especially Georgian Revival. According to the Pennsylvania Historical Commission:

*The Colonial Revival style was an effort to look back to the Federal and Georgian architecture of America's founding period for design inspiration. This enthusiasm to explore the architecture of America's founding period was generated in part by the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 celebrating the country's 100th birthday. This trend was further promoted by the Columbian Exposition of 1893, held in Chicago. Like most revival efforts, the Colonial Revival style did not generally produce true copies of earlier styles. Although, in the early years of the 20th century (1915-1935) there was a real interest in studying and duplicating Georgian period architecture. Generally, the Colonial Revival style took certain design elements - front façade symmetry, front entrance fanlights and sidelights, pedimented doorways, porches and dormers – and applied them to larger scale buildings. These colonial era details could be combined in a great variety of ways, creating many subtypes within this style.<sup>11</sup>*

Roslyn Place is also noted for its exceptional example of a Nicolson Pavement street, which is, itself, a City of Pittsburgh Historic Landmark.

Examples of Colonial Revival, particularly Georgian Revival, architecture within the City of Pittsburgh are rare. The Pitt Building (208 Smithfield St., Downtown), designed by Edward Lee in 1918 (altered in 1921) being, perhaps, the most notable example. The Allegheny Harvard-Yale-Princeton Club (617-619 William Penn Place, Downtown) and The Allegheny Elks Lodge #339 also designed by Edward Lee (the latter is a building remodel) are also notable for incorporating elements of the Federal style in their design. The former Overbrook Municipal Building, currently under consideration for City Historic Landmark status, has been identified, in part for its exceptional Colonial Revival design.

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<sup>9</sup> “The directors of the Union Switch & Signal Company...” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 17, 1899; “Stockholders of Westinghouse Machine Company Voted on the Propositions.” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, December 13, 1899; “Heating of the Shops of the Westinghouse Machine Company.” *The Engineering Record*, Vol. 36, pp. 7-8, June 26, 1897; “The Shops of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company.” *The Engineering Record*, Vol. 32, pp. 7-9; June 1, 1895.

<sup>10</sup> Franklin Toker, *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait*, Pennsylvania State University Press: 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Colonial Revival Style 1880-1960, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission; <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/colonial-revival.html>; Accessed on September 16, 2019.



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What is exceptional about Roslyn Place is the consistency of design, scale, uniformity of each individual building in order to create a sense of place within the district. The Colonial Revival style with elements of the Georgian period can be seen in the symmetry of the facades, the use of brick, hemispherical hoods, pedimented porches on 511, 513, 515, and 517 Roslyn Place, and coffered design elements on the hoods and porches.

Roslyn Place exemplifies important, yet rare, urban design and planning techniques that help to craft a high quality of life through thoughtful but dense urban design. As such, Roslyn Place is featured prominently in Allan Jacob's book entitled *Great Streets*, a book that looks at the relationship between design, communities, and urban planning. In the book, Allan Jacob's highlights Roslyn Place's unique design by stating:

*All the smallness and closeness – but closeness with enough room for healthy, even gracious living – makes for a density that is greater than would be permitted for the same type of housing (remember, these are single-family houses) in most of the urban United States: some 14 dwellings per gross acre (including the street). That density means there are a lot of people around. It means that public transit can be supported; it means that small stores within walking distance are likely to survive; and they do, on Walnut Street, a block away; and that schools, too, can be close. It means, in short, community, or at least the change of a community.<sup>12</sup>*

Jacobs had both a personal and a professional interest in Roslyn Place. He is an internationally renowned urban designer, well known for his research and publications on urban design. He holds a B.A. in Architecture from Miami University, an M.A. in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania, and attended the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and studied city planning as a Fulbright Scholar at the University College of London. Jacobs spent eight years as Director of City Planning for San Francisco but has also worked on planning projects from Pittsburgh to Calcutta. However, he is also a former resident of Roslyn Place.<sup>13</sup>

### **Nicholson Paving**

Roslyn Place is an example of Nicholson Pavement, a particular technique of street paving involving creosote-soaked wooden blocks (or cylinders) patented by Samuel Nicholson in 1859.<sup>14</sup>

According to Nicholson, the first wooden street paved according to his patented technique was constructed on the Western Avenue of the Boston & Roxbury Mill Corporation near Beacon Street in 1848.<sup>15</sup> There were four different approaches to paving with wooden streets, each of which were tailored to the primary use (and users, such as pedestrians, horses, wagons) of the

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<sup>12</sup> Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*, p. 19. MIT Press, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> University of California Berkeley, Faculty + Staff, Allan B. Jacobs; <https://ced.berkeley.edu/ced/facultystaff/allan-jacobs>; accessed September 28, 2019.

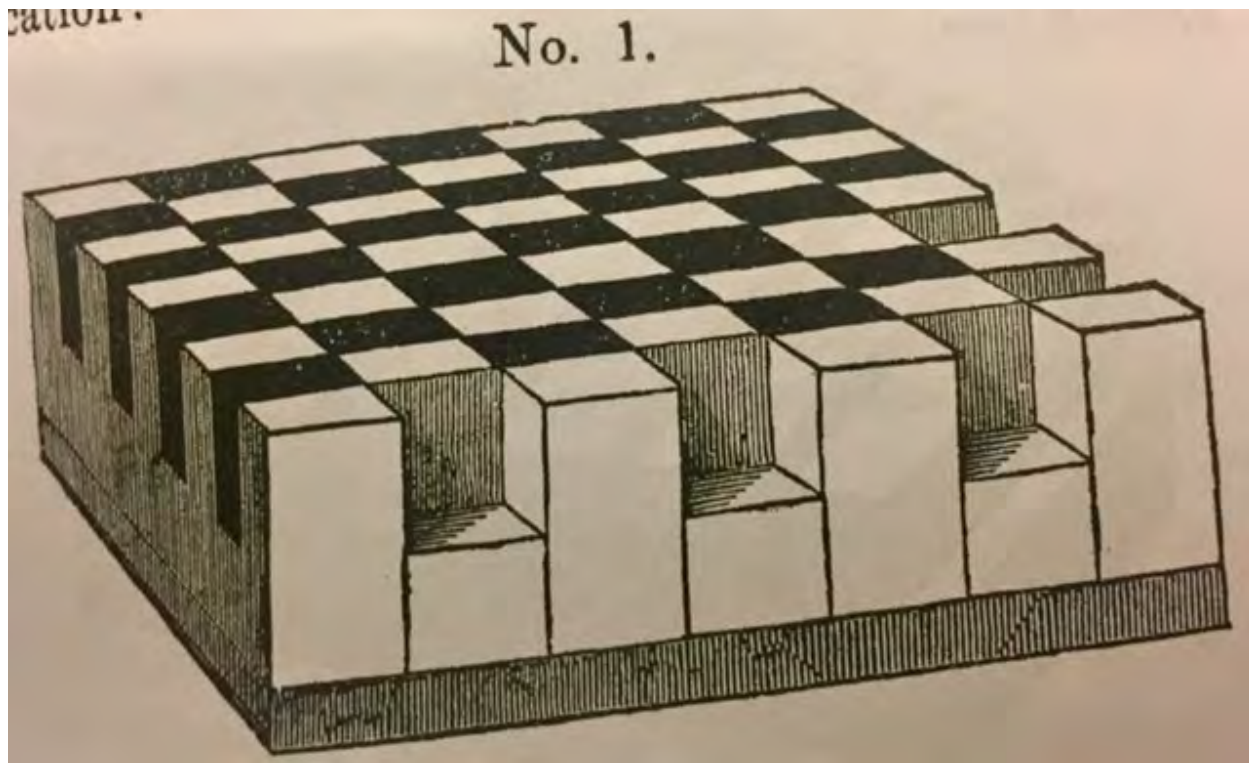
<sup>14</sup> Samuel Nicholson, *The Nicholson Pavement*, 2015 London, FB&c LTD.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Nicholson, *The Nicholson Pavement*, 2015 London, FB&c LTD.

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street itself (Figures 29-32). The benefits of wooden streets were directly compared to other paving options at the time, namely cobblestones and Belgian blocks. Cobblestones were viewed as being the least desirable for all forms of traffic as their rounded edges provided a difficult surface for horses (and their shoes) to consistently gain traction (Figure 33). The lack of a reliably flat surface was also difficult on wagon wheels and pedestrians alike. Belgian blocks were seen as preferable to cobblestones because they created a more level surface, which was easier for wheels to traverse with minimal wear but the rounded edges of the blocks created a difficult, and inconsistent, surface for horses to gain traction (Figure 34). In contrast, Nicolson Pavement provided a flat, somewhat malleable, surface which inflicted limited wear on wagon wheels and created an easily-walkable street for pedestrians as well as providing consistent traction for horses (Figure 35).<sup>16</sup>

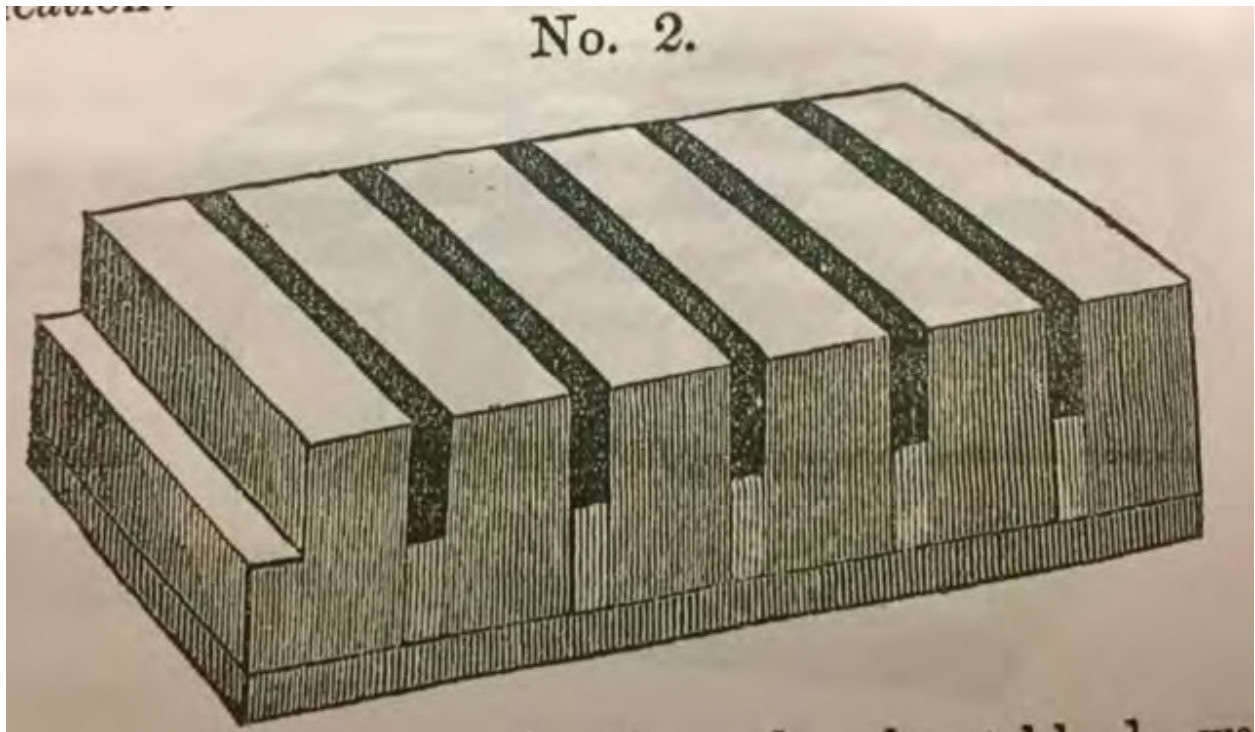


**Figure 29: Nicolson Pavement, Modification 1, Source: Samuel Nicolson, *The Nicolson Pavement*. Boston: Henry W. Dutton And Son, 1859. No. 1.**

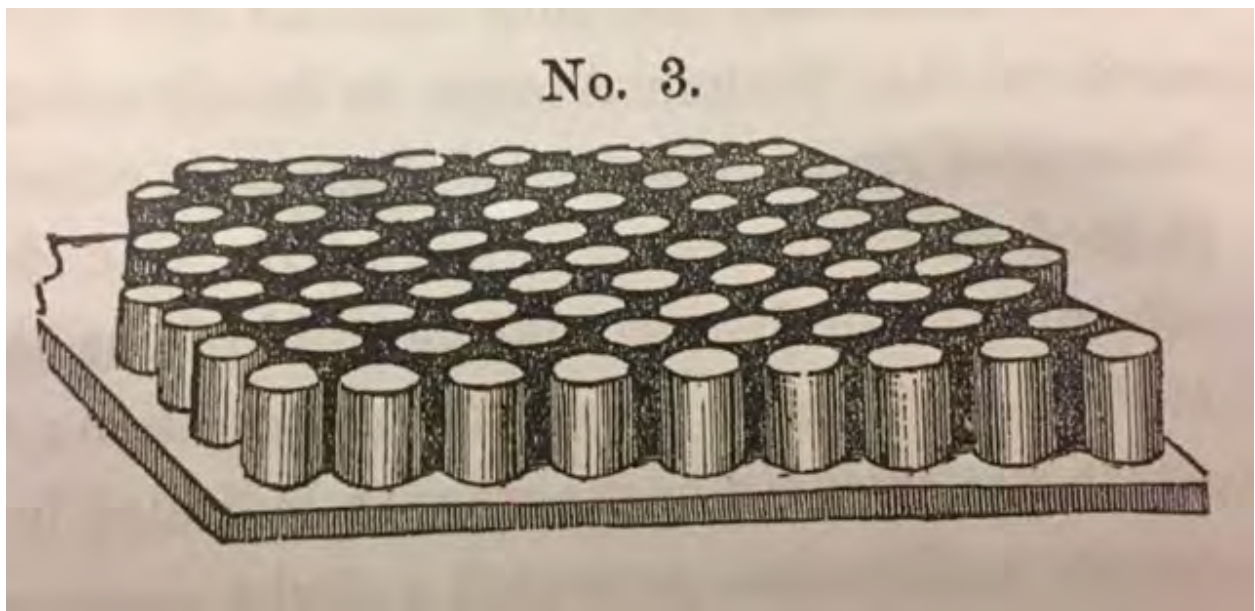
<sup>16</sup> Frank Grant Johnson, *The Nicolson Pavement and Pavements Generally*, pp. 40-44

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**Figure 30: Nicolson Pavement, Modification 2, Source: Samuel Nicolson, The Nicolson Pavement. Boston: Henry W. Dutton And Son, 1859. No. 2.**



**Figure 31: Nicolson Pavement, Modification 1, Source: Samuel Nicolson, The Nicolson Pavement. Boston: Henry W. Dutton And Son, 1859. No. 3.**

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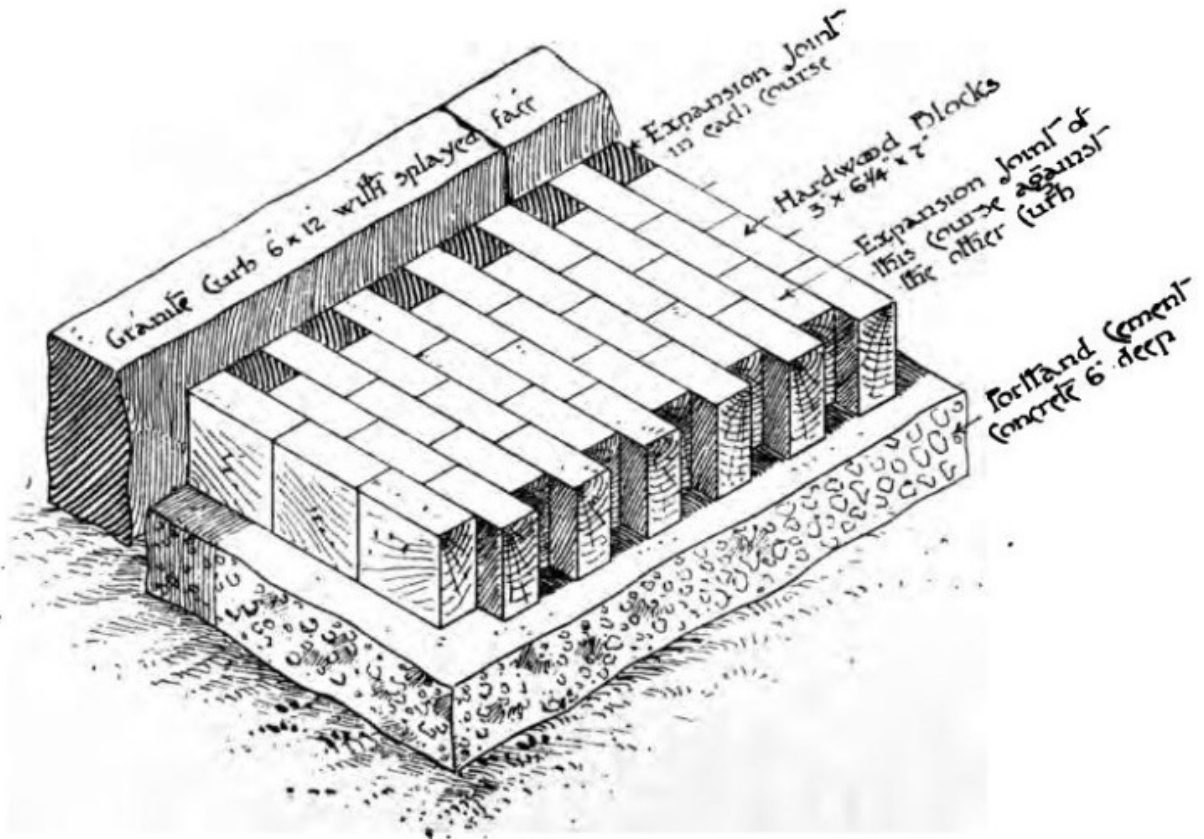
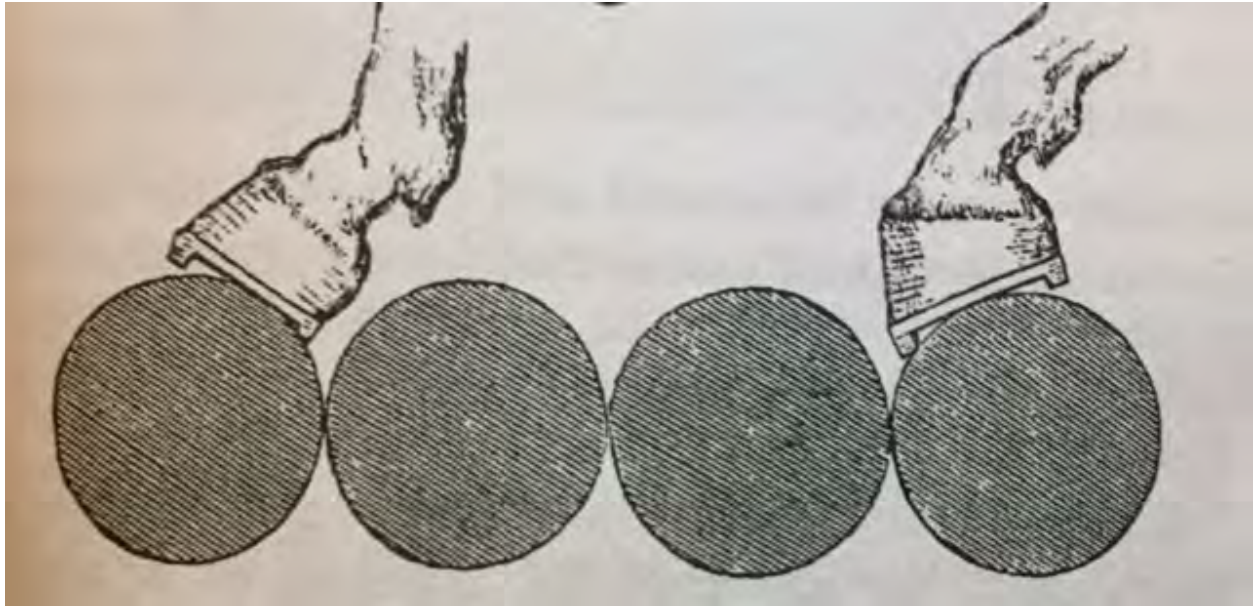


FIG. 26.

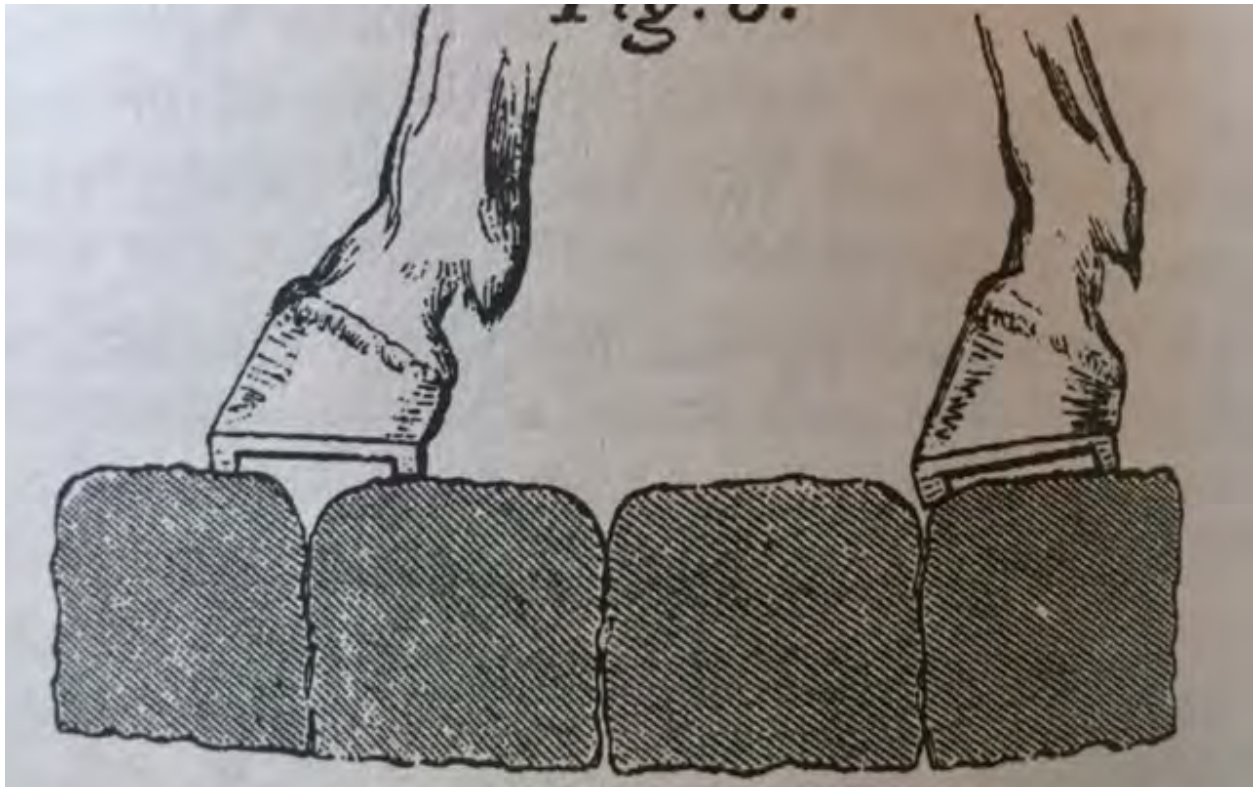
Figure 32: Nicolson Pavement, Method 4, Source: The Nicolson Pavement.

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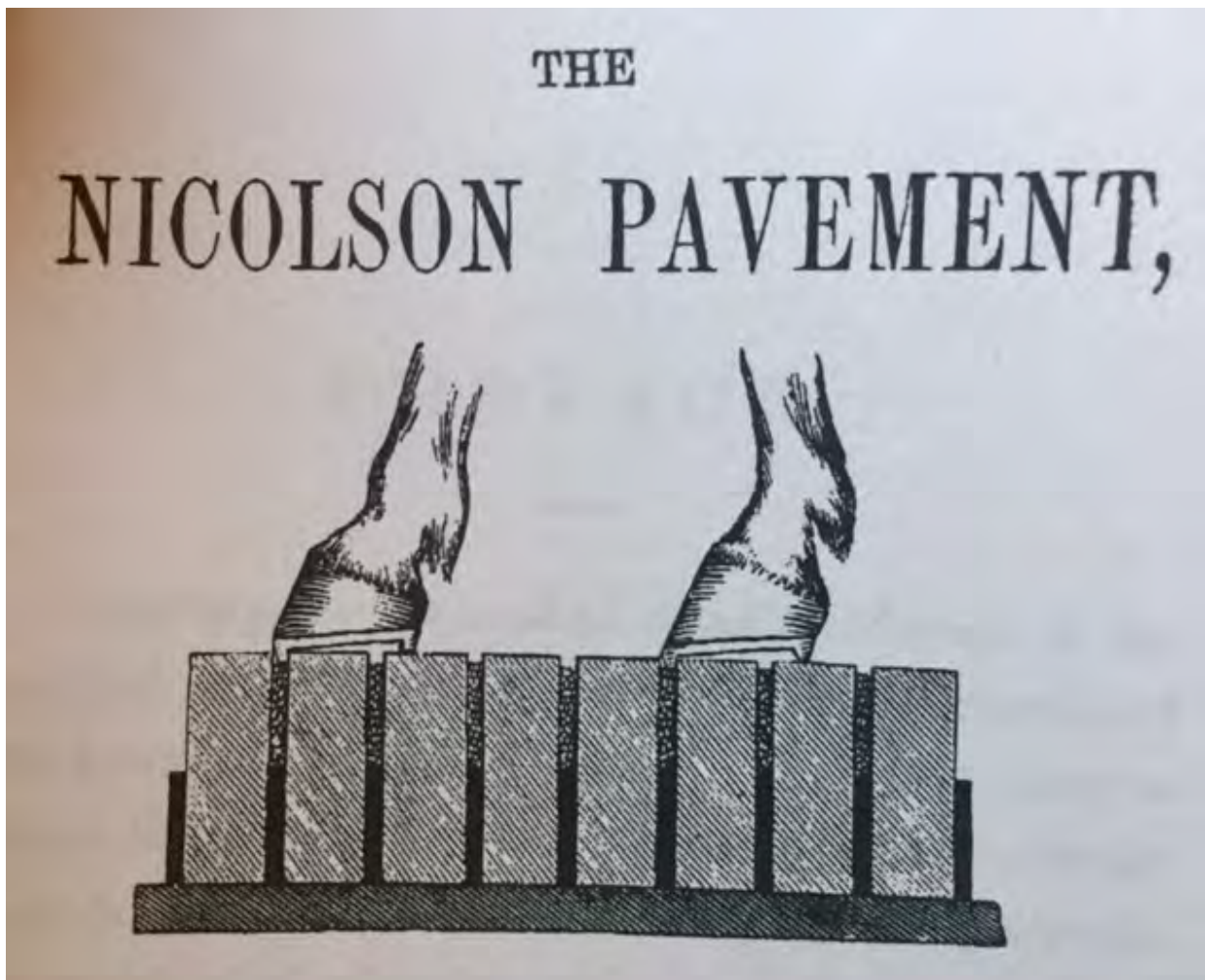
**Figure 33: Foot-hold on the Cobblestone Pavement, Source: Frank Grant Johnson, The Nicholson Pavement, and Pavements Generally, Fig. 7. New York: W.C. Rogers & Co., Printers and Stationers, 1867.**



**Figure 34: Foot-hold on the Belgian Pavement, Source: Frank Grant Johnson, The Nicholson Pavement, and Pavements Generally, Fig. 8., New York: W.C. Rogers & Co., Printers and Stationers, 1867.**

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**Figure 35: Foot-hold on the Cobblestone Pavement, Source: Frank Grant Johnson, *The Nicholson Pavement, and Pavements Generally*. New York: W.C. Rogers & Co., Printers and Stationers, 1867. Title Image.**

Nicolson Pavement was a major advancement in urban planning techniques of the 19th century. It provided an innovative, cost-effective, and efficient means by which communities could pave their streets. This paving technique was became tremendously popular from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries and major urban centers across the country like Sacramento (Figure 36), Chicago (Figure 37), and New York (Figure 38) not only adopted paving with wooden blocks but captured the work in progress. Notably, images of the restoration completed on Roslyn Place in 1985 help to convey a similar sense with the level of craftsmanship involved with this method of paving (Figure 39).<sup>17</sup>

While traction and efficiency were heavily promoted advantages of Nicolson Pavement, several other notable benefits of paving with wood include cost, malleability of materials, a more

<sup>17</sup> Oak Street: Roslyn Place, City's only Wooden Way, Under Repair, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 2, 1985.

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humane surface for the well-being of horses, a reduction of noise-level when compared to other forms of paving, and, perhaps most notable in the construction of Roslyn Place, there was “incontestable evidence that a relatively noiseless pavement is required and appreciated for business purposes, is in the fact that, wherever the Nicolson pavement has been laid, the same rooms and stores have rented for a third more than they were before.”<sup>18</sup>

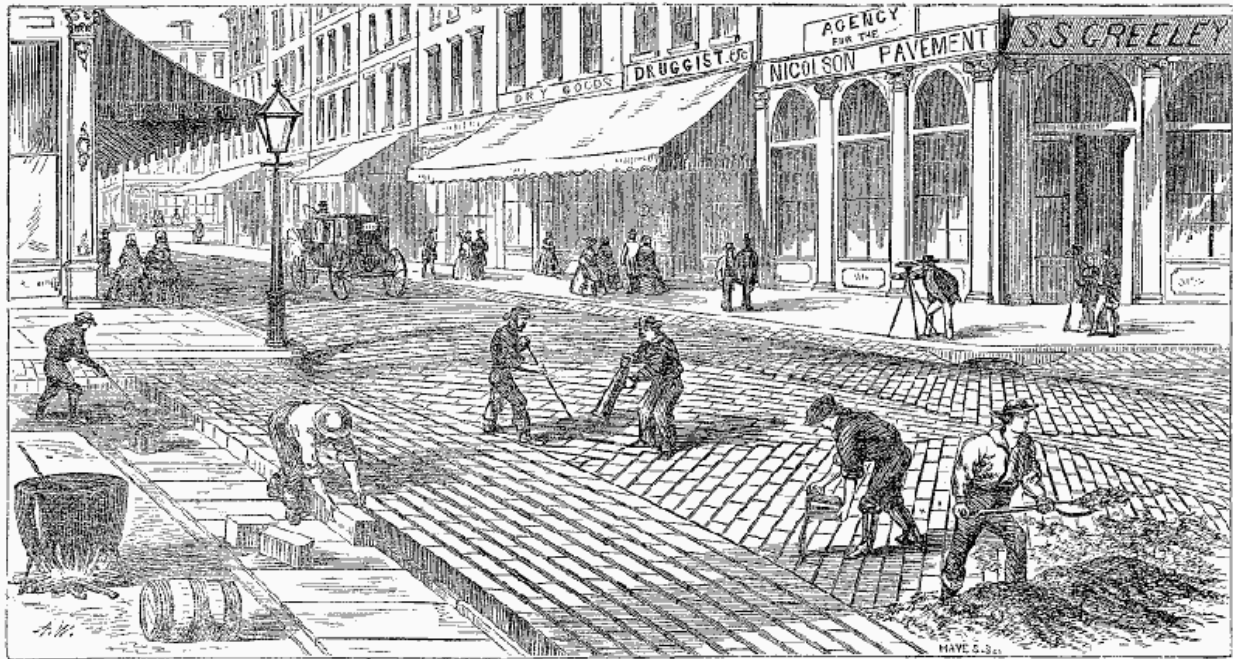


**Figure 36: Sacramento, J Street from Sixth Street, Laying of the Nicolson Pavement.**

<sup>18</sup> Frank Grant Johnson, *The Nicolson Pavement and Pavements Generally*, pp.69-86.

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Putting down the Nicolson Pavement, at the crossing of Washington and Clark Streets, Chicago, Illinois.

Figure 37: Putting Down the Nicolson Pavement, at the Crossing of Washington and Clark Streets, Chicago, Illinois.



Figure 38: Laying the Nicolson pavement in Mercer St., New York, E& H.T. Anthony.

Roslyn Place is reflective of these construction techniques. According to the Plan of Roslyn Place in the Seventh Ward Pittsburgh, the wood blocks of Roslyn Place were to be treated with eight pounds of creosote per cubic foot by the Rueping Process. In the Rueping Process,



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compressed air is forced into the treating cylinder containing the charge of wood to fill the wood cells with air prior to preservative injection.<sup>19</sup>

Over the next several decades the streets would undergo a series of minor restorations and repair but in the 1980s the street had deteriorated to the point where City officials were forced to either pave over the street or conduct extensive repairs. Fortunately, the City opted to conduct an extensive restoration, which was completed in 1985. Since this time, minor repairs and replacements have been made, largely using surplus material from the 1985 restoration project.



**Bricklayer Augie Cardillo splits a wooden block to complete a row.**

**Figure 39: Bricklayer Augie Cardillo Splits a Wooden Block to Complete a Row, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 2, 1985, from the private collection of Charlotte Cohen.**

<sup>19</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, *Wood Preservation*. Accessed: <https://www3.epa.gov/ttnchie1/ap42/ch10/final/c10s08.pdf>

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While Roslyn Place may not have been a distinctive feature for the time it was created, over time the wooden street and surrounding homes increasingly gained community, academic, and professional recognition as a distinctive landmark and today it is a major, character-defining feature of the neighborhood.

Throughout the course of the 20th century, the immediate streetscape neighboring Roslyn Place changed rapidly. Belgian block streets and trolley lines were paved with asphalt, the original Aiken Avenue wooden bridge was replaced with the current steel structure, the homes owned by Osterling and Rodd were demolished in the 1960s and replaced with condominium developments with private streets, and demise of the Pennsylvania Rail Road in the 1970s would lead to the creation of the Martin Luther King Busway to the North of the neighborhood. However, Roslyn Place would remain a wooden block street in part because of the advocacy of its neighbors and the active stewardship of the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Public Works.

Many of the neighbors on Roslyn Place are long-time residents and have recorded the streets history through a collection of photographs, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and even poems (Figures 40-42). Roslyn Place has featured prominently in a plethora of newspaper articles since the 1980s as news organizations documented its restoration and, more recently, celebrated the street's centennial.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Diana Nelson Jones, [Shadyside's wooden street paves its way to greatness](#), *the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 21, 2004; Kate Benz, [Residents seek to shore up status of Shadyside's rare exposed-wood street](#), *TribLive*, July 31, 2015; Margaret J. Krauss, [The Surprising Story of Pittsburgh's Last Wooden Street](#), *Pittsburgh Magazine*, September 28, 2015; Margaret J. Krauss, [Surviving on Charm: Pittsburgh's Last Wooden Street](#), *90.5 WESA*, May 29, 2015; John Conti, [Cul-de-sac streets create Pittsburgh's hidden neighborhoods](#), *TribLive*, September 17, 2016.

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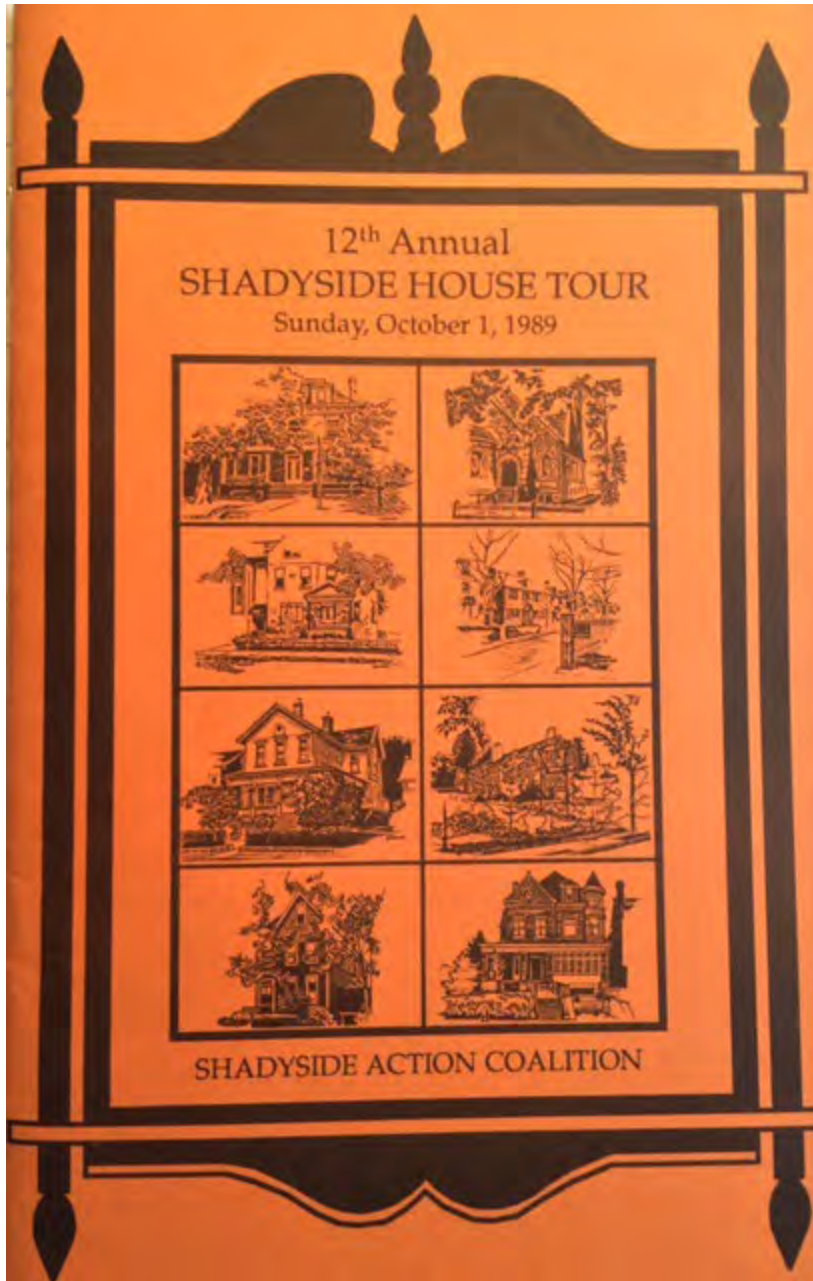
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Figure 40 Roslyn Place, undated photograph from the private collection of Charlotte Cohen.

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**Figure 41: 12th Annual Shadyside House Tour, 1989, Source: from the private Collection of Charlotte Cohen.**

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**Figure 42: Roslyn Place, etching from 12th Annual Shadyside House Tour, 1989, from the private collection of Charlotte Cohen.**

Notably, Roslyn Place also features prominently in *Great Streets*, a comprehensive book on the relationship between design, communities, and urban planning by noted urban designer and U.C. Berkeley professor emeritus Allan Jacobs. Significantly in the book, Roslyn Place, which was the former home of the author, is introduced to the reader as the first example of a “Great

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Street” and sets the tone by which others, like Paris’ Champs-Élysées and Washington, D.C.’s Pennsylvania Avenue, are compared.<sup>21</sup>

To date, Roslyn Place is the only remaining, uncovered Nicolson-paved street in Pittsburgh. While a handful of partially wooden-paved streets exist nationally (most notably the 200 block of Camac Street in Philadelphia and two alleyways in Chicago), Roslyn Place remains the only street in the nation paved entirely in accordance with the Nicolson paving techniques.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*, MIT Press, 1995.

<sup>22</sup> Inga Saffron, *Changing Skyline: Philadelphia’s Only Surviving Wooden Street Embalmed in Asphalt*, December 27, 2015. Source: [http://www.philly.com/philly/living/20151225\\_Changing\\_Skyline\\_\\_Philadelphia\\_s\\_only\\_surviving\\_wooden\\_street\\_embalmed\\_in\\_asphalt.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/living/20151225_Changing_Skyline__Philadelphia_s_only_surviving_wooden_street_embalmed_in_asphalt.html); Wooden Block Alley, All of Chicago’s wood-paved streets are long gone but two alleys remain, Atlas Obscura, Source: <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/wooden-block-alley>

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## **Integrity**

Roslyn Place retains an exceptionally high degree of integrity of location, design, setting materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Specifically:

- **Location:** Roslyn Place remains in its original location.
- **Design:** The homes of Roslyn Place retain their overall design with minor modifications to the engaged front porches and entryways of most homes.
- **Setting:** The setting of Roslyn Place has changed since first constructed in that the adjacent single-family homes owned by the Rodds and the Osterlings have been replaced with multi-unit housing. The neighborhood remains primarily residential in nature.
- **Materials:** The district retains a high degree of material integrity. The brick facades of the homes have been maintained. 521 Roslyn Place was originally conceived as a frame house and was stuccoed in the 1920s (and remains so today). During the 19th century it was preferred that streets paved according to the Nicolson plan be done so with cedar, however, it was not uncommon to use other types of wood. It is not recorded what species of wood Roslyn Place was originally comprised of, Roslyn Place today is composed entirely of oak blocks with gravel and asphalt infill (as was the method of construction with Nicolson Streets).
- **Workmanship:** Roslyn Place continues to evoke a sense of workmanship as when the homes were first constructed. This is, in no small part, thanks to the use of the same craftsmen techniques during the 1985 restoration.
- **Feeling:** Roslyn Place maintains a high degree of integrity of feeling. As a community it maintains the same “feel” as it was first constructed in part because of the continued existence of the Nicolson Pavement. Aside from modern cars and the old growth trees, on any given day the street looks remarkably similar to when first created in 1914.
- **Association:** Roslyn Place maintains a direct association to where and when the community was it was first designed and constructed by Thomas Rodd.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** \_\_\_\_\_

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_  
4. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Matthew W.C. Falcone  
organization: Preservation Pittsburgh  
street & number: 1501 Reedsdale St., Suite 5003  
city or town: Pittsburgh state: PA zip code: 15233  
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date: April 19, 2019

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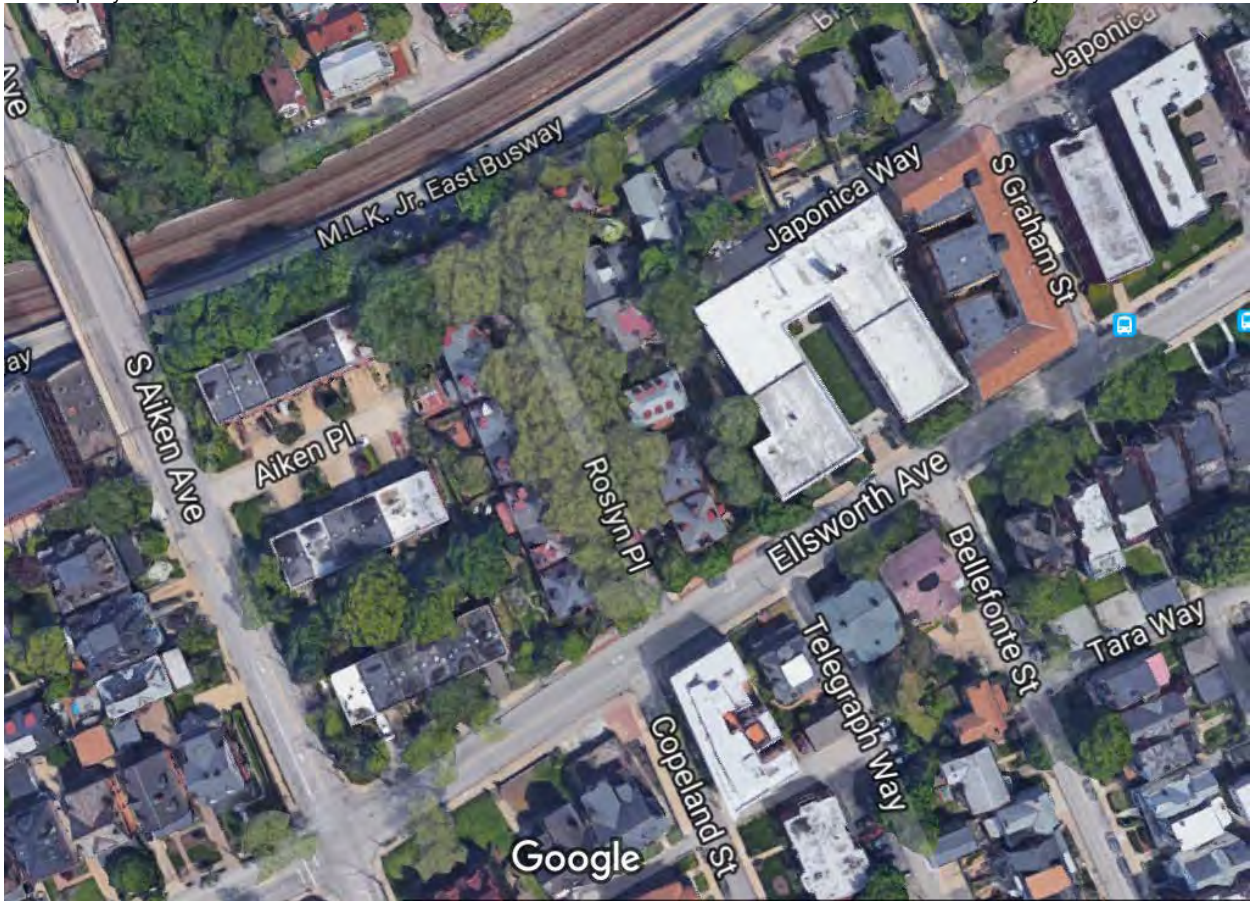
### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Allegheny County Assessment Parcel Map of Roslyn Place. Accessed:  
<http://www2.county.allegheny.pa.us/RealEstate/Map.aspx?ParcelID=0008D00149000000&SearchType=2&CurrentRow=0&SearchName=&SearchStreet=lockhart&SearchNum=417&SearchMuni=1&SearchParcel=&pin=0008D00149000000>

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.