

A Neighborhood Architectural Gem, “Tall Oaks”

BY CAROL KALOS, WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT

Located at 731 West Skippack Pike, the “Tall Oaks” serves today as a real estate office. Its first owners, the DeHavens, arrived in 1682, and the October and November *Stroll* note that five generations resided there among the oak trees. *Whitpain... Crossroads in Time* (1977) relates that one of the DeHavens was a blacksmith and one a cordwainer (a person who sews leather goods). Later residents at the “Tall Oaks” were a tax collector, a school bus driver, and a Justice of the Peace.

The present dwelling at the “Tall Oaks” adds character to our neighborhood. The Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission describes the historic structure as a three-story Federal-style home, constructed in three sections. Two of its portions have uncoursed (rough) stone, once covered with stucco.

The first addition was added between 1740 and 1760, probably to accommodate the DeHaven family’s next

generation. Clapboard covers a second addition in the rear. Stately pairs of chimneys stand at the gabled ends of the two stone sections of the building. The lovely entrance door opens to a square portico, Roman columns, and intricate molding, added with other remodeling in the 1930s.

Oak trees can live to be 150 years old. Today, visitors to this fine property can ponder which of its stately oaks are descendants of that first oak sapling, now gone, but recorded as a boundary marker in a 1742 deed.

The author, Carol Kalos, is president of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society, promoting history in Ambler Borough, Whitpain Township, and Lower Gwynedd Township. At its 1895 Public School, the society sponsors a monthly speakers’ series, open to the public. All are welcome! For details, please email to info@WVValleyHS.org

