

ADDRESS: 121 PLEASANT ST

Name of Resource: The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: CDPHI LLC

Nominator: Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt; megan.schmitt@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the building at 121 Pleasant Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the building satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that the house is significant owing to its association with the life and work of Joseph Meehan, “a prominent editor, horticulturalist, landscape gardener, nurseryman, writer and veteran of the Civil War...” Under Criterion J, the nomination argues that the Joseph Meehan House & Grounds is significant as a representation of the “commercial and cultural legacy of the larger Meehan family in Mt. Airy, Germantown, and Philadelphia.”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the building at 121 Pleasant Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J.



**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 (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: **121 Pleasant Street**

Postal code: **19119**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds**

Current/Common Name: **121 Pleasant Street**

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: Single-family Dwelling

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from **1880 to 1920**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **ca.1886**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Unknown**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Unknown**

Original owner: **Joseph Meehan**

Significant persons: **Joseph Meehan**

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

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization: **Keeping Society of Philadelphia**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian
J.M. Duffin, Archivist & Historian**

Date: **13 October 2020**

Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Telephone: **717.602.5002**
Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: October 13, 2020

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: October 19, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: November 2, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: CDPHI LLC

Address: 68 Jay Street, Suite 201

City: Brooklyn State: NY Postal Code: 11020

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. The primary (southeast) elevation of the subject property. Source: Google, 2019.

THE JOSEPH MEEHAN HOUSE & GROUNDS

—
BUILT CA. 1886

—
121 PLEASANT STREET
MT. AIRY - GERMANTOWN
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

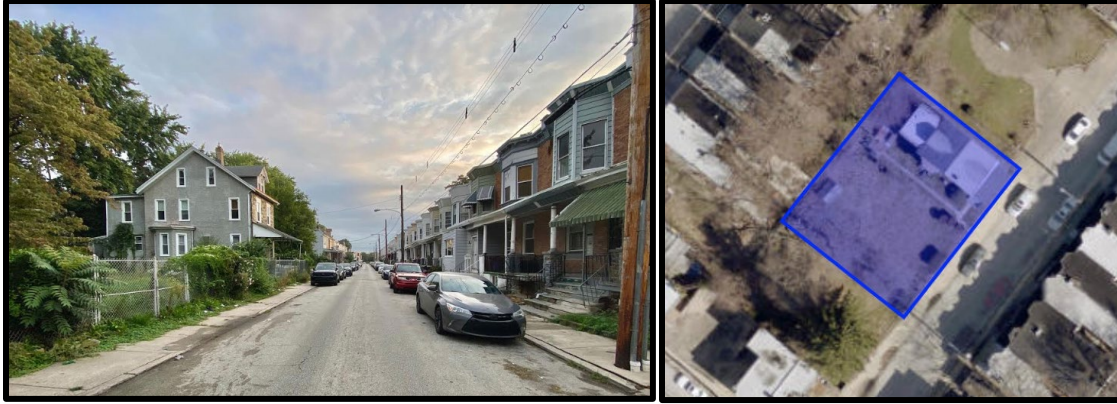


Figure 2. Left: Looking northeast into Pleasant Street with the subject property on left. Source: Bradley Maule, 2020. Figure 3. Right: The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia. Figure 4. Below: An aerial view of the subject property in context. Source: Bradley Maule, 2020.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the designation of the subject property is as follows:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot of piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE on the Northwestern side of Pleasant Street at the distance of 75 feet northeastwardly from the northeasterly side of Musgrave Street, CONTAINING in front or breadth on Pleasant Street 87 feet 11 inches and extending in length or depth of that width northwestwardly between parallel lines at right angles to Pleasant Street on the Southwesterly line 72 feet 6 ½ inches and on the Northeasterly line 72 feet 5/8 inches.

BEING known as No. 121 Pleasant Street.

Map Registry No. 052N170162

OPA Account No. 222071600

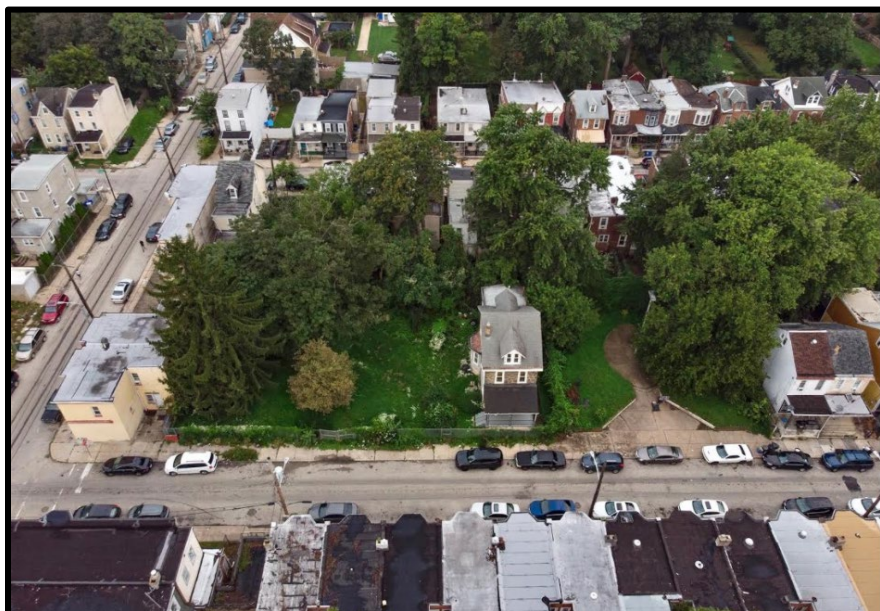




Figure 5. The primary (southeast) elevation. Source: Google, 2019.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Situated on the northwest side of Pleasant Street in the Mt. Airy section of Germantown, the Joseph Meehan House & Grounds is a detached two-and-one-half-story stone masonry dwelling with a side-gable roof and a single-story front porch. Built on a double pile plan with a two-story rear el, the building is of a ubiquitous form that emulates houses built in Philadelphia since its foundational period. However, upon closer inspection, the modest architectural flourishes speak to a quotidian aesthetic of working to middle class houses found historically in the larger German Township. The feeling of a bygone era is further amplified by the ample landscape of matured trees and plantings that occupy large undeveloped lots on both sides of the dwelling.

The primary (southeast) elevation features a façade of finished schist of a random bond, which is penetrated by two apertures per floor. The first floor features a two-part mullion window on the left and a single pedestrian door on the right with an infilled transom. All of the windows are one-over-one replacement fixtures. The first-floor elevation is shaded by a single-story porch with a shed roof. The porch is formed by stone pillars at the base that support a concrete slab floor. The roof of the porch is supported by three metal units that likely replaced original turned wooden posts. The second-floor features symmetrically placed single windows with

stone headers. A generous eave of the roof provides some shade to the second-floor façade, featuring exposed wooden rafter tails. A large dormer rises from the center of the pitched roof and is dominated by a two-part mullion window. The gable-front features a triangle panel defined by decorative wood Victorian details. Projecting eaves with exposed wooden rafter tails are repeated in the dormer roof. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles. A simple brick chimney stack rises from the left side of the roof at center.



Figure 6. An aerial view of the subject property, showing the southwest elevation in the associated landscape. Source: Bradley Maule, 2020.

The southwest elevation features two window groupings per floor with one-over-one replacement windows throughout the building. The ground floor includes a three-part bay window with one window per elevation on the left and a single window on the right near the south corner of the building. The second-floor features two single windows in a group above the bay window with a like window above the single window on right. The top half-story features two single windows that are symmetrically placed. The rear el features two windows on the first floor and a single window on the second floor.



Figure 7. Top: The southeast and northeast elevations. Source: Bradley Maule, 2020.
Figure 8. Bottom: The southwest and southeast elevations. Source: Bradley Maule, 2020.

The northeast elevation of the main block is a blind, stucco-clad wall. The rear elevation features at least one window on the second floor.



Figure 9. Joseph Meehan. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds (Figures 1 through 8) at 121 Pleasant Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (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; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance begins with Joseph Meehan's ownership in 1880, when he no doubt began planting on the grounds, through construction of the house ca. 1886 until the time of his death in 1920.

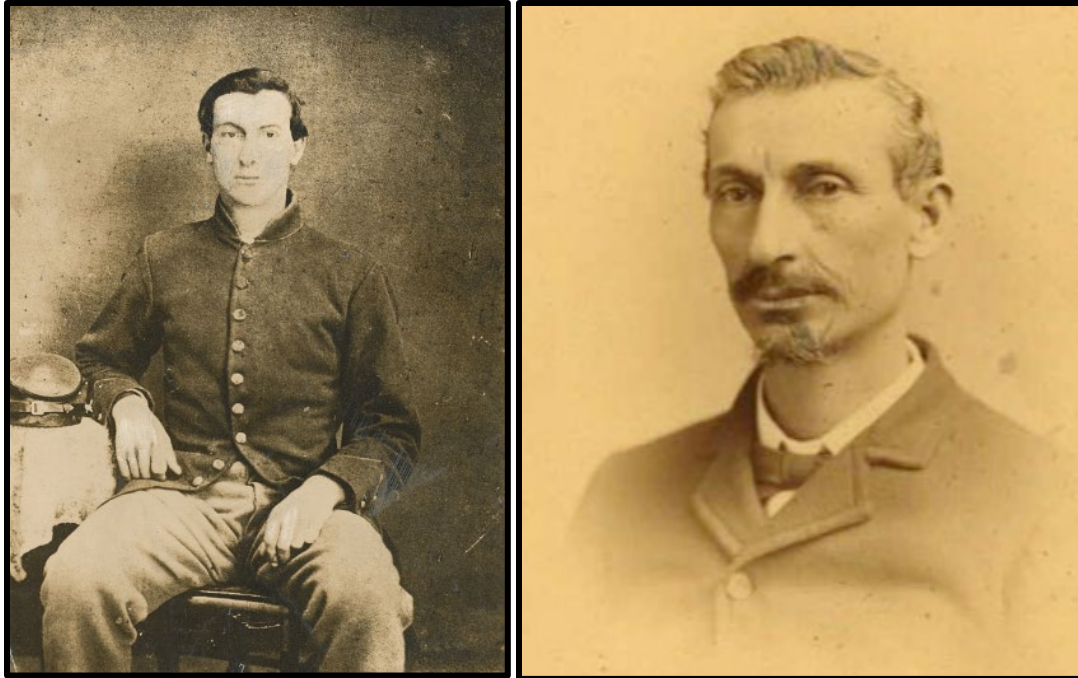


Figure 10. Left: Joseph Meehan in his Union Army uniform. Figure 11. Right: Joseph Meehan in his middle age. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

CRITERIA A & J

The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds at 121 Pleasant Street in the Mt. Airy section of Germantown comprises an unassuming yet significant historic property associated with the life and work of Joseph Meehan (1840–1920) (Figures 7, 8, and 9), a prominent editor, horticulturist, landscape gardener, nurseryman, writer and veteran of the Civil War, who was historically “one of Germantown’s best known residents and a leading horticulturist and nurseryman of the United States.”¹

HISTORIC CONTEXT: JOSEPH MEEHAN (1840-1920)

Joseph Meehan was born in a gardener’s cottage at the Isle of Wight in England on November 9, 1840. His father, Edward Meehan (1798-1882), worked as a gardener for Colonel and Lady Vernon Harcourt. He attended a few years of school and then worked with his father on the Harcourt estate. As a teenager he was employed in a number positions as a gardener in Wales, the Isle of Wight and, even, for a brief time, at Kenwood Gardens in London.² In 1859, he emigrated to Philadelphia, where he would work for his brother Thomas Meehan (1826–1901), the famous nurseryman, botanist, author, and horticultural publisher and City Council member. This initiated Joseph’s fifty-two-year career that began in the associated family firm – Thomas Meehan & Sons, a concern that flourished to be one of the largest and most successful of commercial nurseries in Philadelphia and the United States.³

¹ “Death of Joseph Meehan, Noted as Horticulturist, Writer and Veteran of the Civil War,” *Germantown Guide*, 1 January 1920 in v. 41, p. 203, Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, Germantown Historical Society.

² “Death of Joseph Meehan,” *Germantown Guide*.

³ Samuel Newman Baxter. “The Passing of an Old Nursery Site,” *The National Nurseryman* 29 (1922): 339.

*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2020 - 9
The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds, 121 Pleasant Street, Mt. Airy - Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.*

Just two years after his arrival, Joseph Meehan demonstrated his allegiance to the United States by enlisting in the 106th Pennsylvania Infantry on August 8, 1862, serving as a Private in the American Civil War (Figures 10 and 26).⁴ He was discharged in September 1862, after being wounded in the Battle of Antietam. With Lee's invasion of the North in June 1863, Meehan reenlisted in the Army and participated in several actions to defend various Pennsylvania towns. In a skirmish outside of Carlisle, Joseph was captured by the Confederate troops, but was later released at Gettysburg on July 4, 1863, when the rebels lost the battle.⁵ Meehan's experience in the war made him a life-long Republican and staunch defender of the party's foundational ideals regarding civil rights for African Americans, including equality in education.⁶

He returned to work at the Meehan Nurseries after being discharged and married Emily G. Gaul on September 17, 1868 in St. James Church at Kingsessing, not far from Bartram's Gardens, a matrimonial alliance no doubt initiated during one of his horticultural excursions in that part of the city.⁷ Perhaps in anticipation of the marriage, Joseph Meehan purchased a newly-built twin from his brother Thomas Meehan on Pleasant Street (123 & 125, no longer extant) in March 1868.⁸ Two years later Joseph purchased the subject property, adjacent to 123 & 125 Pleasant Street, which then had a 47-foot frontage. Neighboring the property of Charles Fleu to the southeast, Joseph purchased an additional 90-foot-front from the Fleu family in 1880.⁹ He built the subject building ca.1886 (Figures 13 and 14).¹⁰

⁴ Pennsylvania (State). Civil War Muster Rolls and Related Records, 1861–1866. Records of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, Record Group 19, Series 19.11 (153 cartons). Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

⁵ "Death of Joseph Meehan," *Germantown Guide*.

⁶ Joseph Meehan, "The Ku-Klux Klan: To the Editor of the Isle of Wright Observer," *Isle of Wright [England] Observer* 5 June 1886, 6.

⁷ Historical Data Systems, comp. *U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861–1865* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2009; Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1669–2013* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Robert Robinson Scott: Botanist, Writer, Patriot," *The Chronicles of Germantown*, n.d., 28–29, Germantown Historical Society.

⁸ Deed: Thomas Meehan, of Germantown in the Twenty-second Ward of the City of Philadelphia, gardener, and Catharine, his wife, to Joseph Meehan, of the same, gardener, for \$3,000, 5 March 1868, Philadelphia Deed Book J.T.O., No. 129, p. 113, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereafter CAP).

⁹ Deed: Charles Fleu, of the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia, gentleman, to Joseph Meehan, of the same place, gardener, for \$2,035, 18 April 1870, Philadelphia Deed Book J.A.H., No. 34, p. 519; Deed Tripartite: Milton Flue and Phebe Ann, his wife, Albert Fleu and Catharine, his wife, William Kerbaugh and Susanna, his wife, all of the City of Philadelphia, of the first part, Daniel L. Keyser, guardian for Elizabeth Fleu (a minor), of the second part, to Joseph Meehan, of Germantown in the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia, nurseryman, for \$5,000, 26 July 1880, Philadelphia Deed Book L.W., No. 105, p. 404, CAP. On the same day of his purchase in 1880, Meehan sold off half of the lot towards Musgrave Street (Philadelphia Deed Registry Ledgers, Plan 52N17, Plot 22, CAP)

¹⁰ The house does not appear in Hopkins' 1885 atlas but does in Bromley's 1889 atlas (G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 22nd Ward* [Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1885], plate 19; George W. and Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, vol. 7, *Twenty Second Ward* [Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1889], plate 13). The 1885 city directory lists Joseph Meehan's home address as "60 Pleasant, Gtn" and in 1886 as "71 Pleasant, Mt A" (*Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory* for 1885 and 1886). NB. These house numbers are before 1894 and ca. 1910 address number shifts for Pleasant Street.

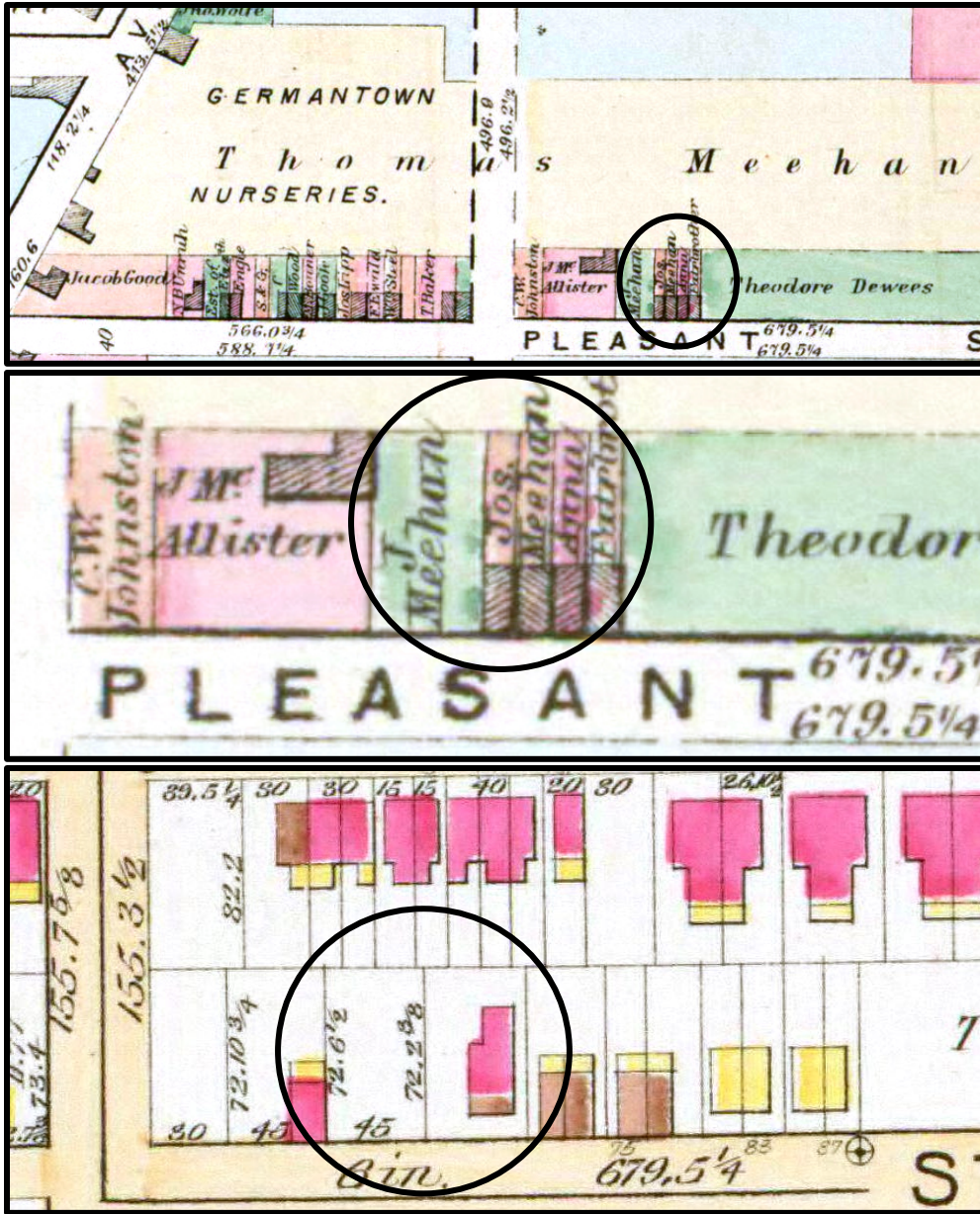


Figure 12. Top: A detail of the 1871 Germantown Atlas by G.M. Hopkins showing the Thomas Meehan Nurseries on Germantown Avenue with Joseph Meehan's first small twin house (demolished) to the south. Figure 13. Center: A detail of the 1871 Germantown Atlas, showing Joseph Meehan's place at center. Figure 14. Bottom: First appearance of the subject property in Philadelphia atlases in 1889 22nd Ward Atlas by G.W. Bromley & Co.

Located adjacent and later just a few blocks from the Meehan Nurseries, Joseph Meehan contributed greatly to the prominence of the business for fifty-two years as a landscape gardener, manager, and lead salesman. While his brother owned the business and became the more famous and prominent, Joseph also was an important expert and practitioner of the nascent and evolving profession of landscape architecture. His rise is documented in the city directories, when in 1892 and 1893 he is listed as “horticulturist.”¹¹

¹¹ Gopsill's *Philadelphia City Directory* for 1892 and 1893.

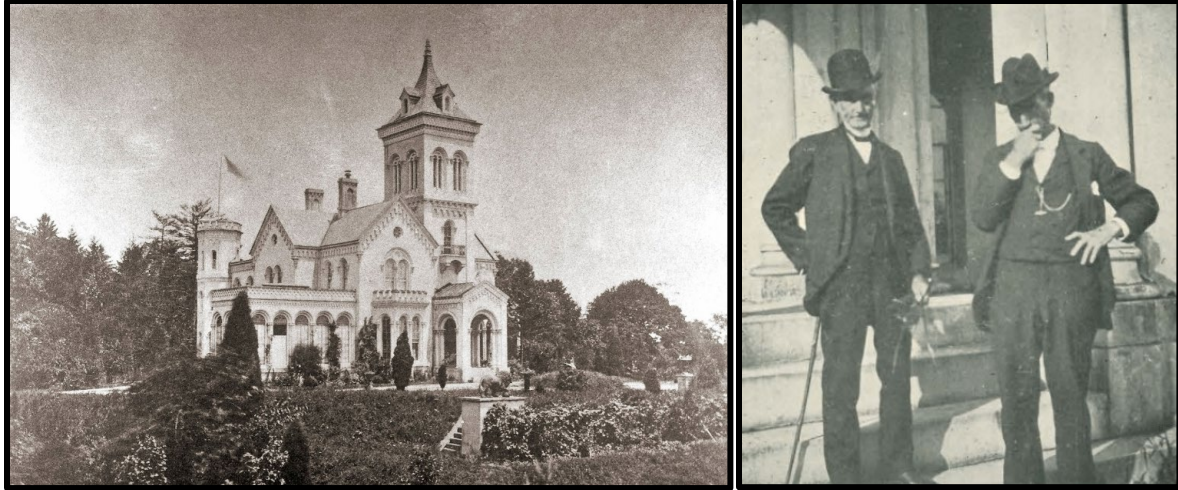


Figure 15. Left: Bartram Hall, the mansion of Andrew M. Eastwick (demolished), where Thomas Meehan first worked upon arriving in America. Source: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Figure 16. Right: William De Hart and Joseph Meehan (right) on the steps of Bartram Hall at Bartram's Garden. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: THE POPULARIZATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN PLANTS

One evolving aspect of the field was the discovery, identification, and employment of native American plant specimen as a viable alternative to the practice of importing plants from abroad. Beyond pride in one's own country, native plants are naturally hardier in their original environment, requiring less maintenance than many foreign plants, a point even more salient today. Though not the originator of the movement nor alone in his efforts, Joseph Meehan was an important contributor to the popularization of Native American plants in landscape gardening.

Perhaps the earliest pioneer and proponent in the field of native American plant species was Philadelphia's own John Bartram (1699–1777), the eminent American botanist, horticulturist, and explorer. Bartram and his agents traveled extensively in the American colonies, collecting native plant specimen for documentation and promulgation. He amassed one of the greatest collections of native American plants of the eighteenth century, which was housed at the site now known as Bartram's Garden, his eight-acre botanical garden on the west bank of the Schuylkill River in the Kingsessing section of Philadelphia. Three generations of the Bartram and Carr families continued the garden, which comprised what is said to have been the first botanical garden in America. Bartram's Garden was not only a botanical garden, it also served as a commercial nursery, which initially focused on the transatlantic plant trade. While their success with international sales continued into the nineteenth century, the Bartrams also expanded their business locally as a result of domestic demand for plants originating on this side of the Atlantic. However, as result of financial problems, the business closed in 1850, at which time Bartram's Garden was sold to Andrew McCalla Eastwick (1811–1879), a wealthy engineer and inventor. Eastwick built a new house on the property (Figure 15), employing Bartram's Garden as his own private park.¹² Incidentally, Eastwick appears to have been one of Thomas Meehan's first American employers. This introduced him to Bartram's Garden and

¹² Stephanie Ginsberg Oberle. *The Influence of Thomas Meehan on Horticulture in the United States*. (University of Delaware, 1997), 58.

its collection of native American plants, a fact that no doubt motivated Thomas Meehan to organize a successful campaign to preserve the garden, when it was under threat after Eastwick's death in 1879.¹³



Figure 17. An envelope with the stamped return address of Thomas Meehan. Source: Ebay.com.

Another trailblazer in the employment of native American plant species was Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852), the American landscape designer, horticulturist, writer, and tastemaker. After Downing's death, Calvert Vaux (1825–1895), the prominent British-born architect and landscape designer, would also become an advocate, as well as a practitioner, for the use of native American plants in landscape design. Other influencers and practitioners would join both Downing and Vaux. These men, along with their British counterparts, achieved nationwide influence early on. The Philadelphia region was long associated with progress in horticulture and landscape gardening, and the Germantown section of the city became an important center of that larger milieu, inaugurating in the eighteenth century, but gaining even more prominence in the mid-nineteenth century as the area became one of the important early American suburbs. The Meehans were a dominant and formative driver of horticulture and landscape gardening of that cultural and historic trajectory at Germantown, Philadelphia, and beyond. In fact, Joseph Meehan, in addition to his brother Thomas, was a leader in commercializing the discovery, identification, and popularization of native American plant material for use in landscape gardening. This was so much so that by 1893 it was Meehan's nursery that contained the largest collection of native American plants in the country.¹⁴

¹³ Stephanie Ginsberg Oberle. *The Influence of Thomas Meehan on Horticulture in the United States*. (University of Delaware, 1997), 58-59.

¹⁴ Harold Davidson, Roy Mecklenburg, and Curtis Peterson, *Nursery Management: Administration and Culture* (Cornell University, 1988), 4.

Token of the early industry leaders, established commercial nurseries had a dual function, maintaining both retail and design businesses that were often inseparable. Beyond Bartram's Garden and its commercial nursery, one of the best known in the nineteenth century was started by Andrew Jackson Downing's father, Samuel Downing, who operated a nursery, which his sons, primarily Charles Downing (1802–1885), a pomologist, horticulturist, and nurseryman, continued at Newburgh, New York. While his older brother focused on the retail component, Andrew Jackson Downing fostered a business consulting on landscape design, as he had no doubt seen his father do more informally.

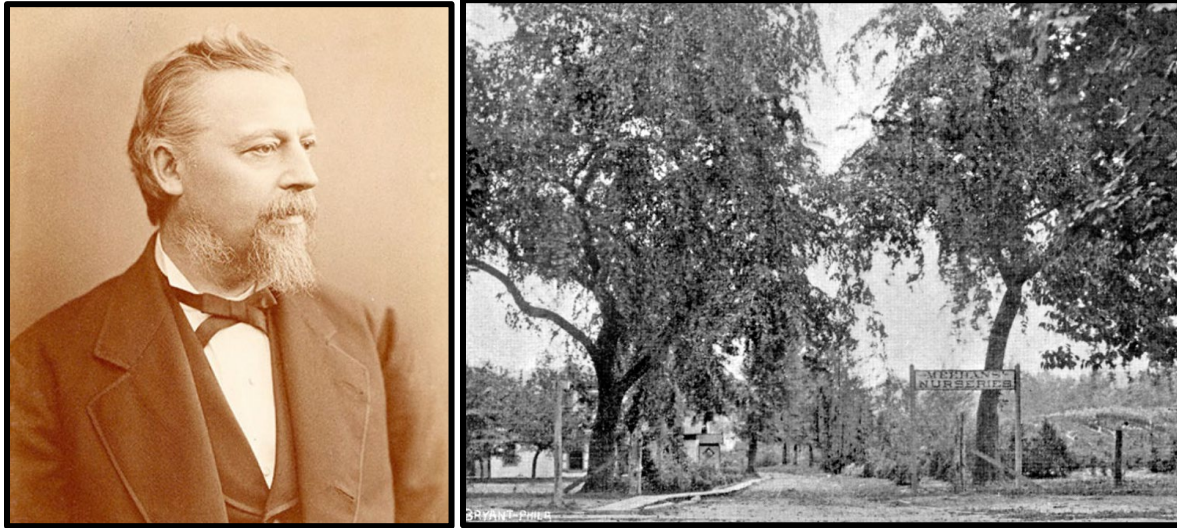


Figure 18. Left: Thomas Meehan. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 19. Right: An entrance to the Meehan Nurseries. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

While the Downings started their nursery much earlier, the Meehans were no different other than that their practice became much larger and more profitable. Thomas Meehan & Sons was a partnership established in 1896, when John Franklin Meehan (1870–1938), Thomas B. Meehan, and S. Mendleson Meehan officially joined their father in the family business. Thomas Meehan and his sons were also involved in landscape design as an arm of their commercial nursery. Known around the nursery as “Uncle Joe,” Joseph Meehan was integral in all aspects of their landscape design business, working first with his brother and later imparting his wealth of knowledge upon his nephews.¹⁵ He is said to have been “an expert landscape architect,” having “planned many beautiful estates in the vicinity of Philadelphia,” as well as “imposing landscape effects to the Meehan nurseries.”¹⁶ In later years he focused more on his writing, but provided expert advice to his nephews in the design and planning of extant masterpieces like Pennypacker Mills—the Colonial Revival summer home of Pennsylvania’s Governor Samuel Pennypacker (1843–1916), the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site at Hyde Park, New York, and the English Garden at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens at Jacksonville, Florida.¹⁷

¹⁵ “Joseph Meehan, The Nestor Among Nurserymen,” *The Florists’ Exchange*, 1 January 1921, 7.

¹⁶ “Joseph Meehan,” *The American Florist*, January 1921, 1251; *American Seedsman*, 15 January 1921, 37.

¹⁷ John William Hammond, Margie Coffin Brown, and Brona Keenan, Cultural Landscape Report for the Vanderbilt Mansion Formal Gardens, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York. (National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 2011), 59.

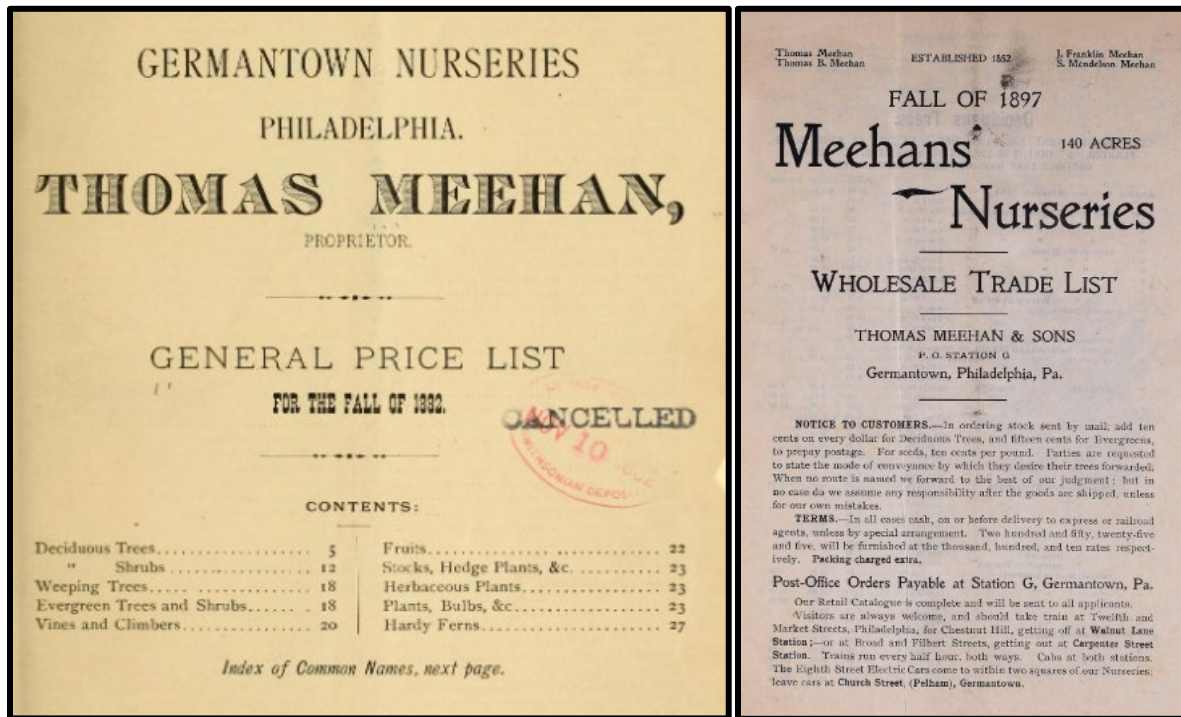


Figure 20. Wholesale Trade Catalogues for Meehan's Nurseries. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

THE MEEHANS—A FORGOTTEN LEGACY IN GERMANTOWN

Thomas Meehan (Figure 18) came onto the scene in Germantown at just the right moment, when in about 1854 he entered into partnership with William Saunders (1822–1900), a Scottish-born horticulturist and landscape gardener, to open a commercial nursery in what is known today as Mount Airy. The partnership was short-lived, as Saunders would go on to be head of the Federal Experimental Gardens in Washington, D.C.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Thomas Meehan's entrée to an elite Germantown clientele of wealthy suburbanites was gained by an impressive résumé of both education and employment.¹⁹ Both Thomas and Joseph Meehan were reared in the industry; in fact, the latter was born in the gardener's cottage of St. Clare, an estate where their father, Edward Meehan, was head gardener to Colonel and Lady Catherine Vernon Harcourt.²⁰ It was there, at Ryde, on the Isle of Wight, where their father worked for half a century, and administered their earliest education and training. Thomas Meehan would go on to work in London at the Kew Gardens, the Royal Botanical Garden of England, where he would acquire greater expertise. In his day, to have trained at Kew was a very prestigious credential for any aspiring young gardener. With this achievement, he would ultimately emigrate to the United States in 1848, where he first worked for "two influential men in the field, Robert Buist and Caleb Cope", having met the former in England.²¹

¹⁸ "William Saunders," *The New York Times*, 14 September 1900, 6.

¹⁹ *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography* (Philadelphia: 1914), 797–800.

²⁰ General Register Office. *England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes*. London, England: General Register Office. Graham Hart, Ben Laurie, Camilla von Massenbach and David Mayall.

²¹ Stephanie Ginsberg Oberle. *The Influence of Thomas Meehan on Horticulture in the United States*. (University of Delaware, 1997), 7 and 9.

After several years officially working at St. Clare under his father, Joseph Meehan served in various gardening positions in South Wales, at Kenwood Gardens in London, and, lastly, at Northwood Park, West Cowes, Isle of Wight. As previously stated, Thomas Meehan sent for his brother in 1859, which necessitated his emigration to Philadelphia.²² Two other brothers, as well as two sisters, also came to the United States.²³ Joseph Meehan lived with his older brother for his first few years at Philadelphia.²⁴



Figure 21. The Thomas Meehan House, formerly the Hortter House. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

The Meehan Nurseries originated with just three acres on Chew Avenue near Church Street, which was purchased from George Washington Carpenter, Sr. In addition, a tract on Germantown Avenue above Pleasant Street was also part of the operation. Another six acres in Ambler were leased from Thomas Meehan's father-in-law, William Colflesh, Jr. However, multiple sites, one separated by six miles, proved difficult to manage, and, in 1870, Thomas Meehan gave up the Ambler lease, and purchased the Hong Farm from Archibald McIntyre, as well as a portion of the Jacob Hortter Farm (Figure 21), both of which comprised thirty additional acres in Mt. Airy adjacent to the Avenue property (Figure 20).²⁵ The Germantown Avenue tract (Figure 12) was eventually sold to William C. Royal, a local real estate developer, who developed the site. In time the Meehan Nurseries would grow to include more than 70

²² William P. Filby, *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s–1900s*. Farmington Hills, MI, USA: Gale Research, 2012.

²³ Stephanie Ginsberg Oberle. *The Influence of Thomas Meehan on Horticulture in the United States*. (University of Delaware, 1997), 7.

²⁴ 1860 U.S. census, population schedule. NARA microfilm publication M653, 1,438 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

²⁵ S.M. Meehan. *Meehans' Monthly*, January 1902, 15.

acres.²⁶ While founded and owned by Thomas Meehan, his brother Joseph was in his employ during the development of what became the famous Meehan Nurseries in the Mt. Airy section of Germantown.



Figure 22. Left: The green comet milkweed, *Asclepias viridiflora*, collected by Thomas Meehan after the Battle of Gettysburg, where he collected his brother, Joseph Meehan, upon being released from captivity. Source: The Botany Collection, Academy of Natural Sciences. Figure 23. Right: *Franklinia alatamaha*, commonly known as the Franklin Tree, at Bartram's Garden. Source: Bartram's Garden

Toiling in the shadow of his brother, Joseph Meehan proved to be a pioneering American horticulturist and landscape gardener, exploring and popularizing the use of native American plant material in landscape design. He not only learned about and employed native American plants, he was also an exploratory horticulturist, using the grounds of the subject house as one of his laboratories.²⁷ While perceptibly a modest Victorian dwelling indicative of a working to middle class household, the building and its immediate grounds were together associated with these pioneering efforts.

This aspect of Joseph Meehan's career was discussed by Edwin C. Jellett (1860–1929), amateur botanist, gardener, and local historian, in his book *Germantown, Old and New; Its Rare and Notable Plants*:

...we shall [not] neglect to stop briefly at Joseph Meehan's, on Pleasant Street, and at Meehan's nursery on Main Street, the latter once located at the southeast corner of Meehan avenue, where numerous plants now beautifying home, streets and gardens were first grown.²⁸

Jellett described the plantings at many spots in Germantown, including both the Meehan Nurseries, as well as the Joseph Meehan House & Grounds. He describes at least two important native American plants in his book:

²⁶ "Joseph Meehan's Autobiography Is Released By His Death," unknown newspaper, 30 December 1920, Germantown Historical Society.

²⁷ Edwin Costley Jellett, *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners* (Germantown, Philadelphia: Horace F. McCann, 1914), 49.

²⁸ Jellett, *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners*, 49.

Among Joseph Meehan's "wild plants" is a handsome aster, discovered by this botanist near Gettysburg, Pa. [Figure 22], a plant which for several years has been growing in his garden. As yet the "authorities" have not decided upon a name, so we have the pleasure of first presenting it as *aster Meehani*.

Here also is a specimen of the rare Franklin tree (*gordonia pubescens*) [Figure 23], and with the exception of a like specimen at Meehan's nurseries, and another near Horticultural Hall, also one raised by William De Hart and now growing near Lansdowne, it is the finest specimen I know.²⁹

Operating from the mid-nineteenth century through the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Meehans, their nursery, and their component personal properties comprised a significant portion of East Mt. Airy, which was then, in part, a landscape devoted to the propagation of plants, as well as horticultural and gardening pursuits. Beyond his own property, Joseph Meehan was involved in various organizations that promoted landscape architecture in the public realm, one of which included the Germantown Horticultural Society. His devotion to the propagation of native American plants also appeared in his public works.³⁰ One example of this can be found in his work at Market Square in Germantown, a place that he endeavored to beautify in the years after the Civil War Monument was installed. A description of his contributions to this public space is as follows:

Market Square has had a large share of Joseph Meehan's interest both horticulturally and patriotically. On the tablets about the soldiers' monument are the names of many of his former associates in Ellis Post, Grand Army of the Republic. The trees and shrubbery received his professional attention in the endeavor to make the little park a suitable setting for the monument. On several occasions he planted trees in the Square, he himself having grown these trees from acorns which he gathered on the Gettysburg battlefield or from seedlings obtained on that field.³¹

In the last year of his life, when he was confined to the subject house, the Germantown Horticultural Society honored Joseph Meehan by planting a tree in Market Square.³²

²⁹ Jellett, *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners*, 49.

³⁰ "Joseph Meehan's Autobiography Is Released By His Death," unknown newspaper, 30 December 1920, Germantown Historical Society.

³¹ "The Man on the Corner, Joseph Meehan, Patriot and Horticulturist," unknown newspaper, 1919, Germantown Historical Society.

³² "Joseph Meehan Honored," unknown newspapers, 10 May 1919 in v. 38, p. 164, Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, Germantown Historical Society.

Practical Farmer (Philadelphia); and *The Florists' Exchange* (New York).³⁴ Over the years, Joseph Meehan became a leading expert in the fields of botany, floriculture, horticulture, landscape gardening, etc., authoring hundreds of articles, consultations, and letters of advice that were circulated in papers, periodicals, and publications throughout the nation.

Joseph Meehan's command of both horticulture and landscape gardening was comprehensive and vast, as is shown by the range of his physical and written products, which served to promote the practice of landscape gardening and educate both laymen and practitioners. The following is a small sampling of his articles written for various publications over the years. In 1895, he published the following articles in *Park and Cemetery*: "A Pretty Cemetery in England"; "Fern House, Horticultural Hall, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia"; "Flower Beds at Girard College, Philadelphia"; "Notes on English Parks"; "The Stags Horn Fern." In 1899, he penned the following articles for *Gardening* magazine, which represent just a fraction of his annual published output: "Beautiful Fall Foliage"; "Covering Shrubs and Trees in Winter"; "Gordonia Pubescens"; "Mulching to Retard Blossoming"; "Pavia Macrostachya"; "Rocky Ford Musk Melon"; "Transplanting and Shearing Evergreens"; "Transplanting Magnolia Grandiflora"; "Transplanting Sequoia Gigantea"; and "Trees, Shrubs and Herbaceous Perennials for Smoky Districts."³⁵ Between 1914 and 1915, he published the following articles in *The National Nurseryman*: "Increasing Hardiness in Plants"; and "State Flowers."³⁶ The material covered in these examples range from expert knowledge of plant species to public interest in landscape gardening, from planting plans and theories to climate specific advice, exhibiting the breadth of his expertise. It is also important to note that the articles and commentary referenced barely scratch the surface of Meehan's published works. He also influenced publication of the following books: *Commercial Plant Propagation* by Alfred C. Hottes, Assistant Professor of Horticulture at Ohio State University; *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners* by Edwin C. Jellett; and *Germantown Old and New, Its Rare and Notable Plants*, also by Edwin C. Jellett.³⁷

Meehan's skill as a writer are best summed up by Fairmount Park Gardener Samuel Newman Baxter:

As a writer on nursery subjects he had no equal. The best nurserymen and gardeners are almost invariably, either not fitted or not inclined to write, and many writers are more skilled with the pen than in the practice of the subject: "Uncle" Joe embodied a happy combination of both of these types; practical first, a writer second.³⁸

³⁴ "Horticultural," *The Practical Farmer*, 6 January 1906, 7; "Honor to Joseph Meehan," *The Florists' Exchange*, 25 July 1914, 220; *The National Nurseryman*, 1918, 222.

³⁵ The following articles were published in *Gardening* magazine in 1899: "Beautiful Fall Foliage"; "Covering Shrubs and Trees in Winter"; "Gordonia Pubescens"; "Mulching to Retard Blossoming"; "Pavia Macrostachya"; "Rocky Ford Musk Melon"; "Transplanting and Shearing Evergreens"; "Transplanting Magnolia Grandiflora"; "Transplanting Sequoia Gigantea"; and "Trees, Shrubs and Herbaceous Perennials for Smoky Districts."

³⁶ *The National Nurseryman: For Growers & Dealers*, 22–23 (1914–1915).

³⁷ Alfred C. Hottes. *Commercial Plant Propagation*. (New York: A.T. De La Mare Company, Inc., 1918), 37, 116, 133, 154, 155; Edwin C. Jellett. *Germantown Gardens and Gardeners*. (Philadelphia: Horace F. McCann, 1914); and Edwin C. Jellett. *Germantown Old and New, Its Rare and Notable Plants*. (Philadelphia: 1904).

³⁸ Samuel Newman Baxter, "In Memoriam," *The Florists' Exchange* 51 (1921): 28.

In his final years Joseph Meehan, even when his eyesight and hearing were failing, continued to live in the subject building with his daughter Emily and her husband. He died on December 23, 1920 at the subject property, which was willed to his daughter and sold in April 1921.³⁹ His death was reported in newspapers across the country, even as far as the west coast (Figures 27 through 32).⁴⁰



Figure 25. A final photograph of the Thomas Meehan House prior to its demolition in 1922. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 November 1922, 17.

Perhaps two telling signs of Joseph Meehan’s significance and contributions can be the degree to which he was regarded by those who had trained under him and worked with him. In 1916, the Philadelphia landscape architect Robert B. Cridland placed Meehan’s photograph opposite the title page of his famous text book on landscape design, *Practical Landscape Design*, which

³⁹ Deed: George E. Williams, of the City and County of Philadelphia, and Emily M. (formerly Emily G. Meehan), his wife, to Joseph M. Murray, of the same, for \$1, 1 April 1921, Philadelphia Deed Book J.M.H., No. 1064, p. 281, CAP.

⁴⁰ “Joseph Meehan Dies,” *The Salt Lake Tribune* 24 December 1920, 7; “Nurseryman Is Dead,” *Oakland Tribune* 24 December 1920, 4; “Joseph Meehan, Horticulturist,” *San Francisco Chronicle* 24 December 1920, 6; “Landscape Writer Dies,” *Muskogee [Oklahoma] Daily Phoenix* 24 December 1920, 5; “Joseph Meehan,” *Daily Arkansas Gazette* 24 December 1920, 14; “Philadelphia,” *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), 24 December 1920, 4; “Veteran Nurseryman Dies,” *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio) 24 December 1920, 2; “Joseph Meehan,” *Seattle Daily Times* 24 December 1920, 17; “Landscape Gardener Dies,” *East Oregonian* 25 December 1920, 2; “Joseph Meehan,” *Arkansas Gazette* 24 December 1920, 16; “Joseph Meehan, Writer, Dies,” *Denver Rocky Mountain News* 24 December 1920, 2; “Noted Horticulturalist Dies,” *San Antonio Light* 24 December 1920, 14; “Philadelphia,” *Omaha World-Herald*, 24 December 1920, 2.

went through five printings up to 1929.⁴¹ Samuel N. Baxter, who became the chief landscape gardener for the Fairmount Park Commission and was mentored by Meehan, even named his son, Joseph Meehan Baxter, honoring his knowledge and influence. In many ways, the Meehans were part of an apostolic succession in Philadelphia's horticultural and landscape legacy, a descentance from the Bartrams and the Carrs to the Meehans and on to Baxter and the Fairmount Park Commission (Figure 16).



Figure 26. Joseph Meehan in his Civil War uniform set in a landscape setting. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

CONCLUSION

While the world known to the Meehans has been largely lost to progress and dense rowhouse and suburban development of the first half of the twentieth century, the house and grounds of Joseph Meehan remain as a vestigial remnant of a bygone legacy that shaped the field of horticulture and landscape gardening in Philadelphia and the United States. The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds satisfies Criteria A and J, representing both an important horticultural editor, nurseryman, practitioner, and writer; and the commercial and cultural legacy of the larger Meehan family in Mt. Airy, Germantown, and Philadelphia.

⁴¹ Robert B. Cridland, *Practical Landscape Design: The Importance Of Careful Planning, Locating The House, Arrangement of Walks and Drives, Construction Of Walks and Drives, Lawns And Terraces, How to Plant A Property, Laying Out A Flower Garden, Architectural Features of the Garden, Rose Gardens and Hardy Borders, Wild Gardens and Rock Gardens, Planting Plans and Planting Lists* (New York: A. T. De La Mare Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd. 1916). "Robert B. Cridland, Landscaper Dies," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 June 1945, 24.

Joseph Meehan

THE NESTOR AMONG NURSERYMEN

THOUSANDS of readers of THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE who faithfully followed the writings of Joseph Meehan, the editor of our Nursery Department from 1900 to 1919, will join with us in our sincere regret on learning of his death early on the morning of Dec. 23 at his home in Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.

Mr. Meehan was born at Ryde, Isle of Wight, England, Nov. 9, 1840, in the gardener's cottage at St. Clare. St. Clare was the Isle of Wight residence of Colonel and Lady Catherine Vernon Harcourt, for whom Joseph's father, Edward Meehan, was gardener for nearly half a century. It may be said here that at the death of his employers the gardener was left a legacy of one thousand pounds, considered a most generous sum in those days. Mr. Meehan's father was of Irish birth, coming to England when a lad. His mother was English, a native of London.

At an early age, after a few years of common schooling, Joseph went to work under his father in the gardens of St. Clare. At the age of 16 he went to London and worked for a time at Kenwood, the seat of Lord Mansfield, near Hempstead. After a short service he returned to the Isle of Wight and worked temporarily in the gardens of Mr. Spode and Miss Helen Gladstone, securing at last what promised to be a good position in the gardens of Mr. Ward, Northwood Park. While there he received word from his brother Thomas that he had started a nursery at Germantown, Philadelphia, and that if he, Joseph, wished to come to him he would place him in charge of two or three small greenhouses he had just erected. This decided it, being just the thing he wanted, so in April 1859 he commenced his career as a nurseryman, a career which ended only after a connection of fifty-two years, when he retired altogether from nursery work; this was in 1911. In that time the nursery had grown from the original three acres to about 70 acres, all within the city of Philadelphia.

In 1862, three years after landing in this country, Mr. Meehan enlisted on Aug. 13 in a three year regiment, the 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers. To show the patriotism of the young fellows of that day, it may be said that the command of a thousand men was recruited in one month, starting the end of July and ending with the close of August. The next day the regiment started for Washington. Such was the demand for reinforcements that in one week later it was merged with the veterans of the Fifth Corps and started with it on a long march ending with Antietam, and participated in that battle when but seventeen days out of Philadelphia. On the 20th of September it suffered great loss at Shepherdstown, W. Va., in following up Lee in his retreat from Antietam. Joseph Meehan was one of some one hundred wounded, a ball entering his left shoulder, behind the shoulder blade; it was never extracted and caused his discharge in the Winter of 1862-1863. In June 1863 when Lee again tried the invasion of the North, Joseph Meehan again volunteered, this time in Landis's Battery of Light Artillery, an "emergency" organization. This command was in two engagements, one near Shiremantown with Elwell's forces which had been sent to capture Harrisburg, and another at Carlisle, Pa., when it refused to surrender the town to Stuart's cavalry. In this action the battery had three wounded and one, Joseph Meehan, taken prisoner. Marched to Gettysburg, he was there paroled on the field and on the 4th of July 1863 was returned to the Union forces, together with several hundred other prisoners. He was then sent to Camp Parole, West Chester, Pa., where he remained until the battery returned to Philadelphia.

As a comrade of Ellis Post, G. A. R., Joseph Meehan was well known as one of the color sergeants of the Post and in that capacity carried the flag at the funerals of over one hundred colleagues who had answered to the "Long Roll" before him.

Returning home at the end of his term of enlistment, he re-entered the service of his brother and from that day on knew no other place. For many years he and his brother Thomas were the sole occupants of the office, and for very many years, until relieved by his nephews, he was the chief salesman of the place. In this way he was a familiar personage to a large number of gardeners and customers and, as usual in such

cases, many a one would be disappointed if not waited on by him.

In 1868 Mr. Meehan was married to Emily G. Gaul of Philadelphia. Five children were born of this union, two of whom died young. The surviving children consist of two sons, Charles E. and A. Rothwell Meehan, and a daughter, Mrs. Geo. W. Williams. Mr. Meehan's wife died in 1905.

While fairly well known as a nurseryman, it is as a writer on horticultural subjects that Mr. Meehan's fame chiefly rests. Some quarter of a century ago he saw what a financial help it would be to him in furthering his ambition to secure a competence for himself and family in his older days, and he turned his attention to this line. In this he was quite successful, having at times cut off from his list some of the papers desiring articles. The first paper to receive his paid contributions was the *Germantown Independent*, but all of the following had received more or less of them: *For-*

results of this photographic work have netted some one thousand photos, for many so taken were used from time to time in other sections of the paper.

A graceful tribute to Mr. Meehan's worth was expressed in May 1919 when the Germantown Horticultural Society planted an Oak as a memorial to him in Market Square. The tree, a rock Chestnut Oak, was grown by Mr. Meehan from an acorn which he brought from the Gettysburg battlefield. The president of the Horticultural Society paid tribute to Mr. Meehan's early activities in the society and spoke of his interest in beautifying Market Square. The secretary of the society told of Mr. Meehan's great knowledge of hardy plants and charged the many boys and girls assembled to always respect and protect the memorial tree. Samuel Newman Baxter, city arboriculturist and a present writer on our nursery staff, conducted the planting of the tree, while a grandson of Mr. Meehan, Joseph Rothwell Meehan, deposited the first spadeful of earth about the tree. As Mr. Meehan's health at the time did not permit his presence at the ceremonies, his son, A. Rothwell Meehan, spoke on his behalf, telling his father's appreciation of the honor conferred upon him.

Mr. Meehan was a member of Mt. Airy Lodge, I. O. O. F., for 51 years. He was also an honorary member of the Germantown Horticultural Society, and had been its treasurer at one time for several years.

Mr. Meehan was the last survivor of four brothers who came to this country. A younger brother, Charles, never left England, and still lives there as a retired private gardener.

The funeral services were held on Sunday, Dec. 26, the minister and comrades of Ellis Post G. A. R. officiating. His remains were surrounded by many floral tokens of esteem and regard, and one could not help but feel that these flowers must be numbered among the intimate friends of Joseph Meehan. Interment was at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

In Memoriam

Joseph Meehan is dead! May I convey to your host of readers to whom the nursery page carried such a wealth of profitable reading over a long period of years, and who now mourn his loss, a tribute based upon a personal acquaintance, that they may know of Mr. Meehan as I knew him.

Twenty years ago, when I entered the employ of Thomas Meehan & Sons, I first met Joseph Meehan in a business way. (I had known his family before this.) I can picture him now standing at his old-fashioned, high-top desk, sought by one, then another, of the entire office staff, for information in reference to plants. His fund of knowledge, always accessible, and most freely imparted, was sought in preference to consulting the office library. By all he was affectionately addressed as "Uncle" Joe.

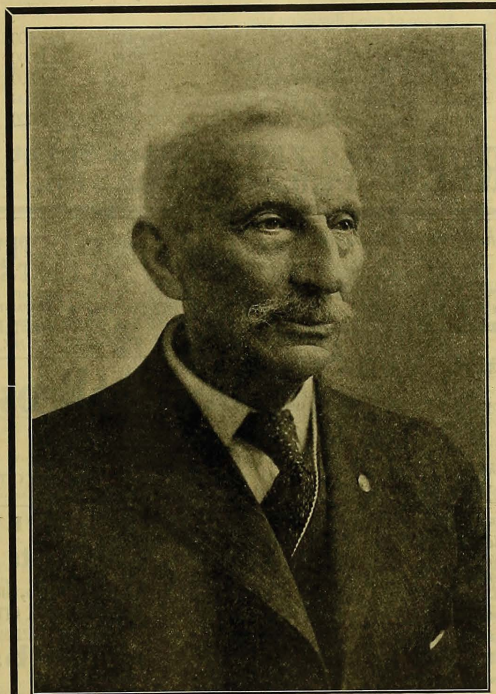
Nor was the knowledge, so freely imparted, confined to the office. Helping the boys—and girls, too—was to him a pleasure, and he took great delight in organizing parties of young folks to stroll along the Wissahickon, that beautiful wooded gorge of Fairmount Park, where under his tutelage all might imbibe a knowledge of trees, shrubs and wild flowers, to an extent limited only by the aptitude of his student "hikers."

Each year, when the post of the Grand Army of the Republic, of which he was a member, would take an excursion down the Delaware River, he would invite his young folks, frolicing with them in the water at Woodland Beach; then exploring for the flora of the country. At his home he would give parties, arranging the program of games and recitations with the same care and precision as he wrote of plants for THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE.

Is it any wonder that the eyes of one who knew him thus grew moist when the news came that he had passed away!

Joseph Meehan was not a botanist in a scientific way but he knew more about hardy plants than the average botanist whose forte is poring over herbarium specimens and working out hair-splitting differences. He knew plants in a practical way; their identification, characteristics, habits of growth, propagation—in short, the essentials which made popular reading for nurserymen in THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE and other publications for which he wrote, and which served as propaganda, as it were, for the greater use and enjoyment of hardy trees and shrubs.

Among other duties, he conducted the tree seed department for his brother, Thomas Meehan, and was recognized as an authority in this line. Here, too, he was practical, for much of this seed was collected and



The late Joseph Meehan

Born November 9, 1840. Died December 23, 1920

For eighteen years Mr. Meehan furnished practically all the material which appeared in our Nursery Department

ney's Weekly Press, Tribune and Farmer, Practical Farmer, Pittsburgh Sunday Dispatch, Park and Cemetery, Prairie Farmer, Gardening, Country Gentleman, THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE and others. Those continuing for the longer period were the *Germantown Independent*, *Practical Farmer*, *Park and Cemetery*, *Gardening*, *Country Gentleman* and *THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE*.

Mr. Meehan's first nursery article appeared in THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE on Oct. 20, 1900, and his weekly contributions continued without a hitch until March 1918, when failing sight called for a cessation of such work. He conducted his department in a most able manner, drawing from his great store of knowledge along nursery lines; the accumulated material would make the most reliable book on trees and shrubs of America ever published. Practically all the photos shown on its nursery page, week after week, were taken under the direction of Mr. Meehan, who was wont to take long walks in search of subjects (the pleasures of which he had often mentioned) through the many picturesque suburbs of Philadelphia, with all of whose garden beauty spots he was well acquainted. As he found subjects he would note them and then he and the photographer would again make the rounds. The

Delaware River, he would take his young folks, frolicing with them in the water at Woodland Beach; then exploring for the flora of the country. At his home he would give parties, arranging the program of games and recitations with the same care and precision as he wrote of plants for THE FLORISTS' EXCHANGE.

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AMTFRS (Continued on page 28)

Figure 27. A Biography of Joseph Meehan after his death in 1920 from *The Florists' Exchange* 51 (1921).

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2020 - 23
The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds, 121 Pleasant Street, Mt. Airy - Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.

Obituary.

JOSEPH MEEHAN

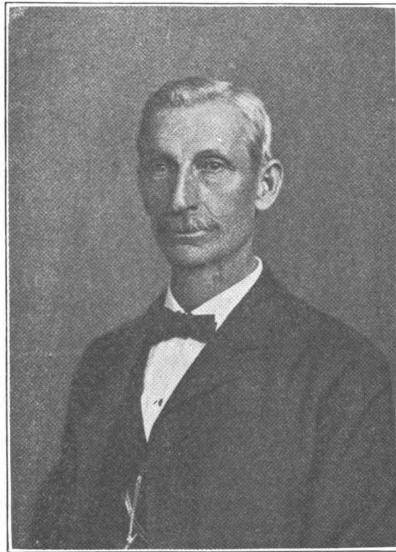
Joseph Meehan died December 23rd, at his home, Germantown, Pa., at the age of 80 years.

The nursery and florist's trades have long been familiar with his writings on horticultural subjects published in the Florist's Exchange, Gardening, Prairie Farmer, Park & Cemetery, Practical Farmer, and a number of other periodicals.

The death of Mr. Meehan marks the passing of the last of the first generation in this country of this well-known family of nurserymen.

Brother to the late Thomas Meehan, founder of the firm of Thomas Meehan and Sons, Germantown, Pa., and uncle of Thomas B. Meehan, Dresher, Pa.

Joseph Meehan came to this country in April, 1859 to



work with his brother soon after the latter had started the nurseries at Germantown and remained with them until he retired from business, a period of 52 years. Mr. Meehan was born at Ryde, Isle of Wight, England, November 9th, 1840, where his father was gardener on the Harcourt Estate for half a century. As a boy he worked under his father and in other gardens including the Kenwood Gardens, London, so that his long life has been spent entirely among plants. It is doubtful if his equal existed, in his knowledge and familiarity with that group usually grown in nurseries and gardens and with the local native flora.

Fortunately through his writings this wonderful

knowledge of and intimate acquaintance with plants will not be entirely lost. It is to be hoped they will be assembled and compiled in book form and not left in their present inaccessible form.

When the Civil War broke out he promptly enlisted in defense of the Union, joining the 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers. He carried a bullet in his shoulder received at Shepherdstown following the battle of Antietam.

He will long be remembered by those who were fortunate enough to be associated with him at the nurseries, who learned to love and respect him to a degree that is rare in such associations.

He was "Uncle Joe" to them all. Ever ready with kindly interest to give of his fund of knowledge, his memory will remain an inspiration of fidelity and loyalty to his profession and to a standard of living that makes its adherents the salt of the earth.

Mr. Meehan is survived by two sons and a daughter: Charles E. Meehan, the well-known wholesale florist, of Philadelphia; A. Rothwell Meehan, and Mrs. George W. Williams.

JOSEPH MEEHAN

AN APPRECIATION

Have you ever met a 24-carat man?

They are rare. To assay any higher they must be of celestial origin. There's lots of alloy, or dross, or whatever you want to call it, in all of us. For this reason we can appreciate the genuine when we travel with it along life's highway.

Joseph Meehan, the horticulturist, the writer; and above all, the man, has left us. His was no projection of the personality of his equally famous and lovable brother Thomas. He reflected no one but himself. He filled his place in the great scheme of things and filled it well.

Over 28 years ago he started in to "make a little gentleman" of the then shy little fellow who today pens these few words of appreciation. He never grew discouraged in his efforts to improve by encouragement the young people whose companionship he sought even until his closing years. His was the fair and unselfish spirit which gave its best to all and played no favorites.

He was clean, he was exact; a fighter for fairness and for the right; a living example of the Golden Rule. The modern idea of sandbagging one's conscience never contaminated him. Things were either right or they were wrong, no half-way measures with him. He might argue over the placing of a comma or semi-colon, but he never argued over doing a good turn.

He was truly a man of the great outdoors. He loved the trees, the plants, the woods and the waters with every fibre of his big body and bigger heart. Until darkness overtook him never a night did he fail to look at the stars and marvel at the infinite. Yet he could see beauty in the clouds as well.

The Great Teacher held out a special reward to those who are meek in spirit. Joseph Meehan was meek, but never lukewarm. He followed out his own independence in thought and actions without trespassing on the feelings of others.

A good comrade and a good soldier has gone; but he has left the world a better place for having lived in it.

CHAS. W. KESSER.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Figure 28. A memorial for Joseph Meehan, published in *The National Nurseryman* in 1921.

that would tell us why co-operation would not co-operate in this instance in disseminating useful information to members of the trade at a considerable saving to the National Association, and incidentally "Why is the Association Bulletin?"

THE NURSERYMAN'S CHANCE

The most earnest desire of the trade is to prevent the business from slumping back to pre-war conditions and prices, when cut-throat competition and the brush pile were large factors in the annual clean-up of stock.

War conditions, Quarantine 37 and other factors have produced artificially a shortage of stock and prices, which if they could be maintained would give the nurseryman the opportunity to give more attention to quality and make a profit on his investment and labor.

The present shortage of stock has really produced conditions that give the nurseryman a chance to clean house that may never occur again.

We may blame the weather, pests, government regulations, transportation, the financial situation, labor, the public, or any or all those things that affect the business, but the fact remains the most blameworthy cause for the troubles that beset the trade is the narrow, selfish practices of the nurserymen themselves.

An over-production of inferior stock is sure to follow a shortage with high prices.

Nurserymen will not only try to grow all they can themselves to make a killing, but they will contract with the farmers to grow certain crops for them.

The farmer in turn begins to grow nursery stock on his own account, adding to the surplus that must be disposed of, and which has its effect on the downward trend of prices.

The adventitious nurserymen would be few in number if they were not encouraged and started in the business by the regularly established concerns.

It is an extremely short-sighted policy that helps to develop a competition that has neither tradition, reputation, organization or overhead to govern their business.

A letter from Lloyd C. Stark, of the Stark Bros. Nursery & Orchard Company, advises nurserymen to discourage in every way possible the selling of fruit stocks to any except established nurserymen.

This would indicate it to be a common practice to supply raw material to the orchardist, so he could grow his own trees and incidentally put on the market the surplus, and culls not needed for his own use.

If nurserymen had pride of profession to set that standard of quality which only the established concern can produce, it would automatically discourage the dollar chasing grower who had not qualified.

Thinkers in the trade are fully alive to the necessity of doing everything possible to stop practices that demoralize the business. The National Association is doing its best to bring about better standards and to raise the code of ethics.

Another encouraging sign is the development of the Bud Selection Idea in California, but there are a good many nurseries outside these influences that should be ostracised by the trade unless they subscribe to standards of business practice set by the trade at large.

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Every nurseryman who wishes the trade to have a good standing in the commercial world should get busy and urge seedling growers, importers and others to keep the business in the hands of the legitimate nursery industry.

LABOR

A letter from the Bowery Mission, 227 Bowery, New York, states that conditions in the lodging house district in the Bowery remind one of pre-war times. The free labor bureau is very busy in trying to bring employees and employer together, without any financial charge. Should any of the readers of this paper require male help of any kind, communicate with A. C. Baker, Sec'y, Bowery Mission, 227 Bowery, New York City.

Many of our readers will be pleased to hear that James McHutchison of McHutchison & Co., 95 Chambers St., New York, is gradually recovering from a long illness. Mr. McHutchison has been away from business for the past eight months, but is now putting in his appearance at the office three times a week, although still under medical treatment.

To The Editor of

THE NATIONAL NURSERYMAN:

JOSEPH MEEHAN

AN APPRECIATION

With the wane of the old year went out a life which as it relates to the profession of horticulture was of inestimable value.

In the death of Joseph Meehan we have lost one of those peculiarly useful men who as they gather knowledge immediately impart it to others.

For several years it was the writer's privilege to be closely associated with Mr. Meehan and like a standard work on our bookshelf one could immediately turn to him for information on any question pertaining to trees and plants.

In fact so much faith did we have in his intimate knowledge of hardy plants that it was quite a proverbial thought in our mind to say "when in doubt consult Uncle Joe" as he was affectionately called by us of a younger generation.

As it is only by continued and intimate association with a person, that we are able to test friendships and discover their inherent traits, so personal contact with Mr. Meehan revealed many sterling qualities of character which all must admire.

Even to the point of severity he had a keen sense of justice and not in one iota could he be swerved, from any principle which in his heart he knew to be right.

Is it not somewhat fitting that Mr. Meehan's life should go out in the last days of the old year, for like the year he had reached his December and had well completed his cycle and after a life full of useful work has gone to rest and sleeps in the bosom of mother earth which in his life he loved so well.

Original from EDWIN MATTHEWS.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Figure 29. A memorial for Joseph Meehan, published in *The National Nurseryman* in 1921.

JOSEPH MEEHAN
AN APPRECIATION

Editor,

NATIONAL NURSERYMAN:

In the death of Joseph Meehan, nurserymen have lost one who did more than any other man to advertise the nursery business. Not that he knew more, perhaps, than some associates of his day but he was an exception to the rule of reticence which characterizes so many skilled gardeners and nurserymen. His writings spread the gospel of hardy trees and shrubs throughout the country, coming as they did from a practical nurseryman of over half a century's experience, were received as authentic and valuable reading by the trade. The same fund of information conveyed in his writings was always available and freely imparted to those around him who sought his advice or evinced an interest in the study of plants. The writer is one of the many who were privileged to work in the same office (Thomas Meehan & Sons) and enjoy and profit by his helpful assistance in tree and shrub lore.

"Uncle" Joe, as we affectionately called him, is now resting in Ivy Hill Cemetery, noted for its liberal plantings of trees and shrubs. As we carried him to his final resting place it seemed as though these very trees and shrubs bid him a cheery welcome to his home among them; there to rest and continue the companionship of his days on earth. It was their turn now to repay him for his tender care; for what he had done in praising their worth and sending them throughout the land to be enjoyed by others. He had been their best friend!

The nursery business is better for having had a Joseph Meehan and so long as men of his type are at the helm it will be a respected and pleasure giving profession.

SAMUEL NEWMAN BAXTER.

GOT 5000 BU. APPLES FROM 40 ACRE ORCHARD

Proper spraying, pruning, and fertilization are given much credit by state orchard specialists for the size and quality of the 5,000 bushel apple crop this season on the Chestnut Hill Farm seven miles north of Youngstown. Of the 56 in fruit, over 40 acres are in apples.

When D. R. McConnell became manager of the farm three years ago, it was badly infested with San Jose scale, scab, red bug, and other insect pests and diseases. These not only injured the quality of fruit but seriously threatened the life of the trees. Due to care since that time, the orchard has been declared by a state inspector to be one of the cleanest in the state.

Although the trees had been sprayed previously, the material had not always been applied at the proper time, thoroughly enough, or of the proper mixture to be effective. These points are hobbies of Mr. McConnell. He is convinced that, while insufficient, the dormant and petal-fall sprays thoroughly applied under a pressure of 225 or more pounds, are more profitable than five sprays half done. He never skimps on material. For the first spray he uses five gallons of mixture and for the second, three or four gallons per tree. These amounts are much more than are commonly applied.

An application of nitrate varying from five pounds on the mature trees to one pound on the young trees have

been made for the last season or two. Lighter applications will be made in the future, however, to avoid letting the trees develop at the expense of the fruit.

FREE SEED DISTRIBUTION

A form letter from Henry W. Watson, House of Representatives, U. S., Washington, D. C., states the number of packages of seeds to each member of Congress has been curtailed, and therefore will only be sent upon request.

The free seed distribution idea seems to die hard but it begins to look as if this senseless and unjust custom would be discontinued entirely in the near future.

FOR SALE

FOR SALE—Collected plants and clumps of Rhododendron, Kalmia, Leucothoe, in car lots or less, also seedlings of Rhododendron, Kalmia, Hemlock and Balsam.

J. B. ANDERSON,
BLACK MOUNTAIN, N. C.

FOR SALE—Peach, medium and small grades, and ever-bearing Mulberry.

WANTED—Apple, Pear and Plum scions. Also Grape vines for lining out.
SMITH BROS., CONCORD, GA.

WANTED

WANTED—Working foreman who understands budding fruit and rose stock and can handle help. Offer permanent job. Good tenement furnished. Reply stating experience, salary wanted, references, etc.

C. E. BURR & COMPANY, MANCHESTER, CONN.

YOUNG MAN 34 YEARS OLD DESIRES POSITION

with a reliable, progressive concern. Have had 20 years of practical experience in the propagation and growing of nursery stock. Can successfully handle men.

References given on request. North Central states preferred.

Box 849, Care The National Nurseryman

WANTED—Young man having had experience in handling correspondence and as nursery salesman.

BOBBINK & ATKINS, BUTTERFORD, N. J.

WANTED—Lining out Stock.

CLARENCE ALDRICH

Farmington, Mich.

WANTED FOR SPRING 1921

I am in the market for the following evergreens for lining out:—Abies, Biota, Cryptomeria, Juniperus, Picea, Pinus, Retinospora, Taxus, Thuja, Tsuga etc. Two to Five year plants preferred.

JAMES B. GILLIN, Nurseryman, AMBLER, PENNA.

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Figure 30. A memorial for Joseph Meehan, published in *The National Nurseryman* in 1921.

PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1920

JOSEPH MEEHAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS RELEASED BY HIS DEATH

Grand Army Color Sergeant, Horticulturist and Writer Prepared Sketch of His Life.

HIS NOTABLE WAR RECORD

Joseph Meehan, who died last Thursday at his home, 121 Pleasant street, was the oldest of a distinguished family of gardeners and horticulturists. He was long a writer of authority on horticultural subjects. Furthermore, he was also widely known in the Grand Army of the Republic, having had a notable record in the Civil War and having served for many years as the colorbearer of Ellis Post in parades. Mr. Meehan was 80 years old.

For the past three years he was virtually isolated by reason of the fact that he was deaf and almost blind. He suffered from cataracts of both eyes, and an operation failed to give relief. To enable him to communicate with his family the alphabet was printed on cards in large black letters that he could discern, and with these messages for him were spelled out. His mind was clear to the last.

He appeared for the last time as the bearer of the flag for Ellis Post in a parade in 1915. Before that he rarely missed a parade or the funeral of a comrade, and he was deeply interested in the welfare of the Post.

His Autobiography

The following sketch of the life of Mr. Meehan is authoritative by reason of the fact that he himself prepared it for *The Independent-Gazette* in 1917 for use "when my end comes."

Joseph Meehan was born at Ryde, Isle of Wight, England, November 9, 1840, in the gardener's cottage at St. Clare. St. Clare was the Isle of Wight residence of Colonel and Lady Catharine Vernon Harcourt, for whom Joseph's father, Edward Meehan, was gardener for nearly half a century. It may be said here that at the death of his employers the gardener was left a legacy of £1000, considered a very generous sum in those days.

After a few years' schooling, Joseph was placed at work in the gardens of St. Clare, under his father. After a few years he worked here and there in various gardens, including one in South Wales and even had a very short course in the Kenwood Gardens, London. His last place in England was at Northwood Park, West Cowes, Isle of Wight.



MR. MEEHAN AS A COLOR SERGEANT OF ELLIS POST
The picture shows him with the flag that he carried for many parades of the Grand Army

While there he received word from his brother Thomas that he had started a nursery at Germantown, Philadelphia, and that if Joseph wished to come out to him he would place him in charge of two or three greenhouses he had just erected. This decided it, being just the thing he wanted, so in April, 1859, he commenced his career as a nurseryman, a career which ended only after a connection of fifty-two years, when he retired altogether from nursery work. In that time the nursery had grown from the original three acres to about seventy acres, all within the city of Philadelphia.

Figure 31. "Joseph Meehan's Autobiography Is Released After His Death," *Germantown Independent-Gazette*, 30 December 1920. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.



Figure 32. "Joseph Meehan's Autobiography Is Released After His Death," *Germantown Independent-Gazette*, 30 December 1920. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

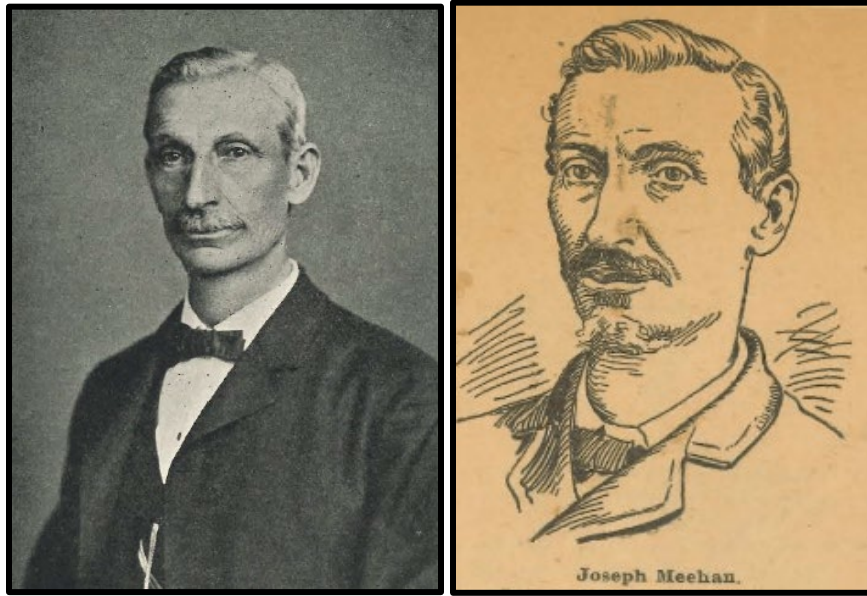


Figure 33. Joseph Meehan. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

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This nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian, Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian, and Bradley Maule, Photographer. The author would like to recognize numerous citizens of Mt. Airy, who inspired the Keeping Society to compile this nomination. This nomination is being sponsored through the generous support of Irwin Richman, Ph.D., a historian long devoted to the study of horticulture and landscape gardening in Germantown.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Newspapers.com

Proquest Historical Newspapers

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*Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2020 - 29
The Joseph Meehan House & Grounds, 121 Pleasant Street, Mt. Airy - Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.*

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