

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM PHOTO/SITE PLAN SHEET

Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission

Bureau of Historic Preservation

Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

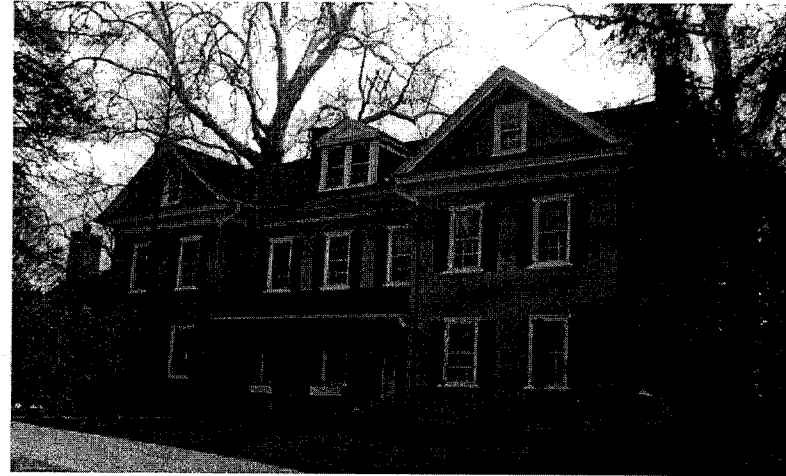
Survey Code/Tax Parcel/Other No.: 042 / 66 00 03293 00 7 Block-Unit #023-019

County: Montgomery

Municipality: Whitpain Township

Address: 560 Lewis Lane

Historic Name/Other Name:

SITE PLAN**PHOTO INFORMATION****Number****Description of View****Direction of
Camera**

1

House – façade

2

House – façade (left)

3

Spring House / Summer Kitchen

4

5

6

Photographer Name: Robert Wise

Date: 1999

Negative Location: Robert Wise Consulting, Station Square 1, Suite 104,
37 N. Valley Road, Paoli PA 19301

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - DATA SHEET

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

89B

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code: 042 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 03293 00 7 Block Unit #023-019

County: 1. Montgomery 091 2. _____

Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2. _____

Address: 560 Lewis Lane Historic Name: _____

Other Name: _____

Owner Name/Address: Carole Haas 300 Lewis Lane Ambler PA 19002

Owner Category: ☒ Private ☐ Public-local ☐ Public-state ☐ Public-federal

Resource Category: ☒ Building ☐ District ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object

Number/Approximate Number of Resources Covered by This Form: 2

USGS Quad: 1. Lansdale 2. _____

UTM A. _____ C. _____

References: B. _____ D. _____

HISTORIC AND CURRENT FUNCTIONS

Historic Function Category: _____ Subcategory: _____ Code: _____

A. Residence_1845 3,660 SF Dwelling _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Particular Type: A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Current Function Category: _____ Subcategory: _____ Code: _____

A. Single Family Residence Dwelling _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:

B. _____

D. _____

A. Georgian _____

C. _____

Other: _____

Exterior Materials: Foundation _____

Walls stucco _____

Other _____

Roof asphalt shingles _____

Walls _____

Other _____

Structural System: 1. _____ 2. _____

Width _____ Depth _____ Stories/Height 2.5 _____

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ca. 1845 Additions/Alterations Dates: ca. ca.
Basis for Dating: x Documentary Physical
Explain: Tax records

Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation: 1. 2. Associated Individuals: 1. 2.
Associated Events: 1. 2. Architects/Engineers: 1. 2.
Builders: 1. 2.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

PREVIOUS SURVEY, DETERMINATIONS

EVALUATION (Survey Director/Consultants Only)

Individual NR Potential: x Yes No Context(s):
Contributes to Potential District Yes No District Name/Status:

Classification: This house is a Class I resource.

THREATS

Threats: x 1. None 2. Public Development 3. Private Development 4. Neglect 5. Other

Explain:

SURVEYOR INFORMATION

Surveyor Name/Title: Robert Wise Date: 6/16/2000
Project Name: Whitpain Township Historic Resource Survey
Organization: Robert Wise Consulting/Whitpain Township Telephone: (610) 722-5818
Street and No.: Station Square 1, Suite 104, 37 North Valley Road
City, State: Paoli, Pa Zip Code: 19301
Additional Survey Documentation: n/a
Associated Survey Codes: n/a

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
NARRATIVE SHEET 89C

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation

Survey Code: 042 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 03293 00 7 Block-Unit #023-019
County: Montgomery 091 Municipality: Whitpain Township
Address: 560 Lewis Lane
Historic/Other Name:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This house is an example of a U-shaped house plan. The house is a 2½ story, seven bay building with end gables and two cross gables on the façade. The cornice follows the height of the second story around the house, forming pedimented gables around the house. The house is clad with stucco and was built c. 1845. It has two chimneys and a center pedimented roof dormer with two windows. The projecting gabled elements on the façade frame the three bay bar of the "U"; a pent roof spans the length of this bar between the first and second floors. The door is in the fifth bay and has sidelights. A two bay, one story addition on the left side of the façade has an exterior end chimney and large windows.

Associated Resource: (Spring House/Summer Kitchen) A springhouse associated with this house is clad with stucco. It has one story and an attic. A large chimney projects through the roof near one of the gable ends. On the side of the spring house looking towards the house is an extended hood over the door supported by two columns. (C)

Classification: This house is a Class I resource.



Front View of Morris Cheston, Jr. Home



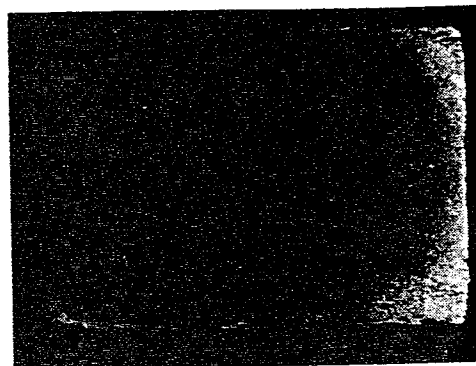
Side View of Morris Cheston, Jr. Home

Home of the Morris Cheston, Jr., Family

By Marjorie H. Gerhart
Photography by George S. Peck

The large, impressive home on Lewis Lane of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Cheston, Jr., stone covered with plaster painted a Mediterranean pink, was originally part of the Dawesfield farm. There is a date stone on a side of the house with the inscription, "G & H Wertsner, 1845." There are porches on the sides, but there is a ridge that indicates there was a porch around most of the outside at one time. Gigantic, old buttonwood trees hug close to the rear of the abode.

The overall structure is probably much the same as it was when it was built in 1845 by George and Hester Wertsner. According to records, George had been in possession of the nearby Wertsner Mill and its house since his father, Adam, died in 1831. George and his wife, who had been Hester Server, had four children, Albert G., Benjamin P., Amanda and Lydia Ann. In 1845, George purchased a 107-acre tract of land from Rebecca C. and Elizabeth A. James that they had inherited from Hannah M. James, the widow of Thomas C. James. A tenant house, built while Dr. James owned the property, and some ten acres were sold to Coleman Fisher, Jr., in 1856. This now belongs to Dr. and Mrs. Haas.

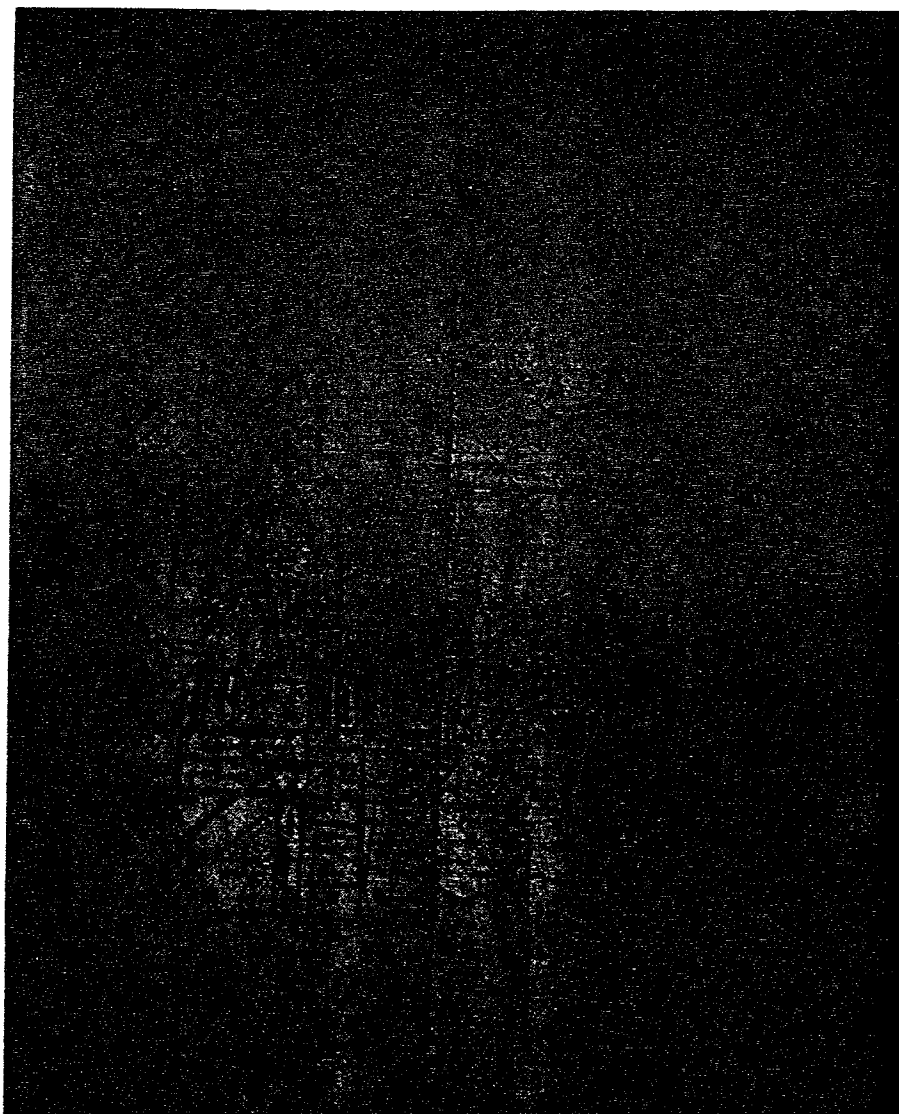


George died about 1867. His will provided that his widow, Hester, should receive \$500 income each year. Albert was to have the mill property and an additional twelve acres. Benjamin was to receive the farm on which he resided and about eighty-two acres of the land purchased from the "Dawesfield" estate. The acreage was estimated as being worth \$150 an acre. To meet the claims of the other heirs, Benjamin was to take out a \$6,000 mortgage and to pay other money to meet the yearly income of his mother.

Bean, in his *History of Montgomery County*, wrote an article about Benjamin P. Wertsner as a prominent contemporary resident of Whitpain Township. Bean stated that Benjamin was born in Norristown in 1829 and moved to Whitpain in 1833 when his father took over the Wertsner Grist Mill. From an early age, he ran the farm his father purchased from the Dawesfield holdings. He married Mary Gross, a daughter of General John E. Gross of Trappe, Pa., who was in the War of 1812. Her grandfather had been a member of the Continental Congress. Benjamin made many improvements to his property in 1876 and the lovely estate was known as "Evergreen Farm." As mentioned previously, he helped organize the First National Bank of Ambler in 1884 and was its first president. He was active in other business and civic affairs: treasurer of the Ambler Building and Loan Association as well as treasurer of the Plymouth Valley Creamery Association and the Whitpain Library Company. The Bean article mentions that he was guardian and trustee of several estates.

The 1893 Atlas of Montgomery County shows B. P. Wertsner as the owner of eighty-four acres across from Saunders Lewis and touching on the land owned by Mrs. Coleman Fisher. The 1880 census indicated that Benjamin P. Wertsner and his wife, Mary, were both fifty years old and had a daughter, Bertha, twenty-one, living with them. At that time his occupation was listed as a "retired farmer."

After Benjamin's ownership, all of the Wertsner lands in this corner of Whitpain Township went out of the possession of the family. The mill and its acreage had been sold to Mrs. Mercer in 1876. Exactly why or how Benjamin lost the tenancy of his property is not fully determined. There is a record that Sheriff I. Edgar Mathews, Esquire, took in the property of Benjamin P. Wertsner "late of my county" in 1904 because of a \$5,000 mortgage due the First National Bank of Ambler. After a year, it was decided that the income from the estate could not satisfy the debt and damages; and since there were no bidders, the bank bought the realty for a nominal fee.

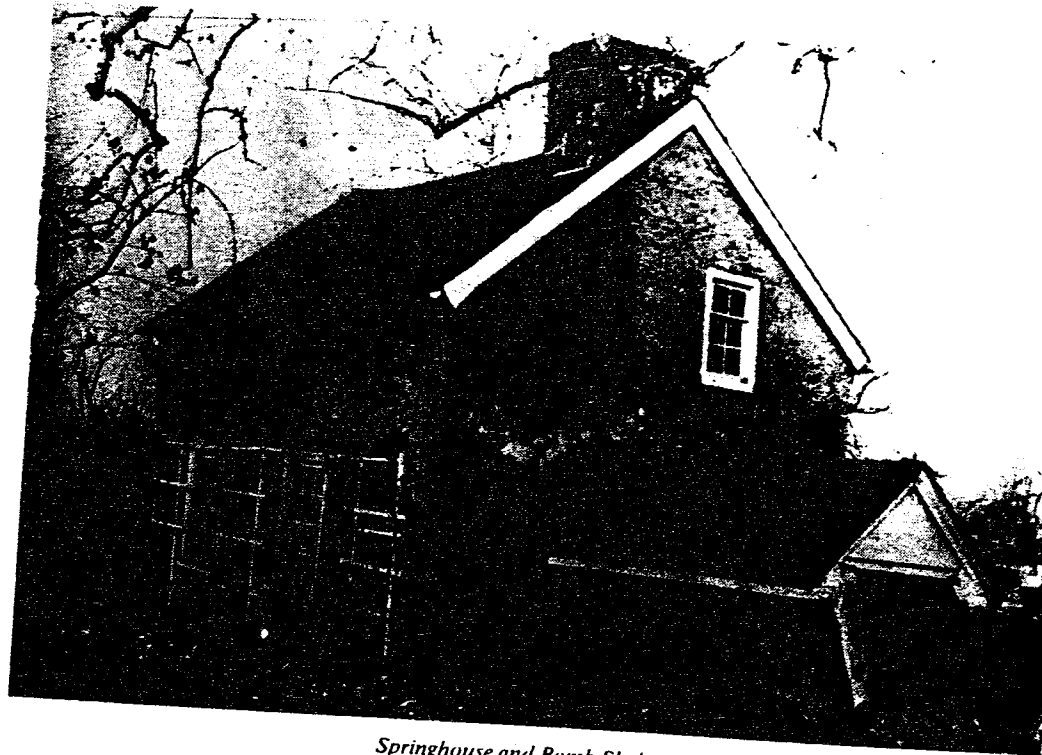


J. L. Smith Atlas, 1893

Charles G. Davis and his wife, Eleanor, received the estate for payment of the mortgage debt in 1909. Different members of the Davis family owned the estate, but it was in the possession of Charles G. Davis when he died in 1921. The Montgomery County Map of 1916 shows the location as eighty-three acres with the names, "Louisa Gibbons Davis, res. J Corbit Davis-Pen-y-Byrn Farm."

After the death of Charles G. Davis, the Orphans Court ordered the sale of the site to settle the claims of the survivors. Eleanor P. Davis sold the estate to Hannah G. Hogan, singlewoman, in 1923. She later conveyed it to Edward J. Hogan, her brother, who died in 1959. As executrix for the estate of Edward J. Hogan, she sold the eighty some acres and buildings to C. Mahlon Kline in 1960. Mr. Kline broke up the estate into parcels. Dr. Haas purchased some of the land. Wilson and Harriet Prichett bought the house, accompanying buildings and a little more than six acres in 1961. In 1970, Morris Cheston, Jr., and Cynthia M. Cheston purchased the Prichett property.

There is a springhouse that is probably much older than the nearby main house. Its exact date is unknown, but there is a legend that Hessian prisoners were kept there during the period Washington and his troops were in the area. It appears more like a tiny dwelling than a springhouse. This building is also plastered over stone and painted pink. The walls are very thick. It is constructed on three levels. A huge fireplace takes up most of a wall in the ground floor room. The room above is reached by a narrow spiral stairway. It has exposed hand hewn wooden beams with wooden pegs. At some time a large studio window was installed. The Cheston children have enjoyed using the walls for their original art. A bomb shelter, with a heavy iron door from a navy ship, was built deep in the recesses of the lower level reached from the outside by a trap door. Mr. Cheston explained that this was built by a former owner, Edward J. Hogan. It is a reminder of the uneasy 1950's with the build-up of the atomic threat.



Springhouse and Bomb Shelter



