

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.: 124 / 66 00 06583 00 2 Block-Unit #011-010

County: Montgomery

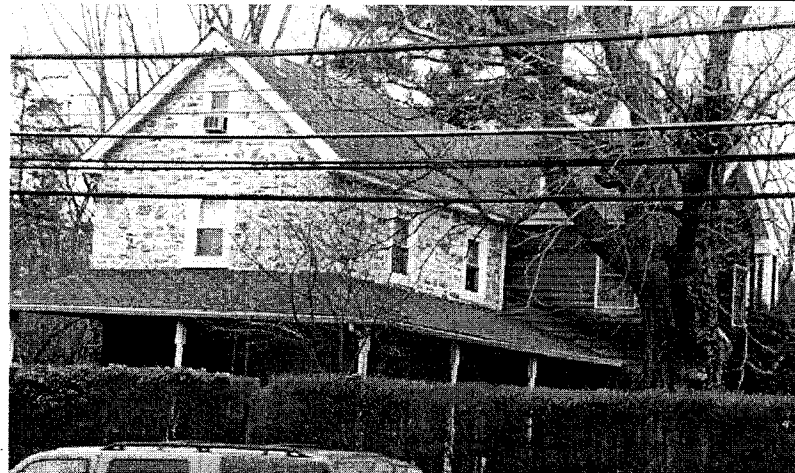
Municipality: Whitpain Township

Address: 901 Skippack Pike

Historic Name/Other Name: _____

SITE PLAN

PHOTO INFORMATION



Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
1	House	
2		
3		
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: 124 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 06583 00 2 Block Unit #011-010
County: 1. Montgomery 091 2. _____
Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2. _____
Address: 901 Skippack Pike Historic Name: Wagon Inn
Other Name: _____
Owner Name/Address: Jeffrey D. Samuelson & Vivian McCardell 901 Skippack Pike Blue Bell PA 19422
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 1800 1,788 SF Land 0.69 Acre 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: A. Vernacular ---
B. _____ C. _____
D. _____ Other: _____

Exterior Materials: Foundation _____ Roof _____
Walls stone Walls _____
Other _____ Other _____

Structural System: 1. _____ 2. _____
Width 2 Depth _____ Stories/Height 2

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ca. 1800 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: Yes x No Context(s):
Contributes to Potential District Yes No District Name/Status:

Classification: Class II due to lack of architectural significance and alterations.

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: 124 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 06583 00 2 Block-Unit #011-010
County: Montgomery 091 Municipality: Whitpain Township
Address: 901 Skippack Pike
Historic/Other Name: Wagon Inn

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This c. 1800 house consists of a stone core and a frame addition, forming an el-shape. The style is vernacular. The core has a front end, asphalt shingled, gabled roof over two story walls. A wrap around shed roof is located on the south and west sides of the core. The original entrance is obscured by a "box" addition around the door. Windows are 1x1.

The two-story frame addition is clad in natural weatherboard. Its asphalt shingled roof creates an overall cross gable on the resource. (The addition is largely obscured by the core and vegetation when viewed from the road.)

Associated Resource: (Garage) The property also contains a pyramidal roofed garage.

Classification: Class II due to lack of architectural significance and alterations.



The "Waggon Inn"

By Agnes Baker Jefferson
Photography by George S. Peck
Artwork by Becky Huttinger

The following account is taken from *Historical Sketches* by Clara Beck, pp. 139-

Thomas Fitzwater was the son of a prominent Quaker preacher, who came to America from Middlesex, England, on the ship "Welcome" in the company of William Penn. As early as 1705, the said T. Fitzwater saw a great opportunity while travelling along the Skippack Road.

Tradition credits him with having built the "Waggon Inn" founded in 1758, which was a modest one-and-a-half story building on the turnpike.

About 1761, Fitzwater sold the Inn and forty acres to L. Rennach. He, Rennach, became financially embarrassed because of pressure put on him from the two colonial churches, as to the kind of "social and moral activities carried on in his house, within a mile of the said churches."

In 1776, a Judah Folke, High Sheriff of Philadelphia, sold the "Waggon Inn" to John Porter. He was the landlord when Washington ordered "men to stand guard here with drawn swords while the Army passed on the way to Germantown."

In 1779, John Porter sold "the Inn" with thirty-eight acres to Benjamin Penrose, who owned it until 1793, when it came into the possession of the DeHaven family — Issac, Samuel and Moses.

In 1797, the DeHaven's sold to John Wentz. Apparently the old Inn was involved in a series of "legal hitches," for the landlords came and went with surprising readiness: from Wentz to Lenard Styer, to Stephen Pott, to Ashmead, to Jacob Hawes. Finally, in 1804 the "Waggon Inn" turned a new leaf which made it, for years, a place of importance in township and county affairs.

Thomas Humphry, age 26, became the owner and colorful "host" and played a great part in the growth of the area. His thriving business prompted him to buy "all four corners." The original building, no doubt, was dilapidated, so he tore it down and erected another on the same spot where the present one now stands.

The building is described as having two stories. The first floor contained four rooms with a kitchen in the rear. There was a tap room at the east end heated by a great open fireplace where grog, flip and ale were served. The mason work was done by Edward Roberts and the carpentry work by William Hurst.

Humphry was politically minded. He was host to such organizations as County Commissioners in 1805, as well as the Federal-Republican Convention. He was a Colonel in the Light Dragoons in the War of 1812, and he championed all patriotic movements, and earned the respect of the business community by being a director of the Montgomery National Bank of Norristown.

In 1822, the genial host, General Thomas Humphry, died and was buried with his ancestors in Montgomery Township.

In 1824 Samuel Wentz, of the "Rising Sun" Wentz's down the road about one-half mile, after operating the establishment for two years, met a tragic death. His widow, Eliza Humphry Wentz, continued the business with son, Thomas, taking over the "man's" work.

The period between the last above date and 1857-1866 is rather vague with only these owner listed:

Dates of Transfer	Owners	Comments
1857	Wells Tomlinson	
1859	Ephraim Shearer	(lived on N. Wales Road)
	Enos Hoxworth	(Cattle drover)
	Joel Wentz	
	Jesse Fisher	(paid \$6,500 for property)

The remainder of the owners follows in this order:

Dates of Transfer	Owners	Comments
1866	William Hood	
1867	Charles Fillman	
1870	Albert Katz	Grandfather of Mrs. Otis Fry
1882	William Blackburn	Bought for \$12,000
1886	Ellen Eacock	Bought for \$14,000
1887	Elwood Hart	Bought for \$15,000
1893	Albert Mauch	Bought for \$16,000
1899	William Baird	Bought for \$16,000
1903	Mr. Snyder	
1906	Eban Clark	Bought for \$17,500
1907	Christian Illi	Bought for \$18,000
1908	Charles Spaeth	
1913	Mr. Shantz - Mr. Spaeth Mr. Goetner	
1917	Harry Cassell	Father of Mrs Henry Whittock
1925	William Reed	

All during the flourishing years, the huge building on the opposite side of Swedesford Rd. (Rt. 202, where Mobile Station now stands) was the stable for the hotel.

An underground wooden pipe carried water from the hotel to the stables for watering purposes. It was dug up when the road was repaved in more recent years.

In 1913, the owner, apparently Charles Spaeth, allowed that corner to be used by the newly organized Fire Company. In 1917, through a series of legal maneuvers the old livery stable became the Fire Co. property.



Hotel Centre Square, c. 1922

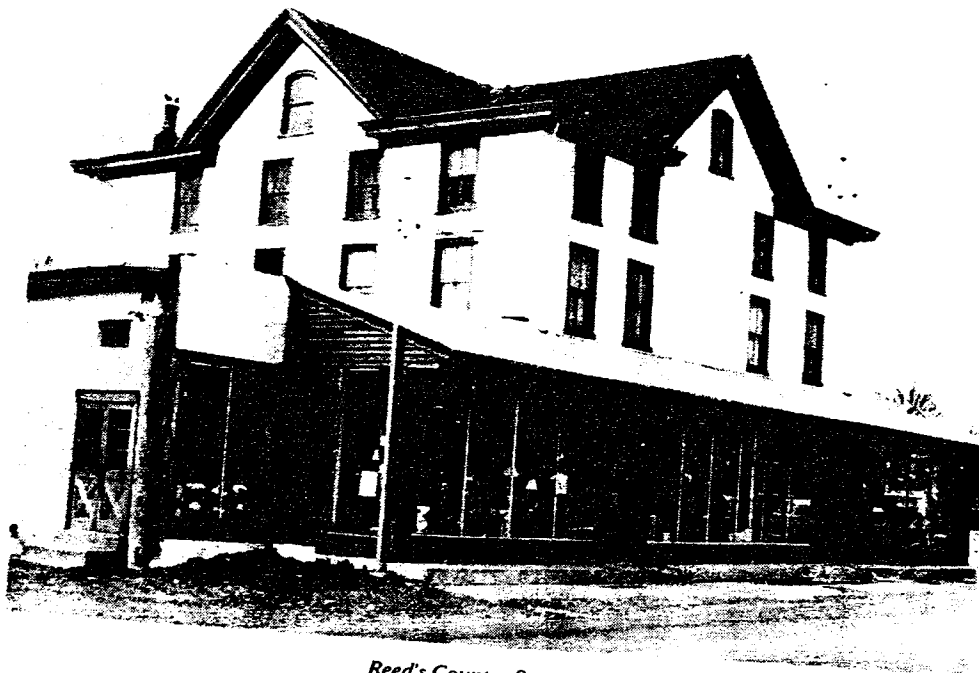
That building became the center of social and cultural activities for the whole township. It was here that the Grange held meetings. Musicals, Chatauqua, plays, minstrel shows, carnivals, graduation exercises, church suppers, political rallies, horse company meetings, 4-H Clubs, and Halloween parties and dances, all took place at the Centre Square Fire Hall.

The auditorium would seat, on folding wooden chairs, between three and four hundred people in the summertime, but less in the winter because one could not sit too closely to the two or three pot-bellied coal-stoves. The stage was adequate and two dressing rooms or meeting rooms provided ample extra space. The kitchen and engine room took up the remainder of the building. In 1953, because of increased traffic on Rts. 73 and 202 the "Fire House" was demolished and the Fire Company moved to its new building at its present location.

It should be noted here, that on the May 14, 1949, cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* the old "Waggon Inn" received nationwide coverage. The painting by Steven Dohanos, of the Post staff, was created to take in the front of the now Reed's Country Store and the Fireman "on call." The original is in the present Fire House and a copy is placed in back of the counter in the department store.

William Reed, purchaser in 1925, during the Prohibition and Depression era, operated an all-purpose, all-product type store. He and his industrious wife and children worked practically around the clock. Reedie's favorite bit of advice to all customers for any and all ills was; "drink hot water, it will cure everything."

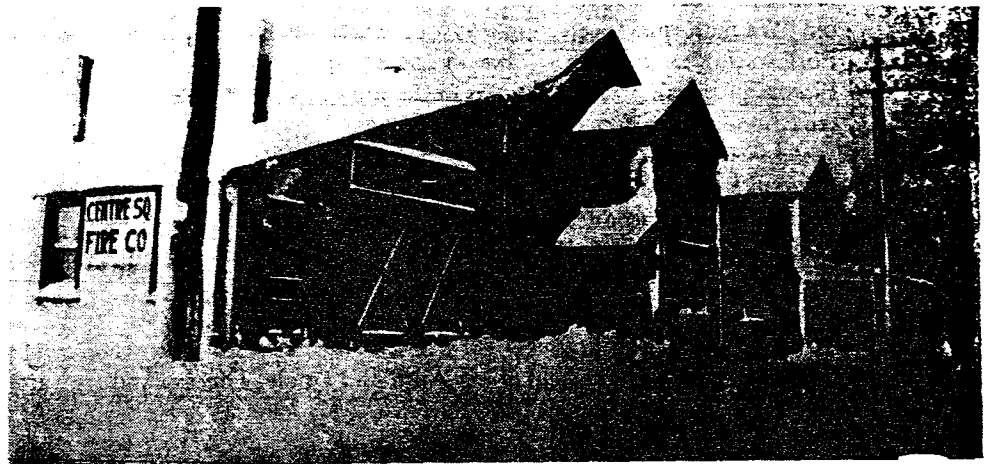
Today, the building houses a furniture, lamp, and antique store conducted by Theresa Reed Murphy, with the help of her Aunt and Uncle, Theresa and Howard Faust.



Reed's Country Store, 1976



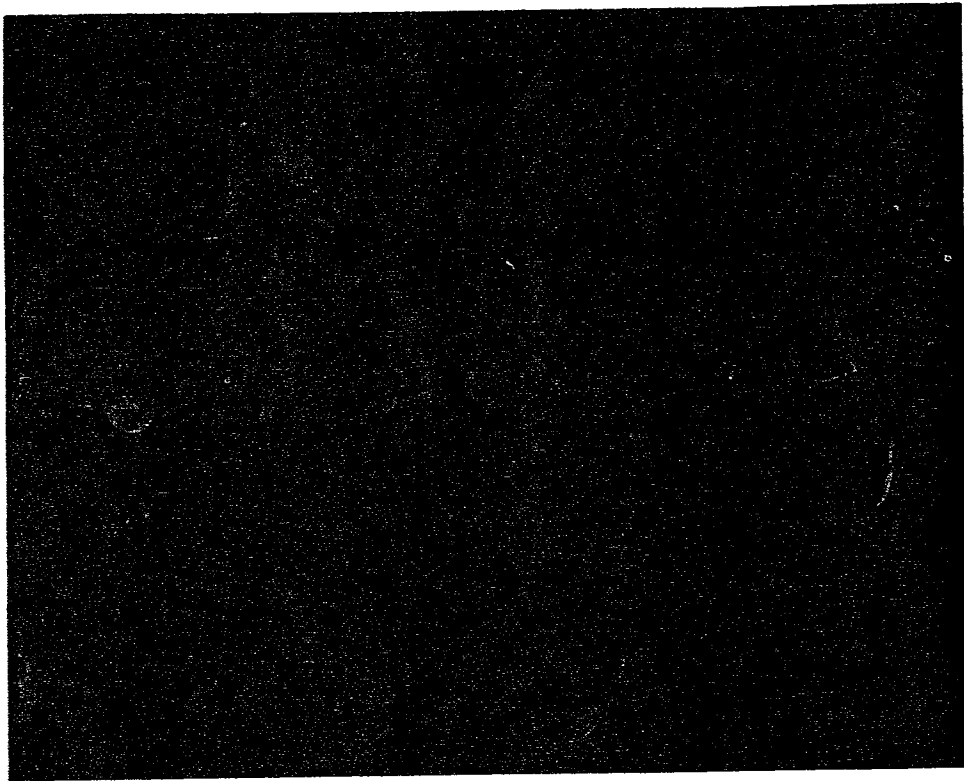
Skippack and DeKalb Intersection c. 1920



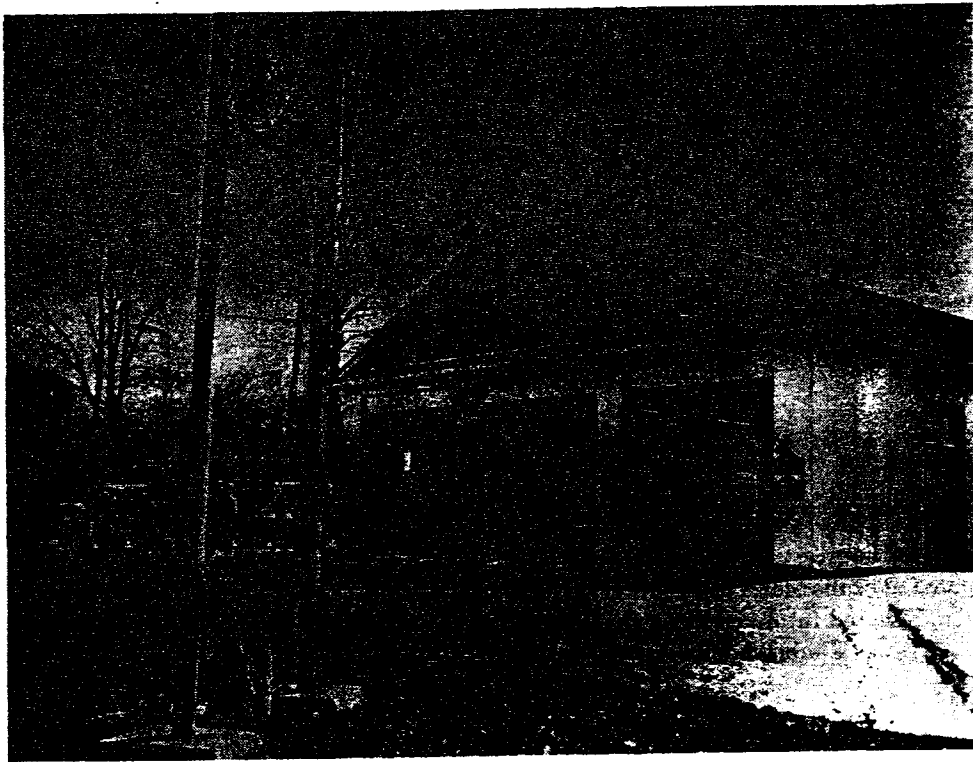
Firehouse c. 1920

Carnival and Supper, 1917





*Photo Courtesy of The Times Herald, Norristown, Pa.
From L. to R. Howard L. Baker, John Berkheimer, Sr., Samuel Krider, as Centre Square Fire Co.
Noted Golden Anniversary in May 1963*



Firehouse Today

