

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - DATA SHEET

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

89B

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code: 159 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 07777 00 5 Block Unit #014-038

County: 1. Montgomery 091 2.

Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2.

Address: 1198 Union Meeting Road Historic Name:

Other Name:

Owner Name/Address: Peter A. & Theraiz Whyte Zielinski 1198 Union Meeting Road 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 1714 2,887 SF Land 1.25 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. Colonial _____

B. _____

D. _____

C. _____

Other: _____

Exterior Materials: Foundation _____ Roof _____

Walls stucco _____ Walls _____

Other _____ Other _____

Structural System: 1. _____ 2. _____

Width 40 feet _____ Depth _____ Stories/Height 2 _____

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ca. 1714 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: The alterations on this house make it a Class II 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: 159 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 07777 00 5 Block-Unit #014-038

County: Montgomery 091 Municipality: Whitpain Township

Address: 1198 Union Meeting Road

Historic/Other Name:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

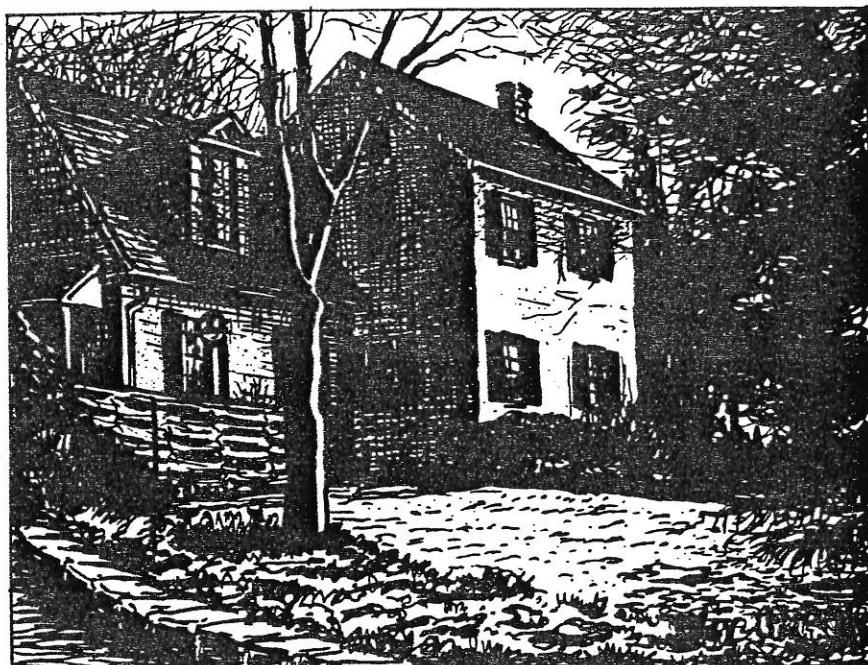
This is an additive vernacular colonial house, c. 1714, has several additions and an L-shaped plan. The core is a two story, two bay building 30 x 40 feet with end gables and an interior end chimney on the right side of the façade. The walls are stucco and the roof is end gabled with asphalt shingles. Each of the windows has shutters. A 1½ story addition on the same axis as the core has two pedimented roof dormers and a bulkhead. A more recent 1½ story gabled addition has been made to the core.

Classification: The alterations on this house make it Class II resource.

The Roberts - Miller Tract

By Becky Huttlinger
Photography by George S. Peck

The early history of this property, like all of the land in this area, may be traced through old deeds to original grants of William Penn. It was part of the five thousand acres presented to George Palmer of England in 1682 by the Proprietor. Palmer's son, William, inherited the land and in 1703 one year after acquiring it, sold it to Philip Price. Price then sold it to Richard Morris who, in 1707, apparently deeded 100 acres of it to Edward Endehave for forty pounds. The old deed reads as follows: — "Beginning corner post being corner of William Thomas's land from thense by a line of trees marked dividing it from other land of Edward Endehave SE one hundred perches to another post being corner of Charles Molen's land being a corner post of Charles Molen's land from thense SW by a line of marked trees and the same land 111 perches to another post being a corner of other land of said Richard Morris from thense by a line of marked trees NW 144 perches to another corner stake set in a line of the said Wm. Thomas's land from thense by said line of marked trees NE 111 perches through the place of the beginning". For the next fifty-seven years ownership is obscure. It probably passed from father to sons within the Endehave family.



The Roberts - Murdock House, Union Meeting Road

B. Huttlinger

In 1764, Edward Roberts bought forty-eight acres. Because the land he purchased was in two parcels, he had to get two separate deeds. The same year, he was married to Ellin Lewis in the Gwynedd Friends Meeting-House. His father was Robert Roberts, son of Hugh Roberts who had come from Merion (on the other side of the Schuylkill River) in 1697 to establish a new community of Friends. He was one of a group of about 100 who bought collectively 7,820 acres which later was to become Gwynedd. Like William Penn, these people had originally come from Wales.

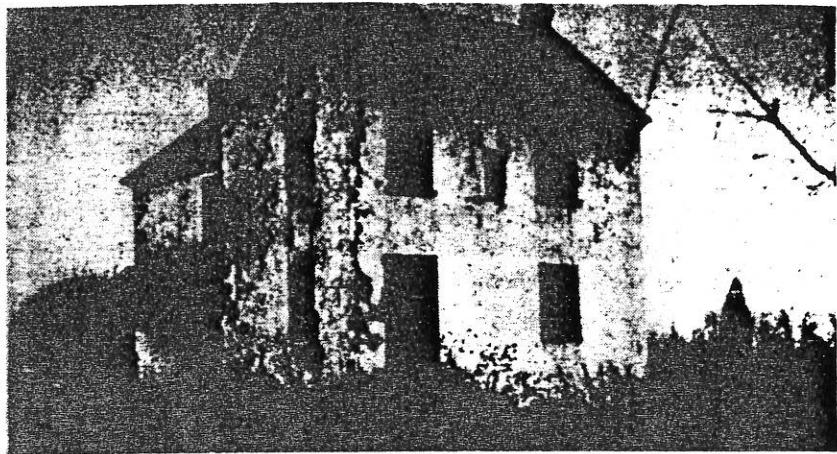
During the American Revolution, somewhere along the northern boundary of the farm (now Union Meeting Road) about 400 yards from Skippack Road, a number of Continental Soldiers are supposed to be buried. They probably died in the winter of 1777 after being wounded in the Battle of Germantown.

Clara Beck, in her *History of Whitpain Township* comments, "Tradition says that at one time a tannery was in operation here, and that huge vats were placed east of the house and between it and the turnpike; and that these vats still exist though sealed with heavy planks and covered with earth."

Edward Roberts, who was esteemed as a gentleman, made a most interesting legal agreement with his son, Amos, in 1811. He gave his farm with messuage (improvements) to his son, "with right of premises, to occupy the back room in each stories of the house plus kitchen privileges." It was further agreed that he would receive, "together with sufficient board, washing and mending at the expense of the said Amos Roberts and sufficiency of Apples for his use, likewise back stable in the barn, the small stock yard and the Barrack therein, pasture for a horse, also lot of plowland containing two and one half acres adjoining woods, further the Meadow adjoining, Mathias Wentz's with exception of small shop and small piece of garden." Amos also agreed to give his father \$4.00 yearly. This document was witnessed by Thomas Lewis and John Lewis. Whether this house and messuage was located on Skippack Pike opposite School Lane or down the lane (later Union Meeting Road) is a matter of speculation.

Amos Roberts had two sons, Levi and Charles. According to Clara Beck in her *History of Whitpain Township*, "when he reached middle age, he decided to divide his plantation into two equal shares, giving one part to Levi and the other to Charles." The 1848 map of Whitpain indicates that Levi lived on Skippack Road and that Charles lived on Union Meeting Road very near the Union Meeting House.

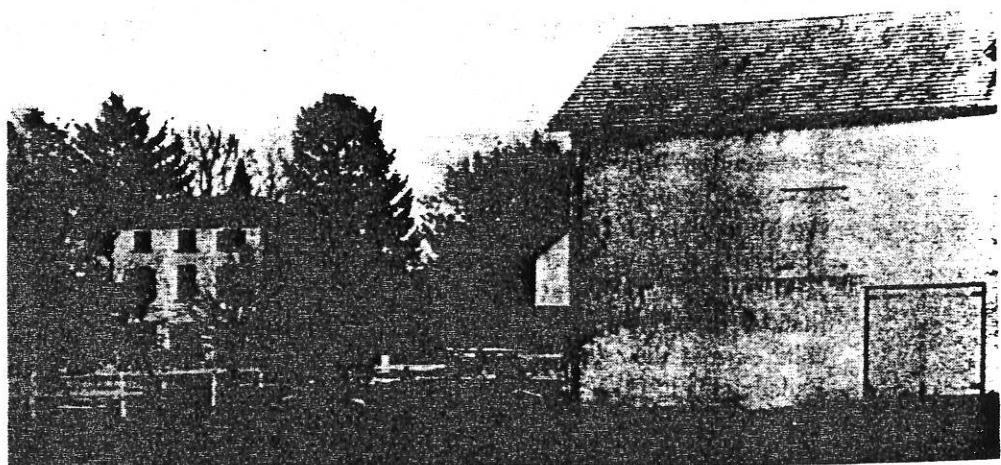
Charles M. Roberts was a teacher as well as a farmer. An old document exists which was written in 1828. It reads as follows: — "Whereas Charles M. Roberts has an intention of teaching a School and has applied to us the Subscribers hereto for a recommendation this is to certify that he is in our opinion a suitable person to conduct a school and well qualified to Perform the duties thereto appertaining his Education consisting of a Knowledge of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Mensuration (conduct), Surveying, Navigation, Algebra, and Book Keeping by single and double entry." Signed, Alan M. Corson, Benjamin Conrade, and Joseph Foulke. (See photograph of same in section about Schools.)



Old Farmhouse After Fire



*Caroline Miller
and Daughters*



The Miller Mansion House and Barn



Josie Miller, Bertie (Rickert) Miller, and Sadie Miller at the Farm



Coach House and Jim the Coachman

With the exception of Eugene, all of the children of Caroline and William Miller were married. Charles worked with his father at Miller Bros.; John became a lawyer and later a Judge of the Montgomery County Courts; William became a doctor, had a private medical practice in Norristown and was County Coroner from 1898 to 1901; Edwin owned the Rickert Hat Company which was in competition with Stetson at the turn of the century; Ellwood married Mary Rich Jeannes, a wealthy widow. The two youngest children were daughters. Joanna became Mrs. Thomas Livezey and Sarah was married to William G. Taylor. All of the members of this generation are now deceased but several of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren live in this area.

After his mother's death, John Faber Miller bought the farm from her estate. However, he and his family did not live there. The home of Levi Miller on the Pike had long since disappeared by this time, and the home of Charles Miller on Union Meeting Road was a separate piece of property. Eugene lived in the mansion house for a time and then in the smaller tenant house until his death. For a few years the Smith family lived there and cultivated the land. A colored man, Uncle Smokey who was well liked by everyone, was the caretaker. The "big field", as the land surrounding the big house was called, was leased and farmed by Dr. Deaver who now owns Brookside Farm in Whitemarsh. In 1950, the Mercaldo Brothers bought the farm (about one hundred acres at this time) from the estate of Judge Miller. Judge Frederick Smillie of Norristown handled the estate. His wife, Comly Miller Smillie, is the daughter of the late John F. Miller. The Mercaldos created their own Blue Bell Water Co. on the grounds and over a period of years built stone and masonry homes. They named the development Blue Bell Gardens. The mansion house was torn down about 1955-56; the barn, carriage house, tenant house and other buildings had been razed sometime before. Just a few of the old maple trees remain today.

The old farmhouse, reputedly dating back to 1714, which stands on Union Meeting Road, is the only house to survive. William and Caroline Miller had lived in this house for a while with Caroline's parents until their big house was completed. After that, the smaller house was rented to a number of tenants. Like many farms in the vicinity, it became a pig farm, then a chicken farm, and more recently, a kennel. Some of the older residents in the township remember when "Mom" Meehan lived there with her numerous foster children and her goats. About 1940, the barn was destroyed and the house was badly damaged by fire. Shortly after, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Rolls bought the ruins from the Miller estate. They restored the house and in 1951, sold it to Mr. and Mrs. R. W. P. Allen, III with three and a third acres. Mrs. C. Valentine Blagden, Mrs. Allen's mother, and the owner of Ruffy's Kennel on Hoover Road, bought the remaining four and two thirds acres.

The Allen's made further improvements. Later, Mrs. Leila Lodge and then Mr. and Mrs. Cockley owned the house. In 1964, they sold the home to Mr. and Mrs. George B. Murdock, the present owners. The additional land along Hoover Road has been developed with attractive one-family homes.

Originally, this native stone and stucco farm house consisted of two rooms, one above the other, plus a third floor garret. Later additions were added to create more living space. In what is now the living room is a most interesting hearth with sturdy wooden doors enclosing it. This same room has a tiny window at the rear which is characteristic of Eighteenth Century houses of this area. Through the years, this old place has been enlarged, restored and modernized without having too much of its original character erased. Today, it is an outstanding example of what can be done to make an old Montgomery County farmhouse beautiful and comfortable.

Caroline Roberts Miller's Notebook

By Becky Huttinger
Photography by George S. Peck

This paper and leather bound book evidently was started in 1854 when Caroline was sixteen. At first it contained quotations from Byron and other sources. These are all written in a beautiful Spencerian script. Caroline must have had some connection with the Kennett School in Kennett Square or she was just quoting from words of friends or teachers. She also speaks of the Glenwood School wherever that was. In those days it was customary for young ladies to attend a Ladies Seminary for a year or so. If they were inclined, they then taught school, or they returned home and were married. The latter was quite possibly the case for Caroline.

The character of the book changed through the years as Caroline's own life changed. Caroline's brother, John, who must have died around 1859, wrote a few things in the book. Enclosed on a separate sheet is an essay composed by John, describing Norristown as it was in the year 1856. There is also a note from Henry Dotts in Pennsbury written in February 1859 telling the family that John is very ill with typhoid fever. Still later in time are records of household accounts and recipes for home remedies and edible concoctions. Still later in the book are signatures and records made by Ellwood and Eugene Miller, when they were children. Some are records of payment for chores accomplished or debts owed, etc.



Caroline Miller apparently took a very active part in running the business affairs of the farm and she was tremendously interested in remedies for ailments in both humans and animals. In her book, and on separate sheets, she also wrote down recipes for making leather, whitewash, and for purifying water.

The material in this book is too extensive to quote in its entirety. Following are some samples:

Titles of poems . . . Byron's Farewell to his Wife, The Land of the Blest, Leave Us Not, To My Mother, The Dying Child, The Grey Hair, A Mother's Gift, or On Leaving Kennett School . . . All of the poetry is either sentimental, or sad, or both which was the style of the time and certainly reflected the people's familiarity and preoccupation with death, especially among the very young.

One essay seems to be a theological treatise but it also discusses civil problems and unfair taxation. The writer speaks of the need for good education, for fair salaries for teachers, for better quality in education, especially in the sciences, for public education, for private support of religion and for charity to be private or in part supported by religious groups, and so on. Part of the last page has been cut out which makes it impossible to know from whom this material was quoted.

On the next page, dated 1866, is a list of accounts — in part

December - sold Conard White Calf	\$9
March 1867	
Sold Turkey 13 lb at 28 cts per lb	3.64
Chicken	.90
3 doz eggs at 30 cts	.90
3 lb Butter at 60 cts per lb	1.80
Detwiler, one Calf	10.00
Shoemaker, one Calf	10.50

Several pages later, dated 1870, is another list . . . in part

Jan 1st	2 turkeys 39 lbs @ 22	8.58
"	2 pr Chick 14 lbs @ 20	2.80
"	8 lb Butter @ 55	4.40

The recipes are to be found inside the front and back covers and are scattered throughout the pages of the notebook . . .

"Tea Poultice, is the best thing in the world for a bruise that is inflamed, or a sore caused by mashing or tearing off the flesh. Take a handful of good fresh tea, put on water enough to wet it throughly, let it stand a few moments, then bind it on the wound; change once or twice a day till the swelling is reduced.

Burns and Scalds

"The best remedy is common Starch. Just moistened with cold water and spread on a cloth to effectually cover the wounded part, keep the starch moist. After the inflammation is out, apply a linen cloth dipped in sweet oil."

Cure for Croup

"The white of an egg given in sweetened water is a sure cure for croup. To be repeated till a cure is affected.

"To cure cattle that are swollen from eating clover. The remedy is a spoonful of ammonia dissolved in a glass of water and given to the animal . . . cure in an hour.

"To remove fruit stain from linen, rub the parts with yellow soap then tie a piece of pearbark in the stain and boil, then expose to the sun.

"To clarify water. 2 grains of allum to a pint of water that is not fit to drink render it perfectly clean, and pure, and the taste of allum will not be perceived.

"To cure a Foundered horse take a green goard. Put it into a gallon of water, boil it down to a quart, and give it as a dreach.

Receipt for Curing Meat

"To every 100 lbs of beef take 4 lb of salt, 2 lbs of brown Sugar, and 2 oz. of Saltpetre, Pack the Beef tightly and cover it completely with the pickle.

An Excellent Pickle for Butter.

"Take two pails of water, two qts. of fine salt, one-fourth of a pound of loaf sugar, two ounces of saltpetre, well boiled and skimmed. cover the butter with the pickle, and it will keep sweet the year round."

Observations and Quotations From Arthur Hagen Miller's Book "Fond Memories"

By Becky Huttenger

The late Arthur Hagen Miller, who was the son of Charles Roberts Miller, wrote his memoirs and had them published in 1956. Mr. Miller was a successful Philadelphia lawyer and a judge. The book describes his family and his life in Philadelphia as he was growing up. He also talks about his immediate family and his career.

In this book, he speaks of his forbears with candor and affection. Of his grandparents he writes, "My grandmother, Caroline Roberts, of Welsh extraction, lived in the Gwynedd (Whitpain Township) section of Montgomery County and was in some way related to the late Justice Owen J. Roberts. My grandmother had a brother, (John Roberts) who also was a poor school teacher in the Pennsburg district where he met William Miller. They must have become cronies, because my grandfather once spent a week-end with my grandmother's brother at his home. Then he spent more week-ends there. My grandmother often visited her brother at Pennsburg. Before long the engagement of William G. Miller and Caroline Roberts was announced and they were married. William moved into the Roberts' homestead, and took a teaching position at Blue Bell in that neighborhood."

Later, Mr. Miller tells a little about his father's life. He says, "He took a job at Blue Bell in the country store conducted by Charles De Prefontaine. I have heard stories of father sleeping in the attic with snow blowing in on his bed, so his early life must have been rugged." Mr. Miller also talks about the wholesale tobacco business and how his father was taken into the family firm. One of the salesmen, Percival S. Hill, with whom Charles Miller worked, later founded the American Tobacco Company in New York."

In a later chapter, *Birthdays Are Milestones*, Mr. Miller describes his first illness when he was but a few months old. He had pneumonia. "The doctor gave me up, but not my grandmother Miller. She asked for permission to try a home remedy and then burned some tar and placed me in a position to inhale the smoke. The congestion broke at once. The doctor then said that the boy would live, and here I am. I suppose that either the Lord wanted me for some purpose, or the Devil wouldn't take me." Two paragraphs of the same chapter describe later birthdays. "Really, the first birthday I can remember is my sixth. Grandmother Miller's summer home was on a farm, and we spent our summers there. I can remember, as if it were yesterday, strolling near the farmer's house and shouting with joy, I am six years old."

"On most birthdays I had a cake. My Aunt Sadie tells me that on the farm we used to spread a tablecloth on the lawn, under the cherry tree, and celebrate out there. She also tells me that one of my favorite pastimes was to take the black seeds from a piece of watermelon, and squirt them around on the table. One time my grandmother got me flat on the ground, and sat on my back until I promised to be good." There is much more to the book and all of it is entertaining and most descriptive of an era.

