

**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.: 089 / 66 00 05134 00 2 Block-Unit #014-018 County: Montgomery

Municipality: Whitpain Township Address: 1399 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike

Historic Name/Other Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**SITE PLAN**

**PHOTO INFORMATION**



Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
1	House – façade	
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: 089 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 05134 00 2 Block Unit #014-018

County: 1. Montgomery 091 2.

Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2.

Address: 1399 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike Historic Name:

Other Name:

Owner Name/Address: Lei Barry 1399 Penllyn Blue Bell 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 1730 4,981 SF Land 1.51 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. Federal \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Exterior Materials: Foundation \_\_\_\_\_

Roof asphalt shingles \_\_\_\_\_

Walls stucco \_\_\_\_\_

Walls \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Structural System: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Width 6 bay \_\_\_\_\_ Depth \_\_\_\_\_ Stories/Height 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ca. 1730 Additions/Alterations Dates: ca. ca.  
Basis for Dating:  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  No Context(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Contributes to Potential District  Yes  No District Name/Status: \_\_\_\_\_

**Classification:** This substantial house is in excellent condition, but it is a Class II resource due to the additions.

## THREATS

Threats:  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: 089 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 05134 00 2 Block-Unit #014-018  
County: Montgomery 091 Municipality: Whitpain Township  
Address: 1399 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike  
Historic/Other Name:

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

This house is a fine example of Federal architecture consisting of a large core with two additions. The core is a three story, end-gabled (asphalt shingles), six bay structure built c. 1730 clad with cream-colored stucco. The house has one end chimney and one central chimney. The cornice line wraps around the corners on the gable ends. All windows have shutters, both on the façade and on the gabled end. The third floor hopper windows have six panes. Windows on the lower two floors are six over six double hung and are separated by a pent roof. The older addition is on the rear of the core, and a one-story sunroom has been built on the west end of the core.

**Associated Resource:** Adjacent to the house is a small, one story, open bay, shed.

**Classification:** This substantial house is in excellent condition, but it is a Class II resource due to the additions.

# Home of Lei Barry and Frank (Tad) Mahan

By Lei Barry

Photography by George S. Peck

The land on which this home sits, on the northeast side of Blue Bell Road at Stenton Avenue, was originally part of 5,000 acres sold by William Penn, in 1682, to George Palmer. After a few changes of ownership, Richard Morris purchased 417 acres of it in 1703 for £100.

Richard Morris was a yeoman and master of a ship which he purchased with four others in 1691. Morris first cleared the land and made his home half a mile north of the existing structure in what was known as the Hoover House in 1703. Seventeen years later he bought an additional 120 acres, bringing the total of his farm to 537 acres. During his lifetime he sold off all but 200 acres, which he left to Joshua Dickinson who had married his daughter, Elizabeth. In 1736, after Richard's death, the Dickinson's came here to live.

The property became known as their "Plymouth Plantation" as at that time the road in front was called Plymouth Road. The Dickinson family retained ownership for thirty-eight years, selling to John Yeddar in 1774. Mr. Yeddar was, however, only a brief owner as he in turn sold the property three years later to Mathias Shoemaker. By this time, the piece which the home was on consisted of only forty-six acres, as the 200 had been divided among the heirs of Joshua Dickinson at the time of his death.

Mathias Shoemaker's forty-six acres included a one-story wood structure with four windows for the home. It measured 22 by 16 feet and is now the kitchen of the house. Also on the property was a 28 by 22 foot stone barn. It is interesting to note that the barn was made of stone, indicating more concern for the animals' shelter than that of the family. There is a very charming two-story springhouse above the existing well which appears to be very old; however, nothing has been found regarding it in the research of the property. The original well from which water was drawn still stands.

Mathias enlarged the farm by thirty-three and a half acres in 1796 and started a major addition to the house which indicates that he had attained affluence in the twenty years he had owned the property. The addition consisted of three stories and was stone and plaster and it seems the wooden section also was covered with stone at that time. That addition is now a large dining room on the first floor with a master bedroom above and another bedroom, bath and storage area on the third floor. A second floor over the original section was also added at that time. The addition was completed in 1804. Mathias, a farmer and blacksmith, was the grandson of Jacob Shoemaker, one of those German Quakers who followed Penn to his new province in America.



*Home of Barry — Mahan Family*



*Another View of Barry — Mahan Home*



*Springhouse*

The Shoemaker homestead remained in the family for four generations for a total of 137 years. There is quite a bit written about the Charles K. Shoemaker family. Charles was born here and he and his wife, Sarah, celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in the house.

An article written in a local newspaper on March 4, 1891, depicted a very heartwarming anniversary party:

“. . . No formal programme was carried out. Spontaneous expressions of love and good will found natural place and prevailed. Hearty greetings to the husband and wife were extended by all. There was singing of the songs of Zion that gladdened the heart and brought mysterious moisture to the eyes. Rev. C. E. Wehler, pastor of Boehm's Church, sang several solos, which were feelingly rendered. His worthy wife presided at the organ. Together they sang several duets. It was a beautiful and touching scene, when the little grandchildren were grouped about the organ, and lifted up their young voices in praise to Him who, when in the flesh, put His hand upon the children and blessed them.

“. . . Fifty-one persons sat about the hospitable board, generously provided with the material blessings so pleasant to the palate and refreshing to the body.”

In his 1884 *History of Montgomery County*, Theodore Bean wrote:

“Charles K. Shoemaker purchased the homestead from the heirs with little more than good health and determination. By honesty and frugal habits he relieved himself of all financial obligations, reared a large and highly respected family and amassed a sufficiency of this world's goods, so that he was able to retire and transfer responsibility to his son, Jesse, in 1880.” Charles died here in 1892.

Jesse became known as one of the most substantial farmers in Whitpain. A newspaper article in 1887 reads: “a large and capacious stone house stands by the roadside and the farm is quite fertile and well cultivated, in fact one of the best farms in the township.”

Bean wrote about Charles' eldest son, Mathias: “who at the first call of President Lincoln for troops in April 1861, to defend the life of the nation against the assaults of the southern slavery, volunteered his services. At the end of his term of enlistment he returned to the paternal roof, where he remained until the dark cloud of the slaveholders war covered the land, when he once more offered himself as a living sacrifice upon the altar of his country, enlisting himself in August 1862 in Company H, 13th Regiment, Pennsylvania Calvary.

“By his strict obedience and soldierly bearing, he passed through the several gradations to the honorable position of second lieutenant. While on picket duty in September 1863, he was captured by the enemy and consigned to Libby Prison, from which he was transferred to that hell of the southern chivalry, commonly dignified by the title of Andersonville Guard House or Prison. There he literally starved and in June 1865 died the death of a noble martyr.”

There were nine other Shoemaker children. In 1914 the sale of the Shoemaker homestead ended the long term ownership which had been the pattern until then.

The property, then forty-three and a half acres, changed hands six times between 1914 and 1958. During the early 1920's, the second wing of the house was completed with the addition of a library and a bedroom above it. While the MacKenzie family owned the property in the early 1950's, the garden and stone work around the back terrace was designed, as well as a grass tennis court. Local residents say much was done to the house during their twelve years there.

In 1958 when the owner, Thomas Fleming, was unable to sell the property in total, it was divided into three parcels, with the home and two-story springhouse being on 1.7 acres which was purchased at auction by the McAllister family. The barn was sold in one of the other parcels and converted into a home.

In 1967, the McAllisters sold to the Mariani family who in turn sold to the present owners, Lei Barry and Tad Mahan, in 1976.

The Barry and Mahan family includes six children in the Wissahickon School District. Lei and Tad are in business together as manufacturers representatives of hospital equipment. All of the family are busily involved working on plans to restore the old homestead and bring back the warmth and charm prevalent in the days of the Shoemakers.



