

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Gladwyne (Merion Square) Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town Lower Merion Township vicinity of congressional district 13

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Montgomery code 091

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number Airy and Swede Streets

city, town Norristown state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pa. Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date 7/14/80 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Gladwyne (Merion Square) Historic District is located at the intersection of Youngs Ford and Righters Mill Roads and the surrounding area at the center of Gladwyne is approximately ten miles from downtown Philadelphia.

Merion Square was a crossroads village first settled c. 1790. It developed primarily to service the nearby mills of Mill Creek and some large farms in the area.

The village of today reflects the nucleus which grew up at the crossroads during the early part of the 19th century. The 1851 Lower Merion map by John Levering shows here a well-established village called "Merion Square", a name by which it is still commonly known. The entire general area, including Merion Square, is called Gladwyne. Today some of the lots are smaller, but the character of the earlier village has remained.

The boundaries of this district were selected because they are consistent with, and show a continuity of, that nineteenth century village in its juxtaposition of shops and dwellings. Incorporated within the boundaries are the maximum concentration of contiguous late 18th century and 19th century buildings with the least number of intrusions.

There are 87 structures in the district, some of which are multiple units. There are also numerous sheds, garages, and several barns which have not been included in this count. Eighteen of the structures are intrusions. Ninety-five owners are represented. Some of the buildings are double (side by side) houses which were formerly mill or farm worker tenant houses, now each side privately owned. A few pieces of property have on them more than one building. For example, the Catholic Church property at 354 Conshohocken State Road (building #29) contains a recent church as well as an 1870's Second Empire Rectory.

The primary building material is locally quarried stone, generally rubble, frequently covered with stucco. There are also some frame houses. Two of these are covered with German siding, while others have various types of shingles.

The predominant building style is the mill or farm workers house: 2 1/2 story, 2 bays wide, stucco over stone, and plain style. "Mrs. Hill's House" c. 1820 at 934 Youngs Ford Road is a good example of this design. Often the plan is found as a double house with a party wall as at 1001 and 1003 Black Rock Road, c. 1850. Sometimes porches and decorative brackets were added to this building type.

During the last quarter of the 19th century a modified version of Stick Style became popular, particularly on Righters Mill Road. There are also a few stucco Carpenter's Gothic houses with wood trim on Righters Mill and Merion Square Roads.

Porches and pent eaves are ubiquitous in Montgomery and neighboring counties. Numerous examples of these architectural features are found in this district.

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Most of the buildings are residential. There are also a few clusters of shops, one supermarket, and two gas stations. Generally, the intrusions blend in with earlier construction. This is particularly true of the small stucco complex of shops at 960-2-4-6 Youngs Ford Road (building #10) which was designed by Walter Durham, c. 1950. Another group of intrusions is the Youngs Ford Place complex of twelve individually owned townhouses, 1979 (buildings #83 & #84). Here, too, an effort has been made to integrate them into the townscape by the use of stucco. In addition, these are set back from the road.

One of the key structures is the Guard House Inn (formerly the Merion Square Hotel) at 953 Youngs Ford Road (building #19). It is a 2½ story, stucco over stone, multigabled building with an open porch on the Youngs Ford Road side and an enclosed porch facing Righters Mill Road. This structure, although built in several stages during the nineteenth century, has been well-integrated by a coating of stucco.

Across the street at 349 Righters Mill Road is another important building which is known as the "War Office" (building #56). It is now two stores, built at separate dates. The earlier (east side) is a 2½ story, 5 bay, center entrance Georgian house with end chimneys, built in 1798. The interior still retains the original walls and floorboards. In the early 1800s a large store was added on the west side and the roof raised on the residence to give the building a unified roof line. Later, both sides were stuccoed over to give it the appearance of a single building. There were further additions on the side and rear.

Many of the buildings in the village have had alterations or additions over time -- dormer windows and rear sheds being the most common changes. In addition, there are some good examples of adaptive reuse such as the Gladwyne Library at 362 Righters Mill Road (building #57) which was formerly a meeting hall. The building next door at 366 Righters Mill Road (building #58) was originally a Democratic meeting place (hence the name "Tammany Hall"), later a butcher shop, and now is a private residence.

The architecture of Merion Square is conservative in keeping with much of rural Pennsylvania. Moreover, it shows a continuity of styles over almost two centuries. The district is notable for the large number of these buildings which are extant and with only relatively minor alterations.

The Gladwyne (Merion Square) Historic District is a crossroads village which has retained its quiet, rural nineteenth century atmosphere of homes, small shops, and an inn. It has kept also a harmony of scale and materials, as well as an unpretentious, time-worn look of buildings in continuous usage, often by generations of families.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates _____ **Builder/Architect** _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) _____

The Gladwyne (Merion Square) Historic District represents a crossroads village settlement which has been little changed since the middle of the 1800's.

The earliest transaction concerning the land which eventually became Merion Square was in 1683 when William Penn signed a treaty with Indian Chief Wingbone giving Penn the rights to all of Wingbone's lands lying west of the Schuylkill River from the first falls. This vast acreage became part of the complex land speculation of Penn's proprietorship.

Of this tract, the rights to 1,000 acres belongs to Christopher Pennock, a lawyer and speculator (shown on Thomas Holme's 1687 map of Pennsylvania). Pennock's rights came from his father-in-law, George Collet, who had purchased them in 1683 from Francis and George Rogers who had acquired them in 1681. Pennock was granted a patent to his land in 1689.

Pennock's land adjoined the Welsh Tract. This was 40,000 acres which Penn had sold 1681 to Welsh Quakers seeking to establish an autonomous nation in the New World. By 1701, 100 acres of Pennock's land, then owned by Richard Walter, was included in a list of Welsh Tract properties. In 1702 Walter purchased an additional 150 acres of adjoining land (see Chain of Title - Merion Square). This 250 acre tract remained in the Walter(s) family in whole or part for almost 100 years. It is precisely these lands which came to be known by the early 19th century as Merion Square.

In 1757 Abraham Walter(s) grandson of Richard Walter, sold 30 acres to James Winter, Sr. (d. 1761). Between 1799 and 1811 James Winter, Jr. sold off his holdings to six men, five of whom were papermakers active along nearby Mill Creek.

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In 1798 George Hembold, son or brother of papermaker Henry Helmbold, purchased 20 acres from Abraham Walter(s). Helmbold built a fine stone house on his property (building #56) at the crossroads of two old roads.

The estate of Abraham Walter(s) sold 23 acres to Samuel Young in 1816. Young built a combination store and dwelling on the corner opposite from Helmbold's house which by now had a sizeable store added to it as well.

These were the land sales and developments which began the small commercial and residential village of Merion Square in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Commercial:

Mill Creek flows in a semi-circle for 4½ miles around the lands that became Merion Square. As a part of the Welsh Tract settlement in the early days of the colony, John Roberts "the Miller" built a grist mill c. 1683 on Mill Creek. From that date to 1788 the Roberts' family milling industry was the largest of the many mill sites which grew up along the Creek. Running northerly from Roberts' mill to a fording place on the Schuylkill River was an ancient road which was probably originally an Indian path. Its earliest recorded name was "the road to Rees ap Edward's ford" ("ap" meaning "the son of" in Welsh). In the mid-1800s this road was known as McClenachan's Mill Road for the owners of Roberts' mill at that time. Since the turn-of-the-century it has been called Youngs Ford Road in honor of a prominent Merion Square family who owned land on the westerly side of the crossroads. Bisecting Youngs Ford Road is another early path called Righters Mill Road (see Merion Square sketch map). The intersection of these two roads became the focal point of the village in the early nineteenth century.

Despite the intensive activity of the mills along Mill Creek during the 1700s, apparently little occurred at the crossroads until the end of the century possibly because the mills had their own stores and tenements for their workers located at the respective mill sites. Consequently, the 1798 Direct Tax lists for the crossroads and vicinity only a few log houses, Helmbold's stone house and a "frame barracks". Tradition says there was also an early tavern or inn here, but there are no substantiating documents.

It was the purchases of land by papermakers Helmbold, Francis Scheetz, Benjamin Holland, and John Robeson, as well as the John Young holdings, which gave impetus to the development of Merion Square in the early years of the nineteenth century. Other factors at this time, in addition to the booming milling industry, were the growth of farming, the location of a soapstone quarry, and an iron mine in the outlying areas.

In 1799 Helmbold sold his property to storekeeper Harman Yerkes. It is probably he who added the large store to the stone house. This building has been in continuous usage as a village store and residence almost to the present (it is currently two stores). David Egbert owned it from 1826 to 1877 when it was purchased by the Isaac Cornman family. They in turn ran the store for fifty years. Here was located the first Lower Merion Post Office. This building was known as "the War Office" undoubtedly because it was a favorite gathering place for mill workers since whiskey and opium were sold there according to an 1819 day book. Arguments among the patrons may have given rise to the name.

Across the street going south is another early nineteenth century building (building #19) which was built in several stages. On John Levering's 1851 Map of Lower Merion it is shown as a "hotel". At that time it was the Merion Square Hotel; earlier it was a tavern. The 1798 Direct Tax lists the aforementioned "frame barracks" on this site which may have housed workmen or travellers. Today, it is the Guard House Inn restaurant. For 150 years this building has been an inn, hotel, or restaurant.

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By the mid-1800s the crossroads village was well-defined, as shown on Levering's map. Located there were two stores, the hotel, several shops, a post office, a public house, Henry Cornman's blacksmith shop, and a wheelwright. Clustered around this core were the homes of millworkers and shopkeepers. Many of the buildings were used for tenant housing. Thus, the village which began as a commercial outgrowth of the mills and farms of the region became a cohesive community in its own right.

Architecture:

The Gladwyne (Merion Square) Historic District is significant architecturally because it has a continuity of building styles spanning a period of almost 200 years. Largely extant, this building stock has been in constant usage generally for purposes similar to the original intent. Furthermore, the village has retained many of its nineteenth century characteristics and has a harmony of scale, material and design. Linked together in a plan laid down in the early 1800s, these structures reflect as well much of the history of the people who built this community.

While a variety of nineteenth century building types predominate, they do not mirror radical stylistic changes. Rather, they are conservative rural adaptations of contemporaneous developments modified selectively to harmonize with existing buildings. For example, the late nineteenth century houses on the north-east side of Righters Mill Road (buildings #40 through 48) have Stick Style elements used, not in bold innovative ways, but decoratively, often in counterpoint to the simple basic house type of the area.

This conservative tendency is found in institutional building as well, but not to the same degree. The Baptist Church of 1870 (now the Scout House, building #30) and the Gladwyne School c. 1880 (now the Children's House, building #4) were more elaborate in design and material than neighboring dwellings, but they are consistent in scale with others in the village.

The intrusions generally are not disruptive of this harmony of scale and design. Exceptions to this might be the fairly pretentious facade and spire added in 1962 to the Methodist Church of 1841 (building #53) and the red brick A & P supermarket, 1965 (building #21). If materially excessive, they may be considered artifacts of the 1960s. Moreover, there is now a widespread and firmly entrenched outlook on the part of residents and Township officials to encourage future building in Merion Square in ways that will be cognizant of, and sensitive to, this village ambience.

Although the name Gladwyne was adopted in the late nineteenth century in keeping with a fashionable trend to giving Welsh names to towns along the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the use of the name "Merion Square" for the village center of Gladwyne has persisted. So too has persisted the spirit of a rural village evoking possibly one of the last looks at a Pennsylvania crossroads village.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 63.2

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	1 8	4 7 5 6 5 0	4 4 3 1 6 9 0	B	1 8	4 7 6 2 6 0	4 4 3 2 1 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 8	4 7 6 1 8 0	4 4 3 1 7 9 0	D	1 8	4 7 6 3 1 0	4 4 3 1 5 1 0
E	1 8	4 7 5 9 4 0	4 4 3 1 2 5 0	F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gloria O. Becker, Gladwyne Civic Association

organization c/o Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion

date _____

street & number 75 East Lancaster Avenue

telephone 215-649-4000

city or town Ardmore

state Pennsylvania

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Ed Weintraub - Director

title Office of Historic Preservation

date _____

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Gladwyne (Merion Square) Historic District Montgomery Co.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9

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Barker, Charles R. "Old Mills of Mill Creek Lower Merion". In Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. Vol L of Montgomery County Historical Notes. 1926, No. 1.

Barker, Charles R. "Early Grants and Surveys". In Historical Society of Montgomery County. Vol. II of Montgomery County Bulletin. 1939-1941, pp. 322-329.

Bean, Theodore W. History of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1884.

Buck, William J. History of Montgomery County within the Schuylkill Valley. Norristown: printed by E.L. Acker, 1859.

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3rd Direct Tax Division (Bucks and Montgomery Counties) 3rd & 4th Assessment Districts (1798). U.S. National Archives Records Service: No. M-372, Roll No. 9.

Glenn, Thomas Allen. Merion in the Welsh Tract. Norristown: Thomas Allen Glenn, 1896.

Penn Manuscripts - Pennsylvania Land Grants, 1681-1806 Vol. 9, Manuscript Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, pp. 11, 43-45.

"Record of Grants of Roads, Ferriers, Taverns, etc. chiefly in Lower Merion Township, Montgomery (formally Philadelphia) County, Pennsylvania, 1687-1820". Compiled and Indexed, Charles R. Barker, Unpublished notebook, 1927, at Norristown: Montgomery County Historical Society.

Warrants and Surveys, 1682-1750. Vols. I-IV, Providence of Philadelphia. Vols 5-6, 7, 8, 9. Philadelphia: City Hall Archives, Reel 1 and 3, MF.

Various newspaper articles in the vertical file under "Gladwyne" at Ludington Library, Bryn Mawr, PA.