

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC THE HIGHLANDS

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Skippack Pike & Sheaff Lane, Ft. Washington

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Whitemarsh Township

VICINITY OF

13th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Pennsylvania

42

Montgomery

091

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: unused at present

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Comm)

STREET & NUMBER

William Penn Memorial Museum

CITY, TOWN

Harrisburg

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Airy & Swede Streets

CITY, TOWN

Norristown

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1972

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
William Penn Memorial Museum

CITY, TOWN

Box 1026
Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Highlands is a large, 2½ story, dressed fieldstone structure built in the late Georgian style during the years 1794-1796. The structure was built in a magnificent setting of 300 acres overlooking the Skippack Valley. The grounds presently include a circular drive with carriage sweep, a distinguished formal garden with mature boxwood surrounded by a machacolated stone wall, a carriage house, a tenant farmhouse, a greenhouse, springhouse, a large fieldstone barn, and an interesting gardener's cottage or "tower house" which features Gothic windows and a parapet-style roof. The "Great House", however, which rests on the crest of a high knoll, is the main attraction.

The central block of the main facade projects slightly and is framed by two monumental Ionic pilasters of white native marble supporting a pediment which has a semi-circular fanlight as its central feature. The two story, engaged pilasters rise from a raised, basement tier. The basic fabric of the main or south facade is composed of regular, squared, surfaced fieldstone laid up in bond, the pointing of the "ridge" or weathered type. The side and rear walls, however, are laid up in random fieldstone rubble.

Marble belt courses are introduced at the first and second floor levels. Marble trim is added at window sills and in the projecting keystones centered in the flat arch over each window. The projecting cornice features a rank of well-detailed corbels with a finely-carved diamond fret. The windows are six-over-six, double hung sash in the usual pattern of many 18th century houses but the scale is so outsized that these openings are almost double the usual glazed area. Second story windows feature wrought iron balconies and louvered shutters.

The entrance porch features reeded Doric columns, low hipped roof, and a marble floor approached by a broad flight of marble steps with wrought iron railings. Except for the double entrance doors, the well-proportioned and detailed millwork, fan and side-lights set with leaded glass, are unique to Philadelphia. The house is divided within by a broad entrance hall running from front to rear with a stairbell turned at a right angle. Finally, detailed millwork adorns the rooms; only the Greek Revival black marble mantles have taken the place of the original Federal units.

A one story open porch extends the width of the east end and features an open deck with wooden railing above. Around 1830, a glazed gallery dining room was built across the rear facade. The dining room features plaster ceiling metallions in which chandeliers once hung and opens to the older dining room and central hall.

The general condition of the house is fair although, since the house has been unoccupied for several years, there are occasional acts of vandalism.

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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 1794-1796, 1830

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Of all the dressed-fieldstone houses in the countryside beyond Philadelphia (except for pre-Revolutionary Cliveden), the Highlands, located along the Skippack Pike overlooking the Whitemarsh Valley is perhaps the finest. Built in the late Georgian manner, the structure is unique architecturally for the Pennsylvania scene.

The house displays the dignified, almost "public building" character of the London townhouses of the period. It has much of the same scale as the long-disappeared President's House in Philadelphia. But, for its indigeuous masonry-wall construction, it suggests the Craigie-Longfellow House of Cambridge or several similar examples in Salem. The use of a multi-storied, engaged classic order springing from a raised-basement tier is directly derived from Palladio's architectural source books which were much in vogue in Britain throughout the mid-18th century.

The Highlands was constructed during the years 1794-1796 not only as a residence but as a scene for lavish entertaining. The structure was the home of Anthony Morris, Esquire, the son of Captain Samuel Morris. Morris was elected early to the State Legislature and became the first Speaker of the House. A friend of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, he served the Madison administration as United States Minister to the Court of Spain.

After several changes in ownership, the house was acquired by George Sheaff, a prosperous wine merchant and influential Philadelphian, in 1813. It was Sheaff who, in 1830, added the gallery across the rear of the house. The Highlands remained in the Sheaff family until 1915 and was finally acquired by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in 1920.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Letter, John K. Heyl, A.I.A. to Dr. S. K. Stevens, December 29, 1964.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 7.13

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

David M. Berman, Curator/Office of Historic Preservation

ORGANIZATION

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

DATE

April, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

William Penn Memorial Museum, Box 1026

TELEPHONE

717-787-4363

CITY OR TOWN

Harrisburg

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Executive Director
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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UTM REFERENCES

A

1	8	4	8	0	2	2	0	4	4	4	2	5	0	0
ZONE			EASTING					NORTHING						

B

ZONE				EASTING					NORTHING					

C

ZONE				EASTING					NORTHING					

D

ZONE				EASTING					NORTHING					

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Executive Director

DATE

8/12/76

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

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KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER