

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

1. Name

historic ROWLAND HOUSE

and/or common Shovel Shop

2. Location

street & number 300 Ashbourne Road ___ not for publication

city, town Cheltenham ___ vicinity of congressional district 13

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Montgomery code 091

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Cheltenham Township

street & number 8230 Old York Road

city, town Elkins Park ___ vicinity of state Pennsylvania

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 Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date 1975 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & 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 checked="" 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

The "Shovel Shop", located at 300 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham, Pa., was reportedly built about 1774. The oldest section was a 2½ story structure with crawl space and was of the typical American colonial architecture of the period consisting of a room on top of a room with an attic above. An addition was built around 1810 or 1820 which converted it into a 3½ story structure. This addition consisted of a basement, 3 rooms and 2 shed-like rooms in the rear one story high.

The house is best described in 3 sections. Section A is 23 feet by 19' and consists of a basement and 4 stories made of stone; Section B is 17' by 25' and is 3 stories; Section C is 13' by 23' and is one story frame construction.

The exterior is of native stone covered with white stucco. The main section of the house has a double-pitched roof. There is an original well in the front which is planted with ivy. The original door is still on the older part of the structure on the exterior but is boarded up on the inside so it cannot be used.

The center hall is 5'3" by 16' by 8'6". The staircase along the wall on the left was put in about 150 years ago when the newer section was added. It has an eased and ramped banister and the chair rail opposite is also eased and ramped with reeded newel posts. Carved brackets are on the sides of the staircase. The balusters are straight turned. The floor is random width pine, the basement stair enclosure is paneled with Philippine mahogany and the ceiling is plastered. The door casing leading to the room on the left is a solid piece.

The room to the left is also part of the newer addition and is 13' by 16' by 8'5". It has random width pegged floors over a hundred years old and a reeded chair rail around the room. The fireplace mantel is of the early 1800's and the fireplace has plinth blocks on either side. Gouged carving is on the face of the mantel. The hearth consists of paving bricks. Build-in cabinets are on both sides of the fireplace. The top cabinets were added in the 1920's but the bottom ones are old. The room has original window jams, Philippine mahogany paneling on four sides, a molded chair rail 1 inch by 4 inches, a molded pine base 1 inch by 8 inches, and coping 1 inch by 2 inches.

The front room on the right in the old section is 13' by 21' by 7'6". It sustained fire damage on the ceiling but most of the original beams remain and probably the original flooring. The room has been paneled recently with Philippine mahogany plywood in wood furring. The fireplace in one corner was put in about 20 years ago. The back of the original door is covered with the paneling.

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The rear addition is 13' by 23'. The left one was probably added in the early 1900's and the right one in 1920's or 1930's.

The second floor hall is 7' by 12' by 7'4". It has papered and plastered walls. The interior partitions of the house seem to be solid board plastered over.

The room to the right (in the old section) is 14' by 22' by 7'8". Due to fire damage, the flooring is new and the beams have been replaced. The room has the basic frames on the windows but the sashes have been replaced. The original fireplace has been covered over. The room has a painted, plastered ceiling.

Six stairs up there is a room in the front with a toilet and a sink.

To the left is a room in the newer section which has the original fireplace (early 1800's) and original windows (3). The door has a solid frame and there is a chair rail around the room. It also has a built-in knotty pine closet.

In the hallway there is a beautiful old door (2 large panels on bottom and 2 small ones on top) which is on an enclosed staircase leading to the top floor.

On the third floor on the older section there is a very large room 14'6" by 23' and the slanted ceiling goes from 3'6" to 10' in height. The rafters are mortised and tenoned and pegged at the ridge. A large window facing the rear is boarded up and a newer one has been added high in the front. The original roof line can be detected on the walls showing where the early 1800 addition started.

A small room (12' by 16'6") is on the left side of the building.

The window at the top of the staircase on the second floor landing has the original reeded sides and head.

Although the interior of the 1774 section was damaged by fire, the exterior is intact. However, the early 1800 addition is in very good condition and has many excellent preserved design detail from that era.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

What is now referred to as the "Shovel Shop" was once known as the Rowland Mansion. It was reportedly built in 1774 (possibly earlier) on a portion of the 250 acre tract of land granted to Nehemiah Mitchell by William Penn. This was one of the original 17 parcels of land which now make up Cheltenham Township. On April 20, 1690, 6½ acres of Mitchell's land grant was recorded as sold to Richard Dungworth who erected a grist mill on the Tookany Creek that later became the front mill for the Rowland mill complex. Dungworth's mill was the first one built in Cheltenham Township.

The Township of Cheltenham is considered to be one of the earliest surveyed divisions of Philadelphia County since it appears on Thomas Holme's map of the "Improved Part of the Province of Pennsylvania in America" which was published in London in 1687. Cheltenham Village, situated in the southeastern part of the Township, is one of its oldest communities. Its early development was due to the presence of Tookany Creek (once known as Eel Creek, Tacony Creek or Quesonominny Creek) which flows through the Village. The creek was used as a source of water power for mills and factories which grew up around it giving the surrounding community its original name of "Milltown". Several grist mills and a shovel and spade factory were located there and the people who worked there lived in homes nearby.

Benjamin Rowland, Jr., born on September 29, 1777, started the famous shovel works in Milltown around 1796 which became the second largest in the United States. It is believed that Benjamin, together with ten other Rowland children, grew up in the "old stone house" now referred to as the "Shovel Shop" because of its connection with this mill-owning family which manufactures shovels.

In 1793, Benjamin Rowland, Sr., uncle to Benjamin Rowland, Jr., purchased a grist mill on the Quesonominny Creek from a Jacob Myers and this deed was recorded in 1796. This was on a six and a half acre tract of land which had originally been part of Nehemiah Mitchell's land grant. In 1796, Benjamin Rowland, Sr., bought more land from a Col. Miles and sold a portion of this to his nephew, Benjamin Rowland, Jr., who began the manufacture of bed screws needed for four poster beds. Benjamin, Jr., expanded the business and began manufacturing spades. In 1802, Benjamin, Sr., erected a tilting and blade mill. There is a record stating that "in 1802 William Rowland fabricated saws in a little stone build-

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ing along Ashbourne Road, where blades before having the teeth cut were smoothed by being passed between the wheels". This might be a reference to the "Shovel Shop". An archeological dig was performed in the summer of 1975 by the Cheltenham High School archeology students under the direction of Dr. Emmanuel Kramer, noted locally for work in this area, on the periphery of the Shovel Shop. It was speculated at that time that a mill race ran underneath the house into the basement (from the Tookany Creek) as evidenced by a slab placed over what appeared to be part of the remains of a race. This evidence would tie into the preceding information. Gradually all the mills were devoted to producing spades and shovels. By the middle of the 19th century a good-sized village had grown up around these three mills called "Milltown".

One of Benjamin Rowland, Jr.'s sons, Thomas, who had been born of January 20, 1801, succeeded to the business when his father died in 1824. This extensive shovel and spade factory, which later became known as "Thomas Rowland's Sons", operated the only two tilt hammers in the United States according to the census of 1910. With the use of the hammers together with steam and water power from Tookany Creek, the mill produced "thousands of dozens of tools". Thomas Rowland's sons in 1890 are listed as Rush, Howard, Lynford, Edward and Thomas. In 1833, ThThomas Rowland moved to a farm not far from the "Shovel Shop" in the section of Cheltenham Village which was later developed and called "Rowland Park".

The Rowland family helped shape the destiny of Milltown. Benjamin Rowland, together with two other members of the Community, deeded land on which to build the "Milltown School" which marked the beginning of the Cheltenham School system in November of 1795. In 1915 a new elementary school was named the "Thomas Rowland School". In 1845, the Cheltenham Methodist Episcopal Church was built on a half-acre of ground donated by Thomas Rowland on the road now known as "Rowland Avenue". Thomas Rowland became president of the church in 1849. In 1855, Thomas Rowland made an application for a local post office. The name of "Cheltenham" was supplied to him by another resident because "Milltown" was already in use elsewhere. Thomas Rowland was appointed the first postmaster of "Cheltenham" on June 4, 1855.

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The title search on this property revealed that the "Shovel Shop" was owned by the Rowland family from January 5, 1796 until September 12, 1901. On the latter date it was sold by T. Rowland & sons to the Ames Shovel and Tool Company who abandoned the factories in 1928. The mills were demolished in 1929 and the "Shovel Shop" is one of the two messuages remaining. The present owner of the property is Cheltenham Township who acquired it on December 9, 1934. The Cheltenham Township Historical Commission is presently overseeing its restoration and plans to turn part of the building into a museum depicting the history of the shovel industry to honor the Rowland family because of its many contributions to the growth and development of the Township.

Legal Description of remaining lands at the Westerly corner of Ashbourne Road and Central Avenue, property of Cheltenham Township, now known as the Old Shovel Shop, more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at a point for a corner in the southwesterly side of Ashbourne Road L.R. 46121-2 as widened by the Pennsylvania Department of Highways at the intersection of same with the Northerly side of Central Avenue as widened on the Northerly side thereof by twenty (20') feet to the conformed width of forty (40') feet as layed out by the Cheltenham Township, THENCE (1) extending South $37^{\circ}44'$ West along the said Northerly line of Central Avenue passing through the said Shovel Shop the distance of seventy eight and ninety eight one-hundredths (78.98) feet to an angle point; THENCE (2) still by the same extending South $40^{\circ}11'$ West the distance of forty-one and eighty five one-hundredths (41.85) feet to a point for a corner; THENCE (3) extending North $45^{\circ}29'$ West the distance of thirty-five and two one-hundredths (35.02) feet to point for a corner; THENCE (4) extending North $41^{\circ}16'$ East the distance of forty eight and seventy nine one-hundredths (48.79) feet to a point for corner; THENCE (5) extending North $41^{\circ}56'$ West fifty-six and ninety five one-hundredths (56.95) feet to a point for corner in the legal Right-of-Way as established by the Pennsylvania Department of Highways; THENCE (6) extending along the same North $28^{\circ}21'30''$ East the distance of forty-two and thirty-six one-hundredths (42.36) feet to a point in the newly established Southwesterly side of Ashbourne Road as laid out by the Pennsylvania Department of Highways; THENCE (7) extending along the same South $61^{\circ}38'30''$ East the distance of ninety seven and eighty one-hundredths (37.80) feet to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

CONTAINING therein 7,036.786 sq. ft.

Rowland House
Montgomery County
Zone 18 E491770 N4434150

