

**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 UNION SCHOOL

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 516-518 Bethlehem Pike not for publication

city, town Whitmarsh vicinity of congressional district 13

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Montgomery code 091

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Ronald H. and Beatrice A. Kline

street & number 1205 Montgomery Avenue

city, town Ft. Washington vicinity of state Pennsylvania 19034

**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 1977  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

## 7. 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 Union School in Whitmarsh is approximately 48' long, 23' wide, and 2½ stories high. The front of the schoolhouse, the east facade, is on street level. However, the site slopes down towards the west exposing the building's full basement.

Originally, the building was one large room, but later a loft space was added to the northern portion of the schoolroom. The columns supporting the loft divide the space into 7 bays; 6 bays measuring approximately 9' x 10' x 6'6"H and 1 bay measuring 20' x 21' x 14'H.

The main structure was built in 1773. A schoolmaster's house was added in the 1800's to the north end of the school. At this time the roof of the schoolhouse was raised to be integrated with the roofline of the house. A small bathroom has also been added in the schoolhouse.

The school and the added house are both constructed of load bearing fieldstone. Portions of the exterior stone have been covered with stucco and painted. The roof is of a shingled gable type. The structure is 7 bays by 2 bays. The windows are double-hung, 6 over 6 in school section and 4 over 4 in house section. They all are equipped with wood shutters. The front door is a wooden door with glass pane insets and a tall thin window immediately adjacent to it. There is a small pitched overhang sheltering the entrance. The other doors are completely wood. The chimney is made of brick and located on the western pitch of the roof. A copper/tin flue is located on the eastern pitch of the roof. Both are at the south end of the building.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1773 **Builder/Architect** Builder: Joshua Morris

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The "Cradle of Free Education," as this building has been called, by historians, was one of the very earliest public schools in Pennsylvania. The Union School was also the first successful school that did not discriminate because of social position or religious preference.

Samuel Morris was the Justice of the Peace in Whitemarsh from 1745-1753. During that period he also was an overseer of the Plymouth Friend's Meeting in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania. Morris died in 1770, but in his will, a sum of money was set aside for the building of a school and a teacher's salary. The will stipulated that all within a 1½ mile radius of his home (Hope Lodge) could come to this school for a free education. The will was not signed or dated when Morris died, but his brother, Joshua, fulfilled his wish. The school was built in 1773. Children, parents and grandparents attended the school.

In 1792 the Union School was incorporated as the Union School in Whitemarsh and was supported by public subscription.

In the early 1800's an addition was built on the north end of the building for use as a home.

The school was used until 1936, except for a period in 1873, when it was used as a lyceum.

A trust fund that was created for the school in 1773 is still in existence today. It goes to help support education in the area of Whitemarsh, Whitpain and Upper Dublin Townships.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .77

Quadrangle name Ambler, PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	8	4	8	1	4	0	0	4	4	1	8	4	0
Zone				Easting				Northing					

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Starting at a point on westside of the Bethlehem Pike moving southwest along westside of said road for 113.10', then west 249.08', then northwest 129.74' then east 304.85' to starting point.

### 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 Charlene M. Tomlinson

organization Historical Society of Ft. Washington

date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 1216 Hazelwood Drive

telephone 215-643-2276

city or town Fort Washington

state Pennsylvania 19034

# 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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RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

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

UNION SCHOOL, Montgomery County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Theel, Heritage of Fort Washington

Bean, History of Montgomery County, pg. 1144

Eberlein & Hubbard, Portrait of the Colonial City

The Pennsylvania Magazine, April 1962, pg. 128-131

Ambler Gazette, March 11, 1920

Ambler Gazette, March 21, 1918

Ambler Gazette, March 3, 1898