

Pennsylvania Historical  
& Museum Commission 3/1969  
Register of  
Historic Sites & Landmarks

Please Type or Print

<i>Official Use Only</i>	
NUMBER:	COUNTY:
TYPE OF PROPERTY:	

I. NAME

COMMON NAME OF PROPERTY:

Helfrich's Springs Grist Mill

OTHER:

II. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Mickley Road (east side), 200' north of Route 22 (15 Cong. Dist.)

CITY OR TOWN:

Whitehall Township

COUNTY:

Lehigh

III. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP			STATUS		ACCESSIBLE TO PUBLIC	
District	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition:	Occupied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes:	
Site	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private	<input type="checkbox"/>	In Process	Unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Object	<input type="checkbox"/>	Both	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered	Preservation Work in Progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building	<input type="checkbox"/>						No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							

PRESENT USE (Check One or More if Applicable)

Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Museum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Educational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Military	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>		(Comment below)

Additional Comments:

Storage building for Township's excess equipment and materials

IV. OWNERSHIP

NAME:

Whitehall Township

STREET AND NUMBER:

3219 MacArthur Road

CITY OR TOWN:

Whitehall

COUNTY:

Lehigh

V. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:

Lehigh County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

455 Hamilton St.

CITY OR TOWN:

Allentown

COUNTY:

Lehigh

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

4.91

VI. (A) REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

"Regional Recreation and Open Space Plan 3, Historic Structures & Sites"

DATE OF SURVEY: May 1970 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Joint Planning Commission, Lehigh & Northampton Counties

STREET AND NUMBER:

Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Airport, Airport Road

CITY OR TOWN:

Lehigh Valley

STATE:

Penna., 18103

(B) MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(Books, Pamphlets, Theses, Research Projects, etc. See Instruction Sheet.)

Fenstermaker, Tilghman G., Jr., Research Paper, Unpublished, 1976

Roberts, Stoult, Krick, and Dietrich, History of Lehigh County, Lehigh Valley Publishing Co., Ltd., 1914, Volume I, pp. 1002, 1005 and 1010, and Volume II, pp. 240, 462 and 544

Rupp History of Lehigh, 1845, p. 131

Wilcox, William J., "In Retrospect", Volume XX, Lehigh County Historical Society Proceedings, Lehigh County Historical Society, 1954

VII. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LARGE PROPERTY—OVER TEN ACRES

SMALL PROPERTY—LESS THAN TEN ACRES

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES

CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			O R	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	.	.	"	.	.	"		40	37	33"	75	29	21"
NE	.	.	"	.	.	"							
SE	.	.	"	.	.	"							
SW	.	.	"	.	.	"							

LIST ALL COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING COUNTY BOUNDARIES

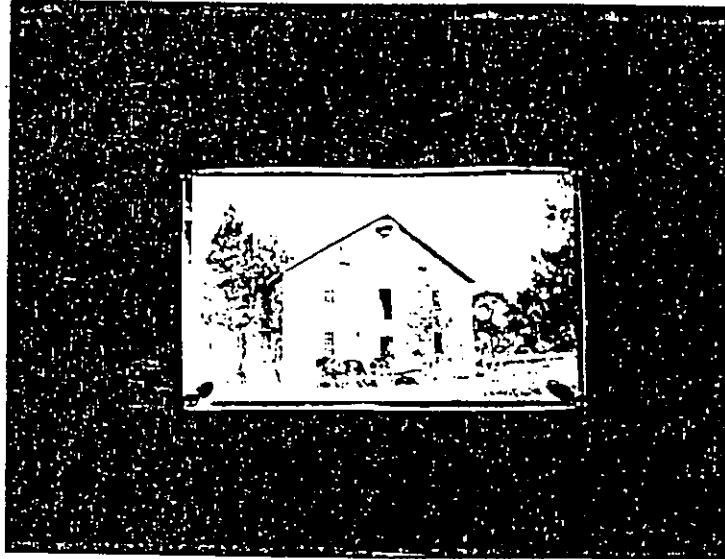
Notice on the use of maps: Please pinpoint property on the largest scale map possible (e.g., a township map is preferable to a county map, which in turn is better than a State map). Please try to find a map that uses the grid coordinate system and includes a notation as to scale. State geodetic maps are preferable when obtainable, but county, township, or local road maps are also acceptable.

VIII. DESCRIPTION

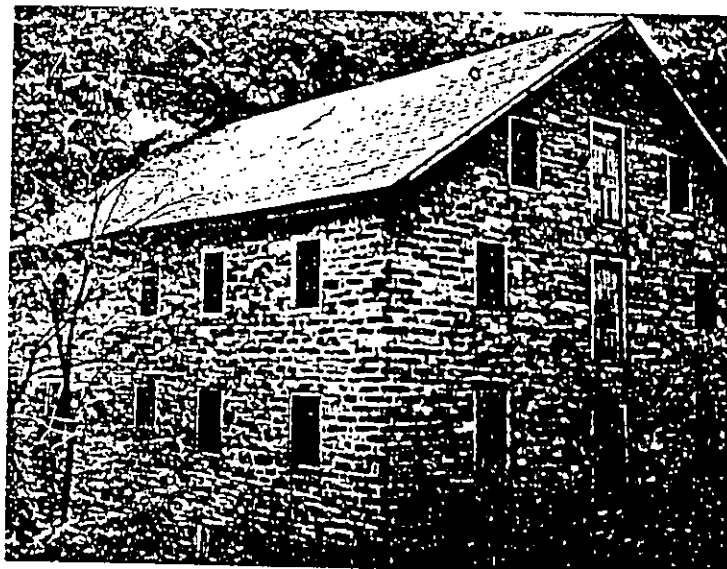
CONDITION	EXCELLENT <input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Check one)		FAIR <input type="checkbox"/>	DETERIORATED <input type="checkbox"/>	RUINS <input type="checkbox"/>	UNEXPOSED <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check one)		(Check one)		MOVED <input type="checkbox"/>		ORIGINAL SITE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	ALTERED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	UNALTERED <input type="checkbox"/>						

VIII. (A) EARLY APPEARANCE (Old prints, old photos, photos of paintings and prints):

*Note: Early views are most important since they often show a property before drastic changes were made. Please seek out any old photos, prints or photos of paintings, or prints that show the property. Place these in chronological order and comment upon the date of each view if possible.*



CIRCA  
1880



CIRCA  
1930

VIII. (G) PRESENT APPEARANCE:

*Note: Please include exterior, interior and detailed views when possible. Any measured drawings or sketches of interesting details are also helpful.*

See photographs attached

IX. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (check one or more as applicable):

Pre-Columbian <input type="checkbox"/>	16th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	18th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	20th Century <input type="checkbox"/>
15th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	17th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	19th Century <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specific Date(s) (if known) 1807

AREAS:

Aboriginal	Conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric <input type="checkbox"/>	Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Political	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic <input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion and/or		Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>	Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	
Architecture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Invention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	
Art <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social - Humanitarian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	.....	
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Military	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Including Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

Note: One may wish to attach here appraisals by noteworthy local historians or other interested parties who have knowledge of the property.

The land on which the present mill is situated lies along the Jordan Creek. Ownership of this land may be traced back to one, John Eigender (Aigenter or Aigander), who arrived in Philadelphia on Sept. 21, 1731. Eigender took up a warrant as early as Dec. 7, 1734 on 200 acres bordering Jordan Creek, and an additional 118 acres on Oct. 12, 1737.

These 318 acres passed by sale through the hands of Jacob Wertz to George Hoffman in 1751. Borrowing money in 1753 and using the land as security, Hoffman erected a log grist mill and an adjoining saw mill on the portion of the property bordering the Jordan. Mention is made of the log grist mill in 1770 in connection with religious services.

Several transactions occurred from Hoffman to Michael Horlacher to Daniel Horlacher to Christopher Blank and finally in a deed dated Dec. 3, 1790 Christopher sold a part of the land including the mill and the water right for the mill race to his son, George Adam Blank.

Peter Grim (born 1771) became owner of the land and the mill in 1802. The new owner erected in 1807 a three-story stone mill -- the present structure -- on the site of the old log mill. Use of the adjoining saw mill was discontinued. Upon Grim's death, his only daughter, Elizabeth, inherited the mill. When she married in 1819 her husband, James Deshler, took over operation of the mill until his death in 1842. From that date until 1872 their son, Jacob Grim Deshler, farmed the surrounding land and operated the stone grist mill.

The mill acquired its present name when Reuben Helfrich purchased it and 52 acres from Deshler. Ownership passed to Thomas Helfrich in 1890 upon the death of Reuben. Thomas had assisted his father in the mill's operation from 1873 to 1890.

It should be noted that the mill is located on what has been called "one of the most interesting tracts in the township". It is within several hundred yards of the famous "Indian Cave", numerous large springs known collectively as Helfrich Springs, and the site of an ancient cemetery where only one tombstone remains dated 1775. The first natural refrigerator in Lehigh County, "Hunter's Hole" at Helfrich Springs, was used by early hunters as a storage place for venison.

IX. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (check one or more as applicable):

Pre-Columbian <input type="checkbox"/>	16th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	18th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	20th Century <input type="checkbox"/>
15th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	17th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	19th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	Specific Date(s) (if known).....

AREAS:

Aboriginal	Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>	Music <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric <input type="checkbox"/>	Education <input type="checkbox"/>	Political <input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning <input type="checkbox"/>
Historic <input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering <input type="checkbox"/>	Religion and/or Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>	Industry <input type="checkbox"/>	Science <input type="checkbox"/>	.....
Architecture <input type="checkbox"/>	Invention <input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture <input type="checkbox"/>	.....
Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape Architecture <input type="checkbox"/>	Social - Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/>	.....
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature <input type="checkbox"/>	Theatre <input type="checkbox"/>	.....
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>		.....

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Including Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

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- Continued -

As late as 1914 when Volume I of the History of Lehigh County was published, Thomas Helfrich's operation was known as the only grist mill in the county still being operated directly from a constant flow of spring water without the construction of a dam as a supply basin.

In 1929 Thomas Helfrich sold the mill to several family members and it was subsequently purchased by William and Minnie Allender in 1933, then by Lawrence and Helen Haag in 1945 and finally by Ray and Ann Dech in 1946.

The Township of Whitehall obtained the grist mill and 4.91 acres of land by right of eminent domain in 1963.

Architectural features are typical of the fast-disappearing Lehigh County grist mill. The Helfrich's Springs Grist Mill is a three-level building plus basement, approximately 30' in width and 58' in depth.

The mill is of local fieldstone construction with slate roof which is in reasonably good condition. There are 24 pegged windows, 6 over 6 double-hung sash. The front of the building retains the extended hoist beam with original door openings at the second and third floor levels. There is no chimney in evidence.

The waterway, diverted from the main Jordan Creek, is still active and flows freely through the original flume, thus retaining the character of the mill. The stone arched openings over the flume are intact and appear to be structurally sound. This area originally housed an undershot water wheel which is no longer present.

Although the original mill wheel working mechanisms and shafts have not been discovered on the site, the supporting beams and framework remain intact in the basement. Most of the interior stone walls still retain the original lime stucco. The interior structure features heavy oak and chestnut beams with mortise and tendon wooden pegged construction. All of the original wooden plank flooring remains and is in reasonably good condition.

- Continued -

A recent frame addition stands as a storage shed and is scheduled for removal. Several small stone grinding wheels remain at the site.

No floor plan is available at the present time. Upon visual examination of both the interior and exterior, no indication of substantial deterioration or structural weakness was found.

It is hoped that preservation will open the door to a major community effort to utilize the building and its surrounding wooded creekside land as an environmental laboratory and museum, and as an educational resource for township students and citizens of all ages. The accompanying news articles document this effort.

## X. FORM PREPARED BY:

NAME AND TITLE:

Robert W. Zimmerman, Chairman, Land Preservation Committee

ORGANIZATION: ~~William G. Fenstermaker, Jr.~~

Whitehall Environmental Group

DATE:

STREET AND NUMBER:

315 Sumner Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Whitehall,

STATE:

Penna., 18052

## XI. PLEASE SEND COMPLETED FORM TO:

Keeper  
 Pennsylvania Register of Historic Sites & Landmarks  
 Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission  
 Box 1026  
 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108

