

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Whitehall Apartments

and or common

2. Location

street & number 410 West Lancaster Avenue not for publication

city, town Haverford vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Montgomery code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input 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 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: residential

4. Owner of Property

name James Marks, Marks and Company

street & number 101 Mill Creek Road, P.O. Box 589

city, town Ardmore vicinity of state PA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number Airy and Swede Streets

city, town Norristown state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

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 Whitehall Apartments is an immense three and one-half story, California/Spanish Mission style stucco building occupying a prominent site on Lancaster Avenue, just west of Haverford College and near the railroad station. With its glazed blue tile in the attic story, Spanish tile roofs and small pergolas in its enclosed courts, the Whitehall is among the most memorable architectural landmarks of the Main Line.

The design of the apartment building takes its cue from the type of planning done for great hotels with a continuous rectangular base occupying most of the site and containing a garage for the complex. On the base sits an E-shaped building, whose three wings are attached to a rear spine. Each wing ends in a stubby projecting block that receives the principal architectural ornamentation. Though the center block is given additional emphasis by an elaborate tile-framed door leading into the main lobby, all of the blocks are otherwise similar. Each is subdivided into thirds by a recessed central panel, and ornamented by wrought iron balconies below double French doors on the second story. Above a string course on the second floor is an ornamented attic story whose rich blue tile is highlighted by glittering golds and deeper blues formed into the sailing ships of Christopher Columbus, Columbus' landing, and other scenes of Spanish civilization. Red tile roofs cap the walls above a deep eave, adding a shadow line across the top.

Behind the front blocks are parapeted walls framing the courtyard, with raised pediments carried on pilasters in Chiurriqueresque style, marking the position of the doors to each group of apartments. Like the front entrance, these have the double curl arched opening of the Spanish Renaissance, but unlike the front door, the courtyard entrances are finished in stucco. With the California style wood trellises and pergolas that frame the courtyards, the effect is one of exotic privacy, removed from the busy street. The end courtyard walls are also ornamented with deep blue tile below a red tile roof.

The sides, by contrast, are of utmost simplicity, with rough cast stucco walls above a field stone basement. Though the window casements continue the pattern of the front, the ornament is reduced to a flat pattern of stringcourses and panels. The rear is as plain, with the basement containing the garage, differentiated by its rough stone walls.

The interior plan is one of the more elaborate of its time and place. By treating each wing as a separate block with its own central courtyard entrance leading to a stair, privacy is assured. But at the same time, a central elevator provides access to the continuous corridors of each floor. That elevator is entered from the front lobby, a gracious public space accented by a marble and wood trimmed fireplace on a projecting chimney breast. With its chair rail and crown molding below the plaster ceiling, the lobby has the air of a "well-bred" living room. The Colonial trim continues in the stair as well, marking the customary separation of internal and external trim, with the exterior selling itself by virtue of its individuality, while the interior, by contrast, is respectably traditional.

The apartments conform to the cues given by the lobbies. Well-lighted living rooms are ornamented by handsome tile fireplaces that become the focus of the room. With the separate dining rooms, it is clear that these are intended as modern alternatives to the suburban house. Sixty years later, the details and design choices are holding up remarkably well.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" 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 1925-1926

Builder/Architect Lippincott & Schaeff

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Whitehall Apartment is important as one of the most visually memorable buildings of the Main Line's prime avenue and dates from the beginning of the age of apartment living. There for the first time in a Main Line apartment, the Whitehall addressed the problem of the automobile by providing an internal garage in the lower level of the building. That awareness of the auto was probably not a coincidence, for Haverford was a center of auto production, then being the site of the "Auto Car" company (still alive elsewhere but manufacturing trucks). Moreover, the Whitehall's owner, Perry Beam, was intimately acquainted with the auto, as his business, "Beam's Motor Freight", helped organize the trucking industry. Finally, it is the work of architects Thomas B. Lippincott and Charles Schaeff, whose later apartments on the Main Line helped shape the future lifestyle of the region, though none would equal the vitality of the Whitehall.

It is the architectural impact of the Whitehall that sets it apart from contemporary buildings, giving it an immediate architectural presence on Lancaster Avenue. That is a function of its powerfully plastic and repetitive form, and the startling originality of its California/Spanish Mission facade. The eastern notion of the California style, exemplified by the brilliant blue and gold tile attic story, red tile roofs and curl gables evokes the popular image of Los Angeles and Hollywood. That highly identifiable scheme contrasts effectively with the more conventional interior detail which served as a transition toward the taste of the Main Line.

The plan has its own significance, for by combining a rectangular ground floor garage with a complexly shaped pavillion plan on the residential levels, the architects provided ventilation, light and privacy on a heavily travelled street. At the same time, they were able to provide covered parking for each apartment for the first time in the Philadelphia region. No doubt that was in part because of the constricted nature of the site, but the end result was the first automobile-oriented apartment on the Main Line. Coming at the time of the construction of America's first shopping center just down Lancaster Avenue in Ardmore, it confirms the shift of the Main Line away from the railroad which gave it its name toward the coming automobile.

The owner, Perry Beam, was long connected with the automobile industry, having founded a motor freight line before World War I. While he had already worked with the same architects on a project in Philadelphia, and in the same year as Whitehall retained Lippincott and Schaeff to design six houses in the automobile suburb of Strafford, Pennsylvania, none would achieve the integration of automobile and architecture of the Whitehall. For that matter, while Lippincott and Schaeff continued to design modern apartments on the Main Line, none were as visually effective as the original. The Whitehall remains as an important record of the changing lifestyle on Philadelphia's Main Line, and a monument to the transformations of architectural taste in the 1920s. At a time when the Philadelphia Inquirer was reporting that "The apartment vogue [was] attracting much popularity", the Whitehall represented an early mature scheme that set the standards for the next generation.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Lower Merion Building Permits, 2-20 1925 #1298
Building Archives, Marks and Company, Ardmore PA
Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, XL:8 25 February 1925
Philadelphia Inquirer, October 25, 1925, p. 28W; June 14, 1925 p.14L (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 acre
Quadrangle name Norristown Quad Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>474160</u>	<u>4429070</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate at Haverford, Lower Merion Township, county of Montgomery, state of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows, to wit: Beginning at a point in the middle of the Lancaster Avenue State Highway 179-6/10 feet (cont)

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

state	<u>Pennsylvania</u>	code	<u>42</u>	county	<u>Montgomery</u>	code	<u> </u>
state	<u> </u>	code	<u> </u>	county	<u> </u>	code	<u> </u>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc. date October 19, 1983

street & number 3961 Baltimore Avenue telephone (215) 386-6276

city or town Philadelphia 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

Larry E. Tise
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12/5/83

For NPS 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

CONFIDENTIAL
EXP. 12/31/81

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Whitehall Apartments

Item number 9

Page 2

Pinkerton City Directory, 1925, 1926

Pinkerton's Philadelphia Business Directory, 1918

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

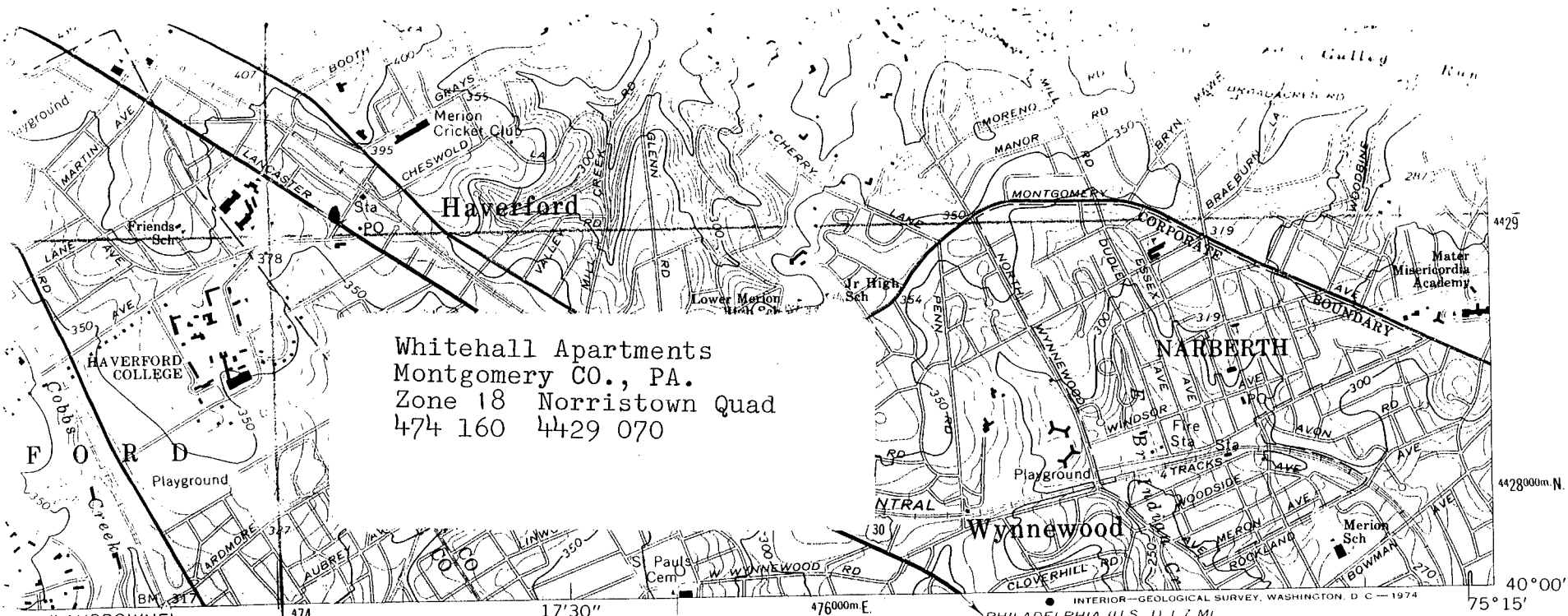
For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Whitehall Apartments

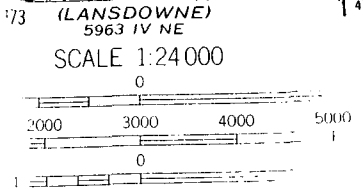
Item number 10

Page 2

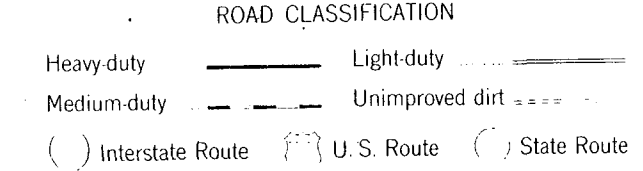
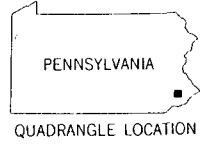
measured in a northwesterly direction along the middle of the highway from the intersection of the middle line of Haverford Avenue extending toward the southwest; thence leaving the State Highway by other lands now or late of the Lower Merion Realty Company, south 39° 25' west 150 feet; north 73° 20' west, 48-61/100 feet; north 55° 25' west 152/1000 feet; north 74° 43' west 153-41/100 feet to a stone a corner of land recently conveyed to the Haverford School; thence by land of the said school, north 39° 25' east, 240 feet to the middle of the highway aforesaid, passing over a stone set on the future sideline 40' from the middle; thence along the middle the said highway south 50° 35' east, 285 feet to the place of beginning, being the property occupied by the Whitehall Apartments.



Whitehall Apartments
 Montgomery CO., PA.
 Zone 18 Norristown Quad
 474 160 4429 070



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
 DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



NORRISTOWN, PA.

N4000—W7515/7.5

1966

AMS 5964 III SE—SERIES V831

CONFORMS WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
 GRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

(PHILADELPHIA)
 5963 I NW