

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM  
 OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION Box 1026  
 PA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION Harrisburg, PA 17120

7. Local survey organization

West Whiteland Historical Commission

8. property owners name and address

Church Farm School  
 Box 662  
 Paoli PA 19301

9. tax parcel number / other number

41-2-84

10.

U.T.M. zone 18 easting 448560

Map#

16 northing 44330510

usgs sheet:

Malvern 9.6A

11. status (other surveys, lists etc.)

CCHSS

12. classification  
 site ( ) structure ( ) object ( )  
 building (x)  
 in N.R. district yes ( ) no ( )

13. date(s) (how determined)

c. 1750/1761

14. period

1700-1799

15. style, design or folk type

Colonial/Georgian

19. original use

Residence-farm

20. present use

Residence-farm

16. architect or engineer

Milton Medary  
 1904 alterations

17. contractor or builder

18. primary building mat./construction

Stone

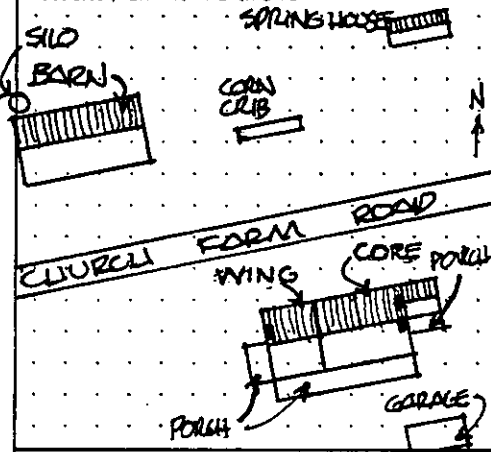
21. condition

Above average

22. integrity

Above average

23. site plan with north arrow



24. photo notation

PG: Nancy Carville  
 PV: Southeast elevation  
 PD: 4/20/1980

25. file/location

CCHS, WWHC, #09-50, #0

26. brief description (note unusual features, integrity, environment, threats and associated buildings)

Solitude Farm enjoyed an ideal location in the 18th century agricultural and limestone-based economy of West Whiteland Township. To the north lay the valuable timberland of the North Valley Hills, and on the south the Great Valley unfolds with its meadows, rich farmland, ample water, and limestone quarries and kilns. The Old Lancaster Road and later, in 1794, the Lancaster Turnpike followed an east-westerly course through the large tract of land which in 1780 exceeded 700 acres. The stone homestead was constructed in two portions (c. 1750, 1761) and stylistically adheres to well-established vernacular architectural traditions. Despite its "rehabilitation" in 1904, the Homestead retains most of the 18th century features which identify it as a fine, early "plantation" or "mansion" house.

The core occupies approximately 2/3 of the existing building. It is rectangular (37' x 32') two stories, stone, and oriented south. A kitchen wing extends to the north. In this room is a large cooking fireplace with evidence of an exterior bake oven which

(continue on back if necessary)

27. history, significance and/or background

Architecture:

Solitude Farm is one of the Township's oldest colonial mansions. It contains superb Colonial/early Georgian paneling in the c. 1750 core. The hall/parlor plan in this section is undisturbed and thus representative of colonial building traditions. The addition of the 2/3 Georgian wing, which provided the house with a fashionable center hall, is typical of additive houses of the 18th century. As it sits today, Solitude Farm

(continue on back if necessary)

28. sources of information

CCHS: A.P. Reid T.S. 2013, Jacobs family papers; VR 1-4-1848, L-11-3-1887, 9-27-1820, VR 9-16-1821, Direct Tax 1798.

29. prepared by:

M.L. Wolf  
 Brandywine Cons.

30. date

revision(s)

12/1981

(continue on back if necessary)

5. present name  
 Solitude Farm

1. county  
 Chester

6. other name (historic name if any)  
 Solitude Farm

2. municipality  
 West Whiteland Twp.

3. street address or specific location  
 Church Farm Road

4. survey code  
 029-09-41-329



#26 cont.

is enclosed in a (16'x14') stone shed with horizontal ventilators. The core's original two room, hall-parlor plan with opposing front and rear entrances is clearly evident. The stairway is somewhat unusually located between the kitchen wing and parlor (east room) and is lit by a small window on the otherwise nearly solid gable end wall. With the exception of a storage area with stone ledges under the east room, there is no basement under the core.

The core features superb Colonial raised paneling above and around its fireplaces of which there are two on the first (excluding the cooking fireplace) and one on the second floor. The western wall of the "hall" is entirely paneled and includes built-in cupboards. Window reveals on the first floor are paneled and chair rail is present on both levels.

The major wing (27' x 32') was, as indicated by its datestone, built in 1761. Like the core it is two stories, stone, and stuccoed. It follows a two-thirds Georgian (double pile, side hall) plan and is underlain by a full basement which contains three candle niches. Corbelled fireplace foundations built into a central pier support the two "interior corner" fireplaces on the first floor, one of which retains its original raised panel chimney breast. The stairway to the second floor is located in the rear (north) hall.

In 1904 Clarence Sears Kates, who had just purchased Solitude Farm and the adjacent Kates Mansion, commissioned architect Milton Medary to design alterations to the farm house and mansion. The alterations to the farmhouse were mostly cosmetic consisting of the addition of diamond-paned dormer windows, a porch and slight modification to the west gable. The outstanding colonial interior was left untouched.

#27 cont.

represents a fully-developed 18th century rural plantation house of the best quality.

#### Agriculture:

The Solitude Farm complex is an excellent example of an 18th century farmstead. Although ideally situated originally, on limestone-rich soil and close to the old Lancaster Turnpike, after the construction of the Turnpike in 1794 it took a back seat to the gentleman farms which were subsequently built along that road. By way of example, after it descended to Thomas H.B. Jacobs in the early 19th century, he chose to rent the farm and live instead in a handsome "new" (1822) manor house along the Turnpike. In advertisements for its sale, Jacobs described it as the "hill farm." In 1848 the plantation consisted of approximately 355 acres, 230 of which were farmland, 80 being woodland, and 45 devoted to limestone quarries and kilns. In that year the farm complex included a stone dwelling, stone barn with walled stockyard, stone wagon house and corncrib, carriage house, bath house, hog house, wood house and work shop and a water wheel. Solitude Farm was the location for many years of a local agricultural celebration called "Harvest Home." The relatively intact 300 plus acre tract was acquired by Church Farm School in the 1950's.

#### Settlement/Exploration:

Solitude Farm dates from the first period of permanent, colonial settlement.

It was the home of several generations of one of Chester County's "most ancient and distinguished" families, the Jacobs. In approximately 1750 John Jacobs (III) settled on a vast tract of land spanning East and West Whiteland: He made Solitude Farm his homestead and raised there a family of four children. John Jacobs was one of the Township's most politically active citizens; he was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1776, a Speaker in the First General Assembly of Pennsylvania, and, prior to that, a member of Council under British government. After the Revolution broke out he became a "violent whig" and "rendered efficient service for General Washington by drawing a map of the surrounding County when the army was encamped at Valley Forge." John Jacobs died in 1780 at age 58, reputedly while "keeping the patriot army supplied with provisions and clothing...and getting together horses and fodder from among the Quakers of Chester County."

#28 cont.

L 6-1-1905, Reading Eagle 1917.

EVALUATOR(S)

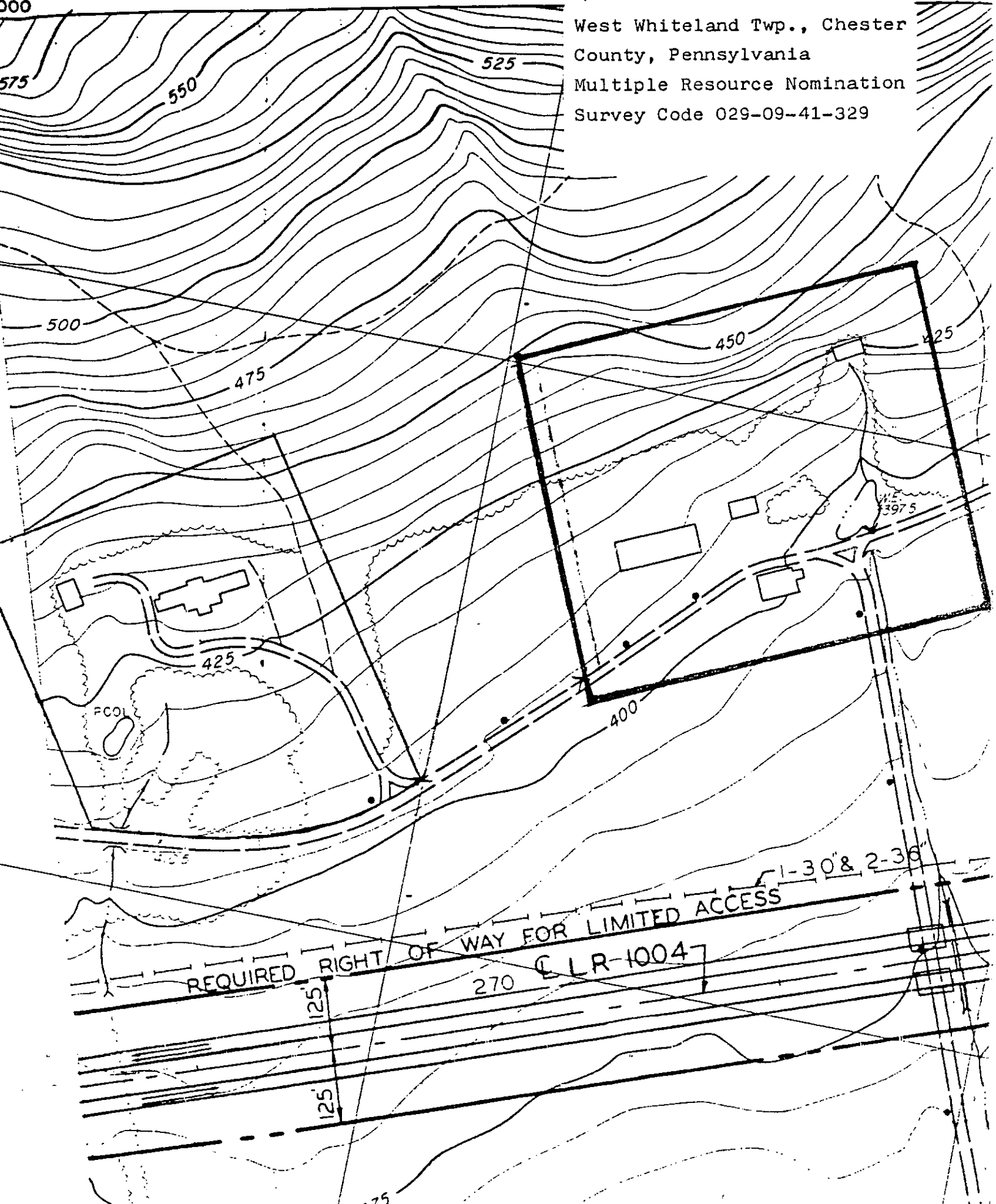
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E 491,000

West Whiteland Twp., Chester  
County, Pennsylvania

Multiple Resource Nomination

Survey Code 029-09-41-329



REQUIRED RIGHT OF WAY FOR LIMITED ACCESS  
 125 270 125  
 C L R-1004  
 1-30' & 2-36'

West Whiteland Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania  
Multiple Resource Nomination

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Solitude Farm Map #16

Summary Statement of Significance:

Solitude Farm is an excellent example of eighteenth century building traditions and it is eligible for listing under criterion C. Originally built as a hall-parlor plan house about 1750, it was quickly enlarged to conform to Georgian ideals as they took hold in the countryside around Philadelphia. It is a well-maintained structure and conveys a true sense of the past. The 1904 modernization of the dwelling harmonizes well with the structure and was intended as a sympathetic rehabilitation. Besides the house, there is also a garage, barn, and some small agricultural out-buildings on the site.

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point in the northern edge of Church Farm Road and 312.5 feet east of the easternmost edge of the Kates Mansion driveway; thence north 25° west 550 feet to a point; thence north 65° east 700 feet to a point; thence south 25° east 600 feet to a point; thence south 65° west 700 feet to a point; thence north 25° west 50 feet to the place of beginning, containing 9.6 acres.

Additional Photographs:



PG: Diane Snyder  
PV: Northwest View  
PD: March 1983  
Location: WWHC, 09-76, #18

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

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

West Whiteland Township, Chester County, PA MRA

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

For NPS use only

received

date entered

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Solitude Farm

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Map #16

The nominated acreage consists of a rectangle with the complex centrally located. Additional land has been included to protect the integrity of the setting and to provide a green buffer zone from future development. Besides the mansion house, the complex includes a contributing 1 story, long, rectangular pre-1848 fieldstone spring-house and a non-contributing frame corncrib and a large barn. The eastern and western walls of the barn are fieldstone and the eastern wall contains an 1822 datestone which appears to have been re-cycled. The northern and southern walls of the barn are cinderblock and were rebuilt in 1970 following a devastating fire.

