

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

1. County Chester
 5. present name Oaklands

8. property owners name and address
 John G. McIlvaine
 351 West Lincoln Highway
 Exton, PA 19341

9. tax parcel number / other number
 41-5-5.3

10. U.T.M. zone 18 Easting 4144510170
 Map# 41 Northing 4141310151610

11. status (other surveys, lists etc.)
 CCHSS,

usgs sheet: Downingtown

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

13. date(s) (how determined)
 1772 - datestone
 14. period
 1700-1799

15. style, design or folk type
 Colonial

19. original use 1.2A
 Residence-farm

20. present use
 Residence-non farm

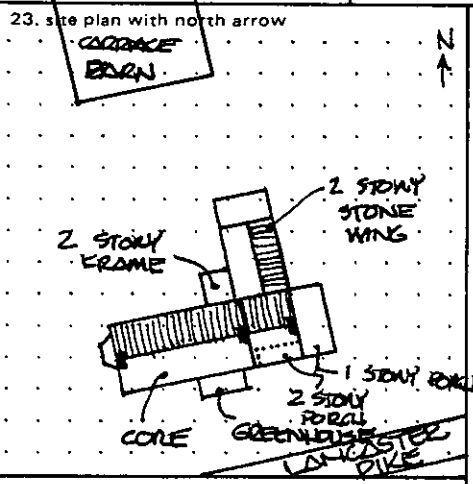
16. architect or engineer

17. contractor or builder
 George Thomas

18. primary building mat./construction
 Stone/Stucco

21. condition
 Average

22. integrity
 Average



2. municipality West Whiteland
 6. other name (historic name if any) Oaklands

24. photo notation
 PG: J. W. Dauber
 PV: East Elevation
 PD: 9/10/79

25. file/location
 CCHS, #09-20, #14

3. street address or specific location
 349 West Lincoln Highway

26. brief description (note unusual features, integrity...)
 Oaklands, located perilously close to Route 30, dates to 1772 in which year it was built by George Thomas, brother to Colonel Richard Thomas and heir to 500 acres of his father, Richard's (II) land. Once the principal dwelling of the Oakland Farm, its acreage is now vastly reduced and most of the associated agricultural buildings have been lost or are in separate ownership. The house, nevertheless retains its architectural integrity and serves as an important, highly visible reminder of the former existence of one of the most important farms in Chester County. The Oakland mansion consists of three major sections which were all in place by the mid-19th century: a dated 1772 core, a major wing to the east, and a second wing extending north of the first addition. The core is rectangular, double pile, 2 stories and shows a 3 bay facade on the south. As the Lancaster Turnpike was not completed until 1794, its original orientation was probably to the north where the Old Lancaster (continue on back if necessary)

27. history, significance and/or background
 Thomas Family The Thomas Family Group includes major dwellings built by brothers Richard and George Thomas and their direct descendents. Oaklands, the home of George (1746-1793), is the oldest among that group and continues in Thomas family ownership. The George Thomas line adhered closely to Quaker principles and life-style and distinguished itself in agriculture as opposed to the military and (continue on back if necessary)

28. sources of information
 "Annie's Recollections and Memories", Sarah R. Thomas (1969); "More Childhood Recollections", S. T. Thomas (1976-77); CCHS: Thomas family papers, clippings, etc; (continue on back if necessary)

29. prepared by:
 M. L. Wolf

30. date 12/1981 revision(s)

4. survey code 029-09-41-207, 208

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

7. Local survey organization
 Chester County Historical Society

8. property owners name and address
 Donald McIlvaine
 349 West Lancaster Ave.
 Exton PA 19341

9. tax parcel number / other number
 41-5-5

10. U.T.M. zone
 18 4145 101710

11. status (other surveys, lists etc.)
 map# 41-3
 usgs sheet: Downingtown

19. original use
 residence-farm

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

13. date(s) (how determined)
 1772 d.s.

15. style, design or folk type

20. present use
 residence

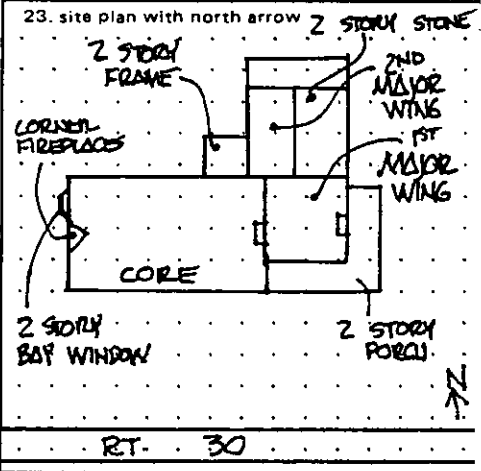
16. architect or engineer

17. contractor or builder

18. primary building mat./construction
 stone

21. condition average

22. integrity good



24. photo notation
 southwest
 09-26, #12

25. file/location
 CCHS, 09-26, #12

26. brief description (note unusual features, integrity, environment, etc.)
 Oaklands consists of a 1772 core, a major wing to the east, and another major wing to the back (north) of the first wing. The core was a simple 3 bay, double pile, 2 story rectangle with interior corner fireplaces on the west end and a larger fireplace on the east end. The house was extended on the east by one room serviced by a gable end fireplace, which now has an elaborate marble mantle. This wing is distinguished by its "cat-slide" roof which has been enlarged to form a two story front porch with decorative iron supports. The second major wing now houses the kitchen and service area. It, too, is plastered stone.

27. history, significance and/or background
 This house possesses exceptional historical significance. It was built by George Thomas, brother of the famous Richard Thomas (III) and was used for Quaker Meetings in 1778 while the Uwchaln Meeting was serving as a make-shift hospital. The house has stayed within the Thomas family to the present day. It was a very important farm in the 19th century and home of the "Oakland Dairy". Dr. George Thomas (descendent) (over)

28. sources of information
 Deed research, Family recollections, etc.
 Smedley Genealogy

29. prepared by:
 M.L. Wolf

30. date
 4/1981

revision(s)

1. County
 Chester

2. Municipality
 West Whiteland Twp

3. street address or specific location
 349 West Lancaster Ave.

4. survey code
 029-09-41

5. present name
 Oaklands

6. other name (historic name if any)
 Oaklands

029-(09)-41-

27. cont.
was a noted agriculturist and horticulturist, and grew rare and exotic plants on his farm.

13. DATESTONE

1772

EVALUATION

Eligible for Nation Register

EVALUATOR(S)

MARTHA WOLF

#26 Cont'd...

Road once existed. The 1772 core is constructed of stuccoed stone as are the 2 major wings. Brick lipped chimneys are set flush with the gable ends, the western one of which serves 2 interior "corner" fireplaces, a recurring feature of 18th century Chester County homes. There is no apparent evidence of an original center hall and the ceilings are low, both features indicative of its early date of construction. Extending off its east end is a narrower two-story, two bay major wing distinguished by its "cat-slide" roof. The wing and core are united however, by a common roofline which, in the wing, culminates in a two-tiered open porch accented with wrought iron railing. This unusual porch arrangement is quite similar to that seen in the Ashbridge House. Distinction between core and wing is further obscured by three pill-astered elliptical dormer windows evenly distributed across the roof. A secondary wing extends to the north containing bedrooms and service area. Minor frame additions to the house include a two-story bay window to the west, a two-story enclosed porch in the L formed by the second wing, and an addition to the north of this wing. Included on the tract is a 1½ story stuccoed stone gatehouse which was remodelled in 1900 as a private school for Thomas children. A sleeping loft for the houseman was contained above.

#27 Cont'd...

politics. Oaklands, however, did feel the effects of the Revolutionary War. During the winter of 1777-8, it was used by the Uwchlan Meeting while its regular house in Lionville served as a hospital for sufferers from nearby Valley Forge.

Agriculture: Since its construction in 1772, Oaklands has been one of the Township's most visible and important farms, enjoying a prime location along the Turnpike, blessed with limestone-rich soil and adequate water, and owned by an old and prominent family. Its builder, George Thomas, was a Chester County "pioneer" in the introduction of lime to his fields as a soil supplement. The application of lime did not become wide-spread in the County until the beginning of the 19th century. During his brother, Colonel Richard's, term in the Revolution, George Thomas remained on the family farm and oversaw both his and his brother's farms. One of Oakland's most distinguished and successful residents was George Thomas, MD (1808-1887), grandson of its builder. Although trained for medicine, he preferred the life of a gentleman farmer and developed Oaklands into one of Chester County's showplaces. During the 1860's his farm consisted of approximately 500 acres inherited from his father. With the acquisition of additional land, his holdings later reached 1000 acres which, as his obituary notes, caused him to be called the "Prince of the (Great) Valley." Thomas combined a love of agriculture with a taste for horticulture. His grounds were planted with exotic specimens and he is noted for his "grapery", a 40' greenhouse he designed which used a new method of ventilation. In an article published in Country Gentleman in 1861 it was noted that "Dr. George Thomas has brought his estate into a condition having probably few, if any, parallels in the county..." The three sons of George inherited their father's land and like him operated successful farms for many years.

Architecture: Oaklands is of architectural interest, not only for its late 18th century core, but for its distinctive two-tiered front porch extremely rare to Chester County. This type of porch appears to have been favored by a few other West Whiteland residents; similar 2-tiered porches are found on the Ashbridge Mansion and the Zook House, the latter, like Oaklands, having the porch extend from a "cat-slide" roof.

EVALUATOR(S)

West Whiteland Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania
Multiple Resource Nomination - The Thomas House

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Oaklands Map #41

Summary Statement of Significance:

Oaklands is eligible under criterion B for its association with the Thomas family and under criterion C as an example of the colonial building patterns used in the township. Enlarged during the nineteenth century, the house has one feature that, while used elsewhere in the township, is rare in the eastern and central portions of Chester County. That feature is the second floor porch on the nineteenth century wing.

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point in the northern edge of the Lincoln Highway located 303 feet east of the center of Whitford Road; thence north 7° 36 minutes 24 seconds west 142.01 to a point; thence north 76° 00 minutes 51 seconds east 247 feet to a point; thence south 31° 59 minutes 09 seconds east 191.88 feet to another point in the northern edge of the Lincoln Highway; thence in a westerly direction along the northern edge of said highway 324.72 feet to the place of beginning, containing 1.2 acres.

**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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Page

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Oaklands Map #41

The nominated acreage includes all land currently associated with the property. A contributing structure located on the site is a small 1 1/2 story, rectangular, stuccoed stone gatehouse which features a gothic arch window in the south gable end and a bracketed cornice. The garage/barn shown on the site plan (item #23) is on a separate parcel and under different ownership.

West Whiteland Twp., Chester
County, Pennsylvania
Multiple Resource Nomination
Survey Code 029-09-41-207,20

