

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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HISTORIC
PRESERVATION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name KASTNER, Jacob, Log House

other names/site number Tax Parcel # 39-00-02989-00-5

2. Location

street & number 416 Norristown Road

N/A

not for publication

city or town Spring House, (Lower Gwynedd Township)

N/A

vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Montgomery code 091 zip code 19477

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
 request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brent Glass

Brent Glass, Executive Director

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission

05-15-96

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register.

removed from the National
Register.

other, (explain:)

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

SUBSISTENCE

SUBSISTENCE

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Log Cabin

foundation stone

walls wood

roof weatherboard and shingle

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

Ca:1712--1754

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Montgomery County Historical Society
Property Owner

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.3

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	118	48117915	444751610
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Herbert W. Levy, Architect/Owner

organization _____ date 3 February 1996

street & number Post Office Box 213 telephone 215-643-5266

city or town Spring House, state PA zip code 19477

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Herbert W. & Florence F. Levy

street & number Post Office Box 213 telephone 215-643-5266

city or town Spring House state PA zip code 19477

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

Description

This historic property is located on the south side of Norristown Road, the original log house within twenty [20] feet of the roadway. The site contains the dwelling and the original well as contributing resources. Non-contributing resources consist of two [2] sheds, an inground swimming pool, a pavilion building and a wooden enclosure fence. With the exception of one shed, all are within the fence. The log house, built circa 1712-1754, is a one and a half story building with an English single pen plan, fifteen feet wide and sixteen and a half feet deep with a stone cellar. The present dwelling, built through a series of additions to the east and south of the log house, has resulted in a complex plan, but one which retains a high visibility for the original building. The original well, stone lined and approximately thirty-two feet deep once located outside the original front door, now lies beneath the kitchen and is counted as a contributing resource. Covered with glass it can still be viewed and remains as an example of a construction style used when the house was built. At the time the well was exposed, part of the original house exterior wall construction was also exposed and has been preserved.

An 1890 description of the site reads, "This is a rather secluded place, the farm fronting on the dirt road, extending to Three Tuns. With this, the buildings are connected by a long lane. The latter are on a bank rising from a meadow and the gushing spring early brought the first settlers here. On the south is a forest of considerable extent. The surface north of the building is quite level. Here has been a habitation for a long time. Robert Coombs was the owner prior to 1754." (Mathews Scrap Book, #91, p. 73)

The log house is the only portion of the existing dwelling that stands over one story high. Its stone cellar walls now extend eighteen inches above ground but originally there was a five foot high exterior door on the north side facing Norristown Road. Roof gables are boarded and set perpendicularly to the road with an interior stone chimney also at the north side. Two six pane casement windows flank the chimney and a four pane window is centered under the roof ridge on the south gable. Walls are covered with board and batten siding; the purlin roof is shingled. The exposed west wall contains a 6/6 double hung window and a small "soul window" on the first floor.

The interior of the original house has been extremely well preserved. Centered on the north wall, the fireplace is built completely within the log walls providing space on the west for boxed-in winding stairs to the cellar and upper level and a cupboard on the east. Plank doors and paneling are used to enclose them both. Sixteen logs high, from the top of the cellar wall to the top of the knee wall, the logs are widely spaced and ax hewn with some debarking

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Montgomery County, PADescription (continued)

of tops and bottoms. Corners are hewn, V-notched and sawn square. Chinking is rubble stone set in a lime-sand mortar and interior daubing is made of ashes, clay and animal hair. Interior wall surfaces were originally completely white-washed and exterior chinking received a cement mortar weather coat. Opening into the present kitchen, the east wall contains the original doorway and one window frame. The south wall now has an opening into the present dwelling. Window and door frames are pegged to the logs. The "soul window" in the west wall may be a later addition as it is set between logs with no jamb framing members. Roof rafters are sawn beams or debarked tree trunks, mortised and pegged at the ridge. Roof purlins are sawn. Floor framing for each level consists of five beams spanning the long dimension. Hewn, debarked logs serve the first floor while pit sawn beams serve the upper level. Flooring consists of wide, random width pine planks. The first floor planks are narrower, laid over rough sawn subflooring nailed through to the log framing with handmade nails. The unfinished cellar has a dirt floor and whitewashed walls and the remains of an earlier brick lined water course are in the southwest corner. In the attic above the top of the knee wall/ceiling, now plastered, the stone chimney extends up the north wall.

Though the house has had a substantial number of additions erected on the south and east (indicated (8) as shown on the attached site plan), the original cabin has been only minimally changed. Little is known regarding dates of early alterations. The first seems to have been the cladding of the exterior walls with board and batten siding. Demolition of later work revealed this siding as having been in place before those additions were built. Oral history, recorded in 1981, from former residents, as well as historic photographs provide some information on additions as well as their interior finishes, especially from about 1890.

The earliest addition seems to have been a shed extension six feet deep across the east end of the house.(2) This extension was enlarged another eight feet about 1890 (3) (oral history) while additions extended on the south wall to the original window and to the original cabin wall on the north side.(3) This north addition was provided with a brick chimney for heating. About 1900 a further extension was built on the south side, also having its own stove for heating.(4) This extension, partially below grade, is known to have been used as a "hot house." At this time muslin was attached to the interior first floor walls (oral history). Later these walls were paneled with a beaded german siding installed over the earlier whitewash and muslin finishes.

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Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

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Description (continued)

In 1942, the additions on the south side of the house (3)(4) were demolished and replaced with new frame construction that contained the first inside toilet.(5) On a photograph of this new construction a note reads, "Cabin rear over 200 years old." In 1948, the south side additions were again removed and were replaced with a twenty-four by thirty-three foot addition containing a corridor, two rooms and a bath.(6) This new construction provided a second cellar with concrete masonry unit walls and a concrete floor. The cellar contains the heating system and storage space. Its attic contains air conditioning equipment. The exterior was of stone and stucco; 6/6 double hung windows and a wood shingle roof. The interior finishes are plaster, floors are pine, with paneled doors and millwork, all selected to be compatible with the original house. The addition was directly connected to the original house as the original south wall window was made into a doorway. A second doorway opened from the new work into the older shed.(2) The front door, though relocated, remains on the east. In 1969, the easterly shed (3) was extended, this time another four feet (7), while the addition (3) was removed. The entire shed area was redone as a kitchen/dining room with brick floors, exposed ceiling beams, plank doors and panels to match those in the original house. Most of the earlier beaded siding was removed leaving only a small amount on the north wall of the first shed (2) where it remains today. Whitewash was removed and the original daubing materials replaced with plaster cement to provide cleaner living conditions. Some original board and batten exterior siding on the north wall was removed and replaced in kind, as the cellar door was replaced with a window when grades were changed. Two non-contributing sheds were moved to the site, a new non-contributing pavilion building was erected, and a fence was installed to provide privacy from the widened road.

In 1979, the east wall was moved nine feet to provide a sun room.(8) The frame walls were enclosed with 6/9 double hung windows on three sides with the interior finish done to match the 1969 work. The earlier exterior stucco was faced with a random grooved plywood to be more compatible with the original batten and board siding. On the west side of the 1948 work an additional bath and dressing room were added (8), finished on the exterior with the same grooved plywood. All roofs are now wood shingled.

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Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

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Description (continued)

There are five non-contributing resources. The swimming pool, built in 1982, is adjacent to the 1969 non-contributing twelve foot by eighteen foot open pavilion building with a wood shingle roof and is well screened from the house. During the pool excavation eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts were unearthed. One of the non-contributing small frame sheds moved to the site is situated south of the original house. Eight feet by eight feet, it has a wood shingled gable roof, walls of vertical wood siding with a plank door and strap hinges on the east side. Six pane fixed windows are centered on the north and south walls. Outside the enclosing, and non-contributing, six foot high stockade wood fence and west of the original house, a former sheep shed has been moved to the property. A non-contributing frame building seven feet by twelve feet, it has a wood shingle shed roof with an extending projection on the east side. Walls are board and batten siding. Double plank doors open under the roof projection and six pane, fixed windows are on the north and south walls.

Since the construction of the "hot house" (4), landscaping has been carefully planned and executed. Plantings screen much of the property and brick lined gravel paths provide access throughout. Although the "long lane" referred to in 1890 has disappeared, vestiges of wagon wheel ruts can still be seen leading from the road, south past the dwelling to the rear of the property where they once led to an early nineteenth century stone Sweitzer barn, demolished in 1941. A portion of its earthen bank still can be seen at that location.

The property is in excellent condition and the additions are sympathetic to it. From the road the original house can still be seen, hardly altered in appearance since it was clad in board and batten siding.

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Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

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Statement of Significance

The Kastner Log House is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, a locally significant intact example of log house construction circa 1712-1754. It is the only such house remaining in Lower Gwynedd Township and one of the few in Montgomery County to have survived. It maintains its original form and massing with the majority of its details intact.

Settled in 1698 by Welsh immigrants, stone and logs provided an expedient means of construction for housing and outbuildings. In 1701 William Penn, on a visit to the community, lodged in one of the log dwellings that boasted the refinement of having the bark removed from its log walls. It was here that he was overheard to give thanks for "peaceful and excellent shelter in the wilderness." (Ruth 1991) By 1725 the established settlers began building larger and more substantial stone homes and barns, many of which were erected beside or even over the foundations of their first shelters near springs and meadows. These two story stone houses allowed for features typical of Welsh, seventeenth century architecture such as steep pitched roofs, interior paneling and open newel stairs. Numerous such buildings exist today. The 1798 Gwynedd Window Pane Tax List shows seventy-six stone houses, twenty-five wood houses and forty-eight log structures, of which only seventeen are still noted as houses. A log stable is also listed for Kastner but no sign of it exists today.

Due to the absence of recorded deeds, construction dates cannot be established more accurately than as having occurred between 1712 and 1754. Jacob Kastner, a German, purchased the eighty-one acre property in 1754 from Robert Coombs, a Welsh man, who may have been the original builder. Kastner apparently leased the property to his son Samuel from the time of purchase until Samuel inherited it in 1767, at which time the Gwynedd Assessment shows him to own one horse and three cows. Upon Samuel's death in 1807 the property was reduced to forty-three acres when it was divided in half and inherited by two daughters, one living in the cabin until 1829 when it passed from the hands of the Kastner family. In 1848 the property shows on a map as the forty-eight acre J. Fitzwater property (Morris 1848). Michael Conway owned the property in 1871 (Hopkins 1871) and W. Merrill acquired the property in 1873 (Scott 1877). The property was reduced to eleven acres when it was sold in 1885. By 1926 the property was reduced to eight and one-half acres; five acres in 1950; 2.2 acres in 1960; and 1.3 acres in 1976.

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Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

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Statement of Significance (continued)

The early Gwynedd settlement was not a self-sufficient community. It was necessary that settlers raise a few subsistence crops as well as livestock and a sheep or two while land was being cleared. Such a system soon required mills for grinding and sawing or the means to reach them. Road building became a priority and in 1702 Welsh Road (now Norristown Road) was confirmed to extend ten miles from Spring House to these mills. The earlier subsistence farms grew and developed as a commercial effort so that by 1850 there were 278 families on 193 farms. By mid to late nineteenth century the railroad brought wealthy owners from Philadelphia to summer estates and year round homes. By 1885 when the Kastner property was reduced to eleven acres, the owner was not listed as yeoman or farmer. Yet, from 1893 to 1941 the property owners were well known throughout the area for their small crops of berries, grapes and fruits (oral history).

It is fairly simple to view the house and find prototype English and German elements of construction in the house. From the English, the square single pen plan, the gable end chimney, the eave side entrance; and from the German, hillside siting, mortised upper floor joists set several logs below the top plate, wide chinks with sizable mortared stone, asymmetrical door and window placements (Jordan 1978). The Kastner House represents an English plan blended with a German building technology, not unusual where a Welsh settlement had a 50% German population after sixty years (Ruth 1991).

In a true vernacular style, the cement and lime weather coat on the exterior face of the chinking seems to indicate the intention of the builder to expose the log structure. The door and window frames were trimmed only to the outer face of the logs, though signs of a later trim piece can be seen in layering of paint coats. The oldest sections of board and batten siding indicate early nineteenth century work using ogee shaped battens, pit sawn boards and cut nails. By the time the siding was placed there had been a cultural change in the house symbol. With stone and wood construction, exposed logs were no longer acceptable.

Though it is difficult to make determinations on dates of construction, the house remains a rare example of a once common architecture type; the simple vernacular house of the eighteenth century in the Gwynedd areas. It maintains an expression of folk art that had its own characteristics modified as cultural and life style changes occurred in the community over two and one-half centuries.

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Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

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Jacob Kastner Log House
Montgomery County, PA

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- Book #22, p. 249, n.d.
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- Book #67, p. 133, 1845.
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Jacob Kastner Log House
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Verbal Boundary Description

Montgomery County/Lower Gwynedd Township Parcel
Number 39-00-02989-00-5.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries selected are the parcel of land containing the Jacob Kastner House. This property is the remainder of Kastner's original 81 acre tract which has been subdivided and developed over the years. No visible historic resources remain on those other properties.

Eastner, J, Log House
Montgomery County, PA
Ambler, PA Quad
Zone 18
E 481795
N 4447560

