

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM PHOTO/SITE PLAN SHEET

Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission
Bureau of Historic Preservation
Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

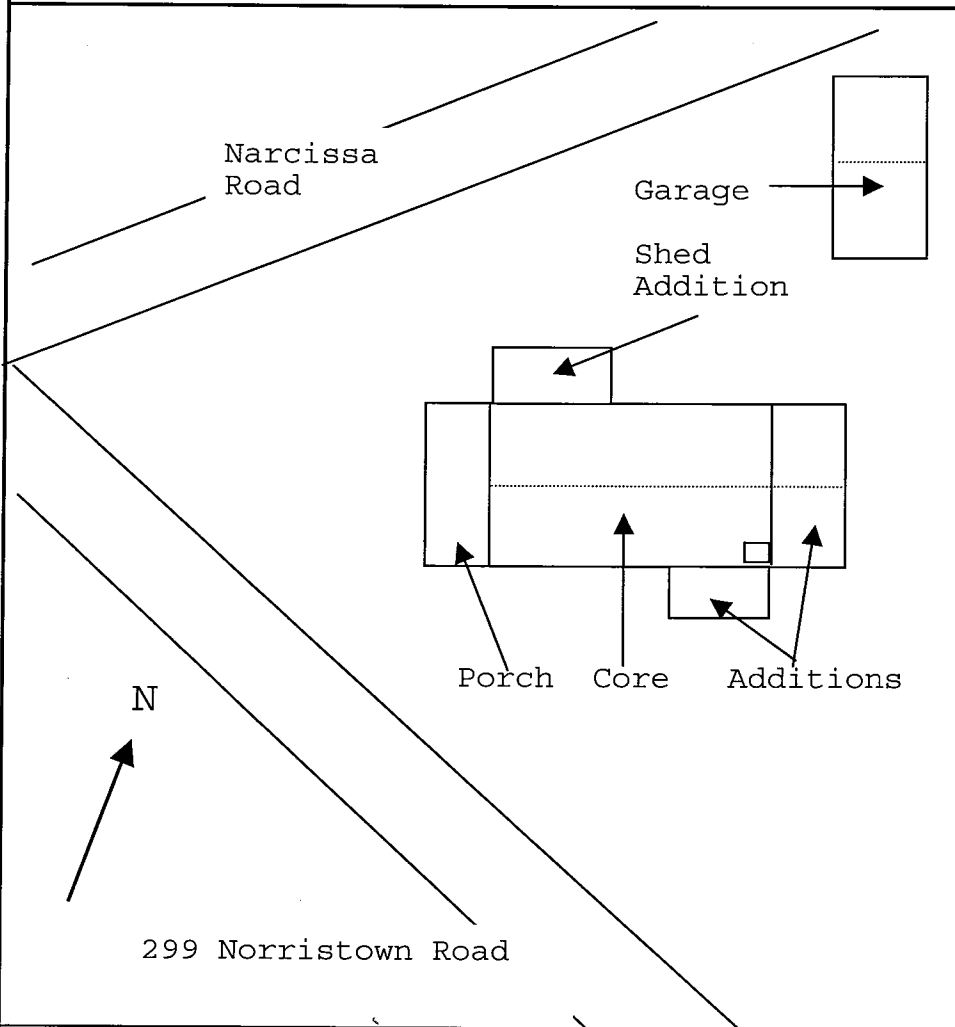
Survey Code/Tax Parcel/Other No.: 071 / 66 00 04750 00 8 Block-Unit #022-019 County: Montgomery

Municipality: Whitpain Township Address: 299 Norristown Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422

Historic Name/Other Name: Sandy Hill School

SITE PLAN

PHOTO INFORMATION



Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
1	West façade (front)	E
2	South façade showing enclosed porch (left)	N
3	Garage, west façade	E
4		
5		
6		
Photographer Name: Robert Wise		Date: 1999
Negative Location: Robert Wise Consulting, Station Square 1, Suite 104, 37 N. Valley Road, Paoli PA 19301		

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - DATA SHEET

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code: 071 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66.00.04750.00.8 Block Unit #022-019
County: 1. Montgomery 2.
Municipality: 1. Whippain Township 2.
Address: 299 Norristown Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422 Historic Name: Sandy Hill School
Other Name:
Owner Name/Address: Horace B. & Carolina O. Firth 299 Norristown Road Blue Bell PA 19422
Owner Category: x Private Public-local Public-state Public-federal
Resource Category: x Building District Site Structure Object
Number/Approximate Number of Resources Covered by This Form: 2
USGS Quad: 1. Lansdale 2.
UTM A. C.
References: B. D.

HISTORIC AND CURRENT FUNCTIONS

Historic Function Category: Subcategory: Code:
A. EDUCATION school 05A
B.
C.
D.

Particular Type: A. EDUCATION/one-room_school
B.
C.
D.

Current Function Category: Subcategory: Code:
A. DOMESTIC single_dwelling 01A
B.
C.
D.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: A. No.Style 21
B. C.
D. Other:

Exterior Materials: Foundation STONE 40 Roof ASPHALT 63
Walls STUCCO 61
Other

Structural System: 1. MASONRY 20
Width 18 feet ONE ROOM Depth / 35 feet Stories/Height 1

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: 1859 Additions/Alterations Dates: ca. 1920s ___
Basis for Dating: ___ Documentary Physical
Explain: Date Stone

Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation: 1. _____ 2. _____ Associated Individuals: 1. _____ 2. _____
Associated Events: 1. _____ 2. _____ Architects/Engineers: 1. _____ 2. _____
Builders: 1. _____ 2. _____

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Crossroads in Time

PREVIOUS SURVEY, DETERMINATIONS

Whitpain Township Historic Sites Survey, 2000.

EVALUATION (Survey Director/Consultants Only)

Individual NR Potential: ___ Yes No Context(s): _____
Contributes to Potential District ___ Yes No District Name/Status: _____

THREATS

Threats: 2 1. None 2. Public Development 3. Private Development 4. Neglect 5. Other

Explain: Potential simplification of the Six-Points intersection may have an impact upon the house.

SURVEYOR INFORMATION

Surveyor Name/Title: Robert Wise Date: 6/16/2000
Project Name: Whitpain Township Historic Resource Survey
Organization: Robert Wise Consulting/Whitpain Township Telephone: (610) 722-5818
Street and No.: Station Square 1, Suite 104, 37 North Valley Road
City, State: Paoli, Pa Zip Code: 19301
Additional Survey Documentation: _____ n/a
Associated Survey Codes: _____ n/a

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
NARRATIVE SHEET 89C

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation

Survey Code: 071 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66.00.04750.00.8.Block-Unit #022-019
County: Montgomery 091 Municipality: Whitpain Township
Address: 299 Norristown Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422
Historic/Other Name: Sandy Hill School

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Sandy Hill School House is located at 299 Norristown Road to the northeast of the Six Points intersection on a 0.68-acre triangular-shaped tract. The tract is bounded by Narcissa Road to the northwest, Norristown Road to the south, and the Lone Star Farm to the east. Much of the property has trees and vegetation. It was constructed in 1859 but was converted into residential use about 1920.

There are two architectural resources located on the property: an altered school house and an early twentieth-century garage. The Sandy Hill School House is a building of local importance, being one of a series of school houses constructed during the 1850s during the growth of public education in Whitpain Township.

The primary architectural resource on the property is the 1859 Sandy Hill School House, an 18 x 30 vernacular building with a Federal-style fanlight in the attic and four additions. Long since being used as a school house, the building was converted into a residence in 1917. The core of the school is a one-and-a-half story, three bay building clad with stucco. The building has an asphalt-clad front-gabled roof and has one end slope chimney on the northeastern corner. The Federal period fanlight in the southwestern gable consists of four panes in a semi-circular pattern; below this fanlight is the date stone. There are four additions to this house. A stucco-covered addition on the southwestern side of the house is a one-room element with a shed roof. A second addition on the southwestern gable end of the house (c. 1933) is a one-story frame element with aluminum siding and a shed-roof. This addition is a three-bay element with a centered storm door flanked by one-over-one windows. The windows on the side of this addition are one-by-one sliding windows. An enclosed porch on the southeastern gable end of the house is also a small one-room element with a shed roof.

Associated Resource: Located at the northeast former of the property is the large garage. This building was originally erected to service airplanes and has three large bays with paneled doors. The roof of this building has an unusual shape; there is a shed roof over the first two bays with another shed roof over the third bay. These two roofs overlap slightly over the pier between the second and third bays to form somewhat of a front-gabled appearance. The walls of the garage are clad with vertical aluminum siding. There is an addition on the rear of the garage with a shed roof.

Originally, the garage had a large sliding door which was used for driving in airplanes for repair. In 2000, this sliding door was replaced with the three smaller garage doors now in place. These changes make the garage a noncontributing resource.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE – SANDY HILL SCHOOL HOUSE, PAGE 1

The Sandy Hill School House may be locally significant under the National Register Criteria A as an example of a township-wide educational effort in the mid-nineteenth century as well as an example of a one-room school house. While the school is no longer in use as an educational facility, and is altered, its history has been published, and its highly visible location enables it to make evident an earlier time in Whitpain Township's educational history.

During the latter part of the 1850s, the School Directors of Whitpain Township inaugurated a significant construction campaign. Many of the schools in the township were in poor condition, and additional facilities were needed. As a result, five school houses were built: Shady Grove (1855), Ellis School in Washington Square (1856), Franklinville (1858), and Center Square and Sandy Hill (1859). Existing photographs of these school houses show that they were very similar in appearance at the time of their use as school houses. Of these five school houses, one still stands, two have been converted to residential use, and two have been demolished.

The Sandy Hill School House was built in 1859 across Narcissa Road from an earlier school building constructed in 1796. [The earlier school had been constructed by the Society of Friends (Quakers) and was presumably demolished during the mid-nineteenth century.] Specifications for the Sandy Hill School (and Center Square School) were decided upon by the School Board and included in their minutes of June 11, 1859, as quoted below in *Crossroads in Time*:

“Said Houses to be of stone, 25 feet side by 32 feet deep or long with solid foundations, walls (at Sandy Hill 20 inches deep) 24 inches deep and deeper if necessary, 20 inches thick to the laying of the joice, and from thence up 18 inches, to be built of good stone, on mortar having not less than one bushel of lime to every perch of stone wall, and to be not less than ten feet high from the top of the joice to the bottom of the raising plate. The joice to be not nearer to the ground in any place than one foot. The joists to be of hemlock of the best quality 3 by 9, and laid not more than 20 inches from center to center, with a partition wall lengthwise of the building for the joice to rest on 20 inches thick. The floor to be of best quality 1 ¼ inch thick yellow pine boards, and a platform raised the whole width of the North East gable 8 inches high and 6 feet wide. There shall be 8 windows – 3 back and 3 front – equally spaced and 2 in the S.E. gable one each side of the door. Each window shall have 12 lights of 9 by 14 inch hooks with staples, for outside fastenings all made of 1/8 inch wrought iron, and 10 inch shutter bolts and rings for inside. There shall be one door in the South West Gable and said door to be 7 feet high, and 3 wide, and 3 inches thick, hung with 3 good 4 inch butt hinges, with heavy thumb latch, and 8 inch lock with key in good order. Said door to have a substantial marble sill. The roof to be of best pine shingles and raised on 6 inch brackets framed into 7 inch joice put on the inside of the wall, similar to the other new houses already built in the District.”

Crossroads in Time also quotes from a report called *History of the Sandy Hill School* by Anna V. Walton. Walton reported that the interior had the following features:

“In the center the ceiling for 20 feet is parallel to the floor and stands at an angle at 140 degrees for about 3 ft. on each side. The wall on the northeast end of the room has been painted black to be used as a blackboard, and then there is also a small board which is fastened against the wall. The room is heated by a coal stove which stands in the center, the pipe running up to the roof. The room is furnished with eighteen desks, each large enough for two scholars. The Teacher's desk stands on the platform which is in the northeast end, then there are four large class benches. In the west corner of the room is a small closet in which we put out kettles.”

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE – SANDY HILL SCHOOL HOUSE, PAGE 2

After fifty-five years of service, the Sandy Hill School House was becoming obsolete. Whitpain Township began the process of consolidating the one-room schools into new and larger school houses, and the old school houses of the 1850s ceased to function as educational facilities. The township sold the Sandy Hill School House in 1917 (Montgomery County Deed Book 788 page 437). Soon thereafter, the new owners converted the interior was altered for residential use. The Oat family purchased it in 1923, and a descendant of the Oat family resides there today. Presumably the Oat family erected the additions and the garage. The garage served as a small aircraft repair facility in the 1930s for planes at Wings Field across Narcissa Road. While these changes have had an impact upon the integrity of the house, they have not obliterated the ability of the resource to convey the role it played in the township's educational history, nor have these changes altered the general appearance of the building at its highly visible location at the Six Points intersection. Indeed, the Sandy Hill School House is a local landmark.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – SANDY HILL SCHOOL HOUSE

DEED RESEARCH

1. The School District of Whitpain Township purchased the land in the 1850s.
2. The School District of Whitpain Township sold the land to Henry C. Biddle on 12-11-1917 (Montgomery County Deed Book [MCDB] volume 765 page 293).
3. Henry C. Biddle sold the land to Harry Sarfert on 7-27-1919 for \$1,600 (MCDB 788:437).
4. Harry and Lillian Sarfert of Philadelphia sold the land to I. Frank and Margaret C. Oat on 7-18-1923 for \$3,500 (MCDB 895:62).
5. Frank and Margaret Oat died and left their property to their children (MCDB 4437:495—496).
Caroline (Oat) Cusomano Firth purchased the interest of her brother in the land for \$18,000 on 8-2-1979 and became the sole owner (MCDB 4437:495—496).

