

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM PHOTO/SITE PLAN SHEET

Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission

Bureau of Historic Preservation

Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

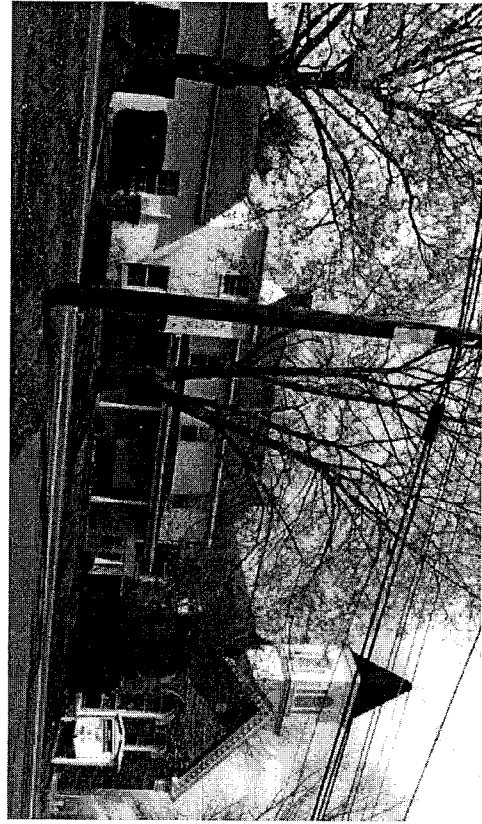
Survey Code/Tax Parcel/Other No.: 095 / 66-00-05188-00-2 Block 015 Unit 022 County: Montgomery

Municipality: Whippain Township Address: Penllyn Blue Bell Pike

Historic Name/Other Name: _____

SITE PLAN _____

PHOTO INFORMATION



Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
1	Church buildings and additions -- facade (left)	
2	Church buildings and additions -- facade (right)	
3		
4		
5		
6		
Photographer Name: Robert Wise		Date: 1999
Negative Location: Robert Wise Consulting, Station Square J, 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

89B

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code: 095 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66-00-05188-00-2 Block 015 Unit 022

County: 1. Montgomery 091 2.

Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2.

Address: Penllyn Blue Bell Pike Historic Name:

Other Name:

Owner Name/Address: Boehms Reformed Church 571 Penllyn Blue Bell Pk., Blue Bell PA 19422

Owner Category: Private Public-local Public-state Public-federal

Resource Category: Building District Site Structure Object

Number/Approximate Number of Resources Covered by This Form: 1

USGS Quad: 1. Lansdale 2.

UTM A. _____ C.

References: B. _____ D.

HISTORIC AND CURRENT FUNCTIONS

Historic Function Category: _____ Subcategory: _____ Code: _____

A. Religious structure RELIGION _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Particular Type: A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Current Function Category: _____ Subcategory: _____ Code: _____

A. Religious structure RELIGION _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: A. Gothic _____

B. _____ C. _____

D. _____ Other: _____

Exterior Materials: Foundation _____ Roof _____

Walls stone _____ Walls _____

Other _____ Other _____

Structural System: 1. _____ 2. _____

Width _____ Depth _____ Stories/Height 1 _____

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ___ ca. _____ Additions/Alterations Dates: ___ ca. ___ ca. ___

Basis for Dating: Documentary Physical

Explain: Tax records

Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation: 1. _____ 2. _____ Associated Individuals: 1. _____ 2. _____

Associated Events: 1. _____ 2. _____ Architects/Engineers: 1. _____ 2. _____

Builders: 1. _____ 2. _____

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

PREVIOUS SURVEY, DETERMINATIONS

EVALUATION (Survey Director/Consultants Only)

Individual NR Potential: Yes No Context(s): _____

Contributes to Potential District Yes No District Name/Status: _____

Classification: Class II due to several additions.

THREATS

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

Explain:

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: _____ 095 _____ Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66-00-05188-00-2 Block 015 Unit 022
County: _____ Montgomery _____ 091 _____ Municipality: _____ Whitpain Township
Address: _____ Penllyn Blue Bell Pike
Historic/Other Name:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This building is a fine example of Georgian-inspired religious architecture. The façade is covered with undressed, semi-coursed stone; the side is stucco. A mid-sized steeple near one gable end has louvers in the shape of a Palladian window on each side. The roof is framed by dentil molding. There are two square stone columns on the façade supporting a dentil echinus. Long vertical windows on each façade are arches, and a strong stone arch on the facade accentuates the arched window. There are some non-contributing associated buildings on the site as well.

Classification: Class II due to several additions.



Sketch of Boehm's Church as it Appears in 1976

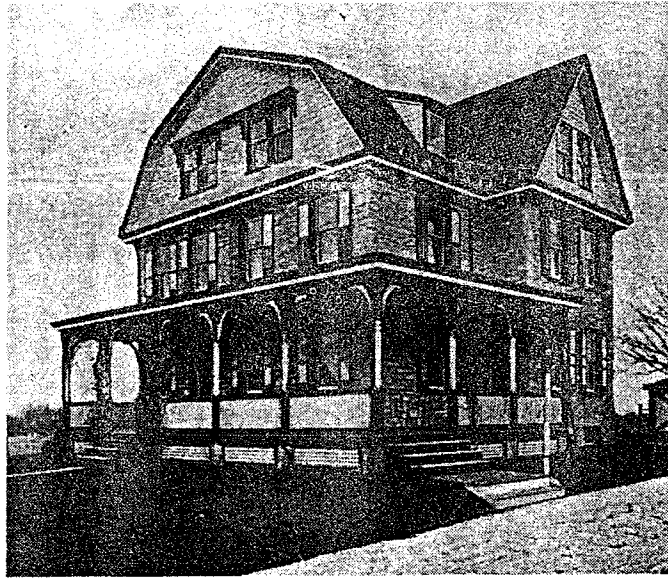
History of Boehm's Reformed United Church of Christ

By George C. Taylor, Jr.
Photography by George C. Taylor, Jr

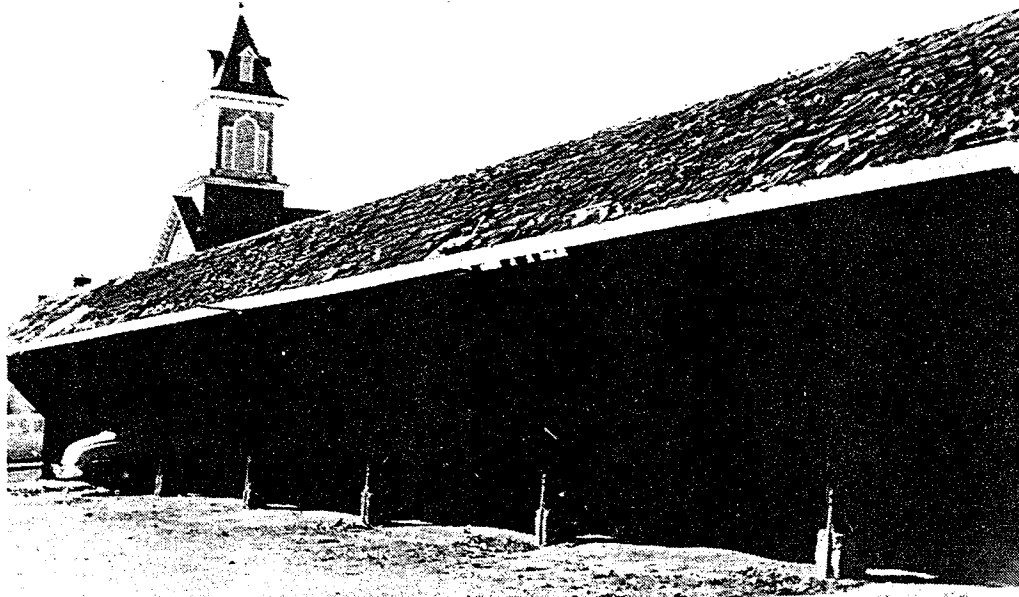
The United Church of Christ denomination is a combination of the previous Evangelical and Reformed Church with the Congregational Church. Earlier, the Reformed Church in America united with the Evangelical Church. Boehm's was originally a Reformed Church; first, Dutch Reformed under the auspices of the Classis of Amsterdam, then in 1790, under the German Reformed Synod of America in Philadelphia. The Dutch and German Reformed Churches are virtually identical in doctrine and theology, both following the teachings of the Heidelberg Catechism. The Reformed Church was founded shortly after Martin Luther fathered the Lutheran Church in Germany but, the father of this denomination is generally regarded to be Huldreich Zwingli of Switzerland.

In 1740, the Reverend John Philip Boehm lived on his 200 acre farm in Whitpain Township, between what is now Cathcart Road and School House Lane, just northeast of Skippack Pike. One of his sons farmed this land while his father rode circuit and attended to the affairs of various churches which he had founded and serviced as often as he could. As he approached his sixtieth year, the hardships of long rides on horseback in all kinds of weather began to catch up with him, and he was forced to spend more time closer to home. His neighbors petitioned him to hold services for them whenever he was at home on Sunday and he complied, beginning in 1740. Finally, this little congregation grew to the point that a building was necessary and, where the Blue Bell Pike meets Plymouth Road, a

*Old view of the 1890 Parsonage
at 830 Blue Bell-Pennlyn Pike*



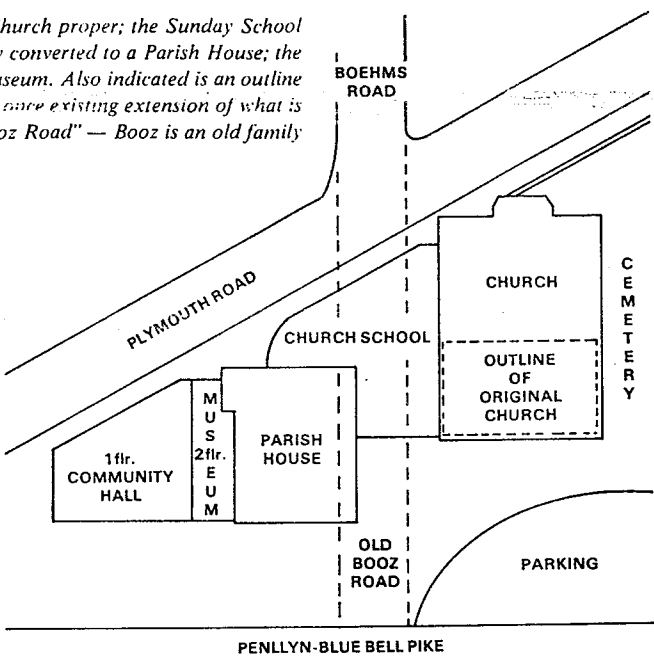
Horse Sheds



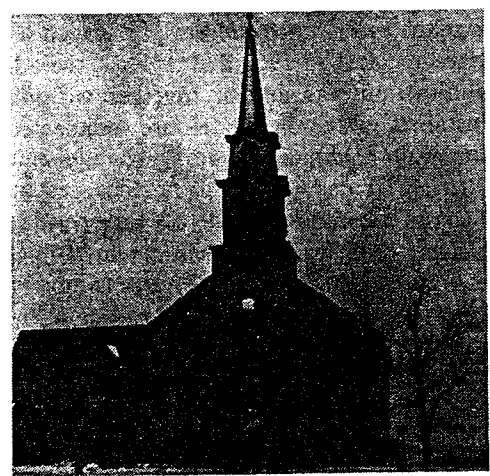
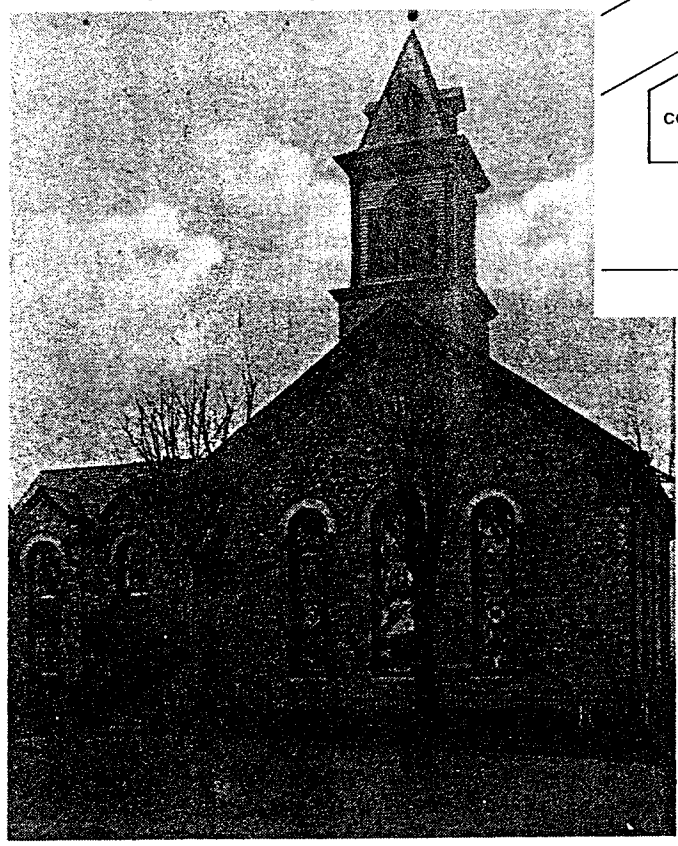
The three remaining were repainted and fixed as reminders of the past and were also useful for storage. In 1975 they were burned to the ground, either through carelessness or arson — whoever was responsible was never learned.

The original church building was refurbished inside to repair the destruction wrought by the soldiers of the Revolutionary War when they used this building as a hospital. All of the pews had been removed and these were replaced along with other renovating. In 1818, it was decided that a larger building was necessary to accommodate a growing congregation and a new building was erected, in part, on the foundations of the old. The new church faced southeast toward Blue Bell-Pennlyn Pike, in contrast to the one, which faced southwest toward a now extinct road called “Booz Road” (which was an extension of what is now “Boehm’s Road” through the present parish house-Sunday School complex).

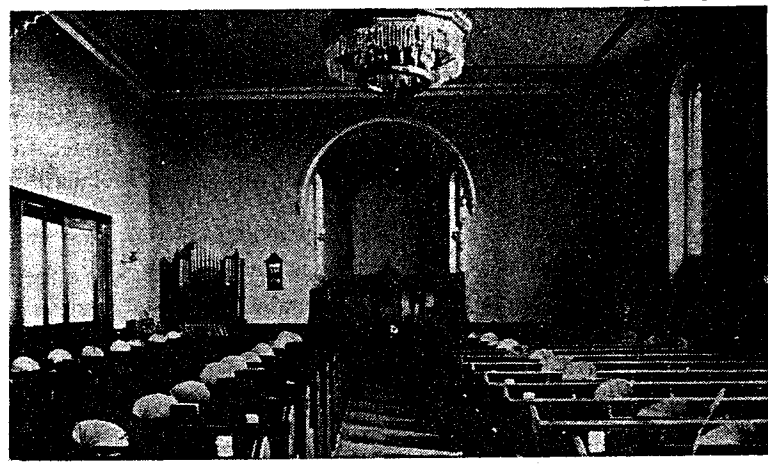
Diagram of the present (1976) Boehm's Church showing the Church proper; the Sunday School section attached and adjoining that, the old Sexton's House, now converted to a Parish House; the 1970 addition of the Community Hall; and the second floor Museum. Also indicated is an outline of where the old church probably was, as well as an outline of a *once* existing extension of what is now Boehm's Road, which is believed to have been called "Booz Road" — Booz is an old family name in Whitpain Township



Boehm's Church as it appeared after 1908 — Note the wrought iron fence and gates in front of the Church.



Church as it appeared between 1903 and 1908 when the high steeple was removed



Interior of the Church showing the cabinet organ and one of the massive chandeliers — prior to 1915

This 1818 building was fifty feet long by forty feet wide, two stories high with two side and one end gallery. The pulpit was of the elevated type, reached by stairs, and was in the northwest end of the sanctuary. In 1853, this building was remodeled with the high pulpit replaced by the modern raised-end platform.

In 1870, extensive renovations were made, including the addition of an eighty-foot high spire with bell (the present church bell), two massive chandeliers were hung inside which could be pulled-down for lighting because they were counter-balanced (see counterweight box filled with rocks in the Church Museum). After this alteration, the Church had a seating capacity of 500. This is basically the same building as the present main church building. It has been modified from time to time over the years . . . In 1891, central steam heat was installed; in 1903, a new Sunday School room was built and the present brownstone front was added; the high spire was replaced by the present lower one in 1908 when the roof was also rebuilt; electricity was put in during 1913 and the old cabinet organ was replaced by the present pipe organ in 1915. The Sexton's House was converted to a Parish House in 1963 and in 1971, the addition of the Community Hall with its 150-seat auditorium was added, together with the upstairs Museum. A modern kitchen was installed in the Parish House, connected to the Community Hall for ease in serving functions held there.

The old basement complex under part of the church, and the Sunday School section were converted for use by the Montessori House School which teaches three- through five-year olds in pre-school skills, until 1977.

In 1976, the Reverend Robert E. Pauli left to accept a call at a larger Church in the Upper Darby area of Philadelphia. Boehm's Church was served by various supply pastors until December, 1976 when the Rev. Milton F. Schadegg accepted the call to this pastorate.

Some information about various pastors has come down to us in the records, a few samples follow:

William Stoy — Rev. Stoy, one of the supply ministers for Boehm's Church in the 1756-1762 period, took up the study and practice of medicine later in his life. He gained special prominence with his cure for hydrophobia. "General Washington's account book shows that he sent to him one of his servants for cure." Dr. Stoy was also noted for his famous drops for hysterics, his salve for itch and his activities with inoculation for smallpox.

John Gabriel Gebhard (1772-1774) — The entry of baptism of his eldest son appears on Rev. Gebhard's baptismal records in the Whitpain Congregation. "Jacob, born April 20, 1774, baptized May 7, 1774: May God make out of him an instrument of his own honor." Rev. Gebhard left Boehm's Church for a congregation in New York. He was an ardent patriot during the Revolution, and he preached the righteousness of the cause of the colonies.