

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.: 005 / 66 00 00646 00 8 Block-Unit #022-004

County: Montgomery

Municipality: Whitpain Township

Address: 901 Butler Pike

Historic Name/Other Name: _____

SITE PLAN

PHOTO INFORMATION



Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
1	Façade	
2	Façade (right)	
3		
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

89B

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code: 005 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66.00 00646.00 8 Block Unit #022-004

County: 1. Montgomery 091 2.

Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2.

Address: 901 Butler Pike Historic Name: Broad Axe Tavern

Other Name:

Owner Name/Address: John J. McDevitt 901 Butler Pike Ambler PA 19002

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. <u>Inn 1757 5,750 SF Land 1.50 Acre</u>	<u>Commercial</u>	_____
B. _____	_____	_____
C. _____	_____	_____
D. _____	_____	_____

Particular Type: A. _____
 B. _____
 C. _____
 D. _____

Current Function Category:	Subcategory:	Code:
A. <u>Restaurant</u>	<u>Commercial</u>	_____
B. _____	_____	_____
C. _____	_____	_____
D. _____	_____	_____

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:	A. <u>Gothic Revival</u>
B. _____	C. _____
D. _____	Other: _____

Exterior Materials:	Foundation <u>stone</u>	Roof _____
	Walls <u>stucco</u>	Walls _____
	Other _____	Other _____

Structural System: 1. _____ 2. _____
 Width _____ Depth _____ Stories/Height 3.5

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ca. 1757 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: Although heavily altered, the Broad Axe Tavern conveys a sense of history. The Township considers this building a landmark. Class I.

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: _____ 005 _____ Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 00646 00 8 Block-Unit #022-004
County: _____ Montgomery _____ 091 _____ Municipality: _____ Whitpain Township

Address: _____ 901 Butler Pike
Historic/Other Name: _____ Broad Axe Tavern

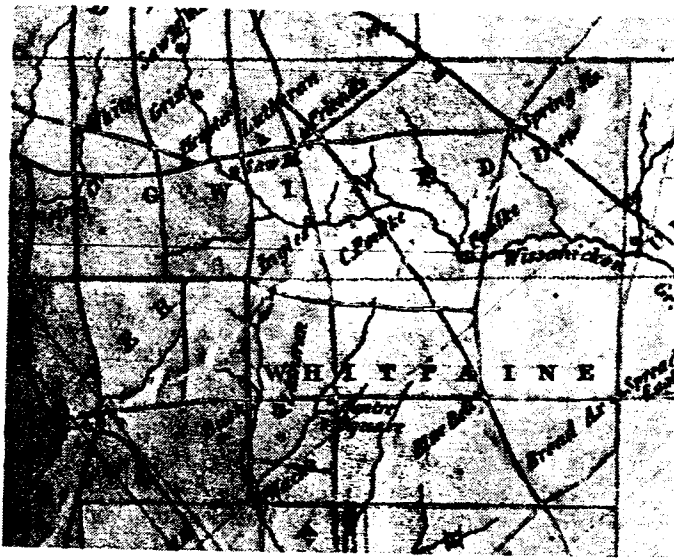
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Broad Axe Tavern is a prominent resource at the northwest corner of Butler and Skippack Pikes. It is a 3.5 story structure with a cross-gabled roof (asphalt shingles), stucco walls, and contains several additions, most of which are one story. The building has some similarities to the basket store at DeKalb and Skippack. The 3.5 story core was probably constructed in two sections. Fenestration is not symmetrical across the main façade facing Butler Pike. Windows are mainly 6x6 sash with smaller 6x6 or 1x1 sash windows serving the upper level.

Classification: Although heavily altered, the Broad Axe Tavern conveys a sense of history. The Township considers this building a landmark. Class I.



"Broad Axe Tavern" — 1977



From Map of Montgomery County, 1816



"Broad Axe Hotel" — 1960

Perhaps one of the most interesting facets in taking a trip back through history is the English language itself. In our twentieth century, the ability to be concise is applauded. This is quite characteristic of the various deeds in the 1900's. They are concise and to the point, easily read, and having no unnecessary words. As we get in the 19th century, the language changes drastically. An example of this is the land demarkation. The "Broad Axe Tavern" is now located quite simply at the such and such corner and in a certain town or village and contains a certain amount of land. In the 19th century it is located at a stone's throw from a point and just so many paces toward or away from said point. In accordance with the boundary descriptions changing, likewise do the descriptions of the physical layout. In this century, the property is comprised of distinct buildings, whereby earlier the deeds refer to a message. This is a "dwelling house with the adjacent buildings and curtilage and the adjoining lands."

Thus, as the words become more flowery and less concise, it becomes increasingly difficult to put the facts together and to know just what actually existed on the property. Only by going back and resifting through these deeds, can some clarity be brought into focus.

As I reached my end at Norristown, I was referred to the Archives Room in the Philadelphia City Hall, where all the deeds prior to 1784 are kept. Rather than the well organized microfilm files, I was now leafing through endless deed books in desperate need of conditioning or repair. Often, I would find the appropriate deed but with no prior deed. This then meant looking through the will of the last owner or owners hoping to find the name of the person from whom it was obtained.

My luck was slim, and my findings were few; however, the facts are as follows:

From 1796 to 1757 there were four separate owners. By this time, the land and buildings had ceased being sold for profit. Rather, it was passed down through the family, and with it, each new owner did what he could. The earliest owner that I have researched is Nathaniel Davis who owned it from 1757 to 1770. He was a yeoman who, with his wife, kept the property which contained 68 acres of land. In 1770, still alive, he deeded it to his son, Jonathon Davis. At this time Jonathon was a coachmaker while his father was the Innkeeper. In 1775, both father and son were deceased and a relation, John Ashmead, was willed it. John was then a blacksmith. In 1796, he died and passed it by will to his sister, Catherine Rex. She later married and it was passed to her husband's side of the family.

Throughout all my research, I was hoping to get back as far as 1685, which is the date previously marked on the building. It very well could be that this date is accurate as to being the first structure existing on this property. However, the facts that I have obtained take the Broad Axe back to 1757, and that, in itself, is a substantial history for one to be proud of.

