

Sehner-Ellicott House
123 North Prince Street
Lancaster
Lancaster County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-372

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SEHNER-ELLICOTT HOUSE

HABS No. PA-372

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Location: 123 North Prince Street, Lancaster, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County.

Significance: The Sehner-Ellicott House is an interesting example of early Federal townhouses in Lancaster. The surviving original woodwork is unusually elaborate for its time, and actually suggests a more Georgian style. The builder, Gottlieb Sehner, was a member of a family of master carpenters and builders whose other credits in Lancaster include the Masonic Hall (1795) and the Fulton Opera House (1852).

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1788-89, definitely by 1798. In 1785, the house and lot were valued at 60. In 1788 the land was valued at 100. In 1789, the value rose to 250, which may represent the replacement of the older house with the present two-story brick building. Tax records of 1798 show a two story brick house 26ft. x 37 ft., valued at 1200.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following chain of title for the Sehner-Ellicott House has been established from deeds, wills and Orphans Court records in Lancaster County:

1788 Estate Settlement, recorded in Deed Book L-3, f577-80. Gottlieb Sehner died intestate leaving a widow and seven children.
Heirs of Gottlieb Sehner
To
Gottlieb Sehner, Jr., carpenter.

1819 Estate Settlement dated September 11, 1819, recorded February 12, 1828 in Deed Book I-5, f173. Gottlieb Sehner, Jr. died intestate, leaving his widow, Sabina, and four children. His daughter, Elizabeth, married Christian Miller. The Orphans Court evaluation of the property was 1000.
Heirs of Gottlieb Sehner, Jr.
To
Christian Miller (Sehner's son-in-law).

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- 1819 Deed dated September 11, 1819, recorded February 12, 1828 in Deed Book I-5, f170.
Christian Miller
To
Abraham Landis.
- 1828 Deed dated March 29, 1828, recorded April 18, 1828 in Deed Book K-5, f378. For \$2425.
Abraham Landis
To
Andrew B. Kauffman.
- 1858 Deed dated May 3, 1858, recorded May 26, 1858 in Deed Book U-8, f187.
Heirs of Andrew B. Kauffman
To
A.B. Kauffman.
- 1863 Deed dated March 31, 1863, recorded March 31, 1863 in Deed Book D-9, f184. For \$2940.
A.B. Kauffman
To
Amos Funk.
- 1867 Deed dated March 30, 1867, recorded April 8, 1867 in Deed Book P-9, f174. For \$4500.
Amos Funk and wife
To
General James L. Reynolds.
- 1881 Deed dated March 31, 1886, recorded March 31, 1886 in Deed Book P-11, f442.
Executors of James L. Reynolds
To
John A. Hiestand.
- Date Deed recorded in Sheriff's Deed Book 6, f267.
unknown D.K. Burkholder, Sheriff
To
W.T. Brown.
- 1890 Deed dated March 11, 1890, recorded March 31, 1890 in Deed Book L-13, f410. For \$3850.
W.T. Brown
To
Sara Jane Nixdorf.
- 1912 Deed dated April 1, 1912, recorded April 1, 1912 in Deed Book W-20, f400. For \$8200.
Sara Jane Nixdorf
To
Amos Hoover.

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- 1912 Deed dated May 3, 1912. For \$8200.
Amos Hoover
To
American Order of Otters.
- 1966 Notice of Condemnation dated June 25, 1966, recorded
June 17, 1966. Resulted in deed recorded in Deed Book
T-55, f1041.
American Order of Otters
To
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Lancaster.
- 1973 Deed dated April 19, 1973, recorded April 19, 1973 in
Deed Book S-63, f1092.
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Lancaster
To
Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County.

B. Historical Context:

The Sehner-Ellicott House was built in the latter part of the 1700s by the head of a family of master carpenters. Although the dates suggested for the building are ca. 1788-89, the interior woodwork reflects the more ornate decorative detail of the Georgian period. This discrepancy can possibly be accounted for by the fact that the owner, Gottlieb Sehner, Jr., was a master carpenter, who might perhaps be using the house as a showcase for interior woodworking. The house derives its second name, Ellicott, from Andrew Ellicott, first United States Surveyor-General, who lived there from 1801-1813. Ellicott remained a figure of national importance during this period, surveying state and territorial boundaries, submitting designs for city plans, and coaching Meriwether Lewis on his expedition to the western territories.

Prepared by Eleni Silverman
Historian, HABS
From field reports submitted
to HABS in April of 1965.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The house is two and one-half stories with a two story ell. It measures 26'6" (three bay front) by 69'2" (including the kitchen ell.)
2. Foundations: Stone, now stuccoed.

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3. Wall construction: Exterior walls of the main elevation are of brick laid in common bond up to the water table, which is of quarter-round molded brick. Above the water table the walls are brick laid in Flemish bond. There is a brick belt course at the second floor level. The walls of the north elevation are brick, laid in common bond, with brick belt courses at the second and third floor levels.
 4. Porches: The front entrance has a modern concrete stoop with pipe rails.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front doorway has a frontispiece with a double architrave with ears, scroll consoles at the frieze and a dentiled pediment. The jambs are paneled. The original door (stored in the attic at the time of the field reports) is paneled on the outside and sheathed with boards inside.
 - b. Windows: The openings are spanned by flat gauged arches with cut stone keystones. Some evidence exists, in the form of historic photographs, for solid shutters on the first floor windows, and slat shutters on the second floor windows.
 8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: A gable roof, presently covered with slate.
 - b. Cornice: A double wooden cornice with scroll modillions.
- B. Description of the Interior:
1. Floor plans:
 - a. Cellar: The original entrance on the south has been blocked. The floors are earth. The large square stone base of the original chimney is still in place, but a modern heating plant has been sunk in a concrete pit.
 - b. First floor: Originally, one entered into a side hallway and a room on the south. Behind the hallway was a stairhall with a staircase which led to the upper floors. A small center room lay to the south of the stairhall, and a much larger room behind. A modern vestibule was created by placing a cross wall in the old entry passage. The wainscoting in the hall is rather elaborate and heavy with bold profiles. The cornice is a double cornice with "eye dentils".

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The staircase is an elaborate one: there are three balusters to a step. Each baluster is turned and decorated with vase forms and doric columns. The step-end brackets are of an elaborate pattern. The heavy handrail is ramped up over turned newels which terminate in turned drops. This design is carried over to the panelled wainscoting, where the half rail ramps over fluted pilasters.

- c. The hall leading from the stair landing is crossed by a divider with an elaborate lintel with triglyphs on fluted pilasters. The walls are paneled in heavy wainscoting and a double cornice with eye dentils.

The front room has the same rich wainscoting. The doors and windows have double architraves. The windows have paneled reveals and are surmounted by a pulvinated frieze and a double cornice with a Greek key bedmold. The central chimney stack and rear wall of the room have been removed. The woodwork was rescued by John W. Lippold of Lancaster (as of the date of the field reports, it had not been replaced) who described it as follows:

"...four Doric fluted pilasters across the fireplace end on a pedestal base. The overmantel panel had crossettes as well as the architrave of the fireplace. There was a plain panelled dado and a pediment over the door..."

Prepared by
Eleni Silverman
Historian, HABS
April 25, 1984
from reports by
Charles Peterson and JHP
4/29/65