

Saltsburg Academy  
(Memorial Institute)  
Corner High and Point Streets  
Saltsburg  
Indiana County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5433

HABS  
PA,  
32 SALT,  
17-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SALTSBURG ACADEMY  
(Memorial Institute)

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- Location: Northeast corner High Street at Point Street, Saltsburg, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania.
- Present Owner: Paul and Hulda Baker.
- Present Use: Vacant.
- Significance: This formidable brick building housed was for many years the first and only academic institution in town, the Saltsburg Male and Female Academy. As a private undertaking, and later as part of the public school system, the building served local boys and girls throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1851.
2. Original and subsequent owners: Deed references were unobtainable, but three known owners include the Presbyterian Church, which purchased the academy building in 1870, when it became the Memorial Institute. In the 1920s boatbuilder George Rhea purchased it from the church. And sometime prior to 1980 Paul Baker acquired the building.
3. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings have been located, but it is apparent that little of the building's historic gable-front, two-story brick form has been altered.
4. Alterations and additions: Physical evidence suggests that at one time the building featured a partial, one-story porch across the five bays of the south facade. There is also evidence of the frame pediment that once existed on the structure above the second story on the west gable end. Also, at one time steps of some sort must have led up to the raised

west entrance, where none exist today. A cupola was located near the west end of the block; it, too, is gone.

5. Builder, contractor: Stone mason John Martin and contractor S.S. Jamison.
- B. Historical Context: The Saltsburg Academy building was erected in 1851 and opened the following year; it was one of the earliest established educational institutions academies in the region at the time (Arms and White, 384). The building's \$3,300 construction cost was financed through the sale of stock at \$25 a share. Share purchasers included William J. Stewart; J.W. Robinson; S.S. Jamison, contractor for the building; Reverend W.W. Woodend, a Presbyterian minister who served as principal until 1859; J.S. Robinson; and John M. Marshall, a canal-boat builder and operator of passenger packet lines out of Saltsburg (Stewart, 225).

The school, sometimes called the Saltsburg Male and Female Academy, opened in May 1852 with about seventy-five students, an enrollment level that remained stable through 1881; boys occupied the first floor, girls the second. Tuition was \$6 to \$10 per five-month semester (Stephenson, 14). While the Presbyterian Church was being completed in 1874, the Academy was used for religious services (Stewart, 225-26).

After the Presbyterian reunion in 1869, with the assistance of the General Assembly and support from the \$5 million memorial fund, schools became acceptable property to donate to the church. Thus, in 1870 the building was acquired by the congregation of the Presbyterian Church, which renamed it the Memorial Institute a year later. Woodend served as principal. From 1890 until 1912 it functioned as part of public school system. Carpenter A.E. Ray used it as his shop in 1913. During the 1920s, woodworker and boatbuilder George Rhea owned the building, and his family occupied the second floor.

Stone mason John Martin (born 1820) emigrated in 1834 with his family from Ireland, and settled in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. His career included work on the Sandy and Beaver Canals, an apprenticeship in the stone-cutting trade with Pagan and Company of Pittsburgh, and bridge construction. He arrived in Saltsburg in the early 1840s and served for six years as a foreman mason on the Northwestern Pennsylvania Railroad. In Saltsburg Martin was responsible for several notable buildings including the Soldier's Monument in Edgewood Cemetery, St. Matthew's Church, and the Western Pennsylvania Railroad Station, as well as this school. He was treasurer of the Saltsburg Bridge Company, vice president of the cemetery organization, and a borough council

member. Martin's stone-cutting yard was on Point Street just east of the canal (Arms and White, 383, 391).

For additional context, twenty-one reports on other buildings in Saltsburg may be consulted, as well as overview histories of the town of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438) and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666). See also, Sara Amy Leach, ed., Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg (Washington, DC: Historica American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The conservative styling and materials typify nineteenth-century vernacular academic and semi-public building forms: gable-front prominence, raised foundation, and multiple entries with modest Federal detailing.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: About 30' x 52' long.
2. Foundation: Largely dressed stone; partially banked, high foundation.
3. Walls: Brick laid in five-course American bond.
4. Structural system: Load-bearing brick.
5. Porches: A one-story, hip-roofed porch protects the north entrance, the two westernmost bays of this facade: foundation unknown, raised wood deck, plain wood supports.
6. Chimneys: One brick ridge chimney located toward the west end of the block.
7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are three standard entrances and one large service doorway. The primary doorway on the west facade is the most formal: double doors of paneled wood with a surround that includes six-light sidelights atop recessed frame base panels; above is a four-light transom with carved dentil coursing.

The secondary doors on the north and south facades are similarly paneled, double, and wood, but are only topped by a four-light transom. Large service doors occupy most of east wall in the form of sliding wood panels.

- b. Windows: Two-over-two-light double-hung wood sash exist in all five bays of the side facades and three bays of the gable-end facades on the second story; all feature plain stone sills and prominent, painted lintels.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape: Gable-front with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The boxed wood eaves are prominent only on the gable ends, where they are wide and raked.

- C. Site: Situated atop a steep hill one block from the center of Saltsburg, the building's formal front is the west gable-end facing west to High Street; the property is bounded here and along Point Street by a rubble-stone retaining wall, and is otherwise fairly isolated.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views and maps:

The collection of the Saltsburg Branch, Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County, Stone House Museum, contains numerous historical images.

Beers, F.W. Atlas of Indiana County. New York: F.W. Beers and Co., 1871.

Johnson, George B., and Palmer, Ann. Saltsburg--The Way It Was--An Appreciation. Indiana, Pa.: A.G. Halldin Publishing Co., 1986.

Peelor, David, and Barker, W. "Map of Indiana County, Pennsylvania." North

Hector, New York: 1856.

"Saltsburg, Pa." New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Co. Ltd., February 1886; New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Ltd., October 1891, January 1897, July 1903; New York: Sanborn Map Company, April 1909, February 1927.

B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Indiana County, Pennsylvania, deed books and tax records.

C. Secondary and published sources:

Arms, C.T., and White, E. 1745-1880, History of Indiana County, Pennsylvania. Newark, Ohio: J. A. Caldwell, 1880.

Berringer, Gloria, ed. Canal Days Sesquicentennial: 1838-1988. No publisher, 1988.

Biographical and Historical Cyclopedia of Indiana and Armstrong Counties. Philadelphia: John M. Gresham and Co., 1891; reprinted 1982.

Johnson, George. Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal. Historic Saltsburg, 1984.

McCullough, Robert, and Leuba, Walter. The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. York, Pa.: American Canal and Transportation Center, 1973.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory, "Western Division of the Pennsylvania Canal: Indiana and Westmoreland Counties." 1979/82.

Stewart, J.T. Indiana County, Pennsylvania: Her People, Past and Present. Chicago: F.W. Beers and Co., 1913.

Wallner, Peter A. "Politics and Public Works: A Study of the Pennsylvania Canal System, 1825-1857." Ph.D diss., Pennsylvania State University, June 1973.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage

Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorothy Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Kristin Belz, University of Virginia. Large-format photography is by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-one reports on other buildings in Saltsburg, an overview history of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438), and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Alexandria (Huntingdon County) and an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).