

WASHINGTON COUNTY OLD MEN'S HOME  
2198 North Main Street  
Arden Vicinity  
Washington County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5585

HABS  
PA  
63-ARD.V  
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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63-ARD.V  
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Washington County Old Men's Home

HABS No. PA - 5585

**Location:** 2198 North Main Street, Arden Vicinity, Washington County, Pennsylvania

U.S.G.S. Washington West Quadrangle, Pennsylvania  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates  
17.563519.4450957

**Present Owner:** County of Washington, Washington, Pennsylvania

**Present Use:** Vacant

**Significance:** The Pennsylvania State Legislature passed an act on April 6, 1830 giving authority to Washington County to erect a building and conduct an institution for the employment and support of the poor of Washington County. The first Washington County Commissioners purchased land situated in Chartiers and North Strabane Township's from Robert Colmery on August 19, 1830. The property comprised 172 acres and the purchase price was \$2,752.00. The site is adjacent to the Chartiers Valley Railroad and the former Washington and Canonsburg Electric Railway Line, 1/4 mile east of the former Arden Station. In 1865 six additional acres were purchased and in 1867 another twenty-eight acres were added to the property.

The first building was erected in 1831 and was replaced when the present main building was commenced in 1872 and completed in 1874.

The institution was known as the Washington County Home for the Poor from 1831 until 1883, when separate institutions were built for women and children. Since 1883 families were no longer housed at this facility, and it became known as the Washington County Old Men's Home.

The main building is an example of institutional type architecture built in the Secocnd Empire style of architecture.

## PART I - HISTORY OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY OLD MEN'S HOME

The Washington County Old Men's Home was initiated in 1830, when the PA State Legislature passed an act authorizing Washington County to construct a building and operate an institution for the poor. The Washington County Old Men's Home complex housed the poor and mildly insane citizens of the County before Federal programs were instituted. The facility was in continuous operation from 1831 until 1976.

The County Commissioners purchased 172 acres on August 19, 1830 in Chartiers Township. In 1865 they purchased an adjacent 6 acres and two years later purchased 28 acres.

The original structure was demolished in 1872 and a new building was completed in 1874. The main building was completed in time to accommodate veterans from the Civil War and also inmates in times of need. Dangerous or violent wards of the County were sent to State asylums. Homeless children were housed in this facility from 1875 to 1883, when the State Legislature passed an act forbidding the County to house children in the poor house for any longer than 60 days (children between the ages of two and sixteen years of age). A children's home was built approximately 1/2 mile southwest of the County Home in 1882.

The facility also served as a home for tuberculosis patients after the turn of the century.

The facility is an example of the institutional facilities that were being built in the late 19th century as a result of the increased public awareness and social conscience. Leaders in the field such as Jane Adams advocated for the poor. Major industrialists started to become philanthropic. The Country became aroused to the needs of the poor and infirm, and Washington County met those needs with this facility.

## PART II - DESCRIPTION OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY OLD MEN'S HOME

There were five structures erected on the site: The Main Building (1872-74); the Administration Building (1929); two White Houses (c. 1916); the Laundry Building (c. 1890); and the Bakery Building (c. 1922).

The site occupies a plateau above the Chartiers Valley Railroad. The land is generally level and slopes down to the southeast. Starting in the early 1870's there were fields in which wheat, oats, corn, potatoes and hay were grown for use by the residents. There were also cattle, milk cows, hogs and horses. The facility had a full and complete working farm with a staff farmer to look after the agriculture work. The residents comprised the labor force. The water supply was furnished by three wells and two springs and was pumped to a reservoir north of the home. Farming continued on the property until the County closed the institution in 1976.

The greatest number of residents at one time totaled 209 in January, 1907. The facility was vacated in 1976.

Attached is a site plan showing the location of the buildings, year of construction and additions.

**Sources:**

J.A. Caldwell; Centennial Atlas of Washington County, PA; 1876; pp. 14 and 80

J. McFarland; History of Washington County; 1910; pp. 210-211

Earle Forrest; History of Washington County; 1920; pp. 966

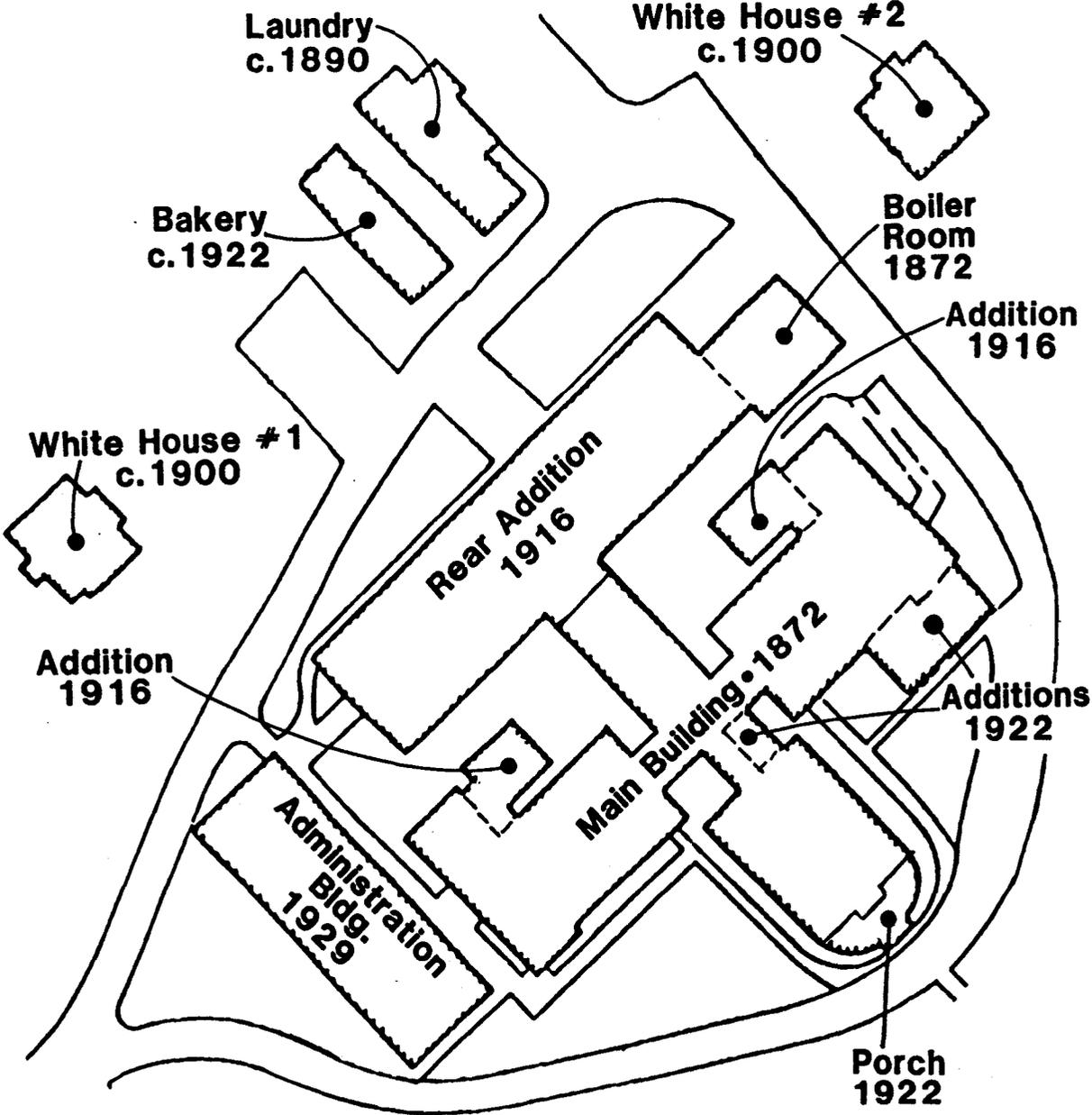
Roy Sarver, Administrator, Washington County Historical Society

Kerry Fox, Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington

**Historian:**

Walter J. Haglund, A.I.A.  
Registered Architect  
Mullin & Lonergan Associates, Inc.  
June 17, 1991

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**Building Location Map  
Showing Year of Construction**

