

LEELAND  
(Conshohocken Borough Hall)  
730 Fayette Street  
Conshohocken  
Montgomery County  
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-6019

HABS  
PA  
46-CONSH,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 9719  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LEELAND

(Conshohocken Borough Hall) HABS No. PA-6019

HABS  
PA  
46-CONSH,  
2-

Location: 730 Fayette Street, Conshohocken, Montgomery Co., Pennsylvania.

Significance: Leeland, currently known as the Conshohocken Borough Hall, was built for J. Ellwood Lee, a pioneer in the surgical supplies and tire and rubber industries. It is a distinguished example of a turn-of-the-century Queen Anne style dwelling executed in stone.

Description: Leeland is a three-story, asymmetrical Queen Anne style mansion. The steeply pitched hipped roof has lower cross gables and is intersected by turrets, dormers and chimneys. The building as well as the low surrounding site wall, are constructed of rough-cut ashlar. The front (southeast) facade is framed by full height corner turrets, one octagonal and one circular. Both the northeast and southwest facades feature wide central end gables separated from the turrets by tall chimneys. A raised wraparound porch of stone piers, turned wood posts, sawn wood balusters and a decorative sawn wood cornice with paired and tripled wood brackets encloses the first floor.

The principal entry is located in the center of the southeast facade. It is approached through the central bay of the porch which is distinguished by a pediment supported by turned posts on extended brick piers. Most windows are one-over-one light double-hung sash with stone lintels and wood sills. There are, however, several Queen Anne style windows with patterned upper sash and single-light lower sash. A hipped-roof porte-cochere with features similar to the porch extends from the northwest facade. The rear elevation is capped by a hipped roof dormer with a tripartite window. Leaded glass, stone friezes and lintels, half-timbering gable ornament and bracketed eaves embellish the building.

The original mansion had twenty-three rooms and an associated stable/recreational structure with a bowling alley and swimming pool. The original interior of the mansion has been altered to suit its use as a municipal office building, yet some significant interior features remain. These include European marble fireplaces in several rooms, a parquet floor in the front rooms, an elegant stairway with a carved wood balustrade and newel post with the original owner's monogram, and original tile work in the bathrooms.

History: Leeland, sited on a large corner lot at Fayette Street and Eight Avenue, was the imposing home of J. Ellwood Lee, founder of J. Ellwood Lee Company and the Lee Tire and Rubber Company. The son of a supervisor in the J. Wood and Brothers rolling mill, Lee, through the help of Charles Heber Clark, got a

job with the surgical supply manufacturing firm of William Snowden in Philadelphia. In 1883, with his life savings of \$28.35 plus \$400 borrowed from his family as capital, he founded J. Ellwood Lee Company, manufacturing chemists. His "plant" was in the attic of the family house at Seventh Avenue below Fayette Street. In 1888, Lee incorporated the company with capital stock of \$75,000 and built three new mill buildings. Soon after the company's products won five gold medals at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. During the same year, work was begun on his stone mansion at Eighth Avenue and Fayette Street. According to a newspaper article, the mansion was to be the largest and handsomest in the borough. Alexander Martin & Sons was contracted to erect the stone mansion for Lee. The well-cut stone was tooled by local mason, Andrew Fenon, an alumnus of Cooper Union Institute of New York City and it is rumored that other masons were brought from Italy to help construct the building.

The company expanded through growth and buyouts to become the second largest in the industry in 1905, at which time it merged with Johnson & Johnson and diversified into the new industry of tire manufacturing. In 1910, with the advance of the automobile, Lee built a large tire manufacturing plant in Spring Mill with a work force of over 800. The Lee Tire & Rubber Company logo, "Lee of Conshohocken," became internationally known. While a member of the Conshohocken Borough Council, Lee was chosen as a delegate to the Republican National Convention for the renomination of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Subsequent to its use as the Lee family residence, Leeland has served as the Manufacturer's Club, a private restaurant, and, since 1964, as the municipal building for the Borough of Conshohocken.

Sources:

Burbank, Kershaw. "Lee of Conshohocken." Pennsylvania Heritage, Vol. XVI. No.2, Spring 1990, p. 10-17. This article provided the date of the building's construction and much of the history.

Conshohocken Historical Society files.

Conshohocken Town Recorder, "Town Notes," May 12, 1893.

Trumbull & Wiesenthal Consultants. "Pennsylvania Historical Resource Survey Form: Conshohocken Borough Hall (Leeland)." July 1989.

Historian: Janet G. Blutstein, HABS Historian, 1994.