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461

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Heller, George K., School

other names/site number Cheltenham Center for the Arts

2. Location

street & number 439 Ashbourne Road not for publication N/A
city or town Cheltenham Township vicinity N/A
state Pennsylvania code PA county Montgomery code 91 zip code 19012

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brent D. Glass March 16, 2001
Signature of certifying official Date

Brent D. Glass, Executive Director, PA Historical Museum and Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register (See continuation sheet). _____
- determined eligible for the National Register (See continuation sheet). _____
- determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- removed from the National Register _____
- other (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: School

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: School
Recreation and Culture Museum
Recreation and Culture Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
 roof Asphalt
 walls Stone

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

Narrative Description

Located at 439 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, the George K. Heller School, is the only building on the one-acre lot. It is picturesquely sited in a residential neighborhood overlooking the Tookany Creek, approximately one-quarter mile from the intersection of Central Avenue, a main access route into Cheltenham Village. The turn-of-the-century building was constructed in three campaigns, 1883, 1893 and 1906, with subsequent additions after 1953 when it was converted into an arts center. A front gable of the 1883 section faces Ashbourne Road, with the 1893 section at the rear of the building and the 1906 portion straddling the hall that connected the earlier sections. The post 1953 additions are limited to exit stair enclosures flanking the 1883 section at the front of the building, and a series adjacent of one-story additions at the rear. Both the 1883 and 1893 portions are one and one half stories in height, while the 1906 section is two and one half stories, all of random stone construction with intersecting gable roofs. Single and paired arched or semi-arched windows are located throughout. At the interior, the three main sections share continuous first floors and basements, with minor level changes occurring at the basement level. Second floor space is limited to the 1906 section at the center of the building. The basement level typically includes utilitarian finishes such as concrete flooring, acoustic tile ceilings and parged stone walls, while the upper floors generally have wood flooring, plaster ceilings, and either plaster, drywall or tack board wall surfaces.

The southwest elevation of the front section of the building, constructed in 1883, sits approximately thirty feet from Ashbourne Road, on a raised lot separated from the sidewalk by a two to three foot stone retaining wall. Several mature deciduous trees are located at the front elevation and perimeter of the building lot, although most of the building's perimeter on three sides has been covered by asphalt driveways and parking areas. To the rear of the site, the site abuts the Tookany Park whose tree-lined slope drops dramatically to meet the banks of the Tookany Creek below.

The 1883 portion of the George K. Heller School is a one and one half story, five bay, symmetrical, central entry, random stone building with a projecting stone water table and dressed stone lintels at all windows and doors. A stone at the southwest elevation of the building reads:

GEORGE K. HELLER
PUBLIC SCHOOL
CHELTENHAM DISTRICT
1883

A round stone marker at the northwest elevation of the building pays tribute to the first school building at this location, replaced by the current building, and reads:

CHELTENHAM
1795
ENLARGED
1857
SCHOOL

The asphalt shingle, intersecting gable roof has exposed rafter tails at the overhanging eaves and similar brackets at the gable ends, and is topped by a cupola. The intersecting gable roof, square cupola with paired, arched, wood louvered openings at four sides until recently housed the school bell, with a pull rope that

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

extended to the first floor level into the existing gallery. The first floor windows are either single or paired four-over-four wood windows with stone arched lintels at all sides. A round-headed four-over-four wood window is located within the front gable, and round-headed wood louvers are located at each of the side gable ends. Most of the two light basement wood windows, with dressed stone arches and a keystone and located within the water table, have been removed and either infilled with stucco, glass block or metal louvers to provide basement ventilation. Since these openings are relatively small and several are hidden by landscaping, the change does not significantly alter the overall appearance. Random stone steps with flagstone treads and a simple metal railing access the central door. The recessed entry is located within a stone barrel vault with a keystone. It includes a pair of double leaf, wood paneled doors, topped by fixed wood panels, flanked by three-light side lights, all topped by a twelve light round headed fan light.

At the interior of the 1883 section, many of the original features have been obscured since its conversion to an arts center after 1953. While the plaster ceilings typically remain visible, the walls and several windows in the exhibit areas have been covered with tack board for art displays. Much of the wood trim including baseboards, window surrounds, door surrounds and transoms remain visible, although some doors have been removed. The first floor floors are typically two-inch wood floors with the exception of the offices that have been carpeted.

The front projecting gable of the 1883 portion includes a central hall flanked by two smaller offices, each with beaded board wainscoting, single light wood paneled doors with transoms, carpeted floors and acoustical drop ceilings. A large space beyond combines two former classrooms, and is accessed by two deep door openings from the front entry hall, each with paneled wood casing and a painted transom window. The walls of the exhibit area are covered with tack board, obscuring some former door openings and all windows. The plaster ceilings and wood floors remain visible, including the patched wood flooring marking the location of the removed central partition that separated two earlier classrooms that was demolished in 1963 to create a large gallery area. The removal of the partition altered the overall proportion of the space from a pair of square rooms to a larger rectangular room. A wood paneled door towards the rear of the room provides access to the 1906 portion of the building.

The finishes at the basement level are utilitarian and include concrete flooring, drywall or acoustic tile ceilings, and either parged or drywall wall surfaces. Many of the former windows at the 1883 section have been obscured or altered to include metal louvers or glass block. At the 1883 section, the area under the entrance corridor and offices is generally utilized for storage. The two rooms under the two original classrooms are utilized as studio spaces, and the southeast room includes a stuccoed ceiling, while at the northwest room an acoustic tile ceiling has been installed. A section of the southeast room partitioned with concrete block for use as a mechanical room between 1963 and 1968. A brick chimney extends from the basement mechanical room through the first floor and the main roof, adjacent to the 1906 addition to the northeast.

To the rear of the complex is the one and one half story, 1893, asphalt shingle, side gable portion of the building, which is similar in exterior detail to the 1883 portion with the exception of the first floor and basement windows. All first floor window openings include dressed stone lintels with keystones, although all single and paired window openings have been infilled with either stucco or plywood with the exception of an opening at the southeast side elevation, which has been converted into an exit door. Although the stucco and plywood openings do not provide the same aesthetic qualities as the earlier windows, they provide a clear

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

articulation of the rhythm of the former window openings and are limited to the rear of the building complex. At the basement level, original pairs of four-over-four wood windows with half-arched heads are located under a single arched head stone lintel are located within window wells. Similar to the 1883 portion of the building, round-headed wood louvers are located within each of the gable ends, with an "1893" date stone located at the northwest elevation.

At the interior, the theater occupies the space of the two 1893 classrooms formerly separated by movable partitions. A raised stage with a proscenium to the northwest occupies almost half of the space, while nine rows of stepped seating are located to the southeast. Although the space was used as a theater prior to 1963, the current configuration with the auditorium seating was constructed in 1991. At the top row of seating to the east is a drywall partitioned control both with a large fixed window facing the stage. Egress stairs are located at each side aisle, connecting to a hallway under the upper rows of seating that accesses a fire door at the southeast elevation of the building. Most of the finishes and all of the windows have been obscured by the stage and seating within the space to allow for its current use. The floor has been carpeted, some of the plaster walls and wood beaded board wainscoting are visible in the auditorium, while the plaster has been removed from some of the stage walls to expose the stone construction. The ceiling has been modified to include painted wood boxes to house stage lights.

The finishes at the basement level studios are utilitarian. The 1893 section of the building is accessed through the 1906 studios, the rear exit stair, or the corridor beyond the original building footprint of the 1893 building. The northwest studio includes a drywall ceiling, parged walls and concrete flooring. An exit stair leads directly from the northwest room to the exterior at the northeast elevation, while an additional stair at the southwest elevation accesses the storage area under the corridor to the 1893 addition. The southeast has an acoustic tile ceiling, beaded board walls, concrete flooring and a storage closet.

Straddling the two sections is a 1906 addition, which has subsumed the hallway that formerly connected the 1883 and 1893 portions of the building. Unlike the 1883 and 1893 portions of the building, the asphalt shingle, side gable, 1906 section of the building is two and one half stories in height with beaded board eaves with wood eave boards and decorative rake board rather than exposed rafter tails and brackets. Similar to the other portions of the building, the 1906 section is also constructed of stone, but the lintels are laid in a rough stone soldier course, the projecting stone window sill at the second floor wraps the building to form a belt course, and a projecting stone water table defines the first floor window sills. A date stone at the northwest elevation reads "1906". Wood windows remain at the attic, first floor and basement levels, although many of the second floor windows were replaced with vinyl windows in 1996. At the attic, twelve light windows are located at each gable end. The front and rear elevations of the second floor include some of the original nine-over-nine arched head windows and half-arch head windows separated by masonry piers located at the gable ends, while several windows have been replaced by six-over-six-over-six vinyl replacement windows. The second floor northwest window sill has been lowered and opening partially infilled with stucco for use as an emergency exit with an exterior metal extendable fire stair. The first floor includes nine-over-nine wood windows and large, arched masonry openings at the southeast and northwest elevations. The southeast elevation opening includes aluminum and glass recessed entry with a concrete landing, accessible ramp and stair, added in 1994. The northwest elevation the opening has been enclosed with a corrugated metal panel with the original concrete stair remaining. At the basement level of the side elevations, single round headed, four-over-four, wood windows are located within large window wells.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

The finishes of the first floor of the 1906 section are similar to the 1883 section. While the plaster ceilings typically remain visible, the walls and several windows in the exhibit areas have been covered with tack board for art displays. Much of the wood trim including baseboards, window surrounds, door surrounds and transoms remain visible, although some doors have been removed. The first floor floors are typically two-inch wood floors with the exception of an office that has been carpeted, and toilet room areas.

Within the 1906 portion of the building two main corridors define the overall layout of the space. One corridor serves as a link between the 1883 and 1893 sections of the building with a pair of wood doors in an arched opening, providing access to the theater space. Evidence of transom windows to the flanking former classrooms remain visible on the approach to the theater. Perpendicular to the first corridor and immediately behind the 1883 section is the primary circulation corridor of the building with an accessible exterior entrance and access to the stair tower at the southeast end. The northeast end of the cross axis has been significantly narrowed and modified to include several toilet rooms and storage areas, enclosing the former recessed entry. Also used for exhibit purposes, the walls and many of the details of the halls have been obscured by tack board. To the southeast of the theater corridor is another exhibit area, also with tack board at the wall surfaces. Single light wood paneled doors provide access to the corridor as well as a pair of non-original offices with drywall partitions, one with carpeting the other wood flooring, located to the southeast. To the northwest of the theater corridor is a theater support area with plaster walls and ceilings and wood floors, which including storage and partial height, wood framed office and dressing rooms, with a short stair providing direct stage access.

The primary route from the first floor to the basement is by way of the stair tower located at the southeast end of the 1906 cross axis hall. A corridor immediately to the rear of the basement 1883 section provides access to the 1883 basement studios, a pair of studios in the 1906 section, with storage closets and stair tower additions at each end. Similar to the remainder of the basement, finishes are utilitarian with concrete floors, parged walls and a drop acoustic tile ceiling within the corridor. The two studios in this section flank a storage closet immediately below the theater corridor, which also includes concrete floors, parged stone walls and an acoustic tile ceiling. The northwest studio includes a raised plywood floor, parged stone walls and an acoustic tile ceiling with windows on the southwest wall and access to the 1893 studios to the northwest. The southeast studio includes a concrete floor with beaded board walls and an acoustic tile ceiling, with windows on the northeast elevation wall and access to the 1893 studios to the northwest.

The accessible portion of the second floor is confined to the area above the 1906 section, with primary access through the stair tower located at the southeast end of the 1906 cross axis hall. The finishes at this level are similar to the first floor with wood flooring, plaster walls and ceiling, and wood paneled doors and moldings. The second floor space is divided along its length, with a large studio located to the northeast and a smaller support rooms and storage areas to the southwest. Although several of the original nine-over-nine wood windows remain, six-over-six-over-six vinyl replacement windows were installed at some locations in 1996. A metal fire escape is located at the north corner of the large studio space, which includes a door within a former window location. The main studio space was formerly a dividable classroom, with the suspended wood sliding partition remaining. The partition hanger also remains visible in the small theater space to the southwest. A series of closets and storage areas are accessed from the studio area, but located within the southwest support zone. A toilet room is located at the northwest of the theater space.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 5

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

In addition to the three main building campaigns, several smaller additions have been added to the building to address the egress requirements and needs of the arts center. At the rear of the building is an asphalt shingle, hipped roof brick addition with a square hipped roof cupola with wood louvers, a brick chimney, and ribbon windows at the side elevations enclosing a lower level corridor, kiln, toilet and storage rooms. Adjacent to the 1893 section and flanking the kiln addition is a pair of flat roofed, wood frame exist stair enclosures, providing egress from the lower level. The rear addition and flanking frame exits were partially constructed by 1963, and enlarged to its current configuration to include the kiln room by 1968. Because of their location at the rear of the building, they do not detract from the visual composition of the front of the building. However, driveway circulation around the building makes the addition more prominent to visitors to the site, particularly since the red brick and frame construction provides a dramatic contrast to the stone construction of the main building.

In addition to the rear addition are two exit stairs constructed in 1969 between the 1883 and 1906 sections of the building that are visible from Ashbourne Road. At the southern corner of the building is a white brick, flat and shed roof stair tower addition with a metal exit door that includes a concrete stair accessing the basement through second floors. Because of its height, contrasting materials, style and location, this stair has a more significant visual impact on the front of the building. However, at the western corner of the building is a shed roof, red brick addition with a metal exit door providing egress from the basement level that raises approximately eight feet above grade and has a much smaller visual impact.

The George K. Heller School retains integrity. Mid to late twentieth century alterations, primarily to allow the continued public use of the building as an arts center after the closing of the school, resulted primarily in the obscuring of historic fabric at the interior and enclosures to address access and exiting requirements at the exterior. Although the change in use and more stringent code and accessibility requirements have necessitated alterations and additions to the academic building, most of the exterior features and many of the interior features including wood floors, wainscoting, doors and surrounds, as well as the sliding wood partitions at the second floor of the 1906 section remain intact. Many of these alterations are reversible and have only a modest impact on the school's overall historic design, form or materials.

- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B Removed from its original location.
- C A birthplace or a grave.
- D A cemetery.
- E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F A commemorative property.
- G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Education
Architecture

Period of Significance 1883-1953

Significant Dates 1883
1893
1906

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Pool, Samuel T.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Old York Road Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

Narrative Statement of Significance

The George K. Heller School, located at 439 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the public school system in Montgomery County and Criterion C for its architectural significance as an example of an Italianate late 19th century school house constructed after the adoption of the Common School System in Pennsylvania. It represents one of the oldest remaining school buildings in the township. The building's period of significance from 1883 to 1953 represents the three major construction campaigns of 1883, 1893 and 1906 that defined its form until the end of its use as a public school. It survives as a valuable monument to the development and expansion of the public school system in Cheltenham Township. The George K. Heller School is also significant as a good surviving example of Italianate vernacular architecture in Cheltenham Township, Pennsylvania. With the 1883 and 1893 sections constructed by the local builder Samuel T. Pool, of Ogontz, architecturally the building reflects a blend of the area's traditional form of building construction as evolved in the area's mill architecture, and a vernacular adaptation of the Italianate style reminiscent of the pattern books published by Andrew Jackson Downing in the middle of the 19th century. The 1906 addition, which infilled the center of the complex and added its second floor, makes reference to the earlier construction through materials while it includes some of the stylistic changes evident in the new century. The existing school building sits on the site of the earlier Milltown Public School, constructed in 1795 and later renamed the Cheltenham School, which was demolished for the construction of the existing building in 1883. With the growing population, the building was subsequently expanded in 1893 and 1906. It remained in use as a public school until 1953 when the population increase and changing standards for educational facilities encouraged student relocation to a new facility. The building was then adapted to its current use as the Cheltenham Arts Center. The George K. Heller School also meets Criteria Consideration G in that the period of significance extends only slightly past the National Register 50-year guideline.

Educational Significance

As part of an early mill community developed along the banks of the Tookany Creek, Milltown residents Benjamin Rowland, Jr., Col. Samuel Miles and Frederick Altemus formed a deed of trust on July 7, 1796 for adjoining pieces of ground totaling three quarters of an acre upon which a schoolhouse was opened in November 1795.¹ The one-room, rough stone schoolhouse, known as the Milltown School, provided education for a daily tuition fee of three cents, with materials and book fees of approximately one dollar annually.² Those who could not afford to pay were admitted free of charge, although their classmates treated them poorly. This early schoolhouse, demolished prior to the construction of the 1883 school building, represented one of the first schools in Montgomery County built without a religious affiliation,³ and later one of the first public schools in area.

¹ Alexander W. Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," Old York Road Historical Society Bulletin 40 (1980): 26.

² Carrie V. Speck Coop, "November 23, 1895 Hundredth Anniversary Address of Ms. Carrie V. Speck, Principal of the George K. Heller School," later published November 30, 1895 in Frankford Herald.

³ Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," 26.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

In 1835 the Pennsylvania Free School Act was passed, and preliminary steps were taken in the township to establish a free school. A School Board of Directors, consisting of John J. Williams, Thomas Rowland, Jacob Myers, George K. Heller, Samuel Fenton and Comly Shoemaker were appointed in 1836. In 1838, a vote for the establishment of a free school resulted in fifty-six supporting a free school with forty in opposition, thus adopting the Common School System in the township.⁴ With the adoption of the Common School System, the first official School Board, consisting of Joel Mann, President, George K. Heller, Secretary, John J. Williams, Treasurer, Thomas Rowland, Bartholomew Mather and William Gillingham⁵ was chosen and the schoolhouse was then renamed the Milltown Public School, the only public school in the township until 1842.⁶ Although the new law made the schools public, patrons were expected to pay one half of their tuition and purchase books and supplies for their children until 1855 at which time township wide taxation began to support the schools.⁷

With the establishment of a post office on June 4, 1857, the Milltown area was renamed Cheltenham. In the same year, a second room, of approximately twenty-one feet by thirty-two feet and a connecting hallway was added to front of the building, it was renamed Cheltenham School⁸ and a second teacher was employed. This addition corresponds with a doubling of Cheltenham's population from 620 inhabitants in the 1790 census to 1,292 in 1850 and 1,979 documented in the 1860 census with the later increase primarily due to the expansion of the North Penn Railroad into Montgomery County and the beginnings of the area's development as a commuter suburb.⁹ Between 1876 and 1883, two additional adjoining pieces of land were purchased from the Waln estate and the Rowland Brothers, increasing the size of the school property from three-quarters of an acre to its current one acre.¹⁰

George K. Heller, the namesake of the existing building, was born on March 14, 1803, in Springfield Township, Montgomery County. He had an eleven year teaching career in the Montgomery County and Philadelphia Schools. He later purchased and cultivated a farm in Cheltenham Township for twenty-two years. After retiring and selling the farm, he moved to Central and Myrtle Avenues in Cheltenham Village. On June 7, 1876, the Board of Directors of Cheltenham adopted a resolution to rename the Milltown schoolhouse, later Cheltenham School, the George K. Heller School, in recognition of his thirty-five years of service as a School Director, thirty of which he served as Secretary of the School Board.¹¹

In 1880, Cheltenham Township reportedly included thirteen public schools within four school buildings with an enrolment of 250 students. Primary school (grades one through three,) secondary school (grades four through six,) and grammar school (grade seven and sometimes eight,) made up the individual schools housed

⁴ Williams, "Some Old-Time Montgomery County Schools and School Houses," 102.

⁵ Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," 28-29.

⁶ Coop, "Some Historic Facts of Cheltenham Township," 6.

⁷ Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," 29.

⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰ Williams, "Some Old-Time Montgomery County Schools and School Houses," 103.

¹¹ Coop, "November 23, 1895 Hundredth Anniversary Address."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

within the buildings.¹² Of the township's early public school buildings, the Cheltenham School was demolished in 1883 and is currently the location of the George K. Heller School. A second floor was added to the c. 1859 Shoemaker School in 1873 and it was converted into a residence prior to its demolition in 1979. The 1853 Audenreid School was demolished by 1907. The 1873 Ashbourne School was considered inadequate and was later converted in to the maintenance building for the Township's schools after the relocation of the Ashbourne School in 1880. The 1878 LaMott Grammar School was closed in 1940 and later converted into the LaMott Community Center.¹³ In addition, the need for a public school in Wyncote lead to the construction of the Wyncote School at Greenwood Avenue and Walt Lane, opening in September 1895.¹⁴

In 1884, George W. Flounders, the principal of the Ashbourne School which opened in 1880, requested that the Cheltenham School Board expand its curriculum from the traditional first through ninth grades to include high school education, eleven years prior to the Pennsylvania passing a law establishing township public high schools. The School Board resolution establishing high schools was adopted on December 7, 1884, and in 1894, the first twelve graduates received their diplomas¹⁵ again marking Cheltenham Township's commitment to educational advancement. On March 17, 1906, Cheltenham High School, the first township school built specifically for use as a high school in Pennsylvania was opened, at High School Road and Montgomery Avenue.¹⁶

By January of 1900, the Cheltenham School District included one high school and seven elementary public school buildings; Ashbourne, George K. Heller, LaMott, Shoemaker, Audenried, Edge Hill and Wyncote Schools. The George K. Heller School included grammar, intermediate, secondary and primary departments, with a total attendance of 165 students.¹⁷ By 1901, a fifth department, referred to as Combined was added.¹⁸ The Ashbourne and LaMott School included similar departments as Heller, with total attendance for Ashbourne at 158 and LaMott 163 for the same period. The Wyncote and Edge Hill Schools, where the departments were limited to grammar, intermediate and primary, attendance was 78 and 119 students respectively. The Audenried School, with only grammar and primary departments, had a total of 41 students, while the High School had 48, with girls outnumbering boys 31 to 17. In total, the Cheltenham School District had 863 public school students by January of 1900, 443 boys and 421 girls. Each department in each school had a single teacher, with one of the teachers at each school also acting as the school principal.¹⁹

In 1883, the 1795 two room George K. Heller School was demolished and the new three room, one and one half story, George K. Heller School was built on its site by the builder Samuel T. Pool, of Ogontz, Cheltenham Township, at a reported cost of \$8,885. Since the new building was not ready for classes by

¹² Toll and Schwager, eds., Montgomery County: The Second Hundred Years, Vol. 1, 85.

¹³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁴ Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," 30-33.

¹⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶ Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," 32.

¹⁷ "School Report," Cheltenham District School News, December 1899, Vol. 5, no. 4.

¹⁸ "School Report," Cheltenham District School News, February 1901, Vol. 6, no. 6.

¹⁹ "School Report," Cheltenham District School News, December 1899, Vol. 5, no. 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

September 1 in time for the beginning of the academic year, classes were held in the nearby Cheltenham Hall in Cheltenham Village during the interim.²⁰

As a result of overcrowding reported in 1893, it was again determined that the existing facilities at the George K. Heller School were insufficient to meet the needs of the community and an addition to the 1883 building would be necessary. The addition was constructed during the summer of 1893, although not completed in time for the opening of the academic year, so again some students were sent to Cheltenham Hall for their classes. The new fifty-six foot by thirty-four foot, symmetrical, one and one half story addition was similar to the 1883 building and connected to the rear of the original building by an eight foot wide, by twenty-five foot long hallway. This configuration of separating the two buildings by a long hallway allowed each of the rooms to maximize their natural light and created defined exterior areas. The interior of the addition's classroom space was planned to be flexible, with large rolling doors with mounted blackboards separating the two rooms.

The new building was erected by Samuel T. Pool, of Ogontz, who was also the builder of the original school erected ten years previously, and was constructed Ogontz stone, with maple floors, at a sum of approximately \$6,000. It was reported that all five classrooms were warmed with heaters.

As a student, principal and teacher of the school, Miss Carrie V. Speck Copp was present at the school during its significant periods of growth. She was a student at the Cheltenham School in 1872 at the age of 16, and worked in the Cheltenham public school system for over 50 years. She taught in the Primary Department from 1876 to 1882 and served as a principal from 1882 to 1905 at the George K. Heller School during its first two building campaigns, and transferred to Cheltenham High School in 1905, where she was a teacher and librarian until her retirement in 1926.²¹ Under her direction, the George K. Heller School Library, was begun in 1884 within the school building, and by January 1900, the library of wholesome and helpful books numbered two hundred twenty seven volumes, purchased with money from the flag fund and through money raised by teachers and students.²² Through her efforts, the George K. Heller School was one of the first in the area to establish a School Savings System.²³

In 1906, an increase in the student population again necessitated that an addition be constructed at the George K. Heller School. Given the site limitations, the decision was made to infill the hallway area between the 1883 and 1893 buildings with a two and one-half story building, the large second floor space being divided by sliding wood door partitions. The architect and builder of the 1906 addition is unknown. This addition established the final overall form of the academic building and provided a cross axis to the original building orientation, parallel to Ashbourne Road, expressed by a large arched opening at both sides of the building, previously linked by an interior corridor. Similar to the 1883 and 1893 sections, the side gable addition is of random stone construction, although a simpler eave board is utilized instead of a bracketed eave. Many of the single and paired 9/9 wood windows remain, most with arched heads, with the exception of the two central pairs of windows at the second floor of the gable ends, which each form half of an arch.

²⁰ Coop, "November 23, 1895 Hundredth Anniversary Address."

²¹ Ibid.

²² "School Report," Cheltenham District School News, December 1899, Vol. 5, no. 4.

²³ Williams, "Some Old-Time Montgomery County Schools and School Houses," 103.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

By 1913, Superintendent William Cleaver described crowded conditions at Heller necessitated the renting of two classrooms in nearby Cheltenham Village. With the continued student increase, another school building was subsequently constructed and in 1915 the Thomas Rowland School began classes.

With the township-wide reduction in the number of elementary school students, in May 1940 the School Board adopted a plan that included the closing of the Edge Hill, La Mott and Heller Schools and the building of the Wyncote Elementary School, although World War II delayed construction plans. Following the War, there were a significant number of schools opened including the Wyncote Elementary School (September 1948), Lynnewood Elementary School (February 1952), Cheltenham Elementary School (March 1953) and Glenside Elementary School (September 1956).²⁴ The George K. Heller School building and site were not suited for expansion necessitated by the population increase and the changing standards of educational facilities.

With the opening of the Cheltenham Elementary School, the George K. Heller School closed in March of 1953. The building is now the Cheltenham Arts Center, currently offering children and adult classes, workshops and exhibit space. At the time of its closing, it was considered to be the oldest public school in continuous use on the same site, from 1795 to 1953.²⁵

Architectural Significance

The George K. Heller School is architecturally significant as a late nineteenth century, Victorian school building expanded to meet the academic needs of the first half of the twentieth century. The three-room 1883 school building, and subsequent 1893 and 1906 expansions are easily distinguishable and provide a visible chronology of the growth of the community and its continued commitment to education.

Like many of the school buildings of the period, the one and one-half story 1883 George K. Heller School was a simple three room construction in a symmetrical plan. Its tall, first floor, 2/2 wood windows are single or paired in arched head openings and round headed 2/2 wood windows at the front gable and wood louvered shutters at the side gables. The intersecting gable roof has overhanging bracketed eaves and is a variation on the more common hipped roof of the Italianate style. A square, intersecting gable roof cupola with paired, round head louvered shutters, is located at the intersection of the roof, and again is a variation of the more typical hipped roof form of the style. The exterior stone walls have a water table and are of random construction, with dressed stone limited to the window and door heads. The arched headed central entry includes a pair of wood paneled doors, topped by wood panels, flanked by three light sidelights and topped by a round headed fanlight. Earlier photographs taken after the initial construction in 1883 but prior to the first addition in 1893, indicate that the cupola was originally open on all sides, similar to the existing cupola at the La Mott School, and a porch was located at the rear of the building.

Similar to the 1883 George K. Heller School, both the La Mott and Wyncote schools are one and one-half stories in height, symmetrical, five bays wide with a prominent front gable wing facing the street, and a principal perpendicular wing to the rear, of random stone construction, with a central entry and single and

²⁴ Scott, "A History of Education in Cheltenham Township," 37-38.

²⁵ Ibid., 28.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

paired large scale window sash. Both schools are contributing buildings in National Register Historic Districts, the Wyncote Historic District (listed 10/16/86) and Camptown Historic District (listed 10/31/85), although the Wyncote School has been converted into an office building and the La Mott School has been significantly altered for use as a Community Center. Other early schools in Cheltenham Township have been demolished or converted into other uses such as residences or substantially altered. The George K. Heller School remains the only late nineteenth-century public school building with an on-going educational mission available to the residents of Cheltenham Township.

Conclusion

The George K. Heller School preserves intact a valuable architectural type, the late nineteenth century school building. The building remains a visual and architectural representation of the evolving concepts of school design and a vital aspect of Cheltenham's history, the exemplary development of a public school system in which the township took great pride. This school is significant under both Criterion A and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 1

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing 18 491 520 4434 620

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dominique M. Hawkins, AIA / Principalorganization Preservation Design Partnership date 07/10/00street & number 2967 W. School House Lane, C1102 telephone 215-842-3388city or town Philadelphia state PA zip code 19144

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Township of Cheltenhamstreet & number 8230 Old York Road telephone 215-887-1000city or town Elkins Park state PA zip code 19027-1589

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 1

Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

Verbal Boundary Description

The 42,560 square foot (just under 43,560 square feet which is one acre) George K. Heller School property consists of all of Tax Parcel Number 31-0000664-007. The property is bordered by Ashbourne Road to the southwest with 228 linear feet of frontage, private residential properties to the northwest and southeast, and the Tookany Creek to the northeast.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes all of the land that is currently and historically associated with the George K. Heller School.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photo Page 1 Name of property Heller, George K., School
County and State Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, PA

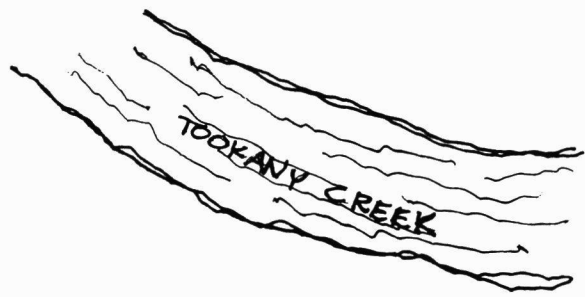
Photographs

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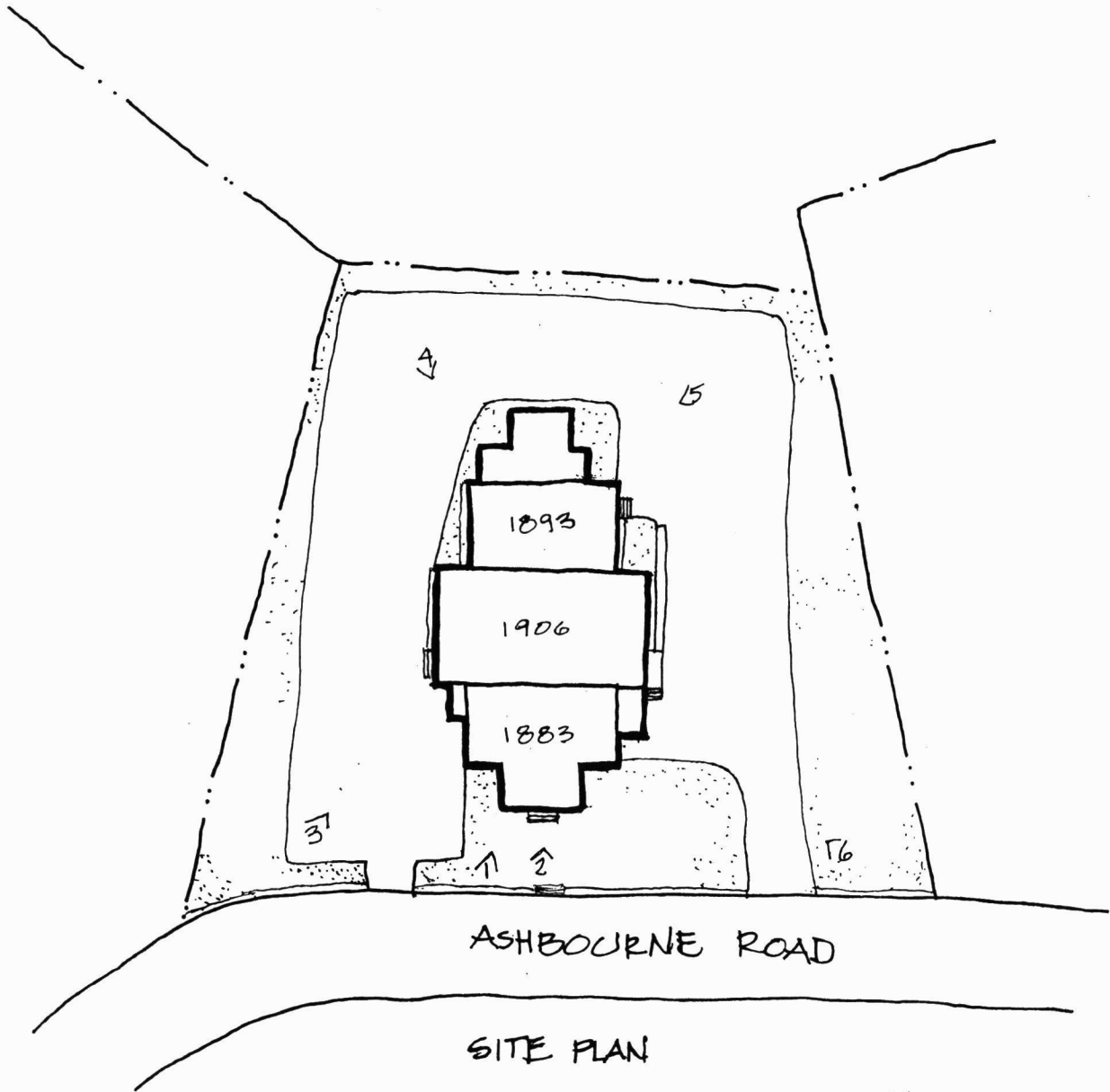
Name: Heller, George K., School
Location: 439 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham, Montgomery County, PA
Photographer: Dominique M. Hawkins, AIA
Date of Photographs: July 2000
Negative Repository: Preservation Design Partnership
2967 West School House Lane, C1102
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144
Historic Photograph Repository: Old York Road Historical Society

Photograph Descriptions:

1. Exterior, front elevation, looking east
2. Exterior, entrance door, looking northeast
3. Exterior, side elevation, looking east
4. Exterior, rear elevation, looking south
5. Exterior, side elevation, looking west
6. Exterior, side elevation, looking north
7. Interior, basement studio, looking south
8. Interior, hallway, looking southeast
9. Interior, gallery, looking west
10. Interior, 2nd floor studio, looking west

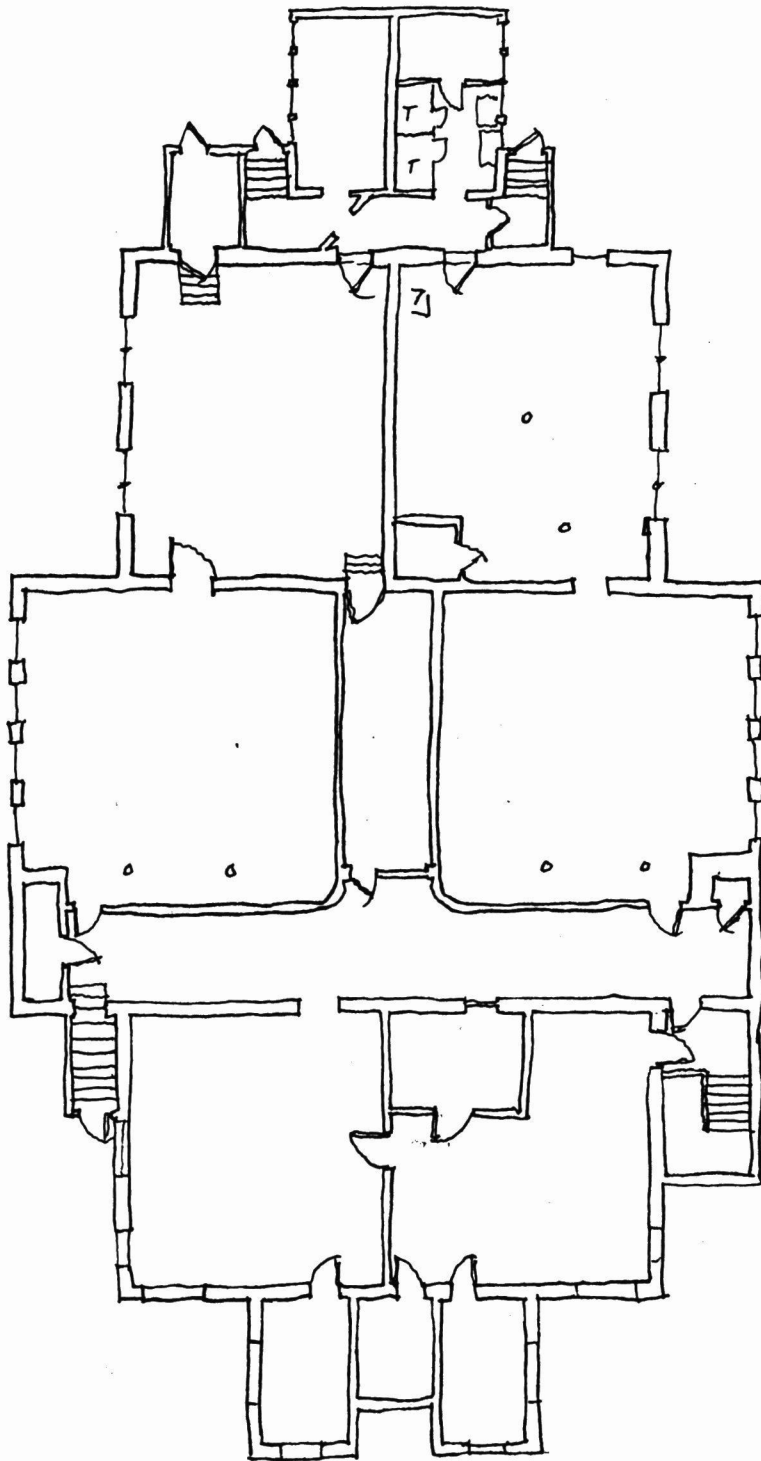


TOOKANY PARK



GEORGE K. HELLER SCHOOL
439 ASHBOURNE ROAD
CHELTENHAM, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA 19012

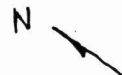
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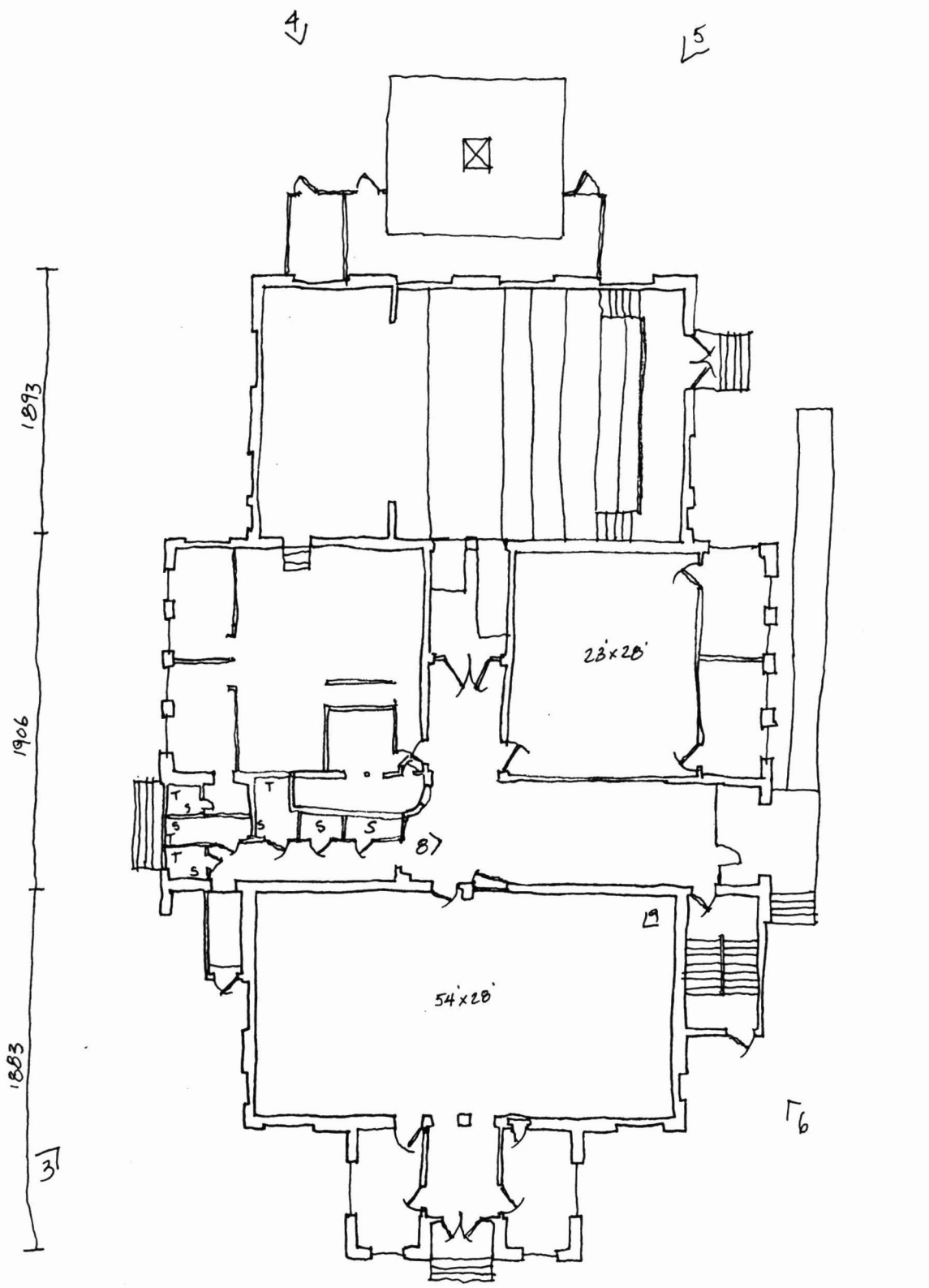


BASEMENT PLAN

GEORGE K. HELLER SCHOOL
439 ASHBOURNE ROAD
CHELTENHAM, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA 19012

KEY:
PHOTOS 9

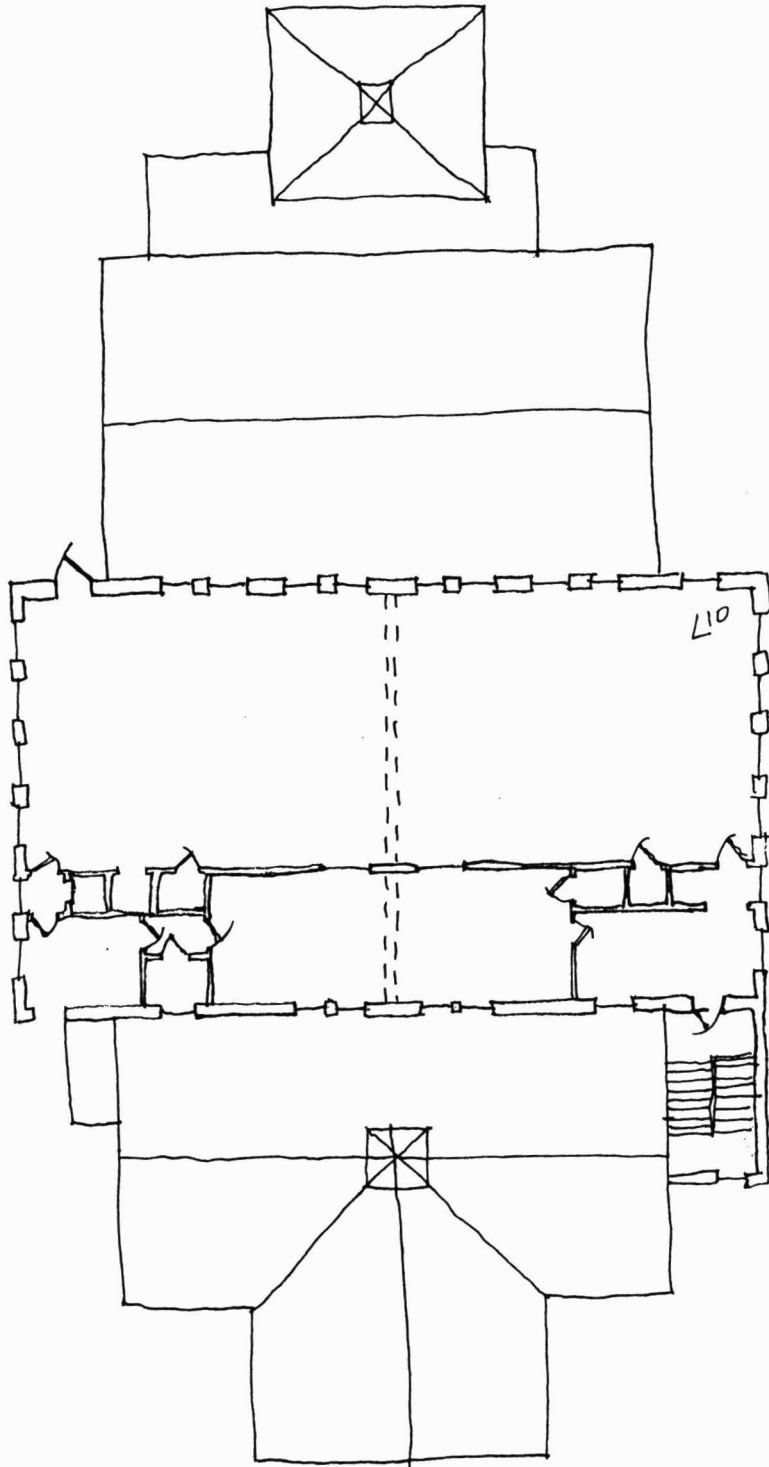




1ST FLOOR PLAN

GEORGE K. HELLER SCHOOL
 439 ASHBOURNE ROAD
 CHELTENHAM, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA 19012

KEY:
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2ND FLOOR PLAN

GEORGE K. HELLER SCHOOL
439 ASHBOURNE ROAD
CHELTENHAM, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA 19012

KEY:
PHOTOS 91



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Heller, George K., School

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PENNSYLVANIA, Montgomery

DATE RECEIVED: 3/26/01 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/13/01
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/29/01 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/11/01
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 01000461

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5.2.01 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in the
National Register**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Kodak Professional Paper

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GEORGE K HELLER

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1. GEORGE K HELLER SCHDDL
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA

GEORGE KELLER
PUBLIC SCHOOL
WELLSBORO DISTRICT
1883.

William
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2. GEORGE K HELLER SCHOOL
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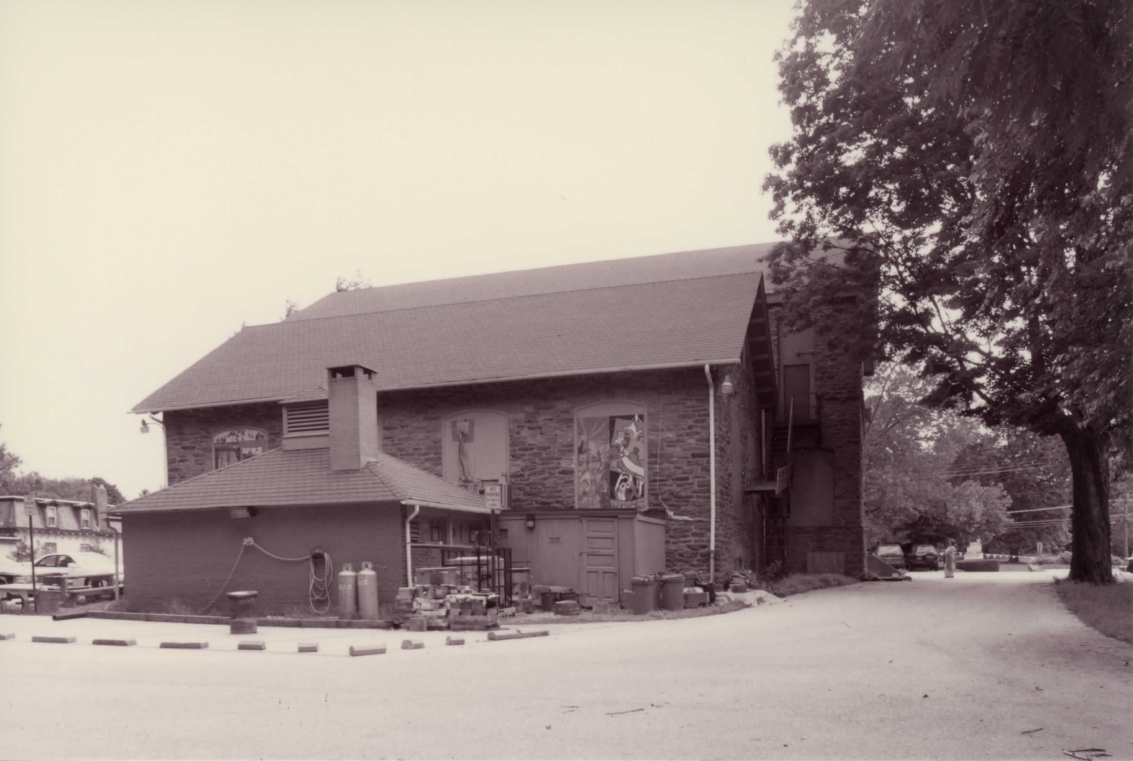
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3. GEORGE K HELLER SCHOOL
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MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA



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8 GEORGE K HELLER SCHOOL
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA



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JUL 00 104 NNNA 18. ----- 9 GEORGE K HELLER SCHOOL
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA



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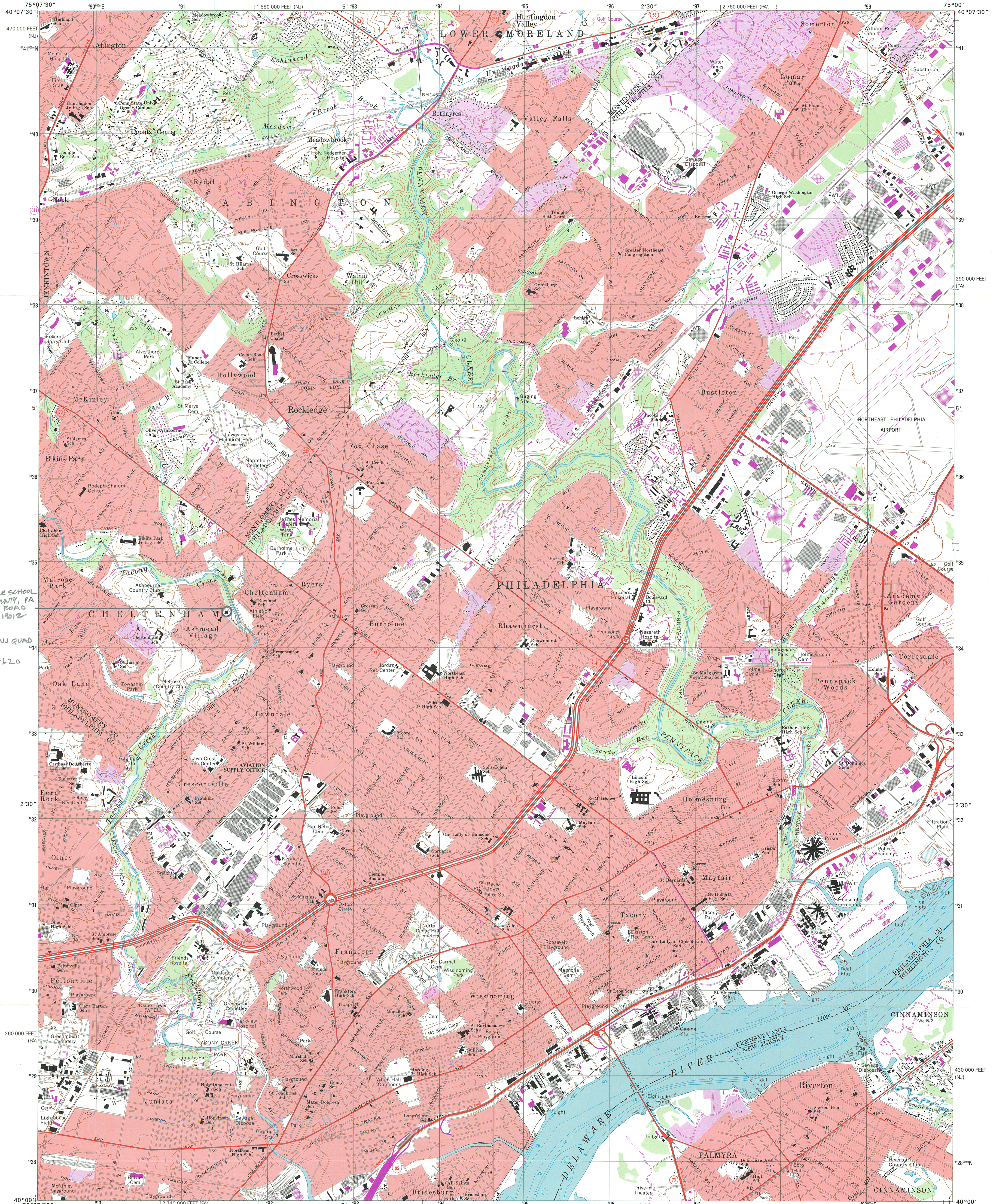
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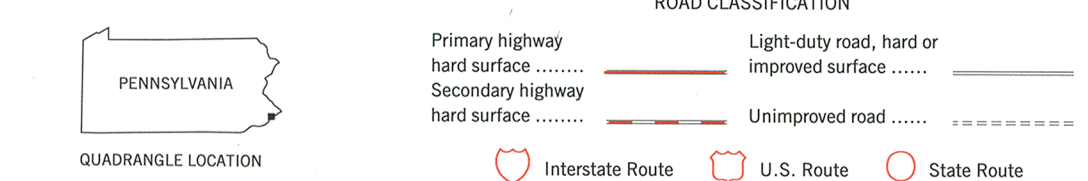
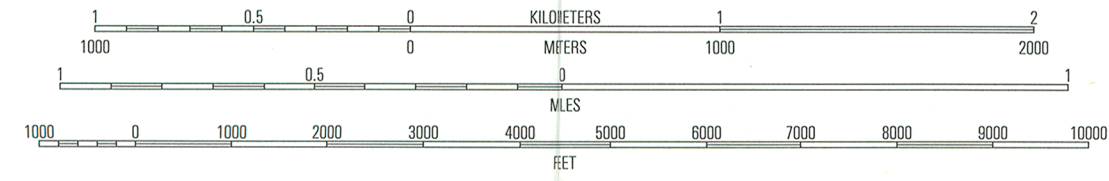
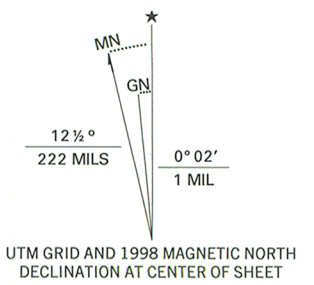
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JUL 00 104 NNNA 20. --- 10 GEORGE K HELLER SCHOOL
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA



GEORGE K HELLER SCHOOL MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA 439 ASHTONDALE ROAD CHELTENHAM 19012
USGS MAP FRANKFORD, PA-NJ QUAD 18 491500 4434120

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey
Topography compiled 1947. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1983 and other sources. Photospectroscopy using imagery dated 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1967. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1998 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27)
Projection: Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
10 000-foot ticks: Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 296 (1966) This information is not intended for navigational purposes
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

1 Ambler
2 Hatboro
3 Langhorne
4 Germantown
5 Beverly
6 Philadelphia
7 Camden
8 Moorestown

FRANKFORD, PA-NJ
1997
NIMA 5964 II SE-SERIES V831



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2nd Floor
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

March 21, 2001

Carol Shull, Chief of Registration
National Register of Historic Places
U.S. Department of Interior
National Park Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Suite NC 400
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: NR nomination form

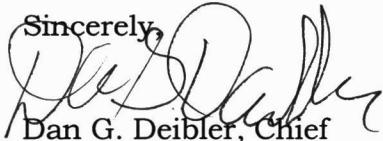
Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register forms are being submitted for your review:

George K. Heller School, Cheltenham Twp, Montgomery County
William Shelly School & Annex, West York, York County
Upper Roxborough Historic District, Philadelphia
Awbury Historic District, Philadelphia
John Nicholas and Elizabeth Moyer House, Jefferson Twp, Berks County
Chester Heights Camp Meeting, Chester Heights, Delaware County

Please note that no CLG comment was received for the George K. Heller School in Cheltenham Twp. The proposed action is listing in the National Register. If you have any questions regarding the nominations please call Greg Ramsey at 717/783-9919.

Sincerely,



Dan G. Deibler, Chief
Division of Preservation Services

Enclosures
DGD/cl