

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Building & Planning Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Historic Resource Inventory Amendments

Prepared By: Greg Prichard, Historic Preservation Planner

Date: July 22, 2025

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Authorization to direct the Township Secretary to advertise a public hearing for an ordinance to amend the Code to make several amendments to the Historic Resource Inventory.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

Historic Resource Inventory amendments must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

NA

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

The attached memo contains information about each of the proposed actions and background on the Historic Resources that would be affected.

V. Impact on Township Finances:

There is no significant impact on Township finances.

VI. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Building and Planning Committee and Board of Commissioners authorize the advertisement and public hearing of the proposed ordinance.

July 22, 2025

TO: Building & Planning Committee
FROM: Greg Prichard, Historic Preservation Planner, Department of Building & Planning
SUBJECT: HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY AMENDMENTS

Proposal

Township Staff recommends the adoption of an ordinance to amend the Historic Resource Inventory. The amendments have been separated into six categories based on the type of amendment.

Section 1: Upgrades from Class II to Class I

Two properties are proposed to be upgraded from Class II to Class I designation.

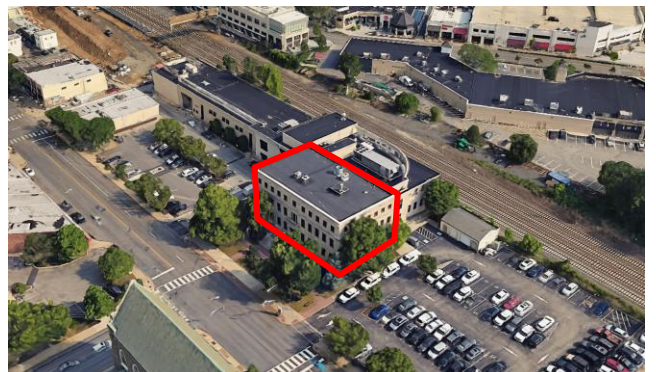
AR097 – 75 East Lancaster Avenue, Ardmore – Lower Merion Township Administration Building

History and Significance

The Township of Lower Merion was incorporated as a Township of the First Class in 1900, the first municipality to attain this distinction after the adoption of a law by the Pennsylvania legislature to divide the Commonwealth's townships into two classes. Prior to this, the Township was governed more loosely by a Board of Supervisors. The new law gave the local government more powers and responsibilities to provide services to the citizens of Lower Merion.

The Township government operated out of the former residence of Robley A. Warner, located at 75 East Lancaster Avenue, which was quickly outgrown as Township services increased. The Commissioners purchased a 7-acre property on the south side of East Lancaster Avenue for the creation of a new office building (and possibly other amenities), but a municipal complex on this property was not pursued. This site was sold to developer Harry Rittenhouse, who turned it into a new commercial area and road he named Rittenhouse Place.

The Township used the proceeds from the sale of this land to build a new Township building on the property they already owned on the north side of East Lancaster Avenue directly



across from Argyle Road, replacing the house that had served as the Township's headquarters since sometime between 1913 and 1920. The new building would allow the various departments that comprised the Township government to operate at a single location, centrally located in one of the Township's busiest commercial areas.

The building's cornerstone was laid on February 25, 1925, with 12 of the 13 commissioners, prominent citizens, and a band present. The building was said to cost \$275,000 (about \$5 million in 2025 dollars).

The Township chose a prominent Philadelphia architectural firm to design its new headquarters. Zantzinger, Borie & Medary was at the height of its prominence in the mid-1920s, having become known for designing (or collaborating on the designs of) major institutional buildings in well-established Neoclassical and Beaux Arts styles. With Horace Trumbauer, the firm designed the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and with Paul Cret, the Detroit Institute of Arts. The latter's cornerstone was laid in 1924, just a year before the same ceremony for the Township Building took place.

Originally conceived with a facade combining limestone and local gray fieldstone, the eventual Township Building was composed entirely of limestone with Classical elements scattered throughout. The use of limestone reflects a trend of the 1920s in Ardmore, when the material was applied to multiple significant facades in the downtown commercial corridor as well as the burgeoning retail district north of the railroad that would later be known as Suburban Square. The earliest buildings within that complex, designed by Dreher & Churchman, shared similarities with the Township Building's form and profiles as well as facade material. Further west, the 1926 office of the Philadelphia Suburban Water Company (now Aqua) in Bryn Mawr designed by Ralph E. White appears to borrow some of the same details and forms on a smaller scale.

Zantzinger, Borie & Medary also designed a police garage and jail building behind the rectangular volume of the main office building, which was removed during the construction of a new Public Safety Building in the early 1980s. Around that time several other exterior modifications were made to the building, including the replacement of its original windows. A rear addition added functionality and space to the building in the early 2000s, including additional offices and a new Board Room addition, with the facades that were obscured from the building's exterior preserved as interior elements.

Municipal office buildings are often modified, adapted, and replaced to reflect the changes necessitated by modern governance. Despite its own alterations and expansions, the Township Building retains its primary street presence with substantial granite front stairs flanked by historic light standards. The Township Building retains a high degree of integrity thanks to the careful preservation of many of its details and interior adaptability.

Historical Commission Recommendation

On June 23, 2025, the Historical Commission recommended a Class I designation for this resource citing the following criteria:

- 1. Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;*
- 2. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community or Township;*
- 3. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community;*

4. Is part of or related to a commercial center, park, community or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif;
5. Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;
7. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, engineering technology, construction or building method, or material fabrication technique;
8. Is the noteworthy work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social or cultural development of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation.

BM053 – 600 Black Rock Road, Bryn Mawr – “Swarthmore Lodge”

History and Significance

“Environment and traditions of the place ought to receive the most serious consideration in choosing the style of house. [Swarthmore Lodge] ...affords an interesting study of both of these forces.”¹

These were the words written by Frank Miles Day, the noted Philadelphia architect, about Swarthmore Lodge, the home of Samuel J. Magarge. They appeared in a critique (or, more accurately, an endorsement) of Swarthmore Lodge that was published in the first issue of the first volume of *House and Garden* (June 1901). The magazine, a creation of Day and several of his contemporaries, including Wilson Eyre, featured commentary, illustrations and plans of country houses and their gardens. The piece, which started on page one and continued for ten more pages, followed a striking photo that appeared on the cover of the magazine: a colonnade that extended from the Swarthmore Lodge into a garden beyond.

During the early twentieth century, Swarthmore Lodge appeared in multiple additional publications. It was cited as an example of an effective way of integrating a house into a landscape, an “artistic” design, and uniquely livable house. Whether Samuel J. Magarge anticipated that his house would be adopted as model for other country homes of the period or that the house’s setting (perched on a hillside and endowed with sweeping views of distant farms and estates) would be so widely admired is not known.



¹ *Country Houses and Gardens of Moderate* (Philadelphia: The John Wilson Co., 1907), 15.

Magarge purchased the property on which Swarthmore Lodge was developed from Elizabeth Egbert and her family on September 28, 1898.² His parcel (13.5 acres) had been carved out of a 17-acre farm owned by Hamilton and Elizabeth Egbert. At this time, his property on Black Rock Road was undeveloped. Notices in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* indicate that within two months, Keen & Mead, a noted Philadelphia-based firm, were soliciting bids for a home they had designed for Magarge's property in Bryn Mawr. The firm of Keen and Mead (Charles Barton Keen and Frank Mead) specialized in residential architecture. Keen in particular was known locally and regionally as an architect of country homes.



Magarge house from the driveway. A three-story house with a low effect

The new house, according to the notice, would “be of stone and brick, hard wood interior. Steam heat, electric work, range and boiler, plumbing of the best system, and all general conveniences, etc.”³ At its front elevation, it has deep recessed porch supported by a heavy, round, stuccoed stone column. This was a space through which the area's summer breezes swept and from which to view the expanse of the front lawn or gardens. The general design of the house, the author of a *Ladies' Home Journal* article noted, was “artistic and satisfying because the house and gardens fit each other.”⁴ Along with the house, Keen and Mead also designed a stable for the property which is no longer extant.



In 1901, only a few years after Swarthmore Lodge was seemingly completed, Megarge commissioned Keen and Mead to design a “large terrace” for the house. The terrace, which the architects positioned off the north side of the house, is depicted on a 1908 atlas and in a rendering.⁵ It was accompanied on the west side of the house by a formal garden enclosed with a pergola comprising a double row of stuccoed columns. The pergola, a form which Keen repeated in many of his independent commission said to have been inspired both by his travels to Italy, was featured in multiple architectural and home and garden magazines of the day.⁶

600 Black Rock Road/Swarthmore Lodge is significant for its associations with the Country House movement as it existed in Lower Merion Township during the early twentieth century. The house, which represented a new kind of style (mingling Colonial Revival with Bungalow with Shingle), was praised for its picturesque value and the ease with which it related with the surrounding landscape.

² Elizabeth Egbert, et. al. to Samuel J. Magarge. Book 442/Page 118. 28 September 1898. Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds. Norristown, PA.

³ *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* 13 (November 1898), 727.

⁴ “A Quaint, Old-Fashioned House for \$6000,” *Ladies Home Journal* (November 1900), 17.

⁵ *Atlas of Properties on the Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad*, 1908;

⁶ Henry H. Saylor, *Architectural Styles for Country Houses* (New York: McBride, Nast & Co., 1912), n.p.

The house is also significant for its associations with the firm of Keen & Mead, and particularly one partner in the firm, Charles Barton Keen. In fact, it became a model for country houses that Keen designed in areas along the East Coast. Reynolda, the 1912 Keen-designed home of tobacco magnate R.J. Reynolds in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, heavily references Swarthmore Lodge. Keen's collection of Bungalow-style houses for the Woodmere Land Association on Long Island also pays tribute to Swarthmore Lodge.

Historical Commission Recommendation

On June 23, 2025, the Historical Commission recommended a Class I designation for this resource citing the following criteria:

- 1. Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;*
- 2. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community or Township;*
- 3. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community;*
- 7. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, engineering technology, construction or building method, or material fabrication technique;*
- 8. Is the noteworthy work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social or cultural development of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation.*

Section 2: Class II Addition

The following property is proposed to be added to the Inventory as a Class II resource.

MS083 – 468 Rockland Avenue, Merion Station

History and Significance

468 Rockland Avenue is likely one of the oldest buildings in Lower Merion and one of very few pre-Revolutionary War buildings that remain in the Township. Historical records, including property deeds, wills, and tax assessments, as well as a physical examination, indicate that the house was probably built during the mid-eighteenth century, possibly by Joseph Tunis. Tunis, from a family of German settlers, purchased the land (402 acres) on which the house sits in 1741 from Jonathon Jones, a member of a prominent Welsh family that settled the Merion Welsh tract in 1682 and later owned the General Wayne Inn. The Tunis property is depicted on a 1753 map of the area. The map reveals that the property was occupied with a house.



Additional documents also indicate that the property was occupied (and not merely farmed) during the mid-eighteenth century.⁷ A 1769 Lower Merion tax assessment indicates that Tunis's property (by this time reduced to approximately 240 acres) contained a stone dwelling. A 1773 newspaper advertisement reveals the presence of two tenant farmhouses on Joseph Tunis's property, including a "small wooden tenement" that may be the subject property.



In 1774, Joseph Tunis's estate sold the property containing the subject resource to John Dickinson, an area landowner who was a member of the Continental Congresses, a drafter of the Articles of Confederation, and the author of the twelve *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*, essays that helped sparked opposition to Britain's Townshend Acts. Dickinson did not farm his property or occupy a residence on it. Rather, tax assessments indicate that he, like owners before and after him, leased it to tenant farmers, including Jacob Morris. Tax assessments indicate that Morris first occupied the property in 1787. The Federal Direct Tax for Lower Merion, taken in 1798, reveals that the house in which Morris lived measured 15 feet by 20 feet. These measurements approximately match measurements of the house's original volume (as recorded on the Montgomery County property records database).

In 1807, Dickinson deeded the property (still measuring approximately 240 acres) to Morris. From time to time, Morris was aided in the upkeep and modernization of his house (presumably the subject resource) by his neighbor, Joseph Price. Price, whose accomplishments and contributions to the township are too numerous to summarize, was a skilled carpenter. He built and lived in a stone house that occupies the parcel at present-day 1803 Montgomery Avenue and is credited with the construction of the William Penn Inn and other significant landmarks in Lower Merion. In his diary, Price writes that he helped Morris in "measuring the house," "cutting out cellar doors," "laying out door frames & putting up spouts," and "putting up boards on his old kitchen." It is not known if Price also helped to build the house's two-and-a-half story addition. His work at the house (as documented in the diaries), however, coincides with period during which the addition was likely erected.

At his death in 1817, Jacob Morris's property (still measuring approximately 240 acres) passed to his estate. Beginning in the late 1830s, Mary Morris McClenahan, Morris's daughter and the executrix of his estate, began to partition the property. In 1847, she sold the 147-acre parcel on which the subject resource is located to James and Ellen Sullivan, Irish immigrants. It is not certain if the Sullivans lived in or leased the house on the parcel. In 1863, the Sullivans sold 60 acres of their original 147-acre parcel (including the subject resource) to Charles S. Wood. A deed indicates that at this time that the parcel contained "barns, buildings and improvements" and a private farm lane that was eventually adopted as a public road: Rockland Avenue. This road once crossed the railroad tracks. It now terminates short of the tracks. It is Charles Wood who likely built the nearby Rockland, an impressive stone house, as well as its accompanying gatehouse. Rockland is listed as a Class II Resource on the Lower Merion Historic Resource Inventory. Members of the Cook family retained the parcel containing the subject resource until 1944. In 1958, the parcel (which, after multiple subdivisions, measured 1.7 acres) was reduced to its present-day size of .3 acres. Its current owner, Sandra and Peter Brown, have owned it since 1991.

⁷ A physical examination also supports the likelihood that the house was constructed during the mid-eighteenth century. Dan Campbell, AIA, conducted a physical examination of the house in 2024. Campbell, a preservation architect who has worked on notable eighteenth-century buildings, including the Merion Meeting House, affirmed that saw marks on the joists house's joists probably date to the mid-eighteenth century.

468 Rockland Avenue is significant for its associations with the early settlement of Lower Merion and for its associations with some of Lower Merion's prominent early settlers. The resource, a frame tenant house, sits on a parcel of land that measured approximately 400-acres during the mid-1700s. Like many properties in Merion, the "Welsh Tract," this parcel was used for agricultural purposes. Over a period of more than 150 years, it was farmed – at times by its tenants and at times by its owners – and contributed to the agricultural economy of the township.

The house is also significant for its association with significant individuals in American history. One of these individuals, John Dickinson, achieved national prominence as a result of his associations with activity that contributed to the colonies' decision to seek independence from the United Kingdom. Another significant person associated with the resource, Joseph Price, is a prominent figure in the early history of Lower Merion.

468 Rockland is one of very few surviving pre-Revolutionary buildings in Lower Merion Township. Although the house's method of construction is not likely unique (and, in fact, was probably repeated in countless modest houses in the area), it does appear to be a rare surviving example of a mid-eighteenth-century framed building. It therefore has the potential to inform scholars about common, but lost, construction practices of the period. An explanation for its survival of the house is wanting; because it is frame, it would have been much more susceptible to deterioration and loss than a masonry building of the same age. In addition, development pressures likely made the house vulnerable from time to time; it sits on a property that directly abuts the line of a four-track railroad and is encircled by a neighborhood of twentieth-century homes. Yet, it is possible that the house withstood these stresses because of its critical long-term utility as a tenant house and its location in the heart of Merion. This put it within close proximity of area landmarks, including Merion Meeting, the General Wayne Inn, and the William Penn Inn, as well as to the day-to-day activities occurring within these establishments.

The subject resource retains a good level of historic architectural integrity. Although the house's late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century porch was removed and replaced with a one-story addition, the form and massing of the original volumes of the house have not been altered. Some building materials associated with the original house (including siding and windows) have been removed or obscured (the asbestos shingles cover wood clapboard), but these changes should be weighed against the overall integrity of the 275-year-old resource.

Historical Commission Recommendation

On June 23, 2025, the Historical Commission recommended a Class II designation for this resource citing the following criteria:

- 1. Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;*
- 2. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community or Township;*
- 3. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.*
- 5. Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;*
- 6. Is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;*

7. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, engineering technology, construction or building method, or material fabrication technique;

10. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Section 3: Upgrade of Historic Objects from Class II to Class I

History and Significance

A total of 42 historic “Merion-Type” street signs still stand within the communities of Merion Station and Merion Park. Before the placing of street signs was an organized municipal responsibility, the Merion Civic Association took the initiative to install the first of these cast iron signs at most intersections within the boundaries of its community utilizing an aesthetically pleasing design. The sign designs created for Merion were used in some other communities, most notably nearby Merion Park. The Merion-type signs may have inspired the Township-wide sign system implemented in later years; both share a similar post design.



Recognizing the surprising endurance of the Merion street signs after a century of service, the Historical Commission recommended their designation as Class II Historic Resources (the highest classification then available to them under the previous designation criteria) in 2018. The Board of Commissioners adopted an ordinance to apply this designation to all 42 signs that summer.



Since that time, the archives of the Merion Civic Association (MCA) have revealed further details about the design and fabrication of the signs. Discussion of the creation of street signs was first taken up by the MCA in 1913, its first year of activity. Cast iron was chosen as the most appropriate material in December of that year. The first road signs were reported to have been installed in the fall of 1914: 31 single signs and 62 double signs. They were accompanied by regulatory automobile signs and road lamps which were later removed (though some salvaged regulatory signs and lamps have since been restored and re-installed by individual property owners). Through various changes and the adoption of a standard Township street sign design, a significant number of the signs installed by the MCA in 1914 have remained.

The MCA minutes of December 15, 1924 state that developer H. Martin Molony sought to use the MCA street sign design for his new community of Merion Park, built on the site of the former Belmont Driving Park north of Montgomery Avenue. The MCA granted the request, with the understanding that the name “Merion Park” be cast into the signs and not “Merion.”

The MCA records also provide insight into the design, fabrication, and delivery of the signs. Delivery receipts indicate that the Bellwood Manufacturing Co., a foundry in Bellwood, PA (near Altoona) fabricated the original sign posts through Wayne Iron Works of Philadelphia possibly acting as broker. The Smyser-Royer Co. of York, Pa. provided post designs and may have contributed in other ways, including later manufacturing. New and replacement signs were made by Adams Foundry starting in 1930.

A previously undiscovered newspaper reference⁸ cites Horace Wells Sellers and Warren Powers Laird as designers of the signs. Both are notable local architects with connections to Merion.

Historical Commission Recommendation

On June 23, 2025, the Historical Commission recommended a Class I designation for these 42 signs citing the following criteria:

- 1. Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;*
- 2. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community or Township;*
- 3. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community;*
- 4. Is part of or related to a commercial center, park, community or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif;*
- 7. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, engineering technology, construction or building method, or material fabrication technique;*
- 8. Is the noteworthy work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social or cultural development of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation.*

Section 4: Addition of Ten Historic Signs as Class I Historic Resources

History and Significance

Before the concepts of “placemaking” and “wayfinding” became commonly implemented in recent years as ways for communities to create a sense of place for the benefit of vehicular traffic, the Pennsylvania Department of Highways (DOH) created a unified, statewide system based on these concepts a century ago. Starting with the iconography and colors most closely associated with Pennsylvania, a system of signs was designed, fabricated, and installed utilizing a keystone shape with blue and gold paint colors.

Now known as “Keystone Markers,” these signs were fabricated from cast iron and consist of two parts: a fluted, square post with ball finial (sometimes cast as a separate part) and a sign with raised border and lettering and the

⁸ “Ancient Road Signs to be Banished.” The Daily Republican (Phoenixville, PA). Mon, Apr 27, 1914, Page 1.

shape of a keystone (Pennsylvania's state symbol) intersecting a wide rectangle with rounded corners. The back of each sign is cast with a pair of ribs and collars to fit over the rounded top of the post.

Markers were originally used to mark places and direct motorists in various ways: they pointed in the direction of nearby towns, provided regulatory messages (such as "School Zone" and "Speed Limit"), and marked waterways. Most significantly, they marked the edges of towns through which state highways ran.

These "town name" markers make up the vast majority of the Keystone Markers that still exist today. Their layouts consist of several concise pieces of information. From top to bottom: The distance in miles to the next town (i.e. "Philadelphia - 3"), the name of the town being entered in large type, the origin of its name (in three lines of text or less), and the date of the town's founding.

Collecting this historical data in the 1920s was a monthslong effort involving each of the municipalities being marked, with the assistance of Pennsylvania Historical Commission (now Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission) Chairman Henry W. Shoemaker and Secretary Dr. Albert Cook Myers.⁹ Shoemaker was a folklorist and writer who became Chairman of the Commission ten years after its 1913 founding and remained in the position for seven years. His work with the Commission continued after his term as Chairman, including efforts to mark Pennsylvania's historic sites with the now-familiar blue and gold PHMC historical markers, a program that continues to this day. Though they are sometimes confused as PHMC markers, Keystone Markers do have a shared history in their origin with the research of Henry Shoemaker.

The Keystone Marker-style warning, directional, and regulatory signs were installed around 1922.¹⁰ The creation of the historical "town name" markers was announced in newspapers across Pennsylvania in April, 1924.¹¹ It was reported the following June that 1,785 "borough and historical signs" had been ordered¹² and in August that they were being installed across the Commonwealth.¹³

Not all towns were marked with Keystone Markers, prompting some communities to make their own markers. Wynnewood is one example, where Lower Merion Township may have taken the initiative to create markers using their own text (over four lines, well beyond the DOH standard of a maximum of three). To differentiate these municipally-produced markers from those made by the DOH, the sign shape does not include a keystone. In every other way, including typefaces, post design, and installation method, they match the official DOH Keystone Markers.

Keystone Markers and their variants were only produced during a short window in time. They are extremely heavy, each having required a great deal of iron in their casting. Signs of such magnitude were impractical for the DOH and later PennDOT to continue fabricating, especially as metal became an important wartime commodity. In fact, it is believed that many of the regulatory signs were scrapped and replaced with thinner and lighter signs during WWII. It is especially remarkable that so many of the "town name" Keystone Markers survived despite the immense pressures to recycle metal for the war effort. Roads like Lancaster Avenue have also been widened considerably since this time, requiring the DOH or municipalities to proactively relocate markers as space became constrained.

⁹ "Marking the Historic Sites of Early Pennsylvania: Fourth Report of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission." 1926

¹⁰ "Highway Body Gets 1700 Warning Signs." Philadelphia Inquirer, September 10, 1922.

¹¹ "New Sign Boards Will Give Historical Data." United Press to various newspapers, April 28, 1924.

¹² "Further Markings for Highways of State." The Evening News (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), Jun 2, 1925, 2.

¹³ "State Highway Dept. Placing Town Signs." The Daily Herald (Monongahela, Pennsylvania), Aug 4, 1925, 2.

Over time, towns have taken ownership of their Markers in various ways. The standard blue and gold paint scheme has largely been retained statewide, though communities with their own sign paint schemes (including Lower Merion) have applied those colors to their markers. Many markers that have been taken down (either purposely or accidentally) now adorn town halls as relics and museum pieces. Despite the progress of a century, with countless road widenings, vehicular accidents, and thefts, several hundred remaining markers of this type have been documented across Pennsylvania.

The Department of Highways' successor agency, PennDOT, has largely refrained from maintaining Keystone Markers, instead allowing individual municipalities to repair and repaint extant examples. In 2010, a nonprofit organization called the Keystone Marker Trust¹⁴ was established to unify the statewide effort to maintain the remaining markers. The Trust has repainted and restored dozens of markers and even created a handful of replica markers. The Trust also maintains an online archive of markers, both extant markers and ones that have been lost.

Ardmore Keystone Markers (2)

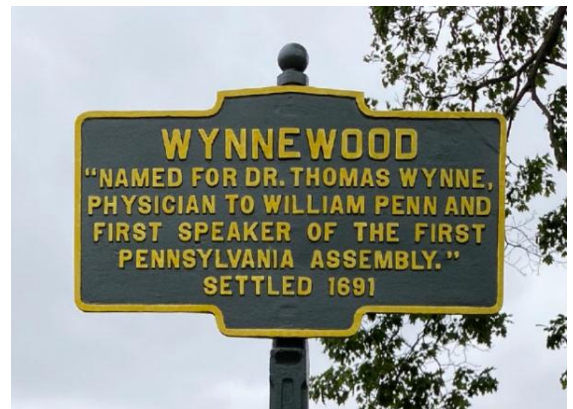
The DOH installed two “Ardmore” markers along Lancaster Avenue: at the east end of town (for viewing by westbound traffic) in front of 233 East Lancaster Avenue, and at the west end of town (for viewing by eastbound traffic) at the southwest corner of Lancaster and S. Wyoming Avenues. This marker was temporarily removed for restoration and repainting in 2017 and is expected to be reinstalled later this year.

The Ardmore markers contain the text “Formerly ‘Athensville’ Renamed Ardmore in 1873.” Like many markers across Pennsylvania, the Ardmore markers have become an overall symbol of the community, having been used in the official Ardmore Centennial logo in 1973 and elsewhere.



Wynnewood Markers (7)

While the Wynnewood markers do not use the DOH-standard keystone shape, they likely date to the same time period. Given differences in typefaces, these seven markers were produced in two groups, and were likely commissioned either by the Township or a community group such as a civic association. Under the name “Wynnewood,” they read: “Named for Dr. Thomas Wynne, physician to William Penn and first Speaker of the first Pennsylvania Assembly. Settled 1691.”

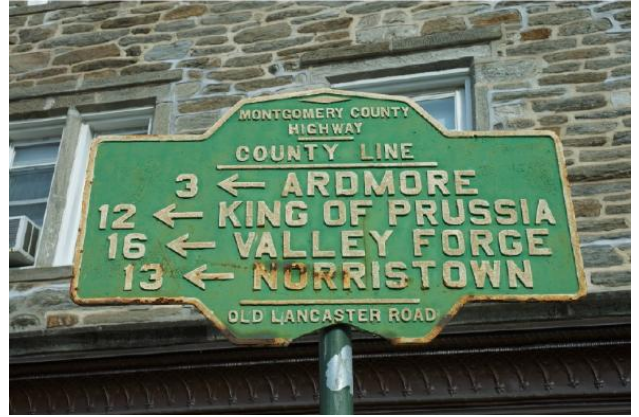


¹⁴ Note: Historical Commission Chair Christian Busch and Historic Preservation Planner Greg Prichard are Board Members of the Keystone Marker Trust.

Old Lancaster Road Directional Marker

Keystone Markers and other types of “permanent” cast iron signs were installed throughout Pennsylvania by municipalities, counties, and the DOH in the years prior to the Second World War. While the DOH only had authority to erect signs along state highways, county and local roads sometimes required similar marking.

The directional sign at the intersection of Old Lancaster Road and City Avenue is the last evidence of an apparent Montgomery County initiative to provide wayfinding on roads under its jurisdiction. While the DOH fabricated signage of a similar size, shape, and lettering using its standard keystone shape, this directional sign uses a more unique form that may have been custom designed for the County. Old Lancaster Road and other County roads may have been lined with similar markers prior to WWII, but no other markers resembling this one have been located or are known to be in use today.



The DOH placed directional signs using their Keystone Marker shape along state roads, pointing the way to nearby towns and denoting how many miles separated them. Nearly all of these state-commissioned directional signs, which may have numbered in the hundreds, have since disappeared, adding another layer of rarity to this sign.

Though largely intact, the sign has lost a portion of its bottom edge. It is also installed on a round post that is not original, though this post stands within the base of its original Keystone Marker-type post, which protrudes several inches above the ground.

Historical Commission Recommendation

On June 23, 2025, the Historical Commission recommended a Class I designation for these 10 signs citing the following criteria:

- 1. Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Township, county, region, commonwealth or nation;*
- 2. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community or Township;*
- 3. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community;*
- 4. Is part of or related to a commercial center, park, community or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif;*
- 7. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, engineering technology, construction or building method, or material fabrication technique.*

Section 5: Addresses to the Removed from the Inventory

The following addresses should be removed from the Inventory as a result of demolitions and past actions:

Past Board Actions (Without Ordinance)

VI073 – 1801 West Montgomery Avenue – Removed from Inventory in April, 2000

Demolished Properties to be Removed

GL232 1601 Spring Mill Road (Gatehouse near entrance of Phila. Country Club – d. 2006)

BMC13 1013 Wyndon Ave (Hubbard House, Bryn Mawr College – d. 2011)

AR133 315 East Montgomery Avenue (Ardmore Junior High School – d. 1990s)

GL214 1345 Conshohocken State Rd (Inwood Farm Barn – d. ca. 2010)

BM034 719 New Gulph Road (Perry House, Bryn Mawr College – d. 2015)

BMC75 719 New Gulph Road (Perry House, Bryn Mawr College – d. 2015)

Not Real Parcels

WW093 640 Lancaster Ave.

WW078 640 Lancaster Ave.

Section 6: Amend to Correct Address

The following address is listed incorrectly in the Inventory. It pertains to the Township’s “County Line” facility at County Line Road and Lippincott Avenue in Ardmore.

AR128 ~~225 Lippincott Avenue~~ 215 Lippincott Avenue

Montgomery County Planning Commission Review

MCPC reviewed the draft ordinance and is in favor of its adoption.