

Dr. George De Benneville House
2-1/4 miles west of Yellow House near Limekiln Creek,
west of State Route 662, Oley Township
Yellow House Vicinity
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1029

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

DR. GEORGE De BENNEVILLE HOUSE

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Location: . 2-1/4 miles west of Yellow House near Limekiln Creek, west of State Route 662, Oley Township, Yellow House Vicinity, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Morris Brown, Birdsboro, Pennsylvania.

Present Use: Residence.

Brief Statement of Significance: Built in 1745, this was the home of Dr. De Benneville, important in state and local history, and the founder of Universalism in the United States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This house was erected in 1745 for Dr. George De Benneville. George De Benneville was born July 26, 1703 in London, the son of French nobility. He was brought up under the care of Queen Anne, and spoke most European languages. At the age of 17 he began preaching to the Huguenots and was arrested and condemned to death by Louis XV. Through the insistence of Queen Anne he was reprieved, and spent 18 years preaching in Germany, Holland, and Flanders before emigrating. In 1745 De Benneville married Esther Bertolet, daughter of Jean Bertolet also of the Oley Valley and built this house. Ten years later De Benneville moved to Germantown, and he died in 1793. In 1925 Mr. Eckert of Reading remodelled the house and converted the original chapel into a rustic club room called Willow Lodge.

References: Croll, Annals of the Oley Valley (Reading, Penna.: The Reading Eagle Press, 1926), pp. 119-122.

Montgomery, Morton L., History of Berks County in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Everts, Peck and Richards, 1886), p. 937.

Montgomery, Richard S., "Houses of the Oley Valley," The Dutchman, Vol. VI, no. 3, (Winter, 1954-1955), pp. 16-26.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The De Benneville House is a large, two-story, stone house with a one-story porch across the front which was probably added at the time of one of the remodelings which the house has undergone. Although the original doors and windows have been replaced by later ones of a different

DR. GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE HOUSE
HABS No. PA-1029 (Page 2)

style, the generous proportions of the house with its large gable roof give it the character of the large nineteenth century farm house of this region. The house is kept in good repair by the present owner, and shows no signs of deterioration.

The walls and foundations are of stone, the exterior having been stuccoed. The roof is a gable with three large dormers. The central dormer is crowned by a broken scroll pediment, and may date from a later remodeling. The original interior arrangement has undergone change through the remodeling of successive owners.

The house faces southeast and is approached by a very picturesque country road which runs through the front yard. Across the road is a spring which flows from the rocky face of a hillside.

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