

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCARS use only  
received JUL 1 1980  
date entered AUG 29 1980

1. Name

historic River Bend Farm

and/or common

2. Location

street & number *N of Spring City, Pa.* Sanatoga Road, R.D., *Historic Preservation* not for publication

city, town Spring City vic. East Coventry Township vicinity of congressional district 5

state Penna. code 42 county Chester code 029

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. & Mrs. George F. Gowen

street & number River Bend Farm, R.D., Sanatoga Road,

city, town Pottstown, Twsp. Pa., 19464

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chester County Court House

street & number High Street,

city, town West Chester, state Pa., 19380

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 11/26/79  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(very slightly)	

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

River Bend Farm house is a pre-Revolutionary home built of field stone using coursed, cut brown stone on the front. It is stuccoed on the other three sides. Three bays wide and two generous bays deep, it has a steeply gabled roof of wood shingles covered with painted tin. There are two additions, which extend it to the southwest, each having a gabled roof at step-down heights from the original gable.

The main entrance is the southwest bay of the front facade. It is a narrow six panel door flanked by five thin side lights under a four-lite transom. This door treatment may be part of a later remodelling in the early 1800's. The doorway is decorated with a plain pediment, squared posts and no ornamentation. The second and third bays are unusually large paned windows, 6/6, with old glass and are capped by keystone lintels on the first floor. The second floor windows are shorter 6/6's.

In the east wall, the windows are more typical 9/9's, with two windows per floor including the third floor. The third floor windows are six-paned casements. A simple box cornice wraps around the ends to make an unusually long partial return. A large off-center chimney pierces the roof. It rises through the apex of the gable but is not in the end wall. There are two bays in the rear, one being a door and one a window. The second floor has a 3/6 stairway window, out-of-line, and one other window.

The west side is partially covered by the first addition which is a one and one-half story, one-room extension. It is recessed from the front line of the first house to allow the first side window of that house to show. A one-story shed-roofed porch covers the southern exposure and there is a large fireplace chimney in the west end wall. This extension is two bays wide and is also built of thick, heavy stone. The windows are mostly 6/6.

The second addition, built about 1959, is a one-story kitchen attached to the west wall of the second addition and set back from it. It is entered from the north wall (rear of house) and its windows are 8/8. It is a two bay structure with a wood shingled gable roof. These two extensions are stucco over stone.

This house appears to have been built on the colonial plan of a wide hall (8 feet) opening into a front room and a back room, the hall extending the full depth of the house. The hall then became almost a room in itself having two windows and a front and back door. The ceilings in this house are especially high for an early country house being 9'7" on the first floor and 8'11" on the second. The stairwell, set in the rear part of the hall, rises to a landing, turns to rise to the second floor hall, and repeats the turn to rise to the third floor. It is not enclosed until the third floor is reached. There is an exposed broad beam around the landing level of the third floor stairwell. This section may have been enclosed at one time, although the window therein seems to belong to the second floor hallway.

The internal chimney divides the front room from the back room providing a fireplace for each room on both first and second floors. Each fireplace wall is panelled and each fireplace originally had indented low-arched openings. These have been altered to accept modern glass firedoors. All hearths are old brick. The front rooms, both first and second floors, have panelled window treatments probably done in the early 1800's. They each have deep layered mouldings at the ceiling heights. Each of the four rooms has a double cup-

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board on either side of the fireplace, the front rooms (up and down) incorporating a keystone between the cupboards. Backs of the cupboards (closets on the second floor) are beaded boards. Downstairs, the east cupboard is a walk-through with pegs for clothes. The west cupboard has ornamentally cut shelves.

The back parlor does not have the panelled window reveals, being plastered instead. The style is straight out from the window and rounded slightly at the turn. The hall treatment of windows makes use of the arrow point chamfer. There is a small wall cupboard with one drawer in each bedroom and some chair rail remains.

The rafters in the attic retain their original pegged construction, as does the stone and frame barn. The barn beams are numbered.

The core of the house does not provide for a cooking room, nor is the cellar under the core section equipped for cooking. A separate kitchen must have served for a short time before the building of the smaller room, (to the east), and there must have been a fireplace in it. However, the present fireplace, large and with an old crane, was added by the Amidon's after 1960. The Opdegrave family claims the building of the present room in the early 1900's. It would seem that the kitchen for which John Hiester was taxed in 1798 may have been on this spot.

The 1798 Direct Tax records John Hiester as owner/occupant of 281 acres in "Coventry near the Schuylkill" on which was a 40x30 stone house in "good repair". The house was further described as being two stories with seven 15-lite windows, three 20-lite windows and two 24-lite windows. There was also a stone kitchen that was 22x22 and had four 4-lite windows. Hiester was assessed £1000 for these. He was also assessed for one good stone barn, 30x60, and one tanyard, for all of which (improvements and 281 acres) he was assessed £6220. In addition, he was credited with 50 acres of woodland at £400. All of these dimensions match their counterparts today. The windows have been changed, the 24-lite windows having been replaced shortly after the 1798 tax. This may have been an economy measure (fewer lites, lower tax) coupled with a desire to 'modernize'. The very old glass indicates, however, that it was an early replacement.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates House c. 1765-70 Builder/Architect John Hiester

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Schuylkill River is the northeast boundary between Chester and Montgomery counties for 25 miles. It is singularized by three great looping bends between Pottstown and Phoenixville which create fingers of valuable land known as 'points'. River Bend Farm is part of one of these points. As the name suggests, it lays in the crook of a long, lazy bend. It had been a favorite point to the local Indians because its particular shape made it possible to drive the numerous wild turkeys into its underbrush and into trap-pens or snares prepared for them. This gave rise to the name "Turkey Point" - a name carried on today by the farm across the road which was part of the original purchase.

The first record of purchase was November 28, 1763, when the Casdorp family bought 600 acres including the entire point from Thomas and Richard Penn. Henry Casdorp was a shipwright in Philadelphia. His sister, Jane, had married Joseph Allen, a cabinetmaker of note in the city. Henry's brother, Jacob, lived on the family farm in Bedminster, Bucks County, with their spinster sister, Mary. These five people, plus Henry's wife, Elizabeth, bought Turkey Point for £600. It proved a good investment. Joseph Allen advertised it four months later, in the Pennsylvania Gazette:

"To be sold by the subscriber, a commodious tract of land, lying in Coventry Township, Chester Co., commonly known by the name of Turkey Point, containing 600 acres bounded on the River Schuylkill on which it is very pleasantly situated and is well known to be as good a piece as any in said township. There are two plantations erected thereon, under good fence and well timbered with about 10 acres of meadow already made and a large quantity more may be made. It will be sold together or divided to suit the purchaser. For further particulars enquire of the subscriber, living in 2nd St. near the corner of Spruce St."

"Joseph Allen" 3/1/1764

The Casdorps sold to Michael Hillegas and Francis Winey on May 23, 1764. They paid £2400.

The cleared land and "two plantations" indicate that the Point was occupied before the Casdorps purchased, unless the three Casdorp men did a herculean job of improving the land in four winter months. Typical plantations, the houses were small and built of squared logs with simple animal shelters built of the same materials. Grapevines wound between uprights (posts) made excellent fence and good use of an abundant material.

Hillegas and Winey seem also to have bought for investment. They were listed on the deed as 'merchants of Philadelphia and they kept the property only sixteen and a half months at which time (10/8/1765), they sold 300 acres to Daniel Hiester, a tanner of Sumneytown, (Philadelphia County, later Montgomery County). This deed hangs in the halls of Perkiomen Preparatory School.

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After the Revolution, Michael Hillegas became the first Treasurer of the United States.

Until this time, the farm appears to have been occupied by lessees or renters (or perhaps, squatters). And, indeed, Daniel Hiester did not live on the property either. He bought it for his eldest son, John, and his wife, Hannah Pawling. John and Hannah were already living in Coventry Township and could have been living on the property but there is no record of this being true. John was also a tanner. Ten years later, June 7, 1775, deed records show that Daniel Heester (sic) and Catherine, his wife, of Upper Salford Township (Sumneytown) sold to their son, John Hiester, and Catherine, his wife, of Coventry Township. (Either the scribe made a mistake in the name of John's wife or else Hannah had died and John remarried.) Family records further bear out living arrangements by recording that Daniel's second son, Daniel, remained on the homestead at Sumneytown.

The Hiester family produced patriots and legislators from the time of their arrival in this country in 1732. Three brothers emigrated from Elsof, Germany, two going to Bern Township (Berks County) in 1732, and one, Daniel, arriving in 1737 and going to Goshenhoppen in Philadelphia County.

Daniel's sons served in leading capacities in the American Revolution. His son, Daniel, was a member of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania and also was Brigadier General in the Pennsylvania Militia. He was a member of the first, second, third and fourth Congresses. John, of Coventry Township, Chester County, was Captain of a company of Militia at the Battle of Brandywine and moved on to become Colonel of a Regiment of Associators. After the war, he was appointed a Brigadier General of the Chester County Militia and then Major General of the Militia of Chester and Delaware Counties. He was later elected to the state legislature serving the district of Coventry, Chester County, in the Senate from 1802 to 1806 and then was elected to Congress in 1806. His son, Daniel, was becoming active in county politics having been a candidate for delegate to the First Congress in 1788 (when he received 209 votes) and 1792 (when he received 2009 votes). He was not elected, however, until 1808. John Hiester had led the family into the political arena as early as 1773 when he was appointed to a Board of Commissioners to clear the Schuylkill River of obstructions to navigation. The Board was appointed by the Assembly and Hiester was reappointed in 1781 and 1784. It was no happenstance, then, to find him interested and active in the Schuylkill Navigation Company which eventually built the Schuylkill Canal in 1822, which, of course, ran through River Bend Farm.

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To carry on the family traditions, John's brother, Daniel, was elected to the Maryland legislature from Hagerstown to which he had moved, and his brother, Gabriel, was a Pennsylvania legislator for 30 years from Bucks County. A cousin, Joseph Hiester, from Berks County, became the 5th. Governor of Pennsylvania in 1820. John's son, Daniel, served many county commissions such as Recorder of Deeds in 1821 and Register of Wills in the same year. Earlier, he had been Prothonotary in 1800 and Clerk of all Courts. He was appointed to the first board of directors of the National Bank of Chester County in 1814 and was made first Cashier of that institution, a position he filled many years.

Such a consistent spirit of public responsibility speaks well for the patriotic environment of the Hiester home. But for all of his obvious ability, John Hiester died intestate. The farm, now 153 acres, was sold at public sale in 1833 to Frederick K. Yost for \$7573.50. The old log buildings had long since given way to the beautiful stone dwelling house and stone barn that stands today. Laid out simply but with generous proportions and above average detailing, John Hiester built his house shortly after 1765 when his father took title. The use of keystones, the internal chimney, the 24-lite windows, the wide, full length hall with staircase at the rear, the open stairwell with landings all speak of architectural awareness rare in the Coventries in 1765. The plan is almost identical to Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge, which notable edifice has a fireback in one of its fireplaces which came from River Bend Farm house. It was donated by a later owner. This fine articulation of early, colonial architecture, brought to the budding perimeters of settlement, declare the particular background of its builder, General John Hiester.

The significance of River Bend Farm is in its architecture, the community minded spirit of its early owner and builder, and also in the land itself which is rich in archeological importance. It continues to reveal Indian activity as the farmer's prepare their fields for crops. J. Bennett Nolan, writing his book "The Schuylkill" in 1951, says on page 117:

"Frick's Locks, once an important boating center, dozed almost forgotten on the south bank until very recently, when a treasure trove of Indian spears and artifacts was turned up accidentally by a farmer who was plowing his field..."

John Frick was neighbor to John Hiester. The spears and artifacts would have been those necessary hunting equipages used when Turkey Point was a game-seekers' paradise. Indians came to it overland and by the river. The natural point was an excellent fording place and was known as Turkey Point ferry before the Hiester ownership. It was called

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Hiester's Ford until a covered bridge spanned the Schuylkill River at that spot. Crooked Hill Tavern is on the opposite side. It is interesting that the map included with this registration as the Clinton Map of 1776, and which may have been made by Major Robert André, should note Hiester Ford as a "good ford". Major André was held prisoner for a brief period at Crooked Hill Tavern before his execution.

The colonial importance of the Hiester family, which carried well into the 1800's, is worthy of preservation in itself. General Hiester was remembered by county citizens long after he was buried in Union Cemetery in nearby Perkerford. His participation in community affairs, his loyal defence of his homeland, his able leadership in the legislature and his appreciation of the finer points of architecture speak well of a man who moved his particular time forward.

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River Bend Farm  
Chester County

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**Abstract:**

The River Bend Farm is a well preserved example of an early Chester County farm. The farmhouse is typical for Chester County constructed of the plentiful stone and then stuccoed for protection, this is also true of the barn. Also typical is the way the house has grown to accommodate the growing family and development of the farm. The house and barn both are fine examples of early construction techniques, i.e. pegged rafters, woodwork and fireplaces and other decorative features.

The house also gains local significance from its association with the Hiester family. This early family was involved deeply in the politics of both the local area, as well as the Pennsylvania and national government.

While prehistoric archaeological remains and artifacts have been found in the area, the exact location of the actual sites are not known. Mention of these resources are being made so that a sensitivity to possibly important sites is created and more intensive investigations will be made in the future.



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Primary: Patent Book AA-Vol. 5, page 455;  
Deed Book H-19-341; T-19-436; F-5-199; W-6-304; M-7-283;  
N-12-518; G-18-160; Y-18-3; O-19-329; Y-19-200; F-21-248;  
X-21-86; M-23-326; F-26-34; O-28-72; S-32-102; D-41-122

Chester County Historical Society: Tax transcripts, News-  
papers, Coventry files,

1776 Map - General Henry Clinton map from the Elk River  
to the Delaware River. Carried

Breou's Original Series of Farm Maps, Chester County, Pa.  
Philadelphia: W.H.Kirk and Co., 1883

Previous owners.

Secondary:

Futhey, J. Smith & Gilbert Cope, History of Chester County,  
Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, 1881

Hiester Family Became Famous - article in Town and Country,  
Pennsbury, Pa., 11/30/1917

The Schuylkill, J. Bennett Nolan, Rutgers University Press,  
New Brunswick, N.J., 1951

Indians in Pennsylvania, Paul A.W. Wallace, Pennsylvania  
Historical & Museum Comm., 1975

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data ITM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 5 acres ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED  
Quadrangle name Phoenixville Quadrangle scale 1"=24000

UMT References

A	1   8	4   5   2	4   8   0	4   4   5   0	2   2   0	B					
	Zone	Easting		Northing			Zone	Easting		Northing	
C						D					
E						F					
G						H					

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point just northeast of the railroad line at Sanatoga Road and continuing northeast along Sanatoga Road 500'; thence northwest 436'; then southwest 500'; thence southeast 436' to the place of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Estelle Cremers for French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust

organization (above) date 10/5/79

street & number Box 360, R.D.#2 telephone (215) 469-6287

city or town Pottstown, state Pa., 19464

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

ED WEINTRAUB, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10/24/80

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Forrest B. ...  
Keeper of the National Register

date August 27, 1980

Attest: Gene A. Berbe  
Chief of Registration

date August 26, 1980