

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Parker's Ford or Old Parkerford

and/or common Parkerford

2. Location

street & number Old Schuylkill Road N/A not for publication

city, town Parkerford N/A East Vincent & East Coventry Twsp. 5th vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code county Chester code 029

3. Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
| <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u>N/A</u> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <u>N/A</u> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number High Street

city, town West Chester state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Comprehensive Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pa. Historic & Museum Commission & Chester County Historical Society

city, town Harrisburg and West Chester state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

___ excellent

good

fair

___ deteriorated

___ ruins

___ unexposed

Check one

unaltered

___ altered

Check one

original site

___ moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Parker's Ford complex consists of a tavern, stable building & three houses built during the Mid-18th Century. These early buildings stand on both sides of the early river trail which caught the traffic from the ford and from the west bank of the Schuylkill River. They are now set apart from the modern thoroughfare, being bypassed by a newer rerouting of Pa #724. They are remarkably well preserved and in relatively unchanged condition.

Tavern - (House #1):

The tavern was built in 1766 by Edward Parker. A five bay structure with the main entrance in the center bay and a small porch, wooden joints are evidence of an original porch, hood or bonnet of even smaller proportions. The structure was built of native red sandstone, rough cut blocks which are used on the front with a water course just above the cellar window. From the decorative stone arches over the cellar windows and their half in-ground placement, it is obvious that floods and road resurfacing has changed the ground level over the years. A good box cornice finishes the gable roof and shows clear evidence of a full return intended across the gable ends. The building is two stories high with chimney on each end.

A one and one half story kitchen is attached to the north rear of the building which originally formed two sides of a courtyard at the back of the tavern. The necessary household equipage of cave/root cellar, well, and ice house are still in evidence. The cave is especially well preserved. These form the third side of the courtyard and the stables form the fourth side. The cave is two floors deep, dropping about 7' the first floor and another 8' to the lower floor.

The Tavern measures 39'6" x 30'6" with the kitchen extending another 21'3". The kitchen has a large walk-in fireplace with bake shelf and beehive oven to the west. This room once may have been only one floor. A porch extended across the entire south wall.

The tavern room was entered directly from the front door and was warmed by a large corner fireplace. A smaller room behind that served as the Keeper's room. These have been made into one room with a fireplace on the south wall. Ceilings are about 8½' high and windows are 6/9 on the first floor and 6/6 on the second.

The second floor is divided into seven rooms (the seventh room was a center cubicle for hanging cloths and a repository for baggage). An unusual feature of this floor is the ability to change the three front rooms into one long meeting hall by the use of two sets of folding partitions. All partitions, both first and second floors, are beaded boards in random widths. The attic also was most certainly used for travellers accomodations since the banister is finished all the way even though a door closes off the third floor. Most of the original hardware remains in Suffolk latches with pointed cusps and one pair of rat-tail hinges on the closet beside the cooking fireplace. All windows sashes and much of the glass is original.

The most unusual feature of the house is its basement raftering. Large logs are cut into wedge shapes with the broad side of the wedge downwards and laid about 3" apart. The space created by the wedge is filled with medium sized rocks and the floor boards above are laid on top of this. (see diagram #3) It is undetermined why such a heavy construction was deemed necessary unless it was to create a cave-like moisture in the basement for wine, brandy and food storage. Half of the basement is brick floored and has a stone shelf rising about three and a half feet from the floor across the south end with a stoned flume or passage which appears to have carried water into the shelf. The water must have exited at a point which is now covered by back fill around the foundation. (see cellar diagram).

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Continuation sheet Parker's Ford Item number 7 Page 2

Stables:

The stables stand to the south of the Tavern paralleling the road. They have been converted into living quarters. The original stable doors faced the tavern with stalls or ties on either side of a walkthrough. They were advertised in 1850 as designed for 30 horses. A cobblestone courtyard between the tavern and the stable has been allowed to grow over in grass. Periodic floods have deposited silt which has raised the ground level. The original stable floor was probably about at the present cellar depth.

House # 2:

The house to the north of the Tavern (House #2) is also stone but is stuccoed. It was built with the same cellar raftering as in the Tavern. Unfortunately, the raftering has been recently removed and the basement filled with gravel and concrete. This house is four bays long on the first floor and two bays deep. This is probably the house advertised in 1851 for sale as a two family house. In 1891, a large frame addition was added on the south side which at a later date accommodated six apartments. This has been removed to feature the original house.

House # 3: The Henry Parker House

Across from the Tavern is the Henry Parker House (House #3), dated stone, 1801. It was built by Edward Parker's son, Henry, and his wife, Susannah. Originally, it had two rooms to a floor but now has one. A cooking fireplace stands at the north end and a heating fireplace at the south end. A one story wing to the north serves as a modern kitchen. This is the original stone lean-to to the 1801 building. When the house was restored in 1932, an inside wall with finished point was found on the west leading to the belief that another house or building stood beyond the present house. The canal bed remains just a stone's throw outside the east door. A fine built-in corner cupboard stands in the southeast corner of the first floor.

House # 4:

To the north of House #3 is House #4, a stone house of uncertain origin. It has been Victorianized to some degree with a porch over the center three bays and an iron fence. Victorian mantels are used inside. The cider mill and Blacksmith Shop foundation are by the mill race running close to the north side of the house.

Buildings known to have been on the property but now gone are the grist and saw mill built about 1720 and rebuilt about 1800, the cider mill, a blacksmith shop built about 1847-50 or earlier, a 40'x60' barn with the Tavern and a frame barn with the two family house. The dam and race for the mill industries can still be followed. Several other houses in the vicinity are of equally early date but not included in this registration due to the distance involved and newer housing in between. Most notably among these is the Christian Swartz house about three quarters of a mile south of the Tavern and at one time part of the Tavern/Mill tract. A log house is listed in the records, the house in which Henry and Susannah Parker first lived, but it has not been located and may have been replaced by Henry Parker's 1801 house.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> theater | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | | |

Specific dates 1766 **Builder/Architect** Not Known

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The early history of Pennsylvania is, in many respects, the story of people on the move. Parker's Ford is a significant part of the story. The complex of buildings at Parker's Ford is a fine example of a colonial inn and the community it served. Located on what as once the "Great Road" from Philadelphia to Reading, the tavern offers an insight into the social and commercial dependencies that developed between the complex and travelers. Like other taverns that dotted the few major roads in colonial Pennsylvania, the inn provided an important hospice for weary travelers and became a center of commerce, entertainment and community. Parker's Ford gained additional prominence in September, 1777, when George Washington and his continental army crossed the Schuylkill River at the complex. Because it was able to adapt to the canal but not the railroad, Parker's Mill also provides valuable observations of the development of transportation systems in Pennsylvania throughout the nineteenth century.

Settled in the early eighteenth century, Parker's Ford was the site of a grist and saw mill by 1720. Located on a much used path from Philadelphia into the western back-country and with easy access to the Schuylkill River, Parker's Ford was a welcomed resting place for travelers during Mid-eighteenth century. In 1766 a tavern was constructed at the Ford which solidified the location's importance to travel in Pennsylvania. As with other roadside oases on colonial thoroughfares, Parker's Ford became a place of entertainment, trade and shelter for all who used it. By the time of the American Revolution, the complex was a busy hostelry on the "Great Road" from Philadelphia to Reading and the west.

In September, 1777, General Washington and his men, on their "race for the fords," crossed the Schuylkill at Parker's Ford. Though it was one of the more shallow fords on the river, heavy rainfall delayed the crossing. While he waited for the river to recede, Washington used the Parker's Ford tavern as his temporary headquarters.

After the Revolution the complex remained an integral part of the transportation system in the state. The tavern continued to serve travelers and provide commerce for local residents. In 1824 the Schuylkill River Canal made Parker's Ford part of a regional system of waterways that supplied Philadelphia with coal from the northern counties. The canal insured the vitality of the complex for over fifty years. Also, a blacksmith shop that was then in the complex was contracted by the Schuylkill Navigation Company to repair its flatboats. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the complex remained an active center of transportation.

Unfortunately, the source of the Parker's Ford prominence - transportation - was also the source of its demise. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the complex was bypassed by the Pennsylvania Railroad. As the railroad flourished and canal trade slackened, the Parker's Ford complex was doomed to disuse and decay. Fortunately, the complex refused to die. Though forgotten for decades, it continues to offer a rare glimpse at an essential ingredient, the tavern complex, in the development of transportation systems in Pennsylvania.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 7.4795 acres

Quadrangle name Phoenixville

Quadrangle scale 1"-2000'

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Estelle Cremers, Eleanor Morris, Priscilla Crowell, Eleanor Barger

organization French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust date April, 1982

street & number Box 360, R.D. #2 telephone 215-469-0150

city or town Pottstown state PA

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

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

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

Primary: Chester County Court House: Deed Books - Patent D86-66; Survey A75-187; A75-188. House #1 & #3 - H40-1053; R17-460; Q16-113; F16-265; D13-564; R5-310; X3-461; R2-394. Stables - I40-483; F37-467; N26-57; House #2 - K48-247; T35-880; I25-249; I19-477; F17-154; F16-378-68; X13-502; X13-501; C12-405; O11-388; 17-92; House #4 - I34-162; A54-420; K21-433; T17-307; D14-188; B7-163; B6-461; K6-221; K6-73; Sheriffs D.B 5-77; R5-312; I8-251; O6-341; W2-97; L5-238; F5-73; Q33-204; C32-332; U21-204; U18-239; Q33-201; R11-344; D6-384; D6-383; R5-306; R5-308; L5-517; G5-275; Z4-194; X2-566; T2-73; S2-411; S2-326.

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Tavern Petitions

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SECONDARY

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Local Heritage - 1777-1977, Ann E. Tudor, Typescript, pages 9-12 Research with Hagley Museum.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 7.4795 acres

Quadrangle name Phoenixville

Quadrangle scale 1"-2000'

UTM References

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|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| A | 1 8 | 4 5 0 5 8 0 | 4 4 4 9 9 4 0 |
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| B | 1 8 | 4 5 0 6 6 0 | 4 4 4 9 8 6 0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| D | 1 8 | 4 5 0 4 0 0 | 4 4 4 9 7 0 0 |
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------|-----|
| state | N/A | code | N/A | county | N/A | code | N/A |
| state | N/A | code | N/A | county | N/A | code | N/A |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Estelle Cremers, Eleanor Morris, Priscilla Crowell, Eleanor Barger

organization French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust date April, 1982

street & number Box 360, R.D. #2 telephone 215-469-0150

city or town Pottstown state PA

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 1/25/83

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration