

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 THE DORRANCE MANSION

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 300 Radcliffe Street N/A not for publication

city, town Bristol N/A vicinity of

state PA code 42 county Bucks code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" 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 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 Mr. & Mrs. Mark S. Swift

street & number 336 Radcliffe Street

city, town Bristol N/A vicinity of state PA 19007

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bucks County Court House, Recorder of Deeds Office

street & number East Court Street

city, town Doylestown state PA 18901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

THE DORRANCE MANSION, Bristol Borough, Bucks County, PA

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 Dorrance Mansion is a three story, three bay, rectangular brick, Italianate style residence, built in one section in 1862-3, located at 300 Radcliffe Street in Bristol Borough, PA. It is situated on a one-quarter acre lot bounded to the north and west by Radcliffe and Mulberry Streets, respectively, to the south by the Delaware River, and to the east by another residential lot. The seamed metal roof is flat with four low pitched cross gables in a cruciform pattern. Carved eave brackets dominate the cornice line. One interior chimney on the western section of the roof and two interior chimneys on the eastern section serve four fireplaces on each of the first, second and third floors. The front facade is symmetrical with proportionally decreasing size windows on the second and third stories, giving the structure the illusion of greater size. The rear facade is dominated by a three story full length porch and a five story elliptical tower. The integrity of the building is excellent.

The brick mansion is erected on a random coursed fieldstone foundation at river level. Owing to the grade of the property, the basement foundation is exposed on the west and south facades. The front facade is dominated by a centered double door arch-headed entranceway with inset fanlight surrounded by classical sandstone pilasters supporting a sandstone entablature. Four-light rectangular windows flank the entry as well as the centered palladian style window on the second story. Paired single-light windows flank a centered, arched, four-light window on the third story. Decorative features of the front facade include the heavy sandstone window surrounds and rusticated quoins which terminate above the second story. Descending ceiling heights per ascending floors are delineated by a sandstone wash at street level, a sandstone belt course at the second story and a sandstone string course at the third story.

The centered five story tower on the rear facade provides the structure with a continuous circular main staircase and a separate staircase for passage between a basement kitchen and first floor dining room. The roof, eaves and brackets duplicate the treatment on the main structure. Each facade of the tower's fifth story contains three arched two-light windows. The south facade also contains a centered round window on the fourth story. Each staircase landing of the tower is lighted with a window. There is an exterior entrance to the tower at the basement level.

(continued on Continuation Sheet #2)

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The tower is flanked by arched, paired, windows on the third story of the main rear facade, four-light rectangular windows on the second story, and four-light rectangular windows and an entranceway on both the first story and basement. Sandstone window surrounds are on a smaller scale than on the front facade. A three story, full length, porch extends out from the tower and basement level of the structure's rear facade. The porch roof is flat with an off-center rounded entrance hood and a less pronounced overhang with decorative brackets highlighting the third story. The upper levels of the porch are supported by keystone, round arches with squared wooden columns with capitals, being two arches deep and six arches long. The upper levels also feature railing supported by large carved and turned balusters. The archless supports of the basement level porch are plain in comparison.

The west and east facades both feature two four-light windows on the second story and paired single-light windows flanking a centered, arched, four-light window on the third story. The west facade features a centered, slightly protruding bay window on the first story and two windows on the exposed basement level. Window surrounds are similar to those on the rear facade. Quoins, a belt course (partially removed) and string course, matching those on the front facade, are additional decorative features of the west facade. The east facade contains a four-light rectangular window on the first story and a three sided, two story bay window (basement level and first floor). Boards over basement windows, which are visible in the accompanying photographs have been removed.

The interior features a center hall floor plan which provides access to the flanking rooms and rear staircase tower. The hallway contains elliptical arched openings and ceiling supports. Black walnut and mahogany are used throughout the house for interior doors, staircases, baseboards, mirrors, shutters and trim. Notable features in the first floor living room include a decorative plaster cornice and applied linear trim of wood forming a geometric pattern on the ceiling. Two marble living room fireplaces with round arch openings, plain colonettes, paneled spandrels and centered cartouches flank the hall opening. They are surmounted by oversized black walnut framed mirrors which extend to the ceiling. The rounded staircase features delicately carved and turned balusters and handrail of black walnut with mahogany steps. It is lighted by stained glass windows at the second and third floor landings. Light fixtures are not original to the house but are of the appropriate period.

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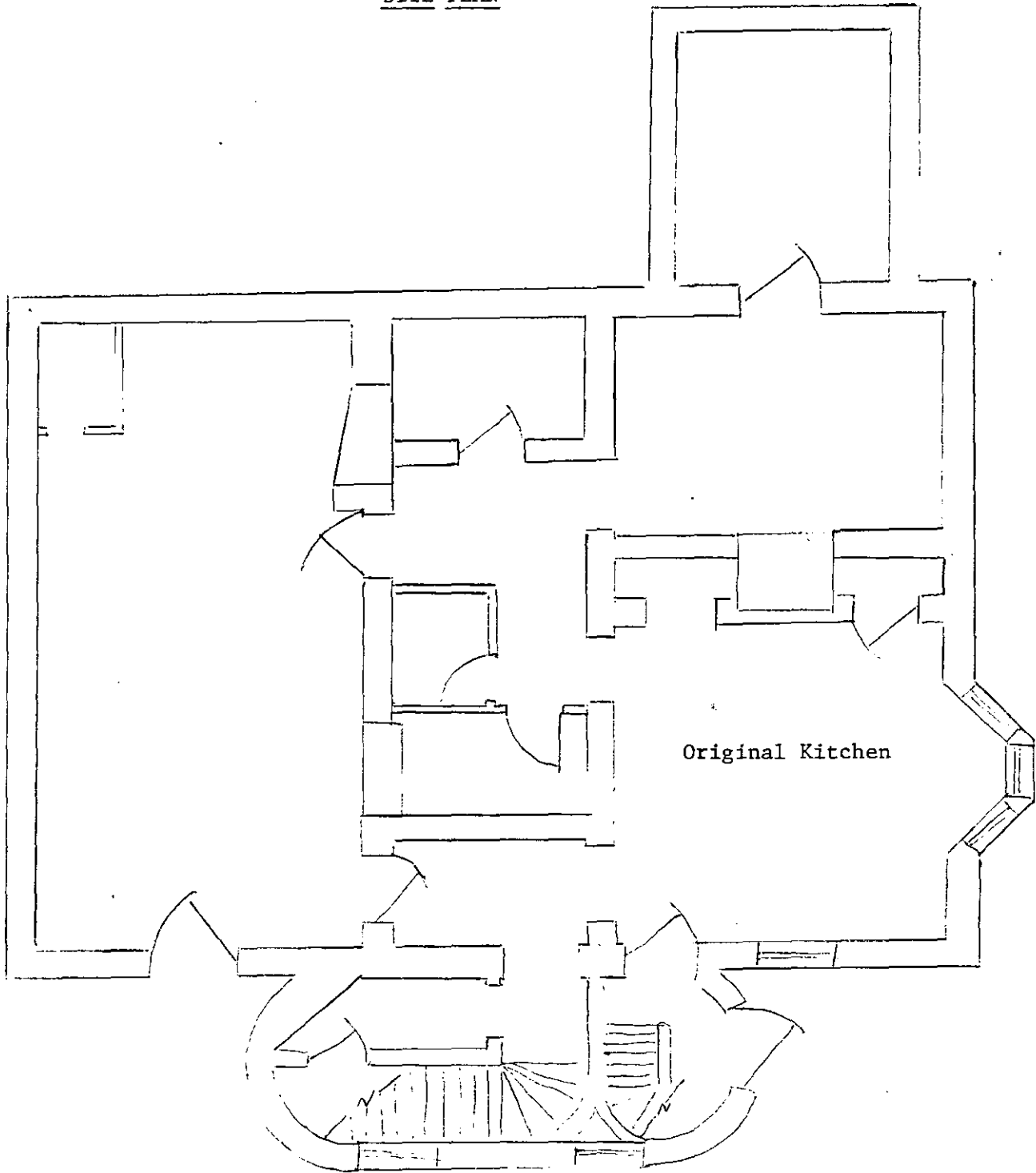
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The integrity of the house's exterior and interior is excellent. The exterior woodwork, including cornice brackets, porches and porch supports, is 99% original. No alterations have been made to the facade or to the numerous decorative features of the interior.

DORRANCE MANSION, Bristol Borough, Bucks County, PA

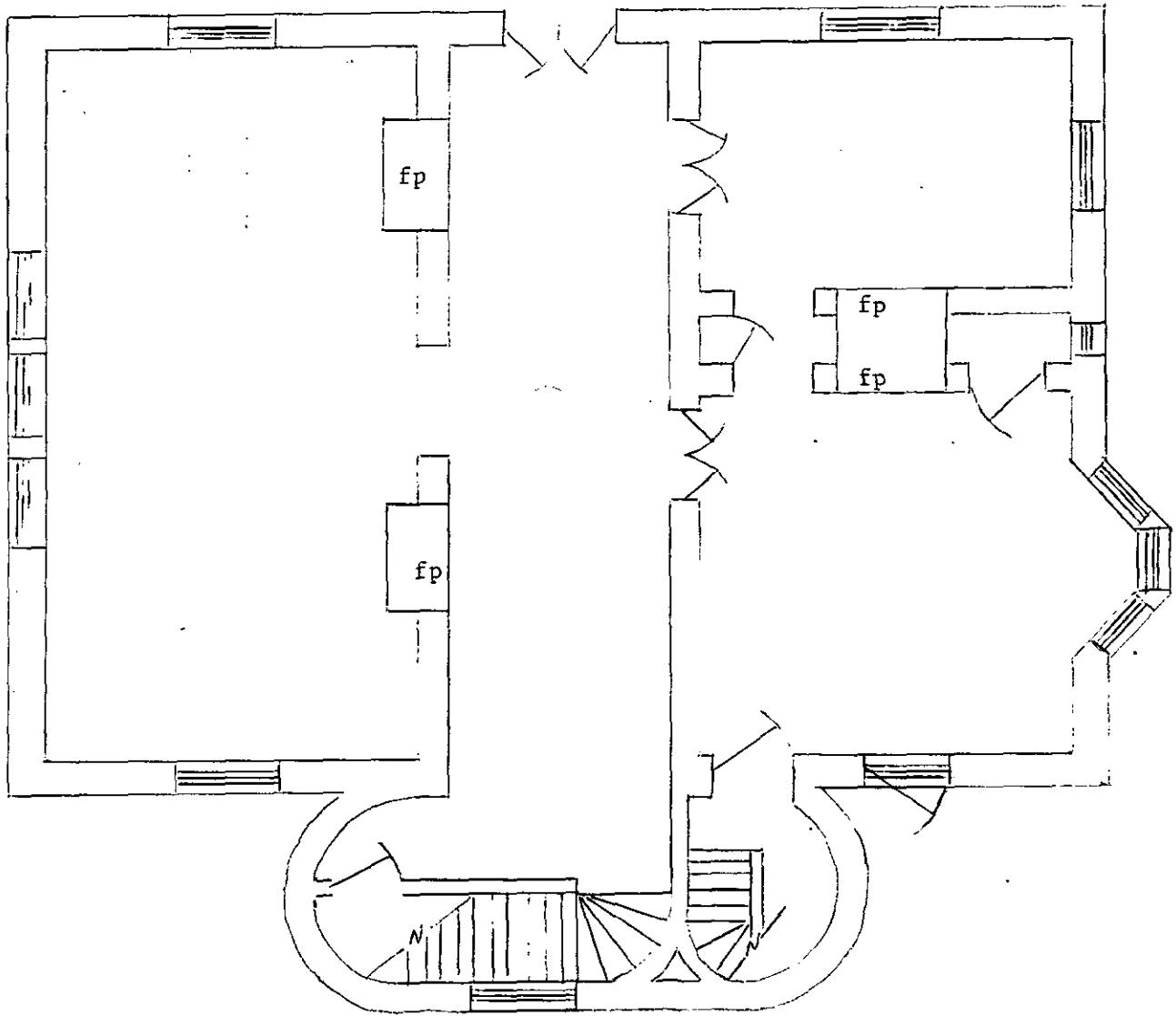
DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 Page 4

SITE PLAN



BASEMENT

SITE PLAN

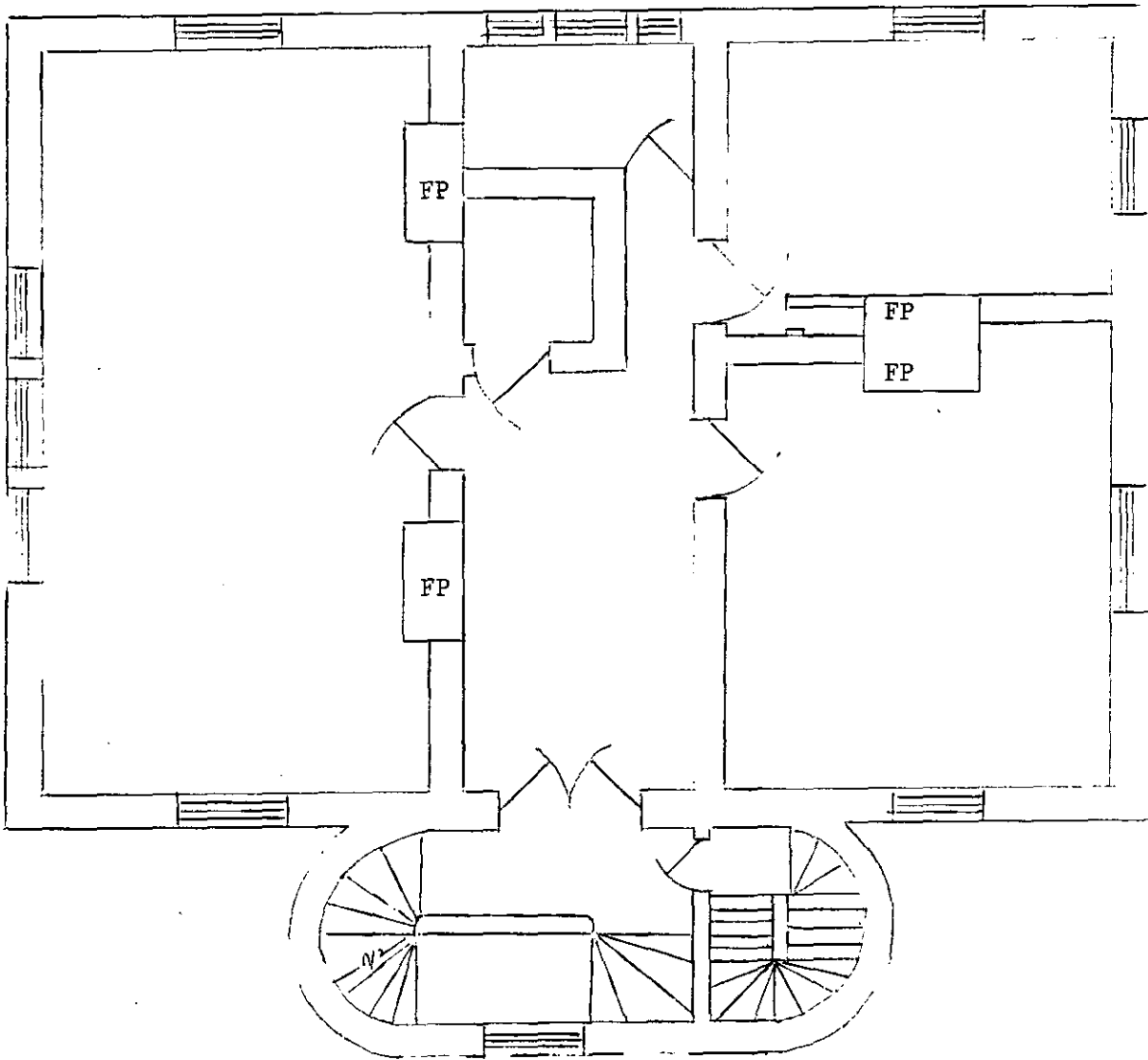


FIRST FLOOR

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SITE PLAN



SECOND FLOOR

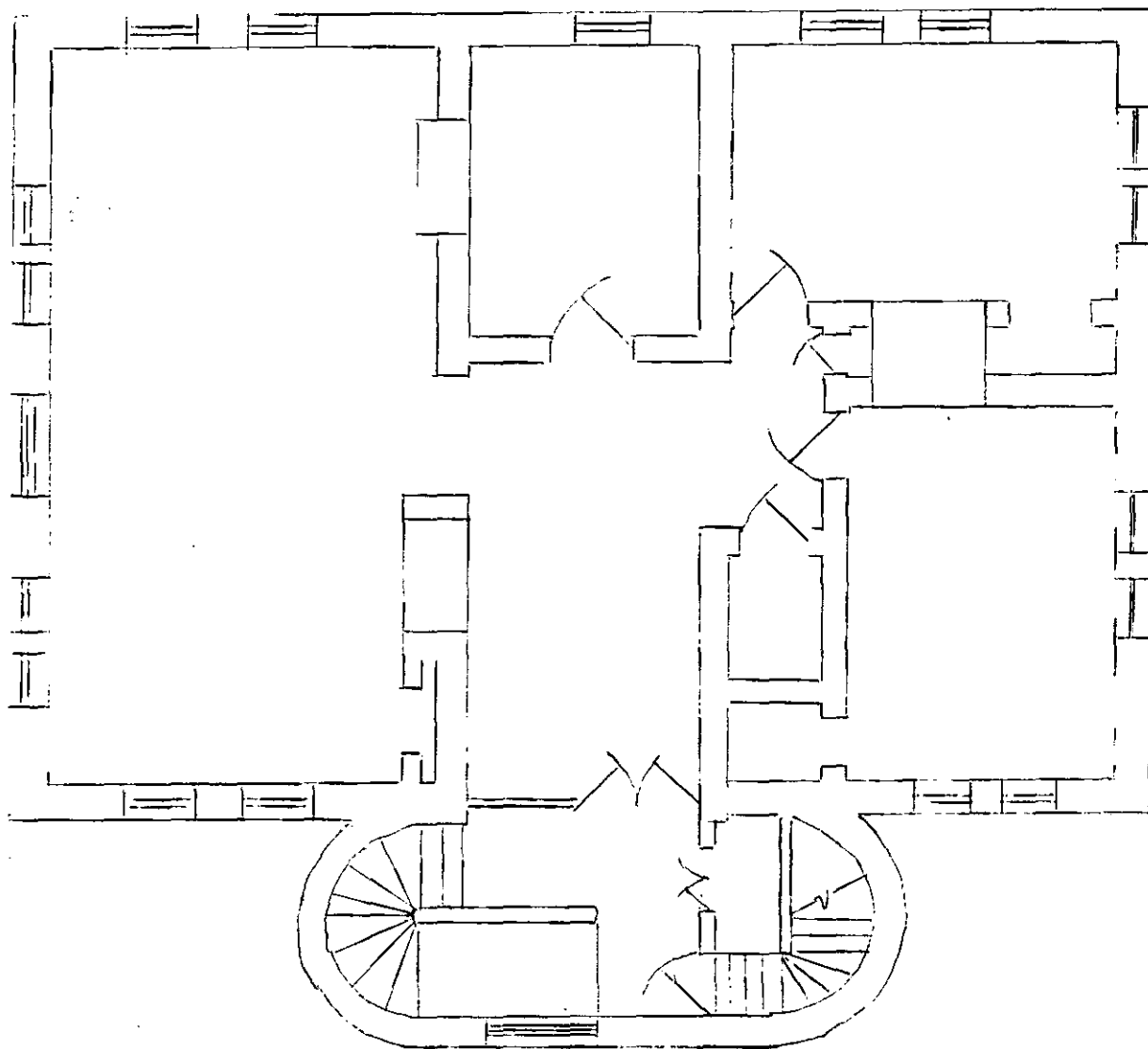
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SITE PLAN



THIRD FLOOR

8. Significance

DORRANCE MANSION, Bristol Borough, Bucks County, PA

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1862-63 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dorrance Mansion is significant as an excellent example of residential Italianate architecture. In addition to being one of the grandest riverfront mansions on Radcliffe Street in Bristol, PA, it is also the only example of Italianate architecture in the borough. The distinctive rear porch and elliptical five-story tower add to the mansion's grandeur and set it apart from the two other examples of Italianate architecture along the Delaware River in Bucks County. Whereas the Dorrance Mansion has an urban setting, the two other examples, The Dell in Bensalem Township and Fruithouse Wharf in Bristol Township, are houses erected on large country estates. The mansion is also significant for its association with John Dorrance, Sr. Dorrance, one of Bristol's leading citizens from his arrival circa 1827 until his death in 1869, commissioned the house which was completed in 1863. Active in commerce as the owner of the Bristol Mills, he was also involved in Bristol politics and various improvement-oriented companies.

Situated on a street of numerous Victorian mansions and houses, the Dorrance Mansion stands out as the sole example of Italianate architecture. Erected in 1862-3, it represents one of the earliest mansions to be built by the industrialists that made Bristol their home. Several mansions erected on Radcliffe Street during the same period were later enlarged or remodeled in the 1880's to satisfy the needs or egos of wealthy new owners, resulting in asymmetrical residences reflecting the influence of various architectural styles. The Dorrance Mansion by comparison is an imposing residence with square proportioned symmetry. Built in one section with no subsequent alterations, it is an outstanding example of an Italianate style residence. Distinguishing features are the ornate centered front entranceway, the flat roof broken by low pitch gables, projecting eaves with carved brackets, rusticated quoins, round arch upper windows, and belt courses on the front facade which highlight the descending ceiling height per ascending floor.

The Resource Protection Plan for the Pennsylvania/Delaware River Coastal Zone, prepared under the direction of the Bureau for Historic Preservation in 1981, identified two Italianate houses along the Delaware River in Bucks County. The Dell,

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located along the River in Bensalem Township, was built circa 1860 as a country estate. It is a two story, three bay, square, stone house with one-story porches on the front and side facades and a rectangular addition to the rear. Fruithouse Wharf, located on the Delaware River in Bristol Township, was also built as a country estate outside of Bristol, circa 1869. It is a three story, asymmetrical, sprawling house exhibiting the Italianate features of rounded windows, a tower, and small third floor windows placed between brackets. These two houses, as examples of riverfront country estates, pale in comparison to the Dorrance Mansion in its urban setting with its symmetrical, grand facade and unusual elliptical tower and three story porch.

John Dorrance, Sr. acquired the lot on which his mansion was built in 1860. He was living across the street at the time in a house which he had purchased in 1828 and which he continued to own until his death. A house on the newly purchased lot was demolished before construction of the mansion began in 1862. Dorrance came to Bristol in the 1820's and purchased an interest in the Bristol Mills which dated back to 1701. He eventually bought out his partners to become sole owner. Prior to the Civil War, the mill supplied large amounts of corn meal to the south and the West Indies. When the mill was sold after Dorrance's death by his sons, the property was comprised of grist and saw mills, a lumber yard, canal stables, coal sheds, a blacksmith shop, a store, two dwellings and a mill race and pond. Besides his involvement in local commerce, Dorrance was also active in various improvement projects including the digging of the Bristol portion of the Delaware Division of the Pennsylvania Canal and the construction of the Trenton and Bristol Railroad in 1834. Dorrance was also involved in the short-lived Neshaminy Lock Navigation Company and the Bristol Building Association. He was an original shareholder of the former which was chartered in 1832 to establish lock navigation in Neshaminy Creek. The project was later abandoned. The Bristol Building Association, of which Dorrance was a director, was the second building and loan association organized in Pennsylvania. It closed in 1859, twelve years after its founding. In partnership with Henry Wright, Dorrance acquired a farm and divided the land into building lots and opened Dorrance, Washington, and Lafayette Streets, thus enabling the further expansion and development of Bristol. In addition to his business pursuits, Dorrance was also active in Bristol politics. He served as a member of the Borough Council for nine terms between 1835 and 1860. Although Dorrance built

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the house toward the end of his illustrious career and only lived there six years before his death, it is the one extant building with the closest association to him and his business career. The Mansion, as commissioned by Dorrance, signifies the success, wealth, and stature he was able to achieve through his ownership of the Bristol Mills. As one of the earliest nineteenth century mansions, it set the standard for later buildings on Radcliffe Street. Ownership of the Mansion passed to his sons after Dorrance's death in 1869. John Dorrance, Jr. purchased his brother's interest in 1879 and bequeathed the Mansion to his son, G. Morris Dorrance. The Mansion passed out of the Dorrance Family in 1921. Shortly thereafter, it was acquired by the Bristol Knights of Columbus who owned it for sixty years. In 1982, it was sold for use again as a residence. Despite its longtime non-residential use, the Mansion retains all of its original interior features.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #1.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Bristol/N. J. - PA

Quadrangle scale 1" = 24000

UTM References See Continuation Sheet #1 for USGS Map.

A

1	8	5	1	2	4	4	0	4	4	3	8	1	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet #2.

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

Bucks County Conservancy, Kathleen K Cook, for:

name/title Mr. & Mrs. Mark S. Swift

organization Bucks County Conservancy

date July 14, 1986

street & number 11 North Main Street

telephone (215) 345-8966

city or town Doylestown

state PA 18901

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 Dr. Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Boundary Description:

From Bucks County Deed Book 2472, page 1137.

ALL THAT CERTAIN LOT of ground situated in the Borough of Bristol, County of Bucks, State of Pennsylvania, described and bounded as follows:

BEGINNING at a corner of Radcliffe Street and Mulberry Street thence running up Radcliffe Street (1) North twenty-seven degrees East eighty-six feet to a lot late of Sarah Morris and Ann Sisom, now of the estate of John Magoffin, deceased, thence by the latter's lot (2) South seventy-two degrees East one hundred thirty-two feet to the Delaware River thence down the Delaware River (3) several courses in a Southwesterly direction approximately eighty-six feet to Mulberry Street thence up Mulberry Street (4) North seventy-two degrees West one hundred fifteen feet to the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries submitted with this nomination follow the present county tax parcel #4-21-71. The south property line fronts the Delaware River and the west and north property lines front Mulberry Street and Radcliffe Street, respectively. The property is bounded to the east by another residential lot. These boundaries contain the mansion and all historically associated land.

6064 III NW
(LANGHORNE)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS

6064 III NE
(TRENTON WEST)

74°52'30"
40°07'30"

511000m E

0.9 MI TO INTERCHANGE 28

2 810 000 FEET (PA.)

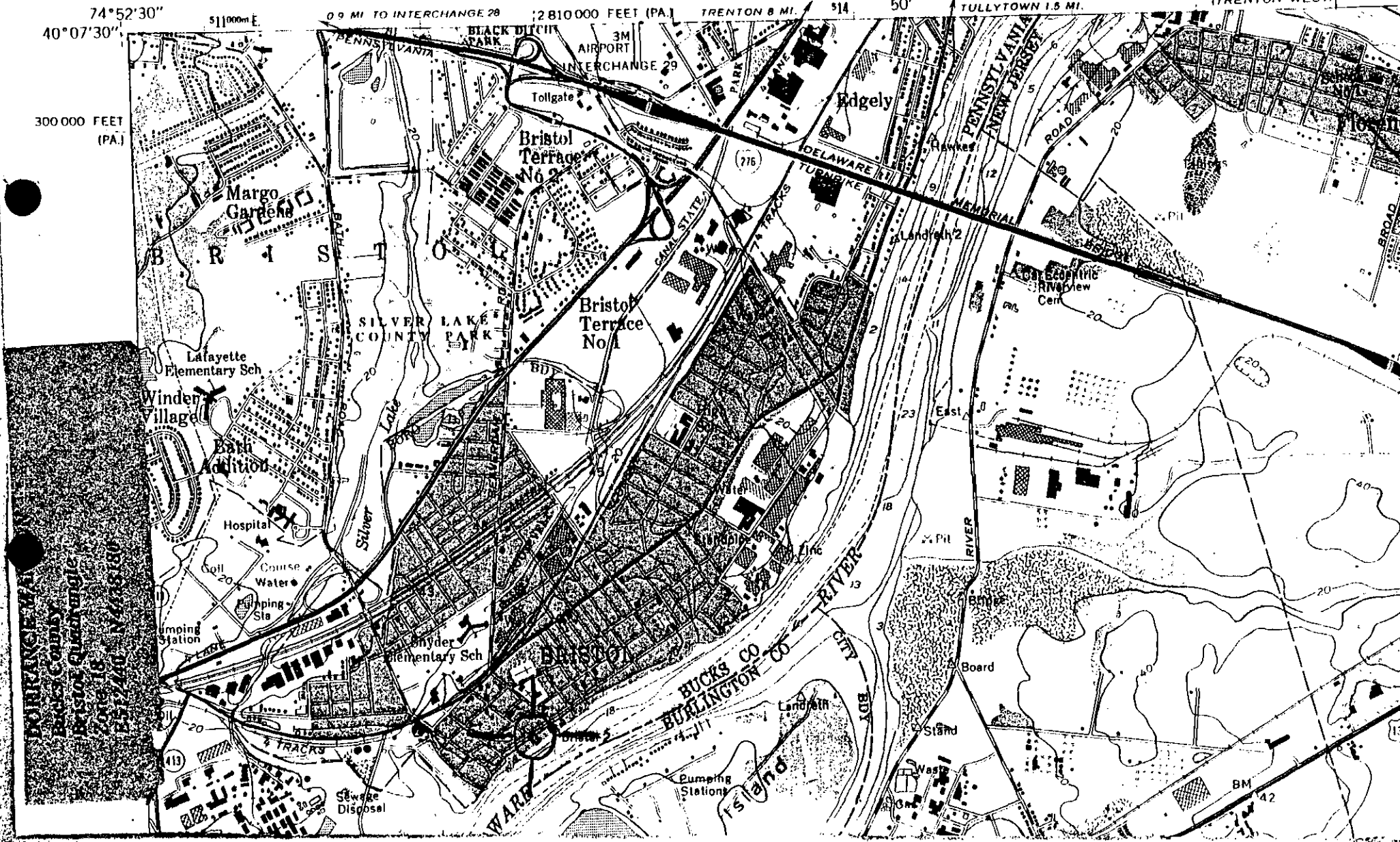
TRENTON 8 MI.

514

50'

TULLYTOWN 1.5 MI.

300 000 FEET
(PA.)



DORRANCE
BUCKS COUNTY
BRISTOL QUADRANGLE
6064 III NW
6064 III NE
6064 III SE
6064 III SW