

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Rieser Mill
NAME:

MULTIPLE Gristmills in Berks County MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PENNSYLVANIA, Berks

DATE RECEIVED: 9/26/90 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/09/90
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/25/90 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/10/90
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90001628

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11/8/90 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rieser Mill
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Grange Road not for publication N/A
city, town Bern Township vicinity N/A
state PA code PA county Berks code 011 zip code 19533

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Gristmills in Berks County
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Dr. Brent D. Glass 9/18/90
Signature of certifying official Date
Dr. Brent D. Glass, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet. 11/8/90

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. _____

determined not eligible for the National Register. _____

removed from the National Register. _____

other, (explain:) _____

fu Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: gristmill

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls stone

roof metal

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Rieser Mill is located in a rural built-up area on Grange Road about one mile south of Leesport. There are wooded hilly areas south of the property along Grange Road. The mill pond west of the mill is completely silted in has become a marshy wetland. The once open country to the south and east is fast developing into housing tracts. The mill is located against the road and would be threatened if the road were widened to accommodate the increasing traffic caused by the new development. The two historic resources on the property consist of the 1825 banked, stone vernacular style mill building and the T-shaped stone and brick miller's house, built in 1784 and enlarged in the late 1800s. The resources have few changes that interfere with their ability to depict the significant time period.

The original stone section of the mill measures 45' 7" by 41' 6", having 2 1/2 stories plus basement. The mill has a rectangular configuration and a tin gable roof. The north side of the building has a six paneled Dutch door and two windows on the basement or entry level, (an additional window is situated between the basement and first floor), three windows on the first floor and four on the top level. The west gable end has a window in the basement, a six paneled Dutch door and two windows on the entry or first floor and two windows on either side of a 6 paneled door on the second and attic floors. On the hoist hood is written 1825 A & M Rieser. The south elevation has three windows and a six paneled Dutch door on the entry or first floor and four windows on the the second floor. The windows on the main part of the mill are either 6/6 or 9/6. There are wrought iron rings for tying horses near the entry doors on the north and south sides. The building is architecturally interesting with limestone walls, large red sandstone quoins, moulded box cornice and S iron tie rods. The roof is trussed with a principal rafter system.

A cement block addition on the east gable end extended the length of the mill by 18'. The cement block addition has a large frame sliding door on the entry level and a door on the second level of the north side., the rear or west gable end has two 3/3 windows on either side of a large door on the entry level, and two 3/3 windows on each of the two top levels, the south side has a 3/3 window on each of the two levels.

The interior vertical water wheel was replaced by turbines. Originally the mill had three millstones but none are now in place. The roller mills have also been removed. In the basement is a cob breaker, elevators and transmission machinery. The two turbines are in place in the wheel pit. The first floor

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Rieser Mill

Section number 7 Page 2

contains the mill office, a Sprout-Waldron Attrition Mill, elevator, hopper and the interior bag hoist. The second floor has a corner fireplace and a heavily framed large pulley wheel with belt. The attic has the bag hoist machinery. The mill has moulded trim around the windows and doors and moulding on top of the hurst frame, the posts have chamfers with lambs tongue stops. The mill has much of the original hardware including wrought iron strap hinges, latches and locks.

As far as can be determined the only change to the exterior of the mill is the 2 1/2 story, cement block addition for storage to the east gable end. It is not a recent addition as it was there when the present owner purchased the property in the 1950's. A portion of the addition rests on the stone foundation of an earlier sawmill. The changes to the interior are those made to keep abreast of technological development in the industry, mainly the change from millstones to rollers, and from the waterwheel to turbines. The historic resources retain the essential physical features that enable them to convey their past identity and character and portray the significant time period 1825 to 1939 the cut-off date for National Register eligibility.

The Rieser House was built in two or more sections. The main wing is rectangular, measuring approximately 40' by 30', five bays wide and two bays deep. The stone walls are covered with stucco scored in a brick design. The gable roof is covered with tin. The west end has a brick interior chimney and the east end, a block exterior chimney. The west gable has several features of note: a decorative circular attic medallion window high in the gable with twin attic windows at a lower level having datestone lintels. The carved inscriptions read: A N 17 - J R 84. Windows have paneled shutters and feature two-over-two sash. The doorway has a bracketed pediment and the cornices feature narrow brackets along the front facade. The wood trim, doors and shutters appear to date from a remodeling of the house in the mid-to-late 1800s. About this time a brick rear wing was added, measuring about 20' by 17'. This section is three stories high with a gently sloped gable roof and a brick chimney at the north end. There are no windows on the north wall. This wing features a porch on the west side with Victorian gingerbread trim, now screened; and a frame addition at the east end that adds to the interior living space on the first and second floors. Exterior windows in the addition have six-over-six sash. A twentieth century addition is a small frame shed-roofed structure at ground floor along the north or rear elevation. The interior of the house has a center hall plan with an open stairway. This building contains three original fireplaces as well as a bake house and smoke house. The house depicts the changes that have taken place over many generations of use by the Rieser family. Overall, it has good integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Industry
Architecture

Period of Significance

1784 to 1939

Significant Dates

1784 1825

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Rieser Mill is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. This mill is important for its association with the county gristmill industry being erected during the period of revitalization and "great rebuilding" of Berks County mills that took place between 1818-1870. Architecturally, this mill is representative of Berks County merchant mills of the period.

Although wheat cultivation decreased markedly in southeastern Pennsylvania as a whole, grain production persisted as the primary agricultural enterprise in Berks and the other four grainbelt counties. In these five counties the income derived from grain rose to 150%. This growth and revitalization of the mill business resulted in a "great rebuilding" of Berks County gristmills. Colonial period mills were pulled down and replaced with new structures. The Rieser mill was one of the colonial mills that was rebuilt in 1825 during this period of revitalization.

This is the period when the classic Berks gristmill types were constructed. These large structures represented an architectural development growing out of the steady expansion of merchant milling during the eighteenth century. By the nature of the business the merchant mill had a requirement for storage capacity that the custom mill had never faced. Designing an additional floor, above the floor on which the millstones were positioned, was the solution to the need for space for storage and additional machinery. The Rieser Mill with its 2 1/2 stories plus basement, banked stone construction, three gable end vertically aligned doors, rectangular configuration, relatively large size (compared to earlier mills), is a good solid typical building representative of Berks County merchant mills of the period. The Rieser Mill is similar in its masonry construction, configuration and size to other merchant mills built during this period, including the Seyfert Mill, the Merkel Mill (Richmond Township), the Moselem Mill and the Weidner Mill.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rieser Mill

Section number 8 Page 2

The water power was developed on this site at an early date. The first mill was built by Jacob Rieser who arrived in this country in 1726 from Switzerland. Jacob selected a location on a small stream about eight miles north of the Indian trading post which later became the City of Reading. The first gristmill was a small log structure. Philip Rieser, son of Jacob, succeeded his father after his death in 1770, and built a larger mill of stone construction. This mill was in operation at the outbreak of the American Revolution. Philip's son, John Jacob Rieser at age 21 responded to the call to arms and became a corporal in the Continental Army. During John's absence, his father provided flour for the army at Valley Forge.

The mill was substantially rebuilt in 1825 by Abraham Rieser who inherited it from his father John Jacob. Water turbines replaced the water wheel. The 1850 census shows the owner as Abraham Rieser the mill having two pair of stones, with a capital of \$4,000, grinding 8,200 bushels of wheat and corn. The product value was \$6,900, one man operated the mill and earned \$20 a month. Jonathan Rieser was the next owner, the family now operating a farm, sawmill and large ice houses.

The next owner was James Rieser, son of Jonathan. James Rieser married Mary Barbara Balthaser and they had two children, Harry and Clara. Before James died in 1935, he passed on the mill operation to his son Harry F. who modernized the mill, replacing the water power with electricity in 1948.

When Harry retired, he turned over the business to his two sons, Sherwood and Mark, who built a new mill in Leesport and discontinued operations at this location. Harry Rieser sold the property to Robert Heck in the 1950's who briefly operated the mill. Mr. Heck, the last operating miller, ground and mixed animal feed. He was forced to discontinue operations due to the difficulty in maintaining water power.

The stone miller's house was built by John Jacob Rieser in 1784. It was to this home that he brought his wife, Esther Bertolet, from the Oley Valley. The residence is now occupied by the eighth generation of the Rieser Family, Mary Barbara Rieser Hartman and her husband, Warren. In 1880 an itinerant artist, Ferdinand Brader, did a pencil sketch of the home and mill which is still in the possession of the family.

Initially, this mill and the Rieser family provided custom services to the farmers of the area, grinding their grain into flour and animal feed. Later grain was ground for the market while continuing the custom milling business. Finally, processing flour was discontinued and the mill concentrated on the grinding and mixing of animal feed. The operations of this mill provide evidence of the change in the industry since 1825, a long association to the milling industry in Berks County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Berks County Conservancy Multiple Property Nomination and Survey: Gristmills in Berks County, 1989

Morton L. Montgomery, History of Berks County in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Evert, Peck & Richards, 1886).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Berks County Conservancy

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately one acre

UTM References

A 18 417150 4457950
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Louise Emery, Consultant
 organization Berks County Conservancy date June 1990
 street & number 960 Old Mill Road telephone 215-372-4992
 city or town Wyomissing state PA zip code 19610

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

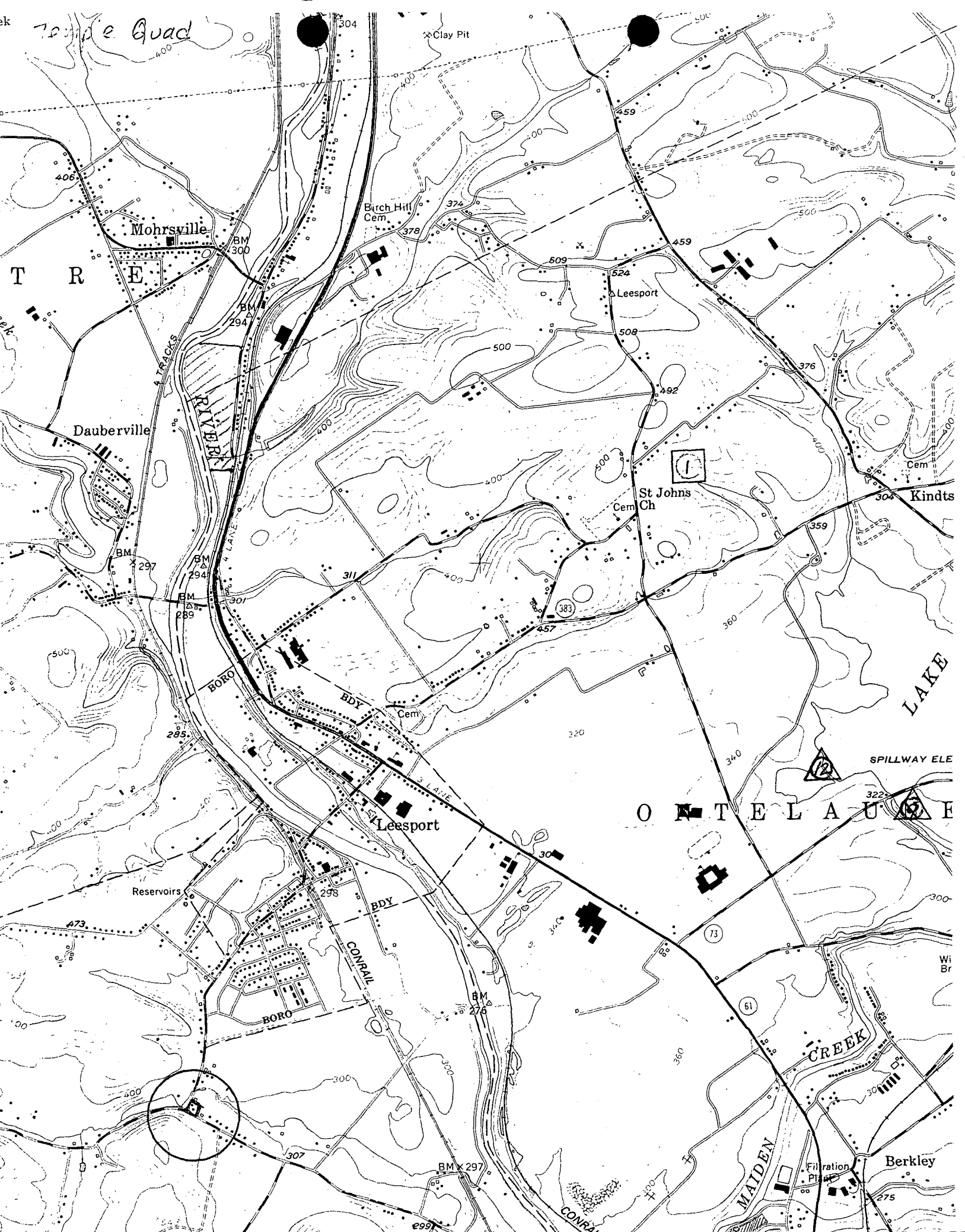
BN 08 Rieser Mill

Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at the intersection of Grange Road and Cross Keys Road, proceed northerly along Grange Road to the north side of the lane north of the mill, a distance of approximately 160 feet; thence continue in an easterly direction along the lane and beyond the curve of the lane to the property line marked by a row of trees, approximately 120 feet; thence continue southerly along the tree line to Cross Keys Road, approximately 150 feet; thence continue westerly along Cross Keys Road to the place of beginning, approximately 115 feet.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the mill and the miller's house which was historically associated with the mill during the period of significance. Excluded from this boundary are the pond to the west, and the buildings east and south of the mill. The pond has been silted in for the past 30 years and the head and tail races have been closed and re-graded, so that there is little evidence of these water courses. The buildings to the east are frame houses and outbuildings that are not of the same period as the mill.



Topographic Quad

Clay Pit

Mohrsville

Birch Hill Cem

Leesport

Dauberville

St Johns Ch

Kindts

Leesport

OTELAUGH

Reservoirs

SPILLWAY ELE

CREEK

Berkley

MAIDEN

Filtration Plant