

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Merkel Mill Complex
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Route 662 and 143 not for publication N/A
city, town Richmond Township vicinity N/A
state PA code PA county Berks code 001 zip code 19526

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>7</u> | <u> </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>1</u> | <u>1</u> structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u> </u> | <u> </u> objects |
| | | <u>8</u> | <u>1</u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: Cristmills 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 1966, 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.

Signature of certifying official Date

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.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing
 Domestic/single family
 Agriculture /outbuilding

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use
 Domestic/single family
 Vacant/not in use

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other; gristmill
 Other; vernacular house and agricultural
 buildings

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
 walls stone
wood
 roof tin
 other slate
asphalt

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Merkel Mill is located at the junction of Routes 662 and 143 in rural Richmond Township. The property consists of 88 acres, the nominated property having 12 acres. The portion to the south of the nominated property across Route 662 is forested, to the east and north are the grounds of the Moselem Springs Golf Club. The buildings are located in a meadowland area with the scenic Moselem Creek flowing through the property. The eight historic resources on the property are: the watercourses (races, dam and pond), and seven contributing buildings: a 2 1/2 stories plus basement banked stone mill with tin roof built 1854, a 2 1/2 stories, stone Georgian manor house built 1767, a large stone and frame barn with banked earth ramp c 1850, a small 1 story stone smokehouse with slate roof c 1767, a 1 1/2 story plus basement stone summer kitchen c 1767, a clapboard frame privy c 1939, a small clapboard storage shed c 1939. All of the buildings, with the exceptions mentioned, have asphalt shingle roofs. The non-contributing structure is a concrete swimming pool c. 1940 located to the rear of the summer kitchen. The eight historic resources have few changes that interfere with their ability to depict the significant time period.

The Georgian style Manor house has a red sandstone date stone and house blessing in German which reads: "Georg Mercklen und Christina anno 1767, Alle Die Diesem Haus Gehn Ausen Ein Las Dro Gott Be Fohlen Sein." Translation: Let all who go in and out of this house be commended to God. The front or south facade of the house has four windows and an entranceway on the first floor and five windows on the second floor. The windows have window boxes and paneled shutters with half moon cut-outs. All windows, except as noted, are 6/6. The entranceway, has a solid paneled door with glass sidelights and wood panels below and a fanlight above. The hood over the door has a gable wood shingle roof and is supported by decorative wood brackets. The six windows, three on the first and second levels of the west gable end have the same type shutter and window boxes, the two windows on the attic are 4/4 with plain frames. The east gable end has a one story screened porch, there is a door from the second floor front bedroom which leads onto an open porch with railing located on top of the screened porch. The north or rear of the house has an open back porch. The porches were added at a later date. There are interior stone and brick chimneys on each gable end, and a red sandstone belt course between the first and second floors.

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Merkel Mill Complex

Section number 7 Page 2

The house has the classic Georgian floor plan, two rooms on either of a center hall. There are indications that the hall originally ran the full length of the house, but now a portion of the kitchen replaces what would have been the hall space. The two rooms to the right of the hall have corner fireplaces. French doors lead from the dining room to the screened porch. There is some early trim including chair rail and paneling around the windows. Some of the original wide pine floor boards, especially in the attic, are intact. The roof is trussed.

The house was constructed over a spring and one of the most interesting features of the house is the vaulted cold cellar in the basement. While the original ground floor has been cemented water still flows in troughs around three sides of the arch, the trough being 17" wide on the south side and 44" on the remaining sides. The temperature of the water remains a constant 55 to 56 degrees. The spring is located in the southeast corner of the building and exits into a stone run outside, which carries the flow back into Moselem Creek. The cellar has three porthole type openings to the outside.

The stone summer kitchen to the rear of the house has a large walk-in-fireplace with early mantel and door. A winder staircase leads to the attic. The large stone and brick chimney is located in the rear gable end of the building.

The small stone smokehouse east of the main house has a smoking pit, with knee-high stone walls, in the northeast corner of the building. There are wood stakes laid across the blackened rafters on which meat was hung. Half of a millstone is set into the wall above the solid board door.

The large stone and frame banked barn has a forebay on the east side beneath which are six Dutch doors and a double door, with wrought iron strap hinges, leading into the stall areas. There is a small frame addition with a shed type roof on the southwest corner. The original portion of the barn has been extended on the north side to include a corn-crib and an open space for wagons or cars.

The mill has a date stone reading: "S. Merkel his wife D.A. Merkel 1854". An older date stone is also set into the wall giving the date of two earlier mill buildings, "CM BM 1796, Old Date 1749". The mill measures 46' 5" by 41' 4". The front or south facade of the mill has a window on each side of a center door on all three floors. The hoist hood is an extension of the roof ridge. Wood steps lead to the six paneled entry door. The west end of the mill has a stone segmented tailrace arch into the wheel pit with an access door above, the basement level has a four paneled Dutch door and two windows, the top two floors each have four windows. The rear gable end of the mill has two windows on each of the three floors, and two stone segmented water wheel bearing arches in the basement wall. The east side has four windows on the first and second floors, a large segmented stone headrace arch and two smaller windows (now filled in) in the basement. The windows are 6/6 and have screens.

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The basement of the mill has the hurst frame and two turbines, one in place in the wheel pit. There are also iron shafts with wooden gears and pulleys. There is a large piece of metal equipment-- an undetermined type of milling machine. Ladder type stairs lead to the various floor levels of the mill.

The first floor of the mill contains the miller's office and two pair of millstones in place, both with wood millstone cover. The runner stones are french buhr and both have their stone cranes, one pair of stones has most of the crane hardware. There are also metal shafts with wood gears, elevators, bin and hopper.

The second floor of the mill has additional metal shafts with wood gears and elevators. The attic contains two small stones with wood cover. A similar stone was found in the attic of the Moselem mill a short distance away on route 662, the purpose of these stones is unknown. This floor also has additional gears and pulleys and what remains of the hoist mechanism.

An outstanding feature of this complex are the water courses. The dam over Moselem Creek is approximately 80' long has a concrete spillway and stone wing walls, a gate at the top of the dam controls the water entering the headrace which travels under the road surfacing on the other side. The dam backs up a large pond, perhaps 10 acres, which is a favorite watering hole for ducks and geese. The race about 400' long flows toward the mill in channels which are partially lined with stone. Approximately 80' before the race enters the mill there is a gate which allows water to be diverted away from the mill and return to Moselem Creek. All the water is now diverted but when the mill was operating the headrace continued to the mill, entered a large iron pipe 19' from the mill, passing through the arch to the water wheel. The water then exited on the opposite or west side of the building through a tailrace arch and back to the Creek. All of the watercourses until the diversion contain water and the headrace and tailrace after the diversion are quite visible.

This is one of the outstanding mill complexes in the county. The basic exterior structure of the house remains intact, over the years porches and window boxes have been added which complement the appearance of the building. The interior has been remodeled and modern plumbing installed. There is some original trim and floors but much of the original old flooring and trim have been replaced. Two frame additions were made to the barn as additional storage was required. The exterior of the mill is in good condition and well maintained, however, there is some sash and glass missing from the windows which all have screens. The interior has had no major structural changes, retaining the original open spaces and some of the milling equipment. The remaining outbuildings exhibit little change. The swimming pool is the only modern intrusion on the nominated property. These changes do not interfere with the essential physical features that enable the historic resources to convey their past identity and character and portray the significant time period c 1745 to 1939 when the mill ceased operating.

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

1767 to 1939

Significant Dates

1854
1767

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 Merkel Mill Complex is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. This property is significant for its two hundred year association to the Berks County Gristmill Industry being representative of a pattern of mills which were part of family farms. This is an architecturally significant mill complex encompassing several different but classic Berks County architectural styles.

Architecturally, this complex represents classic Berks County building types spanning a one-hundred year period. As with most of the early mill complexes this was also a working farm, and the buildings portray that function. The beautiful stone manor house built 1767 has balanced Georgian proportions. Although this house is larger and more elegant than other Berks farmhouses of the period, the stone construction, gable roof and simple rectangular functional design are typical Berks County architectural features. The mill built 1854, replacing an earlier mill, is a classic Berks County merchant mill; as with other merchant type mills of the period it is banked, 2 1/2 stories plus basement, stone construction, large, (compared to earlier mills) rectangular, with hoist hood and three vertically aligned doors on the gable end. The large banked barn with forebay and solid ramp is representative of Berks county barns of the period. A small smokehouse was a common outbuilding on most county self-sufficient farms. The summer kitchen with large walk-in fireplace and winder staircase was also typical of Berks County farms.

Although the resources on the property vary in date they have been altered by gradual organic growth as new needs arose. The buildings, therefore, form an aesthetically pleasing group with a unity of style and taste found on many Berks County farms. The stone construction, simple, but functional design are typical of other Berks County farm/mill complexes of the period including The Mill at Lobachsville and the Weidner Mill complex.

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Merkel Mill Complex

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This mill complex along with the Geiger, Weidner, Brown and Thompson complexes illustrate an interesting finding of the Berks County Gristmill Survey: the majority of early mills surveyed were part of working farms. The building functions on these properties were, therefore, inter-related -- the mill, house and outbuildings serving the mill and farm. This house served as the home of the miller/farmer until the property was sold out of the Merkel family in 1891. The family were by occupation millers, but they also ran a large successful farm. The property is located in a region the pioneers called the "flats" having limestone soil which is among the most fertile farm land in the county.

Johann Christian Mercklen, the father of George Merkel, was a French Huguenot who came to America to settle in 1718 or 1719 (it is believed he came for the first time in 1703). He received the first patent of land for 150 acres from the Penns on May 7, 1734. Subsequent purchases of land made the family one of the largest land owners in the area. George built the first mill on the property of logs in 1749. Merkel's Mill is listed on a map of 1776. The second mill was built of stone by George's son Casper in 1796. The Merkel family are listed as owners on the 1816, 1854 (this map lists two mills) and 1876 maps. The owner of the mill on the 1850 census is Samuel Merkel, the mill having four pair of stones with a capital of \$5,000., processing 9,000 bushels of grain with a product value of \$4,500. One man operated the mill and earned \$16. per month.

County historian Morton Montgomery wrote in 1886, "On Moselem Creek lived the Merkel family, who were large land-owners, the George Merkel tract at one time embracing one thousand three hundred acres. He had a mill above the present Merkel mansion, which was built in 1768, (obviously incorrect) and this has been repaired so that it is still in excellent condition. The present Merkel Mill, below the old mansion, was built in 1856 (1854) by Samuel Merkel, its owner, and also the owner of the homestead. The mill is a large stone building. A distillery at this point has long since been abandoned." Samuel's son Augustus succeeded him as miller and sold the property to the Rothermel family about 1891. In 1912 it was sold to D. E. Hill. The last operating miller was Wellington Firing who discontinued milling c 1939.

Winslow Fegley in his book wrote, "This property has been one of the busy spots in milldom in Berks County. One pair of stones was used for wheat grinding; another for rye and two for corn and oats, and in a year as high as 26,000 bushels of grain were ground. An old pair of stones was also used for grinding old bricks which the farmers used for plastering stone houses, making an imitation facing of brick." Parker Dreibelbies, whose great, great, great, grandmother was George Merkel's daughter, remembers going to the mill in a horse and wagon to have the grain from their farm ground into feed and flour. Parker's cousin Lloyd who went to the mill with his father remembers if you took 60 pounds of grain to the mill 40 pounds of flour was returned, the miller keeping the extra pounds for his service. However, grain was ground into feed for a set fee.

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The watercourses, mill and buildings in this complex have been associated with the milling industry in Berks County for 200 years making it one of the longest operating mill sites in the county. The first mill was built 1749 about the time the rate of wheat products exported from the county expanded considerably. The last mill built 1854 was also built at a time of great expansion of grain production in Berks County. During this period (1818-1870) the county's income derived from grain rose to 150% the average of all counties in the Philadelphia region. As a result of this increased production milling in Berks underwent its own expansion. The Merkel mill was one of the many mills built to keep pace with the increased wheat production.

In addition to the gristmills on the property, there was a distillery, a sawmill and a cider press--only the gristmill survives. As bread was a staple food of the pioneers from the Palatinate the early mill provided a vital service to the pioneer farmers of the area. The later mill built in 1854 still provided custom service to the farmers of the area but also ground grain for the market. This mill complex with its long historical association to the county gristmill industry, its architecture and setting is one of the outstanding mill complexes in the 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 12 acres

UTM References

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| 4 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
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 Zone Easting Northing

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|---|---|

| | | | | | |
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

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

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National Park Service

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Merkel Mill Complex (Richmond Township)

Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at the point where Moselem Creek passes under the north side of Route 143 proceed northeasterly along the east bank of Moselem Creek approximately 1400', thence southeasterly along the west bank of the creek approximately 700' to the northwest corner of the dam, thence easterly along the north side of the dam to its northeast corner, thence southwesterly to Eagle Road approximately 100', thence northerly 150' along the west side of Eagle Road, thence westerly approximately 1000' on the north side of Route 662 and 143 to the place of beginning.

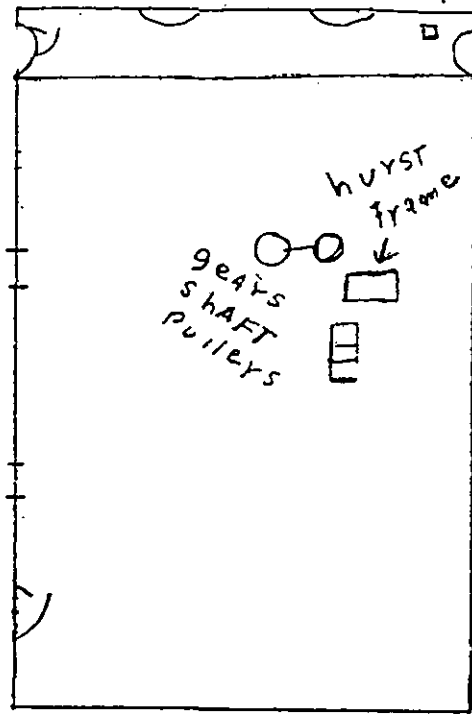
Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the contributing buildings and the water courses. The water power system includes a large dam and a functional head race which carries water and a clearly defined tail race. The buildings are all classified as contributing to the significance of the complex. The boundaries are defined by roads and the creek and dam. Excluded from the nomination is the land used as a golf course to the north and east, and hilly developed land to the west along Route 662.

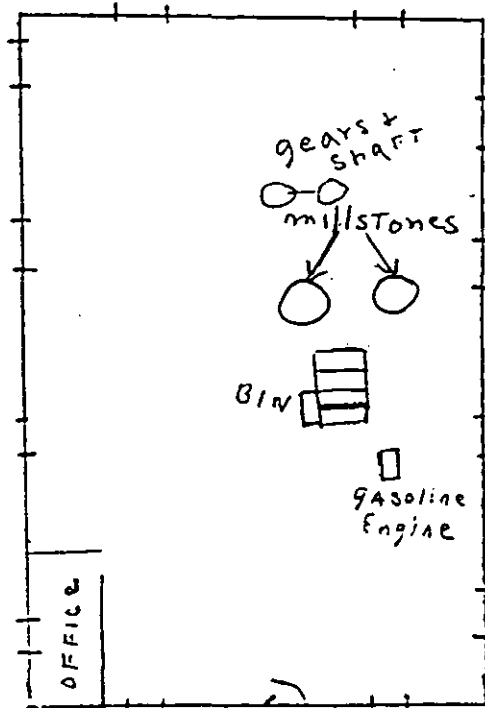
MERKEL MILL (Richmond Township)

BERKS COUNTY, PA

Turbine



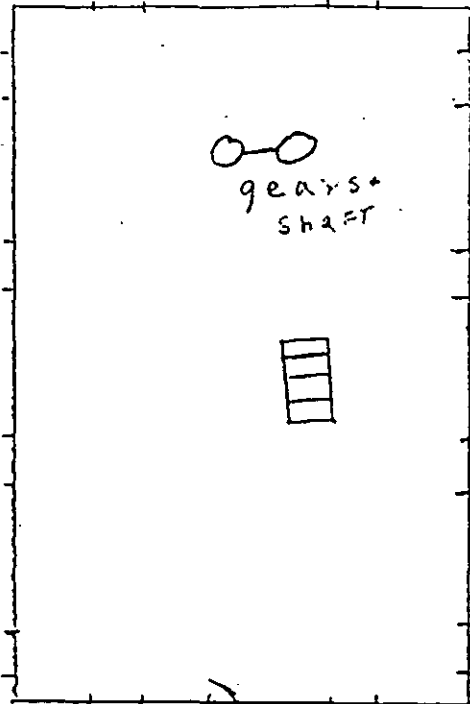
Basement



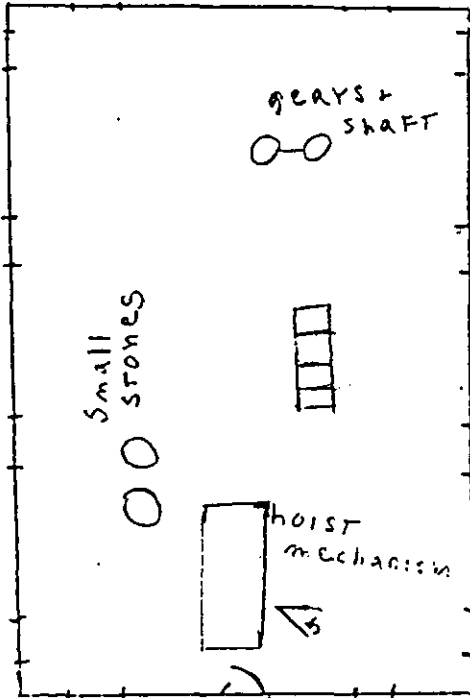
FIRST FLOOR

MERKEL MILL (Richmond Townshi

BERKS COUNTY, PA



SECOND FLOOR

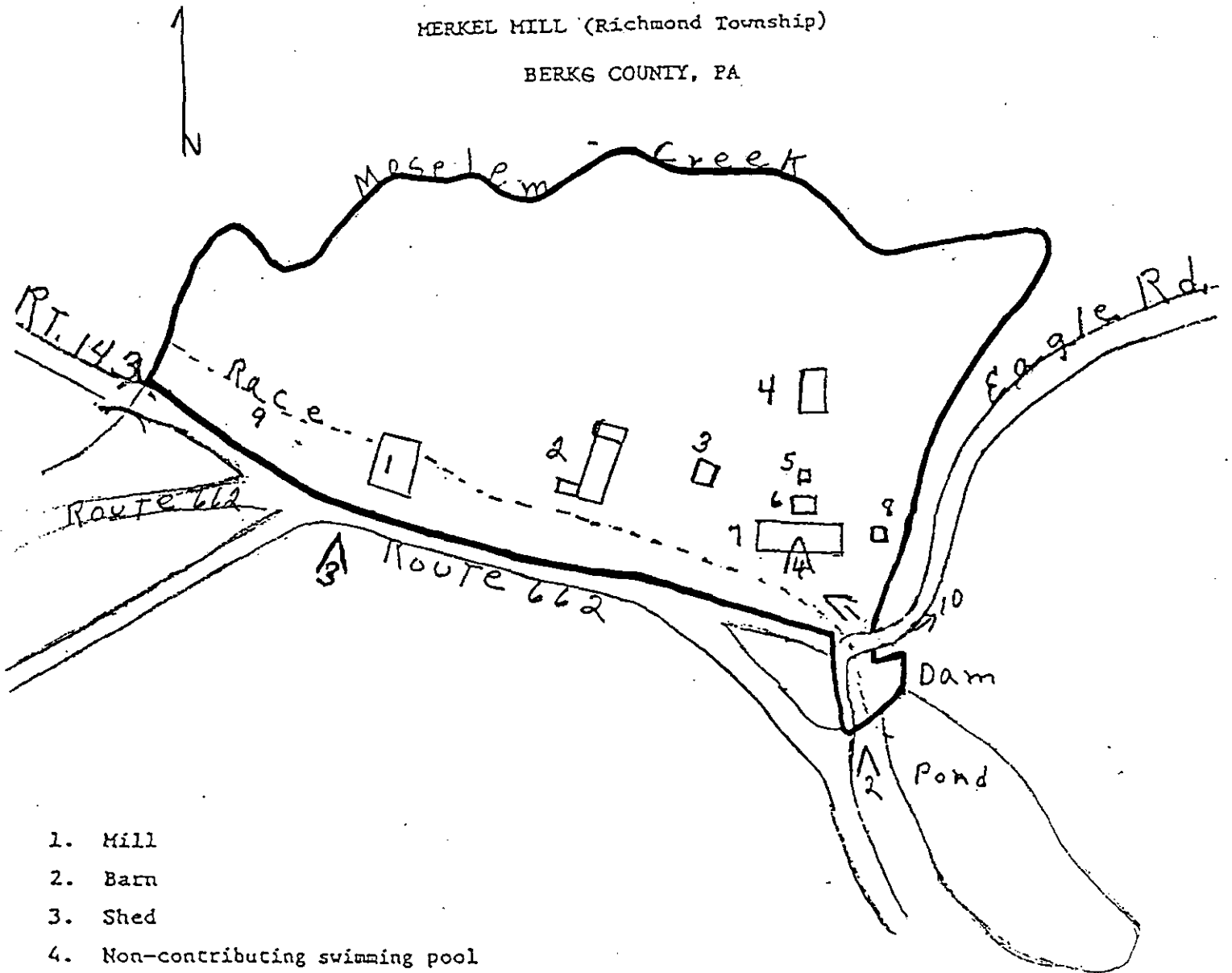


THIRD FLOOR

< Photo Direction
Not to Scale

MERKEL MILL (Richmond Township)

BERKS COUNTY, PA



1. Mill
2. Barn
3. Shed
4. Non-contributing swimming pool
5. Privy
6. Summer kitchen
7. House
8. Smoke house
9. Watercourses
10. Non-contributing bridge

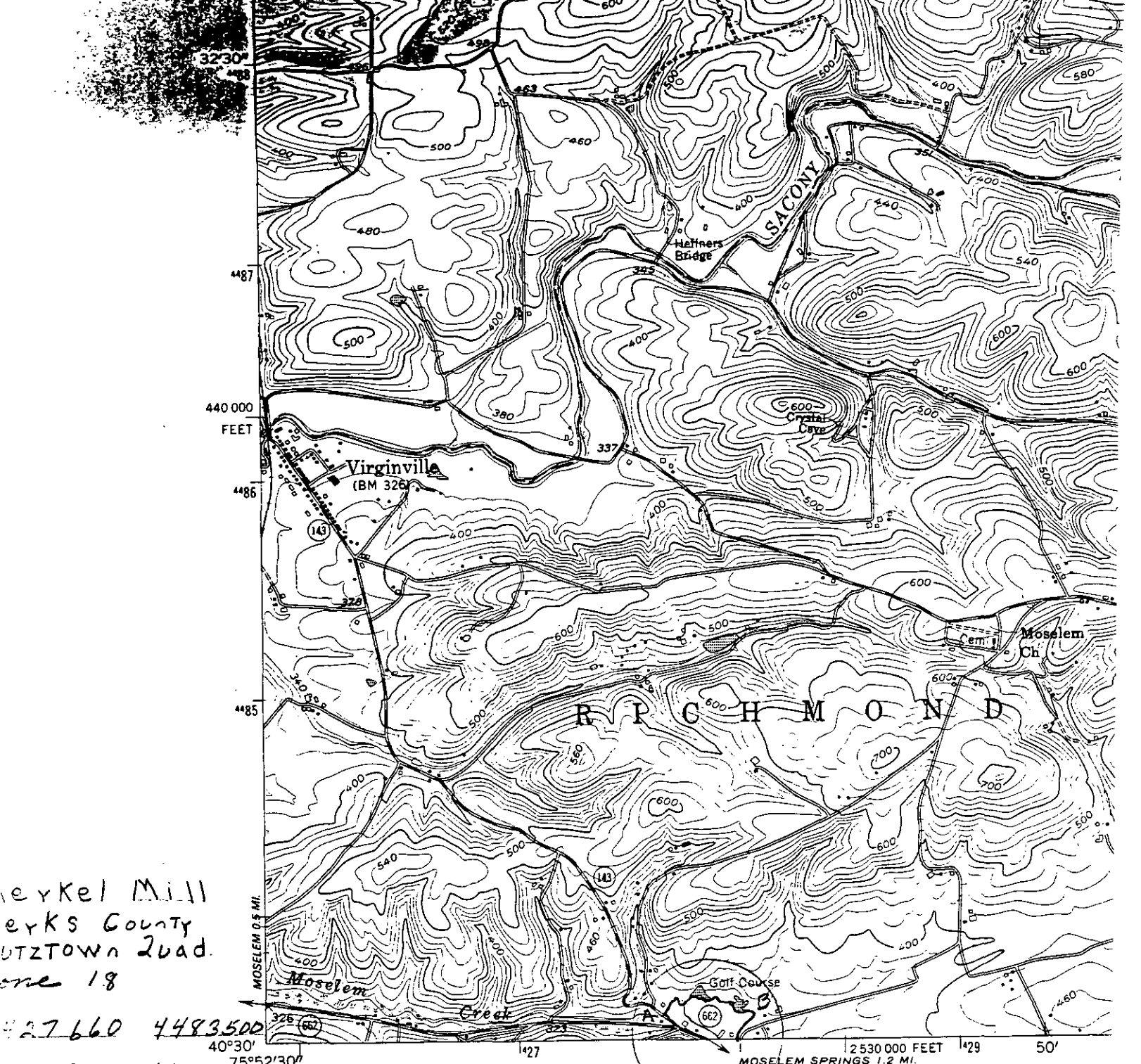
Key

————— Boundry

Not to Scale

< Photo Direction

- 1-3 Exterior
- 4 Basement of Manor House



Keyel Mill
 Berks County
 OUTTOWN Road
 Zone 18

427 660 4483500
 427 960 4483340

(TEMPLE)
 5864 IV NW

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

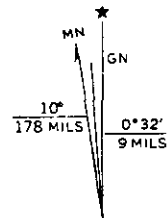
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods
 Aerial photographs taken 1951. Field check 1956

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system,
 south zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
 zone 18, shown in blue

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with
 State of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial photographs
 taken 1969 and 1974 This information not field checked



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF ENVI
TOPOGRAPHIC ANI

5965 11 SW
(HAMBURG)

75°52'30"
40°30' 4260000m E.

427 428 429 50' 430 581 (KUT)

Merkel Mill
Banks County
Flooded Area
Zone 18
C427960 4483340

