

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 Douglass, John House  
other names/site number Gov. Sproul Birthplace

2. Location

street & number Sproul Road, just south of State Rt. 896 N/A not for publication  
city, town Colerain Township N/A vicinity  
state Pennsylvania code PA county Lancaster code 071 zip code 17509

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
	structures
	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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 [Signature]

Date 7/31/90

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)

Domestic; single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic; single dwelling**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Georgian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stonewalls Stoneroof Wood

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The site of the John Douglass House in Colerain Township, Lancaster County, consists of a stone farmhouse, a wooden bank barn, a log smokehouse, and the ruins of a stone carriage shed. The farmstead is located one-half mile south of the National Register Historic District of Andrew's Bridge village within the valley of the east branch of the Octoraro Creek, the border between Lancaster and Chester counties. Since the 1920's, this valley of rolling farmfields and rich pasture land has been controlled by a single family dedicated to its preservation. Under this single owner, who has maintained the agricultural landscape for farming and fox hunting, the valley surrounding the farmstead has retained its rural appearance, only faintly touched by the 20th century. Undoubtedly it was the preservation of this ambiance which secured the valley the honor of listing as part of the Pennsylvania Scenic Rivers System.

**The Farmhouse:** Known locally as the Gov. Sproul birthplace, the house stands facing Sproul Road, a narrow country road about 15 feet to the east that runs parallel to the creek's meandering southward flow. The house is surrounded by a small stand of woods to the west, the barn to the south, cornfields beyond to the south and north, and pasture land to the east that extends to the banks of the Octoraro and beyond. The house is a five-bay, two-and-one-half-story stone structure measuring 45 by 32 feet on a double-pile, center-hall plan. Although the house was built in two phases -- mid 1700's and the early 1800's -- the floorplan resembles the standard Georgian center-hall plan common throughout southeastern Pennsylvania from the colonial era until the mid-19th century. In its symmetrical massing, the house looks like a vernacular Georgian farmhouse with a side-gable, wooden-shingled roof.

The core structure, probably built in 1769, is two rooms deep on a three-bay, side-hall plan. A double-flue chimney within the south wall serves two corner fireplaces diagonally situated to serve the front and back parlors while a single-flue chimney on the north wall serves a third corner fireplace in what was once a smaller back room.

That configuration

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remains intact today, except that the wall separating the back rooms has been removed, creating a single large space. Sometime after 1815, a two-bay addition measuring 18 by 21 feet was built on from the north wall. Although not as deep as the original, this stone addition was designed to match the roofline of the original house and create a five-bay symmetry across the front facade. From the rear, however, the roofline breaks and the addition is clearly noticeable. This section, which is a single room deep, presumably became the new kitchen because of its large cooking fireplace on the ground floor and the vaulted storage space. On the second floor is a single bedroom that has been divided by a thin wall of wooden boarding, apparently constructed as a temporary arrangement. At some later date, a third, single-story stone addition with a shed roof was built into the notch at the northwest corner of the house between the original section and the shallower second addition. Presumably, this addition was built as a summer kitchen due to the fireplace in the north wall.

The uncoursed stone walls of the entire house have been constructed of the local limestone. These fieldstone walls have been laid randomly with large flat pieces inserted at the corners as quoins. The walls show signs of having been either plastered or whitewashed; the house may have been plastered originally to mask the more provincial "rubble" stonework. There is a subtle touch of style, however, in the flat-stone arches inserted over each of the first-floor windows in the original house. Each voussoir is a piece of narrow fieldstone carefully chosen for its size and fit.

The molded door and window frames are mortised, tenoned and pegged throughout. The double-sash windows, which lack shutters, follow the pattern of the period with 9/6 sash on the first floor and 6/6 sash on the second floor. The south wall bears a wooden tablet set into the peak of the gable with the inscription "1769" carved in base relief. The wooden cornice, which is a simple, closed design, extends across this wall as a small pent eave.

The front door, which probably dates from the late 19th century judging from its design, is recessed into the front wall, which has been rounded at both edges to give the entrance a graceful,

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sculpted look. These sculpted corners may have been created when the first addition was built; the window wells inside the addition are similarly rounded unlike the original house where the wells are squared off; the addition's second-floor windows, on the other hand, are squared off. The architrave is a simple piece of wooden molding that frames the front door and the three-light transom above. The entrance is sheltered by a pedimented, wooden portico that covers a small porch with a built-in bench to one side. The portico has a vernacular Greek Revival look and may date from the second addition in the early 1800's, although the uneven shingling over the tympanum suggests either that it was modified later or that the portico was added in the late 19th century, perhaps when the door was changed. Nonetheless, the door is the only Victorian element disturbing the appearance of the Georgian form and, in itself, is barely obtrusive.

**The Interior:** The interior woodwork and molding are restrained, reflecting, most likely, the conservative character of the house's Quaker and Scotch-Irish inhabitants throughout its periods of expansion in the 19th century. Although the front facade was built to mimic the symmetry of a five-bay, center-hall house, the interior plan betrays the house's add-on evolution. The ornamentation in the first-floor of the original consists of a plain baseboard without molding, a molded chair-rail, and molded mantel shelf (not full pieces) over the corner fireplaces. The front-parlor fireplace is stone, not brick, and contains a flat-arch stone lintel similar to the window lintels. Most of the doors are recessed, six-panel types and appear to retain their original iron hardware. The center stairhall contains a simple bannister with a turned newel post. The curtain wall and original door to the cellar beneath the stairs have rectangular and triangular panels, adding to the hall's modest yet graceful appearance. The ground-level floor boards, even those in the front parlor -- the room traditionally given the richest treatment -- are random-width, varying from 12 to 16 inches. The back room in the original house has had a wall removed, creating a larger space from what had been a small room and a kitchen. A corner fireplace, now plastered over, in what had originally been the north wall of the original, probably served as the cooking place. Beneath the oldest section is a full stone foundation that was constructed as a basement with two small windows for light and ventilation. The foundation beneath the addition, however, does not extend to the full

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dimensions of the structure above and was probably designed as a root cellar, as suggested by the built-in stone shelves around its perimeter. The attic is divided by the original north wall into two spaces; each side, however, reveals the traditional, regional building system for wooden-shingle roofs: rafters with roof boards horizontally attached and wooden shingles attached to the boards, the spacing between the boards allowing the shingles to "breathe." On the exterior, the rafter tails are hidden within an unadorned, boxed cornice typical of vernacular Georgian and Federal farmhouses in the region. Overall, the house's understated finished woodwork suggests that the original builder and the succeeding owners were farmers of limited means, conservative tastes, or both.

**The Barn:** About 160 feet to the south of the house, on the same axis, stands a large wooden bank barn constructed in several phases, presumably in the mid to late 19th century. Supporting evidence for that date is found in the timber framing, which bears circular-saw marks; in the machine-cut, six-inch, beaded wooden siding; and in its machine-cut nails. Despite the lack of hand-hewn materials, the barn's construction and layout is colonial in derivation, remaining faithful to an 18th century tradition for Pennsylvania bank barns. Like the house, the barn was built in two principal phases: the original structure is 44 feet deep by 50 feet wide with a stone foundation for stables and a wooden-frame haymow above for storage.

The original core of the barn faces east on the same axis as the house. That is, the doors to its stables at the ground level face east, a non-traditional orientation for this region that ignored the advantages of a warm southern exposure for farm animals. Some time after the original was completed, a new section measuring 43 by 50 feet was added on the east side, nearly doubling the barn's size. Built with similar techniques and materials as the original, the addition was extended perpendicular (or east-west) to the older barn. However, the floor plan remained identical: a three-bay plan entered from a banked earthen ramp on the west side through sliding wooden doors that opened onto a threshing floor with haymows to either side. The haylofts lack ventilation save for identical 3/4 windows located in each of the barn's three gable peaks and that afforded by cracks between the wooden siding boards. The framework follows the traditional post-and-beam system, with wooden pegs

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rather than spikes or nails fastening the wooden main frames. The truss system is also traditional: the walls use rectangular frames braced diagonally while the roof uses a triangulated framing combination of through purlins supported with purlin posts and braces which, in turn, support the common rafters.

The addition to the core contains an interesting structural engineering feature: at the threshing-floor level are two queen-post trusses which extend the length of the floor. Like a bridge platform, the floor seems to hang from these trusses, which were a common type for country bridges in the 19th century. At the stables level below is a 43- by 50-foot enclosed barnyard without any vertical posts supporting the floor above. Instead, the floor rests upon two wooden summer beams which extend on a perpendicular axis to the trusses; the beams are supported in the center by four steel rods, which run vertically through each of the four queen posts, and at their ends by the barn's stone foundation. The rods are anchored to the tops of the queen posts and bolted to the beams underneath. While the summer beams may be strong enough to support the floor across this 50-foot span, it appears that the trusses were installed to increase the carrying capacity of the beams. As for the now enclosed barnyard below, there is some evidence to suggest that the space was once the walled barnyard for the original barn.

The barn also has an attached, wooden-frame tractor or equipment shed, measuring 12 by 45 feet, that was built onto the north wall of the original section. The shed, which is entered by its own banked earthen entrance on the west side, contains a four-and-one-half-foot-wide corncrib that runs the length of the interior. The shed was built using the same methods as the barn, yet it appears to be newer due to its poured concrete foundation, which has been painted ~~the~~ same white color as the barn. Nonetheless, the shed blends unobtrusively with the rest of the barn, and its age is undetectable unless closely inspected at the foundation.

**The Log Smokehouse:** About 15 feet west of the northwest corner of the farmhouse, situated near the door to the summer kitchen, stands a log smokehouse facing south. Measuring eight- and-one-half-foot square by seven feet high, with a slate-shingle gable roof, the house sits on a fieldstone foundation that has been slightly banked into the terrain. Its log walls are flat hewn on their inner and

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outer faces and cut flush at the butt ends where the notches join; the chinks between the logs have been filled with cement. The notching is a V-pattern common to log construction from eastern Pennsylvania to the Ohio Valley in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The exterior of the house appears to have been painted or whitewashed, similar to the house and barn. The interior has been blackened by years of smoke from curing fires. The floor appears to be earthen despite the stone foundation beneath. A single, heavy wooden beam extends between the ends of the rafters with a three-inch diameter hole drilled through its center. From the interior, an eight-inch-diameter hole is noticeable through one of the vertical boards in the gable wall on the east side; although covered presently by another board, this hole was probably where the smokestack vented.

**Ruins:** Directly behind the farmhouse are the remains of what may have been a garden enclosed on three sides by a low stone wall. The garden was not counted as a contributing resource because it is not a substantial ruin and is difficult to determine its age. A path of large flat fieldstone leads from the kitchen door to this enclosed area which measures 36 by 11 feet; the wall stands from one-and-one-half to two-feet high. The wall may also have been the foundation for a wooden carriage shed, similar to those often found at Quaker meeting houses in the region.

Some 40 feet to the south, between the house and barn, stand the remains of a stone-and-wood carriage house that measured 25 by 21 feet; the walls stand about seven feet high. The remains have been counted as a contributing site. The wooden floor joists and rafters, presumably for a gable loft, fell into the foundation some years ago and the interior is filled with miscellaneous debris. Still intact are two, wooden sliding doors on their steel runners, built of the same six-inch beaded board as the barn is sided with.

**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)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1769 - 1899

Significant Dates

1769, c. 181

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 John Douglass House is one of the few remaining 18th century houses in Colerain Township and the oldest in this area of the Octoraro Valley near Andrews Bridge. Known locally as the Gov. Sproul birthplace, it is an excellent local example of a vernacular stone farmhouse built just before the American Revolution, and of rural domestic architecture characterized by evolutionary stages of growth and Georgian design precedents. The nominated property also includes buildings and ruins, particularly the barn and smokehouse, which are representative of local nineteenth century farmstead outbuildings.

The nominated house was presumably constructed by John Douglas c. 1769. After Douglas lost the property to his creditors in 1769, the house was sold by sheriff's sale to David Hayes. Ten years later, Hayes sold the property to William Downing. Downing and his wife Mary sold it, in turn, to George Black. In 1827, the heirs of George Black sold the house to Margaret Black, who sold it to Dr. Obed Bailey in 1837. Dr. Bailey was a well-known figure in the valley, whose ownership marked the beginning of a line of locally distinguished families who lived in the house until the early 20th century.

In 1856, Bailey sold the farm to Clarkson Brosius, a prominent Quaker farmer, who was the father of Marriott Brosius, Lancaster's U.S. Representative to Congress from 1888 until 1901. At the time of his death in 1901, Brosius was chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Currency. The Brosiuses were of English Quaker descent and prominent in the region as abolitionists and prohibitionists; they were especially noted as "conductors" on the Underground Railroad. While no solid evidence has been uncovered of the house's use as a "station" on the railroad, Clarkson Brosius was known to have assisted his own father and brothers in operating underground stations within the valley.

In 1865, the heirs of Clarkson Brosius sold the property to John Bowman who, in turn, resold it the following year to Samuel Slokom.



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Slokum owned the house until his death in 1889, at which time it passed to his daughter, Dora D. Sproul. Dora Sproul was living with her father in 1870 when she gave birth to William Cameron Sproul, later to become governor of Pennsylvania from 1919 to 1923. The future governor lived here for four years before his family moved to Michigan. Years later, as a resident of the city of Chester, Sproul represented Delaware County in the state senate, rising to President pro tem, before becoming the Republican candidate for governor after the First World War. Sproul was also grandson of James Sproul, a prominent local ironmaster of Scotch-Irish descent who owned and operated three nearby iron forges along the Octoraro in the early 19th century. Dora Sproul held the house until 1920 when it was sold to Morris Canan. The property was later owned by Fritz and Barbara Eshlman and Sarah Smith, who sold it to Walter M. Jeffords Jr. in 1966.

The Douglass House is an excellent intact example of the stone houses built in this region which were often the second generation homes to the pioneers who settled in valleys like the Octoraro during the early 18th century. That is, they were the structures which replaced the earlier log houses of the first white settlers in this region. The first houses were generally log because of the pioneer's need for sturdy, yet quick and inexpensive shelter. Later, when they could afford more substantial housing, they built with stone, presumably because it possessed a greater cultural sense of permanency, security and respectability.

Even then, the size of their new homes often depended on the degree of their success and the size of their family. In this valley, as throughout most of the region, farmers, who could afford it, built a five-bay center-hall house, otherwise known as the Georgian center-hall plan. Those who could not often built the two-thirds Georgian-plan; the beauty of the plan, however, was in its flexibility for future modification.

The evolution of the Douglass House reflects that plan and its ability to be modified over time by a succession of owners. The core of the house probably dates from 1769. That date corresponds with the year in which John Douglass lost the property in a sheriff's sale. John was the son of Timothy and Ann Douglass, granted the land by patent in 1737. The Douglass's gave the property to their son in 1765; it is likely that he built the house

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sometime between that date and 1769. If so, he may have replaced a log house belonging to his parents, although there is no basis for that assertion other than the presence of the log smokehouse behind the house, which survives in excellent condition. It is assumed that the smokehouse is older than the house, simply because the majority of extant smokehouses which accompany 18th century farmhouses in this region are either stone or sometimes brick.

The three-quarter Georgian type that Douglass most likely built was a three-bay, two-and-one-half story structure, which was two rooms deep with a side hall on the first floor. There is some evidence that the second-floor plan had been altered many years ago, perhaps as early as the date of the first addition. As described in Section 7, a two-bay, two-and-one-half-story addition was built sometime after 1815. The addition was just a single-room deep but gave the house added bedroom and kitchen space. Just as importantly, it provided the front facade with a balanced and more formal five-bay appearance. This was hardly accidental: starting in the mid-18th century and continuing into the early 19th century, the Georgian five-bay had become a standard design for the middle class (and those who aspired to it) in the mid-Atlantic region. Those, such as John Douglass, who could not afford the full center-hall plan at first, often built the three-quarter version, well aware that future fortune might allow the addition of two extra bays, and thereafter duplicate the image of the five-bay. Such reasoning could explain the stucco on the structure, which was frequently used in the Delaware Valley to mask the fact of such additions if they did not exactly match.

At a date beyond 1815, a third, single-story room was added behind the kitchen wing, filling in the notch behind the kitchen wing and giving the house a full rectangular footprint. That addition was presumably a summer kitchen since it leads off the kitchen wing, contains a fireplace in the north wall, an unfinished shed-style roof, and is rather cramped for space. Taken together, these additions typify the evolutionary nature of the Douglass House and many of the oldest surviving farmhouses in this valley.

Most of the Octoraro Valley's earliest settlers were English Quakers and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who began farming here in the early 1700s, attracted by the valley's fertile soil and many springs. Most of its early settlers emigrated from Chester and

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Philadelphia counties, and maintained an economic and cultural connection with those counties rather than with Lancaster to the west. As a result, the Douglass House and most of the oldest buildings in this valley reflect the building traditions of these ethnic and religious groups. For example, the materials and design forms they adapted for their stone dwellings were reflections of transplanted European backgrounds and not of geographical necessity. The English and Welsh Quakers and Scotch-Irish built with stone not because they lacked wood for framing, but because they often came from stone-building regions in western England, Wales and northern Ireland.

The bank barn that accompanies the house, and which is the property's third contributing resource, was most likely built in the 19th century. Although it is probably not the farm's original barn, its location in relation to the house is historically important: both house and barn face east in a linear arrangement in which the gable of one is aligned with the gable of the other. This so-called mid-Atlantic linear farm plan is typical of this valley and the southeastern Pennsylvania region. Although many older barns (and houses) here tend to face south to take advantage of the warm southern exposure for farm animals, others, such as the Douglass farm, may simply conform to the slope of their site or the direction of the nearest road. In this case, two factors presumably dictated the orientation of the house and barn: the north-side direction of Sproul Road, which parallels the creek, and the slope of the site, which rises from east to west out of the valley. In this respect, the arrangement of the Douglass House and barn is a good example of a traditional farm plan in the southeastern Pennsylvania region.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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Lancaster County Atlases for 1864, 1875, and 1899  
"Members of Congress - 1789 to Present Time," Journal of the Lancaster County  
Historical Society, 34 (1930), p.59.  
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Preservation Trust of Lancaster County (Lancaster:1985), pp.64-70.  
Deeds at the Archives of the Lancaster County Courthouse, Lancaster: K-9-143(1865  
S-13-38 (1866); L-24-464 (1920); L-8-594(1854); O-6-120 (1837);G-5-403 (1827)  
M-3-440 (1802); Q-402 (1779).  
MacElwee, Wilmer M. Around the Boundaries of Chester County West Chester, 1934.  
J.W. Houston, "James Sproul," Journal of the Lancaster County Historical  
Society, 2 (Lancaster : 1907).  
Sproul Biographical & Geneological Files, Lancaster County Historical Society

See continuation sheet

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: Brandywine Conservancy,  
Chadds Ford, PA; Historic Preservation  
Trust of Lancaster Co., Lancaster PA

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 2.0 acres

UTM References -

A 18 413750 4413080  
 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 Frederick L. Richards, initial research by Paula B. Kunkel  
 organization Brandywine Conservancy -EMC date Feb 12, 1990  
 street & number P.O. Box 141 telephone 215-388-7601  
 city or town Chadds Ford state PA zip code 19713

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Previous Documentation on File with NPS: none

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## DOUGLASS HOUSE VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point in Colerain Township, Lancaster County, PA on the west side of the roadbed of Sproul Road, TR-772, approximately 2160 feet south of the intersection with the centerline of Pennsylvania Route 896;

Thence, in a northwesterly direction and approximately perpendicular to Sproul Road approximately 200 feet to a corner;

Thence, in a southwesterly direction perpendicular to the previously described course approximately 400 feet to a corner;




Thence, in a southeasterly direction perpendicular to the previously described course approximately 200 feet to a corner on the west side of Sproul Road;

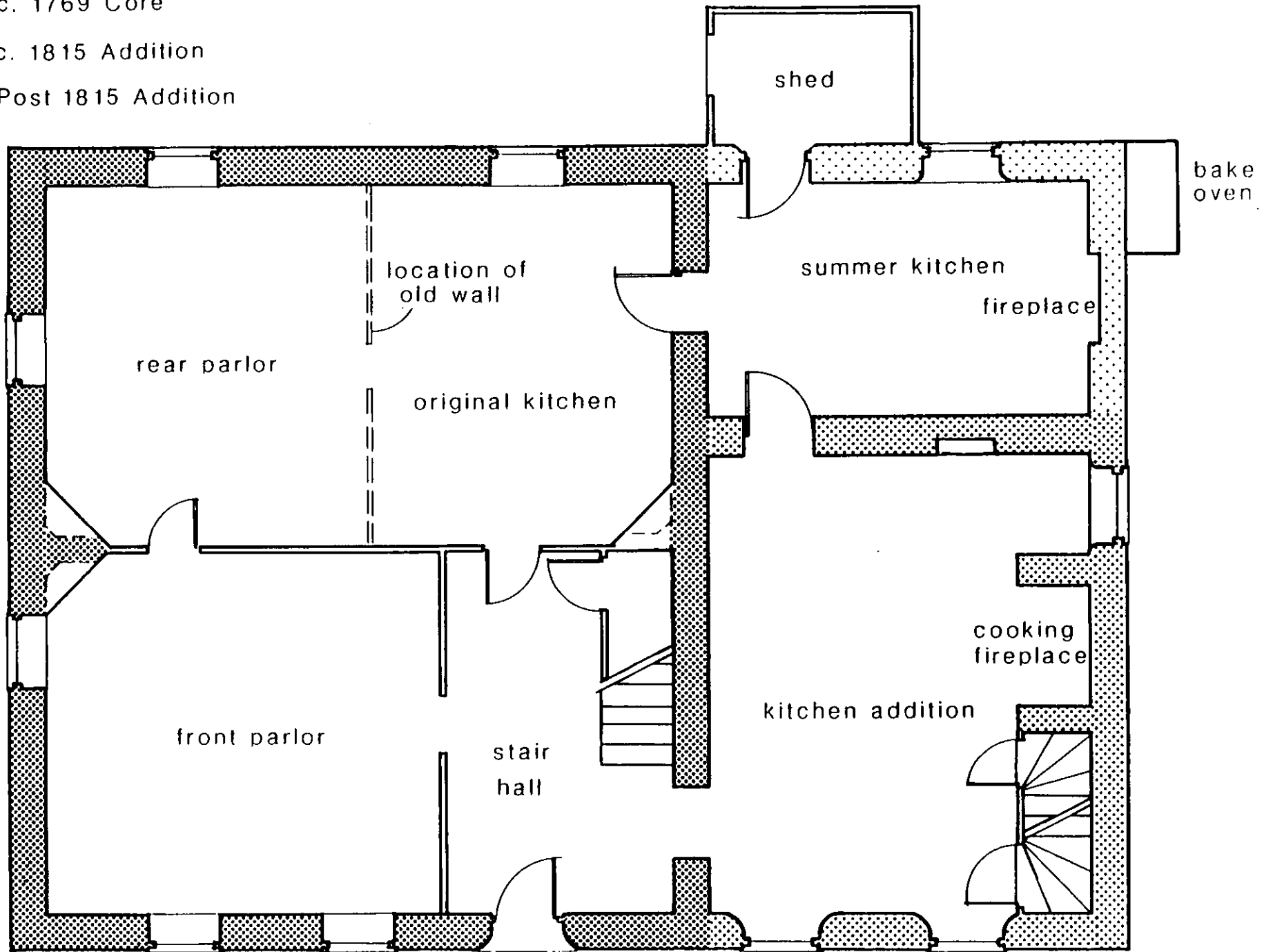
Thence in a northeasterly direction and along the west side of the roadbed of Sproul Road approximately 420 feet to the point of beginning.

Containing approximately 2.0 acres.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Boundary was chosen for the nomination to include only acreage containing the structures listed in the description. The entire parcel owned by Walter M. Jeffords at this location contains 77.706 acres; the 75 acres which are not included in the nomination are farmland and woodland.

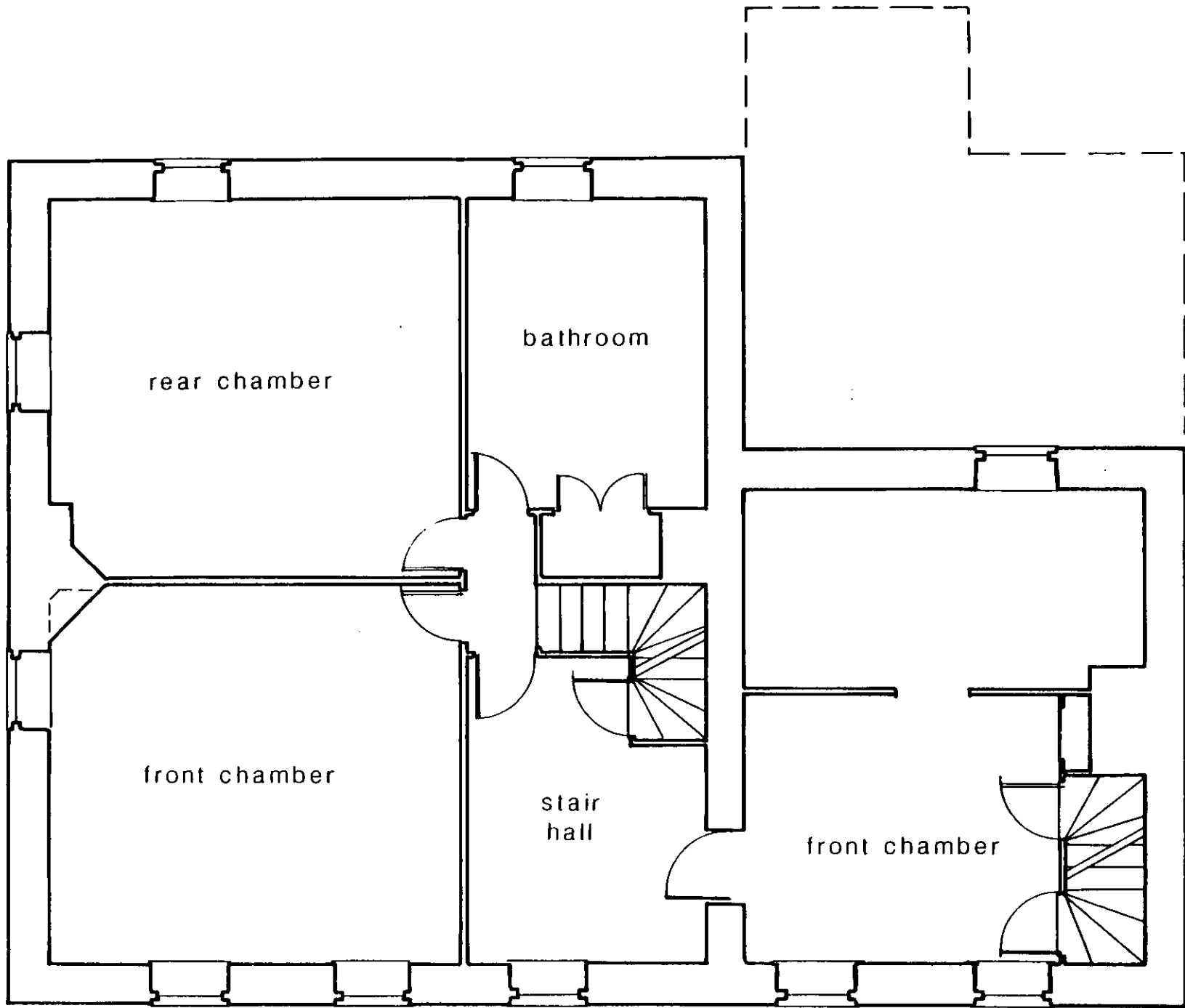
-  c. 1769 Core
-  c. 1815 Addition
-  Post 1815 Addition



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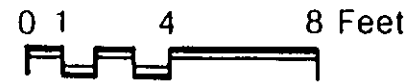
First Floor



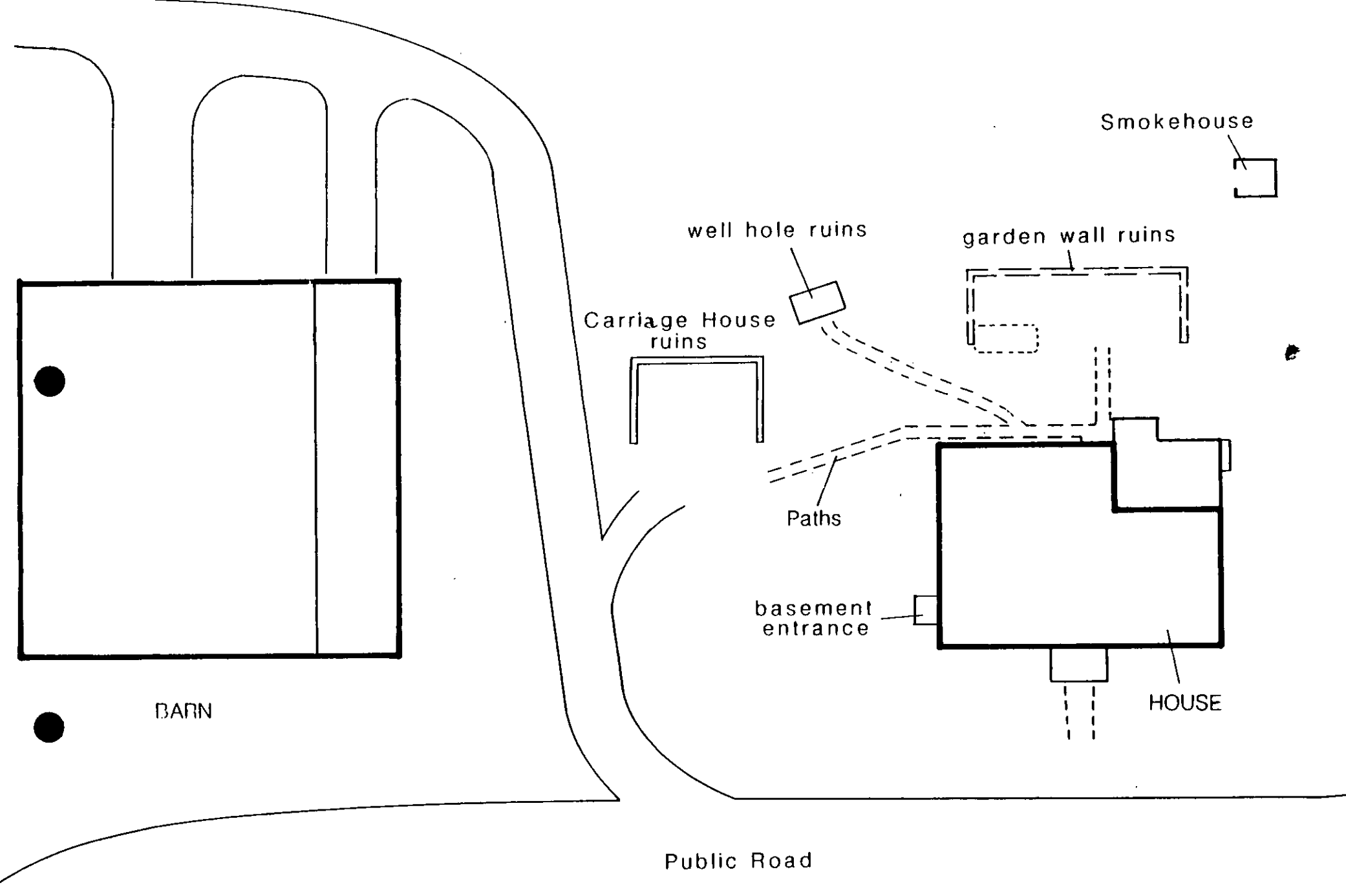


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Second Floor







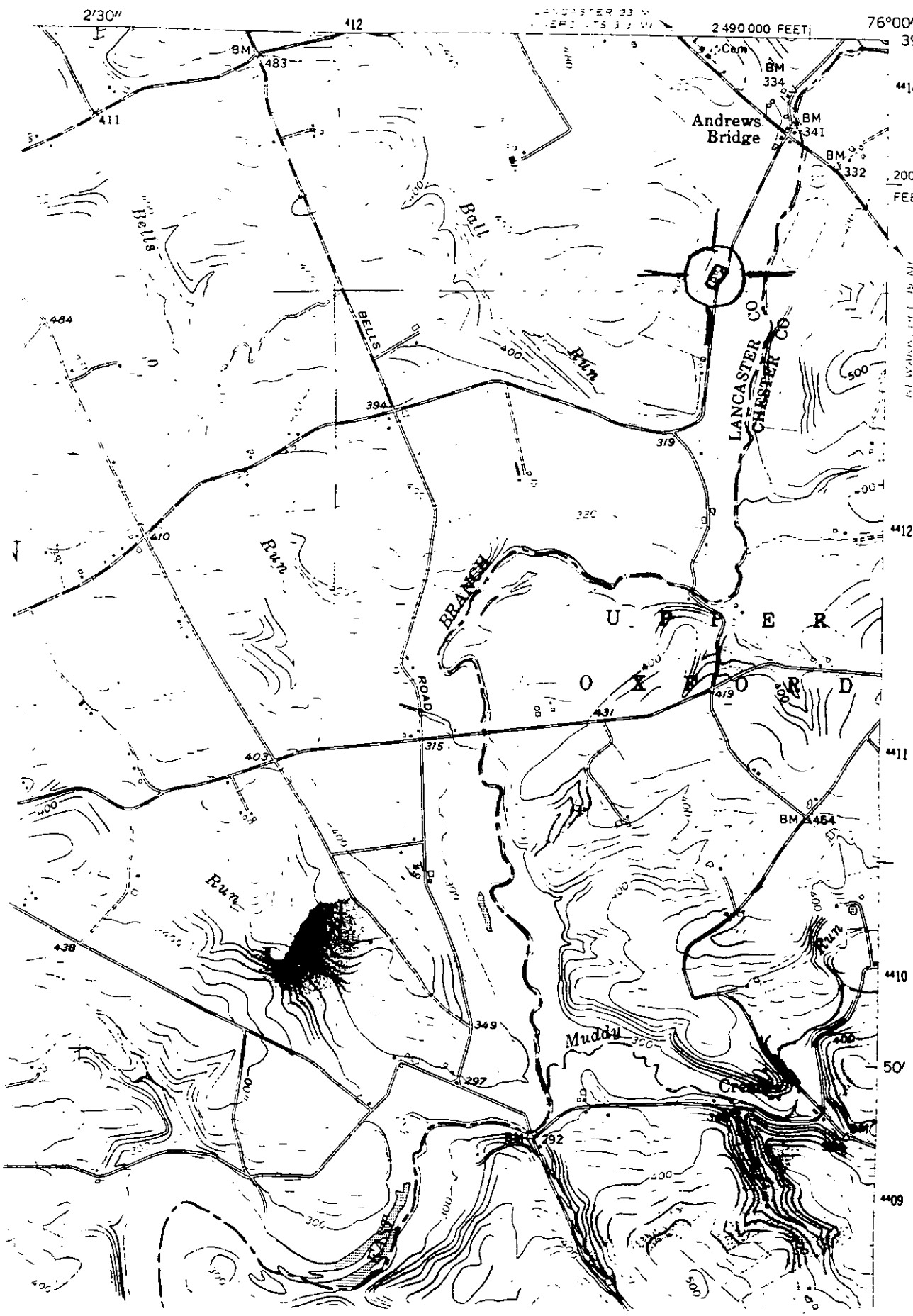
# John Douglass House

## Site Plan



KIRKWOOD QUADRANGLE  
PENNSYLVANIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5963 IV NW  
(PARKESBURG)



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