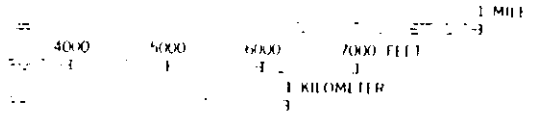


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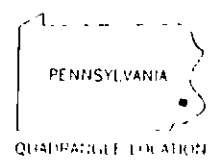
TOWN
NW 4000
42 43 44



SCALE 10 FEET
VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

Platemark
as observed

ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Heavy duty	Light duty
Medium duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route



POTTSTOWN, PA.
N4007 5 --W7537.5/7.5

1956

PHOTO REVISED 1968 ADD 100
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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 BIRCHRUNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT
 other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number HOLLOW, FLOWING SPRINGS ROADS & SCHOOLHOUSE LANE N/A not for publication
 city, town WEST VINCENT TOWNSHIP N/A vicinity
 state PENNSYLVANIA code PA county CHESTER code 29 zip code 19421

3. Classification

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private		<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district		<u>5455</u>	<u>14</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State		<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>5</u>	<u>1</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal		<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures
		<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
				<u>6861</u>	<u>15</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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)

DOMESTIC/single dwellings
 DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwellings
 DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Georgian
 MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival
 LATE VICTORIAN/ Second Empire
 MID-19TH CENTURY/Other - vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Sandstone
 walls STONE/Sandstone
 WOOD/Weatherboard
 roof WOOD/Shingle
 other roof -STONE/Slate

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Birchrunville is a small crossroad hamlet in West Vincent Township in northern Chester County. It is centrally located in the township, the only historic village within the municipality, and lays along a small, highly dependable stream called Birch Run. The village fronts on three roads arranged around a central triangle of ground. Houses are small with a few exceptions where additions have added a room or two, construction is either stone or frame, and they are generally unadorned by architectural motifs. The obvious exception to the plain styles is the General Store (Map #25) which expresses late Victorian details. Most of the village houses were built between 1840 and 1860, the perimeter houses being earlier and the General Store later. Since there are no "modern" concession stands or stores, and house additions have been sympathetically done and made unobtrusive, and the five non-contributing dwellings hidden behind trees, the overall integrity of the village is outstanding.

The natural depression through which the stream flows became locally known in the 18th century as The Hollow. It is at the eastern end of tightly folded ridges and valleys called The Nantmeal Hills, which are part of the Welsh Mountain Anticline. Although the hills rise 800' in some parts of East Nantmeal Township and up to 700' in West Vincent, it is the sharpness of rise (or descent) in this area that gives the impression of a hollow. From either the north or south entrances, one can look over chimneys and rooftops of village houses. The district contains 24 contributing dwellings, 5 non-contributing dwellings, 3 contributing stone barns and 9 small, 'one-horse' barns, 2 stores, 1 school (now the municipal building), 1 grist mill (converted to a dwelling), and several contributing and non-contributing outbuildings. There are one contributing structure, five contributing sites, and one non-contributing site, making a total of 7 resources. Included is one National Registration, the Birchrunville General Store (Map #25).

Birch Run is a small volume, but swift, stream that makes up entirely within the township and is generally scaled as five miles long. It has one major tributary, the northwest branch, known as Rocky Run. The tributary joins the main stem in Birchrunville and they empty into French Creek between Sheeder and Wilson's Corner. Because of a steady supply of water in summer, it has been a favorite mill stream since the early 18th century. Relatively small dams could create sufficient power for milling and small trades. Nine mills are recorded along its banks in the 1870s, most of which had been operating 60-100 years by that time.

The overall impression of the village is one of simple, unpretentious styles. Its retention of vernacular buildings with minimal additions or changes is mixed with earlier Georgian farmhouse facades plus two later stylized buildings - one a classical revival house (Map #3) dated 1847, and the other, a store building, is an excellent 1898 example of late Victorian imagination (Map #25, N.R.). A third building expresses the high, peaked rooflines of Carpenter Gothic in a 1902 major addition. Dwellings are generally native fieldstone, usually stuccoed, but frame construction is also frequently found with one log dwelling remaining under German siding (Map #27). Village barns are frame of the one horse, carriage-house size. The farm barns on the perimeter of the district, though not large by barn standards, are stone.

Architecturally, the majority of the houses fall into two categories: (1) the earliest houses exhibiting substantial, stone features of Southeastern Pennsylvania farmhouse style; (2) the bulk of village houses, dating 1840-1880, are on unostentatious lines that served basic needs as workmen's homes. Two buildings, a dwelling and a store erected 50 years apart, show an appreciation and awareness of

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architectural, stylistic trends of their day. Most of the buildings reflect some form of either early or late modest add-ons to accommodate families or living conditions and expectations, but which do not lose integrity to picture windows or unsympathetic modernizations. Four of the five early houses fall well within a description of the early Pennsylvania stone farmhouse: $2\frac{1}{2}$ story, gable roofed, heavy stone walls, well proportioned whether three, four or five bay, and broad rather than high. The fifth blends the early period into the second period.

The four larger farmhouses are found on the higher north and south perimeters of the village district. The earliest of these is Map #1 wherein the middle room is earlier than the 1817 datestone on the front section. It is believed to have been the stone cottage of Morris and Lettice Evans which would date it at c.1740, at least 50 years before deeds were possible in the Vincents. A large heavy fireplace takes up three-quarters of the north wall. It has a loft room above. To this rude building, Charles Rogers, son of a very early and well-to-do resident of East Vincent Township, added a formal 5-bay front section with center hall and flanking rooms, two and a half stories high. The style is Georgian, but proportions are modest. There are two very fine carved and reeded mantels in the 1817 section. In 1946/7 under direction of G. Edwin Brumbaugh, a kitchen and breakfast room were added to the rear of the original cottage.

Rogers' 1817 house may have been a copy of John Edwards' 5-bay Georgian standing above it higher up the hill (Map #2), for Edwards is advertised in a sale notice for a "mansion" built in 1808. While the 5-bay facade is still clearly visible, Edwards' house has been changed inside and enlarged. Farmhouse Map #17 on the south hill is datestoned 1805. It is a 5-bay Georgian, built in two 2-bay sections, the datestone on the eastern half of the house. A frame two floor, one room addition was built in 1957. While this house shows no workmanship such as is in the Rogers' house, there is much evidence of early dating. It was in very poor condition in the late 1920s at which time considerable foundation and wall repair was made. Map #18 is a 3-bay farmhouse built c.1913 for a widow, with heavy stone walls mortared with mud and animal hair. In 1822, a weaver from Lower Merion Township bought it and built a stone weaver's shop to the side which has been incorporated into the present house. A three-point (or cross-gable) roof was added about 1900.

The fifth early house (Map #26), and the latest of the five, 1827, is transitional into the tradesmen's period. It was originally no more than one room down and two rooms up, built of stone with but one large fireplace to warm the whole building. It was enlarged about 1840 by the addition of one room (2 floors) to the rear, and still later, 1902, by a roomy kitchen and porch still further to the rear. The old smokehouse was incorporated into the 1902 remodelling, and a floor added above it. The entire 1902 additions featured Carpenter Gothic details with high pointed rooflines and fish scale shingling on upper portions. This house as it was originally built in 1827 became the pattern, with minor variations, for village houses for the next 40 years. Map #s 8, 19, ~~20~~, 28 and 30 copy #26 exactly; map #s 11, 12, 14, 21, 29 and 33 change the second floor to 3 bays rather than two, while #s 12, 21, 29 and 33 add half windows at the third floor front which do not appear to have been the result of roof raisings.

The tradesmen's homes were small, functional, unadorned, usually $2\frac{1}{2}$ stories, gable roofed, 3 bays on the first floor and 2 or 3 bays on the second, and only one room deep (single pile). A one story shed-roofed extension to the rear generally sufficed as summer kitchen and pump room. Most of these, but not all, were hillside houses with exposed basements towards the road or front of the house. (Map #s 8, 12, 14, 27, 28). A few exposed the basement grade on a gable side (Map #s 11, 19, 20 springhouse). Winter kitchens were found in the basement. When a porch was added to shelter the kitchen workplace, it was attached at the second or middle floor and approached by high wooden steps. This brought about the second floor 3rd bay, an entrance door, seen in Map #s 8, 11, 12, 14 and 28. The hotel/bakehouse (Map #21) had a wrap-around porch on two sides as did Map #1 after 1884. House #31 is the only 2-bay building found in the village. Dated very nebulously at 1844, it may have been built at that time by Owen Lewis who was school teacher rather than a mechanic.

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The first house in the village to show awareness of changing style was the Griffith house (Map #3) built in 1847. A two story, 3-bay, double pile house originally, it attempted a Greek temple facade with a three-columned two story porch across the full south front. Running the roof ridge with the depth of the house perpendicular to the facade, the low gable roof was extended forward over the porch to create a pediment. A fourth column was introduced after 1917 so that the front door did not look out onto a pillar. Griffith further acknowledged setting as important to architecture, for he surrounded the house by an expanse of lawn and meadow. Thereby, it is viewed from some distance and appreciated as a complete unit of house, barn and outbuildings in a planted setting. Although most of the houses in the village were built after Griffith's temple style, none followed even a hint of his classical renaissance.

No new architecture appeared again in the village until 1898 when Thomas B. Dewees and his wife, Ida, decided to build a new store on the vacant northeast corner of the crossroad (Map #25). This was to be a totally functional building in use, but clad in the late Victorians' exuberant expressions. Whether or not an architect was employed has never been determined, but the result was the delightful building set at the center of the village which enlivened an otherwise commonality of style. Again making use of a sloping site, provision was made for a creamery in the basement and later an ice cream plant. The first floor, with large display windows flanking the recessed center door, is set behind a generous porch created by projecting the second floor well forward. The second floor is entirely ensconced within a deep slate-clad mansard roof with peaked gable dormers on four sides. This floor was a public room with stage for any and all civic meetings.

A frame cubicle flows forward from the main stone first floor on the east side of the porch. This one floor appendage was built in 1901 as the superstructure over an ice house constructed in the basement, and was used for storage until it was converted into an efficiency apartment in 1974 and into the present post office in 1986. This building, approaching its 100th birthday, has adapted to changing times, needs and styles with no outward alterations other than a wooden veranda and stairs at the rear to give private access to the present second floor living quarters.

Few of the contributing buildings have been outwardly changed. Map #s 2 and 6 are notable exceptions having been doubled in size. However, their original appearances have been allowed to remain visible, the additions, each after the date of village significance, being lateral extensions. Their ^{early} 7-5-bay facades stand out clearly against sympathetic additions. Map #31, the most recent full-scale addition, has also doubled the size of the original house. Again the addition is set beside the old house in such a way as not to hide its first appearance and importance. The beaded board addition follows early patterns of construction. There are a few back room, one-floor expansions with an occasional single picture window, but which have carefully not changed front appearances. Almost all of the porches have been retained. Several barns have been replaced usually after a fire, one replaced early enough to be contributing and two by their dates of replacement being non-contributing. They, nevertheless, enhance the village atmosphere since they continue the blend of rural occupation with small trades. (Map #s 2, 17, & 18). Number 17 also has a new (1965) barn to house a carriage collection. The house on Map #23, a frame tenant house moved on rollers to the present site in 1875, received its present facade in 1937.

More has been lost to the visual scene in the way of businesses than in house architecture, for once having served their purposes, the business buildings were dismantled or allowed to fall down. A lumber yard and four buildings shown on the 1883 map disappeared about 1915. Nothing of their placement remains, and no one today can remember what they were. A barber shop attached behind the 1850 store (Map #24) burned in the mid-20th century. Daniel Hartman's tin shop was incorporated into its dwelling by 1871 and remains as part of that house (Map #4). The c1900 slaughter house is now a horse shelter, and the Dewees barn is a much smaller

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three car garage (Map #26). John Egging's automobile garage is remembered but only noted by foundations (Map #15), as are Thomas Emery's carriage shop (Map #4) and the icehouse/cave on Map #29, and the sawmill on Map #1. There are photographs of the saw mill. The oil mill and distillery on Map #6 have enough walls remaining to have been converted into a patio with garden room beneath. The first school is located by foundations on Map #26. The last six noted are listed as sites on the Building Inventory. The only structure found in the village is a corn crib of much age.

Outbuildings remaining part of the village scene are 2 shoemaker shops (on Map #3 and #11) and a third with living space above (Map #28), 1 freestanding smokehouse (Map #1), 6 springhouses/washhouse (Map #s 3, 7, 18, 20, 30-dry, and 33), 2 outhouses (Map #s 3 & 30), 2 bakehouses, one of commercial size (Map #s 19 & 21), and several shop buildings, including the blacksmith/wheelwright building of Franklin Littlefield (Map #23). Dewees' steam bakery of 1904 and his other adventures into commercial food processing are incorporated into buildings #24 and #25. There may be some/survivals on Schoolhouse Lane where Map #13 is thought to be that advertised in 1867. The hotel, Map #21, has lost half of its wrap-around porch to widening of the crossroad, but otherwise is the building of 1853. Its foundations were reinforced considerably in 1894 when they began to give way.

The fourteen non-contributing buildings were erected between 1950 and 1971, with the single exception of the barn on Map #2 which was rebuilt after fire in 1938 but is beyond the period of significance for the village. Of the fourteen, five are houses, 5 are barns and 4 are garages. Since all are hidden behind trees with more set-back than the older village houses, they do not disrupt the scale or texture of the district. Only one (#32) is a split-level out-of-harmony with earlier designs, and only one a true contemporary brick and glass style (#20). Since the latter is one floor with a dark hip roof, it causes no interruption to the older period of the village. Further, it holds in great visibility on the road at a distance from the house the only double floored stone springhouse in the village. Considerate and sympathetic siting of these fourteen buildings keeps them from dominating the village ambiance.

While the plateaus and rolling plains that surround The Hollow developed into new homes in the 1970s and '80s, Birchrunville has succeeded in maintaining the integrity of its architectural heritage with little deep-seated change. The Depression and the automobile stopped growth about 1930, and the '40s saw most of the trades seek larger boroughs. This rural center of village life, hidden away from a major thoroughfare, was left unmolested to husband its 19th century appearance, its only modernization being a gasoline pump at the General Store. Architectural images important to the period of significance are clearly seen today, cultural remnants seen in people walking country roads to post office and store. Loss of the trade buildings does not loom large in the impression of a country crossroad village, for the dwellings, even in their heyday, dominated the visual landscape, the trade buildings being small. While there is architectural diversity within the village bounds, the scale is domestic. Integrity of each historic building is high, none have been sullied by inappropriate fads or fancies, and a returning sojourner could recognize the village of 100 years ago.

2. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered 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 N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- COMMERCE
-
-
-
-

Period of Significance

C. 1805-1920

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Various

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

Birchrunville Historic District is a locally significant grouping of vernacular architecture bound together by the ply of commercial trade for the surrounding area of farmers. The village is a particularly good example in size and form of a mid to late 19th century settlement, authentically depicting its c. 1840-50 burst from woodlots to a village identity still clearly visible today. Its excellent prolongation of original architecture shows the traditional rural gathering of tradesmen and retirees for business and social purposes as experienced in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The commercial core of mill, shops and store reach outward to include the school, meetinghouse, town hall and those homes directly related to the creation of a village settlement. The boundaries used in this nomination circumscribe the clustering of buildings brought about by the interplay of neighborhood supply and demand development rather than a planned community design. The district is important to West Vincent Township as its only historic mercantile and social center. It retains its 19th century appearance as no other local village does, and continues to be the center of commercial intercourse for a large portion of the municipality.

Originally part of 30,000 acres that became the Pikeland and Vincent townships, West Vincent is the land south of French Creek bounded by West Pikeland, Upper Uwchlan and East Nantmeal townships. Unlike East Vincent and the Pikelands which were settled heavily by Germans, West Vincent was first settled by Welshmen. Although deeds could not be given until 1792 because of pending lawsuits, ground was surveyed and leases legally entered into as early as 1720-25. In 1796, a Major John Evans took title to 50 acres on the south side of Birch Run in the center of The Hollow. It was primarily wooded hillside with a few grazing acres along the stream. Little is known of Major Evans. He left no heirs, no Will, and no known estate other than his land. In 1803, the 50 acres was included in the estate of a cousin John Evans and put up at public auction by the executors in eight unequal lots. All were eventually sold as woodlots with no buildings other than an occasional woodman's log hut. This sub-division was the beginning of Birchrunville. Meanwhile, land surrounding The Hollow on the higher tablelands developed into farm-sized parcels. A few small but substantial stone houses and log barns appeared by 1800 at the edge of what would become the village. A paper read to a Literary Society in the village in 1888 says only five houses were in The Hollow "sixty years ago" - 1828. These five houses are included in the nomination as Map #1, 2, 17, 18 and 26.

But it was the stream, Birch Run, itself, that set the pattern for development along its banks. With the first Grist Mill built before 1740 near the mouth of Birch Run, and another at the extreme western beginnings of the stream by 1790 or earlier, other water-driven mills located in between. A narrow, dependable stream, reasonably swift, held in check by the several dams built for mills, Birch Run became the prime attraction for settlement. As early as 1775, a gun powder mill was erected on Rocky Run which later became a plaster mill, and by 1800, there were several saw mills operating through the valley. Within the bounds of this nomination, the first mill was Jacob Frock's saw mill built in 1803 on Map site #1. Charles Rogers added a grist mill in 1811. An

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ax factory and tilt forge were advertised for sale in 1821 on Map #3 and 4. The Hollow had an edge-tool forge by 1823, a wheelwright, a blacksmith and a weaver. The embryonic stirrings of a village could be seen. A tinsmith entered, a store was built in 1832, a school in 1833, and a house or two along the road used by the stage coach on its run from Yellow Springs to Potts' Grove (Pottstown). Owen Crater built a linseed oil mill about 1844, and added a distillery shortly after. (Map #6. site)

The stage coach route, using Schoolhouse Lane and Hollow Road, east, to French Creek, drew the location of the first store (Map #7) and almost dictated the heart of the future village. Not until the grist mill (Map #1) got under full time operation in the 1840s, did the mountainous Flowing Springs Road take on enough importance to warrant the relocating of a general store to the southeast corner of Flowing Springs and Hollow Roads. After 1840, other mill seats were activated along Hollow Road, west, and Birchrun Road. Jonah John, owner of Evans' Lot #3, built the new store (Map #24) c1850, and leased it to Moses King. Unable to support two stores, the hamlet closed its first store (Map #7) and the village hub moved west to the present crossroad. The first store became a dwelling. This pattern of village placement was repeated many-times-over throughout Pennsylvania.

The new hub was much more central to varying stimuli for growth. It encouraged building of homes on small lots both east, west and south of the 1850 store (Map #24). Through the 1840s and '50s the first shoemaker had come, and there were house carpenters, plasterers, carriage and wagon makers, a temperance hotel, masons, harness and saddle makers and a patent medicine maker. Even a doctor located nearby. Commerce was flowing to satisfy the needs of a five to ten mile radius. These craftsmen had no desire to till the soil so their homes provided only enough ground to feed a horse and raise a garden. Except for a few, such as Jonah John and Hugh Whitesides, the families were young, ranging in the 1850 census in their 20s, 30s, and early 40s. They, necessarily, built no more than they could afford with much trading back-and-forth of skills. Homes such as the shoemaker, James Griffith, had built (Map #3) were admired but were not a focus of aspiration. After all, James Griffith was the much respected local minister as well.

A young apprentice shoemaker/entrepreneur named James McDermond, with his Hipple brothers-in-law, began building homes wherever they could afford a little piece of ground or renew a log house. They are credited with the probable building of four homes along Schoolhouse Lane and Flowing Springs Road, south (Map #s 11, 12, 16 & 19). The temperance hotel (Map #21) is certainly McDermond's work. Except for a wrap-around porch facing each of the two roads, only the north side of which remains, the house stands today as McDermond built it. The hotel, of course, became the stage stop, and over the next thirty years, it changed both hands and reputation from time-to-time. It was purchased in 1881 by Henry Honold, a Philadelphia baker, who built the bake-ovens close to the back door, and made considerable "improvements." Unfortunately, he died in 1887, but the bakery and hotel business was carried on until a 'modern' steam bakery was built by T.B.Deweese in 1904 at the main Hollow and Flowing Springs crossroad.

Virtually, every man and some of the women produced some service or piece of handwork that could be sold or marketed either on its own or in the local store. Every building trade was represented, many times in duplicate or more. By 1856, there were enough mechanics to organize the Order of United American Mechanics in the village. They began to build a meeting hall on Schoolhouse Lane (Map #14), but running out of money in the panic of 1857, which, though brief, shook confidence in banks and the federal government, the mechanics sold it to John and Margaret Templin who turned the partly constructed building into a dwelling for resale. However, the bad economic conditions were not otherwise reflected in the village, as Peter Hipple in conjunction with Abraham Mosteller, a lumber merchant, opened a full-fledged lumber yard in the meadow behind the 1850 store (Map #24). There was even talk of building a bank in the hamlet, such was the feeling of a commercial trade center.

The store generated a lot of business both in itself and as a magnet for other trades and businesses. Built as

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a three bay building, two bays deep, it soon was stretched one more bay to the south, making a four bay building. This was to accommodate the storekeeper with a cooking and heating fireplace for his residence on the second floor. (The store was heated with a pot-bellied stove.) This also provided an extra room for the tailor to fit his clients. A milliner and a dressmaker occupied space in the store at various times and for awhile, a photographer. In the midst of the activity of trades, commerce, mechanics and home building, James McDermond concocted patent medicines and printed on the labels "Mechanicsville, Pa." which for a number of years competed with the name of Birchrunville. Seeing their village as "settled by mechanics", an active group of young people wanted the name Mechanicsville, but gave up when in 1868, a post office officially opened in the store under the name of Birch Run Ville Post Office. Thomas B. Dewees was the postmaster. After 1882, the name was spelled as one word.

The village had grown from ten houses in 1840 to 22 in 1870. Perceiving a need, the Vincent Baptist Church, near Yellow Springs, opened a mission Sunday School in the village in 1860, building the Meetinghouse where Rocky Run joins Birch Run (Map #34). Services were held twice a month, but Sunday School every week. The little church operated until 1920 after which attendance dwindled and it closed in 1929. It was almost lost to vandalism and decay, but was rebuilt in 1940 and briefly held services. Today, it is the headquarters for Green Valleys Association, a land and watershed protection organization.

A new and larger school was built in 1863 (Map #22) at the junction of Flowing Springs Road and Schoolhouse Lane. A second floor was added for grades 9, 10, and 11 in 1898, but as school consolidations were viewed advantageous, the high school was closed in 1923. Students were sent to Phoenixville High School if they could provide their own transportation. The grade school closed in 1956 as children were bussed to the new Vincent Townships jointure. Township population declined steadily after 1900 reaching a low point of 808 people in 1940 census, a drop from the high of 1352 in 1890. Population has risen to 2290 persons in 1990 and is projected to rise substantially. Birchrunville continues to be the major center for the municipality, holding the township office, the only Post Office (without rural delivery), the office of Green Valleys Association, a fine restaurant, an antiques business and other home occupations. The flow of commerce still runs high.

The 1880s roused the consciousness level across both urban and rural communities. The Civil War had taken a generation of young men out of their own environment and made them aware of other cultures. Farm life had reached a point of economic ease that allowed time for mental activity, if desired, and the proliferation of a web of rail lines made excursions and intercommunication to more distant centers possible for the average family.

Notable in Birchrunville among these "enlightened" men was Thomas B. Dewees (1844-1919), son of a nearby farmer and descendant of the Revolutionary Huguenot family of Col. William Dewees. Having enlisted in the Northern army at age 16, 12th Pennsylvania Militia for Emergency Men, he reenlisted at 18 as First Lieutenant in Company E, 45th United States Colored Infantry serving in Texas. He respectfully called his regiment "Gentlemen of Color." Returning to Birchrunville, he taught school a brief while, entered the grocery business in Philadelphia for a short time and came back to marry Hannah Templin in 1866. Entering the mercantile trade, he sampled business life in West Chester and Phoenixville, and contemplated going to Europe, but he always returned to Birchrunville, which he called "the hub of the universe". His wife's family owning the four corners of the village, and she the sole heir after her mother, Dewees held an influential position. At one time, he owned most of the real estate in the village including the grist and saw mill.

In 1898, Dewees built the present store (Map #25) on the vacant northeast corner, providing a town hall, post office and creamery for the village. In 1901, he built the ice house addition to the store; in 1902, he remodelled his home (Map #26), giving the new parts peaked Gothic rooflines. Coupled with the creative styling of the new store, these buildings gave the village an esoteric touch of late Victorian class. These were the last

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architecturally innovative buildings the village was to know for the following sixty years. Neither Griffith's leap into classical revival nor Dewees' experimentation with later styles could shake the mechanics from their contentment with four-square, functional architecture. In 1904, Dewees built a steam bakery onto the back of the 1850 store (Map #24), and installed the first local telephone in his new store. Until his death in 1919, Thomas B. Dewees was a moving force in Birchrunville.

But not the only force! Franklin Littlefield, a contemporary of Dewees, was considered a local genius for his work in motorizing bicycles and even building an automobile of the horseless carriage variety. A machinist, Littlefield worked for awhile in a small shop at the grist mill, not far from the place where Samuel Miller, a blacksmith on Map #2, had built bicycles of all varieties as early as 1831. In 1874, Littlefield bought the lot below the new school with its waterpower on Friday's Run where he built a "more commodious shop" (Map #23). Not to be bothered with building anything so mundane as a house, he bought a small frame, two-story tenant house from Dr. White's farm at the covered bridge, three miles away, and hauled it on wooden rollers to his new site with not so much as a door to bind. In this, he raised ten children, one of which, Wilson, followed his father as the village blacksmith. Littlefield's penchant for machinery earned him the description of "a genius, but, unfortunately, born tired."

All this while, the grist and saw mill (Map #1) on the north side of Birch Run had been operating, growing from an "on-demand" schedule to a full-time, regular operation. Its best years were from 1846 to 1866 under ownership of John and William Kinzie. Many deeds of that period read "on the road to Kinzie's Mill". Thomas Dewees bought the mills in 1888 and kept them going with many repairs and up-gradings until his death in 1919. The mill dam lay in the meadow beside the mills. In the 1920s, it was considered for a large 50 acre ice dam and storage facility by a Philadelphia company. Lack of a rail line stalled the proceedings.

Birchrunville is unique in its picturesque and dramatic location, far enough removed from a larger town to be truly rural and necessarily self dependent. In its retention of most of its buildings to their size and character of the most thriving years (1840-1920), it is a rare vignette of a village that viewed itself as important - on the brink of something bigger than it was to be. Its leaders were young, progressive and saw their village through possibly unreal, rose-tinted glasses, but few other villages in northern Chester County generated the sense of community and fierce identity that was reported in newspapers from time-to-time by local residents.

Where many local villages began, as did Birchrunville, with untrimmed, vernacular architecture of small scale, most have either changed that simple style with modernizing elements or expanded to such an extent that they have lost their original appearance. Glen Moore in Wallace Township has only one grouping of 4 or 5 initial buildings remaining although it has kept its 2-story school as the township building. The remaining buildings are of a later period and design. Nantmeal Village in East Nantmeal Township is very similar to Birchrunville in scenic location and in keeping to its functional architecture; however, it did not have the breadth of trades nor the centralization of local interest that is found in Birchrunville. Kimberton in East Pikeland Township started around a crossroad of tavern, mill, school and store but experienced a considerably larger expansion with some planned development when the railroad put through a spur on the Pickering Valley line. Its total emphasis on commerce and trade, however, is akin to Birchrunville, but it greatly outran the more rural village in size and importance. Chester Springs in West Pikeland Township had an early row of harness makers and wheelwrights, etc, which ^{buildings} were demolished in the 1940s for a widening and relocating of Route 113. Its later homes are Victorian. There is really no comparable collection of village architecture and community integration brought about by an active and intended concentration on commercial services to a surrounding agricultural area. Although proclaiming no particular architectural style, the workmen's houses create a village atmosphere of uniformity and singularity of purpose. The farmers' houses lend variety and the architecturally defined buildings

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give a note of distinction beyond the average country crossroad hamlet.

Only fourteen Non-Contributing buildings are within the nomination boundaries. Five are dwellings, five are barns and four are garages. None are dominant to the village scape, three of the dwellings being almost hidden by tree cover. The house on Map #5 was built in 1951 on a fairly steep slope so that it is really a bank house; but viewed from across the valley, its squarish shape and low roofline give a tyrolean impression. From Hollow Road, the tan stucco blends innocuously with other nearby houses. The house on Map #20, a brick and glass-walled rancher, is tucked into a woods with a downward rolling lawn in front of it in such a way that it can almost be missed as one drives by. Map #32, built in 1965, is the only one whose style is out-of-place with the village atmosphere. It is a split-level brick with 'colonial' doorway and attached garage. Fortunately, it is set back, out of line with the houses on either side of it, thereby not a visual disruption. Its urban appearance rather than rural is held to a minimum. Map #s 9 and 10, 2-story contemporary styles, are on ascending wooded hillsides and unobtrusive. The five barns are almost an asset to the general landscape, each adding a rural function. The barn on Map #2, having been built in 1938 after a burning, might have been termed Contributing except that it fell beyond the given period of significance.

Isolated by geographic nature from surrounding developments beyond the boundaries of the nomination, the integrity of Birchrunville is very high, taking the observer back a step in time. Viewed as a whole, Birchrunville Historic District provides a much forgotten pattern of a rural, commercially-oriented village where families of widely divergent economic bases lived in close proximity to each other with mutual respect and dependence.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Chester County Court House: Recorder of Deeds, Ch.Co.Archives, Tax Records, Road Papers, Wills, Orphans Ct.. records.
- Chester County Historical Society, N.High Street, West Chester, PA 19380. Clipping files, family names files, township history, land & business files, census records.
- Chester County Library @ Exton, PA. 19341. Oral History tape of Edith Dewees & Pete Martin.
- West Vincent Township Committee, A History of West Vincent Township. (Under auspices of W.V. Taxpayers' Ass. and the Green Valleys Ass.) 1977.
- Cremers, Estelle. 30,000 Acres, Vincent and Pikeland Townships, 1686-1850. Eastern Lithograph, 1989.
- Futhey & Cope, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Louis H. Everts, Phila. 1881, pgs. 209, 210, 228 & others.
- Wiley, Samuel. Biographical and Portrait Cyclopedia of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Cresham Publishing Company, 1893. Names: Dewees, Griffith, Littlefield, John, Rhoads and others.
- Cope & Ashmead. Historic Homes & Institutions - Genealogical & Personal Memoirs of Chester and Delaware Counties,PA. Lewis Publishing Company, Ed. Gilbert Cope & Henry Graham Ashmead, 1904. Names as above.

Many personal conversation with living residents.

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 193.25 acres

UTM References

A 18 445800 4443000
 Zone Easting Northing

C 18 445340 4441780

B 18 446120 4442380
 Zone Easting Northing

D 18 445090 4442570

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point in the west side of Flowing Springs Road opposite the junction of Sheeder Mill Road and proceeding 290' along the east boundary line of Tax Parcel #25-4-43.1 and Flowing Springs Road in a southeasterly direction; thence crossing Flowing Springs Road to a corner of TP #25-4-50 and continuing along four northern courses of said TP #50 to a point of jointure with TP #25-4-51; thence NE along the rear boundary lines of TP #51, #52, #53 & #54 to a corner of said TP #54; thence along TP #54 SE to Hollow Road; thence crossing Hollow Road

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Since there are no present municipal boundaries for the village of Birchrunville, nor have there ever been, the boundaries were primarily set by general topography of "The Hollow" and by placement of village occupations and homes. Boundaries could have been extended farther in all directions if small historic home occupation had been the single considered factor. However, as distances increase, the sense of village and the geographic location are lost. Therefore, the visual ridge lines which form The Hollow on the north and south were followed, and the eastern and western boundaries

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Estelle Cremers

organization French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust date July, 1991; Revised January, 1992

street & number Box 360, R.D.#7 telephone Contact person: 215-469-6977

city or town Pottstown state Pennsylvania zip code 19464

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to the northernmost corner of TP #25-4-92; thence SE and SW along the east and south boundaries of TP #92 and to a point midway in the south boundary of adjacent TP #25-4-90; thence SE along the east boundary lines of TP #25-4-89 and 88 to a corner of TP #88; thence through TP #88 in a continuation of the SE line to Beaver Hill Road. Thence approximately 1300' along the northern side of Beaver Hill Road to a point 110' shy of jointure with Flowing Springs Road, and crossing said Beaver Hill Road to the SE boundary of TP #25-4-152; thence following said SE boundary line 200' to Flowing Springs Road. Thence crossing Flowing Springs Road and continuing in a SE direction along the boundary of TP #25-4-147 three courses - SE, SW and NW - to a point in the line of TP #25-4-144. Thence SW and NW along the south boundaries of TP #144 to Schoolhouse Lane, crossing Schoolhouse Lane at a slight angle to the southernmost corner of TP #25-4-79, the municipal lot, and following said TP #79 in a northwesterly direction along the rear lot lines of TP #25-4-78 and 77. Thence continuing in the same direction a short distance along the rear line of TP #25-4-75 to a corner of said rear lot line #75. Thence continuing in a southwesterly direction along the rear lot lines of TP #s 75, 73 and 72 to a corner of TP #72; thence southeast along lot line of TP #72 to a corner, and thence southwest along the rear lot lines of TP #s 72, 70, 69 and 68 to the most southerly corner of #68; thence NW along the west boundary line of #68 to Hollow Road. Crossing Hollow Road at an angle to meet the southernmost corner of the Meetinghouse lot, TP #25-4-64 and continuing along said TP #64 N, NW and NE to Birch Run Road. Thence crossing said road and continuing NE along the west boundary line of TP #25-4-44.1 and the NW lot line of TP #25-4-44 to a point of junction and corner with TP #25-4-43.1; thence NW and NE along the rear lines of TP #43.1 to the place of beginning.

The above description includes all of Tax Parcels #25-4-43.1, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 92, 90, 89, 89.1, 83, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 152, 147, 146, 145, 144, 79, 78, 77, 80, 47, 75, 74, 73, 72, 71, 70, 69, 68, 64, 44.1, 45, 46 and 44, and part of TP #25-4-88. With the exception of Map #17 (TP #88), all district boundaries follow current tax parcel numbers.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

were drawn at the points where ^{close} physical proximity of buildings one-to-another ceases and/or where use of the property had no evidence of historical service to formation or perpetuation of the village.

Large open tracts of land lay adjacent to the district on the south, some of which are now being subdivided, while beyond the north boundary where farms also once were seen, there are now several developments of expensive homes. Except for the occasional farmhouse remaining on these tracts, the historic scene is gone. Along Birch Run east, west and northwest, where there are still traces of mills and occupations, the narrow nature of the stream is not conducive to tight development. Although there is historic value in properties along the stream, they indicate individual endeavor rather than village life.

SKETCH MAP
WITH TAX PARCEL NUMBERS &
NUMBERS KEYED TO THE BUILD-
ING INVENTORY NUMBERS.

All tax parcel numbers begin with
25-4- in front of the tax number.

KEY:
All tax parcel numbers are understood
to be preceded by 25-4- as identifi-
cation for township & section of map.
(Ex: 25-4-44)
Pinned map numbers 1 thru 24 corres-
pond to Building Inventory Is 1 - 24.
(Ex: Lot 11 - parcel 144)



1" = 400' on original
Reduced 67.

COPIED
AS OF RECORD

JAN 25 1990

THIS DATE
ord of Assessment Appeals

25-4

WEST VINCENT
TWP.

