

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

DEC 29 1987

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Merino Hill House and Farm

and/or common The Wright Farm

2. Location

street & number Allentown-Clarksburg Road (Monmouth County Route 524)
1/4 mile east of Cox's Corner intersection w. Rte. 43 NA not for publication

city, town Upper Freehold Township vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Monmouth code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (Co-Owners)

name	Richard R. Wright 453 Main Street P.O. Box 314 Crosswicks, New Jersey Phone 609/298-5591	Elizabeth G. Wright Meirs Merino Hill Farm R.D. 1, Box 2176, Clarksburg Road Allentown, New Jersey 08501 Phone 609/259-2462
street & number		
city, town		

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Monmouth County Hall of Records

street & number One Court House Square

city, town Freehold state New Jersey 07728

6. Representation in Existing Surveys (Continued on page 6-21)

(a) title Historic American Buildings Survey, NJ-526 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1938-39 federal state county local

depository for survey records Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

city, town Note: One entire set of the 71 sheets of HABS drawings is owned by the Wrights and is not at Merino Hill. state

7. Description

Condition	(outbuildings)	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good (House)	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Merino Hill property is a working farm. Located in an area still primarily rural, it comprises nearly 300 acres of gently rolling land--a relatively large farm for this region. About 165 acres are tillable, the rest being woodland or meadow, with two streams and a small pond. Current crops are alfalfa, corn, soybeans, and grain; in earlier years, Merino sheep, hogs, dairy cattle, grain and potatoes dominated.

Buildings on the property consist of a dwelling (A, B), an office building (C), domestic and farm outbuildings (D, E, F), and two tenant houses (G). There is also a cemetery (H), whose adjacent Quaker meetinghouse no longer exists.

(A) The dwelling house is well sited on the crest of a low hill. A long drive, stone retaining walls, terraces, marble busts, iron pineapples, sycamores and boxwood preserve traces of the early 19th century landscaping. The main house ("Merino Hill"), built in 1810 by Philadelphia merchant Samuel Gardiner Wright, is three-story, five-bay brick in Federal style with full Georgian floor plan: center hallway with two rooms on either side, on each floor. [For description of older wing, see (B) below.] It has a stone masonry foundation, a full cellar, an attic, four tall brick chimneys, and a truncated hip roof, originally slate, with belvedere deck (its balustrade removed, but preserved in attic). A well is on the south side of the house.

At the center of the south facade, the pattern of the entrance doorway--with double door, sidelights, semi-elliptical fanlight, cast iron tracery, and cast brass eagle-- is repeated in Palladian windows on the second and third floors. The front porch has a stone masonry foundation, brick deck, decorative iron railing and bootscraper, and marble steps. A porch running the entire length of the north facade has a stone masonry foundation, wooden deck, and chamfered wooden posts. The wooden shutters are solid paneled on the first floor, louvered above. At the roofline of the southwest corner, the downspout is decorated with a cast iron eagle.

In the interior of the "mansion house" (as it is called in the 1938 Historic American Buildings Survey), the three stories have ceilings 12, 10, and 8 feet high. Interior construction is frame with the exception of central brick walls running east/west. The stairwell rises the full three stories. Each flight of stairs has two landings, carved stringers, and twin mahogany banisters. The house has a wealth of related yet varied decorative detail in woodwork and hardware. A carved archway which spans the first floor hall is repeated on the second floor. Between the two west parlors there is a wide doorway with double paneled fanfold doors and architrave. The southwest rooms on the first and

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys (Continued)

- (b) New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory, Monmouth County (1981), #1331-50.
- (c) Historical and Architectural Survey of Upper Freehold Township, #E-11
(in Appendix A of Natural Resources Inventory Report, Upper Freehold
Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1974).

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second floors have each four full-length window embrasures; all other windows are inset with deep sills. The eight carved wooden fireplace mantels on the first and second floors (six of them bordered in marble) are all different, but show recurrent design motifs. On the first and second floors, all four east rooms have a pair of closets flanking the fireplace; in the two northwest rooms, there is a narrow closet to the left of the mantel. A pass-through closet connects the two east rooms on the first floor. There have been chair rails throughout the first and second floors, though sections are now lacking. The hardware is original--including brass front door knocker ("S.G. Wright"); brass door locks, door pulls, fireplace tool brackets, door knobs and window knobs; and iron latches, bolts, keys, etc. Three fireplaces have complete cast iron firebacks inscribed "Atsion Furnace." Current furnishings include many pieces of furniture and accessories which are original or early, plus some which are Victorian or contemporary--reflecting the five generations of continuous occupancy by the Wright family.

The mansion house has undergone surprisingly little change. In the 1890s Victorian brackets were added all around the roofline, and both the front and rear porches were partially rebuilt, with modified rooflines and--on the front--Victorian posts and trim. At the same period, by removal of a partition and reversal of a door, a narrow dark east-west corridor connecting the first floor hall with the old wing was abolished and the northeast room thereby enlarged. It was in 1916 that plumbing and central heating were installed; this involved adding a partition across the second floor hall to form a bathroom, and a partition at the head of the stairs on the third floor to conserve heat. In 1926 the house was wired for electricity. About 1940 a first-floor lavatory was installed by borrowing space from the pantry. Apart from these minor changes, the house has been kept in its original form.

(B) The smaller, older, wood framed wing, which is attached directly to the east wall of the mansion house, has a more complex structural history. Built c. 1735 as a two-story house with one room per floor plus a cellar, it was expanded c. 1760-1770+ by adding at the rear two small rooms per floor. (A false ceiling between these rooms and the attic floor provided an ample crawl space which--according to the Wright family's oral tradition--later served as a station for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad.) The documentation for the 1810 house mentions that, to prepare the site in 1809, an existing dwelling was "demolished" and old brickwork and a chimney pulled down. One may surmise that this could refer to a larger frame dwelling, otherwise unrecorded, probably Georgian in style, standing west of the original Lawrence house and probably attached to it, dating from 1770 or soon after; if that be true, its demolition

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would have been necessary in order to clear the way for S. G. Wright's "mansion house."

When the main house was built in 1810, the remaining frame structure was apparently modified to function as a service wing. Still virtually unchanged, it has a wide brick hearth, exposed stone hearthback, large beehive oven, massive fireplace (with cast iron fireback stamped "S.G. Wright Phila" and cast iron crane), a cold storage room, a dry sink, meal bins, and wooden shelves. A one-story lean-to at the northeast forms a shed which encloses the cellar entrance and the cistern. Access from the old wing into the main house was provided at the cellar level and the first floor only, with heavy iron doors at both points. The wing has a steeply pitched gable roof, slate-covered; its overhanging cornice has Victorian brackets at the eaves. There are paneled shutters on the first floor, louvered shutters on the second. At the front entrance there is a small brick deck with stone foundation and marble steps; it was once sheltered by a wooden porch. For the past 70 years this wing has served mainly as a catch-all farm shed.

(C) Office Building: Traditionally named the "storehouse," this distinctive small rectangular structure with 1832 datestone consists of a single room plus a low attic and a cellar. It has a fieldstone foundation, coursed brown sandstone walls, weatherboard siding at the gable ends, a grain door and hoist. Its narrow windows are protected with iron bars, as are the cellar windows. Cast iron ornamentation includes a lyre above the doorway. The main door is framed by a carved wooden pediment on Doric columns (now deteriorated)--a formal element which is said to have come from a Philadelphia townhouse.

(D, E, F) Old outbuildings, all in their original locations, include the following: A five-bent, English plan barn, probably 1815, built into a bank, with horse stalls in the cellar; the massive framing of the haymow and many of the original floorboards are intact. A cow barn, attached soon after 1900 as an ell at the north and east of the horse barn. A wooden wagon shed flanked by corn cribs, on fieldstone foundation; its lumber is both hewn and sawed; storage area above has grain door and hoist. Another wooden wagon shed, double. A small fieldstone smokehouse with brick gable ends. Foundations of icehouse (fieldstone pit). Woodhouse. Chickenhouse. (Wooden "necessary" no longer exists.) Relatively modern garage and potato house, 60 to 70 years old.

(G) Two tenant houses. One in a state of collapse; one occupied. It is uncertain whether either of these might date, at least in part, as far back as

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1813-1814, when S.G. Wright's farm accounts show that two tenant houses were built.

(H) Cemetery and onetime (1816-1967) Quaker meetinghouse: The 1770 deed conveying this farm to David Wright mentions "One Acre of Land Whereon the Meeting House stands." This site had been in use by Quakers at least as early as 1740. A handsome brick meetinghouse erected here in 1816 was used for Quaker worship services until c. 1920; but after being severely damaged in the 1950 hurricane, it had to be demolished in 1967. The adjacent cemetery contains about 123 graves. Some 25 are marked only by rough fieldstones; the others record about 20 surnames. The earliest dated stone is from 1826. Among those buried here are the builder of Merino Hill, Samuel Gardiner Wright (d. 1845), his wife Sarah (d. 1885 at age 99), and a row of their descendants, the most recent being Mary Wright LaBar (d. 1970), sister of the present owners.

On 19th century maps the small cluster of roadside houses near the Meeting House was identified as "Wrightsville." The name fell into disuse but reappeared on modern maps as the (erroneous) label for the Cox's Corner intersection, which is actually a short distance to the west along the same road. Recently, to our surprise, Wrightsville--which no longer exists as an entity--has been resurrected on the large signs for Exit 11 of Interstate 195.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates See page 8-6 **Builder/Architect** See page 8-6

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Samuel Gardiner Wright, prominent businessman, farmer, sheep breeder, and state and federal legislator, created Merino Hill Farm in 1809. His 1810 Federal-style mansion house and accompanying formal landscape architecture remain essentially intact owing in part to 140 years of Wright family ownership. The 1735 wing of the house, also well-preserved, is today one of the oldest extant structures in Upper Freehold Township.

Agriculture: Merino Hill Farm is a fine agricultural property, in active cultivation for at least 250 years--a period which spans profound changes in New Jersey farming. Its distinctive character is traceable to Samuel Gardiner Wright (1781-1845), a Philadelphia merchant and Jersey iron furnace owner who in 1809 began to develop the property as his country estate. He named the place "Merino Hill" directly after building the main brick house in 1810 and establishing in the same year a flock of purebred Spanish Merino sheep, purchased "in Company with Mr. Dupont of Wilmington & others," and "esteemed to be of the first quality." His detailed journal of the progress of this flock continued to 1822. His sheep numbered about 200 in 1821; he sold about half in 1822, and at his death in 1845 the flock numbered 40. Besides breeding sheep, selling lambs and wool, and producing apples for distillation into whiskey, S.G. Wright's agricultural activities included typical crops and livestock to support a rural community of 15 to 20 people. In 1818, in a list of his diverse real estate holdings, he valued "Merino Hill Farm" at \$25,000.

The farm has been continuously owned, occupied, and operated by S.G. Wright's descendants (excepting only the rental of cropland to a nearby farmer during the past 30 years). The farm has reflected the changing rhythms and practices of basic agriculture in central New Jersey. In 1910, for example; workhorses, a dairy herd, chickens, potatoes, corn, and grain were the main features. By 1925, the cows had been sold, and seasonal migrant laborers were beginning to replace local farmhands. Electrification, mechanization, and better roads brought great changes. Today, large complex machines speedily work the fields, producing mainly alfalfa, soybeans, and corn. Timber is occasionally sold from the woodlands.

Meanwhile, however, the layout of the land, and the old farm buildings, have remained virtually unchanged. The farm stands as a significant example of the importance and continuity of 250 years of agriculture in New Jersey. Today it illustrates yet another phase in that history: Many of its long-unused farm machines and tools now come alive again at the Longstreet Historical Farm in Holmdel, New Jersey. Further, being threatened by encroaching "development,"

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 274

Quadrangle name Allentown & Roosevelt, NJ

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	5	4	2	7	6	0	4	4	4	9	0	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

1	8	5	4	2	7	6	0	4	4	4	8	6	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

1	8	5	4	3	1	6	0	4	4	4	8	3	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

1	8	5	4	2	9	2	0	4	4	4	8	0	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

1	8	5	4	2	4	4	0	4	4	4	7	6	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

1	8	5	4	1	9	8	0	4	4	4	7	7	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

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

H

1	8	5	4	1	7	6	0	4	4	4	8	4	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Upper Freehold Township tax map, Block 14, Lots 4 and 7.2. Frontage extends along north side of County Route 524.

I 1 8 5 4 1 7 4 0 4 4 4 8 9 2 0

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries NA

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth G. Wright Meirs (Mrs. William R. Meirs, Jr.), Co-Owner

organization Merino Hill Farm date February 1987 (supplementing and replacing Sept. 1986 form)

street & number R.D. 1, Box 2176, Clarksburg Road telephone 609/259-2462

city or town Allentown state New Jersey 08501

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Walter C. Senneker*

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural Resources date 12/03/87

For NPS use only

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

Linda McClelland date 2/11/88
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Merino Hill Farm is enrolled in the State's new Farmland Preservation Program and is under consideration for a permanent agricultural easement.

Architecture: Architecturally, the dwelling combines two important units: one of the earliest structures now standing in Upper Freehold Township, plus a distinguished example of large-scale Federal domestic architecture. Both sections of the house, and likewise the entire homestead area, retain an unusually high degree of integrity, which is enhanced by the spacious setting surrounded by open fields.

A striking fact about Merino Hill is the extraordinary completeness of its documentation. The building of the "mansion house" is documented by two of the manuscript account books in the large Samuel G. Wright Collection, now on deposit at the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library in Wilmington, Delaware. These farm account books, of several hundred pages each, begin early in 1809 and span the entire period of construction and farm development through 1811. Their meticulous detail gives a clear view of the building phases, the relationship of trades, and the problems of materials supply and workers' food and housing necessary to complete such a major project in a rural area at that date.

Despite their completeness, these records unfortunately give no direct clue to the identity of the architect or master builder of Merino Hill. Indeed, they strongly suggest the conclusion that there was none; that, rather, it was Samuel G. Wright himself who conceived the project and closely supervised its construction throughout; and that in its initial phases he worked in consort with master mason Ephraim Robbins and master carpenter Joseph Forsythe, both of whom probably managed crews for S.G.W. at his ironworks before coming to this site.

Such an interpretation of the written records is reinforced by physical features of the main house itself. While conceived on an imposing scale for its place and time, and constructed in a handsome and workmanlike manner, it nevertheless betrays a certain lack of consistency between the basic brickwork and framing, on the one hand, and the execution of finish details, on the other. (The stairway bisects a window in the main hall; some joinery beside chimney stacks is awkward; rough brickwork shows behind a lunette window, etc.) Presumably a professional architect would have coordinated the exterior and interior planning overall, so as to preclude such misfits. Further, although standard pattern books of the period were certainly used in designing Merino Hill, some of its decorative and finish detail shows a degree of individuality which makes professional planning and oversight seem unlikely. In short, the evidence--written, structural, and conjectural--seems to converge upon the

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conclusion that the "architect" of Merino Hill was Samuel G. Wright himself. He produced--by age 30!--an ambitious, stately structure whose touches of awkwardness and individuality make the house all the more interesting.

Domestic Landscape Architecture: His plan included not only the house itself and its necessary outbuildings, but also a venture in rather formal domestic landscaping. In 1811, to improve the already attractive site, he added stone retaining walls, and a series of three terraces leading down from the front porch. Soon the raised earth mound at the foot of the terraces was encircled with boxwood (unfortunately decimated about 1900); six marble busts, allegedly bartered for Merino sheep, were put in place; gateposts were topped with iron pineapples; sycamore trees--of which six still survive--were planted near the house. Traces of this landscaping still remain, as shown in the accompanying site map and photographs. Details of the original shrubs and flowers are unknown, though existing lilacs, rose of sharon, and trumpet creeper probably date from the early years.

Local History: Samuel G. Wright was a man of great energy and wide-ranging activities--Philadelphia merchant, sheep breeder, gentleman farmer, owner of iron furnaces in New Jersey and Delaware, investor in land, trader along the Mississippi, member of the legislature of the State of New Jersey, and member-elect of the 29th United States Congress (though he died before the session began). The above-mentioned Collection at the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library includes some of S.G.W.'s business correspondence, about 30 large journals containing early financial records of his furnaces and his country estate, and some papers dating from the following generation. The Director of the Library considers these materials to be significant primary sources for study of the economic and industrial history of the Delaware Valley.

Considered historically from its colonial beginnings, the site now under review has significant connections with the early settlement of the area and with the prominent Lawrence family. The land, originally part of the large Richard Salter tract, was owned by the Lawrence family from 1708 to 1759. Boundaries of the farm are still essentially the same as in the 1770 deed from William Clarke to David Wright (d. 1791). After the Revolution it had strong links with Quaker life, eventually serving as a station on the Underground Railroad (as attested by oral tradition plus structural evidence). Most notable in many respects was the period of Samuel G. Wright influence, sketched above. His wealth did not long outlast him, but his descendants have kept the house and farm virtually intact for 140 years, often through difficult times (see attached list of property owners). These farmers and homemakers, in preserving Merino Hill, also

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maintained the Wright family's reputation for fair dealing and helpfulness in local affairs. Gardiner Harrison Wright, a son of Samuel G., managed ironworks in Delaware and became a bank president and political figure there; his grandson Rowland Paynter was a physician in Georgetown, Delaware (where the Wright line has since died out). In the 20th century the family's high regard for education is shown in 17 Wrights holding college degrees. Five, including two women, went on to earn the Ph.D.; of these five, all served as college professors and two as college presidents: Walter Livingston Wright, Sr. (1872-1944), president of Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, and Walter Livingston Wright, Jr. (1900-1949), president of Robert College, Istanbul. Today the Wrights are not numerous and have only modest resources, but they firmly intend to keep Merino Hill within the family for at least another generation.

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Property Ownership

From 1791: David's son Robert Wright (d.1819)
From 1819: Robert's daughter Sarah (1786-1885), who in 1805 had married
her distant cousin Samuel Gardiner Wright (1781-1845)
1856: Their son Harrison Gardiner Wright (d. 1885)
1885: His son Walter Livingston Wright (d. 1908)
1908: His son and daughter, Harry Hall Wright and Bessie Gaskill Wright
1919: Harry Hall Wright only (1881-1956)
1956: His widow Mary Ridgway Wright (1885-1975)
1975: Their son and daughter, Richard Ridgway Wright (1913-) and
Elizabeth Gaskill Wright (1917-) -- who in 1975 married
William R. Meirs Jr., former owner of the pre-Revolutionary
Meirs farm in Cream Ridge, New Jersey, known as "Twin Brooks"

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Specific dates:

- c. 1735 - Original frame dwelling - Owner/builder, Robert Lawrence
- c. 1760-1770+ - Rear extension to same - Owner/builder, William Clarke (?) - or, more probably, Owner/builder David Wright, in conjunction with adding a presumed frame dwelling adjacent until 1809 demolition
- 1810 - Brick mansion house - Owner/builder, Samuel Gardiner Wright, with master mason Ephraim Robbins and master carpenter Joseph Forsithe
 - No professional architect or master builder
- 1813-1815 - Two tenant houses, outbuildings, rebuilding of barn complex - S.G.W.
- 1816 - Quaker meetinghouse - Architect unknown
- 1832 - Stone office/storehouse - Owner/builder, Samuel Gardiner Wright
- More recent outbuildings as indicated in #7, by the Wrights then owning the farm

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Merino Hill Farm, Upper Freehold
Township, Monmouth County, NJ

M E M O R A N D U M

August 3, 1987

TO: State Review Board and ONJH Staff

FROM: Connie Greiff

SUBJECT: Merino Hill

Because this is such a significant property, its National Register form should reflect fully its place in American architectural history. For this reason, I would like to propose that on pages 7 and 8 the Statement of Significance for the architectural portion be rewritten as follows. Beginning with the first full paragraph on the bottom of page 7:

Despite their completeness, these records unfortunately give no direct clue to the identity of the architect of Merino Hill. Samuel G. Wright may have served as architect and construction supervisor, as numerous gentlemen amateurs did in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Whoever may have produced drawings for Merino Hill, it is clear that it depended on a Philadelphia prototype, the William Bingham House. The Bingham House, designed by an unidentified London architect and built in 1787, became the showplace of late 18th and early 19th century Philadelphia. After Bingham's bankruptcy, it was converted to a hotel called the Mansion House in 18. Its facade served not only as the source for the design of Merino Hill, but also as inspiration to two important gentlemen amateur/professional architects. Charles Bulfinch used it for the First Harrison Gray Otis House (1797) on Cambridge Street in Boston, now the headquarters of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Gabriel Manigault adapted it for the Joseph Manigault House (c. 1802) in Charleston, South Carolina.

By the time Samuel G. Wright used the Bingham House design for Merino Hill it was somewhat old-fashioned. Had he turned for a design to one of Latrobe's pupils then practicing in Philadelphia, Robert Mills or William Strickland, the result would probably have been a house in the style of the early Greek Revival, rather than the Federal style introduced to Philadelphia a quarter of a century earlier. Thus it seems likely that Wright chose the Bingham House as a model himself, and then proceeded to

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oversee its execution by master mason Ephraim Robbins and master carpenter Joseph Forsythe, both of whom probably managed crews at his ironworks before coming to this site.

Such an interpretation is reinforced by physical features of the main block of the house. Although conceived on an imposing scale, and constructed in a handsome and workmanlike manner, it nevertheless betrays a certain lack of consistency between the design of the exterior and the planning and execution of interior finish details. (The stairway bisects a window in the main hall; some joinery beside chimney stacks is awkward; rough brickwork shows behind a lunette window, etc.) Presumably a professional architect would have coordinated the exterior and interior planning, so as to preclude such anomalies. Whether the interior of the Bingham House was also used as a precedent for the interior finishes of Merino Hill is not known, since no depictions of the interior of the Philadelphia House have been found. Pattern books may have been utilized, but some of the decorative detail at Merino Hill shows a degree of individuality that differentiates it from standard work of the period. Samuel G. Wright had produced -- at the age of 30 -- an ambitious stately structure, related to other important American houses, but with touches of awkwardness and individuality that make it unique.

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Bibliography

DEED dated April 27, 1770 from William Clarke to David Wright, conveying a tract of 291 acres in Township of Upper Freehold in County of Monmouth in Eastern Division of Province of New Jersey [the land later known as Merino Hill farm]. Framed parchment original, hanging at Merino Hill. Traces title back to Proprietors.

Subsequent DEEDS and WILLS within the Wright family.

THE SAMUEL G. WRIGHT COLLECTION, Accession #1665, Manuscripts Dept., Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Wilmington, Delaware 1987.

Hinshaw, William Wade, ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN QUAKER GENEALOGY, Vol. 2, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Edwards Bros., 1938. Page 695: Samuel G. Wright and wife Sarah, members 1806 of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting for the Northern District; in 1812, to Chesterfield (New Jersey) Monthly Meeting.

Hammond, Joseph W., "THE BUILDING OF 'MERINO HILL' - A Preliminary Draft." Unpublished manuscript, 1987. Based upon study of Samuel G. Wright's farm account books for 1809-1811 and following.

Ellis, Franklin, HISTORY OF MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY. Philadelphia: R.T. Peck & Co., 1885. Pages 107f regarding S. G. Wright in political office; pages 633f regarding Village of Wrightsville, the Quaker meeting and cemetery.

Schmidt, Hubert G., AGRICULTURE IN NEW JERSEY - A Three-Hundred Year History. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973. General context; and especially regarding Merino sheep, in Chapter 11.

BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS 1774-1927. Published 1928. Page 1732, listing of Samuel Gardiner Wright.

Lightfoot, Jesse, surveyor, MAP OF MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, FROM ORIGINAL SURVEYS. Middletown Point: J. B. Shields, publisher, 1851. Upper Freehold shows house for "Mrs Wright" [Sarah, widow of Samuel G.] and WRIGHT'S VILLE with 7 buildings--one identified as Wrightsville Hotel and another as FMH [Friends Meeting House].

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Merino Hill Farm
Upper Freehold Township
Monmouth County, NJ

Section number 9 Page 3

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, NJ-526, The Wright House. Seventy-one drawings, 1938-39; photographs; six pages of text.

"Merino Hill Farm" in CENTURY FARM AWARDS. Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Agricultural Society, 1985. A few minor inaccuracies in the text.

NEW JERSEY HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY, MONMOUTH COUNTY (1981), #1331-50.

THE WRIGHT FARM
NEAR ALLENTOWN, NEW JERSEY

MERINO HILL

KEY TO EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHS IN
NATIONAL REGISTER APPLICATION

FROM
ROADSIDE ①

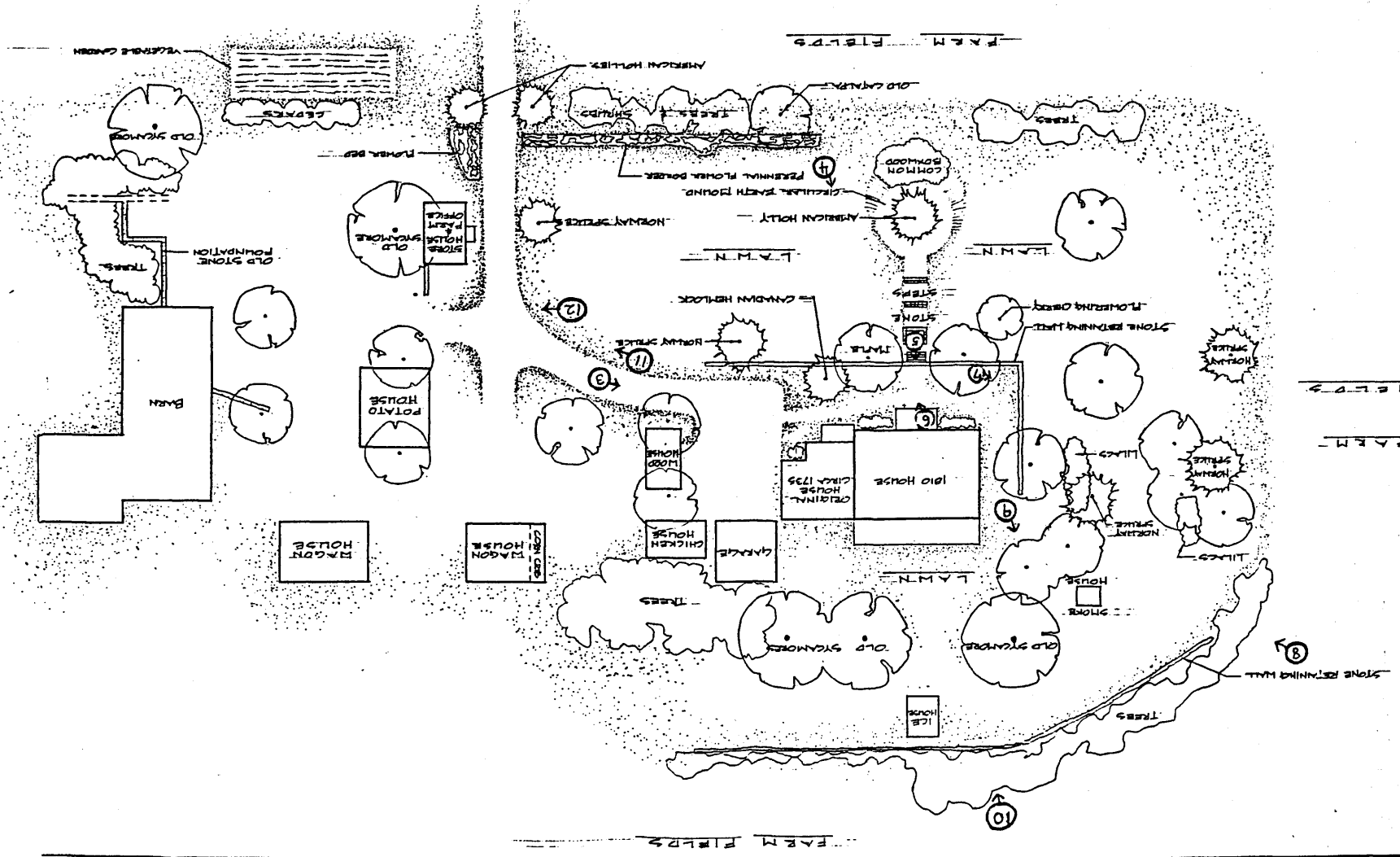
ROADSIDE
NEAR
CEMETERY
IN
⑬

0 10 20
FOOT

NORTH

ANDY LINK D-2-09

FROM
ROADSIDE
⑭



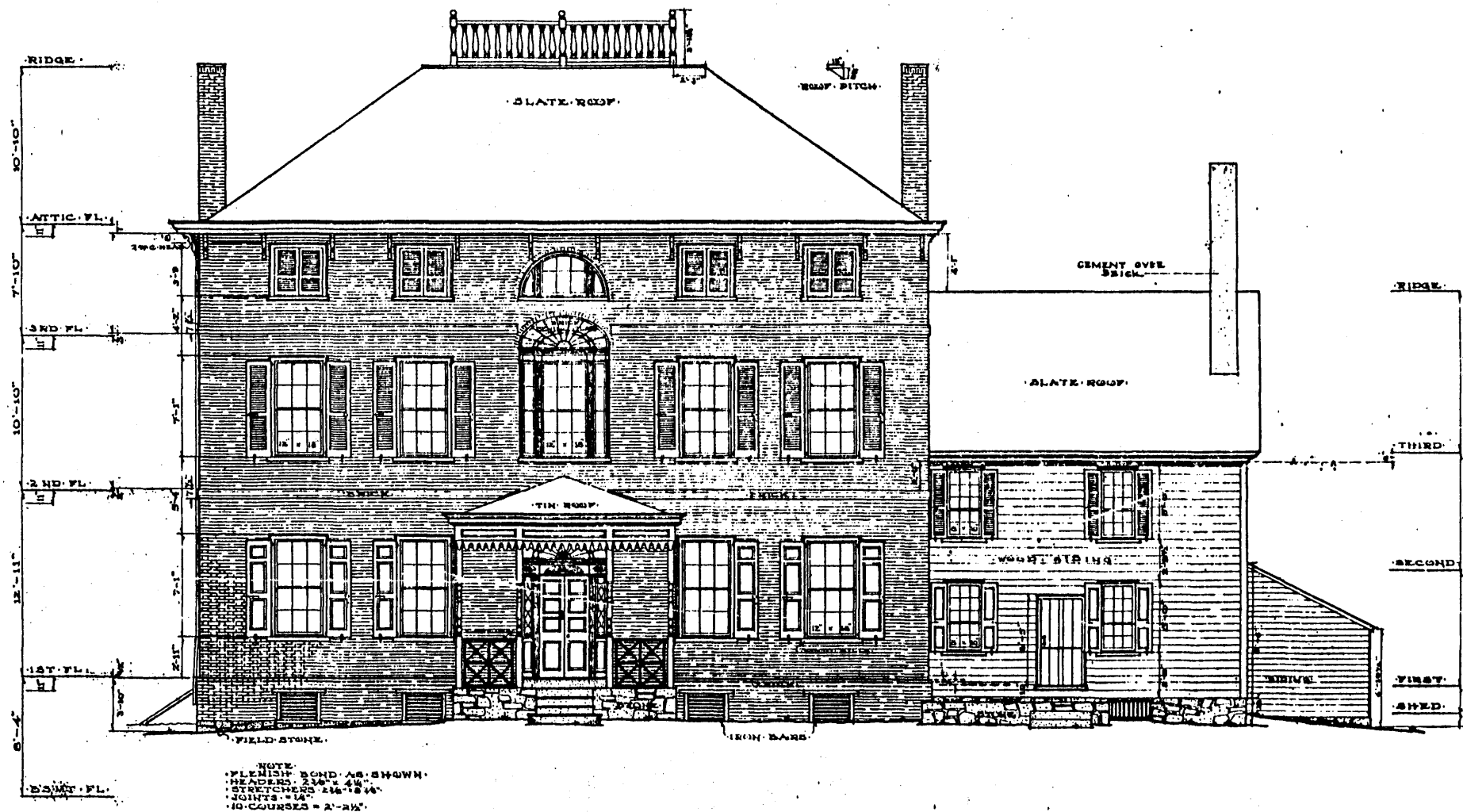
FARM
FIELDS

FARM
FIELDS

FARM FIELDS

NOTE:
 CAPTAIN'S WALK RECONSTRUCTED FROM COMPLETE.
 BALUSTRADE FOUND IN ATTIC AND CORNER
 POSTS SHOWING THRU ROOF DECK.

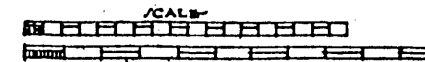
Merino Hill Farm
 Upper Freehold Township
 Monmouth County, New Jersey



• SOUTH ELEVATION •
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

K. MASON DEL.

3/16" TO 1/2"
 METRIC



WORKS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICIAL PROJECT NO 665-82-0-43
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

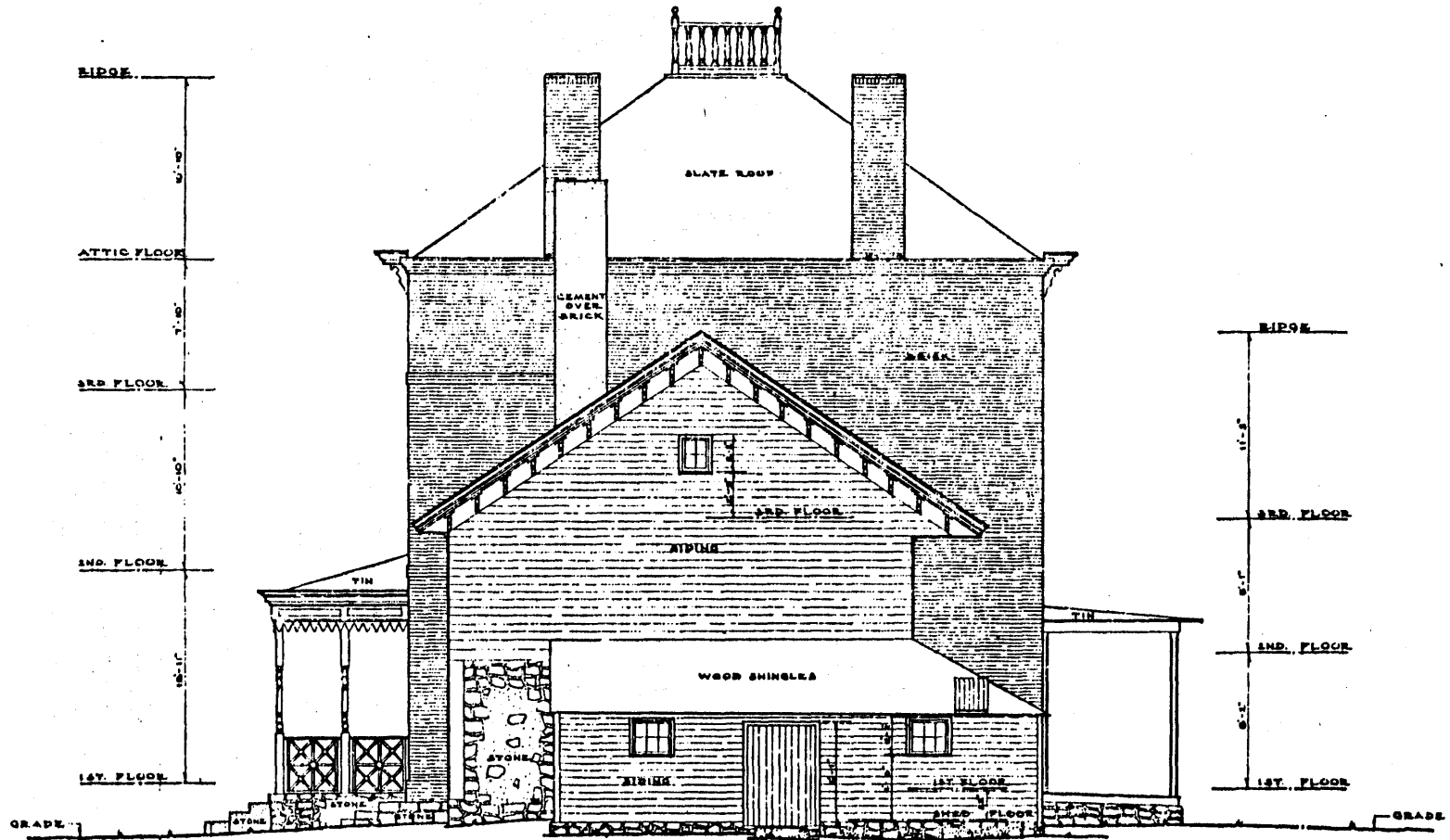
NAME OF STRUCTURE
THE WRIGHT HOUSE
 WRIGHTSVILLE, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

SURVEY NO.
 N.J.
 526

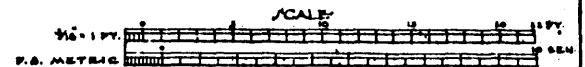
HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 7 OF 21 SHEETS

MADE IN U.S.A.

Merino Hill Farm
 Upper Freehold Township
 Monmouth County, New Jersey



• EAST ELEVATION •
 SCALE: 3/8" = 1 FT.



L. A. WIEGAND, DEL.

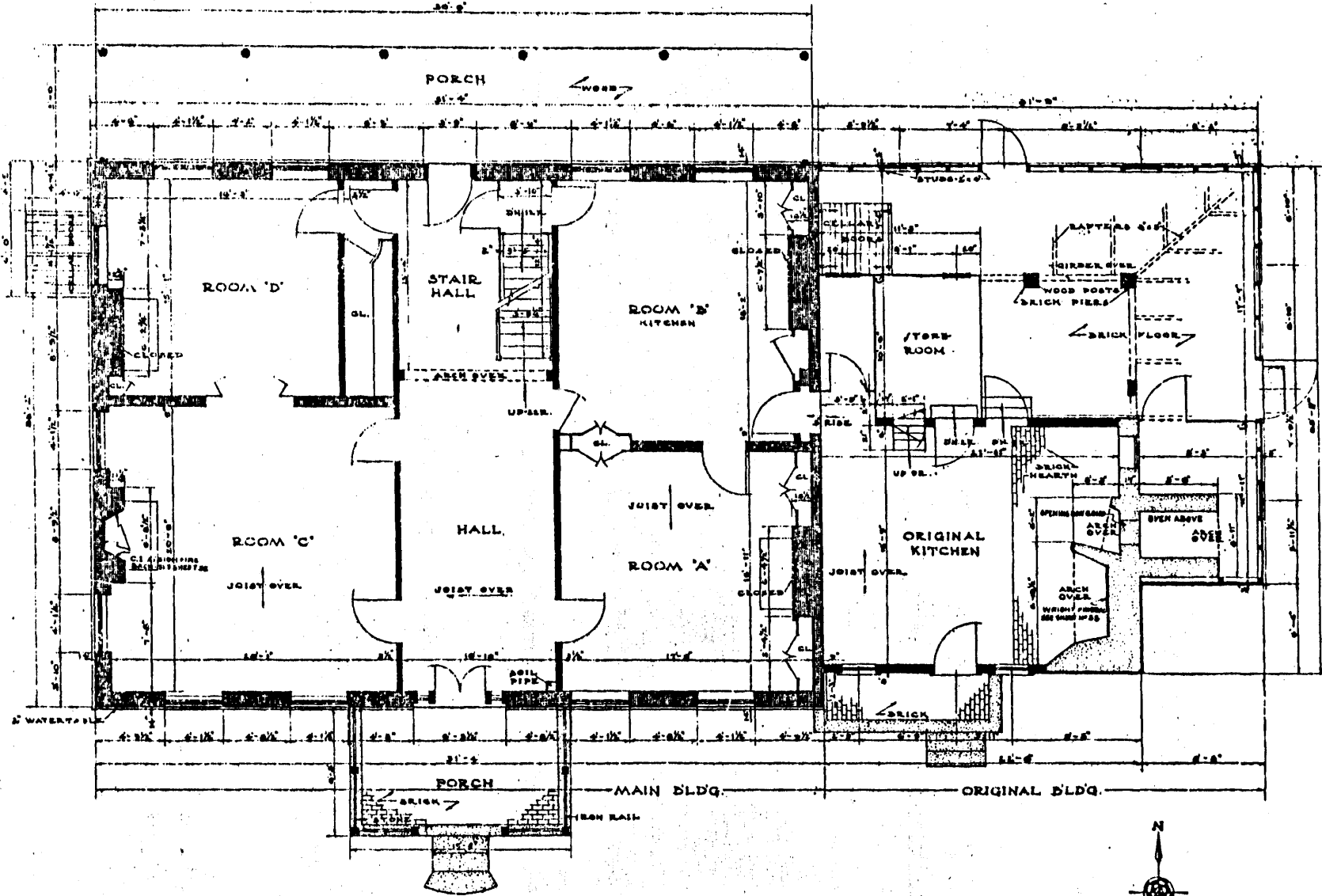
WORKS PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICIAL PROJECT NO. 645-22-3-43
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
THE WRIGHT HOUSE
 WRIGHTSVILLE • MONMOUTH COUNTY • NEW JERSEY

SURVEY NO.
 N. J.
 526

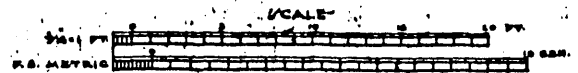
HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 9 OF 71 SHEETS

UNDESIGNED ELEMENTS
 NOT DRAWN



· FIRST FLOOR PLAN ·
 SCALE - 3/8" = 1'-0"

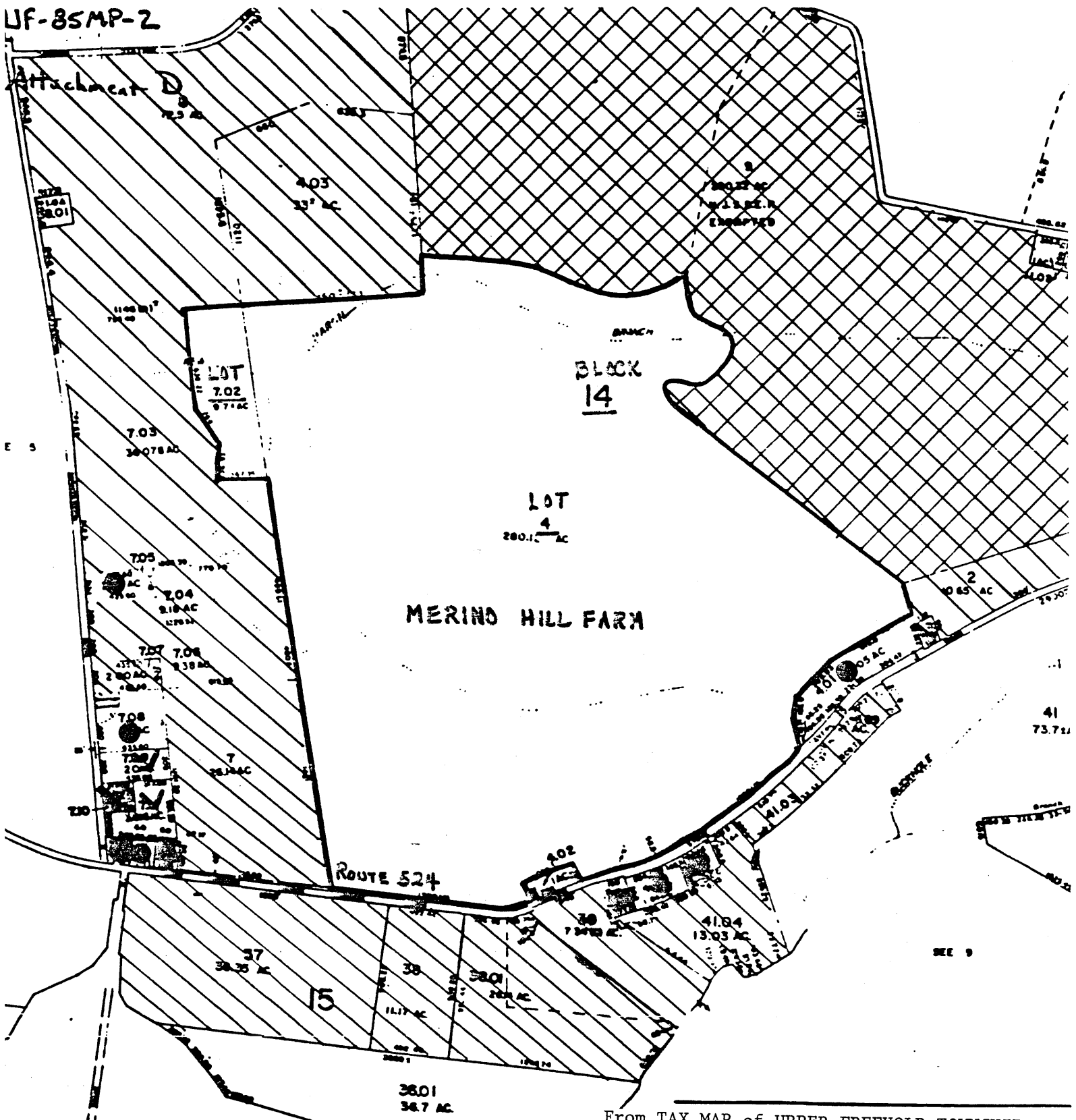
LEGEND
 STONE [hatched pattern]
 BRICK [cross-hatched pattern]
 FRAME [solid black]



L.A. WIGAND, DEL.







UF-85MP-2

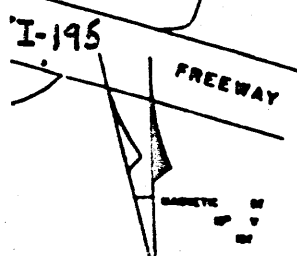
Attachment D



From TAX MAP of UPPER FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

LAND USE STUDY OF ADJACENT PROPERTIES

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|-------------|
|  | Site-in-question |  | Residential |
|  | Farmland(Qualified) |  | Commercial |
|  | Farmland(Regular) |  | Industrial |



Allentown Quad

Roosevelt Quad

UTM's:

- A - 18/542760/4449000
- B - 18/542760/4448620
- C - 18/543160/4448300
- D - 18/542920/4448000
- E - 18/542440/4447680
- F - 18/541980/4447720
- G - 18/541880/4448480
- H - 18/541760/4448460
- I - 18/541740/4448920

