

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUN 13 1978  
DATE ENTERED NOV 21 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC John Reading Farmstead  
AND/OR COMMON "Walnut Grove"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER NE of Flemington at  
523 River Road at the South Branch NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CITY, TOWN vic. of the Raritan River CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Flemington Raritan Township VICINITY OF 13th  
STATE New Jersey CODE 34 COUNTY Hunterdon CODE 019 ✓

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mrs. Josete Walker ✓  
STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box 421  
CITY, TOWN Flemington VICINITY OF STATE New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hunterdon County Hall of Records  
STREET & NUMBER Main Street  
CITY, TOWN STATE New Jersey 08822

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory (1124.2)  
DATE May 4, 1960  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Office of Historic Preservation, Dept. of Environ. Protec.  
CITY, TOWN STATE New Jersey

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Reading House, built in 1760, is a handsome classic form Georgian style house. Constructed of brick, the main facade has five bays with a center transomed (6 lights) front entrance. The east wall has glazed Flemish bond brick while the west wall has the date in glazed headers. There is a water table surrounding the building, but a belt course is on the west facade.

The roof of the house is hip with three brick chimneys--two on the gable ends and the other at the rear. Fenestration arches in the cellar and first floor are segmental, while the second floor had arches which come up to the eaves. The flat fieldstone foundation begins at the arch of the cellar windows. The windows are now 12/12 sash, although photos taken in the 1960's indicate 6/6 sash.

The interior is symmetrical with through center hall and two rooms, front and back, on either side. At the back of the hall is the stairway which has two small landings and a simple 18th century newel.

The rooms have considerable details intact including all major fireplaces, mantels and overmantels, paneling, ceiling moldings, corner cupboards, and wide floor planking.

To the rear of the main building at the southwest corner is a small one story brick structure with gable roof which possibly originally functioned as a summer kitchen. This small building has a Dutch door with a full complement of strap hinges.

Further south is a small frame one story shed with a large three bay protective overhang. This shed facility, now an automobile garage, is probably 19th century.

Still further south are two attached frame barns. The main barn, nearest the house, is an 18th century English form structure with horizontal clapboard sheathing on a completely hewn frame. The barn has 3 bays--a central threshing area and flanking animal pens with hay lofts above. Entrance is gained by the large sliding door on the linear facade. Attached to the west gable end is a smaller hewn barn, later than the first barn, but still dating from the first half of the 19th century.

With its 19 acres the Reading Farmstead is much smaller than originally, but with enough surrounding land to establish an agrarian atmosphere with its boxwoods at the approach to the house.

Approximately 19 of the 600 walnut trees John Reading planted in the 18th century are still thriving on the property.

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John Reading Farmstead

Raritan Township

Hunterdon County

New Jersey 031

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DESCRIPTION

Oriented along the South Branch of the Raritan River, which flows southeast, the Reading Farm continues to project a manoral appearance.

# 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 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 type="checkbox"/> _1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> _ART	<input type="checkbox"/> _ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> _MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> _THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> _1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> _TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> _1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> _INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> _INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES            1760

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture

The Reading House is an excellent classic example of Georgian style architecture. It closely resembles the Trent House in Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey and is a rare surviving example of the style, perhaps the last in Hunterdon County.

Agriculture

With its outbuildings and landscaping, the property projects an authentic image of an 18th century manoral farmstead and is one of the few such estates extant in New Jersey.

Exploration/Settlement

John Reading (1686-1767) was one of the prominent surveyor-proprietors of northwestern New Jersey in the early 18th century. In 1719 he was one of the commissioners selected to adjust the northern New Jersey boundary with New York.

Government

John Reading was an active participant in New Jersey's colonial government. From 1720 to 1758 he served in Council seat. On the death of President John Hamilton in 1747, Reading, as senior councillor, became President of the New Jersey Council. He thereby assumed the duties of acting New Jersey Governor upon Lewis Morris' death and performed as such until Jonathan Belcher replaced him in 1747. When Belcher himself died in 1757 Reading, an old man, again was asked to be Governor. Because of his infirmities, Reading objected, but was nonetheless pressed into temporary service as Governor for the second time.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Genealogical and Biographical Memorials of the Reading, Howell, Yerkes, Watts, Latham and Elkins families. Josiah Granville. Leach, Philadelphia, 1898. (p. 286).

Ryerson Genealogy - Albert Winslow Ryerson.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 19.08 acres

UTM REFERENCES

			A 18   513-760   4485-950		
E	18   513   540	4485   950	B	18   513   850	4485   810
	ZONE EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE EASTING	NORTHING
C	18   513   790	4485   590	D	18   513   640	4485   580
	ZONE EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point on River Road 100 feet E of its intersection with County Route 523; thence proceed 600 feet E; thence proceed 600 feet SE; thence proceed 800 feet SW; thence proceed 500 feet W thence proceed 900 feet NW; thence proceed 500 feet N to the point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

C.F. Brasch (Revised by T. Karschner, Office of Historic Preservation)

ORGANIZATION

DATE

July 9, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Box 238A, R.D. 1

TELEPHONE

(609) 292-2028

CITY OR TOWN

Pittstown

STATE

New Jersey

# 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

*Betty Wilson*

4/27/78

TITLE

Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11-21-78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *Myra A. Decker*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE NOV 20, 1978

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Hunterdon County New Jersey 034  
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SIGNIFICANCE

From 1712 to 1715, young John Reading had been occupied in surveying tracts for parties in Burlington who were locating lands through the Amwell Valley. At the same time, with an eye to a valuable purchase which a surveyor would be supposed to have, he secured for himself 600 acres along the South Branch of the Raritan River, two miles from Flemington. (This would later become the site of his homestead).

He also surveyed the country as far north as the Minisink lands in 1715 and recorded no white settlers in the area visited. These trips, it must be remembered, were made on horseback through uncharted, unoccupied lands where there were no roads. This was "roughing it" in the truest sense and an offer to "lodge for the night" was most welcome.

John Reading was born in Gloucester (now Camden Co.) New Jersey on June 6, 1686. His father Colonel John Reading, early desiring a liberal education for his children, sent young John and his sister Elsie with their mother to England for this purpose. They remained there 9 years acquiring an extensive education while the father remained in this country. While in England, young John embraced the doctrines of the Presbyterians to which he remained faithful all of his life. At his father's death in 1717, John Reading inherited his fathers vast land holdings. These together with the estate he had acquired on his own, made him by far the wealthiest man in all of Hunterdon County.

In November 1718, he was nominated by Governor Hunter to a seat in the provincial council. In view of his youth, this selection was an acknowledgement of his high intelligence and fine character as well as a compliment to the memory of his esteemed father.

On April 18, 1740 he was appointed one of the officers for Hunterdon County to enlist men in the king's service in the war then waging against Spain and in that year was also appointed by the king one of the commissioners to define the boundary between the colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which latter appointment bears added testimony to his high repute as surveyor. He was also for some years one of the agents for the family of William Penn in managing their land interests in New Jersey.

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SIGNIFICANCE

On the decease of Lewis Morris, governor of the province, on May 21, 1746, the administration fell to Colonel John Hamilton, who remained at the head of the government until his decease June 17, 1747. Reading then became president of the council, and, as such, succeeded Colonel Hamilton as acting governor and commander-in-chief, being the first native-born Jerseyman to govern the province.

President Reading's administration as Governor of the state was a brief one. On the 10th day of August following, he was succeeded by Jonathan Belcher, of Massachusetts, who had received the king's appointment to the governorship the previous February. Governor Belcher continued at the head of the government until his decease, August 31, 1757. President Reading was still the senior member of the council, and the administration, of right, delved upon him once again. His age and infirmities, however, were such that he at first declined to act, but he finally consented, though with the utmost reluctance, to assume the duties.

On his release from Public Life, President Reading retired to private life. Remembering the impressive mansion he had visited often in Trenton in which Lewis Morris lived during his term as Colonial Governor, John Reading erected a smaller but nearly exact copy of this house on the 600 acres on the South Branch of the Raritan which he had surveyed and purchased as a young man.

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1957 (pp. 3, 6, opp. 82).

First Century of Hunterdon - Rev. George S. Mott, 1878.

New Jersey as a Royal Province 1738-1776. Fisher, Edgar J. 1911.  
(pp. 30, 37-8, 53).

New Jersey Archives Vo. VI 1st Series.

The Musconetcong Valley of New Jersey. Wacker, Peter O. New  
Brunswick, 1968. (p. 33).

The Holland Society's Record of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Journal of John Reading. (original manuscript - New Jersey  
Historical Society).

Will of John Reading. 1767.

Land and People. Wacker, Peter O. New Brunswick, 1975. (pp. 49,  
50, 69-71, 98-99, 114, 364-5).

The New Jersey Proprietors and Their Lands. Pomfret, John E.  
Princeton, 1964. (pp. 78, 100-101).