

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **SEP 26 1988**

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Alexander and James Linn Homestead

and or common Linn House; also known as "Mayfields" 1920-1948

2. Location

street & number Mine Brook Rd. (Rte 202), N. side, Between Sunnybranch Rd. and Lake Rd. NA not for publication

city, town Far Hills _____ vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Somerset code 035

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input 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

name Paula and (Dr.) Roger Doyle

street & number Mine Brook Road (as above):

city, town Far Hills _____ vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office, Somerset Co. Administration Building

street & number North Bridge Street at East High Street

city, town Somerville _____ state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

NA

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state _____

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 Alexander and James Linn Homestead is a c.1750 partly embanked stone and frame structure of two and a half stories capped by a gambrel roof. A wing of a story and a half was added against the north end wall when the house was updated in the Federal period. The house is fronted by a portico in the Greek Revival mode, a detail which was probably added c.1850. Once part of a 600-acre homestead farm, it now stands on a 36-acre tract of land; its pastoral surroundings are also the setting for a number of large estates created in the early twentieth century as country homes for wealthy New Yorkers.

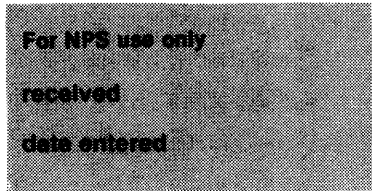
As far as the eye can see, the house is surrounded by open fields, which rise and dip with the contours of the land on this hillside representing the far reaches of Mine Mountain. Some distance easterly near Lake Road there survives another 18th-century house conjectured mistakenly by local people to have been the home of Alexander Linn.¹ The old Mine Brook Road (Route 202), opened about the time of the arrival of the Linn Family, still follows its same course several hundred yards south of the house. At roadside are trees and vegetation, obscuring the structure, but an impressive view of the house in its setting can be obtained in winter time at a quarter-mile distance as one approaches it from the west by car. The driveway turn-off from the road passes over a small bridge which spans a minor stream on the property. This stream feeds into Mine Brook, which is some distance south of the highway.² A large barn, not contemporary with the house, stands in the fields a considerable distance north of the dwelling. In front of the house wing, almost "at the door", a stone block covers a former well. The only other structures now on the property are a small chicken coop and a modern garage. A dry-laid wall of boulders projects from the southern end of the house facade for about a hundred feet, then runs northward in front of the grass lawn, retaining the higher land into which the house is embanked. Above it runs a picket fence. A second such wall, similarly fenced, retains the embankment at the southeasterly corner of the house.

The main block of the house is rectangular in form, 40 by 30 feet approximately. The structure rises from a partly embanked ground storey (foundation level) with walk-in entrance and sash windows, for another two full storys and an attic under a gambrel roof. The front facade is oriented west-southerly. Against its north end wall is attached a wing of one story and a half height. This is recessed to allow for a typical porch area, which up to

1. Deed searching has placed this property from 1730 to now in hands of other individuals.
2. This stream, with house indicated by it, appears on the maps of the 1760s and 1770s.

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1948 was under a shed roof, but now has been lowered in height, expanded beyond the house plane, and crowned with a pergola. At the gable end of the wing is a shed-roofed leanto. Its far wall and rear wall have been removed, but its braced posts remain (one a replacement). Below its flooring are the remains of a brick cistern.

The ground level (foundation) walls are of rubble stone, some but slivers, very roughly coursed. This stonework continues up the south gable wall for one story to provide an exposed chimney back for the great chimneys within. On the south half of the front face are found the two openings above mentioned. Each opening is under a segmental arch made of large stones set on end. Cement covers the tympanum area. The south end of the house is embanked slightly front to back but more deeply in a lateral direction, placing the north half of the building mostly underground.

The remainder of the structure is clapboard-sheathed, with corner boards, with one exception. A small section of the north gable wall that faces into the porch area of the wing retains an earlier cladding of wide flush-laid boards, perhaps dating back to the 1840s. This matches and relates to the portion of the wing's facade that was formerly under the shed roof of the porch. The remaining walls of the wing are clapboarded.

The roof of the main block is gambrel-shaped in the English style that became popular c.1800.¹ The wing's roof is pitched. Both are covered with asphalt composition shingles laid over earlier wood shingles. Two rebuilt open-capped chimney stacks rise from the upper slopes of the roof at the south end of the house, and a single stack from the far end of the wing at roof apex. The wing's end gable contains a squared chimney back of rubble stone. Raking boards follow the roof lines. Fascia boards banded with molding trim the eaves of front and rear facades of the main block.

1. Some other houses erected about 1800 in this area have the same style of gambrel.

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Up to 1948 (as seen in a photograph), the front facade of the house was composed of four bays, with the centered entrance in the third bay. These bays were equidistantly spaced, but the facade was unbalanced since a fifth bay was lacking.² The previous owner of the house removed the upper-story window over the entrance and inserted two smaller windows to illuminate two bathrooms. He also inserted windows on the formerly blank north end to establish the missing symmetry. The windows contain 6/6 sash. Recessed (2) panel shutters hang at first story, fixed louvered blinds at the second. An old smaller-scaled sash window, 6/6, fills the north gable wall at attic level, while a large replacement window is at south gable. The wing facade is of 3 bays with center entry. The door is not original. The attic gable contains two small square single sash windows.

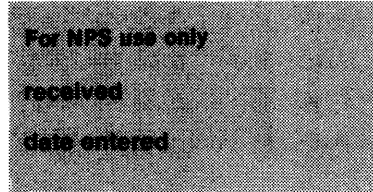
The house entrance is recessed and in Greek Revival mode. Narrow, vertically paneled pilasters flank the door. An atypically wide portico under flattened roof spans the facade, allowing for opposing seats at right angles to the wall. Paired square posts that match pilasters of same width on the house plane support the roof entablature. These, too, have twinned narrow vertical panels. The roof soffit contains recessed panels. A plain railing runs around the porch. The portico rests on brick piers, and its underside is enclosed by latticework.

The ground-level floor -- which represents the original dwelling house -- is full height (8'3"). The area is divided longitudinally at center with a stone wall not ceiling height but on which rests a transverse timber of great size (10 x 13) run below the floor-support beams in the manner of German framing.³ This wall probably superseded an earlier partitioning, evidence of which remains in a regularly spaced series of mortise holes along the length of a near timber. The space north of the wall is divided laterally under the transverse beam. This wall, with a board-and-batten narrow door at far end, is now of cinderblock, but this is a replacement made by the previous owner for an ancient wall of mud daub

2. The absence of a fifth bay is inexplicable. It is not an instance of a lateral expansion, as the foundation wall runs under the whole of the house.
3. Similarly placed timbers are found in the Zeller House, Bertolet House, and others in German-settled Pennsylvania. There were Germans arriving in this area of Somerset County at the same time as the Linns.

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held on lath. Within the stone wall are two old doorways, plain framed and pegged, giving admittance to these north rooms. In one opening hangs a broad board-and-batten door on Dutch strap hinges. A wide-board worn still is on the threshold.

The two halves of this level are not identical. The north half is less deep into the ground by about 5 inches, and its framing timbers are slightly larger (7 x 10½) and closer spaced. Almost centrally placed are not one but two pairs of timbers spaced about 5 feet apart, which only roughly correspond to the present width of the center hall above. The south pair is just slightly beyond the stone wall.

There are open chimney bases against both gable walls. They are of extraordinary size when compared with others found in houses of this period. The north base measures 4' in depth, 12' in breadth, and 6' in height to flat arch. Above the lintel log, stonework slightly projects diagonally upward, perhaps being a hearth cradle. Its stone piers are spanned by three large logs, still tightly bark-clad, above which are a number of small boulders. The cavity beneath the arch was long ago enclosed to serve as a storage cupboard. From front (west) stone pier to the interior wall (7') the space is enclosed by vertical boards with grillwork for ventilation. Adjoining this is a board-and-batten door on Dutch strap hinges. The remainder of the opening is walled with mud daub. The cupboard's interior is partly lined and ceiled with boards. From the back (east) wall of this base a ceiling timber runs diagonally to the gable wall in the manner of framing often used for a corner fireplace. The chimney(s) that this base supported are gone.

The south wall is almost entirely spanned by 3 continuous chimney bases. The front arched opening, closed by logs, is 3' deep and 5' to arch. It is more shallow than the adjacent bases. It shares its interior stone pier with the next base, which has a flue, as does the third base. (Whether this was one enormous cooking fireplace and later divided by a pier at midpoint was not determined. There appeared to be some brickwork on top of the pier within the firebox.) The fireplaces share a 12' lintel log, 19" high by 11" deep. The end pier is faced with a bead-edged board attached by several large wrought-iron nails.

The exterior openings of the south room have their framing members constructed into the stonework. The wide 19th-century board-and-batten door is set into a 4'4" wide opening which is positioned two-thirds back into the 21" thick wall, and the door jambs are lined with bead-edged boards. A second sashed window, slightly smaller, admits daylight from the rear (east) wall. Its top

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member is almost at ceiling level, and it is not under a segmental arch on the exterior wall. The north section has two windows on the front wall, set in plain wood frames on the exterior, each having two ranges of 3 panes. The inner window is now partly concealed by the front portico. The rear wall contains a typical cellar window.

An interior flight of stairs enclosed by wide vertical boards rests against the south side of the interior stone wall. The outer timber of the south pair of hall-support timbers has been sawn off for head room. An opening for exterior stairs exiting to the porch of the wing has been closed with cinderblock. The stairs have been removed.

The two storys above formerly offered a center hall plan with four rooms to a floor, but this has been somewhat altered by the previous owner. The first story -- reached from the outside by a flight of stairs up to the portico -- reflects the evolution of styles. Federal decor, with late-style raised (4) panel doors and (some) door frames, and a later Georgian/early Federal style mantelpiece denticulated under the shelf (ogee-molded profile) in the living room, marks the first update, but the floors of the rooms retain their original boards, those in the rear south room ranging between 15 and 18" in size. The entry, as noted, is Greek Revival, and the hall floor is relaid with narrower boards. The hall widens 2 feet to the right (south) on line with the dividing wall of rooms to create a niche for the staircase to the upper floor. Inasmuch as the stairs are 3' wide, one third of the staircase projects into the hall proper. The final step extends beyond the newel. The open-well staircase leads to a landing against the rear wall and resumes with a second short run of stairs to the hall above. In its refinements, the balustrade has the attributes of late Federal style. The rounded handrail terminates in downward spirals carved of solid wood blocks.

The front north room is entered from the hall through a doorway which incorporates a four-light transom with Federal-period muntins. It is thought that this may formerly have been above the exterior entrance. The door framing on the hall side is Greek Revival and encircles the narrower transom. On the room side, the framing is Federal and does not relate to this unit. The floorboards of this room have been laid in two sections, with their ends butting about midpoint into the room. The north section runs to the gable wall, covering the space where the enormous chimney, whose base is seen on the level below, once stood. This leads to speculation that the chimney was removed when the wing was attached against this wall, making it possible to have a door opening into the addition. These two units share a common wall. The opening to the wing, one

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step up, contains a paneled door. This door, like many others, has a metal boxlock.

The rear north room was completely remodeled after 1948 to make a modern kitchen. The original window was replaced with two of smaller size. The former entrance from the hall leads into a closet. The south rear room has been altered, too. Its original entry from the hall is at the foot of the staircase, but this has been sealed -- with original paneled door in place -- and a second doorway created under the stair landing. A closet has been built in front of the chimney, and a new bathroom built in on the far wall against the side of the chimney and closet projections.

The hall has been shortened by constructing a wall below the interior edge of the stair landing. This creates a side passageway to the rear room and gives access to the stairway positioned under the main staircase to reach the level below.

The former exterior door off the hall now leads into a small room attached against the rear wall by the previous owner to serve as laundry and pantry. At the time of this addition the exterior wall sheathing was removed for a 4' wide span, revealing the original structural details, which are preserved under glass. One hewn 9" wide upright is visible, with a panel infill of mud-hay daub. Nailing boards 3½" wide run from this post to the next. Judging by the nailing of floorboards to beams -- as seen on the second story level -- it can be surmised that these uprights were spaced about four feet apart at minimum.

The proportions of the rooms on the second story are almost of equal size, thus differing from those below them, where the front rooms are larger. The hall is two feet wider than below to allow for an open staircase to run above the other to the attic, and this width is kept up to a small front room. This room, used in modern times as bathroom with marble basin, has been divided into two to create a second bathroom, with additional area gained by stealing space from the north bedroom. Another alteration is the creation of a passageway between front and rear north rooms to lead to a small dressing room carved out of the rear room. The passage claimed space from the rear room. From the dressing room, access to the attic of the wing can be gained. An obviously very old raised (2) panel door, with original paint, hangs on H-L hinges in the opening. It is but 5'10" high by 2' wide.

The floorboards on this level are of narrower width, such as favored in the Greek Revival period. All the doors (some copies) are vertically paneled in

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Greek style, with flush backs, and some have Blake's patented style of latches. Window and door architraves are also Grecian.

The 2' wide matching attic staircase has been uncomfortably squeezed in with an abbreviated landing under the lower slope of the gambrel roof. This stair void is walled in at attic level with a board-and-batten door at opening. In this wall a four-pane window with 18th-century-type muntins is inserted. The gambrel roof is supported in traditional fashion on a braced frame, pegged together, containing some hewn members and some replacements. A series of 3 uprights rises from the frame's horizontal members to the roof. Although the double set of rafters is wide-spaced, and those of the upper slope of good size, sawn, not hewn, the rafters are not pegged. The upper range is butted at the apex and rests by gravity on the upper face of the support frame. The thinner lower range is held by pressure against the frame and the plate.

Two brick chimneys emerge against the south gable wall, the rear one corbeled backward to place it in proper position on the roof. The bricks are old. The floorboards at north gable do not indicate any patching for removal of former chimney.

The Wing

This addition, 19'10" by 22'10", rests on logs above a crawlspace. It consists now of one room, but had formerly been divided by a wall run laterally about 7' in from the rear wall. Before the wall was removed, the space it enclosed had been divided into two pantries, one containing the side-wall opening to the leanto. A wide but relatively shallow cooking fireplace with crane runs against the end wall. Its construction is in post-Revolutionary style. Space to the east of the chimney is enclosed by a wall for some distance, providing a storage area. An in-wall flight of stairs flanks the other side of the chimney. The entire wall is paneled with vertical boards, some if not all having been placed there by the previous owner, using floorboards from the attic. In the 1930s, the wall had been plastered. It is unclear whether these boards were underneath the plaster. The stairs originate with one step in the room. The door, wearing some original blue paint, is board and batten, with a Suffolk-type beanpod latch of post-1780 style.

The ceiling height is low. The room had been ceiled, but the previous owner removed this covering and thus exposed rough-finished timbers measuring approximately 6 x 6". Only one of these runs the full span of the room. It

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rests, without a joint, on a hewn post. The remainder run to a transverse beam. The post at the interior wall is a replacement.

The attic framing for the 3' high wall shows a system of well-spaced hewn posts, the three primary ones diagonally braced. The rafters, some with vertical-saw kerfs, are pegged. The common wall shared with the house contains a framework consisting of Roman-numbered studs fitted against a diagonally placed timber, but nothing is pinned.

The adjoining leanto rises on a stone foundation at its front wall. Formerly this wall had contained a door.

Outbuildings and Setting

A private dirt farm road runs in front of the house and continues north for some distance, eventually passing a 2-story, late 19th century, vertical sided frame barn which is not original to the property. 6 bays in width, including a center drive-through bay, the barn has a stone foundation on its west gable wall, wood shingles overlaid with a single corrugated metal roof, and doors that swing upward rather than sliding on tracks or swinging out. Attached to the southeast corner is another, smaller gable-roofed structure standing at a right angle to the main barns east gable wall. Of relatively new construction, the addition is wall-less on its east facade, perhaps serving as a hovel. A split-rail fence runs along the road and across the fields separating the barn from the house surroundings. A 3-rail fence of boards lines the driveway from Mine Brook Road up to the house. A two-car garage, stucco-walled, with gable to front, is at the southeast corner of the house, but not attached to it. Large oak trees, probably over a hundred years old, stand on the front and rear lawns. Some fruit trees are at a further distance back of the house. A tiny chicken coop used in the period of ownership by the Kinnicutts remains some distance southeast of the dwelling. Extensive views of pasture and farm fields are obtained in all directions. In far distances, wooded areas can be seen. (The two buildings and three structures mentioned above do not contribute to the significance of the property.)

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 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 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 c.1750 - 1850 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Alexander and James Linn Homestead is an excellent example of the vernacular buildings first erected by the Scotch-Irish in Somerset County during the 1740s. As well, it served as the home of two prominent individuals, a father and son, the former an exemplar of the Protestant ethic in colonial society, entering the country as an immigrant and ultimately becoming a successful member of the legal profession, and the latter a public servant at both the state and national levels who secured an appointment from President Jefferson, serving as Secretary of the State of New Jersey from 1805-1820.

The history of the Linn House and of the settlement of northwest Somerset County coincide. The arrival of this family with others of Scotch-Irish background in the 1740s led to the opening of this back-country of wilderness on Mine Mountain and the establishment of its future pattern of life: home farms of considerable acreage, with additional plantations in tenancy, and a comfortable house with multiple outbuildings, a number of orchards, and land all in fence.¹ These pioneers were later joined by their fellow Scotsman, William Alexander, Lord Stirling, James Alexander's son, who took over thousands of his father's acres and on his 1200-acre home estate -- entered at various points by white gates -- built a lavish brick Georgian mansion. His presence in the community may further have stirred the ambitions of more ordinary yeoman farmers to acquire wealth and rise in the social scale.

From the time of the Proprietary takeover of East New Jersey to the time a handful of Scotch-Irish immigrants sought out the Peapack River and Mine Brook valleys of the North Precinct (becoming Bernards Township in 1760) of Somerset County² the land had remained a wilderness held by a few but important land investors. The Elizabethtown Bill in Chancery (1745-47) maps out their claims. Among these landholders were Scotsmen, two of whom were James Alexander, a Proprietor, and Daniel Donaldson Dunstar, who entered into partnership in acquiring certain lands. Tract No. 119 of the Elizabethtown Bill, which lay

1. The comfortable state of living in this area is reflected in numerous advertisements.
2. In 1741, this "sparsely populated and relatively poorly endowed portion of the Watchungs and Highlands" was detached from Sussex County and added to Somerset County. In 1739, Morris County was erected just to the north. Peter O. Wacker, Land & People, p. 148.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 36.161 acres

Quadrangle name Gladstone, N.J.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	5	3	0	9	6	0	4	5	0	4	5	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

1	8	5	3	1	1	6	0	4	5	0	4	7	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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

D

1	8	5	3	1	3	2	0	4	5	0	4	0	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 6-B, Lot 3 in Far Hills Borough, Somerset County, NJ

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ursula C. Brecknell, Architectural Historian

organization Historic House Surveys

date 2/18/85

street & number 36 Ellis Drive

telephone (201) 359-3498

city or town Belle Mead

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

Helen C. Senese

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural Resources

date 6/26/86

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

Entered in the National Register

date 10-27-88

Melores Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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along the east side of the North Branch River and nestled against its northeasterly curving arm, then called the Peapack, was theirs. It had first been surveyed through the Proprietors' office in 1730, but the deed to these owners was not issued until January 1740/41, and it amounted to 1180 acres. Through it coursed the Mine Brook, a major westerly flowing tributary of the North Branch. This tract was flanked west of the river by the Peapack Patent and George Leslie's great tract; and on the east by William Penn's 7500-acre tract, which extended almost to the Passaic River.

Such sparse settlement as had occurred within the North Precinct had been at its eastern border near the Passaic River. When Alexander and Dunstar took ownership, they perhaps did so because of an awareness of the arrival of land-seekers just to the north in Morris County and to the west on the border with Hunterdon County, at Lamington, where a Presbyterian Church congregation had just been formed. The Peapack Patent was attracting tenants of modest means, and Penn's sons were also leasing out their lands. Among the latter's tenants was Jonathan Whitaker, who established a sawmill on the Mine Brook. Much of Penn's tract and adjacent tracts in Morris County were in a wilderness state, however, and agents were employed to catch poachers from Morris County who raided his forests for lumber, taking it to Whitaker's mill.¹ There was a basic road system in place by 1745, including the Mine Brook Road, in part, and another road connecting with it running westward to Lamington. Other roads came from the Passaic and through Bedminster Township connecting the Raritan River at Bound Brook with the Peapack.

At this time of beginnings, the Linn Family arrived, perhaps having learned that fellow Scotch-Irish had been settling in eastern Bernards Township and at Lamington. It is thought that the family immigrated to America about 1734, and

1. One incident was reported to the Colonial Assembly. Whitaker, though a justice of the peace, would not identify the culprits, partly because it would hurt his business, but also because he shared the views of settlers, stating "if the logs had been taken from a poor man or an honest man it had been another thing, but there was no such thing in nature as to wrong the Devilish Proprietors...." New Jersey Archives, Journal of Governor and Council, IV, 1748-55, p. 30.

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in 1740 were living on Long Island. John Linn, the progenitor, is next found in Somerset County in 1744, following his purchase of 200 acres in the Alexander-Dunstar tract, called by the sellers the Mine Brook lots on Peapack. A portion of the tract had been laid out in six or seven long, relatively narrow lots, each with a segment of the brook running through, with northern frontage on the Peapack. On the same day of purchase, John Linn's son William bought the adjacent tract on the east. Two years later, his other son Alexander bought the tract next to William's of 123 acres, which a James Lynn (Linn?), presumably another brother, surveyed for him. Upon John's death in 1746/47, in Somerset, his land passed to James and Joseph, another son. They appear to be the pioneers of the Mine Brook Valley, along with the two owners of the lots flanking theirs, also sold about this time. As late as 1760/62 Alexander Linn purchased the still available easternmost lot from the heirs of the two partners.

Owner-occupied farms were few during this decade. The list of freeholders for the entire precinct in 1753 numbered only 50. The decade of the 1750s, however, saw a surge of development on the Bedminster side of the North Branch River, as Dutch and Germans, migrating from other areas, took up lands;² among the latter nationality was Johannes Moelich, whose stone house, built in 1752, and farm at Lesser Crossroads (Bedminster Village) have been immortalized by his descendant Andrew Mellick. Moelich soon established a tannery on the Peapack, and a William Allan had a mill nearby in 1752. To reach his mill, another road was opened along the river, starting at Mendham, passing en route an Indian Wigwam, and finally, after winding around a turnip patch, arriving at the door of Hendrick Smith's son, Linn's westerly neighbor. In this same decade, German Lutherans built a church at nearby Pluckemin and the Dutch a Reformed Church a little north of it.

A year after his arrival with his father, Alexander Linn married a local girl, Sarah McCoy, whose father had a farm not distant -- between First and Second Mountain, Bridgewater Township. The following year, 1746, he bought his tract of land and presumably then built his bridal home, the subject of this

2. Norman Wittwer in The Faithful and the Bold has traced out German settlement in this area, pp. 8, 37ff.

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nomination. One year later he was set up in business as shopkeeper at Mine Brook, so described in his father-in-law's will. The importance of this service to the community is reflected in a request to the Highway Commissioners made in 1760 by the "back inhabitants of Baskenridge and Morris County" for a road to reach "the market of Alexander Linn."¹

As his purse prospered, Linn began to buy up real estate, first enlarging his home farm by 40 acres purchased along his west line from his brother William, and eventually buying all the Linn Family holdings as well as other tracts at Mine Brook, as the area was called. His status as resident was also on the rise, for he was named, first, a justice of the peace, by 1763, adding Esquire to his name, and later, a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Somerset County. He was also appointed an elder of the Lamington Church. By the time of his death, 1776, at 63, Squire Linn owned approximately 1100 acres of land. Referring to his roles as justice, judge, and elder, his tombstone inscription in the Lamington Church cemetery proclaims: "all which characters he supported with dignity and reputation. His family and the public deplore the loss they have sustained by his death."

Linn willed to his son James the home plantation of 163 acres, with life rights to his widow, and three other plantations and woodlot, for a total of 807 acres. The remaining land went to his daughter Margaret who had married a near neighbor, John Armstrong, whose father had a 500-acre farm. It was, as an advertisement for this in 1780 stated, "a good neighborhood". Armstrong's house stood two stories high, and had two kitchens. Other advertisements indicated houses with four fireplaces to a floor.

James Linn, born on the homestead in 1748, was at the beginning of his career when his father died. He had been given an education at the College of New Jersey, Princeton, and earned a law degree, followed by a Master's degree at the same institution in 1773. In 1776, Governor William Franklin appointed him attorney-at-law for New Jersey. It is said but not verified that he was one of the delegates sent to the Provincial Congress meeting at New Brunswick that year. With the outbreak of the Revolution, James Linn entered service as a captain but soon was made major in the first militia of Somerset County under William

1. Book A, Road Records, 1760, p. 48.

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Alexander, Lord Stirling, and served through the war, resigning in 1783. During this period he lived on the inherited homestead, which he described in an advertisement for a stolen horse as being "at Mine Brook". In the 1778 and 1780 ratables for Bernards Township he is listed with 700 taxable acres, 3 slaves, 39 horned cattle, 11 horses, 8 hogs, 200 pounds at interest, and a riding chair.

In 1778, Linn was elected to the State Council (Senate), marking the beginning of his career as statesman/politician. He was elected afterward to the State Assembly for the years 1791-93, and again to the State Senate, 1793-97, serving as its vice-president for his last two years, and to the House of Representatives, 1799-1801. It was as a New Jersey member of Congress that he was required to cast his vote in the process then in use to determine whether Aaron Burr or Thomas Jefferson would run as Republican Party candidate against Federalist John Adams, who was seeking his second term. In the then balance of power, New Jersey's vote was crucial. Its delegates were evenly split in their commitments and therefore, Linn's vote had to be the deciding one. He cast it for Jefferson, courageously voting against a fellow New Jerseyan. In a speech made in 1802, a Senator Bayard stated: "I know how great, and greatle felt, was the importance of the vote of Mr Linn, of New Jersey. The delegation of the State consists of five members.... Both parties looked up to him for the vote of New Jersey. He gave it to Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Linn has since had the profitable office of supervisor of his district conferred upon him."¹ The office referred to was supervisor of the state revenues. Linn became Secretary of State of New Jersey in 1805 and retained that post until his death in 1820. Up to 1810, he lived at Mine Brook, then took up permanent residence on State Street, Trenton.

James Linn, too, had invested in real estate, but shortly after the turn of the century he started selling his properties, some of which had been occupied by tenants. He had consolidated all the Linn farms into his home farm, making it a 583-acre parcel. In 1814, he finally sold his farm to Abraham J. Van Arsdale(n) of Bedminster, describing it as the place where he lately lived. Nine years after his death, Evelina, his only child, and other executors of his estate, bought back the homestead at sheriff's sale. The following year, 1831,

1. New York Herald, Dec. 23, 1876, cited in James P. Snell, History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, p. 638.

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Evelina and her husband, the Rev. Daniel J. McLean, of Ohio, split the farm into two parcels, selling the homestead portion of 304 acres to Daniel Whitenack of Hillsborough Township. This portion had the Mine Brook Road as its southern boundary. In subsequent deeds, it is still referred to as James Linn's former farm. Whitenack, like so many Dutchmen before him the preceding 100 years, seemed drawn to the hilly north country from the flatlands of Hillsborough and Franklin Townships, an area originally attractive to them as Lowlanders. Whitenack was undoubtedly responsible for making the final alterations on the house, mainly cosmetic, to bring it into the prevailing Greek Revival mode. In 1851, he in turn split the property, selling the houseless western portion to Jacob W. Whitenack. He willed the homestead farm to John A. Whitenack. J. Whitenack is shown on the maps of 1850, 1860, and 1873 as owning the house. It remained his home until 1897, when he issued a deed for it -- 143 acres -- to Erastus W. Whitenack of Michigan. In 1905, it was sold again by John A. Whitenack and others, including Erastus, now of Nebraska, through a Master of the Court to John F. Dillon, sometime judge in Somerset County.

This last transfer marks the break between the historical past of farms operated for a livelihood and the beginning of gentlemen's farms as part of prestigious estates for wealthy newcomers to the area. Dillon was one of several men drawn to the Somerset Hills through the activities -- beginning in the 1880s -- of Evander H. Schley,² a land broker and realtor from New York City, and his brother Grant B. Schley.² By 1897, Dillon already owned a portion of the tract to the east of Whitenack, which included another 18th-century house.

1. The preceding owner, Van Arsdalen, descended from a family which first settled south of the Raritan in Dutch townships. In mid-18th century, Jacobus Vanderveer of Hillsborough settled near Pluckemin, opening a mill. Jacobus Van Doren of the great mill-owning family of Franklin Township, built a mill at Bedminster shortly after Vanderveer began his. The Nevius family also came to Bedminster.
2. With the arrival of the railroad age, it became possible for rising New York industrialists to escape to county retreats. The DL&W railroad was brought into nearby Bernardsville, which led to the establishment of the "Mountain Colony" estates. With the proposal to extend this line to the villages of Peapack and Gladstone, New Yorkers became interested in the real estate of this area. The extension, running alongside Mine Brook and Peapack River, was opened in 1892. The area, called Far Hills, became distinguished for its farms and estates and was set apart as a borough in 1921.

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After Dillon's death, his executors, in 1919, sold his amalgamated estate of some 250 acres to Gustaf Kinnicutt, another wealthy New Yorker. Kinnicutt erected his own mansion some distance northeast of the Linn House on the next tract and turned over the old Linn dwelling house to his garden superintendent, who managed a staff of some 20 men. The neighboring old house was assigned to his resident farmer. During the years 1932-42, George Hawkins was superintendent of gardens and greenhouses (and prize-winner for his orchids exhibited at the New York Garden Shows), and it was during his occupancy that the Linn House was known as "Mayfields". Following the death of Mae Kinnicutt, W.H. Alward briefly held the property, and it then passed into the hands of realtors. In 1948, Dr. Charles Woodman acquired the house with 36 acres of land. With the passing of the era of great estates, and the rise of interest in American history, the Linn House was rediscovered and assumed its rightful name and a revered place in local pride.

Architectural Significance

The Linn Homestead offers an informative study of a house type that was erected in northern Somerset County at its time of settlement -- mid-18th century. In that this house is similar to other utilitarian structures built in this region by men of other cultural backgrounds, it points up the commonality of basic vernacular building.¹ It is not coincidence, however, that brought this about: it doubtless can be largely attributed to the lateness of time of building in terms of American history. The Linns, like many other settlers on newly opened lands, had been exposed to building types that had developed in old settlements. In their years prior to taking up land in Somerset, this family had commingled with Dutch and English on Long Island. They carried with them in memory certain basic forms. Just as surely they observed fellow settlers, especially Germans, erecting their new homes, and perhaps on a practical level exchanged ideas with them.

In its original phase, the Linn House appears to have been a one-story house of two-room depth, raised on a lightly embanked full-height foundation used as their ground floor. Minor differences between the two halves of the ground

1. An anomaly is the Tempe Wicke House in the vicinity of nearby Morristown. This center-chimney house reflects the New England influence of the original settlers of Morris Co.

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level may indicate construction took place at different times. However, the fact that the builder, Alexander Linn, was in business as shopkeeper in 1747, one year after he bought the property, argues in favor of a substantial structure at an early date. This pioneer house in Bernards (formerly, now Far Hills), exhibits the proportions and construction techniques associated with its near contemporaries elsewhere in the county.

The foundation wall is, expectedly, of stone. But at the same time, with its developed facade containing door and window, it takes on the aspect of a masonry house, especially one of the 1750s, when openings more often than not were bridged by segmental arches. This treatment used here seems stylistic, a personal choice. Whether Linn copied it from other houses he observed -- though there were few stone houses at this date in Somerset (though perhaps more in Hunterdon) -- or himself became the model for others cannot be known. Within the following decades at least four other houses with this feature were erected by Scots-Irish and British in eastern Bernards Township.

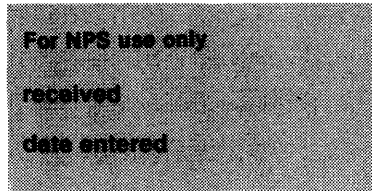
Another feature to be noted is its embankment. This was dictated, in part by the terrain, but it was also a building practice in use by Germans and British. It is curious, nonetheless, that Linn did not follow convention and front his house to the south and to the road before his door (as is the case in the next house east).

The framing is post and girt, not the bent system employed by the Dutch, but the timbers are as massive as those favored by that nationality. The system seems overbuilt, for despite their size the beams are spaced relatively close to each other, even doubled for hall support, and then undergirded with a still more massive beam. Although there was no reason for Linn to be sparing of the timber with a virgin forest at hand, there must have been another reason for him to build so stoutly. A similarity has been noted to German construction in the use of an underlying timber. On the other hand, the framing of the first story follows conventional spacing with intersticing of the most forthright, time-honored material -- mud bound with hay and hair.

1. This feature does not have to be adjudged a German influence, however, although Moelich's stone house, built by a German mason for him in 1752, also has arched openings as did the razed Baltus Pickel House in nearby German-settled Hunterdon County. Similar archwork can be seen on Dutch-built houses in Montgomery (Somerset) and Readington (Hunterdon) Townships.

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One of the most striking features at the first story level is the continuation of the stone foundation along the south gable wall to form an exposed chimney back for the double flues of the three fireplaces, if indeed the third fireplace in the parlor existed at first. This more shallow base would have been added later. The exposed chimney back of overwhelming size is not unique though scarcely encountered. One similar to it commands the gable wall of a mid-century Dutch house in Franklin Township, Somerset County.

In their scale and dominance of floor area, the chimney bases used for cooking fireplaces and storage cupboard are particularly informative about early construction as well as room interiors. Although in primitive houses in this area few cooking fireplaces are found in the cellar, there is some evidence that they were occasionally placed there rather than in an adjunct building. In an embanked building it made good sense. Besides, if Linn used this ground level for his store, which is more than likely, these fireplaces may have served some role in its operation apart from warming the rooms. (A tale, seemingly of recent vintage, that this house was a drover's inn appears to have no basis.) The storage cupboard built under a vast chimney arch is original to the house and a rare survivor of this feature. Though it is unfortunate that the daub-constructed interior wall of same vintage was recently removed, the rooms yet convey a strong feel for the physical surroundings of the first occupants.

While the greatest interest lies in the ground level, which best preserves the cultural artifacts of a c.1750 vernacular dwelling, the first story tells of ongoing evolution, which is the history of many old houses. It has not been possible to determine at what stage the center hall was introduced, though center-hall plans began to be adopted in the second half of the 18th century for houses otherwise utilitarian in plan. With the double framing for the support of hall walls, it is somewhat difficult to know whether the hall width was altered or always had its relatively narrow dimensions. The staircase set in a niche created by taking space from the rear room appears to be an after-thought, and if so, then an example of how practical solutions were found for challenging problems. Undoubtedly, there was an earlier stairway to the garret, perhaps similar to the enclosed one now leading to ground story, but there is no evidence of its location.

1. This does not compare with floor plans in which staircase niches are deliberately designed as hall offsets, as in the William Trent House, Trenton, or Bainbridge House, Princeton.

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It is also of interest to note that the room proportions on this story differ from those on the second story. Not only do the dividing walls not relate to the transverse beam below the floor timbers, which is slightly to the front of center, but they are set somewhat back of center. The narrower width of rear rooms recalls Dutch proportions. Whether such an influence is seen here it is impossible to state. When the second story was added, room partitioning did not conform with the plan below, as one might have expected, but instead created four rooms of about equal size.

With the addition of the recessed story-and-a-half wing against a two-story main block, the house was brought into the mainstream of local farmhouse style. The mounting of a gambrel roof gave it a fillip of sorts, a stylistic plus proclaiming it au courant. Some of the better, substantial new houses of the era being erected nearby sported such roofs. The mantelpiece was probably a stock item purchased from a craftsman's shop. An almost identical one can be seen as far away as Ohio, in a house built in 1820. (There may in fact be some direct connection, for Judge John Symmes of nearby Basking Ridge was one of the organizers of a land purchase on the Miami River, and a number of local residents migrated there.)

The final update some decades later was constrained, exhibiting an unwillingness to discard good and serviceable components though out of style. Apart from a new hall floor and some architraves, the first floor was left unchanged. The second story, though ordinarily not a showplace, became -- perhaps for the first time -- a place for refined living subject to stylish decor. The facade as a whole, perhaps even to new flush-laid board siding, was given a Greek Revival mien.

In summary, the Linn Homestead incorporates a hundred years of building history in terms of fabric, form, construction, and stylish features in the northern countryside of Somerset County. It records the kind of dwelling house first built in the area and how indigenous a type it became; and it records as well the process -- as practiced in the countryside -- of transforming a settler's dwelling into a stylish farmhouse by reworking, redecorating, and building upon the original structure.

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Interviews:

Gertrude Vanderhoff, Bernardsville, local historian, December 1984

Mary Kouslie (nee Hawkins), former resident of Linn House, December 1984, of Far Hills

Dr. Charles Woodman, previous owner of Linn House, November 1984, now in New England

Maps:

Robert Erskine, Map No. 14, Somerset County, showing Mine Brook Road, c.1778

Lt. John Hills, Map of Somerset County, 1781, from Benjamin Morgan's surveys of 1766

Map of Somerset County, 1850. Otley, Vanderveer & Keily

Map of Philadelphia, Trenton, and Vicinity, 1860. Lake & Beers

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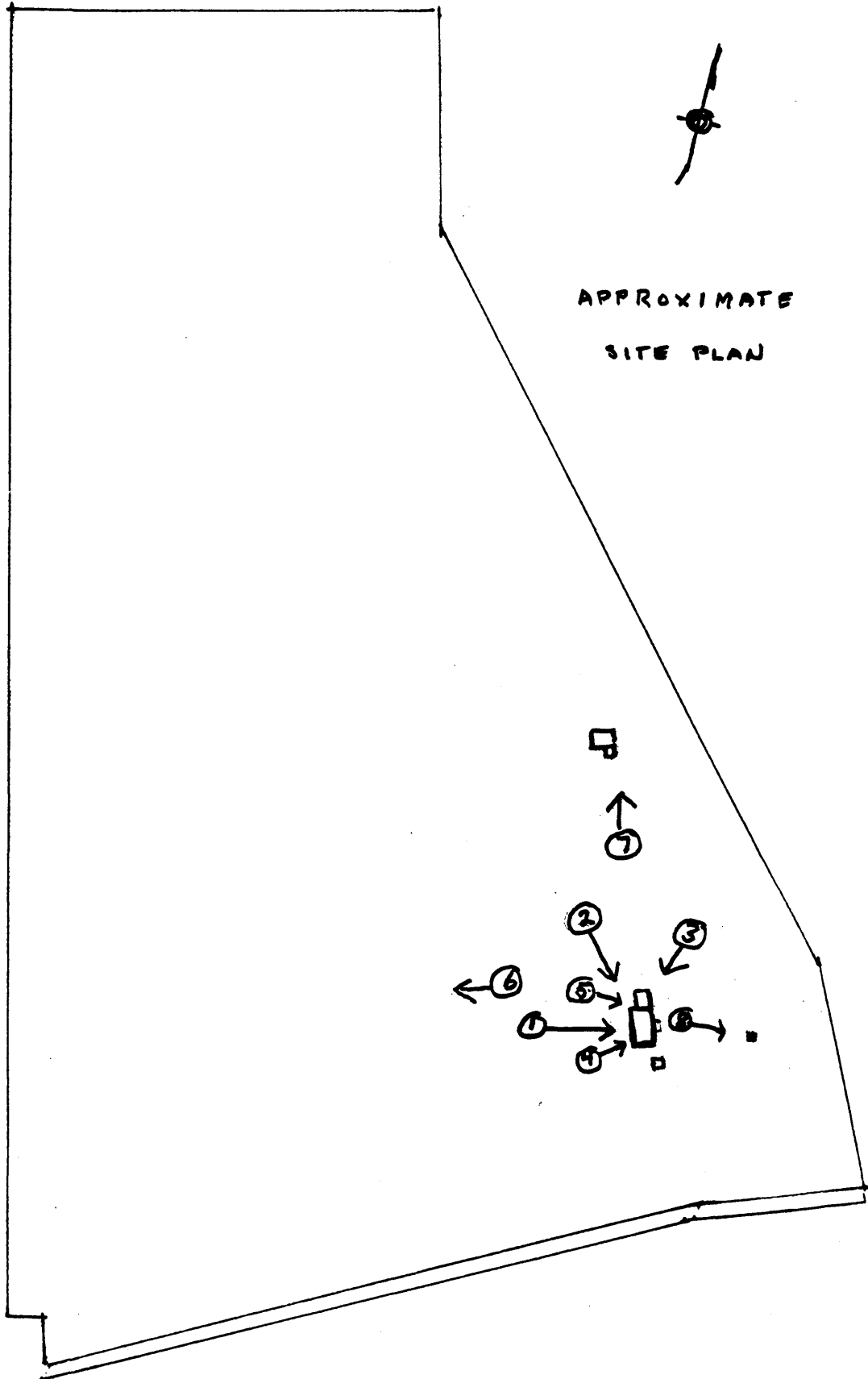
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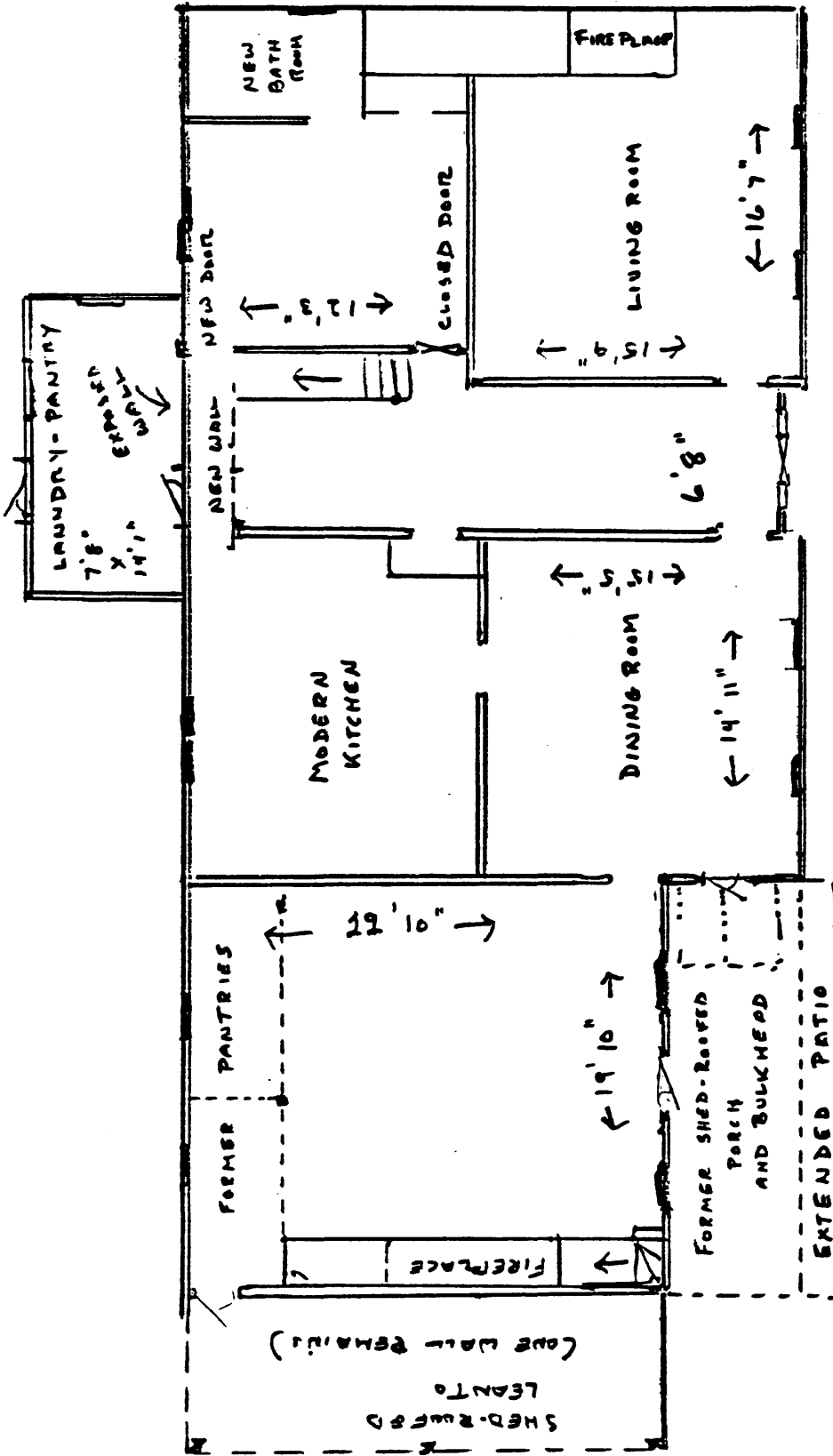
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The Alexander and James Linn Homestead

Far Hills Borough
Somerset County, N.J.

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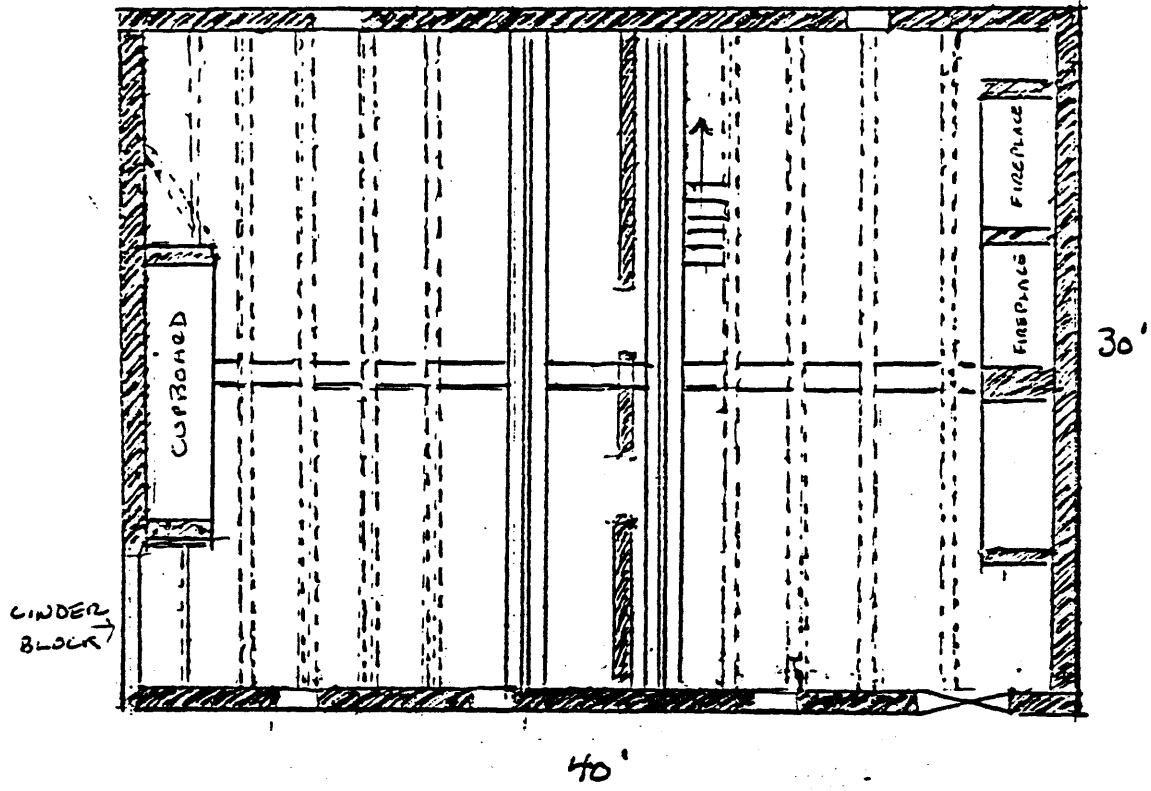


first floor plan

Alexander and James Linn Homestead

Far Hills, New Jersey

(Somerset County)



ground-floor (foundation level)

Alexander and James Linn Homestead

Far Hills, New Jersey
(Somerset County)

Alexander and James Linn Homestead
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