

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional information and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Van der Veer - Harris House
other names/site number Van Derveer House

2. Location

street & number 344 U.S. Highway 206 not for publication
city or town Hillsborough Township vicinity
state New Jersey code NJ county Somerset code 035 zip code 08844

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Amy Cradic 12/19/07
Signature of certifying official Date

Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain): _____

Elson H. Beall 3.12.08
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	0
1	0

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

HEALTH CARE/Medical Business/Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

stone

walls

wood

roof

asphalt shingle

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1940 - 1949

Significant Dates

1940 - 1949

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Chester A. Patterson, architect (Colonial Revival)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of Repository:
Rutgers Special Collections & University Archives

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 9.439 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 18 530977 4484325
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ann M Keen, Architectural Historian
organization Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects, LLC date February 2007
street & number 200 Forrestal Road telephone 609/452-1777
city or town Princeton state NJ zip code 08540

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

organization Township of Hillsborough
street & number 379 South Branch Road telephone 908/369-8382
city or town Hillsborough state NJ zip code 08844

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
Description**

Section 7 Page 1

The Van der Veer – Harris House is a 2-story, double-pile frame house of 18th- and 19th-century origin, which was thoroughly remodeled in the Colonial Revival style between 1940 and 1950. It stands at 344 U.S. Highway 206, on the west side of the highway, currently set back approximately 200 feet from the road in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County, New Jersey. One modification to the site consists of expanding the right-of-way for the widening of U.S. Route 206, which is currently underway. The right-of-way and easements will decrease the building's set back by approximately 66 feet.

The building currently faces north, although it was originally oriented to the south. It stands on a partially wooded lot with a modern housing development to the north and west and a large asphalt parking lot across the driveway on the north side of the house. A few trees and scrub bush that currently obscure the view of the house will be removed during the widening of U.S. Route 206, increasing the visibility of the house from the road.

Structural elements, namely framing elements present in the cellar and attic, suggest the building was originally built circa 1780-1800 as a side-passage double-pile plan. It was three bays wide and two rooms deep with a side hall entry, now occupying the western half of the main block of the house. The house was enlarged soon after the initial phase, circa 1800-1815, when the side hall was widened to become the central hall and two bays were added to the eastern side of the existing house. Also, sometime between the original construction of the house and the early 19th century, a kitchen wing was added to the western end of the house. This wing was dismantled by the mid-20th-century owner of the house, Dr. Robert Harris, and then reconstructed as part of the Colonial Revival renovations that Harris undertook in the 1940s.

As it stands today, the building consists of three sections: the central block with smaller wings on both the east and west ends. It is a frame house finished on the exterior with wide clapboards. Evidence exists in the cellar and attic that the house was constructed using English framing, unlike many of the Somerset County historic houses in the area, which typically feature Dutch framing. Elements have been added to the building, as numerous additions and renovations have taken place over the years. The majority of the current Colonial Revival appearance of the Van der Veer – Harris House, both interior and exterior, is the result of renovations undertaken by Dr. Robert Harris beginning in 1940, designed and executed by architect Chester A. Patterson. In addition to reconstructing the kitchen wing, Harris added a porch to the east end of the house, which has subsequently been enclosed. To the south elevation (the original front of the house), Harris installed a full-width grand portico. The post-1940 renovations extended to the interior of the Van der Veer – Harris House as well. All rooms were restyled to incorporate Colonial Revival decor.

Exterior

The house consists of three sections: the main section is at the center with smaller wings on both the east and west ends. The house features wide clapboards that are painted white. The majority of windows are 20th-century replacements, double-hung wood windows with triple-track aluminum storm windows and applied, non-functional plastic shutters installed in recent years. Regarding the origin of much of the

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Van der Veer – Harris House
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building's exterior decorative elements, it is difficult to discern their age definitively without additional study. In light of the vast experience architect Chester Patterson had with the Colonial Revival (see Section 8 for details), the majority of details are presumed to date from the 1940s renovations.

The main section is a five-bay, two-story, side-gabled building with an asphalt shingle roof. In the late 18th century, the house had three bays, the easternmost bay serving as a stair hall running the length of the double-pile plan. Two interior chimneys were located on either side of the roof ridge at the western end of the house. When the residence was expanded in the early 19th century, two bays were added to the eastern end of the house and two chimneys were added also. One of these chimneys was replaced by a false chimney during the 1940s renovations.

Currently, the main entrance is on the north side of the building facing the driveway and parking lot. **(Photo 1)** This elevation presents a symmetrical façade with a center door and two windows to each side on the first floor and five windows centered above these openings on the second floor. The center window on this elevation is an arched, 14-over-12-light window at the intermediate landing of the main stair. This window was added during the post 1940 renovation of the house. A wide frieze with very shallow, carved triglyphs and a continuous row of small dentils runs across the north façade of the main section.

The original entrance to the house would have been on the south elevation, with the view overlooking the countryside. It also presents a symmetrical façade. **(Photo 2)** As with the north elevation, there are three first-floor openings and five windows centered above on the second story. A flat-roofed, two-story portico, which runs the full width of the house, dominates the south elevation, the building's original façade. It is supported on nine-inch-square, unadorned pillars that rest on the brick porch. The entrance door on this side is centered between two projecting bay windows with a large picture window at the center, flanked by ten-light wood casement windows. The bay windows were installed as part of the 1940s renovations and the casement windows are replacements. The entry door itself is a heavy six-panel stile-and-rail door with a wide locking rail and ornamental raised panels. It is flanked by leaded sidelights with oval-pattern coming set above wood dado panels containing carved oval medallions. Fluted pilasters separate the different sections of the entrance, the whole of which is topped with a Federal-style carved wood fan ornament. **(Photo 3)** The door surround may have been installed during the 1800-1815 expansion, but it is difficult to make that determination based on style alone. The decorative wood frieze on this elevation contains a shallow pattern of repeating miniature segmental arches set on columns. **(Photo 4)** This frieze would most likely have been installed during the 1940s renovation, as part of the grand portico design implemented by Dr. Harris.

The east wing was added during the 1940s renovations and originally served as a porch. It was later enclosed. It is a one-story, side-gabled structure. **(Photo 5)** Centered in the gable of the east elevation there is a six-over-six double-hung window with a recessed, arched panel above. **(Photo 6)** On the first floor level there is a single window on each of the three elevations. It is presumed that the 1940s porch would have reflected the Colonial Revival program, but there is no remaining evidence visible.

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The west wing is a 1-½ story, side-gabled building. (Photo 7) Records indicate there was an addition on this side of the main section that would have included a bake oven and a cooking fireplace. While this wing would not have been part of the original footprint of the side-passage, double-pile house, it may have been added later in the 18th century. According to historian Ursula Brecknell, the wing was in poor condition when Harris purchased it, “with evidence of chicken coops on the upper floor.”¹ He then dismantled it in the 1940s and constructed a similar wing with the same configuration. There is no evidence that any of the original materials were reused. There are two evenly spaced gable-front dormers on both the north and south sides of the building at the second floor level; these dormers project partially through the slope of the main roof. Along the north and west sides of this section is a shed roof extension at the first floor level. The north wall of this projection contains three six-over-six double hung windows and a round, fixed-sash nine-light window at the eastern end. The west wall of this extension contains a single six-over-six window and an entrance containing a Dutch door. The south elevation contains matching dormer windows at the upper level, and a single entrance and two sets of casement windows at the first floor. A parged masonry chimney, similar to those of the main section, extends through the peak of the roof at the west end of this section.

Interior

The interior finishes of the Van der Veer House reflect, almost exclusively, the Colonial Revival changes undertaken circa 1940. Although it appears that portions of the house were possibly constructed in the 18th century, the only interior elements that reflect 18th and/or 19th century construction are the stone foundation, wood flooring and the wood frame, visible in the cellar and attic.

The frame of the main section of the house consists of a combination of hewn and sawn members. Hewn members in the main house consist of the summer beam, approximately half of the first-floor joists, sill plates, principal joists at the attic floor, principal posts, queen posts, purlins, rafters and, while not visible, presumably girts as well. Sawn members include joists at the east end of the first floor and secondary joists at the entire attic floor. The second floor framing was not exposed for survey. The framing at the first floor level consists of heavy hewn joists running north south and mortised into sill plates at the foundation walls and an east/west summer beam at the center of the building. This configuration can be found from the east side of the main stair hall to the west wall of the main house. To the east of this, 3" x 7" joists running north/south are also mortised into the sill plate at the north and south walls and at the summer beam in the center of the building. The summer beam is obscured along much of its length, so it was not possible to determine whether or not it is a single timber. In the attic, a 9" x 6" summer beam extends the length of the attic, although a section has been replaced with a wood beam installed at the time the attic stair was installed during the 1940s renovations. Based on the roof framing and second floor ceiling framing in the west addition, it is presumed that all framing in this section of the house consists of nominal 2x framing material. This is consistent with the understanding that this section of the house was reconstructed circa 1940.

¹ Ursula C. Brecknell, *Hillsborough: An Architectural History*, Neshanic, NJ: Township of Hillsborough, 1996, 123.

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Cellar

There are four main rooms in the cellar beneath the central block of the house. The two west rooms would have comprised the cellar of the original house, being situated under the two original west rooms and original side hall on the first floor. The northwest room shows the building's rubble-stone foundation with a worn whitewash finish. The ceiling features squared hewn joists with wide plank flooring visible above and a worn whitewash finish. An original hewn timber angled header marks the location of the fireplace in the southwest corner of this room. **(Photo 8)** The joists run north/south and are mortised into the summer beam that runs above the partition at the south side of the room and into the sill plate at the north side of the room. There is an area of poured concrete below the hearth area of the fireplace in the room above in which appears a reverse impression of the date "1940." This is a result of concrete being poured over a form containing sand in which the date was written. This date corresponds with the date that the prior owner told the current tenant that they had undertaken extensive renovations of the house.

In the southwest room, the joists beneath the section of the house to the west of the central hall are 6½" wide at about 39" on center. This joist configuration beneath the hall consists of transverse beams running between large principal hewn girders. There are two sections of these joists: one is approximately 7-feet wide, and the other section, beneath the east edge of the central hall, is approximately 3-feet wide. The larger section appears to be roughly the size of the original side hall, with the smaller, 3-foot section perhaps indicating a later expansion. Without further investigation, a complete explanation of the framing chronology is not possible. There is a 20th-century brick fireplace at the west wall with a projecting brick mantel. There is evidence in the first floor framing of an earlier larger fireplace foundation in this area.

The northeast room, like the northwest room, has approximately 12 inches of CMU infill above the stone foundation, upon which the hewn sill plate sits. This presents two possibilities: 1) the house or a portion of the house was raised, or 2) the top portion of the stone foundation was failing and subsequently replaced with this CMU portion. The east wall is dominated by a stone fireplace foundation roughly centered along this wall and a newer CMU fireplace foundation in the south corner, which spans the south wall and continues into the southeastern room. The east portion of the ceiling contains 3" x 7" sawn joists about 24" on center. Wide flooring is visible above the joists in some areas. The framing at the west end of the room, consistent with framing changes and characteristics in the rest of the cellar, is comprised of heavy, hewn timber framing.

The southeast room is dominated by a roughly centered stone fireplace foundation on the east wall and the CMU fireplace foundation that is also contained in the northeast room. The original stone fireplace foundation retains the original framing for the opening and brick arch hearth support with original wood plaster lath although most of the plaster has been lost. **(Photo 9)** The ceiling features open 3" x 7" sawn joists about 24" on center, with tongue and groove wood flooring visible above.

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First Floor

The central hall features a grand staircase that rises from the northwest corner of the hall. **(Photo 10)** A decorative segmental wood arch with a fluted keystone separates the north and south halves of the hall. The arch is supported on either side by a paneled engaged pier with fluted sides under a very wide projecting capital. **(Photo 11)** (None of the finish treatments in the first and second stories are original; all are the product of the 1940s remodeling.)

On the west side of the central hall are two rooms, which, with the main hall, are presumed to comprise the original section of the house. The northwest room has a fireplace in the southwest corner, and features a high level of decorative trim: the south door features scalloped panels; the 7" wood baseboard has an ogee cap and quarter-round; crown moulding is installed around the perimeter of the room; and the fireplace surround has decorative wood panels. **(Photo 12)**

Like the northwest room, the southwest room contains finishes and architectural features reflecting the Colonial Revival renovations. Again, the wood trim is highly decorative, including an 8" baseboard with ogee cap, crown moulding, and raised 6-panel doors with a decorative panel. In addition, this room features a painted plaster dado with a chair rail set 27 ½" from the floor. The fireplace, roughly centered on the west wall, features a decorative tile surround and wood mantel. **(Photo 13)**

There is a single room to the east of the central hall, added circa 1800-1815, which extends the full depth of the house. Based on the evidence of two separate masonry fireplace foundations at the east end of the cellar, this space was likely divided into two rooms, one to the north and one to the south. The two rooms were combined, and a single fireplace, with the new CMU foundation in the cellar, was installed in the 1940s at the center of the east wall with extensive paneling on either side. **(Photo 14)** The panels themselves are of flat, painted plaster with wood stiles and rails. A chair rail separates the upper and lower panels. A crown moulding with a denticulated band beneath extends around the perimeter of the room. Two fluted pilasters flanking the fireplace have florets at their capitals. A hidden door at the north end of this panel provides access to a large storage closet behind the paneling. The door casing is deeply fluted with ornate bulls-eye corner blocks.

The east wing is a porch that has been fully enclosed. The porch structure was most likely an addition installed with the 1940s renovations and then enclosed at a later date. Finishes are late 20th century.

On the first floor, the west wing, rebuilt in the 1940s, contains several rooms, two sets of stairs (one leading to the cellar and one leading to the second floor) and a short hall leading to the entrance to the wing on the west elevation.

Second Floor

The grand staircase leads to a central circulation space on the second floor, accessing four primary rooms in the main section of the house, which reflect the presumed room divisions on the first floor after the expansion from a two-room, side-hall house. All finishes are presumed to date from the 1940s

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renovations. **(Photo 15)** The hall features a decorative baseboard 8 ¾" high overall with a 5 ½" flat at the base, a 2" dado and a 1¼" beaded cove cap. Door and window casing in the hall is a 5-inch casing typical of rooms on the east side of the house (the 1800-1815 expansion). At the ceiling, there is a small, beaded cove crown moulding.

There are two primary rooms in the original west section of the main block. The northwest room features a 6" baseboard with a filleted quarter-round cap. The window and door casings in this room have been removed and currently the plaster runs up to the window and doorjamb. **(Photo 16)** The crown is the beaded cove moulding found throughout the second floor. The southwest room has a 5 ½" beaded baseboard, crown moulding, and more modest window casings than those found in the east rooms on the second floor, as they do not extend all the way to the ground as they do in the two eastern rooms. In general, the finishes in the southwest room are generally not as high as east rooms on this floor. There is a Colonial Revival fireplace on the west wall that, while similar to the fireplace in the southeast room, is decidedly less ornate. **(Photo 17)**

As noted, the two primary rooms in the eastern half of the main block are more elaborately executed than the rooms in the western half. In both rooms, window casings extend to the floor creating a break in the baseboard and a plaster panel below the windowsill. In the northeast room, the baseboard is an 8" base with a beaded cove cap, the door and window casing is 5" casing, and the crown moulding is beaded cove moulding typical for this section of the house. **(Photo 18)** In the southeast room, the baseboard is the same as in the northeast room, and the door and window casings have the same profile and configuration as in the northeast room. Crown moulding in the southeast room is somewhat larger than that in the north room. Overall, this room displays a somewhat higher level of elaboration than the others on this floor. **(Photo 19)** Also of note is the presence of two alcoves in this section of the house, one to the south of the fireplace in the southwest room, and one to the south of the fireplace in the southeast room.

The second floor of the west addition has two main rooms, one to the north and one to the south. There is a door in the south room that leads up one stair to the main block of the house. Finishes throughout are similar to that found in the southwest room of the main block.

Attic

The attic is one open space with loose, wide plank flooring. The floor framing consists of an off-center hewn summer beam running east/west, which is not centered under the roof ridge, but to the north of center, approximately 2-3 feet. **(Photos 20, 21)** The original joists are 2" x 6" vertical sawn joists roughly 15" on-center, which have been sistered with new 2x framing. Heavier principal joists support 5" x 5" queen posts and are in line with the walls defining the east and west walls of the stair. There are very brief knee-walls at the north and south walls where the top of the wall framing is visible. Principal vertical posts are in line with the stair walls; they are fairly regular studs. The east and west gable walls are framed with vertical studs with the exterior clapboards applied directly to the framing and visible on the inside.

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The ceiling consists of open, hewn tapered rafters with 5¼" beaded roof sheathing applied to them. Some of the rafters appear to have been reused with evidence of previous mortises. The rafters are joined with tongue and fork joints at the apex. The roof rafters are supported at approximately mid-span by a hewn 6" x 5" purlin and are bird-mouthed at hewn rafter plates running along the north and south walls of the house. **(Photo 22)** The purlins are supported by queen posts and either the brick chimneys or principal studs in the gable walls at their ends. The queen posts are stabilized in two directions by knee braces connecting to the principal floor-joists and diagonal braces connected to the purlins.

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**Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
Statement of Significance**

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Summary

The historic significance of the Van der Veer – Harris House in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County, resides in its exemplary reflection of the Colonial Revival aesthetic prevalent in America, beginning with the Centennial celebration in Philadelphia in 1876 and continuing into the 20th century. Architectural historian Dell Upton describes the impetus behind the revival: “The Colonial Revival was an origin myth told through landscape...it adopted the rhetoric of a revitalization movement, harkening back to a time when people were ostensibly more virtuous, more public-spirited, more homogeneous, and led simpler lives. Its aim was to counter the sectional division, political corruption, ethnic cacophony, and cultural erosion that Colonial Revivalists believed they saw around them.”¹ A mid-20th-century owner of the house, Dr. Robert Harris, obviously appreciative of the aesthetic the Colonial Revival represented, completely renovated the building in the style, harkening back to its 18th century origins.

Built during the latter half of the 18th century or perhaps the first years of the 19th century, the building was the residence of Dr. Lawrence Van der Veer, a prominent local doctor and the son of an early settler in the area, Jacob Van der Veer. Successive generations of Van der Veers kept the house before it was sold out of the family, and records and correspondence confirm that several of these Van der Veers continued a family tradition of medical practice, using a portion of the house as their medical office. This unique life of the house continued even after its sale, when in the years following, several medical professionals purchased and occupied the home in succession, even through to the second half of the 20th century. In 1940 its then-owner, Dr. Robert Harris, incorporated the Colonial Revival style that is visible throughout the house, renovating it to reflect what he envisioned as sympathetic to its original design. It is this Colonial Revival reinterpretation of the building that gives Van der Veer House its local significance under Criterion C for architecture, for which it is being nominated. A Criterion A or B claim for local significance in medical history or significant persons is not being argued at this time.

Van der Veer – Harris House Early History

Jacob Van der Veer (1702/3-1777) settled in what was known as Roycefield, New Jersey (now encompassed by Hillsborough), in the 1730s, purchasing large land parcels totaling 430 acres. In 1743 he acquired additional land in the Bedminster area and opened grist and saw mills on the Raritan River.² Some time between 1743 and 1750, Jacob moved to Bedminster to oversee his holdings. Records indicate that Dr. Lawrence Van der Veer was born on the Roycefield estate in 1740/1 (d. 1815). He received title to that estate with the death of his father in 1777. In dividing his vast land holdings in New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia, Jacob’s will bequeathed to his “son Lowrens 430 acres on which he lives,” in addition to 300 acres in Virginia.³

Lawrence graduated from Princeton in 1766 and trained in the medical profession soon afterward. He was an early member of the New Jersey Medical Society, founded in 1766. Records indicate his first wife,

¹ Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States*, Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 81-82.

² Information according to documentation gathered by the Friends of the Jacobus Van der Veer House in Bedminster.

³ New Jersey Wills, 18: 558-59. HPO.

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Summary

The historic significance of the Van der Veer – Harris House in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County, resides in its exemplary reflection of the Colonial Revival aesthetic prevalent in America, beginning with the Centennial celebration in Philadelphia in 1876 and continuing into the 20th century. Architectural historian Dell Upton describes the impetus behind the revival: “The Colonial Revival was an origin myth told through landscape...it adopted the rhetoric of a revitalization movement, harkening back to a time when people were ostensibly more virtuous, more public-spirited, more homogeneous, and led simpler lives. Its aim was to counter the sectional division, political corruption, ethnic cacophony, and cultural erosion that Colonial Revivalists believed they saw around them.”¹ A mid-20th-century owner of the house, Dr. Robert Harris, obviously appreciative of the aesthetic the Colonial Revival represented, completely renovated the building in the style, harkening back to its 18th century origins.

Built during the latter half of the 18th century or perhaps the first years of the 19th century, the building was the residence of Dr. Lawrence Van der Veer, a prominent local doctor and the son of an early settler in the area, Jacob Van der Veer. Successive generations of Van der Veers kept the house before it was sold out of the family, and records and correspondence confirm that several of these Van der Veers continued a family tradition of medical practice, using a portion of the house as their medical office. This unique life of the house continued even after its sale, when in the years following, several medical professionals purchased and occupied the home in succession, even through to the second half of the 20th century. In 1940 its then-owner, Dr. Robert Harris, incorporated the Colonial Revival style that is visible throughout the house, renovating it to reflect what he envisioned as sympathetic to its original design. It is this Colonial Revival reinterpretation of the building that gives Van der Veer House its local significance under Criterion C for architecture, for which it is being nominated.

Van der Veer – Harris House Early History

Jacob Van der Veer (1702/3-1777) settled in what was known as Roycefield, New Jersey (now encompassed by Hillsborough), in the 1730s, purchasing large land parcels totaling 430 acres. In 1743 he acquired additional land in the Bedminster area and opened grist and saw mills on the Raritan River.² Some time between 1743 and 1750, Jacob moved to Bedminster to oversee his holdings. Records indicate that Dr. Lawrence Van der Veer was born on the Roycefield estate in 1740/1 (d. 1815). He received title to that estate with the death of his father in 1777. In dividing his vast land holdings in New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia, Jacob’s will bequeathed to his “son Lowrens 430 acres on which he lives,” in addition to 300 acres in Virginia.³

Lawrence graduated from Princeton in 1766 and trained in the medical profession soon afterward. He was an early member of the New Jersey Medical Society, founded in 1766. Records indicate his first

¹ Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States*, Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 81-82.

² Information according to documentation gathered by the Friends of the Jacobus Van der Veer House in Bedminster.

³ New Jersey Wills, 18: 558-59. HPO.

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**Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
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wife, Maria Schenck (b. 1749), passed away in 1777 at age 28.⁴ Perhaps Van der Veer House was built for the newly married couple prior to 1777, but no evidence has been discovered to prove this definitively. At some time during the Revolutionary War, perhaps after the death of his wife and his father in 1777, Lawrence moved to Virginia to practice medicine. He returned to Roycefield at some point, however, and married Mary Onderdonk (1752-1812). Their first child, Maria, was born in April 1780, so they were married probably sometime in 1779. It is also possible that Van der Veer House was built to accommodate this second marriage. Both of Lawrence's wives were originally buried in the family burial ground on the Van der Veer House property, prior to their reinterment in Bedminster.

According to local historian Ursula Brecknell, upon his death in 1815, Lawrence left the property to his son John, aka Johannes, who was also a doctor, and who may have been responsible for the expansion of Van der Veer House between 1800-1815.⁵ Records indicate that another son of Lawrence's, Henry Van der Veer, occupied the Roycefield property in the early decades of the 19th century as well. Dr. Henry Van der Veer (1791-1874) was a graduate of Princeton (1811), and a student in the Department of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania from 1813 to 1815. He returned to Roycefield to practice medicine soon after his study in Philadelphia (he did not graduate). According to his biography published by the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Henry was "active in the medical societies of New Jersey, serving on the Board of Censors of the District Medical Society of Somerset County and presiding as President of the Medical Society of New Jersey in 1836."⁶ Henry may also have been responsible for some renovations to Van der Veer House in the 1830s, although no specific records have been uncovered to date.

Given the lack of concrete evidence, there are a number of scenarios possible for the origins of the Van der Veer – Harris House. The original west wing, along with a kitchen wing may have been built during the latter part of Jacob's ownership, during Lawrence's youth, and then Lawrence and Mary Onderdonk enlarged the house after their three children were born between 1780 and 1791. Or perhaps it was built by Lawrence prior to his marriage to Maria Schenck or to Mary Onderdonk in the last quarter of the 18th century, later to be enlarged by one of his sons, either John or Henry, in the early 19th century. What is known, however, is that the original building, as discussed in Section 7, would have been the western portion of the main building: two rooms deep with a side hall entry. Joists in the cellar and attic bear this out, and the fact that the framing is English style would lead to the assumption that the current structure is not the building first erected on the lot by Jacob Van der Veer in the 1730s, but as discussed, the building, or a significantly smaller section of it, may have been built by Jacob prior to his death in 1777, when English framing would have been more common throughout the area.

⁴ While her birth and death dates are known, it is not known when the couple was married.

⁵ Ursula Brecknell, *Hillsborough: An Architectural History*, Neshanic, NJ: Township of Hillsborough, Historic Preservation Committee, 1996, 120.

⁶ Biography accessed online at <http://www.collphyphil.org> as a finding aid to Henry Van Derveer's notes from Doctor Chapman's lectures on material medica, part of the College's holdings, call no. 10a/403 (Hirsch 151).

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Van der Veer – Harris House
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Colonial Revival Era

While its earliest history has yet to be determined definitively, its significance to the community of Hillsborough has been widely recognized. Dr. Robert Harris purchased the property circa 1940, continuing the tradition of health science occupants of the building. He undertook a renovation plan that gives the Van der Veer – Harris House its architectural significance as a fine local example of the Colonial Revival style in Hillsborough.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Colonial Revival aesthetic arose as a “reaction against the ornate eclecticism of late 19th-century architecture...Colonial Revival was promoted as a ‘national’ style, rooted in the foundations of the [nation] and suited to [its] environment and culture.”⁷ Ironically enough, prompted by the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, ostensibly a large-scale fair to celebrate the advance of manufacturing and the arts worldwide, Colonial Revivalism celebrated the pre-industrial history of America. The significance of America’s 100th anniversary of nationhood took precedence and both philosophical nationalism and its practical result in architecture found their audience soon after and continued through to the middle of the 20th century.

After the Centennial Exhibition, there was a groundswell of nostalgia for the perceived simplicity, purity, and virtue of early America. Other Victorian-era styles, including Queen Anne, were perceived as too elaborate and fussy. As the movement continued into the 20th century, the emphasis evolved from national pride and nostalgia to a more dedicated effort to ensure accuracy. Propelled by events like the discovery of King Tut’s tomb in 1922, the start of restoration for Williamsburg in 1926, and the establishment of the Historical American Buildings Survey in 1933, the prevalence of measured drawings and significant research on the colonial era in America affected the execution of the Colonial Revival style. Entire colonial-era house interiors were acquired and put on display at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Architects practicing the Colonial Revival style in this period were able to recreate early American homes, both inside and out. In the case of the Van der Veer – Harris house, architect Chester A. Patterson was able to use a mix of traditional and modern materials to evoke the late 18th / early 19th century origin of the house.

In 1940, Dr. Harris hired Patterson to rebuild the west wing of the house, create an entry porch on the eastern elevation, refashion the south entry into a grand full-height portico, and supervise the refurbishment of the entire interior, all in the Colonial Revival style. Patterson was an advocate of the Colonial Revival, and of the country gentleman’s house, as seen in period articles and advertisements for his services (see Accompanying Documentation). The earliest published information on Patterson dates to 1913, when images of his Dutch Colonial Revival residence for a lawyer in Sutton Manor, New York was featured in *The Architectural Record*.⁸ His residential work in New York and Connecticut was consistently covered by both *The Architectural Record* and *The New York Times* through 1939. (See Accompanying Documentation for a list of his published projects.) His distinguished clientele may

⁷ Betzey Dinesen, “Colonial Revival” as defined in the *Grove Dictionary of Art*, last updated 27 September 1999. Accessed via: <http://www.groveart.com>.

⁸ “Residence of A.D. Huntington, Sutton Manor, N.Y.,” *The Architectural Record*, v. 34 (October 1913), 366-368.

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**Van der Veer – Harris House
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help explain Patterson's significant presence in contemporary publications. Clients included a number of prominent lawyers, publishers, financiers, and railroad executives. In New Jersey, Patterson designed a house in Rumson, for Gen. Howard S. Borden in 1927.

In the years 1926-1927, the firm Patterson and Willcox is named as the architecture firm for several residences published in *The New York Times*. One article lists the firm as "Patterson & Willcox, Architects, Engineers and Builders."⁹ After 1927, there is no more mention of the firm name. The Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C., executed in the Colonial Revival style, is the lone published example of Patterson's work outside of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut area. It was completed in 1939. While little is known of Patterson's life outside of these examples of his work, his design style throughout his years of practice are clearly tied to the Colonial Revival aesthetic.

Patterson's work on the Van der Veer – Harris House is distinguishable from what may be the building's original finishes primarily by the choice of modern building materials; the enlarging of interior spaces from what would have been smaller, more modest rooms; and the insertion of the arched window at the landing on the north elevation. As discussed in Section 7, the Colonial Revival elements both inside and outside are difficult to distinguish from their earlier counterparts. A key prototype for the execution of the Colonial Revival renovations at the Van der Veer – Harris House is what was originally the Murry Lee House in Rye, New York, built by Patterson and Willcox in 1926. (See Accompanying Documentation for images of the Lee House.) Not listed in *The Architect* as any type of renovation project, it is presumed that the house was designed and built by the firm in 1925-26. It features an elevation with a grand portico, a 1-story porte-cochere, and an entry that nearly replicates the south entry door of the Van der Veer – Harris House. While some differences exist, namely a pedimented portico roof, the absence of bay windows, and a second-story balcony above the main entry door, the overall similarity of the two houses is remarkable. Patterson clearly had experience with the Colonial Revival style throughout his career and brought it to bear on the Van der Veer – Harris House.

As stated, it is in the entirety of the Colonial Revival program that Van der Veer – Harris House achieves its significance. The fireplace mantels, window casings, the ornamental door surround and the large, rounded arch window on the north façade, the full-height, full-width portico on the south elevation – Robert Harris and Chester A. Patterson revised nearly every decorative element throughout the house to reflect the Colonial Revival style. The individual elements indicate the breadth of Patterson's familiarity with the style, as aspects of the house reflect New England, Mid-Atlantic, Colonial, and even some Federal style influence. Van der Veer – Harris House stands as an example of the vision of Dr. Harris and his architect, to restore the spirit of pre-industrial America to this country residence with a storied local history.

⁹ "Real Estate Transactions," *New York Times*, 28 February 1926, RE1.

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Somerset County, New Jersey
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**Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
Verbal Boundary Description**

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Boundary Description

The Van der Veer – Harris House is located in the Township of Hillsborough, Somerset County, New Jersey, at 344 U.S. Route 206, Block 153.06, Lot 1, on the west side of the highway. The boundary lines of the nominated property follow the eastern, northern, and western property lines. The southern boundary is defined as the right-of-way line, illustrated on the accompanying New Jersey Department of Transportation map (1999).

Boundary Justification

The acreage associated with the Van der Veer – Harris House has been greatly reduced over the years due to subdivision and, more recently, highway modifications along U.S. Route 206. The current parcel, redrawn by the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the Township of Hillsborough in 1999, contains the house and its immediate vicinity, which was part of the original Van der Veer parcel purchased in the 1730s. This 9.439-acre section of the Van der Veer's original 430 acres retains its historic integrity and still allows the house to be understood in its rural context.

PHOTOGRAPHS

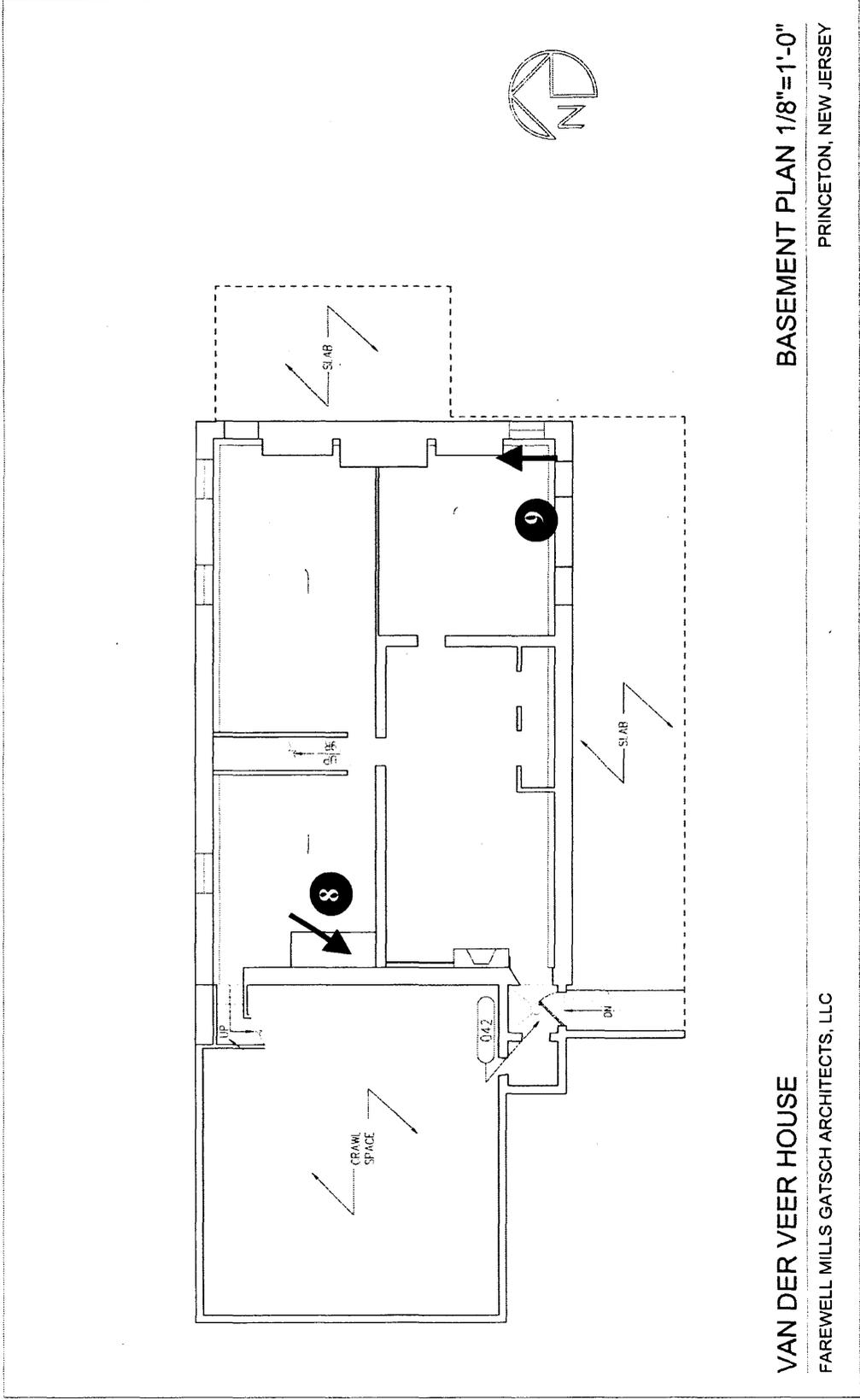
The following information applies to all photographs:

Location of Digital Files: New Jersey Historic Preservation Office

- Photo 1. North elevation, view looking southeast
 Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 2. South elevation, view looking north (stitched together)
 Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 3. Detail, door on south elevation
 Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 4. Decorative frieze on south elevation, under portico roof
 Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 5. East addition, view looking northwest
 Photographer: Kurt Leasure Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 6. East elevation second-story window
 Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 7. West addition, view looking south
 Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 8. Basement, southwest corner of northwest room (hewn fireplace support)
 Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 9. Basement, southeast room (original brick arch hearth support)
 Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 10. First floor, central hall, view looking north
 Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 11. Detail, central hall arch
 Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 12. First floor, fireplace in northwest room
 Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 13. First floor, fireplace in southwest room
 Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 14. First floor, east wall of east room, view looking southeast
 Photographer: Kurt Leasure Date: April 12, 2005

- Photo 15. Second floor, main stair hall, view looking north
Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 16. Second floor, northwest room, view looking south
Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 17. Second floor, southwest room, view looking west
Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 18. Second floor, northeast room, view looking northeast
Photographer: Andrea Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 19. Second floor, southeast room, view looking east
Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 20. Attic, view looking east (temporary supports for purlin)
Photographer: Andrea L. Michalski Date: October 21, 2004
- Photo 21. Attic (exposed summer beam)
Photographer: Ann M. Keen Date: November 2, 2004
- Photo 22. Attic (framing structure)
Photographer: Kurt Leasure Date: November 2, 2004

Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
Additional Documentation



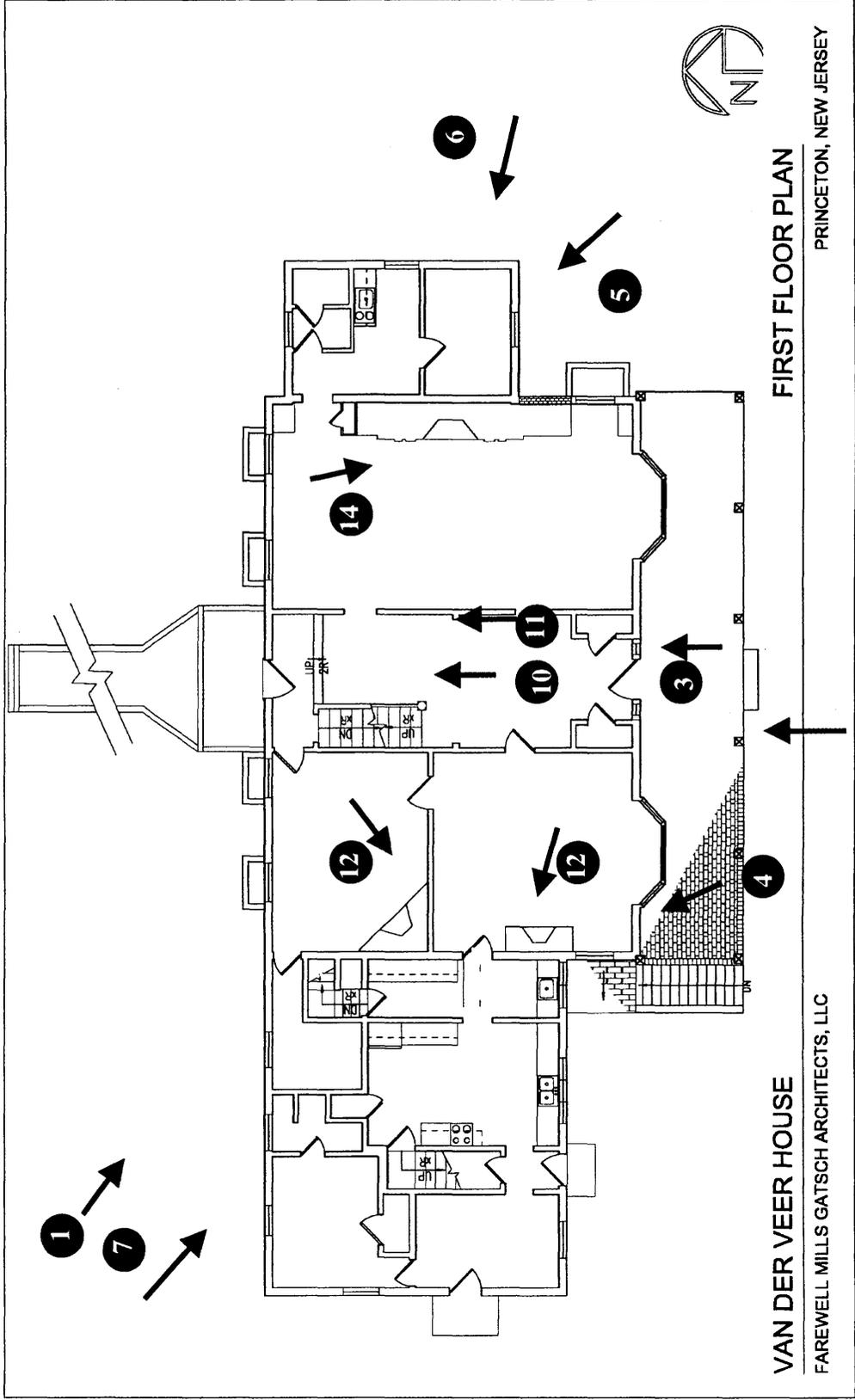
VAN DER VEER HOUSE

FAREWELL MILLS GATSCH ARCHITECTS, LLC

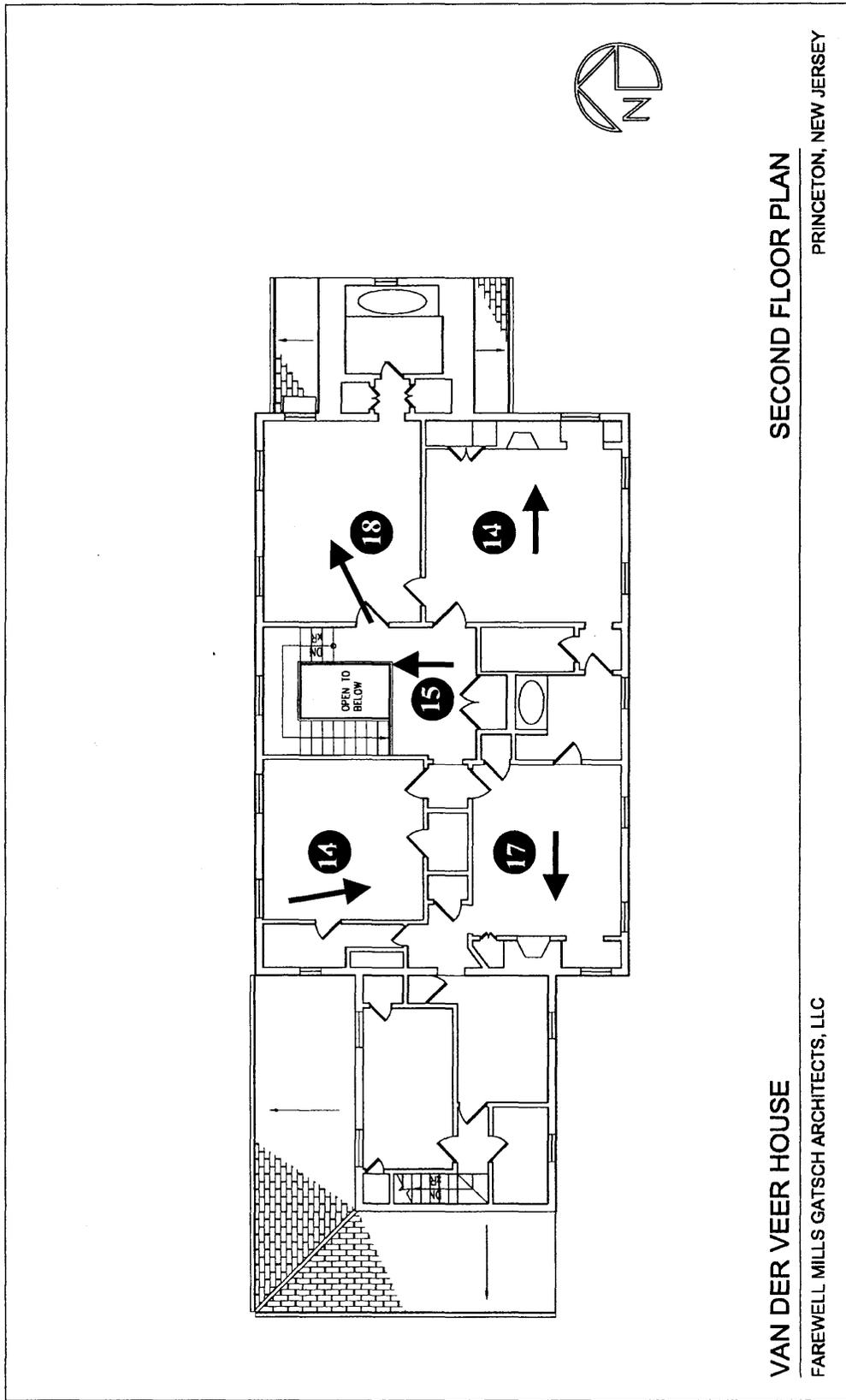
BASEMENT PLAN 1/8"=1'-0"

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Key to Basement Photographs

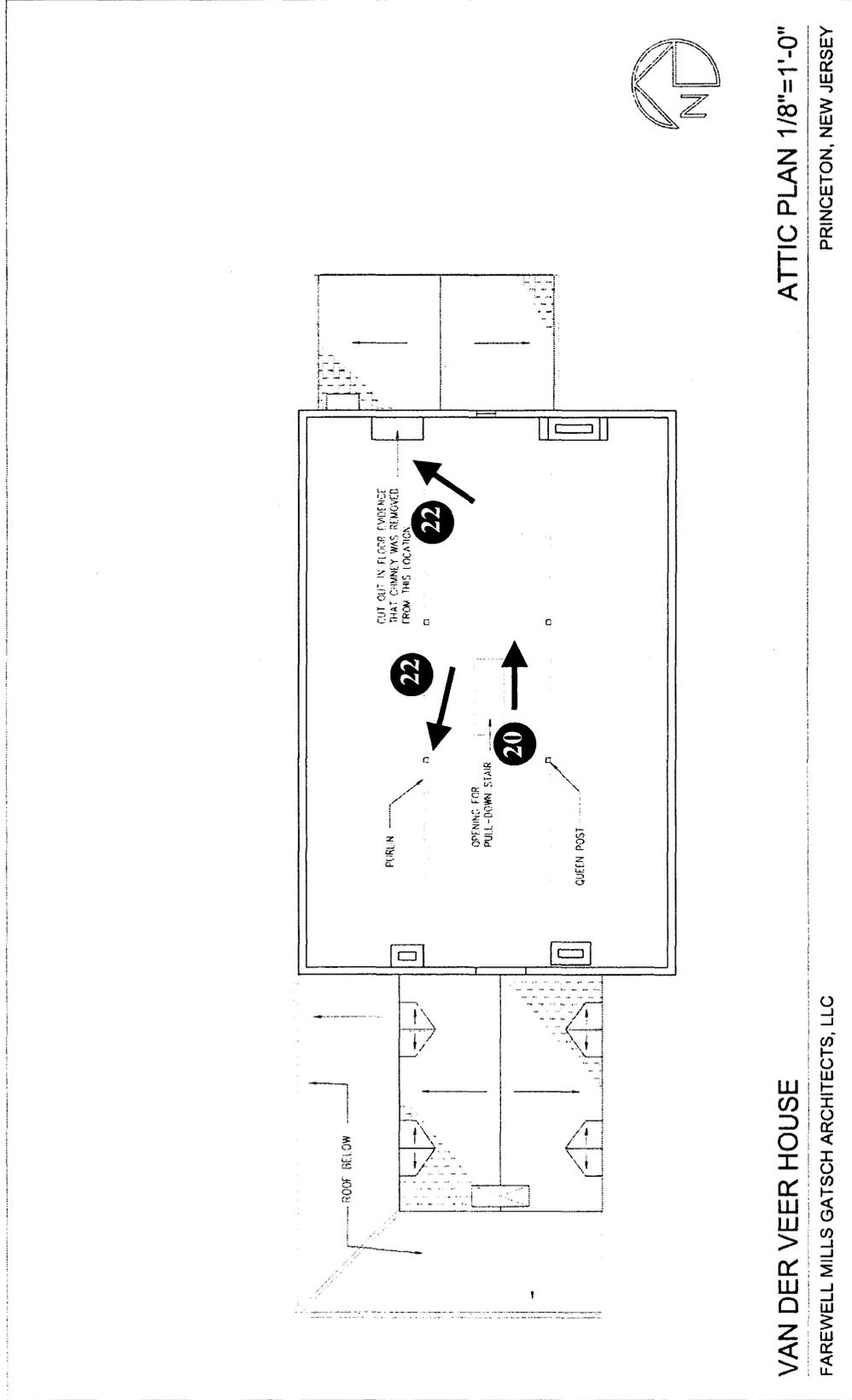


Key to Exterior and 1st Floor Photographs



Key to 2nd Floor Photographs

Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
Additional Documentation



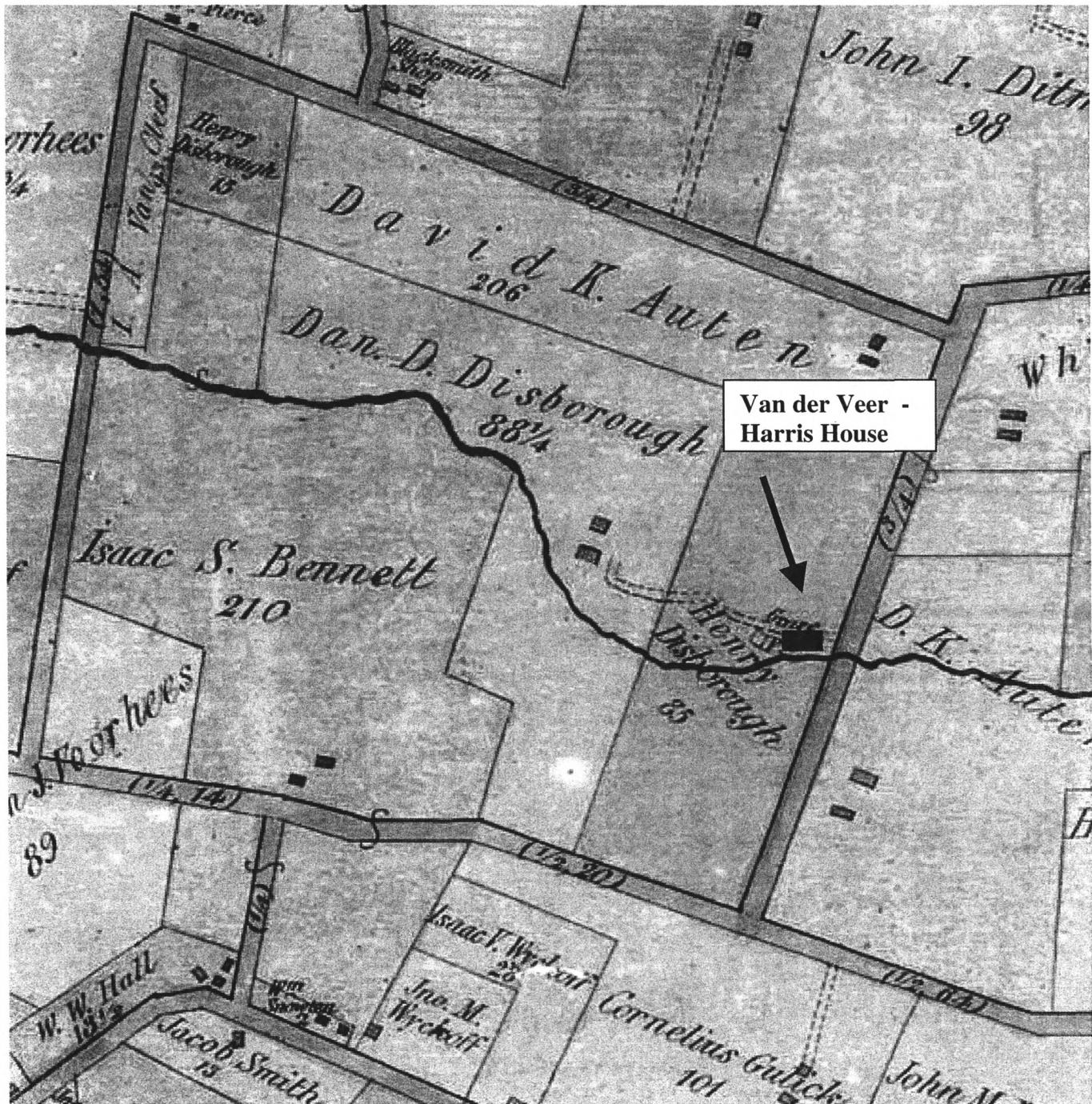
VAN DER VEER HOUSE

FAREWELL MILLS GATSCH ARCHITECTS, LLC

ATTIC PLAN 1/8"=1'-0"

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Key to Attic Photographs



Section of *Farm Map of Hillsborough, Somerset County, New Jersey* (1860). Surveyed and published by Matthew Hughes, printed in Philadelphia by T.S. Wagner, Philadelphia. Owner of property at the time: Henry Disborough, acreage: 83.

Van der Veer – Harris House
Somerset County, New Jersey
Accompanying Documentation



Section of *Topographical Map of Somerset County*, from F.W. Beers, *Atlas of New Jersey*, 1872.

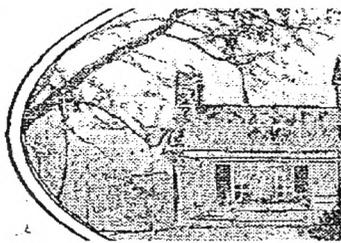
TREND OF SUBURBAN ARCHITECTURE ABOUT GREATER NEW YORK

Colonial Styles With Clapboards and Stained Shingles Favored by the Majority of Country Home Builders.



Gedney Farm Hotel,
Old French
Chateau
Style

Designed and Built
by Kenneth H.
Murchison



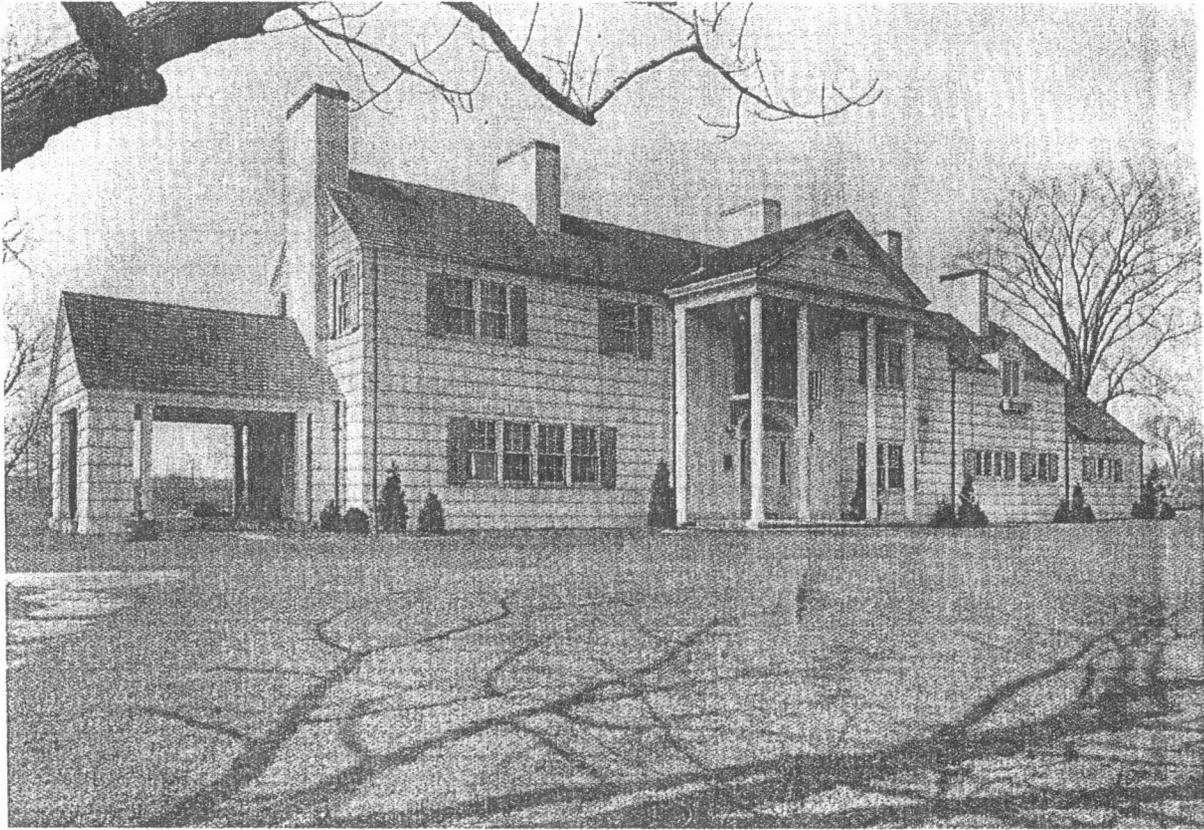
Dutch
Colonial,
Built by Chester
A. Patterson
near Harisdale N.Y.



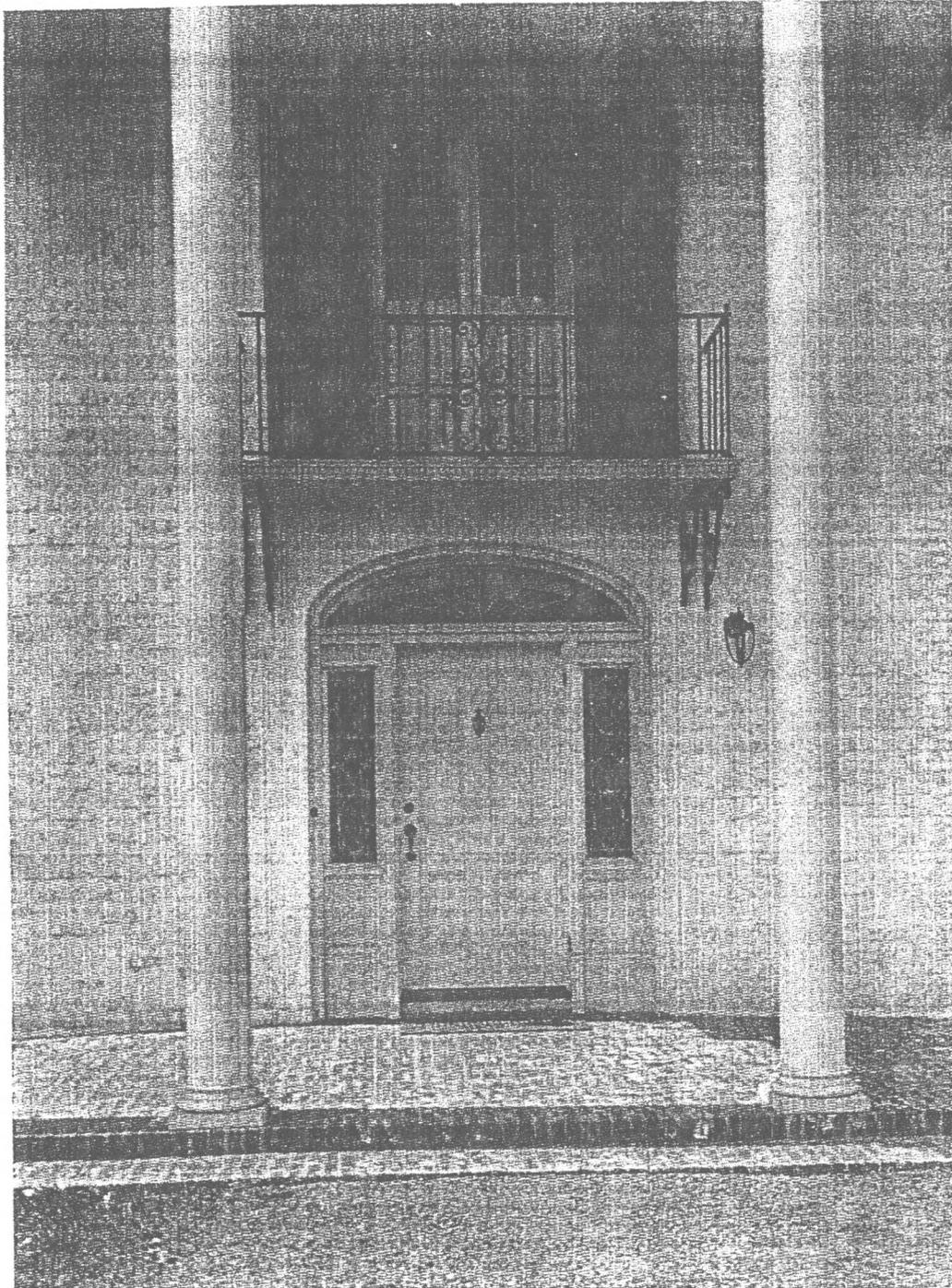
By Winnifred Harper Coolcy.

Some people say Americans have no taste; others affirm that they have plenty of taste, but that it is atrocious taste! I asked three architects who have created some beautiful examples of country homes, chiefly in Westchester County, New York, their





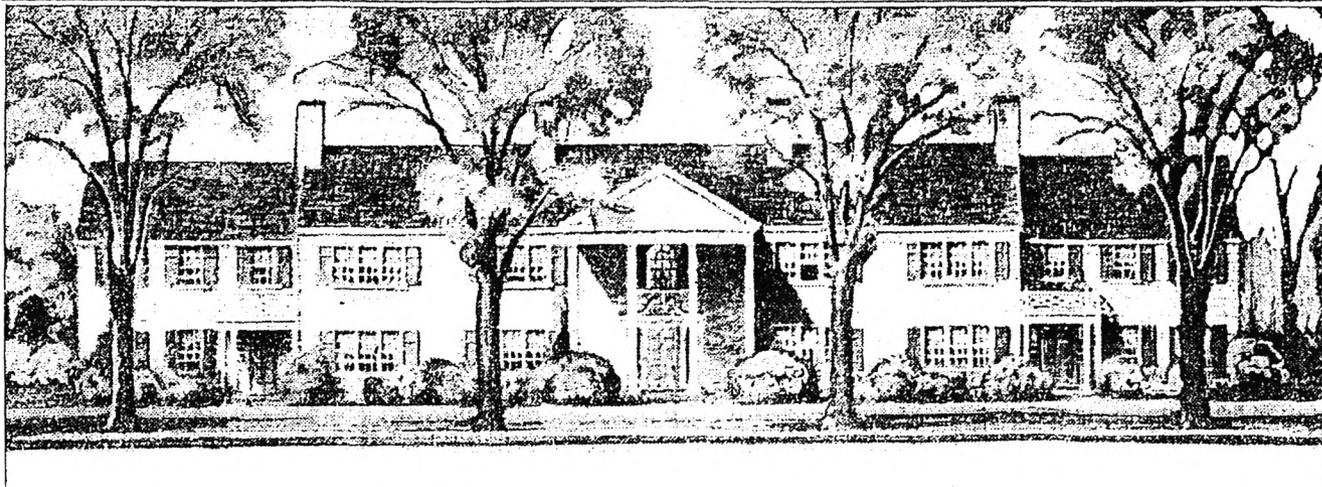
Murry Lee House, Rye, New York, by Patterson and Willcox, Architects. Printed in *The Architect*, vol. 6, June 1926, Plate LXX.



Murry Lee House, Rye, New York, by Patterson and Willcox, Architects. Printed in *The Architect*, June 1926, Plate LXXI.

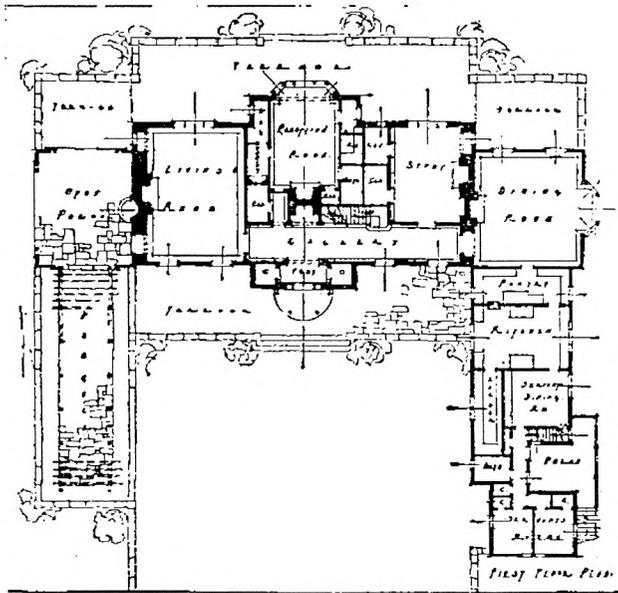
pg. RE2

NEW TYPE OF SUBURBAN APARTMENT HOUSE

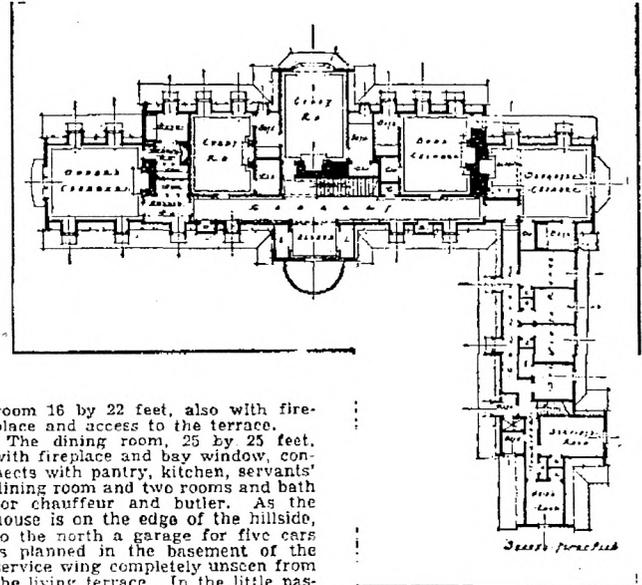


Apartment Building for Everett T. Young, Peekskill, New York, by Chester A. Patterson, Architect.
New York Times, 17 March, 1929, p. RE2.

COLONIAL DESIGN FOR THIS LONG ISLAND COUNTRY HOME



Large Living Room and Gallery Are Features of First Floor Layout.



The Owner's Suite and All Chambers Have Individual Baths.

AN INTERESTING example of Long Island Colonial design in a modern country house is found in the residence being erected at Mill Neck, L. I., for Mrs. Prescott Slade. Construction has been started by the O'Sullivan Harney Company, and completion is scheduled for next June. The cost will be about \$150,000. Chester A. Patterson is the architect.

The plan is a reflection both of the owner's requirements and the physical characteristics of the land. The site is a seven-acre hilltop near the Piping Rock Club, with extensive views to the north, south and east, overlooking the Sound, Beaver Dam Lake and the lawns of several adjoining estates. For this reason the entrance court was placed to the west and the living terrace and main rooms laid out to take full advantage of the land and water views. From the entrance court the house is approached across a wide terrace, with awning protection for bad weather. The vestibule is flanked by two large coat closets, and a long, well-lighted gallery with fireplace provides access to the stairs as well as to the principal ground-floor rooms.

The living room, measuring 23 by 30 feet, is open at each end to terraces and on the south adjoins a covered porch with fountain and pergola. For entertaining the plan

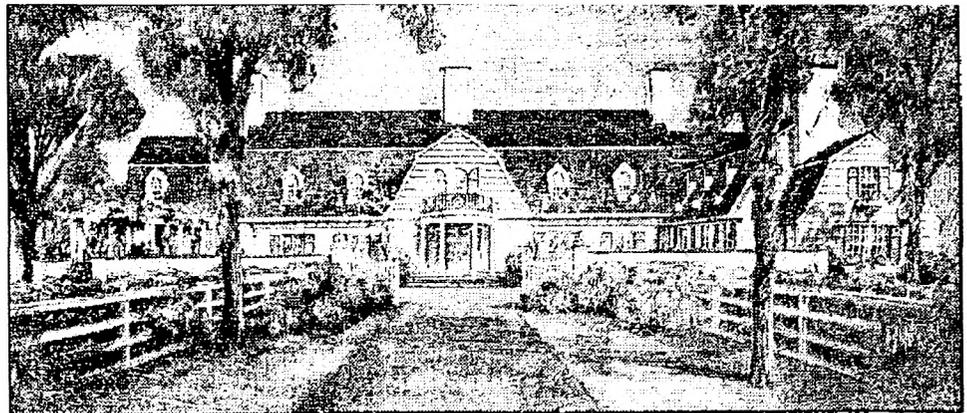
is considered unusually convenient. The reception room, 16 by 20 feet, has a fireplace, large coat closet and a combination lavatory and vanity room, while for gentlemen an additional coat room and lavatory is provided off the study, an attractive

room 16 by 22 feet, also with fireplace and access to the terrace. The dining room, 25 by 25 feet, with fireplace and bay window, connects with pantry, kitchen, servants' dining room and two rooms and bath for chauffeur and butler. As the house is on the edge of the hillside, to the north a garage for five cars is planned in the basement of the service wing completely unscen from the living terrace. In the little passage from reception room to terrace is a flower room, where cut flowers from the garden may be prepared.

Features of Second Floor.

On the second floor is a commodious owner's suite of chamber, dressing room and bath, with fireplace and built-in dressing table; four double bedrooms, each with bath, and a servants' wing of six maids' rooms

and two baths. In exterior design the house is of pleasing low lines, proportioned to nestle into its hill-top setting, a harmonious feature of this rolling section of the Long Island north shore.



Country House of Mrs. Prescott Slade, Being Erected at Mill Neck, L. I. Chester A. Patterson, Architect.

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New York Times article discussing Colonial Revival architecture with accompanying drawing of a Chester A. Patterson home, January 18, 1931, p. 156.



For A Gentleman's Small Estate

Advertisement placed by Chester A. Patterson, architect, in *Town and Country*, December 1935, p. 12.

Published Chester A. Patterson Projects

<u>Client</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Citation</u>
A.D. Huntington, Esq.	Sutton Manor NY	<i>Architectural Record</i> , v. 34, Oct 1913, p. 366-368
Paul Shields, Esq.	Great Neck, L.I. NY	<i>Architectural Forum</i> , v. 35, Sept 1921, pl. 44
Unknown Client – House	near New Rochelle NY	<i>Architectural Record</i> , v. 51, Jan 1922, p. 43
Unknown Client – House	Pelham NY	<i>Architectural Record</i> , v. 51, Jan 1922, p. 44
John Robertson	Great Neck, L.I. NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 5 Apr 1925, p. RE2
Charles W. Nelson	Bellport, L.I. NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 28 Feb 1926, p. RE1
Atwater Prince Co. – Home	White Plains NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 28 Mar 1926, p. RE1
A.M. Farrier	East Orange NJ	<i>New York Times</i> , 11 Apr 1926, p. RE1
Murry Lee	Rye NY	<i>The Architect</i> , Jun 1926, pl. LXX-LXXI
William Gage Brady, Jr.	Islip, L.I. NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 13 Feb 1927, p. RE2
Everett T. Young	Peekskill NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 6 Mar 1927, p. RE2
Neville Bayley	Norontton CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 13 Mar 1927, p. RE2
Gen. Howard S. Borden	Rumson NJ	<i>New York Times</i> , 19 Jun 1927, p. RE1
Peter A. Cameron	Rye NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 1 May 1928, p. 58
George Wheat, Esq.	Springdale CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 9 Jun 1928, p. 31
Apt. Bldg (Everett Young)	Peekskill NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 17 Mar 1929, p. RE2
Unknown Client – House	White Plains NY	www.soundviewmanor.com
Walter Pierson	Greenwich CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 28 Sep 1930, p. RE2
Mrs. Prescott Slade	Mill Neck, L.I. NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 18 Jan 1931, p. 156
Col. Hugh L. Cooper	Stamford CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 22 Mar 1931, p. RE10
Joseph B. Terbell	Greenwich CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 30 Sep 1931, p. 50
Frederick W. Hiort	Harrison NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 18 Oct 1931, p. 152
W.R. Betts, Jr.	Syosset, L.I. NY	<i>Country Life</i> , v. 60, Oct 1931, p. 39
Frederick B. Rentschler	West Hartford CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 22 Oct 1933, p. SM14
Gilbert Ottley	Upper Brookville, L.I. NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 8 Apr 1936, p. 43
Longshore Country Club*	Westport CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 3 May 1936, p. RE2
Edward Holbrook Estate	Stamford CT	<i>New York Times</i> , 18 Oct 1936, p. RE1
Charles P. Rogge	Harrison NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 26 May 1937, p. 47
Ira M. Schey	Harrison NY	<i>New York Times</i> , 12 Feb 1939, p. 149
Venezuelan Embassy (1939)	Washington DC	<i>New York Times</i> , 23 October 1960, p. 133

* Renovation