

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

For NPS use only

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

received **MAY 13 1988**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Smith- Ribsam House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 45 Pine Knoll Drive NA not for publication

city, town Lawrence Township vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Mercer code 021

**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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<u>NA</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Dr. & Mrs. William Mullaly

street & number 45 Pine Knoll Drive

city, town Lawrence Township vicinity of state New Jersey 08648

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mercer County Clerk's Office, Mercer County Courthouse

street & number South Broad and Market Streets

city, town Trenton state New Jersey 08650

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory:  
Lawrence Township Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN 404,

city, town Trenton state New Jersey 08625

# 7. Description

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

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### DESCRIPTION

The house is set on a slight rise facing south toward what is now the Princeton Pike. It consists of a clapboarded, frame, 2-story, 3-bay central block with full cellar, probably built later in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. This is attached to a smaller, 2-story, 2-bay clapboarded, frame wing over a shallow foundation without cellar built in two sections in the first half of the eighteenth century. These sections of the house are flanked on the west and east ends respectively by an early 20th-century, 2-story frame addition in Colonial-Revival design, and a 20th-century 1-story wing. This wing appears to have incorporated a leanto which was once adjacent to the east side of the house. All wings are clapboarded, and gable roofs cover all sections of the house, except the west wing, which has a flat roof.

The earliest wing is slightly recessed in relation to the main block. A porch-like effect is formed by a large pent roof. Its facade consists of a first floor entrance adjoining paired, double-hung windows with shutters and 2/2 sash. A brick chimney in the east wall pierces the roof at the ridge. The north or rear exterior wall includes a door and two windows downstairs and two windows upstairs. Although the door and window next to it are new, the other three windows consist of new sash in old frames.

The facade of the main block includes a nineteenth-century door with glassed upper panels and a five-light transom both set in an eighteenth-century frame. The windows consist of the original openings and frames, filled with new 6/6 sash with narrow muntins. Downstairs windows have paneled shutters; upstairs shutters are louvered. The facade also includes a mid-nineteenth century bracketed cornice and a porch with jig-sawn posts. A chimney in the west wall pierces the roof at the ridge. The roof overhangs about one foot beyond the side and rear walls. The rear wall includes the original entrance with original six-panel door, as well as two original upstairs window openings filled with new sash like that in the facade. The original downstairs windows have been replaced with four French windows in a single opening. The third upstairs window, located over the entrance, is new. It consists of a paired, double-hung 6/6 window topped with a lunette. A mid-20th-century exterior brick chimney adjoins the rear wall and pierces the cornice.

West of the main block, the first story of the early 20th-century wing extends downstairs to range with the front of the porch across the main wing, from which the west wing is entered. The second floor extends the facade of the block. Fenestration in this wing consist of four double-hung 6/6 sash windows in a single opening in the downstairs facade, and paired double-hung sash in all other windows. The flat roof of this wing projects a slight overhang. The easternmost wing likewise projects to the front line of the porch of the earliest section of the house, from which it is entered. It exhibits a narrow frontage but extends in a modified T-plan beyond the rear of the other sections of the house.

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The oldest wing consists of a single space on the first floor, which originally was divided into two rooms, and two rooms on the second floor. The partition between the two was removed by Rudolph K. Ribsam, who purchased the property in 1926, but its' major timbers remain. The flooring throughout this wing consists of wide boards of random width affixed with wrought nails. The ceilings are exposed. The front half of the first floor space, evidently the earliest section of the house, contains a large fireplace with stone back, brick jambs and massive wood lintel. A short flight of steps on the west side leads to a door, which links this room to the main wing of the house. Overhead, the joists supporting the second floor are hewn but not chamfered, and bear lath marks and nail holes suggesting that this room originally included a plaster ceiling. Two hewn posts, supporting a girt into which the joists tenon, stand exposed between the front and rear halves of the first floor, and display evidence of knee-bracing. The second floor joists in the rear half of the first floor are chamfered, suggesting that this space was not originally plastered. The north (or rear) wall includes a new door and window. A stair formerly existed in the northwest corner, possibly behind a partition. Upstairs, the attic joists are exposed and chamfered, suggesting that these spaces, likewise, were not originally plastered. In the front room, a small fireplace and a closet line the east wall. A short flight of stairs and a door in the west wall lead into the main section of the house. A plastered wall divides the front and rear rooms. In the rear room, closets line the east wall, and the west wall includes a door leading to the landing in the stair hall of the main wing. The attic of this section is unfinished and includes hewn rafters.

The main wing of the house consists of a stair hall, front parlor, and dining room on the first floor, and a hall, a small room at the end of the hall, and front and rear bedrooms on the second floor. This wing is characterized by fine Georgian moldings and paneling. The moldings include chair rails in each room, architrave window surrounds, and shouldered architrave door surrounds. There is a paneled overmantel above the fireplace in the parlor; the dining room and both bedrooms have fully paneled west walls. The doors in this wing are of six-panel construction, with raised panels and the same moldings that were used on the fireplace walls. The stiles and rails are finished with an ovolo; the panels are beveled and fielded with a smaller ovolo.

The stair hall includes the principal front and rear entrances to the house and the only stair from the first to the second floors. In the south (front) entrance, the door and transom have been altered, although the surround is

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apparently original. The rear (north) entrance is evidently unaltered, including its six-panel door hung on large, wrought-iron strap hinges. An open-string stair rises from the middle of the east side of the hall ten steps to a landing in the northeast corner, turns ninety degrees and rises three more steps to another landing, then makes another right-angle turn to reach the second floor. The string is ornamented with a simplified foliated design, and the wall beneath the outer string is paneled. The treads appear to be original, though new nosings have been installed. The balustrade, a Colonial Revival design, is a recent replacement. The owner owns the original banister and is considering reinstallation.

The first-floor parlor includes two 6/6 replacement windows with large panes and narrow muntins set in original surrounds in the south wall, an unaltered entrance from the stair hall, and a plastered or stuccoed fireplace, projecting into the room, with shouldered architrave surround and paneled overmantel. A row of small dentils runs along the top. The hearth floor, contains original square, glazed hearth bricks. During Ribsam's ownership, a wide entrance into the dining room was opened in the north wall. This doorway is surrounded with a shouldered architrave of moldings similar to the original woodwork surrounding other doors.

The dining room includes an original plastered or stuccoed fireplace paved with rectangular, glazed hearth bricks. The fireplace projects slightly into the room, is surrounded with a shouldered architrave and incorporated in a paneled wall. Flanking this fireplace, and recessed behind it, are symmetrically placed doors with architrave surrounds. A fine course of small fret dentils extends across the top of the wall. Although both doors probably originally enclosed closets, as the right-hand door does, the function of the left-hand door has been changed into an entrance to the kitchen in the west addition. The dining room was further modified by the Ribsams by the installation of two Colonial Revival corner cupboards in the east wall. At that time a series of windows replaced the original two in the north wall. The present owners have converted these to French windows.

On the second floor, the stair hall provides access to the two bedrooms, a stair into the attic over this central wing of the house, and a small room at the end of the hall. The small room is evidently original, because its door surround contains the moldings typical of the woodwork throughout this wing. The bedrooms both feature chair rails, original window surrounds and similar paneled fireplace walls. The hearths in both bedrooms are paved with square, unglazed hearth bricks. In the front (south) bedroom, the right-hand door has become the entrance to the second floor rooms of the west addition to the house.

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Mercer County, NJTHE GROUNDS

The house occupies the center of a sloping 4.9 acre, irregularly shaped lot in the middle of a mid-20th century tract housing subdivision. The lot fronts on Pine Knoll Drive to the west; along the north, east, and south sides, the lot extends either to Pine Oak Drive or to lots that front on Pine Oak Drive or Pine Knoll Drive. A high wooden fence shields the property from Pine Knoll Drive. The house, set well back from Pine Knoll Drive, is approached by a long, gravel driveway that turns back upon itself to form an enclosed curve. A spur of the driveway leads to a carriage barn.

The entire property is lavishly planted in trees and shrubs, many of which are rare or unusually fine specimens. South and east of the house the planting is naturalized. West of the house is a formal rose garden, and to the northwest is an open area surrounding a swimming pool. Southeast of the house, set in a grove of trees, is a wellhead. Although the wellhead itself is modern, it probably marks the site of a well in use during the eighteenth and/or nineteenth centuries. A pond, probably originally used for ice, occupies low-lying ground in the eastern third of the lot. (Landscaping constitutes a contributing site.)

The property also includes four outbuildings. A small, 1-story, single-room, gabled outbuilding probably built in the early 20th century is currently used as a poolhouse. A small, hip-roofed frame ice or springhouse with vertical board siding, east of the house and adjacent to the pond probably dates from the 19th century. The largest is a 4-bay, 1-1/2-story carriage barn built on the foundations of an earlier barn early in the twentieth century. The loft of this building is enlarged by two gabled dormers on the east side. The building currently serves as an automobile garage. A small, one-room, concrete-block shed with a flat roof stands to the southwest of the garage. Of the four, only the ice/springhouse contributes 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** third quarter 18th century- early 20th century **Builder/Architect** Unclear

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

### SIGNIFICANCE

The Smith-Ribsam House is significant under Criteria A and C as a homestead associated with one of Lawrence Township's pioneering families, which, despite nineteenth and twentieth century alterations, still exhibits fine examples of eighteenth-century design and craftsmanship. Additionally, its landscaping, installed in the first half of the twentieth century by a professional nurseryman, is a good example of exurban gardening of the period.

The two eighteenth-century sections of the Smith-Ribsam House were built by descendants of Jasper Smith, Sr., one of the earliest settlers in the area, whose family occupied it for a period of approximately one hundred years. Although altered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it retains eighteenth-century paneling and other decorative features that are notable for central New Jersey. It is a good example of the domestic architecture made possible by the rapidly improving economic circumstances of the early agricultural community in the area.

During the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the Smith-Ribsam House was occupied by a branch of the Smith family. The Smiths, among the pioneering settlers of Lawrence Township, constituted a large, prolific, and prosperous farming family. The land on which the Smith-Ribsam House was built was part of a large tract surveyed for Mahlon Stacy, the original settler of Trenton, in 1687.<sup>1</sup> In 1704, Mahlon Stacy willed a portion of this tract to his daughter Mary.<sup>2</sup> Jasper Smith, who had been established in Maidenhead (Lawrenceville) since 1699, purchased 271 acres from Mary and her husband Ruben Pownall in 1708.<sup>3</sup> It seems unlikely that Smith ever occupied the property. In 1740 he deeded 176 acres of the tract to his son Jasper Smith, Jr., although the deed was not recorded until 1759.<sup>4</sup> Jasper Smith, Jr. predeceased his father, to whom the land evidently reverted. At his death in 1769, the elder Smith willed the land to Jasper Smith, Jr.'s eldest son, Waters Smith,<sup>5</sup> describing it as "the plantation where my 2nd son, Jasper, lived when he died."

It is probable that Jasper Smith, Jr. built the oldest part of the house soon after his father conveyed the property to him in 1740. The construction suggests the possibility that what was originally (before the partition on the first floor was removed) the southern room in this section was erected first, with the rear room and upstairs added shortly thereafter. The larger eighteenth-century section was probably built by Waters Smith shortly after he came into possession of the property. Waters Smith was an adult at the time of

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

"Ribsam Land" ( unpublished manuscript in owner's possession, tracing history of property).

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 4.9

Quadrangle name Princeton

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

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

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

C 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

D 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

E 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

F 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

G 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

H 

Zone			Easting						Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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

NA

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Constance M. Greiff and Robert W. Craig

organization Heritage Studies, Inc. date March, 1987

street & number 20 Seminary Avenue telephone (609) 466-9606

city or town Hopewell state New Jersey 08525

# 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 *Peter J. Sembo*

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources date April 26, 1988

### For NPS use only

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

*Linda McClelland* date *6/9/88*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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his grandfather's death, having been named, although he did not serve, as an executor of Jasper Smith Sr.'s will. The paneling and other detailing in this section of the house is similar to that found in other of the finer dwellings in the area constructed in the third quarter of the eighteenth century: Bainbridge House in Princeton (c. 1761); the Baker Brearley House in Lawrence Township (1761); and Glencairn (c. 1760-70).

Waters Smith died without issue in 1820. He divided his land among five nephews, leaving the house to one of them, Waters Smith, Jr. His widow, Lamathey, retained life rights to parts of the house, and in spelling out these rights Waters Smith left some information about the building's plan and uses.

His widow was entitled to the parlor and parlor chamber, as well as the "small Bedroom over the entry". She was to have use of the kitchen and cellars as well as the "small bed room back of the kitchen for Sarah Brister to lodge in". Sarah Brister was a black slave, who was also left to his wife, but was to be freed when she reached the age of twenty-five.<sup>6</sup>

Waters Smith sold the property<sup>7</sup> to Israel Stevens in 1851, whose heirs conveyed it to Howard Green in 1918. It was probably early in Steven's tenure that such features as the bracketed cornice, jigsaw porch, and glazed front door were added. In 1926 Green conveyed the property, then just under 80 acres, to Rudolph K. Ribsam.<sup>8</sup>

Rudolph K. Ribsam was the descendant of two prominent German-American Trenton families. His paternal grandfather, Carlman Ribsam, was nurseryman and florist. The florist's business he started is still a Trenton institution. Rudolph K. Ribsam was named for his maternal grandfather, Rudolph Kuser, whose descendants became prominent in Trenton business affairs. Rudolph K. Ribsam adopted the family profession, operating the Smith-Ribsam property as a nursery. Many of the fine specimen plantings around the house date from his era. During the Second World War, Ribsam was active in support of the war effort. The house became the site of meetings concerned with the planning and administration of War Bond drives, Civilian Defense, and local operations of the Office of Price Administration.

Although like any property continuously occupied for over 200 years, the nominated acreage may have archeological potential, there has probably been considerable disturbance because of the landscaping program.

NOTES

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1. Revel's Surveys, p. 69
2. New Jersey Wills, Book I, p. 42.
3. West Jersey Deeds, Book T. p. 413.
4. West Jersey Deeds, Book P, p. 152.
5. New Jersey Wills, 813 J.
6. New Jersey Wills, 3093 J.
7. Mercer County Deeds, Book U. p. 336; Book 410, p. 83.
8. Mercer County Deeds, Book 591, p. 546.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

"C. Ribsam & Sons, Nurserymen, Florists, Seedmen, and Dealers in Garden and Farming Implements". New Jersey State Gazette (July 31, 1897): advertising supplement.

Combination Atlas Map of Mercer County, New Jersey: Compiled, Drawn, and Published from Personal Examinations and Surveys. Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1876.

Kuser, Edna Howe [comp]. The Kuser Story. [Hamilton Twp., NJ: 1979?].

Otley, J.W. and Keily, J. Map of Mercer County, New Jersey, Entirely from Original Surveys. Camden, NJ: L. Van Derveer, 1849.

"Ribsam's New Building". Trenton Magazine (April 1927): 2-3.

Tyler, Donald H. Old Lawrenceville (formerly Maidenhead), New Jersey: Early Houses and People. Lawrenceville, NJ: the author, 1965.

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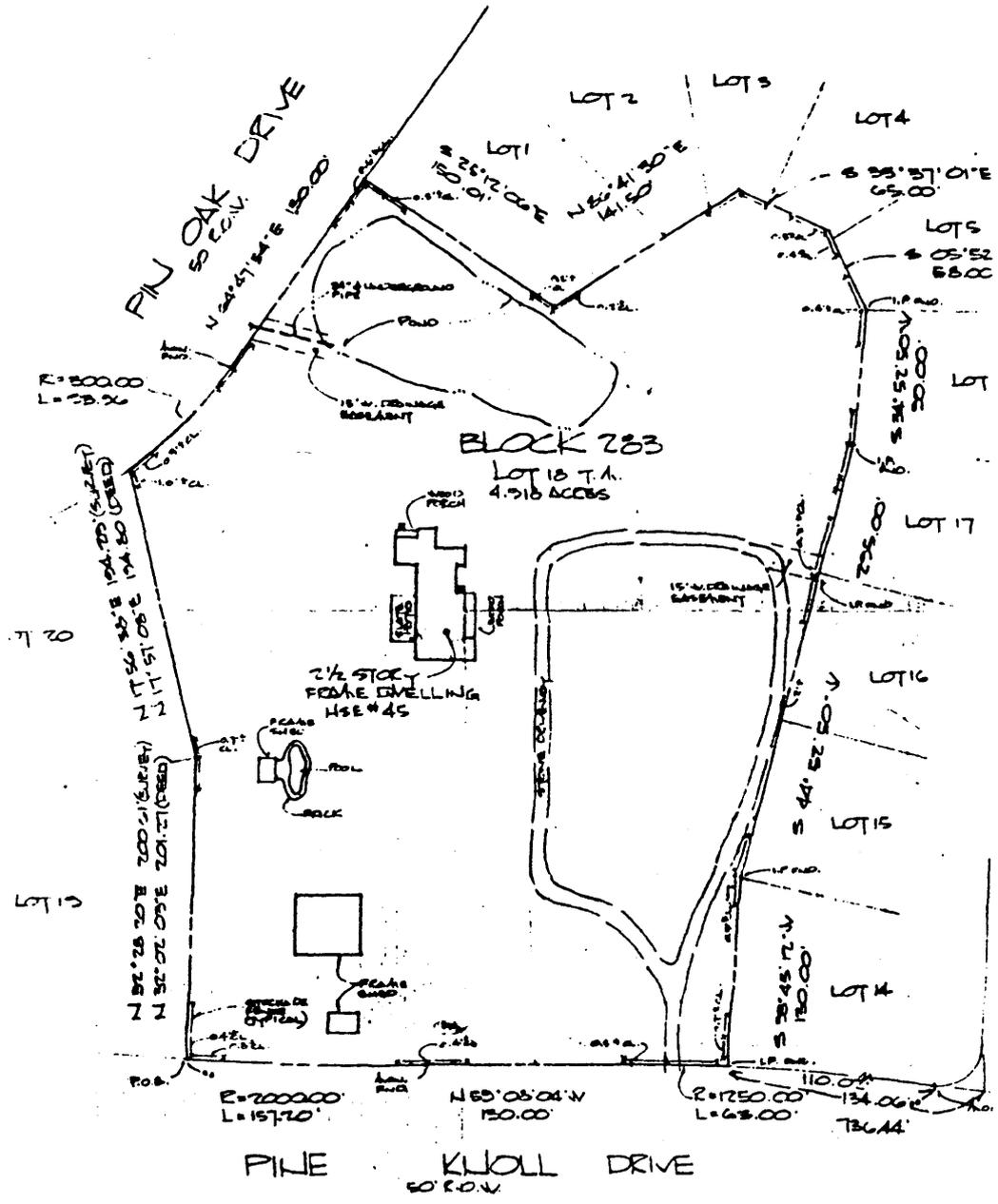
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Boundary Description

The nominated property comprises Block 283, Lot 18, as shown on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification

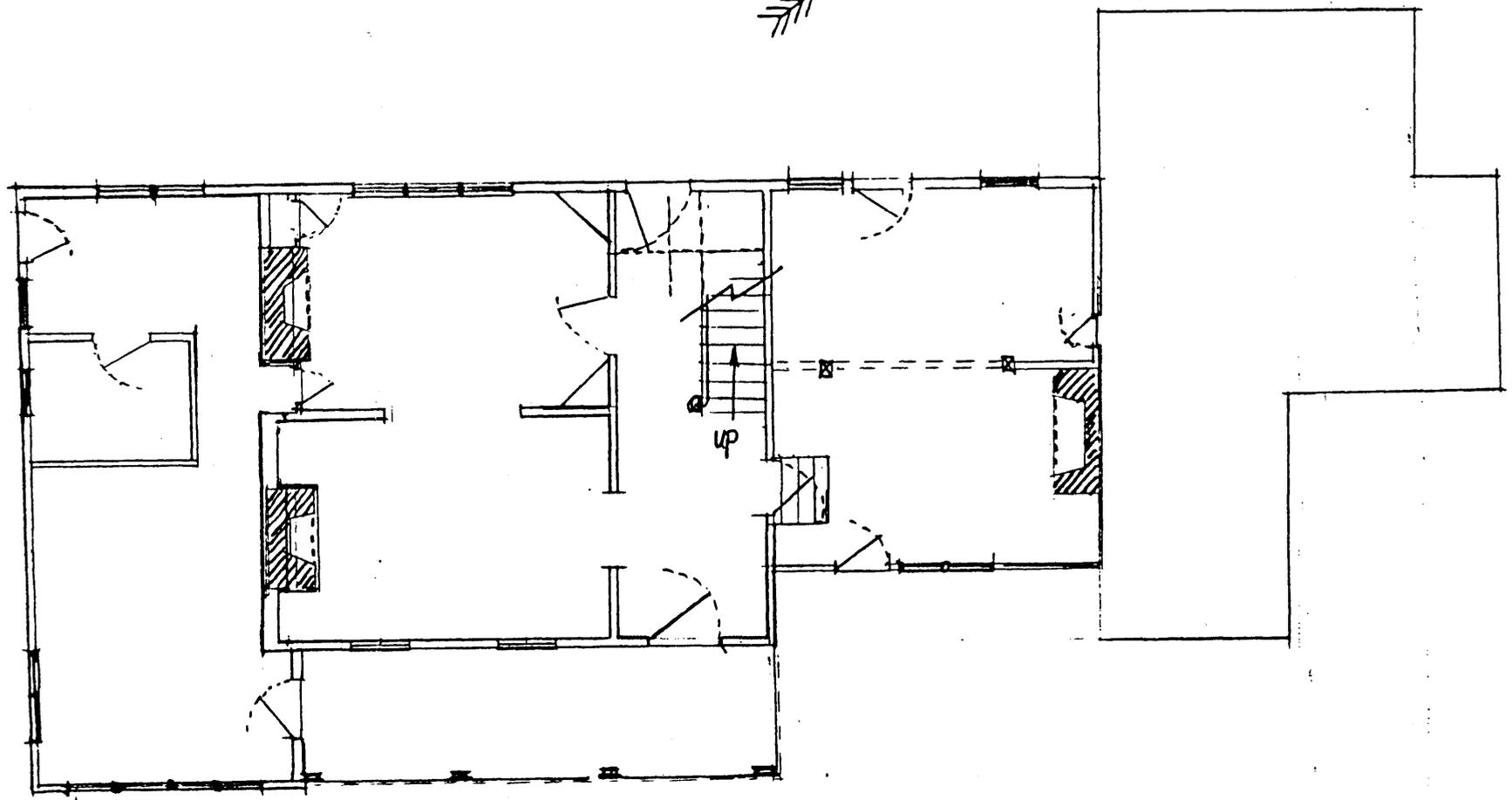
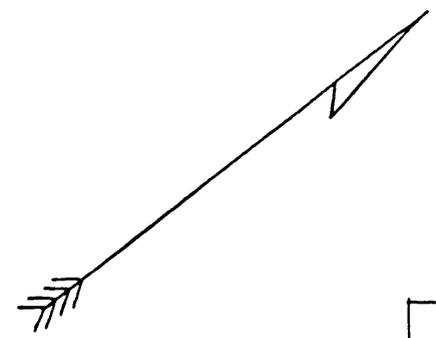
Block 283, Lot 18 is the remaining integral portion of the farm on which the Smith-Ribsam house stands and with which it is historically associated.



ES:  
 213. P. 045; LAWRENCE TWP TAX MAP  
 EXCEPT CORNERS NOT SET AS PER  
 CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT.

Smith-Ribsam House  
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SMITH - RIBSAM HOUSE  
LAWRENCE TWP. MERCER Co., NJ



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

(Not to Scale)