

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

JAN 09 1989

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name VANSANT, JOHN C. HOUSE

other names/site number N-218

2. Location

street & number 110 Possum Hollow Road

not for publication

city, town Newark

vicinity

state Delaware

code

DE

county New Castle

code

003

zip code

19711

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

10

2 buildings

0

0 sites

0

0 structures

0

0 objects

10

2 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously

listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

John T. Kern  
Director, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Date

12/22/1988

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Patrick Andrews

2/16/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Federal Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Stone/Granite

Wood/Weatherboard

roof Synthetic/Fiberglass

other Porch: Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The John C. Vansant House is located in Mill Creek Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware on a tributary of Muddy Run. The c. 1810 two story, stone and frame dwelling with a c. 1936 one-and-a-half story, stone and frame addition is situated on the south side of Possum Hollow Road approximately one half mile east of the junction with Possum Park Road. The property on which the house sits has sustained agricultural production since the late 18th century, therefore remaining rural in the immediate area. Although suburban subdivisions have sprung up on much of the nearby farmland, the Vansant House is maintained on New Castle County owned parkland. The property includes early 20th century agricultural outbuildings.

The Vansant House is a double-pile, side hall plan dwelling with a one room wing. The second story plan is similar. Both the main block and the wing are constructed of stone with gable roofs. During the 1930s, when the wing was constructed, several alterations were made to the original section. At this time most of the fireplaces were closed up, the rear parlor was made into a kitchen, a second floor bathroom was created, and the front porch was added. The walls are primarily of uncoursed local fieldstone with larger stone quoining. The front and rear facades have been coated with stucco. The stone walls of the wing exhibit thickly applied mortar and no quoining. The rear or northern facade on both the main block and the wing is frame sheathed in weatherboard. The house foundation is also stone and encloses a full basement under the main block. Under the wing is a stone-walled excavation that appears to have been built at the same time as the main block. This sub-basement, which may have been used for storage, is several inches below the basement level and is smaller than the foundation for the wing. The gable roof is covered with modern fiberglass shingles and trimmed with a molded box cornice. The gables have a flush verge finished with a verge board. An interior gable end chimney serves the hearths of the main block. The portion of the chimney which extends above the roofline has been rebuilt of brick. The wing also has an interior gable end chimney serving the hearths in that section. The wing has two wall dormers on both facades. The dormers have gable roofs and are trimmed with weatherboard. In the dormers are six-over-six, double hung sash windows.

The fenestration for the main block is symmetrical with three-over-three bays with a side hall entrance in the eastern bay. The original door is a raised six panel door with a four light transom above and a molded surround. The first floor windows are six-over-nine double hung sash windows. These windows are finished with a molded surround and a wood sill. The second story windows are shorter, being six-over-six. The lintel is a boxed wood frame. The rest of the surround is plain board. The smaller sized Colonial Revival wing is also three bays wide on the first floor. The wing door is located in the western bay. The door is a dutch door with two raised panels on the lower half and nine panes of fixed glass above.  See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Agriculture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1804-1938  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The John C. Vansant House is significant under Criterion A as an important element of the early 19th century rebuilding period in Mill Creek Hundred and under Criterion C as it contains a well-preserved example of the double-pile, side hall plan house type. The integrity of the house is enhanced by the intactness of interior details. The Vansant House was unaffected by the subsequent rebuilding period in the late 19th century. The 1930s era wing, with its wall dormers, is a recognizable method of expansion of the colonial revival style.

The John C. Vansant House can best be understood in the context of the transformation of agricultural and rural work during a period of major growth in Mill Creek Hundred. Four factors influenced this growth; a large population increase, a decrease in farm size by one third, an increase in durable or stone buildings, and an expansion of local industry which included agricultural specialization. The rebuilding cycle in the Hundred related to a general phenomena in the Mid-Atlantic that began in the late 18th century and in the Hundred during the first quarter of the 19th century. In constructing new buildings, farmers were making a statement about their social status and prosperity.

At the beginning of the 19th century Mill Creek Hundred was more advanced than other parts of Delaware in terms of population density, economic growth, and agricultural prosperity. Bolstered by new agricultural expertise, farmers combined the Hundred's rich soils with the limestone deposits to build up the highest land values in the state. During the late 19th century, prosperous owners, in coincidence with the rebuilding occurring in the rest of Delaware, altered buildings to meet new standards for style in houses and function in barns.

General mixed farming was common in the Mid-Atlantic area throughout the 18th century. By 1850 in the Piedmont area in general and Mill Creek Hundred in particular, dairy and livestock farming predominated. Grain was grown to feed the livestock while oats, wheat, and butter were sold as cash crops. The highest possible ratios of animals and machinery per acre were employed. Dairying was frequently practiced as this was the most work-intensive and efficient form of farming. High efficiency

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

American Watchman. Newspaper Advertisement. October 6, 1813.  
Historical Society of Delaware.

Baist, G. William. Atlas of New Castle County, Delaware. Philadelphia:  
G. William Baist, 1893.

Beers, D. G. Atlas of the State of Delaware. Philadelphia: Pomeroy & Beers, 1868.

Cooch, Francis. A Little Known History of Newark, Delaware and Its Environs.  
Newark, DE: The Press of Kells, 1936.

Glassie, Henry. "Eighteenth-Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building".  
in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach ed. Common Places: Readings in American  
Vernacular Architecture. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property  $\pm$  3.5

UTM References

A 

1	18
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4	3	7	6	9	0
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4	3	9	6	0	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property incorporates the legal parcel 08-047.00-089 as well as a portion of the adjacent parcel 08-047.00-072 from the New Castle County Property Tax Map, 1987. The nominated property is an irregularly shaped polygon.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This configuration was chosen in order to include sufficient land area to maintain the agricultural yard space for the nominated house. This setting contributes to the character of the property. The boundaries include 10 contributing and 2 non-contributing outbuildings. Although the outbuildings were built during the 20th

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Julia R. Hofer/Assistant Historic Preservation Planner  
organization New Castle County Department of Planning date June 1988  
street & number 2701 Capitol Trail telephone (302) 366-7780  
city or town Newark state DE zip code 19711



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The windows are six-over-six double hung sash windows. The door and the windows have molded surrounds. The half story above has two symmetrically spaced gable-roofed wall dormers. A modern screen porch with a shed roof covers most of the first floor facade. The porch framing, which is supported by a brick-faced concrete foundation, begins at the eastern corner of the facade and extends to the western side of the main block door. A hand-operated water pump is located in the porch foundation. The eastern endwall presents the gable endwalls of both the wing and the main block. The only interruptions are the chimney stack rising above the wing roofline and a small window in the main block at the attic level. The northern or rear facade is less regular than the main facade. The construction for both sections is frame on this elevation. The wing section is stepped back some ten feet south of the main block. There are two windows on the first floor and two dormers above with trim of the type found on the main facade. The facade of the main block is interrupted by a modern, frame, shed-roofed porch. The porch is supported by a brick-faced concrete foundation. The enclosed porch covers the original rear exit from the main hall. Directly above, at the level of the interior stair landing, is a three-over-six double hung sash window. The second floor has a single six-over-six window. The three windows on the first floor are modern replacements. These are nine pane casement windows framed as a unit. The window surrounds on this facade match those seen on the first floor main facade. All of the windows in the house, with the exception of the casement windows, have modern, aluminum-framed storm windows. There is no evidence that there were ever shutters for the windows. Modern gutters have been attached to the cornice. The cornice, which was duplicated on the wing addition, is a box cornice with a flared section which rises to meet the gable edge. Directly below the cornice is a bed molding. The bed molding stops short of the corner. The dormers on the wing are placed in such a manner as to interrupt the bed molding. To accommodate this, the molding stops several inches short of the windows. The western wall is the gable endwall for the main block. The chimney stack rises above the roofline at the peak. The chimney appears to be rebuilt above the roof line. In the southern corner of the wall is a door to the basement level. The entrance is protected by a cantilevered gable roof. The door is beaded batten wood with eight fixed panes of glass.

Access to the basement can be gained through the west endwall door or from interior stairs. The rebuilt open string stairs descend from the north wall along the eastern wall. The interior dimensions under the main block are approximately 19 by 24 feet. The dirt floor is somewhat uneven. The stone walls, which are whitewashed, support a ceiling which varies in height but averages at six feet nine inches. The ceiling support system consists of a centered nine and a half inch square beam. The joists for the floor above run perpendicular to the beam.

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The joists are three by eight inches in size and are notched into the beam. The beam and the joists are vertical sawn. Additional support is provided by a circular sawn square post located near the bottom of the stairs. Projecting from the western wall are the stone foundation supports for the hearths above. The southwest supports are split providing storage area in the opening. A two-over-two pane window is located at the ceiling level near the center of the southern wall.

On the eastern wall about five feet from the southeast corner is a five board batten door pierced by three elongated diamond shaped openings in the upper third of the door. The door opens into the basement. On the other side of the door is another room. This sub-basement is reached through a four foot long stone walled entry. The entry slopes down several inches to the room beyond. The height of the walls at the entry is seven feet three inches. On the far side the walls which were originally five feet eight inches high, have been added prior to the construction of the wing above to equal the seven foot three inch height on the opposite side. Along the north and east walls are several stone projections that were built into the walls at the time of construction. These projections occur approximately three feet above the floor and may have served as shelf supports. The space is small, approximately nine by nine feet, much smaller than the room above. The floor joists for the upper structure extend well beyond the perimeter of the sub-basement.

The first floor plan of the Vansant House consists of an unheated side stair hall with two rooms on the west end of the main block. The 1930s single room addition extends from the east wall. The hall is six and a half feet wide and extends through the width of the main block. Exterior doors are at either end. The interior of the front door consists of seven beaded, tongue and groove boards with several rows of closely spaced nails. The reveals are lined with raised panels. The stiles and rails are molded. The ceiling height is seven feet ten inches. The staircase consists of a closed string, straight run of nine treads to the landing with two treads in the opposite direction to the second floor. The landing is lit by a three-over-six double hung sash window. The wooden balusters are rectangular in section with a newel which consists of a slender turned post. The side of the staircase is finished with flat wooden panels with stiles and rails edged by a molded ogee. The basement level is reached from the rear of the staircase.

The two first floor rooms in the main block are separated from the stair hall by a four inch thick partition wall. The two rooms are nearly identical in size being eleven and a half by twelve and a half feet each. The southern room retains the original woodwork. The floor is finished with random width, five and a half to nine inch boards which break at the hall door. The hall door is a raised six panel wood door with original hardware. The surround is architrave molding with a bead on the inner edge. Two windows are evenly spaced on the south wall. The window reveals,

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which are square, are sixteen inches deep. The window surround has a bead on the inner edge with a beaded ogee molding on the outer edge. The baseboard is six inches high with a simple bead on the top. There is a one and a quarter inch flat shoe mold for which the top edge is rounded. A chair rail runs continuously around the room forming the windowsills. The chair rail is four inches wide, reeded in the middle and strip beaded on the top and bottom edges. From the top of the chair rail to the floor is two foot eight inches. The fireplace occupies the center of the west wall. The opening has been covered by a wood panel. The surround matches the molding around the windows. A shallow mantelshelf with a molded edge supported by two reeded pilasters which are backed by a wood panel surmounts the surround. Built-in cupboards with raised panel doors occupy the majority of the remaining wall space on either side of the fireplace. The cupboards extend from the floor to the ceiling. The southwest cupboard has two pairs of doors while the northwest cupboard has one door each top and bottom. Both have lower doors that extend to the level of the chair rail. Stylistically the cupboards appear to have been constructed at the same time, however, the baseboard that follows the perimeter of the room extends through the southwest cupboard. The other cupboard does not have any baseboard, possibly indicating that this cupboard or both have been reworked. Near the center of the partition wall is a doorway to the north room. A modern swinging door has been fitted into the frame. The north room is a 1930s retrofitted kitchen. All that remains of the original features is the door to the stair hall and the built-in cupboard in the southwest corner. The fireplace on the west wall has been walled over. There is a bank of three nine pane casement windows on the northern frame wall. These appear to be part of the 1930s renovation. No clue remains of the original window configuration for this room.

The one-and-a-half story wing, which probably also dates from the 1930s, is reached on the first floor through the eastern stone wall. The wall is eighteen inches thick at this point. The floor level for the single room in the wing is a step down from the main block. The interior of the room is approximately sixteen by seventeen feet. The flooring is two and a quarter inch wide boards. The baseboard has a simple bead on the top and is five inches high. The interior door from the hall is six panels, raised and molded on one side only, with the original c. 1810 latch hardware. The south wall contains a door to the exterior in the southwest corner and two evenly spaced windows. The reveals are a little more than a foot deep. The opposite wall mimics the main block in being of frame construction. This wall has two windows. The fireplace with flanking open shelves occupies the east wall.

The second floor of the Vansant House follows the first floor plan. The stair hall is also six and a half feet wide. The space above the front door is enclosed, forming a small room with a six-over-six window. This room was remodeled in the 1930s as a bathroom. A door separates the hall from the stairs to the attic. The closed staircase consists of seven treads to the landing followed by two treads in the opposite direction. The rooms above the parlor and kitchen are the same dimensions as



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the rooms below. The ceiling height for the second floor rooms is seven feet four inches. In both rooms the fireplace wall is the western wall. Both openings have been closed up and any surround that may have existed has been removed. Both rooms have built-in cupboards flanking the former fireplace locations. The cupboard doors appear to be later additions. There are two symmetrically placed six-over-six windows set in one-foot-deep reveals in the south room. The north room has a single six-over-six window in the northern frame wall. The window trim is flat with a bead on the inside edge. The baseboards are six inches high. The floorboards are random width as appear on the floor below. The doors to the rooms are batten with beaded tongue and groove boards. In the northwest corner of the room, as in the kitchen below and in the northeast corner of the stairwell, the edge of the stone walls is clearly defined. The edge of the stonework projects several inches into each room.

Access to the upper level of the addition is gained through the east wall. The door to this room is a modern door with six raised panels on both sides. The interior dimensions are the same as the room below. The room occupies the entire space under the eaves so that there is no attic space above. Two dormer windows on each side pierce the sloping ceiling. A fireplace occupies the east wall. The fireplace surround, executed in the Federal style, is a finely detailed 20th century reproduction.

The attic level of the main block has no partitions. Flooring is provided by wood planks. On the west wall is what was a brick double flue that joined to form a single flue. The original configuration has been reworked so that this serves only as a support. The brick work is braced with a steel I-beam. Modern mortar on the eastern gable wall provides evidence of two windows which were evenly spaced on either side of the peak. The window on the southern end remains although the opening was reduced from its original size. These alterations were most likely made to accommodate the ridge line for the addition. Further alterations in the stonework appear on the south wall. The stonework rises about a foot and a half above the floor. It has been shaped around the rafters obscuring the rafter ends. The roof structure consists of common rafters forming nine bents. Each rafter has a collar that is half dove-tailed to the rafter. The rafters are numbered and lapped and pinned at the ridge. On the north wall, the rafters are notched over the plate.

The house and several 20th century agricultural outbuildings lie well below the road grade. The house, which faces south away from the road but toward the former stream bed, lies farthest from the road and at a lower elevation than the other buildings. There is still a substantial drop to the stream bed and woods. A stone wall, which varies in height from a foot to eighteen inches, helps to level the rear yard area on the north elevation. A wooden picket fence encloses the rear yard. The drive from the road to the house runs downhill perpendicular to the road. There is a turnaround at the base of the drive ending to the east of the house. The upper two thirds of the drive is lined with mature conifers. There are eleven outbuildings

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in the immediate vicinity of the house. Most of these were built during the 1930s. There are five frame sheds, one stone and frame shed, one frame kennel, and a frame, open-side equipment shed. A large frame barn with a stone foundation rests on the foundation of a c. 1828 barn which reportedly was struck by lightning and subsequently burned. Since its reconstruction about 1936, the barn has had two sheds and a silo added to it. A frame corncrib stands adjacent to the north face of the barn. A modern shed roofed, stone springhouse is several hundred feet to the west of the house.

Much of the 19th century landscape surrounding the site is extant due to the continued use of the land for farming. The landscape will remain open as the property comprises a central portion of the Middle Run Valley Natural Area. The creek which follows through the valley has been called alternately "Middle" or "Muddy" Run. The southeastern and northeastern boundaries for the property, during the mid 19th century, were delineated by one of the tributaries for Muddy Run. The tributary has since stopped flowing, leaving only a damp bed. Possum Hollow Road which passes through the property served as a connection between Polly Drummond Hill Road and Possum Park Road just south of Milford Crossroads. Although the roadway remains discernable for this length, the pavement now extends only as far east as the Vansant House.

The present stone and frame dwelling is at least the second one on the site. The 1798 and 1804 tax assessment records list a mudwall dwelling. This was replaced by the time of the 1816 tax assessment by what is apparently the present stone dwelling. None of the 19th century tax or probate records make mention of the frame wall. The frame wall appears to be original to the building based on the evenness in the manner that the stone walls terminate on that facade and that the original roof rafters seem to have been designed to accommodate this wall. The fact that the fourth wall is frame and not stone is very unusual. This appears to be the only extant example of the form. Jicha and Cesna in a study of agricultural buildings in Mill Creek Hundred did find that a large percent of barns in the hundred built before 1840 were built with three stone walls and a frame front wall. Since the Vansant house was built at the same time as the barns with similar characteristics, it is possible that the barn construction served as a model. Other hypotheses concerning the frame wall suggest the collapse of a stone wall in that location with replacement by the extant frame wall or that the stone house was built abutting an earlier structure. Since it is not possible to inspect the interior of the wall, these remain as speculations.

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- 218.2 North of the house is a frame, shed-roofed chicken house c. 1936. A door and two adjacent windows are on the south elevation. (Contributing)
- 218.3 To the east of the chicken house is a frame, gable-roofed dog kennel c. 1950 with an attached metal fence run. (Non-contributing)
- 218.4 Beyond the driveway turnaround to the southeast is a stone and frame, shed-roofed building c. 1936. The door is located on the north elevation. The mortar on the stone portion retains the marks of the wooden forms used to construct the building. The stonework is separating along a line which runs from the ground to the rafters. (Contributing)
- 218.5 & 218.6 These are frame, shed-roofed buildings c. 1936 located immediately east of 218.4 They are accessed from the south. (Contributing)
- 218.7 To the east of 218.5 and 218.6 is another wood-faced shed c. 1936 with a quonset hut corrugated metal roof. The structure may have been used as a chicken house. (Contributing)
- 218.8 Located north of the previously described row of sheds, this is a frame, gable-roofed shed c. 1936. (Contributing)
- 218.9 Opposite the row of sheds to the north is an equipment shed c. 1936. The shed has an open wall on the south elevation. An extension was built onto the shed creating further equipment bays to the east. The north wall serves as part of the fenced animal yard associated with the barn. (Contributing)
- 218.10 The present frame with board and batten siding, gambrel-roofed, two story barn was constructed as early as 1936 on the uncoursed stone foundation of the c. 1828 barn. The roof is covered by wooden shingles and surmounted by three metal cupolas. The extant barn has double sliding doors centered on the north wall. The barn is set into the bank, the upper side of which is located on the north. The bank barn form was common in the Piedmont area during the 19th century. The southern face has a recessed section for the protection of livestock from the elements. On the eastern side of the recessed section is attached a gable roofed shed which is open on the adjoining south side. Fencing of the southeast barnyard provides an enclosed area for livestock. A one-and-a-half story frame and stone, gable end roof wing has been built on the south side of the main block. A sliding door is located on the south gable end wall of the wing. (Contributing)
- 218.11 Close to the barn, on the north side is a frame, one story, gable-roofed corncrib c. 1936. The side walls are canted. The gable ends under the eaves are finished with wood shingles. The remaining wall surfaces are finished with metal cloth. (Contributing)
- 218.12 A c. 1940 metal silo is located to the east of the barn. (Non-contributing)

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was necessary as the population density increased and the average farm size decreased in the Hundred through the 19th century. As a consequence more permanent dwellings and agricultural buildings were built. The most frequent improvements were log buildings replaced by stone.

The John C. Vansant House in many ways typifies the changes occurring in the Hundred during this period. Tax assessment records indicate that in 1798 the 284 acres of land owned by the Vansant family included a mudwalled house and a log kitchen. No agricultural buildings were listed. Six years later a barn of unspecified material had been built. The 1816 tax assessment identified a frame barn, a stable, and a stone house. Also, the amount of property decreased to 114 acres. The acreage increased to 135 by the time of the 1828 tax assessment. That listing indicated a stone barn replacing the earlier frame one.

Between 1798 and 1828, pivotal years of agricultural transformation in the Hundred, the Vansant property underwent parallel changes. The property size was greatly reduced, by about sixty percent. This reduction was considerably more than the average of one third, however, in 1798 the quantity of acres was among the top ten percent in the Hundred. In 1828, even with nearly twice the average consolidation of lands, the Vansant property was in the top twenty percent in size. During the same time period, the impermanent log and mudwalled structures were replaced by substantial stone buildings. While stone houses and barns became increasingly more common through the study period, they still constituted less than fifty percent of the dwellings and thirty percent of the barns in 1828. These figures are a good indication of the social standing and prosperity inferred by possessing both of these structures. Although the 19th century agricultural buildings no longer exist, the function of the property has continued to present the atmosphere of the earlier time.

The use of stone as the primary construction material of the John C. Vansant House signified prosperity to the community. This impression was furthered by the owner's houseplan selection. Instead of building a traditional house form, Vansant chose to build in the academically inspired Georgian style. This style with its emphasis on balance and symmetry, began to gain acceptance in the 1740s. The introduction of the new style corresponded with the growing economic and social divisions within the community. An important architectural feature used to express these divisions was the unheated passage. The passage acted not only as a corridor between rooms but also served to isolate movements and functions. The owners of houses that utilized the stair hall were concerned with expressing their social separation from the community. By the early 19th century this house type was scattered throughout the Piedmont area, indicating general adoption of the style into the vernacular building tradition.

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By the mid-18th century balance and symmetry began to gain acceptance so that eventually these ideals became part of the thinking of traditional builders in the Mid-Atlantic. By the time the Vansant House was constructed in the early part of the 19th century Federal style characteristics were added to the vernacular buildings. The most common interpretation within the Georgian type was the double-pile, side hall plan. This was occasionally seen in farmhouses throughout southern Pennsylvania as well as adjacent Delaware and Maryland. However, the form was used much more frequently in towns or villages. The double-pile houses tended to have separate hearths in each room, a hall which ran the whole length of the house with stairs that ran half the length, and the two ground floor rooms were often of equal size. The Vansant House has all of these features as well as interior details reflecting Federal period influence. The house is clearly representative of building types built in the region for the above average landowner at the beginning of the 19th century. There are two unusual features incorporated into the Vansant House construction. The first is that the rear wall of the structure is of framed wood rather than stone as found on the other walls. The best local model for this feature is seen in period barns. Also, the roof supports are common rafters. In Delaware this was all that was deemed necessary. However, the Vansant House also has collar beams which are unusual in the area.

The earliest record of a dwelling on the property occurs in the 1798 tax assessment. The house listed was a mudwalled residence and a log kitchen. The mudwalled house was in all likelihood considered to be a temporary residence constructed sometime after John Clark Vansant acquired the property from James Black in 1788 in exchange for lands in Kent County. Primary records suggest several spellings for the family name including Vinsant, Vancement, Vanzant, and most frequently Vansant.

John C. Vansant died in 1799. He was survived by his wife Mary and six children. His eldest son John was named as executor and given property above and beyond that divided equally between himself and three siblings. Mary, a fifth child, was to be supported during her life by her mother and siblings. This provision indicates that Mary was probably permanently incapacitated. A sixth child, James, was left one dollar, only, as a provision of the will. The resulting estate inventory gives a total value of \$503.09. The farm implements and animals were valued at \$193.68. John C. Vansant also owned one adult negro slave and four young children whose total value was \$260. The household goods, which included three bedsteads and five chairs, amounted to only \$48.41, less than ten percent of the total estate. The furnishings for the house were lumped together in such a way that the number of rooms in the mudwalled house can not be determined.

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The census records from 1800 list household occupants by age and gender. Deductions from this indicate that John C. Vansant II was residing with his three inheriting siblings, the incapacitated Mary, their mother Mary, and five slaves. Part of the settlement of John C. Vansant senior's estate gave an equivalent of dollars for pounds. If this was a standard conversion for the period, the value of the property declined between the tax assessments of 1798 and 1804 from \$1,999 to \$1,536 even though the quantity of improved acres had remained the same and a barn had been constructed in the ensuing years.

The family fortunes must have improved dramatically from 1804 to 1816, the time of the next assessment. The 1816 record indicates a stone dwelling (presumably the extant building) and a total property size of 114 acres. Many elements contributed to these changes. There is an 1805 bill of sale extant for a six year old negro boy. Although no other bills of sale are known to survive for the remaining four slaves, none are listed in the Vansant household in the 1810 census. Presumably, all of the slaves were sold between 1800 and 1810. The one bill of sale was for thirty pounds (roughly equivalent to \$100). If the remaining four slaves brought similar income, a substantial sum of money was raised. More money was brought in through the sale of 108 acres of land in 1813. To balance the influx of money, as part of the estate settlement for John C. Vansant, Sr., a debt of \$760.31 was paid in 1809. The inheriting younger son took possession of his portion of the property in 1809 as indicated by orphans court records and the 1810 census which no longer indicates the younger brother as a member of the household. In the balance, John C. Vansant was able to have a substantial stone dwelling constructed and saw the total value of the property more than double to \$3,192. Undoubtedly, much of the increase was due to the dramatic rise in property value which occurred in Mill Creek Hundred at that time.

John C. Vansant II married, raised a family, and continued to farm the land until his death in 1836. As he died intestate, the orphans court records for the benefit of the survivors reveal many details of the property. At that time there were 128 acres. Included in the total were six acres planted with fruit trees and eight acres of meadowland. Evidence that the land was being regularly improved through the application of lime for fertilizer is found not only in the surveyor's map drawn at this time but also in the written records. Apparently, the kiln was used to produce 500 bushels of lime to spread on the farm. The lime burning operation was not anywhere near as extensive as that found at the nearby Eastburn-Jeanes Kilns (N-194, NR district) which produced lime for commercial purposes. Although the kiln located on the Vansant property may have produced excess lime for profit, the records did not indicate this.

The buildings recorded at this time were more extensive than those indicated on the surveyor's map or tax assessment records. The two story stone dwelling house with attached stone kitchen appear on all of these records and even though there is a

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slight difference in the dimensions, there is no doubt that the house is the extant main block. The stone kitchen was most likely connected to the house in the same area as the 1930s wing. The building drawn on the surveyor's map is rectangular. The northern frame wall could not have been the location of the kitchen as this would have resulted in a square silhouette. Further, the west wall was not the location for the kitchen as there are no scars on the stonework, the land slopes away from the building on this side, and the basement access door is on this side. The rear facade for the possible kitchen location is not probable since the framing as seen at the attic level is original and would have to have been disturbed for the present alteration. Also, an addition in this location would have created a first floor interior room with no windows.

More details about the house are gained from the partitionment of the estate and the estate inventory. Vansant's widow, Ellen or Eleanor, was given the use of the southern room of the western end on the lower floor and the two rooms on the second story with free access through the entry and one third of the cellar. The remaining rooms would have been the attached kitchen, the northern room of the western end on the lower floor, the little room over the entry on the second floor, and the attic. The estate inventory listed a total value of personal property to be \$574.59. Approximately \$75 of this was household goods while the balance was farm related property including grain. The front parlor contained the most value in goods, nearly \$22. The best bed was located in the rear parlor while the upstairs rooms contained several more beds. The contents of the attic, unlike the cellar, are not differentiated. It is possible that one or more of the beds were located in the attic. The contents of the kitchen included a ten-plate stove. Presumably, this was a cookstove. The details gleaned from these documents confirm that the extant house is the one described in the records. The household revealed in these records was similar to traditional households in the Mid-Atlantic region. One important distinguishing feature is the presence of a relatively modern appliance for the time, the ten-plate stove.

The outbuildings described in the orphans court records include a 47 by 30 foot stone barn, a stone springhouse, a 25 by 17 foot granary and corn crib, and a square log tenant house. Only the barn was listed in contemporary tax assessments. The surveyor's map does indicate the location of the springhouse, however, this is the only documentation for the building. No above-ground remains could be located. As no other record survives for the tenant house, this building could have been located anywhere on the property. It is possible that at least through 1840 the tenant was farming the land. In the 1840 census John C. Vansant III was listed as being employed in manufacturing and trades.

The resolution of John C. Vansant II's estate allowed his widow one third of the property through her lifetime and the remaining two thirds being bought by John C. Vansant III from the other survivors. One of these was Isaac, a younger brother.

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The relationship between the two brothers poses some interesting problems. John was listed as the head of the household in the 1840 census together with family members who can be identified as his mother, brother Isaac, and sister. In 1850 the census showed Isaac, farmer, as head of the household with a wife, a child, his mother, and elder brother John. While the agricultural census from the same year listed Isaac as the farmer responsible for the crops and livestock, the 1852 tax assessment charged John for all of the property including the buildings and livestock except for ten acres. John's name no longer appeared in the 1860 census. Instead Isaac with his wife, several children and two non-family members occupied the house. Also absent from this census was the brothers' mother who had presumably died in the ensuing years. The extant records have not revealed the fate of John C. Vansant III. As a property holder, there should be a record of the resolution of the property in the event of his death or sale of the land. As no documents of this type were found, how Isaac Vansant came to be the owner is unknown.

In 1865 the house and property passed out of the hands of the Vansant family. In that year Isaac sold the property to Robert Taylor. The 1870 census indicated Robert Taylor, wife, children, and mother-in-law occupied the land as a farmer. The very next listing was for Joseph and Lucy Taylor, presumably the parents of Robert. They may have occupied the tenant house listed on the property in the earlier orphans court records. In 1892 the property, now containing 162.5 acres of land, was sold at sheriff's auction. At the time Robert Taylor owed in excess of \$4,000 on the mortgage. The mortgage was held by Charles M. Groome through a chain of people back to Isaac Vansant making Isaac Vansant the original mortgage holder. Charles Groome bought the property at the sheriff's sale for \$300. He sold the property in 1899 for a healthy profit only to buy it back again at another sheriff's sale in 1910. It seems likely that Groome was a money lender on a small scale as there are a few records of a similar nature for property in the area.

The property changed hands two more times before being purchased in 1936 by Yolande deV. Brown. Yolande Brown bought three other tracts of land in the Middle Run Valley at the same time. She maintained these properties, through a manager, as farmland. Shortly after purchasing the property, alterations were made on the house. The rear parlor was outfitted as a kitchen, a bathroom was installed, most of the fireplaces were closed up, the Colonial Revival wing was added, and the front porch may have been added. Reportedly, the 19th century barn had burned down so a replacement was built on the foundations of the old barn. Outbuildings were erected subsequent to this time. The alterations effected by Yolande Brown were consistent with the prevailing Colonial Revival movement of the time.

In 1980 New Castle County purchased the Vansant property together with the other three properties owned by Yolande deV. Brown. These lands constitute about one third of the Middle Run Valley Natural Area. The natural area remains an open space allowing the original 19th century setting for the Vansant House to remain as a reminder of past culture.



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This nomination furthers the objectives outlined in the Delaware Statewide Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. The study units covered are the time periods 1770-1830, 1830-1880, and 1880-1940. The historic themes involved are agriculture, change through occupation, and architecture, engineering and decorative arts. The area is part of Zone I, the Pennsylvania Piedmont.

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- United States Bureau of Census: Population Census. Delaware. 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900.
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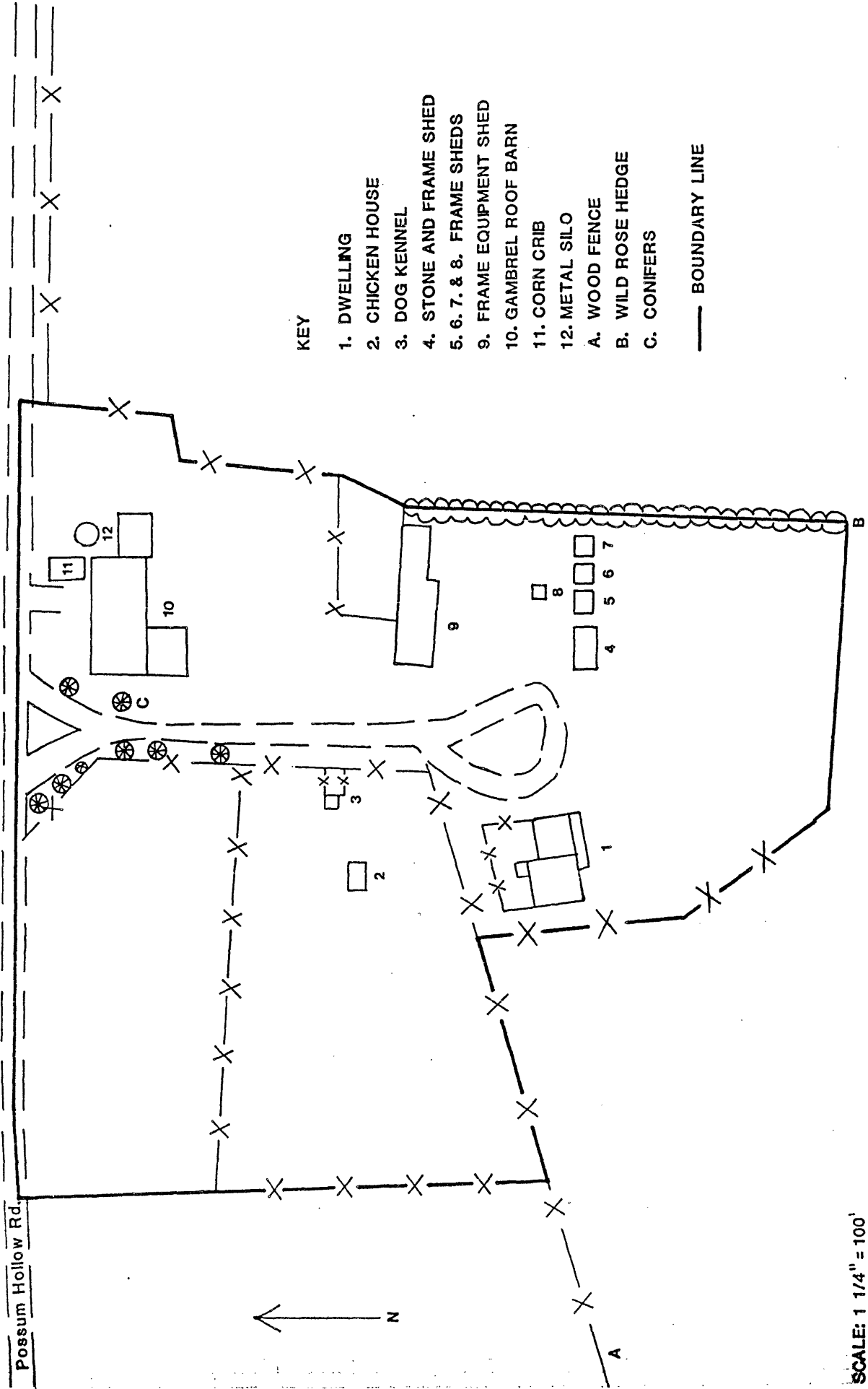
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**Verbal Boundary Description (continuation)**

Beginning on Possum Hollow Road at the end of the paved driveway opposite the west wall of the stone foundation for the barn in a straight line east 140 feet, making an 86° turn and extending in a straight line south 90 feet, making a 107° turn and extending in a straight line west 25 feet, making a 105° turn and extending in a straight line south 90 feet, making a 27° turn and extending in a straight line southwest 40 feet, making a 150° turn and extending in a straight line south 249 feet, making a 90° turn and extending in a straight line west 158 feet, making a 131° turn and extending northwest 105 feet, making a 150° turn and extending in a straight line northwest 119 feet, making a 99° turn and extending in a straight line southwest 140 feet, making an 85° turn and extending in a straight line northwest 310 feet, making an 81° turn extending in a straight line east 430 feet to the point of beginning. The northernmost boundary is a total of 570 feet, the combination of 140 feet and 430 feet. All foot measurements have been rounded to the nearest foot.

**Boundary Justification (continuation)**

century, they do not detract from the character of the property as their agricultural function is consistent with the property's historic use, and they were built within the period of significance. The boundary is defined by fence lines, Possum Hollow Road, and lines which connect the physical boundaries. This delineation distinguishes the house and immediate agricultural area from the fields and wooded areas on the property. The boundary encompasses all of the tax parcel 08-047.00-089 which was created as part of modern land use. Some of the agricultural buildings are part of the nominated property that is located on an adjacent tax parcel. The inclusion of the additional land within the boundary ensures that an adequate landscape vista will be maintained from the road to the house. Both parcels are part of New Castle County's Park system.



KEY

- 1. DWELLING
- 2. CHICKEN HOUSE
- 3. DOG KENNEL
- 4. STONE AND FRAME SHED
- 5. 6. 7. & 8. FRAME SHEDS
- 9. FRAME EQUIPMENT SHED
- 10. GAMBREL ROOF BARN
- 11. CORN CRIB
- 12. METAL SILO
- A. WOOD FENCE
- B. WILD ROSE HEDGE
- C. CONIFERS

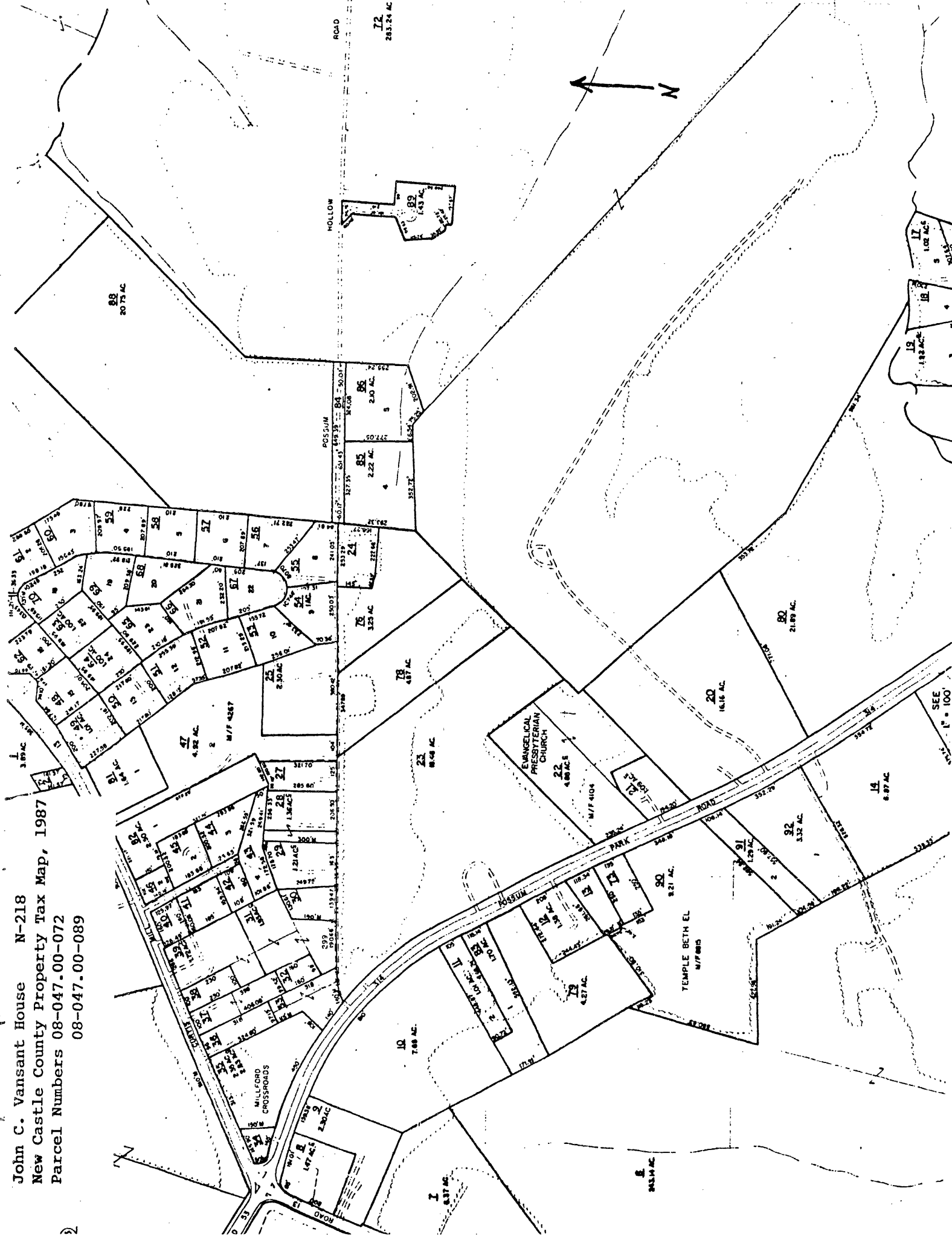
— BOUNDARY LINE

SCALE: 1 1/4" = 100'

STRUCTURES NOT TO SCALE

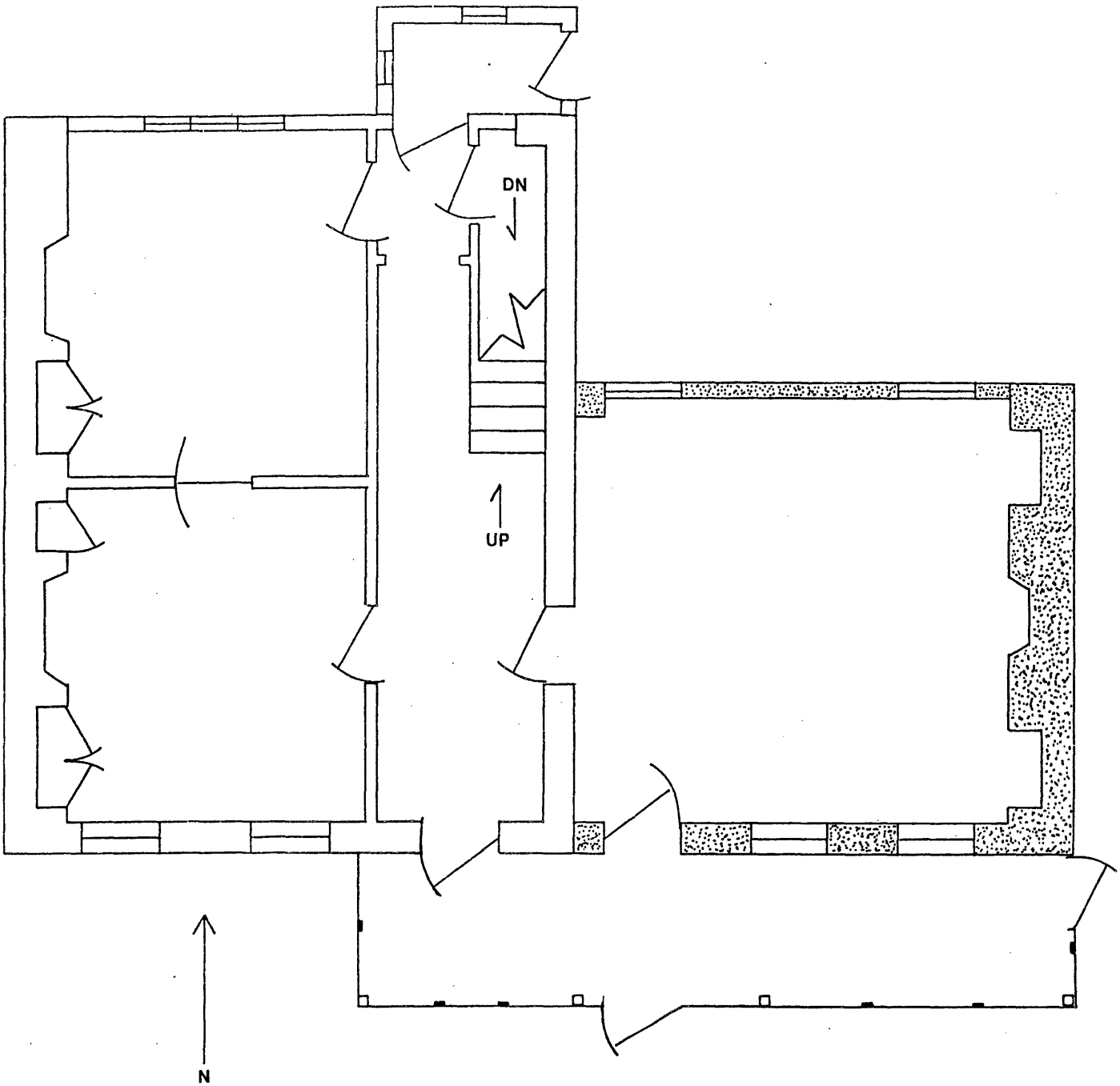
J. R. HOFER  
JUNE 1988

John C. Vansant House N-218  
New Castle County Property Tax Map, 1987  
Parcel Numbers 08-047.00-072  
08-047.00-089



**FIRST FLOOR ELEVATION**

- : c. 1810 ORIGINAL STRUCTURE
- : c. 1936 ADDITION

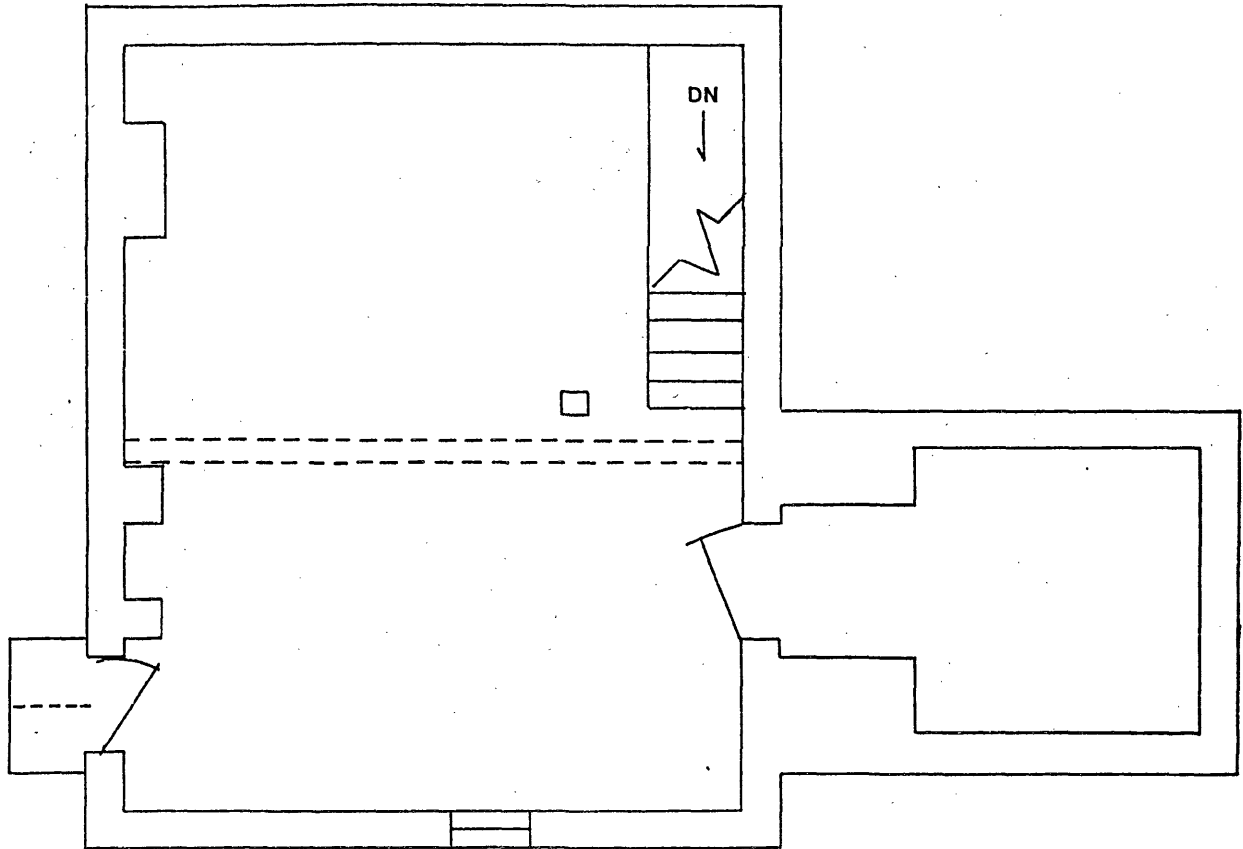


**NOT TO SCALE**

**J. R. HOFER  
JUNE 1988**

**JOHN C. VANSANT HOUSE  
N-218  
110 POSSUM HOLLOW ROAD  
MILL CREEK HUNDRED  
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE**

**BASEMENT ELEVATION**

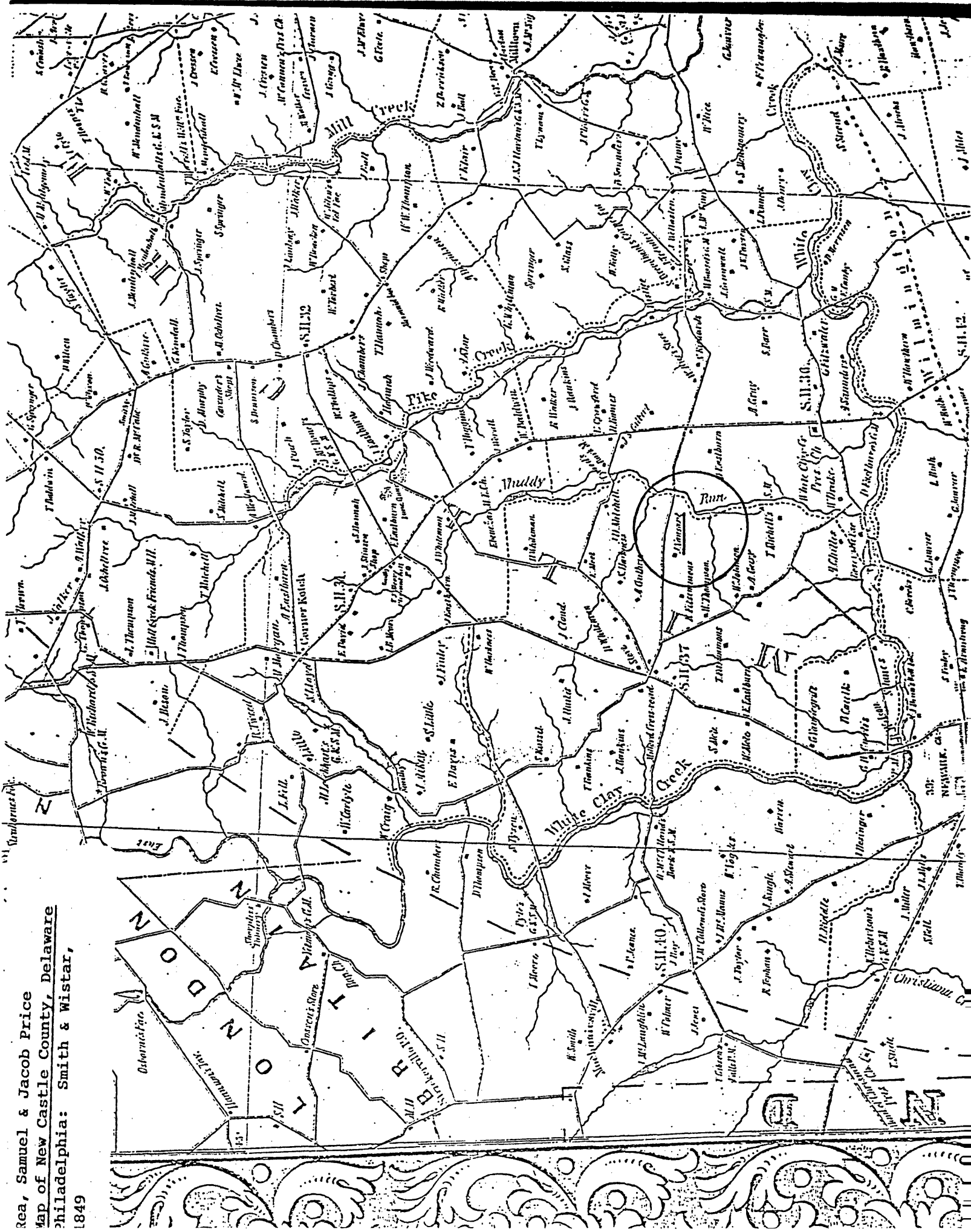


**JOHN C. VANSANT HOUSE  
N-218  
110 POSSUM HOLLOW ROAD  
MILL CREEK HUNDRED  
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE**

**NOT TO SCALE**

**J. R. HOFER  
JUNE 1988**

Rea, Samuel & Jacob Price  
Map of New Castle County, Delaware  
Philadelphia: Smith & Wistar,  
1849







Hopkins, G. M.  
Map of New Castle County, Delaware  
Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins & Co.  
1881

