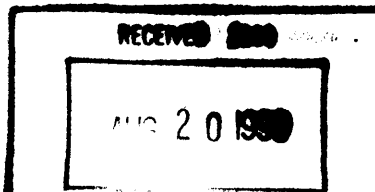


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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 by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries 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 Vass Farmstead

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 109 Stillwater Road N/A not for publication

city or town Hardwick Township vicinity

state New Jersey code 034 county Warren code 041 zip code 07825

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature] Date 7/22/99
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources /DSHPO
 State of Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature] Date _____
 State of Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 9/17/99

Name of Property

County and State

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	2	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
4	2	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 family

Agricultural, agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Georgian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls stone

clapboard

roof slate

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more 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 N/A
(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 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
- Agriculture
-
-
-
-
-

Period of Significance
1812-1922

Significant Dates
1812

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

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):** N/A
- 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:**

Vass Farmstead
Name of Property

Warren Co., NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 27

Flatbrookville NJ-PA

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	8
---	---

5	0	7	0	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	3	9	2	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

2

1	8
---	---

5	0	7	2	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	3	9	0	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

3

1	8
---	---

5	0	6	9	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	3	8	7	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

4

1	8
---	---

5	0	6	8	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	3	8	8	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

5 1 8 5 0 6 8 0 0 4 5 3 9 1 0 0

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dennis N. Bertland for the Hardwick Township Historical Society

organization Dennis Bertland Associates date March 1999

street & number P.O. Box 11 telephone (908) 689-6356

city or town Port Murray state NJ zip code 07865

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name State of New Jersey, DEP, Division of Fish, Game & Wildlife

street & number P.O. Box 400 telephone (609) 292-2965

city or town Trenton state NJ zip code 08625

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.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including 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 the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

DESCRIPTION

Located in Hardwick Township in northern Warren County, the Vass Farmstead is picturesquely sited overlooking White Lake on the north side of Stillwater Road (County Route 521) about a half-mile east of the crossroads known as Squires Corners. White Lake, noted for its marl bottom, drains into a small tributary of the Paulins Kill, and the broad valley of the Paulins Kill forms part of northwestern New Jersey's Ridge and Valley geographical province. An assemblage of stone and frame buildings, the farmstead consists of a substantial stone house with 1812 datestone, a large frame late 19th-century bank barn with early 20th-century appendages, a frame tenant house erected c. 1900-1920, and three small frame buildings of 20th-century date: an equipment shed, a privy, and a collapsing 1-bay garage. About 700 feet east of the tenant house along the road are the remnants of a small stone limekiln, and there are several small mid-20th century sheds north of the barn. Both the main house and tenant house face the road with short setbacks; the barn and other outbuildings stand northwest of the main house. A mix of small abandoned fields and woods crisscrossed by stone rows, the land behind the farmstead to the north rises up into low ridges flanking a narrow hollow. The property forms part of a 273-acre tract recently acquired by the State of New Jersey for wildlife management. Across the road from the farmstead broad open meadows extend to White Lake. The meadow and lake belong to a 391-acre property purchased by Warren County for open space preservation.

Main House:

The principal element of the complex is the main house, a substantial, 2-story, gable-roofed dwelling consisting of a main block and a secondary west wing with small frame appendage. The 3-bay main block has a double-pile side-hall plan and paired interior gable-end chimneys that join into one stack below the roof ridge. It exhibits notable Georgian/Federal style detailing consonant with the date "1812" carved on a stone set in the east gable. Lower than the main block and stepped back several feet from its front façade, the west wing features a 2-over-3-bay fenestration pattern and an interior west gable-end chimney. Originally 1 and ½-stories in height, the wing apparently is not contemporary with the main block but an early addition; it also has an interior gable-end chimney with brick stack. The 1-story frame appendage with low-pitched gable roof probably dates to the early 20th century, and may represent the reworking of an earlier porch or service shed. While retaining much early fabric, as well as later 19th-century

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

embellishment, the house was renovated in the middle decades of this century, and some features date to that period or more recent work. (photo #s 1 -3)

The walls of the main block and wing are mostly constructed of random ashlar limestone incorporating large rectangular blocks and considerable regular coursing on the front elevation and more irregularly shaped stones on the north elevation and the wing's west gable end, the stonework of the north side of the wing being more coursed rubble than ashlar. The walls of the two sections do not appear to be bonded or interlocked in any way, and the common wall between them is integral to the main block, evidence that the wing is a subsequent addition. While much of the stonework has been repointed in this century with Portland cement, areas of early, if not original, pointing survive in places. A simple water table marks the main block's first story level, and the date "1812," presumably the construction date of the house, is carved on a stone set in the main block's east gable just below the peak. Segmental arched lintels constructed of cut voussoirs span the main block's windows and rear entry. The wing's front door and windows instead feature well-cut flat lintels of Georgian style derivation consisting of central keystones flanked by lower blocks with splayed ends. While the first-story west window has a similar lintel; the wing's other window and door openings are spanned with one or two flat stones. The profile of the wing's original steeply pitched gable roof is clearly visible on the west gable (photo #s 1 - 9)

The main block exhibits a regular fenestration pattern. The 2/2 sash windows, however, are late 19th/early 20th century replacements, as are the louvered shutters and plain trim, the latter evidently installed over the original frames whose heavy timber sills remain exposed to view. The windows of the wing are similarly detailed. The main block has several small cellar windows that feature divided light wooden sash, timber frames, and wooden grills. Wooden storm and screen windows are stored in the basement. (photo #s 1 - 6, 8 & 11)

The dwelling's most impressive early exterior decorative feature is the main block's entry, a combination of Georgian form with Federal detailing comprised of a recessed, fanlighted doorway and pilastered surround. The wide reeded pilasters flanking the opening incorporate delicate moldings, latticework frieze and oval Adamesque patera. The fanlight has an architrave surround with fluted key block, radiating muntins, and lead swag and bow ornament. The entry reveals are lined with raised panels matching those of the six-panel door, hung on butt hinges, which retains an early iron rim lock with "spoon" handle, but whose upper four panels have been replaced with glass. The surround may have featured a pediment, removed or covered by the present porch roof.

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

Much more modestly detailed, the main block's rear entry has plain trim and a six-panel door faced with quirk-beaded boards inside and featuring butt hinges, rim lock with spoon lift, and glass lights replacing the upper two raised panels. The wooden storm door is modern. The wing's recessed front entry has architrave outer trim, board-lined reveals, and six-panel door with recessed panels, of which the middle two have been replaced with glass. The door probably is a mid-19th-century replacement. A cellar entry at the south corner of the east gable end, reached by stone steps, has a timber frame and batten door hung on strap hinges. (photo #s 1 & 9 - 12)

The Queen Anne style porch extending across the full width of the front of the house dates to the late 19th or early 20th centuries. It has a box cornice with crown and bed moldings, turned posts and balusters (some of which are missing), and tracery spandrel brackets with a star motif. The shed-roofed sun porch on the north side of the wing features louvered windows above a stone base and is a mid-20th-century addition. (photo #s 1, 3, 4, 11 & 12)

Sometime around the middle of the 19th century, the main block's wood shingle roof (exposed to view in the attic and probably oak or white cedar) was covered with gray slate, at which time box cornices with built-in gutters were installed. The cornices have crown and bed moldings (with Grecian ovolo profiles typical of the mid-19th century), wide soffits, friezes, and returns, and are carried on the raking eaves. The wing has a similar cornice, and its roof probably was raised concurrently with the cornice installation. Gutter leaks have caused extensive damage to the cornices. The two chimney stacks are brick and have corbelled drip caps. (photo #s 1 - 8)

The narrow frame appendage on the west side of the wing has a stone foundation, clapboard siding, and a low-pitched gable roof with boxed overhanging eaves. A c. 1941 photograph depicts 2/2 sash windows with louvered shutters resembling those of the main block and wing; the present small 2/2 sash windows replaced them sometime thereafter. The front entry has a panel door, possibly also a modern replacement, and a wooden screen door. (photo #s 4 & 5)

While also subject to 20th-century renovations, the interior of the house retains much of its original character. The first story of the main block has a stair hall that extends the full depth of the house and is flanked to the east by one large room with two fireplaces created sometime in this century by removing the partition between the two original rooms. Original fabric includes plaster walls, molded chair rails and baseboards, stepped architrave door and window trim, six-panel doors (raised-panel profile on one

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

face, recessed on the other) hung on butt hinges, and raised-panel-lined window reveals. Modern alterations include narrow tongue and groove flooring in the hall, linoleum in the east room, and fiberboard secured to the ceilings with furring strips. The delicate molding profiles of the woodwork are characteristic of the Federal style, as is the detailing of the open staircase and fireplace mantels. The open staircase, which consists of long lower and short upper runs broken by a landing, has square spindles, attenuated vase-turned newel posts, and a railing ovoid in section. The chair rail continues along the stairwell wall as a reflected handrail, and scroll brackets ornament the ends of each step. The triangular wall enclosing the cellar stairway below is constructed of raised paneling matching the doors and window reveals. While the front fireplace has been rebuilt in modern brick, its mantel of provincial Adamesque design remains intact. Reeded pilasters support a wide cornice frieze ornamented with a reeded central panel, fluted oval patera at the ends, and two drill and gouge-carved bands with circle and "triglyph" fluting motifs. The closed back fireplace has a much simpler mantel composed of an architrave surround, frieze with plain center and end blocks, and a molded cornice. Located between the fireplaces and originally separated by the removed partition are two four-door cupboards with raised-panel doors hung on butt hinges. (photo #s 13 - 17)

The main block's second-story floor plan mirrors the original plan below, except for a small chamber, subsequently converted into a bathroom, which occupies the front of the hall. While the flooring throughout is early fabric, the ceilings have been covered with fiberboard as in the rooms below. The hall, front bedroom, and hall chamber feature molded chair rails and baseboards, stepped architrave door and window trim, and six-panel doors with a raised-panel profile, butt hinges, and "spoon" lift rim locks. The closed fireplace in the front bedroom has an Adamesque mantel with reeded pilasters and wide cornice frieze ornamented with large oval patera flanking a reeded center block. The four-door cupboard to the left of the fireplace has recessed door panels matching those lining the window reveals. The back bedroom lacks a fireplace but has a four-door cupboard. Its woodwork, much simpler than in the other rooms, includes quirk-bead-molded baseboard, architrave door and window trim, board-lined window reveals, and architrave chair rail. The attic staircase is enclosed with quirk-bead-edged tongue and groove boards, and its six-panel door retains an early Suffolk latch. (photo #s 24 - 27)

In the main block's attic and cellar some of the original roof and floor framing is exposed to view. The roof is framed with widely spaced common rafters supported about mid span with purlins, for which hewn timber and mortise and tenon joinery were employed. The H-bent truss with diagonal corner brackets is constructed of saw cut timber and may have been a subsequent addition. An inverted V-shaped timber frame

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

supports the "leaning" chimney stacks. The tongue and groove attic flooring consists of boards with two tongues alternating with boards with two grooves. Also of hewn timber, mortise and tenon construction, the first floor frame consists of a large summer beam running east/west about midway with perpendicular joists under the east room and small joists running parallel under the hall. Beneath the summer beam is a vertical board sheathed wall framed with large hewn posts and sill. The two chimneys have solid stone bases. (photo #s 20 - 23)

The interior of the cellarless west wing bears considerably more evidence of late 19th and 20th-century remodeling than does the main block. A partition of unknown date divides the first story into east and west rooms; and most of the finishes of the two rooms appear to date to the mid-20th century. The door leading to the main block and the windows, however, retain early architrave trim. The enclosed second-floor staircase and closet in the southwest corner of the west room may have been installed in the latter 19th century upon the removal of the original cooking fireplace. They have four-panel doors whose recessed panels are edged with molding resembling that of the wing's front door. The chimney must have been rebuilt concurrently to vent a cooking stove that presumably replaced the fireplace. A modern kitchen was installed in the frame appendage during mid-20th-century renovations, at which time, if not earlier, the stone wing ceased being used as a kitchen. The second story of the wing contains three small bedrooms and a bathroom opening from a narrow hallway running east/west. The finishes appear to be mid-20th-century work and include narrow tongue and groove flooring, plaster walls and ceilings, simple door and window trim with a quirk bead molding around the inner edge, and four-panel doors. (photo #s 18, 19, 28 & 29)

Site features and grounds:

Sloping gently to the east, the neglected grounds around the house are informally landscaped with a variety of mature trees and overgrown shrubs. A low stone retaining wall delineates the front and east side yards of the main house. Stone-paved pathways lead from the porch steps at the front door to the road and from the wing porch to the gravel driveway just west of the house. A broken rail fence separates the rear yard from the field to the northeast. Photographs dating c. 1941 depict a farm lane just east of the house and three frame outbuildings on its east side, a wagon house, ice house, and a corn crib, that are no longer extant. The present lane leading to the barn and fields beyond lies about one hundred feet to the east. The tenant house is located at the junction of the

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

lane with the road; the barn stands about 230 feet back from the road. The outbuildings are discussed in more detail below. (photo #s 1 – 4 & 30 – 32)

1. Privy:

One of the three small outbuildings located just northwest of the house, the two-seat privy is a frame, gable-roofed structure with vertical siding attached with wire nails and batten doors. It probably dates to the early 20th century and is a contributing resource. (photo # 38)

2. Garage:

To the east of the privy is a collapsing 1-bay garage of light frame construction that appears to be of mid-20th-century provenance. It is a non-contributing resource.

3. Equipment shed:

Standing just behind the privy, the frame equipment shed is a 3-bay, 1-story, gable-roofed structure with poured-concrete foundation, vertical siding, batten sliding doors, and overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends. Probably constructed in the mid-20th century, it incorporates a portion of the frame of an earlier building, an open fronted wagon shed with asymmetrical gable roof, to which a front extension and new roof frame were added. The recycled framing members exhibit circular saw marks and mortise and tenon joinery. The equipment shed is a non-contributing resource. (photo #37)

4. Barn:

Sited on rising ground to the north of the house and overgrown with trees and brush, the large frame barn consists of three sections: a 5-bay bank barn with a coursed rubble stone stable level, a 2-story perpendicular ell with asymmetrical gable roof at the main block's east corner, and a 1 and ½-story, gable-roofed appendage extending from the main block's southwest end wall. The main block appears to date to the later 19th century, and the date "June 6, 1877" painted on one of its main cross beams may commemorate its construction; the wings probably were added in the first decades of the 20th century. Two mid 20th-century concrete silos abut the north corner of the main

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

block. A collapsing, roofless cupola, centered on the main roof ridge is square in section. An early 20th-century photograph reveals that it had paired louvered openings on the sides and a low hip roof with boxed eaves. Other exterior features of the main block, most of which are early fabric, include a slate roof, boxed overhanging eaves with crown and bed moldings and plain frieze, clapboard siding, louvered and sash windows, and batten sliding doors. The early 20th century photograph also documents that the front wall of the stable was enclosed by that time and featured batten Dutch doors with multi-pane transoms. The existing novelty siding, doors and flanking windows are latter replacements. The perpendicular ell has a concrete foundation, clapboard siding, slate roof, overhanging eaves, sash windows and batten doors. A hoist bar protrudes from its gable peak, directly below which are double doors through which the hayloft was filled. The south addition features a concrete foundation, novelty siding, and a slate roof.

Except for the top-hewn "log" joists supporting its main floor, saw cut timber was used in the construction of the main block's braced frame whose members are mostly connected with mortise-and-tenon joinery. There are two wagon ways, and the flanking trusses are constructed of two long cross beams with a pair of long diagonal braces between them and diagonally braced H-bents above the upper beam supporting the roof. A grain or hay mow occupies the central bay between the wagon ways, supported by poles let into mortises in the cross beams with gaps left between them for ventilation. The wings are built entirely of circularly sawn lumber, of which the smaller members are nailed in place. A hay bay conveyor runs along the roof ridge of the perpendicular ell. Metal dairy stanchions occupy the lower level of all three sections.

With holes in its roof and missing siding and windows, most notably on the northeast gable, the deteriorating barn is in precarious condition. Nevertheless, it is a contributing resource. (photo #s 33 - 36)

5. Tenant house:

The frame, 2-story tenant house evidently was constructed c. 1900-1920. It has a poured concrete foundation, slate roof with gabled profile in front and hipped on the rear, rear end-wall interior chimney with brick stack, and small west-side appendage. Other exterior features include clapboard siding, boxed overhanging eaves with crown and bed moldings and frieze, 1/1 sash windows with plain trim, and a glass-and-panel front door. The hip-roofed front porch has turned posts and spandrel brackets of Queen Anne style derivation; the 1-bay side porch features a Colonial Revival Tuscan column. Early

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

interior finishes include plaster walls and ceilings, tongue and groove flooring, simple
woodwork, and panel doors. (photo #s 39 & 40) Contributing resource.

6. Limekiln:

The 1-bay limekiln is constructed of rubble stone and probably dates to the 19th
century. The large front recess has canted sides formed by corbeling the stonework.
Several stone courses have fallen away from the top of the front wall. The kiln is a
contributing resource. (photo #41)

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

SIGNIFICANCE

Picturesquely sited overlooking White Lake, the Vass Farmstead is an important survivor from Hardwick Township's rural past and has significance under criteria A and C for agriculture and architecture. It exemplifies the region's largest 19th-century farmsteads, properties that clearly express the success of their owners as agriculturists. Throughout the period the farm was owned by three generations of the Vass family, German emigrant John Vass, his son Isaac, and grandson Frank, substantial landowners and farmers and among the township's most prosperous and prominent citizens. The main house and barn also provide a document of the region's substantial rural architecture during the 19th century. In addition, the environs of the house and barn may have the potential to yield archaeological information about the region's material culture in that era.

The main house and barn are vernacular buildings clearly rooted in the region's traditional construction practices and forms but also reflecting the influence of stylistic fashions on conservative rural builders. The house is a notable example of traditional masonry construction, and is distinguished by its random ashlar stonework, the work of skilled masons. With its regular fenestration and double-pile side-hall plan, the 1812 main block exemplifies the 2/3rds version of the Georgian house type popular with area residents of means during the first half of the 19th century. The main block's segmental window lintels, however, were old fashioned for that construction date, and were eschewed in favor of Georgian large keyed lintels in the construction of the west wing some years later. More up to date stylistically, albeit provincial in execution, is the Federal detailing of the front entry and the fireplace mantels in the front parlor and chamber. The continuing influence of stylistic fashions on rural builders can be seen in the addition of the vaguely Greek Revival cornices to the house, as well as the later Queen Anne front porch. Expressive of its owner's prosperity and perhaps their social aspirations as well, the house, when built and for many years thereafter, must have been one of the neighborhood's most impressive dwellings. With its two wagon ways and cupola, the barn is representative of the larger bank barns erected in the area during the later 19th century. It is also a good example of the mortise and tenon, braced frame joinery employed regionally in barn construction throughout the period.

While the chain-of-title for the site of the Vass Farmstead can be traced back to the middle of the 18th-century, little is known about the early history of the property and its owners. The property formed part of a 548.5-acre tract purchased by Martin

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

Swartwelder from Adam Cunkle in 1764. In his will, dated March 24, 1795 and probated on October 4th of that year, Swartwelder designated his wife Catherine and son-in-law John Siperly as his executors and, in addition to making several specific bequests, directed them to sell the remainder of his real and personal estate and divide the proceeds among his eight children. On June 16, 1802, the co-executors sold the 548.5-acre tract to John Vass, former husband of the Swartwelders' deceased daughter Mary, for 1,355 pounds "in silver and gold specie."¹ The property extended on both sides of what is now Route 521 from roughly 1,000 feet west of the farmstead to about one mile to the north and included the northeast quarter of White Lake. Vass owned and occupied the property until his death in 1852 when his son Isaac Vass inherited its western half. Upon Isaac's death in 1893, his son Frank in turn acquired the farmstead, which he owned until 1922 when he sold it to George Van Riper, thus passing from the Vass family after 120 years.²

Like the Swartwelders and many other early settlers of the Paulins Kill valley, John Vass (or Wass as the name was spelled in early records) was of German ancestry. According to family traditions recorded in 1912, he was born at sea in 1764, presumably the son of poor German emigrants, and

was "bound out" [indentured or apprenticed] to Mr. Snover of Hardwick and served seven years. He was married four times, the first in bare feet and shirtsleeves.³

Poor and uneducated, he nevertheless prospered enough to acquire the money needed to buy the White Lake property in 1802, perhaps aided by the inheritance of Mary Swartwelder, his first or second wife, or other assistance from her family. Martin Swartwelder was a wealthy man for his time and place, leaving a personal estate valued at 2,764 pounds in addition to his landholdings.⁴ Described as the wife of John Vass in her father's will, Mary apparently died within a few years of her father's death, perhaps in childbirth, and certainly before 1797 by which year church records suggest that her husband had remarried.⁵ The acquisition of the large farm belonging to his former father-in-law (enlarged by the purchase of a small adjoining parcel to the west in 1810) and the construction of a substantial stone house there in 1812 certainly reflect John Vass's increased economic status in the community.⁶

Remarried twice more in the early 1800s, John Vass had a large family. At the time of the 1830 Federal census his household numbered fourteen, including six children, four young adults, three older adults, and one free black boy less than ten years old. In 1840, the nine-person household consisted of three children, three young adults, two

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

older adults, and a free male black between the ages of ten and twenty-four.⁷ Since his last wife, Margaret, died in 1831, the woman aged between fifty and sixty enumerated in the 1840 census may have been a servant. At least eight children from his various marriages survived to be mentioned in his 1847 will.⁸ In 1850 the widower's household included his son Isaac, daughter-in-law Ellen, their infant son John, fifteen-year-old David Vass (perhaps a grandson), and five other individuals with different surnames, two of whom probably were female servants and a third a male farm hand.⁹

By the middle of the 19th century, John Vass had become one of Hardwick Township's largest landowners and most substantial farmers, although blind and in his eighties he, no doubt, had retired from active farming by then. In addition to the home farm at White Lake managed by his son Isaac, he had acquired four other area farms, placing each one under the management of an adult son, as well as a tract of "mountain land," probably woodland.¹⁰ The population schedule of the 1850 census gives the value of John Vass's real estate as \$25,200, by a wide margin the highest property valuation of any Hardwick Township resident at that time. The agricultural schedule of the 1850 census lists Isaac Vass as the "owner, operator, or manager" of a 350-acre farm (150 acres of improved land and 200 acres unimproved) with a cash value of \$10,500 almost twice that of any other Hardwick Township farm. Farm livestock included 7 horses, 15 milk cows, 6 "other cattle," 17 sheep, and 44 swine, except in the category of sheep more livestock than any other Township farm. The farm produced 200 bushels each of wheat, buckwheat, rye, oats, and Irish potatoes, 600 bushels of corn, 30 tons of hay, 8 bushels of clover seed, 35 pounds of wool, "Orchard products" worth \$15, \$315 worth of "slaughtered animals," and 1,800 pounds of butter, making it the most productive township farm overall. Of particular note was its production of butter and slaughtered animals, both about one third higher than that of any other Township farm.¹¹ Upon the death of John Vass in 1852, the appraised value of his personal property totaled \$4,241.40, including \$2,326.40 in cash, notes, accounts, and rent due. John Vass's landholdings were clearly his most valuable asset.¹²

Under the terms of John Vass's will the homestead farm passed to son Isaac, less 123 acres from its northeast corner added to son Andrew's farm, with the stipulation that Isaac pay his executors \$1,215 within one year of his death. Isaac also received a special bequest of "five horses, two cows, six sheep, one two horse wagon with harness, one plow, one harrow, [and] one bed, bedding, stead, and cord."¹³ He enlarged the farm in 1859 by purchasing a 23.12-acre abutting its west side.¹⁴ While not as wealthy as his father, Isaac Vass was still one of Hardwick Township's most substantial farmers. In the 1860 census his real estate is valued at \$16,000 and his personal property at \$1,500.

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

According to the agriculture schedule of that year's census his farm encompassed 200 acres of improved land and 200 acres of unimproved land worth \$16,000 making it the largest and most valuable farm in the township. The farm continued to produce large crops of wheat, buckwheat, rye, oats, corn, and potatoes, but only in its production of butter (3,000 pounds from 20 milk cows) did it top that of other Hardwick Township farms. A new product in 1860 was 1,600 bushels of flaxseed. In 1860 his household included three farm laborers, and in 1870 he spent \$300 in wages and board for farm labor, probably his sons John and Charles, respectively aged twenty and sixteen, who were identified as farm workers in the 1870 census.¹⁵ By 1880, Isaac had reduced the size of his operation by leasing about one third of the farm to his son John. With 150 acres of tilled land, 100 acres of woodland, 3 acres of permanent meadow, according to the 1880 census agricultural schedule, the father's farm, however, remained the Township's largest. In 1880 the value of his land, buildings, and other improvements was \$10,000, the highest valuation in the Township. Having made only 720 pounds of butter in that year, Isaac Vass was no longer first in the production of butter; he also no longer had any sheep. He remained, however, well above average in the production of corn and rye, at 400 bushels each.¹⁶

In addition to their two oldest sons Isaac Vass and his wife Ellen raised three children to adulthood, sons Marcus and Frank, and daughter Arabella. Throughout the third quarter of the 19th century, the Vasses employed two female domestic servants, both of whom had been with the family since 1850.¹⁷ Unlike his father, Isaac Vass played an active role in local governmental affairs, serving as Township committeeman and constable, and as justice of the peace. A well-respected member of the community, he was elected president of the "Hardwick Vigilant Society for the Detention of Horse Thieves" in 1890.¹⁸ Isaac Vass died intestate on March 9, 1893 at the age of seventy-five, leaving personal property valued at \$8,956.47 in addition to his real estate.¹⁹

In 1895, Ellen Vass conveyed the 239.55-acre homestead farm to her youngest son Frank for \$7,500. According to a local newspaper account this was a high price for farms in the neighborhood at the time, and "strife" between Frank and his brother Marcus may have been the reason for the price.²⁰ Frank owned and occupied the farm for almost three decades. He and his wife, Jennie, had one daughter, Sarita, who lived to adulthood. The family employed a female servant in 1900 and a farm laborer in 1910. Sometime between 1910 and 1920, Frank Vass retired from farming, and in 1922 he sold the farm to dairy farmer Emile Van Riper.²¹ Van Riper's widow sold the property to Elwin H. Smith in 1941. Enlarged to almost seven hundred acres the property was transferred to

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Section number 8 Page 13

Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

corporate ownership in 1958, and after several more changes in ownership was acquired by the State of New Jersey in 1997.²²

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 14Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

Footnotes

- ¹ Sussex County Deeds, Book G, page 347; New Jersey Wills, Lib. 36, page 156.
- ² Warren County Wills, Book 2, page 466; Warren County Deeds, Book 154, page 343 and Book 225, page 356.
- ³ *Blairstown Press*, July 3, 1912.
- ⁴ New Jersey Wills, Lib. 36, page 156. The 1850 census notes that John Vass could neither read nor write (United States Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1850).
- ⁵ New Jersey Wills, Lib. 36, page 156. Andreas Wass, the son of Johannes and Madelene Wass, was born December 9, 1797 (Stillwater Presbyterian Church Records).
- ⁶ Sussex County Deeds, Book V, page 528.
- ⁷ United States Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1830 and 1840.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* Warren County Wills, Book 2, page 466.
- ⁹ United States Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1850.
- ¹⁰ Warren County Wills, Book 2, page 466.
- ¹¹ United States Census, Population and Agricultural Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1850.
- ¹² Warren County Inventories, Book 6, page 26.
- ¹³ Warren County Wills, Book 2, page 466.
- ¹⁴ Warren County Deeds, Book 45, page 537.

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Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

¹⁵ United States Census, Population and Agricultural Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1860 and 1870.

¹⁶ United States Census, Population and Agricultural Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1880.

¹⁷ United States Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880.

¹⁸ J. P. Snell (ed.), *History of Warren and Sussex Counties, New Jersey*, Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1881, pp. 483, 619 & 621; *Blairstown Press*, December 31, 1890.

¹⁹ *Blairstown Press*, March 12, 1893; Warren County Estate Petitions, Book 3, page 395.

²⁰ Warren County Deeds, Book 154, page 343; *Blairstown Press*, November 14, 1893.

²¹ United States Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1900, 1910, and 1920; Warren County Deeds, Book 225, page 356.

²² Warren County Deeds, Book 298, page 109; Book 418, page 530, Book 380, page 283; Book 421, page 368, Book 546, page 415; Book 814, page 234; Book 880, page 205, Book 1538, page 322.

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Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 16Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

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Snell, James P. (ed.). *History of Warren and Sussex Counties, New Jersey*. Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1881.

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Maps and Atlases:

Beers, F. W. *County Atlas of Warren, New Jersey*. New York: F. W. Beers & Co., 1874.

McCarty, D. *Map of Warren County, New Jersey*. Philadelphia: Friend and Aub, 1852.

Walling, H. F. *Map of Warren County, New Jersey*. New York: Smith, Gallup & Co., 1860.

Periodicals:

Blairstown Press, Blairstown, N. J.

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Public Records:

Sussex County Court House, Newton, NJ.

Sussex County Deeds

Sussex County Road Returns

United States Census

Agricultural Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1850-1880

Population Schedules, Warren County, Hardwick Township, 1830-1920

Warren County Court House, Belvidere, NJ.

Warren County Deeds

Warren County Road Returns

Warren County Surrogate Records

Other Records:

Stillwater (New Jersey) Presbyterian Church records

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property includes the following portion of Hardwick Township tax block 902, lot 10. The boundary of the nominated property begins at a point on the north side of County Route 521 located approximately 471 feet west of the front door of the Vass House (also 48 feet west of the third telephone pole west of the house driveway), which point aligns with the south end of an old stone row and barb wire fence oriented roughly perpendicular to the road. From that point the boundary proceeds east along the north side of the road approximately 1,400 feet to a point which aligns with the southern end of another old stone row/barb wire fence also oriented roughly perpendicular to the road, which point is also approximately 915 feet east of the telephone pole in front of the farm tenant house.

The boundary proceeds northwardly along the second stone row/fence a distance of approximately 1,050 feet to the corner of a third stone row /fence oriented roughly parallel to Route 521. At that corner the boundary turns west and runs west along the third stone row/fence approximately 800 feet to another stone row corner. At that point it turns south and runs along the last mentioned stone row/fence approximately 300 feet to the corner of another stone row/fence. The boundary then runs in a southwesterly direction along the last mentioned stone row/fence approximately 550 feet to a corner with the first mentioned stone row/fence. From there it turns south and runs along that stone row/fence approximately 425 feet to the place of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary was delineated to include all of the resources that constitute the farmstead as well as a sufficient amount of the property historically associated with the farmstead to preserve its setting. The boundary follows stone rows and fences which are historically part of the agricultural landscape. So drawn the boundary includes all of the property visible from the farmstead.

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Continuation SheetSection number _____ Photo _____ Page 19Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

Photographic Identification:

The following information is the same for all of the photographs submitted with the nomination:

Name: Vass Farmstead
Location: 109 Stillwater Road (Route 521)
Hardwick Township, Warren County, NJ
Photographer: John Dodd
Date of photographs: Summer/Fall 1998 & Winter 1999
Negative repository: Hardwick Township Historical Society
40 Spring Valley Road
Blairstown, NJ 07826-9636

Photograph direction of view:

- #1 House, northeast view.
- #2 " , northwest view.
- #3 " , northeast view.
- #4 " , southwest view.
- #5 " , southeast view.
- #6 " , northeast view.
- #7 " , east gable detail, datestone, southeast view.
- #8 " , west gable, detail of original roofline between window & cornice, NE view.
- #9 " , east gable end, cellar entry detail south wing, kitchen, northwest view.
- #10 " , south façade, front entry detail, northeast view.
- #11 " , south façade detail, northwest view.
- #12 " , wing front entry detail, northwest view.
- #13 " , stair hall, first story, northwest view.
- #14 " , stair hall, first story, north view.
- #15 " , door from stair hall to wing, northwest view.
- #16 " , first story, main block, living room, front fireplace, east view.
- #17 " , first story, main block, living room, rear fireplace, northeast view.
- #18 " , first story, wing, dining room, north view to rear porch door.
- #19 " , first story, wing, dining room, southwest view to enclosed stairs.

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Continuation Sheet

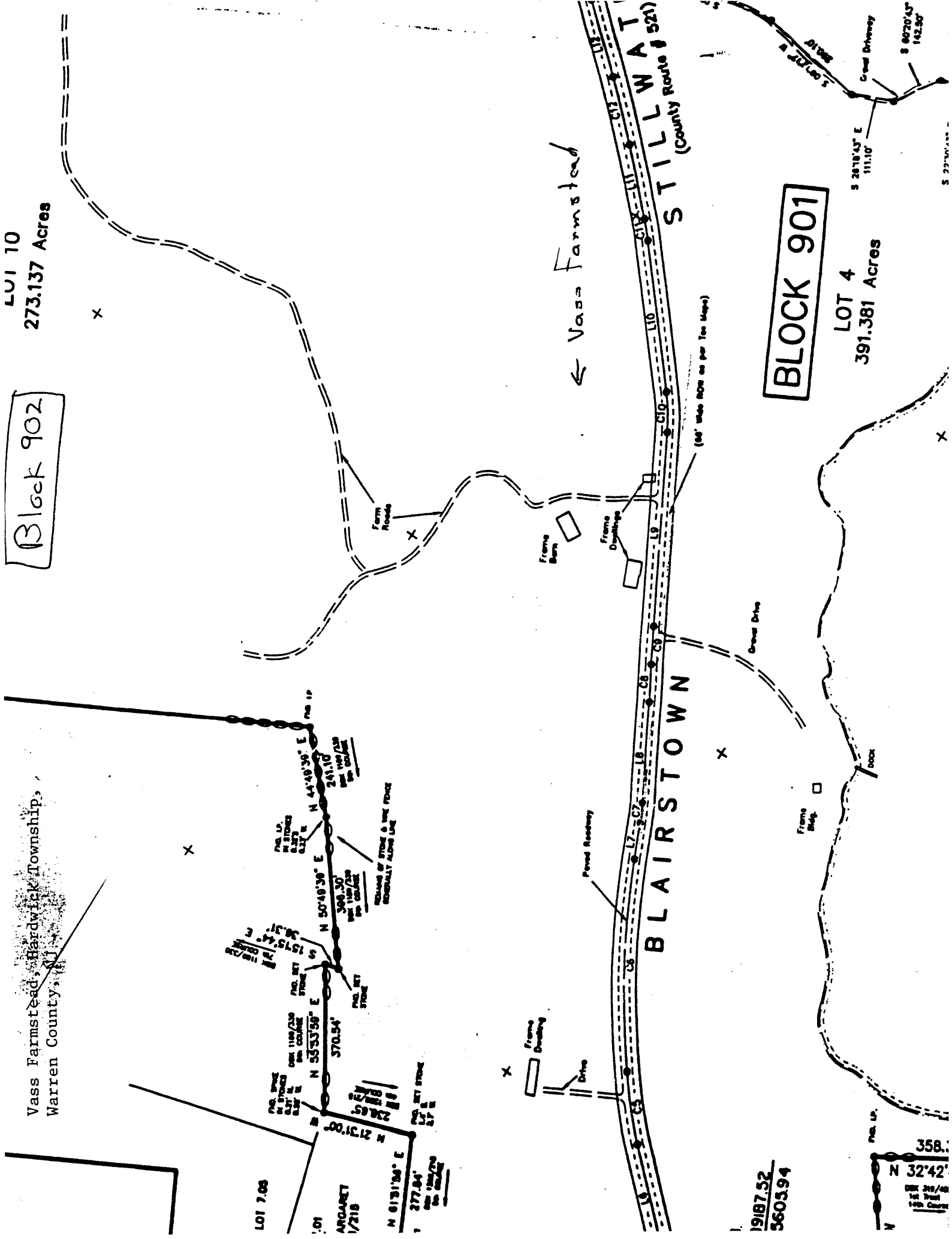
Section number Photo Page 20

Vass Farmstead, Warren County, NJ

- #20 House, cellar, southeast view.
- #21 " , cellar, northeast view towards central partition.
- #22 " , attic, roof truss, southeast view.
- #23 " , " , chimneys in east gable, east view.
- #24 " , main block second story stair hall, northwest view.
- #25 " , " , doors to wing attic stairs, northwest view.
- #26 " , main block, front bedroom, northeast view.
- #27 " , main block, rear bedroom, southeast view.
- #28 " , wing, second story hallway, looking east.
- #29 " , wing, second story hallway, at top of stairs, looking southwest
- #30 Meadow east of house, looking southwest towards the lake.
- #31 Front porch, looking southeast towards the lake.
- #32 South corner of wing, looking southeast towards the lake.
- #33 Barn, north view.
- #34 " , south view.
- #35 " , interior, east wagon way, southeast view.
- #36 " , interior, east bent, date detail, east view
- #37 Equipment shed, northeast view.
- #38 Privy, northwest view.
- #39 Tenant house, northeast view.
- #40 " , southeast view.
- #41 Limekiln, north view.

Block 902
LUI 10
273.137 Acres

Vass Farmstead, Hardwick Township,
Warren County, NJ

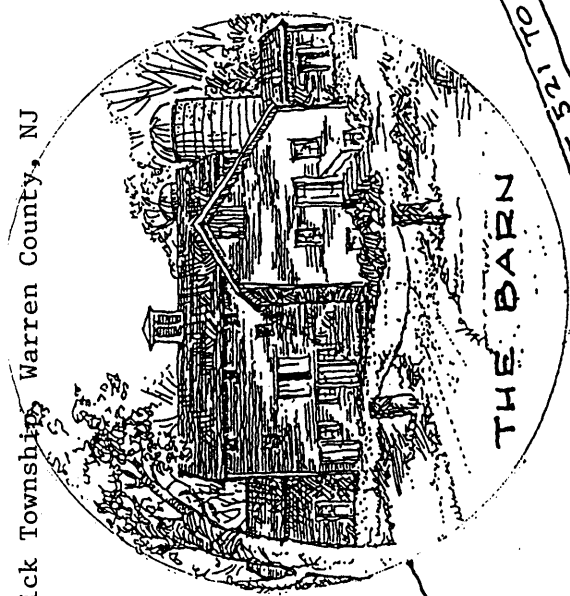
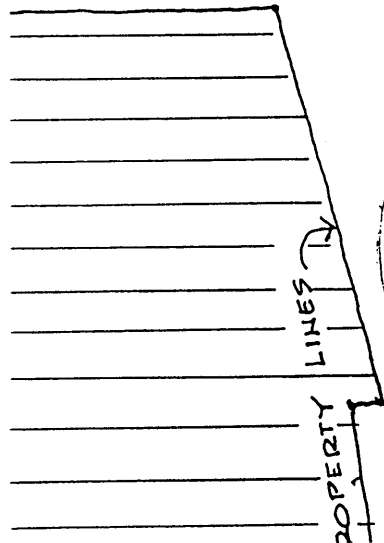


Block 901
LOT 4
391.381 Acres

19187.52
5605.94

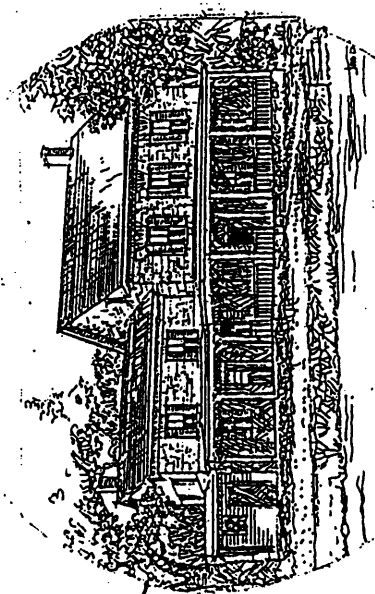
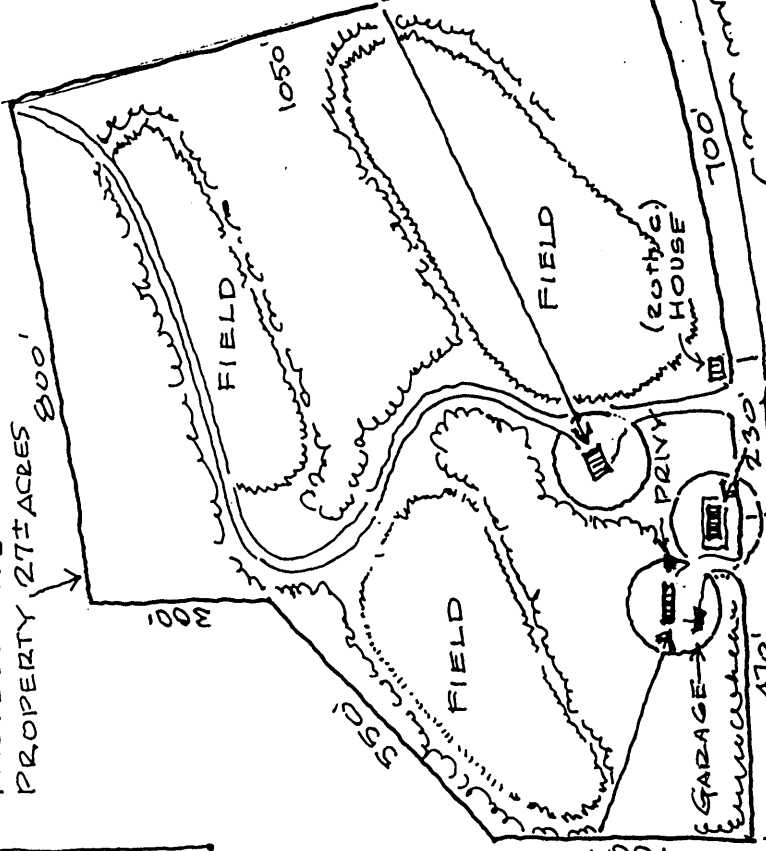
358.1
N 32°42'
1st 2nd/48
159 Feet
1st Curve

BOUNDARY OF PROPOSED HISTORIC PROPERTY 27± ACRES

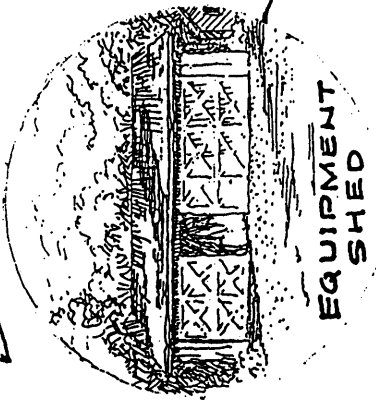


THE BARN

R.T. 321 TO (S)



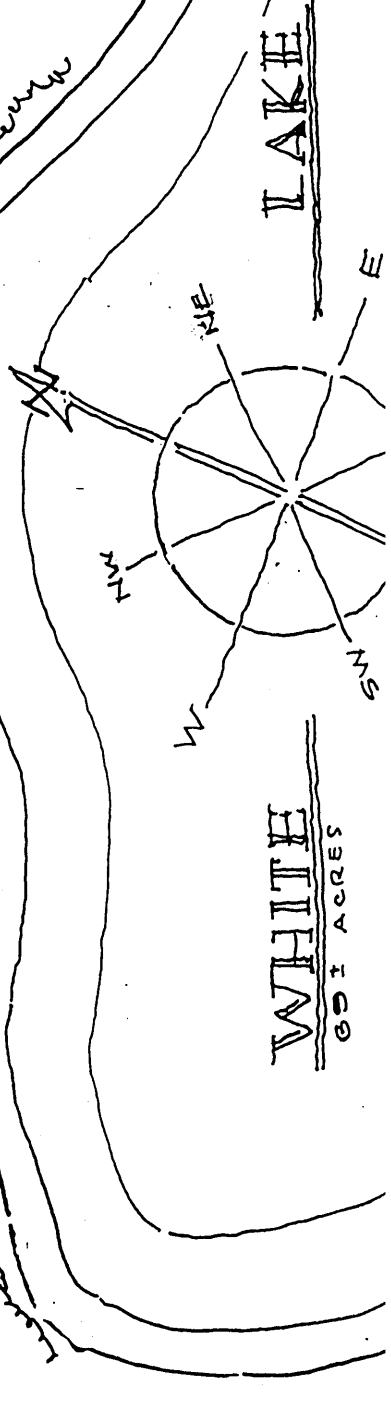
VASS HOUSE



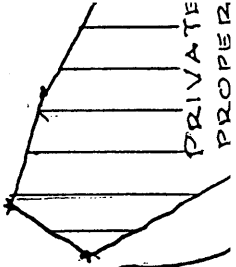
EQUIPMENT SHED

HOUSE (20th C.)

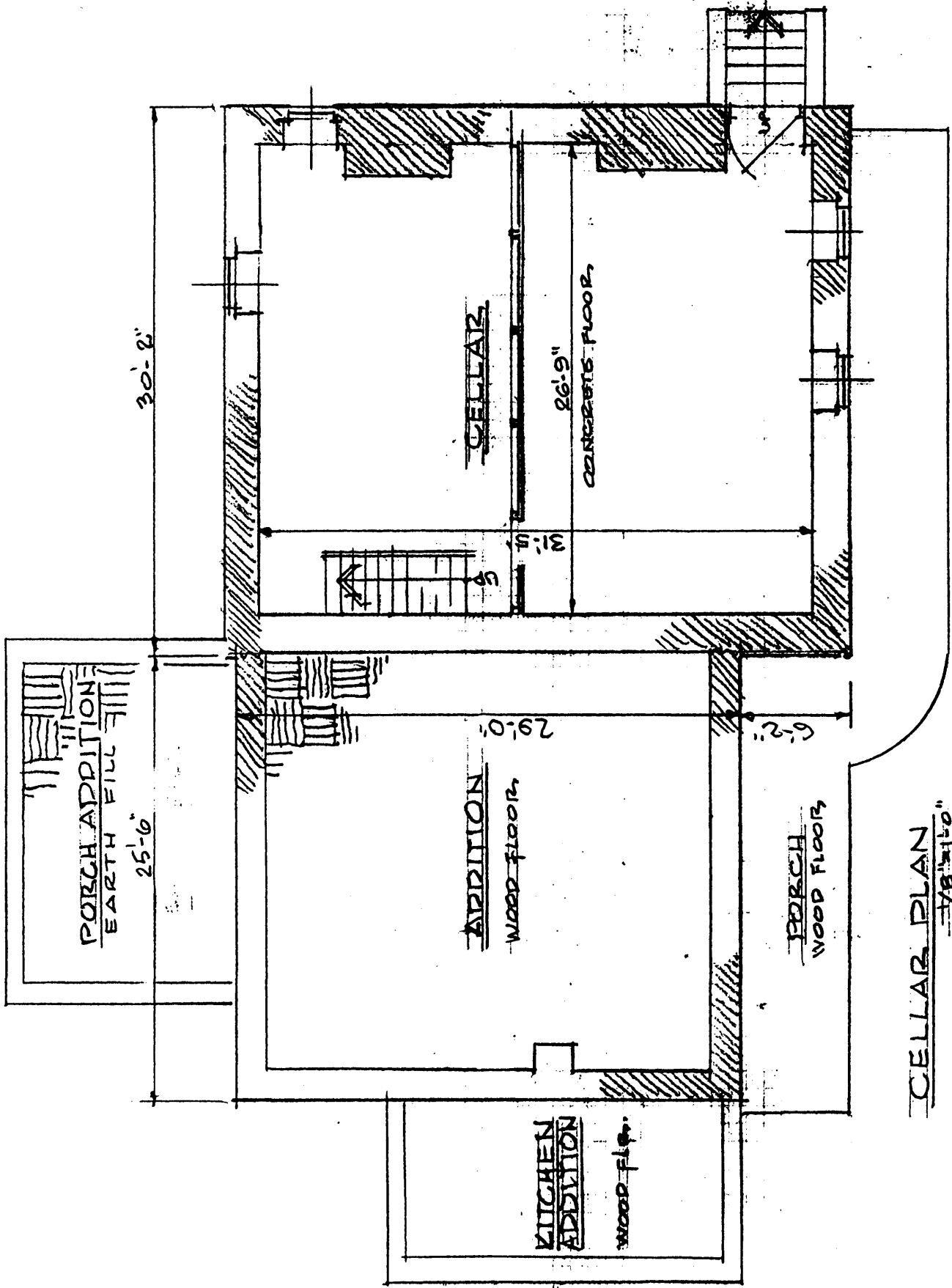
OPEN FIELD



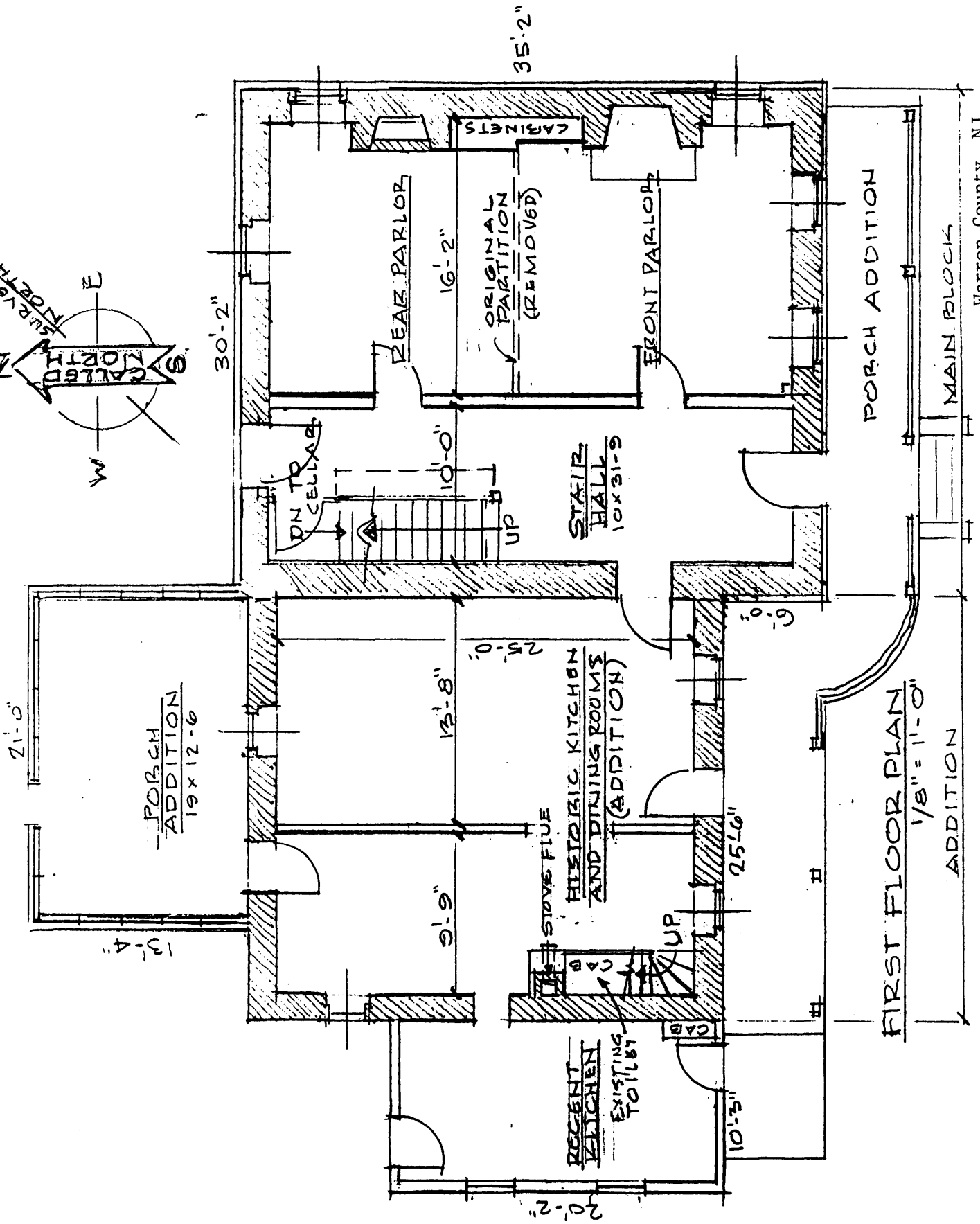
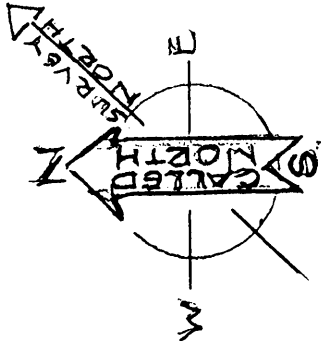
WHITE 60± ACRES



PRIVATE PROPERTY



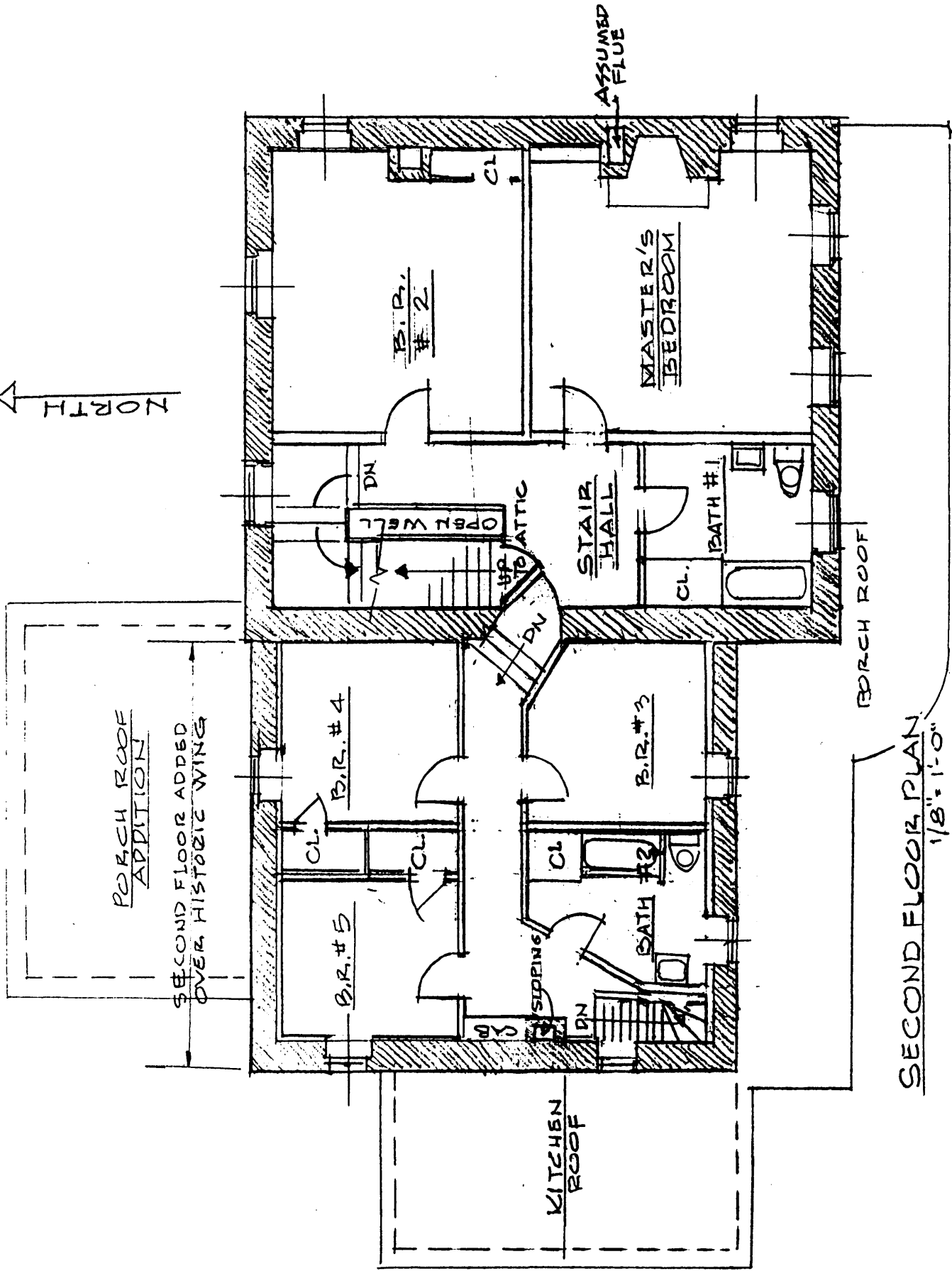
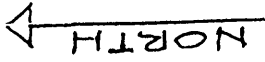
CELLAR PLAN
1/8" = 1'-0"



Warren County, NJ

VASS HOUSE

HARDWICK TWP. 0198



Warren County, NJ

YASS HOUSE
HARDWICK TWP. 6/28

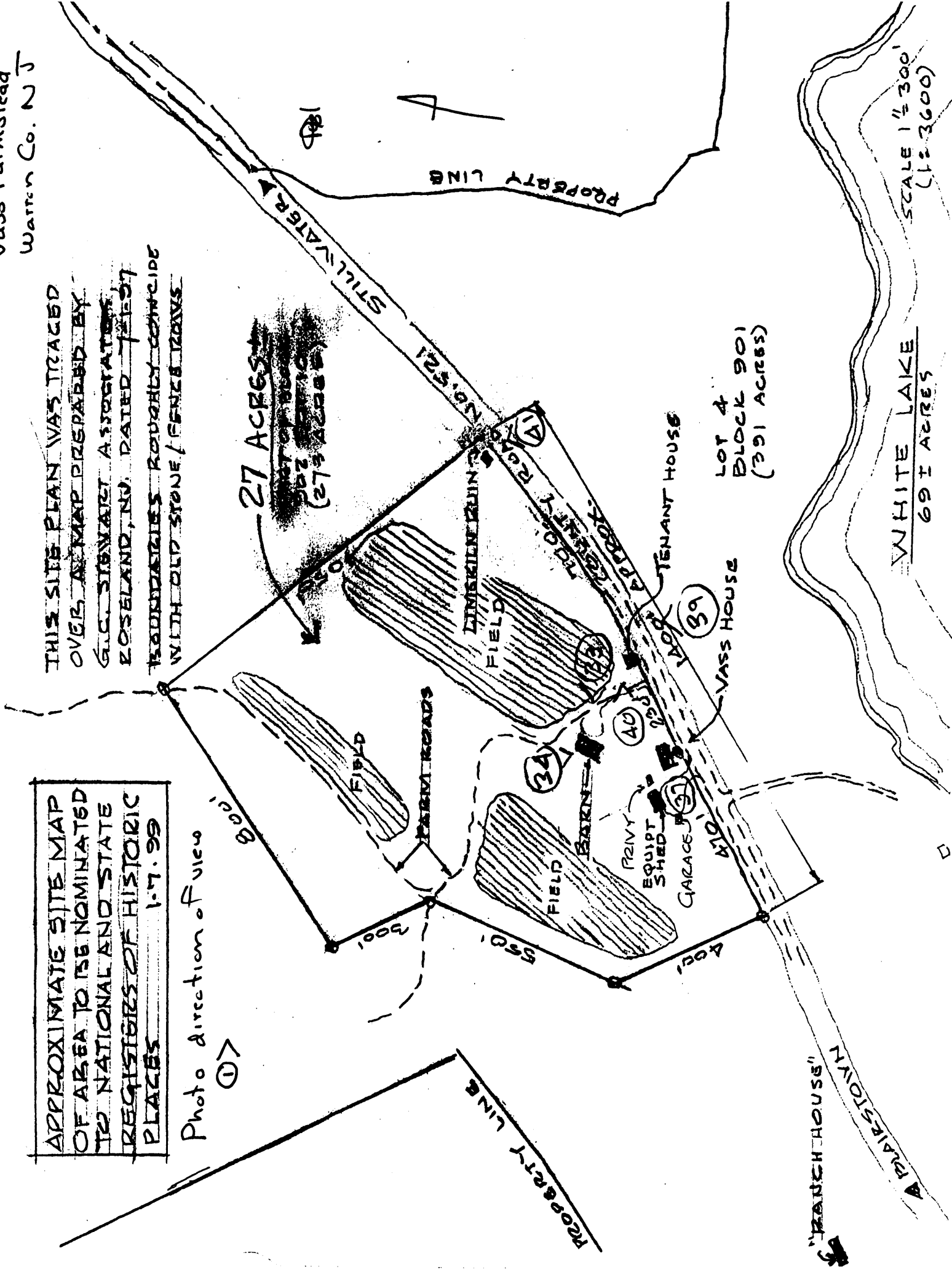
Vass Farmstead
Warren Co. NJ

THIS SITE PLAN WAS TRACED
OVER A MAP PREPARED BY
G.C. STEWART ASSOCIATES
ROSELAND, N.J. DATED FEB 57
BOUNDARIES ROUGHLY CONSIDER
WITH OLD STONE / FENCE ROWS

APPROXIMATE SITE MAP
OF AREA TO BE NOMINATED
TO NATIONAL AND STATE
REGISTERS OF HISTORIC
PLACES 1-7-99

Photo direction of view
①7

27 ACRES
LOT OF BLOCK
902 (27.3 ACRES)

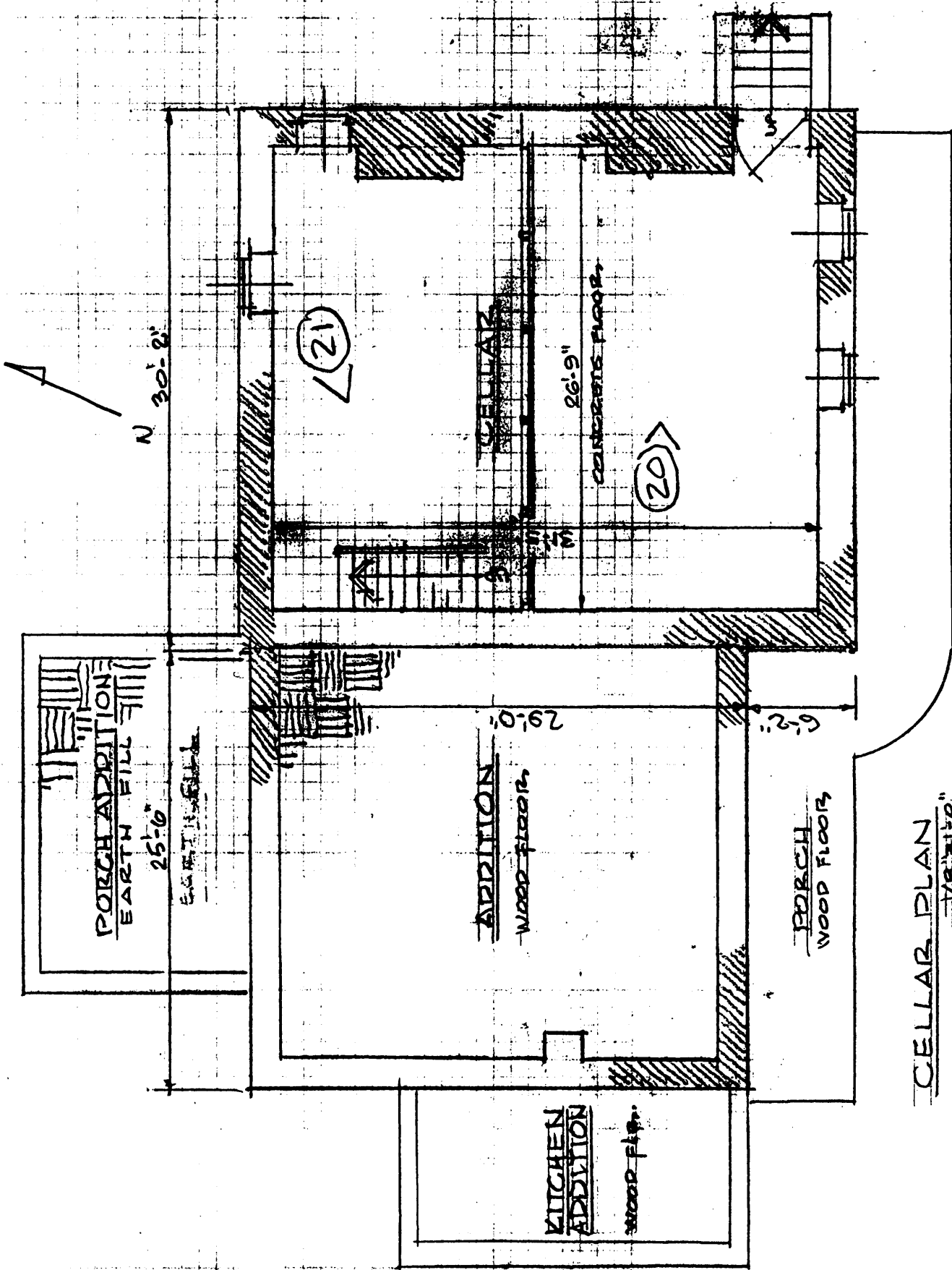


WHITE LAKE
69 ± ACRES

SCALE 1" = 300'
(1:3600)

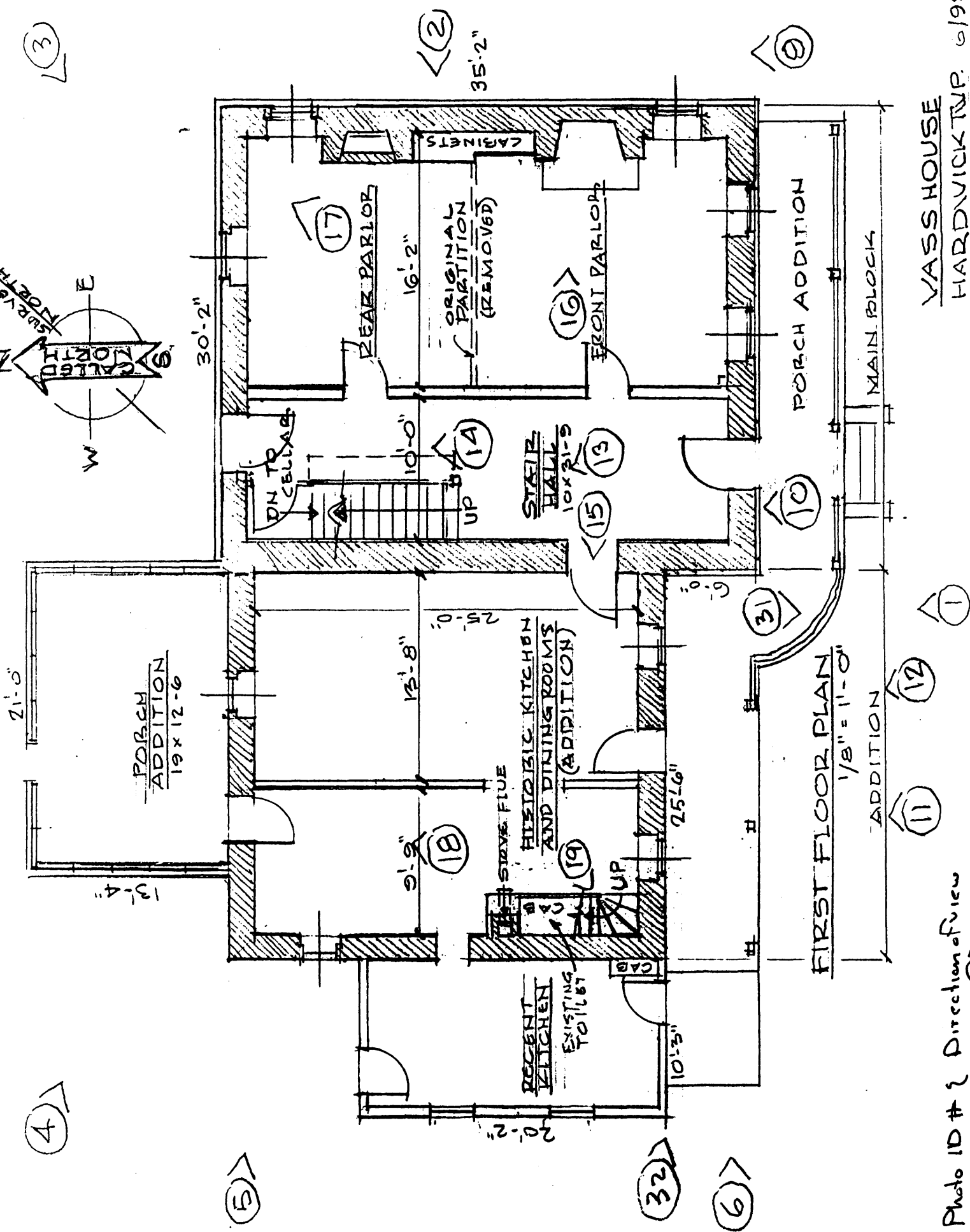
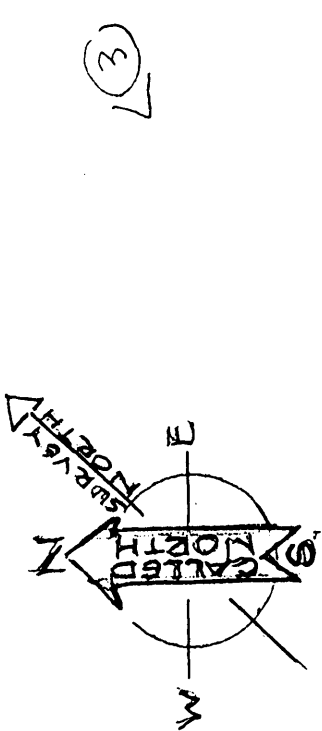
LOT 4
BLOCK 901
(391 ACRES)

"BRANCH HOUSE"
A PART-TOWN



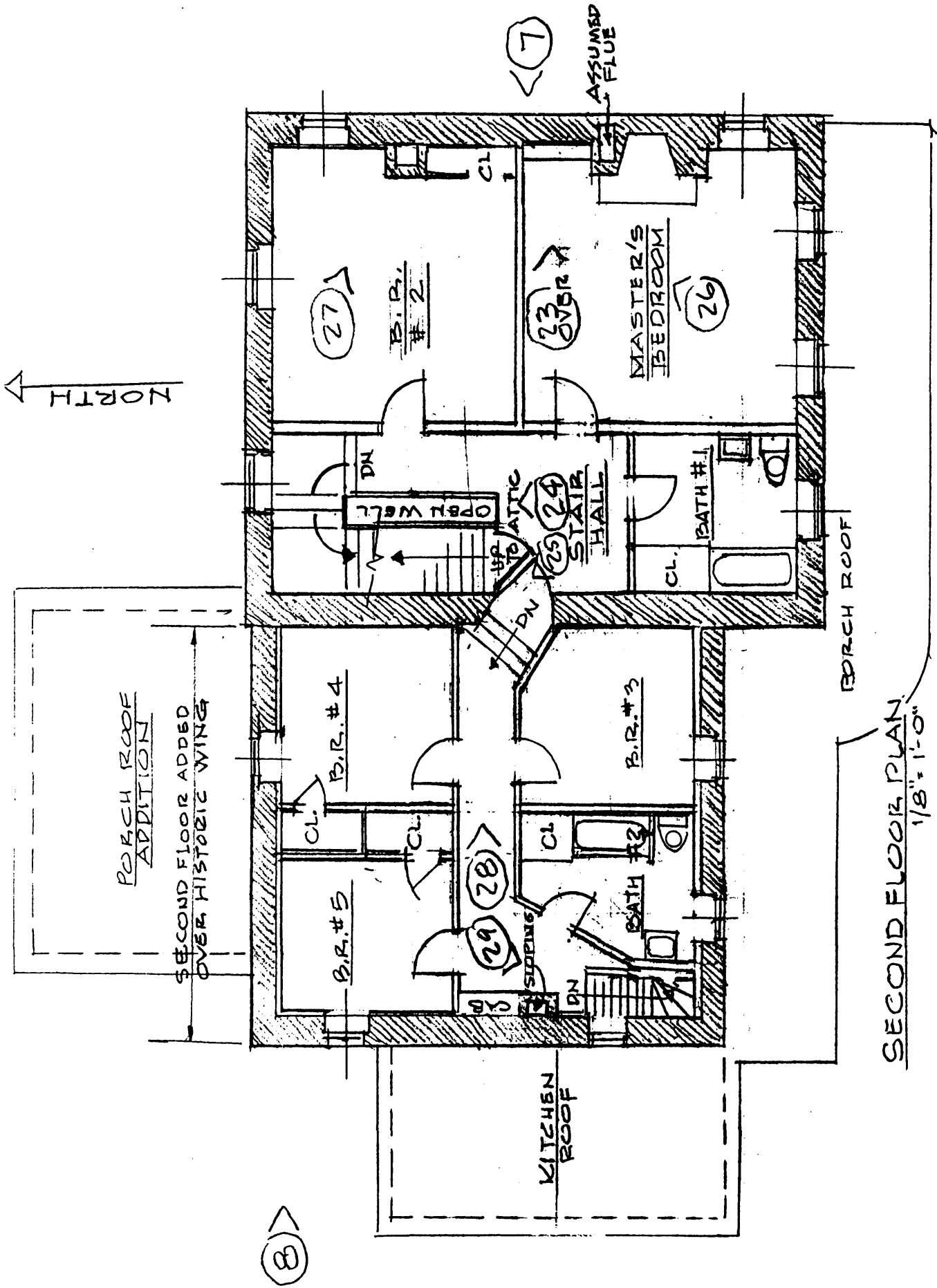
CELLAR PLAN
78' x 110'

Photo 10 { Direction of view (21)



VASS HOUSE
HARDWICK TWP. 6/98

Photo 10 # 2 Direction of view



Warren County, NJ
VASS HOUSE
 DRAWING TWO C.19A

Photo ID # & direction of view (28)