

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

KUERNER FARM

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Kuerner Farm

Other Name/Site Number: Ring Farm

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 415 Ring Road

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Chadds Ford Township

Vicinity: N/A

State: Pennsylvania County: Delaware Code: 045

Zip Code: 19317

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local:

Public-State:

Public-Federal:

Object:

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District:

Site:

Structure:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

6

1

1

8

Noncontributing

1 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Agriculture Sub: single dwelling animal facility

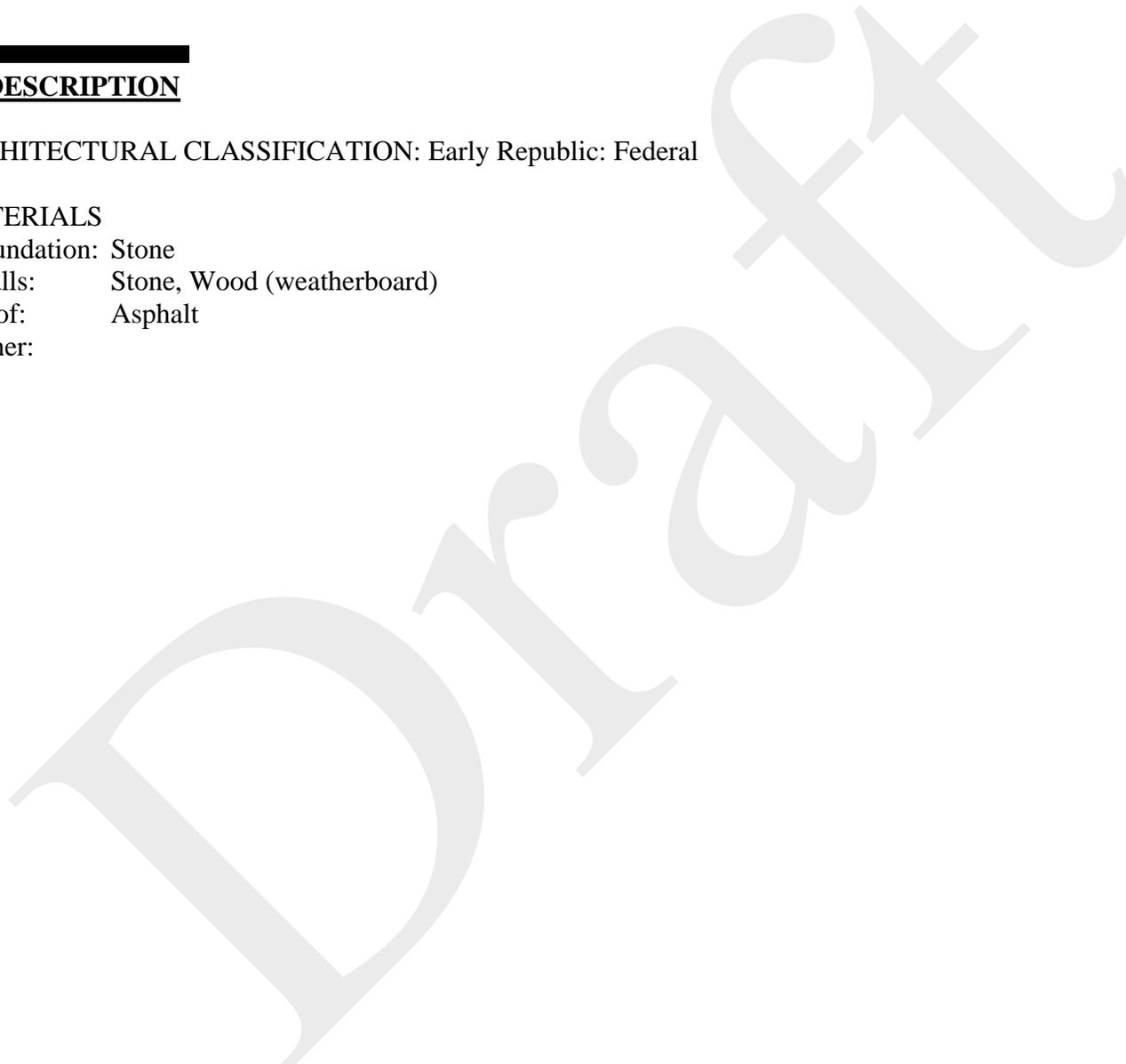
Current: Recreation and Culture Sub: museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Early Republic: Federal

MATERIALS

Foundation: Stone
Walls: Stone, Wood (weatherboard)
Roof: Asphalt
Other:



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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**Overview**

The Kuerner Farm, in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, is nationally significant under Criterion 2 for its association with the world-renowned artist Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009), who produced significant works of art there for seven decades. The Kuerner Farm was a primary subject for Wyeth who repeatedly returned there over a 77-year period, spanning from 1933 until his death in 2009. Approximately one-third of Wyeth's work originated at the farm. It was here that he painted some of his best known works, including "Winter 1946" (1946), "Snow Flurries" (1953), "Groundhog Day" (1959), "Spring Fed" (1967), "Evening at Kuerners" (1970), and "Snow Hill" (1989). The farm was also the inspiration for Wyeth's *Helga* series. Several different rooms in the farmhouse, in the barn, and in the surrounding fields provided settings for Wyeth's paintings while the entire farm itself provided both studio space and subject matter. The relatively unaltered appearance of the farm's agricultural resources and landscape are perhaps what continually attracted Andrew Wyeth to this location. Approximately one-third of his work originated on the farm, emphasizing the property's significance throughout his career.

Andrew Wyeth was one of the most prominent American artists of the twentieth century. His art features the people and places of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and coastal Maine. At the time of his death in January 2009, critics remained divided over his place in American art. His consistent use of recognizable imagery, during the years when many artists explored abstraction, caused some to categorize Wyeth as an illustrator. But Wyeth was also extraordinarily well-known among Americans, with "Christina's World" being one of the best known American paintings. Wyeth's exhibitions also attracted significant crowds and attention, beginning with his first one-man show at the Macbeth Gallery in New York in 1937 and continuing in retrospective exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1976 and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2006, among many others. Wyeth's work led to his being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, the Congressional Gold Medal in 1990, and the NEA National Medal of Arts in 2007.

The Kuerner Farm is a 33-acre property located on the east side of Ring Road, south of U.S. Route 1, in Chadds Ford Township, Delaware County, Pa. The property is located ¼ mile south of the former Turner Mill (artist Howard Pyle's studio) and U.S. Route 1, and ½ mile northeast of the N.C. Wyeth House and Studio (NHL 2000). The property abuts the Brandywine Battlefield (NHL 1961). Although, a 1989 analysis of the battlefield recommended that the Kuerner Farm be added into the NHL boundary this never occurred. Downtown Philadelphia is 23 miles to the northeast; Wilmington, Delaware is nine miles to the south. Though no longer heavily farmed, the general area is still rural with rolling hills of fields and woodlands. Virtually everywhere visitors turn on the property, vantage points of Andrew Wyeth's artwork, created there over the seven decades he visited the farm, are visible, demonstrating how little the farm has changed through this time.

The Kuerner Farm consists of a farmstead near the center of the property and open fields to the south and east. The farmstead itself is made up of a farmhouse, barn, and several outbuildings, located approximately 200 yards east of north/south running Ring Road. The farmstead is highly visible from Ring Road. Surrounding the farmstead are open fields that slope steeply up to the south and east. This hilly terrain dictated the location, orientation, and architectural features of the property's historic resources. The property is bordered by woodlands to the east and south, an abandoned railroad track to the north, and Ring Road to the west.

The centerpiece of the Kuerner Farm is the Caleb Ring farmhouse, c. 1814. Its hipped roof and large molded cornice, however, reflect the addition of a third floor with Greek Revival influences in ca. 1850.

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The Kuerner Farm's agricultural resources incorporate vernacular architectural traditions with a variety of uses, types, ages, and designs. The property's huge double-decker bank barn, rebuilt in the 1870s, is characteristic of a type built in the area throughout the nineteenth century. Other agricultural resources include a springhouse, icehouse, tractor shed, equipment shed, dilapidated chicken house, dilapidated tenant house, cistern, and several prominent serpentine stone walls. Water flows out of the springhouse and into the pasture. A farm pond, restored by the Conservancy, is located just west of the farmhouse. Its spillway makes a dramatic appearance in a number of important works of art. A dilapidated chicken house near the cistern was removed in 2008.

The property contains eight contributing resources and one noncontributing resource. The noncontributing resource does not interfere with the historic views of the property.

Caleb Ring Farmhouse – Exterior (contributing building)

The farmhouse is located on a terraced area carved out of the steep hill that rises to the south. The house, like the barn, is oriented to the west, facing Ring Road. The most significant architectural details are its gently sloping hipped roof, molded cornice, flat shed dormers, and serpentine stone chimney found on the rear addition. The exterior massing, smooth stucco cladding, symmetrical fenestration, roof shape, as well as its center hall plan and interior woodwork, reflect the Federal or Adam style, although the third floor was added c. 1850. The third floor, including the cheeked interior window surrounds, reflects the then popular Greek Revival Style. Although there are two front doors and other separate living arrangements, the house was constructed as a single-family house. According to Karl Kuerner Jr., whose family occupied the house from 1926-1999, two families were renting the house before his father moved there.

The house consists of a three-story masonry core (36' x 28'), a two-story rear shed addition (24' x 13'), and a woodshed (16' x 16') attached to the south sides of both core and addition. The core's stucco-clad, rubble stonewalls are capped with a nearly flat hipped roof clad with standing-seam tin. Stucco-clad, interior chimneys are located at the north and south end walls. Two shed-roofed dormers, with two lights each, are located on the front (west) and rear (east) façades. Although the fenestration and chimneys are quite plain, the house has a rather elaborate water conduction system consisting of several layers of cornice molding with an engaged gutter system, a design popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. An inspection of the roof's framing system in the attic indicates that it replaced an earlier gabled roof.

The core's four-bay exterior characterizes the main façade of the house. Fenestration consists of three window levels getting progressively smaller with each level as one goes up. There are 6x9 light sash windows on the first floor; 6x6 light sash windows on the second floor; and 3x3 light sash, square frieze band windows on the third floor. On the north and south façades, window "columns" flank the center wall fireplaces. At the base of these window columns are two basement windows on the north façade, with three lights each. Much of the glass is original and manufactured using the cylinder method of glass blowing. The window treatment is quite plain, perhaps a combination of Quaker and Federal-style influences. It consists of a simple wood sill, molded surrounds, and no lintel. The windows provide ample light to the rooms within, all of which originally had windows on two walls. The building is missing its shutters: only the first floor windows on the west façade contain shutters (perhaps because they were protected by the porch roof above). The wooden, paneled shutters contain heavy, wrought iron, sliding bolt hardware.

The house has several entrances. The main, or formal, entrance is through the left (north) door on the main (west) façade. Before twentieth-century interior changes, this door provided access to the center hall. In contrast to the symmetry of the fenestration, and in order to access the center hall, the left door is off-center and not immediately under the window above. The right (south) door accesses the kitchen. Thus, these doors continue to provide separate entrances to the more formal (north side) and kitchen (south side) of the house. The

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replacement doors have no formal entablatures or flanking columns; their recessed panels have thick molding, as found in residences of the later nineteenth century. The doors contrast with the architrave molding, which features thick panels whose faces reach the height of the rails (consistent with local vernacular traditions prior to 1840). Four-light horizontal transoms are located above each door. The core originally had rear doors on the east wall directly opposite the front doors. Discussed in detail below, the northern door is now the passage between the core and the late nineteenth-century rear addition. A rear kitchen door was sealed. The rear addition has an entrance via a small vestibule centered on the east façade. Near this entrance is a pole with a bell on it. The woodshed is accessed from its east façade; it connects via a door on the south end of the rear addition. Finally, a bulkhead on the eastern façade leads to the basement.

Attached to the main façade is a full-length porch. The porch, whose base is cement, is approximately three feet above the ground. Large, cut granite steps lead to the porch from the front yard. Thick, cut serpentine stone supporting walls, with squared ridge pointing, frame the porch while supporting its base. German and Italian POWs, who worked on the farm during World War II, constructed these walls. This stonework and mortar pattern is similar to the walls of the attached woodshed (see below). Square wooden columns standing on these walls support the porch's hipped roof above.

In the late nineteenth century, a two-story, shed roof addition was attached to the rear or east side of the house. It included a small vestibule entrance in the center of the east façade. In contrast to the core, the addition is frame construction and clad in machined shingles. It originally had wooden beveled or German siding, some of which is visible from inside the woodshed. Fenestration consists of sash windows flanking the vestibule entrance and its small flagstone porch. The addition's roof is standing seam tin, now covered with tarpaper. Attached to the northern elevation is the cut serpentine stone chimney constructed by German POWs in 1945. Shaped somewhat like an "oil spout," the grapevine pointed chimney narrows as it extends just above the addition's roof. The chimney provides character to an otherwise plain vernacular structure.

The woodshed, added c. 1945, is attached to the south end of both the core and rear addition. It has a standing seam tin roof with board and batten cladding under the southern gable end. The two exposed side walls (east and west) feature the cut serpentine stone and squared ridge-pointing pattern found on the porch. The exposed portion of the south end of the building, it should be noted, is rubble stone. Map evidence suggests that a prior structure may have existed, and the one story woodshed is partially built on its foundation.

Farmhouse – Interior

The interior of the core consists of three levels plus basement and attic levels. The first floor in the core consists of living room, kitchen, pantry, and center hallway. There are four bedrooms on the second floor. The third floor has two bedrooms and a storage room. The house has two stair systems: the main center hall stairway serving the first through third floors, and the winding staircase near the southeast corner of the core connecting the basement to the third floor. The rear addition has just two floors, consisting of a "mud" room and utility room on the first floor and a bedroom and bathroom on the second floor.

The first two floors contain a variety of decorative features in contrast with the austere third floor. While the windows are quite plain, decorative woodwork consists of baseboard molding, chair railing, and Federal-style fireplace mantles (all dating to the early nineteenth century). Windows on the first two floors are deeply inset in the masonry walls with simple wooden sills. (The third floor windows, smaller than those on the other levels, have curved or "cheeked" window surrounds.) The doors are paneled with simple yet varied hardware. The latter includes heavy bolt locks separating the northern side of the house from the southern side. One door on the second floor has a Norfolk latch (common 1800—1845) that may be original to the house; other hardware is primarily mid-nineteenth-century Blake latches or late nineteenth-century knob and box lock systems.

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While the house is approximately 185 years old, there have been few structural changes, the most significant being the raising of the house to three stories c. 1850. The Kuerners made some changes in the 1940s. These changes included removing the partition wall between the front and rear parlors, and removing the wall separating the center hall from the front parlor, both of which created the present ell-shaped living room.

Originally there were seven working fireplaces in the core. The chimney arrangement provides for five fireplaces on the northern wall (two each on the first and second floors, one on the third), and two fireplaces on the southern wall (the kitchen on the first floor, and a fireplace in the southeastern window on the second floor). Eventually coal stoves replaced the fireplaces; the Kuerners sealed the fireplaces in the 1950s.

Heating is provided by a basement oil furnace that forces hot air through a series of exposed ductwork; a freestanding oil furnace utilizing the eastern fireplace chimney in the living room; a wood stove utilizing the former kitchen fireplace on the southern wall of the kitchen; and a freestanding oil stove in the rear addition.¹

Farmhouse – First Level

Originally, the c. 1814 core had a “center hall” plan, with two rooms on either side of the center stair hall. Two parlors were located on the left (north) side, and the kitchen and dining room were on the right (south) side. Today the first floor consists of an ell-shaped living room on the north side of the house, the center stairway hall in the center rear of the core, and the kitchen and pantry area on the south side.

The current living room’s main features are the two Federal-style fireplaces (sealed) on the northern wall. The western fireplace served the former formal parlor; the eastern fireplace served the less formal rear parlor. The western fireplace has a decorative fireplace surround consisting of fluted Doric pilasters with fan carvings supporting the mantle above. At 63” tall, it is 5” taller than the eastern (or former rear parlor) fireplace, with slightly more elaborate wood patterns. A small, recessed cabinet with a paneled wooden door is located between the fireplaces. The former partition wall in front of the cabinet was offset slightly to the east to provide more space to the front parlor. Woodwork on the fireplace, cabinet, and flooring reveals that the wall was angled in westward to allow access into the cabinet. This arrangement was repeated on the second floor.

Other features of the living room include 16” deep windowsills and paneled doors to the hallway and kitchen. The inside hardware on the exterior door consists of an art deco-inspired brass lock system. Many of the windowpanes are composed of cylinder glass. Windows have a muntin profile that is slightly taller than their width, which was common in southeastern Pennsylvania from c. 1810 to c. 1830. A 4” fluted chair rail running along the wall throughout the first and second floors incorporates the window sills. A 4” beaded floor molding with a beaded head runs along the floors on both levels. These molding patterns date to the early nineteenth century. The random width walnut flooring is original.

The kitchen occupies the south side of the farmhouse. A dining area occupies the west end of the kitchen, the cooking area is in the middle, and a partitioned pantry occupies the east end. The kitchen is accessed from the right exterior door on the west elevation of the house, a doorway from the living room (formerly the center hall), and a doorway near the center stairs. The door from the living room has the same early nineteenth-century panel type found in the architraves on the main elevation: thick panels whose faces rise to the height of the stiles and rails. A partition wall, made of vertical wood boards, separates the main kitchen area from a pantry east of

¹ According to Karl Kuerner Jr. (interviewed on 1/18/2000), the oil furnace was added to provide a more efficient heating system when his father began experiencing failing health in the 1970s. Mr. Kuerner also described how the family was able to obtain coal from the nearby railroad after it dumped a large load on the property one day; this enabled them to move the train up a hill during a snowstorm.

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the fireplace. The small room has built-in cabinets on the south wall. The winding staircase, linking all floors of the house, is located in its north end. An early nineteenth century corner cabinet sits in the southwest corner.

The primary architectural feature in the kitchen is the large cooking fireplace centered on the south wall. Now largely sealed by cinderblock, it ceased being used for cooking in the 1940s. It continued, however, to be used for smoking meats. A kettle and large crane are located within the fireplace. A simple wooden mantle is located above the hearth. The hearth, like those in the living room, is covered with aggregate stone floor tiles. The remaining kitchen floor was covered with linoleum until c. 2000, when it was removed to reveal wide tongue and groove flooring. The floor in front of the kitchen hearth is well worn. The walls are painted plaster covered with wallpaper.

The main feature in the building's center hall (between the living room and kitchen areas) is the formal stairway to the third floor. With the living room, it contains the most decorative elements of the house. Details include a stained handrail supported by plain square wooden balusters in the center. The outside handrail has an inset stained railing supported by fluted pilasters. Stringer decoration adorns the stairs on the first floor. A small paneled door under the stringer leads to a closet beneath the stairs. The stairway leads upward, turning at 90-degree angles in a series of landings between the first and second floors. The handsome staircase is similar to stairway designs found in other late eighteenth and early nineteenth century area residences at a time when more decorative woodwork was fashionable. The stairs between the first and second floors feature a wooden pendant that augments the decorative stair design.

Other features of the center hall are less decorative. The walls and ceiling are plaster. A six-paneled wooden door connects the center hall to the rear addition. The door hangs within a 21" paneled doorway inset. Originally the exterior door, the heavy paneled door has a sliding bolt lock. Random width floorboards, painted red, run north to south. The small size of the room accentuates the decorative woodwork on the stairs and is augmented by the chair rail and floor molding.

The first floor of the rear addition consists of the "mudroom," bathroom, and utility room. While the core maintains a consistent treatment of architectural features, the addition is vernacular. It is accessed from three points: the aforementioned passage from the center hall to the mudroom, from the woodshed at the south end of the utility room, and the vestibule entrance on the east wall. The mudroom occupies the northern two-thirds of the addition. Its main feature is a freestanding oil stove located in the northeast corner of the room.² It was a favorite sitting place of Andrew Wyeth and Mr. Kuerner. The stove utilizes the chimney constructed in 1945. Ceiling registers allow warm air into the bathroom and bedroom on the second floor. The walls are drywall and machined wood paneling. A modern bathroom is located off the west side of the mudroom.

The woodshed is attached to the southern walls of the core and rear addition. The stone unit has a single room with a cement floor, stonewalls 6" high, and exposed gabled roof. The woodshed is accessed via a door from the utility room and an exterior door on the eastern side. The exterior door features backwards "Z" bracing.

Farmhouse – Second Level

The second floor consists of the center hall and stairs, two bedrooms on each side of the hall, and a bathroom and bedroom within the rear addition. Architectural elements found here include plaster walls and ceiling, random width hardwood flooring, 4" beaded baseboard floor molding, and a decorative chair rail. A bathroom occupies the northern half of the addition and is accessed via a stair landing. The bathroom is quite large and includes painted wood-paneled walls and a large claw tub.

² The oil stove was temporarily removed for room painting at the time of this writing.

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The core has four bedrooms on the second floor. The southeast bedroom was often used as a sewing room for Mrs. Kuerner and is directly over the kitchen and pantry. The Kuerners' four daughters also used this room and the adjoining bedroom on the southwest corner as their bedrooms. The large kitchen fireplace chimneystack and bedroom fireplace take up a fair portion of the southwest corner of the room. The sealed fireplace includes simple wooden trim and a mantel. The winding stairway occupies the northeast corner behind paneled doors. A closet, an early twentieth-century addition, is located next to the stairs. Given the woodwork and fireplace, this room may have been the master bedroom (or parlor) for those residing in the southern section of the house. The door leading from the center hall into the bedroom has a Blake latch, dating to the middle of the nineteenth century.

The southwest bedroom can only be accessed from the southeast bedroom. This bedroom has plain plaster walls and ceiling. The hardwood flooring, painted dark red, is partially covered by an oilcloth. There is no fireplace.

There are two bedrooms north of the center hall. The northeast corner bedroom has a recessed cabinet immediately to the left of a sealed fireplace. The cabinet has two paneled wooden doors separated by the room's chair rail. The western partition wall angles slightly for access into the cabinet. The room has a linoleum floor. The northwest corner bedroom is the largest bedroom on the second floor and was the Kuerners' master bedroom. Its door has a Norfolk latch. A sealed fireplace on the northern wall is framed by formal wooden molding.

Farmhouse – Third Level

The third floor was added c. 1850. A door in the center hall of the second floor opens into the stairs to the third floor. This door, although slightly altered, appears to be original to the house, as the face of its panels rises to the same height as the stiles and rails. However, after passing through the door, the woodwork in the stairs dates to a later nineteenth-century era. Gone are the engaged railing, pilasters, and decorative stringers. Plain square balusters support the railing that separates the stair well from the hallway. After reaching the third floor, the molding patterns, the door types, and the cheeked windows all point to a date of construction around 1850 rather than 1814.

The third floor consists of a storage area south of the center stairway and two bedrooms occupying the northern portion of the house. The third floor is far less finished than the first and second floors. The wood flooring and floor molding are rustic, the ceiling height is lower, and there is no decorative chair rail. The baseboard molding measures 4.5" and is topped with a thick rounded bead. The large windows on the lower floors give way to small, 3x3 light sash windows. The window surrounds are rounded, or "cheeked," per the mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival tradition.

The storage room, used as a studio by Andrew Wyeth, occupies the southern portion of the third floor. The room, measuring 14' x 25' is quite large, yet the kitchen fireplace chimneystack and the spiral staircase take up some of this space. The flooring is rougher here than elsewhere. It is composed of wide, planed floorboards, held in place by square cut nails. The floor is painted red (like the rooms directly below), another indication of its use by a single household. A door leading to the northwest corner bedroom has been sealed, possibly when the house was divided. Large wrought iron ceiling hooks, used to hang smoked meats, are located on the western ceiling area. Wyeth depicted these hooks in some of his work.

Two bedrooms occupy the northern portion of the third floor. The small bedroom, located in the northeast corner, is the only third floor room with a fireplace. Called the "Moose" room by the Kuerners, this room once had several hanging moose head trophies.

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Farmhouse – Attic and Basement

The attic, reached through a ceiling hatch in the storage room, exposes much of the building's structural system. The house has a shallow pitched, hipped roof with long shed dormers on the east and west sides. The dormers were designed to provide natural light, not for living space. The ridgeline rises to approximately 5' above the exposed attic floor joists. The roof tapers down to the joist levels on all four sides of the house. The attic is clear span space; the hipped design spared the need for collar beams. However, notches in the rafters indicate they were originally installed as part of a gabled roof system, later changed to the current shallower hipped roof system; the rafters have been shortened and a ridgepole added. The collar beam mortises in the rafters are not parallel to the floor, indicating that they were used earlier at a steeper slope. The rafters are connected to a small ridgepole that appears inconsistent with the other roof framing. The attic floor joists are arranged in an east-west fashion. Their perimeter ends are set into the thick stone walls of the house. The tops of the walls are entirely exposed under the attic roof; the rafters extend over the walls and connect to a sill plate running along the outside perimeter of the walls. This design enables the joists to support the massive cornice system. Stucco-covered chimneys at the north and south ends extend through the roof. On the north end, the framing system around the chimney suggests that the chimney was already in place when the framing was installed. The interior ends of the attic's floor joists are connected by mortise-and-tenon to the north-south running summer beam centered between the two chimneys. The hand-hewn beam, measuring approximately 30' by 8" by 8", connects to the chimneys at either end. In contrast to this beam, markings on the joists indicate that they were straight sawn. The beams supporting the dormers, on the other hand, contain radial saw markings, indicating that those beams, at least, were cut sometime after 1850.

The core has a full basement; there are no basement areas under the additions. The basement is accessed from the first floor pantry via the spiral stairs and from the bulkhead entrance on east side of the house. The ceiling is formed by the exposed joists supporting the first floor, and the basement's floor is cement. The walls are mainly smooth stucco over the stone foundation and are painted white. A masonry-supporting wall running north to south, effectively divides the basement into two parts; the ends of the exposed joists forming the ceiling sit on top of the wall. It appears that the original summer beam has been removed.

The basement's major features are the stone hearth supports for the kitchen and living room fireplaces on the south and north walls respectively, the solid "Z" braced bulkhead door, and a drain and shower combination near the northwest corner of the basement. The Kuerners used the hearth supports for cold cellar storage. The supporting wall includes a "window" opening filled with horizontal wooden bars and a door. The rear or west part of the basement is more finished than the eastern side. It was the location of the Kuerner hard cider operation.

Additional Resources**Barn** (contributing building)

Located northeast of the house is the property's late nineteenth-century barn. The barn's location and orientation was predicated by the topography, resulting in a rare westward orientation. Measuring 90' x 58', the complex includes the main barn structure, a bridge bank entrance on the east side, a "straw shed" addition on the south end, and stone barnyard walls. The main barn section is the frame, end-gabled double-decker structure resting on a partially stucco-clad stone foundation on the north, east, and south elevations. It has a standing seam tin roof, and its walls are clad with shingles. The wall surface has few window or door openings. The main (west) elevation has a winnowing door on both upper levels flanked by 6x6 light windows and a series of doors and windows on the stall level. Doors on the stall level include a double-batten unit and two sliding doors; between the doors are six windows of various sizes. The end (north and south elevation) walls have small multi-paned windows in the peak of the gables and three multi-paned windows in the foundation wall on

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the north elevation. The ramp system on the east elevation consists of two stone retaining walls 75' long leading to the wooden bridge. The covered bridge is a framed extension of the barn. It is clad in board and batten and has a front-gabled roof. A double-door opens into the cross-gabled bridge and into the threshing floor. As with many double-decker barns, the bridge leads twelve feet over an open passageway with access into the hay storage level.

The barn interior is typical of Pennsylvania "double-decker" barns. The bridge and ramp system opens onto a narrow threshing floor in the center of the third level, with the flanking hay mows extending from the center level (hay storage level) to the rafters. The apex of the roof rises approximately 35 feet above the threshing floor. The center floor, or hay storage level, is accessed from stairs to the other levels and from doors opening into the passageway under the bridge. The ground level stable plan is typical of late nineteenth-century bank barns with early twentieth-century modifications. It has two-and-a-half rows of raised cement feeding alleys running east to west. Stairs to the bridge level, grain hopper, and trough are located on the east side of this level. According to Pennsylvania barn expert Robert Ensminger, the advent of the double-decker barn reflected the greatly increased agricultural output of the nineteenth century and the associated challenges of providing storage space. "The advantages of this design are manifold: extra capacity for hay storage in a deeper loft area; easier gravity filling by unloading hay downward from the threshing bridge; large, protected granary below the threshing bridge; and increased capacity of the forebay straw shed." Pennsylvania Quaker farmers are credited with the barn enlargement that resulted in double-decker barns.³

A two-story straw shed is attached to the southern end of the barn. For much of the twentieth century, it was used as a corncrib (holding 1,500 bushels of corn) and machine shed. The extension's southern wall consists of dark-stained, vertical wooden slats that form the south side of the corncrib. Its ends are clad in interlocking asphalt shingles; its shed roof is corrugated tin. A large doorway on the east elevation leads into the lower level, and a double door under a pent on the east elevation leads into the upper level. The southern end of its lower level contains a horse stable. Horse stalls and a grooming area are located here, as is a cement cistern in the southwest corner. The cistern is the subject of Wyeth's "Spring Fed" painting.

Like many barns with English antecedents, a stone wall encloses a portion of the barn yard. It begins at the northwestern corner of the barn complex, leads west to incorporate two walls of a tractor shed, and runs south towards the driveway. Another section of stone wall leads west from the southwestern corner of the strawshed section.

Springhouse (contributing building)

The springhouse, c. 1814, is located west of the barn and adjacent to the driveway. It is a whitewashed stone building with a front end-gabled roof, vertical wood board cladding at the gabled ends, and entrances on both ends. Measuring 12' x 34', the building is constructed into a hill which slopes upward to the east. The eastern entrance accesses the second level loft; the western entrance accesses the ground level. The latter consists of a pair of wooden, hinged doors. There is also a single, three-light, horizontal window on the south side. The window has hinged shutters held by English colonial strap hinges. The interior of the lower floor consists of two rooms including a cement-lined creamery occupying the east end of the building. Water enters the building here and exits from the north side.

Icehouse (contributing building)

The icehouse is located on the hill east of the house, adjacent to the location of the now removed chicken house. Similar architectural features are found on the icehouse and the springhouse. The stone building measures just

³ Robert F. Ensminger, *The Pennsylvania Barn: Its Origin, Evolution, and Distribution in North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 103, 213.

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14' x 14' and has a single opening to the south. Built into the hill, the eaves of its front end-gabled, corrugated tin roof nearly touch the ground. The key feature is the large round stone-lined pit (11' in diameter, 6' deep) in the center of the building.

Tractor Shed (contributing building)

A tractor shed, c. 1945, is built into the northwest corner of the barnyard wall. The shed-roofed building measures 20' x 32' and opens to the south. The shed's north and west stonewalls utilize walls that may have been part of the original barn.

Cistern (contributing structure)

Just west of the icehouse is a submerged cistern constructed within an earthen mound. The mound rises to a height of approximately five feet. The cistern itself is an O-shaped, stone and stucco structure in the middle of the mound. The cistern was originally built to collect water from a spring on the hill west of the property. From that location, water is transported via underground pipe by gravity and pressure under Ring Road, south to the cistern. The cistern made water available to the house and the barn.

Stone Retaining Walls and Minor Landscape Features (part of the overall farm as a contributing site)

Stone retaining walls abound on the property. German and Italian POWs constructed most of the walls in the 1940s. A 3' rubble stonewall forming a right angle turn northwest of the house, retains a nearly flat front yard. A serpentine stonewall retains the bank directly behind the house. The largest wall is a capped serpentine resource running half the length of the driveway.

Large Equipment Shed (contributing structure)

The three-sided equipment or woodshed, c. 1955, is located on the hill southeast of the barn. Open to the south, the 50' by 26' frame building consists of a board and batten siding, a corrugated tin shed roof sloping down to the north, and three columns supporting the roof above. A single beam spans the entire length of the building. Currently the shed is in poor condition.

Frame Tenant House (noncontributing building)

The property contains an abandoned, frame tenant house in the southwest corner. While it appears on an 1870 map, the building has been heavily altered and is dilapidated. The one-story, machined shingle-clad building sits on a rubble stone foundation. It contains an original end-gabled section and a rear one-story section.

Potential Archeological Resources (not included in resource count)

Though not specifically noted, the property may have experienced military and battle activity during the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777. A cannon ball and a grape shot ball have been found near the house. Although there may have been no fixed fortifications during the battle, there were troop movements along Ring Road, and both Continental and Militia troops may have taken up positions in the area before their final retreat to the east. There was also an American gun emplacement on the hill west of the property, just across Ring Road from the farm. An 1848 map of Delaware County shows a redoubt on the north end of the property, covering the southern approaches up Ring Road. A comprehensive study of the battle and battlefield completed in 1989 indicated no potential archeological resources in the location of the farm. This study recommended that the Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark boundary be enlarged to include the Kuerner Farm among other properties.⁴

⁴ Nancy Webster and Martha Wolf, Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark Cultural Resource Management Study, Delaware County [PA] Planning Department, 1989.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
 Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National
 Register Criteria:

A B X C D

Criteria Considerations
 (Exceptions):

A B C D E F G X

NHL Criteria:

2

NHL Exception:

8

NHL Theme(s):

III. Expressing Cultural Values
 2. Visual and Performing Arts

Areas of Significance:

Art

Period(s) of Significance:

1933-1997

Significant Dates:

Significant Person(s):

Wyeth, Andrew

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Ring, Nathaniel

Historic Contexts:

XXIV. Painting and Sculpture
 J. World War II to the present, 1939-

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Kuerner Farm, in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, is nationally significant under Criterion 2 for its association with the world-renowned artist Andrew Wyeth (1917-1997) who produced significant works of art there for seven decades. It is also significant under Criterion Consideration 8 because the association with Wyeth, and therefore the period of significance, extends from his earliest paintings in 1933 until 1997 with the death of Anna Kuerner. In 1998 Anna's son, Karl Kuerner, Jr., donated his interest in the farm to the Brandywine Conservancy in order to preserve the farm.

The Kuerner Farm was a primary subject for Wyeth who returned there often over a 77-year period. Beginning in 1933, Wyeth regularly visited the Kuerners and spent much of his time there. In addition, he began painting there and using their farm as a subject or background for his work. Approximately one-third of his work originated on the farm emphasizing the property's significance throughout his career. He painted in several different rooms in the farmhouse, in the barn, and in the surrounding fields; the entire farm provided both studio space and subject matter. Among his nearly 1,000 images of the farm and its inhabitants are "Winter 1946" (1946), "Snow Flurries" (1953), "Groundhog Day" (1959), "Spring Fed" (1967), "Evening at Kuerners" (1970), and "Snow Hill" (1989). The farm was also the inspiration for Wyeth's *Helga* series. The relatively unaltered appearance of the farm's agricultural resources and landscape augment this significance, and is perhaps what continually attracted Andrew Wyeth to this location.

Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) was one of the most prominent American artists of the twentieth century. His art features the people and places of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and coastal Maine, including such iconic works as "Christina's World" (1948, Museum of Modern Art). At the time of his death in January 2009, critics remained divided over his place in American art. His consistent use of recognizable imagery, during the years when many artists explored abstraction, caused some to categorize Wyeth as an illustrator. Andrew Wyeth did not let this controversy distract him and never wavered from following his vision. His ability to take the familiar and use it to communicate universal meanings brought his work acclaim throughout the world.

Throughout his long career, Wyeth's exhibitions attracted significant crowds and attention, beginning with his first one-man show at the Macbeth Gallery in New York in 1937 and continuing in retrospective exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1976 and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2006, among many others. The national importance of his work resulted in Wyeth receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, the Congressional Gold Medal in 1990, and the NEA National Medal of Arts in 2007.

The Ring family originally developed the farm, constructing the c. 1814 farmhouse and other associated buildings prior to selling the property in 1898. The Kuerner family moved to the farm as tenants in 1926, and purchased it from the Atwater family in 1943. The family lived there throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. In 1999, the Brandywine Conservancy, Inc., a major land trust based in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, purchased the property for preservation, public visitation, and interpretive purposes. (The Conservancy, parent of the Brandywine River Museum, is a major repository of Wyeth works, and owns and operates the nearby NC Wyeth House and Studio [NHL 1997].)

Property History

The Kuerner Farm was first settled by the Ring family in the eighteenth century. Benjamin Ring (c. 1710—1767), a Quaker, is believed to have acquired the subject tract from Robert Chalfont sometime after 1753. By occupation a joiner, Benjamin Ring died in 1767, leaving "all that My Plantation whereon I now Dwell

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containing about 70 acres ... Together with the Plantation I purchased of Robert Chalfont containing about 67 acres” to his son Nathaniel Ring, III.⁵ At that time the Rings’ house was located north of the subject property. The Battle of Brandywine was fought near the Ring Farm in 1777. While military activity on the subject property has not been fully documented, an 1848 map of Delaware County shows an American gun emplacement on the northern part of the property and another on the top of the hill west of the property. The guns would have covered the American retreat and any movement by the British from the west or north up Ring Road. (Today the western third of the property lies within the Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark (1961) boundary, yet excludes the farmstead buildings.)

Nathaniel Ring died in 1810. In his will he gave his son Caleb B. Ring, Sr. “all my late dwelling, land, and plantation.” Caleb, born in 1782, owned the tract from 1810 until his death in 1836. Tax records indicate that Caleb and his wife Lydia constructed the present farmhouse around 1814, replacing an earlier dwelling; interior fabric is consistent with a date in the early nineteenth century. Caleb’s will (1833) states that he left his son Nathaniel Ring “all my Plantation in the township of Birmingham in Delaware County containing 165 Acres more or less...”

Nathaniel Ring, IV, son of Caleb Ring, farmed the land from 1833 until he died in testate on February 9, 1897. The farm assumed much of its current appearance during his ownership. Alterations to the farmhouse date to c. 1850, including the addition of the third floor and the change in the roof profile from a gabled to a hipped design with an interior gutter system. In the 1870s, burning embers from a passing Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington locomotive ignited the property’s barn on fire and burned it to the ground. The railroad company responded by shipping (by rail) the extant prefabricated barn from Philadelphia and erecting it in its present location. The barn was constructed as a multi-purpose building with a dairy operation on the ground floor, equipment storage on the middle level, and threshing and grain storage on the upper level. The icehouse appears to date to the early nineteenth century. The springhouse, probably the oldest resource on the property, was refitted to accommodate the dairy operation. A drinking water cistern and aqueduct were built to bring water to the house and barn from a spring on the hill west of the property, and the property’s stream was dammed to create a small pond.

Following the death of Nathaniel Ring, the 216.94-acre Birmingham Township (now Chadds Ford Township) farm was sold at a public auction in 1898. Joseph C. Turner, owner of a nearby mill, purchased the farm at the auction for \$9,533.70, thus ending nearly 150 years of ownership by the Ring family. In 1908, Richard Atwater purchased the farm from the Turner estate (Deed Book 367-620).

In 1926, Karl and Anna Kuerner, having recently emigrated from Germany, began renting half of the farmhouse from the Atwater family, who did not reside on the farm. In 1943, after convincing the surviving heirs of Richard Atwater to sell the farm, the Kuerners purchased the property for \$10,000 (Deed Book 1209-448). After 44 years of “absentee” ownership of the Ring Farm, as it was then known, a resident farmer once again owned the land. In those first few years of ownership, the Kuerners made several changes that mark the present appearance of the farm. One shed was constructed in front of the barn and another was constructed east of the barn. An old frame woodshed located northeast of the house was demolished after the present woodshed was constructed in the late 1930s. Minor changes included the removal of an outhouse behind the barn and the construction of the chicken house and doghouse. The springhouse and creamery, after almost 150 years of use, became obsolete for milk storage in the 1940s. The Kuerners then used the springhouse (as well as the third floor of the farmhouse) to hang meats. The meats (hams, sausage, etc.) were processed from pigs and other animals that were raised on the farm.

⁵ The Ring family failed to record deeds relating to the farm. The first deed filed was in 1898 when the property left the Ring family ownership.

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Several changes were made to the farmhouse. Having been occupied by two renting families for several years, the Kuerners' house was reconverted it into a single-family dwelling. (Physical evidence of the former two-family habitation can be found in locks on the interior doors that separated the north side from the south side.) The partition walls between the two parlors and center hall were removed to form the current living room, and the downstairs bathroom and pantry were added. On the exterior, the family constructed a stone and cement porch, chimney, and several retaining walls, as well as the aforementioned woodshed.

Karl Kuerner, Sr. died in 1979 at the age of 80, and his wife Anna died in 1997. The farm was bequeathed to the Kuerners' five children. Karl Kuerner, Jr., who still resided there, then purchased 76% of the property from his sisters, and the Brandywine Conservancy, Inc., a land trust and art museum also located in Chadds Ford, purchased the remaining 24%. In 1998 Karl Kuerner, Jr. donated his interest in the property to the Brandywine Conservancy to preserve the farm (Deed Book 1876-1782). The Conservancy is now employing curators and conservationists to carefully document the house and restore it (slightly) to its 20th century appearance. The property is opened for public visitation as is the N.C. Wyeth House and Studio nearby. Critical to visitation will be the interpretation of Andrew Wyeth's work there, which is somewhat of a visual recordation, albeit with artistic license, of the farm's last 70 years.

The Wyeth Years

Andrew Wyeth, one of America's most famous artists of the latter half of the twentieth century, very seldom painted beyond a few miles from his homes in southeastern Pennsylvania and mid-coast Maine. Born in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, in 1917, he was the youngest of five children in a remarkably talented family that included several painters, a composer, and a scientist in one generation. By the time of Andrew's birth, his father, N.C. (Newell Convers) Wyeth was a renowned and well-published illustrator of Western stories, historical narratives, and novels such as *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*.

N. C. Wyeth (1882 – 1945) came from Massachusetts to the Brandywine valley in 1902 to study with the renowned illustrator and teacher, Howard Pyle (1853 – 1911). Both N.C. and Pyle contributed greatly and distinctively to illustration and to its technical and stylistic development during "the golden age of American illustration." Much in demand by publishers, Pyle and N.C. Wyeth helped form the public imagination regarding many subjects over three-quarters of a century (through a very large number of images in books and periodicals.) Raised in their shadows, Andrew Wyeth always was influenced by and deeply admired their work.

N. C. Wyeth's technical ability with paint was extraordinary, and his work, along with Pyle's, greatly influenced Andrew throughout his life. N.C. was Andrew's only teacher, and Andrew's work in his father's Chadds Ford studio (NHL, 1997) began at a very early age. Because he displayed an immense ability with pencil and brush, and was a sickly child, Andrew was tutored at home so that he could concentrate on his art.

It was important to Andrew Wyeth that Kuerner Farm is almost next door to the buildings Howard Pyle used for his summer school in Chadds Ford. Wyeth greatly admired Pyle's work, along with his father's, and incorporated formal elements common in Pyle's paintings and drawings into his own work. In 1932, Wyeth began an artistic apprenticeship under his father, N.C. Wyeth.

By 1936, Andrew Wyeth had created a body of work in oil and watercolor that led to a sold-out, one-man exhibition at Macbeth Gallery in New York. This was followed the next year by watercolor shows in New York and Boston, and a museum exhibition at the Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire. By the age of twenty, his career had clearly begun. After that he was recognized around the world as an American artist whose extraordinary virtuosity served his unique responses to the places that were part of his life. Part of

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that virtuosity was always evidenced in his watercolors, and in the late 1930s, encouraged by his brother-in-law, artist Peter Hurd, Wyeth took on egg tempera as his primary painting medium, never again to work in oil. (His famous work, "Christina's World," was painted in tempera and bought by the Museum of Modern Art in New York soon afterwards.) Since the 1930s, one-man exhibitions of his work have appeared in major museums throughout the United States and in Japan, London, Milan, Paris, and elsewhere. These exhibitions have almost always been accompanied by scholarly publications. Indeed, so much has been written about him by art historians and critics that many feet of shelf space can be devoted solely to those commentaries in book and periodical form. Andrew Wyeth continued to paint at the Kuerner Farm, less than a mile from where he grew up, until his last years. Museums around the world continue to actively acquire his work.

Early Years

Wyeth wandered the countryside around Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, on foot as a boy with his parents' permission, in the years before the Wyeths settled in one location during their summers in Maine. Very early, Wyeth found the Kuerner farm to the east of his family's house. He was welcomed at the farm and permitted to wander anywhere on the property. Born in 1917, Wyeth grew up knowing that "the war" to which people referred was World War I. He was immediately fascinated by farmer Karl Kuerner because of his strong character and because he had been a machine gunner in the German army. The Kuerner family spoke German at home and carried on many German customs. The young Wyeth was captivated by the farm, the methods of farming, and especially by the people and their traditions which he came to know well. He was free to roam around the farm or in the house with the Kuerners at any time of the day or night, and in any circumstances for decades to come. Wyeth said, "Starting when I was very young, Karl would talk to me about his war experiences, in his broken English. You see, all of that, plus my father telling me about his Swiss background, and my mother discussing her Pennsylvania German forebears, got my imagination going."⁶

As a teenager, Andrew Wyeth made oil paintings (many are extant but seldom seen) and drawings at the farm. Those early years established ties between the artist and the place, and between the artist and the Kuerner family that would last throughout their lives. When in Pennsylvania, he always drew and painted on the farm. In the warmer months of the year, he traveled to the central Maine coast which was the setting for his famous images of that region and the people he knew there.

For Wyeth, the Kuerner Farm became the center of one of the worlds of what has come to be called, since the artist's one-man exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1976, "the two worlds of Andrew Wyeth." He told Thomas Hoving in 1976,

I didn't go to that farm because it was in any way bucolic. Actually I'm not terribly interested in farming. The abstract, almost military quality of that farm originally appealed to me and still does. Everything is utilized. If they kill a groundhog, he's cut up and his innards are made into sausages. . . . To enter that house with those heavy thick walls and have beer on draft or hard cider was an exciting thing. . . . When I was about ten years old, I had an urge to paint it . . . it never became a conscious effort. . . . I don't think of it as a studio. I think of it as an environment, free, organic, and natural."⁷

⁶ Katherine Stoddert Gilbert and Joan K. Holt, *Two Worlds of Andrew Wyeth: Kuerners and Olsons* (New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

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Kuerners and Olsons⁸

At the same time that Wyeth was visiting the Kuerner farm and painting, he was also painting Christina and Alvaro Olson on their farm in Cushing, Maine. While the Kuerners kept their farm neat and orderly, the Olson farm represented the decline of a New England family home throughout many generations. Wanda Corn has written, "At Wyeth's southern painting spot, the Kuerners' farm at Chadds Ford, the circumstances are very different. Here there are no relics, no New England ghosts, no weathered clapboards; pails are never battered, nor paint peeling. Quite the contrary. The Kuerner farm is tidy and orderly, run with the clockwork efficiency according to a fixed seasonal schedule. By all signs, this German farmer has achieved the modest success he came to seek in America after WWI."⁹

Andrew Wyeth also commented on the differences he perceived in the Kuerners and the Olsons. "Through the Olsons I really began to see New England as it really was. It was just the opposite to the Kuerners. The difference between Anna Kuerner and Christina Olson is quite great. Anna Christina is a direct Maine type of Yankee, New England, whereas the other is foreign and yes, small and quiet but underneath, of course, tremendously pugnacious. Quite a difference there. Difference, of course, is something that interests me very much."¹⁰

Both the Kuerner Farm in Pennsylvania and the Olson Farm in Maine were equally important in Andrew Wyeth's career. In his book on American painters in the 20th century, John Baur wrote,

These two places, where virtually all of Wyeth's life has been cast, are important to his work. Not only have they provided the subjects for his pictures but they have deeply colored his outlook, giving him something of their spare simplicity, an understanding of weather-beaten things, of sun and air and of the underlying tragedy in hard and lonely times. The microscopically realist style which Wyeth has mastered in his tempera paintings has been a direct response to his love of these places and their people. It is never used to dazzle nor for the sheer joy of imitation. It is a tool for mirroring, as flawlessly as possible, the subtle moods and restrained drama of his chosen themes. His pictures are often symbolic in feeling but the symbolism is essentially pictorial, not literary and seldom explicit.¹¹

Wyeth's focus on these two regions of America and their inhabitants also serves as a lesson for other artists. Years of subject matter and countless paintings were derived from working on two farms. Paintings that evoke strong emotions in the viewer were created by Wyeth through experiencing the lives of only four people.

Andrew Wyeth's Works at the Kuerner Farm

Of the nearly 1,000 images of the Kuerner Farm created by Andrew Wyeth, some major works have become enormously famous. They also have appeared in many exhibitions of his art throughout the United States and around the world. They also have been reproduced in many publications and distributed as single reproductions for framing. A sampling of these works would include "The Kuerners," "Evening at Kuerners," "Snow Flurries" (collection of the National Gallery of Art), "Karl," "Groundhog Day" (collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art), "Spring Fed," "Brown Swiss," "Overflow," and many others. To examine these works of art is to see the farm and also to understand how the artist immersed himself in a subject and making it his own. In

⁸ This section is based upon a similar discussion in the National Historic Landmark nomination for the Olson House in Cushing, Maine written by Janice Kasper, Curator of Historic Sites, Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, Maine, in 2004.

⁹ Corn, 119.

¹⁰ Gilbert and Holt, 158.

¹¹ John I. H. Baur, *New Art in America: 50 Painters of the 20th Century* (New York Graphic Society, New York, 1957), 278.

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drawings, watercolors, and paintings, Wyeth examined and presented both large views of the farm – the pond and house seen from above, for example – and some of its smallest details – a sausage hanging on a hook from a ceiling. Clearly, this farm with its own long history has, in the 20th century, contributed much to American art history.

“The Kuerners,” for example, is a watercolor that never fails to startle. Wyeth said that he was painting Karl with his rifle when Mrs. Kuerner walked into the room and the painting derived from that moment. The artist removed details from the painting in order to heighten the tension conveyed by this dual portrait, which has often been reproduced in exhibition catalogues. “Evening at Kuerners,” also a watercolor, was painted when Karl was seriously ill and a light was kept on through the night in the living room where Karl was being cared for. The somber tones of this work help convey the bleakness of the occasion. This work also has been reproduced many times, in many countries, in books, exhibition catalogues, and on posters. “Snow Flurries” is an egg tempera painting of a very large portrait of a hill that in many ways defines what Wyeth uniquely achieved with this painting medium. “Groundhog Day,” often reproduced by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is – as are so many of Wyeth’s images – a painting of stark contrasts. In this case, the contrast is between the colorful floral kitchen wall paper and the single knife on the table before a window looking onto a harsh and confining bit of landscape. The famous and complex tempera “Spring Fed” demonstrates the artist’s clear sense of abstraction in its multiple shapes, including windows that overlay each other. “Brown Swiss” honors the landscape and the variety of cattle raised on the Kuerner farm, although the title is a pun on the brown landscape and brown farm pond in which no cow is seen. It is also a pun on the Wyeth family’s Swiss heritage.

A famous chapter in Andrew Wyeth’s career involved a single model, Helga Testorf, who was discovered by Wyeth at the farm when she arrived to be Karl Kuerner’s nurse. He painted her often thereafter. She was German and, at the end of World War II, married an American and came to live across the road from the Kuerners. In 1985, the National Gallery of Art exhibited a large group of Wyeth’s images known as “The Helga Pictures;” the exhibition traveled to museums around the country. Many of these tempera paintings, watercolors, and drawings, more than 200 total in the group, have become famous individual works of art, with the tempera painting, “Braids,” acknowledged as the signature piece of the group. Since the National Gallery’s tour of “The Helga Pictures,” these more than 200 works of art have been exhibited in many additional cities throughout the United States. Their genesis was at the Kuerner farm. “Overflow,” for example, is a drybrush watercolor, one of the major images of the model Helga, and it was painted on the third floor of the Kuerner house, overlooking the pond and its spillway. These paintings became highly controversial in part because many of them are nudes, and it was mistakenly stated in the popular press that these were Andrew Wyeth’s first nudes, done late in life. Nearly the entire group of paintings and drawings was sold by Wyeth to a collector who promoted the group to the National Gallery and used the images for commercial purposes. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wyeth, and the collector, Leonard Andrews, correctly reported that Mrs. Wyeth was unaware of the existence of this group of works until weeks prior to their sale. Commentators in the media claimed that Mrs. Wyeth had fabricated a story in order to hype the collection and raise its value. Many people who lived in Chadds Ford at the time knew that the appearance of this collection, on which the artist had worked for many years, was, indeed, a complete surprise to Mrs. Wyeth. She had been unaware of her husband’s work with this model at the Kuerner farm, just as she always had been unaware of his subject matter until he completed any work of art.

On October 8, 1945, a train struck a car driven by artist N.C. Wyeth, killing him and his grandson. The accident occurred where the railroad tracks cross Ring Road near the northwest corner of the property, within sight of the house and barn. Because of the death of his father in this location, Wyeth valued the Kuerner Farm more than he may have otherwise. Dramatic events did much to shape the art of Andrew Wyeth and to imbue it with uncommon force. Mark Wilson, Director of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, wrote, “At

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once alluring and unsettling, the work strikes the very heart of our emotional being, reminding us that art is ultimately about truth and the human condition.”¹²

Without his life-long experiences at, and as part of, the Kuerner Farm, Andrew Wyeth’s art would not have developed as it did. His compelling images of that place would not be known today, nor would the farm be so famous and frequently sought out, as it is, by travelers from throughout the world.

Andrew Wyeth’s Place in American Art

Andrew Wyeth’s creative vision was formed early through multiple sources. His father and first teacher, the illustrator N.C. Wyeth, handed down artistic methodology while also stressing essential lessons learned from his teacher, Howard Pyle: the importance of using one’s imagination and knowing one’s subject well.

Beyond his father’s studio, Andrew Wyeth was impressed by the work of Winslow Homer, particularly his watercolors of coastal Maine. Wyeth studied Homer’s watercolor techniques, and in 1936, he visited the artist’s studio in Prout’s Neck, Maine. In Pennsylvania, Wyeth saw the work of Thomas Eakins, whose unsparing realism set a standard in American art. Other influences came through viewing art books and exhibitions, including careful study of detailed renderings by German artist Albrecht Dürer.

In his catalog introduction for Wyeth’s 2006 retrospective, John Wilmerding compares the quality of Wyeth’s work to that of his “great Philadelphia predecessor,” Thomas Eakins. Such formal and psychological expressiveness is a hallmark of Wyeth’s best painting, and informs the particular realism for which he has come to be known. Along with Hopper’s distilled and suggestive vision, Wyeth’s art is likely to stand as an indelible contribution to the realist tradition of the twentieth century.”¹³

Wilmerding describes Wyeth’s blending of traditional American realism with personal expression throughout his long career. “By his early maturity, Wyeth had developed a personal style of meticulous realism in both his temperas and watercolors that was firmly shaped by the American tradition. Yet what we often overlook in his paintings are two elements that seem contrary to this realism but are powerfully modern in their character – Wyeth’s sense of the psychological and the abstract. His style has retained an internal consistency almost from the beginning, paralleling in its longevity two of his famous contemporaries, Edward Hopper and Georgia O’Keeffe. Now approaching ninety, Wyeth has been painting for more than three-quarters of a century, and his art is as much admired and beloved as it is maligned and misunderstood.”¹⁴

As Wilmerding notes, assessing Andrew Wyeth’s work presents a challenge. Large numbers of people have been touched by his art, resulting in record-breaking attendance at his exhibitions. Contrasting this are the opinions of some established art critics, who tend to be wary of artists whose work gains broad popularity. Yet often, Wyeth’s critics and fans interpret his work in a similarly limiting way, focusing on a perceived element of nostalgia and rural solitude. Rural solitude is his chosen environment.

Art historians who have spent considerable time with Wyeth’s work refute those who focus solely on the art’s superficial aspects. Wanda Corn makes comparisons between Wyeth and his contemporaries such as Franz Kline and Jackson Pollack, emphasizing Wyeth’s use of gestural drawing and abstract shapes among other qualities. Corn suggests a different approach to understanding Wyeth’s art. “Andrew Wyeth belongs to the generation that grew up between the world wars...Not surprisingly, artists of this particular generation tended

¹² Thomas Hoving, *Andrew Wyeth: Autobiography* (Boston, MA: Bullfinch Press, 1995), 6.

¹³ John Wilmerding, “Introduction,” in Anne Knutson, et al. *Andrew Wyeth: Memory and Magic* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2005), 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

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to turn inward and become introspective in their expression. Their art is often emotionally autobiographical, communicating a deep sense of loss and displacement. ...Wyeth too...came to create an extremely private and subjective art, one which in part offers a personal definition of continuity and permanence in the face of the instabilities and uncertainties of modern life. Like others of his generation, his art, at its most meaningful level, clearly exposes a heightened sensitivity to life's ambiguities and darker realities."¹⁵

Adam Weinberg echoes Corn's point regarding Wyeth's significance as an American artist whose work reflects the experiences of his generation while defying exact categorization:

It becomes more and more apparent that trying to position Wyeth in relation to antithetical poles of realism and abstraction is ultimately a losing proposition. Such terms do, of course, enable us to see the origin of his work in American realism and Regionalism of the 1920s as well as the influence of modernist painting and photography on his art. However, Wyeth's work should not be a shuttlecock batted to and fro between dualistic positions. In the postmodern era, one doesn't have to be either a realist or an abstract painter. The distinction between the two is largely artificial, based as much on ideology as style. ...In short, realism is no more real than abstraction. ...By looking at Wyeth's art simply as a reflection of warring aesthetic ideologies, we miss its complexity, its mix of ideology, technical skill, style and personal psychology. We also miss seeing this art as a legitimate response to contemporary life, the kind of response for which other realist artists have been acclaimed rather than assailed as anachronisms.¹⁶

Wyeth's insights about life are revealed through images of the people and places with which he was most familiar. Rather than limiting his vision, this personal and intense focus provided him with an effective means of expression. Ultimately, it is this ability to communicate common experiences visually and connect to wide audiences that gives Andrew Wyeth's work, and the Kuerner Farm, an important place in the history of American art.

¹⁵ Corn, Wanda M., *The Art of Andrew Wyeth* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1973), 97-99.

¹⁶ Weinberg, Adam, "Terra Incognita: Redefining Wyeth's World," essay in Beth Venn and Adam Weinberg, *Unknown Terrain: The Landscapes of Andrew Wyeth* (New York City: Whitney Museum of Art, 1998), 17-18.

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Chester County Property Assessment Records, located at Chester County Archives.

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Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine: www.farnsworthmuseum.org.

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

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- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): Brandywine Conservancy, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 33 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	450716	4413535
B	18	451465	4413428
C	18	451004	4413120
D	18	450740	4413258

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary is land contained in Chadds Ford Township tax parcel 04-14-028:000

Boundary Justification: The boundaries encompass the 33-acre property and resources historically known as the Kuerner/Ring Farmstead, which have maintained integrity.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Robert J. Wise, Jr.

President

Wise Preservation Planning

Address: 1480 Hilltop Road
Chester Springs, Pennsylvania 19425

Telephone: 484-202-8187

Date: February 12, 2004
September 18, 2009 (updated)Edited by: Carolyn Pitts, Patty Henry, and Alexandra Lord
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Survey
1849 C St., NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2216

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM

November 19, 2010

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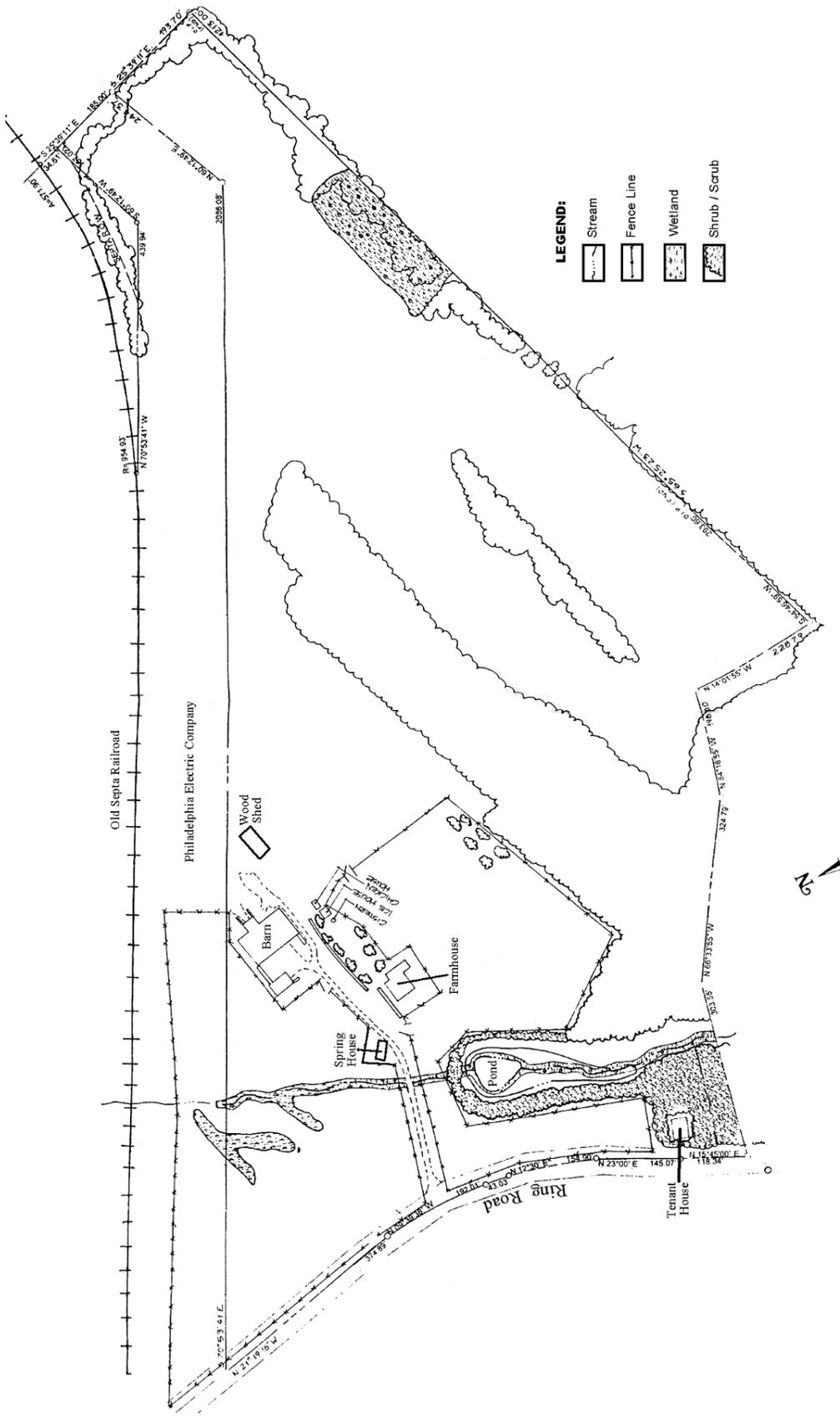


Figure 1: Sketch map of Kuerner Farm showing the historic resources and their location on the tax parcel.

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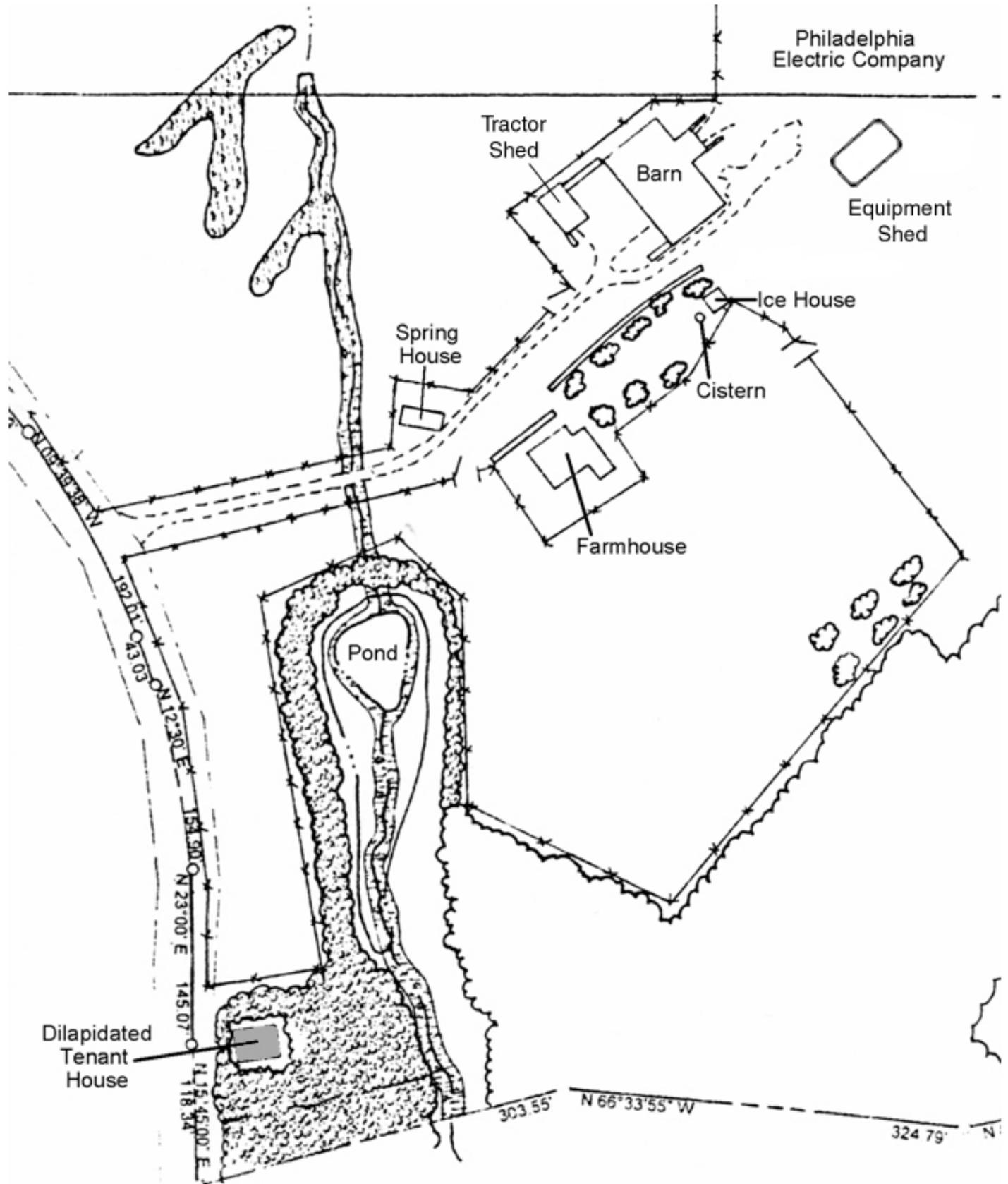


Figure 2: Sketch map of Kuerner Farmstead showing the historic resources (detail of previous map).

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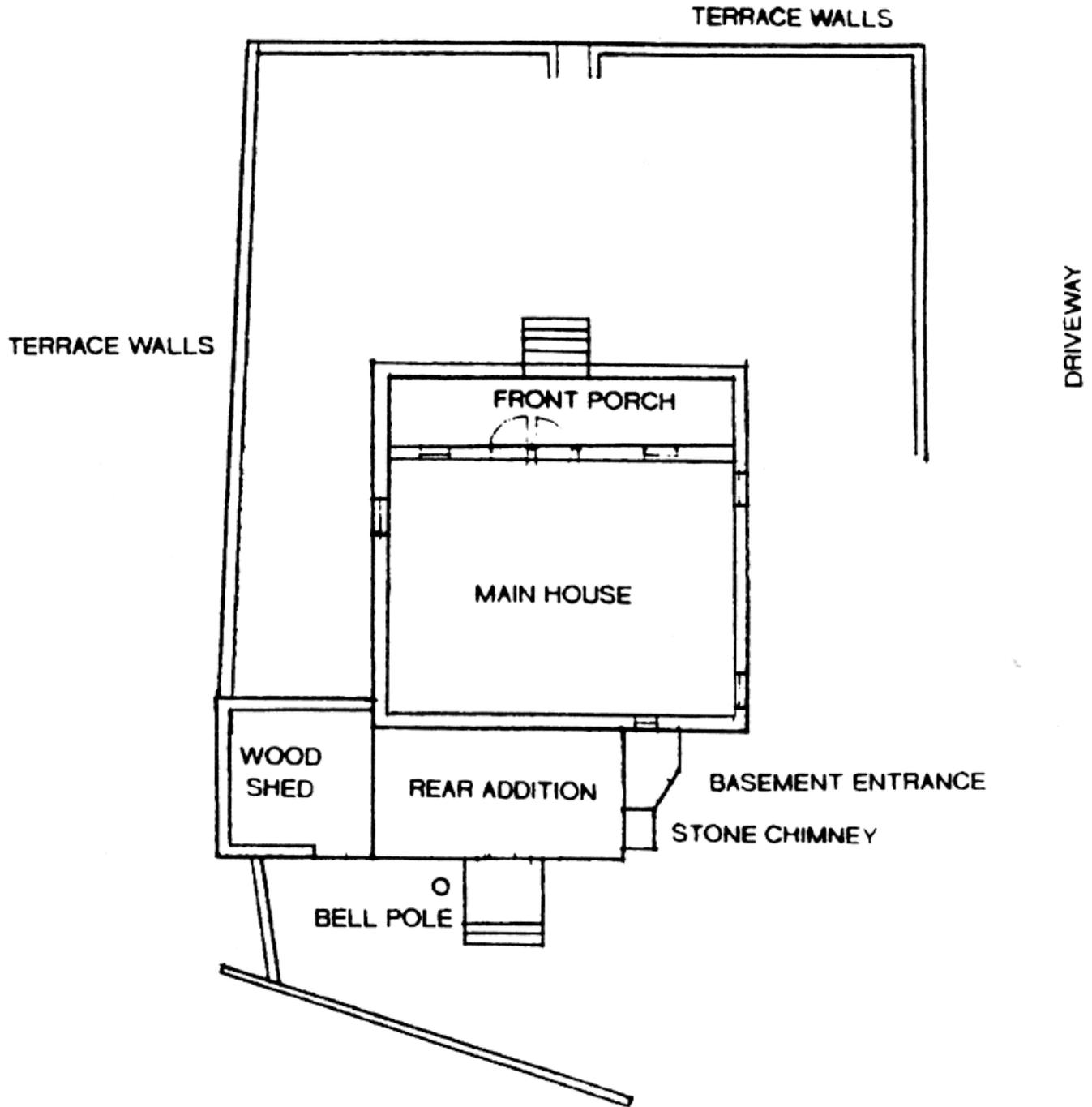


Figure 3: Farmhouse footprint (oriented west).

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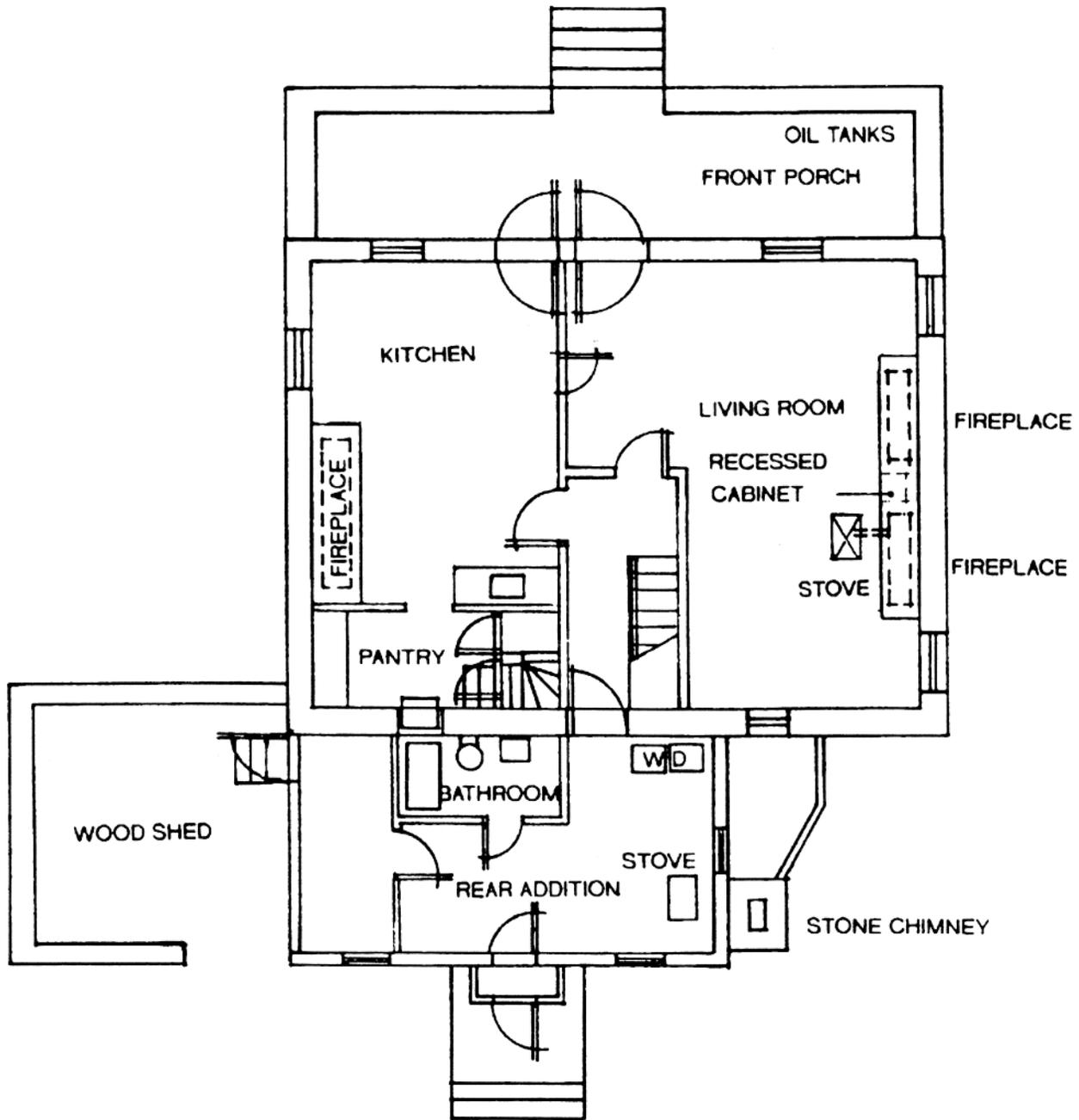


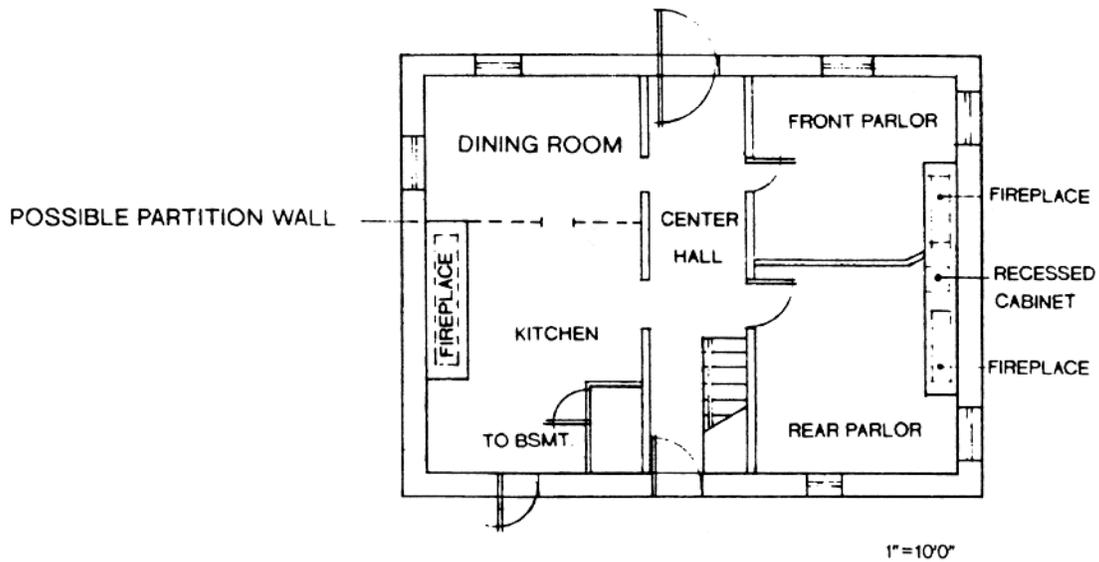
Figure 4: First floor plan (oriented east).

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ORIGINAL FIRST FLOOR PLAN

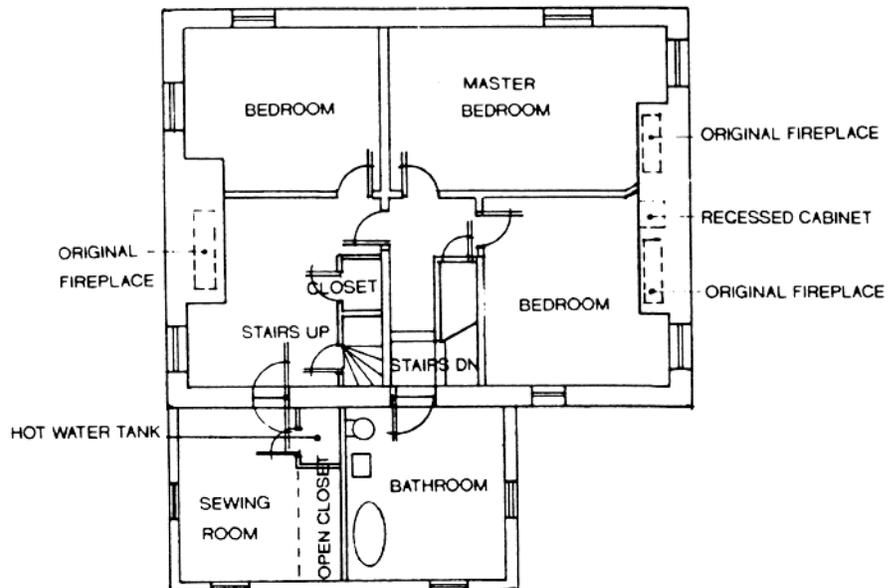


Figure 5 (above): Original first floor plan.

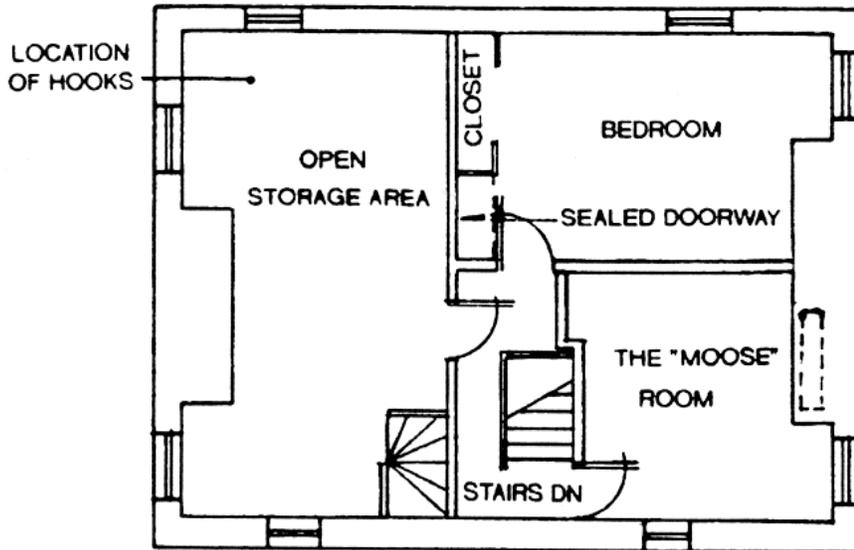
Figure 6 (below): Second floor plan (oriented east).

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HOUSE – THIRD FLOOR

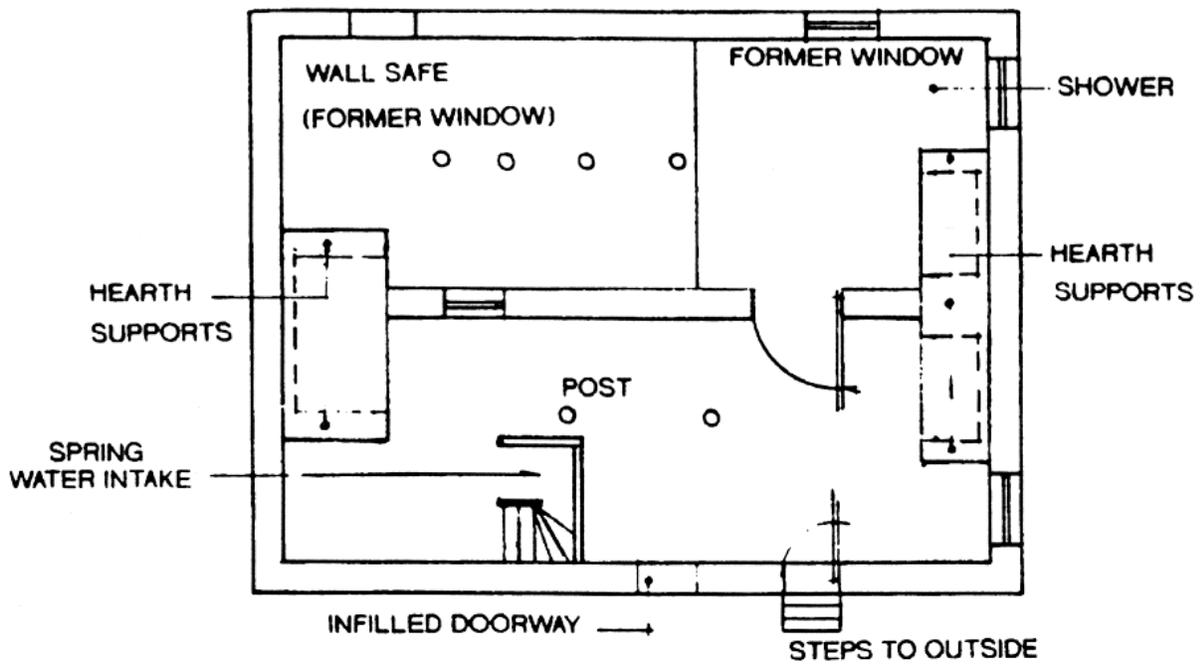


Figure 7 (above): Third floor plan.

Figure 8 (below): Basement floor plan (oriented east).

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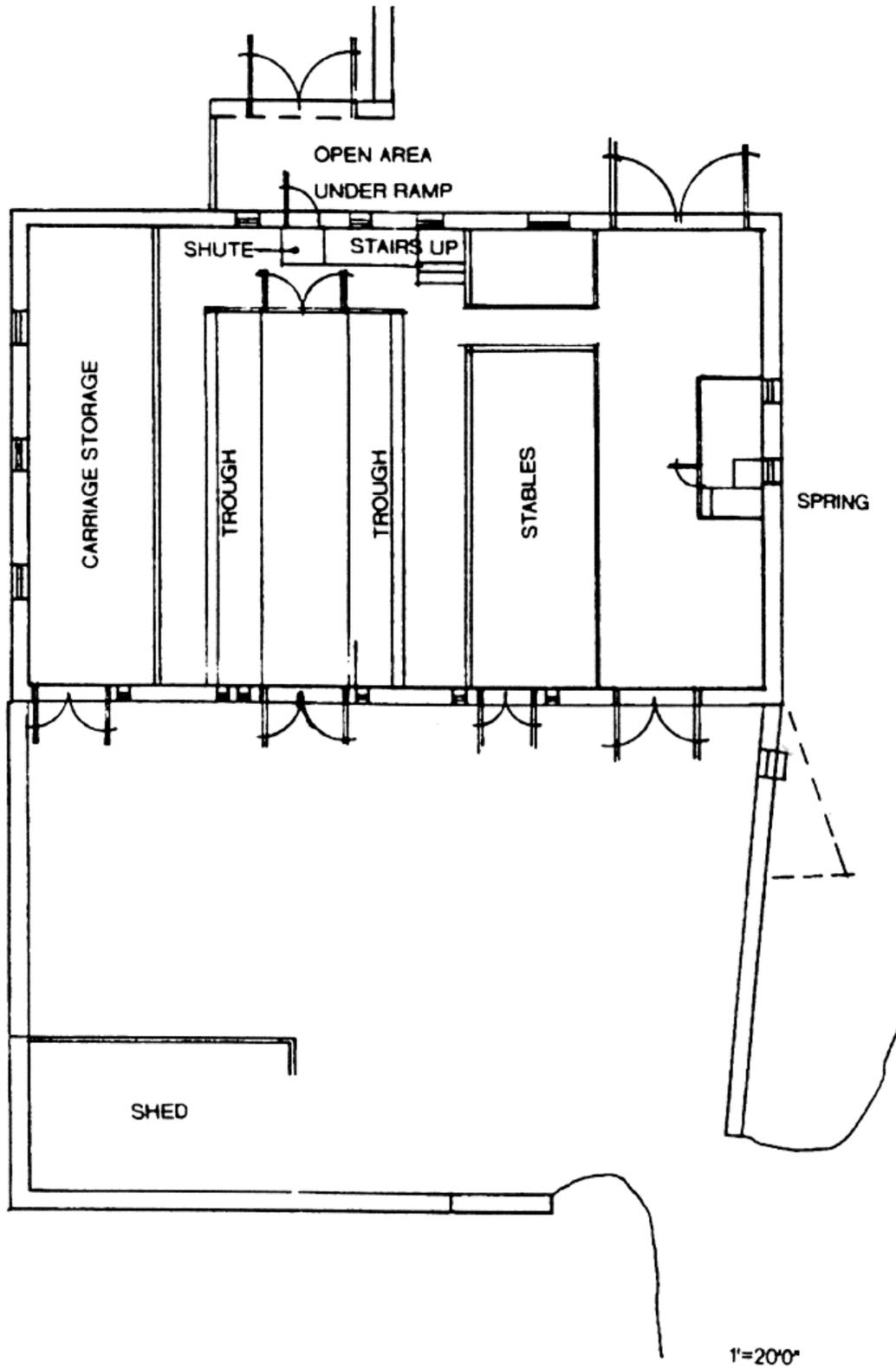


Figure 9: Floor plan of barn (ground floor).

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Plate 1. Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009), "Winter, 1946," 1946, tempura on panel. This image is copyrighted and permitted for use in the NHL nomination only.

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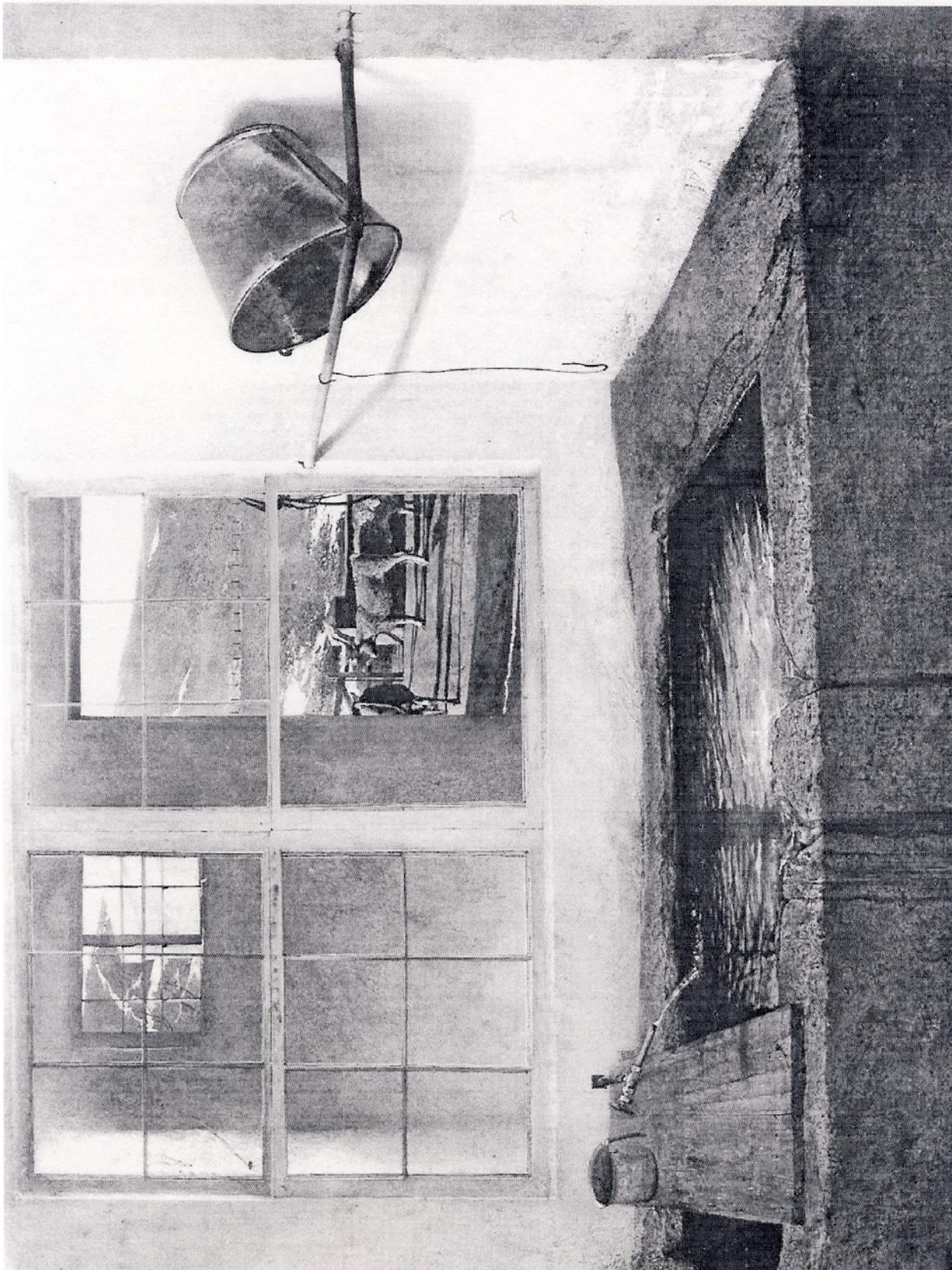


Plate 2. Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009), "Spring Fed," 1967, tempura on panel. This image is copyrighted and permitted for use in the NHL nomination only.

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Plate 3. Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009), "Evening at Kuerners," 1970, drybrush watercolor. This image is copyrighted and permitted on a one time use for the NHL nomination only.

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Plate 4. Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009), "Working Farm," 1988, drybrush watercolor. This image is copyrighted and permitted for use in the NHL nomination only.

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Kuerner Farm from Ring Road facing southeast, showing from left to right: barn, springhouse, and farmhouse. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



Farmhouse, north and west (front) elevations, facing southeast. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.

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Farmhouse, south elevation, facing north. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



Farmhouse, east (rear) and north elevations, facing southwest, showing rear addition and chimney. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.

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Farmhouse kitchen, facing west. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



Farmhouse, living room, facing north showing fireplaces. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.

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Farmhouse, third floor studio facing west. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



Barn, west elevation with stone and frame equipment shed in foreground, facing east. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.

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Barn, south and east elevations facing northwest. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



Springhouse, south and east elevations facing northwest. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.

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Icehouse, north elevation facing south. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



Stone and frame equipment shed at northwest corner of barnyard, facing northwest. Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.

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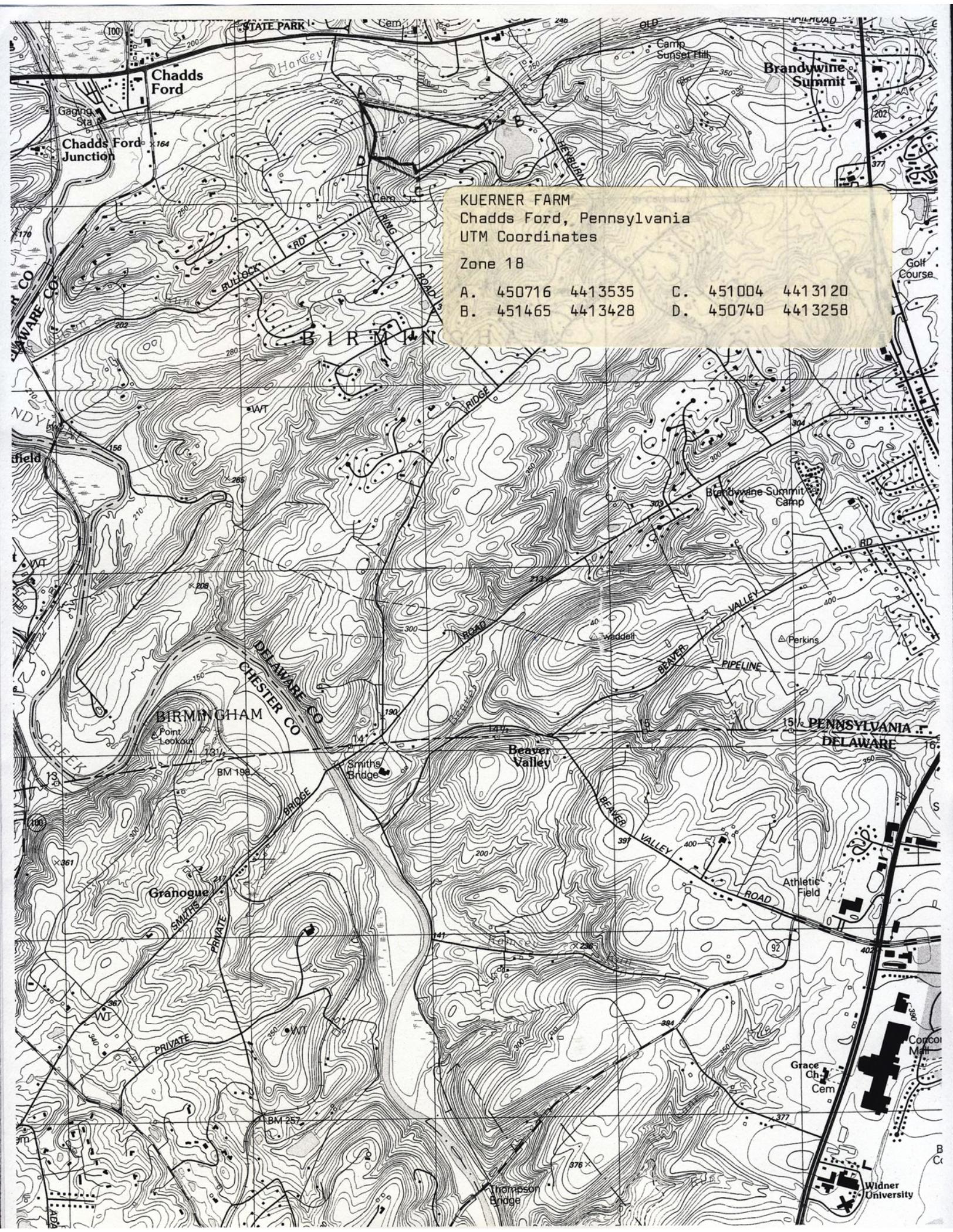
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Equipment shed (noncontributing resource), west and east elevations facing northeast.
Photograph by Robert J. Wise, Jr., Wise Preservation Planning, March 2010.



KUERNER FARM
Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania
UTM Coordinates

Zone 18

A.	450716	4413535	C.	451004	4413120
B.	451465	4413428	D.	450740	4413258