

Vincent Forge Mansion  
Chester Co., PA.  
Zone 18, Pottstown Quad  
A. 445 520 4445 280  
B. 445 600 4445 240  
C. 445 500 4444 900  
D. 445 020 4445 380

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Vincent Forge Mansion

and or common Young's Forge Mansion

2. Location

street & number Cook's Glen Road R.D. not for publication

city, town Spring City vicinity of East Vincent Township

state Pennsylvania code county Chester code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Weaver

street & number Cook's Glen Road, R.D.

city, town Spring City vicinity of E. Vincent Twp. state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chester County Court House

street & number High Street

city, town West Chester state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

(1) Chester County Historic Sites Survey  
title (2) Study of Upper Reaches of French Creek has this property been determined eligible? yes  no

date Current federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records (1) Chester Co. Historical Society and P.H.M.C.  
(2) French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust office

city, town (1) West Chester, Pa. and Harrisburg, Pa. state  
(2) R.D. 2, Pottstown, Pa.

## 7. Description

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

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

Facing southeast and situated at the bottom of a southern slope about 300 yards back from French Creek, Vincent Forge mansion looks over the flood plain where a large 18th century iron foundry once stood. A dam in the creek, a braceway, several mounds of stone close to the creek, and a few other traces are all that remain of the forge site and associated grist and saw mill. The ironmaster's house, however, has been in continued use since its inception, and bears witness to the level of activity here over a period of two hundred years.

A two and one-half story stone house with gable roof and pent, the house has experienced little change through its years of service. First as an ironmaster's home and office, then a century of being the farmer's domicile, and finally as the center of a boys summer camp, it has never lost its identity and character.

Five bays wide and two bays deep, it makes use of the wide center hall plan with flanking rooms on both first, second and third floors. A large, broad chimney is found at each gable end. Its carefully laid stone walls were covered with stucco in the 1850s, and not until that stucco was removed in 1981 did anyone know that such fine stonework lay beneath. The entire house and the attached kitchen are laid in native fieldstone, light brown in color, without great cornerstones. The front and the east side are laid in coursed fashion and are of stone hand-cut by journeymen on the site. They are not quarry cut. The west side, the rear and the kitchen show less precision, but still are not rubble stone, and are believed to have been laid by apprentices.

A good box cornice finishes the roof and there is evidence of a full return across the gables. Possibly a full pent roof at second floor height at one time wrapped around three sides and half of the rear. Evidence of the early pent are clear on front and back, and less clear on the sides. There is a cellar beneath the west portion of the house but not under the east. Outside entrance to the cellar is under the westernmost front bay.

The floor plan is three rooms and wide hall on both first and second floors, with two rooms on the east side of the hall and one large room on the west. The one story and loft kitchen is attached to the north wall of the large west room. Its fireplace lintel is 18" square, adzed upward on the inside of the fireplace, and 22' long. The loft of the kitchen was provided with a smoke flue and hooks.

Both the hall and the west room expose the summer beam encased in boards. This heavy beam is incorporated into the partition between the two east rooms forming part of the cove trim. This feature is repeated on the second floor, but with much more embellishment on the second floor, giving rise to the belief that the first floor was primarily office and work space for the forge business. The second and third floors were intended to be living space for the ironmaster and his family.

The staircase is set at the rear of the hall behind the summer beam and is open to the third floor. The third floor is partitioned with beaded boards. Evidence of dormer windows on the front side of the roof are found which accounts for the extra six-lite windows enumerated in the 1798 glass tax. Floors are original on the second and third floors.

By written record, the house can be traced to about 1770. Physical evidence is found in handmade wrought iron nails, cast brass hinges on cupboard doors and original brass locks and escutcheons, a strap wrought hinge on a rat-tailed gudgeon on an attic door, and door panels with plain ovolo frame work repeated wherever panels are used in the house. These are indicative of a pre-revolutionary house in this region.<sup>1</sup> Later documentation is seen in the 1798 Pennsylvania Direct Tax on Glass wherein the given measurements of the house and the number and panes of windows match those found today.

1. The Dating of Old Houses, Dr. Henry C. Mercer, Bucks County Historical Society, New Hope, 1923... page 14.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** circa 1770 **Builder/Architect** John Young

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Associated with one of Chester County's earliest sites of iron production, Vincent Forge Mansion reflects the standard of architecture and style of living enjoyed by the iron-masters before the Revolution. An excellent example of rural Georgian architecture, the house is the sole remaining structure of the Vincent Forge which operated from circa 1760 to 1800. Architecturally, the house is noteworthy for its early date, its unusually fine stonework and its incorporation of interior details - such as extensive Georgian panelling on chimney breasts, wide hall, and positioning of the open stairway behind the summer beam, a large "drawing" room on the second floor, etc. - found in larger, more metropolitan houses of that day.

There were five major sites of iron manufacture on French Creek prior to the Revolution which interacted to create, collectively, the first iron activity in Chester County and the second in the state. In order of their dates of origin, they were Coventry Iron Works, 1717, Reading Furnace #2, 1736, Warwick Furnace, 1737, Vincent Forge, circa 1760 and Hopewell 1770. It was from these workings on French Creek, the Rutter establishments on the Manatawny Creek, Montgomery County, and the Grubb or Cornwall ore banks in Lebanon County that the independence of the thirteen colonies found strength to put muscle behind rhetoric in resisting the oppressions of the British Crown.

Frederick Sheeder, writing in 1845,<sup>1</sup> states that Myrick Davis built a forge in 1759-60 on this property. It may have been built on the site of an earlier iron works. Under ownership of Myrick and George Davis, the property contained a forge with two fires and a hammer, and a grist and saw mill. That they were not operated efficiently is shown in the Debtors Court, wherein Myrick and George were arraigned in at least 23 different suits. Their debt to John Potts Estate, alone, was £3000, and Myrick was imprisoned in Philadelphia for debt on another suit in 1767. At that time, John Davis, a third brother, paid the sheriff and claimed ownership of the forge property. He took John Evans as a partner. In 1768, a Warwick Furnace ledger has a notation of "20 tons of Piggs" to "John Evans, owner of Vincient forge."

Vincent Forge is consistently the highest taxed property in East Vincent Township from 1760 through the 1st quarter of the 19th century, and it is frequently used in requests for new roads as a designation point. Vincent Forge is noted on maps of Pennsylvania from 1759 through 1800, and on the British General Clinton's intelligence map of 1776. In a sale notice of 1768, from which John Young probably purchased, its size is given as "three fires, two hammers, a grist and saw mill". By 1791, Young's son advertised the forge with "four fires, two hammers, a grist and saw mill". Four fires is a large forge. Vanleer's Forge (the continuation of Reading Furnace #2) and Coventry Forge were each advertised in the 1790s as having "two fires with one hammer." In 1864, Coventry was advertised with three fires. The output of a small forge was about two tons of bar iron a week or roughly 100 tons per year. A large forge with three or four hearths and two hammers could turn out from 300 to 350 tons annually.<sup>2</sup>

John Young's Estate Inventory of 1781 reveals "5800 pairs of horseshoes" were stock-piled waiting for delivery at 6 pence per pair. Later entries show that many of Young's horseshoes were marketed through stores in Philadelphia. Also noted on hand were "nineteen tuns of pigg metal", plus more than "four tuns" of Bar Iron. These together, were worth over 290 pounds. Under Young ownership, Vincent Forge appeared to be quite stable, even highly successful. Land acreage burgeoned from 300 acres to 655 acres. When John Young died, he left a widow, two sons and three daughters. His substantial importance is recognized in the community through the number of notes and bonds which he held for

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neighbors in a large circle around his forge. Their confidence and trust in him is also evidenced by the fact that he was treasurer of nearby Brownback's Church.

Vincent Forge Mansion is architecturally important to the domestic architecture of southeastern Pennsylvania because of its total retention of original Georgian chimney breast panelling, chair rail, cove moldings, corner cupboards, panelled window reveals - all effective in creating the Georgian ambiance. It also displays the art of the stone mason. This is an exceptionally fine and well built house. It shows that its builders had association with the wealthy iron men of the area and their homes, for there are great similarities in inside detail to Warren Point, Warwick Furnace and the home of Jacob Winings, all of which are on French Creek and registered nationally.

Believed to have been built by John and Susanna Young shortly after they took title to the forge property in 1770, the house is tangible evidence of the above average standard of both architecture and living quarters enjoyed by the ironmasters at that time. While not quite as large as either the Reading or Warwick mansions, but slightly larger than the one at Coventry before its additions, Young's mansion exemplifies the full country Georgian style of architecture in its purest form. Broad and balanced on the outside, it has retained ample inside decoration to bear witness to a gracious way of life tightly coupled to the business requirements of a working iron plantation.

Visual survey of the house clearly shows its use as both home and office. The large west room and the southeast room of the first floor are quite plain. The southeast room, having been heated by an iron stove, is completely devoid of any architectural refinements. The west chamber, with access to the attached kitchen, was used as a general work room for both family and employees. The fireplace is plastered to the ceiling and drawn forward at the top in a Queen Anne curve. This stylistic feature is found in no other house in the French Creek valley. The northeast room of the first floor has panelling over the wide Rumford<sup>3</sup> corner fireplace and a corner cupboard with plain shelves. The room directly above it, however, has more panelling than the one on the first floor and the corner cupboard has butterfly shelves. The large west room, so plain downstairs, is regaled upstairs with a long expanse of perfectly executed panelling that extends across half of its west wall. (See small photographs)

Again referring to John Young's Inventory, an "Eight Day Clock Upstairs" is valued at \$22.10 and an "Eight Day Clock Below Stairs" is valued at \$17.10, providing further proof that the better accoutrements were upstairs. Also "the Workmans Table" is listed with desks and other items downstairs. That the house was actively used in running the forge and mills is evident.

When John Young died, he bequeathed his property to his sons to be held in trust until they became 21 years of age. The eldest, John, was to have the mills and forge. As directed in the Will, the widow, Susannah, continued operations for seven years. In 1788, they were taken over by James Templin who had married Elizabeth Young, one of the three daughters. John claimed his inheritance in 1792, Templin died in 1794, and apparently son John did not want to be an ironmaster, for he is taxed as a miller in 1797. Consequently, the forge with 294 acres was sold to William Shuler in 1802 and the industrial site became a farm.

Other industrial activities followed, but the forge was not continued. Reeves & Whitaker, of the Phoenix Iron Company, Phoenixville, bought the farm in 1837, presumably for its ore deposits. About this time, many such sites were purchased by Reeves & Whitaker for that purpose. From 1840 to 1864, the deeds mention an oil mill and water power tract. In 1870, twenty-six acres with "Messuage, Mill and Machinery" was purchased by John W. Dixon of Philadelphia (Manayunk) who built and operated a paper mill on the premises. This was sold to J. Frederick Sheeder in 1874.

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Under the Shulers and subsequent owners, the property became a very productive farm, but gradually reduced in size. In 1925, the property was sold to Father James Wilson of the Roman Catholic Church to become a summer camp for boys of Philadelphia. Under the names of St. Michael's Camp and Camp Taggert, the house was turned into an office/dwelling for the camp director, and a large wooden dining hall was added onto the west side of the house. Boys lodged in the house until a dormitory was erected. The large barn burned in 1948.

Some years after the church closed the camp, it was conveyed to Donald Francis in 1979, who subdivided the remaining acreage. The purchaser of parcel #5, Kenneth Weaver, removed the rotting shambles of the dining hall and the stucco from the original stonework in 1981. This was the beginning of an ongoing restoration of this last remaining edifice of a once vital iron operation on French Creek.

## Footnotes:

1. Frederick Sheeder, History of East Vincent Township (Pennsylvania Historical Society, 1845) in response to a statewide request for histories of townships. Sheeder, a German immigrant in 1791, was the only person to respond.
2. Arthur Cecil Bining, Pennsylvania Iron Manufacture in the Eighteenth Century (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1938), pages 72-74. The process was Pigg from the furnace hammered into anconys at the furnace refinery, sent to the refinery forge to be heated and hammered again into bar iron; thence to the chafery forge or blacksmith to be worked into specialties, i.e., hinges, horseshoes, etc. Most furnaces did some forging, and forges did several steps of the refining process according to their size.
3. Rumford fireplaces are frequently found in Chester County, more consistently in the Welsh Valley and towards Philadelphia. Its characteristic is a double recess on the plastered cheeks, as can be seen in photograph #3.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Chester County (PA) Recorder of Deeds Office, West Chester, Deed Books:  
N2-37-334; Z2-48-281; N4-85-208; T4-91-56; T4-91-2776; C5-100-349; T6-141-194;  
X6-145-138; I7-156-114; S7-165-504; W7-169-328; N8-185-59; Misc.Bk. 17-127;  
C9-200-470; Y9-221-114; K12-282-266; S16-390-260 and 261.

Chester County (PA) Archives: Tax Records - 1754-1800, Road Dockets, Vol. 10  
and 11; Debtors Court Records, 1760-1780; Orphans Court Records - 1750-1800.

Chester County (PA) Register of Wills, West Chester, Will Papers #3322, "John Young".

Chester County (PA) Historical Society, West Chester, Miscellaneous clipping files  
(sales notices), township histories, general clipping files.

Frederick Sheeder, History of East Vincent Township, (Pennsylvania Historical  
Society, 1845)

Arthur Cecil Bining, Pennsylvania Iron Manufacture in the Eighteenth Century,  
(Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, 1938), Chapter IV,  
"Technique of Iron Manufacture", pages 55-81; pg. 172, and others.

Futhey & Cope, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, (Everts Co., Philadelphia,  
1881), pages 346-348, "Mills - Iron".

Interviews with Kenneth Weaver, owner, re: work done in restoration; also his  
research into records.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Manuscript Room, 1300 Locust Street, Philadel-  
phia; Thomas Willing leases, West New Jersey Society leases, Potts manuscripts and  
ledgers, furnace ledgers, newspapers, map collection.

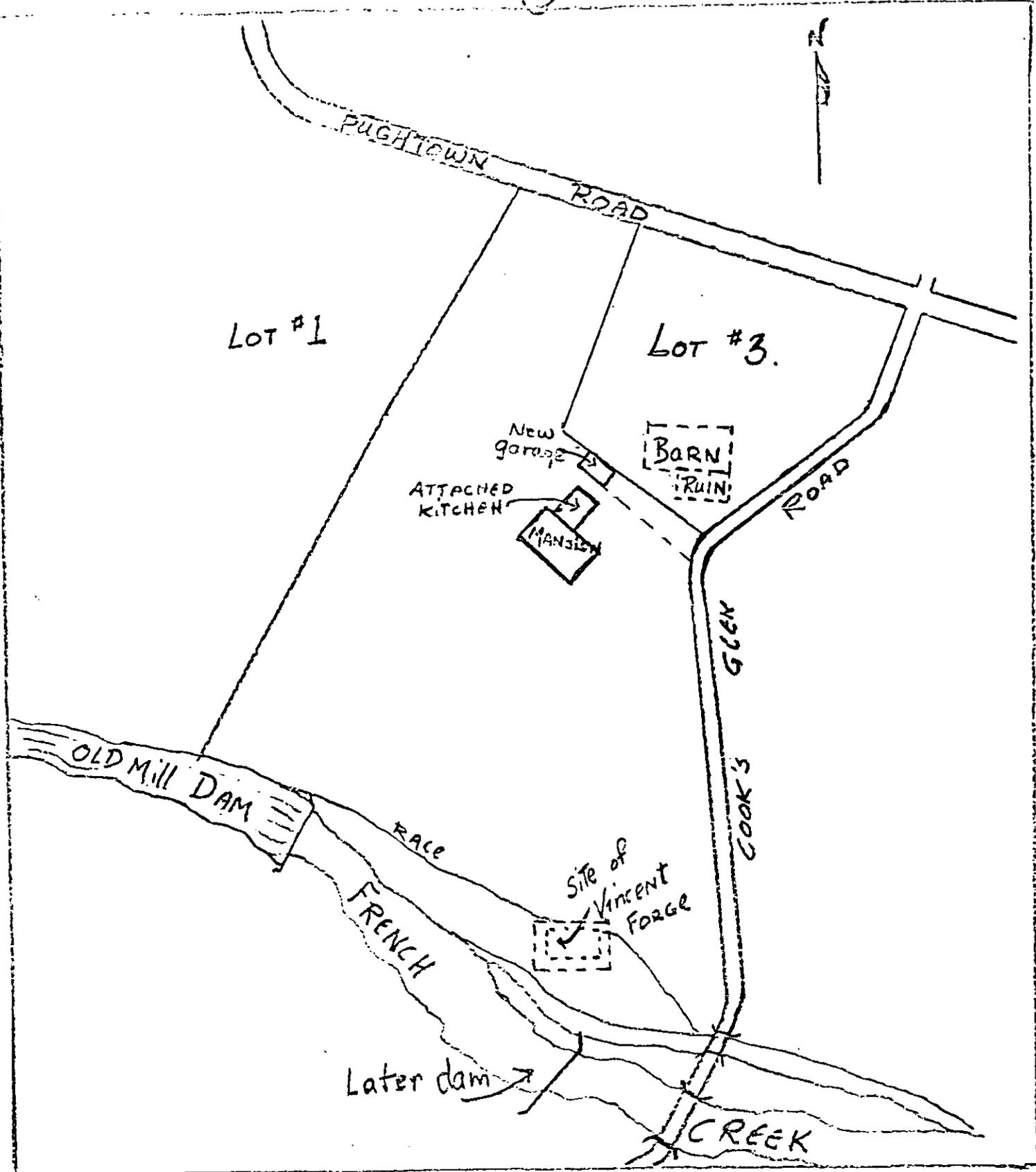
Seminary Library, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, (PA), records of Brown-  
back's Church, Vincent Township, 1770-1780, under "Church of the Brethren".

Witwer's Series of Township Maps, Chester County, (PA), "East Vincent Township  
and West Vincent Township", (Safe Harbour, Pa., 1873)

Breou's Original Series of Farm Maps, Chester County, (PA), "East Vincent Township",  
(Philadelphia: W. H. Kirk & Co., 1883)

Hindman Map of Chester County, 1816, at Chester County Historical Society,  
(Tinicum Press, Philadelphia, 1936)

# Vincent Forge Site Plan



# 9. Major Bibliographical Reference

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 9½ acres

Quadrangle name Pottstown

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

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

B 

1	8	4	4	5	6	0	0	4	4	4	5	2	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

1	8	4	4	5	5	0	0	4	4	4	4	9	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

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

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a corner of Lots 2,3, and 5 and proceeding along line of Lot #3, S.63°44'26", 303' to Cook's Glen Road; thence along said road 876' to the middle of French Creek; thence up said creek 579.86' to a corner with Lot #1; thence along line of Lot #1, N23°11'34", 730.89' to Fughtown Road; thence along road 36.30' to corner with Lot #3; thence along line of Lot #3 S26°15'34" 400' to the place of beginning.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eleanor M. Morris, Estelle Cremers, Kenneth Weaver

French and Pickering Creeks

organization Conservation Trust, Inc. date February 4, 1985

street & number Box 360, R.D. 2 telephone 215-469-0150

city or town Pottstown (Chester County) state Pennsylvania

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Larry E. Tise*

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/19/85

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration