

SITE REGISTRATION PROGRAM  
NEW JERSEY STATE MUSEUM  
Bureau of Archaeology  
205 West State Street  
(609) 292-8594

SITE NO.: 28-Me-253  
Site Name: JOSEPH PHILLIPS FARM  
Atlas Coordinates:  
U.S.G.S. Coordinates:  
National Register:  
State Register:  
Date:  
File:

County: MERCER

Municipality: HOPEWELL

Location: Brickyard Road 950 ft. SSE of intersection with Church Road

Period of Site: One room, two-story frame farmhouse constructed c.1800-1805 (possibly earlier), enlarged c.1840. Derelict house burned 1988. Ruins bulldozed into cellar.

Type of Site: Farm

Cultural Affiliations: Anglo-American

Owner: NJDEPE, Division of Parks and Forestry  
Washington Crossing State Park  
355 Washington Xing Penn Road  
Titusville, NJ 08560-1517 Telephone: (609) 737-0617

Attitude towards preservation:

Surface Features: Entrance lane, foundations

Prominent Landmarks:

Vegetative Cover: Weeds, briars

Nearest Water Source: Spring

Distance: 150 feet

Soil Type:

Erosion: Ruins bulldozed

Statified:

THREAT OF DESTRUCTION:

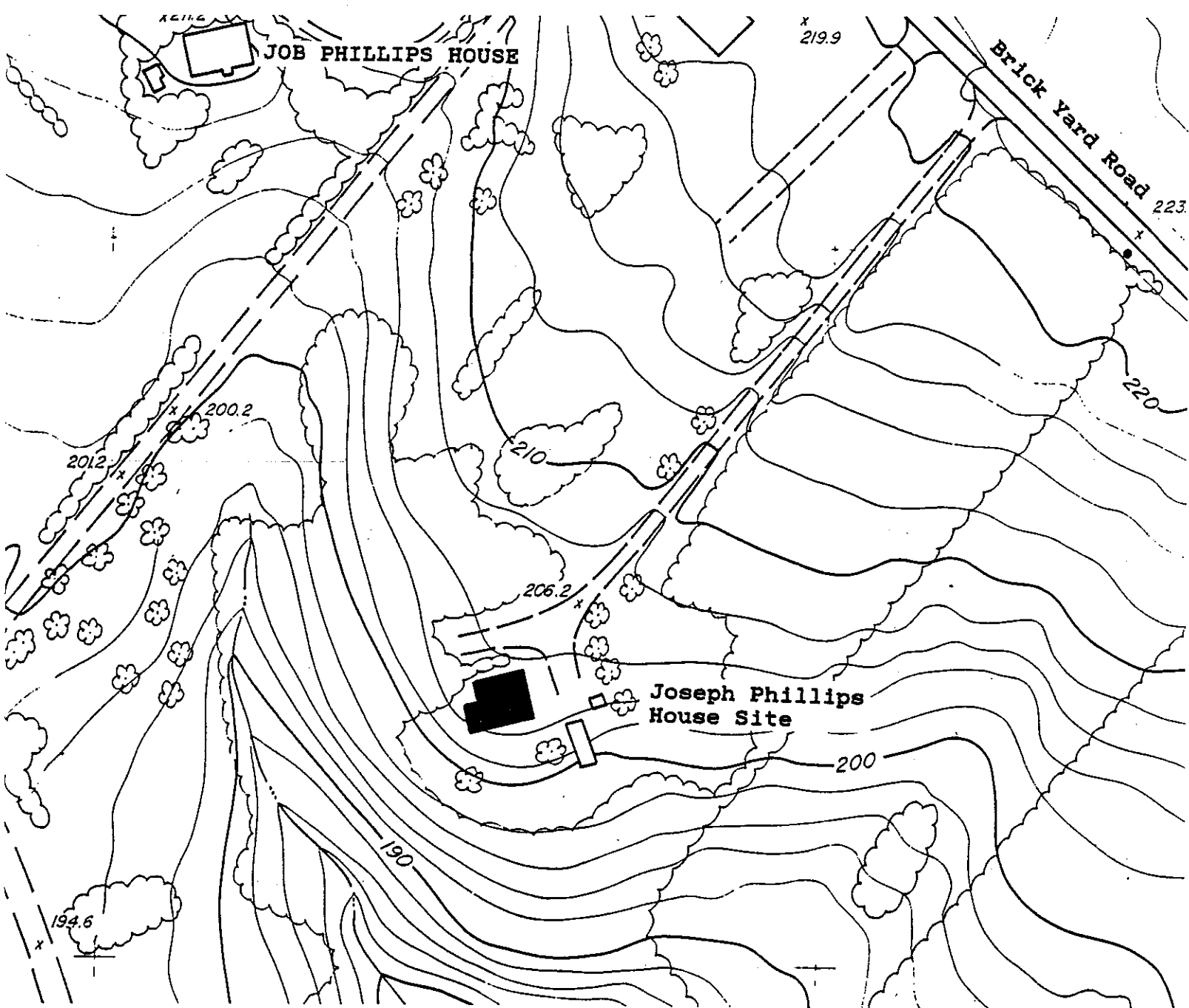
PREVIOUS WORK:

By whom: Date: Collection stored: Previous Designation:

Recorder: Garry Wheeler Stone, Principal Historic Preservation Spec.  
State Park Service, Region II Office  
275 Englishtown-Freehold Road  
Englishtown, New Jersey 07726 Telephone: (908) 462-5868

Collection Stored: Washington Crossing State Park Office  
(Nails, plaster lath, photographs)

Date Registered: March 1993



SCALE: 1 inch = 100 feet

**OBSERVATIONS, REMARKS, OR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Archaeology required to confirm hypothesized construction date.

**REFERENCES:**

Stone, Garry Wheeler, "Joseph Phillips House." MS, 3pp. , March 1993.

JOSEPH PHILLIPS HOUSE  
Washington Crossing State Park  
Archaeological Site 28-Me-253

February 14, 1988, an abandoned house burned at Washington Crossing State Park. The fire engines and house ruins attracted the attention of neighborhood children. To eliminate this "attractive nuisance," the ruins were photographed and bulldozed. Subsequently, a few nails were salvaged from the rubble pile. Thanks to the subsequent research by Philip Hayden of the Princeton Historical Society, we now know that this house stands on land once part of the adjacent farm, a farm with a surviving farmhouse dated "1764." Does the burned building predate, or postdate, the 1764 dwelling? Based on the available evidence, it seems most likely that the burned structure was constructed c.1800-1807 by Joseph Phillips, son of the Job Phillips who in 1764 constructed (and thoughtfully signed and dated) the adjacent house. However, future archaeology might modify this hypothesis.

Most of the house was consumed before the fire was extinguished. Of a large two-story addition, only the gutted ground floor and the skeleton of one second floor wall survived. Even less remained standing of the old part of the house: only the west (chimney) gable and the first floor framing of the rear wall. Fortunately, the eleven 35 mm. slides taken by then Park Superintendent, James E. Wiles, III, are well composed, focused, and exposed. Combined with the dimensions recorded in a 1973 real estate appraisal, they permit the following description.

The old house was a modest, English-framed structure two stories high with one room on a floor. The appraisal records its length as 20 feet. Assuming floor-to-floor distances of eight feet, the width of the building would have been about 18 feet deep. A large stone chimney (approximately 12 by 3 1/2 feet) occupied two thirds of the west gable. A massive timber lintel spanned a fireplace almost 10 feet wide and 5 feet high. The jambs of the fireplace were faced with coursed rubble. The remainder of the fireplace and chimney were constructed of irregular rubble. The stone fireback was exposed on the exterior. A dome-shaped scar on it suggests that the fireplace once had an attached bake oven.

I visited the house briefly in 1987. My now dim memory is that there was a winding closet stair in the traditional location next to the fireplace. One of Jim Wile's slides shows a plastered chimney surface corresponding in height to a closet wall beneath a stair landing.

The building was fully timber-framed with 2-story corner and bay posts, girts, and up-braces from posts to girts. There were additional posts on the first floor. One set off the chimney and another the second side of the rear door. (The other side of the door abutted the bay post.) The tops of the girts were notched for small-sectioned, closely spaced floor joists. In the eastern bay, the joists were on roughly 21 inch centers. In the gable wall, the

studs were on roughly 18 inch centers. The walls were weatherboarded on the exterior, lathed and plastered on the interior, and filled with mud for insulation. No trim survived.

The sources for dating this modest, two room house are the historical documents that establish the early 19th-century subdivision of the farm, and the nails recovered from the rubble. The latter are listed below:

Fully wrought nails, shanks and heads:

- 1, 1 3/4" nail
- 2, 1 1/4" lath nails

Hand-wrought "double struck" heads, shanks machine-cut from common sides:

- 2, 1 1/8" lath nails (c.1790-1810) complete with riven oak lath
- 1, 2 3/4" nail (c.1790-1825)

Sprig machine-cut from opposite (?) sides (c.1805-1820):

- 1, 2 1/2" [L-headed finish nail]

The nails and documents leave the possibility that the house was constructed in the mid-18th century and remodelled in the Federal period. The house lay directly on the Colonial path from the Great Road to Bellemont Lower Ferry, and hand-wrought lath nails were the first nails to be displaced by machine-cut nails. However, it is considerably more likely that Joseph Phillips constructed the house not long before his marriage in 1807. (In 1802, Josephy is taxed for the land on which the house stands, but no livestock, suggesting that he was still living with his parents.) Philip Hayden has extensively researched the c.1720-1820 dwellings of Hopewell Township. He states that one-unit, two-story houses are rare prior to the late 18th-century. The "double-struck" lath nails used in finishing the house suggest that the house had been finished by 1810. Perhaps the mixture of hand-wrought and machine-cut lath nail shanks is an indication that the construction of the house dragged out over several years with nails coming from different suppliers. Until these hypotheses can be tested by archaeology, a construction date of c.1800-1807 appears reasonable.

Joseph Phillips died early in 1831. The inventory of his estate suggests that he was still living modestly in a small house. Before c.1850, however, his former dwelling was expanded with a major addition to the east. Measuring 26 feet wide and 30 feet deep, this addition consisted of a cellar, two floors, and an attic. The first floor had an entry passage along the west side with a stair at the back and two rooms. Both rooms had fireplaces. Only the 2nd floor south chamber had a fireplace.

The building was fully timber-framed of straight-sawn and hewn oak. (Only the largest timbers, the 2-story corner posts, are shown in the slides as hewn. Presumably, the sills also were hewn.) Chiselled assembly numbers show that all the mortised-and-tenoned joints were prefitted before raising the frame. As in the old

house (now the kitchen), the addition had two-story corner and bay posts, girts notched for the joists they supported, and the girts and plates were up-braced from the posts. Light posts flanked those sides of windows and doors that did not abut the bay posts. Neither the east nor west gables had windows. The south and north walls were symmetrically fenestrated in three bays: a door and two windows down and three windows above. The front door had a transom, but the doors and windows had only the simplest architrave trim. The east gable wall had closets between the chimneys and the chimneys and corners. These closets had their shelves installed before their walls were plastered. The only interior trim visible in the slides is a simple chair rail in the entry passage. The closet below the stair was enclosed with a paneling rather than lath and plaster. The exterior walls were insulated with brick. The overall impression is of modest respectability.

The farm's occupants are listed on three Mercer County atlases or maps. These occupants are:

1849:	J. Menigemerite [?]
1875:	G. H. Phillips
1905:	D. Hunt

Garry Wheeler Stone  
State Park Service  
Division of Parks & Forestry, NJDEPE  
30 March 1993

SOURCES:

Hayden, Philip A., Personal Communications.

Hayden, Philip Aldrich, "The Cow and the Calf: Evolution of Farmhouses in Hopewell Township, Mercer County, New Jersey, 1720-1820." Thesis, the University of Delaware, 1992.

Hunterdon County Tax Ratables, Hopewell Township, 1802 (NJ State Archives, Box 41, item 11).

Hunterdon County Marriages, 1795-1875. Lambertville, NJ: Hunterdon House, 1986.

Kline, Morton S., "Appraisal of the Property of Norman & Yvette Hortman, April 30, 1973." Acquisition Files, Division of Parks and Forestry, Trenton, NJ.

Map Collection, NJ State Library:

1849: J. W. Otley & J. Keily, Surveyors, Map of Mercer County, New Jersey, Entirely from Original Surveys. Camden, Lleye Van Der Veer.

1875: Everts & Steward, Combination Atlas Map of Mercer County, New Jersey. Philadelphia.

1905: A. H. Mueller & Co., Automobile Driving and Trolley Map of Mercer County, New Jersey.

Nelson, Lee H., Nail Chronology as an aid to dating old buildings. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, Technical Leaflet 48, 1968.

New Jersey Wills, Inventory of Joseph Phillips, filed 6 April 1831. New Jersey State Archives, file 3969J.

Washington Crossing State Park, Washington Crossing, New Jersey. Artifact and slide collections.