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Rural Conservation: A Vision for the Aaron Garrett Property

Ann Catherine Hausmann
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RURAL CONSERVATION
A VISION FOR THE AARON GARRETT PROPERTY

Ann Catherine Hausmann

A THESIS

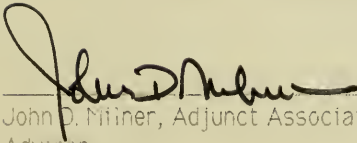
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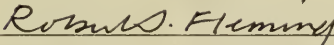
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MASTER OF SCIENCE

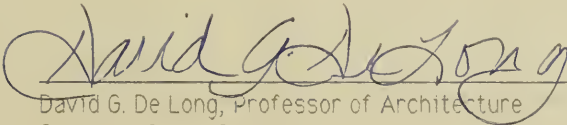
1990



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INTRODUCTION

What are the natural features which make a township handsome? A river with its waterfalls and meadows, a lake, a hill, a cliff or individual rocks, a forest, and ancient trees standing singly. Such things are beautiful; they have a high use which dollars and cents never represent. If the inhabitants of a town were wise, they would seek to preserve these things ... for such things educate more than any hired teachers or preachers ...

Henry David Thoreau
1861¹

Not *every* community is marked by a scenic river or a magnificent mountain view; nonetheless, much of the American landscape is touched by a host of natural delights, some more "common" than others. The preservation ethic espoused by Thoreau in 1861 has underscored decades of environmental action by governmental bodies, private organizations, and concerned citizens across the United States. Despite concentrated efforts, however, there remains (as one governmental administrator recently commented) a "steady, perceptible degradation of the countryside -- an erosion of the distinctive qualities that differentiate one place from another."²

While migration to urban centers left many rural communities impoverished during the early part of the twentieth century, a mass exodus *back* to the country has carted the kind of wealth which very often costs natural resources. The most recently recorded Census indicated that the United States' rural population had increased by sixteen percent from 1970

to 1980; *one-third* of all Americans now live in "agrarian" areas.³ Suburbia has a country cousin: Exurbia (a.k.a. semirural areas beyond the suburbs.)

Traditional suburbs (or bedroom communities) have given way to a new kind of decentralized city. In complete contrast to the residential and industrial suburbs of the past, new technoburbs are providing housing, industry, *and* commercial development (complete with shopping malls, hospitals, cultural centers, and recreational space.) Robert Fishman has remarked that, "the technoburb has been built as standardized and simplified sprawl -- consuming time and space, and destroying the landscape."⁴

It appears that Mr. Fishman is correct. Suburbanization of the rural landscape has put an end to the kind of individualism that has been at the heart of American civilization for hundreds of years. Mass culture has replaced regional diversification. Conservationists argue that the homogenization of our countryside has, in fact, exposed an American wound -- the loss of an ethic which is derived from treating land as a continuing resource, rather than as a commodity for consumption.

Perhaps the greatest stimulant in the rural-land-conversion-syndrome is the increased property value of our countryside. As development spreads into rural areas, the value of agricultural land skyrockets to reflect the prices buyers are willing to pay. Farmers, seduced by high prices, are selling their land with greater frequency. Those who choose to maintain their agricultural operations are very often unable to afford, in the long run, the price of expansion. Perhaps saddest of all: Young and potential farmers are unequipped to even buy into the business. In the

end, the cycle and the suburban affront continue, giving us mile after mile of cookie-cutter strips and subdivisions.

The full impact of rapid suburban growth on the nation's rural and historic environment has only recently been understood by preservation organizations, government officials, the media, and the general public. The current climate indicates that a heightened sensitivity toward the earth and the environment is on the rise. Record crowds -- all across the United States -- attended April 22nd's twentieth anniversary celebration of Earth Day. The environment, once dismissed as a fringe cause by many politicians, has reached the forefront of American politics. Recycling is "vogue." The list goes on and on ...

Citizens have launched grass roots campaigns all over the country to protect open lands; efforts in communities like Chester County, Pennsylvania are particularly noteworthy. Billed as one of the top fifty agricultural counties in the United States,⁵ Chester County is located west of Philadelphia. Researchers have predicted that population in the rural, exurban county is going to increase by 70,000 people over the next twenty years.⁶

Fueled by the fact that, "every day 90 acres of Chester County's open space -- farmland, trees, grass, woods, and wildlife -- are lost forever,"⁷ citizens launched an SOS Campaign (to "Save Open Space") in the Fall of 1989. The grass roots effort succeeded in securing nearly 82% voter approval for an open space referendum on the November 7, 1989 ballot.⁸ The bond proposal authorized borrowing \$50 million; if approved by the County Commissioners, the bond sales will secure public park space,

preserve productive farmland, and assist private organizations and municipalities in their protection of open space.

Due to the irreversibility of most land-use conversions, time is rapidly running out. Many towns have only a few more decades before they are **completely** blanketed by development. Willistown Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania sits at the crux of an urgent agenda. Finding its roots in an eighteenth and nineteenth century agrarian settlement, Willistown has retained the special type of ambiance created when the built environment respectfully coexists with the landscape. Located approximately seventeen miles west of Philadelphia and six miles east of West Chester, Willistown Township is maintained (and for the time being, preserved) amidst the encroachment of high-density suburban development to both the east *and* the west.

Randall Arendt, Associate Director at the Center for Rural Massachusetts, has repeatedly challenged the nation to begin devising creative means through which the mechanics of conservation and development can be integrated.⁹ Although differences will probably always remain between the two camps, tremendous opportunities for cooperation and collaboration are being neglected. By spotlighting a 194 acre tract of farmland in Willistown Township, only recently acquired by a commercial developer, this thesis will explore the possibilities that exist for wedding the retention of an historical sense of place with the cultivation of profitable new development. The nineties are here ... Growth Management is clearly the buzz phrase.

¹ Robert D. Yaro, Randall G. Arendt, Harry L. Dodson, and Elizabeth A. Brabec, Dealing With Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Environmental Law Foundation, 1989) 182.

² Michael A. Mantell, Stephen F. Harper, and Luther Propst, Creating Successful Communities: A Guidebook to Growth Management Strategies (Washington, D.C. and Covelo, CA: Island Press, 1990) xiii.

³ "Rural Conservation," Information: from the National Trust for Historic Preservation 19 (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1979) 1.

⁴ Robert Fishman, Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987) 198.

⁵ "Every Day Chester County Loses 90 Acres of Open Space ... Forever," (West Chester, PA: Chester County Citizens to Save Open Space, 1989) 1.

⁶ Wendy Johnston, "Saving Open Space," Kennett Paper [Kennett Square, PA] 10 Oct. 1989: B17.

⁷ "Every Day Chester County Loses 90 Acres of Open Space ... Forever" 1.

⁸ Rich Henson, "2 Verdicts On Open Space," Philadelphia Inquirer 8 Nov. 1989: 19A.

⁹ Randall Arendt, "Conserving Rural Character through Creative Planning and Zoning," University of Pennsylvania Student Lecture Series, Philadelphia, 12 April 1990.

CHAPTER ONE GROWTH MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

A recent article in the National Trust's Forum Newsletter projected that growth management would become the guiding rule in more and more cities, counties, and states during the 1990s. The article additionally asserted that, "for preservationists, it may become ... an extremely useful tool in documenting and protecting built and natural environments." ¹ By definition, growth management provides a way for private organizations and governmental bodies to manage development pressures and avoid mindless miles of strip construction, insensitive office/residential parks, and complete usurpation of the land.

The techniques and tools utilized in managing growth are numerous. The Conservation Foundation has classified agricultural zoning, purchase of development rights (PDR), and transfer of development rights (TDR) as the most promising approaches to open space and farmland preservation. ² While this may be true, additional land preservation efforts have been realized through the application of conservation easements, fee simple acquisition, and preferential land assessment. Conservation techniques have been applied with a range of success; practice indicates that the "proper" tool often varies with the nature of the project.

AGRICULTURAL ZONING

In spite of recent changes and innovations in the land use control arena, zoning remains the most frequently utilized and potentially effective device to preserve agricultural lands. ³ Exclusive agricultural zoning

protects the owner of farmland by excluding incompatible uses from his or her property. In *theory*, "ag-zoning" is a definitive tool for preserving agricultural lands and preventing their conversion to nonagricultural uses; even if speculators purchase farmland and take it out of agricultural production, strict enforcement of the zoning code *should* prevent any development that would affect the land's ultimate suitability for agricultural production. The key to successful "ag-zoning" rests on a community's ability to stave local and county authorities from granting rezoning and variance requests that are inconsistent with farmland preservation. Specific techniques that fall under the umbrella of agricultural zoning include: minimum lot zoning, cluster zoning, and performance-based zoning.

Minimum Lot Zoning

Large lot ordinances require a substantial minimum lot size, ranging from as few as ten acres to as many as 640 acres for one single-family dwelling.⁴ Ideally, the ordinance bases lot size on the minimum acreage necessary to support an economic farm operation; as a result, lot sizes become large enough to retain agricultural operations *and* discourage large lot residential subdivisions. The disadvantage: although large lot zoning may temporarily discourage the onslaught of development, it can exacerbate urban sprawl by encouraging the kinds of inefficient residential tracts that consume agricultural and rural landscapes.

Spotlight: McHenry County, Illinois is located fifty-five miles northwest of Chicago. From 1970 to 1980, the population in McHenry

increased by thirty-three percent; average farm acreage prices in 1978 were five times what they were in 1963. The county's recent "Year 2000 Land Use Plan" has set goals for protecting natural areas by encouraging the preservation of open space for recreational use, promoting the protection of historic resources, and preserving agricultural lands. The plan has been implemented by a tough zoning ordinance that includes 160-acre minimum lot sizes for areas zoned agricultural. It is interesting to note that the ordinance has been *upheld* against two court challenges, the most recent touting a unanimous decision by the Illinois Supreme Court.⁵

Cluster Zoning

One of the most serious dilemmas confronting owners of agricultural land is the development of adjacent property for residential and/or commercial uses. Cluster zoning is designed to alleviate the disadvantages of integrating development and agriculture by providing a land buffer on or between the developed land and the neighboring farm parcels. As a result, cluster zoning is an ideal growth management tool for more densely populated and growing areas. The clustering technique has been advocated by the Center for Rural Massachusetts; typically, design schemes include "clustered" new construction on the least productive portions of a farming tract while providing for the implementation of a conservation easement on the remaining acreage.

Spotlight: Jackson Hole, Wyoming has a long history of protection by an assortment of federal agencies, national and local nonprofit organizations, local planning officials, and philanthropists. With all but

three percent of the land in federal ownership, one might think Jackson Hole was well protected. Development, however, has ravaged the area since 1965: The 1986 population was documented at 10,000-plus (an 8,000 person increase over the population recorded in 1950); two *million* tourists visit the county each year; and ranchland that sold for \$500 an acre in 1950 has gone for as much as \$15,000 per acre in recent years. The decade-old "Teton County Comprehensive Plan and Implementation Program" calls for the protection of critical natural resources and establishes environmental criteria that developers must meet in order to obtain building permits. The Teton ordinance has a generous cluster provision which allows developers who place conservation easements on at least fifty percent of their parcel, to receive a density bonus up to 100 percent. For example, the owner of a 300-acre parcel (zoned one unit per three acres) who donates an easement on 150 acres can build 200 units on the remaining acreage instead of the 100 units normally permitted. A few large scale developers have taken advantage of the Teton County cluster provisions to construct resort areas in and surrounding Jackson Hole. ⁶

Performance Based Zoning

Land use controls based upon performance standards are a potentially useful approach to growth management. Performance-based zoning has been widely advocated as an effective means of protecting rural communities that are facing intense development pressures. Typically, performance-based zoning takes advantage of either a point system or performance criteria to help establish a comprehensive plan. The major advantage of

performance-based zoning is its ability to provide site-specific land use control as needed without requiring the expensive, time consuming data-gathering and analysis necessary for a long-range plan.

Spotlight: Harden County, Kentucky is located forty-five miles southwest of Louisville. Farmland covers approximately sixty percent of the county; over eighty percent of all agricultural lands contain Class I, II, or III soils (as determined by the Soil Conservation Service.) Prime soils *and* agricultural production have been threatened, for over twenty years, by the proliferation of development. In 1984, Harden County's legislative body enacted the Development Guidance System (DGS) which steers growth away from valuable farmland into areas where capital investment has already occurred. The DGS evaluates the suitability of individual development proposals in three steps: 1) Critique based upon soil productivity and the existence of nearby services; 2) assessment of a proposal's compatibility with existing uses in the surrounding area; and 3) final review by county officials. Through each step, a development proposal gains points. Out of a possible total of 325, 150 points are required for automatic permit approval -- fewer than ninety points leads to automatic permit rejection.⁷

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

The purchase of development rights has become a popular and effective tool for preserving farmland. By acquiring and extinguishing the right to construct dwellings and commercial buildings on farmland, states and local governments can ensure that prime soils will remain in agricultural use with the following benefits:

- Rather than paying market value for a particular parcel of land, a community pays the difference between the market value of the land and its value for agricultural use.
- Communities avoid land maintenance and management responsibilities; agricultural operations remain in private ownership.
- The land remains on the tax rolls (albeit at a reduced valuation.)
- Local agricultural economies are often bolstered by funds received from the purchased development rights; farmers are free to invest the capital in farm equipment, supplies, etc. ⁶

Many urban fringe communities wishing to retain a mixed suburban-agricultural landscape find that the purchase of development rights is particularly effective when coupled with agricultural zoning. The greatest strength of the PDR concept lies in its ability to provide protection in perpetuity. While zoning is subject to political pressures for change, the purchase of development rights is effective in securing open space ... permanently.

On the downside, the typical purchase of development rights transaction takes over a year to close (and sometimes up to three.) ⁹ More and more, state and local governments are finding that the success of their PDR programs depend upon a private partnership with a nonprofit conservation organization. One last caveat with the purchase of development rights: They tend to be costly to residents; programs typically rely upon local bond issues or real estate transfer taxes for funding.

Spotlight: Seven states and a handful of innovative counties have preserved over 129 *thousand* acres of farmland using the purchase of development rights. ¹⁰ King County, Washington -- which includes metropolitan Seattle -- has implemented one of the nations leading PDR programs. Between 1945 and 1975, urban growth consumed two-thirds of King County's farm holdings; lands with prime soils decreased from 165,000 acres to 55,000 acres. In 1979, county voters passed (with 63 percent voter approval) a \$50 million property tax bond issue for a Purchase of Development Rights Program. The program is authorized by an ordinance that divides eligible farmland into three priority categories; the county acquires development rights through a series of purchase rounds. The last acquisition financed by the 1979 bond issue was finalized in 1987, at which time the county had purchased development rights on a total of 12,658 acres of farmland for \$53.8 million. ¹¹

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

The application of a TDR approach to agricultural land preservation is of recent origin. Development rights in general (as a separate element of land ownership) have not been appreciated in this country until recently, despite the fact that they have provided the key to land use control in Great Britain for decades. ¹² TDR programs achieve the same farmland preservation results as PDR programs, while avoiding large public acquisition costs.

The TDR approach 1) designates certain land areas within a given jurisdiction subject to severe regulation and, 2) designates other land areas

within the same jurisdiction appropriate for development. Owners of severely restricted land are allowed to sell their development rights (which they cannot exercise because of imposed land use limitations) to the owners of land in developable areas. In one typical scenario, a purchasing landowner may be required to secure rights from a restricted landowner before development begins; in another common scenario, the acquisition of development rights may authorize a purchaser to develop at greater density than would normally be permitted.

The transfer of development rights can substantially reduce the value shifts and economic inequities of restrictive zoning; ¹³ as a result, TDR programs allow the market to compensate owners whose land cannot be developed because of its environmental, scenic, or historic significance. By selling development rights, a landowner can profit from property appreciation without developing the parcel. As Gerald Torres, Associate Professor of Law at the University of Pittsburgh has observed, the basic principle behind the transfer of development rights is historically familiar to farmers:

While in urban areas transferrable development rights may be looked upon as a novel land planning device, in farm country, the notion that the productive capacity of one area may be saved and transferred to another area is at least as old as the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Depending on the crop being farmed, acreage allotments have traditionally been transferrable between farms ... ¹⁴

A word regarding the negatives. Transfer of development rights programs require high levels of both staff expertise and energy to design

and administer. The novelty of the TDR concept and the sophistication required to make it work properly has frequently reduced both its attractiveness and political acceptance in rural communities. ¹⁵

Spotlight: Montgomery County, Maryland is a 500-square mile stretch that includes part of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Although the county is approximately two-thirds urban, agriculture continues to be an important contributor to economic vitality. ¹⁶ As a result, Montgomery County has developed a sophisticated TDR program that substantially downzones land in "sending areas" (the county's best farm regions) from a five-acre minimum lot size to a twenty-five acre minimum lot size. While landowners in sending areas can only build one house per twenty-five acres, they can realize the formerly permitted level of land development by selling their unused rights to property owners in "receiving areas" (urban parts of the county closer to Washington, D.C.) ¹⁷ Real estate brokers list TDRs (a single development right sells for \$4,000 to \$6,000) and collect commission on the sales. Since 1983, approximately 3,000 TDR transactions have taken place in Montgomery County; another 1,000 transactions are currently being processed. ¹⁸

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Throughout this century, the conservation of natural resources (all the way from the creation of national parks to local planning and zoning efforts) has been achieved primarily through governmental action. Virtually unnoticed, however, has gone the undercurrent of a private-sector initiative that has made a substantial contribution to the preservation of wildlife

habitat, historic structures, scenic landscapes, and agricultural land.¹⁹ More often than not, this private activity has revolved around the donation of conservation easements to nonprofit organizations.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of conservation easements is that the farmer/landowner remains in control of all land interests except the right to use the property in a manner inconsistent with the restrictions of the easement. The long range benefit of conservation easements is that they create a *permanent* restriction on the use of real property by requiring all future owners to refrain from acts as specified in the agreement. The flexibility of the conservation easement is notable: An easement can take the form of anything from a simple "forever-wild" designation to the complex management of a plan for a large parcel with multiple resource values.

Spotlight: Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is the most productive agricultural county east of the Mississippi River. Since the county is wedged between two of the state's largest metropolitan areas -- Philadelphia and Harrisburg -- development has raised land values to the point that it is more attractive for farmers to sell their land for non-agricultural uses than to maintain property for farming purposes. In 1980, Lancaster County commissioners adopted an "Agricultural Land Preservation-Conservation Easement Program." Easement donations are received by the County from landowners who volunteer to restrict their property deeds to agricultural uses only, without receiving compensation except in the form of profitable tax benefits. Conservation easements can be donated for either twenty-five years or in perpetuity. As a private

nonprofit organization, the Lancaster Farmland Trust has been instrumental in raising funds for easement acquisition, performing property surveys and appraisals, paying legal expenses for IRS rulings, and encouraging landowners who are considering easement donations.²⁰

FEE SIMPLE ACQUISITION

One of the simplest and most straightforward means of farmland and open space protection can be found in fee simple acquisition; its obvious advantage is the total and perpetual protection it affords. Either private or governmental bodies may acquire fee simple property through donation and/or purchase. The land *donor's* reward comes from the satisfaction of knowing that a valuable resource will be protected in perpetuity (although he or she may reap some tax benefits as well.) The organization holding title to the land is rewarded through the acquisition of life-long undeveloped open space.

There are, of course, drawbacks to preserving farmland and rural countryside through fee simple acquisition. The major disadvantage for the donor is the loss of the property's monetary value. The disadvantage for the organization that acquires a fee simple tract is the burden that comes with land ownership: property taxes, land management, and (unless the property is a donation) the purchase price.

Spotlight: Recently, more than 100,000 acres of wildlife refuges and historic areas were given to the Federal Government by the Richard King Mellon Foundation of Pittsburgh. The land -- divided between ten parcels in both the Northeast and the Southwest -- was purchased for \$21 million over

a two-year period under the guise of the Conservation Fund. The largest single property is a 93,000-acre tract of wildlife wetlands at Alligator River, North Carolina, where conservationists hope to reintroduce the endangered red wolf. In addition to the ten parcels going to the Federal Government, the Richard King Mellon Foundation intends to grant subsequent sites (with a higher total value) to state governments within the next year.²¹

PREFERENTIAL LAND ASSESSMENT

A major source of revenue for local governments comes from the tax levied upon real property. Despite the loss in revenue, many states have granted special treatment to agricultural landholders through preferential or use-value property tax assessment programs. Donald Hagman and Julian Conrad Juergensmeyer have underscored two justifications for such preferential treatment in their book, Urban Planning and Land Development Control Law:

1. Agricultural tax breaks save farmers money and make farming activities more profitable. The end result: farmers have an economic incentive to continue farming.
2. Agricultural activities do not make the demands on governmental services that urban land uses make. Farmers, therefore, are entitled to tax breaks because they otherwise would be paying more than their fair share of governmental service costs.²²

In implementing use-value assessment, property taxes for a parcel are based upon a current use value rather than a greatest and best use value.

Preferential assessment is an ideal tool for reducing the property taxes on lands whose development values far exceed their agricultural values. Reduced tax assessments for agricultural land can lessen the need (very often undulated by high property taxes) to sell farmland.

THE BROADER ISSUE

The call to conserve and preserve our countryside has clearly broadened, democratized and enlarged. Jane Holtz Kay recently commented in a Landscape Architecture article that, "today, a few decades after the post-war preservationists and conservationists staked out their very separate turf on the built and natural environment, the urban and rural landscape, the problems are seen as deeper, more desperate -- and intertwined." ²³ As the guidelines and examples in this Chapter have demonstrated, conservationists have proven capable of developing the type of clear terminology needed to protect rural landscapes. Preservationists, on the other hand, continue to cling more naturally to a vocabulary designed specifically for the built realm, in the end, ignoring the special nuances of vernacular and cultural environments. As the need to synchronize our means of protecting agricultural land and scenic open space becomes more urgent, one question in particular has surfaced: How do we define conservation and preservation today? More importantly, how can we maintain -- in an interdisciplinary fashion -- our rural heritage?

¹ Nora Richter Green, "Growth Management: A Boom for Historic Preservation," Forum Newsletter Sept. 1989: 4.

² Mantell et al. 8.

³ Donald G. Hagman and Julian Conrad Juergensmeyer, Urban Planning and Land Development Control Law 2nd ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1986) 490.

⁴ Robert E. Coughlin and John C. Keene, eds., The Protection of Farmland: A Reference Guidebook for State and Local Governments (Washington, D.C.: National Agricultural Lands Society, 1981) 22.

⁵ Samuel N. Stokes, A. Elizabeth Watson, Genevieve P. Keller, and J. Timothy Keller, Saving America's Countryside (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 138-140.

⁶ Stokes et al. 59-63.

⁷ Mantell et al. 19-20.

⁸ Edward Thompson, Jr., "Purchase of Development Rights: Ultimate Tool for Farmland Preservation?" Zoning and Planning Law Report Oct. 1989: 154.

⁹ Thompson, "Purchase of Development Rights" 159.

¹⁰ Thompson, "Purchase of Development Rights" 153.

¹¹ Mantell et al. 21-22.

¹² Hagman et al. 496.

¹³ Mantell et al. 183.

¹⁴ Gerald Torres, "Helping Farmers and Saving Farmland," Oklahoma Law Review Spring 1984: 38.

¹⁵ Mantell et al. 183.

¹⁶ Mantell et al. 25.

¹⁷ Mantell et al. 12.

¹⁸ Mantell et al. 26.

¹⁹ Edward Thompson, Jr., "Local Planning Efforts To Encourage Private Land Conservation," Zoning and Planning Law Report April 1986: 25.

²⁰ Mantell et al. 25-26.

²¹ Kathleen Teitsch, "U.S. Gets 100,000 Acres in Largest Gift of Land," New York Times 1 July 1990: 1, 20.

²² Hagman et al. 501.

²³ Jane Holtz Kay, "From Olmsted To Infiniti," Landscape Architecture May 1990: 47.

CHAPTER TWO HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

The current state of our exurban landscape indicates that preservationists have not fully realized the tie that exists between the built environment and the natural environment. Rural countryside forms the setting for vernacular structures in the same way that streetscapes provide a context for urban architecture.¹ Jane Holtz Kay has commented that,

Historic preservation in the architectural community is clear on its nomenclature. It has standards and criteria, a constituency and a 250,000-member organization, the National Trust for Historic Preservation. But though the Trust has expanded to rural, cultural, and horticultural landscapes, its heart beats to the built environment."²

In a similar vein, Robert Melnick, head of the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Oregon, remarked at a recent forum: "One of the great failures of the preservation movement is that it hasn't worked closely enough with the ecological movement and all those other groups."³

Historic preservationists are only *beginning* to learn how to transfer the lessons gleaned from fifty years of successful urban preservation to more rural areas. A long haul lies ahead:

- few rural surveys have been performed by or for responsible state agencies
- rural historic resources are vastly underrepresented on the National Register of Historic Places

- procedures for the successful nomination of large land tracts (as distinguished from the nomination of individual buildings) are not well established in many states

Only a small number of rural communities have employed comprehensive preservation plans, historic district ordinances, or acquired significant properties in order to achieve historic preservation goals.⁴

An examination of the rural landscape often confirms the assertion that historic resources are inseparable from their setting. The development of farms, villages, and other rural structures has generally been determined by the availability of natural resources. Indigenous building materials, climate, topography, and the presence of water have all contributed significantly to the construction and siting of vernacular architecture. The functional and harmonious relationship that exists between early vernacular structures and their surroundings has evolved over decades ... however, it can be demolished overnight.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Aesthetics

Aesthetics rule the countryside: More often than not, perceptions of the rural landscape are marked by a sense of the picturesque. Within the historic preservationist's *urban* lexicon, aesthetics provide the basis for an emphasis on design standards that respect original fabric and intent -- the same degree of quality control could adhere to non-urban environments as well. When applied to cultural landscapes, preservation guidelines have the

capacity to advocate sensitive, imaginative solutions to the challenge of creating modern buildings for historic surroundings.

Financial Incentives

Aesthetic motivations certainly do not provide the sole reason for maintaining vernacular and rural architecture. In many cases, it costs less to preserve through rehabilitation or adaptive use than to build anew. Although the attractive tax incentives developed in the 70s and early 80s have been replaced by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, credit opportunities do exist.

A 20% tax credit is now in place for historic buildings; a 10% credit is available for nonresidential buildings constructed prior to 1936. In order to claim credit for building rehabilitation, an owner must prove that his or her structure is listed on the National Register (either individually or as a contributing building in a district.) Additionally, rehabilitation work must be produced in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Cultural Significance

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has only recently begun to produce bulletins intended to assist in identifying, evaluating, and nominating historic cultural landscapes to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Park Service has admitted that attempts to apply National Register criteria to cultural landscapes have highlighted several deficiencies:

1. greater scholarship and standardized terminology is needed for common landscapes and vernacular structures;

2. the number of multidisciplinary studies conducted on a regional and local basis should be increased;
3. efforts should begin identifying regional and statewide historic contexts that are related to cultural landscapes and their land uses.⁵

Landscapes having significance for folkways, historic archeology, landscape archeology, and continuing or recent land uses require special documentation. To assess integrity, the National Park Service uses period of significance as a benchmark and then considers the presence of historic location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association. Given the changing nature of rural landscapes, however, it has become additionally important to weigh the impact of both large-scale alteration and cumulative loss of character-defining features.⁶

RURAL CONSERVATION

The desire to protect rural cultural landscapes is assuming a greater prominence in historic preservation and local planning arenas. "Rural conservation" has evolved as a specialized branch of preservation planning that advances beyond the traditional paths of historic preservationists to encompass techniques which protect the settings that *surround* rural structures, as well as the structures themselves. Agricultural preservation, natural resource inventories, scenic (visual) analysis, and open space protection all become elements of rural conservation.

Rural conservation is based upon an understanding that built and natural resources play equally important (and complementary) roles in

creating the overall perception of a landscape's scenic quality. Since traditional historic preservation tools have exclusively emphasized the built environment, their usefulness is often overlooked by land conservationists focused strictly on an environmental agenda. As a result, exurbia has been punctuated with "holdouts" -- barns along major four-lane highways, farmsteads surrounded by housing tracts, villages hemmed in by commercial strips, etc.

Joining Forces

Integrating the goals of land conservationists with the architectural values of historic preservationists will no doubt expand the scope of protection that now exists for rural environments. Together, preservation and conservation organizations can implement a variety of growth management tools:

1. Surveys -- to identify historic resources and plan appropriate protection.
2. National Register nominations -- to protect historic places and open spaces from adverse federal or federally funded actions *and* to qualify properties for certain rehabilitative tax deductions.
3. Local ordinances -- to promote historic resources through municipal land development codes, which, unlike inclusion on the National Register, have the power to provide *real* protection.
4. Conservation easement programs -- to protect buildings *and* historic open space.
5. Property acquisition and development -- to directly preserve rural buildings and promote sensitive design. ⁷

Even though protection mechanisms exist, many localities have been slow to preserve their limited cultural resources. While *some* communities employ conservation easements and *others* conduct local resource surveys, very few have combined more than one preservation/conservation technique in order to arrive at a full blown growth management program. As a result, a great deal of eighteenth and nineteenth century vernacular architecture has been forced to contend with incompatible residential/commercial development, busy traffic intersections, and worst of all ... demolition.

Sense of Place

Elizabeth Watson has commented that "sense of place" comes out of the ability old buildings, structures, and sites have to represent who we are and where we have been as a nation.⁸ Amidst twentieth century growth, much of the rural countryside's "sense of place" has been lost -- even within the most well-intentioned restoration efforts. Particular challenges for rural preservation planners include.

- the adaptive use of agricultural buildings and other rural resources
- the encouragement of compatible land uses and continued patterns of ownership
- attempts to increase the public's awareness of values and qualities that make the rural landscape significant
- accommodation of growth and development while preserving historic values
- the rehabilitation of depreciable rural buildings using Federal tax credits

- the protection of landscape values in local and regional planning projects.⁹

Unless preservationists can begin to meet these challenges, many of our natural, cultural, and built resources will be lost ... forever.

CASE STUDIES

Church Farm School

Rouse & Associates, a major real estate development firm with a national reputation for excellence, recently purchased approximately 1,500 acres of the historic Church Farm School complex in Exton, Pennsylvania for redevelopment as a mixed-use complex (See Figures 1 and 2). The Brandywine Conservancy, an established Chester County, Pennsylvania land conservation organization, conducted an evaluation of key environmental issues relative to the Church Farm School proposal in 1989; a focus upon preservation of historic structures, their settings, and overall scenic and visual quality within the Church Farm area was included in the analysis. An understanding of Church Farm's history and the Conservancy's response to proposed development lends an interesting study toward the possibilities that exist for fully integrated preservation-conservation-development schemes.

The area surrounding the Church Farm tract (the Great Valley) was occupied by Lenni-Lenape Indians prior to European settlement. Due to the location and topography of the area, the Great Valley became coveted for agriculturally-related endeavors in the early part of the eighteenth century. Economic changes in the nineteenth century resulted in diminished farm



Figure 1



Figure 2

sizes -- traditional semi-sufficient farms gave way to smaller, more specialized production farms. 10

In the later part of the nineteenth century, gentleman farms (stylistically updated) created another chapter for the Great Valley area. The Church Farm School, established in 1918, has played the ultimate role in preserving the Great Valley by retaining open space and allowing for continued large-scale agricultural land use. Over the course of its lifetime, the School has acquired nearly 1,300 acres -- absorbing several of the area's historically important farms. 11

In immediate response to the proposed Rouse development, the Brandywine Conservancy has responded:

We realize that extensive development of any sort will forever change the pastoral setting now enjoyed in this section of the Great Valley. We do believe, however, based on both research and a multiplicity of examples from throughout the nation, that it is both realistic and possible to retain all or the majority of the historic structures, to have sensitive, practical re-use applications that will maintain not only the historic exteriors, but the majority of the historic interiors as well, and to use appropriate landscape buffers to maintain the sense of the historic viewshed and/or link to an historic landscape context. In short, we believe it possible to intentionally and carefully address historic preservation issues within the development process. 12

The Conservancy has recommended that the following key preservation issues be addressed:

- attention to historic siting of buildings, acknowledging the life and history of the landscape context
- conservation of historic vistas

- recognition of the historic agricultural focus of land use in the area
- recognition of the archaeological potential of the area
- recognition of the historical significance of extant roadways (as historic passageways)
- recognition of the extant architecture
- attention to the potential effects of construction on extant structures
- attention to the potential effects of airborne pollutants from increased traffic on extant historic materials
- appropriate adaptive reuse of extant structures. ¹³

Within the Church Farm complex, historical significance is embodied in the landscape context as well as in the architecture. The Brandywine Conservancy deems the Rouse proposal to be gravely inadequate as far as its treatment of immediate historic structure settings and broader historic vistas are concerned. Without a second look and major adaptation, the Conservancy has argued the probability that the imposition of new mixed uses will diminish all sense of the cultural landscape.

The Zook House

The proposed Church Farm development is not alone in its neglect of historic setting and vista preservation. The Zook House, located on Lancaster Pike in Exton, Pennsylvania, is currently overshadowed by the twentieth century construction of Exton Mall (See Figure 3). The eighteenth and nineteenth century home was restored in a good-will effort by the Mall's developer for adaptation as a community center. All intentions have been

lost, however, on the "demolition of place" which has occurred to the structure's immediate surrounds



Figure 3

The John West Tavern

In 1978 and 1979, Arco Chemical Company spent \$250,000 to preserve the John West Tavern in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania.¹⁴ Despite a pricy, accurate restoration, the eighteenth century tavern (now poised as a house museum) sits literally fifteen feet from the major intersection of Route 252 and Goshen Road (See Figure 4). While the John West Tavern serves as a capable historic marker for all cars fortunate enough to encounter a red light at the structure's corner, the building remains a ghost -- no inference of the original roadbed has been preserved, carts, carriages, and other exterior elements which might infer past use do not exist; and it is rare that one witnesses activity either coming or going from the Tavern.



Figure 4

WHAT NEXT?

The inadequately preserved environments which dot our now-suburban landscape stand as an important signal to all historic preservationists. Rehabilitation of *only* the built environment can sometimes work, in an urban setting, vernacular structures, however, draw from the immediate landscape for a definition of place. As Robert Melnick recently commented, "The historic rural landscape cannot be separated from the rivers, geology, and climatic changes which shaped it" (5). The hour has arrived. Historic preservationists must join forces with land conservationists in order to secure a place on the American agenda for vernacular and cultural landscapes.

¹John C. Murphy, "A Law for the Landscape," Environmental Comment Sept. 1977. 10.

²Kay 48.

³"Duplicators or Deceivers?" Landscape Architecture May 1990: 56.

⁴A. Elizabeth Watson, "Rural Conservation: Historic Preservationists in the Rural Landscape," 174.

⁵Linda Flint McClelland, "Rural Cultural Landscapes: An Overview of Key Issues," (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, n.d.) 1.

⁶McClelland 1.

⁷A. Elizabeth Watson, "Rural Conservation: Historic Preservationists in the Rural Landscape," Private Options: Tools and Concepts for Land Conservation (Covelo, CA: Island Press, 1982)174.

⁸A. Elizabeth Watson, "Rural Conservation: Historic Preservationists in the Rural Landscape," 173.

⁹McClelland 2.

¹⁰ Environmental Management Center, The Church Farm Tract: Alternative Approaches to Development (Chadds Ford, PA: Brandywine Conservancy, 1989) VI-2.

¹¹ Environmental Management Center, Church Farm VI-2.

¹² Environmental Management Center, Church Farm VI-7.

¹³ Environment Management Center, Church Farm VI-7.

¹⁴ Robert J. Fleming, personal interview, 13 July 1990.

¹⁵ Kay 49.

CHAPTER THREE

PROFILE: THE AARON GARRETT PROPERTY, PAST AND PRESENT

The past decade has ushered an upgrade in technology and a trend toward service industries that allows businesses the flexibility to locate outside of urban cores. As has already been mentioned, however, mass movement has its drawbacks: The American rural landscape experiences increased vulnerability every year. A recent survey by Inc. magazine ranked Philadelphia eighty-eighth among the best cities for entrepreneurs, but cited the 202 corridor (which poses as narrow country road, divided four-lane expressway, and suburban Main Street through the picturesque landscape *outside* of Philadelphia) as a hot spot for business growth.¹ Rapid rural development has carted with it all the ingredients necessary to create an undesirable living situation; The Philadelphia Inquirer previewed what lies ahead in a recent article titled, "21st Century Plans for Route 202:"

DeKalb Pike was little more than a country road in 1950 when Jim and Madeleine Degnan moved into their Victorian-style house in East Norriton Township. Now they can hardly make a left turn out of their driveway onto this two-lane stretch of Route 202.²

A similar scenario rings true for many nineteenth century residences located along Route 3 (West Chester Pike) in Willistown Township, Pennsylvania. Like Route 202, West Chester Pike marks a corridor increasingly dealt homogeneous new construction in exchange for irreplaceable pieces of the cultural landscape -- farmhouses, barns, taverns, meeting houses, and open space. As this thesis will highlight,

spotty historic remnants of Chester County do manage to survive. A large chunk of West Chester Pike's stretch through Willistown remains untouched by high density planned development.

WEST CHESTER PIKE

Constructed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as the major thoroughfare between West Chester and Philadelphia, Route 3 continues in what was essentially its original eighteenth century roadbed.³ The state road became known as West Chester Pike in the 1640s when the Philadelphia-West Chester Turnpike Company undertook construction of a plank toll road between West Philadelphia and West Chester.⁴ A railroad was erected by the Philadelphia-Castle Rock Trolley Company along the north side of the Pike in the 1890s (See Figure 5); however, the organization



Figure 5

ceased operation nearly a half-century later, in 1954.⁵⁵ The road was widened with the demise of the trolley, and Route 3 has remained a four-lane divided highway since the early 1960s.⁵⁶

A portion of the original roadbed is still clearly visible. (See Figure 6.)



Figure 6

from the entrance to the Aaron Garrett property (5316 West Chester Pike). The site, highly visible to eastbound travellers, has approximately one mile frontage on the north side of Route 3. Route 252 is located five miles east of the Garrett property, Route 202 stands virtually five miles west of the site, Route 926 intersects West Chester Pike at the property's southwestern border (See Appendix A). All in all, Aaron Garrett's spot is ideally situated for the type of development occurring to both the property's east and west.

THE HOUSE

The Garnett family name reigns among the earliest to establish a substantial presence during Millstone's initial settlement. William Garnett, the family patriarch, emigrated from Leicester, England to Darby, Pennsylvania in 1684 (75). In the early nineteenth century, ten Garnett grandsons and great-grandsons were farming the land and operating mills throughout the Township.⁹

Aaron Garnett, Jr. erected "a stone house on the east side of Ridley Creek, a few perches north of the Philadelphia Road"⁹ in the early nineteenth century. A bold circular datestone on the west gable end bore the initials of Aaron and his wife Jane, dated 1812 (9). The Garnett dwelling consisted of a stone core and recessed stone wing (See Figure 7). It is speculated that the addition was constructed sometime between 1812 and



Figure 7

1814, the space would have been necessary, as Aaron and Jane had seven children between 1803 and 1812.¹¹

The original part of the house, based upon a traditional Quaker plan,¹² consisted of a front and back room which would have been entered direct from the outside. The 1842 portion of the Garrett House is two and one-half stories, two bays, with a deep gable roof and end chimney (See Figure 8).



Figure 8

The major wing is a banked, two-story, two bay addition with a shallow gable roof.

Structures designed one room wide and two rooms deep have been coined "Quaker plan" houses in the rural districts west of Philadelphia.¹³ The front room appears to have been cast in the image of the European parlor, containing a hearth smaller than that found in the hall.¹⁴ The fireplace in the Garrett House -- typical of Quaker plan homes -- is set diagonally into

the corner of the room that is farthest from the doorway (See Appendix D). The rear room in eighteenth and nineteenth century Quaker farmhouses was ordinarily fitted with a large open fired place typical of European hall-positions. Although the second Garnett fired place has been removed, evidence of its existence can be found on the basement, first, and second floors.

Stairs to the upper stories have been placed against the wall away from the chimney pile, the stairway from the first to the second floor can be entered from either the front or the rear room (See Figure 9). The



Figure 9

Garrett farm house is equipped with four usable rooms on the second floor; additional space can be obtained in the full basement and attic. Modern conveniences, such as the kitchen's hot bathroom, are currently included in the earlier addition. (See Appendix C)

THE BARN

Many of the original Winstown area residences are adorned with subordinate farm buildings. The Aaron Garner House is marked especially by the presence of a "great barn." (See Figures 10 and 11) Identified most readily as larger versions of traditional barn, barns, great barns are typically equipped with earthen ramps that bridge projecting entrance ways



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

on the first floor. The second floor of the great barn usually provides a haymow while the ground level is typically reserved for stabling. A frequent feature of the great barn is a walled stockyard.¹⁴

Aaron Garrett's nineteenth-century outbuilding is remarkable in its letter-perfect conformity to the definition of a great barn. The two-story structure boasts a stone core with a projecting entrance bay and bridged ramp (See Figure 12). The western bannyard is formed by four stone and frame sheds (See Figure 13). The upper barn continues to service hay storage; the ground level stables are frequently utilized by boarded horses

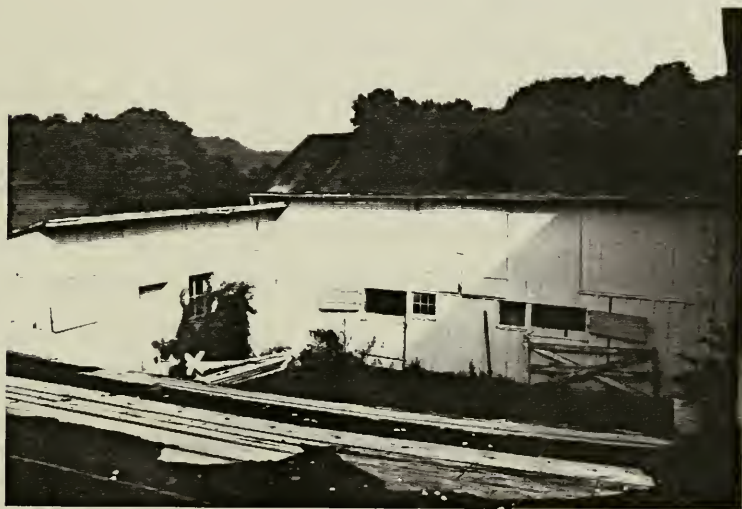


Figure 13

THE LANDSCAPE

Agricultural History

The Aaron Garrett property claims its roots in a nineteenth century agrarian community, the land upon which the farmhouse and barn are located has literally been in agricultural use for over two centuries. As one of the most important industries in the area, farming supported Willistown residents until the late 1950s. ¹⁵ Although no longer a *thriving* industry, most of the area's land remains in agricultural use.

A great deal of the ambiance that envelops the Garrett property results directly from a respectful relationship between the built and natural environment. Because the Garrett house is not "high style," it does not compete with its immediate surrounds -- this is the distinction that separates the Aaron Garrett property from the influx of new development along West Chester Pike. Although many Willistown landowners have protected their properties through the employment of conservation easements, the land immediately encompassing the Garrett structures has not been secured through any such mechanism.

Okehocking Indian Reserve

In addition to significant built and natural resources, the Garrett property also hosts an archaeological site of primary importance. A section of the five hundred acre reservation laid out for a band of early seventeenth century Okehocking Indians by William Penn is included in the Garrett tract. ¹⁶ The Okehocking site is particularly significant since scholarship speculates that it may be the first and only Indian reserve ever to be deeded

by William Penn. 17. A letter from Penn to the Ojibwa (dated April 21, 1682) reads:

I have already taken care that none of my people wrong you, my good friend, and I have provided for that purpose you shall never allow any of my people to sell you anything, make your people drunk, or bantering should be out of order, except when I come, it shall be mended, and I will bring you some things of our country that will be useful and pleasing to you. 18

As a nomadic tribe, the Ojibwings left A. die, Creek, every year during the hunting season. By 1735, however, the Indians had ceased to occupy the land at all. 19

On June 21, 1924, the Pennsylvania Historical Commission and the Chester County Historical Society dedicated a marker to the memory of the Ojibwing Indian Town. (See Figure 14) 20. The bronze dedication tablet is

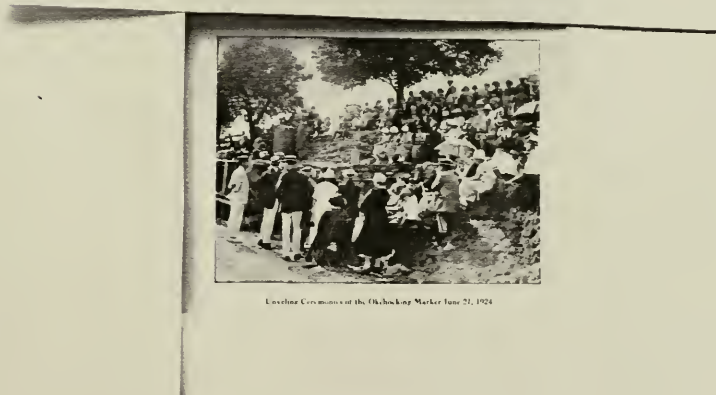


Figure 14

notable in that it was designed by the architect Paul Cret (See Figure 15).²¹ The tablet, mounted on a huge boulder obtained from the Ripley Creek area, was imbedded in a plot on the north side of West Chester Pike -- directly in front of Aaron Garrett's property -- where it remains today (See Figure 16).²²

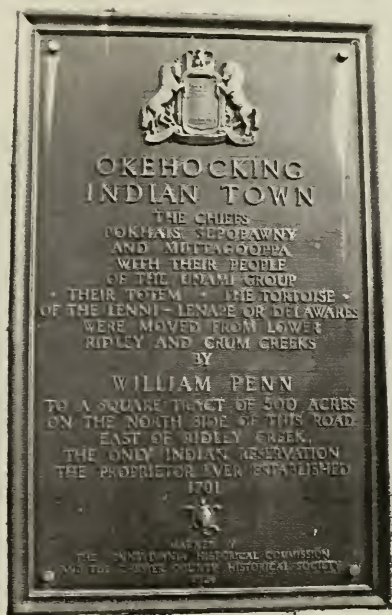


Figure 15

Cultural Landscape

As a landscape, the Aaron Garrett property represents a unique site where a cultural interface between Quakers and Indians occurred (even if only briefly.) Coupled with examples of rural Quaker architecture, and the

retention of a national topographic, the significance of Aaron Gannett's map is manifest. Due to its wear, Chester Pike enclosure and the encroachment of incompatible development from the east and west, the Gannett incident marks among the most visible and important cultural landscapes in Wilkesville Township.



Figure 18



Figure 17

settlement of English Quakers. The rural Quaker lifestyle was reflected by the strong agriculturally-oriented communities of families located within a half-day's distance of a meeting house.²⁵ The Aaron Garnett House stands as testament to one of the three Quaker families that dominated Willistown's early history. Garnett was also an instrumental financier of nineteenth-century Willistown Meeting construction efforts.²⁶

-- Agriculture -- As has already been mentioned, agriculture was one of the most important industries in the district from the period of first settlement until the 1950s.²⁷ Aaron Garnett's barn and hedge rows (See Figure 18) -- which border the crop producing fields -- remain as important indicators of the land's historic use



Figure 16

-- Architecture -- The Wrentham Historic District contains a self-styled collection of rural vernacular architecture from c. 1720–1940. Structures are both residential and auxiliary (support), with the most noteworthy of the latter being the massive banked barns which dot the district.⁴⁵ The nomination form reassures that, notable among the larger farm complexes (is the) Aaron Garrett Farm.⁴⁶ Additionally, the nomination records that, (noteworthy), Great Barns in the district include two on Aaron Garrett's Farm.⁴⁷ Only one of the two barns was utilized by Aaron Garrett, (only), the other was constructed in the later part of the eighteenth century (by Aaron Garrett).⁴⁸

Through a preservation effort spearheaded by local residents, the area's structures and cultural landscapes have been largely protected by

conservation easements. The easements, in conjunction with a National Register listing, will provide a variety of protection mechanisms to assist Willistown Township in maintaining a buffer against the onslaught of high-density suburban development. As already noted, however, even though conserved agricultural holdings permeate much of the area, the easements do not include land immediately surrounding the Garrett House and Barn; as a result, the property has no real protection against ensuing development plans.

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- ¹ Steve Goldstein, "21st-Century Plans for Route 202: Unlogging A Regional Artery," Philadelphia Inquirer, 1 July 1990: 1A.
- ² Goldstein 1A.
- ³ "Original Road Papers, Willistown Township," (West Chester, PA: Chester County Archives) n.p.
- ⁴ "Transportation Vertical File," (West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society) 31.
- ⁵ "Transportation Vertical File" 32
- ⁶ "Transportation Vertical File" 32
- ⁷ Gilbert Cope, comp., Genealogy of the Smeley Family (Lancaster, PA: Wickersham Printing Co., 1901) 92.
- ⁸ Cope 154.
- ⁹ Cope 282.
- ¹⁰ Cope 171.
- ¹¹ Cope 282.
- ¹² Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700-1900 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987) 22.
- ¹³ Herman 22.
- ¹⁴ Joseph W. Glass, The Pennsylvania Culture Region: A View from the Barn (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986) 62.
- ¹⁵ Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form" (Chadds Ford, PA: Brandywine Conservancy, 1989) 12.
- ¹⁶ J. Marshall Becker, "The Okehocking: A Remnant Band of Delaware Indians," Pennsylvania Archaeologist Sept. 1976: 25.
- ¹⁷ Becker 27.
- ¹⁸ "Dedication of Okehocking Marker," Chester County Historical Society Bulletin (West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society, 1929) 29.
- ¹⁹ Becker 53.

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- 20 "Dedication of Okehocking Marker" 28.
- 21 "Dedication of Okehocking Marker" 28.
- 22 "Dedication of Okehocking Marker" 28.
- 23 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 2.
- 24 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 8.
- 25 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 9.
- 26 Cope 170.
- 27 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 12.
- 28 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 13.
- 29 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 4.
- 30 Environmental Management Center, "Okehocking District" 7.
- 31 Cope 113.

CHAPTER FOUR A VISION FOR THE AARON GARRETT PROPERTY

It is clear from both site analysis and a reading of the Brandywine Conservancy's National Register nomination, that historic and visual resources are intrinsically woven into the fabric of Aaron Garrett's property. Given the threat of ensuing development, it is of paramount importance that the site be assessed in terms of 1) its vulnerability to development and 2) its potential contribution to the post-development landscape.¹ As the Brandywine Conservancy noted in its critique of the proposed Church Farm development, extensive new intervention of *any* kind can change the pastoral setting enjoyed within a rural landscape.

In an ideal world, all open space surrounding the Garrett property would remain untouched by either commercial or residential construction. (Squinting is hardly required to imagine the farmhouse converted to a community nature center, with nothing but hiking and riding trails meandering through the existing farm- and woodland. The barn -- in complementary fashion -- could maintain its historic use, boarding horses and housing farm equipment necessary to maintain the existing landscape.) With wide-open eyes, however, it is easier to recognize that the current development climate in Willistown Township mandates a more realistic, precautionary preservation forecast.

In Chapter Two, an examination of both the Zook House and John West Tavern revealed that most vernacular architecture draws from its extended environment for a definition of place; true preservation of the rural landscape cannot be met through building protection alone. Examples of

early American rural architecture being coupled with new construction additions on the twentieth century landscape. House C Associates has recently developed a commercial, three-building, on the east side of Route 29 (just north of Route 50) in the West Park Village. Two of the structures -- a former use and a barn -- have received substantial restoration attention.

The house currently serves as a "Business Development and Training Center" (See Figure 19) while the barn hosts the "Great Valley Inn" (See Figures 20 and 21). The structures are neatly tucked away and masked by the mature foliage which surrounds them. Although the rehabilitated farmhouse and barn are probably visited off and on by a certain segment of the corporate center community, chances are that most of the surrounding



Figure 19

office inhabitants are not even aware of their existence. *Is this* the way to preserve rural historic structures and cultural landscapes amidst new construction?



Figure 20

Additional vernacular sites in Rouse's "Great Valley Corporate Center" have been long-abandoned and remain in states of extensive disrepair (See Figure 22). Lone deterioration juxtaposed with manicured new construction, however, has the ability to create a poignant piece of sculpture (often more fitting than the recently imposed land ornamentation). *Is this* the way to preserve rural structures amidst new construction?

"Willstown Woods" -- a residential development on the south side of West Chester Pike between Routes 926 and 352 in Westtown, Pennsylvania



Figure 21



Figure 22

-- has maintained an historic greatbarn as well as two small Quaker¹an farmhouses. The barn stands, unused and in a state of disrepair, as a piece of sculpture (See Figure 23). One of the farmhouses is currently utilized for



Figure 23

community social space, the other farmhouse services storage material (See Figure 24). While the historic structures have been maintained, both their immediate and extended environments have been destroyed by the siting of townhouse complexes. Even though new development is historicized through banked construction and deep gabled roofs (See Figure 25), the end result of the integration attempt remains a sign of, "oh... you can tell how it *used* to be... what a shame!" Is *this* the way to preserve historic structures and landscapes amidst new construction?



Figure 24



Figure 25

Although numerous attempts have been made to incorporate modern development and preserved rural landscapes, most schemes appear to fail:

short of full integration. The Garrett property provides a unique opportunity for the implementation of a sensitive preservation-conservation-development effort. Due to its high visibility from West Chester Pike, the Garrett tract mandates a preservation plan that will interpret some sense of historic place to a broad audience. While a "view from the road" will be key to the successful creation of a sustainable land use plan, it is first necessary to highlight the protection agenda required closer to the Garrett home.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT -- UP CLOSE

New construction imposed upon the Garrett surroundings will inevitably impact two important structures -- the farmhouse and the barn. As mentioned in Chapter Three, both buildings are considered to be significant and contributing on the Brandywine Conservancy's National Register nomination. It seems wise to consider the practical re-use applications for both structures which -- at the very least -- will maintain historic exterior fabric and retain a sense of the architecture's tie to the landscape.

Effect of National Register Listing

The National Register nomination could feasibly play a role in the evolution of any proposed development on the Garrett site. Secretary of the Interior listing as "contributing buildings" within a National Register district will help ensure that the Garrett farmhouse and barn:

1. are identified on an inventory of properties worthy of preservation. (In fact, inclusion on the National Register nomination should already carry some local clout.)
2. are protected from federal, federally assisted, and/or federally licensed undertakings that might adversely effect the properties. (See Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.)
3. are eligible for benefits such as the National Historic Preservation Fund grants and loans, if the programs are implemented by the Interior Department and if there are appropriations.²

Additionally, land owners who rehabilitate their National Register properties in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings" may qualify for substantial investment tax credits. Although National Register inclusion does not directly restrict private property owners, it often effects the way in which they choose to use their holdings. It should be noted that a National Register listing will **not** secure the Garrett farmhouse and barn from the threat of demolition; the only existing federal disincentive denies tax deduction for Register properties that have been demolished.

The Barn

The Garrett's greatbarn remains in structurally sound condition, although the stone and frame sheds surrounding the western courtyard have fallen into slight disrepair (See Figure 13). The upper barn is currently used for hay and equipment storage; the lower stables house boarded horses.

Since the barn's cavernous interior (See Appendix C) will allow for reuse without grave loss to original design, primary attention should be focused upon maintenance of the exterior fabric. Restaurant, commercial office, day care, gallery, and physical plant facilities rank among the adaptive use possibilities which might be considered for the Garrett barn.

As previously underscored, land surrounding the Garrett tract has more than a two hundred year history of agricultural use. Perhaps the greatest American symbol of working farmland (either extinct or existing) is the barn; great care should be taken to retain all sense of historical context enveloping the Garrett barn.

- The banks and slopes into which the barn was constructed should not be altered
- Plant material growing on the exterior walls should be maintained
- An inference of the line that connects the barn's courtyard to the western yard of the house should be re-created in the event that the existing post-and-wire fencing is removed (See Figure 26). The line helps define the relationship between house and barn; inference might take the form of either new fencing adaptation or indigenous plant material.
- The corn crib has fallen into slight disrepair (See Figure 27); nonetheless, it should be maintained rather than removed in order to provide an ornamental reminder of the barn's utilitarian past.
- The stone wall supporting the upper barn's approach ramp may need restructuring (See Figure 28); original materials



Figure 26



Figure 27

should be replicated and new stone should be selected with replication in mind.



Figure 28

- Natural plant growth close to the barn should be encouraged in order to preserve the immediate impact of natural landscape environments. Two majestic trees stand off the southeast corner of the barn. (See Figure 29; this type of material should be considered a permanent landscape element like any newly imposed surface construction should be designed around it.)



Figure 29

The Farmhouse

Vernacular architecture can be limited in its capacity for re-use. The 1800s Garrett farmhouse has served as a residence since its early nineteenth century construction and, unfortunately, does not lend itself to many non-residential possibilities. A minimal amount of square footage and difficult

room configurations will no doubt influence the structure's ultimate adaptation.

Maintaining the farmhouse as a residence would clearly cause the least amount of intervention to original fabric. In the event that a large commercial or residential development were imposed on the land surrounding the immediate Garrett property, the farmhouse might serve as residence for the development's caretaker. Equipment necessary to maintain both physical plant operations and the landscape could be stored in Aaron Garrett's barn.

Another workable solution would call for purchase by an individual or individuals with *small* business interests and *large* quantities of cash. The acquisition and subsequent easement of land surrounding the Garrett house and barn would virtually guarantee protection of the cultural landscape. In this capacity, the Garrett farmhouse might serve as a small commercial office. An historic structure would no doubt provide retreat-like respite from the more contemporary commercial complexes already existing along West Chester Pike. First floor rooms would lend themselves quite nicely to reception, conference, and luncheon space. Second floor (and even attic) rooms could accommodate individual offices. The exterior wrap-around porch would provide additional social space.

In an altered context, Aaron Garrett's farmhouse has the capacity to handle either a small restaurant or bed and breakfast scheme. A restaurant might service lunch and dinner crowds with seating on the first and second floors (as well as the porch during the warmer months.) Carryout beverages and pastries might be provided for purchase by early morning commuters on

West Chester Pike. (Although 55 m.p.h. traffic prohibits easy access to or from Route 3.) It should be noted that *substantial* interior adaptation would be required if Aaron Garrett's stead were to serve as a restaurant.

The rehabilitation work necessary to convert Garrett's farmhouse into a bed and breakfast facility might prove to be even more complicated than a restaurant adaptation. The house is currently serviced by one bathroom -- in desperate need of an upgrade. The creation of private bedrooms on the second floor would require serious alteration of extant design; the creation of private *baths* would force an overhaul of all existing space. Given the significance of the structure's early Quaker plan, it would be advisable to entertain plans that are capable of working within the existing layout.

The unfortunate reality of the Garrett farmhouse is that it may *not* be capable of courting a feasible adaptive use possibility. Although ideally suited for one-family residential living, the Aaron Garrett house does not tout the kind of "high-style" nineteenth century interior which frequently accommodates modern adaptation. In the event that a profitable, marketable re-use for the building is deemed unattainable, it should be reinforced that any developer holding Garrett property interest has a moral responsibility to maintain the structure (particularly in light of the significance underlined in the Brandywine Conservancy's National Register nomination.) As an aside, the relocation of historic structures *can* yield attractive preservation solutions. In this case, however, it should be noted that given the intrinsic weave between Garrett house, barn, and landscape, relocation would most likely encourage the same demolition of space that

has occurred at the 200' House, the John West Tavern, and Whitcomb Woods.

As with all other exceptional landscapes, great care should be taken to maintain the sense of exterior space that surrounds the Barnhart farmhouse.

- The view of the farmhouse from the west is most arresting, and the foliage and open space that encroaches upon the structure's western facade should be maintained. (See Figure 7.)
- A re-creation of the circular datestone missing from the west gable end (See Figure 7) would publicly mark the farmhouse's construction date.
- All segments of the exterior porch should be maintained, especially the porch line which is afforded from the western section of the porch. (See Figure 30.)



Figure 30

- The original stone slabs that create a stepped approach to the western porch should be maintained (See Figure 31). Repair work will be necessary to correct a shifting problem. However, the existing slabs should be retained -- they are most likely non-duplicatable, due to their sheer size.



Figure 31

- The view of and from the eastern facade is most expendable -- fenestration occurs only in the stairwells and the attic (See Figure 32). Any newly imposed construction should take advantage of this fact by limiting views of the farmhouse from the east only.
- Original tree and plant materials that surround the house are vital contributors to the definition of "place". Mature trees have



Figure 32



Figure 33

limited the farmhouse's ability to see and hear West Chester Pike for nearly two centuries and should be retained (See Figure 33). The open exposure created by any elimination of south-side tree stands will not do anything to better protect or preserve the farmhouse's stone building material.

The driveway from West Chester Pike to the farmhouse and barn has contributed a significant piece of historic fabric to the site. It has served as the only form of access to and from the house for nearly two hundred years. Extreme care should be taken to preserve this approach:

- The stone wall lining the east side of the driveway should be maintained (See Figure 34). Sections of the wall have fallen into disrepair (See Figure 35); if necessary, the wall should be rebuilt



Figure 34

with original materials.



Figure 35

- The trees lining the west side of the driveway, guide the viewer's eye toward the house. (See Figure 36), destruction of the driveway will truly impede narration of a "sense of place."
- If the existing post-and-rail fencing that runs along the west border of the driveway (See Figure 36) is removed, an inference of the fence line should be recreated. Historic photographs indicate that a post-and-rail fence was in place during the later part of the nineteenth century (See Figure 37).
- Finally, it would be advisable to maintain the rustic feel of the approach drive, asphalt paving should not be utilized. If larger-scale development is imposed upon the Garrett surrounds, the original entrance should be reserved for limited access only.



Figure 36



Figure 37

New Construction

Any new architecture introduced to the Garrett/Willistown landscape should be created for compatibility with existing structures. Although design might draw from elements common to older farm-associated buildings, it need not mimic existing construction. Historicized elements should be indigenous to the area and avoid the development of false place. As far as the Garrett tract is concerned, appropriate siting may prove more critical than actual building design. One final note: Excavation and blasting could have a serious impact on the farmhouse, barn, and historic plant material; all original fabric (built and natural) should be properly covered and fenced.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT -- A STEP BACK

The increasing homogeneity of new development along West Chester Pike throws the Aaron Garrett tract under a critical spotlight. From an aesthetic standpoint, the property maintains an irreplaceable picturesque value and affords a visual reprieve from suburban clutter to both the east and west. Views witnessed by eastbound travellers are literally arresting: The house, barn, and landscape first come into view just west of Route 926 (See Figure 38); the site slips momentarily out of vision after crossing Route 926; and then rushes back for a quick breath before passage.

From a social standpoint, the existing Garrett landscape provides a constant reminder to all West Chester Pike travellers of Chester County's agricultural history. While the merit of commitments made by Willistown property owners toward private land conservation should not go unnoticed,



Figure 26

maintenance of a cultural landscape that directly interfaces with a much broader audience actually has greater social value. As the "Environmental Decade" begins to focus upon the loss of ecological resources, the fact that we are also losing many of our important visual resources should not be forgotten.

Since the frontal views actually affect more people's experience of the total Garrett scene, conservation techniques should permit retention of the open landscape context and maintain major vistas to and from built structures. The existing cultural landscape should be buffered from new development through careful and intentional use of appropriate plant materials (both original and introduced). Thick tree growth along Ripley Creek, north of the barn, and east of the farmhouse (See Figures 26, 30, and 38) secure the most natural means of determining preservable borders.

ideally, property within the woodland would remain undeveloped. New construction might be designed to blend into crestlines and dense woods, (1) masking development for those who appreciate the views from west Chester Pike and (2) sustaining vistas of the Goffinet house, farm, and fields for those who inhabit any newly imposed commercial/residential units.

At the very least:

- Both Ridley Creek and the vegetation which surrounds it (See Figures 17 and 30) should be maintained for historic and visual purposes.
- The hedgerow that begins at the northeast corner of the barn and moves east should be cultivated (See Figure 39).



Figure 39

- The vast view north of the barn that juxtaposes dense woods and rolling onto the as mandated presentation. (See Figures 26 and 29 regeographs and instruments) to an understanding of the historic landscape behind the barn.
- Although records do not indicate that Ashby Garrett, Jr. ever utilized the eighteenth century greatbarn, located to the immediate west of Ripleys Creek. (See Figure 40), the structure is visually included within the Garrett tract. The barn has fallen into grave disrepair; however, it should be maintained as a piece of historic sculpture.



Figure 40

- A marked characteristic of Willistown's terrain can be witnessed in the rolling hills. Natural grade changes should be retained. Any new development should differentiate setbacks, building heights, and new plant material.
- The building height of any newly imposed construction should neither wall-off views of the landscape nor punctuate the crestlines that exist to the north and the east of the barn.
- Newly introduced plant species should mimic already existing material. Attempts to design new landscapes should look toward the pastoral for a definition of terms.
- Finally, the archaeological importance of the area should not be forgotten. Since small archaeological finds have been made along Ridley Creek,³ all construction crews should be alerted and advised as to the possibility of locating important Okehocking Indian evidence.

IN THE END

Site designs which intentionally and sensitively reflect the landscape context and its visual attributes (both existing and introduced) can result in attractive post-development landscapes. New Chester County construction seems to indicate, however, that many developers find "landscape context" to be an expendable commodity. Even the best mixed-architecture efforts offer nothing more than token preservation; buildings lose all sense of cultural purpose as their definition of space is demolished.

More than ever, protective mechanisms are needed to preserve built and natural resources that continue to dot the exurban landscape. Highly visible sites, like Aaron Garrett's (marked on local, regional, and national history to a vast audience), and should therefore be protected. The time has come to restructure the way developers think about utilizing major highway corridors. Historic landscapes should not be treated as expendable resources; instead, new construction should fade into the background in an effort to showcase the few aesthetically and culturally important vistas which remain on the rural canvas.

Axon Chemical's Research and Development Facility on West Chester Pike in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania has sited its operations so deeply into the belt/development area that only mature stands of trees and white post



Figure 41

Handrail fences are visible to those who pass (See Figures 41 and 42). The major headquarter has been designed with a black extension so that color from the surrounding natural environment completely envelops it. Historic outbuildings such as barns and sheds are either adaptive reuse (such as maintenance overstoreys) or new and designed to fit the local preserve rural historic structures and cultural landscapes, almost new construction.



Figure 42



Figure 43

¹ Based upon a suggestion made by the Environmental Management Center, Church Farm VI-1.

² Christopher J. Duerksen, ed., A Handbook on Historic Preservation Law (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation and The National Center for Preservation Law, 1983) 207.

³ Holly Richter, "Archaeological Remains Tell the Story of Willistown's Past Inhabitants," Cattails Spring 1982: 8.

POSTSCRIPT
THE AARON GARRETT PROPERTY: FUTURE MANDATE

The Garrett tract was purchased, in 1986, as part of a larger land acquisition by the Terramics Property Company for \$1,107,535.00.¹ Terramics, a Berwyn, Pennsylvania real estate firm involved in the development of high-end office buildings, closed its deal with a total of 194 Willistown Township acres. Seventy-six acres fronting West Chester Pike are slated for office construction; the northernmost 118 acres of the holding are to be conserved in perpetuity as non-developable green space. The open space aspect of the proposed development has, in fact, been a key marketing tool for Terramics (See Appendix I):

This park area insures that the quality of the environment and the setting for office development will be preserved. The terrain features rolling hills with open fields and mature stands of trees. Streams traverse the property which will be connected to several lakes that will be used for aesthetics as well as retention. The physical beauty of the site, the prestige of the general area, coupled with the views and deed restricted open space make the site incomparable in the marketplace."²

The development is planned for up to 500,000 square feet of office space.³ The buildings will be three stories high and designed "of the finest exterior materials;"⁴ sample wall mock-ups which now stand on the property indicate that the material of choice will be painted brick (See Figure 44). The current site plan shows nine office buildings (See Appendix G). Potential uses for the Aaron Garrett house and barn have not yet been finalized; however, the developer is committed to *maintaining* the structures.

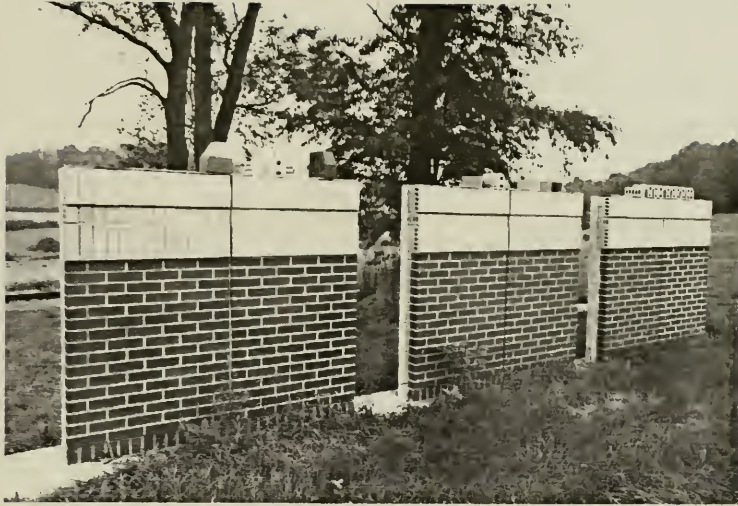


Figure 24

Terramiles intends to capitalize upon the Whitstown landscape, taking maximum advantage of the back-acreage views and implementing an underground parking scheme that will accommodate up to five cars per thousand square feet of office space.⁵ Due to the costliness of underground parking, however, above-ground space will also be required to meet the development's needs.

The site will offer three distinctive office campus areas:

- Three buildings are grouped at the western-most portion of the site, off Garrett Mill Road. The western campus will accommodate 165,000 square feet of usable office space.

- The middle section of the site, in between the main entrance and Delchester Road, is comprised of five buildings and 275,000 square feet. One of these structures has already been leased.
- Finally, the eastern-most portion of the site off Delchester Road is planned for one 60,000 square foot structure. ⁶

Terramics would like to lease all buildings prior to construction, at this point, however, they have only the one lessee in hand.

The Terramics proposal is applaudable for its broad understanding of land conservation issues: 119 acres is a lot of land for a developer to preserve within a 195-acre commercial park. It should again be noted, however: It is the proposal's back acreage, rather than the land fronting West Chester Pike, that has been protected through conservation easements. As a result, the property immediately surrounding the Garrett house and barn has no real defense against ensuing development.

¹ Deed Book Q (West Chester, PA: Chester County Court House, 1986) 455.

² "Tennamics Route 3 Property," (Berwyn, PA: The Tennamics Property Company, 1989) 5

³ Richard Astheimer, personal interview, 20 Oct. 1989.

⁴ "Tennamics Route 3 Property" 5.

⁵ Richard Astheimer, personal interview, 20 Oct. 1989

⁶ Richard Astheimer, personal interview, 20 Oct. 1989.

CONCLUSION A CALL TO ACTION

Stewart Udall commented in his Foreword to Saving America's Countryside that,

... each generation has its own rendezvous with the land, its own opportunity to make history by creating lifegiving environments for its children. It is time for a new wave of conservation action in rural America. We must act ... and learn to cherish and live in harmony with our past -- because that is the only way truly civilized people can live. ¹

The call to preserve America's countryside does not, by definition, translate into the entombment of our vernacular environments. Instead, rural conservation calls for the foresight to manage change, minimizing its negative effects and using it to improve a community's economic vitality, employment possibilities, educational opportunities, municipal services, and civic amenities. ² The call to action should impose a certain static element upon the countryside, however, by demanding that alteration of vernacular landscapes occur within a framework that includes respect for natural areas, retention of agriculture, and preservation of diverse cultural and historic resources.

All too often the bland homogenization of America's countryside is blamed upon "insensitive" real estate developers. A closer look uncovers the fact that it is more typically a lack of comprehensive planning which leads to the misuse, underuse, and overuse of land and natural resources. The National Trust's Constance Beaumont acknowledged in a recent Growth Management article that,

If preservation advocates get into the planning process early and make sure that local plans include strong preservation elements, they may significantly strengthen the legal hooks on which courts hang rulings on preservation versus development conflicts. Conversely, if preservationists stay on the sidelines, they may find that fragile historic resources have been placed squarely in the path of development that can only destroy such resources.³

The components required to create successful rural preservation plans are manifold.

- Local governments and citizens need to be educated about the value of landscapes.
- Enforcement of laws that protect the rural landscape need to be strengthened.
- Local zoning should maximize the protection of historic landscapes.
- Developers need to be convinced that preserving and protecting landscapes can add value to their property.
- Communities need to recognize that protected landscapes help to attract higher quality development.
- The importance of viewing development from the road needs to be de-emphasized; significant rural and cultural landscapes should be elevated to a platform above new construction.

The list goes on and on ...

The call to preserve our cultural landscapes reaches far beyond the local level, however. Regional planning needs to occur with greater frequency. *Fifty* states must enter the business of legislating protection for agricultural and open space lands. Rural conservation efforts must

include affordable housing for all -- not just the wealthy. We must make our cities, with their already existing infrastructure and able-bodied workforce, more attractive places to live. And finally, we must follow the lead of planners and architects who are working to de-emphasize suburban/exurban reliance upon the automobile, in order to maintain healthy, efficient environments.

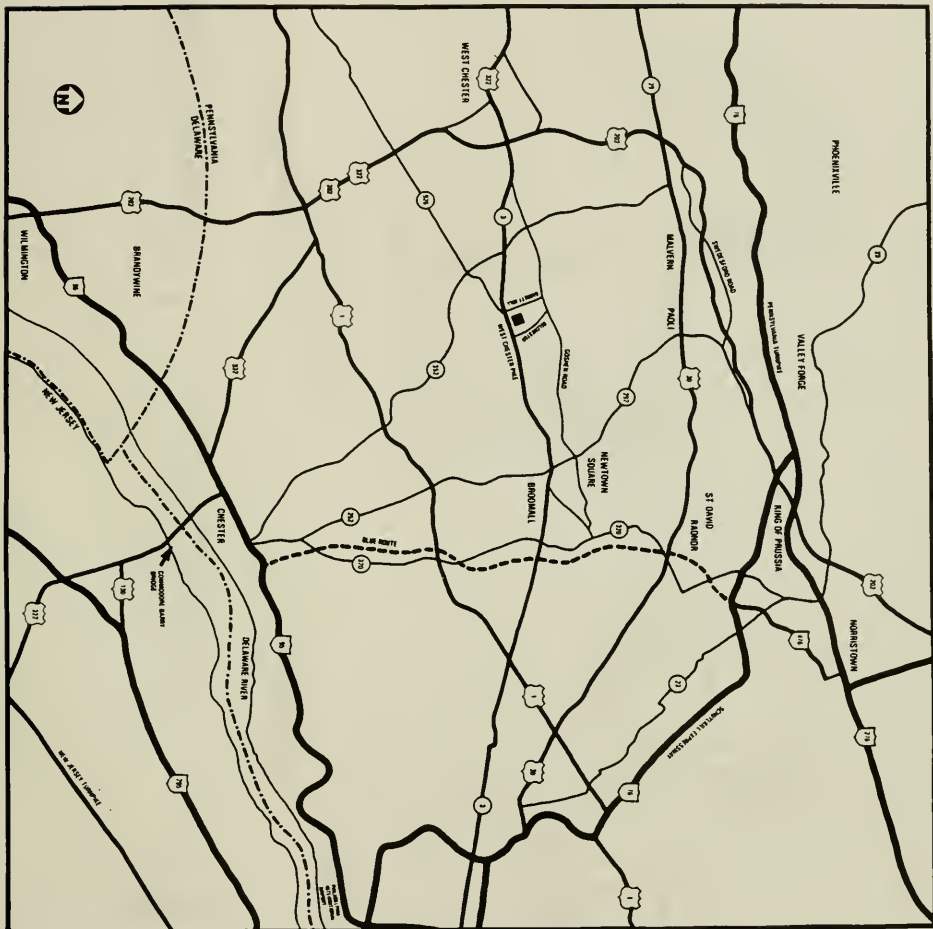
Historic preservationists have learned from their experience in the urban landscape, that given a mandate to respect historic character and integrity, architects and builders can create the kinds of housing and commercial units which enhance already existing environments. We now have the same opportunity in the rural landscape. Planners, architects, landscape architects, preservationists, conservationists, and developers must begin to respect the elements which intertwine our built and natural resources in order to create better physical environments within the countryside. The "call to action" echoes in the twentieth century landscape -- it can be found at the Zook House, Willistown Woods, the Church Farm Development, and the Aaron Garrett property. The twenty-first century is almost upon us ... the time to respond to the call is now.

¹ Stewart L. Udall, foreword, Saving America's Countryside by Samuel N. Stokes, A. Elizabeth Watson, Genevieve P. Keller, and J. Timothy Keller (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) xviii.

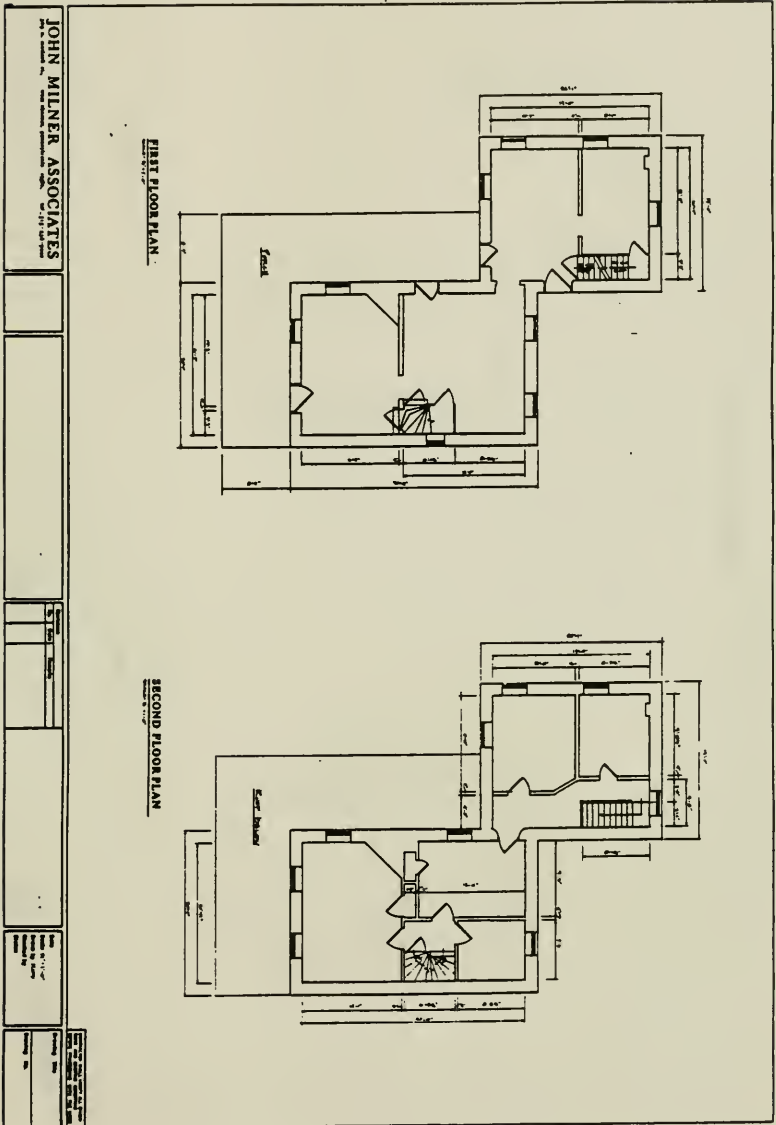
² Stokes et al. 2.

³ Greer 4.

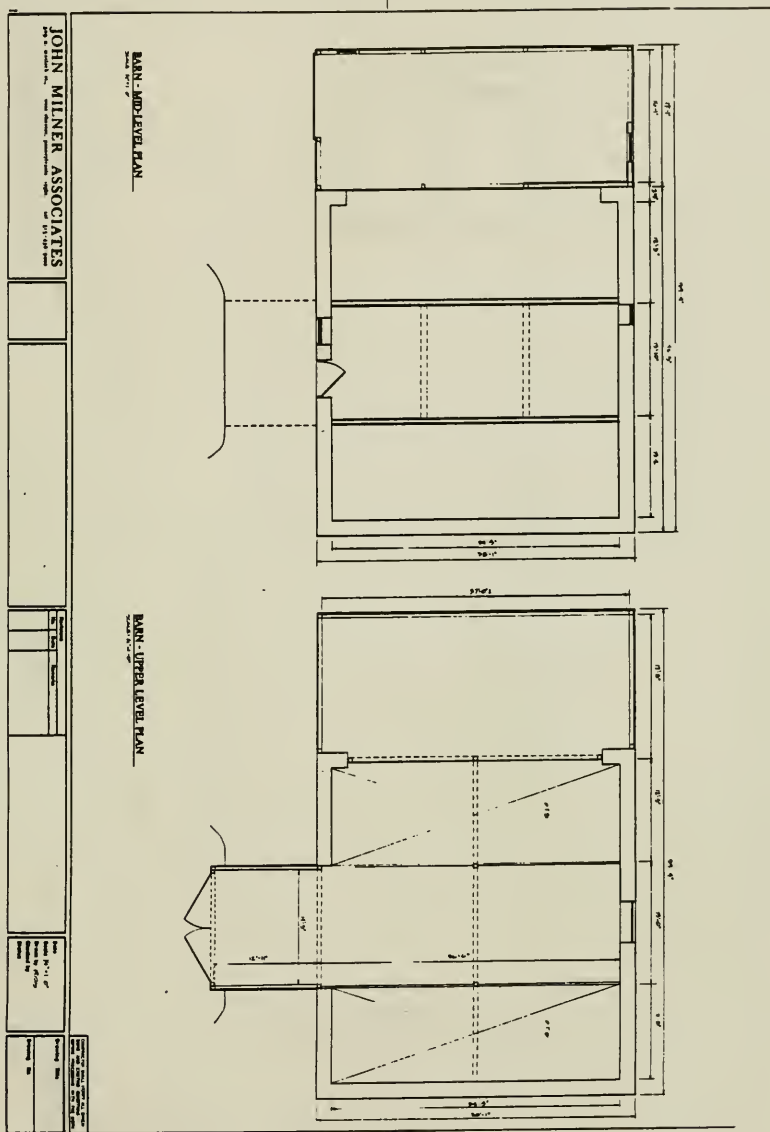
APPENDIX A
THE AARON GARRETT PROPERTY: SITE ORIENTATION MAP



APPENDIX B
 THE AARON GARRETT FARMHOUSE: ARCHITECTURAL PLANS

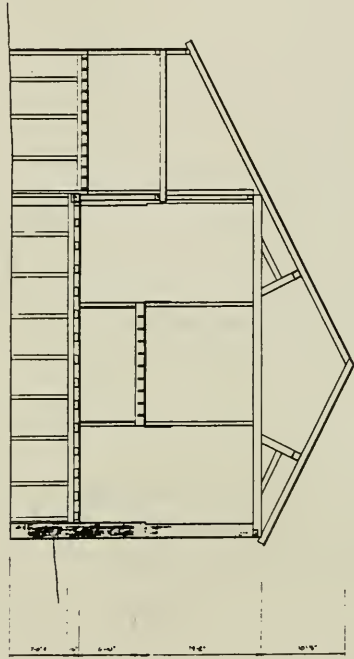


APPENDIX C
 THE AARON GARRETT BARN: ARCHITECTURAL PLANS AND SECTION



JOHN MILNER ASSOCIATES
 INCORPORATED
 1000 WEST 10TH AVENUE, SUITE 100
 DENVER, COLORADO 80202
 TEL: 333-1111

BARN - SECTION



| | | |
|-----|------|----------|
| NO. | DATE | REVISION |
| | | |
| | | |

DATE: 11/11/11
 DRAWN BY: J.M.
 CHECKED BY: J.M.
 SCALE: AS SHOWN

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APPENDIX D
DRAWING OF TYPICAL QUAKER-PLAN FARMHOUSE

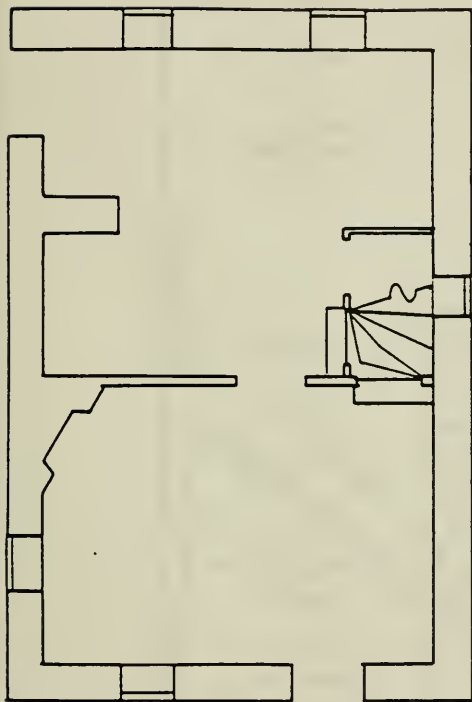


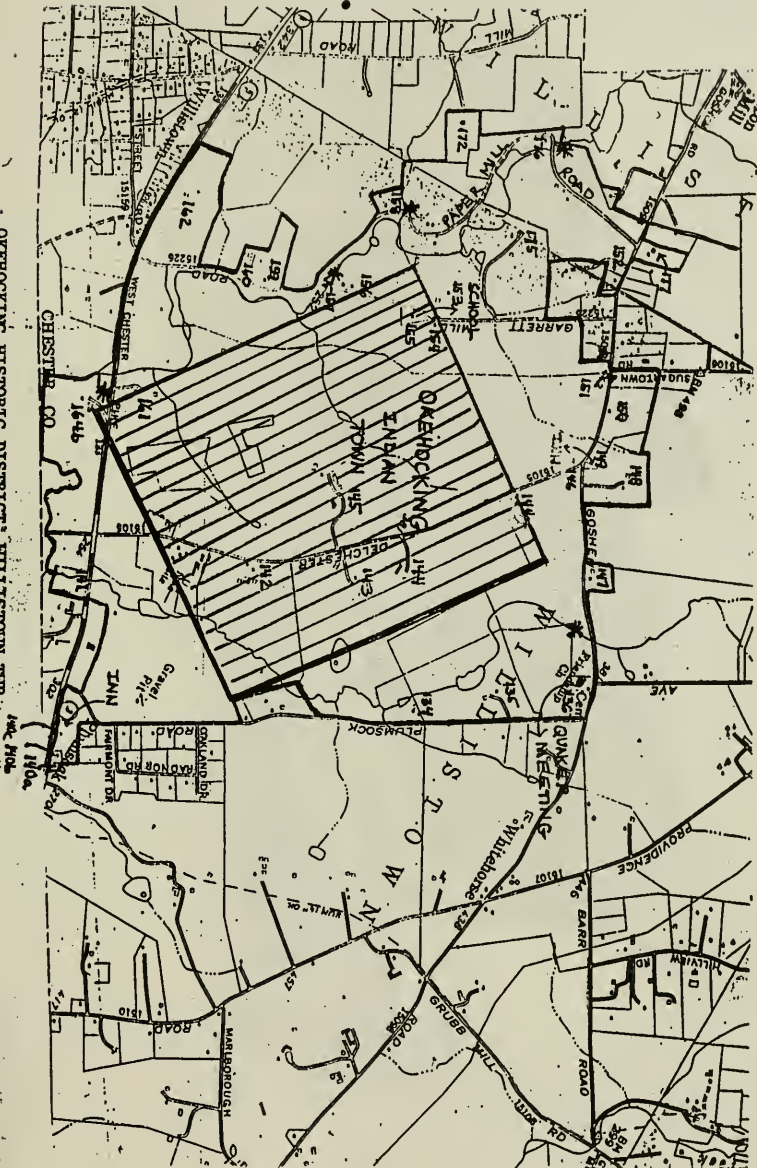
Figure 2:4. Double-cell-plan farmhouse in southeastern Pennsylvania: West Chester vicinity, Chester County (late eighteenth century).

Reprinted from Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700-1900, Figure 2:4.

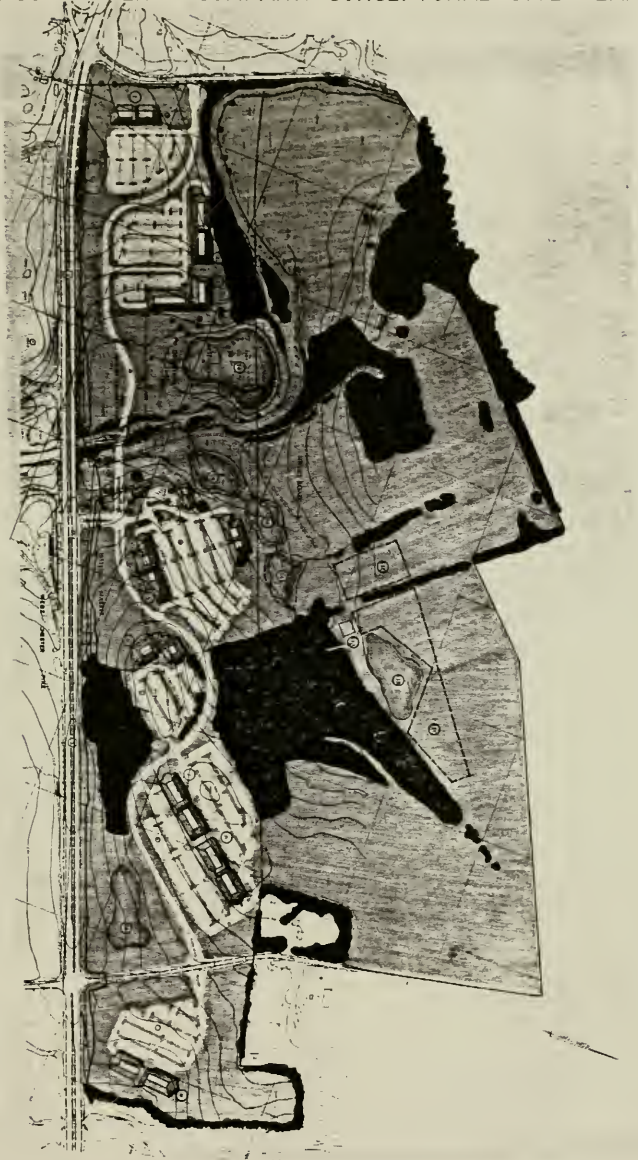
APPENDIX F
 OKEHOCKING HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP

* MILL SITES

OKEHOCKING HISTORIC DISTRICT, WILLSTOWN TWP.
 BOUNDARY MAP 1/89
 CHESTER CO.

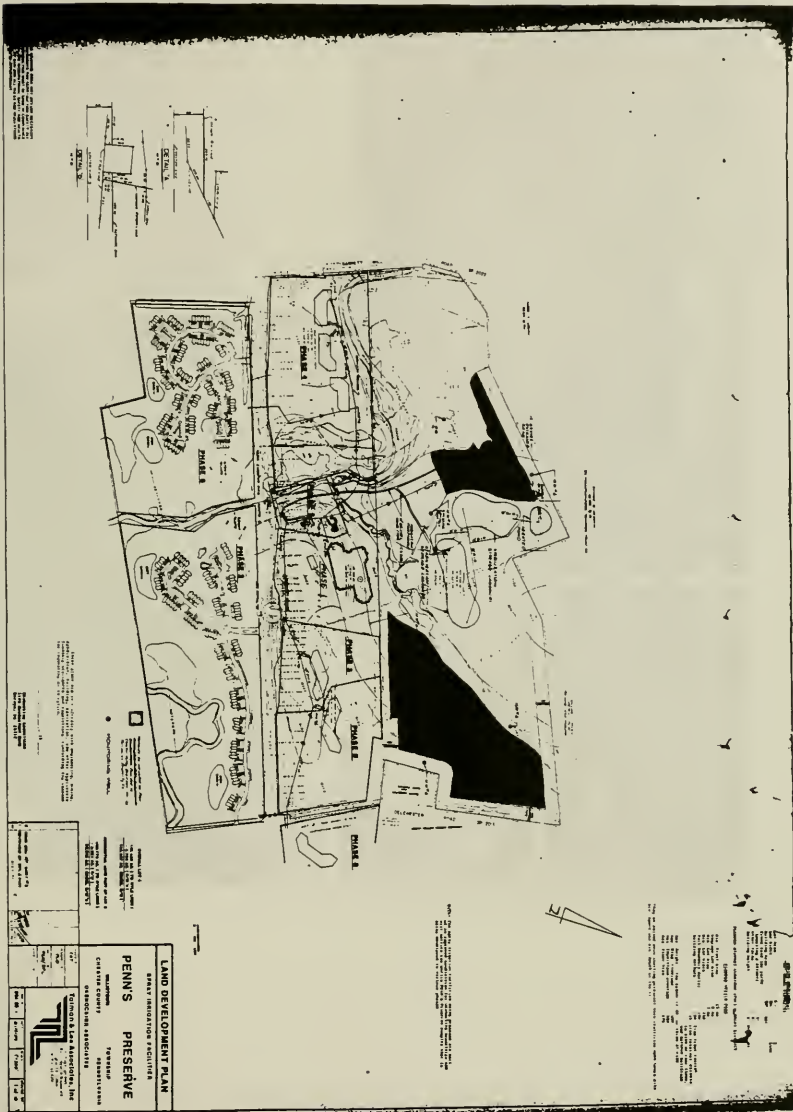


APPENDIX G
TERRAMICS PROPERTY COMPANY: CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN

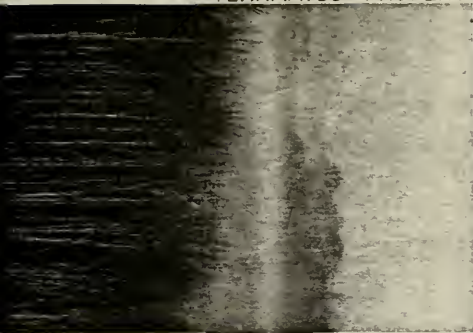


**CONCEPTUAL
SITE PLAN**

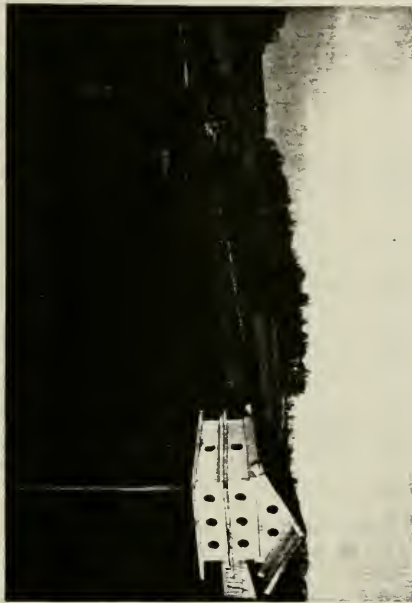
APPENDIX H TERRAMICS PROPERTY COMPANY: LAND DEVELOPMENT MAP



APPENDIX I
TERRAMICS PROPERTY COMPANY: MARKETING PICTORIAL



Reprinted from Terramics Route 3 Property, 4.



Reprinted from Terramics Route 3 Property, 5.

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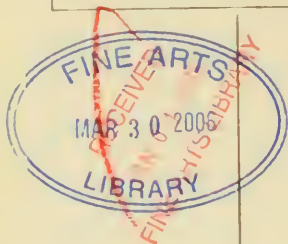
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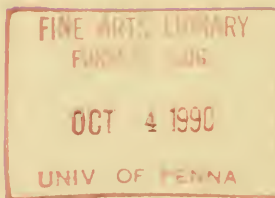
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