

HISTORICAL COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION

January 12, 2022

Re: Toll Brothers – 100 Greenridge Road Conditional Use Application

Prepared by Gwen Jonik, Township Secretary, at the request of the Historical Commission

The Historical Commission's October 2021 motion/recommendations for this project included a condition for "further investigation by the Township of stone structure and any other identified possible historic structure, ruin or landscape feature".

The Township's Historical Preservation Consultant, Bob Wise of Richard Grubb & Associates, visited the site December 20, 2021, and identified several stone ruins, stone walls, an old road, and prepared the attached 'Irwin Rice Parcel' Report.

The Report makes a number of recommendations regarding the stone ruins and walls and an old road located on the 100 Greenridge Road property. The Historical Commission also recommends that in addition to revisions to the existing conditions plan and the proposed development plan to show the features on the Irwin Rice Parcel already noted in the Report, the existing conditions plan and proposed development plan be revised to show the Benjamin McClure Farm stone walls identified in the Report and the stone wall along Greenridge Road.

Historical Commission members:

Vivian McCardell

Nancy Copp

Jordan Staub

Aaron Stoyack

Michael Groff



RICHARD GRUBB & ASSOCIATES
Historic Architecture • Archaeology • Historical Research

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January 11, 2022

Vivian McCardell
Upper Uwchlan Township Historical Commission
140 Pottstown Pike
Chester Springs, Pennsylvania 19425

Re: Irwin/Rice Parcel, 100 Greenridge Road, Upper Uwchlan Township

Dear Ms. McCardell:

As requested, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc. (RGA) is pleased to provide Upper Uwchlan Township with the following report for the property located at 100 Greenridge Road. Specifically, the report discusses a former outparcel on that property (the Irwin/Rice parcel), as well as stone walls located elsewhere on the property. The report includes recommendations for preservation, where possible, and interpretation.

Irwin/Rice Parcel

The property herein described as the Irwin/Rice parcel was located in the northwest part of Upper Uwchlan Township on the boundary between two large farm properties. It was accessed by a now abandoned private lane off today's Greenridge Road. Vestiges of the lane running along the property line between the two adjacent historic farm properties are readily apparent. The 3.6-acre (approximate) Irwin/Rice parcel existed as a separate parcel from 1856 to sometime between 1887 and 1900. It was derived from the 155-acre farm to the west which is identified as the Benjamin McClure Farmstead in the Upper Uwchlan Township historic resource inventory (resource #011), and at the end of its separate existence it was consolidated back into that farm. The name of the subject parcel is based on two residents whose names are indicated on historic maps: John Irwin (shown as Erwin on historic maps) and Jacob J. Rice.

Background Research

The Irwin/Rice parcel was subdivided from the Benjamin McClure farm in 1856. In 1855, James Butler purchased the 106-acre Benjamin McClure farm (Chester County Deeds 1855: Deed book Z5-122-240). The following year, Butler subdivided a 3.6-acre parcel (the Irwin/Rice parcel) from the farm, and sold it to James Buffington for \$265. The deed describes the property as "all that messuage and tract of land," indicating the parcel contained a house (CCD 1856: F6-128-556).

James Buffington (1805-1883) appears in the U.S. Census of 1850 as a carpenter living in Sadsburyville with his wife Hannah and two daughters (U.S. Census 1850). It is possible that Buffington built the dwelling on the subject parcel in the early 1850s, moved there with his family, and then purchased the property. In 1859, Buffington sold the subject parcel (CCD 1859: F6-128-556). Buffington's wife is not indicated on the deed, suggesting that she may have died. After selling the subject parcel, Buffington purchased a farm on the boundary between Upper Uwchlan and Uwchlan townships, south of the village of Eagle. In 1862, Buffington repurchased the subject parcel, and then sold it 11 months later. By this time, he was using the

middle initial “G” and he did not live on the property during his second period of ownership. Instead, Buffington lived on and farmed his property south of Eagle, and he was an active member of the Windsor Baptist Church. Buffington’s remains were interred at the Windsor Baptist Church cemetery along with those of his second and third wives (Find-a-Grave.com).

John Irwin appears to be the first definitive resident of the dwelling on the Irwin/Rice parcel. His surname is spelled and signed “Irwin” in deeds (and thus in this report) but as “Erwin” on historic maps and in the U.S. Census. The U.S. Census of 1850 indicates that John Erwin was a 46-year old carpenter living in East Brandywine Township with his wife and eight children (U.S. Census 1850). At the time of the 1860 Census, however, John Erwin was living on the subject parcel, and was aged 51 with no family (U.S. Census 1860). This census listing of John Erwin describes the subject parcel’s resident correctly and his flanking neighbors are listed as Davis Buckwalter and Davis Bishop, who lived to the east and south, respectively. John Erwin appears on the 1860 T.J. Kennedy, *Map of Chester County, Pennsylvania* as “J. Erwin,” the spelling used in the Census (Figure 1). Irwin left little documentation of his life after he sold the property in 1862. He never again appears in the U.S. Census in Chester County.

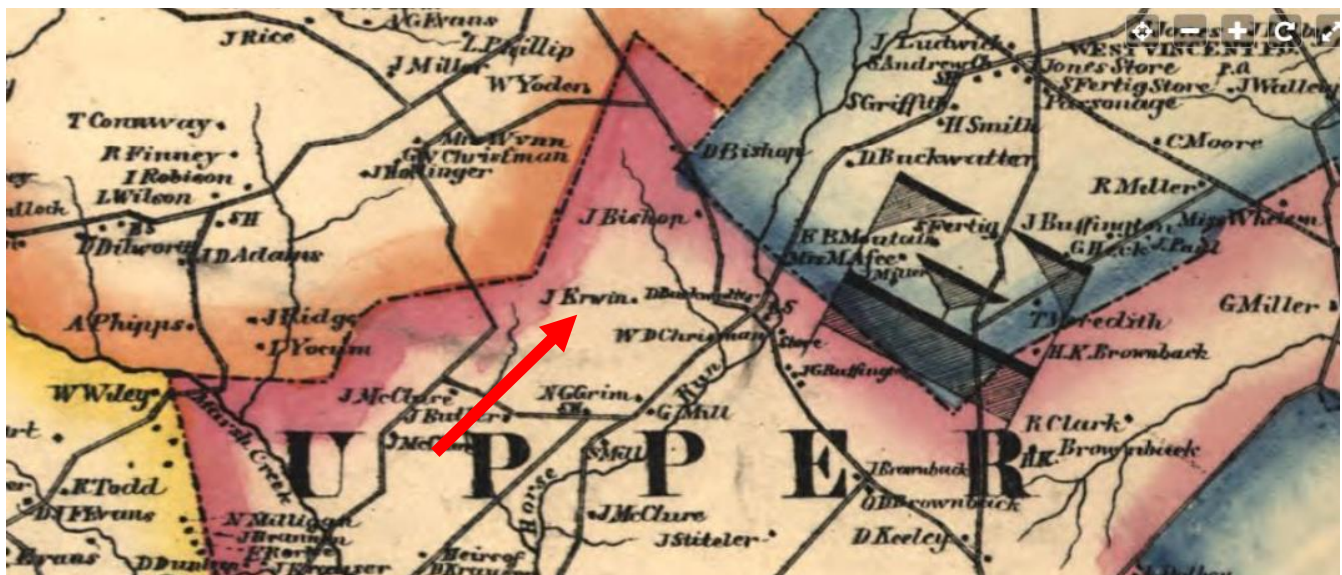


Figure 1. 1860 T.J. Kennedy, *Map of Chester County, Pennsylvania*, with “J. Erwin” indicated.

William Osborn owned the subject parcel for six years in the 1860s. At the time of the 1850 Census, Osborn reported that he was 49 years old and had been born in England. He was a single man boarding with a stocking weaver in Conshohocken (U.S. Census 1850). He purchased the Irwin/Rice property from Buffington in 1863 (CCD 1863: V6-143-197). During his brief residence, he married and had a son. William and Ann Osborn sold the property in 1869. They eventually lived in Reading, where William worked as a brass molder (U.S. Census 1880).

The next owner of the Irwin/Rice parcel was the Rice family. Jacob J. Rice (1801-circa 1885) owned the house and parcel for 14 years, having purchased it from Osborn in 1869 (CCD 1869: S7-165-302). Rice’s name appears on the 1873 A.R. Witmer, *Atlas of Chester Co., Pennsylvania* (Figure 2) and the 1883 Forsey Breou, *Breou’s Official Series of Farm Maps, Chester County, Pennsylvania* (Figure 3). It is possible that Rice had the parcel surveyed during his ownership, as all prior deeds describe it as three acres and 90 perches (3.56 acres) while all deeds beginning with the 1869 sale describe it as three acres and 97 perches (3.61 acres). The metes and bounds of the property remained the same until it was absorbed back into the Benjamin McClure farm.

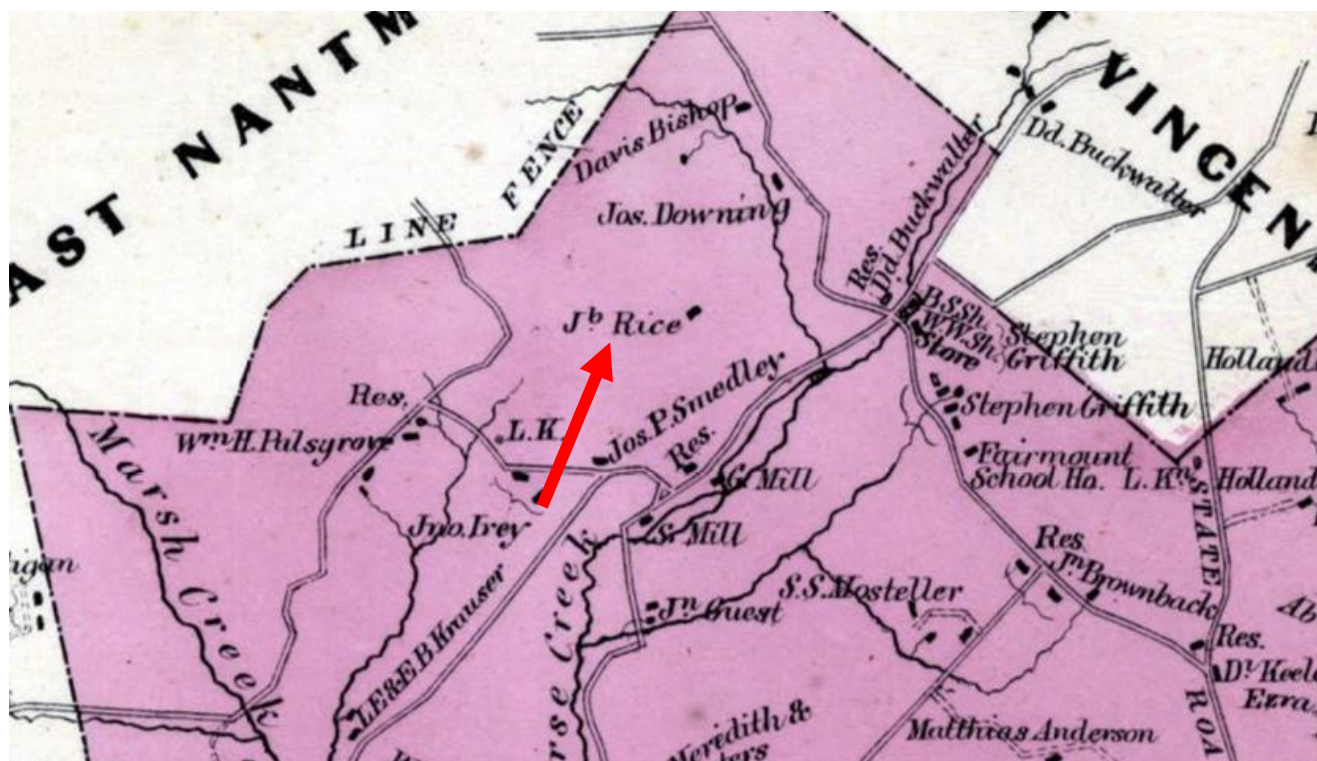


Figure 2: 1873 A.R. Witmer, *Atlas of Chester Co., Pennsylvania*. "Jb. Rice" indicates Jacob J. Rice, the owner / occupant.

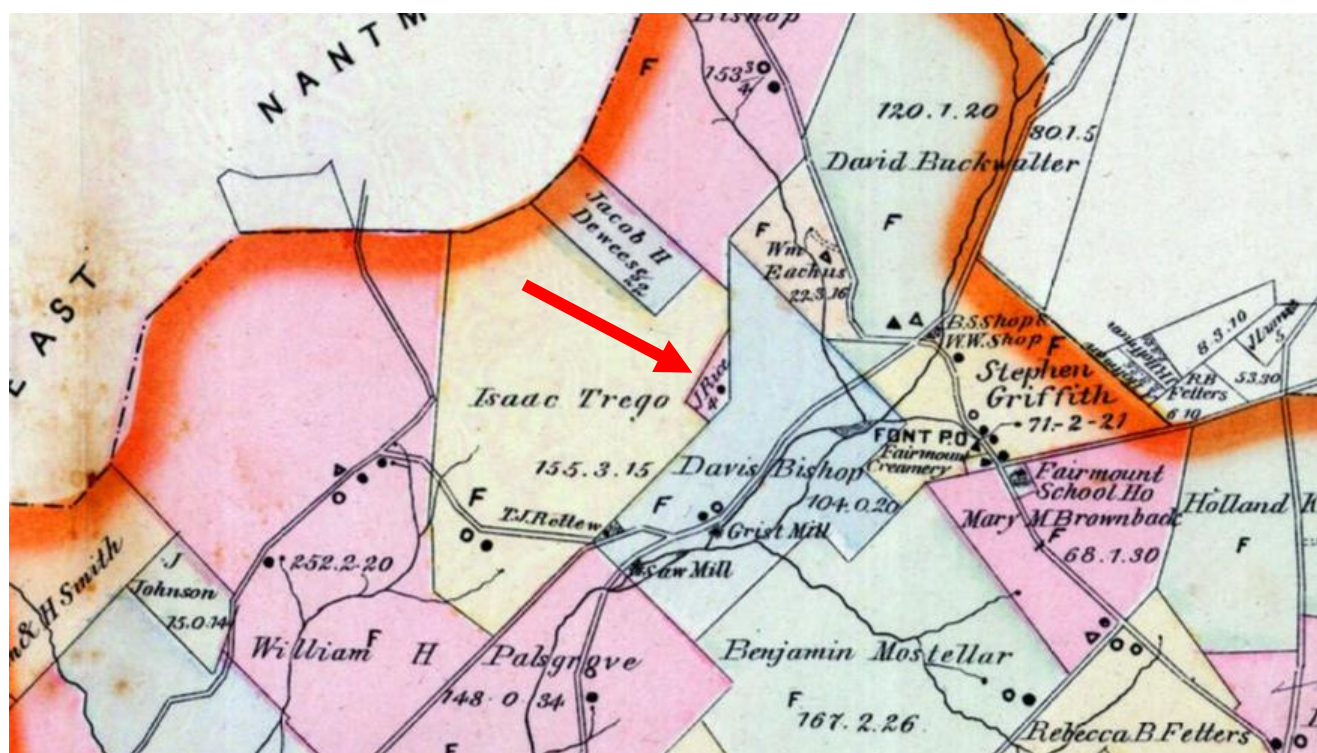


Figure 3: 1883 Forsey Breou, *Breou's Official Series of Farm Maps, Chester County, Pennsylvania*. The parcel is identified as "J. Rice." The solid dot indicates a stone house.

Rice only appears in the U.S. Census in 1880. At that time, he was living with his daughter and son-in-law in West Vincent Township as a retired farmer (U.S. Census 1880). In 1883, Rice sold the Irwin/Rice parcel

to his son Morton T. Rice (CCD 1883: O9-211-324). Morton Rice (1826-1889) likely never lived in the Irwin/Rice house. In 1860, he and his wife Elizabeth had a farm in Perkiomen Township, Montgomery County (U.S. Census 1860). Morton Rice owned the Irwin/Rice parcel for 3½ years. In 1887, he sold it to Isaac Trego, who owned the former and aforementioned Benjamin McClure property, from which the Irwin/Rice parcel was subdivided in 1856 (CCD 1887: F10-228-178). Morton Rice died two years after selling the Irwin/Rice parcel, and his remains were interred in the burial ground of the Skippack Church of the Brethren in Montgomery County (Find-a-Grave.com).

It is unclear how long the house stood on the property; research for this project did not identify evidence that the house survived past the end of the nineteenth century. Deeds suggest that the house was in poor condition even in the nineteenth century. The highest property value was in 1869, when Jacob J. Rice paid \$545 for the house and land (CCD 1869: S7-165-302). The parcel's value then fell to \$350 in 1883 and to \$250 in 1887 (see Table 1. Chain of Title). Perhaps the house was vacant throughout the 1880s, as Jacob Rice was living in West Vincent in 1880. No twentieth-century map indicates the subject dwelling. The initial U.S.G.S. topographic quadrangle for the area was published in 1906 and it and the 18 subsequent quadrangle maps do not show the house (Figure 4). A detailed road map of Chester County, completed in 1941, shows buildings along Chester County roads and does not indicate a house in this subject parcel's location (Figure 5).

By 1900, when Isaac Trego Assignees sold the entire, then 159-acre property to Mary E. Safer, it again contained the Irwin/Rice parcel, which had been consolidated back into the former McClure farm property between 1887 and 1900.

Table 1. Chain of Title.

Reference Date	Grantor	Grantee	Price Acreage	Notes
G12-279-153 4/20/1900	Isaac Trego Assignees	Mary E. Shafer of West Chester	\$4,900 159.45 acres	Two messages and tracts of land. The subject parcel was derived from the following deed.
F10-228-178 3/7/1887	Morton T. & Elizabeth Rice of Lower Providence Twp.	Isaac Trego	\$250 3 acres, 97 perches	All that certain message, tract, or lot of land. Same as the following.
O9-211-324 7/10/1883	Jacob J. Rice of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	Morton T. Rice of Lower Providence Twp.	\$350 3 acres, 97 perches	All that certain message, tract, or lot of land. Same as the following.
S7-165-302 4/1/1869	William & Ann Osborn of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	Jacob J. Rice of East Nantmeal Twp.	\$545 3 acres, 90 perches	All that certain message, tract, or lot of land. Same as the following.
V6-143-197 3/27/1863	James G. & Mary Buffington of Uwchlan Twp.	William Osborn of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	\$525 3 acres, 90 perches	All that message and tract of land. Same as the following.
U6-142-68 4/11/1862	John Irwin of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	James G. Buffington of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	\$225 3 acres, 90 perches	All that message and tract of land. Same as the following.
L6-133-464 3/22/1859	James G. Buffington of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	John Irwin of Upper Uwchlan Twp.	\$350 3 acres, 90 perches	All that message and tract of land. Same as the following.
F6-128-556 4/11/1856	James Butler of Uwchlan Twp.	James Buffington of Uwchlan Twp.	\$265 3 acres, 90 perches	All that message and tract of land. Part of the following.
Z5-122-240 3/26/1855	Jacob & Phebe Dingee of Uwchlan Twp.	James Butler of Uwchlan Twp.	\$10,600 106 acres	All that message and tract of land.



Figure 4: Detail of the 1906 U.S.G.S. quad map (Downingtown quadrangle). The arrow indicates the approximate location of the Irwin/Rice parcel.

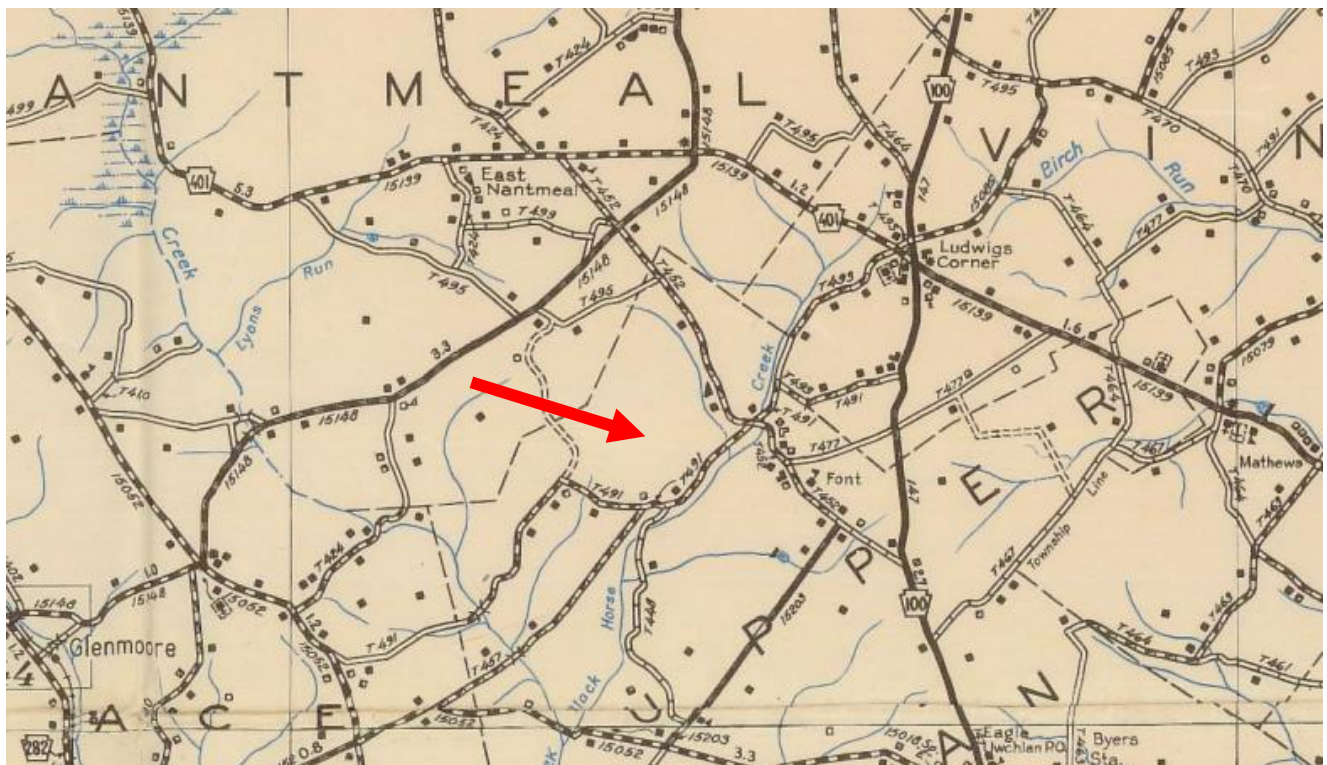


Figure 5: Detail of the 1941 *Official Highway Map, Chester County, Pennsylvania*. The arrow indicates the approximate location of the Irwin/Rice parcel.

Unfortunately, the Chester County Historical Society Research Library is closed for the month of January, and thus additional property research could not be conducted, such as examining newspaper advertisements.

The project site and vicinity was partially inspected in December 2021 by Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc. (RGA), and no indication of a foundation of a house was identified. The former dwelling, though made of stone according to the 1883 map, may have been a simple structure, and thus did not last into the twentieth century, particularly if it sat vacant. All that remains of the historic development of the subject parcel is a small, semi-circular and highly disturbed masonry structure at ground level, which is possibly the top of a well. The structure sits on the edge of an abandoned private lane traversing part of 100 Greenridge. The lane, which traverses the hillside, is quite wide for a private farm lane, and to level it, large stones were removed and placed on the downward slope side of the road. Other stones appear to have been added in places to create a stone wall. In addition, a rubble stone wall lies perpendicular to the lane on a northwest/southeast orientation. This rubble stone wall may have delineated the southwest boundary of the Irwin/Rice parcel. The land near the well structure has been disturbed over the last several years. The well structure may have been filled in at this time, and any foundation may have been removed.

Although the parcel and abandoned lane are located along the border of the Benjamin McClure Farmstead (township resource #011) and the Davis Miller House property (township resource #014), they historically existed on separate parcels. The Upper Uwchlan Township Historical Commission questioned whether the property was associated with the adjacent mill property; research conducted for this report found no connection between the Irwin/Rice parcel, the abandoned lane, and the former mill operation that existed on the adjacent Davis Miller property.

Historic Resources on the Former Benjamin McClure Farm

This report also examined the stone walls on the former Benjamin McClure Farm, also located at 100 Greenridge Road. The former Benjamin McClure Farm contains a stone wall just west of the circa 1985 stone mansion house. The Upper Uwchlan Township Historical Commission requested that RGA examine this wall for historic significance. The wall appears to be one of several that are visible on the 1937 aerial photograph (Figure 6).

Regarding the stone wall west of the current house, RGA was asked whether it could have been associated with the former Davis Mill, which was located across Greenridge Road. An examination of the Benjamin McClure Farm property indicated that it was always a separate farm property and is not directly associated with the Davis property or milling operation. As such, the stone wall structure on the former Benjamin McClure Farm does not appear to be associated with the mill. The stone wall more likely was part of a field clearing program initiated by the various farmers, as the land is quite rocky. The large quantity of rocks that are part of this stone wall structure may be a factor in why they were not carried to the property edge, as is often the case. However, the wall is not a typical stone farm wall. The wall runs north/south, is approximately 300 feet long, and the northern third of the wall is wider and consists of strewn stone rubble of various sizes. While it is several feet wide, it is only approximately 2 feet high. The southern two-thirds of the wall features stacked rocks, many are quite large. The wall varies in size with an average height of approximately three feet and an approximate width of two to three feet. Unlike the northern portion of the wall, there is no rubble around the stacked portion. It almost appears to be two walls: the strewn rubble wall, which was then extended south to form the stacked stone southern portion of the wall.

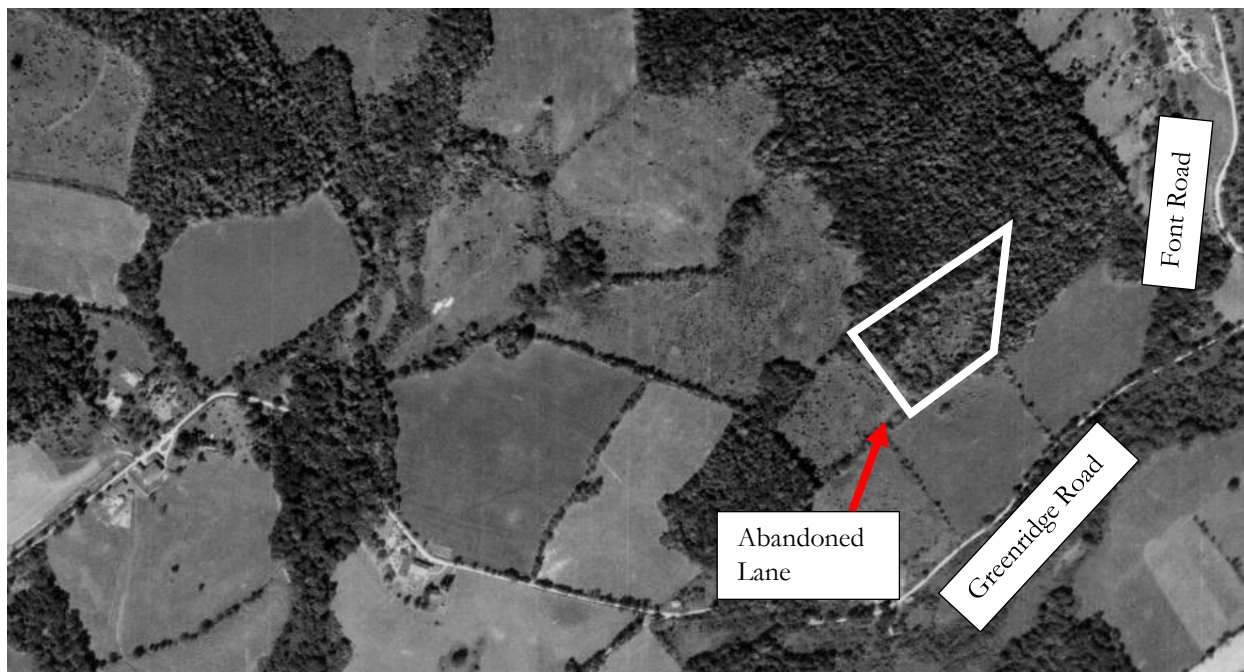


Figure 6: Historic aerial photograph dated September 20, 1937, adapted from the Pennsylvania Imagery Navigator (tile ahk_4351). The Irwin/Rice Parcel, identified by the white outline, is in the process of reforestation. Its abandoned lane leads southwest to Greenridge Road along a treeline. The larger Benjamin McClure farm property to the west and south displays farm fields divided by tree lines (possibly with stone walls).

The stacked portion may have been constructed for landscape reasons by the previous owner as part of the estate development; however, the previous owner has no recollection of constructing the wall. Stones used for stacking may have come from the rubble portion to the north, as well as from clearing the land for the estate. Again, many of the stones are quite large, requiring a substantial amount of manpower (or machinery) to construct the wall. The wall stops abruptly at the southern terminus, where it is out of sight from the manor house. The stacked portion of the wall may also have been constructed years earlier for animal husbandry reasons and supplemented by fencing. This however is usually not the case with historic farms, particularly at this far distance from barns and other structures, which often incorporate foundation walls or barnyard walls for such purposes. (A review of historic maps indicated that there were no buildings in this location.). Ultimately the stacked portion of the wall most likely was built during the construction of the present estate.

Stone Retaining Wall

The Historical Commission also asked RGA to comment on the stone retaining wall that runs along the north side of Greenridge Road. The wall is partially visible from the road and rises to a height of one to two feet. RGA found no information about this wall. It may have been constructed as a retaining wall to protect Greenridge Road.

Historic Preservation Recommendations

Irwin/Rice Parcel

The well-like structure, abandoned lane, and related stone walls appear to be historic resources associated with the former Irwin/Rice parcel. If possible they should be preserved as they relate to the dwelling once located there. It is our understanding that the parcel will not be disturbed by the planned development, except for parts of the stone wall. Specific recommendations:

1. Request that the developer revise the existing conditions plan and the proposed development plan to show these features and the extent of reuse and preservation. Work with developer to limit disturbance, where possible.
2. Request that the developer undertake an archeological study to investigate the Irwin/Rice parcel, this should help determine the size and age of the former dwelling.
3. Complete photographic documentation to document the Irwin/Rice parcel, including the well structure, abandoned lane, and stone wall.
4. Work with the developer to create an interpretive sign, which conveys the history of the Irwin/Rice parcel. The sign will be located near the well-like structure along the abandoned lane, the latter of which will be preserved and reused as a walking path at the location of the Irwin/Rice parcel.

Benjamin McClure Farm Stone Walls

These stone walls are located in the main area of future development and are historic resources; however, they will be demolished as part of the development plan.

1. Complete photographic documentation to document the stone walls before they are demolished.
2. Work with the developer to determine if sections of the wall could remain, such as along a new lot line, note those sections on the plan, and ensure that they will be preserved.

Stone Retaining Wall along Greenridge Road

The stone wall is located along Greenridge Road and is partially visible from the road. No development will occur near the wall and a walking path is proposed immediately north of the wall.

1. Work with the developer to preserve the stone retaining wall; if possible, incorporate it into the proposed walking path in this location.

General Recommendations

1. Where possible, preserve all historic elements, including those not covered in this report.
2. Consider naming the development and its roads after historic property owners.
3. To reduce impact on the property and adjacent historic properties, design the development's entrance to appear as a simple farm lane with appropriate signage.

Irwin/Rice Parcel, 100 Greenridge Road
Upper Uwchlan Township
January 11, 2022
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Conclusion

This concludes the report. Should you have questions, please contact Robert Wise at rwise@rgaincorporated.com or Seth Hinshaw at shinshaw@rgaincorporated.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Wise, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Robert J. Wise, Jr.
Principal Senior Architectural Historian