An aerial photograph of an archaeological excavation site. Two workers in light blue shirts and khaki pants are bent over, working in a large, rectangular pit. The pit is surrounded by low, rough stone walls. The ground is dark brown soil, and there are some wooden crates and a green bag nearby. The background shows a large, circular, terraced structure, possibly a well or a large cistern, with concentric stone rings. The overall scene is one of active archaeological work.

# Lifting a Lid on Long-Forgotten Lives

*An Archaeological Investigation of  
a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Tenant House Site  
in Exeter Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania*

A Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc. Publication

# Lifting a Lid on Long-Forgotten Lives

*An Archaeological Investigation of  
a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Tenant House Site  
in Exeter Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania*

A Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc. Publication

2010



*An archaeologist flags features exposed on the Bishop Site when topsoil was stripped in mid-September, 2008.*

*Lifting a Lid on Long-Forgotten Lives:  
An Archaeological Investigation of a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Tenant House Site in  
Exeter Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania*

This copyright-free publication was produced by Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc. (CHRS, Inc.) in 2010 for the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, as mitigation for the effects of the Shelbourne Road Improvement Project (S.R. 0422, Section JG2) in Exeter Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania on the Bishop Site (36Bk750) and the Pratt Site (36Bk671). While the publication as a whole is in the public domain, the historic photographs employed herein are privately owned and may not be reproduced in full or in part without their owners' permission.

Principal author: Philip Ruth, Director of Research, CHRS, Inc.  
Contributing author: Kenneth J. Basalik, Ph.D., President, CHRS, Inc.

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

Why Archaeology, and Why *Here*? / 1

## CHAPTER ONE

Historical Sketch of the Bishop Farm Tenant House / 7

## CHAPTER TWO

Archaeological Excavations and Analysis / 37

For Further Reading and Research / 54

An archaeologist watches for archaeological features exposed through the stripping of topsoil on the Bishop Site in mid-September, 2008.



No structures were denoted on the site of the Bishop Farm Tenant House (red circle) on a detail of a Berks County map published by Henry and Boyer in 1854. This is the earliest map on which the Township's private residences and owners were identified. The blue line delineates the boundary of George Bishop's farm. Bishop's farmhouse is denoted in the farm's southeastern corner, along the north side of the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike.

## INTRODUCTION

---

### Why Archaeology, and Why *Here*?

If you are like most Americans, you have a good sense of what archaeologists do, and why they do it. Polling reveals that “Americans correctly view archaeologists’ work as digging, excavating, finding, analyzing, researching, studying, documenting, and, more specifically, analyzing and researching the past to discover and learn what life and past civilizations were like.”<sup>1</sup> This doesn’t mean there are *no* misconceptions floating around. You might be surprised to learn, for instance, that archaeologists do not study rocks and stones (that is the business of geologists), nor are they experts on fossils and dinosaurs (that is paleontology’s realm). Archaeologists will also tell you that the glamorous picture of adventure and romance painted by Hollywood bears little resemblance to the painstaking and quiet endeavors that fill their days—meticulously moving dirt, cleaning and labeling artifacts, recording data, and poring over inventories and maps.

Poll results also indicate that most Americans believe archaeology is worth the effort. There is a general perception that archaeology can help us improve the future by more fully understanding both the past and the present. People recognize that archaeological artifacts and sites can have aesthetic value, spiritual worth, and historical significance for populations and individuals. For these reasons, the majority of Americans support legislation designed to protect and preserve archaeological resources.

Even *with* this awareness and appreciation, people can be startled to find an archaeological investigation underway in their own neighborhood. Most Americans assume archaeology is only performed in exotic locales. In fact,

---

<sup>1</sup>*Exploring Public Perceptions and Attitudes about Archaeology*, Harris Interactive Poll, February 2000.

hundreds of archaeological investigations are conducted in the United States every year. A few “digs” are high-profile operations overseen by historical organizations and covered by the media. The vast majority, however, are relatively brief investigations necessitated by federal, state, and/or local laws designed to preserve the nation’s archaeological resources. Surveys of the latter variety are part of an environmental clearance protocol sometimes referred to as “the Section 106 process.”

### **The Section 106 process**

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is the cornerstone of the nation’s cultural resource preservation policy. Amended and strengthened several times since 1966, this law established the National Register of Historic Places, the office and duties of state historic preservation officers (SHPOs), a program of grants-in-aid to enable SHPOs to conduct their work, the Certified Local Government program to identify communities that meet certain preservation standards, federal agency responsibilities concerning historic preservation activities, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This legislation was followed in 1969 by passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires federal agencies to prepare impact statements for undertakings that might have an effect on environmental quality (cultural resources being a principal contributor to environmental quality). Yet another law with far-reaching implications—the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act—was passed in 1974. This legislation extended the protections established by the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960 to all federally funded, licensed, or aided undertakings where scientific, historical, or archaeological data might be impacted.

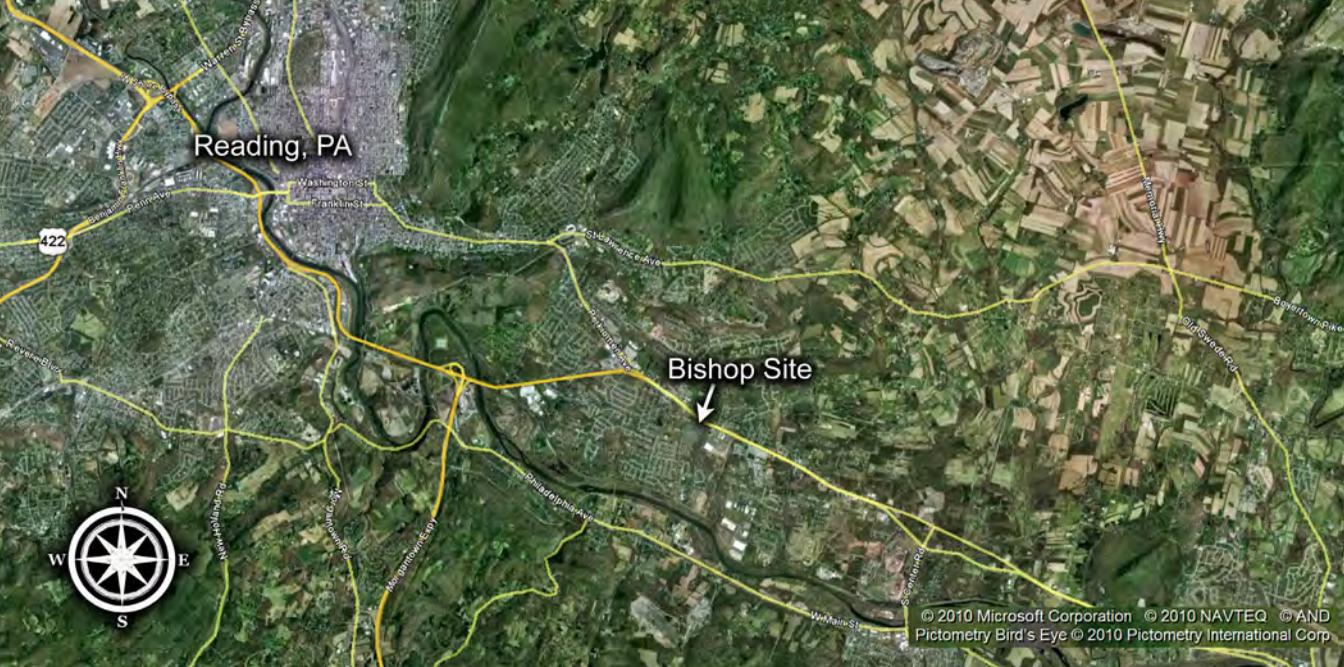
The unofficial but commonly employed term “Section 106 process” derives from the section of the National Historic Preservation Act requiring federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings or licensing activities on historic properties, while giving the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to review and comment on the potential effects of these activities. The Advisory Council has defined the procedure for satisfying Section 106 requirements in a set of regulations titled “Protection of Historic Properties.”

Pennsylvania’s Legislature has enacted laws aimed at further protecting the Commonwealth’s cultural resources, whether or not they are imperiled by federally funded, licensed, or aided undertakings. The linchpin of this regulatory effort is Act No. 1978-273, amended as Act No. 1988-72 (“the History Code”), which requires, among other things, that Commonwealth-funded undertakings be subjected to the same Section 106 process as federally-funded projects. Pennsylvania’s SHPO—the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), Bureau for Historic Preservation—has also published guidelines designed to promote consistency and efficiency in the treatment of cultural resources across the Commonwealth. These directives include 1991’s “Cultural Resource Management in Pennsylvania: Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations.”

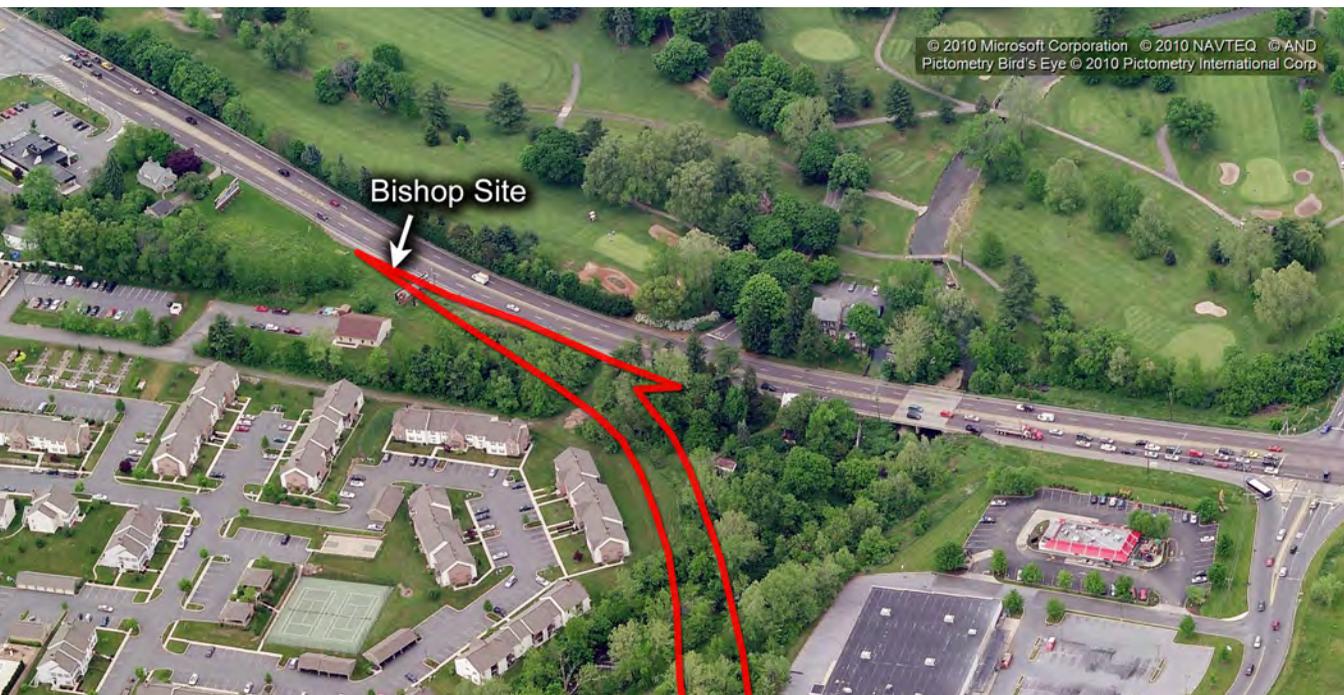
### **The Shelbourne Road Improvement Project and the Section 106 process**

A transportation improvement project initiated by the Reading Area Transportation Study in the late 1980s called for construction of “jug-handle” traffic connectors on either side of the intersection of State Route 422 (the Benjamin Franklin Highway) and Shelbourne Road in Berks County’s Exeter Township. The project would be undertaken by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Because the project involved both federal and state funding, the agencies and their prime contractor—Rettew Associates, Inc. of Lancaster, Pennsylvania—needed to have the “Area of Potential Effect,” or APE, cleared through the Section 106 process before site work could begin (an APE is defined as “the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties”).

Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc. (CHRS, Inc.) of North Wales, Pennsylvania was contracted to perform an initial survey of cultural resources—both above and below ground—within the APE. To address above-ground resources, the firm’s historic preservation specialists attempted to identify all properties in the project’s immediate vicinity that were at least 50 years of age. As noted in the *Historic Resources Survey Report* submitted by CHRS, Inc. in 1989, a stone farmhouse standing on the north side of Route 422, west of the Shelbourne



*The Bishop Site was discovered in 2001 along the south side of Pennsylvania State Route 422 (Benjamin Franklin Highway), approximately 4 miles southeast of Reading, Pennsylvania, during an archaeological survey conducted as part of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Shelburne Road Improvement Project. Part of the Bishop Site lay in the northwestern tip of the proposed location of the Project's western jug-handle, outlined below in red.*



Road intersection, had several years earlier been listed in the National Register of Historic Places (our nation's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation). The National Register Nomination Form prepared for that property indicated that the residence had been constructed around 1769 by politician and miller John Bishop. CHRS, Inc. personnel identified only one other above-ground resource within view of the APE that appeared to be eligible for listing in the National Register. Standing across Route 422 from the circa-1769 "John Bishop House" was a well-preserved stone dwelling with a datestone reflecting its construction in 1808, when John Bishop owned the property (as reflected in deed records). CHRS, Inc. thus included a National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for this property—designated "the Bishop/Tyson House"—in the 1989 Historic Resources Survey report.

In an effort to identify below-ground resources, CHRS, Inc. archaeologists performed an archaeological investigation of the APE. This investigation entailed the hand-digging of "shovel test pits" at regular intervals across the project area, as well as documentary research. The systematic testing brought to light two areas with multiple archaeological deposits, which qualified them as "archaeological sites." One site was an undatable scattering of stone flakes left behind by Native American tool-makers. On the Pennsylvania Archaeological Site Survey (PASS) form that CHRS, Inc. filled out for this site, the "lithic scatter" was recorded as "the Pratt Site," and given the PASS designation "36Bk671."

The other archaeological site discovered in the course of the investigation was much more extensive, and its artifacts could be dated to the nineteenth century. Documentary research strongly suggested that this site—on a rise on the south side of Route 422, roughly 150 yards west of the John Bishop House—had been occupied at least during the 1860s by a tenant house owned by farmer George K. Bishop, a son of John Bishop. As of 1860, George Bishop owned the surrounding farm and lived in the circa-1769 "mansion house" on the north side of the highway. The archaeologists thus referred to the presumed tenant house location as "the Bishop Site (36Bk750)" when they prepared a PASS form for it in 2001.

A second phase of archaeological testing performed by CHRS, Inc. in 2005 (after the APE had been enlarged and refined) was designed to more clearly define the extent of the Bishop and Pratt Sites, and to determine if either site

was eligible for listing in the National Register. Excavations on the Bishop Site partially revealed a stone foundation on the spot where a tenant house had been denoted on an Exeter Township map published in 1860 (Page 9). The testing also indicated that the Site had remained relatively undisturbed through the twentieth century, and thus constituted an “archaeological snapshot” of nineteenth-century rural life. As the archaeologists noted in their *Phase II Archaeological Survey Summary Report and Phase III Work Plan*, “few sites of this type have been previously examined either through documentary research or through archaeological investigations in this region.” Because the Bishop Site had yielded data “contributing to our understanding of local history” (one of the criteria for National Register eligibility), the portion of the Site within the APE was deemed eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Pratt Site was also determined eligible, based on its capacity for “providing information important for the prehistory of the region.”

If the Shelbourne Road Improvement Project proceeded as planned, both of these National Register-eligible sites would be at least partly destroyed. The Section 106 process required that the sponsoring agencies devise a strategy for mitigating the project’s anticipated “adverse effects” on the Sites. After referring to the “Phase III Work Plan” submitted by CHRS, Inc. and consulting with the PHMC, PennDOT and the FHWA authorized CHRS, Inc. to proceed with a third and final phase of investigation, sometimes referred to as “Data Recovery.” On the Bishop Site, this work involved mechanically stripping topsoil from the portion of the Site within the APE (approximately one-third of an acre), and recording the artifacts and features revealed. Data collected through this and earlier phases of testing were presented with wide-ranging analysis in a *Phase III Archaeological Data Recovery* technical report. A second publication—the booklet you are reading—was prepared for the benefit of non-archaeologists. On the following pages you will find a history of the Bishop Site and a synopsis of the Data Recovery. Read on to learn how archaeology “lifted the lid” on some long-forgotten lives.

Philip Ruth  
Director of Research  
CHRS, Inc.

♦ CHAPTER ONE ♦

## Historical Sketch of the Bishop Farm Tenant House

No structures were denoted on or immediately adjacent to the future site of the Bishop Farm Tenant House on the earliest detailed map of Exeter Township, published in 1854 (*facing Page 1*). The two residences closest to the site were depicted to the east, along the west side of Antietam Creek, one on either side of the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike (present-day U.S. Route 422). Both of those structures—which are still standing in 2009—were attributed by the 1854 cartographers to “Bishop.” The building on the north side of the turnpike has since been listed in the National Register of Historic Places (in 1985) as the “John Bishop House.” The core of this residence is believed to have been constructed by politician and miller John Bishop (1740-1812) around 1769. One of John Bishop’s commercial enterprises, known for many years as “Bishop’s Mill,” was located across Antietam Creek from the “John Bishop House.” The building depicted on the 1854 map on the south side of the turnpike (the same side as the future Bishop Farm Tenant House) was determined eligible for listing in the National Register in 1989 as the “Bishop/Tyson House.” A datestone on this dwelling indicates it was constructed in 1808, when John Bishop owned the encompassing tract of land.

A structure attributed to “G.K. Bishop” (John Bishop’s son, George Keim Bishop) was depicted in the location of the Bishop Farm Tenant House on a map of Exeter Township published in 1860 (*Page 9*). If this map and the 1854 map are accurate with respect to the presence of structures in the location of the Bishop Farm Tenant House, then a structure must have been erected there sometime during the period 1854-1860. George Bishop was also identified on the 1860 map as the owner of the residence across the turnpike, now known

as the “John Bishop House.” The “Bishop-Tyson House” was owned in 1860 by Francis Parvin, according to the cartographer.

George Bishop had been born on July 12, 1786 to John Bishop and his wife Susanna Keim in the Berks County Seat of Reading. A biographical sketch of George’s wealthy and well-connected father was published in 1886 as follows:

John Bishop, of Berks County, was born March 4, 1740, in Exeter township, that county, his father, John Bishop, coming to Pennsylvania with the Boones and Lincolns. He was brought up as a farmer, an occupation he was engaged in all his life, although other enterprises engrossed much of his attention. He had extensive business connections, and became an ironmaster. He was a large landholder, not only in Berks County but in the Valley of Virginia. As a consequence, he was more or less prominent and influential in public affairs. During the Revolution he greatly aided the county lieutenants in organizing the Associators and militia, by advancing large sums of money in emergencies. He was elected to the General Assembly, serving from 1781 to 1784, and chosen a delegate to the Pennsylvania Convention to ratify the Federal Constitution in 1787. He did not sign the ratification, and the year following was a member of the Harrisburg Conference which protested so loudly against that instrument. He filled the office of county auditor in 1797-98, and represented Berks in the State Legislature in 1805-06. He died at his residence in Exeter township the 3<sup>d</sup> of September, 1812, aged seventy-two years, and was buried in the Reformed Church graveyard there. Mr. Bishop married Susanna Keim, daughter of Nicholas Keim, a merchant of Reading, and whose only son, John Keim, was the ancestor of the Keim family of Berks County. They left six children,—Catharine, Elizabeth, Susanna, George, Mary, and Daniel John. . . . Mr. Bishop . . . resided on the Antietam Creek and on the Philadelphia road, about five miles from Reading. He carried on a mill, and the site is yet called “Bishop’s mill.”<sup>2</sup>

In Exeter Township census records compiled on June 15, 1860, George K. Bishop was identified as an unmarried, 73-year-old, retired farmer living with 81-year-old Catherine Groff (identified elsewhere as George’s eldest sis-

---

<sup>2</sup>Biographical sketch of John Bishop in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 10, 1886. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



A dwelling attributed to George K. Bishop was denoted in the location of the Bishop Farm Tenant House (white arrow, inset detail) on a map of Berks County published by H.F. Bridgens in 1860. Bishop's residence was denoted on the opposite (north) side of the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike (present-day U.S. Route 422).

ter, “Kitty,” who had been married to Francis Groff or Groves). Deed records indicate that George had inherited 600 acres in Exeter Township—including the Antietam Creek mill property—from his father upon John Bishop’s death in 1812. In 1830, the Berks County Sheriff seized the mill and 215 acres on the east side of Antietam Creek in order to sell it and thereby settle a longstanding dispute concerning the legality of George’s inheritance. George retained ownership of the farmhouse now known as the “John Bishop House,” along with the encompassing land on the west side of the Creek, lying almost entirely north of the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike. Only a small, triangular portion of the farm lay on the south side of the Turnpike, bordered on the west by Lorane Road. The Bishop Farm Tenant House would be erected on this triangular parcel, which was said in subsequent deeds to encompass 4.41 acres. As noted above, this area was depicted as devoid of structures on the 1854 Exeter Township map, and as occupied by a single structure on the 1860 Township map.

Exeter Township tax data recorded from 1850 through 1880 indicate that the owners of the “John Bishop House” and associated farm employed a succession of tenant farmers and farm managers beginning in 1855 and concluding in the 1870s. In light of cartographic data strongly suggesting that a dwelling-sized structure was erected by the owner of the “John Bishop House” in the location of the Bishop Farm Tenant House between 1854 and 1860, it is reasonable to assume the dwelling was erected to accommodate tenant farmers and/or farm managers. The dwelling will be referred to below as the Bishop Farm Tenant House. It is also possible that some Bishop Farm managers lived in a portion of the John Bishop House, particularly during those years when tax records indicate the occupancy of two tenant farmers on the Bishop Farm. The John Bishop house was referred to as “a double house” and “a large double stone dwelling house” in two newspaper articles published in 1882.

### **First tenants: the family of Henry and Elizabeth Hoffmaster**

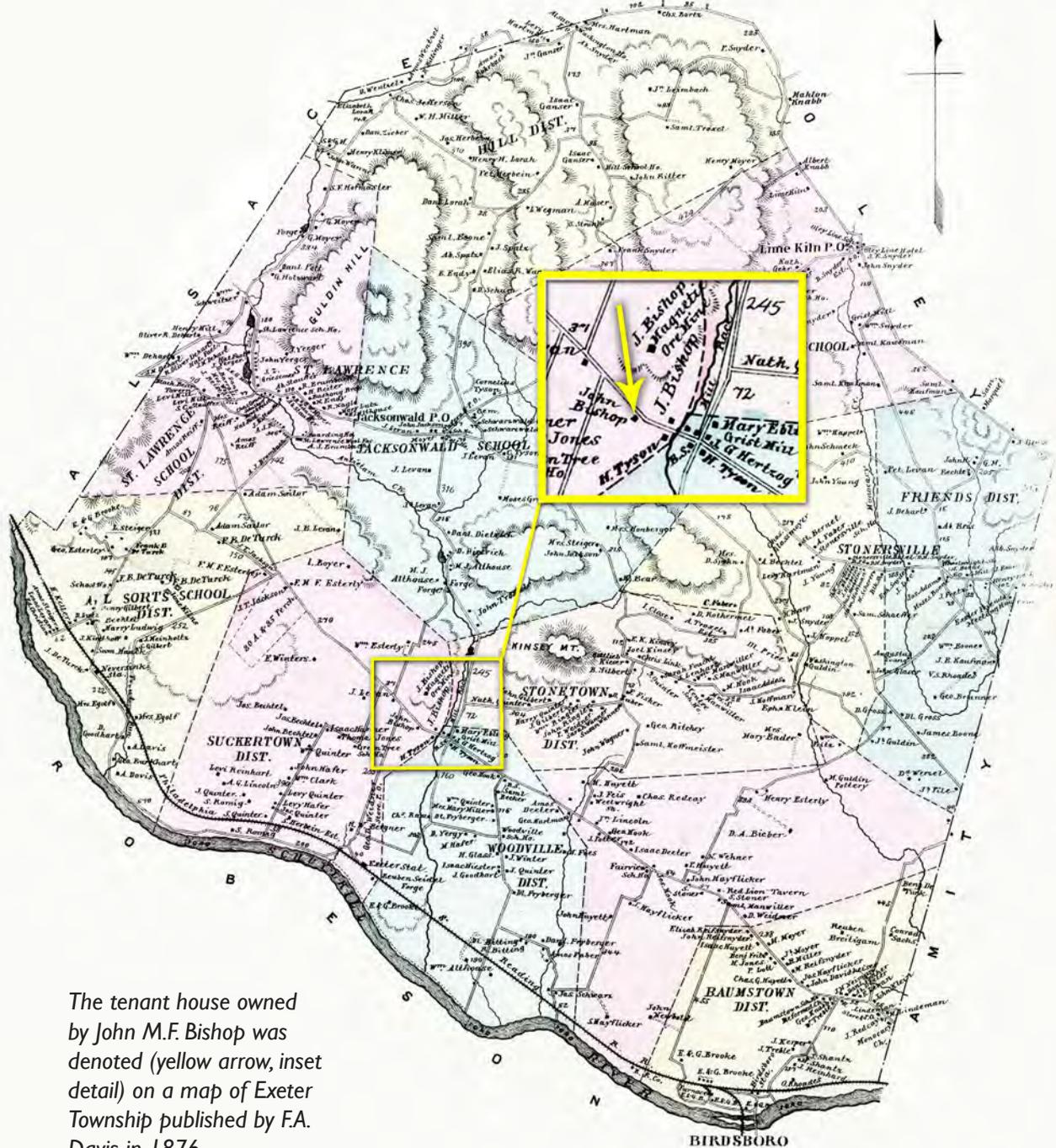
According to Berks County Triennial Tax Assessment records compiled in 1855, Henry Hoffmaster was George Bishop’s first tenant farmer after the Bishop Farm Tenant House was constructed. Hoffmaster’s taxable property comprised

2 horses (valued together at \$100) and 3 cattle (\$45). His well-to-do landlord, retired farmer George K. Bishop, was taxed on a 100-acre farm (\$6,000), 3 horses (\$150), 8 cattle (\$120), a pleasure carriage (\$50), and yearly income of \$80. Hoffmaster was one of 156 Exeter Township heads-of-households identified by the assessor as a tenant rather than a property owner. Of those 156 tenants, 83 were classified as unskilled laborers, 32 as farmers (including Hoffmaster), 29 as skilled craftsmen or merchants, and 12 as unemployed.

Five years before relocating to the Bishop Farm, Henry Hoffmaster had been identified in census records as a 28-year-old laborer living in Exeter Township with his 30-year-old wife Elizabeth and their children Nathaniel (6), Eli (4), and Hannah E. (2). All members of the family were classified as white, native Pennsylvanians. Henry Hoffmaster would tell a census enumerator 30 years later that he had been born in “Alsace,” which the enumerator took to mean the region in eastern France widely re-settled by German-speaking religious and economic refugees after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) (for Henry and both of his parents, the enumerator entered “Alsace” as the “Place of Birth of this person, naming state or Territory of United States, or the County, if of foreign birth”). Henry may have meant to indicate that he had been born in Berks County’s Alsace Township, which was home to several Hoffmaster families by the mid-nineteenth century. Hoffmaster’s wife Elizabeth (sometimes identified as “Eliza”) would admit to the enumerator in 1880 that she could neither read nor write in English.

By the time the Hoffmaster family moved to the Bishop Farm in late 1854 or early 1855, at least two more children had joined the family: twins Samuel and Henry, born around 1852. A sixth and final child, Isabella, was born in 1855 or 1856, possibly in the Bishop Farm Tenant House.

Tax records are inconclusive with respect to the Hoffmaster family’s tenure on the Bishop Farm. Henry Hoffmaster was identified again in 1856 as a tenant farmer, but his landlord was not specified (tenants were not cross-referenced with their landlords in annual Exeter Township tax assessment ledgers). Moreover, Hoffmaster’s name was lined out in the tax ledger, an alteration typically indicating the subject’s exit from the municipality early in the current tax year or late in the previous tax year. In Exeter Township’s 1857 assessment, however,



The tenant house owned by John M.F. Bishop was denoted (yellow arrow, inset detail) on a map of Exeter Township published by F.A. Davis in 1876.

Hoffmaster's name was again included as a taxable tenant farmer, while his landlord was again not specified. By early 1858, Hoffmaster and his family had moved away from the Bishop Farm, according to Berks County Triennial Tax Assessment records compiled in that year. As of July 16, 1860, the Hoffmaster family would be living elsewhere in Exeter Township, as Henry Hoffmaster farmed rented land (as reflected on Exeter Township census schedules).

### **Occupation by Samuel Babb, Michael Gehret, and their families**

Berks County Triennial Tax Assessment records compiled in 1858 indicate that the Bishop Farm Tenant House was then occupied by one or both of George K. Bishop's two tenant farmers: Samuel Babb and Michael Gehret. Babb was assessed for his ownership of 2 horses (\$160) and 3 cattle (\$45), while Gehret owned 2 horses (\$150) and 2 cattle (\$30).

In a census enumeration conducted nine years earlier (1850), Samuel Babb had been identified as a 33-year-old, Pennsylvania-born farmer living with his 37-year-old wife Catherine and their two children—Catherine Ann (age 11) and Samuel Jr. (6)—in Berks County's Penn Township. Samuel owned, at that time, a 21-acre farm in Penn Township, worth an estimated \$1,400. Why and how he came to serve as George K. Bishop's tenant farmer in 1858 has not been ascertained. Babb's name was entered, then struck out, in Exeter Township's 1859 tax assessment ledger. By June 25, 1860, he would be living with his wife and son in adjoining Robeson Township, on land valued at \$1,400.

The "Gehret" surname was spelled at least four different ways in mid-nineteenth-century Berks County records (the other ways being "Gearhart," "Gerhart," and "Gerhard"). The "Michael Gehret" identified as a tenant with Samuel Babb on George K. Bishop's farm in 1858 appears to have been the "Michael Gerhard" born on December 21, 1836 to John and Salome Gerhard, who three weeks later took him to be baptized at St. John's (Hain's) Reformed Church in Lower Heidelberg Township, Berks County (this "Michael Gerhard" is the only person in Berks County census and genealogical records with the Christian name "Michael," a surname variant of "Gehret," and a birth year of

1837 or earlier, making him at least 21 years of age in 1858).<sup>3</sup>

According to St. John's (Hain's) Reformed Church baptismal records, Michael Gerhard was the sixth child of farmers John and Salome Gerhard. As of August 17, 1850, some of Michael's older siblings had left the family's Lower Heidelberg Township home, but four boarders had taken their places, so John "Gearhart" was head of a 12-person household. Son Michael "Gearhart" was reportedly 13 years of age at the time of the enumeration. Sometime during the next six years, Michael married a woman named Catherine Ann, variously identified in St. John's (Hain's) Reformed Church baptismal records as "Catherine," "Catherine Ann," "Kate Ann," and "Kitty

BELOW: George Bishop and his widowed sister Catherine Groff were documented living next-door to the family of David and Mary Ann Hartman on this page of the 1860 Exeter Township population census schedule.

Page No. 18

SCHEDULE 1—Free Inhabitants in Exeter Township in the County of Berks State of Pennsylvania enumerated by me, on the 16th day of August 1860. Geo. W. Kershner Ass't Marshal.

Post Office Heidelberg

1	2	3	Sex and Age				7	Value of Estate		10	Place of Birth			14
			4	5	6	8		9	11		12	13		
Name		Sex	Age	Color	Profession, Occupation, or Trade of such persons and usual trade over 15 years of age	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate	Married (M), Single (S), or Coarct.	Native (N), Foreign (F), or Coarct.	Color	Whether blind and deaf, dumb, insane, pauper, or convict.			
1	George Bishop	M	33	W	Farmer	2200	275		Pa					
2	78 98 Henry Bishop	M	48	W	Farmer		177		Pa					
3	Sarah	F	37						Pa					
4	Albert	M	11	W	Farmer's helper				Pa					
5	Henry	M	15	W	Pa				Pa					
6	Sarah	F	3						Pa					
7	Benjamin Robert	M	23	W	Carpenter				Pa					
8	Levan Evans	M	22		Laborer				Pa					
9	Emma Kaper	F	18						Pa					
10	16 91 George Boyer	M	45	W	Day laborer		2100		Pa					
11	Margaret	F	55						Pa					
12	Henry Hart	M	14	W					Pa					
13	Richd. Dierker	M	11	W	Day laborer				Pa					
14	77 90 George B. Bishop	M	33	W	Retail Farmer	2000	225		Pa					
15	Catherine Groff	F	31				1500	525	Pa					
16	11 93 David Hartman	M	27	W	Farmer		753		Pa					
17	Mary A.	F	55						Pa					
18	Arden	F	3						Pa					
19	Mary A.	F	1						Pa					
20	Ellen Clay	F	14						Pa					
21	17 94 Wm. Wright	M	57	W	Farmer	2000	117		Pa					
22	Mary A.	F	13						Pa					
23	Arden	F	17						Pa					
24	David	M	18	W					Pa					
25	George	M	12	W					Pa					
26	Charles	M	9	W					Pa					
27	76 95 George Hartman	M	32	W	Day laborer		160		Pa					
28	Ellen	F	28						Pa					
29	Harriet	F	9	W					Pa					
30	Mary A.	F	7	W					Pa					
31	Abraham	M	5	W					Pa					
32	Ellen	F	4	W					Pa					

<sup>3</sup>W.J. Kershner and Adam G. Lerch, *History of St. John's (Hain's) Reformed Church in Lower Heidelberg Township Berks County, Penna.* Reading, Pennsylvania: I.M. Beaver, 1916.

Ann.” Michael’s wife would be said in 1860 and 1870 census records to have been born around 1838. The obvious conclusion is that the woman Michael Gerhard married in the 1850s was Samuel and Catherine Babb’s daughter, Catherine Ann, whom 1850 census records indicated had been born in either 1838 or 1839, and who would be documented as living with Michael, rather than her parents, as of June 25, 1860.

In 1858—the year they were co-tenants with Catherine Ann’s parents and brother on George K. Bishop’s farm—21-year-old Michael and 20-year-old Catherine Ann Gerhard were parents of two children: Adam, born in 1855 or 1856; and Catherine (“Kassy”), born on October 3, 1857. At least five more children would join the family after it moved out of the Bishop Farm Tenant House, apparently in the spring of 1859. The young Gerhart family had limited means during its occupancy of the Bishop Farm Tenant House, but Michael was able to begin setting aside some savings. By the summer of 1860—after the family’s relocation to his boyhood community in Lower Heidelberg Township—Michael’s personal estate would amount to \$835.

### **The tenancy of David and Mary Ann Hartman’s family**

As reflected on census schedules, the Bishop Farm Tenant House was occupied on June 15, 1860 by 27-year-old farmer David R. Hartman, his 22-year-old wife Mary Ann, their daughters Amaline (age 3) and Mary (1), and 14-year-old boarder Ellen Clay (Amaline’s name would be spelled “Emeline” in 1870 and 1880 enumerations). David Hartman had been born on February 15, 1832 to second-generation German-American Conrad Hartman and his wife Elizabeth (née Richard) in Boyertown, Berks County.<sup>4</sup> By August, 1850, when he was 18 years of the age, David had moved in with the family of wheelwright William Wynne in Berks County’s Douglass Township, presumably to work as Wynne’s assistant. David married a woman named Mary Ann around 1857 and started a family with her almost immediately. Daughters Emeline and Mary were born before the Hartmans occupied the Bishop Farm Tenant House in either the spring of 1859 or the spring of 1860.

---

<sup>4</sup>“Johannes Schurr, Romig, Miller, Hartline Family Tree.” Published online by Ancestry.com.

From genealogical and census records it may be deduced that David Hartman's wife was Mary Ann Shurr, born in or near Exeter Township on January 9, 1837 to German immigrant Johannes Schurr (John Shurr, 1813-1883) and his American wife Susanna Lorah (1816-1888). John and Susanna were married in Exeter Township's Schwarzwald Reformed Church on October 11, 1836, and Mary Ann became their firstborn child. Susanna Shurr would give birth to at least six more children between 1838 and 1855, including daughter Emeline, born on February 3, 1849. As noted above, Mary Ann and David Hartman named their first child "Emeline" in 1857, offering additional circumstantial evidence that Mary Ann Hartman was the daughter of John and Susanna Shurr. As will be discussed below, John Shurr would be identified in tax assessment records as the tenant on the Bishop Farm in 1867.

A statistical snapshot of the Bishop Farm as managed by David Hartman in 1860 was recorded on agricultural schedules completed by a census enumerator visiting the farm on August 10, 1860. Hartman and/or owner George K. Bishop reported the following data, with production amounts reflecting products generated during the year ending on June 1, 1860:

Improved land:	90 acres
Unimproved land:	10 acres
Cash value of farm:	\$13,000.00
Value of farming implements and machinery:	\$50.00
Value of livestock:	\$403.00
Horses:	2
Milch [dairy] cows:	5
Other cattle:	2
Sheep:	0
Swine:	6
Bushels of wheat:	100
Bushels of rye:	15
Bushels of Indian corn:	200
Bushels of oats:	175
Bushels of Irish potatoes:	25

Tons of hay: 9  
Pounds of butter: 260  
Pounds of wool: 0  
Bushels of sweet potatoes: 0  
Bushels of clover seed: 9  
Value of animals slaughtered: \$56.00

The Bishop Farm's size, value, and productivity relative to the other 5,359 farms in Berks County in 1860 are reflected in the following table:

	Berks County Farm Averages For the Year Ending on June 1, 1860 (5,359 farms)	Bishop Farm (David Hartman, manager) For the Year Ending on June 1, 1860
Improved and unimproved land	82.09 acres	100 acres
Improved land	66.18 acres	90 acres
Unimproved land	15.91 acres	10 acres
Cash value of farm	\$4,948.01	\$13,000.00
Value of farming implements and machinery	\$160.73	\$50.00
Value of livestock	\$459.23	\$403.00
Value of animals slaughtered	\$124.05	\$56.00

These data indicate that the Bishop Farm was larger, more extensively improved, and significantly more valuable than the average Berks County farm in 1860. Under George Bishop's oversight and David Hartman's management, however, it was only average or below-average in its productivity.

David Hartman owned no real estate in the summer of 1860, but claimed a personal estate amounting to \$753. This placed the 27-year-old on a low rung of the region's economic ladder. The average Exeter Township head-of-household owned assets valued at \$4,382.25, with \$3,795.21 of that total held in the form of real estate. Hartman's boss, 72-year-old retired farmer George Bishop, en-

joyed a position at the other end of the Township’s wealth spectrum by virtue of owning \$13,000 worth of real estate and a personal estate valued at \$435. For good measure, George’s widowed sister Kitty, with whom he shared the mansion house, held \$15,000 in real estate, to go with a \$330 personal estate.

David Hartman and George Bishop were two of 416 heads-of-households identified in Exeter Township’s 1860 federal census enumeration. Nearly half of those persons (194) were engaged in agriculture. The farming heads-of-households were subdivided into four classes: farmers owning real estate (107); farm laborers owning real estate but working someone else’s land (19); farmers owning no real estate and working someone else’s land (40); and farm laborers owning no real estate (28). The term “laborer” was applied to persons paid a wage by an employer, as distinguished from someone working “on his own account.” The relative economic standings of farming heads-of-households in these four classifications as of 1860 are apparent in the following census data:

From 1860 Exeter Township Census Enumeration				
	Farmers owning real estate	Farm laborers owning real estate but working someone else’s land	Farmers owning no real estate and working someone else’s land	Farm laborers owning no real estate
Number	107	19	40	28
Average age	50.14 years	52.16 years	36.77 years	35.75 years
Value of real estate	\$6,065.58	\$2,731.16	0	0
Value of personal estate	\$1,267.46	\$237.21	\$876.70	\$148.43
Total value of assets	\$7,333.04	\$2,968.37	\$876.70	\$148.43
Percentage of white males	99.06	100	100	96.43
Percentage of foreign birth	3.73	0	0	3.57
Average number of persons in household	6.5	5.63	6.85	4.46

Men such as David Hartman who managed other people's farms were classified as "farmers" owning no real estate and working someone else's land, rather than as "farm laborers." In terms of "total value of assets," marked disparities are apparent between the four classifications of farming heads-of-households in Exeter Township in 1860. Hartman was a fairly typical member of the second-to-least-affluent classification: "farmers owning no real estate and working someone else's land." He was almost a decade younger than the average, which accounts for his personal estate (\$753) being slightly lower than the average (\$876.70). The number of persons in his young household (5) was also below average (6.85). Like all 39 of the other farmers owning no real estate and working someone else's land, Hartman was an American-born white male. He was also in the vast majority of Berks County natives.

Records relating to the occupancy of the Bishop Farm Tenant House between the summer of 1860 and the spring of 1864 have not been located. David Hartman may have continued in residence at least through the spring of 1861, as he was again identified in the Exeter Township tax assessment recorded at that time as a tenant farmer with \$100 in taxable property (as he had been in 1860; his landlord was not specified in 1861). If Exeter Township tax data was compiled in 1862 and 1863—the middle years of the Civil War—those records are not available.

### **Death of Bishop Farm owner George K. Bishop**

On May 23, 1863, 75-year-old George Bishop composed his last will and testament. He had fathered no children, and his childless, widowed sister Kitty was even older than he was, so George devised "unto my grand nephew, John M.F. Bishop, [the] son of [my nephew] John M.F. Bishop, who died in California, my farm in Exeter Township, and a tract of wood land in Alsace Township, Bucks County." George's grandnephew was then only 16 years of age (according to an obituary published in *The Reading Times* in 1881), so at least five years would have to pass before he was old enough to legally take possession of the Bishop Farm. After George named Reading banker David McNight and John B. Hallway as executors of his will, he included other stipulations as follows:

My executors are to sell and dispose of my horses, carriage and sleighs, except the New York sleigh, which they are to keep together with my sword and spurs until the said John M.F. Bishop arrives at the age of twenty-one years where he is to have the same, together, also, with my two-year old colt, which is also to be kept on the farm for him until he arrives at the age of twenty-one. . . . I also direct that my farm and such of the personal property as shall not be sold by my executors, under the directions, however, of my sister Mrs. Groff, shall remain in the possession and control of my said sister, Mrs. Groff, until my said devisee shall attain to the age of twenty-one years, the same to be rented to good tenants on the shares, without however, suffering any hay or straw to be sold or removed, and a suitable portion to be limed from year to year—the rents and income arising therefrom to be applied to the necessary repairs, the education and clothing of my said grand nephew. . . . In renting the farm I desire my sister to consult with my executors and secure their advise and aid in the matter—and if my said sister should be living at the time my devisee arrives at the age of twenty-one and takes possession of the said farm and other personal property remaining unsold, it is my will that she remain in the mansion during her life time, should she desire to do so, free of any rent or other charges.

In May, 1863, George Bishop's holdings in Exeter Township amounted to "about 108 acres with improvements, which is believed to be worth over fifteen thousand dollars" (according to his estate papers). George died on February 28, 1864, "unmarried and without issue," and his will was proved two weeks later. His widowed sister, Kitty Groff, assumed responsibility for the Bishop Farm, with banker David McNight as her advisor.

### **The post-Civil-War occupancy of Jacob and Anna Maria Gehman**

For the next eight years (1864-1871), the executors of George Bishop's estate paid taxes on the Bishop Farm. The property had two taxable occupants in 1864, according to County tax assessment records: Kitty Groff and Jacob Gehman. The latter was assessed for his ownership of 2 horses, 6 cattle, and a carriage, while Kitty's taxable property amounted to a single horse and a single cow. It is possible that George Bishop's death created a vacancy in part of the Bishop "mansion,"



*The boundaries of the 108-acre farm owned by George Bishop on the day of his death (February 28, 1864) are superimposed on an aerial photograph taken on September 12, 1937. The site of the Bishop Farm Tenant House, in the triangle of land on the south side of Route 422, is indicated by a white arrow.*

and that Gehman occupied those quarters with his wife and children, rather than the Bishop Farm Tenant House. Judging from his ownership of 2 horses, 6 cattle, and a carriage, Gehman had greater financial resources than preceding tenants on the Bishop Farm. He was also older and more experienced than most of his predecessors. He had been born on August 24, 1827 twenty miles to the northwest, in southern Lehigh County. In 1849, or soon after turning 21, he married Anna Maria Christman, the 16-year-old daughter of Lower Macungie Township (Lehigh County) farmers Daniel Christman and Susanna Kerchner. The newlyweds' first child—Susan Alabaster Gehman—was born on January 7, 1850.<sup>5</sup> By the following September 11 (as reflected on census schedules), Jacob and Anna Maria's family was living with Anna Maria's parents and five of her younger siblings in the Christman farmhouse in Lower Macungie Township. Jacob was working as a carpenter at this time.

Over the course of the next decade, Anna Maria Gehman delivered at least two more children: Clinton Daniel (on May 10, 1852), and William (about 1855). As of June 9, 1860, the Gehman family was living in rented quarters beside the family of Anna Maria's uncle Jonas Christman near Alburdis, Lehigh County. Jacob was still working as a carpenter, and he had built up a personal estate worth \$300. Within a matter of several years, he doubled his wealth, even as he built up his herd of cattle to six head. During this productive period, Anna Maria gave birth to another son, Charles, around 1863. The Gehman family thus comprised two parents and four young children in 1864, when Berks County tax assessment records identified Jacob Gehman as a tenant farmer on the Bishop Farm.

No Berks County tax assessments were conducted in 1865 and 1866, and no records of Exeter Township assessments are available for those years. No other means of identifying the tenant(s) and/or manager(s) of the Bishop Farm during this period has been discovered. The Gehmans departed Exeter Township sometime prior to the spring of 1867, when a new tenant of the Bishop Farm was identified in tax records. By July, 1870 (as reflected on census schedules), the Gehman family would be living in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward of Reading City, where Jacob once again plied the carpentry trade, his personal estate having been reduced to \$150. Anna Maria had delivered a fifth child, Henry, the previous year.

---

<sup>5</sup>Rolland Christman, Christman Genealogy website <<http://www.christmanfamily.net>>.

## **John and Susanna Shurr**

The Bishop Farm's tenant farmer in 1867 was John Shurr, whose taxable property comprised 2 horses and 3 cattle. In some mid-nineteenth-century records, Shurr's surname was spelled "Shur" or "Shaur." Shurr had been born to Friedrich and Elizabeth Schor in Württemberg, Germany on August 13, 1813. He had emigrated to America and been naturalized sometime prior to September 11, 1836, on which date he married Berks County native Susanna Lorah. As of August 10, 1850, the Shurrs were renting accommodations in Exeter Township, where 38-year-old John worked as a general laborer. John and Susanna's family had grown by 1850 to include at least six children: Mary Ann (13), William (11), John (6), Sarah Ann (9), Peter (3), and Emeline (age 1). As noted above, eldest daughter Mary Ann married Boyertown-born David Hartman around 1857, and lived with him and their first two children on the Bishop Farm in 1860 (and possibly a year or two before and after that date). As of 1860, John and Susanna were living with their younger children—including newcomers Jacob (born circa 1853) and Daniel (circa 1854)—a mile or two up the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike from the Bishop Farm Tenant House, according to an Exeter Township census enumeration conducted in that year. John's personal estate was said to be worth \$500.

When John and Susanna Shurr moved onto the Bishop Farm in or shortly before 1867, they probably brought along at least their youngest children: Emeline (17), Jacob (12), and Daniel (11). Those children would still be living with John and Susanna three years later, after the Shurrs moved from the Bishop Farm to a rented farm somewhere nearby. When a census enumerator visited the family in its new location on August 2, 1870, he noted that father John's personal estate had increased to \$1,116 (more than double its 1860 level).

## **John M.F. Bishop hosts the Richard Brossman Family**

No Berks County tax assessments were conducted in 1868 and 1869, and no records of Exeter Township assessments are available for those years. No other means of identifying the occupants of the Bishop Farm during this period has been discovered. Kitty Groff died in 1868, at the approximate age of 90, according

to Berks County death records. When the next Berks County tax assessment was conducted in the spring of 1870, farmer Richard Brossman was identified as the Bishop Farm's tenant. His landlord was the George Bishop Estate, but the imminent owner of the property, 23-year-old John M.F. Bishop, had already moved into the mansion house. Census records compiled on August 2, 1870 indicate that John shared the farmhouse with his 44-year-old widowed mother Sarah and 19-year-old sister Sallie. The enumerator erroneously recorded John's age as 20 years, and designated his mother as the head-of-household. While Sarah was said on this occasion to own \$300 worth of real estate, and Sallie's personal estate was valued at \$400, John claimed real estate holdings worth \$20,000, on top of a \$290 personal estate. As a household, the Bishops were thus land rich and cash poor. By contrast, their tenant farmer, 33-year-old Richard Brossman, had a personal estate valued at \$1,255.

Richard W. Brossman had been born on April 5, 1835 in Lower Heidelberg Township, Berks County, the first child of Benjamin Brossman and Catherine Werner. Benjamin Brossman was a third generation German-American highly regarded by his neighbors for his social and mechanical skills. Some of his accomplishments were noted in the following biographical sketch, published in 1909:

Benjamin Brossman, son of John Adam Brossman, was born on the homestead, August 31, 1810, and he died upon his farm in Lower Heidelberg at the ripe old age of eighty-eight years and two days [on September 2, 1898]. He was an intelligent citizen, and was frequently called to serve his fellow citizens in positions of honor and trust. He served as school director, supervisor, and frequently was a delegate to county conventions. He was captain of the State militia, a military organization of his day, and the sword he wore is now in the possession of his son Hillorius. Mr. Brossman was an exceedingly versatile man, his ability as a mechanic making him an expert cabinet maker, carpenter, cooper and blacksmith, and he understood tree grafting as few men did. He successfully grafted shellbarks, chestnuts, and all kinds of fruits, also budded peach trees. He made a number of musical instruments, including a piano, which his son Isaac now possesses, and he repaired musical instruments. In 1872 he erected the present house on his farm. This reflects the skill of his workmanship, as all the doors, wainscoting, etc., were made by hand.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Morton Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania*. Chicago, Illinois: J. H. Beers & Co., 1909.

As Benjamin Brossman's eldest son, Richard Brossman likely received training in a variety of practical arts. He was apparently still too young in August, 1850 to report an occupation to a Lower Heidelberg Township census enumerator (when his father was characterized as a farmer). As of July 27, 1860, 24-year-old Richard was still living with his parents and siblings in the family's Lower Heidelberg Township farmhouse. He was making his living as a mason, perhaps in association with his father, who was identified as a carpenter.

Around 1863, Richard married Anna Elizabeth ("Eliza") Krick, daughter of Peter and Anna (Hill) Krick of Berks County's Spring Township. The couple's first child, Eva, was born in or around 1864. Eliza delivered a second daughter, Sarah Ann, a couple of years later. The earliest year in which the Brossman family could have moved to the Bishop Farm was 1868. The Brossmans' occupation was not documented until the spring of 1870, by which time a third child, Thomas, had joined the family. If the Brossmans were already living on the Bishop Farm in 1869, Thomas might have been born either in the mansion house or the Bishop Farm Tenant House. As of August, 1870, 72-year-old retired farmer Jonas Easterly was living with the Brossmans (as reflected on census schedules).

Richard Brossman was assessed in the spring of 1870 for his ownership of 2 horses and 8 cattle. He was identified as the Bishop Farm's 33-year-old manager when data pertaining to the farm were recorded by a census enumerator a few months later. Brossman and/or John M.F. Bishop reported the following data, with production amounts reflecting products generated during the year ending on June 1, 1870:

Improved land:	90 acres
Unimproved land:	0 acres
Cash value of farm:	\$18,000.00
Value of farming implements and machinery:	\$200.00
Value of livestock:	\$1,360.00
Horses:	4
Milch [dairy] cows:	12
Other cattle:	4
Sheep:	0

Swine: 8  
 Bushels of wheat: 220  
 Bushels of rye: 25  
 Bushels of Indian corn: 150  
 Bushels of oats: 150  
 Bushels of Irish potatoes: 46  
 Tons of hay: 40  
 Pounds of milk sold: 5,570  
 Pounds of butter: 100  
 Pounds of wool: 0  
 Bushels of grass seed: 8  
 Value of animals slaughtered: \$340.00

The Bishop Farm, under Richard Brossman's management, ranked well above average in size, value, and overall productivity relative to the other 6,525 farms in Berks County in 1870, as reflected in the following table:

	Berks County Farm Averages For the Year Ending on June 1, 1870 (6,525 farms)	Bishop Farm (Richard Brossman, manager) For the Year Ending on June 1, 1870
Improved and unimproved land	68.27 acres	90 acres
Improved land	57.40 acres	90 acres
Unimproved woodland	10.87 acres	0 acres
Cash Value of Farm	\$6,687.89	\$18,000.00
Value of Farming Implements and Machinery	\$268.77	\$200.00
Value of Livestock	\$696.47	\$1,360.00
Value of Animals Slaughtered	\$193.66	\$340.00
Value of Orchard Products	\$26.24	\$50.00
Estimated Value of All Farm Products	\$1,402.42	\$3,185.00

Under Richard Brossman’s management, the Bishop Farm concentrated on milk production. The farm’s herd of 12 dairy cattle was one of the largest in this section of Exeter Township, and the amount of milk sold (5,570 pounds) exceeded the totals of all other farms in the area. Some of the Bishops’ neighbors produced as much or even more milk from larger dairy herds, but most of those farmers chose to turn that production into butter, rather than sell it in more perishable liquid form.

Richard Brossman was one of 432 heads-of-households identified in Exeter Township’s 1870 federal census enumeration. Two-thirds of those persons (281) were, like Brossman, engaged in agriculture. As had been the case with the census enumeration conducted a decade earlier, Exeter’s farming heads-of-households were subdivided into four classes: farmers owning real estate (150); farm laborers owning real estate but working someone else’s land (19); farmers owning no real estate and working someone else’s land (52); and farm laborers owning no real estate (60). The relative economic standings of farming heads-of-households in these four classifications are apparent in the census data presented below:

<b>From 1870 Exeter Township Census Enumeration</b>				
	Farmers owning real estate	Farm laborers owning real estate but work- ing someone else’s land	Farmers owning no real estate and work- ing someone else’s land	Farm laborers owning no real estate
Number	150	19	52	60
Average age	48.25 years	47.6 years	39.96 years	37.48 years
Value of real estate	\$6,588.60	\$1,392.11	0	0
Value of personal estate	\$2,442.73	\$321.84	\$1,566.15	\$357.63
Total value of assets	\$9,031.33	\$1,713.95	\$1,566.15	\$357.63
Percentage of white males	97.5	100	100	100
Percentage of foreign birth	5.33	5.26	1.9	1.6
Average number of persons in household	5.72	4.26	6.44	4.56

Richard Brossman was among the 52 farming heads-of-households who owned no real estate and worked someone else's land. His \$1,255 in personal estate was below average for someone in his classification, and he was about seven years younger than the average age. The size of his household—six persons—was right around the average.

John M.F. Bishop turned 21 on October 20, 1867, and was finally old enough to take legal possession of the Bishop Farm. Records detailing the date and means by which he did so are not available. As noted above, George Bishop's Estate was identified as the farm's owner on tax assessment records compiled early in 1870, suggesting that John M.F. Bishop had not legally acquired the property by that time, although he was in residence. Exeter Township tax assessment records for 1871 and 1872 are not available. No other means of identifying the occupants of the Bishop Farm during this period has been discovered. When the next Berks County tax assessment was conducted in Exeter Township—in the spring of 1873—"John Bishop" was classified as a non-resident owner of real estate valued at \$4,000. Two years later (1875), he was again identified as a non-resident owner in the course of an Exeter Township tax assessment. His place of residency from 1871 through 1875 has not been ascertained. Richard Brossman appears to have moved his family off the Bishop Farm prior to 1873, as he was not identified as an Exeter Township resident in the County assessment conducted in that year. By 1880, the Brossman family would be farming near Richard's boyhood home in Lower Heidelberg Township.

### **Possible tenants Ellen Horne and Samuel Boyer**

On July 22, 1873, a woman identified as Ellen Hahn prepared a bill for \$3.20 in repairs to a "tenant house" and submitted it to John M.F. Bishop (this bill would find its way into Bishop's estate papers after his death in 1881). The only woman by that name identified in 1870 and/or 1880 federal census enumerations conducted either in Exeter Township or a neighboring township was the wife of stone mason Henry Hahn. The Hahns were identified in both 1870 and 1880 census enumerations as residents of Robeson Township, across the Schuylkill River from Exeter Township. There is thus the possibility that John M.F. Bishop hired a local stone mason to do some minor repair work on the Bishop Farm

Tenant House in the early 1870s. A more likely possibility is that the preparer of the \$3.20 repair bill was the woman identified in 1870 Exeter Township census records as “Ellen Horne,” the 44-year-old and illiterate head of the household living next-door to Richard Brossman’s family. The other members of Horne’s household comprised her children Ellen (14), Henry (7), and John (6), her mother Elizabeth Horne (70), and 60-year-old stone mason Samuel Boyer. The likelihood that these six persons occupied the Bishop Farm Tenant House as of August 2, 1870 is increased by the fact—discussed below—that a stone mason named Samuel Boyer would be identified in an 1875 Township tax assessment as a Bishop Farm tenant. If the Ellen Horne/Hahn household occupied the Bishop Farm Tenant House at least in 1870 and 1873, it would follow that Richard Brossman and his family occupied all or part of the mansion house when the 1870 Exeter Township census enumeration was conducted.

As noted above, John M.F. Bishop was identified as a non-resident owner of Exeter Township real estate in Township tax assessments conducted in 1873 and 1875. On the latter occasion, “B. Kissinger” was said to be one of several tenants on Bishop’s property. Elsewhere in the assessment ledger, mason Samuel Boyer was said to be a tenant of “J. Bishop,” and farmer Benjamin Noll was said to be a tenant of “Jon. Bishop.” Only three structures were attributed to someone with the Bishop surname on a map of Exeter Township published in 1876 (*Page 12*). All three structures were located on the Bishop Farm. The mansion house was attributed to “J. Bishop,” as was a structure denoted approximately 500 yards north of the mansion. The latter structure was labeled “J. Bishop Magnetic Ore Mine.” The structure in the location of the Bishop Farm Tenant House was attributed to “John Bishop.” These tax and cartographic data strongly suggest that one or two of John M.F. Bishop’s tenants occupied the mansion duplex, and the other occupied the Bishop Farm Tenant House. Confusingly, “B. Kissinger” was also identified in the “tenants” section of the 1875 assessment ledger as a tenant of “Eberling.” Perhaps Kissinger began the tax year on one property, and then moved to another property.

The Samuel Boyer identified as a mason occupying one of John Bishop’s residences in 1875 appears to have been the Samuel Boyer identified as a “master mason” and “stone mason” in Exeter Township census enumerations conducted in 1860 and 1870, respectively. The only other Samuel Boyer identified as an

Exeter Township resident during these census years was identified on both occasions as a farmer, rather than a mason. According to census data, the “master mason” Samuel Boyer had been born in Pennsylvania in July or August, 1810. As of July 26, 1860, he was living in Exeter Township with his 46-year-old wife Susan, and daughters Caroline (25) and Amelia (19). Boyer’s real estate holdings were said to be worth \$250, and his personal estate amounted to \$187. Ten years later (as noted above), Boyer was identified in Exeter Township census records as a 60-year-old stone mason living with Ellen Horne and her family. Boyer’s daughters would have been 35 and 29 years of age in 1870, so it is no surprise that they no longer lived with their father. The status of Boyer’s former wife Susan as of 1870 has not been ascertained.

### **The Bishop Farm Tenant House is vacated**

In 1876, for the first time in six years, John M.F. Bishop was identified in tax records as an occupant of his 100 acres in Exeter Township. Census records compiled in June, 1880, suggest that he had married a woman named Rebecca—five years his junior—around 1872, and this union produced four daughters over the course of the next seven years: Sallie (born circa 1873); Mary (circa 1875); Susan (circa 1877); and Kate (circa 1879). No tenants were attributed to John M.F. Bishop in Exeter Township tax assessments conducted after 1875. It thus appears that John Bishop moved into the Bishop Farm mansion house with his wife and young family between the spring of 1875 and the spring of 1876, expecting to operate the farm without the services of a resident manager or tenant farmer. When the next decennial census was conducted in Exeter Township—in June, 1880—John Bishop was identified as a 32-year-old operator of a 134-acre farm. The two non-family members living in the Bishop household—Charlotte Hilbert (20) and William Shiling (40)—were both identified as “servants” (rather than “farm laborers”), suggesting that John Bishop was the only resident of the Bishop Farm engaged in agriculture. He was recorded as having paid \$700 in farm wages during the year ending on June 1, 1880, and employing one or more non-resident farm laborers for approximately 38 man-weeks. The absence of Bishop Farm tenants in Exeter Township tax and census records after 1875 suggests that the Bishop Farm Tenant House was vacated, and may have even been razed. In a detailed advertisement of sale for the Bishop Farm published in August, 1882 (discussed below), the tenant house would not be mentioned.

John Bishop died intestate of unspecified causes on November 7, 1881. According to a death notice published in the November 9, 1881 edition of *The Reading Times*, his age was “34 years, 3 months and 18 days.” His “relatives and friends” were “respectfully invited to attend the funeral on Monday afternoon, Nov. 14, at 2 o’clock, from the Rambo House, Reading.” Bishop’s remains were later interred in the Charles Evans Cemetery, a nonsectarian burial ground in northern Reading.

On August 14, 1882, a Berks County Orphans’ Court ordered the administrators of John Bishop’s estate—his wife Rebecca and Henry Hoover—to expose the Bishop Farm to public sale, in order to raise money for the payment of Bishop’s debts. The administrators placed the following advertisement of sale in a local newspaper on August 26, 1882:

TH day OH, ner, the H, to ST- ver; the AL, at BET No All	By order of Orphans' Court—Wm. H. Gilmer, Clerk 8-26-Ceats	Y SU = A ...
<b>ORPHANS' COURT SALE OF A VAL-</b> <b>uable farm containing 126 acres. Five miles from</b> <b>Reading.—Will be sold at public sale, at the Keystone</b> <b>House, in the city of Reading, on</b>		
<b>Saturday, Oct. 7, 1882,</b>		
At 1½ o'clock p. m., all that splendid farm, late the property of John Bishop, dec'd, situate five miles east of Reading, on the Perkiomen turnpike, at Bishop's (now Hertzog's) mill. The farm contains 126 acres of highly cultivated land. The improvements consist of a large double stone dwelling house, large stone barn, pig-pen, wagon sheds, chicken houses, several orchards of choice fruit, splendid spring house and a trout pond; filled with large trout, and all other necessary appendages to add to the comfort of a well regulated country home. There is supposed to be a large body of iron ore on this farm. Terms made known by		
<b>HENRY HOOVER,</b> <b>REBECCA E. BISHOP,</b> Adm'rs of John M. F. Bishop, dec'd.		
By order of Orphans' Court, Wm. H. Gilmer, Clerk. 8-26-Ceats		
<b>Swithin C. Shortlidge's</b>		

The fact that no tenant house was listed among the Bishop Farm’s improvements in this advertisement strongly suggests that the Bishop Farm Tenant House was no longer inhabitable.

## The quarter-century Wamsher era

The sale of John Bishop's property was postponed from October 7 to October 28, 1882. On the latter date, 55-year-old farmer David R. Wamsher of Robeson Township, Berks County submitted the winning bid of \$11,480.15. The sale was submitted to an Orphans' Court for approval on November 25, and Wamsher received a deed to the property on March 31, 1883.

David Wamsher would own the former Bishop Farm, but not occupy it, for nearly a quarter-century. He appears to have acquired the property in order to rent it to his eldest son, George, who was 31 years old, unmarried, and living with his parents in Union Township when David purchased the former Bishop Farm (as reflected on 1880 census schedules). George Wamsher was identified in 1885 Exeter Township tax records as a tenant on the 126-acre farm recently acquired by his father. George's tenancy—and his father's non-resident ownership—of the property would be reflected in tax records compiled through 1909. These records offered no evidence that the Bishop Farm Tenant House was still standing, or that either David or George Wamsher hosted a tenant farmer on the former Bishop Farm.

George Wamsher married a much-younger woman named Clara around 1895, and immediately began raising a family with her on the former Bishop Farm. The Wamsher family was still in residence on October 14, 1907 when George's father died intestate. In a subsequent Orphans' Court ruling, the 126-acre Wamsher farm was awarded in equal shares to David's six surviving children. By a deed dated April 4, 1908, five of these siblings conveyed their equal interests in the property to the youngest sibling—David Heber Wamsher—in consideration of \$6,666.67.

George Wamsher remained on the former Bishop Farm with his family for at least a few years after his bachelor brother David became its legal owner. George was identified as the property's farming occupant in a 1909 Exeter Township tax assessment, as well as a 1910 census enumeration. By 1909, he had acquired the gristmill across Antietam Creek from the Bishop Farm mansion house, and was making his living as a miller. George's brother David, meanwhile, continued as owner of the former Bishop Farm, living in Union Township with his older

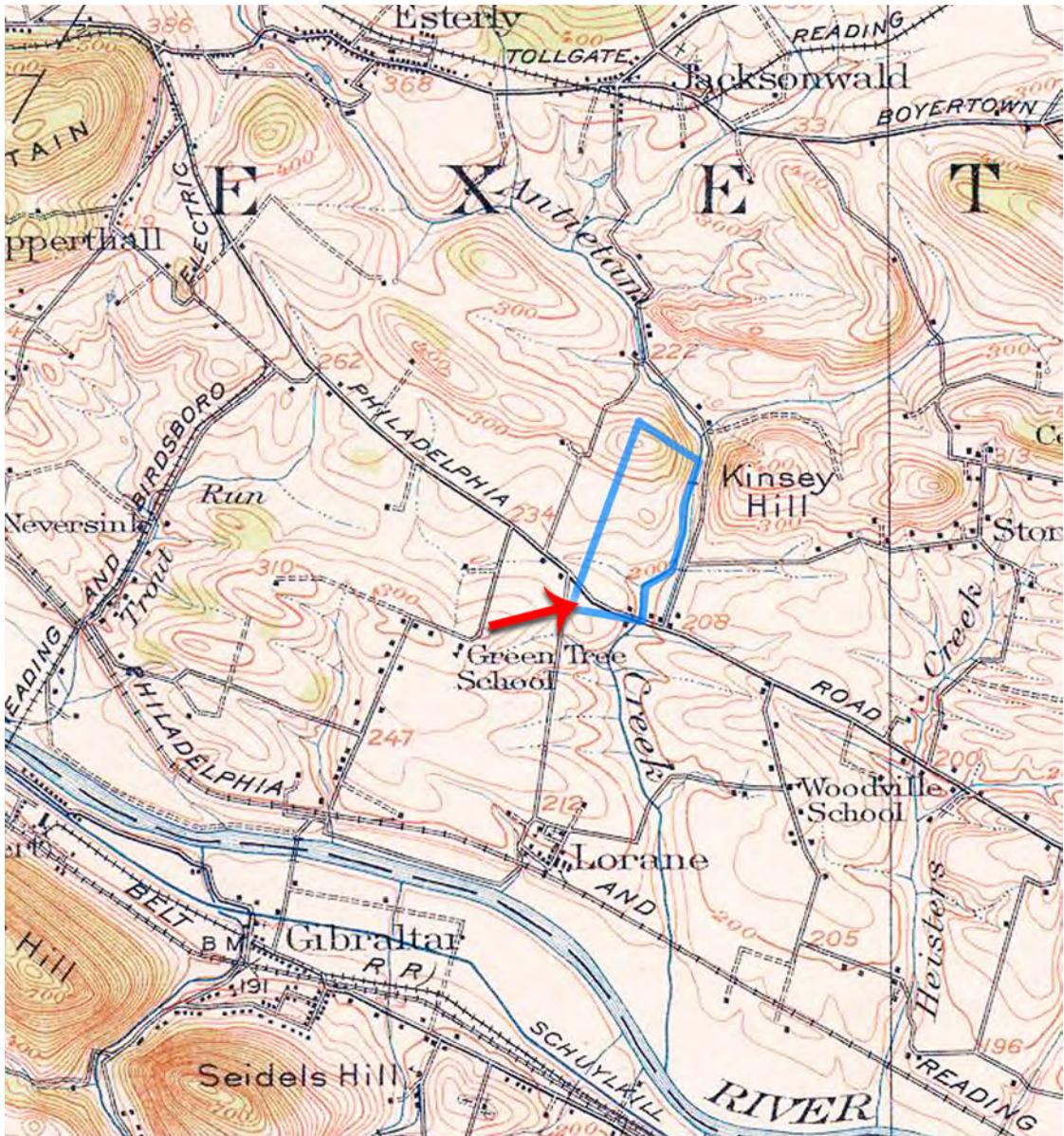
sister Mary Anna, and dealing in “wood and poles [produced] from the stump” (as reflected on 1910 census schedules).

By a deed dated April 1, 1919 David Wamsher conveyed the majority of the former Bishop Farm—encompassing 113.44 acres—to Walter J. Dunn of Exeter Township, in consideration of \$13,000. It was noted in the deed that “the major portion of [the property] lies on the northern side of the State Highway leading from Reading to Norristown [the former Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike], and a small triangular portion [lies] on the south side of said Highway.” The Bishop Farm Tenant House had been located in the 4.41-acre “small triangular portion” of the property acquired by Dunn. The house site had been depicted as devoid of structures on a USGS map of the area surveyed in 1913 and published two years later (*overleaf*).

In census records compiled in February, 1920, Walter Dunn was identified as a 38-year-old dairy farmer, living in Exeter Township with his 34-year-old wife Stella, their three children, and three hired farmhands. It has not been determined if Dunn and/or members of his family occupied the former Bishop Farm during the few years that he owned it.

The Reading Country Club was chartered on June 6, 1922, and “promptly purchased two farms [including most of the former Bishop Farm] and four additional tracts of land in Exeter Township . . . having a total area of 237 acres” (according to a 1923 Reading Country Club brochure). Walter Dunn and his wife retained the vacant, 4.41-acre triangle of the former Bishop Farm lying on the south side of the Reading road and embracing the former site of the Bishop Farm Tenant House. On April 2, 1924, they conveyed this triangular parcel to Reading resident Mary R. Bingaman and Allentown resident Frederick E. Krug, in consideration of \$6,000.

By a deed dated April 29, 1925, Krug and his wife Miriam conveyed their half-interest in the southeasternmost third of the triangular parcel—including the former tenant house site—to the other interest-holder, Mary Bingaman, in consideration of \$1. The parcel now owned by Bingaman alone was said to encompass 1.5 acres. The metes and bounds of the parcel remained unchanged from that time to the present, while the property itself changed hands repeatedly. Subsequent owners have been as follows:



No structures were denoted in the former location of the Bishop Farm Tenant House (red arrow) on a United States Geological Survey topographic map of south-central Berks County surveyed in 1913 and published two years later. The blue line delineates the boundaries of the Bishop Farm, owned in 1913 by David Wamsher.

- 1925-1944: Mary R. and John R. Bingaman
- 1944-1960: Hen Johnson, Inc., a Pennsylvania corporation, of West Reading Borough
- 1960-1971: Allis Realty Company, a Pennsylvania corporation, of West Reading Borough
- 1971-1975: William Y. Dear Jr., Trustee in Liquidation for stockholders of Allis Realty Company
- 1975-1980: United Advertising Corporation, a New Jersey corporation
- 1980-1981: Eller Outdoor Advertising, United Division, Inc., a New Jersey corporation
- 1981-circa 1983: Gannett Outdoor Company (formerly Eller Outdoor Advertising)
- ca. 1983-1984: Penn York Advertising Inc., a Pennsylvania company, York County
- 1984-1987: Power Mill Corporation, a Delaware corporation
- 1987-present: Walter T. Greth, of Temple, Pennsylvania

Some, if not all, of the parcel's owners since 1925 have either utilized or leased the parcel as a location for one or more advertising billboards. Shadows apparently cast by billboards are discernible immediately east of the former tenant house site on aerial photographs taken in 1937 (*Page 21*) and 1971 (*overleaf*).





No structures were discernible on the Bishop Site (red circle) on an aerial photograph taken for the United States Department of Agriculture on July 18, 1971. A shadow cast by a billboard is visible on the Site's immediate right. The blue line delineates the former Bishop Farm's boundary. Phase III archaeological excavations conducted in 2008 revealed the full extent of the Bishop Site's surviving tenant house foundations (inset, eastward view).

## Archaeological Excavations and Analysis

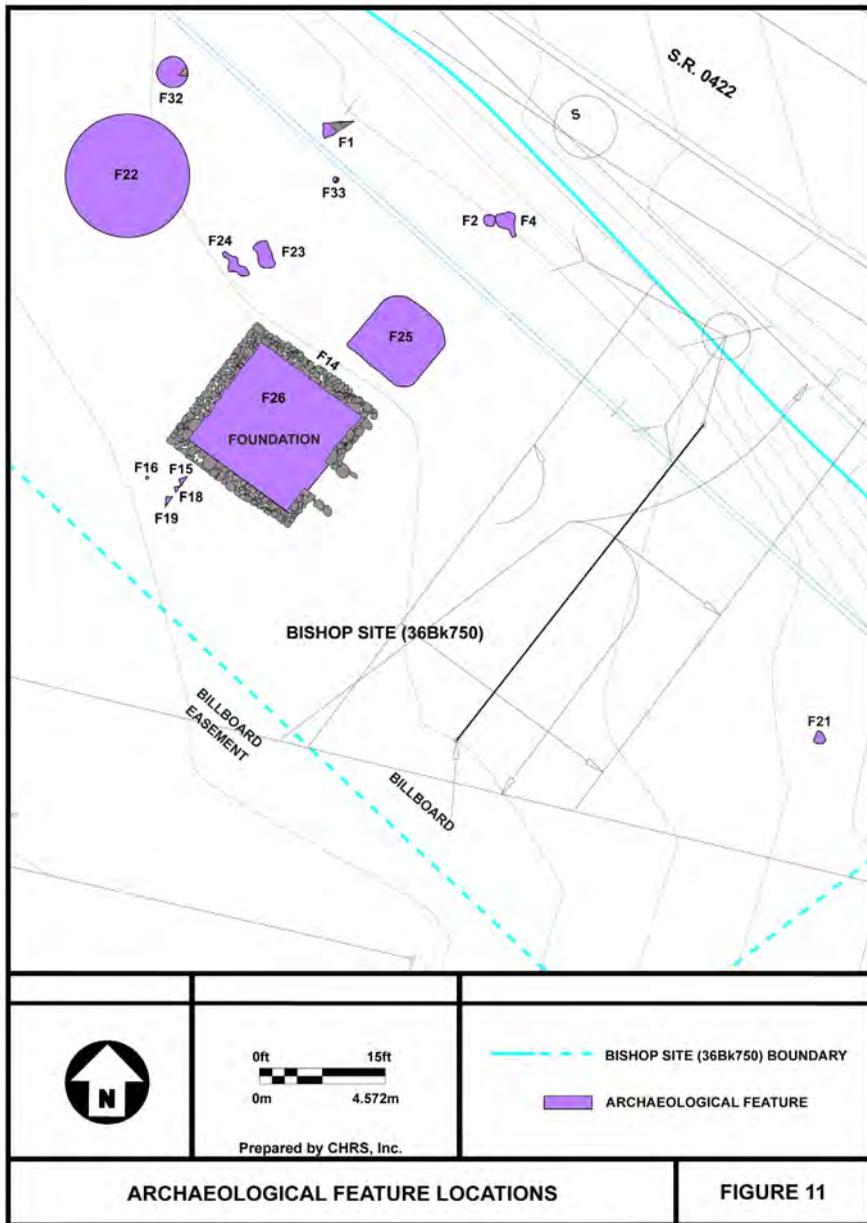
A number of historic features\* were discovered during archaeological excavations on the Bishop Site (the locations of the features were denoted on Figure 11 of the *Phase III Archaeological Data Recovery* report, reproduced on Page 38). The largest feature is the foundation of the tenant house that once stood in this location. The 18-foot-square foundation supported a structure of modest dimensions, similar in size to other mid-nineteenth-century farm dwellings in this region. The foundation walls are 2 feet thick and made of roughly coursed fieldstone. The dwelling's basement, with a compacted dirt floor, was accessed through a door in the middle of the east wall. There is no indication of a foundation for a chimney, suggesting that the building may have been heated by, and food prepared on, a cast iron stove.

Two other features were encountered in the yard area west of the house foundation. Both features are abandoned wells. The smaller well (designated "Feature 32") was discernible as a square of rock rubble at the surface. Once the rubble was removed, an unlined shaft 3.3 feet in diameter was encountered. The larger well ("Feature 22") was identified as a large, dark, circular stain at the surface of the subsoil, measuring 15 feet in diameter. This circle was evidence of an excavation that had allowed the stone of the original well lining to be removed for use elsewhere. The original size of the well could not be determined. Both wells had been filled with rocks and dirt, and both contained artifacts.\*\*

---

\***Features** are non-portable elements of an archaeological site, such as foundations, privy shafts, walls, posts, and stone hearths; because they cannot be removed intact, features are drawn, photographed, and mapped.

\*\***Artifacts** are portable objects made, modified, and/or used by people; artifacts measuring at least a quarter-inch in any dimension are separated from excavated soils through the sifting of the soils through screens of metal mesh.



The sizes and relative locations of features uncovered on the Bishop Site were denoted on this figure in the Phase III Archaeological Data Recovery report.

Although some artifacts were recovered from the fill, the fill deposits were not refuse. There was no evidence of trash-dumping in these shaft features. It is likely that the artifacts within the wells were deposited as “clean” fill.

Although a number of additional features were encountered on the Bishop Site, there were not enough of them to permit an assessment of their significance within the context of the yard surrounding the tenant house foundation. Subsurface testing was largely limited to the front yard and a section of the yard west of the dwelling. The east yard had been extensively disturbed after the house’s abandonment. Other parts of the Site lay outside the limits of the construction project, and were thus exempted from the Phase III investigation. The absence of features in the front yard suggests that this area—fronting on the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike in the latter 1800s—served as public space. Work areas, gardens, animal shelters, and other outbuildings associated with the tenant house were located elsewhere on the property.

## Artifact Analysis

More than 16,000 historic\* artifacts were recovered from the Bishop Site through the excavation of shovel test pits, test units, and test trenches.\*\* Among the items unearthed were nails and window glass associated with the tenant house, as well as bottle glass and ceramics associated with food preparation, storage and consumption. The artifact assemblage also included buttons, buckles, coins, combs, tobacco pipes, and toys.

After archaeologists identify a recovered object, they try to ascertain the object’s significance. On a basic level, it is the presence or absence of a specific artifact or type of artifact that helps archaeologists determine what kind of site they have encountered, and what activities were conducted there. The presence of architectural debris is indicative of a house or an outbuilding. The presence of ceramic plates and bowls reflects food preparation and consumption activi-

---

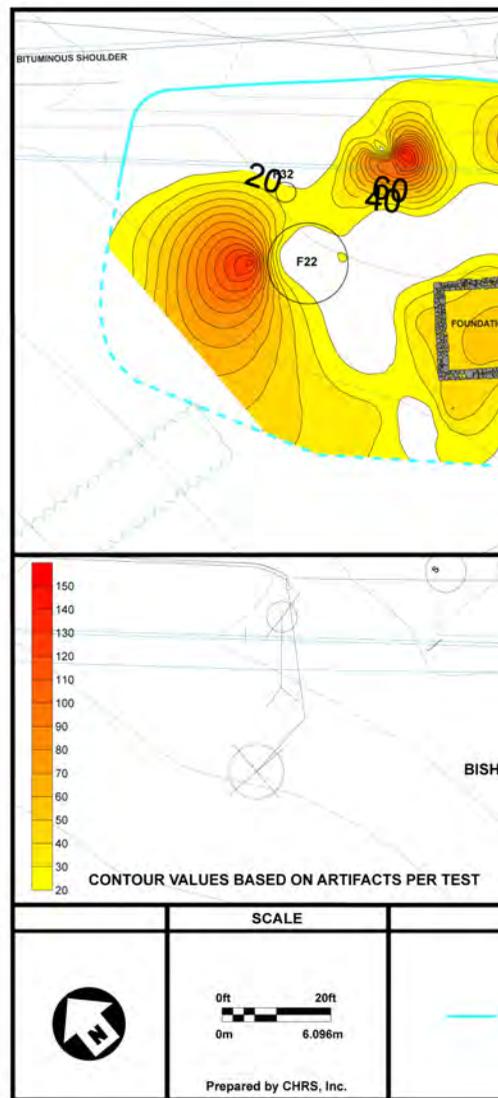
\*Any cultural resource at least 50 years of age qualifies as “historic.”

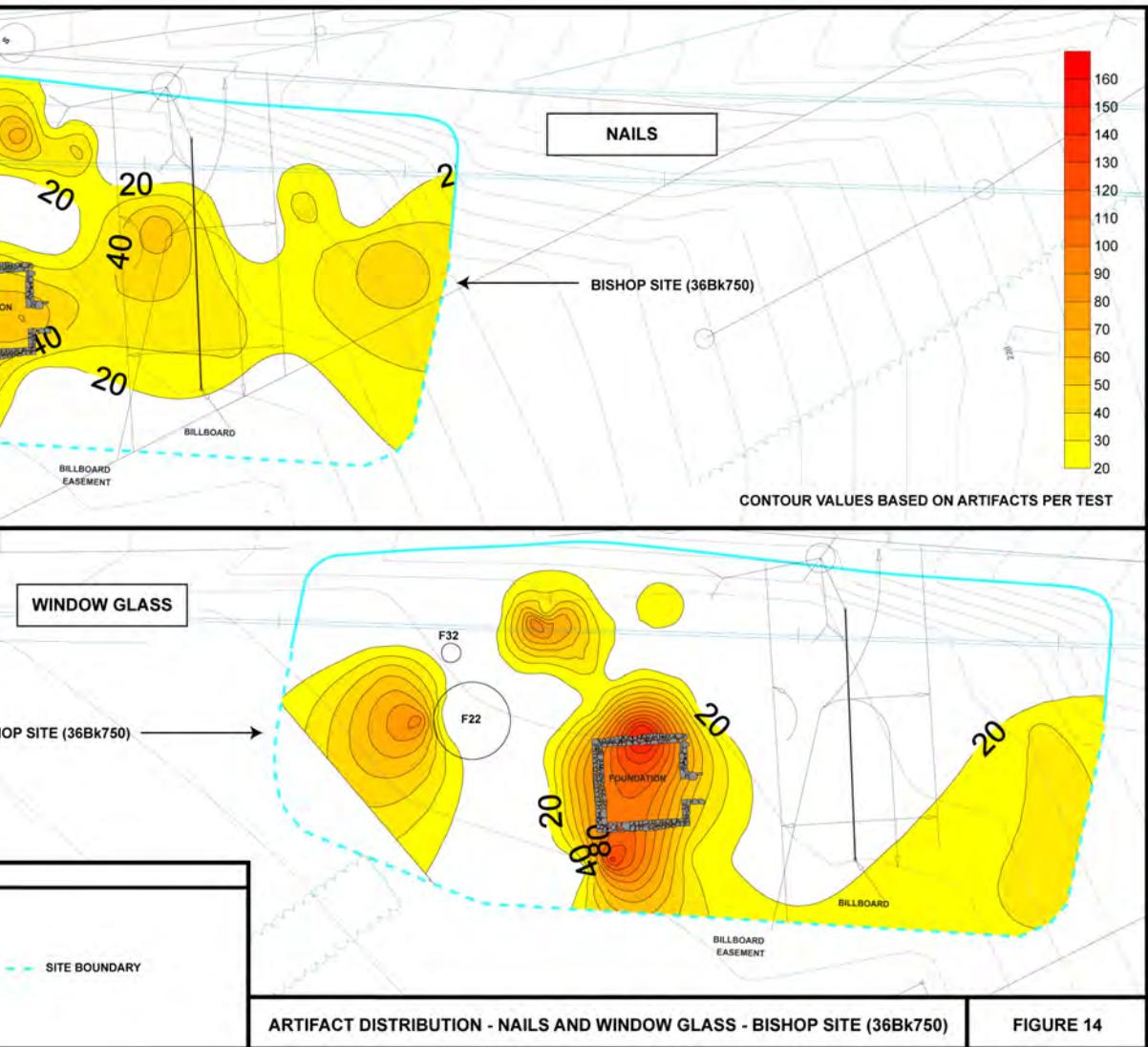
\*\***Shovel Test Pits (STPs)** are round, approximately 20 inches wide, and are excavated using hand tools. **Test Units (TUs)** are square, variously sized (most often 3 feet or 5 feet), and are also hand excavated. **Test Trenches (TTs)** are excavated either by hand or machine.

ties. Mason jars indicate food preservation and storage. Horseshoes or horseshoe nails on a site indicate animal maintenance activities, or, in special circumstances, blacksmithing. An absence of bottles of the type traditionally filled with alcoholic liquids may indicate that no alcohol was consumed on a site.

Data derived from the locations of recovered objects can shed light on a site's former layout. Concentrations of nails, for example, might attest to the former presence of frame buildings. Concentrations of window glass can be used to identify door and window openings (nail and glass concentrations on the Bishop Site were indicated on Figure 14 of the *Phase III Archaeological Data Recovery* report, right). A large number of bones can indicate where animal butchering occurred. Areas with high artifact densities are often revealed to be refuse dumps. The vertical locations of artifacts within layers of soil are also recorded, as that information can help archaeologists determine the period in which the artifacts were deposited.

Artifact locations on the Bishop Site were mapped according to the artifacts' functional types. Items related to food preparation, storage, or serving (such as bottle and jar glass, pottery, and utensils) were grouped and compared to artifacts associated with building construction or utilization (such as window glass, nails, and shutter hardware). While percentages of artifacts associated with these functional groups remained relatively consistent through successive periods of deposition, small variations within each period of deposition suggested how different yard areas had been used. A large percentage of lamp chimney glass was found in the east yard, for example. Concentrations of lamp chimney glass are often associated with privy (or "outhouse") locations, as lamps or lamp chimneys





frequently broke when their carriers walked to and from the privy at night. The high percentage of lamp chimney glass in the east yard strongly suggests that a privy had been located there, on the opposite side of the house from the wells, and downhill from those crucial water-sources.

The small percentage of architectural items in the west yard, where the wells were located, indicates that this area was removed from any outbuildings that may have been on the Site. The high percentage of better-quality ceramics in the north yard—adjacent to the front of the house—hints that these two areas were the focus of public activities, particularly in the earliest period of the Site's occupation.

Information regarding the condition of artifacts can also be used to interpret a site and its inhabitants. Nails, for example, can be analyzed according to size. Different size nails are used for the construction and maintenance of different parts of a building. The condition of nails can be used to determine if a building was torn down, or if it collapsed in place. The nails at the Bishop Site indicate that the house was allowed to deteriorate and collapse. Other data indicate that the stone walls of the house were later dismantled so the stone could be reused elsewhere.



Artifacts also provide information about the people who discarded them. The relative affluence of occupants can be deduced from what they acquired. Ceramic objects can be graded according to how expensive they are to purchase. Porcelain items cost more than those fashioned from redware. White paste ceramics are generally more expensive than stonewares. Highly decorated ceramics are usually more expensive to produce and purchase than minimally decorated or non-decorated items. Well-made items are more costly than poorly made items and factory seconds. Some highly decorated white paste ceramics were recovered from the Bishop Site, but many of the ceramics—while not factory seconds—had been manufactured nearly two decades before the Bishop Farm Tenant House was built, and thus appear to have been bought as previously-owned goods or excess stock. The ceramics indicated that the occupants of the Bishop Site were not affluent. This interpretation is supported by the kinds and numbers of animal bones recovered from the Site. The “faunal assemblage” was dominated by swine (pig) bones. Cattle, sheep, and chicken bones were also unearthed, but in smaller quantities. The data indicate that animals were butchered elsewhere and brought to the Site for consumption. Most of the meat cuts were lower quality, of the sort typically used for stews, sausages, or soups. Like the recovered ceramics, faunal remains on the Bishop Site suggested that the Site’s occupants were not well-to-do.

Artifacts can also shed light on non-tangible attributes of a site’s occupants, when viewed alongside the site’s documented history. On the Bishop Site, for instance, a large number of redware vessels dating to the third quarter of the nineteenth century were recovered. This was unusual for historic archaeological sites in general, but a similar pattern has been discovered on several other farm sites in the region where the former occupants—like those on the Bishop Site—were German immigrants or at least of German descent. The atypical use of redware into the late nineteenth century by German-Americans could mean that they regarded the objects as symbols of ethnic identity. The highly decorated redwares were a reflection of social standing. The presence of these types of ceramics on the Bishop Site suggests that the status of the Site’s occupants in the community may have been based on their ethnic heritage rather than how wealthy they were.

*LEFT: Among the “Activities Group” artifacts recovered from the Bishop Site were horseshoe nails, a scissors handle (a), slate pencil fragments (b), a marble (c), a clasp knife (d), tool fragments (h and m), and miscellaneous hardware (e through l).*



*Viewed in November, 2009 from the north side of Route 422, the Bishop Site offers no visual clues that this was once a house location (as envisioned on the facing page).*

## **Artifacts Considered in Historical Context**

Methods of artifact analysis are numerous and diverse. Fully 50 pages of the technical report prepared by CHRS, Inc. at the conclusion of the Bishop Site investigation were devoted to describing and analyzing the array of recovered objects. This analysis was ultimately combined with historical information and other contextual data.

Throughout its history, the Bishop Site was affected by events that left marks not only on the occupants of the tenant house but also on what those residents bought and how they adapted their household. Several archaeological studies have alluded to the fact that changes or innovations to households often coincide with changes in house ownership. The acquisition of a property by new owners can be reflected in alterations to dwellings and outbuildings, as well as archaeological deposits. It is important, therefore, to associate a site's features and soil layers with particular owners, as much as possible. In this way, changes through time can be observed,



*From the mid-1850s through the mid-1870s, the Bishop Site might have appeared to travelers along the busy Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike something like the inset image, a recreated scene that brings together a mid-nineteenth-century, two-story, stone tenant house (Tenant House 2 at the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, 7 miles southeast of the Bishop Site), a privy in the east yard, and a hand-pump-equipped well in the west yard.*

and specific questions about particular owners or occupants can be addressed. Unfortunately, deposits on the Bishop Site cannot be attributed to particular owners. The Site was only occupied for about two decades, and the occupations of its many tenants were too brief to allow connections to be made between deposits and particular inhabitants.

The residents of the Bishop Farm Tenant House appear to have shared certain traits. They were all of German descent. They occupied the property for no more than three years. They were generally upwardly mobile. Several of them were related through either blood or marriage. Their households tended to average 4-6 persons. All of the heads-of-household held personal estates smaller than the average personal estate of other tenant farmers in the region. With the possible exception of the final household, the Bishop Farm's tenants appear to have left the farm and moved into more favorable circumstances.

The siting of the Tenant House appears to have been based on several considerations. The structure was positioned so that it fronted on the Reading and Perkiomen Turnpike, and stood back from the road the same distance (roughly 50 feet) that the farm's mansion house—on the opposite side of the highway—was removed from the road. The rationale for this particular set-back is unclear, as other houses in the vicinity were not so oriented. The Tenant House was built in the eastern tip of a triangular parcel lying on the south side of the Turnpike. This parcel was the only piece of the Bishop Farm located on that side of the highway. The Tenant House was placed there because such a small parcel had few other uses. The dwelling was thus situated on non-productive land somewhat removed from the mansion house—distant enough to provide occupants of the main house with privacy, but close enough that the Bishops could keep an eye on their tenants. Though the Tenant House was much smaller than the mansion house, it was comparable to tenant houses in other areas. The archaeological data indicate that the Bishop Farm Tenant House was constructed of stone, the same material as the mansion house. From the highway, it would have been evident that the two buildings were associated. The Tenant House lacked a stone or brick chimney, indicating that a stove was necessary for both cooking food and heating the structure. The tenants were probably not given access to the woodlot, and were expected to purchase their own fuel in the form of coal or wood.

No traces of outbuildings were discovered on the investigated portion of the Bishop Site. According to tax records, each head-of-household on the Site had owned a horse and a cow. These animals must have been sheltered. It seems likely, given the proximity of the Bishop Farm's barn, that tenants housed their livestock in that facility.

There was little delineation between public space and private space in the front (north) and side yards of the Bishop Site. Two wells were located in the west yard, slightly closer to the road than the house. Artifact distributions suggest that privies had been located in the east yard. The density of artifacts varied across the Site. The highest density of artifacts was discovered west of the wells, in the west yard. The deposits there comprised a sheet midden (a surface scatter of artifacts) rather than a dump (a specific area where trash is disposed), indicating that this location was used more often for trash disposal than other yard areas

*RIGHT: Archaeologists monitor the painstaking progress of a backhoe operator stripping layers of soil off the Bishop Site in September, 2008.*

examined, but was not the only location of waste discard. The types of artifacts deposited across the yards were very similar. The same types of material were deposited in the same relative proportions across most of the Site. This indicates that the seven households that successively occupied the Site over the course of two decades likely used the yard areas in similar ways.

The recovered artifacts do not reflect well-to-do households. While most of the ceramics recovered are highly decorated—suggesting that they were expensive—slightly less than 50% of them were types that had been popular during the first half of the nineteenth century, well before the Tenant House’s construction. The ceramic assemblage reflects an aspiring rather than prosperous household. The same conclusion can be drawn from the sizes of plates in the ceramic assemblage. There were few small plates that might have been used as pie plates, tea plates or breakfast plates. There were also few plates larger than 9 inches in diameter. The paucity of specialty dishes fits the pattern detected in Germanic households elsewhere, where wealth was likely to be expressed through social interactions rather than the possession of material culture items such as glass and ceramics.





*Fragments of decorated redware vessels recovered from the Bishop Site.*

The modest means of the Bishop Site's occupants were also reflected in the recovered faunal assemblage. The low percentage of high-quality meat cuts, together with the limited number of cuts and animal species present, indicate that the households were either not wealthy or their wealth was not manifested in their material culture. The faunal remains also help to identify the activities undertaken around the Tenant House. There is no evidence that animals were butchered on-site, suggesting that the dwelling's occupants acquired meat from their neighbors.

A comparison was made between the Bishop Site's artifact assemblage and assemblages recovered from other archaeological sites occupied during the mid-1800s by Pennsylvania German farmers in Bucks, Chester, Cumberland, and Lancaster Counties. While the assemblages varied slightly, they all suggested that German cultural traditions greatly influenced the occupants' acquisition and utilization of goods. For example, the prevalence of redware in the ceramic assemblages indicated that locally-manufactured redware vessels might have been preferred over stoneware and bottle glass. Investigations of non-Germanic sites in Pennsylvania have revealed a decrease in the proportion of redware vessels to

all ceramics by the mid-nineteenth century, as vessels made from other ceramic paste types and glass supplanted redware forms. The continued use of redware on the Bishop Site in the second half of the nineteenth century ran counter to that trend. Archaeological investigations performed by Geoffrey M. Gyrisco in Lancaster County<sup>7</sup> have suggested that the reliance on locally-made redwares during the mid-to-late nineteenth century relates to German ethnicity. Where other ethnic groups adopted vessels made from more highly-fired ceramics and/or glass, the use of traditional redware forms persisted in German communities. Redware use was a means of reaffirming one's ethnic roots and demonstrating one's community membership. Purchasing locally-made goods from other community members promoted community cohesion. The occupants of the Bishop Site were of German descent and were likely active in the German community. They appear to have been selected for tenancy by the Bishops—a German family—in part because of their ethnicity. Most of them appear to have come from nearby German communities and then to have returned to those communities when they left the Bishop Farm. In some cases, later tenants were members of the extended family of earlier tenants. At least some of the tenants were more conversant in German than in English, as was still typical in German communities of southeastern Pennsylvania during the second half of the nineteenth century. As a Midwestern visitor noted in 1871, following his participation in a German Baptist Brethren Church annual meeting on the Merkey Farm north of Reading, “the German language was the language entirely used by the people residing in the locality in which the meeting was held.”

The Bishop Site artifact assemblage is very similar to assemblages recovered by CHRS, Inc. from the Merkey Farm Site in Berks County and the Joseph Lewis Site in Chester County. All three sites had been occupied by persons of German descent. The Merkey Farm was owner occupied, while the farmstead on the Joseph Lewis Site in the mid-nineteenth century was tenant occupied. Diana diZerega Wall has argued that highly refined and decorative ceramics were used as a marker for middle- and upper-class families.<sup>8</sup> The ceramics at the Merkey

---

<sup>7</sup>Geoffrey M. Gyrisco, “Defining the Pennsylvania-German Cultural Region: Evidence from Archaeology.” Paper presented at the American Studies International Convention, New York, 1987.

<sup>8</sup>Diana diZerega Wall, *The Archaeology of Gender: Separating the Spheres in Urban America*. New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1994.

Farm were highly decorated. While not the most fashionable or expensive wares available, they nonetheless expressed their owners' desire for middle class gentility. The prevalence of highly decorated ceramics, and the high percentage of teawares, indicate that the households on the Merkey Farm aspired toward an emerging domestic ideal that conflicted with ethnic tradition as manifested in the continued use of redware. That new ideal, termed "the Cult of Domesticity," was embraced in early nineteenth-century urban centers such as New York City, and expanded into rural areas as the nineteenth century progressed.

### **The Cult of Domesticity**

In the Cult of Domesticity, the home was regarded as an oasis of virtue, comfort, and perfection in an otherwise rough world. Wives, as keepers of the home, were supposed to embody domestic perfection. This led to a separation of male and female work spheres, the ritualization of meals, and a middle-class ethos incorporating a lower birth rate. Such practices spread to more and more remote corners of the country due to several interwoven factors. One of these was the industrialization of the American economy, when economic ideals shifted from self-reliant subsistence farming to the accumulation of wealth in an expanding capitalist society. The Cult of Domesticity represented aspiration to a higher social class, or a struggle to define a new type of social class. It also reflected a desire to separate domesticity from the workaday world, both physically and metaphorically. Also implied in the Cult of Domesticity were ideals of industriousness, devoutness, cleanliness, and order. Rubbish was no longer dumped in the front yard. It was either discarded in middens removed from the residence, buried in pits, or carried away. New houses and their interiors were laid out with an emphasis on symmetry. Acceptance of the Cult of Domesticity implied that the hardships and rawer morals of the capitalist world could not exist in the virtuous home. Barriers between home and work took the physical form of land ridges, trees, walls, fences, ditches, hedges, gardens, and space buffers. Barriers were also expressed culturally. At work, one might adopt to the standards of mainstream industrial culture and behavior, but at home one could practice the more familiar rituals of one's native ethnicity, religious practices, cuisines, and horticulture.

The Bishop Site and the Joseph Lewis Site held relatively low percentages of teawares in comparison to tenant farm sites occupied by individuals of non-



*The Bishop Site's artifact assemblage included such clothing-related items as thimbles, beads; metal, porcelain, and bone buttons; and hook-and-eye eyes (above). The most complete specimen of refined paste earthenware was a pearlware soup plate with blue willow transferprinted pattern (below). Embossing on an unearthed beer bottle indicated its origination at the "A.W. Fisher—West End Bottling Works, Reading" (left).*



German descent. The paucity of teawares and other items of ritual dining has been interpreted as confirming the Germanic tradition of the Sites' occupants, and their rejection of the Cult of Domesticity. The story was somewhat different on the Merkey Farm Site. Its owner-occupants were active in their community, supporters of their church, and leaders in local events, but they were also part of the larger world. While they owned some redware, they also acquired higher status goods produced outside of their community (such as highly decorated refined earthenwares). In this way they maintained their ethnic heritage and demonstrated their social status within the local German community, while also displaying social markers for the benefit of those outside the community. By contrast, the tenant farmers on the Bishop and Joseph Lewis Sites were part of the German community, but were not among its elites. They depended on ethnic associations in maintaining themselves, and strove for upward social mobility.

The concept of an "agricultural ladder" has been formulated to describe levels of advancement toward land ownership in rural American communities. Common farm laborers stood near the bottom of this "ladder," tenant farmers occupied its middle rungs, and independent farmers enjoyed the view from the top. Landless farmers (laborers and tenants) struggled to rise to a point where they could finally take title to a farm. Reaching the top of the ladder was one way to achieve the American dream in the nineteenth century. While a useful heuristic tool, the "agricultural ladder" concept does not capture the full complexity of land ownership and use in many farming regions. Census data compiled in the Bishop Site's home township of Exeter during the nineteenth century provide a fuller picture of farmer types. There were farmers who owned and farmed their own land, farmers who owned real estate while working someone else's land, farmers who worked someone else's land and owned no real estate, and farm laborers who owned no real estate. As revealed in the recorded assets of these farmers, wide disparities in accumulated wealth were reflected within each of these four categories.

## **Farm Sites as Rural Landscapes**

Increasingly, archaeologists have studied farm sites as sums of their parts—in other words, as rural landscapes. Elements of farm complexes such as fences and outbuildings can be interpreted as to how they were used for specific agri-

cultural purposes. On a larger scale, farms can be viewed as functioning entities within the rural environment. Understanding the purpose of a farm as a place of food production is the first step toward understanding people's motivations for altering the landscape. The National Park Service defines rural historic landscapes as places featuring continuity of "areas of land use, buildings, vegetation, roads and waterways, and natural features." Rural landscapes "reflect day-to-day . . . activities of people engaged in traditional work," and have "developed and evolved in response to both the forces of nature and the pragmatic need to make a living."

Our view of the Bishop Site as a rural landscape is incomplete, because only that portion of the Site within the project's Area of Potential Effect (yard areas on three sides of the Tenant House) was subjected to Phase III investigation. From the recovered data we can only draw limited inferences. Construction of the Tenant House in the mid-1850s marked a shift in how the Bishop Farm was operated. For the next two decades, the Farm's owner was not its principal farmer. Physical changes to the property precipitated by this shift have not been explored, as the investigation was constrained to a small portion of the Farm. When the property's owner resumed the role of principal farmer in the mid-1870s, more physical changes resulted, including the robbing of stone from the Tenant House and at least one of its wells. The stone was presumably reused in the construction or expansion of other agricultural buildings on the property.

The archaeological data from the Bishop Site, and comparable data from other farm sites, suggest that the Bishop Site's occupants were average folk, living ordinary lives, in a mid-nineteenth-century tenant house of common style and layout. Their financial standing was a notch below that of other farmers in the area who owned no real estate and worked someone else's land. At the same time, the Bishop Site inhabitants had slightly more means than most of their farming neighbors who owned real estate but worked someone else's land, and they were certainly better off than farm laborers who owned no real estate. The most distinguishing characteristic of the Bishop Farm tenants was their Pennsylvania German heritage. Familial and community connections growing out of this heritage brought the tenants to the Bishop Site in the first place, supported them during their brief occupancies there, and then allowed them to move on, having used the Bishop Farm as a stepping stone to a better situation.



## For Further Reading and Research

- Beaudry, Mary. "Archaeology of the Historic Household." In *Man in the Northeast*, Vol. 28, 1984.
- Bridgens, H.F. Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania. Reading, PA: Javon Company, 1860.
- Christman, Rolland David. Christman Family genealogical data, published on the Christman Genealogy Website <<http://www.christmanfamily.net>>.
- Davis, F.A. *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Berks County, Pennsylvania*. Reading, PA: Reading Publishing House, 1876.
- DeCunzo, LuAnn. "Tenant Farmers in Delaware." In *Unlocking the Past: Celebrating Historical Archaeology in North America*. LuAnn DeCunzo and John H. Jameson Jr. (eds); Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- DeCunzo, LuAnn and Ann Marie Garcia. *Historic Context: The Archaeology of Agriculture and Rural Life, New Castle and Kent Counties Delaware, 1830-1940*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 1992.
- Fletcher, Stephenson Whitcomb. *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life 1640-1840*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life 1840-1940*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: PA Historical and Museum Commission, 1955.
- Gyrisco, Geoffrey M. "Defining the Pennsylvania-German Cultural Region: Evidence from Archaeology." Paper presented at the American Studies International Convention, New York, 1987.
- Henry, M.S. and M.K. Boyer. Map of Berks County, 1854. Copied by George M. Meiser, IX, 1971.
- Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Biographical sketch of John Bishop. In *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 10. Philadelphia, PA: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1886.
- Lavender, Dr. Catherine. "The Cult of Domesticity and True Womanhood." Digital document posted online at <<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/386/truewoman.html>>.
- Mascia, Sara. "The Archaeology of Agricultural Life." In *Unlocking the Past: Celebrating Historical Archaeology in North America*. Lu Ann DeCunzo and John H. Jameson Jr (eds); Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- McMurry, Sally. *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Montgomery, Morton L. *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, PA: Everts, Peck, and Richards. 1886
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania*. Chicago, IL: J. H. Beers & Co., 1909.
- Wagner, A.E., F.W. Balthaser, and D.K. Hoch. *The Story of Berks County*. Reading, PA: Reading Eagle Company, 1913.
- Wall, Diana diZerega. *The Archaeology of Gender: Separating the Spheres in Urban America*. New York: Plenum Press, 1994.

