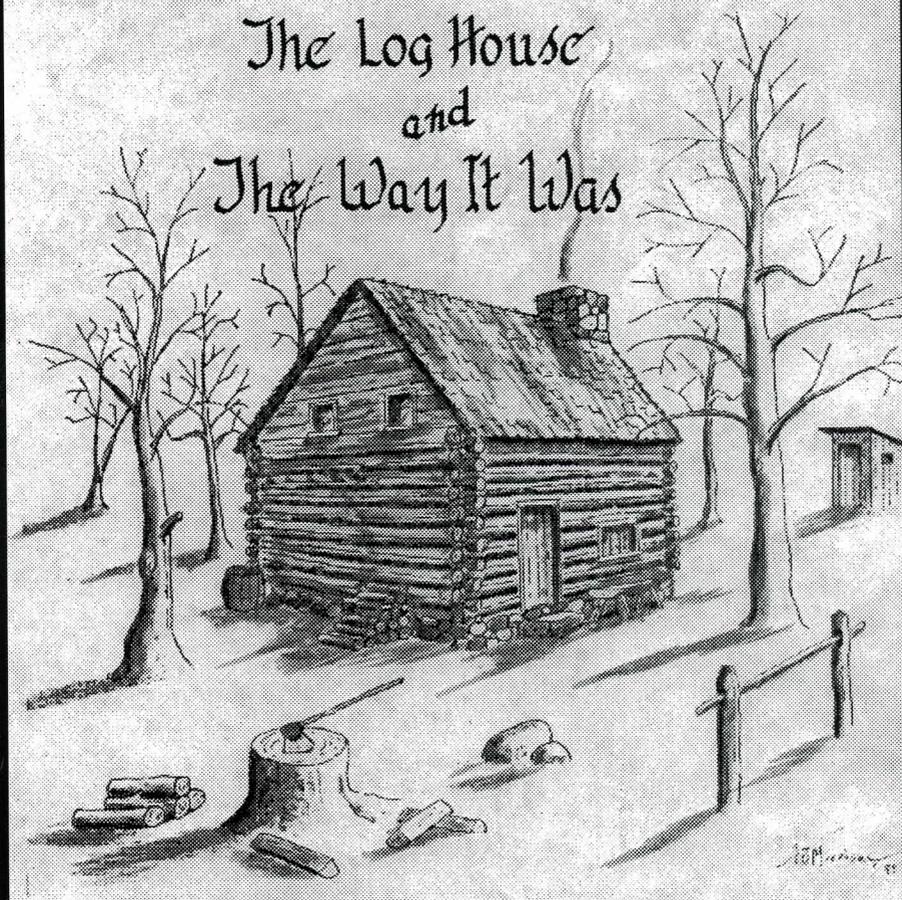


The Log House  
and  
The Way It Was



The Story of the Downingtown Log House

by

Harlan B. Morrison

The Log House  
and  
The Way It Was:  
The Story of the  
Downtown Log House  
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Downtown  
Downtown Historical Society  
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1996

## DEDICATED TO

The Downingtown Historical Society and everyone who volunteered their time, energy, and financial support to preserve the Log House for tomorrow.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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-- H.B.M.

*The Log House and The Way It Was:  
The Story of the Downingtown Log House*

by Harlan B. Morrison

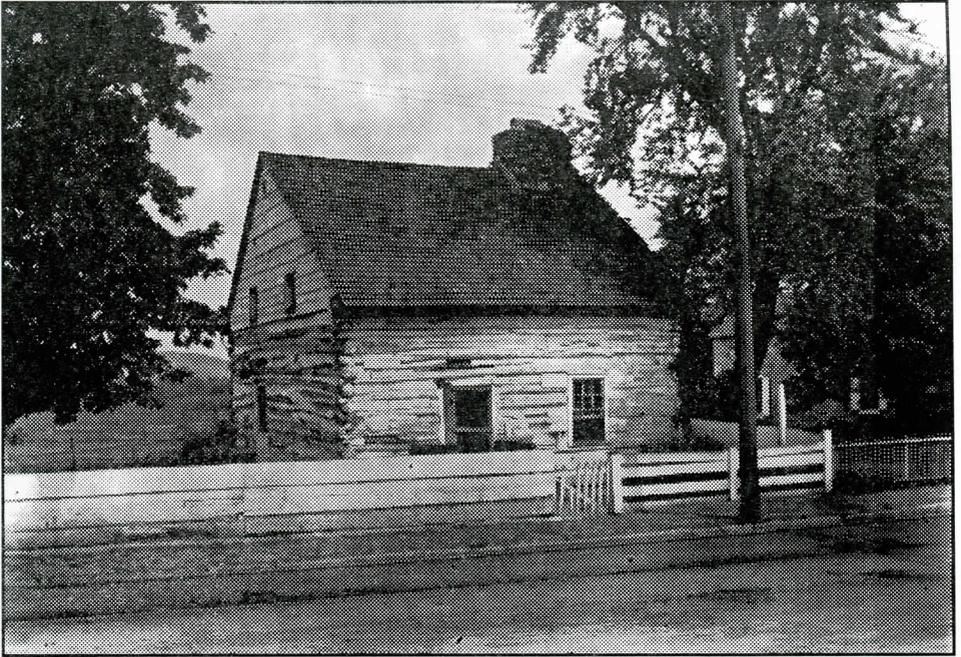
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The Downingtown Historical Society also publishes a quarterly newsletter, *The House Log*. For information on the newsletter or on membership in the Society, please write to the above address. If any readers have any further information on the Log House, their contributions would be most welcome.

Of a limited edition of 500, this is number 120



Downingtown Log House, ca. 1905 (Joseph Miller Collection)



Downingtown Log House, 1994 (Jay Byerly)

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## PREFACE

This booklet is about the Log House—its history, architecture, restoration and archeology. Names and dates are factual; much of what remains is speculation. Theories have been proposed and interpretations of several features of the house have been made with which not everyone will agree. It is possible that letters, deeds or other documents will come to light in the future that will either prove or disprove what is now conjecture.

— H. B. Morrison

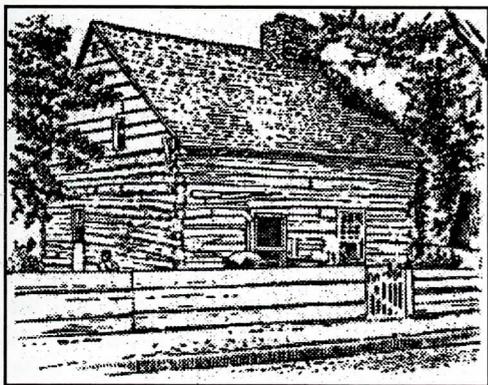
## LOG HOUSE CHRONOLOGY

- 1681 William Bayley purchased 500 acres from William Penn. Jacob Button, Bayley's nephew, inherited 375 of the original 500 acres when Bayley died. Living in England, neither man ever saw the property he owned.
- 1682 Jeremiah Collett Jr. and John Hickman arrived in the colony.
- 1693 The road west from Philadelphia was extended for a distance of 15 miles.
- 1703 Collett purchased the 375 acres from Button.
- 1705 Hickman purchased the property from Collett.
- 1705-1706 Log House built by Hickman.
- 1713 Hickman sold the House and 375 acres to Thomas Moore. The road from Philadelphia was extended to Thomas Moore's.
- 1714 The road was extended 40 miles west to the Conestoga Creek.
- 1714 Moore opened a trading post out of the Log House.
- 1717 Moore was granted a license "to sell strong liquor".
- 1718 Road to Susquehanna River built by Peter Bezellion began at Moore's.
- 1719 Moore's license was renewed "to keep a common ale house in the house where he lives".
- 1729 Moore moved to new stone house still standing at 341 E. Lancaster Ave.
- 1739 Log House was acquired by Thomas Downing.
- 1798 Direct Tax List described House as being old with a value of \$150.
- 1798-1926 The Log House was apparently occupied by a series of tenants, most of whom are unknown. The few who are known are described in the text.
- 1930 Photograph showed the House as unoccupied and overgrown with vines.
- 1934 House had been "renovated and is open to the public view at any time".
- 1940 Downing's will bequeathed the House and property to the Borough.
- 1947 House was restored by the Borough.
- 1950-1988 House was occupied by the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce.
- 1988 House was moved to its present location and completely restored.
- 1991 House became the museum of the Downingtown Historical Society.

## 1- HISTORY

"The Log House represents a rarely surviving architectural style and is an irreplaceable element of Downingtown's eighteenth century heritage."

— S. Heberling



Among the immigrants who arrived in the Delaware Valley in 1682 were Jeremiah Collett, Jr. and his wife Jane. We do not know what Collett's occupation was in England but he apparently recognized the potential for merchandising items not yet manufactured in the colonies. Collett brought more than 800 pounds of such items as nails, gunpowder, shot, cloth, shoes, stockings, and other wearing apparel and hardware. Twenty years

later he was, as noted by Davidson (1982: 3) "an acknowledged merchant in the colony." He also dabbled in land speculation.

Many tracts of land were sold by the Penn family to absentee speculators who never set foot on the land they had purchased. One of these was William Bayley who purchased 500 acres along the Brandywine Creek in 1681. At his death 375 acres passed to Bayley's nephew, Jacob Button. In 1703 Collett acquired Button's property which not only included a major part of present-day Downingtown east of the Brandywine but also a small strip of land on the west side of the creek.

The 1798 Direct Tax List describes the thirty houses in the village at that time. Ten of these were of log construction and one, the Log House, was listed as being old with a value equivalent to \$150. Ninety-three years earlier, when the House was built, there were probably less than a half-dozen houses in the area.

With a nearly nonexistent labor pool, the construction of a log house would have been no small undertaking. For the foundation, fireplace and chimney, the area was scoured for fieldstones, or a rock outcrop might have been quarried for stone. Sixty-two trees of the right size had to be found and

cut down, the branches removed and the logs then hauled to the site. After they were cut to the proper length and carefully notched at each end to insure a snug fit on the log below, they had to be raised into position. The space between the logs was filled with daub, composed of clay, sand, and lime.

Shingles for the roof were an additional chore. C. A. Weslager (1969) notes that a group of workmen worked through the winter of 1716 to make the over 2,000 shingles required for one log structure. The Downingtown Log House would probably have required more than 1,800 shingles, depending on their size.

After more than twenty years in the colony, Collett and his wife, would have been living in a larger, more substantial house which would have provided considerably more comforts than what was offered by the Log House.

In 1705, only two years after he acquired the property, Collett sold his 375 acres to John Hickman. It is a reasonable assumption that it was Hickman who built the Log House, probably between 1705 and 1706.

The road from Philadelphia, no more than a cart path by the time it reached Hickman's property, ended at the Brandywine Creek. Beyond the Brandywine, a forested wilderness extended to the Susquehanna River and beyond, interrupted only by the many Indian trails that crisscrossed the area.

Today, with Kerr Park in the background, commercial establishments to the east and the busy Route 30 passing in front, it is very difficult to imagine what life was like in the small frontier log house almost 300 years ago.

With few exceptions, the House today looks very much as it did when the Hickmans moved in. But there was more -- much more. There would have been a beehive oven not far from the front door. There probably was a smokehouse for preserving meat. The Hickmans would have had a cow or a couple of goats, sheep and chickens. There would have been a horse and wagon for periodic two- or three-day trips to the seaport town of Philadelphia for supplies such as cloth, thread, buttons, nails, hardware and tools. The animals and the wagon would have required weather and winter protection and so there was a barn.

By midsummer the Hickmans could stand at the back of their house and look north across rows of corn, peas, beans, potatoes, squash and tobacco. Meat would have made up a large part of their diet, particularly during the winter months. The Brandywine could be fished the year round.

Hickman could ill afford to slaughter his few farm animals for food

except perhaps a chicken for a special occasion. The area abounded with deer, pheasant, wild turkey rabbit and squirrel, and in the summer and fall they would have been attracted to the crops behind the House.

Whether it was foresight or hindsight, Hickman installed a small opening on the north side of the House. It has been suggested that the Log House had served as a trading post during some period and that trade items were passed through this window. This may have been the case, but not during Hickman's time. He would have been too occupied scratching out an existence in what was at that time the western frontier of Pennsylvania. Also, with less than half a dozen scattered families in the area and only a small band of migratory Indians in the vicinity of Glenmoore, a trading post would not have been a profitable undertaking.

A more likely scenario would be that Hickman used the small window to keep an eye on his crops and if an unsuspecting deer, turkey or rabbit wandered into the area, the small window became a gunport and the Hickmans would have fresh meat for several days. In the winter he may have baited the area with dried corn or table scraps.

By 1713 the Hickmans either had enough of their rural isolation or they may have decided to venture even farther west. It is also possible that the next occupant of the House, recognizing the potential of the location, made them an offer they could not refuse. Whatever the case might be, Thomas Moore now became the owner of the Log House and the accompanying 375 acres.

The records for this transaction include the phrase "land with message" (mess-wij). *Webster's Dictionary* (1977) defines "message" as a "dwelling house with adjacent buildings." Every succeeding sale of the property includes the term message. However, the sale of the 375 acres by Collett to Hickman makes no mention of message. This offers another reason to believe it was Hickman who built the Log House.

The development of the road, west of the Brandywine became a major factor in the prosperity of the Moores, the future village of Milltown and the Borough of Downingtown. The following dates, according to Eshelman (1908), outline the road's history:

1693 - "The completion of the road thus asked for extends the highway about fifteen miles west of Philadelphia."

1701 - Isaac Norris wrote: "I have just come from the Susquehanna [to Philadelphia]. We had a roundabout journey and pretty well traversed the wilderness."

1705 - "The return [report] made in 1705 states that the road was laid out to the upper Brandywine settlement."

1711 - "... they also state that the road [from Philadelphia] extends to Thomas Moore's." [This date is questionable since Moore did not purchase the House until 1713.]

1714 - "There is evidence at this date the Conestoga Road was in use from the Conestoga Creek to Philadelphia from a point on that creek known as Rock Hill."

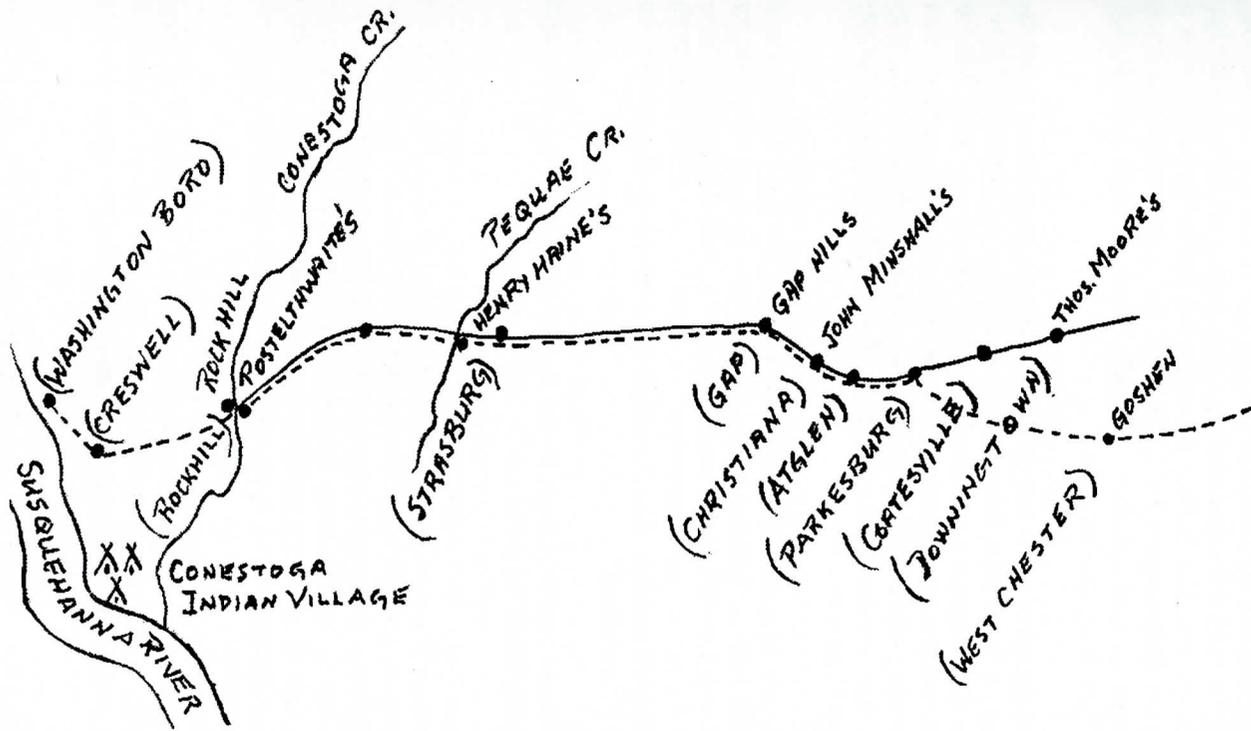
1716 - Thomas Moore built a bridge over the Brandywine.

1718 - Several inhabitants petitioned for a road from Conestoga to Thomas Moore's on the Brandywine to be made a King's Highway. Thomas Moore was one of a committee of six appointed to lay out such a road.

1720 - James Logan of Philadelphia "had occasion to go on the road to Conestoga and did not fail to proceed to the Susquehanna."

1726 - "A petition of diverse inhabitants about Pequea in the County of Chester [now Lancaster County] for a road bypassing rocks and swamps for a distance of three miles said to be the road which leads from Thomas Moore's."

The frequent reference to Thomas Moore's house is not unusual for that period. In those areas where the sparse population was not concentrated enough for the settlement to have acquired an identity and a name, geographical locations were indicated by prominent residences or landmarks along the way.



Conestoga road is shown as a solid line. The Great Minquas Path, the broken line, began in the vicinity of Manayunk (Philadelphia). West from Parkesburg the description of the Conestoga Road follows that of the Minquas Path. Indian paths were walking trails, often so narrow that two people could not walk abreast. In time certain of these trails were widened to accommodate pack horses and later wagons. One of these, the Nanticoke Trail, began in Maryland and passed through present-day Oxford, Honey Brook, Morgantown and Reading. This trail was eventually widened and paved to become Route 10.

The Conestoga Road, ca. 1715  
(Modern names in parentheses. Map not drawn to scale.)

## Thomas and Mary Moore

The Moores were probably the most affluent family in the neighborhood and Thomas was possibly the county's first entrepreneur. Shortly after moving into the Log House he expanded his 375 acres to nearly a thousand. In 1716 he built a grist mill, the first industry in the area, and he had a bridge built over the Brandywine. But before the mill and the bridge there was a trading post. As previously shown, by 1713-1714 the wagon road that once ended at the Brandywine had now been extended west through present-day Coatesville, Gap, Strasburg and beyond.

Where Hickman had seen only the rare pioneer traveler or a neighbor who might stop by for a visit, Moore saw an increasing number of travelers -- packhorses and wagons -- passing his door on their way west. Moore converted the back west room to a storeroom and Hickman's gunport was now opened for trading and to sell such items as flour, cornmeal, salt, vegetables in season, gunpowder, shot and tools, along with hardware for repairing wagons and harnesses.

In 1717 Moore, based on his claim that he was "living 20 miles back near no public house of entertainment" sought and was granted a license by the court "to sell strong liquor" (*Petitions for Licenses 1682-1740*: 59). Several alterations of the House were necessary in order to accommodate both the trading post and the tavern. These will be discussed in the section on "Architecture and Restoration."

Moore now had his trading post, the tavern and the grist mill -- and the road west passing his front door.

In 1718 Peter Bezellion was commissioned to lay out a road from the Susquehanna River to Thomas Moore's. Peter's Road or Old Peter's Road as it came to be known, followed the Conestoga from Moore's house to the vicinity of Thorndale but from there it turned to take a more northerly route. It crossed the west branch of the Brandywine at Siousca north of Coatesville and continued through Wagontown and Compass, eventually ending at Conoy Indian town on the Susquehanna approximately seventeen miles south of Harris Ferry (Harrisburg).

Peter's Road was superior to the road that led to Conestoga. It avoided swampy areas, steep hills and was well drained. As more people learned of Peter's Road, the traffic west increased -- and it all had to pass the Log House.

The *Petition for Licenses* record for 1719 clarifies that Moore's ale house was "in the house where he lives" (p. 59). There is no evidence that he renewed his tavern license in 1724. In 1729 Moore moved into his new two-

and-a-half story gray stone house which still stands at 341 East Lancaster Avenue.

In 1726 George Aston was granted a license for a tavern, the location of which is not known, except that he lived "on the great Road leading from Philadelphia to Conestogoe in the Township of Calne"[sic] (Davidson 1982: 9, quoting from *Chester County Tavern License Papers*). And by now Bezellion had his trading post in the vicinity of the Coatesville Veterans Hospital.

With Moore having moved from the Log House and with Aston's tavern and Bezellion's trading post nearby, it would appear the "glory" days of the Log House had come to an end.

Moore died in 1738 and by 1739 Thomas Downing had acquired the property on which the Log House stood. The House remained in the Downing family for about two hundred years.

Very little information regarding the 19th- and early 20th-century occupants of the Log House is available, but it appears to have housed a succession of tenants through most of the period. The 1798 Direct Tax List gives John Baldwin as the occupant at that time.

Eugene Downing, a carpenter, with his wife Mary and their two children, William and Marjorie, were living in the House in 1870. This is supported by a 1907 newspaper article in the Downingtown Historical Society newspaper clipping file which noted that the Log House was the birthplace of William W. Downing, father of the then president of the Downingtown National Bank. The relationship between Eugene Downing and the occupants of the adjacent Downing Mansion is not known, but he is listed as owning no real estate and only \$250 in personal property.

Following the Downings, other families moved in, as noted by the Heberlings (1991): "In 1880, the occupants were Sallie Kirk, stepson Frank and sons Thomas and Frank. In 1900, the occupants were James Boggs and his family. The 1907 newspaper article cited above noted the current occupants were Amos Smith, his wife and four children. A 1926 article mentioned that the Log House had been occupied for the past fifteen years by Roxanne Remy."

Walter F. Boggs, who died April 9, 1989 at the age of ninety, was the last surviving member of the Boggs family to be born in the Log House. In a 1989 interview (Downingtown Historical Society, newspaper clipping file), Walter had said that the family had moved from the House when he was six or seven which would indicate they moved no later than 1906.

Remy was most likely the last person to live in the Log House. A 1930 photograph in the Log House's collection shows the House to be unoccupied and overgrown with vines. In 1931, the Sanborn Insurance Map described the House as being "vacant and open" (Heberling and Heberling 1991: 34) indicating that it had become a virtual derelict. And yet in 1934 a class of school children, writing about the House in a report entitled *Our Town*, said it "has been renovated and is open to the public view at any time." Any renovation would have been financed by Thomas W. Downing, the owner at the time, whose appreciation for the antiquity of the House was evident when he specified in his will that the House "be kept in good repair, protected, maintained and improved."

Downing's will of 1937 left the Log House and adjoining property to the Borough of Downingtown. When Downing died in 1940 the Borough interviewed a number of architects regarding restoration of the House. However, World War II interrupted these plans for the restoration, which was not accomplished until 1947. From 1950 to 1988, the Log House was occupied by the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce.

Thirty-five years later the House needed a thorough and complete restoration to survive the future. A number of logs, especially on the east side, were severely deteriorated due to dry rot. The House was now eighteen inches below street level, and was receiving water runoff from the street and the adjacent property to the east. Vibration from the heavy traffic on Route 30 was also adversely affecting the structural soundness of the building.

In 1984 the Downingtown Historical Society undertook a fund raising program to finance (1) the removal of the House to a safer location, (2) a thorough restoration of the House and (3) a program of limited archeology in the area.

The House was moved in 1988 to a new foundation approximately seventy feet west of its original location and twenty-two feet from the Route 30 sidewalk. It was also raised to an elevation slightly above street level.

The Log House now serves as a museum for the Downingtown Historical Society and is open to the public at specified times and by appointment.

## 2- ARCHITECTURE AND RESTORATION

“—but time is growing short. A day is rapidly coming when the American log cabin will be extinct.”

-- C. A. Weslager

In the first century A.D. Vitruvius Pollionis wrote describing ancient Colchis (in present-day Armenia): “Evergreen trees having been laid level on the ground to the right and left, a space between them being left as far as the length of the trees extend, upon them, at their ends, other transverse pieces ... are placed, then thereupon, with alternate beams, ... on all four sides. And so walls of trees [are] erected ... upward, ... and the intervals which are left ... they stop up with chips and mud” (quoted in Mercer 1924: 3). This is possibly the earliest description for the construction of a log cabin.

The log house concept was introduced into the Delaware Valley by the Swedes, probably in 1638, when Peter Minuit built Fort Christina (now Wilmington, DE) on the Christina River. During the succeeding years, what was originally referred to as the Swedish log house became known as the American log house. This resulted from the national and ethnic diversity of the new settlers, their personal tastes and individual abilities and the availability of materials.

Dr. Henry C. Mercer wrote in *The Origin of Log Houses in the United States* (1924: 22): “The Delaware Valley log dwelling appears, not as a permanent home, ... but in its cheapest and simplest form, as a temporary, careless, somewhat makeshift [house], soon discarded by the builders.”

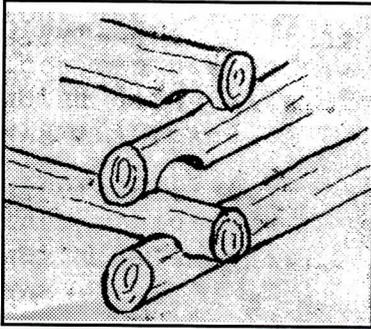
The above would seem an appropriate description of the Downingtown Log House especially when the construction of the House is compared with that of the 1683 Pusey House in Upland outside of Chester or the 1704 Brinton House south of West Chester. Wesley Sessa and Norman Glass, the restorers of the Log House, agree the Log House was built as a temporary structure expected to last for

a “generation or two” (personal communication, 1992-93) That the House has survived for nearly three hundred years makes it all the more remarkable.



1683  
Caleb Pusey House  
Upland, Delaware County

The Downingtown House, which measures 21' 8" by 25', is constructed of saddle-notched round logs, a method of construction which dates as early as 1000 A.D. in Sweden. David Maurer, in his 1996 article "A History of the Log Cabin," supports Mercer, Sessa and Glass regarding the temporary intent of the log homes when he writes, "Notching methods varied according to how the logs were to be used. The simplest notch, the saddle-notch, was used in crude structures such as barns" (p. 73).



Approximately one-third of the logs, including all of the east side, were replaced during the 1989 restoration. The original logs are readily identified by their weathered split ends. The composition of the original daub between the logs was determined by analysis and the same formula, a mixture of clay, sand and lime was reproduced and used for the restoration.

An 1870 photograph of the House currently displayed in the House shows it was whitewashed at that time and it was determined during the restoration that the interior walls had also been whitewashed. The first application of whitewash probably did not occur until some time in the first half of the 19th century with the proliferation of lime kilns in the area at the time.

### **Foundation**

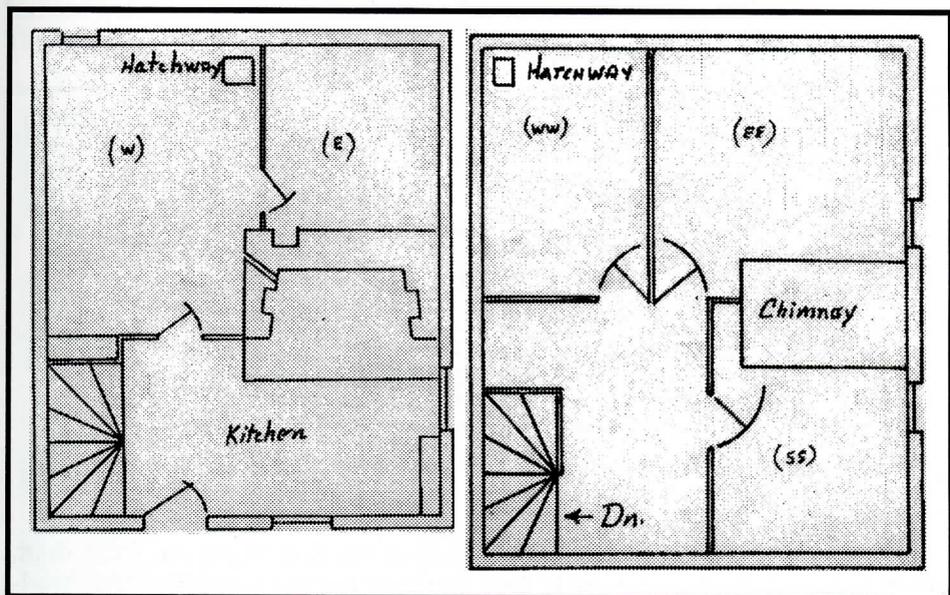
While not unheard of, having a complete stone foundation was not the norm for log cabins at that time. Most were built directly on the ground or supported on large stones around the periphery.

Inside the northwest corner of the foundation was a 10' x 10' root cellar with a clearance of four feet between the dirt floor and the first floor joists. Access to the cellar would have been through a first-floor hatchway, a common practice at that time. The present outside cellar entrance coincides with what can best be described as an oversize window well. This entrance to the cellar was a later modification and not a feature of the original house. On the inside wall next to this opening was a niche approximately 12" x 12" in which a candle or oil lamp was kept to illuminate the area. This niche also indicates the location of the hatchway.

### **Interior**

The original house had three rooms on the first floor and three on the second with an open area at the top of the stair which, because the House lacked closets, would have been used for storage.

The layout of both floors underwent several alterations, mostly the first floor, by Thomas Moore. During the period Moore operated the trading post, his trade and sale merchandise was stored in room (w) with negotiations being carried on through the small back window. Adding the tavern to his business enterprises necessitated some major changes since both could not occupy the same room.

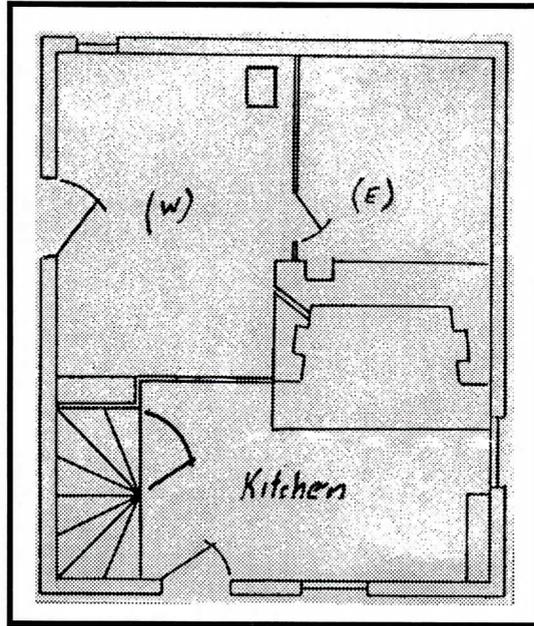


First Floor ca. 1706

Second Floor

All trade items were moved to room (ww) on the second floor with access to the first floor being made by cutting a hatchway through the second floor over the trade window. This was followed by two additional significant changes, the sealing off of the kitchen from room (w) and the addition of the side door to the outside. As Sessa and Glass (1990: 41) note, “When the 19th-century closet [see illustration, p. 15] on the west wall was removed to reveal six feather-edged boards we knew the original location related to the plaster line and the mantel.—The mitered thumbnail moldings on the two elements (board and mantel) matched perfectly.”

The boards referred to are approximately fourteen inches wide and six of them would extend a distance of eighty four inches. The installation of these panels completely walled off the kitchen from the back room (w) with no allowance for a door between the two rooms. This, along with the installation of the side door, eliminated the necessity for tavern patrons to pass through the kitchen/living area. Adding the Georgian mantel over the original fireplace lintel and using the beveled panels instead of the overlapping boards seen elsewhere in the House gave Moore the opportunity to add some formality to Henry Mercer’s “temporary, careless, somewhat makeshift [house].”



*Tavern Floor Plan*

While Moore's tavern door is almost six feet high, the front door, which is its original size, is only five feet five inches high. The low headroom clearance is not necessarily indicative of the stature of the people at that time -- other doors were even lower. C. A. Weslager (1969: 157-58) quotes early travelers who were quartered overnight in log houses and who later gave descriptions of the houses:

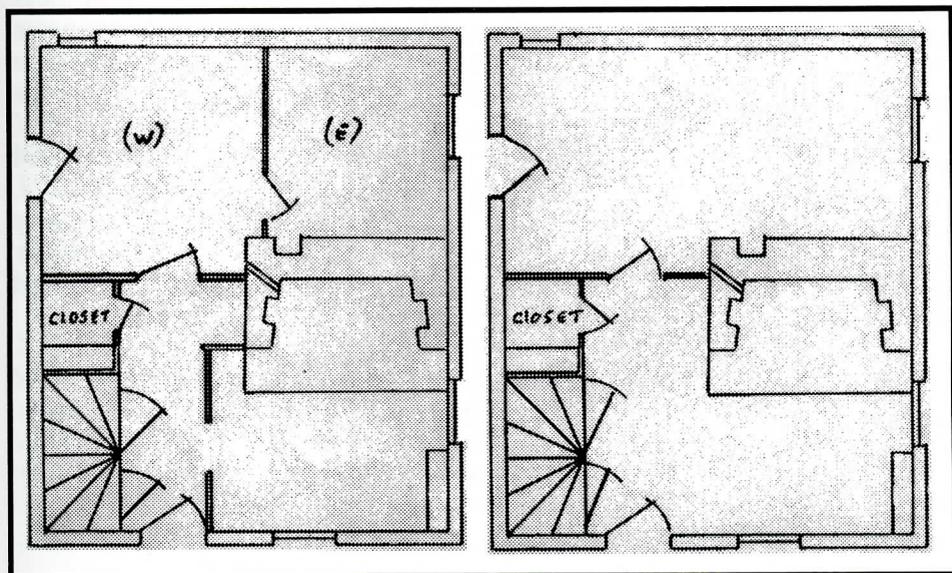
Joseph Dankers and Peter Sluyter (1680): "the doors are wide enough but very low, so that you have to stoop on entering."

Peter Kalm (1749): "— the door of which was so low that one was obliged to stoop in order to get in."

The first log houses had no windows, but the Downingtown House was built nearly seventy years after Peter Minuit's log houses at Fort Christina. Eighteenth-century window glass was imported, expensive and difficult to ship long distances especially over rough wagon trails. Windows were not larger or more numerous than was necessary because they were a major cause of heat loss which was a primary consideration with the fireplace often being the sole source of heat in the winter. The small front kitchen window of the Downingtown Log House would have been original but the east window is suspect.

The niche at the back of the fireplace held a candle or lamp and is identical to the one in the root cellar. This suggests the original house had no window in room (E).

In the northeast corner of room (E) four large staples (one now missing) had been driven into the underside of the second floor. These staples formed a 3' x 7' rectangle from which a quilt frame was suspended by ropes. The frame was pulled to the ceiling when not in use.



*First Floor, 1942*

*First Floor, 1981*

Sessa and Glass (1990: 41) describe an unexpected find in room (W):

“On the west side of the fireplace, approximately four feet back [from the kitchen wall] and five feet above the floor appeared an in-filled stovepipe hole. The hole was integral to the stone work with two angles in the carbon-caked flue. The original masonry stone flue points to one of the earliest uses in this area of a wood stove, possibly of European tile or iron.”

Whether Hickman had a stove or was planning for the future, Thomas Moore would have had a stove to warm his tavern patrons in the winter months.

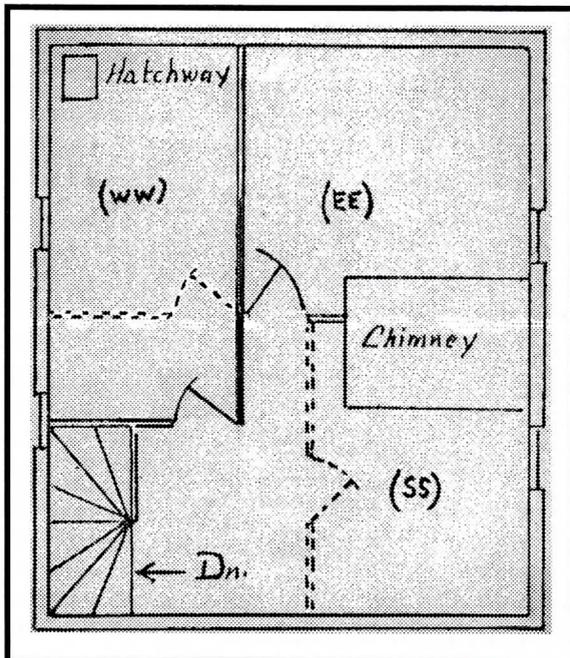
The present stairs to the second floor probably date to the middle of the 19th century replacing the original stairs or possibly a ladder.

Until the 1989 restoration when the House was moved to a new foundation with a full basement, there was no entry to a cellar. This would have allowed space beneath the second floor stairs for the storage of wood for the fireplace or a kitchen closet or both -- wood below and shelves above.

At the front left corner of the hearth, two floor boards are seen to be inscribed with the Roman numerals XII and XIII. These boards are not original to the Log House but were acquired from an 18th-century house being demolished at the time of 1989 restoration of the Log House. Instead of measuring, cutting and installing one board at a time, a series of measurements were made across the full width of the House after which the boards were cut and numbered so they could be positioned in the same order in which the measurements were made. The same system was used when erecting roof rafters. Placed on the ground, the rafters were individually measured and numbered then raised and positioned according to their numerical sequence. The numbers III, IV, V and VI on the rafters of the Log House are clearly visible from the attic hatchway. Roman numerals, in lieu of Arabic numerals, were used because the straight lines could be easily scribed on the wood with a chisel or saw.

The second-floor diagram (below) shows the floor plan at the time of the restoration. The broken lines indicate the locations of the original walls.

*Second Floor, 1988-89*



When the walls of the expanded room (ww) were removed during the restoration and reconstructed in their original location, the wood beneath the wood strip to which the bottom of the wall boards were nailed had the appearance more of new wood, unlike the surrounding dark discolored floor.

Conversely, where the wood strip of part of the west wall of room (ss) was located, the floor is a uniform dark color with only faint lines indicating where the strip had been.

According to Norman Glass (personal communication, 1992-93), when the fireplace mantel was removed during the restoration, the face of the log lintel appeared to be relatively freshly cut showing little discoloration or evidence of aging and showing that the mantel covering the lintel had been added within five to ten years after the construction of the fireplace. Using this time table, it would appear that in addition to the first-floor alterations, Moore had enlarged room (ww) and eliminated room (ss) by removing the west wall.

Large nails, still in place, were driven randomly into the roof rafters. Smoked and dried meats and bags of dried corn and grain were suspended from the nails during the winter. Access to the attic was by a hatchway which most likely was in the ceiling of room (ss) above the stepped west side of the chimney. At the time of the restoration only the ceiling boards of rooms (ww) and (ss) were intact. The restorers chose the most logical location in what had been room (ss) for the present hatchway -- above the stepped west side of the chimney.

### 3 - ARCHEOLOGY

“— the significance of the Log House is enhanced immeasurably by what cannot be seen above the surface of the site.”

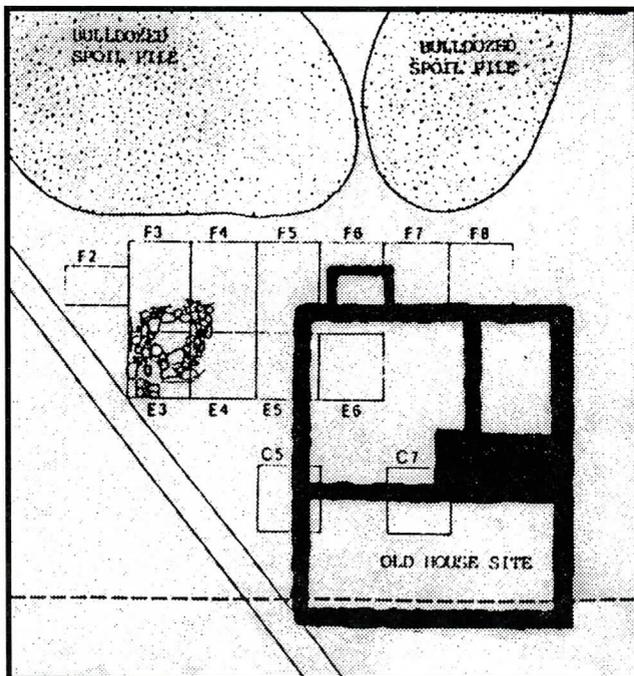
-- S. Heberling

The archeology in and around the original site of the Log House was begun in 1988. The field work was carried out by volunteers from the Downingtown Historical Society, Chapter 21 of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology and interested local residents of Downingtown. All work was under the direction of Paul M. and Scott D. Heberling of Heberling Associates, Inc., professional archeologists from Huntington, Pennsylvania.

Because of time and financial limitations only 20 percent of the area was excavated as indicated by the coded squares and rectangles on the following page. However, the yield from this relatively small area resulted in the recovery of over 16,000 artifacts!

By today's standards the early settlers were not very tidy about their surroundings. The vast majority of artifacts such as sherds of ceramics and bottles, nails, window glass and various pieces of hardware were recovered

*Archeological Excavation, 1988-89*

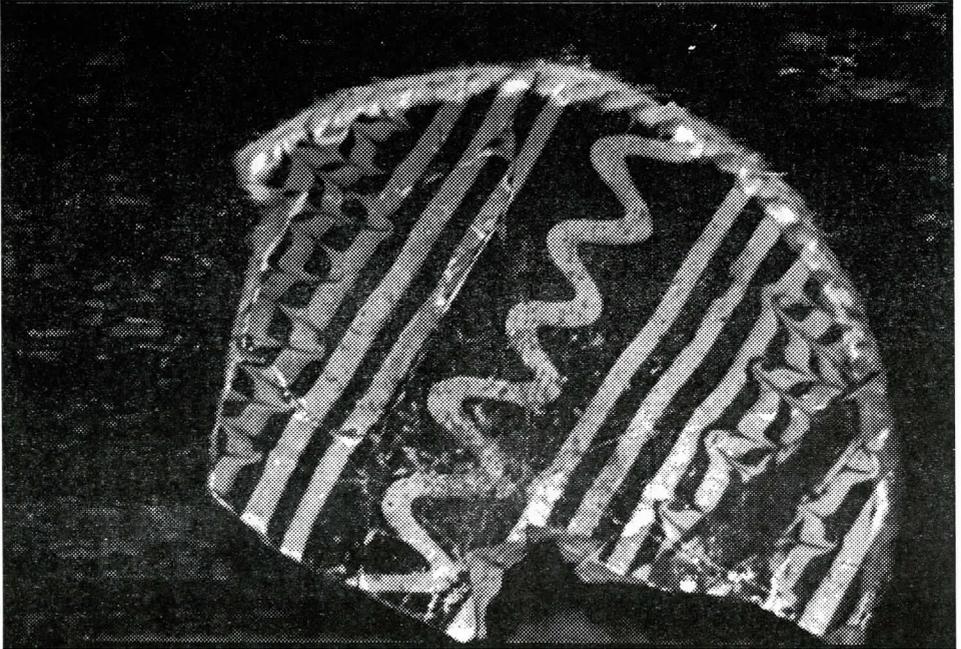


from what had been the original ground level when the House was occupied. Similar conditions have been described for a Bucks County house built as late as 1783.

The final Heberling Associates report places the artifacts in eighty-eight categories. The following is an abbreviated list of types and numbers of items recovered.

<u>Group Type</u>	<u>No. of Items</u>
Ceramics	
redware, stoneware, whiteware, porcelain, other	5,542
Glass	
bottle, tumbler, lamp	1,855
Bone	
bone fragments, teeth, shell	914
Architecture	
nails, bolts, window glass, etc.	2,671
Clothing	
buttons, beads, shoe leather	106
Personal/Activities	
toys, pipe and doll fragments	108
Miscellaneous	
jar lids, tools, prehistoric artifacts	297
Spoil Pile Artifacts	
metal	402
fabric	3
leather	71
bones/teeth	291
redware	314
other ceramics	1,327
buttons	60
glass	1,721
stone	57
other	
marbles, jar lids, plastic, rubber, <u>unidentified rusted metal</u>	<u>478</u>
Total	16,217

Quadrant E6, which represents one quarter of the cellar area, was possibly the most productive. At some point in time the root cellar became a trash pit. This is evident from the variety of artifacts recovered from this area. Most prominent among these were slipped redware (see example below), whiteware, bottles, oyster, clam and muscle shells, and animal bones, both bovine and porcine.



*This redware plate was partially reassembled from thirteen sherds found in Quadrant E6.*

Of the total recovered redware sherds, over 60 percent came from E6. Several plates and bowls have been partially restored but all are less than 50 percent complete. The same is true for the bottles. The sherds required to complete these items still lie buried in the unexcavated portion of the Log House cellar.

Most of the Log House redware probably dates to 1806-1860 during which time John Vickers, Eber James and Milton Hoopes plied their trade in the vicinity.



*This square bottle, known as a "case bottle," was found in Quadrant E6. It greatly resembles another case bottle found in a well at the Shield's Tavern site in Williamsburg dated to 1774-1781.*

One of the bones exhibits a series of parallel cut marks caused by the knife cutting into the bone when the meat was sliced. Other bones show obvious signs of being gnawed by rats. It is difficult to account for the recovery of several calf and pig mandibles from this area.

The missing fourth staple for suspending the quilt frame (mentioned above, page 15) was found in E6!

Among the ninety-nine prehistoric artifacts found were two spear points. One of these probably belongs to the Late Archaic period of Indian culture which would date it between 3500 and 1000 B.C. The larger spear point probably belongs to the Early Archaic period and dates to between 8000 and 6000 B.C.



*Stone-lined Well, Northwest Corner*

A stone-lined well was uncovered six feet west of the northwest corner of the House. Again limited time, funds and manpower did not allow for the excavation of the well. Several post molds in the vicinity suggest the possibility of a protective roof over the well which was probably dug in the early 19th century. Prior to that water would have been obtained from the then pristine clear Brandywine or possibly from a spring which has long since been covered by fill. The well would have been abandoned sometime after 1870 when a water system was installed in the town.

Abandoned wells and privies are prime sources for artifacts. No privy was found; however only five test pits were dug. The Heberlings believe it was probably east of the House in an area now covered by a paved parking lot.

The 1870 photograph in the Log House shows a small shed with a flat roof sloping down toward the west and a door facing south was located south of the well and close to the House. This would have been the woodshed. Post molds from the shed would probably have been uncovered if the archeology had been extended farther south from the well. Examination of the soil strata indicates that the House had been built on a terrace. Twelve to fourteen feet west of the well, the terrace sloped down abruptly to a swampy flood plain five feet below. This would place the present House directly over the old flood plain.

## 4 - SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The purpose of this book is to bring together most of what we know about the Log House and some of what we think we know.

It should be remembered that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had not been born when the House was built. Benjamin Franklin was just a toddler and the populace swore allegiance to the King of England.

It was at the beginning of the 18th century that the small log house was built on the banks of the Brandywine Creek, some thirty miles west of the Delaware River. It would be at least another seven years before it could be reached by road from the seaport town of Philadelphia.

Today, almost 300 years later, it is surrounded by a growing community of 8,000 people. The residents of Downingtown should be proud of the small white log house that stands in the center of their town, for it is rare indeed that any town or city is able to point to a single structure and say, "This is where it began."

The following quote, cited in a July 15, 1945 letter from Harvard University Professor of Architecture Kenneth Conant to Mrs. S. B. McIlvain of Downingtown aptly summarizes the significance of the Downingtown Log House:

The Downingtown log ... [house] stands at or near the first rank in the whole development of out frontier architecture. Naturally so early an example is very precious. It is one of the most important buildings of its kind.

-- Talbot Hamlin, Ph. D.,  
Great Avery Library of Architecture  
Columbia University

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