

HARLAN RUIN

On July 4, 1990 a wall section of the stone house ruin on the edge of Spear Pond fell in a heap. That event sparked research of its history.

It seems that between 1698 and 1700 Ezekiel Harlan began clearing a 200 acre farm of virgin soil and building a stone house near what today is called Spear Pond. Ezekiel lived in the stone house until about 1727 to 1730. The land was legally owned by Ezekiel's father, George Harlan, who emigrated from Ireland to nearby Centreville in 1683 with his brother Michael Harlan.

[The Old Kennett Meeting House, built in 1710, was on two acres obtained from Ezekiel Harlan, a member of Meeting. Minutes covering that transaction refer to him: "who lives in ye ould house on the farm."]

A dependable water supply being an essential requirement for a farm home, Ezekiel built his home near the most reliable spring on the property. Although two centuries have obliterated the spring's exact location, we believe that it was only just a few yards from Harlan Ruin.

Ezekiel Harlan married Mary Bezer in 1700-01 and they lived in the house long before 1710. An 1830 township map marks the original Harlan house as "occupied". Perhaps this was home for a hired hand and his family.

Resident Margaret Elvin, whose grandparents lived in the "Farm House" when she was young, recalls Harlan Ruin as a building with two usable levels: dry storage for hay on the upper level and cool storage for milk and butter on the lower level through which spring water flowed.

While we cannot prove that this ruin was part of Ezekiel Harlan's house built in 1700-01, we know of no more likely a location for Harlan House. This was a logical place for a home—close to water in a low area protected from wintry winds.

SPEAR POND

In 1949 Alex Spear brought nine acres of land that today includes Harlan Ruin and Spear Pond. In 1956 Alex Spear built an earth dam across the floor of the small valley in which Harlan Ruin is located and created the spring-fed pond that we now call "Spear Pond." (Dam construction obliterated the exact location of the spring that supplied water for the Ezekiel Harlan family in the early 1770s and supplies water for Spear Pond in 2008.)

Alex Spear stocked his pond with fish and used it and adjacent meadows to train his field-champion Chesapeake Retrievers, one of which won a national championship.

During a severe rainstorm in 1978, flooding of Kendal's storm water retention pond at the head of the small channel leading down to Spear Pond washed away a section of the dam. The channel is 550 feet long with an elevation drop of 30 feet. The dam was soon rebuilt and the pond restocked with fish.

Today, spring water flows under the west wall of Harlan Ruin into Spear Pond, whose level is about 12 inches below the floor level of the ruin, and rainwater augments the flow of water into the pond.

When heavy rain causes an overflow, excess water is drained from Spear Pond through a pipe that passes underneath the dam into a small stream-bed that drains eventually into Bennetts Run. (The Spear Pond overflow is about 393 feet above sea level.)

The Harlan Ruin-Spear Pond area offers today's Kendal residents a quiet place of natural beauty and of historic interest within a short walk from home. Visit often and enjoy this blessing.

Isla and Alex Spear were among Kendal's Founders.

Timelines-Harlan Glen and Farm

Ref: "History of this Kendal Land", by Frank C. Roe, KRA, 1990
 "Breoir's Farm Maps of Chester County", W. H. Kirk & Co.,
 Philadelphia, PA, 1883: East Marlboro Township, p. 201; Kennett
 Township, p.217; Pennsbury Township, pp. 34, 35.

1698-1700 George Harlan received warrant for 500 acres from Chistopher Pennock's, grant of 5000 acres. George Harlan had migrated to Centerville from Ireland in 1693.

1698-1700 George Harlan's son Ezekiel cleared 200 acres and built a stone building (now "The Ruin") in the sheltered hollow near the only spring on the property, 20 or 30 feet to the east (now covered by the pond). It would appear to have been 39 ft. by 16 ft. by 17 ft. high, with walls 18 inches thick, plastered inside. There was only a small brick chimney; possibly heat was by a predecessor of the Franklin stove and cooking in an outside cook house. The spring was about six feet below the first floor.

1710 Two acres transferred to Kennett Meeting for a meeting house and cemetery.

1727 Ezekiel Harlan's daughter Mary married Daniel Webb.

1727-30 West wing of the current farmhouse built of wood on very high ground, 480 feet above sea level..

Ca 1730 Daniel and Mary Webb took possession of the farm.

1732 Current barn built. Original building probably used as tenant house until the 1880's, when it was used in the dairy, with hay storage on the second floor and milk cooling on the first. floor.

1826
 Mary Webb
 Executrix of →
 Thomas Webb,
 sold at auction
 to William Huey

1833 Farm sold to Jacob Huey, who added the present stone east wing to the farm house. He installed a hydraulic ram at the spring, which pumped water an elevation of 130 feet to a tank in the attic. The need for a feed water supply above the ram caused the water table to rise to near the first floor level of the old farm building. (It would still be useful to cool milk)

The Webb family kept land in the area: William Webb retained 99 acres between the now Huey property and Street Road (the "Webb Farm"), while Stephen A. Webb had 256 acres directly across the road.

- 1891 William Hoopes purchased the farm. It passed to Frank E. Hoopes and wife Margaret R., who had Ida H., Harry B., Margaret, Fred. W., and Enos. The farm was named "Lawnwold"
- One of William's daughters married William Huey, son of Jacob; their son William became a resident of Kendal in 1975
- Ida was the mother of Kendal Resident Margaret Hoopes Cloud Elvin..
- 1947 Lawton A. Burrows (Burrows Run?) purchased the farm and renovated the farmhouse completely. He did not farm it but sold off portions, amounting to 50 acres, much of which Kendal has now bought back.
- 1949 Alex Spear bought nine acres that includes the old building (which had burned) and the spring. He stocked the pond with fish and trained champion Chesapeake retrievers on the pond.
- 1956 Spear Pond created by the a dam; this covered the spring and raised the water level into the first floor in times of heavy rain.
- 1971 Friends Hall purchased the remaining 77.6 acres, which included the farm house and barn.
- 1973 Property transferred to Kendal
- 1985 Kendal purchased Worth house from the Hinsleys (four acres)..
- 1988 Kendal purchased Spear property..

JWH
10/8/10

II. THE HARLAN HOUSE

Although George Harlan's land warrant from Christopher Pennock for 500 acres was not recorded until 1700, we believe, based on practice of that time, that the agreement must have been made two or three years earlier. Thus it seems probable that George's son Ezekiel had already selected the site for a house, and perhaps he was working on it or clearing the land. Any analysis of his tasks then would indicate they were formidable! He must have had considerable help.

A good water supply was the primary essential requirement for any site, especially a farm home. There was only one spring on the whole property. It was in the valley sloping north and east as shown on the map (page 1); the quality was perfect and the quantity more than ample.

The site Ezekiel Harlan selected for the house (now a ruin) was close to the spring. It faces on the west side of the valley where it widens and bends easterly towards Bennett's Mill. He must have reasoned that this would give protection from cold winter northwest winds. The spring was then some 20 or 30 feet east of the house. (Events two centuries later obliterated the exact spring location--see pages 13 and 14).

The existing ruin of the house provided ample measurements and other information that permitted a studied perspective drawing of it (fig. 2 below). The horizon as it appears on the drawing should be considered as a cleared field, perhaps a year later. However, that double line on the bank of the valley in back of the house was unquestionably Ezekiel Harlan's initial path and ultimate road to and from the house. The evidence remains clear today.

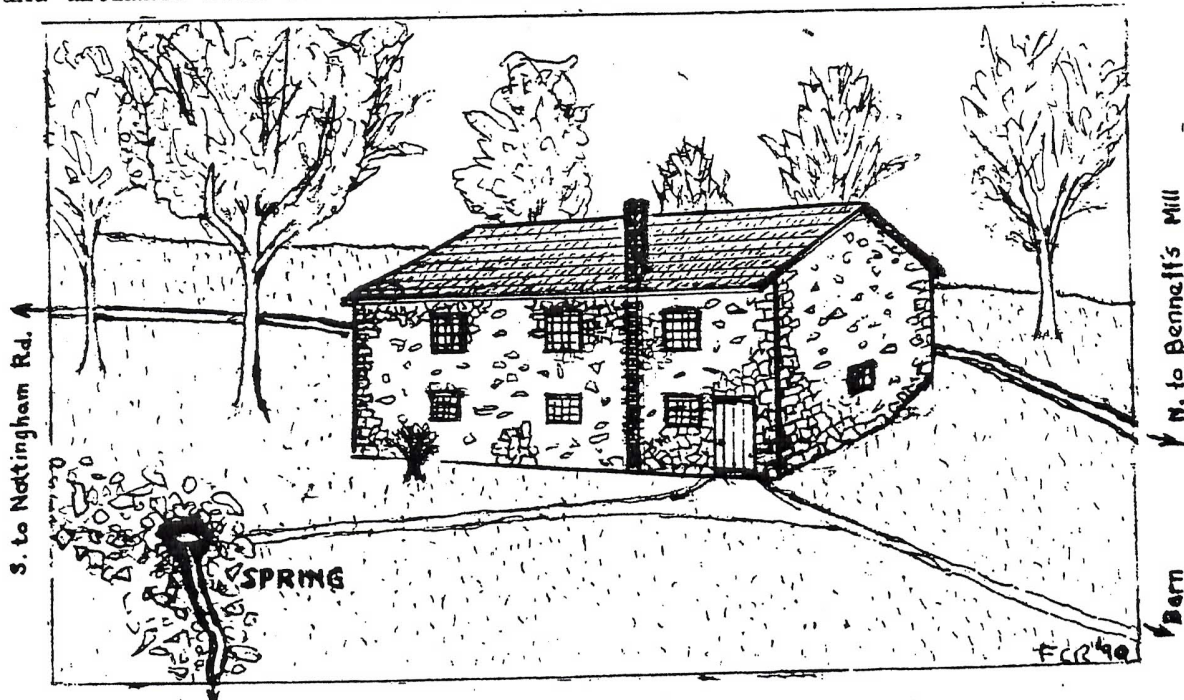


FIG. 2, EZEKIEL HARLAN HOUSE
Circa 1700

A change in underground water elevation at the Harlan house ruin was created by the installation of the hydraulic ram. Since the ram required that reservoir well above the existing spring to operate, it had to be near the house itself. This in turn caused a rise in ground water level all around the reservoir, which included the ground floor of the house; water flows through it to this day.

* * * * *

The fourth and final great use of this spring was made by Alex Spear in 1956 when he built that earth dam across the valley and created what has been properly named "Spear Pond." Isla Spear took the photograph on this page (fig. 8) the following early spring, showing the first geese to use it on their return flight to Canada.

Note the Harlan house ruin on left (west) shore of pond, before there was serious deterioration. Interior wall plastering shows up particularly. There also appears to be some evidence of cornice wood construction that survived the fire.

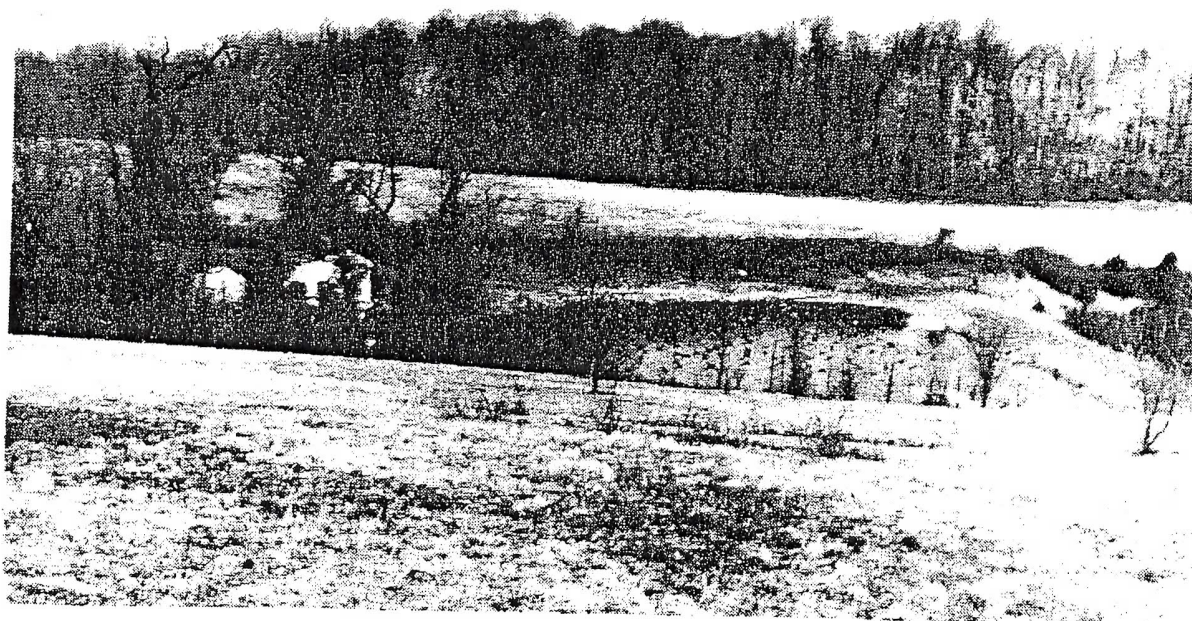


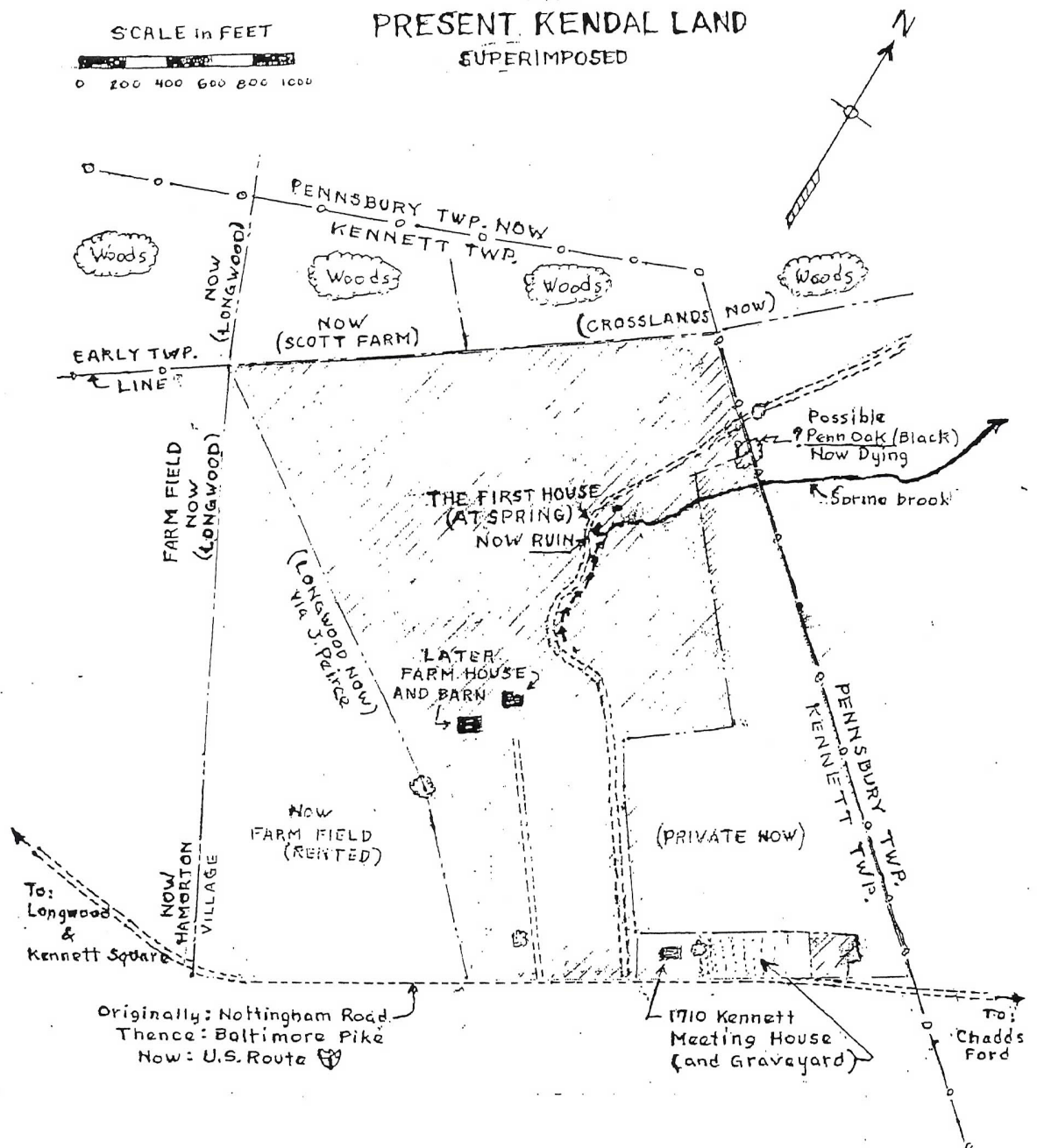
FIG. 8, SPEAR POND; EARLY 1957

Incidentally, the picture also faintly shows the row of seedling pines immediately in back of opposite shore. Alex planted these the year before-- one of seven rows he planted on his land, for a total of some 150 trees; all now about 50' tall.

11/20/95

PROPERTY MAP
OF
ORIGINAL HARLAN LAND
WITH
PRESENT KENDAL LAND
SUPERIMPOSED

SCALE in FEET



Map by
Frank C. Ro
1990