

February 4, 1969

Mr. John M. Dickey  
18 S. Olive Street  
Media, Penna. 19063

Dear Mr. Dickey:

At last, we have prepared a short report of the instrument surveys made at the Morton Mortonsen House. Two copies are enclosed as well as blueprints of the Geohm and magnetometer grids.

I have prepared another set which I shall leave in the Museum for Dr. Butler.

Sorry to be so slow with these.

Sincerely yours,

R/rs  
Encls.

Elizabeth K. Ralph

Grids in Map Drawer  
"Eastern U.S.A."

## INSTRUMENT SURVEYS

### MORTON MORTONSEN HOUSE

At the invitation of Dr. Mary Butler, instrument surveys were conducted around the Morton Mortonsen House on several weekends in October and November, 1968 by members of the staff of the Applied Science Center for Archaeology and volunteers. The surveys were carried out with two different instruments as shown on the grid plots. The more extensive coverage was made with the Gossen Co. Geohm, an instrument which detects changes in resistivity. One would expect readings of high resistance over buried stone or brick foundations and low readings over filled pits or trenches. Two grids (nos. 2 and 6) were made with the Varian Associates cesium magnetometer Model 4920. This is a sensitive detector of changes in magnetic intensity. With this, grids can be covered much more rapidly than with the Geohm, but the magnetometer could not be used within 50 feet of the existing house because the bricks, of which it was constructed, are very magnetic. Away from the proximity of the house, one would expect to detect buried brick walls as magnetic anomalies and stone walls as regions of low magnetism. Also, regions of soil disturbance tend to be more magnetic than undisturbed earth. Pieces of iron, "tin" cans, etc. are also very magnetic and usually cause pronounced anomalies of small area but with steep gradients (closely spaced contours of equal magnetic intensity).

The site of the Morton Mortonsen house was not an ideal one for instrument surveys. In addition to not being able to use the magnetometer near the house, there was much clutter of modern civilization. Because of this, the Geohm was the more appropriate instrument for this site, but even the Geohm anomalies are difficult to interpret. The suggested interpretations of the anomalies which follow must not be taken too seriously because they may easily be wrong.

The Geohm grids have been replotted on a composite map. On this map, artificial "N-S" and "E-W" axes are shown (in addition to magnetic north) in order to designate the numbers of the stakes which had been placed at 50-foot intervals. The most pronounced anomalies occur in the northern part of the composite plot between stakes 0-100N; 50E, 100N; 0,150N; and 50W, 150N. Just north of an imaginary line between 0,100N and 50E, 100N, there is a more or less rectangular area of high resistance which may be representative of the foundations of a shed. If one overlays magnetometer grid #2 on top of this, one sees a pronounced magnetic anomaly and associated anti-magnetic reaction that corresponds in location with this Geohm anomaly. Perhaps, pieces of iron farm equipment were stored in the shed. In line with this anomaly to the east, there are also corresponding magnetic and resistivity anomalies. To the west, just beyond the limit of grid #2, there is also a Geohm anomaly in the same line.

Just south of an imaginary line between stakes 50W, 150N and 0,150N, there is a larger rectangular anomaly of high resistance about 40 feet long and 15 feet wide. This may represent another shed or barn, but it is possible that all of these anomalies reflect only the bedrock.

South of stake 50W, 100N there is a less pronounced low-resistance anomaly, also rectangular. In the bottom of this grid (between 100W,<sup>0</sup><sub>A</sub> and 50W, 0), there is a smaller area of high resistance with two small peaks. Again, it is possible that these anomalies represent nothing of interest. One encouraging feature of all of the Geohm anomalies discussed is that they are oriented either parallel to or perpendicular to the house.

When encountered, the regions of fill show up clearly in both the resistivity and magnetometer grids. In the composite resistivity plot, one sees this in the section west of stakes 100E, 50N and 100E, 100N where resistance values drop down to 10 ohms. North of this in magnetometer grid #2 the area marked "FILL" has been left blank because the magnetic disturbances were so large that it was not possible to draw contours of equal magnetic intensity at the same interval of 5 gammas. This is true also in grid #6. Here a steep gradient of magnetic contours is shown as one approaches the "FILL".

Elizabeth K. Ralph

February 3, 1969

# PRICE & DICKEY

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WILLIAM W. PRICE, A. I. A. • 1947-1961

JOHN M. DICKEY, A. I. A.

*Morton Mortenson Survey  
file*

Miss Elizabeth K. Ralph  
Associate Director  
Applied Science Center for Archaeology  
The University Museum  
33rd and Spruce Streets  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

February 11, 1969

Dear Miss Ralph:

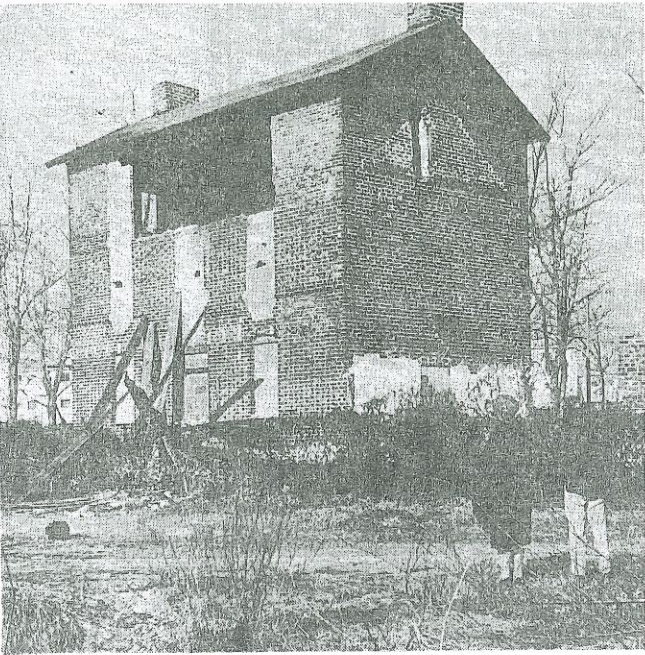
I have been hoping to have a chance to express my appreciation for your help at the Morton Mortonsen House ever since you made the survey. The information is clear and graphic, and will be of great assistance to us immediately in running the trenches for utilities. It will also be of significant help in the future archaeological investigation, and ultimate development of the site.

It was particularly generous of you to contribute this substantial asset to our project. I will make sure that it is brought to the attention of Dr. and Mrs. Haas, the Preservation Officer of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and to Norwood Borough.

Of all the people who will benefit, I am by far the most grateful.

Cordially,

*John Dickey*  
John M. Dickey



Morton Mortonson House, frequent target of vandalism, looked like this until officials closed it up with cinder blocks pending its resoration.

# 'Historic Home' Disproved But Restoration Is Assured

By JACK HOPKINS  
Of The Inquirer Staff

Morton Mortonson may not have lived in the house in Norwood that bears his name, but that fact will not prevent restoration of the old building and its use as a community center. The architect drawing up plans for the 17th or 18th century home said this week that restoration probably will begin this summer and be completed within a year.

Delaware County residents have believed for some time that Swedish settler Morton Mortonson lived in the brick house overlooking Darby Creek near E. Winona ave.

They thought the house was built by Mortonson around 1670. Mortonson was great-grandfather of John Morton, Delaware County's only signer of the Declaration of Independence.

**HIT BY VANDALS**  
The building was subjected to vandalism during the past few years and its demolition was considered.

Borough officials, however, decided the building should be saved for its historic value and said it would be made into a community center.

The community had no trouble funding the restoration project.

The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the borough a \$50,000 grant last year to aid in restoring the building. The Hass Foundation of Philadelphia matched the Federal grant.

**ARCHITECTS NAMED**  
Media architects Price and Dickey were named to draw up plans for the restoration.

Then Dr. Mary Butler, an Upper Providence resident and archeologist at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, dropped a bombshell.

A six-month archeological probe of the house, she said, "turned up no evidence that the house was built during the 17th Century."

Dr. Butler, conducting the archeological work for Price and Dickey, said Mortonson never lived in the house.

Mortonson died in 1706 and the house wasn't built until at least the 1730s, she said.

The house's existence by 1768 is definite. Records show it was

mortgaged at that time by William Boone of Ridley Township and his wife, Rebecca, the great-granddaughter of Mortonson.

The exact date the house was built still isn't known, but Dr. Butler believes she knows why there has been confusion on whether Mortonson lived there.

**FINDS CULPRIT**  
The culprit, she says, is a man named Benjamin Smith who drew an 1880 county map.

The map, which included material from a survey in 1695, contained errors which led to the false belief that Mortonson lived in the house, she said.

Her determination that the building was constructed in the 18th and not the 17th century is similar to that reached by Mrs. Courtland Springer of Upper Darby.

Mrs. Springer published last year a genealogical work which indicated the house was built in the 18th century. She stated then that some confusion was caused by constant duplication of names in the Morton family over the years.

Regardless of the findings, restoration work will go on as

scheduled, John Dickey of Price and Dickey said.

"The building will be restored. It is being restored," he said. "The work will not be affected by the date of the house or who lived there."

In fact, Dickey says he still isn't sure whether Mortonson lived in the house or not.

**NO ABSOLUTE PROOF**  
"Smith said it definitely was his property. People have been trying to disprove him. But there just isn't any absolute proof when it was built," Dickey said.

Additional archeological work in process at the site may bring in new information, but Price and Dickey are moving ahead with the restoration plans.

"The preliminary drawings have been completed," Dickey said. "They haven't been approved by HUD yet, but I have no doubts that they will be."

Dickey said the firm has "no particular deadline" to get the plans in and doesn't want to rush the archeological work. But, he said the preliminary drawings will probably be submitted to the Federal agency within 60 days.

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