

**MIGEL ESTATE AND FARM**

**Orange Turnpike at the intersection of Mombasha Road  
and the intersection of Harriman Heights Road**

**Monroe**

**Orange County**

**New York**

**HABS No. NY-6356**

HABS  
NY  
36-MON,  
2-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**Northeast Field Area**

**Chesapeake/Allegheny System Support Office**

**National Park Service**

**U.S. Custom House**

**200 Chestnut Street**

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106**

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MIGEL ESTATE AND FARM

HABS No. NY-6356

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36-MON,  
2-

Location: Orange Turnpike at the intersection of Mombasha Road and at the intersection of Harriman Heights Road, Monroe, Orange County, New York

USGS Monroe, New York Quadrangle  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.568560.4571895

Present Owner: Great Expectations, Inc. 633 Route 211 East, Middletown, New York, 10940

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Migel Estate and Farm is significant as a good example of a typical country estate established in the Hudson Valley by people of means in the early twentieth century. Moses C. Migel, the philanthropic industrialist and silk dealer, created the estate and made his home there for several decades. The mansion, and possibly other estate buildings, were designed by Lewis Albro, a New York architect whose work included the design of a number of large country homes. Migel is noted as a founder, benefactor, and first president of the American Foundation for the Blind. The Estate also incorporates pre-existing nineteenth-century elements such as the Checkerboard Inn and the W.K. Smith House (HABS No. NY-6356-A), which possess significance relating to the site's earlier rural history.

## 1. Historical Information

The development of the Migel Estate commenced in 1914 with Moses C. Migel's purchase of the former Forshee/Jenkins/Smith farmstead, which included the Forshee/Jenkins house (a.k.a. The Checkerboard Inn) and the W.K. Smith House (HABS No. NY-6356-A) (O.C. Deed 547 57). Migel developed an impressive country estate on his newly-acquired property, building a sizable Georgian Revival residence, a large stone barn, and a number of supporting structures, and rehabilitating two existing dwellings. In 1920 Migel conveyed the entire estate to his wife Elisa Parada de Migel (O.C. Deed 598 375). Mrs. Migel purchased additional lands to increase the size of the estate in 1923 (O.C. Deed 636 462), 1928 (O.C. Deed 683 152), and 1946 (O.C. Deed 1029 338). Moses C. Migel died in 1958 (O.C. Will 141 41), and with the death of his wife the property descended to his son Richard H. Migel. The property was finally sold out the family by Gertrude L. Migel, the widow of Richard H. Migel, in 1980 and 1983 (O.C. Deeds 2178 950 and 2273 319).

The architect Lewis Colt Albro is reported to be the architect for the Migel mansion and used local artisans in the construction of the farm buildings (Enviroplan Associates 1987:5). Born in Paris, the son of American parents, Albro was brought to the United States as a child and grew up in Pittstown, Massachusetts. At age eighteen, he attended the Metropolitan Art School for a year and then entered the office of McKim, Mead and White as a student. He was later employed by the firm as a draftsman and was rapidly promoted as a designer through the nine years he was in their employ. He was closely associated with McKim in designing the Columbia University Library and other campus buildings, and later was given charge of several important commissions, including Carnegie Libraries in New York, the Mitchell residence in Wading River, New York, and the Manhattan home of the artist Charles Dana Gibson.

After Albro left McKim, Mead and White, he worked as a sole practitioner and designed another house for Gibson at Newport, Rhode Island. From 1906-1914 he maintained a partnership with Harrie T. Lindeberg and they gained a reputation as designers of high-quality domestic architecture for prominent clients. During the last ten years of his career, Albro again practiced alone. Designs from this time period include the Arentz estate at Rye, New York, the Mendelsohn residence at Albany, New York, an Italian villa for John Bushnell at Springfield, Ohio, and a group of English farm houses for Ernest Fahnestock at Cold Springs, New York (Withey and Withey 1970:12-13).

The Migels entertained extensively at the mansion, called "Greenbraes," which they considered their primary residence, as opposed to their New York City apartment (Koestler 1976:42) at 621 West End Avenue (O.C. Deed 547 57). Migel founded the American Foundation for the Blind in 1921, served as its first Chairman of the Board, and served as its president until his death in 1958 (Enviroplan Associates 1987:5-6). The Foundation's M.C. Migel Library and Information Center and its highest honor, the Migel Medal, are both named for him. Migel worked closely

for many years with Helen Keller to raise money for the foundation (Koestler 1976:58). In 1923, the Migels purchased a five-acre parcel of land which adjoined the estate to create a resort for blind women called "Rest Haven" (Koestler 1976:42). The location of this property is presently unknown.

## 2. Descriptive Information

The 225-acre estate is comprised of rolling meadows and scattered woodlands with a ridge running north/south through the property that provides dramatic views of the surrounding countryside. The Estate's low, stone perimeter wall is punctuated by stone gateways at the south and west entrances at Mombasha Road and at Harriman Heights Road. The driveway through the Estate incorporates a 4,200' length of the old Orange Turnpike alignment (HAER No. NY-312). There are two major clusters of buildings, one containing the mansion and associated structures and the other containing the farm buildings, as well as several scattered outbuildings and site features.

Atop the ridge at the center of the estate is the brick Georgian Revival mansion, built ca. 1914. Clustered around the mansion are a now-overgrown, expansive terraced garden with a fountain and several picturesque fieldstone benches, a small stone tool shed located immediately west of the mansion, a Gardener's Shed (HABS No. NY-6356-D), a tennis court and a swimming pool.

The farm complex is located at the northwest corner of the property and consists of a large stone Eclectic-Colonial Revival-style barn and nine stone or frame outbuildings, including the large and small vehicle sheds now partially collapsed, a canning shed, a smokehouse, an icehouse and a stone well curb. The supporting structures include a Repair Shed and Stable (HABS No. NY-6356-C) and a Corn Crib (HABS No. NY-6356-E). At the western end of the farm complex, near the west driveway entrance, is a stone pumphouse. A stone and concrete dam impounds the pond located nearby. The pond is fed by streams that flow under stone culverts located throughout the northwestern quadrant of the property. A stone pumphouse is located at the west entrance, across the drive from the pond. At the northeast corner of the farm complex stand two frame houses: The Checkerboard Inn located beside the old Orange Turnpike alignment -- an early nineteenth-century dwelling also used as a tavern for a period -- and the W.K. Smith House (HABS No. NY-6356-A), a late nineteenth-century farmhouse. East of the Smith House are two twentieth-century poultry sheds (HABS No. NY-6356-F and HABS No. NY-6356-G) and a small nineteenth-century tenant house moved to the site after Migel purchased the property (HABS No. NY-6356-B).

3. Sources of Information

A. Architectural Drawings: The location of original architectural drawings, if any, is unknown.

B. Historic Views: No historic views were located.

C. Interviews: No interviews were undertaken as part of this documentation.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

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Ibid. Migel Estate Barn. Building-Structure Inventory Form on file, New York State office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau), Waterford, 1987.

Clark, Donald F. Greenbrae Farm Stone Barn. Building-Structure Inventory Form on file, New York State office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau), Waterford, 1976.

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## 2. Secondary and Published Sources

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Ruttenber, E.G. and L.H. Clark. History of Orange County, New York. Everts & Peck: Philadelphia, 1881.

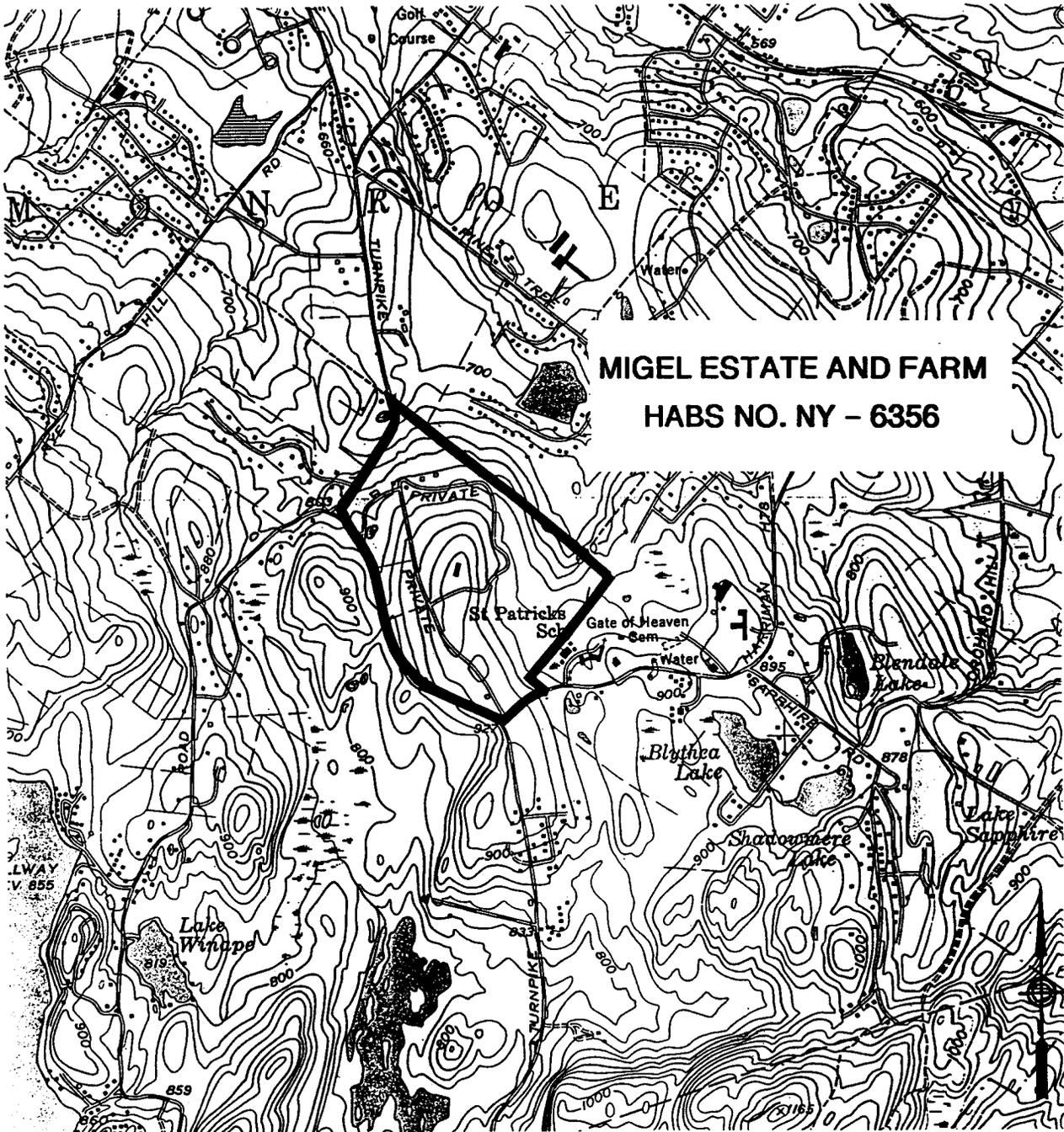
Withey, Henry F. and Elsie R. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Hennessey & Ingalls: Los Angeles, 1970.

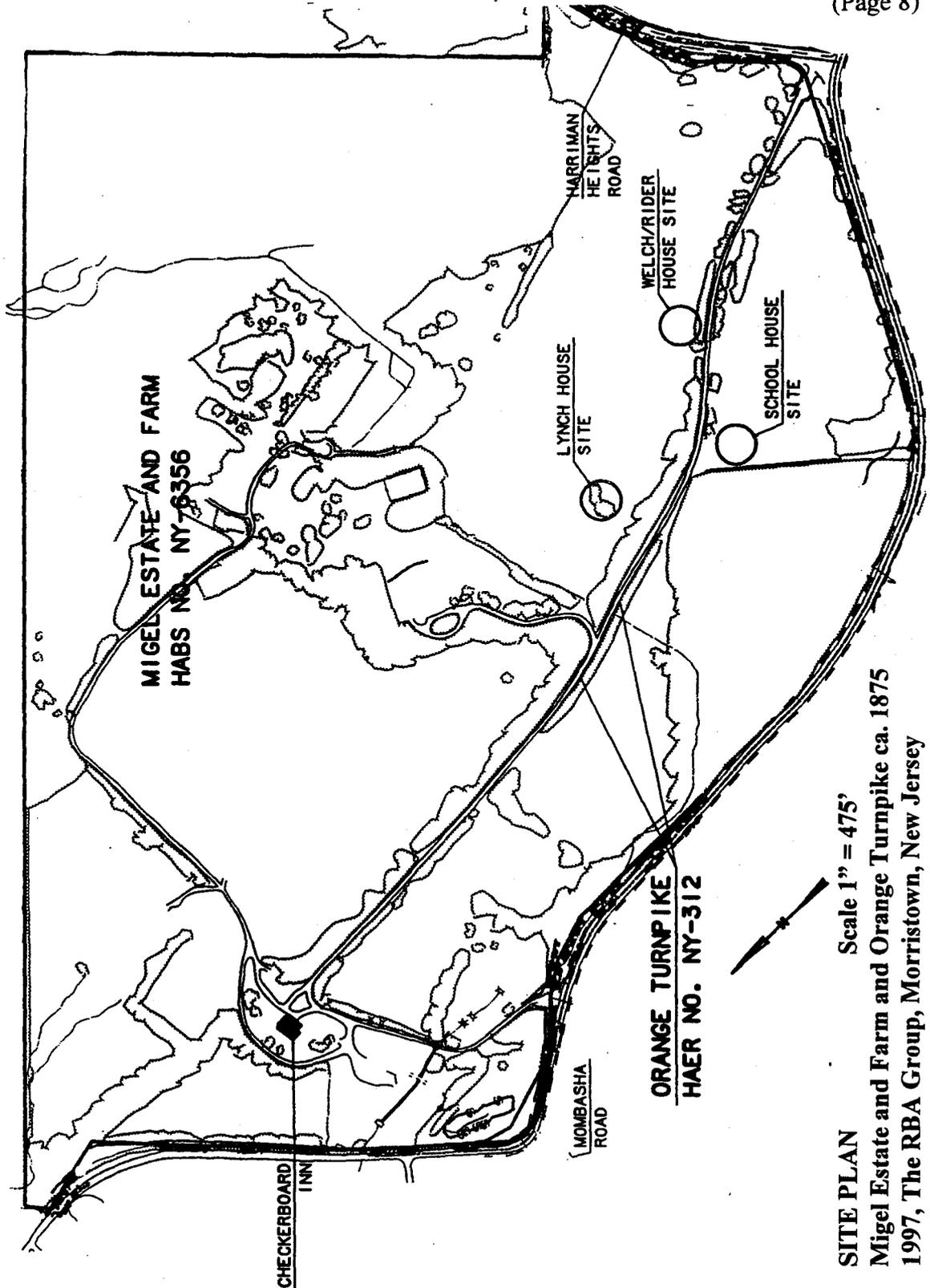
4. Project Information

The estate is presently being altered to construct a golf course with associated structures and single-family housing. The mansion and several of the buildings will be retained and re-used as part of the complex. As per a Memorandum of Agreement among the Army Corps of Engineers, the New York State Historic Preservation Office, and the developer Great Expectations, and accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, those buildings scheduled for demolition are being documented.

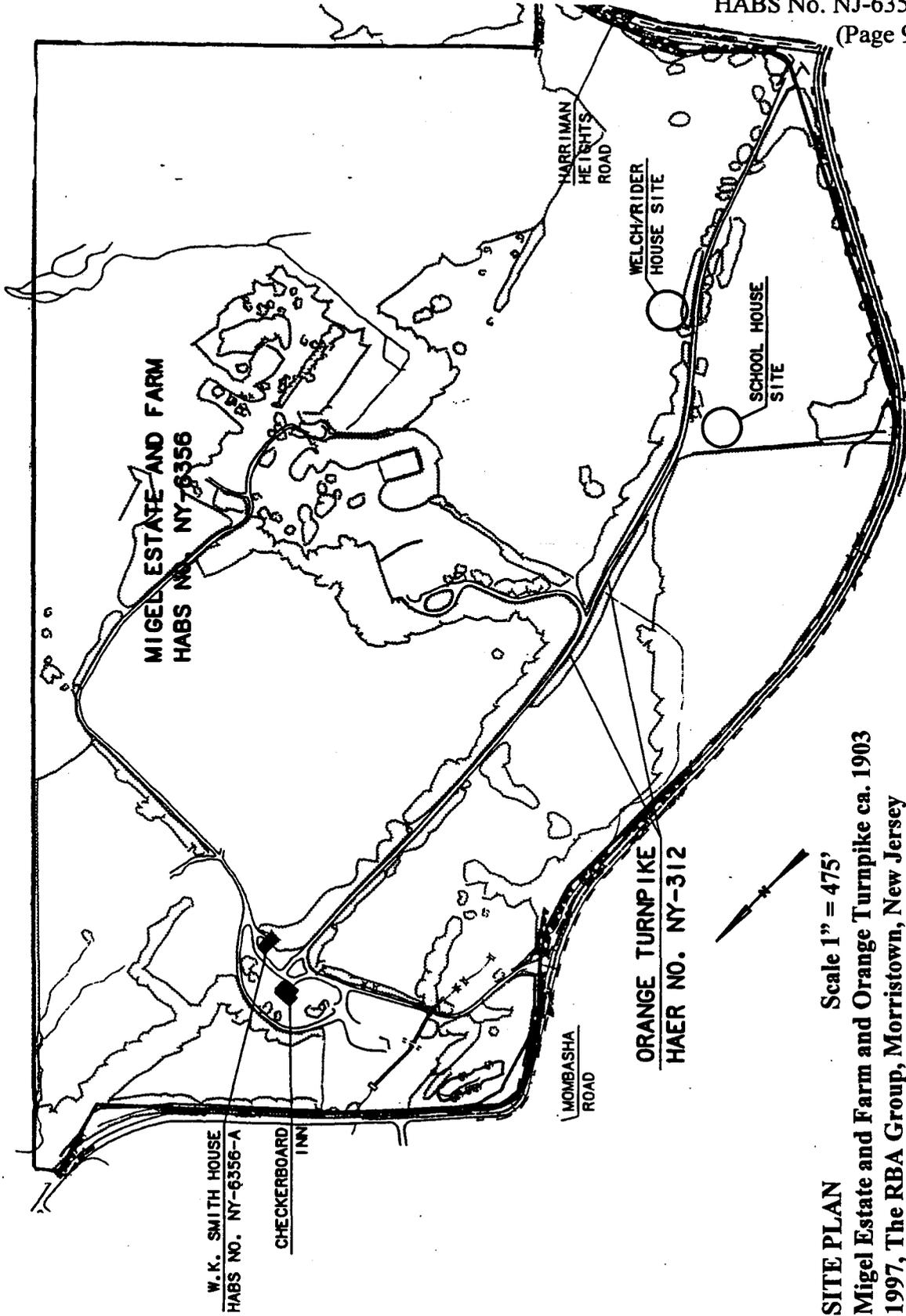
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Date: July 1997

USGS Monroe, New York Quadrangle 1957, Photorevised 1981 Scale 1:24000

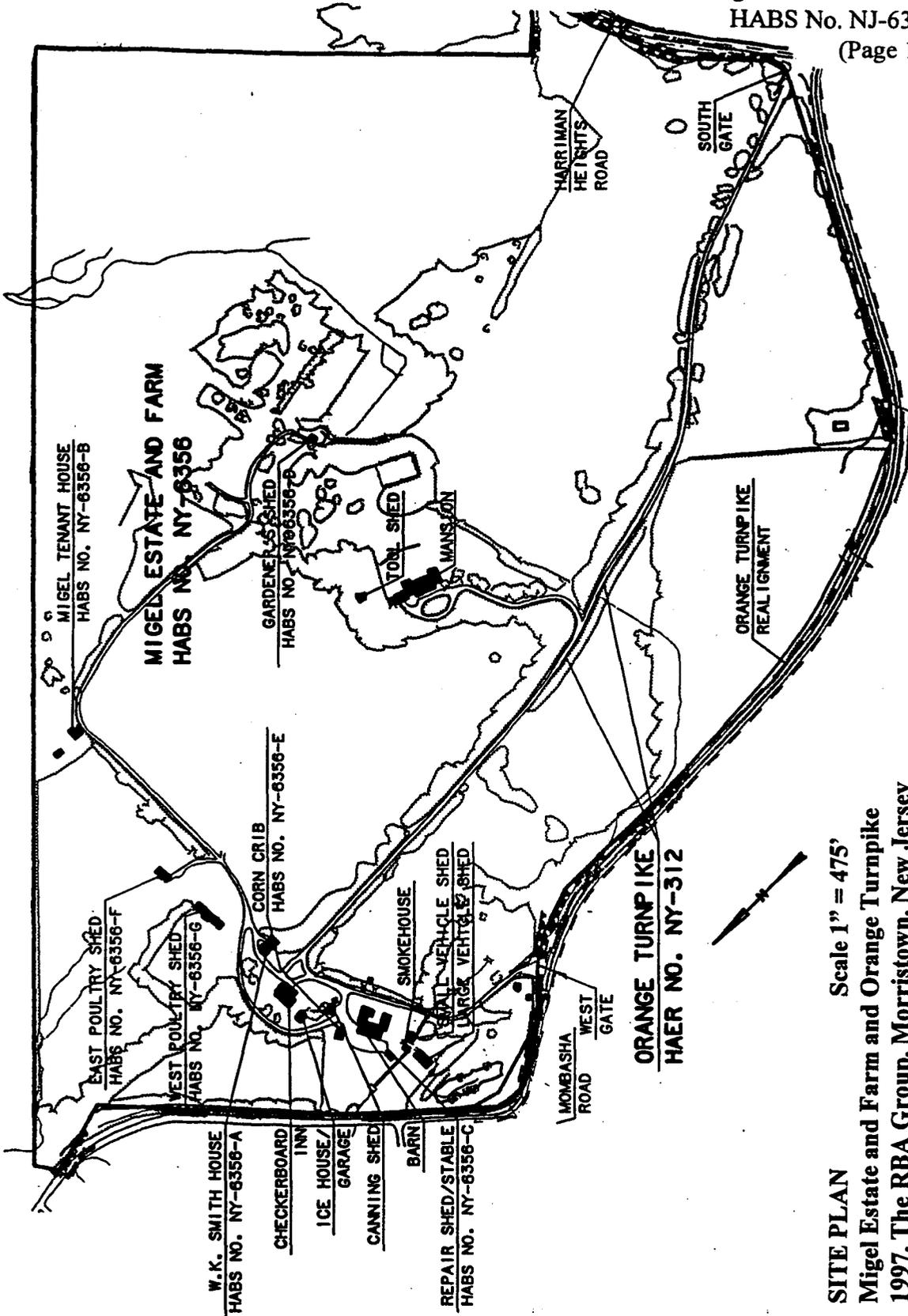




**SITE PLAN**      Scale 1" = 475'  
Migel Estate and Farm and Orange Turnpike ca. 1875  
1997, The RBA Group, Morristown, New Jersey



**SITE PLAN** Scale 1" = 475'  
Migel Estate and Farm and Orange Turnpike ca. 1903  
1997, The RBA Group, Morristown, New Jersey



**SITE PLAN**      Scale 1" = 475'  
**Migel Estate and Farm and Orange Turnpike**  
 1997, The RBA Group, Morristown, New Jersey