

DUNDALE
(Morris Estate)
(Patterson Hall)

HABS No. PA-6012

Dundale Lane, .1 mile west of
County Line Road
Villanova
Delaware County
Pennsylvania

HABS
PA
23-VILA,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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Location: Dundale Lane, .1 miles west of County Line Road
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USGS Norristown P.I., 7.5 Minute Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates
17.470580.4932440

Present

Owner: Villanova University, Villanova, Delaware County,
Pennsylvania.

Present

Occupant: Unoccupied and scheduled for restoration
and renovation in 1994.

Significance: DUNDALE is significant for several reasons:
Built in 1890 in a late Victorian eclectic style, it is one of the few remaining large country houses (including a barn and other out buildings) from that era in Villanova--or anywhere among Philadelphia's famous "Main Line" suburbs, of which Villanova forms a part. Both the house and its original occupants, the Theodore Morris family, illustrate the lives of socially prominent Philadelphians who used great wealth, derived mainly from local industries, to create country estates between the end of the American Civil War and the Great Depression of the 1930s. DUNDALE is also significant because its designer, Addison Hutton, was among Philadelphia's most accomplished nineteenth-century architects and probably the last of its great building designers who had no formal schooling in the profession of architecture. The Quaker faith of both the architect, Hutton, and the Morris family add yet another significant dimension in that their Quaker culture influenced DUNDALE's design, as well as the tenor of life in this spacious country house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The house called DUNDALE was part of a 99-acre estate, also known as DUNDALE. This property was assembled between 1874 and 1888 by Israel Morris (1810-1905), a highly successful iron manufacturer in Philadelphia. Morris had DUNDALE built in 1890 for his son, Theodore Hollingsworth Morris (1840-1913), and Theodore's wife, Mary Lownes Paul Morris (1843-1907).

For his architect, the elder Morris selected Addison Hutton (1834-1916). Called Philadelphia's "Quaker Architect" by his biographer, Hutton had already executed a number of commissions for both individuals and institutions associated with the Society of Friends in the Philadelphia area. A man with little formal schooling, Hutton's first exposure to building design was through his father who was a local carpenter and builder in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. Hutton moved to Philadelphia in 1857 to take a job with the well-known architect and creator of architectural plan books, Samuel Sloan. His work with Sloan over the next few years became an unofficial apprenticeship for Hutton.

Growing connections among Quaker businessmen and philanthropists (and eventually among non Quakers) led to a number of important institutional and commercial commissions for Hutton, including Parrish Hall at Swarthmore College (1868), the Arch Street Methodist Church (1869-70), the Ridgway Library (1873-78), the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (1902), and the Chalfonte Hotel in Atlantic City (1903). Important private residences designed by Hutton include "Glenlock," Paoli, PA (1868), the Jonathan Evans House, Germantown, Philadelphia (1875), "Llysyfran," Bryn Mawr, PA (1882-84), and "Ballytore," Wynnewood, PA (1885). However, of all the residences designed by Hutton, DUNDALE (1890) stands out as perhaps his best with regard to beauty, comfort, and practicality.

There was apparently no general contractor for DUNDALE, the work being executed entirely by local carpenters and masons under the supervision of Hutton's office. This fact may have contributed to the house's relatively low cost of \$64,000.

The Theodore Morrises and their twelve living children (four others having died very young) usually resided at DUNDALE from early May through the end of September--or approximately five of the twelve months. During the remainder of the year, they lived in Philadelphia at 1619 Arch Street. The Morrises' town house allowed them and other wealthy families to enjoy the social

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season and various cultural amenities in Philadelphia during the fall and winter.

This alternation between town and country houses was typical of wealthy Philadelphians who used their country residences to escape the extreme heat and humidity of summers in the city. DUNDALE's altitude of 423 feet also made it much healthier than the City Philadelphia (located in Pennsylvania's narrow tidewater area) at a time when many Americans correctly associated certain diseases with warm, low-lying districts. In addition, the Morrises were consciously imitating the habits of Philadelphia's Anglophile elite in following the English custom of country retreats. While in residence at DUNDALE, Theodore Morris and his sons commuted to their offices in downtown Philadelphia on the "Main Line" of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which passed through the edge of the Morris property and gave its name to the string of suburbs along this famous railroad corridor as it ran west from the city.

The name DUNDALE stems from the rolling terrain of the estate, whose numerous duns (low hills) and dales (shallow valleys) offered attractive and ever changing views from the house and grounds. A small creek, called Morris Run, meandered through the estate. It was dammed along one portion to form a pond slightly southwest of the house, where ice was cut for storage and used during the summer for cooling drinks and making ice cream. The hilly landscape also made for excellent bobsledding. In the early twentieth century these sledding expeditions were organized by Theodore Morris's son, Christopher "Christy" Morris (1882-1971), the last member of the family to occupy DUNDALE. Christopher Morris was also a champion cricket player, another Anglophile pursuit of upper-class Philadelphians. He competed in national and international cricket events for over thirty years and often organized cricket matches at DUNDALE itself.

Dozens of relatives and friends frequently descended on DUNDALE during the summers or on winter weekends, and it was not unusual to see twenty or more persons seated around the large dining table for meals. Every June the house and grounds were thrown open for the graduating seniors of nearby Haverford College, a Quaker institution patronized by the Morris family. On Sunday evenings the family (and any guests) gathered to sing hymns, with Mary (Mrs. Theodore) Morris playing the organ, a common practice of middle- and upper-class Victorian Protestants. The family also assembled each morning and evening for Bible readings, and following the custom of many Quakers, the Morrises never served alcohol. They were well known, however, for the quantity,

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variety, and excellence of other refreshments offered to family and friends. Fortunately, the three story house with its 35 rooms, including fourteen bedrooms, large parlor, library, dining room, entrance hall, music room, and six bathrooms could accommodate the large assemblies and multitude of activities that took place on the property.

Much of the food consumed at DUNDALE came from a working farm on the grounds. Besides chickens, pigs, sheep, and cows, there were orchards and vegetable gardens which provided amply for the table. At times the Morrises employed a cook, but their Quaker beliefs in hard work and individual responsibility meant that many chores, including a good portion of the preparing and preserving of food, fell to Mary Morris and her daughters. In addition to the sometime cook, there were several maids to help clean and keep the house in order, and two farmers who took care of the animals and crops.

PART II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

DUNDALE estate is reached through a narrow lane off County Line Road, the entrance to which is marked by a low stone pillar, with the name DUNDALE carved in capital letters near the top. The estate consisted of various outbuildings and residences--in addition to DUNDALE house itself. The overall condition of DUNDALE house is good. Although its wooden trim has not been painted for many years and some of the wood has rotted, the house's load-bearing masonry walls are quite sound. There have been no apparent additions or alterations to the exterior of the structure and, except for peeling dark green paint and other marks of deterioration, the house looks much the way it did when completed in 1890.

DUNDALE occupies the site of a small, split-level farmhouse, which was demolished around 1890 to make way for the new house. The main section of DUNDALE measures roughly 98 x 40 feet on the exterior (not including the terrace and small servants' wing) and is divided into five-bays. It is three stories high with a full basement and attic. Since the house was built into a low hillside, the basement is at ground level on the front (or south side of the dwelling) and underground on the back (or north side). The exterior walls are three layers thick and measure approximately 20 inches on the first floor. The innermost layer is constructed of a granite-like stone taken from a quarry at the west end of the estate, but because of its heavy iron content and tendency to stain, this stone was deemed unsuitable for the

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facade. Thus a dressed gray granite from Port Deposit, Maryland was selected for the surface walls, where the stone is laid in even courses. Between the two stone walls there is a layer of brick. (Repointing of the masonry work is needed in several places.) All the exterior wood is painted a dark green and would appear to have been so painted from the very beginning, since there are no other paint colors visible down to the bare wood.

This stone and brick wall rises only through the second floor in the front, with the exception of a central bay, which is three stories high. The third floor of the house is covered by the steep, lower pitch of a double Mansard roof. Thus some might argue that DUNDALE is not a true three-story house. Yet the full-sized rooms on the third level would seem to qualify it as a genuine third floor. All the true roof surfaces are covered with a thick, dark gray slate, which remains in generally good condition, except for some obvious leaks which are visible from the attic. Beneath the main roof (between the second and third floors) there are wide bracketed eaves.

The over-all style of the exterior might be described as late Victorian eclectic, with French, English Tudor-Gothic, English Georgian, Queen Anne, Spanish, and American Colonial motifs all discernable. Yet upon closer examination, the structure exudes an atmosphere of solidity, conveyed by its heavy stone turrets and plain wall surfaces. This heaviness is relieved by wooden shutters on the first and second floors and by a terrace, with wooden rails and turned balusters, across the entire front of the house. A softening effect is also achieved by the wooden sleeping porch, which sits atop a stone porte-cochere. The sleeping porch has railings and balusters similar to those on the terrace. On the roof of this porch there are two conical, turret-like projections. Both the terrace and the sleeping porch exude a Queen Anne flavor and help to convey the atmosphere of a summer residence. Overall, however, the somewhat subdued exterior of DUNDALE (at least compared to the flamboyant creations of many other domestic architects at about the same time) probably reflects the Quakerism of architect Hutton and the Morris family.

The fenestration is somewhat irregular, with double windows, single windows, triple bay widows, French doors (on the balconies and at the west end of the terrace), and Mansard-style dormer windows on the third floor. The wooden lintels above the paired windows at the ends of both the front and rear facades are carved with sunbursts and triglyphs, recalling English Georgian and American Colonial designs. There are double-hung sash windows throughout much of the house, and hinged casement windows in the basement. The shutters on the second floor are louvered, while

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those on the first level are solid with rectangular panels.

There are several other exterior features of note on the front, or south side of the house. Among these are the projecting stone bay (with windows) on the front, which extends from the first through the third floors, with a belt course dividing the second and third levels. This bay is capped by a conical roof which extends out over the main roof of the house, and thus becomes a false turret at the top. This feature, along with a rear turret (a genuine turret in this case, which gives access to a small observation platform) are slightly off-center, but are balanced by the right roof cone of the sleeping porch. Each of the corner rooms on the second story have small balconies with Spanish style iron grills and French doors. There are four large dormers in the French style punctuating the lower Mansard roof and two smaller dormers, somewhat Colonial in feeling, in the second, more gently sloping Mansard roof, which forms the attic. The lower dormers are covered in sheet metal, which is stamped with shield-like designs and painted black to match the dark gray slate on the roofs. Four large stone chimneys, each with multiple flues, accent the roof line.

Because of DUNDALE's siting on a hillside, The rear (or north side of the house) rises only two stories from the ground level. This side of the house is reached by a drive which encircles the entire dwelling. There is a small "mud porch" towards the west end of the rear facade (exiting from the service stairway) with Tudor-Gothic timbering and built-in, Colonial style benches facing each other. A rear porte-cochere towards the east end of the same side is also Tudor-Gothic in style, with its heavy timbered framing on the sides and roof gables. At the rear northwest corner of the house there is a small servants' wing, rendered in the same stone as the rest of the house and containing two bedrooms and a bath.

The basement, which extends from the rear of the house through the front terrace, is lighted by large, south-facing windows, each of them covered by iron grill work in the same Spanish style as on the second-floor balconies. The interior basement walls are covered with a smooth, white stucco. Originally, the basement contained the laundry, main kitchen, and maids' dining room. There were also two coal-fired furnaces, with adjoining coal bins. These furnaces were later converted to oil, but the original heat exchange chambers were retained. A wooden service stairway joins the basement to the three main floors of the house, as well as to the attic and observation platform on the rear roof. There is also a dumb waiter from the basement kitchen area to the pantry above.

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The main entrance to the house is on the terrace level and is reached from the ground-level porte-cochere by wooden steps, with railings and balusters matching those on the terrace and sleeping porch. The entrance to the main floor is formed by double doors flanked by side windows and panels. Carved stone mullions separate the doors from the side windows and panels. The doors contain large single panes of glass in the top halves and wooden rectangular panels in the bottom portions. This arrangement of glass over wooden panels is repeated on the sides. There are fixed transom windows above the two doors, as well as above the side windows.

Immediately beyond the front door is the large entrance hall paneled in oak, with a beam and girdered ceiling. At the rear of this entrance hall the main stairway rises to the second and third levels. These stairs ascend along three sides of a rectangular stairwell. There is simple spoolwork in the spaces between the upper portions of the wooden balusters. A small elevator (or lift) appears to have been installed in the stairwell some years after the house was completed.

Separating the stairwell and the entrance hall itself is a wide hallway which runs the entire width of the house (except for the rooms at either end) and gives access to the major rooms, all of which face south on at least one side, thus filling them with abundant natural light during most of the day. On the north (or darker) side of this transverse hallway are smaller spaces. These are given over to stairwells, bathrooms, pantries, coat rooms, and storage areas. The hall has oak wainscotting and is punctuated on the second and third floors with two wooden archways at the points where the stairwell intersects with the transverse hallway. These feature spoolwork in the arched wooden openings, echoing and anticipating the identical spoolwork on the main stairway. This use of a transverse hallway on all three floors, allowing the main rooms to face south, is an especially practical and pleasing arrangement at DUNDALE.

The five main rooms on the first floor are of generous size, with the largest being 20 x 30 feet and the smallest 18 x 18 feet. The parlor off the entrance hall, at the southeast corner of the house, is the largest main room on the first floor and the library the smallest of these. There is a music room just west of the entrance hall, with the library and dining room following in succession. In addition to being accessible from the transverse hall, which runs along the rear of these rooms (except for the parlor and dining room), there are openings with recessed sliding doors which allow easy movement from one room to another--an

installed in case of a power failure, a common "fall back" system in those pioneering days of electrical illumination. Beyond the matter of lighting fixtures, there is a conspicuous absence of fancy metal work in the house, yet another example, perhaps, of Quaker plainness. The door knobs on the first floor, for example, are common round brass knobs. The knobs on the second and third levels are round and made of wood, with threads resembling strands of rope having been milled around the edges for easier gripping.

Despite its lack of elaborate fixtures, DUNDALE came equipped with the latest plumbing, lighting, and heating devices. The Morrises could thus enjoy all the creature comforts in the country that they and other wealthy Philadelphians had in the city.

The attic, which can be reached only by the service stairs, covers the entire main portion of the house and gives ample headroom for walking about. It once afforded the family a large storage area, as well as space for a 6,000 gallon water tank/reservoir (still in place in early 1994), which supplied the house with abundant water pressure. A circular stairway leads from the attic to the rear turret and small observation deck.

The condition of the interior is remarkably good, considering that the house has been uninhabited for about 25 years. There are several leaks in the roof and water has damaged the plaster in places on the upper floors. The wallpaper is peeling in many of the bedrooms. The extensive woodwork, however, is in nearly prime condition.

Slightly north and west of DUNDALE, there are several ancillary structures. These were also built into the hillside which rises through the site of the house and continues for about 100 feet behind it.

Green House

The first of these structures are the brick and stone ruins of a green house, located directly behind the rear garden. Portions of the green house were erected before DUNDALE house itself, as shown in a topographical map of the property prepared in 1887. Its foundations measure about 30 x 50 feet.

Coach House

Slightly west and south of the green house site is the coach

house, approximately 22 x 40 feet. It originally sheltered the carriages and carriage horses, and later the family's automobiles. It sits directly behind the servants' wing at the northwest corner of DUNDALE house. It is built of local stone and was originally covered with a light beige stucco, most of which has fallen off. It would seem to have been designed and erected by local builders. Appearing on the 1887 map, it likewise antedates DUNDALE house.

Ice House

West and a few feet north of the carriage house is the ice house. Shaped as an octagon and built of local stone (covered with stucco), each of the eight sides measures about 10 feet, with the distance from one side to the other of the structure being approximately 25 feet. Its wooden roof has rotted and has collapsed into the interior of the structure. The ice house is attractive in its simplicity and may be retained as part of Villanova's landscaping plans. The ice house also appears to have been designed and executed by local craftsmen, and like the green house and coach house, is older than DUNDALE itself.

Barn

Just west and south of the ice house is the large barn, which measures about 89 x 67 feet. It, too, was put up before DUNDALE house and, in light of certain stylistic features, appears to have been constructed around 1880. Built into the hillside, the barn rises two and a half stories in the front and one and a half in the back. The ends of the barn (facing east and west) are constructed of local stone covered with the same beige stucco as the coach house. These walls are about 20 inches thick at the lower level. The other two walls (facing north and south) are made of heavy timbering sheathed with vertical barn siding, which seems to have been painted in a mustard shade of yellow. There are bracketed eaves separating the barn siding and roof, as well as on the gable ends. The gabled roof itself is covered with what appear to be asphalt shingles, dark gray in color. A square lantern, with a double Mansard shaped dome (made of wood covered with sheet metal) sits astride the middle of the roof.

Double hung sash windows on the south side with six over six glass panes give the barn a colonial look. This effect is emphasized by the louvered openings on the second level of the west end, and the Palladian opening (with louvers) on the upper level of this same facade. However, this effect is modified somewhat in the west gable end where there are twin Gothic style

windows. The window frames and all the other wooden trim were painted dark red (including the cupola and roof brackets) and, although much faded, this trim still forms an attractive contrast with the yellow siding and stuccoed gable ends.

Attached to the northwest corner of the barn, and thus echoing the servants' wing at the northwest corner of DUNDALE house is a farmer's cottage, now partly in ruins. Its walls appear to be built of Wissahickon schist, a gray, brown, and bluish-colored stone which is quarried in the Wissahickon Valley in the northwest section of Philadelphia. This dressed stone is laid in partly irregular courses. A steeply pitched roof and wooden dormers with half-timbered framing lend it the aura of a German or Swiss chalet. In its state of partial collapse, the cottage exudes a romantic, picturesque feeling.

A stone wall south of the barn forms one side of a barnyard, which was once the preserve of chickens and other domestic fowl. From the barnyard one enters between thick stone and stucco pillars, tapered slightly at the top, into an area of animal stalls. The floor is strewn with old bales of hay, rusting shovels and pitchforks, and rotting bridles, harnesses, and parts of saddles. The second story, which one can reach from ground level on the north side, or by stairs from the south side, contains an area used for farm wagons and various implements. There are also lofts for hay and various storage bins. The entrance to this floor is at ground level on the north side. This north entrance forms a center gable, which is framed in a such a way that it resembles the end of a covered bridge. Both inside and out, the barn is in amazingly good condition. Years of accumulated clutter and trash need to be removed from the interior. The outside requires a fresh coat of stucco, and some of the deteriorated wooden trim needs to be replaced.

Other Structures

In addition to these outbuildings and DUNDALE house itself, other descendants of Israel Morris built residences on the estate. All of these, with the exception of the Frederick Wistar Morris house (now privately owned and not part of the property purchased by Villanova University), have been demolished. But during the first few decades of the twentieth century the estate had come to resemble a family compound, where several generations of the Morris clan lived within easy walking distance of one another.

Landscaping

Very little of the original landscaping remains on the DUNDALE

grounds. A few trees, on the sides and rear of the house (and barn) perhaps date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. These may include several white pines, hemlocks, sycamores, and arbor vitae. The ruins of a stone and stucco garden wall remain behind the house, though the garden site itself is overgrown with weeds, vines, and random seedlings of various types.

PART III. THE PROJECT

In 1978 Villanova University purchased DUNDALE house and approximately 38 surrounding acres (all that remained of the original 99) from the heirs of Christopher Morris, who had begun reassembling as much of the land as possible in the last decades of his life. The purchase price was \$750,000. Since DUNDALE lay immediately northwest (across Spring Mill Road) from the Villanova campus, the university had been interested in acquiring the property for a number of years. It was the largest remaining parcel contiguous to Villanova and the only area where the university could easily expand, being surrounded by residential or commercial developments in every other direction.

Because of opposition by DUNDALE's neighbors, Villanova was able, at first, to secure zoning only for playing fields on the southernmost end of the property. In 1992, however, the university obtained permission from Radnor Township, with the general assent of the neighbors, to build four residence halls on the southeastern portion of the tract. As to DUNDALE house itself, the university plans to restore the exterior and to renovate portions of the interior for use by its fund-raising and other development activities. Besides providing offices for development personnel, DUNDALE will become the site for board of trustee meetings, conferences, and a variety of social events. There are tentative plans to convert the barn into an art studio.

Villanova has renamed DUNDALE Patterson Hall, in honor of Joseph B. Patterson (Villanova, 1964), who is the leading donor in the restoration/renovation project. Although it will have a new name, the old house will once more be a center of intense activity.

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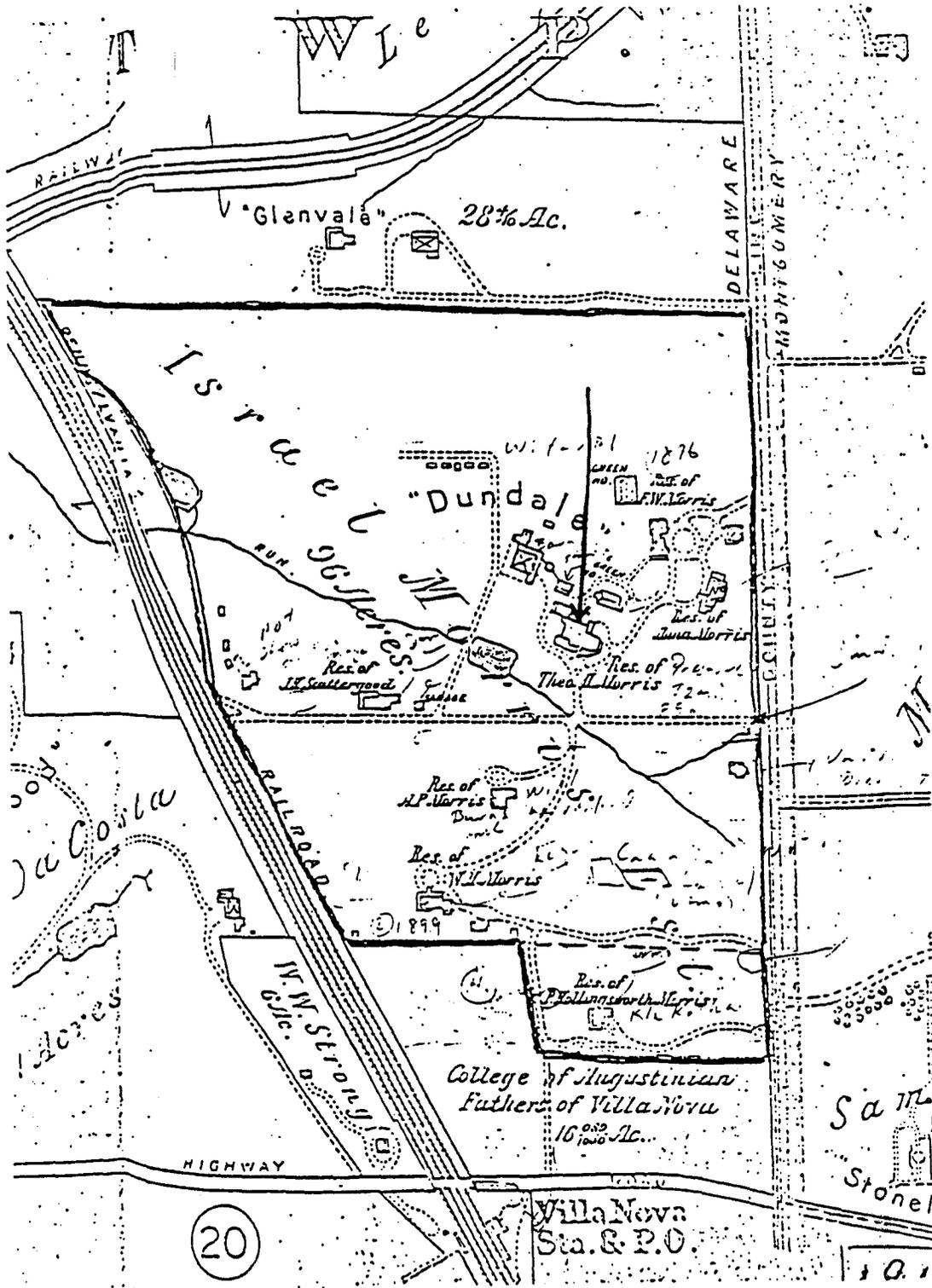
Topographical map of the Israel Morris property drawn in 1887 and found in the wall safe of DUNDALE house. (Now located in the office of Facilities Management, Villanova University).

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Title: Villanova University Historian
Date: January 1994



Source: A.H. Mueller, Atlas of Properties on Main Line of Pennsylvania Railroad, Overbrook to Paoli. (Philadelphia, 1913).