

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM-PHOTO/SITE PLAN SHEET

89A

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

Bureau of Historic Preservation

Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

Survey Code/Tax Parcel/Other Tax blocks 10A-10B

County: Montgomery

Municipality: Upper Merion Township

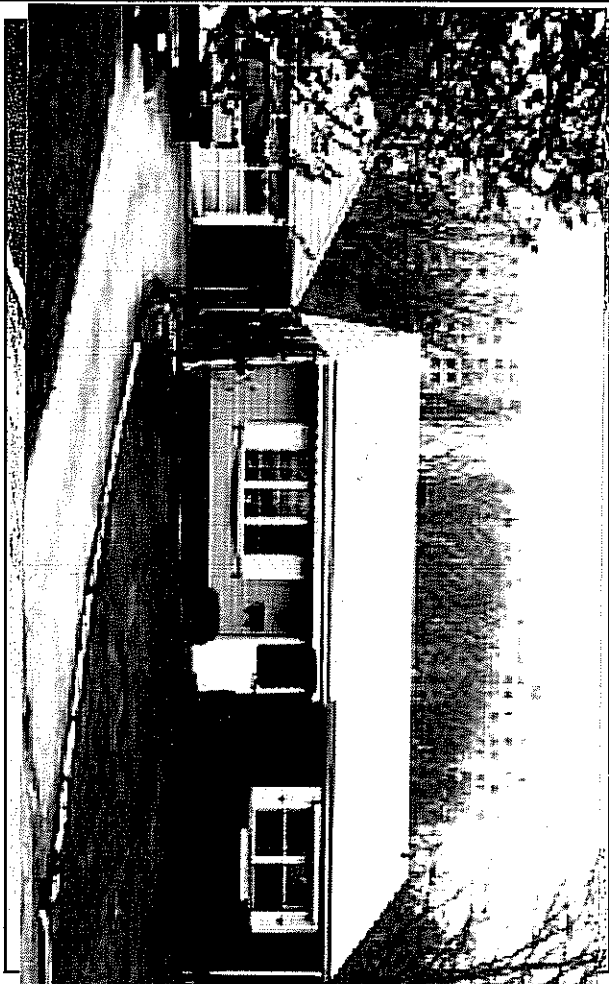
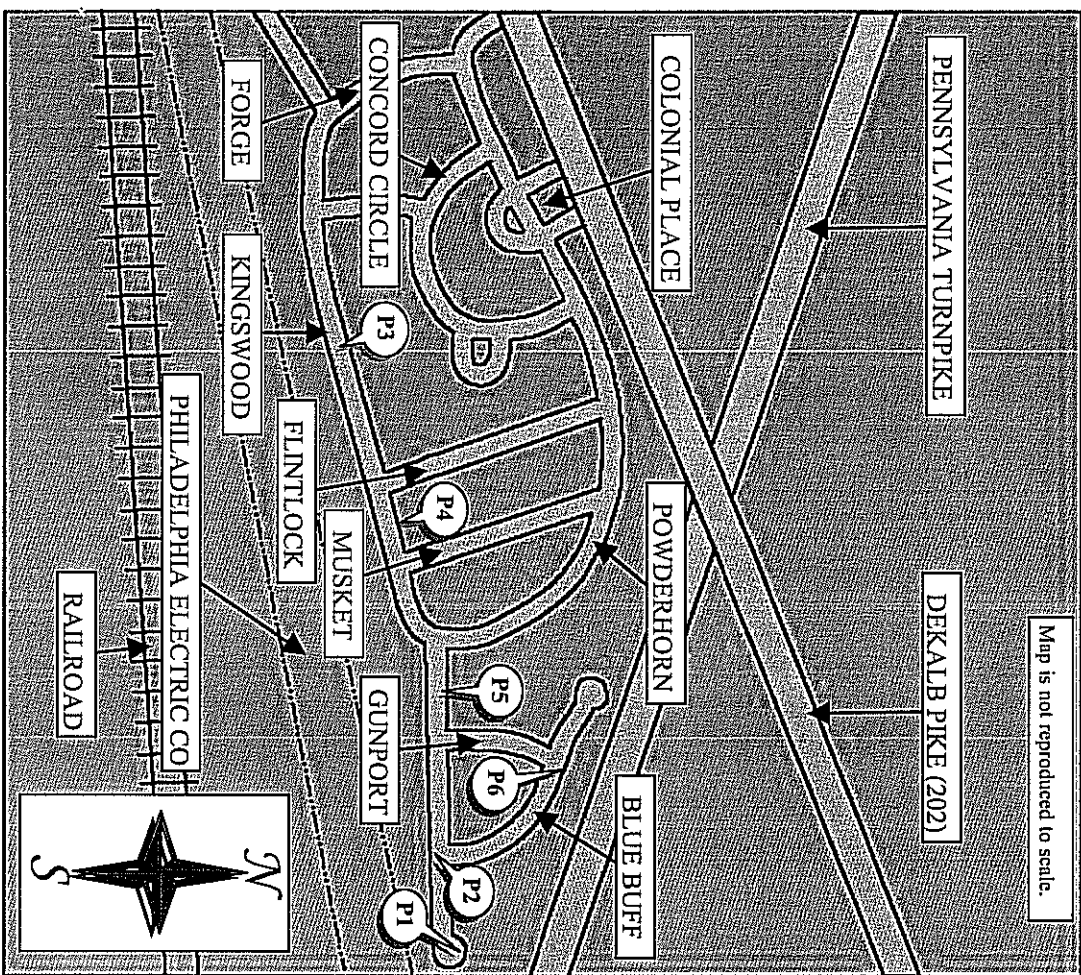
Address: South of the crossing of Dekalb Pike and the Pennsylvania Turnpike

Historic Name/Other Name: Valley Forge Homes

King of Prussia, PA 19406

SITE PLAN

PHOTO INFORMATION

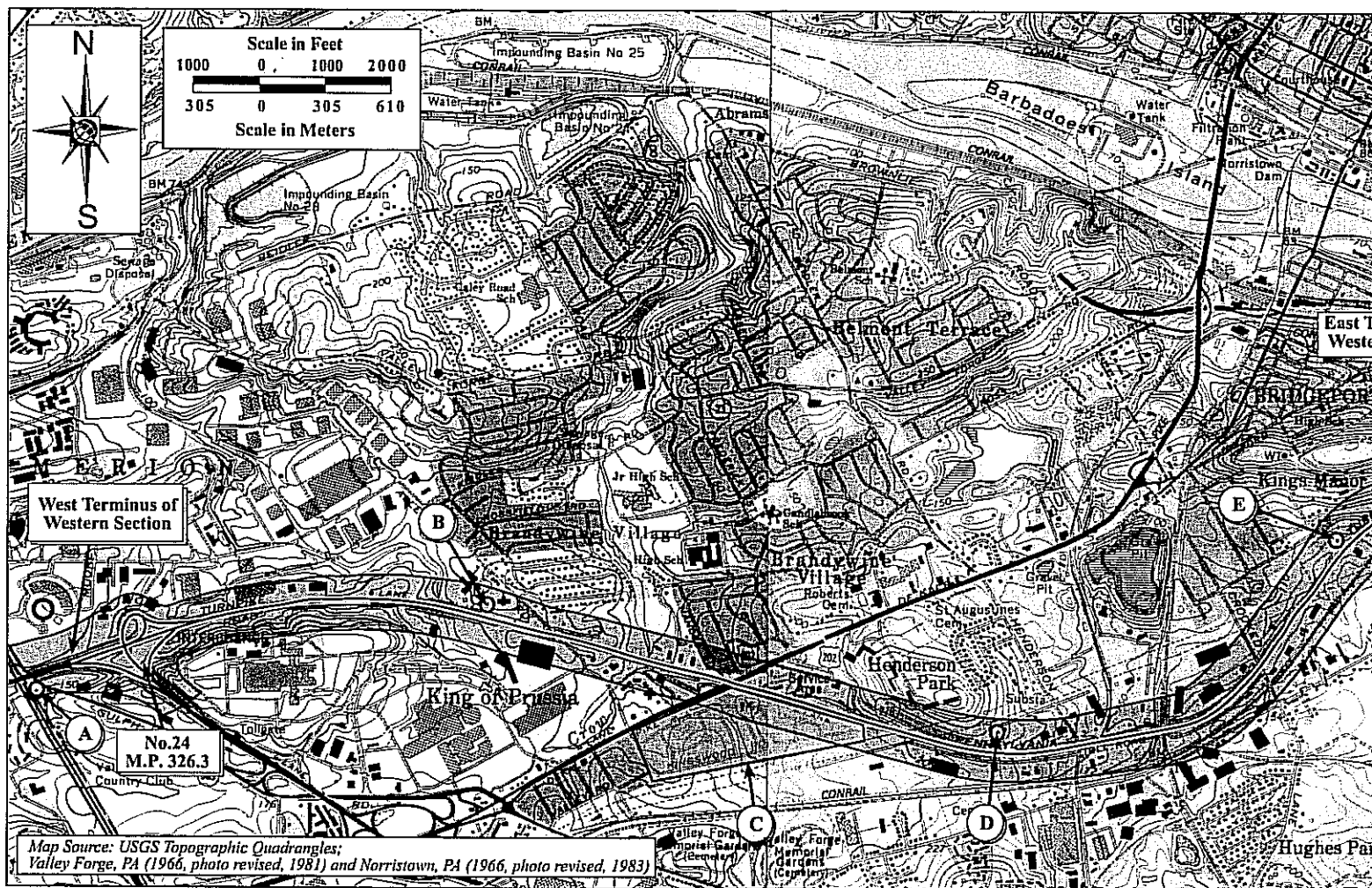


Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
P1	372 Kingwood Road	NE
P2	Valley Forge Homes Streetscape	SW
P3	529 Kingwood Road	S
P4	433 Kingwood Road	S
P5	417 Kingwood Road	S
P6	412 Bluebuff Road	N

Photographer Name: Erin Hammerstedt Date: April 2001

Negative Location:

Figure 1
Historic Resources Immediately Adjacent to the Turnpike Within the APE - Western Section
 Pennsylvania Turnpike Widening from the Valley Forge Interchange (No.24, M.P. 326.3) to the Norristown Interchange (No.25, M.P. 333.1)
 Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



Legend of Potentially Affected Resources

- (A) - Baron's Inne, 499 North Gulph Road, c. 1900 restaurant
- (B) - Mother of Divine Farmhouse, 333 Allendale Road, c. 1800 residence
- (C) - Valley Forge Homes, mid-twentieth-century residential subdivision
- (D) - William Carver Farmhouse, 355 South Henderson Road, c. 1863 residence
- (E) - 492 Church Street, c. 1930 one-and-a-half-story residence

Legend

- - Project Location (Western Section)
- - APE
- - Potentially Eligible Resources (Potentially Affected)

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM – DATA SHEET
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation
Box 1026 Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code:
County: Montgomery County (091)
Municipality: Upper Merion Township
Address: South of the crossing of Route 202 (DeKalb Pike) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-276), King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406
Historic Name: Valley Forge Homes
Other Name:
Owner Name/Address: Multiple
Owner Category:
 Private ☒ Public-Local
 Public-State Public-Federal
Resource Category:
 Building District ☒
 Site Structure
 Object
Number/Approximate Number of Resources Covered by This Form: 212
USGS Quad: Valley Forge, Pennsylvania and Norristown, Pennsylvania
UTM References: Zone 18 (See boundary description)
 A. N 4437370 E 467380 B. N 4437570 E 467810
 C. N 4437520 E 468000 D. N 4437390 E 468430
 E. N 4437250 E 468000 F. N 4437130 E 467480

HISTORIC AND CURRENT FUNCTIONS

Historic Function Category:	Subcategory:	Code:
A. Domestic	Single Dwellings	01A
B.		
C.		
D.		
Particular Type:		
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		
Current Function Category:	Subcategory:	Code:
A. Domestic	Single Dwellings	01A
B.		
C.		
D.		

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:
A: Other (80): FHA Minimal/Minimal Traditional
B:
C:
D:

EXTERIOR MATERIALS

Foundation: Brick (30) **Roof:** Asphalt (63)
Walls: Brick (30), Aluminum (55) **Structural System:** Light frame (14)
Other: Some asbestos siding (64), some stucco (61), some vinyl (72)
Width: 3 bays (C) **Depth:** 2 rooms (B) **Stories/Height:** 1 story (A)

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: 1951-1953

Additions/Alterations Dates: Various

Basis for Dating:

Documentary: X

Physical: X

Explain: The Valley Forge Homes, Inc. purchased the property in 1950, and properties were sold between 1951 and 1953. Physical evidence, including the design, materials, and methods of construction are concurrent with this information.

Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation:	1.	2.
Associated Individuals:	1.	2.
Associated Events:	1.	2.
Architects/Engineers:	1.	2.
Builders:	1.	2.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Ames, David.

 1998 *Context and Guidelines for Evaluating America's Historic Suburbs for the National Register of Historic Places.* University of Delaware.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee.

 1984 *A Field Guide to American Houses.* Alfred A. Knopff, Inc. New York.

Montgomery County Deeds

 Books 2092 and 2230. Montgomery County Clerk's Office, Norristown, Pennsylvania.

National Park Service.

 1997 *National Register Bulletin Number 15, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation."* United States Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Seifert, Donna J., with Barbara J. Little, Beth L. Savage, and John H. Sprinkle, Jr.

 1997 *National Register Bulletin 21 "Defining boundaries for National Register Properties."* National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Smith, J.L.

 1893 *Property Atlas of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.* J.L. Smith Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

PREVIOUS SURVEY, DETERMINATIONS

None

EVALUATION (Survey Director/Consultants Only)

Individual NR Potential: No

Explain: The buildings are not individually significant under any of the National Register criteria.

Contributes to Potential District: Yes

District Name/Status Based upon the criteria outlined in *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Park Service 1997), Valley Forge Homes does not appear to be eligible for listing in the *National Register* due to loss of integrity. The neighborhood is representative of a broad trend in our history, namely suburbanization. As an example of a residential "Freeway Suburb" (Ames 1998), the resource may have been eligible under Criterion A, had it not been for alterations to a large number of the homes, resulting in a loss of integrity throughout the district. No evidence linking the building to the lives of significant persons was found, indicating that the resource is not eligible under Criterion B. The Valley Forge Homes neighborhood contains 212 FHA minimal insurable dwellings composed of mass-produced and partially pre-assembled component parts as was typical in post-World War II residential subdivisions. As representatives of a characteristic type, period, and method of construction, the resource may also have been eligible under Criterion C, had it not been for the loss of integrity. Valley Forge Homes does not appear to be significant under Criterion D for its potential to yield information.

Although the Valley Forge Homes Neighborhood may have possessed the significance required for listing in the *National Register*, it is not eligible as a district because of loss of integrity. Uniformity among the tract houses located in the Valley Forge Homes neighborhood represented the developer's efforts to keep prices down; by using a small number of pre-designed, mass-produced models with pre-assembled components that were shipped to the area by rail or truck, Valley Forge Homes, Inc. was able to sell the modest but adequate homes to working-class individuals. Options were available at the time of purchase, resulting in slight variety among exterior materials, but the massing and setbacks of the buildings were consistent. Approximately 60 percent of the buildings have been significantly altered since their construction in the early 1950s. Common alterations, those having a greater impact on the neighborhood than changes in materials, include the addition of a front or rear porch, addition of an ell, addition of a full or partial second story, and changes to fenestration. Such alterations have an impact on the continuity of the neighborhood, affecting setbacks and other character defining features. Alterations made to a high proportion of the homes has detracted from the uniformity that characterized the neighborhood as an example of post-World War II suburban development with homes constructed specifically for veterans with loan guarantees, thus compromising its integrity as a district.

Threats:

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. None X | 2. Public Development | 3. Private Development |
| 4. Neglect | 5. Other | |

Explain:

SURVEYOR INFORMATION

Surveyor Name: Erin Hammerstedt, Architectural Historian

A.D. Marble & Company

919 Conestoga Road

Building 1, Suite 202

Rosemont, Pennsylvania 19010

Date: April 2001

Telephone: (610) 527-9311

**PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE SURVEY FORM-
NARRATIVE SHEET 96CBR**

**Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation**

Survey Code:

Tax Parcel/Other Number: Tax blocks 10A, B, C, and D

County: Montgomery County (091)

Municipality: Upper Merion Township

Address: South of the crossing of Route 202 (DeKalb Pike) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-276), King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406

Historic/Other Name: Valley Forge Homes

I. Physical Description

Valley Forge Homes is a mid-twentieth-century, working-class residential "freeway" suburb (Ames 1998:21) with access from Route 202 (DeKalb Pike) at both Forge Road and Colonial Place. Route 202 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike create the neighborhood's northern boundary, while a swath of power lines on land owned by the Philadelphia Electric Company form the southern border. The Valley Forge Homes subdivision is approximately 95 acres, containing 212 individual lots. This area was initially altered by a single developer, Valley Forge Homes, Inc., who purchased large plots of land, subdivided it into small lots, constructed the houses, and improved the area by creating an infrastructure of roads, utilities, and public amenities. As is typical of residential neighborhoods of its time, meandering roads and cul-de-sacs characterize the development. Several roads, all with Revolutionary War-themed names, wind through the bounded area. Roads within the Valley Forge Homes suburb are fifty feet wide with a simple concrete curb separating the road from the front yards of the properties; there are no flanking sidewalks or pedestrian paths. A sign at the Colonial Place entrance announces: "Valley Forge Homes Established 1952."

The neighborhood lacks any community green space. Instead, private yards contain lawns in the front and back, with relatively mature trees and shrubs of great variety throughout the neighborhood. The houses are situated near the center of their lots creating consistently large setbacks and front yards almost as large as those in back (Photograph 1). The parcels are generally between one-eighth and one-fifth of an acre, although some are as large as one-half acre. Yard ornaments, outdoor furniture, fencing materials, and children's play equipment exist in many of the yards.

Homes within the subdivision are generally situated with their eaves to the street, however some are oriented so that their gable-end faces the road. Homes situated on the street corners have generally been placed diagonally.

Constructed in 1950-1951 as part of the post-World War II residential building boom, the houses comprising the Valley Forge Homes neighborhood are small, one-story, wood framed dwellings, rectangular in shape, with low-pitched gable roofs and asymmetrical facades. They are generally faced in brick with either asbestos shakes or aluminum siding covering the upper half of the gable ends. Asphalt shingles cover the roofs. As a whole, the

houses are lacking in decorative detailing, however some have applied details that are loosely based on traditional precedents.

The buildings are generally three bays across the front, with a centered door flanked by a pair of one-over-one, double-hung sash windows on one side, and a large window (picture or bay) on the other side of the door. The homes tend to be three bays deep, having a narrow window just off center under the roof peak and a slightly wider window of the same height flanking it on both sides (Photographs 2 and 3). While the general fenestration patterns are quite consistent, the treatments of those openings are somewhat varied. These houses were constructed with aluminum windows.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) set minimum standards for the houses that they would insure, and many houses, including the Valley Forge Homes, were based on this standard. The houses contain four rooms plus a bathroom, with the larger kitchen and living room on the front of the house facing the street, separated from the two rear bedrooms by a narrow hallway and a bathroom. A utility room was also included on the ground floor, compensating functionally for the lack of a basement. Minimal houses, such as these, are generally sized in four-foot increments and have an interior ceiling height of eight feet because of the economy of four-foot by eight-foot drywall sheets.

A few of the buildings still display their original asbestos siding, however the vast majority of the properties boast aluminum siding. The consistency with which aluminum siding appears in the neighborhood indicates that while some residents may have changed the siding on their homes, aluminum siding was probably offered as an "upgrade" at the time of construction, an alternative to less expensive asbestos. Other options were also available, on both the interior and the exterior of the homes. A few of the homes have a basement, causing the front door to be raised three steps above grade, and allowing for two basement windows on each façade. In such cases, the foundation stem walls are generally faced either in brick or stucco. Basements and fireplaces are both signs of slightly more expensive housing.

Attached garages were usually constructed along with homes by the 1950s, but none of these Valley Forge homes have them. Most of the buildings currently have a detached garage to the rear of the home at the culmination of the standard side driveway. The fact that many of the garages appear to be contemporary to the buildings, while others are obviously recent additions suggests that having a detached garage was probably another upgrade offered by the developer.

"Minimal traditional" homes (McAlester 1984:477) such as these were built in great numbers in the years immediately following World War II and commonly dominate the large tract-housing developments of the period. They are small and low, but are wider and less suited to narrow lots than the bungalows of previous decades. The Valley Forge Homes were probably marketed as Ranch style houses indicating their single-story nature, asymmetrical facades, and low roofs, however the buildings are not as sprawling as a typical Ranch style house and are lacking standard detailing such as the broad roof overhang.

II. Historical Description

The Valley Forge Homes neighborhood is an example of post-World War II suburban development, containing over two hundred homes constructed specifically for veterans with loan guarantees. Residents began to move into the neighborhood as early as 1951; a few of those original residents still live there today.

World War II veterans returning home after hostilities ceased were armed with a new type of weapon to ensure a better future—the “G.I. Bill of Rights.” Passed unanimously by the 78th Congress, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-346)” into law on June 22, 1944 (http://www.va.gov/about_va/history accessed 17 April 2001). This law’s legislative intent was to assist the millions of men and women in resettling into civilian life with minimal impact on the nation’s economy and diminution of any associated sociological problems. Under this law, the Veterans Administration offered guaranteed home loans and education benefits to veterans. According to the Veterans Administration,

Credit was viewed as one of the cornerstones of a program to aid the veteran in his/her effort to readjust to civilian life. In the opinion of the supporters of the original legislation, the Government should provide the means whereby the veteran could obtain favorable credit, which would permit him/her to shelter his/her family or begin a business or farming venture. This concept arose because of the feeling that veterans, in view of their service in the Armed Forces had missed an opportunity to establish a credit rating, which could be the basis of borrowing to acquire a home or to establish a business. The establishment of the loan guaranty program was an attempt to place the veteran on a par with his/her non-veteran counterpart. (http://www.va-home-loans.com/history_VA_loan.htm accessed 17 April 2001)

As originally drafted, the home loan program featured several pronounced limitations. The maximum guaranty was limited to \$2,000 or 50 percent of the total loan, and loans were limited to 20 years with a maximum interest rate of four percent. Wording in the law included a type of price control, vis-à-vis, “the purchase price paid or to be paid, or the construction cost, including the value of the land, could not exceed the reasonable normal value as determined by an appraisal” (Public Laws 1944:387-391). Only World War II veterans were eligible for benefits, and loan applications had to be submitted within two years of service separation or the cessation of hostilities. These restrictions and shortcomings were addressed in amending legislation passed in 1945 (Public Law 79-268), resulting in almost a total rewrite of loan guaranty benefit as stated in the 1944 law. The maximum guaranty loan was raised to \$4,000 and the word “normal” was dropped from the phrase “reasonable normal value.” Loan maturity periods were extended from 20 to 25 years, and veterans now had a ten-year window to apply for a V.A. mortgage. In an evolution of legislative intent, the home loan benefit was transformed from a goal of immediate readjustment aid to a long-range veteran benefit (http://www.va-home-loans.com/history_VA_loan.htm accessed 17 April 2001).

The revamped mortgage benefit spurred housing starts in the second half of the 1940s. In the years 1948 and 1949, residential construction set new, successive all-time records. But housing was still at a premium, with many urban centers still overcrowded with defense workers who relocated from rural areas to obtain industrial-based employment. By 1950, Congress was again spurred into action, passing change legislation to both the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act and the National Housing Act. This Congressional effort included eight basic changes in the veteran home loan program included in the Housing Act of 1950 (Public Law 81-475). Percentage, monetary, and

interest and maturity rates were raised as part of this landmark legislation, and the law also authorized the Veterans Administration to establish minimum construction standards, which strengthened the appraisal process, offering protection to the purchasing veterans (http://www.va-home-loans.com/history_VA_loan.htm accessed 17 April 2001). Developers and builders scrambled to design houses according to the new standards set forth by the V.A. The standards issued by the Veterans Administration minimally included hardwood floors, plastered walls, Youngstown-style metal kitchen cabinets, asbestos siding, and a ceramic-tile bathroom.

Valley Forge Homes, Incorporated was chartered as a Pennsylvania corporation shortly after the 1950 Act became law and the V.A. housing standards were drafted. The new company received their charter on May 15, 1950, and purchased a parcel of land that in 1893 had been owned by Thomas Williams (Smith 1893:24). The nearly complete Pennsylvania Turnpike extension provided a major incentive for erecting homes at this location. In fact, the development is nestled against the Turnpike's eastbound lanes and Route 202 (DeKalb Pike). In December 1950, Leroy Webb and the Land Title Bank & Trust Company sold 61 acres of land to Valley Forge Homes, Incorporated (Montgomery County Deeds 2092:418; 2144:343). The first development section began on this parcel. In November 1951, Valley Forge Homes acquired the second and final 35-acre land parcel from Fritz Hansen (Montgomery County Deeds 2230:251). Valley Forge Homes proceeded to subdivide this land into 212 building lots along meandering streets and around cul-de-sacs. It appears the corporation erected up to four different sample Ranch style houses and offered interior and exterior upgrade packages. The basic house was a brick faced, one-story, wood framed dwelling, rectangular in shape, with an asphalt-shingled gable roof. Either asbestos shakes (basic) or aluminum siding (upgrade) covered the gable ends. A detached garage was another upgrade offering, as were basements, but the houses featuring lower levels seem to be clustered near the entrance to the development.

The 50-foot wide streets constructed within the development support the Revolutionary War theme and included such road names as Colonial Place, Concord Place and Circle, Flint, Forge, Gunport, Musket, Patriot, and Powderhorn. The theme could have been based on its proximity to Valley Forge or a marketing scheme by Valley Forge Homes, Inc. Over the proceeding years, both original and successive homeowners have modified their Valley Forge homes, exchanging asbestos shakes for aluminum siding; encapsulating soffits and other exterior wood trim in aluminum flashing; adding a second floor; placing a garden shed on their property; or erecting a garage.

III. Determination of Eligibility

Based upon the criteria outlined in *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Park Service 1997), Valley Forge Homes does not appear to be eligible for listing in the *National Register* due to loss of integrity. The neighborhood is representative of a broad trend in our history, namely suburbanization. As an example of a residential "Freeway Suburb" (Ames 1998), the resource may have been eligible under Criterion A, had it not been for alterations to a large number of the homes, resulting in a loss of integrity throughout the district. No evidence linking the building to the lives of significant persons was found, indicating that the resource is not eligible under Criterion B. The Valley Forge Homes neighborhood contains 212 FHA minimal insurable dwellings composed of mass-produced and partially pre-assembled component parts as was typical in post-World War II residential subdivisions. As representatives of a characteristic type, period, and method

of construction, the resource may also have been eligible under Criterion C, had it not been for the loss of integrity. Valley Forge Homes does not appear to be significant under Criterion D for its potential to yield information.

Although the Valley Forge Homes Neighborhood may have possessed the significance required for listing in the *National Register*, it is not eligible as a district because of loss of integrity. Uniformity among the tract houses located in the Valley Forge Homes neighborhood represented the developer's efforts to keep prices down; by using a small number of pre-designed, mass-produced models with pre-assembled components that were shipped to the area by rail or truck, Valley Forge Homes, Inc. was able to sell the modest but adequate homes to working-class individuals. Options were available at the time of purchase, resulting in slight variety among exterior materials, but the massing and setbacks of the buildings were consistent. Approximately 60 percent of the buildings have been significantly altered since their construction in the early 1950s. Common alterations, those having a greater impact on the neighborhood than changes in materials, include the addition of a front or rear porch, addition of an ell, addition of a full or partial second story, and changes to fenestration (Photographs 4, 5, and 6). Such alterations have an impact on the continuity of the neighborhood, affecting setbacks and other character defining features. Alterations made to a high proportion of the homes has detracted from the uniformity that characterized the neighborhood as an example of post-World War II suburban development with homes constructed specifically for veterans with loan guarantees, thus compromising its integrity as a district.



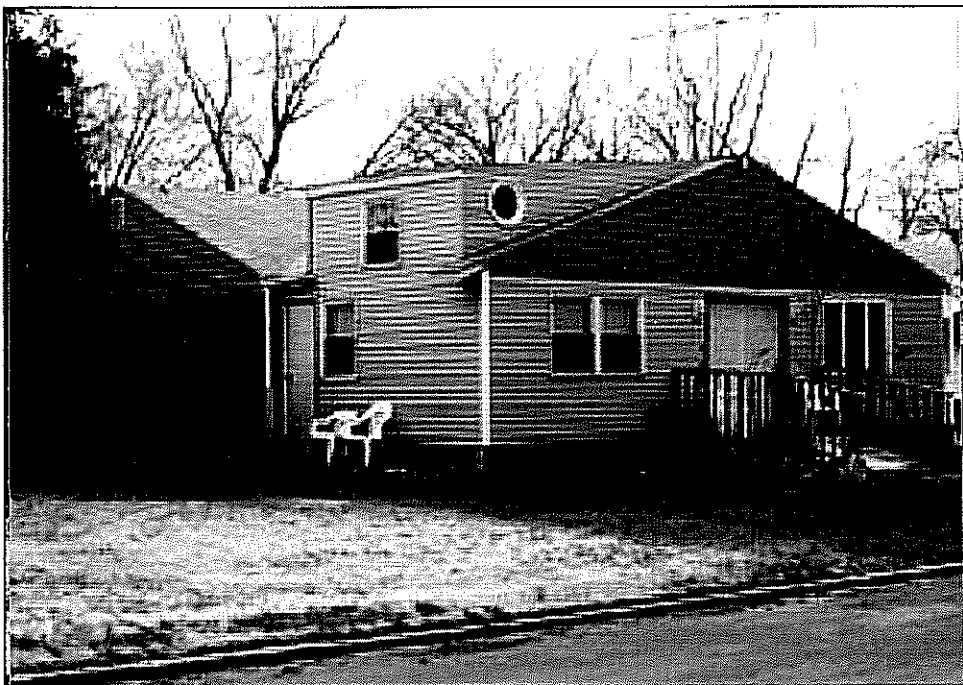
Photograph 2: Valley Forge Homes Streetscape, looking southwest (April 2001).



Photograph 3: Typical Valley Forge Home, 529 Kingwood Road, looking south (April 2001).



Photograph 4: Valley Forge Homes, 433 Kingwood Road, looking south (April 2001).



Photograph 5: Significantly Altered Valley Forge Home, 417 Kingwood Road, looking south (April 2001).



Photograph 6: Significantly Altered Valley Forge Home, 412 Bluebuff Road, looking north (April 2001).