HISTORICAL AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES OF PENNSYLVANIA, c. 1700-1960

NATIONAL REGISTER MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

STATEMENT OF METHOD

Part H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The identification and evaluation process for this Multiple Property Documentation Form proceeded from research to fieldwork rather than the reverse. This sequence had two major advantages. Equipped with an understanding of the local agricultural history, field workers could recognize characteristic buildings and landscapes. For example, documentary evidence of packing barns in the Lake Erie fruit region allowed for proper identification of this regionally specific type. Second, it was important to recognize where once-common features were missing, as in the River Valleys Tobacco region. Only prior research helped field workers realize that important historical landscape elements had disappeared. The research and fieldwork for this MPDF were conducted between Fall 2003 and Summer 2011.

Agricultural History Background – the United States

A modern agrarian history of Pennsylvania had to be created through extensive primary and secondary source research. It was informed by a rich body of scholarship on the history of agriculture and rural life in the United States. The foundations of scholarship on the history of Northern agriculture were laid by Percy Wells Bidwell and John Falconer in their *History of Agriculture in the Northern States, 1620-1860* (1925). In the mid-20th century, a generation of scholars (led by such figures as Paul Wallace Gates, Wayne Rasmussen, and Allan Bogue) focused on such issues as federal land policy, the impact of urbanization and industrialization on agriculture, and the rise of specialized agricultural regions such as the corn-hog belt. While these scholars never completely neglected the social history of rural life, their works were chiefly grounded (both with respect to method and substance) in economic history. By the 1970s, their scholarly descendants were undertaking sophisticated quantitative econometric studies. Meanwhile, a revolution in slavery and emancipation studies contributed much to the history of rural life, especially of course in the South. Also at the same time, the "new social history," influenced by the European Annales school of historians, turned away from "great men" and national politics, to analyze demographic patterns and the lives of ordinary people -- especially women, the working class, and ethnic minorities. In the 1980s and thereafter, scholars advocating a "new rural history" sought to incorporate a broader social and cultural dimension to agricultural history. With the "new rural history" our understanding acquired added depth with studies of such subjects as gender patterns, migration, class, environmental changes, and ethnic relationships. In order to recover the lives of ordinary people, these studies made innovative use of unconventional source materials, notably vernacular landscapes and material culture. They also used conventional materials (such as the census) in new ways.[1]

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[1] Percy Wells Bidwell and John Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern States, 1620-1860* (New York, 1925, reprinted by Peter Smith in 1941.) Paul Wallace Gates's most notable contributions include *The Illinois central railroad and its colonization work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934); *The Farmer's Age, Agriculture 1815-1860* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960); and many other monographs. Rasmussen is best known for his articles about farm mechanization, especially "The Impact of Technological Change on American Agriculture, 1862-1962," *Journal of Economic History* 22 (December 1962): 578-591. Allan Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming in the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) was an influential study. For examples of quantitative studies, see Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987). Useful overviews of the "New rural history" can be found in: Robert Swierenga, "The New Rural History:

Agricultural History Background – Pennsylvania

Unaccountably, despite the flowering of scholarship on rural America more generally, Pennsylvania had been neglected by historians of agriculture and rural life. While historians lavished attention on the rural South, Midwest, and West, the mid-Atlantic and Pennsylvania with it remained in the scholarly shadows, particularly for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The dramatic industrialization and labor conflict in Pennsylvania in this period have attracted many historians, but since the publication of Stevenson Fletcher's two-volume *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life* (1949 and 1955), there has been little work on the history of agrarian Pennsylvania. Fletcher's book is based on primary sources (mainly published material from agricultural journals, almanacs, agricultural society reports, etc.), but it is episodic in format and it did not have the benefit of interpretive perspectives introduced after 1950. A few specialized monographs fill out the complement of significant published historical scholarship on Pennsylvania rural life. Therefore the Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project has had to conduct wide-ranging primary-source research in order to bring an updated approach to evaluating historic rural landscapes and buildings.[2]

Research Method – Documentary and Archival Sources; Fieldwork

Secondary Sources: A substantial review of existing secondary literature on Pennsylvania's social, cultural, economic, political, and agricultural history was conducted. While, as has been noted, no general history of agriculture existed, there is a corpus of more specialized articles

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Setting the Parameters," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1981): 211-223, and Christopher Clark, "Economics and Culture: Opening Up the Rural History of the Early American Northeast," American Quarterly 43 (June 1991): 279-301. A narrative overview which incorporates the "new rural history" is David Danbom, *Born in the Country, A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Excellent examples of more focused substantive work in the "new rural history" include: John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation:Essays in the Social History of Rural America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism, Western Massachusetts 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West, Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: the Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Studies which use buildings and landscapes as primary evidence include: Thomas Hubka, *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: the Connected Farm Buildings of New England* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1984); Bernard L. Herman, *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Steven Stoll, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage: Making the Industrial Countryside in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[2] Stevenson Fletcher, *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life*. 2 volumes. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1949 and 1955). Kuan-I Chen's 1954 Ph. D dissertation, "Agricultural Production in Pennsylvania, 1840 to 1950," provides a convenient overview based on published census data. Work that prominently features Pennsylvania includes: Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Beauveau Borie IV, *Farming and Folk Society: Threshing among the Pennsylvania Germans,* (Ph. D dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1974); Diane Lindstrom, *Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region 1815-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); James Lemon, *The Best Poor man's Country, a Geographic Study of early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972); Joseph Glass, *The Pennsylvania Culture Region, a View from the Barn* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986). Note that the latter two monographs are actually by geographers rather than historians. Robert Ensminger, *The Pennsylvania Barn, Its Origin, Evolution, and Distribution in North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) is an able analysis of form, origins, and construction; its author also was trained as a geographer.

involving agricultural subjects. This work was done by Penn State University graduate student research assistants (funded by PennDOT) and Sally McMurry. The graduate student work was supervised by the Principal Investigator, Sally McMurry.

Primary sources: The secondary sources that specifically addressed agriculture were incomplete, so many primary sources pertaining were studied for information. Each graduate student research assistant followed guidelines set out by the Principal Investigator**,** compiling information on historical patterns of production, labor, land tenure, and so forth. Images were collected where possible. Most of this research was done by county because most sources are organized by county. The primary source materials included (but were not limited to):

- Published materials such as gazetteers, atlases, maps, 19th-century local histories, agricultural periodicals, travel narratives, folklore compilations, farm handbooks (including books about building design), emigrants' advice books, Agricultural Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station bulletins, works by rural sociologists and agricultural economists, and handbooks on specialized crops like fruit and potatoes.
- Unpublished materials. The most important of these were materials generated by Penn State's agriculture college, especially the records of the Agricultural Extension agents (for each county, beginning in 1915); surveys and reports done by faculty and students in departments such as Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology; student theses; and photographs. Materials in the Pennsylvania State Archives were also surveyed as time and funds permitted. Records of Pennsylvania's Departments of Commerce, Forests and Waters, Tourism, and Revenue, for example, have valuable materials pertaining to agriculture, including maps and photographs. Collections around the state in specific regions were also consulted. These included specialized repositories such as the National Apple Museum in Biglerville, PA; county historical societies, notably in Lycoming, Greene, and Centre; the Sones Farm and Home Museum in Lycoming County; the Heinz Historical Center in Pittsburgh; and numerous others. These are listed in each regional narrative. Occasionally oral history interviews were conducted.

Census Tabulations: Using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, work-study students created databases with information from the Manuscript Census of Agriculture, 1850, 1880, and 1927, collected down to the township level for the entire state (except for Philadelphia County). The information collected included data on crop production, land use, livestock production, mechanization, farm tenancy, and many other categories. This was necessary because the published summaries only list data at the county level, and regional boundaries often cut through counties. The township provided a more fine-grained unit of analysis. The three dates captured change over time. Various production data were graphed within these spreadsheets. Selected data were mapped. This allowed for a visual presentation of patterns.

Field Work: Field work was conducted in every historical agricultural region. Some of the work was done in partnership with other organizations, with greater comprehensiveness. Notably,

Washington, Greene, Bedford, and Fulton Counties were covered much more extensively than the other regions. However, the same basic information was collected for all sites, using a form developed for the purpose. This form can be accessed through the Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project website. The form design was refined as work went on, but the same information was collected. An attempt was made to make the survey form and online Field Guide parallel to one another. The principal revision to the form consisted in creating checkoffs to make it quicker to fill out in the field. At first, only paper forms were used, but later forms were completed electronically and converted to PDF format. The recording focused on identifying, describing, and photographing house, barn, outbuildings, structures, and landscape features. Each form included a sketch site plan.

Identification of sites for field work was made based on several factors. Library research and census figures revealed townships that typified a given region's historic agricultural production, soils and topography, and land tenure patterns. Penn Pilot and Google aerials were used to determine whether extensive development or modern agriculture might have destroyed resources. Townships with historical data that exemplified a region's agriculture and seemed likely to retain historic fabric were targeted for field research. The word "survey" is deliberately avoided here, because the purpose of the work was not to produce a comprehensive survey. The goal was to efficiently gather information on extant historic farm buildings and landscapes. In each target area, a route was planned through the target township and field workers traversed the route, filling out forms for individual farms along the route. Much work was done from the public roadway, but often workers were invited onto properties. In some cases (where possible at the time), boundaries and landscape features were checked against GIS tax assessment maps later. Farm acreages could be added this way.

Over a period of almost ten years, dozens of field trips resulted in documentation for hundreds of historic farms. At the conclusion of the project, the documentation will be held at the Bureau for Historic Preservation and at Penn State University. Plans were originally made to incorporate the documentation into the Pennsylvania Cultural Resources GIS database, but as of January 2013 this process was incomplete.

Sample Nominations

Sample Nominations: The MPDF materials were submitted for National Register consideration in three large batches, each of which contained a sample nomination. These were: the Houseknecht farm in Lycoming County; the McClelland-Grimes Farm in Greene County; and the Pierceville Run Historic Agricultural District in York County. These nominations demonstrated the context in use for two individual farms and one historic agricultural district, furnishing models.