

HERMAN FARM

(Schindel Farm)

North side of Showalter Road, 0.3 miles  
east of I-81, at Washington County

Regional Airport

Hagerstown vicinity

Washington County

Maryland

HABS No. MD-993

HABS  
MD,  
22-HAGTON,  
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HERMAN FARM  
(Schindel Farm)

HABS No. MD-993

HABS  
MD,  
22- HAGERSTOWN,  
3-

Location: North side of Showalter Road, 0.3 miles east of I-81, at Washington County Regional Airport, Hagerstown vicinity, Washington County, Maryland

USGS Hagerstown, MD Quadrangle  
UTM Coordinates: 18 265820 4398060

Present Owner: Board of County Commissioners of Washington County, Maryland

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Present Use: Unused.

Significance: The Herman Farm complex contains a house, barn and wash house-smoke house. The buildings are significant because they are precisely dated; the house was built in 1860 and the barn in 1856. Conservative in their appearance, the buildings reflect rural building traditions of Washington County and the larger region of South central Pennsylvania and mid-Maryland, and the outlook or design preferences of the area's successful farmers. The house has Greek Revival stylistic influence evidenced in exterior and interior elements which have been applied to a basic residential form rooted in the Georgian style. The farm was considered prosperous and the house a "mansion" in an 1888 sale bill for the property. This farmstead reveals the appearance and preferences of the period and enriches understanding of the late 19th century cultural setting of the local area.

SUMMARY OF THE HERMAN FARM COMPLEX

The Herman Farm complex is located along the north side of Showalter Road, just south of the Washington County Regional Airport. It is situated approximately three miles north of Hagerstown, three-tenths mile east of Interstate 81 and one half mile west of U.S. Route 11. The complex consists of a brick house, dated 1860, a stone and frame bank barn, built in 1856, with attached sheds and a smoke house-wash house, a one story brick structure which is contemporary with the house.

The house and barn are set nearly on an axis, east to west approximately 80 feet north of the north edge of Showalter Road. The house is a two story, three bay brick building resting on coursed limestone foundations. A cornerstone located at the south end of the east foundation wall of the house is inscribed "OCT TH 16 1860." The house is L-shaped with a two story wing extending to the rear. Along the east facade of the wing is a recessed, galleried porch. A later, one story shed-roofed porch and small pantry addition to the house are located on the west facade of the wing which faces the barn. The only other exterior alterations or additions to the house is the mid 20th century neo-colonial trim around the entrance and the resurfacing of the roof with channel drain sheet metal. All other exterior features - walls, window frames and sash, shutters, chimneys, doors and their frames, transoms and much of the glass - are original to the period of construction.

Although built in 1860, well into the Victorian period, the style of the house is architecturally very conservative, combining elements of the Greek Revival style with a popular traditional regional house type which has its design rooted in the 18th century Georgian style. The front of the house with its window-window-door sequence is a facade type which is sometimes identified as a "3/5 Georgian" or "half-Georgian" arrangement. The use of Flemish bonding at the front elevation is another 18th and early 19th century feature which has been retained quite late in this house. Generally, in Washington County, Maryland, the use of Flemish bonding was abandoned in the 1840s.

As is typical of the region, the exterior Greek Revival elements are restricted mostly to the entrance treatment. In the Herman house, this is evidenced by the trabeated entrance structure with a broad transom and sidelights, a typical Greek Revival style treatment. The use of six over six windows and four-panel shutters are also typical of the Greek Revival period

as conservatively expressed in mid-Maryland.

The interior of the house reflects the same conservative blend of traditional, Georgian and Greek Revival elements. The plan of the front part of the house consists of a side entrance and stair hall which accesses two rooms, a front and rear parlor or a dining room. This is an 18th century Georgian townhouse plan that was also used with other neoclassically inspired styles such as Federal and Greek Revival. This abbreviated version of the full plan which consisted of a central entrance and stair hall with two rooms on either side, was not only used for urban dwellings where space was limited, but was also adapted for smaller farmhouses in mid-Maryland. All of the character defining features (doors, woodwork, trim, stairs and layout) on the first floor of the house except for one fireplace and one door which have been removed from the back parlor or dining room remain intact. Original doors, windows, baseboards, architraves and trim are present. In the kitchen, mid-20th century cupboards have been added. On the second floor, alterations include removal of the front chamber fireplace, built-in closets in two rooms from the mid-20th century and installation of a bathroom. The bathroom is placed in a small original room at the front of the second floor hall. This installation did not alter the configuration or the elements of this room. The only missing elements of the interior are two mantel pieces, one door (which was found outside near the wash house) and most of the hardware which has been removed. Outlines of the hardware remain on the doors and frames, however. Original wall finishes were found beneath layers of paint and wallpaper. Although it has been vacant for approximately ten years, the house remains in very good condition.

The second building in the complex is a large stone and frame bank barn. Built of coursed native limestone, it has a date cut into the cornerstone of the south end of the east foundation wall inscribed "MAY 1856." It has a cantilevered forebay and a ramp or bank at the rear. A three bay machine shed was added at the rear and a one story hog pen is attached at the front. Overall, the barn is representative of the barn building traditions of the region, showing Germanic influence, that was prevalent in the late 18th and 19th centuries in central and western Maryland as well as southern Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

The third building in the complex is a smoke house-wash

house. The term "wash house" is used to describe the building in 19th century documents. It is a brick structure, contemporary with the house and contains a cooking and baking facility as well as an attached smoke house. Directly to the north of the wash house is a poured concrete pad which originally had a porch-type covering and a well with a pump and trough. Here, much of the domestic industry of the household took place: washing, butchering, baking, smoking of meats, canning and major food processing, such as making sausage and pudding. Between the wash house and the house is a cistern and a paved pathway crossing the yard.

Originally the farmstead had other features such as a wood house, a repair shop and poultry coops. Also part of the landscape was an orchard and fencing, most of which was post and rail, according to an 1888 sale bill for the property. The farm contained 121 acres.

The farm was established by George Herman who came to Washington County in 1852 from Pennsylvania. He purchased this land in April of 1853 from William Logan and Samuel Brumbaugh et al., about 70 acres in two tracts for which he paid \$3,400.31 for 25 acres and \$2,037.65 for 45 acres. The 25-acre tract was part of a large land grant called "Garden of Eden," a name by which George Herman's farm came to be known. The price of nearly \$5,500.00 for 70 acres suggests that some type of improvement was on the property at the time it was purchased by George Herman. The nature of those improvements and their location, however, is unknown. Approximately three years later in May, 1856, George Herman had built the barn, and the house, dated October the 16th, 1860 came a few year later. Where George Herman and his family lived before the house was completed is not known. The 1877 Atlas, however, shows that at that time he also owned the farm immediately south of the one discussed here and owned a total of 200 acres.

In 1888, George Herman died. In his will, he named his son as executor to sell his real estate and divide the proceeds among his four children, Henry S., Rebecca, Amanda Melvina and Alice Lavinia. His widow, Nancy received all the "household goods and furniture", as well as the contents of the "wash house and in the smoke house to be hers absolutely."

The real estate was offered for sale first privately, then at public sale on November 15, 1888. According to estate

records, the property did not sell on the appointed day. The executor "failed to effect a sale at public sale on said day and ever since has made most diligent and persistent effort to sell said property which by reason of depressed activity in market for farm real estate was difficult to sell, ..." Eventually, the farm was sold on July 29, 1892, to W.O.B. Sperry of West Virginia for \$9,955.00.

The Sale Bill for the farm appeared in two Hagerstown newspapers, the Daily News and the Herald and Torch, and a Lancaster, Pennsylvania newspaper, the New Era. The sale bill gives a detailed description of the appearance of the farm during the last quarter of the 19th century and the points emphasized give some idea of what was perceived as important or desirable to prospective buyers of the property. The fact that the farm was advertised in a Lancaster, Pennsylvania newspaper, reflects the migration patterns from southeastern Pennsylvania into central Maryland and the Valley of Virginia which was significant to the settlement of the Hagerstown area in the 18th century and continued through the 19th century. The Sale Bill read as follows:

For Sale

"Garden of Eden" Farm

Farm of the late George D. Herman, pursuant to an order of the Orphans Court of Washington County, Maryland, the undersigned executor will offer for sale, the fine mansion farm of the late George D. Herman at private sale, till Thursday, November 15, 1888, at 1 P.M. at which time it will be sold at public sale in front of the court house in Hagerstown, Md., if not previously sold. The farm is situated four miles north of the City of Hagerstown along the Hagerstown and Middleburg turnpike, contains about 121 acres of the choicest limestone land in a high state of cultivation under good fencing, mostly post and rail fence. The improvements are massive house and barn. The house is a large solid brick, containing nine rooms with large hall running through the house, with cemented collars under the house, pantry attached. The barn is large and commodious with double, two mows, wagon shed and corn crib attached with stone wall gable ends, carriage house and hog pen.

A never failing well of water in the yard, a brick wash-house (containing furnace bake house and smoke house, all conveniently arranged under one roof), all other necessary

outbuildings, such as wood house, repair shop +c. An orchard in fine bearing condition, other choice fruits such as peaches, cherries, grapes +c. The location of this fine level garden spot within thirty-five minutes drive over one of the finest macadamized roads entering the city of Hagerstown within one and a half miles of Hagersville depot and 2 miles from State Line depot on the Cumberland Valley R. R. makes it financially one of the most desirable farms now offered in the famous Cumberland Valley. Besides its easy access to various railroad outlets, it commands a grand view of the historic South Mountain, while sitting on the porches there is a fine view of the "Blue Mountain House," "High Rock" and "Chirock," now famous to summer tourists and is located in a rural section noted for its industry and culture...

This advertisement conveys a concept of this farm as prosperous with the buildings described in grand terms such as "mansions" and "massive." It indicates that the added pantry had been constructed by 1888 when the sale bill was printed. Features of the farm that were considered desirable, aside from the fertile land and its well cultivated condition, were the easy access to Hagerstown - the four mile drive could be done comfortably in 35 minutes; and the view of the guest house and rock formations on South Mountain which during the turn of the century period were popular tourist attractions, being an easy train excursion from Baltimore. Also suggested is the agricultural significance of the upper Hagerstown Valley which has long been considered some of the best agricultural land in the state. The valley had been dominated by the production of wheat and other small grains. In 1870, during the time that this farm was operating, Washington County had the highest yield of wheat in bushels per acre in Maryland. The county's average yield per acre was 25 3/4 bushels as compared with the statewide average of 14 1/2 bushels per acre. The importance of grain production also relates to the asset of being near rail depots, factors also mentioned in the advertisement. The 1890s reference to the depressed market for agricultural real estate is also important to the study of local economic trends.

The significance of the Herman Farm lies in the excellent documentation that exists about the complex. Both the house and barn are dated, 1860 and 1856 respectively. Both have survived to the present with only minimal alteration, and the detailed description of the farm in 1888 within 30 years after the buildings were constructed, not only illustrates what they looked

lited but provides insight into those features and elements that were considered to be important as selling points at the time. The buildings show the conservative nature of the region's rural architectural expression. Although the house was considered a "mansion," and the farm prosperous, it certainly was not representative of the latest architectural styles, except, perhaps in a few details of interior finishing. The house is not unusual or unique, nor is the barn. It is not a rare example or a one-of-a-kind building. However, the complex is perhaps more valuable than most because it can be placed precisely in its temporal context. There are no circa dates, no time ranges. It is known what they looked like in 1888, and the changes made since are relatively minor.

One other family is significant to the history of this property and that is the ownership of the Showalter family, one of several Germanic Mennonite families who farmed the prime agricultural land north of Hagerstown. The Showalters owned the property from 1900 to 1945. It was from them that Showalter Road which runs by the farm got its name. In 1945, 41 acres of the farm, including the buildings, were sold to Henson Flying Service, Inc. It remained in the Henson family until 1950 when it was sold to Joseph B. Schindel. It was during Henson and Schindel ownership that most of the changes to the buildings were made.

ENDNOTES

An Illustrated Atlas of Washington County, Maryland.  
(Philadelphia, PA: Lake Griffing and Stevenson, 1877; reprint  
ed., Evansville, Indiana: Unigraphic, Inc., 1975), p. 10.

Washington County, Land Records, Liber IN7, Folio 613,  
614. 1853.

Atlas, p. 10.

Will of George D. Herman, Liber H, Folio 56, made February  
11, 1881, probated October 24, 1888.

Washington County, List of Sales, Volume II, page 191.

J. Thomas Scharf, History of Western Maryland.  
(Philadelphia: Louis H. Evarts, 1882), p. 274.

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- Goodwin, R. Christopher and Associates, Inc. "Phase I  
Archeological Survey of the Herman/Schindel Farm,  
Washington County Regional Airport, Washington County,  
Maryland." Prepared for the Board of County Commissioners  
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- Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Western Maryland. Philadelphia,  
PA: Louis H. Evarts, 1882.

PROJECT INFORMATION

The Maryland Historical Trust and the National Park Service have approved the demolition of the Herman Farm buildings to allow for construction of a new terminal for the Washington County Regional Airport at Hagerstown, Maryland. On November 20, 1989, the Board of County Commissioners of Washington County hired a consultant, Preservation Associates, Inc., to prepare HABS documentation as directed by the National Park Service, mid-Atlantic Region.

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