

**4.3.12 K-02750. Jerome Tenant House (J.B. Tracy Tenant House)
1008 McGinnis Pond Road
SM-00-121.00-01-25.01**

Description: This 1.02-acre property is located on the east side of McGinnis Pond Road, approximately 800 feet north of the intersection with Barratts Chapel Road. The property contains a dwelling, a garage, and two sheds. Access to the property is *via* a gravel driveway that circles the rear (east) of the house. The property is bordered by a small patch of trees and private property to the north; a developing subdivision to the east (Pintail Pointe); more private property to the south; and McGinnis Pond Road to the west.

The dwelling is a two-story, two-bay square, Italianate style house built *ca.* 1875. The main block has an asphalt shingle hipped roof with decorative scroll-sawn roof brackets. The cornice with dentil molding features paired brackets at the center and ends of the front and side elevations. A broad porch wraps around the west (front) and south sides, and a one-story addition stretches around the south and east sides to join with the formerly detached summer kitchen building at the rear. The house is clad with vinyl siding, the main block has a brick foundation, and the wrap-around porch and addition have a concrete block foundation. The historic fluted porch posts have been replaced with prefabricated wood posts, and all of the original six-over-six windows have been replaced with modern sash windows.

A one-bay garage is located just east of the house. The *ca.* 1950 garage has a side-gable roof with exposed rafter tails and vinyl siding. The front (north) facade has one wide overhead door. The east elevation has a modern steel pedestrian door. The west elevation is blank. The rear (south) elevation has two original six-light windows.

A *ca.* 1950 shed/stable is located to the east of the garage. It has a shed roof with an open end at the south, which is enclosed by a wood fence. It is probably used as a stable for a horse. There are two board-and-batten sliding doors on the north side. The west side has a steel pedestrian door and a three-pane awning window.

A gambrel roof shed from *ca.* 1935 is located at the western edge of the property, just behind the house. It has two board-and-batten doors on the front (west) facade. The other elevations are blank. The vinyl-sided shed is supported on a foundation of wood planks.

Applicable Historic Context(s): Upper Peninsula Zone; Industrialization and Early Urbanization (1830-1880±); Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880-1940±); Agriculture; Settlement Patterns and Demographic Changes; Architecture, Engineering, and Decorative Arts; Other Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Houses.

Historical Overview: Evidence suggests that although this land has been part of agricultural complexes since at least the mid-eighteenth century, the house currently on the property was not built, or did not attain its Italianate influences, until *ca.* 1875, when the property was in the control of Ellen Jerome.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the land associated with K-02750 was part of the “dwelling plantation” of Edward Callahan of Murderkill Hundred. It appears to have been part of a 212-acre tract “and Branch Cripple of Mill Creek” he purchased in 1797 from Daniel James (Kent County Deeds 1797). The land was part of a larger estate called Avendale, which historian J. Thomas Scharf noted was owned by the James family in the early days of settlement in the hundred (Scharf 1888). Following Callahan’s death, the land passed by will to his widow, Christian Callahan, in 1806. Following her death, the land became property of Edward and Christian’s daughter, Mary Ann Cloud. The land, if it was in production, was undoubtedly in tenancy, because in 1826, Mary Ann Cloud and her husband Enoch were residents of Cecil County, Maryland. They sold 103 acres of land and branch cripple in that year to George Bonwill (also spelled Bonwell and Bonnewell) of Murderkill Hundred (Kent County Deeds 1826).

Bonwill was a miller and a farmer, and clearly the land he purchased from the Clouds was not his home place. He also owned a 350-acre farm with a log dwelling and various outbuildings. K-02750 was assessed in the 1852 tax assessment for Murderkill Hundred as 60 acres, 40 of which were improved; the only building on it was a small frame house in bad repair. The land and building were valued at only \$300 (Kent County Tax Assessments 1852). It is not surprising that Bonwill could have purchased a tract called 103 acres in 1826 that was assessed as only 60 acres in 1852. Often cripple, or marshland, was considered to be so worthless it was not taxed. The 60 acres could represent the only taxable land on this farm. Unfortunately, this tract was not listed in Bonwill’s name in the 1850 agricultural census of Murderkill Hundred, so it is not possible to cross-reference the information on this farm.

The 1859 map of Murderkill Hundred listed the farm as owned by H. Bonwill (French and Skinner 1859) (see Figure 3). The 1860 Murderkill Hundred tax assessment identified

this person as George Bonwill's daughter, Haldy (also Haldah). According to the assessment, the land had limited value. Haldy Bonwill was assessed for 70 acres of land, only 15 acres of which were improved. The remaining 55 acres were "in undergrowth and cripple." The land had deteriorated, but the building stock had improved. There was now a one-story frame dwelling, shed kitchen, and stables, all in tolerable repair. The land was in the tenure of Benjamin Everett (Kent County Tax Assessments 1860). Neither Haldy Bonwill nor Everett was listed in the 1860 agricultural census of Murderkill Hundred.

The property had apparently come into Haldy Bonwill's possession following the death of her father, because in 1866, she and George Bonwill's other heirs sold the land to George W. Hallowell for \$1,600. The deed listed the parcel as 65 acres (Kent County Deeds 1866c). Hallowell owned it for only two years before selling to Joseph B. Tracey (Kent County Deeds 1868a), who also owned the nearby gristmill and bark mill (K-02748). He would also soon own K-02749, a house on the west side of what is today McGinnis Pond Road. Tracey is shown as the owner (identified as J.B. Tracy) of all the properties on the 1868 map of Murderkill Hundred (Beers 1868) (see Figure 4). The 1872 Murderkill Hundred Tax Assessment listed a slightly larger amount of land, 73 acres, as associated with K-02750, which included 50 improved and 23 in timber. It was valued at \$20 per acre, so clearly Hallowell and Tracey had improved the land and made it more productive. The only building listed on the property was a "small frame dwelling" in the tenure of David Harman (Kent County Tax Assessments 1872). Once again, the farm could not be located in the agricultural census; neither Tracey nor Harman are noted in the 1870 enumeration (U.S. Census 1870a).

In 1874, Tracey sold the property, listed as "70 acres of upland and cripple, more or less," to Ellen M. Jerome for \$2,000 (Kent County Deeds 1874b:10). Based on the Italianate influences in the architecture of the house, it is speculated that the two-story house currently on the property dates from after this purchase. Whether it was constructed new or grafted onto the one-story frame dwelling referenced in previous assessments is not known. Jerome apparently kept the farm in tenancy, as neither she nor her husband is listed in the 1880 agricultural census of Murderkill Hundred (U.S. Census 1880a).

Ellen Jerome owned the house until 1904, selling the 70 acres for \$3,000 following her husband's death to satisfy his debts (Kent County Deeds 1904b). Following this 30-year period of stable ownership, the house went through a series of owners. It was sold in 1914 (for the large sum of \$7,350), 1921, 1925, 1938, 1939, 1943, and 1949. Nearly all selling parties were not residents of South Murderkill Hundred, indicating that the property was in

tenancy for most of that time. The 1949 purchaser owned the property until 1983, when they sold off the house and 1.1 acres of land to the current owner (Kent County Deeds 1983).

An aerial map from 1937 appears to show the house, a barn, at least two smaller outbuildings, and a large orchard to the north of the farmstead. By 1954, the number of buildings in the farmstead had increased, but the orchard was gone. A 1961 aerial shows the farmhouse surrounded by outbuildings. A barn did not appear to be present, but a long chicken house appears to be on the north edge of the farmstead. The chicken house may be gone by 1968; the image quality is poor. By the early 1990s, the farmstead resembles what is present today: a farmhouse and a few small outbuildings. There were also modern houses along McGinnis Pond Road (Delaware DataMIL 2008).

Evaluation: The Jerome House is evaluated for NRHP eligibility as an agricultural complex from both the Industrialization and Early Urbanization Era (1830-1880±) and the Urbanization and Early Suburbanization Era (1880-1940±). The farmhouse is also evaluated as an example of Italianate style architecture.

An agricultural complex is composed of dwelling(s) and agricultural outbuildings, plus utilitarian and non-utilitarian spaces and features directly associated with these buildings. Also included are agricultural fields, woodlots, marshes, ditches, landscaped lawns, yards, gardens, drives, lanes, paths, and trash and other waste disposal areas and features (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992). An agricultural complex must have the ability to convey information or exhibit trends concerning national, state, or local agricultural development. Primary and secondary source historical documentation is used to substantiate the significance of an agricultural complex. The principal historic components of the complex, the dwelling(s), domestic outbuildings, agricultural outbuildings, and utilitarian and non-utilitarian landscapes must convey strong associations with the farm's period of significance. Changes to active farms are expected and will not preclude NRHP eligibility. However, the major buildings, including dwelling(s) and barn(s) should retain much or all of their historic exterior fabric. In addition, to remain eligible, new construction must not dominate the old.

To be eligible under NRHP Criterion A, an agricultural complex must be significant in association with local, statewide, or national trends in agriculture and must be able to convey those trends. During the period from 1830 to 1880, Murderkill Hundred was a mixed farming area making a transition to orchard and perishable crops. During the 1880 to 1940 period, the area continued to grow a mixture of crops, with an increased emphasis on vegetables and cannery crops. The Jerome House does not convey associations with these historic

trends or time periods. The farmhouse has been altered and only marginally resembles its nineteenth or early twentieth century appearance. Agricultural outbuildings referenced in nineteenth century records, such as a shed, kitchens, and stables, are not present. Also missing are agricultural buildings still present as late as the 1960s, including a barn and chicken house. The agricultural fields are no longer part of the property, and late twentieth and early twenty-first century dwellings and housing developments have encroached on the property, compromising setting. The house is not significant as an agricultural complex under NRHP Criterion A.

To be eligible under NRHP Criterion B, a property must be associated with a person of demonstrable significance; it must be associated with that person's productive life; and it should best reflect that person's historic contributions. There is no evidence in the historical record that any of the owners or occupants were demonstrably important. None are highlighted in Delaware histories or bibliographies. The property is not significant under NRHP Criterion B.

To be eligible under NRHP Criterion C for architecture, the principal historic components of the agricultural complex must be present and must convey strong associations with the farm's period of significance. Buildings and structures should also retain integrity of materials, design, feeling, and workmanship. As noted above, agricultural buildings historically associated with the property have been removed and the house is altered. It is not significant under NRHP Criterion C.

To be eligible under NRHP Criterion D, an agricultural complex must have the ability to yield important information on agricultural history and it must be the principal source of that information. Due to the absence of an intact, nineteenth century farmstead, historic buildings, and farm fields, the resource cannot convey information on agricultural complexes in South Murderkill Hundred not available from other sources.

The Jerome House is also evaluated individually as an example of Italianate style architecture. Italianate style houses, which were inspired by romantic images of Italian villas, were popular from *ca.* 1840-1885 (McAlester and McAlester 2002:211). Italianate style houses are often nearly cubic and generally two or three stories in height. They typically feature low-pitched, hipped roofs with wide overhanging eaves, which are sometimes ornamented with a widow's walk or central cupola. The most common detail associated with Italianate style houses is the use of decorative single or paired cornice brackets under the roof eaves and on porches. Other common Italianate elements include bay windows with inset wooden panels, corner boards, tall narrow windows with curved or molded window

caps, and porches with arched openings and/or turned columns. High-style Italianate dwellings can be found in Kent County, but I-houses or cross-gabled dwellings with some Italianate decorative elements such as a bracketed cornice or porch and turned porch posts are more common.

To be eligible for architecture under NRHP Criterion C, an Italianate style house must retain its original form and massing. It should possess characteristic elements of the style, including a bracketed cornice and tall narrow windows. Additional Italianate elements, such as decorative window hoods, double doors set in an arched surround, hipped roof with cupola, and decorative stoop, add to its significance. Unsympathetic additions, alterations, or renovations that obscure the original scale, massing, or materials compromise integrity and make the resource ineligible for listing.

Resource K-02750 is one of two Italianate style houses in the project area. The two-bay by two-bay house was originally designed as a nearly cubic volume with a hipped roof. It retains the scale and placement of the original wrap-around porch, but all historic decorative detail has been lost. The porch is now supported by replacement posts, and it terminates in an addition at the southeast corner. The addition extends around the rear of the house and joins to a former summer kitchen building, which has been entirely refurbished. Replacement windows, roofing material, and siding further impact integrity. With the exception of the retained cornice brackets, K-02750 conveys little of its historic sense as an Italianate style house. Its original design, with an awkward arrangement of single and paired six-over-six sash windows, was not an exceptional example of the style, and the modern alterations compromise the resource's integrity. K-02750 is not eligible under NRHP Criterion C as an Italianate style house.

The Jerome House is also recommended as not eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion D, the ability to yield information on history not available through other sources. Italianate style architecture and construction techniques from the late nineteenth century are well documented. Thus, it is unlikely that the house will yield additional information on the style.

K-02750 Photographs



House, west (front) and south elevations, facing northeast.



House, south and east (rear) elevations, facing northwest.



House, east (rear) and north elevations, facing southwest.



Garage, east and north elevations, facing southwest.



Shed/Stable, north and west elevations, facing southeast.



Shed, west and south elevations, facing east.

K-02750 Mapping



K-02750 tax parcel on 2002 aerial photograph (Delaware DataMIL 2008).



K-02750 tax parcel on 1937 aerial photograph (Delaware DataMIL 2008).