

EVALUATION OF RECORDED RESOURCES

Limestone Road is situated in the northernmost of three "overlapping vernacular building zones" described by Bernard Herman (1982) that comprise Delaware's vernacular geography. This zone, essentially that part of New Castle County north of the fall line, has as its primary vernacular "source area" the southeastern Pennsylvania counties of Chester and Delaware. This source area in turn lies within the lower Delaware Valley culture region defined by Glassie (1972) that itself acts as the "threshold" to the Mid-Atlantic cultural region encompassing much of northern Delaware, southwestern New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania. What sets off one cultural region from another, and within a region its vernacular building zones, is the persistence of certain building forms over time. As a result, a given set of vernacular forms on a landscape becomes perhaps the clearest visual expression of a given place. In contrast, popular or "academic" architecture expresses the aesthetics of a given time but tends to vary little from one place to another.

Of the sixteen properties inventoried on Limestone Road, nine in particular (McKenna-Klair, Derrickson, Chambers, Samuel Dennison, Ocheltree, Gutherie-Dennison, Hannah Gutherie, George Springer and Springer-Yeatman) display in various ways aspects of form and/or use of materials that have been recognized as characteristic of vernacular architecture in the southeastern

Pennsylvania/northwestern Delaware region. Most directly expressive of place is utilization of the products of the area's geologic history. The vernacular resources of Limestone Road exhibit a strong sense of place through their construction using local fieldstone, which clearly associates them with similar limestone regions of southeastern Pennsylvania, in contrast to the rest of Delaware, where brick and wood are the principal materials of vernacular construction (Eberlein and Cortlandt 1962:3; Herman 1982:179).

Several forms of vernacular building of recognized importance are illustrated on Limestone Road. One is the bank barn, associated with Pennsylvania German settlement but widely adopted by other nationalities in the region. This barn type features at least two levels. The stone-walled ground level (ideally opening to the south for maximum warmth and light) houses the animals. The upper level, accessed from the opposite side, contains the drive or threshing floor flanked by haymows. This upper area is extended as a forebay over the stabling area, and the forebay may be of frame construction, even if the rear and side walls of the barn proper are of stone. Where topography does not allow actual construction into a bank, the same effect is achieved by building an earth or stone ramp to the second level. On Limestone Road, the Yeatman barn (Plate 21) exploits the sloping land, while the Alexander Gutherie (Plate 13) and Hannah Gutherie (Plate 15) barns feature built-up ramps. The Alexander Gutherie barn is also

distinguished by the covered "bridge" that extends the ramp over a drive, into the barn proper.

While the "archetypal" bank barn has but a single, side-gable roof, all three of the Limestone road barns are extended on the front with large hay sheds supported on stone walls or piers, with roofs oriented perpendicular to the main roofs. In the Alexander Gutherie barn, this extension represents an early 20th century modification of an existing structure, while the later Hannah Gutherie barn appears to have included the hayshed extension in its original construction. The Yeatman barn is more problematic, as it apparently was rebuilt to some extent in 1932, but it is likely that the timber-frame hay shed here represents construction subsequent to the original. This cross-gable enlargement of the basic bank barn has been tentatively associated with expansion of dairy herds in northern New Castle County in the late 19th century (Jicha and Cesna, 1986).

The I-house, a type originally described by Fred Kniffen (1965) is distinguished by its two-story height, one-room depth, and length of two or more rooms. In its earliest forms, the I-house had but two rooms on the ground floor and often an informal arrangement of openings on the facade. One room called the "hall," was where most household activities took place; the other, somewhat longer, room was called the parlor and was used for more formal activities. In Delaware and other areas of the Mid-Atlantic region, chimneys were commonly built within each

windowless gable-end wall; and at one end, the chimney was flanked by a narrow, enclosed winding stair to the upper floor. Examples of this form of the I-House on Limestone Road are the McKennan-Klair (Plate 2) and David Chambers (Plate 9) houses. The earliest, brick section of the Klair house appears to have been built with the simple hall-parlor plan, although a kitchen ell was also included in its construction. The Chambers house was also built with two rooms on the first floor, plus a winding stair beside one of the gable-end fireplaces, although this stair was removed in the 1930's.

According to Glassie (1972:35), the introduction of the Georgian house type "into the awareness of builders" had a profound, if gradual, influence on the I-house. The full Georgian type was not one, but two, rooms deep, and its plan was arranged with two rooms on either side of central passage containing an open stair. The strict symmetry of the plan was reflected on the exterior, in five-bay facades with centered entrances, and two windows (one for each room) on each floor at each end wall. The Georgian plan was easily adapted to the I-house, which, however, retained its one-room depth. The "Georgian I" thus consisted of one room on each side of the center stair hall and often, but not always, either one window per floor in each side wall (usually set toward the front) or two per floor symmetrically arranged to give the illusion of a two-room depth. The symmetrical five-bay facade was also adopted (sometimes even when the symmetrical interior plan

was not), as was a variation, the three-bay facade. On Limestone Road, the Georgian I-house, in both plan and exterior arrangement, is excellently represented in the James Ocheltree (Plate 11) and Samuel Dennison (Plate 10) houses. The enduring popularity of the plan is illustrated by its employment in the Gantt House, built c. 1910 (Plate 18). The Robert Dennison house (Plate 12) contains the plan, and both this and the Hannah Gutherie house (Plate 14) represent the full Georgian facade reduced to three bays.

The Aquila Derrickson house (Plate 3) illustrates an interesting variation on the Georgian I type. Its six-bay facade is arranged symmetrically, but presents not one but two entrances located in the two center bays, recalling the "four over four" or "Pennsylvania farm house" (Glassie 1972:42; Noble 1984:46-47). Such a combination of features suggests the freedom with which vernacular builders manipulated forms and details to create often very personal architectural statements.

To provide more living space, ells could be added to existing structures, for example the brick ell on the Hannah Gutherie house. Ells could also be integral to initial construction, as illustrated by the Samuel Dennison, Robert Dennison, and Aquila Derrickson houses (Plates 10, 12, 13) With slight modification, the existence of an ell did not materially alter the essential plan or form of the house, the "main block" of which continued to demonstrate, inside and out, the fundamental characteristics of the I-house type.

The house form described by Glassie as "2/3 Georgian" and by other writers as a modification of the three-room Quaker Plan or German-derived "continental plan" (Nobel 1984:45) is represented in two examples on Limestone Road, the Springer-Yeatman (Plate 20) and George Springer (Plate 19) houses. Both consist of side-gable, nearly square fieldstone masses with three-bay fronts and entrance in one of the end bays. The plan features a stairhall along one gable, and two rooms, one behind the other, the fireplaces of which share a single interior gable-end chimney. Often associated with late 18th and 19th century urban construction, this form in rural areas, such as Limestone Road, was commonly joined to other units at one or both gable ends. The Yeatman house, with its frame side wing, is representative of this linear extension. The stone section of the Springer house was actually an addition to an earlier stone structure, of which nothing remains except one gable-end wall and, perhaps, the foundation, now concealed beneath recent new construction.

If the full Georgian plan could be reduced to two-thirds, so could the Georgianized I house. A classic illustration is the 1818 fieldstone addition to the McKennan-Klair house (Plate 2), which includes the side stair hall and one room on each of the first and second floors. The resulting interior effect is almost that of a properly-symmetrical Georgian I, except that there are two rooms on the west side of the hall, so that neither the plan or the facade is balanced in true Georgian style.

In general the commonality of elements exhibited among these architectural resources of Limestone Road suggest the durability of cultural tradition in the region. The major theme of these vernacular structures is the continued replication of basic structural arrangements over a century or more, with lesser features freely employed according to individual taste or prevailing fashion (Hubka 1986). Even attributes of popular or academic styles, however, are employed in a conservative, consistent manner. One example is the use of molded panels to embellish the reveals and soffits of main entrances, the doors of which are set back to the inner plane of the thick masonry walls (in contrast to window sash, which are invariably set toward the outer wall plane). This feature, probably derived from Georgian precedents, emphasises the importance of the main entrance as the formal, public, access to the house, whereas secondary entrances on sides or rear are seldom if ever treated in the same manner. The influence of the Federal and Greek Revival styles gives further elaboration to main entrances, in the glazed transom panels and sidelights that came to frame the doors within molded surrounds.

Employment of such features, however, represents less the individuality of the builder and more the way in which selected aspects of academic style could become integral components of a regional "grammar" of building. The resulting structures are less statements of individual will than suggestions about the culture in which the individual lived and worked.

The only property on Limestone Road currently listed in the National Register of Historic places is the Mermaid Tavern. Of the sixteen additional properties investigated, due to their location in or in the vicinity of the proposed Route 7 corridor, five (the James Walker, Donald Ross, Miller, Gantt and John Naudain houses) were evaluated as not eligible for the National Register. These buildings lacked significant architectural characteristics and did not represent a theme or themes of importance in the architectural history of the region or state. In three cases (James Ocheltree, George Springer, and David Chambers houses), buildings that might otherwise have architectural significance, were found to lack an appropriate level of integrity due to alterations and additions. Tweed's Tavern, while of historical interest, was also found to lack integrity and thus to be ineligible for the National Register. However, it has been proposed that Phase II archaeological testing at Tweed's Tavern (recommended by Catts et al. 1986: 128, 186) be accompanied by investigations to determine the nature and extent of remnants of the original log structure reportedly present within the existing house. Additions and alterations also resulted in an evaluation that Harmony School would not meet National Register criteria for architectural significance. It has, however, been proposed for a Determination of Eligibility (Catts et al. 1986:217-223) as "representative of the continuity of education in Delaware" (see also Appendix A of this report). The Springer-Yeatman Farmstead has been included in a thematic group National Register

nomination, prepared by Hubert Jicha and Valerie Cesna of the New Castle County Planning Office. The nomination, entitled "Agricultural Buildings and Complexes in Mill Creek Hundred, 1800-1840," has been submitted to the Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and approved by the State's National Register Review Board (See Appendix A).

In consultation with the Delaware Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Delaware Department of Transportation, the following five properties (for which Determination of Eligibility forms are included in Appendix A) were found to meet the standards of integrity and architectural importance necessary for National Register eligibility:

McKenna-Klair Property (CRS #N-1250)

The McKenna-Klair house is significant under National Register Criterion C as an important example of rural domestic architecture in northwestern New Castle County, essentially grounded in folk-vernacular tradition. Use of local fieldstone locates it precisely in this Piedmont region of northwestern Delaware, while the I-house form (both pre-Georgian and Georgianized) places it fully within the English-influenced Delaware Valley architectural tradition. The cellar kitchen with gable-end entry adds another distinctively regional note, that of the Swiss/German bank house. That this feature exists in the same section as the Federal

finishes of the floors above is a note-worthy juxtaposition of fashion and tradition. Contributing to the importance of this property are the stone springhouse (one of the very few historic domestic outbuildings remaining along Limestone Road) and the wood frame outbuildings that remain from late 19th or early 20th century occupation of the McKennan-Klair House.

Aquila Derrickson House (CRS #N-211)

The Aquila Derrickson house is significant under National Register Criterion C as a distinctive and well-preserved example of vernacular domestic architecture in northern New Castle County. Built of local stone and stuccoed, the dwelling at first glance appears to be a straightforward representation of the Georgian I-house, two stories high and one room deep, with a symmetrically-arranged facade. Closer inspection, however, reveals the paired center entrances and the even number of bays, which Glassie (1972) has attributed to the influence of the Georgian style on the traditional three-room "continental" house type. The result is a highly distinctive melding of these regionally-important vernacular forms, proclaiming a certain creativity on the part of its builder in the context of regional building tradition.

Samuel Dennison House (CRS #N-1090)

The Samuel Dennison house is significant under National Register Criterion C as a well-preserved example of 19th century rural

domestic architecture in Mill Creek Hundred and northwestern New Castle County. Built in 1876, the house preserves a specific sense of place in the material of construction and its I-house-with-ell configuration, both of which are features characteristic of 19th century vernacular building in the region. As with much vernacular construction, a sense of time is conveyed chiefly through details, such as machine-turned stair elements, chimneys (though traditionally located inside the gable end) designed for stoves or coal grates, rather than fireplaces, and the Victorianized Greek-Revival style entrance treatment. As at least the second dwelling on the Dennison farm, the house conveys both the prosperity of its builder, Samuel Dennison, and the architectural tradition in which he and his family lived and worked in 19th century northern Delaware.

The Gutherie-Dennison Farmstead (CRS #N-1096)

The Gutherie-Dennison farmstead is significant under National Register Criterion C for its retention of structures embodying distinctive features of types, periods and methods of construction characteristic of the architectural history of rural Mill Creek Hundred and northwestern Delaware. At least three phases of construction, spanning nearly a century, are readily discernable in this complex, which is one of only two active agricultural units remaining on Limestone Road. These phases are represented by the barn, the farmhouse, and the expansion of the barn and the poultry sheds.

Two of these three represent building forms that are almost diagnostic of the Delaware Valley cultural region, and thus, on the local level, with that portion of the region represented by Mill Creek Hundred and Limestone Road. These forms are the Pennsylvania bank barn and the I-house, whose two-story, single pile form, with or without "Georgian" symmetry or other features derived from formal styles, was to a significant degree a living environment of choice in this area during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The third feature, the large hay shed extension of the original barn forebay, represents a distinctive local response to the expansion of dairy herds in Mill Creek Hundred in the late 19th and 20th centuries (personal communication with Bert Jaicha, New Castle Co. Planning Office, 8 April 1986). The house and barn constitute the pivotal elements in this farmstead complex. However, the early 20th century tenant house/garage and the range of former poultry sheds contribute to the significance of the property as illustrations of the continued agricultural function of the farmstead over time.

Hannah Guthrie Farmstead (CRS #N-9580)

The Hannah Guthrie farmstead is significant under National Register Criterion C for its ability to portray forms of construction important in the architectural history of the area. The dwelling is a clear example of I-house construction, a form that dominates the vernacular building tradition of the Delaware Valley culture region in which it is located, here expressed in

the stuccoed fieldstone characteristic of many surviving 18th and 19th century houses in northern New Castle County. The associated bank barn is also characteristic of agricultural architecture in northern Delaware, both in its basic form and in the enlarged stabling area and hay shed associated with the expansion of dairying in the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Guthrie complex of farmhouse, barn, late nineteenth century stable/garage and other outbuildings, is also one of only two properties that still conveys, through retention and continued use of its structures, the agricultural character and practices that once dominated life and work along Limestone Road.