

WILLIAM HOUSE FARM
East side of West Wilson Road,
approximately 0.7 mile north of
Breakneck Road
Flintstone vicinity
Allegany County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1081

HABS
MD
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut House
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM HOUSE FARM HABS No. MD-1081

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Location: East side of West Wilson Road, approximately 0.7 mile north of Breakneck Road, Flintstone vicinity, Allegany County, Maryland

USGS Flintstone, Md.-Pa. Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates
18.705010.4395330

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Farmers Home Administration
Peter J. Wesp, District Director
92 Thomas Johnson Drive, Suite 220
Frederick, Maryland 21702

Present Occupant: George E. Fellows, Jr.
P. O. Box 6
Rt. 2, Box 65, West Wilson Road
Flintstone, Maryland 21530

Significance: The William House Farm is significant as a contributing resource in the Breakneck Road Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The complex is typical of the mixed farming carried on in the mountainous terrain of eastern Allegany County from the settlement period in the late eighteenth century well into the twentieth century. It comprises a dwelling consisting of a ca. 1837 one-and-one-half-story, hall-parlor house of V-notched log construction, enlarged in the late 19th century by a two-story frame addition; a timber-frame bank barn; a wash house of vertical-plank construction; several frame outbuildings, including a poultry house, animal shed, privy, and storage/equipment shed; and a log structure, probably originally part of a wagon shed or small barn, most recently used as a sheepfold.

A. Description:

The House Farm focuses on a valley floor at approximately 1050 feet elevation, enclosed by hills rising steeply to 1200 feet. The dwelling house and associated outbuildings are sited on a narrow hillside terrace at about 1100', facing south-southeast across the valley. A bank barn and storage/equipment shed are located on the valley floor. A narrow, deeply-cut farm lane enters from the northwest; the farm complex is located approximately one-half mile off West Wilson Road. Much of the property remains wooded. Cleared areas offer pasturage. A few fruit trees remain as evidence of a more extensive orchard operation. A small stream borders the property on the west; the bottom lands are cleared, and were likely cultivated. The farm is typical of those of the area and period in its mixed use and variety of topographical features.

The site appears to retain much of its original plan; changes over time have been limited to the replacement of outmoded or worn-out structures and changes in planting associated with changing farm priorities. The extant structures on the property are described below. With the exception of the house, whose original section dates to the 1830s, the log sheepfold, which appears to be part of an early structure, and the wash house, which appears to have been built prior to the Civil War, the remaining structures on the property appear to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The only structure known to have been removed in recent years was a deteriorated wagon shed which was located on the west side of the lane, opposite the house. It is likely that the farm accommodated other functional structures at various times in the past. One such structure, whose existence (if not its location) may be inferred from documentary evidence, is a sawmill, probably relatively small and powered by steam; the inventory of Allen House, taken in 1849, refers to an "old mill saw" and a "lot of scantling [i. e., dimension lumber] in the powerhouse," suggesting that House operated a steam-powered sawmill on the property in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The dwelling house on the property comprises a one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed building constructed of logs with V-notched corner timbering upon a raised basement of uncoursed rubble. The 22'-7" by 20'-4" building originally contained two rooms on the first floor, organized in the traditional hall-parlor plan. A one-story frame shed outshut, 9'-6" deep across the rear of the log house appears to have been part of the original construction; later in the 19th century, perhaps ca. 1850, a low extension was added across part of the rear of the outshut, utilizing the vertical plank construction technique which was employed in the Western Maryland region during the period. In this method, stout planks run from sill to plate without additional framing such as corner posts. Around 1880, the log house was enlarged by the construction of a two-story frame addition against the west gable end. This addition incorporates a single room on the first floor and two chambers above. This building campaign involved other alterations to the log house, including the removal of a large exterior chimney from the east end, replacement of windows with two-over-two light, double-hung sash, and the creation of a gabled dormer on the south slope of the roof. The entire structure was sheathed in novelty siding, and a broad porch was constructed, spanning the south facade.

A mid-nineteenth-century wash house is located approximately twenty feet east of the rear outshut of the dwelling; the small level area between the two buildings apparently was treated as a domestic yard. The wash house is rectangular in form, measuring 10'-3" wide by 13'-9" deep; the entrance is located in the west gable end, and a six-light sliding casement window is centered in each of the longitudinal walls. The wash house exhibits vertical-plank construction without internal framing. The sill, plate, and an intermediate horizontal rail are nailed to the planks; there are no corner posts. The roof is framed with common rafters mitered to a ridge board; 1" x 6" nailers spaced at two-inch intervals support corrugated metal sheathing. There is a terracotta stove flue in the east end. The structure was most recently used as a chicken house.

A row of outbuildings extends to the east, behind the wash house; these include a shed-roofed poultry house measuring 24'-9" x 10'-10", a 6'-3" x 4'-5" privy (practically collapsed), and an animal shed, 11'-5" x 9'-6". These structures are aligned along a narrow hillside terrace. They are cheaply constructed primarily from scavenged lumber, resting on short earthfast posts, and are of recent construction, possibly as late as the second quarter of the twentieth century. One of the sills of the privy retains hardware which suggests that the structure may have been intended to be movable, with sledge runners allowing it to be relocated; an alternative interpretation is that the hardware remains from a previous use of this particular timber element.

Southeast of the house and outbuildings is a three-bay bank barn of timber frame construction on a rubble stone foundation; framing members are mortised and pegged in the traditional manner, but were produced with a circular saw rather than hewn, suggesting a relatively recent construction date, probably in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The topography of the site dictates the location of the barn entrance on the uphill east side, served by an earthen ramp.

A frame storage or equipment shed with an attached corncrib is located to the west of the barn; this structure appears to date from the second quarter of the twentieth century. It measures 14'-8" wide by 18'-10" deep, with an entrance in the east gable end; a 4'-10" wide corncrib is attached along the south side. The structure is sided with circular-sawn planks, applied vertically. The framing employs apparently-reused hewn timbers for the sill, plate, and corner posts at the east end; intermediate posts, and the corner posts at the west end, are circular sawn 2" x 6" lumber. The sill rests on wooden piers; it is butt-jointed at the corners. The corners of the plate are half-lapped and secured with wire nails. The roof is framed with pole rafters mitered to a ridge board. The rafter feet are spiked to the plate with large wire nails; 1" x 2" nailers at ten- to twelve-inch intervals support corrugated metal roof sheathing. There is evidence that a shed approximately thirteen feet wide formerly spanned the north side

of this structure.

A wagon shed formerly stood on the west side of the lane, opposite the house.

Also on the property is a V-notched log structure, 24'-4" square, located about 100 yards northwest of the house; this structure appears to incorporate the upper walls and gable roof of a small barn or wagon shed, salvaged (and most likely relocated) for use as a sheepfold.

B. Historical Information:

The National Register nomination documentation for the Breakneck Road Historic District characterizes the area as a "pioneer farming enclave." Situated in a fertile valley between the ridges of Martin Mountain and Warrior Ridge, the area was initially settled in the last quarter of the eighteenth century by settlers moving westward from the area around Frederick, Maryland. The pioneer families established farmsteads and carried out a variety of agricultural pursuits; the ownership and use of these properties generally remained stable through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

The nucleus of the property upon which the complex stands was patented to William House, progenitor of the House family, by the State of Maryland in the late eighteenth century. Through additional land purchases by House and his descendants, the farm achieved its present extent by the mid nineteenth century, and remained in the possession of the House family until 1970.

According to local tradition, William House constructed the log portion of the dwelling house shortly after he acquired the property; architectural evidence, however, suggests that the structure was built in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, probably after Enoch House inherited the property in 1837.

As was typical of the family farms in the region, the House operation spanned a broad range of agricultural pursuits. The estate inventories of Enoch and Allen House, son and grandson of William, who worked the farm in the second quarter of the

nineteenth century, reflect a wide variety of crops and activities: cultivating grain crops, including white and red wheat, corn, and rye; raising cattle, horses, mules, hogs, and sheep; blacksmithing; and possibly also wheelwrighting and sawmilling.

Agricultural prosperity increased in the mid nineteenth century, fueling the expansion and redevelopment of farms in the area; the wash house and the extension of the rear outshut of the dwelling exhibit vertical-plank construction associated with this period in the region. Another period of agricultural growth followed the end of the Civil War; this phase of development is reflected in the frame addition and remodeling of the dwelling house, and in the construction of the bank barn.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources

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2. Secondary and published sources

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Stegmaier, Harry, Jr., et al. Allegany County - A History. Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Company, 1976.

Thomas, James W., and T. J. C. Williams. History of Allegany County, Maryland. 2 vols. Orig. pub. n. p., 1923; rpt. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1969.

B. Interviews: Interviews were conducted with Mr. George E. Fellows, Jr., occupant of the property since 1970, at his home on November 3 and 8, 1993.

C. Supplementary Information: A sketch site plan is appended to this report.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the Farmers Home Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture as a condition of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The documentation was undertaken by Peter E. Kurtze, with field assistance from Michael Seibert. The photography was prepared by J. Brough Schamp. The project was completed during the months of October and November, 1993.