

BARNES ESTATE  
South side of U.S. Route 40 between  
Fairchance and Buttermilk Roads  
Hopwood  
Fayette County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5499

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P  
86-HOP  
2-

~~PHOTOGRAPHS~~

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HABS  
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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**BARNES ESTATE**

**HABS No. PA-5499**

*Location:* South side of U.S. Route 40 between Fairchance and Buttermilk roads, Hopwood, Fayette County, Pennsylvania

*Present Owner:* Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

*Present Use:* Vacant

*Statement of Significance:* The generator house and storage building are contributing resources of the Barnes Estate, a property recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation. Dating from 1906, the Barnes Estate was built as the summer home of James R. Barnes (1860-1940), a major entrepreneur in the local coal industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The generator house and storage building, each dating from the early twentieth century, are notable expressions of English Colonial Revival design.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Barnes Estate is situated on a 24-acre parcel along the south side of U.S. Route 40 at the south edge of Hopwood. The tract is irregularly bisected southeast to northwest by Lick Run, a first order stream. Northeast of the stream are a two story wood framed residence, a discontinuous coursed rubble wall, a pond, the coursed rubble foundation of a gazebo, and the site of a springhouse. Southwest of the stream are a generator house, a storage building, and the sites of a barn, a carriage house, a residence, a caretaker's cottage, and a log cabin. Vehicular access to the estate is gained via a y-shaped carriage drive, each fork of which begins at a gate in the stone wall, crosses the front lawn of the residence, and passes beneath one of two porte-cocheres, adjoining either side of the residence. The forks join at the rear of the residence and extend southwestward across Lick Run on a concrete vehicular bridge. Immediately southwest of the bridge the carriage drive intersects a service road which bisects the parcel. The stream is also crossed by two footbridges.

The Barnes Estate was established by James F. Barnes, on land purchased by his wife, Martha Belle (Frazee) Barnes in 1905 and 1906. He was the son of Staten Barnes, a local coal operator. Known as "Boomer," the younger Barnes started his career as a miner. This position enabled him to learn the coal business and work his way to the top. By 1915, "Boomer" Barnes was a millionaire. However, in that year, he and others became involved with banker J. V. Thompson and suffered a great financial loss with the failure of Thompson's First National Bank of Uniontown. Since the Barnes Estate was owned by Martha, rather than "Boomer," it remained within the family until the 1940s. During the late 1940s, a nightclub was operated on the estate. Since the 1950s the function of the estate has been exclusively residential.

James F. "Boomer" Barnes was born on 9 July 1860. His formal education consisted of several years in Uniontown's public schools, "supplemented by self-study, travel and broad experience" (Moore 1913: 27). He left school to work with his father in the mines of Hopwood. While coal mining had occurred in this area as early as the eighteenth century, and coke production as early as the 1830s, the industry expanded appreciably after the Civil War (Sheppard 1947: 33). By the late nineteenth century, the bituminous coal of the Early Pennsylvanian Connelville and Pittsburgh formations, which occur in southwestern Pennsylvania, were recognized as particularly suited to the manufacture of coke (Puglio 1983: 35). With the development of a domestic iron and steel industry centered on Pittsburgh, local coke became extremely important as a fuel source.

A major proponent of these developments was Josiah Vankirk Thompson. Unlike Barnes, who began his involvement with coal as a miner, Thompson became involved with the financial end of the business. After graduating from college, he went to work for his father as a teller at the First National Bank of Uniontown. He ascended to the presidency in 1889 upon his father's death. Thompson's management of the bank and his land dealings were calculated not only to acquire great personal wealth, but to spread the wealth around the community. Consequently, Thompson is fondly remembered in the local community. Many local farmers realized more income from the sale of their coal rights to Thompson than they could have secured in a lifetime of farming their land (Barbara Peterson, personal communication). Thompson was noted for loaning money based on his personal assessment of an applicant's character and prided himself on his judgment (Sheppard 1947). So widely was he trusted in the community that few would hesitate to sell him their mining rights. By 1913, Thompson was "the largest individual owner of coking coal lands in the United States" (Moore 1913: 21).

Thompson brought a number of local coal operators in with him, most of whom became wealthy. In 1910, Uniontown boasted 13 millionaires, most of whom were business associates of J. V. Thompson. An additional 91 people had acquired assets in excess of \$100,000 (Sheppard 1947: 75). Among the millionaires was James R. Barnes. Barnes played a particularly important role for Thompson, handling a considerable amount of his business in New York financial circles:

There was a coal operator in Uniontown named James Barnes who often worked with [Thompson] when a big coal sale was to be managed. He could supply the finesse that J. V. lacked, and, what was particularly important, he knew how to handle the big New York capitalists. Part of his technique was to establish fine quarters in the Waldorf and entertain on a magnificent scale. Mr. Thompson would complain that the wining and dining cost too much and wasn't necessary, but Barnes undeniably produced results, so he let him have his way. (Sheppard 1947: 68-69)

As one whose business required high living, it is hardly surprising that Barnes determined to enjoy the fruits of his labor to the fullest in his home life. Not content to own a fine house in Uniontown, he and his wife decided to build a summer home in Hopwood, just south of Uniontown. They chose to build on a piece of land that Martha Barnes had purchased from John and Margaret Gump in March 1905 (Fayette County Deeds 239: 160-162). Martha had paid \$6,000 for two lots. The lot on which the residence was built measured 58 acres, 151 perches, and was situated on both sides of the National Pike in Hopwood. There is no mention in the deed of any buildings on the property, although tax records for 1904 and 1905 indicate that the Gumps and their predecessors, Joseph and Mary Wolf, were taxed for a house as well as the land (Fayette County Taxes, South Union Township, 1904: 83; 1905: 32). Tax records for 1906 refer to a "new house & stables" (Fayette County Taxes, South Union Township 1906: 6). Although Barnes is reported to have spent \$1,000,000 on the estate's construction (Swetnam and Smith 1976: 135), the tax valuation was only \$50,000. In 1907, tax records mention a "Stables & Electric Plant," and note "new stables," as well as the presence of ten horses and six cattle (Fayette County Taxes, South Union Township 1907: 6). Except for unspecified stables and the residence, no other buildings are mentioned in the tax records. A photograph of the estate, reportedly taken shortly after construction, shows a number of buildings, including the residence, springhouse, gazebo, barn, and carriage house (Gates 1979: 147). However, neither the generator house nor the storage building is shown in this view.

Construction of the Barnes Estate may have represented an attempt to compete with, or at least follow the example of, the J. V. Thompsons, who were the wealthiest family among Uniontown's elite. A relevant anecdote is told regarding a dinner party which James and Martha Barnes attended at Oak Hill, Thompson's estate. Martha is said to have so admired the china that she inquired where the Thompsons had purchased it. She then called the store in Pittsburgh and insisted on having an identical set made up for herself. Some time later, the set arrived, appearing exactly as that of the Thompsons, down to the monogram, which read "JVT," for Josiah Vankirk Thompson (Barbara Peterson, personal communication). Oak Hill, built in 1904 shortly before the Barnes Estate, included both a swimming pool and a generator (Laurel Highlands High School 1983: 21). It was probably Thompson's example that led Barnes to include these features on his estate.

Some glimpses of life at the Barnes Estate, which became known as "Martha Place," after its owner, may be gleaned from articles in a local monthly newspaper, the *Hopwood Chronicle*. The October 1907 issue reported that "Miss Estella F. Barnes [a daughter] returned home from the

Sewickley horse show of Sept. 12, 13 and 14th, bringing three blue ribbons as first prizes and a number of others for minor positions. Miss Barnes is to be congratulated on her success in this her first trial. Mr. Barnes has at the present time horses that will be heard from wherever they go" (*Hopwood Chronicle*, October 1907). The November 1907 issue reported that "J.R. Barnes has sent some of his fine driving horses to the horse show in Pittsburg" (*Hopwood Chronicle*, November 1907). This interest in horses is consistent with information from other sources. Tax records indicate that the estate was home to between three and 21 horses during any given year, as well as several dogs and some cattle (Fayette County Taxes, South Union Township 1909:6; 1916:8). Barnes's munificence extended across the animal kingdom to embrace not only the taxable horses, cattle and Collie dogs, but also ducks, weasels, and foxes (Dillon 1975). For the ducks, he built a special house on the estate.

The seasonal occupation of the estate is also evident from newspaper accounts. The *Hopwood Chronicle* for January 1908 informed its readers that "James R. Barnes and family have moved from their summer house at this place [Hopwood] to Uniontown" (*Hopwood Chronicle*, January 1908). If December seems an odd time to remove from summer quarters, it must be remembered that the residence and townhouse were less than three miles apart, a fact which is relevant to the role of the estate as a statement of Barnes's arrival in society. Hopwood is not far enough south of Uniontown to afford differences in climate. Therefore, ownership of both summer and winter houses appears to represent Barnes's interpretation of the lifeways of the very wealthy.

In 1914, J. V. Thompson incurred financial difficulty. Although his bank had paid an astounding 700 percent dividend in that year, and the First National had more than enough assets to cover the deposits, Thompson found it impossible to convert bank assets to cash, except on the most unfavorable terms. A major source of Thompson's difficulty was his poor relationship with Henry Clay Frick, who ran U.S. Steel. Frick was able to use his influence to prevent Thompson from acquiring the capital he needed to borrow his way out of the crisis. Many potential lenders held off, hoping to buy Thompson's assets at bargain rates after he failed (Sheppard 1947: 78-97). Local investors rallied behind Thompson, and when an impasse was reached in January 1915, eight of them, including Barnes, swiftly followed Thompson into bankruptcy. Barnes was reportedly worth \$5,000,000 at the time (Dillon 1975). Fortunately, his wife possessed considerable assets of her own, including the family estate. As a result, although Barnes lost much of his wealth, he did not finish his life in poverty. In fact, although tax records indicate fewer horses on the property after 1915, the effect on the family was probably not as disastrous as it might seem. Agriculture had been one of the estate's uses since its purchase (Calendar Committee 1990), and with his coal lands gone, Barnes had more time and energy to devote to it. He was listed in the 1925 directory as a farmer (Polk 1925: 926).

After Barnes's bankruptcy, taxes on the estate were listed under Martha B. Barnes instead of James F. Barnes (Fayette County Taxes, South Union Township 1916: 8). In addition to this nominal change, there was no doubt constant financial pressure on the Barneses, as indicated by the record of mortgages on the property. The first indication of this pressure appeared in the record on 30 July 1915, shortly after the bankruptcy. At this time Martha and James borrowed \$25,000 from the Braddock Trust Company. Buildings on the property were listed as "a large frame dwelling, stable, garage, power house and other out-buildings" (Fayette County Mortgages 111: 323-328). The money was due in three years, but was apparently not paid in full, as the Braddock Trust Company assigned the mortgage to Henry Whyel and John Husband for \$25,000 on 8 October 1918 (Fayette County Assignment of Mortgages 9: 250-251). Two days later, the Barneses remortgaged with Whyel and Husband for \$50,000, presumably as an alternative to foreclosure (Fayette County Mortgages 130: 266-270).

This encumbrance on the property was satisfied on 14 July 1930. On the same day, Martha B. Barnes, then a widow, mortgaged the property to Whyel and Irene Husband for \$10,000 (Fayette County Mortgages 165: 233-4). In 1931, Husband sold her half of the loan to Whyel for \$5,000. This mortgage was satisfied on 26 May 1936. On the previous day, Martha had secured a second mortgage on the property for \$14,000 from W. W. Parshall, A. A. Thompson, and R. J. Arnett, Trustees of the "Fitzgerald Estate." The mortgage agreement is quite specific about the buildings on the property, to wit:

a large modern three-story frame and shingle house containing 20 rooms, 5 baths, 2 toilets, a furnace room, laundry room and three large basement rooms, a 4-car brick garage, a brick building similar to the garage, used as a workshop, a large two-story frame barn with brick floor, a large frame carriage house with brick floor and capacity for fourteen carriages, a four-story pony and cow stable containing twelve stalls and five rooms, including a three-room apartment and bath, the said barn, carriage house, stable, and apartment being equipped for steam heat, a stone milk house with running water, a log cabin with basement used as a tenant house, a brick chicken house approximately 20 by 80 feet, a pump house and well, a large cement pool 80 by 180 feet, a frame refreshment stand, and a frame basket house, all of said buildings being equipped with electricity and modern heating plants, and on the Southeastern corner of said land, a Barbecue Stand. (Fayette County Mortgages 218:120-121)

"A brick building similar to the garage" may be a reference to the generator house, while "a 4-car brick garage" may be a reference, albeit inaccurate, to the storage building. Thus this mortgage agreement appears to indicate that both the generator house and the storage building were present in 1936. This conjecture is supported by stylistic evidence. Both buildings, ornamented in English Colonial Revival detailing, are typical expressions of early twentieth century residential design.

The 1936 mortgage was still outstanding in August 1942, when Martha Barnes deeded the property to her son-in-law, William A. McHugh, a Uniontown physician (Fayette County Deeds 581: 82-85). An agreement of even date stipulated that the deed was to establish the estate's ownership as a trust for her three living daughters and her four granddaughters by McHugh and his late wife Gwendolyn (nee Barnes) (Fayette County Agreements 94: 101-103). The agreement directed McHugh to give a mortgage to the Second National Bank of Uniontown and to pay the 1936 mortgage, as well as \$3,000 in back taxes. This mortgage was given by the end of the month and satisfied in November 1947 (Fayette County Mortgages 250:405-411).

In 1946 Barnes and McHugh sold the estate to Stephen and Olive Balaban of Uniontown. At that time the property consisted of 24.1428 acres, and contained

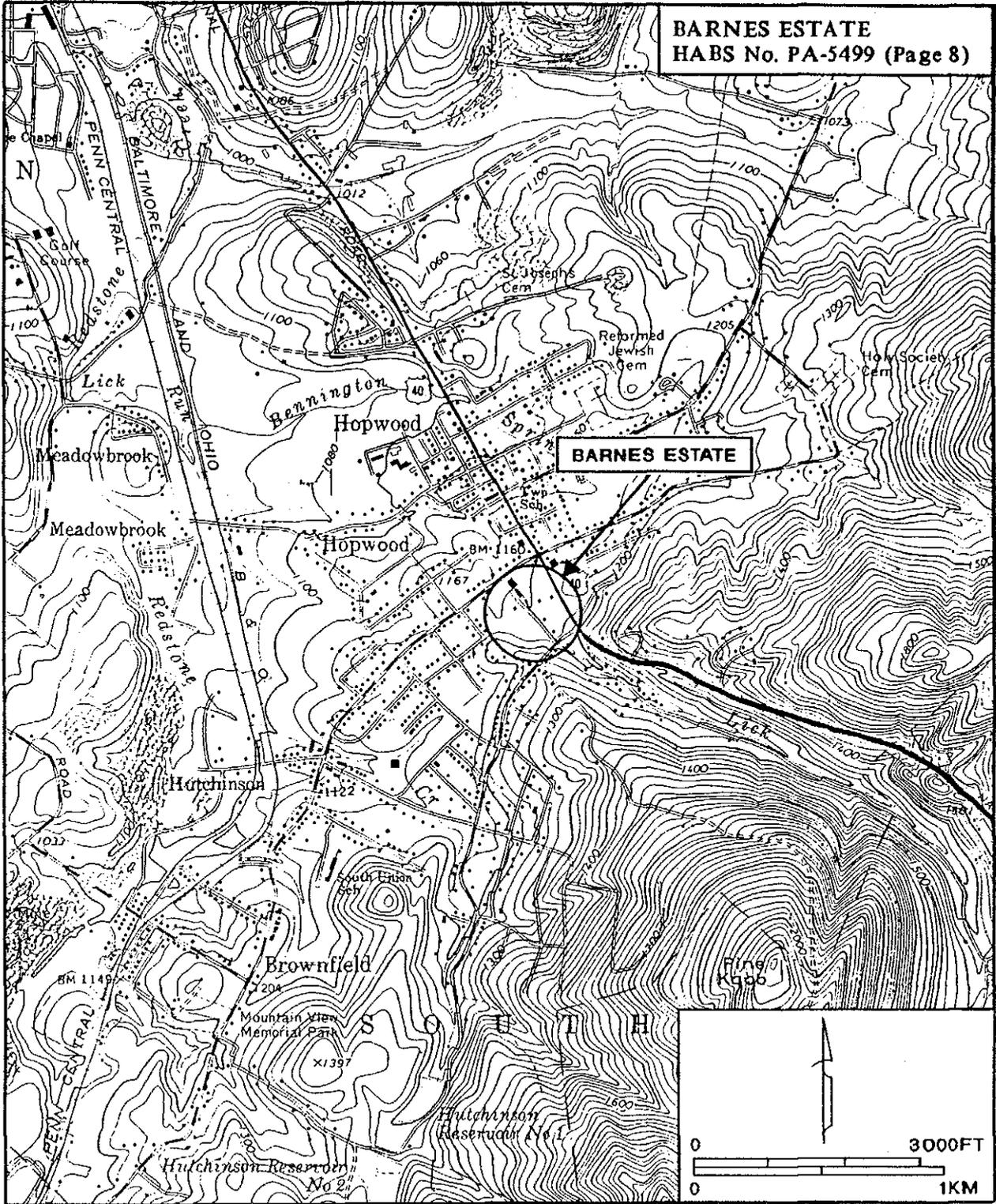
a large three-story frame and shingle dwelling house, containing twenty rooms, a four-car brick garage, a large two story frame barn, a large carriage house, a cow stable, a brick chicken house, a brick spring house, a brick power house, a log cabin, and other buildings. (Fayette County Deeds 628:457)

The Balabans apparently used part of the estate as a nightclub. One source says that the house served this function (Laurel Highlands High School 1983:22), while another source attributed the introduction of a concrete floor in the barn to nightclub use (Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc. 1988:35). This use ended in 1950, when the Balabans sold the property to Joseph and Alberta Bendik of Uniontown (Fayette County Deeds 714:155-157).

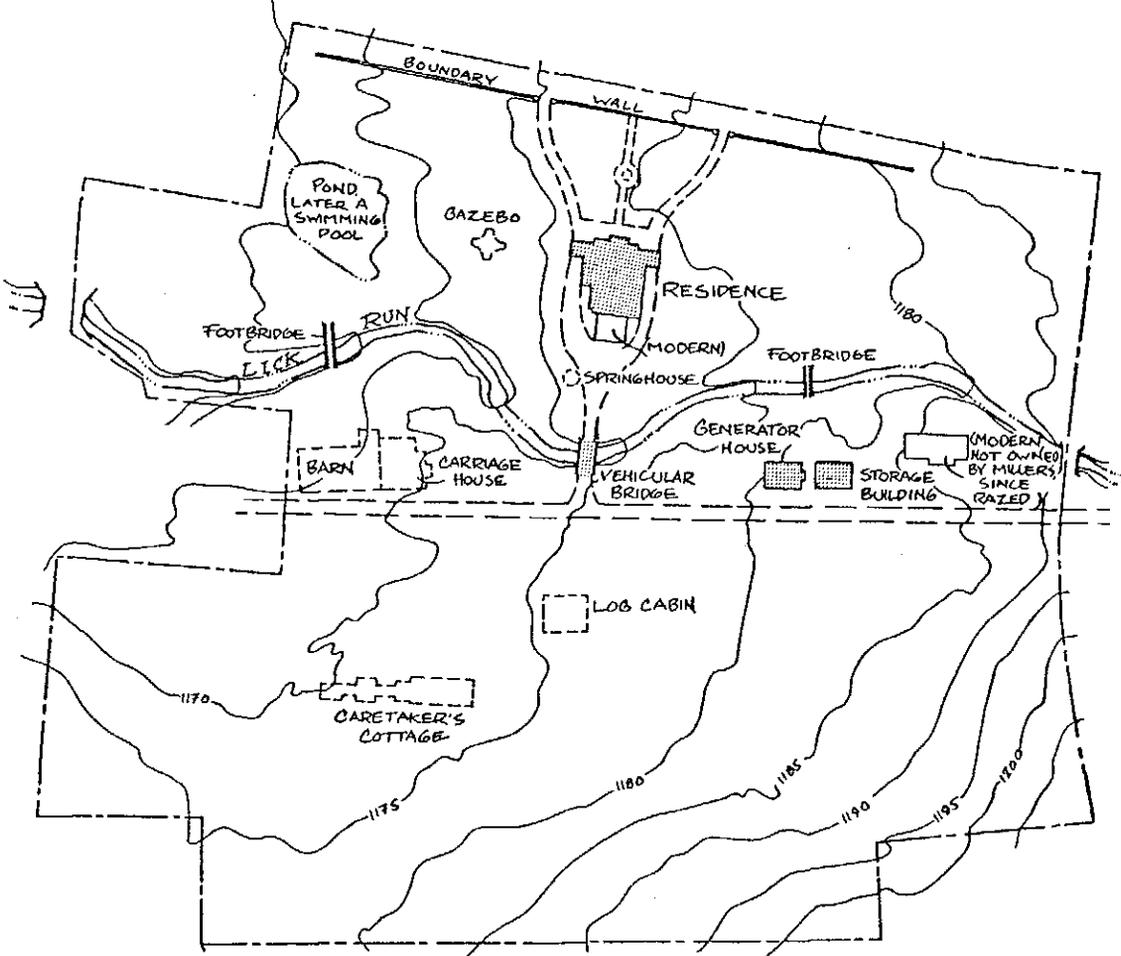
Joseph Bendik died in 1966, leaving Alberta as the sole owner. After her death, the Orphans Court granted the estate to her sole heir, Arthur Bendik, on 4 January 1973 (Fayette County Deeds 1139:330-338). During Arthur Bendik's ownership, the barn and log cabin burned (Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc. 1988:35). As recently as 1975, the duck house was extant on a neighboring property (Dillon 1975). Conversion of the residence to apartments appears to have occurred during the Bendik period of ownership (Laurel Highlands High School 1983:22). On 29 July 1983, Bendik sold a portion of the estate, including 4.967 acres, to Alan and Rick Miller, who presently own the residence. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has acquired the generator house and storage building as part of the right-of-way of the proposed Uniontown Bypass.

**BRIEF OF TITLE: BARNES ESTATE**  
South Union Township  
Fayette County, Pennsylvania

25 April 1890 Deeds 94: 11	Diocletian and Mary A. Shipley, Uniontown to Joseph Wolf, Braddock, Allegheny County \$6,500, 1 lot, 58 acres, 151 perches.
1 August 1901 Deeds 228: 248	Joseph and Mary Wolf, Swissvale, Allegheny County to John F. Gump, Georges Township, Fayette County \$8,000, lot described above.
24 March 1905 Deeds 239: 160	John F. and Margaret Gump, Georges Township to Martha B. Barnes, Uniontown Borough \$6,000, two lots, including lot described above.
3 August 1942 Deeds 581: 82	Martha B. Barnes, Widow, Uniontown to William A. McHugh, Jr., Uniontown \$1, six lots, including lot described above.
30 August 1946 Deeds 628: 457	William A. McHugh, Jr., and Martha B. Barnes, Uniontown to Stephen E. and Olive R. Balaban, Uniontown \$1, one lot, 24.1428 acres, part of lot described above.
24 November 1950 Deeds 714: 155	Stephen E. and Olive R. Balaban, Uniontown to Joseph J. and Alberta Bendik, Uniontown \$1, one lot, 24.1428 acres.
4 January 1973 Deeds 1139: 330	Estate of Alberta Bendik, deceased to Arthur J. Bendik, sole heir-at-law \$269,750 total value, four lots, including lot described above.
29 July 1983 Deeds 1324: 150	Arthur J. Bendik, Uniontown to Alan and Rick Miller, Wharton and South Union townships \$90,000, one lot, described above.

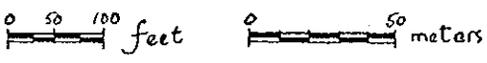


**Property Location**  
**USGS 7.5 Minute Series**  
**Uniontown and Brownfield, PA Quadrangles**  
**Photorevised 1973**



Key

- = Extant historic structure
- = Non-extant historic structure



Site Plan

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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- 1988 Historic Structures Inventory Report: The Barnes Estate, Uniontown Bypass (S.R. 0040, L.R. 1058, Section A04) Fayette County, Pennsylvania, E.R. No. 88-0744-051. Report submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

**Fayette County Documents, Fayette County Courthouse, Uniontown, Pennsylvania:**

Fayette County Agreements, Volume 94.

Fayette County Assignments of Mortgages, Volume 9.

Fayette County Deeds, Volumes 94, 228, 239, 581, 628, 714, 1134, 1324.

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**Institutions and Individuals**

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Open stacks, Uniontown Public Library, Uniontown, Pennsylvania; 5 December 1990.

Pennsylvania Room, Uniontown Public Library, Uniontown, Pennsylvania; 3 and 4 December 1990.

Mr. Mickey Gallis, member of the Uniontown Area Historical Society; 4 December 1990.

Ms. Barbara Peterson, librarian of the Pennsylvania Room, Uniontown Public Library; 3 and 4 December 1990.

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

This documentation was undertaken in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement among the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration as a mitigative measure prior to demolition of a portion of the Barnes Estate. The generator house and the storage building are located within the right-of-way of the proposed Uniontown Bypass (S.R. 6040, Section A04).

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Date: 1990-1991