WALKER FARMSTEAD, FARMHOUSE
West side of U.S. Route 522 at intersection
with T-373 .3 mile south of Shirleysburg
boroughline
Shirleysburg vicinity
Huntingdon County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6086-A

HABS
PA
31-SHIR.V,
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HABS
PA
31-SHIR.V,
1A-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WALKER FARMSTEAD, FARMHOUSE HABS No. PA-6086-A

Location: West side of U.S. Route 522 at intersection with T-373, .3 mile south of Shirleysburg borough line, Shirleysburg vicinity, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania

USGS Butler Knob, Pennsylvania Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.4463560.255620

Present Owner and Occupant: Dean E. and Donna J. Varner
R.R. #1, Box 25
Shirleysburg, Pennsylvania 17260

Present Use: Single-family residence

Significance: Located in rural Shirley Township, Huntingdon County, the Walker Farmstead is an outstanding example of an intact late nineteenth century agricultural complex, consisting of a house, two barns, a drive-in corn crib, a summer kitchen, and a smokehouse. The house and other structures retain exceptional architectural and visual integrity with few modern alterations. They provide important information concerning historic rural land-use patterns and vernacular building techniques in this part of south-central Pennsylvania. The farmstead contributes to an intact rural historic landscape which also includes the East Broad Top Railroad and the borough of Shirleysburg.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1883. The property is known to have contained only an orchard when it was acquired by Winfield A. Walker in 1883, and the style of the house suggests that it probably was built soon afterward.

2. Architect: None. The farmhouse is a vernacular structure representing general late nineteenth century construction techniques.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain-of-title to the land on which the farmhouse and other structures stand. References are to records in the Register and Recorder's Office, Huntingdon County Courthouse, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

   1883 Deed, 26 March 1883, recorded in Volume P-3, page 503.
   Heirs of William A. Fraker to Winfield A. Walker.

   1927 Partition of Estate of Winfield A. Walker, recorded in Orphans Court Docket Y, page 279. To Hayes Walker.

   1953 Deed, 21 April 1953, recorded in Volume G-9, page 315.
   Hayes and Mabel C. Walker to Mabel C. Walker.

   1960 Deed, 20 December 1960, recorded in Volume 47, page 275.
   Mabel C. Walker (nka Mabel C. Dobbins) and Wiley C. Dobbins to Mabel C. and Wiley C. Dobbins.

   1991 Deed, 24 June 1991, recorded in Volume 279, page 484.
   Mabel C. Dobbins to Dean Eugene Varner.

   1994 Deed, 30 September 1994, recorded in Volume 364, page 622.
   Dean E. Varner to Dean E. and Donna J. Varner.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.

5. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings have been located. Except for a few minor changes, the house retains its original form.

6. Alterations and additions: Physical evidence suggests that the first notable alterations to the house were made in the 1920s, possibly by Hayes Walker after he inherited the

property in 1927. The installation of internal plumbing at that time may have led to a general remodeling of the kitchen and conversion of an upstairs bedroom into a bathroom. A small three-light window characteristic of the 1920s was installed above the kitchen sink. An internal chimney in the rear ell was removed. The house may have been wired for electricity at the same time, as indicated by the use of metal conduit and knob-and-tube wiring. An early twentieth century photograph reveals that the exterior of the house looked almost exactly the same as it does today, except that all of the windows had shutters at that time.

Other alterations were made during the period of Wiley and Mabel Dobbins' ownership, between 1950 and 1991. At some point during this period, the house's parlor was divided into two smaller rooms and a new external brick chimney in the rear ell was constructed.

A number of cosmetic changes were made after the Varners acquired the farmstead in 1991. The most significant alterations were the installation of modern synthetic paneling and flooring in the kitchen, the remodeling of the southwest bedroom with new wallpaper and acoustic ceiling tile, and the addition of a new wood-fired furnace outside the house. Despite these alterations, most rooms remain remarkably unchanged from their early twentieth century appearance.

B. Historical Context:

As one of the first parts of Huntingdon County to be settled, Shirley Township has a long and colorful history. By 1753, George Croghan had established a trading post at "Aughwick", on the present site of Shirleysburg. As Indian hostility intensified, Croghan's crude stockade--strengthened by the proprietary government and named Fort Shirley--served as one of a chain of forts established to protect the frontier. Although Fort Shirley was never attacked, it did serve as the staging area for Colonel John Armstrong's military expeditions of 1756 and 1763. Although Croghan apparently did not live at Fort Shirley after 1756, he continued to claim the land, and a tract of 424 acres called "Oldtown" was surveyed for him in 1762. It was not until the close of the Revolutionary War, when the threat of Indian attack had been eliminated permanently, that settlers began to move into the Aughwick Creek valley in significant numbers.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Shirley Township remained an area of scattered farms with little industrial development. The only commercial center was the village of Shirleysburg, which supported several taverns and stores, a pottery, a distillery, and a tannery, as well as several blacksmiths, tailors, wheelwrights, and other craftsmen. Shirleysburg experienced its greatest period of growth between 1830 and 1850, and was incorporated as a borough in 1837. By 1847, it had between thirty and forty houses and a population of 275. Two private academies, the Shirleysburg Female Seminary and the

Aughwick Collegiate School for Boys were established in the early 1850s and prospered for a few years, but both closed within a decade. The County Almshouse was built just south of town in 1850-1852. After 1850, the construction of railroads encouraged the rapid growth of the nearby industrial centers of Orbisonia and Mount Union at the expense of Shirleysburg, which lay midway between these towns.

By mid-century, most of the Aughwick Creek valley had been cleared of its forest cover, and farms were located at regular intervals along the main roads. The local economy was based on subsistence agriculture. Although a fairly extensive network of roads had been developed, the condition of even the principal roads was abysmal for much of the year, making large-scale commercial agriculture impossible. Market access for farmers improved somewhat in 1862, when a private company undertook improvements to the primary north-south road through the valley (present-day U.S. Route 522). Even more important was the construction of the East Broad Top Railroad, a narrow gauge line that served the Broad Top coal fields of southern Huntingdon and northern Bedford and Fulton Counties. Eleven miles of the line from Mount Union to Orbisonia were open by 1873, and the entire 30-mile route was completed the following year. By 1881, the E.B.T. was carrying over 143,000 tons of coal, 19,000 tons of pig iron, and 25,000 tons of iron ore north to Mount Union, where its freight was transferred to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Yard facilities were located at Rockhill and Mount Union, and Shirleysburg had a passenger and freight depot.

By 1880, Shirleysburg's population had stabilized at about 300. It continued to be an important commercial center for the surrounding countryside, with four stores, two or three groceries, two taverns, two potteries, a grist mill, and a steam tannery. With improved transportation facilities, local farmers had begun to participate more fully in the regional market economy. One result was a general shift from grain production to dairying.

In the twentieth century, the growing popularity of the automobile resulted in increased mobility and accelerated the decline of rural commercial centers such as Shirleysburg. The borough's population fell from 296 in 1880 to 256 in 1910 to 200 in 1920. A significant drop in coal consumption after World War II meant less demand for Broad Top coal, and led to the end of freight traffic on the East Broad Top Railroad in 1956. Since 1960, railfan excursion trains have run over the five miles of track between Orbisonia and Shirleysburg on a seasonal basis. With little twentieth century development, the appearance of Shirleysburg has changed very little since 1875. Although the local area has retained its agricultural character, increasingly, its residents have turned away from farming and are employed elsewhere.

The property known as the Walker Farmstead originally was part of a tract conveyed to Robert Coleman by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in an 1810 patent; an adjacent farm to the north and the County Home Cemetery across the highway also were included in this large tract. The property subsequently passed to David Milliken (1814), John Cooper (1815),

Alexander Dysart (1826), and Samuel Carothers (1838). In 1864, the 182-acre property was sold to Aaron L. Ricketts, who subdivided it and sold 20 acres along U.S. Route 522 to William A. Fraker, a Shirleysburg merchant; this 20-acre parcel included the land on which the structures comprising the Walker Farmstead now stand.

After Fraker's death, the property passed to his children, and in 1883 their guardian sold the 20-acre parcel (then containing an orchard) to Winfield A. Walker, who probably built the house and other buildings soon afterward. Walker later acquired an additional 26 acres of land to the south of the farmstead. Unfortunately, no 1890 census data is available, but the 1900 census indicates that the Walker household currently included Winfield (49 years old) and his wife Margaret (50 years), three of their childred (Zeola, 14 years; John, 11 years; and Hayes, 5 years), and boarder Newton McGill (a 24 year old black man), who may have been a farmhand. The 1910 census reveals that the Walkers were the parents of ten children, only four of whom were still living. Members of the household in 1910 included Winfield and Margaret; son Hayes; son-in-law Ross C. Campbell (27 years), described as a "farm helper"; daughter Zeola; and grandson John (2 months). Winfield Walker died in 1919, and the 1920 census reveals that the household consisted only of Margaret (69 years), daughter Zeola (34 years), son Hayes (25 years), and grandson Finney Campbell (7 years). The 1920 census lists Margaret Walker as "farmer" and Hayes Walker as "overseer, general farm".

Following Margaret Walker's death in 1923, the property was partitioned, and the homestead tract of 26 acres and another tract of 172 acres were conveyed to Hayes Walker in 1927. The deed noted that the homestead property then contained a frame house, frame bank barn, and other outbuildings. Hayes Walker evidently made some alterations to the house at about that time. Physical evidence suggests that electrical wiring and indoor plumbing may have been added in the 1920s, and an internal chimney in the rear ell may have been removed at the same time.

When Hayes Walker's died in 1956, his widow, Mabel C. Walker, conveyed the property to herself and second husband Wiley C. Dobbins in 1960. Following Wiley's death, Mrs. Dobbins continued to occupy the farmstead until 1991; although the house continued to be well-maintained during this period, she leased her fields to local farmers, and the farm buildings gradually fell into disrepair. In 1991, she sold the property to its current owners, Dean E. and Donna J. Varner.

The Walker Farmhouse is an example of the most common nineteenth century house form in the region, the I-house. The I-house is distinguished by its two-story height, one-room depth, length of two or more rooms, and (in Pennsylvania) internal gable-end chimneys. In its early form, the Pennsylvania I-house consisted of two rooms on the first floor, with an enclosed winding stair at one end. The Georgian building tradition later influenced I-house design, as later examples retained the one-room depth while modifying the first-floor plan to include a central hall flanked by two rooms of approximately equal size. Houses of this type

feature a symmetrical three-bay or five-bay facade, and often, either one window per floor in the end walls or two windows per floor arranged to give the illusion of two-room depth. Rear ells frequently were added to provide more living space.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the development of regional rail networks contributed to an expansion of commercial agriculture, the I-house form came to represent agricultural affluence and respectability. Farmers and villagers alike regarded it as an icon of success. Jakle, Bastian and Meyer (1989) note that the I-house was a manifestation of folk and popular culture which was adopted by builders throughout the eastern United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. The stylistic ornamentation which was applied depended on the age of the house, the local or regional popularity of various styles, and the status and personal tastes of the owner.

Features of Shirley Township's development mirrored the trends which were occurring in rural areas throughout the region. The completion of the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line through central Huntingdon County in the early 1850s, followed by the construction of the East Broad Top Railroad through the Aughwick Creek valley in the 1870s, greatly improved the market access for agricultural produce and dairy products. Local farmers benefitted considerably from these transportation improvements. As the population grew, many of the large farms near Shirleysburg were subdivided, and were more intensively cultivated with the aid of improved mechanized equipment. Dairying became an increasingly important part of the agricultural economy. Because the new farmhouses built during this period generally were I-houses, this house form became a distinctive component of the typical late nineteenth century farmstead. As the importance of local agriculture declined in the mid to late twentieth century, many farms went out of production and their buildings deteriorated or disappeared completely. Although numerous structures dating to the valley's most prosperous period still dot the landscape, few intact historic farmsteads survive.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Walker Farmhouse is a well-preserved example of a typical rural central Pennsylvania house constructed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although it is a vernacular structure, it possesses some fine detailing, especially in the porch ornamentation. The house retains exceptional integrity and offers an excellent opportunity to document the construction methods and finishing details of a traditional house of this time and place.

2. Condition of fabric: All aspects of the fabric are sound. In contrast to the associated outbuildings, the house is in good physical condition and is in need of only routine repair and maintenance. Other than the loss of one chimney, there have been no

notable exterior alterations, and interior alterations have destroyed relatively little historic fabric.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Walker Farmhouse is a frame I-house with a rear ell, three bays wide by two bays deep and two-and-one-half stories in height. The main block of the house measures 30' 6" x 20' 5", and the rear ell measures 20' 6" x 18' 0".

2. Foundations: The rubble stone foundation walls are 18" thick, forming a full basement under the entire house. Approximately 24" of the foundation is above grade. A former open crawlspace under the back porch and pantry has been enclosed with new concrete block foundation walls.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are clad with 4" tongue-and-groove German siding painted white. An early twentieth century photograph reveals that the house has been painted white since at least that time. The siding is affixed with cut nails. The corners are finished by applying 4" vertical boards over the siding, rather than butting the siding against the verticals.

4. Structural system, framing: Both the front block and the ell feature balloon framing, with 2" x 4" studding on 16" centers, doubled at the corners and resting on a 5" sill. The wall cavity is hollow. The roof structure of the front block is framed with 2" x 5" rafters butted against a 2.5" x 4" ridge pole, although there is evidence to suggest that the ridge pole is a later addition, inserted into notches cut in the rafters at some point when the roof was being replaced; the wire nails used to secure the rafters to the ridge pole contrast with the cut nails used in the rest of the framing. In the ell, the ridge pole extends only as far as the rear wall of the front block, and beyond that point the rafters are butted against each other at the ridge. All framing members consist of sawn stock.

5. Porches: The porches represent the only use of formal stylistic detailing on this otherwise plain vernacular house. The facade is dominated by a one-story full-width Italianate porch, which measures 28' 6" wide by 6' 0" deep. The hip-roof is supported by four square 6" x 6" boxed wood posts on 8" x 8" boxed pedestals, spaced 8' 6" apart. The pedestals are beveled at the corners, with built-up panels matching those on the friezeboard. The posts are also beveled at the corners, and display simple routed decoration. Pilasters echo the design of the free-standing posts. Large curved brackets are found at the corners, creating the effect of an arch between each pair of posts. Small single brackets line the cornice, dividing the friezeboard into a series of individual panels decorated with geometric cut-out panels and applied floral designs. The deck has been replaced, and at present consists of 3" tongue-and-groove flooring

attached to 2" x 6" joists on 24" centers. The moldings at the base of each post are missing, possibly removed when the deck was replaced. The porch framing is supported by concrete block piers at the corners, hidden by a plain narrow apron. The present plywood ceiling is a recent replacement.

A two-story porch fills the offset along the south side of the rear ell, under the slope of the main roof. At first-story level, the porch measures 10' 0" x 6' 2", slightly smaller than the second-story porch because of an enclosed pantry at the west end which is accessible from the kitchen. Two solid 4" x 4" wood posts, beveled on the corners, are spanned by a 32"-high railing composed of four widely-spaced 4" boards topped by a plain handrail. The ceiling is 9' 2" high, and consists of 4" beaded tongue-and-groove stock painted white. The deck is constructed of 5.5" tongue-and-groove stock painted gray, nailed to 2" x 8" joists on 24" centers and supported by stone piers infilled with modern concrete block. Doors to the kitchen, parlor and cellar open off the porch (see below). A small three-light window above the kitchen sink, probably added in the 1920s, is located between the kitchen door and the pantry wall. Two poured concrete steps with a plain railing lead up to the porch from the concrete sidewalk in the side yard.

The second-story gallery measures 13' 10" x 6' 2", and extends over the first-story pantry. A door to the second-story rear bedroom opens off the porch. The 31"-high balustrade features decorative cutwork with unornamented base and hand rails, and is divided into three segments of slightly-varying widths (48-57"), corresponding to equivalent divisions below. The divisions are formed by two solid 4" square posts, beveled at the corners, and a pilaster at the east end of the railing; as is the case with the front porch posts, all of the back porch posts are missing their base moldings. The gallery's ceiling is constructed of the same stock as that of the kitchen porch, but the deck consists of 3.5" tongue-and-groove stock.

6. Chimneys: An internal 13" x 17" brick chimney is centered in each end of the main block. The house has no fireplaces, and stove pipe holes into the flue on both floors indicate that the historic heating system consisted of a stove in each room. Physical evidence in the attic, rear bedroom, and kitchen reveals that a third internal chimney originally was located at the west gable end of the ell, but this has been removed and replaced by an external brick chimney.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The house has six doors to the exterior. The principal entrance is centered in the facade of the main block and opens off the front porch. The opening measures 30" x 80", with a 12" high single-light transom above. The front door has four panels with raised moldings and features an antique bell. The screen

door has brackets and turned spindlework. The exterior surrounds consist of plain unmitred 4" stock with projecting architrave moldings at the top; the total height is 105".

The door openings to the kitchen porch and second-story gallery from the kitchen and rear bedroom are identical to the main entrance, and also feature single-light transoms. However, the doors are different: the kitchen door (a ca. 1920s replacement) features three vertical lights above three horizontal panels, while the door off the gallery has four recessed panels with narrow moldings, identical to the interior doors. The doors to the parlor and cellar which open off the east end of the kitchen porch are set in 30" x 78" openings with plain unmitred 4" surrounds and no transom lights; both doors feature the standard four-panel design characteristic of the interior doors.

All five of these doors hang on cast iron butt-hinges with slender finials. The doors to the cellar and rear bedroom have agate knobs, while the others have brass knobs; all feature cast iron box locks.

A pair of deteriorated batten doors on strap hinges provide access to a concrete stairwell in the north end of the main block which contains a flight of steps leading to the cellar.

b. Windows and shutters: The fenestration of this three-bay house is regular in that openings are always aligned with each other on the first and second stories. Except for two fixed 32" x 16" attic windows in each end of the front block and the three-light window over the kitchen sink, all of the windows in the house contain two-over-two light double-hung sash. First-story window openings measure 29" wide by 67" high, while second-story openings are 29" x 62". Surrounds are identical to the surrounds of the principal doors, consisting of plain unmitred 4" stock on the sides, projecting architrave moldings at the top, and plain wood sills with no aprons.

All windows retain historic shutter hardware, but the only surviving shutters are found in the first-story facade, under the porch; these are louvered shutters, suggesting that they originally flanked upper story windows. They hang on small cast-iron hinges. Aluminum storm windows have been installed in all of the window openings.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The Walker Farmhouse has a moderately-sloped, side-gable roof to which is joined, at right angles, the similarly-pitched gable roof of the rear ell. The ridges of the two sections join at the same level. The front or eastern slope of the roof is of standing-seam metal, and the remainder of the roof is covered with galvanized metal. Cast iron snow-catchers are found above the eaves. An early twentieth century

photograph indicates that standing-seam metal originally was used for the front porch roof, but it has since been replaced by composition shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: The roof projects 12" beyond the face of the building on all sides, with a plain boxed cornice and eave returns at each gable end. The drainage system consists of hanging aluminum gutters and downspouts.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: First and second-story floor plans of the Walker Farmhouse are attached.

The structure's two-and-one-half-story height, three-bay width, and one-room depth mark it as a classic I-house. The I-house is the most common nineteenth century house form in this region. While numerous examples can be found in the Shirleysburg vicinity, few have retained such strong integrity.

On the first-floor, the front door opens into a small entry hall measuring 5' 5" x 4' 0". Doorways lead to a room on either side, with a stairway to the second-floor straight ahead. The original first-floor plan consisted of two rooms, a dining room and a parlor, each measuring 12' 8" x 19' 2". While the north room (dining room) retains its original dimensions, the south room (parlor) has been divided into two smaller rooms measuring 12' 8" x 10' 6" and 12' 8" x 8' 4". The rear ell contains the 12' 6" x 17' 6" kitchen, and is entered from the dining room. Three other doorways lead from the kitchen to the pantry (now a bathroom), the back porch, and a stairway to the second-floor.

The second-floor plan includes two small rooms on each side of a central hallway in the front block, with a large bedroom and a stairway to the kitchen in the rear ell. The two bedrooms in the south end of the front block measure 10' 4" x 10' 4" and 10' 4" x 8' 6", and the northeast bedroom measures 13' 0" x 8' 10". The northwest room measures 12' 6" x 8' 3" and serves as a bathroom. Access to the bedroom in the rear ell is through the northwest room rather than from the hallway.

The unfinished attic is accessed by a stairway leading from the bedroom in the ell. It is open and utilized for general storage. A full basement extends under the entire house, with no interior walls or divisions. A flight of wooden stairs leads up to the kitchen porch, and another set of steps penetrates the north foundation wall. There is no direct access to the basement from the interior of the house.

2. Stairways: The central hallway contains the principal stairway between the first and second floors. A straight run of fourteen steps leads from the entry hall to the second-floor. The 33"-wide enclosed stairway features 9.5" treads on 7" risers. On the

second-floor, a 31"-high balustrade with 24 turned balusters and a turned newel post separates the stairway from a central hallway that extends the full depth of the house.

Stacked stairways in the rear ell lead from the kitchen to the second-floor bedroom and from the bedroom to the attic. Each stairway is completely enclosed, and has two steps rising to a landing, turning 90 degrees, and rising nine additional steps to the next level. The stairs from the kitchen are 35" wide, with 9" treads on 8" risers, and the attic stairs are 30" wide, with 9" treads on 7" risers.

The cellar stairs are open, with access from the back porch.

3. Flooring: Flooring in the front section of the house is random-width (mostly 3.5") pine, laid parallel to the front wall. The flooring in the parlor is varnished, in keeping with the formal nature of the room, while the floors in the rest of the house (except the upstairs hallway, which also is varnished) are painted. The first-floor is supported by 2" x 12" joists.

   Flooring in the rear ell is random-width pine, laid parallel to the north wall. New sheet vinyl has been installed in the kitchen.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings throughout the house are plaster over sawn wood lath, although modern synthetic panels have been applied over the original plaster walls in the kitchen, and acoustic ceiling tile has been installed in the southwest bedroom. Historic wallpaper survives in the downstairs and upstairs hallways, the southeast bedroom, and the rear bedroom; in all other rooms it has been painted over or removed. Ceilings in the downstairs rooms are 10' high, while upstairs ceilings are 8' high.

   The only non-original wall in the house is the one that subdivides the former parlor on the first-floor. It consists of flakeboard nailed directly to the studs, with plain 4" baseboards and door surrounds of unmitred 3" stock. There is an opening but no door between the two small rooms.

5. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: All of the interior doorway openings are of uniform size, 30" wide by 77" high, except for the closet doors in the bedrooms and the door to the attic stairs, all of which are 28" wide by 71" high. Each first-floor doorway is topped by a 12" single-light transom. The frames consist of shallowly-cut 4" molding with mitred corners. The doors feature four recessed panels and applied panel moldings; all hang on 6" cast-iron butt-hinges with decorative finials, and feature 3" x 4" cast-iron box locks. The majority of doors have brown agate knobs.

b. Windows: The window openings on each floor are of uniform size: 28.5" wide by 66" high downstairs, and 28.5" wide by 62" high upstairs. All of the windows except those in the attic are fitted with two-over-two light double-hung sash. The surrounds are identical to those of the doorways.

6. Decorative features and trim: Baseboards throughout the house consist of plain 8" (upstairs) or 9" (downstairs) boards topped with deeply-cut ogee trim, with 3/4" quarter-round shoe molding at the base. The baseboards, door and window frames, and doors in some of the rooms (dining room, southeast bedroom, southwest bedroom, upstairs hallway) retain their original decorative faux graining, but in the other rooms they have been painted white, brown, or gray. Pine wainscot is found on the north wall of the kitchen. There is no chair rail, historic paneling, or other notable trim anywhere in the house.

   Floor-to-ceiling wood cabinets are located along the west wall of the kitchen. They probably were installed after the removal of the ell's original internal chimney, most likely during the general remodeling of the kitchen in the 1920s. The cabinets feature two ranks of double-doors mounted on small butt-hinges, with each pair secured by a thumb latch.

7. Hardware: See section B.5a above for a description of the typical door hardware. The house has no other notable hardware.

8. Mechanical equipment: The house retains no historic mechanical equipment. All of the kitchen appliances are new.

   a. Heating: All of the rooms in the house originally were heated with cast iron stoves, as indicated by the presence of stovepipe holes in the gable-end chimneys in the parlor, dining room, and southeast bedroom; the removal of the internal chimney in the rear ell would have destroyed any similar evidence in the kitchen and rear bedroom. Decorative cast iron vents in the floors of the second-floor rooms assist in circulating warm air through the house.

   Heat currently is provided by new baseboard hot water radiators in the downstairs rooms, and by older cast iron radiators upstairs which were installed by the present owners. Hot water for the radiators is generated by a new wood-fired furnace behind the house.

   b. Lighting: No evidence of lighting systems prior to electric lights was found. The wiring in the house has never been upgraded, and most rooms contain a maximum of one outlet. Early twentieth century lighting fixtures survive in most rooms, although many of the switches and outlets have been replaced.

c. Plumbing: Given the rural location of the farmstead, it is unlikely that indoor plumbing was part of the original construction. A rather crudely-installed cast-iron soil pipe running to the upstairs bathroom is visible in the stairway from the kitchen to the rear bedroom, suggesting that the house was retrofitted with indoor plumbing. Existing rooms appear to have been converted into bathrooms; the upstairs bathroom originally may have served as a bedroom, and the downstairs bathroom undoubtedly was a pantry. Surviving fixtures suggest that the upstairs bathroom may have been installed in the 1920s or 1930s, which matches the presumed date of various other alterations, while the downstairs bathroom probably is somewhat more recent.

The upstairs bathroom contains a cast-iron bathtub, an old wall-mounted porcelain sink, and a new toilet. All of the fixtures in the downstairs bathroom except the metal shower stall are new, but marks on the wall indicate that there formerly was a wall-mounted sink.

9. Original furnishings: None.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house is immediately adjacent to the highway, with access provided by a driveway just to the north. A row of large spruce trees and a hedge of arbor vitae stands between the house and the road, completely blocking the view from that direction. Smaller spruce, arbor vitae, and black walnut trees screen the house from the north and south.

The house is oriented with its ridge line parallel to the road and parallel to that of every other farmstead structure except the summer kitchen. This ensures that its most impressive elevation--the facade--can be seen to best advantage, and also provides an eastern exposure for the front of the house, away from the prevailing winds; it is significant that the house has no windows on its west side, and is well-protected from cold northerly winds by the row of evergreens between the house and the lane. The main domestic activity area adjacent to the summer kitchen and well is in a sheltered position but receives strong sun for most of the day--clearly a benefit.

See the attached site plan for the arrangement of structures.

2. Historic landscape design: The relationship of the house to the outbuildings clearly illustrates the dualized activity areas typical of nineteenth century farmsteads. Characteristically, there are two distinct centers of activity: one centered around the house, and the other around the barn. The domestic activity area includes the house, summer kitchen, smokehouse, and well, all arranged around a small courtyard adjacent to the house's rear ell. Gardens behind and beside the house also were important components

of the domestic activity area. Originally, the privy would have been another important domestic outbuilding, although the installation of indoor plumbing made this structure functionally obsolete. All areas of the domestic farmstead are connected by a network of walkways, originally paved with brick and stone, but now mainly concrete. The principal agricultural activity area is physically separated from the domestic complex, 150' to the south and downslope. An early twentieth century photograph shows that the intervening space was filled with fruit trees and a vegetable garden, resulting in a clear demarcation. Within the agricultural complex, the two barns, as well as the drive-in corncrib prior to its relocation, are all adjacent both to the road and to a small stream which would have provided fresh water to animals and carried off waste. The locations of historic fencelines are not known.

The buildings carefully arranged for maximum efficiency. The domestic outbuildings and the well are convenient to the kitchen door and to each other. The gardens and orchard also would have been close at hand. The main access to the cellar was directly off the kitchen porch, so that freshly-harvested fruit and vegetables easily could be carried to the cellar for storage or processing. The smokehouse is located so as to be convenient to both the kitchen and the barns. The upstairs gallery on the south side of the ell provides a panoramic view of both building complexes as well as the farmstead's associated fields.

3. Outbuildings: See section D.2 above. Outbuildings in the immediate vicinity of the house include a frame summer kitchen and a smokehouse. At a greater distance are two barns and a drive-in corncrib. All of these structures are described in HABS PA-6086.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

No architectural drawings are known to exist.

B. Historic Views:

A thorough search at the Huntingdon County Historical Society, the Huntingdon County Public Library, and the State Archives failed to locate any historic views of the Walker Farmhouse. The property owner provided one historic photograph, described below:

1. Photograph dating to circa 1900-1925: An original 3" x 5" black and white print of this photograph is in the possession of Mr. Dean Varner. Unfortunately, it was not possible to copy the photograph in an appropriate format for inclusion as part of the documentation for the farmstead complex. The photograph obviously was taken prior to the 1925

highway widening project which resulted in the relocation of the drive-in corn crib. Although the farm buildings still look fairly new, the mature appearance of the property suggests that the photo substantially postdates the farmstead's circa 1883 construction. Only the south end of the house is shown, and none of the domestic outbuildings.

C. Interviews:

1. Dean and Donna Varner: interviews at the site, March 1996. Mr. and Mrs. Varner acquired the property in 1991 and provided information concerning recent alterations, but they had no knowledge of the farmstead's prior history.

   No other individuals could be found who are knowledgeable about the history of the property. Longtime owner Mrs. Mabel Walker Dobbins, who lived in the house for much of this century, is recently deceased.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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United States Geological Survey. Butler Knob quadrangle, 1:24,000. 1959 edition.

United States Geological Survey. Mount Union quadrangle, 1:62,500. 1924 edition.

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E. Likely sources not yet investigated:

None known.

F. Supplemental material:

None.

PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

The Federal Highway Administration and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation propose to widen U.S. Route 522 between the boroughs of Shirleysburg and Orbisonia. The project will require acquisition of a small amount of right-of-way from the Walker Farmstead property, necessitating the demolition of the house and barns. Documentation of the historic property to HABS standards was determined to be an appropriate mitigation strategy.

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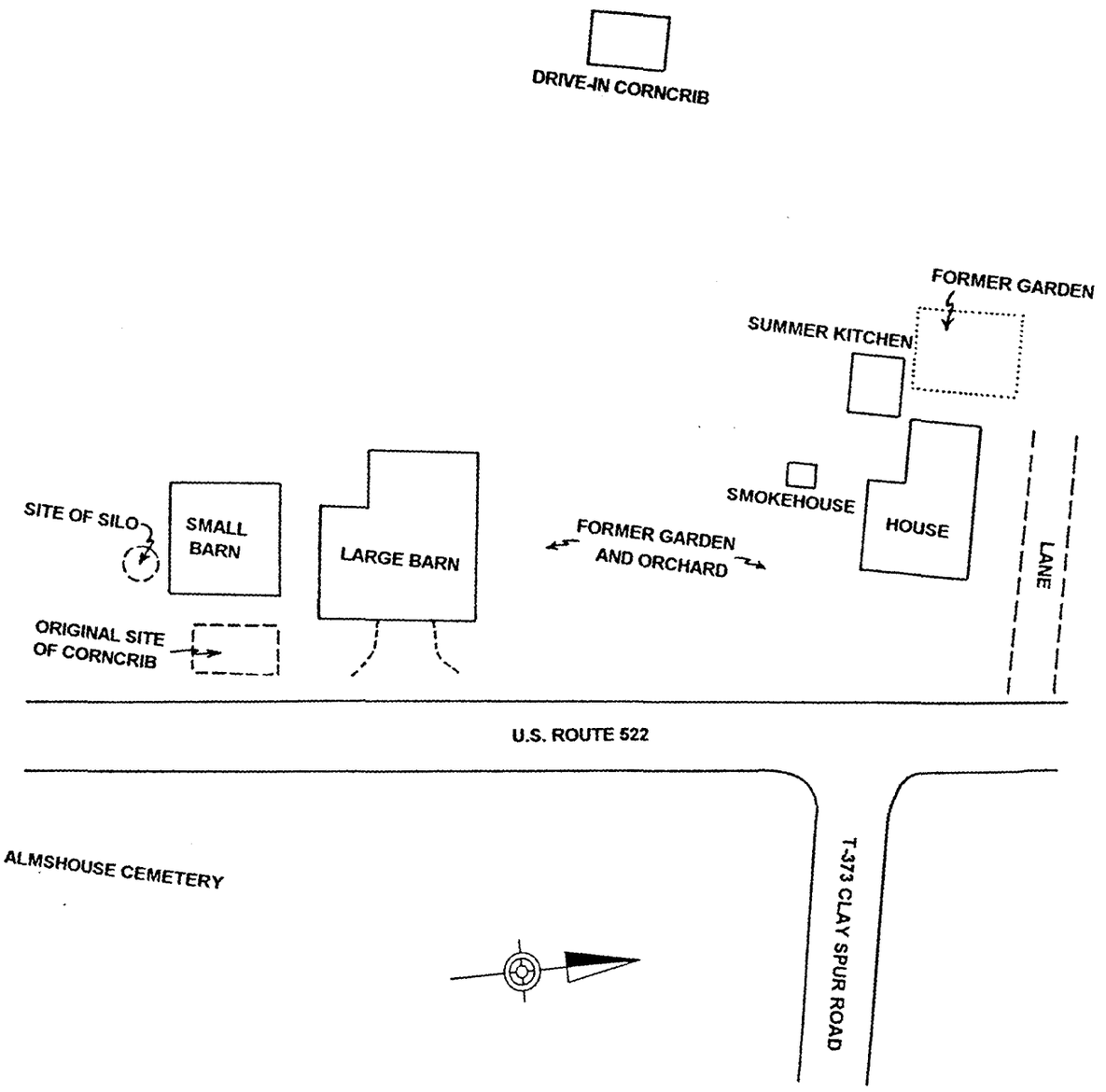
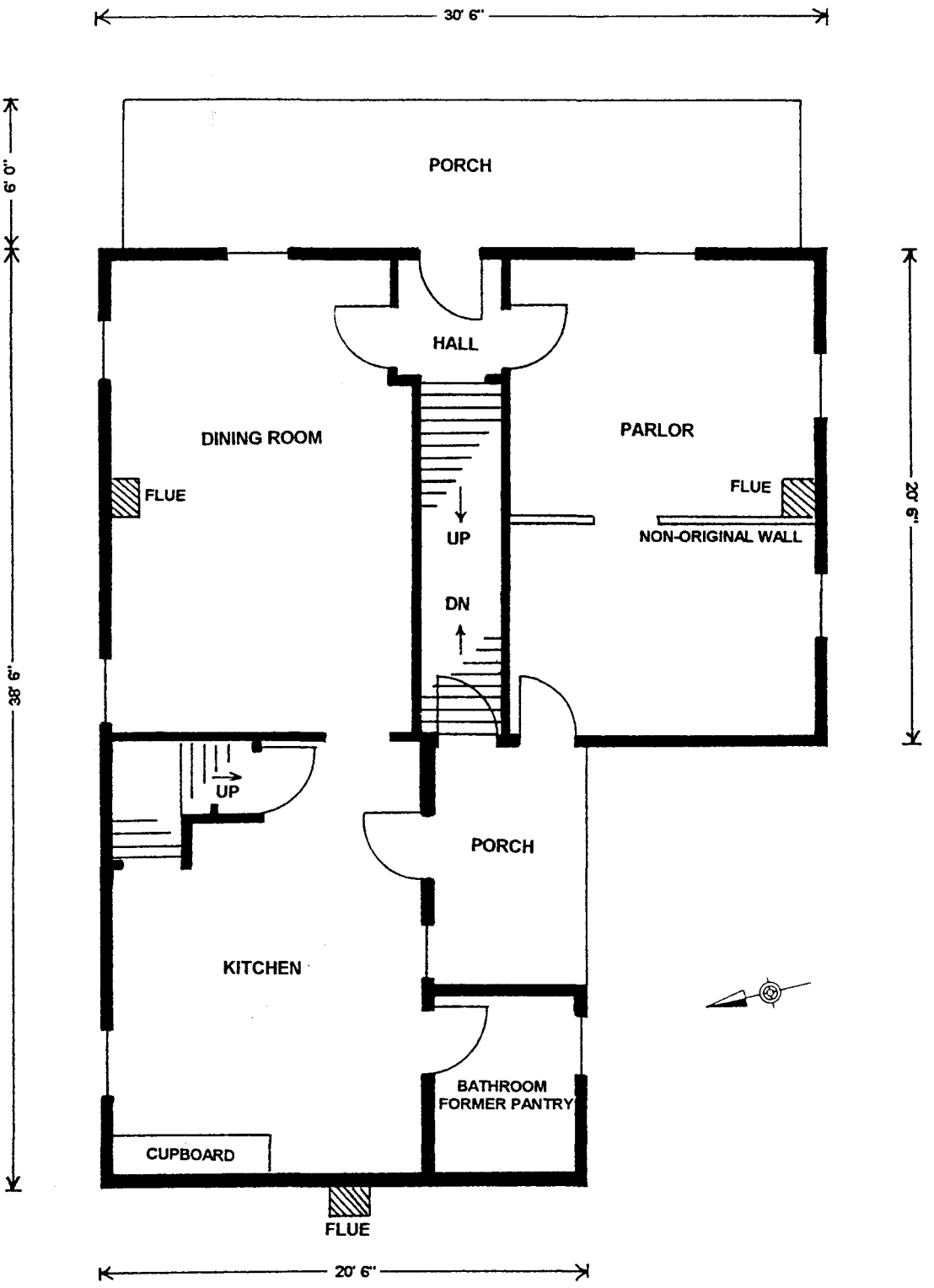
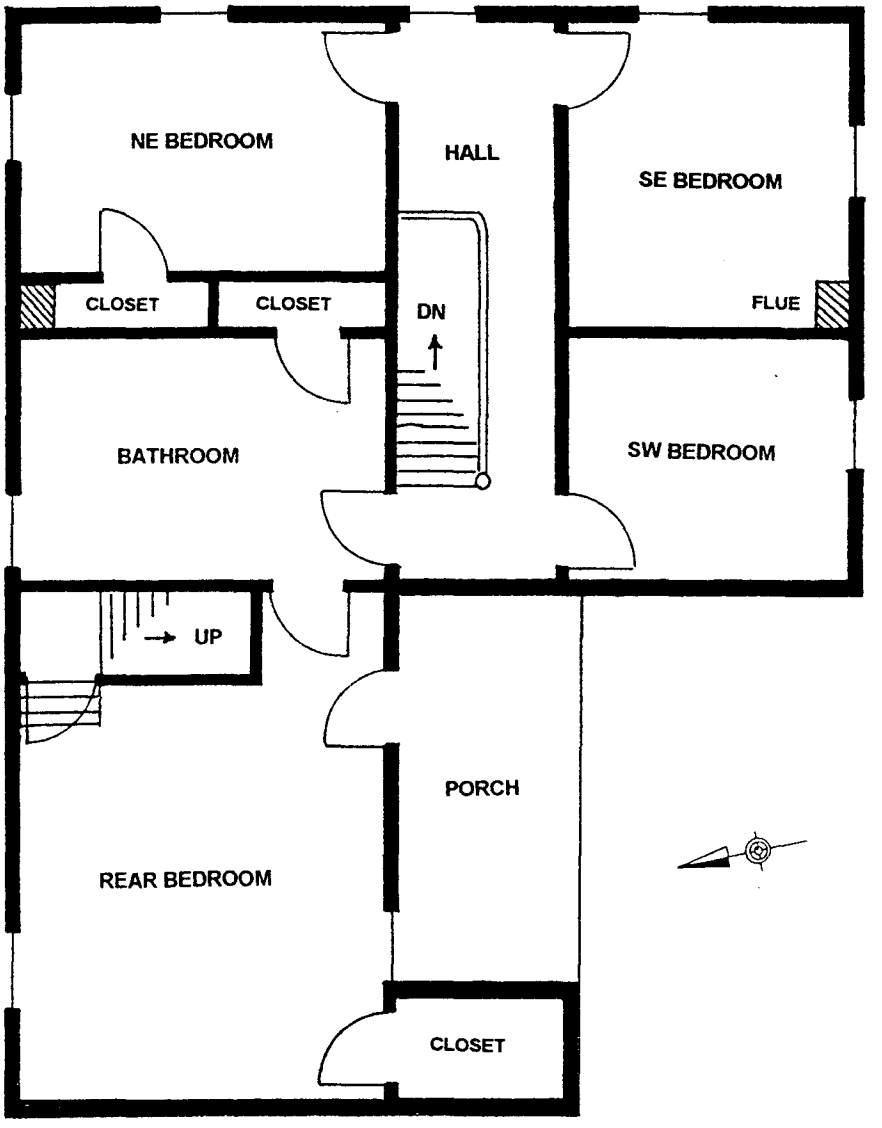
Date: April 1996

WALKER FARMHOUSE
SITE PLAN





WALKER FARMHOUSE
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



WALKER FARMHOUSE
SECOND FLOOR PLAN