

SCHEETZ FARM, BARN
7161 Camp Hill Road
Fort Washington vicinity
Montgomery County
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6666-B
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PHILADELPHIA SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SCHEETZ FARM, BARN

HABS No. PA-6666-B

Location: 7161 Camp Hill Road, Fort Washington Vicinity, Montgomery County,
Pennsylvania

USGS Ambler and Germantown, PA, Quadrangles.
UTM Coordinates: 18.0482711.4441554

Significance: The barn is a contributing element of the Scheetz Farm, which is significant for its architecture and history. The barn is a remnant of a much larger barn complex that once stood on the property, reflecting the historical and architectural evolution of a farming and milling complex from the mid-eighteenth century through the early twentieth century.

Description: The barn lies in ruins to the north/northwest of the house at the base of the earthen berm supporting the S.R. 0309 expressway. The barn consists of one-story fieldstone walls and portions of a collapsed side-gable roof structure. The ruin measures approximately 70' x 30' (21.34 x 9.14 meters) and shares the same orientation as the house. Another large rectangular barn, the main portion of the former agricultural complex, was once attached at right angles to the west corner of the extant structure. Only one stone rubble corner of the other wing remains, since it was demolished to accommodate the roadway berm for S.R. 0309. Seams in the stone walls of the extant structure suggest an additive construction history, but the evidence is obscured by overgrowth and rubble, as well as remnant patches of stucco siding and plaster. The barn is banked slightly along the rear, or northeast elevation, but there is no evidence of a ramp or vehicle entry on this side. Instead, vacant wood window frames pierce the northeast wall. The southwest façade is broken by a series of stone piers suggesting vehicle entrances on the northwestern half of this elevation. Several vertical beaded-board Dutch doors hung on strap hinges occupy the southeastern half of this elevation as well as the southeast gable end. Portions of the roof and a gable-end wall clad with vertical board-and-batten have collapsed at the southeast end of the interior. Two steel I-beams span the barn interior at the northwest end. Remnants of charred timber in this half of the barn suggest that it was destroyed by fire.

History: The date of construction of the remnant barn is unknown. Schedule B of the Federal Direct Tax of 1798 indicates that the property contained a stone barn measuring 25' x 28' (7.62 x 8.53 meters). Masonry seams in the extant structure allow for the possibility that it may have incorporated parts of the eighteenth-century barn. This early structure had been built either by Henry Scheetz Sr., who likely built the oldest portion of the house, or his son, Henry Scheetz Jr., later known as General Scheetz. Both farmed the land to supplement their operation of a paper mill on the property. An advertisement for the sale of the property following the death of General Henry Scheetz in 1848 described a "stone barn with stabling for 15 head of cattle, with frame wagon and hay-house attached" (Scheetz, Scheetz, and Day 1848). A frame wagon house and hay house had also been noted on the 1798 direct tax but no evidence of these structures remains.

Estate inventories for Henry Scheetz Sr. in 1793 and General Scheetz in 1848 indicate that each had kept several horses and swine, as well as cows, tools, and grain in the barn (Montgomery County Archives RW 6039, RW 6063). Tax records indicate that General Scheetz had as many as 10 cows in the 1820s. The barn complex may have supported the most livestock in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when a tenant farmer named Jesse Nice sustained a dozen cows and up to 75 barnyard poultry in addition to his horses and swine. In the 1930s, Irwin Hixson, a tenant farmer and later owner of the property, also used the barns for dairy purposes and to board horses belonging to the owners of elite country estates (Mary Ellen Kirk-Sander, pers. com., November 1, 2000).

The 1956 as-built plans for the construction of S.R. 0309 identify the extant structure as a one-and-one-half-story "barn & garage" and describe the missing wing as a larger two-story stone barn with a two-story frame addition to its southwest gable and a small addition to its northwest elevation (PennDOT 1956). A stone wall formed a triangular barnyard between the two wings. The larger, demolished wing was likely the barn with attached frame wagon and hay house noted in the 1848 advertisement.

Sources: Scheetz, Jacob, George Scheetz and Jacob Day. "Public Sale of Valuable Real Estate pursuant to the last will and testament of General Henry Scheetz." Broadside printed at the Office of the Germantown Telegraph and dated October 25, 1848. In the collection of the Historical Society of Montgomery County, Norristown, Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Engineering drawing for S.R. 0309, Sheet 15 of 26; dated 12 August 1956. In the collection of PennDOT District 6-0.

Historian: Nancy A. Holst, Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc.
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