

Eliza Stamm House (Moorehead House)
W side Gruber Road, .2 mile S Pa. Rte. 183
Mount Pleasant vicinity
Penn Township
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-113

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. PA-113

ELIZA STAMM HOUSE
(Moorehead House)

Location: West side of Gruber Road about .2 mile south of State Route 183, about 200 feet northeast of the confluence of Licking Creek, Tulpehocken Creek, and the Union Canal bed, .4 mile southeast of Mount Pleasant, Penn Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

USGS Bernville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.410210.4472440.

Present Owner: United States Government

Present Use: Demolished in 1977 for the Blue Marsh Lake project, sponsored by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Significance: This nineteenth-century brick residence maintains the traditional Pennsylvania German, three-room layout, complete with two identical front entry doors placed side by side.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The original brick part of the house was probably built about 1865. Stylistically, this house would seem to date from much earlier, but brick building was rare in Berks County rural areas before 1850 and the common bond, too, indicates a mid-century date. Furthermore, an atlas published in 1862 fails to indicate the house, while an 1876 atlas clearly labels the house as belonging to "Miss E. Stamm." Presumably, Eliza Stamm's father was John Stamm who owned the Pleasant Valley Hotel next door. John Stamm willed the hotel and the land under the house to Eliza Stamm in 1865; she then probably built the house, then sold the hotel in 1870.
2. Architect: As in the case of nearly all Pennsylvania German building, the house was not designed by an architect in the formal sense. However, the relative sophistication of the construction indicates that the house was planned and executed

under the direct supervision of a master builder or mason. Cornelius S. Stamm (1828-1902), a direct descendant of Werner Stamm, was a trained mason and may be responsible for the design and construction of this house, as well as the Isaac Stamm House (HABS No. PA-113) across the street.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the house is located. Chain of title information for Berks County before circa 1875 is vague and often incomplete, so this data is based on educated guesses using the best available information. Reference is to the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Berks County, except where noted.

It is highly probable that Werner Stamm acquired the land from the Penns about 1760. The Stamm family intermarried with the Heck family from at least 1800 and constantly transferred parcels of land between various members of the two families. Both the Stamm and Heck families were involved in the overall development of Pleasant Valley, planning and constructing many of its buildings in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

- 1865 Deed dated April 4, 1865
Levi S. Stamm and Daniel Billman, Executors of
John Stamm
to
Eliza Stamm
- 1870 Deed dated April 19, 1870 recorded March 7, 1871
in Book 98 page 526
Eliza Stamm
to
George Zerr
- 1870 Deed dated April 19, 1870 recorded September 9, 1870
in Book 100 page 210
George Zerr
to
Eliza Stamm
- 1898 Deed dated April 4, 1898 recorded April 4, 1898
in Book 247 page 527
Adam K. Stoudt, Administrator of Eliza Stamm
to
Israel C. Becker

ELIZA STAMM HOUSE (McCrehead House)
HABS No. PA-113 (Page 3)

- 1898 Deed dated April 4, 1898 recorded April 4, 1898
in Book 262 page 33
Israel C. Becker
to
Adam P. Himmelberger
- 1911 Adam P. Himmelberger died, leaving the property to
Rebecca S. Himmelberger, his wife, and the following
children, Irwin E. Himmelberger, Harry E.
Himmelberger, Charles F. Himmelberger, Kate V.
Himmelberger, and William H. Himmelberger; deed
unrecorded
- 1922 Deed dated February 27, 1922 recorded March 2, 1922
in Book 533 page 503
Rebecca S. Himmelberger, widow, Irwin E. Himmelberger
and Mary E., his wife, Harry E. Himmelberger and Emma,
his wife, and William H. Himmelberger
to
Paul Weber
- 1941 Deed dated September 12, 1941 recorded January 6, 1942
in Book 880 page 88
Paul Weber and Helen, his wife
to
Margaret E. McCullough
- 1941 Deed dated September 13, 1941 recorded January 6, 1942
in Book 880 page 90
Margaret E. McCullough
to
Paul Weber and Helen, his wife
- 1944 Deed dated March 16, 1944 recorded March 16, 1944
in Book 899 page 634
Helen Weber, widow
to
Paul M. Weber and Sallie Catherine, his wife

1971 Deed dated April 27, 1971 recorded April 27, 1971
in Book 1584 page 862
Paul M. Weber and Sallie Catherine, his wife
to
David J. Moorehead and Marlene, his wife

4. Alterations and additions: Except for a bathroom installed in the bedroom about 1950, the original brick part of the house remains relatively unaltered. There was, however, a wood addition built on the north end wall about 1925.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Eliza Stamm House was an integral part of the small linear hamlet known as Pleasant Valley, running between the Gruber Wagon Works and the Pleasant Valley Roller Mill. Pleasant Valley was strategically located along the former main road to Reading, paralleling the Union Canal. It had two small hotels, a tannery, a mill, several farms, and the Gruber Wagon Works. The Reading to Bernville stage stopped at both hotels in Pleasant Valley, and the canal boats stopped there regularly (Canal Lock #41 was about one quarter mile from the Isaac Stamm House) to pick up and discharge cargo. It is probable, for example, that the bricks and sawn lumber for the Isaac Stamm House and the Eliza Stamm House were delivered by canal boat. After 1881, Pleasant Valley was connected directly to North Heidelberg and Lower Heidelberg Townships by the Fox Lake steel truss bridge (known as the Pleasant Valley bridge before circa 1930) which spanned the Tulpehocken Creek. A smaller, wood bridge crossed the Union Canal just ahead of this bridge. An 1876 atlas, moreover, shows that the ill-fated South Mountain and Boston Railroad was planned to come within one quarter mile of Pleasant Valley. These transportation links allowed Pleasant Valley to prosper in the late nineteenth century.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Interviews:

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Auchenbach, Pleasant Valley, Pa., residents of the Isaac Stamm House (HABS No. PA-112) and long time residents of the Pleasant Valley area; August, 1976.

ELIZA STAMM HOUSE (Moorehead House)
HABS No. PA-113 (Page 5)

Fred Durdore, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., a grandson of the last Stamm owner of the Stamm Farm (HABS No. PA-266); August 10, 1976.

John Gruber, Reading Pa.; Long time resident of the Jacob H. Gruber House (HABS No. PA-262) August 30, 1976.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Unger, Reading, Pa.; Mrs. Unger is the daughter of the last Stamm owner of the Stamm Farm, (HABS No. PA-266) and both Mr. and Mrs. Unger were longtime residents of the farmstead; August 17, 1976.

2. Secondary sources:

Arthur, Eric, and Dudley Whitney. The Barn, A Vanishing Landmark in North America. Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1972, esp. pp. 84-113.

Dornbusch, Charles H. and John K. Heyl. Pennsylvania German Barns. Allentown, Pa.: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, Vol. 21, 1958.

Fox, Cyrus T. Reading and Berks County Pennsylvania, A History. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1925, 184-185: gives brief account of the Stamm family history.

Long, Amos, Jr. The Pennsylvania German Family Farm: A Regional Architectural and Folk Cultural Study of an American Agricultural Community. Breinigsville, Pa.: The Pennsylvania German Society, Vol. VI, 1972.

Weiser, George, IK. "Historical Survey of Blue Marsh Project Area", Historical Review of Berks County XXXVI (Summer, 1971), 98-110: general study with good map of the area and the landmarks.

Moser, Nick. "Penn Township." Reading Sunday Eagle Magazine (December 1, 1957), 1-3.

3. Maps:

Davis, F.A. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Berks County. Reading, Pa: Reading Publishing House, 1876.

Township Map of Berks County Pennsylvania "from actual Survey
by L. Fagan." Philadelphia, Pa.: H.F. Bridgens, 1862.

Prepared by Thomas Kheel
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August, 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This substantial Pennsylvania German brick residence maintains the traditional three-room floor plan with two identical front entry doors.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The original brick house measures 28'-6" across its four-bay front by 24' (two bays) deep and is two and-a-half stories tall. The one-story frame addition of the north end wall measures 10'-6" by 26'-6".
2. Foundations: The foundations of the original brick part of the house are made of randomly laid rough limestone masonry with crude quoining. The frame addition is supported by four wooden columns.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The exterior walls are made of reddish brick, laid in common bond. The brick wall on the inside of the front porch is painted white, as is the wooden trim. The frame addition is covered with hexagonal, interlocking, mineral-surface, asphalt siding.

4. Structural system: The walls are composed of brick bearing walls about 14" thick. There are two star-shaped, iron wall anchors visible on the level of the second and attic floors on the south and north end walls. The floors are held up by large, sawn wood beams and joists tied together by mortise and tenon joints. The roof is composed of wood rafters pegged into a central ridge pole.
5. Porches: The 5' by 19' porch protecting the front (east) entry doors is formed by two wooden box columns. There is a simple bench made of a board built into the south end. The floor of the porch is narrow width tongue and groove boards. The porch extends past the edge of the house to form a carport on the north facade, east of the frame addition. The northern support for the porch roof is a metal pole.

The two-level porch on the west (rear) facade measures 5' by 19'. The second-level porch is supported by two wooden posts and the balustrade is composed of horizontal boards. The floor of the upper porch is supported by a wood column on the north end, a metal column in the center, and a gerry-built stack of concrete blocks on the south end. The lower porch has a brick floor laid out in a herringbone pattern.

6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney in each of the end walls. The chimney in the north end wall has been removed below the level of the second floor. The chimney in the south end wall has also been removed below the level of the second floor, but the cellar fireplace which it once vented has been retained.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The two front entry doors, painted a dull gray, are composed of a large tin panel (replacing the original single light) with two smaller wood panels below. There is a three-light transom above each door. Entry to the basement in the south wall is through a pair of wood panel doors painted white. There are two doors to the wood addition: one a solid wood panel door and the other a wood panel door with four lights.

- b. Windows and shutters: Most of the windows on the first and second floors of the original part of the house have six-over-six-light double hung sash. There are two smaller, two-over-two-light double hung sash windows in the gables of each end wall. The windows in the wood addition have one-over-one-light double hung sash. The windows in the basement of the original part of the house are covered with a heavy, cast iron grating. All of the windows on the original part of the house are fitted with the original shutters and clasping hardware.
- 8 Roof: The original part of the house has a gable roof covered with tin sheets with standing seams. The two porches and the wood addition are covered by a continuous shed roof which wraps around three sides of the brick main block. This roof is also covered with tin sheets with standing seams.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The first-floor plan reflects Pennsylvania German farmhouse planning traditions. There are two front entry doors--the one on the north leads directly into the kitchen and the one on the south leads directly into the parlor. The dual entry system was traditional because it was considered impolite to enter a dwelling house through the kitchen on formal occasions. The north half of the first-floor plan was devoted to the kitchen (die Kich). In the front of the south half was the parlor (die Schtubb) behind which is the bedroom (die Kammer, now converted to a bathroom). The frame addition on the northwest corner is accessible from the rear porch and from the front.
- b. Second floor: The stairway to the second floor leads into a wide hallway running the full depth of the house. Four bedrooms of approximately equal size are entered from this hallway.

ELIZA STAMM HOUSE (Moorehead House)
HABS No. PA-113 (Page 9)

- c. Basement: The rear half of the basement is divided into two rooms finished off as living spaces. The north room has a large, walk-in fireplace with folding wood doors. Next to the fireplace is a toilet enclosed in a small stud-framed partition. The front half of the basement, one large room, is used for storage and plumbing equipment.
2. Stairways: All the stairways in the house are straight runs, and are built directly above one another. The double entry stairway, traditional in Pennsylvania German houses, allowed access to the stairway from adjoining rooms, while still ensuring privacy. The stairway connecting the first and second floors can be reached from doorways in the both the kitchen and rear bedroom (now bathroom). The stairway below it, to the basement, is accessible from both the kitchen and the parlor.
3. Flooring: All the floors on the first and second floor have random-width pine board flooring covered with linoleum and carpeting. The floor of the attic is made of tongue and groove planks. The two rooms in the rear of the basement have pine wood flooring. The floor in the large room in the front of the basement is concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All the rooms on the first and second floors are plastered, and painted in a variety of colors. The ceilings are plastered and painted white. The walls in the two rooms in the rear of the basement have been plastered and painted white.

5. Doorways and doors: All doorways are surrounded by simple, machine-produced, wood moldings. The doors are composed of wood panels. The moldings and doors are painted a variety of colors. Some of the doors on the second floor have been painted to resemble oak.
6. Decorative features and trim: All the rooms on the first and second floors have simple, machine-produced baseboards painted a variety of colors. The window surrounds and closet woodwork are similarly treated.
7. Hardware: Most of the original iron hardware survives in place. A few doors have brown porcelain doorknobs.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: There are no electrical lighting fixtures built into the ceilings or walls. Light is currently provided by a variety of plug-in fixtures spread throughout the house.
 - b. Heating: The only fireplace in the house is the large, walk-in fireplace located in the north room in the rear of the basement. There is a modern central heating system located in the front room of the basement. A large cast-iron wood burning stove is located in the kitchen and supplements the modern heating system.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces east (towards Gruber Road) and is built into an embankment. The first floor of the house is at the level of the road which begins about eight feet from the house. The confluence of Licking Creek, Tulpehocken Creek, and the bed of the Union Canal is about 200 feet southwest of the house. The house is located on what was once the main road to Reading, and is an integral part of the linear grouping of buildings known as Pleasant Valley.
2. Landscape design: As in the case of nearly all Pennsylvania German houses and farmsteads, there was never a professional attempt to design the surrounding landscape. The house is

built into an embankment, which was traditional since it ensured multi-story entry and exposure. There is a 4' high stone retaining wall running for about thirty feet from the south end wall. While the front door is very close to the road, there is a fine view of the confluence of Licking Creek, Tulpehocken Creek, and the bed of the Union Canal from the upper deck of the rear porch. The placement of the house in this position was probably the result of the owner's need to be in close connection with the transportation networks in the area and the adjoining hotel. The site was originally well planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers, but has been allowed to go unattended for the past few years.

3. Outbuildings: There are no major outbuildings surviving on the site. There is a small chicken house and a wooden privy about 25' to the south; however, both are in very poor condition.

Prepared by Thomas Kheel
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August, 1976

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Tulpehocken Creek Survey was undertaken in 1976 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in cooperation with the Philadelphia office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of Blue Marsh Lake. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, the documentation was prepared on site by project supervisor Perry Benson (University of Pennsylvania); student architects Robert E. Clarke (University of Notre Dame), Gregory Lee Miller (University of Illinois), Robert Moje (University of Virginia), Daniel F. Clancy (University of Pennsylvania), and Steven M. Shapiro (University of Maryland); and HABS project historian Thomas H. Kheel (Cornell University) and HAER project historian Stuart Campbell (University of Delaware). The drawings were completed in the HABS office in 1977 and 1978 by Mr. Clarke and HABS architects Susan M. Dornbusch and Bethanie C. Grashof. The HABS data was edited for transmittal in 1980 by Alison K. Hoagland of the HABS staff.