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REPORT ON THE BARNARD TAVERN DEERFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

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The following report is based on an inspection of the Barnard Tavern in Deerfield on April 21-22, 2006, in partial fulfillment of the terms of a National Endowment for the Humanities "Interpreting America's Historic Places" consultation grant. The grant request, submitted by staff members of Historic Deerfield, Inc., proposed a number of humanities questions. Among these questions were several that this report will attempt to address, largely through physical evidence in the building itself. They are: How did tavern business affect domesticity and privacy of the Barnard family who lived in the adjoining house? How did the family express aspiration for gentility and status within a building that had dual functions? Did the unusual floor plan/design of the tavern stem from the rising number of taverns and [from] business competition? What were the various roles played by the Barnard Tavern in the community? Did the tavern serve as an instrument to redraw the boundaries of community life?

This report takes the position that the Barnard Tavern, if defined strictly as the framed unit that was added to the Frary House in 1795, does not possess the physical attributes to have served all the functions to be expected of a tavern. Questions remain as to whether this building served as a full tavern and, if it did, whether 1) it made use of some of the rooms in the adjacent Frary House, or else 2) had a different floor plan in the area now occupied by its second-floor hall.

Barnard Tavern is defined as the separate framed addition that was connected in 1795 to the southern end of an existing center-chimney dwelling, the Frary House (c. 1719/1765) by Salah Barnard during the last year of his life. The addition was first utilized as a licensed tavern by Salah Barnard's son and heir, Erastus Barnard (1768-1852). While we have a probate inventory for the estate of Salah Barnard, taken in April 1796 on the eve of the opening of the new wing as a tavern, we lack such an inventory for Erastus, who sold the property in 1805 and moved to Canandaigua, New York. Erastus held a

tavernkeeper's license only during the eight years between 1796 and 1804.¹ We thus lack a room-by-room listing of the contents of the addition when it served as a licensed tavern. Such an inventory could have provided crucial information on the use of each room, and on the possibility that the addition originally had a floor plan that differed from its existing layout.

Set flush with the façade of the Frary House but extending farther east than the eastern rear elevation of the dwelling, the 1795 addition transformed the rectangular outline of the existing Frary House into an L-shaped structure with a long southern elevation that had an entrance providing access to the heart of the addition. A second entrance on the western elevation of the addition, adjacent to the wall of the adjoining house, seems to have served primarily to provide access to a staircase that ascended to the second floor, where the principal feature of the building is a large hall or ballroom that is distinguished by larger scale and more elaborate joinery than are seen anywhere else in the tavern addition.

Functions of a tavern

Most taverns replicated the architectural characteristics of typical houses in their neighborhoods, though frequently on a larger-than-typical scale. As “public houses,” taverns reflected the styles of dwellings of the appropriate period (Georgia, Federal, Greek Revival). They provided ample kitchen facilities for cooking on a large scale, and they provided a number of sleeping chambers for travelers. To accommodate the animals that were constantly on the road, taverns also provided large, well-stocked barns and ample pastures for horses and cattle.

In addition, taverns commonly provided amenities not found in private houses, especially the seemingly ubiquitous bar or taproom where alcoholic beverages were dispensed to travelers and local residents alike. Many taverns also offered halls like the one seen in the Barnard Tavern—a type of chamber that was rare (but not unknown) in private dwellings. Like the hall in the Barnard Tavern, these rooms were usually located in an upper story: the second floor of a two-story building, and, often, the third floor of a three-story building.

The social function of the tavern was varied and crucial to life in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England. The tavern provided the person on the road with all the necessities of life: warmth, light, food, drink, sleep, and provender for draft animals or stock being driven to market. In the absence of any other facility, taverns were utilized as hospitals for sick or injured travelers in an age when travel could be arduous or hazardous.

Taverns provided a special service in towns and villages that hosted militia musters and sessions of court. Such places saw the periodic influx of strangers who needed sustenance during their stay in town. Militia musters were usually treated as social

¹ Susan McGowan and Amelia F. Miller, *Family & Landscape: Deerfield Homelots from 1671* (Deerfield, Mass.: Pocumtuck Valley Historical Association, 1996), pp. 143-144.

occasions, attended by gaiety and entertainment when maneuvers were not being practiced. Militiamen were frequently accompanied by their families and catered to by hawkers and peddlers who flocked to such occasions. All these strangers needed food and shelter. According to Susan McGowan and Amelia Miller, the common south of the current brick church served as Deerfield's training field in the early days of settlement, but the book does not seem to make it clear whether the town hosted regular musters in the late 1700s and early 1800s, when the Barnard Tavern was licensed.² In gauging the logistical demands placed on public houses like the Barnard Tavern and any contemporaneous Deerfield taverns, it will be important to determine whether Deerfield hosted either local or regimental musters.

Notes made on April 26, 2006, suggest that Greenfield was designated as the shire town for Franklin County in 1811. It will be important to determine whether sessions of court were held before that date in Deerfield. Court sessions were commonly held in taverns in instances where courthouses had not yet been erected, and this practice could have affected the Barnard Tavern, possibly playing a determining role in the provision of the imposing second-floor hall in the building.³

The tavern also provided facilities for corporate meetings, which typically required fires and candles and overnight accommodations for those assembling for such meetings. In this sense, the tavern served as an equivalent to the convention center of the twentieth century. Many New England institutions were incorporated in taverns, including Dartmouth College (in the Wyman Tavern in Keene, N. H., in 1770) and the New Hampshire Historical Society (in taverns in Exeter and Portsmouth, N. H., in 1823).⁴ Similarly, McGowan and Miller tell us that the first meeting of the trustees of Deerfield Academy was held in the "second-floor assembly hall" of the Barnard Tavern on April 18, 1797.⁵ The footnote citation supporting this statement apparently does not actually name the hall as the meeting place. Depending on the number of trustees assembled at the time (and one source says 25), such a meeting might have been hosted in another room where fire and candles were available. As noted below, there is some physical evidence to suggest the possibility that the current hall post-dates the period when the Barnard Tavern was licensed as a public house.

Beyond the physical needs of the traveler in both health and sickness, and of his animals, the tavern provided a place for social interaction between the local populace and the people of the road. Tavern bars were the resort of local patron and traveler alike, and were the forum in which ideas and opinions were exchanged and in which news was

² Ibid., pp. 43-47.

³ For the use of taverns for court sessions, and the evolution of deliberately designed courthouses during the early Federal period (with an emphasis on Massachusetts practice), see Martha J. McNamara, *From Tavern to Courthouse: Architecture and Ritual in American Law, 1658-1860* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

⁴ Donna-Belle and James L. Garvin, *On the Road North of Boston: New Hampshire Taverns and Turnpikes, 1700-1900*, second printing (Lebanon, N. H.: University Press of New England, 2003), p. 12.

⁵ Susan McGowan and Amelia F. Miller, *Family & Landscape: Deerfield Homelots from 1671*, p. 144 and note 13.

obtained through word of mouth and through the newspapers and pamphlets that were often made available for perusal.

Architectural characteristics of the Barnard Tavern

Since taverns reflected the norms of the context in which they stood, a licensed tavern in 1795 could have approached the scale of what came to be regarded as a “hotel” if located in an urban setting like Boston, or could have been a log house or near-hovel if located on the northern frontier where virtually every building was rudimentary.⁶

In a long-settled village like Deerfield, however, one would have expected a tavern of 1795 to have possessed all the amenities of a large and comfortable private dwelling. In such a building, a traveler or local resident would have expected to find an ample larder and kitchen, a barroom, and sleeping chambers filled with an adequate number of bedsteads and beds. In a building of sufficient size, the traveler or resident would also have expected to find a hall for meetings and assemblies. The Barnard Tavern seems to offer everything that would have been expected in a licensed public house *except* sleeping chambers. While the 1795 addition has adequate cooking, dining, and drinking spaces, together with an elegant hall that would have served a wide range of social functions, the building as it stands could not easily have provided sleeping facilities on an appropriate scale without recourse to chambers in the adjacent Frary House.

Even if the second floor hall and adjacent front chamber were equipped with bedsteads, the tavern wing would have been ill adapted to offer private sleeping chambers, especially for women travelers. Tavern halls were often utilized as bedchambers at times when they were not being used as places of assembly, but in such cases these large rooms were commonly subdivided into normal-sized chambers by hinged partitions that swung down from the ceiling or folded out from the walls. The vaulted ceiling and side benches of the Barnard Tavern hall would have made it difficult to subdivide this room into such sleeping chambers, though this difficulty does not absolutely preclude the use of the hall as a sleeping space.

Of course, the same part of the building could previously have been a more modest hall with a level ceiling, perhaps with fireplaces at both ends and with a shifting partition in the middle. Such a room could readily have provided two large sleeping chambers when not in use for assemblies.

It is possible that the 1795 wing was never intended to serve as a full tavern. Depending upon the requirements for a tavern license in Massachusetts in the 1790s, the building could have been intentionally restricted in its functions. As seen today, the Barnard Tavern offers a barroom, a dining room, and one or two kitchens. It offers a fine hall, which was adapted for entertainment to an unusual degree by being fitted with a musicians’ balcony in a recess beneath its vaulted ceiling. To the west of the hall, the

⁶ For more on tavern buildings in various scales and locations, see Chapter 2, “The Tavern Building,” in Garvin, *On the Road North of Boston: New Hampshire Taverns and Turnpikes, 1700-1900*, and James L. Garvin, “Early White Mountain Taverns,” *Historical New Hampshire* 50 (Spring-Summer 1995): 23-37.

building offers an antechamber that could have served the joint purposes of a bedchamber and a cloak room for those attending functions in the adjacent hall. If these amenities were all it offered, the Barnard Tavern would have served as an excellent and ample center of social activity, including dining, drinking, dancing, and meeting. But, lacking proportionate sleeping quarters, the building could not so obviously have served the role of a full tavern.

Other taverns in Deerfield

Pending further research, (which might include accounts written by travelers through Deerfield in the 1790s), a better understanding of the likely function to be expected of the Barnard Tavern by residents and travelers alike can be gained by examining other tavern facilities that the village may have provided between 1796 and 1804. The most readily available source of information on Deerfield taverns at all periods is Susan McGowan's and Amelia F. Miller's *Family & Landscape: Deerfield Homelots from 1671*. This book indicates that the following householders were licensed as tavernkeepers:

Samuel Field and David Field, Lot 34, 1729-1740; 1741-1746⁷

Samuel Taylor, pre-1734, and John Taylor, Lot 33, 1749-1752⁸

Samuel Wells, Lot 16, 1753-1761⁹

David Stebbins, Lot 35, 1766-1773¹⁰

John Sheldon, Lot 12, 1762-1773 and 1778-1798¹¹

John Catlin, Lot 22, 1762-1773¹²

Timothy Childs, Lot 15, license to retail liquor, 1763-1773¹³

David Sexton, Town Lot 1, [possibly 1774;] 1778-1784¹⁴

Samuel Bardwell, Lot 39, 1787-1789¹⁵

Ebenezer Wells, Lot 26, 1790¹⁶

Erastus Barnard, Lot 29I, 1796-1804¹⁷

John Bennett and successors, Lot 29II, 1805-1935¹⁸

If this compiled list is complete, then the Barnard Tavern was the only licensed public house between 1796 and 1805, and was supplanted after 1805 by a succession of taverns and hotels on the adjoining lot to the north.

⁷ Susan McGowan and Amelia F. Miller, *Family & Landscape: Deerfield Homelots from 1671*, p. 164.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

This, in turn, suggests that during this eight-year period, the Barnard Tavern had to have provided the amenities expected of a licensed tavern, including adequate sleeping chambers. As noted, the house as seen today does not appear to afford the number of bedchambers that would be required in the only licensed tavern in a village with the supposed traffic and activity of Deerfield, especially if Deerfield supported occasional militia musters and other activities that brought a concentrated influx of visitors from away.

Theories regarding the Barnard Tavern

Two possibilities suggest themselves. First, the tavern might have utilized bedchambers in the adjacent Frary House. During the period of the tavern's operation and after, the Frary House was owned by Elizabeth Nims Barnard (1745-1827), the widow of Salah Barnard and the mother of Erastus Barnard, the tavernkeeper. According to McGowan and Miller, the Frary House was set off to the widow Barnard "as her dower."¹⁹ A widow's dower was normally set at one-third of the late husband's estate, and often entailed the legal (and sometimes physical) subdivision of the dwelling to provide the widow with possession of the equivalent of one-third of the house and appurtenances. It will therefore be important to ascertain whether the widow Barnard actually received all of the Frary House as her dower, or only a portion of it.

Even if Elizabeth Nims Barnard received the entire dwelling, it is possible that she rented rooms to her son for his use as tavern bedchambers. There are sealed door openings that once passed from the Barnard Tavern stairhall to adjacent rooms in the Frary House, near the front of the stairs, on both the first and second floor levels of the hallway. At one time, there clearly was access from one property to the other through this party wall.²⁰

In addition to the logistical issue of providing sleeping quarters for tavern guests, Erastus Barnard reportedly had four small children in his family during the years when he held a taverner's license. Thus, his private family also had a need at least for limited sleeping accommodations, which are not clearly in evidence within the 1795 building except perhaps for the second-floor bedchamber west of the ballroom.

A second possibility is that the needed bedchambers were provided in the area of the tavern now occupied by the hall or ballroom, and that the hall represents a later change made after the tavern license expired. As noted above, the hall is by far the most impressive and elaborate chamber in the Barnard Tavern. It is the only room in the tavern that has joiner's work that reflects the Federal architectural style in a full sense.

The hall is distinguished by detailing that far exceeds the quality of woodwork anywhere else in the building in elaboration and expense. The room also has a vaulted ceiling that must have required special thought in designing the roof trusses overhead (not seen during our inspection of the building). All in all, this chamber was designed to provide an impressive setting for any social function that might take place here. This must have

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 143.

²⁰ More recent connecting doorways were reportedly cut through the wall by C. Alice Baker.

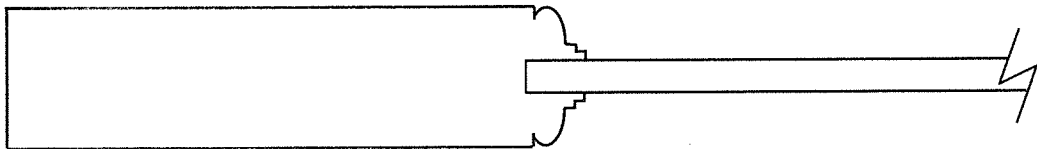
been the most impressive meeting place in the village until possibly supplanted by halls in the taverns that were later built on the adjoining lot north of the Frary House. It reportedly provided a setting for dances, classes offered by dancing masters, vendues, probate court sessions, militia elections, and a variety of meetings.

We did not examine the joinery of this hall in detail. We know that some features of the room were elaborated under the ownership of C. Alice Baker, who employed the Boston architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge as well as Clarence P. Hoyt, “an architect who was born and grew up in Deerfield and who had experience in ‘colonial’ architecture.”²¹ These consultants made certain known changes to the room, notably the installation of the elaborate balustrade, with its anachronistic swash-turned balusters, at the front of the musicians’ balcony. Nevertheless, we may assume that most of the more authentic-appearing features of the hall are original.

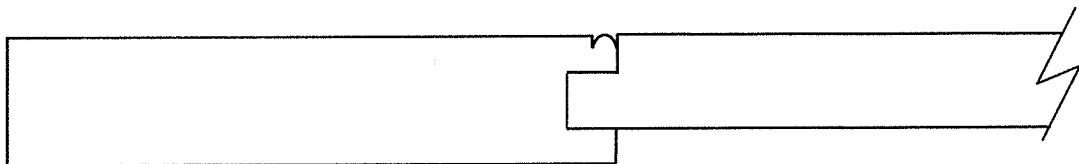
The hall reflects the Federal style as it was expressed in the immediate vicinity by Asher Benjamin and his contemporaries. This style is thoroughly defined in Benjamin’s *The Country Builder’s Assistant*, which first appeared in 1797 in an edition that was published in Greenfield, a few miles from Deerfield, by Thomas Dickman.

Among the characteristic features of the hall are the arched recesses on each side of the eastern fireplace, the fluted architraves of each of the two arches, and the elaborate mantelpiece with its flat-paneled pilasters, central tablet, and guttae in the bed moldings beneath the shelf. Other unusual features of this room include rope-turned dowels at the arrises of the window casings and along the edges of several other features of the room, the flat-paneled wainscoting and bench paneling, and the chip-carved frieze above the doorway that provides the only entrance to the hall.

The unusual degree of elaboration of this room is shown in the entrance door, a six-panel, double-sided door that has the only fully developed Federal-style detailing to be seen in any door in the house:



By contrast, most doors on the first floor are four-panel doors of unusual simplicity:



²¹ Elizabeth Stillinger, *Historic Deerfield: A Portrait of Early America* (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1992), pp. 108-109.

The contrast in joinery between the hall and any other part of the house suggests that an individual joiner of great skill was employed to finish the ballroom, probably under separate contract. Joinery elsewhere in the tavern is workmanlike and competent, but expresses the early Federal style only in the most basic way.

The same contrast might also suggest that the hall was not created until the 1795 addition ceased to be licensed as a tavern and reverted to use as a private dwelling after 1805. Presumably, any private homeowner could possess and rent a hall without a taverner's license as long as the owner did not retail liquor on the premises. If the space now occupied by the hall was utilized for bedchambers when the Barnard Tavern operated as a public house, then that space might have been freed for another use once the building no longer needed to accommodate travelers. We know that Hezekiah Wright Strong (1768-1848) owned the Barnard Tavern between 1805 and 1811, purchasing the 1795 part of the property from Erastus Barnard.²² And we know that Strong sold the property to Ebenezer Hinsdale Williams (1761-1838) in 1811.²³

According to information supplied to us on April 21, 2006, the Barnard Tavern hall remained the only space of its kind in the village for some years (the schoolhouse on the common supplying the only other large meeting room), and dancing masters used the hall for classes as late as 1819-21. This later use of the room, after the 1795 building ceased to accommodate travelers, suggests the possibility that the hall was not created until the building needed fewer bedchambers, and that it was built by an entrepreneurial later owner as a public hall that was not intended as an adjunct to a licensed tavern.

Other parts of the Barnard Tavern that arouse puzzlement are the two kitchens, served by a single chimney with back-to-back cooking fireplaces, at the eastern end of the 1795 building. Large kitchens, or even double kitchens, were characteristic of taverns, so the presence of two kitchens, by themselves, is not unexpected. Tavernkeepers were the caterers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, capable of producing large meals, and even banquets, for large numbers of diners on short notice. An example of cooking on a large scale occurred when New Hampshire Royal Governor John Wentworth was received in Portsmouth in 1767. Local tavernkeeper James Stoodley prepared the inaugural dinner for about 100 invited guests. The fare included a dozen turkeys, two dozen ducks, three dozen dunghill fowls, fifty pounds of pork, as well as tongue, bacon, veal, and cod.²⁴ This dinner was amply planned well ahead of time, and involved "28 Days Labour for Sundry Persons." A more remarkable instance of a tavernkeeper's resourcefulness occurred in the early nineteenth century when "a party of fifteen or twenty guests arrived at the Hatch tavern in Greenland [N. H.] expecting dinner. Finding the larder empty, Mary Hatch directed her son to drive home the sheep

²² Susan McGowan and Amelia F. Miller, *Family & Landscape: Deerfield Homelots from 1671*, p. 144.

²³ *Ibid.* According to McGowan and Miller, "Jackson Dickinson (1790-1816) owned it in 1816 and, following his death that year, his widow, Harriet J. Dickinson (b. c.1795) sold it in 1818 to Seth Nims (1762-1831), her neighbor to the south." The authors supply a further chain of ownership. Meanwhile, the widowed Elizabeth Nims Barnard, Erastus' mother, "continued to live in the earlier, north portion of the building until her death in 1827." (*ibid.*, p. 144).

²⁴ Garvin, *On the Road North of Boston: New Hampshire Taverns and Turnpikes, 1700-1900*, p. 153.

from a pasture half a mile away. Killing a lamb, the hostess cooked parts of it, baked bread, and boiled vegetables for the hungry crowd, all within the space of two hours.”²⁵

Given the culinary demands made upon a tavern, the presence of two cooking fireplaces, as seen in the 1795 addition, is not unusual. But these fireplaces have been rebuilt, reportedly standing on a modern footing of concrete blocks, and the details of their reconstruction raise questions, especially in the area of the restored ovens.

A brick oven of the type that has no separate flue inside its mouth is essentially a sealed, domed chamber with only one opening. Heating such an oven entails building a fire within, on the oven floor, leaving the oven’s mouth uncovered to provide air to the fire and to allow smoke to exit and pass up the flue of the adjacent fireplace. Once the bricks are sufficiently heated, the ashes and coals are removed and food is placed within the oven. The mouth is then sealed with a wood or iron stopper to allow baking to take place.

The back-to-back ovens in the eastern chimney of the Barnard Tavern are connected. The oven cavity has two mouths, one opening into the eastern fireplace, and the other into the western fireplace. This arrangement seems unprecedented, and suggests serious doubts as to whether such a linked pair of ovens could effectively be heated or would bake food properly. Baking in a correctly built oven depends largely on the symmetry of the dome, which radiates stored heat evenly upon the food resting on the oven floor below. When two ovens are placed close together in a chimney that remains in original condition, the two chambers and domes are invariably separated by brickwork.

The anomaly of these linked ovens suggests that the two kitchen fireplaces were restored on incomplete evidence. This likelihood will make the interpretation of tavern cuisine somewhat more difficult.

Suggestions for further research

The foregoing comments have raised a number of questions and offered few answers. Yet development of “interactive e-tools to supplement on-site visits” in a self-guided visitor’s experience, as proposed in the NEH grant application, will require that answers to some of these questions be sought, or at least that these and other questions be posed to visitors as part of the challenge of understanding a 200-year-old building. And the proposed reinterpretation of the connected Frary House as an example of colonial revival “restoration” will need to be considered in conjunction with the interpretation of the adjacent Barnard Tavern if it should be found that, while licensed, the tavern utilized bedchambers north of the party wall that separated the two properties.

Among the suggestions that might arise from the foregoing questions are the following, some of which may already have been carried out by staff or interns at Historic Deerfield or by Deerfield Fellows:

²⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

1. Review or research travelers' accounts between 1795 and 1806 to locate possible references to the Barnard Tavern.
2. Compile a history of militia activities in Deerfield, with special reference to regimental musters that may have brought large numbers of strangers needing overnight accommodations.
3. Compile a history of probate and other courts held in Deerfield to learn where courts convened at various dates, if possible.
4. Search for documentation of the physical boundaries of Elizabeth Nims Barnard's widow's dower. Did she really receive possession of the entire Frary House?
5. Search for evidence of the use, through rental or lease, of rooms in the Frary House by tavernkeeper Erastus Barnard after 1796.
6. Investigate and attempt to date the two sealed door openings that once provided access through the party wall on both floors. Were these openings likely sealed in 1795 when the late Salah Barnard's household was subdivided among his widow and heirs, or in 1806 when the 1795 addition ceased to function as a tavern and to have a possible need for access to bedchambers beyond the party wall? Check nail evidence on the assumption that laths of 1795 might employ wrought nails rather than cut.
7. Thoroughly examine the joiner's work of the hall or ballroom to try to determine whether the present detailing represents the first interior finish in this part of the 1795 frame, or a remodeling. Compare the present woodwork with dated local examples to try to determine whether the joinery is likely to date from 1795 or from after 1806. Check nail evidence on the assumption that joinery of 1795 might employ wrought nails rather than cut. Examine joints in the floor boards for the possibility that they may reveal previous partitions in this area. Investigate the roof trusses to try to determine whether this portion of the frame originally had level tie beams and whether the vaulted ceiling represents a later change.
8. Carry out a careful examination of the eastern chimney to try to determine how much is new work and whether the fireplace layout could have accommodated two ovens that did not intersect one another.
9. Using whatever means have not been exhausted, research former barns and other outbuildings on the property and attempt to define the relationship between the buildings and their farmlands.