



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

30 North Market Street, Third Floor Frederick, Maryland 21701 (301) 600-1147



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### CASE NO. CR 19-02 NOMINATION TO COUNTY REGISTER STAFF REPORT

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#### SUMMARY

**Property:** Daniel Sheffer Farmstead  
8926 Mount Tabor Road, Middletown vicinity  
**Applicants:** Jane and Geb Byron

Public Hearing for consideration of placing the property located at 8926 Mount Tabor Road, Middletown, the Daniel Sheffer Farmstead, on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Jane and Geb Byron, property owners of record.

The public hearing for the nomination of the property to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held at 7:00 p.m., or thereafter, in the First Floor Hearing Room at Winchester Hall at 12 E. Church Street, Frederick on September 4, 2019.



## **DESIGNATION STATUS**

The property is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties under survey number F-4-17. The Daniel Sheffer Farmstead was determined to meet Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the farmstead illustrates important regional agricultural patterns from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries and is located on the eastern edge of the Civil War's Battlefield of South Mountain. On the day of the battle, the farming complex served as a temporary hospital for wounded soldiers. The farmstead also is significant under Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of their types, periods, and methods of construction. Additionally, the property is listed as a contributing property within the Turner's and Fox's Gaps National Historic District and the Fox's Gap Historic District on the State Inventory (F-4-17B).

Furthermore, the property has a recorded deed of easement with the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) where the dominant scenic, cultural, rural, historical, archeological, agricultural, woodland and wetland character of the property must be conserved. The easement permits limited construction of accessory structures and the existing structures to be improved, repaired, restored, replaced, altered, remodeled and maintained as long as similar size and purposed remain. Further limitations are set on the residence, spring house, bank barn, and stone walls, all identified in the easement as "Protected Structures." Any exterior alterations to these protected structures must be communicated to MET/MHT ninety days prior to undertaking the alterations in order to obtain written approval.

## **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

The applicants submitted a completed County Register nomination form, portions of the Maryland Historical Trust Review form, plat map, and digital photographs. At Staff's request, additional photographs of the existing structures, and a topographic map were submitted with the form. Staff also included the National Register nomination form.

## **SITE VISITS**

Site visit dates were on Friday, August 23, 2 – 4 p.m., and Saturday, August 24, 10 – 12 p.m. Commissioners who could not attend either of these dates were urged to familiarize themselves with the exterior on their own time.

## **REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1) Analysis**

The documentation provided in the National Register nomination clearly establishes the architectural and historical significance of the Daniel Sheffer Farmstead, indicating that is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1B), 6B(2A), and 6B(2E).

## 2) History Summary

According to the National Register nomination form, the main house was constructed circa 1840-1850 after Philip Sheffer purchased the property in 1835. Sheffer's will, probated in 1842, provided farms for his three sons and states in the will that Daniel was already residing on the farm. The wood-frame bank barn was constructed circa 1900 and rests on a stone foundation of an older barn. A stone springhouse is located near the house. A milk house and terra cotta silo were added to the complex in the 1930s.

Daniel Sheffer died in 1863. His son George purchased the property and held onto it until 1873. George sold it to Peter Shank who owned the property until 1899. The Moser family owned the property from 1899-1940 and the Keller family held onto it from 1940 to 1994. In June of 1994, the State purchased the property from the Keller estate using Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act funds, Program Open Space money, and funds from the State Highway Authority<sup>1</sup>. The property was sold at auction in September 1999 to the Goodloe's.

## 3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance

The property is eligible for listing under criteria 6B(1A):

*The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, state, or nation.*

The Daniel Sheffer Farmstead represents a typical farmer-occupied agricultural complex located in western Frederick County that illustrates regional agricultural patterns from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. An excerpt from the Daniel Sheffer Farm National Register nomination form states:

Agriculture was the economic basis for initial settlement in Frederick County during the early-eighteenth century and continued to play a dominant role until after World War II. During most of the nineteenth century, diversified agricultural production was practiced on the farmstead. Wheat and other grains were grown as the farm's primary cash crops during the mid-nineteenth century....The small buildings located near the house, including the springhouse, meat house, chicken house, and hog pen are indicative of the variety of activities required to maintain and operate a nineteenth century farm efficiently.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a significant shift in agricultural practices as dairy farming came to dominate agricultural production in Frederick County. The wood-frame bank barn, constructed ca. 1900 on the foundation of an older barn, was built during this period and illustrates this shift from agricultural crops to dairying. The subsequent additions of the milking

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Burns, "Governments to pay \$640k to preserve historic land," *Frederick News Post*, June 9, 1994, A1.

parlor, concrete block dairy, and the terra cotta silo reflect changes in regulations requiring milk sterilization that were introduced into the milk industry during the early-twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally the Daniel Sheffer farmstead is eligible under criteria 6B(1B):

*The property is the site of an historic event.*

The farmstead played a military role during the Civil War's Battle of South Mountain. Fighting at Fox's Gap, located approximately one mile south of Turner's Gap (where the National Pike crossed South Mountain) began the morning of September 14, 1862. By that afternoon, the fighting had reached Turner's Gap and along Frosttown Road (now Dahlgren Road). According to the National Register nomination form:

Federal troops from New York arrived at Mt. Tabor Church just east of the Sheffer farmstead at about three-thirty that afternoon. A regiment of New York troops crossed the fields west of the church to take up positions along the farm road northwest of the Sheffer farmstead. As these troops marched across the fields towards the farm road, they flushed an old woman from the Sheffer house, who asked them where they were headed. When they replied up the hill behind the house, she was reported to have waved the soldiers back from her hands with the warning that they would get hurt (Priest 1992:251).

Two hours later, Federal troops (Wisconsin and Indiana) began their assault on Turner's Gap along the National Road (Priest 1992). By late afternoon, fighting was occurring in three areas west of the Sheffer farmstead: Frosttown Road gorge, up the hill behind the house, and along National Pike.<sup>3</sup>

In *History of Frederick County Volume II*, Reno S. Harp, great nephew of Daniel Sheffer, recounted the following story:

Emma V. Harp, a deceased child, was born on Saturday morning, September the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1862, in the home of Jonas Sheffer, her grandfather [and brother of Daniel], at the base of South Mountain, and the same day was moved with her mother one mile through the picket lines of the Confederate forces to the home of Daniel Sheffer. The following day one shell penetrated both brick walls of the house. It severed a large peach tree, and then exploded in the garden. Another shell exploded in the parlor of the house. In this house of Daniel Sheffer many soldiers' wounds were dressed during the battle of South Mountain, among whom was General Hatch. While his wound was being dressed on the first floor of the house,

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<sup>2</sup> Katherine Grandine, "Sheffer, Daniel, Farmstead," (*National Register Nomination*, February 2000), Section 8 Page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Grandine, "Sheffer, Daniel, Farmstead," Section 8 Pages 3 & 4.

the mother with her infant was being cared from on the second floor. It was at this house that Major William McKinley was given his breakfast by grandmother Sheffer, together with many of the Union soldiers, on their way to Antietam.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4) Architectural and Design Significance**

The property is eligible under criteria 6B(2A):

*The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*

The Daniel Sheffer farmstead is a good example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead with associated domestic and agricultural outbuildings, which define farm life over the period of 1840-1920. The addition of a milking parlor and milk house during the 1930's is indicative of the development of the dairy industry in Frederick County in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The springhouse, bank barn, and milking parlor are the only remaining historically significant agricultural outbuildings on the property.

Furthermore, in the opinion of Staff, the Daniel Sheffer farmstead is also eligible under criteria 6B(2E):

*The property represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County, due to its singular physical characteristics, landscape, or historical event.*

Many of the properties located along the foot of South Mountain served in some manner during the Battle of South Mountain. However, the Daniel Sheffer Farmstead is distinct in the few alterations to its buildings and the environmental setting. The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory Form, prepared by Janet Davis in 1992, states and continues to be true today:

Although modern housing has been built along Mt. Tabor Road, the distance of the farmstead from the road and the open character of the fields surrounding it clearly portray the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century setting of the complex. In the fields west of the farmstead are several low stone walls, undoubtedly dating from the 1840's and 1850's, which are identical to those behind which both Union and Confederate troops took cover during the 1862 battle.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> T.J. C. Williams and Folger McKinsey, *History of Frederick County Volume II*, (Regional Publishing Company, Baltimore, reprinted 1979), 905.

<sup>5</sup> Janet Davis, "Daniel Sheffer Farmstead," (*Maryland Historic Sites Inventory Form*, March 1992), 5.



### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Daniel Sheffer Farmstead property for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criterion 6B(1A), 6B(1B), 6B(2A), and 6B(2E) as described in Section 1-23-6B of the County Code.

If the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) recommends the property for local designation, the HPC will submit a letter of recommendation to the County Council for final action.