



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

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



CASE NO. CR 24-05 COUNTY REGISTER NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

SUMMARY

Property: Henry Smeltzer Farmstead
3231 Bidle Road, Middletown

Applicant: Charles and Kim Brown

Public Hearing for consideration of nominating the property located at 3231 Bidle Road, Henry Smeltzer Farmstead, to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Charles and Kim Brown, property owners of record.

The public hearing for the nomination to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held at 6:30 p.m., or thereafter, on October 2, 2024.



Figure 1: Subject Property.

DESIGNATION STATUS

The property is listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties under inventory number F-4-147 and on the National Register of Historic Places as the Henry Smeltzer Farmstead. The nominated property contains the historic house, pumphouse, garage, slaughter house, weigh shed, and barn and encompasses approximately 2.53 acres of land.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

A completed County Register nomination form, maps, a statement of significance, and photographs were submitted.

SITE VISITS

Site visit dates were scheduled for September 27th and 29th.

REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

1) Analysis

The architectural and historical significance of the Henry Smeltzer Farmstead is documented in the supporting materials. The property is locally significant for its association with small farming and more recently as a slaughter facility for Main's Meat Market in nearby Middletown and for its vernacular architecture of an 1830s farmhouse. Based on the information provided, Staff finds the property is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A) and 6B(2A).

2) History Summary

The Henry Smeltzer Farmstead was built beginning in circa 1832 with improvements and alterations made through 1960. The property is located near Middletown with the entire current parcel consisting of 20.03 acres.

The property was once part of a larger part of a tract of land called "Watsons Welfare," first surveyed in 1744 as 100 acres for Daniel Dulaney. However, in 1751, Joseph Chapline had the tract resurveyed as 260 acres. In 1770, Van Swearingen purchased the tract and improved it with a grist mill and sawmill. He left this property to his sons, John and Thomas, in his Last Will and Testament. The property was divided and parcels were sold over the intervening years. George Bowlus purchased a few of the parcels. In 1828, Bowlus sold 30 acres on the east side of Catoctin Creek to Rebecca Phillips. In 1832, the property is sold to Henry Smeltzer for \$1,813. Smeltzer also purchased two adjoining tracts, one 10 ½ acre tract called "Little Left" and the other a 7 ¼ acre piece of "Watsons Welfare" from David Bowlus in 1833. The farmstead had several owners following Henry's death in 1850. In 1924, local "meat store" owner Charles Main purchased several parcels including the 49-acre Smeltzer farmstead. Main operated a meat market in Middletown and appears to have purchased the Smeltzer farm to serve as a finishing farm and

slaughterhouse. The Main family retained the property until 1972 when the current twenty-acre farm parcel was divided and sold to Donald and Lucille Smith. The current property owners have retained it since 2009. The period of significance for this property is circa 1832, the presumed construction date of the house, through 1960, the time the farm remained in continuous use and achieved its current and historic form and appearance.

3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance Criteria

The property is eligible for listing under this category for meeting criteria 6B(1A) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(1) of the Frederick County Code:

- 6B(1A): *The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.*

The property has significant character and interest as part of development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of the County. As mid-Maryland became more settled and was moving from initial interests of fur trading and subsistence farming, more substantial farming was established. Grain farming was prominent requiring gristmills to convert the grain into flour or meal. These commodities were sent to markets in Baltimore or Philadelphia on newly developed turnpikes. With these early transportation issues solved during the first half of the 19th century, Frederick County prospered. Farming and agricultural processing industries dominated the County. Many farms grew in size and in the scale of their operations, with the addition of buildings. Substantially built houses of brick or stone and large bank barns reflect the agricultural prosperity of the region.

As agriculture evolved and the United States expanded westward, Frederick County's agriculture also changed. With grain farming becoming more prosperous in the mid-west, Frederick County began diversifying and moving towards dairy farming in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Also during this period, "truck farms" from which fresh produce, meats, and dairy products were delivered directly to local markets and homes, were developed in mid-Maryland.

The Henry Smeltzer Farmstead reflects this prosperous agricultural period in Frederick County as well as its transition into "truck farms." Once part of a larger milling operation, the land was divided allowing Henry Smeltzer to establish his own grain farming operation in the 1830s and 1840s. The farm also reflects its transition from a grain and livestock farm into an early 20th century "truck farm" providing pork and other meats to Main's Meat Market in nearby Middletown.

4) Architectural and Design Significance Criteria

The property is also eligible under this category for meeting criteria 6B(2A) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(2) of Frederick County Code:

- 6B(2A): *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*

The Henry Smeltzer Farmstead is also significant for its architectural characteristics. German settlers in Frederick County, influenced the types of houses and barns that were built on their property. Houses were often enlarged into more substantial buildings and bank barns replaced smaller log-crib stables. Materials found or made on the farm or nearby were often used to construct the buildings, such as stones for foundations or even whole buildings, bricks made on-site, and utilizing timber for floor joists and roof rafters. Nineteenth century Germanic farmhouses spanned four to six bays, often sat on a hillside with raised cellar, and had side gables. By the second quarter of the 19th century, porches began to appear either across the entire front or recessed in an inset containing two or three bays along the front elevation at the kitchen wall, such as with this house. Typical floor plans consisted of center passages with one or two rooms on either side, or a two or four room plan where the main entrance opened directly into a room, as with the Smeltzer house.

The house retains many regional Germanic architectural traditions and although there have been alterations over time, the floor plan, hillside layout, woodwork, and façade arrangement remain intact and important definers of 1830s farmhouse architecture as evolved by German-descended populations.

RECOMMENDATION

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