

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

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



CASE NO. CR 20-04 (Boundary Expansion) COUNTY REGISTER NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

SUMMARY

Property: Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District (Boundary Expansion)
6509 Green Valley Road, New Market

Applicants: Audu Bemer and Naomi Walcott

Public Hearing for consideration of expanding the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District to include the Oliver P. Harding Farm, located at 6509 Green Valley Road, New Market. Submitted by Audu Bemer and Naomi Walcott, 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 November 6, 2024.

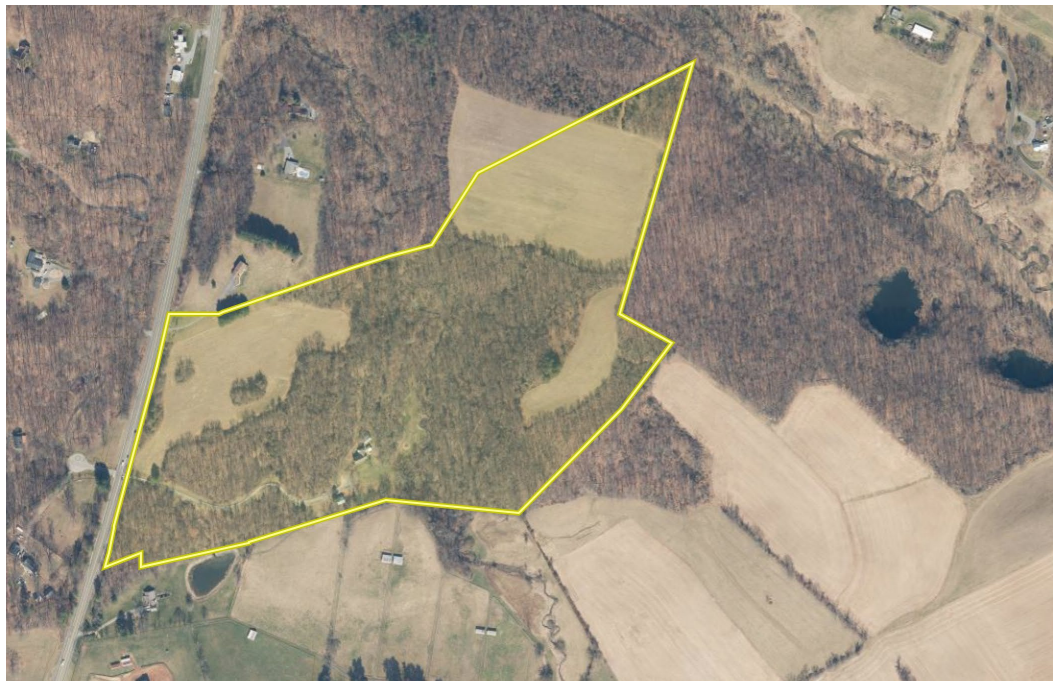


Figure 1: Subject Property.

DESIGNATION STATUS

The proposed expansion to the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District includes the Oliver P. Harding farm which is listed individually on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) under inventory number F-5-99 and is included as a contributing property in the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic Landscape under inventory number F-5-124. The proposed expansion contains a historic house, smokehouse, and spring house and encompasses approximately 57.68 acres. The proposed Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) review areas would be immediately around the historic house, smokehouse, and springhouse.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

A completed County Register nomination form, map, photographs, and the MIHP forms are provided.

SITE VISITS

Site visit dates were scheduled for November 2 and 3rd.

REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

1) Analysis

The history and documentation provided in the nomination and the MIHP forms clearly establish the architectural and historical significance of the Oliver P. Harding Farm. In history and architecture, it is very similar to the histories and architecture already represented in the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District (District).

Visual analysis of the proposed expansion also shows that the landscape is relatively unaltered and contains numerous components of a rural district. The National Park Service document *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System*, dated 1984, outlines how to identify and evaluate rural historic districts. This process involves identifying the landscape components that form and define the proposed district. Below is the list of these landscape components with an analysis of how the District and the proposed expansion of the District meets each component:

1. Overall Patterns of Landscape Spatial Organization

According to the NPS document, this component is reflected in major material components, predominant landforms, and natural features. Review of historic topographic maps and historical aerial photographs reveal that the rolling topography, Bens Branch, and major road networks, which include Old Annapolis Road, Lime Plant Road, and Detrick Road, remain largely unchanged. Green Valley Road and Old National Pike have been realigned in places. Within the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District, the same distances between farmsteads are maintained with most dwellings facing

southwesterly. Much of the field patterns remain the same as well. The Oliver P. Harding farm is very similar in that the dwelling faces south and maintains much of the original distances between historic outbuildings and the landscape. While more wooded than in 1937, the property still retains pastureland.

2. Land Use

The district has been utilized for farming since the European settlers first arrived in the area in the 1740s. This use is largely unchanged; however, the types of crops and livestock over the years has changed. Additionally, portions of these farms have been subdivided and newer homes built. Any pre-history use of this area was not made available. The Oliver P. Harding farm ceased full-time agricultural operation most likely around 1970 when the tract was subdivided from 143 acres to 57 acres.

3. Response to Natural Features

Bens Branch and its tributaries run through most of the farms located within the district. The farmhouses are typically oriented to face the water source and are located in close proximity. The houses and structures are located below the highest hill tops in the area, but some houses and farm buildings are located on smaller hill crests. Three farms also have ponds that were used either recreationally or for watering animals and were most likely created in the early 1900s. On the Oliver P. Harding farm, a tributary of Bens Branch runs through the central portion of the property. The house faces southeasterly towards the stream and sits atop a hill. The springhouse sits directly over the stream.

4. Circulation Networks

Old Annapolis Road, Detrick Road, Lime Plant Road, and Old National Pike largely maintain their original alignment where they adjoin with the proposed district. Green Valley Road has been altered from its original alignment. Several road beds within the district are still visible and some are still in use. Notably the farm lane from the Basil Harding house to the Walter Burrall Lime Plant can be faintly seen in recent aerial photographs. Portions of this farm lane are still used. According to *Pioneers of Old Monocacy*, Lime Plant Road was part of the Monocacy-Annapolis Road, one of the first roads to run east-west through the county.¹ For the Oliver P. Harding house, the driveway has been shortened and re-routed from its historical appearance on the 1937 aerial, largely due to the development of Green Valley Road.

5. Boundary Demarcations

Review of historic aerial photographs show that much of the field demarcations remain the same as today. Visual review of the farms indicate that these demarcations are made by post and wire fences, post and board fences, or tree lines. For the Oliver P. Harding farm, the boundary demarcations do not match what is shown on the 1937 or even the

¹ Grace Trace and John Dern, *Pioneers of Old Monocacy, The Early Settlement of Frederick County, Maryland 1721-1743*, p 228.

1973 aerial photographs. This is most likely due to the agricultural operations on the property ceasing after 1970.

6. Vegetation Related to Land Use

Wood lots observed in the historical aerials and topographic maps are generally the same size and location as today. Crop and livestock types have changed over time but the use of the fields to grow crops or to pasture cattle has remained. For the Oliver P. Harding farm, this has changed. Whereas the fields were more prominent pre-1973, today woods have covered the majority of the land.

7. Cluster Arrangement

The farmsteads are clustered close with other outbuildings. Several farms still have domestic outbuildings clustered close to the main historic dwelling with agricultural buildings located further away from the house, but still in proximity. This is true for the Oliver P. Harding farm as well.

8. Structures: Type, Function, Materials, Construction

There are eight historic dwellings located in the district. Two are constructed of brick, five are constructed with stone, and one is believed to be log but has since been covered with aluminum siding. Eight bank barns are located within the district, all built on stone foundations. Some of the barns still maintain wood or stone siding while others have newer replacement metal siding. A concrete-block, wood-sided dairy barn is also located in the district, along with several concrete-block milk houses. Stone spring houses and wooden meat/smokehouses, chicken houses, wagon sheds/corn cribs also make up the structures within the district. A cemetery and lime plant are within the district boundaries as well. The addition of the Oliver P. Harding farm would increase the dwelling count to nine and increase the number of stone dwellings to six. Furthermore, the farm will add another stone smokehouse and springhouse to the collection of outbuildings in the District.

9. Small-scale Elements

According to the NPS document, small scale elements could include foot bridges, fence types, or signage that are unique or commonly repeated throughout the district. The District has post and wire fencing that is located on nearly every property and some post and board fencing as well. No bridges are located within the District, but a concrete culvert runs over Bens Branch on the Basil Harding property. Additionally, a cattle grate is located on the lane leading onto the Still Works farm.

10. Historical Views and Other Perceptual Qualities

No historical photographs were provided, other than those photographs taken with previous nomination forms. Other perceptual qualities would include the smells and sounds associated with farms.

By analyzing these ten landscape components, along with the historical and architectural documentation, it can be better understood how the Oliver P. Harding farm adds to the District. While the farm itself does not maintain vegetation elements and boundary demarcations that were historically present, it contributes through its similar cluster arrangements, response to natural features, structure types, and overall patterns of landscape orientation.

2) History Summary

The Oliver P. Harding farmhouse was built circa 1780-1790 with major interior alterations in the late 1820s or early 1830s. The two stone outbuildings date from the same period as the house. Improvements were made to the house in 1970 and again in 2017 when the 1970 rear addition was removed and replaced with a larger two-story addition.

The property is part of several tracts of land called “Darby’s Delight” and “Peace and Plenty.” The earliest land record is from 1784 when George Burkhart, Sr. sold 100 acres to Michael Mofsetter and describes “houfer [?] buildings, gardens, orchards...” indicating a farm was already located on the property. In 1836, Christian Harding, executor of Michael Mofsetter’s estate, sold the property to his son Philip Harding. Four months later, Christian purchased the property from his son. Christian Harding maintained several land holdings in the area, including a saw and grist mill in the Lime Plant Road area. His Last Will and Testament divided his land holdings among his children and grandchildren. His son John Harding received the subject property in 1848. John and his son Oliver farmed the land and at times resided together on the property per the US Census records. However, following John’s death, the property was owned by Oliver in 1872. Oliver mortgaged the property in 1883 to Lydia Wood and defaulted and lost the property in 1895. During the first seven decades of the 20th century, the property went through several owners and the acreage was reduced from 143.37 acres to its current acreage of 57.68 acres. The current owners have retained it since 2020.

3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance Criteria

The District was found eligible for listing under this category by meeting the following criteria 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 the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, state, or nation;*
- 6B(1C): *The property is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society; and*
- 6B(1D): *The property exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the County and its communities.*

The Oliver P. Harding property adds to this significance for its representation of agricultural development in the eastern portion of Frederick County of rural elite farmers of English heritage

who used enslaved and tenant labor to work the farms. The stone farmhouse exemplifies the cultural and economic status of the Harding's as an early farming family in the community. Furthermore, this family influenced the economic development of nearby New Market and New London.

The District is also associated with another group of persons, the enslaved, whose labor produced the commodities on many of the farms. This provided the economic foundation for not just New Market, but the county and even the state. While no aboveground resources associated with the enslaved exist on these farms, there is potential for belowground resources to provide additional information about these people. John and Oliver Harding do not appear on the 1850 Schedule 2 of the US Census as slaveholders; however, in 1840 one enslaved male child under ten is noted in John Harding's household and by 1850 a "free mulatto" named William Stanton is living with Oliver. Martha Reed a "house servant" is noted in John's household from 1840 through 1870. While John and Oliver don't appear in the records as enslaving people, it is possible they may have shared enslaved labor with their nearby relatives or hired laborers, possibly free Blacks.

4) Architectural and Design Significance Criteria

The District was also found eligible under this category by meeting the following criteria 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; and*
- 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.*

The farmhouses in the District are characteristically two-and-a-half story masonry houses, the majority stone. They are three to five bays wide under gable roofs built between 1760 and 1870. The additional agricultural outbuildings found on the farms are typical types of construction found on other farms in the county. The Oliver P. Harding house contributes to this architectural significance for its additional representation of a two-story, side gabled, stone dwelling. Its recessed side addition with a two-story porch is a unique feature in the District that is not represented elsewhere. Additionally, the stone smokehouse and springhouse add to the architectural significance of the farm.

The landscape components of the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District clearly represent a familiar and established visual feature to the community that has not largely changed. The landscape is a visual feature that is similarly replicated in other areas of the County as well. Together, the historic vistas of agricultural fields, historic farm complexes, woodlots, fences, meandering streams, farm ponds, and farm lanes create a landscape with high historic integrity. While modern intrusions such as newer houses and farm structures can be viewed, the overall components that contribute to the historic character and integrity of the landscape are well

preserved. The addition of the Oliver P. Harding farm will enhance the District's ability to represent the familiar and visual features of the area.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends expansion of the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District to include the Oliver P. Harding farm for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criterion 6B(1A), 6B(1C), 6B(1D), 6B(2A), and 6B(2E) as described in Chapter 1-23-6B of the County Code.