

Landmark Nomination Report:
Oak Tree Farm or V. Dust-Moler Farm
11 Uvilla Rd. Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission

Physical Description

The original eastern part of the historic house is a vernacular building of log construction dating to 1836. This earliest section has two rooms on the ground floor and two rooms above on the second floor with an outboard brick-topped stone chimney. The house was enlarged around 1892 and the exterior was refashioned with decorative shingles, 2-over-2 window sashes, interior brick chimneys, and German siding.

The west side of the house contains the larger Victorian staircase with turned spindles, newel post and decorative riser treatments. The wall under the stair is signed "Mr. Derr of Shepherdstown" and dated 1892, this date is also found in the attic in chimney masonry. The western ground floor level contains a double parlor divided by a pair of pine doors. One parlor contains a fireplace with a simple etched wood mantel. About 1940, a two-story porch was enclosed for a new modern kitchen and bathroom. The logs are exposed in the second story bedroom.

The house has changed through the years to keep pace with the times, but it has been carefully restored with period lighting. The log section contains a large stone and brick fireplace, which has been rebuilt where it was taken down. There is a winding stair leading to the second floor with original hardware on the board-and-batten doors. The upstairs bedroom floor has exceptional wide plank flooring. It is believed that the timber was sawed on Virginus Island in Harpers Ferry, which operated the only type of pit saw in the area capable of making the saw marks evident on the boards. The mill went out of business in 1836. The other mills converted to round circular saws.

Several historic outbuildings survive on the property. These agricultural structures include a large drive-through corn crib barn, a two-story smoke house, and a well house, which contains coolers for milk storage.

Ownership History:

The extant log house was built in 1836 for Valentine Dust - who never lived in the house. His will was probated on April 19, 1854, and it was written Sept. 25, 1850. He left the Cooke farm to be divided between his two daughters, Catharine Dust Snyder and Rebecca Dust Hoffman. Dust purchased the farm on June 15, 1833, for \$6,376.

The farm was divided on Sept. 20, 1856. Lot 1, containing the house and 83 acres, went to Catharine. This lot consisted of 66 acres of cleared land and 17 acres of woodland. Catharine was required to pay \$30 per year to her sister, Rebecca, during her life. At Rebecca's death, she was to pay her sister's heirs \$500. The 1860 tax list shows that Catherine Snyder had left Jefferson County and was living in Ohio. She was paying taxes on 84 acres, and the buildings were valued at \$300. The 1861 deed book has recorded a deed where Rezin A. Snyder and his wife Catharine; John M.L. Snyder and his wife Elizabeth; Daniel Hitchcock and his wife Ann

R.; Catharine B. Snyder; Frances E. Snyder; Emily E. Snyder; and Moses A. Snyder sold for \$5,030 the tract containing 83 acres, 3 roods and 31 perches to John Ruse of Jefferson County. Daniel H. Moler purchased the log house and farm in 1868 from Ruse. The farm then went to son Philip R. Moler, who had married Sarah Ann Moler on July 27, 1848. Philip left a will written Dec. 12, 1884, which was probated July 26, 1893. In his will, he stated that on April 1, 1884, he planned to rent his farm to son, Charles G. Moler. He wrote in his will that any one, two or three of his children could purchase his farm at a price that his children agreed upon.

On Dec. 1, 1894, the heirs sold the log house and farm to Charles G. Moler, Philip's son. Charles had married Daisy A. Moler. By his will in 1925, the house and lot of 4 acres where they were living went to Daisy and also \$5,250. The log house and farm were left to his daughter, Lelia Moler Jenkins. She lived there until her death on Nov. 10, 1936. In her will, she left everything to her husband, Norvel Jenkins. He was the last farming resident of the property. He and Lelia had a farming/egg/dairy business. After her death, Norvel then married Mary West and they continued farming and also had an egg business. Later, they ran a country store in Reedson, which is located next to the B&O Railroad line on W.Va. 230. The store was located about three-quarters of a mile south of the farm.

Eric S. Hendricks Jenkins, part owner of Spruce Gate, is descended from Philip and Sarah Moler. He and David S. Semmel of Arlington Va. purchased the house in November, 2009 and at that time began restoring it.

Nomination Criteria:

Oak Tree Farm or V. Dust-Moler Farm is significant under National Register Criterion C as an example of an early 19th-century vernacular Shenandoah Valley house, which was adapted to changing architectural customs. The prominent siting of the house at the intersection of the Shepherdstown Pike and Uvilla Road has made this structure a local landmark for more than 175 years.

The JCHLC nominates this property under Criteria C for inclusion on the list of registered county landmarks. Criteria C states that a site may be nominated if, in the opinion of the JCHLC, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values. Owners, Eric Jenkins and David Semmel have agreed to have the property listed as Jefferson County Historic Landmark.

Nomination Action:

The JCHLC voted unanimously to add **Oak Tree Farm or V. Dust-Moler Farm**, under Criteria C, to the rolls of registered Jefferson County Historic Landmarks on December 18, 2013.