

## **Wildwood Farm House Also Romenous House**

Location:	On the West side of a private farm lane 0.3 miles Northeast of Co Route 20/Shenandoah Junction Road, Jefferson County, West Virginia.  1116 Wildwood Farm Lane Shenandoah Junction, West Virginia 25442.
Present Owner:	Mr. Herbert S. Snyder and Mrs. Susan B. Snyder
Present Occupant:	Mr. Herbert S. Snyder and Mrs. Susan B. Snyder
Present Use:	Residence
Significance:	The Wildwood Farm house is significant for multiple reasons. Wildwood embodies distinctive characteristics of a mid- nineteenth century farmhouse from the Mid-Atlantic, Shenandoah region. Wildwood is also an excellent example of a structure constructed using typical building methods found in this area during this time period and constructed using local materials found within the region with a high level of craftsmanship. Furthermore, Wildwood is significant due to the fact that it contains a graveyard that holds the remains of General William Darke of the American Revolutionary War who married into the family who once occupied the land around the lots containing Wildwood. Also, the graveyard formally contained the oldest tombstone in West Virginia, now located in the West Virginia State museum, belonging to Caterina Bierlin.

### Part I. Historical Information

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of Construction: C. 1850. The estate of known as Wildwood or the Romenous House got its name from Henry Ronemous.
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is the chain of title for the Wildwood Farm house property.

Reference to the Chain of Title to the land containing the Wildwood Farmhouse is found in the Clerk's Office Records, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, West Virginia or Jefferson County Historical Society's *Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County*.

1832. Deed, April 7, 1832, recorded in volume 17, on page 291.  
Thomas and Mary Melvin  
To  
Philip Engle Jr. and conveyed to daughter Mary Engle
- 1846 Sarah E. Engle inherited property from Mary Engle who later married and became Mary Melvin. Sarah Engle would marry Henry Ronemous in 1846 and would leave the property to her husband after death.
- 1907 Deed of Partition, June 1, 1907, recorded in volume 99, on Page 362.  
Henry Romenous. Deceased  
To  
Ida M. Ronemous and Mollie E. Barnhart
- 1932 Will, April 2, 1932, recorded in volume 252, on Page 7983.  
Ida M. Ronemous Deceased  
To  
Helen B. Jones and her heirs
- 1979 Deed, June 8, 1979, recorded in volume 456, on page 467  
Jane Jackson Jones  
To  
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Snyder.

Recent records of the transaction of the structure and property of Wildwood indicates that the current owner of the property to be Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Snyder with survivorship clause in the deed.

4. Builder, contractor, and supplier: No information found on the contractor or supplier of material. But, evidence found points to Henry Romenous being a contributor in the building of the Wildwood Farmhouse.
5. Original plans and construction: Original plans concerning the construction of the house were unable to be recovered. It is likely they no longer exist. But, the structure is situated to face south. Further research is need.

6. Alterations and additions: A roof over the ell addition of the house has been replaced. Also, on the north elevation a two-story single pile addition has been added that is connected to an elevated porch.

Other exterior alterations: Residents of the house have attached an in-ground pool surrounded by a five-foot brick barrier on the south elevation.

#### B. Historical Context:

Wildwood Farm House, also known as “The Ronemous Place,” was built C. 1850 and documented as existing before the onset of the American Civil War in 1860. Henry Ronemous began construction of the house after his marriage to Sarah Engle in 1848. Sarah Engle would inherit the land prior to her marriage to Henry Ronemous from her family member Mary Melvin. The family members of the Engle family and the Melvin family were early settlers of this area. Also, Sarah Engle’s ancestor Melchior Engle was the original owner of the land that was granted by Thomas Lord Fairfax and would later contain the structure of Wildwood. The structure is distinctive as it is more elaborate in its construction than other less modest structures found in the same area. Wildwood is an example of Greek Revival architecture produced at the end of the styles’ movement. This type of architecture is very common to the Mid-Atlantic region especially in the area of what is now Jefferson County, W.V. Evidence to support Wildwood as a Greek Revival structure are the low pitched roof with a slight eave overhang containing a band of trim below it.

### Part II. Architecture Information

#### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The structure was built around C. 1850 and is a two-and-a-half story, double pile plan made of course rubble limestone. Also, the structure’s layout is that of an L shape. The structure is of Greek Revival style consisting of five bays. Furthermore, the structure is side gabled with inboard chimneys at each end of the main structure and another on the ell extension.
2. Condition of Fabric: The structure is in good condition as it has been made suitable for residency. Evidence of damage from 24 years of being unoccupied is not evident.

#### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: Wildwood is a two-and-a-half story, double pile plan structure with five bays. Also, there is a two-story single pile extension at the

rear of the North elevation. Overall dimensions are unknown and need further research, as measurements were unable to be taken.

2. Foundations: Wildwood's foundation is made of course rubble limestone quarried locally.
3. Walls: The walls are made of hand cut two feet thick course rubble limestone created on site. Also, the walls contain rusticated quoins on the edge of the structures corners. The limestone surface walls are coursed rock faced.
4. Structural system: Structural system for Wildwood Farm House is load bearing coursed rubble limestone. Walls are two feet thick. Also, joint system and floor and rafter system is unknown and requires additional examination and research for documentation.
5. Porches: The structure contains two porches. First, a single story porch dominates the ell addition of Wildwood. The roof is supported by a single Doric, non-fluted column and is at ground level. This is possibly the original section of the structure. Also, the porch is connected to the main structure. Second, the north elevation contains an elevated porch connected to the two-story, single pile addition. This porch is constructed of wood boards.
6. Chimneys: Wildwood contains three separate chimneys. They are located at each gable end of the farmhouse. The chimneys tops are made of brick and are inside end chimneys. Also, they contain corbelled caps.
7. Openings:
  - i. Doorways and doors: There are three exterior doors to this house. The main entrance to the structure is located on the east elevation. This door contains a screen door, as well as, a six panel main door. Also, there is another entrance located on the South elevation that leads directly into the main part of the structure. The door is a six-panel door containing the Christian icons of the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments along with the Christian cross. The frames of the doors are deep due to the two feet thick limestone walls. The third door leads to the adjoining porch addition on the East elevation.
  - ii. Windows and shutters: All elevations of Wildwood contain windows. The main part of the structure contains six over six pane, double hung windows in the north and south elevations. The east elevation contains six over six sash, double hung windows on the first floor and two over two, casement windows on the second floor. The west elevation contains only two windows that are two over two, casement windows located on the second floor. All windows contain straight

sills under the windows. Also, due to the two feet thick limestone walls the framing of the windows are set deep into the walls.

8. Roof

- i. Roof shape, covering: The roof is side gabled with a low pitch. The gable runs from east to west. The roof material is that of standing seam rolled metal typical of the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- ii. Cornice, eaves: Wildwood contains slight eave typical of Greek Revival structures with simple a band of trim below it.
- iii. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Structure contains no dormers, cupolas, or towers

C. Description of interior:

1. Floor plans: Floor plans are unknown and an area for further and future research and documentation.
2. Stairways: Structure contains a highly crafted walnut staircase leading to the second floor. But, further research and documentation is needed.
3. Flooring: The flooring of Wildwood is pine. Unable to gain access to the inside of the farmhouse does not allow further documentation. Further research is needed.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wall and ceiling finish is unknown and needs to be documented further.
5. Openings:
  - i. Doorways and door: Interior doorways and doors are unknown. But, the frames of the doors are deep due to the two feet thick limestone walls. Further investigation is needed.
  - ii. Windows: Interior windows are categorized as deep-seated due to the thickness of the limestone walls.
6. Decorative features and trim: This area is unknown due to the lack of access to the inside of the structure. For this reason further research and documentation is needed.
7. Hardware: Aspects of the hardware of this house is unknown. Due to this documentation could not be completed.
8. Mechanical equipment

- i. Heating, air conditioning, and ventilation: Original heating was from fireplaces. Main fireplace is described as having an unusual massive kitchen hearth. Original ventilation for the structure was done through the windows of the structure. Heating, air conditioning, and ventilation have been updated to make the structure suitable for residential occupation. For this reason, speculation states that they are that of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
- ii. Lighting: Lighting for Wildwood is possibly from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is due to the fact that the structure was reconditioned after its purchase in 1979 after 24 years of not being occupied. The structure is now used as a residence.
- iii. Plumbing: Due to the fact that the structure now must support the modern use utilities because of its use as a residency the plumbing of Wildwood must be from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The general setting of the site is facing south to take advantage of the sun's natural light and heat. This is typical of farmhouses of that time. Setting off of Shenandoah Junction RD about 0.3 miles north on the west side of lane.
2. Historic landscape design: Located in the middle of a heavy forested area the landscape takes advantage of the tree lines that divide the property.
3. Outbuildings: There is one outbuilding. It is used as a stable for horses. It is wood framing with a metal roof.

Part III. Sources of Information:

- A. Original architectural drawings: Original drawings not found. Further research is needed.
- B. Early views: The only earlier view of the structure located in the Jefferson Counties *between the Shenandoah and the Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County, West Virginia*. The picture dates from 1990.
- C. Interviews: Due to the owner being Senator Herbert Snyder and the fact that he was in legislative session interviews could not be conducted.
- D. Bibliography

- a. Primary and unpublished sources: Primary sources are very rare for this structure. Both Jefferson and Berkley County Historical Societies have little if no information on this structure. The initial land grant from Thomas Lord Fairfax can be found on microfilm at the Berkley County Historical Society in H-412. Also, Jefferson County Geo-explorer mapping was used to determine if the structure existed before 1860. Deeds and Wills are found in the Court House of Charlestown.
- b. Secondary and published sources:
  1. Jefferson County Historical Society, *Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County, West Virginia*. (Winchester, Virginia: Winchester Printers, Inc, 1990), 79.
- E. Likely sources not yet investigated: Sources not yet consulted include the inside of the structure itself, interviews of current owners, original construction plans and floor plans, and hardware within the house. Also, tax records, insurance records, and family history need to be examined.
- F. Supplemental material: Color pictures of the structure, its layout, and outbuilding are provided at the end of HABS report. Pictures are labeled on the back.
  1. General drawing of layout of Wildwood and outlining areas.
  2. Picture 1- South Elevation
  3. Picture 2-East Elevation
  4. Picture 3- North Elevation
  5. Picture 4- West Elevation
  6. Picture 5- Wildwood Outbuilding
  7. Picture 6- Chimney & Casement windows
  8. Picture 7- Northern Elevation porch and Addition
  9. Picture 8- Door to main entrance
  10. Picture 9- Metal Roof
  11. Picture 10- Overview of Farmhouse layout

#### Part IV: Project Information

- This project was done and completed as part of the class ENVS: 371- Documentation of Historic Properties. For Shepherd University by William Kline.

