

## **Landmark Nomination Report:**

### ***York Hill Bank Barn***

***1583 Ridge Road Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442***

Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission

#### **Physical Description:**

The bank barn at York Hill Farm is located on the west side of Ridge Road in northern Jefferson County, West Virginia. The barn sits among the rolling agricultural fields and apple orchards near the intersection of Ridge Road and Luther Jones Road, just north of the community of Shenandoah Junction.

#### **Historic Description:**

York Hill is a 138-acre orchard along with historic buildings consisting of the log and stone main house, stone smokehouse, stone springhouse, and the subject stone bank barn. The rolling landscape and fertile soil is particularly suited to agricultural production, and the open fields surrounding the farmstead are generously planted with several varieties of apple, as well as table grapes, berries, and pumpkins. The building complex of York Hill fronts closely on the west side of Ridge Road (State Rt. 16), the buildings sited in a linear pattern. While the telescoping sections of the main house present an impressive front, the large stone Pennsylvania bank barn dominates the landscape. Surrounded by orchard, the bank barn, constructed in 1812 during the height of grain culture in the region, and the main house constructed beginning in the 18th century in telescoping phases of various materials, are representative of the process of change – from settlement house to established farmstead and of agricultural evolution – in the mid-Atlantic region.

In addition to the four historic buildings, York Hill includes the historic Hendricks/Snyder family cemetery.

York Hill was established as a settlement-era farm ca.1750 by Samuel Darke, who produced subsistence goods and perhaps tobacco. The farm passed into the ownership of Col. James Hendricks in 1762. Hendricks, who in the Virginia Militia in the Revolutionary War, occupied the farm for more than 30 years until his death in 1795. In 1798, the farm was sold into the extended ownership of the Snyder family, who by 1910 had converted at least part of the York Hill farm to commercial orcharding. The Snyder family operated the orchard/farm until 1939. The Hockensmith family, initially in partnership with Milton Burr, fully developed the commercial potential of the York Hill orchard, adding significant amounts of acreage as well as an apple evaporator and packinghouse located immediately adjoining the B&O Railroad at Bardane, southwest of the York Hill farm. Passed to Jerry Hockman by his marriage to Mary Frances Hockensmith, Hockman's orchard, known first as Twin Ridge Orchards, and today as York Hill Orchard & Farm, continues under the management of their son Gordon Hockman.

In addition to retaining much of the land still planted in orchards, the farmstead is dominated by the ca.1812 stone Pennsylvania bank barn, converted from its original use for grain storage and livestock stalls to cold storage for orchard produce. The house too demonstrates the evolution of the farm with its two log sections and stone section dating from several building periods. The stone springhouse and stone smokehouse also remain in place, although a number of other associated outbuildings are now gone. The family graveyard, dating back to the Hendricks

ownership, still anchors the historic York Hill farm.

The period of significance covers the period of documented occupation and cultivation of the land beginning with the Hendricks family's 36-year ownership, through the Snyder family's 41-years of occupation, and ending in the continued ownership of the Hockensmith/Hockman family who fully developed the commercial orchard and converted the barn ca.1950.

York Hill Farm was listed on National Register of Historic Places in 2006 in criteria A&C and the bank barn is a contributing structure to that listing.

### **Historic Resource:**

Built during the ownership of John Snyder, the stone end Swisser-type (Pennsylvania) bank barn at York Hill is located to the southwest of the house. Dated 1812, it has stone end walls, which wrap along the back-side to the threshing floor doors. There is a framed overhanging forebay and a gabled wall dormer overlooking the barnyard. As indicated by the name, the barn is built into a slight slope or bank with a ramp at the back giving access to the upper level threshing floor. The end walls are pierced with vertical ventilation slits and round openings, also for ventilation in the gable peaks at each end. The north gable wall includes an arch-topped sandstone date tablet engraved with the number "1812". Under the forebay, the doors into the stable areas are marked with carved initials, doodles and dates. At the rear elevation a framed granary outshot is constructed at the north end. An unusual feature of the barn is its adaptation from a grain and livestock barn, as constructed, to a cold storage facility to accommodate the 20th century orchard use of the property. The barn continues to retain its exterior appearance as an early 19th century grain and livestock facility, but its interior has been lined with concrete blocks to create a fruit storage building. The lower level was converted to cold storage, and the upper level for storage of orchard machinery and equipment. Thus the barn reflects the changing agricultural use of the property while retaining most of its original character-defining features.

This barn is one of about a dozen early-19<sup>th</sup>-century stone bank barns remaining in Jefferson County.

### **Nomination Criteria:**

York Hill Bank Barn is significant under National Register Criterion C as a good representative example of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century bank barn adapted to changing agricultural practice and changing architectural custom. The stone barn, constructed ca.1812 as a Pennsylvania-style bank barn used for grain storage and livestock housing, was converted to orchard product storage in the 20th century. The barn demonstrates the adaptation of historic barn technology to "modern" agricultural practice.

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. Owner, Gordon Hockman, has agreed to have the property listed as Jefferson County Historic Landmark.

### **Nomination Action:**

The JCHLC voted unanimously to add **York Hill Barn**, under Criteria C, to the rolls of

registered Jefferson County Historic Landmarks on December 18, 2013.