

HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT

GEORGE FARMSTEAD HISTORIC DISTRICT  
OAKLAND TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

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**CHARGE OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE**

The Historic District Study Committee was appointed by the Oakland Township Board of Trustees on March 23, 2010 pursuant to Oakland Township Ordinance 37-A, and Amendment One dated October 22, 2002 and Amendment Two dated February 8, 2005. The study committee is a standing committee charged with conducting the duties and activities for a designated period of time. These duties include inventory, research, and preparation of a preliminary historic district study report for a proposed historic district, and the organization of a public hearing. The Historic District Study Committee shall be comprised of at least five individuals, including at least two individuals who are owners of a historic resource and at least two, but not more than three, who are members of the Historic District Commission.

**STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

*E. Jean Lyons*, served from 1976-80 as a Historic District Commissioner (HDC) and secretary to the HDC from 2004 thru 2011. Her term was renewed in May 2011 for three years until 2014. She is a retired English teacher and continues to serve as HDC secretary. She lives in an 1842 historic home in Oakland Township.

*Janice Derry*, served on the HDC for five years as vice-chairperson from 2004-09. She has participated with the Master Plan Committee for Oakland Township. She has also been a preservation consultant for several housing developments on the Oakland County area.

*Susan Knudsen*, served on the HDC from 2000 to 2003. She was elected to the historic district study committee in 2004. She has lived in a historic home for twenty-five years.

*Bruce Parkinson*, continues to serve on the HDC as he has for the last five years. He is an electrician by trade working on many historic properties. He lives in a historic rural country home in Oakland Township. He is also a member of the Oakland Township Historical Society.

*Jean Kroger*, served on the Historic District Commission two terms; 1996-2008. She has owned a historic home ca. 1890 in Clinton, Michigan from 1966-1971 prior to residing in her current designated historic home since 1977. She is a member of the Oakland Township Historical Society, Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society, and National Trust for Historic Preservation.

*Barbara A. Barber*, HDC administrative assistant assisted the study committee in its work. She has worked for the HDC for over four years and is in her third year Masters of Science in Historic Preservation; Preservation Planning at Eastern Michigan University with expected graduation date of April 2012.

Members of the Oakland Township Historical Society for research assistance:

*Janine Saputo*, Oakland Township Historical Society member assisted in the research. She has been involved in historic preservation since 1988, working on several successful National Register nominations and Michigan Historical Markers. She is a former HDC chairperson, former Michigan Historic Preservation Network board member, and former Oakland County Historical Commission board member. She is a current member of the Oakland County Pioneer Historical Society and member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She also currently sits on the Oakland Township Planning Commission.

*Sue Fox*, Oakland Township Historical Society board member assisted with the deed research and historical timeline. She is also a member of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. She has been researching genealogy for ten years and her interests are in historical research of people and places.

## **INVENTORY**

A Photo documentation of the proposed district was completed in the summer and fall of 2011 by members of the study committee. Copies of the photos are in the Historic District Commission office located at 4480 Orion Road, Rochester, Michigan 48306.

The property is also listed in Oakland Township historic resources #13 as the Wm George Place.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT**

The proposed single district is located one mile east of Rochester Road on Mead Road in Oakland Township, Michigan. The property is in the eastern half of southeast quarter of Section 35. The 3.7 acre parcel is also known as 'Stoney Mead Farm' to many due to a sign that has stood by the end of the drive for several decades.

The proposed district contains a main house built in 1909, a carriage barn built ca. 1920s, a small shed with two walls made from silo tiles ca. 1930s, a silo located on the southeast corner of the property ca. 1920s, stone gateway with stone wall wings at the driveway entrance, and approximately fifty Sugar Maple trees arranged in a unique array pattern in the landscape.

The main house was originally built in 1892; however, the house was lost to a fire in 1903. The house was rebuilt in the same location in 1909 by William George. There have been numerous additions the last one hundred years. The gable-front facade is flanked by two wings and appear to be a variation of Gothic Revival influence with Gable Front and Wing. One third of Gothic Revival houses are compound asymmetrical with variations of L-shaped plans and cross-gabled roofs.<sup>1</sup> The gable-front, with open cornices, faces south towards the road and shows off ornate vergeboard in the eaves, a sign of wealth in rural communities for main facades. The front facade is two-bays with one center window in the second story. Many of the windows in the

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<sup>1</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf. New York. 2009. Page 197.

main house are wood frame single pane replacements. A shed roof one story porch wraps around the front to the east side of the house to the main entrance doorway in the east wing. (Photo 5) The wood floors are original and almost all of the doors and trim on the interior are original in the oldest sections of the house. The foundation is large split stone. A flat roof projection to the west of the front facade has an open porch with wood balustrades. (Photo 3) The west elevation shows a tiny door located on the second story for access to this small space. The original wood clapboard siding has been covered with engineered wood board also referred to as oriented strand board (OSB), made from a composite of wood products and other materials. The roof shingles are asphalt.

The carriage barn is a four bay, two-story building with a gable roof, parallel orientation, facing south. (Photo 8) A south front shed roof dormer projects at attic level and is flush with the main façade of the building. The four dormer windows are wood frame, double-hung, three over six glazing. Each window has two wood board shutters that have a cut out moon shape. There are four large openings on the first level, each with double doors swinging out, which have raised panels and six lights. An addition to the west side of the carriage barn was completed in 2011 with permission from the Zoning Board of Appeals contingent upon applying as a historic district.<sup>2</sup> The carriage barn addition to the west end has an additional two door openings and similar shed roof projection with two double-hung three over one wooden windows. (Photo 12) The Foundation shows dark reddish orange concrete that appears to be clay tile mix without the glazed surface. The original lapped wood siding has a narrow profile. The roof shingles are asphalt. The carriage barn retains high integrity of original features other than the recent addition.

The small shed is referred to as a horse barn, pig barn, and shed. The north wall and the west wall are made with a glazed silo tiles. (Photo 14) William George sold silo tiles for many local silos in Oakland Township, including the silo on the property. The silo tiles are rich in color and are in excellent condition. The south façade of the shed has four hopper windows with six lights that tuck up under the roof. There is one large fixed window with twenty-four lights. One sliding door for access is located on the east side of the building, hanging on a basic barn door roller track.

The silo is located in the southeastern corner of the property. The tile glazing depicts rich brown and burgundy in an almost iridescent color. Several silos still standing in Oakland Township on Mead Road and Snell Road, have identical glazing tiles with similar colors and textures. Tower silos were used for storing silage for animal feed which was common in the rural Oakland County agricultural landscapes. The silo is located next to the foundation remains of a large barn. (Photo 22) There are no signs of the roof as the silo top is level and open.

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<sup>2</sup> Oakland Township Building Department demanded the shed be demolished for the carriage barn addition to be approved based on current zoning laws which state a lot under five acres can only have one accessory building. The shed was grandfathered in, yet the new addition changed the protection. The homeowners came to the Historic District Commission for help and applied to the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow the second outbuilding (shed) to remain. The ZBA agreed if the homeowners allowed the parcel to be listed for protection in the local historic district ordinance. March 2011.

In the south entrance driveway are two stone gateways, thirty feet in length, running parallel to the road, in east and west directions. The masonry design is an excellent example of stonework in the township including a unique focal point design depicting a crown or style of rock finial on each end post. One rock is a perfect sphere and has the appearance of being a child's ball. (Photo 24)

Sugar Maples have been planted in rows across the north side of the landscape. (Photo 26) The rows continue into the next parcel so they were planted prior to 1972. Similar rows show up in 1963 aerial photo (Image 3), therefore the trees are estimated to have been planted prior to 1963, yet it is uncertain if they were planted by the George family prior to 1957. The George family sold the parcel in 1957.

## **RESOURCE LIST**

825 Mead Road property. Single historic district.

## **COUNT OF HISTORIC AND NON-HISTORIC RESOURCES**

The proposed George Farmstead Historic District contains the main house, carriage barn, small shed, silo, stone wall gateway wings, and Sugar Maple trees planted in rows.

1. Main house constructed 1909. Contributing.
2. Carriage Barn. Contributing.
3. Shed. Contributing.
4. Silo. Contributing.
5. Stone gateway and wall fence. Contributing.
6. Sugar Maple trees. Compatible/ contributing. (More research needed.)

## **BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The proposed George Farmstead historic district consists of parcel number 10-35-400-004.

## **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The proposed George Farmstead historic district is a single district significant locally due to the architecture and craftsmanship tied to historical events and people. The entire 3.7 acre parcel is included in the historic district boundaries. The southern lot line is Mead Road. The northern lot line borders Stoney Creek Metropolitan Park. The eastern property line borders another parcel of 1.28 acres which was split from the 5 acre parcel in 1972.<sup>3</sup>

The legal description is T4N, R11E, Section 35, Part of SE ¼ beginning at PT DIST N 88-20-04 W 547.33 FT from SE SEC COR, TH N 88-20-04 W 466.69 FT, TH N 01-39-56 E 466.69 FT, TH S 88-20-04 E 466.69 FT, TH S 01-39-56 W 466.69 FT TO BEG EXC E 120 FT 3.72 A 7-15-91 CORR.

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<sup>3</sup> Oakland County Clerk's Office. Register of Deeds. J. George sold to D.S. Holefca in 1957. D.S. Holefca split 1.28 acres to H.L. Hagen in 1972.

## **HISTORY OF THE PROPOSED DISTRICT**

A 160 acre parcel was purchased from the government in 1825 by Phebe Condict from Cayuga County, New York. There were several owners until 1833 when William Millerd purchased it and owned the property until 1893. Oakland Township is rich in its agricultural history. The flat topography and fertile soil made for excellent crops. The Millerd's sold to D. Hooley in 1883, the property was sold again in 1885 to Axford Price, who then sold to Oscar George on March 20, 1893. O. George handed the land down to his son William (Wid) George in 1901.<sup>4</sup> A terrible fire burned the original house in 1903 and it was not until 1909 that W. George rebuilt the main house. W. George bought and sold cattle and also sold glazed silo tiles.<sup>5</sup> W. George died in 1937 and his estate was dispersed to Elizabeth Warren Sheldon, except for a five acre split containing the main house, carriage barn, and shed, which was deeded to his son Jerome George. J. George retained the parcel until he sold in 1957. The George family owned the parcel for sixty-four years and made valuable contributions to the site including important characteristics that define the heritage of Oakland Township.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and: Criteria C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of constructions, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The proposed George Farmstead historic district represents the historic context of rural qualities and agrarian traditions of the township. The property is an excellent example of craftsmanship in examples of masonry, carpentry, silo tile manufacturing, architecture, the use of different materials for new ideas, and the use of the landscape.

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<sup>4</sup> Oakland County Clerk Register of Deeds. Section 35. 825 Mead Road.

<sup>5</sup> Kelly, Delta. Inventory of Historic District Homes and Sites in Oakland Township. Unpublished. 1974-75. # 13.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Attachments: Photos, maps, and site plan.



Photo 1: 825 Mead Road as seen on north side of mead heading east



Photo 2: 825 Mead Road main house from road. View southwest side of house



Photo 3: Closer view of southwest corner of main house.



Photo 4: Westside view of main house



Photo 5: South view and front façade facing Mead Road



Photo 6: Southeast view of main house



Photo 7: East view of main house



Photo 8: South view of carriage barn, new addition to the west end



Photo 9: East side of carriage barn



Photo 10: Northeast view of carriage barn



Photo 11: Northwest view of carriage barn



Photo 12: Southwest view of carriage barn construction



Photo 13: Northeast corner view of shed



Photo 14: Northwest view of shed



Photo 15: West end of shed



Photo 16: Southeast view of shed



Photo 17: Hopper windows south side of shed



Photo 18: North view of shed



Photo 19: East façade of shed



Photo 20: West view of silo from front of main house



Photo 21: West side of silo looking up



Photo 22: Silo view south side from Mead Road



Photo 23: North side of stone posts



Photo 24: East view of stone entrance wings



Photo 25: North side of stone gateway and stone wall



Photo 26: Sugar Maples in rows view looking north



Image 1: Aerial Map <https://gis.Oakgov.com/PropertyGateway/home/mvc>



Image 2: 2010 Aerial



Image 3: 1963 Aerial

<http://land.oakgov.com/ims/ocnr/viewer.htm>

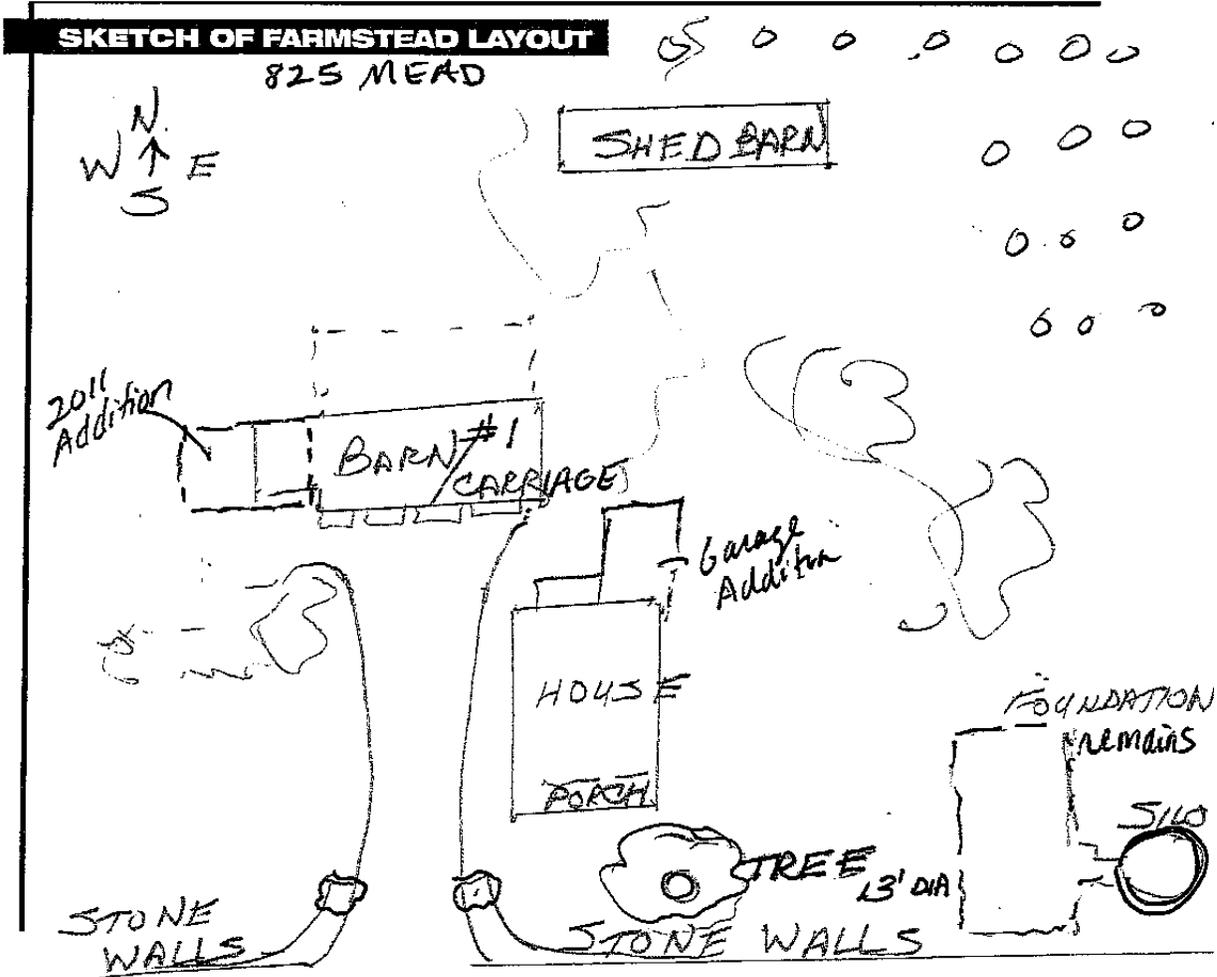


Image 4: Site Plan