

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	11801 Bethesda Church Rd., Damascus	Meeting Date:	8/12/2020
Resource:	Individually Listed Master Plan Site Mendelssohn Terrace	Report Date:	8/5/2020
Applicant:	Stewart Walker	Public Notice:	7/29/2020
Review:	HAWP	Staff:	Dan Bruechert
Case Number:	10/12-20A	Tax Credit:	Partial
Proposal:	Porch reconstruction, roof replacement, window repair, deck construction, fence installation, sign installation, tree removal, and accessory building demolition		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the HPC approve the HAWP

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Individually listed Master Plan (*Mendelssohn Terrace #10/12*)
STYLE: Gothic Revival
DATE: 1880

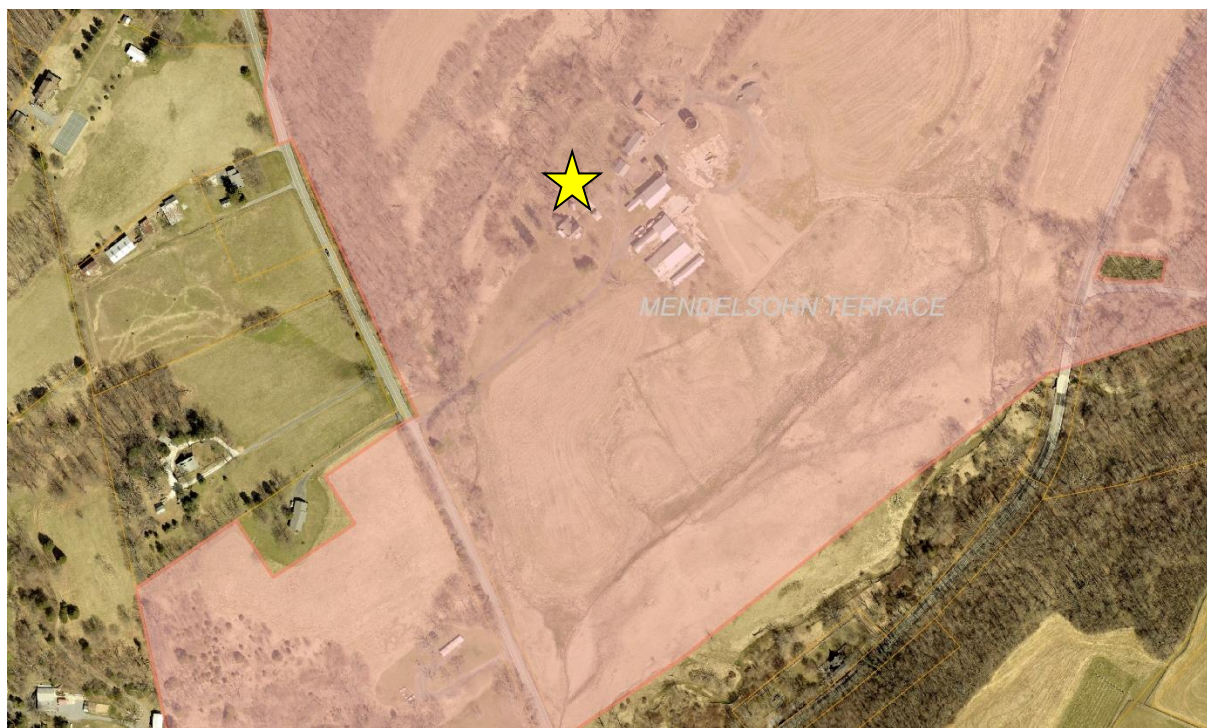


Fig. 1: Mendelssohn Terrace is located on a large property in Damascus.

From *Places from the Past*:

“Mendelssohn Terrace is among the most elaborate local examples of Gothic Revival architecture. Builder John Mount constructed the house for George W. Walker in 1880. The house is traditional in form, with the main block of the ell-shaped house being three bays wide and one room deep with a center passage plan. Influence of the Gothic Revival style popular elsewhere in the mid-1800s is seen in this 1880 house in pointed arch windows, cross gables and wall dormers, scalloped bargeboard trim, and long-paired windows. The gable over the front entrance contains the construction date. Front rooms have 10-foot ceilings embellished with plaster medallions. The house was allegedly built with a bathroom, complete with wooden copper-lined tub. The house originally had German siding, which was replaced or covered with aluminum siding.

For over 50 years, Mendelssohn Terrace was the musical and literary center of Browningsville. Professor George Washington Wesley Walker gathered choirs and school groups here for musical and social events. The room west of the front hall (left) was the music room. Walker was music director and organist at nearby Bethesda Church. He had been born in 1837 in a log house on the farm that his family had acquired in 1830. A frame smokehouse has an overhanging gable surmounted with a bell whose ring can be heard throughout the farm. A late bank barn, built in the early 1900s, has corrugated siding and rusticated concrete block foundation with matching dairy house. The Walker family has continued to own the property into the 21st century.”

BACKGROUND

The applicant presented this proposal (constituting phase 1) and a second phase of work as a preliminary consultation at the August 12, 2020 HPC meeting.¹ The work proposed for this HAWP encompasses is largely restorative and was strongly supported by the HPC.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to reconstruct a historic porch, replace the roof, repair the existing historic wood windows, install a sign, remove trees, and demolish several accessory structures.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

Proposed alterations to individual Master Plan Sites are reviewed under Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (Chapter 24A) and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features, which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Montgomery County Code; Chapter 24A-8

- (b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to ensure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:
 - (1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or
 - (2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic

¹ The Staff Report and application materials for the August 2020 Preliminary Consultation can be found here: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/II.A-11801-Bethesda-Church-Road-Damascus.pdf> and the audio recording can be found here: http://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=364c82d2-dda6-11ea-b5c3-0050569183fa.

- resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter; or
- (3) The proposal would enhance or aid in the protection, preservation and public or private utilization of the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district in a manner compatible with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural value of the historic site or historic district in which an historic resource is located; or
 - (4) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportions, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

STAFF DISCUSSION

Staff has reviewed the work proposed for the porch reconstruction, roof replacement, and window repair and has determined that all of that work is repair in-kind and does not require a HAWP. That work is, however, eligible for the County Historic Preservation Tax Credit program and Staff encourages the applicant to take advantage of that incentive once the work is completed.

The other proposed work was discussed during the preliminary consultation and supported by the HPC.

Deck Construction

At the rear of the house, the applicant proposes constructing a wood deck, measuring 26' × 12' with a simple wood railing. To access this new deck, the applicant proposes to install a full-lite wood door with a simple wood pediment over the door. Staff finds that the deck will be constructed entirely behind the massing of the house and will not have a significant visual impact on the historic character of the house. Additionally, the deck will not destroy any significant visual features of the house and can be successfully removed in the future with a minimal loss to the historic integrity. Staff recommends the HPC approve the deck and new entrance under Standards 2, 9, and 10 and Chapter 24A-8(b)(1) and (2).

Fence Installation

The applicant proposes enclosing the house site in 605' (six hundred and five linear feet) of 4' (four foot) tall wood, paddock-style fence with an inset metal, dog wire mesh. The proposed fencing is similar to a c.1900 photo of the house site submitted with the application materials.

Staff finds that there is a historic precedent for fencing at the site and that the proposed alteration would not have a significant visual impact on the historic character of the site and recommends approval under Standard 2 and 24A-8(b)(1) and (2).

Sign Installation

At the entrance of the property on Bethesda Church Road, the applicant proposes installing a wooden sign, approximately 36" × 44" (thirty-six inches by forty-four inches) suspended from the wood posts.

Staff finds that the design and materials are compatible with both the historic and agricultural character of

the site. While it is not the HPC's purview to regulate the text or language on signage, the purpose of this sign is to identify the property "Mendelsohn Terrace Farm" and the family that owns and operates the farm. The text and graphics are simple and are compatible with the site.

Tree Removal

The applicant proposes removing two trees adjacent to the house site. The first tree is a 16" (sixteen-inch) d.b.h. Norway Maple, located to the north of the house; and the second tree is an 11" (eleven-inch) d.b.h. Norway Maple. The tree survey states that both of these trees' root systems are damaging the house's stone foundation. Staff finds that these trees need to be removed to protect the long-term preservation of the house and recommends the HPC approve the tree removal under 24A-8(b)(4).

Accessory Building Demolition

The applicant proposes to demolish four accessory structures. All of the structures are in poor condition. The first building is identified as "tool shed" and is a small frame building with a corrugated metal roof. Virtually all of the paint has come off the building and it only has half a roof at this point. The roof framing is failing and the internal structure is failing to the point the structure leans to one side. Staff finds this building is degraded beyond repair and its demolition will not impact the site integrity and would recommend approval as a HAWP.

The three remaining buildings are all identified as 'Chicken Houses' (A, B, and C respectively). Staff finds that the structures could easily be identified as ruins based on their current condition. Chicken House A is a CMU block structure with no windows or doors and a failing roof structure. Chicken House B is a wood frame structure that is missing much of one wall and has a failing roof. Chicken House C has already collapsed and is a danger to the site and needs to be removed. At the August 2020 Preliminary Consultation, the Staff Report recommended the degraded condition of these buildings constituted a danger and that these buildings needed to be demolished. All of the Commissioners present agreed. Staff recommends approving the demolition of these four buildings under 24A-8(b)(4).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the HAWP application under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1), (2), and (4), having found that the proposal, is consistent with and compatible in character with the purposes of Chapter 24A;

and with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation #2, 9, and 10;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall present the **3 permit sets of drawings, if applicable, to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) staff for review and stamping** prior to submission for the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) building permits;

and with the general condition that final project design details, not specifically delineated by the Commission, shall be approved by HPC staff or brought back to the Commission as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall notify the Historic Preservation Staff if they propose to make **any alterations** to the approved plans. Once the work is completed the applicant will contact the staff person assigned to this application at 301-563-3400 or dan.bruechert@montgomeryplanning.org to schedule a follow-up site visit.

HAWP APPLICATION: MAILING ADDRESSES FOR NOTIFYING [Owner, Owner's Agent, Adjacent and Confronting Property Owners]	
Owner's mailing address Mr. & Mrs. Stewart E. Walker, III 11939 Gladhill Brothers Road Monrovia, Maryland 21770	Owner's Agent's mailing address Mr. Joel Rensberger 1 South Main St. Woodsboro, Maryland 21798
Adjacent and confronting Property Owners mailing addresses	
Mr. and Mrs. Stewart E. Walker, Jr. 11720 Bethesda Church Road Damascus, Maryland 20872	Ms. Lisamarie T. Eustice 27530 Clarksburg Road Damascus, Maryland 20872
Mr. and Mrs. Leonard A. Nahr 11810 Bethesda Church Road Damascus, Maryland 20872	
Mr. and Mrs. Jared King 11820 Bethesda Church Road Damascus, Maryland 20872	

Revisions made as a result of Preliminary Consultation with HPC held on 12 August 2020 meeting.

Note: French doors are no longer being considered for the second story exterior of the house. Only wood will be used for the front porch and other construction.

1. WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

b. General description of project and its effect on the historic resource(s), the environmental setting, and, where applicable, the historic district:

1. The existing front porch will be removed and a new front porch will be constructed of wood to replicate the original Gothic Revival porch as seen in the accompanying historic photographs of the house (see Exhibits A-D). The new front porch will measure 32' by 10' like the original and will have decorative balusters, railing, posts, and post trim to match the original front porch as seen in Exhibits A-D all made of wood and painted.

2. All of the original windows of the house will be conserved and repaired. The existing storm windows will be restored as necessary to protect the original windows. New storm windows may be installed over original windows which currently lack storm windows where appropriate to protect historic windows. Rotten window sills or frames will be replaced with wood and painted. Decorative wooden balusters and wooden railing will be returned to the existing bay window roof as seen in the historic images.

3. On the front façade, the second story central window and door assembly will be restored and the existing storm door on the outside of this window and door assembly will be conserved and maintained in place. (See the Proposed Restoration of the Second Story Window and Door Assembly for details, photographs, and materials as requested by the HPC).

4. The asphalt shingle roof will be replaced with like materials.

5. A new exterior door will be added to the rear of the house to access a new wooden deck which will not be visible from the front façade. A gabled awning will be placed above the new exterior door.

6. A wooden deck measuring 26' by 12' will be added to the rear of the house. Deck flooring, railing, and balusters will be made of wood.

7. The house and grounds will be surrounded by a 4 foot tall wooden three-paneled fence lined with dog wire to provide a secure exercise area for our daughter's Seeing Eye dog and will match the original fence as is seen in the ca. 1900 photograph (See Exhibit C). This wooden three-paneled fence will occupy the same area as the original fence as seen in Exhibit C and will have a total perimeter of approximately 605 feet. Each post will be pressure treated wood round post measuring approximately 3.75"x3.75"x6.5' and each panel will be 1"x6"x8' pressure treated boards. (See Proposed Farm Fence Design for details, specifications, and materials).

8. A sign will be placed at the end of the driveway. (See Proposed Farm Sign Design for details, specifications, and materials).

9. The existing shrubbery and two trees will be removed (see Tree Survey).

10. Three chicken houses and an old tool shed which are in various stages of decay and present a danger to visitors will be demolished.

Project Effects

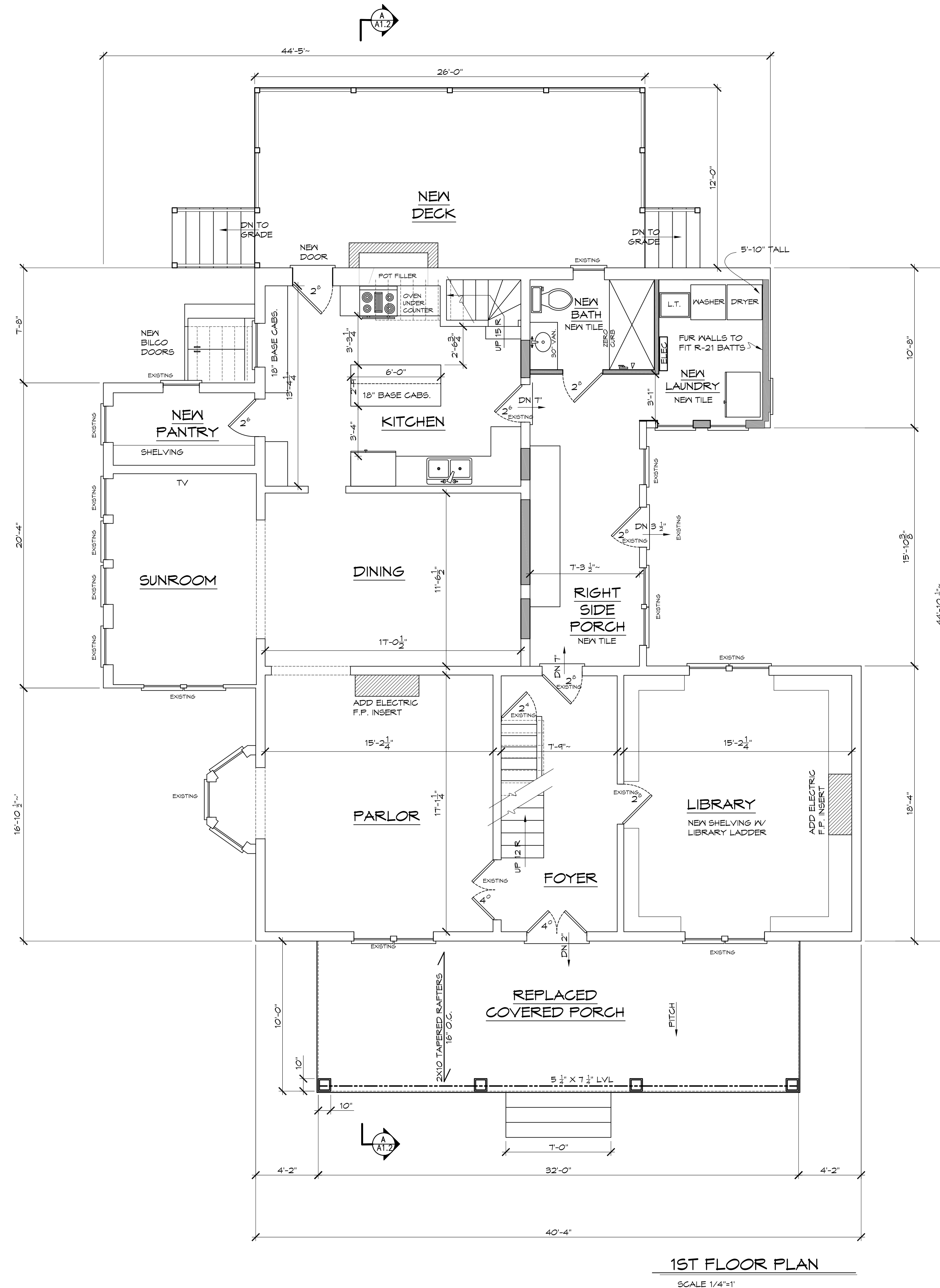
This project will enhance the historic integrity of the house by restoring the exterior to look more closely as it did originally; based on the historic photographic evidence. It will also assist in the preservation of the house from the elements. No significant impact on the environmental setting is expected. However, it will be necessary to remove shrubbery and two trees (see Tree Survey) which are too close to the house and whose roots are damaging the historic field stone foundation. The demolition of a tool shed and three chicken houses which are in various states of dilapidation is necessary to improve the safety of the site for visitors. This demolition will also improve the overall appearance of the farm. The house is not part of any historic district, although it overlooks the Browningsville Historic District. Mendelssohn is listed as a designated historic site (10/12) in the Damascus Master Plan and the house and farmstead are identified as "Mendelssohn Terrace" in the plan.

Existing Conditions Photographs follow. These are the same photographs in our original application; however, the detail descriptions of the work have been revised as a result of our preliminary consultation with the HPC.

Details and photographs regarding the renovation of the front second story central window and door assembly are included as requested by the HPC.

Details regarding the proposed farm fence as requested by the HPC are also included.

Details concerning the proposed farm sign are also included.



1ST FLOOR PLAN



DRAFTING SERVICE
1805 UNIONTOWN RD
WESTMINSTER, MD 21156
443-340-2061 bsjlorcad@comcast.net

MENDELSSOHN
REINHOLD, CLAUDE DEBussy,

BEIHESDA CHURCH ROAD
DAMASCUS, MD 20872

FILE: 2023

A2

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5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (FRONT)**



Detail: Front Elevation of the house. The affected portions include the front porch, balusters, trim, and windows. Proposed plans include removal of existing front porch to be replaced with new front porch with new posts, trim, and balusters to more closely match the original as shown in the 1897 photograph (see Exhibit A). The shrubbery will also be removed to prevent further damage of the historic field stone foundation and return the front façade closer to an 1880 appearance. Windows will be restored and existing storm windows will remain in place to protect the original windows.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT)**



Detail: Left Elevation of the house. The affected portions include the top of the bay window and two second story windows above the existing sunroom addition roof. New trim and balusters will be added to the top of the bay window similar to the 1897 photograph as shown in Exhibit A. Bilco doors will be added to the cellar stairwell to prevent water from entering the basement. The shrubbery and the tree (identified as “K” on the Tree Study) will be removed. Windows will be restored and existing storm windows will remain in place to protect the original windows.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT DETAILS)**



Detail: Left Elevation showing the Cellar entrance detail of the house. The affected portion includes the cellar entrance which will be covered with a bilco door to prevent further water damage to the original cellar door and to prevent rain water from entering the cellar. Windows will be restored and existing storm windows will remain in place to protect the original windows.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT DETAILS)**



Detail: Left Elevation showing the sunroom addition (ca. 1900) detail of the house. The existing roof and balustrade will remain in place. Windows will be restored and existing storm windows will remain in place to protect the original windows.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (REAR)**



Detail: Rear Elevation of the house. The affected portions include the exterior wall to the right of the chimney and the ground at the base of this elevation. A new exterior door will be added to the right of the chimney to provide access to a new wooden deck (26'x12') to be constructed along the rear of the house. The floor of the new deck will be at the same height as where the siding meets the foundation. The wooden deck will not be visible from the front façade. The tree (identified as “L” on the Tree Study) will be removed.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (RIGHT)**



Detail: Right Elevation of the house. The affected portions include the metal awning above the door. The existing awning will be removed and replaced with a gable roof awning in keeping with the Gothic Revival style. Windows will be restored and existing storm windows will remain in place to protect the original windows.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (RIGHT DETAIL)**



Detail: Right Elevation Detail of the house. The affected portions include the metal awning above the door. The existing awning will be removed and replaced with a gable roof awning in keeping with the Gothic Revival style. Windows will be restored and existing storm windows will remain in place to protect the original windows.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

5. a. **EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS: (RIGHT DETAIL)**



Detail: Right Elevation Detail of the eastern wing of the house. This wing has no affected portions.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

HAWP 919197 (applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III)

Second Story Window/Door Restoration

Work & Materials Description: The original window and door assembly will be restored. The existing exterior storm door will be kept to protect the original features. Only wood will be used to replace any rotten or damaged portions of the window.

Photo 1: Second Story Center Window/Door Access to balcony above front porch



**Photo
Doors Open**

2: Lower



Photo 3: Detail of Exterior of the Lower Door Assembly



Photo 4: Exterior View of Center Window covered with existing storm door.



Photo 5: Detail of Exterior Storm Door over Second Story Window/Door Assembly



Photo 6: Detail of Exterior Storm Door over Second Story Window/Door Assembly



Photo 7: Detail of Exterior Storm Door showing Door Handle and Latch



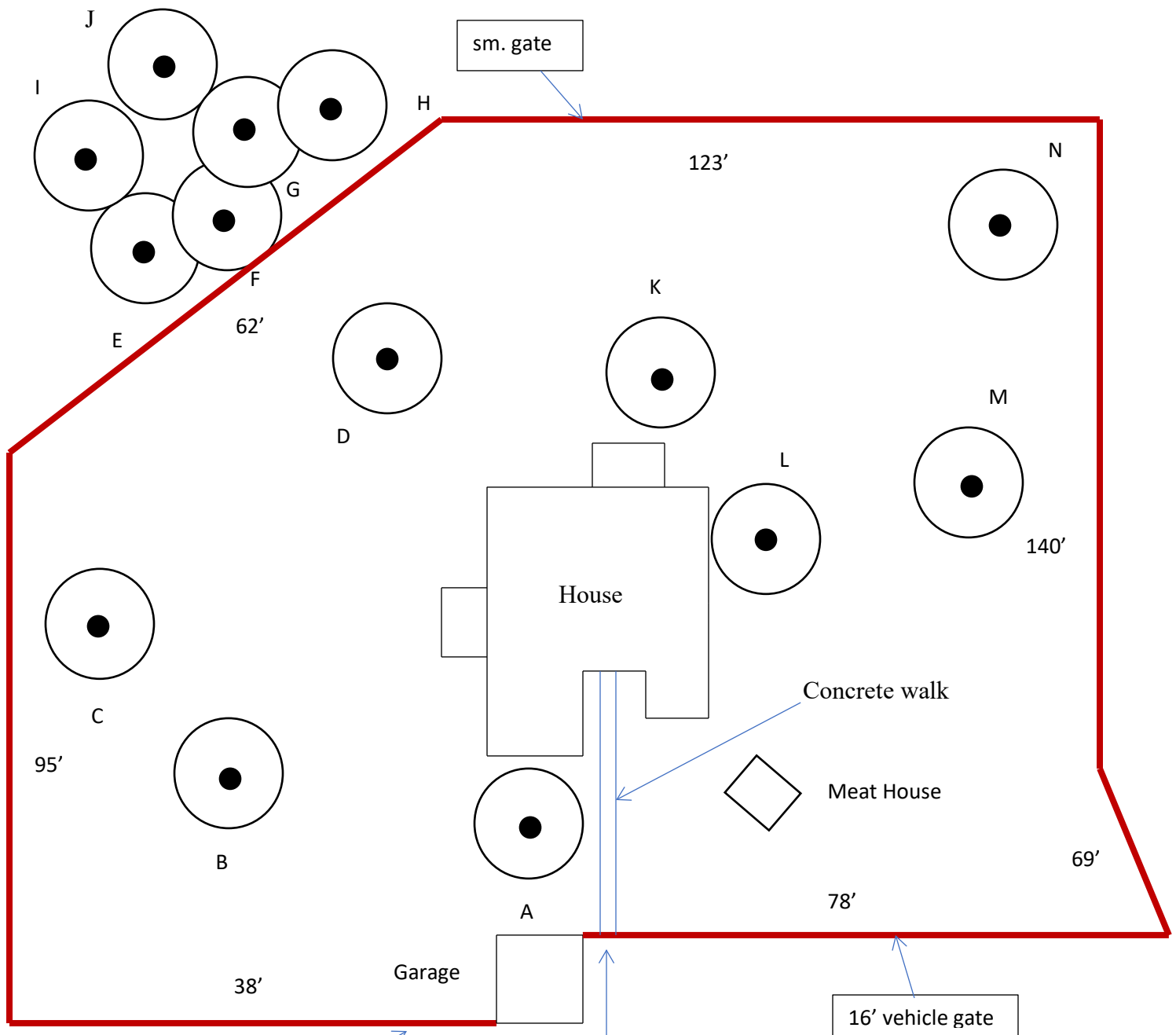
HAWP 919197 (applicant Stewart E. Walker, III)

Proposed Fence Specifications:

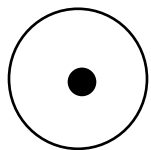
The house and grounds will be surrounded by a 4 foot tall wooden three-paneled fence lined with dog wire to provide a secure exercise area for our daughter's Seeing Eye dog and will match the original fence as is seen in the ca. 1900 photograph (See Exhibit C). This wooden three-paneled fence will occupy the same area as the original fence as seen in Exhibit C and will have a total perimeter of approximately 605 feet. Each post will be a pressure treated wood round post measuring approximately 3.75"x3.75"x6.5' and each panel will be 1"x6"x8' pressure treated boards. See the fence location on the page which follows in relation to the house and out buildings. See the photograph below as an example of the desired construction. Dog wire (2" x4" mesh, 14 gauge galvanized welded wire fence 48" in height running the entire perimeter of the wooden fence) would line the inside of the fence. See photograph below.



LOCATION OF NEW FENCE



Key & Notations:



= Tree location (trunk & canopy/dripline) See Tree Survey.



= Fence location (wood, three panel, 4' high with round posts, lined with dog wire). Total fence perimeter is 605'.

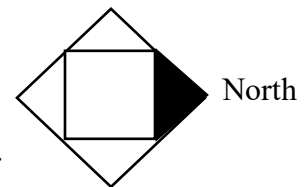


Exhibit C: Original photograph of Mendelssohn taken in circa 1900 showing the wooden three paneled fence which once encircled the crest of the hill upon which the house was constructed.



HAWP 919197 (applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III)

Proposed sign Installation. A sign to be placed at the entrance of Mendelssohn Terrace Farm within sight of the public road similar to the one in the image below:

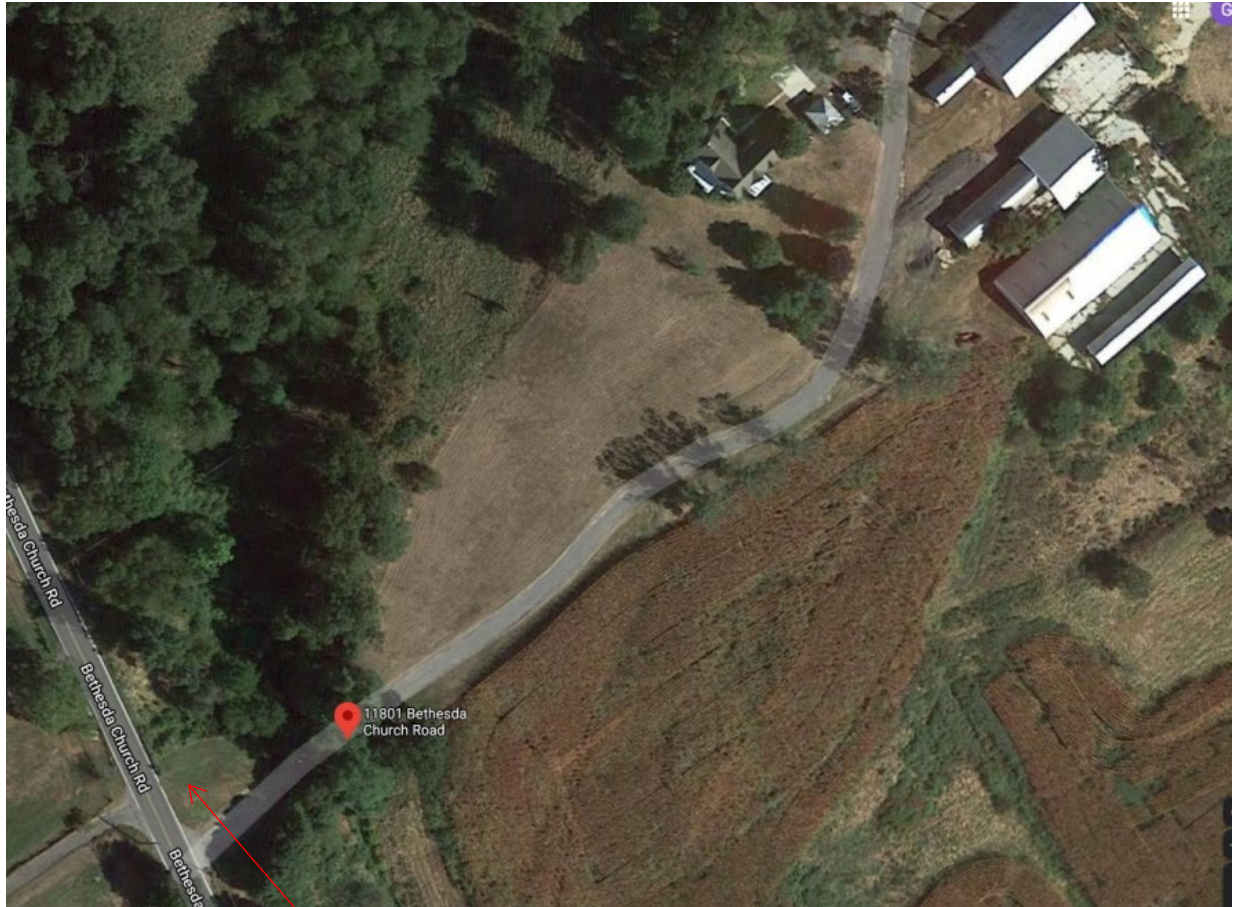


Materials: The proposed sign will be made of painted wood and will be suspended from a horizontal arm fastened to a vertical wooden post approximately 6-7 feet in height above the ground.

Dimensions: The sign will measure approximately 36 inches wide and 43.5 inches in height. The post from which the sign will be suspended will be a square pressure treated post measuring 4"x4"x10". A horizontal arm will extend from the post from which the sign will hang.

HAWP 919197 (applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III)

Site of Proposed Farm Sign



Proposed location of farm sign within sight of Bethesda Church Road at the entrance of the farm driveway. (Map courtesy of Google Maps).

EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITIONS: DERELICT BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION



Detail: This derelict tool shed is in danger of collapse and is a danger to farm visitors. We propose to demolish and remove the structure and plant grass where it once stood. This structure is noted as “Tool Shed Ruins” on the site map.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITIONS: DERELICT BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION



Detail: This derelict chicken house is in danger of collapse and is a danger to farm visitors. We propose to demolish and remove the structure and plant grass where it once stood. This structure is noted as Ruins of Chicken Houses “A” on the site map.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITIONS: DERELICT BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION



Detail: This derelict chicken house is in danger of collapse and is a danger to farm visitors. We propose to demolish and remove the structure and plant grass where it once stood. This structure is noted as Ruins of Chicken Houses “B” on the site map.

Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

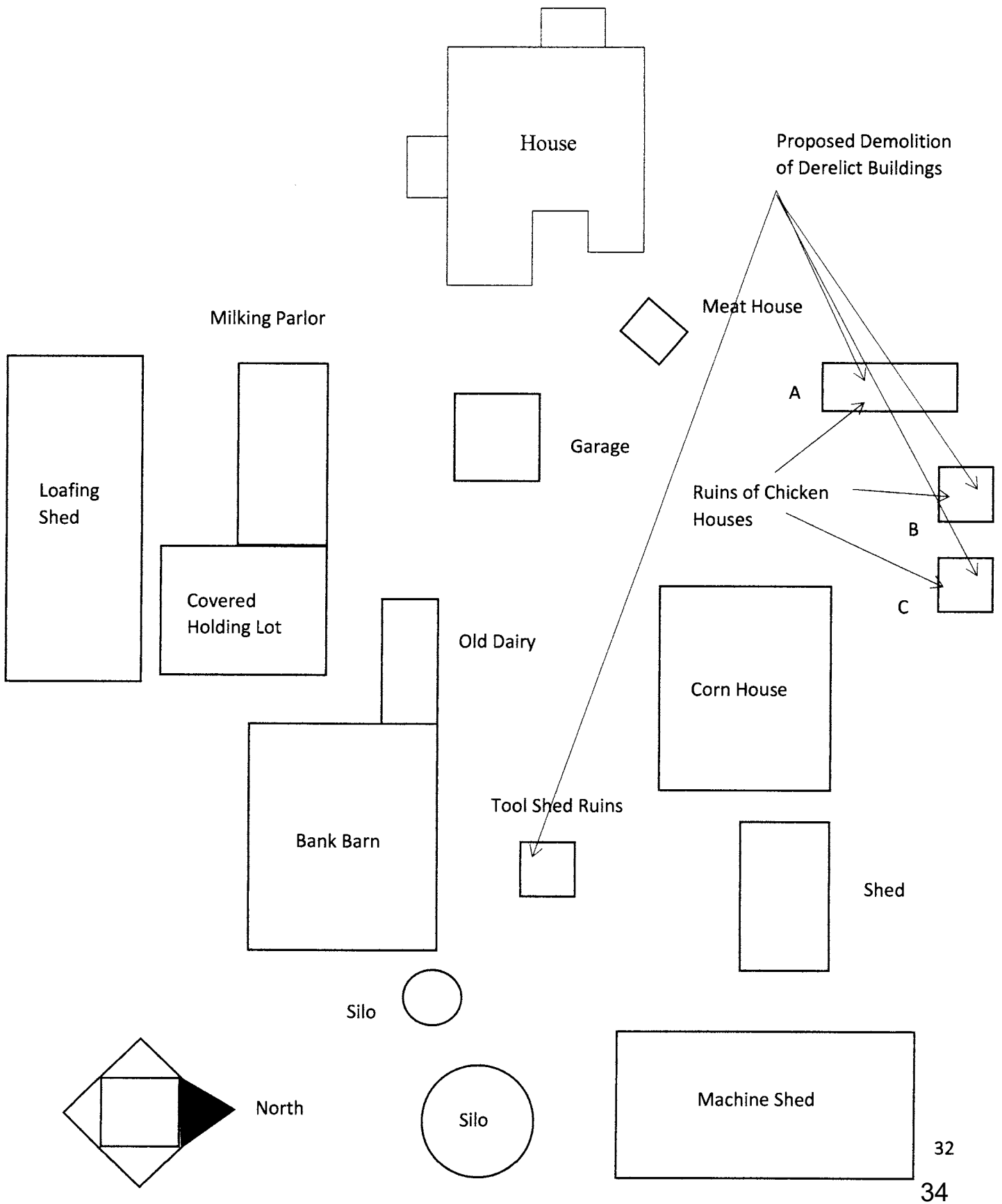
EXISTING PROPERTY CONDITIONS: DERELICT BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION



Detail: This derelict chicken house collapsed years ago and is a danger to farm visitors. We propose to demolish and remove the structure and plant grass where it once stood. This structure is noted as Ruins of Chicken Houses “C” on the site map.

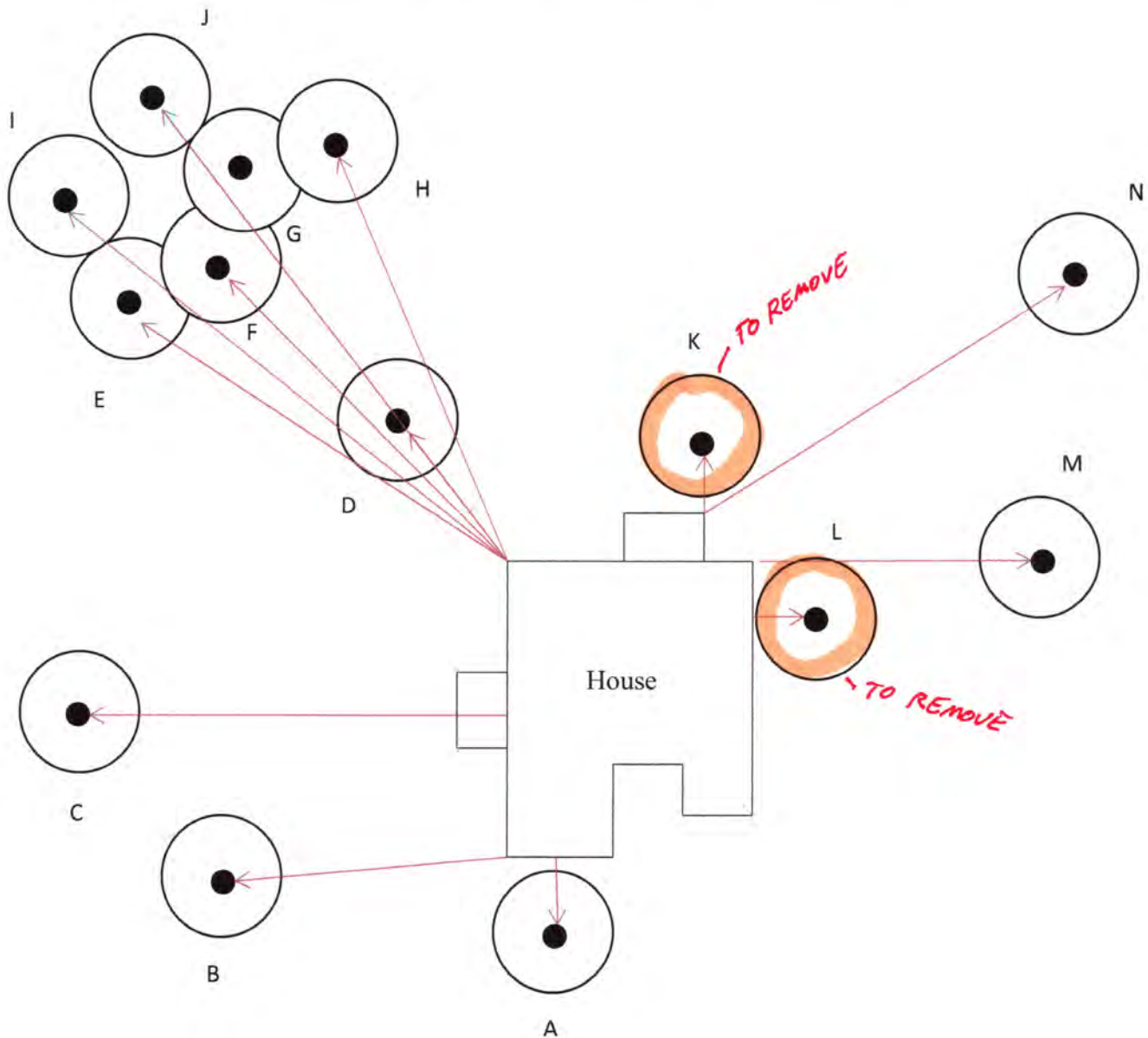
Applicant: Stewart E. Walker, III

SITE MAP: LOCATION OF PROPOSED BUILDING DEMOLITION

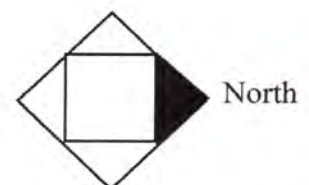
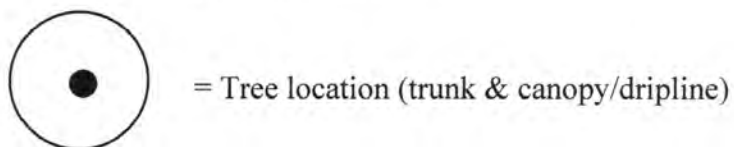


6. TREE SURVEY: MAP OF RELATIVE LOCATIONS OF TREES

Note: a total of 14 trees are shown (labeled by letters A-N) in their locations relative to the house. Tree sizes, location, and species are shown on the table which follows.



Tree Study Key & Notations:



6. TREE SURVEY: TREE SIZES, LOCATION, & SPECIES

(A total of 14 trees are identified by letter as indicated on the Tree Survey Map)

Tree	Trunk Diameter	Dripline Diameter & (Circumference)	Location	Species
A	12"	38' (119.32')	19'	Norway Maple
B	24"	35' (109.9')	62'	Pin Oak
C	16"	30' (94.2')	83'	Crimson King Maple
D	12"	33'3" (104.41')	44'2"	Norway Maple
E	14"	26' (81.64')	89'3"	White Pine
F	12"	24' (75.36')	81'6"	White Pine
G	13"	23' (72.22')	85'4"	White Pine
H	14"	25' (78.5')	80'7"	White Pine
I	12"	14'5" (45.268')	98'	Pin Oak
J	10"	21' (65.94')	106'6"	Red Maple
K	11"	33' (103.62')	11'8"	Norway Maple
L	16"	34'6" (108.33')	10'5"	Norway Maple
M	19"	48'9" (153.075')	43'	Norway Maple
N	16"	21' (65.94')	44'6"	Norway Spruce

Notes: All trunk diameters were measured 4 feet above ground. The location of each tree relative to the house is shown with a red arrow on the accompanying map as measured from the exterior of the house nearest each tree. All trunk diameter measurements are given in inches ("). All canopy/dripline diameters and circumferences are given in feet (') and inches. All locations are given in feet and inches.

Environmental Setting Effect: It will be necessary to remove Trees "K" and "L" as their root system is damaging the historic field stone foundation due to their close proximity to the house. Branches from both trees are rubbing against the house. These trees were volunteer in nature and were not intentionally planted. Both trees are Norway Maples which are classified as an invasive species by the University of Maryland Agriculture Extension Office. The shrubbery which was planted much later around the foundation of the house in the front and left elevations will be removed to prevent further damage to the historic field stone foundation. Repairs will be made to the foundation with like materials once the shrubbery has been removed. Exhibit A shows the front facade and left elevation of the house in 1897 with no shrubbery.