



Pittsfield Charter Township

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Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee

The Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee is pleased to present the preliminary historic district study committee report for your review and comments. The report is titled, “David R. Byrd Center and Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm: Historic District Study Committee Report, Final Draft Report” and dated July 27, 2022.

The Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee was established by the Township Board for Pittsfield Charter Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan on January 27, 2021, for the purposes stated in Res #21-03. In general, the Committee was tasked to perform the duties outlined in Section 3 of the Local Historic District Act (MCL 399.203).

Please review the report and its findings, and submit any comments, recommendations and/or an endorsement to the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee, c/o Patricia Tupacz Scribner, Pittsfield Charter Township, 6201 E. Michigan Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108 or scribnerp@pittsfield-mi.gov.

The Study Committee will include submitted material from all agencies and individuals, including those made at a public hearing to be held on or after October 11, 2022, in a final version of this report. The report and accompanying proposed ordinance will then be submitted to the Township’s Board for a vote to establish the proposed historic district under the jurisdiction of the Pittsfield Charter Township Historic District Commission.

If you have any further questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Patricia Tupacz Scribner (contact information provided above) or Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, Chair, at ihanel@aol.com.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee

Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, Chair

Al Paas, Vice Chair

Mary Ellen Wall, Secretary

Dan Bonenberger

Joyce Hunter

Helen Richards

Patricia Tupacz Scribner

C. Ed Wall

**Dr. David R. Byrd Center
and Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm
3261 Lohr Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108**

Pittsfield Charter Township
Washtenaw County, Michigan
**Historic District Study Committee
Draft Report**

July 27, 2022



Dr. David R. Byrd Center
and Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm

**Historic District Study Committee
Draft Report**

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DR DAVID R BYRD CENTER
AND WILSEY-SPERRY-NELSON FARM

PRELIMINARY HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT

Submitted by the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee
Pittsfield Charter Township, Michigan

Draft Report

July 27, 2022

I. Introduction

In a letter dated January 4, 2021 (**Attachment A**), Mr. Kip Lightfoot, representing the Dr. David R. and Letitia J. Byrd Historical Foundation, current owner of the Byrd Center at 3261 Lohr Road, Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County, petitioned Pittsfield Charter Township to have the Byrd Center property designated an historic district under the authority of the Pittsfield Charter Township Historic District Commission. Following the provisions of Section 5-4 of the Township's Historic Preservation Ordinance (**Attachment B**), the Township Board of Trustees appointed a Historic District Study Committee by resolution on January 27, 2021 (**Attachment C**). The resolution charged the Study Committee to evaluate the property and determine if it meets criteria for historic district designation, as outlined in Section 3 of the Township Preservation Ordinance. This document describes and includes the Committee's findings and recommendations.

The members of the **David Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee** are:

- **Dan Bonenberger** -- Dr. Bonenberger is Professor of Historic Preservation in the Department of Geography and Geology at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan. He holds a PhD in Geography (Geographic Information Systems and Science) and an MA in History, both from West Virginia University. His expertise lies in heritage recording and documentation, digital heritage, and historic American architecture and cultural landscapes. His work often focuses on dwellings and places associated with working class people from the Midwest to the Mid-Atlantic. He has produced, supervised, and contributed to intensive-level and reconnaissance-level surveys following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for architectural and engineering documentation.
- **Ina Hanel-Gerdenich** (Chair) – Ina Hanel-Gerdenich (MS, Historic Preservation, Eastern Michigan University) is an independent consultant in historic preservation, specializing in the agricultural and architectural history of Michigan. She has conducted multiple architectural surveys for local governments within Washtenaw County, including Pittsfield Township. She has also served on historic district study committees, including chairing, among others, the Harwood Heritage Farm Historic District Study Committee (Pittsfield Township, 2015). Ms. Hanel-Gerdenich served as editor and contributing author of *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan: An Historic Context for the Theme of Agriculture*, produced by the Michigan Agricultural Heritage Team at MSU in 2004. She was formerly employed as the Preservation Planner and Architectural Historian/Rural Specialist for Washtenaw

County and its Historic District Commission. She has served on the board of directors of the Washtenaw County Historical Society and the Michigan Barn Preservation Network, where she currently volunteers as a member of its Awards Committee.

- **Joyce M. Hunter** -- Joyce Hunter is a founding member and the President/CEO of the African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County (AACHM). Under her leadership, the Board has implemented programs and gathered and researched historical artifacts. AACHM was a “Museum Without Walls” for years. The Museum is now housed at 1528 Pontiac Trail and opened to the public on October 24, 2021. Joyce is interested in maintaining historical sites such as the David R. Byrd Center. Ms. Hunter holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Western Michigan University, a Master of Arts degree from Michigan State University, an Administrative Endorsement from the University of Michigan, and a Computer Science Endorsement from Madonna University. Professionally, Ms. Hunter served as Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools within the Ann Arbor Public Schools. In this role she supervised middle and high schools, including working closely with the Mitchell and Mouat Architectural firm during the construction of Ann Arbor’s Skyline High School. She also served as the School District’s liaison to the Student Homebuilding Program and continues to serve on the Student Homebuilding Program Board. Ms. Hunter also is the Board President of the Safe House Center in Ann Arbor.
- **Betty LeClair** – Ms. LeClair has served as a member of the Pittsfield Township Historic District Commission since its establishment twenty-three years ago. She is a former secretary and liaison to the Historical Society. Ms. LeClair is also a charter member of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society and served as its President from 1998-2012. During that time, the Society established the Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead Historic District (2011) and restored the Sutherland-Wilson barn under the leadership of her husband, Don LeClair. Ms. LeClair is a graduate of Cleary College (now University). She retired from the Ann Arbor School District in administrative support to the Class Principal, class counselors and the Science Department at the high school level. Mrs. LeClair has lived in Pittsfield Township for eighty-four years.
- **Al Paas (Vice Chair)** – Al Paas is a current member of the Pittsfield Township’s Construction Board of Appeals and the Historic District Commission. He is a past member of the Township Planning Commission. Mr. Paas served as President of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society from 2017 to 2021. He is currently a Society Board Trustee and actively engaged in the restoration of some of the buildings in the Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead Historic District. Professionally, Mr. Paas spent 40 years working as an architect primarily on commercial and institutional buildings. His portfolio includes the design of the current Township Administration Building and of two of the Township Fire Stations. Mr. Paas’ family has resided in Pittsfield Township for the last forty-seven years.
- **Helen M. Richards** – Helen Richards is a retired archivist of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society. She devoted considerable time and energy to organizing the artifacts and documents in the township archival collections. In addition, she has written for the society’s newsletter and has prepared displays/exhibits at the Pittsfield Township Administration Building. She was appointed to the Pittsfield Township Historical Commission in 2002 and continues to serve on the Pittsfield Township Historic District Commission. Ms. Richards is a trained librarian. After completing the requirements for the MALS degree at the University of Michigan, she was employed as a children’s librarian at the Dunning-Hough Library in Plymouth, Michigan, as a research and development librarian at Applied Dynamics, and finally as a librarian at Cleary College (now Cleary University), where she assisted

inmates at the Milan Federal Penitentiary. She later served as Director of Library Services and in that role, she chaired the internal committee that organized and conducted Cleary's successful application for accreditation by the North Central Association. Ms. Richards has lived in the Ann Arbor area since 1951.

- **Patricia Tupacz Scribner** – Since November 2008 Patricia Tupacz Scribner has been the elected Treasurer of Pittsfield Charter Township and has served on the Pittsfield Charter Township's Board of Trustees. She is the board liaison to the Pittsfield Township Historic District Commission. She served on the Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead Historic District Study Committee in 2011 and on the Harwood Heritage Farm Historic District Study Committee in 2015. She also served on the Township's former Arts and Culture Excellence Committee. Patricia is the President of the Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission (WCPARC) and has been a member for thirty-two years. Her interest in historical and cultural resources of our community extends beyond the borders of Pittsfield Township. Patricia was instrumental in the acquisition and restoration of two of the County's most historic sites: Parker Mill County Park in Ann Arbor Township and Sharon Mills County Park in Sharon Township.
- **C. Edward Wall** – Ed Wall has been a resident of Pittsfield Township since 1973 and has been involved in local township government for much of that time. He served as an elected township trustee for nine years. He is also a former university library director and historian. Mr. Wall has authored, edited, and published more than one hundred books and founded and edited three journals. Among the books are several on local Pittsfield Township History: *Emerging from Wilderness: Formation and First Settlement of Pittsfield Township, Michigan*; *Patriots and Pioneers: The Revolutionary War Soldiers of Pittsfield Township, Michigan*; *Ghosts of Whitmore Cemetery: The Mystery of Burial Rights and Empty Graves in the 1825 Pittsfield Township Cemetery*; and *Roster of Valor: The Civil War Soldiers of Pittsfield Township, Michigan* (two volumes).
- **Mary Ellen Wall** – Mary Ellen Wall is a member of the Pittsfield Historical Society and chairperson of the Pittsfield Township Historic District Commission. She has also served on the Pittsfield Township Parks and Recreation Commission for two four-year terms, serving as chairperson during the second term. She was appointed liaison to the Pittsfield Historical Commission in 1989. Ms. Wall served on the Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead Historic District Study Committee in 2011 and on the Harwood Heritage Historic District Study Committee in 2015. She continues to conduct research in local history with her husband, Ed. She has been a resident of Pittsfield Township for 48 years and has four children and twelve grandchildren.

The Committee thanks **Ms. Kimberley Johnson** (Treasurer's Office Administrative Assistant) for her excellent and much appreciated administrative assistance. We also thank **Ms. Lyn Sebestyen** and **Jill Mitchell** (Deputy Clerks) for setting up our Zoom meetings; **Ms. Elizabeth Ciolino** (Assessing Department) for obtaining records from the Washtenaw County Register of Deeds; **Ms. Laura Igna** (Building Services Manager) for retrieving archival building department records; **Mr. Matt Catanzarite**, Pittsfield Charter Township GIS Manager, for generating Figures 1 and 2; and **Mr. Jonathan Mazza** for conducting research in the zoning history of the property. Finally, we would like to thank **Ms. Diana Morton-McKnight**, Washtenaw Community College Trustee for providing information on the tenure of Dr. David R. Byrd.

II. Description of Property

Setting

The Byrd Center property is a 1.22-acre residential parcel located on Lohr Road in the northwest portion of Pittsfield Township, County, Michigan (**Figure 1**). The property lies just south of I-94 and the City of Ann Arbor in an area that includes commercial development to the west and multi-family housing to the north and south. I-94 and a church are located at the property's rear (east side). Its boundaries are visually defined by the public road (Lohr Road) to the west, a U-shaped driveway with legs running parallel to the north and south property boundaries, and a wooded area behind the house on the east side.

The property features the 19th-century Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson farmhouse, a small garage, a linear stone feature and multiple older trees and bushes. The Upright and Wing house stands on high ground facing an expansive front lawn and the public road (**Figure 2**). The U-shaped gravel driveway circles around the rear of the house. The small, vernacular timber-frame garage stands southeast behind the house and faces the southern portion of the driveway (**Figure 3**). A small rectangular enclosure built of cinderblocks and capped with a row of stone and mortar stands behind the garage (**Figure 4**).

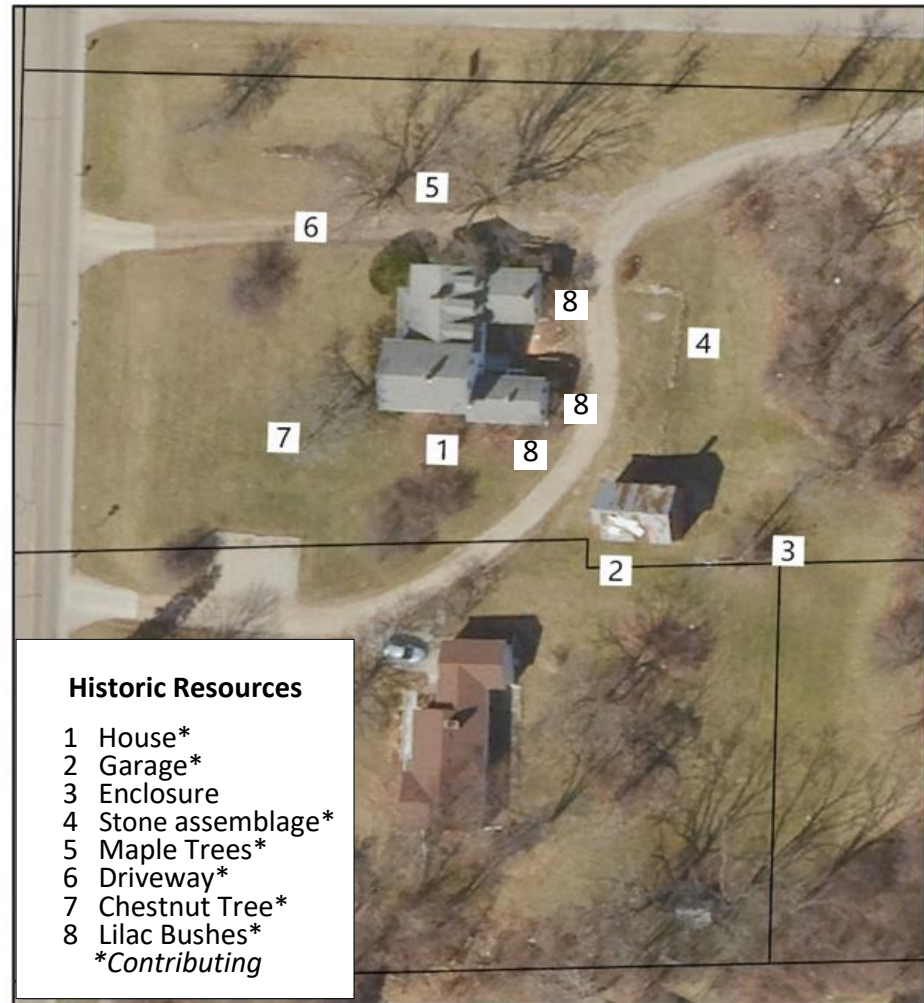
The front lawn includes a large horse chestnut tree near the southwest corner of the house (**Figure 5**) and several smaller trees planted near the southwest corner of the property and randomly placed near the north arm of the driveway. Among those are two apple trees that were planted in the late 20th century. The U-shaped driveway borders the front lawn. The driveway on the north side of the house passes a linear rocky area of bushes followed by two mature maple trees standing due north of the house (**Figure 6**). The origin of the rocky bushy area in front of the maple trees is not known but it may be associated with the construction of the lane leading to the 1984 church at the rear of the farmhouse. On the east side, the driveway passes between the house and a row of partially buried stones. The L-shaped assemblage extends from a bush at a point east of the house to the garage on the southeast side of the house (**Figure 7**). The land to the east of the stone assemblage gently slopes down to a young, wooded area. The yard between the house and the south portion of the driveway is filled with large, mature lilac bushes that have recently been cut back (Fall 2021). Similar bushes are located along the rear elevation as well (**Figure 8**).

The property is what remains of the 138-acre Moses Wilsey farm.² The farm has been gradually reduced in size by all subsequent owners. A substantial portion of the farm to the east was incorporated into the I-94 highway right-of-way and commercial development adjacent to the Briarwood Mall. The former agricultural fields that extended north and south from the farmhouse have been developed in recent decades into multi-family residential structures. The former field to the west, separated from the farm by Lohr Road and not part of the original Wilsey farm, is now a large retail center with accompanying parking lot (**Figure 9**). Two neighboring parcels retain resources affiliated with the original farm. A one-story ranch house

² See Footnote no. 20 (page 37) for commentary on the size of the farm.

Byrd Center

3261 Lohr Rd
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
Pittsfield Charter Township



Historic Resources

- 1 House*
 - 2 Garage*
 - 3 Enclosure
 - 4 Stone assemblage*
 - 5 Maple Trees*
 - 6 Driveway*
 - 7 Chestnut Tree*
 - 8 Lilac Bushes*
- *Contributing

Figure 1. Site and location maps of the Byrd Center property.



Figure 2. Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farmhouse, March 2021. Item No. 1 on Site map (Figure 1). View looking southeast. The north end of the driveway is in foreground (Item No. 6).



Figure 3. View across property to NE. Farmhouse on left, garage/barn on right (Item No. 2 on Site Map (Figure 1). Buildings on far left are housing units on the neighboring property to the north. The south end of the driveway is in the foreground.



Figure 4. Small enclosure of cinderblock capped with a row of stone. View looking SE. Item No. 3 on Site Map (Figure 1). Non-contributing resource.



Figure 5a and 5b. Horse chestnut tree, looking NE. Left in summer, right in winter. Contributing Resource. Item No. 7 on Site Map (Figure 1).



Figures 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d. Pair of mature maple trees along N side of main driveway. Left, looking E. Above, looking across front lawn to NE. Below, looking SE from road. Below left, rock and bushy area forming border between house and adjacent church lane.

Contributing Resources. Item No. 5 on Site Map (Figure 1).



Figure 7. (Far left): L-shaped assemblage of rocks leading from barn north to end of driveway before it turns west. Looking SW. (Near left): as above, but looking NW.

Item No. 4 on Site Map (Figure 1). Contributing resource.

Figure 8. Lilac Bushes on east and south side of house. The bushes were trimmed back extensively in Fall 2021. Item No. 8 on Site Map (Figure 1). Contributing resource.

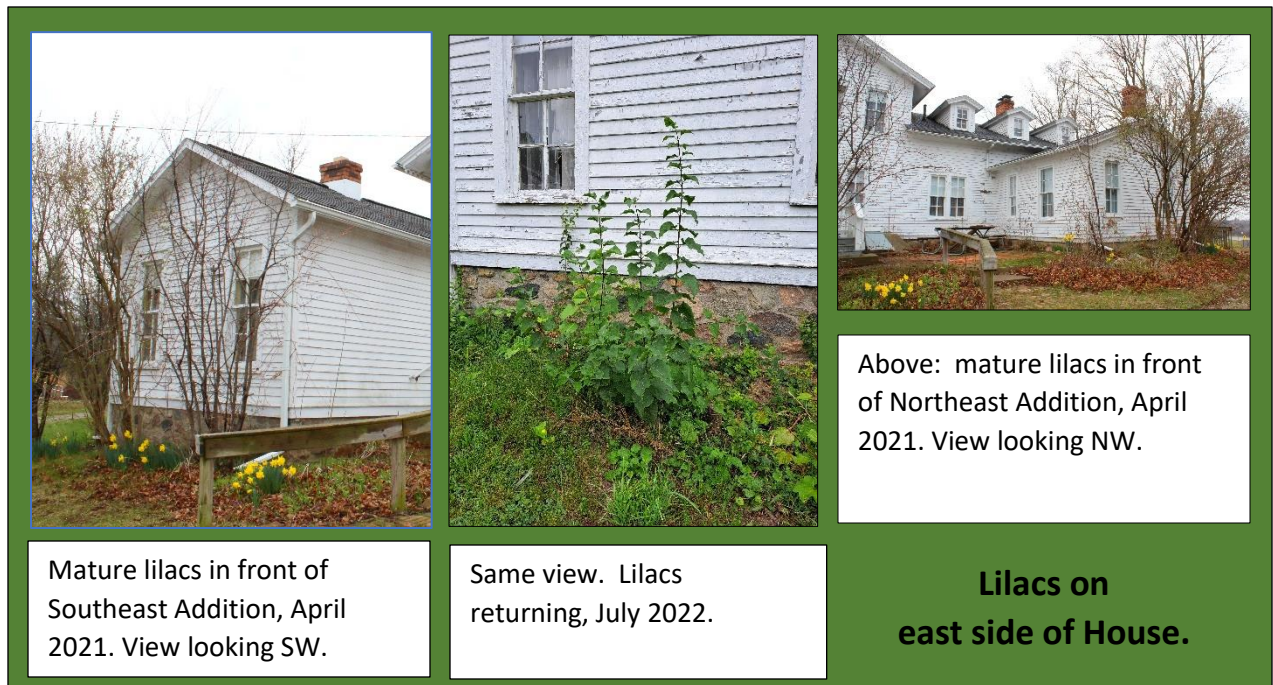




Figure 9. Area Map showing:

- Farm: 3261 Lohr Road (see Figure 1 for details)
- Ranch House: 3269 Lohr Road
- Church: 3257 Lohr Road

stands on the lot to the south of the farmhouse (3269 Lohr Road; **Figure 10**). The ranch as built c.1950 is one of several country homes that were carved out of the farm's original property and built along Lohr Road during the 20th century. Its rear foundation was built adjacent to the front foundation of the original barn on the Byrd property. Remnants of the barn foundation and a silo foundation remain visible to this day in the rear yard of the ranch house (**Figures 11, 12**).



Figure 10. 3269 Lohr Road, c.1950. View looking southeast.



Figure 11. Remnant of barn foundation. Poured concrete and stone. Looking southwest.



Figure 12. Silo foundation of poured concrete, 3269 Lohr Road. View looking north.

The most prominent resource formerly connected to the property is the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation chapel located about one hundred yards to the east of the farmhouse. The chapel was designed and built in 1984 by then property owner Dr. David Byrd (**Figure 13**). To accommodate a growing religious community, the original chapel was expanded between 1998 and 2002. A paved access drive from the public road and an expanded parking lot were added at the same time. The drive runs parallel to the north portion of the gravel drive surrounding the house. The land on which the chapel stands was deeded by the current owner of the Byrd Center to the Church in 2011.



Figure 13. Episcopal Church of Incarnation built 1984. View looking northeast.

Farmhouse

The 19th century farmhouse is the largest and oldest resource on the property. It is a vernacular “Upright and Wing” frame house with two rear additions (**Figure 14**).³ Each section of the house stands on a rectangular footprint and has a gable roof. The Upright portion is twenty feet wide by twenty-six feet long. It is a full two stories tall and has a front-gable roof of medium pitch. It defines the south end of the house and faces west. The adjacent side Wing is attached to the north side of the Upright, but its front elevation is stepped back from that of the Upright to make room for a front porch. The Wing is twenty-eight feet long by twenty feet deep and one-and-one-half stories tall. It has a gabled roof oriented perpendicular to the Upright roof and a one-story rear addition at the northeast corner of the house. The addition stands on an eighteen-foot-deep by sixteen-foot-wide footprint, is one-story tall and has a gabled roof whose ridge abuts the eave



Figure 14. Oblique view of farmhouse façade (west elevation). Facing southeast. Item No. 1 on Site Map. Contributing resource.

³ “Upright” refers to the taller portion with a front-facing gable. “Wing” refers to the lower mass projecting off the north side of the Upright. The rear additions are identified by their respective locations.

of the Wing. A second one-story addition is attached to the rear of the Upright, although its twenty by fourteen-foot footprint projects slightly to the south. Together the parallel one-story additions frame a courtyard and give the house an overall U-shaped plan.

The entire house stands on a fieldstone foundation and is covered with wood clapboard siding. The siding on each elevation is framed by a water table and projecting drip strip at the bottom, narrow corner boards on the outer edges, and a medium-sized frieze board under the eaves at the top. The exception is the exposed wall between the engaged columns under the front porch. That area is covered with flush-mounted horizontal tongue-and-groove boards decorated with a center bead. All sections are capped by a shallow- to medium-pitched gable roof covered with gray, 3-tab asphalt shingles.

The structural framing of the house varies by section. The Wing is of timber frame construction. The exposed beams on the interior are hand hewn and connected by rounded pegs (see Figures 29-31).⁴ The adjacent sawn joists in the basement reveal vertical saw marks. The remaining sections of the house are framed with sawn lumber, suggesting braced frame or balloon frame construction. The floor joists in the Upright section are covered with circular saw marks.

Façade (West Elevation)

The façade is characterized by the dominant two-story Upright section, the gingerbread trim running along the eaves and around the windows, and the decorative front porch in front of the Wing.

The Upright section is two bays wide and two bays deep (**Figure 15**). It includes two windows at each level, with the upper windows placed directly above the lower ones and the pairs centered on the elevation. The placement of windows gives the Upright a

symmetric appearance. In comparison, the Wing is less formal. Its front elevation is four bays wide: two windows flank the right-of-center front door and are placed under the porch roof. A third window is located just outside of the porch towards the north end of the Wing. While the main door leads into the Wing, a second door leads into the north side of the Upright. The matching doors are made of wood, consisting of five panels outlined by rounded, raised



Figure 15. Wilsey-Sperry Farmhouse Façade, looking East.

⁴ One peg exposed in the attic bedroom of the Wing has complete eight sides.

molding (**Figure 16**). The upper two vertical panels feature a round arch at the top. The center, horizontal panel is cut into an oval shape. The bottom two panels are rectangular in shape.

The façade features character-defining decorative gingerbread trim that wraps around the front and side eaves of both the Upright and Wing sections. The sawn wood ornamentation is placed along the outer edge of the medium-deep raking soffits, which themselves are sheathed with individual boards oriented parallel to the roof ridge. The pattern of the gingerbread ornamentation is that of repeating shallow arches separated by an-upside down trefoil (**Figure 17**).

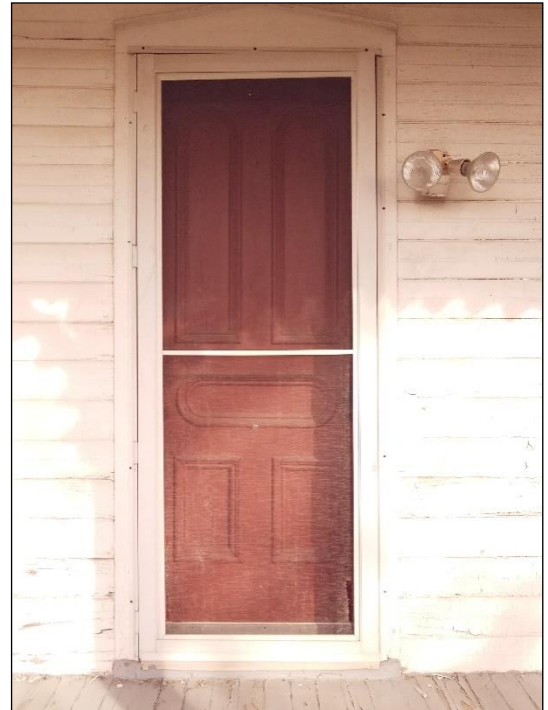


Figure 16. Front Door on west elevation of Wing.

Figure 17. Gingerbread Trim along the eaves.

The window openings exhibit their own form of gingerbread decoration (**Figure 18**). The plain casing surround is capped by a peaked lintel with its own drip strip on top. For most windows on the front and side elevations, the peaked lintel is covered by a projecting gabled hood that features a sawn anthemion mounted on the peak and a stylized hanging trefoil flanked by decorative scrolls hanging underneath. Several of these cutouts appear to be made of laminated plywood. In addition to the sawn cutouts, several windows on the front and south elevations are flanked by dark green shutters with moveable slats. In places the size of the shutters does not match the size of the window opening. The windows themselves are made of 4/4 double hung wood sashes. Some of the sashes feature a spring pin to hold them in place, whereas others are hung with a retracting metal tape or a sash cord.

The front porch is nestled in the corner created by the recessed Wing façade and the side wall of the adjacent Upright (**Figure 15**). The porch with a shallow-pitch half-hipped roof is three bays long and one bay deep as defined by the placement of three individual and two engaged chamfered columns. The base of the columns has been replaced with rectangular wood boxes,

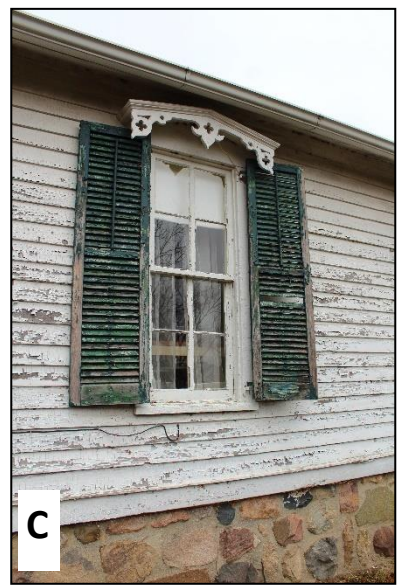
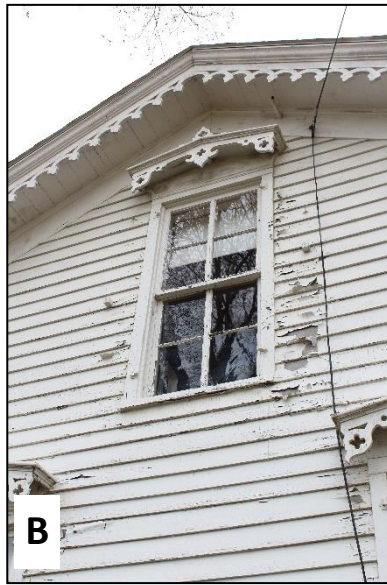


Figure 18. Window and Gingerbread Details

- A. Plain 4/4 Double Hung window with peaked lintel, east elevation.*
- B. Window in gable showing window and eave gingerbread decoration, north elevation.*
- C. Window with decorative hood and shutters, south elevation.*
- D. Underneath detailing of window hood and eave, west elevation looking north.*
- E. Decorative window hood and eave, north elevation looking east-southeast.*

but the upper portion of the columns is capped by a capital made of a sequence of mitered moldings (**Figures 19, 20**). These include a comparatively large torus (bullnose) at the top, a narrow and recessed cyma reversa underneath, followed by a larger cyma reversa and an astragal molding at the bottom. The capitals provide a visual platform upon which arches made of the same decorative lace-like gingerbread trim found on the eaves rise to fill the space at the top of the bay openings. The spandrels associated with the arches are solid boards with a three-leaf cut-out. A sawn bracket connecting the top of each column to the frieze board and eave above adds additional decoration. The profile of the bracket resembles a series of drops (**Figure 20**). The floor of the porch is covered with narrow tongue-and-groove boards. The framing of the porch floor is covered by a vertical plain board on the exterior.

North elevation

Like the front elevation, the north elevation is composed of two parts (**Figure 21**). The western portion includes the gable end of the Wing. The eastern portion is the side elevation of the Northeast Addition at the rear. The Wing contains two 4/4 windows on the lower level and one in the gable of the upper level, all of which are embellished with the same ornamentation as those placed on the facade. The eave is also decorated with the same sawn ornamentation as on the front. In contrast, the side elevation of the Northeast Addition is plain. It features an exterior steel door flanked by a 4/4 double hung window on each side. Both the windows with their lintel peak and the eave remain unadorned. While no windows on this elevation have shutters, all windows display the hardware to indicate that at one time they were flanked by shutters. A modern handicap access ramp made of Wolmanized wood is placed in front of the elevation, providing access to the door in the Addition.



Figure 19. Free standing and engaged porch columns. Looking southwest.



Figure 20. Column capital, bracket, and porch spandrel detail. Looking northeast.



Figure 21. North elevation, looking southeast.



Figure 22. East (rear) elevation, looking west.



Figure 23. Northeast Addition attached to east elevation of Wing, looking northwest. Note lilac bushes in foreground.



East Elevation

The rear elevation of the house is defined by form rather than decoration (**Figure 22**). The two projecting one-story additions at each end of the house partially enclose a brick courtyard in the center. The Northeast Addition includes two 4/4 windows with a lintel peak facing east, and an additional two windows with a plain board lintel on the elevation facing south to the courtyard. The east one of these windows is newer and wider and appears to have replaced a former doorway (**Figure 23**). The Southeast Addition also has two windows on its east elevation, and they lack the lintel peak (**Figure 24**). The courtyard side features a single, off-center door with plain trim that includes drip molding above the opening. The door is accessed by a wood staircase that rests on a raised concrete slab. Its wood railing consisting of square spindles mounted to the exterior side of the handrail matches that of the handicap access ramp on the north elevation.

The rear elevation of the Upright and Wing portions of the house is only exposed between and above the additions. On this elevation, the lower-level windows are paired and placed side-by-side, facing the center courtyard. Each set includes two 4/4 windows separated by a mullion, and trimmed with plain, narrow boards

Figure 24. Southeast Addition attached to east elevation of Upright, looking southwest.

that feature the lintel peak capped with drip molding on top. One set of paired windows is in the Upright section and the other set is built into the Wing. Two individual 4/4 windows trimmed with the lintel peak are on the second floor of the Upright. Unlike in the front, the placement of these windows is determined by the interior floor plan, giving the rear elevation an unstructured appearance. Finally, the Wing includes three gabled dormers placed above the eave line. The smaller 4/4 windows in the dormers are also trimmed with a peak and drip molding at the top.

Like the 4/4 window openings, most of the glazing in the sashes has a longer vertical axis (**Figure 25**). The dimensions of the individual panes on a Wing (living room) window are 11 5/8" wide by 15 3/4" tall. The corresponding dimensions in an Upright (dining room) window are 11 3/4" and 16." On the second floor, an Upright (southwest bedroom) window has panes that are 11 7/8" by 13 7/8." The smaller 4/4 sashes placed in the dormers resemble a pair on the south elevation above the kitchen sink (**Figure 26**). While these sashes fill an opening that also has a vertical axis, the shorter nature of that axis requires the individual panes in the sashes to be oriented with a longer horizontal axis--one that is perpendicular rather than parallel to the length of the window opening. The two basement windows exposed on the south elevation are similar. They mimic the typical three-pane configuration found in older frieze windows, but the sashes include an additional horizontal muntin. This configuration creates six panes with the longer axis placed on the horizontal.

None of the windows on the rear elevation have shutters or the hardware for shutters.

The frieze and cornice treatment of the Upright, the Wing and its dormers, and the Northeast Addition appear similar. The frieze board is of medium width. The gap between the frieze board and soffit is covered with a small strip that has a rectangular profile. The fascia is covered along its upper edge by a piece of molding that has the profile of a cyma recta flanked on each side with a fillet. In comparison, the frieze and fascia of the Southeast Addition are plain and quite narrow (**Figure 23**).

Finally, a steel bulkhead door provides access from the courtyard into the basement of the Upright portion of the house (**Figures 22 and 23**).

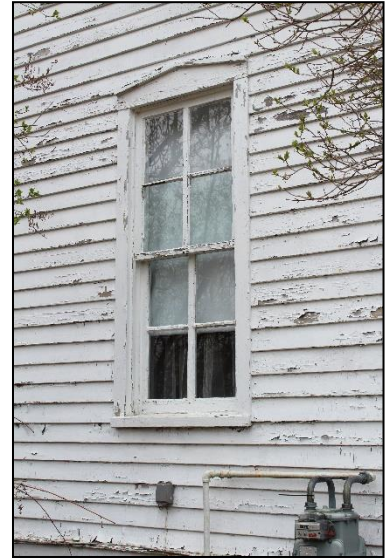


Figure 25. Typical 4/4 double hung window without decorative hood. East elevation of northeast Ell, facing southwest.



Figure 26. Smaller 4/4 double hung window with horizontal panes. Kitchen window, south elevation.

South Elevation

The south elevation is visible to the public, so it is made decorative like the front and north elevations (**Figures 27, 28**). The Upright portion at the west end features the same sawn gingerbread trim along the eave as in front, and all the windows are highlighted with the full decorative hoods. There is one 4/4 window on the lower level and there are two above, with one right above the lower one. The second opening on the lower level contains the pair of shorter 4/4 windows mentioned above. The south side of the Southeast Addition features one fully decorated 4/4 window near its center, and one undecorated 4/4 window on the narrow west-facing wall. This wall exists because the Southeast Addition extends slightly beyond the elevation of the main portion of the house.

Chimneys

The house has four brick chimneys, one for each section (**Figures 23, 28, 29**). All four chimneys appear to be made of the same mottled orange and brown brick, but each has a different profile. The Wing chimney is most visible and is placed left of center. The top of the rectangular chimney has three courses of brick that project outward to the same degree. The Upright chimney is placed off-center to the rear of its section of the house. It too has a rectangular cross-section, with the top embellished by a double band of projecting single courses of brick sandwiching a single recessed row. The Northeast Addition has an end chimney placed adjacent to its eastern elevation. The chimney, while still rectangular in cross-section, is not as wide as the Wing chimney. It has four courses of projecting brick at the top, with the center two courses projecting even further than the uppermost and lowermost courses. The



Figure 27. South elevation showing window types, including those in the basement. Looking northeast.



Figure 28. South elevation with chimneys on Upright and Southeast Wing. Looking northwest.



Figure 29. Chimneys on Upright and Wing. Looking southeast.

Southeast Addition chimney is similar in cross-section to the Northeast Addition chimney, although it has been partially dismantled. While visible on the exterior, its base rests on the floor joists of the attic. The Southeast Addition chimney is comparatively short, and its top two courses of brick project out. From other angles, however, all courses of brick appear to project or recess to varying degrees.

Interior

The interior floorplan of the farmhouse is included in **Attachment D**. The most noteworthy features on the interior include the following:

- Visible timber frame post and plate (**Figure 30**) and steep stairs (**Figure 31**) in the Wing, dating the Wing to a pre-Civil War period. Without the Upright, the Wing resembles a hall and parlor structure with an attic floor. Eight-sided pointed pegs hold the plates together or may dictate where standing posts are located along the Wing's façade and rear elevation (**Figure 32**).
- The window and door casing (**Figures 33-34**) and walnut newel post and railing (**Figure 35**) in the Upright, suggesting a mid-19th century (post-Civil War) construction date. The time gap between the Upright and Wing is emphasized by the change in floor level upstairs (**Figure 36**).
- Some of the changes associated with the Dr. David Byrd period include the Living Room fireplace surround made of stained plywood (**Figure 37**), and the varnished tongue-and-groove vanity, bathroom, and closet doors (examples in **Figures 38-39**) which are probably recycled from another home. Dr. Byrd also installed a nickel stove in the kitchen (**Figure 40**) and removed interior partitions in the southeast addition. With his students he also added cinder block walls and white brick columns in the basement and rebuilt the main-level floor in the Wing. The white bricks are identical to ones used in the 1984 Episcopal Church of Incarnation located behind the house.

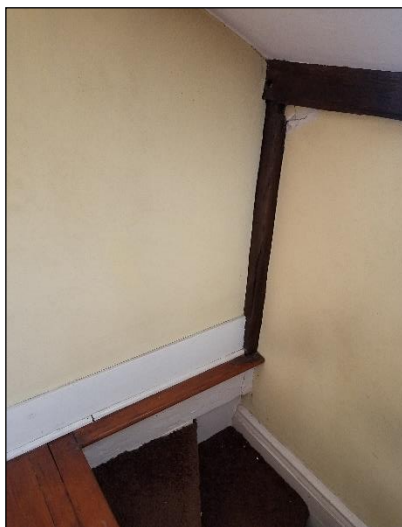


Figure 30. Timber frame post and plate at upper level, northeast corner of the Wing. Looking northeast.

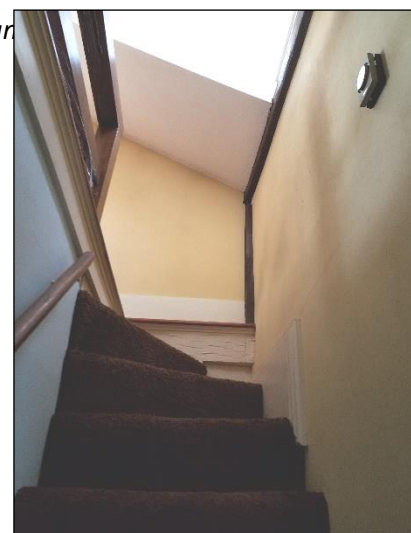


Figure 31. Staircase in Wing. Looking north.



Figure 32 (left). Paired eight-sided pointed pegs along plate on west elevation of Wing.



Figure 33 (left). Window casing, Upright (rear bedroom, looking southwest).

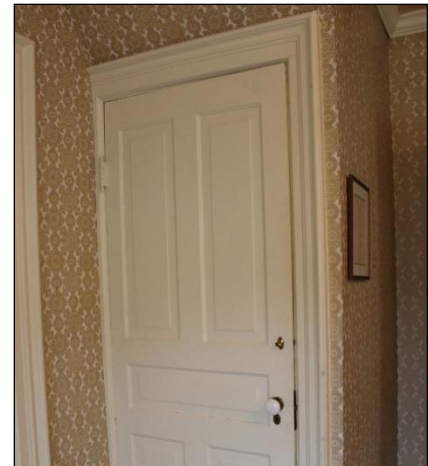


Figure 34 (right). Door trim, Upright (basement door in Dining Room, looking NE; Inset: kitchen doorway detail in Dining Room, looking NE).



Figures 35a and 35b. Walnut newel post of Upright stair. (Left) Looking northwest into Living Room, and (right) Living Room looking south towards stair.



Figure 36. Floor level change marking transition between Wing and Upright. Upper level, facing south.



Figure 37. Living Room Fireplace, looking northeast.



Figure 38. Downstairs Bathroom door in front of matching vanity, looking southeast.



Figure 39. Upper-level Bathroom door, looking east.



Figure 40. Nickel Stove installed in kitchen by Dr. Byrd during the mid-1970s.



Figure 41. Garage, west and north elevations. Item No. 2 on Site Map. Contributing resource.



Figure 42. Garage, south and east elevations.

Garage

The garage is a 1.5-story, rectangular building with a front-gable orientation (**Figures 41, 42**). It stands southeast of the farmhouse, on the outer edge of the circular driveway, and faces west towards the public road. The building rests on a thick poured concrete slab foundation, except on the east elevation, where a good portion of the exposed elevated foundation includes the white, elongated bricks resembling those found in the basement of the house and the adjoining church.

The building's walls are covered with face-nailed vertical boards and battens on all four elevations. The rough boards feature many knot holes and a distinctive growth pattern in the wood, suggesting a sole source for the lumber. The base of the walls is covered by a water table board nailed onto the siding. The top of the walls includes a narrow frieze board also nailed onto the siding. The battens butt up against these boards. There are no corner boards. A 1978 photograph reveals corners painted white to mimic corner boards by contrasting them with the red siding.⁵ Today, white paint is applied around the window openings and

highlights details around the door openings. The 1990s overhead garage door is also white. The facade is further decorated with a narrow strip of shingles above the garage door opening and running the full width of the front elevation. The narrow, pent roof is covered with wood shingles.

The garage building is capped by a shallow to medium-pitch gable roof with an open cornice faced with a plain board. The unadorned fascia slants inward along the building's side elevations. The roof is covered with sheets of standing seam metal. A portion in the southwest corner of the roof has fallen off, exposing the spaced wood nailer boards underneath.

⁵ Kathy Hulik, "Restoration: answer to housing needs?" (*The Ann Arbor News*, December 31, 1978), A-5 to A-6.



Figure 43 (left). Garage, interior view of mortise and timber joinery, southeast corner of building.



Figure 44. Garage, view of interior. Facing south.

The board and batten walls cover a timber-frame structure exposed on the interior (**Figure 43**). The frame is composed of three bents as defined by four hand-hewn corner posts with two additional hand-hewn posts placed in the center of the longer side elevations (**Figure**

44). The posts are joined by a hand-hewn wood sill at the base and a plate beam at the top. The posts support tie beams with the aid of knee brackets. The tie beams are placed at each end of the building and across the middle and are anchored approximately three feet below the level of the plates. The beams and brackets are held together with mortise and tenon joints and wood pegs pointing inward. The posts are approximately eight inches by six to eight inches in cross-section and hand hewn. The brackets are sawn, as are the upper floor joists and the rafters. The sawn rafters are one inch by five inch in cross-section and placed twenty-four inches on center and covered with narrow nailer boards. Additional horizontal dimensional lumber girts used to support the siding are placed between the vertical posts along the side elevations.

The garage includes an upper loft floor accessed by ladder through a narrow opening at the building's east end. The upper floor rests on floor joists that run between the east elevation tie beam and the center girt. Two of the joists are tree trunks whose ends are notched to approximately four-inch by four-inch stubs that interlock with the rear and middle tie beams. The other two joists are sawn four-inch by four-inch lumber. The stair opening itself is outlined in matching sawn lumber. The front portion of the upper floor is built on narrower sawn joists which hang multiple inches lower than the adjacent center tie beam. The beam and joists are held together by pieces of wedged wood between them and nailed to each. This creates a step up from the front to the rear floor levels on the upper floor. The flooring on both levels is made of twelve-inch-wide wood boards oriented perpendicular to the length of the building.

The garage building includes window and door openings. The front elevation has a single overhead garage door placed in the center. A pedestrian door opening is located to its left (**Figure 45**). The door consists of five-inch-wide tongue and groove boards held together on the



Figure 45. Pedestrian entrance into garage. Looking east.

interior with a “Z” configuration made of individual boards. The exterior side of the door is faced with a plywood board covered with vertical battens to resemble the exterior siding. An old-fashioned latch is mounted on the interior with modern screws. Other than the latch, the door is effectively disguised on the exterior with paint, matching the paint treatment of the vertical board wall situated to the right of the overhead garage door.

Windows are found on each elevation. The front and rear gables are graced with a large, double-hung window with minimal trim surround. An additional double hung window is located towards the east end of the south elevation. A narrow, rectangular, single sash window is placed in the front half of the north elevation. Patches in the siding on the south and east elevations suggest that smaller windows have been removed. The smaller windows are visible in the 1978 photograph.

Additional features on the garage building include a narrow cinder block chimney on the building’s north



Figure 46. Chimney and patched opening on Garage, east end of north elevation.

elevation and three small openings in the siding that are now sealed (**Figure 46**). The chimney serves a wood stove that was placed near the northeast corner of the main floor to heat a workshop that once occupied the space. The sealed dovetail openings are approximately three inches wide and six inches tall with a full-round arch top. Two are located near the northeast corner on the north elevation and one is situated near the northeast corner on the east elevation. In both locations, the battens below the openings are notched, suggesting that these openings may have had a functional purpose.

Stone Assemblage and other remnants

An L-shaped assemblage of small boulders runs parallel to the house from the north side of the Garage to where the driveway turns west along the north side of the house. The assemblage separates the driveway on its west side from the sloping rear lawn on the east side (**Figure 7**). The original purpose of the loose stone feature is not known. Possible purposes include stabilization of a parking area adjacent to driveway, making use of rocks from a removed

foundation, and/or serving as remnants of a former stone wall or the edging of a terrace.⁶ Similarly, remnants of foundations found behind the house on the neighboring property (3269 Lohr Road) include a circular concrete wall and additional loose stones and concrete forming a linear N/S feature (**Figures 11, 12**). Aerial photos from 1940, 1947 and 1960 confirm that these features are remains of the foundations for the farm's silo and barn, respectively. The silo and barn were removed before 1940. Finally, a concrete and brick cistern is located to the immediate east of the Northeast Addition (**Figure 47**).



Figure 47. Concrete and brick cistern near southeast corner of Northeast Addition. View looking southwest.

III. Summary of Resources at the Byrd Center

Note: Resource number ("No.") correlates to number on site plan (Figure 1).

No.	Date of Resource	Other Significant Date	Comments	Photos
1. Wilsey-Sperry House*	c. 1840	c. 1865 c. 1935	Upright addition Renovation, rehabilitation	Figures 14-15, 22
2. Garage/Barn*	19 th C-early 20 th C			Figures 41-42
3. Enclosure	1970s-1980s		Poor condition	Figure 4
4. Linear rock feature*			Unknown origin ⁷	Figure 7
5. Maple Trees*			Older trees	Figure 6
6. Driveway*				Figures 2, 3
7. Horse Chestnut Tree*				Figure 5
8. Lilac Bushes*			Along east and south sides of house	Figure 8

**Resources considered historically significant and contributing.*

Number of historic resources within proposed district: 7

⁶ J. Raleigh Nelson mentions the existence of a terrace behind the house in his poem "Iris" published in *From Sunny Pastures* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1952), 45.

⁷ See last paragraph in section titled "Historic Significance" (p. 56) for additional information.

IV. History of the Property

The history of the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson-Byrd property as an organized entity began in 1825 with the purchase of 480 acres from the Federal Government by Ralph and Margaret Updike of New York (**Table 1**). The land in Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County was subsequently purchased by the Wilsey and later the Sperry families and developed into a 19th- and early 20th century subsistence farm. During the 20th century the property transitioned into a “gentleman’s farm,” purchased by a sequence of owners residing in the city of Ann Arbor who used the property as a second home in the country. These owners sold portions of the surrounding acreage for residential development. In 1975 the remaining six acres of the property and its buildings were sold to Dr. David and Letitia Byrd. Dr. Byrd used the house on the property as an office for his architectural firm. After his death, ownership was transferred to the David R. and Letitia J. Byrd Historical Foundation for the purposes of preservation as a museum and to house the African American Cultural and Historical Museum Center administration. The property zoning was changed from agricultural to residential office in 2002 and reclassified as “commercial improved” with R-2 low density, multi-family zoning in 2013.

Pre-settlement Era

Prior to 1825, the land that was to become southern Michigan was occupied by multiple Native American tribes moving east, west, and north across the Lower Peninsula. Most recently, the tribes in and around Washtenaw County were members of the Potawatomi, the Ottawa, and the Huron people.⁸ They exchanged goods with the early European (French and English) fur traders until the balance of power shifted towards the Europeans, gradually eroding the profitability of fur trading, and providing room for the practice of agriculture to expand.⁹ After the War of 1812 ended in 1815 and cemented United States control over the region, the land was surveyed, platted, and opened for Euro-American settlement according to methodology outlined in the federal Land Ordinance of 1785.

There is little remaining of the pre-1825 historic landscape in Pittsfield Township. Descriptions compiled in pre-settlement surveys dated to 1819 reveal a terrain consisting of gently rolling hills, flat lands, and low-lying marshes and swamps. Much of the township, including the immediate area around the Updike (Byrd) property was forested, with areas dominated by oak and hickory or beech and sugar maple.¹⁰ Native American trails and villages were thinly scattered in the area.¹¹ The closest trail to the property paralleled today’s Ann Arbor-Saline Road, which passes approximately one-half mile to the west. Evidence of a Native American village was discovered two miles east of the property. In addition, numerous trails (including the one parallel to Ann Arbor-Saline Road) converged at the sites of the current cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Saline. These sites are all within ten miles of the property.

⁸ Kenneth E. Lewis, *West to Far Michigan* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2002), 16.

⁹ Lewis (2002), 15.

¹⁰ Dennis A. Albert and Patrick J. Comer, *Atlas of Early Michigan’s Forests, Grasslands, and Wetlands* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2008), 16.

¹¹ W.B. Hinsdale, *The Indians of Washtenaw County* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr, Publisher, 1927), Map.

Table 1. Byrd Center Property Occupants (owners marked in bold; *Acres as indicated in source document, see Liber/page or Comments)

Transition Date	Source of Information	Name of Occupant (Owner)	Liber: Page	Acres*	Price (\$)	Comments
8/18/1825	BLM	Ralph & Margaret Updike		480		Patent Deed
6/8/1831	ROD	Mary Nesbitt	N: 425	+/- 400	2,000.00	Divided property among grandsons in 1839, 1843, 1847 (=approx. 133 acres each)
6/13/1839	ROD	Moses T Wilsey	30: 314	1/3 of 400		mortgage M Nesbitt and H and S Wilsey; certified 6/13/1839
	1852, 1853 Assessment	Ferel Otis and brother, taxpayer				*1850 census records 135 acres
	1854 Assessment	Joseph Wilsey, taxpayer				
	1855-1862 Assessment	William Boylan, taxpayer				*1860 census records 137 acres
8/20/1863	ROD	William D Holmes	51: 739	138	4,398.00	Purchased 8/19/1863 from minor heirs of M Wilsey via Amanda Gillet, guardian pursuant to Probate orders 5/11/1863
9/1/1863	ROD	John H Sperry	51: 779	97.97	4,606.00	N 40 ac sold to Z Burd by 1864
2/10/1868	ROD	George E Sperry	65: 149	97.97	7,000.00	*1870 and 1880 censuses record 98 acres
1/15/1903	ROD	Eva Sperry	155: 255			
2/4/1925	ROD	BH Honeywell	253: 319	97.97	1.00	
5/5/1927	ROD	Mark N Green	270: 199	97.97	1.00	Includes \$5800 mortgage from Eva and Cone Sperry
7/26/1933	ROD	Cone and Mabel Sperry	308: 613	97.97	6,178.57	Repurchased from Honeywell via Sherriff's Deed, S 40 acres sold separately
6/8/1935	ROD	J Raleigh and Emma Nelson	314: 62	58.14	3,000.00	Sold parcels for residential and highway construction purposes
9/27/1943	ROD	Emma B Nelson , later her estate	369: 313	58.14	1.00	
8/29/1975	ROD	David R and Letitia J Byrd	1542:546			*Purchased 6+ acres
3/6/1995	ROD	Letitia J Byrd	3085:74			
2004	ROD	Byrd Historical Foundation				Sold 5.45 acres to Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in 2011

The 1819 surveyors' description for the section lines bordering or cutting through the original Updike property provide a site-specific pre-settlement description of primarily forested land.¹² For example, the northern border of the original property is described from west to east as "Run [creek] 8 links wide flowing North East; Run 14 links wide flowing South; Fine rolling rich land; Sugar, Lynn, Ash, White Oak, Bur Oak and Hickory; Undergrowth Aspen, Hazel mixed with Spice." The southern border is similar, except "first [western] half mile swampy, White Oak, Bur Oak, Hickory, Ash; Undergrowth Aspen, Hazel, and Spice." The eastern and western boundaries of the original property do not coincide with section lines. However, the dividing line between Sections 7 and 8 runs through the middle of the original property and is described from the south to the north: "Run [creek] 10 links wide flowing SouthEast; Lynn line tree; Run 8 links wide flowing SouthEast; Fine rolling rich land with Sugar, Lynn, Ash, White Oak, Bur Oak, and Hickory; Undergrowth Aspen, Hazel mixed with Spice." The witness trees are named as maple, sugar maple, beech, ironwood, black jack, white oak, and bur oak.

First Owner: Updike Period, 1825-1831

Ralph Updike was a farmer, expert structure builder, and boat builder. Born 1788 in Somerset (now Mercer) County, New Jersey to a family which traces its roots back to the 17th century immigration from Holland, he moved with his father Roliph to Ulysses in Tompkins County, New York around 1798. Ralph's family was joined there by three of Roliph's brothers and their families over the next few years. The extended family formed the "Updike Settlement," carved out of what was described as a wilderness in the "Lake Country."¹³

After serving briefly in the War of 1812, Ralph married Margaret Ritchie of New York. He owned a small farm and constructed frame mills and boats.¹⁴ As his family grew, the lure west to Michigan did as well. Ralph purchased land patent deeds in Michigan beginning in May 1825. His name is included in the 1825 tax list in Huron River Township in Wayne County. By August 1825, he received title to 480 acres in what would eventually become Pittsfield Township in Washtenaw County.

Ralph's family did not emigrate to Michigan permanently until about 1827.¹⁵ The date is supported by the birth locations of his children. The three oldest were born in New York in 1818, 1820 and 1823, respectively. The youngest of these died in 1827, the same year as her maternal grandmother. Both were buried in the Updike Settlement (New York) cemetery, indicating that the family was still located in New York at that time. On the other hand, daughter Caroline (b. 1828) and all subsequent children were born in Michigan, suggesting an emigration date of 1827 to early 1828. Just three years later, in January 1831, Ralph purchased additional land, this time obtaining four hundred acres in neighboring Jackson County to the west. In June 1831 he sold four hundred acres of his Pittsfield Township farm to Mrs. Mary Nesbitt.

Little is known about Ralph Updike's use of his land in Pittsfield Township. He most likely resided there and given his carpenter's skillset and the abundance of trees, built a shelter and cleared a

¹² Descriptions cited in C. Edward Wall, *Emerging from Wilderness* (Ypsilanti, Michigan: Pierian Press, 2018), 164 and 166.

¹³ Charles Wilson Opdyke, *The op Dyke Genealogy* (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1889), 251.

¹⁴ Opdyke (1889), 311.

¹⁵ Opdyke (1889), 311.

small amount of land for food production, although the location of the building site is unknown.¹⁶ Ralph Updike and his household are included in the 1830 Federal Population Census for “Ann Arbor Township,” which at that time included this portion of what is now Pittsfield Township. He is also listed in an Early Census Index from 1834, suggesting that he may have continued to own or use property in Washtenaw County after having sold the property in Pittsfield Township.¹⁷ Ralph Updike was a resident of Jackson County when the 1840 census was conducted and remained so for the rest of his life. He would go on to serve as a Grass Lake Township supervisor and build a sawmill and store in the village of Grass Lake.¹⁸ He died in 1859.

Nesbitt-Wilsey Period, 1831-1863

The Nesbitt-Wilsey period marks the division of the original property into three separate farms. Mary Nesbitt was born in New York in 1765¹⁹ and had at least one daughter named Sarah Todd, born in 1788 or 1789 in New Jersey. Sarah married Oliver Platt c. 1812 and gave birth to two daughters. By 1814 Mr. Platt and at least one of the baby daughters had died. The fate of the second daughter is unknown. Sarah married Mr. Henry Wilsey in 1816 in Washington, Genesee County, New York.²⁰ The couple had three boys: Moses (1817-1851), David (1819-1893) and Joseph (1824-1907), all born in LeRoy, Genesee County, New York. Henry Wilsey was a farmer and carpenter who built one of the first flouring mills near Rochester, New York.²¹

In the spring of 1831, the Wilsey Family, including matriarch Mary Nesbitt, moved to Michigan. It is not known what led the family to emigrate or to immigrate to Pittsfield Township, but Mrs. Nesbitt purchased four hundred acres of Ralph Updike’s property in Pittsfield Township in June of that year. The Wilseys probably first lived in the log cabin built by Updike, but soon built their own cabin and eventually a frame house next door. The precise location of these early buildings on the farm is not known, although there is a possibility that the frame house was situated near the northeast corner of the intersection of Ellsworth and Lohr Roads. This was the location of grandson Joseph Wilsey’s house in 1856, and because he was the last grandson to inherit his portion of the farm and because he and his parents lived with his grandmother until her death in 1849 or early 1850, it seems possible that this was the oldest house (excluding any log cabins) on the Nesbitt-Wilsey farm.²²

Mary Nesbitt divided the property among her three grandsons in stages, while her son-in-law Henry Wilsey continued to farm the remaining amount. The oldest grandson, Moses Wilsey,

¹⁶ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Jackson County, Michigan* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1890): 622.

¹⁷ *Michigan, U.S., Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1827-1870* (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999), retrieved 29 June 2021. This is in reference to a Ralph Updike of Washtenaw County. It is not confirmed that this is the same Ralph Updike.

¹⁸ *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, volume 5 (Lansing, Michigan: W.S. George and Co., State Printers and Binders, 1884): 347.

¹⁹ *History of Washtenaw County, Michigan* (Chicago: Charles C. Chapman & Co., 1881), 1253.

²⁰ *History of Washtenaw County, Michigan* (1881), 1253.

²¹ Henry Wilsey Obituary, FindAGrave.Com, May 24, 2009, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/37455216/henry-wilsey>.

²² *Map of Washtenaw County, Michigan* (Philadelphia: Bechler and Wenig, Co., 1856; republished by the Washtenaw County Genealogical Society, Nancy Krohn and Mary L. Liskow, eds., 1997), 12.

received the northern-most third in 1839.²³ This portion of the farm includes the present Byrd Property. The southeastern third of the farm was gifted to grandson David Wilsey in 1843 and the southwestern portion of the farm, including the parcel of land on the west side of Lohr Road, was presented to the youngest grandson, Joseph Wilsey in 1847.²⁴ Mary as well as Joseph's parents, Henry and Sarah, continued to live with Joseph (and later his wife) in the same house until they passed in 1849 or 1850, 1874, and 1884, respectively.

Moses is listed as a farmer within the Henry Wilsey household in the 1840 census, suggesting that other than receiving title to his land he continued farming the entire Nesbitt/Wilsey parcel with his father. Moses married neighbor Amanda Holmes in October 1841, around which time Moses may have moved onto his property with his wife.²⁵ She was the daughter of Burroughs Holmes and Polly Dennison, who settled on a 160-acre farm to the immediate east of the Nesbitt-Wilsey property in 1837. Moses and Amanda had three children: Alvin, born in 1842, Mary Elizabeth, born in 1845, and Eunice, born in 1848 or 1849. In 1850, the young household also included Martha Smith, age 12, who may have been a household helper for the young family while also attending school.

The appearance of the Moses Wilsey farm during his tenure is not known. The 1850 agricultural census describes the farm in production terms. Twenty-five of the reported 135 acres recorded had been improved. Two oxen and two horses provided additional labor. The family kept four milk cows, two other unspecified cattle, five swine and twenty-four sheep. They harvested wheat, corn, oats, barley, and hay. They also produced wool, butter, and maple syrup (by comparison, Henry Wilsey, who by then was farming Joseph's 133 recorded acres, worked fifty improved acres, and kept sixty sheep; he did not report producing maple sugar, but the remaining production statistics are resemble those of Moses). It is likely that the Wing of the current Byrd House served as the original house on the farm. Unlike the rest of the current house, the Wing is built using timber frame construction methodology, which was supplanted by balloon framing beginning in the 1830s (**Attachment E**). The Wing has its own exterior door and staircase leading to the attic-like space above the main floor. Its low 1.5-story height, side gable profile, and rectangular footprint resemble the earliest hall-and-parlor houses in Pittsfield Township, including those standing on the 1830s Sutherland-Wilson Farm and the 1845 Cobblestone Farm.

In December 1851 Moses died of consumption at the age of thirty-four. For the next decade, the farm's property taxes were paid by various individuals, suggesting that Amanda leased the farm. These individuals included brother-in-law Joseph (1852) and others. The longest tenant was William Boylan, brother to Lydia (Mrs. David) Wilsey. William Boylan paid the property taxes on the farm during the years 1853-1862. The 1860 agricultural census indicates that the farm consisted of sixty-five improved acres and seventy-two unimproved acres. The value of the farm

²³ Washtenaw County Register of Deeds, Liber 30: 314. The amount of land is described as one-third of the parcel that Mary Nesbitt purchased in 1831, which is described as "400 acres more or less." The reported and calculated acreage associated with the farm up to 1863 varies from 133 to 138. The inconsistency is probably due to variability in the measurement techniques and not because additional land was purchased.

²⁴ Washtenaw County Register of Deeds, L 30: 315-316.

²⁵ The 1845 State of Michigan population census lists Moses Wilsey as a separate entity from his father, suggesting that Moses and his family moved to their portion of the farm sometime during the early 1840s.

is reported as \$5480, which is slightly lower than the neighboring Wilsey farms of the same size (\$6100 and \$6000). Boylan worked the farm with four horses and two oxen. He also owned three milk cows, thirty-eight sheep and twelve swine. He raised corn and wheat and sold wool. Unlike his immediate neighbors that year, he also produced oats (**Table 2**).

Around 1860 Amanda Wilsey moved to a farm near Manchester with her youngest daughter. She married James Gillett sometime in 1859 or early 1860, but the marriage apparently did not last long, because by 1868 she was living in Ann Arbor and using the surname Wilsey.²⁶ Amanda's older children also lived in Ann Arbor by this time. Her son was a musician and professor who eventually moved with his own family to Detroit, and her older daughter was married to N. Augustus Parker. The wedding took place during the same week in 1863 that the Moses Wilsey Farm was sold at a public auction in Ann Arbor.²⁷ The farm, then recorded as 138 acres in size, was purchased by Amanda's brother, William D. Holmes (**Table 1**). Two weeks later, William Holmes sold the farm minus the northern forty acres to John Sperry of Ann Arbor Township (**Figure 48**).

Sperry Period, 1863-1935

Under the ownership of the Sperry family, the farm continued to operate in as before. Like the Wilseys, the Sperrys were a pioneer family who first settled in Washtenaw County in 1835. In that year the family patriarch, Mr. Samuel Sperry and his wife Miranda Page purchased a 160-acre farm in Section 32 of Ann Arbor Township. The property was situated on Main Street, approximately one mile south of the village of Ann Arbor and 1.5 miles north of the Wilsey farm. The Sperrys would also become related to the Wilseys through marriages, suggesting they traveled in overlapping social circles.²⁸

Samuel and Miranda Sperry's older son John Sperry purchased ninety-seven acres of the Moses Wilsey farm in 1863 (**Table 1** and **Attachment F**). He was born on the Ann Arbor Sperry family farm in 1836 and would in later years become a successful farmer and horticulturalist. He married Kittie Snyder in 1864. The Sperrys operated the former Wilsey farm for just five years. A comparison of agricultural census data from 1860 and 1870 suggests that little changed on the farm during the John Sperry tenure. The one distinctive change was the value of the farm. While John purchased the farm for \$4606, he sold it for \$7000. The increase in five years may suggest that substantial improvements were made to the property during this time. While this alone is insufficient proof, architectural detailing on the farmhouse also suggests that the house was significantly expanded during the 1860s. The modest Wilsey farmhouse received a full, two-story, gable-front addition. The addition expanded the house significantly and gave the house

²⁶ *City Directory of Ann Arbor* (Adrian, Michigan: H.H. Chapin, 1868), 121.

²⁷ "Married," *Michigan Argus*, August 28, 1863.

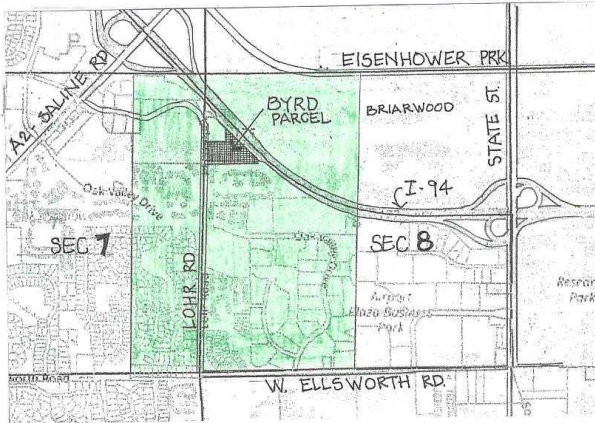
²⁸ Calvin Cone Warner, brother of Evalyn Warner Sperry (wife of George Sperry and daughter-in-law of Samuel and Miranda Sperry), married Ermina Sheldon in 1859. Ermina was a sister to Anna, wife of Amanda Wilsey's brother Alfred Holmes, and sister to Jane, wife of Amanda's son Alvin Wilsey. The Sheldon sisters were the daughters of Newton and Susannah Sheldon of neighboring Lodi Township.

Table 2. Comparison of Agricultural Census Data for the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm, 1850 to 1880

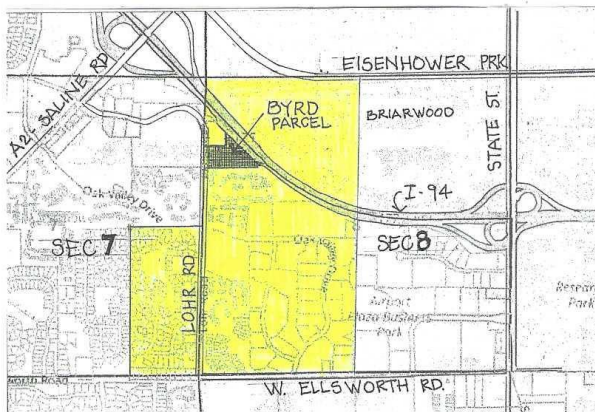
Year:	1850	1860	1870	1880
Item Farmer:	M Wilsey	W Boylan	G Sperry	G Sperry
Acres, improved	25	65	73	87
Acres, woodland				5
Acres, unimproved	110	74	25	6
Acres, Total (calculated)	135	139	95	98
Cash Value of Farm (\$)	\$2,600	\$5,480	\$12,000	\$9,000
Value of Implements (\$)	\$100	\$150	\$350	\$400
Total wages paid			\$300	\$100
Horses (no.)	2	4	3	3
Oxen (no.)	2	2		
Milch cows (no.)	4	3	3	5
Wetting cows (no.)				
Other cattle (no.)	2	7	2	
Sheep (no.)	24	38	50	74
Swine (no.)	5	12	5	6
Value of Livestock (\$)	\$269	\$544	\$700	\$700
Wheat (bu)	20	365	240	486
Rye (bu)				
Indian Corn (bu)	100	400	175	800
Oats (bu)	100	217		
Barley (bu)			115	146
Buckwheat (bu)				
Butter (lbs)				500
Fleece (no)				75
Wool (lbs)		190		450
Poultry (no)				107
Eggs (dozen)				460
Potatoes (bu)				50
Orchard (trees)				120
Forestry (cords)				30

Figure 48. Maps showing change in acreage of farm, 1825-1987. Courtesy of Al Paas.
See also Plat maps from the 19th and early 20th century in Attachment F.

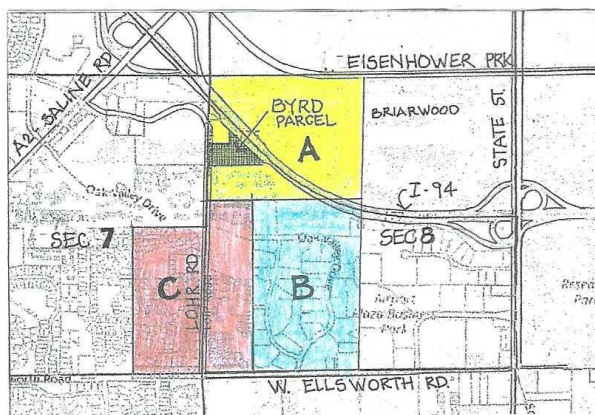
Progression of Land Ownership and Use



In 1825 Ralph Updike obtained a patent on 480 acres. 320 acres in the western half of what would become Section 8 of Pittsfield Township plus 160 acres in the eastern half of Section 7



Mary Nesbit purchased 400 acres of the property from Updike in 1831. The first house for the family (not a log cabin) was likely built near the NE corner of the intersection of Lohr and Ellsworth.



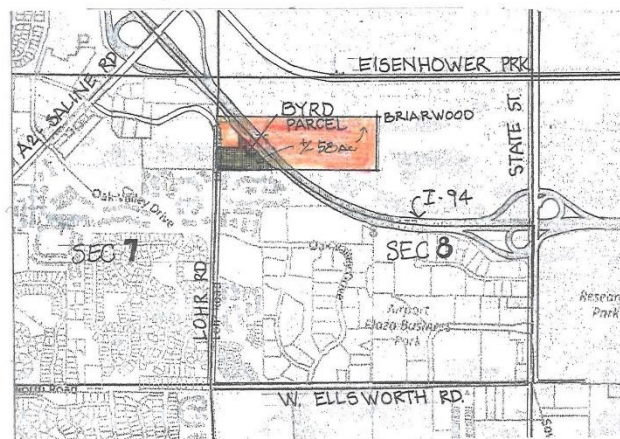
Mary Nesbit divided her 400 acre property among her three grandsons.

Portion "A" to Moses Wilsey in 1839
Portion "B" to David Wilsey in 1843
Portion "C" to Joseph Wilsey in 1847

Figure 48, continued. Maps showing change in acreage of farm, 1825-1987.



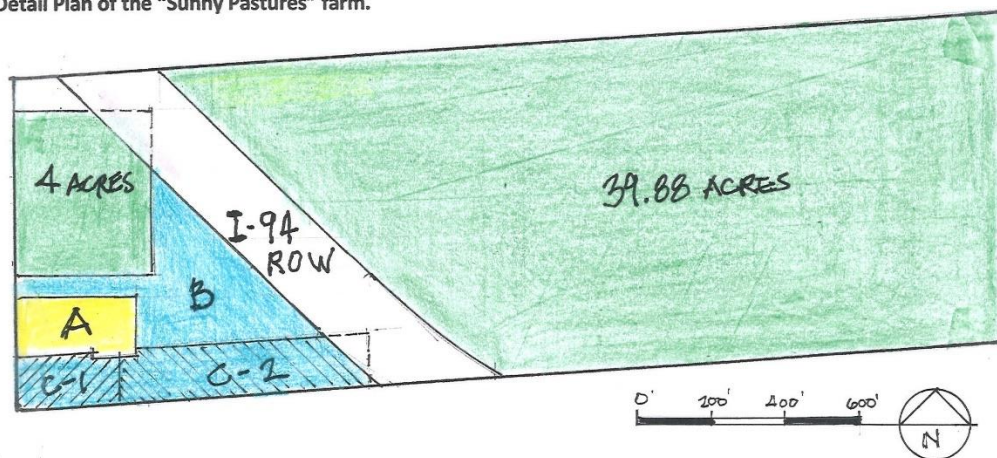
The current Farmhouse is located on what was then the Moses Wilsey farm. Moses died in 1851. The farm was sold at auction in 1863 and purchased by William Holmes, the brother of Moses' widow Amenda. Holmes then quickly sold the property, less the northern 40 acres, to John Sperry. In 1868 The property passed to John's brother, George Sperry. Between 1868 and 1933 there were a number of Owners resulting in a foreclosure and sheriff's sale in 1933, at which time Cone Sperry, son of George, purchased the 98 acre property.



Cone Sperry separated the southern 40 acres from the 98 acres and sold the remaining 58 acres to J. Ralph and Emma Nelson in 1935. The Nelsons used the farm as a second home until Dr. Nelson retirement in 1943, when it became their principal residence, which they referred to as "Sunny Pastures".

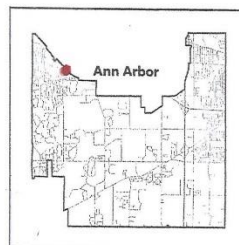
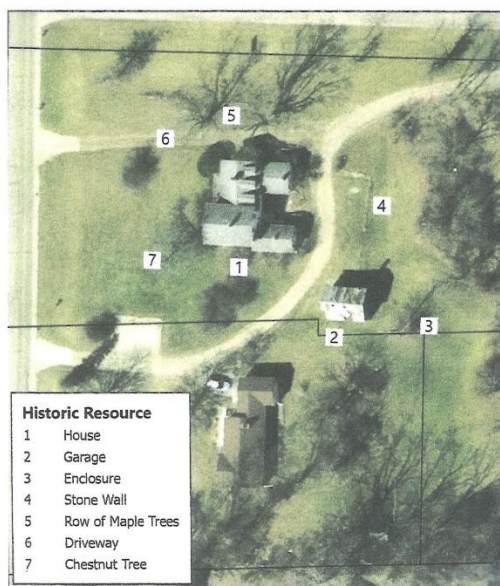
Figure 48, continued. Maps showing change in acreage of farm, 1825-1987.

Detail Plan of the "Sunny Pastures" farm.



The Nelsons were not farmers and had no need for the extensive 58 acre land area. They sold a 4-acre section in the northwest corner of the property to Marie de T. Johnston in 1939. In 1949 they sold a section (C-1 & C-2) in the southwestern corner to Harry and Esther Clarke. The Clarkes built a one-story ranch house on the property and lived there for many years. That house is now the meeting center for the Church located further to the east. In 1952 the Michigan State Highway Department split the Nelson property into east and west sections, divided by the I-94 Right of Way. With no possible connection to the east property, the Nelsons sold those 39 acres to Jens and Fred Nielson in 1955.

David and Leticia Byrd entered the picture in 1975. Dr. Byrd had a strong interest in historic preservation and they purchased the farmhouse and the adjoining six acres for use as his office and a training facility for his students. The Byrds also purchased the Clark property and then separated the 1.25 acre site of the farmhouse (parcel "A") which is the subject of this report, from the remaining acreage which is the property of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan (parcel "C-1") or the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation (parcel "B" & "C-2")



the distinctive “Upright and Wing” appearance popular during this time.²⁹ Also popular during this time are the architectural elements that tie the two sections of the house together: sawn gingerbread vergeboard trim along the eaves, 4/4 double-hung windows with window hoods, and porches with Italianate detailing. On the interior, the two sections of the house are distinct from one another due to the different floor and ceiling heights, which are particularly noticeable on the second level (see Attachment E for more in-depth analysis of the evolution of the house).

In 1868, John and his younger brother, George, who had been living with his parents, switched properties: George became the owner of the former Wilsey farm and John and Kittie returned to the Sperry homestead in Ann Arbor Township.³⁰ George had been trained as an engineer at the University of Michigan when he married Eva Warner, the daughter of a nearby immigrant family, in 1864 (the same year as his brother). Their son Cone E. was born in 1869.

A general description of the George Sperry farm is provided by the 1870 and 1880 agricultural censuses (Table 2). During this period, the number of tilled fields grew to eighty acres and an additional seven acres were cleared as pastureland and meadows. The remainder of the farmland included five acres of woodland and six acres of “unimproved” land. Like his neighbors, George continued to grow wheat, corn, and barley and steadily added sheep to his livestock collection.³¹ By 1880 George also kept one hundred chickens, collecting 460 dozen eggs, planted potatoes, and maintained an orchard of apples and peaches. The orchard covered six acres to the north and east of the house. The Sperrys also harvested thirty cords of wood, twenty tons of hay, and made five-hundred pounds of butter. The farm had become fully self-sufficient.

The censuses of the late 19th century reveal that the Sperry household often included more persons than just the immediate family. In 1870, the Federal census lists five individuals living at the residence. These included the Sperrys (George, wife Eveline and son Cone), a farm laborer, and a 16-year-old girl whose relationship to the family and occupation are not indicated or known. By the 1880 Federal census, the Sperry household included six residents: the three Sperrys, the same farm laborer, one housekeeper and one boarder.³² The 1884 state census indicates just the immediate family of three (George, Eveline, and Cone) lived in the house. In the 1894 census, the Sperrys hosted Cone’s wife Mabel, Eva’s mother Mary Warner, and 18-year-old hired farm laborer Lucifer Zebb. By 1900, the household included grandson Earl, born 1896, which brought the number of residents back to six.

²⁹ Marshall McLennan McLennan, Marshall. “Vernacular Architecture: Common House Types in Southern Michigan.” *Michigan Folklife Reader*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1988.

³⁰ Washtenaw County Register of Deeds, Liber 64: 142 and Liber 65: 149. See also Table 1. Deed records indicate the acreage remained at 98 acres.

³¹ Due to the demand of meat and wool, partly created by the demands of the Civil War, the number of sheep owned by farmers in Pittsfield Township during the mid-19th century was comparatively high. Pittsfield Township averaged sixteen sheep per resident, the highest number in the County (Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, “Agriculture,” *Washtenaw County Thematic Survey* [1997], 9).

³² The boarder, age 7, shared the same last name as the 9-year-old granddaughter of the Oliver Warners living next door. The Warners were Eva Sperry’s parents, suggesting the boarder may have been Eva Sperry’s niece.

After George's death in 1902, his son Cone continued to work the farm. The 1910 census indicates that Cone is the farmer of a general farm with a mortgage. The household includes wife Mabel, son Earl, and mother Eva, who has her own source of income. By 1920, the family moved to 517 Benjamin Street in Ann Arbor. The household expanded to include Earl's wife and daughter. Cone was employed as a clerk at a local grocery, while Earl was employed as a truck driver. It is not clear who was working the farm during this time. The 1918 Washtenaw County directory continued to list Mrs. George Sperry as the owner of the \$9500 acre farm.

Eva Warner Sperry passed away in 1925, marking the transition of the property's function from one of subsistence farming to one of "gentleman farming" with a more residential nature. After Eva's death, the Sperry farm was sold to B.H. Honeywell, a dentist who practiced in Ann Arbor. The Honeywell family used the farm as a second residence, maintaining their primary residence in Ann Arbor. The Honeywells sold the property to Mark N. Green in 1927. As part of the deal, the Honeywells passed along a mortgage initially obtained by Eva Sperry. Mr. Green was a farmer living in Pittsfield Township. He appears to have been more interested in the Sperry land than in the house. Over the course of the next three decades, he purchased neighboring farms and resold the land as smaller residential parcels. In the meantime, however, Mr. Green did not make payments toward the mortgage passed to him by B.H. Honeywell and Eva Sperry. Eventually, the land was foreclosed, and Cone Sperry repurchased the family property during a sheriff's sale in 1933. Sperry separated a portion of the farm property from the house, selling fifty-eight acres with the house to J. Raleigh and Emma Nelson in 1935.

Sunny Pastures Period, 1935-1975

J. Raleigh Nelson was a professor and director of the Department of English in the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan. Born in 1873 in Bement, Illinois, he first came to Ann Arbor as a student, graduating from the University in 1894. He returned to the University to teach English to foreign students in the Engineering department in 1908. He also served as a counselor to them as they adjusted to life in the United States. He was popular with his students and maintained connections with them as they returned to their homes all over the world. In 1933 Dr. Nelson was appointed as the university counselor to foreign students and in 1938 he founded and directed the International Center. He retired in 1943 and passed away in 1961.³³

In addition to his professional work, Dr. Nelson published his mother's biography and a book of poetry. He volunteered for several community organizations, including the Dunbar Advisory Board. The Board's role was to support the Dunbar Community Center, a venue first established in 1923 to assist members of the African American community in Ann Arbor in establishing new lives in Ann Arbor. The center's role expanded over the next few decades to include social and civic events for members of the community who were not able to participate in similar venues limited to Ann Arbor's white citizens.³⁴ African American children and teenagers used the center for after-school studying, holding social events, reading books in the library, performing musicals and plays, or attending classes and/or camp. There were numerous planned activities and events organized by the director and staff. The Center was housed in various buildings

³³ "Tributes Paid Prof. Nelson By Friends, Associates," *Ann Arbor News* (January 3, 1961).

³⁴ "Dunbar Community Center To Move To New Location," *Ann Arbor News* (March 11, 1937).

within the community over time. The advisory board of which Dr. Nelson was a member assisted with fundraising and membership drives to pay for the buildings and their maintenance, and to support the organization and its needs. Dr. Nelson served at least thirteen years on the board, planning fundraisers, soliciting members of the general community for funds and membership, and writing individual thank you letters to donors, many of whom were white.

During this time, Dr. Nelson and his wife, Emma, purchased the Sperry Farm as a second home in 1935. Like the 1920s owners, they initially maintained the farm as a second residence, continuing to live in the city until retirement. Once retired, they moved out to the hundred-year-old farm which they named “Sunny Pastures” and spent the rest of their lives there.

A description of the farm during the Nelson occupation is compiled from early aerial photographs, the Rural Property Inventory (RPI) conducted by the Works Progress Administration, and poems written by Dr. Nelson. The 1938 RPI farm sketch divides the 54 (*sic*)-acre rectangular parcel into eight sections (**Figure 49**). Two large crop fields of 12 and 10.5 acres are located north of a farm lane that runs along the length of the parcel on a line just south of the main house. Two narrower crop fields are located on the south side. They are 2.5 and 7.5 acres in size. The rear of the property is divided into one eight-acre crop field and one 8.5-acre wood lot. The field is situated on the west side of a creek that cuts through the property. The wood lot to the east of the creek is described as “mixed hardwood, poor condition.” The remaining two sections are combined as the farmstead lot, approximately 4.5 acres in size.³⁵ The front portion of these two sections is situated in the southwest corner of the property. It includes the house inside a U-shaped driveway. Two additional buildings include a c.1916 small barn still standing to the southeast of the house, and a c. 1900 corncrib. The crib is described as “18’x 6’x 8’ wood on posts.” There is no mention of a general-purpose barn or any other outbuilding in the Rural Property Inventory.

The 1947 aerial photo depicts the house, the small barn, and a narrow structure to the east, which may be the corn crib (**Figure 50**). The photo also reveals a rectangular foundation of a possible larger barn and the circular foundations of what may have been two silos (one in front of the barn and the other to the rear of the barn).³⁶ The barn and silos were located to the south of the house and other outbuildings. Stone and poured concrete remnants of the foundation of these buildings are visible in the rear yard of the adjacent house now known as 3269 Lohr Road.³⁷ While a portion of the barn foundation and the front silo have been removed to make room for the newer house, the rear silo foundation remains extant. It is one foot thick and forms a circle that measures 14 feet in diameter.

³⁵ Michigan State Tax Commission, “J. Raleigh Nelson Farm, Section 8, Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County,” (W.P.A. Project S-110, Rural Property Inventory, 1938).

³⁶ “Aerial Photo of Ann Arbor, Michigan” Map Ann Arbor, 1947.
<https://www2.a2gov.org/GIS/MapAnnArbor/ParcelViewer/>.

³⁷ 3269 Lohr Road was purchased as a three-acre parcel by Mr. and Mrs. Harry S. Clarke in 1949 (Liber 524: 457). A comparison of the 1940 and 1960 aerial photos of the area suggests that the rear elevation of the ranch-style house that was built by the Clarkes coincided with the former front elevation of the barn that was removed before 1938.

YR. OF INV. 1938	SCHOOL DISTRICT Spc	SEC. 8	T. 35	R. 6E	VILLAGE N	TOWNSHIP Pulaski	COUNTY Washington	CODE NO. 08-2
ASSESSED TO Nelson, J. Raleigh.					CLASS BUILT 1880 REMODELED 1900 SQ. FT. CU. FT. FOUNDATION ROOFING WALLS CONSTR. BASEMENT HEATING PLUMBING NO. STORIES FLOORS INT. FINISH LIGHTS MISC.			
554 [±] of NW 4 [±] of NW 4					RURAL PROPERTY IMPROVED RD. L M1 TRADING CENTER (Name) Y R. P. D. ME. SCHOOL L M1 T ELEC. LINE M1 X TELEPHONE M1 GAS-LINE WATER SUPPLY WELL ADEQUATE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO PLATTED & VILL. PROP. FRONT. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEEP K. FACTOR ST. CURB RUNG WATER ELECTRICITY FIRE PROTECTION LAND			
54 acres					OTHER BLDG. GARAGE 1906 20x16x12 good CONC. Fin. lbr.			
SUPERVISOR					19	18	17	16
LAND					19	18	17	16
BLDG.					19	18	17	16
TOTAL					19	18	17	16
RD. REVIEW					19	18	17	16
LAND BLDG. TOTAL					19	18	17	16

Figure 49. Rural Property Inventory (1938), page one.

Figure 50. Close-up of Farmstead on 1947 Aerial Photograph of Ann Arbor area.

The photo is a composite of two images. The images are shifted relative to one another and overlap slightly. A north-south fault line cuts through the main buildings in the photo, making them appear larger and more complex than they really are.

The Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson-Byrd farmhouse is within the circular driveway loop near the middle left of the photograph (the east end of the loop is shifted south relative to the lanes heading west).

The Barn/Garage is visible to southeast of the house. A prominent fence separates the house and garden from the tilled fields to the east (right). Remnants of an orchard stand to the northeast of the house. Foundation remains of the barn and silo are located to the south (bottom), and those of an unknown resource are visible to the east of the Garage. The linear stone assemblage visible today (resource no. 4) is not visible under a row of trees in the photo. It may be the edge of a former terrace.

The larger complex near the top of the photograph is the non-extant neighbor house to the north.



Views of the farm are also provided in poems composed and published by Raleigh Nelson.³⁸ The poems allude to the white farmhouse standing on the crest of a hill, adjacent to plowed fields planted with wheat extending downward to the east. The poems describe a pasture which slopes toward a willow-lined brook and woodlot to the rear, an orchard filled with older apple, pear, and plum trees to the northeast of the house, and twelve tall elms standing around the house.³⁹ The poems mention the flower garden behind the house, which was filled with tulips, grape hyacinths, and other blooming bulbs and lilacs in the spring, and poppies, peonies, larkspur, columbines, roses, and tall, white lilies through the summer.⁴⁰ Alyssum, mignonette, lavender, phlox, and heliotrope lined the paths.⁴¹ Clusters of irises were grouped “all along the terraces, the borders of the lawn, the winding drive.”⁴² Wild strawberries grew along an old orchard wall where pets were buried and a fragrant wild crab was “blooming in the lane.”⁴³ The poems mention the farmhouse frequently, including its east-facing dormers, the wavy windowpanes, the warm hearth inside, the apple tree at the door, a terrace, and the “towers of gold” (aka, the silos).⁴⁴ Nelson mentions the cows at the pasture gate, and an old horse barn adjacent to an ancient elm, but it is not clear if that structure was located on the Nelson farm or on a neighboring farm.⁴⁵ Nelson’s poems mention specific neighbors and their farms that he could view from the front yard.⁴⁶ The farms were located along today’s Ann Arbor-Saline Road. The farmers raised milk cows, hogs, and planted fields of corn. It is likely that one of these farmers planted the wheat in Nelson’s fields during this time.

While Raleigh Nelson enjoyed his farm and garden and the views from his house on the hill, he and wife Emma periodically sold small portions of the farmland. The land was developed as individual residential parcels. Another portion of farmland was sold to the State Highway Commission for the right-of-way of Interstate 94 in 1952. The highway was built during the second half of the 1950s, cutting a wide swath across the Nelson property and effectively dividing the farm in two parts. By the time David and Leticia Byrd purchased the farm, the land surrounding the house was reduced to a little more than six acres. The sale of the property was precipitated by Emma’s death in 1975. Raleigh had passed earlier in 1961.

Byrd Center, 1975-present

In 1975 David R. Byrd purchased the Nelson Property to use as an office for his architectural practice. He was eager to restore the house and make it into a museum.

³⁸ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures’* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1952).

³⁹ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 16, 22, 32.

⁴⁰ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 39-40, 46.

⁴¹ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 62.

⁴² J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 44-45.

⁴³ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 47, 74.

⁴⁴ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 14, 17, 34, 28, 86. Nelson mentions the terrace in a poem, but it is not clear if this refers to the terrace between the wings of the house or one that may have been to the east of the driveway, its eastern edge identified by a linear row of rocks in the ground. A separate terrace is not visible in the 1947 aerial photo, but the area is covered with trees.

⁴⁵ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 77, 86.

⁴⁶ J. Raleigh Nelson, *From ‘Sunny Pastures,’* 72, 78, 86.

Dr. Byrd was an African American architect of churches, homes, and schools in Washington, D.C. and Ann Arbor, Michigan (Attachment E). Born in 1921 and raised in the Washington, D.C. area, Byrd was educated at Hampton Institute College and Trade School where he majored in carpentry. He took graduate courses in engineering and art at Howard University. He later earned a Master of Arts in Architecture from the University of Michigan. His proposal for his thesis was to explore economic practices and their impact on ethnic minorities.⁴⁷ He earned his PhD from Wayne State University in 1978.

David Byrd learned architecture initially by doing. He began his career in Washington, D.C. during the 1950s as a high school teacher, teaching drafting and mechanical drawing, math, and industrial arts (design). He successfully led students in winning design projects submitted to the local Builders' Association competitions. He worked at the same time as an equipment specialist for the Department of Education for the District Public Schools. In that capacity he designed additions, which caught the attention of the school's architectural department. During the early 1960s Byrd formed an architecture partnership with Andrew Bryant.

David Byrd was an advocate for promoting careers in construction and other technical and engineering fields. He sought to help disadvantaged youth and eliminate racial barriers. He became a civil rights activist and fought for affordable housing for the poor. To further his efforts, he was elected as President of the National Technical Association in 1960. Shortly after he moved to Ann Arbor, he served on the Board of Commissioners of Washtenaw County (1968 – 1972) and its Planning Commission, was the president of the Huron Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and became the chair of the Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission. He also served as a community development director and was a member of the Ann Arbor Alliance for Achievement in Academics and the Arts (1981-1983).

In 1966 Byrd gave up a career as an architect in Washington, D.C. to start the Washtenaw Community College (WCC)'s construction technology program in Ypsilanti, Michigan. As faculty and coordinator of WCC's Architecture/Construction Technology department, Byrd's mission was to help minority contractors succeed. His four-year course taught blueprint reading, estimating, surveying, math, business administration, and remedial skills.⁴⁸ He also worked to get more African Americans into unions by giving them the necessary training so that they could have decent wages and benefits. Some of his older students had obtained the skills but simply needed a piece of paper to prove their credentials.

According to his widow, Letitia Byrd, then a retired teacher and community activist, the job at Washtenaw Community College appealed to David's idealistic side. "He wanted to use architecture to help people," she explained in an interview, "He wanted to stimulate black students—to create new opportunities, lines of vision."⁴⁹ A *Voice* profile recorded in November 1974 stated, "A tremendous amount of David Byrd's energy and time is spent on behalf of Ann Arbor's minority and low-income citizens."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ David R. Byrd Papers, Folder 1, Box 1, Bentley Historical Library.

⁴⁸ Diana Morton McKnight, communication to Joyce Hunter, 12/17/2021.

⁴⁹ McKnight, communication, 12/17/2021.

⁵⁰ McKnight, communication, 12/17/2021.

Byrd also encouraged more African Americans to become architects. One of his mentees was David Moody who became an architect and now owns a construction company in Atlanta. David Moody stated that “David R. Byrd was a Renaissance man.”⁵¹

While in Washington, D.C., David Byrd learned the value of reusing old materials. He retrieved lamps from a project site that were headed to the dumpster and reused them at another project site. The success of that preservation effort led to a life-long principle to reuse material whenever possible. When he moved to Ann Arbor in the mid-1960s just as the National Preservation Act was adopted by Congress, Dr. Byrd became one of the city’s early historic preservationists. He built his first office in a former garage on East Summit Street in Ann Arbor. He converted the old brewery at East Summit and North Fifth Avenue into apartments. In 1969, while serving as a Washtenaw County commissioner, Byrd convinced the County to purchase the former Holy Ghost Fathers Mission Seminary at Washtenaw and Hogback Road. Today, the seminary buildings continue to be used as part of the Washtenaw County Service Center.

Byrd purchased the Raleigh farmhouse with approximately six acres of land. At the time the farm was thought to be located out in the country, only accessible by a dirt road. The house was run down from years of rental use, but it served as a perfect learning laboratory for architectural rehabilitation and restoration. Students reframed the sagging floor, jacked up the roof, put in new rafters, added support columns in the basement, and replaced portions of the gingerbread on the outside with exact replicas. The work and David’s vision of the restored house are described in an article published in *The Ann Arbor News* in 1978.⁵²

Some details of the rehabilitation work completed on the house by Byrd and his students can be identified by comparing the floorplan drawings of c.1975 with existing conditions in 2021.⁵³ The indicated repairs and modifications reflect the transition from a single-family home to an office:

- The Southeast addition was gutted to make one single office space. Around 1975, the interior of the Southeast addition was divided into two storage rooms, a pantry, and a hall that connected to the adjacent kitchen. The interior walls between the four spaces were removed. The ceiling height was lowered, and fluorescent light fixtures were added. The door between the new office and kitchen was shifted northward.
- The remodeled Southeast addition served as the primary office space for Dr. Byrd. In addition, the door from the kitchen into the Southeast Addition was shifted northward to enter the space near the northwest corner of the new office.
- The chimney, which the Byrd drawings indicate was to be repaired, was removed from the space. The base of the chimney stack now rests on the ceiling joists in the attic space.
- The Byrd floorplans indicate a window looking out into the rear courtyard. That window was replaced with an exterior door, leading from the courtyard into what became the office space. There are two wing walls on the interior flanking doorway as shown on the current floor plan.

⁵¹ David Moody, Interview by Joyce Hunter, July 3, 2021. See Attachment E.

⁵² Kathy Hulik, “Restoration: answer to housing needs?” *The Ann Arbor News*, December 31, 1978, A-5 to A-6.

⁵³ Floorplans by David R. Byrd (c.1975) and Al Paas (2021).

- The Byrd drawings show an exterior door going from the rear courtyard into the space designated as the library. This door was removed and replaced with a window. The window is thirty-two inches wide, which is the same width as most of the existing doors in the house. All the other windows in the house are twenty-four inches or twenty-eight inches wide.
- The basement includes walls of fieldstone and others of concrete block. There are also freestanding columns made of brick. The modern masonry is used primarily along the wall separating the Wing basement from the Upright and in the northwest corner of the Wing. It appears that some of this work may have been a teaching tool for the students to become familiar with masonry construction.
- The tub on the upper floor bathroom has been enclosed. A shower indicated on the Byrd plans on the main floor bathroom has also been removed and the sink relocated.
- The floor structure was reinforced with steel straps.
- A new interior door was installed between the study and the bathroom (this door is a six-panel “cross and bible” design).
- New electrical receptacles and lights were installed as indicated at the chimney in the master bedroom upstairs.

Building a cupola was another class project for Byrd’s students. They learned how to apply metal to wood. They constructed the wooden frame at Washtenaw Community College and added the metal in Byrd’s basement. When it was done, Byrd thought it should be used. He decided to build something on the land behind the farmhouse. He decided to build a church (Figure 12). His wife Letitia once said, “He was very spiritual. If he had lived, he would probably would have gone into the ministry. He spent so much of his time studying and researching church work and talking to ministers.”⁵⁴ The chapel was built in 1984 of similar block to what he and his students used in the house’s basement. The remaining material used for the chapel was reclaimed from other construction projects to maximize the effort of recycling. Dr. Byrd used donated or rejected material as often as possible. In fact, he placed a quotation from Psalm 118:22 over the front entrance to emphasize this principle: “The stone which the builders rejected.”

Byrd’s personal stamp is most noticeable inside the chapel. He designed the stained-glass windows, chose verses to put on the railings and on the stonework, designed the interior cross, and did most of the inside carpentry, including the railings, pulpit, and chancel, where he inlaid a cross in the wooden floor. The chapel was dedicated in January 1987. Byrd envisioned the church as “a place people could come to concentrate, meditate—a sanctuary.” He would only enjoy it briefly. He died on May 17, 1987, at age sixty-six, after suffering a heart attack.

An aerial photograph c.1985 in the possession of the Byrd Foundation shows the farm as it appeared around the time of Dr. Byrd’s passing (**Figure 51**). The farmhouse and garage are right of center in the photograph. The ranch house with its red roof is visible to the right. The house on the left has been demolished. The chapel is located to the rear. The rectangular boundary of the Nelson era property remains visible, cut by the I-94 highway across the upper portion of the

⁵⁴ See Attachment E.

Figure 51. 1985 Aerial Photograph, looking east.

The Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson-Byrd farmhouse with the green roof is visible in the foreground. The Garage is located to the right, between the farmhouse and the ranch house to the south (former location of the Barn). The circular drive around the farmhouse is not readily visible, but its extension along the south side of the Garage leading to the Chapel at the rear of the property is. The extension has since been replaced by a road between the farmhouse and the large house to the left in the photograph. The large neighboring house is no longer standing and is not a part of this study.

Note the rectangular outline of the Nelson-era farm (marked in bold line) that extends towards the Briarwood Mall in the background. Interstate 94 cuts diagonally across the farm, separating the former tilled fields from the former farm buildings.



photograph. The land to the east (rear) of the highway and adjacent to the north of the farmhouse has been developed since the photograph was taken.

After Dr. Byrd's death, his widow Letitia J Byrd inherited the property. She established the David R. and Letitia J. Byrd Foundation. In 2004 she transferred the ownership of the farmhouse and a little over an acre of land to the Foundation. In 2005 the house became the administrative center for the African American Cultural and Historical Museum. The Foundation sold the Byrd Chapel to the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in 2011. Along with the chapel, the neighboring ranch house to the south of the farmhouse and approximately four acres of land were also sold.

V. Historic Significance of the Byrd Center Property

Areas of Significance: Criteria A: Early Settlement, Architecture, Social History and Education

Period of Significance: 1825-1987

Geographic Location: Pittsfield Charter Township, Washtenaw County, southern Michigan

Criteria for historic significance are referenced in Chapter Five of the Pittsfield Charter Township General Code of Ordinance and are based on the criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places (**Attachment B**).⁵⁵

Historic Significance of Property

The Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farmstead and Byrd Center property meets criteria A for historic significance as defined by the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with the early settlement period of Pittsfield Township, 19th-century architecture and agriculture in central Washtenaw County, and 20th century social history and education. The house started as a hall-and-parlor timber frame structure. It expanded to include a two-story Upright, giving it an "Upright and Wing" configuration--a form that was among the most popular types of farmhouses built in Southeast Michigan during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The farmhouse was the dominant building on a farm that operated throughout the 19th century. In the 1970s the single-family residence was rehabilitated as an office and learning laboratory for students of the building trades, and thus the property is associated with events related to 20th century social history and higher education.

The period of significance begins with the patent purchase of 480 acres from the United States government by Ralph Updike. Updike bought the acreage in 1825 when the area was first opened for settlement by American and Canadian settlers. He was among the first of many who migrated to southern Michigan from upstate New York. He would go on to purchase additional properties in Grass Lake Township (Jackson County) to the west and become its first township

⁵⁵ *National Register Bulletin #15*. Criteria A, National Register of Historic Places: "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 that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." Criteria B: "...and that are associated with the lives of persons significant to our past."

supervisor. In 1831 Mary Nesbitt, also of New York, purchased four hundred acres of the Urdike property. Mrs. Nesbitt was among the first generation of female heads of households to settle in the county.⁵⁶ She was accompanied by her daughter, son-in-law, and three grandsons. Although her son-in-law worked the farm, it was the grandsons who were her beneficiaries. As they reached adulthood, each grandson received approximately one-third of the land. The grandmother and parents continued to live with the youngest son, Joseph, while the older boys established their own farms—one to the north and one to the east.⁵⁷ The oldest son, Moses Wilsey, received the land that would become the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson-Byrd property shortly before he married Amanda Holmes of a neighboring family. Wilsey started developing his 138 acres into a general subsistence farm, clearing and tilling land, and raising crops and livestock. Their small, timber-frame house serves as the main Wing of the existing Upright and Wing farmhouse. The Northeast addition to the rear may also be from the Wilsey era, but the exact year of its construction is not known.

The Wilsey period of occupation was cut short with the death of Moses in 1851. After a decade of use by tenants, the farm with ninety-seven acres was purchased by John Sperry, the son of another early immigrant to Ann Arbor. Sperry owned the property for four years before selling to his brother, George. It is John Sperry who likely expanded the house with a full two-story Upright section. Inspired by the Gothic Revival fashion of the time, he modernized the appearance by adding gingerbread vergeboard trim along the eaves and windows and between the columns of the new front porch. Under the ownership of brother George, the farm continued to produce its own food along with a surplus in wheat, corn, oats, and barley for income. It had an orchard on the northeast side of the house and a barn on the south side of the house. The fields lay to the north and east. John Sperry was very successful on his parents' 160-acre farm and became active in the Ann Arbor Pomological Society, where he consorted with others specializing in fruit production. His brother, George, trained as an engineer at the University of Michigan, remained on the former Wilsey property and farmed it for the rest of his life.

George Sperry passed in 1902 and his wife Eva followed in 1925. Their son Cone farmed the land for a little while, but then the family moved into town, treating the farm as a second residence. The property was subsequently purchased by several short-term owners who also used it as a second residence.

University of Michigan Professor J. Raleigh Nelson and his wife Emma obtained the property along with fifty-eight acres in 1935. Dr. Nelson was inspired by his property to write poetry, which he published in a book titled "From Sunny Pastures" in 1952. In some of those poems, he alludes to "his" wheat field and the cows located at the pasture gate or staying warm in the barn filled with hay. He also writes extensively about his flower garden. The poems provide a glimpse of how the land was used. Dr. Nelson's age suggests that he probably did not work the farm himself, but instead leased it to a neighboring farmer. By the time the 1947 aerial photo

⁵⁶ Nesbitt purchased the farm six years before Michigan became a state, and eight years before the township changed its name from "Pitt" to "Pittsfield."

⁵⁷ The David Wilsey House built in the Greek Revival architectural style is located at 1120 Oak Valley Drive (formerly 1110 West Ellsworth Road).

was taken, the barn and silo and other outbuildings were removed, leaving remnants of foundations consisting of poured concrete and rocks.

Dr. Nelson was a Professor of English in the Engineering Department and served as Director of its International Center where he helped foreign students with their academic and social needs. He hosted some of them at dinners held at the farm. In addition, Dr. Nelson spent years serving on the Advisory Board of Ann Arbor's Dunbar Community Center, charged with fundraising to support the Center's mission to provide members of the local African American community with a social center and to assist with civic and other needs of both the young and old. He spent much of his time soliciting more affluent members in the community to support the organization and its programming.

Like Dr. Nelson, the next property owner, Dr. David Byrd, worked in higher education and was dedicated to helping members of the local African American community. Byrd was an architect and civil rights activist who fought for affordable housing. Elected president of the National Technical Association in 1960, he moved from Washington, D.C. to Michigan in 1966 and started the Technical and Construction program at Washtenaw Community College. After serving on the County Board of Commissioners and the County Planning Commission, he purchased the Nelson Farm in 1975. Dr. Byrd used the farmhouse as an office and as a learning laboratory for students of the building trades. Although Byrd continued to practice architecture in the area, he devoted much of his time to hands-on projects with the students, including the construction of a chapel to the east of the farmhouse. It was Dr. Byrd's goal to inspire and train minorities in the trades and technological fields to maximize their career opportunities while at the same time fostering the practices of preservation and conservation and applying these practices in the rehabilitation of the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson farmhouse.

The period of significance for the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farmstead and Byrd Center property ends in 1987 with the death of Dr. Byrd. The property now consists of a little over an acre. The remaining land to the east along with the chapel built by Dr. Byrd were sold to the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation. The house (excluding the access ramp on the north elevation), garage, immediate surrounding yard with mature trees and lilacs, and the circular driveway have remained the same, reflecting the influence of each of its owners. The potential historic significance of the L-shaped assemblage of rocks on the east side of the house remains uncertain. While the feature is man-made, its purpose and function are not known. The small enclosure behind the garage does not retain sufficient integrity on its own to be considered historically significant, but it does not detract from the rural setting. Overall, the farmstead retains integrity of feeling, association, materials, and location. Because of the work of the last owner, David C. Byrd, and his efforts to train a new generation of builders in rehabilitation and new construction using salvaged and second-hand materials, the farmhouse and garage/barn (and chapel) stand as a testament not only to the evolution of farming in Washtenaw County, but also to the 20th century social justice movement in higher education.

IV. Boundary Justification

It is recommended that the legally recorded boundary lines of the Byrd Center property be selected to make the boundary for the proposed historic district. In addition to having been the center of activity of the farm since at least the 1840s, the 1.22-acre parcel provides a buffer around the significant historic resources to maintain the integrity of the setting and location (**Attachment H**).

The present western boundary coincides with the western boundary of Section 8. This boundary line was established during the late 1810s by the pre-settlement surveys of the township. It was visually reinforced with the construction of Lohr Road sometime between 1840 and 1856.

The northern boundary is marked by the east-west private drive easement owned by the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation. The lane was installed in 2002 when the Church added an addition. The lane runs parallel to and north of the original driveway.

The eastern boundary of the property is placed behind a front row of trees and undergrowth, providing a visual buffer to the church and highway located behind the house.

The southern boundary is defined as the property boundary established during the 1950s when farming activities ended, and the adjacent ranch house (3269 Lohr Road) was constructed. The boundary is approximately parallel to the south arm of the circular driveway leading to the house.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee finds that the Byrd Center, consisting of the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farmhouse, garage (small barn) and surrounding landscape features, is a unique property with historic significance due to its association with the settlement and development of early Pittsfield Township, local agriculture, and regional architecture. In addition, the property is associated with two prominent individuals who made significant contributions for the benefit of the local African American community and minority students in local institutions of higher education. The farmhouse is a visual reminder of the passion Drs. Nelson and Byrd had for their students, their sense of justice, and their love and appreciation for the property and its history. Together, these events contribute to the farm's historic significance under Criterion A of the National Register of Historic Places.

The Study Committee finds that the property has sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, setting, feeling and association to make it worthy of preservation. The Byrd Center property stands in its original location, with house, garage, expansive front lawn, mature trees, and U-shaped driveway reflecting the property's nineteenth and twentieth century appearance. The surrounding pastoral setting serves as a significant backdrop to the agricultural setting portrayed by the buildings. The house's expansion from a small, side-gable structure to an Upright and Wing with gingerbread trim reflects the residential architectural forces present during the mid-19th century period in southern Michigan. In addition, the farmhouse provides a physical link to the early settlement period when successful farmers were able to build and

expand homes and properties while at the same time organizing local units of government. The Wilsey family that built the home was closely related to neighbor David Wilsey, who served as one of Pittsfield Township's 19th-century Supervisors.

While some outbuildings have been removed, the changes made are associated with the evolution of the farm from one of subsistence to specialization (dairying) to becoming a rural "gentleman's farm" of the 20th century. The current farmstead includes a sample of the outbuildings present to support the setting of a twentieth century farming operation near an urban area where the land was leased while the owner enjoyed the open spaces and historic resources of their "farm." The integrity of the individual resources, complete with their own histories, also contribute to the sense of feeling and association with the evolution of a Michigan farmstead spanning almost two centuries.

The proposed historic district resembles other established local historic districts. Specifically, the Harwood Heritage Farm and the Sutherland-Wilson Farm Historic Districts in Pittsfield Township feature architecturally distinctive houses constructed by well-known early settlers who developed successful farms during the early and mid-19th century. However, neither of these depicts the evolution from a small cottage to the Upright and Wing farmhouse typical of the mid-19th century. The same is true of the Merriman Farm in Manchester Township and the Esek Pray Farm in Superior Township. Both feature significant 19th-century houses with a few associated agricultural outbuildings, enabling each to maintain their rural aesthetic. While the Harwood Heritage Farm district is associated with activities of the Underground Railroad, the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson-Byrd Center property is associated with activities supporting minorities in the 20th century. The property was named the Byrd Center in honor of its last owner, Dr. David R. Byrd, who not only worked for the improved welfare of the African American community and students, but who did so while becoming one of the area's early preservationists.

The Byrd Center and Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm property is a significant contributing resource to the settlement, agricultural, and architectural contexts of Pittsfield Township, and to the social and education contexts of 20th century Washtenaw County. The Study Committee recommends that the property be designated as a local historic district by the Pittsfield Charter Township Board of Trustees.

Due to the strong association between the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm, the church building at its rear, and the significant contributions of Dr. Byrd's work to the community, the Committee also suggests that the Township consider expanding the proposed historic district in the future to include the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation at 3257 Lohr Road. The church is located on original farm property adjacent to the house. The Church was designed by Dr. Byrd and reflects the principles that he stood for: creating opportunity for African American individuals in the building and trade industry as well as in architecture; adopting a philosophy to preserve and recycle materials; and offering ministry and spirituality to the community. The church and property were developed in 1984 and will reach the fifty-year mark in 2034. Dr. Byrd's association with the Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson Farm property where he conducted his design work, outreach, and student training, dates to 1975 and will reach the fifty-year mark in 2025. The Committee feels that the expanded historic district in the future would contribute significantly to understanding Dr. Byrd's legacy and contributions to the community.

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Attachments

Attachment A Letter Petitioning Designation

2807 Pittsfield Blvd.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

January 4, 2021

Subject: Historical District for 3261 Lohr

Dear Dr. Mandy Grewal:
Pittsfield Township Supervisor

I am the son of Letitia Byrd and I am authorized to manage the Letitia and David R. Byrd property, I am authorizing the initial planning to begin to make 3261 Lohr Rd (Byrd Property). - Ann Arbor, MI 48113 a Historical District. I understand that the next step is to set up a Study Committee.

Thanks in advance for moving on this request. If you need, additional information do not hesitate to contact me or Joyce Hunter from the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County.

Sincerely,



* Kip Lightfoot

Cc: Joyce M. Hunter, President/CEO
African American Cultural & Historical Museum

Attachment B Pittsfield Township Historic Preservation Ordinance (Excerpt)

Chapter 5, Section 4: Establishing, modifying or eliminating historic districts.

“At any time, the township board of trustees may by ordinance establish additional historic districts, including proposed historic districts previously considered and rejected, may modify boundaries of an existing historic district, or may eliminate an existing historic district. The procedure for such action will be governed by Section 399.203 (1-3) and Section 399.214 of Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended.” (<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-169-of-1970.pdf>).

Attachment C Resolution Appointing Study Committee

**PITTSFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP
WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICHIGAN
RES #21-03**

**RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE BYRD CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
STUDY COMMITTEE AND TO APPOINT MEMBERS**

January 27, 2021

At a Regular Meeting of the Township Board of Pittsfield Charter Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, held at the Township Administration Building located at 6201 W. Michigan Avenue, in said Township, on the 27th day of January, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Grewal, Anzaldi, Scribner, Edwards-Brown, Jaffer, Krone, Urda-Thompson

Absent: None

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Treasurer Scribner and supported by Trustee Krone.

WHEREAS, since 2010, Pittsfield Township's Master Plan has delineated historic preservation, along with celebrating our arts and culture, as a primary objective for our community as a result of which we've established two (2) historic districts since then; and

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan has declared historic preservation to be a public purpose and has established procedures whereby a local unit of government may establish local historic districts; and

WHEREAS, the Local Historic Districts Act ("the Act") requires and authorizes a local unit of government to appoint a historic district study committee before establishing a historic district; and

WHEREAS, the Pittsfield Township Historic District Commission has requested the Board of Trustees to appoint a historic district study committee to consider establishment of the Byrd Center Historic District; and

WHEREAS, the Pittsfield Charter Township Board of Trustees supports historic preservation efforts in the township; and

WHEREAS, the Local Historic Districts Act requires that the committee contain a majority of persons who have a clearly demonstrated interest in or knowledge of historic preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Local Historic Districts Act also requires that the committee contain representation from one or more duly organized local historic preservation organizations; and

WHEREAS, the persons listed below meet both of the above criteria;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Pittsfield Charter Township Board of Trustees establishes the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee shall perform the following tasks, as required by Section 3 of the Local Historic District Act (MCL 399.203):

- a) Conduct a photographic inventory of resources within each proposed historic district following procedures established or approved by the department.
- b) Conduct basic research of each proposed historic district and the historic resources located within that district.
- c) Determine the total number of historic and nonhistoric resources within a proposed historic district and the percentage of historic resources of that total. In evaluating the significance of historic resources, the committee shall be guided by the selection criteria for evaluation issued by the United States secretary of the interior for inclusion of resources in the national register of historic places, as set forth in 36 C.F.R. part 60, and criteria established or approved by the department, if any.
- d) Prepare a preliminary historic district study committee report that addresses at a minimum all of the following:
 - i. The charge of the committee.
 - ii. The composition of the committee membership.
 - iii. The historic district or districts studied.
 - iv. The boundaries for each proposed historic district in writing and on maps.
 - v. The history of each proposed historic district.
 - vi. The significance of each district as a whole, as well as a sufficient number of its individual resources to fully represent the variety of resources found within the district, relative to the evaluation criteria.
- e) Transmit copies of the preliminary report for review and recommendations to the local planning body, to the department, to the Michigan historical commission, and to the state historic preservation review board.
- f) Make copies of the preliminary report available to the public pursuant to the Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee shall meet all other requirements and deadlines established for such committees by the Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the following persons are appointed to the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee:

- Dr. Dan Bonenberger
- Ina Hanel-Gerdenich
- Joyce Hunter
- Betty LeClair
- Al Paas
- Helen Richards
- Patricia Scribner
- Ed Wall
- Mary Ellen Wall

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Grewal, Anzaldi, Scribner, Edwards-Brown, Jaffer, Krone, Urda-Thompson
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

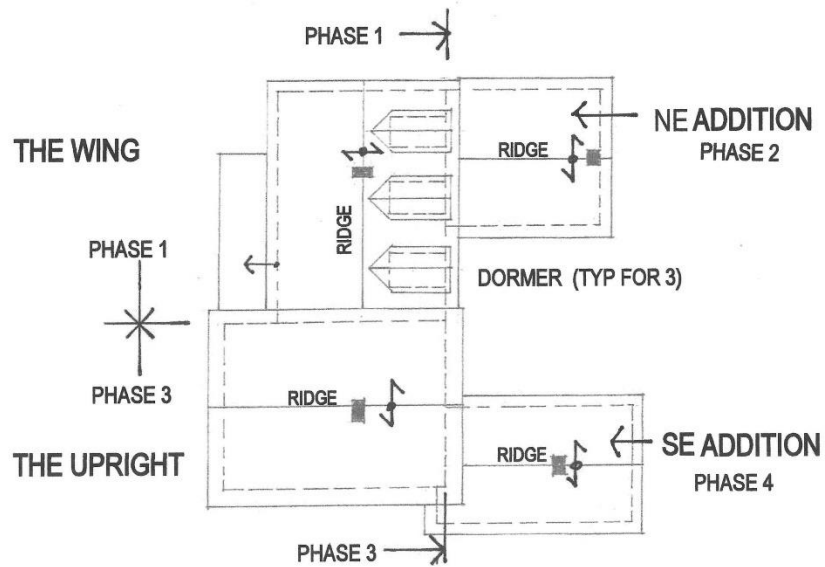


Mandy Grewal, Supervisor
Pittsfield Charter Township

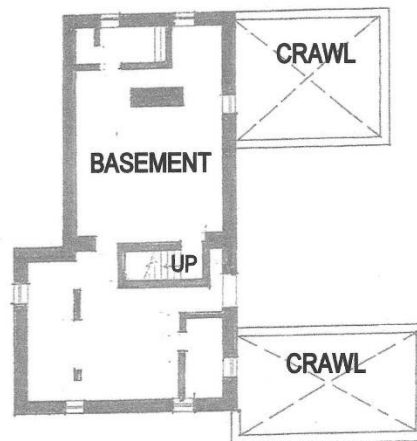
Dated: January 29, 2021

Attachment D Plans drawn by Al Paas, Fall 2021

1. Ground and Roof Plans of Farmhouse and Phasing of Masses



ROOF & PHASING PLAN



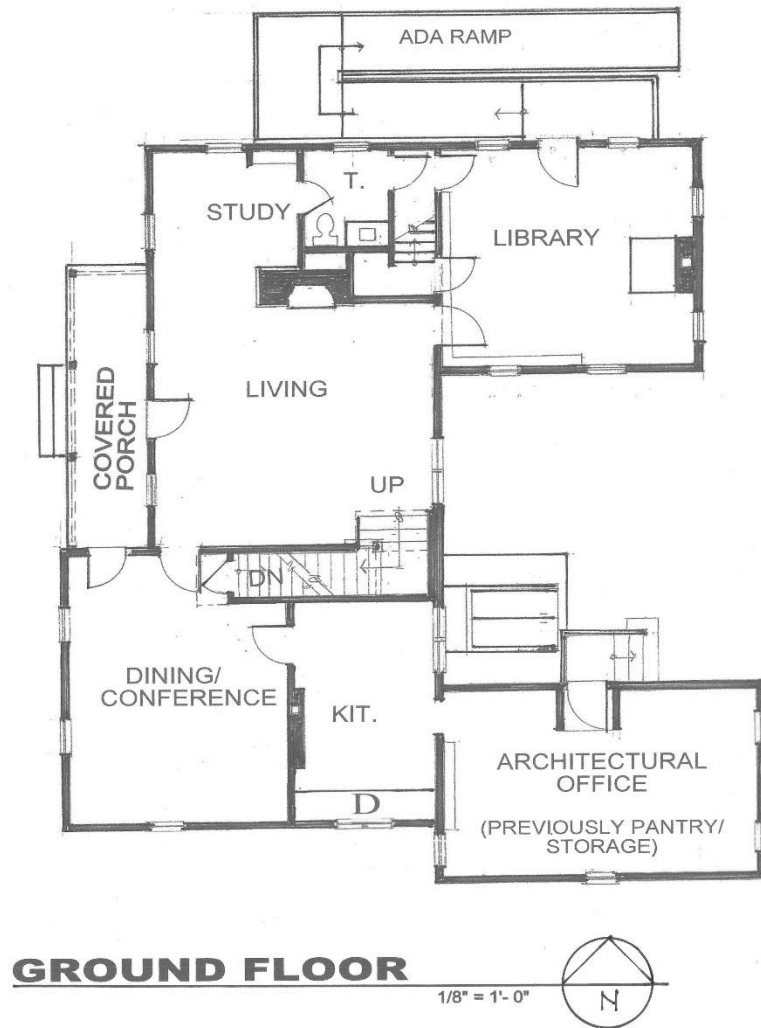
BASEMENT

1/16" = 1' - 0"



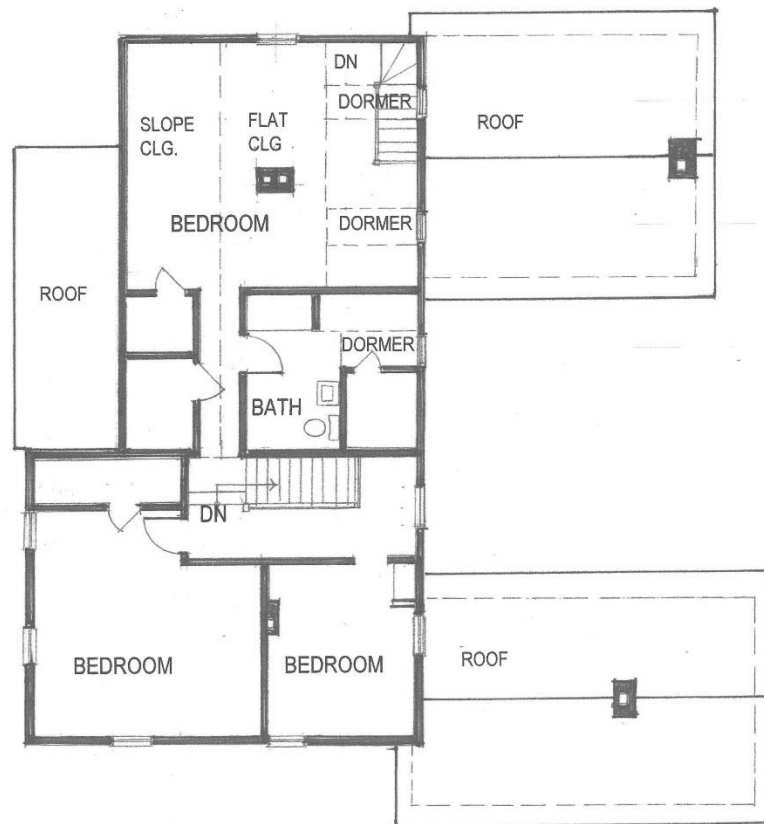
Attachment D

2. Main Level Plan of Farmhouse



Attachment D

3. Upper Level Plan of Farmhouse



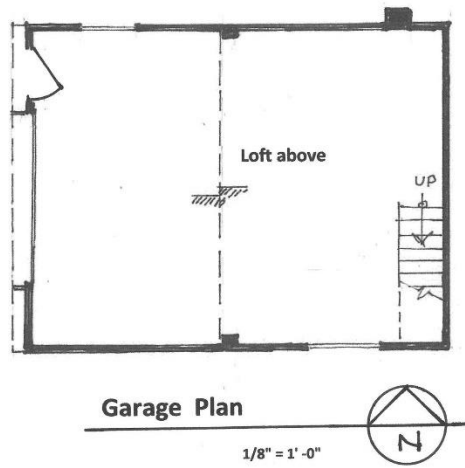
UPPER FLOOR

1/8" = 1' - 0"



Attachment D

4. Plan of Garage/Barn



Attachment E Chronology of House Evolution

This evolution of the Byrd House has been compiled from historical and survey data collected in 2021 by members of the Byrd Center Historic District Study Committee. The evidence is included in the bulleted sections below each paragraph.

The house consists of four masses: the Upright, two-story portion with a front-facing gable; the 1.5-story side-sing situated on the north side of the Upright; the 1-story ell at the north end of the rear of the building (current Library) and the 1-story wing at the south end of the rear of the building (current rear entry/office room attached to the current kitchen). These sections will be addressed as Upright, Side Wing, Northeast Addition and Southeast Addition, respectively.

c. 1840: The **Side Wing** is constructed as a 1.5-story side-gable house timber-frame house on a fieldstone foundation with a central chimney approximately one-third of the way south from the north elevation. Access to the upstairs attic area is *via* a steep staircase in the northeast corner of the building. Access to the full basement is via a stairway located on the west side of the stairs leading up (the space today is occupied by the lower bathroom).

- The Side Wing is built of timber frame construction. Hand-hewn timbers and pegs are exposed on the second floor by the staircase and along the line marking the intersection of the ceiling and exterior walls. Timber framing was the construction method used in the early to mid-19th century in Washtenaw County.
- The large framing timbers exposed in the basement ceiling are hand hewn. Other framing members show vertical saw marks suggesting the use of a water-powered saw typical of the early 19th century in the Washtenaw County area (Rudy Christian, 2002).
- Interior fireplaces are characteristic of the New England building tradition, which spread into New York, Ontario, and Michigan during the first part of the 19th century.⁵⁸ Although not as common in Michigan, the Wilsey family which first owned the house were from upstate New York and may have built their chimney location accordingly.
- Moses Wilsey and wife Amanda were married in about 1840 and would probably have moved onto the farm at that time. According to the 1840 Federal census, Moses was living with his parents prior to that time.

1840s: The **Northeast Addition** is built soon after the Wing. It may have served as the farmhouse kitchen. The Addition is built over a crawl space. Its foundation consists of rounded fieldstone rocks embedded in generous amounts of mortar.

- The roof framing rafters and floor joists visible from the existing access hatches have similar dimensions and spacing in both the Side Wing and the Northeast Addition, suggesting a contemporaneous construction period.

⁵⁸ Allen G. Noble, *Wood, Brick and Stone*, Volume 1 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1984), 102, 104-105.

- A later construction period is suggested by the absence of visible timber posts in the Northeast Addition. In addition, the eaves for both wings are treated differently: whereas the eaves of the Side Wing are covered with narrower boards, the eaves of the Northeast Addition are finished with a single plain board.
- Moses Wilsey passed in 1851 and the family sold the property in 1863. During the decade in between, the property was leased, and Moses' widow remarried. Long-term tenant William Boylan worked the farm with his young family (wife and three daughters) from 1855 to 1863. There may have been little incentive and resources to expand the house unless William Boylan (a local boy) anticipated eventually owning the farm.
- The house footprint is depicted with a rear ell in the 1856 plat map of Pittsfield Township. However, in the depiction, the ell is attached to the south end of the main structure. It is not clear if this is in error or if a previous ell on the south end of the original Side Wing was removed prior to the construction of the current Northeast addition. Today, there is no detected physical evidence of a former ell (the area is now a courtyard covered by older brick).

1860s: to possibly 1880. The **Upright** portion of the house is built. It added a formal dining room, a new kitchen, and two new bedrooms to the existing house. The Upright includes excavated space in the basement and a bulk-head entrance to the basement accessed from the exterior. A second stairwell leading from the living room up to the new bedrooms and from the dining room down into the basement is included. The original basement stairwell is closed off to create a small space.

- The Upright floor and ceiling heights are higher than those in the Side Wing. Two additional steps are needed to reach the Upright second floor. In addition, there is no evidence of timbers protruding into the walls of the Upright rooms as there is for the rooms in the Side Wing.
- The large supporting frame members exposed in the basement ceiling of the Upright are made of a smooth, hand-hewn timber (in contrast to the coarse hand-hewn texture in the Side Wing). The joists are of sawn dimensional lumber, with the saw marks curved to suggest the use of steam-powered saw characteristic of the mid-19th century in Washtenaw County.
- Dimensional rafters in the attic are similar in texture and size to the joists in the basement. They are covered by very uniform (sawn) roof nailer boards spaced uniformly apart.
- The eaves and porch of the house are decorated with sawn gingerbread popular during the 1860s-1880s period. The same trim is found on houses of similar age in Pittsfield Township, in surrounding townships, and in the City of Ann Arbor.
- The windows are a 4/4 double hung sash configuration (associated with the Italianate style period – 1840s to 1880s). A few sashes have a push pin, but most of the sashes feature no form of a sash stop. There is no evidence that a sash cord was ever used.
- The sashes feature a prominent vertical muntin with a flat surface. Separating the two panes on each side of the vertical muntin are narrow muntins with an approximately one-quarter-inch blunt edge. The gently sloping profile has been modified through the

application of many paint layers and breakage but resembles that typically found in a mid-19th century window.⁵⁹

- The turned walnut newel post of the main staircase leading to the Upright is typical in color and texture of mid-19th century houses in the area. It is elaborate in design and may reflect a later period. The accompanying rails are typical.
- John Sperry purchased the house and 98 acres in 1863 for \$4606. He was married in 1864. He and his wife sold the property with the same acreage four years later for \$7000 to brother George and his wife. The comparatively steep price increase suggests an improvement to the property may have taken place between 1863 and 1868.
- The assessed value of the property significantly increases between 1870 and 1874, again suggesting an improvement to the property. However, nearby properties experience a similar jump in value.
- The Rural Property Inventory compiled in 1938 indicates that the house was built in 1880. See note below.

1860s: to possibly 1880. Remodeling of the Side Wing, probably contemporaneous with the construction of the Upright section. The work includes replacing windows in all parts of the house to match those in the Upright and adding additional ones.

- Windows have a similar 4/4 double sash configuration. Window casing on the second floor of the Upright matches that of several windows on the first floor of the Side Wing.
- Two sets of paired 4/4 windows are built into the east elevation. One is in the living room (Side Wing) and the other is in the kitchen (Upright).

1860s: to possibly 1880. The **Southeast Addition** is built at the same time as the Upright Wing. The wing is built on a crawl space (its floor framing was not visible).

- The Southeast addition and Upright share similar roof framing boards and measurements. The Southeast addition also features tongue-and-groove boards in the eaves, as commonly featured on houses from the post-Civil War period.
- The Southeast addition has similar window sashes and trim (casing) as the Upright. The one exception is on the exterior rear elevation, where the two windows lack the casing peaks over the openings as found throughout the rest of the house.
- Given the minimal vernacular detailing of the Southeast addition, it is possible that it was built a decade or two later (such in as in 1880 as suggested by the RPI data).

1925-38: The house is partly plumbed, wired, and remodeled.

- The Sperry family, who owned the property since the 1860s sold the farm in 1925. Ownership changed in 1927, 1933 and again in 1935, providing potential dates for remodeling efforts.

⁵⁹ James L. Garvin, "Historic Wooden Windows" (New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Concord, New Hampshire), nd. See also "Window Muntin Identification Guide," *Architectural Digest* (April 1992), 91.

- The Rural Property Inventory conducted in 1938 indicates that the house has partial indoor plumbing and electricity.
- Short, paired window sashes over the kitchen sink suggest a kitchen remodel that included the installation of counters (20th century).
- The paired windows themselves share similarities in window glazing dimensions with those in the south-facing basement windows and in the dormer windows of the Side Wing. All these windows have rectangular lights with the long axis oriented in a horizontal direction in direct contrast to the more square or rectangular panes with a vertical axis found in the remaining windows of the house. This feature may be due to the relatively small size of window openings. They may also suggest that the dormers on the Side Wing were possibly added during this time. The dormers are visible in the 1947 aerial photograph and are mentioned in the 1952 "From Sunny Pastures" book of poetry written by owner Raleigh Nelson.

1975-78: The house is rehabilitated. The house is described and photographed in an article published in *The Ann Arbor News* (1978).

- Dr. David and Letitia Byrd purchased the house in 1975 from Emma Nelson's Estate.
- The 1978 news article lists the work completed under the direction of architect David Byrd. Some of the work is performed by construction students from Washtenaw Community College:
 - (1) Fireplace chimney receives new paneling of stained plywood and battens
 - (2) Gingerbread trim is repaired or replaced
 - (3) A structural beam is added to support the sagging roof
 - (4) Living Room floors are reframed (some reinforced with additional joists and steel straps)
 - (5) Library chimney receives a brick base for additional support.
- A comparison of architectural drawings of the house provided by Dr Byrd in the 1970s with those of the existing structure in 2021 made by committee member Al Paas suggests additional work completed:
 - (1) Doors in the Library are replaced, including the ones leading into the living room, bathroom area, and rear stairs. An exterior door on the south elevation is replaced with an extra wide (32") window (the remaining windows are generally 24" or 28" in width). An exterior door on the north elevation is replaced with a steel door and newer casing on the exterior.
 - (2) All interior walls in the South Wing are removed, creating one open space. This work includes lowering the ceiling and raising the floor slightly (as evidenced by the small step near the entry door); realigning a doorway between the kitchen and the pantry; and replacing a window on the north elevation with an exterior door. The exterior door is flanked on the interior by two full-height walls that are only a few feet wide.
 - (3) The lower portion of the masonry chimney that stood in the middle of the South Wing space is removed. The upper portion is supported in the attic on extra ceiling joists

and continues to be visible on the exterior. The chimney may have been shortened at the same time.

- (4) The bathrooms are modified. In the upstairs bathroom, the tub is enclosed in a plywood box. In the lower bathroom the shower stall is replaced with a vanity.

Not mentioned in *The Ann Arbor News* article are the concrete block and newer brick walls added as replacement walls or support columns in the basement. In addition, one basement window on the west elevation of the Upright is sealed with the same gray concrete brick used in the construction of the 1984 Church designed by Dr Byrd and located east of the house. The brick on the exterior is covered with stone.

Also not mentioned are the unusual, but lovely varnished tongue-and-groove bead board doors found as bathroom doors, on the lower bath vanity, and as closet doors off the attic bedroom and in the two Upright bedrooms. These items reflect the late 19th to early 20th century period but may not be original to the house. It is not clear if these features were added during the 1930s or 1970s remodeling periods, although the 1970s remodeling did include the installation of the above-mentioned vanity (Byrd construction drawings).

Note: The Rural Property Inventory (RPI) of 1938 indicates that the house was built in 1880 and remodeled in 1900. There is no additional evidence to confirm that these dates are correct. RPI dates were typically collected from current property owners, neighbors, or guessed by the surveyor and are to be treated with some skepticism. This is particularly true if the date is a round number. If the 1880 year is correct, it could reflect the construction of the Upright and/or the Southeast Addition, but probably not the other sections of the house for the reasons listed above. If 1900 is correct, it may reflect a remodeling done by Cone Sperry, son to George Sperry, who managed the farm for a short time after his father's death in 1902.

The RPI also indicates the presence of a **garage** (built 1916; 20x16x12') with a concrete foundation and "finished lumber" on the walls, and a **corn crib** (built c. 1900; 18'x6'x8'). The current garage is 18'8" by 16" and approximately 12' tall at the eaves and rests on a concrete foundation. It is sided with rough vertical board and batten lumber and exhibits a newer eave and fascia. Its double and single sash windows have replaced older single sash windows as evidenced from the marks in the siding. The pedestrian door consists of plywood covered with matching battens and the steel (aluminum?) garage door with imprinted panels is a replacement of a previous garage door that featured a row of glazing. It could be the same building as indicated on the 1938 RPI survey. The corn crib is no longer standing. The RPI survey does not mention a barn or other outbuildings.

--Compiled by Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, 8/28/2021 (Al Paas assisted with field observations)

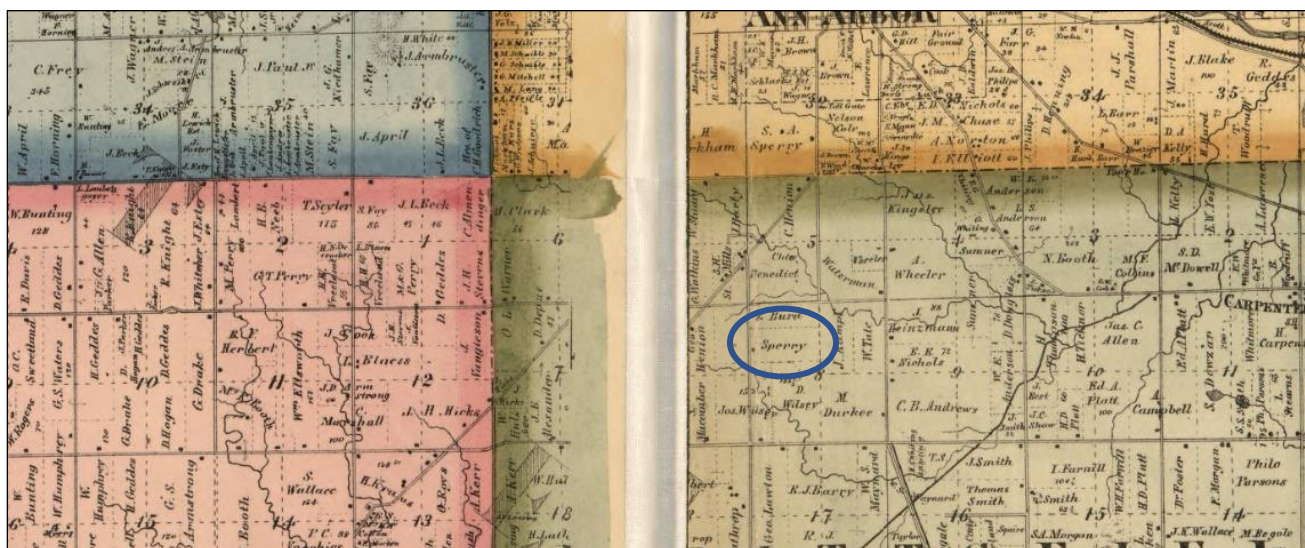
Attachment F
Plat Maps

1856, 1864, 1874,
1895, 1911 and 1915



1856. Property owned by Amanda Wilsey (northern portion of the NW ¼, Section 8). Note the Joseph and D(avid) Wilsey Farms to the south. The diagonal road to the west is Ann Arbor-Saline Road.

Map of Washtenaw County, Michigan.



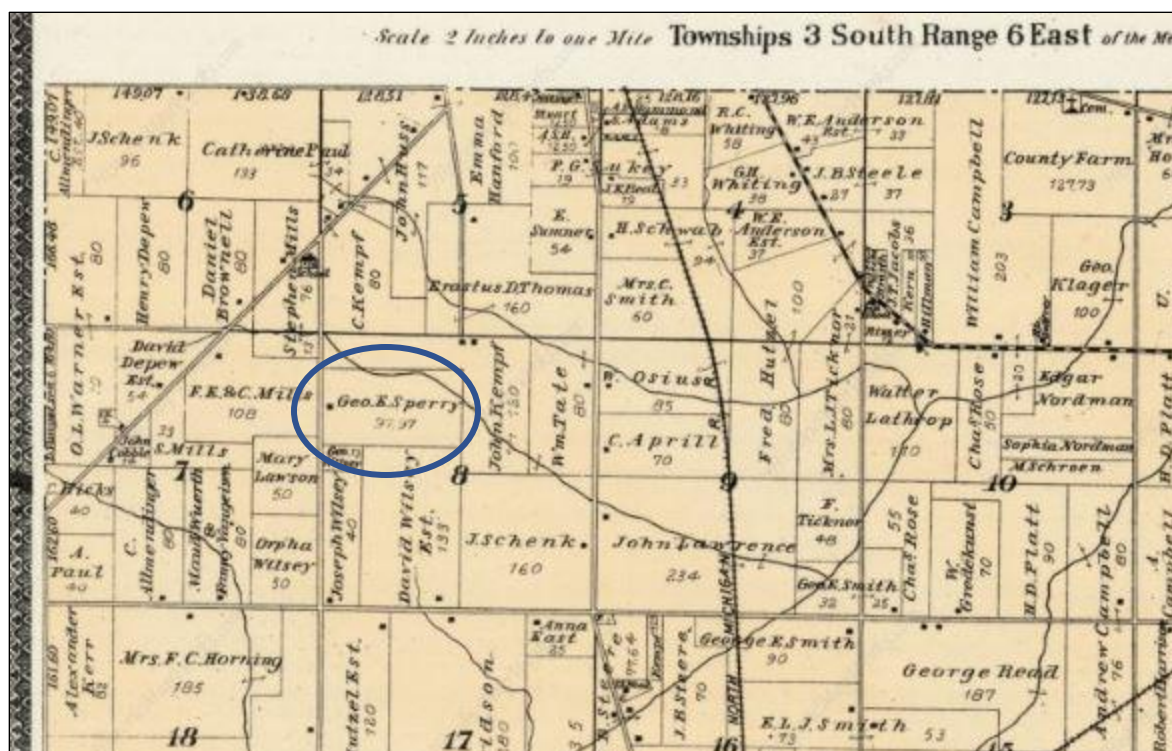
1864. Property owned by Sperry (central portion of the NW ¼, Section 8). Note the S. and A. Sperry Family Farm about 1.5 miles due north in Ann Arbor Township. The city of Ann Arbor is just a little farther to the north.

Map of the Counties of Washtenaw and Lenawee, Michigan.

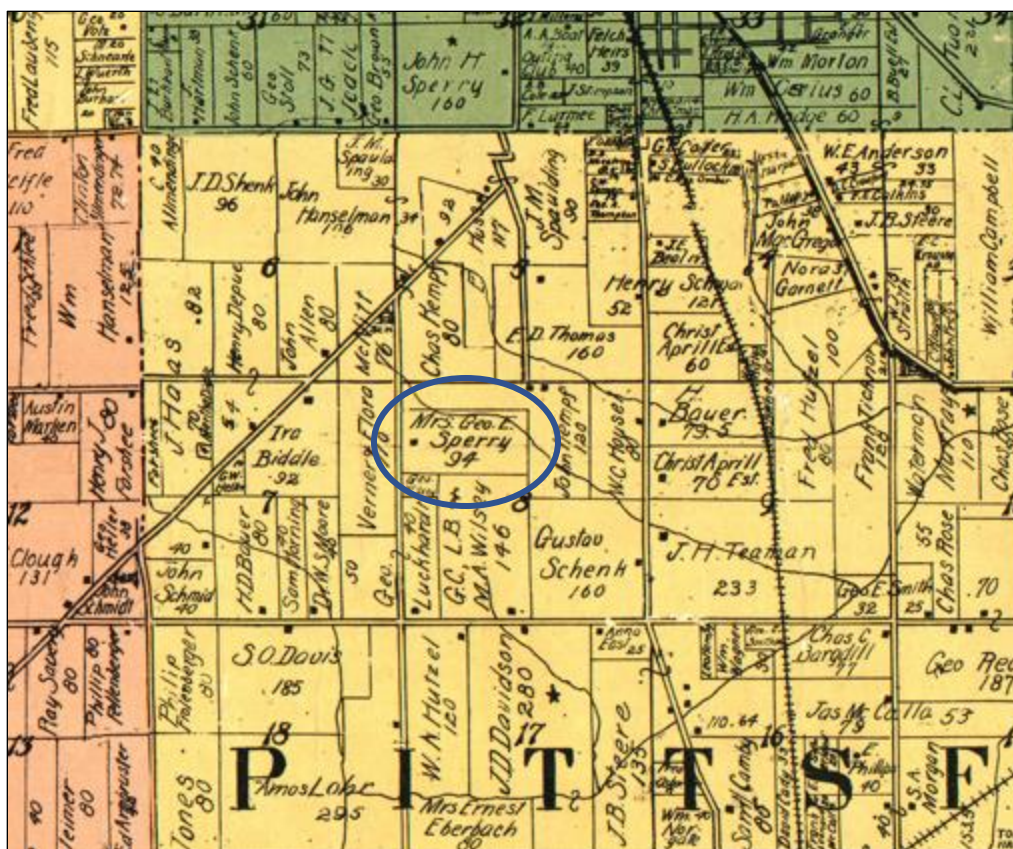


1874. The 98-acre property in northwestern Pittsfield Township is owned by George E. Sperry. Ann Arbor is due north off the map and the town of Saline is in the southwest corner.

Combination Atlas Map of Washtenaw County, Michigan.



1895. Property owned by Geo. E. Sperry (central portion of the NW ¼, Section 8).
Standard Atlas of Washtenaw County, Michigan.



1911. Property owned by Eva (Mrs. George) Sperry (central portion of the NW ¼, Section 8).
Chadwick's Map and Directory of Washtenaw County, Michigan.



1915. Property owned by Eva (Mrs. George) Sperry (central portion of the NW ¼, Section 8). *Standard Atlas of Washtenaw County, Michigan.*

Attachment G Dr. David R. Byrd Information

1. Some Architectural Projects by Dr. David R. Byrd near Ann Arbor, Michigan (list is not comprehensive)

- 421 Brookside, Ann Arbor – David and Letitia Byrd Residence, 1967
- 387 Brookside, Ann Arbor – Residence of Letitia Byrd's Grandmother, 1972
- 218 Chapin, Ann Arbor – New Hope Baptist Church conversion of former Arnet's Monuments building, 1973-1974
- 1076 Jefferson, Ypsilanti -- Greater Shiloh Church of God in Christ Nursery School
- 3257 Lohr Road, Ann Arbor – Episcopal Church of the Incarnation Chapel, 1985-1987
- 3261 Lohr Road, Ann Arbor – Rehabilitation of Wilsey-Sperry-Nelson farmhouse, 1975-1987
- 2580 Packard, Ann Arbor -- Crossroads Baptist Church addition
- 120 South State, Ann Arbor – United Methodist Church Chapel, memorial garden, and promenade
- 2345 Tyler Road, Ypsilanti -- New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church, Willow Run
- 620 North Fifth Ave, Ann Arbor – Black Economic Development League
- 724 North Fifth Ave, Ann Arbor – former Central Brewery remodeling of converted, mid-1970s

2. Compilation of Dr. Byrd's Background Joyce Hunter, 10/5/2021

DAVID R. BYRD (1921 – 1987)

David R. Byrd was an African American architect of churches, residential home, and schools in Washington, D.C. and Ann Arbor, Michigan. He served on the Board of Commissioners of Washtenaw County (1968 – 1972) and was an advocate for civil rights and affordable housing for the poor.

In 1966 Byrd gave up a career as an architect to start WCC's construction technology program. Born in 1921, he was educated at Hampton Institute and Howard University, and later earned a master's and worked toward a doctorate in architecture at the University of Michigan. According to his widow, Letitia Byrd, a retired teacher and community activist, the job at WCC appealed to David's idealistic side. "He wanted to use architecture to help people," she explains. "He wanted to stimulate Black students—to create new opportunities, lines of vision." One of his mentees was David Moody who became an architect and now owns a construction company in Atlanta. David Moody stated that "David R. Byrd was a Renaissance man."

One of Byrd's main goals was to get more Black people into the unions by giving them the necessary training. In cases, older students already had the skills but needed a piece of paper as proof. Byrd also encouraged more African Americans to become architects.

Architecture Projects

Byrd continued to practice architecture while teaching at Washtenaw Community College. Some of his projects located in the Ann Arbor vicinity are summarized above.

New uses for old buildings

In Ann Arbor, Byrd built his own office in a one-time garage on East Summit Street and converted the old brewery at Summit and Fifth Streets into apartments. In 1969, while serving as a Washtenaw County commissioner, Byrd convinced the county to purchase the old Holy Ghost Seminary at Washtenaw and Hogback, today, it is part of the County Service Center.

In 1975, Byrd bought an 1840s farmhouse and six acres of land on Lohr Road, then a dirt road. Although now across the street from Kohl's department store, the house then seemed far out in the country. Run down from years of rental use, it was a perfect teaching tool for restoration practices. Students raised the sagging floor, jacked up the roof, put in new rafters, and replaced the gingerbread on the outside. (<https://aadl.org/taxonomy/term/12681>; pictures of David and restored rooms on Lohr Rd.)

Building a cupola was another class project for Byrd's students. They learned how to apply metal to wood. They constructed the wooden frame at WCC and added the metal in Byrd's basement. When it was done, Byrd thought it should be used. He decided to build something on the land behind the farmhouse. He decided to build a church; Letitia said, "He was very spiritual. If he had lived, he probably would have gone into the ministry. He spent so much of his time studying and researching church work and talking to ministers."

The stone which the builders rejected. When architect David Byrd was building the chapel that bears his name, he put a quotation from Psalm 118:22 over the front entrance. "The stone which the builders rejected." Whenever he could, Byrd used donated material that contractors did not need or had rejected. Byrd's personal stamp was most noticeable inside the chapel. He designed the stained-glass windows, chose verses to put on the railings and on the stonework, designed the interior cross, and did most of the inside carpentry, including the railings, pulpit, and chancel, where he inlaid a cross in the wooden floor.

The chapel was dedicated in January 1987. Byrd envisioned the church as "a place people could come to concentrate, meditate—a sanctuary." Early that spring, Byrd had a heart attack. "He left home in pain one morning. At noon he drove to St. Joe's and admitted. He never came home," recalls Letitia. He died on May 17, 1987, at age sixty-six.

Note: The Episcopal Church of the Incarnation now occupies the building.

RESOURCES

Ann Arbor District Library Archives

Ann Arbor Observer

Interview with David Moody, 7/3/2021

--Compiled by Joyce Hunter, 10/5/2021

Compilation of Dr. Byrd's Background at Washtenaw Community College

Diana Morton-McKnight, 12/17/2021

Dr Byrd began working at Washtenaw Community College in 1966. He was a faculty/coordinator of the Architecture/Construction Technology department.

Education

- Hampton Institute College and Trade School
- Master of Arts – University of Michigan
- N.C.A.R.B. Certified
- Registered Architect – Maryland, West Virginia, Michigan, and District of Columbia

Excerpts from (Reynolds, A Fierce Commitment - the First 10 Years of Washtenaw Community College) and college archives.

David R. Byrd *Architecture*

"As an individual and a professional, David Byrd left his mark on his community in many ways," Lola Jones said. "He was a fine man, dedicated to helping people better their lives."

Through the years, Byrd's endeavors and creative solutions to design problems made headlines in regional papers. He designed the furnishings for the Huron High School Charter Center, which opened in 1974, and his students built the carrels for the school. He designed the ceremonial mace used in special WCC ceremonies. In April of 1975, The Ann Arbor News reported on an invention Byrd created with another Washtenaw Community College instructor. The headline reads "Energy Machine or Dud?" The story shows some of the tremendous scope of interests and talents the architectonics instructor brought to this classroom:

Solar energy, fusion power, geothermal energy – forget it! Two Ann Arbor African American men claim to have invented an energy machine which is superior to any of these potential power sources.

David R. Byrd and Johnny Clarke, instructors at Washtenaw Community College, were scheduled to leave for Washington, D.C., this week to discuss their invention with the U.S. Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA).

Byrd, chair of the Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission (HRC) and former Washtenaw County commissioner, is an instructor in architecture in the WCC Technical and Industrial Division. Clarke, a local licensed builder, is a part-time instructor in construction technology at the college.

The Instructor of Architectural Technology and former president of the Huron Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was the subject of an in-depth Voice profile in November 1974, which noted, "A tremendous amount of David Byrd's energy and time is spent on behalf of Ann Arbor's minority and low-income citizens."

David Byrd initiated a course study for minority contractors who had failed in business because they did not understand business management techniques. The four-year course taught blueprint reading,

estimating, surveying, math, business administration, and remedial skills. Another program headed by Byrd trained the “hardcore unemployed” for careers in construction. To give on-the-job training, Byrd designed houses that the trainees built – literally from the ground up, under Byrd’s supervision. The architect also conducted his own architectural practice, working on an eighty-unit high-rise apartment building for the elderly and a multipurpose neighborhood center in a low-income area of Ann Arbor, among other projects.

David Byrd served on the Advisory Search Committee seeking new President in 1975.

The mace used in Washtenaw’s commencement exercises was designed and built by David Byrd. The various parts of the mace represent program areas of the college-a tire for automotive programs, a gear for industrial manufacturing, a graduated beaker for chemistry and health programs, and a cup and saucer for culinary arts and hospitality. The top of the mace is a torch of learning-signifying the overall mission of the college.

--Compiled by Diana Morton-McKnight, 12/17/2021

Attachment H Legal Description of Proposed Byrd Center Historic District

Parcel No.: L-12-08-250-017

Legal Description:

BNDRY ADJST PER SURVEY 08/22/11 OWNER REQUEST PI 8-4A-2A-1 PCL " II " COM AT NW COR SEC 8, TH S 00-12-15 W 1253.02 FT TO A POB, TH S 89-47-45 E 323.04 FT, TH S 00-12-15 W 163.06 FT, TH S 87-21-15 W 130.44 FT, TH N 00-12-15 E 10.00 FT, TH S 87-21-15 W 193.00 FT, TH N 00-12-15 E 169.14 FT TO THE POB. PT OF NW 1/4 SEC 8, T3S-R6E. 1.22 AC. SPLIT ON 06/21/2004 FROM L-12-08-250-016.

For Corresponding map, see Figure 1 of this report.

The Process for Establishing a Local Historic District

