



The Abraham Beydler House

**National Register of Historic Places (2002)
Virginia Landmark Register (2001)**

History of Home and Area, Descriptions & Construction, Ownership

**2748 Zion Church Road
Maurertown, Virginia**

The Abraham Beydler House & Valhalla Farm

The Abraham Beydler House and related structures sit on what has come to be known as Valhalla Farm. The farm consists of a manor house, a smokehouse and the remains of a springhouse situated on nine and one half acres adjacent to the North Fork of the Shenandoah River just across from Massanutten Mountain in Shenandoah County, Virginia. Valhalla Farm has been occupied since the 1770s and the Beydler House is a three-story, six room brick house, constructed from 1783-1800, on a full-story basement opening toward the river. A two-story ell was added perpendicularly to the house around 1850, adding four rooms and additional basement area. The house is an example of the Federal style that was popular with Shenandoah Valley residents during the early nineteenth century. Stone from the river and surrounding land provide the coursed foundation, while bricks made on the property were employed for the walls, most of which are laid in a Flemish-bond pattern. The house has interior-end chimneys at each gable end of the building. The interior of the house features heart-of-pine floors, horsehair plaster walls, chair rails and heavily decorated mantels. Doors throughout the house consist of two-inch-thick planks and six panels; exterior doors are topped by five-light transoms. Windows have one-over-one, double hung sashes and wooden shutters are reproductions of the originals.

Approximately 30 feet east of the house stands a three smokehouse/summer kitchen, generally referred to as a cabin. Constructed around 1850, the building has diamond shaped air vents and was renovated in the 1990s. The smokehouse and the remains of an original springhouse, approximately 75 feet east of the smokehouse, are contributing resources.

The house has undergone little alteration and remains a well-preserved example of late 18th century Federal style architecture. A few modern additions have been made and the adjacent smokehouse has been thoroughly restored. The buildings and grounds have been in continuous use for two hundred thirty years.

I. The Area of Valhalla Farm

Property

The original farm, which occupied land on both sides of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, derived from a land grant made by Lord Fairfax, the lord proprietor for Virginia. Owned previously by two other parties from 1750-1783, the farm was held by the Beydler family for over 140 years; in its first twenty-five years, it varied in size based on marriages, purchases and inheritances. At one point, the farm was over 300 acres. During its history, the farm acquired the name Valhalla. Reduced over time to about 45 acres, it was purchased in the 1940s by the Carey family which continued to subdivide the property. Most recently, the manor house, smokehouse/summer kitchen and 9.5 acres of land were set apart and sold. The property consists of approximately 2.5 acres on a hillside, approximately 1 acre on which the manor house and smokehouse sit and 6.5 acres of pasture and former orchards leading to the river. Route 654 runs on the borders of the property.

River

The property has approximately 400 feet along the North Fork of the Shenandoah River at a point in the river at the end of the famous Seven Loops, a large compressed system of meanderings. After flowing fairly evenly along the base of the Massanutten ridge, the North Fork suddenly meanders in seven large looping turns and then straightens into smaller meanderings, joining the South Fork near Strasburg. The Shenandoah River then flows north to Harpers Ferry and there enters the Potomac River.

Of note, viewed from the middle of the bridge across the North Fork, at the right, may be seen a V-shaped rock formation in the water. The large boulders embedded in the river are remains of a large Indian fish trap that “funneled” river fish into wooden traps.

Mountain

Beyond a private farm (part of which originally belonged to the Beydler family) across the river is Massanutten Mountain. The mountain forms a ridge and the top two thirds are part of the George Washington National Forest; elevation of Three Top Mountain, the peak across from Valhalla Farm, is just over 1700 feet. Roughly 40 miles long, the ridge provides a “spine” for the Shenandoah Valley, with the Blue Ridge Mountains to the southeast and the Allegheny Mountains to the northwest. The ski resort at Massanutten is at the southwestern end of the ridge and Strasburg is roughly at the northeastern end.

County

Augusta County was split into three parts in 1770, consisting of Augusta, Rockingham and, at the time, “Dunsmore” county. Dunsmore was renamed Shenandoah shortly thereafter. The county seat, Woodstock, had been founded in 1752. In Woodstock is the second oldest continuously operating courthouse west of the Blue Ridge. The farm sits just outside Maurertown (“Maury-

town”) that is named for a German immigrant family (Maurer), as are other towns in the area, such as Saumsville.

Shenandoah Valley

The Shenandoah Valley is approximately 160 miles long and may be as wide as 30 miles at points. Shenandoah reportedly comes from the Indian expression “Clear Eyed Daughter of the Stars.” The valley was familiar to colonial settlers, but was not a favored subject of settlement until the 1730s. The land lacked the attraction of property in the east as it did not have extensive navigable rivers which would support agricultural trade. The land did accommodate a large number of German and Scotch-Irish immigrants. Many of the Germans who settled the north end of the valley left Germany after the 1689 expulsion by Louis XIV of Protestants from the Palatinate region. They migrated to Pennsylvania, beginning around 1710; then these immigrants followed some of their leaders in the 1730s and 1740s to the area referred to by them as the Valley of “Cenanto.” In 1763 there were 3 people per square mile in the valley; by 1776, there were 7 people per square mile. The earliest crop of note— hemp— was exported.

The Valley runs from the Northeast to the Southwest, bounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains on the east and the Allegheny Mountains on the west.

II. History of the Surrounding Area

Set forth here are some historical notes on the area near the farm and Beydler House.

Colonial/Revolution

Woodstock, the county seat, was the scene of some of the last Indian raids in Virginia against settlers, resulting in deaths to settlers and Indians in the period just before the French and Indian War.

A famous Revolutionary War event occurred in Woodstock and is recorded in most school history books. Pastor John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg in 1776 spoke before his congregation in Woodstock. During his sermon he referenced Ecclesiastes, repeating “there is a time to every purpose...a time to war and a time to peace.” At that moment he threw down his minister’s robes and stunned his congregation as he was wearing a colonel’s uniform in the Continental Army. This was said to lead to more active participation from the area in the war, which had been seen up until that time by many as an eastern Virginia planters’ struggle. The Beydler family, for example, as Mennonites would have opposed both forming militias and the war itself.

On Zion Church Road, at the site of the County Farm, was the Glebe House (or church residence) where Muhlenberg lived and rode circuit. Later called the Almshouse and then Poorhouse, it finally became a county work farm, where the unemployed or those who committed minor offenses could work for a time in lieu of incarceration. This County Farm was the last in operation in Virginia; its Glebe House/Almshouse was destroyed by fire in 2015, though a barn and outbuildings remain.

1850s

Most of the towns of significance in the Shenandoah Valley exist along the Valley Pike, the second oldest continuously paved road in the United States. During the Civil War its importance was reflected by the fact that whichever general could access and move troops up or down the Valley Pike invariably won the next battle engagement.

One Virginia writer highlighted Woodstock in the 1850s with the following— “As for the town of Woodstock, it doubtless has, like many other Virginia towns, the merits of a singed cat, that of being better than it looks.”⁽¹⁾ Maurertown was known as Mudville for its unpaved, muddy main street and Strasburg as Pot Town for its numerous pottery works.

1860s

The area around Strasburg became very famous during the Civil War. While battles had made the Shenandoah Valley look like scenes that would be common in the First World War with forests

¹ Stevens, *Shenandoah and Its Byways* (1941), p. 75.

burned to the ground and battles for position fought and refought over the same territory for three years, in 1864 the area returned as a key focus for the sectional conflict. The Valley not only served as a highway to Washington in the North and a refuge for Confederate armies to the South, it provided one of the “bread baskets” for the Confederacy.

A year after the battle of Gettysburg, Confederate troops under General Jubal Early (a lieutenant to Stonewall Jackson in 1863, the year Jackson was killed by friendly fire) made a raid towards Washington, D.C. that frightened many in the Capital. This action made it clear that the hoped-for peace after Gettysburg might not be attained so quickly.

With the impact of Gettysburg still unclear, Abraham Lincoln faced a fall election in 1864. Expectations grew that the South might give way, but this did not occur. Once again, Union generals chased various Confederate generals around the Shenandoah Valley; most troubling, they could not suppress Jubal Early in the northern Valley. Lincoln anxiously looked for a victory for fear that Democrats, led by General George McLellan, and even Republicans might pose a serious election challenge. General Sheridan, appointed by General Grant, was charged with pressing Jubal Early out of the region so that the border with Maryland would be secure.

In a series of battles, Sheridan’s and Early’s armies exchanged victories, including the Confederate victory at Fisher’s Hill, just south of Strasburg. A few months after Fisher’s Hill, during the time General Sheridan traveled east to consult with General Grant, the armies re-engaged. Upon learning his armies were in major battle near Middletown and Belle Grove Plantation and not faring well, Sheridan quickly moved by train from Washington to Martinsburg and then to Winchester. Hearing cannon fire from his camp, Sheridan determined to inspect the situation. Eventually he rode all the way to the battlefield—about 14 miles—and found his forces in disarray and retreat. Sheridan turned troops around as he rode and had their commanders march them south. The troops rallied, defeating Early at the Battle of Cedar Creek (or Battle of Belle Grove); this battle effectively ended Confederate military effectiveness in the valley. [Belle Grove served as the home of Joseph Hite a leading German citizen of the valley. Belle Grove is a location for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and an historic trust property; its interior has many elements in common with the Beydler house.]

Lincoln and his advisers, needing a victory, hailed Cedar Creek and Sheridan’s victory as the “turning point of the war”—at the time, higher praise than that accorded Gettysburg. The retreat of Confederate cavalry, with Major General Custer in pursuit, became known as the “Woodstock Races.” Sheridan was immortalized in poems and school memorials for his famous ride, even if somewhat embellished from reality. Lincoln won the election of 1864, two and one half weeks after Cedar Creek.

A Note on the Pollard-Moffie Connection

Coincidentally, at the time of the Civil War, Susan Moffie Pollard’s family lived in the Shenandoah Valley. Susan’s family, the Moffies, were French-Italian and first generation immigrants prior to her father. Her mother’s family, the Biddles, had a branch named Miller, members of which lived in Western Pennsylvania and, as it turns out, in Northwestern Virginia. At the time of the Civil War,

Susan's great, great grandfather Hezekiah Miller lived in Woodstock, where his father worked a forge. Hezekiah and a school friend crossed the mountains to western Pennsylvania and tried to enlist in the Union army, but were too young and were given a mule team to drive. When old enough, he enlisted in the 20th Pennsylvania Volunteers serving under General Hartranft and later married Mary Powell. After the war, Hezekiah and Mary moved to Huntingdon, Pennsylvania and the family was there at the time of the great Johnstown flood, which forced them to survive by climbing to the second story of their home.

1930s

Camp Roosevelt south of Woodstock, near Edinburg, was the first Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) camp and its volunteer members helped construct the Skyline Drive and the infrastructure of Shenandoah National Park.

III. The Beydler House— Summary

The Abraham Beydler House at Valhalla Farm represents German immigrant adoption of the Federal style of architecture, popular among residents of the Shenandoah Valley.⁽²⁾ This is reflected in the use of the English-style construction of chimneys placed at the end of exterior walls, use of brick, carved woodwork for the parlor and other prominent rooms and a floor plan of two rooms wide, one room deep. The house form is referred to frequently as an “I house” and is very common to the Valley.⁽³⁾

The original house consisted of six rooms, a large home for the area.⁽⁴⁾ The basement level’s principal elevation faces south towards the river and the principal elevation of the top two floors and attic faces north. The house was constructed between 1783 and 1800 and was referenced in a will executed by Abraham Beydler.⁽⁵⁾ The bricks and wall plasters are made with horsehair, typical of construction materials employed in the area before the widespread introduction of wheat to the Valley.⁽⁶⁾ The basement level eventually served as an area for storage and sheltering animals in winter.

The addition or ell was constructed around 1850. It consists of two stories with four rooms and a basement under part of the structure and an attic. First-floor rooms consist of an entry foyer and kitchen; the upper floor has bedrooms. The principal elevation of the ell faces east.

Bathrooms and closets were added in the 20th century. Wall pegs permitted families to hang and dry their clothes, as well as display them for their neighbors. Chair rails, that exist in almost all rooms of the house, were popular and were commonly placed in most principal rooms in the late 1700s.⁽⁷⁾ A porch on the ell was added in the 1920s.

2 Terrell, *Old Houses in Rockingham County* (Verona, Virginia: McClure Press 1970), pp. 10-12 (application of Georgian style by Germans in Shenandoah Valley).

3 Brownell, Loth, Rasmussen and Wilson, *The Making of Virginia Architecture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1992), pp. 27-28 (notes on German immigrants migration through Pennsylvania, use of diverse architectural styles and construction features, including employment of heavy roof supports). Lyle and Simpson, *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1971), p. 17 (style brought to Virginia as early as the 1600s and reflected the rise of families from modest means to economic stability, particularly use of brick in construction).

4 In Lanier and Herman, *Everyday Architecture of the Mid Atlantic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press 1997), p. 24, the authors note that millers and innkeepers built large homes of brick with well executed interior appointments.

5 The Beydler family was known to have an orchard and later raised wheat, engaging in their traditional family business as millers. Kennedy, *Architecture, Men, Women and Money in America 1600-1860* (New York: Random House 1985) (relationship of corn, tobacco, land speculation and western movement and impact on colonial period migrations), p. 118.

6 Dalzell and Dalzell, *George Washington’s Mount Vernon: At Home In Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press 1998), Appendix— House-Building in Eighteenth-Century Virginia, pp. 229-231 (brick-making techniques) and 241 (animal hair plaster). Also Lanier & Herman, pp. 97-105 (brick-making) and 113 (plaster).

7 Dalzell and Dalzell, p. 239.

In the 1960s, a back porch was enclosed as a “mud room”; a few years later, a sleeping porch was constructed above it. Later a garage was added and then a studio above that in 1988. The original house, ell and adjacent smokehouse are painted white today. Wood shake roofs existed originally on the house and smokehouse, replaced with standing seam metal roofs in the late nineteenth century.(8)

The adjacent smokehouse/summer kitchen is constructed of brick, laid in Flemish bond, as is the main house. The foundation is brick, not fieldstone employed in the original house and ell. The roof, originally wood shake, is now standing-seam metal. The building had its interior completely renovated, save for the top floor heart-of-pine floors. The floor in the basement mirrors the brick pattern that exists in the “egg room” in the main house. The original building consisted of three stories of single rooms to which a basement furnace room was added and above that a kitchen and restroom.

IV. The Beydler House— Manor House and Ell

Exterior

The original house and ell addition, constructed of brick made on the property, have foundations that consist of stacked fieldstones of limestone and slate. External walls have Flemish bond brickwork on north and south elevations, while a five-course American bond is displayed at the other two elevations. A molded brick cornice extends across the north and south elevations of the original house. Windows have brick jack arches; the original nine-over-nine sashes have been replaced with one-over-one, double-hung sashes. Shutters are copies of the originals, one of which has been preserved. Exterior doors are topped with five-light transoms.

Interior

Inside, the house has horsehair plaster walls and floors made of heart-of-pine planks with sawdust caulking between the boards. The first-floor dining room has a boxed staircase leading upstairs and down to the basement. All doors in the house consist of two-inch-thick planks with six panels.⁽⁹⁾ Almost all of the door hardware in the house is original. Fireplaces in the house have either been restored with bricks from the property or remain in their original condition; all fireplaces are in working order.

The following describe interior rooms of the original house and ell:

Attics. Rafters in the original house and ell appear to have been handcrafted outside on the ground and then carried to the attic. Each set of two rafters is joined at the peak with a mortise-and-tenon joint and pegged. In order to re-assemble each unique pair, the rafters were numbered with matching Roman numerals.⁽¹⁰⁾ These remain visible on the charred rafters. The rafters have small hooks that were used to dry herbs that were gathered near the river or from a garden. The rafters were burned or charred intentionally to prevent bug infestations. The floor of the attic was removed and parts of it made into the current kitchen's hutch and the cabinets around the sink. In the attic, six windows exist— two with green stained glass portions in leaded frames came from an old schoolhouse in Maurertown.

A tale, probably apocryphal, describes a space to the left of the stairs leading up to the attic as a hiding place for Confederate soldiers. Proceeding up the attic stairs a space exists between the stair wall and the wall of the house approximately two feet wide. A piece of flooring may be removed just under the first attic window. The space from the attic to the ground is over two stories high. The space was supposedly used by the Beydlers, pacifist Mennonites, to hide defecting Confederate and probably Union soldiers from capture. So the story goes.

9 Dalzell and Dalzell, p. 238 (such doors were easier to produce and carve).

10 Lanier and Herman, p. 80 and at p. 114-- the roof timbers were "prefitted, trussed and sometimes numbered in their raising order," then joined with mortise-and-tenon joints. Also, Dalzell and Dalzell, at 235.

Kitchen. The kitchen of the house is now in the 1850 ell addition and has a large, eight-foot-wide fireplace, of commonplace construction, that was heavily used. The swing pole, from which a kettle hung, was discovered in a nearby barn and restored to the house. The kitchen walls are exposed brick. The cooking fireplace has a segmental arch firebox and a mantel consisting of a plain frieze and reed pilasters. Windows above the sink are original, containing hand-made glass panes. The wooden threshold at the back door to the kitchen is worn in the middle from years of active use. Originally flat to the ground, the raised fireplace hearth was built in 1975 of bricks taken from the basement floors. While the hutch and cabinets were crafted from the attic floor, the woodwork along the fireplace—the bowed mantel and reeded wall treatments (slightly altered)—are all original. The woodwork would have been painted as most homes had extensive painting that helped reflect candlelight and would not have been in its current exposed state.

The wooden threshold at the back door to the kitchen is worn in the middle. This resulted from bringing wood into the kitchen during the winter season. There was a back and front door to the kitchen and a mule would bring a cut tree to the back door. The chain on the tree would be drawn across the kitchen floor and reconnected to the mule outside the front door. The tree would be pulled into the kitchen and then rolled into the fireplace to provide firewood for cooking and heating during the winter.

Parlor. The parlor is the most ornamental room in the house. The large plaster medallion in the ceiling accentuates the height of the room. The Palladian-style cupboards have reeded pilasters, topped with a carved pineapple.⁽¹¹⁾ Above each cupboard, a semi-circular wooden arch crowned by a keystone springs from the pilasters. The Federal-style mantel has reeded banding, hatching and engaged Doric columns on pedestals. A central frieze tablet is accented by a carved flower motif and is flanked by carved pineapples in the frieze. The mantel shelf is bowed as are others in the house.

Speculation exists that the carving in a Federal style reflects the work of Hessians who remained in Virginia after the Revolutionary War. Captured in battles in New Jersey, Hessian soldiers were imprisoned in Charlottesville along what is now called Barracks Road. After the war, a number of the young men determined not to return to Germany and took up woodworking and other skilled crafts for various families, particularly German-speaking ones, up and down the Valley, and worked on a number of homes such as nearby Belle Grove plantation (site of the Civil War battle of Cedar Creek).

Dining Room. The dining room staircase is enclosed or “boxed.”⁽¹²⁾ Chair rails and heart-of-pine floors along with horsehair plaster walls mirror other rooms of the house. A door to the basement, under the staircase, has a hand-painted, faux treatment. A door was created to the left of the fireplace and later resealed. The fireplace was bricked closed as the furnaces employed the chimney for exhaust.

11 Lanier and Herman, pp. 29 & 125; note that symmetrical, Palladian style cupboards or bookcases in a parlor reflect a frequent device of the time and the fact that the highest finishes in houses came along fireplace walls.

12 Terrell, p. 10 (use of enclosed staircases in German immigrant houses).

Entry Room. The entry room, now in the ell, originally contained four exterior doors; three remain with one now accessed through an added bathroom. The heart-of-pine floors and horsehair plaster walls are original as are the chair rails and coat hooks. No bathrooms were in the house most likely until the 20th century so here and elsewhere in the house the rooms would have been larger.

Upstairs Rooms. The east-facing bedroom in the ell has original, hand-made window glass in windows looking out to the west. The master bedroom in the original house has an original fireplace with bowed mantel shelf, chair rails and coat pegs. A sleeping porch was added in the 1970s along the west wall of the ell. Above the dining room, a room leading from the original house to the ell was originally a bedroom. As elsewhere, the floor in the rooms are heart of pine and the fireplace has an original bowed mantel shelf. A room above the kitchen in the ell has two doors with interesting hand-painted faux designs simulating a raised wood surface. These door treatments are original to the room and common to the 1850s; the room served as a bedroom.

Basement Rooms. Three basement rooms exist, two below the manor house and one below the ell. The basement walls consist of fieldstones and of quarried, worked stones that are flat and well fitted. The walls are covered with horsehair plaster, much of which remains. Two have cement floors; bricks were taken up and used to create the current hearth in the kitchen fireplace. The third basement room, a storeroom in the original manor house, came to be known as the "egg room" in the 20th century. The room was used for keeping eggs before sale at market or for use by the family. The walls of the egg room have horsehair plaster and numbers on the wall reflect the count and sometimes the source of eggs. The basement rooms were used in earlier time for 2-3 horses. The egg room has an original brick floor with bricks aligned in a traditional German "basket weave" pattern; at one point the bricks were painted and traces of green paint remain. The doors are wide and window has wooden bars (so called "loop holes" for the use of firearms).

Other Structures. In the 1970s, a garage was built and over it a workroom. An in-ground pool was added in those years as well.

V. The Beydler House— Outbuildings

Smokehouse/Summer Kitchen

The one-and-a-half story smokehouse/summer kitchen is situated on a high brick basement. It had many uses over the years and was restored in the early 1990s as a residence, complete with a bedroom, basement room, living/dining room, bathroom, kitchen and furnace room. Adjacent to the house, the smokehouse was added to the property around 1850 and mirrors the architectural character and interior features of the original house. The exterior walls are brick laid in Flemish bond and diamond-shaped vents are located at the roof line.⁽¹³⁾ In the 1990s, the smokehouse was completely renovated with the furnace room, bathroom and kitchen added. The gable roof is covered in standing seam metal; originally, it had a wood shake roof as did the manor house.

The foundation of the smokehouse is brick. Most of the interior has been replaced; the flooring of the top level is constructed of original wood flooring and the beams in the smokehouse are old and have a number of pegs and hooks for hanging meats or herbs. The first-level room faces the river and has a floor that mirrors the basket weave pattern employed in the house basement (egg room). The room has a working fireplace and stairs leading to the second level. The second level contains a dining/living area with fireplace as well as a kitchen and a bathroom. The third level contains a bedroom.

Several nightstands, dining tables and side tables in the manor house were crafted from wood taken from the smokehouse during its renovation. Flooring and a stair enclosure that were removed in the 1990s renovation provided this wood from the 1850s.

Springhouse

Across the road (state route 654) from the smokehouse/summer kitchen are the remains of the original springhouse. Constructed of field stones and bricks made on the property, the springhouse was partially removed due to road construction, with about one quarter of the structure remaining. The alteration of Zion Church Road to run to the river, rather than west of the property as it had been for over 100 years, led to tearing down the structure and sealing the spring.

¹³ Diamond vents were popular for kitchens and smokehouses; see Terrell, p. 17 (ventilation in 18th century construction through brick, diamond pattern vents), and Lanier and Herman, p. 80 (diamond pattern vents on smokehouses).

VI. Historic Background

Valhalla Farm, which originally occupied land on both sides of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, was carved from a land grant made to Thomas, Lord Fairfax, the lord proprietor for Virginia. Conveyed by the Lord Proprietor's office to one Samuel Denton in 1750 and then to John Tipton in 1783, the farm was transferred that year and held by the family of Abraham Beydler for over 120 years. In its first forty-five years, it varied in size based on marriages, purchases and inheritances; at one point, the farm consisted of more than three hundred acres. During its history, the farm acquired the name Valhalla. Most recently in 1988, the house, smokehouse/summer kitchen, springhouse remains and nine and one half acres of land were set apart and sold.

The property extends just over 400 feet along the North Fork of the Shenandoah River at a point in the river at the end of the famous Seven Loops, a large, compressed system of meanderings. Across the river and beyond a private farm (still owned in part by the Hochman family and, at one time, in part by the Beydler family) is Massanutten Mountain.

The original brick house was constructed between 1783 to 1800 by Abraham Beydler, a German immigrant and member of a Mennonite sect. A land sale for 800 Pounds and 144 acres recorded in March 26, 1782 from Jacob Hoover to Abraham Beydler of what had been the Brumback Farm was recorded in county Deed Book. Many German immigrants first settled in Pennsylvania during the 1700s and shortly thereafter began migrating through Maryland and down the western slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains into western Virginia and western North Carolina. Land in the valley was cheaper and less desirable than acreage in the Tidewater region and along the navigable rivers of central Virginia.

Many of the deeds and wills related to the property reflect the strong Germanic heritage of its owners, with many documents either written in the German language or signed with names reflecting German spellings. Continued use of the language by the occupants— as well as the entire German community in the northern valley— throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was common.⁽¹⁴⁾ As late as the early 1900s, several German language newspapers published in the north Valley.

The following details the heritage and significance of the property's builders and owners—

The Beydler family (initially "Beutler") originated in Switzerland, near Bern, and family records go back to the 1580s.⁽¹⁵⁾ A branch of the family moved to the Palatinate region and along with other Swiss Mennonite families found themselves refugees after action by Louis XIV in the 1680s to

14 Davis, *The Shenandoah* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart 1945), p. 33 (newspapers in Shenandoah Valley published in German into the 20th century). Also see Smith, Stewart and Kyger, *The Pennsylvania Germans of the Shenandoah Valley* (Allentown, Pennsylvania: Schlechter's Publishers 1964)(German immigrant religions, foods, rituals, customs, crafts and related topics).

15 The family originated in the Swiss Alps region, concentrated around the village of Oberdiessbach; *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz* (Zurich 1940), Vol. I, p. 93; also see *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House 1982), Vol. I, p. 266.

restore the Palatinate to Catholic France.(16) Christian "Beudler" was born in Germany or the German Palatinate in 1707 and married one Susanna just before emigrating to the United States. His age was listed as 24 and his wife's, 23, when they landed in Philadelphia in August 1732 on the ship *Samuel*. He signed a document affirming his allegiance to the English King and later obtained a survey warrant for land in Philadelphia County where he built a grist mill.(17) His son Abraham was born in 1736. The family sold its property in 1744 and moved further west where he operated another mill and was listed as Christian "Beitler, millar." After his wife died, he remarried and moved once again. At his death in 1767, he left his plantation to his younger son and a separate 50-acre tract to his older son.

Christian Beudler's eldest son Abraham moved to the Shenandoah Valley some time around 1770, after selling the property his father left him, shortly after probating the will. He owned no land until 1782. In November 1772 his name appeared as Abraham "Pideler" in court minutes and in September 1776 he was called to testify in the case of a theft from himself and four others by one John Gordon.(18) On August 27,1783, Beydler purchased an additional 181 acres on the "North River of the Shanando" and a 1786 survey recorded buildings on the river property.(19) Abraham Beydler's name appeared again among those of other Mennonites signing a petition against the militia laws of Virginia in 1785.

16 Bly, *From the Rhine to the Shenandoah: Eighteenth Century Swiss and German Pioneer Families in the Central Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and Their European Origins*, Volume II (Baltimore: Gateway Press 1996), pp. 26-31. NOTE: this reference provides much of the history contained here regarding transactions in the Beydler family.

17 *Persons Naturalized in the Province of Pennsylvania, 1740-1773* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company 1967), p. 14. It was recorded that Beydler, "being such who conscientiously scrupled to take an oath," was naturalized by affirmation, reflecting the religious beliefs of the Mennonite immigrants.

18 Shenandoah County Order Book 1772-74 (November 25, 1772)(Abraham "Pideler" was appointed overseer of a road on property of Jacob Burner). In Shenandoah County Order Book 1781-1784 (February 28, 1782), Abraham "Piedler" and three others were appointed to "view a way for a Road from the Top of Macenutin mountain to the old Road at Benjamin Stickler meadow and report the conveniences attending to the same court..." As to the trial referenced, it is recorded in the Shenandoah County Minute Book 1774-1780 (September 1776). These records indicate not only that Beydler was active in the community, but that he lived in the neighborhood where he eventually purchased property and built his house.

19 Shenandoah County Deed Book D, p. 294 (August 27, 1783). The deed reflects a transfer by patent from the Lord Proprietor's "office" to Samuel Denton in October 20, 1750 and from him to John Tipton at Deed Book D, p. 65 (January 29, 1783). The deed from Tipton to Abraham "Pidler" references some 181 acres on the North River of the "Shanando" and a price of 650 pounds. According to a survey of the area, three years later in 1786, Beydler had fifteen acres of first rate river bottom land and twelve acres of second rate bottom land in cultivation, twelve acres of meadowland in the river bottom and thirty six acres of second rate high land under cultivation. Cited in Bly in note 3 above, p. 27 (statistical survey referenced as "Jonathan Clark Survey, 1785-1786").

The residence at the time was "a log dwelling-house, half worn, one and a half stories, 54 by 20 feet" with a "very indifferent" chimney of stone and earth. A barn existed of round logs, 44 by 28 feet and an orchard with 40 bearing apple trees was noted. The property included land where the house and smokehouse are today.

In September 1797, he became the guardian to his four youngest children who were heirs to their mother's share of her parent's estate in Pennsylvania. His will, dated April 17, 1807, was probated at the time of his death on April 9, 1810.⁽²⁰⁾ Around 1800, he had constructed a much larger house than that surveyed in 1786 and, in his will, directed that his wife was "...to live on the plantation where I now live, in the new dwelling house of which she shall have full possession during her widowhood and I do direct that my Son Jacob Beydler do plough and dung the Garden for my widow every year during her widowhood..."⁽²¹⁾ The will, common to the times, provides numerous specific bequests to other children and provides detailed bequests to his wife in terms of specific furniture, personal effects and even that she should have a cow and should the cow become "dry" then the son Jacob should provide her a cow that produced good milk.

In its tenth provision, Abraham Beydler provided that

"I give and devise to my Son Jacob Beydler himself and his heirs and assigns, forever, all the Plantation and tract of land whereon I now live, lying on both sides of the North River of Shenandoah, below the town of Woodstock about six miles, including the new entry Subject to the maintenance of my widow aforesaid and to the bequests to his brothers and sisters herein mentioned."

In the eleventh provision, Beydler states *"I do value the tract of land I give to my Son, Jacob, at twelve hundred pounds current money of Virginia."*

Jacob Beydler was born on November 11, 1782, married in 1800 and died on April 9, 1830. In 1800, he moved to property owned by his mother and, after her death in 1812, obtained full title and purchased additional land as well as land inherited from his father. At the time of his death, Jacob Beydler had property appraised by Jacob Kronk, David Crabill and Jacob Fisher on May 25, 1830 and sold at an auction; a detailed account reported the proceeds as \$2186.05.⁽²²⁾ The remaining value of Jacob Beydler's estate was estimated by the administrators, on May 27, 1830, as \$1785.91.⁽²³⁾ A further settlement was for \$2132.95 in 1832. A final settlement of accounts took place on December 24, 1833 for \$614.54.

Evidence that the property was part of the active commerce of the area is reflected in the records of a nearby historic site. On the same road as Valhalla Farm, two miles away, is the former Shenandoah County Farm, that originally served as the Glebe House (or church residence) where Peter Muhlenberg, the Revolutionary War patriot, lived and rode circuit. In the Almshouse account book for 1810, "Alex. Pollock, manager," recorded a transaction with Jacob "Bydler" for 67 bundles

20 Shenandoah County Will Book G, p. 446.

21 Shenandoah County Will Book G, p. 451.

22 Shenandoah County Will Book Q, p. 195.

23 Shenandoah County Will Book Q, p. 195. Also, the Shenandoah County Land Book 1830-1837, p. 5, lists the property of Jacob Beydler at some 431½ acres.

of straw at one pence per bundle.(24) The Beydler family were millers and they used the house and outbuilding not only for shelter but also storage of crops and animals.

Many transactions occurred within the Beydler family before the property left its owner-ship.(25) In the 1940s, the Carey family purchased the property and held it until the 1980s when the land was subdivided further and the house was sold to the Kelley family, by them to the Monahan/Couric family and then to the current owners, the Pollard family, in 1998.

Photograph

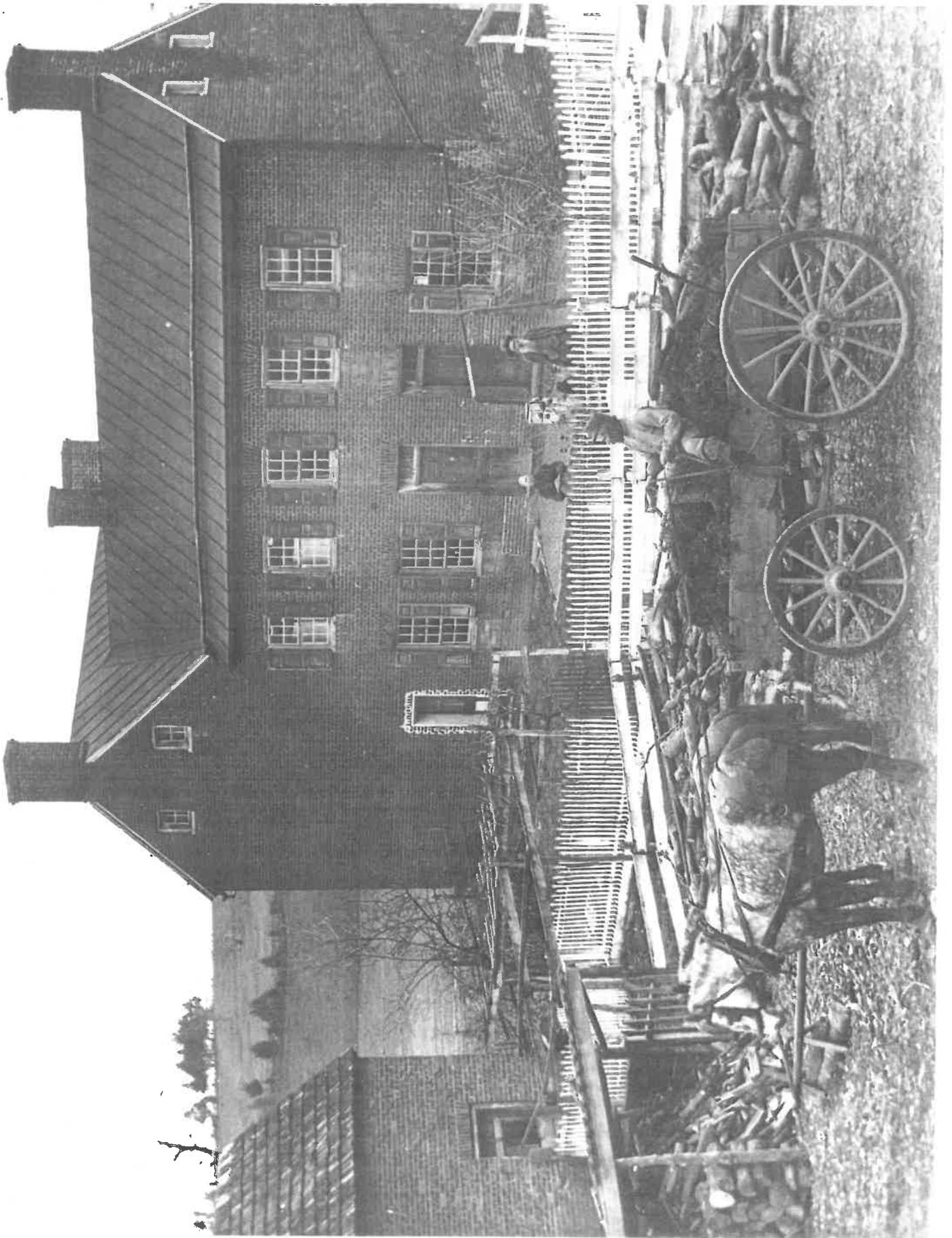
Photograph of Beydler House

This earliest photograph of the Beydler house has been referenced as 1895; the photo may have come from the *Shenandoah Valley Herald* newspaper. The photograph shows on the extreme left the smokehouse/summer kitchen. Next comes the 1800 manor house and then the 1850 addition or ell. In the yard stands Hiram and Elizabeth (“Libby”) Beydler and, in the wagon, one Si(mon) Fitzer. Dating of the picture was possible as Hiram Beydler died, according to county records in 1896.

From left to right in the picture the following may be noted– the smokehouse/summer kitchen still has a shake roof, which would have been on the main house prior to the use of “tin” roofs. On the manor house, on the extreme left near the roof line appears the edge of a “gutter,” but more likely represents a water collecting siphon that would round the house and into a cistern; the house does not have gutters. A door to the 1800 main house had been added recently, as seen in the picture; the door was later removed. A center smokestack on the 1850 ell no longer exists. Modern shutters on the ell copy the original shutters in the photograph; an original remains in the mud room. There are two doors in the ell, however, a door to the kitchen on the right no longer exists, replaced by a window. No porch existed on the house before the 1920s, however, a patio composed of bricks made from clay on the property sits in front of the ell.

24 Painter, *The Alms House of Shenandoah County* (Stephens City, Va.: Commercial Press 1979), p. 14.

25 Other transactions recorded for the property within the Beydler family took place in 1873, 1879, 1892 and in 1895 from A. Beydler to Hiram Beydler. Hiram Beydler was born on February 1, 1833 and died on October 21, 1896; he is buried at the Valley Pike Brethren Church; his wife Barbara (“Libby”) died on March 27, 1900. A picture of the house and smokehouse dated from approximately 1895 shows Hiram and Libby Beydler. Following their deaths, in January 1902, the property was divided in to three tracts, one with 48½ acres on the North Fork of the river; the property was inherited by Laura Wakeman; she was the last of the Beydler family owners. She sold the property on September 1, 1918 to John Artz. It was then bought by Charles F. and Mary Headley who sold it on October 1, 1919 to Lawrence Roy Hockman [Deed Book 87, p. 182 (October 1, 1919)] who held the property until 1940 when it was acquired by B.G. Collier [Deed Book 129, p. 149 (September 9, 1940)]. Collier sold the property in 1942 to the Harth family [Deed Book 133, p. 421 (May 29, 1942)]. Shortly thereafter the Carey family purchased the land and buildings [Deed Book 136, p. 191 (May 10, 1943)] and held the property until 1988.



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Abraham Beydler House
2748 Zion Church Road
Maurertown, Virginia

Summary Descriptions &
Nearby Attractions

(winter view of main house)

The Abraham Beydler House occupies 9.3 acres in the Shenandoah Valley and is on the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register. The property was in the Beydler family from 1783 to 1919 and has been continuously occupied. The location is 85 miles from the Intersection of I 495 and I 66. Zion Church Road is off Route 11, the second oldest continuously paved road in the United States.

There is the "plantation house" built from 1783-1800 and its 1850 addition and there is the separate smokehouse/summer kitchen (three stories of single rooms with added furnace room, kitchen and bath). Outside is an in-ground pool facing the Allegheny Mountains. The property has 400 feet along the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and, across the river, Three Tops Mountain (part of Massanutten Mountain range) rises to 1700 feet. Fishing, biking, hiking, mountains and historic sites out the door and nearby.

Nearby attractions include—

1. Edinburg Virginia— home of Murray's Fly Fishing Shop and annual fall Old Times Days;
2. Woodstock Virginia— home of second oldest courthouse west of Blue Ridge; largest county fair in Virginia; great July 4th fireworks at the fairgrounds; restaurants; movie theatre;
3. Maurertown Virginia— Filibuster Distillery (bourbon, rye, etc.);
4. Toms Brooks Virginia— Crabill Butchers (local beef and sausage— provides meat to area as well as D.C. restaurants; volunteer fire department hosts many local events;
5. Strasburg Virginia— major antique shops; restaurants; Box Office Brewery; site of Battle of Fisher's Hill (1864)
6. Front Royal— historic area; restaurants; theatre; major shopping area;
7. Middletown Virginia— Belle Grove Plantation: home owned and operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and also site of the Cedar Creek Battlefield (1864);
8. Stephens City Virginia— Family Drive In Movie Theater (2 screens);
9. Route 11 (home of many new vineyards, historic towns and Rt. 11 Potato Chips);
10. Blue Ridge and Skyline Drive; Bryce and Massanutten Mountains ski resorts; fly fishing; caverns; and
11. North at Winchester is Shenandoah University and south at Harrisonburg is James Madison University.