

Barn and Farmhouse

The barn and farmhouse, located at 5400 Limestone Road, have been home to Duffield Associates, Inc. since 1981. The property on which the barn and farmhouse reside currently consists of five acres of land.

Buildings are known to have existed on the property since the 1860's. A portion of the original barn foundation, which was exposed during construction in 1984, suggested that the lower barn foundation predated 1800. The construction on the property in 1990 encountered a dug well located near the midpoint of the northeast property's frontage along Limestone Road. This well may have served a second farmhouse on the property.

The property is sketched in Nancy Sawin's *A Hockessin Diary* and the owners are referred to as "T. Hannah + J. Chambers." The site is also acknowledged on an 1868 map of the Mill Creek One Hundred. (Beeks, Atlas of the State of DE) as well as referenced by J. Thomas Scharf's *History of Delaware 1609-1888* which also references J. Chambers and T. Hannah. It is thought that the S. Dennison family made use of the barn after Hannah and Chambers, as referred to in *A Hockessin Diary*.

Although we have no clear succession of ownership for this site, we do know that the land was acquired by Wilhelmina DuPont Ross. The barn/farmhouse was one of five farmsites that made up the approximately 800 acres of land owned by Mrs. DuPont Ross that is now known as Limestone Hills. The site was passed on to the John Ross family in the early 1930's, who used the land for farming and stables for horses (the Ross family owned Delaware Park Race Track and were involved in the horse racing industry).

Immediately prior to occupancy by Duffield Associates, the farmhouse and barn, along with the accompanying land were designated as "historically significant" buildings by the New Castle County Historical Preservation Board. The farmhouse had been used as a home for one of the horse trainers on the Ross Estate and the barn was used as a stable and for agricultural storage.

In 1984, Duffield Associates embarked on a project that had as its goal the preservation and beneficial use of these landmark structures so that future generations would be reminded of the area's agricultural heritage. As the size of the company grew, a west wing was added to the barn in 1995, increasing the building's efficiency while preserving the integrity of the building's origin. The farmhouse interior has been renovated several times since 1981 to accommodate an increase in office staff and an addition was constructed in 2004. These renovations have been sensitive to maintaining the character and charm of the farmhouse's exterior appearance. In 2005, a new building was constructed behind the "barn" and occupied in early 2006. The new building, dubbed the "Water Shed," was designed based on LEED principals and it relates to the other simple agrarian structures on the campus.

As a firm practicing in the geosciences, Duffield Associates is committed to the preservation of our natural and historic resources. We take pride in our commitment to the preservation of this signature location. We hope this commitment and utilization will serve as an example for the preservation and utilization of historic landmarks. The preservation and renovation of the barn and farmhouse have been designed and implemented by Duffield Associates with the goal of accomplishing the beneficial use of the property while preserving the agricultural past of the Mill Creek One Hundred. Today, this property stands as a reminder to our suburban neighbors and all who pass by that history can be an integral part of carefully planned growth.



Picture courtesy of Nancy Sawin's *A Hockessin Diary*