

**NJS Presents****Research Notes**

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*In this issue, we bring you the third edition of “Research Notes,” inaugurated to allow scholars to share their works in progress and solicit feedback from others in the NJ History community. All are welcome to contribute- simply send submissions for inclusion in future issues to the editor ([mziobro@monmouth.edu](mailto:mziobro@monmouth.edu)).*

**Janet L. Sheridan, Principal Cultural Heritage Specialist, Down Jersey Heritage Research, LLC,** is currently researching agricultural buildings in southwestern New Jersey. She writes, “Between 2012 and the present, I have been studying agricultural complexes and outbuildings in Salem County, in the southwestern part of the state, with the assistance of two research grants from the New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State. My approach is to record the buildings with scaled drawings, photographs, narrative architectural description, link them to archival documents to flesh out their human history, and compare and contrast them with such buildings documented in other regions of the state and country. It is a material culture approach, one that sees buildings and landscapes as embodying historical primary data that may not exist in any documentary form. The purpose is to understand history—settlement, social, economic, and agricultural—through the buildings and land features that survive. My first subjects were three farmsteads in two townships: Mannington and Alloway, which differ somewhat in settlement history. Mannington was settled earlier than Alloway. The former abuts the town of Salem and the great inland tidal flat called Mannington Meadow, and was peopled principally by English Quakers who farmed. Alloway, to its east, occupied higher ground, enjoyed many streams with enough fall to drive mills, was fairly wooded through the nineteenth century, and was peopled

more heavily by Baptists and Methodists. Among the farmhouses I found variations in form, size, material, and style, perhaps related to socio-economic status or cultural origin. I found farm and domestic outbuildings of similar types, but always varying somehow farm to farm, as though each was an individualized innovation on a theme. My second project focused solely on outbuildings, because they are in more peril of disappearing. Many older outbuildings—threshing/hay barns, wagon houses, carriage barns, smokehouses, machine sheds, etc.—are not particularly useful for modern farming, so they become altered for new uses, or they stand without a use or maintenance, and eventually fall down or get torched by miscreants. Irreplaceable data on farming history is therefore lost. I've recorded a number of barns that could be called English, threshing, or ground barns with both three and four bays. I've found barns that were built exclusively to house animals. I know of others that exemplify the bank barn more commonly seen in Pennsylvania. And certainly the Wisconsin dairy barn, a national standardized type, appeared in the early twentieth century. One, one-off innovation I found was a gable-fronted type designed for milking, animal stalling and hay storage built in the 1890s that expressed a radical experimental departure from the traditional barn design. One distinctive and quite pervasive type is the wagon house or crib barn, a multi-purpose gable-fronted building that normally stands very close to the farmhouse, and may contain a granary, corn cribs, a cellar, a meat room, a butchering hoist, and two or three drive bays for wagons and other implements. Some mistake it for a New Jersey Dutch Barn (well-known in the northeastern part of the state) from its outward appearance, but a close study of its structure and features proves that it is neither structurally nor functionally a Dutch Barn. Among this type are variations, such as broken versus continuous roof slopes, and those built of a piece or which accrued over time, all to serve similar purposes. A common thread is that farmers adapted older buildings as

agricultural markets, state regulations, and technologies changed. For example, farmers strung older barns together, end to end, with the insertion of hay trolleys and tracks at the roof ridge, to accommodate a larger dairy herd and their fodder, in response to the expanding urban fluid milk market after the Civil War. My reports (Salem County Farms Recording Projects I & II) are found at <https://app.box.com/file/23299897692> and <https://app.box.com/file/169903017364>. They are also archived at Rutgers University Library Special Collections, the Salem Community College Library, and the Salem County Historical Society. Two farms from Vol. I were subsequently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and those nomination forms can be accessed at:

<https://app.box.com/file/163476236143> and <https://app.box.com/file/163475631294>.

They contain more information and analysis than the reports. I would like to get a better handle on the literature of the built agricultural heritage of New Jersey. There are some familiar books, but no doubt there is harder-to-find gray literature hiding in architectural offices, historical societies, archives, libraries, and preservation agencies around the state. I propose a crowd-sourced bibliography project for not only farm buildings, but associated landscape features as well. I plan to make this bibliography publicly accessible on my web site. Please contact me to contribute sources that you know of to a New Jersey Historical Agricultural Buildings and Landscapes Bibliography at [janet@downjerseyheritage.com](mailto:janet@downjerseyheritage.com) . Much appreciated!"