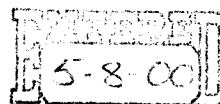


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

REFNUM 00000419



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Benedict, Reuben, House
other names/site number Oliver, William, House (MRW-261-16)

2. Location

street & number 1463 County Road 24 N/A not for publication
city or town Marengo (vicinity) vicinity
state Ohio code OH county Morrow code 117 zip code 43334

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara Pave Dept. Head
Planning, Inventory & Registration March 20, 2000
Signature of certifying official Date

Ohio Historic Preservation Office -- OH SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register other (explain): _____
 See continuation sheet. Signature of Keeper Date of Action
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic/Federal

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation

roof

walls

other

Metal/Iron

Brick bearing/Stucco

Balloon frame

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture _____

Social History/Underground Railroad _____

Period of Significance

ca. 1828-1865 _____

Significant Dates

ca. 1828 _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

X Other

Name of repository: Ohio Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.25 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1. 17 341880 4474510
2. _____

Zone Easting Northing
3. _____
4. _____
 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen Gordon

organization Ohio Historical Society date May 1999

street & number 567 E. Hudson Street telephone (614) 297-2470

city or town Columbus state Ohio zip code 43211

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name James and Erika Landman

street & number 1463 CR24 telephone 419-864-9772

city or town Marengo state OH zip code 43334

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1

Reuben Benedict House Morrow County, OH

Peru Township is located in southwestern Morrow County, nine miles south of Mt. Gilead, the county seat, and thirty-five miles northeast of Columbus. With a population of 955 people living in 328 households (1990 census), the township is predominantly agricultural, although the effects of exurban development are becoming increasingly apparent on the rural landscape.

The Reuben Benedict House (MRW-261-16) is sited on the east side of Worthington-New Haven Road between the unincorporated hamlets of South Woodbury and West Liberty (Figure 1). Alum Creek, the primary drainage for the township, runs immediately to the east, roughly paralleling Worthington-New Haven Road. The property is accessed by a gravel driveway extending approximately 165' eastward from the county road. A large Norway spruce shades the west elevation, and a row of mature maples and a massive black walnut define the north yard space behind the house. There are three 20th century outbuildings on the property that are not included within the boundaries of the nominated property.

Facing south, the Benedict House is a two-story, brick bearing wall dwelling with a one-and-a half story frame wing (photos #1-3). The four bay front elevation is relieved by simple two-over-two windows with plain brick lintels and concrete sills. Brickwork is common bond with five course stretchers. A historic photo taken in 1926 indicates the stucco wall treatment added to the first floor elevations existed at that time (Figure 2). The "S" anchor iron and uneven lintels suggest the house has settled over the years, presumably since the 19th century. Standing seam metal covers the roof of the main block and frame addition. Large end chimneys flanked by fixed four-pane garret windows mark the otherwise blind gable ends. The fascia board is extremely narrow and is nearly flush with the second floor window lintels. A large single pane window with transom (circa 1950) flanks the front entrance (photo #4).

The 1926 historic photo also shows a frame addition and open porch. Wide shiplap wall treatment, likely original material, covers the addition, while the open portion of the porch has been enclosed with narrower horizontal tongue and groove siding (photo #2). The upper story windows are double-hung, six-over-six sashes. Most remaining window and door openings are more recent replacements.

Attached to the east side of the frame addition is a post-1950, single story frame garage with rough board and batten wall surfaces and a concrete block foundation (photo #5). The rear (north) elevation is marked by five evenly spaced bays and a center door. There is a small frame lean-to bridging the house and the pre-1926 frame addition (photo #6). Basement access was not gained during the site visit.

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Section number 7 Page 2

Reuben Benedict House
Morrow County, OH

Interior Description:

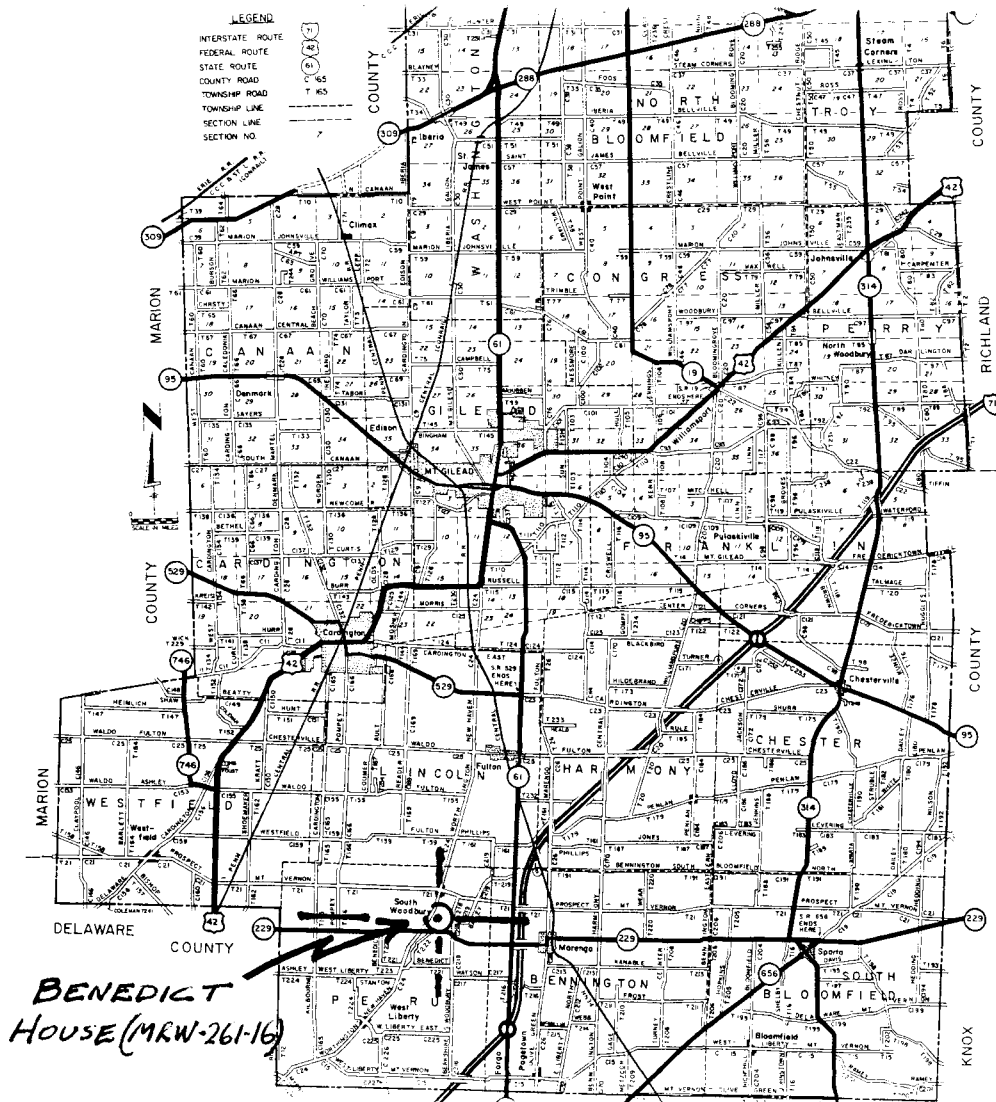
The main brick block is bisected by a masonry bearing wall which is evident by the unusually wide voids between the exterior bays (photo #4). The floor plan is a modified three-room Continental Plan with a large hall/kitchen and two smaller rooms (Figure 3). Two dimensionally equal rooms measuring 8' 10" x 13' 10" have been partitioned against the symmetrical hall chamber (17'10"). The cultural geographer Bernard Herman identifies two southeastern Pennsylvania farmhouses with Continental plan interiors without the center chimney and placed in a symmetrically balanced four-bay façade (Herman, p. 164). A handsome Federal style mantle distinguished by reeded moldings, carved tulip flower and sunburst motifs in relief, and shelf brackets distinguishes the large parlor (photos #7-9). The mantel measures 59" tall and 77" wide at the crown. Original chair rails are intact in the two smaller rooms as are the Federal style reeded corner fireplaces (photo #10). Doors are simple mortise and tenon two panel over two panel and probably black walnut. Many of the window and door openings have narrow Federal vernacular style moldings covered with thin furring strips. The upstairs chambers are accessed by a simple corner staircase with what appears to be the original balustrade and newel post. The provenance of the balustrade's yellow graining is nineteenth century. Chair rails, a built-in cupboard and partial mantelpiece survive. Access to the unfloored and unfinished attic is by ladder through a trap door, where one sees what appears to be original wood sub-roofing and cedar shakes. The roof is supported by rough-sawn 4" x 4" rafters, 32" off-center, lapped and pinned at the ridge. The rafters appear to be white oak.

The interior of the frame addition has been substantially altered and currently serves as the kitchen, bathroom and storage spaces. Visible elements such as simple woodwork, upstairs six-over-six windows and exterior shiplap all indicate the addition dates to the 19th century.

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Section number 7 Page 3

BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH



MORROW COUNTY MAP

FIGURE 1.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 1

BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

Statement of Significance

Built ca. 1828, the Reuben Benedict House (MRW-261-16) is significant under Criterion A for its historic association with the Underground Railroad in northern Ohio and also under Criterion C as a locally rare and early Ohio example of a modified Continental plan house in the Federal vernacular style. The Benedict House meets the registration requirements for "stations" on the Underground Railroad as specified in the *Underground Railroad Resources in Ohio* (MPDF, draft, 1999) and the *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study* (NPS, 1998). Although altered after the period of significance, the house retains a relatively high degree of architectural integrity and has been recognized locally for well over a century for its involvement on the Underground Railroad. Alum Creek, the first Quaker settlement in Morrow County, settled ca. 1812, was a strategic safe haven on the Underground Railroad and is widely documented in contemporary and secondary literature.

Historical Background

Alum Creek was among the first Euro-American settlements in Morrow County, and is the oldest Quaker meeting in the county. In 1812 Cyrus and Hannah Benedict purchased land on the east side of Alum Creek. Around this time fifteen families, including the Reuben and Aaron Benedicts, the Osborns and Keenes moved to Alum Creek, erected cabins and established what would become known as the "Quaker Settlement." In 1817 a permanent monthly meeting, the Peru Society of Friends was established, and in 1821 the Alum Creek Monthly Meeting became part of the new Still Water Quarter, later becoming part of the Indiana Yearly Meeting (*Historical Records Survey*, 7 October 1940).

In 1817, land for a new meeting house and cemetery was purchased from Reuben Benedict, who also served on the committee "to regulate prices for labor and materials for a new meeting house." A monument of "boulder cone," presently unaccounted for, was subsequently placed on the site of this pioneer church (*Minutes*, 29 March 1821; *History Morrow County*, p. 431). A brick meeting house was built in 1822. The present frame building located on SR 229 was erected in 1854 and remodeled in 1944 and 1962 (*Alum Creek Meeting*, p. 6).

Reuben Benedict was born in Connecticut in 1768, married Anna Stephens and moved to New York state. In 1812 several Benedict families, part of a contingent of 67 people from Peru Township, Clinton County, New York, came to Ohio and settled along the banks of Alum Creek one mile south of South Woodbury. This group was known locally as the "New Yorkers." The Worthington-New Haven Road, the first dedicated road along the west bank of Alum Creek, was

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

surveyed by Colonel Kilbourne and opened in 1825 (*History Morrow County*, pp. 428-429; 438). Baskin's history of Morrow County claims "Reuben Benedict's brick house was the first of that kind in the [Peru] township" (p. 429). Baughman's 1911 history notes "In 1828 the first two brick houses [Peru Twp.] were erected" (Baughman, p. 436).

Reuben Benedict was the first recorded miller in the township, operating a saw and gristmill on the east side of Alum Creek as early as 1818. (Remnants of a millrace were observed during a site visit in 1999). Anna Stephens Benedict died in 1831 and Reuben Benedict then married Catharine Gaylord. The 1835 and 1836 tax duplicate records for Peru Twp. indicate Reuben Benedict then owned 150 acres with a total assessed value of \$433. While one history states Reuben and Anna Benedict had 12 children, census records suggest none resided at home by 1850 (*Memorial Record*, p. 158; population census, 1850). Although a house was not enumerated, Adam Benedict, believed to be one of Reuben Benedict's 12 children, appears as the owner of a "House" and 30 acres valued at \$129. Benedict and Whipple also owned a saw and grist mill valued at \$343 (*Tax Duplicates 1835-1836*).

In May 1848 the then 80 year-old Reuben Benedict sold his 78 acre farm to William Oliver (Deed Book 1, Page 40). The 1850 census lists Reuben and Catharine as living in the same house as William Oliver and his family. Oliver sold the grist mill in 1853 to Harvey Benedict and it was subsequently operated by Bunker & Hance. Reuben Benedict died in 1854 and Catherine maintained a right of dower "in the premises" until her death in 1872 (Deed Book 8, Page 113). William Oliver is listed in the 1860 census as a fifty year-old farmer from Virginia. Living with him, his wife and three children was Catherine Benedict. The value of Oliver's real estate was \$8,800 and personal property \$2,300 (manuscript population census, 1860). Some local informants have indicated William Oliver operated a roadhouse known as the Temperance Hotel, but this has not been corroborated (Repogle). Although their marked headstones have not been found, it is believed Reuben and Catherine Benedict are buried in the Alum Creek Friends Cemetery (many headstones are illegible). The Oliver family sold the house and farm in 1877 to C. C. Smith and Samantha Welch (Deed Book 30, Page 249; Deed Book 32, Page 256).

Historic Context and the Underground Railroad Network in Ohio:

Given its lengthy common border with slave states Kentucky and Virginia, and its strategic location between the slave-holding South and British North America, Ohio from ca. 1815-1865 played an integral role in the secretive network of escaped slave routes and trails known as the Underground Railroad. It is currently estimated some 20,000 African Americans settled in Canada between the 1820s and 1860s, the majority crossing at border settlements along the eastern and western ends

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

of Lake Erie (Ricketts, "*Commemorating the UGRR*", 33). Ohio's early involvement in the UGRR is largely attributed to "its geographical location between the slave states and Canada and the character of the early settlers from New England and the Quaker settlements of North Carolina and Pennsylvania" (Chaddock, p. 104). According to Charles Blockson, "The Ohio–Kentucky Underground Railroad probably served more fugitives than any other in the North." Significantly, Ohio had a boundary extending nearly 400 miles along the two slave states of Virginia and Kentucky (Blockson, pp. 83-84). Ohio's black communities also attracted many escaping runaways who found people of their own race would house them during passage (Gara, p.54). As early as 1817 leading Kentuckians protested the numbers of blacks escaping into Ohio (Blockson, p. 206). National estimates of the number of total fugitives range as high as 100,000, of which Ohio is estimated to have received no less than 40,000 (*UGRR Handbook*, p. 52; Gara, p.191). John William Mathews, a former slave, recalled in 1937, "When slavery was going on there was the 'underground railway' in Ohio." Another former slave, Julia King, widow of Albert King, the first African American on the Toledo, Ohio, police force, recited portions of a song her mother used to sing, "I was advertised for sale, and I would have been in jail, If I had not crossed the deep, dancing waves. I'm upon the Northern banks, and beneath the Lion's paw, And he'll growl if you come near the shore" (Mathews, *Slave Narrative*, 72; King, *Slave Narrative*, 59).

Described by cultural geographers as an unincorporated hamlet, Alum Creek is a collection of farms and houses clustered along Alum Creek and the Worthington–New Haven Road. Both the settlement and Quaker meeting were named for Alum Creek, the principal watercourse that flows from Mt. Gilead south to Columbus. Given the presence of so many Quakers, Alum Creek was also known as "Quakertown," and as such became an important safe haven on the UGRR. Alum Creek was located along one of two principal routes in north–central Ohio on the Underground Railroad (*Alum Creek Meeting*, p. 13). The route linking Worthington to Greenwich in Huron County roughly connected Ozem Gardner's farm north of Worthington to Alum Creek, Mt. Gilead Friends settlement, Iberia and Plymouth, while the route from Westerville north linked Sunbury, Fredericktown, Mansfield and Greenwich (Figure 4; Siebert, Box 109). Underground Railroad stations usually resulted from a number of influences, including a sizeable fugitive and free black population and an active Quaker fellowship, as well as locally strong convictions about the injustice of slavery (*UGRR Handbook*, p. 59). As early as 1840 an anti-slavery constitution was signed by members of the Presbyterian Church in Mt. Gilead (Howe, p. 316). Thirty miles to the south, Columbus abolitionists were outspoken about assisting fugitive slaves. In 1852 one Columbus newspaper carried a letter stating the "underground railroad, and especially the express train, is doing a good business just now," having "good and competent conductors." Another Columbus abolitionist told the story that Ohio's Underground Railroad had been "in successful

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operation for several years,” and that stations were typically located “ten miles apart”(Gara, pp. 144-146).

The earliest published reference to Alum Creek the form preparer could find appeared in 1880 in a county history that said of Ozem Gardner, “He used to conduct them [fugitives] to Eden, in Delaware County, or to the Quaker settlement; sometimes up Alum Creek, to another friendly station.” (*History of Franklin and Pickaway Counties*, p. 424). Henry Howe, Ohio’s leading nineteenth century chronicler, wrote in 1891, “A branch of the ‘underground railroad’ which passed through the township [Gilead], did a considerable business, though the principal depots were in Peru and Washington Townships” (Howe, p. 316). Antebellum Quakers in Morrow County held a particularly important role in the Underground Railroad. “The Society of Friends,” stated Baskin’s 1880 history of Morrow County,

has been long noted for its Antislavery principles, and the fugitive slave found no warmer or more self-forgetful friends than among the Quakers. Their presence in this township [Peru], therefore, was the signal for the coming of these fugitives, and the underground railroad was soon an established institution in the early community settled here (Baskin, p. 331).

Several properties in and around the Alum Creek community hold important historical associations with the Quakers and the Underground Railroad. Perhaps the most revealing primary document is taken from Friend Daniel Osborn’s 1844 diary entries listing fugitive slaves passing through the Alum Creek settlement (see *Underground Railroad Handbook*, NPS, 1998, inside front cover). To date only two pages of this remarkable journal [April – September 1844] are known to exist. The Daniel Osborn House, built ca. 1828, was one of a number of UGRR stops in Peru Township. While the house still exists, it has been substantially altered and no longer retains historic integrity from the period of significance.

On the west bank of Alum Creek and one mile south of SR 229 is the Aaron Benedict House (MRW-260-16; see Figure 5). Built ca. 1857 by Aaron L. Benedict, Alum Creek’s most active conductor, the house reputedly sheltered 60 fugitives during a single month in 1855. In writing Aaron Benedict’s biography, son Griffith Benedict recalled:

Every effort in his power was put forth to relieve the sufferings of the race, and relieve them from cruel bondage. His house was one of the principal depots on the through line of the ‘underground rail road,’ from the Ohio River to Canada. Hundreds of poor fugitives have been fed and lodged beneath his roof, and when the curse of slavery was wiped from our land, by that glorious and crowning act of the immortal Lincoln – the emancipation

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proclamation- he did not fold his hands, but redoubled his efforts in relieving the wants of the suffering freedmen (*Benedict Family Book*).

Despite its documented UGRR associations, the house has recently been altered both on the interior and exterior and does not appear to meet the National Register integrity criteria. Further evaluation of this significant property is warranted.

Underground Railroad and the Society of Friends (Criterion A):

The Reuben Benedict House is a physical manifestation of the Underground Railroad in Ohio and as such represents an important property type, the “station,” described in *Underground Railroad Resources in Ohio*. The Society of Friends, along with abolitionist Presbyterians and Congregationalists, were among the most outspoken religious opponents of slavery. Ohio attracted considerable numbers from each of these groups and their sects, and in areas where they overlapped, such as in Logan and Jefferson Counties [Mt. Pleasant], the UGRR was particularly active (Johnson, *MPDF*). Beginning in 1758, Quaker quarterly and yearly meetings increasingly denounced the institution of slavery (Burke and Bensch, p. 244). Yet not all Quakers approved of the Underground Railroad, and as one historian notes, their role in the UGRR is frequently exaggerated (Blockson, p. 3). Indeed Quakers never officially sponsored the Underground Railroad. “Active participation,” note two historians,

Distressed many Quakers, not only because it was a violation of the Fugitive Slave Law (after 1850), but because it necessitated lying when questioned by the authorities – and Quakers prided themselves on maintaining a reputation for strict honesty (Burke and Bensch, p. 245).

Yet we know many Friends participated in the Underground Railroad. In large measure their individual actions were manifested by the Quaker’s belief in truth and honesty, and the notion that “concerns” for matters such as peace and the abolition of slavery went hand in hand with action (Burke and Bensch, p. 238). For many southern Quakers slavery “became the primary factor” for the steady migration of farmers, merchants and craftsman to Ohio and Indiana (Brown, p.2). In 1844, the Indiana Yearly Meeting, which for many years encompassed the Alum Creek Monthly Meeting, authorized the re-printing of an important anti-slavery treatise entitled, *An Appeal on the Inequity of Slavery and the Slave-Trade*, which was first printed in London by the Society of Friends. The volume was republished in Cincinnati “for general circulation” by A. Pugh, a well known Cincinnati printer (*Minutes Indiana Yearly Meeting*, 1844).

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

Throughout the antebellum period, Quaker meetings regularly posed questions, or queries, regarding important moral issues and concerns of the day, including temperance, educating the poor and slavery. These queries were read, discussed and recorded in the minutes at each meeting. For example, during numerous meetings of the Alum Creek Meeting Friends were encouraged to avoid using articles or goods produced by slaves. Aaron Benedict's obituary, published ca. 1867 said, "So conscientious was he in regard to slavery, that he would neither use nor allow to be used in his family any article which was the product of the unrequited labor of the slave" (Aaron Benedict obituary). In October 1838 the Alum Creek Meeting responded to the query on slavery with these words:

We believe friends generally are careful to bear a testimony against slavery, and to provide in a suitable manner for the free coloured [sic] people under their care. And they have been instructed in useful learning (*Minutes*, 1 October 1838).

During the period from the mid-1830s until Emancipation, Alum Creek Meeting raised considerable sums of money to help remove slaves from bondage. Like many other Quaker meetings, Alum Creek established a Committee on the Concerns of People of Color. In 1835 the minutes indicated "the sum of \$49.10 has been raised and been forwarded for the benefit of friends in North Carolina to aid them in removing the people of colour [sic] under their care to free government (*Minutes*, 28 September 1835, p.8).

From 1851 through 1858 the Alum Creek Meeting donated over \$400 to assist in the emancipation, relocation and education of slaves from Virginia and North Carolina to Ohio. "Most who claimed our aid," wrote Asa Williams in 1858, "were slaves, emancipated and removed to our limits by John Warwick of Virginia, by John Newlin and George C. Mendenhall and others of North Carolina. The laws of these states prohibited emancipation on their soil – the enslaved must live and die, slaves or exiles" (*Minutes*, June 1858). The Committee on the Concerns of People of Color was a large body, numbering 41 members, and included Aaron Benedict and Livius Benedict. Funds were also used to assist in the education of freed black children (*Minutes*, June 1858; March 1859). These children were taught by "competent colored teachers" and "a young woman belonging to our society." The minutes of the Alum Creek Meeting show an extended and deeply held concern for the welfare of emancipated slaves. Asa Williams, chairman of the Committee reported to the Meeting in 1859:

With regard to the character of our colored population, we think we can safely say that considering the disadvantages and disabilities under which they labor, they are fully equal in industry, intelligence and moral worth to their white neighbors around them (*Minutes*, June 1859).

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

Evidence would suggest Alum Creek and Peru Township were safe havens for emancipated blacks, at least as safe as any place in antebellum Ohio could be. Black freeholders were reported by local Quakers as “living comfortably.” Between 1853 and 1857 as many as 50 slaves “liberated and placed under our [Alum Creek] direction” by George C. Mendenhall of North Carolina “settled in the neighborhood of Alum Creek” (*Minutes*, September 1855; September 1856; December 1857). Mendenhall, a Quaker who owned a large plantation in Guilford County, was a prominent lawyer and leader of the North Carolina Manumission Society. He advocated the freeing of slaves and relocation to other states. In a letter written in 1825 Mendenhall advised, “the only way seems to be, to set them free by removing them to a free state or country in your own lifetime for you cannot let them free here in this State, either by deed or will, because the Laws will not allow thereof” (“Jamestown Historic District,” *National Register of Historic Places Nomination*). At the close of the Civil War assisting freedmen became an important social concern for many Friends. Former slaves such as Stephen Cook were inspired to settle in South Woodbury just north of Alum Creek (Burke and Bensch, p. 248; *Sentinel*, 5 November 1925).

While it cannot be stated with any certainty what local attitudes were toward runaway slaves, evidence suggests any assistance provided to them was conducted quietly, discreetly and at times, presumably, covertly. “Conceived in secrecy, conducted in silence, it has few records to tell its story – and probably too many places credited as being associated with it” (Kammen, p. 11). Researching the UGRR is also difficult because it involved marginal Americans (Scherman, p. 26). The Minutes of the Alum Creek Meeting contain no specific mention of the Underground Railroad or encourage fellow friends to participate in what was largely, at least after 1850, a clandestine activity. Yet some Meetings did take a more proactive position on the Fugitive Slave Act. The Green Plains Meeting in Clark County, located 50 miles southwest of Alum Creek, passed a resolution stating,

Not only do we feel ourselves exonerated from all allegiance to this infamous law...We will aid and assist the fugitives to liberty hereafter as we have been proud to do in the past...the slave has a right to liberty, and we invite him and tender him our assistance.” (*Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 13 November 1850).

Between 1850 and 1860 freed blacks living in the Alum Creek area likely played a strategic role in the UGRR (Blockson, p. 4). In 1850, only three blacks, including a mulatto residing on the Levering farm, were listed in the population census for Peru Township. Yet there is evidence blacks lived in the vicinity of Alum Creek during the 1840s. In 1844 the Minutes state “there were about forty-five colored [children] within our limits” whose parents are unable to educate them (*Minutes*, 1 January 1844). By 1860 eleven black males and six black females were listed in Peru Township, and they had very real recollections of slave life (*Population Census*, 1850; 1860). Most

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

blacks, though, probably lacked confidence in Ohio's social and legal systems, opting to move to Canada's free and open society.

There is a convincing body of documentation that strongly suggests Alum Creek and the Benedicts, Leverings and Osborns were sympathetic to the plight of runaway slaves. Daniel Osborn's journal entries for 1844 provide a rare contemporary glimpse of the role an active local Quaker played in shepherding slaves north to freedom. When interviewed in 1894 former slave Asbury Parker recalled his escape from Virginia to Ohio in 1857:

I got in there [Columbus] that night about 11 o'clock and gave a boy ten cents to take me to the house of colored people. I told him I had kin there but couldn't find them till morning...The family's name was Smith. I stopped there a couple of days and rested. From there I went out to the Benedict settlement. There I found another colored man a resting – had been there a day or two. We were directed to Jim McKibben's – the other side of Mt. Gilead, about a couple of miles, then up to Iberia...(Siebert, Box 108).

There is strong reason to believe Daniel Osborn did not act alone, indeed the UGRR was a network of like-minded conductors. The Reuben Benedict House is cited in numerous Underground Railroad references and accounts. An 1897 history of Peru Township noted, "Reuben Benedict's House is now Harry Green's and was on the Underground Railroad." An interview with an unidentified source in Siebert claimed William and Reuben Benedict "were the first to receive fugitives" in Alum Creek (Siebert, Box 109). According to an 1893 article in the *Morrow Sentinel*, the house played a role in the locally famous Bill Anderson case of 1839. During the trial of Anderson, also known as "Black Bill," a group of Virginians attempted to remove him from neighboring Marion County, Ohio. Since Bill was considered a free man by the court, and the Virginians could not prove ownership, Anderson was released. Following another attempt to take him, a group of local Quakers spirited Anderson away to safety. "Thence he was conducted to the Benedict Settlement on Alum Creek, reviving in Reuben Benedict's attic." Bill's next stop was the Quaker settlement at Fredericktown, then on to Greenwich and Oberlin (Siebert, *Mysteries of UGRR*, p. 185; Purtee, *UGRR in Northwestern Ohio*, p. 21). Another source notes "Bill escaped and wandered through the swamps of Reuben Benedict" (Purtec, 21). The 1883 Marion County history cites this case in considerable detail but only mentions "Billy then saw his opportunity to 'clear' the country, which he did most effectually, as he got on the underground railroad for Canada and went through on the 'lightning express.'" (*History Marion County*, p. 364-365).

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

Accounts left by both agents and fugitives involved with the Underground Railroad indicate there frequently was not an excessive preoccupation with secrecy and little concern to build special hideaways for the fugitives (Freuhling and Smith, p. 116). Aaron Benedict's house (MRW-260-16) is a good case in point. Mordecai Benedict recalled in the 1890s that fugitives "sometimes were put in the cellar, but there was no cellar arranged expressly for that purpose. We kept them in the house generally, spreading beds for them on the floor. Often we had to get up and cook a meal for them in the night" (Siebert, Box 109).

In the final analysis, agents rarely constructed secret chambers or escape tunnels, rather fugitive slaves were generally quartered in common places such as an attic, upstairs bedrooms, a cellar, a hayloft or even a nearby woods (Fruehling and Smith, p. 116). Modern observers should take into account that for much of the nineteenth century Alum Creek was a sparsely populated, rural area dotted by pioneer families intimately familiar with one another. Nighttime out of doors was pitch black, there were no bright horizons or sodium lights to illuminate the barnyard or the roads. An established, yet informal system of like-minded farmers and conductors probably could evade even the best trackers and slave owners. Property owners were familiar with the terrain, the creeks, the snags and the potential whereabouts of approaching captors. Indeed, more important than any physical hiding places were the conductors themselves, their attitudes toward runaways, and their skill at maintaining a low, inconspicuous profile.

Yet a century and a half following the activities of the Underground Railroad, it is easy for many local residents to believe every antebellum house sheltered runaway slaves. The danger here is folklore should not be confused with history. In the case of the Reuben Benedict House and the Alum Creek community, the historical evidence presented in support of their association with the Underground Railroad seems compelling.

Architectural Context (Criterion C):

The Reuben Benedict House is architecturally significant as it embodies a distinctive house form associated with antebellum Quaker settlement in Ohio. Of the surviving Quaker and Underground Railroad-related houses still extant in Alum Creek, the Reuben Benedict House retains a high degree of historic integrity. The modified three-room, Continental plan and exterior fenestration convey much of the original plan and design. Reconnaissance surveys of the Alum Creek area indicate the Benedict House is among the few examples of the Federal vernacular style extant, and certainly is one of the very earliest houses in Morrow County.

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BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE MORROW CO., OH

In his seminal research on houses of the Mid-Atlantic region, geographer Henry Glassie observed an important form that he believed was a “merger” of the older, Germanic house form with the newer, Georgian plan house. “The type’s gable end,” noted Glassie, is strictly Georgian but its front is pierced by four rather than five openings in order to accommodate the three room plan inside. One door still brings the visitor into a large, narrow room, but there is usually, though not always, another front door leading into the parlor... The large central chimney has been replaced by chimneys in the gables.” (Glassie, 407). In the case of the Benedict House, the modified Quaker Continental plan with enlarged hall accommodates a superficially symmetrically balanced four bay façade. Two dimensionally equal rooms measuring approximately 9’ x 14’ are partitioned against an enlarged hall/kitchen that measures a symmetrically balanced 18’ x 18’. The mysterious aspect of this house is learning more about the builder. Who was he, where was he from and what influenced him to build a house in the three room plan? Perhaps the external emphasis on order and symmetry was a simply vernacular influence. Bernard Herman writes,

With the central [chimney] stack exploded into smaller end chimneys, the hall-kitchen plan ceases to be as strikingly continental in origin and represents instead ethnically anonymous late eighteenth and nineteenth century formal conceptions in American vernacular building (Herman, p.165).

In 1860 Ohio ranked third nationally in the states with the most Friends meeting houses and total accommodations. Of the 92 meetings in Ohio, three were located in Morrow County (*Eighth Census*, pp. 448, 498). Given such a large population of Quakers, Ohio has a significant collection of antebellum houses associated with the Society of Friends. The greatest concentrations are clustered around Quaker settlements in southwestern Ohio (Clinton, Highland and Warren Counties) and in eastern Ohio (Belmont and Jefferson Counties). Several of these houses have documented UGRR associations, including the James Stanton House in Springboro (1826; *NROHP* 1982), the Benjamin Butterworth House in Warren County (ca. 1812), the Daniel Howard Hise House in Salem (1857; *NROHP* 1998), the William Hubbard House in Ashtabula (*NROHP*, 1973), the Halsey Hulbert House in Seville (*NROHP*, 1988) and the Benjamin Lundy House in Mt. Pleasant (c.1820; *NHL*, 1974). Quaker houses in Ohio featuring the distinctive three-room plan include the Benjamin Satterthwaite House in Waynesville (1812; *NROHP* 1988) and the Joseph Stanton House in Springboro (ca. 1833; *NROHP* 1999).

Period of Significance Justification:

The Reuben Benedict House’s significance encompasses the period from when the original brick dwelling was built to the Emancipation.

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**BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE
MORROW CO., OH**

Historic Integrity:

The Benedict House meets the integrity requirements for Associated Property Type: Station, *Underground Railroad Resources in Ohio MPDF*. The house retains much of its historic rural setting. The 1926 photo indicates the house also maintains a relatively high level of its historic integrity. Pre-1850 Quaker houses are rarely seen on the central Ohio cultural landscape, and of the few that remain, historic integrity is a central issue. By virtue of their age, natural attrition and changes over time have diminished the remaining survivors. The Reuben Benedict House conveys integrity of location, design and plan.

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Section number 8 Page 12

BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE
MORROW CO., OH

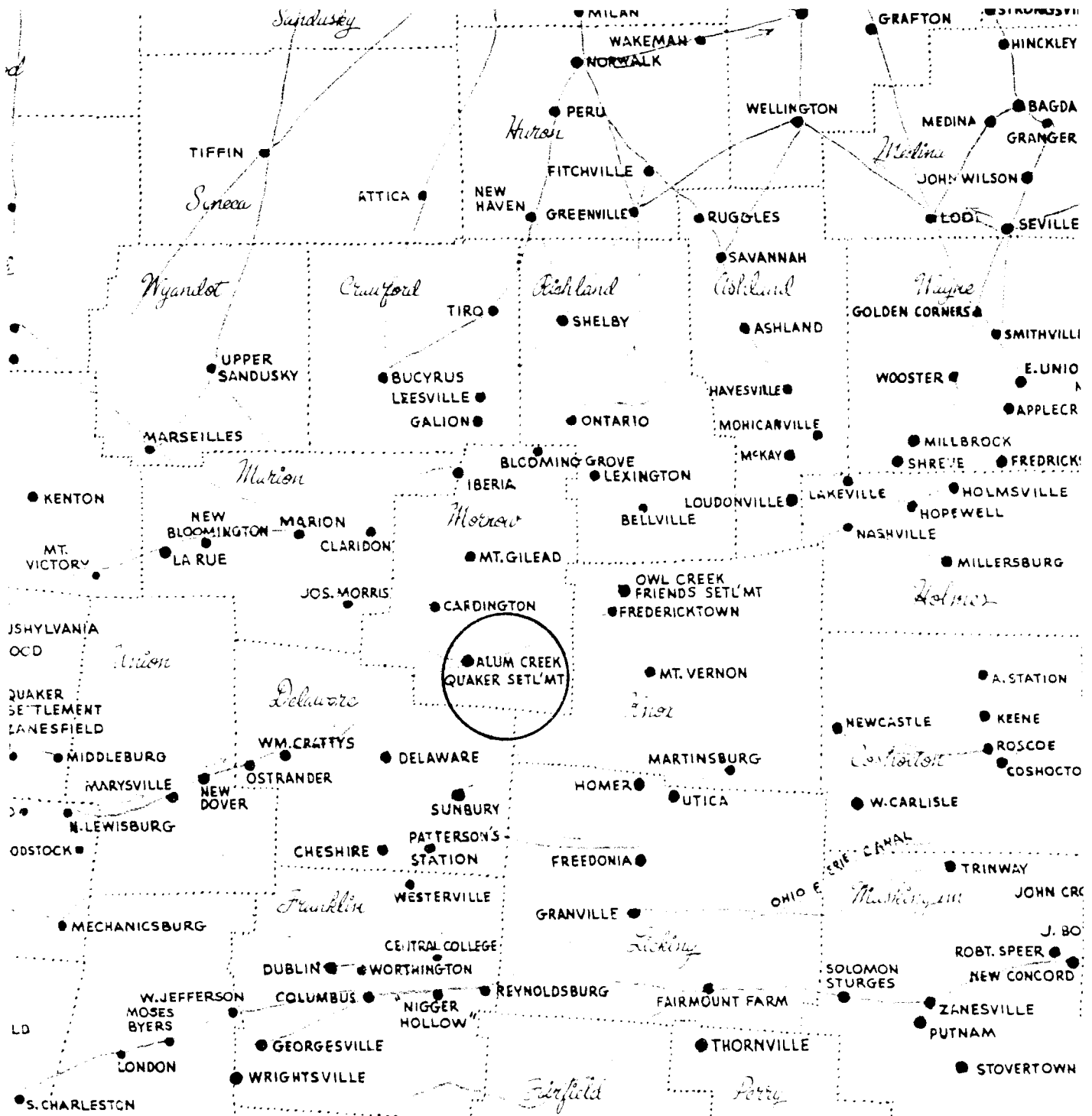


FIGURE 4. OHIO'S UNDERGROUND TRAILS
From Siebert, *Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroads*, 1951.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1

**BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE
MORROW CO., OH**

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Section number 9 Page 2

**BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE
MORROW CO., OH**

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 3

**BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE
MORROW CO., OH**

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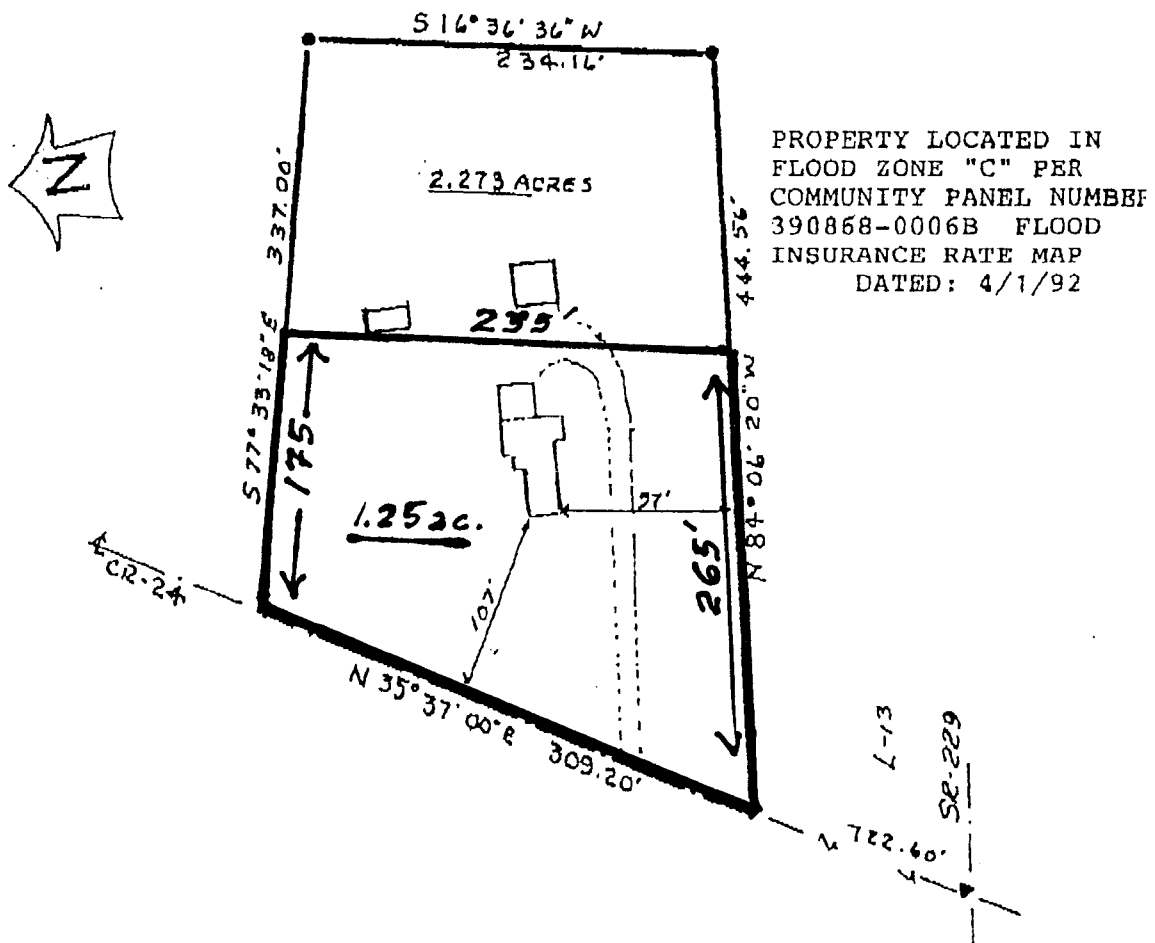
**BENEDICT, REUBEN HOUSE
MORROW CO., OH**

Verbal Boundary Description

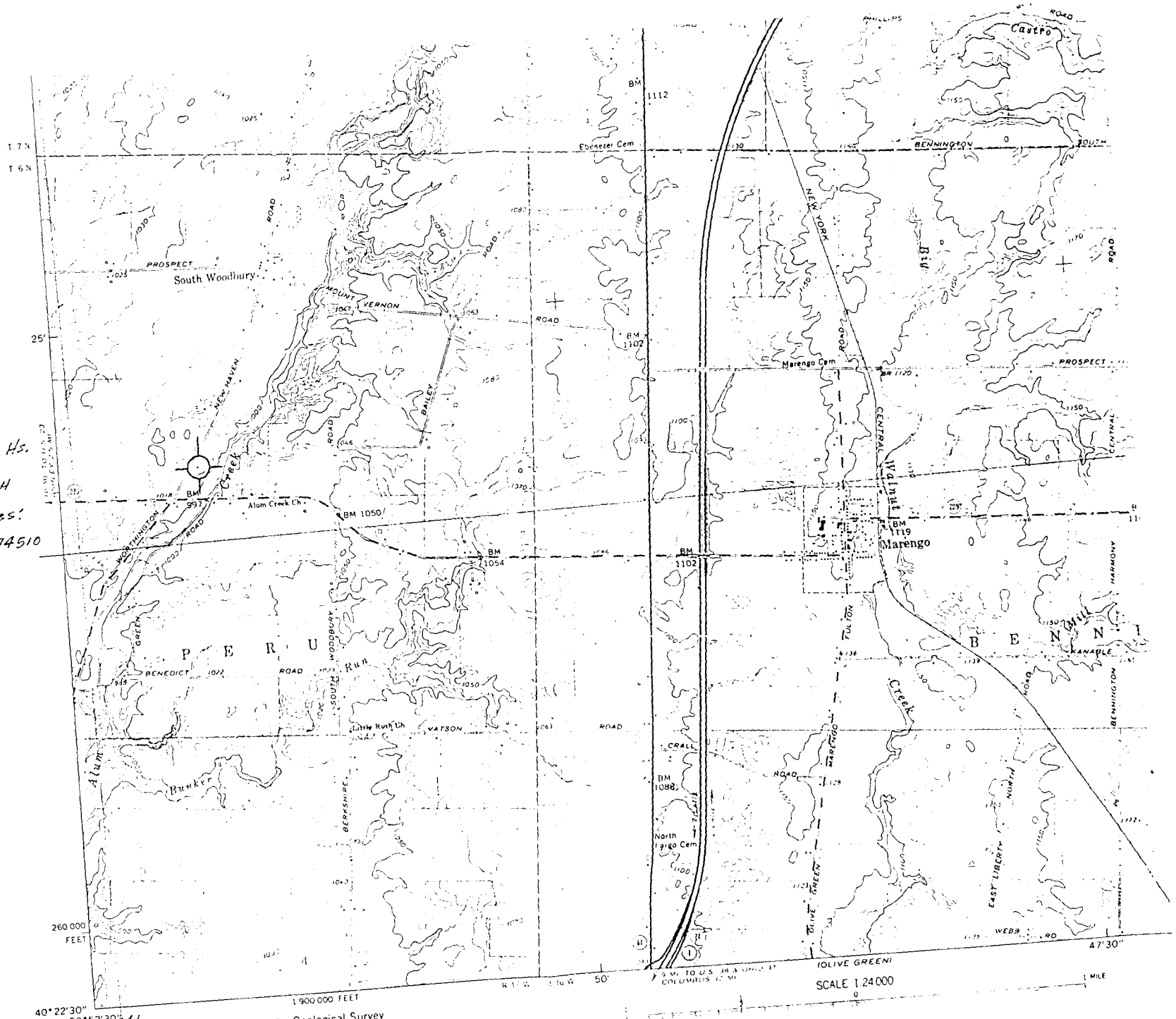
The nominated property is a trapezoidal parcel (see below), located on Lot 13, Parcel 65, Township 6 North, Range 17 West, Quarter 1, described in Volume 327, Page 384, Morrow County Auditor's office.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes that portion of the parcel historically associated with the Benedict House, and excludes three noncontributing structures outside the period of significance.



Benedict, Reuben Hs.
 Peru Twp.
 Morrow Co., OH
 UTM References:
 17/341880/4474510



40° 22' 30"
 82° 52' 30" 34/
 Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and USC&GS

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

Section number **Addendum** Page 1

Reuben Benedict House
Morrow County, OH

Minutes of the Alum Creek Quarterly Meeting (Morrow Co)
March 1835-May 1864

“It appears that the sum of \$49.10 has been raised and forwarded for the benefit of friends in North Carolina to aid them in removing the people of colour under their care to free gov’t.” (8) Sept. 28, 1835

Queries read and answered at each mtg.

“We believe friends generally are careful to bear a testimony against slavery, and to provide in a suitable manner for the free coloured people under their care. And they have been instructed in useful learning.” (35) October 1, 1838

proposed raising of funds for colored children “whose parents unable to educate them, there being about forty-five within our limits.” (116) Jan. 1, 1844

“The people of colour among us jenurali mentan a gud caracter for oensti and industri...”
principali _____ brot from Nort Carolina by our frend Jon Nylin [Newlin?]. David Hunt, clerk.
(Sept. 25, 1851).

Reuben Benedict not on “Committee on the Concerns of People of Color.”

“Still endeavor to assist pepl of colour _____ settled near Brodhead (Farm) in north west part Logan County. Emancipated by the late John or Monwie(?) or Vid, as well as thos in de immediat visinate. Sept. 20, 1854

Report on “Committee of Concerns of People of Colour”

\$81.00 buck spent “for the relief of two companies (?) of recently emancipated slaves, one sit. in the n.w. part of Logan Co, and the other within the immed. vicinity of Garben Monthly Mtg. Had school taught by “competent colored teachers” and one by a young man belonging to our Society. Some “freeholders living comfortably.” Asa Williams, Clerk. Sept. 1855

“We have recently had an addition of 12 to the number of emancipated by George C. Mendenhall of North Carolina who have settled in the neighborhood of Alum Creek, making in all, about forty which he has liberated and place under our care.” Asa Williams, Clerk. Sept. 1856

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

Section number **Addendum** Page 2

**Reuben Benedict House
Morrow County, OH**

A company of emancipated slaves from Geo. Mendenhall has arrived annually for 4 years, making in all about 50 "he has liberated and placed under our direction." Gilead, Dec. 1857

Most who claimed our aid "were slaves, emancipated and removed to our limits by John Warwick of Va., by John Newlin, Geo C. Mendenhall and others of N.C. The laws of those states prohibited emancipation on their soil-the enslaved must live and die, slaves or exiles." Over 8 years \$414 [sent] to them from Alum Creek Friends

Asa Williams, June 1858
Clerk, COCPC

41 members of COCPC, inc. Aaron Benedict and Lovina Benedict. March, 1859.

With regard to the character of our colored population we think we can safely say that considering the disadvantages and disabilities under which they labor, they are freely equal in industry, intelligence and moral worth to their white neighbors around them."

Asa Williams, June 1859.

Stephen Cook, 87, colored, found dead at his home in South Woodbury [Morrow County]. Born South Carolina, been a slave on plantation near Greensboro, N.C. Came to Ohio end of Civil War. The Underground Railroad Route prompted several colored families to locate here.

[Mt. Gilead] *Sentinel* Nov. 5, 1925.

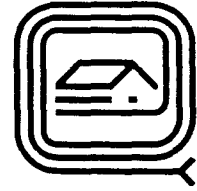
Ohio Historic Preservation Office

567 East Hudson Street
Columbus, Ohio 43211-1030
614/ 298-2000 Fax: 614/ 298-2037

Visit us at www.ohiohistory.org resource histpres.org

June 6, 2000

Mr. and Mrs. James and Erika Landman
1463 County Road 24
Marengo, OH 43334



**OHIO
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**
SINCE 1885

RE: Benedict, Reuben House

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Landman:

Congratulations on the recent listing of your property into the National Register of Historic Places!

The National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior listed the **Benedict, Reuben House** at 1463 County Road 24 in Marengo, Peru Twp. Ohio on May 8, 2000. The nomination was made in connection with a state plan to identify and document prehistoric and historic places in Ohio which qualify for National Register status under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended.

The Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) is available to advise you in maintaining the historic character of your property. As you know from previous mailings received from this office, there are no restrictions placed on your property following the National Register listing. However, the OHPO strongly encourages owners of historic properties to consider all options before completing work that could damage the structure or impair its historic integrity. Careful planning can facilitate the sensitive incorporation of contemporary alterations with the historic fabric. The OHPO provides free information on how to sensitively rehabilitate and repair historic properties, upon request.

Thank you for your interest in historic preservation and the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Powers
Department Head
Planning, Inventory and Registration

BAP/tch

Cc: David Weaver, Commissioner
Senator Richard P. Schafrath, District 19
Representative John Peterson, District 80
Ohio Department of Transportation

Ohio Historic Preservation Office

National Register of Historic Places File Checklist

The following materials are contained in this file of the National Register form for:

Name: Benedict, Benjamin, House

County: Marion

Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form

Multiple Property Nomination form

Photograph(s)

Photograph(s) (copies)

USGS map(s)

USGS map(s) (copies)

Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

Correspondence

Other 1900s photos

