



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

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April 15, 2026

Certification of Eligibility

Margaret Newman
PO Box 222
Carversville, PA 18913
Via email: mnewmanhistory@comcast.net

Dear Margaret Newman,

This letter is in response to your request for a formal certification of eligibility for the Schenck Farm located at 50 Southfield Road (Block 28.02, Lots 8.01 and 31.03) and in West Windsor Township, Mercer County, New Jersey. We appreciate the time and effort that went into compiling the application, the opportunity for a site visit on September 19, 2025, and the additional information provided upon request. The submission was supplemented with comparative context research completed by Historic Preservation Office (HPO) staff on Dutch English hybrid barns.

While the preliminary application was submitted under the name Schenck Farm, the name was changed to Voorhies-Fisher-Everett Farm for the evaluation. Based on current National Register guidance, the historic name should best reflect the property's significance or the name it was commonly known as during its period of significance. The submission's proposed period of significance is 1782-1870. The oldest section of the house is believed to have been construction by William and Ann Voorhies who were also the first enslavers on the property, based on the tax ratables from 1782 to 1784. According to the 1830 Census, John S. and Susan Fisher enslaved two individuals, one male and one female. Census records further document African American workers as part of the Samuel and Catherine Fisher household in 1850 and 1860 and the Thomas and Caroline Everett household in 1870. The Schenck family's association with the property did not begin until 1888, after the proposed period of significance. A different argument for significance and/or a different period of significance could prompt the need for a different historic name.

After careful consideration, it is my opinion as Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for New Jersey that, based on the available information, the **Voorhies-Fisher Barn** is eligible to be listed in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places under **Criterion C** as a rare example of a Dutch English Hybrid Barn. The barn is believed to have been constructed in the mid eighteenth century with a Dutch H-bent timber frame.

The four original H-bents are extant. The Fisher family is believed to have enlarged the barn with English framing techniques in the early nineteenth century as farming practices changed and prompted the need for more storage. A non-character defining addition was made to the rear elevation in the mid-twentieth century. The boundary is Block 28.02, Lots 8.01 and 31.03 to include the historic setting and the context of the larger farmstead.

Dutch barns are an increasing rare and vanishing resource in New Jersey. Hybrid barns are especially difficult to identify because they appear as English barns from the outside and access to the interior framing is needed to identify their true nature. Between 1999 and 2005 the barn was dismantled and a concrete foundation laid. The barn was then reassembled using the original structural timber where possible.

Additional Comments

The submission proposed that the Voorhies-Fisher-Everett Farm is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History as a documented site where slavery was practiced in West Windsor Township, Middlesex and then Mercer County, New Jersey from the end of the eighteenth century through the 1830s and where free African American agricultural laborers worked through 1870. Ethnic Heritage: African American would be a more appropriate area of significance for this argument. HPO staff were unable to reach a consensus regarding the eligibility of the proposed argument. Staff have concerns with the property's integrity. The Farmhouse, barn, and smokehouse are the three remaining resources on the property from the time of association. Evidence suggests that the farmhouse underwent four building campaigns with the last campaign, the raising of the roof of the side wing from 1 1/2 stories to two full stories, occurring outside the proposed period of significance.

HPO staff also have questions about the location on the property of the living quarters for the enslaved individuals. Historically, in New Jersey living quarters for enslaved African Americans could be located in the garret of the main dwelling as well as a separate building on the property. HPO staff are aware of a recent finding of separate enslaved African American quarters on a nearby property which raised the possibility that there may have been another building on the Schenck Farm utilized by enslaved individuals. HPO staff believe the argument needs to be strengthened with documentary or professional archaeological evidence and a more detailed assessment of integrity.

Based upon a review of the submitted information, the Schenck Farm may also be eligible for listing in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places under Criterion D, for the potential to yield important new information in history regarding eighteenth and early nineteenth century enslavement, lifeways, and consumer behaviors in Mercer County. Subsurface archaeological deposits therein have high potential to yield contributing artifacts and additional features related to the occupation of the property throughout its history.

The property contains a high potential for domestic archaeological deposits (e.g., middens, trash pits, privies, wells, former living surfaces) throughout the property. Artifacts derived from these deposits have the potential to provide important information regarding economic status, stylistic preferences, trade networks, consumption patterns, and daily



lifeways of the former owners of the property not currently available in other documentary sources.


Based on the documented history of enslaved Americans held in bondage by the Voorhies and Fisher families in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is potential for archaeological deposits at the property that could provide significant new information on the history of enslavement in West Windsor Township. Archaeological investigations around the Voorhies and Fisher Farm may provide data aligning with the enslaved individuals known to have lived here. Archaeological evidence of enslaved African American lifeways and cultural expressions (e.g., artifacts, refuse pits, sheet middens, dietary evidence, privies, and sub-floor caches) therein could provide important-new information on this poorly documented and underrepresented group. If confirmed, this would add another dimension to our current understanding of the history of the property, and to African American history in the broader Mercer County region. The HPO recommends reviewing the HPO archaeological data recovery report MER C 1550e conducted in 2022 on an eighteenth-century enslavement site in West Windsor Township.

Please note that any Criterion D significance (i.e., archaeological feature and artifact analysis, specialized scientific analysis) would need to be confirmed through formal archaeological survey by professional archaeologists meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology (48 FR 44738-9). The identification of archaeological deposits may be accomplished through "ground-truthing" efforts, such as the excavation of shovel test pits (STPs), excavation units, or other methods such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR).

If you wish to pursue registration, please contact Andrea Tingey, of my staff at either 609-940-5149 or Andrea.Tingey@dep.nj.gov. The Historic Preservation Office advises you to notify the property owner if you intend to nominate this property to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places.

To help expedite our review and response, if additional consultation with the HPO is needed regarding the nomination of this property, please reference the HPO project number (25-1774) in any future calls, emails, or written correspondence.

Thank you for your interest in New Jersey's irreplaceable historic resources. If you have any further questions, please contact Catherine Dzubaty at either 609-940-5168 or Catherine.Dzubaty@dep.nj.gov.

Sincerely,

Katherine J. Marcopul
Administrator & Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer

cc

Brian Aronson, Facilities Maintenance Manager, baronson@westwindsortwp.com
John Hatch, CCH Architects, jhatch@cchnj.com



