NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Aug. 2002)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Zehmer Farm

other names/site number DHR # 257-5008

2. Location

street & number 9818 Jack Zehmer Road not for publication N/A

city or town McKenney vicinity x

state Virginia code VA county Dinwiddie code 053 zip code 23872

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official — Date 8/19/09

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

Signature of commenting official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain): _____

for Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall

Date of Action 9.30.09

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

_X_ private
___ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

___ building(s)
_X_ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	0	buildings
8	0	sites
8	0	structures
0	0	objects
23	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register __0___

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: ___Domestic_____ Sub: ____Single dwelling____
_____Domestic_____ _____Secondary structure_
_____Domestic_____ _____Horticultural facility_
_____Agriculture_____ _____Animal facility_____
_____Agriculture_____ _____Storage_____
_____Agriculture_____ _____Processing_____
_____Agriculture_____ _____Agricultural field_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: ___Domestic_____ Sub: ____Single Dwelling_____
_____Domestic_____ _____Storage_____
_____Domestic_____ _____Horticultural facility_____
_____Agriculture_____ _____Animal facility_____
_____Agriculture_____ _____Agricultural field_____
_____ _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

___Late 19th/Early 20th century Revivals_____
_____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation __brick, concrete block_____
roof __standing seam metal, V-crimp metal sheathing_____
walls __wood weatherboard, concrete block, wood plank, corrugated metal_____
other __brick chimneys_____

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.

__X__ 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.)

____ 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

Period of Significance 1905 - 1960

Significant Dates **1905** (house construction), ca. 1920 (**flue** tobacco barns), ca. 1940 (dairy and cattle operations)

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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
_X__ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
_**X**__ Local government
___ University
_X__ Other
Name of repository: __Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Dinwiddie County Records Office_____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property _309 acres_____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1				2				3				4		

_X__ 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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title__John G. Zehmer, Jr._____
organization_____ date__March 2009_____
street & number__2001 Monument Avenue_____ telephone_804-358-5913_____
city or town__Richmond_____ state_VA___ zip code _23220_____

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Additional Documentation

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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)

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)
name ___Dr. and Mrs. Reynoldson B. Zehmer_____
street & number__815 Enderby Drive_____ telephone_703-836-4735_____
city or town_____Alexandria_____ state_VA____ zip code __22302_____

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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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 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 National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Zehmer Farm in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, is comprised of a frame, one-story, dwelling constructed about 1905 and a collection of 22 secondary resources including outbuildings, agricultural buildings, as well as fields and pastures and the sites of other structures associated with the use of the property. Various uses of the farm since 1905 have included timber farming, tobacco growing and dairy farming. The Zehmer farm contains approximately 309 acres of land in which are situated a central complex of domestic buildings with the remnants of a flower garden and a fenced vegetable garden, as well as a dairy complex, tobacco barns, pastures, arable fields, a two-acre pond, and woodlands. It is located in southern Dinwiddie County, about three miles west of the intersection of Interstate 85 and Va. Rt. 40. The house and the collection of outbuildings and farm structures – including animal shelters, corn crib, flue-cured tobacco barns, dairy barn and milk houses, and the sites of tenant houses, a butcher house, fire-cured tobacco barns and a sawmill -- constitutes a well preserved farm complex and represents a dwindling resource in the still rural, but increasingly more developed area of Dinwiddie County south of the City of Petersburg. The dwelling is a typical example of an early 20th century Virginia farmhouse that has evolved over time through expansion and modernization by several generations of the Zehmer family to meet changing needs. It retains much of its original fabric. The farm buildings and sites document the property's agricultural use for timber farming to tobacco cultivation to cattle and dairy farming from 1905 to the early 1960s. Today, the farm's pastures are rented for the raising of beef cattle and the secondary buildings are used for storage of hay and machinery.

Location

The Zehmer Farm is located both in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, and the Town of McKenney. In fact the town line bisects the farmhouse, meaning that while living in the same house some of the family has always slept in town and others in the county. The southern and eastern boundaries of the farm property are marked by the former right-of-way of the old Seaboard Airline railway, abandoned in 1985. The northern boundary is formed by land behind the McKenney Elementary School and Sunnyside Road, and the western boundary is irregular and is defined by land owned today by the Marks and Fitzgerald families. The land is rolling and has a variety of features: natural woodland, stands of planted pines for timber, open fields for grazing, cornfields, hay fields, a vegetable garden, and a broad lawn with large deciduous trees, cedars and hollies. There are several small creeks and one pond on the property.

The farmhouse sits on a high point in the landscape. It was originally a one-story, frame L-shaped dwelling with a broad hipped roof. Wings have been added to both sides. A dirt drive forms a circle behind or west of the house. In the yard a smoke house and a pump house border the drive. The pump house served a windmill for the now unused well. There are remnants of a flower garden adjacent to the northern side of the house. A large vegetable garden in constant use for over 100 years lies to the west. The barns and other farm buildings are located north and west of the house. These are utilitarian buildings dating from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1960s. These include a 42--stanchion dairy barn with a concrete block silo, two milk houses, two log flue-cured tobacco barns, a mule barn, a corncrib, three silos -- one with outdoor automatic feeders -- and a "loafing shed" for holding cows waiting to be milked in rotation. The property includes the sites of buildings and resources no longer standing including a tenant house, two fire-cured tobacco buildings, and a butcher house.

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS AND INVENTORY OF RESOURCES:

1. **Dwelling**. The construction of the one-story L-shaped frame dwelling was begun sometime after July 1901 by P.R. Freeman, who then owned the land. He did not finish the house, because his fiancé – for whom he was building the house – called off their wedding. The property was bought in 1905 by Charles G. Zehmer, who finished the house and moved in with his wife, the former Lillian M. Harrison. The house originally consisted of a main block with a center hall with two rooms on each side. Behind this was a long service wing with a bathroom, dining room and kitchen and pantry. Soon after Zehmer acquired the house, he added a nursery with built-in cupboards beyond the two south rooms of the main section. It served the growing family which eventually included six children. The house consists of a one-story ell plan with a hipped roof covered with standing seam metal, weatherboard siding, and a brick foundation. An exterior corbelled brick chimney rises along the house's southwest gable end. An interior corbelled brick chimney protrudes through the northeast roof slope. The three-bay main elevation faces southeast toward Jack Zehmer Road and exhibits three evenly spaced openings: a central four-panel wood door with a two-light transom flanked by two-over-two wood sash windows with drip moldings. The main elevation is protected by a full-width hipped roof porch supported by turned posts set on top of a tongue-and-groove deck with a brick foundation. The seven-bay service wing has a long hipped-roof porch with turned posts that wraps around the northwest and southwest elevations. The original wood porch floor was replaced with concrete ca. 1940. The house's northwest elevation features a four-panel wood door with a two-light transom under the porch and one two-over-two window. The north corner of the porch has been enclosed and displays a two-over-two wood sash window in its northeast elevation. A one-story hipped-roof addition appended to the southwest end of the main structure also possesses a small, one-story hipped addition on its northwest side.

The interior features twelve-foot ceilings. The walls are plaster and the floors, dating to ca. 1940, are rift-cut pine. The pine logs – grown and milled on family-owned property -- were cut specially to produce the fine-grained pine floor boards. The windows with two-over-two sash framed by molded architraves with bulls-eye corner blocks. The interior has the same trim around shallow four-panel doors. A simple picture molding runs around the walls about eighteen inches below the ceiling throughout the house. The house was heated with wood-burning metal stoves and had five interior brick chimneys that served eight rooms. Mantels, originally in place, have been removed. On the south side a wing containing a sun room and master suite were added in 2008. The same high ceilings and interior trim details were maintained in this addition. **Contributing building**.

2. **Pump house**. Built about the same time as the house (1905), this small rectangular brick structure on a concrete foundation sits over a well that was powered by a windmill. The structure features a standing-seam metal gable roof and a plywood door in the gable end. The well served the family until the Town of McKenney water system was created, about 1940, using wells on the farm and elsewhere as its source. The metal structure of the windmill was too much of a challenge to climbing children and was removed when town water was brought to the farmhouse. **Contributing structure.**

3. **Smoke house**. This small building (ca. 1915) has an earthen floor with a central depression to hold a smoldering fire. The building has weatherboard siding and a standing-seam metal roof. There is a board and batten door in the southwest gable front elevation. There is a large salt box of unknown age in one corner preserved by the constant application of salt to the hams, shoulders, and "side meat." **Contributing building.**

4. **Vegetable garden**. This garden is thought to have been in use for at least a century. Thanks to natural and chemical fertilizers it has fed generations of Zehmers, their relatives, and their employees (particularly the Ragsdales who had their own gardens, and exchanged seeds, seedlings, and produce with the Zehmers). Walter Grant, who was for many years a manager for John G. Zehmer, Sr., also shared vegetables and fruits from his garden with others. Over the years the following have been grown continuously or at times: potatoes, yams, corn, butter beans, snap beans (green beans), okra, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, lettuce, carrots, onions, radishes, turnips and several varieties of white corn. Flowers for cutting included gladioli, zinnias, marigolds, and sweet peas. **Contributing site**

5. **Middle barn (**Mule Barn, dual purpose as a dark tobacco barn**) ca. 1910.** This barn is a two-story, gable-roofed building with one-story, shed-roofed side aisles along the southwest and northeast elevations. The roof is covered with metal roofing and the building is covered with weatherboard and vertical plank siding. There are double-leaf board and batten doors in the southeast elevation. **Contributing building**

6. **Corn crib**. A one-story gable roofed structure, **ca. 1910,** This structure features a shed-roofed bull pen appended to its northwest elevation. The shed is covered with metal roofing and is sided with vertical plank siding. A board and batten door is in the southwest elevation. An addition on the right of the crib used hold calves or sick cows has been removed. **Contributing structure**

7, 8. **Dairy barn & first silo**. The **ca.1946** dairy barn is a large, 2-story, gambrel-roofed structure with kicked eaves and metal roof sheathing, weatherboard siding in the gable ends and evenly-spaced nine-bay concrete block walls. Six-light metal hopper units occupy most of the window openings. A concrete block silo with a rounded metal cap, also ca. 1946, stands adjacent to the dairy barn's northeast gable. **Contributing building and contributing structure**

9. **First milk house**. The **ca. 1940** milk house is adjacent to the dairy barn. It is a one-story building constructed of smooth and rock-faced concrete block made by the Batte brothers in McKenney at their small concrete plant which operated for several years in the 1940s. Board and batten shutters cover its window openings and metal sheathing covers the gable roof. Two six-panel metal doors are located in the southeast elevation. **Contributing building**

10, 11, 12. **Second silo and 2 sheds** (animal shelter and loafing shed). This ca. 1960 complex includes a large one-story gable roofed animal shelter (referred to as the "loafing shed") with corrugated and metal sheathing on the roof and sides on a poured concrete foundation. Paired board and batten sliding doors are found on the northeast and southwest gable ends. A feeding trough for an automatic feeding system is sheltered under an adjacent shed roof covered with metal sheathing and supported by wood posts and down braces. A concrete block silo without a cap stands to the north of the shed covering the trough. **Contributing structures (3)**

13. **Second milk house**. This larger milk house was built about **1955** for the production of bulk milk. It is a one-story concrete block building with a gable roof covered with metal sheathing. There are two metal casement windows and a six-panel wood door in its northwest elevation. A single board and batten door penetrates the southwest gable end. **Contributing building**

14, 15. **Tobacco barns**. Two log, flue-cured tobacco barns, built about 1920, stand near the main entrance to the

property at the end of Jack Zehmer Road. The northern barn is the older and features square-notched corners, a stone foundation, and a board and batten door in the northern elevation. Metal sheathing covers the gable roof and weatherboard covers the gable peaks. There is a small one-story shed-roof porch that protects a hearth for use in the tobacco curing process. The southern barn possesses a metal-sheathed gable roof, saddle-notched corners, a poured concrete foundation, vertical plank siding in the barn's gable peaks and a board and batten door in its north elevation. **2 Contributing buildings**

16. **Silo, ca. 1950.** A short distance northwest of the middle barn situated west of the house stands an unused, concrete block silo without a cap. **Contributing structure**

17. A small **privy built ca. 1950** is located behind the first milk house. **Contributing structure.**

18. **Agricultural fields**. The domestic buildings and the agricultural resources are surrounded on three sides by forests that traditionally provided the resources for the Zehmer Farm's timber business as well as fields and pastures for growing tobacco and other crops and for cattle raising. **Contributing Site**

SITES OF BUILDINGS NO LONGER STANDING (see site map)

1. **Butcher house**. A small group of trees in the pasture behind the vegetable garden marks the site of a building where slaughtered animals were hung prior to being butchered for food. **Contributing site**

2. **Burned barn**. At the western end of the farm complex was a second barn originally built as a stable for horses and mules. Later the original box stalls were removed and stanchions installed. It served as an auxiliary dairy barn when there were too many "fresh cows" to house in the main dairy barn. It burned in a spectacular fire about 1990. **Contributing site**

3. T**enant house**. There have been an uncounted number of these on different parts of the farm. All are now gone. The best-remembered is the house called the "White House" which sat near the main house. It was a two-room house with a center chimney. Once used to house farm workers, it was later used for storage. **Contributing site**

4,5. **Fire-cured tobacco barns**. Two massive tobacco barns (much taller and wider than the flue barns) stood just beyond the vegetable garden, one at either end of the back line of the garden. One of these very tall barns was built of large logs cut from the surrounding woods in the early 20th century. The other was built with wide cut planks. Both had earthen floors which held smoldering wood fires. The buildings gradually sank into the ground when the huge foundation timbers placed above the random stones sank into the earth, rotting the bottom logs. **2 Contributing sites**

6. **Site of an early 20th century sawmill**. Across the road from the side of the main house is a field of planted pines in which is a brick foundation with a few protruding iron rods. This is one of a number of sites of sawmills on the farm. **Contributing site**

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Zehmer Farm consists of a frame, one-story dwelling built about 1905 and 22 domestic and agricultural outbuildings, structures, fields and sites of earlier resources located at the northwest end of Jack Zhemer Road on the western outskirts of the town of McKenney in Dinwiddie County, Virginia. The farm's collection of agricultural buildings includes flue-cured tobacco barns, a dairy barn, milk houses, and silos as well as structures built originally to shelter animals or for storage. The house and the collection of outbuildings and farm structures -- as well as sites of tenant houses, fire-cured tobacco barns, and a sawmill -- constitute a well preserved farm complex and represent a dwindling resource in the still rural, but developing area south of the City of Petersburg. The dwelling and other buildings at the Zehmer Farm reflect changes typical of more than a century of ownership by three generations of the Zehmer family and the expansion and modernization undertaken by those families. The farm buildings, structures and related sites were built to serve specific functions on the farm and document the property's agricultural use for timber farming, tobacco cultivation and curing, and dairy farming from 1905 until the early 1960s. Three generations of the Zehmer family, beginning with Charles G. Zehmer, have been associated with the farm and have provided service to the community of McKenney. Charles Zehmer's son, John G. Zehmer, Sr., with his wife Emily Butterworth Zehmer, purchased the farm from his father. Their son Dr. Reynoldson B. Zehmer owns it today.

Justification of Criteria

The property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its collection of agricultural architecture. The house is a good example of an early 20th century vernacular dwelling possessing integrity of materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, design and location. As an intact collection of agricultural architecture, the outbuildings are significant for their association with the evolution of agricultural practices in Dinwiddie County. The main house and its domestic outbuildings constitute a collection typical for an early 20th century tobacco and dairy farming complex in Dinwiddie County and with its 309 acres, the farm represents an unusually intact example of this property type. Taken together, the house and agricultural buildings – modest structures concerned more with function than design -- represent an unusually complete farmstead that documents the county's agricultural architectural history in the era before agricultural specialization.

The Zehmer Farm is significant at the local level with a period of significance from 1905 until ca.1960. The main farm house was completed in 1905 and the last major change to the farm's collection of outbuildings occurred ca. 1960 with the construction of silos and animal sheds.

Historical Background

Because of the destruction and theft of many of the Dinwiddie County land and court records in the last days of the Civil War, tracing the ownership of the Zehmer Farm land before that time is difficult. Existing deeds refer to the land as "Hardaway's." That family's name occurs on maps and in some other early county records. Where the Hardaways lived, if they did live on the land, is unknown, but there was a Hardaway's Mill on the Nottoway River not far away.

Before the 20th century, the land that is now the Zehmer Farm seems not to have been farmed to any great extent, but was left to be timbered perhaps twice or three times in a century. It was also used for hunting wild game. The farmhouse, barns and other structures at the farm are important examples of an agricultural complex that has functioned for more than a century. Its history reflects the changes in agriculture in Southside Virginia during that period. Dinwiddie County has fewer and fewer traditional farms, but those remaining continue as contemporary facilities for producing a variety of crops, for cattle and timber production, and for recreation.

The farm property probably was part of one or more of the large holdings nearby eventually owned by the Field, Fitzgerald, Jones, Lucy, and Edmonds families. In a deed dated July 1, 1901, J.L Shepherd and his wife, Susie R. Shepherd, conveyed several properties and also stands of timber to T. R. Freeman. Freeman was engaged in the timber business and sometimes bought the timber off land and sometimes bought both the timber and the land. In this deed among other parcels, Freeman bought, "All of the pine timber…of the diameter of ten inches on the stump…on that certain tract or parcel of land …called "Hardaway's" or Field's estate."

The construction of the one-story L-shaped frame dwelling on the Zehmer Farm was begun sometime after July 1901 by T. R**.** Freeman, who then owned the land. He did not finish the construction, because his fiancé – for whom he was building the house – called off their wedding.

In 1905 Charles Granderson Zehmer bought for $2,200 one hundred and ninety acres, "known as a part of "Hardaway's," from T. R. Freeman. Prior to this transaction, on February 23, 1905, Freeman had sold Zehmer 90 acres of land on the "Seaboard Air Line Ry," which was across the railroad from the 190 acres. McKenney was incorporated as a town in 1922 after the railroad reached the area around 1900. The railroad provided a means for timber to be sold and then easily transported. Zehmer was one of several people who took advantage of the new railroad to enhance the timber industry. Zehmer finished the house Freeman started and built a number of the outbuildings and farm structures on the property. Soon after moving into the house in 1905 with his wife, the former Lillian (Harrison) Zehmer, they added a nursery wing to accommodate their six children.

Charles and Lillian Zehmer's six children included a daughter Geraldine (who married Irving C. Hammock), and five sons – C. Harrison (who married Aileen Burks), Richmond T.(who married Elizabeth Rose), Leonidas S. "Lonnie" (who married Mildred Strange, John G. (who married Emily Butterworth) and Charles, Jr.(who married Lilly Bec Underwood). Geraldine was an accomplished musician and choir mistress. Harrison was involved in local politics and government. Richmond, until his sudden death, was head of the Bank of Dinwiddie (now Bank of McKenney),

Lonnie owned rental property, worked in the post office, and sold insurance, John G. farmed, and Charles, Jr., (always known as "C.G.") was a school principal in Hampton, VA.

Charles G. Zehmer, Sr., was a self-made man who touched many lives in the community of McKenney. He was a fair but firm timber man, farmer, and industrious businessman, whose employees took pride in working for him. He made certain that his most trusted employees had their own homes and vegetable gardens. He lent them draft horses and mules, wagons, tools and gave them seeds and vegetable plants.

Zehmer was a pillar of Asbury Methodist Church in McKenney, as well as public servant who served on numerous town and county boards and committees. His help to the needy and bereft (particularly cousins and acquaintances during the Great Depression) was accomplished quietly and generously. He served on the board of the Bank of Dinwiddie (now the Bank of McKenney), was instrumental in the creation of the McKenney water system, and gave money and land for good causes. He instilled community responsibility in all of his children.

In town of McKenney, Charles Zehmer opened a grocery store named Zehmer's Grocery. His son, Jack, continued to operate the store until 1957. Charles also owned a hardware store with his brother-in-law, Vernon Elmore, called McKenney Supply Company. They sold it around 1940. It continues to operate today as McKenney Hardware. Neither of these resources are part of the Zehmer Farm property.

Lillian (Harrison) Zehmer joined her husband in his good fortune, good will and generosity. The couple took in various family members who were in need and helped them get back on their feet. Especially during the Great Depression, they assisted many friends and relations in either avoiding or surviving bankruptcy. They shared fruit, vegetables and meat from the farm with the farm hands, kinfolk and neighbors. The farm hands often returned the favor with wild fruits, nuts, and greens as well as firewood and home churned butter.

Timber farming: Zehmer was an entrepreneur in the harvesting of timber to supply the growing railroads with cross ties for the track as well as lumber for buildings that were being built. Zehmer's timber business included the usual purchasing and selling of timber with or without the land on which it stood. From the timber, he and his men produced wooden railroad ties cut to exact lengths and trimmed on two sides. The men would use draft horses and mules to "snake" the ties out of the woods. One of a number of sawmill sites on the farm was across the road from the main house in a field of planted pines. A brick foundation of the sawmill remains with a few protruding iron rods. This sawmill site probably dates from the time of Charles Zehmer. Other sawmill sites with less or no remains are from the time of John G. Zehmer, Sr. He cut timber whenever cash was needed, especially to pay the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech and the University of Richmond for the college educations of his three children.

The **Middle Barn** (Mule Barn, later tobacco barn) is one of the oldest buildings on the farm. It was built by Charles G. Zehmer shortly after he purchased the property in 1905. Originally it was a stable for the mules and horses used in Zehmer's timber business. Some of the African American workers who cut and hauled wood for sale as railroad ties told great tales of the prowess of those sometime huge animals. There were always mules named Eva and Dora, along with others. Two well remembered draft horses were Charlie and Dan. The last of them died in the 1960s. They were used for less strenuous chores in their old age, mainly plowing the vegetable gardens and pulling the tobacco "slides" from the fields to the barns. Two of the mule stalls still survive along one side of the structure. The barn itself housed hay for the mules and later for the cattle.

While Zehmer raised beef cattle, hogs and vegetables, the primary farming enterprise on the farm was tobacco as a cash crop, both the fire-cured and flue-cured varieties. The former sold mostly for cigars and the latter for what was the new fad of cigarettes in Charles Zehmer's time. The fire-cured need heavier clay soil and the flue-cured grew better on a looser sandy soil, both of which were found in different places on the farm.

Two **log flue tobacco barns** still stand on the farm. These log barns are called "flue barns" to differentiate them from the fire-cured barns which used smoke to cure "dark tobacco." The upper smaller barn is the older structure and has square cut logs above a stone foundation. The lower barn is slightly larger and has round logs. These flue barns were originally heated by wood-burning brick furnaces, and later by oil-fired heaters. In both cases, the heat slowly dried out the tobacco leaves tied on slim four-foot sticks hanging between vertical rows of horizontal tier poles. These rows formed "rooms" that ran from about six feet above the earthen floor to the height of the gable roof. The tobacco was dried in about a week and was stored in a "pack house" until the whole crop had been cured. It took six to eight weeks in all to harvest the crop.

Two **fire-cured tobacco barns** once stood on the property and were located behind and on either side of the vegetable garden. Both had earthen floors that held wood which smoldered and cured the whole tobacco plants hanging from the tier poles. Later the barns were used for storage and occasionally to pen sick cows, or ones with birthing problems.

Since much of the harvesting was done by hand, Zehmer had about a dozen full time employees – both white and African American -- and probably an additional dozen, including high school and college students, in the summer. Some lived in small houses on the farm or near by. None of these tenant houses still exist. The best remembered of the farm's tenant houses is the one which was called "the White House." It stood in the yard of the main farmhouse. By the 1940s, it had become a storage building. At other times the White House served as a shelter for baby chicks, a place to secure dogs, storage for seeds and fertilizer, and a playhouse for children. Best of all, with a fire in its small tin heater, it was a refuge for the Zehmer children and friends from the town to warm themselves after hours of sledding down the front lawn's safe, yet challenging slopes.

The "White House" was also used seasonally as a pack house for tobacco and a place to prepare the leaves for market. This was known as "stripping tobacco." Stripping was taking off the flue-cured leaves that were tied with string to each stick and grading them according to color and quality. The leaves were then made into bundles of leaves tied at the top with a single leaf. The bundles were hung across sticks to be trucked to market.

Zehmer raised hogs and butchered them. The butcher house, constructed about 1915, no longer stands. From time to time, bull calves, cows, and a few deer, were hung in the building to age. Most of the meat was butchered and used by the family and employees, although some was occasionally sold in Zehmer's Grocery store in McKenney. The **smoke house** from which many hams were produced still stands near the dwelling. From a fire in the center of the building, the smoke escaped through cracks between the weatherboards and the edges of the roof. The smoke house produced thousands of hams over the years. These were classic Virginia country cured meats and were sold privately to friends and family.

Dairy Business Charles Zehmer and his son John G. Zehmer, Sr., went into the dairy business together in the early 1940s. A number of families in the immediate area joined Zehmer in the dairy business, sharing the services of "Lip" Tucker, who drove a "milk truck" and picked up cans from the several area dairies and took them to Petersburg, Virginia. Mr. Tucker returned to the dairymen after stops to pick up needed items for them from various vendors. The first Zehmer dairy barn burned to the ground after only a few years. A second, larger one, met the same fate. A third barn was built and is still standing. It is larger than the first two structures. All three barns were of the classic gambrel roof shape with enormous lofts. The current barn has 42 stanchions.

Central to the farm's dairy business was a milk house. The **First Milk House** was the cooling house for the milk brought from the barn. In the 1940s, the milk was placed in large cans and kept on ice until Mr. Tucker picked it up for transport to Petersburg for further processing.

The farm features a number of buildings and structures associated and necessary for the sheltering, feeding and raising of dairy cows and cattle. The **"Loafing shed" complex** was built in the1960s and included a shed that housed cattle too numerous for the dairy barn on winter nights and two rows of sheds for more cattle. An automatic feeding system was built adjacent to the sheds. The main shed was known as the "loafing shed." The concrete paving around this complex was fitted with a wide chute to push manure out of the area and into a manure spreader. This ended years of shoveling manure out of the gutters in the barn and into a tractor pulled spreader. (Family members recall spreading manure once a day during snow and/or sleet was one of the most miserable of chores.)

The main gable-roofed section of the early twentieth-century **Corn Crib**, constructed by Charles Zehmer, was used for the storage of corn and other things over time. The addition to the left was built to house pure-bred bulls to service the milk cows. There was a small fenced area behind where the waiting cow could be confined within a stanchion. The bulls occasionally got out of their small enclosure and the following toreador antics of the farm hands, though dangerous, were comic to behold.

J. G. Zehmer, Jr., always known as "Jack," was the second youngest of Charles Zehmer's children. He began farming with his father at an early age. With his wife, the former Emily Butterworth, he bought the farm from his father for $2,500 in November of 1943. Jack Zehmer also owned and operated his father's local grocery store, and sold and delivered coal to local businesses, schools and households. He served on the board of the Bank of McKenney and on the Town Council. He and his wife served on the vestry of the Church of the Good Shepherd. Before the birth of their children, Emily Butterworth Zehmer was bookkeeper for the town's only industry, a button factory. She was president of the McKenney Woman's Club and a member of the Dinwiddie Civil War Centennial Committee. She was an avid gardener and a local historian. She shared her knowledge with family, friends, and the many researchers who were referred to her. Emily Zehmer's mother, Mamie (Rives) Butterworth, lived at the farm with her daughter and son-in-law from 1940 until her death in 1971. For some years Emily Zehmer's youngest sister, now Lena Harper, also lived there in the summer. Her other three sisters and their families also came for frequent visits.

The family made alterations to the dwelling to suit their family's needs. Their children were John Granderson Zehmer, Jr. (called Jack) born in 1942; Reynoldson Butterworth Zehmer (called Ren) born in 1944; and Emily White Zehmer (called Em) born in 1948. The Zehmers converted the nursery into a kitchen in 1938, and made the adjacent

bedroom into a dining room. They also turned the old kitchen and dining room at the end of the house into a servant's room and an additional guest room. The only person to occupy this room was Estelle (Hobbs) Lanier, who came to work for the family in 1942 at the birth of the first child. She now lives on her own in the town of McKenney, but still joins the Zehmer family on weekends.

John G. Zehmer, Sr., continued raising tobacco like his father. Once, when there was an extra large tobacco crop and he was wondering where he could put an unusually large amount to cure, Channing Ragsdale, who had worked on the farm for more that fifty years took great pride in showing Zehmer that the wooden floor of the **Middle Barn** had never been nailed in place, only carefully set. Once the floorboards were removed, the ground was cleaned and new tier poles were put up to hold sticks of tobacco. A small smoky fire on the earth floor slowly cured the tobacco. The barn had last been used for tobacco at a time that only Ragsdale was old enough to remember.

Emily and Jack Zehmer and their three children, John Granderson Zehmer, Jr., Reynoldson Butterworth Zehmer, and Emily White Zehmer, lived at the family farm until 1954, when they moved to the Zehmer family home in McKenney (less than a mile away) after Lillian Zehmer's death. Their sons hated leaving the farm but continued milking cows before and after school and worked in the tobacco and hay fields in the summer. Their leisure time was often spent in the fields, woods and at a pond their father had built for fishing and swimming. The banks of the pond were often used by community organizations for picnics held in a shelter built for that purpose by Jack Zehmer.

In 1955, Zehmer constructed a larger **Second Milk House**. It housed a walk-in refrigerator for milk cans and two large stainless steel tank for bulk milk storage all of which facilitated increased production, reflecting the evolution of dairy farming on the Zehmer farm, as on other farms in the region. All milk eventually was marketed to large tank trucks that also served other nearby dairy farms. By this time new technology enabled the milk to go directly from the cows into glass pipe connected to the milk house tank and from it into the tank truck. Human hands had not touched the milk, but still had to wash the milking machines, pipelines, and the tanks. All the equipment has been removed to make room for storage. The dairy operation was phased out in 1968. Beef cattle were substituted and more tobacco was raised.

In 1977 Jack Zehmer suffered a stroke and the farm eventually was rented to local farmers, Thomas Edmonds and a cousin, Edward Baskerville**.** Jack Zehmer died in 1985 and Emily Zehmer died in 1994. When their children divided the estate Reynoldson B. Zehmer took the farm as his part. His siblings, John G. Zehmer, Jr. and Emily W. Zehmer divided the rest of the family property between them. Reynoldson Zehmer and his wife, Nancy (Hardy) Zehmer, the daughter of Lewis and Charlotte Hardy, another farm family in Dinwiddie County, have renovated and enlarged the house with a new master suite wing balancing the kitchen wing. They spend many weekends and vacations there and plan to move permanently in the future**.** Cattle continue to be pastured on the land today. Clay Swicegood, who lives across Sunnyside Road from the pond, has rented the pastures and barns to raise beef cattle for about fifteen years**.** Timber still occupies the majority of the lands.

The children of John G. Zehmer, Sr., were instilled with the same sense of service to community and fellow man that marked the lives of their father and grandfather. John G. Zehmer, Jr. (Jack) is an architectural historian, author, and past director of the Valentine History Center, past executive director of the Historic Richmond Foundation, and former director of the Capital Region Office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Emily (Em) W. Zehmer, a librarian and archivist, had a thirty-year career with the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress.

She lived in Washington, DC and died in early 2009. Ren Zehmer is a veterinarian in Alexandria, Virginia. He and his wife have expanded the farmhouse and intend to retire to the farm. They and their three children, R. B. Zehmer, Jr., Mary Campbell (Zehmer) Akers, and Lewis Hardy Zehmer, and their families use the farm for weekends and vacations.

Architectural Significance as an Agricultural Complex

In an era before agricultural specialization, farmers in Dinwiddie County and in Virginia generally raised and processed a variety of crops and animals. The Zehmer Farm was typical of others in the County and in the rest of Virginia where owners raised timber and crops as well as cattle for dairy production both to serve their own needs and for sale locally. This type of agricultural pursuit required a variety of simply constructed outbuildings, secondary structures, barns and silos that were used to process and store the farm's products and to house farm laborers, as needed and resulted in a diverse collection of agricultural outbuildings on the Zehmer Farm. The number of outbuildings still standing on the Zehmer farm is evidence of the variety of its agricultural products and together they form a complete and little altered collection of agricultural buildings. The survival of so many of these resources on the Zehmer Farm provides a tangible reminder of the County's agricultural heritage in the years between ca. 1900 and 1960. The barn is a typical example of a mid 20th-century dairy barn and features the accessory earlier milk house required for production of milk for local distribution as well as the later milk house which met the specifications required for the sale of bulk milk as the dairy industry evolved. The fire and flue cured tobacco barns are evidence that the County's soils were well suited for both types of tobacco production and that small farmers in the county grew both.

The buildings at the Zehmer Farm form an unusually intact collection of the structures necessary on a small farm for the production and storage of a variety of agricultural products – tobacco, dairy, timber, animal fodder -- intended both for consumption by the family and to produce income when sold off the farm. This typical arrangement characterized Dinwiddie County's farmsteads in the years prior to 1970 before large-scale farming and specialization began to define farms in Southside Virginia and when new forms and new materials began to replace more traditional building forms and construction materials in agricultural outbuildings and support structures. Most of the Zehmer Farm's resources have good integrity, despite modifications for continued use. Many are modest buildings constructed for a particular purpose. Yet, when necessary, these simple structures – like the mule barn or the tenant house -- could be pressed into service for uses other than those for which they were constructed. The Zehmer Farm is one of several farms included in the DHR inventory for Dinwiddie County. Of the several properties designated as farms within the Dinwiddie County inventory, the Zehmer Farm's complex of buildings stands out. All of the 22 agricultural resources were built within the farm's period of significance (1905 – 1960) and, taken together, they document the evolution of farming practices and provide an accurate impression of life on a small farm in Dinwiddie County from early in the 20th century to the mid-1950s. Three other properties identified as farms in the Dinwiddie County inventory are Evergreen or the Lewis Farm (026-0023), a small farmstead located on Route 711 (026-5-1010), and the F. P. Clay Farm (026-0164). The main house at Evergreen is a Federal-period dwelling with architectural significance, but the farm buildings are all from the 20th century and do not relate to the house's period of significance. The farmstead on Route 711, like the Zehmer Farm, is typical of the smaller 20th century farms in Dinwiddie and Virginia. The house (ca. 1925) has been heavily altered; its outbuildings and agricultural buildings were constructed after 1969. The F.P. Clay Farm (026-0164) has a late 19th- century farmhouse that has been heavily altered; all of its characteristic exterior

features have been removed. While it possessed a horse barn and a collection of five tobacco buildings when surveyed in the last decade, its agricultural resources do not show the variety of uses found among the resources at the Zehmer Farm.

Bibliography

Zehmer, A Family History , Roberta Zehmer Smith, edited and complied by Jane C. Arnett.

Dinwiddie County Deed Books and Will Books

UTM References:

Zone 18

	Easting	Northing
1)	255895	4097273
2)	257095	4096849
3)	257271	4096580
4)	256607	4095873
5)	255526	4095893

Boundary Justification

The Zehmer Farm includes the main residence, outbuildings, farm buildings, and agricultural fields which have been associated with the property during its active years between 1905 and 1960.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is identified as parcels **80A1 4 15** and **80-11** on the tax parcel maps for Dinwiddie County, Virginia and the insert tax parcel map for the Town of McKenney. Eighteen acres of the farm property are within the Town of McKenney (tax parcel **80A1 4 15**) and 291 acres (tax parcel **80-11**) are in Dinwiddie County.

The following information is common to all photographs:

Property: Zehmer Farm
Location: Dinwiddie County
Date Taken: March 2009
Photographer: John G. Zehmer, Jr.
Negatives stored at: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Photo 1 of 14: Farm house

Photo 2 of 14: Farm house showing 21st century addition

Photo 3 of 14: Farm house rear porch

Photo 4 of 14: Farm house interior, looking down front hall

Photo 5 of 14: Farm house interior, living room

Photo 6 of 14: Agricultural buildings: dairy barn, milk houses, smoke house, brick well house, wood box

Photo 7 of 14: Dairy barn, exterior

Photo 8 of 14: Dairy barn, interior windows

Photo 9 of 14: Dairy barn loft

Photo 10 of 14: Middle Barn

Photo 11 of 14: New milk house

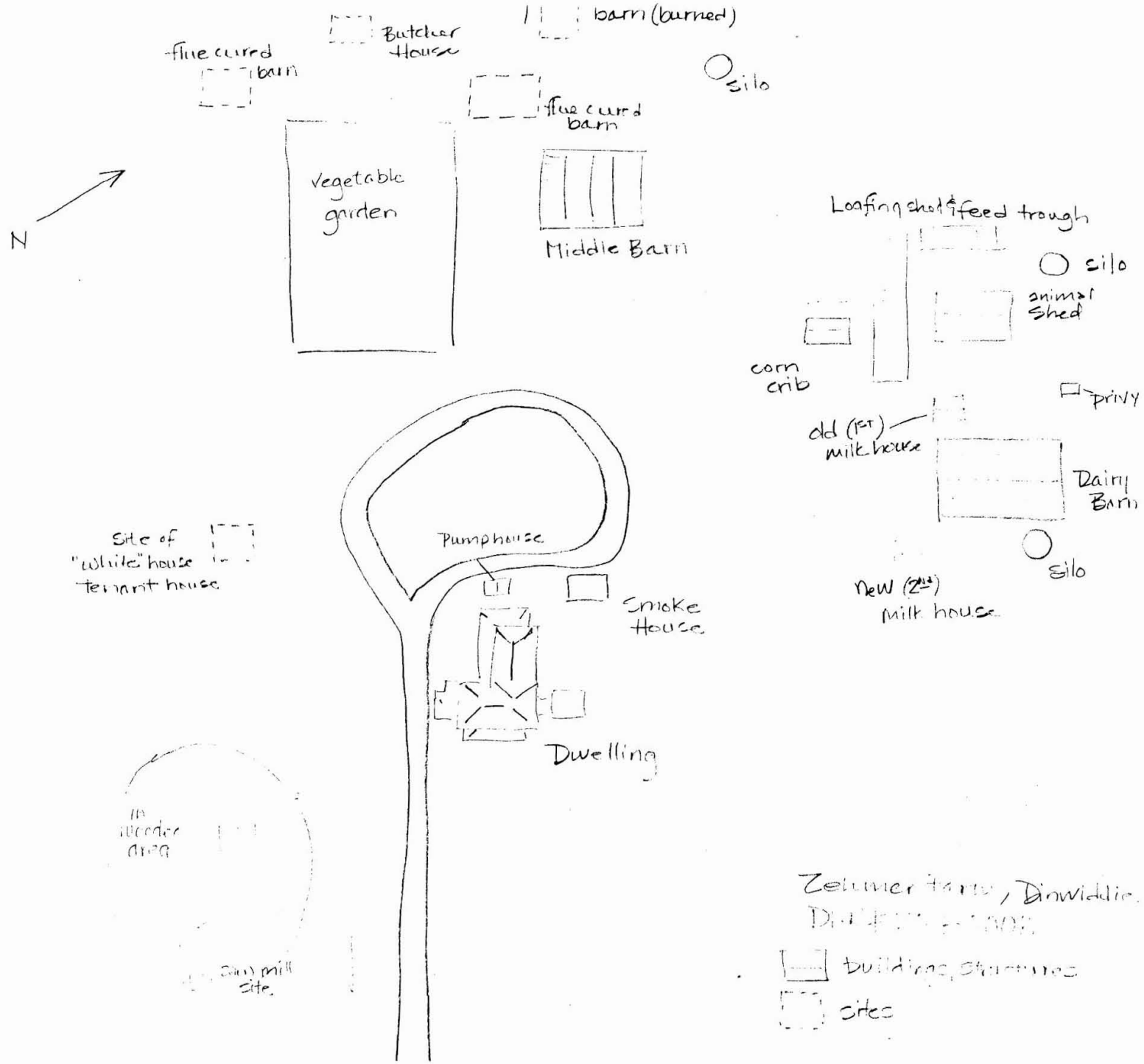
Photo 12 of 14: Agricultural buildings: loafing shed, old milk house, new silo, dairy barn

Photo 13 of 14: Tobacco barns

Photo 14 of 14: Agricultural buildings: bull pen, corn crib, loafing shed, old milk house, dairy barn

Additional Documentation

Site Plan of Zehmer Farm, Dinwiddie County, Virginia (not to scale)



Zeumer farm, Dinwiddie Co., Va.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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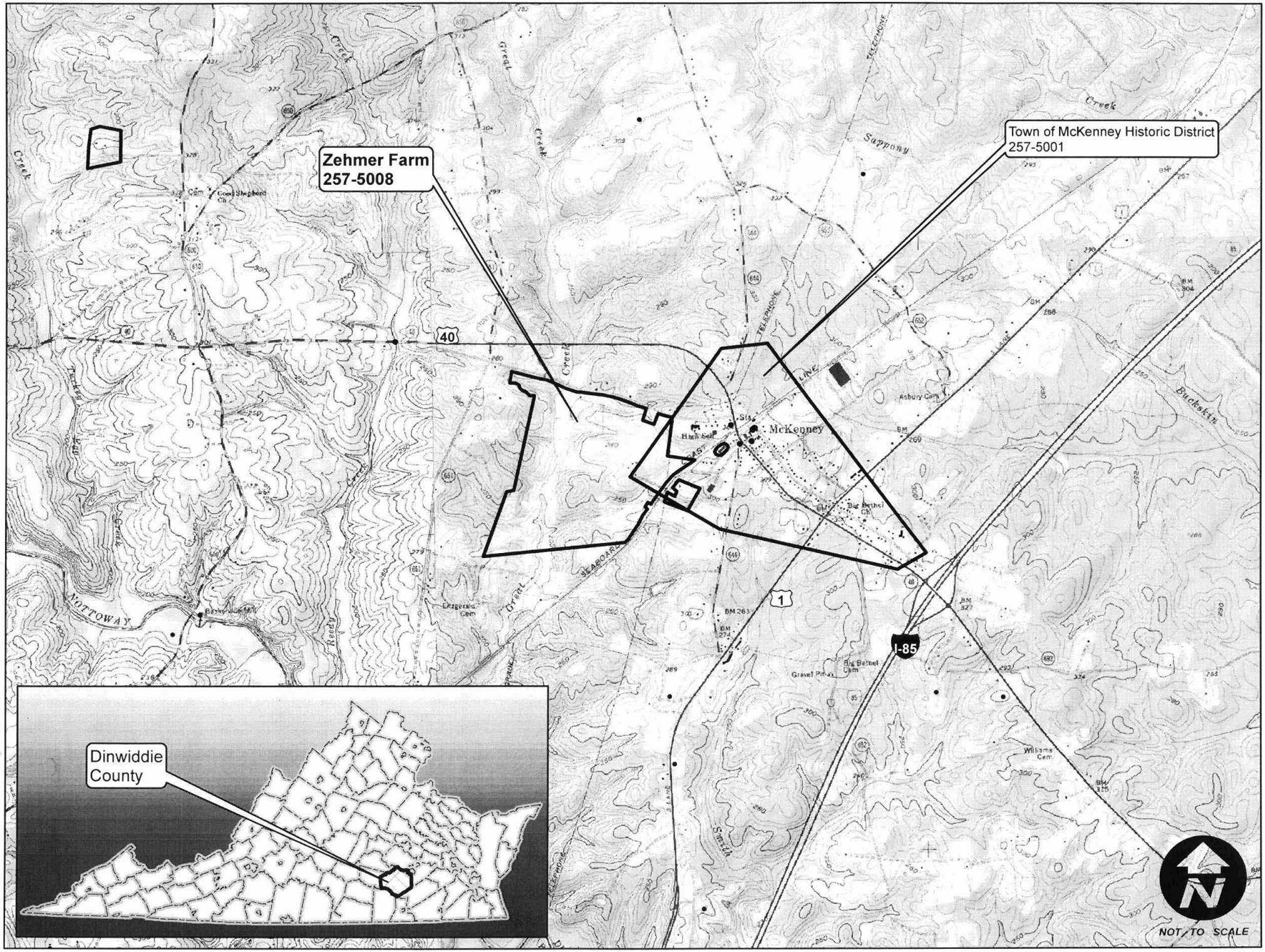
DIVISION OF MI
JAMES L. CALVE

Zehner Farm
Dinwiddie Co, VA
USGS Quad
UTM Coordinates

1) 18 [illegible] 4097273
2) 18 [illegible] 4096[illegible]
3) 18 [illegible] 4096658
4) 18 [illegible] 4095878
5) 18 [illegible] 4095893


Zehmer Farm
257-5008
Town of McKenney Historic District
257-5001
McKenney
Dinwiddie
County
NOT TO SCALE