

VLR-12/16/80 NRHP-7/8/82

# United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCERS use only  
received  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Harnsberger Octagonal Barn (preferred)

and/or common Mt. Meridian Octagonal Barn

## 2. Location

street & number N side route 256, W of intersection with route 865 and Middle River N/A not for publication

city, town Grottoes X vicinity of congressional district Sixth (M. Caldwell Butler)

state Virginia code 51 county Augusta code 015

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Dwight Houff

street & number Holly Hill Farm

city, town Mt. Sidney N/A vicinity of state Virginia 24467

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Augusta County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Staunton state Virginia

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date 1972, 1973, 1979 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Harnsberger octagonal barn is set on the west bank of a field overlooking Middle River west of the small community of Mount Meridian. The frame barn is one of three octagonal structures in the northern Augusta and southern Rockingham county area clearly inspired by Orson Fowler's book on octagonal houses. Although this building adopted a novel shape, it continued the local bank barn tradition in both form and use. Fowler also had advocated a bank setting "so that the farmer can drive in on his main floor several feet above the foundation." Sliding doors on the west side provide such an entrance, with a central octagonal focus for turning around wagons and equipment. The main floor design did not utilize "different bays for different things" to economize space as Fowler suggested, but instead enclosed hay storage space to the north and south sides of the central wagon floor, in the usual local manner. The builders constructed the traditional forebay on the lower end of the barn, here across three sides, to provide access into the cattle stalls. The partitions and mangers on this lower level again are arranged on an east/west axis, as on the main level, rather than radiating from the center as Fowler suggested.

The major heavy structural framing members remain, although several rafters, studs, and floor boards have been replaced. When this restoration work was completed in 1978, aluminum siding and a tin roof were added. The taller, lattice-work cupola shown in a 1950s photograph has been cut off to the present, lower octagonal shape.

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### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated acreage of the Octagonal Barn consists of an acre and a half of land on the west bank of a field overlooking the Middle River at Highway 256. It represents a fraction of the acreage of the original farm owned by Robert Harnsberger in 1867.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** Ca. 1867 **Builder/Architect** William Evers

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Harnsberger octagonal barn was built ca. 1867 under the direction of carpenter William Evers. The unusual structure is possibly a unique example of its type in Virginia and reflects the penetration of popular architectural ideals into the vernacular cultural patterns of rural Augusta County after the Civil War. While most local carpenters were constructing the familiar bank barns, a form which derived from the Pennsylvania region and spread into the Valley of Virginia, Robert Harnsberger drew inspiration from the octagonal building styles popularized by Orson Fowler's A Home for All, or the Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building (1853). The Harnsberger barn did not copy Fowler's pattern book designs directly, however. Augusta builders combined these new ideas with more traditional barn building concepts, integrating the new shape with the older bank barn form. Several older residents recall that the basic octagonal shape posed many problems for the local carpenters, who failed to get the barn to fit together correctly and called in others, specifically William Evers of Centerville, to complete it.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Robert Samuel Harnsberger acquired the farm in 1867 and had the barn built soon thereafter. He obviously was aware of this octagonal style through his brother Stephen M. Harnsberger's octagonal house, only two miles to the northeast along the South River. The two buildings are rare examples of the Fowler mode in the Valley of Virginia and suggest the prominence and sophistication of the Harnsberger family. The Harnsbergers had extensive landholdings in the area and were involved in the incorporation of the town of Grottoes along the South River in the late 19th century.

The barn has been used for agricultural purposes since its construction. The Harnsbergers only owned the farm until 1880, when it was acquired by the Felger family. The present owner, Dwight Houff, restored the barn in 1978 after he purchased it from the Fultons, who had owned it since 1917.

AMcC

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Augusta County Deed Book V.

Fowler, Orson. A Home for All. 1853.

Harnsberger, Mrs. George. Port Republic, VA. Interview.

Richmond, VA. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives. Harnsberger House file.

Wise, Carolyn. Bridgewater, VA. Interview.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 1/2 acres

Quadrangle name Grottoes, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7
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6	8	6	8	1	0
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4	2	3	6	8	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point 1300' NW of intersection of routes 865 and 256, 1550' N of Middle River; thence extending from 1120' contour line 150' E; thence extending 200' S to N edge of said route 256; thence following said side of said route 450' W to said contour; thence turning and following said contour line about 400' NE to point of origin.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date October 1980

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell 6/3/82

title H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director date DEC 10 1980  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

**For HCRS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

