

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

**VLR Listed: 6/18/2020**  
**NRHP Listed: 8/11/2020**

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Brown-Swisher Barn

Other names/site number: Jackson Barn; DHR ID# 081-7171

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 2939 Walkers Creek Road

City or town: Middlebrook State: VA County: Rockbridge

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  X

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

<p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p><u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u></p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
<p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE: animal facility

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Bank Barn

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD; STONE; METAL; CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The ca. 1918 Brown-Swisher Barn, also known as the Jackson Barn, is located at 2939 Walkers Creek Road in northwest Rockbridge County, Virginia. The barn is a timber-framed building of bank barn form, forty by sixty feet in size, with what is known as a five-bent plan defining four structural bays. The building has slatted vertical board siding, a metal-sheathed side-gable roof, and a poured concrete foundation. A forebay overhangs the lower level on the front east elevation and there is a slight overhang on the gable ends and a short ramp on the west side. The upper level interior has an un-partitioned haymow with mortise-and-tenoned and pegged bents. Other features include slatted and latticed vents, hay drops, remnants of a system for moving hay, sliding doors, and (on the lower level) animal stalls with Dutch doors. In addition to the wood pegs the building is constructed with wire nails, and it uses circular-sawn wood and poured concrete, features that agree with a post-1900 date of construction. The barn was surveyed in October 2019 shortly before stabilization work was slated to begin. Its overall integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association are very good.

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### Narrative Description

#### Setting

The barn occupies a slope on the west side of Walkers Creek Road (State Route 602), on the opposite side of which is Walkers Creek, a tributary of the Maury River and James River. A farmhouse and other buildings formerly stood immediately to the north of the barn and a 1978 house and associated modern buildings stand on the slope above the nominated area to the west.

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The area inside and around the boundary is maintained as pasture. A driveway passes between the house and barn. Pastures, agricultural fields, woodlots, and forest are visible beyond. The barn stands at 1,300 feet above sea level with the heights of Jump Mountain and North Mountain to the southwest and west. A benchmark in the road in front of the barn has an elevation of 1,290 feet.

### **Barn, ca. 1918, contributing building**

The Brown-Swisher Barn's vertical board siding is stained a light brown color, a modern finish. Dark brown (almost black) paint survives on the lower level, which has horizontal board siding. The siding on both levels preserves evidence of closed or reduced openings such as doorways and hatches, along with a few instances of what may be routine patching in kind. Siding was removed from the base of the upper-level west side at the time of survey in preparation for work on the barn. The main reduction is of the large door opening on the upper-level east side, which corresponded in width to the surviving opening on the west side. In place of the former east doors is a modern wood and metal sliding door. The vertical siding dips down to cover the projecting ends of plates on the gable ends.

The latticed vents are extensive and run under the eaves and in the gables of the upper level, except over the west doorway, and at the top of the east wall of the lower level. There are four batten Dutch doors on the east side of the lower level, three on the north end, and two on the south end. Also on the south side is the wide doorway to the interior cow lane with a sliding wood door that was set aside in preparation for work on the barn at the time of survey. The sliding door has two cast iron rollers manufactured by the F. E. Myers & Brother company of Ashland, Ohio, with the brand name Stay On. The lower-level doors are painted green. Some of the projecting joists and plates at the north end of the forebay are painted red, a remnant of the Venetian red (iron or ferric oxide) color the barn had in the mid-twentieth century. The area of red paint looks incomplete, as though the painter began to paint the forebay joists but stopped.

A crude, low foundation of creek cobbles in concrete extends under the east side and the ends. The concrete forms a retaining wall on the west side and is raised to full height along the ramp. Impressions of the circular-sawn board forms are visible on the wall, as are a seam and color change that suggest the higher portion was poured later. A number of cast iron tracks are positioned over doorways on both levels, including some of the lower-level doorways that now have non-sliding Dutch doors. There is a modern blue-painted metal star plaque in the south gable.

The upper level interior is defined by five structural bents, three free-standing and two incorporated into the gable-end walls. The bents consist of a pair of tall posts that extend from the floor to a plate on which the rafters lie, with cross beams connecting post to post and to the side walls and up and down diagonal bracing. The members are predominately oak with a few timbers cut from other species of wood. The various members are joined with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints. The smaller pegs are rounded whereas the larger pegs are squarish. The perimeter walls are of similar construction, with bottom and top plates spliced together with

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pegged scarf joints and girts between the posts for the attachment of the outside siding. The floor consists of a single thickness of floor boards, although until recently the center drive-through had a second, upper layer of floor boards for added strength (these boards had rotted and were removed).

Two hay drops flank the center drive-through. The drop on the north side is larger and taller, with a triangular profile. Inside it, where the sloping section meets the floor, are leather straps nailed to the floor structure. These are assumed to be hinges for a former trap door, although no means to secure the door in the open position have been observed on the sloping section. The drop on the south side of the drive-through has a low, boxy, rectangular profile. At the top of two of the posts flanking the drive-through are staves that served as ladder rungs. The lower rungs have been removed on one of the posts (it is unclear whether they extended down on the other post). The common roof rafters are butted and nailed at the ridge. Tongue-and-groove boards, now removed, formerly defined a wall of what is believed to have been a granary next to the east doorway. No dates or initials have been observed in the barn. Hand-forged iron hasps and hooks from the barn are stored in the owner's residence.

The barn retains multiple features related to a former hay fork system. A wood track runs the length of the ridge and attached to it is a cast iron trolley for a former hay fork, which has been removed, although part of the rope that moved the trolley back and forth survives. A pulley attaches to the top of a post at the apex of the north gable; a second pulley hangs from a rafter in the south end of the barn, although not at the gable end and lower than the ridge. Iron hooks are inserted into the bases of posts next to the west doorway jambs. How these features are believed to have functioned in concert is described in section 8.

The lower level has animal stalls in the east half and an end-to-end "back lane" in the west half where cattle could come and go for feeding. Walls and ceiling structure are exposed, except for the lower parts of the stall walls which have horizontal board linings. The stalls have z-braced doors opening to the lane (the Dutch doors are z-braced as well). The wall between the stalls and lane incorporates a number of posts that are mortise-and-tenoned and pegged to the plate above. Several empty mortises testify to the removal of posts. The posts and another line of posts in the lane stand on cinder block footers. The cinder block footers of the lane posts were inserted on top of stone footers when the lower parts of the posts were removed, presumably because they had rotted. There are notches and other features in the stalls that appear to relate to now-missing elements, including a board on the north wall of the north stall with a circular hole bored through it to the outside, perhaps an attachment for electric service. At the time of survey (October 2019) the barn was experiencing racking in the lower level.

### **Integrity**

The Brown-Swisher Barn possesses good overall integrity. The barn possesses integrity of design, workmanship, and materials in that it retains its historic form, siding, exposed timber-frame structure, and details such as hay drops, ladders, animal stalls, and Dutch doors. The threshing bay doors survive in part, as does the hay fork and its associated pulleys and hooks.

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The metal roofing is a modern replacement in kind. Rehabilitation, underway in October 2019, will replace the failing historic poured concrete foundation with a new poured concrete foundation and will replace deteriorated framing members. The integrity of the barn's immediate setting is lessened by the loss of the historic Brown-Swisher farmhouse and other domestic and/or farm buildings that once accompanied it, and the construction of a modern (1978) house on the ridge above, but the setting retains its agricultural character and the general surroundings of fields and wooden mountainsides retain their historic character, adding to integrity of setting, feeling, and association.

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## 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.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

Ca. 1918

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

Ca. 1918

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Shecle (barn builder, attributed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Brown-Swisher Barn, located in the Walkers Creek Valley of Rockbridge County, Virginia, embodies the distinctive characteristics of bank barn construction in the county. The five-bent barn of pegged mortise-and-tenon timber-frame construction was most likely built ca. 1918 during the nationwide agricultural boom sparked by World War I. According to tradition the barn builder was a Mr. Shecle, of whom little is known. The barn's basement level, equipped with Dutch doors and slatted vents, was used for sheltering livestock. The upper level, used for hay storage and possibly also for threshing, features latticed eaves vents, large threshing bay doors, and remnants of a hay fork system for offloading hay. The barn is associated with the agricultural boom of the World War I era, which dramatically increased local farm values, before the decline of the 1920s and 1930s. The barn is in the process of rehabilitation. The Brown-Swisher Barn is eligible under Criterion C in the Architecture area of significance for its distinctive characteristics of bank barn construction such as its bank siting, forebay, and threshing floor plan, and other features of note such as timber-frame bent construction, provisions for ventilation, hay drops, and hay fork remnants. The period of significance corresponds to the date of construction, which is most likely ca. 1918 (a slightly earlier or later date is possible, as indicated by the use of circa). The barn is locally significant.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Brown-Swisher Barn stands on property that belonged to James W. Brown (b. ca. 1818) in the nineteenth century. The property was acquired by James's son Robert W. Brown (b. ca. 1856) after the division of his father's estate. James's widow, Mary Brown (ca. 1826-1916), continued to live on the property with Robert, accompanied in her later years by her daughter Virginia (ca. 1847-1910), a black female (perhaps a servant) named Amy Setington (b. ca. 1865), and Amy's sons, Harry and Benjamin. Mary's death in 1916 may have prompted a decision to sell the farm, which in turn appears to have resulted in construction of the barn. At an unspecified date, but apparently in 1917 or 1918, Robert Brown and his wife, Nannie C. Brown, sold a 461-acre tract to Norvel N. Cobb, Cobb's wife, Lou D. Cobb, and H. W. Snyder, who in turn sold the property to William M. Swisher, a series of transfers summarized in a December 1918 deed. William Swisher and his wife, Hattie May Swisher, sold a half interest in their farm, including the 461-acre parcel, to Stuart Andrew Tolley (1880-1953) in 1927, and in 1935 Swisher and his wife sold their entire interest in the 461-acre parcel to Tolley. After Stuart Tolley's death in 1953, his lands went to his heirs who in 1955 sold 214 acres to David Graham McCray (1913-90). McCray, who represented the Walkers Creek District on the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors from 1964 to 1971, was married to Stuart Tolley's daughter, Mabel Violet Tolley McCray (1912-1997). The McCrays' son, contractor John McCray (b. 1940), acquired the property and built the house that stands above the barn in 1978. John McCray drew upon a number of published designs as models for the Colonial Revival house. The property

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passed through several owners before it was purchased by the current owner, James Andrew (Andy) Jackson, in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

Architectural evidence such as the absence of cut nails indicates the barn was built after ca. 1890 and almost certainly after 1901, the patent date on door hardware that is assumed to be original to the barn. County land book tax information is not specific enough to suggest a date of construction for the barn but shows a reduction and then an increase in the value of parcels associated with the property in the 1910s. In 1910, Robert W. Brown owned a parcel with buildings valued at \$500, the only parcel he owned with buildings of value. By 1915, the value of buildings on the parcel had decreased to \$396. In 1917, by which date the Brown parcel had increased to 457 acres (approximately the size of the 461-acre tract described in the 1918 deed), the value of buildings was \$700. In 1918 and 1919, the value of buildings was \$900. The fluctuations may represent demolition and reconstruction of buildings on the farm, including construction of the current barn, though it is possible they reflect other factors.<sup>2</sup>

Changes in ownership during the late 1910s also appear to be associated with the barn's construction. The longtime ownership by the Brown family ended in 1918 when Cobb and Snyder acquired the 457/461-acre tract, as noted in the 1918 land book which states "Cobb & Snyder [in] poss[ession]." Cobb and Snyder, who owned the tract only briefly, perhaps as a speculation, sold it to William Swisher, who owned it in part or in whole until 1935. The value of buildings on the 457-acre tract stood at \$900 in 1920 and had increased to \$1,080 by 1922. The value jumped to \$2,950 in 1926, though this increase may be related to the consolidation of multiple parcels with buildings. The late 1910s or possibly the early 1920s therefore seem the most likely period of construction for the barn based on building values. Because of the changes in ownership reflected in the 1918 deed, the year 1918 may in fact be the date of construction and is also likely for historical reasons cited below in the agriculture context.<sup>3</sup>

Traditionally, the farmers of Rockbridge County, like those elsewhere in the Valley of Virginia, practiced mixed agriculture, growing a range of crops such as corn and wheat and keeping livestock such as horses, cattle, and swine. Farming was more or less profitable depending on market conditions, crop diseases and weather, and the availability of transportation, the latter enhanced by the arrival of canal and rail transport in the area in the mid-nineteenth century. In the late 1910s the nation experienced a farm boom precipitated by the reduction of agricultural production in Europe during World War I, which created demand and drove up prices for farm products in the United States. "Agricultural prices soared during the war," wrote geographer Jean Gottmann in *Virginia in Our Century* (1955), a rise that benefitted Virginia's rural areas. Farm

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Jackson and John McCray personal communication; US census; Rockbridge County Deed Book 126, p. 267; Deed Book 146, p. 104; Deed Book 165, p. 425; Deed Book 241, p. 463. A number of individuals assisted with this report, foremost among them the owner of the Brown-Swisher Barn and sponsor of the nomination project, James Andrew (Andy) Jackson. Others who assisted included timber-framer Al Anderson, architectural historian Samuel Biggers, longtime local residents Kenneth LaMont "Monty" Fix and John McCray, and Michael Pulice and Lena Sweeten McDonald with the Virginia SHPO.

<sup>2</sup> Rockbridge County land books.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Stuart Tolley, who gained an ownership interest in 1927, was married to Lydia McClure Swisher Tolley (1882-1919), whose parents were Swishers, though a connection to William M. Swisher has not been established.

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values reflected the boom. From 1910 to 1920 Virginia farm values (land and buildings) rose 92 percent. Rockbridge County farm values increased from \$8.301 million in 1910 to \$13.562 million in 1920, a 63 percent rise. The new owners of the Brown property were well-positioned to take advantage of the wartime boom, and construction of the barn enabled them to optimize agricultural production to meet demand.<sup>4</sup>

According to John McCray, Stuart Tolley's grandson and the barn's owner in the 1970s, the barn was built by a man the family called "Mr. Sheckle" (spelling uncertain). McCray believes it is possible the barn builder was related to the family. The closest match to the name discovered in online sources and county records is an H. W. Shecle, who is named in a 1912 court proceeding related to a 47,900-acre timber tract in northern Rockbridge and southern Augusta counties, an area not far from the Brown-Swisher Barn. Shecle is listed as a trustee in the document along with one W. W. Logan. Nothing more is known about him. The name is not otherwise attested in deed and will records from the period, suggesting he was not from the area. Internet searches of the Shecle name yield a few historic-period matches in Pennsylvania. Of potential significance to the construction of the barn is the belief of Monty Fix, whose family has a long association with the area, that the Swishers had a sawmill.<sup>5</sup>

Former owner John McCray recalls the barn in use during the 1940s and 1950s. A hay fork was used to lift loose hay from a truck parked in the center drive-through or threshing bays. The fork was operated by means of ropes that passed over the hooks at the lower corners of the west entry. Horses pulled the ropes. "They'd holler 'Whoa!' at the right time" to stop the horses," McCray recalls. McCray does not recall the specific arrangement of ropes inside the barn but the following seems possible based on surviving elements. The ropes may have run from the hooks to pulleys hanging from the rafters (the south pulley at this position survives) and then to pulleys at the ends of the wooden track (the north pulley at this position survives). This would allow the trolley to be moved the full length of the barn. The fork mechanism would have been operated by another rope, part of which still hangs from the trolley.<sup>6</sup>

### *Architecture Context*

The Brown-Swisher Barn is a bank barn, meaning it is built into a bank so that both the upper and lower levels are accessible from ground level. More specifically, the barn is a type known to researchers as a standard Pennsylvania barn. Other terms include German bank barn, Pennsylvania-German barn, and Pennsylvania barn, the latter term in use by 1867. The terminology reflects the form's origins in German-speaking areas of Europe (specifically Switzerland) and its adoption and continued evolution in the cultural hearth area of southeastern

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<sup>4</sup> Albrecht, "World War I Agricultural Boom and Bust;" Gottmann, *Virginia in Our Century*, 134; *United States Census of Agriculture, 1925*, 137, 148. The boom was followed by a bust: farm values in the county, state, and nation decreased during the period 1920 to 1925. This strengthens the case for the construction of the barn before ca. 1920, since farm owners would be more likely to make a major building investment during a period of economic optimism and less likely during a period of agricultural depression.

<sup>5</sup> John McCray and Monty Fix personal communication; Rockbridge County Deed Book 114, p. 128.

<sup>6</sup> John McCray personal communication.

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Pennsylvania (and adjacent areas of Maryland). Initially the form was most popular with farmers of Germanic origin, and as these farmers spread into western Virginia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they brought the form with them, which explains the frequency of bank barns in the Valley of Virginia of which the Walkers Creek Valley is a part. A defining characteristic of the standard Pennsylvania barn is the forebay, which the Brown-Swisher Barn has.<sup>7</sup>

Mutual Assurance Society policies for Rockbridge County barns written in the first two decades of the nineteenth century imply the local existence of the bank barn form by that period, for they describe two-story barns with stone lower stories and wood (frame or log) upper stories. The bank barn's presence in Rockbridge County may be due to acculturation, adoption of the form by the county's predominately Scots-Irish and English settlers, though some settlers with German surnames located in the county and the county was not far from Germanic settlements in the Shenandoah Valley. The Mr. Shecle who is remembered as having built the barn is thought by at least one individual (Monty Fix) possibly to have been from Pennsylvania, which would suggest a direct infusion of Pennsylvania barn knowhow. However, John McCray, whose ancestors the Tolleys owned the farm, thinks Shecle was local and may have been related to the family.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to the Brown-Swisher Barn another factor may be at play. The 1867 reference noted in the paragraph above appeared in a nationally distributed farm journal, the *American Agriculturalist*, and points to the role of the agricultural press in popularizing the bank barn form. "Scientific" farming methods, as opposed to folk methods, were practiced in the county as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by the organization of the Rockbridge Agricultural Society in 1827 and the efforts of progressive farmers in soil amendment and other scientifically-informed methods, so the county was fertile ground for innovations championed by agricultural reformers through journals and other print media. The Brown-Swisher Barn is a standard Pennsylvania barn, but given its late date it may be as much a product of mainstream national culture as traditional diffusion.<sup>9</sup>

Pegged mortise-and-tenon timber-frame construction remained common for barns into the twentieth century in western Virginia counties. The tried-and-true method was well suited to joining the large timbers required for the spans of bent construction, and though spiking with iron spikes was used for certain types of large timber construction, such as the antebellum crib dam at Jordan's Point in Rockbridge County, pegged joinery had the advantage of strength in resisting the multi-directional forces experienced by a barn, the weight of the hay and the structure itself, and wind and snow loads. Its use for the Brown-Swisher Barn reflects cultural conservatism but also functionality.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Noble and Wilhelm, *Barns of the Midwest*, 67-70, 82; *American Agriculturalist* (November 1867), 402; Noble and Cleek, *Old Barn Book*, 84-91.

<sup>8</sup> Pezzoni, *Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*, 63-64; Monty Fix and John McCray personal communication. A search of Tolley family genealogies has not turned up the Shecle name.

<sup>9</sup> Pezzoni, *Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*, 69-70.

<sup>10</sup> Giles and Pezzoni, "Page County Historic Resources Survey Report," 48; Kalbian and Pezzoni, "Removal Report on Jordan's Point Concrete Dam and Timber Crib Dam," 23.

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Al Anderson, the timber-framer responsible for raising and repairing the barn, notes a number of interesting details of the barn's construction. The two most common types of traditional timber framing are scribe rule framing, in which the joints are custom cut to accommodate irregularities in the members, and square rule framing, which relied on standardized members and joints. Scribe rule framing is generally the older technique, with square rule framing adopted later (beginning in the early nineteenth century in Connecticut barn construction, for example). The Brown-Swisher Barn, though late in the history of timber-frame barn construction, is more akin to scribe rule framing. Scribing or "mapping" of joints may have been necessitated by the irregularity of the timbers used in the barn's construction, which could vary up to half an inch from end to end. Anderson classifies the scarf joints used in the barn's construction as "under-squinted splayed scarfs" and notes the form may be unusual in the Valley of Virginia.<sup>11</sup>

The Brown-Swisher Barn has other features of note. The siding extensions that cover the projecting ends of plates helped protect the plates from rot and aided (and continue to aid) the longevity of the barn. The slatted siding, attached so that there are small gaps between the boards, along with the slatted vents of the lower level and the latticed vents of the upper level helped assure air flow to keep the hay fresh and would also have helped prevent rot in the structure. The leather straps interpreted as hinges for the (former) trap door of the triangular hay drop relate to the traditional use of leather for door hinges and washers as a way to avoid the expense of iron fittings. The arrangement of the pairs of large sliding doors positioned opposite each other on the sides of the upper level, in line with the two center bays of the barn (the "threshing bays;" the east doors have been altered), encouraged a flow of air to aid the threshing of wheat by blowing away the chaff. Whether the Brown-Swisher Barn's threshing bays were actually used for threshing is unknown, though they did have a granary in close proximity. Assuming the barn was built ca. 1918, the first quarter century of the barn's use lies beyond the memory of older individuals who remember it as children. John McCray (b. 1940), for example, remembers a hay truck backing into the threshing bays for unloading hay but does not recall threshing taking place there. Steam-powered threshers would have been in use in the county by the date of the barn's construction. John McCray recalls the use of tractors on the farm in the 1940s but believes work horses were still in use earlier, and if so they were presumably housed in the barn's lower level. The hay fork or carrier was common in the region's barns by the early twentieth century, though the arrangement set up for the Brown-Swisher Barn, with the rope passing through hooks near the bottom corners of the door, may have been unusual.<sup>12</sup>

The Brown-Swisher Barn was built during a period of experimentation in the county's barns. Though most barns of the era, the Brown-Swisher Barn included, were of frame construction, in the early 1900s the owner or owners of the Balcony Downs farm near Glasgow constructed an exceptionally large barn out of brick with segmental-arched openings reminiscent of commercial and industrial construction during the period. The Balcony Downs barn has interior silos in its two front corners, and an interior silo is also a feature of the frame barn built in 1915 on the National Register-listed Mountain View Farm in the Kerrs Creek area. Interior siting helped

<sup>11</sup> Al Anderson personal communication; "Timberframing."

<sup>12</sup> Monty Fix and John McCray personal communication.

Brown-Swisher Barn  
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protect the ensilage in the wood-stave silo from freezing and from the elements. Interior silos represented an early stage in the evolution of silo form (which began in the region toward the end of the nineteenth century) marked by considerable experimentation, before concrete stave and enameled metal Harvestore silos became ubiquitous during the second half of the twentieth century. There is no evidence that the Brown-Swisher Barn had a silo, either exterior or interior, but its hay fork system and the other features described above indicate a willingness to explore a range of solutions to the barn's functional needs. In overall form, however, the barn adhered to regional tradition, as illustrated by such Rockbridge County barns as the ca. 1871 bank barn on the National Register-listed Scott-Hutton Farm near Collierstown. The Brown-Swisher Barn therefore represents a melding of traditional and experimental approaches to barn form and outfitting in the Rockbridge County context.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Pezzoni, *Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*, 72-73; Pezzoni, "Scott-Hutton Farm," 8.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Brown-Swisher Farm sale advertisement (ca. 1965), William B. Dunlap, Realtor, Brownsburg,  
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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR ID# 081-7171

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** approximately 1/2 acre

Brown-Swisher Barn  
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**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.974780      Longitude: -79.380755

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is a rectangle centered on the barn and extending fifty feet from each elevation. The barn measures approximately forty by sixty feet, therefore the boundaries measure 140 by 160 feet and encompass an area of 22,400 square feet or approximately one-half acre. The nominated area is depicted on the accompanying approximately 1:100-scale Sketch Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries are drawn tightly around the nominated resource in order to exclude a non-historic house and other resources. Fifty feet on the west side of the barn is sufficient to encompass the earthen ramp that leads to the barn's hay wagon entryway. The historic boundary encompasses all known historic resources.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
organization: Landmark Preservation Associates  
street & number: 6 Houston St.  
city or town: Lexington state: Virginia zip code: 24450  
e-mail: gilespezzoni@rockbridge.net  
telephone: (540) 464-5315  
date: November 19, 2019

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer,

Brown-Swisher Barn

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photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log** (information the same for all photos except the description of view and photo no.)

Name of Property: Brown-Swisher Barn

City or Vicinity: Middlebrook County: Rockbridge State: Virginia

Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni Date Photographed: October 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Barn (at right; south and east sides) with 1978 John McCray House (left) and agricultural and forested setting. View facing north. Photo 1 of 11.

East and north sides. View facing west. Photo 2 of 11.

West side. View facing east. Photo 3 of 11.

Myers & Bro. door roller. Photo 4 of 11.

Framing showing a typical bent, ladder, and the triangular hay drop. Photo 5 of 11.

Boxed hay drop. Photo 6 of 11.

Hay fork trolley and pulley. Photo 7 of 11.

Hay fork system hook. Photo 8 of 11.

Leather strap (probable hinge) inside triangular hay drop. Photo 9 of 11.

Animal stalls in lower level. Photo 10 of 11.

Pegged scarf joint in plate in lower level. Photo 11 of 11.

**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.460 et seq.).

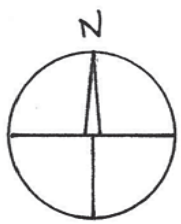
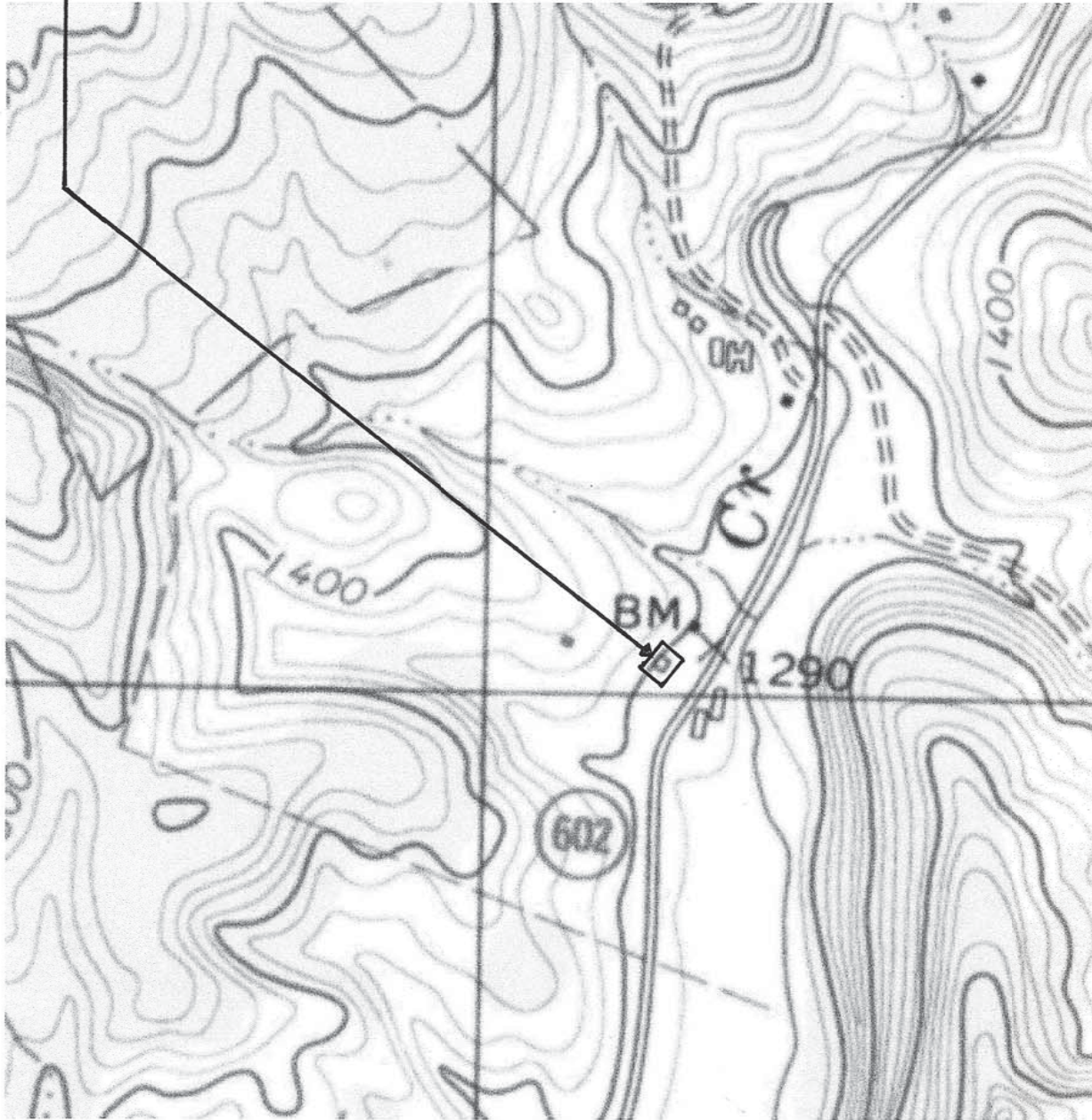
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Brown-Swisher Barn  
2939 Walkers Creek Road  
Rockbridge County, Virginia

DHR ID# 081-7171

National Register of Historic Places Location Map  
Latitude: 37.974780 Longitude: -79.380755

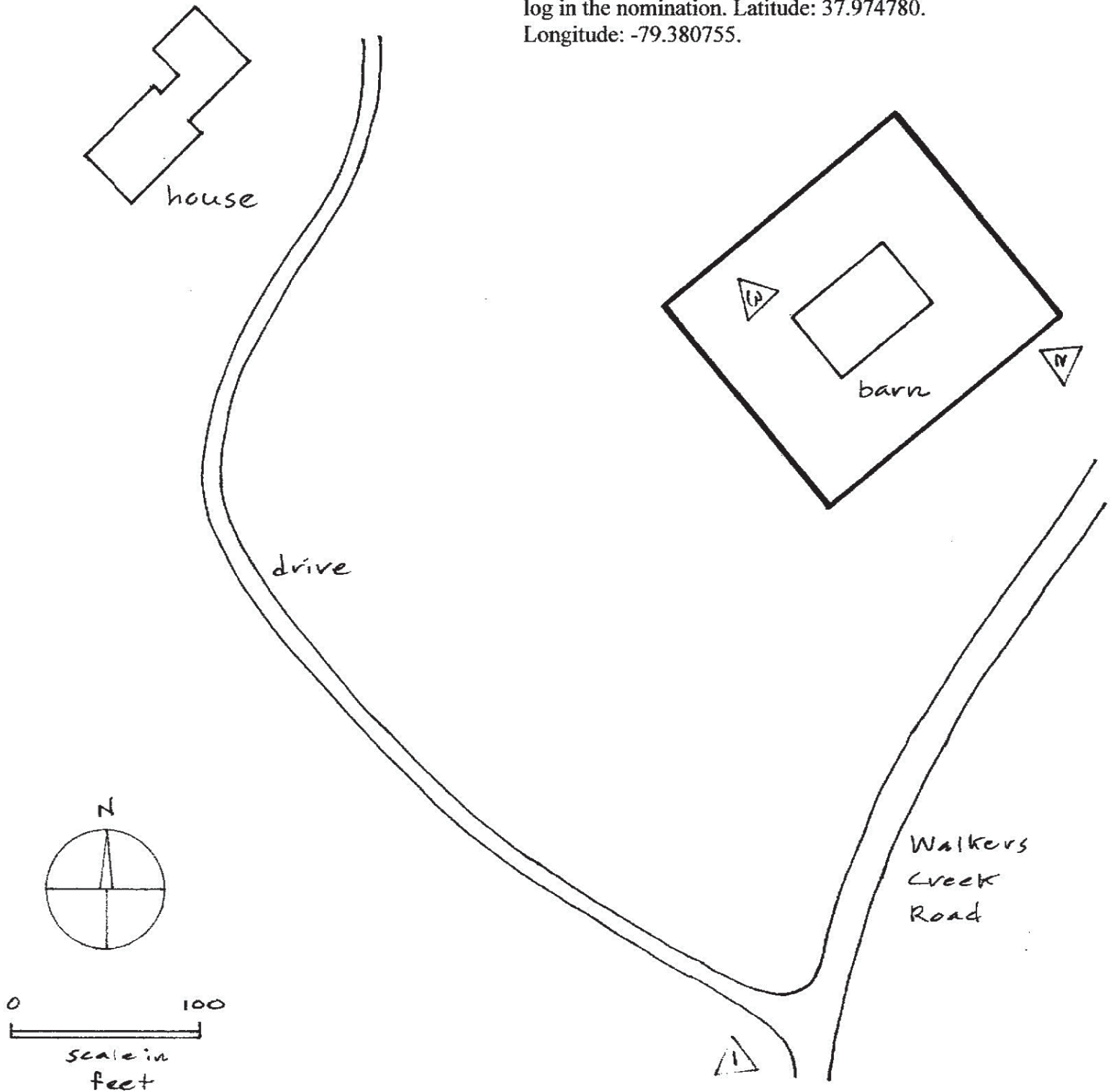
Historic Boundary



Brown-Swisher Barn  
2939 Walkers Creek Road  
Rockbridge County, Virginia

SKETCH MAP/PHOTO KEY

Rectangle around barn indicates historic boundaries. The barn is the sole resource and is contributing. Triangular markers indicate number and direction of exterior views and are keyed to the photo log in the nomination. Latitude: 37.974780. Longitude: -79.380755.



## AERIAL VIEW

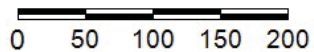
Brown-Swisher Barn

Rockbridge County, VA

DHR No. 081-7171



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 1/10/2020**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.*

## AERIAL VIEW - Vicinity

Brown-Swisher Barn  
Rockbridge County, VA  
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Feet



0 600 1200 1800 2400  
1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet

**Title:**

**Date:** 1/10/2020

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

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