

Student Handout 7: Fredrick Watts and the Experimental Farm

Frederick Watts was a leading agricultural reformer of the mid-nineteenth century. Much of his life's work was directed toward the goal of educating the farmer in the efficient use of his land and buildings. The layout of farm buildings was planned for the economy of labor and material for the farmer's daily routines. Not only did Watts attempt to improve the layout, he also experimented with creating a better (more efficient) farm structure than the Pennsylvania Barn.

The experimental farm was situated on a 116-acre tract of land at the western end of the Borough of Carlisle in Cumberland County. It was in the fertile, limestone-based soil of the Cumberland Valley, and the level fields surrounding the complex were ideal for farming. The farm complex was composed of a farmhouse, summer kitchen (out-kitchen), combination washhouse/woodshed, bank barn, hog pen, wagon shed, chicken house, and milk house. The house and barn were placed facing south within the center of the farm.

Built around 1867, the barn was a tri-gabled bank barn designed to enable the stabling of animals, storage of grain and hay, a wagon shed, and corn crib all under one roof. The usual ramp to the threshing floor was extended and built upon to store the corn on the ear (a corn crib) at each side with room for storage of the farm machinery in the center. Underneath the ramp there was to be room for additional wagon storage and a root cellar. Fredrick Watts felt that a compact barn yard saved labor costs and time. He placed the hog pen so it opened towards the barnyard to permit the hogs to root through the manure to its greatest benefit. According to Watts, one of the functions of the barn was to create an ample supply of manure for fertilization.

Source: Information is taken from the 1988 Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission submission to the United States Department of the Interior for listing the Frederick Watt Farm on the National Register of Historic Places.