HISTORIC AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1700-1960: A NATIONAL REGISTER MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

MPDF INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of this Introduction is to explain the overall organization and conceptualization of this large Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). The information offered here will help users decide which portions of the MPDF will be most directly relevant for them. It also points to resources that will help people use the MPDF effectively. It should be noted that this MPDF does not preclude users from listing their farm resources separately in the National Register of Historic Places under areas of significance other than Agriculture.

Several resources have been created specifically to help users. They are all available on the Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project website. These resources currently include a Field Guide to agricultural buildings and landscapes; agricultural census information and maps for 1850, 1880, and 1927; and guides on how to document historic farming resources. Together the historic contexts and the supporting PHMC Web resources constitute the Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project and the National Register Agricultural Resources of PA Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Background, Purpose, and Production of the MPDF:

Agriculture is a critically important sector of Pennsylvania's economy and has been so since the Commonwealth's founding in 1682. Pennsylvania is well known for its rich historic farm landscape. Yet despite the importance of both historic and contemporary agriculture to the state, at the time the Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project was begun, there was no comprehensive resource that offered a deeply researched and authoritative standard for evaluating the historical and archaeological significance of Pennsylvania's farm buildings, archaeological resources, and landscapes. The National Register of Historic Places provides standards and processes for such a resource through its MPDF process. A cover MPDF has been urgently needed for many reasons. Development is putting prime farmland under pressure throughout the state; interest is rising in farmland preservation and heritage tourism; and many rural community planners and historical organizations are looking for guidance on how to understand and protect their historic barns, farmhouses, outbuildings, archaeological resources, and farm landscapes.

This context, then, is intended for a variety of users. For example, under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Section 106, an assessment of impact on historic resources is required whenever a federally-funded project could have an effect. Each year the Federal Highways Administration, PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Bureau for Historic Preservation (BHP) evaluate many historic agricultural resources as part of the planning process for transportation projects across the state. The MPDF will furnish high quality accessible information allowing for a consistent and expedited assessment of historic resources for Section 106 purposes.

However, the context will also be relevant to other activities besides Section 106 compliance. For example, it will inform the many initiatives across the state that seek to protect historic open space, farmland, and natural historic resources. Land trusts, conservancies, government-run agricultural land preservation organizations, and individual property owners may use it to add a historic-preservation dimension to natural resource and open space preservation efforts. The context can also provide an authoritative source of reliable background for Heritage Tourism and education projects. This latter purpose may come to have increasing importance as public interest rises in issues such as local food and sustainable agriculture.

With funding from the Federal Highways Administration and other sources, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museums Commission and PennDOT's Bureau of Design worked with the Pennsylvania State University (PSU) to develop this MPDF for Pennsylvania's historic agricultural resources. Under the direction of Sally McMurry, Professor of History at Penn State, historical research and fieldwork were carried out by Penn State faculty and students, as well as by non-PSU historic preservation professionals and scholars with expertise on different regions within the state. Sally McMurry wrote the narratives, with input from BHP and PennDOT's Bureau of Design.

Because the state is so agriculturally complex, and to spread out the funding, the work was undertaken in stages. Initially the work was assigned by PennDOT districts, and it was always carried out first by county because so many sources are organized by county. The first phase to be completed covered the central, north central, and northeastern counties (PennDOT Districts 2, 3, and 4.). The second phase added a substantial area in the western portion of the state (PennDOT Districts 1, 10, and 11). The third and final phase covered the southeast and south central portions of the state.

For each study area, and based on library research and fieldwork, historic agricultural regions were identified using techniques described below and in the "Statement of Method." Narratives were written for each historic agricultural region, connecting the region's distinctive agricultural history to its distinctive agricultural landscape. Completed, revised narratives were submitted in groups (ie Phase I and II narratives were all submitted simultaneously) to the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Board for approval. With Board approval, they were then submitted to the National Register of Historic Places for approval.

The entire state is now covered for a time period spanning 1700 to 1960. This MPDF establishes clear and specific guidance on questions of National Register eligibility, defining standards for significance and integrity according to the National Register Criteria and guidelines. A comprehensive planning document, the context will be a valuable tool that can be used to protect natural and historic resources that comprise Pennsylvania's "farm country."

How to Begin the National Register process using this MPDF

Contact the PHMC Bureau for Historic Preservation at www.phmc.state.pa.us to begin the National Register nomination process. The Agricultural Resources of Pennsylvania MPDF is to be used in conjunction with supporting contextual information found on the PHMC's Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project website. Staff will direct you to appropriate sections of the MPDF materials and to supporting resources all available at the Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project website: http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/agricultural_history_project/2579. It is also possible to locate the site using a Web browser to search for "Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project."

If you are reading a copy of the MPDF furnished by the National Park Service, National Register Focus database, charts and graphs will appear in black and white. To view charts and graphs in color, please refer to the PDF documents on the PHMC's Pennsylvania Agricultural History Project website. The PDF documents on the website also differ from the National Park Service version in that the images and text are integrated in the same document, rather than contained in two separate documents.

The regional contexts submitted with this MPDF are as follows:

- Agriculture in the Settlement Period, c1700-c1840 (interior counties)
- Northern Tier Grasslands, c 1840-1960
- North & West Branch Susquehanna River Valley, c1840-1960
- Central Limestone Valleys, c 1840-1960
- Allegheny Mountain Part-Time and General Farming, 1840-1960
- Potter County Potato and Cannery Crops, 1850-1960
- River Valleys Tobacco Culture, 1870-1930
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Diversified Agriculture and Sheep Raising, c. 1830-1960
- Lake Erie Fruit and Vegetable Belt, c1850-1965
- Northwestern Pennsylvania Diversified Agriculture and Dairying, c. 1830-1960
- Pocono Resort and Anthracite Coal Region Local Market Oriented Agriculture, 1860-1960
- Adams County Fruit Belt, c1875-1960
- Great Valley, 1750-1960
- Lehigh County Potato Region, 1850-1960
- Lancaster Plain, c 1730-1960
- Southeastern Pennsylvania, c 1750-1960
- York-Adams Diversified Field Crops, Cannery Crops, and Livestock, c 1750-1960

Some of the contexts address specific specialties in production that occur within a larger region, such as the Potter County Potato and Cannery Crops located in the Northern Tier Grasslands, the River Valleys Tobacco Culture, which have examples in both the Northern Tier Grasslands and the North and West Branch Susquehanna River Valleys, or

the Adams County Fruitbelt, which falls between the Great Valley and York-Adams region. As appropriate, you may need to refer both to the specialty context and to the broader context. This is because a property in (for example) the Lehigh Potatoes Region may well have buildings relevant to both the potato specialty and the Great Valley patterns in general. However, properties in such areas will not need to meet the registration requirements of more than one context.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Pennsylvania presents interesting intellectual challenges for the agricultural historian and archaeologist. The watchword for Pennsylvania's agricultural history is "diversity." The widespread transition to a relatively specialized monocrop or single-product system did not really take hold until after the Second World War in Pennsylvania. Beginning in the settlement era and stretching well into the 20th century, diversity of products was a hallmark of nearly every farming region as a whole, and of individual farms too. As late as 1934, the state Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin used 1930 census data to conclude that "the largest number of farms in PA are the farms with some diversity of crops and livestock production."[1] Nearly 53 percent of the state's farms were either "General," "Self-Sufficing," or "Abnormal" (mainly part-time) farms. "Specialized" farms were defined as those where at least 40 percent of farm income derived from a single source. These included types labeled variously as "dairy," "cash grain," "fruit," "poultry," and "truck farms."

Towards the mid-20th century, regionalism declined in significance within Pennsylvania. Along with other eastern states, Pennsylvania agriculture shared in the general shift towards specialization, commercialism, state oversight, industrialization, and decline in farming population. This trend is recognized in the context narratives. Yet even in 1946, in an updated description of Pennsylvania's "Types of Farming" areas, only the Northeast and Northwest were given descriptors that implied specialization; these were dairying areas. The rest were given names like "General Farming and Local Market section." Equally significant, statewide the top source of farming income – dairying -- only accounted for a third of farm income. To be sure, there were pockets where individual farms specialized to a greater degree (in terms of the percentage of income derived from a single product), but these were the exception rather than the rule; overall even in the mid-20th century, Pennsylvania agriculture was remarkably diversified both in the aggregate and on individual farms.

The "Types of Farming" maps mainly considered diverse commodity production. However, diversification also involved many activities and products that would not necessarily show up on farm ledger books, because they were bartered, consumed by the family, used by animals, or sold in informal markets. These might involve managing an orchard, raising feed and bedding for farm animals, tending poultry flocks, cutting

[1] Emil Rauchenstein, and F. P. Weaver, "Types of Farming in Pennsylvania." Pennsylvania Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin # 305, April 1934, 39.

cordwood, or making maple sugar or home cured hams. These activities frequently fell outside strictly monetary calculations of "farm income." Yet they were important aspects of a farm family's life and took up a good deal of family members' time. Indeed, we can't understand the historic agricultural landscape without acknowledging these activities, because they so often took place in the smokehouses, poultry houses, root cellars, summer kitchens, springhouses, and workshops that appear so frequently in the rural Pennsylvania landscape. These spaces might not be well accounted for (if at all) in a conceptualization that emphasizes commodity production, but they become more readily comprehensible when we take into account the broader diversity of farm productions. Another important benefit of this perspective is that it preserves—indeed reclaims—contributions that a preoccupation with specialized market commodities tends to obscure, for example those of women and children.

Acknowledging the historic diversity of Pennsylvania farm productions helps to clarify much, but it also raises a fundamental challenge for conceptualizing an approach that will faithfully convey Pennsylvania's agricultural history, and make it possible to understand the landscape that was created as people farmed in the past. How can we make sense of this sometimes bewildering variety? Added to diversity of products we must consider a diversity of cultural repertoires; a diversity of labor systems; diversity of land tenure arrangements; varied levels of farm mechanization; 93 major soil series; ten different topographic regions; and growing seasons ranging from about 117 to over 200 days. All of these have had a marked impact on the historic farming landscape.

The concept of a "farming system" was found to be particularly helpful as a framework for understanding how agriculture in Pennsylvania evolved. A "farming system" approach gathers physical, social, economic, and cultural factors together under the assumption that all these factors interact to create the agricultural landscape of a given historical era. Physical factors like topography, waterways, soils, and climate set basic conditions for agriculture. Markets and transportation shape production too. Other components, equally important but sometimes less tangible, form part of a "farming system." For example, cultural values (including those grounded in ethnicity) influence the choices farm families make and the processes they follow. So do ideas, especially ideas about the land. Social relationships, especially those revolving around gender, land tenure, labor systems, and household structure, are crucial dimensions of a farming system. Political environments, too, affect agriculture.

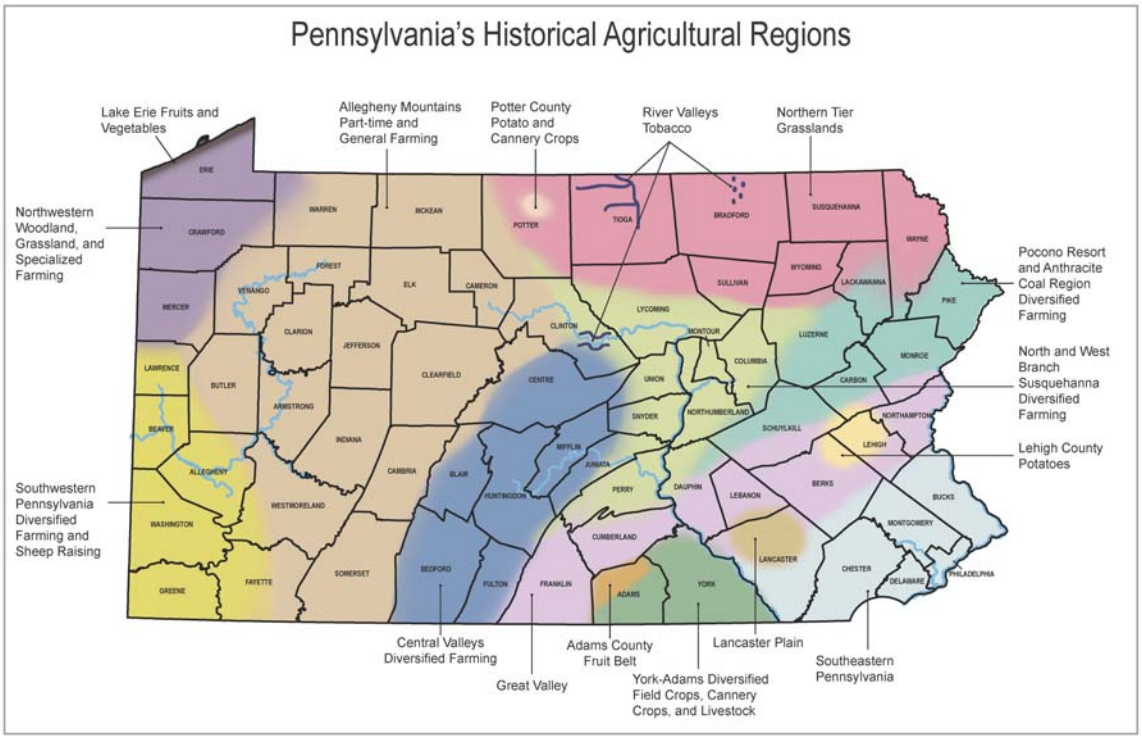
The idea of a "farming system" opens the way to a more comprehensive and accurate interpretation of the historic rural Pennsylvania landscape. For example, because the notion of a "farming system" includes land tenure and mechanization levels, we can identify a distinctive region in the heart of the state where sharecropping and high mechanization levels supported a cash-grain and livestock feeding system. This allows us to interpret the tenant houses, "mansion" houses, multiple barn granaries, large machine sheds, and crop rotation patterns that typify this region. Or, by including cultural forces as part of a system, we can differentiate a three-bay "English" barn from a three-bay German "ground" barn. By attending to labor systems, we can appropriately interpret the Adams and Erie fruit-belt areas that relied on migrant workers. And so on. So whether we seek to interpret German Pennsylvania, the "Yorker" northern tier, home

dairying areas where women dominated, or tobacco farming in Lancaster County, the "farming system" approach is key to understanding all aspects of the rural Pennsylvania farm landscape—not only the house and barn.

Identification of Historic Agricultural Regions

The "Types of Farming" maps published in 1934 and 1946 identified areas based on soil types, topography, markets, climate, and commodity production. These helped to establish clear regional boundaries to the extent that topography, climate, and soil types set basic conditions for agriculture, and they also aided in identifying 20th century production patterns. However, as we have seen, the agricultural economists who created the maps were mainly interested in production and markets; they did not take into account non-market productions, not to mention other important factors which shaped the landscape, especially ethnicity, labor patterns, and land tenure. Moreover, the maps did not capture earlier trends. To address these gaps, other data were obtained or analyzed with the concept of a "farming system" in mind. For example, cultural geographers' work informed the analysis of settlement patterns and ethnic groups.[2] Data on farm tenancy and mechanization levels were obtained from the census. Local histories and archival materials were mined for information on patterns of labor, foodways, and ethnic customs. (For more detail on this process, see Part H, Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods). Together, these resources were used to outline historic agricultural regions. While boundaries are not hard and fast, in general these regions share soil types, topography, and climate. They also possess in common historical production patterns, social makeup, land tenure customs, labor forces, and cultural makeup.

[2] Work of the following was especially valuable: Mark Hornberger, Joseph Glass, Wilbur Zelinsky, Pierce Lewis, Richard Pillsbury, Edward Muller, and James Lemon. Their work is listed in the project bibliography.

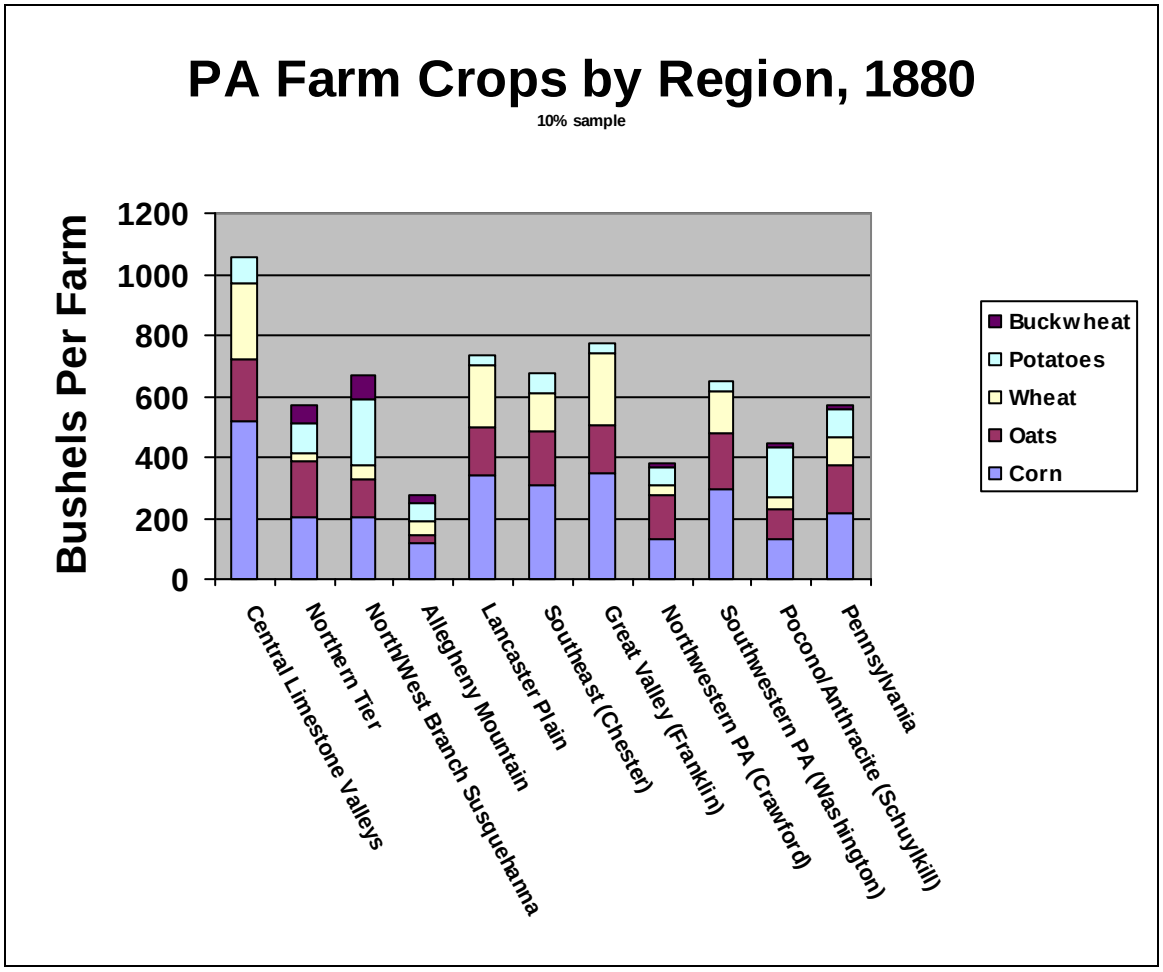


Brief Description of Historic Agricultural Regions

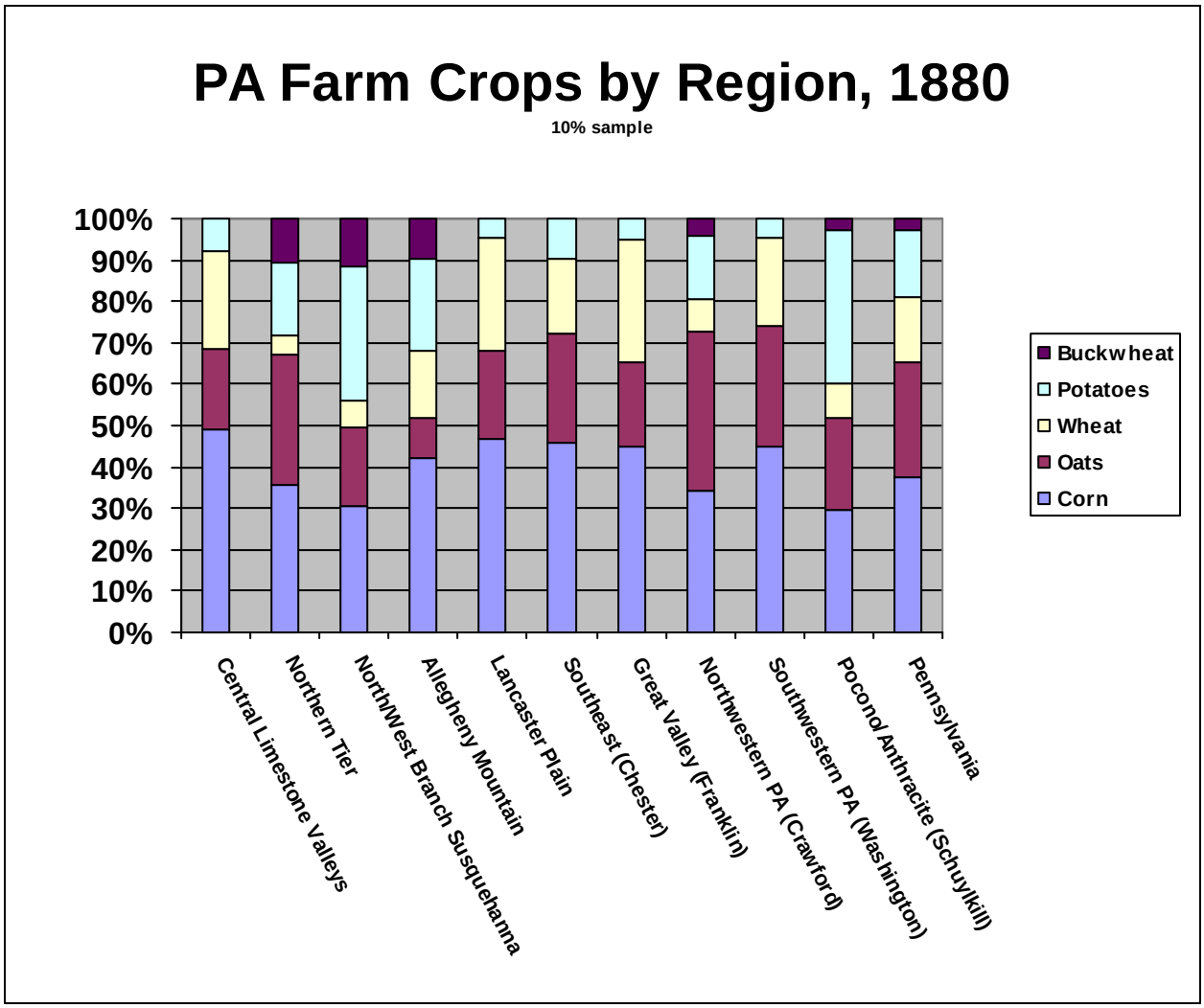
The full flowering of distinctive agricultural regions in Pennsylvania occurred only in the mid 19th century. Where farm production is concerned, regional differences clearly emerged not so much in the product mix itself, but in the proportions within that mix. Census figures showed that in any given census year, virtually all Pennsylvania farms recorded the same basic crop and livestock mix; in 1850, almost everybody raised wheat, rye, corn, oats, buckwheat, potatoes, and hay; and reported horses, cattle (for milk and meat), swine, and sheep. Regions historically took shape as hundreds, sometimes thousands, of farms in a given area raised products in a characteristic proportion. So for example, a typical Columbia County farm, in the Susquehanna North and West Branch region, carried far more swine than in Greene County, where the favored animal was likely to be the sheep. A typical Bradford County farm, in the Northern Tier, had far more hay and pasture land than in Centre County, where cropland took up a much bigger percentage of farmland. Other factors besides a crop or product mix also influence landscape. Once this basic groundwork for understanding diversity of production is established, it becomes possible to contemplate how to integrate other forces that shaped historic agricultural regions.

A visual presentation helps to clarify the nature of Pennsylvania's diverse farm production. Below are two charts showing 1880 census-derived production patterns for the major regions discussed in this context. They show data on a per-farm basis. The data was organized this way because it is more useful than aggregate data, because totals create distortions based on simple geographic size. A large county or township will usually show greater production, even if at the individual farm level, agriculture was

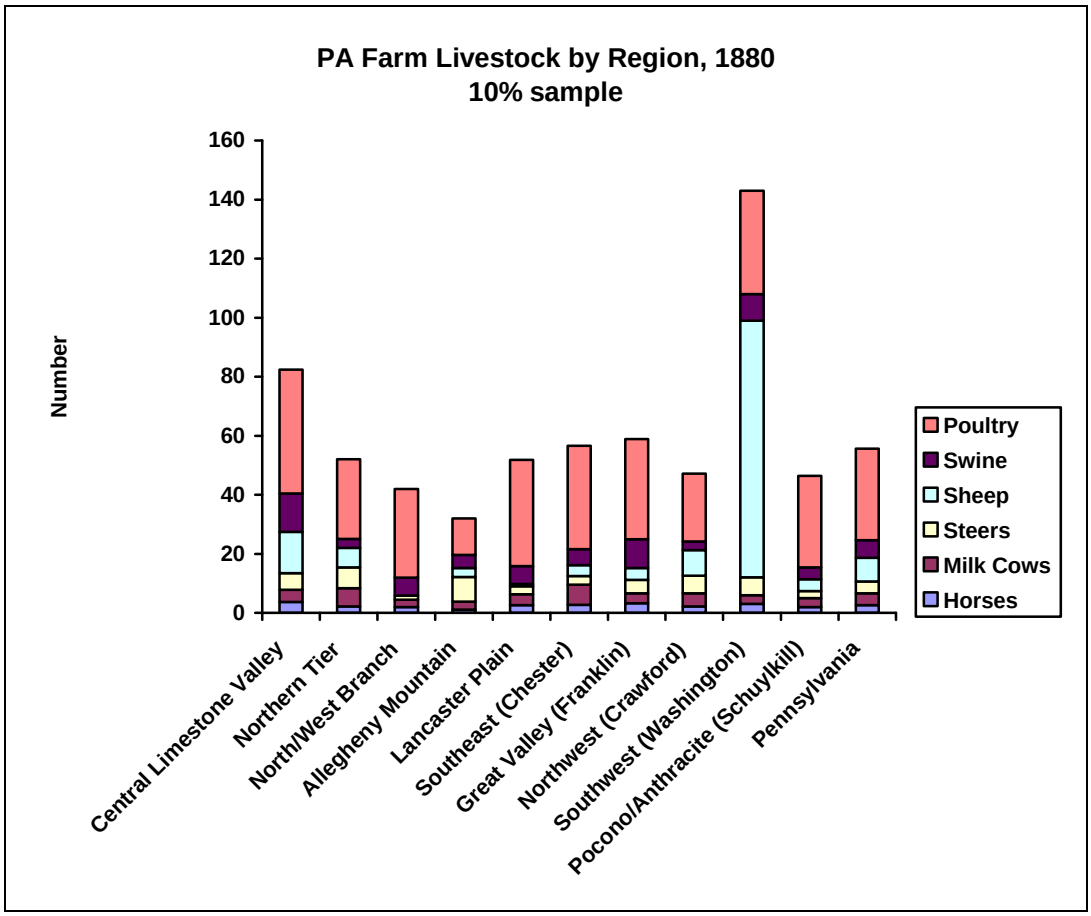
comparatively unproductive. Of course, average farm size did vary from one region to another, and this is significant; but overall, in Pennsylvania the variation in farm size was far less than in many other parts of the US.



The differences are due in part (but not entirely) to variations in farm size.



This chart shows how the same crops were grown throughout the state, but the proportions varied considerably. For example, potatoes were more important in the regions with access to markets in mining and industrial towns. Buckwheat and oats were grown in cooler regions with poorer soils.



Except for the sheep region, there were subtle variations in the livestock mix. Regions closer to large urban markets, for example, had more poultry in their mix, while dairy cattle were more important in the southeast and in the north.

Sixteen Historic Agricultural Regions have been analyzed using in-depth primary source research and field work combined with a "farming systems" approach. These are the Northern Tier Grassland Region; Central Limestone Valleys Diversified Farming Region; North and West Branch Susquehanna Diversified Farming Region; Potter County Potato and Cannery Crop Specialty Area; River Valleys Diversified Agriculture and Tobacco Culture Region; Allegheny Mountain Part-Time and General Farming Region; Northwestern Pennsylvania Woodland, Grassland, and Specialized Farming Region; Southwestern Pennsylvania Diversified Farming and Sheep Raising Region; the Lake Erie Fruit and Vegetable Belt; the Adams County Fruit Belt; Pocono Resort and Anthracite Coal Region; Lancaster Plain region; Southeastern Pennsylvania Region; Great Valley Region; Lehigh County Potatoes region; and York-Adams County Diversified Field Crops, Cannery Crops, and Livestock Region.

Though overlap surely occurs (especially in the 20th century), each of these areas has its own chronological development, and has characteristics that distinguish it from the rest. For example, agriculture in Southeastern Pennsylvania was always driven by proximity to Philadelphia; wheat, then dairy products were the center of a diversified agriculture catering to urban consumers. The Northern Tier Grassland area was shaped not only by

the limitations of glaciated soil and access to distant urban markets, but by Yankee/Yorker culture. Farm households in the North and West Branch Susquehanna Diversified Farming region followed a diversified strategy that featured hogs and corn and catered to nearby markets in industrial towns. They mechanized early, perhaps because of competition for labor. In the Central Limestone Valleys, Pennsylvania German cultural influence was strong, and customs of share tenancy and rich limestone soil permitted one generation after another to raise wheat and livestock in a highly mechanized farming system. For a brief time in scattered river valley bottoms in the north and center of the state, tobacco culture brought significant alterations to farming patterns, and to landscapes, creating the River Valleys Diversified Agriculture and Tobacco Culture Region. Potter County's specialty system of seed potatoes and cannery crops flourished in the 20th century, and for a time relied upon African American migrant labor. In the poor soils of the Allegheny Mountain Diversified Part-time and General Farming region, mining and manufacturing households used farming as a means to ensure family subsistence when wages were low. Along the Lake Erie shore, the Lake Erie Fruit and Vegetable Belt developed, taking advantage of suitable soils and a long growing season to produce fruits and vegetables, especially Concord grapes. First local women, then migrant workers furnished the labor force. In Northwestern Pennsylvania, wet and glaciated soils prompted diversified farming and eventually dairying for emerging urban markets. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, rugged topography combined with climatic conditions to encourage diversified farming and fine-wool sheep raising. In the Adams County Fruit Belt, favorable topography and soils fostered first a diverse fruit-growing region, then a specialized apple growing belt, with the product mainly destined for shipping and for processing. First local people and later Spanish-speaking migrant workers furnished the labor. In the Pocono and Anthracite regions of northeastern Pennsylvania, small-scale truck farming families catered to the summer resort trade and the vast working population, respectively. In the broad Great Valley region, diversified farming with cash wheat growing in the 18th century yielded to a balanced mix of crops, livestock, and poultry. Within the Great Valley, Northwestern Lehigh County became an important center of market potato production in the early 20th century. Pennsylvania Germans left a strong imprint throughout the Great Valley region. On the Lancaster Plain, diversified farming with cash wheat production predominated in the 18th century, but by the 19th century stall feeding and then tobacco farming anchored the agricultural mix on the smallest farms in the state. Pennsylvania Germans were also numerous here. Eastern Adams County and York County had a broadly diversified system oriented toward Baltimore until about 1920 when they became nationwide leaders in poultry production and cannery crops. These farms were significantly smaller than average.

Organization of the narratives

Each context narrative is organized in a similar way. The narrative begins with a short introduction summarizing this Introduction and Overview. This is followed by a description of "Location," then "Climate, Soils, and Topography." The agricultural history of each region is periodized into several major "historical farming systems," with period breaks as determined by historical data. For each "historical farming system," the narrative is organized by the topics Products, Labor and Land Tenure, and Buildings and Landscapes. For convenience, each regional narrative includes Registration Requirements and Property Types for Pennsylvania as a whole and for the region, as

judged for Criterion A for Agriculture. These are followed by Registration Requirements for Criterion B (Association with significant people), Criterion C (Architecture), and Criterion D (Archaeology). Then follows the Statement of Integrity. These last four are identical for all the narratives; they are included for convenience. Finaly, each regional narrative has its own bibliography and endnotes.