

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Van Kirk Farm

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Round Hill Road at Scenery Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Elizabeth N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county Allegheny code 003

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Carroll Wycoff

street & number Round Hill Road, R.D. #3

city, town Elizabeth N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania 15037

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Allegheny County Office Building

street & number Ross Street

city, town Pittsburgh state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Allegheny County Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979-1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Van Kirk Farm is a working farm in rural Elizabeth Township with an exceptional Greek Revival farmhouse dating to c. 1840 and several other notable farm buildings. Set back from Round Hill on rising ground, the farm is highly visible from the surrounding rural area and commands a picturesque view of the small valley in which it is sited. The property is bounded on the north by a ridge with fields beyond; on the east by Pennsylvania Route 48, a scenic two-lane road with a Victorian church and cemetery beyond; on the south by Round Hill Road with fields beyond; and on the west by the Hutchinson Farm, another nineteenth century farm complex. In addition to the farmhouse, the Van Kirk Farm has a brick springhouse west of the house; a small frame building east of the house; a small board and batten house to the northeast; and a large frame barn, two small frame out-buildings, and a modern garage, all to the north. The frame buildings probably date to the mid to late nineteenth century. The overall visual effect is of a nineteenth century working dairy farm with excellent integrity.

The house consists of a main rectangular section and a perpendicular rear ell. It is constructed of red brick laid in common bond atop a high basement, with a foundation of coursed stone blocks with a dressed stone watertable. Its roof is covered with standing seam tin. There are two interior chimneys at each end of the gable roof, as well as two chimneys on the rear ell. Windows throughout the house are six-over-six double-hung sash, with stone sills and lintels. The tall facade windows retain their original glass and have original panelled shutters.

The ell projects from the northwest rear of the house. It has a steep half gable roof which slants from a high two-story wall on the west, which continues the west wall of the main part of the house, to overhang a one story porch on the east. A dip in the roofline where the ell joins the west wall of this main section of the house, and the somewhat narrower proportions of doors and windows of the ell, suggest that the ell may be a later addition to the house. There is, however, no discernable break in the brickwork of the house's west wall.

The front portico is the house's most distinguished feature, with four slender fluted Doric columns bearing a dentilled entablature and flat roof. The central door is four-panelled with a tall single-pane transom and narrow sidelights. There are dentils between the transom and the top of the door.

A door on the rear elevation is opposite the main entrance. It has a stone lintel, no transom, but sidelights similar to those at the front door.

The rear porch--recessed beneath the roofline of the ell--features early square posts and an early cornice, with a simple board railing. The underside of the porch roof is tin in rectangular panels. A transomed door is located towards the middle of each side of the ell. Attached to the end of the ell is a small one-story brick section, formerly a wash house.

The interior of the house remains largely intact. The plan of the main section has a center hall with staircase flanked by two rooms on either side. The ell contains two rooms on the first floor with attic rooms above.

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Original interior woodwork includes the staircase, door and window surrounds, cupboards, mantels, and baseboards. The door surrounds are Classical in design with smooth attached pilasters and a slightly peaked, pediment-like entablature. On the east side of the house, a pair of double doors separates the two rooms. There is an approximately twelve-foot ceiling in the central section of the house, though it has been dropped in several of the rooms without apparent damage to the woodwork. The mantels have the same attached pilaster motif as the door surrounds; one has been marbled. Some of the doors have been grained to resemble various woods. The staircase has a smooth railing, simple balusters, and a newel post with a bulbous base. In the kitchen there are built-in cupboards and the house's largest fireplace (now enclosed) which has a simple mantel shelf.

The springhouse, located west of the main house, is two stories tall, of brick, with first and second story doors on its north end, sheltered by an extension of the gabled wood roof. There is a diamond-shaped ventilator on the brickwork on the south end.

On the east side of the main house is a one-room frame building of cove lap siding with a corrugated metal roof. It serves storage purposes. An open wooden shed is sited beyond it to the southeast.

North of the main house is a two story board and batten house on a high foundation, banked into the hillside. It has a two-by-one bay configuration with a one-bay shed extension on its north end, and a chimney at the north end of the main section. The building has been completely remodeled inside.

Sited near the board and batten house are a corn crib, wood garage, and the barn. The last is banked into a hillside and has a four-by-five bay configuration and a central rooftop ventilator.

Between the main house and the barn is a modern metal garage, the only non-historic building on the site.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics:government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1840

Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Van Kirk Farm is one of Allegheny County's better examples of a nineteenth century farm. Possessing excellent integrity of site, the complex includes an architecturally important main house of c. 1840, one of the county's better examples of the sparsely represented Greek Revival style. With its four nineteenth century outbuildings and a little-changed site, the Van Kirk Farm is a rare survivor recalling the period of the area's initial settlement when most of Allegheny County was a rural area of scattered farms.

The farmhouse occupies a unique architectural niche in Allegheny County as the only surviving Greek Revival farmhouse.¹ Represented by a mere handful of commercial and institutional buildings in and around Pittsburgh, the Greek Revival style has even fewer residential representatives in the county. Among the county's notable houses from the early nineteenth century, only the Nicholas Way house in Edgeworth Borough and the Isaac Lightner house in Shaler Township show much Greek Revival influence. Actually late Federal in design, the Way and Lightner houses were primarily built as country houses rather than farm dwellings and have lost their rural context.

The Van Kirk house exhibits notable elements of the Greek Revival on both the exterior and the interior. On the exterior, the Greek Revival is fully realized in the elegant three-bay portico which is centered on the south facade. The fluted Doric columns beneath a dentilled cornice clearly express the Classical ideal of the Greek Revival. The front door, with a tall transom and narrow sidelights, is framed and given added dignity by the portico. The extra-height six-over-six windows continue the formal theme.

That little else on the house's exterior can be attributed to stylistic concerns is an indication of the way in which architectural styles were employed in rural Allegheny County in the early nineteenth century. Style was used to give added stature to otherwise simple houses. In this case, the simplicity of the Greek Revival style is well adapted to the farmhouse's straightforward needs. Without the civilizing effect of the portico the Van Kirk house would seem almost mundane on the exterior, at least from the rear, where vernacular design prevails and the ell slopes awkwardly downward from its tall two-story western wall. But with the portico, the house easily assumes the air of an elegant high-style villa.

On the interior, the house's center hall plan—with opposite entrances on the front and rear, flanked by two rooms on either side—exhibits the symmetry of plan typical of the style. The fireplaces are located in the center of the gable end wall of each room, and the wide doors between rooms are centered on their walls. In the rear ell, the single doors are also centered on the wall except where that is precluded by a fireplace. Overall, the house exhibits the rigid symmetry characteristic of the Greek Revival and seldom seen in houses built after 1850.

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The Greek Revival influence is seen in the interior detailing as well, such as the door surrounds and mantels, which unifies the interior and connects it stylistically to the exterior. The attached pilaster motif appears throughout, and is both well-executed and well-preserved. Flanking the doorways, the pilasters support a slightly peaked pediment-like entablature; on the mantelpieces, the pilasters hold a simple flat shelf. The relative shallowness, smoothness, and delicate detail of the woodwork makes it a good example of its style.

The other buildings of the farm are important because they reinforce the integrity and context of the entire farm. The most interesting, perhaps, is the small board and batten house, which exhibits a simple but seldom seen use of materials. The barn is relatively large and unusual for its degree of maintenance and its continued usage. The nearby wood shed and corn crib supplement its function. The one-room wood structure located beside the main house may have served as a workshop of some kind. Though it postdates the house, its overlap siding and peaked window surrounds suggest a c. 1875 date of construction. The brick springhouse, distinguished by its brickwork ventilators, is a very unusual type in this region, where most springhouses are of stone.

As a document of social and economic history, the Van Kirk Farm suggests the rural way of life in Allegheny County in the nineteenth century. Samuel Van Kirk (1758-1836), a Revolutionary War veteran, is the earliest known Van Kirk to settle in the region. He arrived in the early nineteenth century, and he, his wife Mary, and thirty-two other Van Kirks are buried in Round Hill Cemetery, immediately east of the Van Kirk Farm. The land on which the present farm sits was owned by Joseph Van Kirk (1774-1846), possibly Samuel's son. Joseph amassed a large tract of land, beginning with 112 acres in 1813. He bought nearly 300 more acres by 1823; his later acquisitions bordered Samuel Van Kirk's land. When Joseph died in 1846, his estate was settled between his wife and seven children by a Memorandum of Agreement which includes the property nominated herein and discusses a "mansion house." It seems unlikely that Joseph would have built himself a "mansion house" at age 72; one suspects the house was built some years before his death. Therefore, the c. 1840 date of construction is probably a conservative one. As specified on the Memorandum of Agreement, Joseph's widow and unmarried daughter were to live in the "mansion house" until their deaths, although ownership of the house and surrounding land fell to sons Asher and John Van Kirk and, eventually, to Asher alone. Asher had already acquired nearby property of his own; eventually he moved to Pittsburgh. It may be that the "mansion house" was the physical culmination of the Van Kirks' contribution to the region.

An 1855 map of the area shows a "Van Kirk Lathe" located not far from the house. Whether or not there is a connection between the Greek Revival woodwork in the Van Kirk house--the distinguished fluted columns of the portico, in particular--and a family lathe business is the interesting subject of speculation on the largely unknown enterprises of this family.

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The Van Kirk Farm is elevated from the commonplace to the locally significant by its fine and regionally rare Greek Revival farmhouse, its largely intact collection of nineteenth century farm buildings and structures, and its land which is believed to have been farmed since the early nineteenth century. Enhancing the farm's significance is the rural context in which it remains. Adjacent to the farm on the west is the Hutchinson Farm which dates at least to the 1820s (although the existing farmhouse is early Victorian) and is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. When Joseph Hutchinson died in 1823, neighbor Joseph Van Kirk was a trustee of his estate, indicating the longstanding natural relationship between the two properties. Today, both jointly and individually, the farms represent a nineteenth century agricultural environment which has virtually disappeared from Allegheny County. The Van Kirk and Hutchinson Farms, and the Gilfillan Farm already listed on the National Register, are the three most intact nineteenth century farms in Allegheny County.

Context for evaluating nineteenth century farms in Allegheny County was provided by the Allegheny County Survey of Historic Resources conducted in 1979-1984 by Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. In the ten most rural municipalities surveyed in the county, only six farms, in addition to the Hutchinson and Van Kirk and Gilfillan Farms, were recommended for listing in the National Register. In all cases, these six farms included a nineteenth century farmhouse and several outbuildings situated in a rural landscape. Five of these six farms have nineteenth century brick, vernacular Greek Revival farmhouses.

Although other nineteenth-century farmhouses were identified in the Allegheny County Survey, including some of individual architectural distinction, these examples have lost most of their outbuildings and do not retain their character as historic farms.

1. The so-called vernacular Greek Revival house form--two-story, five-bay, gable roofed, with a tripartite entry, symmetrical fenestration, and virtually no ornamentation--is ubiquitous in the county.
2. The other farms considered to be eligible for the National Register are the following: the Schlag Farm in Ross Township; the Bedell Farm in Jefferson Borough; the Applegate and Sutton Farms in Forward Township; the Torrence Farm in Elizabeth Township; and Scratchwell Farm in North Fayette Township.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Van Trump, James D. and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. Landmark Architecture of Allegheny County. (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1967), pp. 173, 227, 246.
(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 45

Quadrangle name Donora

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	1	7
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5	9	6	9	2	1	0
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4	4	5	4	8	8	1	0
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5	9	6	3	5	0
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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated acreage is bounded as follows:

Beginning at a point at the northwest corner of Rt. 48 and Round Hill Road, proceed west along the north side of Round Hill Road approximately 1,000 feet to the western boundary.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (see continuation sheet)

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christina Schmidlapp

organization Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation date July 30, 1985

450 The Landmarks Building

street & number One Station Square telephone (412) 471-5808

city or town Pittsburgh state Pennsylvania 15219

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Dr. Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date

For NPS 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

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Fischer, D.R., compiler. Round Hill Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. (McKeesport, 1970).

Neff, Sidney S. and S. McRae. Map of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania with the names of Property Holders From Actual Surveys by Sidney S. Neff and S. McRae. (Philadelphia: R.L. Barnes, 1855).

Deeds. Allegheny County Office Building, Pittsburgh.

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of lot 1572-F-191, as defined in the Allegheny County Block and Lot System. Proceed in a straight line northwest along this boundary line approximately 1900 feet to a point at the northwest corner of the lot. Proceed east along the northern boundary of the same lot approximately 2000 feet to a point at the northeast corner of the lot, and then proceed south along the eastern boundary of this same lot approximately 200 feet to a point on the west side of Rt. 48. Continue south along the west side of Rt. 48 approximately 1850 feet (this coincides with the eastern boundary of lot 1572-F-191) to the point of origin.

This boundary was chosen to include all of the present owner's property north of Round Hill Road. The area south of the road was not included because it is separated from the rest of the property by the road and has no buildings on it.

VAN KIRK FARM
Allegheny County

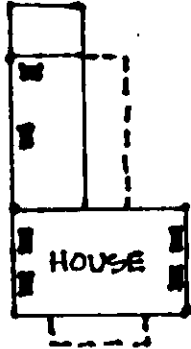
SITE PLAN



ROUND HILL ROAD

ROUTE 48

SPRINGHOUSE



HOUSE

GARAGE



SHED



CORN CRIB



BARN



SMALL FRAME HOUSE



SHED



FRAME BUILDING



