

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Meldahl House
other names/site number _____**2. Location**street & number Washington Bottom Road off WV Rt. 892 ☐ not for publication
city, town Washington ☒ vicinity
state West Virginia code 54 county Wood code 107 zip code 26181**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>2</u>	<u> </u> sites
<u>3</u>	<u> </u> structures
	<u> </u> objects
	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register _____**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____

Date 3/11/91

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Agriculture	Residential
Agricultural processing	
7. Description	
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
American Four Square	foundation stone
	walls wood frame
	roof shingle (asphalt)
	other
Describe present and historic physical appearance.	

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Meldahl House, Wood Co., WV

Situated off the west side of West Virginia State Route 892, a few miles south of Washington and about a mile north of New England and adjacent to the tiny community of Meldahl, in Wood County, West Virginia, is a historic property containing a ca. 1920 American Foursquare residence, a wine cellar constructed ca. 1860, and several other ancillary buildings relating to the historic Meldahl property.

The house, a Foursquare residence, is situated on the site of the original Meldahl House, which burned during the 1890's. A two and a half story structure built over a full basement, it has horizontal wood siding and all four sides are three bays wide. Windows, original to the structure, are one over one. Each elevation contains a hipped dormer with twin single pane windows and there is a central stone chimney emerging from the center of the hipped roof. On the first floor, two elevations have four column single story porticos with squared columns and two squared pilasters, while the other two elevations contain a single bay one story porch with two squared columns and two squared pilasters. The house stands on a stone foundation, which was the foundation of the original Meldahl House. The residence was constructed by local builder Lewis Fankhauser. The interior of the house contains large rectangular rooms with handsome hardwood floors and finish. There is a small one story addition to the house, with horizontal wood siding, that is compatible with the remainder of the house.

Probably the most significant of the extant structures on the property is the wine cellar. Constructed of cut stone, the cellar is thought to have had a skylight and an underground ventilations system consisting of subterranean tunnels, though neither is presently in evidence. It has a stone vaulted ceiling in relatively good condition.

A wooden gazebo, harkening back to the original owners of the property, is also in evidence. A non-contributing wooden, vertically sided garage of late construction is directly adjacent to the residence. It is single story, with a front gabled roof and contains a small round ventilation window in the upper eaves of the front elevation.

These buildings, taken together with the gently rolling agricultural lands surrounding it and the Ohio River glistening in the distance, represent a once flourishing local industry in Wood County and that industry's association with the significant Meldahl family.

8: Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally

☐ statewide

☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria

☒ A

☒ B

☐ C

☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)

☐ A

☐ B

☐ C

☐ D

☐ E

☐ F

☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Ethnic Heritage (Danish/German)

Period of Significance

1850-1923

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Christian Emil Meldahl; Captain Anthony Meldahl

Architect/Builder

House Builder: Lewis Fankhauser

Wine Cellar Builder: Charlie Behrens

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☒ See continuation sheet

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Meldahl House, Wood Co., WV

The Meldahl property in Wood County, West Virginia, meets National Register Criterion A as the focal point for the once-flourishing wine and grape industry of Wood County. The property also meets Criterion B for its association with the Meldahl family, who were key figures in not only the afore-mentioned wine industry and the local Danish-American community, but in the history of the Mid-Ohio River traffic.

In 1870, J.H. Diss Debar, designer of the great seal of the State of West Virginia and the state's first commissioner of immigration, released The Immigrant Handbook, a piece which he had written and designed to lure new settlers to West Virginia. In it, he described the grape growing area of Wood County inhabited by the Munchmeyer family as one of the new state's resources. The Munchmeyer's were German emigres from Mecklenburg, a German duchy near the Danish border.

About two decades before the release of Debar's book, Christian Emil Meldahl, a Danish immigrant who had married into the Munchmeyer family, moved to this area. Meldahl had close ties to the Danish Royal Court; one of his brothers was commander-in-chief of the Danish Army during the 1864 war with Prussia and Austria, and another brother was Lord Chamberlain to King Christian IX. Spurning these high connections, Meldahl came to Wood County and purchased property adjacent to the Munchmeyer lands, began to farm, and was soon one of southern Wood County's leading farmers. He built a winery and wine cellar on the southern part of his property (which adjoined Munchmeyer's) and established vineyards. The grapes he did not make into wine he shipped to Cincinnati and to Pittsburgh, made easier by the fact that his farm bordered on the Ohio River.

By the decade of the 1880's, one of Christian Emil Meldahl's children, Anthony ("Tony") Meldahl (1855-1923), who had spent his youth on the farm, had begun a career on the Ohio River which would culminate with his recognition as the most famous riverboat captain plying the waters between the Steel City and the Queen City. He became Master and Pilot of the U.S. Army Engineer Steamer Cayuga in 1916 and served on her until his death. In 1962, the newly completed locks and dam on the Ohio at New Richmond were opened and dedicated as the Captain Anthony Meldahl Locks and Dam.

The surviving structure of the once the elaborate winery is a vaulted stone wine cellar. It is enclosed with a fence built to protect it from vandals. It is located to the rear of a house which, though built in 1920, stands on the foundations of the house built by Christian Emil Meldahl in the 1850's. Inside the basement of the present structure can be seen the entrance to a tunnel which connected the wine cellar with the house. The original Meldahl House burned in the mid-1890's.

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Meldahl House, Wood County, WV

The significance of the Meldahl property to the agricultural and ethnic history of West Virginia and of Wood County is probably best summed up in a letter to the editor of the Parkersburg Daily Times which was published by that newspaper on Monday, July 10, 1871:

" I had occasion recently, in company with some friends, to visit the lower part of this county for the first time in the last ten years and on my route thither, passed by the farms and residences of several of our German citizens, located in the vicinity of 'Washington's Bottom'.

The recent rains had cooled the atmosphere and freshened the fields, and never did the country present a more charming aspect.

Time has wrought a surprising change in this respect. Many an unsightly spot of ten years ago has entirely disappeared and its place is found the neat dwelling, newly painted or whitewashed, surrounded with its plat of flowers, trees and garden decorations. The presence of the rose-bush, grape vine, bird-house, lattice porch, bright blossoms and general tidiness, are the unmistakable indications of a German home. Owing to the fact that a new road had been opened since our former visit to this region, we fortunately met with good fortune to lose our way and were thus diverted a few miles from our intended course. The dinner hour found us at the farm of our worthy friends, Messrs. H. and L. MUNCHMEYER. No sooner recognized than we were literally 'taken possession of,' our horses seized and placed beyond our control. After glancing at the 'situation,' we discretely surrendered to the hospitalities from which escape was impossible. The dinner table abounded both with the 'fat of the land' and the 'blood of the grape,' and we flatter ourselves that ample justice was done them. While the merits of the latter were being discussed, we were pleasantly surprised by five of the younger members of the family, who suddenly made their appearance with musical instruments, and entertained us for an hour in a manner that would do justice to professional performers.

Their musical attainments, pleasant faces and happy looks are so many proofs that young life upon the farm is not necessarily a dull routine of cheerless duties. In close proximity to the dwelling of Messrs. MUNCHMEYER we noticed several arrangements designed expressly to afford pleasant recreation for the young folks. Among these were the bowling alley, located under a long row of shade trees, with a vine-clad summer-house at the end; the revolving swing; the ample bird-house with its multitude of canaries; the Apiary, and the flower garden with its rustic decorations. We could but think in observing these that in this age of money-making and practical utility, parents are apt to that children used these rational sports and recreations; but fail to make provision for them. The mind can cherish no sweeter memories than those of a happy childhood home. Let the fate of later life be what it may--wander withersoever we will--

"These memories like glowing sunshine
Their genial warmth impart;
They penetrate the saddest bosom
And drive the shadows from the heart "

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Meldahl House, Wood Co., WV

We were next shown the vineyard of Messrs. MUNCHMEYER, comprising more than twenty acres; the vines are in a most thrifty condition and teeming with promises of an abundant vintage.

After visiting the wine cellar, in which were stored a hundred barrels or more of wine from the Catawba, Muscadine, Concord and Virginia Seedling, and other varieties of grapes, we were assured by Mr. E. MELDAHL, who owns the adjoining beautiful farm, that the Messrs. MUNCHMEYER's cellar did not contain the best evidence of successful wine making. Desiring to have all uncertainty upon so important a point removed, we yielded to their pressing invitation to go with them and see for ourselves. We went, but the question is still an open one; we must reserve our judgement for the present, and possibly will have 'go over the proffs' again before the decision is made.

From what we have already seen, and from information derived from others, it is evident that grape-raising and wine-making are, at no remote period, to become important branches of industry in this county. Would it not be wise in our people to gain all possible information upon the subject, and to this end for those already engaged in the business to form associations, and meet at stated times each year, and compare notes of their experience, and the results of their experiments with the various kinds of grapes. Valuable information could thus be obtained and organizations of the sort would be of immense importance to the less experienced in the business, especially if all the information so communicated should be published and preserved for the benefit of all. A department in your paper opened for the purpose would be read with the greatest interest.

yours truly,

D.L.S."

The real demise of the property began in 1914. In that year Christian Emil Meldahl died and the State of West Virginia passed a law prohibiting the manufacturing and sale of intoxicating liquors.

The period of significance of the property is from ca. 1850, about the time that Christian Emil Meldahl began his grape growing activities on the site, until the death of Captain Anthony Meldahl in 1923. The nearby community of Meldahl is named for this family.

The property later passed out of the hands of the Meldahl family about 1940 and was divided, but the Meldahl house, wine cellar, and its adjacent lands are intact reminders of a once-thriving Wood County industry and the family that rose to significance with that industry.

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Meldahl Wine Cellar

The Meldahl Wine Cellar is a significant structure, dating to the pre-Civil War period in West Virginia. It is the second largest known structure of this type in the state, somewhat smaller than the National Register-listed Dunbar Wine Cellar in Kanawha County. The subterranean portion of the structure is largely intact. Its principal feature is the fine, large cut stone masonry and handsome vaulted roof. Approximately 40' long, 15' high, and 15' wide, the masonry chamber is entered through a low doorway from a rectangular, roofless depression which may be the basement of a once standing, wine industry-related building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # N/A
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # N/A

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approx. two (2) acres

UTM References

A 17 44 110 80 43 4117 00
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bernard L. Allen, Ph.D.(History) and Michael J. Pauley, Historian, SHPO
organization Parkersburg Community Foundation date January 15, 1991
street & number 1521 Washington Avenue telephone (304) 422-8375
city or town Parkersburg state West Virginia zip code 26101

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Meldahl House, Wood Co., WV

Printed

Boso, Charles M. A View of Washington Bottom: A Glance at Blennerhassett Island. Parsons, W.V. McClain Printing Co., 1984.

Captain Anthony Meldahl, the Man and the Locks and Dam. A publication prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and released at the dedication of the dam and locks in 1965.

Census Records for the years 1860 and 1870.

Debar, Joseph H. Diss. The West Virginia Hand-Book and Immigrant's Guide. Parkersburg, W.V. Gibbens Brothers Printers, 1870.

Lake Atlas of Wood County, West Virginia. Philadelphia, 1886.

Meldahl Papers and Photographs. Private Collection owned by William Knighton of Charleston, W.V., a direct descendant of Christian Emil Meldahl.

Summers, George W., Jr. Pages From the Past; Recollections, Traditions and Old Timer's Tales of the Long Ago; Incidents and Episodes in the Early History of West Virginia. Charleston, W.V. Charleston Journal. 1935.

Newspaper Articles: (1) a letter to the editor of the Parkersburg Daily Times, July 10, 1871; (2) Obituary in a Parkersburg paper of C.E. Meldahl's death in 1914; (3) a piece in the Parkersburg Sentinel's Golden Anniversary Edition (1939) summarizing the significance of the Meldahl family for Wood County, W.Va.

Interviews

John Cather (January 11, 1990). Cather often hunted on the property in the 1930's.

William Knighton (Summer of 1987). Done in two phases. First, an examination of the Meldahl Papers and Photographs by Bernard L. Allen, Ph.D. (History) in Allen's office on the WVU-P campus. Second, a field trip to the Meldahl farm with William Knighton and others.

Jack McCoy (January 1990). McCoy is the present owner of the property encompassing the house and the wine cellar. He has gathered a great deal of information about his property and its owners over the years.

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Meldahl House, Wood Co., WV

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

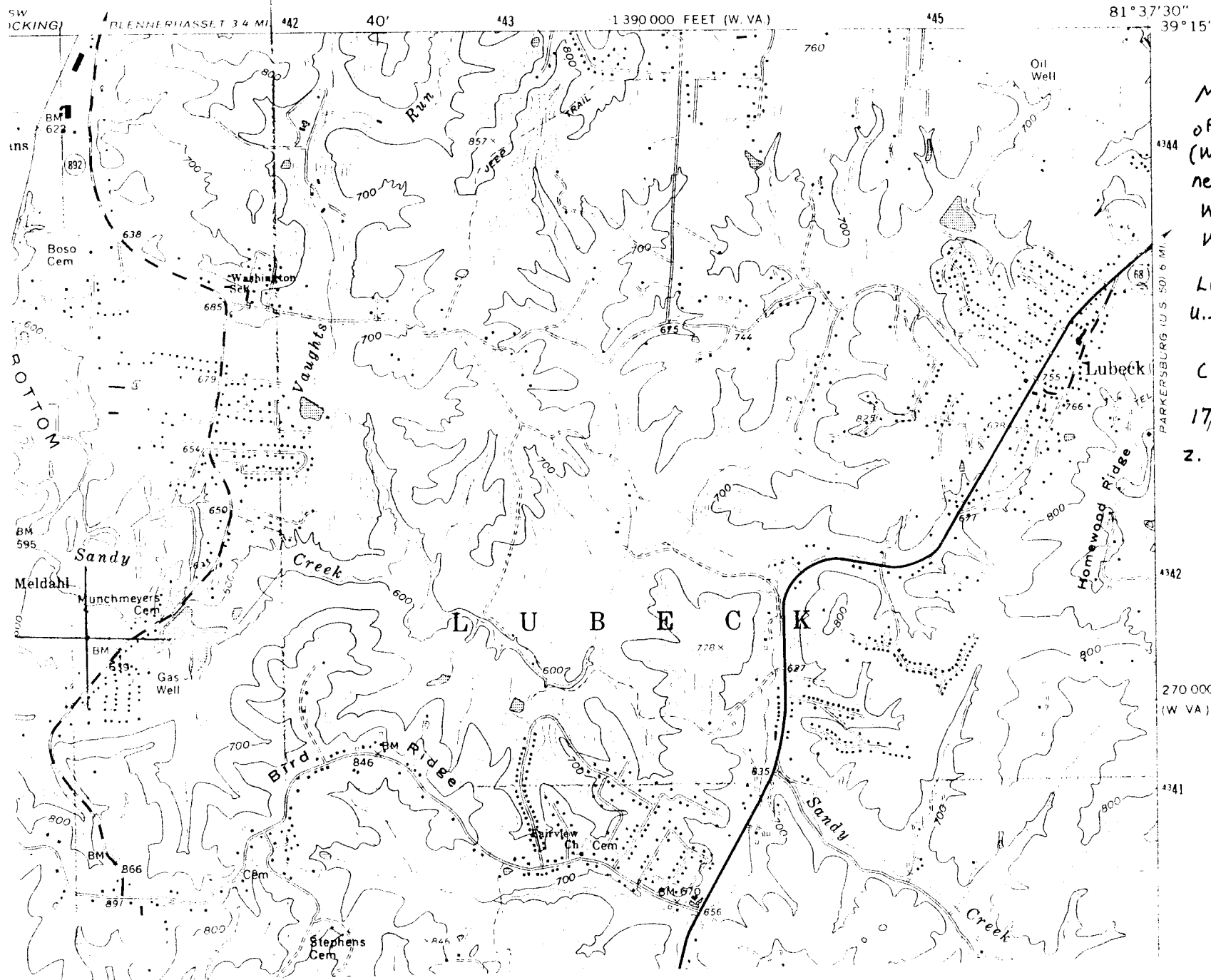
Beginning at a point on the east side of a private gravel road leading to the Meldahl House where said road meets Washington Bottom Road (one thousand feet west of its confluence with State Route 892); thence in a line along the east side of the private road south 347.11 feet; thence in a line due west 248 feet; thence in a line north 414 feet to the south side of Washington Bottom Road; thence along the south side of Washington Bottom Road 208.10 feet to the point of beginning, encompassing an area of approximately two acres.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is drawn to match the deed of Mr. & Mrs. Edward Spencer, present owners of the Meldahl property, and encompasses the Meldahl House, the vaulted wine cellar, the immediate grounds historically associated with the Meldahl family property, as well as the physical egress to the property.

LUBECK QUADRANGLE
WEST VIRGINIA-OHIO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NW-4 BELLEVILLE 15 QUADRANGLE

46621 SE
(PARKERSBURG)



MELDAHL HOUSE
off W.V.S. Rt. 892
(Washington Bottom Rd.)
near Washington
Wood County
West Virginia
Lubeck, W.V.
U.S.G.S. Quadrangle
U.T.M.
Co-ordinates
17/44 ¹⁰⁸ 0/4341700
Z. E. N.



ABDELLA
787/330

$21^{\circ}47' W - 248.00'$

$N 50^{\circ}13' W - 128.00'$

WOOD FRAME GARAGE
22.3' x 29.00'

WINE
CELLAR

NC
GARAGE

ABDELLA
787/330

GRAVEL DRIVE
ENCROACHES 8'

PORCH
30.5' x 10'

PORCH
8.5' x 11'

2-1/2 STORY
WOOD FRAME

HOUSE

PORCH
8.7' x 6.5'

BIGELOW
ET. UX.
703/417

PIPE
(FOUND)
GRAVEL
PARKING

NOTE: THIS PROPERTY
IS NOT LOCATED IN
A FLOOD ZONE.

TO NEW ENGLAND
RIDGE ROAD

$N 40^{\circ}30' E - 208.10'$

TO PARKERSBURG

WASHINGTON BOTTOM ROAD

DATE SURVEYED: 12/15/86

MELDAHL HOUSE

34

SCALE 1" = 50'

PLAT OF ROUTE #1, BOX 145, WASHINGTON

Surveyed for EDWARD B. SPENCER & MARY H. SPENCER

