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To: *Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission*
Date: *December 7, 2006*
From: *David Gilmour, AICP, Historic Preservation Commission Member*
Re: *Analysis of Potential to Designate Wurtz Property (244 Springtown Road) as a Town of New Paltz Local Historic Landmark*

The Wurtz dwelling, 85-87 Springtown Road (Ulster County SBL 08600100030020000000), appears to have sufficient historical and architectural significance and qualities to consider designating the site as a local landmark (Town Law, Chapter 140, ARTICLE XIV Historic Preservation Commission [Added 2-28-2002 by L.L. No. 1-2002], § 140-122. Designation of Landmarks). The locus is shown in Figure #1. The building may qualify for the State and/or National Register. The following descriptions provide preliminary information developed at the request of the Historic Preservation Commission Chair and obtained through basic literature review, records research and observation (it is not based on exhaustive research).



Early site history is documented on local atlases and deeds at the Elting Memorial Library Haviland Heidgerd Historical Collection. The 1853 atlas has a structure on Mountain Rest Road labeled 'G Wurtz', while the atlas of 1858 has this additional (proximate) structure on Springtown Road labeled "G Wurtz". The 1875 atlas lists both as Jacob Wurtz. It appears that the 'G' stands for George, the brother of Jacob, and if my notes are correct the deed for Jacob Wurtz is dated 1859. It is assumed the existing residential dwelling on the site is from 1853 to 1858. While not reviewed, the Town reference librarian indicates period pictures are available for the structure (as noted there are also deeds), which would provide insight into original architectural features and/or early modifications to the façade and rest of the

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structure. A recent picture of the site is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Site Viewed From the East on Springtown Road (August 7, 2006)



There is no direct documentation for this site in the Town of New Paltz, Ulster County, New York, Reconnaissance-Level Historic Survey of August 25, 2004 by Neil Larson & Associates. References to Springtown, on the west side of the Walkill, as an early and enduring farming precinct (page I-2) appear to coincide with concentrations of activity further north, although this site was likely similar in that it had agricultural uses. Notably, in that study the 'Town Period' and 'Village Period' overlap with the probable construction point of this dwelling.

Based on the photographs, it appears the structure is stick built. There seem to be eyebrow style 2nd floor windows and side chimneys, possibly an addition on the south side. It is unclear whether and when features were altered; more analysis is required to determine the integrity and point that renovations may have occurred.

Figure 3 – Another View From Springtown Road (August 7, 2006)



The mid-20th century initiates a unique period in the cultural, historic and architectural significance of the site during its development and utilization as a large chicken farm that was noteworthy at the time. Jacob Kauder emigrated from Pennsylvania and established highly advanced and innovative chicken breeding facilities for the period at this site. Selective breeding and modern equipment were used to raise state of the art (pedigreed world champion) breeding stock and their export eggs. The commercial focus was the exportation of the eggs, nationally and internationally, with the product intended to aid the establishment of breeding stock for purchasers. Consistent with the discussion in the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan,

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October 2005, by the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Committee, et al, these activities signify aspects of the diverse agricultural history and heritage of New Paltz and the region. Progressive agriculture has been part of the regional mix for many decades. Documentation on Kauder's extensive business is also available at the Town Library historical records collection.

The potential architectural significance of the site and vicinity in the 21st century would appear associated with the main barn, other associated out-buildings used for the farming, and the sometimes massive equipment used to farm chickens and incubate eggs. It is not conclusive whether the latter two types of features remain intact. It appears that the main barn from that period is on an adjacent property to the north. Through a review of aerial photographs and windshield surveys along Springtown Road, it is not possible to discern whether some of the outbuildings and mechanical equipment remain on or adjacent to the site to the north and northwest.

Another aspect of the site history is the fame and notoriety of its former owner and inhabitant, Floyd Patterson (Born January 4, 1935 and died May 11, 2006), an internationally recognized sports personage. Patterson was an Olympic gold medalist, the youngest heavyweight champion ever, and the first American boxer to hold the heavyweight championship twice. He is also a visible African-American figure in the second half of the century. Mr. Patterson resided at the property for more than 20 years. A biographical description is provided at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floyd_Patterson. It is also possible that physical alterations to the property during the period of Patterson's residence contribute to the site architectural history. Specifically, an extensive gymnasium may have been developed which would be novel or unique for the period 1950 to 1970, if applicable.

In conclusion, there is a rich architectural and cultural/historic context for this site. Prior activities contribute to the mid- to late-1800's history of the Springtown Road corridor, including widespread agriculture. The latter agrarian activity and personages are also noteworthy. Detailed documentation could be developed to evaluate the potential to designate it as a local landmark or nominate it for the State or National Registers. No portion of the initial research above involved consultations with the owners regarding their potential interest and support for such designations. Nor was there communications with SHPO officials, such as to ascertain if there were prior applications for the site, such as to determine its eligibility for the National Register.