In February and March 1994, I was staff architectural conservator for the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and inspected seven structures at Meadowcroft Museum of Rural Life. An inspection of the Pine Bank Covered Bridge (1871), Miller house (c.1800), Miller schoolhouse (1834), Hamilton house (late 18th-early 19th c.), King house (1850-1860), Scott cobbler shop (1870-1910), and the Wilson chair shop (1830s) assessed the condition of each building, developed some preliminary recommendations for their preservation and maintenance, and obtained cost estimates for the recommended work.

Prior to the field inspection of the structures, I reviewed archival information, previous documentation and condition assessments, and recommendations for repair work and maintenance. Written records such as "A History of Meadowcroft Village 1956 to 1969, Taken From a Diary and Work Journal Which Albert Miller Kept Over the Years" and conversations with Albert Miller and Meadowcroft staff-persons Dan Freas and David Scofield provided valuable information on the provenance of the structures and their reconstruction at Meadowcroft.

According to Albert Miller, some liberties had been taken in the reconstruction of the buildings at Meadowcroft. For example, the Miller log house was rebuilt with a front porch, which was not an original feature. Although the logs were taken from the original Miller house, a variety of salvaged building materials were also used for its reconstruction. The fireplace stones were...
Meadowcroft Village was developed to recreate and preserve a built environment representative of 19th-century rural life.

original construction and that they had been disassembled and reconstructed.

The inspection identified common patterns of deterioration and typical conditions — those that were prevalent throughout all of the structures. Most of the observed conditions were associated with moisture-related deterioration which, in most cases, was the result of site conditions and inappropriate reconstruction details. In some areas, the bottom logs or sills directly contacted soil that was improperly graded upward and toward the buildings. Improper grading also caused rainwater run-off from the roofs to pond directly along the base of buildings. The Hamilton and King houses, the Scott cobbler shop, and the Wilson chair shop were situated in wooded and shaded areas where their building materials retained moisture and they were particularly susceptible to deterioration and biological growth such as algae and moss.

Based on the conditions observed during the technical assessment, preliminary recommendations for the preservation and maintenance of the surveyed structures were developed. The procedures and materials for any initial remedial work were recommended on the basis to preserve, stabilize, and maintain the structures as they had been reconstructed and on their present sites. Recommendations were not made in accordance with interpretive issues or to provide historically accurate restorations during the initial work phase.

In addition to identifying typical conditions, recommended remedial work and maintenance was prioritized according to the severity and possible impact of certain conditions with the control or elimination of water intrusion a priority for all of the inspected structures.