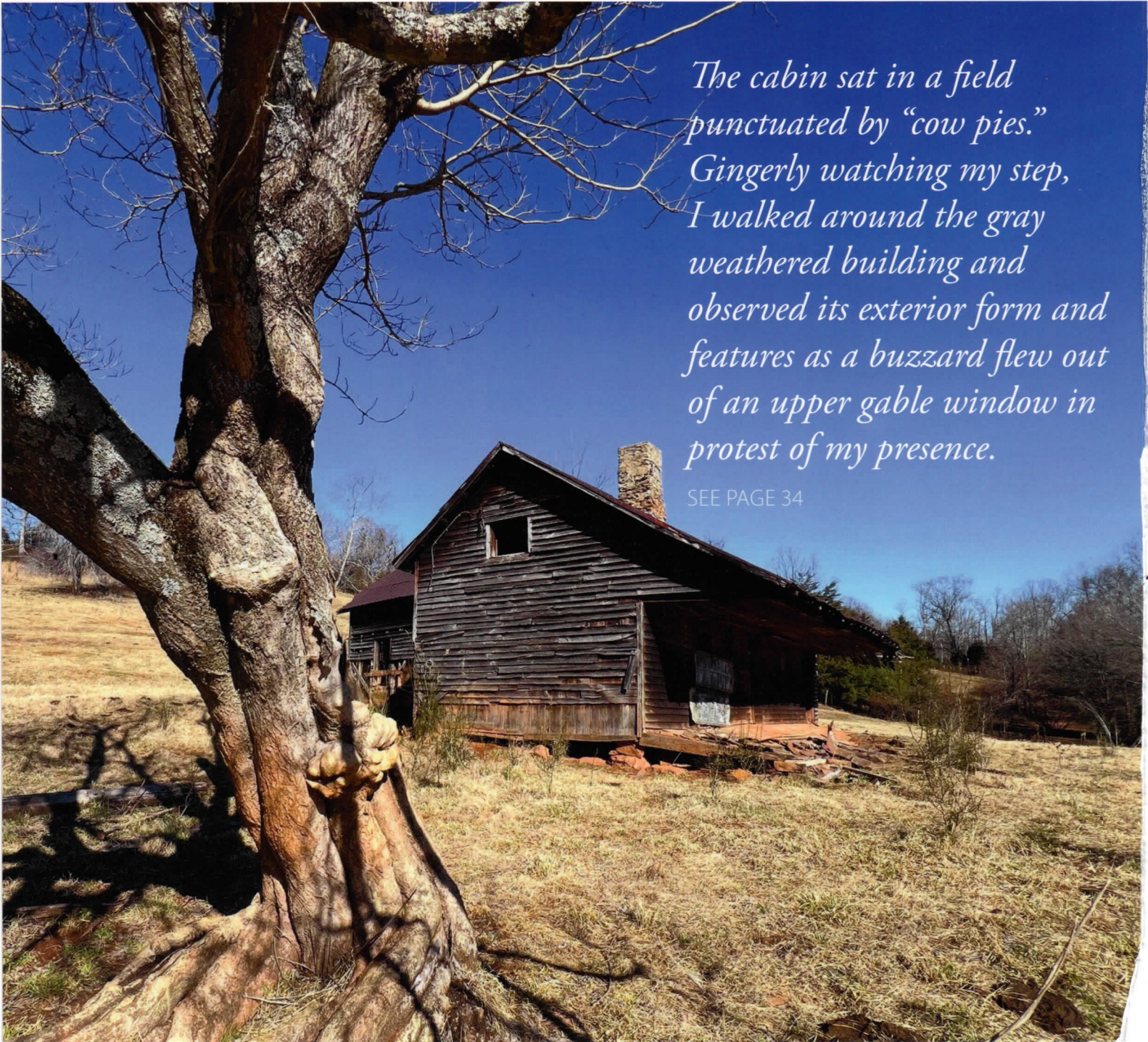



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*The cabin sat in a field
punctuated by “cow pies.”
Gingerly watching my step,
I walked around the gray
weathered building and
observed its exterior form and
features as a buzzard flew out
of an upper gable window in
protest of my presence.*

SEE PAGE 34

"OUR DECISION TO BUILD A PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE IN THE QUARRY SUDDENLY MADE IT A PART OF MY DAILY LIFE. AS I GAINED AN APPRECIATION FOR ITS BEAUTY AND LEARNED ITS HISTORY, A LOVE AFFAIR SLOWLY EMERGED AND GREW."

SEE PAGE 24



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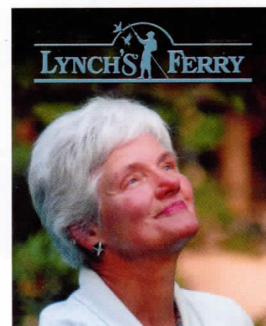
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Lynchburg Museum and Visitor Services, Old City
Cemetery, Point of Honor, and *Lynch's Ferry's* office
at 1318 Church Street.

- 4 Lessons Learned from a Public Historian: Remembering Jane Baber White** by Ted Delaney. In the mid-1990s, speaking to a reporter regarding her restoration of Old City Cemetery, Jane White remarked that "the whole thing is just one story after another...We're trying to tell all those stories." The same quote could now easily be applied to Ted Delaney's effort to capture all that White accomplished over the course of her forty-year career as "a historian, of sorts, without intending to be." His celebration of White is also a tribute to a legion of collaborators and volunteers. "Jane had the gravitational pull of a large celestial body," says Delaney, "and her ability to mobilize and motivate others was extraordinary."
- 24 Peakland Quarry, A Love Story** by Nancy Young. In 1978 Bill and Nancy Young were given absolutely no room to negotiate. If they wanted the wooded three-and-one-half-acre property in the Boonsboro area of Lynchburg, the purchase would have to include a three-quarter-acre quarry filled with rubble, wildlife, and rubbish. They took the deal, unaware that they were joining an impressive list of past owners, many of whom were "associated with the growth of Lynchburg—Payne, Hutter, Blackford, Jones, Apperson, Langhorne, Glass, and Burks," not to mention the Rivermont Land Company and Peakland Corporation.
- 34 Recording the Quickly Disappearing Past** by Travis C. McDonald. When we last encountered Travis McDonald—on page 7 of the Fall/Winter 2023 issue of *Lynch's Ferry*—he was pictured wearing a tuxedo in an article marking the inaugural celebration of Poplar Forest's completed restoration. Now, two years after his retirement, we find the former director of architectural restoration out in the field—his exuberant dog, Zeke, at his side—solving the mystery of a falling-down cabin with three front doors. This, along with several other examples of "quickly disappearing" houses, offers readers a glimpse at what it takes to become an archeological detective.

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FRONT COVER:

Jane Baber White (1940–2024) at the party celebrating her retirement from Old City Cemetery in 2007

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW WILDS

from the editor

M

Many, many years ago, in an attempt to explain what was happening at Old City Cemetery, I half-jokingly quipped that the ingenious and unstoppable Jane White—with the help of a wonderkid named Ted Delaney—was busy raising the dead. I was only half joking because, from my perspective, it was true. The place and all the people interred within it were magically coming back to life, giving context and texture to the city's past in unexpected, delightful, and deeply moving ways.

As it turned out, Jane White was just getting started. And, in this issue, author (and now director of the Lynchburg Museum System) Ted Delaney has graciously taken on the task of capturing the spirit and good works of a woman who “literally and figuratively reshaped the landscape of local history in Lynchburg.”

At roughly the same time many, many years ago, about ten miles southwest of the cemetery, another ambitious project was underway: the world-class restoration of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest. There, Travis C. McDonald, the director of architectural restoration, was performing a faithful reconstruction of the octagonal masterpiece in full view of thousands of visitors a year—while also teaching archeology, giving presentations, and writing a book.

But that's not all. As McDonald explains in “Recording the Quickly Disappearing Past,” his high-profile position at Poplar Forest meant that people would call him occasionally, asking if he “could take a look at their ‘old building.’” He somehow always found the time to do so. And, in this first of two articles documenting his explorations, he walks readers through a hands-on assessment of a weathered cabin—a falling-down structure surrounded by “cow pies” and housing a startled buzzard or two.


On a similar note, on page 25, author Nancy K. Young recalls sitting on the edge of the Peakland Quarry's twenty-five-foot cliff wall, looking out at “paint cans and other rusted containers, discarded children's toys, rope, and balls of barbed wire huddled together” along with “old tires from cars and larger vehicles, one cooking stove, one refrigerator, and sections of wire fences.” The year was 1979, and the scene marked the beginning of her love affair with an abandoned rocky pit—a romance that continues to this day.

Though Young's personal experience researching and transforming “her quarry” might pale against the monumental, civic-minded projects wrought by the likes of White and McDonald, she has perhaps uncovered at least two things they all have in common: a reverent sense of place and an abiding love for their chosen pursuits. As Young explains, “I decided to describe my research as a romance because the sensations are so similar. I was—and still am—smitten with my subject.”

I half-jokingly quipped that the ingenious and unstoppable Jane White—with the help of a wonderkid named Ted Delaney—was busy raising the dead.



Jane White's re-creation of a Victorian floral tribute in the shape of a small bed on the grave of madam Lizzie Langley was not only photographed daily by visitors, but also remembered by them years later.



RECORDING the Quickly Disappearing Past

TRAVIS C. MCDONALD

The cabin sat in a field punctuated by “cow pies.” Gingerly watching my step, I walked around the gray weathered building and observed its exterior form and features as a buzzard flew out of an upper gable window in protest of my presence. An overhanging metal roof stretched across the front of the cabin, suspended now without posts, forming a porch that featured the puzzling choice of three front doors. A central stone chimney protruded from the roof. Centered on and extending from the rear was a frame addition as large as the original front section.

A quick glance at the first-period cut nails that secured the wooden weatherboards indicated a date no earlier than the 1840s. The wire nails of

the addition indicated a post-1890 construction. Similarly, the exposed heavy-timber mortise-and-tenon corner wall framing of the front section was an earlier method compared to the dimensional lumber making up the rear addition. As my fearless dog, Zeke, bounded ahead of me across the floorless rear addition, jumping between floor joists, I quickly took in construction features in the empty rooms.

Besides the framing materials, little in the spare rooms of this typical, modest dwelling could date the building. Returning to the original front section, Zeke, who was experiencing his first old building investigation, quickly took to the steep dogleg stairs where the buzzard had made its home. I followed him to the upper room where the mystery behind the three

doors on the front porch was soon explained.

Although the building looked to be one-story-and-a-half from the front, one half of the upper story—the room I was standing in—did not connect with the rest of the space. The two halves of the upper story were separated by the central stone chimney. And, as it turned out, the *other* upper half solved the three-door mystery: a steep stair squeezed between the chimney and the front wall connected the central of the three front doors to the other upper room.

There, in the upper room of the rear addition, some exposed roof sheathing of the original section showed circular saw marks that also spoke of a post-1840 construction date. This quick twenty-minute examination yielded a

hypothesis of an 1840–1860 construction date with a circa 1900 addition. Subsequent visits would begin with this hypothesis as one to prove or refine. No one element of a vernacular old building gives up its date but rather a summation of as many corroborating clues as possible must be observed and analyzed. This challenge was what excited me on first examination of any old building, whether vernacular or high style, whether a barn or a corn crib.

The weathered, three-door cabin in the old “Coffee” area of Bedford County was the first building I investigated in my retirement. During my tenure as the director of architectural restoration at Poplar Forest, from 1989 to 2023, I investigated and recorded numerous old buildings in the Lynchburg region. This process began as an exercise as part of my annual Poplar Forest Restoration Field School where an average of ten people from many different disciplines learned the museum-quality aspects of investigation and restoration.

One important part of the field school program was the hands-on experience of walking into an old building—without any prior documentation—and figuring out its date and evolutionary building sequence. Members of each field school, graduate students and young professionals, typically lacked this type of training, even when enrolled in historic preservation programs; thus, the reason I had started the program in 1989. Classroom courses in architectural history stuck to the easy and safe curriculums of teaching from books and slides that showed the classic styles of Colonial, Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, etcetera. Buildings in the real world were seldom that neat and might be a combination of several styles executed over many decades and messier to teach from. The detective work involved in determining a building’s DNA was what excited me, and I wanted to reduce the intimidation frequently imposed by classroom instruction when encountering old buildings. Sure, historical documentation was great for any building but that too might be misleading when compared to the physical truths of a structure, if one could decipher them.

Increasing public awareness of the work taking place at Poplar Forest, including the intensive two-week field school, meant people would call me from time to time asking if I could take a look at their “old building.” Old, I knew, might mean a 1770 house or an 1870 house. “Sure,” I always replied, and would take a look. If it was something in an imminent state of demolition by nature or intention, and something worth recording, I would find the time to document the building, even if it might already be in a pile. A one-time visit involved taking as many photographs as possible. With a little more time, measurements might be taken for a floor plan or to record significant features.

The field school investigations were initially restricted to just one day at a site and eventually two days if the building warranted it. The measured floor plans were valuable as a means of annotation describing dates, evolution of form, clues of change, and types of moldings. For a project, the participants were given instructions on how to describe each building from every exterior feature to that of each room. For example, given thirty minutes in a house, where would you go to date the original construction? (Answer: the attic, followed by the cellar.) Inside and out, what looked original? What were the materials of structure or finish? What changes were evident in space, features, or materials? What did the changes signify? How did the moldings in each room tell the social and cultural hierarchy of the space?

Field school participants put together their descriptions in the evening of their second week. These were then edited after the group departed, and I would spend additional time annotating the plans. Finally, a bound report was produced and mailed to each person in addition to one sent to the state Department of Historic Resources archives in Richmond.

When I retired from Poplar Forest in 2023, I transferred these recorded building files to the Jones Memorial Library, where they already had an outstanding collection of architectural drawings collected by S. Allen Chambers Jr. when he was researching his magisterial book on Lynchburg’s architecture. My collection might

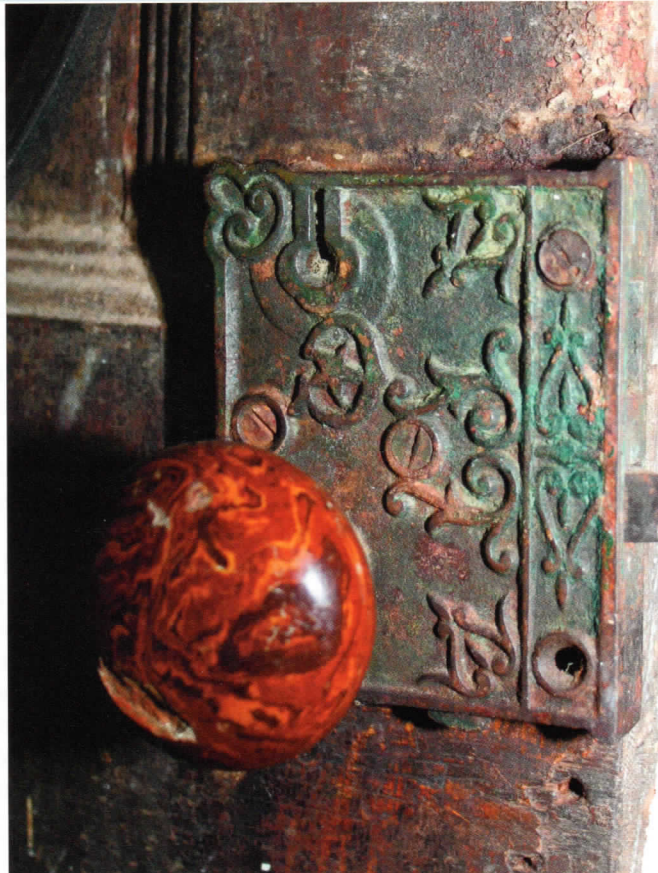
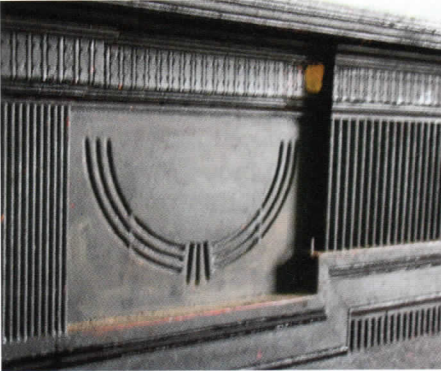
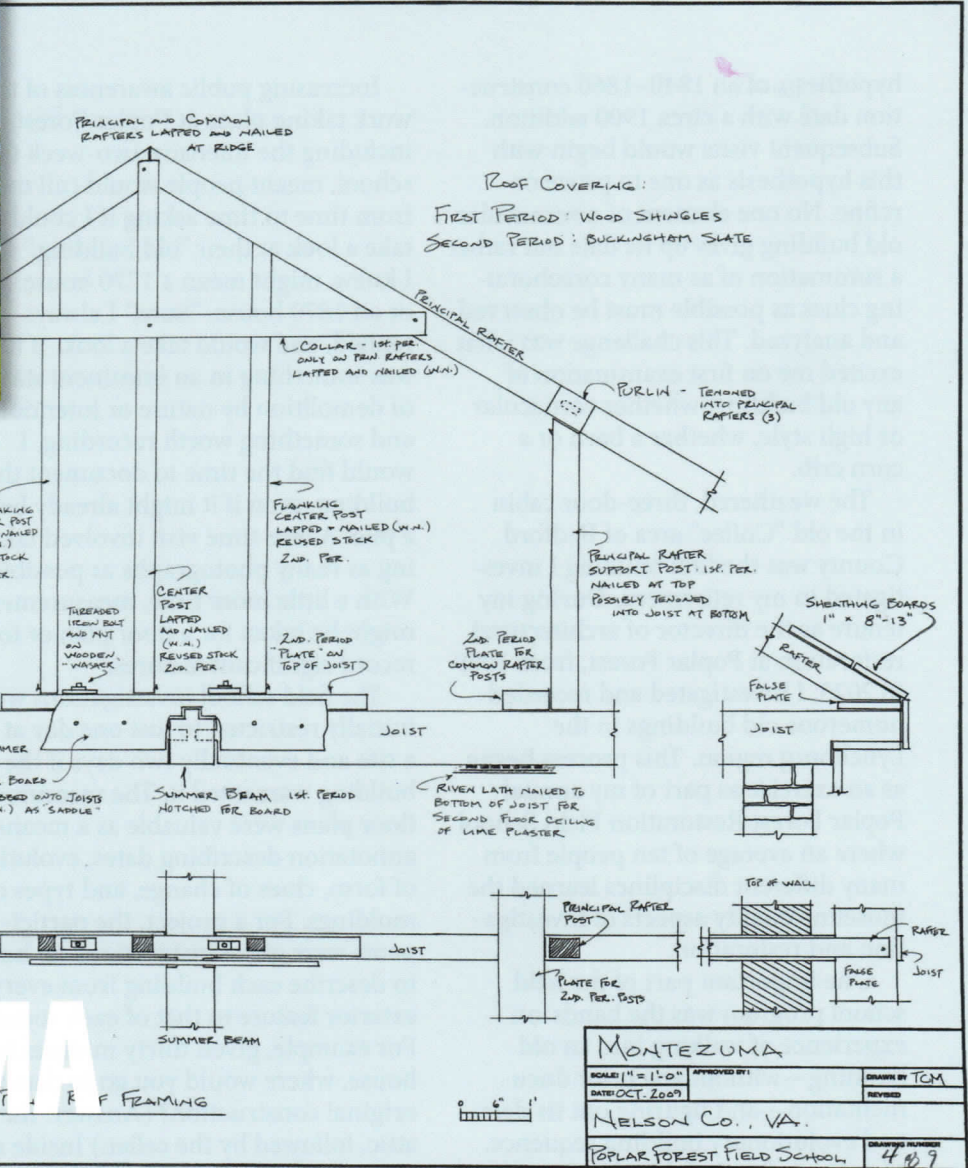
ONE IMPORTANT PART OF THE FIELD SCHOOL PROGRAM WAS THE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE OF WALKING INTO AN OLD BUILDING—WITHOUT ANY PRIOR DOCUMENTATION—AND FIGURING OUT ITS DATE AND EVOLUTIONARY BUILDING SEQUENCE.

consist of only photographs of any site, or multiple sets of annotated plans and detailed drawings. These sets totaled about 120 and spanned all counties around Central Virginia and some in Lynchburg city. Each county historical society or library was given a list of what was recorded in their particular county should anyone need to research that property; no one would think to look for them in the Poplar Forest files. This initial article shows typical examples of what was recorded. A following article will focus on places already gone or soon to be. In most cases, they are mute witnesses and survivors of people and times gone by and always stir the imagination.



Travis C. McDonald is the former director of architectural restoration at Poplar Forest. He retired in 2023, after thirty-four years of dedicated service to the project. The same

year marked the publication of his book Poplar Forest: Thomas Jefferson’s Villa Retreat. He is taking full advantage of his new status by continuing his work on Poplar Forest and completing a second book.



Montezuma is an early nineteenth-century Cabell family house in Nelson County that had few modern amenities.



BERKELEY

Berkeley in Bedford County is an example of an early house with modern additions.

RESERVATION NOTES

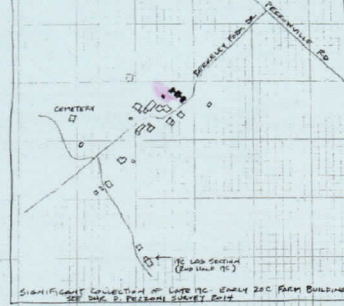
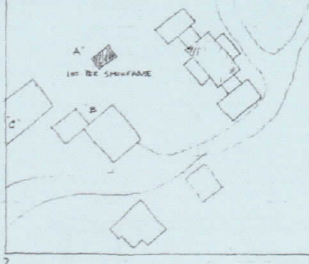
- SHOWN HOUSE INT. TO PRESERVE A BRICK CHIMNEY FROM ADDED W/ LINE MARKER
- BRICK / GARAGE BLDG. S.W. OF HOUSE "B" HAS BRICK HOUSE PARTS THAT SHOULD BE KEPT
- SHED SOUTH OF SHEDHOUSE "C" HAS BRICK HOUSE PARTS THAT SHOULD BE KEPT

BACKWORK

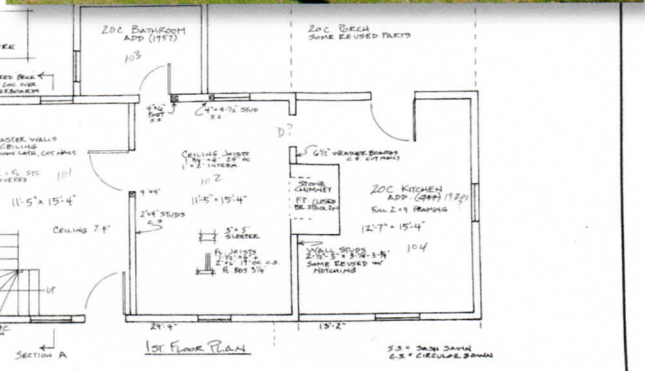
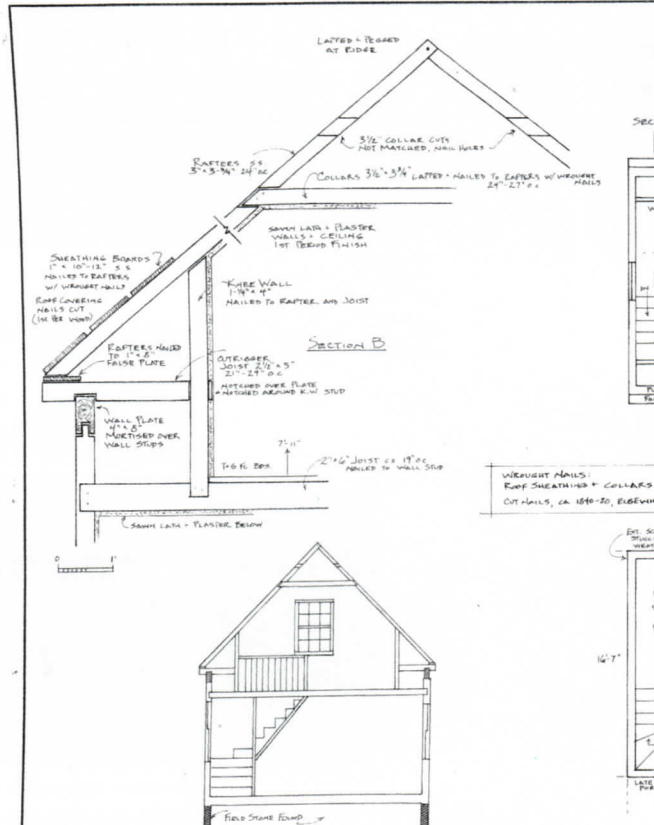
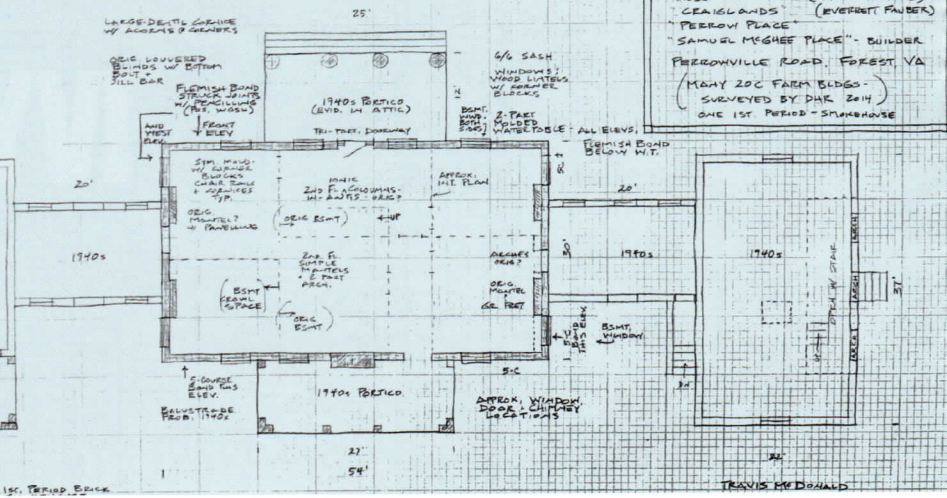
- EXCELLENT SAND-MADE BRICKS
- FLEMISH BOND NORTH + WEST ELEV.
- 5 COURSE BOND SOUTH + EAST ELEV.
- 2 PART MOLDED WATERTABLE

ALL OPENINGS TO BE MATCHED WITH ORIGINAL COVERS. ALL OPENINGS TO BE MATCHED WITH ORIGINAL COVERS. ALL OPENINGS TO BE MATCHED WITH ORIGINAL COVERS.

- SHEDS: SASH-SAWN
- CHIMNEY W/ BENTONITE, NO WASH
- NO EVID. OF ORIG. FRONT PORCH. BUT 1937 SURVEY SHWS 20' x 20'



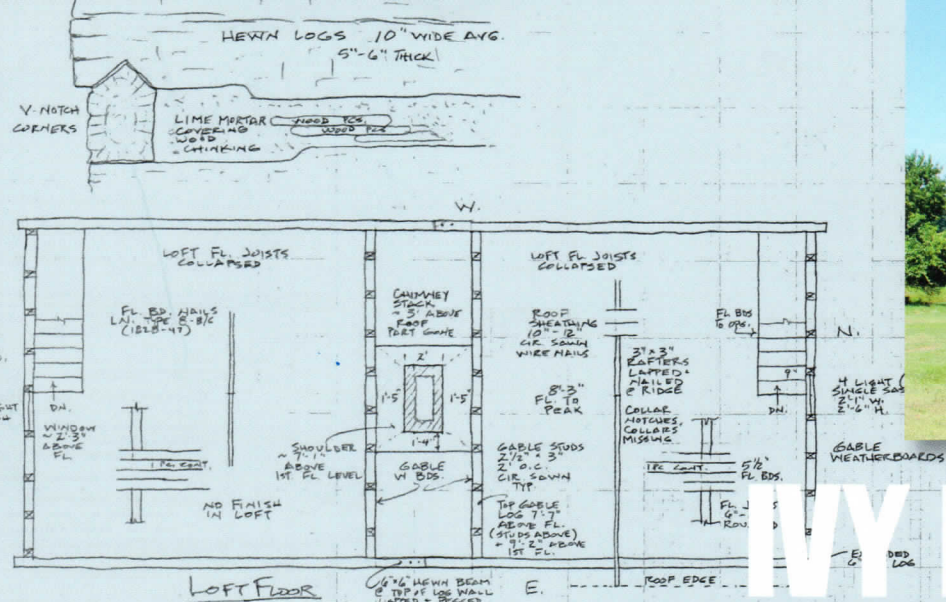
"BERKELEY" CA. 1848
 ALSO
 CEILINGLANDS (1940s ADDITIONS)
 (REVERENT FAUBER)
 "PERRYVILLE PLACE"
 SAMUEL MCGHEE PLACE - BUILDER
 PERRYVILLE ROAD, FOREST VA
 (MAY 20C FARM BLDGS - SURVEYED BY DHR 2014)
 ONE 1ST PERIOD - SHEDHOUSE



ASHWELL HOUSE

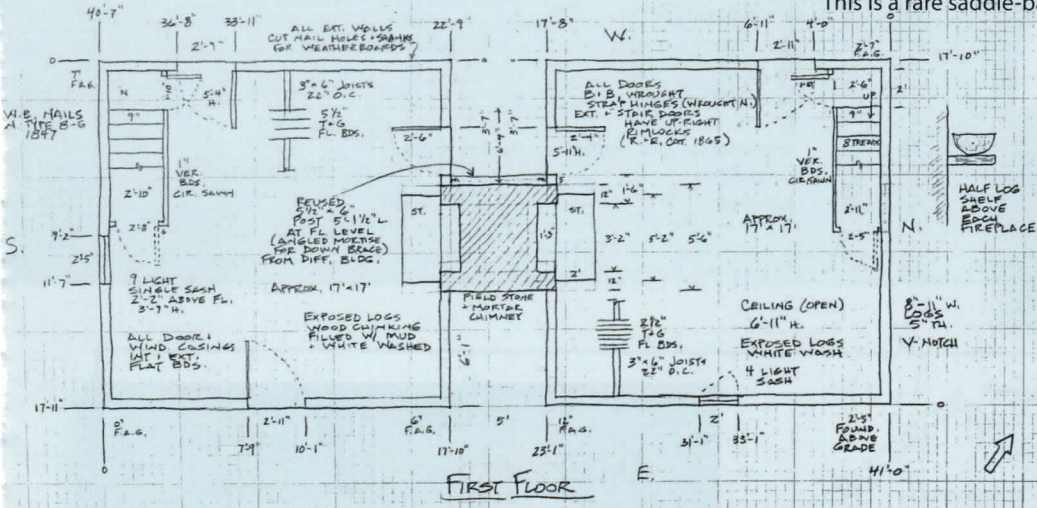
ASHWELL HOUSE
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
 DATE: DEC. 2017
 NEW LONDON, VA
 DRAWING NUMBER: 142

The Ashwell House in New London burned. Photo pre-fire; recording post-fire.



IVY HILL CABIN

This is a rare saddle-bag type slave cabin.

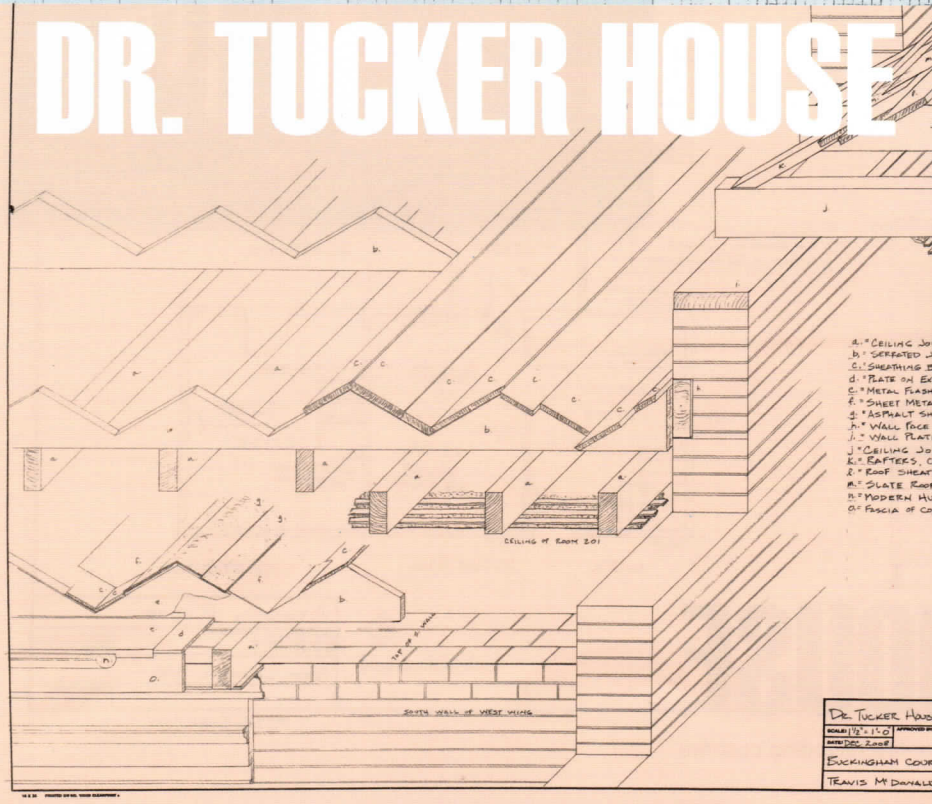


SOUTH ELEV.

IVY HILL CABIN
 IVY HILL DRIVE
 PEEROWVILLE RD (643)
 BEDFORD CO.
 RECORDED BY:
 TRAVIS McDONALD JULY 2017
 KELSEY DOTSON

SCALE 1/4" = 1'

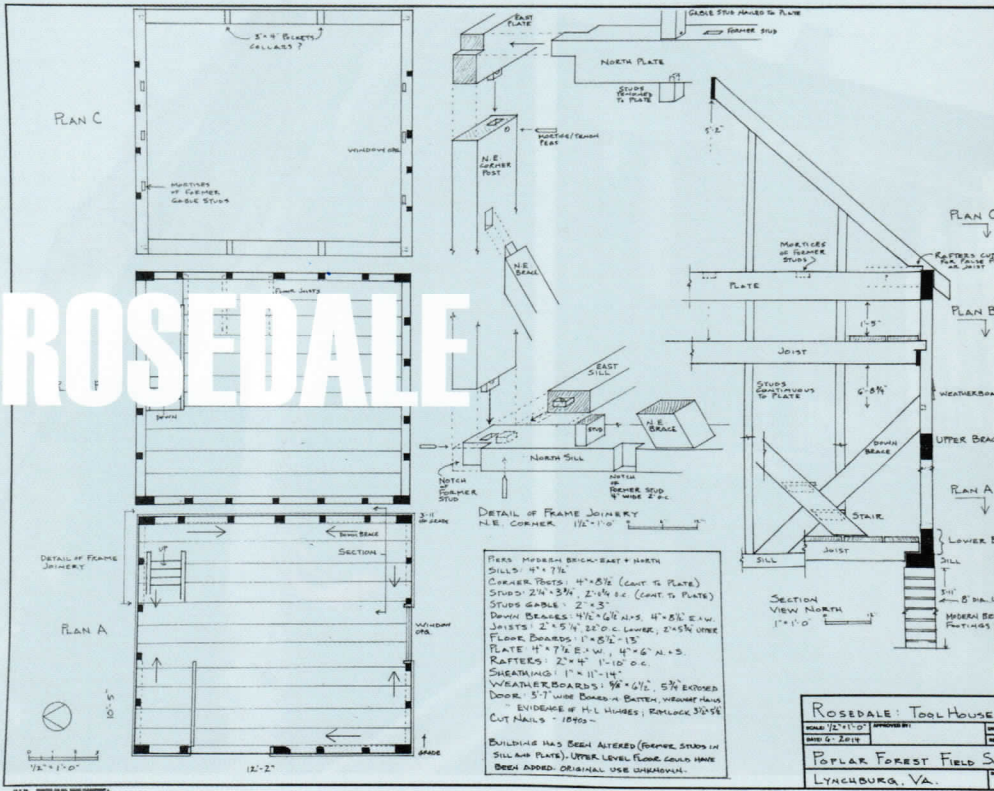
DR. TUCKER HOUSE



- A. CEILING JOIST
- B. SHEATHING
- C. SHEATHING
- D. PLATE ON EXT.
- E. METAL FLASH
- F. SHEET METAL
- G. ASPHALT SH.
- H. WALL FACE
- I. WALL PLATE
- J. CHAIRING JOIST
- K. RAFTERS, C.
- L. ROOF SHEATH.
- M. SLATE ROOF
- N. MODERN MU.
- O. FASCIA OF CORNER

DR. TUCKER HOUSE, ROOF FRAMING	
SCALE 1/2" = 1'	DESIGNED BY TCM
RECORDED 2007	RECORDED
BUCKINGHAM COURTHOUSE, VA.	
TRAVIS McDONALD T.M.D.	RECORDED BY ATVA

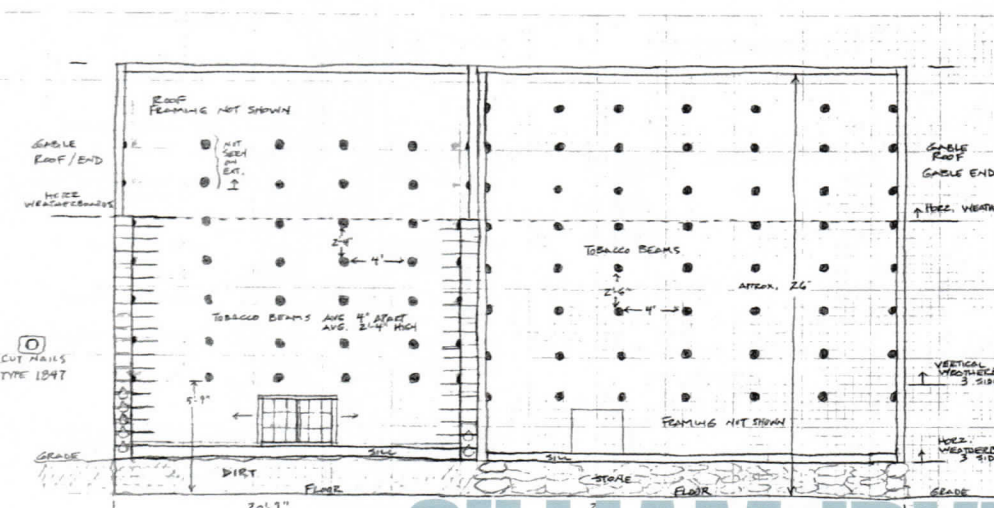
Besides Jefferson's own buildings, this is the only known example of Jefferson's "terras roof" that allowed for a flat deck above. Jefferson's design for the Buckingham Courthouse was being built across the road from this house, also with a "terras roof," and this was on his usual route to Poplar Forest.



ROSEDALE

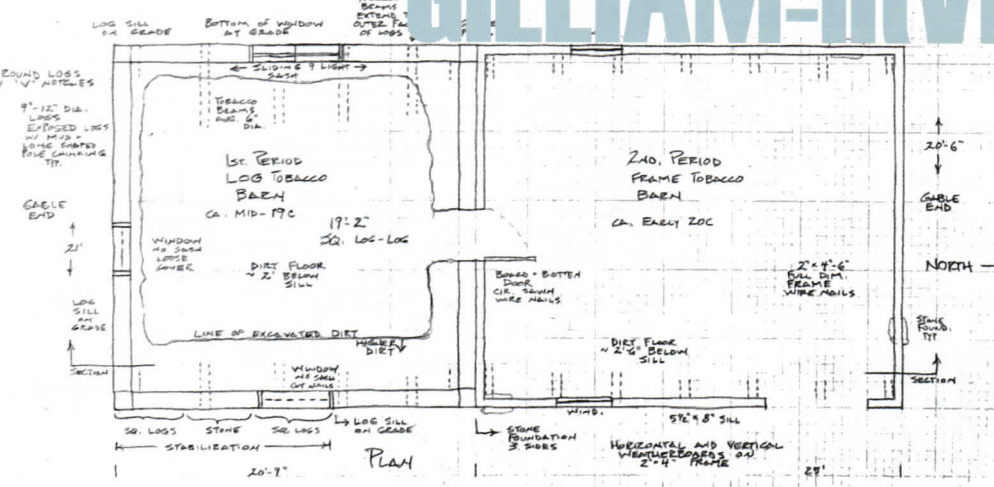
ROSEDALE TOOL HOUSE	
DATE: 12/11/07	DESIGNED BY: T.M.
NO. OF SHEETS: 2	NO. OF PAGES: 1
POPLAR FOREST FIELD SCHOOL	
LYNCHBURG, VA. 134713	

Rosedale on Graves Mill Road had a full range of outbuildings; this is one that has survived.



This is a rare survival of a typical tobacco barn in Appomattox County.

GILLIAM-IRVING BARN



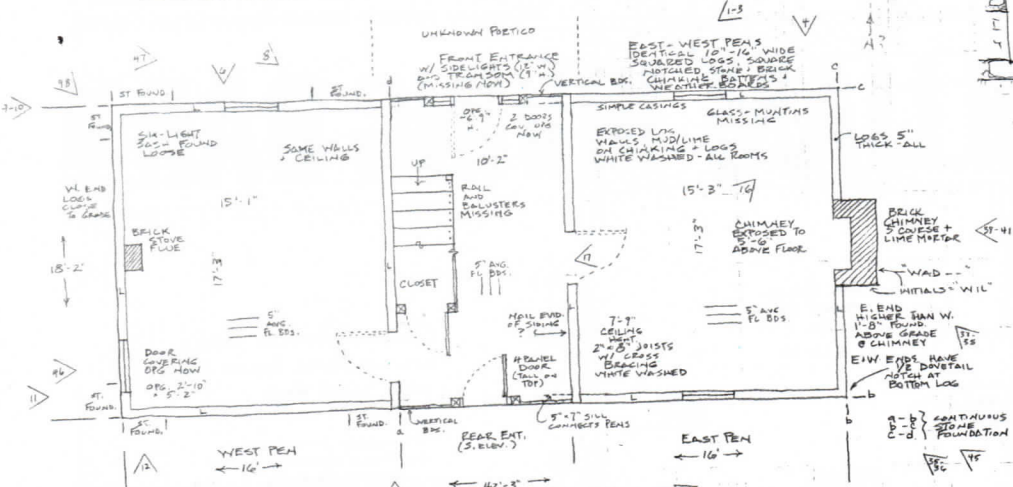
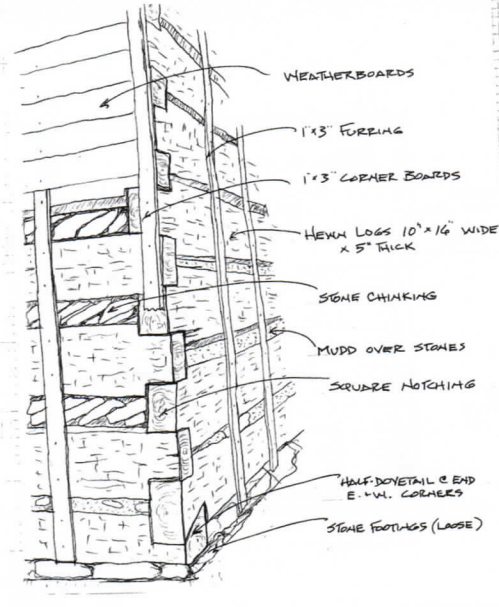
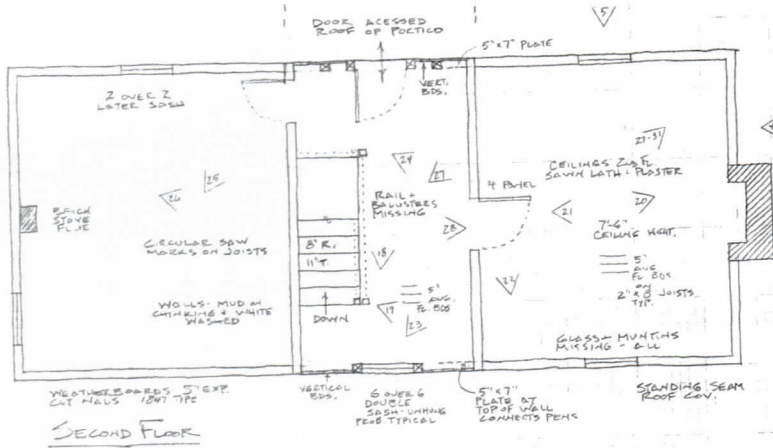
GILLIAM-IRVING FARM
 LOG AND FRAME TOBACCO BARN
 2012 SWAIN ROAD
 APPOMATTOX COUNTY

MEASURED 3-17-17
 BY TRAVIS MIDONALD
 CHARLES PEARSON

DRAWN: T.M.
 1/4" = 1'

LAAM 0024-5

Field School students are shown here at Outterburn in Bedford County.



FULL 2-STORY LOG HOUSE
 2 16'x18' SECTIONS JOINED
 BY CENTER PASSAGE
 SQUARE NOTCH W/
 HALF-DOVETAILS ON ENDS
 CA. 1850 (ANAL. CIR. SAW MARKS)

"SMITH HOUSE ON DALTON PROPERTY
 #2687 ROUTE 43 BEDFORD CO.
 RECORDED BY TRAVIS McDONALD
 AND KELSEY DOUTSON
 JULY 2017

SCALE 1/4"=1'
 SEE PHOTO SHEET

SMITH HOUSE

The Smith House in Bedford County is an example of a full two-story log house.



Construction and materials tell a great deal about the age of a house.



This early nineteenth-century house survived on Cheese Creek, now in the city of Lynchburg



This late eighteenth-century house on property owned by James Monroe survived in Amherst County.

The eighteenth-century house, Tusculum, in Amherst County was taken apart and rebuilt.





The photos above and below of Clement Hill in Pittsylvania County show how nature soon takes over an unoccupied house.

