HUMANIZING HABS: RETHINKING THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY'S ROLE IN INTERPRETING ANTEBELLUM SLAVE HOUSES

by

JOBIE HILL

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Student: Jobie Hill

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Historic Preservation by:

Dr. Kingston W. Heath — Chairperson
Dr. Rick Minor — Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy — Vice President for Research and Innovation; Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Jobie Hill

Master of Science

Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Historic Preservation

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Title: Humanizing HABS: Rethinking the Historic American Buildings Survey's Role in Interpreting Antebellum Slave Houses

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Federal Writers' Project were two government survey programs from the 1930s that, in part, documented slavery in America. Historically stakeholders utilized these resources in isolation of one another. Coordination between the two programs in this study has identified five documented slave houses from the HABS collection that are directly linked to a slave narrative recorded by the Writers' Project. The slave narrative brings to life the spatial density, degree of accommodations, nature of the facilities, and attitudes of those who inhabited the slave house. The relationship between the historical record and the stories of the inhabitants is crucial to our understanding and interpretation of the lifeways and settings of enslaved African Americans in the Antebellum South. Historic preservationists now have five personal accounts of the historic plantation landscape upon which to build future interdisciplinary appreciation and research.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jobie Hill

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon
University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee
Rice University, Houston, Texas

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Science, Historic Preservation, 2013, University of Oregon
Technical Teaching Certificate, Architecture, 2013, University of Oregon
Master of Arts, Egyptian Art and Archaeology, 2007, University of Memphis
Bachelor of Architecture, Architecture, 2004, Rice University
Bachelor of Arts, Architecture and Anthropology, 2002, Rice University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Historic Plantation Landscapes
Minority Preservation
African American History

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Architect, Historic Amerian Buildings Survey, Washington, D.C., Summers 2012 and 2013

Architect, OPN Architects, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 2010-2011

Architectural Professional License, New York State, 2010

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional (LEED AP), U.S. Green Building Council, 2010

Project Architect, Page Ayres Cowley Architects, New York, New York, 2008-2010

Designer, AECIX, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2007-2008

Designer, Hazlip Studio, Memphis, Tennessee, 2006

Architectural Intern, Mitchell-Giurgola Architects, New York, New York, 2002-2003

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Heritage Research Fund Scholarship, Historic Preservation Department, University of Oregon, Historic Preservation Program, 2011-2012, 2012-2013

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Teaching Assistant, Architecture Department, University of Oregon, 2012-2013

Selected Professions Fellowship, American Association of University Women, 2011-2012

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Teaching Assistant, University of Memphis, 2005-2007

McGinty Scholarship, Architectural Excellence, Rice University, 2003-2004

Arthur B. Cohn Scholarship, Rice University, 2003-2004

Rosa R. and Henry M. Holden Scholarship, Rice University, 2001-2002

Class of 1945 Scholarship, Rice University, 2001-2002

J. B. Morris Scholarship, Minority Students, J. B. Morris Scholarship Fund Inc., 1998-2000

Edmund B. Middleton Scholarship, Rice University, 1989-1999

PUBLICATIONS:

"Terra-cotta." *Masonry Conservation Handbook.* Scholars' Bank, University of Oregon, 2013.

"The Row House of Third Ward, Houston, Texas: A Typological Analysis and Preservation." *ASPH Journal Vol 25* (Spring 2012).

"An Architectural Reconstruction of Mastaba G 2381." Master's Thesis, University of Memphis, 2007.

"Recycled Aggregates and Concrete Strength." Produced by Jobie Hill. 20 min. Rice University, 2002. DVD.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The thesis, "Humanizing HABS: Rethinking the Historic American Buildings Survey's Role in Interpreting Antebellum Slave Houses," (1) identifies and links slave houses of five Historic American Buildings Survey historic records with ex-slave narratives recorded by the Federal Writers' Project, and (2) interprets these sites through an interdisciplinary lens. The interdisciplinary analysis draws from architecture, anthropology, archaeology, historic preservation and the personal folklore narratives of ex-slaves.

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) is a government program, established in 1933, for relief employment under the Civil Works Administration. The mission of HABS was to employ 1,000 "qualified… architects and draftsmen to study, measure and draw up the plans, elevations and details of the important antique buildings of the United States."[1]

The original plan for HABS, drafted by Charles E. Peterson, a National Park Service landscape architect, was to document the significant architectural features of historic nineteenth century buildings in the United States. The survey was meant to be inclusive rather than exclusive in its selection of important historic building types. Although the original focus of HABS was to record the architecture, Peterson suggested four supplemental pieces of information be included in the historical record: (1) archaeological excavations, (2) a bibliography of previous work, (3) photographic documentation and (4) a historical report.[2] Together, the architectural survey and Peterson's supplemental pieces of documentation were designed to reveal information about the lives of the people who lived

[1] Charles E. Peterson, "The Historic American Buildings Survey Continued," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* , Vol. 16, No. 3, Romanesque Issue (Oct., 1957): 30.

[2] Ibid.

in these structures. An important historic building type that was obsolete by 1933 and rapidly disappearing was the slave house, a poorly documented part of plantations in the Antebellum South.

Another federal relief program, the Federal Writers' Project, was established in 1935. The Federal Writers' Project was designed to provide employment for unemployed historians and writers. One of the tasks of the Writers' Project was to collect American life histories from people of all backgrounds across the United States. The Writers' Project followed upon the heels of the Archive of American Folk Song project, now the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress, established a few years earlier in 1928.[3] One type of narrative that was of great interest to John A. Lomax, the FWP director, was the life histories of ex-slaves. The collection of ex-slave narratives became so vast that it eventually became its own separate series of books, the *American Slave*.[4]

HABS and the Writers' Project were two large-scale government survey projects from the 1930s that, in part, documented slavery in America. Each program functioned independently from the other throughout its history. This thesis proposes that:

- Several phenomenal resources exist as the result of unique economic constraints in the United States.
- There are opportunities to utilize these resources for interdisciplinary research that have not yet been thoroughly explored.
- The Historic American Buildings Survey collection contains records of documented slave houses that can be linked to a slave narrative recorded by the Federal Writers' Project.

The purpose of this thesis was to identify those links and to serve as an example of how to carry out interdisciplinary research and analysis using both resources.

[3] See John Lomax, "Field Experiences with Recording Machines," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No.2 (June 1937).

[4] George P. Rawick, Jan Hillegas, and Ken Lawrence, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography: Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 8 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1977), 891-892.

Previous HABS Research on Plantation Architecture

The HABS collection has been used extensively for architectural and historic research, but only one other study has used the collection in conjunction with the Writers' Project Slave Narratives. Twenty years ago, in 1993, John Vlach published the book *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery.* Like the current study, the primary source for Vlach's book was the HABS collection, supplemented by the Writers' Project Slave Narratives. Vlach's stated objectives for the book were "first to describe, in broad terms, the architectural setting of plantation slavery and then to suggest some of the ways in which black people may have transformed those architectural settings into places that best served their social needs."[5] In researching and writing *Back of the Big House* Vlach stressed images over verbal description.[6] In contrast, this study "Humanizing HABS" stresses the direct link between HABS images and the verbal descriptions of the ex-slaves.

In *Back of the Big House,* Vlach identified twenty different types of structures in which slaves lived and worked that were recorded by HABS.[7] This all-inclusive sample of buildings is the second difference between Vlach's work and the current study. The thesis "Humanizing HABS" analyzes domestic slave structures exclusively. Limiting the study to slave habitats offers a more in-depth study of the human dimensions associated with slave houses.

As Vlach so accurately pointed out, "knowledge of slave structures alone is not enough. Some understanding of the human dimensions of old buildings is also required for a complete description of the lives they enclosed."[8] The thesis "Humanizing HABS"

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[5] John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), x.

[6] Ibid., xv.

[7] Ibid., xii.

demonstrates that in order to have an accurate understanding of the human dimensions associated with these buildings one must carefully consider the descriptions given by ex-slaves.

The most important distinction between Vlach's work and this study is the way in which the narratives are "matched" to the HABS images.[9] Vlach's broad approach displayed a HABS image with each ex-slave description. In Vlach's context, the term *matched* is misleading, for the plantation where the ex-slave lived during slave times is *not* the same plantation that is featured in the HABS image. Instead, the image represents characteristics of plantation life *similar* to those described in the narrative. Vlach's approach is very useful in identifying broad patterns and is used, as such, in the current study as well. The methodology used in "Humanizing HABS," on the other hand, is able to identify the ex-slave narratives that describe a specific HABS documented plantation. In this context, the plantation where the ex-slave lived during slave times is *the same* plantation that is featured in the HABS image. This approach reveals new relationships between the HABS collection and the Writers' Project Slave Narratives that have never before been made.

Research Methodology

The methodology used to link the images of slave houses documented in the HABS collection with the ex-slave narratives recorded by the Writers' Project included the research, analysis and cross-reference of the chain of evidence linking these two historic resources. The methodology consisted of a five-step process:

1. A search of the HABS database
2. An index search of ex-slave narratives published in the *American Slave*
3. The development of a comprehensive reference database
4. Matching a HABS historical record to an ex-slave narrative
5. An interdisciplinary analysis of the matched HABS records

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[8] Ibid., xiii.

[9] Ibid., xiii.

Methodology: Step One

Step one included a search of the HABS database. Slave houses were identified within the HABS database through a series of keyword searches. The HABS database is stored on a secure server that is accessible exclusively through the use of computers in the HABS office in Washington, D.C. The data for this research was collected during the summer of 2012. The keyword phrases used in the search paired the word "slave" with various terms for "house." A parallel search of the HABS database was also completed using the keyword "plantation" and the phrase "servant's quarters." These searches yielded a sample of 1,600 HABS records that potentially dealt with slave houses.

In an effort to narrow the sample, further analysis of each of the 1,600 records was required. Several complications had to be addressed in order to further analyze the HABS records:

1. An official HABS survey ideally describes a historical building through: (a) measured drawings, (b) photographs, (c) historical bibliographies and (d) index card references. However, in reality, not all of these key elements are included in all HABS historical records.
2. There is not a one-to-one relationship between a plantation and a historical record. For example, more than one HABS record could reference the same plantation.

To address each of these variables, additional filters were applied, and further analysis was completed on each of the 1,600 records. Each record was examined for the inclusion of at least visual documentation of a slave house (e.g., a photograph and/or measured drawing). Through the application of this visual/graphic filter, further analysis of the HABS data yielded a sample of over 350 historical records of a slave house at approximately 300 sites in the United States and the Virgin Islands.

Methodology: Step Two

Step two was an index search of the Writers' Project *American Slave* series (41 volumes) to identify all published ex-slave narratives that referenced a slave house,

resulting in approximately 1,000 narratives. These narratives were reviewed and cross-referenced for documented reference to the 350+ sites identified in the HABS research.

Methodology: Step Three

Step three was the development of a crosswalk database of the 350+ HABS records and the 1,000 ex-slave narratives, including analysis, collection and storage of:

- Identification markers as they relate to various historical records
- Title data
- Architectural features
- Census data applicable to the specified timeframe
- Genealogical references

This database is a crosswalk for diverse fields (architecture, anthropology, archaeology, historic preservation, genealogy and folk culture) to access and utilize the archived information. The reference database was organized into two distinct sections:

Part 1: Contains the results of the architectural analysis and the site information for the HABS records.
Part 2: Contains data collected from the Writers' Project Slave Narratives.

Part 1 of the database includes a copy of the HABS photographs, measured drawings, history sheets and index cards. The following site information was collected and stored in the reference database for each of the 350+ HABS historical records:[10]

- HABS survey number
- Survey date
- National Register of Historic Places Record number, when applicable
- Site name
- Site address (including city, county, state and zip code)
- The ownership history of the house from construction through the Civil War (including titles, first names and last names)[11]

[10] This information was collected using the Library of Congress's online database of the HABS collection, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/.

[11] This information was on the survey index card or was part of the historical bibliography. The historical bibliographies are title "Data Pages" and the index card is titled "Supplemental" in the Library of Congress' database.

An architectural analysis of the 350+ HABS historical records was also completed. The HABS photographs and measured drawings were visually critiqued and the historical bibliographies were reviewed for significant information. The architectural analysis identified the following information for each HABS recorded domestic slave buildings:

- Construction date
- Alteration dates
- Number of documented domestic slave buildings
- Number of undocumented domestic slave buildings
- Building type
- Primary building materials
- Building materials descriptions
- The presence of windows
- The presence of a fireplace
- Number of floors
- Plan type

Part 2 of the reference database contains the data collected from the Writers' Project Slave Narratives collection. The following information was collected for each of the ex-slave narratives:

- Citation information
- The complete name of the ex-slave
- The first and last name of the ex-slave's mother
- The first and last name of the ex-slave's father
- The city, county and state where the ex-slave was enslaved
- The name of the plantation where the ex-slave was enslaved
- The complete name of the primary slaveowner, including title when applicable
- The complete name of the secondary slaveowner, including title when applicable
- The first name of the white "Misses" of the house (typically the slaveowner's wife)
- The first and last name of the overseer, if applicable

Research of demographic and agricultural information relating to the Slave Narratives was also completed and included in Part 2 of the reference database. Census data from 1840, 1850 and 1860 was researched. The census data quantified the number of slaves in a given area and for a given slaveholder. The census data also identified the primary cash crop produced in a county.

Methodology: Step Four

Step four of the research methodology identified matches of the HABS historical record and a Writers' Project ex-slave narrative. The HABS slave houses were initially matched to the ex-slave narratives according to the slaveowner's name and the location of the plantation (slaveowner's last name + state). This first-generation match resulted in a tentative correlation of thirty-eight HABS sites and forty-one slave narratives. The matches were reexamined using more specific parameters, such as the slaveowner's first name as well as the city and county of the plantation. The second-generation match yielded four HABS sites with a documented slave house that can be irrefutably matched to a specific Writers' Project ex-slave narrative; and one HABS site that is adjacent to the plantation. The site that is adjacent to the plantation is significant because both plantations were owned by the same slaveholding family.

Methodology: Step Five

The final step of the methodology developed an expanded profile of the five matched sites, adding interdisciplinary assessments, interpretation and refinement to the architectural details on record. This thesis "Humanizing HABS" interpreted these five linked sites through an interdisciplinary lens. The interdisciplinary analysis drew from architecture, anthropology, archaeology, historic preservation, historical records and folklore in the form of personal narratives of ex-slaves.

The architectural lens addressed aspects of the slave house as it related to issues of human comfort, circulation, safety and welfare, as well as programmatic concerns. The anthropological lens evaluated the architecture in terms of boundaries and opportunities associated with human behavior. These social limitations and prospects created perceived and real spatial zones on the historic plantation landscape. The archaeological lens

identified opportunities for future excavations. The historic preservation lens added depth, color and texture to the historic slave house sites through an informed reading of the HABS drawings, which in turn, provided data and opportunities upon which new insights and interpretations can be drawn. The slave narratives recorded by the Writers' Project represent a folk culture lens. The narratives are unique first person accounts of living in a slave house.

There were two important outcomes of this study's methodology. The first was a reference database that served as a crosswalk for the diverse fields that made up the interdisciplinary analyses. The database was instrumental to this study and has laid the groundwork for future research of the historic slave house. The second outcome was this thesis which can serve as a reference document. The thesis "Humanizing HABS" demonstrated HABS' potential role as a bridge between diverse fields of study. Historically, the role of HABS in research of the historic slave house has been limited to that of architectural recording. As demonstrated in this study, however, the HABS collection has the capacity of making significant contributions to fields of study other than architecture.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

> De slave cabins wuz all in rows under tall shady oak trees in de front ob Mar's house. Mos' all de slave owners had 'em livin at de back. I neber did know how come he didn't hab his lak dat.[1]
>
> - Minerva Grubbs a slave on Louis Howell's plantation in Mississippi

This chapter is a historical overview of the Historic American Buildings Survey's organization and goals. The program's founding vision and mission significantly affected the results of the surveys and are crucial to a retroactive understanding of the HABS collection. This chapter reviews decisions and processes executed by HABS, as documented in the official HABS administrative files, in an effort to provide an accurate historical context for the architectural surveys.

History of the Historic American Buildings Survey

The Historic American Buildings Survey originally was a Civil Works Administration ten-week unemployment relief project for one thousand architects and architectural draftsmen. The original proposal for the project was written by Charles E. Peterson, a National Park Service landscape architect. An appealing aspect of the plan was that it was a practical relief project that would put men back to work almost at once and with minimal equipment, supplies and overhead.[2] Peterson submitted his proposal to Arno B. Cammerer, Director of the National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, on November 13, 1933.

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[1] Minerva Grubbs, born c. 1857, was a slave on Louis Howell's plantation in Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave*, *Supplement, Series 1,* 891-892.

[2] Historic American Buildings Survey, "General Information," *HABS Circular No.1* (December 12, 1933): 1; Charles E. Peterson, "HABS," 29-30.

Cammerer reviewed the proposal and two days later submitted it to Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, for approval. The HABS project was approved by Ickes on November 17, 1933 and by the Federal Relief Administrator, Harry L. Hopkins, on December 1, 1933.[3] HABS was to be administered by the Branch of Plans and Design of the Office of the National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, a bureau of the Department of the Interior, and was allocated a working budget of $448,000 by the Civil Works Administration.

The HABS program was administered by Thomas C. Vint, Chief Architect of the Branch of Plans and Design. The executive branch of the program consisted of a National Advisory Committee[4], State Advisory Committee[5] and District Officers. The survey teams were comprised of squad leaders and squad members.

The administrative goal of the program was to decentralize as much of the routine executive work as possible. Therefore, thirty-nine branch offices, known as the District Offices, were created to service forty-two states.[6] Each District Office covered specific areas that usually conformed to state lines. Each office had a District Officer who was in full charge of administering the HABS program in the District. A key responsibility of the District Officer was the preparation of the list of buildings to be included in the survey, with

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[3] Historic American Buildings Survey, *Circular No.1,* 1.

[4] The committee consisted of seven members: Dr. Leicester B. Holland (Chairman of the American Institute of Architects Committee on Preservation Historic Buildings and Chief, Fine Arts Division, Library of Congress) Washington, D.C.; John Gaw Meem (Architect) Sante Fe, New Mexico; William G. Perry (Architect) Boston, Massachusetts; Albert Simons (Architect) Charleston, South Carolina; Dr. Herbert E. Bolton (Prof. History University of California, Past President of the American Historical Association) Berkley, California; Miss Harlean James (Executive Secretary American Civic Association) Washington, D.C.; and Dr. Waldo G. Leland (Executive Secretary American Council of Learned Societies).

[5] The committee consisted of five members; three from the architectural profession with the state and named by the American Institute of Architects and two were non-professionals from local civic, patriotic or historic groups.

[6] Wilton Claude Corkern, "Architects, Preservationists, and the New Deal: The Historic American Buildings Survey, 1933-1942" (Ph. D. diss., George Washington University, 1984), 83.

the guidance of the District Advisory Board and approval from the Headquarters Office in Washington, D.C.[7] The purpose of HABS was to document structures that had previously been neglected by architectural connoisseurs.[8] The list was arranged in order of priority of historical significance and served as an "almost complete resume of the builders' art."[9] The list was to be created from an academic and historic interest rather than a commercial use interest.

The intent of the survey was, "so far as possible, to obtain a complete record of every building measured, including all details."[10] Each squad was given very specific directions on the methods to be used when measuring in the field. They were to document the orientation of the buildings, the relationship between groups of buildings, openings, wall thicknesses, building materials and all other pertinent details that would make it possible to reproduce the building if it were destroyed.[11]

Completed Surveys of Slave Houses

A fundamental rule for sites selected to be surveyed by HABS was: a building could only be included through the willing cooperation of the owner. *HABS Bulletin No. 3* stated:

> The fact that the building is unoccupied will not be sufficient ground for waving the requirement, except in the case of abandoned structures of unknown ownership, and in such cases the local municipal or county officials should be advised in advance of the intention to survey the building and the purpose of the survey.[12]

[7] Historic American Buildings Survey, "Fiscal and Administrative Procedure," *HABS Bulletin No. 1* (December 27, 1933): 1.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Historic American Buildings Survey, *Circular No. 1*, 2; Peterson, "HABS," 30.

[10] Ibid., 4.

[11] Ibid., 3-5.

An important historic building type that was of academic and historic interests in 1933, and continues to be, was the slave house of the Antebellum South. HABS has completed over 350 surveys done at approximately 300 sites that had a slave house (Appendix A). These appear almost exclusively in the southeast, which is expected since these were slave holding states that used slave labor to operate plantations. Slave houses are also found in northern states as well.

Each completed survey is given an official Survey Number which is the job number.[13] An example of this Survey Number format, that is still used today, is "HABS AL-37." The parts of this identification number represent the following:

HABS = National Parks Service program (Historic American Buildings Survey)
AL = State abbreviation (Alabama)
37 = Survey sequence number for the state

The last group of numbers in each survey number represents the order in which the sites were surveyed in each state. The lower the number the higher the priority the site was given. For sites affiliated with a slave house only ten of the 300 are ranked as a top ten high priority site in its state.

A site that was one mile or less away from a town or city was considered an urban site. If the site was further than one mile from a town or city, then it was considered rural. Of the sites with slave houses 62 percent are classified as urban and 38 percent are rural, as many rural sites, by 1933, had been encroached upon by urban growth since the Civil War era. These numbers support the original cost effective approach of the HABS administration, which was to make every effort to assign projects in the cities where the architects lived.[14]

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[12] Historic American Buildings Survey, "General Instructions," *HABS Bulletin No. 3* (December 20, 1933): 2.

[13] Historic American Buildings Survey, "Check List for Correcting Final Drawings," *HABS Bulletin No. 17*. (January 25, 1934): 3.

[14] Historic American Buildings Survey, *Bulletin No. 1,* 5.

Surveys were not limited to locations near the District Office, but they do appear to be clustered together in small groups throughout each state, suggesting that an effort was made to keep travel to a minimum (Fig. 1).

Two other important factors that significantly influenced the surveys were the size of the District and number of personnel assigned to the District. The distribution map reveals that there is not always a direct relationship between the size of the District and the number of architects employed by HABS (Fig. 1). Districts that have a major east coast city within its boundaries were assigned a greater number of architects than those Districts without a major city but responsible for a large geographic area. The urban Districts appear to have a more robust staff. Alabama completed the most surveys of slave houses, ninety-nine, with one of the smaller teams of only twenty-four architects.

Documentation of the Slave House

Vint and his team at Headquarters in Washington, D.C. created specifications for the measured drawings to "ensure uniform and readable sheets for final deposit in the Library of Congress."[15] It was understood by all the members of HABS that a high standard of draftsmanship was required.[16] The scale of each drawing, the layout of each sheet, and the order of the sheets were to be given "careful study so that the final result will be worthy to be placed among the permanent national records."[17] No decorative embellishments were to be placed on the sheets. Drawings for each building would typically include complete plans,

[15] Historic American Buildings Survey, *Circular No. 1,* 3; Peterson, "HABS," 30; Historic American Buildings Survey, *Bulletin No. 1,* 1; Historic American Buildings Survey, "Preparation of Record Drawings and Data," *HABS Bulletin No. 5* (December 26, 1933): 1.

[16] Historic American Buildings Survey, *Bulletin No. 5,* 1.

[17] Ibid.

elevations, sections, scale details and full size details.[18] Photographs and a brief historical account were to accompany each set of drawings.

No conjectural restorations were to be shown on the drawings; only existing conditions were to be recorded.[19] Supplemental drawings could be used to show "definite facts regarding the original condition" of a building.[20] These definite facts could come from a photograph, old drawings, or the memory of an eye-witness. In all cases, the source of this information was to be noted on the sheet.

The level of documentation for each HABS documented slave house covers the entire range of possibilities. Photographs were intended to supplement the measured drawings and not to serve as the only form of documentation, but for 60 percent of slave house sites a photograph turned out to be the only type of documentation. At some sites, the reason for this is because the slave house was not the primary subject of the survey and was unintentionally part of the photographic composition. Only 14 percent of the HABS slave house records include both measured drawings and photographs. This low number suggests that the slave house was not considered a significant structure that was worthy of a comprehensive survey. Although the slave houses did not receive a level of documentation equal to that of the other structures, the measured drawings did receive the same high standard of draftsmanship.

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[18] Ibid., 2.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

District	Territory	Personnel	District	Territory	Personnel
1	North New England	37	15	Florida	14
2	Massachusetts	37	16	Alabama	24
3	Connecticut	30	17	Mississippi	20
4	Southern New York	53	18	Louisiana	19
5	Northern New York	53	19	Tennessee	23
6	New Jersey	35	20	Kentucky	23
7	Eastern Pennsylvania	42	21	West Virginia	30
8	Western Pennsylvania	41	22	Northern Ohio	30
9	Eastern Shore	20	23	Southern Ohio	29
10	Washington Area	19	24	Indiana	28
11	Virginia	32	31	Missouri	32
12	North Carolina	28	33	Texas	40
13	South Carolina	23	34	Oklahoma	21
14	Georgia	26			

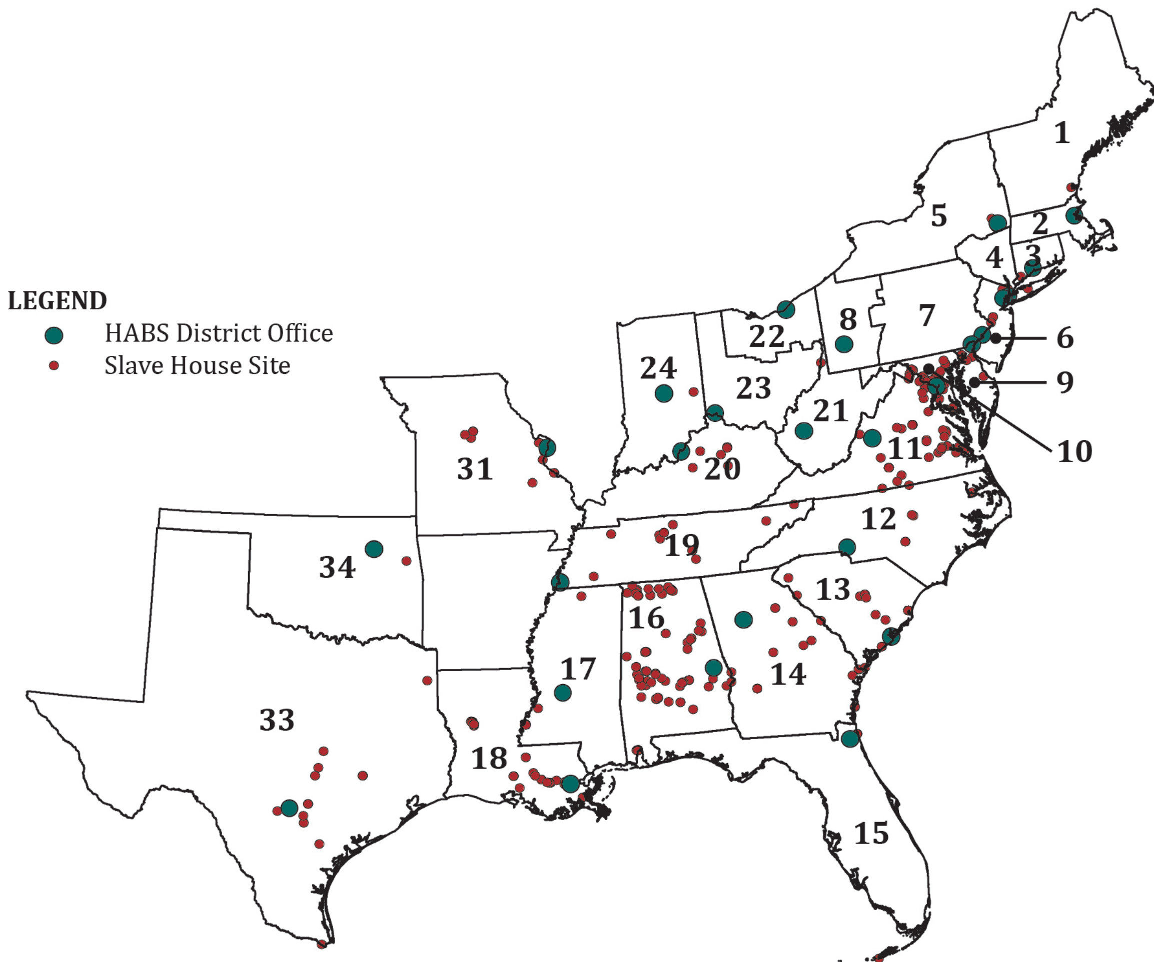

Fig. 1. HABS personnel and a map of HABS District Offices and slave house sites.

Archaeology and Historic American Buildings Survey Sites

The initial ten-week HABS program in 1933 included the excavation of sites that were in ruins as part of the scope of work. Excavations required specialized archaeological knowledge and were to only be carried out under "exceptional circumstances."[21] It is not clear what constituted "exceptional circumstances," but extensive archaeological excavations did occur at one HABS slave house site (DC-28).

General John Mason House

The General John Mason House on Theodore Roosevelt Island in Washington, D.C. was the only HABS site (DC-28) with a presumed slave house to have an archaeological excavation done simultaneously with the original 1936 architectural survey (Figs. 2 to 4). Stuart M. Barnette, Senior Architectural Foreman, recommended an exploratory project be conducted to set up further investigation.[22] Further archaeological excavations were never carried out and no report of the exploratory findings is known to have been prepared.

Archaeological excavations can be more time intensive than architectural surveys, which is likely the reason so little archaeological work was done during the first ten weeks of HABS in 1933. Although a coordination system between HABS and archaeological surveys was never established, slave archaeology has taken place at HABS sites, but never again in conjunction with the HABS architectural survey (Table 1). The reports from these excavations are not part of the HABS records. Archaeology at slave house sites has played an important role in our understanding of not only the architecture, but also the people who

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[21] Historic American Buildings Survey, "Measurements and Field Notes," *HABS Bulletin* No. 4 (December 22, 1933): 1.

[22] Stuart M. Barnette and O. F. Northington, Jr., *Recommendations for John Mason's mansion*, 19 March 1936. Memorandum, Theodore Roosevelt Island National Memorial, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o274007 (accessed 06 April 2013).

lived in these spaces. Extensive archaeological excavations from three HABS sites are discussed below.

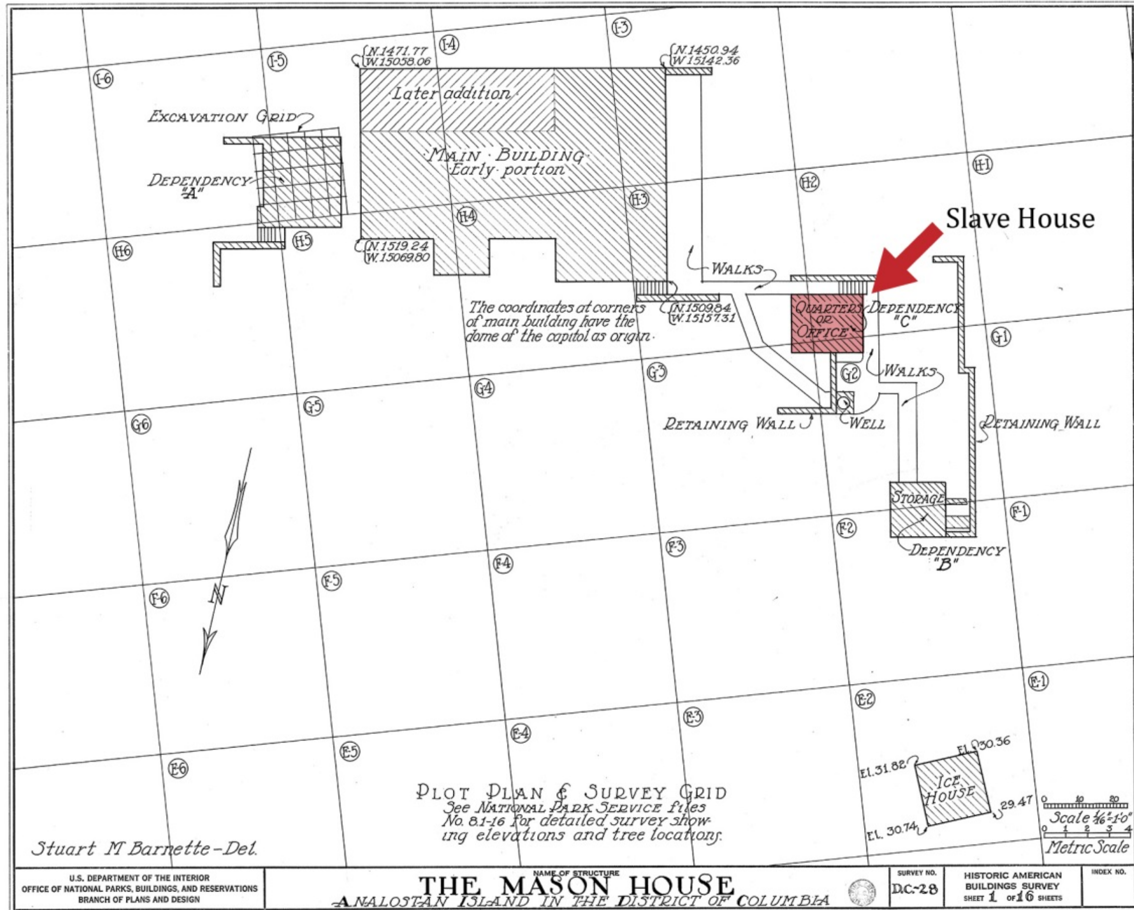

Fig. 2. 1936 plot plan and archaeological survey grid showing the location of the slave house at General John Mason House, Theodore Roosevelt Island in Washington, D.C. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS DC-28.

Fig. 3. Civilian Conservation Corps workers excavating Unit A at the General John Mason House (HABS DC-28). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS DC-28.

Fig. 4. Civilian Conservation Corps workers screening for artifacts at the General John Mason House (HABS DC-28). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS DC-28.

Table 1

Archaeological Surveys and HABS Slave House Sites

Excavation Date	Site Name	State	Archaeologist(s)	HABS Survey	Survey Date
Archaeological Surveys in Conjunction with HABS					
1936	General John Mason House	DC	Stuart M. Barnette	DC-28	1936
Archaeological Surveys Completed before HABS					
Excavation Date	**Site Name**	**State**	**Archaeologist(s)**	**HABS Survey**	**Survey Date**
1967 & 1980	Kingsley Plantation	FL	Charles Fairbanks Unknown	FL-478	2005
1972	Kingsmill Plantation	VA	William Kelso	VA-208	1976
1975 1976 1976-1982 1991	The Hermitage	TN	Samuel Smith Lynne Bowers & Dinah Grashot Emanuel Breitburg Larry McKee	TN-52	1999
1982	Haig Point	SC	Larry Lepionka	SC-867	c.2003
1982	Edward House	SC	Larry Lepionka	SC-868	c.2003
Archaeological Surveys Completed after HABS					
Excavation Date	**Site Name**	**State**	**Archaeologist(s)**	**HABS Survey**	**Survey Date**
1978	Captain Francis Watlington House	FL	Donald L. Cruseo	FL-192	1967
1980	Traveller's Rest	TN	Emanuel Breitburg	TN-14	1970
1985	Anna Jai House	FL	Unknown	FL-15-1	1934
1991 & 1996	Magnolia Plantation	LA	Southeast Archeological Center, National Parks Service	LA-1193	1986
1995	Piper Farm	MD	E.H. Manning-Sterling, M.A. Brown and T.H. Klien	MD-946	1968
1996	Sotterly	MD	J.L. Neuwirth	MD-181	1937
2000	Blythewood Plantation	LA	David Palmer	LA-1275	1998
Unknown	Evergreen Plantation	LA	Scott Simmons	LA-1236	1983
Unknown	Magnolia Plantation	LA	Unknown	LA-1193	1986
Unknown	Poplar Forest	VA	Unknown	VA-303	1986

Kingsley Plantation

The Kingsley Plantation in Monroe County, Florida, HABS site FL-478, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. The Anna Jai House, HABS site FL-15-1, is a contributing resource to the Kingsley Plantation National Register property (Fig. 5). Anna Madgigine Jai was a slave and the wife of Zephaniah Kingsley, the owner of the plantation. At age eighteen Anna was emancipated, but she remained on the plantation and managed the house.[23] The HABS survey of her house in 1934 included a slave house (Fig. 6) and the Driver's Cabin (Fig. 7). In 1985 archaeological work was carried out at the Anna Jai House site.

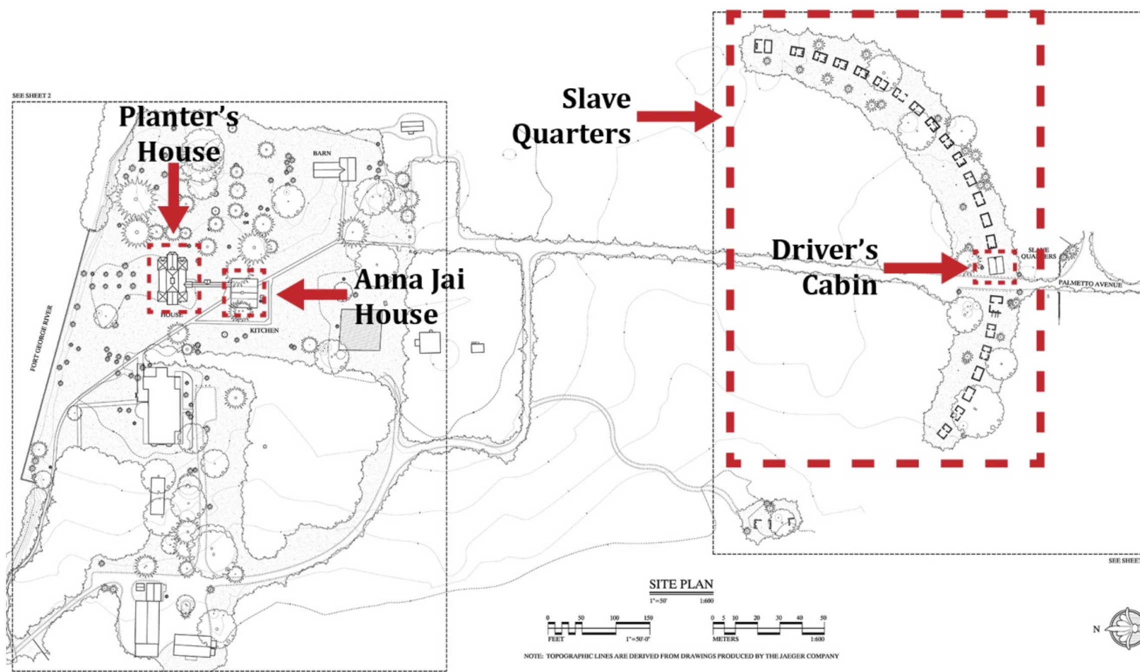

Fig. 5. Site Plan of Kingsley Plantation, Monroe County, Florida. Site plan courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS FL-478. Notations by Jobie Hill.

[23] Daniel L Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 27-30.

Kingsley Plantation, 1813 to 1839, is known for its extremely segregated layout (Fig. 5). Many slaveholders tried to distance themselves from the harsh realities of slavery. Kingsley Plantation represents a slaveowner's very literal translation of this desire. It is an example of a large-scale plantation in which the slaveowner went to great efforts to demonstrate his ideology that slaves were aliens of society and should be separated from everyone else.[24]

The slave cabins at Kingsley Plantation were built with tabby construction (Figs. 8 and 9). Tabby is a building material composed of equal parts lime, sand, oyster shell and water.[25] Tabby as a building material is known to have antecedents in Africa and would have been a familiar construction type to the enslaved Africans brought to America. The coastal regions of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida are known to have many plantation sites with tabby structures.[26]

At Kingsley Plantation archaeological excavations preceded the 2005 HABS survey. In 1967, Charles Fairbanks began excavating the slave quarters on the plantation. Excavations revealed no floral remains except for three corncob fragments. The recovered faunal materials included raccoon, snake, cattle, turtle, fish, and shellfish. Analysis of the faunal collection from Kingsley Plantation were interpreted by Fairbanks as indicating that the slaves hunted and butchered wild animals and cooked for themselves at their houses. Hunting was believed to be a significant dietary supplement for the slaves on the plantation.[27]

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[24] Robert K. Fitts, "The Landscapes of Northern Bondage," *Historical Archaeology* vol. 30, no. 2 (1996): 58-30.

[25] Lauren B. Sickels-Taves and Michael S. Sheehan, *The Lost Art of Tabby: Preserving Oglethorpe's Architectural Legacy* (Southfield, Michigan: Architectural Conservation Press, 1999), 1.

[26] Ibid., 2, 11.

[27] Tyson Gibbs, Kathleen Cargill, Leslie Sue Lieberman and Elizabeth Reitz, "Nutrition in a Slave Population: An Anthropological Examination," *Medical Anthropology* 4, No. 2 (1980): 214.

Fig. 6. Slave house at the Anna Jai House HAB site in Monroe County, Florida. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS FL-15-1.

Fig. 7. Driver's Cabin at the Anna Jai House HABS site. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS FL-15-1.

Fig. 8. Exterior view of a reconstructed slave house at Kingsley Plantation, Monroe County, Florida. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS FL-478-A.

Fig. 9. Interior view of a slave house at Kingsley Plantation. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS FL-478-A.

Another site with well-preserved examples of tabby slave houses is HABS site SC-867, Haig Point Tabby Ruins in Daufuskie Landing, Beaufort County, South Carolina (Figs 10 and 11). This site was surveyed by HABS around 2002. Like Kinsley Plantation, archaeological investigations were undertaken before HABS documentation. The first archaeological survey of the site was conducted in 1982 by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology. In 1985 archaeologist Larry Lepionka directed the excavation of the North Slave Settlement. At the same time as this excavation Colin Brooker, an historical architect, created measured drawings of Haig Point. Brooker's drawings are not part of the HABS collection. Both Kingsley Plantation and Haig Point are examples of the exemplary skills slaves possessed in tabby construction methods.

Fig. 10. Detail of tabby construction at Haig Point, Beaufort County, South Carolina. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS SC-867.

Fig. 11. Ruins of a tabby slave house at Haig Point. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS SC-867.

Kingsmill Plantation

Kingsmill Plantation, 1619 to 1843, HABS site VA-208, in Williamsburg County, Virginia was surveyed by HABS in 1976, after William Kelso completed archaeological excavations in the early 1970s. The archaeological investigations yielded a considerable amount of information about the types of activities that occurred in slave houses (Fig. 12). While excavating the slave houses at Kingsmill Plantation, Kelso uncovered eighteen small cellar holes dug into the interior floors. Each hole was filled with tools and personal items mixed in with kitchen garbage (Fig. 13). Kelso interpreted the holes as serving as an out-of-

sight personal storage space for the enslaved individuals living in the houses.[28] Excavations of nineteenth century slave houses had not previously revealed these types of cellar holes. It is likely that slaveowners eventually caught on to the hidden use of the root cellars and eliminated them.

Fig. 12. West Dependency at Kingsmill Plantation, Williamsburg County, Virginia. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS VA-208.

The excavations at Kingsmill Plantation also recovered large numbers of buttons below the floors inside the slave houses. Kelso suggested that the buttons came from discarded clothes of the planter's family which slave women made into quilts. The quilts would have to be sewn at night by the light of the hearth after sundown. The buttons

[28] William M. Kelso, *Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), 102-128, 198-206.

apparently fell through the cracks of the floorboards where the women worked as they were cut from the clothes.[29]

Fig. 13. Excavated root cellar at Kingsmill Plantation showing personal items and garbage. Photograph by Viginia Historic Landmarks Commission. From William M. Kelso, *Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), 121.

[29] Ibid., 201-202.

The Hermitage

Andrew Jackson's the Hermitage, 1804 to 1845, in Davidson County, Tennessee was documented by HABS in 1999. The site consists of the mansion, the First Hermitage site, an overseer's house, workshops and the houses for the field-hand slaves (Fig. 14). The First Hermitage is made up of three structures: Alfred's Cabin (Fig. 15), the East Cabin (Fig. 16) and the West Cabin (Fig. 17). This site was originally occupied by the Jackson family while the mansion was being built. It was later inhabited by his slaves.

The Hermitage has been the subject of many different types of archaeological research. In 1975 Samuel Smith directed excavations of the Alfred's Cabin. In 1976 Lynne J. Bowers and Dinah L. Grashot conducted a dendrochronology study at the site. From 1976 to 1982 Emanuel Breitburg analyzed faunal remains from the First Hermitage site and the smokehouse and identified which animals were present on the plantation. These animals could have been used for food, as work animals or as pets. Most animal bones recovered are related to food consumption and indicate what types of meat were eaten and how they were prepared.[30] Slaves were not typically allowed to have pets, but according to the narratives of ex-slaves some slaves did have pets.

In 1991 and 1995 Larry McKee excavated the slave quarters at the Hermitage. Among the artifacts recovered were small brass items in the shape of a closed human fist.[31] Two similar charms have been recovered from other slave archaeological sites. One charm was from a root cellar beneath a slave house near Memphis, and the other charm was from a

[30] See Emanuel Breitburg, "Faunal Remains and Dietary Practices for the Hermitage," in *Results of the 1976 Season of the Hermitage Archaeology Project*, ed. Smith, Samuel D. (Nashville: Prepared for the Ladies Hermitage Association and the Tennessee American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1977), 97-108.

[31] Larry McKee, "The Earth Is Their Witness," *Sciences* Vol. 35, No. 2 (1995): 40.

slave house north of the Hermitage.[32] These findings may represent cherished objects which are rarely found in the archaeological record.

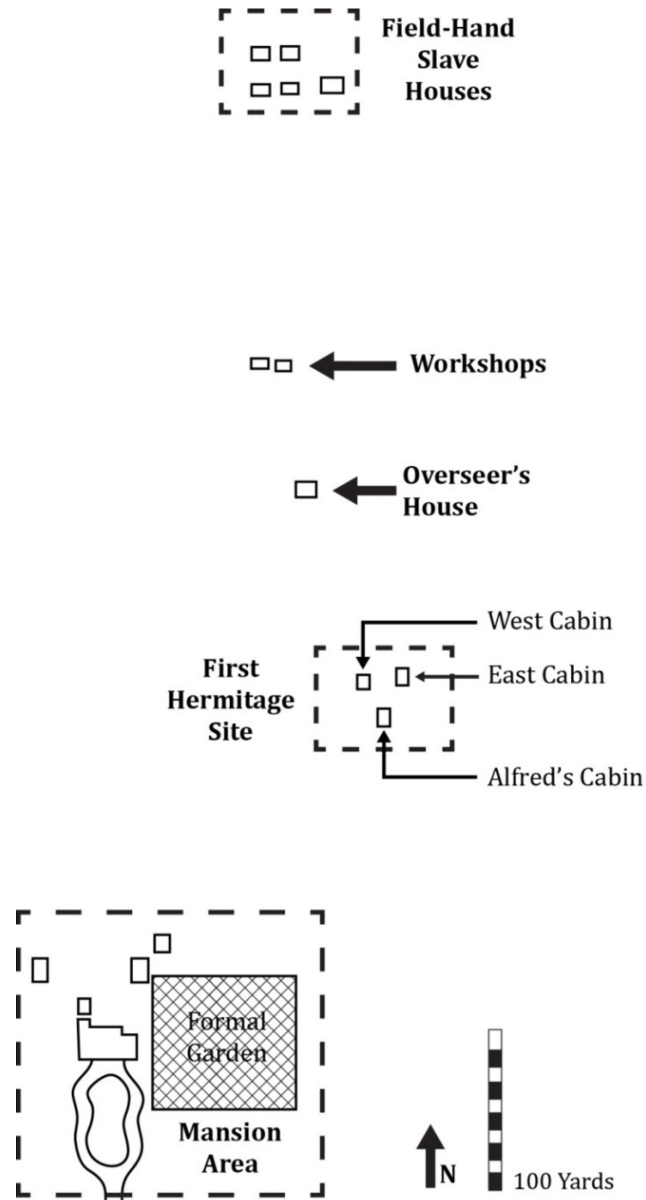

Fig. 14. The Hermitage Plantation site plan, Davidson County, Tennessee. Redrawn from Whitney Battle, "A Space of Our Own: Redefining the Enslaved Household at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage Plantation," in *Household Chores and Household Choices: Theorizing the Domestic Sphere in Historical Archaeology*, ed. Kerri S. Barile and Jamie C. Brandon (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 35.

[32] Mark P. Leone, Cheryl Janifer Laroche, and Jennifer J Babiarz, "The Archaeology of Black Americans in Recent Times," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 582.

Fig. 15. Alfred’s Cabin at The Hermitage. An example of a saddle-bag form type. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS TN-52-C.

Fig. 16. East Cabin at The Hermitage. An example of a double-pen form type. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS TN-52-B.

Fig. 17. West Cabin at The Hermitage. An example of a single-pen form type. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS TN-52-A.

Future Archaeological Research

Archaeological research at HABS sites has the potential to make important contributions to the archaeology of slavery. Some of the most valuable sources of information about slave sites created by HABS are site plans and sketch maps. Lesser known slave sites recorded by HABS identify the location of slave houses that were already demolished at the time of the survey (Fig. 18).

Rosemount Plantation in Greene County, Alabama was surveyed by HABS in the spring of 1934. The HABS record has one photograph (Fig. 19) and one sheet of measured drawings for the slave house located directly behind the Big House (Fig. 20). The slave house appears to be a dormitory-style house for at least four slave families. The second floor is one large room, but the presence of two doors suggests that historically the space was divided into two living units like the first floor. According to the HABS records the slave house burned down in the summer of 1934. The plot plan shows the location of this house and five other slave houses, a carriage shed and a barn that were demolished prior to the HABS survey. No archaeological investigations have yet been undertaken at Rosemount Plantation.

The plot plan of Rosemount Plantation suggests that the slave houses on the site represent a slaveowner's change in attitude about slave housing. The original five slave houses appear to have been single-unit dwellings, while the HABS documented slave house was a dormitory-style dwelling. Archaeological excavations at Rosemount Plantation could potentially recover information about the slave houses that could help identify the architectural changes over time at the site.

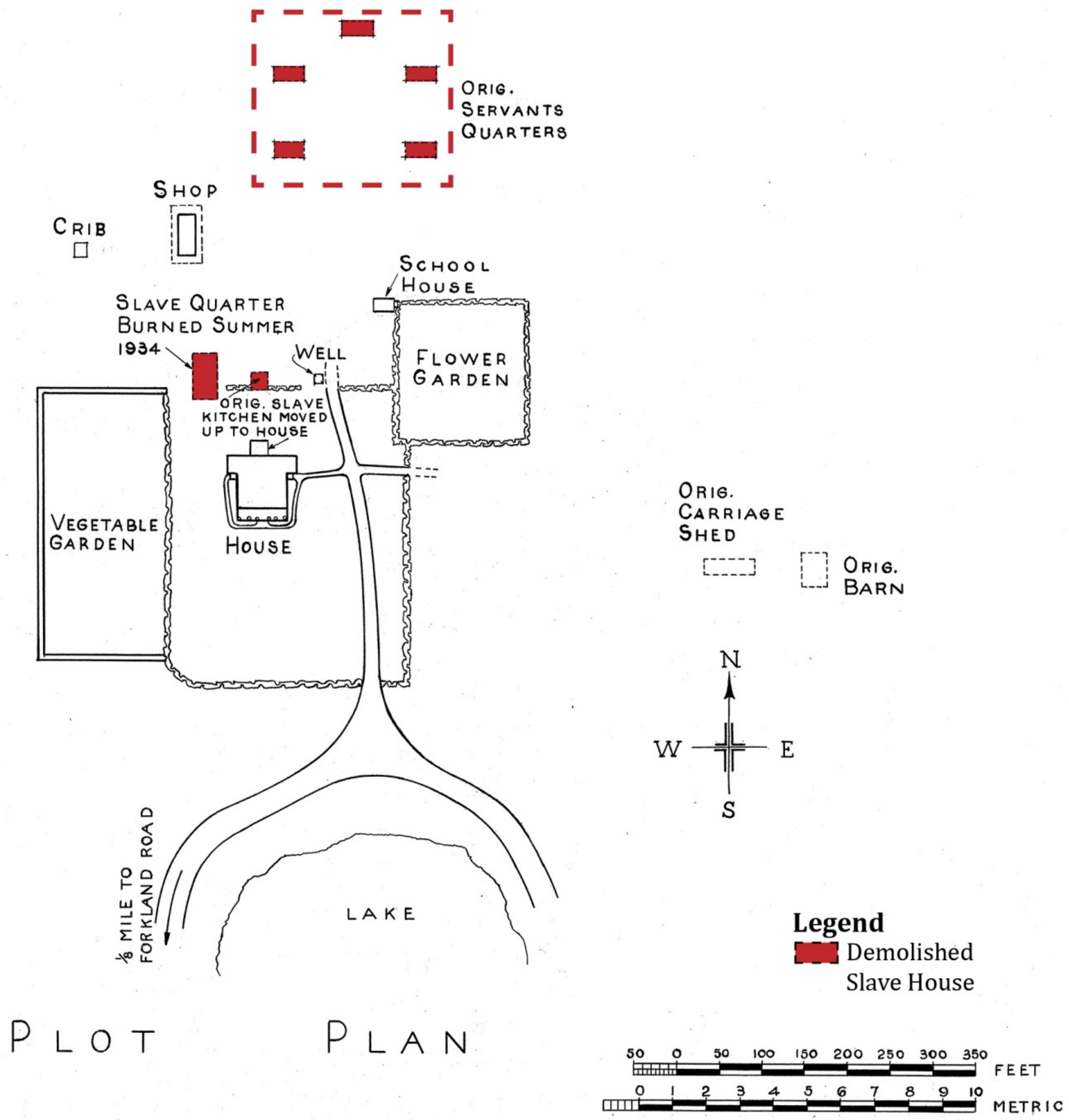

Fig. 18. Plot plan of Rosemount Plantation, Greene County, Alabama. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-212.

Fig. 19. View of the slave house at Rosemount Plantation. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-212. Notation by Jobie Hill.

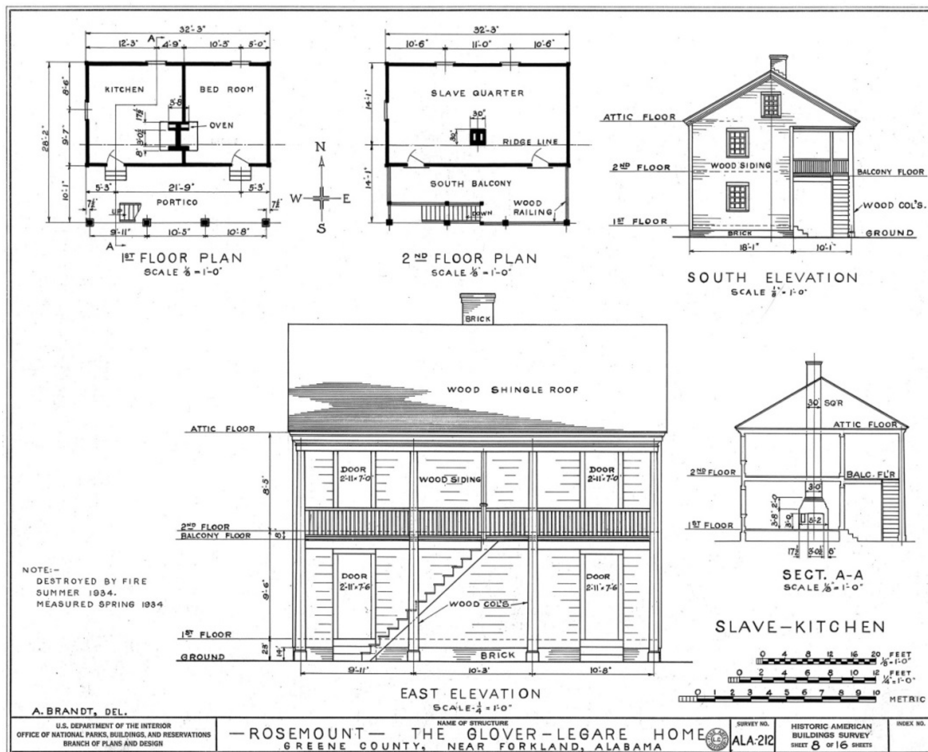

Fig. 20. Measured drawings of the slave house at Rosemount Plantation. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-212.

CHAPTER III

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT

> We had our little log cabin off ter one side, an' my mammy had sixteen chilluns. Fas' as dey got three years old de marster sol' 'em till we last' four day she had wid her durin' de war. I wuz de oldes' o' dese four; den dar wuz Henry an' den de twins, Liza an' Charlie.[1]
>
> - Mary Barbour a slave on Jefferson Mitchel's plantation in McDowell County, North Carolina

This chapter describes key contributors to the Federal Writers' Project including their professional backgrounds, gender and race. Appreciation of the effects of these three aspects on the interview process and related responses by the participants is crucial. Chapter III also includes the official interview questions used by the Federal Writers' Project and a summary of the transcription and publishing process.

History of the Federal Writers' Project

Under the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA), The Federal Writers' Project was assigned the task of collecting the life stories of ordinary people from 1936 to 1938. On August 31, 1939, the Federal Writers' Project became the Writers' Program. The Federal Writers' Project was subject to much political interference at the onset of the program in 1935 that heavily influenced the selection of the Director in each state. As with most WPA programs, the Directors dictated the direction of the program.[2] In addition to being affected by politics, the Writers' Project was also host to many other problems. In the

[1] Mary Barbour, age 81, was a slave on Jefferson Mitchel's plantation in McDowell County, North Carolina. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography,* Vol. 14 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), 79.

[2] Monty Noam Penkower, *The Federal Writers' Project: A Study in Government Patronage of the Arts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 39.

eyes of the WPA administration, one of the primary problems was recruiting professional writers. As part of President Roosevelt's New Deal, at least ninety percent of all WPA workers were to be selected from the public relief rolls.[3] For certain programs this mandate caused a great deal of hardship in finding qualified professionals. The Writers' Project was one of these programs. Not surprisingly, directors in large cities, with greater populations, were more successful in obtaining experienced writers than smaller rural town directors. It is estimated that almost half of Writers' Project employees came from New York City, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Los Angeles.[4]

The difficulty the Writers' Project found with having 90 percent of its staff officially registered as unemployed was that most professional writers were not registered. Relief rolls from North Carolina contained 518 schoolteachers and 3 librarians, but no writers. With such a small enrollment, the Writers' Project was forced to consider professionals from other occupations.[5] The term "writer" was expanded to include "almost any other occupation that involved an understanding of the English language and some training and observations in the preparation of records."[6]

As with most other WPA programs, the prevailing wage for Writers' Project employees varied according to regional living costs. Even with a prevailing wage in effect, Writers' Project employees were some of the higher paid participants, much more so than the manual-labor relief programs such as HABS. Employees of the Writers' Project were seen as white-collar workers and were placed in the skilled and professional-technical

[3] Ibid., 56.

[4] Ibid., 58.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 58-59.

security wage classification.[7] The highest paid wages were in New York where professionals earned from $93.50 to $103.50 per month. Georgia and Mississippi were on the other end of the spectrum earning only $39 per month. The pay discrepancy may have been a point of animosity between state recorders, especially amongst the Directors.

History of the Slave Narratives

In the beginning, Writers' Projects in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia decided to focus the majority of interviews on people who had once been held in slavery. These interviews were sent to the Washington office and immediately caught the eye and interest of John A. Lomax, then National Advisor on Folklore and Folkways for the Federal Writers' Project.[8] Lomax was so intrigued by the content of the interviews that he persuaded the Writers' Project administration to support these types of interviews, and thus the official Slave Narratives project was created. In 1937, the Writers' Project directed states to conduct interviews with former slaves.[9] Lomax realized that "in some states it may be possible to locate only a very few ex-slaves, but an attempt should be made in every state. Interesting ex-slave data has recently been reported [during the Writers' Project] from Rhode Island, for instance."[10]

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[7] Ibid., 62.

[8] Other members of the Writers' Project in the Washington office were Henry G. Alsberg, Director; George Cronyn, Associate Director; Sterling A. Brown, Editor on Negro Affairs; Mary Lloyd, Editor; and B.A. Botkin, Folklore Editor succeeding Lomax. George P. Rawick, "Editor's Introduction to Volumes 2-19," in *From Sundown to Sunup; The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972), 169.

[9] Library of Congress, "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938," Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/narratives-slavery/file.html (accessed 15 September 2012).

[10] Work Projects Administration, *Slave Narratives, Administrative Files: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington: Library of Congress, 2004), 10.

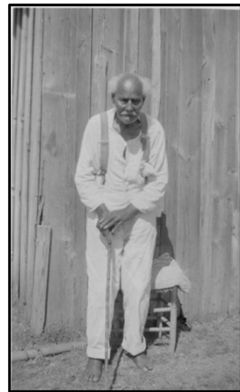
Betty Bormer

Charlotte Beverly

Felice Boudreaux

Francis Black

James Singleton Black

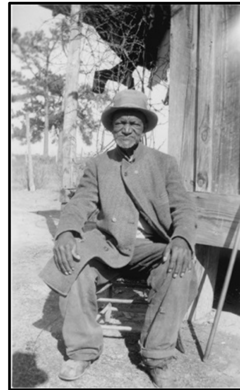


Jas. Boyd

Julia Daniels

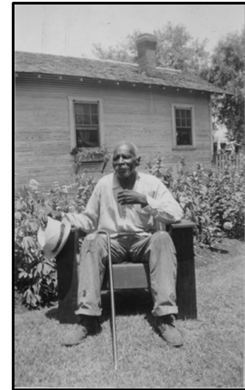
Minerva & Edgar Bendy

Rose Fay



Wes Brady

Will Adams



William Green

Fig. 21. Selected photographs of ex-slaves interviewed by the Federal Writes' Project. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, "Portraits of African American ex-slaves from the U.S. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers' Project slave narratives collections," LOT No. 13262

At the end of the Slave Narratives project in 1938, more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves had been collected by Writers' Projects from seventeen states (Fig. 21). The narratives are the largest published collection and most frequently-cited set of primary sources on slavery in the United States.[11]

Compiling the Narrative Data

On April 22, 1937, the document "Supplementary Instructions #9-E to The *American Guide Manual*" was sent out to each of the Writers' Projects. This addendum to the *American Guide Manual* included the standard questionnaire that was to be used by the field workers (Appendix B). The main purpose of the questionnaire, created by John A. Lomax, was "to get the Negro interested in talking about the days of slavery. If he will talk freely, he should be encouraged to say what he pleases without reference to the questions."[12] The instructions also stressed that "the Federal Writers' Project is not interested in taking sides on any question. The worker should not censor any material collected, regardless of its nature."[13] Lomax also stated that it was very important that the interviewer return for a second visit, a few days after the first. Lomax did not specify how the questions should be split between the two interviews.

[11] Brenda B. Johns and Alonzo N. Smith, *Black Oral History in Nebraska* (Omaha, NE: Black Studies Dept., University of Nebraska, 1980): 4.

[12] George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup,* 174.

[13] Ibid.

Dialect Usage

The Writers' Project was strict about reporting the interviews “as accurately as possible in the language of the original statements.”[14] But when it came to dialect usage the Writers' Project was looking for “simplicity” and some standardization “in order to hold the interest and attention of the readers.”[15] Lomax explained in the “Supplementary Instructions #9-E” that exact phonetic transcription was extremely valuable, but very hard to do.[16] Therefore, Lomax believed that the interviewer should follow the rule: “truth to idiom be paramount and exact truth to pronunciation secondary.”[17] Lomax appreciated that many of the writers were recording sensitively, but “in a single publication, not devoted to a study of local speech, the reader may conceivably be puzzled by different spellings of the same word.”[18] It was recommended that a uniform word be used for certain terms, even though setting-up a single standard would be difficult (Appendix C). The exceptions to these rules were when the words and phrases had “flavor and vividness,” in which case the different pronunciation, should be recorded as heard.[19]

Even though the Writers' Project recommended standardization in dialect, they continued to stress the importance of telling the stories in “the language of the ex-slave, without excessive editorializing and ‘artistic’ introductions on the part of the interviewer.”[20] A final recommendation made by Lomax was that “the words darky and nigger and such

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 176.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 176-177.

[19] Ibid., 177.

[20] Ibid., 178.

expressions as ‘a comical little old black woman’ be omitted from the editorial writing. Where the ex-slave himself uses these, they should be retained.”[21]

Compilation of the Interviews

On October 17, 1939 the Library of Congress Project was set up. The purpose of the Project was to “collect, check, edit, index, and otherwise prepare for use WPA records" which included the ex-slave narratives and the photographs of former slaves.[22] The primary tasks of the Writers' Unit in preparing the narratives for deposit in the Library of Congress consisted of organizing the interviews and photographs first by state, then alphabetically by informant’s last name. They also created lists of all the informants and illustrations.[23]

The Writers’ Unit did not edit any of the manuscripts. Any editing that appears was done previously in the Washington office. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax are known to be responsible for some of the penciled-in comments. If an interview had two drafts or versions, both were included so that the reader could compare and draw their own conclusions.[24]

The compilation of ex-slave narratives from the Writers' Project was published as three multivolume sets edited by George P. Rawick. The first set, entitled *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography,* was published in 1972 and consists of two series totaling nineteen volumes. The first volume, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community,* by Rawick, is an essay on slavery that is organized into two parts: part one, “The Sociology of Slavery in the United States,” and part two, “The Sociology of European

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 169-170. This also included interviews with white informants regarding slavery, transcripts of laws, advertisements, records of sale, transfer, and manumission of slaves, and other documents.

[23] Ibid., 170.

[24] Ibid.

and American Racism." Volumes two through nineteen are the ex-slave narratives and complete Series One. Series Two contains twelve volumes, two of which (volumes eighteen and nineteen) are reprints of interviews collected at Fisk University at the end of the 1920s. The Fisk interviews were first published in 1945 and are titled *Unwritten History of Slavery* and *God Struck Me Dead*.[25]

The first supplemental series, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography: Supplement, Series 1*, published in 1977, has additional narratives collected by the Writers' Project from 1936 to 1938. Rawick found these narratives scattered throughout the United States in various libraries, historical societies and other similar institutions. The largest collection of interviews in this series came from Mississippi. Here there was an effort to censure the narratives that showed the white slaveowner in "a bad light." Consequently, over 2,400 pages of interviews were originally withheld.[26] Rawick's final set of publications, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography: Supplement, Series 2,* published in 1979, is believed to be (by Rawick) the last of the unpublished interviews of ex-slave narratives from the Writers' Project.[27]

The Slave House and the Slave Narratives

Architectural history as a discipline examines when, where, how and why buildings were constructed. The primary areas of research typically revolve around the architect or builder, architectural style and design intent, methods of construction, major alterations and significant owners and occupants. As an architect, I believe these studies tend to leave

[25] Ibid., 1636-64.

[26] For one explanation, see Rawick, "General Introduction," in *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 1, xvi-xxi. For a discussion on tampering with and editing of the narratives see Ibid., xxi-xxvi.

[27] George P. Rawick, "General Introduction," in *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography: Supplement, Series 2*, Vol. 1, edited by George P. Rawick (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1979), xii.

out the most important aspect of a building—user response, the emotional reaction the space evokes for the occupant. The principal way to know this is to ask the user. In modern times, architects conduct post occupancy evaluations to arrive at this answer. These evaluations typically consist of a questionnaire that allows the user to rate specific aspects of the building that affect the functional and technical performance of the building. Areas that are evaluated as part of the functional performance include: (1) aesthetics and image, (2) space (size, relationships and adaptability) and (3) comfort (lighting, temperature, ventilation, and noise).[28]

Post occupancy evaluations are a relatively recent practice. Fortunately, an unintentional functional performance evaluation was carried out for nineteenth century slave houses. The ex-slave interviews conducted by the Writers' Project included questions that evaluated the slave houses in terms of functional performance. Question No. 2 from Lomax's standard questionnaire addressed issues of human comfort in the historic slave houses (Table 2).

The amount of detail that each ex-slave provided about his or her house varied significantly. The responses range from two word answers to lengthy descriptions of the construction of the house or catastrophic events that occurred within the house while they were living there. Regardless of the level of detail given about the structure itself, each narrative embodies an emotional reaction to the house and provides a unique perspective that only a direct user could have.

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[28] Alastair Blyth, Anthony Gilby and Mel Barlex, *Guide to Post Occupancy Evaluation* (London: Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2006), 11, www.smg.ac.uk/documents/ POEBrochureFinal06.pdf.

Table 2 Writers' Project Interview Questions Associated with Human Comfort[29]
Questions about the house:
• Describe your home and the "quarters." • Describe the beds and where you slept.
Questions about the events and people in the house:
• Give the names of your father and mother. Where did they come from? • Give names of your brothers and sisters. • Tell about your life with them. • Do you remember anything about your grandparents or any stories told to you about them? • What did you eat and how was it cooked? Any possums? Rabbits? Fish? • What food did you like best? • Did the slaves have their own gardens? • How many acres in the plantation? • How many slaves on it?

Limitations of the Interviews

The most significant problem with the Writers' Project program was the racial discrimination of workers. The New Deal and the WPA programs of the early 1930s took place during a time when Jim Crow Laws were enforced. These racist segregation laws and attitudes against blacks are evident not only in the Writers' Project employee demographics but also in the literature produced. Pre-World War II historians tended to have racist attitudes towards enslaved people and attributed them virtually no agency in establishing any type of independence.[30] Many state Directors claimed they could not find qualified black writers.[31] The New Mexico Director asserted that almost all of the "colored people" in her state were cooks or chauffeurs.[32] Other Directors gave the excuse that very few Blacks

[29] Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup,* 174-176.

[30] Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields: Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 4-5.

[31] Ibid., 67.

[32] Ibid., 66.

possessed a higher education, and if they did they already had a job in the private sector.[33] In the South there were clear cases of discrimination where qualified Blacks were openly turned down positions. A report in February of 1937 disclosed that only 106 Blacks, of some 4,500 workers, had been employed by the Writers' Project.[34]

The most important and influential aspect of oral histories is the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer must not in any way project his or her own biases onto the subjects. “This sensitivity is particularly important among Black people, who have, more than many groups, been subjected to invasions of privacy, and questionable methods of gathering information.”[35]

Reviews of the Slave Narratives have concluded the most informative stories were recorded when the informant and the interviewer were the same gender. In general, women received better answers to their questions than men.[36] In the most general sense the hierarchy of effective interviewer was: (1) black female, (2) black male, (3) white female and, (4) white male.

Fourteen of the twenty-six states employed black interviewers (Table 3). In Virginia thirteen of the twenty interviewers were African American. The book *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-slaves*[37] is considered the standard for successful ex-slave interviews. The narratives from highly conservative southern states are considered the most historically inaccurate. Jerrold Hirsch attributes this shortcoming to “the determination of most southern Federal Writers to make the former slaves’ narratives

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[33] Ibid., 66.

[34] Ibid., 67.

[35] Johns, *Black Oral History,* 13.

[36] John W. Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," *The Journal of Southern History* 41, No. 4 (1975): 473-492.

[37] Charles L. Perdue and Thomas E. Barden, *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991).

confirm the white South's traditional view of blacks and slavery."[38] Interviews carried out by white interviewers may have resulted in the informants telling their white interviewers "what they wanted to hear" or they may have not told the complete story, resulting in a kind of self-censorship.[39] Paul D. Escott's systematic analysis of the Slave Narrative collection found that the answers given by the ex-slaves were influenced by the race of the interviewer. For example, when asked to rate the quality of their food 72 percent of those interviewed by white Writers' Project employees rated the quality of their food as good, while only 46 percent of those interviewed by black Writers' Project employees rated their food as good.[40]

Table 3
Race and Gender Statistics of Writers' Project Interviewers[41]

HABS States	Black Interviewers Female	Black Interviewers Male	White Interviewers Female	White Interviewers Male	Unidentified Race	Total Interviewers
AL	0	1	11	8	10	30
FL	4	4	1	0	2	11
GA	4	0	18	3	5	30
IN	0	1	2	0	15	18
KY	0	0	4	3	9	16
MD	1	0	3	0	0	4
MO	1	0	2	1	3	7
MS	0	0	5	0	3	8
NC	0	0	8	1	0	9
OH	0	0	3	3	8	14
SC	1	0	6	5	11	23
TN	0	0	1	0	0	1
TX	0	0	0	0	3	3
VA	6	7	7	0	0	20

[38] Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 188.

[39] Library of Congress, "Born in Slavery."

[40] Ibid.; Paul D. Escott, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1979), 33.

[41] Escott, *Slavery Remembered,* 188-191. If the gender of the interviewer was unknown they are assumed to be female.

The race and gender of the interviewer would have been more of an issue for certain types of questions. Personal questions directly relating to how the informant was treated by the slaveowner may have created an uncomfortable or even threatening situation for the informant. As a result, the question was more likely to have a censored answered. Unobtrusive questions, on the other hand, were likely to invoke a more candid honest answer.[42] The questions relevant to this study are about the slave's house and were more than likely considered nonthreatening by the informant. The responses about their living arrangements provide details about the houses that only someone living there would know. User testimonies as they related to issues of human comfort are discussed in the following chapter.

Archaeology and the Slave Narratives

The archaeological evidence found at slave sites can tell us about food production and consumption on plantations. This, in turn, informs us about types of food that made up a slave's diet, how these foods were prepared, the utensils used to eat, personal possessions, a slave's health conditions, labor demands and the physical treatment of the enslaved.[43]

The first question that is asked when researching a slave's diet is: Were the slaves being given enough food from the slaveowner? The ex-slave narratives provide a wide range of answers, and sometimes the answers are contradictory. Slaves would first say that their master gave them plenty to eat and then they would say that they had to hunt wild game to supplement their diets. For example, the narrative of William McWhorter, a slave on Joe McWhorter's plantation, in Green County, Georgia stated that:

[42] Library of Congress, "Born in Slavery."

[43] The largest archaeological investigation of skeletal remains of enslaved Africans was the African Burial Ground Project in New York City, 1991. See Edna Greene Medford, ed., *The New York African Burial Ground: History Final Report,* Washington, D.C.: The United States General Services Administration Northeast and Caribbean Region and Howard University, 2004.

> Now, you is talkin' 'bout somepin sho 'nough when you starts 'bout dem victuals. Marse Joe, he give us plenty of sich as collards, turnips and greens, peas, 'taters, meat, and cornbread. Lots of de cornbread was baked in pones on spiders, but ashcakes was a might go in dem days. Marster raised lots of cane so as to have plenty of good syrup. My pa used to 'possum hunt lots and he was 'lowed to keep a good 'possum hound to trail 'em wid. Rabbits and squirrels was plentiful and dey made mighty good eatin'. You ain't never seed sich heaps of fish as slaves used to fetch back atter a little time spent fishin' in de cricks and de river.[44]

One explanation for this may be that the slaves believed they were responsible for providing the meat in their diet and their masters were responsible for providing the other foods. In this context, the narratives are not contradictory, but it is that our understanding of the historical context is from the singular perspective of the slaveowner.

The southern plantation had no inherent characteristics that inhibited food production, but because the plantation existed primarily to accumulate wealth, when competition arose between food and cash crops, it was tempting for the planter to favor the cash crop. [45]

It was fairly common for sugar and rice plantations to have overseers because the planter often owned more than one plantation. The plantation overseer resided on the plantation and was responsible for its function.[46] The duties of the overseer were to take care of the slaves and the stock, see that enough food was produced for use on the plantation, and most importantly he was to raise as much cash crop as possible.[47] Many planters believed that in order to maximize the return on their investment they needed to place a strong emphasis upon crop production over that of food production. Consequently,

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[44] William McWhorter, age 78, was a slave on Joe McWhorter's plantation in Green County, Georgia. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 13, Pt. 3, 94.

[45] Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake; Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 22-23.

[46] Ibid., 25-26.

[47] John Spencer Bassett, and James K. Polk, *The Southern Plantation Overseer As Revealed in His Letters* (Northampton, Massachusetts: Printed for Smith College, 1925), 11-12.

many overseers were judged not by the provisions they grew but how much harvested cash crop was collected.[48]

Throughout the Antebellum Period slaves on most plantations ate wild game, fish, and vegetables. Corn and pork were the dietary staples in the South throughout the Antebellum Period and into the twentieth century.[49] The techniques used in preserving food determined the amounts of vitamins and minerals that were retained in the food. Researchers of slave nutrition have suggested that the food preservation methods used from 1800 until 1860 led to a loss of many vitamins and minerals. These methods included: drying salt, smoking, pickling, brewing, drying, potting, root cellaring, canning, sterilization, pasteurization, and freezing.[50]

Excavated food remains from slave sites indicate that most meals were cooked in one large pot.[51] Many of the excavated animal bones from slave sites have been cut into small pieces and are highly fragmented suggesting that meats were boiled in stews or soups, rather than roasted.[52] The narratives from ex-slaves describe eating stew-like foods out of large bowls and with homemade spoons. Dan Bogie, a slave on Abe Wheeler's plantation near Lancaster, Kentucky remembered eating quite well compared to other slaves: "Stewed rabbits, fried fish and fried bacon called 'streaked meat' all kinds of vegetables, boiled cabbage, pone corn bread, and sorghum molasses. Old folks would drink

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[48] Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake,* 25-26.

[49] Ibid., 40.

[50] Gibbs, "Nutrition in a Slave Population," 227. For a discussion on plantation tasks and energy requirements see Ibid., 237-245.

[51] Theresa A. Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life," in *Images of the Recent Past: Readings in Historical Archaeology*, ed. Charles E. Orser and Jr. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 147.

[52] Ibid.

coffee, but chillum would drink milk, especially butter milk."[53] Lizzie Williams, a slave on Captain Jack Williams' plantation in Grenada County, Mississippi, on the other hand, remembered: "Dey didn't give us nothin much to eat… Heep o' times we'd eat coffee grounds fo' bread. Sometimes we'd have biscuits made out o' what was called the 2nd's. De white folks allus got de 1st's."[54] Rachel Adams, a slave in Georgia, remembered that certain foods were said to be dangerous to eat:

> Dey used to skeer us out 'bout red 'taters. Dey was fine 'taters, re on de outside and pretty and white on de inside, but white folks called 'em 'nigger-killers.' Dat was one of deir tricks to keep us from stealin' dem 'taters. Dere warn't nothin' wrong wid dem 'taters; dey jus as good and healthy as any other 'taters.[55]

Rachel also remembered that "potlicker and cornbread was fed to us chillum, out of big old wooden bowls. Two or three chillum et out of de same bowl."[56] Rose Holman, a slave in Mississippi, was fed in a similar manner: "We eat out o' troughs down at Marsa's back doo' an et wid muscle shells fo' spoons."[57] Lizzie Williams, a slave in Mississippi, recalled "Us chillum had homemade wooden paddles to eat with an we sho' had to be in a hurry 'bout it cause de dogs would get it all if we didn't."[58] On some plantations the slaves were given actual eating utensils. Leah Garrett, a Georgian slave, recalled that "every pusson had

[53] Dan Bogie, born May 5, 1853, was a slave on Abe Wheeler's plantation near Lancaster, Kentucky. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 16, 2.

[54] Lizzie Williams, age 88, was a slave on Captain Jack Williams' plantation in Grenada County, Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 10, 2335.

[55] Rachel Adams, age 78, was a slave on Lewis Little's plantation in Futman County, Georgia. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 6.

[56] Ibid., 3.

[57] Rose Holman, age about 84, was a slave in Choctaw County, Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 8, 1037.

[58] Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 10, 2335.

a tin pan, tin cup, and a spoon. Everybody couldn't eat at one time, us had 'bout four different sets."[59]

The narratives reviewed for this study did not describe any personal possessions, but archaeological excavations at slave sites have recovered evidence of material goods possessed by slaves. The most common excavated artifacts that are believed to have been personal possessions are crystals, blue beads, drilled coins, marine shells, fist charms, pipes, and spoons with Xs on them.[60] M. C. Emerson's work on pipe decorations in the 1980s is considered among the earliest physical evidence of an African American expression of cultural identity in the Antebellum South.[61]

The written historical record does not contain any references to the provisioning of slaves with ceramics. Yet, ceramics have been recovered from slave house sites. Archaeologists have offered three possible explanations as to how slaves received such items. One, these objects were unwanted items by the slaveowner's family and given to the slaves as a means of disposal. Two, slaves may have purchased these items with money they earned through the task system.[62] Three, the items were stolen. It is likely that all three possibilities occurred to varying degrees from time to time.[63]

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[59] Leah Garrett, age 78, was a slave in Georgia. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, Pt. 2, 15.

[60] Leone, "The Archaeology of Black Americans in Recent Times," 582.

[61] Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life," 145. See M. C. Emerson, *Decorated Clay Tobacco Pipes from the Chesapeake* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 130-138.

[62] See Philip D. Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700-1880," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1982): 563-599.

[63] Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life," 153.

CHAPTER IV

THE SLAVE HOUSE

> My father wuz sold 'way from us when I wuz small. Dat wuz a sad time fer us. Mar's wouldn't sell de mudders 'way from dier chillun so us lived on wid her wid out de fear ob bein' sold. My pa sho' did hate ter leave us. He missed us and 'us longed fer him. He would often slip back ter us' cottage at nite. Us would gather 'round him an' crawl up in his lap, tickled slap to death, but he give us dese pleasures at a painful risk. When his Mars missed him he would beat him all de way home. Us could track him de nex' day by de blood stains.[1]
>
> - Hannah Chapman, a slave on Bill Easterlin's plantation in Mississippi

This chapter is this author's analysis of the Historic American Buildings Survey and Federal Writers' Project, Slave Narrative collections as they relate to the historic slave house. This chapter is an exploration of considerations beyond a two-dimensional analysis that significantly impacted the lifeways of inhabitants. Historically analyses have neglected to take these considerations into account. The interdisciplinary analysis completed in this chapter reviews, in part, the slave family structure, slave autonomy, agricultural practices, food preparation, and spatial perceptions. These examinations are primarily reviewed and interpreted exclusively in this chapter.

Historically, there are five primary terms used to refer to structures that people occupied for shelter: home, cabin, house, dwelling and quarters.[2] The narratives provide context for each term and demonstrate the historical connotation for each. This study argues that there is a relationship between the strength of a slave's family unit and his or her attitude towards the slave house as reflected in the choice of terms.

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[1] Hannah Chapman, born c. 1851, was a slave on Bill Easterlin's plantation in Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 7, 381-382.

[2] See George W. McDaniel, *Hearth & Home, Preserving a People's Culture*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982, for essays that discuss the features of a home.

The slave narratives used the terms cabin, house and quarters. *Cabin* was used as a descriptive term in the narratives. Ella Booth, a slave on the Wiltz plantation in Prentiss, Lawrence County, Mississippi described her slave houses and the landscape as: "The slaves lived in scattered cabins back of de big house but in calling distance. Dey didn't have no overseer or Nigger driver. Old Massa said he could look after his own niggers."[3] The narratives that use the term *cabin* are similar to Ella's and provide very few personal details about the house. This suggests that the narrator felt little personal connection to the slave house.

The terms *house* and *quarters* are the primary terms used in the slave narratives for discussing the domestic structures in which they lived. House describes the individual structures and quarters describe a group of slave houses. Peter Clifton's description of his family and house on John Satterwhite's plantation in South Carolina is a good example of how ex-slaves used each term:

> My pappy name Ned; my mammy name Jane. My brudders and sisters was Tom, Lizzie, Mary and Gill. Us live in a log house wid a plank floor and a wooden chimney, dat was always ketchin' afire and de wind comin' through and fillin' de room wid smoke and cinders. It was just one of many others, just lak it, dat made up the quarters.[4]

Most of the narratives that use the term *house* include personal details of the structure they are describing, like Peter's narrative. The inclusion of these details suggests that the ex-slave felt a strong personal connection to his or her slave house.

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[3] Ella Booth, age 80, was a slave on the Wiltz plantation in Prentiss, Lawrence County, Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 6, 179.

[4] Peter Clifton, Born 1848, was a slave in Newberry County, South Carolina on John Satterwhite's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 2, 205.

The Slave Family

A slave's family was the most important and precious aspect of a slave's life. In slave communities the family was used as a survival mechanism.[5] Family was the one thing that gave the enslaved strength, hope and comfort during insufferable times. There were many external factors that affected the strength and stability of slave families. The most influential was the slaveowner's attitude towards slave family units. Unfortunately, no slave family in the Antebellum South was ever completely safe from the prospect of being separated from its family members. At any time, a family could be torn apart for a number of reasons, such as estate divisions, debt collections, sales, or long-term hiring out.[6] The most brutal aspect of slavery, the separation of families and the threat of being sold, was a slaveowner's most powerful punishment. Nothing demonstrated a slave's powerlessness better than forced separation.[7]

The type of crop grown on the plantation affected slave family life. The demands of work on the plantation determined the boundaries and opportunities with respect to family contact, childcare, domestic responsibilities, and long-term stability.[8] The nature of work limited the amount of time that the enslaved had to spend with their family members. Enslaved parents that were kept in the fields from sunup to sundown were significantly deprived of valuable bonding time with their children.[9]

The amount of contact between slave family members was also determined by where meals were eaten. Meals created from a central kitchen and eaten as a group reduced

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[5] John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community; Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 191.

[6] Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields*, 171.

[7] Ibid., 173-174.

[8] Ibid., 4.

[9] Ibid., 87.

the amount of private time a slave had to spend with family members. Meals cooked at home in the slave houses required more work on the slave's part, but eating together meant more unsupervised time with family members. Evidence of the eating habits of slaves is found through archaeological research and the personal narratives of ex-slaves.

Slave houses played a significant role in determining the strength of the slave family. Because the slave house was the one private space where slaves could spend time with family members, the slave house can be interpreted as a sacred family space. The individual size of the slave houses affected how a family or a group of families interacted on a personal and intimate level. The location and spatial distribution of the houses affected the activities that took place around the house after sundown. These two factors affected families the most with members living on different plantations. Slave houses located near the Big House had tighter surveillance than those located further away. Parson Allen, a slave on John McWiggin's plantation in Georgetown, Scott County, Missouri remembered: "We lived in log cabins. Dey had slip doors for de windows. Man, what you talkin' 'bout? We never had no window glass. Had 'bout fourteen cabins and dey was placed so dat de old master could sit on his porch and see every one of dem."[10]

The Documented Slave House

The documentation of the slave house recorded by HABS and the Writers' Project primarily represent the last fifty years of slavery and the transition period from slavery to freedom. Due to the age of the informants from the Writers' Project the ex-slave narratives represent life on the plantation from approximately 1835 to emancipation.[11] The HABS collection includes slave houses from as early as 1700, but the bulk of the slave houses were

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[10] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 11, Missouri, 18.

[11] Rawick, "Editor's Introduction to Volumes 2-19*,"* 165.

built between 1825 and 1850. Together, the HABS images and the Writers' Project ex-slave narratives demonstrate the vast range of housing types and living conditions that once shaped the lives of thousands of slaves in the Antebellum South (Fig. 22).

Slave house design and location varied significantly from plantation to plantation depending on the slaveowner's needs and desires. Slave houses could be large, dormitory-style dwellings (Fig. 23) or they could be a small single-unit structure (Fig. 24). Some plantations located the slave houses near work areas. Manus Robinson described the location of the slave houses on Bill Toom's plantation in North Carolina as: "Ole Mars had his slave cabins scattered all 'round over his plantation, he lacked 'em dat way, he wanted 'em convenient to der different parts. Some ob 'em wuz clos' ter de barn an' stables, den dey wuz two or three close ter de big house fe de servents an' maids ter live, uders wuz near de fields an' pastures."[12] Other plantations had a very systematic layout that demonstrated the hierarchy of power on the plantation. Mollie Watson described the plantation layout on Squire Garner's plantation in Centerville, Leon County, Texas as:

> [Marse Bastian] His house was a big two-story white house. Right behind it was de first quarters where de workin' slaves lived. Next was de quarters where de nigger drivers lived. Nigger drivers was de cullud overseers. Dey sho' was mean. Dey was so biggity an' such smart-alexs an' dey worked de niggers so hard dat all de hands hated 'em. Dey was a lot harder 'n de white overseers… In de lower quarters was de white overseers homes. Dey had very nice boxed houses… The cabins where de slaves lived were not very big an' didn't have much furniture in 'em. Dey jest one room and dirt flo's. Dey would spread ashes over de flo's an' dampen 'em and pack 'em down so it would be white and smooth."[13]

Because the majority of the slave houses in the HABS collection were built between 1825 and 1850, during the Slave Management Reform Movement (c. 1820 to c. 1860), similar architectural details can be seen in the houses. Advocates of the Reform recognized that the existing slave houses were crowded, unhealthy and poorly constructed. If any

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[12] Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 9, 1,857.

[13] Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 12, 369-370.

**Single-Pen House or
Single-Cell House**

A one room structure with a square floor plan. The house may or may not have a chimney.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-168.

Saddlebag House

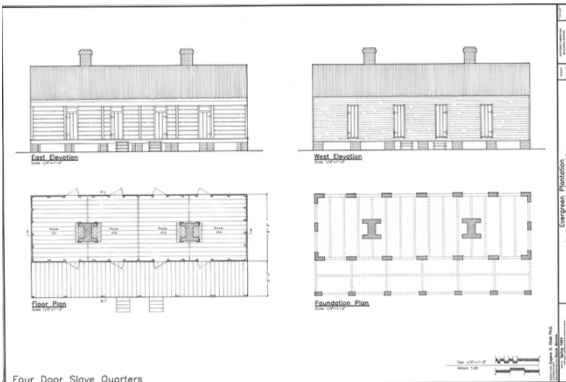
A single structure divided into two separate rooms with a central back-to-back fireplace that serves both rooms. The rooms are similar in size and shape.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-137.

**Triple-Pen House or
Three Cell House**

A single structure divided into three separate rooms with a fireplace between each room. The rooms are similar in size and shape.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS KY-32.

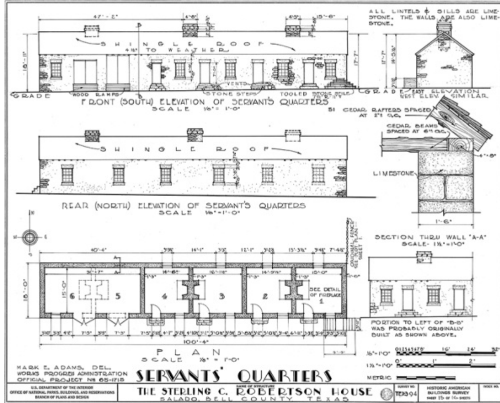


**Double-Saddlebag House or
Four Cell House**

Two double cell houses built as one unit. The two outside units have a back-to-back fireplace that serves that room and one interior room.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS LA-1236.

Fig. 22. Slave house plan types in the HABS collection.



Triple-Saddlebag House or Six Cell House

Three double cell houses built as one unit. A back-to-back fireplace serves every pair of rooms. The rooms are similar in size and shape.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS TX-394.

Double-Pen House

A single structure with a rectangular floor plan. The interior space is divided into two separate rooms but the fireplace only serves one room.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS VA-125.

Dogtrot House

A single roofed structure that has two single-pen units with a central open passageway.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-388.

I-House

A two-story house with a chimney at each end. The chimney can be flush (as pictured), partially flush or exterior. The house may have a central through passage.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS KY-20-5.

Fig. 22 (continued)

L-Shape House

A house with an L-shaped floor plan.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-333.

U-Shape House

A house with a U-shaped floor plan.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-204.

Circular House

A house with a circular floor plan.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS VA-85-B.

Irregular House

A house with an irregularly-shaped floor plan.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-140.

Fig. 22 (continued)

justification for slavery—duty, humanity, and self-interest—was to endure, reform was a must.[14] Proposed changes called for carefully planned layouts of the quarters and better quality houses. The preferable location of the quarters would be a site with ample space, abundant shade and fresh air. The ideal slave house was a well-constructed single family unit. One 1850 plantation owner with over 150 slaves believed that "in no case should two families be allowed to occupy the same house. The crowding of a number into one house is unhealthy. It breeds contention; is destructive of delicacy of feeling, and it promotes immorality between the sexes."[15]

Fig. 23. Example of a dormitory-style slave house, Claiborne County, Mississippi. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS MS-205.

[14] James O. Breeden, *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980), 114.

[15] Ibid., 121. An 1850 planter that owned more than 150 slaves.

Fig. 24. Example of a group of small single-unit houses located under a row of shade trees in Chatham County, Georgia. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-225.

The reformed slave house was to be a one-story weatherproofed log cabin, measuring approximately 16 feet by 18 feet. One farmer-planter strongly believed that "there should be no loft, no place to stow away anything, but pins to hang clothes upon."[16] Houses were to be elevated two or three feet from the ground to aid in ventilation and to allow for easy cleaning underneath. The houses were to have a brick chimney, a shingled roof, an airtight plank floor and sufficient windows to allow in air and light.[17]

These specifications for the reformed slave houses were essentially the required minimum to provide adequate shelter for a slaveowner's human chattel. Adopting these changes would satisfy a number of goals for the slaveholder: (1) slaves would be housed in

[16] Ibid., 123. An 1851 farmer-planter.

[17] Ibid., 114.

an economical and healthy way, (2) the slaveowner's concern for his human property would be demonstrated, (3) the message of their inferior status would be apparent to the slaves and (4) a mechanism for controlling slave behavior while encouraging reproduction and "stable" slave families would be established.[18] The slave houses were to accentuate the plantation's ideals, and thus serve as a physical representation of the slaveowner's control over his land and property. [19]

The "Single-Family" Slave House

The most fallacious and contradictory part of the Slave Management Reform Movement is the term "single-family." How a slaveowner described a single family of slaves and what he expected and encouraged were two different things. Slaves were highly encouraged and sometimes forced to have many children, especially if their owner was in the slave trading business. Each child that was born by a slave was considered a slave and became the property of the mother's owner. Therefore, every new child increased the property value of the slaveowner. It was advantageous to the slaveowner to promote large slave families and encourage the women to have a child every two years. In Thomas Jefferson's *Farm Book*, he wrote "I consider the labor of a breeding woman as no object, and that a child raised every 2 years is of more profit than the crop of the best laboring man."[20] This two year cycle allowed the slaveowner to benefit from breeding female slaves without diminishing his manual-labor work force.

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[18] Larry McKee, "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of 19th Century Virginia Slave Cabins," in *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz,* ed. James Deetz, Anne E. Yentsch, and Mary Carolyn Beaudry (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1992), 204.

[19] Ibid., 200.

[20] Thomas Jefferson and Morris Betts, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 43.

Slaves could not control the size of their houses, but they could sometimes control the size of their families. Sarah Graves, a slave on Shaw Plantation in Missouri, remembered that her mother felt so hopeless that "Mama said she would never marry again to have children, so she married my step-father, Trattle Barber, 'cause he was sick an' could never be a father. He was so sick he couldn't work, so me and mama had to work hard."[21] To Sarah's mother, working harder in her lifetime was a better than bringing more children into the harsh world of slavery.

On some plantations slave houses were occupied to maximum capacity with little or no regard to family structure. William McWhorter, a slave on Joe McWhorter's plantation, in Green County, Georgia remembered that at his plantation:

> Dey crowd jus' as many Niggers into each cabin as could sleep in one room, and marriage never meant a thing in dem days when dey was 'rangin' sleepin' quarters for slaves. Why, I knowed a man what had two wives livin' in de same cabin; one of dem 'omans had all boys and t'pther one din't have nothin' but gals. It's nigh de same way now, but dey don't live in de same house if a man's got two famblies.[22]

Minnie Davis, a slave on John Crawford's plantation, in Green County, Georgia remembered that "the unceiled house that my father and mother shared with three other families was weatherboarded and had a chimney mad of sticks and dirt."[23] A single room house with four families would have had to be divided in some way in order to give each family personal space of their own. In Minnie's house personal space was achieved at night by having "a bed in each corner of the room and from one to three children slept in the bed with their parents: the rest of the children slept on the floor… I'm quite sure there were no pillows."[24]

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[21] Sarah Graves, age 87, was a slave in Missouri on the Shaw Plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 11, 129.

[22] William McWhorter, age 78, was a slave in Green County, Georgia on Joe McWhorter's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 13, Pt. 3, 93.

[23] Minnie Davis, age 78, was a slave in Green County, Georgia on John Crawford's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 254.

A family of slaves is typically described by slaveowners as a father, mother and three to five children. Slave families were known to have orphan children, elderly members, or single friends living with them, so that they didn't have to face the hard existence of slavery on their own.[25] The ex-slave narratives reflect these extended family living situations in their testimonies. A slave family, as described by the slaves, could be a mother, not always a father, possibly two to four aunts or uncles and three to eighteen children (Fig. 25). Based on the narratives of ex-slaves, the families that the slaveowners were designing the houses for were the exception not the norm.

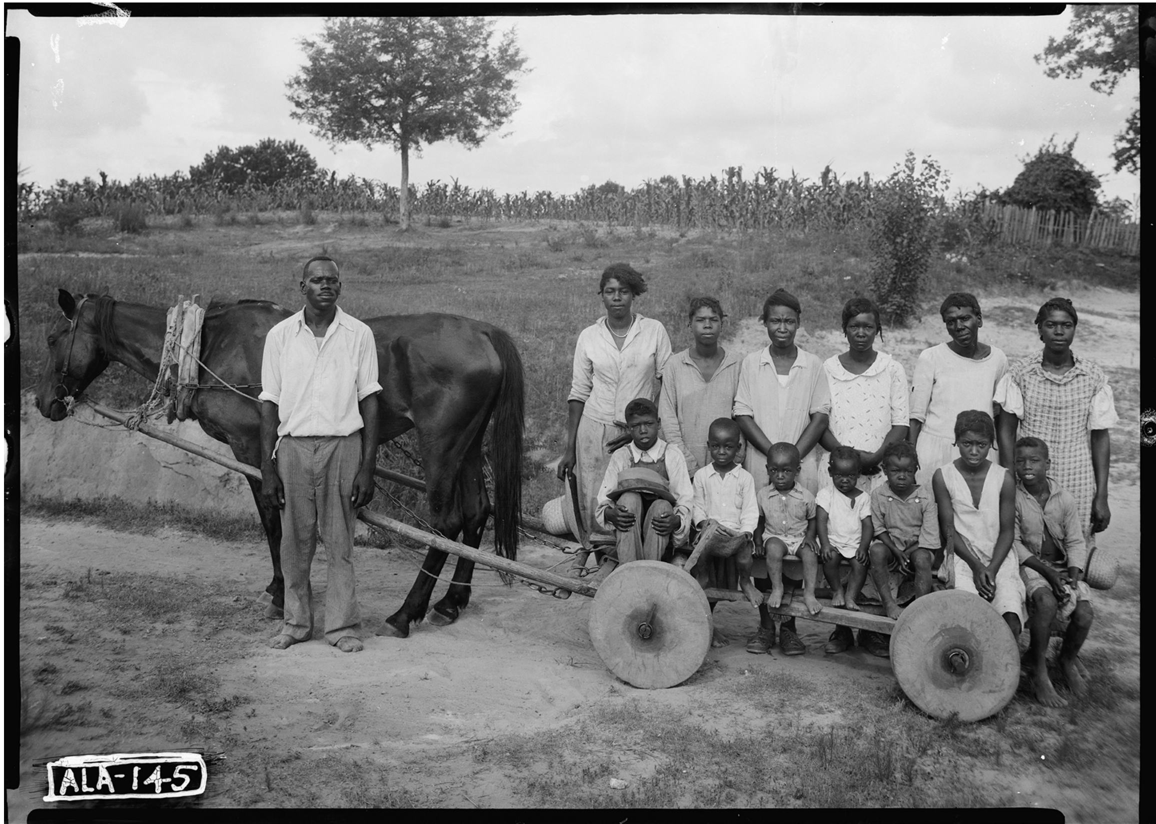

Fig. 25. A large ex-slave family from Marengo County, Alabama. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-145.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 524.

Quality of Construction

The care, or lack thereof, in which slave houses were constructed, would have greatly affected the level of comfort slaves experienced when occupying the space. The majority of the slave houses documented by HABS were constructed from logs. Typically, the logs were notched at the ends and cracks between the logs were infilled with mud or a similar daubing material. Some houses had a stronger notching system, such as half- or full-dovetail (Fig. 26). This very minimal architectural detail was significant enough to be remembered by the ex-slaves. Cull Taylor's house in Augusta County, Alabama during slave times was a house with this detail, which he considered a contributing factor in keeping his house warm during the cold winter months:

> De cabins was built out ob log wid a notch cut in de shoulders, an' laid on top ob one another an' when dey built de wall up as high as dey wanted hit, dey would bore a augor hole an' put a pin in hit to hold 'em together. Den dey put de roof on. Dey filled de cracks between de logs wid mortar, so as to keep de wind out, an' it sho' made de houses warm.[26]

When the construction of slave houses was carried out with less attention and care, the occupants experienced the space differently. Benny Dillard, a slave on Isaac Dillard's plantation in Elbert County, Georgia remembered "slaves lived in log cabins what had red mud daubed in de cracks 'twixt de logs. De roofs was made out of boards what had so many cracks 'twixt 'em, atter a few rains made 'em swink, dat us could lay in bed and see de stars through dem big holes."[27] Mrs. Rosaline Rogers, a slave on Belby Moore's plantation in Tennessee also had unfavorable memories of her log house and recalled, "There were holes between the logs of the cabin, large enough for dogs and cats to crawl through."[28]

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[26] Cull Taylor, born March 5, 1859, and was a slave in Augusta County, Alabama on Tom Taylor's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 6, 363-364.

[27] Benny Dillard, age 80, was a slave in Elbert County, Georgia on Isaac Dillard's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, 288.

[28] Mrs. Rosaline Rogers, age 110, was a slave in Tennessee on Belby Moore's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 6, 164.

The log houses typically had catted chimneys that were constructed from sticks and mud (Fig. 27). This type of construction could create dangerous situations for the house's occupants and unpleasant memories if the clay lining was not maintained. Savilla Burrell, a slave on Captain Tom Still's plantation in South Carolina recalled:

> Us lived in a log cabin wid a stick chimney. One time de sticks got afire and burnt a big hole in de back of de chimney in cold winter time wid the wind blowing, and dat house was filled wid fire-sparks, ashes, and smoke for weeks 'fore day tore dat chimney down and built another jest like the old one.[29]

Fig. 26. Log slave house in Green County, Alabama with a strong notching system and white washed logs. The shake roof and double-hung windows were likely added later. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-238.

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[29] Savilla Burrell, age 83, was a slave near Jackson Creek, South Carolina on Captain Tom Still's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 2, 150.

Fig. 27. Detail of catted chimney pulling away from the hearth from a slave house in Perry County, Alabama. The slave house is constructed from log slabs nailed to a stud framing system. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-267.

Nicey Kinney, a slave on Gerald Sharp's plantation in Jackson County, Georgia recalled having a special chimney in the house:

> [we] even had one of dem *franklin-back chimblies* built to keep our little cabin nice and warm. Why, child, ain't you never seed none of dem old chimblies? Deir backs sloped out in de middle to throw out de heat into de room and keep too much of it from gwine straight up de flue.[30]

The most commonly documented and described slave house was a log structure with a loose notching system. When time permitted, the gaps between the logs were daubed with mud, but with the demanding work schedule of sunup to sundown slaves did not always have time to maintain the houses properly. Therefore, many log slave houses had

[30] Nicey Kinney, age 86, was a slave in Jackson County, Georgia on Gerald Sharp's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 13, 25.

gaps between the logs. The houses had dirt floors and catted chimneys that were built sloped away from the house so that they could be quickly pulled down when the hearth fire got out of control and threatened the safety of the occupants inside. The houses had one door and one window without any glass panes, only a wooden shutter (Fig. 28).

In some of the narratives, the details of one's house were associated with unpleasant memories. Fannie Fulcher, a slave at Piney-Wood's Place in Georgia described her dogtrot house similar to one from Alabama (Fig. 29) as: "De houses was built in a row on dat side, one on dat side, quarters in the middle, and de overseer's house at de end, wid a big hall going right through it."[31] For Fannie, she associated her house with the watchful eye of the overseer. Mrs. M. S. Fayman, a slave on Beatrice Manor near Frankfort, Kentucky distinctly remembered: "On the outside near each window and door there were iron rings firmly attached to the walls, through which an iron rod was inserted and locked each and every night, making it impossible for those inside to escape" or have access to ventilation.[32] Locks used to confine slaves to their houses may have been common in Kentucky because it was a border state vulnerable to runaway slaves.

For Bettie Massingale Bell, a slave on the Massingale Plantation in Monroe County, Alabama the details of her house evoked a more pleasant memory that demonstrated one of many skills slaves possessed: "Dere wuz 'bout fifty slave cabins in de quarters. I 'members sum of dese wuz built of brick up to de roof an' den de roof wuz cobered wid wide shingles made by the slaves wid de han's."[33]

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[31] Fannie Fulcher, age 76, was a slave in Georgia at Piney-Wood's Place. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 3, 250.

[32] Mrs. M. S. Fayman, born in 1850, was a slave near Frankfort, Kentucky on Beatrice Manor. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 16, 12.

[33] Bettie Massingale Bell, was 8 or 9 years old at Emancipation. She was a slave in Monroe County, Alabama on the Massingale Plantation. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 1, 48.

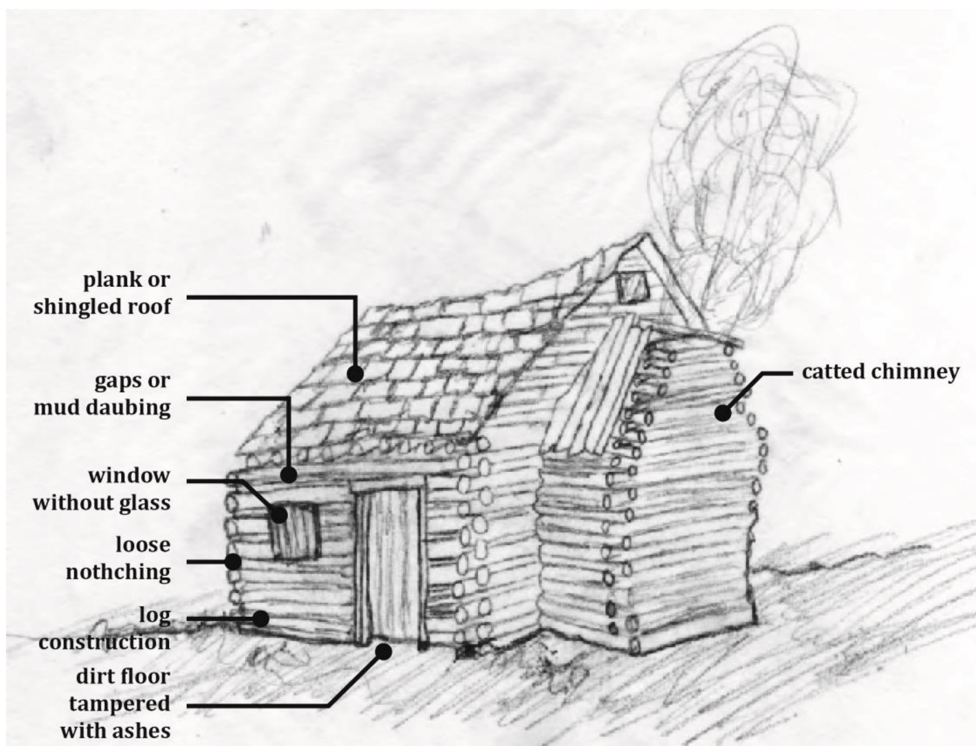

Fig. 28. Analytical drawing by Jobie Hill of typical architectural characteristics of a slave house distilled from evidence from the HABS records and ex-slave narratives.

Fig. 29. Dogtrot house in Calhoun County, Alabama with half-dovetail notching and a brick chimney with a family of eight living in the house. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-470.

Interior Spaces

The interior spaces of slave houses were as austere as the exterior facades. Mollie Watson from Sebastian Stroud's plantation in Leon County, Texas, explained in her interview that "the cabins where de slaves lived were not very big an' didn't have much furniture in 'em. Dey jest one room and dirt flo's. Dey would spread ashes over de flo's an' dampen 'em and pack 'em down so it would be white and smooth."[34] Sam Mitchell, a slave on Woodlawn Plantation on Ladies Island, South Carolina recalled that any furniture his family owned was made by his father. "De Master don't gib you nuttin for yo' house – you hab to git dat de best way you can. In our house was bed, table and bench to sit on. My father mek dem. My mother had fourteen chillen – us sleep on floor."[35]

Uncle Wes Woods' house, on the other hand, had a few more embellishments than the other houses on his Garrard County, Kentucky plantation as he remembered: "The cabin where my mother and father lived was the closest to the house, for my mother did the cooking. Our cabin was one long room, with a loft above, which we reached with a ladder." In addition to the extra space Wes' family also had a more sophisticated bed. "There was one big bed, with a trundle bed, which was on wooden rollers and was shoved under the big bed in the daytime. The oldest boys slept in a big wooden bed in the loft."[36]

The majority of the narratives recorded by the Writers' Project described a more crude homemade bed and mattress. Jasper Battle's narrative gave a detailed description of the type of bed slaves would make on Henry Jones's plantation in Taliaferro County, Georgia:

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[34] Mollie Watson, age 83, was a slave in Leon County, Texas on Sebastian Stroud's plantation. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 12, 370.

[35] Sam Mitchell, age 87, was a slave on Ladies Island, South Carolina on Woodlawn Plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 3, 200.

[36] Uncle Wes Woods, born May 21, 1854, was a slave in Garrard County, Kentucky and was owned by Eliza Kennedy. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 16, 24-25.

> All de beds was home-made and de best of 'em was corded. Dey made holes in de sides and foots and haidpieces, and run heavy home-made cords in dem holes. Dey wove 'em crossways in an dout of dem holes from one side to another 'til dey had 'em ready to lay de mattress mat on. I'se helped to pull dem cords tight many a time. Our mattress ticks was made of homespun cloth and was stuffed wid wheat straw. 'Fore de mattress tick as put on de bed a stiff mat wove out of white oak splits was laid on top of de cords to pertect de mattress and make it lay smooth. Us was 'lowed to pick up all de old dirty cotton 'round de place to make our pillows out of.[37]

William McWhorter, a slave on Joe McWhorter's plantation in Greene County, Georgia remembered that "'if you didn't tighten dem cords up pretty offen your bed was apt to fall down wid you."[38] As for the mattresses, "*Suggin sacks* was sewed together to make our mattress ticks and dem ticks was filled wid straw. Now, don't tell me you ain't heard of suggin sacks a-fore! Dem was coarse sacks sort of lak de guano sacks us uses now."[39] Benny Dillard, a slave in Elbert County, Georgia on Isaac Dillard's plantation, also described a bed made from cords:

> Or home-made beds was made of rough planks nailed to high poles; leastways de poles was high for de headpieces, and a little lower for de footpieces. For most of dem beds, planks was nailed to de wall for one long side and dere was two laigs to make it stand straight on de other long side. Dey never seed no metal springs dem days but jus' wove cords back and forth, up and down and across, to lay de mattress on. I never seed no sto'-bought bed 'til after I was married. Bedticks was made out of homespun cloth stuffed wid wheatstraw, and sometimes dey slept on rye or oatstraw.[40]

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[37] Jasper Battle, age 78, was a slave in Taliaferro County, Georgia on Henry Jones' plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, 63.

[38] William McWhorter, age 78, was a slave in Greene County, Georgia on Joe McWhorter's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 13, Pt. 3, 93.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Benny Dillard, age 80, was a slave in Elbert County, Georgia on Isaac Dillard's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 288.

Although Benny clearly remembered that the "pillows was stuffed wid hay what had a little cotton mixed in it sometimes," he also pointed out that "after a long day of wuk in de fields, nobody bothered 'bout what was inside dem pillows. Dey slept mighty good lak dey was."[41] Rachel Adams, a slave on Lewis Little's plantation in Futman County, Georgia had a different memory of the mattresses:

> De cloth what dey made the ticks of dem old hay mattress-es and pillows out of was so coarse dat it scratched us little chillum most to death, it seemed lak to us dem days. I kin still feel dem old hay mattresses under me now. Evvy time I moved at night it scunded lak de wind blowin' through dem peach trees and bamboos 'round de front of de house whar I lives now.[42]

According to Cordelia Thomas, a slave on Andrew Jackson's plantation in Oconee County, Georgia slave beds had a special name: "Dem old home-made beds had high posties and us called 'em '*teesters*.'"[43] To Abe Kelley, a slave on Jim Kelley's plantation in Mississippi beds had a different name: "You might call 'em bunks, - we called 'em '*jinnies*.'"[44]

Comfort of Houses

The primary problems with the living conditions for slaves were (1) the small size of most slave houses (2) the insufficient number of slave houses and (3) the poor quality of the houses (Fig. 30). Mary Ella Grandberry, a slave in Barton, Alabama, remembered the poor quality of her slave house: "Us lived in a li'l two-rom log cabin jes' off the Big House…Dere

[41] Ibid, 289.

[42] Rachel Adams, age 78, was a slave in Futman County, Georgia on a Lewis Little's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, 3.

[43] Cordelia Thomas, age 80, was a slave in Oconee County, Georgia on Andrew Jackson's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 13, Pt. 4, 14.

[44] Abe Kelley, age 101, was a slave in Mississippi on Jim Kelley's plantation. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 8, 1267.

was a lot o' cabins for de slaves, but dey wasn't fitten for nobody to lib in. We jes' had to put up wid 'em.[45]

Sometimes the issue of limited space stemmed from the fact that the houses resembled animal stalls. Leah Garrett, a slave on a plantation in Georgia, had a very vivid recollection of the discomforts of her house during slave times. She described her house as:

> Us lived in a long house dat had a flat top and little rooms made like mule stalls, just big enough for you to git in and sleep. Dey warn't no floors in dese rooms and neither no beds. Us made beds out of dry grass, but us had cover 'cause de real old people, who couldn't do nothin' else, made plenty of it. Nobody warn't 'lowed to have fires, and if dey wuz caught wid any dat meant a beatin'. Some would burn charcoal and take de coals to deir rooms to help warm 'em.[46]

Fannie Fulcher's mother had eighteen children, making a family of twenty. When she was asked how that many people could live in one small house, she said: "Dey took some of 'em to de house for house girls. Some slep' on de flo, some in de bed. Two-three houses had a shed room on de back."[47] A family of this size was not an anomaly, especially on plantations that encouraged and sometimes even rewarded women for having lots of children. Rachel Adams' family in Futman County, Georgia, also greatly exceeded the size limit of the slaveowner's ideal "single family" of slaves.

> Dere was 17 of us chillum, and I can't 'member de names of but two of 'em now – dey was John and Sarah. John was Me's onliest son; all de rest of de other 16 of us was gals. Us lived in mud-daubed log cabins what had old stack chimblies made out of sticks and mud.[48]

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[45] Mary Ella Grandberry, age 90, was a slave in Barton, Alabama on a plantation owned by a man named Jim. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 6, 157.

[46] Leah Garrett, age 78, was a slave in Georgia. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, Pt. 2, 15.

[47] Fannie Fulcher, age 76, was a slave in Georgia at Piney-Wood's Place. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 3, 250.

[48] Rachel Adams, age 78, was a slave in Futman County, Georgia on a Lewis Little's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 12, 3.

Fig. 30. Stud framed slave house in Hale County, Alabama demonstrating poor living conditions. By the 1930s, it was being used, apparently, as a blacksmithing and woodworking shop under the porch. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-266.

This many people in one small room would significantly affect movement, noise levels, sleeping arrangements and safety. A family this large in a one-room house would be an obvious example of overcrowding, to say the least. In some cases the footprint was not the only aspect of the house that was tight. Hattie Sugg, a slave on the Armstrong Plantation in Calhoun County, Mississippi, described her house as being extremely cramped, especially for her father:

> I had five brothers an' sisters…We lived in little log houses what looked like sheep houses. De walls was plastered with mud an dey didn't have no floors. Dese little old houses wasn't tall 'nuff for Pa an' de taller ones to stand up in.[49]

[49] Hattie Sugg, age 80, was a slave in Calhoun County, Mississippi on the Armstrong Plantation. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 10, 2074.

A diagram of a HABS drawing from Maryland illustrates a low ceiling condition in a slave house, similar to the one described by Hattie (Fig. 31).

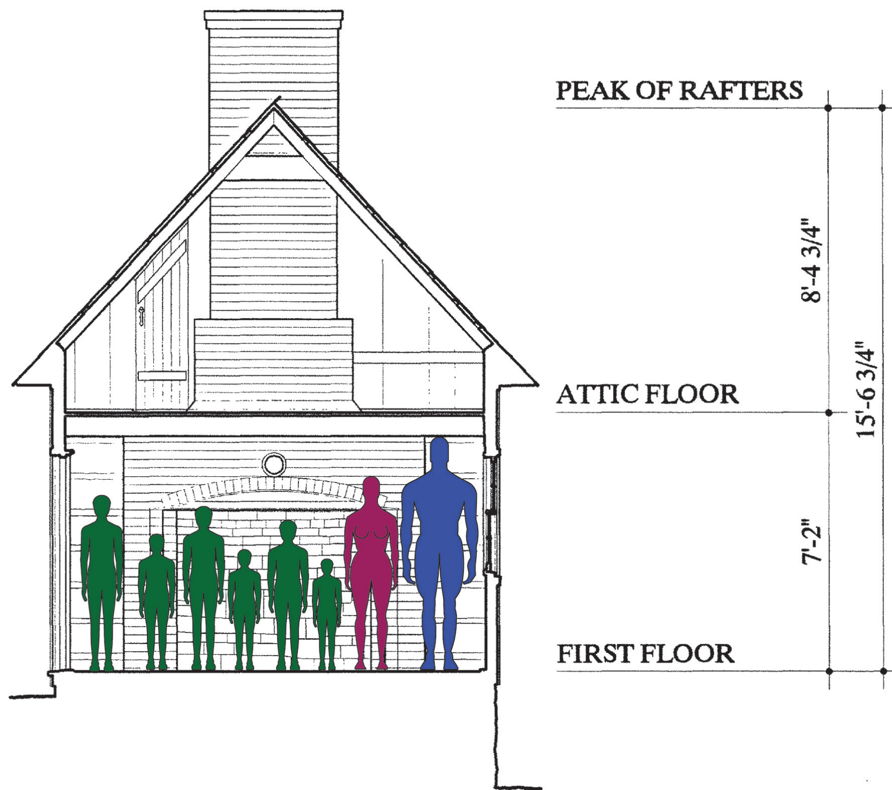

Fig. 31. Section drawing showing low ceiling height in a slave house from Howard County, Maryland. Section drawing courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS MD-1149-A. Diagram drawn by Jobie Hill.

Personalization of Houses

The most humanizing narratives are the ones that described how slaves personalized their homes. Callie Williams, a slave on Hiram McLemore's plantation in Lowndes County, Alabama remembered that the house she lived in "was a rambling one story white house surrounded by beautiful trees" and that there was a well and the large

dairy close by. She then went on to say, “the row of cabins in the slave quarters, some built of logs and some of planks, each known by the name of its occupants.”[50] Remembering the names of the houses, and their occupants, demonstrates a strong sense of community amongst the slaves on Hiram McLemore’s plantation.

Cordelia Thomas described an unusual detail in her slave house: “Thin slide blocks kivvered de peepholes in de rough plank doors. Dey had to have dem peepholes so as dey could see she was at de door ‘fore dey open up.”[51] Peepholes would not have been a mechanism that would have been supplied by the slaveowner for his slaves. These would have been created by and for the slaves and more than likely without the slaveowner’s knowledge.

A HABS slave house from Virginia illustrates a similar functional use for exposed ceiling joist to one described by the narrative of Uncle Wes Woods (Fig. 32). Uncle Wes remembered that in his house in Garrard County, Kentucky: “The ceilings was of joists, and my mother used to hang the seed that we gathered in the fall to dry from these joists.”[52] The fireplaces in slave houses were used primarily for cooking and at night would also provide light. According to Vinnie Busby, a slave on Colonel Easterlin’s plantation in Mississippi, “de fire places wuz big dat helt long logs. We could build up big roarin’ fires dat would light up de whole cabin bright as sunshine.”[53] Zack Herndon, a slave on the Herndon Plantation in Lockhart, South Carolina remembered there was “plenty wood fer fire and pine knots fer

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[50] Callie Williams was 4 years old at Emancipation. She was a slave in Lowndes County, Alabama on Hiram McLemore’s plantation. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 1, 448-449.

[51] Cordelia Thomas, age 80, Athens, Georgia. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 13, Pt. 4, 14.

[52] Uncle Wes Woods, born May 21, 1854, was a slave in Garrard County, Kentucky and was owned by Eliza Kennedy. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 16, 25.

[53] Vinnie Busby, born c. 1854, and was a slave in Mississippi on Colonel Easterlin’s plantation. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 6, 309.

lights when de fire git low or stop blazing."[54] Nelson Cameron, a slave on Sam Brice's plantation in Alabama remembered his house as being a "log house wid a little porch in front and de mornin' glory vines use to climb 'bout it. When they bloom, de bees would come a hummin' 'round and suck de honey out de blue bells on de vines. I 'members dat well 'nough, dat was a pleasant memory."[55]

Fig. 32. Interior view of a slave house from Campbell County, Virginia showing the use of exposed ceiling joists to support meat hooks. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS VA-609.

[54] Zack Herndon, was a slave in Lockhart, South Carolina on the Herndon Plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, 272.

[55] Nelson Cameron, was a slave in Alabama on Sam Brice's plantation. Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave*, Vol. 2, Pt. 1, 173-174.

Perception of Space

The houses that slaves lived in had to accommodate a multiplicity of activities for a variety of different people. A slave's house functioned not only as living space, but also as work space for the projects they undertook after sundown. The daily essential activities that occurred in slave houses were cooking, eating, sleeping and children playing. Additional activities such as sewing, washing clothes, candle making, soap making and furniture making also took place in some of the houses. Each took up a certain amount of space within the house and left less room to carry out other activities.

Body size and movement are two important factors that affect a person's perception and comfort within a space. During the first eighteen years of a person's life the human body grows and matures. Significant changes in body size can be seen every two years. As the body increases in size one's perception of space is affected (Fig. 33).

Fig. 33. Diagram of human spatial perception zones at the ages with significant changes in body size. Drawn by Jobie Hill.

Studies have suggested that human beings have an internal projection of space immediately around them that known as the “body buffer zone.” The zone’s shape, size and penetrability relate to “the immediate interpersonal events… and the individual’s psychological and cultural history.”[56] Studies of movement within an enclosed space have suggested that human beings move within four distinct zones: Touch Zone, No-touch Zone, Personal Zone, and Circulation Zone. The Touch Zone has frequent unavoidable contact and movement is restricted to shuffling. In the No Touch Zone contact between people can be avoided and movement is possible if done as a group. The Personal Zone separates individuals by a full body depth. Lateral movement within this zone is restricted to sideways movements. The Circulation Zone allows unrestricted movement without disrupting others.[57] Looking at the space of a slave house in terms of these zones provides a sensory understanding what it was like to carry out one’s daily activities in the small slave houses.

Exterior spaces have a different set of spatial zones. In more open spaces, people function within four distance zones: intimate, personal, social and public. The distance, clearance and space around a person have many sophisticated and subtle connotations known as “hidden dimensions” (Fig. 34). The nature of the activity dictates the appropriate zone to be used.[58]

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[56] Mardi J. Horowitz, "Body-Buffer Zone: Exploration of Personal Space." *Archives of General Psychiatry* Vol. 11, No. 6 (1964): 655-656; Julius Panero and Martin Zelnik, *Human Dimension & Interior Space: A Source Book of Design Reference Standards* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1979), 40.

[57] John J. Fruin, *Pedestrian Planning and Design* (New York: Metropolitan Association of Urban Designers and Environmental Planners, 1971), 66-69; Panero, *Human Dimension*, 266.

[58] Ibid.; Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 109-110, 120.

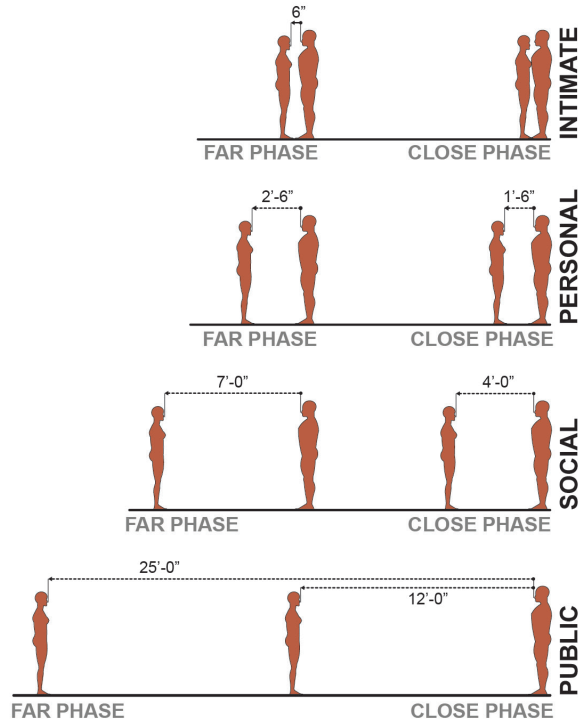

Fig. 34. Diagram demonstrating Hall's distance zones.
Redrawn by Jobie Hill from Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*.

Thornhill Plantation

The HABS records from Thonhill Plantation in Greene County, Alabama are used to illustrate spatial boundaries on a plantation from a slave's perspective. Most of the slave houses on Thonhill Plantation are at a significant distance behind the Big House. The hidden dimensions associated with the plantation created spatial boundaries around the slave houses and the Big House that were understood and respected by both the enslaved and the slaveowner (Fig. 35).

Any outdoor activity was potentially carried out in the presence of the slaveowner. Therefore, these activities would have been done at social distances. The close proximity of the slave houses resulted in some outdoor activities that were perceived as personal. Slaves would have interacted with the slaveowner and guests at public distances, unless instructed otherwise.

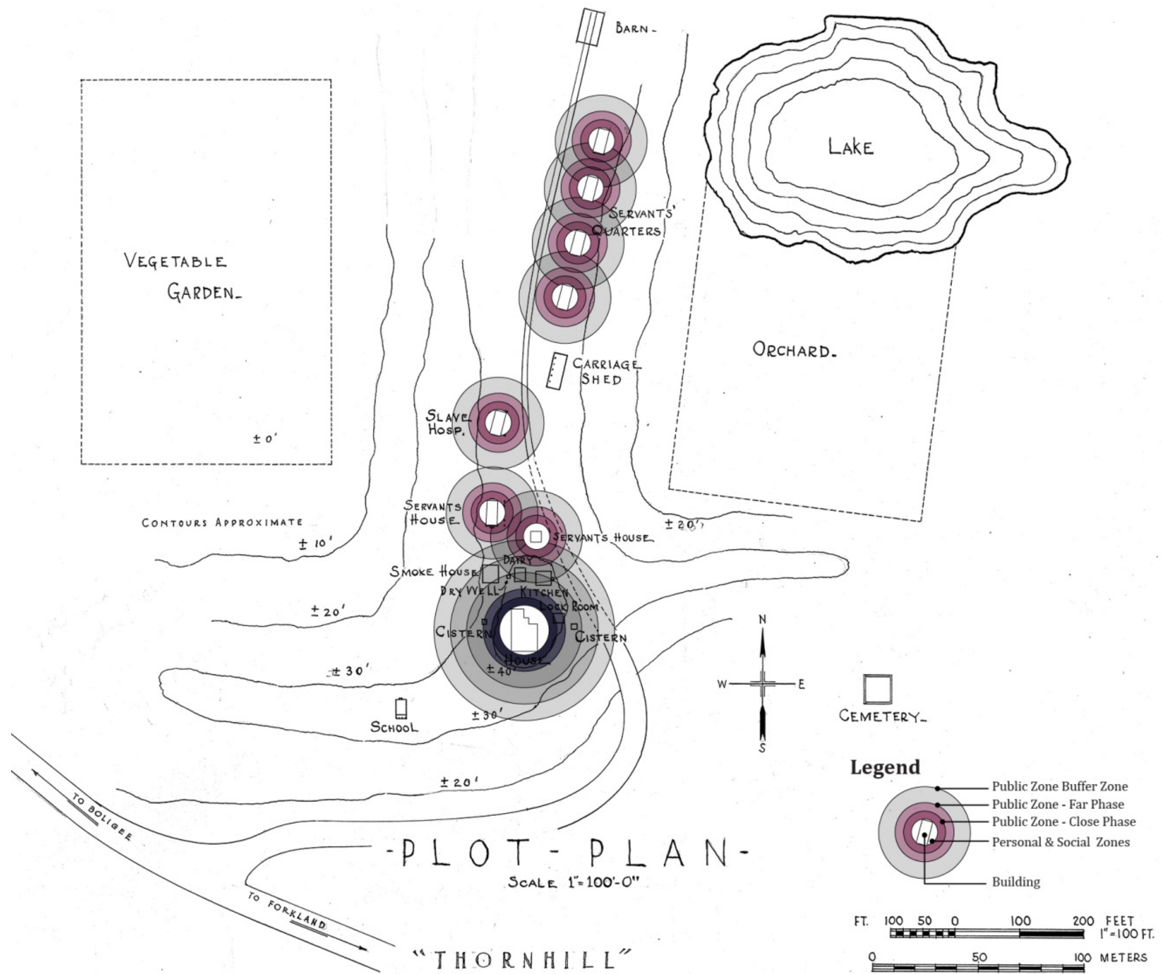

Fig. 35. Diagram demonstrating spatial boundaries from a slave's perspective on Thornhill Plantation. Site plan courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-238. Diagram drawn by Jobie Hill.

The small size, 16 feet by 16 feet, of the slave house on Thornhill Plantation would have made all encounters within the house intimate and personal. The majority of the slave houses on Thornhill Plantation were dogtrot houses that had one family in each unit. Each unit measured approximately 16 feet square which is equal to 256 square feet. The hearth and the door both have approximately a 3 foot clearance around them. These areas were potentially dangerous areas that likely were avoided, especially by small children.

Looking at the unit on the left, together these two potentially dangerous areas decreased the amount of area available to move around by 50 square feet, leaving 206 square feet. The family took up approximately 160 square feet, leaving 46 square feet of safe space for all indoor activities (Fig. 36).

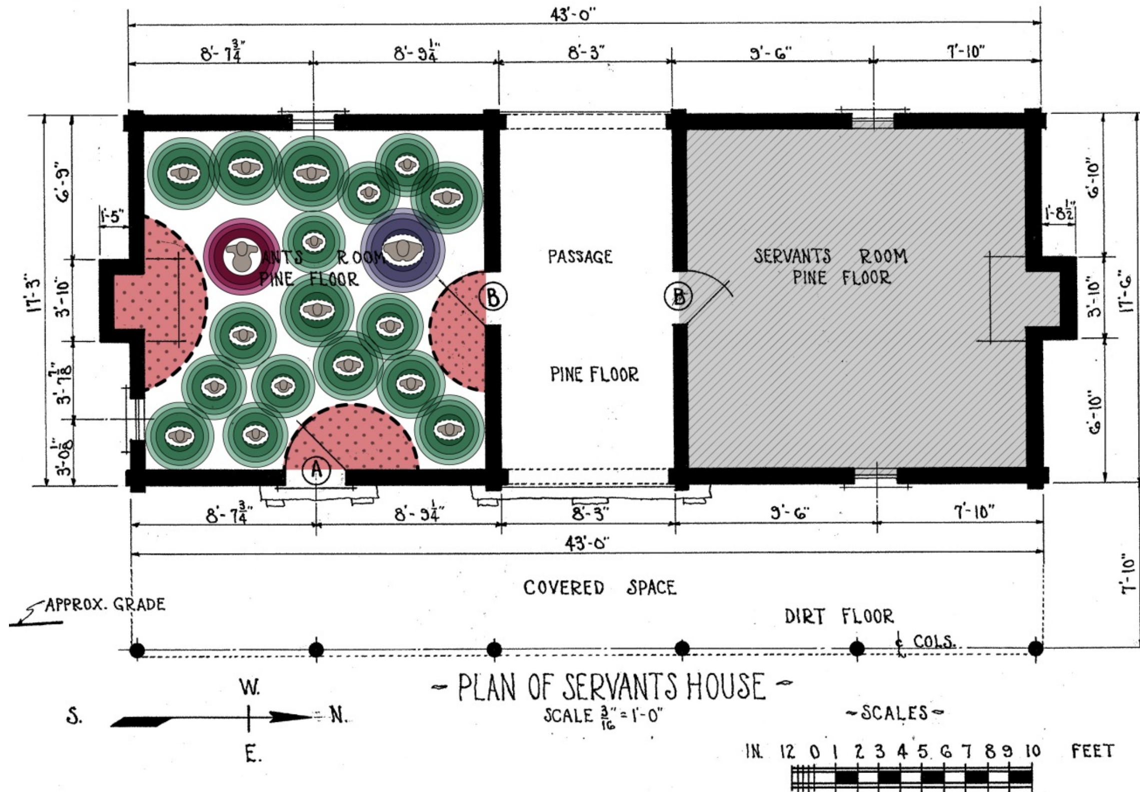

Fig. 36. Spatial diagram of human comfort issues associated with a large slave family in a one-room house on Thornhill Plantation. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-238. Diagram drawn by Jobie Hill

The ex-slave narratives frequently describe the warmth of the slave houses. The intense temperatures of the hearth coupled with the human densitiy easily heated the small houses. Both these conditions were advantageous during the winter months, but almost unbearable in hot humid summer months.

In this example the only ventilation in the slave house was two small windows and two doors. In winter, the slaves had to choose between getting fresh air and being cold, or smothering and staying warm. In the summer months, having both the windows and doors open invited swarming insects.[59]

The noise level in each house varied significantly, but the more children there were in the house the higher the noise level assuming they behaved as contemporary children. A noisy house with limited space for activities and movement is not an ideal living condition by today's standards.

[59] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 525.

CHAPTER V

HUMANIZING THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

> We had comfortable clo'se an' livin' qua'ters. De cottages was small, and built side by side in a long row by de side of de road. We liked livin' together lak dat ruther dan bein' scattered as many of 'em was. You see, we could collect up at times in de evenin' even effen we was tired, and have some enjoyment layin' around under de big treesm hummin' and singin' to de tune of some old guitar, and tellin' tales and talkin' of de hopes and fears of de comin' war to free us.[1]
>
> - Foster Weathersby a slave on Jonh Newsom's plantation in Old Hebron, Mississippi

"Humanizing the Historic American Buildings Survey" is an interdisciplinary interpretation of the five documented slave houses from the HABS collection that are directly linked to slave narratives recorded by the Writers' Project. The interpretation is a demonstration of how existing resources can be utilized in interdisciplinary research to further our understanding of historic buildings and the lifeways of the people who inhabited them. The results of this thesis are stepping stones for future research.

Matching an ex-slave narrative recorded by the Writers' Project with a specific HABS site is challenging because most of the available information is incomplete. The historical bibliographies included in the HABS documentation are brief and in some cases absent. Typically, the chain of ownership includes the original owner and the current owner at the time of the HABS survey. Fortunately, for many plantations, especially large ones, the family that established the plantation continued to own and operate it after the Civil War and Emancipation. The one certainty the HABS documents provide is the location of the plantation.

[1] Foster Weathersby, born February 7, 1855, was a slave on Jonh Newsom's plantation in Old Hebron, Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 10, 2227-2228.

The Writers' Project narratives also have challenging aspects associated with them. Because slaves were considered chattel, they were constantly being sold, traded or hired out. By law, slaves were required to take the last name of their current owner, which for some slave families meant that each family member had a different last name. This made genealogical histories difficult to create. But it did allow for easy identification of the slaveowner's last name. According to the ex-slave narratives, slaves would address slaveholders as "Marse" followed by the slaveholder's first name, thus providing the slaveowner's first name. The one certainty that the ex-slave narratives provide is an accurate name of the slaveowner.

The United States Census Slave Schedules provide information about a slaveholder's slaves, but the information is limited to age and gender. Slaves were not recognized as human beings by the federal government, and therefore they remained nameless on the forms. In this study, census information is used primarily to check the accuracy of the plantation location as described by the ex-slave. The census data also provides an idea of how many slaves each slaveholder possessed and the type of cash crop that was grown on the plantation.

Liberty Hall

Liberty Hall is one of two HABS sites that can be matched irrefutably to an ex-slave narrative recorded by the Writers' Project. Liberty Hall is located in Crawfordville, Taliaferro County, Georgia (Fig. 37). The site was surveyed by HABS in 1936 (GA-158) under the direction of Harold Bush-Brown, a District Officer in Atlanta, Georgia. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. Liberty Hall was the home of Alexander Stephens from 1845 to 1883.

Fig. 37. Approximate location of Liberty Hall in Taliaferro County, Georgia. Drawn by Jobie Hill.

Georgia Baker, a slave of Alexander Stephens, was interviewed in 1938 when she was eighty-seven years old. The interview took place in Athens, Georgia and was administered by Sadie B. Hornsby, a white female Writers' Project interviewer.[2] Georgia Baker was born on "de plantation of a great man. It was Marse Alec Stephens' plantation 'bout a mile and a half from Crawfordville, in Taliaferro county [sic]."[3] The plantation was likely a cotton plantation and it one of many plantations that Stephens owned: "No Mam, I never knowed how many acres dere was in de plantation us lived on, and Marse Alec had other places too. He had land scattered evvwhar."[4]

In 1861 Alexander Stephens was elected Vice President of the Confederate States. Georgia Baker remembered: "Marse Alec Stephens… he never stayed home enough to tend to things himself much 'cause he was all de time too busy on de outside. He was de President or somepin of our side durin' de war."[5] At the Liberty Hall, "Marse Lordnorth Stephens was de boss."[6] Marse Lordnorth's real name was Linton Stephens, Alexander's half-brother.

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[2] Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 190.

[3] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 38-39.

[4] Ibid., 44.

[5] Ibid., 42.

[6] Ibid.

Georgia Baker was from a family of six: "Mary and Grandison Tilly was my Ma and Pa… Pa was a field hand, and he belonged to Marse Britt Tilly. Dere was four of us chillum: me, and Mary, and Frances, and Mack."[7] As Georgia listed off the names of her siblings during the interview she counted on the fingers of one hand. Georgia did not get to spend her childhood years with her family: "Ma was cook up at de big house and she died when I was jus' a little gal… Marse Alec let Marse Jim Johnson have Mack as his bodyguard."[8] Many of the slaves on the Stephens Plantation were related: "Lord, dere was a heap of Niggers on dat place, and all us was kin to one another. Grandma Becky and Grandpa Stafford was de fust slaves Marse Alec ever had, and dey sho had a passel of chillum."

It appears as though slave family units were important to Stephens, but only to a certain extent. If a child was fathered by Stephens or another white man, then that child was removed from the plantation: "One thing sho Marse Lordnorth wouldn't keep no bright colored Nigger on dat plantation if he could help it. Aunt Mary was a bright colored Nigger and dey said dat Marse John, Marse Lordnorth's brother, was her Pa, but anyhow Marse Lordnorth never had no use for her 'cause she was a bright colored Nigger."[9]

At the time of the HABS survey at Liberty Hall in 1936, all but one of the slave houses had been torn down. The extant buildings that remained were: the Big House including its attached kitchen and ell addition, a slave house, a wash house, a wood house, a smokehouse, a dry well and a gas plant (Fig. 38). During the first few years of the plantation, while it was being established, there were relatively few slaves. The 1850 Census Slave Schedule recorded thirteen slaves for Alexander H. Stephens of Taliaferro County, Georgia.[10]

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[7] Ibid., 39.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 44.

According to the census, the slaves were between the ages of two months and fifty-five years old. Half of the slaves were female and half were male. Ten years later, when the plantation was fully operational and Stephens was a well-established politician, the number of slaves at Liberty Hall had more than doubled. Of the thirty-one slaves, fourteen were female and seventeen were male. Their ages ranged from three years to eighty years old.[11]

From the HABS photographs, we know that one type of house used for slaves was the double-pen floor plan. This house could accommodate a minimum of two families. From Georgia Baker's narrative, we know that there was also a shotgun house at Liberty Hall. Georgia remembered: "De long, log house what us lived in was called 'shotgun' houses 'cause dey had three rooms, one behind de other in a row lak de barrel of a shotgun… De kitchen whar us cooked and et was de middle room."[12] At night, adults and children were separated as were male and female children. "All de chillum slept in one end room and de grown folkses slept in de other end room… Gals slept on one side of de room and boys on de other in de chillums room."[13] From Georgia's description of the sleeping arrangements and because the other house type was a two family plan, it appears likely that the shotgun houses at Liberty Hall were also shared by two slave families.

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[10] Ancestry.com, *1850 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Taliaferro County, Georgia, Alexander H. Stephens*, *Division 78*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013).

[11] Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Taliaferro County, Georgia, Alexander H. Stephens*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013).

[12] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 39.

[13] Ibid.

Fig. 38. The extant buildings at Liberty Hall in 1936. Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-158. Notations by Jobie Hill.

The 1860 Slave Schedule indicates that four of the females on the plantation were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-eight years old. These females probably each had a family of their own. If two families lived in each slave house, the four slave families at Liberty Hall would have needed two houses in 1860. Each house likely had a minimum of seven to eight people per unit, and five to six of those people were likely old enough to work on the plantation.[14] At Liberty Hall, a single family of slaves might have included a father, a mother, two to three children, two aunts and two uncles.

Household units made up mostly of adults made moving around in the small slave house very constricted. Having a limited amount of space in the slave house also made daily

[14] According to the ex-salve narratives slaves went to work full time between the ages of twelve and fourteen.

tasks and after sundown projects and activities much harder to do. Georgia Baker remembered that the female slaves at Liberty Hall worked after sundown: "Most times when slaves went to deir quarters at night, mens rested, but sometimes dey helped de 'omens oyard de cotton and wool. Young folks frolicked, sung songs, and visited from cabin to cabin. When dey got behind wid de field wuk, sometimes slaves wuked atter dinner Saddays, but dat warn't often."[15] When slaves had completed their work for the day, they were allowed to enjoy themselves but only during strict time periods. Georgia Baker remembered: "but, Oh, dem Sadday nights! Dat was when slaves got together and danced. George, he blowed de quills, and he sho could blow grand dance music on 'em. Dem Niggers would jus' dance down. Dere warn't no foolishment 'lowed atter 10:00 o'clock no night."[16]

There was no mention of furniture in the Liberty Hall slave houses except beds, which were homemade. "Beds was made out of pine poles put together wid cords. Dem wheat-straw mattresses was for grown folkses mostly 'cause nigh all de chillum slept on pallets. How-some-ever, dere was some few slave chillum what had beds to sleep on. Pillows! Dem days us never knowed what pillows was… Uncle Jim, he was de bed-maker, and he made up a heap of little beds lak what dey calls cots now."[17]

Meals created from the provisions provided by Stephens were prepared in a central kitchen: "You jus' ought to have seed dat dere fireplace whar dey cooked all us had to eat. It was one sho 'nough big somepin, ell full of pots, skillets, and ovens. Dey warn't never 'lowed to git full of smut neither. Dey had to be cleant and shined up after evvy meal, and dey sho was pretty hangin' dar in dat big old fireplace."[18] The plantation had a very large garden:

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[15] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 46.

[16] Ibid., 46-7.

[17] Ibid., 39.

[18] Ibid., 41.

"You might want to call dat place wher Marse Alec had our veg'tables raised a gyarden, but it looked more lak a big field to me, it was so big."[19] Georgia remembered there being plenty to eat: "Oh, yessum! Marse Alec, had plenty for his slaves to eat. Dere was meat, bread, collard greens, snap peas, 'taters, peas, all sorts of dried fruit, and just lots of milk and butter. Marse Alec had 12 cows and dat's wher I learned to love milk so good. De same Uncle Jim what made our beds made out wooden bowls what dey kept filled wid bread and milk for de chillum all day."[20]

Although Georgia remembered there being plenty of food at Liberty Hall, she also remembered that slaves did have to supplement their diets: "George and Mack was de hunters. When dey went huntin' day brought back jus' evvything: possums, rabbits, coons, squirrels, birds, and wild turkey. Yessum, wild turkey is some sort of birds I reckon, but when us talked about birds to eat us meant part'idges. Some folkses calls 'em quails. De fishes us had in summertime was a sight to see. Us sho et good dem days. Now us jus' eats what-some-ever us can git."[21] These supplemental meals created from hunted game after working hours were prepared in the slave houses.

Previously, only two of Alexander Stephens' slaves had been identified, Harry Stephens and Eliza Stephens. Now, having identified Georgia Baker as one of Liberty Hall's ex-slaves, eight more slaves that once lived and worked at Liberty Hall can be identified: Georgia Baker, Grandma Becky, Grandpa Stafford, Mary Tilly, Grandison Tilly, Mary Stephens, Frances Stephens, and Mack Johnson.[22] Henry and Eliza were a slave couple that remained at Liberty Hall after being emancipated and cared for Alexander Stephens until

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[19] Ibid., 40-41.

[20] Ibid., 40.

[21] Ibid., 41.

[22] The last names of Mary, Frances, and Mack are based on who owned them during slaver times.

his death in 1883. Henry and Eliza were not the only two slaves at Liberty Hall that stayed on the plantation after being freed. Georgia remembered her mother telling her, “You all is free now. You don’t none of you belong to Mister Lordnorth nor Mister Alec no more, but I does hope you will all stay on wid ‘em, ‘cause dey will allus be jus’ as good to you as dey has done been in de past.”[23] Georgia followed her mother’s advice, “I stayed on wid my two good Masters ‘til most 3 years atter de war.”[24]

Liberty Hall is a HABS site that may be interpreted from many perspectives. Georgia Baker’s Writers’ Project interview contributes significantly to our understanding of the daily lives of Liberty Hall’s slaves. From her narrative it is known that the extant house was not the only slave house on the property. There were at least two different plan types for slave houses on the plantation. Some of the houses had beds, which for this time period and in this context significantly contributed to the human comforts of the house. Liberty Hall had an overseer that might suggest that an insignificant amount of food was provided to the slaves. Georgia’s description about hunting and cooking at her house supports this.

Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House

The Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House is the second HABS site that can be matched irrefutably to an ex-slave narrative recorded by the Writers’ Project. This site and the ex-slave narrative of Julia Cole Monroe are noteworthy, because together they allow a comparison to be made between the lives of planation slaves and city slaves owned by the same slaveholding family.

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[23] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 49.

[24] Ibid., 50.

Fig. 39. Approximate location of The Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House in Clarke County, Georgia. Drawn by Jobie Hill.

The Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House is located at 570 Prince Avenue, Athens, Clarke County, Georgia (Fig. 39). The site was surveyed by HABS in 1934 (GA-120), under the direction of P. Thornton Marye, a District Officer, in Atlanta, Georgia. The Big House and its outbuildings were restored by the University of Georgia in 1949. In 1972, the mansion and its outbuildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House was built for use as a summer home for John Thomas Grant in 1855. Julia Cole Monroe remembered: "De old White home on Prince Avenue was deir summer home. When dey built it, woods was all 'round and dare warn't many houses in dat section."[25] Grant's plantation in Monroe, Walton County, Georgia was about twenty-five miles southwest of his summer house.

Julia Cole Monroe, a slave of John Thomas Grant, was interviewed when she was seventy-eight years old in Athens, Georgia by Corry Fowler, a Writers' Project interviewer of an unidentified gender and race.[26] Julia "was born in Monroe, Georgia and b'longed to Master John Grant."[27] According to census information, Liberty Hall was located in a cotton farming area. Cotton plantations required a large number of slaves to operate. Julia

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[25] Ibid., 233-234.

[26] Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 190.

[27] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 232.

remembered: “Marse John had a big plantation and a heap of slaves. Dey was rich, his folks was. Dey is de folks dat give Grant’s Park to Atlanta.”[28] Grant did not have any outside help managing his plantation. His son, “Marse Willie Grant,” was responsible for getting “de slaves up in time to be in de fields by daybreak.”[29] When slaves were punished on the plantation, Grant did it himself or “sometimes Marse John made a colored man named Uncle Jim Cooper give ‘em a good whuppin’ when dey needed it.”[30]

The 1850 Census Slave Schedule lists the ages and genders of the slaves at Grant’s plantation home in Walton County, while the 1860 Census Slave Schedule lists the slaves at Grant’s summer home in Clarke County. According to the census records, Grant kept forty-one slaves on his plantation and five at his summer house.[31] The slaves associated with his summer home probably also lived and worked on his plantation. Since Grant only lived at his summer house a few months out of the year, it would have been more economical for him take one slave family with him from the plantation.

The HABS survey of The Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House in 1934 documented only one outbuilding on the property of his summer house. This outbuilding was most likely the slave house on the estate. If the restoration of the slave house is historically accurate the slave house was built in the Greek Revival Style (Fig. 40). Such well-constructed and designed slave houses are extremely rare. Grant probably chose to build this way because the building was not used exclusively by his slaves. The building had a double-cell plan with two interior chimneys. One half of the building was probably an accessory space of Grant’s,

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[28] Ibid., 232.

[29] Ibid., 233.

[30] Ibid., 234.

[31] Ancestry.com, *1850 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Walton County, Georgia, John T. Grant*, *Division 88*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013); Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Athens, Clarke County, Georgia, John T. Grant*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013).

and the other half was used to house the single family of slaves he brought with him for the summer. Because Grant also occupied the space, to some extent, the facades needed to reflect Grant's wealth and superior status — not the inferior status of the slaves.

Fig. 40. The restored Greek Revival Style slave house at The Grant-Hill-White-Bradshaw House. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-120.

On Grant's plantation, the slaves lived in "cabins." Julia's description of her favorite meal suggests that each house had its own yard space: "Sometimes Marse John would give us 'mission to kill little pigs at night and broil 'em over de coals in our yards, and how us enjoyed 'em!"[32] Because cooking was done in the yard, this may indicate that the slave

[32] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 233.

houses did not have fireplaces. If this was the case, then there probably was a central kitchen on the Grant Plantation. Julia's memory of being fed as a child supports the use of a central kitchen: "Chillun et in de yard at de big house, whar dey give us plenty of meat and cornbread wid good vegetables for dinner. For breakfast and supper, us had mostly buttermilk and cornbread. On Sundays us had bread made from wheat flour and sopped good old syrup wid it."[33]

Any furniture the slaves possessed was homemade. Julia remembered: "Us had home-made beds in de cabins widout no paint on 'em. Evvery slaves had was home-made, jus' wooden-legged things. Even de coffins was made at home out of pine wood."[34] Julia was a house slave so when she got old enough to do chores most of her time was spent at the Big House. "Now me, I didn't sleep in de cabin much. I slept on a little trundle bed up at de big house. In de daytime my bid was pushed back under one of de big beds."[35]

Julia grew up without ever knowing her father: "I don't 'member my Pa. Mama had four chillum. Richard and Thomas Grant was my brothers, but me and my sister Hattie was Johnsons."[36] Right before being emancipated she also lost her mother. "My Mammy was Mittie Johnson, and she died de year 'fore de war ended… my Mamma tuk a 'lapse f'um measles and died."[37] The death of her mother was very hard on Julia, she remembered "I jus' lak to have died when my Mamma died."[38] Mittie was given a funeral but that wasn't easy for Julia either: "Dey carried her to de graveyard and put her down in de grave and I jus'

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 232.

[37] Ibid., 232, 235.

[38] Ibid., 235.

couldn't help it; I jumped right down in dat grave wid her, and dey had to take me out. My brothers said I was plum crazy dat day."[39] The only other family Julia knew growing up was her grandfather: "Dey called my grandpa, 'Uncle Abram.'"[40] Uncle Ambram was a field-hand and "atter he had wukked hard in de field all day, he would jus' lay down on a bench at night and sleep widout pullin' off his clothes."[41]

Julia did not make any reference to the number of slave houses on the plantation, but the census tells us that there were forty-one slaves living on Grant's plantation. Because there were a significant number of slaves living on the plantation, the slave houses were probably double-pen log structures that housed one family in each unit. This plan type is the same plan type seen at his summer house. According to the census record, five of the females on the plantation were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-two years old and probably had families of their own. Assuming these women each had four to five children like Julia's mother, then the average family unit on Grant's plantation was between five and six people. If there were five families on the plantation, and two families lived in each slave house, then the Grant plantation needed approximately seven slave houses. According to the census household units, the slave houses consisted of mostly young adults and teenagers. Only six of the slaves on the plantation were above the age of forty. With such young families, a significant amount of activity took place inside the houses.

The ages recorded in the census show that almost all of the slaves were old enough to do chores or work in the fields. According to Julia, even the games slave children played

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 232.

[41] Ibid., 232-233.

prepared them for going to work in a few years: "Chillun didn't have much to do. Us loved to hunt for turkey nests 'cause dey give us a teacake for evvy turkey egg us fotched in."[42]

Grant's plantation was not organized or managed in a way that supported strong healthy slave families. Julia had a very unstable family unit. She never knew her father, her mother died when she was young, and she was sent to the Big House to be a house slave at a young age. Julia's description of plantation life suggests that slave families had very little time to spend together privately. The houses may not have had fireplaces. If that was the case, any cooking done at home was done in the yard and in plain view of the slaveowner and overseer. The use of a central kitchen also suggests that slave family units were not a priority to Grant.

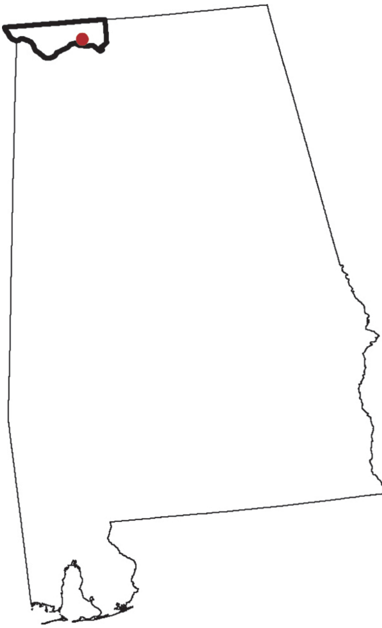

Fig. 41. Approximate location of the Taylor-Cunningham House in Lauderdale County, Alabama. Drawn by Jobie Hill.

Taylor-Cunningham House

The first Taylor-Cunningham House is a HABS site that can be matched to the ex-slave narrative of Jane Holloway with confidence. This site and Jane's interview provide insights into the lives of slaves on a small plantation. This slave house is also significant because it is an example of a slaveowner's old house being reused as a slave house.

The first Taylor-Cunningham House was located on Bellevue Road in the Rogersville vicinity in Lauderdale County, Alabama (Fig. 41). The site was surveyed in 1936 by HABS (AL-377-A) under the direction of E. Walter Burkhardt, a District Officer in Auburn, Alabama. The first

[42] Ibid., 233.

Taylor-Cunningham House was built sometime before 1858 by the Taylor family. The house was being occupied by the Taylors while the Big House was constructed.[43] Upon completion of the second Taylor-Cunningham House, the first house was reused as a slave house.

Jane Holloway, a slave who lived at the first Taylor-Cunningham House, was interviewed in 1937 in Opelika, Alabama by Preston Klein, a white female Writers' Project interviewer.[44] Her age at the time of the interview was unknown. Jane was "borned up in North Alabama" on the Taylor Plantation.[45] Jane remembered that "Mister Billie Taylor … didn't have so many slaves, he jes' had a little plantation."[46]

The 1860 Census Slave Schedule has two entries for the surname Taylor in Lauderdale County, Georgia. One is Benjamen Taylor in District 1, who owned forty-six slaves, and the other is William B. Taylor in District 2, who owned three slaves.[47] According to Jane, her slaveowner did not own many slaves and because Billie is a nickname for William, William B. Taylor is more than likely the correct slaveowner that owned Jane. At the time of the census, Taylor apparently owned one family of slaves.[48] This number may reflect the early years of the Taylor plantation during which time Taylor was still growing his slave holdings. Jane's family was small and they were probably bought by Taylor after the census was recorded. Jane described her family as: "My mammy was Carrie Holloway

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[43] Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A, Supplemental Information. The second Taylor-Cunningham House (AL-377-B) was constructed in 1858.

[44] Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 188.

[45] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 6, 188.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Lauderdale County, Alabama, District 1, Benjamen Taylor*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013); Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Lauderdale County, Alabama, District 2, William B. Taylor*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013).

[48] The census record shows one adult female (33 years old), one adult male (25 years old) and one male child (7 years old).

and my pappy was Traylor Holloway. I had a brother Maryland. Dere nebber was but de two of us.[49] Although the plantation was small, Taylor employed an overseer to manage his land and his slaves. Jane's recollection of the overseer identifies with the master's perspective: "Our oberseer was good, too. He had to whip some of dem sometimes, but dey wouldn't work. Dey brung it all on deyselves."[50]

The architectural details and the high quality of construction of the first Taylor-Cunningham House suggest that the house was not originally built as a slave house (Fig. 42 and 43). First, the chimney is a well-built, sturdy, brick chimney. Log slave houses usually had catted chimneys made from mud and sticks. Second, the windows have panes of glass (Fig. 44). In most slave houses, if a window was present, there was only a shutter to close off the opening. Third, the use of two types of notching (half-lap corner notching and half-dovetail notching) suggests that the house was built in two stages or had two builders working on the house (Fig. 45). Because Taylor may have owned only one slave family while living in the first Taylor-Cunningham House, the dogtrot plan well suited the house. The Taylors likely lived in the unit with the fireplace, while the slaves likely lived in the other unit. This living arrangement allowed Taylor regular surveillance of his slaves. The entrance to the slave wing was on the front façade and unprotected from the elements. The entrance to the Taylor's wing was under the passageway and was protected from the weather (Fig. 46).

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[49] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 6, 188.

[50] Ibid., 188-189.

Fig. 42. Photograph showing the high quality of construction of the first Taylor-Cunningham House. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A.

Later, when the first Taylor-Cunningham House was solely occupied by slaves, it provided two to three separate living spaces. Jane described her house as: "Us lived in a mud and log house, jes' one room but it sho' had a big fireplace." Jane and her family presumably lived in the unit with the fireplace that was previously occupied by the Taylors. She also remembered that the slave house was located "'bout a mile from de Big House. [Inside the slave house] …We had high tester beds in all de houses."[51]

[51] Ibid., 188.

Fig. 43. Photograph showing the architectural details of the first Taylor-Cunningham House. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A.

Fig. 44. Photograph showing windows with panes of glass at the first Taylor-Cunningham House. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A.

Fig. 45. Detail of the first Taylor-Cunningham House showing half-lap corner notching on the dogtrot house and half-dovetail notching on the kitchen addition (likely a later). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A.

The slaves on the Taylor's plantation did not have their own gardens, but Jane remembered "us was always fed good. Dey had long wooden troughs what dey poured our bread and milk in and us eat it wid a wooden spoon. When dey yell, 'Chillun, chillum! Bread! You bet we jes' burnt de wind getting there, 'caze us was always hungry."[52] The kitchen at the rear of the slave house suggests that the slaves were responsible for cooking their own meals (Figs. 47 and 48). On Fedman Dent's plantation in Mississippi, where Jennie Webb was enslaved, slaves also ate out of troughs even though they controlled food preparation:

> Right here I wants to tell yo' how we wuz fed. We had big wooden bowls dat wuz alwas' left out deir. Our food wuz poured in dese bowls an we all et from 'em at de same time wid our hands. My aunt wuz de one dat cooked an'

[52] Ibid., 188-189.

> fixed hit up fer us. She never did have dese bowls took in an' washed. After we got through eatin' in 'em de flys swarmed over 'em an' de dogs licked 'um an' dey sho' did smell bad. When I got big 'nuf to know how nasty dis wuz I got to whar I couldn't half eat, but I'd take de little uns up an' feed 'em from my hands. Even dis got to whar it sickened me. Mos' all de bigger chillum wuz lak me 'bout it. We began to git skinny from de lak of some 'em to eat, an' one day I wuz a feedin' some ob de little uns at dinner time but couldn't eat nothin' my self.[53]

The location of the slave house about a mile from Big House, the use of an overseer with only a few slaves on the plantation, and slaves preparing meals in their own houses suggest that Taylor tried to distance himself from the harsh realities of slavery. Because Taylor was an absentee slaveowner, to a certain extent, slave families on the Taylor plantation probably formed stable family units, a situation that may have been reflected in the small size of Jane's family.

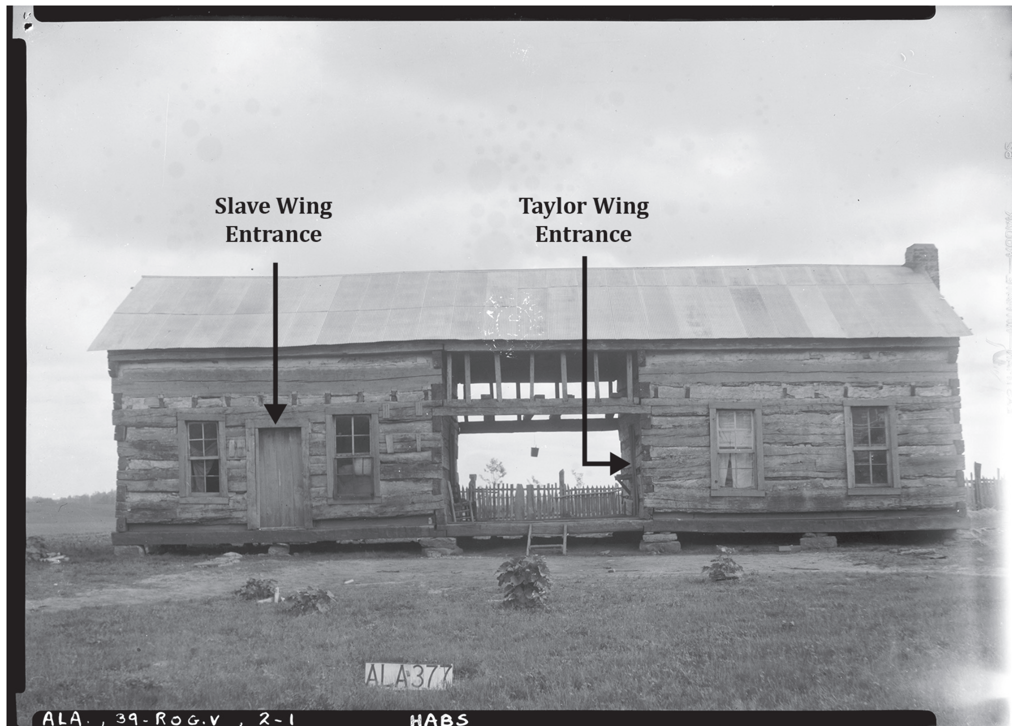
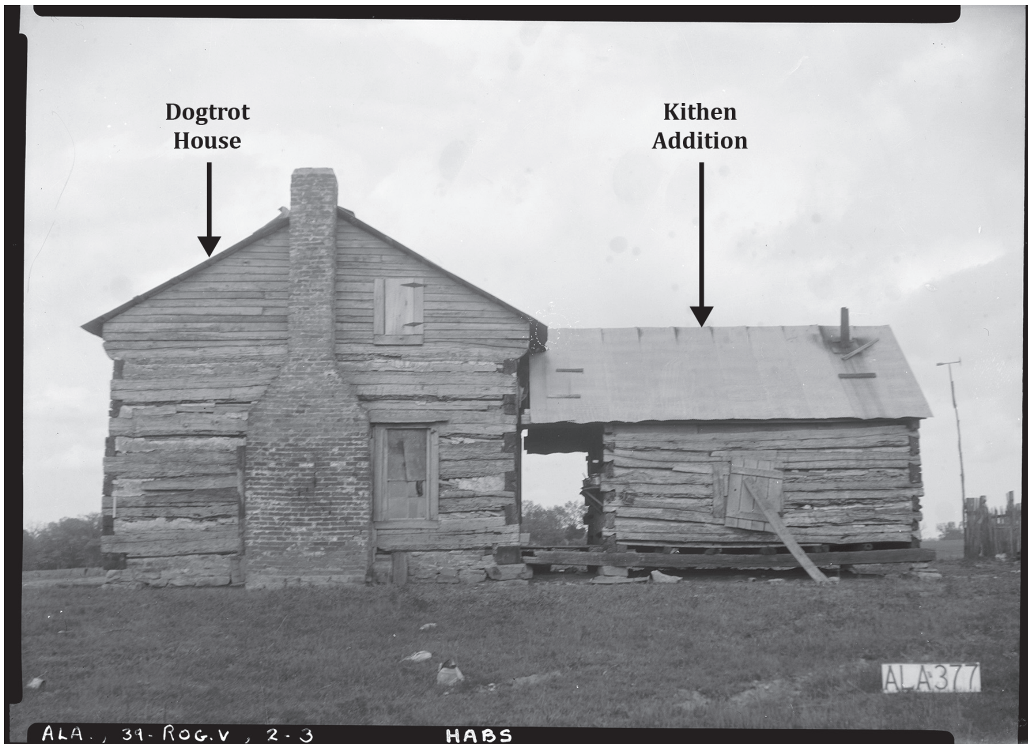


Fig. 46. Photograph showing the dogtrot plan type at the first Taylor-Cunningham House. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A. Notation by Jobie Hill.

[53] Jennie Webb, born c. 1846, was a slave on Fedman Dent's plantation in Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, Vol. 10, 2251.



Figs. 47. Photograph showing the kitchen addition at the first Taylor-Cunningham House Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A. Notation by Jobie Hill.

Figs. 48. Detail of the hearth in the first Taylor-Cunningham House. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS AL-377-A.

Fig. 49. Approximate location of the Bass Place in Muscogee County, Georgia. Drawn by Jobie Hill.

Bass Place

The Bass Place is a HABS site that can be matched to the ex-slave narrative of Aunt Carrie Mason with confidence. This site and its associated ex-slave narrative provide insights into the life of a large slave family living in a small one-room house. The slave houses are also significant because they were built by and for slaves.[54]

The Bass Place is located in the Columbus vicinity in Muscogee County, Georgia (Fig. 49). The site was surveyed by HABS in 1936 (GA-1150) under the direction of Harold Bush-Brown, the same District Officer in Atlanta, Georgia that supervised the survey of Liberty Hall (Fig. 50).

Aunt Carrie Mason, a slave on the Bass Place, was interviewed in 1937 when she was about ninety years old, "You wants to fin' out my age an' all? Law Miss, I don' know how ole I is. George is nigh 'bout 90. I 'members my mammy said I wuz bawn a mont' or two 'fore freedom wuz 'cleared."[55] The interview took place in Milledgeville, Georgia and was administered by Estella G. Burke, a white female Writers' Project interviewer.[56] Aunt Carrie and her family "b'longed ter Mars' Ben Bass an' my mammy had de same name ez marster

[54] Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-1150, Supplemental Information.

[55] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 13, Pt. 3, 109.

[56] Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 190.

twell she ma'ied pappy. He b'longed ter somebody else 'til marster bought him."[57] According to the census records the plantation was located in a primarily cotton farming area. The plantation was small and Bass owned fewer than thirty slaves: "He [Bass] didn't hav' many slaves, 'bout 20, I reckon."[58] Aunt Carrie remembered the work the slaves did on the plantation was very hard: "Us had er right hard time in dem days… Us wukked in de ole days from before sunup 'til black night an' us knowed whut wuk wuz."[59]

Fig. 50. Single-pen slave houses at the Bass Place. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-1150.

[57] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 13, Pt. 3, 110.

[58] Ibid., 111.

[59] Ibid., 110.

The 1860 Census Slave Schedule has two entries for the surname "Bass" in Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia. One entry is for a John Bass and the other is for a Mary Bass.[60] From Aunt Carrie's narrative, we know that her owner was named Ben, not John. Mary Bass may have been Ben's wife and was the one who legally owned the slaves at the Bass Place. It was common during this period for newlywed women to receive slaves as wedding gifts from their fathers. According to the census, Bass owned eleven slaves between the ages of four and fifty-six years old. Eight of the slaves were male, which suggests that there was a greater need for field-hand slaves than domestic slaves. Aunt Carrie remembered that her mother was a field-hand slave on the cotton plantation.

Aunt Carrie had a large family: "My mammy's name was Catherine Bass an' my pappy's was Ephriam Butts… Dey had ten chillum."[61] Aunt Carrie's mother, Catherine was more than likely used for breeding on the Bass Plantation: "Mammy had er ole 'oman whut lived on de place evvy time she had a little 'un. She had one evvy year too. She lost one. Dat chile run aroun' 'til she wuz one year ole an' den died wid de disentery."[62] Aunt Carrie could not remember all the names of her siblings: "My brothers wuz Berry, Dani'l, Ephriam, Tully, Bob, Lin, an' George. All yuthers I disremembers caze dey lef' home when dey wuz big enough to earn dey livin' an' I jes don't recollec'."[63] All the children on the plantation were born at home with a midwife. Aunt Carrie told the interviewer: "No, mam, Mammy didn't

[60] Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia, John Bass*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013); Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia, Mary Bass*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013).

[61] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 13, Pt. 3, 110.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 111.

have no doctor. Didn't nobody hardly have a doctor in dem days. De white folks used yarbs an' ole 'omans to he'p 'em at dat time."[64]

From the HABS photographs we know that the slave houses on the Bass Place were one-room log structures with brick chimneys (Fig. 51). The houses did not have any windows or loft spaces. From Aunt Carrie's description, we know that the floors were not dirt but probably made from planks of wood: "Mammy didn't have much soap an' she uster scrub de flo' wid sand an' it wuz jes ez white. Yes mam, she made all de soap us used, but it tuk a heap."[65] Inside the single room houses were homemade beds, "De beds us used den warn't like dese here nice beds us has nowadays… De beds us slep' on had roun' postes made cuten saplins of hickory or little pine trees. De bark wuz tuk off an' dey wuz rubbed slick an' shiny. De sprangs wuz rope crossed frum one side uv de bed to de udder. De mattress wuz straw or cotton in big sacks made outen osnaberg or big salt sacks pieced targether."[66] Aunt Carrie did not mention any other furniture in the slave houses.

Slaves prepared their own meals in their houses on the Bass plantation: "We'uns cooked in de ashes an' on hot coals, but de vittals tasted a heap better'n dey does nowadays."[67] Aunt Carrie's mother also had to cook the meals for the Bass family, "Mammy had to wuk in de fiel' an' den cum home an' cook fer master an' his fambly."[68]

Aunt Carrie's mother was a field-hand slave, and therefore probably had very little time to spend with Carrie when she was a child. Even though Carrie came from a large family, her family unit was unstable because when the children in her family reached working age they were sold or given away by Bass. Slaves were responsible for cooking

[64] Ibid., 110.

[65] Ibid., 111.

[66] Ibid., 110.

[67] Ibid., 111.

[68] Ibid.

their own meals in their houses. Even though Aunt Carrie's mother would have been exhausted after a full day's work in the field and then cooking for the slaveowner's family, private meals with her own family were likely highly cherished moments.

Fig. 51. Detail of a log slave house with half-lap square notching, a brick chimney and a plank roof at the Bass Place. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-1150.

McPherson's Purchase

McPherson's Purchase is a HABS site that is closely related to the narrative of ex-slave Richard Macks. This site and its associated ex-slave narrative provide the opportunity to identify similarities in the architecture of the slave houses between two neighboring plantations owned by the same slaveholding family. The narrative of Richard Macks is also significant because it provides insights into the life of a black overseer's family.

Fig. 52. Approximate location of McPherson's Purchase in Charles County, Maryland. Drawn by Jobie Hill.

McPherson's Purchase is located at 4250 Fox Burrow Place in Pomfret, Charles County, Maryland (Fig. 52). The site was first listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985 and was surveyed by HABS in 2009 (MD-1371). McPherson's Purchase was owned and occupied by the McPherson family from 1749 to 1949. William McPherson was the pioneer of the property. William also owned several additional large tracts of land in Charles County. These other properties were more than likely owned by non-immediate family members. McPherson's Purchase always had slaves living on the estate during slave times. William owned six slaves in 1752 and by 1849, when his grandson was running the plantation, the number of slaves living on the plantation had increased to twenty-six.[69]

Richard Macks, a slave of the McPherson family, was interviewed in 1937 when he was ninety-three years old. The interview took place in Baltimore, Maryland and was administered by Rogers, a black Writers' Project interviewer of an unidentified gender.[70] Richard remembered, "I was born in Charles County in Southern Maryland in the year 1844… Near Bryantown, a county center prior to the Civil War as a market for tobacco, grain and market for slaves."[71] Richard lived "on a large farm or plantation owned by an old maid by the name of Sally McPherson on McPherson Farm."[72] Sally McPherson is believed to

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[69] J. Richard Rivoire, "McPherson's Purchase," (Washington, D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 1984), 7.

[70] Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 191.

[71] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 16, 51.

be a relative of William McPherson who lived on one of his other properties in Charles County.

The 1860 Census Slave Schedule has only one entry for a Sarah McPherson in Bryantown, Charles County, Maryland.[73] According to the ex-slave narratives recorded by the Writers' Project, slaves often used the nicknames of their owners, not their given names. Sally is a common nickname for Sarah. The census recorded that Sarah owned twenty-five slaves between the ages of three and sixty-fives years old. Fifteen of the slaves were female and ten were male.

Richard's family was one of the smaller families on Sally McPherosn's plantation, "My father's name was William (Bill) and Mother's Harriet Mack, both of whom were born and reared in Charles County – the county that James Wilkes Booth took refuge in after the assassination of President Lincoln in 1865. I had one sister named Jenny and no brothers; let me say right here it was God's blessing I did not."[74] Richard's father William may have been named after William McPherson. Richard and his family may have received certain privileges and better living conditions than that of the other slave families because as Richard described: "My father was the colored overseer, he had charge of the entire plantation and continued until he was too old to work, then mother's brother took it over, his name was Caleb."[75]

Richard's house had a loft space and windows: "I lived with my mother, father and sister in a log cabin built of log and mud, having two rooms; one with a dirt floor and other

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[72] Ibid., 51.

[73] Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census: Slave Schedules*, *Bryantown, Charles County, Maryland, Sarah McPherson*, National Archives microfilm publication M653, digital image, http://www.ancestry.com (accessed 30 April 2013).

[74] Federal Writers' Project, *The American Slave,* Vol. 16, 51.

[75] Ibid., 52.

above, each room having two windows, but not glass."[76] The description Richard gave of his house is similar to the slave house on McPherson's Purchase documented by HABS (Fig. 53). Both slave houses have paneless windows, dirt floors and a loft space. Because Richard's father was the overseer, he and his family did not have to share their living space with other slaves. His house was a single-pen log house and would have been somewhat separated from the other double-pen shared slave houses. The slave houses on Sally McPherson's plantation were probably built close to one another which allowed the slaves to easily move from one house to the next without being seen. Richard remembered that "at nights the slaves would go from one cabin to the other."[77] The furniture in Richard's house consisted of two beds and a bench. It was considered a luxury for a slave family to have one bed, let alone two. "I slept on a home-made bed or bunk, while my mother and sister slept in a bed made by father on which they had a mattress made by themselves and filled with straw, while dad slept on a bench beside the bed and that he used in the day as a work bench, mending shoes for the slaves and others."[78]

The slaves on Sally McPherson's Farm did not have individual gardens around their houses, but Richard remembered: "We had a section of the farm that the slaves were allowed to farm for themselves, my mistress would let them raise extra food for their own use at nights."[79] The slaves needed to supplement their diets because as Richard recalled, "We had nothing to eat but corn bread baked in ashes, fat back and vegetables raised on the farm; no ham or any other choice meats; and fish we caught out of the creeks and

[76] Ibid., 51.

[77] Ibid., 56.

[78] Ibid., 52.

[79] Ibid.

streams."[80] Richard's father was allowed to have dogs that were used for hunting: "My father has some very fine dogs; we hunted coons, rabbits and opossum. Our best dog was named Ruler, he would take your hat off. If my father said: 'Ruler, take his hat off!' he would jump up and grab your hat."[81] The dogs were likely used during working hours to aid in carrying out William's overseer duties of keeping the other slaves in line.

Fig. 53. Photograph of a saddle-bag slave house at McPherson's Purchase. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS MD-1371.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

Richard's family was different from the other slaves on the plantation because his father was the overseer, which theoretically would have given his family greater opportunities to remain an intact family unit. Richard's narrative hints at these privileges and supports the belief that his family was an intact slave family.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

> [Colonel Easterlin] owned a big plantation wid a big bunch ob slaves dat lived in small one-roomed cabins built in rows back o' his big fine two story house… Da cabins we lived in wuz built ob logs split open an' pegged together. De fire places wuz big dat helt long logs. We could build up big roarin' fires dat would light up de whole cabin bright as sunshine. Des chimneys wuz made ob sticks, dirt and straw. De cabins didn't hab but 'bout one window an' two doors. One doo' at de front an' one at de back. Deir wuz nothin' in 'em but beds which wuz home made, wid de matress made o' hay. De chairs wuz home maid wid cow hide bottoms. Des chairs an' de cabin floors wuz kept scrubbed to a creamy whiteness.[1]
>
> - Vinnie Busby a slave on Colonel Easterlin's plantation in Mississippi

People often associate historic preservation strictly with physical structures. Historic preservationists, however, strive to preserve not only physical structures, but also the history of a structure's inhabitants. Undertaking the inclusion of the anthropological history of the inhabitants along with the preservation of the historic slave house is important because it reveals a part of history that cannot be gleaned from the historical or physical evidence alone.

The Historic American Buildings Survey and the Federal Writers' Project were two large-scale government survey projects from the 1930s that, in part, documented slavery in America. HABS documented the architecture and created a graphic representation of a site. The Writers' Project recorded American life histories from ex-slaves. The slave narratives brought to life the spatial density, degree of accommodations, nature of the facilities, and attitudes of those who inhabited the slave house. Historically, stakeholders utilized these resources in isolation of one another.

[1] Vinnie Busby, born c. 1854, was a slave on Colonel Easterlin's plantation in Mississippi. Rawick, *The American Slave, Supplement, Series,* Vol. 6, 308-309.

Through the research of this thesis, coordination between the two programs was proven effective. Five documented slave houses from the HABS collection were directly linked to slave narratives recorded by the Writers' Project. The relationship between the historical record and the stories of the inhabitants are crucial to our understanding and interpretation of the lifeways and settings of an enslaved people in the antebellum South. In doing so, the plantation landscape is revealed not through the eyes of the master but through the perspective of those who were in his charge. Historic preservationists now have five personal accounts of this landscape upon which to build future interdisciplinary appreciation and research.

APPENDIX A

HABS DOCUMENTED SLAVE HOUSES

The Historic American Buildings Survey has documented slave houses on over three hundred site throughout the United States. Pictured is a selected key image for each HABS record. The key image represents the most revealing piece documentation within each given record set. The first group of numbers in the caption is the unique HABS identification number.

AL-19-B_Photo_S01_Key

AL-22_Photo_S04_Key

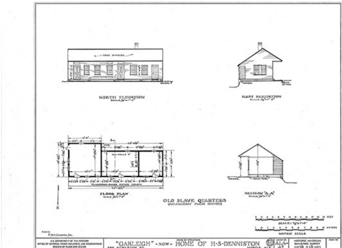
AL-27_Photo_S01_Key

AL-28_Photo_S01_Key

AL-30_Photo_S01_Key

AL-37_Photo_S01_Key

AL-39_Photo_S01_Key



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AL-225_Photo_S01_Key

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AL-232_Photo_S02_Key

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AL-289_Photo_S01_Key

AL-303_Photo_S01_Key

AL-306_Photo_S02_Key

AL-311_Photo_S01_Key

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AL-322_Photo_S01_Key

AL-333_Photo_S01_Key

AL-337_Photo_S01_Key

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AL-355_Photo_S01_Key

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AL-362_Photo_S02_Key

AL-375_Photo_S01_Key

AL-377-A_Photo_S01_Key

AL-380_Photo_S02_Key

AL-388_Photo_S01_Key

AL-395_Photo_S01_Key

AL-402_Photo_S01_Key

AL-405_Photo_S01_Key

AL-406_Photo_S02_Key

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AL-610_Photo_S01_Key

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AL-612_Photo_S01_Key

AL-626_Photo_S02_Key

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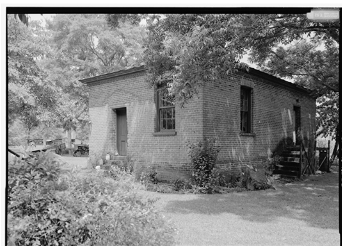
AL-690-A_Photo_S02_Key

AL-712_Photo_S01_Key



AL-765_Photo_S13_Key

AL-770_Photo_S01_Key

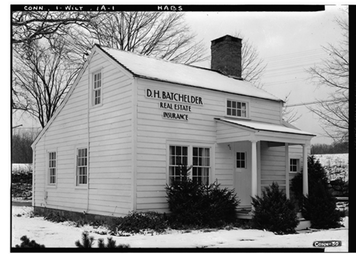
AL-772_Photo_S01_Key

AL-822_Photo_S02_Key

AL-883-B_Photo_S02_Key

AL-884-A_Photo_S01_Key

AL-887-A_Photo_S01_Key

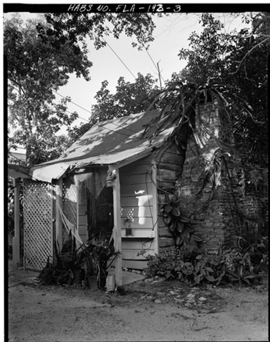


CT-30_Photo_S01_Key

DC-28_Photo_S45_Key

DE-183_Photo_S01_Key

FL-15-1_Photo_S03_Key



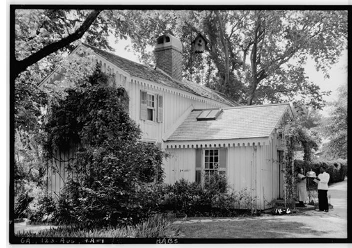
FL-192_Photo_S01_Key

FL-478_Photo_S24_Key

FL-478-A_Photo_S05_Key

FL-478-C_Photo_S01_Key

GA-21_Photo_S02_Key



GA-26_Photo_S01_Key

GA-40-A_Photo_S01_Key

GA-40-B_Photo_S03_Key

GA-40-C_Photo_S02_Key

GA-120_Photo_S01_Key

GA-158_Photo_S02_Key

GA-164_Photo_S01_Key

GA-168_Photo_S01_Key

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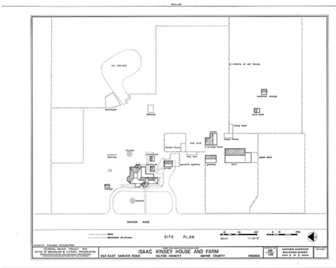
GA-2126_Photo_S01_Key

GA-2137_Photo_S02_Key

HI-33_Photo_S02_Key



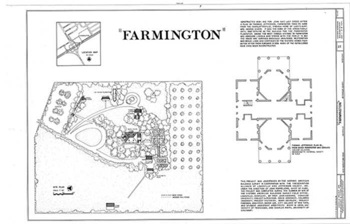
IN-109_Dwg_Site01_Key

KY-20-5_Photo_S01_Key

KY-20-16_Photo_S01_Key

KY-20-17_Photo_S01_Key

KY-20-21_Photo_S01_Key



KY-24_Dwg_Site01_Key

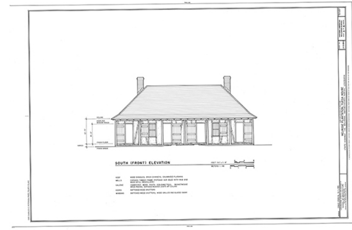
KY-30_Photo_S02_Key

KY-32_Photo_S01_Key

KY-68_Photo_S01_Key

LA-2-69-A_Photo_S01_Key

LA-2-69-B_Photo_S01_Key



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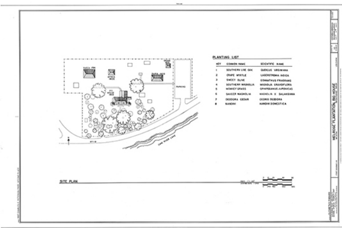

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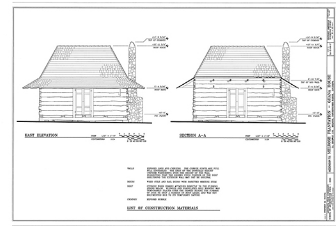
LA-2-69-E_Photo_O02_Key



LA-2-69-F_Dwg_S03_Key

LA-18-2_Photo_S01_Key

LA-18-12_Photo_S01_Key

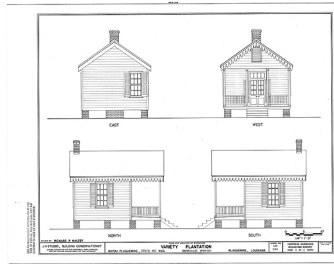
LA-18-13_Photo_S01_Key

LA-29_Photo_S03_Key

LA-35-A_Photo_S01_Key

LA-74_Photo_S03_Key

LA-176_Photo_S01_Key



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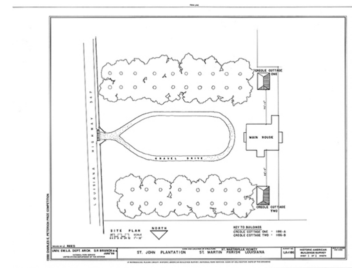
LA-1142-B_Photo_O01_Key

LA-1142-C_Photo_S02_Key



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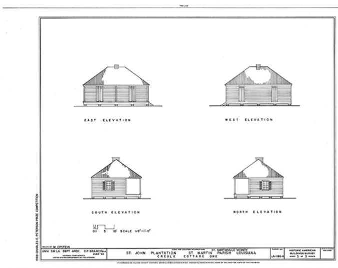

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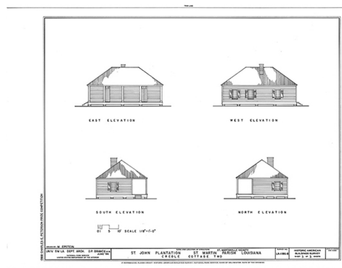

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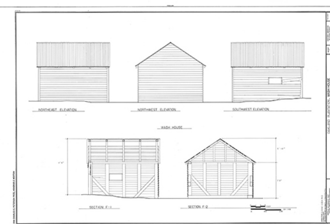
LA-1192-A_Photo_S03_Key

LA-1192-B_Photo_O01_Key



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LA-1192-M_Photo_S03_Key

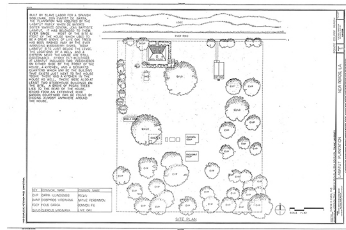
LA-1192-Q_Photo_S03_Key

LA-1192-T_Photo_S02_Key

LA-1193-B_Photo_S03_Key

LA-1193-C_Photo_S03_Key

LA-1193-D_Photo_O02_Key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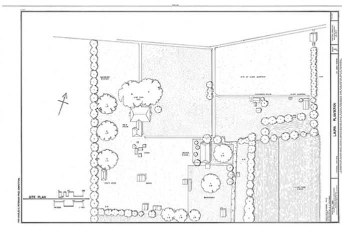
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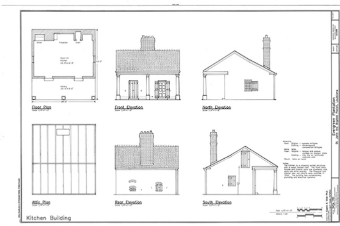
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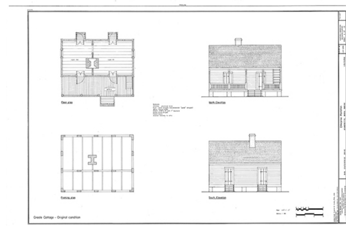
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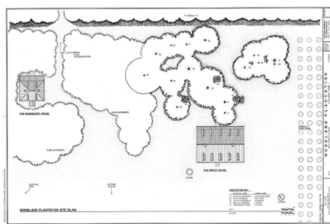
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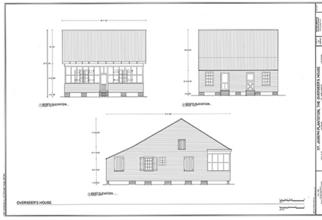
LA-1260-B_Dwg_S03_Key

LA-1268_Dwg_S01_Key



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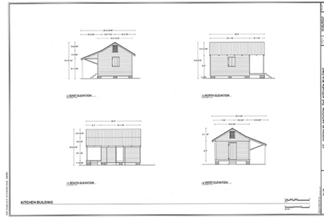
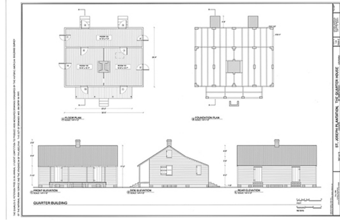


LA-1268-C_Dwg_O02_Key



LA-1268-E_Dwg_S01_Key

LA-1268-F_Dwg_S02_Key

LA-1275_Dwg_S02_Key

LA-1297_Photo_S03_Key

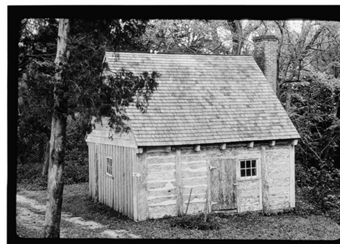
LA-1318_Photo_S01_Key

LA-1318-A_Photo_S02_Key

MA-130_Photo_S01_Key

MD-84_Photo_S01_Key

MD-85-B_Photo_S03_Key



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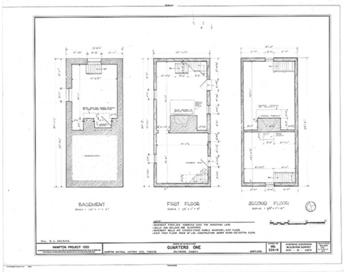

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MD-226-L_Photo_S01_Key

MD-226-M_Photo_S01_Key

MD-230_Photo_S09_Key

MD-315-D_Photo_S01_Key

MD-333_Photo_S02_Key

MD-432_Photo_S02_Key

MD-459_Photo_S01_Key

MD-570_Photo_S01_Key

MD-571_Photo_S01_Key

MD-572_Photo_S01_Key

MD-578_Photo_S01_Key

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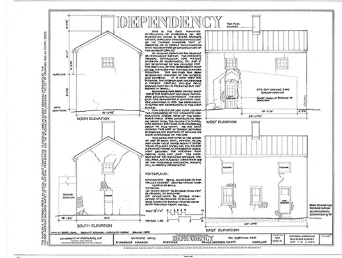
MD-596_Photo_S01_Key

MD-604_Photo_S01_Key

MD-627-B_Photo_S01_Key

MD-639_Photo_S02_Key



MD-655-A_Dwg_S01_Key

MD-687_Photo_S01_Key

MD-935-A_Photo_S02_Key

MD-944-C_Photo_S01_Key

MD-946-B_Photo_S01_Key

MD-1149-A_Photo_S01_Key

MD-1371_Photo_S01_Key

MO-31-11_Photo_S02_Key

MO-31-11-A_Photo_S03_Key

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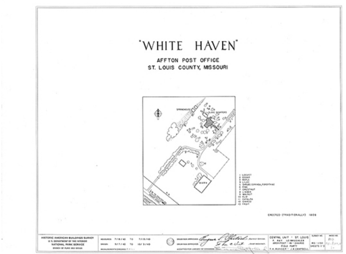
MO-170_Photo_S01_Key

MO-198-A_Photo_S01_Key

MO-223_Photo_S01_Key



MO-1150_Dwg_Site01_Key

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MO-1182-A_Photo_S01_Key

MO-1382-A_Photo_S01_Key

MO-1439-A_Photo_S01_Key

MO-1440_Photo_S01_Key

MO-1441_Photo_S01_Key

MO-1620_Photo_S01_Key

MO-1719-A_Photo_S01_Key

MS-51_Photo_S02_Key

MS-61-H_Photo_S01_Key

MS-61-I_Photo_S01_Key

MS-61-J_Photo_O01_Key

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MS-225_Photo_S01_Key

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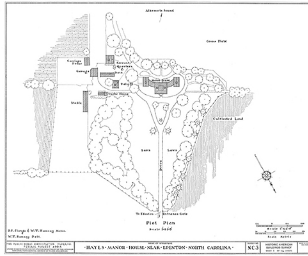

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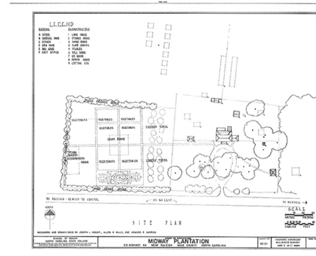

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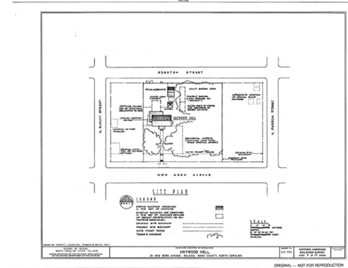

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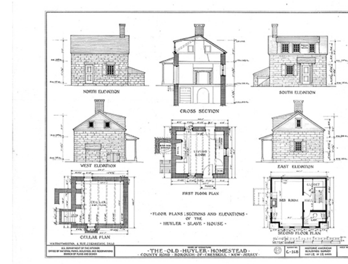
NH-1_Photo_S03_Key

NJ-111_Photo_S01_Key



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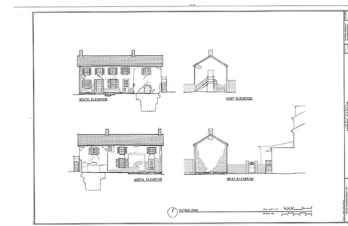
NJ-363_Photo_S01_Key

NJ-408_Photo_S01_Key



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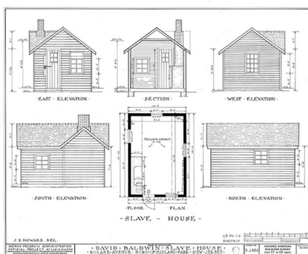


NJ-420_Dwg_S01_Key

NY-371-A_Photo_S02_Key

NY-3162_Photo_S02_Key

NY-3163_Photo_S02_Key

NY-3280_Photo_S01_Key

OH-2322_Photo_S01_Key

OK-28_Photo_S02_Key

PA-1245-C_Photo_S01_Key

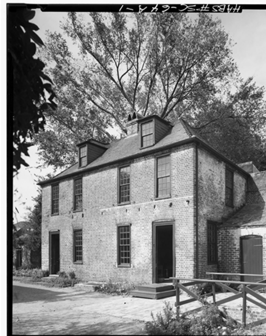
PA-5345-A_Photo_S02_Key

SC-7_Photo_S01_Key

SC-18_Photo_S01_Key

SC-44_Photo_S01_Key

SC-58-A_Photo_S01_Key



SC-64-A_Photo_S01_Key

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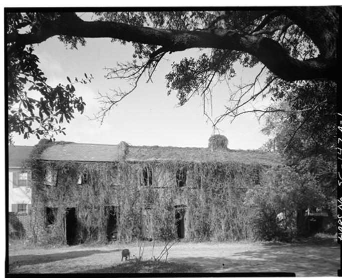
SC-78-C_Photo_S03_Key

SC-129_Photo_S01_Key

SC-129-A_Photo_S01_Key



SC-147-A_Photo_S01_Key

SC-147-B_Photo_S01_Key

SC-200-A_Photo_S06_Key

SC-232-A_Photo_S01_Key

SC-269_Photo_S05_Key

SC-276_Photo_S03_Key

SC-344_Photo_S10_Key

SC-366_Photo_S01_Key

SC-369_Photo_S02_Key

SC-381_Photo_S05_Key

SC-476-D_Photo_S01_Key

SC-478-A_Photo_S01_Key

SC-478-E_Photo_S01_Key

SC-482-A_Photo_S01_Key

SC-482-B_Photo_O01_Key

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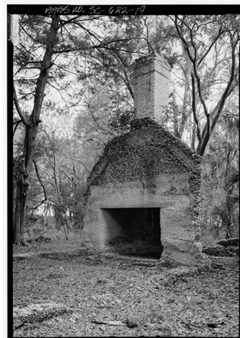
SC-482-F_Photo_S01_Key

SC-494-A_Photo_S01_Key

SC-494-B_Photo_S01_Key



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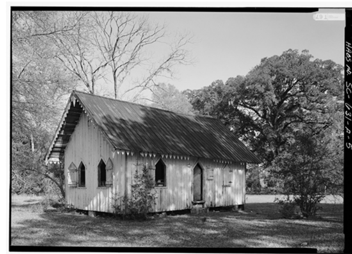

SC-631-A_Photo_S05_Key

SC-665_Photo_Site02_Key

SC-665-A_Photo_S01_Key

SC-867_Photo_S13_Key

SC-868_Photo_S11_Key

TN-10_Photo_S03_Key

TN-14_Photo_S01_Key

TN-52-A_Photo_S01_Key

TN-52-B_PhotoC_S01_Key

TN-52-C_PhotoC_S02_Key

TN-54-D_Photo_S02_Key

TN-81_Photo_S03_Key

TN-97_Photo_S02_Key

TN-132_Photo_S01_Key

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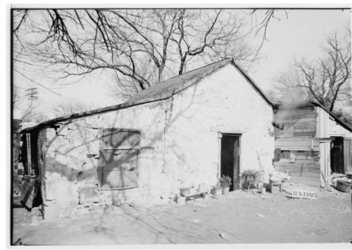
TN-176-A_Photo_S01_Key

TN-219_Photo_S01_Key

TN-219-A_Photo_S01_Key



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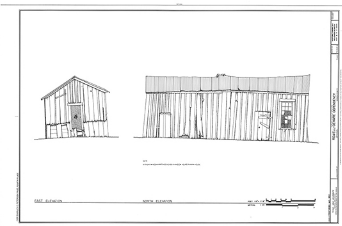

TX-149-A_Dwg_S02_Key

TX-310_Photo_S02_Key

TX-326_Photo_S02_Key

TX-343_Photo_S03_Key

TX-346_Photo_S02_Key

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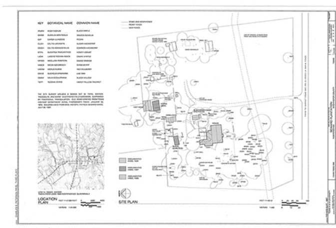
TX-393_Photo_S01_Key

TX-394_Photo_S01_Key

TX-3277_Photo_S01_Key



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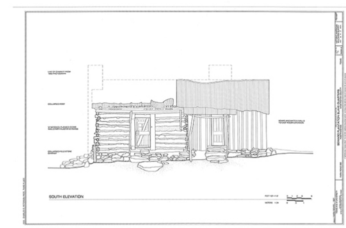

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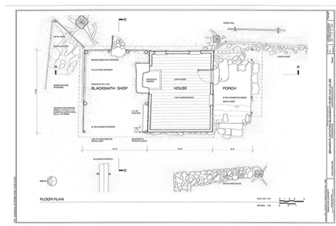

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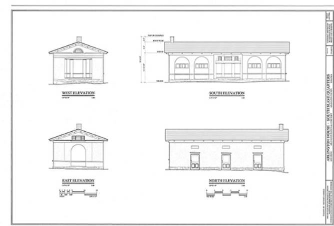

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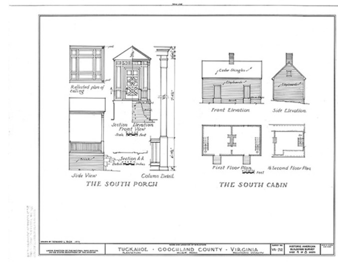

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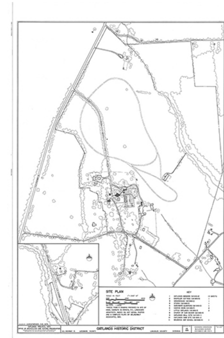

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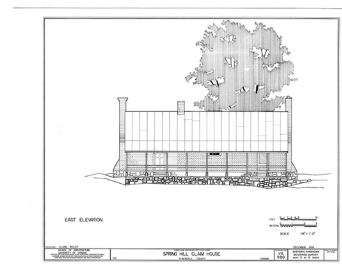

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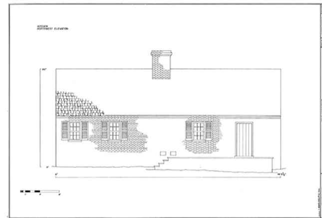

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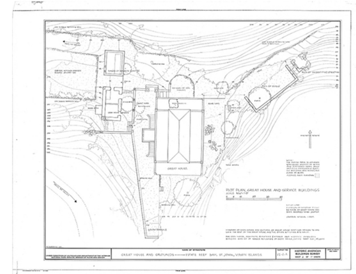

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APPENDIX B

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT EX-SLAVE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Where and when were you born?
2. Give the names of your father and mother. Where did they come from? Give names of your brothers and sisters. Tell about your life with them and describe your home and the "quarters." Describe the beds and where you slept. Do you remember anything about your grandparents or any stories told you about them?
3. What work did you do in slavery days? Did you ever earn any money? How? What did you buy with this money?
4. What did you eat and how was it cooked? Any possums? Rabbits? Fish? What food did you like best? Did the slaves have their own gardens?
5. What clothing did you wear in hot weather? Cold weather? On Sundays? Any shoes? Describe your wedding clothes.
6. Tell about your master, mistress, their children, the house they lived in, the overseer or driver, poor white neighbors.
7. How many acres in the plantation? How many slaves on it? How and at what time did the overseer wake up the slaves? Did they work hard and late at night? How and for what causes were the slaves punished? Tell what you saw. Tell some of the stories you heard.
8. Was there a jail for slaves? Did you ever see any slaves sold or auctioned off? How did groups of slaves travel? Did you ever see slaves in chains?
9. Did the white folks help you to learn to read and write?
10. Did the slaves have a church on your plantation? Did they read the Bible? Who was your favorite preacher? Your favorite spirituals? Tell about the baptizing; baptizing songs. Funerals and funeral songs.
11. Did the slaves ever run away to the North? Why? What did you hear about patrollers? How did slaves carry news from one plantation to another? Did you hear of trouble between the blacks and whites?
12. What did the slaves do when they went to their quarters after the day's work was done on the plantation? Did they work on Saturday afternoons? What did they do Saturday nights? Sundays? Christmas morning? New Year's Day? Any other holidays? Cornshucking? Cotton Picking? Dances? When some of the white master's family married or died? A wedding or death among the slaves?
13. What games did you play as a child? Can you give the words or sing any of the play songs or ring games of the children? Riddles? Charms? Stories about "Raw Head and Bloody Bones" or other "hants" of ghosts? Stories about animals? What do you think of voodoo? Can you give the words or sing any lullabies? Work songs? Plantation hollers? Can you tell a funny story you have heard or something funny that happened to you? Tell about the ghosts you have seen.
14. When slaves became sick who looked after them? What medicines did the doctors give them? What medicine (herbs, leaves, or roots) did the slaves use for sickness? What charms did they wear and to keep off what diseases?

15. What do you remember about the war that brought your freedom? What happened on the day news came that you were free? What did your master say and do? When the Yankees came what did they do and say?
16. Tell what work you did and how you lived the first year after the war and what you saw or heard about the Ku Klux Klan and the Nightriders. Any school then for Negroes? Any land?
17. Whom did you marry? Describe the wedding. How many children and grandchildren have you and what are they doing?
18. What do you think of Abraham Lincoln? Jefferson Davis? Booker Washington? Any other prominent white man or Negro you have known or heard of?
19. Now that slavery is ended what do you think of it? Tell why you joined a church and why you think all people should be religious.
20. Was the overseer "poor white trash"? What were some of his rules?[1]

[1] Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup*, 174-176.

APPENDIX C

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT EX-SLAVE UNIFORM WORD LIST

The following list is composed of words which Lomax thought should *not* be used when transcribing the ex-slave interviews. [1]

Pronunciation		**Transcription**
ah	for	I
baid	for	bed
bawn	for	born
capper	for	caper
coase	for	cose
com'	for	come
cose	for	'cause
cot	for	caught
daid	for	dead
do	for	dough
ebry, ev'ry	for	every
fiuh or fiah	for	fire
fuh	for	for
gi'	for	give
gwainter	for	gwineter (going to)
hawd	for	hard
hit	for	it
ifn	for	iffen (if)
j'in	for	jine
kin'	for	kind
mah or muh	for	my
moster	for	marster or massa
nekid	for	naked
ole, ol'	for	old
oman	for	woman
othuh	for	other
ouh	for	our
ovah	for	over
poar	for	poor or po'
poe	for	po' (poor)
ret, right	for	right
sneik	for	snake
sowd	for	sword
sto'	for	store
the	for	tell
tho't	for	thought
tuh	for	to

[1] Rawick, "Editor's Introduction," in *From Sundown to Sunup*, 178.

Pronunciation		**Transcription**
twon't	for	twan't
undah	for	under
useter, useta	for	used to
utha	for	other
uz or uv or o'	for	of
waggin	for	wagon
wha	for	whar (where)
whi'	for	white
wuz	for	was
wuz	for	was
yo'	for	you
yondah	for	yonder

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