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# ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM

## WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

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#### 8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

##### A. Physical Description Narrative of all Resources on the Site

###### Farmhouse (contributing)

The original hall-parlor house, c.1835-1840, is simple in design with little ornamentation. It is primarily Greek Revival style architecture with some Federal style elements. The roof is metal with gable ends facing Creedmoor Road (Highway 50). Its boxed cornice and tight eaves suggest an early nineteenth-century construction, as well as its half-round, pine log floor joists and hand-hewn sill. It retains the original weatherboard cladding and has a brick and stone pier foundation. The foundation was originally left open to ventilate the space under the house, but it is now enclosed. The front door was replaced in the mid-twentieth century while most of the first floor windows are original, six-over-six, double hung. The doors and windows appear to be in their original places. An exterior, single shoulder end chimney completes the east façade and has a very roughly coursed stone base. The stack is 1:7 common bond brick with a corbeled cap.

The east façade features a shed roof porch, which includes the main entrance to the hall, the parlor window, and an opening that may have been a door to the central hall bathroom at one time. The porch features turned wood porch posts. It is original to the house but was altered with the turn-of-the-century renovations. An original storage room on the east end of the porch features nineteenth-century cut nails in the weatherboard. When the turn-of-the-century addition was constructed, an infill room was added to the west end of the porch. This part of the porch was constructed with modern framing and round wire nails in the weatherboard. The porch was probably enclosed at this time, and a new surround was added to provide continuity. The porch window may have been recentered to maintain symmetry.

The original hall has been altered with the addition of mid-century kitchen counters and appliances, but the room retains its original woodwork. The original sheathing on the hall ceiling is covered by a late-twentieth-century tile ceiling and a modern drop ceiling, and the linoleum flooring was installed on top of the original pine. This part of the house is transitional Federal-Greek Revival style, which is exemplified in the fireplace mantel. The mantel is original and features a recessed panel frieze and recessed panel pilasters.

The wood paneling in both the hall and the parlor is original and features flush-sheathed wainscoting. The original pine floor is visible in the parlor, and the boards are face nailed and approximately seven to eight inches wide. A modern bathroom was added to the



north end of the parlor, possibly during the 1940s. The southeast parlor wall is Victorian tongue-and-groove paneling where the original staircase was removed and a wall constructed around the turn of the century.

The hall-parlor house includes a sleeping loft on the second floor, which was originally accessed by a staircase leading from the hall. It led a few steps up from the hall, then turned to the right and continued through the parlor to the second floor. This staircase was removed after 1900 and the wall was filled in with the same style of tongue-and-groove paneling found in the later addition. The balustrade is intact on the second floor. Two small windows look east over the shoulders of the chimney and have the original single sash, recessing wood panels. There is also an original window facing Creedmoor Road on the west façade, now not visible behind the addition. This window is four-over-four glazed with a double hung sash and retains the original shutter. The loft was also added onto when the house was expanded at the turn of the century, streamlining the new roofline created by the infill room added to the west facade of the existing house. There is also a stove flue in the northeast corner of the loft, possibly from the later addition of a stove in the hall, which was converted to a kitchen probably in the 1940s. The rafter tips are nailed and sash sawn. The second floor may now be accessed through the exterior second story windows.

Around the turn of the century, a Victorian I-house was added to the hall-parlor home facing Highway 50 to the west. The addition is nearly identical to the nearby Cannady-Brogden House, so it may have been constructed by the same builder, Edgar Gooch. The addition is a triple-A roofline, and its returned gables are a holdover from the previous popularity of Greek Revival architecture. The center gable features a decorative round louver window, and its peak features a decorative bracket. Corner boards and a stamped tin roof offer additional decorative elements. The roof retains its original weathervanes from the early twentieth century, including the original glass bulbs.

The addition is flanked by external, single shoulder end chimneys. The stack patterns are an unusual random-ratio common bond brick, and they have corbeled caps matching the earlier chimney on the east façade. The foundation is a brick pier foundation similar to that on the original hall-parlor part of the house, also now enclosed. The first floor addition retains the original two-over-two windows, but the second story has six-over-six replacements. The double-leaf front doors are original to the addition. They are paneled in a common Victorian pattern with a single window pane and were probably ordered from a catalog. A double-leaf storm door has been added.

The I-house is decorated with fashionable sawn gable ornaments and extensive millwork. The porch features a hipped roof, bead board ceiling, and turned porch posts. The porch gingerbreading is a delicate foliate pattern with turned drop pendants and sawtooth drapery running between posts. This façade, especially the front porch, is almost identical to



that of the Cannady-Brogden House, suggesting many of its elements were handcrafted by a local builder, such as the turned porch posts and foliate brackets. However, many of the porch details are remarkably similar to items in the Roberts Catalog and Universal Design Book, including the turned porch spindles, the turned drops, and the sawtooth drapery; therefore some of the basic elements may be stock materials.

The interior of the addition is a typical I-house floor plan with a wide central hall flanked by a room on each side. A beautiful closed string staircase ascends from the doorway along the south wall to a landing, then turns 180 degrees and continues to the second floor. The staircase is decorated with turned balustrades, drop pendants, and carved newel posts, as well as inlaid paneling on the outer side of the staircase. It is the most impressive decorative interior element. An understair closet reveals the original color of the pine used to construct the staircase. Modern coat closets have been added, as well as a modern bathroom in the infill room accessed through the central hall.

The north and south rooms on the first floor have the original tongue-and-groove paneling and ceilings as well as beadboard wainscoting below the chair rail. They are decorated with late Victorian mantels, the south room mantel being much more elaborate with mirrored overmantel decoration, indicating this room was the more formal and likely used as the parlor. These rooms also retain their original pine floorboards and carved baseboards. The doorways and window surrounds are decorated with geometric cornerblocks. The doors are a five-paneled Victorian design, and the floors are the original pine, with the north room floor stained a walnut color.

The second floor rooms are similar to the downstairs rooms but have more alterations. The north room features tongue-and-groove paneling and ceiling, original floorboards, and geometric cornerblocks on the door and window surrounds. The south room retains some of these original elements but three of the walls have been covered with mid-century wood paneling. Both rooms have late Victorian mantels that are more modest than those downstairs, and each room has had closets added.

Connecting the original hall-parlor dwelling to the I-house addition is a small infill room with a tongue-and-groove ceiling. This room has sheetrock walls that cover the original tongue-and-groove paneling. There is a six-over-six double hung window on the north wall that was originally a door. On the south end of the infill addition, there is a bathroom accessed through the central hall.



### Tobacco-Curing Barns (contributing)

Two flue-cured tobacco barns and a tobacco pack house are located south of, and somewhat removed from, the Farmhouse. The older barn, c.1910, was constructed with round pine logs and clay chinking, a stone curtain foundation, and a dirt floor. These early barns were constructed with tightly-fitted logs that retained the heat needed for curing process. A second tobacco-curing barn is located nearby. This barn is frame construction, c.1930 covered with weatherboard to improve insulation.

Both buildings have tin roofing and tin exterior cladding that was added later to improve heat retention. They each have a large window opposite the main entrance for ventilation after curing, which are now covered by the tin cladding. The tin cladding has helped to preserve the original frame and log materials, and both structures are in good condition. Open sheds extend from the main entrance of each barn that were used to shelter workers while they stripped the leaves from the stalk. Later, the barns were converted to gas heat, but they retain the original wood fire flues.

### Pack House and Ordering Pit (contributing)

East of the two tobacco-curing barns is a tobacco pack house, c.1930. It is a two-story frame building with a metal roof. The site also retains the ordering pit adjacent to the pack house, which at one time was covered, but the roof has now collapsed. Tobacco leaves were loaded into the first floor of the pack house by the door adjacent to the ordering pit. Here, the leaves were graded and packed, then stored on the second floor. A second floor doorway allowed the packed tobacco to be easily lowered to the ground and taken to market for sale.

### Potato-Curing Sheds (contributing)

To the north of the Farmhouse are two potato-curing sheds. The earlier shed, c.1910, is log construction with concrete chinking. The logs were hewn on one side and left round, with the bark attached, on the other. The notching is no longer visible as the exterior has been covered with rough board and batten siding ranging from seven to nine inches wide. The interior has a central flue and three hanging racks on each side with a flue vent above each rack.

The second shed is frame construction, c.1915. The exterior cladding is six-inch weatherboard, and the wall studs are 2x10s allowing a gap between the interior and exterior walls. This gap has been filled with sawdust to serve as insulation for the curing process. Varying amounts of sawdust remain in place, in most areas filling the wall four to five feet high. An unusually large 8x10 beam serves as the sill plate at the shed's entrance. A number of





repairs have been made to the interior walls using parts of shipping crates, including one with a handwritten address to the farm. A central flue and two hanging racks on each side with square, wood-framed flue vents above each rack complete the interior.

Both sheds have second-story lofts accessible by gable end windows. The central flue passes through the lofts to the exterior of the sheds, while the smaller flue vents lead into the lofts. They both have unfinished floors covered with several inches of sawdust for insulation. The sheds were converted to chicken coops in the mid-twentieth century by adding screen doors and incubation equipment. The original solid door remains on the log shed, although it no longer closes properly, and the frame shed has only the screen door. Both sheds have metal roofing.

#### Tenant House (non-contributing)

At the northernmost edge of the domestic outbuildings, a tenant house was constructed c.1930. Based on photos from a 1994 state survey, the original structure included an adjacent structure, possibly connected by an infill room that may have originally been a dogtrot. This part of the building has since collapsed, but it was accessed by a doorway in the south façade of the remaining structure. The structure could accommodate two families, appropriate for a middle class farm. Tenant houses built during this time were generally one-story, side-gabled structures, making this example unusually large at two-stories.

The tenant house is a frame structure with the original board and batten cladding and a metal roof. It is remarkably similar in appearance and construction to a flue-cured tobacco barn, but instead of the typical stone curtain foundation, the tenant house has a field stone pier foundation. It is a vernacular structure likely built by someone familiar with tobacco barn construction rather than house construction, possibly even the O'Briants themselves.

The first floor served as the main living space and a vent in the northeast corner indicates it was heated by a stove. The interior walls are horizontal, four-inch paneling that cover the original board and batten cladding, and they retain the original blue paint. The floor is constructed of rough-sawn yellow pine floorboards ranging from eight to eleven inches in width. The building was electrified around 1960. Single sash, recessing glazed windows look out the north and west façades. An intact door enters the east façade and is solid wood and of a very crude construction, befitting the rest of the house.

No staircase remains to access the second floor, but it may have led from the south entrance via the infill room. The second story remains crude and probably served as a sleeping loft. The walls lack the interior paneling and blue paint of the first floor living space, but there is a finished floor and gable end window similar to that on the first floor.



Corn Crib (contributing)

There is a small corn crib, c.1920-1930, adjacent to the Farmhouse on the south side of the property. It is a gable-front, frame structure with a metal roof. The building is of plank construction, well-ventilated with gaps in the planks and an elevated foundation. The building was converted to a chicken coop in the early to mid-twentieth century and later used as a storage shed.

Livestock Barn/Kennel (non-contributing)

Adjacent to the Farmhouse to the southeast was the location of the livestock barn. The building may have been built as early as the 1930s, but was certainly built by 1959. The building was dismantled sometime after 1994. Although the building no longer remains, photos indicate it was typical to Wake County farms with entrances on the gable ends, stalls on the first floor, a second floor for hay storage, and a side shed for additional stalls or storage space.

A dog kennel was constructed on the original barn site, although the original barn foundation is still visible in some places. The kennel has been removed, but its concrete slab foundation remains.

Storage Shed (non-contributing)

The shed, located just south of the Farmhouse, was originally a gable front structure with a concrete slab floor, doors in the west and south façades, and an open side shed on the south façade. At some point, the open shed was enclosed with the rest of the building by moving the south wall to the edge of the open shed and adding plywood to fill in the east and west façades. There is also a plank floor on this portion of the shed. The plywood walls and floor are now in poor condition while the original wood paneled walls are still in good condition. The building may have been built as early as the 1930s but was definitely built by 1959.

Outhouse (non-contributing)

An outhouse was constructed c.1920-1930 behind the farmhouse. It is a small weatherboard structure with a metal roof, and it had a two-seat bench inside. It was probably used until the 1940s when indoor plumbing and electricity came to rural Wake County.



### Wells (contributing)

The Robertson-O'Briant Farm has two wells. The original nineteenth-century well is located close to the Farmhouse and was probably dug in the early 1800s by the Robertsons. This well is covered by a gable-roofed shelter, a common well covering throughout the county. A modern septic system is located adjacent to this well, probably added around 1940 with the addition of indoor plumbing.

The second well was added by the 1950s and is about thirty feet deep. Its location adjacent to the cultivated fields suggests it was used for agricultural purposes, and its proximity to the tenant house suggests it may have been used for domestic purposes by the tenant families as well.

### Pennington Cemetery (contributing)

On the southernmost corner of the property, accessed by Highway 50, there is a small cemetery. It has not been well maintained, but the boundaries are still visible. It has not become overgrown with the early succession scrub forest that surrounds it, but it does have a thick layer of forest debris covering the grave sites. The cemetery boundaries are approximately 100 feet by 75 feet.

There are two well-marked graves in the cemetery. One belongs to Dililah Pennington, the wife of John Pennington who owned one of the original parcels that made up the Robertson-O'Briant Farm. There is a headstone and footstone to mark this grave. The other belongs to George G. Roberson, the son of an African American tenant farming family living and working either on or near the Robertson-O'Briant Farm in the early 1900s. This grave also has a headstone and a footstone, and both stones are engraved. There are also grave depressions marked with field stone headstones and footstones. The forest debris covers any other grave depressions or field stone markers.

### Farm Landscape

The farm landscape indicates the division of operations on the farm, with outbuildings related to tobacco cultivation on the south side of the property and those used in potato cultivation on the north side. The landscape also reveals the social divisions between the property owners and the workers at the O'Briant Farm, with the owners living in a large, fashionable home in the center of the property and tenant farmers living in smaller, simpler structures close to the fields and far from the owners' house. Outbuildings relating to daily life, including the well and outhouse, were constructed central to the property and close to the Farmhouse to facilitate frequent access.



The property is split by Boyce Bridge Road, which runs east-west south of the house, and at least one recently constructed logging road that travels north-south. Several branches of a small creek water the property. They come together near Boyce Bridge Road and continue southeast, draining into Falls Lake. The presence of mature vegetation in the riparian zones indicates these areas were not cleared when the farm was in cultivation. The vast majority of the previously cultivated land has begun to grow a variety of early succession scrub plants. Only a few acres adjacent to the main house and outbuildings are actively maintained by Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space. There are no structures on the tract south of Boyce Bridge Road, but there is a small cemetery.

The Creedmoor Road neighborhood is primarily farms featuring turn-of-the-century I-houses with outbuildings related to tobacco farming. Some of the farms continue to cultivate crops and raise livestock, while others appear to no longer be actively farming. There is also a variety of twentieth-century infill housing including 1930s bungalows, mid-1900s ranch-style houses, and mobile homes.

## **B. Historical Background Narrative**

Wake County was created in 1771 by combining portions of Johnston, Cumberland, and Orange Counties, on the border of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain regions. It has three major soil types especially suitable for producing cotton, tobacco, corn, and sweet potatoes. The western section of the county, where New Light Township and the Robertson-O'Briant Farm are located, lies in the Triassic basin, which is characterized by red and gray sandstones and shales, as well as rock outcroppings that have made cultivating crops difficult or even impossible. The county was inhabited by English yeoman farmers during the colonial era, and continued to be rural and agricultural through the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

### A Modest Beginning: The Robertsons (1837 – 1888)

In 1837, John Herbert Robertson purchased forty-three acres from John Pennington.<sup>2</sup> These forty-three acres are located south of the present-day Boyce Bridge Road and contain the Pennington Family Cemetery. The only Pennington grave still visibly marked is John Pennington's wife, Dililah (Dilly).<sup>3</sup> However, the cemetery contains a number of graves that

<sup>1</sup> Kelly A. Lally and Todd Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941)," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Wake County Planning Department, March 18, 1993, 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "John Pennington to John Robertson," Deed Book 17, Page 001, January 13, 1846, Raleigh, NC. (Note: The deed text indicates the agreement was made July 19, 1837, however, it was not recorded in the Register of Deeds Office until January, 13, 1846.)

<sup>3</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Marriage Bonds, 1741-1868 (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000), www.ancestry.com (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Ancestry.com, 1830 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012).



are no longer marked. After selling a portion of their property to Robertson, the Penningtons continued to farm their remaining acreage south of the Robertson's newly acquired land with free and enslaved African American labor.<sup>4</sup> Like most Wake County inhabitants prior to the Civil War, Pennington and Robertson were subsistence farmers, raising only enough crops and livestock to feed their families and earn enough cash for taxes and goods they could not make themselves. The center of the farm was likely a small, one- or two-room log home surrounded by simple log outbuildings. Although these small farm complexes were common, no complete extant examples remain in Wake County.<sup>5</sup>

Robertson added eleven acres to the Pennington tract in 1842, another twenty acres in 1843, and then one acre in 1844, by buying up the adjacent lands of the Wilkins family, which stretched from Ledge of Rock Creek on the west to Beaver Dam Creek on the east.<sup>6</sup> In 1844, Robertson married Eliza Beck, and they built the original hall-parlor home that remains today.<sup>7</sup> Their son, James, was born in 1854.<sup>8</sup> Early Wake County farmers frequently raised horses, cattle, sheep, and chickens that they allowed to forage in the forests and along streams most of the year, then rounded up in the spring and fed corn or oats to fatten for slaughter or sale. Corn and pork were their primary foodstuffs.<sup>9</sup> In the 1850 Agricultural Census, Robertson reported growing ninety-three bushels of wheat, 375 bushels of corn, and twenty-five bushels of oats on his seventy-five acres, as well as keeping three horses, seven cattle and six milk cows, two working oxen, six sheep, and thirty-six pigs. He added another seventy-eight acres of land to his farm in 1848 that were not included on the census.<sup>10</sup>

Free African Americans were a minority in Wake County prior to the Civil War, and most of them worked as farmhands.<sup>11</sup> One such family was the Inscores. To help manage the farm, the Robertsons hired Nancy Inscore as a domestic laborer, and she lived on the property with her three children. By 1860, Nancy was still working for the Robertsons as a domestic laborer, probably helping to maintain the house and raise James, while Nancy's son, Roland, was working for the Robertsons as a field hand.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 8-11, 109-110.

<sup>6</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "John Wilkins to John H. Robertson," Deed Book 16, Page 32, November 11, 1843, "Clement Wilkins to John H. Robertson," Deed Book 16, Page 34, November 13, 1843, "Clement Wilkins and Susannah Wilkins to John H. Robertson," Deed Book 17, Page 2, January 13, 1846, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>7</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Marriage Collection, 1741-2004 (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Death Certificates, 1909-1975 (accessed February 13, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 10-11.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 United States Federal Census, Production of Agriculture, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC; Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "Clint Wilkins to John H. Robertson," Deed Book 17, Page 479, May 18, 1848, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>11</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 22.

<sup>12</sup> Ancestry.com, 1850 United States Federal Census (accessed February 13, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1860 United States Federal Census, (accessed February 13, 2012).



By 1840, two-fifths of the Wake County population was enslaved African Americans, and by 1860 over one-quarter of the white population owned up to twenty slaves. This middle class of slaveowners generally owned several hundred acres of land and varied between agricultural complexes similar to those of large plantations owners and smaller farms more similar to the yeoman, and between large labor forces for large-scale commercial production and fewer laborers helping maintain the farm's independence. The Robertsons themselves owned two slaves, both men in their forties. They probably worked side-by-side with their slaves and the Inscores, and they probably had a number of agricultural outbuildings to support their independence as farmers. Slaves lived in a variety of housing throughout the county according to the means of their owners. Many middle class slaveowners constructed log houses for their slaves, and few of these have survived. None remain at the Robertson-O'Briant Farm.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the abundant labor on the farm in 1860, Robertson reported only 25 acres of improved farm land on the 1860 Agricultural Census, producing 40 bushels of wheat and 150 bushels of corn, while keeping three cattle, two milk cows, one working ox, and twenty pigs. Robertson also managed a general store on the northern portion of his property, and this may have been a greater source of income than agriculture by this time.<sup>14</sup>

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Robertson was 55 years of age and did not enlist in the Confederate Army. His son James also did not serve, since he was only seven years old at the time.<sup>15</sup> Robertson passed away in 1876, and James inherited the farm. He married Valeria Josephine Yearly in 1878, and the two had five children: Sallie was born in 1878, Elizabeth in 1880, Luther in 1880, Robert in 1883, and James in 1890.<sup>16</sup>

Emancipation had a profound effect on the labor system of the South, and freedmen chose to either stay to work for their former masters or to leave and obtain jobs elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Those who were skilled in the fields obtained jobs as farm laborers, including John Ford, who went to work for James and Valeria Robertson around 1880.<sup>18</sup> Landlords typically offered tenant workers a plot of land as large as fifty acres in exchange for a share of the crop to cover rent, tools, and other supplies. Tenant houses were either former slave houses or

<sup>13</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 15-23; Ancestry.com, 1860 United States Federal Census (accessed February 13, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1860 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules (accessed February 13, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1860 United States Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>15</sup> The National Park Service Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System at [www.itd.nps.gov/cwss](http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss) (accessed February 13, 2012) indicates a number of men named John Robertson enlisted in the Confederate Army. Ancestry.com Civil War Soldiers Database at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed February 13, 2012) indicates only one of these men was from Wake County, and he was only twenty years of age at the time of enlistment.

<sup>16</sup> Ancestry.com, 1880 United States Federal Census (accessed February 13, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1900 United States Federal Census (accessed February 13, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1920 United States Federal Census (accessed February 13, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 33-34.

<sup>18</sup> Ancestry.com, 1880 United States Federal Census (accessed February 13, 2012).



simple, new buildings set away from the landowner's house.<sup>19</sup> No structures from this time period remain, but it is likely that the current tenant house was constructed on the site of an earlier structure.

With Ford's help, Robertson's farm produced 200 bushels of corn on twenty acres, forty bushels of wheat on four acres, eight bales of cotton on ten acres, ten bushels of Irish potatoes on one acre, and 1000 pounds of tobacco on three acres, and included two horses, one ox, seven cattle and two milk cows producing fifty pounds of butter, one sheep, and ten pigs.<sup>20</sup> These products reflect a post-Civil War decline in livestock agriculture (caused in part by 1870s legislation requiring livestock be fenced) as well as the rise in cotton and tobacco crops (caused in part by the creation of a Cotton Exchange in Raleigh in the late 1860s, in part by the increasing demand for bright leaf tobacco by Civil War veterans nationwide, and in part by the expansion of railroads in the 1880s and 1890s).<sup>21</sup>

#### The Prosperity of Bright Leaf Tobacco: John Robert O'Briant (1888 – 1900)

Granville County, which borders Wake County to the north, was well-suited to growing bright leaf tobacco. Compared to the darker, coarser variety, bright leaf tobacco is a delicate, sweet-scented, fine leaf. The bright leaf variation requires light, infertile, siliceous (gravely and sandy) soil, which is unsuitable for cultivation of almost everything else and is commonly found on the North Carolina-Virginia border. The area of Granville County known as Dutchville was an especially prosperous tobacco-producing community, and through the early 1800s, Granville County led the state in tobacco production with North Carolina growers exporting their crops through Virginia. Granville County soil was so famed that later it would be shipped as far as Australia in hope of starting tobacco business abroad. It wasn't until the 1880s that the crop caught on in Wake County, and New Light Township, bordering Granville County and with similar soils, was one of the primary locations.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1880s, the tobacco wilt struck Granville County. Now known as Granville Wilt, this plant disease is caused by a bacteria transferred in soil or water that causes the plant to wilt and die. The disease caused farmers to lose as little as one-quarter of their crop or as much as their entire crop. Many of the farmers affected chose to relocate to northwestern Wake County. These uprooted farmers congregated in an area of New Light Township known

<sup>19</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 33-34.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1860 United States Federal Census, Production of Agriculture, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>21</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 32-39, 48-49.

<sup>22</sup> Nannie May Tilley, *The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1929* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 3-4, 386, 547; Cornelius O. Cathey, *Agriculture in North Carolina Before the Civil War* (Raleigh, NC: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1974), 34-36; K. Todd Johnson and Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, Volume II: Reconstruction to 1920* (Raleigh, NC: Wake County, NC, 2008), 134-135.





as Sandy Plain, where the soil composition was similar to that of Dutchville, making it perfect for tobacco cultivation.<sup>23</sup>

One of these unfortunate Dutchville farmers was John Robert O'Briant, who bought James Robertson's Wake County farm in 1888. O'Briant was born in 1834 in Granville County, the first of six children of Thomas O'Briant (1806-1880) and Elizabeth Gordon O'Briant. His sister Mary was born in 1839, brother William (known as Henry) in 1841, sister Nancy in 1846, brother Samuel in 1848, and sister Mildred in 1852.<sup>24</sup>

O'Briant married Edna Cash on October 12, 1861.<sup>25</sup> They had seven children: Ella was born in 1862 and died in her teens, Corena was born in 1866, Virginia was born in 1867, Rebecca was born in 1868, Sarrah was born in 1870, William was born in 1872, and Charles was born in 1874.<sup>26</sup>

Both John and his brother Henry fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. They enlisted in the 23rd North Carolina Infantry, Henry in Company "I" on June 17, 1861, followed by John in Company "E" on July 8, 1862. The regiment was first stationed in Virginia and fought at Malvern Hill, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville before being sent north to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in 1863. They returned to Virginia and fought at Spotsylvania Court House, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. The unit was mustered out on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House.<sup>27</sup>

John O'Briant was captured by Union troops in July of 1864 and sent to Camp Chase, Ohio, located just outside Columbus. Early in the war, it served as training camp for Union Army volunteers, but late in 1861 it became a prison for Confederate soldiers. As with most Civil War prisons, conditions were poor. Inhabitants suffered from overcrowding, poor food quality, exposure to the elements, and a smallpox epidemic. Nearly 10,000 men were imprisoned there by April of 1865, and over 2,000 soldiers died there during the course of the

<sup>23</sup> Kelly A. Lally, *The Historic Architecture of Wake County North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: Wake County Government, 1994), 83-84; North Carolina State University College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Plant Pathology Extension, "Granville Wilt," <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/Tobacco/tin002/tin002.htm> (accessed February 6, 2012); Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 50; Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 134.

<sup>24</sup> Ancestry.com, 1850 United States Federal Census (accessed February 11, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1860 United States Federal Census (accessed February 11, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Marriage Collection, 1741-2004 (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Ancestry.com, 1870 United States Federal Census (accessed February 11, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1880 United States Federal Census (accessed February 11, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Historical Data Systems, comp., "American Civil War Soldiers" (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999), [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed February 11, 2012); Historical Data Systems, comp., "American Civil War Regiments" (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999), [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed February 11, 2012).





war. Fortunately, O'Briant was paroled in March 1865 and was included in a prisoner exchange at Boulware Camp, Cox's Wharves, Virginia.<sup>28</sup>

On his return from the war, O'Briant did what most North Carolinians did after the Civil War: he returned to farming, growing tobacco on his Granville County farm. The Civil War changed the tobacco industry in North Carolina when soldiers passing through the region first tasted bright leaf tobacco. These soldiers preferred this popular North Carolina variety, and soon the demand for bright leaf dramatically increased. An adept farmer, O'Briant recognized the economic profitability of the crop and reported cultivating seven acres of tobacco in Granville County in the 1880 census. He also grew twenty acres of corn, eight acres of wheat, six acres of oats, one acre of sweet potatoes, and 1/8 acre of Irish potatoes, as well as tending one ox, twenty-seven sheep, thirteen pigs, and eight cows, including two milk cows that produced fifty pounds of butter. The Granville farm was worked by fifty white laborers and fifty African American laborers, and John paid a total of \$275 in wages to these workers that year.<sup>29</sup> When the Granville Wilt of the 1880s made tobacco cultivation unprofitable in Granville County, O'Briant purchased 305 acres of Wake County farmland from John Robertson with his business partner, Junius Beck. The two paid three thousand dollars for the property.<sup>30</sup>

O'Briant's Wake County farm was connected to the Durham and Raleigh markets by water and rail by 1890. It bordered Beaver Dam Creek, which flowed into the Neuse River toward Raleigh. By 1890, a railroad had been constructed through Creedmoor, connecting New Light Township easily to Durham. The expanding railroad system resulted in increasing dependence on shipping consumer goods in and cash crops out, especially bright leaf tobacco, which brought three times the price of cotton.<sup>31</sup>

John O'Briant was not the only member of his family to abandon Granville for Wake County; his brother Henry also lived there. Henry was a member of the New Light school board and headed up the founding of schools in the up-and-coming tobacco district.<sup>32</sup> Education expanded greatly in Wake County after the Civil War because state funding for public schools became available. In the 1870s and 1880s, forty-six schools were constructed for white children and forty-two for black children countywide. The curriculum included

<sup>28</sup> Robert Keech, comp., "John Robert O'Briant 23rd NC Co E CSA Service Record," [trees.ancestry.com/tree/25798089/person/1758951545/media/1?pgnum=1&pg=0&pgpl=pid%7cpgNum](https://trees.ancestry.com/tree/25798089/person/1758951545/media/1?pgnum=1&pg=0&pgpl=pid%7cpgNum) (accessed February 11, 2012); Ohio Historical Society, "Camp Chase," <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=662> (accessed February 11, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Johnson and Murray, *Wake*: Volume II, 129; U.S. Census Bureau, 1880 United States Federal Census, Productions in Agriculture, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>30</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "J.A.J. Robertson to J.B. Beck and J. R. O'Briant," Deed Book 101, Page 282, February 9, 1888, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>31</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 112-113.

<sup>32</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "Jno R. O'Briant & Wife Edna O'Briant to W.H.H. O'Briant & W.E. Allen, Public School Committee of District No. 5," Deed Book 135, Page 54, January 2, 1893, Raleigh, NC.



reading (often taught from the Bible), spelling, writing, grammar, arithmetic, geography, psychology, and hygiene.<sup>33</sup> School officials in New Light Township hoped to make theirs the first township in Wake County without a single illiterate.<sup>34</sup> At Henry's request, John donated one acre for a school "for the children of the white race," while Margaret Mordecai donated an acre nearby for "the use and benefit of the children of the colored race."<sup>35</sup>

Local districts were responsible for funding the construction of schools, so most were modest frame buildings heated with stoves and furnished with benches.<sup>36</sup> The Sandy Plain Elementary School was a one-room schoolhouse that served white children in grades one through seven. The teachers were usually from outside the community and boarded at the nearby home of Sirathner Cannady, a tobacco farm not far from the O'Briant's Farm. African American children attended New Light Elementary School. In 1921, Sandy Plain received aid from Wake County to build a new school that served both elementary and high school students, so Frank Aiken purchased the original Sandy Plain Elementary School and moved it to his property across Highway 50 for use as a tenant house.<sup>37</sup> The structure burned to the ground in 2011.

#### The Return of the Granville Wilt: William and Lena O'Briant (1900 – 1940)

By 1900, John and Edna O'Briant had returned to Dutchville where they lived with their youngest son, Charley.<sup>38</sup> Their eldest son, William, took over the Wake County farm. William married Lena Belle Jackson in 1896, and they had five children that survived to adulthood, Arbelle (born 1897), Lomo (born 1901), Mozelle (born 1903), Wilbur Thomas (born 1906), and Linster Jackson (born 1912). They also lost two children, a stillborn son in 1898 and a son named David who was born 1909 and died in 1913.<sup>39</sup> William and his wife purchased one hundred and forty acres of the farm he grew up on the following year.

<sup>33</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 44-45.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson and Murray, Wake: Volume II, 290.

<sup>35</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "Jno R. O'Briant & Wife Edna O'Briant to W.H.H. O'Briant & W.E. Allen, Public School Committee of District No. 5," Deed Book 135, Page 54, January 2, 1893, Raleigh, NC; Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "Mrs. Margaret B. Mordecai to J.A.J. Robertson, W.E. Allen, and W.H.H. O'Briant, Public School Committee, District 5, New Light Township, Wake County," Book 79, Page 574-575, Raleigh, NC

<sup>36</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 44.

<sup>37</sup> Lally, Historic Architecture, 85-86.

<sup>38</sup> Ancestry.com, 1900 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Ancestry.com, 1900 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1910 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1920 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012); User rmd30195, "Moore Family Tree, <http://trees.ancestry.com/pt/PersonMatch.aspx?tid=34336493&pid=18629050189&src=m&pg=32772&pgPL=pid> (accessed February 26, 2012).



Around the turn of the century, the prosperity of tobacco in New Light Township resulted in rapid population growth while the rest of the county failed to attract newcomers.<sup>40</sup> The O'Briants were some of these prosperous newcomers, and by the time William took over the farm, they were able to afford a large and fashionable Victorian addition to their home. They hired a local builder, probably Edgar Gooch, to design and construct the Victorian addition on the original hall-parlor house.<sup>41</sup> The two-story, triple-A-roof style of the addition was especially popular in Wake County. He continued to grow bright leaf tobacco and potatoes, so they also constructed new tobacco and potato barns using frame construction rather than the earlier log construction methods, which was common to middle class agricultural complexes throughout the county during this time.

William was both a farmer and a merchant; he not only grew bright leaf tobacco on his father's farm, but also managed the general store established by the Robertsons.<sup>42</sup> Known as Bill O'Briant's General Store, William supplied rice, sugar, salt, snuff, kerosene for lamps, sewing thread, pencils, and candy. He allowed customers to barter for supplies if they had too little cash to purchase necessities, accepting eggs, wild strawberries and blackberries, or other items. The store served as a community center for Sandy Plain where residents went to vote, hold meetings, and discuss local news.<sup>43</sup>

The O'Briant's community was more well-known for its illegal moonshine stills than for farming in the early 1900s. Referred to as "The Hurricane," it included about eighty acres of the Sandy Plain, Purnell, Stoney Hill, and New Light communities in Wake County, as well as parts of Granville and Franklin Counties.<sup>44</sup> It is unclear whether the O'Briants participated in this underground whiskey still culture, but their prosperity with bright leaf tobacco and the general store probably prevented the poverty that led many residents to these illegal activities.

By 1910, four in five large farm owners rented a portion of their land to between five and nine tenant farmers, while middle class farmers relied heavily on farmhands and at least one tenant family to grow a combination of food and cash crops. The O'Briants were situated in the latter group. In the Pennington Cemetery, there is a well-marked headstone for George G. Roberson, son of Lee and Savannah Roberson. The Robersons were African American tenant farmers working on or near the O'Briant's Farm in the early 1900s. In 1900, they were living in Granville County, then moved to New Light Township in Wake County by 1910.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 48-50.

<sup>41</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "John R. O'Briant and wife Edna to William R. O'Briant and wife Lena," Book 187, Page 52, August 18, 1903, Raleigh, NC; Lally, Historic Architecture, 301.

<sup>42</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Death Certificates, 1909-1975 (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> Lally, Historic Architecture, 84-87.

<sup>44</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 132; Johnson and Murray, Wake: Volume II, 671-672.

<sup>45</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 53; Ancestry.com, 1900 -United States Federal Census (accessed February 27, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1910 United States Federal Census (accessed February 27, 2012); Ancestry.com, 1920 United States Federal Census (accessed February 27, 2012).



Between the Civil War and World War I, the community of white and black tobacco farmers in Sandy Plain enjoyed relative prosperity. But around 1910, the Granville wilt spread to their farms in Wake County. Some families moved to areas of Wake County where the soils were not yet infected. Others shifted from farming their own land to sharecropping or working land owned by relatives. Most farms stopped growing only tobacco and began also growing corn and vegetables, as well as tending milk cows, pigs, and chickens.<sup>46</sup> It appears the O'Briants followed this trend by growing potatoes and tending livestock; both potato-curing sheds were added to the farm around this time.

On May 18, 1917, the Selective Service Act was passed to coordinate registration of all American males between the ages of 21 and 30 to be drafted for service in World War I. It was later expanded to include men ages 18 to 45. There were three registration dates: June 5, 1917, included all men 21 to 31 years of age, June 5, 1918, included all men who turned 21 over the previous year, and September 12, 1918, included all men 18 to 45 years of age. William registered for the draft in this last registration period at 45 years of age, and since the armistice came that November, it is unlikely he actually served in the war.<sup>47</sup>

William died in 1929, and his wife, Lena, inherited the farm and store. She lived on the farm with her youngest son, Linster, and his wife, Malissa, while her oldest son, Wilber "Tommie" and his wife, Estelle, lived nearby and ran the store.<sup>48</sup>

Farm tenancy continued to rise throughout the 1920s, and the tenant house was added to the O'Briant farm around this time. Reflecting their place in the middle class of farmowners, it was constructed to house up to two families. The 1930 Federal Census shows two African American families living between Tommie and Linster O'Briant: Taylor Barham and his wife, Mary, as well as George Pegram, his wife Julie, and their four children. Both men are listed in the census as farm laborers, and they appear to have been tenant farmers for the O'Briants.<sup>49</sup>

The tobacco industry began to rebound between the two world wars, and the O'Briant farm exemplifies this trend in the addition of a new tobacco barn, tobacco pack house, and ordering pit around 1930. The crop continued to be prosperous with a wilt-resistant variety developed by E.G. Moss of the Oxford, NC Agricultural Experiment Station in 1944. Many Sandy Plain farmers, probably including the O'Briants, started growing this new

<sup>46</sup> Lally, *Historic Architecture*, 84-88.

<sup>47</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Selective Service Act," Encyclopedia Britannica Online (Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2012), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/533193/Selective-Service-Act> (accessed February 10, 2012); Ancestry.com, World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918 (accessed February 10, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Ancestry.com, 1930 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 69; Ancestry.com, 1930 United States Federal Census (accessed February 26, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> Lally, *Historic Architecture*, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 72-77, 115.



variety and regained some of their losses from the return of the Granville Wilt just prior to the First World War.<sup>50</sup>

Agricultural production also went through another period of diversification during the 1920s and 1930s, with increasing production in potatoes, beans, fruits, nuts, and poultry. The potato sheds at the O'Briant Farm were converted to house poultry at some point, and it is possible that at least one of the sheds was converted during this time. This shift may also have been prompted by the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act, which initiated a tobacco crop reduction program to battle plummeting prices during the Great Depression. The O'Briants may have compensated for the losses in tobacco and potato production through poultry and other livestock, and it is probable that the livestock barn was also constructed around this time.<sup>51</sup>

### A New Era: Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space (1940 – 2008)

Post-World War II farms experienced a significant change – electrification. Federally funded rural electrification programs brought lights, refrigerators, freezers, washing machines, and other modern conveniences to the farms of rural Wake County. Kitchens were being built in new homes and detached kitchens attached to older houses, so this is likely when the kitchen was added to the original hall in the Robertson-O'Briant farmhouse. Indoor plumbing also became more common, so the bathrooms were probably also added during this time.<sup>52</sup>

Lena O'Briant passed away in 1953, dividing her property in equal parts among her four surviving children, Mozelle O'Briant Brinkley, Arbelle O'Briant Emory, Linster Jackson O'Briant, and Wilbur Thomas O'Briant.<sup>53</sup> Lomo O'Briant Moore preceded her mother in death in 1949, but in 1955, her four siblings each sold a portion of their inheritance – totaling 139 acres – to her son, William Thomas Moore, Jr., and his wife, Thelma.<sup>54</sup> Mozelle, Arbelle, and Wilbur then sold their remaining parcels to Linster.<sup>55</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s, Wake County experienced a sharp decline in farms. The 6,000 farms in 1950 fell to fewer than 3,000 by 1964.<sup>56</sup> The Robertson-O'Briant Farm follows this unfortunate trend; the farm changed hands as a real estate investment property from the

<sup>52</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 77, 115.

<sup>53</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Death Certificates, 1909-1975 (accessed February 26, 2012); "Will of Lena Jackson O'Briant Allen," North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>54</sup> Ancestry.com, North Carolina Death Certificates, 1909-1975 (accessed February 26, 2012); Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "Mozelle Brinkley et al to Williams T. Moore, Jr., and wife, Thelma M. Moore," Deed Book 1201, Page 295, August 3, 1955, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>55</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "Mozelle Brinkley et al to Linster J. O'Briant," Deed Book 1201, Page 484, August 15, 1955, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>56</sup> Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," 77-78.



Moore to John and Dorothy Lee, then to Elizabeth Niven Sinclair. Sinclair owned the property for over forty years before deeding it to Wake County while relatives of the O'Briants continued to rent and farm there. In 2008, Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space purchased the remaining 122 acres including the remaining structures to be included in the park system as open space property.<sup>57</sup> The Open Space Program began in 2000 with the goal of preserving 30% of Wake County land as forests, greenways, parks, meadows, fields, wetlands, floodplains and farms that have not been converted to residential, suburban or commercial development. The program is overseen by the citizen-appointed Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee and the Land Acquisition Review Committee, composed of management-level county staff.<sup>58</sup>

### C. Significance Statement

The Robertson-O'Briant Farm meets the criteria for significance in events, specifically the founding and growth of the Sandy Plain community and the agricultural and labor history of Wake County. First settled by the Robertsons, the farm used free and enslaved African American labor to produce grains, livestock, Irish potatoes, bright leaf tobacco, and cotton. They also established the first general store in the community. Following the arrival of the Granville Wilt in the mid-1800s, many Granville County farmers moved into the Sandy Plain community, including the O'Briants. They continued to operate the Robertsons' general store, and they helped to build the community's first schools. With the assistance of African American tenant farmers, they grew bright leaf tobacco until the wilt moved into Wake County forcing them to shift their primary crop to Irish potatoes until the wilt could be prevented.

The Robertson-O'Briant Farm is also significant for buildings that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. The original Federal-Greek Revival hall-parlor house built by the Robertsons typified the modest homes of subsistence farmers in early Wake County. It retains integrity with its original form, plan, materials, and style largely unaltered. When the O'Briants purchased the farm, their prosperity growing tobacco allowed them to construct a large and fashionable Victorian addition, which also retains its original form, plan, materials, and style. The outbuildings also convey the transition of construction methods, with both log and frame forms of the tobacco and potato sheds, a large tenant house, and additional buildings supporting farm life added over time.

<sup>57</sup> Wake County Register of Deeds Office, "William T. Moore, Jr. and Wife, Thelma M. Moore, to Williams T. Moore, Jr., Inc.," Deed Book 1414, Page 95, June 17, 1960, "William T. Moore, Jr., Inc. to John I. Lee," Deed Book 1512, Page 222-223, July 11, 1962, "John I. Lee and wife, Dorothy T. Lee, to Elizabeth Niven Sinclair," Deed Book 1592, Page 563, April 30, 1964, "Elizabeth Sinclair Family Properties, LLC to The Trust for Public Land," Deed Book 13227, Page 1877-1878, August 27, 2008, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>58</sup> Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, "Open Space Program," <http://www.wakegov.com/parks/openspace/default.htm> (accessed February 26, 2012).



#### **D. Landmark Boundary**

The farmhouse and its associated outbuildings are arranged in close proximity to one another, creating a domestic complex within the farmland along Creedmoor Road. The landmark boundary includes this immediate domestic complex, approximately 3.5 acres, the adjacent Pennington Cemetery on the corner of Creedmoor Road and Boyce Bridge Road, approximately 0.8 acres. The remaining acreage, approximately 118 acres, is former farmland, now early succession scrub forest, and is not included in the landmark.

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## 9. PHOTOGRAPH PROOF SHEETS

Farmhouse (contributing)



The south façade of the original hall-parlor house



The east façade of the original hall-parlor house

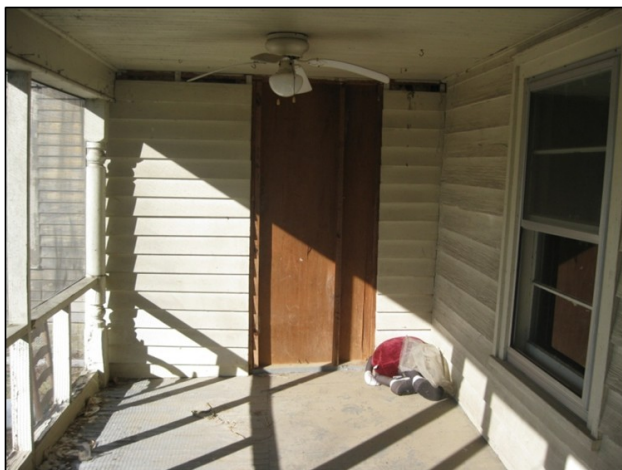


The north façade of the original hall-parlor house



There is a very roughly coursed stone base on the exterior end chimney on the east façade





The east façade features a shed roof porch. Note the parlor window, possible former door to the center hall bathroom, and turned porch posts



The hall-parlor porch features the main door into the house, which leads to the hall



The original hall has been altered with the addition of modern kitchen features, but retains its original architecture. The original ceiling sheathing is covered by a modern drop ceiling, and the linoleum flooring was installed on top of the original pine



An original storage room is on the east end of the hall-parlor porch







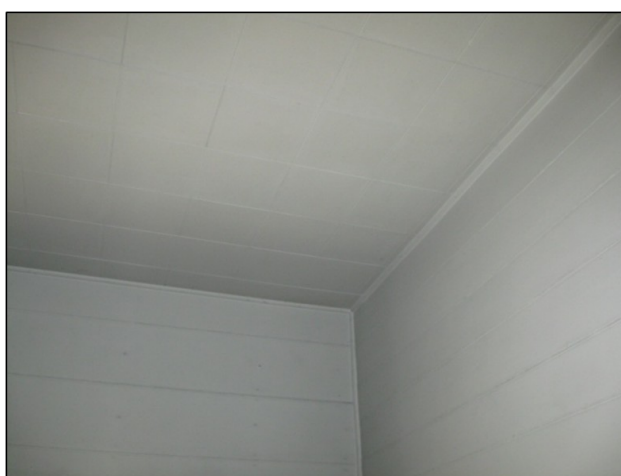
The original sheathing on the hall ceiling is covered by a late-twentieth-century tile ceiling and a modern drop ceiling



The transitional Federal-Greek Revival style of the hall-parlor house is exemplified in the hall mantle, which features recessed panel frieze and recessed panel pilasters



The wood paneling in both the hall and the parlor is original and features flush-sheathed wainscoting, and the original pine floor is still visible in the parlor



The original wood paneling on the hall and parlor walls and ceiling is intact





A modern bathroom was added to the north end of the parlor



The southeast parlor wall is Victorian tongue-and-groove paneling where the original staircase was removed and a wall constructed around the turn of the century



The hall-parlor house includes a sleeping loft on the second floor



The staircase to the second floor sleeping loft was originally accessed by a staircase leading from the hall through the parlor to the second floor, which was removed and the wall was filled in with tongue-and-groove paneling





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



The original balustrade for the loft staircase is intact on the second floor



Two small windows look east over the shoulders of the chimney and have the original single sash, recessing wood panels. These windows are now the only access to the loft



There is also the original window facing Creedmoor Road on the west façade, now not visible behind the addition. This window was four-over-four glazed with a double hung sash and retains the original shutter.



The loft was added onto when the house was expanded at the turn of the century



There is a stove flue in the northeast corner of the loft, possibly from the later addition of a stove in the hall



## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



The west façade of the Victorian addition



The northwest façade of the Victorian addition



The south façade of the Victorian addition



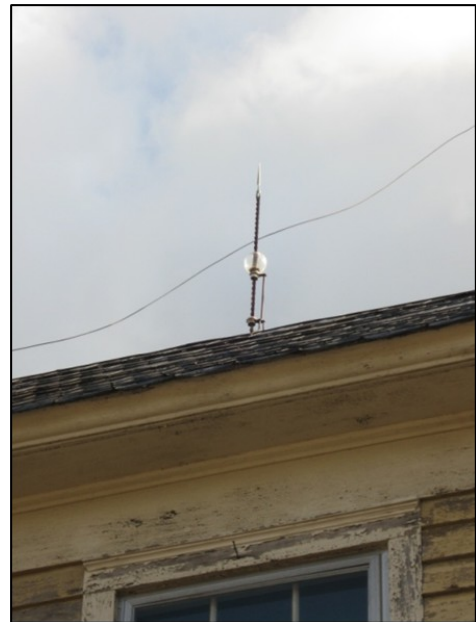
The center gable of the west façade features a louver window and decorative millwork bracket







The Victorian addition features a decorative stamped-tin roof



The Victorian addition retains original weathervanes including original glass bulbs



South Façade Chimney and Gable



Brick Pier Foundation





The Victorian porch features delicate millwork that may have been partly ordered from popular catalogs and partly designed and carved by a local builder



The Victorian porch features foliate patterned brackets, drop pendants, and sawtooth drapery



Victorian Paneled Front Doors



Central Hall







Central Hall Staircase



Newel Post



Second Floor Central Hall



Staircase Landing





Staircase Drop Pendants



Understair Closet



Original Color of Pine in  
Understair Closet



Central Hall



Infill Room Bathroom



ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



North Room, First Floor



North Room Mantel, First Floor



North Room Doorway Cornerblocks, First Floor



Original Pine Floorboards







South Room, First Floor



South Room Mantel, First Floor



South Room Fireplace, First Floor



Victorian Five-Paneled Door in  
South Room, First Floor



ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



North Room, Second Floor



North Room Closet, Second Floor



North Room Mantel, Second Floor



South Room Mantel, Second Floor



ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



South Room, Second Floor



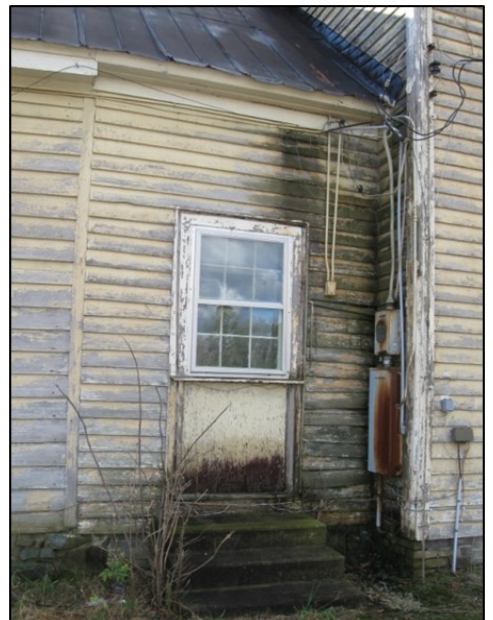
South Room, Second Floor



Infill Room



Original Infill Room Door



Original Infill Room Door





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Tobacco-Curing Barns (contributing)



Log Tobacco Barn, Northeast Façade



Log Tobacco Barn, Northwest Façade



Log Tobacco Barn, South Façade



Log Tobacco Barn Rafters



Log Tobacco Barn, Clay Chinking





ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



Frame Tobacco Barn, North Façade



Frame Tobacco Barn, Southwest Façade



Frame Tobacco Barn, East Façade



Frame Tobacco Barn, Rafters





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Pack House and Ordering Pit (contributing)



Tobacco Pack House, West Façade



Tobacco Pack House, Southeast Façade



Tobacco Pack House, First Floor



Tobacco Pack House, Second Floor



Tobacco Ordering Pit





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Potato-Curing Sheds (contributing)



Log Potato-Curing Shed, Southwest Façade



Log Potato-Curing Shed, Northeast Façade



Log Potato-Curing Shed, First Floor Interior



Log Potato-Curing Shed, Loft Floor



Log Potato-Curing Shed, Loft Interior







Frame Potato-Curing Shed, Southeast Façade



Frame Potato-Curing Shed, Northwest Façade



Frame Potato-Curing Shed, Sawdust Insulation



Frame Potato-Curing Shed, Sawdust Insulation







Frame Potato-Curing Shed Central Flue



Frame Potato-Curing Shed Interior



Frame Potato-Curing Shed Repairs



Frame Potato-Curing Shed Repairs



Frame Potato-Curing Shed Loft





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Tenant House (non-contributing)



Tenant House, Northwest Façade



Tenant House, South Façade



Tenant House, Interior First Floor



Tenant House, Interior First Floor Board & Batten



Tenant House, Original Recessed Window







Tenant House First Floor Stove Vent



Tenant House First Floor



Tenant House Second Floor





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Corn Crib (contributing)



Corn Crib, Northeast Façade



Corn Crib, Southwest Façade



Corn Crib, Interior



Corn Crib, Exterior Cladding





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

Livestock Barn/Kennel (demolished), Storage Shed (non-contributing)



Livestock Barn, c.1994  
(now demolished)



Kennel Foundation



Storage Shed, Southwest Façade



Storage Shed, Northeast Façade



Storage Shed Interior





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Outhouse (non-contributing)



Outhouse, West Façade



Outhouse, Northeast Façade



Outhouse Interior

### Wells (contributing)



19th Century Well, Northwest Façade



20th Century Well, Southwest Façade





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Pennington Cemetery (contributing)



Pennington Cemetery, Facing Northeast



Diliah Pennington Headstone



George G. Roberson Headstone



Grave Depression Marked with Field Stones





## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION



View South from the Tenant House



View North from the Pack House



View East from the Farmhouse



View East from the Log Potato Shed

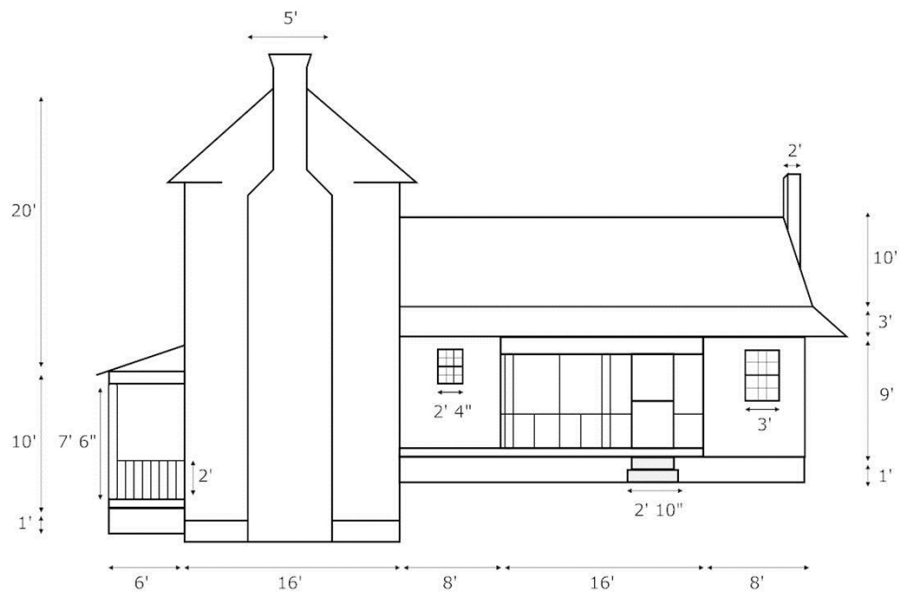


## 10. FLOOR PLANS

Farmhouse (contributing)

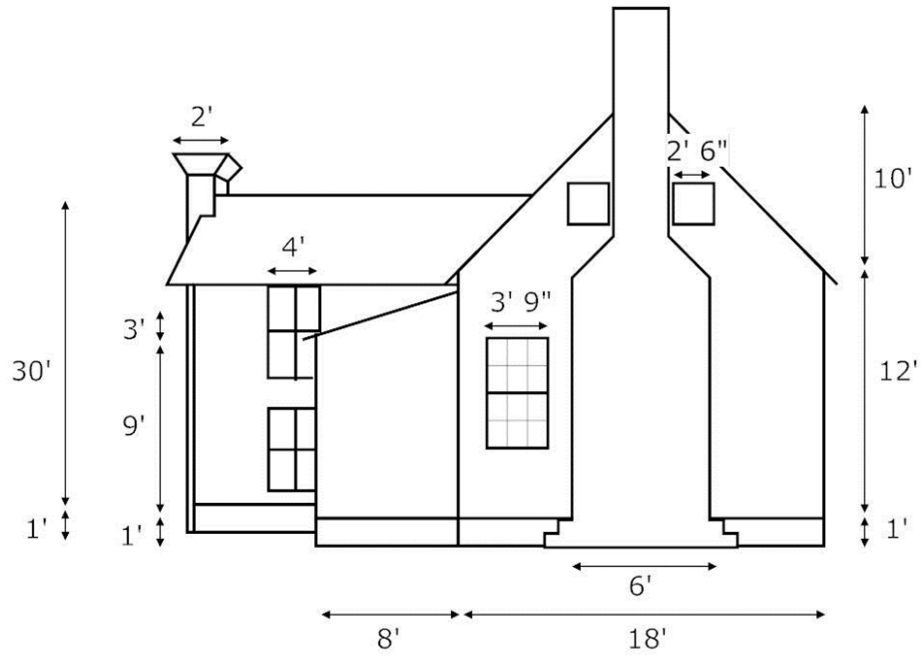


West Facade



South Facade



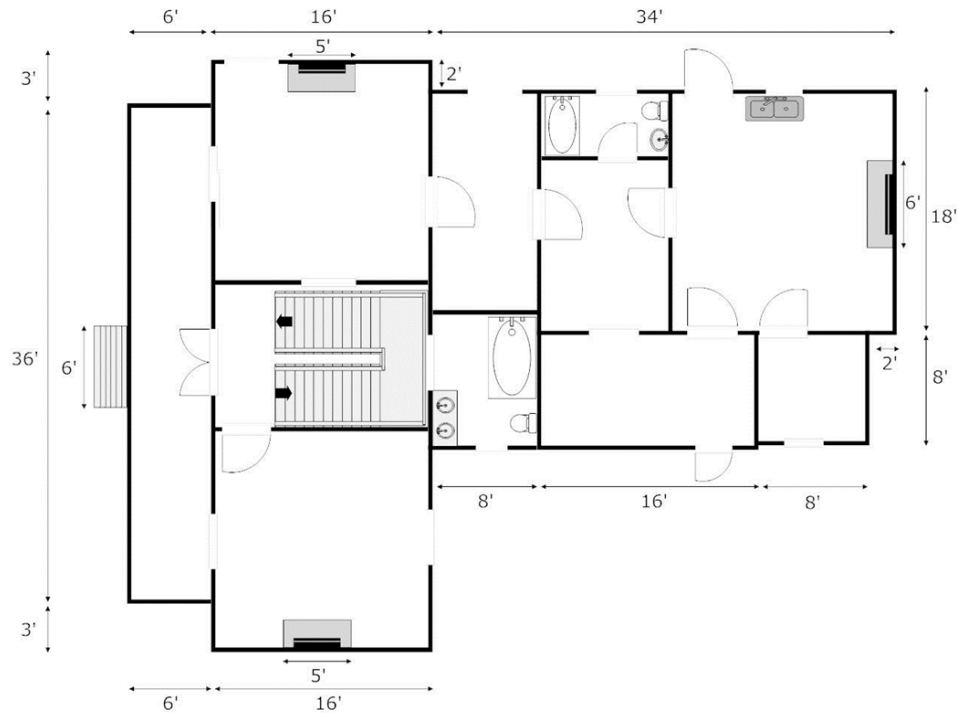


East Facade

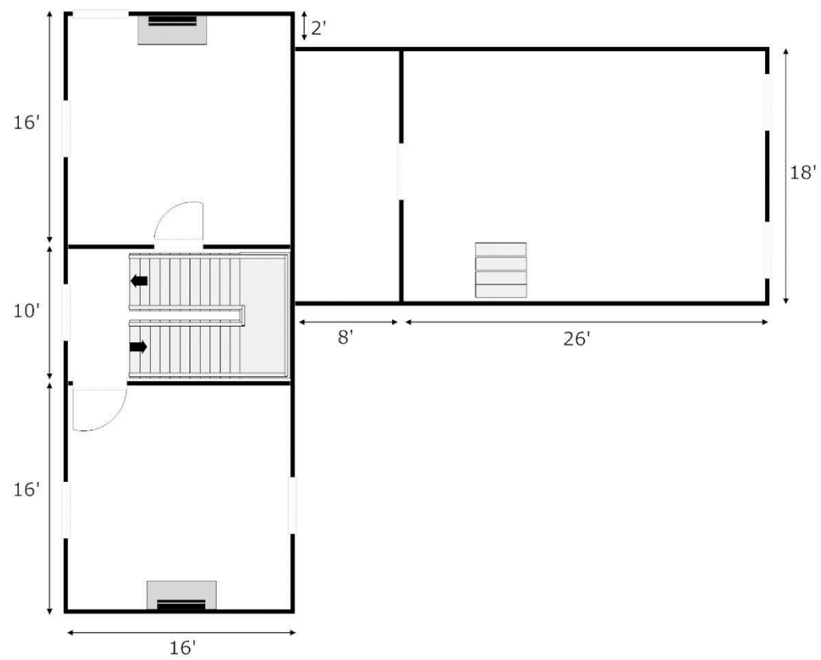


North Facade





Farmhouse, First Floor

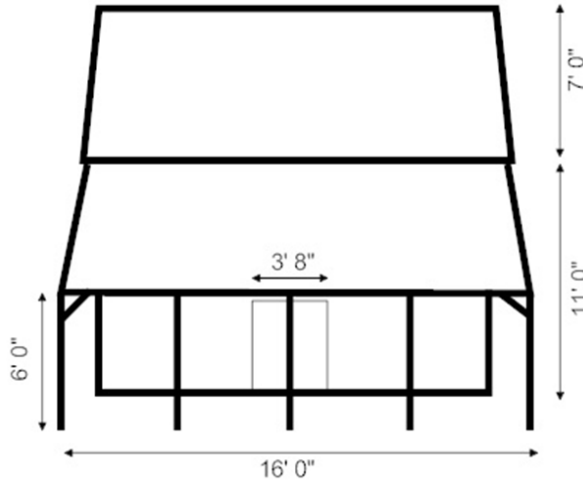


Farmhouse, Second Floor

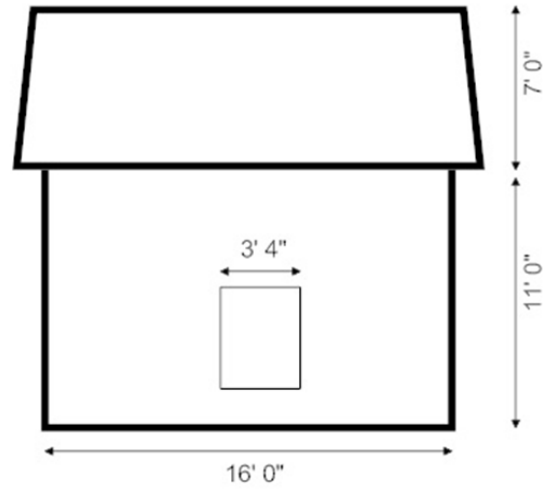




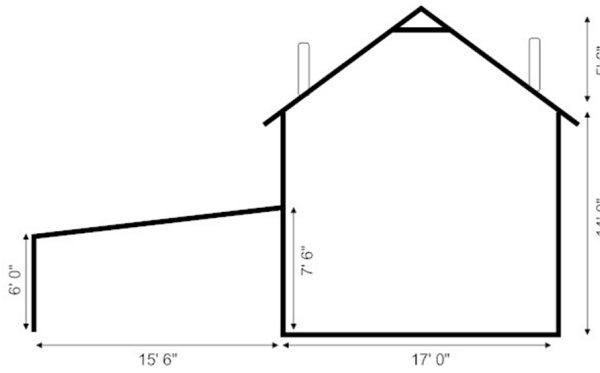
Log Tobacco-Curing Barn (contributing)



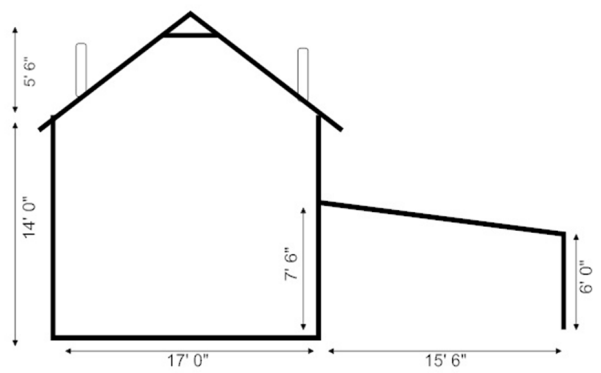
Log Tobacco Barn, East Facade



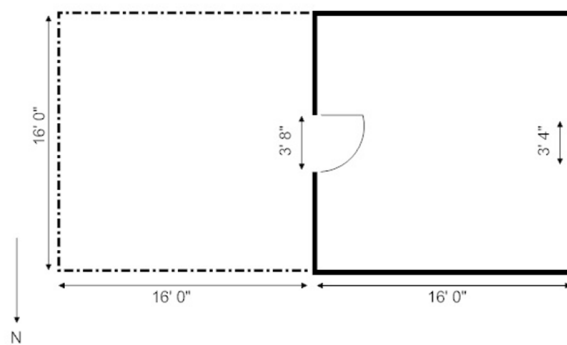
West Facade



North Façade



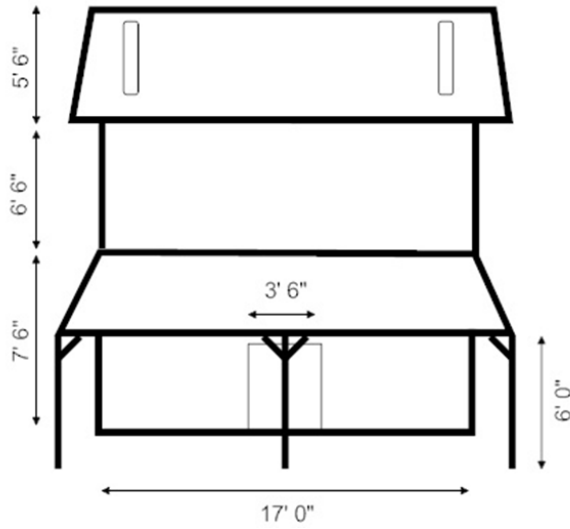
South Facade



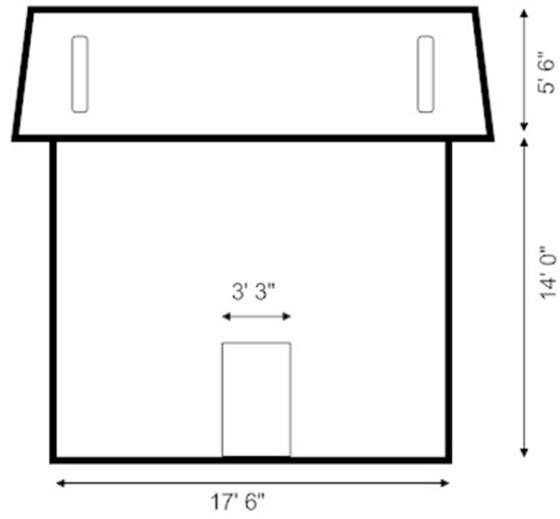
Interior



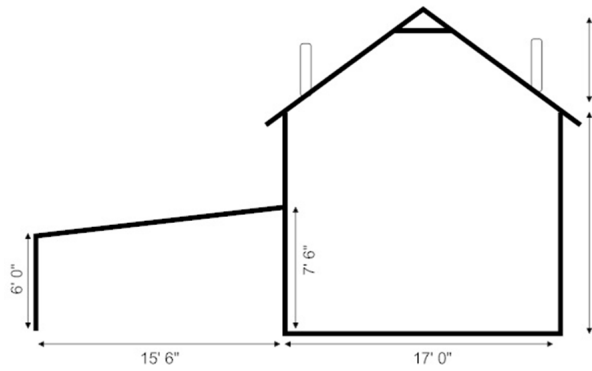
Frame Tobacco-Curing Barn (contributing)



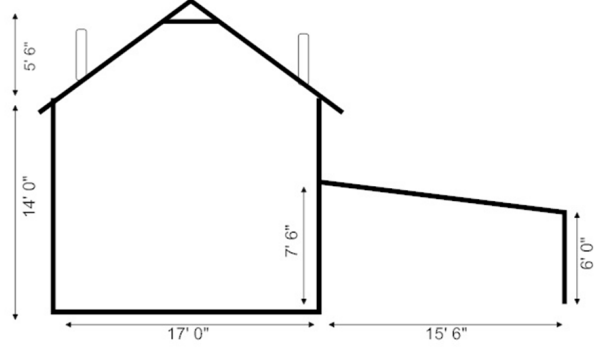
East Facade



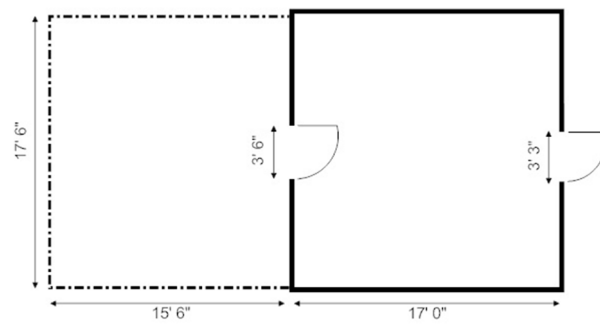
West Facade



North Façade



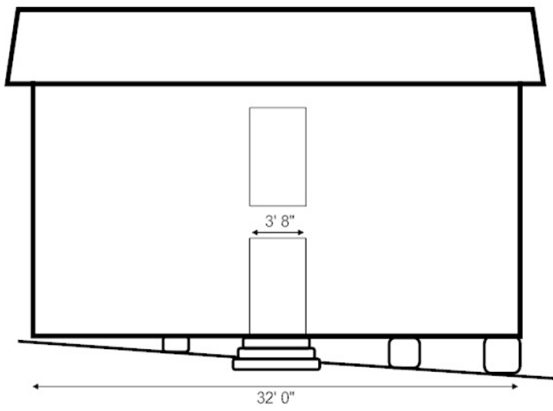
South Façade



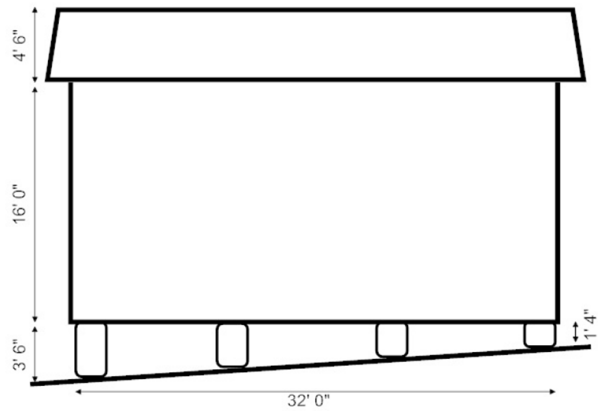
Interior



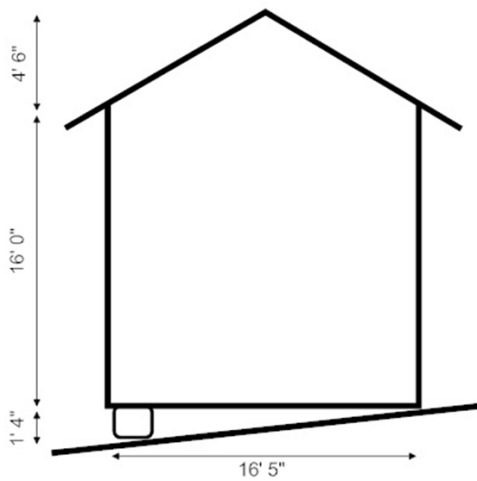
Pack House and Ordering Pit (contributing)



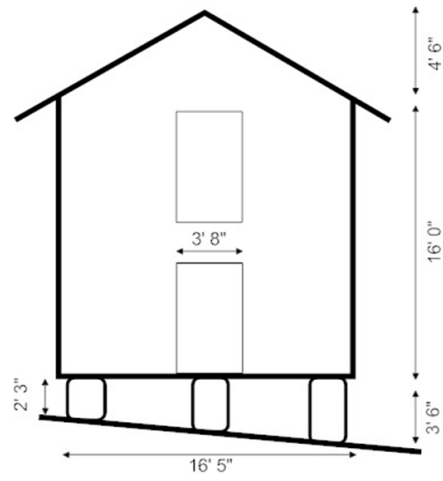
Pack House, West Facade



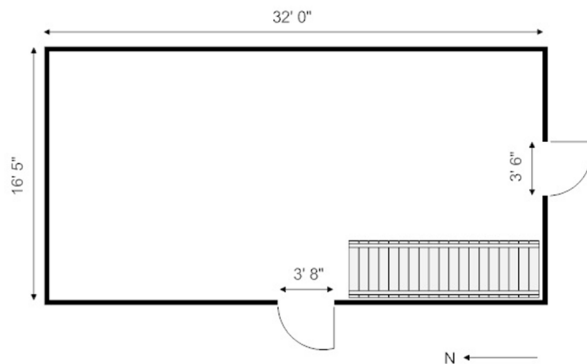
East Facade



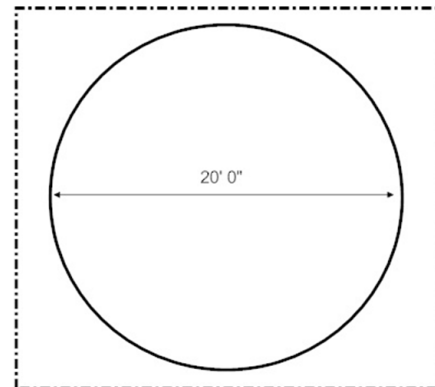
North Façade



South Facade



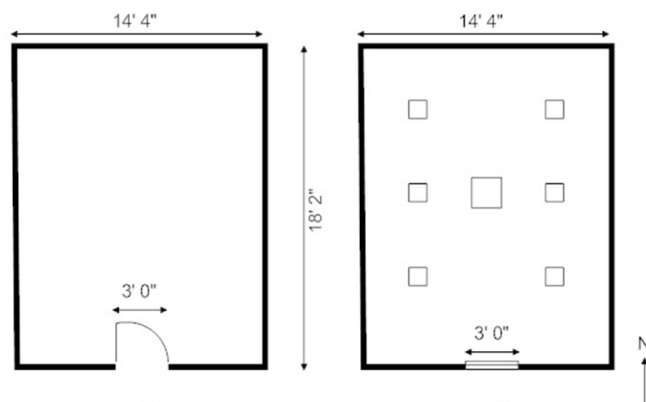
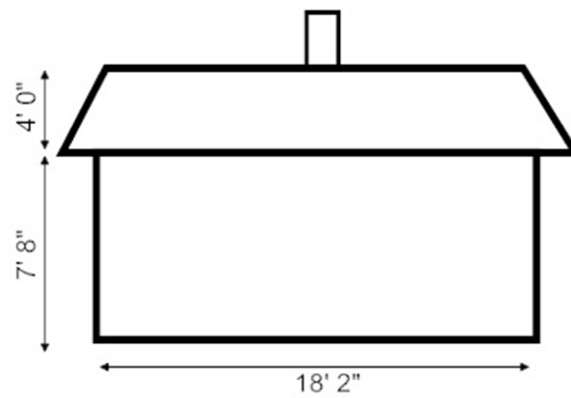
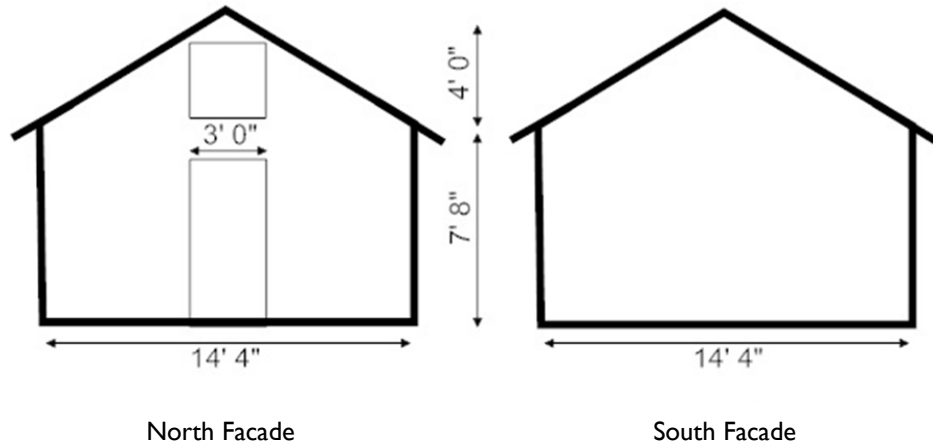
Interior



Ordering Pit

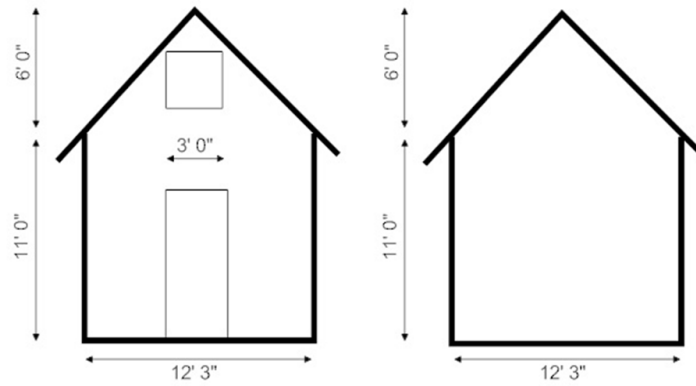


Log Potato-Curing Shed (contributing)

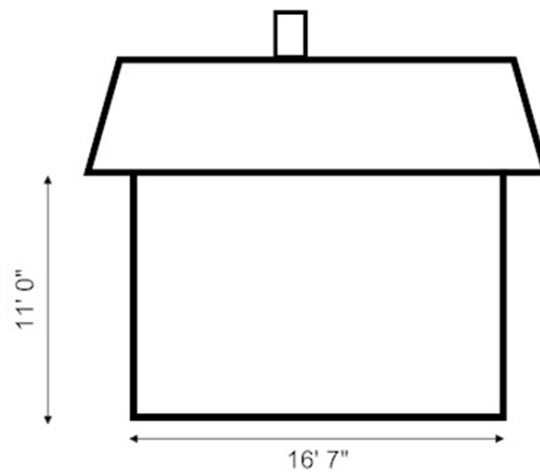




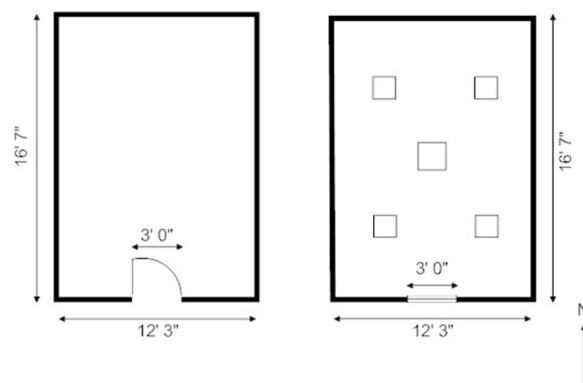
Frame Potato-Curing Shed (contributing)



South and North Facades



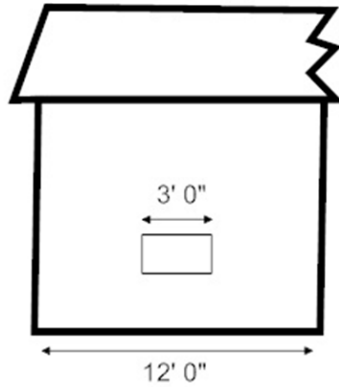
East and West Facades



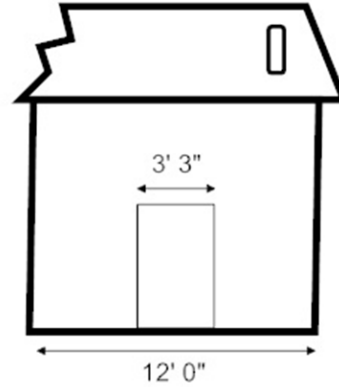
Interior First Floor and Loft



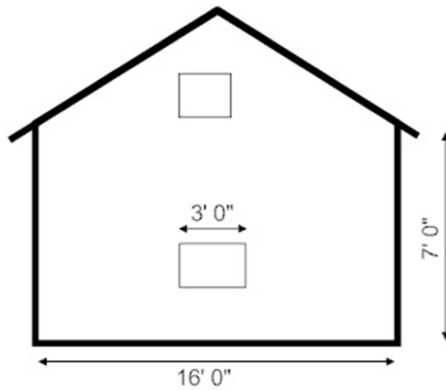
Tenant House (non-contributing)



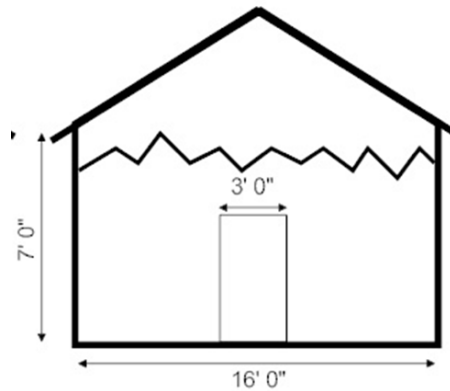
West Facade



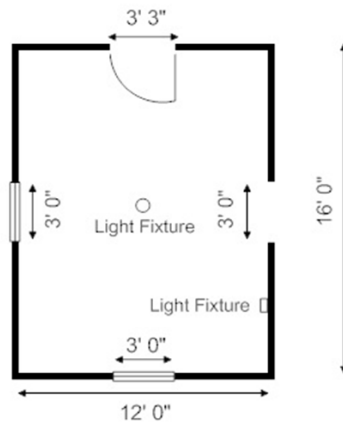
East Facade



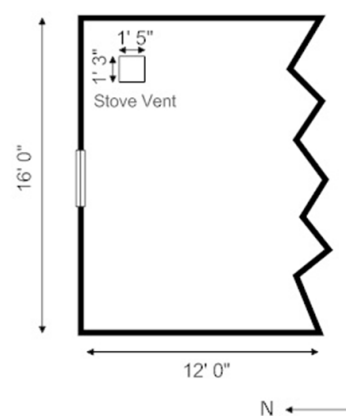
North Façade



South Facade



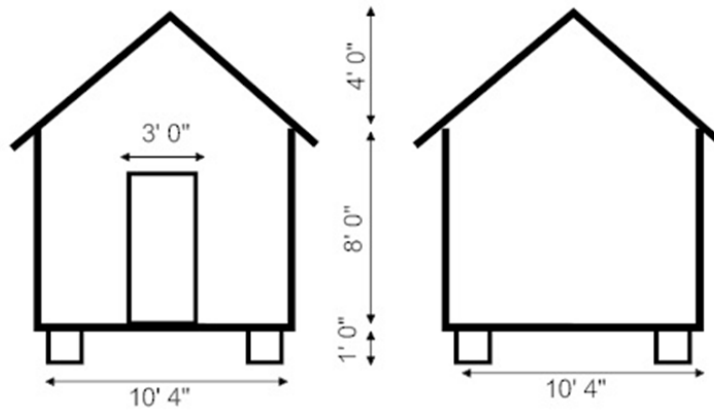
Interior First Floor



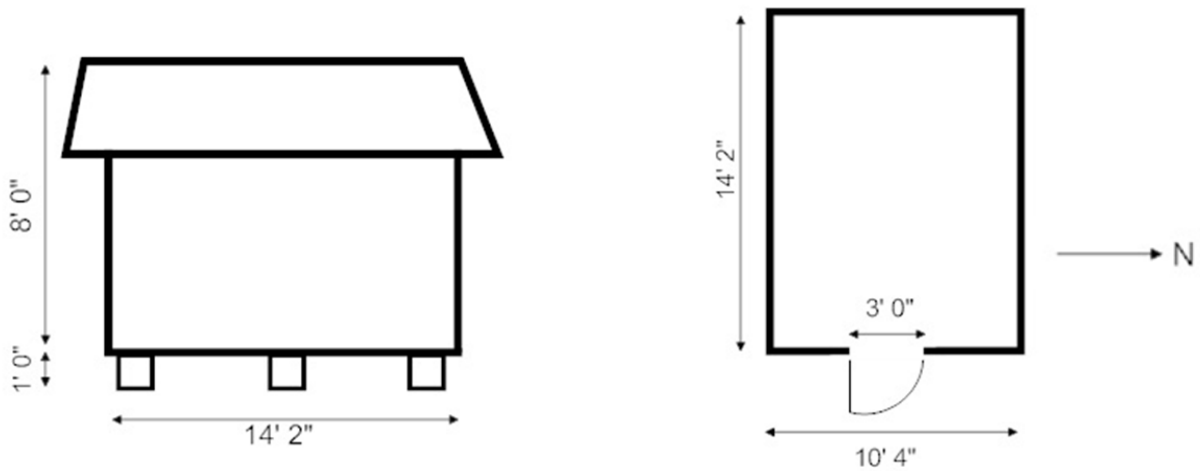
Interior Second Floor



Corn Crib (contributing)



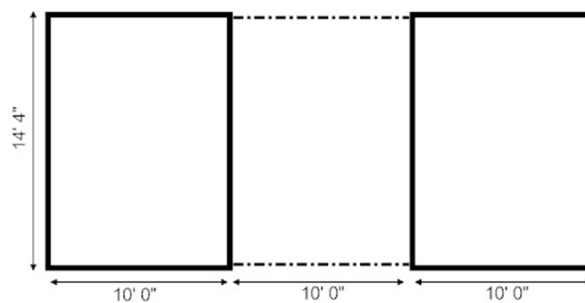
East and West Facades



North and South Facades

Interior

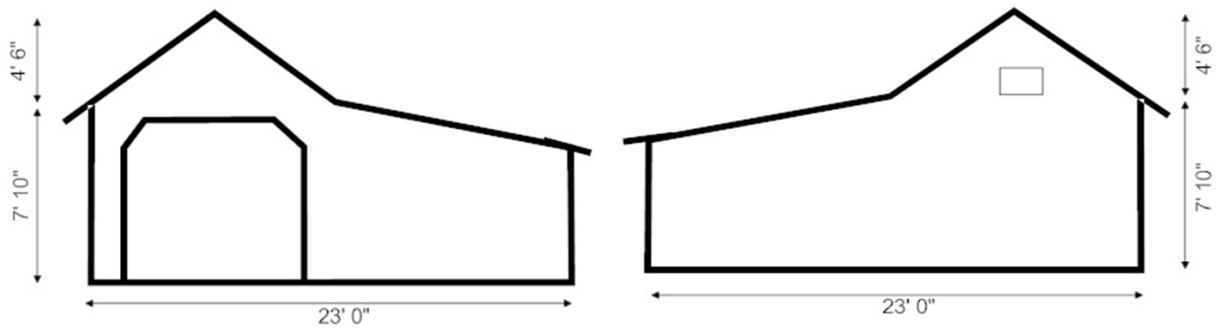
Kennel (non-contributing)



N ←

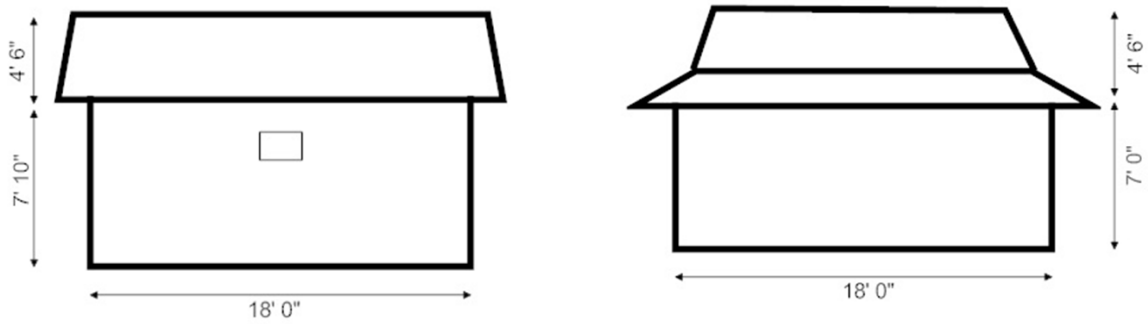


Storage Shed (non-contributing)



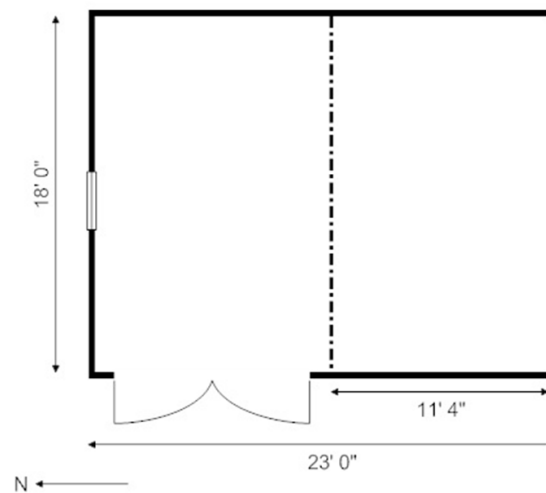
West Facade

East Facade



North Façade

South Facade

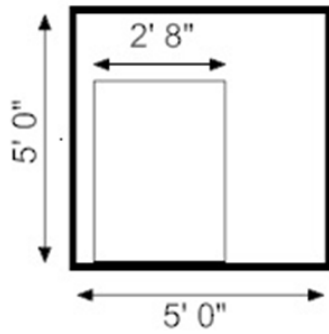


Interior

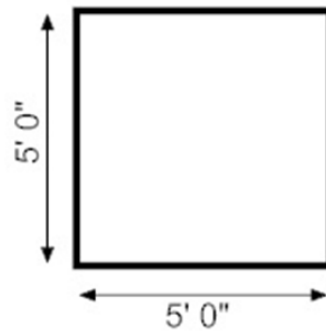




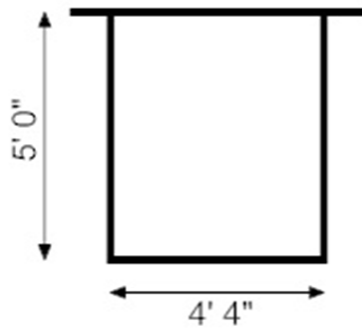
Outhouse (non-contributing)



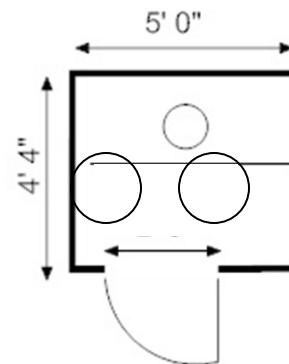
East Facade



West Facade



North and South Facades



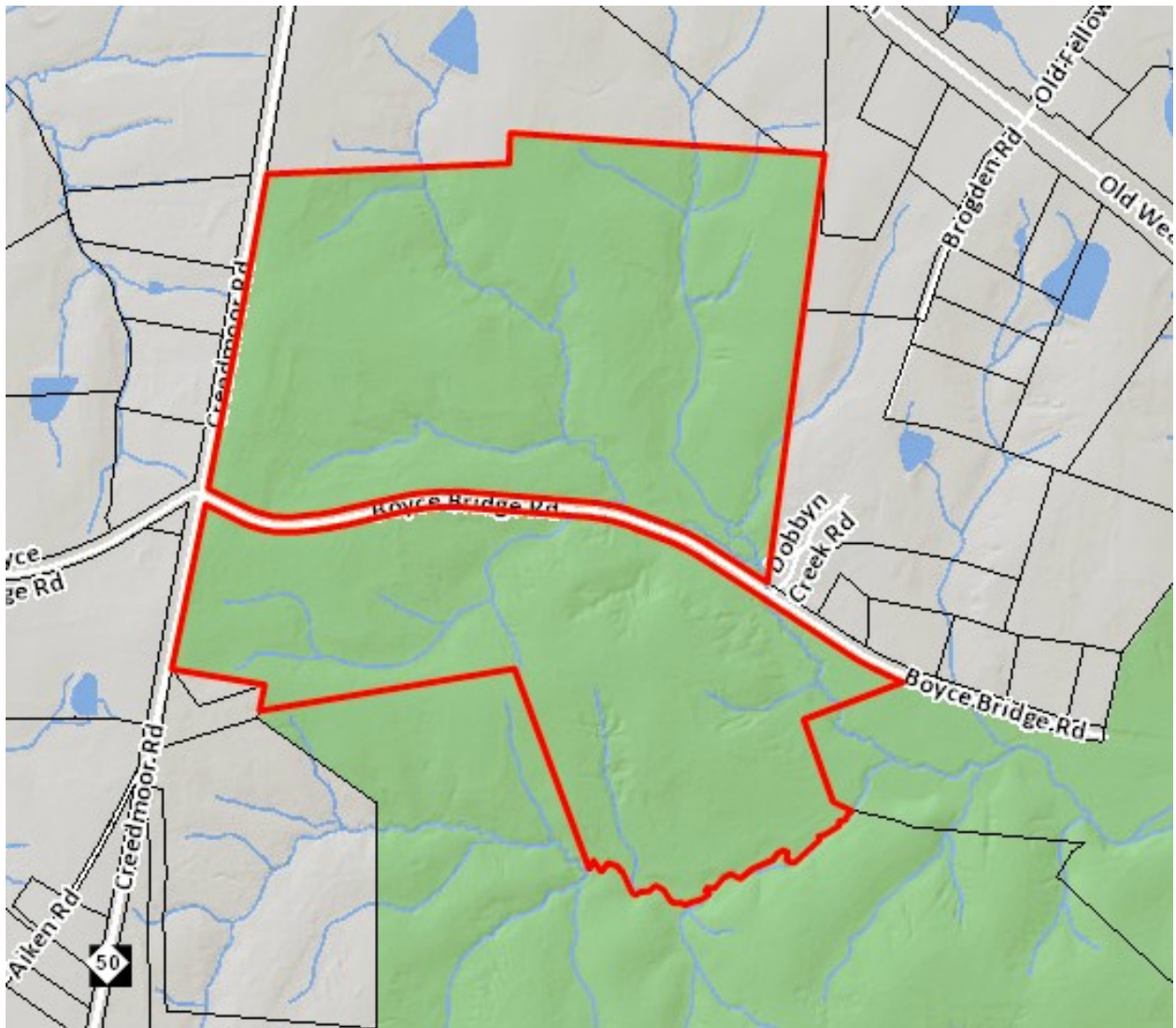
N ←

Interior



*11. MAPS*

Aerial Map of Full Property Boundaries



*11. MAPS*

Aerial Map of Full Property Boundaries



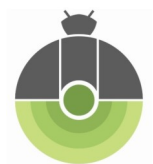


Proposed Landmark Boundary Map



## ROBERTSON-O'BRIANT FARM WAKE COUNTY LANDMARK APPLICATION

### Aerial Map of Significant Resources



Application Prepared By:  
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