

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Big Hill Farmstead Historic District

other names/site number Fairy Lawn; Fair Lawn; Cottage Home

2. Location

street & number 2246 State Highway PP [n/a] not for publication

city or town Jackson [X] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Cape Girardeau code 031 zip code 63755

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
[X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my  
opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered  
significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

18 Mar 99  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [ ] entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- [ ] determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- [ ] determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- [ ] removed from the  
National Register
- [ ] other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	4	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	1	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	5	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**

Domestic/single dwelling  
Agriculture/Subsistence/field  
Agriculture/Subsistence/outbuilding

**Current Functions**

Domestic/single dwelling  
Agriculture/Subsistence/field  
Agriculture/Subsistence/outbuilding

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Greek Revival  
Other: I-house

**Materials**

foundation limestone  
 walls brick  
 roof asphalt  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Agriculture \_\_\_\_\_

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Periods of Significance**

circa 1849-1875 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1855 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person(s)**

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

unknown \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other:

Name of repository: Southeast Missouri State University Archives, Cape Girardeau, MO

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 129.65 acres

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
16	261490	4138885	16	262100	4138800
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
16	261840	4137880	16	261490	4137940

[X] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title see continuation sheet

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state MO zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mary Kate Johnson and G. Frederick Williams Jr.

street & number 2246 State Highway PP telephone 573/243-8575

city or town Jackson state MO zip code 63755

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National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

**SUMMARY:** The Big Hill Farmstead Historic District contains the nucleus properties of a mid-19th century farm and a large tract of associated cropland in central Cape Girardeau County, Missouri. Anchored by a circa 1855 central passage I-House with Greek Revival and Italianate affinities, the district is located on the west side of Missouri Highway PP, about two miles southwest of downtown Jackson. Together, the five contributing resources (a circa 1855 timber frame barn, a circa 1856 cabin/workshop, a circa 1870s wagon shed, the I-House and approximately 130 acres of gently rolling agricultural land) constitute a setting that is highly evocative of the antebellum period when Missouri agriculture was carried out primarily for self-sufficiency, as well as the early postbellum years when a mass market increasingly beckoned. A circa 1851 summer kitchen is noncontributing because of alterations. Various other resources have succumbed to deterioration, but the service-like arrangement of extant outbuildings west of the farmhouse provides internal unity. A sense of cohesiveness is further conveyed because the farmstead retains its historic division of fields, woodlots, farm roads and yards.

The east-facing farmhouse, rendered in brick, has a two-story ell with a gallery porch. The main block has a hipped roof with wide, bracketed eaves. The summer kitchen is nominally connected to the ell with a dogtrot. Stylistically, Greek Revival elements predominate and include a classical trabeated entrance with sidelights and transom. With its decorative brackets and trellised veranda, the house is reminiscent of an Andrew Jackson Downing design for a "suburban cottage in the Italian style."<sup>1</sup> The Italianate brackets adorn porch eaves as well as those on the main roof. The farmhouse has been well-maintained over the years and the surviving outbuildings are in relatively good condition considering their age. Despite the loss of some outbuildings and the presence of corrugated metal, the remaining resources give a sufficient impression of the district's appearance when the nucleus was developed in the 1850s, and throughout the period of significance. Because corrugated metal was commonly applied as sheathing to older farm buildings in Missouri, its limited presence within the Big Hill Farmstead Historic District is acceptable. Overall, the surviving properties retain integrity of location, design, materials, craftsmanship, and setting.

**ELABORATION:** The Big Hill Farmstead Historic District is a trapezoidal-shaped tract of 129.65 acres lying south and west of the intersection of Missouri Highway PP (the east boundary) and County Road 330 (the north boundary), approximately two miles southwest of Jackson. The farm nucleus containing the farmhouse and outbuildings is within a rectangular area of approximately four acres. The property is situated on gently rolling, partially wooded terrain between the Ozark Plateau and the Southeast River Plain. The Mississippi River is approximately 10 miles to the east. The farmhouse is at the end of a gravel driveway that winds through a parklike setting of flower beds, bushes, and more than 50 varieties of deciduous and coniferous trees. Extant outbuildings are located west and south of the farmhouse. Workers' cabins, a smokehouse, a granary and an ice house have been lost to deterioration. Beyond the district boundaries, the land is still primarily used for agriculture. (See Figure

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<sup>1</sup>Downing, Andrew Jackson. *The Architecture of Country Houses*. New York: Appleton & Co., 1850 (Dover Publications, Inc., reprint, 1969), p.108.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

1, Farm Nucleus.)

Keyed to the site map, the properties are as follows:

(A) FARMHOUSE: The circa 1855 farmhouse is a brick, central passage I-House with Greek Revival and Italianate details, a nearly full-width trellised veranda and a two-story ell. The main block has a low-pitched hipped roof with a ridge; the ell has a gable roof with a two-story gallery porch. The farmhouse rests on its original low foundation of native limestone with a crawlspace under the main block and a cellar with limestone walls under the ell. Load-bearing brick walls, 14 to 16 inches thick, are of reddish-brown brick made at the site from clay excavated for the cellar. Bricks are laid in a common bond pattern with header courses at seven-row intervals. Mortar joints are flush. Trim is painted white, except for shutters which are green. The interior is distinguished by fine original woodwork including a black walnut staircase, pilaster mantels and window surrounds with curved heads and paneled aprons. (See exterior photos #1-12 and interior photos #33-46.)

Above the main block, tall chimneys emerge at the ridge ends. Wide, boxed eaves are supported by massive curvilinear brackets. The ell roof is pierced by chimneys at the west end and adjacent to the main block on the north side. Original cypress shingles have been replaced with asphalt shingles throughout. The main block measures approximately 44' across the front and is 24' deep. The ell extends approximately 29' from the rear of the main block and is 17' wide, not counting a two-story gallery porch along the south facade.

The primary (east) elevation is five-bay with a central entrance in an elaborated surround. This pilastered enframing incorporates a three-part transom and tall sidelights with diamond-shaped patterns of tracery. The single door has two vertical molded panels. The veranda is constructed with five broad latticed archways (three in the front) supported by latticed columns. Aligned with the columns, small paired brackets adorn the porch eaves. The porch has a low wooden deck with a latticed base and a finished ceiling. A cut limestone step accesses the deck from the ground level walkway.

Windows in the primary facade (six-over-six wooden sash) and throughout the main block with the exception of the upstairs rear are set within segmentally arched openings. First floor windows have paneled, white-painted aprons. Second floor windows have cut limestone lugsills. Windows on the front facade are equipped with green shutters which, on the first floor, extend to the wooden porch deck. The shaped upper tiers of windows in segmental openings are masked by panels on the aluminum storm windows.

On the north elevation of the main block, each floor has two evenly spaced window openings with segmental arches and stone lugsills. Each floor of the ell, which is a few feet lower than the main block, has three evenly spaced window openings with flat arches. The original brickwork appears to have been disturbed above the upstairs windows, which are topped with bricks set horizontally instead of vertically as with other flat arched windows in the original building. Nominally connected to the rear

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

of the ell is a summer kitchen, described below as a separate building.

The south elevation of the main block is identical to the north: two evenly spaced window openings with segmental arches and stone lugsills. The ell roof continues over a two-story gallery porch supported by square wooden posts. In 1964, part of the lower floor porch was framed and faced with brick to make a bathroom and laundry room. These rooms have small double-hung sash windows. A door from the porch was added as an entry to the hallway formed from the remainder of the enclosed portion. In 1979, the wooden porch floor was replaced with concrete.

In the rear (west) elevation of the main block north of the ell, a window opening with a segmental arch is on the ground floor and a window opening with a flat arch is directly above it on the second floor. South of the ell, an upstairs window opening in the main block is bisected by the gallery roof extension. This flat-arch window is covered with a panel. The rear wall of the ell contains the projecting portion of central chimney with a wide base and, at the first floor level north of the chimney, a window opening with a flat arch. South of the chimney but obscured by the summer kitchen is the entrance to a cellar under the ell. Except as noted, all sash are believed to be original.

The floor plan of the main block is a traditional one for a central passage I-House with an ell. Two public rooms of similar dimensions, in this case a parlor and living room, flank the middle hallway and are entered from doorways just beyond the main entry. The dining room is in the first room of the ell, accessed from the rear of the hallway, followed by the kitchen. The hallway contains a return staircase leading to second floor bedrooms directly above the lower rooms, and to the second floor of the ell which is accessed from the staircase landing. From the landing, a 180 degree turn and a short flight leads to the upstairs hall. A doorway at the rear of the living room accesses a narrow corridor between the dining room and bath/laundry room addition. The dining room has an outside entrance (along the corridor) plus an interior doorway to the kitchen. The kitchen also has an outside entrance onto the open side porch. (See Figure 2, Floor Plans.)

The Greek Revival-influenced interior has an abundance of elegant, original woodwork which is painted white except for the staircase of black walnut. Door and window enframements in the parlor and living room have curved arches with ears which harmonize with the exterior shapes, along with paneled aprons similar to those under first floor windows in the main facade. Both main block rooms have fireplaces with pilaster mantels set against their interior walls. In the living room, a molded cornice adorns the ceiling line. Presses (shallow closets) built into the north wall are within a classical enframement with an entablature supported by pilasters. The doorway between the main block and dining room has wide casings and an eared architrave. Most doors have two-over-two panels or have two tall panels, along with rimlocks. Main block rooms on the first floor have eleven foot ceilings, with ten foot ceilings upstairs. Ell rooms on both levels have eight foot ceilings.

The elegant staircase is placed against the south wall of the central hallway which it easily dominates.

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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
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A shaped handrail is inset into the rounded cap of a tapering, hexagonal newel post. Balusters are round and tapering. Stringers are painted white in contrast to the black walnut balustrade. A closet under the stairs is accessed from the dining room.

Upstairs in the main block, each of the two larger rooms has a traditional fireplace mantel with plain facings and small decorative moldings, painted white. A partition wall divides the large north bedroom into two rooms. Doors are paneled two-over-twos with rimlocks. Curved wooden facings over windows and doors repeat the segmental pattern of the openings in this portion of the house. Three additional bedrooms are in the ell, which is accessed from the staircase landing. The first and largest ell room contains a traditional mantel. Built-in cabinets are on each side of the door opening onto the central staircase landing. Between 1971-76, closets were built in four upstairs bedrooms and a bathroom was added in the southeast upstairs room.

Original interior walls and ceilings of smooth plaster are preserved in some rooms while in others paneling or drywall has been installed. Original flooring of lapped planking is intact throughout the house, painted or carpeted in most rooms and covered with modern linoleum or tile in the kitchen, laundry and bathrooms.

Along with the alterations noted, the kitchen was modernized in 1977. At that time the two kitchen doors were replaced and the original fireplace in the west wall--an area now containing appliances and cabinets--was covered. The farmhouse was wired for electricity in 1948, and modern heating and plumbing fixtures were added in 1964 and 1971, without compromising the building's integrity. The latticework front porch has been repaired as needed but its original appearance has been retained.

(B) SUMMER KITCHEN: Constructed in circa 1851, the original summer kitchen is at the west end of the rear portion, separated from the main house by a "dog trot" passage.<sup>2</sup> This gabled 15-1/2' x 13' building is of timber frame construction sheathed with clapboard. At some point, a covered porch was constructed on the north elevation. A solar collector for heating is on the south side and composition asphalt sheeting covers the west wall. In 1981, the interior was reconstructed. The wood floor was replaced with concrete and the walls and ceiling were covered with plywood. The former kitchen is used as an office and library. The attic, entered from the upper porch of the main house, is used for storage. (See photos #8-10 and #13.)

(C) CABIN: The 34' x 15' cabin was built in two installments. The east half was constructed as a workshop, probably in circa 1856.<sup>3</sup> The west half was added a few years later, converting the building into living quarters. A brick fireplace and chimney in the west half collapsed and was not replaced although the foundation is intact under the floor. Timber sills rest on short piers of stacked stones.

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<sup>2</sup>H.H.M. Williams' farm diary, various entries from December 1850 through January 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Farm diary, entry dated March 10, 1856.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

The post and beam frame is covered with poplar siding. The interior is lathed and plastered. The present roof is corrugated metal. In addition to workshop and living quarters, the cabin has been used as a schoolroom and for storage. (See photos #14-15.)

(D) WAGON SHED/GARAGE: This 9' x 15' building may have been built to house an early automobile, but more likely is an adaptation of a circa 1870 wagon or buggy shed. It is simply a utilitarian building today. Constructed of driven posts and framed, its wood sheathing was long ago replaced with corrugated metal. (See photo #21.)

(E) BARN: Constructed in 1855, the Williams barn is a timber frame building with a ridge roof.<sup>4</sup> At the gable ends, the barn is 53' wide including a 10-1/2' side aisle for wagon and implement storage. The 48-1/2' deep building rests on its original stone foundation. A wagon entrance (without a door) is in the central third of the primary east elevation. There are four bents across the long axis. Most of the heavy, up to a foot square sills, beams, posts and supports are hand-hewn, with markings from a broad axe. Connections and joints are mortised and pegged or slotted and notched. Full-length purlins run along each side of the roof interior and are supported by braced posts. Access to the loft is from an area near the center. A hay track is under the ridge, 30' above ground level. A hay door is on the north end. The lower floor is divided into stall, storage, threshing and work areas. At some time prior to 1930, the barn was partially sided and reroofed with corrugated metal. Like most very old barns, the Williams barn was modified over the years to reflect changing needs and processes on the farm. (See photos #16-20.)

(F) FIELDS AND WOODS: The historic division of fields and woodlots is unchanged. The north fields are divided by a lane leading from the central yards to the northern woodlot which contains a running spring. The southern fields are partly divided by a north-south thicket. The western boundary of the property is along a large wood lot of about 20 acres. The remaining small field lies in the center of the farmstead and is bounded by the western woodlot and the central yards area. All of the fields, woodlots and yards have been or are fenced to control livestock and mark boundaries. The lane through the north fields was fenced to protect fields in crops while allowing cattle access to a spring in the north woodlot. Present fencing is post and wire. Rail fences were used originally. (See photos #22-32.)

Menfro silt loam, the Big Hill soil type that overlies the area's gently sloping fields, is easily tilled throughout a fairly wide range in moisture content. It typically has a friable surface layer about seven inches thick. As hundreds of central Cape Girardeau County farmers like Williams have demonstrated, the soil is well suited for a variety of cultivated crops, hay, pasture, and trees.

FORMER PROPERTIES: Properties mentioned in the farm diary but no longer extant include a house used by a hired hand, constructed in January 1850; a hen house erected in April 1850; a shed

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<sup>4</sup>Farm diary, entry dated July 3, 1855.

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**Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO**

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constructed near a stable in August 1850; the stable itself; an unidentified house with a roof that was raised a half story in November 1850; a Negro house built in March 1851; a corn crib built in November 1853; and a log smoke house "covered with 28 inch boards," erected in 1858. Other facilities for support of the poultry and hog operations were located immediately west of the farmhouse, along with various storage buildings, a loading chute for livestock, privies, etc. Known locations of lost properties are indicated on the site map.

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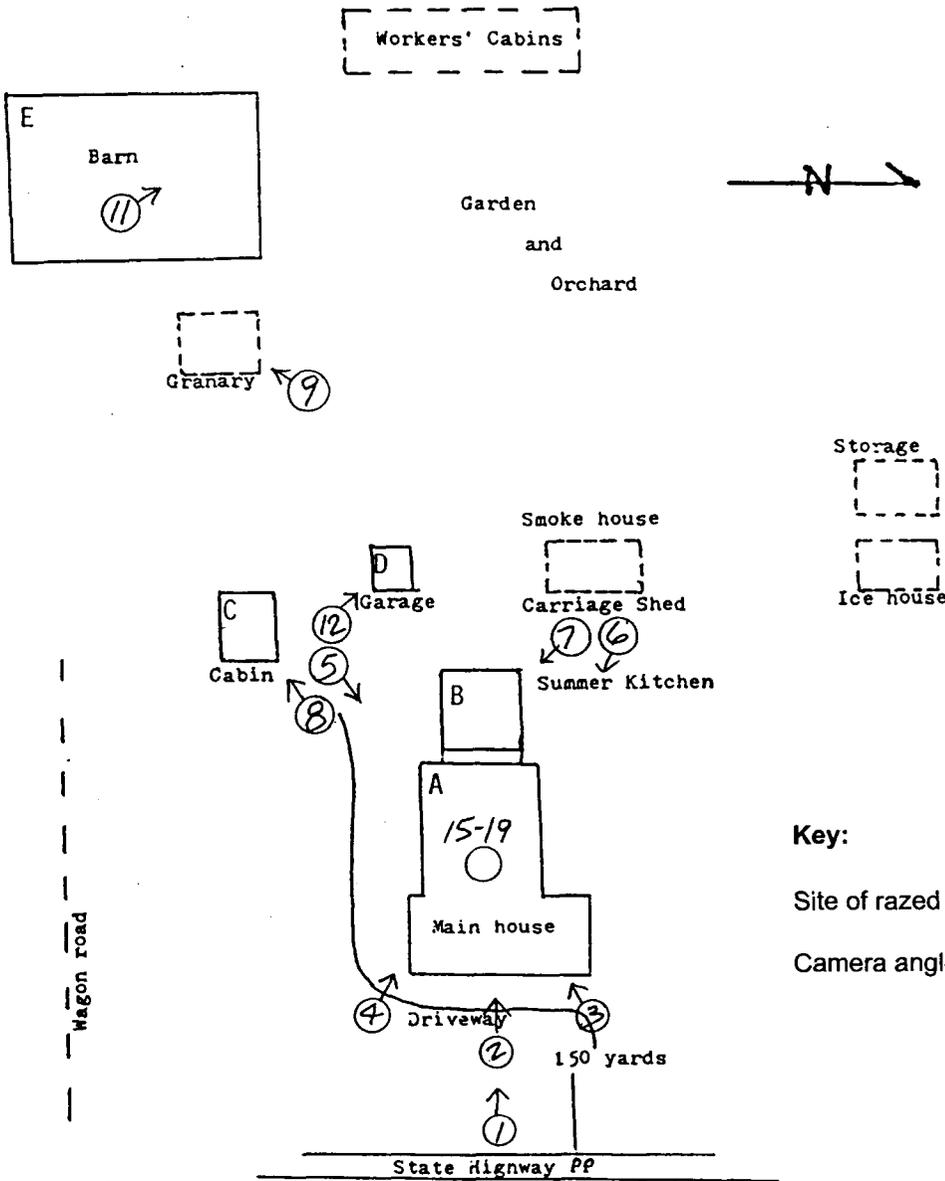
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The Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Figure No. 1

⑩ ↘



Key:

Site of razed building = [dashed box]

Camera angle of view = (5) →

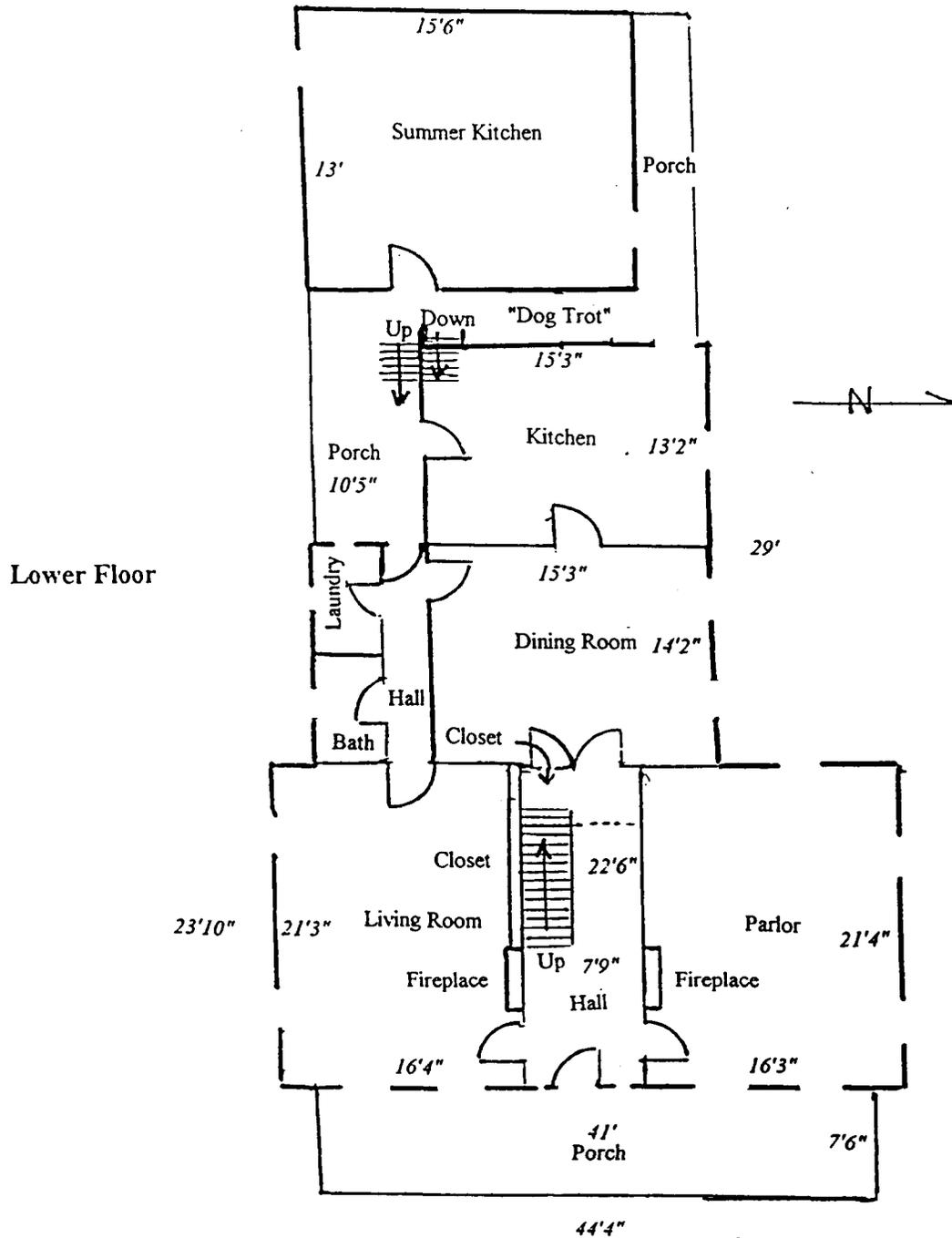
Farm Nucleus  
Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri  
Not to Scale

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**Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
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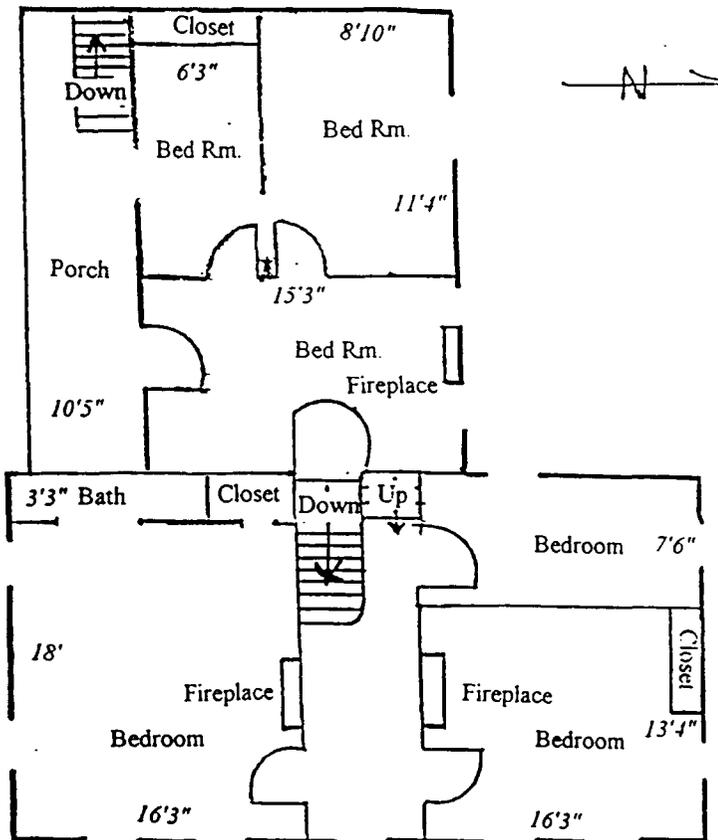
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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Upper Floor



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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

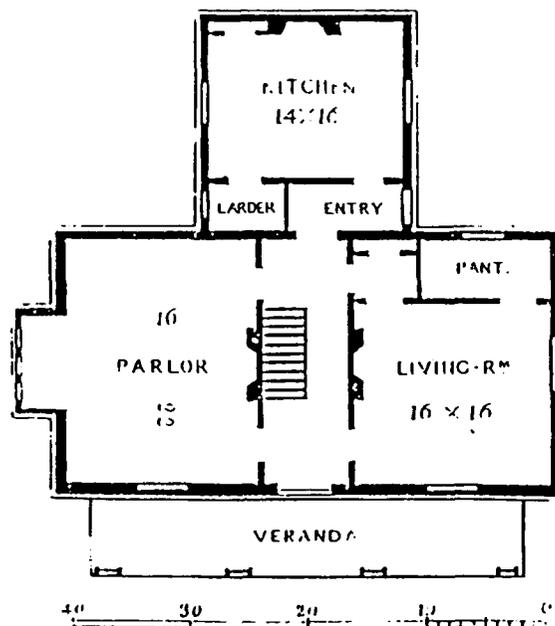
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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

DESIGN VIII  
SUBURBAN COTTAGE



Fig. 33



PRINCIPAL FLOOR

Fig. 34

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

**SUMMARY:** Big Hill Farmstead Historic District near Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A in the area of AGRICULTURE and under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. During the decades bracketing the Civil War, the Big Hill farmstead of Harrison Harvey Minton Williams and his wife Berenice Daugherty Williams was typical of the larger-than-average family farms that radiated outward from Jackson, the county seat and trading center for a wide area of southeastern Missouri. Williams began farming in about 1847 and by 1860, Big Hill was the most mechanized of the 165 farms in Byrd Township. Striving initially for self-sufficiency and ultimately the mass market, Williams and most of his neighbors concentrated on the production of corn, wheat and livestock, as reflected in the agricultural census. Additionally, a farm diary kept by H.H.M. Williams from December 1849 through April 1858 documents the daily routine at Big Hill and provides insights into mid-19th century agriculture in southeastern Missouri. Constructed in 1855 and central to the Big Hill Farmstead Historic District is the farmhouse, a brick, central-passage I-House with Greek Revival and Italianate affinities, a trellised veranda and a two-story ell.<sup>5</sup> Greek Revival elements in this transitional example include a classical entrance with an elaborate enframing containing sidelights and a broken transom, and an elegant interior with eared architraves, pilaster mantels, and other traditional detailing. The Italianate style is reflected in the low-pitched hipped roof (uncommon in an I-House) with wide, bracketed eaves. The house and contributing outbuildings--a circa 1855 timber frame barn, a circa 1856 cabin/workshop building, and a circa 1870 wagon shed--rest on their original foundations within the four-acre nucleus cleared by the Williams family in 1852-55.<sup>6</sup> An additional 125.65 acres--consisting of fields and woodlots that historically have been part of the Big Hill estate and which maintain integrity--are contributing as a site. The only noncontributing property is a summer kitchen which is nominally attached to the ell. Agricultural significance is suggested for the period 1849-75, corresponding to the start of the farm diary through the death of Williams' wife and his subsequent move to nearby Jackson. Significance is not claimed beyond 1875, although Big Hill has remained a productive farm continuously since its development through the present.

**ELABORATION: FARMSTEAD & FAMILY HISTORY:** Both Harrison Harvey Minton Williams and his wife Berenice Daugherty Williams, who were primarily responsible for development of the Big Hill farm as it exists today, were descended from families associated with the early history of Southeast Missouri. If the accomplishments of Williams' ancestors seem somewhat overshadowed by those of his wife's, it is probably because her side of the family was at the forefront of so many things. Perhaps Berenice's best known relative was George Frederick Bollinger, her maternal grandfather, whose surname is ingrained in the history of Southeast Missouri. Upon his arrival from North Carolina, Bollinger became acquainted with Don Louis Lorimier who established the Cape Girardeau District in 1793 while the region was under Spanish control. At Lorimier's request, Bollinger traveled back to North Carolina to recruit colonists in exchange for land. When he returned in about 1800, Bollinger led

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<sup>5</sup>McAlester, *op cit.*, pp. 96-97, 179-187, and 211-219.

<sup>6</sup>Details of the clearing of land, along with many other details of farm life, are contained in the farm diary.

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Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
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a large contingent of German and Swiss settlers, including six of his brothers and their families who settled along the Whitewater River. Bollinger settled near what is known today as Burfordville, where he erected a dam and a water-powered grain mill that provided an essential service for the developing region. In 1812, Bollinger was a member of the first territorial assembly and in 1828, as a state senator, was elected president pro tem. Berenice's mother was Sarah Daugherty, Bollinger's only daughter, who inherited the Bollinger Mill and operated it with her two sons until Union troops torched it during the Civil War to prevent grain and meal from reaching Confederate forces in the area. At the time of the 1870 census, Sarah Daugherty was living with her daughter and son-in-law at Big Hill.<sup>7</sup>

The Big Hill farmstead is part of the original 1799 Spanish land grant to William Daugherty, Berenice Williams' paternal grandfather. Daugherty, according to family tradition, gave the property its name, Big Hill. An early abolitionist, Daugherty came to Missouri from Virginia with other family members in 1796, settling along Hubble Creek northwest of Cape Girardeau. Along with his wife Elizabeth Ramsey Daugherty, the group of settlers included his father-in-law Andrew Ramsey who, the year before, had become the first American to receive land in the Cape Girardeau territory from Spain.<sup>8</sup> Daugherty's grant of 440 arpents (approximately 374 acres) was a reward for serving as a captain in Houck's Spanish Regiment and as a member of the local Legislative Council. In 1806, Daugherty's grant was confirmed by the U.S. government in a document signed by John Adams.<sup>9</sup> William Daugherty's son Ralph Daugherty served as clerk of the Cape Girardeau Circuit Court from 1825-28, and in 1828 was an elector for Andrew Jackson.<sup>10</sup> Ralph Daugherty was Berenice's father.

Harrison Harvey Minton Williams' parents came to Missouri from separate areas of Virginia in the early 1800s, with their own parents. His father, George Harvey Williams, arrived with his parents, Colonel Charles and Mary Harvey Williams, in 1814. George Harvey Williams was born at Harper's Ferry, where his father was a master armorer. Later, Colonel Williams was appointed Chief Arms Inspector for the U.S. government. Williams' mother was Jane Minton. She came to Missouri with her parents from Buckingham County, west of Richmond, in circa 1818. The Williams family settled a few miles northeast of Big Hill, along Indian Creek near the tiny town of Oriole, Missouri. Williams was born there in 1821, but his mother died soon afterward and he was reared by his grandparents at the family home

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<sup>7</sup>History of Southeast Missouri. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888, pp. 55, 173, 274-276, 326, 435; "Bollinger Mill State Historic Site," pamphlet published by Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Manuscript Census Schedules, Population, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, 1870.

<sup>8</sup>1888 county history, pp. 272-273, 277-278, and family records.

<sup>9</sup>Both documents are at Big Hill.

<sup>10</sup>1888 county history, p. 326.

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on Indian Creek.<sup>11</sup>

As a teenager and young man, Williams attended Catholic schools at Perryville, Missouri and Emmitsburg, Maryland. Upon returning to Jackson (about two miles northeast of Big Hill) after completing his education in Maryland, he read law in the office of Col. Thomas Ranney and was admitted to the Missouri Bar at the age of 21. In 1846 when the Mexican War began, he was elected lieutenant colonel of a regiment of volunteers at the age of 25. Although the unit was never called to active duty, he retained the title of colonel and his sword is still at Big Hill. Meanwhile, Williams continued his law practice in the Cape Girardeau district. In 1847, he and Berenice Daugherty were married. In 1850, the census taker listed Williams' occupation as lawyer. The family--now including nine-month-old Sarah Conway--was already living at Big Hill, in an old Daugherty house which is no longer standing.

Berenice, who completed her education at Mrs. Guild's school in Philadelphia and traveled in the eastern states before returning to southeastern Missouri, is thought to have brought back ideas about the sort of house that she wanted, ideas that, in 1855, were translated into the farmhouse at Big Hill with its latticework veranda emphasizing warm weather leisure and bracketed eaves signifying an awareness of Italianate as an emerging architectural style in America.

Details of the earliest agricultural production at Big Hill are unavailable, but a farm already was established on the property when Ralph Daugherty sold the land to George Frederick Bollinger in 1830, the year that Berenice was born at Cape de la Croix near Cape Girardeau.<sup>12</sup> Bollinger's daughter Sarah Daugherty inherited her father's estate, which included a trust for Berenice, upon his death in 1842. In 1849, two years after Berenice married H.H.M. Williams, she received her trust: 337 acres including all of the land in the Big Hill Farmstead Historic District. The present house is located approximately 300 yards southwest of the site of Cottage Home, the old Daugherty place on a rise above some springs where the family lived initially. Williams began his farm diary in December of that year, recording in short, descriptive phrases the details of life on a mid-19th century farm in southeastern Missouri. He kept the diary for nearly ten years, through April 1858. Virtually every day was accounted for until February 1851, after which entries became rather sporadic. Williams apparently maintained his law practice to some extent, but managing the farm and keeping up with family responsibilities probably consumed most of his time and energy. Under Williams' stewardship, the amount of improved land was nearly doubled and production at Big Hill increased dramatically between 1850 and 1860. During this developmental period the

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<sup>11</sup>Family records are the basis of all family history cited, with the exception of footnoted portions.

<sup>12</sup>In 1803, production on the William Daugherty farm in the general area of Big Hill included 250 bushels of wheat, 800 bushels of corn, 200 pounds of tobacco, 1,000 pounds of cotton, 150 pounds of flax and hemp [probably all flax] and 200 pounds of maple sugar. Daugherty owned 25 cattle and five horses. Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri, p. 265.

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approximately four acre parcel used for the farmstead nucleus was cleared and landscaped and the house, barns, sheds, cabins for slaves and farmhands and other basic buildings, roads and fences were built. Big Hill is described as a farm rather than a plantation since it was operated by only a few hands and slaves rather than on a larger, gang labor basis. Williams owned six slaves in 1850, of which four were women and young children, and nine slaves in 1860, of which five were women and young girls. Two slave houses were at Big Hill in 1860.<sup>13</sup>

The farm diary offers insights into daily life at Big Hill and also provides likely construction dates for at least four extant buildings including the farmhouse. Work on preparing the site and collecting materials for the new house apparently was under way at least as early as March 8, 1852 when "Patrick Burns commenced getting up rock at fifty cents per day." On March 9-10, "Burns at quarry - Boys chopping logs in new ground." On March 22, Williams wrote, "Burns lost 1 day...Bal. of week spent in new ground & getting rock - making lime heap etc." The early years were a time of planning and site preparation and of cutting timber for lumber and collecting the other materials considered necessary for construction. Burns apparently was the local rock supplier, not a regular hand, since his name does not otherwise appear in the diary.

On Feb. 1, 1854, Williams wrote: "Last month spent principally in cutting and splitting Brick wood. Put up 3367 lbs pork this winter. Sold 927 lbs. Total 4294 lbs. Slaughtered 27 hogs." The reference to "Brick wood" probably referred to wood intended to fire the kiln used for brickmaking. On Feb. 15: "Finished brick wood--say 65 cords." During this period two men identified only as King and Frank--apparently two slaves--dug the foundation for a new house believed to be the present house.<sup>14</sup> Clay from the cellar excavation was used for bricks and mortar. A diary entry dated Dec. 31, 1854, made construction sound almost routine: "Besides ordinary farm work, quarried rock, made brick & put up walls of house--crops poor." No entries followed until July 3, 1855, when the diary simply stated: "Moved into new Brick House, Finished Barn." This gap of six months is the second longest stretch without an entry in the diary, possibly indicating that Williams was too deeply involved in construction of the new house to bother recording the details. Presumably Williams at least closely supervised the work of his hands, slaves and other workers borrowed from neighbors or hired to assist with the project.

On July 4, 1855, according to family tradition, friends and relatives assembled on the north lawn of the new house that Berenice called Cottage Home (as the old Daugherty house had been called) for a combined housewarming and Independence Day celebration. Over the years the house provided comfortable shelter for the couple's family of nine children who lived past infancy. Meanwhile landscaping of the yard was completed and orchards were developed west of the house. A separate

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<sup>13</sup>Manuscript Census Schedules, Slaves, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, 1850 and 1860.

<sup>14</sup>Williams owned six slaves in 1850: males aged 25 and [illegible], and females aged 23, 21, 6 and 2, according to the Manuscript Slave Schedule for Cape Girardeau County, Missouri.

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entry road for farm equipment was located along the south side of the front yard, leaving a pleasant vista in the front.

Whether an itinerant master craftsman was involved in constructing the house is unknown, but the diary confirms that workers from the area came to Big Hill to perform or assist with various construction projects. For example on Nov. 18, 1850, work was under way on an unidentified house: "Morgan came to work on house & Tom to getting rock, Willey timber & prized up house." Willey was probably Dennis C. Willey and Tom was probably Tom Ellis, hired hands, but Morgan was a new name in the diary. Morgan is mentioned four more times over the next several days in connection with a house that was going up, but the nature of his assistance is stated only once, on Dec. 2-3: "Morgan came late & worked bal. of the day at Kitchen frame." Tom continued working on the cellar through December as weather permitted, and the cellar was reported finished on Jan. 4, 1851. On Jan. 7, Lose Lyle (whose name appears for the first time) arrived to help construct a kitchen. Lyle must have been an accomplished carpenter because he assembled the framework and installed lathing and shingles. Whether he also nailed on the weatherboarding, sawed and fitted the floor, constructed the door, etc., is unstated but likely. The kitchen is probably the summer kitchen which is currently attached to the rear of the ell. Whether the 1850 house references concern the ell (the only extant building with a cellar), the kitchen or a different house no longer present on the property is, at this point, undetermined.

Life at Big Hill, as elsewhere, was significantly different during and after the Civil War. Williams opposed secession and the Cape Girardeau area was a Union stronghold but there were many Confederate sympathizers. With an unidentified Union soldier and later a Colonel L. M. Bean residing in the house with the family in 1863 and 1864, however, Big Hill escaped without damage. On Berenice's side of the family, the Daughertys were ardent abolitionists while the slave-owning Bollingers were pro-South. But Bernice's parents had separated when she was a child and she was, basically, a Bollinger. The Bollinger Mill, operated by her mother Sarah Daugherty with help from two sons--brothers of Berenice--was burned by Union soldiers in retaliation for suspected shipments of flour and meal to Confederate forces.<sup>15</sup> According to Williams family history, some of his freed slaves--there had only been a few--resumed working for their livelihood or for wages at Big Hill but the farm suffered from the disruption of war and the lack of regular labor afterward.

By November 1870, Williams was devoting less and less time to farming and more and more time to his legal practice and business activities in Jackson. Under an arrangement, a man named Spencer built a tenant house by the big spring and began tending the farm, which by this time had grown to at least 500 acres. Altogether, Williams owned 965 acres of which 215 acres were improved at the time of the 1870 census. By November 1872, hired hands were living in both workers' houses. After Berenice died in 1875, Williams moved to Jackson where he already owned a mercantile store on the

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<sup>15</sup>"Bollinger Mill State Historic Site," leaflet published by Missouri Department of Natural Resources, (n.d.).

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southeast corner of Main and South High Streets. He ran the store at this location for more than 40 years. He was Cape Girardeau County treasurer for 15 years and also served as public administrator. He was a deacon and treasurer of the Baptist Church in Jackson for 50 years.<sup>16</sup>

Williams did not mention it in his farm diary, but in 1852 he was president of the Cape Girardeau McAdamizing and Plank Road Company. The firm built the road from Cape Girardeau to Jackson and on to Bollinger's Mill, facilitating the movement of inland commerce in the area. He chaired committees to attract a railroad and to find a local site for a normal school. He was an organizer of the Jackson public school system and served as president of the school board in 1874.<sup>17</sup>

In May 1883, Williams executed a warranty deed signing his estate over to the children but the farmstead was kept intact until after Williams died in 1906. In September 1883 his oldest son, Samuel Daugherty Williams, moved onto the farmstead with his wife, Frederica Welling Williams, and their children. Samuel, after attending Washington University in St. Louis, became a partner with his father in the Jackson store and later opened his own store, the Williams Hardware Company. In 1909 he and his brother Joseph Welling Williams bought out their siblings' interests in the farmstead. Joseph took the larger tract on the east side of Missouri Highway PP and Samuel took the portion on the west side that included the fields and yards as well as the farmhouse and other properties in the Big Hill Farmstead Historic District. In 1965, George Frederick Williams and his wife Katrina Worley Williams became the owners. Upon their deaths the property was inherited by their two children, G. Frederick Williams and Mary Kate Williams Johnson, who remain the owners today.

**AGRICULTURE:** The Big Hill Farmstead Historic District was a mainstream farm in southeastern Missouri, reflecting agricultural practices in the region before as well as after the Civil War. Many details of its operation from December 1849 through April 1858 are documented in a farm diary kept by long-time owner Harrison Harvey Minton Williams. Agricultural census data provide a means of evaluating crop production and the raising of livestock at Big Hill, as well as for comparison with other farms in the region. Together these records strongly suggest that the Big Hill farm was, perhaps for several years, a local model for progressive agriculture. The period of significance begins with the opening of the diary in 1849 and continues through 1875. In 1875, Williams essentially abandoned his agricultural pursuits and moved to Jackson following the death of his wife, Berenice. Since 1880 or so, members of the neighboring Schaper and Meier families have rented the land and farmed the fields at Big Hill, providing all of the labor, seeds and equipment in return for two-thirds of the profits. This arrangement continues today. Although the present acreage represents only about a third of the Big Hill farmland that existed in 1850 and 1860, it contains the farm nucleus with all of the remaining buildings as well as the historic fields, woodlots, yards and farm roads. Apparently, H.H.M. Williams did not start out to be a farmer. In 1842, at the age of 21, Williams was

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<sup>16</sup>1888 county history, pp. 326, 427, 429, 556 and family records.

<sup>17</sup>Local and family records.

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an aspiring lawyer who had just been admitted to the Missouri Bar. But by 1847, newly married to Berenice Daugherty and living on the old Daugherty farm that she had inherited, 337 acres known as Big Hill because of its modest elevation, he had become an aspiring farmer as well. Under Williams's management, primarily subsistence farming at Big Hill was expanded to include farming for the cash market. The workers, whether slave or free, lived on the farm or nearby and were provided with most of their needs from the farm's output. Crops mentioned in the diary include corn, wheat, rye, oats, timothy, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, lettuce, cabbage, pumpkins, onions, radishes, and apples. The farm also produced such things as maple sugar, honey, beeswax, peas, beans, cider, butter and wool. Williams raised hogs, sheep and cattle and kept horses, mules and oxen.<sup>18</sup> Self-sufficiency at Big Hill was probably at its peak during the decade before the Civil War.

Milling was the most important local industry apart from agriculture itself, and one of the best and biggest mills in the area was the Bollinger Mill operated by Williams' mother-in-law, Sarah Daugherty. Bartley, apparently one of Williams' most reliable slaves in the early years, made innumerable trips back and forth to the mill, six or seven miles away but farther by road, the diary indicates, hauling wheat and corn and returning with flour and meal. Bartley also made shoes for the children, dug graves, chopped, hauled and split wood, drove a team of oxen in sowing and harrowing wheat and other crops, drained meadows, gathered and washed turnips, made sugar troughs, set posts and hung gates, cut, hauled and stacked wheat and other crops, laid foundations, and at one point was described in the farm diary as "dangerously ill" although he recovered to haul more logs, etc. Other adult slaves during this period, apparently, were named King and Sarah (not to be confused with the Williams' infant daughter Sarah Conway); another person mentioned in the diary, Isiah, may have been a slave child. Dennis C. Wiley, who came to work for Williams in 1849, was probably a white farmhand.

In 1850, agricultural census data indicate, Big Hill was one of the higher-valued farms in its township. But only 90 acres were improved and the farm's output was not particularly impressive compared with many others in the group. By 1860, however, the Williams farm had grown to 400 acres (200 improved) and was, or should have been, an early model for mechanized agriculture in central Cape Girardeau County. Improved plows, disk harrows, reapers, straddle-row cultivators and threshing machines were available to enterprising farmers prior to the Civil War. Implements and machinery owned by Williams were valued at \$800, nearly double the amount spent on equipping even the largest of the 165 farms reported in the 1860 agricultural census for Byrd Township. The diary confirms that Williams, with only a few years under his belt at farming his own land, had invested in the latest devices available at the time. On May 3, 1850, Williams reported getting a "jumping shovel plow." On Sept. 23-25, 1851, he wrote of using a new deep tiller plow in a bottom meadow, noting that it "does well." On May 17, 1856, Williams reported the purchase of an early McCormick mower and reaper for \$155. On Oct. 7, 1856, he reported sowing nine bushels of Zimmerman wheat with a Pennock patented drill that "works finely." Drills, devices for placing seeds uniformly, were seldom used west of

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<sup>18</sup>Manuscript Census, Agriculture, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, 1850, 1860, 1870.

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Illinois and Wisconsin at this time.<sup>19</sup> In August 1857, Williams bought a new threshing machine.

Agricultural census data also indicate that, in 1860, Williams was among Missouri farmers who went beyond self-sufficiency to produce for the pre-Civil War market. Except for crops that Williams chose not to grow, Big Hill production figures reported in the 1860 census exceeded the township average in virtually every category.

Agricultural production was well-balanced at Big Hill in 1860, with an emphasis on wheat which Williams grew as a cash crop. Even the use of farmland was balanced on the Williams farm that year, with half of the acreage improved and half unimproved. Balance was important not only for self-sufficiency but in order to better withstand market fluctuations. Wheat was a particularly good crop to emphasize at that time because it was profitable and its price generally remained stable at around \$1 a bushel. In the fall of 1850, Williams sent 323 3/4 bushels of wheat to market for which he received \$216.75.<sup>20</sup> For the year ending June 1, 1860, Williams harvested 1,200 bushels of wheat, an amount matched by three other farms in the township but surpassed by none. Williams also produced 600 bushels of corn, an important multipurpose crop. This amount was slightly less than the township average (620 bushels) but more than enough for self-sufficiency and animal feed.

During wheat thrashing season in late summer, the neighboring farmers cooperated by pooling their labor and equipment and moving the operation from farm to farm. On July 29, 1850, Williams wrote in his diary: "Both hands helping D. Green [probably neighbor David Green] thrash wheat." On Aug. 2, it was Williams' turn: "Commenced thrashing wheat noon. 13 hands including my own besides driver & feeder, 3 hired but 3 exchange. Robt. Sheppard, Frank Allen & Tom Ellis hired." Aug. 3: "Quit today at dinner - over half done." On Aug. 8: "Helped E. Criddle [probably neighbor Edward Criddle] thrash wheat, very hot." On Aug. 13: "Thrashed wheat at Russells [probably Joseph W. Russell] afternoon - from 11 a.m." On Nov. 10, 1855, the season's thrashing was completed inside a new barn but Williams declared in his diary that he "suffocated with dust - prefer outdoor thrashing."

Williams was occasionally willing to experiment with new methods as well as new equipment, the farm diary indicates. In April 1857, Williams planted a dozen acres of corn after soaking a bushel of seed in a solution of nitre (potassium nitrate) for 12 hours, at a ratio of three ounces to four gallons of water. A few days later, he planted untreated seed in the lower portion of the same field. Whether the experimental treatment resulted in improved production, however, is unrecorded. Williams apparently tried various varieties of wheat at Big Hill including Blue Stem "patent office wheat" (from Centre County, Pennsylvania) and Zimmerman, in an effort to find a good drought-resistant variety that would live through the winter. The diary records numerous fall plantings and summer harvests of winter

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<sup>19</sup>Schlebecker, John T. Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1975, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup>H.H.M. Williams' farm diary, Oct. 4, 1850.

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wheats. Sixty acres, roughly a quarter of the farm's total improved acreage, was devoted to wheat in 1857.

The value of livestock at Big Hill increased dramatically between 1850 and 1860, from \$290 to \$2,500, but by 1870 had fallen back to \$1,120. As the census indicates, Williams raised the largest number and the greatest variety of livestock in 1860. Similar data are unavailable for non-census years. He owned 65 swine that year, a number exceeded on only five township farms. He also owned 25 sheep, 10 cows, 18 cattle, nine asses and mules and nine horses. Many township farmers owned two or more oxen but Williams, like the majority, owned none. He owned two oxen at the time of the 1850 census, however, and the use of oxen is mentioned on several occasions in the farm diary. Sometimes, trips to market did not go smoothly. On Sept. 23, 1850, Williams reported sending 73 bushels of wheat to the Cape Girardeau market but the trip resulted in a crippled ox. On Sept. 25, the next load of wheat, 48 bushels, broke the wagon. By 1860, he apparently was committed to teams of mules which were bred at Big Hill, as were horses.

In 1860, seven township farms were larger and four were assigned a higher cash valuation than Big Hill, which was valued at \$11,000. At 1,750 acres, the Stephen Byrd farm was by far the largest farm in Byrd Township but only 275 acres were improved. Byrd's implements and machinery were valued at only \$300, indicating a more labor-intensive operation than at Big Hill. Like Williams, Byrd's main crops were corn (2,000 bushels) and wheat (900 bushels) produced for the market in addition to serving farm needs. Byrd also harvested 500 pounds of flax, a crop that no one else in the township bothered with. Hardly anyone around there grew tobacco either except Jesse Criddle, whose large farm north of Big Hill produced 22,000 pounds of tobacco leaves along with 900 bushels of wheat and 1,500 bushels of corn in 1860. Criddle also had harvested the most tobacco in 1850, 18,000 pounds. Tobacco production persisted in Byrd Township after the Civil War, with a larger number of farmers producing the crop in smaller quantities. The top tobacco grower in 1870 was Benjamin Wigginton, with 6,000 pounds.<sup>21</sup>

During the period of significance, milk cows were kept at Big Hill mainly for subsistence as were cattle for beef until a market developed later in the century. Hogs and poultry were raised for market as well as for subsistence. Twenty-seven hogs were slaughtered in the winter of 1854, producing 4,294 pounds of pork of which 3,367 pounds were "put up" and 927 pounds were sold.<sup>22</sup> In 1860, the total value of animals slaughtered at Big Hill was \$525, which was above the township average. Orchard products, particularly apples for cider and vinegar, also were grown for the market as well as for subsistence. Two hundred bushels of apples were collected in the fall of 1869, although the total

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<sup>21</sup>Manuscript Census Schedules, Agriculture, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, 1850, 1860, 1870.

<sup>22</sup>H.H.M. Williams' farm diary, Feb. 1, 1854.

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orchard production was only valued at \$50.<sup>23</sup> Surplus eggs also were sold. Farm garden and sugar maple trees were almost always for subsistence only.

Williams had been a hands-on farm operator, working along with his hired workers and slaves on various projects, but by 1870, farming apparently had lost much of its appeal. Prices for farm products were down, for one thing, while manufactured goods cost more in the wake of the Civil War. Whether Williams decided that farming could not be profitable or simply lost interest is unknown, but the census data for Big Hill that year are telling. Although Williams owned more land than previously, production was down in nearly every category except corn, which held steady at 600 bushels, the same amounts reported in 1850 and 1860. Reflecting the added acreage, the Williams farm was valued at \$17,000 in 1870. But for a man who seemingly enjoyed keeping up with developments in agriculture, the greatly reduced valuation of implements and machinery on the Williams farm from 1860 to 1870 was perhaps the most telling statistic. No longer the leader, Williams was far back in the pack with only \$300 worth of equipment. He grew no wheat, oats, or rye and had no sheep, although he still raised hogs and owned a few other animals and grew corn, potatoes and some other crops in relatively small quantities. The orchards also remained productive. The 1860 census listed Williams as a farmer, period. The 1870 census listed him as a merchant and farmer.

The post-Civil War years were difficult for Berenice, who lost most of the servants who previously helped with cooking, cleaning, sewing, food preservation and other household tasks. The life of a farm wife without servants, for which she was unaccustomed, was filled with drudgery. In a 1868 letter to her son Samuel who was attending the Kentucky Military Institute, she complained about being in grease all day at hog-killing time. In 1870 she wrote to him that she wanted to go off to some new country where she could live a different and better life. Eleven people were living at Big Hill that year including a young Danish farmhand, a young black housekeeper, Berenice's mother Sarah Daugherty and a half-sister Sarah Frizel.<sup>24</sup> In 1872 Berenice wrote, "I am disgusted with farm life, milking cows, carrying out slops, feeding pigs is not what I fancy." In July 1872, the main house used the output of eight cows. But she displayed a wry sense of humor in March 1872, writing that egg packing was a brisk "smashing" business in Jackson. Berenice became ill and died in 1875. After her death, Williams moved to Jackson although other family members replaced him on the farm at Big Hill.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Manuscript Census Schedules, Agriculture, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, 1870, and family records.

<sup>24</sup>As reported in the 1870 population census, the Williams household and help at Big Hill consisted of H.H.M. Williams, age 48; Berenice, 40; Samuel, 18; Minnie, 12; George, 10; Joseph, 6; Harrison, 5; Sarah Daugherty, 69; Sarah Frizel, 47; \_\_\_ Peterson, 24, a farmhand; and Lorena Daugherty, 19, listed as a black housekeeper. In 1860, the blood family had been about the same size but Berenice had the services of five female slaves (although one was 65 and another was only 12).

<sup>25</sup>A collection of Berenice D. Williams' letters is at Big Hill.

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The Big Hill Farmstead Historic District is significant as a mid-19th century farm in central Cape Girardeau County, reflecting agricultural patterns and practices that prevailed before as well as after the Civil War. The farmstead is part of the original Spanish land grant to William Daugherty, an early settler from Virginia whose descendants own the property today. Census data for 1850, 1860 and 1870 provide statistical evidence of the early growth and postwar decline of Big Hill, echoing a scenario that applied to many farms during the evolution of agriculture in Missouri in the 19th century. Big Hill's significance within the local agricultural context is supported by census data as well as a farm diary kept by hands-on owner Harrison Harvey Minton Williams. The diary is an important cultural document in its own right because it describes life on the farm, in concrete terms, from 1849 through 1858. The cropland, woodlots, yards, farm roads and five contributing buildings constitute an effective physical link with the 1849-1875 period of significance.

**ARCHITECTURE:** The I-House is a British folk form originally introduced in America during colonial times. Tall, shallow I-Houses--two stories, two rooms wide and one room deep--became an especially popular 19th century house form in the Tidewater South, and a symbol of economic attainment within an agricultural society.<sup>26</sup> Later the I-House became ubiquitous, spreading across a large rural area including Missouri. McAlester and McAlester suggested a regional association based on climate, with I-Houses particularly favored in midwestern states "where the relatively long and confining winters made large houses more of a necessity than farther south."<sup>27</sup> In *Folk Architecture in Little Dixie*, Marshall called central passage I-Houses "the most significant single group of houses in Missouri."<sup>28</sup>

Cultural geographer Fred Kniffen "discovered" I-Houses in the 1930s while studying forms and patterns of folk housing between Louisiana and Michigan. Kniffen traced their pattern of distribution and concluded that regional variations notwithstanding, no other folk form was so widely disseminated throughout rural America. Along with their constant, essential qualities Kniffen identified frame, brick, stone and log I-Houses with various chimney placements and even various floor plans. Probably, considering all of the possible variables, no two I-Houses were ever built that were exactly alike despite a timeframe spanning four centuries.<sup>29</sup>

Another cultural geographer, Allen G. Noble, concurred with Kniffen that the I-House had the widest

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<sup>26</sup>Kniffen, Fred B. "Folk Housing--Key to Diffusion," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 55, No. 4 (1965), p.555.

<sup>27</sup>McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *op cit.*, p.96.

<sup>28</sup>Marshall, Howard W. *Folk Architecture in Little Dixie: A Regional Culture in Missouri*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981, p.68.

<sup>29</sup>Kniffen, *op cit.*, p. 551.

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distribution of any folk house in America "with the possible exception of the log pen house." Noble noted that unlike some folk forms, the construction of I-Houses persisted long after the advent of architectural styling as a factor in house building. Noble, who devised an I-House typology based primarily on chimney placements and floor plans, observed that the basic form was modified in the 19th century by such things as ell and wing additions and the application of decorative embellishments.<sup>30</sup>

Like other folk houses, I-Houses were often "enhanced" by elements of whatever architectural style was in vogue. On the Missouri frontier, migrating settlers from the Upland South demonstrated that the I-House was a particularly good carrier of Greek Revival styling. As newer styles became fashionable, they sometimes overlapped or coexisted with older styles on the same house. For example Gothic Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne affinities were commonly imposed on later I-Houses (or on early I-Houses being updated), singly and in various combinations. This duality is exemplified by the house at Big Hill, where "new" Italianate brackets and an Andrew Jackson Downing-inspired latticework veranda vie for attention within the context of an otherwise traditional Greek Revival I-House. As demonstrated by the Williams House, an outstanding local example of the practice of applying formal elements to a folk form, these two styles were highly complementary when the elements were tastefully combined.

While the generic I-House is usually described as side gabled, less common variations with flat, gambrel and hipped roofs are recognized in the typology used by the Missouri Historic Preservation Program. The house at Big Hill has a low-pitched hipped roof, and its wide eaves are adorned with decorative Italianate brackets. As Downing noted in his comments about a somewhat similar suburban cottage with a bracketed roofline, "The projection of the roof supported by cantilevers [gives] the character of the Italian style." Downing's design includes a trelliswork veranda with a bracketed hipped roof much like the one on the house at Big Hill, but the Italianate style is only hinted at, not developed. The brackets (and the projecting eaves which they support) are the house's only obvious affinity with the Italianate style of architecture. The house described by Downing is depicted in The Architecture of Country Houses, originally published in 1850.

Another Downing comment about the suburban cottage in his pattern book seems appropriate for the house at Big Hill: "This design," wrote Downing, "is an attempt to redeem from the entire baldness of some examples and the frippery ornament of others, a class of cottages very general in the neighborhood of our country towns." In other words, the design was supposed to be an intelligent compromise, a house that might appeal to a practical man of taste even if he could afford something larger and fancier. Like the pictured house, the Williams House "convey[s] at once an expression of beauty arising from a sense of superior comfort or refinement in the mode of living."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Noble, Allen G. Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape Volume 1: Houses. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984, pp.52-55.

<sup>31</sup>Downing, op cit., p. 108.

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Greek Revival I-Houses were popular in Missouri in the 1850s when the house at Big Hill was built, but full-blown Italianate architecture was uncommon in the state until after the Civil War. Italianate styling first appeared on American houses in the late 1830s, then was popularized by Downing and others who championed the style in pattern books published in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>32</sup> While textbook examples of Italianate architecture were highly uncommon in rural Missouri in the 1850s, an enterprising builder might take a single defining element from a pattern book (such as decorative brackets) and simply apply it to a familiar-shaped house in order to make it seem more fashionable. This, presumably, is precisely what happened to the house at Big Hill. The Williams House has wonderful, albeit modest, Greek Revival I-House features and clearly expresses agricultural success, but the bracketed eaves additionally proclaimed that the owner was in touch with something new. Or as Massey and Shirley put it, "As time went by, the hard edges of the Greek Revival began to blur, softened by decorative elements such as carved, curving eave brackets borrowed from the increasingly popular Italianate style. There was no holding back the surge of romantic eclecticism that overwhelmed the country in the mid-19th century."<sup>33</sup>

Sparked by public buildings designed by William Strickland, Robert Mills, Gideon Shryock and others, Greek Revival architecture flourished in the United States in the first half of the 19th century. In 1798, Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Bank of Pennsylvania was the first American building with a Greek order; in 1818, Strickland's Parthenon-like Second Bank of the United States was an early milestone. America had only recently won its independence and the style was embraced, in part, for what it symbolized about democracy and political freedom: ancient Athens had been the fountain of liberty. Too, the "National Style" as Greek Revival came to be called was highly adaptable. As Rifkind put it, "Greek Revival architecture offered a Classical vocabulary that was versatile enough to express both regional vernacular and urbane design concepts, and a mood that was romantic as well as rational." Disseminated by pattern books and settlers from the Upland South, the style began appearing on rural Missouri farmhouses as early as the 1830s. Greek Revival flourished until the Civil War, then fell out of fashion in the postwar years and was gradually supplanted by a growing interest in medieval styles, most notably Gothic Revival.<sup>34</sup>

Whether Williams hired a master builder to direct the local workers in constructing his new home is unrecorded in the farm diary, but the house at Big Hill itself stands as evidence of its skillful

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<sup>32</sup>McAlester and McAlester, op cit., p.214.

<sup>33</sup>Massey, James C., and Shirley Maxwell. "Greek Temples for a Young Republic." The Old-House Journal, May-June 1995, p.61.

<sup>34</sup>Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969, p. 38; Rifkind, Carole. A Field Guide to American Architecture. New York: New American Library, 1980, p.38; McAlester and McAlester, op cit., p. 184; Denny, James M. "A Transition of Style in Missouri's Antebellum Domestic Southern Architecture." Pioneer America Society Transactions, Vol. VII (1984), pp. 1-4.

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construction. The diary speaks of basic things like digging cellars, quarrying rock, making brick, cutting timber, slaughtering hogs, thrashing wheat, setting fence, planting corn, making cider, trips back and forth to the mill, weather, ailments, deaths--but there is nary a word to indicate any special awareness of or interest in architecture per se. Unfortunately, there are no entries in the diary between Dec. 31, 1854's "Besides ordinary farm work, quarried rock, made brick & put up walls of new house - crops poor" and July 3, 1855's "Moved into new Brick House, Finished Barn." Perhaps Williams was so deeply involved in supervising the construction of his house, in addition to ongoing farmwork, that the farm diary was simply suspended. Or perhaps a separate, now lost, journal was kept recording details of the house's construction.

In any case, the house at Big Hill obviously has fine craftsmanship for a central passage I-House erected in rural Missouri in circa 1855, reflecting the taste of its owners. It would be easy to imagine the house with a portico instead of a veranda, but there is no indication that a portico ever existed. But with a veranda, not to mention a hipped instead of a gabled roof, classical columns and pediments would have been difficult to incorporate into the design, even if they had been wanted. Nonetheless a clear, if modest, Greek Revival effect was achieved by recessing the entrance within an entablature surround with an eared architrave, broken transom, narrow sidelights and pilaster trim. The elegant interior is also a well-documented Greek Revival type. It contains primarily original woodwork with, among other things, paneled aprons, entablature enframements, pilaster mantels and an impressive return staircase with a tapering hexagonal newel post.

Architecturally, the Big Hill Farmstead Historic District stands as an excellent example of an antebellum family farm in Cape Girardeau County. Like the traditional farmhouse which stands among fields continuously farmed since before it was built, the Big Hill outbuildings are representative of the period when many materials and workers were local. Timber came from nearby woods, bricks were made from local clay, and limestone for foundations was quarried nearby. Elements of Greek Revival and Italianate styles are tastefully applied to the I-House, while construction methods reflecting early building techniques are apparent throughout the farmstead. Overall the properties possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, craftsmanship and feeling.

The University of Missouri Extension recognizes the Big Hill property as the oldest, continuously owned farm by the same family in Cape Girardeau County. Statewide, two somewhat older farms are recognized by the University of Missouri Extension. Both, like Big Hill, are in Southeast Missouri. The oldest farm (1788) is in Bollinger County which adjoins Cape Girardeau County. The second oldest is (1792) in New Madrid County, in the Missouri Bootheel.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>The Missouri Centennial Farms Program is coordinated by the University of Missouri Extension Center at Columbia, Missouri. The program was initiated in 1975 to recognize farms that have remained in the same family for 100 or more years, and the register remains open. Farm buildings are not required to be old, however. Records are maintained by county.

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**ADDITIONAL FARM & FAMILY HISTORY:** Samuel Daugherty Williams and his wife Frederica, who moved onto the property in 1883, had seven sons and a daughter. Some tasks such as cutting firewood, tending the garden, feeding the animals and milking cows were ongoing. In the 1880s and 1890s, a freed slave called Uncle Tom by the children lived in the cabin and helped with chores. The field work was left to skilled workers with specialized equipment, who farmed the land under an arrangement that gave them two-thirds of the profits. From 1880-1926, the land was farmed by Lewis and August Schaper and then by Alvin and Albert Schaper until their retirement. Ultimately, the Williams children grew up and most of them joined the exodus away from rural areas.

Samuel and Frederica remained at Big Hill after World War One, along with their only daughter, Berenice. Berenice, named after her grandmother, was the only one of eight children to live continuously on the farm except for her years away at school. Although her father lived at Big Hill, most of his time was devoted to running a hardware business and then an insurance business in Jackson. Meanwhile Berenice, with hired help, was able to keep a few cows, horses, pigs and chickens in addition to garden areas near the house. In the 1930s, Big Hill and most other area farms were plagued by falling prices and years of drought. During these lean times, Berenice's butter and egg money was an important component of the family's income.

Upon the death of Samuel Williams in 1933, Manning Williams, one of Berenice's brothers, returned to the farm. Manning's presence made it easier for his mother and sister to remain at Big Hill. Manning, who had been a civil engineer in Baltimore, reverted to milking cows, fattening cattle and pigs for market and making ham, sausage and bacon for the family. This was a time of numerous farm foreclosures, but thanks to the renters, the fields of Big Hill kept producing. From 1927 through the present, the fields have been farmed on a rental basis by members of the Meier family.

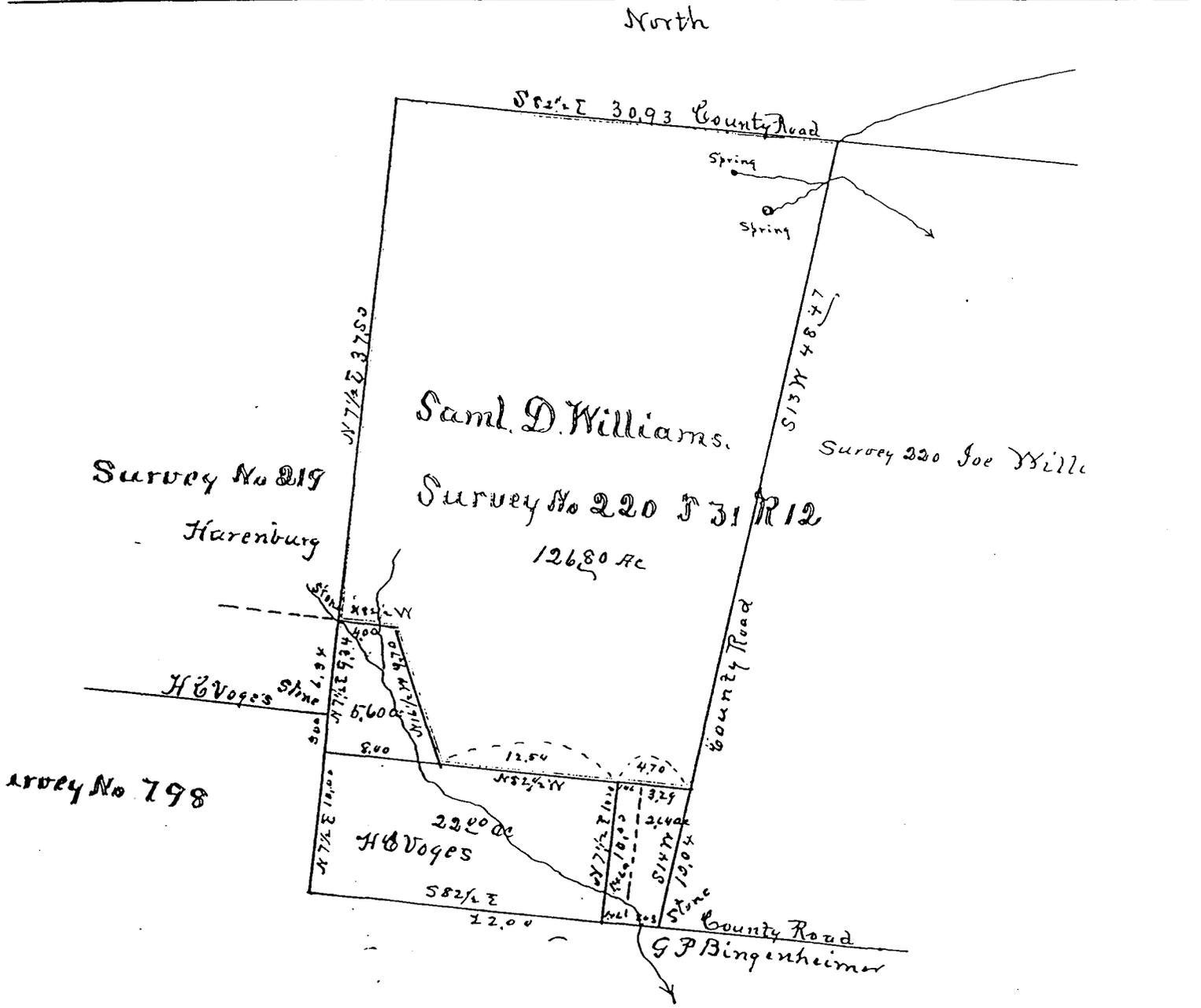
Later generations at Big Hill moved away from the cow-calf production of cattle and began purchasing young steers which were pastured and fed hay for a year or two before being fattened on feed and sent to market. Hog and poultry operations gradually declined to a purely subsistence level except for egg production, which held steady. In general as at Big Hill, farm income increased dramatically during World War Two. Despite wartime labor shortages, improved tractors and other new equipment facilitated increased production for which farmers received higher prices. Improved farming methods at Big Hill after World War Two included the use of limestone, commercial fertilizers and hybrid seed. In 1948, electricity came to Big Hill.

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**Big Hill Farmstead Historic District**



Surveyed for S. D. Williams and Geo. P. Bingenheimer  
 July 14th 1902. Scale 10 Var 4 1/4 E.  
 Pt Survey No. 220 T 31 R 12 -  
 M. Dean  
 Survey

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**Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
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Cape Girardeau County, MO

### 10. Geographical Data

#### UTM References

E. 16/261430/4138110  
F. 16/261370/4138110

#### Verbal Boundary Description

Big Hill Farmstead Historic District is a 129.65-acre tract bounded on the east by Missouri Highway PP, on the north by County Road 330, and on the south by an unimproved dirt road as shown on the accompanying map entitled "Big Hill Farmstead Historic District Site Map." Beginning at Point A (UTM reference 16/261490 Easting 4138885 Northing), continue roughly eastward along the south right-of-way of County Road 330 to Point B (16/262100E, 4138800 N), then continue roughly southward along the west right-of-way of Missouri Highway PP to Point C (16/261840E; 4137880N), then continue roughly westward along the north side of an unimproved dirt road to Point D (16/261490E, 4137940N), then continue in a northwest direction to Point E (16/261430E, 4138110N), then continue roughly westward to Point F (16/261370E, 4138110N), then continue roughly northward to the Point of Beginning.

#### Boundary Justification

The trapezoidal tract containing the Big Hill Farmstead Historic District encompasses the nucleus of the farmstead including the house, the remaining outbuildings and all of the contiguous acreage still associated with the property. Other portions of the 337 acres contained in the original Spanish Land Grant to William Daugherty are no longer owned by direct descendants, have been used for road and railroad rights-of-way, or have lost integrity and are excluded. The southwest corner of the tract is irregular because this portion was conveyed to a neighbor to provide access to a stream.

### 11. Form Prepared By

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Jackson, Missouri 63755  
Date: October 1998  
Telephone: 573/243-8575  
Original preparer

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO**

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Section Photographs Page 31

The Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, MO

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### Photographs:

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Jackson vicinity  
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri  
Photographer: Daniel F. Johnson  
Date: June and September 1998  
Negatives on file at Big Hill, 2246 State Highway PP, Jackson, MO 63755

1. Entrance road and house, facing west
2. East facade of house, facing west
3. Front porch, facing west
4. Bracketed eaves at southeast corner, facing northwest
5. South facade of house, facing northeast
6. West facade of house with summer kitchen, facing east
7. Summer kitchen, facing southeast
8. Cabin/workshop, south and east facades, facing northwest
9. Barn, east and north facades, facing southwest
10. Barn, west and south facades, facing northeast
11. Barn interior showing bent detail and loft door, facing northwest
12. Wagon shed/garage, south and east facades, facing northwest
13. Northeast field bordering Missouri Highway PP, facing northeast
14. Southeast field with dividing thicket on right, facing south
15. Central hall with stairway, facing west
16. Central hall facing entrance, facing east
17. Parlor, west window, facing west
18. Parlor mantel, facing southwest
19. Living room mantel, facing northwest

Big Hill Cape Girardeau County

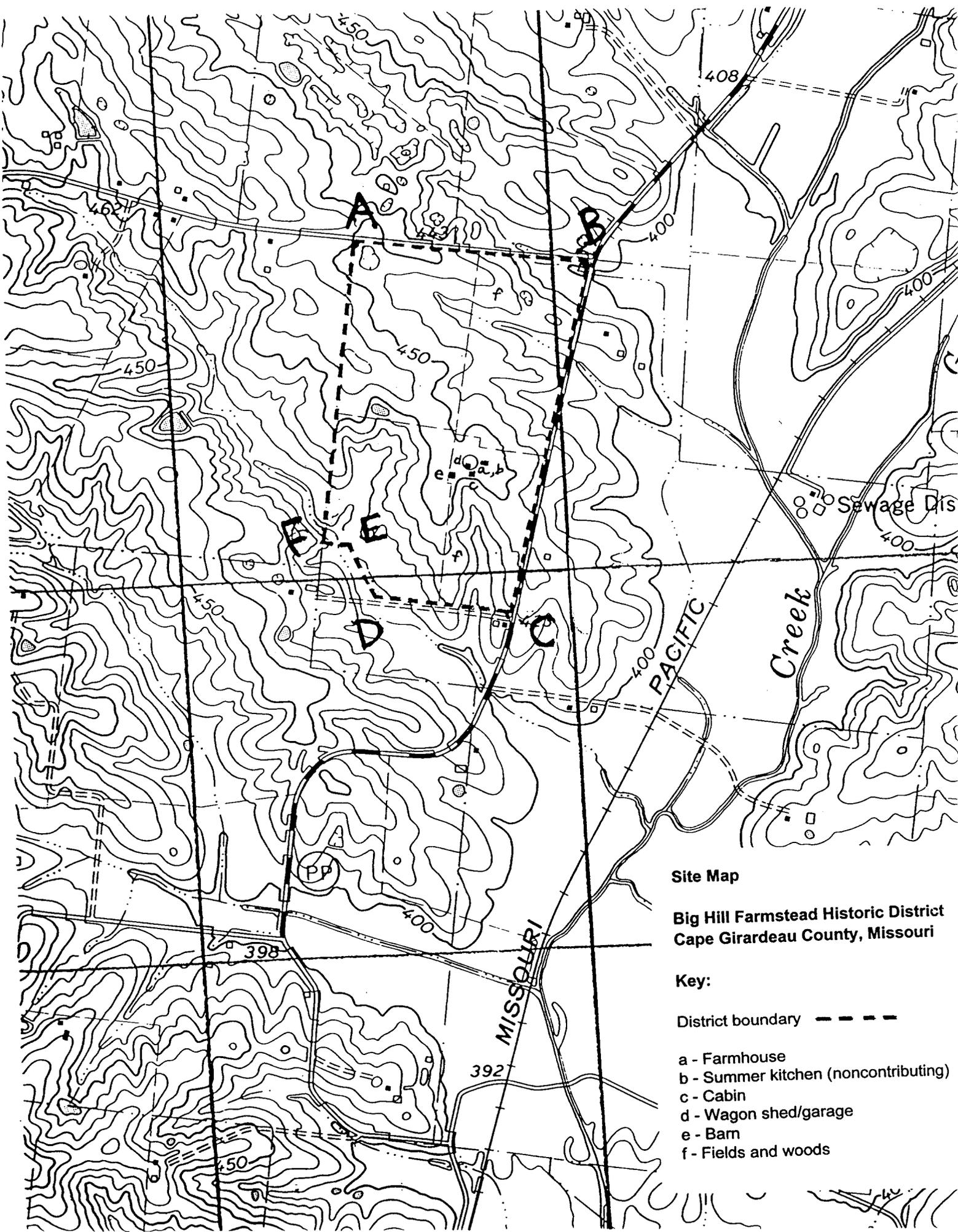
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- A. 16/261490E 4138885N
- B. 16/262100E 4138800N
- C. 16/261840E 4137880N
- D. 16/261490E 4137940N

4138/10N

STATE OF MISSOURI  
 DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE  
 WALLACE B. HOWE, STATE GEOLOGIST  
 8058 / NW  
 (JACKSON)

UNITED STATES  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 GEOLOGICAL SURVEY





**Site Map**

**Big Hill Farmstead Historic District  
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri**

**Key:**

- District boundary - - - - -
- a - Farmhouse
- b - Summer kitchen (noncontributing)
- c - Cabin
- d - Wagon shed/garage
- e - Barn
- f - Fields and woods





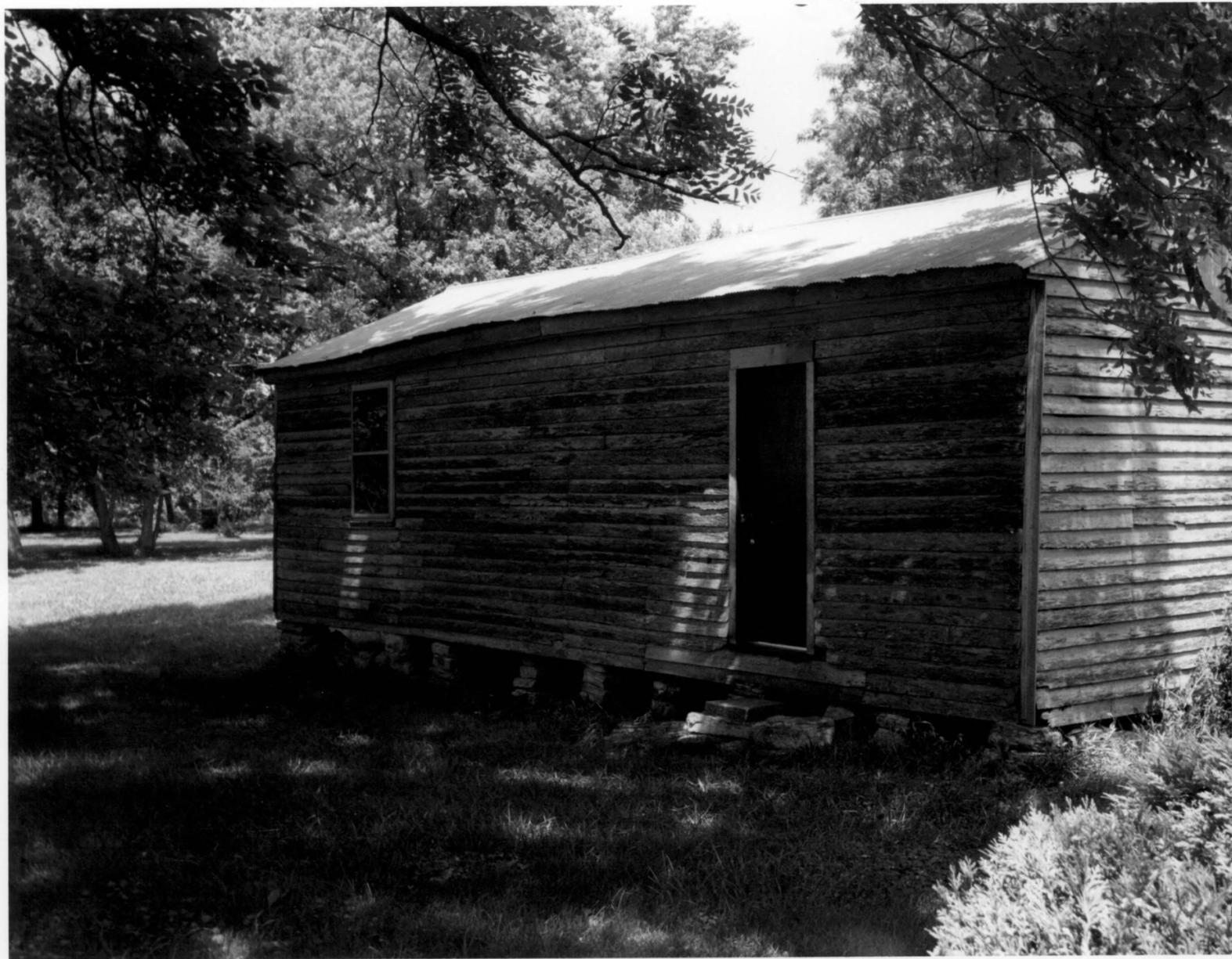


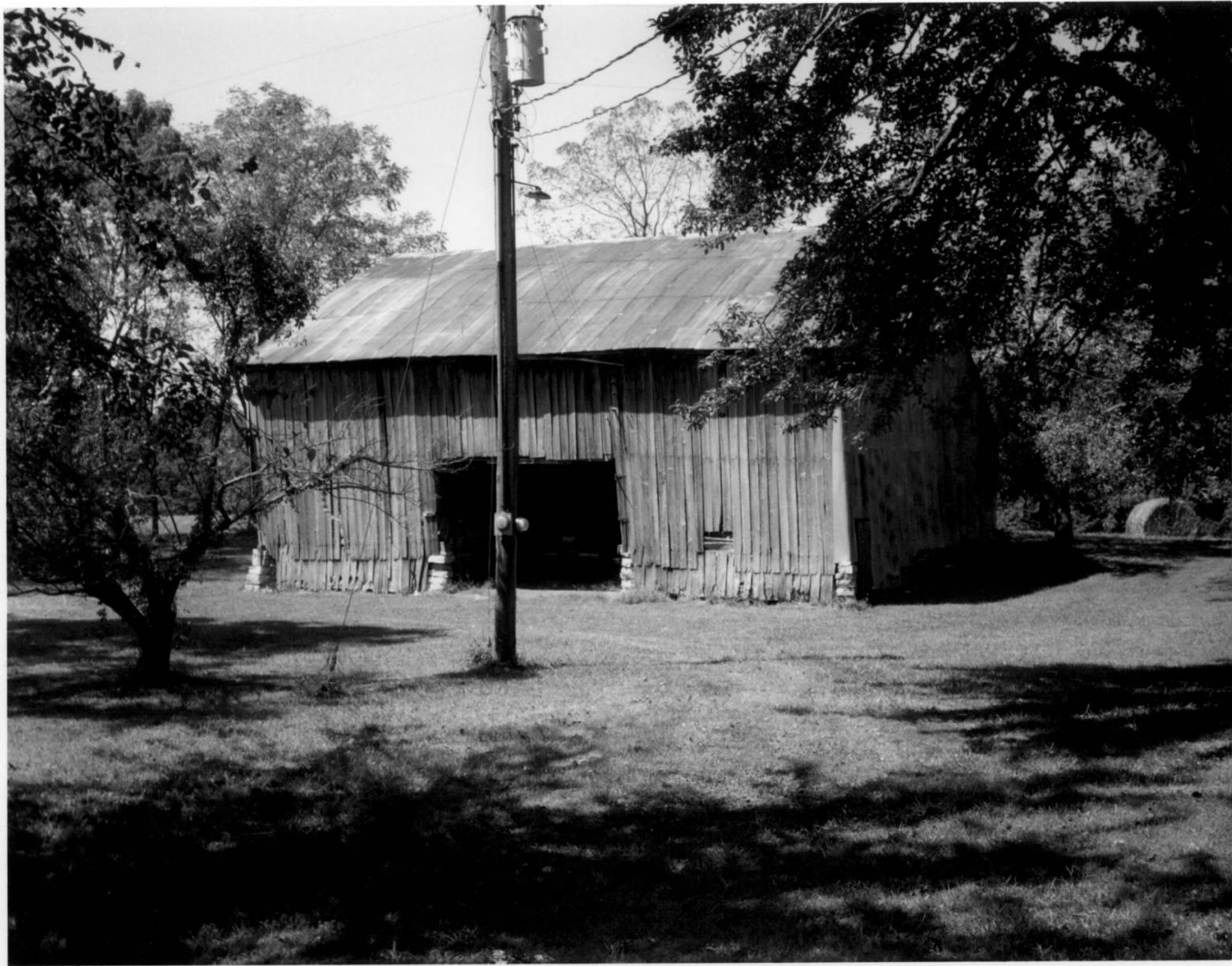


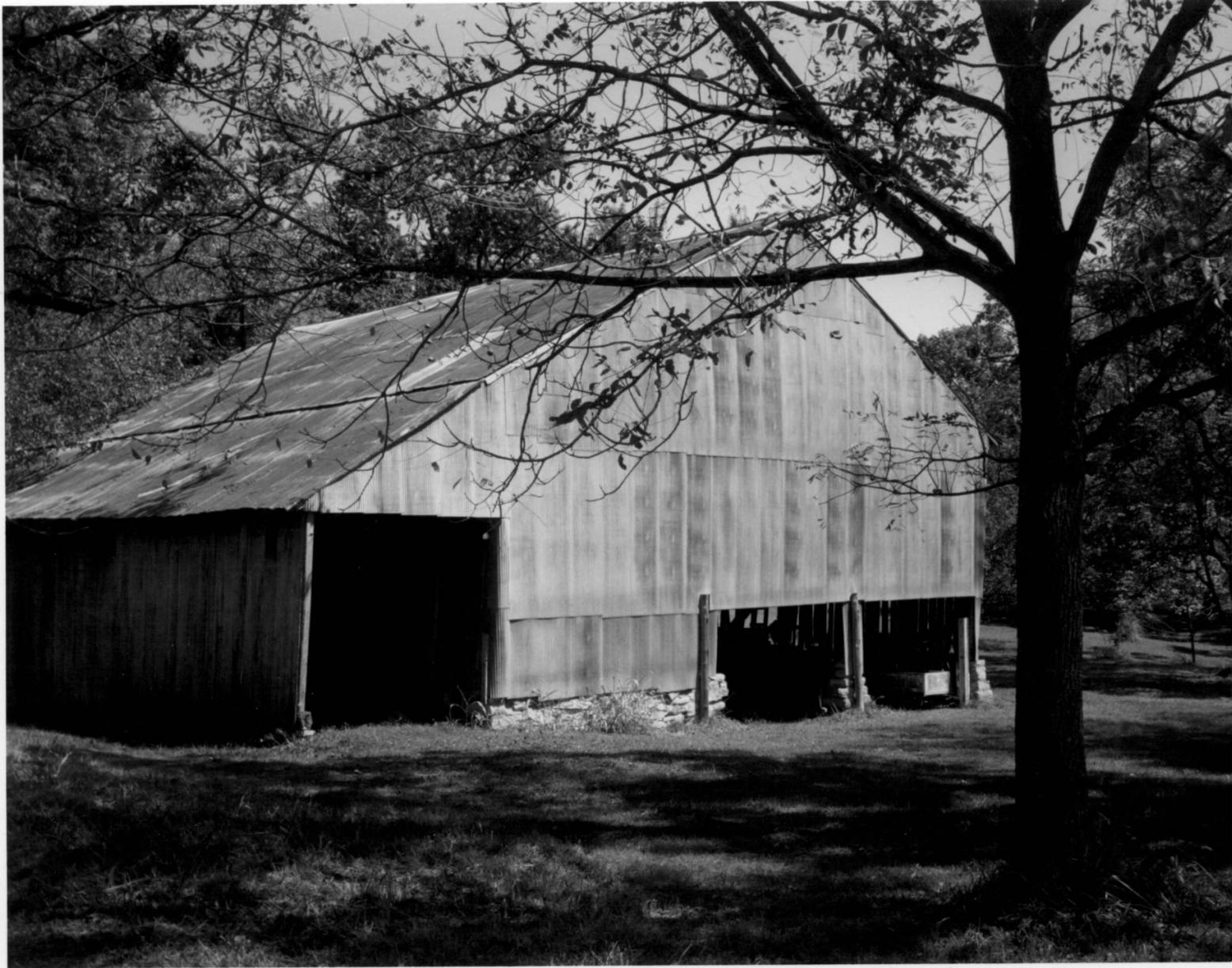




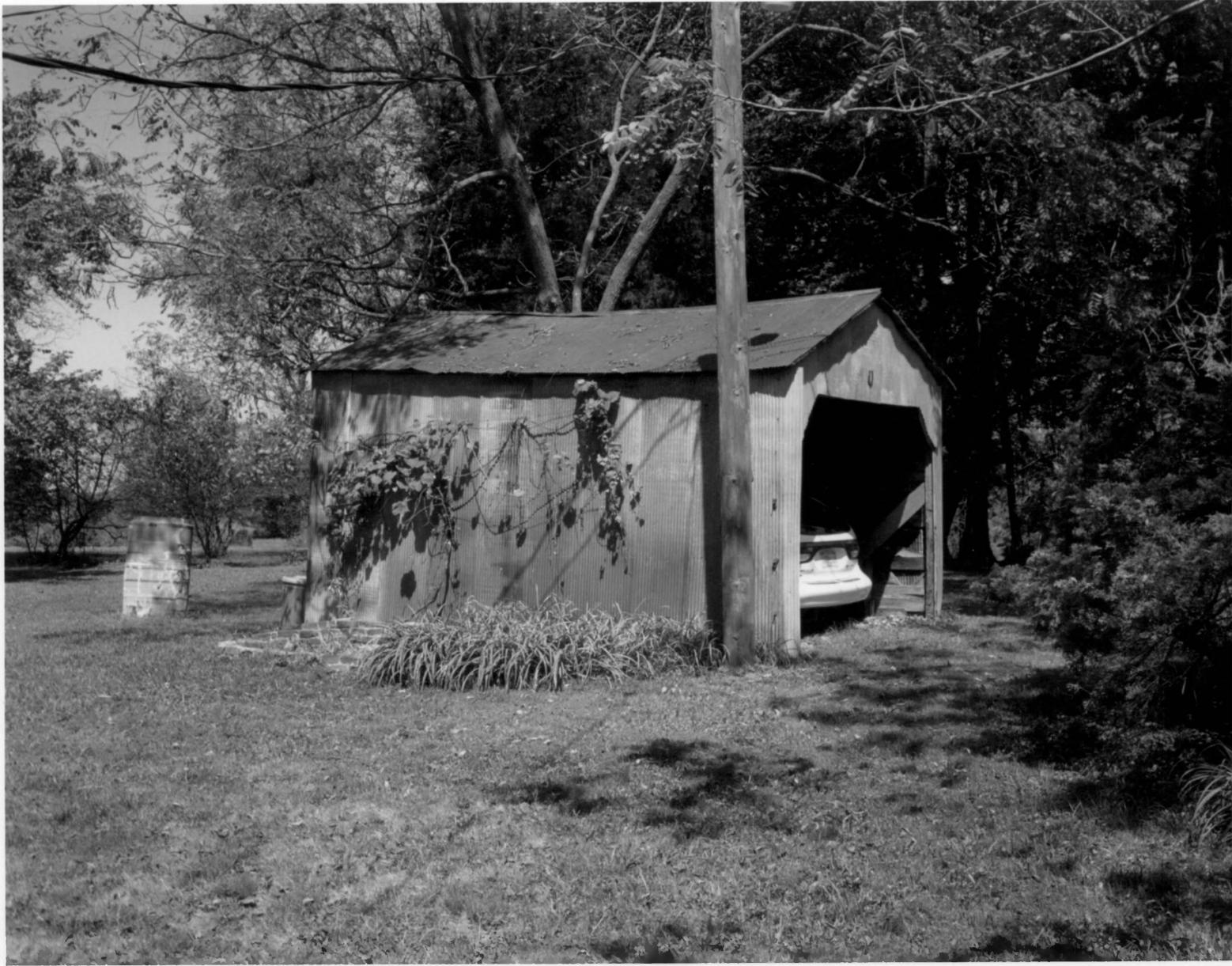












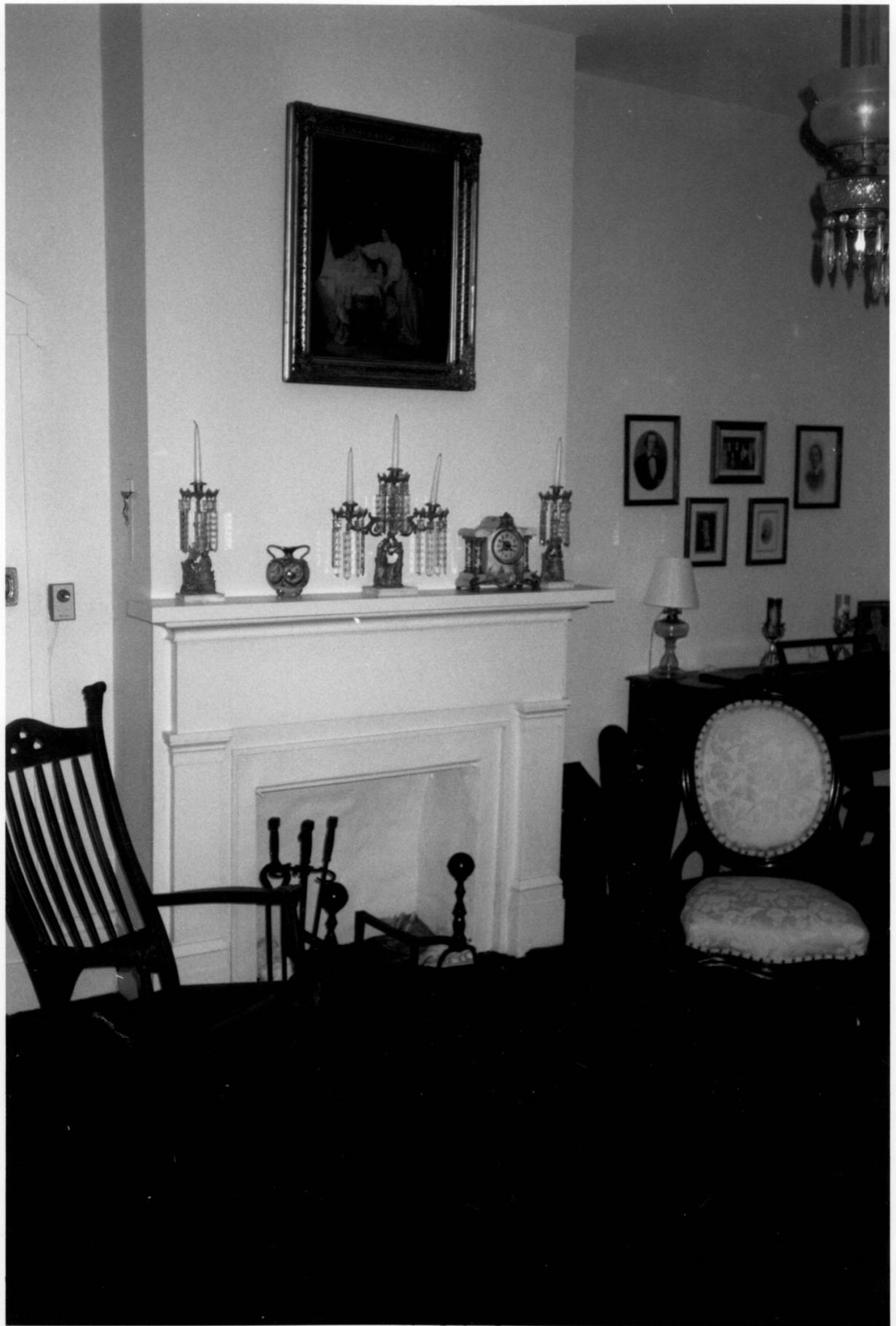














EXTRA  
PHOTOS











