

# **Coomer Barn History and Preservation Assessment**

## **Walter Hill, Rutherford County, TN**



**Prepared by the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation**



**May 2024**

The six-acre lot at 3076 Dinky Lane owned by Jon and Mary Coomer in Rutherford County is in the rural farming community of Walter Hill. On the property, there is a house, barn, single-crib outbuilding, smokehouse, cistern, and cellar. Oral accounts of former residents of the property, public deeds, and court records suggest that these were built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Located along the southeast side of Nashville's greater metropolitan area, the growth of the adjacent cities of Murfreesboro and Smyrna is pushing suburban residential development into the Walter Hill area. Aware of this growth and the modernization of their neighborhood, in September 2023, the Coomers contacted the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation (CHP) to request a preservation assessment of the barn on the property. On November 2, 2023, Center research assistant Amelia Blakely, fieldwork coordinator Savannah Grandey Knies, and assistant director Antoinette van Zelm visited the property, met with the Coomers and previous owners of the property, and assessed the barn and other outbuildings. Amelia then took the lead in researching and writing this report. Unless otherwise noted, all photographs of the property included in this report were taken by CHP staff during the site visit.



Southwest oblique of the home on the Coomer property.



Coomer farmhouse, Walter Hill, Rutherford County, TN, Nov. 2, 2023.

### **Community and Property History**

While small, subsistence farmers settled the Walter Hill area in the early nineteenth century, some of the first white American inhabitants were families of financial means. Many of these families owned large tracts of land and brought enslaved people to the area to construct farm buildings and homes and produce subsistence crops, as well as crops for market. After the Civil War, Black and White families continued to farm this area as formerly enslaved people worked the land as laborers, tenants, and – to a lesser extent – owners.

The end of the nineteenth century saw significant economic shifts in the creation of new hybrid crops and breeds of livestock, higher commodity demands, the emergence and establishment of progressive soil practices and mechanization, and a rural population increase

in the South.<sup>1</sup> In Tennessee, between 1880 and 1890, 68,762 farms were created, according to the respective agricultural censuses.<sup>2</sup> Rutherford County had a total of 3,266 farms in 1890 with a little more than 60 percent being operated by owners. Sharecropping and tenant farming were split roughly equally. In the state, Rutherford County was the largest producer of milk in 1890, producing over two million gallons, and was the second-largest producer of eggs. Corn, wheat, cotton, and molasses were also substantial crops produced by the county's farmers that year.<sup>3</sup>

During the start of the twentieth century and through World War I, agriculture continued to be a significant economic driver in Rutherford County, with nearly half of the county's population working on farms as hired hands, tenants, or sharecroppers in the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> By the 1940s, farmers in the county had experienced decades of precarious years characterized by rapid modern change and turbulent economic cycles. According to the 1940 U.S. Agricultural Census, Rutherford County landowners who farmed their property full-time had dropped to a little over 49 percent. The next largest portion of operators were tenants or sharecroppers. The average farm in Rutherford County was a little under 80 acres. Milk continued to be a major farm commodity produced in the county along with wool, eggs, and corn.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carroll Van West, *Tennessee Agriculture: A Century Farms Perspective* (Tennessee Department of Agriculture: 1986), 116; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 187-189.

<sup>2</sup> 1880 U.S. Agricultural Census, Tennessee, Table 1, 3, in [1880 – AgCensus \(cornell.edu\)](#); 1890 Agricultural Census, Tennessee, Table 1, 74, [1890 – AgCensus \(cornell.edu\)](#) (accessed 4/1/24).

<sup>3</sup> 1890 U.S. Agricultural Census, Tennessee, 182-415.

<sup>4</sup> Bethany L. Hawkins, "Powell's Chapel: A Church and Community," Master's Thesis (Middle Tennessee State University, 2014), 55.

<sup>5</sup> 1940 U.S. Agricultural Census, Tennessee, Tables 1 – 6, 174 – 218, [1940 – AgCensus \(cornell.edu\)](#) (accessed 4/1/24).

## **Definitive Lineage of Ownership**

Through research at the Rutherford County Register of Deeds Office, definitive owners of the Coomers' property can be traced back to the latter half of the nineteenth century. A list of the owners and their tenure of ownership is found below.

Mid-19th Century - 1892: Andrew M. Jones

1892 - 1915: Anderson Short

1915 - 1921: John H. Cunningham, family head, and then Clive Presley Cunningham, son

1921 - 1949: Shelah Phillips

1949 - 1963: William Tully Barrett

1963 - 1985: John and Eva Leyhew

1985 - 2013: Maryanne Aquadro and Jim McNeil

2013 - 2021: Mitch and Jamie Wagers

2021 - present: Jon and Mary Coomer

Tracing back ownership of the Coomer property was difficult because the property was part of larger landholdings before the 1890s, when it was divided up into smaller tracts in a chancery court case. According to public deeds, the property was part of a 62-acre tract sold in an auction in 1892 from the widow and heirs of Andrew M. Jones to Anderson Short. Before the Jones family sold the property, research suggests that the land could have formerly been part of swaths of acreage owned by Albert Jones, the father of Andrew Jones, or Mariah Malone, Jacob Donelson, William S. Sublett, or John Mullins—all individuals who sold land to Andrew Jones and his father Albert between 1832 and 1878. The following paragraphs outline the history of the families who held significant acreages of land around the Coomer property and the community they created through religious, economic, and familial relations.

## **The Phillips Family**

To understand the history of the property and surrounding landscape, it is important to start with one of the property's previous owners, Shelah Phillips (b. 1897, d. 1935), and his



family's connection to the surrounding community.<sup>6</sup> The Center for Historic Preservation's staff met Robert Phillips, Shelah's son, at the property, where he described what the property looked like and how it functioned in the 1930s.

Like many residents of the area, Phillips and his family were deeply connected to the community through institutions like Powell's Chapel Baptist Church, where his ancestors were founding members. Additionally, Robert's mother, Era Phillips, was a teacher at the school that the church formed a few years after Powell's Chapel was created in 1875.<sup>7</sup> This community, which Robert and his family were active members of close to a century ago, still exists today.

Although Robert was only a young boy when his father died in 1935 and a teenager when he moved from the property, the place of his childhood home was a core aspect of his earliest memories and sense of self. In conversation with CHP staff, Robert spoke of a long depression he experienced until he was able to recreate his childhood home on his current farm in Gallatin, Tennessee. He attributed this long season of melancholy to departing from his childhood home and being uprooted from his family and community. These connections and experiences demonstrated why Robert felt that the property was a "home place" to him.

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<sup>6</sup> Shelah Phillips, Death Certificate, 1 Feb. 1935, digital image, Ancestry.com.

<sup>7</sup> "Powell's Chapel School, 1878 – 1926," Rutherford County Tennessee Historical Society (blog), <https://rutherfordtnhistory.org/powells-chapel-school-1878-1926/> (accessed 4/1/24).



Powell's Chapel Sunday School class in 1900.<sup>8</sup>

Robert's father, Shelah Phillips, was born to John Houston Phillips (1857-1934) and Susan Robertie "Birdie" Short Phillips (1861-1903), the third youngest of 9 children.<sup>9</sup> According to census records, John Houston was originally from Wilson County. He and Susan married in Rutherford County in 1879 and lived in the Walter Hill community.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Rutherford Courier*, 9 Sept. 1951, Newspapers.com.

<sup>9</sup> John Houston Phillips, Death Certificate, 23 June 1934, digital image, Ancestry.com; Susan Robertie Short Phillips, Grave Marker, Short Cemetery, Rutherford County, TN, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com.

<sup>10</sup> "John Houston Phillips," 1890 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Rutherford Co., TN, Ancestry.com.



The barn that Shelah used to shelter livestock and store farm equipment. Pictured is Robert Phillips (sitting), John Leyhew (standing), and Amelia Blakely on Nov. 2, 2023, in Walter Hill, Rutherford County, TN.

During Shelah Phillips's ownership, he used the barn to shelter livestock and store such farming tools as a plow that he used to grow field crops. In addition to farming, Shelah was a school bus driver. The two cedar trees in the front yard were planted by Shelah for his son, Robert, and daughter, Doris Phillips. Shelah owned property surrounding the tract of the Coomer property, including land across the road. When that piece of land was owned by the Phillips family, there was a tenant house that relatives and other community members rented while they worked for the family.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Phillips, Personal Communication to CHP, 11 Nov. 2023.





Shelah Phillips's father and mother, John Houston and Susan Robertie Short Phillips.<sup>12</sup>

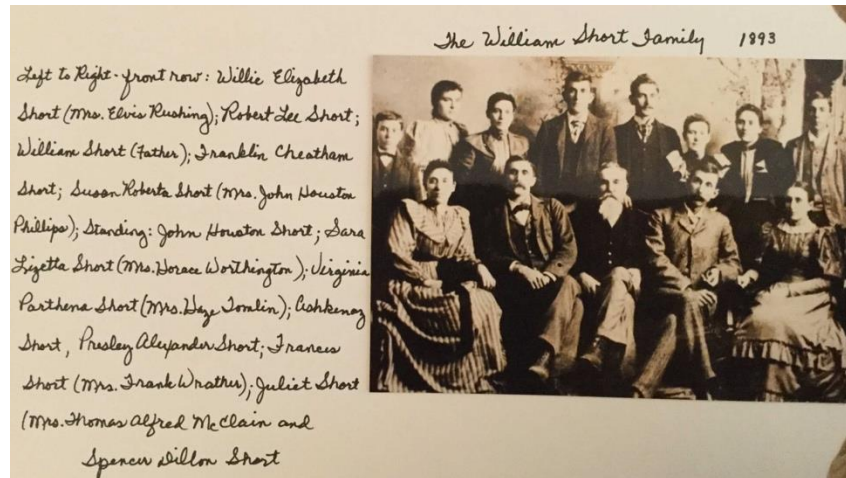
### **The Short Family**

Shelah Phillips's family's connection to the Walter Hill community is through his mother, Susan Short Phillips. She was the daughter of William "Buck" Short (1827-1913) and Mahala Elizabeth Williams (1843-1884). Susan was the oldest of twelve children born to William and Mahala. After Mahala's death in 1884, William Short married Susan McNeil and had one more child, Mattie Lee Short (b. 1888, d.1966).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "John Huston [sic] Phillips and Roberta [sic] Short," Digital Image, personal collection of *Etta Moore Phillips Lester*, Ancestry.com.

<sup>13</sup> William M. Short, Grave Marker, Short Cemetery, Rutherford County, TN, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com; Mahala Elizabeth Short, Grave Marker, Short Cemetery, Rutherford County, Tennessee, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com.



The Short Family in 1893.<sup>14</sup>

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Shorts were among a group of families that owned many acres of land in Rutherford County in the Walter Hill community, where they enslaved African Americans. William's father, Anderson Short (1795-1876), settled in Rutherford County after moving from Mecklenburg County, Virginia.<sup>15</sup>

The earliest U.S. Census record for Anderson Short in Tennessee dates to 1820. Along with Anderson in 1820, there was a child under ten years old, two women between 24 and 44, and one enslaved child under the age of 14.<sup>16</sup> According to deed research, one of the earliest swaths of land Anderson Short bought was 22.5 acres "on the waters of Fall Creek," in the proximity of the current Coomer farm.<sup>17</sup> In 1850, Anderson Short is listed in the Slave Schedule of the U.S. Census as enslaving seven people, two women, both 37 years old, four boys ages 7, 5, 2, and 1, and one 5-year-old girl.<sup>18</sup> In the Population Schedule of Free Inhabitants of the Census, Anderson Short is listed as living with his children, including William. The property had

<sup>14</sup> The Short Family in 1893, Digital Image, Ancestry.com.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson Short, Grave Marker, Silver Hill Cemetery, Rutherford County, TN, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com.

<sup>16</sup> "Anderson Short," 1820 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Rutherford Co., TN, Ancestry.com.

<sup>17</sup> Tennessee State Library and Archives, *Early Tennessee/North Carolina Land Records*, Roll 118, Book 17, Nashville, TN, Ancestry.com.

<sup>18</sup> "Anderson Short," 1850 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Rutherford, Co., TN, Ancestry.com.

a real estate value of about one thousand dollars. One of Short's neighbors listed in the census was the Malone family.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Malone Family**

The Malone family was prominent in the area and related by marriage to the Phillips family through Robert Hatton Henderson (Shelah's second cousin on his paternal side).

According to historian Bethany Hawkins's research, the Malone family owned 426 acres around Fall Creek and was one of the largest enslavers in Rutherford County's Civil District No. 5.<sup>20</sup> The head of the Malone family was Mariah Malone (1804-1898), the widow of William Malone (1803-1847).<sup>21</sup> Some acres of the land owned by the Malone family were donated in 1834 to the Methodist Episcopal Church to establish a Methodist camp that became Shady Grove Methodist Church and later Powell's Chapel Baptist Church.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the Malone and Short families, other local families with large landholdings worked by enslaved people before the Civil War included the Jones family, the Harrison family, and the Harris family. These families and their descendants would become members of the Powell's Chapel Baptist Church community in the later portion of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Community relationships that started through geographic proximity and were reinforced by the

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<sup>19</sup> "Anderson Short," 1850 U.S. Census, Population Schedule for Free Inhabitants, Rutherford Co., TN, Ancestry.com

<sup>20</sup> Hawkins, "Powell's Chapel: A Church and Community," 13.

<sup>21</sup> "Mariah J. Malone," Grave Marker, Walterhill Cemetery, Rutherford County, TN, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com; "William Malone," Grave Marker, Walterhill Cemetery, Rutherford County, TN, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com.

<sup>22</sup> Billy Pittard, "Mariah Hoover Malone," *Southern Roots and Branches: Digging up ancestors since 1966* (blog), 8 Jan. 2011, <https://southernrootsandbranches.wordpress.com/2011/01/08/mariah-hoover-malone-1804-1898/> (accessed 4/1/24).

<sup>23</sup> Hawkins, "Powell's Chapel: A Church and Community," 14-15

economic system of slavery evolved into an intricate web of marital and religious kinships as families intermarried and belonged to the same religious community by the end of the century.



Short Family Reunion at William Short's House in 1924. Shelah Phillips (man in the back row with arms crossed) and members of the Short, Phillips, Malone, and Henderson families are shown.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Cunningham Family**

Emerging into adulthood within this social context, Shelah Phillips bought the 62-acre tract to which the Coomer property originally belonged and another tract from Clive Presley Cunningham in 1921.<sup>25</sup> During the Cunningham family's tenure on the property, they raised livestock and grew field crops.<sup>26</sup> Clive Presley (1893-1930) inherited the property from his father, John H. Cunningham (1864-1915), and was directed by his father's will to sell the land.<sup>27</sup> John Cunningham had received the land in 1915 from Anderson Short (1860-1936), William

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<sup>24</sup> "Buck Short Family Reunion 1924," *Southern Roots and Branches: Digging up ancestors since 1966* (blog), 27 March 2011, <https://southernrootsandbranches.wordpress.com/2011/03/27/buck-short-family-reunion-1924/> (accessed 4/1/24).

<sup>25</sup> "C.P. Cunningham to (DEED) Shelah Phillips," Rutherford County Deeds Office, Book 65, 233.

<sup>26</sup> "John H. Cunningham," Will, 1915, Ancestry.com.

<sup>27</sup> "Clive Presley," Grave Marker, Evergreen Cemetery, Murfreesboro, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com; "John H. Cunningham," Will, 1915, Ancestry.com; "John Henry Cunningham," Grave Marker, Lannom Vesta Cemetery, Wilson Co., TN, digital image, Find-a-Grave.com.

Short's nephew and Shelah's cousin. Anderson had purchased the land at auction in 1892 for Cunningham after the two men made a trade.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Jones Family**

The Jones family, the owner of the property before the Cunningham and Phillips families, was a significant landholding family in the area and was headed by Albert Jones (1810-1873), also a prominent enslaver.<sup>29</sup> According to genealogical research by the Rutherford County Historical Society, the Jones family first lived in the area prior to Tennessee statehood.<sup>30</sup> The family settled in Rutherford County after Albert's parents, William (1784-1859) and Isabella Jones (1790-1835), moved from North Carolina.<sup>31</sup> William and Isabella Jones are buried in the Charlton Ford Cemetery, about a half mile from the Coomer property.<sup>32</sup>

The family was prosperous, as they purchased numerous enslaved people in the decades leading up to the Civil War and accumulated hundreds of acres before and after the war. Between 1832 and 1878, Albert Jones purchased 419 acres of land from neighboring landowners in the county's Civil District 5 around Fall Creek. According to property records found in the Rutherford County's public deed indexes, between 1846 and 1850, Jones purchased 9 enslaved people, including children, from his neighbors. Although documents do not exactly say where the Jones family lived and worked when the property was owned by

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<sup>28</sup> Anderson Short, Grave Marker, Short Cemetery, Walterhill, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com; "Hattie Jones et al. vs. Virgie Jones et al. Judgment," *Chancery Court Records*, Rutherford County Archives, Jones, Hatte vs. Virgil [sic] Jones, c. 1888-1893, Book U, 225-227.

<sup>29</sup> Albert Jones, Grave Marker, Jones Cemetery, Murfreesboro, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com.

<sup>30</sup> Rutherford County, Tennessee, Historical Society, "Some of the Earliest People in Rutherford County By Date of Their Birth Prior To 1800," <https://rutherfordtnhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Pioneers-before-1800.pdf> (accessed 4/1/24).

<sup>31</sup> Isabella Jones, grave marker, Charlton Ford Cemetery, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com.

<sup>32</sup> William Jones, grave marker, Charlton Ford Cemetery, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com.



Andrew and Albert Jones, it is likely that the land was cultivated by enslaved people's labor before the Civil War.

Before his death in 1888, Albert's son Andrew Jones, owned about 411 acres in Rutherford County's Civil District No. 5. After Andrew's death, the court ordered the Jones's property to be divided into four tracts and put up for auction. James Polk McCullough (1839-1921) testified as a witness in the case and described the land regarding its value.<sup>33</sup> He described the first tract, the "home place," as a tract of about 260 acres situated in "the middle of Fall Creek's banks." According to McCullough's testimony, 160 acres of the tract were ready for farming while the remainder was said to have shallow and rocky soil with "inferior timber" and other vegetation. The second tract, about 87 acres, was across from the first tract across Fall Creek. It was described as having uncultivable land and no valuable timber. The third tract was separated from the other tracts by about a mile and included 64 acres that were also considered untillable. McCullough's testimony described the fourth tract as being between 30 to 60 acres on the east side of Jones Road, which separated it from the first tract.<sup>34</sup>

When the tracts went up for auction, Shelagh Phillips's father, John Houston Phillips, bought 190 acres of the first tract with his father-in-law, William Short, and brother-in-law, Robert Lee Short, as sureties. Anderson Short, John Houston's nephew and Shelah's cousin, bought the fourth tract of 62 acres.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> James Polk McCulloch, Sr., Grave Marker, Charlton Ford Cemetery, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com.

<sup>34</sup> "Hattie Jones et al. vs. Virgie Jones et al. Judgment," *Chancery Court Records*, Rutherford County Archives, Jones, Hatte vs. Virgil [sic] Jones, c. 1888-1893, Book U, 225-227.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

By the time Shelah Phillips received ownership of the 62 acres in 1921, the slavery-based farming economy his ancestors participated in had shifted towards commercial tenant farming. After Shelah died from tuberculosis in 1935, his wife Era took ownership of the farm but was unable to maintain it. She and her children, Doris and Robert, moved off the farm in 1941 to East Nashville. When Era decided to sell the land, Robert sued his mother. According to court records, in 1949 the 62 acres owned by the Phillips family had a house, barn, and garage, in addition to other outbuildings. The property had been rented out “for a number of years” and produced a meager income for the Phillips family. The structures, fences, and land were deteriorating and losing value from the lack of upkeep and extractive farming practices by tenants. Additionally, neither Robert nor his sister Doris were interested in or capable of running the farm, according to court records. The court ruled that the property in question, three tracts, was to be sold separately and then as one for Phillips to get the most financial benefit.<sup>36</sup> In 1949, the property was sold to William Tully Barrett (1897-1970) and Mattie Barrett (1897-1985).<sup>37</sup>

### **The Barrett Family**

When the Barretts bought the property, some of the Barrett children moved with their parents onto the farm, including Eva Barrett, who was a daughter of William Barrett. When William Barrett owned the land, he raised sheep, beef cattle, and corn. Cotton was tried for the first year but not continued. He also put indoor plumbing into the house.

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<sup>36</sup> “Mrs. Era Morgan Phillips, ET AL vs. Robert Phillips No. 1757, *Minutes, Rutherford County Chancery Court*, Rutherford County Archives, Book RR, 436, 442.

<sup>37</sup> “Brainard B. Gracy, C & M TO: DEED W.T. Barrett & Wife, “Rutherford County Deeds Office, Deed Book 104, 261-262; William Tully Barrett, Grave Marker, Roselawn Cemetery, Murfreesboro, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com; Mattie Frances Barrett, Grave Marker, Roselawn Cemetery, Murfreesboro, Rutherford Co., TN, Find-a-Grave.com.

## **The Leyhew Family**

In November 1952, Eva married John Leyhew, and the couple bought the property from William Barrett and lived there until 1985, raising their family. William and Mattie also lived on the property in a new brick house. William died in 1970. The Layhews continued updating the farmhouse into a modern home. They installed electric heaters and a wood stove. They used the cellar outside to the west of the house to store potatoes.

The Leyhews lived on the property for more than 20 years. On the farm, John Leyhew raised cows and calves in the barn. He sold calves for cash and used the cows for dairy. John Leyhew added a hay loft in the barn and an elevator. While the barn served the Leyhews by keeping cows and hay, the family's sons also played there. The Leyhew family didn't use the corn crib. However, they did use the smokehouse when it was time to butcher hogs. Hogs were killed under the adjacent tree in the backyard. Then the meat was put on the roof of the smokehouse before it was salted and put into the smokehouse. In the smokehouse, next to the door, there was a saltbox and a large, carved-out log used for salting down the meat, according to Eva Leyhew.



Eva Leyhew standing in the doorway of the smokehouse, pointing out a square nail on Nov. 2, 2023, in Walter Hill, Rutherford County, TN.

After the Leyhews, the property was no longer strictly used for farming. In 1985, the Leyhews sold the property to Maryanne Aquadro and Jim McNeil, a couple who lived there from 1985 to 2013 and renovated the house. In 2013, the couple sold the house to the Wager family, who then sold it to Mary and Jon Coomer, the current owners.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Eva and John Leyhew, Personal Communication to CHP, 11 Nov. 2023.

## **Property Resources**

The Coomer property contains approximately six acres with its length on the north-south axis. Like many other farms in the area, this former farm property has evolved over generations to meet the needs and lifestyles of its owners. This is most evident in the piecemeal evolution of the historic house, the centerpiece of the property, but is also represented by the extant historic outbuildings including the barn, crib, and smokehouse.



Aerial view of the Coomer property with extant historic resources labeled.



## House

The house is a gable-front-and-wing house with a porch on the primary façade facing Dinky Lane and an additional porch along the east elevation. Attached to the rear of its east elevation is a two-story double-bay garage. The build date of the house is uncertain, as it appears to have evolved over time with at least three to four additions. It is possible the original core of the house was a simple, rectangular shape with one or two rooms that dates to the mid-nineteenth century or later. It was common in the South for simple homes with one or two rooms to be renovated near the turn of the twentieth century into gable-front-and-wing houses by adding a one-story, front-facing gable wing to the front. This not only provided more interior living space but also updated the exterior and showed passersby that the homeowners had the means and wherewithal to maintain a stylish house.<sup>39</sup> The room toward the rear (south) of the house contains the kitchen and may have been added during the same renovation when the gable-front wing was attached. Other additions, such as the two-story garage, were added during the latter half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>39</sup> Lee and Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 92.



The southeast oblique of the main house.



The north (rear) elevation of the house, showing the interesting layout of the home with varied roof heights and gables.



## Barn

The barn resembles a Midwest three-portal barn with a slight gambrel-styled roof, with its three main aisles, hay lofts on top of the flanking cribs or stables inside the structure, and enclosed side aisles. In the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the Midwest three-portal barn became the standard farm structure throughout southern and central parts of the United States. These types of barns can also be called “feeder barns” because they were used in housing livestock, in addition to storing hay, other grains, and machinery.<sup>40</sup> The barn’s roof is corrugated metal. It is suspected the barn was built with wood such as yellow poplar and then repaired with cedar.



The north and west elevations of the barn.

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<sup>40</sup> Allen G. Noble, *Wood Brick and Stone: The North American Landscape*, Vol. 2 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 13-14.



Flanking cribs with missing boards and hay lofts in the barn.

### **Corn Crib**

The corn crib is a side-drive crib of log chink construction. The crib is thought to be older than the barn. Some of the wall logs are round, others are square, and they vary in thickness, possibly because of different wood species, processing, and age. The chink construction (when the logs only touch at the corners and there are gaps between them) used in this structure is a sign that this building was constructed to dry out and preserve stores placed within it. The log notches are mostly saddle-V notches with a mixture of double-saddle notches on round logs.



The southeast oblique of the corn crib.

Some features on the corn crib signal that the logs were most likely repurposed from an earlier building or structure. The V-notch style is a common style of notching used from eastern Pennsylvania and across the Ohio River Valley including the lower Midwest, Shenandoah Valley, Kentucky, and parts of Tennessee. It is typically found on round logs, as are double-saddle notches. These notch styles required less skill to execute than dovetail notches or half-dovetail notches (commonly used in this region to construct more substantial buildings such as homes and large barns) and are commonly found on small outbuildings. The lack of daubing used in crib-type of buildings is also conducive to reusing the logs from older buildings to construct new ones.

The timber used for this crib is most likely yellow poplar or cedar. It has a shed corrugated metal roof with windows on either end, a lean-to, and a foundation of stacked limestone rocks. There is a window cut in the walls on the south side of the crib. Beneath the



gable, there is weatherboard. These planks appear to be younger than the logs used in the lower portion of the crib.



Seen in this photo are the double-saddle notches on the eastern side of the corn crib. On the ends of the timber, it appears that these logs were formerly notched with square notches, possibly from being used in another building before this one.





Seen above is the chink construction and different sizes of the timber used on the north side of the corn crib.



Interior of the corn crib.





The west elevation of the corn crib.

### **Smokehouse**

The smokehouse is a gable-roof building with weatherboard walls and the remnants of a lean-to attached to the north elevation. The roof material is corrugated metal. There are still square-cut nails in the framing of the smokehouse. A low, dry-stack stone foundation supports the building.



The west elevation of the smokehouse.





The north elevation of the smokehouse.



The low, dry-stacked stone foundation beneath the smokehouse.

## **Barn Condition Assessment and Preservation Guidance**

### **Barn Condition**

The barn is in a run-down but stable condition and not beyond preservation or restoration. The corrugated metal roof is intact except for missing metal pieces on the north side of the barn. The barn's walls are intact but are old and weathered. Some pieces of siding towards the roof of the barn are missing. There is chicken wire wrapped around a corner in the breezeway on the west side of the barn towards the ground. It appears to be a temporary repair to keep animals out since the siding is missing in that area.

The lean-to on the west side of the barn looks like the most unstable portion of the barn because of the tilt of weight-bearing posts that look like unprocessed logs of cedar trees. Some areas of the barn have vines climbing up the sides and onto the roof. According to owners who lived at the property in the mid-20th century, they occasionally repaired the barn throughout their time living on the property, replacing plank trusses with unprocessed pieces of cedar wood. On the northeastern corner of the barn, the east lean-to's roof is sagging.

### **Preservation Assessment**

All missing pieces of metal on the roof and missing wood panels on the side of the barn and in the barn should be replaced with the same or similar materials. To support the historical integrity of the barn, replacing the metal and wood with the same or similar materials is critical. Any panels of wood that are rotted or decayed should be replaced. Once repairs are made to the siding and wood panels in the barn, the chicken wire being used can be removed. Repairing the roof and siding of the barn are the first steps in making the barn as weathertight as possible. Keeping water out of the barn is vital in maintaining the barn's condition. In addition



to repairing the roof and siding to keep out moisture, ensuring there is proper drainage and grading around the foundation should be done. Moisture, in addition to insects, are major threats to historic structures. Regular examinations for infestations or leaks will ensure the structure is staying maintained.<sup>41</sup>

Since the barn was used for sheltering livestock, keeping hay and grains, and storage for farm equipment, the flanking cribs or stables inside the barn could be repaired by replacing missing panels of wood that created separate spaces within the cribs. By doing so, the barn will more closely resemble what it looked like while it was being used in the twentieth century.

Further inspection of the west side of the barn--in between the western aisle and middle portion--will determine if that side is structurally sound or needs repairs to weight-bearing posts to improve stability. Structural repairs to this side of the barn could include straightening the middle aisle's wall, bracing, or tying the western aisle's wall more securely to the structural system of the barn. The eastern aisle needs to have the sagging portion of its roof repaired. This will require inspecting the outer wall of the aisle to determine which part of the wall is losing its structural integrity and causing the roof to sag. Adding gutters or downspouts to the roofs will improve draining and possibly delay further deterioration.<sup>42</sup>

All vines and other vegetation growing on the barn should be cleared. Additionally, the young trees growing close to the barn should be removed before they grow any taller and cause any structural damage to the barn. Finally, inside the barn, any soil or manure build-up around or up against the foundation needs to be removed. These types of build-ups can hold

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<sup>41</sup> Micheal J. Auer, "20 Preservation Briefs: The Preservation of Historic Barns," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Heritage Preservation Services, 1989, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 7-9.

moisture from water and snow and therefore promote rot. They can also promote insect infestations.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 7.