

Dye-White Farm
County Road 244, 1.2 mis. S of
 Heardmont
Heardmont vicinity
Elbert County
Georgia

HABS No. GA-31

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
DYE-WHITE FARM

HABS NO. GA-31

Location: East side of County Road 244, 1.2 miles south of Heardmont, .7 mile north of Beaverdam Creek, Heardmont vicinity, Elbert County, Georgia.

USGS Heardmont Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.344240.3773735.

Present Owner: United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Present Use: Vacant; scheduled to be demolished.

Significance: Jim White, owner of the largest amount of land held by a black in the Heardmont neighborhood, was the only black person in that community to accumulate a sizeable acreage without inheriting all or part of his land. Black ownership of more than one hundred acres was most unusual in Elbert County in the early twentieth century. The barn, smokehouse, and one-story center-hall-plan house were the only structures on the farmstead when White moved there in 1926; at present there are thirty-seven out-buildings associated with the farm.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Early twentieth century. According to Ed Brownlee, the house was built by Bynum Dye and his son, Shelton, sometime prior to 1916. Dye finished only one room of the house before he began occupying it; the other rooms were finished and the addition added before Jim White moved there in 1926.
2. Architect: none known
3. Original and subsequent owners: The deeds for Bynum Dye's original acquisition and Jim White's purchase from him cannot be located.

1919 Deed Book 7, page 313. Jim White purchased two 50-acre tracts from the heirs of Bynum Dye, Shelton Dye and Estelle Bone, for \$2,500. This property had a house on it; it was probably one of the houses near Beaverdam Creek labeled "B.B. Dye" on Baker's 1905 map. The White family moved to that house about 1921 and lived there until 1926.

- 1924 Deed book 12, pages 492 and 565. Jim White acquired four and one-half acres from Martin Dye for \$138 and two 100-acre tracts from the heirs of W. F. Anderson for \$800 each.
- 1926 Unrecorded. Jim White's land was purchased by the Wateree Power Company and he used this money to buy 50 acres, including a farmstead from Shelton Dye, who was forced to sell his land because he could not pay the taxes on it. This is the Dye-White Farm.
- 1929 Deed book 17, page 392. Jim White increased his acreage, buying 57 acres from Mrs. Elizabeth Tutt for \$1,400.
- 1933 Deed book 21, page 322. Jim White bought another 15 acres from Mrs. Elizabeth Tutt for \$75.
- 1956 Jim White died in 1956, his wife having predeceased him in 1954. Ownership of the land and management of the farm passed to their four unmarried daughters, Laura, Ludie, Emma C., and Inez.
- 1979 The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers acquired the farm from the White sisters.
4. Original plans and construction: The house, which retains its original appearance, is a frame, one-and-a-half story, center-hall-plan structure with four rooms and a rear addition. The main block has a hipped roof with two front gables. The one-story three-room addition has a shed roof.
5. Alterations and additions: The rear addition, consisting of a kitchen and two pantries, was added before Jim White bought the farm in 1926 and may be considered part of the original structure. Jim White made few alterations to the house during his thirty-year occupancy. The interior was not altered until 1968, when Inez White installed panelling in the hallway and southwest bedroom. Cardboard was tacked on over the wallpaper in the other rooms and painted. Salvageable wood was removed from the house after the White sisters vacated in 1979.

B. Historical Context

The community of Heardmont is so named because it lies adjacent to the antebellum plantation of Governor Stephen Heard. The community was always agricultural rather than industrial,

and the crossroads town of Heardmont included the offices of prominent white landowners of the community, their general stores and gins, the post office, and the Heardmont railroad depot. In about 1930, approximately one hundred families comprised the Heardmont rural community.

In the early twentieth century, several white landowners controlled the majority of land in the area. The largest farm was that of the McCalla estate, comprising more than 3,000 acres. Sam Mattox had the next largest farm, and Frierson and Orr also had a substantial amount of land, although they rented part of the land they farmed. McCalla was the largest employer of black farmhands and tenants in the neighborhood, and Frierson and Orr had nearly as many; the White sisters estimate that they each employed between 100 and 200 hands. Mattox used prison chain gangs as well as tenants and hired hands. Most of the tenants of white landowners, and many of the black landowners, left the area in the 1920s and early 1930s because of the poor economic conditions. For the most part, they migrated north to the cities and never returned to this area.

The amount of land owned by blacks in Elbert County varied year to year but increased gradually after 1900. The percentage of land owned by blacks in Elbert County ranged from 4 to 6% between 1905 and 1945, and increased to 8% by 1950. Black land ownership in the Ruckersville Militia District, which contains the rural communities of Ruckersville and Heardmont, is significantly different than that of the county as a whole. Before the Civil War, three white landowners in the district fathered children by one of their black slaves, and in each case their mulatto children inherited land from them. This was the basis for the disproportionately high percentage of black land ownership in the two neighborhoods. In 1905, 16% of the land in the Ruckersville District was black-owned.

In the Heardmont neighborhood, almost all the black-owned land was held by Jarret, Bynum, and Laura Dye and their descendants, the exceptions being Willie and Mary Wall and Jim White. By 1935, there were only three black landowners in Elbert County who had holdings larger than 200 acres. Within the Ruckersville District, Jim White was the largest single black landowner in 1935 with 357 acres, followed by Ed Brownlee with 228 acres, Marion Heard with 150 acres, and Martin Dye with 100 acres. The other ten black landowners in the District all had holdings of less than 65 acres.

Jim White came from Ninety-Six, South Carolina, to the Heardmont area in 1890 to work on the construction of the Georgia, Carolina and Northern Railroad. In 1896 he married Addie Heard; they had eleven children. Until about 1907, Jim White worked for the railroad in South Carolina, coming home to Heardmont on weekends. Then he began tenant farming. From about 1910-21 he rented from Mildred Elliott on the Beverly Plantation. In 1919 he began acquiring his own farm land.

Jim White's success at farming was undoubtedly due to the fact that he diversified. In the early twentieth century in Elbert County, cotton-based agriculture became increasingly less profitable. Few farms rotated crops or introduced a variety. Jim White, though, was able to sell produce and meat as cash crops when the price of cotton was low and other farmers were forced into debt. The growth of White's farmstead reflected his increasing farm production: between 1925 and 1935 he added a new barn every year or two during the slack season in July until he had four or five substantial barns on his farm.

The Whites grew almost every southern crop on their farm except rice: cotton, peas, corn, wheat, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and sugar cane; they also had a vegetable garden and fruit trees. They owned a syrup mill and canned 70 to 80 gallons of syrup a year, mostly for home consumption. Livestock included hogs, cattle, chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys. They had three milk cows but no springhouse or milkhouse. Milk was kept cool by placing it in a pail of cool well water, which was changed several times a day. Fish from the Beaverdam Creek formed a significant part of the family's diet.

In about 1930, the White family sold approximately one-third of what they produced. Since most tenant families in the area had little or no garden, and no significant acreage in peas or sweet potatoes, the Whites found a ready market for their stored produce in the late winter and early spring months. Sweet potatoes were a basic foodstuff, as they were everywhere in the south at that time. Because the Whites planted a large potato crop to sell, a special building (copied from Jerry Johnson, another diversified farmer in the neighborhood) was constructed to hold the potatoes during the winter months. The sweet potatoes were covered with a canvas to protect them from frost in the winter and were uncovered when it got too hot.

When the White family traded at Heardmont in the early 1930s, there were three general stores, all owned by prominent white landlords in the community: T. B. Tucker, G. W. Gray, and Frierson and Orr. Both Frierson and T. B. Tucker owned cotton gins as well as general stores. As early as the turn of the century there was a black-owned sawmill and cotton gin in the Heardmont community, both owned by Bynum Dye. Black landowners and tenants, unlike sharecroppers, were free to choose the gins and mills that offered the best rates, and to negotiate the purchase of supplies in the larger towns.

Four black carpenters built homes for residents of the Heardmont area. George Verdell was a carpenter, as were George Gray and his two sons, Johnny and Wiley Gray. The houses and outbuildings common in the neighborhood were very similar to the major structures still extant on the Jim White farm: one-story, four-room frame houses with a center-hall plan and collections of small frame single- or dual-purpose outbuildings constructed in familiar forms. Many early twentieth century outbuildings were of log construction; the White sisters remember helping to strip the bark off logs as children to build their barns and outbuildings. According to the White sisters, most of these log outbuildings were constructed with either half-dovetail or full-dovetail notching.

After Addie White died in 1954, followed by her husband less than two years later, their four unmarried daughters, who were still living and working on the farm, took over its management. They were Laura, born in 1905; Ludie, born in 1910; Emma C., born in 1912; and Inez, born in 1913. Only Inez, a schoolteacher who spent several summers at school in Savannah, Atlanta, and Athens, has spent more than a week or two away from the farm.

The White sisters continued farming as their father had before them. As the soil became poorer as a result of over-intensive cultivation, the White sisters decreased the number of acres planted. They grew their last cotton crop in 1970, but as late as 1978 had 61 acres of cropland. They never owned a tractor, preferring to rely on mules. In 1979, the White sisters were relocated by the Corps of Engineers to a site one-half mile west of this one, where they continue their subsistence farming.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The hip-roofed, one-and-a-half story frame Dye-White house is built on a traditional center-hall plan with a one-story shed-roofed addition to the rear.
2. Condition of fabric: The house was badly vandalized in July 1979.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: One story, essentially square with a rear ell.
2. Foundations: Log piers with some cement block piers.
3. Walls: Weatherboard siding, 5½" wide, over frame.
4. Structural system, framing: Conventional frame construction. Studs and rafters are rough-cut lumber, 2" x 4", studs spaced 2' on center. The joists are 2" x 10".
5. Porches: The porch across the east front had a wall about 3' high covered with weatherboard siding, 2" x 4" posts, and a shed roof. It was screened. The porch on the rear was similar.
6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: None remaining.
 - b. Windows: All of the windows had two-over-two-light double-hung sash with screens.
8. Roof: Hip roof with two gables on the east front. Green asphalt shingles cover the original shakes.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: Center-hall plan, four rooms. Kitchen wing on rear.

2. Flooring: Tongue and groove boards 4" wide covered with linoleum.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are beaded 3" x ½" tongue and groove boards. The porch walls have plasterboard finish. Some interior walls were plastered with newspaper. There was a dropped ceiling in the house at one time.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation:

The farm is located on the crest of a hill .5 mile north of Beaverdam Creek and 1.4 miles southeast of the former town of Heardmont. The house is located at the highest point of the crest with a valley south of the main house. The outbuildings are located mainly to the southeast and southwest. There is a heavy forest to the northwest, south, and southeast of the farm. There are several large fields located to the southwest, north, and east of the main house.

2. Outbuildings:

The thirty-seven outbuildings illustrate the agricultural development of the farm from the early twentieth century until the present. The structures built before 1955 were of simple frame construction, built with local lumber, with logs used for sills and some posts. After 1955, buildings and repairs were made with rough-sawn lumber, small logs and branches nailed together, chicken wire, and rolled tarpaper roofing.

- a. Outbuildings constructed before 1926, by Bynum and Shelton Dye:

- (1) Cow Barn: A three-bay barn, 32'-4" x 26'-6", with shed-roofed additions on the southwest and northeast sides. Frame construction with rough-sawn lumber, corner posts measuring 4"x6" and interior wall studs measuring 3"x4". Some log posts on the interior. Roof was tarpaper with a metal ridge. The sheds have small logs for roof rafters. The exterior walls were vertical plank siding. The building has totally collapsed.

- (2) Smokehouse: The small rectangular smokehouse has completely collapsed. It is not possible to determine its original form.
 - (3) Fruit tree grove: Originally containing apple, pear, cherry, and peach trees, this grove was replanted with peach trees as the original trees died, beginning ca. 1944.
 - (4) First well: This well was never finished. A spring located northwest of the farmstead was used as the source of water until 1956.
- b. Outbuildings constructed between 1926 and 1955, by Jim White:
- (1) Corn crib: Built in 1926, the one-and-a-half-story corn crib measures 30'-0" x 18'-0" with shed additions, the main building measuring 11'-0" x 18'-0". Frame construction with log studs 2' on center. Log foundations. Gable roof has 2" x 6" rafters covered with roll asphalt with many patches. The siding is horizontal planks which measure 3/4" x 8" to 10". Horizontal plank door on the first level and vertical plank door on the second level. By the summer of 1979, the building had collapsed.
 - (2) Corn and pea barn: Built in 1927, the one-story corn and pea barn measures 14'-0" x 24'-0". The shed additions on the north and south sides are 8' wide; the main structure measures 8' x 14'. The structure has two levels, with the second level used for light storage. The foundations are stone piers. The structure is built of logs and small tree trunks, with horizontal planks measuring 3/4" x 8" to 10" for siding. The elevated plank floor was supported by four logs 3½' apart. There is a gable roof with metal covering on the main structure, and the shed roofs on the additions have rolled asphalt roofing.

- (3) Hog pens: This set of outbuildings was begun in 1926, and repairs and construction of additional buildings have been extensive. The pens are constructed out of log posts and branches with a few 2" x 4"s here and there. The branches are from 1" to 3" in diameter. Planks covered with rolled asphalt roofing form the roof. The fences are constructed of barbed wire with 3" diameter log posts and some angle bracing at the corners.
- (4) Grape arbors: The first grape arbor was constructed in 1926, and two others were added later.
- (5) First dog house: Constructed in 1927, the building consists of short poles nailed horizontally to a wood frame, with tarpaper roofing.
- (6) Fencing: Initially the Whites had no fenced pasture; the cows were staked out until enough woodland was cleared for a pasture. Fencing consists of wood posts and barbed wire.
- (7) Calf barn: Built in 1930, the calf barn is a lean-to structure 16' long and 6' deep, with the open end facing northeast. Constructed of branches with rolled asphalt roofing.
- (8) Privy: Built in 1944, the privy measures 6' x 5'. Stone foundation. Shed roof with rolled asphalt. Siding is horizontal planks measuring 3/4" x 6".
- (9) Hay barn: Built in 1944, the hay barn measures 39'-0" x 39'-0" with sheds on the south, west, and north sides. The main structure is 16'-3" x 31'-0" with the side sheds 10'-0" and the rear shed 8'-0" deep. Log foundations. Flooring is 1" x 6" to 10" planks supported on 2" x 8" joists. The corner-posts are 4" x 6" and the studs are 2" x 4", 2' on center. The siding consists of weatherboards 5½" wide. The roofing is rolled asphalt set on planking. There is a loft on the interior.

- (10) Chicken houses: The chicken brooder house was built in 1940 and other chicken houses were built in 1950.
 - (11) First Greenhouse: Built in 1944.
- c. Outbuildings constructed between 1955 and 1979, by the White sisters:
- (1) Cow pens: The first of this set of three buildings enclosed in two fenced areas was built in 1955. The pens measure 13'-0" x 9'-0", 5'-6" x 9'-0", and 8'-0" x 12'-0". The structural system is log framing members nailed together and covered with horizontal planking. The shed roofs are planking covered with rolled asphalt.
 - (2) Chicken houses: built in 1955.
 - (3) Cow and mule barn: Built in 1958, this barn measures 25'-0" x 11'-2". It has conventional frame construction with horizontal planking on the exterior. The shed roof has rolled asphalt roofing. There are two front doors and an interior partition dividing the building into two sections.
 - (4) Fruit jar storage and lye soap storage house: These two special-purpose storage buildings were constructed in 1960 and 1955, respectively.
 - (5) Second well: The second well was drilled in 1956.
 - (6) Second and third greenhouses: Built in 1968 and 1972. These greenhouses were constructed of wood members covered with pliofilm sheeting.
 - (7) Turkey house and chicken house: Both built in 1968.
 - (8) Garage: Built in 1950, the garage measures 12'-6" x 14'-6". With no foundation, it is of frame construction with horizontal siding 5½" wide. The gable roof has rolled asphalt roofing. There are two vertical-plank binged doors.

(9) Second and third dog houses: Built in 1968 and 1971.

(10) Children's play house: Built in 1967.

d. Other outbuildings: As the White sisters remember the farmstead ca. 1935, there was at least one more large barn and several smaller log outbuildings. After their father's death in 1957, these were moved out or disassembled and used to construct new structures.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views: The Corps of Engineers Real Estate Office in Elberton has color photographs of the house, greenhouse, and two barns before they were vandalized; photos undated.

B. Interviews:

Interview with Laura, Ludie, Emma C., and Inez White at their new home near Beaverdam Creek, August 7 and 9, 1980.

Telephone interview with Ed Brownlee of rural Elbert County, August 14, 1980.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Elbert County Deed Records, Clerk of Courts Office, Elbert County Courthouse, Elberton, Georgia.

Elbert County Marriage Records, Colored, Book B., page 214.

Elbert County Tax Digests, 1873-1970, Georgia State Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

"Maps of Elbert County, Georgia, by J. W. Baker, 1905. Copyright 1905 by J. W. Baker, Hartwell, Georgia. Fieldwork by H. K. Ertzberger, Penwork by H. H. Wilcox." Georgia State Archives: Department of the Surveyor General, Atlanta, Georgia.

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2. Secondary and published sources:

Fisher, James S. "Negro Farm Ownership in the South," Annals, American Association of Geographers, 63:4 (December 1973), pp. 478-489.

Johnson, Charles S. Statistical Atlas of Southern Counties: Listing and Analysis of Socio-Economic Indices of 1104 Southern Counties. Chapel Hill, N.C.; University of North Carolina Press, 1941, p. 95.

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PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the historic resources within the Richard B. Russell Dam Project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service's (HCRS) Interagency Archeological Services (IAS), Atlanta, Georgia, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District Office in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of the lake. The project was executed under the direction of John C. Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of HABS. The emergency recording was carried out during the fall of 1979 by the Historic American Buildings Survey's Washington, D.C. office: Project Supervisor, Richard J. Cronenberger; Staff Architects, Reginald A. Berry (Howard University), David T. Marsh, Jr. (Howard University); and Staff Landscape Architect, Paul D. Dolinsky. The buildings were researched in the summer of 1980 by LeAnne Baird, Project Historian, and Marcie Robertson, Assistant Historian. The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland in the HABS Washington Office in February 1981.