

Billie Eaton House
On the Old Natchez Trace, 0.9 mi.
W of Mackeys Creek, 5.7 mi. SW
of the intersection of State Rte.
25 and 30
Tishomingo Vicinity
Tishomingo County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-176

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MISS,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

BILLIE EATON HOUSE

Location: On the Old Natchez Trace, 0.9 miles west of Mackeys Creek, 5.7 miles southwest of the intersection of State Routes 25 and 30, Tishomingo Vicinity, Tishomingo County, Mississippi.

USGS Paden SE 7 1/2' Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates:
16.379160.3828470.

Present Owner: A. L. Riddle (August 1978).

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Billie Eaton House was built in the 1890s as a two-room house with open central passage. The persistence of traditional plan types exemplified in this dwelling is common in southwestern Tishomingo County. The house served as the home of Bille Eaton, who taught at the Billingsley School until his death in 1907.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Assuming that Billie Eaton was the first occupant, the house was probably constructed between 1894 and 1897. The use of wire nails makes it unlikely that the house was constructed before 1890. Although Billie Eaton was 19 in 1894, the Enumeration of Educable Children for that year shows that he was still living with his father. Furthermore, the U.S. Census of Population for 1900 shows W. B. (Billie) Eaton as a separate household. Billie and Allena Eaton's son Bolivar was born in 1898. It is likely that the house would have been constructed before this time. A. L. Riddle, a native of Tishomingo County, who was born in 1895, stated that the house had been there, "as far back as I recollect."
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Billie Eaton House is located 134 acres in the north part of the northeast quarter of Section 2, Township 6 South, Range 9 East, in Tishomingo County, Mississippi. Deed records are located in the Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

1914 Decree of Chancery Court, Amanda Ardis et al. v. John Eaton et al., December 10, 1914. Recorded in Minute Book 3, pp. 505-509. Allena Eaton and her two children, Bolivar and Lillian, received the following land in the settlement of the estate of J. M. Eaton, Billie Eaton's father:

"134 acres on north side of North East quarter of Section Two (2) Township Six (6) and Range Nine (9) East and valued at \$750.00, \$50.00 of which is for Improvements and \$700 of which is the value of the land without the Improvements made by the testator John M. Eaton." (A partial transcription of this settlement and a transcription of the will of J. M. Eaton are included with the Supplemental Material.)

1954 Warranty Deed. Bolivar and Lillian Eaton to Lu Allen Riddle [also known as Albert Lewellen Riddle], March 1, 1954. Recorded in Deed Book P-34, p. 348. Undivided interest in 134 acres, for \$10 and other valuable considerations. The deed stated that, "Possession of the above described lands is to be given up by January 1, 1955, and the grantors herein hereby retain any and all of the crops made on the above described lands during the year 1954." The land has remained in Riddle's possession since that time.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Although it is likely that Billie Eaton built the house for himself and his wife (Interviews with A. L. Riddle and Mittie Eaton Short), a 1913-1914 suit to partition the estate of J. M. Eaton, Billie's father, listed \$50.00 in improvements made by J. M. Eaton to Billie Eaton's property. (Amanda Ardis et al. v. John Eaton et al.) While \$50 would be a reasonable price for a house, this sum of money might also refer to any farm buildings on the property. Mittie Eaton Short stated that she had always understood that the "Improvements" listed in this suit consisted of cleared land. Because of the rich timber resources on the Eaton lands, it is likely that wood was supplied from the property.

5. Original construction: This three-bay house facing west was originally built as a two-room house with an open central passage. Porches ran the length of the east and west sides. A "side room" was located at the south end of the east (rear) porch. (Interviews with Mittie Eaton Short and Dalton Ward, corroborated by structural evidence) "Side room" is a term used in the area to denote a shed enclosure occupying part of a porch. Although there are mantels on the interior of the north and south end walls, there was originally only one brick chimney located at the north end. (Interviews with A. L. Riddle and Dalton Ward. There is no physical evidence for the existence of an exterior chimney at the south end.) There were also no windows on the south end, although a place for an opening had been cut into the western part of the south wall. (Interview with A. L. Riddle. See floor plan, included with Part II., Architectural Information.)

The Billie Eaton House offers an interesting contrast to both the John Eaton House (HABS No. MS-177) and the J. E. "Tobe" Eaton House (HABS Tenn-Tom Inventory No. Bay Springs Tract 617), four-room houses constructed by Billie Eaton's two older brothers. The John Eaton house (with end chimneys) displays some of the finest carpentry and building craftsmanship in the area. Interior and exterior wall surfaces are of novelty siding set diagonally with diagonals changing direction ninety degrees and perfectly matched seams. While the Tobe Eaton House (with central chimney) was not as elaborately crafted as the John Eaton House, it was nevertheless a well-constructed dwelling. (Interview with Laster and Mittie Eaton Short) By contrast, the Billie Eaton House was constructed with a more traditional plan (end-chimney dogtrot) and more commonplace finish techniques.

6. Alterations and additions: The only major alteration to the house has been the enclosure of the open passage between the two major rooms. In the late 1960s the Lewis family, A. L. Riddle's tenants, enclosed the hall with lumber provided for that purpose by Riddle. The north porch at the rear of the house was also enclosed during Riddle's ownership. Riddle himself installed the two metal flues at the northeast and southeast corners of the house. (Interview with A. L. Riddle. See floor plan.)

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

1. Billie Eaton's father J. M. Eaton owned some 600 acres worth over \$4000 at the time of his death in 1896 (Amanda Ardis et al. v. John Eaton et al.) This land was located in Sections 2, 11, and 12, Township 6 South, Range 9 East, west of Mackeys Creek. Despite the amount of property once owned by the Eatons, little is known about the family. The following information has been pieced together from the U.S. Census of Population for 1900, tombstones in Piney Grove Cemetery, and Enumerations of Educable Children in Tishomingo County. J. M. Eaton (1830-1896) was married to Cynthia Emeline Eaton (1845-1913). Cynthia was from Tennessee, as were her parents. Eaton was either from Alabama or Tennessee. They had seven children: J. E. "Tobe" Eaton (1863-1916), Mary C. Eaton (1865-1892), John R. Eaton (1867-1953), Annie Eaton Broaderick (1868-1888), Amanda Eaton Ardis (no dates available), William B. Eaton (1874-1907) and Henry Wister Eaton (1880-1923). The Eatons had moved to Mississippi by 1874 when Billie was born, and they were included as part of the Burnt Springs Community in 1890. (Enumeration of Educable Children, 1890, p. 78)

2. Billie Eaton (1874-1907) was married to Allena Luster (1880-1953), also known as Eleanor Lester. She came from Prentiss County, Mississippi, above Piney Grove. Bolivar (1898-1964), also known as Bob, and Lillian Eaton were their two children. Billie Eaton along with his brother Tobe had been educated at Jacinto School in Alcorn County. In addition to farming the land, Billie taught school at the old Billingsley School House in Tishomingo County until his death. The old Billingsley School House was a one room structure with split log benches and was heated by a wood stove. (Interview with Laster and Mittie Eaton Short)

3. Bolivar and Lillian Eaton continued to live at the house with their mother until two years after her death when they sold the land to A. L. Riddle and moved to Belmont, Mississippi. The Eatons farmed the land with mules, growing cotton, corn, peanuts, and sorghum, as well as vegetables for their own use. (Interview with Mittie Eaton Short) Mittie Eaton Short suspects that the Eatons had mortgaged their land to Riddle. No record of a Deed of Trust from the Eatons to Riddle exists, but the \$10 purchase price of the land suggests that the Eatons may have been indebted to him.

4. A. L. Riddle is a farmer and entrepreneur who began his practice of buying up small parcels of land adjoining his own when he was a young man during the 1920s. For more information about Riddle, see the A. L. Riddle House, HABS No. MS-179.

C. Sources of Information

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records: Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

U.S. Census of Population, 1890, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, page 209 A. Available on microfilm in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

Interviews:

A. L. Riddle, Tishomingo Route 2, Mississippi, August 8, 1978. Riddle has lived in this area since his birth in 1895 and has owned this property since 1954. He provided general information about the house and about alterations which have taken place.

Laster and Mittie Eaton Short, 2nd Street, Belmont, Mississippi, August 11, 1978. Mittie Short is the daughter of J. E. "Tobe" Eaton. She furnished information about the Eaton family, and provided a copy of the 1896 will of her grandfather, J. M. Eaton.

Dalton Ward, Route 6, Booneville, Mississippi, August 22, 1978. Ward was born in 1902. His family visited the Billie Eaton House frequently when he was a child. His early memories aided considerably in the interpretation of physical evidence.

Cemeteries:

Broaderick Family Cemetery, east side of Old Natchez Trace, Tishomingo County, Mississippi. (See map included with Supplemental Material, Section D. 3.)

Piney Grove Cemetery, Piney Grove Church, one quarter mile west of the Old Natchez Trace, Tishomingo County, Mississippi. With the exception of Annie Eaton Broaderick's dates, all Eaton family birth and death dates have been taken from this cemetery.

Subscribed as witnesses

J. H. Tipton	J. E. Eaton
S. B. Adams	Mandie Ardis
J. H. Allen	Billie Eaton
W. A. Tipton	John R. Eaton
M. B. Lancaster	

W. H. Lindsey J. P.

2. Amanda Ardis et al. v. John Eaton et al., Minute Book 3, pages 505-508. Minutes of the Chancery Court of Tishomingo County Miss December 10, 1914.

Mr. G. A. Clark, K. L. Anderson, and J. F. Oaks Commissioners appointed by a decree of this honorable court rendered at its December Seven 1913 to partition in kind the lands in controversy in said cause, C. A. Leone (?) to report to the Court as follows to wit:

We first had the land in controversy surveyed by John Henry Clark, County Surveyor, into quarter sections and we then valued these quarters sections so as to get a basis on which to start and make a total valuation of the lands at \$4450.00. This valuation is based on what we consider, the land, [?] be worth now uninformed, except as to what Improvements that was put on the land by the Deceased, [James?] John M. Eaton and we made the following allotments to each of the following heirs: To Mrs. Alena Eaton and to her two children, Bolivar and Lillian Eaton the following land to wit-

134 acres on north side of North East quarter of Section Two (2) Township Six (6) and Range Nine (9) East and valued at \$750.00, \$50.00 of which is for Improvements and \$700 of which is the value of the Land without the Improvements made by the testator John [James?] M. Eaton.

To Wister Eaton, we made the following allotment, 26 acres, on the south side of the North East quarter, of Section Two (2) also 100 acres in the south East quarter of Section Two (2) described as following: Commencing at the North East corner, of said south East quarter, and running west 160 rods to the northwest corner of said South East quarter, thence south 88 rods, thence East 107 rods, thence south 36 rods, thence east 53 rods

to section line between sections one (1) and Two (2) thence north 124 rods to the northeast corner of said south East quarter, the place of beginning, also Four (4) acres more or less, in south East corner of the north half of the southwest quarter of Section Two (2) commencing at South East corner of said north half running west 15 rods, thence north 40 rods thence east 15 rods to east boundary line of said southwest quarter. Thence south on said Line 40 rods to point of beginning all in Township Six (6) Range Nine (9) East. The value the above land allotted to Wister Eaton at the sum of 750.00 value of said land unimproved \$650.00 value of the Improvements made on land by J. M. Eaton Testator, and improvements placed on the above described land by John Eaton \$600, and that Wister Eaton has placed no improvements on said land.

Amanda Ardis was allotted the following described land South half of South west quarter of of Section Two (2) also 48 acres more or less, In south west corner of southeast quarter of said section (2) being a parallelogram 107 rods long from East to West, and 72 rods wide from north to south all in Township Six (6) Range nine (9) East. Value \$750.00 Improvements made on the above land by John Eaton \$18.00.

Tobe Eaton was allotted the following land: 107 acres on the west side of the north east quarter of section eleven (11) and 27 acres in the northwest corner of said south east quarter of said section eleven. The same being a parallelogram 107 rods long from East to West and 40 rods wide from north to south. All in Township Six (6) Range Nine (9) East. Value of said share \$750.00. Value improved (sic) \$700.00. Improvements by J. M. Eaton Testator \$50.00. Improvements put on land by John Eaton \$36.00.

John Eaton was allotted the following described land 12 acres more or less in the southeast corner of southeast quarter of section Two (2) being a parallelogram 53 rods long from east to west and 36 rods wide from north to south and 53 acres east side of north east quarter of Section Eleven (11) and 13 acres in the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of said section eleven (11) being a parallelogram 53 rods from east to west and 40 rods from North to South. Also 10 acres, more or less in the northwest corner of southwest quarter of section Twelve (12) described as follows beginning at Northwest corner of said southwest quarter running south 40 rods thence East about 26 rods to Mackeys Creek, thence north thence northeasterly with meanderings of said creek to north boundary line of said southwest quarter thence west about 39 rods to the northwest corner of said southwest quarter the place of beginning.

Also 52 acres on west side of northwest quarter of Section Twelve being all of said northwest quarter west of Mackey's Creek all of which is in Township Six (6) Range Nine (9) East. Land valued at \$750.00 value unimproved, \$690.00. The improvements by J. M. Eaton, Testator, \$60.00 by Tobe Eaton \$12.00

Roscoe Broaderick was allotted the following described land 120 acres on the south side of southeast quarter of Section Eleven (11) also 9(?) acres more or less in southwest quarter of Section Twelve (12) and more fully described as following: Commencing at southwest corner of said southwest quarter thence with the meandering of said Creek in a southwesterly direction to said southwest corner, the place of beginning all in Township Six (6) Range Nine (9) east, value of land \$700.00. Improvements by John Eaton \$60.00. We hereby declare and recommend and give in so far as we can, a road to John Eaton, from his land to the public road. Said road to be on Section line between Sections Two (2) and Eleven (11). The said road crossing and going upon the land of Tobe Eaton and Amanda Ardis. Said road to be sixteen feet wide.

We also give a road to Roscoe Broaderick said road to be sixteen feet wide and shall extend from the northwest corner of the said Broaderick Land north on the west line of the said Tobe Eatons land to the Public Road said road to be on the land of the said Tobe Deaton [sic]

We further repair and find and give the right to the said John and Tobe Eaton to have the right to widen and deepen and keep open the ditch which goes from their lands across the said land allotted to Broaderick and empties into Riddle Creek. There being a ditch now in existence and this right is given to follow the said ditch as far as practicable.

We. further report that the wire now on the land allotted to Roscoe Broaderick and which was placed there by Tobe Eaton shall be removed by the said Tobe Eaton.

We also report that Mrs. Eleanor Eaton, Bolivar Eaton and Lillian Eaton shall pay as surety to Roscoe Broaderick the sum of \$8.35 and Tobe Eaton, John Eaton, Wister Eaton, and Mrs. Amanda Ardis shall each pay the sum of \$8.35 to Roscoe Broaderick. Under this report the following sums are to be paid to John Eaton by the following heirs to wit:

Wister Eaton, Pay to John Eaton	\$6.00
Amanda Ardis Pay to John Eaton	\$18.00
Tobe Eaton to Pay to John Eaton	\$24.00
Roscoe Broaderick to Pay to John Eaton	\$60.00

We would respectfully show further to the court that we spent ten days each of us at this work...

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. The Billie Eaton House is an example of a house that began as a dogtrot (two rooms with open central passageway), with front and rear porches. The passageway and the rear porch were later enclosed.
2. Condition of fabric: Deteriorated.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This house is 40' (three-bay front) by 26'. It is one-story and its plan consists of five spaces, two larger front rooms separated by what was once a central dogtrot passageway, now enclosed, and two smaller rooms in what was once an open east porch. An open porch extends across the west facade. (See floor plan, below.)
2. Foundations: The house is, on the west side, raised above grade approximately 1', on piers consisting of concrete block, or brick, or round or square wood posts. On the east side, foundation piers, if they exist are covered by wood siding, which meets the ground.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Exterior walls are sheathed with board-and-batten siding (12" boards and 3 1/2" battens). On the gable ends of the house, there are horizontal weatherboards, averaging 5 1/2" in width. The exterior is unpainted.

4. Structural system, framing: Only the barest skeleton of a wood frame has been used, there are hardly any intermediate studs. Exterior walls consist of two layers of boarding nailed to the corner posts and to one another, the interior layer running horizontally, the exterior layer vertically.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: A dilapidated porch runs the full length of the west facade, covered by an extension of the roof structure which covers the main part of the building.
6. Chimneys: An exterior brick chimney, built with a combination of common and running bond, stands at the north end of the house. It has a pair of shoulders at a height of approximately 10' above grade. The top four courses of this chimney are partially destroyed.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The house has five exterior doorways, three opening from the front porch into the two front rooms and the central passageway, one opening into the northeast room on the north facade and one opening into the southeast room on the south facade. The two front doors opening into the two main rooms are of plain vertical boards braced on the interior, hung with concealed hinges and fitted with surface-mounted metal brackets. These doors measure roughly 2'-9" in width and 6'-3" in height. The central door on the porch facade has four vertical panels and is hung with surface-mounted gate hinges. The door on the south facade is of plain vertical boards braced on the interior, measures roughly 2'-4" in width and 6'-0" in height, the door on the north facade is of plain vertical boards braced on the interior measures roughly 2'-9" in width by 5'-7" in height, and is hung with recessed metal hinges.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six window openings exist. Two in the northwest room flank the fireplace and measure approximately 1'-9" wide by 3'-8" tall. A opening for a similar window occurs in the southwest room. Along the east facade one window opens into the southeast room, measuring roughly 5'-2" wide by 1'-9" tall, one opens into the northeast room, measuring roughly 2'-1" wide by 4'-4" tall, and another opens into the northeast room measuring roughly 3'-4" wide by 1'-11" tall. No sashes or casements remain.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The house has a gable roof, with the ridge running north-south, and with the pitch changing to a shallower angle approximately 10' from the ridge on both slopes of the roof. The roof is covered with galvanized, corrugated metal sheeting.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Although deteriorated, the eaves on the north and south ends have plain fascia boards 6" wide, surface-mounted on the walls. Roof overhangs do not appear to have been enclosed on the west and east elevations, and rafters spaced about 2' on center are visible. The roof extends beyond the walls by roughly 7" on the south, 1'-5" on the east and 7" on the north. It overhangs the post-supports of the west porch by roughly 1-5".

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The one-story house has a central-hall plan, with two roughly square front rooms and two unequal-sized rear rooms, accessible only through a door in the rear wall of the north front room. (See floor plan.)
2. Flooring: Flooring consists of wood planking laid in a north-south direction. Board widths average 6". In the two east rooms, sheet linoleum in a floral pattern overlays the wood.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior wall surfaces are in a deteriorated condition. Some exterior wood is exposed in each space. While generally running horizontally, wood boarding does run vertically in the north and south walls of the central passageway as well as on most of the wall surfaces in the east rooms (with battens being used on the south wall of the northeast room). All spaces except the northwest room have corrugated cardboard nailed to large portions of the interior wall surfaces. Remnants of patterned wallpaper remain in the northwest, southwest and northeast rooms. Ceilings are of wood boarding varying in width from 3 1/2" to 5 1/2". In the east rooms there are also sections of novelty siding on the ceilings. In some instances, corrugated cardboard has been nailed to the ceilings.

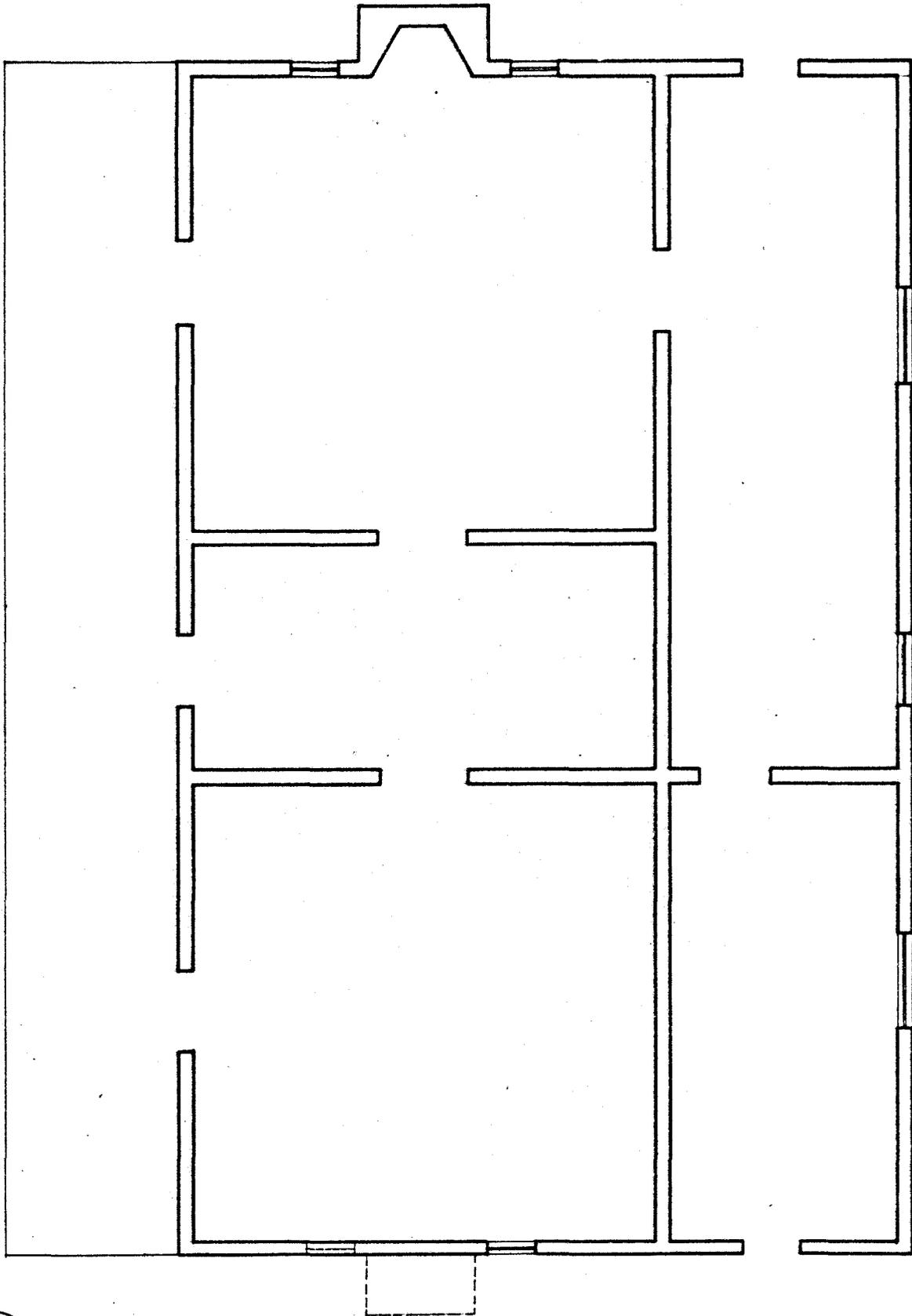
4. Doorways and doors: Doors between the central passageway and the two front rooms are of plain vertical boards braced on the inside face, hung with recessed concealed hinges, without locksets. Between the northwest (front) and northeast (rear) rooms and between the two east rooms, there are similar vertical plank doors. All doors measure roughly 3' in width and 6' in height.
5. Decorative features and trim: The only decorative trim is a plain wood mantelpiece in the northwest room.

D. Site:

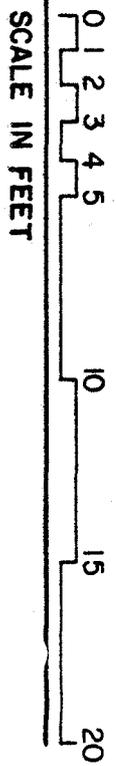
1. General setting: The entrance (porch) facade faces west, and the house is situated about 100 feet south of the Old Natchez Trace. Abandoned fields extend to Mackeys Creek, about a mile to the east. Wooded areas contain shortleaf and loblolly pine, red and white oak, poplar, sweetgum, hickory, and maple trees.
2. Outbuildings: A single wooden outbuilding with a raised floor, measuring roughly 10' in width and 12' in depth is located approximately 25 feet northeast of the house.

Prepared by: James Murray Howard
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August 1978

BILLIE EATON HOUSE



MS-176



PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Interagency Archeological Services, Atlanta, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile and Nashville Districts, in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a mitigative effort in the construction of the waterway. Records were made of eighteen historic sites and structures in the region between Gainesville, Alabama, and Iuka, Mississippi.

The project was executed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was James Murray Howard of the University of Illinois. Project Historian was Betty K. Bird of the University of Virginia. The Assistant Historian was Michael Ann Williams (University of Pennsylvania). Foreman was Ruthie D. Wiley of the University of Florida. Student Architects who prepared measured drawings for the project were Carol J. Crandall (Carnegie-Mellon University), Richard J. Cronenberger (University of Miami), Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Daniel M. Gaines (University of Tennessee), and R. Bradley Mellor (Rice University). The inventory of sites within the project area was carried out by Inventory Supervisor J. A. Chewing of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Assistant Historian for the inventory was Pamela J. Wolf (George Washington University). One structure was recorded during the winter of 1979 by project supervisor Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Sally K. Tompkins, Project Historian, and Staff Architects Bethanie C. Grashof, Rudy Massengill, and Janet Hochuli (The Cooper Union). Drawings for this structure were completed during the spring of 1979 by staff Architects Peter G. Darlow, Janet Hochuli, James F. Speake and Reginald A. Berry (Howard University). Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in the summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.