

R.G. Adams House
0.3 mi. E of Mackeys Creek, about
6 mi. SW of the intersection of
State Rte. 25 and 30
Tishomingo Vicinity
Tishomingo County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-173

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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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MS-173

R. G. ADAMS HOUSE

- Location: .3 mile east of Mackeys Creek, about 6 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: 16.381125.3827995.
- Present Owner: United States of America (August 1978.)
- Present Occupants: Arthur and Lois Slack.
- Present Use: Dwelling.
- Significance: The Adams House is a good, late, example of a frame double pen (two-room) plan with open central hall, or "dogtrot," a folk house type indigenous to the rural South. Built in 1913, with a rear ell, it has never been significantly altered in plan, except for the relocation of doors from the central passageway to the front of the house. The house has served for most of its existence as the dwelling on a forty acre family-run farm.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1913. According to Arthur Slack, John Trimm, and Laster Short, the house was built by R. G. Adams soon after his former home was destroyed by a storm on March 13, 1913. (For an account of the storm see the Corinth Weekly Herald, March 20, 1913.)
2. Architect: According to John Trimm, R. G. Adams' wife Emma, was the person who decided the size and shape of the house. Arthur Slack stated that the "dogtrot" plan was one common to the community.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Adams House is located on a 55-acre tract in the southeast part of the northeast quarter of Section 1, Township 6 South, Range 9 East, in Tishomingo County, Mississippi, acquired by the United States of America for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project.

The following deed records are located in the Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

- 1906 Deed. B. H. Deaton and M. E. Deaton to R. G. Adams, December 17, 1906. Recorded in Book P8, p.49. 40 acres, more or less, for \$335 and the continued support of Mrs Emiline Osburn.
- 1925 Deed. R. G. Adams and wife, Emma Adams to T. Z. Tennison, December 19, 1925. Recorded in Book P19, p. 504. 40 acres, more or less, for \$1,574.
- 1942 Deed. T. Z. Tennison to R. C. Henry and wife, Lena Bell, August 19, 1942. Recorded in Book P27, p. 119. 40 acres, more or less, for \$800. (R. C. Henry was T. Z. Tennison's son-in-law, explaining perhaps the low price paid).
- 1947 Deed. R. C. Henry and wife to Arthur Slack, November 1, 1947. Recorded in Book P30, p. 372. Property sold for \$1,900.
- 1978 Warranty Deed. Arthur Slack and wife, Lois Slack, to United States of America, February 9, 1978. Recorded in Deed Book B90, p. 754. Fifty acres for \$28,000.
4. Builder contractor, suppliers: The house was built by R. G. ("Guy") Adams. According to Adams' nephew, John Trimm, neighbors contributed a day's work to help Adams complete his home. Timber, blown down by the storm on March 13, 1913, was used in the construction of the house.
5. Original construction: The basic plan of the house has not been greatly altered. The Adams house is a fairly late example of a two-room house with open central passageway, or "dogtrot," with an ell to the rear. As with most late examples of "dogtrot" houses, the rooms on either side of the passage are square and of equal size. However, the dimensions of the house (the rooms are approximately 14'-square and the passageway 6' wide) are somewhat smaller than those of the average late or "third generation" dogtrots (averaging 16'-square with an 8' passageway) noted by Eugene Wilson in rural Alabama. (Wilson, pp. 30, 37) The southwest ell, built at the same time as the front rooms, is also approximately 14'-square. As is common with most later "dogtrot" houses, the Adams House originally had doors in the passageway and not in the front of the house.

The "dogtrot" house (not a term used by the owners of the Adams house), is a folk house type indigenous to the rural south, thought to have developed in the Tennessee Valley and spread southward. (Kniffen, p. 561)

6. Alterations and additions: Few major alterations have been made to the dwelling. According to Arthur Slack, there was once a well extending off of the rear (west) porch, which was moved further away from the house during the period when T. Z. Tennison owned the house (1925-1942). Both John Trimm and Laster Short remember the house having doors in the open passageway and not in the front of the house. Slack believes that the front windows were made into doors and the passageway doors boarded up just prior to the time (1947) when he acquired the property. After Arthur Slack bought the property, a chimney on the north side of the house was torn down, and two double hung six-over-six windows were placed in the north wall of the north room. Water was piped into the kitchen around 1965.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

The R. G. Adams House served as the dwelling for a small 40-acre farm in Tishomingo County, Mississippi. A relatively non-productive area due to poor soil, this part of northeast Mississippi has seldom supported more than subsistence-level agriculture. (Hubbert, pp. 8-9) This farm, for most of the twentieth century, was family run, though for several years prior to 1940, the house and land were rented through a sharecropping agreement. All of the occupants of the house have been farmers, growing cotton as a cash crop and corn to support livestock.

The farm was once part of a community situated along the 'Jourdon Creek Hill and Tishomingo Road--a dirt road east of and roughly parallel to Mackeys Creek, southwest of the town of Tishomingo. Former resident, Laster Short and current resident, Arthur Slack, knew of no name associated with this community. John Trimm suggested that it might once have been known to the residents of Tishomingo as the Mt. Pleasant School area. Despite the lack of a name, Laster Short stated that people knew they were neighbors and were always ready to come to each others aid. According to Slack, farm labor in particular was exchanged, as few people had money to hire help. Slack stated that despite the hardships of farming, people had time to enjoy one an other's company and that neighbors visited frequently. Farms in the community were both owner-operated and rented in a sharecropping agreement.

R. G. ("Guy") Adams built his home after his former dwelling, which was located slightly northeast of the present house site, was destroyed by a storm which passed through Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia on March 13, 1913. The nearby town of Tishomingo was one of the worst damaged in Mississippi, almost every house in the town being destroyed. (For an account of the story see the Corinth Weekly Herald, March 20, 1913.) Adams built his new house with the aid of neighbors and continued farming until about 1925 when he moved his family to Tupelo, Mississippi.

The land was then farmed by T. Z. ("Zedic") Tennison until about 1942 when he sold the land to his son-in-law, R. C. Henry. According to Arthur Slack, the property was rented for several years prior to 1947. One of the tenants was Slack's father.

Arthur Slack, the last occupant of the Adams House, is the same age as his house and has lived there for close to half his life. Prior to purchasing the farm in 1947, Slack had lived there for several years with his father, and he has always lived in the vicinity. Until 1972, when his health prevented it, Arthur Slack farmed his land using mules and a hand plow to turn the soil.

As resident of longest duration still living in the community, Arthur Slack has noted the many changes in the area. Houses which could once be seen from his front porch have been destroyed, and land which once was tilled is now forested. Slack believes that people left farming because of the low price paid for cotton, the high price of pesticides, and the creation of factory jobs in nearby areas. (See Carter, p. 105) According to Slack and Short, land was bought up by timber interests and by farmers who could tend large tracts of land with modern machinery. Property in the community is now being acquired by the United States Army Corps of Engineers for the Bay Springs Lake of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

Interviews:

Arthur Slack, Rte. 1, Dennis, Miss., July 14, 17, and August 3, 1978. Current resident and last private owner (1947-1978) of the house, Slack has always lived in the immediate community.

John Trimm, Tishomingo, Miss., August 1, 1978. Former Postmaster and Mayor of Tishomingo, Trimm is the nephew of R. G. Adams, the builder and first owner of the house. He was acquainted with the structure when it was owned by Adams (1913-1925).

Laster Short, 2nd St., Belmont, Miss., August 2, 1978. Short, formerly a farmer, was raised immediately to the south of Adam's property.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Carter, Kit, "An Historic Look at Bay Springs, Mississippi," In A Cultural Resource Survey of the Bay Springs Segment of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, Charles Hubbert, ed.

Hubbert, Charles, ed. A Cultural Resource Survey of the Bay Springs Segment of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. Report of Investigations No. 3, Office of Archaeological Research, The University of Alabama. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1977).

Kniffen, Fred, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 55 (1965): 549-77.

Corinth Weekly Herald (March 20, 1913). Available in Office of the Chancery Clerk, Alcorn County Courthouse, Corinth, Mississippi.

Wilson, Eugene, Alabama Folk Houses (Montgomery, Alabama: Alabama Historical Commission, 1975).

Prepared by: Michael Ann Williams
Assistant Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is a good, late adaptation of a double-pen dwelling with an open central hall ("dogtrot" house type) the adaptation consisting primarily of additional rooms at the rear.
2. Condition of fabric: Marginally maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This one-story, L-shaped dwelling is 40'-7" wide (three-bay front) by 34'-4".
2. Foundations: This building is supported on piers of concrete and brick.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The exterior walls are surfaced with unpainted lapped siding running horizontally in some cases and vertically in others. Gable ends have horizontal planking. Where horizontal siding occurs on exterior walls, it appears to have been applied over vertical planking. The west gable end is covered with corrugated metal sheeting.
4. Structural system, framing: Simple wood framing sheathed with butted vertical planking.
5. Porches: Porches are attached to the entire lengths of the south and east (front) elevations and to the rear of the house on those portions of the north and west elevations forming a small outdoor space on the inside of the L-shaped plan. A set of entrance steps having broad treads and shallow risers were added about 1972.
6. Chimneys: One exterior chimney is attached at the south gable end, hence within the porch space. Below the porch roof, the chimney is constructed of a brownish-yellow stone; above, of reddish brick set in running bond. The present occupant tells that there was a second chimney centered on the north gable end, where a double window is presently located.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: On the east (front) elevation are two exterior doors, the top halves of which are glazed with large single panes. The southwest rear room has two doors which have no glazing. All four doors have inset plywood panels and are set into plain wood frames. A single exterior door opens outward from the small storage room at the southwest corner of the house. This door is constructed of butted vertical planks braced together on the backside of hung in a frameless opening with surface-mounted gate hinges. In place of a lockset, a pivoting closing block is used.
- b. Windows and shutters: Four-over-four light double-hung windows are located on either side of the south chimney. Paired six-over-six windows are located on the north and west gable ends. A single fixed sash of four lights is set into the west wall of the storage room at the southwest corner of the building. All windows have plain board frames.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof consists of two intersecting gables running north-south and east-west and having equal ridge heights. Attached to the gable roofs are shed roofs at a shallower pitch than the gable roofs over all porches. All roof surfaces are covered with corrugated metal sheeting.
- b. Cornice, eaves: At the lower edge of each shed roof, the eave width is approximately eleven inches. Along the rising edge of sloping roofs the overhang is approximately 9". In such cases, fascia boards have been attached to gable ends below the level of the roof purlins.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The floor plan consists of two front rooms separated by an open passageway in dogtrot fashion. To the rear of the left (south) front room is a room of approximately the same size, currently used as a kitchen. At the extreme southwest corner of the house is a storage room created by enclosing the west end of the south porch.

2. Flooring: Interior floors are for the most part covered with sheet linoleum, but appear to have been exposed wood planking originally. Porch floors and the central open passageway are of unpainted wood planking.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are presently sheathed in gypsum board in the right (north) front room and the large southwest room. These rooms are painted bright blue-green and light yellow, respectively. In the left (south) front room, there are vertical pine panels, 9 1/4" in width with carved molding strips between each panel. According to the present occupant, walls in all three rooms have merely been covered with gypsum board and paneling; the original wall and ceiling surfaces were, he states, wood boarding carved to simulate narrow wood strips separated from one another by half-round beading. Ceilings in the two front rooms are unpainted, smooth-surfaced acoustical tile; in the southwest rear room, painted gypsum board. The walls and ceiling in the small storage room at the southwest corner of the house are structural members and exterior wall cladding.
4. Doorways and doors: The single interior doorway between the south front and rear rooms is a cased opening with no door.
5. Decorative features and trim: Plain pine boards are used around most windows and doors. Plain baseboards are used in the right front room and left rear room but not in the left front room.
6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: The fireplace, which has been covered over, now has a wood-burning heater sitting in front of it.
 - b. Plumbing: Plumbing service, said by the present occupant to have been installed about 1965, serves a kitchen sink. There are no indoor water closet, bathing or lavatory facilities.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces roughly east, parallel to a dirt and gravel road running north-south. Several fences are located in the fields near the house.

2. Outbuildings:

- a. Barn: Approximately 130 feet north of the house is a gable-roofed transverse crib barn of frame construction, with horizontal boards for the exterior siding. The barn has a loft opening to the outside through rectangular openings in the east and west gable ends. Along the south side of the barn is a one-story attached shed. Both barn and shed have corrugated metal roofing. Overall size of the barn, including the shed is approximately 36' by 31'.
- b. Chicken sheds: 60 to 100 feet to the south of the house are four chicken sheds of frame construction, roofed with corrugated metal. The sheds range in size from 3' by 4' to 9' by 18'. These four sheds are surrounded by a wire fence strung on wood posts.
- c. Other sheds: About 35 feet west of the house is a gable-roofed shed that has a secondary shed roof extending along its north side. This shed is approximately 16' by 12' and has corrugated metal roofing and a combination of vertical and horizontal siding boards. A smaller shed (9' by 18') is located roughly 80 feet northwest of the house. This shed is also of wood construction and has a gable roof covered with corrugated metal and wood siding. Approximately 200 feet north of the barn are the remains of a shed (a foundation measuring about 6' by 11'.)
- c. Enclosures: Roughly 26 feet west of the southwest corner of the barn is a fenced enclosure measuring approximately 5'-square. The exact use is not known, but it might have been a pigpen.

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

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 Universtiy). Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in the summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.