



HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MS-170

JEFFRIES-GARDNER FARM

Location: .5 mile east of Carmen Church, 1500 feet south of the Tombigbee River, ~~MISSISSIPPI~~ <sup>CARMEN CHURCH</sup> Vicinity, Lowndes County, Mississippi.

USGS Columbus 15' Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates:  
16.374800.3686950.

Present Owner: United States of America (August 1978).

Present Occupants: Bess and Lane Gardner.

Present Use: Family dwelling and farm structures in limited agricultural use.

Significance: The Jeffries-Gardner Farm, consisting of several scattered specialized-use outbuildings and a dwelling, enlarged by three additions, is an example of a family farmstead of the Mississippi Black Belt. Although the house dates from 1938 and the farm structures from after 1942, the site itself is significant in that the property has been owned and farmed by two black families since 1873.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: According to a mortgage waiver and continuance, dated April 18, 1938, recorded in Deed Book 164, p. 229 (Lowndes County Courthouse Columbus, Mississippi), the dwelling on the property was destroyed. The waiver stated:

"whereas the house of Sandy Jeffries was blown away by a cyclone recently, and whereas the Red Cross has agreed with the said Sandy Jeffries to furnish material for replacing the building, his home, now, therefore, I hereby agree that I will not foreclose on the said mortgage, in case of nonpayment of the indebtedness at its maturity, until after the 31st day of December 1939".

According to Willie Armstead and his aunt Rebecca Hargrove, former residents of the area, the house had been totally destroyed, and a new house was built on the property. Bess Gardner indicated that the new house was built nearby but not on the original house site.

Bess and Lane Gardner stated that all the other structures currently standing on the property were erected over a several year period after they acquired the property in 1942. These buildings include a large shed, a single-pen barn, a chicken shed, and a smokehouse. The smokehouse was moved to the farm from a different location.

2. Architect: Possibly Abraham Moore, builder of the nearby Norwood-Williams House (See HABS No. MS-171).
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Jeffries-Gardner Farm lies in Section 30 and Fractional Section 29, Township 17 North, Range 19 East, Choctaw Meridian, Lowndes County, Mississippi. The property is located in the northeast quarter of Section 30 and the northwest quarter of Section 29, north of the James Creek. It was acquired by the United States of America for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project.

The legal descriptions of basically the same tract of land varies in the different deeds according to the nature of the landmarks used. There also appear to be several inconsistencies in estimation of acreage in the legal descriptions.

1873. Deed. William B. Harrington to Chas. Adams, October 14, 1873, recorded in Deed Book 45, p. 111.

The description of the property is as follows:

"Known as the Blewett Land, all of the NW 1/4 of Section 29 Township 17 Range 19 East lying north of Jim Creek containing 100 acres more or less bounded on the south by James Creek on the east by James Creek on the north by Hairston and Union Bluff and on the west by Union Bluff containing one hundred acres more or less being the same premises owned by William McCarty, Dec."

The stated purchase price was \$500.

The property remained in the possession of members of the same family for the next 69 years. According to information in a trust deed dated January 27, 1912 (Deed Book 96, p. 302), and a deed dated May 12, 1906 (Deed Book 85, p. 382), Charlie Adams was married to Harriet Swoope. Newton and John Adams were their sons,

and John P. Adams, their grandson. By 1882, reference is made in a trust deed (Deed Book 59, p. 121) to Harriet and Newton Adams as the owners of the property. In 1903, Harriet Swoope deeded 33-1/3 acres of the south side of the property to John P. Adams. (Deed Book 84, p. 57)

Portions of the land changed hands within the family at various times, particularly after the death of Newton Adams during the 1930s. (Deed Book 166, p. 332 and 333)

According to Rececca Hargrove, Sandy Jeffries was married to Rebecca Adams, daughter of Newton Adams. In 1938, Sandy Jeffries put the land, listed as 86 acres, in trust for a debt owed to Propst and Co. (Deed Book 162, p. 161)

- 1942 Trustee's Deed. W. C. Dowdle to Propst and Co., June 15, 1942, recorded in Deed Book 178, p. 156. A default having been made for the payment of Jeffries' debt, the 86 acres property was put up for sale by the trustee, and acquired by Propst and Co. for \$600.
- 1942 Deed. Propst and Co. to Lane and Bess Gardner, September 18, 1942, recorded in Deed Book 175, p. 534. The property was sold for \$600 and was described as being 46 acres. However a correction deed, dated April 19, 1954, recorded in Deed Book 228, p. 502, changed the legal description and listed the property as being 86 acres.
- 1976 Warranty Deed. Lane and Bess Gardner to the United States of America, October 22, 1976, recorded in Deed Book 548, p. 207. All 86 acres, for \$28,600.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: According to a mortgage waiver and continuance (Deed Book 164, p. 229) and to Bess Gardner, materials for the dwelling, which was built in 1938, were furnished to Sandy Jeffries by the Red Cross. The builder of the house is not known. However, the original plan of the house and particularly the proportions of the rooms show a similarity to those of the Norwood-Williams House (see HABS No. MS-171) approximately a quarter of a mile west. The houses, both built in the 1930s, have front facing gables, and the size of the living room and location of the

chimneys are almost identical. The Norwood-Williams House was built by a local carpenter, Abraham Moore, who was also responsible for several other structures in the immediate area.

According to Bess Gardner, her husband, Lane Gardner, built the outbuildings on the farm.

5. Original construction: According to Bess Gardner, the only part of the original house that is still standing is the pair of rooms now used as a living room and a dining room. The original plan consisted of these two adjacent rooms with a central chimney and a narrow kitchen along the east side of the two rooms. The placement of the gable indicates that the kitchen was once approximately the same width (6'-4") as the present porch on the east side. Bess Gardner stated that the south gable end has always been the front of the house. (See floor plan, included with Part II., Architectural Information.)

The other structures on the farm site consist of relatively small specialized-use outbuildings lying in no formal relationship to the dwelling of each other. This "seemingly patternless composite" of separate use buildings is typical of the farms of the Deep South. (Glassie, p. 101) The outbuildings on the Jeffries-Gardner Farm consist of a fairly large, 30'-6" (three-bay) by 22' storage shed, now used as a garage, a privy, a single-crib barn, used for corn and hay storage, a smokehouse, a simple frame chicken house, 10'-4" by 11'-9", and several fence enclosures for livestock. Except for the storage shed, which has a shed addition on its east side, these structures have not been significantly altered since the 1940s, when they were built.

6. Alterations and additions: The dwelling is the only structure which has been greatly altered. According to Bess Gardner, the old kitchen was torn down because it was too narrow and dark, and a larger kitchen was added on the northern end of the east side. A bedroom on the southern end of the west side was added, as was a small porch, later enclosed to form a storage room, at the northern end of the west side. (See floor plan.)

Bess Gardner stated that the original dwelling was built of "no account" lumber and did not even have proper siding. The siding, the porches, and side rooms were added after the Gardners acquired the property in 1942.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Site:

Prior to the Civil War, the property was owned by Colonel Thomas G. Blewett, who, according to Betty Thomas of the Lowndes County Department of Archives, was one of the largest property owners in the county. The land was part of a 1,873.71-acre tract deeded by Thomas Blewett to his son Allen Blewett in 1858 (Deed Book 31, p. 350). The same year Allen Blewett sold all but 100 acres (apparently the same 100 acres later purchased by Charles Adams) of the tract to Maria Chandler (Deed Book 31, p. 378).

The 100-acre tract apparently changed ownership during or after the Civil War, and in 1873, it was acquired by Charles Adams from William B. Harrington (Deed Book 45, p. 111). The same year, a trust deed stipulated that Charles Adams was indebted to William Harrington for twenty-six bales of cotton. The bales were to weigh 500 lbs. each and were to be paid at a rate of six a year. (Deed Book 46, p. 515) The Adamses, a black family, continued to farm the property for seven decades.

On several occasions the land, agricultural products and animals were placed in trust for debts by Charles Adams' son, Newton Adams. These trust deeds reveal to some extent the agricultural products raised and the animals owned by the family. In 1882, Newton and Harriet Adams placed their "crop of cotton and corn" in trust as well as their land, (Deed Book 59, p. 121) In 1886, Newton Adams placed his interest in the land in trust as well as, "one dark bay horse named Sam about 9 years old; and all of my crops of cotton raised by me and my hands this year 1886 on the Chandler place near Nashville in this county" (Deed Book 59, p. 534). (See also Book 88, p. 9 and Book 126, p. 67)

By 1938, Sandy Jeffries, Newton Adams' son-in-law, was living on the property. In April of that year Jeffries' home was destroyed by a storm. Rebecca Hargrove, a former midwife in the area, described the house and the storm that destroyed it to her nephew Willie Armstead who recorded it in this way:

"the old house of Sandy Jefferson two rooms and kitchen. foundation was out of rounf plate & wood pillor for foundation. wood shade window and wood doors and wood shangle for the top. it was total destroyed by a storm or tornado. seven people in the house none had major damage. four of them was family Daddy, three small girls. the house had a front porch. the house was destroyed in April 1938."  
(Information provided to Department of Archives)

In a trust deed, dated December 24, 1938, Jeffries put his land in trust, as well as "crops of cotton, cotton seed, corn and all other agricultural products grown or raised by me or through me during the year 1939; also one (1) sorrel mare about 8 years old and her increase; one (1) blue horse mule about 11 or 12 years old this day bought of third part; four (4) head of mild cows; two (2) Bull yearlings; one (1) Heifer about 6 months. (Deed Book 162 p. 161)

Bess Gardner, who lived several miles away before acquiring the property in 1942, remembers Sandy Jeffries but does not remember him farming. Lane Gardner, however, recalls vaguely that he did. Both stated that no one was farming the land when they acquired the property.

Lane and Bess Gardner farmed the property from 1942 until recently, when ill health has prevented them. Cotton was their primary cash crop. Corn was grown primarily for stock, and part of their land was reserved for hay. The hay and corn were stored in the small barn at the east end of the farmstead. Mules were used to plow and cultivate. The Gardners farmed a plot of land belonging to neighbors as well as their own.

A large garden was once planted just east of the house and yard, surrounding the large shed and barn. Assorted vegetables were grown, including a large number of peas and sweet potatoes. The livestock included chickens, several cows and pigs, as well as the mules used in farming. Pigs were butchered and pork was smoked in the smokehouse just north of the yard. In the summer of 1978, the Gardners were growing some corm, tending a small vegetable garden, and keeping chickens and two hogs.

The Jeffries-Gardner Farm is a part of a rural black community in the vicinity of Nashville Ferry in southern Lowndes County. During the 19th century, the ferry was an important link for transferring cotton between Lowndes and Noxubee Counties. (W.P.A. "Source Material for Mississippi History," pp. 443,462)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Office of the Clerk of the Chancery Court,  
Lowndes County Courthouse, Columbus, Mississippi.

Interviews:

Lane and Bess Gardner, vicinity of Nashville Ferry,  
Mississippi, July 10, 1978. The Gardners are the former  
owners, and current residents of the farm.

Betty Thomas, Lowndes County Department of Archives and History, Columbus, Mississippi. Mrs. Thomas provided information about Colonel Thomas G. Bluett, and contacted Willie Armstead, who provided information from his aunt Rebecca Hargrove about Sandy Jeffries.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Glassie, Henry, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968).

Works Progress Administration for Mississippi, "Source Material for Mississippi History" Vol. 44: Lowndes County (1936-38). Compiled by State wide Historical Research Project, Susie V. Powell, State Supervisor. Available at Lowndes County Public Library, Mississippi Collection, Columbus, Mississippi.

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

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This farm is an example of an additive house and farmstead owned for several generations by black families.
2. Condition of fabric: Marginally maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over all dimensions: The principal structure on this farmstead is a dwelling measuring approximately 43'-3" (five-bay front) by 34'-6". The layout of this one-story house is an additive plan that started with two rooms, one behind the other, and having a central chimney. Rooms were subsequently added to the left of the front room and to the right of the rear room and a porch was enclosed at the left of the rear room to form yet another room.

A porch extends across two-thirds of the extreme south elevation, turning again to extend eastward to the edge of the house. (See floor plan, below.)

2. Foundations: The house sits about one foot above grade on concrete block piers.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The original two rooms are covered with vertical boarding butted edge-to-edge and with shiplap siding along the top edge of each board. The addition to the right at the rear is covered on the east with board-and-batten siding below the level of the gable; above that level, clapboard siding is used. On the south side of this same addition, vertical edge-buttetted boarding is used, while on the north, curved-profile shiplap siding is used. The porch enclosure to the left of the original back room is covered with horizontal wood siding butt-jointed on the west, overlapped on the north. All siding is painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Lightweight wood framing is used throughout.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The remaining unenclosed porch has three segments. It extends across the eastern two-thirds of the south elevation, then continues north to intersect the east room at the rear of the house and turns east along the front of this room. The porch is covered in part by attached shed roofs. The porch which existed at the northwest corner of the house has been enclosed with wood siding.
6. Chimneys: A single chimney serves two central back-to-back fireplaces. It is now used as a flue for a wood-burning stove. A brick flue on the north side of the house, once used as a kitchen flue, is no longer in use.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Four exterior doorways exist. Only the one opening into the former northwest porch is not closed by a door. The two doors on the south facade are six-panel wood doors. The one on the east facade is constructed of vertical boards, edge-buttetted.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Exterior windows are of the double-hung sash variety having four-over-four lights. There is a fixed, six-light window mounted in the north wall of the enclosed rear porch.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof consists of three intersecting gable roofs to which low-pitched shed roofs have been attached in three locations. The roofing surface is corrugated metal throughout.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Eaves overhang walls from 1" to 12".

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The one-story house consists of two main rooms, one behind the other, joined by a single door. Between the two rooms is a chimney structure with fireplaces facing into each room. To the northeast and southwest, single rooms have been added and, to the northwest, a former porch has been enclosed. There are no interior halls or corridors. The original front room is used as a living room; the room west of it, as a bedroom; the room north of it, as a dining room. West of the dining room is a storage room; east of it a kitchen. (See floor plan.)
2. Flooring: All floors are of wood planking laid in either a north-south or east-west direction. Linoleum has been laid over all the wood floors.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: All interior walls and ceilings have been surfaced with gypsum board -some surfaces having been painted, others papered, others papered and then painted. Ceiling height is approximately 7'.
4. Doorways and doors: There are two-panel wood doors, located in the east and west walls of the dining room. In the north and west walls of the living room are two doors constructed of vertical wood boards. A fabric curtain covers the sole closet doorway in the dining room.
5. Decorative features and trim: A wood mantel shelf is located on each side of the central chimney.
6. Mechanical equipment: A wood-burning heater is used in the original front room. The house has electricity but no running water.

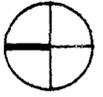
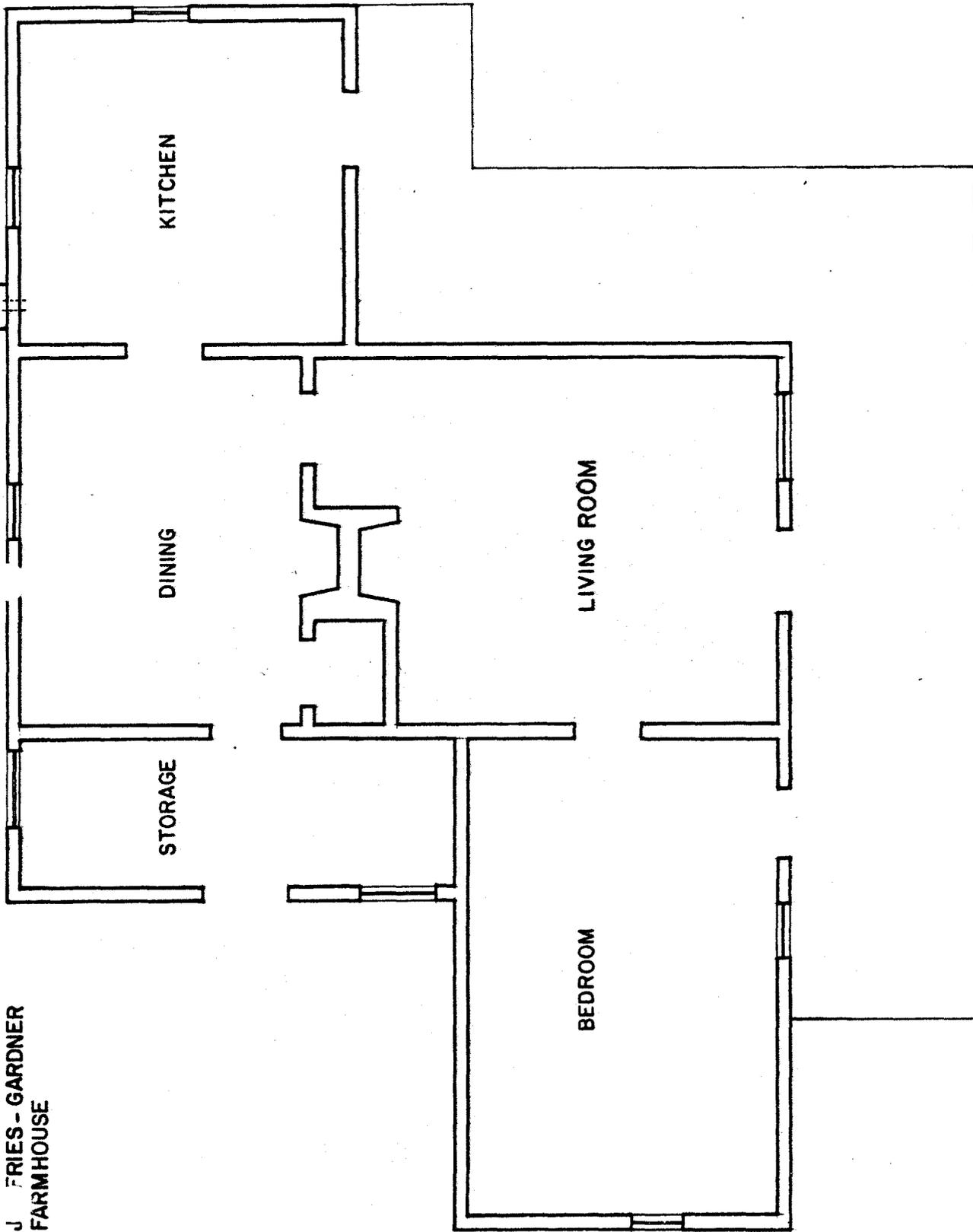
D. Site:

1. General setting: The house faces south beside the approach road, roughly 25 feet away. The front yard is enclosed by a wood and wire fence.

2. Outbuildings:

- a. Smokehouse: A smokehouse lies 3 feet north of the northeast corner of the house and measures approximately 12'-10" by 14'-10", and is 12' in height. Walls are vertical planks except, in the gable ends where planks are horizontal. The corrugated metal gable roof runs north-south. There is a hinged window on both the east and west sides, but the door on the south side is missing.
- b. Chicken house: A chicken house measuring 10'-4" by 11'-9" and 9'-0" in height lies 32 feet north of the house. It is a wood frame structure with vertical board siding and a corrugated metal gable roof running north-south. It is surrounded by a fenced enclosure.
- c. Corn crib: About 110 feet east of the house is a corn crib measuring 11'-2" by 13'-5" and 12' in height. Walls are vertical planks, except in the gable ends, where the planks are horizontal. The door on the west is made of vertical planks. The crib has a hay floor and a corrugated metal roof. There is a fenced tomato patch north of this structure.
- d. Outhouse: The privy is roughly 157 feet east of the house and measures 5'-10" by 7'-10", and is 6' in height. It is constructed of vertical boards with a vertical plank door and green tarpaper roof. It has two seats and a concrete floor.
- e. Garage and storage shed: Roughly 73 feet east of the dwelling is a garage and storage shed measuring 30'-6" (three-bay front) by 22'-0", and about 9' in height. It has horizontal boarding on the west and north sides, while the south side is left open as an entrance. The low-pitched, corrugated metal, gable roof runs north-south and is supported by light wood rafters, as well as vertical log posts. It has a shed addition along posts. It has a shed addition along its east side.
- f. Enclosures: The site has a number of fences, not all segments of which are contiguous. Except for the pig enclosure, which is surrounded by corrugated metal sheeting, the fences are of wire strung on wood posts.

Prepared by: James Murray Howard  
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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. Crandal (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 Supervisor J. A. Chewning 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.