

Sutherland Barn
S. side Va. Rt. 692, .5 mi. W.
of intersection with U. S. Rt. 29
Batesville vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS no. VA-1078

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SUTHERLAND BARN

HABS No VA-1078

Location: South side of Va. Rt. 692, .5 miles West of intersection with U.S. Rt. 29.

Present Owner: Mortimer Yates Sutherland, Jr.

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Present Use: Storage facility.

Significance: The Sutherland Barn is an early 19th-century structure with many special features: splayed windows, Flemish bond brickwork on south side, and a wood truss with hand hewn beams and mortise and tenon joints.

I. HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

A. Physical History:

Original and Subsequent Owners:

In August 1813 James Bullock, James Brown, and Jim Rives acquired 784 acres from William Alcock. Later that year it was sold again to Henry Gantt, for \$8,500.00. It is described as "a certain tract or parcel of land lying in the North Garden on the head waters of the Hardware (?) River" (Deed Book 19 p. 39: 1813). Henry Gantt kept the land until 1830 when he deeded it to John W. Gantt, who sold it for \$15,000.00 in 1835 to the Joseph Sutherland family. In analyzing the construction of the barn, Mr. Edward Lay suggest a building date between 1790 and 1820. According to the preset owner, all the bricks for the barn were made on the property.

B. Chain of Title

- 1813 James Bullock, James Brown and Robert Rives acquired from William Alcock
- 1813 Henry Gantt
- 1830 John W. and Sarah Gantt (given to him by his father)
- 1835 Joseph Sutherland
- 1867 Joseph Sutherland, Jr.
- 1900 Mortimer Yates Sutherland
- 1948 Mortimer Yates Sutherland, Jr.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Exterior Description:

Windows: Among the most interesting features of this barn is the loop hole and splayed windows. The slit windows give the building a very fortress-like appearance, but actually the windows were solely for the purpose of letting in light and air while keeping out the rain. According to Eric Sloane in An Age of Barns the splay created 'an aerodynamic situation' - pulling for air in but not the rain. He also states that whitewashing the splay intensified the light and thus illuminated the interior even more. Possibly to encourage more air, there is an extra row of windows on the west elevation where the wind blows regularly from the northwest.

Brickwork: The brick work further enhances the significance of this barn. On the north, east, and west sides of the brickwork is three-course American bond. On the east side there are some areas where remnants of penciling still exist. Penciling is a light colored slip used to lighten the mortar between the brick coursing, thus heightening the pattern. On the south side the pattern is Flemish bond with queen closures at the east and west ends. To make the pattern even more distinctive, the headers are glazed in a dark blue-grey finish. The elaborateness of the south side suggests, according to Mr. Edward Lay, the possibility that this side originally was the front, and that it faced a road to Batesville.

Truss: The most spectacular interior feature is the wood truss. Two 12" x 12" posts with chamfered corners support the truss at ground level; these posts support at the first level a huge 12" x 13" center beam which in turn supports 24 cross beams of 4 1/2" x 9-9 1/2". These beams are hand hewn, and in some areas the bark from the trees still remains. These beams, or joists, rest in the center into notches carved out of the center beam and on the north and south wall rest on wood plates that run the length of the brick structure.

The two posts continue from the first level to the second level; in between these two levels the posts are 'Y' shaped. The second level has the same layout as the lower one but the joists do not sit inside the beams but rather rest on boards of a same dimension as the joists. These boards then rest on top of the beam.

The rafters connect with the joists at the first level, and also at the second, where the tenon of the rafter fits into the mortise of the joist. These two are then pinned together with a wood pin. The rafters from the second level to the peak of the roof are one piece. At the peak these rafters join with the ones on the other side in a half-lap joint and are pinned with a wood pin. Approximately 4' down

from the peak there is another series of 24 cross beams. These are joined to the rafters by slipping in to a notch at one side of the rafter.

Planks approximately 10-12" wide traverse the rafters. These in turn are covered by a corrugated tin roof. The roof is 50 years old on the south side and 30 years old on the north side. In March 1982 a very strong wind ripped the northwest corner of the roof, damaging rafters and planks as well as destroying this section of the tin roof. It was repaired with new wood and tin.

B. Interior Description:

Floors and Doors: The brick barn is on a foundation of fieldstone which raises the floor joists from the ground between 10" on one side to 24" on the other. The floor itself consists of floor boards from 9" to 12" wide running parallel to the north and south elevations. There is evidence that the doors for the barn were originally sliding ones. There is vertical molding 5" wide on the south side and 6 3/4" wide on the north. Part of the metal runner still exists on the south side connecting the vertical door stopper (molding) to the door opening.

- C. Site: On the north, the barn has panoramas of the surrounding hills. Trees line the road to Rt. 692; otherwise the land is mostly a grazing area. On the south, the land drops off to South Branch Creek, along which one tenant house still stands. To the east and west are pastures.

III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This report is part of a project undertaken at the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture. During the Spring semester, by Kristie Struble. The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.