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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Carothers, John Henry, House  
other names/site number Carothers, Ezeal, House

### 2. Location

street & number Liberty Pike N/A  not for publication  
city, town Franklin  vicinity  
state Tennessee code TN county Williamson code 187 zip code 37064

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>4</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>6</u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<u>2</u> objects
	<u>      </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Historic Resources of Williamson County MRA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Herbert T. Byrum  
Signature of certifying official Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date 10/18/89  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Herbert T. Byrum Entered in the National Register 11/27/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)**

DOMESTIC: single dwelling  
DOMESTIC: secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural outbuilding  
AGRICULTURE: animal facility

**Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)**

DOMESTIC: single dwelling  
DOMESTIC: secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural outbuilding  
AGRICULTURE: animal facility

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification**

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: rectangular plan

**Materials (enter categories from instructions)**

foundation limestone  
walls limestone  
  
roof tin  
other WOOD

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The John Henry Carothers House is located on Liberty Pike in Williamson County east of the town of Franklin, Tennessee. The small stone farmhouse was constructed in 1937 by John Henry Carothers with the assistance of his son, Ezeal Carothers. The small one-and-one-half story rectangular plan house was constructed following stock plans purchased by John Henry Carothers. The limestone used to build the house was all quarried by the Carothers family from the farm property.

The front or west facade of the house contains only two openings, a single leaf door on the south end and a simple one over one window on the north end. The front facade of the house is covered by a three-fourths length shed roof front porch. The floor and steps of the porch are of quarried stone and concrete. Three simple square posts support the shed roof.

The south facade of the house contains two one over one windows on the first floor and a single one over one window on the second floor. The north facade differs slightly from the south facade with three one over one windows on the first floor, two of which are located side by side on the east end.

The rear or east elevation of the house contains a bathroom/utility room addition constructed in 1984. The addition was constructed in the location of a back porch that was originally added to the house in 1947. The addition is set back from the south wall of the house and runs two-thirds of the length of the house. The other one-third of the rear of the house is covered by an open shed roof porch with a wood floor. The original quarried stone foundation and piers are extant under the rear addition. New square cut stone is used as infill between the piers.

The foundation of the house is constructed with rough hewn, random ashlar cut stone. On a large square foundation stone, located on the south side of the house, the year 1937 is carved. A slightly projecting stone watertable separates the foundation from the smooth cut rubble stone walls. The gable fields of the house are covered with wide wood boards, as are the shed roof dormers on the front facade. The original gable fields were covered with weatherboard. A stone chimney is located between the two front dormers. A smaller brick chimney is located on the rear of the house. The roof is covered with standing seam tin.

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The interior of the house is composed of four rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second. The first floor consists of a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bedroom. The living room, or south room, contains a large stone fireplace and stone mantle piece with large stone brackets. The bedroom on the north side of the house has a smaller fireplace with a wood mantle and is located directly behind the living room fireplace. The kitchen and dining room, located at the rear of the house, are simple rectangular rooms with little trim. A boxed staircase is located between the kitchen and dining room and leads to the two upper rooms. The head of the stairs enters a large open room now used for storage. A second room is located on the south side of the house and serves as a bedroom. The ceilings throughout the house are narrow tongue and groove panels. The narrow tongue and groove boards are also located on the kitchen walls, as well as on a portion of the upstairs walls. Walls and ceilings downstairs are either painted or papered, while the wood walls and ceilings in the upstairs rooms are stained and varnished.

The twenty-six acre farm retains several of its small frame outbuildings. The small frame outbuildings are clustered directly behind (east) the house and include five contributing outbuildings and two non-contributing outbuildings. The outbuildings include a frame, gable roof smoke house constructed circa 1930 with an attached shed roof carriage shed added circa 1937. The smoke house was moved to its current location around 1937. Also located near the house is a small frame shed roof tool shed built circa 1937, a circa 1937 frame chicken house, and a 1958 shed roof garage. Located a short distance away from the small outbuildings is a frame privy built circa 1937. To the east of the house and outbuildings is a circa 1933 frame stock barn and beyond the stock barn is a 1950 tobacco barn. The northern boundary of the property is marked by a dry-laid stone fence that pre-dates the house by several years.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK  
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1937

Significant Dates

1937

Cultural Affiliation

Black

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Carothers, John Henry, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The John Henry Carothers House, built in 1937, is eligible under National Register criterion A for its significance in Ethnic Heritage (Black) as it relates to agriculture in Williamson County. The small stone Carothers House represents an important aspect of farm ownership by Blacks in the rural south. The Carothers House is also eligible under criterion C for Architecture as an example of a local building style.

John Henry Carothers purchased twenty-six acres of farmland in Williamson County in 1933 for twenty-five dollars an acre. From 1933 to 1937, the family farmed fourteen acres (the other twelve acres were unsuitable) of the twenty-six acres while living in a small frame house nearby. In 1937, John Henry Carothers purchased stock architectural plans for a small house and began construction of the one-and-one-half story house with the assistance of his son, Ezeal Carothers. The house was constructed of limestone quarried by Ezeal Carothers from a site located on the farm. The small, rectangular plan house was built with solid stone walls by the Carothers with the windows and doors cut out by C. B. Barnes. Barnes also provided technical assistance on the construction of the house.

After the Civil War, emancipated slaves were often left without a means of livelihood and southern landowners were left without someone to work their plantations and farms. Landowners attempted to hire former slaves for wages, but the majority did not have ready cash to pay wages at regular intervals, which black farm workers wanted. Landowners also believed that the wage system did not give them sufficient control over the black workers.<sup>1</sup> As a result, tenant and sharecropping systems were established to provide the unemployed and "homeless" Blacks with a job and a place to reside, and to provide the landowners with the needed labor. Tenant farming consisted of the farmer's renting the land and supplying with mules and farm equipment to farm the property. The tenant kept two-thirds of the

<sup>1</sup> Fite, p. 3.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 26 acres

UTM References

A 

1	6	5	1	6	3	0	0	3	9	7	5	9	2	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

C 

1	6	5	1	6	6	8	0	3	9	7	5	6	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B 

1	6	5	1	6	7	0	0	3	9	7	5	8	8	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

D 

1	6	5	1	6	2	8	0	3	9	7	5	6	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Franklin 63NE

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the John Henry Carothers House include the original 26 acres as shown on the accompanying tax map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include all land historically associated with the John Henry Carothers House and provide sufficient land to protect the historic integrity of the farm.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Elizabeth A. Straw, Historic Preservation Specialist  
organization Tennessee Historical Commission date August 1989  
street & number 701 Broadway telephone 615-742-6722  
city or town Nashville state Tennessee zip code 37243-0442

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crop and the landlord received one-third. Sharecropping was a system in which an entire family was provided land, house, tools, seeds, and a mule. The crop was divided equally, but due to a lack of money, landowners often provided cash advancements that were settled up at crop sales. Sale of crops was often less than the cash advance and left the sharecropper in perpetual debt.<sup>2</sup> "Lacking the capital to buy property at first, Blacks entered wage and sharecropping contracts as expedient methods of gaining the necessary resources to achieve independence."<sup>3</sup> The sharecropper/tenant farm system also provided an easy means to control what many Whites perceived as a race problem.

Black sharecropper/tenant farmers were seldom able to escape the debt owed to the white landowners and to acquire their own farms. Blacks who acquired land often did so because small amounts were given to favorite slaves by landowners or, if they were able to purchase land, due to discrimination, the purchase was often backed by white supporters.<sup>4</sup> By 1900, black farmers in the south owned approximately 13.5 million acres (23% of all farm owners) compared to over 100 million acres owned by Whites. By 1910, black ownership of farmland was at its peak with 195,432 farmers owning 15.7 million acres. The average cropland for black farmers was 29 acres versus over 50 acres for white farmers.<sup>5</sup> In Tennessee, three-fourths of all Blacks lived in rural areas and were primarily farmers.<sup>6</sup> Housing for rural black farmers consisted mainly of small cabins constructed loosely of logs or slab boards. Windows rarely had glass or screens and were usually covered with wooden shutters. Houses usually had only a single fireplace or secondhand wood stove, used for both heating and cooking. Houses were very small and contained one or two crowded bedrooms and a living room/kitchen.

Between 1914 and 1915, depressed conditions in the south coincided with industrial growth in the north. Northern industries often sent labor recruiters into the south, which led to a large migration of black workers to the north in search of better economic conditions, schools, and an

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2 Ibid., pp. 3-4.  
3 Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee, 1900-1930, p. 37.  
4 Fite, p. 20.  
5 Ibid., p. 21.  
6 Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee, 1900-1930, p. 64 and 38, 300 black farmers - Fite, p. 238.  
7 Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee, 1900-1930, p. 64.

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attempt to escape racial discrimination.<sup>8</sup> The advent of World War I also added to a substantial loss of land by black farmers.

By the 1920s, the number of black farmers began to decrease and only 22% of 881,964 black southern farmers were landowners.<sup>9</sup> By the 1930s, Blacks moved out of southern agriculture at a more rapid pace than any other group, and by 1930, there were only 840,088 black farmers and 35,123 black farmers in Tennessee (less than 25% of black Tennessean farmers were landowners).<sup>10</sup> Between 1900-1930, bankruptcy, abandonment, and voluntary sale reduced the number of black farm owners by 25%, and the total rural population fell by 15%.<sup>11</sup> In 1929, over 35% of black Tennesseans still earned their living on the farm, with most black farmers living in the cotton country of West Tennessee. Over 77% of black farmers in Tennessee were in some form of tenancy by 1930, due to low prices and poor agricultural practices.<sup>12</sup> Over half of the rural black population in Tennessee was in need of some form of relief by the end of 1930, and continued to live in substandard housing.<sup>13</sup>

The John Henry Carothers House is an excellent example of a small farmhouse built by a black Tennessee farmer. The Carothers family, although by no means a wealthy family, prospered much more than many of their rural counterparts in Tennessee during the Depression. The Carothers family was able to purchase land, build a house, and place fourteen of their twenty-six acres into agricultural use, growing hay, wheat, tobacco, and a large kitchen garden. The family also raised six cows and several chickens. While the Carothers were able to build a house and use about half of their land for subsistence agriculture, they were still dependent upon outside farm work for additional income. Ezeal Carothers farmed 355 acres, located across the road, that was owned by a Nashville businessman.

The Carothers House is also a good example of a local adaptation of stock building plans using native materials. The Carothers House was the first stone house to be constructed by John Henry Carothers who later built two other stone houses from stock architectural plans. One house is now demolished and the other, located on Jordan Road and built circa 1941, is

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<sup>8</sup> Fite, p. 98.  
<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 99.  
<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 238 and Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee, 1900-1930, p. 64.  
<sup>11</sup> Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee, 1900-1930, p. 79.  
<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 88.  
<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.89 and Fite p. 161.

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slated for demolition. All three houses were constructed from limestone quarried from the Carothers farm by Ezeal Carothers.



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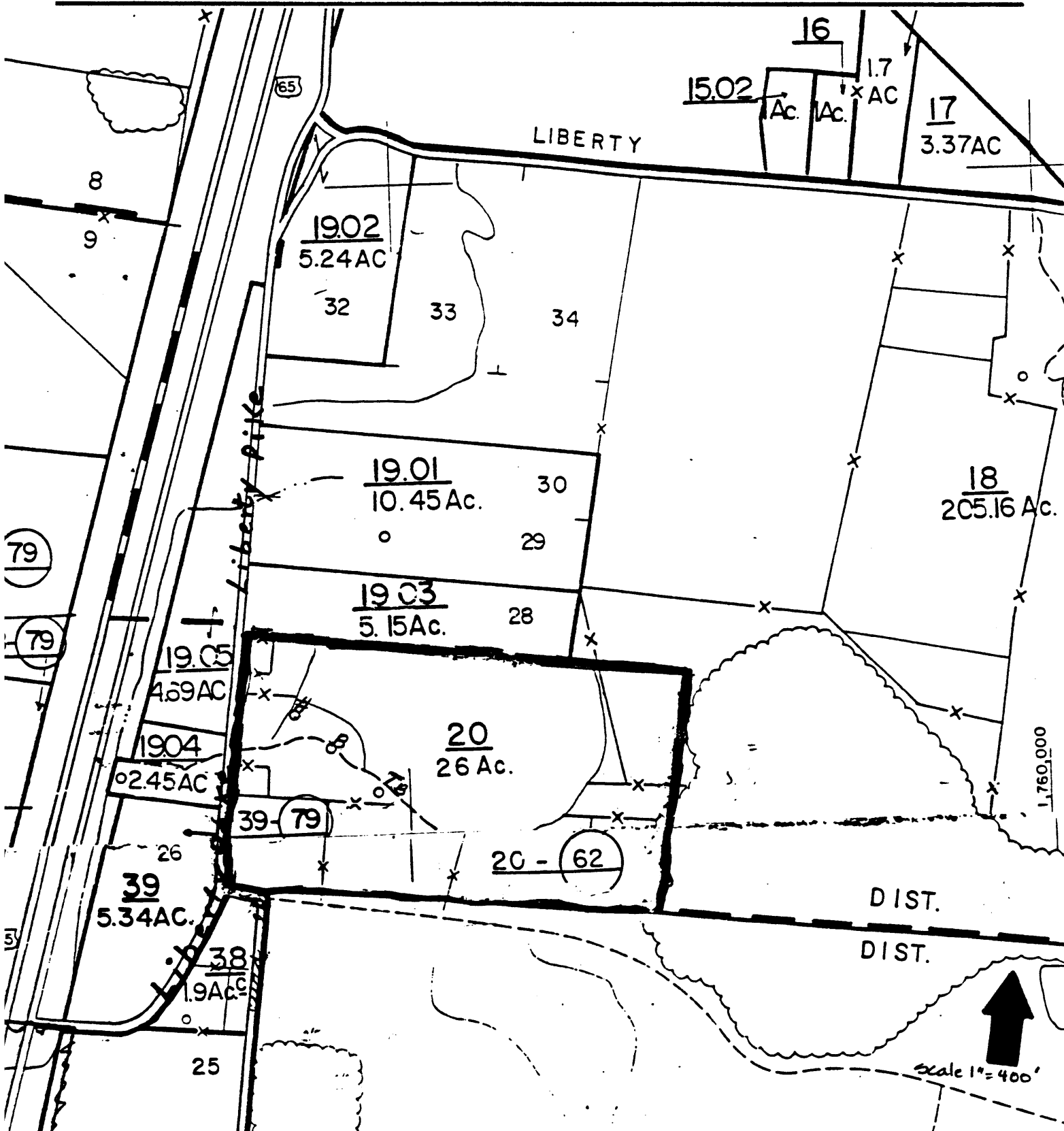
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Carothers, John Henry, House  
Liberty Pike  
Franklin vicinity, Williamson County, Tennessee  
Photo By: Claudette Stager  
Date: March 1989  
Neg: Tennessee Historical Commission  
Nashville, Tennessee

North and west facades, looking southeast  
#1 of 14

North elevation, looking south  
#2 of 14

South elevation, looking north  
#3 of 14

East elevation, looking west  
#4 of 14

Detail of date stone, south elevation  
#5 of 14

Fireplace, living room  
#6 of 14

Fireplace, bedroom  
#7 of 14

Kitchen  
#8 of 14

Upstairs Bedroom  
#9 of 14

Looking west towards Liberty Pike  
#10 of 14

Outbuildings, looking southeast  
#11 of 14

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Outbuildings, looking northeast  
#12 of 14

Garage and Tobacco Barn, looking east  
#13 of 14

Privy, looking north  
#14 of 14