

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

FEB - 8

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cowen Farmstead

other names/site number The Heritage, Farmer House, Cowan House, Fahey House

2. Location

street & number 2671 Little Indian Creek Rd. NA not for publication

city or town Buffalo Valley vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Putnam code 141 zip code 38548

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Harper
Signature of certifying official/Title

2/7/05
Date

Herbert L. Harper, DSHPO, THC
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

3/25/05

Cowen Farmstead
Name of Property

Putnam County, TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) **Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	2	buildings
2		sites
3		structures
		objects
12	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Historic Family Farms of Middle TN MPS

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling _____
 secondary structure _____

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural outbuilding _____
 agricultural field _____
 Animal facility _____

FUNERARY: cemetery _____

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling _____
 secondary structure _____

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural outbuilding _____
 agricultural field _____
 Animal facility _____

FUNERARY: cemetery _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
OTHER: Folk Victorian _____

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation STONE; CONCRETE

walls Weatherboard; log; WOOD

roof METAL

other WOOD; GLASS

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Cowen Farmstead
Name of Property

Putnam County, TN
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property For National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or Represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity who' s components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, Information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations NA
(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration / settlement
Architecture

Period of Significance

Circa 1780-1954

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Upper Cumberland Development District

Cowen Farmstead
Name of Property

Putnam County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 166 acres Buffalo Valley 322 NE & Baxter 326 NW

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>612599</u>	<u>4008933</u>	3	<u>16</u>	<u>611679</u>	<u>4007907</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>16</u>	<u>612546</u>	<u>4007767</u>	4	<u>16</u>	<u>611776</u>	<u>4008928</u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Randal D. Williams / Historic Preservation Specialist
 Organization Upper Cumberland Development District date 6 June 2003
 street & number 1225 South Willow Avenue Telephone 931-432-4111
 city or town Cookeville state TN Zip code 38506

Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Richard and Ellen Fahey
 street & number 2671 Little Indian Creek Rd. Telephone 931-858-2427
 city or town Buffalo Valley state TN Zip code 38548

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Cowen Farmstead
Putnam County Tennessee

VII. Narrative Description

The Cowan¹ Farmstead is located at 2671 Little Indian Creek Road, two miles north of U.S. Highway 70N in western Putnam County, Tennessee. The farmstead is approximately sixteen miles west of Cookeville, the county seat of Putnam County. The nominated boundaries of the site include the Matthew Cowen house, a tool shed, a barn, a springhouse, a cemetery, and rock walls or fences and several other outbuildings. The 166-acre site is located in Buffalo Valley, which lies within the Central Basin physiographic region, an area of eroded limestone, hilly terrain, and thick, humic soil. Little Indian Creek is some 500 feet south, and 100 feet below the farmhouse and outbuildings. The farmhouse is ringed with old maple, box elder, locust, dogwood, and fruit trees. The farm is approximately two miles southeast of the Cumberland River.

The topography of the Cowen Farmstead is typical of the Central Basin. The terrain is flat along Indian Creek, and becomes hilly to the north. The farmstead has numerous slave-built rock walls that enclose old fields where oats, wheat, and barley were once grown. The fields are used today for the production of hay.

The Cowen Farmstead is an important component in the overall cultural history of the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee. The architectural integrity of the structures on the site as well as the historical significance of the farm makes the Cowen Farmstead worthy of inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The property meets the registration requirements of the Historic Family Farms in Middle Tennessee MPS.

1. Matthew Cowen House (circa 1780, 1850, 1900)

The Matthew Cowen House is believed to be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, houses built in what is now Putnam County. The house evolved through the years, but the original single pen log cabin is still extant, although covered by later additions to the house. Today the home has roughly a U-shape, is covered with weatherboard, rests on a stone foundation, and has a standing seam metal roof. Although there is no actual proof as to the date of construction, local oral tradition is that the original one and one-half story, single pen cabin of chestnut logs was built circa 1780 by Ned Cowan, a Long Hunter from Augusta County, Virginia, who entered Tennessee in 1769. His son, Matthew Cowen, expanded the original single pen house by adding an open hall and another pen, making the house a dogtrot. The house originally had a detached kitchen and dining area, which was later, around 1857, enclosed to create the current U-shaped house. Also around 1857 the façade and west elevation porches were added and a one-story frame/log saddlebag section was added to the north elevation of the house. Circa 1890, Dr. Winfield Scott Farmer, who then owned the house, covered the log structure with weatherboard and added sawn wood trim to the porches and eaves, giving the house a more Folk Victorian style. Later in the 1930s, Mr. Clay

¹ The name is spelled as Cowan and Cowen in historic records. Because Matthew Cowen used the 'e' in his last name and he the person most closely associated with the principal building on the property, the nomination uses Cowen.

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Farmer added a summer porch on the east elevation. Few additional changes occurred to the house until the 1980s when the area where the well house was on the northeast corner of the house was enlarged to two stories, a garage was added to the rear (north) elevation, the former kitchen on the northwest was remodeled and some interior logs were exposed.

The most prominent feature of the south façade is the circa 1890s wood trim on the 1857 half-hip roofed porch. Six elaborately detailed sawn wood columns with brackets support the roof, while a balustrade with more decorative sawn wood encloses the porch. There is a central door with transom flanked by two segmental arched, four-over-four windows with wood muntins. Although the windows are arched, they are set in rectangular frames. There are three circa 1890 gable wall dormers on the south façade. Each has a sawn bargeboard and four-over-four hung windows. Stone gable end chimneys and the root cellar entry, enclosed porch, and 1980s addition are visible from the façade, although set back near the rear of the house. The 1980s addition is a modification of a circa 1930s well house.

The west elevation of the one and one-half story original pen has a large, shouldered limestone chimney and one four-over-four window to the south of the chimney. An 1857 porch with circa 1890s sawn woodwork similar to the trim on the façade porch highlights the U-shaped courtyard formed by the evolution of the house. The sawn balustrade and brackets are identical to the façade woodwork, but slender columns are different in design. Numerous wood frame doors and windows are found on the courtyard walls. There are four doors and four windows in the west side; the windows are four-over-four. There is one two-over-two window centrally located above the porch roof. Another chimney is seen on the west elevation of the former kitchen. Constructed of larger stones, it is much wider than the other chimney seen on this elevation. The siding is wood. A circa 1930s shed roof dormer with modern windows is located on the south elevation of this courtyard section.

The north or rear elevation of the Cowen house shows the evolution of the house up to the 1980s. The one story shed roof garage was added to this elevation in 1980. The garage is sheathed with wood siding and is covered with a metal roof. The 1980s expansion of the former well house is most visible here. There is a two story shed roof section and an extension of the gable roof. Sided with wood, this elevation shows three two-over-two windows, similar in scale to the historic windows, are visible on the second story of the addition. No historic fabric shows from this elevation.

The east elevation reveals both the historic house and the modern changes to it. A 1920s photograph (right) shows part of the façade porch as it looks today, the same four-over-four window adjacent to the stone chimney, and a shed roof entry to the cellar. A single leaf entry and two six-over-six windows are visible on the portion now enclosed by a porch. North of this is



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the historic one story well house. A simple wood fence enclosed the courtyard formed by the two ends of the elevation. Today you can still see the stone chimney and window; however, the entry to the root cellar was changed to a gable roof structure circa 1980. Around 1937 an exterior porch was added to this elevation and around 1980 the porch was enlarged and enclosed. Covered with wood there are two sets of tripled six-over-six windows and a multi-light double-leaf door. A modern wood patio extends from this elevation to the façade porch. North of this section is a front gable expansion of an original part of the house. Covered with weatherboard siding and embellished with a two-story porch with sawn wood trim similar to the historic woodwork, this section is set far back from the facade and not very visible from it. North of the two story addition is the modern garage.

The interior of the house retains many of its historic features. The house contains a total of five, cut limestone fireplaces. The fireplace in the original single pen log cabin has a mantel made of a single oak log. The other fireplaces throughout the house have dressed mantelpieces, circa 1850-1870. Interior walls of the house contain exposed chestnut logs, one of which is over thirty inches thick and forty feet long, indicating the great size of the area's chestnut forest at the time the walls were constructed, circa 1780-1800. The primary stair has a heavy turned wood balustrade with a simple handrail on the first story, while the second story stair is composed of a cut wood balustrade similar to the exterior balustrades. The upper stairway also has sawn wood scroll brackets on the string. Tongue and groove wood flooring of the main living area of the house dates to the 1850s and was part of the expansion of the house undertaken by Wesley Harvey. The interior of the structure shows very distinctly the evolution of the house. (Contributing building)

2. Dutch Barn (1901)

The large barn has vertical board siding with weatherboards in the gable ends and a steep pitch metal gable roof. The 'Dutch style' barn has traditional crib barn features. It has a low, broad gabled roof and is built of chestnut, some planks being thirty inches wide. The east façade has a main hall entrance at ground level and a hayloft entrance above. These entrances are flanked by two doors and one six-over-six window to the south of the hall entrance. The north elevation is configured as the east, minus the window. The south and west elevations contain no doors or windows. The most notable feature of the Dutch barn is the broad gable roof that is often extended very low to the ground. This type of barn is rare in the South, where most barns are variations of crib style, and even more rare in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee, where few examples of this style of barn architecture exist. The barn has a metal roof, but was originally covered with wood shingles. While the exterior architecture of the barn is prototypically Dutch, the interior architecture is crib style, typical of Appalachian barns. The barn has a central hall with seven separate cribs originally used as mule stalls. There is a hayloft above the cribs. (Contributing building)

3. Springhouse (circa 1790)

The springhouse sits some 300 feet south of the farmhouse. It is a small, rectangular structure built of cut limestone and set into the hill from which the spring flows. There is a door in the south

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façade and it is covered by a gable roof. The springhouse, according to local tradition, was built prior to 1800, as is evidenced by the mortise and tenon construction. Until well into the 20th century, a "trolley" was used to carry water buckets from the main house to the springhouse. Occupants of the house would lower the buckets to the spring by means of ropes and pulleys in order to fetch water from the spring. (Contributing structure)

4. Cemetery (circa 1830-1900)

The cemetery is north of the farmhouse and is no longer used. Due to animal and agricultural activity, the exact number of graves in the cemetery cannot be determined. The cemetery dates to the early 19th century and is approximately 22,500 square feet or roughly one-half acre. There are two graves marked with legible headstones, eleven are marked with simple stone markers with no inscription, most likely slave graves, and there are seventeen visible depressions with no markers of any kind. Based on oral history, slaves, sharecropper, and Cowan family members are buried in the cemetery. At the east of the cemetery, there is what appears to be a burial cairn, the possible grave of Ned Cowan, who was reported to have been killed by Indians in the 1780s. The cemetery is known locally as the Harvey Cemetery and was apparently established by the Harvey family in the mid 19th century. Sarah Trousdale Cowen Harvey was the daughter of Matthew and Catron Cowen. (Contributing site)

5. Wash House (circa 1890)

The wash house is immediately east of the main house. The frame building is covered with vertical board wood siding and has a low pitch metal shed roof. A wood porch with shed roof was added at a later date. The single leaf central door is on the east façade. Of interest in the wash house is a massive salt trough hewn from a single black walnut log over six feet in diameter, a size unimaginable today. The trough is purported to date to the late 18th century. (Contributing building)

6. Outhouse (circa 1920)

Located immediately east of the wash house, the outhouse has wood siding, a central door, and a metal roof. There were other outhouses on the property but none remain. (Contributing building.)

7. Horse and Buggy Shed (circa 1890)

Northeast of wash house is a frame shed. Sided with vertical board wood, it has a metal shed roof and open front, door in west façade. The shed was relocated here circa 1980. (Noncontributing building due to move.)

8. Chicken House (1937)

East of main house is a frame, wood sided, metal shed roof chicken house. The entry is on the west façade and there are two four-over-four windows on the structure. (Contributing building)

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9. Corn Crib (circa 1901)

Southwest of main house is the rectangular plan, frame corn crib. It has wood siding and a metal roof. (Contributing structure)

10. Weigh House (circa 1901)

Southeast of barn is the frame weigh house. The frame building is sheathed in vertical board wood siding and has a gable metal roof. Central doors in the northeast and southwest elevations allow livestock to enter building for weighing. The northwest elevation of the building has a compartment for the scale. (Contributing building)

11. Rock Fences (circa 1800-1860)

The Cowen Farmstead contains several rock walls or fences, which were built by slaves who once lived on the property. The walls are built of native limestone and are constructed Roman style having two rows of heavier stones with smaller stone fill between them capped by another row of stones. These walls were constructed during the antebellum period, over a period of roughly sixty years. The rock fences on the Cowen Farmstead are some of the best examples of rock wall architecture in the Upper Cumberland region. (Contributing structure)

12. Setting: Field Patterns and building foundations/footprints

The farm has fields and pastures delineated by 19th century rock fences (see #11) and modern woven wire fences. Orchards and field patterns remain nearly the same today as they did in the 19th century, which is due in large part to the existence of the rock fences that have served to reinforce the patterns. In addition, the foundations or footprints of numerous outbuildings or slave housing can be found on the property and these contribute to the overall setting. See site plan for locations. (Contributing site)

13. Storage/tool Shed (circa 1990)

Northwest of main house, is a modern rectangular plan, vertical wood board sided storage barn with metal roof. Shed extensions with metal roofs are on the east and south elevations. The building is used for farm implement storage. (Noncontributing building.)

14. Car House (circa 1930)

Immediately north of main house is a rectangular plan, vertical wood board sided shed/garage. The building has a gable roof with metal roofing and a shed extension on the north elevation. It was used as a garage, or "car house." (Contributing building)

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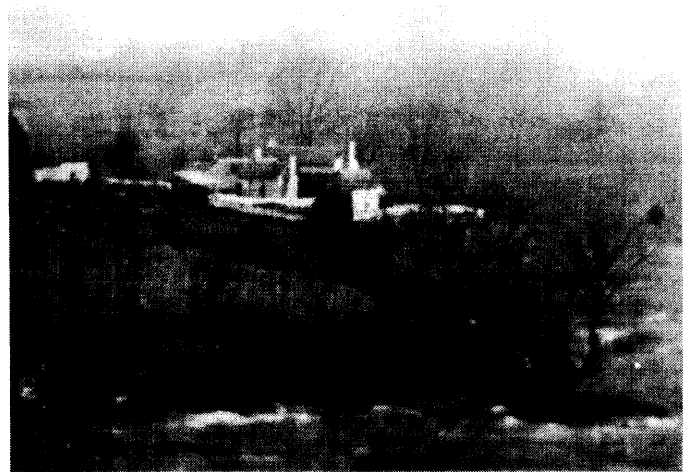
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Cowen Farmstead
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Aerial view of farmstead circa 1999-2000



Farmstead circa 1920



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VIII. Statement of Significance

The Cowen Farmstead in Putnam County, Tennessee is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under criteria A and C in the areas of settlement and architecture. This farmstead was one of the earliest established in the region and one of the oldest continuously operated farms in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee. According to local tradition, Ned Cowan settled on this property in the Buffalo Valley area sometime prior to 1790, before Tennessee achieved statehood. Ned's son, Matthew, was prominent in the early history of the Upper Cumberland region, and served as a captain under General Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812, seeing action at the Battle of New Orleans. Dr. Winfield Scott Farmer, who owned the farm in the early 20th century, was a nephew of Ned and Matthew Cowen. Dr. Farmer practiced medicine in the Buffalo Valley area before becoming Superintendent of Central State Hospital in Nashville, a position he held for some thirty years. Cowan and his descendants living on one farm over several generation are a good example of a characteristic settlement patterns in this region of Tennessee.

Subsequent owners of the farm, all of whom were related to the original owners, maintained the integrity of the farm while continuing to update the house and outbuildings. The farmhouse is a fine example of an early log building that evolved into a Folk Victorian house with elaborate milled woodwork on the exterior and exterior. The outbuildings on the farm are collectively good representations of 19th century agricultural buildings and structures. The historic rock fences and field patterns add to the sense of time and place of the farmstead. The farm remained in the same family until 1976, a span of nearly 200 years. The exact date when the house was begun is not known but it is believed to be circa 1780, which is an early date for the Caney Fork Valley. Wesley Harvey was responsible for making many of the changes to the house around 1857, and the Farmer family made changes in the late 19th century. There were few other changes to the house until the 1930s. The farmstead retains a high degree of integrity and meets the registration requirements of the Historic Family Farms in Middle Tennessee MPS.

Background

The Cowen Farmstead lies in the Central Basin physiographic region of Tennessee. The Central Basin covers an area of 5,000 square miles, is fifty miles wide, and about 600 feet lower in elevation than the surrounding Highland Rim.² The extreme western end of what is now Putnam County lies in the Central Basin. Many streams, including the Caney Fork River and tributaries, dissect the western portion of Putnam County. The Caney Fork itself is a tributary of the Cumberland River, which lies approximately two miles north of the Cowen Farmstead. The Central Basin, due to millenia of erosion and sedimentation, contains some of the most fertile farmland in Tennessee, and attracted settlers at an early date.

² Edward T. Luther, *Our Restless Earth, The Geologic Regions of Tennessee* (Knoxville: U.T. Press, 1977), 36.

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In addition to European settlers, the Central Basin of Tennessee has been home to Native Americans for millenia. The Cowen Farmstead shows evidence of Native American occupation and utilization that covers a vast period, from early Archaic through the Mississippian eras. This evidence occurs in the form of lithic assemblages representing these various eras. Projectile point types found on the site include Adena, Big Sandy, Eva, Hamilton, Kirk Corner Notched, Madison, Pine Tree and others. Other artifactual material in the form of hammer stones, nutting stones, and celts have also been found on the site.

Although permanent settlement of what was to become Middle Tennessee did not occur until the late 18th century, various explorers and adventurers had been visiting the Tennessee country for many years before permanent settlement took place. The Spaniard, Hernando De Soto, was probably the first European in Tennessee, having made his way from Florida to southeastern Tennessee by 1540, to be followed by Juan Pardo in 1566.³ By the late 17th century French explorers such as Marquette, Joliet, and La Salle, were pushing into the Mississippi Valley from Canada, and by the early 18th century, English adventurers and traders were crossing the Appalachian Mountains into Tennessee.⁴ However, it was not until the coming of the Long Hunters that Tennessee began to be explored in earnest, paving the way for permanent settlement.

The Long Hunters originated mainly in southwestern Virginia, although some came from the Carolinas.⁵ Long Hunters were men who went into the wilderness to hunt, trap, and trade for months, and sometimes years, at a time.⁶ These men were the archetypal frontiersmen, the independent trail blazer who would come to play such an important role in the collective American consciousness. Daniel Boone was among this group of men.

As early as the 1740s hunters had ventured into the backwoods of Tennessee, and by 1761 Elisha Walden was leading groups of hunters into Tennessee from Virginia.⁷ The year 1769 saw the largest party of Long Hunters to enter Middle Tennessee. These men came through the Cumberland Gap and followed the Cumberland River to a rendezvous site in Wayne County, Kentucky called Price's Meadow. From Price's Meadow, some of the men explored as far south as the Caney Fork River and its tributaries in Putnam, White, and DeKalb counties.⁸ Among this party were men who would be instrumental in settling Middle Tennessee and Nashville, including

³ Robert E. Corlew, *Tennessee, A Short History* 2nd Ed. (Knoxville: U.T. Press, 1981), 25-26.

⁴ Ibid, 28.

⁵ Edward Albright, *Early History of Middle Tennessee*, N.p., 1908, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~tnsumner/early7.htm>

⁶ Corlew, 41.

⁷ Ibid, 41-42.

⁸ Albright, 1.

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Kaspar Mansker, Abraham Bledsoe, Uriah Stone, and Obadiah Terrill. Also among this party was the Long Hunter, Ned Cowan.⁹

According to local oral tradition, Ned Cowan was the first settler in the Caney Fork Valley, in what would become Putnam County. Little is certain concerning Cowan's early life, although it is known that he came from the Botetourt County, Virginia area. Unlike many other Long Hunters, Cowan never returned to his home state, but stayed in Tennessee to establish a permanent home. The soils of the Central Basin have historically been some of the best farmland in Middle Tennessee. In Western Putnam County, the Central Basin is dissected by Big Indian Creek and its tributaries, one of which is Little Indian Creek, on which is located the Cowen Farmstead. Drainage is well defined and dendritic, and stream dissection is well advanced.¹⁰ All formations of the Outer Central Basin of Putnam County have weathered from phosphatic, clayey limestone; the Mimosa soils are formed in this residual material.¹¹ The soils of the region have allowed farming operations to flourish in the region since being first established; the Cowen Farmstead is no exception.

Cowan apparently chose to squat on 2,000 acres on Little Indian Creek, a practice that was not uncommon among frontier settlers. Indeed, famed Long Hunter Elisha Walden had squatted on land on Smith River in Pittsylvania County, Virginia.¹² No land grant entitling Cowan to the land on Little Indian Creek has ever been found, nor has any record of military service. As the early date of settlement predates the 1805 signing of the Third Treaty of Tellico in which the Cherokee ceded their claims to all lands in Middle Tennessee, it is assumed that Cowan squatted illegally on Cherokee land. Sometime after Cowan established himself on Little Indian Creek, he married a woman whose last name was Manners; her first name is unknown. Cowan and his wife had several children, although the exact number is unknown. Much of Cowan's life is shrouded in mystery, as is his death. According to one source, Indians killed Cowan sometime prior to 1790.¹³ It is of interest to note, that the cemetery on the Cowen Farmstead property contains a stone burial cairn of the type utilized in the 18th century. There is conjecture as to the possibility of this being Ned Cowan's grave, although this cannot be ascertained for certain. The exact time, nature, and place of Cowan's death is unknown, but his settlement on this farmstead contributed to the early development of Middle Tennessee.

Upon Cowan's death, the farm became the possession of his son Matthew. Matthew Cowen, according to the 1850 Jackson County, Tennessee census, was born in Tennessee in 1776 or 1777, another indicator of the early date of Ned Cowan's presence in Tennessee. The exact place

⁹ Ibid, 1.

¹⁰ Soil Survey, Putnam County, Tennessee (Washington, DC, U.S.D.A., 1960), 108.

¹¹ Ibid, 108.

¹² Emory L. Hamilton. "The Long Hunters". Historical Sketches of Southwest Virginia, #5, March 1970. www.geocities.com/the-long-hunters/, 3.

¹³ John Carr, *Early Times in Middle Tennessee* (Nashville: E. Stevenson and F. A. Owen, 1857), 12.

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Cowen Farmstead
Putnam County Tennessee

of Matthew's birth is unknown, although local oral tradition has it that he was born on Little Indian Creek. Matthew Cowen died on the Cowen Farmstead in 1865.

Matthew Cowen was a well-placed member of early Middle Tennessee frontier society. In 1800, he married Catron "Katy" Trousdale, the daughter of James Trousdale, originally from Scotland, who had served as a Captain from North Carolina under Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox", during the Revolutionary War. Catron was the sister of William Trousdale who served as governor of Tennessee from 1849 until 1851. Catron Cowen was born in North Carolina in 1782 and died in Putnam County, Tennessee in 1866.

Matthew Cowen was a captain in the Third Regiment of West Tennessee Militia during the War of 1812; Cowan served under his neighbor, Colonel James Raulston. The Third Regiment of West Tennessee Militia were among the famed and feared "Dirty Shirts" of the New Orleans campaign. The Third Regiment saw heavy fighting under General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans.

The Matthew Cowen family expanded the log farmhouse believed to have been built by Ned Cowan. Around 1857, Cowen's son-in-law, Wesley Harvey, added porches to the south façade and west elevations of the house. Around this time a saddlebag portion was added onto the north elevation of the original house and the original kitchen was remodeled. The structure grew to incorporate the growing family and today it is essentially the house that the Matthew Cowens lived in, with a few later changes. The Cowens and Harveys were slaveholders, among the largest in the Upper Cumberland region. The slaves farmed the land, tended stock, and built numerous rock fences on the property. The slaves lived in cabins west of the main house, none of which are extant. According to the 1840 Jackson County, Tennessee census, Matthew Cowen owned a total of nineteen slaves, who worked as domestics and agricultural laborers. It was during this period that numerous slave cabins were built to the west of the main house. Tobacco production was an important component of the agricultural output of the farm at that time, and slave labor was used in this labor-intensive pursuit. By the end of the Civil War, all slaves had been freed, although several of the Cowen's slaves chose to remain on the premises as hired laborers or tenant farmers.

Matthew and Catron Cowen had a total of twelve children. The farm became the property of Sarah Cowen and her husband, Wesley Harvey in March 1842. Sarah was a daughter of Matthew and Catron Cowen. Harvey was a master craftsman. He made furniture of all descriptions, some of which still exists today. At the time the Harvey's operated the farm, it was essentially a self-sufficient operation. The daily needs of the family were produced on-site. Rooms in the house were used for weaving flax, spinning cloth, carding, quilting, and sewing. The farm produced tobacco, flax, corn, oats, hay, and vegetables. There were orchards on the property that produced a variety of fruits and seeds; and cattle, hogs, and sheep were raised on the property.

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The next proprietors of the Cowen farm were the Vadens, Henry and Sina. Sina Vaden was the granddaughter of Matthew Cowen. Henry Vaden became manager of the property in 1865. Vaden established a one room school on the property for the benefit of the children of the community. Vaden also undertook improvements on the farm property that included the building of a new smoke house, outhouses, harness house and buggy shed. Crop production on the farm also increased under the tenure of the Vadens, who controlled the farm until the end of the 19th century.

In 1890, Dr. Winfield Scott Farmer and his wife, Francis Vaden, came into possession of the Cowen farm. Francis Vaden Farmer was the daughter of Wesley and Sina Vaden. Dr. Farmer was a rural, country doctor who had an office on the farmstead. Dr. Farmer practiced medicine in the Buffalo Valley area for a number of years as well as in Cookeville. Dr. Farmer served as Superintendent of Central State Hospital in Nashville for thirty years, until his death in 1938. Dr. Farmer's son, Clay Farmer, operated the farm until the mid 1970s when the property passed from the Cowen heirs after nearly 200 years of ownership.

The Harveys, Vadens, and Farmers were all related to the Cowen family, both directly and collaterally. The connection of these families to the Cowens allowed the farmstead to stay within the family until it was sold in 1976. All these families were prominent in the affairs of their local community. Dr. Winfield Scott Farmer was a rural physician in Putnam and surrounding counties, and was highly respected in the community. The families continued to improve the farm, although through the years acreage was sold and given to children in order that they be able to establish their own homes and farms within the community.

The Cowen Farmstead in Putnam County, Tennessee is significant to the overall cultural settlement of Middle Tennessee. From a socio-historical perspective, there are few sites in the Upper Cumberland region as significant as the Cowen Farmstead. The farm was established at an early date, and the lives of those who owned and worked the property were significant to the early history of the area.

No formal archaeological assessment has been done for the Cowen Farmstead. There is the potential for historic subsurface remains. Farmsteads such as this one were comprised of a principal building such as a house, numerous agricultural outbuildings, field patterns, and cemeteries. Subsurface remains may contain important information useful for interpreting site patterning or general interpretation of the history of the property. In addition, anecdotal information suggests that there may be a significant prehistoric component, one that is worthy of future, controlled investigation.

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Cowen Farmstead
Putnam County Tennessee

Geographical Data

The nominated property consists of 165.77 acres on parcel 2 and the Farmer Cemetery on parcel 3. This contains all the property currently associated with the Cowen Farmstead.

The tax map scale is 1" = 400', which is the only, scale available for rural areas of the state.

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Cowen Farmstead
Putnam County Tennessee

Photographs

Photos by: Randal Williams
Upper Cumberland Development District

Date: April 4, 2003

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, Tennessee

South façade, facing north
1 of 48

South façade, facing north
2 of 48

South façade, facing north
3 of 48

South façade and west elevation, facing northeast
4 of 48

South façade and east elevation, facing northwest
5 of 48

South façade, facing northwest
6 of 48

South façade and west elevation, facing northeast
7 of 48

West elevation, facing east, featuring cut limestone chimney
8 of 48

West elevation, facing southeast
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West elevation, facing east
10 of 48

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Cowen Farmstead
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East elevation, facing west
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East elevation, facing west
12 of 48

East elevation, facing northwest
13 of 48

West elevation of house, facing east, featuring cut sandstone chimney; also shows modern storage/tool shed
14 of 48

West elevation of modern tool shed, facing east
15 of 48

Living room window, facing south
16 of 48

Interior Chestnut log wall
17 of 48

Interior Chestnut log wall
18 of 48

Interior cut limestone fireplace featuring Chestnut mantel
19 of 48

Interior cut limestone chimney featuring antique andirons
20 of 48

Interior cut limestone fireplace featuring keystone
21 of 48

Interior wall featuring Chestnut logs, window, and door
22 of 48

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Cowen Farmstead
Putnam County Tennessee

Interior hardwood floor
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Second story bedroom featuring Chestnut boards
24 of 48

Second story bedroom featuring Chestnut boards
25 of 48

South façade of springhouse, facing north
26 of 48

South façade and west elevation of springhouse, facing northeast
27 of 48

South façade of barn, facing northwest
28 of 48

East elevation of barn featuring roof, facing west
29 of 48

North façade of barn, facing southeast
30 of 48

Second story barn floor featuring Chestnut planks
31 of 48

Rock wall, facing east
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Rock wall, facing northeast
33 of 48

Rock wall, facing east
34 of 48

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Cowen Farmstead
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Rock wall, facing west
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Rock wall, facing west
36 of 48

Corner of rock wall, facing southwest
37 of 48

Rock wall, facing northeast
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Rock wall, facing northeast
39 of 48

Cemetery, tombstone facing west
40 of 48

Cemetery, tombstone facing west
41 of 48

Cemetery, facing northwest
42 of 48

Cemetery, facing northwest
43 of 48

Cemetery, facing north, featuring burial cairn
44 of 48

Cemetery, facing southeast, featuring burial cairn
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Cemetery, facing southeast, featuring burial cairn
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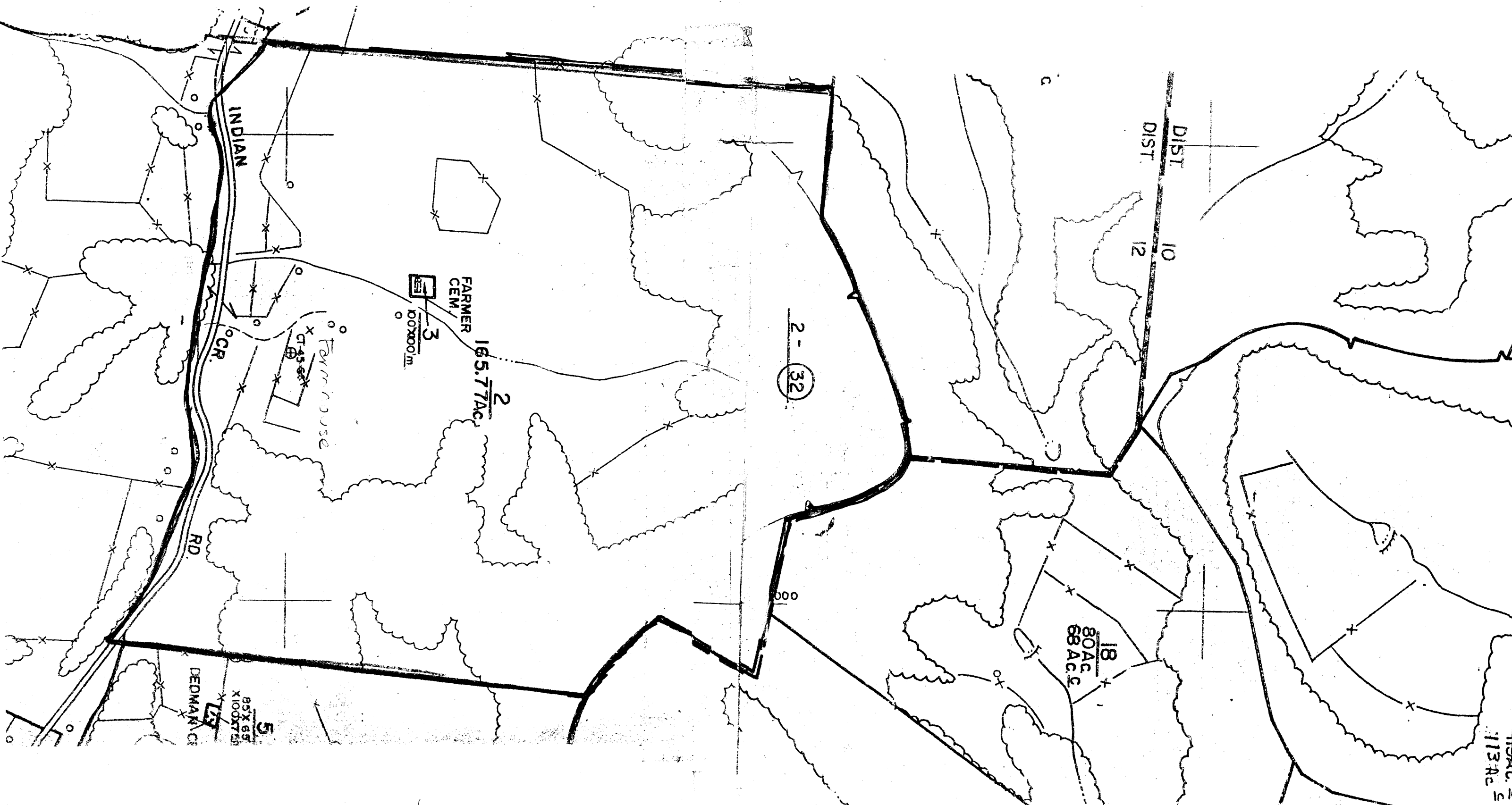
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Cowen Farmstead
Putnam County Tennessee

Foundation of slave quarters, facing northwest
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Foundation of slave quarters, facing east
48 of 48



Cowen Farmstead
 Putnam County TN
 1" = 400' → N