

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received 11 12  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Benajah Gray Log House

and or common Same

2. Location

street & number 446 Battle Road N/A — not for publication

city, town Antioch  vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Davidson code 037

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name See attached sheet

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Davidson County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Nashville state Tennessee 37201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A N/A federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Benajah Gray House is a double pen log house. One pen is 1½ story, while the other is 1 story, with a 1 story rear shed addition built ca. 1805, and exhibiting very unusual diamond notching techniques. The house, located in a rural area of southeastern Davidson County, is an unaltered example of an unusual central hall plan with one large room on either side. In addition to the Gray Log House, five outbuildings are included in the nomination. They include: a log kitchen, log smokehouse, log slave house, framed kitchen, and framed barn.

Situated on Battle Road approximately fifteen miles southeast of downtown Nashville, the Benajah Gray House is one of the oldest log structures in Middle Tennessee and has always been owned by a member of the Gray family. Built ca. 1805, and currently owned by the great great granddaughter of Benajah Gray, the double pen log house rests on a solid limestone foundation and the diamond notched logs are yellow poplar and cedar. The Gray House is very unusual in that the 1½ story pen and the 1 story pen were built at the same time. This asymmetrical appearance usually evolves through time and not a result of a single building effort. The facade of the Gray House is covered by a 1 story shed porch with metal roof which is supported by eight square boxed columns with plain capitals and dentils. The 1 story pen is sided with weatherboards, while the siding on the 1½ story pen has been removed to expose the logs. The southern facing five bay facade has three doors which open into each log pen and the central hallway respectively. The door opening into the 1½ story pen was probably originally a window. The two windows on the facade are 6/6 light double hung sash.

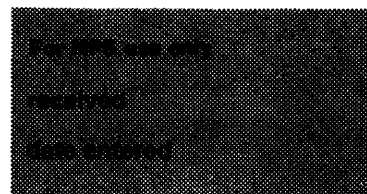
The east elevation has 2 brick chimneys and one 6/6 light double hung sash window on the first floor and two windows flanking the chimney on the second floor. The southernmost brick chimney rests on a limestone base and appears to have replaced the original stone chimney. The other brick chimney was built with the later rear addition. The north elevation is a 1 story rear shed addition that was added to the house ca. 1890. This addition is sided with weatherboarding and has four 6/6 light double hung sash windows. The west elevation has the original limestone chimney and two 6/6 light double hung sash windows. The older weatherboard siding has been replaced by wider horizontal siding. A projecting door next to the chimney leads down to a crawl space beneath the 1 story pen.

The metal roof is supported by 4"x4" poplar rafters that were hand hewed on two sides and pit sawed on the other side. These rafters are joined together at the crown of the roof by being half lapped and pegged, and are individually marked with Roman numerals.

The interior of the Benajah Gray House has not undergone many changes through time. All of the interior doors are original and handmade, and retain the original handwrought H-L hinges. These hinges are fastened with handwrought nails with leather gaskets, an unusual surviving architectural feature. The original floors are white ash, while the poplar moldings, door and window trim, and baseboards were replaced in the 1860s. While the box locks with Rockingham and porcelain door knobs on the interior doors date to the 1860s, the original large Carpenter-like locks are stored in the attic and date to ca. 1790s. The interior walls have original hand planed beaded poplar vertical boards, and the original closet stairway that leads up to the second floor.

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Owner of Property:

Ernestine Huffman  
1023 Grassland Lane  
Nashville, Tennessee 37220

James Fyke  
Division of Parks and Recreation  
Centennial Park Office  
Centennial Park  
Nashville, Tennessee 37205

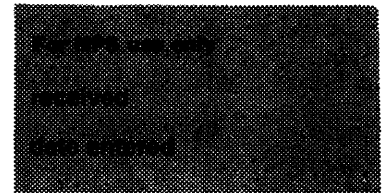
Property:

Benajah Gray Log House, log kitchen,  
log smokehouse, frame barn, and  
frame kitchen.

Benajah Gray log slave cabin

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Other features about the house that merit mention are the lightning rod and weather vane atop the 1½ story log section and the well and pump behind the house

Three log outbuildings, a kitchen, smokehouse, and slave cabin are significant buildings, as is the later framed detached kitchen/dining room. The 1 story log kitchen, built ca. 1805, rests on limestone piers, has V-notched logs, gable metal roof and large brick chimney in the rear. The one bay facade has the original vertical board door. This building served as the principal kitchen until ca. 1870s when Benajah F. Gray built the adjoining framed kitchen. The log kitchen continued to be used as the summer kitchen into the 20th century. The log smokehouse is a 1 story building with V-notched logs and metal gable roof. The vertical board door is the only opening into the structure. It is currently used as a storage area.

The framed kitchen/dining room is located between the log kitchen and smokehouse and perpendicular to the house. The one story building, constructed in the 1870s, rests on limestone piers, has a central brick chimney, metal gable roof, and deeply set extended porch that is supported by square columns. The framed kitchen has 2 four paneled doors and weatherboard siding. The older siding on the north and south has been replaced by wider horizontal siding.

Also included within the boundaries of the nomination is a 1½ story framed pole barn. This 20th century barn with vertical siding and a metal gable roof is constructed of hewed logs probably salvaged from a much older structure. All the doors off the central aisle-way have hand forged strap hinges.

The log slave cabin is an unusual single pen, 1½ story building with a central H-shaped limestone chimney. The half dovetail notched structure has a metal gable roof, two door openings on the facade, yet no windows, and a closet stairway leading up to the second floor. The tongue and groove pine floor boards are supported by hewn cedar log floor joists. The upper story of the slave house has board and batten siding that represents a 20th century remodeling.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** ca. 1805 - 1935      **Builder/Architect** Benajah Gray

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Benajah Gray Log House is a double pen log house constructed ca. 1805 located in south-eastern Davidson County. The house is significant under criterion B due to its historical association with Benajah Gray, a Davidson County settler of the early 1800s and a public figure in former Civil District 6, and his son Benajah F. Gray, who was also a prominent member of the same community during the late 1800s. Under criterion C, the house derives further significance as one of the oldest remaining log structures in Middle Tennessee in continued ownership by the same family. The Gray House and associated outbuildings depict the life of an upper middle class farmer. As a collection of relatively unaltered buildings, they help to convey a lifestyle seldom seen in Davidson County.

Benajah Gray, the son of Revolutionary War soldier James Gray, was born in Onslow County, North Carolina on July 11, 1775. An early settler to this region, Gray arrived in Davidson County sometime before 1800. He purchased a 52 acre tract of land in the former 6th Civil District of Davidson County on October 12, 1800. This land had been part of a 640 acre tract granted to Lardner Clark by the State of North Carolina in 1784, lying on the waters of Hurricane Creek, a branch of the Stones River. Benajah Gray probably built his 1½ story log house on this land sometime between 1800 and his marriage to Eleanor Dillard Warnick in 1808. In 1811, Benajah Gray purchased an additional 212 acres which adjoined his home tract and on which he raised crops of corn, wheat, oats, and cotton.

Benajah Gray served as Captain in the 19th Regiment of the Tennessee Militia in Davidson County in 1809, was appointed Justice of the Peace by Governor John Sevier in 1809, and was a life member of the Notables Court. Benajah and Eleanor Gray had eight children. Gray's hard work and industry in developing a profitable working farm was evident at his death. He died on June 6, 1836, leaving in his will his house, farm, and surrounding land to Eleanor during her lifetime, and specified that at her death his son, Benajah F. Gray, would inherit the property. His estate included eight slaves, horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, geese, 408 acres of land in Davidson County, 325 acres in Dyer County, 2,362 acres in Haywood County, and 834 acres in Haywood and Dyer Counties.

Benajah F. Gray, son of Benajah and Eleanor Gray, inherited his father's farm after his mother's death in the 1840s. He was born May 12, 1828 in Davidson County and married Mary Ann Williams (born April 10, 1834; died June 13, 1917) on October 14, 1856. Benajah F. Gray was an active and influential member of the community. He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1870 and 1876, was a School Board Director for fifteen years, and served as a Sixth Civil District Magistrate for nearly thirty years. By occupation he was a farmer and his estate grew to encompass 650 acres.

Aside from the usual tasks of operating a large farm, Benajah Gray also ran a successful thoroughbred horse breeding business in the 1870s. Gray documented the daily operation of

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property approximately 6 acres

Quadrangle name Nolensville, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References Smyrna, Tennessee

A 

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

B 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

C 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

D 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

E 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

F 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

G 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

H 

Zone	Easting						Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Mason, Researcher, Nashville Heritage Foundation  
Stephen Rogers, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization Tennessee Historical Commission date March, 1985

street & number 701 Broadway telephone (615)742-6716

city or town Nashville state Tennessee 37219-5237

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Stuger

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 5/22/85

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 7-11-85

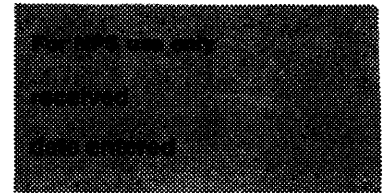
J. Alvaris Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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his farm and horse breeding in account journals and logs. These journals, which are in the family possession, give a comprehensive look into the Gray family. Included with the account journals and logs are many 19th century books on agriculture and farming techniques. Gray was interested in the latest ideas and methods to improve livestock quality. In these journals and logs, Gray kept very detailed information on his horse and cattle breeding. Gray produced lengthy horse and cow genealogies that allowed him to document the development and improvement to his herds. Upon his death on November 16, 1894, Grays's land was partitioned among his wife and six children. Ownership of the house has remained in the Gray family, descending through the female line. It is presently owned by Benajah Gray's great-great granddaughter, Mrs. Ernestine Huffman.

While there is a Gray family cemetery about 100 yards south of the log house where later family members are buried, (not included within the boundaries of the nominated property), Benajah Gray, his son, Benajah F. Gray, and several family members are buried in an unmarked cemetery in the front yard of the house. According to family tradition, Benajah et al were buried near the house with wooden grave markers.

The Benajah Gray House is architecturally significant as one of the oldest log structures in Davidson County. It is unusual in construction in that the 1½ story section and the one story section are diamond notched and built at the same time. The diamond notching is very unusual in Tennessee and has been found on only one other structure, a pioneer frontier station built in 1785 by Major William Hall in Sumner County, which burned in 1969. The interior doors and hardware of the Gray House are all original and represent a collection of H-L hinges with handwrought nails with leather gaskets.

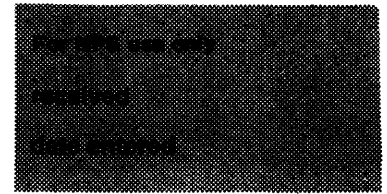
The Benajah Gray House has a number of significant and original log outbuildings. Immediately adjacent to the house is a one story log kitchen and log smokehouse. The kitchen, with a large brick fireplace, continued to be used well into the 20th century. The smokehouse continues to be used for storage. Located between the log kitchen and log smokehouse and perpendicular to the main house is a detached framed kitchen and dining room. Built by Benajah F. Gray in the 1870s, this building served as the main dining area and winter kitchen.

Finally, a 1½ story framed pole barn is also included in the nomination. This early 20th century barn has hewed logs and hand forged strap hinges on all the interior doors.

Located approximately .3 miles northeast of the Benajah Gray House is a 1½ story single pen log slave house. While owning a great deal of property, Gray was not a large slave owner. He owned 8 slaves at the time of his death in 1836, and the 1850 and 1860 slave census showed his son owned 6 slaves. This structure is significant in that it is the only surviving example of the Gray slave houses that aids in the understanding and full interpretation of the Benajah Gray farm. With the partition of Benajah Gray's land in 1894, this slave house was included within a tract of land given to Gray's daughter, Maggie Gray Burkkett. She rented the house to tenant farmers. The land stayed within the Gray family

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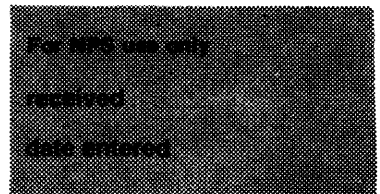
until it was purchased by Metropolitan Davidson County in 1977 as the future site of a public park. Currently vacant and deteriorating, the log house has undergone changes of a 20th century roof, rafters, ceiling joists, and board and batten exterior siding on the second story. However, it is significant as an unusual example of log house construction in Middle Tennessee. Log houses with central H-shaped chimney usually have two pens and have evolved through time. This house is one large single pen and the only surviving slave house on the Gray property.

The Benajah Gray Log House and outbuildings are an unusual collection of well preserved log buildings. They help to interpret the life of an upper middle class family. The Gray family, while active in agriculture and horse breeding, also represented the Davidson County government for the 6th district. Descendants of the Gray family have continued to own and live in the house for over 175 years. The buildings retain their overall integrity and represent one of the oldest collection of buildings in Davidson County.



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Bibliographical References:

Benajah Gray Journals and Account Books. Located at State Library and Archives.  
Nashville, Tennessee.

Clayton, W.W. History of Davidson County. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1880.

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Johnson, Lillian Brown. Historic Cane Ridge. Privately printed, 1973.

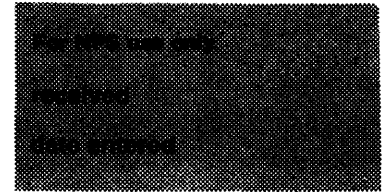
Nashville American. November 19, 1894, p. 2.

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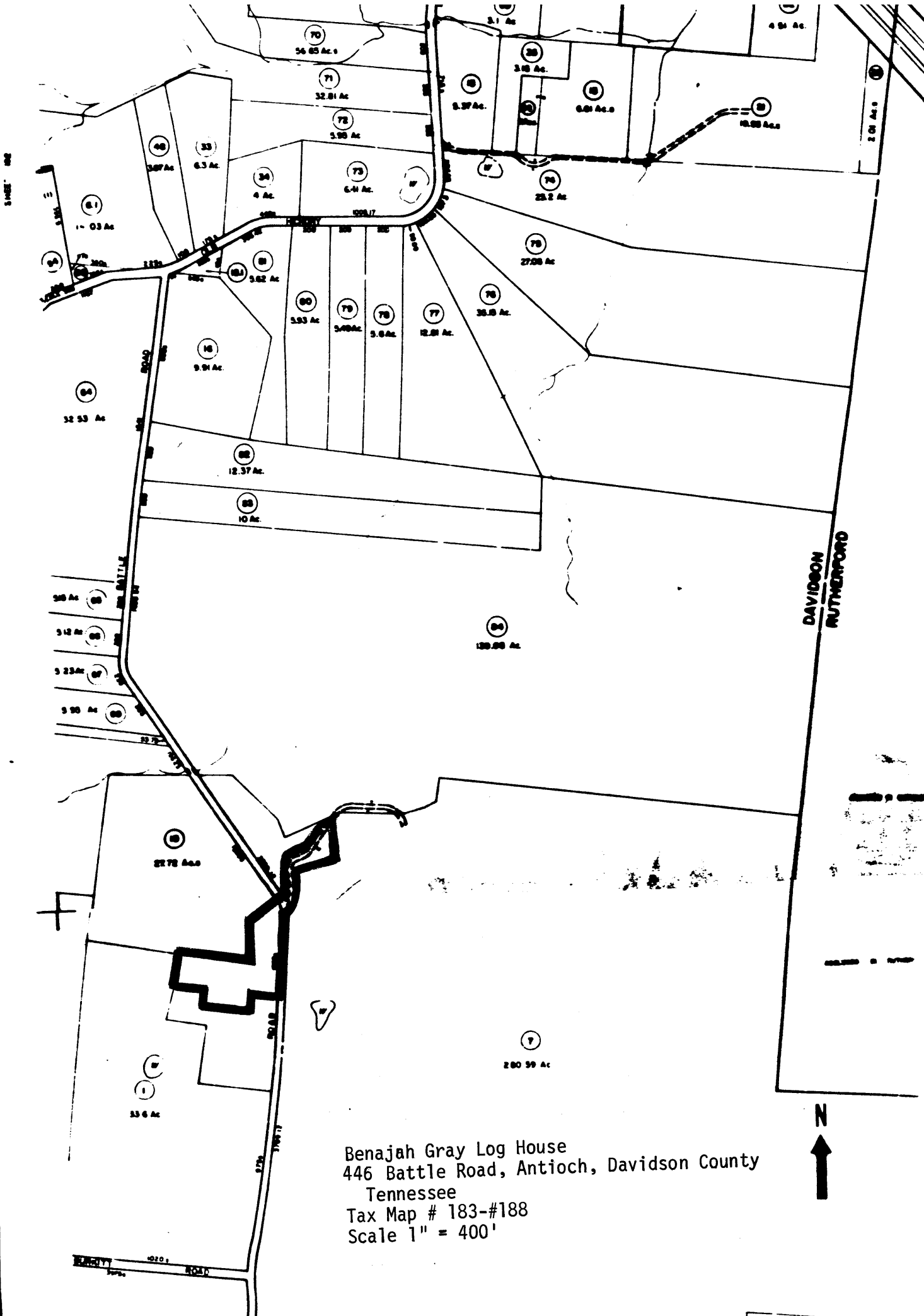
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Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point on the west side of Battle Road 60 feet south of the driveway leading to the Benajah Gray House, thence west following the old fence line to a fence line behind the log kitchen, then north with said fence line to a point behind the log smoke-house, thence east with said fence line to the eastern side of a field road, thence north along the treeline, pass the frame barn and pond to a small group of cedar trees, thence in a northeastwardly direction to the intersection of Battle Road and road leading to Battle Park, thence along the northern side of Battle Park Road approximately .15 miles, thence south across said road to an old fence line, thence with said fence line southwestwardly and then southerly to the eastern edge of Battle Park Road, thence in a southerly direction approximately .15 miles along the eastern edge of said road to the intersection of Battle Road, thence south along the western edge of said road approximately .15 miles to the beginning, containing approximately 6 acres.

This boundary includes a sufficient amount of land to protect the historic setting and architectural integrity of all the structures associated with the Benajah Gray Log House.



Benajah Gray Log House  
 446 Battle Road, Antioch, Davidson County  
 Tennessee  
 Tax Map # 183-#188  
 Scale 1" = 400'



BATTLE ROAD

DAVIDSON  
RUTHERFORD