

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 31 1992

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

Ala. Historical Commission

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 PITTS, Samuel R., Plantation
other names/site number MITCHELL, Evelyn Pitts, House; Greenwood Plantation; BENTON, William, House; HENRY, Dr. John Benson, House

2. Location

street & number U.S. Highway 431 not for publication N/A
city, town Pittsview vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Russell code 113 zip code 36871

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>7</u>	<u>3</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A 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.
[Signature] 5-14-92
Signature of certifying official Date
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
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. Entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet. [Signature] 6/25/92
 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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling
DOMESTIC: Secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Animal facility
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling
DOMESTIC: Secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MID-19th CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

roof Shingle

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Samuel R. Pitts Plantation (Greenwood Plantation, and now the William J. Benton House) is a one-storey house in the Greek Revival style. Its original central-hall, basically U-shaped plan has since 1950 been augmented with a wing extending to the rear on the east side and by a porch and porte cochere addition to the west side. Of extremely graceful style and proportions, it sits on the bank of Hatchechubbee Creek as it runs just south of Pittsview. The old coach road runs in front of the property and now provides a drive as it curves in front of the house. The present highway, U.S. 431 to Eufaula, lies to the west, nearby but out of sight.

The house is of hewn-timber mortise and tenon construction on a brick pier foundation that has been masked with a brick curtain wall. It is clad in hand-hewn lapped weatherboard that is painted white. The low hipped roof breaks slightly at the front as it covers a recessed full-facade porch; the roof is supported by four fluted Doric columns. There is a single row of dentiling along the friezeboard. The two high chimneys, decorated by dentiled headers and drip courses, pierce the side hips. There are four main front windows, nine-over-nine wood sash to the floor with working shutters; though arranged singly, the contiguity of the shutters gives the windows the appearance of being paired. Windows to the sides and rear of the house are six-over-six, also set singly.

The central entry into the hall is a slightly recessed double doorway in the Greek Revival style, with three simple panels per door. A six-light transom above and two-light side panels are separated from the door by a smaller order of pilasters and lintel cornice.

The rear porch, now enclosed with glass, occupies the space between the short arms of the U, these being the extensions of the rear rooms on either side of the hall. Modern additions are (1) the c. 1950 bedroom wing that is connected to the rear east bedroom and extends to the south, comprising two baths and three bedrooms with a corridor running along the inside (i.e., the house side) that ends at the door of the last bedroom; and (2) the c.1950 porch and porte cochere that extend directly to the side of the present kitchen on the west side of the house. Both wings maintain the hip roof and simple entablature of the original house; the porte cochere roof is supported by paired fluted Doric columns that sit on a brick half-wall.

An exterior irregularity is the placement of the window in the east rear bedroom: while of the same size and shape as the other secondary windows, it sits lower in the wall. It was originally the door onto the gangway leading to the detached kitchen, which sat immediately to the east of the house.

See continuation sheet

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The original interior configuration of rooms has not been changed except that (1) a bathroom has been built in between the front and middle rooms on the east side of the house, behind which closets were built that resulted in the closing of the fireplace in the middle room, and (2) part of the original rear porch was enclosed as a utility room (see History section following). The 14'-wide central hall gives access to the front two rooms on each side, with doors near the front and rear of the hall. Access to the third rooms is not off the central hall but directly from the middle rooms, or through doors off either side of the now enclosed back porch. Originally the rear east bedroom was the dining room, and the present kitchen, now the rear room on the west side, was a bedroom.

Original 6"-board native pine floors remain throughout the original house, said in one report to be "so thick they didn't need underflooring." Ceilings are 12' high. Walls are plastered and papered, with simple crown mouldings. The front four rooms are served by the two stacked chimneys (with the exception noted above in the middle east room); the fireplaces have simple mantels with pilasters. The living room fireplace had a marble face and hearth added as part of the 1949-54 refurbishment (see History section). Interior doors have moulded surrounds and are of a six-panel type throughout.

Outbuildings:

There are two groups of outbuildings: the domestic service structures immediately to the rear of the house and the farm buildings at a short walk to the front on the east side by one of the pastures. In the first group are:

1. the garage (non-contributing), a later structure dating from the 1950s, front-gabled with a concrete block base with flush boards above and a nine-light window in the front gable; double plank doors and exposed rafter ends.
2. the smokehouse (contributing), a gabled structure of full-dovetailed hewn logs on a brick foundation; lapped weatherboard in the gables; standing seam metal roof. This structure used to sit to the east of the house approximately between the first two rooms; it was moved by Mrs. Mitchell in the 1940s to its present location. It now has a concrete floor.
3. the dairy house (contributing), a side-gabled small weatherboard structure with a new wood shingle roof; two equal rooms, each with a door. Originally behind the detached kitchen, it was moved to its present site when the kitchen was dismantled in the 1930s.
4. the well house (contributing), an open pyramidal roof resting on four square brick corner columns, covering the brick well.

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5. the greenhouse (non-contributing), recently moved from Lato and not part of the original group of structures.

The farm buildings are:

1. the carriage house (contributing), front-gabled, clad in painted weatherboard with a projecting front eave over a shallow porch; single central door, no windows. This was where the carriage tack was hung.
2. the double crib (contributing), a broad-gabled structure of hand-hewn, full square-notched logs on a brick pier foundation that now has concrete infill. Two interior rooms with open ceilings, now used for hay storage. This structure was two separate cribs at one time, reconstructed in the 1950s from the best logs from each. Between one of the cribs and the carriage house stood at one time a lean-to shed that housed the carriages.
3. the horse barn (contributing), a gabled main structure with a shed-roof pen extension on three sides; lapped board siding, standing seam metal roof, brick foundation. Inside there are pole stretcher beams from eave-line to eave-line. The Bentons added six horse stalls in 1989 and were careful to make them free-standing so as not to alter or compromise any of the original materials.
4. the vehicle shed (non-contributing), a more recent structure, standing seam metal roof on a timber frame; one end bay enclosed with metal, a stall that houses the 100-year-old buggy.

There are no remaining tenant houses on the farm. Old foundations remain beyond the east pasture near springs and a well; there was also a tenant house in front of the house toward the creek, and one behind the house.

Archeological Component:

No formal archeological survey has been made of this property, but the potential for subsurface artifacts or remains is probably high. Plantations of this type were sited within a constellation of dependencies and areas of high activity such as kitchens, tenant houses, etc., many of which in the present case are still extant, although moved from their original sites. Especially in the case of the destroyed tenant houses, buried portions may contain significant information that could be helpful in interpreting the entire property.

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1846; 1874

Significant Dates

1846
1878

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

HENRY, Dr. John Benson (builder)

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

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

Constructed in the middle of the Greek Revival period in America, this is one of the best examples of a Greek Revival cottage in Russell County, one whose original structure has been augmented and refurbished but not significantly remodeled. It is a prototype for Russell County houses from earliest days to the recent past: the one- or one-and-a-half-storey central hall house with three rooms per side in the main block, two stacked chimneys serving the front four rooms, and often with wings or extensions incorporating service rooms and later additions. Houses of such plan, of varying degrees of scale and grandeur, continued to be the dwelling style of choice in Russell County well into the mid-20th century. The ideal of the Greek Revival, decorating the regional practicalities of a wide-halled, deep-porched dwelling, reaches toward perfect expression in this 1846 house.

The status of the house as essentially in original condition is enhanced by the survival of many farm and service buildings, some of very early vintage and others added over the years. The Plantation therefore reflects not only the architecture of the primary house but the construction techniques of the secondary buildings as well, notably the double log crib and the smokehouse.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Papers of the Pitts and Mitchell families, now in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Benton Sr.

Mr. and Mrs. William J. Benton Sr.: interviews and material from their personal file on the house, including the cited newspaper article from the Columbus paper, n.d.

Mr. Robert Feaser, son of Elizabeth Pitts Feaser, nephew of Evelyn Pitts Mitchell, who spent many childhood years in the house: telephone interview.

Martin, Ellen, History of Pittsview, unpublished typescript, n.d.

Walker, Ann Kendrick, Russell County in Retrospect. Richmond, Va., 1941.

Dictionary of Alabama Biography, p.1371, on S.R. Pitts

See continuation sheet

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
- Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 223+ acres

UTM References

A 16 673160 3561950
Zone Easting Northing

C 16 673300 3561240

E 16 674100 3560990

B 16 674030 3562060
Zone Easting Northing

D 16 673820 3560900

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See attached engineering survey for complete property description, with indications of location of structures added. See also attached site map.

For complete legal description, see attached Continuation Sheet. This legal description is located in the Tax Assessor's Office, Russell County Courthouse, Phenix City.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries shown are of this property as it was sold by Mrs. Evelyn Pitts Mitchell to the present owners, the William J. Benton Srs.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson /Historic Preservationist; Melanie Betz/AHC Reviewer
organization FuturePast date January 1992
street & number 4700 Seventh Court South telephone (205) 592-6610
city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35222

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History of the House:

Whereas the location of this house at Pittsview predates the establishment of the town itself by some 11-12 years, and whereas its longest association has been with the Pitts family, the Greenwood Plantation house was originally built by Dr. John Benson Henry in 1846 in the developing community of Glennville, which is about eight miles south of Pittsview. Glennville is the location of several very fine Greek Revival houses dating from the late '30s through the 1840s, all of one storey with the exception of the 1840 Americus Mitchell House (now Glennville Plantation). The other house most comparable in style and ambience to the Henry House is the 1840 Richardson/Quarles House, although the latter has been more altered in its restoration than has the Henry House. The Richardson/Quarles house, in its original form a "six-column house," was very similar in execution to the "four-column" Henry house across the street; though necessarily speculative, it is reasonable to assume that both or all of these houses are related in construction history, very likely having been built by the same hand. There is a local tradition that wintering shipbuilders constructed such houses using all the skills of their trade and, although not proven, such a supposition would be justified by the care and craftsmanship expended on houses like the Henry/Pitts House.

The Henry House was built very near the Americus Mitchell and Richardson/Quarles houses, on Continuation Street just south of the former and north of the latter (see the National Register nomination for the Glennville Historic District). Dr. Henry did not live into old age, and after his death the house belonged to the Samuel Eberharts. Mr. Eberhart sold the house to Samuel Rutherford Pitts some time after the latter's marriage in 1874. Mr. Pitts dismantled the house board by board, numbered every piece, and loaded it onto ox-carts for the seven-mile trip to his homestead. There it was reassembled exactly as it was built. Cleburne Eberhart, a witness to this process, said they "never lost a plank." (1) One of Sam's great-nephews, Robert Feaser, reports that, when the house was restored in 1949-54 and the plaster was being replaced, he satisfied himself that the numbers were still visible on the inner faces of the boards.

The Samuel Pittses lived in the house all their married lives but never had any children, so at his death much of his property went to his brothers. His widow sold her interest in the house to the Pitts family and moved a few miles north into Seale, at that time the County seat. About that time Sam's younger brother Henry Bragg Pitts lost his house in town in a fire, so he and his family moved into the big house until his new house was finished in Pittsview. It was to be Henry's third child, Evelyn, who was to come into possession of the homeplace when her husband, Richard Malcolm Mitchell, purchased the property from her uncle Samuel's estate in 1927 after their having rented it for about ten years. Various other combinations of Henry's eight children took up residence with the Mitchells over the years; Mr. Mitchell died in the

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'30s and three of Evelyn's unmarried sisters, Mary Alice, Edith and Louise, lived on with her there at the house. Their brother Bragg joined them in 1961.

The original plan of the house had no connecting doors between rooms as it does now, since the majority of the rooms were bedrooms with access only off the central hall. The rear rooms on either side had three windows instead of the present two, the third ones opening onto the narrow rear porch. Both the porch windows were closed by Mrs. Mitchell when the room uses changed; on the kitchen side a section of the porch was enclosed to create a small utility room.

By the 1930s a small bathroom had been inserted in the middle east bedroom on the chimney wall. The detached kitchen and gangway were dismantled in the '30s and an interior make-shift kitchen created in the rear west room with a wood stove and chimney where the present rear windows are. In the 1940s Mrs. Mitchell moved the kitchen across to the east side of the house but it did not stay there long, returning to its former and present location at the west rear when the major restoration was done in 1949-54.

In 1949 Mrs. Mitchell undertook a major refurbishment of the house under the direction of the Auburn architectural firm of Orr & Reeve. This work included, on the exterior, jacking up and leveling of the entire structure, repair of the windows and shutters, wirebrushing and repainting of the weatherboard, replumbing of the porch columns and repair of the entablature, construction of a brick foundation curtain wall in front of the piers and replacement of the front steps with brick. Inside, work included repairs to the fireplaces, reconvertng them back to wood-burning from coal grates; sanding and refinishing of the floors, including sinking the floor nails into the boards; laying of tile floors in the kitchen and on the back porch, now expanded and enclosed; repair of plaster, replacing some of the deteriorated lath with wire mesh; and repapering the walls. It was during that time that the present bath and closets were constructed on the east side of the house and the old bathroom dismantled, and the kitchen was given its present form. The house was also rewired at that time.

The east wing was also built in those years, extending back from what had been the old pantry, with its doorway moved and converted to a bath at the head of the corridor. At the other side of the house the screened porch and porte cochere were added.

A newspaper interview with Mrs. Mitchell in the early 1960s reported that the plantation then consisted of 1,000 acres devoted to peanuts, corn, and beef cattle. It was during the 1960s that the property, long known as the Mitchell Place, came to be called Greenwood Plantation; the name was devised for the wedding invitation of one of the Pitts grandchildren who was married at the house.

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In 1989 the William Benton Srs. were in the market for a Greek Revival country house, their ambition being to faithfully restore it as a residence and to be a focal point for their interest in Russell County history. Finding Greenwood at a time when the Pitts-Mitchell family were getting older and finding the estate difficult to maintain, the Bentons purchased the house, most of the furnishings, and something over 223 acres of the land from Mrs. Mitchell. Immediately undertaking a major restoration, the Bentons have repaired, repainted and reroofed the exterior and completely refinished the interior, with particular attention to the selection of period wallpapers. They have also added a number of fine pieces to the furniture already in the house.

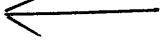
Samuel Rutherford Pitts

Although the house is not being nominated to the National Register based on its association with S.R. Pitts, some recognition of that gentleman's significance to the house and to Pittsview should be made. He was born in Stewart County, Georgia in 1847, an older son of Russell County pioneer Richard Moore Pitts. He achieved the rank of first lieutenant in the Second Georgia Volunteers, was wounded in the Wilderness, and returned to Russell County to become a planter and merchant. Mr. Pitts and three of his brothers owned farms in close proximity on the 2000 acres belonging to the Pitts family. After his marriage in 1874 and the establishment of his house on its present site in 1878, Samuel Pitts assumed the role of a prominent landowner and man of affairs in the County. In 1890 there began to be talk of a railroad, the potential of which Mr Pitts recognized early. After Glennville refused to allow the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery line to be built through its cultivated environs, he had about 30 acres of his land surveyed for division into town blocks, and exercised his influence to bring the railroad to that place. A depot was built on land donated by him for the purpose, and in his family's honor the new settlement was named Pittsboro; the name was subsequently changed to Pittsview after some aural confusion with Hurtsboro. The Savannah, Americus & Montgomery eventually became part of the Seaboard Air Line system.

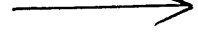
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A tract or parcel of land containing 223.0 acres, more or less, located in Sections 19, 20 and 30, Township 14 N, Range 29 E, Russell County, Alabama, as shown on a map or plat by McPherson Engineering Co., Inc., dated July 1, 1982, and being more particularly described as follows: BEGINNING at the northeast corner of said Section 30, and run thence South 87 deg. 24 min. East along section line separating Section 29 from Section 20 a distance of 1871 feet, more or less, to the centerline of Island Branch; thence in a northerly direction along the meanderings of centerline of said Island Branch a distance of 535 feet, more or less, to a point where the branch intersects the centerline of Hatchechubbee Creek, said point being North 16 deg. 56 min. East a chord distance of 472.7 feet from the previous point; thence run in a westerly direction along the meanderings of the centerline of said Hatchechubbee Creek a distance of 7470 feet, more or less, to a point which point is North 78 deg. 25 min. West a chord distance of 4885.1 feet from said previous point; thence South 01 deg. 50 min. West a distance of 585 feet, more or less, to an iron pin; thence continue South 1 deg. 50 min. West a distance of 35 feet to a point; thence South 63 deg. 20 min. West a distance of 824.9 feet to an iron pin; thence South 51 deg. 09 min. West a distance of 399.7 feet to a point located on the east right of way of U.S. Highway 431; thence South 9 deg. 07 min. West along said ROW a distance of 368.5 feet to an iron pin; thence North 51 deg. 00 min. East a distance of 230.7 feet to an iron pin; thence North 83 deg. 20 min. East 178.7 feet to an iron pin; thence South 222.0 feet to an iron pin; thence South 50 deg. 50 min. East a distance of 330.0 feet to an iron pin; thence North 45 deg. 45 min. East a distance of 363.0 feet to an iron pin; thence North 09 deg. 15 min. West 159.0 feet to an iron pin; thence South 88 deg. 30 min. East a distance of 860.0 feet to an iron pin; thence South 01 deg. 19 min. West 476.5 feet to an iron pin; thence South 53 deg. 32 min. East a distance of 841.3 feet to an iron pin; thence North 85 deg. 23 min. East 385.2 feet to an iron pin; thence South 76 deg. 42 min. East a distance of 150.0 feet to an iron pin; thence South 7 deg. 10 min. East 412.4 feet to an iron pin; thence North 85 deg. 32 min. East 312.0 feet to an iron pin; thence North 57 deg. 30 min. East 718.0 feet to an iron pin on the east Section line of said Section 30; thence North 1 deg. 50 min. East along said section line a distance of 1109.5 feet to the iron pin at the point of beginning.

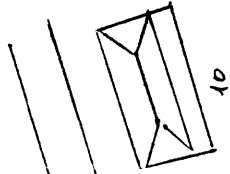
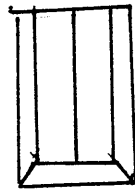
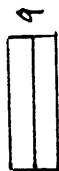
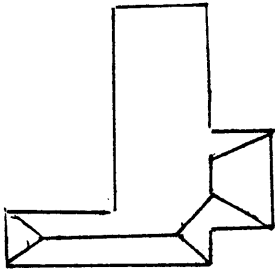
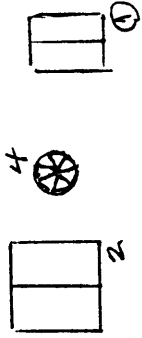
Eufaula



Pittsview



Site map of Greenwood Plantation
(Samuel R. Pitts Plantation)
Pittsview, Alabama

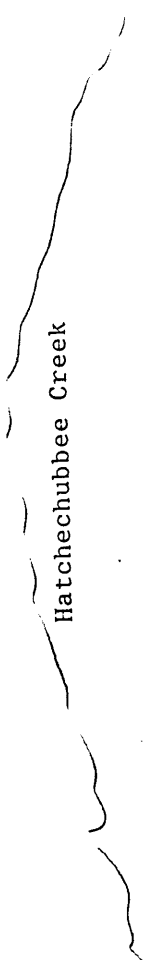


unpaved lane

Ancillary buildings:

- 1. Garage
- 2. Smokehouse
- 3. Dairy
- 4. Well
- 5. Greenhouse
- 6. Carriage house
- 7. Double crib
- 8. Horse barn
- 9. Vehicle shed
- 10. Pitts Brothers' House

Hatchechubbee Creek



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SAMUEL R. PITTS HOUSE (GREENWOOD PLANTATION)

Pittsview, AL (Russell County)

Linda Nelson, Photographer

November 1989; January 1991; March 1991

Alabama Historical Commission

- Photo #1: Front of house, from north
- Photo #2: Front and west facade, from northwest
- Photo #3: Front and east facade, from northeast
- Photo #4: Front and east facade, detail, from northeast
- Photo #5: Front porch, looking across under roof from west
- Photo #6: Front door, from north
- Photo #7: East side of house, from east
- Photo #8: West side of house, and part of porte cochere, from west
- Photo #9: Porte cochere and side porch, from west
- Photo #10: East wing addition, from southeast (rear)
- Photo #11: Rear of house, enclosed back porch, from south
- Photo #12: Interior, central hall looking toward rear, from north
- Photo #13: Central hall looking toward rear, from north
- Photo #14: East front room, detail, from northwest
- Photo #15: West front room (living room), from northeast
- Photo #16: Dining room, from southwest
- Photo #17: West rear room, present kitchen, from northwest
- Photo #18: Pack porch, now enclosed, from northeast
- Photo #19: Smokehouse, east facade, from east
- Photo #20: Smokehouse, front detail, from northwest
- Photo #21: Smokehouse, detail of notching
- Photo #22: Wellhouse, from northeast
- Photo #23: Dairy, from west
- Photo #24: Garage, from northwest
- Photo #25: Carriage house, from northwest
- Photo #26: Double crib, from north
- Photo #27: Double crib, detail of foundation construction
- Photo #28: Horse barn, from southeast
- Photo #29: Horse barn, from west
- Photo #30: Vehicle shed, from northeast