



## Criterion C - Architecture

The Welch/Averiett House is significant for its unusually complete collection of 19th and early 20th Century support buildings including c.1915 dairy and milking barns, an extremely unusual rammed earth smokehouse, four sheds and a barn related to diverse farming activities.

### Integrity:

The Welch/Averiett House exists today essentially as it did during its period of significance (c.1920) as the last center of the Benjamin Averiett Farming enclave. Its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association all convey its historic association even though it has been altered through additions at least twice in its existence.

In addition, the rural site on Welch Spring retains its historic identity as southwest Talladega County's first voting place.

### Description:

Facing south on Highway 8, about a half mile west of the Benjamin Averiett House, the Welch/Averiett House is a rambling twelve room clapboard bungalow little changed since c.1920. It has a hipped roof with broad eaves and a shed dormer decorated with angular brackets. The exterior is clapboard irregularly fenestrated with 6/6 wooden sash windows. There are four exterior brick chimneys. Two board and batten "cabins" adjoin the rear with gabled and shed additions to the west end.

The interior of the house confirms its evolutionary construction. The part of the house that appears to have been associated with Daniel Welch features 6" pine floors and walls, fieldstone piers, and a brick and stone chimney. One of the rooms has plaster over lathe walls with board and batten ceiling, a common early treatment in the area.

About 1890 the cabin complex was given a dining room and two bedrooms all of which have 4" pine floors, plaster over lathe walls, brick piers and chimneys. An exterior East-lake-style door and floor length window openings remain on an interior wall, reminder of that period in the history of the house.

Old photos, c.1920, document the renovation which gave the house its present appearance. At that time, L-shaped porches on the front were enlarged and enclosed to square off the front of the house and a new superstructure for the roof was constructed.

The house is in excellent condition.

Outbuildings in the rather extensive farm complex include an unusual rammed earth smokehouse, a c.1915 dairy barn and milking house and several other wooden barns and sheds.

#### Historical Summary:

Little changed since 1920, the Welch/Averiet House in its present form represents the last era of the 19th century farming domain established by Benjamin H. Averiet and embodies physical remains of Talladega County's earliest white settlement.

During the last days of World War I; the last prosperous days of cotton farming, the Averiet family patriarchs had died and granddaughter Lillian Dean had assumed the role of family leader. Diversification had come to farming. William's daughter had successfully managed her deceased husband's lumber and shingle mill and begun a dairy when<sup>1</sup> her mother and niece came to live with her at Welch Spring.

Records indicate that the original owner, Daniel Welch was living here by 1831, and there is strong evidence that he was here earlier. While Welch's association with the existing structure is supposition, the site of his farm is significant as a territorial voting place as early as January 15, 1831, and as southwest Talladega County's first voting place in 1832.<sup>2</sup>

Purchased from Welch's estate by Benjamin Averiet<sup>3</sup> and given to his son Thomas, the farm complex apparently remained unchanged through Thomas' ownership. Both the inventory of Thomas' estate in 1871 (he died at age 24) and the tax assessment for 1873 indicate very meager living circumstances on the farm, the only "improvements" being eight "cabins." Agricultural records, however, indicate it was a very productive farm.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A/D/G Papers. Interviews.

<sup>2</sup>Acts of Alabama, 1831, p. 38. (Daniel Welch's house was established as a new Shelby County voting place in 1831 and then became one of Talladega's first voting places in 1832. Talladega County Election Results, 1833, p. 52.)

<sup>3</sup>A/D/G Papers, Mortgage dated April 23, 1839, Deed dated July 26, 1842.

<sup>4</sup>Talladega Co. Records, Deed Bk. N, p. 398. Talladega Co. Wills and Inventories, Bk. D, p. 289-290. A/D/G Papers, 1873 Tax Assessment. Talladega Co. Agricultural Census for 1870.

Purchased from Thomas Averiett's estate by his brother, William, Welch Spring was given to Lillian shortly after her marriage to W. T. Dean in 1884. (It is interesting to note that Lillian was also Daniel Welch's great granddaughter.)

Apparently refined for the first time by the Dean's, it is uncertain exactly when the final consolidation of all the cabins created the present dwelling. It seems to have happened after William Averiett's death in 1917 and certainly by c.1920 when post-renovation portraits document the house.

Today the house is occupied by Mrs. Dean's granddaughter-in-law, who has continued the family farming tradition, with the twentieth century addition of cattle farming.