

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 8 1976
DATE ENTERED JUN 23 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Rucker House *h*

AND/OR COMMON

Cedar Grove

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER On County maintained dirt road through
Ruckersville, south of its intersection of State R. 985

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ruckersville

VICINITY OF

9th - Phil M. Landrum

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Georgia

13

Elbert

105

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input 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 Mrs. Kenelm Earl Rucker

STREET & NUMBER

Route 6 - Elberton, Ga 30635

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Ruckersville

VICINITY OF

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Elbert County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Elberton

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

(6)

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Rucker House, built by Joseph Rucker sometime shortly after his marriage in 1812, was originally a plantation plain style structure to which was added, probably in the late 1830's or early 1840's, two projecting wings which, in combination with a four bay, two story portico between the wings, made the house Greek Revival in its detailing. It is located on two branches of Little Van's Creek, on the west side of the old Petersburg Road, in the town of Ruckersville, Elbert County, just to the south of State Road 985.

The original structure was a raised two story weatherboarded house with a pitched roof, two end chimneys, a one-story shed room appendage to the rear and an open shed porch to the front, spanning the distance between the outside edges of the two windows of the first story on this facade. On all elevations there is a care to symmetry. Originally, there were three windows on the second story of the east and west sides, which were placed directly above a central door and two windows on the east or front facade. Though later alterations to the northern half of the shed porch on the west or back elevation make it difficult to ascertain the nature of this elevation originally, the fact that there is no evidence of there ever having been a window on the west wall of the larger of the two first story rooms suggests that originally the entirety of the rear shed porch was filled-in.

This filled-in rear shed porch would have made the interior spaces of the original house consistent with the common plantation plain style plan. The first story would have had two main rooms of unequal size, each with an end fireplace, while two secondary rooms of unequal size would have been found beneath the rear shed porch. A straight stair along the west wall led and still leads to the second story from the larger of the two main first story rooms. The second story was most likely two rooms, again of unequal size, though additional plank walls were added at some point in time. On the second story, there is a break in the ceiling planks, on an east-west axis, twelve feet from the south end fireplace, and there is a break in the floor boards, on an east-west axis, sixteen feet from the south end fireplace along which a plank wall presently stands. Probably this was the original location of the wall between the two upstairs rooms.

The second story mantels are surely the original plain, unadorned wood coverings over round-headed fireplace openings, a form which continued to be used in Georgia through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The first story mantels, also original, are identical, being five feet high and having three panels above the fireplace opening and beneath the beveled shelf, a shelf which is visually supported by a double row of drilled holes and dentil-like cubes. This arrangement is framed on either side by broad vertical elements, beveled on the inside edge and beaded on the outside edge, which rise from the floor to the shelf. Identically beaded chair railings, thirty inches above the floor, are found throughout the house except along the interior walls on the second story and along the walls of the shed rooms at the rear of the first floor. The floor boarding, which occurs at the base of those walls having chair railing, also displays a consistent pattern throughout the house. The height of the chair rails suggests that they belong to the original house.

The diaper patterning on the two end chimneys, unusual in Georgia, may relate to the fact that Joseph Rucker's father, John, migrated to this land in Elbert County in 1785 from central Virginia where the influx of Pennsylvanians seems to have encouraged the use of glazed patterning into the 19th century. The two concentric diamond patterns in each chimney are formed by glazed headers set within a stretcher bond, with the coursès irregularly adjusted by the addition of queen closers. The innermost diamond pattern on the

(continued) (7)

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south end chimney closes at the top, beneath the weathering, with a unique heart shape, perhaps meant to emblemize the marriage of Joseph to Margaret Speer. The slanted or tumbled coursing of the weathering, which achieves flat angled surfaces similar to a tiled weathering, is known to exist in two other Georgia examples, Gatewood House in Putnam County (1805-1812) and the Avret House in Morgan County (1810-1820). The stepped bases of the Rucker House chimneys have been plastered, and an indented string course beneath the cap of each free-standing stack has also been plastered, a feature which usually dates to before 1800 in Virginia. The height of these decorated chimneys on the Rucker House, in combination with the narrowness of the main body of the house viewed from the north and south sides and the tapered verge boards of the gables, results in a visually appealing attenuation which would have been complimented on the original house by the careful attention to symmetry in the exterior arrangement of architectural features regardless of one's vantage point.

In the late 1830's or early 1840's, probably due to both his growing family and his growing prosperity, Joseph Rucker decided to enlarge and update his house. This was easily accomplished by the building of two identical one room wings off the northeast and southeast corners of the front facade and by the addition of a four-bayed two story portico of the same width as the original shed porch. One wing and the portico are now lost, though the door which was cut into the middle of the second story on the east facade, probably for a small balcony, remains. Access to these two wings was from the portico. Each wing consisted of two large windows, with nine over nine panes like the smaller windows of the original house, an enclosed end chimney forming a fireplace with flanking pilasters reaching the full height of the mantel and framing a single raised panel beneath the mantel shelf. Apparently, Joseph Rucker wished these wings to be as up-to-date and commodious as possible, for they each had lath and plaster walls and ceiling as well as movable window louvers.

When these additions were made, the only alteration to the interior of the original house seems to have been the inclusion of continuous roll printed wallpapers on both stories, while stenciled papers which must have been put up shortly after the original house was built were kept. Thus, there is the impression that every attempt was made to retain the integrity of the plan and design of the original house, amplifying its exterior characteristics by reasserting the sense of symmetry. The facts that the chimneys of the wings were de-emphasized by their enclosure and that the wings themselves in no way disrupted the north and south elevations of the original house indicate that Joseph admired the patterned end chimneys and chose to preserve them. Indeed, one entered the property from the Petersburg Road along a boxwood and cedar avenue which is still apparent, though the cedars were sold to a mill sometime in this century, and there was a boxwood circle, now part of a plowed field, about 50 feet to the southeast of the house from which one could view well the original house and its additions.

Joseph's son-in-law, the Rev. James S. Lamar, wrote shortly after his father-in-law's death in 1867 that:

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"(t)he house was approached through a long avenue of cedars and box planted by Margaret, from which the place became known as Cedar Grove. The fine old trees, the office, the flower garden, the kitchen garden, the well-house, the smoke-house, the kitchen, the buildings for house servants and, not far off, the barns, the carriage houses, the quarters, presented a typical picture of the life of the ante-bellum planter who lived at home, making on his own acres all that was needed for those dependent upon him. For there, as in so many similar places throughout the State, the tannery, the blacksmith-shop, the corn mill, the flour mill, the cotton gin, the spinning wheels, the looms and the wheelwright were an essential part of the plantation. It was a hive of industry, and it is not surprising that in time a name should be given to the little center, nor is it strange that it should have been named after the village in Orange County, Virginia, from which John Rucker had come in 1785."

None of the original outbuildings remain. Two storage barns of recent date are located within 50 feet of the east and north sides of the house, and the house itself is now used as a hay barn. The tanyard was located across the road from the Rucker House, and sink holes still visible within the stream which runs parallel to the road are the result of years of use in the tanning process. Other than this, little else remains of the working buildings of this once active town. The Van Creek Baptist Church, founded in 1795, replaced its building early in this century. The Eudisco and Philomathia Academies, founded in 1823 and 1824 respectively, have been torn down. An archaeological survey of extant surface features in the town of Ruckersville is planned, though at present no one on the Historic Preservation Section staff is free to do so.

(11)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1811-1820

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rucker House, though it may never be restored by the present owner, the widow of a Joseph Rucker descendant, is deserving of full documentation as a foremost example of a sophisticated Plantation Plain style structure to which well-considered Greek Revival additions were made. The boxwood and cedar landscaping, while planned to enhance the primary views of the house, surely distinguished the house as a place of importance in the town and district of Ruckersville, which by 1840 had all prospects of continued growth, having been incorporated in 1822. A major contributor to that continued growth was the Ruckersville Banking Company, founded by Joseph Rucker in 1838, the office of which was quite possibly located in the now lost southeast wing of the Rucker House. Ruckersville, however, never became the sizeable town it might have been, primarily due to the fact that in 1878 a major railroad by-passed Ruckersville and went instead to Elberton, the county seat. But for the duration of Joseph Rucker's lifetime, Ruckersville was a thriving plantation town.

Indeed, two Georgia notables are associated with Ruckersville and gave the town fame even during the beginning of its decline in the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Joseph Rucker Lamar, a grandson of Joseph Rucker, was born in the Rucker House in 1857. He later became an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Corra Harris, a great-granddaughter of Joseph Rucker, had such a fondness for Ruckersville, her birthplace as well, that in the midst of her literary career in 1912 she wrote a fictional account of the town in The Recording Angel, nostalgically looking back to more prosperous days and what might have become of them.

While John Rucker, Joseph's father, is to be credited with the original acquisition of about six hundred acres of Rucker land in what was to become Ruckersville, he was not a part of the district's greatest period. Joseph's mother died in 1807, leaving nine children, all of whom had been born on this Elbert County land after she and John had arrived from Ruckerville, Virginia, in 1785. Her death apparently left John at quite a loss, for by 1811 he had sold all his land to his two eldest sons, Joseph and John, and one of their cousins, had remarried and moved to Morgan County, Georgia, with the younger of the children.

Joseph's parcel consisted of 290½ acres and probably included a Headright plat of 37½ acres which was granted to his father in 1798 as a veteran of the Revolution. The fact that the parcel which Joseph bought from his father cost only \$2.75/acre, the least per acre for any of the three parcels which John sold, suggests that indeed there was no sizeable house on the land. Joseph never sold this acreage, and as he added to his holdings this 290½ acre seems to have come to be referred to as the "Joseph Rucker Home Place." Although only three tax digests survive for Elbert County between 1790--the year of the County's creation--and 1849, there is evidence that by 1816 Joseph had already increased his holdings to 550 acres.

(continued)

8

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Candler, Allen D., ed., Cyclopedia of Georgia, Atlanta, 1906.
 Chambers, Margaret, personal inspection, September 24, 1975; Personal interviews with Frank Wansley, former Ruckersville resident, 11-75; Frank Hudson, Amateur Historian, 11-75; Mrs. Kenelm E. Rucker, Ruckersville resident and Rucker widow, 11-75; and Catherine Frangiamore, Curator, Atlanta Historical Society, 12-75.
 Flanders, Ralph Betts, Plantation Slavery in Georgia, Cos Cob, Conn., 1967.
 Knight, Lucien Lamar, Georgia's Landmarks, Memorials and Legends, Atlanta, 1913.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 11

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	33511510	3781660	B	17	33511810	3781470
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	17	334970	3781420	D	17	334940	3781630
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The northeast corner of the boundary of the Rucker House site is located at the intersection of State Road 985 and a county maintained dirt road which runs north and south through the center of Ruckersville. From this point the boundary runs south for approximately 600 feet, following the north-south county maintained dirt road. The boundary then turns in a westerly direction for approximately 650 feet before turning in a northerly direction for approximately 580 feet until it intersects with State Road 985. The boundary then follows State Road 985 in an easterly direction for approximately 660' until it returns to beginning point.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Margaret Chambers, Intern (Elizabeth Z. Macgregor, Architectural Historian)

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources

DATE

January 16, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

270 Washington Street, S.W., Room 703C

TELEPHONE

404-656-2840

CITY OR TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

DAVID M. SHERMAN

DATE

6-25-76

TITLE

Chief, Historic Preservation Section

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST

Wansley Cor.

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

6-23-78

DATE

6-6-78

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Joseph married within a year of his father's departure, and it may be that Margaret, the daughter of a moderately successful South Carolina planter, brought into the marriage enough money to begin work on the house. It is possible that, out of respect for an unfulfilled dream which his father had, Joseph chose to build the kind of house which his father once desired. Then, not only is the original house to be understood as having characteristics popular in Georgia in the first quarter of the 19th century, but as having characteristics meant to be reminiscent of features more commonly seen in the late 18th century in the father's birthplace, west-central Virginia.

In 1822, the town of Ruckersville, Georgia, was incorporated, and in 1838 Joseph Rucker felt confident enough about the town's future and his own future to seek the support of some thirty landowners in Elbert and Hart Counties who then put up their land as collateral on a loan of \$100,000 from the State for the purpose of organizing a bank at Ruckersville. Anticipation of the success of this venture must be partially the cause for Joseph's having enlarged his house at about this time. While features of the one remaining added wing, such as the large windows, the extreme ceiling height and the plastered ceiling suggest that the house was not enlarged until the late 1850's, it is possible that the additions were made sometime between 1840 and 1853 -- when the Bank was in existence -- as a former resident of Ruckersville remembers distinctly seeing in his youth the nail clad lock on the door to the southeast wing of the Rucker House, which he was told was intended as a deterrent to thieves attempting to axe their way to the bank's safe which was kept within the addition. This recollection plus the fact that Joseph's son-in-law refers specifically to an office in association with the Rucker House suggest that the Bank may well have been located in that now lost wing of the house.

While Joseph, as President, seems to have managed the operation of the Ruckersville Banking Company, he himself had initially only \$5,000 stock in the Bank. However, it seems the investment was a wise one for all concerned, and Joseph's personal gain is probably reflected in the fact that by 1849 he owned 5,689 acres and 196 slaves in Ruckersville, totals which by 1851 had increased to 10,018 acres and 224 slaves. The Bank itself ceased business as a Corporation in 1850, finalizing all its transactions by 1853, the stockholders apparently deciding that more could be made in the planting and manufacturing of cotton. In 1860, the Elbert County Tax Digest shows Joseph as owner of 13,245 acres in Ruckersville with the same number of slaves as he had in 1851, and the 1860 Agricultural Census lists Joseph as producing 315 bales of cotton. The Census of 1860 lists the value of Joseph's real estate at \$75,458 with other property valued at \$257,100. Certainly, he was one of the wealthiest planters in Georgia, and there is some justification for the legend which claims Joseph to have been the State's first millionaire.

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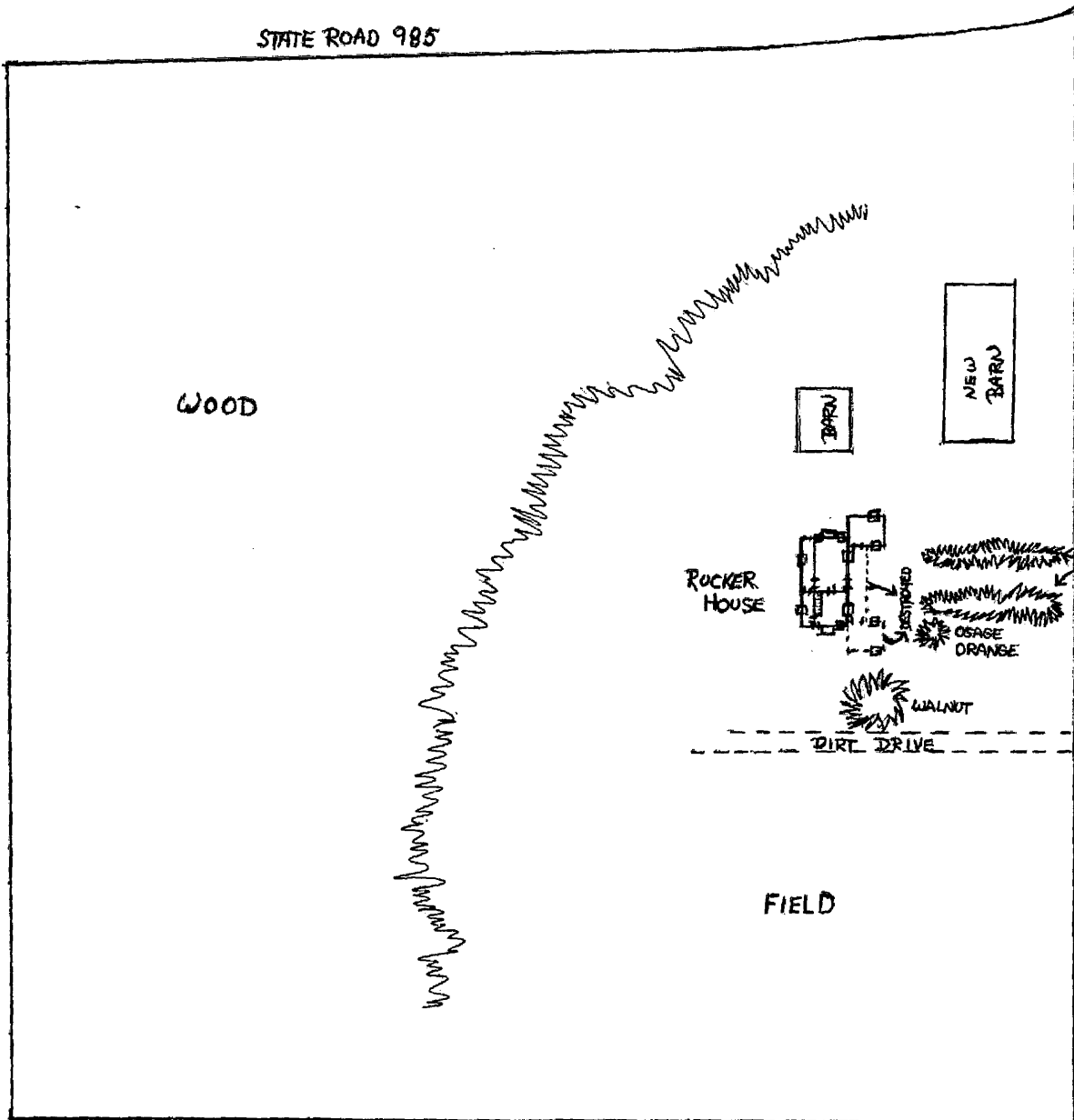
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Georgia Department of Archives and History - County Records - Deeds, 1791-1883; Estates, 1804-1919; Van's Creek Baptist Church Minutes, 1799-1801; Georgia Law Books, 1853/4 and 1849/50; Rucker Family Tree and Joseph Rucker's Family Bible Records; Census Records, 1820-1870; Tax Digests, 1801-1860; Surveyor General's Office, maps.
Lamar, Clarinda Pendleton, The Life of Joseph Rucker Lamar.
Macgregor, Elizabeth, personal inspections, March, 1975 and September, 24, 1975.
McIntosh, John H., History of Elbert County, Georgia.

STATE ROAD 985



NOT TO
SCALE

