

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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 Bowens, Eddie, Farm
other names/site number Seabrook Village Foundation

2. Location

street & number 660 Trade Hill Road
city, town Seabrook community (N/A) vicinity of
county Liberty code GA 179
state Georgia code GA zip code 31320

() not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	1	1
sites	0	0
structures	3	1
objects	0	0
total	4	2

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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 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 the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

W. Ray Luce
Signature of certifying official

9-3-04
Date

W. Ray Luce
Historic Preservation Division Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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 or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Daniel J. Viera 10/29/04

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

for

Keeper of the National Register

Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural outbuilding
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility

Current Functions:

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

OTHER: hall-parlor

Materials:

foundation BRICK
walls WOOD: weatherboard
roof METAL
other N/A

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Seabrook community in rural Liberty County is a historic African-American community. The low-lying, often marshy land in this area was only suitable for rice cultivation, which began in the 1750s and continued until the outbreak of the Civil War. After the war, the former rice plantations were abandoned, and the area was settled by freed African-Americans who established small farms. Eastern Liberty County is still a remote, rural area of the state with little development. Midway is the nearest city to Seabrook and has a population of just over 1,000 according to the 2000 U.S. census.

Located on nine acres of land, the Eddie Bowens Farm is comprised of a main house, outbuildings, historic plantings, and the remnants of rice cultivation. The main house is a frame, hall-parlor-type house and was constructed in 1903 by Eddie Bowens (photograph 1). The house evolved during the historic period with several additions made to the original two rooms. In the 1920s, a two-room addition was added to the rear of the house perpendicular to the parlor and a shed-roof wrap-around porch was added to the front, side, and rear of the house. In the 1930s, a two-room addition was added perpendicular to the hall and the porch between the two additions was enclosed as a hallway. In the 1950s a three-room addition was added to the rear of the house. This final addition was removed in 1994 (see attachment A).

The house features its original six-over-six windows, exposed rafters on the front porch and rear additions, and weatherboard siding (photographs 1-5). The cross-gable roof is standing-seam metal and the foundation is brick piers. The front façade has a shed-roofed, wrap-around, screened porch

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

and a central front door (photographs 2,3, and 6).

The interior of the original hall-parlor house features original bead-board of varying widths for the walls and ceilings and original pine floors (photographs 7 and 8). The hallway and additions have drywall walls and ceilings with original wood ceiling in the left center bedroom (photographs 9, 10, and 11). The house retains its original, simple door and window surrounds and paneled doors.

The outbuildings include a 1920s barn and 1930s chicken coop that were rebuilt in 1993 due to deteriorating foundations. The outbuildings were rebuilt using the original materials, with the same design, and in their original locations (photographs 15 and 16). The barn is constructed of unpainted, rough-sawn weatherboard over a peeled-pole-and-hewn-beam frame. The barn has a shed-roofed addition on the east side. The chicken coop is built with rough-sawn boards, chicken wire, and tin. The coop is surrounded by a high chicken wire reinforced with boards and tin. A historic well is located to the rear of the house, and a historic 1930s doghouse remains east of the house (photograph 17).

The historic landscaping surrounding the main house is representative of rural African-American houses in Georgia with informal plantings of ornamental, edible, and medicinal plants with agricultural fields to the rear of the property. Traditionally, the front yard may have been a swept yard but is now grassy. The landscape immediately surrounding the house features ornamental plants and shrubs and mature trees such as crepe myrtles, azaleas, wisteria, oak leaf hydrangeas, gardenias, sweet shrubs, live oaks, and heirloom flowers. To the west of the house is a scuppernong grape arbor and fruit trees. To the north of the house are two historic "strawberry" trees with handmade benches at their bases. Strawberry trees are related to mulberry trees and botanists speculate that they were introduced the Georgia during the Colonial period with the short-lived experiments of silk cultivation. Wild onions, garlic, and other medicinal plants are scattered throughout the property. The doghouse sits among beautyberry bushes to the south of the chicken coop. The barn and chicken coop are located to the rear of the house, and agricultural fields are located to the rear of the yard. The area surrounding the yard is heavily wooded with mostly live oak trees. At the far north end of the property are the remnants of historic rice fields and a dam for rice cultivation.

In 1993, the non-profit Seabrook Village Foundation acquired the farm for use as teaching tools as part of their rural, African-American heritage open-air museum. The main house is now used as the Seabrook Village Foundation's administrative office and gift shop. The grape arbor and agricultural fields are kept planted. The rice fields are overgrown.

Although no formal archaeological investigation has been done on the property, there is a high potential for archaeological resources on the property associated with the Bowens' household due to 100 years of continuous occupancy and use and the absence of any recent ground-disturbing activities.

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): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

AGRICULTURE
ARCHITECTURE
ETHNIC HERITAGE: black

Period of Significance:

1903-1954

Significant Dates:

1903—construction of the house

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Located in the rural lowlands of eastern Liberty County, the Eddie Bowens Farm is representative of the type of African-American farmsteads developed after the Civil War. The population of coastal Liberty County has remained primarily African-American subsistence farm families from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century.

The Eddie Bowens Farm is significant in the area of architecture as a good example of a vernacular house that evolved over time from a hall-parlor house with later, historic additions. Eddie Bowens constructed the two-room hall-parlor house in 1903. According to the statewide historic context Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings, the hall-parlor was one of the state's earliest house types and was built through the 1930s for farm owners, tenant farmers, and mill workers. Typical of most small, one-to-two room houses, additional rooms were constructed on the rear of the hall-parlor during the historic period. The house retains its original weatherboard siding, shed-roof porch with exposed rafters, brick piers, and six-over-six double-hung windows. The interior of the house retains its historic finishes in the hall-parlor and its original pine floors, door and window surrounds, and paneled doors throughout.

The Eddie Bowens Farm is significant in the area of agriculture and black ethnic heritage as an excellent example of an early 20th-century African-American farm. Eddie Bowens was a farmer, construction worker, carpenter, oysterman, and root medicine practitioner as well as being a deacon and church elder at the nearby Sunbury Baptist Church. The farm is typical of African-American farms in the Seabrook and Sunbury communities with a main house with historic ornamental, edible, and medicinal plants surrounding the main house, fruit trees and vegetables grown slightly away from the house, and agricultural fields to the rear of the property. The property is also significant for the remnants of rice cultivation, which existed for a brief time along the Georgia coast. Intact historic structures relating to rice cultivation include historic rice fields and a dam. According to plat maps, a rice dam running along the back of the Bowens Farm existed prior to 1917. The dam probably was part of a large antebellum plantation rice field before the property was subdivided. Many African-American farmers in coastal Liberty County grew swamp rice on their low-lying land. Even small patches could be cultivated, processed by the farmer and his family using hand-carved wooden mortar-and-pestle sets and hand-woven flat baskets known as fannas ("fanners"), and sold or traded informally. Along with rice as a cash crop, Mr. Bowens raised crops, medicinal plants, scuppernong grapes, and chickens. As defined in the statewide historic context Tilling the Earth: Georgia's Historic Agricultural Heritage, the Eddie Bowens Farm retains all its agricultural-related features including the main house, an identifiable historic agricultural landscape with few changes, a historic doghouse, and a historic rice dam.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

National Register Criteria

The Eddie Bowens Farm is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as an excellent example of an early-to-mid-20th century farm and for its direct association with Eddie Bowens, an African-American farmer and root practitioner in the Seabrook community. The property is eligible for listing under Criterion C as a good example of a hall-parlor-type house with later historic additions.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

Period of significance (justification)

The period of construction begins with the construction of the house in 1903 and ends with the end of the historic period (1954) to reflect the continual ownership and farming practices of Eddie Bowens until his death in 1987.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The property consists of one contributing building (the main house) and three contributing structures (the well, dog house, and rice dam and fields). The rebuilt barn is a noncontributing building and the chicken coop is a noncontributing structure although original materials were used.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

NOTE: The following developmental history was prepared by Meredith Devendorf. "Eddie Bowens Farm," Historic Property Information Form, May 7, 1999. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

The unique culture and history of African Americans along the Georgia coast is inextricably linked with the area's topography and climate. Low, swampy land and subtropical weather conditions made growing any crop besides rice nearly impossible in coastal Liberty County. Rice cultivation in Liberty County began in the 1750s when the area was settled by Puritans from Dorchester, South Carolina. Consisting of mostly low, swampy land, eastern Liberty County could support few crops other than rice. Liberty County rice planters grew primarily swamp rice, flooding their low-lying fields with rainfall and artesian spring water. The planters etched an extensive system of dams, sluice gates, drainage ditches, and canals on the land, which remain in areas as permanent reminders of attempts to tame the harsh coastal landscape. Despite their efforts, Liberty County rice planters were not as successful as their counterparts in Darien, Savannah, and Charleston. The poor quality of the rice-growing land, repeated hurricanes that struck the area throughout the 19th century, and several malaria epidemics combined to keep wealth suppressed and land and slave holdings small.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

As in other areas of the low country, Liberty County planters bought slaves from West African tribes for their expertise in rice cultivation, a pursuit completely alien to Northern Europeans. White indentured servants originally brought to colonial Georgia under Oglethorpe's ban on chattel slavery balked at the toil, mosquitoes, alligators, and oppressive heat and humidity associated with rice cultivation and frequently ran away into South Carolina where, among the vast black slave population, they were seldom detected as being "slaves" themselves. Beginning in the 1740s, Savannah River planters began importing black African "day laborers" from South Carolina. By the 1750s, the Georgia Trustees had repealed James Oglethorpe's ban on slavery, and Georgia rapidly became one of the most active participants in the American slave trade. West Africans, desired for their expertise in rice cultivation, comprised the majority of slaves along the Rice Coast. Despite horrendous working conditions, West Africans adapted extremely well to life on the Southeastern coast. Coastal Georgia's vast savannas and subtropical climate were similar to conditions in West Africa.

Having been exposed to malarial mosquitoes for millennia, most West African tribes had developed a genetic resistance to malaria. During the months of "bad air"—the sweltering hot and humid summer months during which mosquitoes were abundant—white planters and their families usually removed themselves to cooler, less buggy areas to avoid malaria. Slaves were often left in the care of black drivers while their white masters were absent, leaving them with a certain degree of self-governance not found in other areas of the South. In Liberty County, planters devised an "incentive" program for their slaves known as the "task system." Each slave was assigned a parcel of land to work. Every day, each slave had to work his or her parcel of land; this work was known as a "task." Once the slave completed his or her task for the day, the remaining hours belonged solely to that slave. Often, as the growing season progressed, there would be days that required far less work on the task than at other times of the year, leaving the slave with more personal time. Whatever the slave did during that personal time, whether hiring himself out as an artisan or growing vegetables on his small patch of earth near his cabin, he could keep what he earned. Slaves often were able to buy property such as mules, tools, and carts with the earned money.

Rice slaves were seldom sold out of the narrow region of the Rice Coast. Sharing similar language patterns, religious traditions, songs, and cultural experience, West Africans, albeit from different tribes, developed perhaps the most "African" of African-American subcultures. Able to interact relatively undisturbed by whites with other West Africans, rice slaves developed a unique culture of traditional West African folktales, grave art, religious iconography, and ideology and a unique dialects (Geechee and Gullah).

In 1864, General Hugh J. Kilpatrick, bringing up the southern flank of General William T. Sherman's "March to the Sea," marched through Liberty County along what was then known as the Sunbury Road (now called Trade Hill Road) to the failing seaport of Sunbury. At Sunbury, Kilpatrick burned the Sunbury Baptist Church, the largest wooden structure in town, as a signal to the Union blockade just off the coast that the march had finally reached the sea. Most of the white residents of the area had fled in 1862 with the threat of the Union navy.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8—Statement of Significance

After the war given the hardscrabble existence of Liberty County and the decline of rice cultivation, few whites returned to their former plantations and moved to the West, Northern cities, and new developing areas of the South. African Americans settled in the Sunbury and Seabrook areas and often found themselves owners of parcels of land they had once worked as slaves. Unlike other areas of the post-war South where sharecropping was the rule for African Americans, the freedmen of Seabrook had a certain level of self-determination. They owned land and were subsistence farmers. Because of a business savvy developed under the task system, many Liberty County African-American landowners held onto their property and managed it well. Even in the 1950s, blacks held the vast majority of property in Liberty County.

Because of land ownership, a lack of white challenge for African American-owned property, and firmly rooted traditional, isolated community ties, the people of Seabrook remained on the Georgia coast through Reconstruction, the Great Migration, and even the Great Depression. From the end of the Civil War, the African Americans of Seabrook have maintained varying degrees of their African heritage. Most notably, the grave art of Cyrus (or Siras) Bowens, a cousin of Eddie Bowens, was featured in the WPA study Drums and Shadows.

Eddie Bowens was born in 1886, mere yards from his future home site, to Elliott and Mary Dix Bowens. In 1903, Eddie Bowens bought a portion of his family's property and built a two-room hall-parlor house. Throughout the next 84 years, Bowens continued to modify his home often with the help of his second cousin, John Stevens. Following traditional form, Bowens added to the original house two rooms perpendicular to the first two with a porch sometime in the next 20 years. Eventually, he added two rooms opposite the first addition, thereby enclosing the porch into a passageway. A third addition of consisted of a kitchen and two other rooms(the last addition was removed in 1993-1994).

The property has three outbuildings: a barn (ca. 1930), a chicken coop and yard, and a doghouse. The chicken coop was probably not originally built for that purpose as it had flooring and was "fancy" in construction. The barn and chicken coop were rebuilt in 1994. The grounds are filled with ornamental, edible and medicinal plants. Oral tradition states that Bowens was a root doctor and tied to old African ways of conjure. He also cultivated scuppernong grapes on a cedar arbor of his own construction and rice in a small pond dammed in by an old dike on the north edge of the property.

Eddie Bowens lived in the house and farmed the land throughout his life. He outlived two wives and was married to a third, but has no known children. Eddie Bowens died in 1987 at the age of 101. In 1993, the Seabrook Village Foundation acquired the house and property. The house, now rehabilitated, serves as administrative offices and a gift shop for Seabrook and has gallery space for exhibits of "Makin' Do" and the renowned grave art created by Bowens' cousin Cyrus Bowens.

9. Major Bibliographic References

- Devendorf, Meredith. "Eddie Bowens Farm," Historic Property Information Form, May 7, 1999. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division. Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings. 1991.
- Georgia Writers' Project, Savannah Unit, Work Projects Administration. Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes. 1940. Reprint: Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986.
- Groover, Robert Long. Sweet Land of Liberty: A History of Liberty County, Georgia. Roswell, GA: W.H. Wolfe Associates, 1987.
- Jones-Jackson, Patricia. When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions of the Sea Islands. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987.
- Merritt, Carole. Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia. Atlanta: Historic Preservation Division, 1984.
- Messick, Denise P., J.W. Joseph, and Natalie P. Adams. Tilling the Earth: Georgia's Historic Agricultural Heritage. Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 2001.
- Smith, Julia Ford. Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia: 1750-1860. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- () preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- () preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
- () 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 #

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office**
- Other State Agency**
- Federal agency**
- Local government**
- University**
- Other, Specify Repository:**

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 9 acres.

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 469749 Northing 3511917

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary for the Eddie Bowens Farm is indicated on the attached tax map with a heavy black line, drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary corresponds to the current legal boundary owned by the Seabrook Village Foundation. The boundary includes the main house, outbuildings, historic landscaping, historic agricultural fields, and the right-of-way.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Gretchen A. Brock/National Register Coordinator
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 47 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 414-H
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** July 21, 2004
e-mail gretchen_brock@dnr.state.ga.us

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) () not applicable

name/title Meredith Devendorf
organization N/A
mailing address 5836 Islands Highway
city or town Midway **state** GA **zip code** 31320
telephone (912) 884-5450
e-mail N/A

- () **property owner**
(X) **consultant**
() **regional development center preservation planner**
() **other:**

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Anna Stevens, President
organization (if applicable) Seabrook Village Foundation
mailing address 660 Trade Hill Road
city or town Midway **state** GA **zip code** 31320
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Eddie Bowens Farm
City or Vicinity: Seabrook community
County: Liberty
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: September 2002

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 19

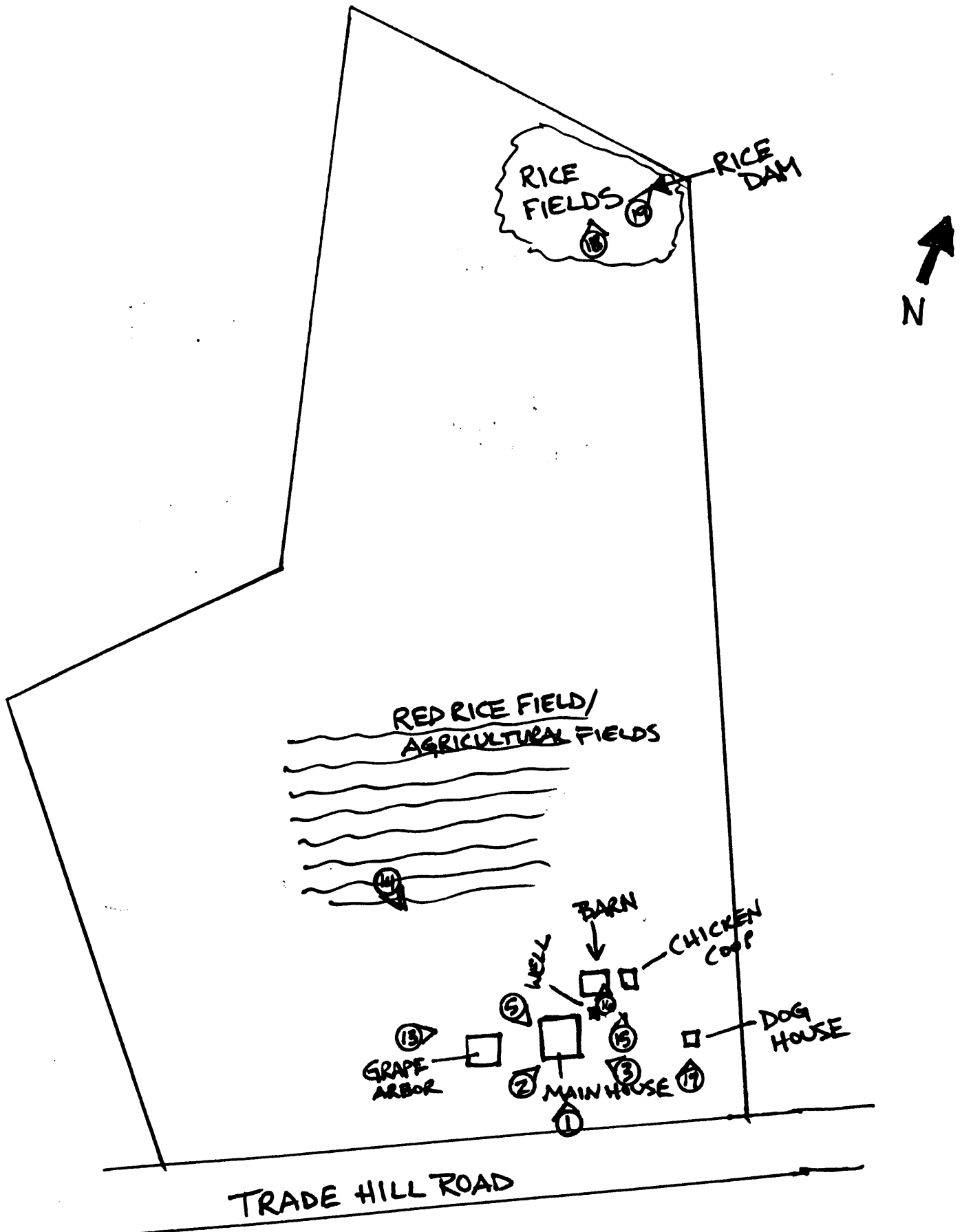
1. Exterior main house, front (south) façade; photographer facing northwest.
2. Exterior main house, front (south) façade; photographer facing north.
3. Exterior main house, front (south) and east facades; photographer facing northwest.
4. Exterior main house, rear (north) and east facades; photographer facing southwest.
5. Exterior main house, west façade; photographer facing southeast.
6. Exterior main house, detail of front porch; photographer facing east.
7. Interior main house, hall; photographer facing east.
8. Interior main house, parlor looking into hall; photographer facing east.
9. Interior main house, rear right room (currently the back office); photographer facing north.
10. Interior main house, left middle bedroom (currently gift shop); photographer facing southwest.
11. Interior main house, hallway looking towards front door; photographer facing southeast.
12. Setting and landscape view from road; photographer facing northwest.
13. Setting, grape arbor, and landscape view; photographer facing east.
14. Landscape and agricultural fields; photographer facing southeast.
15. View of barn and chicken coop; photographer facing northwest.



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Photographs

16. View of barn and chicken coop; photographer facing northwest.
17. Dog house; photographer facing northwest.
18. View of rice fields and dam; photographer facing northwest.
19. View of rice fields; photographer facing northwest.

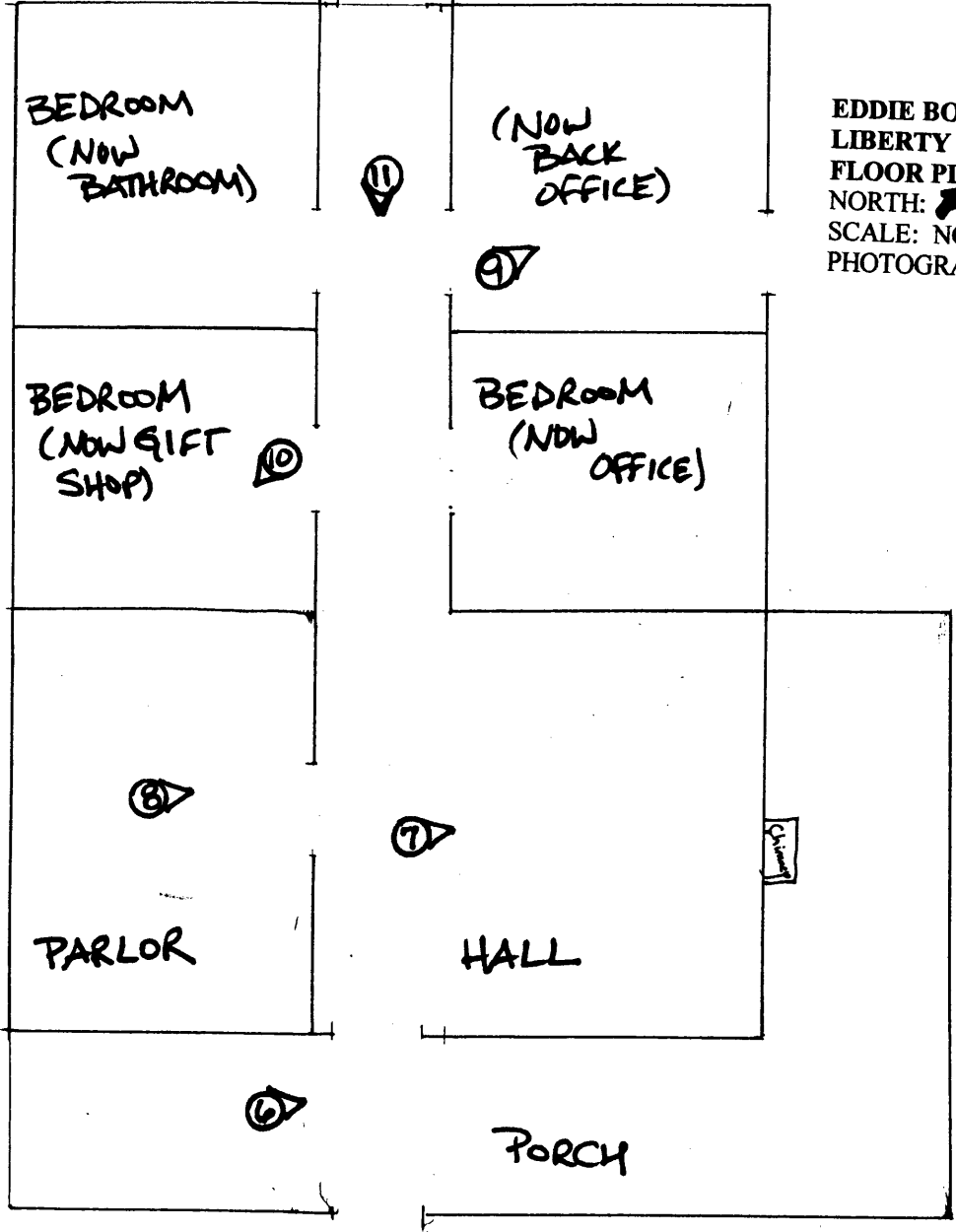
(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)



EDDIE BOWENS FARM
LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA
SITE MAP
 NORTH: 
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE
 PHOTOGRAPH/DIRECTION OF VIEW: 



Handicapped Ramp



EDDIE BOWENS FARM
 LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA
 FLOOR PLAN
 NORTH:
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE
 PHOTOGRAPH/DIRECTION OF VIEW:

BOWENS HOUSE
 FLOORPLAN
 SEABROOK, GEORGIA

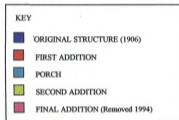
by Meredith Deverdorff
 1999

**EDDIE BOWENS FARM
LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA**

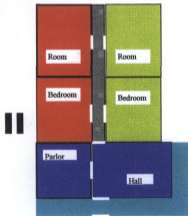
ATTACHMENT A



Original Hall & Parlor (ca. 1906)



First Addition (ca. 1910s-1920s)



Second Addition (ca. 1940s)



Third Addition (ca. 1950s-1960s)

