

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 19 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Tidewater Cottages in the Tennessee Valley (Thematic Group)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number See individual inventory forms NA not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | NA | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: abandoned |

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership (see individual inventory forms)

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

County courthouses in Morgan, Lawrence, Colbert and Lauderdale
courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Counties (see individual inventories for proper county)

street & number

city, town _____ state _____

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" 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

Among the oldest houses in Alabama is a group of eight, small, early 19th century dwellings located in rural areas of the Tennessee Valley region of the state. Seven are included in this nomination and an eighth, Melrose, has lost all of its interior features and most of its exterior detailing and has, therefore, been declared ineligible due to loss of architectural integrity. These buildings were patterned after houses common in Tidewater Virginia and have thus been called "Tidewater cottages." Their general architectural form typically includes a rectangular story-and-a-half block with a gable roof which sometimes features dormers. On either gable end of these houses is one or sometimes two exterior fireplace chimneys.

The Tennessee Valley houses, like their antecedents in the older South, can be sub-divided into two basic categories: the single-pile or one-room deep dwelling (examples: "Bride's Hill, The Green Onion), and the double-pile or two-room deep dwelling (examples: the Armistead and Koger houses). Within this format, the interior room arrangement varied from the standard central-hall layout to the rare hall-and-parlor plan--the latter essentially a holdover from the 17th century. In this plan, there was no bisecting passage, but rather two side-by-side rooms: a larger room called the "hall" in the English sense of the word, and a smaller adjacent "parlor" entered from the "hall." Three of the extant Tennessee Valley examples - Melrose plus the Murphey and Rice houses - also have a gabled ell at the rear, representing a further development of the "Tidewater cottage," but one that again finds precedent in the Chesapeake region at Sweet Hall (c. 1700), King William County, Virginia, and similar colonial-period dwellings.

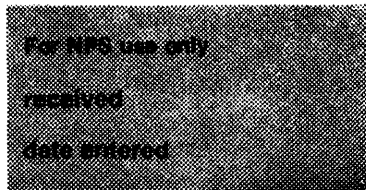
Alabama versions of the cottage tend to vary somewhat, but the basic Chesapeake form and construction techniques remained the same. The roof-pitch of the Alabama cottages, for example, is lower than their colonial predecessors, reflecting a general 19th century trend. The same trend can be discerned in Virginia and North Carolina examples built between 1820 and 1840. Like their eastern counterparts, the Alabama cottages are constructed in both brick and frame with the substructures of the frame versions being mortised and tenoned in typical 17th and 18th century fashion (see illustration 1).

There is evidence of not only a cultural transfer of basic form but also of a basic construction pattern. A good example of one of the construction elements used over and over in Alabama is the raising plate (see illustration 1 & 2) between the roof rafters and the second floor joists. This construction element was also used in the earlier Chesapeake cottages and simply copied again and again as the house type was reproduced by trained builders. As the "Tidewater cottage" moved further and further from its source, however, the work of the craftsman became less and less refined. This is particularly noticeable in the interior woodwork of the Alabama cottages when compared with that found in Virginia and North Carolina.

The brick versions, like the frame examples, exhibit marked similarities with those in the seaboard south in technical and aesthetic craftsmanship. Albemarle and the Green Onion near Leighton, the Green Pryor Rice House near Somerville, and the William Koger House in Lauderdale County are examples of four Alabama "Tidewater" cottages with exceptional brickwork. At all three of these house the elevations which faced the public road were laid in Flemish Bond, while the other sides were generally executed in common bond. This trait is tied directly to the same practice along the eastern

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seaboard during the colonial period. The Flemish bond employed on the "public" sides of the house presented to the passing eye not only the most pleasing brick pattern, but also made a social statement about the wealth of the owner, since Flemish bond was more expensive than common bond and required of the mason a greater degree of skill.

The Rice House is unique among this group in that the Flemish bond pattern extends all the way around the house. In addition, there is an exceptional molded brick cornice (see illustration 3). This elaborate brick cornice is yet another example of the transfer of a craft tradition from the East into early Alabama. The builder of the Rice House was descended from a family in Rockbridge County, Virginia who emigrated, via east Tennessee, into northern Alabama. The curved molded brick cornice abounds in Rockbridge County and can be traced all along the migration route through Tennessee into Alabama.

The more sophisticated Tennessee Valley cottages have a specific set of geometrical ratios governing height to width, length to depth, and so on. Thus, the so-called "double square" formula--much used in 18th century Williamsburg--is the controlling figure for such Alabama examples as Bride's Hill and Albemarle near Courtland and The Green Onion.

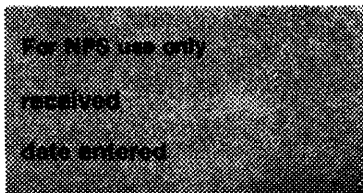
The term "double square" means simply that the front elevation of the house is twice as long as it is high, or the ground plan twice as wide as it is deep. Passed on from master craftsman to apprentice for generations, such established proportions gave to the most finished of the Tidewater-type cottages a strong family resemblance.

Another important identifying feature of the "Tidewater cottages" are the exterior chimneys on either end of the main block. The Alabama examples tend to be less massive than their earlier eastern predecessors. There is also a disparity in the number of fireplaces; some providing hearths at the first floor level only and others having additional fireplaces in the basement and/or second floor levels. The number of fireplaces, of course, alters the general exterior shape of the chimneys with some shouldered just above the first floor and others shouldered above the second story. Some chimney stacks, as at Brides Hill, break away several inches from the main wall plane like their colonial prototypes, and some, more typical of 19th century construction, are flush with the gable ends of the house. Another important Chesapeake chimney feature is the cantilevered chimney pent (see illustration 4). Bride's Hill has two cantilevered pents and is the only known example of a house in Alabama with this unusual chimney feature. Most of the chimney variations probably tended to reflect specific stylistic trends that were familiar to the original owner or builder. The Dr. William E. Murphey House near Decatur, for example, has unusually fine stone chimneys with a distinctive, decorative, protruding, stone band near the top. This feature was peculiar to stone chimneys in Franklin County, North Carolina, where the Murphey family had lived prior to coming to Alabama.

Several of the cottages, including the Peter F. Armistead, Sr. House, Melrose and Bride's Hill, have basements or cellars. These below-ground spaces with fireplaces served as dining rooms as did their counterparts in the southern regions of Virginia. One area of the cellar in the Peter F. Armistead, Sr. house is reported to have been used as sleeping quarters for slaves.

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LIST OF PROPERTIES

1. "Dr. William E. Murphey House"
Rt. 1, Box 130
Decatur, Alabama 35601
2. "Green Pryor Rice House"
P. O. Box 7
Somerville, Alabama
3. "Sunnybrook" ("Bride's Hill")
Annie Wheeler Estate
AmSouth Bank
Birmingham, Alabama
4. "Albemarle"
P. O. Box 356
Courtland, Alabama
5. "The Green Onion"
Leighton, Alabama
6. "Peter F. Armistead, Sr. House"
P. O. Box 279
Florence, Alabama 35631
7. "William Koger House"
Smithsonia - Rhodesville Rd.
Florence, Alabama

PROPERTIES DETERMINED NOT ELIGIBLE

1. Melrose
W side Cook's Lane approx. 1 mi. W of U.S.43
Tuscumbia, Alabama

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 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 c. 1820- c. 1835 **Builder/Architect** NA

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C - Architecture

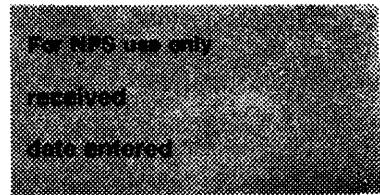
The "Tidewater cottages" are architecturally significant as exceptional examples of the direct transfer of an architectural house type from the eastern seaboard. Typical architectural features of this house type include a rectangular story-and-a-half block with a gable roof flanked on either gable end with one or sometimes two exterior chimneys. The houses in this nomination are among the oldest dwellings in Alabama (c 1820-1835) and represent some of the last surviving first generation examples of a particular house type of timber/frame or brick construction in the state.

Criterion A - Exploration/Settlement

The "Tidewater cottages" are significant for their associations with the establishment of large, slave-based cotton plantations in the Tennessee Valley area of North Alabama by the descendants and relatives of leading planter families of Virginia and North Carolina. Their landholdings in Alabama were among the earliest plantations in the state. Five out of seven property owners in this nomination remained in Alabama less than ten years before moving on into Mississippi where new cotton-producing land was made available for the first time. This migration is representative of a general trend in North Alabama at that time, which was sparked by the depletion of the soil caused by the repetitive planting of cotton and the lack of a convenient cheap means of transporting crops to market.

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Historical Summary

Of the various house-types brought to early Alabama from the eastern seaboard, one of the most distinctive is the so-called Tidewater-type cottage. As its name suggests, this house-form descends from the typical story-and-a-half gabled dwelling with end chimneys, and very often dormer windows, that once dotted the countryside of eastern Virginia, as well as portions of adjacent Maryland and upper North Carolina. Today, the best-known examples of the form are the prim, 18th-century cottages that line the streets of colonial Williamsburg.

The form itself, however, goes back even earlier, to such 17th-century antecedents as the famous Adam Thoroughgood House (c. 1650) near Norfolk and the Wishart House (c. 1670) on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, along with similar, more primitive examples from the same period that have long since disappeared. From these early North American ancestors, the form can be traced across the Atlantic, to the south and west of England and to the typical yeoman dwelling that had developed there by the late Elizabethan period. Although the English and North American versions of the form pursued distinctive evolutionary paths during the 17th and 18th centuries, their common origin is still readily apparent to the student of folk architecture.

Modified during the late colonial period by Georgian ideas of symmetry and proportion, the Tidewater-type cottage gradually spread inland to the piedmont and the Blue Ridge foothills, as well as southward down the Atlantic seaboard, from its seedbed around the lower Chesapeake Bay region. During the 1820s and 1830s settlers coming directly from Virginia, or from Virginia via the Carolinas and Georgia, brought the house form to Alabama, where the best and most clear-cut examples occur in the western Tennessee River Valley. (A second clustering, more distantly related to the Virginia prototype and lacking the clear-cut traits of the premier Tennessee Valley examples, occurs about Montgomery and may probably be traced to the "Broad River" settlers--transplanted Virginians who had lived for a generation along northeastern Georgia's Broad River before coming to central Alabama.) Today, the Tidewater-type cottage is one of those house-types representing the first generation of permanent timber-frame and brick construction in Alabama.

The concentration of the best Alabama examples of Tidewater-type cottage in the Tennessee Valley can perhaps be attributed to a couple of factors: first, an unusually high proportion of immigrant planters coming directly from Virginia, Maryland, and upper North Carolina; and secondly, the documented presence of house builders who were themselves immigrants from the same region--men who carried with them to Alabama ideas of craftsmanship and domestic construction steeped in the vernacular tradition of their places of origin.

By modern standards, the Alabama "Tidewater cottages" appear to be very modest homes with few of the trappings currently associated with wealth or prestige. These houses, however, were considered to be exceptionally fine dwellings in the early 19th century in Alabama. The original owners of all of these houses were very wealthy land and slave owners and were direct descendants

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of important "first families of Virginia." Among those included in this nomination were the Jones, Dandridge, Johnson and Armistead families and these, in turn, were connected to the Lee, Carter and Byrd families of Virginia.

Five out of the seven families represented in this nomination remained in Alabama less than ten years before moving on into newly-opened cotton-producing land in Mississippi. This was a common migration pattern in North Alabama, which was sparked by the depletion of the soil after repeated cotton planting and the lack of a cheap, convenient, regional system of transporting crops to market.

The "Tidewater cottage," unlike most folk house types brought to Alabama, ceased to be built in the state after the mid-1830s. Those included in this thematic group are among the very few surviving examples of this particular type. Their concentration in the northwest corner of the state is particularly important, because it shows the direct cultural transfer of the architectural traditions familiar to the eastern immigrants who settled in that area of Alabama.

Of the seven houses included in this nomination, three are abandoned, and two are in deteriorated condition. An eighth example which was virtually unaltered was razed in early 1985.

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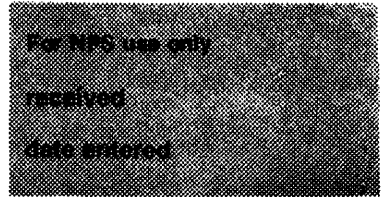
METHODOLOGY

In preparing this nomination the following was undertaken:

- A. A windshield survey was made by Robert S. Gamble, state architectural historian, of all of the Alabama counties bordering the Tennessee Valley to ascertain which buildings were surviving examples of "Tidewater cottages."
- B. Local residents, family descendants and current occupants of the houses were interviewed both for information about known examples of the Tidewater house type and for assistance in locating unknown examples.
 1. Personal interview with Carrie Randolph Hotchkiss, Courtland, Ala., July 1, 1966.
 2. Personal interview with Margaret F. Armistead, Tuscumbia, Ala., 1975.
 3. Personal interview with Mrs. Millie Wright, Florence, Ala., August 14, 1985.
 4. Phone interview with Mrs. Paul Rice, Phil Campbell, Ala., September 23, 1985.
- C. Research was carried out from the following sources:
 1. State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Ala.
 2. Lawrence County Courthouse, Moulton, Ala.
 3. Morgan County Courthouse, Decatur, Ala.
 4. Colbert County Courthouse, Tuscumbia, Ala.
 5. Lauderdale County Courthouse, Florence, Ala.
 6. Publications:
 - a. James E. Saunders and Elizabeth B. Saunders Stubbs, Early Settlers of Alabama (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969 reprint of original 1899 edition).
 - b. W. R. Turner, Old Homes and Families in Nottoway (Blackstone, Virginia: Nottoway Publishing Co., 1932).
 7. Robert S. Gamble Papers, Montgomery, Ala.

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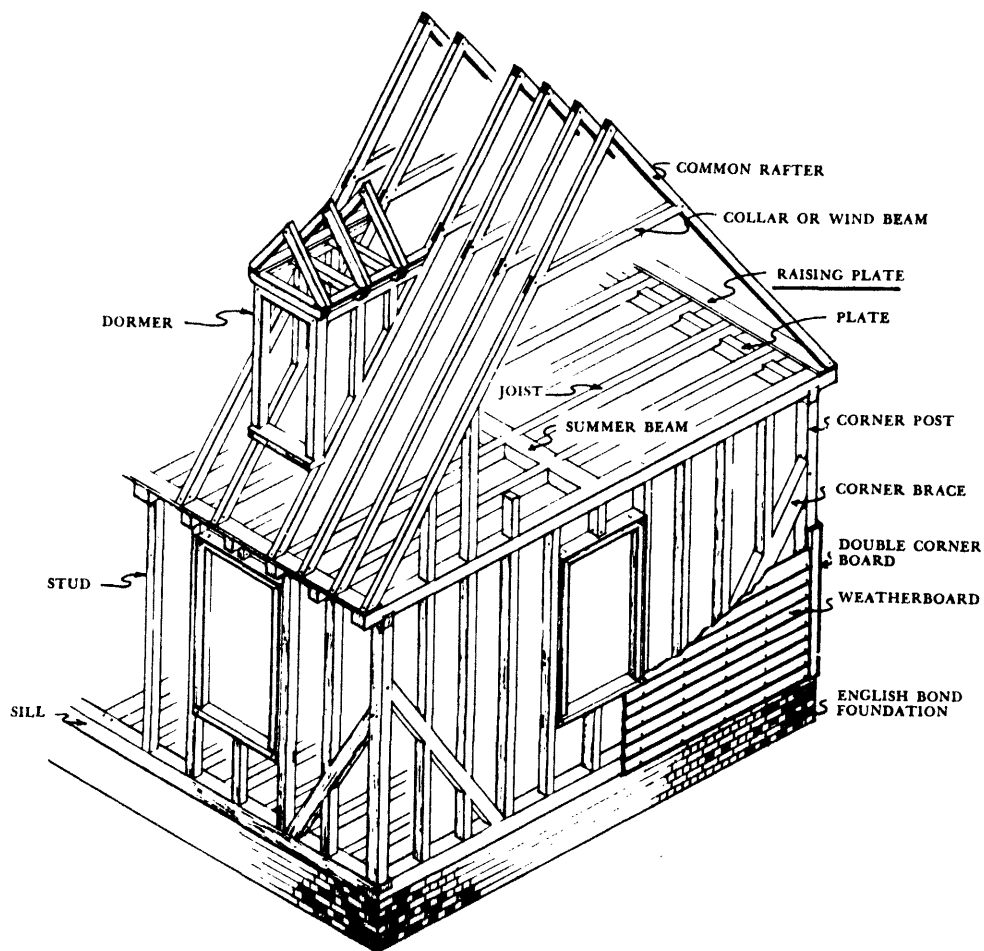
- D. Selection of eight "Tidewater cottages" was made based on the findings above.
- E. Each building was then studied individually for:
- a. approximate date: arrived at from courthouse records.
 - b. an architectural description based on on-site inspection.
 - c. significance was established for each building based on its architectural integrity, its style and its contribution to the theme of the nomination.
 - d. each building was photographed.

Buildings included:

1. Dr. William E. Murphey House
2. Green Pryor Rice House
3. Bride's Hill
4. Albemarle
5. The Green Onion
6. Peter F. Armistead, Sr. House
7. William Koger House

Building studied but not included:

1. Melrose



Typical 17th and 18th century frame construction found in "Tidewater cottages."

Illustration taken from Building Early America, Charles E. Peterson, Editor, published by Chilton Book Co., Radnor, Pennsylvania, 1976.

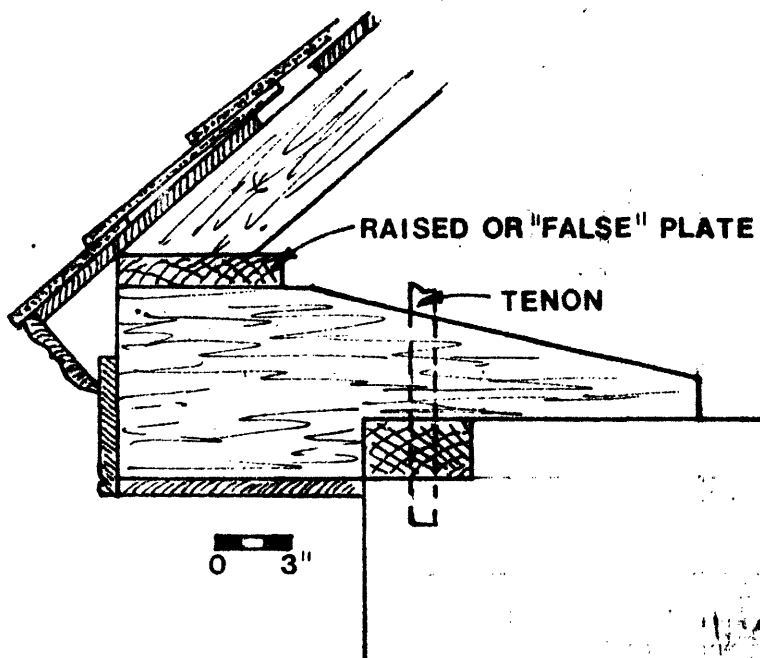


Illustration showing raising plate

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Tidewater Cottages in the Tennessee Valley TR
State ALABAMA

COVER ASchlagel 4/3/86
Date/Signature

Nomination/Type of Review

1. Armistead, Peter F. Sr., House

for Keeper Melvin Byers 7/9/86
Attest

2. Bride's Hill

for Keeper Melvin Byers 7/9/86
Attest

3. Koger, William, House

for Keeper Melvin Byers 7/9/86
Attest

4. Murphey, Dr. William E., House

Substantive Review

Keeper ASchlagel 7/9/86
Attest

5. Rice, Green Pryor, House

Records in the
National Register

for Keeper Melvin Byers 7/9/86
Attest

6. Albemarle

Substantive Review

Keeper _____ Reject
Attest

7. Johnson, John, House

Substantive Review

Keeper ASchlagel 7/9/86
Attest

8.

Keeper _____
Attest

9.

Keeper _____
Attest

10.

Keeper _____
Attest