

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Akins House

Other names/site number The Cabin; The Hollow; Burchfield House

Name of related multiple
property listing N/A

(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

2. Location

Street & Number: Citico Road

City or town: Vonore State: Tennessee County: Monroe

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A Zip: 37885

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Signature of certifying official>Title:

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official:

Date

Title:

**State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal
Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Public – Local | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Public – State | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Public – Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| District | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Site | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Structure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Object | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/ secondary structure

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: processing

VACANT NOT IN SUSE

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Cumberland Plan House

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood; Metal; Brick; Stone

Narrative Description

The Akins House is located in a rural setting off Citico Road approximately eleven miles from the city of Vonore in Monroe County, Tennessee. The area surrounding the property is occupied primarily by dense, uninterrupted forests, rolling hills, and plunging valleys filled with mountain streams. The Little Tennessee River is located approximately a mile north of the Cabin site, and the property is bounded by the Cherokee National Forest on its eastern, western, and southern boundaries. The Akins House is situated upon 7.47 acres of land, all of which was historically associated with the property during its Period of Significance. The cabin's design, fenestration, and exterior ornamentation mark the cabin as an excellent representation of the Cumberland Plan House type. Contributing resources on the property include the Akins House (c. 1921), and the Smokehouse (c. 1921).. The only Non-Contributing resource is the Outhouse (c. 1990).

The cabin is a L-shaped wood-frame building standing one and one-half stories tall. The exterior of the house looks much like it did historically. The interior was renovated by Elmer Dupes, a local carpenter, moonshiner, and friend of the historical and current property owners. The renovations took place between 1958 and 1963. The renovation consisted of the sheet rock installation on the walls and linoleum over the original wood floors. The linoleum was replaced with green carpet in 1964. These modifications facilitated

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the continued use of the property as a livable home for its residents.¹ The property is currently owned by a private individual who maintains the property and stays at the cabin primarily for recreation. The Akins House retains its integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. As such, these attributes qualify the property for listing the National Register of Historic Places for its significance as an excellent representative type of a Cumberland Plan House and for its significance as an important part of Monroe County's moonshining industry from 1921-1958.

Cabin, circa 1921 (Contributing)

Exterior

South Elevation (Façade)

The Akins House is a small, one and one-half story, wood-frame, Cumberland Plan House sat upon a stone pier foundation. The board-and-batten sided cabin has a crimp metal side-gable roof. A full-length porch with a corrugated metal shed roof porch and exposed rafter tails is supported by six evenly spaced wood posts. Wood railing is located between two porch supports on both ends of the porch. The porch is raised approximately two feet off the ground and is supported at regular intervals by wood posts. Four wood steps centered on the porch and flanked on one side by a wood rail lead to the porch landing. A set of three wood stairs leading up to the porch are located on the eastern end of the porch. The main entrance to the cabin is located on the eastern end of the façade. The main entrance is filled with a wood door and screen door. The wood door is vertical paneled, and the boards and hardware are all original to the cabin. Unless otherwise noted, all doors are identical in description. A secondary entrance is located on the western end of the façade. This entrance is filled with a wood door. Two 6/6 double-hung wood windows are located on the façade. One is located to the west of the main entrance, and the other is located to the west of the secondary entrance.

East Elevation

The east elevation is dominated by a gable end, stone and brick chimney. The chimney extends above the cabin's roofline, tapers just above the first floor and has a metal cap. South of the chimney on the first floor is a 2/2, wood, double-hung window. A two-light, wood, casement window is located south of the chimney on the upper story. North of the chimney is a six-light, wood stationary window. The gabled rear ell is visible, extending from the cabin's north elevation, and the east elevation features only a single, four-light casement window. The ell was part of the house's original design.²

North Elevation

A single, 4/6 double-hung wood window is centered on the gabled ell's first floor. Attached to the ell's west elevation is a one-story standing-seam metal shed roof porch. This porch is also shared with the west elevation of the main house section. The porch is supported by three wood posts with a wood balustrade and is accessed by two wood steps.

West Elevation

¹ David Helms, email message to author, August 5, 2022.

² Ibid.

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The one-story ell porch is also located on this elevation. A single 6/6, wood, double-hung window and an entrance filled with a wood door are sheltered beneath the porch. A single, 2/2, wood, double-hung window is centered on the gable end of the cabin's first floor. A 4 light, wood, casement window is centered beneath the gable peak on the half-story.

Interior

Living Room

The interior of the cabin is laid out in a simple L-shape, three-room design. Two rooms are in the main portion of the house, following the Cumberland Plan, while the third is in the gabled ell. The exterior main entrance opens into the Living Room. The room is square with green outdoor carpet and drywall. Unless otherwise noted, visible flooring covers the original wood flooring of the cabin, and drywall covers original wood walls. The ceiling is sheetrock with narrow wooden boards covering the seam of the sheetrock. The ceiling is the same throughout the house. A fireplace is located on the east wall. The fireplace is framed by the original wood mantle. Above the mantle is a wood frame mirror. The current owner has a laminated wood frame covering the firebox of the chimney. The frame is covered with historical pictures of previous residents of the cabin and other areas of interest. A wood door is located on the western wall of the room and opens into the First Floor West Bedroom. A wood door on the northern wall of the room opens into the Kitchen.

First Floor West Bedroom

The First Floor West Bedroom has green carpet floors and drywall walls. A wood door is located on the south wall and leads out onto the South Elevation's porch. A boxed staircase is located in the northwest corner of the living area. It is accessed through an original wood door and leads up to the half-story.

Kitchen

North of the Living Room is the Kitchen, located in the ell of the cabin. The room is square and matches the dimensions and layout of the Living Room. The floors are vinyl. A wood door is located on the western wall of the kitchen and leads out to the ell porch on the north and west exterior elevations.

Half-Story East Bedroom

The staircase provides access to the Half-Story East Bedroom. The floors of the Half-Story East Bedroom are covered in carpet. A wood ledge is attached to the gable end wall.

Half-Story West Bedroom

The Half-Story West Bedroom is identical in size and interior detail, with the exception of the cabin attic doorway. A small crawlspace access is located on the north wall of the Half-Story West Bedroom. This crawlspace provides access to the cabin's attic, which is currently not in use. The attic is unfinished.³

³ David Helms, email message to author, August 5, 2022.

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Smokehouse, c. 1921 (Contributing)

The Smokehouse is located to the northwest of the cabin. It is a one story, wood-frame, front-gable building with a combination of board-and-batten and vertical board siding. The roof is covered with standing seam metal. The main entrance is located on the east elevation and is filled with an original wood vertical board door. Two brackets covered by siding provide support for the gable that shelters the entrance. A shed roof lean-to addition is located on the south elevation of the building. The lean-to addition is formed from an extension of the roofline and supported by two cedar log posts. The addition was constructed by Elmer Dupes in 1970. The interior of the smokehouse has a wood board floor. Some of the flooring was replaced in kind in 2022 due to rot and water damage. The walls are unfinished. Original shelves are located on the walls.⁴

Outhouse, c. 1990 (Non-Contributing)

The Outhouse is located to the northwest of the cabin and just to the north of the smokehouse. The Outhouse is constructed of vertical wood boards with a shed standing seam metal roof. The wood vertical board door is located on the east elevation of the outhouse. The Outhouse was constructed in the 1990s to replace a previous building located in the same spot. As such, the Outhouse is non-contributing because it was not present during the property's Period of Significance.

Integrity

The Akins House has an overall high level of integrity, having changed little since its Period of Significance. The Akins House retains its integrity of setting, location, feeling, and association, which is communicated most clearly through its rural setting. A large number of natural features are located within the property's boundaries, including cedar trees and a stream historically used by the family for water and making moonshine. The presence of outbuildings like the smokehouse also reinforce the integrity of location, feeling, and association. The natural and built elements communicate clearly the site's historical importance as an important component of the local moonshine industry. The Akins House itself retains a high level of integrity in its materials, designs, and workmanship. Though the interior has been modified with the installation of carpet and drywall, the historic materials are still located underneath the modern materials. Further, the design of the cabin remains unchanged, the floorplan remaining the same that it did historically. As a result, the cabin retains its integrity of material, design, and workmanship. Finally, the smokehouse, a key component of the site's significance, has an overall high level of integrity. With the exception of the lean-to, the smokehouse's design, materials, and workmanship have not changed since it served as a moonshine distribution point on the property.

⁴ David Helms, email message to author, August 5, 2022.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

N/A

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.
- G significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1921-1958

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Akins, John

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Statement of Significance Summary

The Akins House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Commerce. The property is being nominated at the local level of significance for its role as a local distribution point in the making, selling, and distribution of moonshine. Monroe County was heavily involved in the production of illegal liquor, its reputation for moonshining in Tennessee second only to neighboring Cocke County. The small communities of Vonore and Ball Play, the nearest communities to the Akins House, were moonshining hotspots within the county. The isolation of both communities and access to nearby Citico Road created the ideal environment for producing and selling moonshine. Under the stewardship of Luke Akins (1897-1936), Elvavine "Vennie" Williams (1903-1988), and Virgle "Babs" Burchfield (1908-1997), the Akins House became an important part of this moonshining industry from 1921-1958. The Akins House is also eligible for Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level. The house exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of a Cumberland Plan House, a vernacular architectural type rooted in tradition and significant as a popular housing style for rural residents in Monroe County and Tennessee. The period of significance (1921-1958) reflects the construction date of the house and the year that the Akins House was sold out of family, thus ending the property's role in the moonshine industry.

Narrative Statement of Significance

County Context

The Akins House is located in a rural, heavily forested area near the Cherokee National Forest in Monroe County. The area is known for its rich Native American history. Prior to European settlement, Monroe County was the traditional homelands of the Overhill Cherokee. The Overhill Cherokee established many significant villages throughout the area. Such villages included Toqua (NR 11/16/1978), Great Talequah, Tanasi (NR 08/30/1973), and Chota (NR 08/30/1973). Toqua was a large Mississippian village located along the Little Tennessee River, and Great Talequah was the principle Overhill Cherokee town in the late seventeenth century. Tanasi emerged as the political center of the Overhill Cherokee in the early eighteenth century before Chota became more influential in the mid-1750s. These settlements produced many influential figures, with perhaps the most well-known being Sequoyah, who was born around 1776 in the village of Tuskegee.⁵

European settlers, the majority of which were of Scotch Irish descent, settled the area in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries after the French and Indian War. The Tennessee legislature formed Monroe County in 1819 after the signing of the Calhoun Treaty. As a result, the Cherokee ceded to the State of Tennessee land south of the Little Tennessee River to the Hiwassee River. The county was named after James Monroe, the president of the United States when the county was founded. While Monroe County had some of the state's largest and earliest gold mines, logging and agriculture were the primary occupations for many of its residents. Perhaps the best-known logging operation in the area was located at Tellico Plains, a late nineteenth and early twentieth century logging and industrial town controlled largely by businessman

⁵ Carroll Van West, "Monroe County," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, October 8, 2017, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/monroe-county/>. The Akins House is also located near the Sequoyah Birthplace Museum. Owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokees, the site honors the legacy of Sequoyah the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet.

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Charles Abner Scott.⁶ The arrival of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in the 1890s further fueled the logging industry in Monroe County. Timber and other natural products shipped through this line brought prosperity to parts of the local community and county.⁷

Monroe County's subsequent history was defined in large part by federal programs and projects, the two most notable examples being the establishment of the Cherokee National Forest and construction of the Tellico Dam. In 1911 Congress passed the Weeks Act, which granted the federal government authority to purchase private land for the creation of national forests. Though President Woodrow Wilson set aside land for the creation of national forests in 1920, it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt that created the Cherokee National Forest in 1936. He did so by piecing together sections of the Cherokee, Pisgah, and Unaka national forests. The majority of the 640,000 acres are located within the borders of Tennessee, but the forest also includes land in western North Carolina. A sizeable portion of the Cherokee National Forest, approximately 145,380 acres, is within Monroe County and surrounds the nominated property.⁸

The construction of the Tellico Dam (NR 08/14/2017) by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in the 1970s also affected the county. Congress approved funding for the Tellico Project on October 15, 1966, and construction began on March 7, 1967. However, Tellico Dam faced opposition from the very beginning. Unlike other projects, TVA did not have a clear idea on how much acreage it should take or how many families it would displace. In the end, TVA took nearly three times the land it needed to build the dam and reservoir. The organization took this extra acreage so that they could sell the land and recoup their losses. This created a major problem for TVA as property owners, local governments, and state and federal legislators attacked the project for its effects on private families and individuals. At the same time, the discovery of the snail darter and flooding of Cherokee sites added to the Dam's opposition. Despite the challenges, the Tellico Dam was completed in September of 1979 when President Jimmy Carter signed a bill that closed the dam and finished the lake. The Tellico Dam and Cherokee National Forest collectively changed the county's landscape forever.⁹

The History of Moonshine and Prohibition

The Akins House is historically significant for its role in the local moonshine industry. Moonshine is one of many names that refers to untaxed liquor that is made illegally and is generally clear in color and quite potent. Though the ingredients of moonshine vary according to the maker's recipe, they generally include sugar, water, yeast, cornmeal, and malt. To make moonshine, the mash of fermented grain is carefully heated. At the conclusion of the process, the alcohol is condensed using the "worm," which is a coil of copper pipe in a barrel of cool water. As William Ellis wrote, "although the process appears to be a simple one, only well-trained and highly skilled practitioners can produce unadulterated whiskey under such

⁶ Charles Abner Scott built the Scott Mansion in Tellico Plains. A two story brick house constructed sometime between 1908 and 1912, the mansion and farm was listed on the National Register in 01/21/1993.

⁷ West, "Monroe County," <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/monroe-county/>

⁸ Jamie Woodcock, "Cherokee National Forest," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, October 8, 2017, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/cherokee-national-forest/>.

⁹ Andra Kowalczyk Martens and Phil Thomason, "Tellico Dam Project," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2017; West, "Monroe County," <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/monroe-county/>; Woodcock, "Cherokee National Forest," <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/cherokee-national-forest/>.

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generally primitive conditions.”¹⁰ It is a testament to the skills of those who lived at the Akins House that they were among those skilled practitioners who could make moonshine.

The production of moonshine at the Akins House has deep historical roots that are intertwined with the settlement of North America and even the history of the Scottish Highlands. Emelie Peine and Kai Schafft wrote in “Moonshine, Mountaineers, and Modernity: Distilling Cultural History in the Southern Appalachian Mountains” that moonshine began with “usquebaugh,” spirits distilled from grains in the Scottish Highlands. In 1610 the English Parliament instituted an excise tax on liquor, which was met with protest by both those that made the liquor and those that consumed it. As one can expect, the tax fueled the rise of a black market where individuals made and sold illegal liquor to bypass the tax. Peine and Schafft note that, despite breaking the law, moonshiners were not seen as standard criminals by the public. They were instead seen as “gentleman criminals,” and the act of making moonshine was seen as an expression of individual freedom and autonomy from the authority of the state.¹¹ Scotch Irish migrants brought this tradition to America and the Appalachian region.

The first conflict between moonshiners and the American government came in 1791 when George Washington imposed an excise tax on whiskey. Alexander Hamilton proposed the tax as a way to pay off the national debt and to assert the fledgling federal government’s power over the states. Whiskey was both an informal currency and a part of many rural American lives. In response to this tax, distillers tarred and feathered federal revenue officers who attempted to collect the excise tax. Everything came to a head when farmers from Western Pennsylvania organized the “Whiskey Rebellion” in July of 1794. Consisting of 500 armed men, the rebels burned the home of the regional tax inspector. President George Washington ordered the rebels to return home and organized a militia to put the rebellion down. When 13,000 troops arrived in the area, the rebels went home and the Whiskey Rebellion ended. Though the revolt failed, the Rebellion demonstrated the deep roots the distilling of illegal liquor held in the American people.¹²

However, it was not until the rise of the Temperance Movement and the passage of the Volstead Act in 1920 that both legal and illegal liquor met their greatest challenge. The anti-alcohol movement nationwide and in the state of Tennessee gained traction in the 1830s and 1840s. Rooted in the middle class and evangelical Protestantism, the movement railed against alcohol and its destructive effects. Despite the enthusiasm of local groups like the Nashville and Davison County Temperance Society, the anti-alcohol movement struggled to organize at the state and federal level. The founding of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874 and Anti-Saloon League (ASL) in 1893 changed that. Both organizations were successful in recruiting members for the movement, increasing the movement’s visibility across the nation, and lobbying for laws and legislation that prohibited the production and sale of alcohol. Thanks to their efforts, by 1910 nearly 50% of America’s population fell under some form of liquor prohibition legislation.

¹⁰ William Ellis, “Moonshine,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/moonshine/>, 2017.

¹¹ Emelie K. Peine and Kai A. Schafft, “Moonshiners, Mountaineers, and Modernity: Distilling Cultural History in the Southern Appalachian Mountains,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 18, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2012):93-112; Ellis, “Moonshine,” <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/moonshine/>.

¹² Adam Zeidan, “Whiskey Rebellion,” *Britannica Encyclopedia*, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Whiskey-Rebellion>; Ellis, “Moonshine” <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/moonshine/>

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The anti-alcohol movement in Tennessee also met with resounding success. In 1887, Tennessee legislators used the “four mile law” to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquor within four miles of any country schools. This law excluded many rural areas from buying alcohol. The Peeler Act of 1899 extended the four mile law to incorporated towns. It also prohibited the sale of liquor in towns with less than 2000 people. In 1907, the Tennessee legislature passed the Pendleton Act of 1907, which ensured that only Memphis, Chattanooga, Nashville, and LaFollette were exempt from the four mile law. The anti-alcohol movement culminated with the passage of Governor Thomas C. Rye’s “bone dry bill” in 1917, which made illegal the “receipt or possession of liquor and prohibited the transportation of liquor into or out of the state.” This put Tennessee ahead of national prohibition, achieved via the Volstead Act.¹³

Moonshiners had been making illegal liquor in Appalachia long before the passage of the bone dry bill or the Volstead Act. There are several factors that go some way towards explaining how the region became synonymous for moonshining prior to prohibition. To begin, there are fewer places better suited to making illegal liquor than Appalachia. The area is incredibly remote and hard to access. Its towering mountain ranges, plunging valleys, and hidden hollows offer both the natural resources necessary to make moonshine, like cool running water, and protection from prying eyes. However, this same natural environment prevented Appalachian farmers from participating in large scale agriculture like that found in other parts of East, Middle, and West Tennessee. Instead, farmers in Appalachia focused on feeding themselves and their families first, and one crop perfectly suited to do that was corn. The abundance of corn in the region ensured that farmers had access to one of the main ingredients needed to make moonshine. The monetary value of moonshine also drove production in the region. Many who lived in Appalachia were subsistence farmers and did not have much disposable income.¹⁴ Moonshine was a product that could be produced relatively cheaply and then either bartered or sold for goods and money the family needed. The last factor is that the cultural heritage of Appalachia also encouraged moonshining. Some of those who settled the region were of Scotch Irish descent, whose ancestors made illegal liquor.¹⁵ Thus, when Prohibition went into effect, moonshiners in Appalachia were uniquely positioned to meet the increased demand for their product.

However, moonshine production was not always safe for those that made moonshine, agents who attempted to stop its production, and even those who consumed the finished product. To avoid the law, many moonshiners adopted the new automobile technology of the 1920s and 1930s to transport moonshine. The blockade runner, or “tripper,” became legendary with the advent of fast, modern automobiles. outrunning law enforcement became a near pastime for moonshine bootleggers. Despite their best attempts, many moonshiners were caught and sentenced to prison terms. Violence also openly bloomed around the

¹³ Karen Blumenthal, *Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition* (New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2014); W. Calvin Dickson, “Temperance,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, October 8, 2017; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Lisa McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015); Jason Sumich, “It’s All Legal Until You Get Caught: Moonshining in the Southern Appalachians,” Appalachian State University Department of Anthropology, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://anthro.appstate.edu/research/field-schools/ethnographic-and-linguistic-field-schools/summer-2007-alleghany-county/its#:~:text=Moonshining%20was%20always%20strong%20in,little%20interference%20from%20the%20law>.

¹⁴ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee Agriculture: A Century Farms Perspective* (Nashville, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, 1986).

¹⁵ Peine and Schafft, “Moonshiners, Mountaineers, and Modernity,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, 2012.

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moonshine trade. Deaths and injuries resulted from car wrecks, gun fights, or even tainted moonshine.¹⁶ Prohibition was repealed in 1933, and though it had provided income to Appalachian moonshiners, it also left behind a trail of injured and incarcerated people, and a legacy which continues to echo into the modern period.¹⁷

Moonshining did not end with Prohibition. Indeed, in places like Monroe County, moonshining only became more widespread from 1930-1960. The Great Depression devastated the Appalachians, whose populace, already poor, suffered even harsher economic setbacks as the value of their land and farms plummeted over fifty percent in some areas.¹⁸ Moonshine remained a way to reliably make money as well as provide a sense of escape from what was, for many, an incredibly harsh reality in the 1930s. The production of illicit liquor in the 1940s was undoubtedly changed when moonshiners were drafted into the armed services. However, many moonshiners who served went right back to making moonshine when they came home. As the twentieth century wore on, moonshiners found that making moonshine and avoiding the law grew increasingly difficult. The coming of good roads, advancement in radio technology, and even the employment of helicopters made law enforcement much more likely to catch the moonshiner in the act. Appalachian society also began to integrate with mainstream America as its remote status slowly dissipated. Jason Sumich described this process: "Brick houses and trailers have replaced log cabins. Professional farmers are now in the minority. Almost every house has a TV set that can bring in the outside world with a push of the button. Wealthy outsiders have bought summer homes here...The old tradition of moonshining has been replaced by factories and marijuana."¹⁹ The end result is that by the end of the late twentieth century moonshining as a way of life had declined, though it has not disappeared entirely.

Monroe County Moonshine Context

The Akins House is located near the community of Vonore, a moonshining hotspot in a county known for its moonshining. Monroe County has long been associated with the production of moonshine. An early report in the *Knoxville Sentinel* reveals that moonshining in Monroe County was well underway by 1895. The article interviewed a Mr. Essary who also held the title of Collector, a person responsible for destroying stills in the area and cracking down on moonshine. During the interview, Collector Essary reported that moonshiners

¹⁶ Loyal Durand Jr., "'Mountain Moonshining' in East Tennessee," *Geographical Review* 46, no. 2: 168-181; Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee press, 1966); Jaime Joyce, *Moonshine: A Cultural History of America's Infamous Liquor* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2014); Bruce E. Stewart, *Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle Over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2011).

¹⁷ The legacy of moonshining is writ large throughout American culture. One example is stockcar racing. Bootleggers used souped up cars to outrun law enforcement on back roads through the Appalachians and across America. This eventually led to the creation of NASCAR (National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing). Moonshine culture can also be seen in movies and television shows, such as 1973's "White Lighting" starring Burt Reynolds, or more recent films such as 2012's "Lawless" starring Tom Hardy. Shows like "Moonshiners" on the Discovery Channel also fuels interest in both the product and the history of moonshine. The popularity of moonshining continues to spread through the establishment of legal moonshine distilleries, like Ole Smoky Distiller in Sevier County, and the legends of modern moonshiners, such as Popcorn Sutton of Cocke County.

¹⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture, 1920 and 1930.

¹⁹ Sumich, "It's All Legal Until You Get Caught," Appalachian State University Department of Anthropology, <https://anthro.appstate.edu/research/field-schools/ethnographic-and-linguistic-field-schools/summer-2007-allegany-county/its#:~:text=There%20still%20is%20some%20moonshining, but%20it%20has%20been%20marginalized.>

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were becoming very rare and that there were fifty percent less illicit stills in Knox and surrounding counties in 1895 than there was in 1894. However, there were two exceptions. Essary reported that “there are only two counties, Polk and Monroe, in which these people now operate their business to any great extent.”²⁰

Moonshine production continued in Monroe County unabated as Tennessee first came under the Bone Dry Law and later the rest of the Nation under Prohibition in the 1910s and 1920s. A local history recorded that moonshiners in Monroe County took advantage of the county’s many “hollars,” each of which was said to have a moonshine still. Government revenuers were often on the lookout for those who produced, sold, or transported liquor. Opposing them was a network of locals and informants that kept moonshiners abreast of the revenuer’s activities, allowing those involved in the moonshine trade to stay one step ahead of the law.²¹

A newspaper report from neighboring Cocke County highlighted the amount of moonshine made in the area and the continual battle between revenuer and moonshiner. Prohibition Officer Pat Cureton busted a “moonshine factory” in Cosby, a small town located near Newport in Cocke County in February 1927. During the raid, Cureton destroyed nine stills, some of which were 250-gallon stills, captured nine moonshiners, and confiscated 4,000 gallons of “Cosby Drip” moonshine. He also captured a horse drawn wagon team, claiming an additional 126 gallons of moonshine.²² This was quite a haul, as most moonshiners did not have a single 250-gallon still, and most confiscated moonshine rarely amounted to more than 50 gallons of whiskey.

The end of Prohibition in 1933 did little to stem moonshine production in the county. Monroe County, like so many others across Tennessee and the nation, grappled with the effects of the Great Depression. Moonshine became an even more important part of a family’s financial income during this period, despite the legal risk of making illicit liquor. A newspaper article that covered the case of Alfred and John Williams as they plead guilty to moonshine production in 1938 made this painfully clear:

The men stood, fumbling at the old caps in their hands while their attorney pleaded for them. ‘They are mountain men,’ said the attorney. ‘Just ‘bout as poor as any one could get I reckon...’. ‘Well,’ said the judge. ‘They need to be some place where they’ll be cared for. Need feeding, and a good soaping...Let each one be confined a year and a day.’²³

Though the conversation surrounding their sentencing could have been embellished, it reflected a harsh reality for many people in Monroe County, particularly farmers. In 1925, the average value of a farm in Monroe County was \$3,339, and the average value per acres was \$31.04. Ten years later, that had dropped to

²⁰ “War on the Moonshiner: There are Signs That Illicit Distilling is Rapidly Decreasing in East Tennessee,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, April. 5, 1895, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²¹ Barbara Barnby et. al., *Vonore Yesterday and Today* (Vonore: Vonore Historical Society, 1991) p. 212. For example, if a revenuer was spotted, rather than using the backroads to transport moonshine, the producer would load them into a horse drawn wagon. From there it was loaded on to a boat and delivered to a buyer. Some accounts report that moonshiners loaded hearses with moonshine to get their product past law enforcement. Much of the moonshine produced in Monroe County was destined for Knoxville, though there were also buyers in North Carolina and northern states.

²² “Nine ‘Moonshine Factories’ In Cosby Raided,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, February 12, 1927, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²³ “Bachelors—Year and Day,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 10, 1938, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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\$1,682 per farm, and \$21.64 per acre. This means that in a period of ten years, the value of farms decreased by nearly 50%, and the value per acre over 43%.²⁴

The 1940s and 1950s saw a flurry of moonshine cases and busts reported in Monroe County, particularly in the communities of Vonore and Ball Play.²⁵ A February 1950 article titled “Only Women, Boys Left to ‘Shine’ Around Vonore” demonstrated how widespread moonshining was in the two communities and the effect that enforcement had on the population. In the article, two teenage boys were arrested for making moonshine by agents in the Rocky Hollow section of Vonore. One was eighteen-year-old Peary Williams, and the other was a 16 year old youth. The agents destroyed a 75-gallon still, 75 gallons of mash, and 11 gallons of whiskey. Both plead guilty and were released under \$500 bond. However, before they were dismissed, the boys told United States Commissioner Steve Hale that only “boys and women” were left in Vonore to continue moonshining because the remainder of the population, namely the men, had been arrested. The article went on to say that just in that past term, the Federal Court had sentenced twenty men from Vonore for moonshining charges, Akins House-owner Babs Burchfield being one among them.²⁶

Subsequent articles provide insight on why people in Rocky Hollow, Vonore, and all over Monroe County continued to moonshine well into the mid-twentieth century. A 1956 case against moonshiners Lester Bivens and his cousin J.D. Biven revealed that Lester had seven charges and J.D. five charges of making moonshine. Both were from the Ball Play community. Lester was a veteran of World War II, a prisoner of war, and three times decorated for valor during his service. He even held a job in Detroit before he lost it and moved back to Vonore to make moonshine. His cousin J.D. had six children, the oldest being ten. J.D. Bivens testified that they made moonshine because “there wasn’t anything for him to do in Ball Play except make whisky.” The judge let them off on probation, on the condition that Lester return to Detroit and J.D. also leave Ball Play.

A second case involved J. D. Akins of Monroe County. He had been initially charged with seven counts of making moonshine and while waiting for trial, he was charged with seven more counts. Akins admitted to his guilt and even signed a waiver “to get it all out of the way now.” The Judge asked him for his defense, and Akins responded that “I had a hospital bill to pay and groceries to buy. There’s nothing to do besides moonshining in Monroe County.” Akins was ultimately sentenced to 18 months for each of the first seven accounts, with the second seven counts running concurrently.²⁷

Moonshining in Vonore and Monroe County continued well into the 1960s. Court records published in newspapers between 1960 and 1969 recounted the case of Thomas David Dupes, a Vonore native, after he was arrested in Knoxville following a Monroe County moonshine raid that confiscated 153 gallons of moonshine and 600 gallons of spent mash. The still was located in the Rocky Branch section of Monroe

²⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture, 1920 and 1930.

²⁵ Both communities are close to the nominated Akins House.

²⁶ “Only Women, Boys Left to ‘Shine’ Around Vonore,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, February 25, 1950, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²⁷ “New Environment Urged: 7 of 16 in Moonshine Cases Get Probation,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 20, 1956, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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County, and during the raid the agents also arrested W.C. Viars at 11:30 pm. They also seized a 1946 car which had moonshine in the trunk.²⁸

There is not much available information on modern moonshining in Monroe County. However, a study of nearby Cocke County explored how moonshining has transitioned into the modern period, and what that meant for the people who participate in its production and consumption. The information for the survey came from interviews with moonshiners conducted by the authors. They found that moonshiners still made illicit liquor for monetary purposes. A few of the interviewees pointed to nearby hotels, restaurants, or other buildings and reported that they were funded by moonshining. But the moonshiners also alluded to moonshining as something of a unique cultural phenomenon. It marked an individual as either an outsider or an insider. If you made moonshine, or knew someone that did, you were part of the “in crowd,” a part of the community. If you did not then you were an outsider.

This insider/outsider dichotomy provided the moonshiners with a new market: tourists. A Cocke County moonshiner explained that his best business were tourists, saying that “a lot of people buy it because they think it’s something that’s, you know, really historical.” The tourists’ need to experience something authentic, something “real,” drove them to seek out real moonshine and in turn, the moonshiners were happy to deliver. Like the authors of the study summarized, “the point of owning a quart of moonshine is not necessarily in the history, culture, and identity of a place. It speaks of an authenticity even more powerful for its illicit nature.”²⁹ Whether it be the Scots distilling moonshine in defiance of the English crown, or modern moonshiners catering to tourists in 2022, moonshining remains an important part of Monroe County and Appalachia’s past, present, and future.

Luke Akins House: Moonshine Distribution Hub

The Akins House was finished in 1921, the same year that nationwide Prohibition became law. The first owners of the property were Luke Akins and Elvavine “Vinnie” Williams, who received the cabin as a wedding gift from Luke’s father, John Akins. The couple were married on June 13, 1920.³⁰ Together they had three children: J.R. Akins (1921-2001), Johnny A. Akins (1923-2012), and Lillie Mae Akins (1925-2013). Though Luke Akins was the first owner, there is not much documented information on his moonshining operation, due in large part to his early death but also due to the fact that the illegality of the activity meant that it was not recorded in traditional historical records like newspapers, requiring sources like oral histories to fill in details. Virgle “Babs” Burchfield assisted Luke in the making and distribution of moonshine on the property while Luke was alive. Luke fell ill and died on March 27, 1936, in the downstairs

²⁸ “T.D. Dupes Faces Whiskey Charges,” *The Knoxville Journal*, July 7, 1960, Knoxville, Tennessee. A second court case revealed another raid in the Vonore area, this time between Vonore and the community of Sweetwater. During the raid, Sheriff Howard Kirkpatrick and his men destroyed a 500 gallon still and arrested William Howard Tilley and Ford Henderson, both residents of Vonore. In addition to the still and arrests, the agents found 1500 gallons of mash and 17 gallons of white liquor, all of which was destroyed. Future newspaper articles do not specify where the individuals are from or how much moonshine they were caught with, but a 1968 article reveals that three more Monroe Countians were sentenced or placed on probation in the month of January alone

²⁹ Peine and Schafft, “Moonshine, Mountaineers, and Modernity,” pp. 98-104.

³⁰ Tennessee, U.S., Marriage Records, 1780-2002, Ancestry.com.

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bedroom of the Luke Akins House.³¹ The death certificate listed the cause of death as “T.B. of Throat,” a condition that results when the tuberculosis bacteria settle in the lymph nodes of the neck instead of infecting the lungs.³² He was buried in Little Toqua Cemetery. Babs Burchfield became the common-law husband of Elvavine and moved in sometime following the death of Luke Akins. He and Elvavine had two children together. Their firstborn son, Bobby Burchfield (1938-2018), was born in 1938, and their second child Annie Ruth Burchfield was born in 1960.

It was under Babs’s tenure that the Akins Cabin became a locally significant moonshine hub in the Vonore area. Bobby Burchfield recollects that his father Babs maintained several moonshine stills located around the cabin. The locations of the stills reflected the needs of the moonshiner to have access to the resources need to make moonshine, most notably a stable water supply, and the need for secrecy. For example, one of Bab’s moonshine stills was located on a ridge. Babs put a hose in the creek and used a hand pump to get the water from the creek to the still.³³ Pumping the water up to the moonshine still rather than setting up the still next to the creek was a matter of expediency. Law enforcement travelled creeks and streams in Appalachia looking for moonshine stills. Placing the still farther away and pumping the water reduced the likelihood of the still being discovered. After finishing a run of moonshine, the family, including Bab’s children and stepchildren, poured the moonshine into various containers for individual sale and consumption. These stills, under the management of Babs and his friends, were a major component of the Vonore moonshine industry.

The smokehouse and the Akins property also served as a “clearing house” for moonshine in the area. Elmer Dupes related that the smokehouse was filled from the front door to the rear door with moonshine. Though large portions of the moonshine were made by Luke and Babs, oral history and available evidence suggests that other moonshiners in the area brought their moonshine to the Akins property where it was held temporarily before it was sold. Photographic evidence provided by the current owner show several men assisting Babs in the production of moonshine on the Akins property. Oral histories related that Elmer Dupes hurt himself carrying a cask of moonshine up the driveway to the Akins House.³⁴ Other neighbors and friends of the Akins who lived nearby, including Tracy Perry and Bab’s stepson J.R. Akins, were arrested and served time for moonshining.³⁵ There also used to be additional structures on the property, including a barn where cock fights took place. Such buildings further indicate that the property served as a community focal point.³⁶ This evidence demonstrates that the Akins property sat in the middle of a moonshining network and that, because the family was deeply involved in moonshine production, people could trust them to help with their moonshining operation and store moonshine on the property.³⁷

Storing the community’s moonshine at the Akins property was advantageous due in large part to the property’s location on Citico Road. Interviews with locals revealed that Citico Road was notorious as a

³¹ David J. Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles* (Walden: Waldenhouse Publishers, 2013), p. 87.

³² Tennessee Death Records, 1908-1958, Ancestry.com; Melinda Ratini, “What Is a Scrofula?,” WebMd, June 8, 2021, <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/what-is-scrofula#:~:text=Scrofula%20also%20called%20cervical%20tuberculous,or%20death%20if%20not%20treated.>

³³ Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 96.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 95.

³⁵ J.R. Akins received his sentence for making moonshine at the same time that Babs did in 1950.

³⁶ Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 87.

³⁷ David Helms, email message to author, August 10, 2022.

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moonshine transportation route, as it provided moonshiners easy access to Knoxville.³⁸ The smokehouse served as an ideal place to store the moonshine until it could be sold and hauled out.³⁹ Oral history states that Model A Fords ran the road to and from the cabin. The cars backed up to the smokehouse, collected the moonshine from the smokehouse or elsewhere on the property, and then got back on Citico Road. A large portion of the moonshine made it to Knoxville, where it was sold or taken further north for distribution.⁴⁰

While there is no specific information on how much money or moonshine Babs made from his operation, comparative data from an interview with a Revenue Agent who operated in the Great Smokey Mountains in 1966 shed some light on the typical economic profit made while moonshining. In an interview with author Michael Frome, the Revenue Agent revealed that moonshining operations in the Smokies were small, averaging 50-60 gallons in moonshine production. This is contrasted with the large syndicate productions like one might find in Wilkes County, North Carolina, which had the capacity to produce up to 25,000 gallons. When discussing the profit to be made, the Agent stated that a moonshiner can produce and bottle a gallon of 100 proof whiskey for \$1.25 and could sell it for \$5. This was less than half of the federal tax for a gallon of whiskey, which sat at \$10.50 a gallon. All told, a moonshiner could make almost \$225 on 60 gallons of moonshine in 1966.⁴¹ According to the U.S. Inflation Calculator, this equates to roughly \$97.22 in 1940, or \$2,029.79 in 2022.⁴² Consequently, this figure also hints at the amount of lost income for the state in terms of taxes. An article by Loyal Durand Jr. in 1956 explored this issue. He stated that the Tennessee State Alcohol Tax Division estimated that state moonshine production was somewhere around 1,664,000 gallons per year. If all of that moonshine was consumed in state, with a Tennessee state tax of \$2.00 per gallon, that equaled to \$3,300,000 in lost income. The author also noted that this figure was five times that number when calculating the income lost to the federal government in taxes.

Though moonshining was a potent economic driver for the Akins family, producing it never came without risk. Babs's first run in with the law occurred sometime in 1938. He, along with seventeen other people, was charged with the "violation of Federal liquor laws." Burchfield went in front of Federal Judge George C. Taylor on December 16, 1938. While the newspaper report does not specify the punishment meted out, it stated that thirty one received sentences "ranging from five years down to fifteen months," while a "majority

³⁸ Monroe County Archivist Jo Stakely told the author during a phone conversation on July 26, 2022, that the road should have been called 'Thunder Road' because so much moonshine was hauled along its length. She related that the moonshine would have been taken to Knoxville for sale, and from there distributed across the county or further north.

³⁹ David Helms, email message to author, August 10, 2022.

⁴⁰ Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 87. A story recounted by local Nathan Snider in *Vonore: Yesterday and Today* provides a look into the bustling moonshine trade with Knoxville. Snider was a short-order cook for a local restaurant in Madisonville. He recollects that he got up at 5:00 am every morning to cook breakfast for the men that hauled moonshine to Knoxville, and that they would pay for their meals with rolled up change. Following their breakfast, the moonshiners would have every inch of their car washed and inspected for dirt. The reason for this was because revenuers or law enforcement in Knoxville knew to watch for cars with mud on them because it could mean the car came from the mountains and was carrying moonshine. Thus a dirty car had a higher chance of being stopped than a clean car.

⁴¹ Frome, *Strangers in High Places*, pp. 284-287.

⁴² U.S. Inflation Calculator, <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>, accessed 6.22.2022. The U.S. Inflation Calculator uses the latest US government Consumer Price Index data to adjust for inflation and calculate the cumulative inflation rate. The figure quoted in the text is current as of 6.22.2022.

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of the sentences were accompanied by fines of \$200.”⁴³ It is likely that Burchfield received a fine, as no mention is made in the family history of him serving time in 1938, and generally a moonshiner received leniency for their first offense.

In 1949, Babs was making moonshine in the woods south of the Akins House. He had instructed his son, Bobby, to knock on the tin roof of the barn with a hammer if he saw law enforcement pull up to the house. When law enforcement arrived at the cabin, Bobby banged on the roof of the barn. Babs did not hear the warning. The law enforcement officer tracked Babs down to his moonshine still and hid behind a tree. Babs caught sight of the lawman and, thinking that the lawman was one of his customers, shouted “come on up you S.O.B., you found it.” When the officer revealed himself and his badge, Babs took off running into a thicket. He was eventually caught by the officer, and Bobby recalled that when they brought him out of the woods and through the yard in front of the family, “Babs looked at them and said nothing as he passed.”⁴⁴

Babs’s arrest and subsequent sentencing was chronicled in the newspapers of other counties. He pleaded guilty to owning and operating a moonshine still on June 22, 1949. He was arraigned by U.S. Commissioner Steve Hale and released that same day on a \$500 bond. According to the Knoxville Alcohol Tax Unit Office, when Burchfield was caught he was operating a 50 gallon still. They destroyed the still, 50 gallons of mash, 42 gallons of whiskey, and all the pieces of equipment located near the still.⁴⁵ Though this may seem like a small operation when compared to other moonshine busts in the area, it is important to note that this was likely not the only still he owned and operated. During a later visit to the property, Babs’ son Bobby showed the current owner six different sites where Babs made moonshine on the Akins property.⁴⁶

Babs’s pre-sentence investigation was on December 8, 1949, and he received his sentence on January 5, 1950.⁴⁷ The newspaper article wrote that “Federal Judge Robert L. Taylor decreased the population of little Vonore, in Monroe County, by sending six of its citizens to prison on moonshining charges.” Among those was Virgil Burchfield, who was given 15 months.⁴⁸ He served 18 months in Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary.⁴⁹ In that same newspaper article J.R. Akins, Babs’s stepson and frequent moonshining partner, was also sentenced for moonshining.

Family accounts described the hard times on the farm during Babs’s imprisonment. Bobby recollects that his mother took over much of the responsibilities on the property in addition to canning and the production of “homebrew” for sale.⁵⁰ Homebrew was a type of sweet beer made at home for public sale.⁵¹ Babs was

⁴³ “U.S. Court Keeps Busy: 80 Cases Handled in Day; 31 Persons Are Sentenced,” *The Knoxville Journal*, December 8, 1938, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁴⁴ Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ “Madisonvillian Admits Operating Still, Is Bound,” *The Knoxville News Sentinel*, June 22, 1949, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁴⁶ Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 95.

⁴⁷ “Judge Taylor Orders 30 Pre-Sentence Probes,” *The Knoxville Journal*, December 8, 1949, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁴⁸ “Ex-Deputy Gets Year for ‘Shining: 8 Monroe Countians Also Given Sentences,’ *The Knoxville News Sentinel*, January 5, 1950, Knoxville, Tennessee; “Ex-Deputy, 15 Others Draw Whiskey Sentences,” *The Knoxville Journal*, January 6, 1950, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁴⁹ Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 96

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 96-100

⁵¹ David Helms, email message to author, August 9, 2022.

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released and returned home in 1951.⁵² It is unclear if Babs continued to make moonshine following his release from Brushy Mountain, though it is clear that the hard times the family faced during Babs' imprisonment continued after his release. Elvavine finally sold the property in 1958 for \$17 per acre in order to pay off the \$200 in back taxes owed for the property. The sale of the property not only brought the Akins and Burchfield tenure to a close, but also marked the end of the property as a moonshining distribution hub.

Luke Akins House Architectural Significance

In addition to its significance as a moonshine hub, the Akins House is also significant under Criterion C as an excellent representative of the Cumberland Plan House architectural type. According to historians John B. Rehder, Terry G. Jordan, and John Morgan, the term Cumberland Plan House was coined by authors Norbert F. Riedl, Donald B. Ball, and Anthony P. Cavender in a 1976 report titled "A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Folk Culture Patterns in the Normandy Reservoir, Coffee County, Tennessee."⁵³ The survey took place in Coffee County, located in Middle Tennessee. During their survey, Riedl, Ball, and Cavender encountered a variant of the double pen house type, notable for two single leaf doors opening into two separate rooms on a symmetrical facade. This variant accounted for 35 of the 78 buildings surveyed, and 67.3% of all double-pen homes in the survey. Due to the high prevalence of the variant in the region, and the fact that up to that point it had not been encountered in great numbers either nationally or across the state of Tennessee, the survey authors named it the "Cumberland Plan House" because it was "more diagnostic of the Middle Tennessee region than other portions of the United States."⁵⁴

The distinctive characteristics of a Cumberland Plan house are one or one-and-one-half stories, two single leaf doors that open up into two separate rooms on a symmetrical façade (which are generally accompanied by two windows), gable roof, shed roof porch, rectangular plan, weatherboard siding, and either a central chimney or two gable end chimneys. They are two rooms wide and one room deep, and all the rooms are generally identical in size. Cumberland Plan Houses that are one-and-one-half stories are generally those that have had a window put into the attic for more light, better circulation, and to increase livable space. Cumberland Plan houses are also known for either shed roof additions or an ell addition identical in size on

⁵² Helms, *The Cabin Chronicles*, p. 96. Bab's brush with law enforcement and subsequent sentencing were part of a pattern of enforcement that ran the gamut from simple fines to deadly raids and shootings. These encounters have been represented and mythologized in various popular accounts. One of the most enduring representations is that of the cat and mouse between law enforcement and moonshiners. A revenue agent interviewed by Michael Frome provides such an example. The agent recalled a high-speed chase with a moonshiner on a mountain road in the Smoky Mountains. During the chase, the agent's car spun out and ran into a ditch. The moonshiner stopped his car to see if the agent was ok. That is when the moonshiner noticed that the agent's car was not disabled like the moonshiner previously thought, and that the agent could resume their high-speed chase. The agent rewarded the moonshiner's concern by allowing the moonshiner a head start while the agent backed his car out of the ditch. Because of this, the moonshiner got away. When the agent saw the moonshiner in town later, the moonshiner asked how the agent's driving was coming along, to which the Agent replied "improving."

⁵³ See Terry G. Jordan, *An Old World Heritage: American Log Buildings* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985); John Morgan, *The Log House in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); and John B. Rehder, *Tennessee Log Buildings: A Folk Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012).

⁵⁴ Norbert F. Riedl, Donald B. Ball, Anthony P. Cavender. "A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Material Folk Culture Patterns in the Normandy Reservoir, Coffee County, Tennessee." Report of Investigations No. 17 Department of Anthropology University of Tennessee Knoxville 1976. Published by TVA, pp. 79-81.

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the rear of the house. The ell additions generally contain kitchens, bathrooms, or even additional bedrooms. Though many of the ell additions come after the initial construction date, examples of those designed with an ell at the time of initial construction are not uncommon.⁵⁵

As with most forms of vernacular architecture, the origin of the Cumberland Plan House is unknown. Cumberland Plan Houses were generally constructed between 1880-1940, though their log ancestors may have been built earlier. There are a few theories as to why the Cumberland Plan house has two front entrances leading into two separate rooms. The prevailing theory is that the Cumberland Plan house is an evolution of double-pen log architecture, specifically that of the “dog trot” or “saddlebag” design.⁵⁶ Reidl and authors theorized that, “the tradition of two front doors was maintained unreflectively even though it would have been a simple matter to construct a double-pen entirely of frame with only one front door.”⁵⁷ Interviews conducted by Reidl with the residents who lived in Cumberland Plan houses reinforce this point, many saying that they looked that way because “they’ve always looked that way.”⁵⁸ Leo J. Goodsell provided further weight to this theory in his article for the *Old House Journal*. He wrote that the “...antecedents for Cumberland houses have been traced to the double-pen ‘dog-trot’ and ‘saddlebag’ log houses. Once sawn lumber became available, local builders developed a frame adaptation of these common log building forms, keeping the distinctive double front doors.”⁵⁹ Other explanations included theories that two doors made it easier to escape from fires, or that the two doors gave newlywed couples independence and privacy from their parents and in-laws.⁶⁰ Whatever the reason for the two doors, the Cumberland Plan house has traditionally been associated with farmers, lumber mill workers, miners, and other families of very low to moderate income levels.⁶¹

A 2010 survey by Jamie L. Woodcock addressed the local context for Cumberland Houses in Monroe County. The survey report included a section for double-pen, hall and parlor, and saddlebag houses, with no information on Cumberland Plan houses. However, after looking at the architectural report and pictures, it is clear that the author conflated Cumberland Plan houses with double-pen, a term that is reserved for two-room log buildings. The report demonstrated that not only were Cumberland Plan house present but that they were an important type in the county. The author stated that of all double pen houses, a large majority had two front doors and an end chimney, which are distinctive characteristics of the Cumberland Plan style. Rear ells or shed additions were common. The houses typically featured full or partial-width porches and were one

⁵⁵ Reidl et. al., “A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Material Folk Culture Patterns,” 1976; Claudette Stager, “Vernacular Domestic Architecture,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Commission, 2017; Leo J. Goodsell, “Vernacular Houses: The Cumberland House.” *Old House Journal* 21, no. 3 (May-June 1993). Riedl, Ball, and Cavender break down in greater detail the distribution of chimney types, house height, room size, and types of shed roof porch. For more information, see their survey report.

⁵⁶ Jordan, *An Old World Heritage*; Morgan, *The Log House in East Tennessee*; Rehder, *Tennessee Log Buildings*.

⁵⁷ Reidl et. al., “A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Material Folk Culture Patterns,” p. 88

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 89.

⁵⁹ Goodsell, “Vernacular Houses: The Cumberland House.”

⁶⁰ Reidl et. al., “A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Material Folk Culture Patterns,” p. 89.

⁶¹ Reidl et. al., “A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Material Folk Culture Patterns,” p. 89; Stager, “Vernacular Domestic Architecture”; Goodsell, “Vernacular Houses: The Cumberland House.”

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story tall. Most examples were constructed between 1890 and 1930. The author stated that these houses were popular choices amongst workers, tenant farmers, and subsistence farmers due to its economical design.⁶²

The Akins House is an excellent and intact example of the Cumberland Plan house and is representative of both its broader and local designs. Completed in 1921, the Akins House was constructed towards the end of the style's popularity in both Monroe County and Tennessee. The house's one-and-one-half story design mark it as an outlier in Monroe County, though the addition of a window at the attic level to allow for more living space is documented in Reidl's survey. Another unique trait of the Akins House is the rear ell, which was not a later addition but a part of the original plan and design of the house. The side gable roof, wood siding, full length shed roof porch, symmetrical façade, two single leaf entries with accompanying windows, and identically sized separate rooms are all distinctive characteristics of the Cumberland Plan House. Equally important is the gable end chimney, an important feature documented in both Reidl and the Monroe County report. The retention of these character defining architectural features make the Akins House eligible under Criterion C for architecture.

⁶² Jaime L. Woodcock. "A Historical and Architectural Resource Survey of Monroe County, Tennessee." Alexander Archaeological Consultants, Inc. Wildwood, GA. December 2010, p. 17.

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9. Major Bibliographic References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)		X	State Historic Preservation Office
previously listed in the National Register			Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register			Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark			Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #			University
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #			Other
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #			Name of repository:
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.47 **USGS Quadrangle** Vonore Quad 139-SW

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.523195 | Longitude: -84.133887 |
| 2. Latitude: 35.523660 | Longitude: -84.133252 |
| 3. Latitude: 35.524566 | Longitude: -84.133769 |
| 4. Latitude: 35.524274 | Longitude: -84.134535 |

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is a rectangular-shaped parcel approximately seven and one-half acres. The corners of the boundaries correspond to the coordinates noted above. It is located on Monroe County tax map parcel 061 039. These boundaries follow the legal parcel boundaries of Monroe County Tax Parcel 061 039, which are depicted on the enclosed tax map.

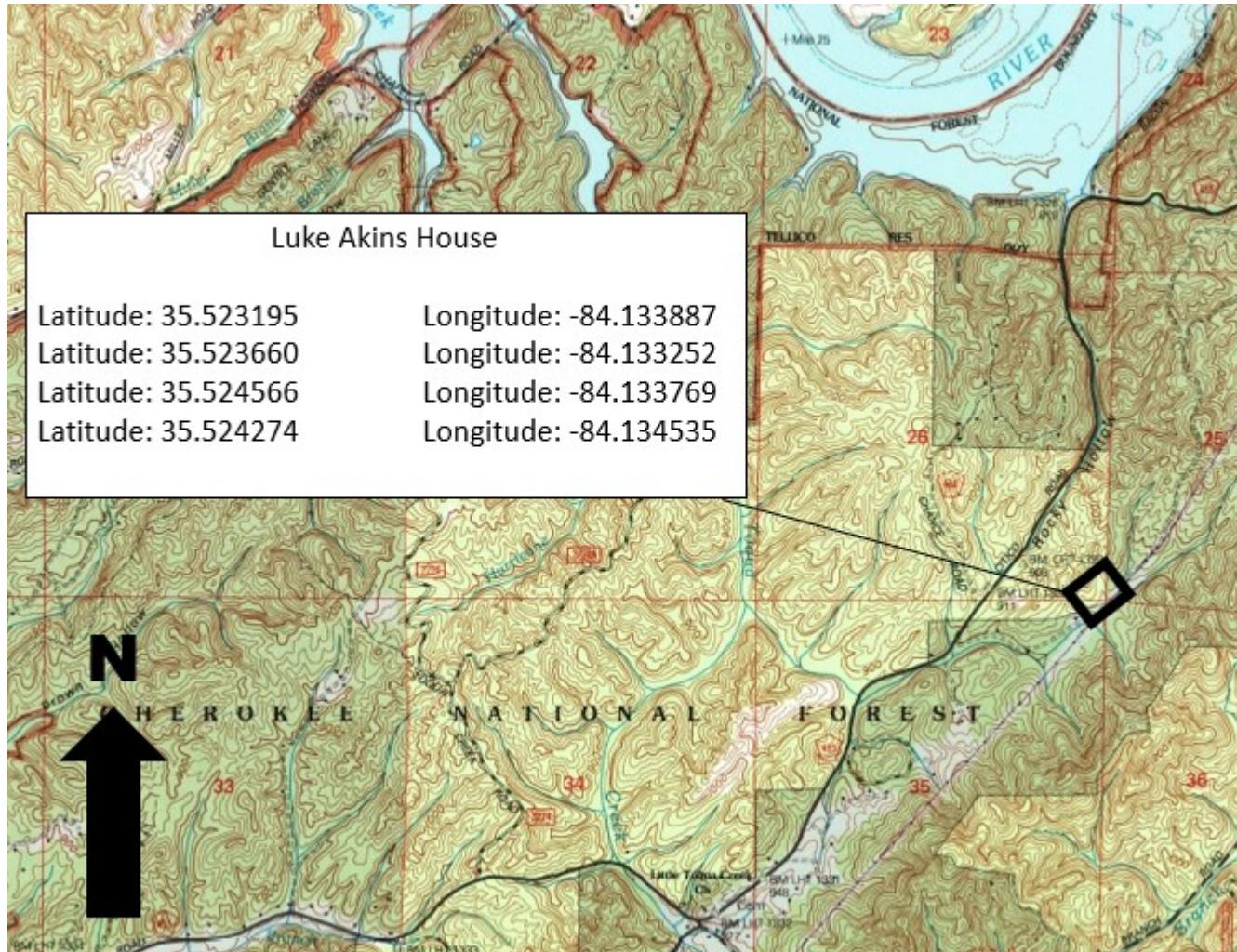
Boundary Justification

The boundaries are drawn to include the land and resources that retain integrity and convey their historical association with the property's significance.

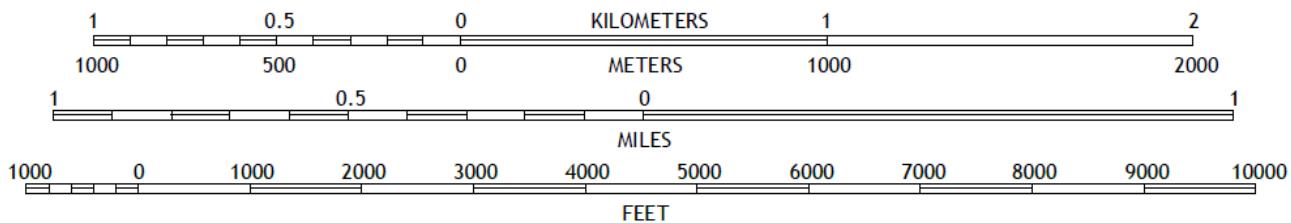
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Topographic Map



SCALE 1:24 000



Vonore, TN Quadrangle map, 2003. The location of the Luke Akins Cabin is marked with a black square.

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Tax Map

Monroe County - Parcel: 061 039.00



Date: August 16, 2022

1.9,028
0 0.05 0.1 0.2 0.2 mi
0 0.1 0.2 0.4 km

County: Monroe
Owner: HELMS DAVID J
Address: CITICO RD
Parcel Number: 061 039.00
Deeded Acreage: 7.47
Calculated Acreage: 0
Date of TDOT Imagery: 2019
Date of Vexcel Imagery: 2021

TDOT, State of Tennessee, Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Local Government (OLG), State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, HERE, GeoTechnologies, Inc., State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, HERE, Gamm, GeoTechnologies, Inc.

The property lines are compiled from information maintained by your local county Assessor's office or state tax collector. The evidence of property ownership is in any court of law.

Tennessee Property viewer map of the Luke Akins House, outlined in blue.

Akins House

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11. Form Prepared By

Name J. Ethan Holden and Christopher W. Kinder
Organization Tennessee Historical Commission
Street & Number 2941 Lebanon Pike Date
City or Town Nashville Telephone 615-770-1090
E-mail Ethan.holden@tn.gov State TN Zip Code 37214

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 - **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
 - **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
 - **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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Akins House
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Log

Name of Property: Akins House

City or Vicinity: Vonore

County: Monroe

State: Tennessee

Photographer: Rebecca Schmitt

Date Photographed: July 24, 2019. Photographs still convey current conditions.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 15. West elevation and smokehouse. Photographer facing east.
- 2 of 15. West elevation. Photographer facing east.
- 3 of 15. South façade and west elevation. Photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 15. South elevation of smokehouse. Photographer facing north.
- 5 of 15. Interior view of front doorway. Photographer facing south.
- 6 of 15. Interior view of kitchen. Photographer facing northwest.
- 7 of 15. Interior view of west upstairs bedroom. Photographer facing west.
- 8 of 15. Interior view of east upstairs bedroom. Photographer facing east.
- 9 of 15. Interior view of enclosed staircase. Photographer facing north.
- 10 of 15. Interior view of enclosed staircase. Photographer facing northwest.
- 11 of 15. Smokehouse. Photographer facing northwest.
- 12 of 15. Outhouse. Photographer facing northwest,
- 13 of 15. North elevation. Photographer facing south.
- 14 of 15. East elevation. Photographer facing west.
- 15 of 15. South façade. Photographer facing north.

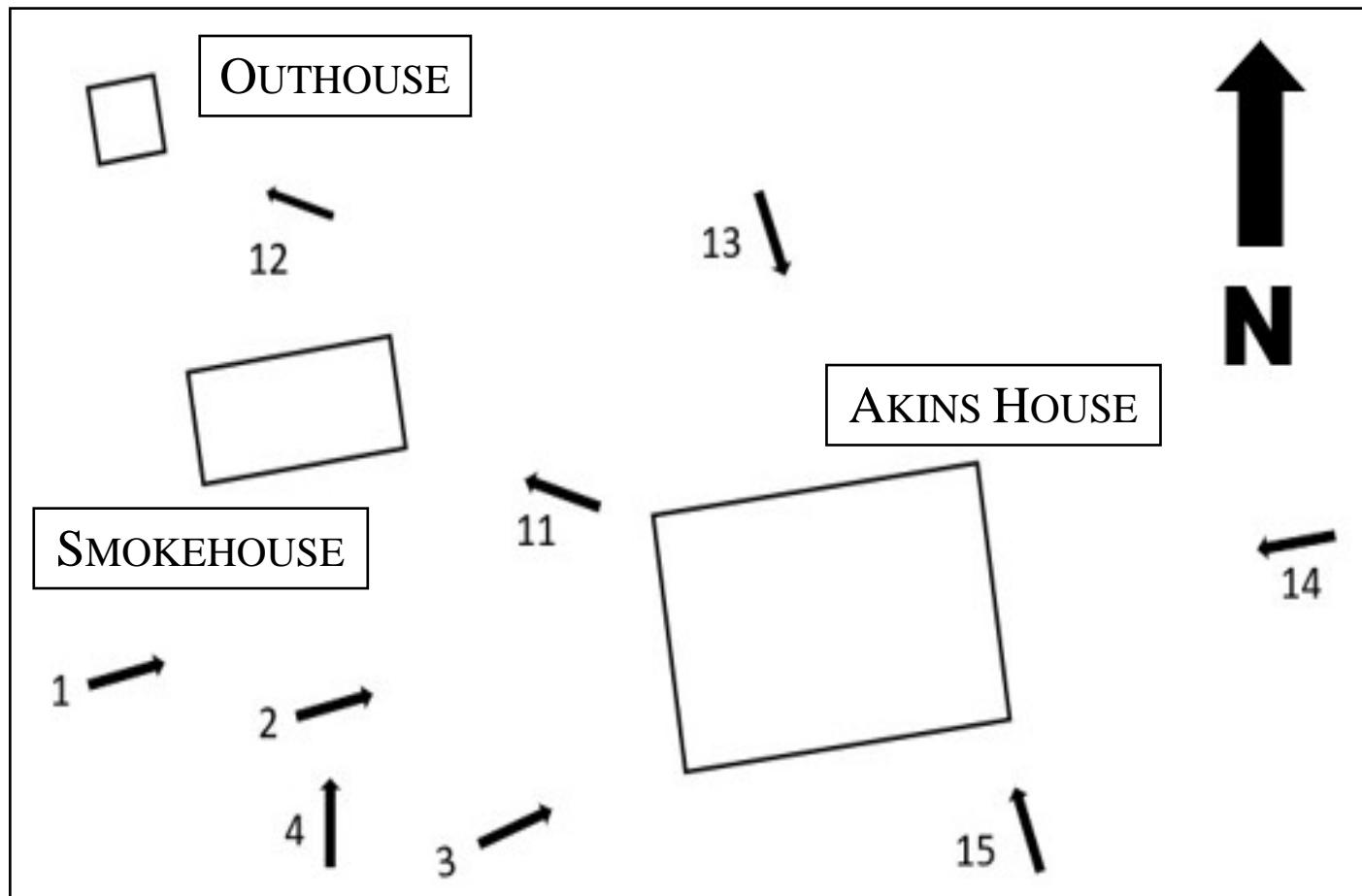
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Site Plan



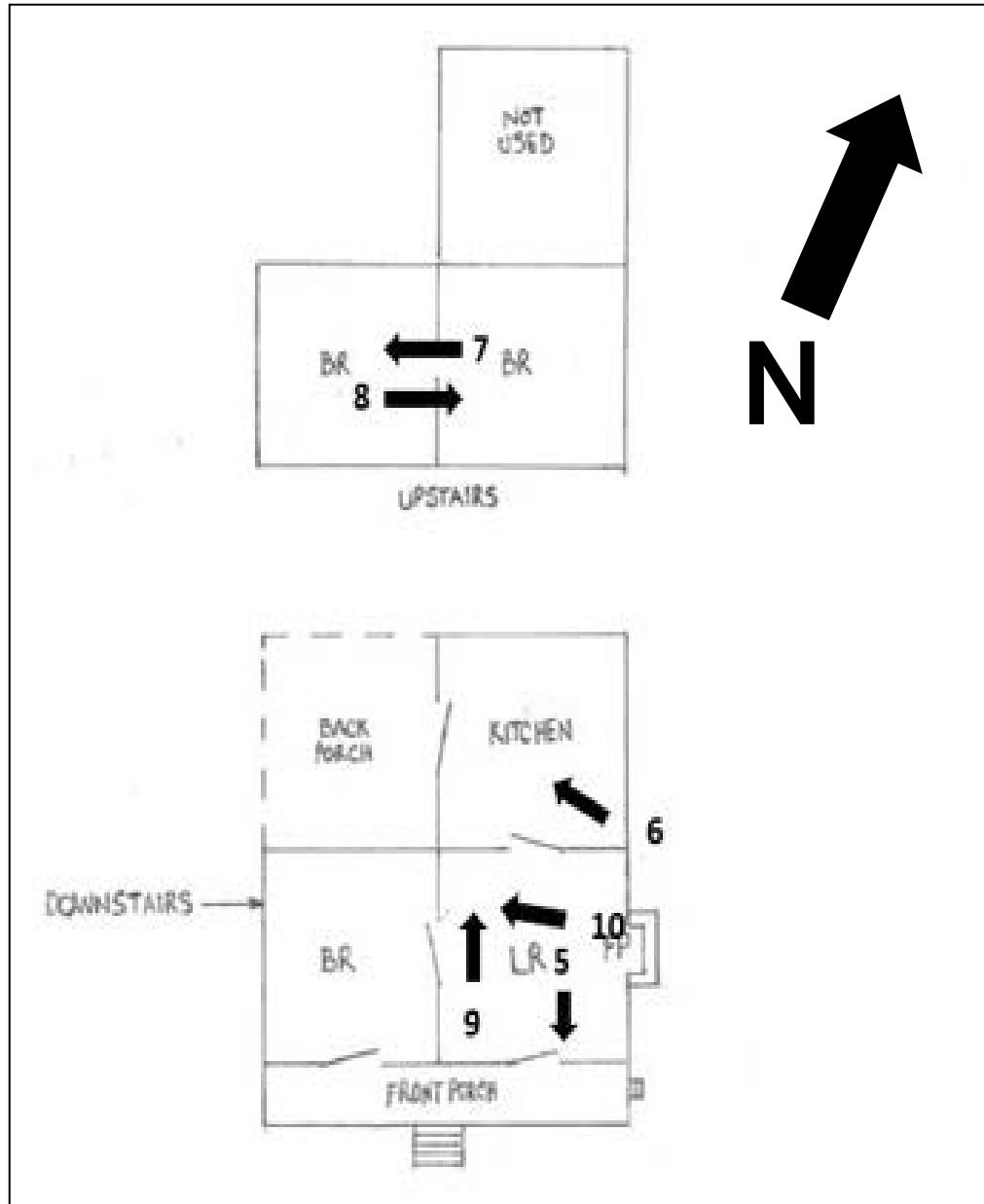
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Floor Plan



DRAFT

Property Owner:

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

Name David Helms

Street &
Number 8730 Ellington Way Telephone 423-485-9442

City or Town Chattanooga State/Zip TN, 37421



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