

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 Higgins, Holland, Homestead
Other names/site number N/A
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: Left Higgins Creek Road and Bill Shelton Road
City or town: Flag Pond State: Tennessee County: Unicoi
Not For Publication: ☐ N/A Vicinity: ☒ X Zip: 37657

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ 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 or 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 ☒
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure

AGRICULTURE: agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Log Cabin

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

WOOD: Weatherboard, Log; STONE; METAL

Narrative Description

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Holland Higgins Homestead is a one-and-one-half story, single room, half-dovetail, log cabin built ca. 1810. It is located in the vicinity of Flag Pond, Unicoi County, at the intersection of Left Higgins Creek Road and Bill Shelton Road. Significant features include its dry-stack stone foundation; half-dovetail log construction; exterior end stone chimney; full-length shed roof porch; and full length shed-roof addition. Significant interior features includes its single room layout, fireplace mantel, and boxed staircase. Though the cabin is located on a large parcel of rural land, 2.59 acres of the property is being nominated, which is sufficient to encompass the building, the immediate setting, and all relevant outbuildings. Other resources on the property include the Barn (ca. 1820) and the Smokehouse (ca. 1910). Both are considered Non-Contributing resources.

SITE FEATURES AND SETTING

The cabin sits in a heavily forested, remote, wooded area. The smokehouse is to the northwest of the cabin. The barn is to the east of the cabin, across Bill Shelton Road, which runs north-south of the house. There are no nearby National Register-listed properties.

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HOLLAND HIGGINS HOMESTEAD (CA. 1810) - CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Exterior

The Holland Higgins Homestead cabin is a one-and-one-half-story, log cabin. The house sits upon a dry-stack stone foundation and is capped by a steeply-pitched, metal, side-gable roof. The hand-hewn logs are joined using half-dovetail joinery, and parts of the logs are covered with weatherboard siding. Family records indicate the current wood siding was installed sometime in the early twentieth century. The full length addition on the back (south) elevation of the house was constructed ca. 1940.

North Elevation (Façade)

The north elevation serves as the façade of the cabin. A full-length, shed roof porch supported by four, wood, hand-carved, square columns is located on the façade. The western end of the porch features a wall. No steps access the porch: a visitor must instead step onto the lowest part of the porch on its eastern end. The porch shelters a centered entrance filled with a simple wood door and simple wood surround. The portions of the wall under the porch are covered in weatherboard siding.

East Elevation

The stone chimney is centered on the east elevation. The gable field is covered in weatherboard sidings: the pen's logs are exposed. To the south of the chimney on the first floor is a three-over-one, wood, double-hung window. To the north of the chimney, in the gable field of the one-and-one-half story, is a four light, wood, fixed window. The shed roof addition is also visible. A three-over-one, wood, double-window is visible on the east wall of the addition

South Elevation (Rear)

The only feature of the south elevation is the full length, shed roof kitchen addition. It is covered in wood siding.

West Elevation

A single, four-light, wood, fixed window is centered on the first story of the cabin. Above, just beneath the gable peak of the one-and-one-half story, are paired, double hung, wood windows. The west elevation is covered in weatherboard siding. The shed roof addition is also visible from this elevation. A single door is centered on the west wall of the addition.

Interior

The main entrance accesses a single, large room that composes the entirety of the first floor. The floors, walls, and ceiling are all covered in original wood planks. Opposite the main entrance, on the south wall, is a wood door constructed of multiple planks with a simple wood door surround. This door access the rear addition. A stone fireplace with a simple, wood mantle is located on the east wall of the great room. A boxed stairwell accessed by a swinging wood door is visible in the northeast corner of the room. This stairwell accesses the one-and-one-half story, which features the same floor, wall, and ceiling cladding but is otherwise devoid of ornamentation.

SMOKEHOUSE (CA. 1910) – NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

The Smokehouse is a small, front gable, wood building. It does not have a formal foundation and its capped by a metal roof. Wood is located on the north elevation of the building.

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The Smokehouse is Non-Contributing because it does not contribute to the architectural significance of the house.

BARN (CA. 1820) – CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

The Barn is a side gable, log, rectangular building. The logs are joined by half-dovetail notching and the building is supported by rock piers. The siding is covered in vertical planks and the roof is covered in metal. Two bays are visible on the west elevation of the barn, which faces Bill Shelton Road.

The Barn is Non-Contributing because it does not contribute to the architectural significance of the house..

INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The Holland Higgins Homestead retains the integrity necessary to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The house remains in its original location, thus retaining integrity of location. The house's setting also remains much as it was historically. It remains surrounded by dense forests in a rural area.

The cabin retains the material, design, and workmanship that make it a significant local example of the rectangular Appalachian log cabin archetype identified by Henry Glassie in his study of the region. This includes its one-and-one-half story height, log construction, full-length shed roof porch, side gable roof, stone chimney, and rear kitchen addition. The interior features also align with the established type. The single great room, simple fireplace with wood mantel, boxed stairs, and sleeping quarters in the one-and-one-half story are character defining features of the type. Though some elements have been altered, including the application of two different types of wood siding, these do not detract from the overall design of the cabin and would have historically been present. The kitchen addition is also an important evolution of the type. Because the property retains these aspects of integrity, it also retains its integrity of feeling and association and is thus eligible for listing in the National Register.

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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.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1810- ca. 1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Holland Higgins Homestead is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for its architectural significance as a locally important example of the rectangular Appalachian log cabin archetype identified by cultural geographer Henry Glassie in his study of the region. Constructed ca. 1820, the cabin retains the character defining features of the type, which include one-half story height, log construction, full-length shed roof porch, side gable roof, stone chimney, and rear kitchen addition. Important interior features include the single great room, simple fireplace with wood mantel, boxed stairs, and sleeping quarters in the one-and-one-half story. The Period of Significance is ca. 1820 to ca. 1940. This corresponds with the year the original cabin was completed, and the year the kitchen addition, which is recognized as a significant addition in Glassie's study, was completed.

Narrative Statement of Significance

REGIONAL AND PROPERTY CONTEXT

Unicoi County is located in upper East Tennessee. It covers 186 square miles, the majority of which is part of the Cherokee National Forest and owned by the United States government. The Nolichucky River is the major waterway in Unicoi County, where it originates at the North Toe River and flows through North Carolina. The first European Settlers arrived in the late 1770s. Unicoi County was originally part of Washington and Carter Counties until the Tennessee General Assembly carved land from each to form the new county on March 23, 1875.¹

Erwin was designated the county seat shortly thereafter. Its location at the convergence of the North Indian Creek and Nolichucky river ensured it was an important transportation hub and possessed some of the most fertile river bottom land in the region. Erwin experienced several name changes over the years. Early in its history, it was known as Unaka (1832) and then Longmire (1840). In December 1879, it was changed to Ervin to honor David J. N. Ervin, who donated fifteen acres for the county seat. A mistake by postal officials changed the name to Erwin, and it has remained that way ever since.²

Other notable communities in the area include Unicoi and Flag Pond. Like Erwin, Unicoi had several names over its lifetime. This included Greasy Cove, Swingleville, and Limonite. The arrival of the railroads in 1880 changed the name to Unicoi. It is located in North Creek Valley, where the North Indian Creek emerges from the Appalachian Mountains and flows onward to Erwin. Flag Pond is an unincorporated community situated deep in the Cherokee National Forest. It was named for the Dwarf Blue Flag Iris, a local wildflower that grows in the valley's wetlands along the Nolichucky. Flag Pond was largely uninhabited until the construction of local roads and the digging of waterways to dry out the swamp land fed by Upper Higgins Creek, Sams Creek, and Rice Creek in the mid-1800s. According to local historians, the local post office was opened in 1846, making it "the oldest official town in Unicoi County."³

¹ Hilda Britt Padget and Betty Washburn Stevens, "Unicoi County," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/unicoi-county/>, accessed 6/26/2026; "Appalachian Air: The Towns, People, and History of Unicoi County," Unicoi County, <https://realwildunicoicounty.com/appalachian-air-the-towns-people-and-history-of-unicoi-county/>, accessed 6/26/2026.

² Padget and Stevens, "Unicoi County," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*; "Appalachian Air," Unicoi County.

³ Padget and Stevens, "Unicoi County," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*; "Appalachian Air," Unicoi County.

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The county's growth, much like others across the state, was tied to the growth of the railroads. The Charleston, Cincinnati, and Chicago line started operating in the county in 1886. It was later followed by the Ohio River and Charleston in 1893; the South and Western Railway in 1902; the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio in 1908; and Seaboard in 1908. The Clinchfield line ran 277 miles from Elkorn, Kentucky to Spartanburg, South Carolina, traversing five states. The railroads remained the major employer of the area until 1916. Because of the county's remote location and rugged landscape, developing infrastructure provided difficult. It wasn't until 1919 that second and third-class roads were finally replaced with macadamized roads. Today, Davison Chemical Company and tourism generated by the Cherokee National Forest are major parts of the county's income.⁴

The Holland Higgins Homestead is located near the unincorporated community of Flag Pond. A land grant dated June 18, 1824, documents the borders and parcels of the land communicated to Holland Higgins. Higgins traveled from Virginia, to Greasy Cove (later Unicoi), to Erwin, before finally settling on the nominated property. Family documentation indicates Higgins had skills in blacksmithing, carpentry, stone masonry, shoemaking, copper working, and farming. Holland married Barbara Hensley in Buncombe County, North Carolina. Together, they had ten children, five boys and five girls. Higgins also had two children by another woman, before he married Barbara. It is believed that Holland Higgins constructed the cabin prior to his untimely death.⁵

On November 30, 1824, Holland Higgins was murdered by David "Hog" Greer as he was traveling to pay land taxes on the property he received from the land grant. Local historians tell that David Greer moved to Big Bald Mountain in the early eighteenth-century after personal misfortune in South Carolina. Once established in Flag Pond, David quickly achieved a violent and law-breaking reputation.⁶ Holland Higgin's land butted up against David Greers. According to local accounts, the two had violent disagreements over a cherry orchard that Higgins owned but Greer coveted. This led Greer to murder Higgins in November of 1824 near Granny Lewis Creek. Greer was arrested and later released on the count of being "mentally deranged." George Tompkins, a local blacksmith, later shot and killed Greer in self defense in the spring of 1834. Historian John Biggs Alderman stated that local were "so relieved" to hear of Greer's death that Tompkins was never summoned to appear in court over the incident.⁷

Not much is known about the history of the cabin and property following the death of Holland Higgins. Family recollections state the kitchen addition as constructed in 1940. The family participate in the logging and milling industry that was popular in Unicoi County during the mid-twentieth century. The children sold timber and helped construct houses in the area, and the family also housed loggers and sawmill workers during the work year in the one-and-one-half story. The Masburn family were the last ones to live in the cabin and on the property.⁸

⁴ Padget and Stevens, "Unicoi County," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*; "Appalachian Air," Unico County.

⁵ John Higgins to William Holland Higgins, Letter, January 18, 1892, Flag Pond, Tennessee, collection of C.J. Benton.

⁶ For more information on the legend of the "Hermit of the Bald," see the National Register continuation sheets.

⁷ John Biggs Alderman, "Hermit of the Bald," From *Wonders of the Unakas*, collection of C.J. Benton.

⁸ "Holland Higgins Homestead Information Packet," Tennessee Historical Commission, on file at the State Historic Preservation Office.

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The log cabin is one of the most recognizable symbols of the frontier and early America. The log cabin was so popular because it was a simple, practical solution to the environment that European settlers faced.⁹ With nothing but an axe, adze, and froe, a settler could clear an area and use the harvested logs to construct a cabin and make roof shingles. After felling the tree, a settler would score curved marks into the log, mark the desired hewing length with a chalked string, and use the foot adze to hew to the chalk line. Some cabins were constructed as temporary housing until the settlers could become more established. These cabins may have been designed with no windows in mind; used round, unhewn logs; saddle-bag joinery techniques; wood chimneys; and featured dirt floors with weighted boards. Others represented a more substantial investment of time, money, and labor. These buildings boasted carefully flattened and hewn logs, half-dovetail or full-dovetail joinery, plank floors, stone-pier foundations, and chimneys of mortared stone. The vast majority existed somewhere between the two in a continuum influenced almost exclusively by the needs of the owner.¹⁰ It is telling the log cabin only dropped out of popularity with the rise of sawmills and cheap, standardized lumber in the early twentieth century. Since then, the myth of the American frontiersman, National Park Service “parkitecture,” and log vacation homes have reignited modern interest in the log cabin.¹¹

After conducting a field survey in 1961 of the Southern Appalachian region, cultural geographer Henry Glassie developed a methodology for evaluating log cabins and established a typology for each kind. He divided a cabin into primary and secondary characteristics. The primary characteristics of defining a type include the approximate height, shape, general size of floor plan, placement of doors and chimney, and the roof form. Secondary characteristics, which do not necessarily factor into defining the type of cabin but still have cultural significance, include the precise size of floorplan, placement of windows and stairs, and the types of appendages.¹² Gabrielle M. Lanier and Bernard L. Herman added an additional criterion in 1997 which is also important: the ways in which the corners are joined, and the ways in which the spaces between logs are filled.¹³

Glassie identified two basic types: the square and rectangular log cabin. Both shared many similarities. They were either one-and-one-half story, or two stories in height. The loft was generally unheated, whereas the

⁹ A major component of any scholarship addressing log buildings is the ethnic heritage tied to each building form and construction technique. However, this nomination abstains from retreading this well-established path. As historians Arthur Thiede and Cindy Teipner articulate in *American Log Homes* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1896), frontier log cabins inevitably became a reflection of real, immediate needs facing the builders at the time of construction, thus becoming something “truly American in every sense of the word.” For more information on the ethnic heritage of log buildings, see Terry G. Jordan, *American Log Buildings: An Old World Heritage* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985) and Allen G. Noble, *Wood, Brick, & Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape, Volume 1: Houses* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Jordan, *American Log Buildings*, pgs. 14-17.

¹¹ Thiede and Teipner, *American Log Homes*, pgs. 1-3; Alex W. Bealer and John O. Ellis, *The Log Cabin: Homes of the North American Wilderness* (Barre: Barre Publishing, 1978), pg. 9.

¹² Henry Glassie, “The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin,” in *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1968), pgs. 529-562. Though there are more complicated frameworks for evaluating cabins as it pertains to identifying the potential ethnic influences on its construction, the overall organization of roof type, shape, floor plan, and joinery serve as a through line in log architecture.

¹³ Gabrielle M. Lanier and Bernard L. Herman, *Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic: Looking at Buildings and Landscapes* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), pgs. 73-74.

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first floor featured a fireplace. Children would sleep in the loft while parents often slept in a low bed in the corner of the ground floor room. The ground floor room was a single, large room that generally contained a single bed, table, cupboard, bench, couch, and chairs. Interior walls could sport a variety of finishes. The most common was a whitewash of the logs themselves, paper, or planed board nailed vertically to cover the walls. Floors are also generally covered in boards, and the roofs are gable covered with vertical boards or split shingles. It is important to note that only the most primitive log cabins had exposed logs without any kind of treatment.¹⁴ As with the exteriors of log cabins, families always intended to cover the logs with some kind of cladding.¹⁵

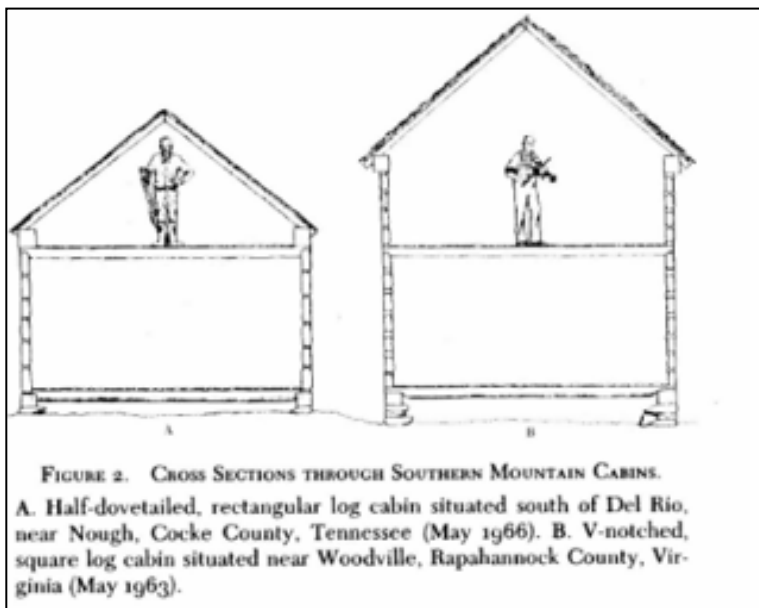


Figure 1: Glassie's illustration demonstrates the variation of loft sizes in his typology. Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," pg. 533.

Though it may be easy to dismiss the interior of a log cabin due to its simplicity, there are several character defining features Glassie identified for both square and rectangular cabin types. The stairs to the second floor were almost always "boxed in" stairs, sometimes called a "late medieval stair." (See **Figure 2**) The stairs are generally located opposite the fireplace. Fireplaces themselves are shallow, stone, and are either unadorned or feature a simple mantle. The chimneys themselves are external and centered on one gable end. (See **Figure 3**). Another character defining feature is the important shed roof addition on the rear of the cabin that would house the kitchen.¹⁶

¹⁴ Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," pgs. 532-533.

¹⁵ Lanier and Herman, *Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic*, pg. 74.

¹⁶ Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," pgs. 535-541.

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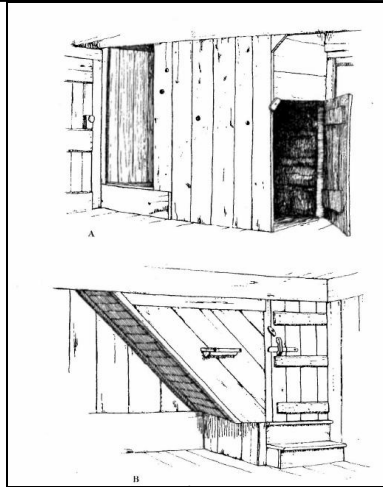


Figure 2: The Holland Higgins Homestead cabin stairs are identical to the top example. Glassie, "The Types of Southern Mountain Cabin," pg. 534.

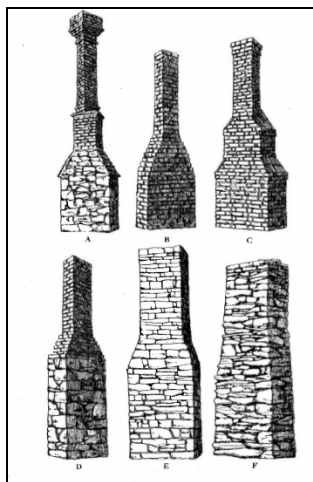


Figure 3: Chimney types. Note the bottom middle and its similarities to the Holland Higgins cabin. Glassie, "The Types of Southern Mountain Cabin," pg. 536

With the overall types and shared characteristics identified, Glassie then analyzes each particular type. Square cabins are roughly sixteen feet square and are only very rarely partitioned into two rooms. The front door is located near the center of the front wall, or displaced away from the chimney end. Only very rarely is a second door located in the gable end of the chimney, and most square cabins do not have a rear door. If there is a shed roof addition, they are generally located on a gable end and front porches are not all that common. During his survey, Glassie found that square cabins are very common in the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia, but are uncommon in Tennessee.¹⁷

The rectangular cabin is generally sixteen by twenty-two foot and is also commonly one large room. However, there are more examples of this room being portioned, with the larger room containing the

¹⁷ Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," pgs. 543-545.

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fireplace and front door, which would be centered on the front wall. The rear door was also in line with the front door. Shed roof additions were located on the rear elevation, and full-length porches often adorned the façade. (See Figure 4) Whereas the square cabin is very rarely found in Tennessee, the rectangular cabin is very common in Tennessee, the Blue Ridge of North Carolina, and the eastern Alleghenies.¹⁸

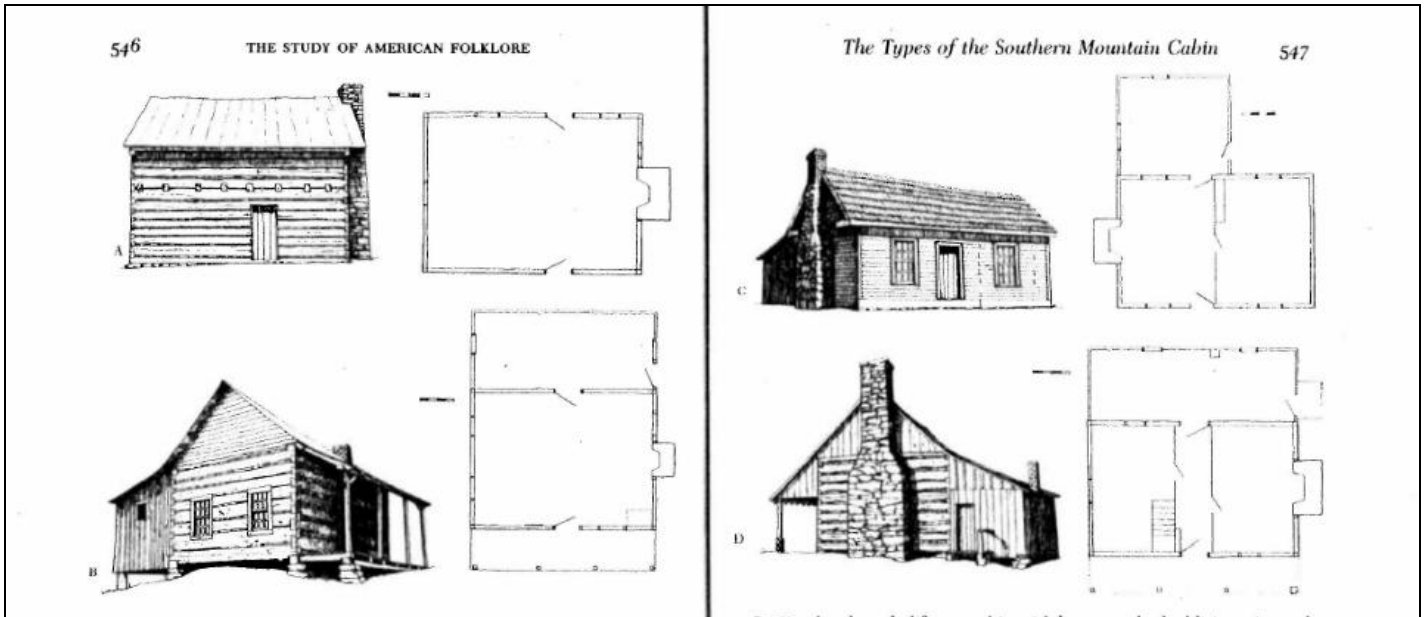


Figure 4: Glassie's illustration of four rectangular cabin examples. Note that similarity between the bottom-left cabin and the Holland Higgins Homestead cabin. Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," pgs. 549.

With this typology established, it is clear the Holland Higgins Homestead cabin is an almost proto-typical example of the rectangular cabin Glassie identified in his research. Its side gable roof, one-and-one-half story height, log construction, exterior end chimney, rectangular shape, full-length front porch, and full-length rear kitchen addition are all textbook features of the type. The interior also closely matches the type Glassie describes. The Holland Higgins Homestead features a single, large room, its floor, walls, and ceilings all finished with wood boards. A rear door is located directly opposite the front door, and a mantel is visible on one wall of the house. A late-medieval staircase accesses the floor above, which is also a single large room with no division. Though not original nor an architectural feature, the presence of a simple table, bed, and cupboard, also helps the viewer understand the spatial relationship of the room and is a visual reference for how people lived in such cabins, a facet of life also underscored by Glassie in his survey. In summary, the Holland Higgins Homestead so closely resembles the rectangular cabin archetype Glassie identified that one might mistake the drawings in his field survey for the Holland Higgins Homestead.

Glassie's essay, published in 1968, identified the rectangular cabin as a common type popular throughout eastern Tennessee and other parts of Appalachia. A review of Tennessee Historical Commission 1980s survey records for rectangular log cabins in and around New Tazewell and Unicoi County uncovered nine rectangular cabins. Of the original nine, only four may remain extant, including the nominated Holland

¹⁸ Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," pgs. 549.

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Higgins Homestead. Studying the four examples demonstrates that the Holland Higgins Homestead is a locally significant example of the rectangular cabin archetype Glassie identifies in his study.¹⁹

The first extant comparable is the Butler House, constructed circa 1870 and located twenty-miles northeast of the Holland Higgins Homestead near Unicoi (**See Figure 5**). It is a one story, rectangular, log cabin. It is capped by a side gable metal roof, and features a full-length shed roof porch and an enclosed, rear, shed roof addition. The cabin is clad in weatherboard and features an exterior end stone chimney. A unique feature of this cabin is the elliptical, repeating, decorative wood pattern located along the roofline. The presence of this detailing and the weatherboard suggest the owner's desire for a more finished appearance to their cabin. The Butler House is a strong example of the rectangular cabin type, possessing many of the features identified by Glassie and present on the Holland Higgins Homestead. However, its one story height is a deviation from the more common one-and-one-half-story height. Further, its physical location in the northeastern portion of the county, directly opposite Flag Pond and adjacent to Unicoi, aligns it closer to the architectural stock and context of Unicoi and its environs than Flag Pond.



Figure 5: Butler House.

The next comparable is the Head House.²⁰ (**See Figure 6 and 7**) It too is located near Unicoi, in the northeast portion of the county. The survey photograph depicts a one-and-one-half story, rectangular cabin with a side gable roof, three-quarter length porch, exterior end chimney, rear shed addition, and rear ell addition. Unlike

¹⁹ An intensive survey for this nomination was not feasible at the time it was written. When determining if a property remained extant, the author compared geographical data from the Tennessee Historical Commission survey files and the most recent aerial imagery. If the building appeared to be extant based on aerial photographs, it was classified as extant. Because of the secluded nature of both the county and the residences, there are no Street View photographs. Despite this, even when comparing historical photographs of the extant examples to current photographs of the Holland Higgins Homestead, it is clear that the nominated property is a significant local example of the rectangular cabin archetype within the context of Flag Pond and Unicoi County.

²⁰ The exact physical location of the property can be found using the Tennessee Historical Commission Property Viewer: <https://tnmap.tn.gov/historicalcommission/>.

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the examples identified thus far, the Head House features a range of different materials and stylistic applications not present on the Holland Higgins Homestead or the Butler House. The porch features elaborate Folk Victorian woodwork detailing, and the whole house is covered in a material designed to imitate brick. The ell shape addition also enlarges and complicate the rectangular plan synonymous with the type identified by Glassie. As a result, the Head House is valuable for understanding the evolution of the rectangular cabin type in the area, but is not a good embodiment of the rectangular cabin archetype.



Figure 6: Head House, facade.



Figure 7: Head house, ell addition.

The final comparable, is the cabin identified as “UC-160” in the Tennessee Historical Commission Survey database. The cabin is a one-and-one-half story, side gable, log building with a full length shed roof porch and exterior end chimney. Uniquely, the house also features a shed roof addition that is offset on the rear elevation, thus making it visible from the façade. **(See Figure 8)** This uncommon application of the rear shed roof addition is useful for understanding how alterations to cabin occurs, but does mean that when compared to the Holland Higgins Homestead, UC-160 does not embody the rectangular cabin type in the same way the nominated property does.

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Figure 8: UC-160

In conclusion, the Holland Higgins Homestead is a locally important example of the rectangular log cabin type. The overall rectangular shape, full-length shed roof porch, full-length shed roof rear addition, one-and-one-half story height, log construction and open interior space with Medieval boxed stairs aligns it closely with the historically significant building methods of Tennessee and the southern Appalachians. The comparison of the property to other local properties also demonstrates it is an important example of the type within its context.

Higgins, Holland, Homestead
Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (Insert bibliography. Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form. Follow an accepted citation style guide, such as Turabian style or the Chicago Manual of Style. Other style guides are acceptable as long as citations are consistent)

“Appalachian Air: The Towns, People, and History of Unicoi County,” Unicoi County.

<https://realwildunicoicounty.com/appalachian-air-the-towns-people-and-history-of-unicoi-county/>.
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Jordan, Terry G. *American Log Buildings: An Old World Heritage*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Lanier, Gabrielle M. and Bernard L. Herman. *Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic: Looking at Buildings and Landscapes*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997.

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Thiede, Arthur and Cindy Teipner. *American Log Homes*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1986.

Upton, Dell and John Michael Vlach. *Common Places: Reading in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

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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 2.59 **USGS Quadrangle** Flag Pond, 190SE

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (These coordinates should correspond to the corners of the property boundary. Add additional coordinates if necessary. Enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Datum if other than WGS84:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.995308 | Longitude: -82.526269 |
| 2. Latitude: 35.995030 | Longitude: -82.524796 |
| 3. Latitude: 35.994356 | Longitude: -82.524871 |
| 4. Latitude: 35.994589 | Longitude: -82.526359 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries are depicted on the attached boundary map.

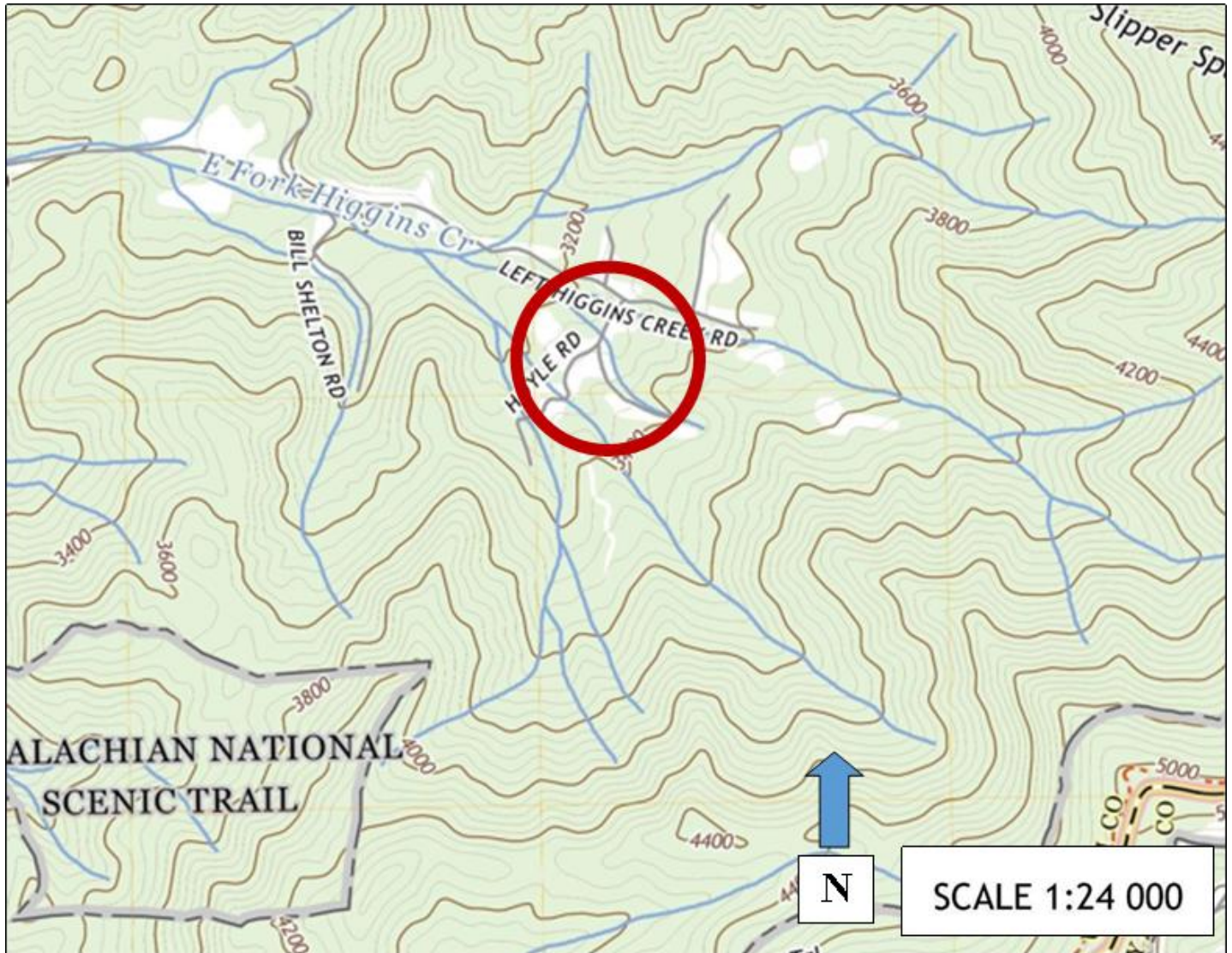
Boundary Justification

The boundaries contain the land and resources historically associated with the homestead and communicate the property's architectural significance.

Higgins, Holland, Homestead
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USGS Topographic Map



The nominated property is indicated by the red circle. Map courtesy of the United States Geological Survey, 2026.

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Boundary Map



The nominated property is represented by the lightly shaded white area. Each point corresponds with each latitude and longitude point listed earlier. Image courtesy of Google Earth, 2026.

Higgins, Holland, Homestead
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11. Form Prepared By

Name	Cedric J. Benson / DoraGale Benton / J. Ethan Holden		
Organization	Property Owners / Tennessee Historical Commission		
Street & Number	2941 Lebanon Pike	Date	6/25/2026
City or Town	Nashville	Telephone	615-775-0853
E-mail	Ethan.holden@tn.gov	State	TN Zip Code 37214

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints. Photos should be submitted separately in a JPEG or TIFF format. Do not embed these photographs into the form)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. can be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps. They can also be embedded in the Section 7 or 8 narratives)

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.

Higgins, Holland, Homestead

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Holland Higgins Homestead

City or Vicinity: Flag Pond (vicinity)

County: Unicoi

State: Tennessee

Photographer: Dora Gale Benton

Date Photographed: January, 2026

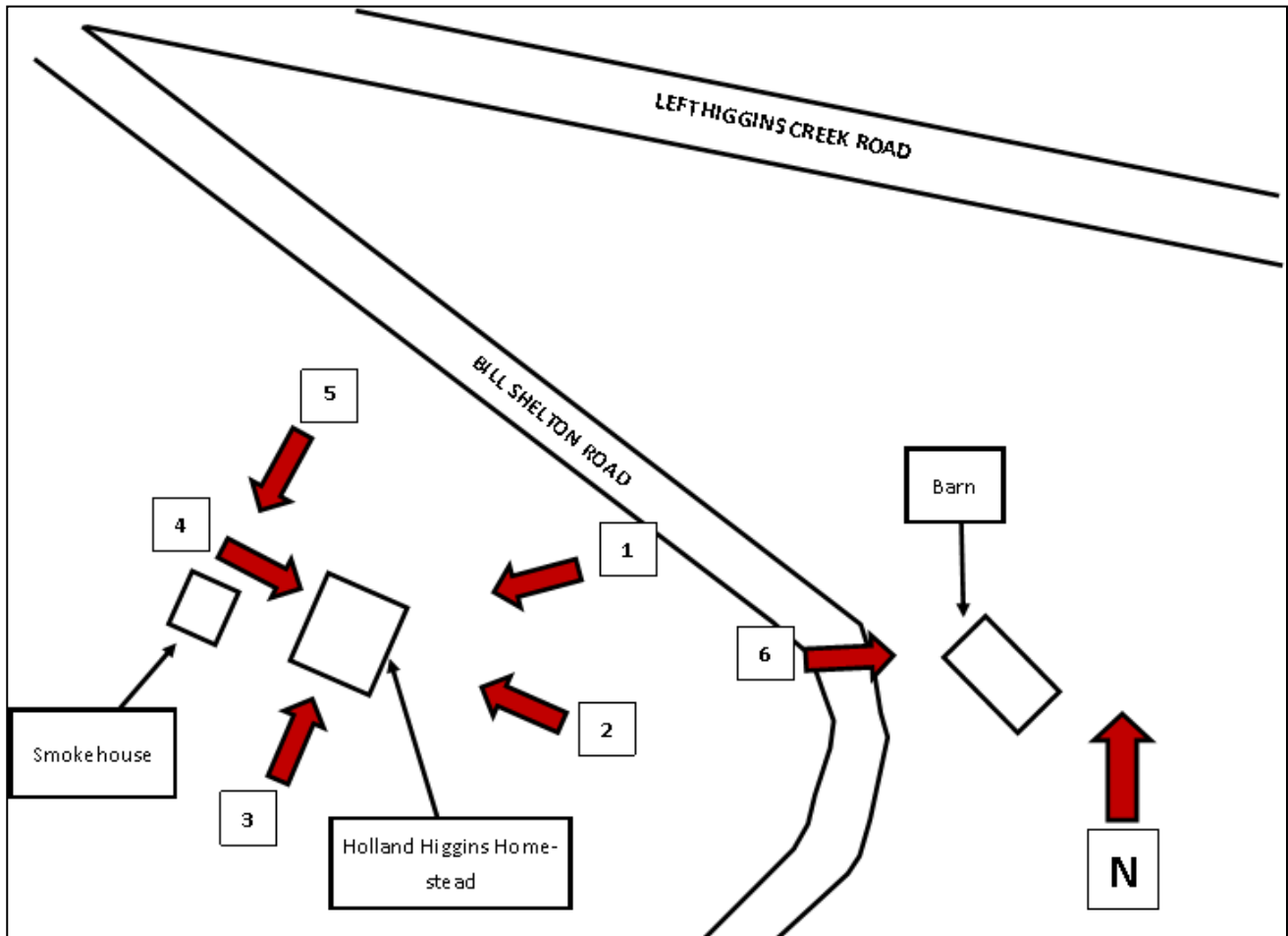
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 16. Façade and East Elevation. Photographer facing southwest.
- 2 of 16. East Elevation. Photographer facing northwest.
- 3 of 16. South Elevation. Photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 16. West Elevation. Photographer facing southeast.
- 5 of 16. Smokehouse. Photographer facing southwest.
- 6 of 16. Barn. Photographer facing east.
- 7 of 16. Porch. Photographer facing southeast.
- 8 of 16. Porch. Photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 16. Main Room, First Floor. Photographer facing northeast.
- 10 of 16. Main Room, First Floor. Photographer facing southwest.
- 11 of 16. Main Room, Staircase and Fireplace Detail. Photographer facing northeast.
- 12 of 16. Main Room, First Floor. Photographer facing southwest.
- 13 of 16. Staircase Detail. Photographer facing southeast.
- 14 of 16. Staircase Detail. Photographer facing northeast.
- 15 of 16. Second Floor. Photographer facing southeast.
- 16 of 16. Second Floor. Photographer facing northwest.

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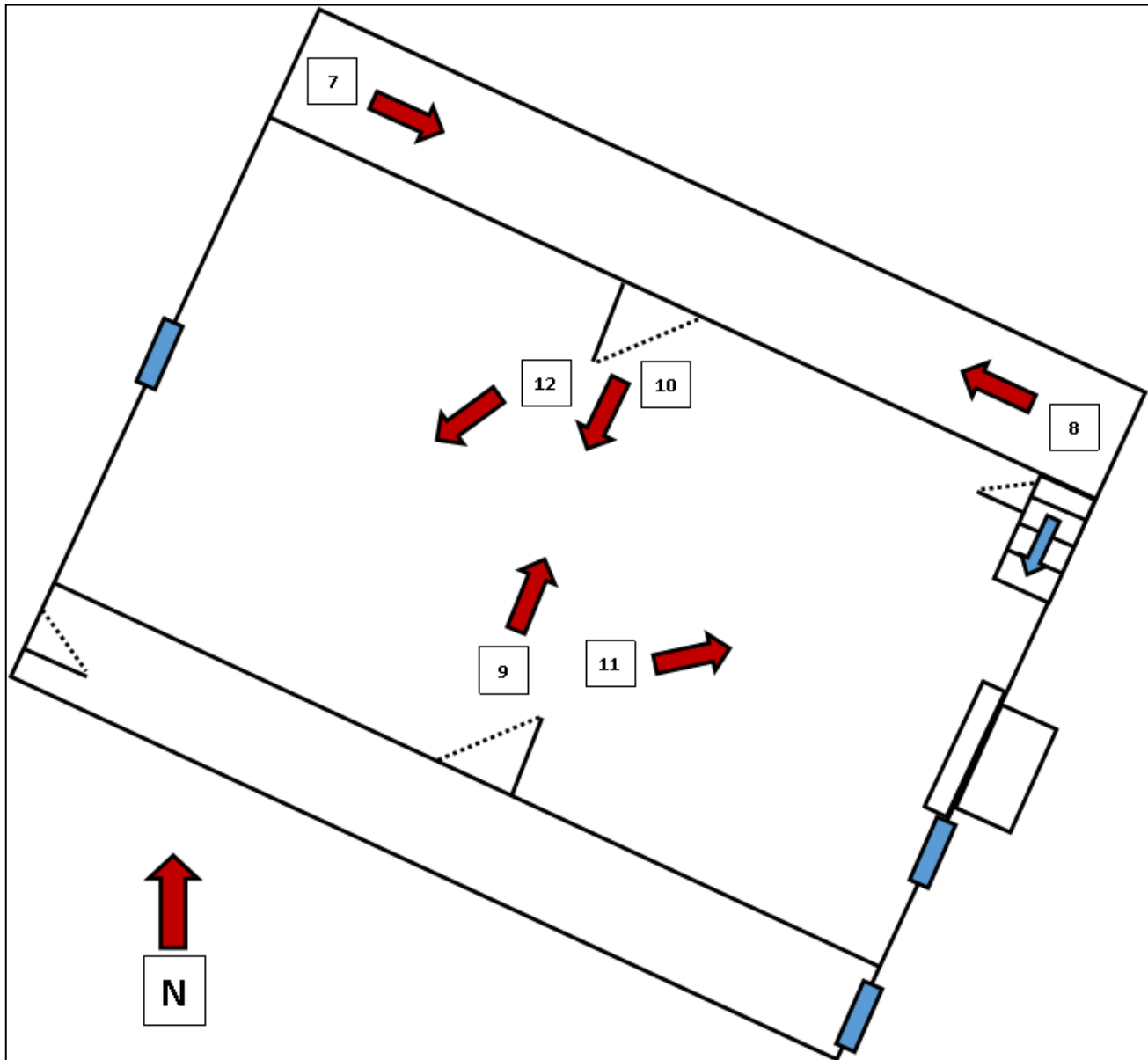
Site Plan, Keyed, Not to Scale



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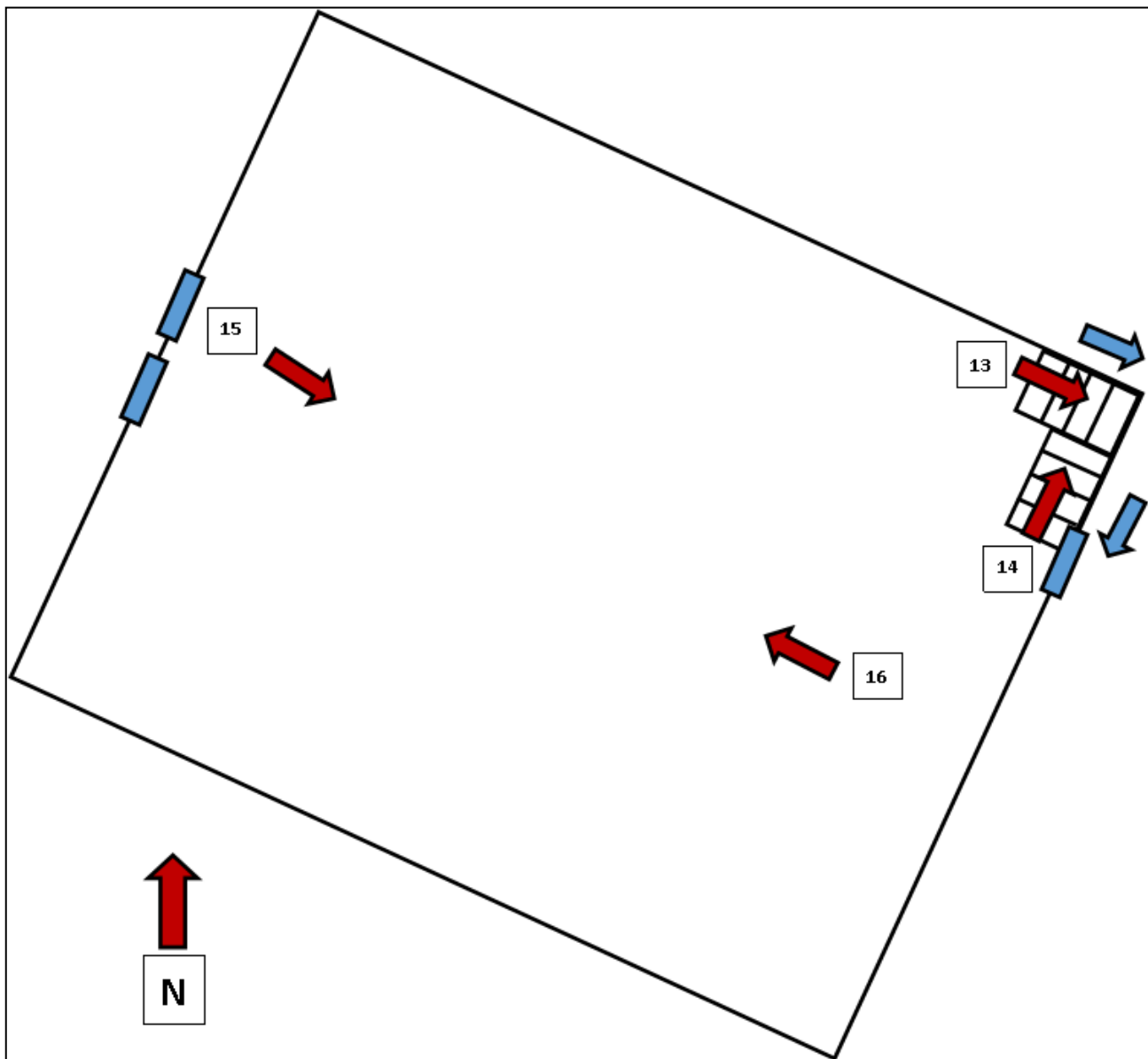
First Floor Plan, Keyed, Not to Scale



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Second Floor Plan, Keyed, Not to Scale



United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
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The N.R. Continuation Sheet should be used for additional supporting documentation such as historic photographs, maps, and addendum documentation. You may also imbed supporting documentation and/or images within the text of Sections 7 and 8.

HERMIT OF THE BALD

This story begins in South Carolina late in the 18th century. David Greer, an ambitious young man and well-educated for the times, worked for Colonel David Vance. David fell in love with his employer's daughter. But Miss Vance, popular belle of the community, could not see in her father's hireling the man of her future. She haughtily spurned young Greer's love; so David, quick of temper and of moody disposition, took his six feet of rejected masculinity to far places. He would show a coldhearted woman that a love like his could never die.

He wandered around until he found the 5618-foot Big Bald Mountain that straddles the Tennessee-North Carolina line between Unicoi and Yancey Counties. Here was the ideal spot to grieve out his lost love. An opening under a large rock suited his purpose for living quarters. He dug a 12-foot room underneath and sealed the sides with large rocks daubed with clay. A crevice furnished a chimney-like smokestack and a slab of rock was his door. Material for a fence was not convenient, so he dug a ditch some four feet deep and four feet wide. This moat kept his stock in and other people's out. He ate much as the animals did, supplementing with potatoes and beardless rye.

David Greer wrote his own code of laws declaring himself submissive to no man or government. Any trespassing by man or beast was forbidden at the point of a gun. A North Carolina deputy, thinking Greer a citizen of that state and not having read Greer's laws, served a paper on the hermit for an unpaid poll tax of 75¢. On the appointed day, David appeared in court with a gun and drove the judge, jury, lawyers, and sheriff out of the building. Then, furiously hurling rocks, he broke all the window glass in the courthouse.

Holland Higgins owned property that joined Greer's claim. A cherry orchard that lay some 400 yards below the rock house was covered by Hermit Greer. Many violent arguments followed David's demand that Higgins get off the land. November 30, 1824, as Higgins was traveling to Jonesboro to pay his land taxes, Greer shot him near Granny Lewis Creek where Higgins is buried. Greer is said to have made the remark that there were seven other men he was going to kill. He was arrested, but freed in court on a mentally deranged verdict.

Because of his living habits, he acquired the nickname of "Hog". The name became a household word, and mothers would tell their children, "You better be good or Old Hog Greer will get you".

At one time, Greer herded cattle on Rich Mountain, and about the same period worked in the ore mines in Bumpass Cove. But his violent temper never allowed him to work anywhere very long. The hermit's headquarters on Rich Mountain was another rock ledge located on the upper prong of Mill Creek. He walled the sides with slabs of shale rock chinked with mud; thinner slabs of rock served as crude furniture.

David Greer's word was his only law, and woe to the man who crossed him. In the spring of 1834, the eccentric recluse left a plough and other tools at George Tompkins' blacksmith shop to be repaired. The shop was located on Higgins Creek above the site of the present Higgins' Chapel Church. Greer had told Tompkins when he would return for his property and at the designated hour Hog appeared at the shop. Meanwhile, Tompkins had stopped work on Greer's tools to repair a neighbor's broken plough. He told Greer that he would have his work finished in a short time but David, without a word, picked up his gun and left. The neighbor told Tompkins, "You are a dead man". The blacksmith replied that he had never done anything to the hermit; but the neighbor, who had been watching Greer through a window, took Tompkins' hat, placed it on a gun stick, and held it up to the shutter window ledge. Bang! a hole was drilled through the crown of the hat. Tompkins was convinced that Greer would kill him. Having only one half of a bullet in the shop he loaded his gun with it and when Greer rose from behind a blind which he had made of elder branches stuck in a section of rail fence, Tompkins shot him in the back.

The people of the whole area were so relieved to be rid of the Wild Hermit of The Bald that Tompkins was never summoned to court. It is said that the men just dug a hole and buried Greer where he fell. No marker tells the spot.



Tennessee
Creek Incorporated
S. McNabb
Recreation
Rock Creek
ed as George
John Love
ney.



This is from WONDERS OF THE UNAKAS by John Biggs Alderman
"Uncle Pat"

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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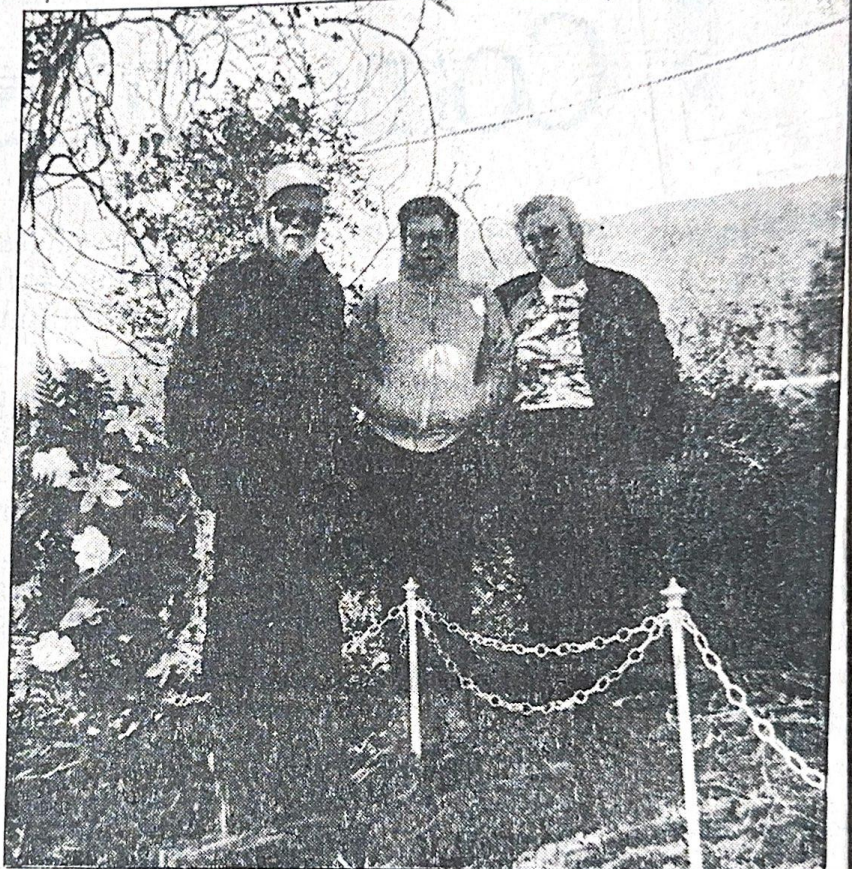
Historic grave, long unnoticed, gets attention

Hartsell Howell of Knoxville, Charlotte Beck of Spivy community and Ora Blankenship of Knoxville, all descendants of Holland Higgins, visited the Higgins grave recently to clean off weeds and growth that have obstructed the piece of Unicoi County history for many years.

Higgins, distant grandfather to the three, was allegedly shot and killed by legendary David "Hog" Greer, known as the 'Hermit of Big Bald Mountain.'

Few people realize the Higgins grave is there, located near Temple Hill Elementary School, although the site is passed by hundreds of people daily traveling U.S. Hwy. 23. The inscription on the grave marker reads "Holland Higgins Senior, Shot

Continued on page 5



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- Grave -

and killed by David Greer, Nov. 30, 1824."

The Higgins family thinks the murder was the result of a land dispute between their grandfather and Greer over some land in the south end of the county which Higgins would "neither give nor sell."

According to the late Pat Alderman, author of several legendary stories about the county, Greer watched Higgins and ambushed him as he was going to check his land titles and pay his taxes. Legend says Higgins was buried where he was shot. The marker was reportedly later moved due to road construction.

Greer, known during that age as a recluse, lived as a hermit in the Big Bald area, refusing to abide by law. Apparently no one saw the Higgins murder and Greer was never charged nor arrested for the crime. He was allegedly shot and killed about 10 years later in a dispute with a blacksmith.

Ms. Blankenship said it had probably been "a hundred years" since the Higgins grave had been cleaned off and she felt someone should take time to clean it up.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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B15

BEACON

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2006

LIFESTYLES

David "Hawg" Greer, most despised

BY: BETTY B. CHANDLER
EDITOR

David "Hawg" Greer was one of the most despised people around the mountains of Western North Carolina and Upper East Tennessee in the early 1800's. According to local lore, Greer was said to have been one of the Hessian (of German origin) troops bought by the British to fight in the Revolutionary War who chose to remain in America.

Greer, according to the late historian Kenneth Chandler of Clearbranch, had been rejected by his sweetheart, the daughter of a higher ranking officer in the American Revolution.

Suffering great melancholy, vowed to live a solitary life if he could not have the woman he loved. He moved from South Carolina and came North into the area of Bald Mountain, to seek a place where he could be alone and go unnoticed. He lived like an animal, sleeping in a cave which still remains in tact today and bears the smoke stains of Greer's fires. Becoming a recluse, He dug trenches around what land he laid claim to in order to keep his livestock enclosed. He would only venture into civilized areas when it became necessary to obtain food or staples. Then, he would travel mountain trails and follow the river down to Jonesborough where he traded.

Because of the very nature

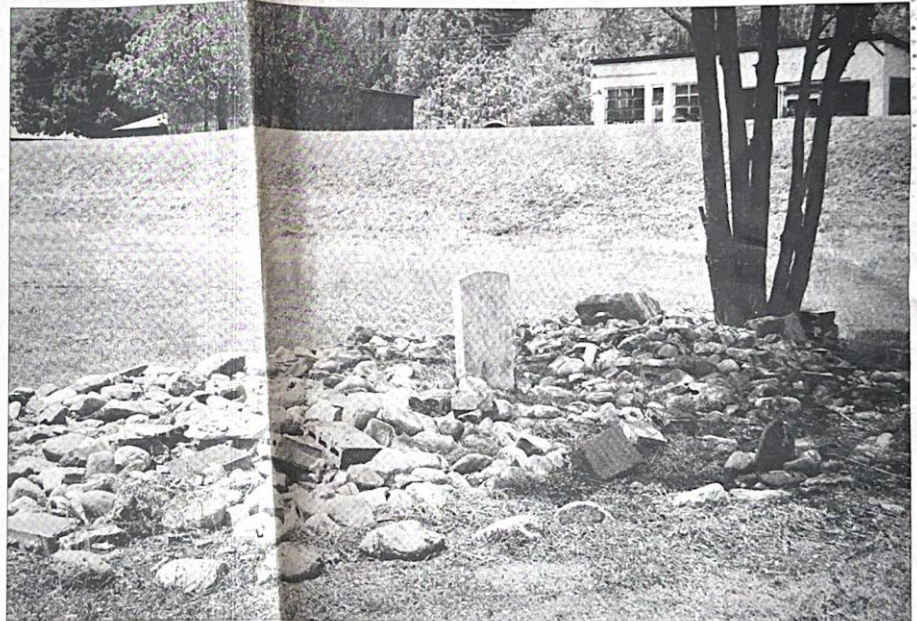
of the man, he was feared by people who lived along the roadways Greer traveled.

He had threatened to kill anyone who came near him, and he had several skirmishes with early settlers from the South End of what is now Unicoi County. According to early accounts, Greer had killed Holland Higgins, father of Ellis Higgins and Ruth Tilson, following an altercation on November 30, 1824. Higgins was buried in a marked grave near Temple Hill School, near Granny Lewis Creek. At least one other marked grave remains at the site.

According to early historians, Greer took his gun to George Tompkins, a local gunsmith, for repairs on one of his trips to Jonesborough. He told Tompkins that if his rifle was not repaired by the time he returned, he would kill the gunsmith.

Gripped by fear and knowing of the incident with Holland Higgins, Tompkins set about fixing Hawg Greer's rifle. The longer the man thought, the more he realized that Greer could not be allowed to continue to terrorize the settlement. Men, women and children all lived in fear of him. Tompkins put aside Greer's gun and began honing his own weapon.

About the time Greer had vowed to return for the weapon, Tompkins hid in some brush near his shop and waited for Greer, who with his unshaven face and long hair was said to have



Above is the burial site of Holland Higgins, who was killed by David Greer. Higgins' grave marker is now gone. When it stood above his grave, it read, "Holland Higgins, Sr., d. Nov. 30, 1824, Killed by David Greer." Also buried at the same location is Joseph W. Lewis, whose grave is marked and the unmarked graves of Johnnie Walker and Cordelia Walker.

looked like some wild animal. About dusk, Tompkins heard a noise in the distance. He carefully aimed his rifle in the direction of the noise, knowing that if it was indeed Greer, that he would have only one chance to rid his neighbors and family of the

scourge of David Greer.

As Greer appeared in the distance, Tompkins made ready his weapon, which he had most carefully loaded. When Greer was near enough, Tompkins squeezed off his only shot and the giant of a wild man fell with

a thud. Word had gotten around that Tompkins would take no more of Greer's bullying, and as soon as the shot was fired, neighbors came forward. They took hold of Greer's body, which, according to Chandler, had landed partially in the edge of the

river, and pushed him out into the current. The Hermit of Bald Mountain floated on down stream.

No one ever came looking for Greer, or the man or men who took his life. In fact, it is said that Greer was never seen again by anyone.

Property Owner(s):

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

Name

Stockton Byrd and Gale G. Stockton

Street &

Number

530 Gentry Mountain Road

Telephone

City or Town

Flag Pond

State/Zip

TN / 37657



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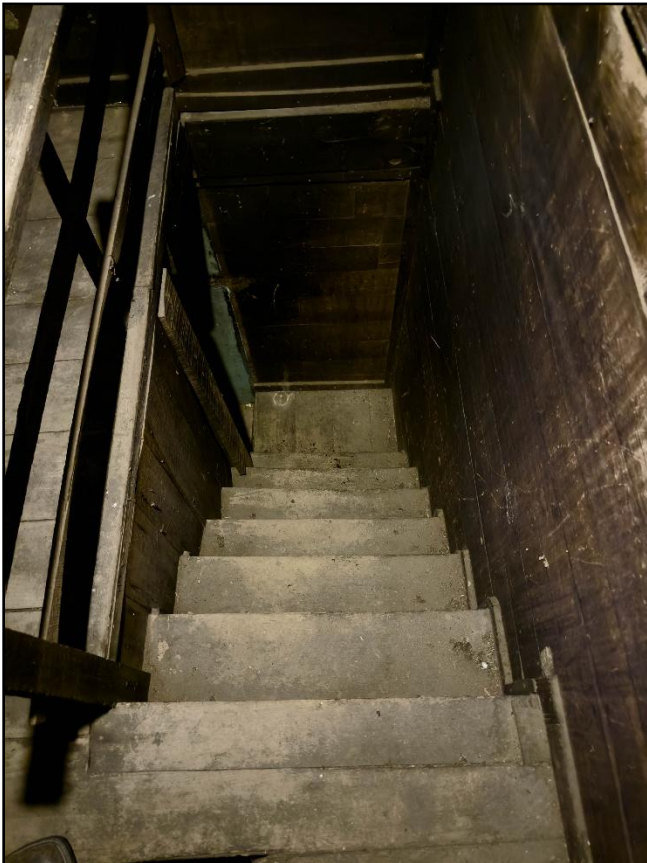
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