

Stable E

According to the present owner this building was used as a carriage house, with a "garage" on the east side and a platformed or floored area on the west for stering gear. A difference in materials however, suggests that the tall gabled-end building may once have stood alone. This portion of the building is 12' and 24" deep. It has a post-and-beam frame with 2' studding inbetween that appears to be circular sawn. The posts are squared, and measure 6" in thickness. There are log joists in the floor and ceiling. Boards are simply laid across the ceiling joists to form a full second story room.

The roof is A-framed with rafters that are lap joined and fixed with cut nails.

Other Outbuildings*Ireland House*

Mrs. Waters recalls a seperate kitchen, a meathouse, and a log quarters near the main house (on its north side) but they have been removed. There is a frame tenant house on the property which was not examined. The smaller north wing of this building could be an earlier Ireland House structure.

The "Ireland House" was also examined June 2, 1977, and again on June 4, 1977. The National Register refers to this building as a "frame house that was created by the joining together of two eighteenth century log slave quarters." It is suggested that these two log houses were positioned with about 10' inbetween the west end of one and the east end of the other, and that a frame connecting wing was built which became the central hull of the present structure. This possibility has much credibility which is not contradicted at all by the fine decorative features present.

The mantels, staircase, etc., cornerblocks, etc., are evidence that a log house was at least remodeled.

There are two other possibilities which must be considered and they have equal credibility. They both recognize the two log rooms as being original components of a single structure. The first possibility is that this building is a "possum trot" or "dog run" log house that was later enclosed and remodeled. The second possibility is that the house was planned as it now is from the start and is the product of the double pen or possum trot tradition.

In Early American Architecture, H. Morrison describes the "possum trot" or "dog run" and says that it was a type of log house which was popular throughout the South. Considering the proximity of Calvert County to Virginia, it is also interesting to note that Morrison thinks that this form finds its origin in that state. Morrison cites a possum trot log house on Green River Plantation in North Carolina as his example. Basically the house consist of two log pens which face each other on opposite sides of a breezeway. Both of the rooms and the passageway are housed under the same roof. The outside end walls of each log pen contain a fireplace with an exterior chimney. There is a single window in each of the side walls and doors open into the breezeway. Each pen has a single room downstairs with a loft above. It is suggested by Morrison that this arrangement was particularly suited to the South since it offered a sheltered but open room for humans in warm weather and as an adequate storage place and animal shelter in winter.

Apparently this form is not peculiar to the South, however, as J. Rempel has recorded the existence of such a log house in Ontario, Canada. Rempel reprints in Building With Wood good documentation for a log house built for Peter Russell in 1797 which actually consisted of "two log houses for his honour Peter Russell, the houses to be 16 x 20 foot each and a space betwixt of 16' more which makes the roof 48' long". The list of materials needed for the house indicates that the two log pens and passageway shared a single roof but had separate plates. There were four 20'7" plates needed for the rafters of the pens to rest on and two 18'8" plates needed "for the space betwixt the two houses".

The only weatherboards to be ordered was for the gable ends and it would appear that the central room was left open. One log room was used for living in and the other is labeled as a grainery.

These are the only immediately available references, however, it is significant that one refers to North Carolina and the other to Ontario, Canada. The scant literature which is available on double log pen barns runs nearly the same gamut. E. Sloane cites examples of two-story barns built on log cribs in Tennessee and Virginia. Samuel Tatham, in his Essay of 1800, cited the double log run as the most common type of tobacco house which can be observed while traveling in Virginia and Maryland during the late eighteenth century. While no other double log pen houses have been recorded in Calvert County, there is a tobacco barn of this type at Willow Glen (CLVT-34).

The most convincing evidence for seeing the Ireland House as a possum trot would be the existence of a continuous plate connecting all three or at least two of the sections together. This has not been found as yet although it can be seen on the north side of the building that the uppermost logs of the east wing extend beyond the west wall of that section, and extend partially into the area of the central section. There are some other indications of the possibility, however, one of them being the chimney placement. In most, if not all of the log houses having fireplaces thus far recorded in Calvert County, the entrances to the house were in the sides and the fireplaces on the ends. There are no side entrances in these log buildings. There are large windows in the sides of each log room and these correspond exactly with the plan given by Morrison. The placements of the chimneys also matches the North Carolina possum trot and is the most unlikely aspect of the suggestion that these were once neighboring slave houses. It seems too coincidental or unusually convenient that these two houses were built exactly apart and with one having a chimney on the east end and the other having one on the west end.

Another feature which does not preclude the possibility of slave houses being converted but certainly does establish these as typical log houses, are the high ceilings. These ceilings are high on the first level. The more normal height of 6-7' is an easier space to heat and is also less grand. The higher ceilings on the other hand, go along with the mantels and staircase to make these rooms less "cabin like".

It is this last observation which suggests the possibility that this plan was decided upon from the start as an inexpensive means to a grander house. The double-log pen tradition could have provided the structural basis for a home which was intended from the start not to look like a log house (as opposed to remodeling a possum trot which had displayed its construction methods). It has been observed that the logs in these wings, in addition to being very large, have also been very well squared. One on the south walls of the east wing shows vertical saw marks. Whether these logs were so well dressed because they were meant to be seen, or because a smooth surface facilitated plastering and weather boarding however, is still uncertain. At any rate this feature again appears somewhat refined and typical among those slave dwellings recorded in Calvert.

Bibliography

Morrison, H., Early American Architecture, New York, 1969.

Sloan, E., An Age of Barns, New York, 1961.

Rempel, J., Building With Wood...., Toronto, 1972.

Tatham, W., An Historical and Practical Essay on the
Culture and Commerce of Tobacco, London, 1800.

June 22, 1977

An examination of the Ireland House produced these observations.

--- Examination of the sills revealed that on the south side the west pen and central passage share the same sill.

--- The logs used to build the pens have been pit sawn to a thickness of 6" or less resulting in something very close to plank construction.

--- Rough overhang of the plate log on the north side of the east pen and the south side of the west pen protrudes to the extent that neither appears to have been an individually finished log house.

It would appear that neither was ever meant to be seen, thus suggesting the frame enclosure to be original. These overhangs may have been seen as a means of locking the frame portion into the two log pens.

--- The center passage has a frame made of pit sawn members joined with cut nails. The studs are continuous for 1 1/2 stories and meet a plate that connects the plate logs of the two pens. Plates and studs are lap joined.

The result is that of high knee-walls 3'2" above the floors of the upper level.

The ceilings of the second level of course are somewhat low and are trapezoidal in shape to accommodate the pitch of the steep gable roof.

--- On the first floor the ceilings are 8'2" high.

--- Beneath the floor boards of the west wing were observed floor joists that were hewn, and then trimmed on the sides with a pit saw.

--- In the hall the stairs remain in good condition. The chamfered posts and oval knol on the newall are consistent with the early Nineteenth Century mantles and mouldings found throughout the house.

--- The interior walls of the log pens are only 6" thick, but contain the same fieldstone-and-mortar chinking as the outer walls.



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