

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

May 23, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Ramona M. Bartos

Reap for Ramona M. Bartos

SUBJECT: Historic Structures Survey Report for Replacement of Bridge 131, PA 13-10-0002,
Burke County, ER 14-1004

Thank you for your May 13, 2014, letter transmitting the report for the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the report and offer the following comments.

We concur that the **Cox-Simpson Creek Farm (BK0156)** is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The report was extremely well presented with a particularly good analysis of why the property is significant under Criterion C, but lacks the integrity necessary to be eligible for the National Register.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or renee.gledhill-earley@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.



FINAL

**Cox-Simpson Creek Farm Eligibility Report
Bridge 131 Replacement Project
Upper Creek Township
Burke County, North Carolina**

WBS No. 17BP.13.R.134

Prepared for:

North Carolina Department of
Transportation

Prepared by:

Johnette Davies
Architectural Historian

AECOM-Transportation
516 E. State Street
Trenton, NJ 08609

609-310-3202

April 11, 2014

AECOM

Cox-Simpson Creek Farm Eligibility Report
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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is planning to replace Bridge 131, a small steel stringer bridge built in 1958 that carries SR 1258 (Rose Creek Road) over Simpson Creek in Upper Creek Township, Burke County, North Carolina (WBS No. 17BP.13.R.134). The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm (BK0156) (also known as the Cox Farm), located at 3266 Rose Creek Road, is within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) that was provided by NCDOT for the project. NCDOT assigned a task order to AECOM Technologies, Inc. (AECOM) to provide an assessment of the eligibility of the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This report describes the methodology and results of the field survey, research, and analysis, conducted in January and February 2014. Work performed was consistent with the analysis and documentation requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800. As a result of the analysis, the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is recommended *not eligible* for the National Register of Historic Places. While the collection of buildings on the farm are representative of the building types and construction methods present on small farms of the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the collapse of one building, a portion of another, and loss of material at the dwelling have diminished the integrity of the resource.

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INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is planning to replace Bridge 131, a small steel stringer bridge with wood railings that carries SR 1258 (Rose Creek Road) over the Simpson Branch of Rose Creek, in Upper Creek Township, Burke County, North Carolina (**Figure 1**). The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm (BK0156), located at 3266 Rose Creek Road, is within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the project. NCDOT assigned a task order to AECOM Technologies, Inc. (AECOM) to provide an assessment of the eligibility of the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This report describes the methodology and results of the analysis, conducted in January and February 2014. Work performed was consistent with the analysis and documentation requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800.

METHODOLOGY

AECOM conducted research in online sources to collect readily available historical information, including historic aerial photographs and maps of the property. Field survey at the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm was performed on January 30 and 31, 2014 to collect information about the current physical character, condition, and integrity of the property. Data was recorded with digital photographs and field notes. Research was conducted at the Historic Burke Foundation, Morganton Public Library, the Burke County Recorder of Deeds, and the western branch of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office to collect historical data about the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm and its context. One local informant, neighbor and former historian Greer Suttlemyre, was also contacted to discuss his knowledge of the property. Analysis was then performed to assess the potential National Register eligibility of the property under the National Register eligibility criteria defined in 36 CFR 60.

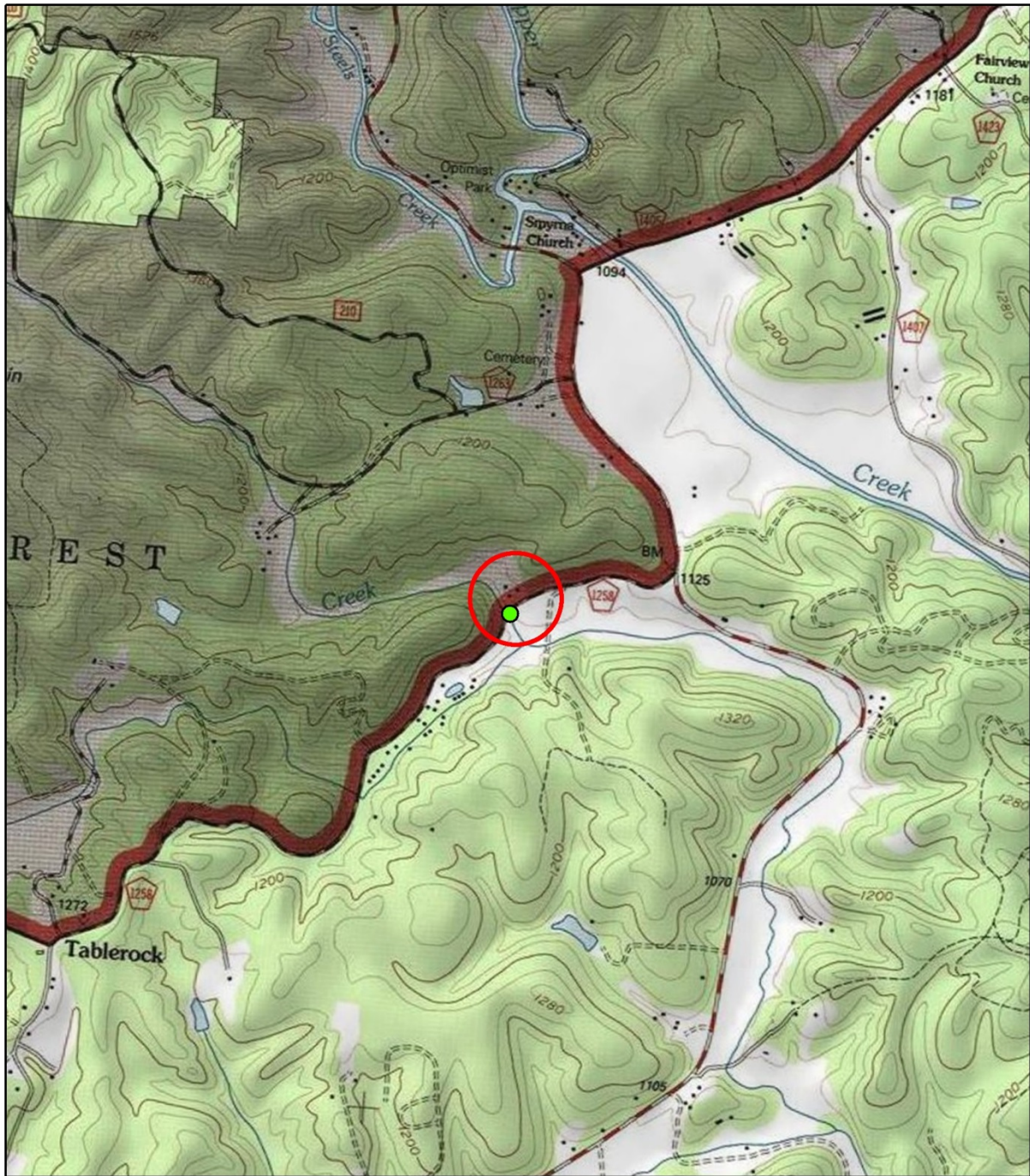



Figure 1. Cox-Simpson Creek Farm Location Map

Image source: USGS 1993

Image date: NA

Scale: 1:24000

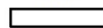
Coordinate System: NAD83 UTM 18N

 Approximate Location

 Bridge 131



1000



Feet

COX-SIMPSON CREEK FARM PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

AT-A-GLANCE	
Resource Name:	Cox-Simpson Creek Farm
NCHPO Site No.:	BK0156
Location:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3266 Rose Creek Road, Morganton, Burke County, NC 28655; PIN 1777462693• 3290 Rose Creek Road, Morganton, Burke County, NC 28655; PIN 1777363409
Construction date:	c. 1910
Recommendation:	Not eligible for the National Register



The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is located on the north side of SR 1258 (Rose Creek Road), north of Simpson Creek and west of Rose Creek, at the edge of the Pisgah National Forest (the property is within the National Forest Boundary according to USGS maps, but is privately owned.) Most of the terrain is hilly and wooded, with the exception of level land in the floodplain of Simpson Creek (**Photo 1**). Much of the property in the vicinity of the buildings is overgrown, though some former circulation routes are discernable among the trees (**Photos 2 and 3**). The level land in the creek floodplain appears recently cultivated and is bordered along the roadside by a wood post and barbed wire fence, which dates no earlier than the road's realignment in the 1910s or 1920s. An abrupt rise in terrain, together with evergreen and deciduous trees, marks the northeastern edge of the cultivated area.

Vegetation on the property is composed of a mix of native forest vegetation and typical disturbed-site species common to the region, and there do not appear to be purposefully planted trees, shrubs, or other plants on the property. Mixed forest cover of hardwood and pines consistent with the surrounding landscape has grown up on the formerly cleared portions of the property around the house and outbuildings. Holly, privet, and other common plants are present on the property; based upon their age, location, and appearance, they do not appear to have been purposefully planted or cultivated in the past.

There are seven standing buildings clustered near Rose Creek Road, including a two-story frame house, log and frame barn, two frame sheds, log pen, frame well house, and a frame privy; a latticed crib identified in a 1983 survey has since collapsed (**Figure 2**). The barn, collapsed lattice crib, and one of the frame sheds are located above the northeastern edge of the field, along the driveway.¹ The well house, shed, log pen, and privy are situated around the house, overlooking the barn and field below. Each building is described in the following pages.

¹ It is unclear whether debris west of the frame shed is the remains of an additional outbuilding, or whether it is building debris collected from elsewhere.



Photo 1. View northeast along Rose Creek Road. Previously cultivated land and a fence are at the left, and the barn is visible in the background, next to the road.



Photo 2. Example of a trace of an unpaved farm road or path remaining at the property, leading northwest from the north side of the barn. View northwest.



Photo 3. Example of a trace of an unpaved farm road or path remaining at the property. View southeast.

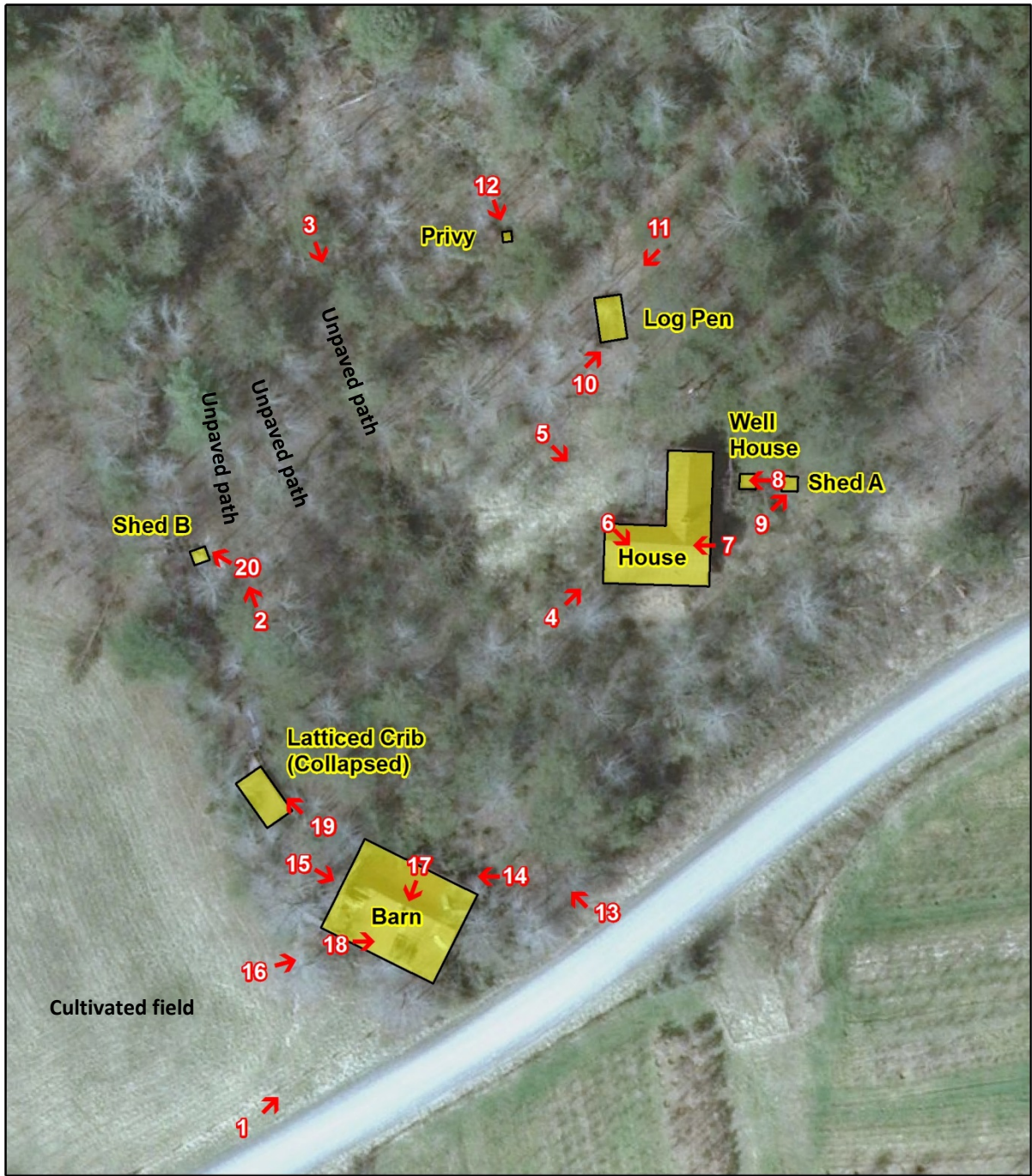



Figure 2. Cox-Simpson Creek Farm Buildings and Photograph Locations


Image source: GTMO 2010

Image date: 20100518

Scale: 1:750

Coordinate System: NAD83 UTM 18N

 Building

 Photo Location



30



Feet

House, c. 1910 (Photos 4-7)

The dwelling on the property is a two-story, three-bay, center-passage, frame I-house with a two-story rear ell extending northward from the east end of the rear of the main block, creating an L-shaped plan. The building is clad in wood weatherboard; however, extensive areas of cladding are missing on the rear ell and second floor of the main block. The roof is covered in standing-seam metal, has boxed cornices with partial returns, and a simple frieze. A cable lightning protection system is in place, and the cables are detached from the building in some areas. The visible rear ell and porch foundations consist of dry-laid stone piers. A full-width open porch, with a shed roof, chamfered posts, diagonal bead board fascia, bead board ceiling, and wood deck, extends across the facade. The front door is missing – it may be one of two that are currently in the center hall. Wood window sashes are present; however, the muntins have been broken off. Physical evidence and prior survey shows that windows had a six-over-six configuration. Window and door surrounds are without decorative detail, except for a small piece of coved molding above the front door.

The rear ell is two rooms deep and one room wide, the northernmost room being the kitchen. Extensive areas of weatherboard are missing at the second story. Both the east and west sides of the ell have shed roofed porches along their length; the western porch also extends west along the rear of the main block. The northern section of the west porch, adjacent to the kitchen, is enclosed and clad in weatherboard. Three four-panel wood doors access the west/rear porch: one from the center hall of the main block, and one from each of the rooms of the rear ell. Similar four-panel wood doors, one from each room of the ell, provide access to the eastern porch. Some of these doors have screened wood storm doors. Another doorway leads from the kitchen into the enclosed portion of the west porch. An interior brick chimney is located at the rear of the building, but no longer extends above the roofline. An opening for a stovepipe attachment is visible on the interior. Curiously, there are no chimneys or fireplaces at the main block of the house.

The interior of the first floor of the main block, including walls and ceilings, is clad in tongue and groove bead board, known as a matchstick or matchboard. The boards are laid horizontally on the walls. The walls of the western room of the first floor have the boards laid on a diagonal, with vertical boards at the dado and the boards laid diagonally, in opposite orientation to the main wall finish, at the frieze.

Door surrounds have low-relief beaded convex molding and plain corner blocks. A straight stair in the center hall accesses the second floor. A local informant has stated that the second floor has a similar finish.² The interior walls of the rear ell are clad in the same matchboard finish as the main block. The southern room, adjacent to the main block, contains a brick fireplace; the surround is missing.

² Greer Suttlemyer, Personal communication with author, January 30, 2014. The second floor was not accessed for this survey due to debris blocking the stair and safety concerns.



Photo 4. House, view northeast. Note the missing weatherboard at the second story, and missing door and window muntins.



Photo 5. House, rear ell and rear of main block, view southeast. Note the missing weatherboard at the second story. Much of the weatherboard is missing at the second story of the rear ell.



Photo 6. House, west room of main block, view southeast. The doorway accesses the center hall; the door frame of the main entrance is just visible through the doorway.



Photo 7. House, east room of main block, view west. The doorway accesses the center hall; the stair to the second floor is visible through the doorway. Similar matchstick finish is found throughout the house.

Well House, c. 1910 (Photo 8)

The one-story frame well house, located just east of the rear ell of the house, consists of one room, and is roughly six feet wide and five feet deep. The front (south-facing) elevation is clad in latticed horizontal wood planks, and the other elevations are clad in wood weatherboard. The metal-clad front gable roof, supported by square wood posts, encompasses an additional area approximately three feet deep that includes the well and a concrete platform. The well has been capped with concrete. On the interior, a trough/tub on the floor at the east wall is served by a water pipe and spigot, and some wood shelves remain on the north wall.



Photo 8. Well House, view northwest. The roof extends to cover the concrete well housing.

Shed A, c. 1910 (Photo 9)

The one-story frame shed, located just east of the well house, consists of one room, and is roughly six feet wide and seven feet deep. The building is clad in wood weatherboard. The front gable roof, with exposed rafter ends, is clad in standing-seam metal. A vertical plank door, centered on the south facing elevation, is missing half of its planks. An opening appears to have been cut into the weatherboard on the east elevation, and wood planks and a partial mesh panel have been nailed over a portion of this opening. The wood weatherboard is unpainted, and some boards are deteriorating.



Photo 9. Shed A, view northeast.

Log Pen, c. 1910 (Photos 10 and 11)

A one-story, one-room square-notched log pen is located northwest of the rear ell of the house, up the slope. The front gable roof, clad with corrugated metal, has a generous overhang at the front (south) elevation. The gable ends are clad in wood weatherboard. Empty “V” notches in the top logs at the front and rear of the building, below the weatherboards in the gable ends, may indicate a prior loft in the building. The floor is earthen, though there is a remnant of what appears to be a concrete slab at the rear.



Photo 10 (left). Log pen, view northeast.

Photo 11 (below). Log pen, view northeast southwest.



Privy, c. 1910 (Photo 12)

The one-story, one-bay frame privy is located west and slightly north of the house. It has a metal-clad shed roof with exposed rafter ends; an opening just below the roof provides ventilation. The building is clad in horizontal wood planks on the north elevation and vertical wood planks on the other elevations. The doorway is located at the west end of the north elevation. A low wood bench accommodates two “seats.”



Photo 12. Privy, view southeast. The doorway faces up the hill, away from all other buildings on the property. There is no door present today.

Barn, c. 1910 (alteration dates unknown) (Photos 13 to 18)

The log and frame barn is located between the edge of the field and the driveway into the property (see Photo 1). A two-story hewn log structure with half-dovetail corners forms the core of the building, and frame additions surround the east, west, and south sides. The standing-seam metal side gable roof appears to have been added at the same time as the frame additions, as it comfortably covers all portions of the barn. The broad overhang on the north side of the barn is supported by braces resting on wood blocks on the exterior of the log portion, allowing for a clear span below. The frame sections of the north elevation are clad in weatherboard, except at the loft, where the cladding consists of relatively widely spaced wood planks. The north side of the building has three entrances at the same grade as the driveway, each with a vertical plank door: one entrance is centered on the log section, and one entrance is located at the east and one at the west frame additions, both directly adjacent to the log core.

Entrances to the frame section on the south side, adjacent to the field, are at grade at field level. A central door opening to the log section, however, is above grade here, consistent with the north end of the building. A simple, dry-laid stone pier supports the sill below this opening.

On the interior of the log portion of the building, there are wood plank floors, and a straight wood stair immediately left of the north door provides access to the loft above. Floorboards at the ground level and loft are deteriorated. In the southern, frame portion of the building, the interior is divided into what appear to be animal stalls. The interior area is relatively small, and door openings are short. The stalls may have housed donkeys, sheep, or other farm animals. (The entrances appear to be too short for horses.) Some planks cover the top of the central pen, in front of the door opening to the log structure.

It appears that the hewn log portion was built as a half dovetail-notched, one-and-a-half-story building with one central entrance on the north elevation and a loft space above. Empty square notches in upper logs may indicate the original location of roof rafters. Additional logs of smaller dimension with square notched corners above the original logs raised the elevation to provide additional space in the loft when the new roof was added. The opening above the doorway is also likely a later feature, as it cuts through the original and added logs.

The western frame addition has collapsed, along with that portion of the roof. Joists tying the second floor to the log building are now visible, though collapsed. Some planks on the south elevation have fallen away.



Photo 13. Barn, view northwest from the edge of Rose Creek Road.



Photo 14. Barn, view west. The doorway at immediate left is in the east frame addition.



Photo 15. Barn, view east. Because much of the western frame extension has collapsed, the core log structure is visible.



Photo 16. Barn, south elevation view northeast. The left floor of the collapsed west end is visible at left.



Photo 17. Barn, interior, view south. This view through the log building from the north entry shows deteriorated flooring at each level, and the south doorway to plank covering over a stall in the frame addition.



Photo 18. Barn, interior south side, view east. This area appears to have functioned as animal pens. Planks have been laid over the central pen, which is accessible from the doorway in the log section at left.

Latticed Crib (collapsed) (Photo 19)

This rectangular building, located west of the barn along the driveway, had a corrugated metal gable roof, and was clad in weatherboard in the gable ends. The description of the building as a “latticed crib” is based upon the description in the 1983 survey of the property. The building has since collapsed.

Shed B (Photo 20)

This rectangular, frame building is located west of the collapsed lattice crib, adjacent to the driveway. It has a shallow front gable standing seam metal roof with exposed rafter ends. The building is clad in weatherboard, and the gable ends are filled with simple wood planks. A double-leaf plank door with metal strap hinges fills the full width of the east gable end. The weatherboard is deteriorating, particularly the boards nearest the ground. There are no interior wall finishes, and the floor is earthen.



Photo 19. Former latched crib, now collapsed, view southwest.



Photo 20. Shed B, view southwest.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Physical Development

According to a survey of the property conducted in 1983, the house on the property was built by Julius A. Cox, a farmer and one-time county official, circa 1910. The 1905 USGS map of the area shows a building at roughly the current location of the house. Cox reportedly had occupied another homestead nearby before building this dwelling (Cotton 1983).³ Outbuildings are not noted on the property until the 1956 USGS map; however, they were likely present prior to that time. It is unknown whether the hewn log portion of the barn was built here or moved to the site from another location.

The alignment of Rose Creek Road relative to the property has changed over the years. The 1905 USGS map shows the road curving west, running along the south elevation of the current barn, then crossing Simpson Creek before turning southeast to cross over Rose Creek (**Figure 3**). The 1926 soil survey shows that this portion of Rose Creek Road had been realigned, eliminating the route along the south side of the house in favor of a more direct southwest alignment that created a new crossing of Simpson Creek and eliminated two crossings of Rose Creek (**Figure 4**). This alignment is consistent with that shown on the 1938 State Highway Map and subsequent maps and aerial photographs. The current road alignment is shown on **Figure 5**, which depicts the alignment of the roadway when the current bridge no. 131 was built in 1958.

Aerial photographs and maps through the twentieth century also provide some clues to the layout and circulation pattern within the property. A 1947 aerial photo shows the land clear of trees around the house, outbuildings, and areas in between, making some circulation paths visible (Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Inc.). Two pathways, one from the barn and one from the road nearby, converge en route to the southeast corner of the house. The terminus of this path is also near the well house, located just east of the house. The driveway from the road passes by the north side of the barn, then along the buildings lining the northeast side of the cultivated field. It is possible to discern a clearing that allows for another, less worn, pathway, from the convergence of the footpaths to the west, meeting with the path from the driveway. Traces of these circulation routes are visible through the current overgrowth of the property (see photos 2 and 3). A 1964 aerial photograph continues to show a similar extent of cleared land as the 1947 aerial (see Figure 5); however the photo is not of sufficiently high resolution to show any smaller buildings on the property, including those that remain today.

³ His younger brother, Christopher Columbus (C.C.) Cox, occupied their father's (Wesley Cox) dwelling until C.C.'s death in 1923. In a newspaper article at the time, C.C. Cox was described as "one of the most substantial farmers and influential citizens in his part of the county. He was looked up to as a leader in all civic and religious matters and was a good all-around man" ("A Good Citizen of Upper Creek Passes").



Figure 3. Rose Creek Road alignment in 1905

Image source: DoI 1905

Image date: NA

Scale: 1:5000

Coordinate System: NAD83 UTM 18N



200



Feet



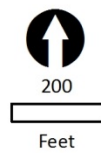
Figure 4. Rose Creek Road alignment in 1927

Image source: USGS 1927

Image date: NA

Scale: 1:5000

Coordinate System: NAD83 UTM 18N



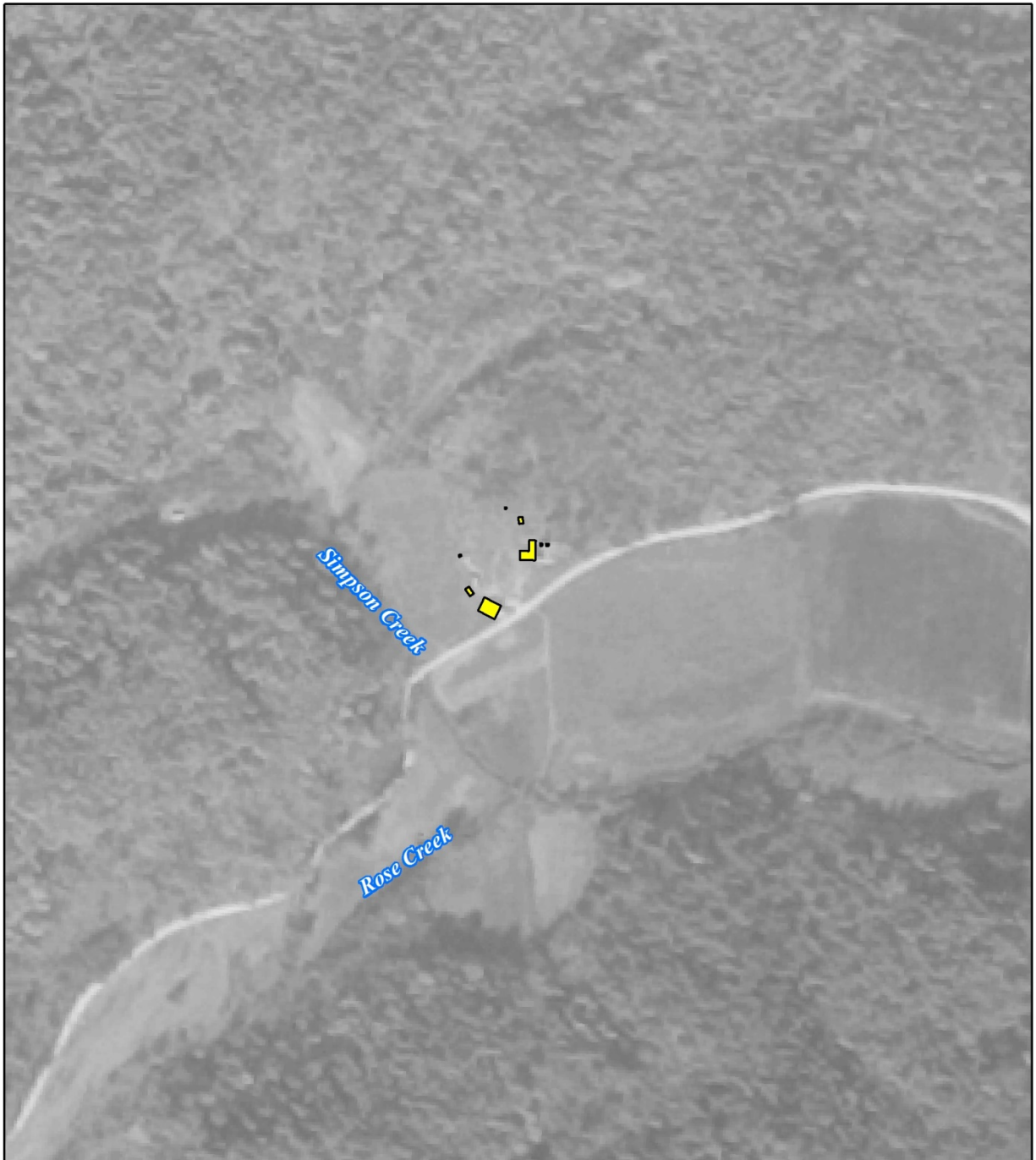


Figure 5. Rose Creek Road alignment in 1963

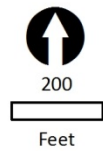
Image source: USGS 1973

Image date: NA

Scale: 1:5000

Coordinate System: NAD83 UTM 18N

 Buildings



Julius A. Cox

Julius Alexander Cox was born to farmer Wesley Cox and his second wife Catherine (Kate) (née Shuffler) in Burke County in 1848, the ninth of Wesley's twelve children (Michaels 1990; "United States Census, 1860"). The Cox family has been associated with property in Upper Creek Township for generations. A land grant was made to a Barbary Cox (or Cocks) along Steel Creek in 1815 (Grant 3671). In the 1850 agricultural census, Wesley Cox had 50 acres of improved land and 700 acres of unimproved land, then worth \$300. He also possessed \$15 worth of farm implements, and livestock valued at \$200.⁴ At the time, he was raising seven children in addition to the two-month-old Julius (Green 2008:123; Swink 1984:82). The 1870 census lists Julius as "at school," and still considered part of his father's household at age 23 (Swink & Tallent). He spent five years in Kansas and Oklahoma as a young man, and in 1876, at age 28, he married Burke County resident Phoebe Eliza Shull ("Final Rites Held for Julius Cox, Prominent Burke County Farmer").⁵ The 1880 census lists Cox as a 32-year old drygoods merchant in Morganton, living with his wife and young sons, Bella and Tommy (*Burke County, North Carolina 1880 Federal Census*). He reportedly operated his general store there for 12 years. During this period, he was also a founding member of the First Baptist Church in Morganton. Cox served as a County Commissioner (Democrat) from 1911-1914 (Phifer, 431).

By the 1900 census, Julius and his growing family had moved to Upper Creek Township. At this time, Julius' occupation is listed as Farmer, consistent with the occupations of his neighbors. Sons Bella and Thomas, then in their early 20s, were farm laborers, likely on their father's land. Four additional children, ranging in age from seven to 17, were also in the home (*Burke County, North Carolina: 1900 Federal Census*). The documentation has not confirmed whether the family was living in the house presently on the property at that time. In 1910, around the time Julius is reported to have built the house, only Julius, his wife Phoebe, daughter Louise, and son Julius, Jr. remained at home in Upper Creek ("United States Census, 1910"). Julius, Jr. was a farm laborer on his father's farm when he enlisted in the military in 1917 ("United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918"). In subsequent census years, only Julius Sr. and Phoebe are listed as living in Upper Creek Township.

An article published when Julius' brother C.C. died in 1923 stated that Julius was living in Childers, Texas with his brother William C. Cox at the time ("A Good Citizen of Upper Creek Passes"); however, both the 1920 and 1930 censuses list Julius in Upper Creek ("United States Census, 1920"; "United States Census, 1930"). When Julius Cox died in 1935, the *Morganton Herald* newspaper ran a front-page article about the passing of "one of Burke County's most prominent citizens" ("Final Rites Held for Julius Cox,..."). Cox died at his home in Upper Creek Township, of pneumonia, at age 87; his wife Phoebe had died two years

⁴ The two parcels where the buildings currently associated with the Cox farm are located are 52.29 acres, combined. Based on a newspaper article at the time of Wesley's son Christopher's (C.C.) death in 1923, Wesley's dwelling is not the one currently associated with the Cox farm ("A Good Citizen of Upper Creek Passes").

⁵ Details about Julius A. Cox's life are from this newspaper article unless otherwise noted. Cox's connections with the west continued throughout his life. Two of his children moved to Oklahoma (one of whom, Ben, became sheriff of Cimarron County), and his brother, W.C., lived in Childress, Texas ("Burke Man Elected Sheriff in Oklahoma").

earlier. At the time of his death, one brother, eight children, and 35 grandchildren survived him. Cox had been a prominent member of Smyrna Baptist Church, and was buried at Hemphill Cemetery.

Today, some of the property associated with the historical Cox family farmland remains in the ownership of Cox family members. Because of the many subdivisions, sales, and consolidations of parcel ownership over the years, the chain of title for the property is cumbersome to trace.⁶ In 2006, the parcel containing the Julius Cox house and several outbuildings came under the ownership of Gerald Cox, under Cox Burke LLC, after purchasing the shares of several relatives. The adjacent parcel to the south, which contains the barn and cultivated flatland adjacent to Simpson Creek, is owned by Steve Allen Cox, Trustee.

Agriculture in Burke County⁷

The central valley lowlands along waterways between the Blue Ridge (north) and South Mountains become the site of plantation-type farms in the nineteenth century, while the small valleys of the foothills became the locus of small-scale, owner-cultivated farming. Many residents farmed at a subsistence level, growing field crops primarily corn, as well as other grains, vegetables such as peas, beans and Irish and sweet potatoes; they also cultivated orchards of fruit trees. Livestock, often pastured in the forests, and fish from local waterways provided a ready source of meat. Market crops, such as cotton, tobacco, and rice, were very minor parts of Burke County agriculture. Many farmers kept oxen to help work the land. Plantation-type farms with slave workforces were generally located on larger tracts of land near waterways in the Catawba Valley, while non-slaveholding farmers “had to be content with narrow bottoms high up on the creeks or with upland where farming was much less productive” (Phifer, 205).

After the Civil War, the emancipation of slaves, damage to or abandonment of crops and cultivated lands, and lack of available capital resulted in the decline of many Burke County farms. The decline of plantations, and arrival of the railroad and new sources of energy spurred new settlement in villages with local postal service. For example, a post office was in operation at a place called Joy, in Upper Creek Township near the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm, in 1884; in 1896, the population was 15. Table Rock, not far south of Joy, had a post office by 1875, and the population in the 1890s was 75 (Phifer, 266). Further, the number of small farms increased more than 300% between 1860 and 1880, and the size of these farms decreased by approximately 50% (Phifer, 220). Farmers continued to work the land, though often with results that kept them economically poor. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, crops diversified and yields increased, though cash crops remained a relatively small amount of the product. Surpluses were small and sold locally. Corn, wheat, hay, oats, rye and other grains shared fields with peas, beans, potatoes, sorghum, and cotton. At local markets, poultry and dairy products, vegetables

⁶ A survey outlining parcel subdivisions and consolidation prepared in 1986, referred to in deeds as “O.C. Cox Estate Property,” was never filed with the County Recorder of Deeds.

⁷ Information about the agricultural history of Burke County is derived from Edward Phifer, Jr.’s *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County, 1777-1920 with a glimpse beyond* (Edward William Phifer, Jr.: Morganton, NC, revised 1982) and Barbee’s (ed.) work, unless otherwise noted.

and fruits provided income for local farmers. Orchards, vineyards, and other producers of fruit were located in the vicinity of the South Mountains, south of Morganton.

Through the twentieth century, the number of farmers in the county declined but crop yields continued to rise, maintaining agriculture's major contribution to the local economy. Share-crop farming and tenant farming increased after World War I; share cropping was popular as workers returned from war without cash but with farming experience. By mid-century, farmers often took jobs in other industries and continued to farm in their free time. Mechanization of farming allowed these farmers to maintain production yields with less effort. Increasingly, full-time farmers expanded their property holdings or leased additional land to make full use of expensive equipment. By the 1970s, corn remained the top crop in Burke County.

Burke County Architecture⁸

Buildings constructed by early settlers of Burke County generally reflected folk traditions from their country or culture of origin. These basic building types are often referred to as “traditional” or “vernacular” architecture. Early brick plantation houses, frame I-houses, and buildings of log construction reflect these vernacular architectural traditions. Architectural “style,” in the form of ornament or variations in roof types, materials, or other features according to contemporary trends, remained relatively rare in the county prior to the Civil War.

Log construction, a folk tradition in many northern European countries, was the most common early building technology, and remained commonplace across the state into the twentieth century. By the time Burke County was settled, the varied house forms of each country of origin were melded into what could be called an “American” tradition of building (Barbee 1987: 16). In the wooded hills of North Carolina, log construction was also practical. Materials were readily available, construction techniques were relatively straightforward, and few tools were needed. For some, the log dwelling was a temporary shelter, while others—often folks of Scotch-Irish descent in the mountain regions—continued to view log houses as a permanent dwelling. While mountain-area dwellers may have maintained the tradition of log building to the greatest extent, small farmers and landowners throughout the state continued to build log dwellings well into the twentieth century as an effective, economical alternative to frame, brick, or other methods. A variety of notch types were used to join the corners of log buildings, but the most common in Burke County was the half-dovetail. Gable roofs and were common, and log buildings were often expanded with log or frame extensions or second stories. In the lowlands, owners upgraded log buildings over time to include weatherboard cladding, cornices, window and door moldings, and other improvements, while the log buildings of mountainous areas often remained in their original state or were altered for practical purposes, excluding elements of style.

⁸ All information about Burke County's architectural context is derived from Millie M. Barbee's (ed.) *Historic Burke: An Architectural Inventory of Burke County, North Carolina* (Morganton, NC: Historic Burke Foundation, 1987), and Catherine Bishir's *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill, NC: Published for The Historic Preservation of North Carolina by the University of North Carolina Press, 1990), unless otherwise noted.

Log outbuildings were common across the state and throughout the region, and continued to be built after log houses became less favorable. Log outbuilding types included anything from barns to cribs, milksheds to smokehouses. Two- and four-crib barns were common in the nineteenth century, with the two-crib type being more prevalent in the early years of the 1800s; cribs were often separated by “runways,” internal hallways providing access to each space, though design and layout varied. In the late nineteenth century, as tobacco cultivation became popular, slatted barns became popular to provide adequate ventilation to dry the harvested tobacco leaves. Sometimes these buildings housed multiple activities, including livestock shelter, hay loft, corn crib, and tobacco drying. Corner notches were often of a simpler shape than those seen on dwellings. However, J. Randall Cotton notes that the “substantial” log barn at the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm, with its half-dovetail notches, is “representative of a type once commonly seen” in Burke County (Barbee 1987: 19). Along with a similar barn elsewhere in the county, the Cox-Simpson Creek barn is further described as follows:

They consist of several small log animal pens which make up the core of the barn. At some later time, extensive frame lofts and lean-to additions were added – a widespread practice (Barbee 1987: 19).⁹

Frame outbuildings increased in popularity in the late nineteenth century, and often were built in similar form as traditional log barns. Agricultural journals were influential, and larger gambrel roofs, ventilated haylofts, and slatted corncribs were well publicized. The use of diagonal slats or lattices became distinct features of the region. Domestic buildings and farm buildings were not the only long structures; churches, schools, and other community functions were housed in these functional buildings. Many log buildings survived in Burke County as of the 1980s, though they were often altered, “built over” or in ruins (Barbee 1987: 19).

Frame construction became more common through the later decades of the nineteenth century, including in more rural areas across the state. Sawn timber, machine-made nails, and other mass-produced elements were used to continue building classic house forms through the early decades of the twentieth century. The common one-room deep house, one or two stories tall, with gable roofs and symmetrical fenestration, and perhaps a rear kitchen ell, was perpetuated across the state. Single-room houses continued to be built, primarily for tenant farm laborers. Decorative elements at porches, trim, and rooflines sometimes expressed the taste and ambition of owners or builders, and the late nineteenth century saw front gables become fashionable, either as a full projecting gable or in a dormer. In *North Carolina Architecture*, noted architectural historian Catherine Bishir cites the Benjamin Hamilton (Hamp) Harris House as typical of those built through the second half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. The Hamp Harris House (BK0183) is on Route 181 near the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm, built around the same time, and the description is nearly identical, down to the chamfered porch posts and matchstick interior finish (Bishir, 290). Oddly, the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm

⁹ Small log pens do not appear evident in the log portion of the Cox barn today; however, pens created by wood plank framing are evident in the frame southern addition. The Barbee text does not indicate where the similar barn at the Cook-Temple farm is located in Burke County.

house has no chimneys in the main block of the building; the only fireplace is in the south room of the rear ell.¹⁰ The Hamp Harris House was included in the architectural survey of the county in the 1980s, and at that time was noted to be in excellent condition, along with some small sheds and a privy on the property. Based upon a brief view from Route 181 in 2014, the house currently appears to be occupied and in good condition. No assessment of NR eligibility as been performed for this property. Aerial photographs indicate that those small outbuildings are now gone, and a large outbuilding is now located toward the rear of the property.

The selected historic houses of Upper Creek Township illustrated in Barbee’s book illustrate the prevalence of two-story, center hall, frame I-houses in the township. The basic type is consistent, though the details vary, such as the porch posts, size of the rear ell, and chimney locations. Some have matchstick interior finishes, either as an original feature in turn of the twentieth-century houses, or as an upgrade in older dwellings. Barbee’s Burke County examples do not typically exhibit the exterior decorative features identified by Bishir as gaining popularity in the latter years of the nineteenth century. As rural farmsteads, many of these properties retain at least some associated outbuildings. These include barns, sheds, lattice-sided cribs, well houses, smokehouses, and other structures of frame and log construction.

The National Register nomination prepared for the Sloan-Throneburg Farm (BK0060) in 2001 provides an analysis of the state of preservation of Upper Creek and Lower Creek Township I-houses and related farmsteads. The author examined the agricultural properties with I-houses in Barbee’s book, and concluded that the Sloan-Throneburg Farm (Lower Creek Township) and the Theodore McGimsey Farm (BK0220; Upper Creek Township) were the best examples of intact agricultural properties in the county at that time, with the “full compliment of outbuildings” (Suttlemyer, 8-15). Based on a review of online aerial photographs, the buildings documented in the Sloan-Throneburg Farm nomination appear to remain intact.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

According to the standards set forth by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 36 CFR 60.4, eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places is evaluated under the following criteria. Buildings, structures, objects, districts, or sites must be

- A. associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or
- B. associated with the lives of significant person in our past; or
- C. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that

¹⁰ The second floor was not investigated during the field visit, so it is unknown whether this chimney also serves second floor fireplaces. There is no evidence of chimneys on the exterior or the roofline of the main block.

- represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Resources must also retain the integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association needed to convey their significance. These criteria, in addition to guidance contained in the National Register bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, were utilized to assess the National Register eligibility of the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm.

Significance

To be significant under Criterion A, a resource must be associated with a an important event or historical trend, and the resource must make a significant contribution to that event or trend. While the Cox-Simpson Farm property is associated with the context of small farms in the region in the early twentieth century, there are no known associations with specific events or significant contributions to this broad pattern of Burke County's history. The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is *not eligible* for the National Register under Criterion A.

Te be significant under Criterion B, a resource must be associated with a person or persons who have made a demonstrable contribution to important historical events or trends; have been associated with the person's productive life and the period when they achieved significance; and the property should illustrate the person's significance. If the person's significance can be demonstrated, the resource should be compared to other properties to determine which resource best represents the important person's significance and contributions to history. While the newspaper article printed at the time of Julius A. Cox's death in 1935 describes him as a "prominent citizen," no documentation has been found to substantiate that Mr. Cox made important contributions to local, state, or national history. The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is *not eligible* for the National Register under Criterion B.

To be significant under Criterion C, the resource must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; possess high artistic values; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. The collection of buildings at the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm embody the distinctive building types and construction methods prevelant on small farms of the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Together with the adjacent cultivated field, they comprise a distinguishable entity, and are significant under Criterion C.

To be significant under Criterion D, the resource must have information that contributes to our understanding of history or prehistory, and that information must be considered important. The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm does not appear to have, or the potential to have, the principal source of information important to our understanding of history or prehistory. It is *not eligible* for the National Register under Criterion D.

Integrity

In addition to having historical significance, a resource must be able to convey why and when the property was significant; the ability to convey significance is referred to as the *integrity* of a historic property. The National Register considers seven aspects of integrity:

- Location: the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Design: the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Setting: the physical environment of a historic property.
- Materials: the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- Workmanship: the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling: a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association: the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.¹¹

The level of integrity needed under each aspect depends on the significant aspects of the property that qualify it for the National Register. For example, the integrity of workmanship might not be as important for a property important for its association with a significant person under Criterion B as it would be for an important example of an architectural style under Criterion C.

As an example of an early twentieth-century rural farmstead in Burke County significant under Criterion C, the property must retain the characteristics that reflect the type, period, and methods of construction common on Burke County farms of this period. As previously discussed, these properties often included an I-house and related agricultural outbuildings, which consisted of log or frame construction. Buildings may have changed over time to suit the needs and tastes of the property owner. The most important aspects of integrity needed to reflect these characteristics are materials, workmanship, and design. Each aspect of integrity for the Cox-Simpson Farm is discussed below.

- Design: The integrity of design is retained but diminished. The design of the property's spatial organization is essentially intact. Buildings remain in their original locations and relationships to each other, the circulation routes (though overgrown) and the cultivated field. The integrity of design for individual elements of the property, however, has been diminished due to the deterioration and loss of key designed features of the buildings. The integrity of design for the I-house has been diminished due to the loss of a great deal of weatherboard cladding, all window

¹¹ The definition for each aspect of integrity is from the National Register bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (U.S. Department of the Interior: Washington, DC, 1991), p. 49-50.

muntins, and mantelpieces. The integrity of design for the outbuildings has also been diminished by the collapse of a latticed crib and the western frame addition of the barn.

- **Materials:** The integrity of materials is retained but diminished. Many key exterior materials from the farm's historic period remain intact, particularly on the log buildings. Alterations of buildings occurred during its use as a farm, primarily in the form of additions to the barn, enclosure of a rear porch on the house, and capping of the well. However, changes such as the loss of cladding and window elements on the I-house and the collapse of the west section of the barn and latticed crib diminishes the integrity of materials due to the loss of these key building elements.
- **Workmanship:** The integrity of workmanship is retained but diminished. Some elements of the property's workmanship have been compromised through collapse or missing cladding, but good evidence of workmanship remains at the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm. Hewn logs with dovetail- and square-notched corners characterize the log buildings on the property, and simple weatherboard remains on frame buildings, except for those areas of the house that have lost cladding. Matchboard finishes, a common feature of houses of this period in the region and the most decorative aspect of this property, also remain on the interior of the I-house.
- **Location:** Integrity of location is retained. The buildings at the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm appear to remain in their original locations.
- **Setting:** Integrity of setting is retained. The setting of the property remains rural. Much of the property is wooded, with a cultivated field near Simpson Creek. Across Rose Creek Road, trees are now cultivated for sale rather than corn or wheat. The topography remains intact, and there are no substantial visual intrusions in the viewshed of the property. The realignment of Rose Creek Road in the mid-twentieth century has not substantially impacted the property's setting.
- **Feeling:** Integrity of feeling is retained but diminished due to the overgrown, dilapidated and disused condition of the property. While the overgrowth of trees and other vegetation often obscures the property and views between buildings, the continued rural setting, number of buildings remaining on the property, and relationships among buildings, pathways, and field convey the feeling of an early twentieth-century farm.
- **Association:** Integrity of association is retained. Because the I-house and several outbuildings remain on the property from its construction and operation as a farm in the early twentieth century, the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm retains its integrity of association.

In summary, while the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is significant under Criterion C as an example of an early twentieth century small farmstead in Burke County, the integrity of the property is diminished owing to the collapse of the latticed crib and one frame wing of the barn, as well as the missing window muntins and a substantial amount of cladding on the I-house, particularly at the rear ell. In comparison, the nearby Hamp Harris House (BK0183) is a good example of an intact I-house in the county. As described in the National Register nomination for the Sloan-Throneburg Farm, good examples of small farms in the area that retain their main house and collection of outbuildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include the Sloan-Throneburg Farm (BK0060; listed in the National Register) and Theodore McGimsey Farm (BK0220). Given the diminished integrity of key elements of the Cox-Simpson

Creek Farm property, and the continued presence of other examples in the area that retain their integrity, the Cox-Simpson Farm does not appear to remain an important example of its type. The Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is *not eligible* for the National Register under Criterion C.

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Historic Property Survey Summary

County: **Burke**

SSN: **BK0156**

Blockface#:

Quad: Morganton
PIN:
X: Y:
DOT Project #:
OSA#:

Update Mo: **01** Yr: **2014**

- No Alt Alt Det Rehab
 Removed Outbldg Loss
 No Acc. Not Fnd FileMsg
 Newly ID'd Needs Resch.

Property Name: Julius A. Cox-Simpson Creek Farm Street or 911 Address: 3266 Rose Creek Road Location Description: North side of SR 1258 (Rose Creek Road), 1/4 mile west of NC 181 Town/vicinity: Morganton District: None () District Dates: NRdate: SLdate: DOEdat: Local District:
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<input type="checkbox"/> Recommended for SL <input type="checkbox"/> StudyList SLDate: <input type="checkbox"/> NR NRDate: NR # None <input type="checkbox"/> DOE DOEDate: DOE Type: Local Status: None Ownership: Private
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Principal Resource Material Integrity: **Low** Condition: **Deteriorated** Location Integrity: **Original**

Architectural Data: Date: ca. 1910 Major Style Group: 19th-20th c. trad/vern Construction: Frame Ext. Material: Weatherboard:Plain Later Covering: None Height: 2 story Roof: Side Gable Plan Center passage Core Form (Domestic): I-House 1st Design Source and attribution: Unknown
--

Major Theme Agriculture 2nd Theme: Group Association: Religious Affiliation Historic Function: Agriculture/Subsistence - small far

Written Summary

The Julius A. Cox-Simpson Creek Farm consists of two parcels on the north side of Rose Creek Road: the house and most outbuildings are located at 3266 Rose Creek Road, and the barn and field are located on the adjacent parcel at 3290 Rose Creek Road. There are seven standing buildings clustered near Rose Creek Road, including a two-story frame I-house, log and frame barn, two frame sheds, log pen, frame well house, and a frame privy; a latticed crib identified in a 1983 survey has since collapsed. The barn, collapsed lattice crib, and one of the frame sheds are located above the northeastern edge of the field, along the driveway. The well house, shed, log pen, and privy are situated around the house, overlooking the barn and field below. The property has been abandoned for well over thirty years, and the trees and other vegetation are overgrown obscuring pathways and views within the property.

The buildings are reported to have been built by Julius A. Cox, a local merchant turned farmer, circa 1910. His family had farmed land in Upper Creek Township since the early nineteenth century. While the Cox-Simpson Creek Farm is significant under Criterion C as an example of an early twentieth-century small farmstead in Burke County, the integrity of the collection is diminished owing to the collapse of the latticed crib and one frame wing of the barn, as well as the missing window muntins and a substantial amount of cladding on the I-house, particularly at the rear ell. It is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Outbuildings/Features

FeatureType	Material	CircaDate	Condition	Contrib
Field				

A formerly cultivated field lies south of the barn, between the barn and Simpson Creek, north of Rose Creek Road. It is unknown whether this land was used for pasture.

Road trace

1910

There are at least three traces of unpaved farm roads on the property in the vicinity of the barn and outbuilding

Shed - general storage

Frame

1910

Fair

This rectangular, frame building is located west of the collapsed lattice crib, adjacent to the driveway. It has a shallow front gable standing seam metal roof with exposed rafter ends. The building is clad in weatherboard, and the gable ends are filled with simple wood planks. A double-leaf plank door with metal strap hinges fills the full width of the east gable end. The weatherboard is deteriorating, particularly the boards nearest the ground. There are no interior wall finishes, and the floor is earthen.

Latticed Crib

Frame

1910

Ruinous

This rectangular building, located west of the barn along the driveway, had a corrugated metal gable roof, and was clad in weatherboard in the gable ends. The description of the building as a "latticed crib" is based upon the description in the 1983 survey of the property. The building has since collapsed.

Barn (general)

Log

1910

Poor

The log and frame barn is located between the edge of the field and the driveway into the property. A two-story hewn log structure with half-dovetail corners forms the core of the building, and frame additions surround the east, west, and south sides. The standing-seam metal side gable roof appears to have been added at the same time as the frame additions, as it comfortably covers all portions of the barn. The broad overhang on the north side of the barn is supported by braces resting on wood blocks on the exterior of the log portion, allowing for a clear span below. The frame sections of the north elevation are clad in weatherboard, except at the loft, where the cladding consists of relatively widely spaced wood planks. The north side of the building has three entrances at the same grade as the driveway, each with a vertical plank door: one entrance is centered on the log section, and one entrance is located at the east and one at the west frame additions, both directly adjacent to the log core.

Entrances to the frame section on the south side, adjacent to the field, are at grade at field level. A central door opening to the log section, however, is above grade here, consistent with the north end of the building. A simple, dry-laid stone pier supports the sill below this opening.

On the interior of the log portion of the building, there are wood plank floors, and a straight wood stair immediately left of the north door provides access to the loft above. Floorboards at the ground level and loft are deteriorated. In the southern, frame portion of the building, the interior is divided into what appear to be animal stalls. The interior area is relatively small, and door openings are short. The stalls may have housed donkeys, sheep, or other farm animals. (The entrances appear to be too short for horses.) Some planks cover the top of the central pen, in front of the door opening to the log structure.

It appears that the hewn log portion was built as a half dovetail-notched, one-and-a-half-story building with on central entrance on the north elevation and a loft space above. Empty square notches in upper logs may indicate the original location of roof rafters. Additional logs of smaller dimension with square notched corners above the original logs raised the elevation to provide additional space in the loft when the new roof was added. The opening above the doorway is also likely a later feature, as it cuts through the original and added logs.

The western frame addition has collapsed, along with that portion of the roof. Joists tying the second floor to the log building are now visible, though collapsed. Some planks on the south elevation have fallen away.

Privy

Frame

1910

Fair

The one-story, one-bay frame privy is located west and slightly north of the house. It has a metal-clad shed roof with exposed rafter ends; an opening just below the roof provides ventilation. The building is clad in horizontal wood planks on the north elevation and vertical wood planks on the other elevations. The doorway is located at the west end of the north elevation. A low wood bench accommodates two "seats."

