

**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

January 28, 2019

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley 
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT: Historic Structures Survey Report, Replace Bridge 222 on Big Pine Road over Back Branch,
PA 18-09-0015, B-6017, Madison County, ER 18-4254

Thank you for your December 18, 2018, letter transmitting the report for the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the report and concur that the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm (MD0302) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with rural agricultural practices and under Criterion C as an excellent and intact collection of rural agricultural buildings in Madison County.

We do not agree with the proposed boundary depicted on page 21. Rather than drawing the boundary along the tax parcel lines, I recommend that the proposed boundary for the eligible resource be drawn at the edge of pavement along Big Pine Road and Back Branch Road. It is our opinion that the rural character of the property does not stop at the parcel line, but rather extends into the right-of-way with the continuance of greenspace between the parcel line and these rural two-lane roads. This difference between the parcel line and the edge of pavement is particularly critical in the area around the house and outbuildings.

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 919-814-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT, mfurr@ncdot.gov

Received: 12/28/2018
State Historic Preservation Office



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III
SECRETARY

Renee Gledhill-Earley
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4617

December 18, 2018

ER 18-4254

Due -- 1/24/19

Dear Ms. Gledhill-Earley:

RE: Historic Structure Survey Report, TIP# B-6017, PA# 18-09-0015, Replace Bridge
No. 222 on Big Pine Rd over Back Branch in Madison County

H- ER letters
1/24/19

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to replace Bridge No. 222 in Madison County. MDM prepared the attached Eligibility Report and recommends the Ruth Jane and Ruben Burton Caldwell Farm (MD0302) eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The report and survey materials are enclosed for your review and comment per 36CFR.800. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding this project. I can be reached at (919) 707-6088 or by email at sreap@ncdot.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Shelby Reap".

Shelby Reap
Historic Architecture Section

Attachment

Mailing Address:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PDEA-HUMAN ENVIRONMENT SECTION
MAIL SERVICE CENTER 1598
RALEIGH NC, 27699-1598

Telephone: (919) 707-6000
Fax: (919) 212-5785
Customer Service: 1-877-368-4968

Website: www.ncdot.gov

Location:
1020 BIRCH RIDGE RD
RALEIGH NC 27610

Historic Structures Survey Report
Replace Bridge No. 222 on Big Pine Road over Back Branch, Madison County, North
Carolina
TIP# B-6017
WBS# 48212.1.1
PA# 18-09-0015

Prepared for:
Environmental Analysis Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Prepared by:
MdM Historical Consultants Inc.
Post Office Box 1399
Durham, NC 27702
919.368.1602

December 5, 2018

**Historic Structures Survey Report
Replace Bridge No. 222 on Big Pine Road over Back Branch, Madison County, North
Carolina**

**TIP# B-6017
WBS# 48212.1.1
PA# 18-09-0015**

Prepared for:

Environmental Analysis Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Prepared by:

MdM Historical Consultants, Inc.
Post Office Box 1399
Durham, NC 27702
919.368.1602

December 5, 2018

Jennifer F. Martin, Principal Investigator
MdM Historical Consultants, Inc.

Date

Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor
Historic Architecture Team
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

Historic Structures Survey Report
Replace Bridge No. 222 on Big Pine Road over Back Branch, Madison County, North
Carolina
TIP# B-6017
WBS# 48212.1.1
PA# 18-09-0015

Property Name and Survey Site Number	Address and PIN	NRHP Eligibility Recommendation	NRHP Criteria
Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm MD0302	8578 Big Pine Road Big Pine community 8776-06-5944	Eligible	A and C

Management Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to replace bridge No. 222 over Back Branch on Big Pine Road in Madison County, North Carolina. The project area is in the Big Pine community of Walnut Township in rural and mountainous Madison County.

This project is subject to review under the *Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects* (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA, 2015). An NCDOT architectural historian established an Area of Potential Effects (APE) for each project and conducted a preliminary investigation, identifying resources warranting additional study and eligibility evaluation. NCDOT defines this project’s APE as 75 feet on either side of Bridge No. 222 and 300 feet from each end of that structure. NCDOT Architectural Historians reviewed the properties within the APE and determined that one property greater than 50 years old warranted further evaluation: the Ruth Jane and Rueben Burton Caldwell Farm. Madison County Bridge No. 222 is not addressed in this report. Built in 1951 the structure does not exemplify any distinctive engineering or aesthetic type and is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

In November 2018, MdM Historical Consultants Inc. (MdM) conducted a historic architectural eligibility study of the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm, the only historic property located in the APE.¹ The APE is indicated on a map on page 6 of this report. MdM principal Jennifer Martin conducted the fieldwork on November 12, 2018, photographing and mapping all the built resources and landscapes associated with the subject properties located within the APE. Ms. Martin conducted research on the Madison County Register of Deeds website, the Madison County GIS website, and at the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh. She corresponded with Taylor Barnhill, lead researcher for the Appalachian Barn Alliance, a group that documents historic barns in Madison County. Ms. Martin authored this report.

¹ Reuben Burton Caldwell’s first name is spelled various ways in historical documents. In this report, the author has chosen to spell his name as it appears on his death certificate.

After an intensive evaluation following the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) criteria for eligibility, the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm (MD0302) is recommended eligible under criteria A in the area of agriculture and under criteria C in the area of architecture.

The historic architectural survey within the APE associated with the replacement of bridge No. 222 on Big Pine Road over Back Branch in Madison County, North Carolina was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Secretary of the Interior's standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 60; 36 CFR Part 800; and the NCDOT document entitled Historic Architectural Resources: Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines (2003). This evaluation meets the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service.

In order to meet the requirements of the above laws, regulations, and guidelines, the work plan for the intensive-level survey included the following items: (1) conducting general historical and architectural background research in order to develop contexts within which to evaluate the potential National Register eligibility of the resources located within the APE; (2) an intensive-level field survey of the APE, including surveying, describing, evaluating, and proposing specific National Register boundaries for any resources believed to be eligible for the National Register; (3) specific historical and architectural research on the resources inventoried at the intensive level; and (4) preparation of a report developed pursuant to the above-referenced laws, regulations and guidelines. The report is on file at NCDOT and is available for review by the general public.



View of Big Pine Road looking toward Bridge No. 222 and the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm (MD0302), view to the northeast

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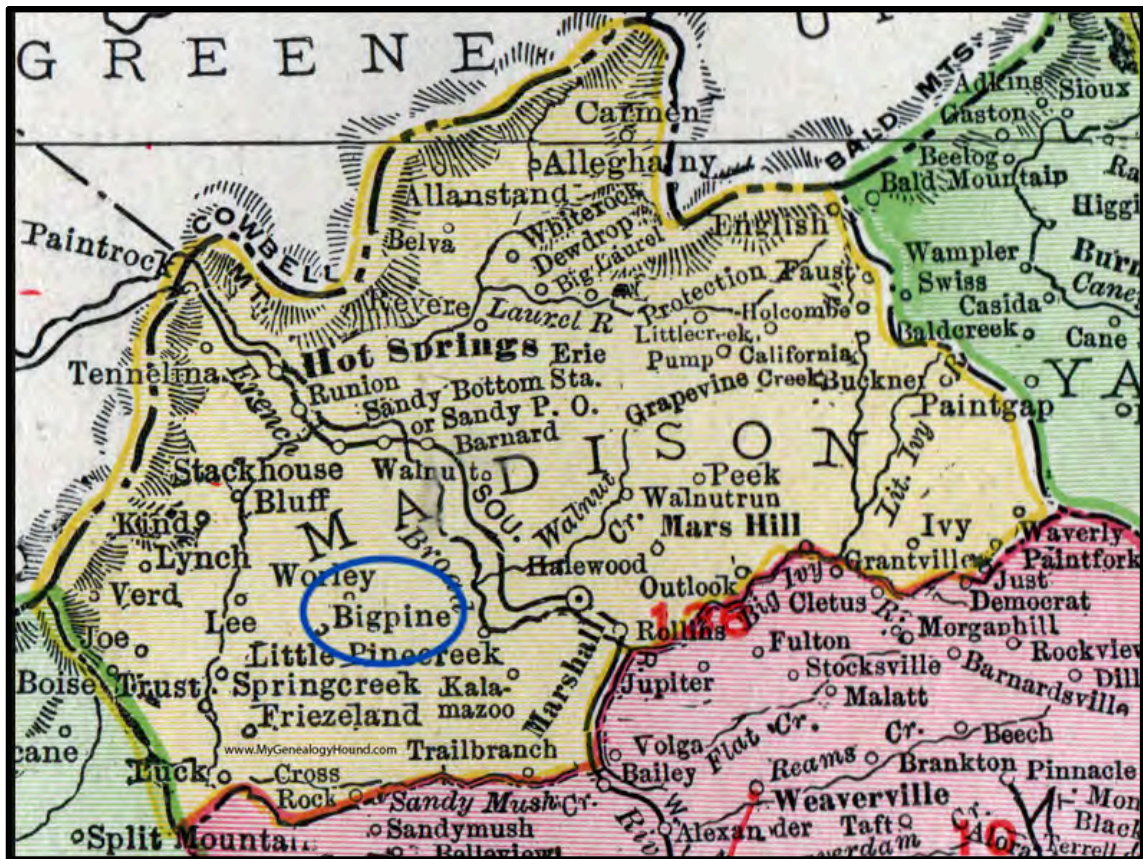


Big Pine Road looking toward the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm, view to the southwest

I. Project Location Maps



Location of Madison County in North Carolina, from the NCPedia website, www.ncpedia.org



Project area indicated on the 1911 Rand McNally map, from mygenealogyhound.com website



Delineation of the Area of Potential Effects and location of evaluated property, map from HPOWEB

II. Introduction

The project area for TIP# B-6017 is located on Big Pine Road in the unincorporated community of Big Pine west of Marshall in rural Madison County. Big Pine Road originates on the western banks of the French Broad River at the railroad community of Barnard, then winds its way to the southwest terminating in the narrow valley at Big Pine. Back Branch flows under Big Pine Road then southward into Big Pine Creek, which flows northeast alongside its namesake road ultimately emptying into the wide French Broad River. As the crow flies, the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm is located about seven miles due west of Marshall, but the trip over winding two-lane roads is double that distance.

III. Methodology

The field survey was conducted on November 12, 2018. All buildings, structures, and landscapes historically associated with the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm were photographed and recorded. Research on the project area was conducted on the Madison County Register of Deeds website, the Madison County GIS website, and at the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh. Taylor Barnhill, lead researcher for the Appalachian Barn Alliance, a group that documents historic barns in Madison County, provided additional information about the Caldwell farm.

IV. Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm: Property Description and Evaluation

Resource Name	Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm
HPO Survey Site Number	MD0302
Location	8578 Big Pine Road, Big Pine Community
PIN	8776-06-5944
Construction Date	Circa 1902, 1924
Recommendation	Eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A and C in the areas of Agriculture and Architecture



Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell farmhouse facade, view to the west-northwest

Description

Setting

The Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell farm stands in the southeast corner of a twenty-four-and-a-half-acre parcel in a rural, mountainous area in the Big Pine community in southwest-central Madison County. The property’s elevation is approximately twenty-three hundred feet. The farm is on the north bank of Back Branch, which flows eastward along the property’s southern boundary then under bridge no. 222 on Big Pine Road before it empties in Big Pine Creek. The house and outbuildings face Big Pine Road and stand in a fairly level grass-covered yard that begins to slope upward just behind the livestock barn and can house/root cellar/shed located southwest of the dwelling. Moving west from the buildings, the parcel grows steeper as it nears Snakeden Ridge, an elevated crest located to the northwest of the farm. The immediate farm yard extends over less than two acres and includes an overgrown farm field north and west of the house. A thick forest of trees

and ground cover blankets the remaining acreage. A poured concrete retaining wall standing about three feet tall at its highest point borders the front yard along right-of-way so that the house is elevated above Big Pine Road. A large tree is located just off the front, south corner of the house.



Southwest (side) elevation of the livestock barn with view to the house, view to the east-northeast

Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell House
Circa 1902

The I-house on the Caldwell Farm rests on a brick and concrete block foundation and faces east-southeast toward Big Pine Creek, which flows northward on the east side of Big Pine Road. A new standing-seam metal roof covers the house, which is sheathed entirely in asbestos cement shingles with a wavy bottom edge applied sometime before 1956.² The side-gabled house features two one-story, gable-roofed rear ells standing parallel to one another. Windows on the main block include two-over-two and three-over-one, double-hung sash. A brick chimney laid in stretcher bond rises along the south gable end.

The shed-roofed porch with exposed rafter ends rests on an elevated concrete block foundation. Original square posts atop brick plinths support the porch roof that shelters the first level of the symmetrical three-bay façade. Three original double-hung, two-over-two windows on the upper level are tucked beneath an overhanging eave. Paired windows on the first level contain original two-over-two, double-hung sash and flank a single-leaf, solid-wood door. The porch ceiling is tongue and groove wood and the floor is a concrete slab.

² A photograph of Reuben Caldwell dated 1956 indicates the asbestos was on the house at that time.



South gable end of the Caldwell House, view to the northeast



Rear elevation, view to the southeast

The one-story rear ells, standing side-by-side and of equal size, rest on a concrete block foundation. A slightly wide valley sheathed in metal roofing and situated between the gables slopes downward to capture rain runoff from the main block's roof. An inset porch with square wood posts running along three-fourths of the expanse of the rear elevation of the ells shelters a single-leaf partially-glazed door to the south and a pair of three-over-one, double-hung sash just to the north of the door. The north one-fourth of the porch is enclosed and accessed from the exterior by a four-panel wood door tucked beneath the porch. An interior concrete block flue extends from the exterior wall of the south ell through its roof. Like the front porch, the rear porch displays a tongue-and-groove ceiling and a concrete slab floor.

The property owner lives in South Carolina and did not respond to correspondence from the principal investigators. While interior access was not possible, a view from the back door into the rear ell and the main block indicates that the house follows a central-passage plan and that tongue-and-groove sheathing finishes the parlor walls. A portion of the ell walls are covered with composite plywood panels.



North (side) elevation, view to the southwest

Outbuildings and Landscape Elements

The Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm includes three outbuildings constructed in the early twentieth century. The buildings stand west and southwest of the dwelling. A poured concrete wall extends along the front of the house near Big Pine Road. Thick vegetation currently covers most of the wall.



Can House/Root Cellar/Shed

Circa 1902

Standing sixteen feet due west of the house, the two-story, multi-purpose stone, concrete, and wood building with a metal roof remains in good condition and is an excellent example of a multi-purpose domestic agricultural building. The can house/root cellar/shed is built into a bank so that its rear elevation is one story in height. The front-gabled building consists of an enclosed, stone root cellar and open-bay shed or garage on the first level. Small nearly square windows flank a metal-sheathed door fronted by a wooden screened door (screens missing) at the center of the root cellar's façade. The equally-sized open bay has a wall of concrete block on its west side. Wide vertical wood covers the upper level, but the eastern half is covered with rolled, ersatz brick sheathing. A window in poor condition is located on each half of the upper level façade.

The side (east and west) elevations include a center window and a span of openings just beneath the overhanging gable roof. A wooden batten door and a four-panel door pierce the rear elevation, which is one story in height. A small, two-lite window is positioned next to the batten door on the east side of the elevation.



Can house/root cellar/shed, front and rear elevations

The building standing closest to the dwelling illustrates the type of outbuilding found on many farms in Madison County. The Caldwell's likely assigned several uses to the relatively large edifice. It served as a can house where fresh food could be stored after it was preserved and as a root cellar where pickled and fresh vegetables and fruit could be stored in a naturally cool and insulating environment. The building also likely served as general storage for farm equipment.



Livestock barn, view to the northwest

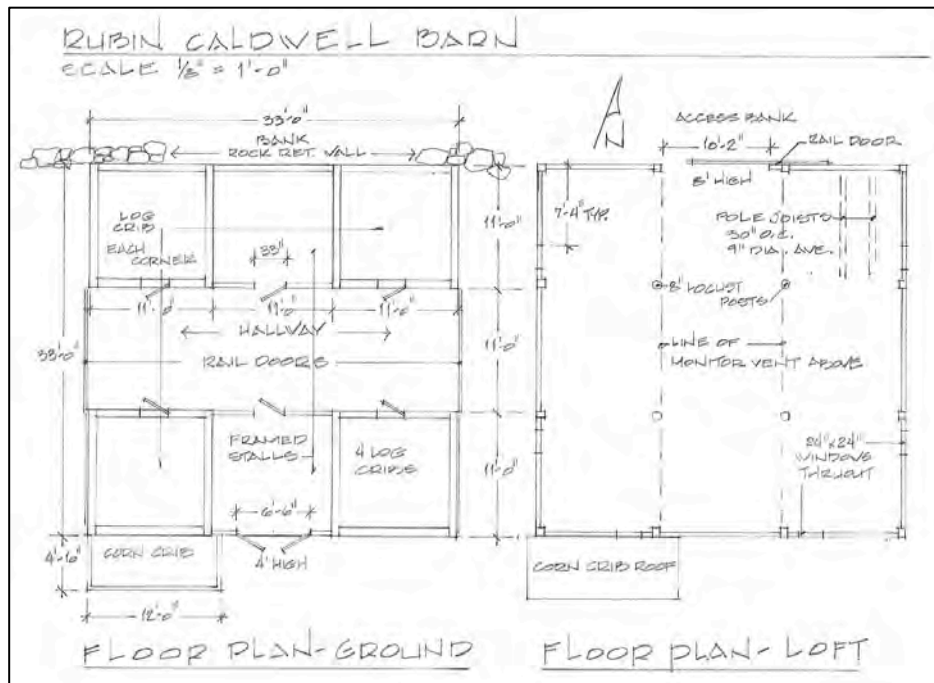
Livestock Barn
1924

Standing approximately twenty yards to the southwest of the can house, the livestock barn is an exceedingly well-preserved banked monitor-roof outbuilding. The lower level is built of log while the second level is milled lapped poplar siding and the upper section is constructed of diagonal



Livestock barn, southwest elevation (left) and northwest/rear elevation (right)

wood laticework. A 3-V metal roof tops the barn. The large building stands approximately twenty-nine feet high on its southeast side and approximately eighteen feet high on its rear elevation. The banked rear allows for drive-in access to the second-level hay loft. Square windows throughout measure 24” x 24”. The barn rests on a foundation of dry-laid stones and wood sills on stone piers. The rear is banked by a stone retaining wall. An original, 4’ x 12’ shed-roofed corn crib on the south end of the east elevation displays lattice walls and rests on a stone pier foundation.



Floor plan of livestock barn, from the Appalachian Barn Alliance Documentation Project, appalachianbarns.org

The lower level—built entirely of log—contains four cribs for housing animals. The dirt floor interior is organized around a north-south passage with the cribs occupying the four corners. The Caldwells used the open-plan second level for storing burley tobacco and the upper level for keeping hay.

Flue-curing Tobacco Barn

Circa 1902

The four exterior walls of the log flue-curing barn on a dry laid stone foundation stand about twenty-five yards west of the livestock barn. The roof collapsed several years ago. Reuben Caldwell likely built the barn around 1902. In 1918, Caldwell moved it from its original site about 200 yards west to its current location. Although it stands in poor condition, the barn is significant as an extremely rare resource associated with flue curing in Madison County, a practice that ended in the period from 1915 to 1920 with the introduction of burley tobacco as a cash crop.



Flue curing barn presently and the same barn in 1985 with livestock barn and can house/root cellar/shed in background, photo from Appalachian Barn Alliance Documentation Project, appalachianbarn.org

History

Reuben Burton Caldwell—known as Rube or R.B.—was born in Madison County in 1860 to Elmira Minerva Beech Caldwell (1831-1910) and Henry Elzie Caldwell (1824-1864).³ Reuben married Ruth Jane Roberts (1861-1940) in 1885.⁴ Reuben Caldwell acquired the land containing his family house and outbuildings from C. W. Roberts in 1902 and likely built the house and can house/root cellar soon thereafter.⁵

A lifelong farmer, Reuben Caldwell, along with his wife and children, grew wheat, grasses, corn for grain, and clover for hay as their principal crops for much of the first half of the twentieth century. He also raised cattle. For 1924, he reported twenty acres of wheat on his 238-acre farm, the largest amount of acreage in the township devoted to the crop.⁶ Caldwell kept three milk cows and fifty hens. He worked forty-one of his acres, while tenants cultivated one hundred acres. The rest of his land was cleared, but not tilled in 1924. In 1924, he built the livestock barn on his farm indicating that he likely had additional farm animals not reported by the farm census of 1925.⁷

³ Death Certificate for Reuben Burton Caldwell dated October 15, 1962, ancestry.com.

⁴ Madison County Register of Deeds Marriage Records, ancestry.com.

⁵ Madison County Deed Book 13, page 320, deed dated April 30, 1902.

⁶ After Reuben Caldwell's death in 1960, much of his farmland was divided among heirs or sold.

⁷ 1925 Farm Census Reports, Big Pine Township, Madison County, North Carolina Department of Agriculture Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. The North Carolina Farm Census Reports for 1925, 1935, and 1945 do not enumerate livestock other than milk cows, hens, and sows.

By 1934, the Caldwell farm was roughly the same size as it had been ten years before. Wheat, corn, and clover for hay occupied most of the land. In addition, the farm contained two acres of burley tobacco and smaller amounts of land devoted to Irish potatoes and truck crops, such as vegetables. The family tended twenty fruit trees, which put the can house/root cellar to good use. By this time, Caldwell was only farming ten of his acres and giving over another thirty-two to tenants. He had three milk cows and three horses or mules.⁸



Reuben Burton Caldwell on the porch of his house in 1956, posted on ancestry.com by Wilma Flowers

In 1940, Ruth and Reuben Caldwell lived on their farm with their son, Floyd Caldwell, and Floyd's wife Bevie and their five sons. Ruth died that year when she and Reuben were both in their late seventies.⁹ Just after World War II, Reuben Caldwell and his family farmed twenty acres of their 246-acre farm. Tenants cultivated another twenty-six acres. Corn, hay, wheat, and tobacco remained his principal crops, but they also grew oats, Irish and sweet potatoes, and had thirty fruit trees. Six milk cows and 125 hens lived on the Caldwell farm in 1944.¹⁰

Reuben Burton Caldwell lived a long life, dying at age 102 in 1962 in a nursing home in Waynesville.¹¹ The farm remains under ownership of Ruth and Reuben Caldwell's heirs, but the house is no longer occupied.

Context: Farms from the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century in Madison County

Madison County contains numerous late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century farms and intact rural landscapes. Farms from this period retain a variety of house forms, most commonly weatherboard I-houses and modest Queen Anne-influenced dwellings, and Craftsman bungalows built from stone, weatherboard, or to a lesser extent, brick. The county boasts a robust stock of historic outbuildings in all parts of the county, but most are concentrated in fertile valleys where farmers built a variety of domestic and agricultural outbuildings. When laying out their buildings and fields, farmers tended to take advantage of the many streams, creeks, and natural springs that abound.

⁸ 1935 Farm Census Reports, Big Pine Township, Madison County, North Carolina Department of Agriculture Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁹ 1940 Census of the Population, ancestry.com.; Death Certificate for Ruth Jane Roberts Caldwell, dated April 18, 1940, ancestry.com.

¹⁰ 1945 Farm Census Reports, Big Pine Township, Madison County, North Carolina Department of Agriculture Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

¹¹ Death Certificate for Reuben Burton Caldwell, dated October 15, 1962, ancestry.com.



House at the Clark Farm, view to the northwest

The Clark Farm at 8081 NC 63 occupies a fertile valley in the farming community of Little Sandy Mush, ten miles northwest of the Buncombe County community of Leicester. George Lyda Clark (1889-1963) established the farm and passed it to his son, Archie Clark (1914-2004) and Archie's wife, Dollie Mae Coleman Clark, in 1946. A two-story, vernacular Queen Anne-style house with L-shaped massing stands at the center of the eighty acre-farm. The dwelling features original two-over-two sash, gable returns, and spindlework and turned posts that grace the hip-roofed wraparound porch. Asbestos covers the exterior—likely added around the time Dollie and Archie Clark acquired the house. A log barn, log crib, front-gabled garage with asbestos siding, and a stone pump house are among the outbuildings on this highly intact farm.



Outbuildings at the Clark Farm, view to the northeast

The forty-acre Margaret and Theodore Plemmons Farm at 693 Sharp Hollow Road near Walnut features an early-twentieth-century house with asbestos cement siding and a collection of log and wood-sided outbuildings with metal roofs. The late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century farm buildings include a log, flue-curing tobacco barn that retains remnants of mud chinking. In the 1920s, the barn was adapted for air curing burley tobacco. The outbuildings, including a large gable-roofed livestock barn from the early twentieth century, are arranged in a neat row on the south side of Brush Creek perpendicular to the state road and just northwest of the dwelling.¹²



Plemmons Farm outbuildings with house in the background, view to the southeast

The Katie and Claude Wild Farm at 9840 Big Pine Road in Big Pine dates to the early twentieth century and features a two-story, hipped-roof frame dwelling from 1918 and a monitor roof barn similar to the livestock barn on the Ruth Jane and Reuben Caldwell Farm. Built in 1918 by Claude Wild (1887-1972), the barn is one of six monitor roof barns, including the Caldwell barn, found in Walnut Township.¹³ The sawn lumber barn stands on a foundation of dry laid stone and wood sills on rock piers. The farm also includes a small concrete spring box where the Wilds collected water from the neighboring mountains.¹⁴

¹² Taylor Barnhill, "Theodore Plemmons Barn," July 17, 2015, Madison County Barn Documentation Project, appalachianbarns.org.

¹³ Claude Jacob Wild," findagrave.com.

¹⁴ Taylor Barnhill, "Claude Wild Barn," August 27, 2015, Madison County Barn Documentation Project, appalachianbarns.org.



Claude Wild Barn, photo by Taylor Barnhill, August 2017

The Charlotte and Homer Caldwell Farm (MD0085) is at 7191 NC 209 in the southwest corner of a fifty-four-acre parcel in a rural, mountainous area of the Spring Creek community in western Madison County. With an I-house as the central resource surrounded by early-twentieth-century outbuildings, the Charlotte and Homer Caldwell Farm is similar to the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm. However, the latter retains a much higher degree of integrity. Built around 1915, the I-house on the Charlotte and Homer Caldwell Farm rests on a stone foundation and retains three-over-one and four-over-four double-hung sash and a standing seam metal roof. The dwelling's original chimney has been replaced and the house has been covered in vinyl siding. Several outbuildings remain including a two-story concrete block and weatherboard can house. To the west stand the weatherboard log burley and stock barn and the dairy barn with a concrete block silo. Both are heavily overgrown and leaning. South of these barns are the weatherboard wood shed and weatherboard corn crib, which have collapsed. A spring house stands northeast of the house facing Spring Creek. The weatherboard building features a low-pitched, front-gable roof. It is overgrown, but remains in overall good condition.



House and outbuildings at the Charlotte and Homer Caldwell Farm

Evaluation

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm is eligible for the NRHP under criterion A for significance in the area of agriculture as an intact representation of early-twentieth-century farm practices in Madison County and under criterion C for its well-preserved collection of farm buildings and landscape features that epitomize rural mountain farms in the county during this period.

The Caldwell Farm contains twenty-four acres of both cleared and wooded land in the Big Pine river valley and on the mountain slope above the central farm complex. The combination of woods and cleared land typified farms in Madison County in the first decades of the twentieth century where farmers left most of their farms in “unimproved” woodlands. Farmers in the Appalachians followed “forest fallowing” techniques in which cultivation was constantly shifted between fields and forests. Thickets of trees on mountainsides were allowed to grow for two or more decades before being returned to cultivation or pastureland. The Caldwell Farm typifies the Appalachian agricultural tradition of what cultural geographer John Solomon Otto calls forest farming with “its cycle of fields, fallow, and forest.”¹⁵

The Caldwell Farm retains a high degree of integrity. The complex stands in its original location in an isolated portion of rural and mountainous Madison County and therefore retains integrity of location and setting. The house and farm buildings retain their original or historic fabric, which contributes to the property’s integrity of materials, workmanship and design. The retention of a substantial portion of the Caldwell’s historic acreage provides adequate setting for the farm buildings and contributes to the property’s integrity of feeling and association.

Properties can be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A if they retain integrity and are associated with a significant event or pattern of events that have made contributions to history at the local, state, or national level. The dwelling, outbuildings, landscape elements, and acreage of the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm represent agricultural practices on farms in Madison County from circa 1902 into the late 1960s. The house, outbuildings, and farm fields occupy the level alluvial soil of the farmstead near two sources of water—Back Branch and Big Pine Creek. The can house/root cellar/shed, a domestic outbuilding used for food storage stands relatively close to the dwelling, an arrangement typical for mountain farms in western North Carolina. The surviving primary agricultural outbuildings, the livestock barn, which was later used for burley tobacco, and the flue-curing tobacco barn, stand farther from the home and away from the domestic sphere. While the buildings and agricultural fields immediately to the north occupy one corner of the acreage, the remaining land, which is mountainous, was used for both for grazing cattle and cultivating crops. The Caldwell Farm clearly illustrates the ordering for twentieth century Madison County farms and therefore is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of agriculture at the local level of significance.

¹⁵ John Solomon Otto, “The Decline of Forest Farming in Southern Appalachia,” *Journal of Forest History* 27 (January 1983), 22.

For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and be associated with individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state, or national context. Neither Ruth Jane nor Reuben Burton Caldwell made contributions to local, state, or national history, therefore the house is not recommended eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B.

For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion C, it must retain integrity and embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. The Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm conveys the distinctive characteristics of a rural, agricultural complex from the period circa 1902 into the late 1960s. Farmers like the Caldwells built I-houses, a common vernacular form in Madison County, to accommodate their family, but also as a symbol of their agricultural prosperity as wheat and cattle farmers. The outbuildings are well-preserved examples of their types and exemplify the form, materials, and massing of farm buildings from the period in Madison County. The Caldwell Farm is recommended eligible under Criterion C, specifically in the area of architecture.

It is unlikely that additional study of this property would yield any unretrieved data not discoverable through informant interviews, building technology, and documentary sources. Therefore, the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion D.

Boundary Description

The recommended NRHP boundary for the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm includes the legal parcel 8776-06-5944 owned by Hazel and Floyd Ralph Caldwell, the latter who is a descendant of the original owners. The NRHP-eligible parcel contains 24.51 acres. Less than two acres at the southeast corner is mostly cleared and contains the buildings and farm fields. The remaining parcel is mountainous forest land where the Caldwell's cattle once grazed and where crops grew when the land was cleared using forest fallowing techniques common in the Appalachians in the first half of the twentieth century. The boundary includes the circa 1902 house, the circa 1902 can house/root cellar/shed, 1924 livestock barn, and the remnants of the circa 1902 flue-curing tobacco barn. The boundary also includes the significant landscape and setting associated with the farm. The boundary follows the existing right-of-way along Big Pine Road and Back Branch Road. The parcel represents the land, resources, and features associated with the Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm, which has been associated with this parcel since circa 1902, the date of construction of the house and the year Reuben Burton Caldwell purchased the property. The 24.51-acre parcel is an appropriate setting to convey the property's significance in the areas of agriculture and architecture on the local level of significance.



Property map indicating National Register of Historic Places boundary, from HPO Web

Bibliography

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