A.L. Riddle House
0.6 mi. NW of the Old Natchez Trace, 0.1 mi. E of Riddle Creek and 0.5 mi. E of the Tishomingo-Prentiss County line, about 6 mi. SW of the intersection of State Rte. 25 and 30
Tishomingo Vicinity
Tishomingo County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-179

HABS
MISS,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HABS
MISS,
71-TISH.V,
8-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. MS-179

A. L. RIDDLE HOUSE

Location: .6 mile northwest of the Old Natchez Trace, .1 mile east of Riddle Creek and .5 miles east of the Prentiss-Tishomingo County line, 6 Miles southwest of the intersection of State Routes 25 and 30 Tishomingo Vicinity, Tishomingo County, Mississippi.

USGS Paden SE 7 1/2' Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates: 16.378780,3829950.

Present Owner: A. L. Riddle (August 1978).

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The A. L. Riddle House may have originally been used as a schoolhouse after the Civil War. This log structure was moved to its present site in 1919.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: A. L. Riddle moved the structure to its present site in 1919 as a home for him and his wife. (Interview with A. L. Riddle)

2. Architect: Unknown.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Riddle House is located in the northwest quarter of Section 35, Township 5 South, Range 9 East, in Tishomingo County, Mississippi. References to the title for this property can be found in the Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi. Earlier references to the building may be found in the Old Tishomingo County Deed Records, Office of Chancery Clerk, Alcorn County Courthouse, Corinth, Mississippi. In a Warranty Deed dated September 6, 1919, A. L. Riddle received the property on which the structure is located from his father, W. C. Riddle for the sum of $500:

   Part of the North West quarter of Section (35) Thirty-five, Township Five (5) Range (9) Containing 30 acres more or less. Starting at the North East corner of said quarter, thence West 52 rods to Wilsons creek [now Riddle Creek] thence with the meanderings of said creek 83 rods thence east with said road 57 rods to the South east corner of said tract [sic] thence 93 rods to starting point." (Deed Book P-13, p.50)

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: A. L. Riddle moved the building from a site on a ridge one half mile southeast of the present location. (Interview with A. L. Riddle) The practice of moving buildings intact and adapting them to other purposes is a familiar custom still practiced in southwestern Tishomingo County.

5. Original construction: As reconstructed by Riddle the rectangular log structure consisted of an 18'-square room on the east adjacent to an 7' by 18' kitchen on the west. An interior partition separated the two rooms. A porch, now gone, extended the length of the south side and included an enclosed sleeping room under the western portion. The sleeping room was reached from the porch through an opening on its east side. This porch was not integral to the structure of the house, but was added by Riddle about 1919. Access to the dwelling was through doors located at the present openings on the south and west sides of the building. (See floor plan, included with Part II., Architectural Information.)

   A cat-tail chimney, now gone, stood to the north of the window opening on the east side of the house. (Interview with A. L. Riddle) These mud-daubed chimneys were once common in southwest Tishomingo County (Sumner, p. 55), and a description of how they were made is included with the Supplemental Material. The roof was "raftered down and covered with board." The logs used to construct the house were hewn from the heartwood of virgin pine, which "outlasts iron." (Interview with A. L. Riddle)

6. Alterations and additions: Around 1930 the wood roofing rotted out and had to be replaced with metal sheeting. About that same time the south porch and sleeping room deteriorated. A storm in 1932 blew off the first metal roof, and it was replaced with the present corrugated tin. The notches below the roof line on the north and south sides were cut to accommodate pole joists supporting loft flooring during the tenancy of Porter Beard, who used the structure as a barn. (Interview with A. L. Riddle)

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

1. According to A. L. Riddle, the structure he moved in 1919 had been used by his uncle Van as a barn since 1875. This same uncle told Riddle that he himself had attended school in that building after the Civil War. It is not clear whether the school was located on his uncle's property or another site. The scanty documentary evidence on late nineteenth century Tishomingo County schools offers no support for the building originally serving as a school. However, the positioning of door and window openings and the height of the building in relation to its length and width suggest that it was originally designed for community rather than domestic use. In 1860 the Board of School Commissioners of Tishomingo County did appoint a J. M. Riddle to serve with four other men as trustees for a common school in Range 9, Township 5, where the building is located (Cochran, pp. 155-57).

2. The Riddles were among the earliest settlers of Old Tishomingo County, which comprises the present counties of Alcorn, Prentiss, and Tishomingo. They appear in county records by 1840 (History of Old Tishomingo County, p. 27). William Riddle, the father of A. L. Riddle, stated in the U.S. Census of Population for 1900 that his father had come from Tennessee and his mother from Illinois. C. M. Riddle and T. E. Riddle fought with Mississippi Company H during the Civil War. (Cochran, pp. 187-188) A. L. Riddle stated that his grandfather had been captured by Union forces at his home and died in a prison camp in Illinois. In 1845 Charles and William Riddle helped to found Macheys Creek Church, a Primitive Baptist Church which is still a center of activity for this rural area. (Sumner, pages 79-80)

3. Albert Lewellen Riddle was born in 1895. He was the son of William S. and Mary Riddle. (U.S. Census of Population, 1900) His older brother was Minter Riddle who built the M. V. Riddle Barn (See HABS No. MS-180) A. L. Riddle was educated at the Oak Ridge School. He married his wife Essie, who died June 5, 1978, on January 28, 1917. Shortly thereafter he was drafted into the Army, returning to Tishomingo County on August 19, 1919. Riddle belongs to Mackeys Creek Church. Over his lifetime, he has increased his original 30-acre holding to over 600 acres by buying small parcels of land when they became available either keeping them or deeding them to members of his family. Riddle devoted himself to other enterprises besides farming. S. B. Wilson remembers driving a mule cart across the valley and down the road to the Riddle House during the early twenties to buy "Japanese Oil," a highly regarded cough remedy available only through individual distributors.

Riddle was also responsible for instituting school bus service in the southwestern Tishomingo County area. He and his sons first hauled children to school in a wagon drawn by a team of oxen. One of these school wagons still remains on Riddle's property by his present home. (Interviews with A. L. Riddle and S. B. Wilson).

4. The A. L. Riddle family lived in the log structure from 1919 to about 1922. Riddle and his wife slept in the sleeping room, and despite the lack of chimney and insulation, they were "warm a plenty." One cold winter night they went to bed as usual "piling on the quilts." When they awoke the next morning, "snow had blowed in under the boards and was on the bed." (Interview with A. L. Riddle) The house presently serves as a barn.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

U.S. Census of Population, 1900, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, p. 209 B Available on microfilm in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson Mississippi.

Interviews:

A. L. Riddle, Route 2, Tishomingo, Mississippi 38873. August 8 and August 24, 1978. Riddle provided information about himself and about the physical history of the structure. He was the original occupant of the house and has owned it since 1919.

S. B. Wilson, Belmont, Mississippi 38827. August 9, 1978. Wilson has lived in this area all his life. He coorroborated Riddle's recollections and offered additional information.

Dalton Ward, Route 6, Booneville, Mississippi, August 24, 1978. Ward was born in 1902 and has lived in the Bay Springs area all his life. He offered the explanation of how 'cat-tail' chimneys were made. This information is included with Supplemental Material.

Sumner, Mary Floyd. "History of Old Tishomig County: 1836-1860." M. A. Thesis. University of Mississippi, 1957. (Available in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi)

2. Secondary and published sources:

Cochran, Fan Alexander. History of Old Tishomingo County, Mississippi Territory (Oklahoma City: Barnhart Letter Shop, 1969).

Corinth Herald. History of Old Tishomingo County (Corinth, Mississippi: Historical Edition, December 15, 1903).

Both of the above may be found in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

D. Supplemental Material:

Account of the procedure for making "cat tail" chimneys given by Dalton Ward.

Prepared by Betty K. Bird
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The A. L. Riddle House is a rectangular log structure that has been used variously as a barn and a dwelling and perhaps even as a schoolhouse.

2. Condition of fabric: Marginally maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This log structure is approximately 19'-3" wide (two-bay front) by 25'6". It is one-story and contains a single rectangular space. (See floor plan, below.)

2. Foundations: Foundations are piers of stone blocks and irregularly shaped logs.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: Walls are of hewn logs roughly 10" by 10" to the height of the eaves. Half-dovetail notching is used at the corners. Above this line, the gable ends on the east and west facads are enclosed with circular sawn boards ranging in size from 8" to 12", applied horizontally.

The exterior walls have weathered to a gray color. If chinking did exist between logs, it has disappeared.

4. Structural system, framing: The structure is built of hewn logs, with half-dovetail corner notching. The roof is supported on 2 x 6 rafters across which 1 x 4 purlins are laid. A single interior brace composed on an 8"-diameter log spans the structure just east of its north-south minor axis, perpendicular to the direction of the roof ridge.

5. Openings: The building has five ground-level openings, all of which have been boarded shut. On the east is one measuring roughly 2'-8" in width and 6'-0" in height, and another measuring roughly 4'0" wide and 6'-0" high. On the north is one measuring roughly 2'-8" wide and 7'-0" high. On the west is one measuring roughly 2'-8" wide by 6'-0" high. On the south is one measuring roughly 1'-8" in width by 7'-0" in height. In the gable end on the east is a loft-level opening roughly 2'-6" wide by 3'-0" high.

6. Roof:

   a. Shape, covering: The sturcture has a gable roof, with its ridge running east-west and surfaced with galvanized corrugated metal sheeting.

   b. Cornice, eaves: No fascias boards are used. The roof overhangs the wall approximately 2'-6" on the east and west and approximately 1'-6" on the north and south.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The single floor is a simple rectangular space used for storage of hay. No loft floor or floor joists remain. (See floor plan.)

2. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are the interior surfaces of the logs, wide planks attached in places to cover the spaces between logs.

3. Doorways and doors: None exist except as listed for the exterior.

C. Site:

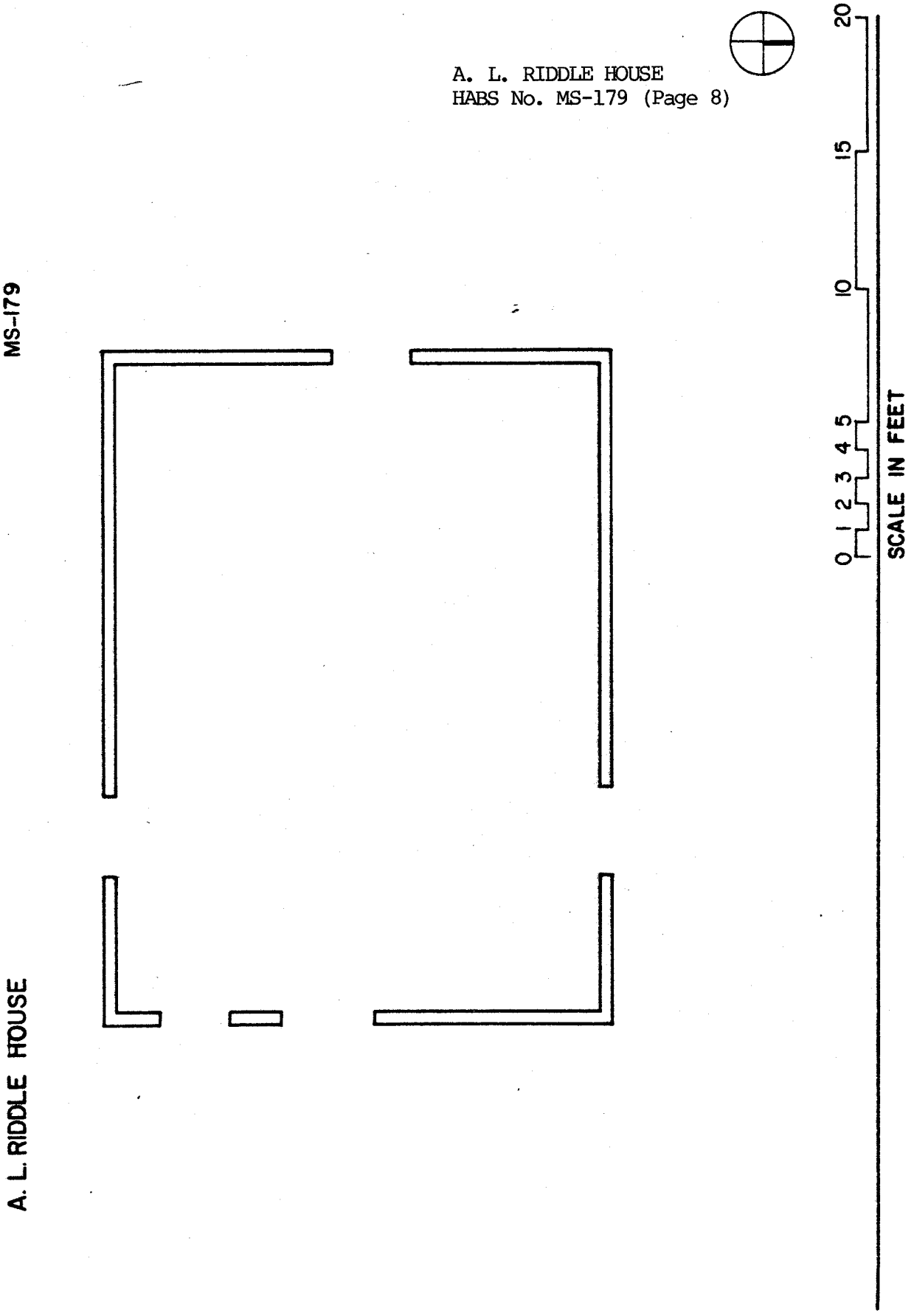
1. General setting: The building is approached from the east by a narrow dirt road. It is located in an open field 400 feet east of Riddle Creek.

2. Outbuildings:

   a. About 100 feet south of this structure is a one-story frame tenant house, rectangular in shape, measuring about 16' (one-bay front) by 23'-6". It has corrugated metal gable roof, with ridge line running east-west over the main room, and a shed roof over the south (rear) porch. There is an exterior end chimney at the ridge line on the east elevation. The house was built ca. 1900 of lumber salvaged from a late nineteenth-century dwelling.

   b. About 50 feet east of the log structure is a one-story board-and batten frame house, rectangular in shape, measuring about 35' (four-bay front) by 22'. It has a corrugated metal gable roof, with ridge line running east west, and a shed roof over the south (front) porch. There was once an exterior end chimney at the ridge line on the east elevation. The house has two front rooms and two integral rear rooms. It was built ca. 1921.

Prepared by: James Murray Howard
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1978


MS-179
A. L. RIDDLE HOUSE
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SCALE IN FEET

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennesee-Toimbigbee Waterway Project, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Interagency Archeological Services, Atlanta, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile and Nashville Districts, in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a mitigative effort in the construction of the waterway. Records were made of eighteen historic sites and structures in the region between Gainesville, Alabama, and Iuka, Mississippi.

The project was executed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was James Murray Howard of the University of Illinois. Project Historian was Betty K. Bird of the University of Virginia. The Assistant Historian was Michael Ann Williams (University of Pennsylvania). Foreman was Ruthie D. Wiley of the University of Florida. Student Architects who prepared measured drawings for the project were Carol J. Crandall (Carnegie-Mellon University), Richard J. Cronenberger (University of Miami), Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Daniel M. Gaines (University of Tennesee), and R. Bradley Mellor (Rice University). The inventory of sites within the project area was carried out by Inventory Supervisor J. A. Chewning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Assistant Historian for the inventory was Pamela J. Wolf (George Washington University). One structure was recorded during the winter of 1979 by project supervisor Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Sally K. Tompkins, Project Historian, and Staff Architects Bethanie C. Grashof, Rudy Massengill, and Janet Hochuli (The Cooper Union). Drawings for this sturcture were completed during the spring of 1979 by staff Architects Peter G. Darlow, Janet Hochuli, James F. Speake and Reginald A. Berry (Howard University). Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in the summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.