

ARRINGTON FARM HOUSE
(Brightwood Farms)
Route 29, north of the Intersection of Route 634 & Route 29
Madison
Madison County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1385

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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ARRINGTON FARM HOUSE (Brightwood Farms)

HABS No. VA-1385

Location: Off of Route 29 North, Madison, Madison County, Virginia.

The Arrington Farm House is situated at Brightwood Farms, located in Madison County 3.3 miles north of the intersection of Route 634 and Route 29 North in the town of Madison. The farm house sits on a prominent hilltop approximately 100 yards south of the highway and slightly below the grade of the modern road level.

Architectural Description:

Exterior: The clapboard building consists of a two-story nearly square mass with a gable roof and a one-story, two room addition with a low-pitched gable roof appended to the south and east side of the main block. Both sections are covered with green standing seam metal roofs that are pierced by stovepipe chimneys; one through the west gable of the main block and the other in the southeast corner of the addition. The clapboard on the main section to the west is secured by square-headed cut nails and runs from the sill to the roofline where it meets with a wide face board, topped by a small ovolo molding. The walls of the addition section to the east are secured with circular-headed (possibly wire) nails and meet the roof at overhanging eaves. The entire house rests on a series of rocks that serve as the foundation for its frame. At the northeast corner of the building clapboards at the sill have fallen away to reveal uniform size studs nailed to the sill with a corner brace. Further damage at the sill level indicates that the framing of the west section of the house consists of studs and posts of different sizes. Posts at the corners and window and door frames are secured in the sill by mortise and tenon joints with the studs between them simply nailed to the sill. Nail heads on the clapboard follow a corner brace on the south side of the west wall. Cracks inside the house show an additional corner brace on the north side of the partition wall between the two sections of the house. No evidence suggests any other braces in the framing.

Interior: The main entrance to the house, on the south side of the building, is marked by a one-story wood porch that shares its roof with the east addition. The porch leads to two doors; one marked with a simple transom which leads to the west section, the other unadorned, which leads into the east section. Another unadorned door on the north side of the house leads into the room of the west section, while a fourth exterior door on the east side of the house leads

into the north room of the east addition. Inside the building the first floor consists of three rooms.

The west room walls and ceiling are covered in plaster, which is applied to sawn laths that are secured to the framing members by wire nails. The east wall of the room is not plastered but consists of a partition of planks that creates two closet spaces below a staircase. Along the plastered walls a baseboard with an ovolo and beading and a simple chair rail with rounded edges adorn the room. An opening in the west wall indicates where a wood stove was once vented through the exterior wall. The window and door surrounds are decorated with a very simple molding profile; most throughout the house are of the same design. A doorway in the west room leads to the stairway, and further into the east section.

The stairway is a straight ascent enclosed between the paneling of the west room and the wall between the west section and east addition. A landing at the top of the stairs holds a simple rectangular newel post with smaller balusters running from the post along the floor level for the last half of the ascent. From the landing a plastered hallway with baseboards provides access to a small room to the west. Another door in the southeast corner of the hall leads to a staircase to the attic while a window on the south wall provides light. The small west room on the second floor is separated from the hallway by a thin plank partition. Doorways on the second floor do not have molding surrounds but the three windows have the same surrounds as the first floor. Likewise, the exterior walls are plastered and have the same baseboard molding as the first floor. The space in the west room on the second floor is partially interrupted by a chimney on the west wall. A similar staircase to that from the first level is concealed behind a board and batten door in the second-floor hallway. The framing system of the attic is constructed of circular-sawn rafters of a standardized size that are nailed together at the peak without a ridgeboard. A small window on the south side of the chimney on the west wall provides light to the attic.

The south room of the east addition has horizontal planks covering the walls that have been painted yellow. Unadorned windows on both the south and east walls light the room. A pipe in the ceiling indicates that there was another wood stove in the room. A sink and shelves suggest that this may have been the kitchen. A board and batten door on the north wall of the room leads to the north room of the east section. The north room shows few signs of having had any sort of finishing. The ceiling is exposed to the rafters and the west and south

walls show clapboard. Simple boards without any sort of molding surround a window on the north wall and the two doors.

An analysis of the evidence suggests that the Arrington Farm House at Brightwood Farms was built in at least two phases during the middle to late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The difference in nail types and framing techniques between the west and east sections of the house demonstrates that the west portion is of an earlier date. Cut nails and circular-sawn clapboard securely date the west section to after 1850. The use of both joined and standardized framing components indicates that the west section was constructed on the threshold of balloon framing. Considering its rural location, the likely construction time is during the 1880s. The east section is composed entirely of standardized framing and circular-headed wire nails, which suggests a construction date from the early twentieth century. It is probable that the north room of the east section was constructed in a third building phase, which enclosed either an outside area or a porch which has left the clapboard exposed. At the time of the second and third phases, plastering appears to have been applied or reapplied and the roof replaced.

Historian(s): Heather McMahon and Richard Sidebottom, May 2003.

Project Information: The documentation of the Arrington Farm House took place as part of Louis Nelson's (2003) field methods class at the University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Department of Architectural History. Students recorded various structures through measured drawings and written description; the record the students created was dependent on their ability to read what the structure was telling them about its construction history rather than on traditional documentary research.

Photographs

- Figure 1 Exterior view of the west and south walls.
- Figure 2 Exterior view of the west and north walls.
- Figure 3 Exterior view of the east and north walls.
- Figure 4 Exterior detail of damaged clapboard at the northeast corner at the sill level.
- Figure 5 Exterior detail of circular-sawn clapboards and square-headed nails at the southwest corner of the west section.
- Figure 6 Interior view of the first floor west room looking north and east at partition wall and closets.
- Figure 7 Interior view of the south room of east addition looking east.
- Figure 8 View of the roofing system in the attic of the west section.
- Figure 9 Interior detail of lock on the exterior door of the southeast room.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

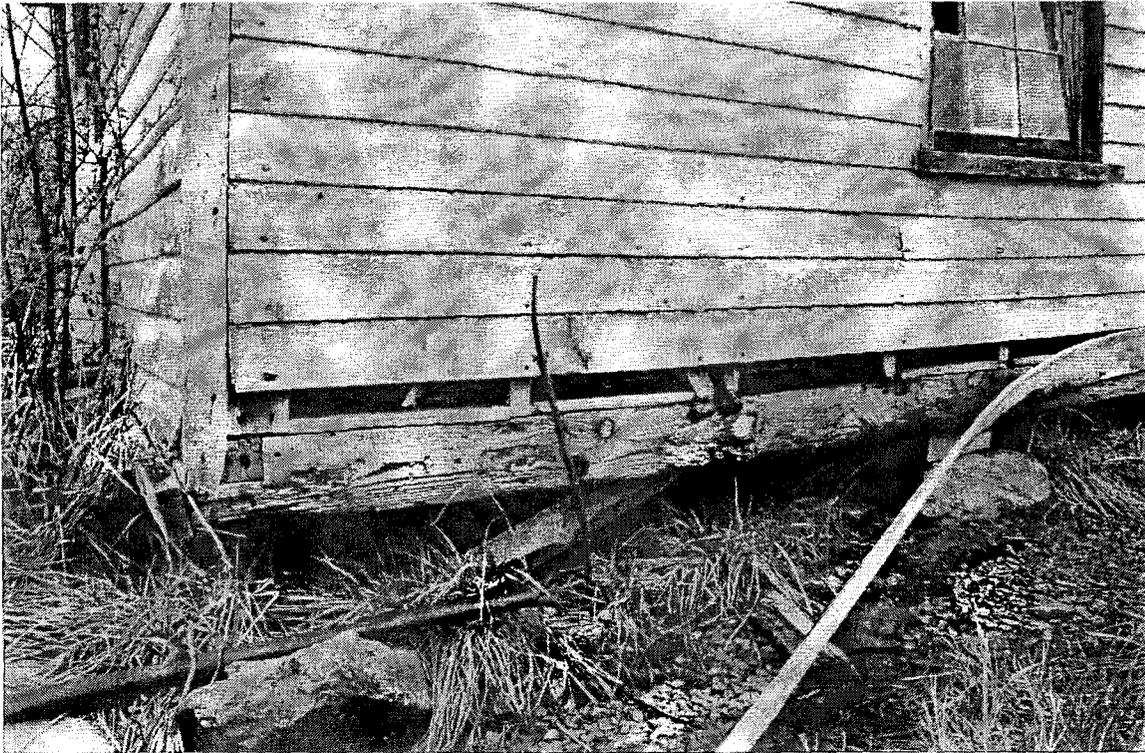


Figure 4

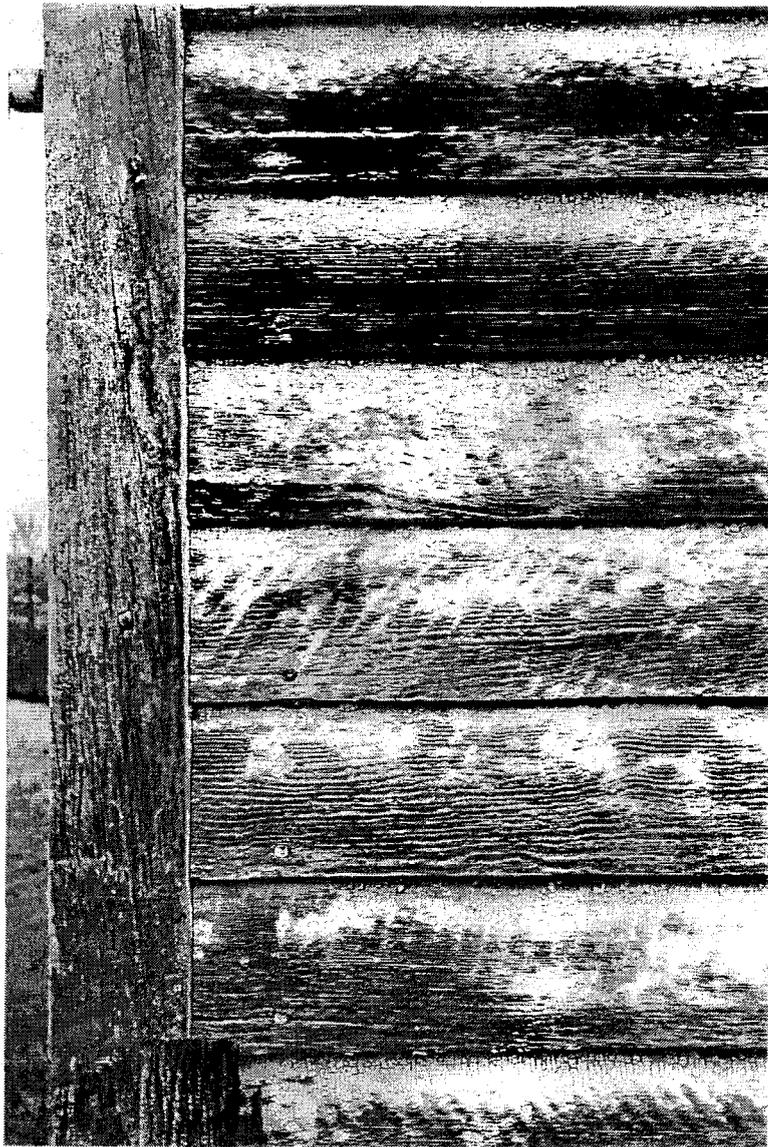


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

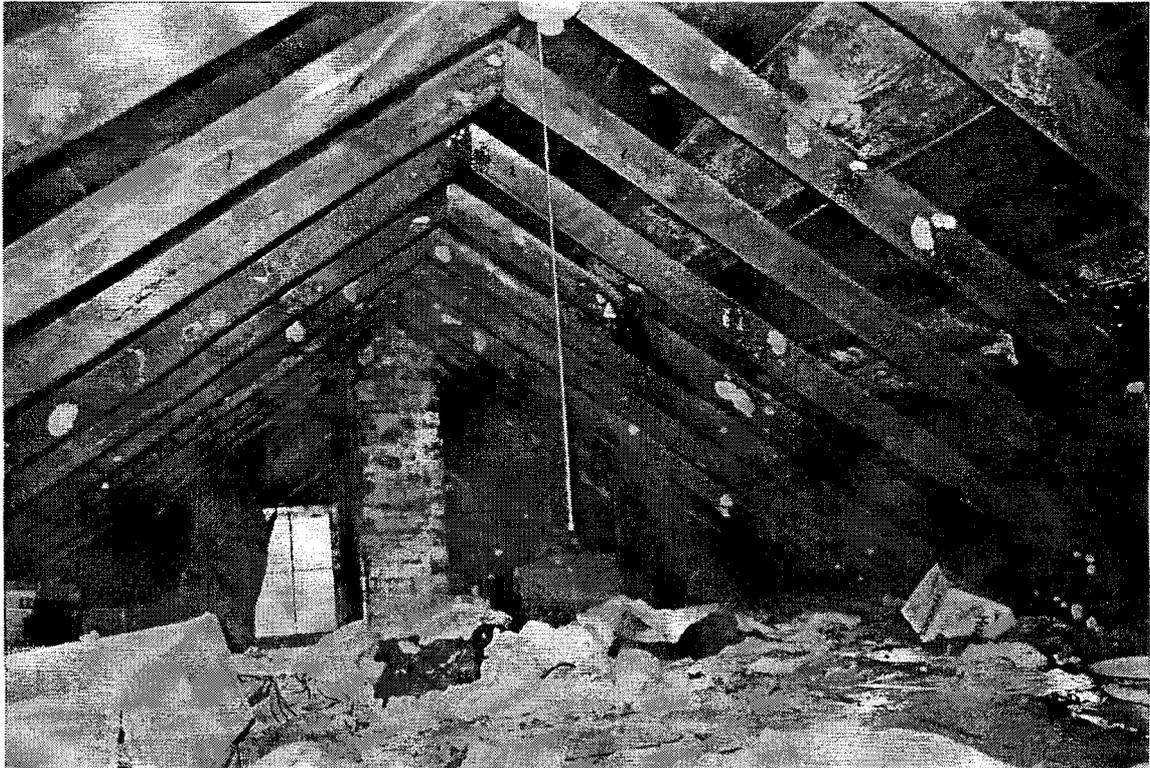


Figure 8

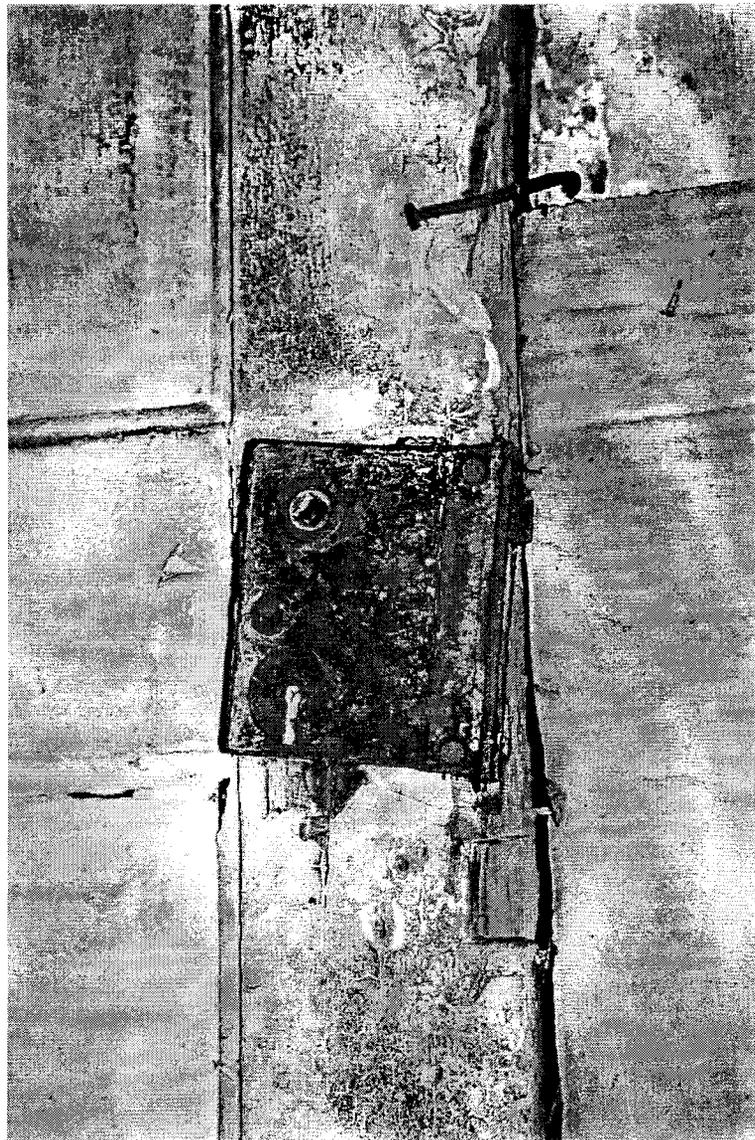


Figure 9