

M.V. Riddle Barn  
0.6 mi. NW of the Old Natchez Trace,  
0.7 mi. E of the Prentiss-Tishomingo  
County Line, about 6 mi. SW of the  
intersection of State Rte. 25 and 30  
Tishomingo Vicinity  
Tishomingo County  
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-180

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MISS  
71-TISH.V  
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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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MS-180

M. V. RIDDLE BARN

Location: .6 miles northwest of the Old Natchez Trace, .7 miles east of the Prentiss-Tishomingo County line, about 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: 16.79115.3830040.

Present Owner: United States of America (August 1978).

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Riddle Barn is an example of log technology used in the twentieth century to construct farm outbuildings. The log construction, crude in comparison to that of most nineteenth century log houses, was used primarily as an economic expedient to save milling costs. The small barn, enlarged with a frame addition, was used to house livestock and store some crops from the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1934. Mrs. Clovis Smith and her sister Mrs. Robert Dean agreed that the barn was built about this year, during the period of time that the Deans rented and farmed the land.
2. Architect: According to Mrs. Clovis Smith, the plan of the barn was probably decided upon by M. V. Riddle, the owner and builder.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Riddle Barn is situated on a tract of land, acquired by the United States of America for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project and described as follows:

"Beginning at the Northwest corner of the Northeast fourth of section thirty-five (35), township Five (5), Range 9 East, running east 80 rods, thence south 55 rods, thence west 80 rods, thence north to the point of beginning, containing 27 1/2 acres more or less." (from the legal description in the 1940 deed, Deed Book P-31, p. 560).

The following deed records are located in the Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

- 1927 Deed. Heirs of W. M. Riddle to M. V. Riddle, November 12, 1927. Recorded January 1, 1940, in Deed Book P-25, p. 592. The first parties each conveyed a one eighth interest in those lands inherited from W. M. Riddle. 240 acres, for \$800.
- 1950 Deed. M. V. Riddle to Sophia and Elma Shackelford, September 4, 1950. Deed Book P-31, p. 560. 27 1/2 acres, for \$400.
- 1978 Warranty Deed. Sophia and Elma Shackelford to United States of America, March 3, 1978. Deed Book B-91, p. 70. 27 1/2 acres, for \$21,000.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The barn was built by M. V. Riddle, with the aid of neighbors who would donate a free day's work. According to Mrs. Clovis Smith, log construction was used to save the expense of having the timber milled.
5. Original construction: The original plan of the barn consists of a single log unit and an open-sided shed enclosure on the south side. On the ground floor, the log unit is divided into two cribs by logs notched into the exterior logs that run the length of the structure. The two cribs have been used for livestock (both contain troughs), though according to Clovis Smith, one or both of the areas were previously used as corn cribs. The second floor, which served as a hay loft, is undivided. The space under the shed roof is divided into two areas by horizontal boards, to the height of approximately four feet, indicating that one or both of these areas were in some ways enclosed, probably with wire or fencing.

The construction techniques used are relatively crude, typical of log construction used for outbuildings. The logs used are small, averaging approximately 5" to 6", and are shallowly hewn on the two sides which form the exterior and interior walls. The other sides of the logs have been left rounded. The spaces between the logs are relatively wide, approximately 2" to 3", and appear never to have been chinked. Instead, riven boards are nailed to the logs to cover the gaps. The corner timbering is a rather crude V-notching (see Kniffen and Glassie, 1966 pp. 52-57 for terminology of corner timbering). A V-shaped notch is cut in the bottom of each log, but the top of the log is only roughly shaped to fit the V.

6. Alterations and additions: A frame addition, with a shed roof, built along the length of the north side, was added by Clovis Smith fairly soon after he began to rent the land in 1936. The addition was used to store corn, and some farm equipment. The log portion was then used to house livestock and store hay. Only the north wall of the addition is still standing, the rest has fallen into disrepair.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

During the period in which the M. V. Riddle Barn was built, around 1934, the property was being rented by Robert and Verlie Dean. The barn was built by Riddle for the Deans' use. From about 1936 to 1946, the property, with the barn and a house, was rented to Mr. and Mrs. Clovis Smith, Mrs. Dean's sister and brother-in-law. The small barn was enlarged by Mr. Smith when he decided he needed more room to store corn. At this time the barn served a small farming operation rented under a sharecropping agreement.

During the late 1940s, the property was rented by R. P. Shackelford. In 1950, after his death, a 27 1/2 acre tract on which the house and barn were situated was acquired by Shackelford's daughters Sophia and Elma. At the same time, an adjoining 27 1/2 acre tract was purchased by their brother. For several years, when their brother plowed the land for them, the Shackelford sisters planted corn and cotton. In later years they just planted a large garden of peas, beans, sweet potatoes, corn, collards, and peanuts. The Shackelford sisters also owned livestock, including several dairy cows, hogs, chickens, and a mule which had belonged to their father. In recent years, declining health prevented the sisters from continuing to operate the farm, and the barn and pasture were rented out.

Elma and Sophia Shackelford have always lived in the immediate area around Mackey's Creek in southwest Tishomingo County, and they have noted the great changes which have occurred in it. Although the community itself had no name, people in it were generally associated with either Jackson Camp or Mackeys Creek Church. A community of farmers, owning or renting small subsistence level farms, it was once, according to Elma and Sophia Shackelford, a tight social unit. Neighbors exchanged labor and helped out when needed. Social events were numerous, and included church going, dances, parties, and frequent social visits. In recent years, residents have died or moved away, and much of the land in the area is now being purchased for the proposed Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. In July, 1978, Elma and Sophia Shackelford moved to a new house nearby, just south of Jackson's Camp Church.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

Interviews:

Sophia and Elma Shackelford, Tishomingo, Miss., July 19, 1978. The Shackelford sisters, owners of the property on which the barn is situated from 1950-1978, have always been residents of the immediate area.

Mr. and Mrs. Clovis Smith, Tishomingo, Miss., August 3, 1978. The Smiths rented the property from about 1936 to 1946, and Mr. Smith built the addition. Mrs. Smith consulted by phone with her sister, Verlie Dean, who with her husband, Robert Dean, farmed the land prior to the Smiths.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Kniffen, Fred and Henry Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time-Place Perspective." The Geographical Review 56 (1966); 40-60.

Prepared by: Michael Ann Williams  
Assistant Historian  
Historic American Buildings  
Survey  
August 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is an example of the continuation of log construction for farm buildings into the twentieth century.
2. Condition of fabric: With the exception of the ruined northeast corner, the building is moderately well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-and-a-half-story barn is 20'-5" (two-bay front) x 26'-0" (gable end) in overall dimensions. It is a two-crib barn with flanking shed areas on the north and south.

2. Foundations: Wooden piers constructed of logs and random lengths of lumber are used at all support points except along the south side, where posts for the shed roof run directly into the ground.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Walls for the main portion of the structure are primarily of shallowly-hewn, unpainted, V-notched logs, apparently never chinked, with spaces between, averaging 2" to 3" in width. Logs average 5" to 6" in diameter and generally are scored at 2'4" intervals. Sometimes these spaces are partially closed by riven planks nailed to the exterior. Small sections of exterior wall surface are of unpainted planking used on the shed-roofed enclosure along the north side of the building. Planks are of random lengths, ranging in width from 3" to 7 1/2". These planks are attached to vertical studs.
4. Structural system, framing: Framing for the main section is of notched logs, and the roof is of square-cut rafters and purlins. Round posts support the shed roof along the south side of the building. The shed roofed enclosure along the north side of the building is enclosed by planking attached to square-cut studs. Both shed roofs are constructed of square-cut rafters and purlins.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are four doorways on the lower level, one on the upper level. Three of the lower-level openings are fitted with crudely fashioned vertical plank doors hung with metal gate hinges and fastened with pivoting wood stops. The fourth lower-level opening (located on the east end of the south elevation of the main section) is boarded over with vertical planking nailed in place. The lower-level openings are approximately 30" wide and range in height from 4 1/2' to 6'. The single upper-level opening is on the west face of the main section and is completely open, having neither a door nor shutter. It measures approximately 2'-6" in width and 2'-0" in height. It is reached by a ladder and serves more as a door than as a window.
  - b. Windows: This log structure has no windows, only doors.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof consists of a central gable roof flanked along its lower edges by two shed roofs, one being partially ruined. The central gable is covered with corrugated metal sheeting. The shed roofs, which have a somewhat shallower slope, are covered with standing seam metal sheeting.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Roofs overhang the building on the west by approximately 1' and on the east by approximately 2'. On the north, the eaves are 1' in depth, on the south, approximately 6".

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The ground floor consists of two square pens arranged side by side with no interconnection. On the north is the remaining portion of what appears to have been a continuous, shed-roofed enclosure having at least two spaces--one approximately 4'-0" by 8'-", the other(s) totaling approximately 16'-0" by 8'-0" in width. On the south is an open-sided, shed-roofed area having two spaces, roughly square, separated from each other by a crude fence-like plank barrier approximately 4'6" in height. The upper floor is a single open space closed only to a height of 3'-6" above finished floor level by round cut logs.
2. Stairways: The only stair-like structure is the exterior ladder leading to the upper level opening on the west end of the main section. This ladder consists of roughly cut wood members nailed together and to the face of the building.
3. Flooring: Plank flooring exists in the partially destroyed shed-roofed enclosure along the north side of the building and in the upper level. The planks vary from 4" to 6" in width and are laid in an east-west direction. Plank flooring appears to have been used in the two lower-level pens of the main section but is now almost completely destroyed (to such an extent that only a few traces remain along the walls). It resembles the flooring just described.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are exposed wood logs, unpainted, but with the bark either removed or destroyed by deterioration. In the wooden shed enclosure on the north, the walls are unpainted exposed studs and sheathing.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The ridge of the gable roof runs east-west and is perpendicular to the road by which the barn is approached. This road is approximately 140 feet from the barn and is separated from it by a fence located roughly 40 feet west of the barn.
2. Outbuildings: There was a house (moved August 1978) 190 feet west of the barn and a storm shelter 100 feet to the northwest.

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

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennessee-Tombigbee 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 Tennessee), 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 structure 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.