Previous Research

The information described within this report is the culmination of two decades of historic research, structural assessments, and stabilization of the Garvin House. The following reports have been consulted for the purposes of this analysis:

• The Garvin House; Seyaliogly; 2003

• The Garvin House Project; Bergin; 2004

• Structural Assessment Report; Moulton Clemson Jones, Inc.; 2007

• Field Report; Maxy et al.; June 12 2008

• Conceptual Master Plan for Oyster Factory Park; Wood+Partners Inc.; 2008

• Oyster Factory Site Plan; Town of Bluffton; 2009

• Garvin House Preservation and Interpretation Plan and Drawings; Living History Company; 2009.

• Old Town Master Plan - 2012 Update; Dept. of Growth Management, Town of Bluffton; 2012.

• Preserving Culture by Rewriting History: Interpreting Sites in the Lowcountry Antebellum Planters' Summer Cottage Community of Bluffton, South Carolina; Carolyn M. Coppola, 2013

In addition to these resources, local news coverage from the Bluffton area was consulted in order to understand the development of the project. These articles include:

• "Former Bluffton freed slave's home awaits renovation, but lack of money stalls progress"; The Island Packet; January 18, 2010.

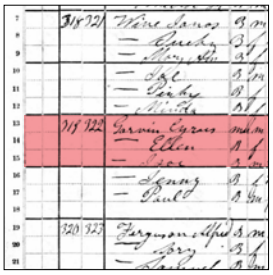
• "Aw shucks: Town beds down park pavilion"; Bluffton Today; September 14, 2011.

• "Preservation of Bluffton's history and heritage important"; Savannah Morning News; July 29, 2012.

• "Bluffton restarts push to restore ex-slave's home"; The State; December 16, 2013.

TIMELINE

1863	June 4 1863 Plantation of Joseph Baynard burned down during Union attack on Bluffton
1870	Census records Cyrus Garvin as a 49 year old farmer, with 41 year old wife Ellie and twelve year old son, Issac. At this time he owns real estate valued at $250
1878	Cyrus Garvin likely builds current structure on land once belonging to Joseph Baynard
1880	Census –Cyrus Garvin listed as 60 years old man with wife Ellen, son Isaac, daughter-in-law Jenny, and grandson Paul
1890	Cyrus Garvin is recorded as residing in Bluffton, but likely dies within the next year
1891	State of South Carolina grants Cyrus Garvin property formerly owned by Joseph Baynard
1891	Title of property transferred to son, Isaac Garvin
1914	Title of property transferred to son of Isaac Garvin, Paul Garvin
1961	Property transferred to John Samuel Graves III
1970	Property owned by Bluffton Oyster Cooperative
1985	Property transferred to Bluffton Oyster Company
2001	Property acquired by Beaufort County Land Trust
2004	Beaufort County entered into a partnership with the Town of Bluffton to share in maintaining Oyster Factory Park and its resources
2008	Beaufort County and Town of Bluffton stabilize the Garvin House
2014	Beaufort County and Town of Bluffton initiated Structural Plan and Updated Preservation Plan for the Garvin House



Site History Summary

The Garvin House is located at the intersection of Bridge Street and Wharf Street within the "Old Town" district of Bluffton, SC. The structure dates to ca. 1870 and is an excellent example of Carolina Lowcountry vernacular architecture of the late-19th century. The building was constructed during the Reconstruction Era; an historic period rarely represented architecturally due to the impermanence of the construction methods and materials. The house utilizes a combination framing technique using indigenous materials to create an original hall-parlor plan with shed extensions. Traditional building techniques in the structure include hand-hewn timbers and notching and Anglo methods introduced through Union occupation of Hilton Head Island (milled lumber and fabricated materials). The floor plan constitutes a 20th c., Georgian modernization of the common hall-parlor folk house, modifying it into a more refined I-house plan. The Garvin House is believed to be one of the earliest known freedmen owned houses still extant on the May River. The residence remained in the Garvin family for three generations until 1961. The structure remained in private hands until 2001, when the Beaufort County Land Trust acquired the house and property. In 2004, Beaufort County and the Town of Bluffton entered into a partnership to share the responsibility of maintaining the Oyster Factory Park, which includes the Garvin House. The house has the potential to become a centerpiece of interpretation for the park due to its extreme rarity as a home constructed and owned by African-Americans in Bluffton during the Reconstruction Era.

History

Cyrus Garvin, a Freedman, built the Garvin House on the property of what might have been his former owner Joseph Baynard. Baynard's house was burned down during the Union attack on Bluffton on June 4, 1863, and the Garvin House stands on the exact location where the residence had been located, on a bluff overlooking the May River. Garvin purchased the land, 54 acres, from the Estate of Esther Box on May 10, 1878 for $239.70. The house now sits in parkland owned by Beaufort County.

The Garvin family history is fragmented, and there appears to be no record of Cyrus Garvin before an 1870 census, which lists him as a 49 year-old mulatto male who could neither read nor write. The census states that he was a farmer with real estate valued at $250 and personal net worth valued at $375. Additional information in the 1870 census of St. Luke's Parish indicates that Garvin had a forty year-old wife named Ellie and one twelve year-old son named Isaac. Garvin and his family were not on the list in the Index of Free Blacks and Mulattos of the Parish's 1860 census, indicating that they were likely slaves of Joseph Baynard. The 1860 St. Luke's Parish census lists Baynard as being the owner of forty-four slaves. Additionally, historical trends indicate that newly freed slaves

tended to remain on properties familiar to them, supporting the conjecture that Garvin was a former slave on the property.

A deed of conveyance dated to November 12, 1878 indicates that Garvin may have also been known by the surname Garvey. In this conveyance, Garvey states that another conveyance of January 31, 1878 referred to him as Cyrus Garvin. Thereafter, however, all documents refer to him as Cyrus Garvin. Garvin was active in the Bluffton community, serving as an agent of St. Matthew's Baptist Church and acting as a church trustee alongside "FS Keates, Geo H Guerard, Jacob Givens, S. Scott, and John Chisolm." In the previously mentioned 1878 conveyance, Garvin bought land from Dr. Paul Pritchard; additionally, he purchased the aforementioned fifty-four acres from Esther Box in 1878. Another document shows Garvin selling land to J.H. Estill in 1885.

The 1880 census of St. Luke's Parish states that Garvin, then 60 years-old, resided with his wife Ellen, 50; son Isaac, 21; daughter-in-law Jenny, 22; and seven-month-old grandson Paul. A deed of conveyance from 1914, where Isaac conveyed the family property to Paul, explains that the property formerly owned by Joseph Baynard was originally granted to Cyrus Garvin in 1891 by the state of South Carolina. A 1913 survey map of Bluffton shows the Garvin homestead at its present location.

Recent historic documentation uncovered by Celebrate Bluffton indicated that the Garvin family hosted social events at their house during the early 20th century. One newspaper article describes a "flinch" party at the home of Mrs. Isaac Garvin "On the Bluff" where "dainty refreshments were served and dancing indulged in until a late hour" (Savannah Tribune 8.19.1905). This new information highlights the importance of the family in Bluffton society during the early 20th century.

Following the death of Cyrus around 1891, the title of the property was passed from Cyrus to Isaac Garvin. According to interviews with community members, Isaac's wife Jenny was the last known person to inhabit the house. She passed away in the 1950's. For the last decade of her life Jenny Garvin was blind (Brown 10.30.14 and Martin 09.08.14). Historic records show that the title of property was passed to Paul Garvin in 1914. Around 1930, Paul Garvin constructed a second house on the property (see site map on p. 19 for location). The home was demolished in the early 2000's. In 1961 the property transferred to J.S. Graves Jr. before being passed to the Bluffton Oyster Company and then Beaufort County in 2001.

both colored and white.
white reporters of the city
, asked for two of the es-
and the names of respond-
the four welcome addres-
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ominal request, which was
diately complied with.
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d the above mentioned
ention, left there for Fitz-
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ant time while away. Each
er of the home were very
l of her arrival on last Sat-
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Statesboro Items.

general meeting that was
at Banks Creek Primitive
st church was a complete
ss and certainly had good
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, followed by Elder A.
son, and he certainly
hed a fine introductory
on and had a large crowd.
unday night, Elder Cook

Brunswick is very lively this summer with so many entertaining young ladies.

Bluffton Social.

Quite a delightful flinch party was given in honor of Mrs. L. A. Spring and the Misses Spring at the home of Mrs. Isaac Garvin "on the Bluff." Those ipvited were Mrs. L. A. Springs, Misses Addie and Luella Springs, Mrs Rena Fields, Mrs. Sarah Rivers, Mrs. Susie Perry, Miss Emily Smith, Mr. Chas Royal of Savannah; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Garvin, Miss Ida Taylor, Mr. and Mrs Chas. Frazier, Messrs. James Miller, M. O. Riley, Eddie Symons, David Frazier, B. Bruen. Dainty refreshments were served and dancing indulged in until a late hour.

Mrs. L. A. Spring and children are at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Garvin "on the Bluff"

Misses Addie and Luella Spring, after spending three weeks of pleasure in Charleston are rusticating at Bluffton.

Central Railroad Excursion Rates.

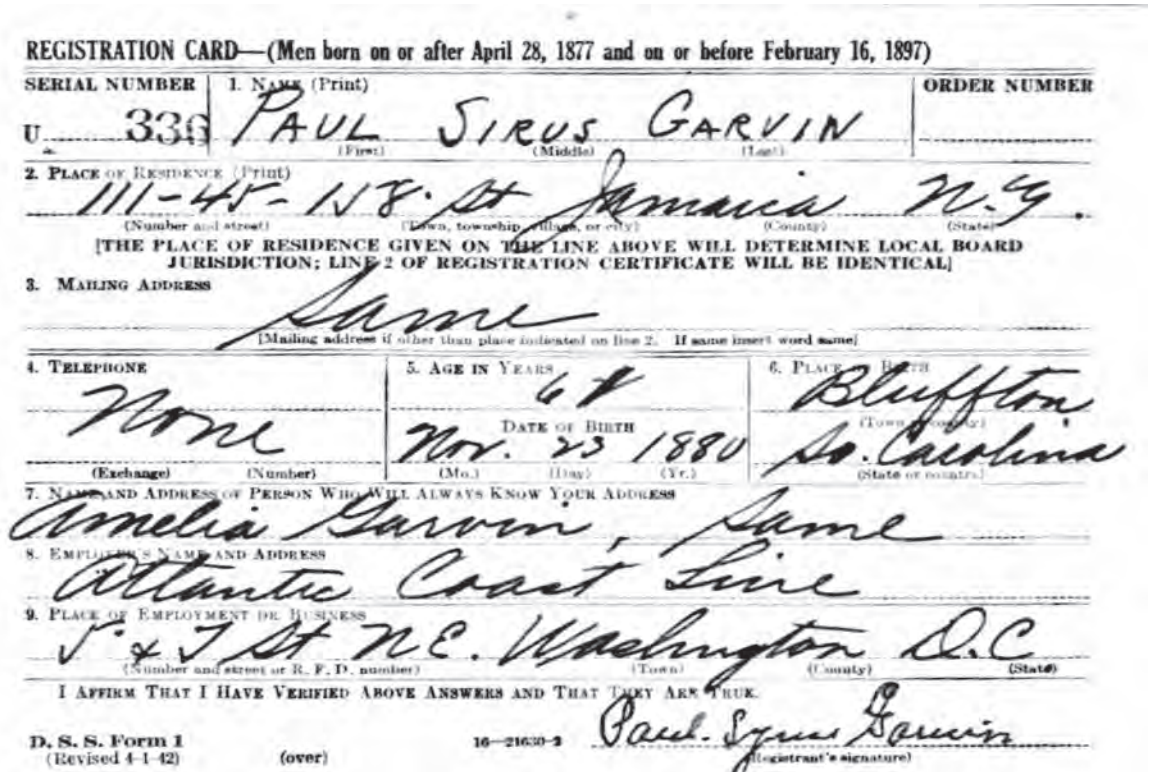
Low excursion rates via Central of

And solicit the patronage of my friends.
Repairing .· Neatly .· Don

Boarding and Lodging
Good Meals Served by
Mrs. M. Hall,
Cor. Tattnall & Taylor Sts
EVERYTHING FIRST CLASS
The patronage of my old friends and the public is solcited.

Asbury M. E. Church
Wednesday Evening, ×
× Aug. 30, 1905
AT 8-30 O'CLOCK
GRAND
CONCERT RECITAL
BY THE—
COLERIDGE TAYLOR GLEE CLUB

Figure 1: *Savannah Tribune* Article, 1905: Article describing flinch party at the Garvin House. Flinch was a popular card game during this time.



REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U 336 | 1. NAME (Print) PAUL (First) SIRUS (Middle) GARVIN (Last) | ORDER NUMBER

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 111-45-158 St (Number and street) Jamaica (Town, township, village, or city) (County) N.Y. (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THIS LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS Same

[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]

4. TELEPHONE None (Exchange) (Number)

5. AGE IN YEARS 68 DATE OF BIRTH Nov. 23 1880 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)

6. PLACE OF BIRTH Bluffton (Town, county) So. Carolina (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Amelia Garvin, Same

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Atlantic Coast Line

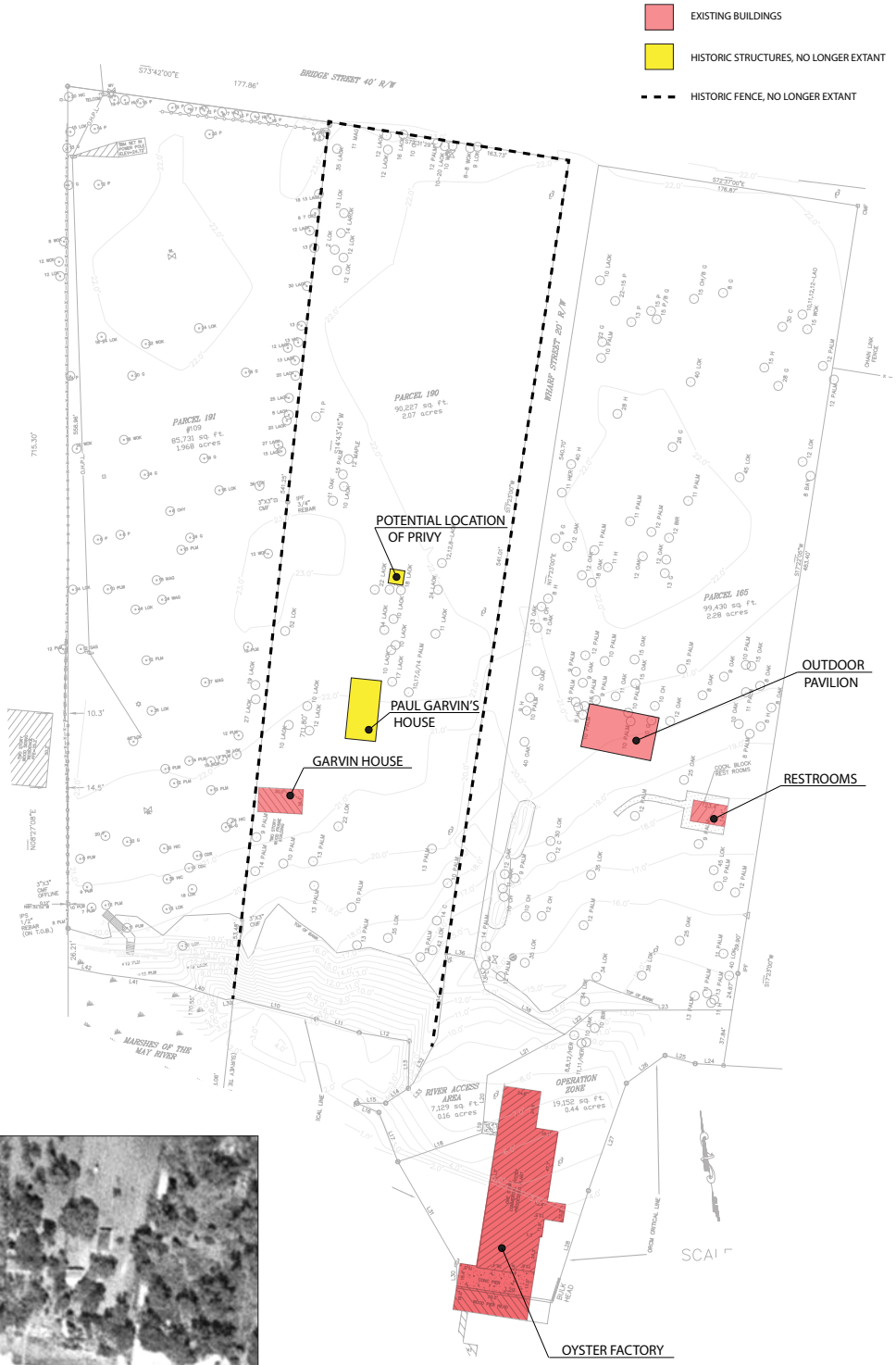
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 5 & I St NE. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) Washington (Town) D.C. (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE. Paul Sirus Garvin (Registrant's signature)

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16—21630-2

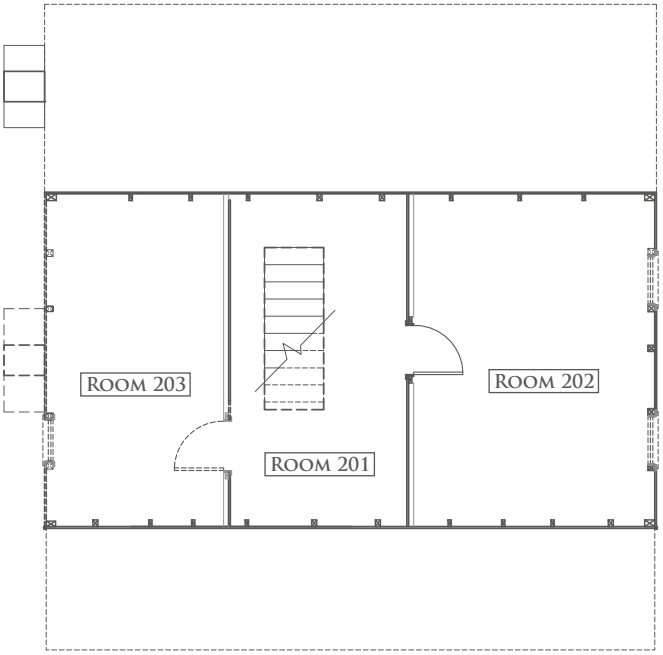
Figure 2: WWII Registration Card. Paul Garvin's registration card uncovered during this project research.

Site map

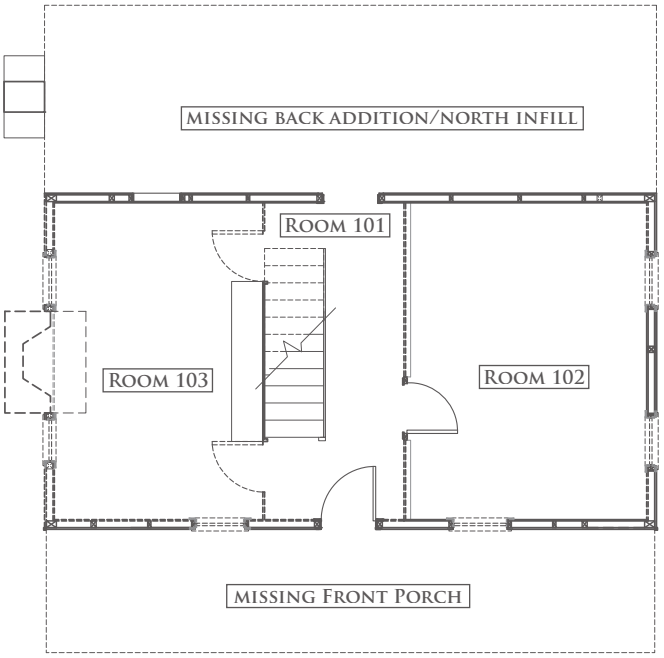


1951

Plan Key



Second floor plan



First floor plan

Historic Images

Historic Documentation

Currently, few historic photographs are known to exist of the Garvin House. During the course of this assessment, the Bluffton community was asked to share memories and photos of the structure. Despite these recent attempts to reach out to the community to find additional documentation, no photographs have been uncovered of the structure when it was occupied by the Garvin family from 1870 to 1960.

Several images exist that document the unoccupied building and its deterioration from 1970. However, full photographic documentation of this structure is incomplete. The front (south) porch and west gable-end elevation with the fireplace were not captured in any of the images on record. Nevertheless, the following images serve as a record of the structure's rate of deterioration over the last 40 years, and provide clues to understanding the original fenestration of the building.

Figure 3: Northeast Elevation: Photograph from ca. 1970 showing original window sashes. Note: The chimney on the west elevation is no longer extant (in red).

Figure 4: East Elevation: Photograph showing the collapsing front porch. Back addition and windows are present at this time.

Figure 5: East Elevation, ca. 1970: Another view of front porch and windows. Note: Addition foundation appears to be failing as evidenced by angle of the clapboards.

Figure 6: South elevation: Photo of this elevation taken circa 1990 shows shutters on south windows. Red dots indicate larger window frames found beneath clapboard.

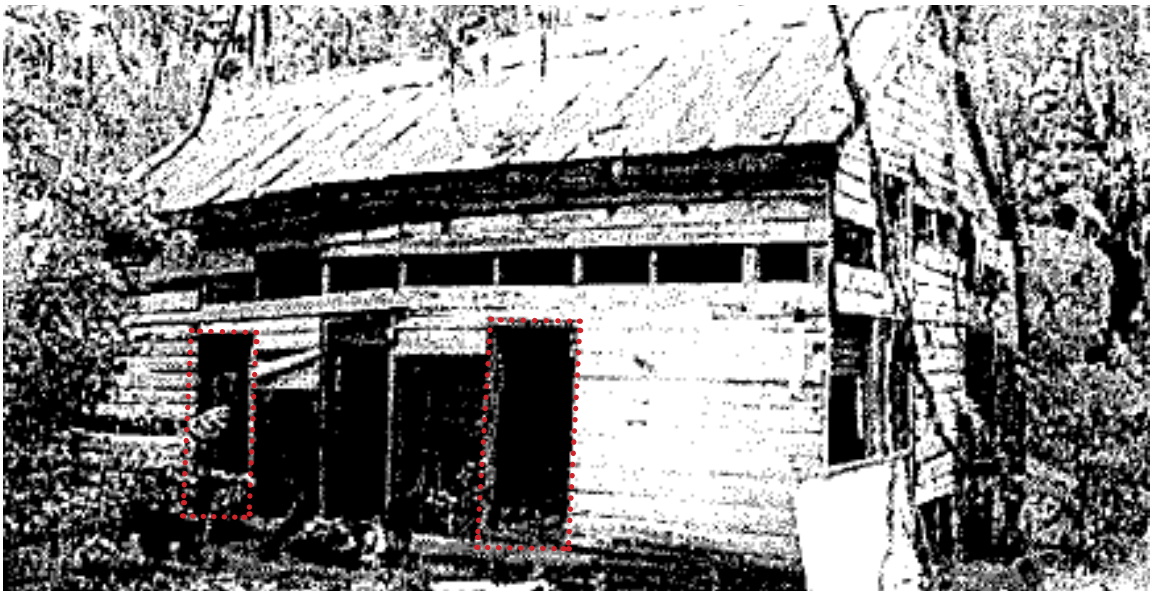


Figure 7: South elevation ca. 2002-2003: Deterioration of exterior siding reveals original length of windows on this elevation. Note: Exterior clapboards cut to cover lower portion of opening has now failed.

Figure 8: Northeast Elevation, ca. 2002: The north addition and window sashes have been removed by this time. There is noticeable deterioration in the foundation.

Figure 9: North Elevation, ca 2002: Gable end chimney appears to have been removed.

Figure 10: Room 102, looking northeast ca. 2002: Note cardboard and tongue & groove panelling. Few finishes currently remain in this location today.

Figure 11: Paul Garvin's House, ca 2002. This structure was constructed by Cyrus Garvin's grandson, Paul, to the northeast of the Garvin House around 1930. It has since been demolished.

Figure 12: Room 103, ca. 2002: Removal of the chimney likely caused extensive deterioration of the interior finishes and foundation. Note evidence of a window (in red) and mantel currently in storage.

Figure 13: West elevation clapboard extensions for the addition ca. 2004. These boards are no longer present (Bergin 2004). The edge of this board can be seen in Fig. 11.

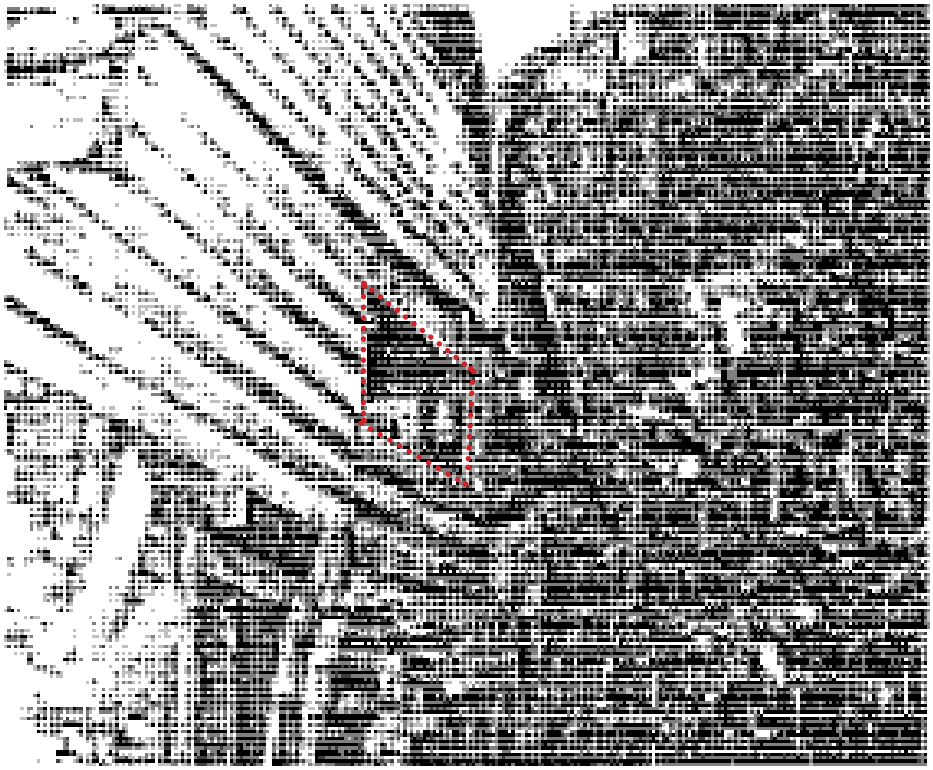


Figure 14: West gable, looking south: Only one window is visible on the second floor at the west gable (Bergin 2004).

Figure 15: Southwest Elevation, ca. 2008. Note approximate window locations on south and west elevation.