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historic structure report

Historical Data

COWPENS ROBERT SCRUGGS HOUSE



NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE / SOUTH CAROLINA

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HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT
ROBERT SCRUGGS HOUSE
HISTORICAL DATA
COWPENS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE
SOUTH CAROLINA

by

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PREFACE

This monograph--Historic Structure Report, Robert Scruggs House, Historical Data--has been prepared to satisfy the research needs as outlined in discussions with Superintendent Ben Moomaw of Kings Mountain National Military Park, Archeologist Jack Walker of the Southeast Archeological Center, and Historical Architect Hugh Miller of the Division of Park Historic Architecture. All available sources, both published and manuscript, have been examined and pertinent material extracted. Members of the Scruggs family and neighbors, familiar with the house, have been interviewed. Through the courtesy of Mrs. Rosa Scruggs Garrett the house was examined by Messrs. Miller, Walker, and the author. The data gathered has been compiled into a report designed to provide architects with a structural history of the Robert Scruggs House and grounds; museum curators with data useful in preparation of a furnishing plan; and interpreters with information on the cultural and social history of the Scruggs family and the community.

Many persons have assisted during preparation of this report. A special note of thanks is in order for Mrs. Rosa Scruggs Garrett--granddaughter of the builder, Robert Scruggs--who was born in the house in 1894 and has lived in it for almost 80 years. She welcomed us on numerous occasions, cheerfully sharing with us her recollections and family papers.

As always, particular thanks are extended to my friends at Kings Mountain National Military Park--Superintendent Ben Moomaw, Historian Jim Anderson, Ranger Doug Thompson, Management Assistant Don Crawford, and Maintenance men Earl Huskey and Jerry Bowen--for their assistance and encouragement.

County officials and their employees at the Cherokee and Spartanburg county courthouses in Gaffney and Spartanburg, South Carolina, and at the Rutherford County Courthouse, Rutherfordton, North Carolina, were pleasant and helpful. Director Charles Lee of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina, and three members of his staff (Ken Kitt, Harold Devorne, and Robert Mackintosh) gave of their knowledge and expeditiously handled my many requests.

In addition to Rosa Scruggs Garrett, these members of the Scruggs family and longtime neighbors invited us into their homes and cheerfully shared recollections of the Robert Scruggs House,

the family, and community: Mesdames Ruth Scruggs Hatchette, Lillie Martin Scruggs, Leona Martin Jolley, Jessie Scruggs Ellison, and Vaud Scruggs Jolley, and Mr. James W. Scruggs.

Local historians--Mrs. C. M. Moser of Shelby, North Carolina; the Honorable Sam Manning, State Representative from Spartanburg County; Professor Bobby Moss of the faculty of Limestone College; and Jack Blanton of Gaffney--shared their information.

Henry Hilliard, a land specialist with the National Park Service's Southeast Regional Office, is owed a special debt for the excellent rapport he has opened and maintained with the local people, which expedited and simplified the establishment of local contacts.

Dr. Harry Pfanz and Barry Mackintosh of the Division of History read the draft manuscript and made valuable comments. Jack Walker of the Southeast Archeological Center and Hugh Miller of the Division of Park Historic Architecture visited the area and shared their extensive knowledge of vernacular architecture.

Barbara Hudson of the Denver Service Center spent many hours typing this report, and George Hedricks prepared the accompanying line map of the Scruggs Farm in 1907.

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I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Number of Structure

Robert Scruggs House, Structure No. 1, Cowpens National Battlefield. This structure is of Third Order of Significance.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

The exterior of the structure will be restored to reflect its appearance ca. 1900, while the interior will be rehabilitated and refurnished to interpret the way of life of Robert Scruggs and others who lived in this section of the Carolina Piedmont in the 1850s.

C. Justification for Such Use

The Robert Scruggs House, erected about 1828, is a form of vernacular architecture that is rapidly disappearing from the region. Unless the Service takes measures to preserve and protect structures of this character, there will soon be none. Private organizations and individuals are generally interested in preservation of the more pretentious homes of the great planters and the wealthy, and have shown little interest in preservation and interpretation of structures such as the Scruggs House, which were typical of the region and a way of life.

D. Provision for Operating Structure

The restored Robert Scruggs House will be refurnished and employed to interpret life in the Carolina Piedmont in the 1850s.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any, Executed or Proposed for Operating Structure

No cooperative agreement will be required to operate the structure.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

To restore the exterior of the Scruggs House to its appearance ca. 1900 will require: (a) replacement of the sheet metal roof with a shingle roof; (b) reconstruction of the north dormer; (c) stabilization of the west chimney and stabilization and partial reconstruction of the east chimney; (d) removal of the kitchen ell; (e) reconstruction

of the full-length south shed porch; and (f) replacement of deteriorated fabric where necessary.

To restore the interior of the structure to its appearance ca. 1850 will require the replacement of deteriorated fabric where necessary and elimination and replacement of fabric incompatible with the period.

Restoration of the grounds would involve: (a) relocation of the well to its historic site; (b) reconstruction of the privy and selected outbuildings; (c) restoration of the Scruggs Road as a historic trace; and (d) reestablishment of the Scruggs garden and orchard.

G. Estimated Cost of Construction

The cost estimate form will be a part of the architectural data section written by the historical architect.

II. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Robert Scruggs House, ca. 1828, is characteristic of the type of homes constructed in the Piedmont during the nineteenth century by yeoman farmers. These people and their way of life were more important politically and economically in the South than the great planters with their mansions and slave gangs.

The Scruggs House, as built, was a one-room log cabin with a loft and chimney and fireplace in its east elevation. As his family grew and he became more affluent, Robert Scruggs enlarged and framed in his log cabin. A second chimney and fireplace were erected at the west elevation of the addition. Changes to the house in the last 50 years have been minimal; thus it is an excellent example of a type of vernacular architecture which is rapidly disappearing from rural America.

Although built almost half a century after the Battle of the Cowpens, the Robert Scruggs House has long been associated with the battleground. From 1849, when Historian-Illustrator Benson J. Lossing stopped and chatted with Robert Scruggs, until the 1970s, students of the battle have paused at the Scruggs House to get directions, discuss the battle with the occupants, and orient themselves.

The Scruggs family, which moved to the Cowpens area from Rutherford County, North Carolina, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, have been community leaders for almost 175 years.

