



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 011-0034

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

This property is, I believe, of historic significance and I believe it would be a travesty for it not to be so recognized officially. The County of Botetourt is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year 2020 and it would be fitting for both State and National recognition to be obtained during this celebratory year.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes X No

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes X No

1. General Property Information

Property name: Glencoe

Property address: 1088 Poor Farm Road

City or Town: Fincastle

Zip code: 24090

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Botetourt

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 9.012 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban Town Village Hamlet Rural X

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The setting is agricultural, with level fields and low rolling hills, partially wooded. Catawba Creek, a branch of the James River, flows nearby. The moat and retaining wall, discussed in the architectural description, constitute the principal landscape feature. The yard around the house is shaded by a variety of mature trees. To the east of the house, on property now in separate ownership, is a farm complex that includes the two-story stone Spiller Mill (later converted to a barn). A nineteenth-century barn, also now in separate ownership, stands to the north.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Greek Revival, Italianate

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: unknown, though original owner James Madison Spiller was likely involved in the design and construction of the house.

If the builder is known, please list here: unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): ca. 1860

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodeling's, or other alterations.

Glencoe is a ca. 1860 two-story house of 1:6 common bond brick construction with a slate-shingled hip roof. The house stands on a stone basement level with original ashlar limestone masonry with razor-thin joints above later limestone masonry with decoratively irregular stone sizes, shapes, and courses and pronounced beaded joints. The original-above-later juxtaposition is unexpected, and it is associated with the house's most interesting architectural characteristic, it's "dry moat," a one-story-deep excavation around most of the three sides (the north end, an original one-story brick wing, has a fully revealed stone basement level with no moat). The moat has battered outer walls constructed of large rough-hewn blocks of limestone. At least two explanations for the moat seem possible: 1) it is an original feature, perhaps intended to keep the basement dry and/or created for aesthetic reasons, in which case the lower part of the house foundation was refaced within a generation or two of original construction; or 2) the moat was created later to correct water infiltration, and the later decorative foundation facing dates to the moat's creation.

Interestingly, given the original owner James Spiller's occupation as a lock builder, the house and moat have something of the appearance of a canal boat docked in a lock, but whether this is a coincidental or an inspired tongue-in-cheek architectural reference is not known. A romantic aesthetic impulse such as allusion to moated medieval castles may also explain the features. The later decoratively irregular stonework is most like work done in the region's cities, such as nearby Roanoke, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The later stonework is also irregular in overall form, with multiple seemingly random projecting sections. The projections do not appear to relate to bedrock or other influences and so the possibility exists they are themselves a romantic aesthetic feature.

Stylistically, Glencoe's superstructure mixes Italianate influences, seen principally in the widely spaced sawn brackets of the eaves, and Greek Revival influences, seen in the fluted jambs of the front entry sidelights. The decorative muntin pattern of the transom above the entry is a standard Greek Revival treatment, seen for example in the designs of Asher Benjamin. The entry is sheltered by a one-story porch with chamfered posts; a one-story porch with slightly tapered square wood columns extends across most of the rear elevation. Other exterior features include six-over-six windows with louvered shutters (believed to be original), interior brick chimneys in the main two-story section and one-story wing, and numerous historic inscriptions (many dating to the nineteenth century) written in pencil and chalk on the bricks and penciled mortar joints.

The interior has a center passage and stair hall with a stair with turned balusters and a bulbous turned newel at the foot. A vertical beaded board partition under the stair landing has curved boards that follow the curves

of the landing above. Mantels include standard Greek Revival post-and-lintel forms, one with a peaked frieze profile, and an unusual Italianate design with curved inner corners. Doors are typically four-panel, some with transom panels, and the doors, transom panels, and surrounds are typically vibrantly grained in imitation of oak, mahogany, and other woods. In the north basement room is a fireplace with an early cooking and/or wash pot and crane which were revealed in situ during renovation. The room was formerly supplied with gravity-fed water from a cistern in the raised part of the back yard. In an inner basement room interpreted as a dining room is a built-in cupboard with punched-tin panels with floral patterns.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

The large brick smokehouse behind the house has two close-set entries, a metal-sheathed gable roof, and high barred vents. The first story of the interior is divided by a brick partition; the upper level, which has multiple thick beams for hanging meat, is not divided. Between the house and smokehouse is a much-altered one-story frame building constructed with cut nails suggestive of a nineteenth-century date. The larger of the two slatted corncribs is also constructed with cut nails. The cribs are believed to have been moved from the Spiller Mill area of the farm to their current location a hundred years or so ago. There are several other frame buildings of historic and non-historic construction.

4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Draft Statement of Significance

Glencoe, located near Fincastle in Botetourt County, Virginia, is a Greek Revival and Italianate house built ca. 1860 for canal contractor James Madison Spiller and his wife, Caroline Kyle Spiller. The two-story brick house, which stands on a full stone basement level, is notable for its encircling dry "moat". The house also features a bracketed cornice, mantels with a mix of stylistic influences, a punched-tin built-in dining room cupboard, and extensive graining. Behind the house are a large two-story brick smokehouse and two slatted corncribs; the terraced front yard is formed by a stone retaining wall that is a continuation of the wall of the moat. Glencoe is potentially eligible under Criterion A in the architecture area of significance for its many notable architectural features and its complement of historic outbuildings. The proposed period of significance extends from ca. 1860, the approximate date of construction for the house (examination of land book records may refine), to ca. 1920, embracing the construction of outbuildings and the evolution of the moat and stonework. Glencoe is potentially eligible at the local level of significance.

Historical Discussion

Most sources agree that Glencoe was built for James Madison Spiller (ca. 1810-1889) and his wife, Caroline Kyle Spiller (b. ca. 1818), around the time of the Civil War. A 1958 HABS inventory form states, "The house was begun before the Civil War and finished after the war. It once served as a private school under Miss Jane Spiller. Local residents attribute the moat to the "eccentricity of the builder". In *Seed-Bed of the Republic* (1962), historian Robert Stoner wrote, "Construction of the Twyman home, Glencoe, was begun before the War Between the States. The then-owner, J. M. Spiller imported stonecutters from Scotland to teach his slaves the art of masonry. His slaves and their Scottish teachers built the walls of the first floor just prior to the War Between the States, but upon the liberation of the slaves the project as begun became economically infeasible, and the building was completed with the use of bricks. The house is surrounded by a moat, for draining rather than for protection" (p. 283).

An undated and unattributed biographical writeup on James and Caroline's son George Spiller notes that his father "was a contractor on the James River & Kanawha Canal [and] consequently he moved every two or three years, as a lock or dam was completed & followed the canal through Nelson, Amherst, Campbell, Rockbridge & Botetourt." That the family moved frequently during the period is corroborated by other sources; George Spiller was born in Nelson County in 1845 (Couper, *Corps Forward*, 192) and his younger brother Hollis Barclay Spiller was born in Botetourt County in 1849 (VMI Archives website; some sources state Hollis was born in Rockbridge County in 1849). Research by John Salmon in 1977 determined that James (a "lock builder"), his wife, Caroline, and their growing family resided in Rockbridge County in 1850, as indicated by the census of that year, and that the 1850 annual report of the Virginia Board of Public Works noted that James was awarded the contract to construct Guard Lock No. 4 on the James River and Kanawha Canal in 1847. Spiller was also contractor for the Joshua Falls Dam that spanned between Amherst and Campbell counties in 1860 (an itemized estimate for the work survives). The James River and Kanawha Canal was completed to Buchanan (Botetourt County) in 1851 and construction began above Buchanan in 1853 but was not completed.

James Spiller was also a mill owner. He owned the mill located in front of Glencoe (now in separate ownership) which is identified as Spiller's Mill on the 1864 Confederate Engineers' map of Botetourt County. When his son George graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1866, James "gave him the store and mill known as 'Gilmore's Mill' in Rockbridge Co., Va., where he was in business until May, 1870" (Couper, *Corps Forward*, 192-193). James and Caroline's daughter Antonia Spiller Twyman (1851-1934) married Iverson Lewis Twyman (1849-1921) and the Twyman family owned the property into the late twentieth century. Glencoe was recommended eligible for the National Register as a result of the 2008 "Architectural Survey of Botetourt County, Virginia," in which survey the house was dated to (or about) 1860 (pp. 70, 87).

Sources

Couper, William, ed. *The Corps Forward*. Buena Vista, Va.: Mariner Publishing, 2005.

"Glencoe." Historic American Building Survey Inventory Form, 1967.

"Glencoe, Circa 1855, 1088 Poor Farm Road." Report, n.d.

"Glencoe, Historic Fincastle Holiday Tour, November 11, 2010." Report, 2010.

Hill Studio. "Architectural Survey of Botetourt County, Virginia." Report, 2008.

James River Cement Works. Balcony Falls, Va., ca. 1875.

"Map of Botetourt County." 1864.

Speer, Betsy. "Spiller House." Historic American Building Survey Inventory Form, 1958.

Stoner, Robert Douthat. *A Seed-bed of the Republic*. Roanoke, Va.: Roanoke Historical Society, 1962.

Sydnor, George, Jr. Personal communication with the author, July 2020.

Sydnor, George, III, to Michael Pulice. Email, November 10, 2008.

Sydnor, Shirley. Personal communication with the author, July 2020.

T. P. Parker & Son. "Boundary Survey for George W. Sydnor, III and Jill R. Sydnor." Survey, June 6, 1991.

Unknown (librarian at the Virginia State Library) to George A. Kegley, April 1, 1977, concerning James M. Spiller.

Virginia Military Institute Archives Digital Collections website.

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: X Public\Local _____ Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

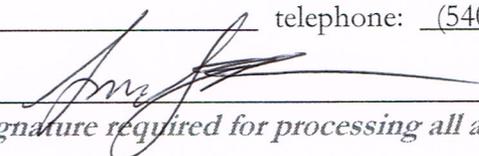
name/title: George W. Sydnor, III

organization: None

street & number: 1088 Poor Farm Road

city or town: Fincastle state: Virginia zip code: 24090

e-mail: _____ telephone: (540) 556-3764

Legal Owner's Signature:  Date: 7-28-2020

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: J. Daniel Pezzoni

organization: Landmark Preservation Associates

street & number: 6 Houston St.

city or town: Lexington state: Virginia zip code: 24450

e-mail: gilespezzoni@rockbridge.net telephone: (540) 464-5315

6. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

name/title: Gary Larrowe, County Administrator

locality: Botetourt County

street & number: 57 S. Center Dr., Suite 200

city or town: Daleville state: Virginia zip code: 24083

telephone: (540) 928-2006

Glencoe (011-0034), Botetourt Co.: Salisbury, VA USGS quad detail (top); survey (bottom)

