

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Gibson Farm

Other names/site number: VDHR ID 052-5163; Gibson Cemetery

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2473 Dr. Thomas Walker Road

City or town: Ewing State: VA County: Lee County

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: X

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	_____ Date
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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>11</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: Outbuilding

FUNERARY: cemetery

SUBSISTENCE/AGRICULTURE: farm building

TRANSPORTATION: railroad

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

LATE VICTORIAN

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

WOOD; BRICK, STONE; METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Gibson Farm, in Lee County, Virginia, encompasses approximately 36 acres, however, the nominated area is limited to only 13.6 acres—the acreage on which all of the farm’s known historic resources are located—on the north side of Dr. Thomas Walker Road (Highway 58 Business) and south of the modern four-lane Highway 58. The farmhouse is sited 1.64 miles south of the Kentucky state line and 3.2 miles north of the Tennessee state line, on the eastern outskirts of Ewing, Virginia. The nominated area of the farm includes 11 contributing historic resources including the Gibson Farmhouse, the original part of which was standing by 1830 and appended later in the nineteenth century. Other significant resources include a half-dovetail-notched log granary and large v-notched log meathouse, both located a short distance to the rear of the house, and the Gibson family cemetery located about 100 feet off of the west front corner of the house. The flat topography around the house and cemetery begins to slope downward to the north and east toward hayfields along the banks of the meandering Indian Creek. Close to the house are the remains of a concrete-block domestic outbuilding that included a cold-storage room and a washhouse, both fed by piped-in spring water. The c. 1891 Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad bed (a contributing structure) runs through the property, as close as 210 feet to the north-northwest of the Gibson farmhouse, along the Indian Creek bottomlands. Resources to the east of the house are agriculture related: an intact milking house, the ruin of a frame barn, a structurally compromised log crib barn, and the site of a corncrib marked by limestone piers.

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Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Gibson farmhouse is located 1.64 miles south of the Kentucky state line and 3.2 miles north of the Tennessee state line, on the north side of Dr. Thomas Walker Road (US 58 Bus, about 200 feet from the road) on the eastern outskirts of Ewing, Virginia; roughly 4/5-mile east of the town center and post office. The Gibson-Smith family cemetery is about 100 feet west (and southwest) of the house, its chain-link-fence enclosing a rectangular area measuring 145 feet (roughly north-south) by 40 feet. Three extant outbuildings are located within the backyard, and two deteriorated barns are roughly 230 feet to the east of the house. A small milking house is located about 200 feet due east of the farmhouse, on the west side of the farm road and the north side of Dr. Thomas Walker Rd. A mostly subterranean cistern is found in the front yard near the southeast corner of the house's south wing. A small drainage called Indian Creek is 250 feet north of the house, midway between the house and four-lane Highway 58, known as both Wilderness Road and Daniel Boone Trail. The c. 1891 Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad bed runs through the property, as close as 210 feet to the north-northwest of the Gibson farmhouse, along the Indian Creek bottomlands.

Detailed Building Descriptions

Farmhouse

The Gibson Farmhouse is a south-facing L-plan two-story side-gabled, weatherboarded hewn-log and timber-frame house with a coursed-limestone foundation enclosing a partial basement, and a one-story, two-room frame front wing extending to the south, offset from the southwest corner of the main-block—altogether an unusual configuration. In total, the main block is 53 feet wide and only 19 feet deep. The south wing is 28 feet by 14 feet, with the full-length porch increasing the wing's width by another 6.5 feet.

It appears the main block of the house began as a one-story single-pen hewn-log house. By the third quarter of the 19th century, it was raised to two stories, and a two-story four-bay braced timber-frame addition was built to the east, more than doubling the size of the house. The log pen is generally not currently exposed, but several logs are partly visible in the second-floor rear wall and corner (photo 17). More logs were revealed when the kitchen was removed from the west end of the house ca. 1991. Photos from the time show larger, smoother, and more neatly hewn logs at the second-story level compared to those of the first story.

The south wing has a one-story porch along the full length of its east elevation, sheltering an off-center front entrance to the wing, flanked by a window to each side. The porch roof rafters are notched into a hewn top plate, and is supported by four solid wood posts. The upper portions of the posts are chamfered to an octagonal shape, closely resembling the octagonal corner posts of the house's two-story timber-frame east addition. Under the north end of the porch is a secondary entrance to the house's two-story main block, enclosed by a

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batten door hung on wrought iron strap hinges. The south wing's west elevation also has an off-center doorway and a single window lighting each room, although all are infilled or covered. The south wing has weatherboards on three elevations, but flush boards (likely with tongue-and-groove joinery) enclose the east side, under the porch.

The timber framing of the lateral two-story east addition, which has a large room on each floor and also includes the house's front entrance and center passage, is highly unusual in that the framing members are chamfered and semi-exposed in the first- and second-floor rooms. The corner posts, which extend two stories, from the sill to the top plate, are chamfered to an octagonal shape (the south wing's four porch columns are similarly chamfered). Though wider than the posts, the diagonal down-braces are also chamfered and octagonal. Sawn girts connect the corner posts, and the lower parts of the second-story braces, pegged into the girts, are semi-exposed in the first-floor room. Instead of common studs, the upright members between the corners are semi-exposed, six-inch-wide timbers set at wide intervals. The interior walls are finished with wide, flush-mounted, likely tongue-and-grooved boards. The addition has no basement, but massive hewn joists are seen in the crawlspace. In the first-floor room the vertically sawn, un-beaded second-floor joists are exposed, as are the tie beams in the second-floor room, all of which measure about 3 x 8 inches thick. The flooring of the addition consists of about 10-inch wide boards with beaded edges.

The house possesses four exterior end chimneys including the now free-standing kitchen chimney. All have stepped shoulders. Of the four, the two on each end of the main block are two stories tall, with bases of dressed limestone blocks up to about six feet, above which are hand-made bricks laid in common bond. The kitchen chimney served only one story and is much wider and slightly deeper than the others, yet is otherwise identically constructed of the same materials as the two-story chimneys. This suggests they were all built around the same time, after the original log structure was raised to two stories and appended with the two-story timber-frame addition to the east (at which time the original chimney was removed). The well-fired bricks have peculiar, unusually deep frogs (indentions in the bottom) and the masonry bonding courses are at inconsistent intervals ranging from 6 to 8. All three of these chimneys are in very poor condition, their stacks crumbling from the top. The west chimney will likely soon succumb to vines, but the south wing's one-story chimney, on the south elevation, remains in relatively good condition. The south wing chimney is likely newer than the others and lacks a stone base. Although its bricks are hand-made, they are laid with no discernable bond. It has been subjected to poor-quality repair/repointing and the top fitted with two ceramic chimney pots. Oddly, the south wing chimney serves one of the largest fireplaces with the oldest mantel in the house—an elaborate Federal-style piece. The fireplace was eventually made smaller to adapt for coal burning, and later still, reduced to a small, round stove-flue exhaust hole.

The timber-frame portion of the house makes up the four easternmost bays, the first and second stories neatly aligned vertically, including the central, principal entrance to the house, which comprises the first-story, fourth bay from the east front corner. The entrance has

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unusual design features beginning with its folding doors, each with doweled joinery and four raised panels arranged vertically or stacked. The west door has a key lock and white porcelain knob mounted higher than is typical. Spanning the doorway is a four-light transom with vertical muntins. Between the doorway and transom is a coarsely reeded frieze, and surrounding them is wide trim with more-narrow reeding and plain corner blocks. Finally, flanking only the top half of the door and transom assembly are narrow sidelights within architrave-molded frames and covered with fitted louvered shutters, vertically hinged along the outer edges. All of the front windows (and at least one of the two east-side windows) of the house have matching architrave-molded frames and tightly closed shutters. The east elevation second story does not appear to have had any windows.

Farmhouse Kitchen Wing and Rear Porch

The house is in fair condition, but the kitchen extension on the west end of the house's main block is now gone except for its chimney. The one-story, one-room kitchen wing (figures 1, 2) was demolished circa 1991. It was built partly of frame construction and partly of plank construction, all of it externally clad with weatherboards. The gable roof is tucked between two masonry chimneys, both of which still stand, though in deteriorating condition. The kitchen had pole rafters, hewn flat on the upper surfaces, that met at a ridge board, and a square-hewn top plate that projected outward to form shallow eaves. The fairly steep roof pitch allowed for functional space in the loft. The kitchen's frame construction was limited to its west gable end, consisting of a common stud wall finished with regular-sized flush-mounted boards on the inside wall. These boards measured 1-2 inches thick by about eight inches wide. The two front and rear (north and south) walls of the kitchen, however, were built of heavy planks, about three inches thick, a foot or more in width, and three feet or more in length, without the use of studs. These planks were fitted tightly together by means of tongues or grooves along all four edges and fastened by cut nails. The usage of such planks and this type of plank construction have not been documented elsewhere in southwestern Virginia. The planks are stored the south wing's south room.

On the north side of the kitchen is a concrete trough into which water was piped from a spring uphill and across the road to the south. Overflow water from the trough continued by pipe to other locations on the farm. Immediately north of the trough remains is a short flight of wide, stone steps (augmented with concrete) leading down to the backyard.

The main block of the house formerly had a two-story full-width porch (figure 3) across its rear (north) elevation, eventually enclosed with weatherboards and seven windows evenly spaced across its second story. The porch, built on stacked limestone piers, deteriorated and was taken down, with only pieces left inside the house, and the main-block rear doors and windows, of which there were few, infilled/covered. Family photos show the deconstruction of both the kitchen and the back porch of the house in progress, after it was decided that deterioration had rendered demolition necessary. The light framing of the porch suggests it was built in the late nineteenth or early 20th centuries.

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Farmhouse Interior

Within the western (log) portion of the house is a single room on each floor, an enclosed stair in the northwest corner, and modified/infilled fireplaces and replacement mantels on the west wall on each floor. Batten doors are built of hand-planed boards with vernacular wrought-iron hardware, and in some places, cast-iron rim locks and brown mineral doorknobs. Mid-twentieth-century manufactured coverings obscure earlier whitewashed horizontally mounted wall boards and original floorboards. The first-floor ceiling consists of exposed upstairs floor joists and floorboards, all hand-planed, with beaded edges. The second-floor ceiling is finished with narrow slats from a later time period.

The eastern (timber frame) portion of the house includes the house's approximately seven-foot wide center passage (lacking a staircase) on each floor. No framing is exposed within the passage, but the framing is purposely semi-exposed in the corners and along the ceilings of both first- and second-floor large rooms—suggesting that the passage may be an interim space between the log and timber frame parts of the house; however, no further evidence is seen in the attic, where the roof structure appears as only two distinct parts. Nevertheless, the frame portion of the house has its own enclosed stair in the northwest corner of the large rooms. It makes sense that a stair would not be within a connecting space. In addition to the highly unusual semi-exposure of the framing, which is complete with diagonal braces and pegged joinery, is the unconventional chamfering of each framing member, or at least the exposed parts of them.

With the two staircases in the house supporting the tradition that the second floor room historically had no communication between them, the notion that the house was enlarged to accommodate travelers along the Wilderness Road and/or the L&N Railroad seems more than plausible. Eventually the family made a cut-through between the two parts, possibly during the twentieth century, after the heyday of westward migration and railroad passenger service.

The house's fireplaces have been altered, some of them multiple times, to accommodate the use of coal, and later wood- or coal-burning stoves. Two significant mantels remain in the house, one in the first-floor room of the east wing, and one in the south room of the south wing. Both mantels have Federal style tripartite designs with center tablets in the frieze, and numerous bed moldings. The east wing mantel has turned colonettes on each side of the fireplace, topped by vasiform motifs, and the south wing mantel has fluted pilasters topped by tiny squares with fine diagonal reeding.

In the main block's attic are ample distinctions between the roof structure of the log pen and that of the frame east wing. The log pen has round pole rafters, the pairs lapped and pegged together, and no collar ties to prevent them from spreading. Instead, the rafters are birdsmouth-notched and securely fastened into the top plates. A 1991 photo shows layers of shingles still in-place, nailed to narrow roof sheathing boards. Soon after the photo was taken, the shingles were removed and tossed loosely into the attic, where they remain on the

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attic floors of both the log pen and frame wing, and new sheet-metal roofing was installed, leaving the existing rafters in place. The frame wing rafters are vertically sawn rather than left round, are nailed to a narrow ridge board rather than pegged together, and are fitted with collar ties, most half-lapped and pegged into the rafters.

Secondary Resources

1) Cemetery

The Gibson-Smith family cemetery is about 100 feet west (and southwest) of the house, its chain-link-fence enclosure measuring 145 feet (roughly north-south) by 40 feet (east-west). The cemetery dates to the 1860s and contains graves of Gibson family members who resided or were born on the farm, including the original owner, James Johnston Gibson (1810-1874) and his wife Lucy Ann Ball, and 7 of their 10 children. The second youngest son, George Washington Gibson (1848-1930) was the second owner of the farm. He married a cousin, Mary Ruth Gibson, in 1869. According to Find-a-Grave.com, there are 41 grave markers in the cemetery, which is known as the Gibson-Smith Cemetery because of two Smith family-related individuals interred in 2009 and 2023. The oldest grave appears to be that of Pvt. Moses Marshall Gibson (1836-1861) PVT CO E 37 VA INF CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY, who died of Typhoid fever. The cemetery also includes headstones for two unnamed enslaved persons who died in 1862 of Typhoid fever.¹

2) Meathouse

The unusually large, 18 x 18-foot meathouse is located off of the northeastern corner of the house at a distance of about 25 feet. Likely built during the mid-19th century, it is a one-story single-pen v-notched hewn-log building with a cantilevered overhanging roof in the front, which faces west toward the backyard of the house and the granary. The front-gable roof is sheathed with corrugated sheet metal. The building has a collapsed foundation of rounded fieldstones and is generally in poor condition. The only fenestration is a doorway centered below the front gable, with its door hung on wrought-iron strap hinges.

3) Granary

The 13.5 x 12-foot granary is located directly behind the house at a distance of 10-15 feet. Likely built during the mid-19th century, it is a one-story single-pen half-dovetail-notched hewn-log building with a rectangular footprint and a cantilevered overhanging roof in the front, which faces south toward the house. The front-gable roof is sheathed with corrugated sheet metal. The building has no visible foundation. Its lowest logs appear to be resting on the ground. The only fenestration is a raised, half-height entrance in the front, enclosed by a small door or shutter and reached by a ladder fixed to the front exterior wall.

4) Frame Barn Ruin

The ruin of a gable-roofed frame barn clad with wide vertical boards is located about 235 feet east of the farmhouse, on the east side of a two-track farm road that descends to the lower acreage along Indian Creek and the L&N RR bed. The barn appears to have been built

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around 1920. An extant double-crib log barn was built roughly parallel, less than 20 feet to the south of the frame barn.

5) Double-crib Log Barn

Adjacent, less than 20 feet to the south of the frame barn ruin is a large, 88 x 16-foot double-crib log barn in neglected, but fair condition. The logs are left round and are saddle-notched at the corners. Both barns are located about 235 feet east of the farmhouse, on the east side of a two-track farm road that descends to the lower acreage along Indian Creek and the L&N RR bed, and the north side of Dr. Thomas Walker Rd. The round, rather than hewn logs suggest the barn was built during the late 19th century or early 20th century.

6) Corncrib Site

Adjacent, to the west of the double-crib log barn, are four or more massive limestone blocks that served as the piers of a corncrib, no longer extant. The corncrib site is about 230 feet east of the farmhouse, on the east side of a two-track farm road that descends to the lower acreage along Indian Creek and the L&N RR bed, and the north side of Dr. Thomas Walker Rd.

7) Milking House

Across the two-track farm road from the corncrib site and barns stands a 14 x 20-foot one-story gable-roofed early-20th-century frame milking house clad with vertical boards, in neglected, but fair condition. Inside the building are scales and other milking equipment. The building is located about 200 feet due east of the farmhouse, on the west side of the farm road and the north side of Dr. Thomas Walker Rd.

8) Cistern

Located about four feet off the southeast corner of the house's one-story front south wing porch, the approximately four-foot-square top of the cistern is capped and surrounded by a poured concrete structure. A yucca plant and tall grass are growing in it.

9) Domestic Outbuilding

Sited about 65 feet north of the farmhouse's demolished kitchen location, the c. 1940 one-story concrete block outbuilding includes two 12 x 12-foot rooms, one a dairy, cooled by piped-in spring water and used for cold storage, and the other a wash house that presumably also used piped-in spring water. The building has two front doors on the south elevation, facing the rear west corner of the house; no front windows, and single small windows on the other elevations. The shed roof is in very poor condition.

10) Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad Bed

The ca. 1891 Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad bed runs as close as 210 feet to the north-northwest of the Gibson farmhouse, along the Indian Creek bottomlands. Within the Gibson property, the roughly east-west-aligned railbed is indicated by a narrow tree line, creating a windbreak between wide clearings to the north and south. West of the property line, the railbed runs alongside the creek and is not wooded or obscured, and can be fairly

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easily discerned in aerial imagery. The railroad alignment is clearly indicated on topographic maps.

Integrity Statement

Although in only fair condition, the historical integrity of the farm is generally intact in all aspects, most notably setting, design, workmanship, and materials, but also location, feeling, and association. The area around the farm remains rural and undeveloped. The farmhouse has experienced some loss, most notably of the kitchen wing and back porch, as well as replaced roofing, altered fireplaces, and added small bathroom; however, compared to most houses, few modifications were made during the twentieth century. The house and other buildings have stood vacant since around 1982. Both major parts of the farmhouse retain their original masonry foundations and roof structures (e.g. rafters, see photo 15). Neither the floor plan, circulation pattern, nor fenestration have been modified. The setting has changed very little since the mid 1980s except for major improvements made to Highway 58, which is 500 feet north of the Gibson Farmhouse.



Fig. 1 Gibson Farmhouse with kitchen (left) still intact, circa 1991; looking northeast.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE/CRAFTSMANSHIP

Period of Significance

ca. 1830 – ca. 1940

Significant Dates

1891

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Gibson Farm, with the farmhouse being its primary resource, is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture/Craftsmanship as a rare surviving early antebellum dwelling with later nineteenth-century additions and notable features, located in rural and remote Lee County, Virginia. Historically, the property was strongly associated with agriculture, and it still contains agricultural resources that are good examples of designs and functions from the nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries. However, because the agricultural buildings are no longer in use and found today in deteriorated condition, the property is not nominated under Criterion A for Agriculture. The period of significance spans from circa 1830 (original construction) to circa 1940 (estimated construction of the latest historic resource). The year 1891, listed as an important date, corresponds to the completion of the L&N Railroad, which runs behind the Gibson farmhouse and undoubtedly brought changes to the farm and surrounding areas. The farmhouse and associated buildings ceased to be regularly occupied around 1982. Lee County has historically been, and continues to be one of Virginia's poorest counties. Today it is outranked as the poorest only by two other coalfield counties to the north. Mainly due to economic circumstances, few enduring landmarks were built in Lee County and far fewer have been preserved. Lee County currently has only seven register listings including two districts at the Cumberland Gap—the far western tip of the county. There are five individually listed architectural properties, of which just three are domestic in character, and only two of those—the Sayers House and Duff House—have an agricultural component. Although nomination under Criterion D for Archaeology is not supported at this time, the Gibson Farm is thought to have good potential for prehistoric archaeological deposits, considering its topography, with acres of land on both sides of Indian Creek, along a heavily traveled pre-contact-period migration route; as well as good potential for historic-period data recovery, considering its location along the Wilderness Road westward migration route through the Cumberland Gap. As many as 300,000 settlers traveled the Wilderness Road between 1775 and 1820, and although numbers gradually diminished, traffic remained fairly steady through the Civil War period.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion C: Architecture

The Gibson Farmhouse, a remarkable example within its geographical and temporal context, was built in two or more stages beginning with hewn-log construction ca. 1830. The last phase of construction comprised the two-story four-bay eastern (frame) part of the house and/or the one-story south wing. Erected sometime between these two construction campaigns, the kitchen addition on the west side of the log pen had walls built of three-inch-thick tongue-and-groove “short planks” no longer than 3-4 feet, without the use of studs or other conventional framing (figure 2). The exceptionally heavy hardwood planks, which are stored in the house, had tongues along two edges and grooves along the other two edges. Although “plank” or “plank-log” buildings were not uncommon in 18th- and 19th- century Virginia, they were typically built of

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long planks that extended the full length of a wall, corner to corner, and were greater than three inches thick (five or six inches on average). The planks were usually pegged or notched together without tongue-and-groove or similar joinery. As far as can be determined, there are no other recorded examples of tongue-and-groove short-plank buildings in Virginia. The Gibson farmhouse's two-story four-bay timber-frame lateral wing was built at an unknown date, in a very unusual fashion, using pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery rather than nails, with the framing semi-exposed on the inside of the building. The corner posts and diagonal down braces, which are chamfered to an octagonal shape, are all partly visible within the rooms. Considering its use of three entirely different construction methods, two of them with possibly unique details among recorded properties, the Gibson Farmhouse is the only known survival of its kind in Lee County or elsewhere, and is therefore of exceptional historical importance at the local and regional levels. Although combination log-and-timber-frame buildings continue to exist in southwestern Virginia, survivals are exceptionally rare, with only a few examples recorded.²



Fig. 2 Plank north wall (right) of kitchen before being dismantled ca. 1991.

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The Gibson Farmhouse is also notable for its masonry chimneys. Three of the four exterior end chimneys are constructed of dressed, square limestone blocks, probably quarried on the farm or close by, and hand-made bricks with unusual frogs (indentions in the undersides). The fourth chimney is built only of brick without a limestone base.

The Gibson Farm also contains log secondary buildings, of which the half-dovetail-notched granary behind the house is the most noteworthy for its construction and also the best preserved. The large v-notched meathouse and the double-crib round-log barn remain extant, but in deteriorated condition.



Fig. 3 Rear porch being dismantled, circa 1991.

Architectural/Comparative Analysis

As noted above, there are very few extant, comparative examples of log and timber frame buildings in Southwest Virginia to compare with the Gibson Farmhouse. However, there are a few recorded comparative examples that are no longer extant, and others that survive in the greater Southwest Virginia region, including Rockbridge, Botetourt, Bedford and Campbell and Montgomery County counties, all a considerable distance to the north and east of Lee County. A few of these are described below.

With a substantial timber-frame addition on one end of two adjoined hewn-log pens, the Fishburn Park Keeper's Cottage (City of Roanoke, VDHR 128-0032) is a variant of a saddlebag house, with a central chimney between both log pens and an exterior chimney on the end of the timber-frame portion. The cottage is believed to have been erected in two or more phases between ca. 1820 and ca. 1850 and later appended further with minor additions.

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Also standing until recently in the Roanoke area was an antebellum-era Baptist parsonage (VDHR 080-5146) only recently discovered to have been built as a single hewn-log pen with a small hewn-timber-frame lateral addition. The building was gradually exposed during demolition in February 2026, revealing its construction details.

Another extant example of a hewn-log and timber-frame house is the “farm manager’s house” at the Bowyer-Holladay House site (VDHR 011-0028, NRHP 1999) in Botetourt County. The 1.5-story dwelling began circa 1830 with a v-notched log pen and within a relatively short period of time a braced timber-frame lateral addition of the same height and width was built. The hewn-timber frame was built about two feet away from the log pen and the space between infilled with weatherboards outside and wall boards inside. For decades the building has stood vacant on public land, in generally neglected condition.

Within Rockbridge County stands the extraordinary Alphin House (VDHR 081-0318) significant for its “unusual evolution employing a combination of ... v-notched hewn-log construction and mortise-and-tenon timber framing, as well as dimensional lumber balloon framing, and limestone masonry.” Its early nineteenth-century architectural features include an unusually massive limestone chimney with a large cooking fireplace and an upstairs fireplace spanned by a segmental arch of stone voussoirs. The chimney is located within the c. 1830s timber frame addition, but it serves only the flanking (originally 1.5-story) log pen and predates the addition.³

Historical Background

Documentary and architectural evidence indicates that the Gibson Farm dates to circa 1830. It retains the farmhouse begun about that time and later appended, as well as the Gibson family cemetery located about 100 feet from the farmhouse. The center part of the house, two stories in height and built of logs, is the original structure, although it began as merely one story and was heightened later. The original owner was James Johnston Gibson (1810–1874), a merchant and farmer who served a term in the Virginia legislature (1842–1843). James was the grandson of Major George Gibson, an Irish immigrant and Revolutionary War soldier who built a frontier outpost called Fort Gibson near what would become the Gibson Farm in Lee County. Major Gibson’s son, Zachariah Smith Gibson, was James’ father. James and his wife, Lucy Ann Ball (1813–1891) raised ten children, including six sons who reportedly served in the Confederate Army, and three more generations of Gibson residents would follow, working and residing on the Gibson Farm. The first of these was headed by George Washington Gibson, who served the Confederacy during the war and later married Mary Ruth Gibson (d. 1899) in 1869. They raised eight children in the farmhouse. A son named James became a medical doctor, and the house’s one-story south wing is said to have been built for his practice; although after he married, he removed to Lexington, Kentucky. The final owner/occupant would be Robert George Gibson, who lived on the Gibson Farm until the 1980s. The original owners and many descendants are interred in the family cemetery, which is thought to contain 41 graves including those of two unnamed enslaved (and perhaps freed) persons.⁴

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Immediately to the south of the Gibson farmhouse was the famous Wilderness Road (now Dr. Thomas Walker Road) by which settlers headed to the South and Midwest traveled throughout much of the late 18th and 19th centuries; and a branch of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, completed through the length of Lee County to the City of Norton, Virginia, by 1891, ran through the Gibson Farm, only 80 yards north of the farmhouse. The Gibsons may have constructed one or two of the house's wings to accommodate travelers or boarders, which could explain the segregation of the two lateral wings of the house, with separate stairs and no second-floor internal conduit between them.

The Wilderness Road and Exploration of Present-day Lee County

In 1750, an expedition led by Dr. Thomas Walker, an investor in the Loyal Land Company, set out from Virginia through the Cumberland Gap and into present-day eastern Kentucky with the aim of exploring lands for future settlement. The Loyal Land Company had promoted settlement of lands in southwest Virginia, but not yet in Kentucky. The rough terrain hampered the expedition, but Walker's detailed report proved to be valuable in encouraging and guiding later expeditions, as well as the subsequent founding of the first settlements in Kentucky. Beginning in 1769, Virginia explorer Joseph Martin, for whom the City of Martinsville is named, made several forays into the Lee County area as an agent for Dr. Thomas Walker. Martin's first expedition to Powell's Valley (now Lee County) in early 1769 reportedly earned him a twenty-one thousand-acre grant from Walker and the Loyal Land Company. Martin led the construction of the first frontier fort at present-day Rose Hill, Virginia (a few miles east of the Gibson Farm), which became known as Martin's Station. During the same time period, Owen Station was established at present-day Ewing, and Gibson Station, which still holds its name, was established in close proximity to the future site of the Gibson Farm.

In 1774, a North Carolinian, Richard Henderson, organized a land speculation group called the Transylvania Company with the hope of establishing a colony on the west side of the Appalachian Mountains. They retained the services of experienced explorer Daniel Boone to blaze a trail leading through the Powell Valley and the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. The following year Boone set forth from Fort Chiswell in western Virginia, identifying the optimal route west. The Wilderness Road, as it became known, was difficult traveling, even on foot or horseback. Nevertheless, it would become the principal westerly route used by settlers for more than fifty years. After crossing the Cumberland Gap, the Wilderness Road forked to the south, toward what would become the cities of Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee, and to the north toward northeast Kentucky and the Falls of the Ohio River at Louisville. In 1796, the same year the Sayers House is believed to have been constructed, major improvements to the road were completed, greatly facilitating wagon and carriage travel.

As many as 300,000 settlers traveled along the Wilderness Road between 1775 and 1820. By 1840, use of the Wilderness Road had declined considerably as new, alternative passages to the west were established. During the Civil War, however, the Union and Confederate armies heavily traveled the road through the Cumberland Gap, which changed hands four times throughout the war. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the road provided an

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important route for timber, farm produce, and other commodities sold in distant eastern markets, as well as for supplies heading west to sustain newer settlements.

Endnotes

1. Find-a-grave website: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/50336/memorial-search?cemeteryName=Gibson+Cemetery&page=1#sr-75652190>
2. Based on Virginia Department of Historic Resources survey data.
3. Pezzoni and Pulice, Alphin House architectural survey. See VDHR survey form, June 2024.
4. Smith, Henrietta. "House of the Gibsons" Bicentennial History of Lee County, Virginia, 1792-1992. Lee County Bicentennial Committee, 1992: 126-127.

Acknowledgements

A number of individuals facilitated the preparation of this nomination, such as members of the Gibson family who opened the farm to visitation and shared family lore and old photographs: Roberta, Robert, Thomas, and Tara Borton. Ruth Babylon of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation was also very helpful in arranging an initial site visit and sharing information. At the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, assistance and/or review was provided by Austin Walker, Angel Williams, and Quatro Hubbard.

Gibson Farm
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Lee County, Virginia
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.) **Sources**

Smith, Henrietta. "House of the Gibsons" Sections I-III. Bicentennial History of Lee County, Virginia, 1792-1992. Lee County Bicentennial Committee, 1992: 126-127.

Find-a-grave website: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/50336/memorial-search?cemeteryName=Gibson+Cemetery&page=1#sr-75652190>

Roberta, Robert and Thomas Gibson and Tara Gibson Borton. Personal communication with Michael Pulice between October 2025 and February 2026.

Pezzoni, J. Daniel and Pulice, Michael. Alphin House, Rockbridge County (DHR 081-0318) Survey record, June 2024.

Virginia Department of Historic Resources survey data.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Virgina Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR 052-5163

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 13.6

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: **36.6438** Longitude: **-83.4202**
2. Latitude: **36.6445** Longitude: **-83.4185**
3. Latitude: **36.6426** Longitude: **-83.4170**
4. Latitude: **36.6416** Longitude: **-83.4191**

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The 13.6-acre nominated Gibson Farm parcel comprises the southern portion of Lee County real estate parcel number 63-(A)-98. Within the nominated parcel are all known extant historic (contributing) resources associated with the Gibson Farm including the Gibson-Smith Cemetery, which has a separate parcel ID: 63-(A)-98A.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated area boundary, indicated on accompanying maps, includes the 13.6-acre Gibson Farm parcel, on which all known extant historic (contributing) resources associated

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with the Gibson Farm are located. There are no extant secondary resources on the omitted area of tax parcel 63-(A)-98.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michael J. Pulice
organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources
street & number: 962 Kime Ln
city or town: Salem state: VA zip code: 24153
e-mail: michael.pulice@dhr.virginia.gov
telephone: 540-387-5443
date: March 2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Gibson Farm, Gibson-Smith Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Ewing vicinity

County: Lee County

State: Virginia

Gibson Farm
Name of Property

Lee County, Virginia
County and State

Photographer: Michael Pulice

Date Photographed: November 2025, January 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

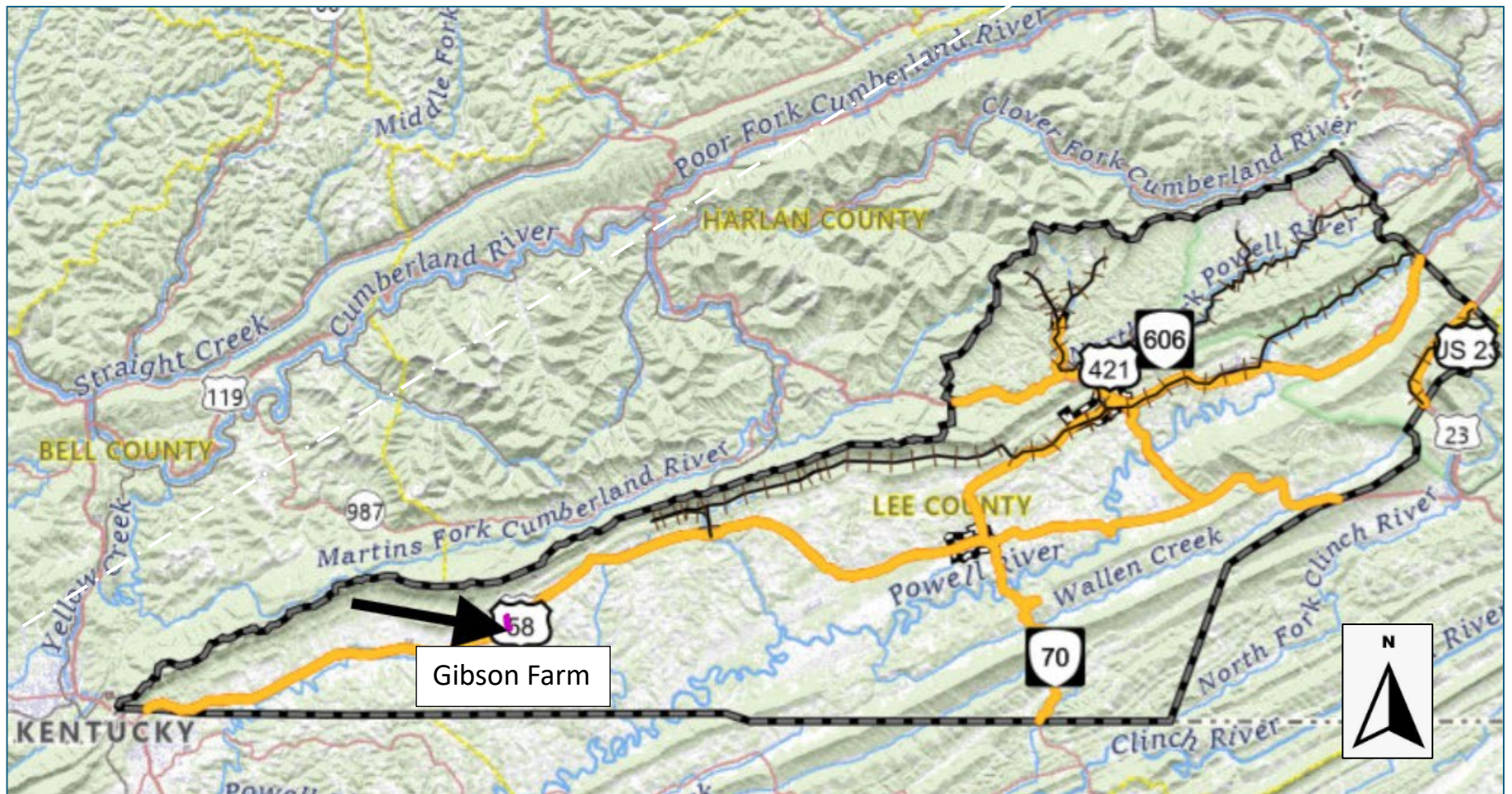
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0001_2025_looking_N-NW
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0002_2026_house_looking_NW
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0003_2025_house_front_door
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0004_2025_south_wing_looking_NW
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0005_2025_house_looking_E-NE
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0006_2026_house_looking_N-NE
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0007_2026_house_looking_SE
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0008_2025_kitchen_chimney_looking_NW
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VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0010_2026_house_looking_W
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0011_2025_house_1st-floor_E_room_corner
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0012_2025_house_1st-floor_E_room_ceiling
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0013_2025_house_2nd-floor_E_room_NW_corner
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0014_2026_house_E_wing_2nd-floor_corner
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0015_2026_house_E_wing_attic
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0016_2025_house_1st-floor_S_wing_fireplace
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0017_2026_house_log_pen_2nd-floor_corner_logs
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0018_2025_granary_looking_NE
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0019_2025_granary_closeup
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0020_2026_house_L&N_railbed_&_Indian_Creek
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0021_2026_log_barn_looking_E-SE_closeup
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0022_2026_cemetery_looking_W
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0023_2026_view_looking_N_from_backyard
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0024_2026_view_looking_NE_from_backyard
VA_LeeCounty_Gibson_Farm_0025_2026_milking_house_looking_W

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

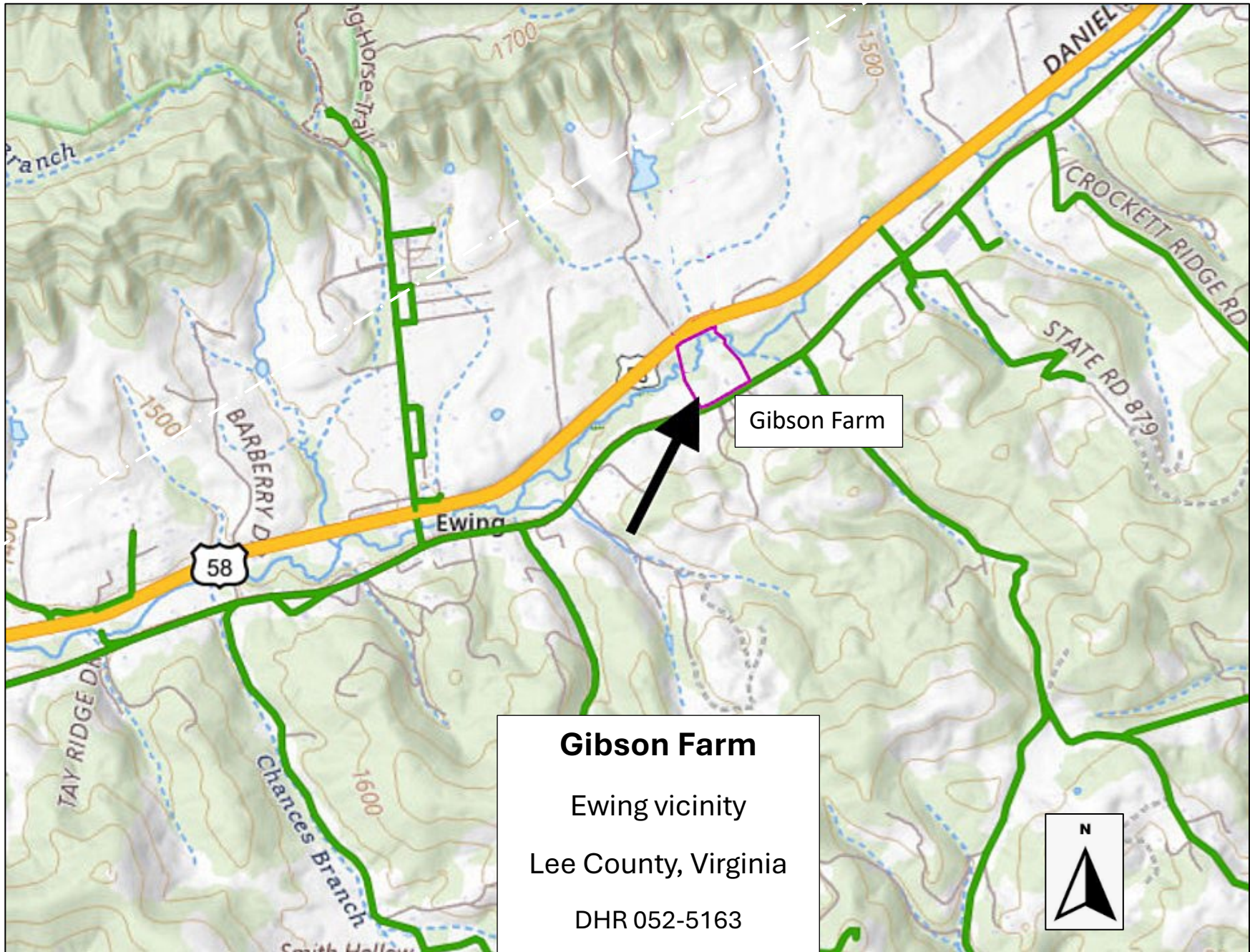


Gibson Farm

Ewing vicinity

Lee County, Virginia

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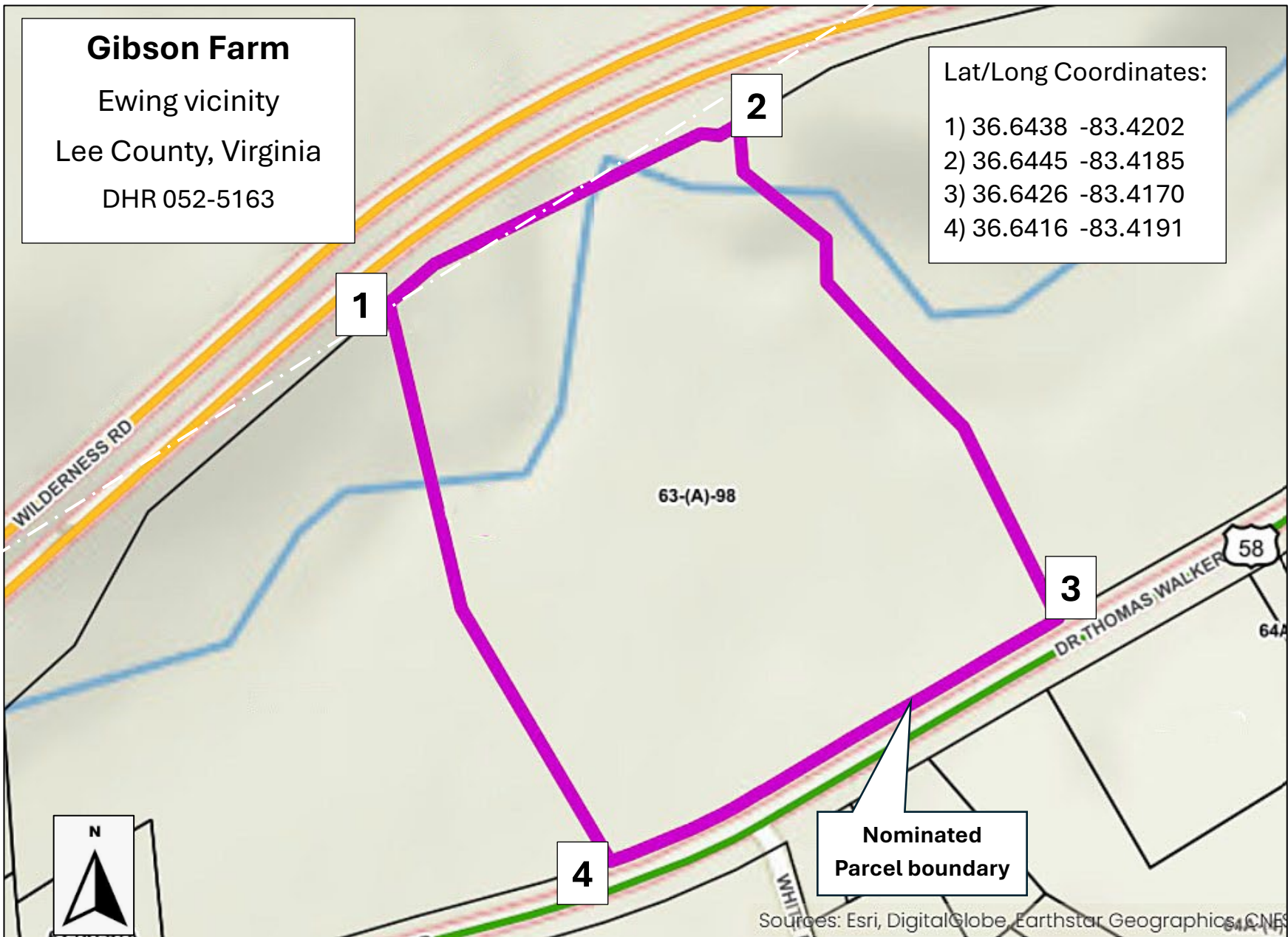


Gibson Farm

Ewing vicinity
Lee County, Virginia
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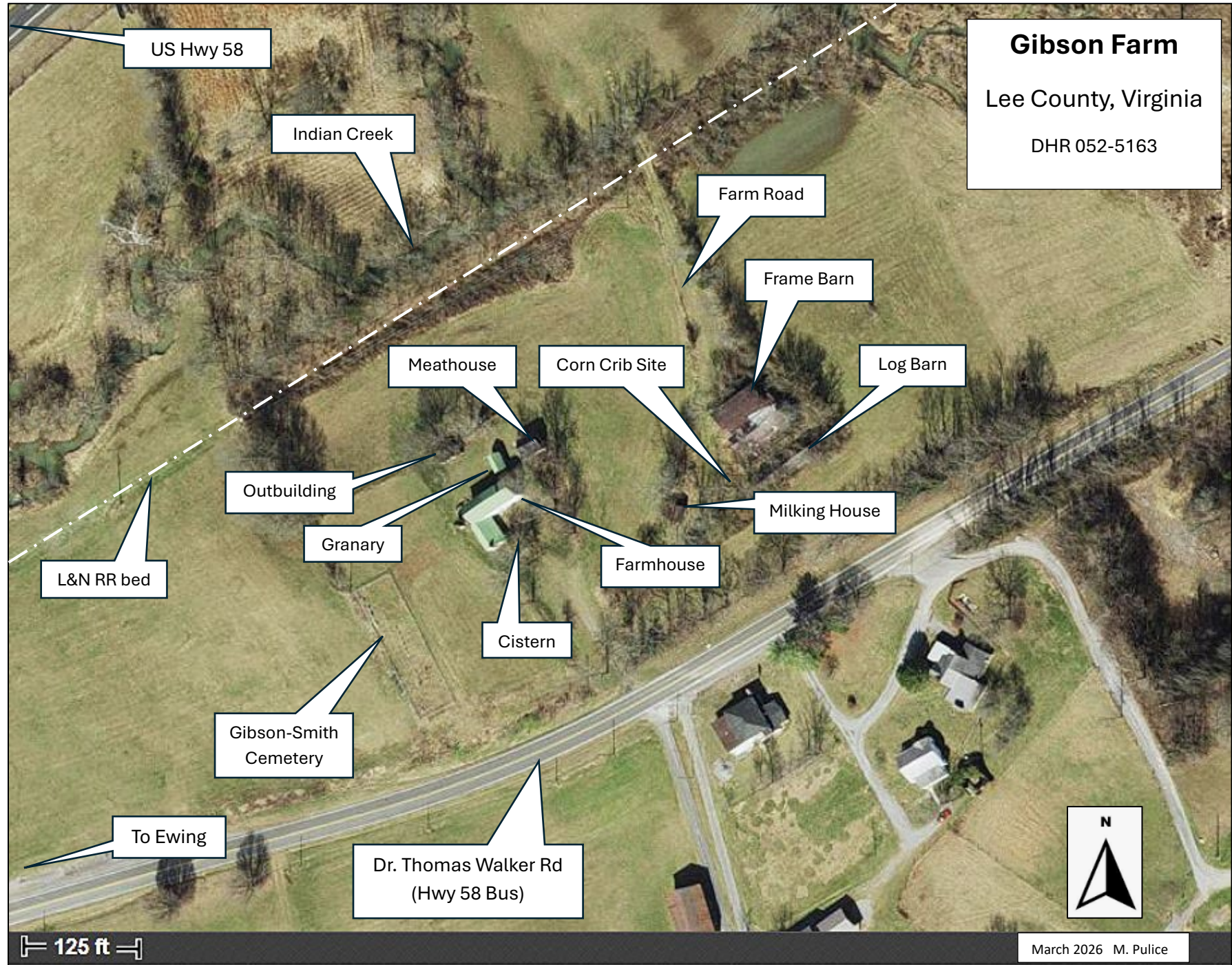
Lat/Long Coordinates:

- 1) 36.6438 -83.4202
- 2) 36.6445 -83.4185
- 3) 36.6426 -83.4170
- 4) 36.6416 -83.4191



Nominated
Parcel boundary

Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, Earthstar, Geographics, CNES



Gibson Farm
Lee County, Virginia
DHR 052-5163

US Hwy 58

Indian Creek

Farm Road

Frame Barn

Log Barn

Meathouse

Corn Crib Site

Milking House

Outbuilding

Granary

Farmhouse

L&N RR bed

Cistern

Gibson-Smith
Cemetery

To Ewing

Dr. Thomas Walker Rd
(Hwy 58 Bus)



125 ft

March 2026 M. Pulice

















































