Sabine Hill
Elizabethton, Carter County, Tennessee
Historic Structure Assessment
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Historic Structure Assessment

Prepared for:
Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, Tennessee

Prepared by:
Amber Clawson, Graduate Research Assistant
Jessica Lauren White, Graduate Research Assistant
Dr. Spurgeon King, Associate Director

Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area

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This Historic Overview, Existing Conditions & Needs Assessment and General Recommendations Report is the result of a project partnership between the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC), and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (NHA). The State of Tennessee owns Sabine Hill, located in Elizabethton, Tennessee. The Tennessee Historical Commission asked the NHA to develop this report for the house and its property. After meetings between Martha Akins, State Sites Director, THC; E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr., Executive Director, THC; Dr. Spurgeon King, Assistant Director of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area; Amber Clawson, graduate research assistant at the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation; and Jessica White, graduate research assistant at the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation, work was begun on the report.

Clawson and White, with the assistance of Dr. King, assessed the preservation needs of the various structures located at the site. The two graduate assistants also measured the interior and exterior of the house. White put together detailed Auto CAD drawings and 3-D renderings of the building, while Clawson researched the history of the family associated with the house and documented changes made to the house. White, with the guidance of Dr. King, evaluated the building and site, and developed the needs assessment.

Thanks to Patrick McIntyre, Executive Director of the Tennessee Historical Commission; Dr. Carroll Van West, Director of the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University; Dr. Spurgeon King, Associate Director of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area; Jennifer Bauer, Sycamore Shoals State Park; Mr. Benjamin Harrison Taylor; and Michael Thomas Gavin, Preservation Specialist, Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, for their contributions to the project.
Existing Conditions Overview

House Exterior Description

Sabine Hill, constructed c. 1818, is situated on a five-acre plot within the city limits of Elizabethton, Carter County, Tennessee. Built by Mary (Polly) Patton Taylor, the main dwelling and ell sits at the top of a rise, with a wooden shed and small frame barn immediately contiguous to the west. Further to the west below the rise is a larger frame barn. The front of the dwelling faces northwest, overlooking State Highway 321 on the west side of Elizabethton. Beyond the highway to the north is a bend in the Watauga River southwest of Sycamore Shoals, and to the south, a golf course. Light commercial and residential infill is situated to the west and east. The property, which is covered with a grassy lawn, scrub brush and mature shade trees, is accessed from a drive at the end of West G Street. Dense woodlands cover the property to the southwest below the rise, and a small creek that defines the southwestern border empties into the Watauga River to the north. The property is surrounded by small mountains and ridges.

The Federal-style frame dwelling is a two-story, side gable I-house featuring a symmetrical five-bay front façade with central entrance (Figure 1). The plan of the first floor consists of a center passage with a parlor on each side, and an ell addition to the rear. The foundation is composed of coursed rough-cut limestone, while the roof is clad in standing seam metal panels. The main block is flanked on either side by two single-shoulder brick chimneys. To the rear is a single story, side gable ell accessed from the main block through a hyphen (Figure 2). The single room ell rests on a limestone foundation, features a standing seam metal roof, and has a single shoulder limestone chimney on the southeast façade.

Figure 1. Sabine Hill NW Façade, 2011.
Figure 2. First Floor, Floor Plan. Not to scale Siding
The dwelling has undergone various alterations over the years. A previous owner confirmed during a recorded interview that he had replaced much of the dwelling’s weatherboard siding during the early 1950s (HABS photographs, when compared to those taken more recently, confirm this, see Figure 3), and that he later flipped and sanded weatherboard siding on the front of the house during the 1960s. Siding on the southeast façade and ell may also have been replaced or flipped (Figures 4, 5). It is possible that rough hewn logs were used in the original building, with any remaining primitive elements hidden by the current weatherboards.

Figure 3. 1936 HABS image of NW façade and siding close up.
Figure 4. Photo from 2011, provides evidence that the SE siding has been realigned.

Figure 5. Photo of the SW façade of the ell addition clearly shows that the siding is modern.
Foundation

Extensive cracking and shifts in the foundation of Sabine Hill can be seen in the 1936 HABS photographs (Figure 6). The foundation of the house was reworked during the 1950s to correct cracking and tilting issues. Most of the foundation problems have been caused by a basement addition to the 1818 section of the house. The basement was added some time before 1936 as HABS images clearly show a basement entry and window (Figures 7). The basement walls were not properly reinforced when the basement was constructed and has caused the walls to weaken and start to give way.

Figure 6. 1936 HABS photograph shows damage to the foundation.

Figure 7. 2011 photograph shows the addition of a basement window.
Sabine Hill has three exterior chimneys: one centered on each of the northeast and southwest facades, and a third centered on the southeast end of the ell. The larger chimneys are composed of brick laid in a common bond pattern and feature single shoulders (Figures 8, 9). These brick chimneys have been re-pointed at various times, and rebuilt as required over the years. Mr. Reynolds indicated that he repaired the chimneys almost immediately after purchase (a 1936 HABS photograph indicates chimney damage, see Figures 10-13). The east chimney shows signs of ghosting, indicating that brick was replaced over the soot line (Figure 14). There is evidence of water damage (Figure 15). Foundation issues may also have undermined the stability of the tall brick stacks. The ell chimney is composed of rough cut, coursed limestone blocks, and has a single shoulder (Figure 16). This chimney, which also has been repointed several times, is an original nineteenth century stack.
Figure 10. Close-up of SW chimney, HABS 1936. Note the decorative coping along the top of the chimney. This no longer exists.

Figure 11. Close-up of NE chimney, HABS 1936. Note that the banding along the top is missing and part of the chimney is crumbling.

Figure 12. Close-up of SW chimney, 2011.

Figure 13. Close-up of NE chimney, 2011.
Figure 14. Left: Full view of the NE chimney. Note the water damage marks starting at the shoulders.

Figure 15. Above: Note the ghosting marks just above the shoulder where the top half of the chimney was reworked.
Figure 16. SE Ell Chimney
Doors

Several exterior doors on Sabine Hill have been either replaced or altered. The original 1818 front door surround was replaced with a close replica during renovation work in the 1950s and 1960s (1936 HABS photographs show the original surround, see Figures 17 and 18). Remnants of the 1818 surround are stored in a front parlor of the dwelling.

![Figure 17. 1936 HABS photograph of the door surround.](image)

![Figure 18. 2011 photograph of the current door surround.](image)

Windows

There are a total of twenty-one 9/9 double-hung windows in the house (Figure 19). All of the sash have been replaced. The southwest façade of the ell addition features a set of 1950s-era 1/1
double-hung sash between the two existing doors (Figure 20) and a photo from the 1936 HABS report indicates that these windows were installed sometime after 1936 (Figure 21).

Figure 19. 9/9 double-hung window
Addition (comparative)

Figure 20. 1936 HABS image of the SW ell. Note that there are no porch or windows.

Figure 21. 2011 photo of the 1/1 double-hung sash and porch added during the 1960s.
A poured concrete porch (c. 1955) was added to the rear (southwest) wall of the ell addition (Figure 20). A photo from the 1936 HABS report shows no porch and indicates that there probably never was one (Figure 21). A foundation extension can be seen along the poured concrete porch located on the west façade of the ell. The use of later brick and river rock denote that this foundation was later construction added c. 1950, and is non-load bearing (Figure 22).

![Figure 22. 2011 photograph of the veneer over the porch that extends SW from the rear ell.](image)

**Porches**

Sabine Hill has three porches: an entry porch on the northwest façade of the house, a full covered porch on the southwest façade of the ell, and a third porch on the northeast façade of the ell. The c. 1960 metal frame entry porch features wooden plank horizontal treads and metal handrails and balustrades. (Figure 23). The c. 1960 concrete porch on the west façade of the ell has a metal shed-roof awning supported by decorative wrought iron columns (Figure 24). The
c. 1960 porch on the northeast façade of the ell has a metal frame with wooden plank treads, and a freestanding metal shed-roof awning extends over a portion of the porch (Figure 25).

Northwest

Exterior Elevation Descriptions
The northwest elevation of the main block features five bays with a central entrance (Figure 26 & 27). Four of the bays have 9/9 double-hung wooden windows with aluminum triple-track storms. The six-paneled wooden entry door features a fanlight transom above. The c. 1950 exterior door surround is capped by a decorative broken pediment supported by square pilasters. There are five symmetrical 9/9 double hung wooden sash with aluminum triple-track storms on the second floor. The roof is composed of standing seam metal. The foundation consists of rough-cut limestone blocks laid in courses. The metal frame entry porch on the north façade of the main block has wood plank horizontal treads and metal handrails and balustrades.

![Figure 26. NW Façade, 1818 house.](image-url)
Figure 27. NW Façade.

Northeast
The northeast façade of the main block has a centered brick chimney flanked by two symmetrically spaced 9/9 double-hung wooden sash on both stories (Figure 28 & 29). The chimney is composed of brick laid in the common bond pattern and has one shoulder. This chimney has been repointed and/or repaired as necessary over the years. Return boards for the frieze appear just above the second story windows.

Figure 28. NE Façade, 1818 house.
The southeast façade of the main block is divided into five bays and has an attached ell. The first floor features a 9/9 double-hung wooden sash and a six-panel wood entry door. The builders probably anticipated adding the rear ell at a later time (Figure 30 & 31). Current images of the house suggest that the exterior weatherboard may not be original, or may have been flipped. The boards are warped and should be replaced in-kind.

Figure 30. SE Façade, 1818 house.
Southwest
The southwest façade of the main block has no openings other than a small wood plank basement door located at the rear corner (Figure 32 & 33). The chimney is composed of brick laid in the common bond pattern and has one shoulder. This chimney has been repointed at least once and has been painted white. Frieze board returns appear at the top of the wall.
The southwest façade of the ell has four bays (Figure 34). The kitchen portion of the ell features a central door flanked by fixed pane sash. The two fixed pane sash were added sometime after 1936. A shed roof supported by decorative wrought iron columns protects the concrete porch. The hyphen that attaches the kitchen to the main block has a single entry door.
—Southeast

Figure 35. SE Façade, Ell Addition.
The southeast façade of the ell addition has a rough-cut limestone chimney with one set of shoulders centered on the wall (Figure 35).

—Northeast

The northeast wall of the ell addition is divided into four bays (Figure 36). Three evenly spaced 9/9 double-hung wooden sash are located on the kitchen portion of the house.
Rear Ell Addition

A wood paneled door with a decorative metal storm door leads to the hyphen extension. The metal awing and a metal frame porch date to the 1960s.
House Interior Description

The entryway of Sabine Hill (Figure 37) measures 7’9” x 22’4”. The walls are clad with horizontal hand-planed tongue-and-groove wooden planks approximately 6” wide. The main staircase, located on the southwest wall, ascends to a half-landing before turning 180 degrees and continuing upwards (dog-leg layout). The stair risers measure 9 ½” high, while the treads are 12” wide, trimmed with a simple nosing. The thin handrail is supported by simple square balusters and the stringer features a delicate scroll design (Figures 38, 39). A second staircase that leads to the basement is located beneath the main staircase. The entryway has opposing sixpanel exterior doors and three interior doors. The southwest door leads to the “Red, White, and Blue” Room. The northeast door opens into the sitting room. The third door, located beneath the staircase, provides access to the basement. This room has 6”-wide wood plank floors and 6”-wide baseboards. The crown molding at the top of the walls has reed detailing; all of the molding appears to be original.
Figure 37. Entryway, main house.

Stairs

Figure 38. Handrail detail.

Figure 39. Decorative scroll-work on the main stairwell.
Measuring 14’3” x 22’4,” the “Red, White, and Blue” Room is located on the southwest side of the main block and has much original material remaining, although in a poor state of repair (Figures 40-44). The walls are composed of plaster over wooden lath, which is crumbling in many places. The millwork is mostly intact and includes 6” baseboards, paneled wainscoting, a 3”-wide chair rail, and 6” crown molding with reed detail. The floor is composed of 6” poplar planks. The original mantel has been removed and may be stored on site. The fireplace surround is composed of brick laid in common bond with a surmounting flat jack arch. The surround has been plastered over at some point in the past.
Figure 41. Red, White, and Blue room.
Figure 43. Red, White, and Blue room.
The sitting room (Figure 45) is located on the northeast end of the main block, and measures 13’4” x 22’4”. The walls in this space are obscured by decorative paper, but consist of either plaster or horizontal wood planks. The millwork is not original; it now consists of modern 3” pine baseboards, crown molding, and surround molding. A Crab Orchard stone fireplace, c. 1960, has replaced the original mantel, hearth, and fireplace surround. Much of the original
First Floor—

wood plank flooring has been covered with linoleum, although some portions of the older flooring are exposed.

Hyphen Addition

The hyphen portion of the ell addition has been converted into a modern kitchen, c. 1960 (Figure 46). The room measures 14’3” x 13’4”. Little historic material remains exposed; the original wooden plank walls have been covered by a decorative board and batten pine boards.
First Floor—
Knotty pine wall and floor cabinets, as well as modern plumbing and electrical fixtures, also have been added. The kitchen area has two exterior pine doors and two interior pine doors, c. 1960. There is one historic 9/9 double-hung sash on the northeast wall; the 1/1 windows on the southwest wall are modern additions, c. 1960.

Cabin Addition

Figure 47. Kitchen Addition.
First Floor—

The kitchen portion of the ell measures 17’0” x 13’4” (Figure 47). Most original elements in this space remain intact. Horizontal wood plank wallboards are concealed beneath several layers of wall paper. The ceiling has also been covered with resilient ceiling tiles. The mantel on the south side of the space appears to be original and the fireplace surround is composed of rough-cut limestone blocks with a segmental arch. The crown and baseboard molding have been replaced. The floor covering consists of modern 3” pine plank flooring.
A small c. 1960s bathroom measuring 8’7” x 7’0” is located at the top of the stairs (Figure 48). Walls in this bathroom have been covered with cork tile and wood paneling. Modern plumbing and fixtures have been added.

—Southwest Bedroom
The bedroom on the southwest side of the main block has been completely altered, and little, if any, original building fabric exists (Figures 49, 50). The space measures 22’3” x 14’3”. The walls have particle board paneling, and the ceiling has resilient tiles. Original molding was removed and replaced with modern stock. Two small closets were added on the west and east sides of the room. The fireplace mantel has been stripped away, but the hearth and fireplace surround are still visible. Flooring in the room is covered by carpet. All alterations to this space took place c. 1960.
Like the southwest bedroom, the northeast bedroom has been greatly altered (Figures 51, 52). The space measures 14’10” x 14’4”. The room has particle board wall covering, resilient ceiling tiles, and modern molding. The fireplace mantel has been removed from the space and the fireplace covered. The original wood plank floor remains intact, although a changing room
and closet have been added to the south side of the space, which measures 6'9” x 14’4”. All alterations to this room took place c. 1960.
The basement is located beneath the main block of the house (Figures 53, 54). The portion located beneath the “Red, White, and Blue” Room has finished concrete floors, while the floor on the east side consists of dirt. The east side of the basement is structurally unsound. From the basement one can observe the full hardwood log sleepers that support the flooring above.
Figure 54. First Floor sleepers

Outbuildings—Shed

Figure 55. West side of the shed.

Figure 56. East side of the shed.
A small storage shed sheathed with vertical boards is located to the east of the dwelling. The shed has moderately pitched flat roof covered in 5-V pattern sheet metal (Figures 55, 56).

**Outbuildings—Barn**

![Figure 57. North side of the Corncrib.](image)

![Figure 58. South side of the Corncrib.](image)

To the east side of the property there is a double pen drive-through corncrib sheathed in horizontal weatherboards on the first level and vertical board-and-batten siding in the gables.
The structure rests on a stacked limestone pier foundation and has a corrugated metal roof. There is a shed-roof addition on the east façade probably used to store farm implements (Figures 57, 58).
Needs Assessment—Exterior

- The exterior of the house should be thoroughly examined for access points, which should be sealed off to prevent the intrusion of vermin. Sabine Hill has several openings which should be closed up immediately. A window on the southeast wall is broken and is providing an entry for birds and other animals (Figure 59). An opening in the foundation of the rear ell allows access to the house’s crawlspace (Figure 60). Finally, a large hole in the foundation of the northeast wall of the main structure serves as an entryway for vermin and has compromised the stability of the foundation wall (Figure 61).

Figure 59. Missing panes in window

Figure 60. Access point for vermin into the crawlspace of the ell.
The later addition of a basement space to the main block of the house raises concerns about the structural stability of the foundation walls of the building. On the east side of the house, the foundation wall has collapsed in some areas and may be effecting the soundness of the structure, as well as the attached chimney. An experienced professional should be consulted immediately to determine potential danger and foundational stability (Figure 62).
Figure 62. Foundation on the NE wall of the main structure.

—Chimneys

- The chimney on the northeast side of the main structures shows signs of mold and water damage. The chimney should be examined for any cracks or penetration points. These areas should be properly sealed (Figure 63).
The weatherboards on the south façade are in poor condition (Figure 64). In some areas the wood siding is extremely weathered and some of the boards have rotted. There are also numerous holes in the siding caused by rodents.

- These holes should be carefully patched and the damaged boards repaired or replaced.
- Sand, prime, and paint all wooden building components.

**Figure 63.** Water damage to the NE wall chimney.

—*Weatherboard Siding*
Figure 64. SE façade weatherboard siding deterioration.
—Weatherboard Siding
Figure 65. SE façade weatherboard siding deterioration above hyphen.

Figure 66. SW façade weatherboard siding deterioration.

—Roofing

• Metal seam roofing needs replacement (Figures 67, 68).

Figure 67. Metal standing seam roofs on main house and ell.
Figure 68. Metal standing seam roof on ell showing rust.

—Miscellaneous

Needs Assessment—Interior
Figure 69. Accumulation of bird guano and other debris.

![Figure 69](image)

Figure 70. The wine still located in the house’s basement.

The interior of the home is also in poor condition (Figures 69, 70). Various access points throughout the house have allowed the accumulation of guano, dirt, and other various types of hazardous debris. There is also a collection of hazardous chemicals and a wine still in the basement of the house. All of these materials can pose health risks for any who enter the house and should be removed.

- Seal access points for rodents and birds; remove guano from property.
- Remove old wine containers, ensuring that the bottles are handled safely.

—Plaster Walls

- The plaster work in some areas of the house, specifically in the “Red, White, and Blue” Room, is extremely deteriorated and should be restored and maintained (Figures 69 - 71).
- Repair and/or replace old lath as necessary; metal lath may be used to shore up the older material.
- Allow for proper curing.
- Repaint, using alkaline-resistant primer for new plaster.
Figure 71. Deteriorated plasterwork on SW wall in “Red, White, and Blue” Room.
—Plaster Walls
Figure 72. Deteriorated plasterwork: SW wall of “Red, White, and Blue” Room.

Figure 73. Deteriorated plasterwork: NE wall of “Red, White, and Blue” Room.
• Fireplaces have been severely altered throughout the house with the exception of the kitchen addition where the fireplace box and primitive mantle piece are intact (Figure 74).
• Fireplace boxes throughout the main house need to be repaired and/or rebuilt.
• Flues should be examined for proper ventilation and repaired/rebuilt for safe operation.
• Chimneys should be sealed to prevent moisture penetration.
• Mantles will have to be reconstructed and installed.

Figure 74. Intact fireplace and mantle in kitchen addition.
Figure 75. Fireplace on SW wall of “Red, White, and Blue” Room.

Figure 76. Crab Orchard stone fireplace with raised hearth in NE parlor.
Figure 77. Fireplace in SW bedroom (2nd floor).

Figure 78. Fireplace in NE bedroom (2nd floor).
• With the exception of plasterwork and wainscoting in the “Red, White, and Blue” Room (Figure 79), wall coverings are not original. Paneling and wallpaper were added during the renovations of the second half of the twentieth century.
• Modern trim throughout the house was added during the second half of the twentieth century.
• Wainscoting in the “Red, White, and Blue” Room most likely is original. The eclectic collection of wall coverings should be stripped out and the walls returned to a representative nineteenth century appearance.
Figure 80. Wall coverings in NE parlor.

Figure 81. Wall coverings in hyphen.
Figure 82. Board covered walls in hyphen.

Figure 83. Modern wood paneling in NE
Needs Assessment—

bedroom.

**Interior Trim**

Figure 84. Original front entrance fanlight trim work stored in “Red, White, and Blue” Room.

Figure 85. Replacement trim on doors and
Needs Assessment—
ceiling of the second floor landing.
General Recommendations

The main house at Sabine Hill is in somewhat poor condition and several areas require immediate remediation to stabilize deteriorating building materials. It should be noted that much historic fabric has been lost during past renovations. The primary initial objective should be exterior weatherization to protect the roof, walls, and windows, followed by the correction of any foundational and/or structural problems.

1) The exterior should be sealed properly for both weatherization and pest control. The foundation should be examined closely by a qualified professional. The building needs to be sealed, painted, and protected from moisture and vermin penetration.

2) Site drainage should be assessed to prevent water from entering the basement and damaging the foundation. The gutter system should be inspected and deteriorated components should be replaced. The southwest wall appears to allow seepage through the exterior basement door. There is a catch basin at the corner of the wall that also should be sealed up.

3) The weatherboard siding, particularly on the southeast wall of the main block, should be repaired/replaced in-kind, and properly sealed and painted.

4) Metal roofing should be inspected and replaced (if necessary) on both the main house and ell addition.

5) Windows should be repaired/replaced, and appropriate storm windows installed. There is evidence of leakage though the second floor windows of the main block.

6) Outbuildings are in extremely poor condition and should be inspected.

7) The site should be examined to accommodate vehicles and parking. The current driveway that curves in front of the house should be reconfigured to run behind the house to parking areas that do not detract from the site’s main viewscape.
Figure 86. Historic American Buildings Survey, W. Jeter Eason, Deputy District Officer, Photographer June 11, 1936 FRONT ELEVATION (LOOKING EAST).

Figure 86. Historic American Buildings Survey, W. Jeter Eason, Deputy District Officer, Photographer June 11, 1936 REAR VIEW (LOOKING NORTHWEST).
Figure 87. Historic American Buildings Survey, W. Jeter Eason, Deputy District Officer, Photographer June 11, 1936 DETAIL OF MANTEL.