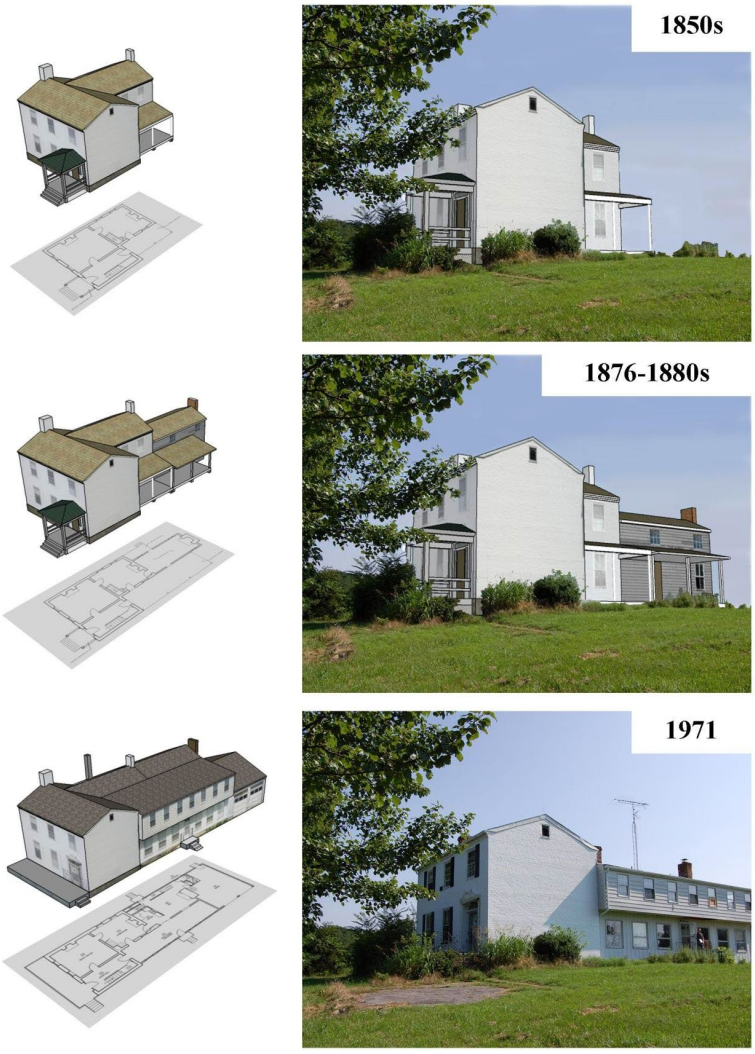
Bowman-Hite Historic Restoration Project
Project Description, Proposed Mitigations, and Alternatives Considered



National Park Service
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
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Project Description

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park is located near Middletown in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Established in 2002, the park works with partner organizations to preserve and interpret the rich natural and historic resources of the region. Countless people have left their mark on the region from Indigenous Native American inhabitation, early European settlement, the Civil War and battle of Cedar Creek, through post-war changes to the modern day.

Among properties protected by the National Park Service is the Bowman-Hite farm, located at 621 Bowman Mill Road, Middletown, Virginia. This property is historically significant, telling us about life and agriculture before and after the Civil War as well as witnessing some of the first fighting from the battle of Cedar Creek in 1864.

The domestic core of the property includes the farmhouse, barn, and smokehouse. Archeological survey has documented multiple layers of inhabitation and use. While the NPS has worked to restore the historic features of the landscape by removing modern additions and repairing historic features, additional work is needed.

The National Park Service proposes a project to remove a modern addition from the farmhouse. As this has been determined by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to constitute an Adverse Effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the park sought comments on the project proposal and proposed mitigations. This revised plan takes into consideration comments received from consulting parties and seeks additional comment.

Purpose:

The brick portions of the farmhouse were built around 1850, and a frame addition was added in 1876. The last private owners of the property built a significant addition in the 1970s that entirely subsumed and heavily altered the 1876 frame structure.

The park proposes to remove the 1970s addition, which would involve demolition of the limited remaining portions of the 1876 addition. Much of the 1876 structure was heavily altered or completely removed during these earlier additions. So much has been lost that preserving it has been deemed not feasible by the NPS Historic Architecture, Conservation, & Engineering Center, and the limited documentation that predates the renovation is not sufficient to support an accurate reconstruction.

Maintaining the sizeable footprint of the addition unnecessarily adds to the park's ongoing operation expenditures and takes resources away from maintaining historic features. The deteriorating modern addition also poses an eventual risk to the health and safety of park staff working in and around the structure as well as visitors on the farmstead. The park believes that removing the modern addition and 1876 elements would address these purposes and needs.

Historical Significance:

The Bowman-Hite house is a west-facing, two-story, side-gable, brick, Greek Revival-style house that was built for Charles J. Hite and his wife Rebecca F. W. Bowman Hite. The original three-bay, side-passage, single-pile house has a rear gable-roofed addition that extends from the

north side of the east façade. The rear addition consists of a ca. 1876 one-and-one-half-story kitchen addition and a 1970s two-story addition on the kitchen's east and south façades. The roof of the house is covered with asphalt shingles and has three brick chimneys: interior end-gable chimneys on the original house and the east façade of the kitchen addition and a chimney on the east façade of the 1970s addition. The nineteenth-century walls are laid in common bond and have a corbelled cornice; the wood-frame addition walls are clad in aluminum siding. The nineteenth-century sections have semi-coursed, quarry-faced limestone ashlar foundations; the 1970s addition sits on concrete block footings.

Nestled along Cedar Creek near its confluence with the Shenandoah River, the archeological record indicates Native American inhabitation during the Woodland Period. The historic farm is located on land granted to George Bowman during early European settlement of the Shenandoah Valley, the property passed to Rebecca Bowman upon the death of her father. Charles and Rebecca relocated here shortly after their marriage, and the brick portion of the home was constructed circa 1850. They operated a small plantation here, practicing mixed agriculture while relying on the labor of approximately 15 enslaved individuals.

The property also played a role in the battle of Cedar Creek. In October 1864, United States soldiers in the Army of West Virginia under the command of division commander Colonel Joseph Thoburn encamped on the property, constructing earthworks on the hill above the house. In the early morning of October 19, a Confederate surprise attack moved through the property, including through the domestic yard, before taking control of the position.

Later that day, United States counterattacks pushed Confederate soldiers far south, winning victory shortly before the presidential election and both securing US control of the Shenandoah Valley and boosting President Abraham Lincoln's chances at re-election.

Following the Civil War, the Hite family moved into Middletown, renting out the farm. After Charles abandoned his family, the property was sold. Around 1876, John Pirkey constructed the frame addition and extended the side porch before constructing the bank barn on the property around 1881. The Kerns family owned the farm from 1881-1967, when it was purchased by Lloyd and Ruth Whitham.

The Whithams carried out significant alterations, concealing and partially demolishing the rear frame addition, raising the chimney, and removing historic porches. Over time, the farm shrank in size as parcels were sold off and types of work changed with the dairy operation growing and the planting of orchards.

The Bowman-Hite farmhouse, as well as other structures and landscape features on the property, are recorded on historic registers as having national, state, and local significance. The farmhouse, landscape, and other structures are listed as contributing to the 2025 Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park National Register of Historic Places listing. The farmhouse is also listed as contributing to the 2024 update to the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove Plantation National Historic Landmark District, though only the Civil War era resources are listed here, not the post-Civil War addition or other later structures. Thus, the Adverse Effect applies to the National Register listing but not the National Historic Landmark District.

In addition to previous documentation efforts, including the Cultural Landscape Inventory (2007) and Historic Structure Report on the farmhouse (2013 and 2015), the NPS continues to study the history of the property and residents. In addition to ongoing staff research, in 2025 the park plans to update the Cultural Landscape Inventory and produce a full Cultural Landscape Report on the historic extent of the Bowman-Hite Farm, analyzing hundreds of acres to create a comprehensive study on the historic landscape's evolution and use.

Removal of the 1970s addition, which includes remaining portions of the 1876 structure, would help to restore the Civil War era farm landscape. However, the post-Civil War landscape is also considered significant, so the loss of the limited 1876 features is considered an Adverse Effect by the NPS and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Description:

Demolishing the 1970s addition will be complicated because of the way it added on to and subsumed historic features. This section provides a general overview of the necessary steps. Throughout the process, archeologists and historic architects will be consulted to manage effects to historic resources and record information.

The first story addition will be removed. This includes the limited remaining fabric from the 1876 frame section as well as all 1970s additions. The 1870s foundation will be retained, and elements of the chimney may also be retained, described later in this document. All aspects of the 1850s brick structure, including its basement, first story, second story, and attic, will be protected. A protective plan, meeting standards outlined in the NPS "Preservation Tech Notes Temporary Protection Number 3" will be developed to ensure historic elements to include the 1850s structure are not adversely impacted.[1] Doors matching historic style will need to be added to close entryways currently providing access within the interior.

The second story addition will be removed. This retains very little to no historic fabric from the 1870s. Two 1850s windows will be restored, as they were repurposed into doors when the second story addition was built.

The modern porch will be removed. The 1870s cistern located by archeological survey beneath the porch will be covered with culturally sterile fill dirt and protected with construction matting during demolition. The park also proposes to reconstruct some of the original porch structures as a mitigation, which is described later in this document.

A new cover and entryway will need to be constructed to protect the stairway into the basement beneath the 1850s structure. Historically, there was a small porch to the rear of the structure until the 1970s addition expanded the house, demolished the historic cover, and placed the stairway within the primary structure. Additionally, gaps in the limestone basement walls will need to be filled, as they were opened to facilitate HVAC ductwork throughout the addition.

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[1] Chad Randl, "Preservation Tech Notes Temporary Protection Number 3 Protecting a Historic Structure during Adjacent Construction," National Park Service, 2001. https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/tech-note-temporary-protection-03-during-construction.pdf

Consulting Parties:

While developing this project, park staff has engaged NPS specialists and initiated consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The following organizations are currently engaged as Consulting Parties: American Battlefield Trust, Belle Grove Plantation, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, The NPS National Historic Landmark Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Invitations were also sent to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, NPS American Battlefield Protection Program, Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation, and Warren County Heritage Society, each of whom declined to engage at this time or has failed to respond to repeated inquiry. The Monacan Indian Nation, Rappahannock Tribe, Tuscarora Nation, and Seneca Nation of Indians have also been invited.

Proposed Mitigations

Through initial consultation with Virginia Department of Historic Resources (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) staff, consulting parties, and NPS experts, the park has concluded that the removal of the remaining structural fabric of the 1876 addition constitutes an Adverse Effect to historic resources.

The National Park Service at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove proposes several actions to mitigate the Adverse Effect that would occur as a part of the project. This consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR part 800) has resulted in the selection of the following mitigations.

Retention and Marking of Foundation:

The historic foundation of the 1876 structure, consisting of raised limestone blocks currently enclosed by the cinderblock foundation of the addition, will be retained and preserved. The park will explore options to add fill dirt or plant grass around the foundation to limit erosion. The retained foundation would be visible to offer opportunities to interpret the history of the addition and the post-Civil War agricultural enterprise. This foundation is already above ground, and the park believes it would be inappropriate to conceal it through burial as it would be a major topographic and landscape alteration.

Limited Retention of Chimney:

In addition to retaining the stone foundation of the 1876 addition, the NPS proposes retaining a portion of the chimney on the east façade of the house. The brick levels of the chimney have been altered with both additions to height as well as cutting to match the roof line.

The NPS proposes retaining only the limestone layer of the chimney while removing all brick layers. The limestone level is believed to date to 1876, as it matches the addition's foundation, and the lower height makes retention less hazardous than retaining brick layers of questionable age and alternation. Per consulting party comment, the lowest segment of brick (minus the bricks cut during the 1970s addition) would be retained and stored at the park. The two taller brick segments are believed to be later, and the brick will be disposed of.

Minimization of Ground Disturbance:

Ground disturbance will be minimized during demolition by the use of construction matting. Additionally, any ground disturbance necessary for removal of non-historic features, stabilization of historic features, study of the resource coinciding with this project, or reconstruction of the porches will be paired with professional archeological survey or monitoring by an Archeologist that meets the *Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards* in the field.[2] Specifics for ground disturbance, and archeological survey and monitoring will be outlined in an archeological plan of action that will be distributed to consulting parties prior to project start.

Reconstruction of Historic Porches:

Two historic porches are no longer extent in their original locations attached to the 1850 brick farmhouse. The single-bay porch on the historic front (west façade) was removed and replaced with a concrete porch by the last private owners. The NPS has removed the concrete porch, but no porch has yet been reconstructed. The south façade also historically had a porch within the brick ell that was removed to allow for the 1970s renovation.

Pictured is a depiction of what the farmhouse looked like in the 1850s. The porches proposed for reconstruction are circled. There is likely adequate

[2] Information on the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualifications Standards can be found here: https://www.doi.gov/pam/asset-management/historic-preservation/pqs or https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec-standards-prof-quals.htm.

photograph documentation and physical remains of anchor points to allow for an accurate reconstruction of the porches per The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Reconstruction of Historic Properties*.[3] See end of this report for additional images. Addition of these porches would add key features back to the Civil War and post-Civil War landscape, as they were part of the structure from the 1850s-1970s. It would also drain water away from the structure, assisting in preservation.

Documentation of Structure:

While the farmhouse has been intricately detailed in a two-part *Historic Structure Report*, some features were difficult to study due to being obscured by modern additions.[4] Demolition of the addition allows the opportunity to more closely study fragments from the 1870s. Mitigation could involve 3D scanning of the first floor to document the 1876 room as well as documenting additional features by hand before or during the demolition process. A limited portion of the 1876 roofline can be seen marked on the brick wall of the second story, protected by the 1970s wall enclosure. This roofline marking will be among the features carefully recorded.

This work will be completed by an expert who meets the *Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards* in the fields of Architectural History or Historic Architecture. The final documentation will be entered into the Virginia Cultural Resource Information System and provided to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for inclusion in their archives.

[3] More information on The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Reconstruction as a Treatment and Standards for Reconstruction can be read here: https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-reconstruction.htm.

[4] Both parts of the Historic Structure Report for the Bowman-Hite Farmhouse can be accessed at the following link: https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2305635.

Retention of Architectural Fragments in Museum Collection:

As outlined in the park's museum Scope of Collections Statement, architectural fragments generated by work on historic structures may be retained as museum objects. In order to justify retention and preservation, they must be character-defining features, unique, and in good condition. Common, numerous, or well documented elements will not be retained physically, but may instead be documented through photographs or laser scanning.

Fragments of the 1876 structure, such as portions of the extant wooden siding boards shown here, can be identified prior to demolition, removed, and retained. Consideration will also be given to elements that demonstrate methods of construction. NPS shall also consider whether any materials planned for removal could be used in future planned restoration or rehabilitation projects at the park.

Fragments chosen for retention would be accessed, cataloged, and curated as NPS museum collections and available for reference and study. The park will prepare a plan in consultation with NPS staff at the Northeast Museum Services Center and Historic Architecture, Conservation, and Engineering programs, and this plan will be provided to official consulting parties prior to demolition activities.

Interpretation:

The park also proposes to mitigate the loss of the 1876 structural features through interpretation, telling the story of the late-1800s operations of the farm. The park would continue sharing the late-1800s narrative on guided tours as well as interpretive media. This may include digital media on the park website or NPS app as well as physical media such as interpretive waysides with text and visuals. Interpretation would be paired with the retention of the 1876 foundation, successfully presenting both the Civil War landscape as well as the post-war agricultural history.

Alternative Actions Considered

During pre-planning and early design stages, the National Park Services explored a number of alternative actions. These concepts were shared with park partner organizations, SHPO staff, and discussed with other NPS specialists. This section documents actions that were considered and why they are not the preferred alternative.

No Action

Under this alternative, the NPS would take no action on the structure. The modern addition would not be demolished, and it would remain in place and unoccupied. The limited 1876 features would remain in place, but inaccessible to be seen by visitors. While the farm property would continue to be developed for visitor access, the structure would retain unsightly modern

intrusions to the historic landscape. The modern elements of the structure would continue to deteriorate and would accrue continued maintenance costs.

NPS does not believe this alternative to be the best course of action, as the landscape would continue to be intruded upon by modern additions, which is inconsistent with the park mission. Additionally, the costs of maintenance and risks to health and safety are significant.

Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of the 1876 Addition

Under this alternative the park would demolish the 1970s addition while retaining as much 1876 materials and features as possible. The park would then restore the remaining materials and reconstruct the lost features of the frame addition of the building to portray the structure exactly as it appeared in the late 1800s.

The park has not selected this alternative, as there is insufficient evidence to meet The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Reconstruction. Only one set of photographs has been identified that depicts some, but not all, of the house's features, and there is almost no evidence of the features of the second story. Additionally, many elements of the first story have been removed or altered, including almost the entirety of the north and east walls. Figure 5 shows a more detailed sketch of what remains.

The NPS Historic Architecture, Conservation, & Engineering Center carried out a site visit in 2019. They determined that though there was evidence for the basic footprint of the structure and much of the basic building envelope, "There does not appear to be enough physical evidence to accurately restore the exterior of the ca. 1870 wooden addition to the Bowman-Hite Farmhouse to its historic appearance, and adhere to The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*." Due to this lack of historic fabric and evidence to accurately reconstruct the 1876 frame addition this alternative was rejected.[5]

Construction of Ghost Structure

Under this alternative, the NPS would demolish the 1970s addition and 1876 frame features as outlined in the main body of this document. The park would then construct a "ghost structure" that would be an outline of the walls and roofline of the structure. This would be similar to the use of steel-framed structural outlines found at Franklin Court within Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[6]The ghost structure would add to the maintenance needs of the park to ensure it is both stable and not visually decaying. The park also has concerns about potential impacts to the historic foundation or 1850s structure posed by anchoring the new structure. A steel outline would be a striking modern intrusion on a historic agricultural landscape, and the project's primary goal is removal of a modern intrusion.

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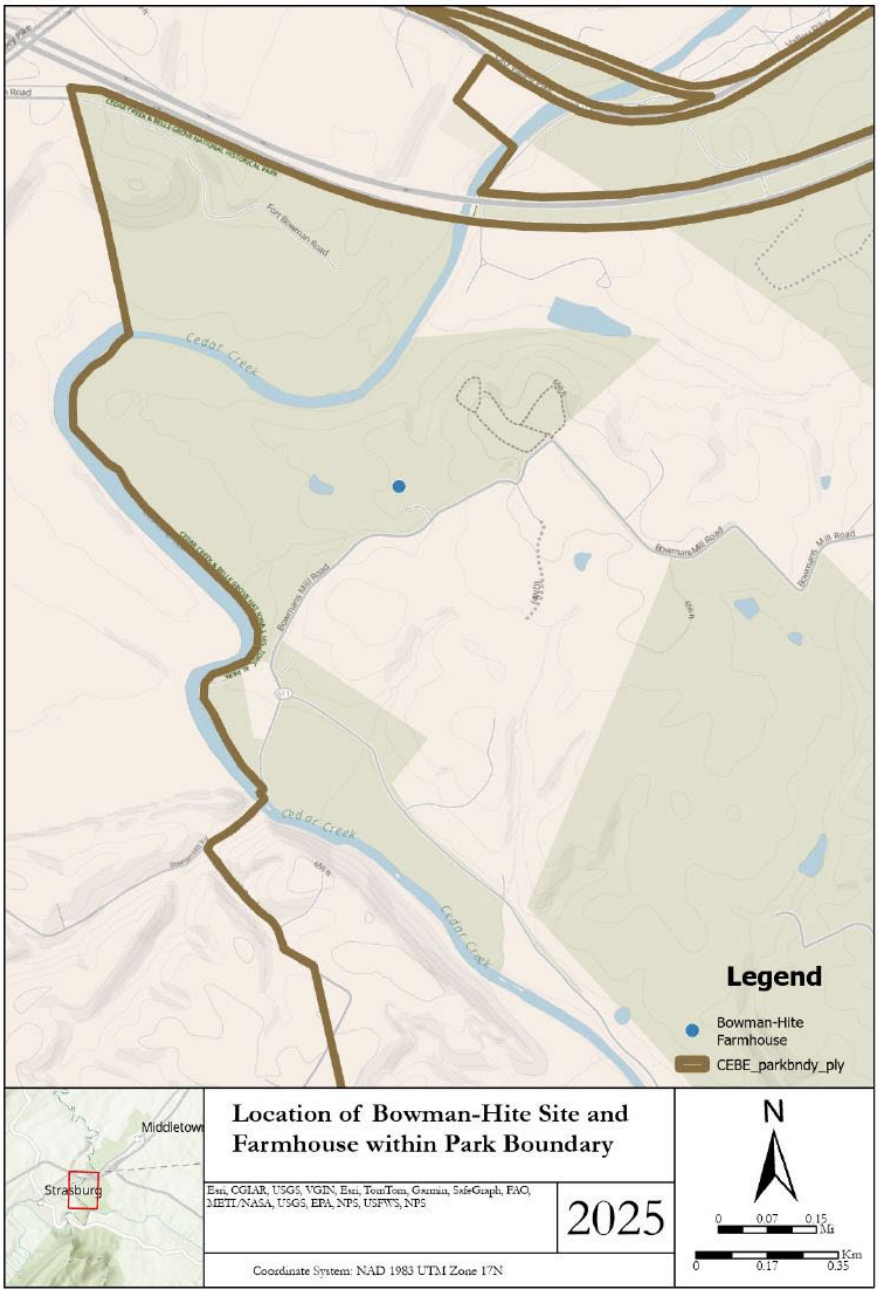
[5] This is consistent with the 2006 NPS Management Policies, 5.3.5.4.4, which states that structures will not be reconstructed unless a number of extenuating circumstances are met. They are not met in this project. https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1548/upload/ManagementPolicies2006.pdf.

[6] Images and information regarding the Franklin Court structures can be found here: https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/places-franklincourt.htm.

The park's Historic Architect advisor recommends strongly against the ghost structure, as the physical and visual change in material may go against the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Due to these concerns this alternative was rejected.

Additional Images

Figure 1: Location Map



This map marks the location of the Bowman-Hite farmhouse at 621 Bowman Mill Road, Middletown, Virginia. The blue circle marks the property, while the green sections mark preserved properties and the brown border denotes the park boundary.

Figure 2: South and West Façades, 1971

A front oblique view of the Bowman-Hite house prior to 1970s addition.

Figure 3: North and West Façades, 1971

A second oblique view of the Bowman-Hite house prior to 1970s addition.

Figure 4: East Façade, 1971

A view of the east façade of the Bowman-Hite house prior to 1970s addition, showing the 1876 frame addition, chimney, and porch.

Figure 5: Sketch of Remaining 1876 Historic Fabric.

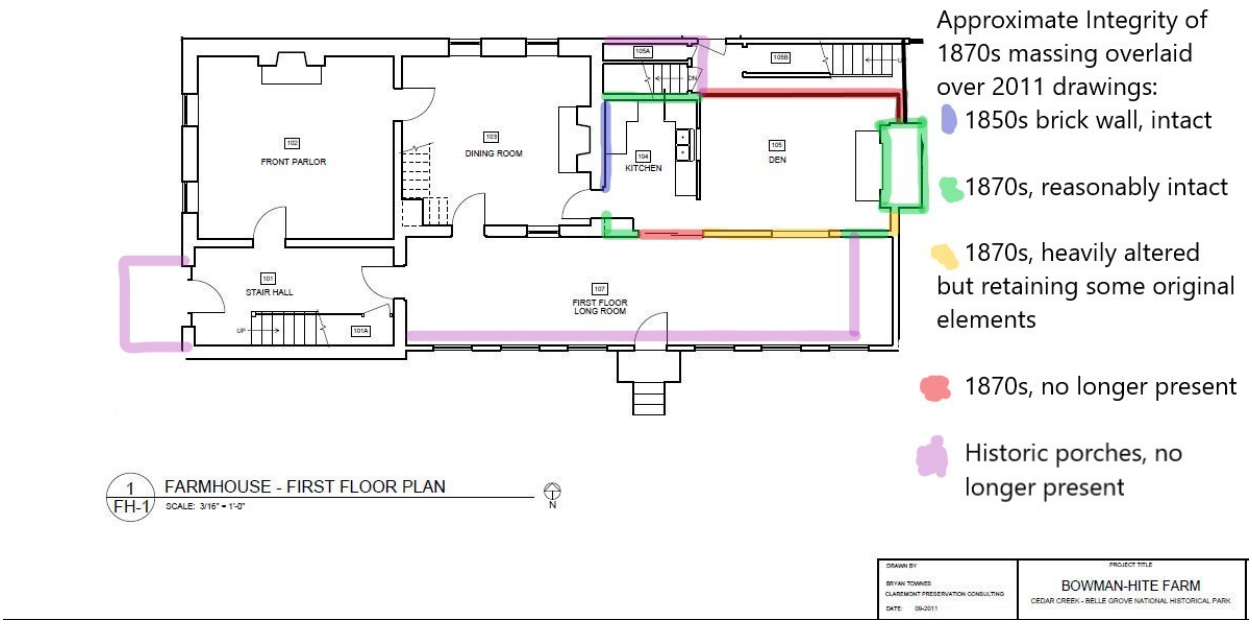


Figure 6: South and West Façades, 2024

Figure 7: North and West Façades, 2024

Figure 8: East Façade, 2024