

Henry Davis barn  
**MADISON COUNTY BARN DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

---

**Common Identity of Barn:** Henry Davis or Danny Gillespie barn

**Address of Barn:** approximate to 310 Bluff Mt. Rd., on right before Indian Trails Rd. on left

**GPS Location:** N35-50.504 / W82-52.124

**Elevation:** 2048 ‘

**Township:** Spring Creek

**Vicinity:** Bluff community, Bluff Mt. Rd.

**Approximate Decade Built or year if known:** late 1800’s, early 1900’s.

**Current Owner:** Harold Hunter, Jr.   **Phone No.:** 828-622-3294

**Permission to visit property granted by:** Harold Hunter, Jr.

**Historic Owner(s):** Danny Gillespie, 3/30/1888 to 12/1/1974

**Current Use:** burley tobacco, storage

**Historic Use:** flue-cured tobacco

---

**Outbuildings:** none, livestock barn is directly across the road.

**Setting and/or Surrounding Land Use:** This farm is part of several tracts of land that have been subdivided numerous times among local families.

**Historic Information**

---

This type of log barn is now very rare in Madison County, an example of a log barn used to heat cure “bright leaf” or “flue-cured” tobacco, the first commercial tobacco type introduced to mountain farmers in 1872. The spaces between the logs were originally filled or “chinked” with clay and/or rocks and wedges of wood, to keep the heat from the rock “flue” fire inside, to quickly cure the hanging tobacco leaves. These flue-cured tobacco barns consistently measured around 21 feet square by 21 feet to the top log, with only slight variations. By 1882 the estimated value of flue-cured tobacco was \$200 per acre, with the average production per household of 4 ½ acres, providing a windfall of cash for mountain families.

Also known locally as the Danny Gillespie barn and farm, it is not known that this barn was built by Danny Gillespie, who was born in 1888 and would have been only 22 years old in 1910. It likely built by an earlier owner during the period of 1870 to 1910, when flue-cured tobacco was being supported by the US Dept of Agriculture. With many of these barns still standing across the landscape, some farmers continued growing flue-cured tobacco after 1910 and into the early 1920’s. The current owner also knows it as a flue-cured barn, having been the person who removed the mud chinking when adapting it to burley tobacco. Spring Creek has many round chestnut log barns built during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has been observed that some of these barns have logs with scarring from the chestnut blight, which would indicate that those trees were cut after 1920, being the approximate time the blight first appeared in Madison County. The original barn would likely have had split wood shingles for roofing. The log corner notching is the simpler

saddle notch that requires less time and skill. Many of the chestnut logs still have their original bark, a material that no longer exists and is the only example of mature chestnut bark that people of this era will ever see.

### **ORIGINAL BARN CHARACTERISTICS**

---

**Condition of original barn:** Good \_\_\_ Fair X \_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_ Ruined \_\_\_

**Has the original barn been added to or altered?** yes X \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ roofing upgrade cannot determine \_\_\_

**Condition of additions and alterations to barn:** Good \_\_\_ Fair X \_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_ Ruined \_\_\_

#### **Original Barn structure**

##### **Function of original barn:**

**General purpose** \_\_\_ Livestock/hay \_\_\_ flue-cured tobacco X \_\_\_ burley tobacco \_\_\_ dairy \_\_\_  
Bull Face tobacco \_\_\_

##### **Construction elements of original barn: (check all that apply)**

**Post and Beam** \_\_\_ **Mortise and tenon** \_\_\_ **Sawn lumber from sawmill** \_\_\_ **Hewn Timbers** X \_\_\_ **Notched Logs** X \_\_\_

**Additional Info:** round logs with saddle notches, chestnut logs dominate, some with bark still present

##### **Original Siding Materials: (check all that apply)**

**Milled Boards** X \_\_\_ **Lattice** \_\_\_ **Exposed logs** X \_\_\_ **Boards and Battens** \_\_\_ **Metal** \_\_\_  
**Shingles** \_\_\_

##### **Orientation of siding materials: (check all that apply)**

**Angled on diagonal** \_\_\_ **vertical** \_\_\_ **horizontal** X \_\_\_

**Additional Info:** sawn boards may or may not be original

**Roof of original barn Pitch or Slope:** 12/10.6

##### **Roof Shape of Original barn:**

**Gable End** X \_\_\_ **Extended Gable** \_\_\_ **Broken Gable** \_\_\_

**Gambrel** \_\_\_ **Shed** \_\_\_ **Other** \_\_\_

##### **Roofing materials of original barn (if known)**

**Split wood Shingles** X assumed \_\_\_ **3-V metal** \_\_\_ **3-U metal** \_\_\_ **5-V metal** \_\_\_ **stamped metal shingle** \_\_\_ **Tar paper** \_\_\_ **other** \_\_\_

**Current materials:** 5-V metal

**Roof framing of original barn**

Round pole rafters\_\_\_ milled rafters\_  \_\_\_ cupola\_\_\_ split roof sections

**Foundation of Original barn:**

Dry-Laid Stone\_\_\_ Wood sills on stone piers\_  \_\_\_ hewn log\_ Mortared Stone\_\_\_

Concrete\_\_\_ Concrete Block\_\_\_ Columns/Wood Piers\_\_\_

**Additional Info:**

Flooring: dirt floors\_  \_\_\_ concrete slab\_\_\_ wood flooring

**Other features of original barn**

Species of wood used: chestnut\_\_\_  logs dominate\_\_\_ others: oak, pine , poplar

Hand-crafted doors, mangers, feed troughs, equipment hooks, hay forks, wrought iron:

List and describe: none

Hinges: leather\_\_\_ wooden\_\_\_ wrought iron\_\_\_ commercial metal\_  \_

Wire nails  wrought spikes cut nails

Tobacco Tier poles: +/- 2 foot vertical spacing\_\_\_ +/- 4-foot vertical spacing\_\_\_ +/- 3 foot vertical spacing\_  \_\_\_ (confirm in inches) 30" to 36"

Lightning rods\_\_\_ grapevines on south wall\_\_\_ leeks on downslope from barn\_\_\_

Barn bank, hill, ramp or bridge to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor loft level (describe): none

**Additions and Alterations**

---

**Siding Materials on additions and alterations: (check all that apply)**

Milled Boards\_\_\_ Lattice\_\_\_ Exposed logs\_\_\_ Boards and Battens\_\_\_ Metal\_\_\_ Shingles\_\_\_

**Orientation of siding materials on additions and alterations: (check all that apply)**

Angled on diagonal\_\_\_ vertical\_\_\_ horizontal\_\_\_

**Additional Info:** addition of sawn board siding possible; metal roofing to replace oak shingles;

**Date Photos Taken:** May 28, 2014

Submitted By:

Name: Taylor Barnhill

Address: 226 Beech Glen Rd. Mars Hill 28754

Phone: Home: 828-689-5530 Cell: 828-380-9336

Email: [taylor.barnhill@yahoo.com](mailto:taylor.barnhill@yahoo.com)