

**Furman Willet barns (b1898 to d1964)**  
**MADISON COUNTY BARN DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

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**Common Identity of Barn:** Furman Willet barns, F. N. Willet barns

**Address of Barn:** 11461 NC Highway 209    **GPS Location:** N35-47.520 / W82-52.197    **Elevation:** 2140'

**Township:** Spring Creek

**Approximate Decade Built or year if known:**

large log barn: original was across the road on the mountain, built in the 1800's, moved in 1953

livestock barn with gambrel roof: late 1940's

log barn across the road, within shed additions: 1954

**Current Owner:** F. N. Willet    **Phone No.:** 828-622-7344

**Permission to visit property granted by:** owner

**Historic Owner(s):** William "Bill" M. Willet, Furman Willet

**Large log barn**

**Current Use:** storage, equipment

**Historic Use:** livestock barn adapted to burley tobacco, perhaps after it was moved in 1953; Because of dimensions, could have been Bull Face tobacco barn prior to that, but this is not known.

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**Outbuildings: Include Separate Sheet if needed:** many outbuildings remain, including a rare surviving carbide tank for a gas generator for the early electric light system.

**Setting and/or Surrounding Land Use: Include Separate Sheet if needed:** a classic farmstead in this narrow section of the Spring Creek watershed.

**Historic Information**

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The Furman Willet log barn represents a very common practice in the log barn building history of this and other townships, where an older log barn has been relocated to its current site. The original is thought to have been built in the late 1800's on the mountain across the road and was moved to this site in 1953 and adapted for livestock stalls and burley tobacco curing in the loft. The logs are predominantly chestnut, some with the bark remaining. There are also logs with scars from the 1920's chestnut blight which would indicate that those logs may have been added when the barn was moved, as its function was also changed. The adjacent livestock barn with the gambrel roof was built in the late 1940's. Furman Willet's father was known to have also grown the earlier flue-cured tobacco until the early '20's, and Bull Face chewing tobacco, that was smoke-cured.

The rock case house was built in 1944, rock work NOT done by Clarence Lawson, a known Spring Creek rock mason, but by another known mason. The log section of the equipment barn is the form of a flue-cured tobacco barn, but was built in 1954, an unusual construction that late in the history of log building here.

## BARN CHARACTERISTICS

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Barn 1: Large log livestock/burley tobacco barn: original was across the road on the mountain, built in the late 1800's, moved in 1953

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

**Has the original barn been added to or altered?** yes X no \_\_\_ 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 likely \_\_\_ burley tobacco \_\_\_ dairy \_\_\_

**Bull Face tobacco** X Bill Willet raised flue-cured tobacco and Bull Face chewing tobacco from 1914, when he purchased this land, until the 1920's, and could have built the original barn, in a different location, possibly as a Bull Face tobacco barn or a flue-cured tobacco barn. His son, Furman Willet relocated the barn to the present location in 1953 and adapted it to burley tobacco.

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

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

**Additional Info:** simple saddle notching; there are several logs that have scarring from the chestnut blight and would have been cut after 1924. Because of the common practice of relocating and reconstructing log barns, this barn could have been originally built prior to the chestnut blight with a different function and with original logs. When moved, new logs could have been added to change the shape and function of the barn, possibly explaining the scarring. This speculation is in light of the current owner explaining that his grandfather grew both flue-cured and Bull Face tobacco, but there is no other evidence of this.

**Original Siding Materials:** The barn that is considered "original" here, is the barn that was reconstructed on this site in 1953.

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

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

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

**Roof of original barn Pitch or Slope:** 6/12

#### **Additional Info**

#### **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\_\_\_ 3-V metal\_\_\_ 3-U metal\_\_\_ 5-V metal\_x\_\_\_ stamped metal shingle\_\_\_ Tar paper  
\_\_\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_ Current materials\_\_\_\_\_

**Roof framing of original barn**

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

**Foundation of Original barn:**

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

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

**Additional Info:**

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

**Other features of original barn**

Species of wood used: chestnut\_x some with blight scarring\_others: x

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

**List and describe:**

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

Wire nails x wrought spikes cut nails

Tobacco Tier poles: +/- 2 foot vertical spacing\_\_\_ +/- 4-foot vertical spacing\_44" average vertical\_\_\_ +/- 3 foot

vertical spacing\_\_\_ (confirm in inches)

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

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

Below-ground room or cellar\_\_\_

Water supply if applicable (describe)

**Additions and Alterations**

See note above about this barn having been moved and likely reconfigured.

***Date Photos Taken:*** August 22, 2014

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