# Contextualizing South Carolina's Tobacco Buildings: Historic Overview & NRHP Guidance

South Carolina Department of Archives & History

State Historic Preservation Office

August 2013

# Contents

# Figures



# Tables



*Cover Photo: Smith Barn, Floydale vicinity, Dillon County (SCDAH)*

# Introduction

By the mid-twentieth century, numerous flue-cured tobacco barns dotted South Carolina's Pee Dee landscape. These historic barns are easily identified by the following typical character defining features: two stories in height, rectangular plan, wood construction, and often with side shed roofs on some or all sides of the barn. Today, these resources are disappearing. Industry, technology, and economic changes have left many historic tobacco barns vacant and in disrepair. The vanishing traditional barns represent part of the long and varied history of tobacco production in South Carolina.

The story of tobacco in South Carolina is intertwined with community development, economic changes, and technological innovation. South Carolina tobacco production occurred in three waves. The first European tobacco cultivation attempt in the state was during the colonial period (1670-1690), while Charles Towne was still being established. A comeback occurred in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century as settlers from the north entered South Carolina's upcountry, but once again the crop production declined. With the introduction of flue-cured (or Brightleaf) tobacco, which contributed to the rise of cigarettes, tobacco boomed once again in South Carolina, this time in the Pee Dee region. This third, and most productive, wave extended from about 1880 to 1960, when small tobacco farms began a sharp decline as the use of imported tobacco increased. Although tobacco is still produced in the Pee Dee region, technology has changed the tobacco farming landscape.

# History

## Early Production

The European discovery of tobacco and the New World occurred simultaneously. Tobacco was cultivated for centuries in North and South America before Columbus arrived. This early type of tobacco was very harsh and bitter and typically smoked in a pipe. In 1531 Spaniards became the first Europeans to cultivate the plant in the New World, originally in Haiti, and soon production spread.[1] The first North American colony to produce tobacco was Jamestown, Virginia, in 1612. Although the American Indians living in Virginia were growing tobacco, this type was "unpalatable to the Englishmen" so Jamestown planted the tobacco variety grown by the Spanish colonists.[2]

European tobacco cultivation in South Carolina began in the 1670s near Charles Towne. The Lords Proprietors noted the success and demand for Virginia tobacco and decided the plant would serve as a means of income for Charles Towne until other cash crops could be established. The plant did well and almost all of the leaves were exported back to Europe. Tobacco cultivation was very labor intensive and the leaves during this time were dried by air curing, which was time consuming. Unfortunately, by the time South Carolina's tobacco production took off, the crop's price dropped as Virginians planted more tobacco. Because of the decrease in prices and intense labor efforts, in the 1690s South Carolina began replacing tobacco as a cash crop with rice and naval stores.[3]

---

[1] W.K. Collins and S.N. Hawks, Jr., *Principles of Flue-Cured Tobacco Production* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University, 1993), 1.
[2] Ibid., 2.
[3] Eldred E. Prince Jr., with Robert R. Simpson, *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 2-6.

By the late eighteenth century, tobacco emerged once again in South Carolina as Virginians and Pennsylvanians migrated into the Upstate, bringing with them their tobacco cultivation knowledge. The tobacco they produced was sent down to the Charleston market for inspection, sale, and exportation to Europe. At first inspections consisted of opening the container, called a hogshead, determining leaf grade, and weighing it. Because prices were based on quality and weight, some farmers began putting rocks or other heavy objects in the center of the hogshead. In addition, sometimes farmers would put the highest quality of leaves on top and the poor grade towards the bottom. These tricks were usually not caught until the tobacco reached their European buyers across the ocean.[4]

In 1771, South Carolina passed their first tobacco law, *An Act for Regulating the Inspection and Exportation of Tobacco and Flour, and For Granting a Bounty on Flour*. Because of the demand for tobacco and the long haul through the backcountry, the law provided additional warehouses and inspectors to speed up the trade process. Tobacco was easier to transport along water, so the new warehouses were built along rivers and in the port cities of Charleston, Georgetown, and Beaufort. The river inspection locations were at the Pee Dee River at Cheraw, the Wateree near Camden, and the Savannah at Silver Bluff.[5] The law required each hogshead to be inspected, including cross sections and probing to identify any fill.

Tobacco reached its peak in 1799, but sharply decreased thereafter with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. With the invention of the cotton gin, the demand for cotton increased. Cotton appealed to farmers because it was far less labor intensive and expensive to produce compared to tobacco. According to United States Census, by 1850 no South Carolina farmers reported growing tobacco for income.

## The Tobacco Boom

### Late Nineteenth Century

The revival of tobacco as a cash crop began in the late 1880s in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. This new tobacco boom was the result of a combination of multiple earlier inventions. For years people had been trying to develop a tobacco variety that was not as harsh. Yellow or gold leaf tobacco was the answer, with its light, mild leaf and sweet aroma. This type of tobacco grew well in the "starved" soils of the Piedmont.[6] In the 1820s and early 1830s, some planters began inventing and patenting heat curing methods that used a fire box to speed up the drying process (fire-curing). Previously, most tobacco was air cured. The invention of flue-curing lead to the production of Brightleaf tobacco, a type of yellow leaf. The discovery of the method for flue-curing tobacco occurred by accident in 1839 in Caswell County, Virginia. Stephen Slade, slave of Abisha Slade, fell asleep while keeping an eye on a tobacco barn's fire box and woke up to the fire almost extinguished. In a frantic response he added charcoal to the fire, which produced a sudden, drastic increase in heat. The tobacco leaves turned a light yellow color and cured faster, producing a milder and more appealing tobacco. To recreate this process, farmers used exterior wood burning furnaces with metal flues running inside the barn along the dirt floor to provide controlled heat. Although flue-curing began in the mid-1800s, the unreliability of stoves and flues prevented the wide adoption

[4] Ibid., 10-11.
[5] Thomas Cooper, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina; Statutes*, vol. 4 (Columbia: A.S. Johnston, 1838), 327-328.
[6] Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 303.

of the flue-curing method until the 1870s, when the technology began to improve.[7] Flue-cured tobacco soon became very popular because of its smoothness.

Cigarettes did not gain popularity until the end of the Civil War. Before this time, people typically consumed tobacco as snuff or chew, or smoked a pipe. The emergence of cigarettes started at the end of the Civil War when troops from both sides were stationed near Durham, North Carolina. It just so happened that in the center of their encampment was J.R. Green's tobacco factory. Green shredded, instead of twisting or plugging, his Brightleaf tobacco for smoking. The troops soon spread news of this method and the demand for cigarettes began.[8]

The next two inventions created a way to sell flue-cured Brightleaf to the masses. First was the tobacco cutting machine in the 1870s, invented by Albert Pease of Dayton, Ohio. This machine sped up the process of chopping tobacco up for cigarettes. Cigarettes still had to be rolled by hand, which was time consuming. The answer to mass producing cigarettes came in 1880 from James Albert Bonsack of Roanoke, Virginia, with the invention of a cigarette rolling machine.[9] Cigarettes became quicker and less expensive to produce, making them affordable for the average American. With the spread of cigarettes, the demand for tobacco increased.

The South Carolina Pee Dee in the 1870s and 1880s was still adjusting to issues of race and financial woes from the Civil War. Many landowners were in great debt and struggled with the hiring and treatment of freedpeople. Banks and country stores were also suffering from hard times since these institutions relied heavily on agricultural income. With the loss of their slave labor force, landowners had to find new means of labor. At first contracts between worker and property-owner were implemented, but this was not as successful as hoped. In its place emerged sharecropping. Sharecropping involves the landowner allowing a tenant to farm on their land and in return the owner receives a share of the crop produced. This method existed with whites before the Civil War, but after emancipation it began to switch to predominately white landowners and African American laborers.[10] Although sharecropping was more successful than the previous contract labor, more tenants began renting land. By the 1880s, tenant farming had gained popularity. Unlike sharecropping, tenancy allowed the farmer to pay rent to live and farm on the land and they were not under the owner's supervision. Paying rent instead of a giving portion of the crops to the landowner was favored by many farmers because it was generally more profitable. Also by the 1880s, cotton prices began declining in South Carolina causing farmers to seek out a new cash crop.

Brightleaf was brought into the Pee Dee in the late 1880s and although some people were wary at first, tobacco would change the lives of not only farmers but whole communities. A small handful of farmers began experimenting with Brightleaf and saw great success. Tobacco was fetching high prices that farmers had not seen in a long time with cotton. The Pee Dee's soil was very suitable for Brightleaf and the plant could withstand water shortages and high temperatures better than other cash crops.[11] Soon more farmers were cultivating tobacco and William Henry Daniel of Mullins established a local market.[12] Tobacco's success and value continued to rise and in 1891 the first auction was held in South Carolina at the Florence Tobacco Warehouse. Soon another warehouse opened in Darlington. In 1893 the market slowed, but recovered the next year. This short decline

---

[7] Ibid.
[8] Collins and Hawks, *Principles of Flue-Cured Tobacco Production*, 4-5.
[9] Prince, *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina*, 49-50.
[10] Ibid., 31.
[11] Collins and Hawks, *Principles of Flue-Cured Tobacco Production*, v.
[12] Prince, *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina*, 71.

was due to a damaging hurricane and credit issues that caught up with some landowners and farmers.[13] Also in 1894, the price of cotton dropped significantly, providing additional incentive for Pee Dee farmers to plant tobacco. The increase in South Carolina's tobacco production also led to more markets and warehouses opening between 1894 and 1895.

## Early to Mid-Twentieth Century

By the early 1900s, tobacco was a reliable and productive crop for Pee Dee farmers. During this time railroads also began appearing, making the transportation of tobacco easier. Some railways, including the Seaboard, were purposely laid out to go through tobacco towns such as Mullins, the number one tobacco town in the Pee Dee at the time. The outbreak of World War I strengthened the tobacco market. Cigarettes were popular with troops and many U.S. citizens were sending them to troops abroad. To keep up with the rising demands, tobacco production in South Carolina increased more than threefold from 1909-1919.[14] By 1920 South Carolina had 77 tobacco warehouses, the most in that state's history.[15]

**Table 1: 1909 Top Ten Tobacco Producing Counties in South Carolina[16]**

| Ranking | County | Pounds Produced | Acres Planted | % of Total Farm Acres in Tobacco |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Horry | 4,474,183 | 5,347 | 1.25 |
| 2 | Florence | 4,362,388 | 5,052 | 1.66 |
| 3 | Darlington | 4,193,125 | 4,672 | 1.82 |
| 4 | Marion | 3,527,941 | 4,275 | 2.13 |
| 5 | Williamsburg | 3,261,551 | 3,899 | 0.94 |
| 6 | Dillon | 2,984,639 | 3,393 | 1.93 |
| 7 | Clarendon | 1,921,341 | 2,259 | 0.88 |
| 8 | Sumter | 368,534 | 478 | 0.18 |
| 9 | Chesterfield | 244,450 | 368 | 0.09 |
| 10 | Lee | 153,450 | 201 | 0.09 |
| **South Carolina Total** | | **25,583,049** | **30,082** | **0.22** |

[13] Ibid., 63.
[14] Ibid., 76.
[15] Ibid., 77.
[16] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Thirteenth Census of the United States, take in the year 1910." *Agriculture, 1909 and 1910, Reports by States with Statistics by Counties* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), 7:508-519.

**Table 2: 1919 Top Fifteen Tobacco Producing Counties in South Carolina[17]**

| Ranking | County | Pounds Produced | Acres Planted | % of Total Farm Acres in Tobacco |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Horry | 12,552,481 | 15,905 | 3.59 |
| 2 | Florence | 11,991,883 | 17,060 | 5.67 |
| 3 | Williamsburg | 11,707,464 | 19,355 | 5.68 |
| 4 | Darlington | 7,660,986 | 11,465 | 4.13 |
| 5 | Marion | 7,308,196 | 10,315 | 6.43 |
| 6 | Dillon | 6,540,978 | 8,674 | 4.88 |
| 7 | Clarendon | 5,409,698 | 7,415 | 3.15 |
| 8 | Sumter | 2,364,663 | 3,499 | 1.32 |
| 9 | Georgetown | 2,199,364 | 3,383 | 1.49 |
| 10 | Lee | 1,013,082 | 1,715 | 0.87 |
| 11 | Chesterfield | 960,921 | 1,761 | 0.55 |
| 12 | Berkeley | 443,572 | 944 | 0.40 |
| 13 | Dorchester | 206,917 | 369 | 0.18 |
| 14 | Marlboro | 202,619 | 308 | 0.14 |
| 15 | Orangeburg | 183,974 | 389 | 0.07 |
| **South Carolina Total** | | **71,193,072** | **103,496** | **0.83** |

The prosperous years of tobacco in the Pee Dee soon came to an abrupt half after World War I. Demand decreased and more farmers were planting tobacco than ever because of the boll weevil invasion, leading the crop of 1919 to overproduce. The 1920s were marked by overproduction, decline in tobacco market prices, and farming spreading to other regions. Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina were not the only states producing Brightleaf anymore. Parts of Georgia and Florida were also cultivating Brightleaf tobacco. There were other underlying issues in the tobacco market even before the war, in particular no control on grade scales or quality. This caused inequality in the system. There were no government programs or agencies to help farmers with product control. Even at the state level there was little control, with the last South Carolina tobacco law dating back to the eighteenth century. Earlier in the 1890s, South Carolina farmers tried to push reform but no progress was made. Because of the dire financial situation caused by the 1919 crop, in 1920 the South Carolina Tobacco Association was founded. This market cooperative wanted to restore equality and urged farmers not to overplant.

[17] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Fourteenth Census of the United States, take in the year 1920." *Agriculture*, *Reports by States with Statistics for Counties and a Summary Table for the United States and the North, South, and West* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1922), 6:276-290.

It was soon realized reform in one state was not going to solve the market problems. By 1921 the Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina cooperatives came together to form the Tri-State-Cooperative. This organization wanted to create fair tobacco grading and change the way it reached the market. Instead of the farmers taking it to market themselves, the tobacco would go to the cooperative first where it would be weighed and graded by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and then the farmer would receive a certificate and advance payment for the crops. From there the co-op would negotiate with manufacturers and exporters. Farmers who joined the co-op started receiving fairer and higher prices. Although the co-op was seeing success, by 1926 there was great backlash from propaganda and law suits that led to the co-op losing popularity and dissolving.[18]

The problems caused for Pee Dee farmers by inequities in the tobacco market were exacerbated by the onset of the Great Depression. Although tobacco was generally doing better than other cash crops, tobacco farmers still struggled. It would take multiple government interventions to restore the tobacco market. The first government assistance came during the Herbert Hoover administration, in the form of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929. The government was well aware of the cash crops over-production and low prices, so the act aimed to balance out supply and demand by aggressively buying crops. The Farmers Board called for co-ops to be established. In 1930 the South Carolina Tobacco Grower's Cooperative began operation, but prices still dropped. The co-ops struggled to pay farmers and the Farmers Board was not able to help. Almost as soon as it was established, the South Carolina co-op disbanded in 1931 and in 1932 the Farmers Board failed.

The New Deal made several attempts before solving tobacco production issues. First was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1933. This act created crop control and assisted growers. Cash incentives were given to farmers to reduce tobacco production, which allowed prices to rise. They also created taxes and licenses on manufacturers, in particular the "Big Four" companies, and enforced fair pricing. The revenue generated from taxing funded the AAA. In 1934 the first crops were produced under AAA and prices finally improved. AAA could not force all farmers to participate, so over-production was not completely halted. To address this problem, the Tobacco Control Act of 1934, commonly referred to as the Kerr-Smith Act, implemented a tax against non-AAA growers. Things were looking up, but then in January of 1936 the Supreme Court ruled the AAA and Kerr-Smith unconstitutional.

Although not intended to be a permanent solution to crop control, the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936 helped by paying for reduced acreage of soil depleting crops, including tobacco and cotton. Unlike the AAA, which required no government funding, this act had to be funded by Congress. A revised AAA emerged in 1938, this time implementing the same concepts but without the processing tax of the first AAA. But the act had problems from the start because it never announced the marketing quotas before planting time and also used poundage instead of acreage quotas. It failed, leaving the 1939 crops without regulation. After World War II began, the Imperial Tobacco Company of Britain stopped importing U.S. tobacco, which was a huge blow to American farmers. The U.S. reacted by forming the Commodity Credit Corp to reimburse farmers for their crops that would have been imported by the British.

For the 1940 crop another AAA was created. This time the standards were given out ahead of planting and used acreage quotas. Tobacco prices began to stabilize and then experienced substantial increases after the US entry into World War II, with cigarettes issued as part of the

[18] Prince, *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina*, 81-105.

rations for American servicemen. By 1944 the demand for tobacco was higher than its production.[19] That same year, the Office of Price Administration (OPA) set price ceilings. From 1944 to 1948 tobacco reached its greatest monetary value in the twentieth century.[20] At the end of World War II, the government established a safety net for farmers protecting them from the price crash that occurred as demand decreased.

### Into the Present

With crop control, USDA standards, and price support the 1950s was a great time for tobacco in the Pee Dee. Advances were also made in farming equipment from tractors to upgrading wood burners to kerosene. Crop control also had an impact on the Pee Dee's landscape with the decrease of barns and small farms. Crop control resulted in less tobacco to cure, leading to a decline in the need for barns. Instead of building more barns, money went to upgrading or replacing existing barns.

Multiple factors led to the decline of the small tobacco farm. The AAA and Soil Conservation began encouraging more plant diversity leading some farmers to try other crops. In addition, tenant farming was not appealing to young people and many of them left the Pee Dee region. According to Prince and Simpson, "very few persons born after 1945" ever tenant farmed as adults.[21] In the 1970s as modern farming technology changed agriculture, the number of Pee Dee tobacco farmers continued to decrease as farms became larger; a trend that would continue into the twenty-first century.[22]

Increasing concern about smoking's health dangers and foreign tobacco cultivation also undercut tobacco cultivation in the Pee Dee. Smoking health risks were realized in the early 1950s, although it was not until the 1980s that smoking started to decline. Cigarettes have long been a mix of Burley and Brightleaf tobacco, but starting in the 1950s foreign tobacco, usually from Brazil, was added to the mix. In the 1950s 0.18 of the 2.7 pounds per 1,000 cigarettes was from foreign tobacco and this percentage would only continue to rise over time.[23]

## Flue-Curing Process

To better understand the architecture of the Pee Dee tobacco barn, it is important to know the basics of the flue-curing process. The purpose of flue-curing is to give the leaf its famous, aromatic scent and golden color by keeping the barn dry, not smoky, and at controlled artificially heated temperatures. The overall production of tobacco was historically labor intensive, although as technology improved the process became less daunting.

Before tobacco was cured, the leaves were harvested and then trailers or wagons would haul them under the curing barn's shed roof where the leaves would be placed on work benches. The picked, or "cropped," tobacco leaves were then tied to sticks that would be placed inside the barn. There are two ways to hang tobacco leaves. Until about 1900 the farmers would cut the whole tobacco stalk from the field and then split the stalk and hang them evenly on poles. After 1900 the "priming"

[19] Prince, *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina*, 174.
[20] Ibid., 175.
[21] Ibid., 186.
[22] Ibid., 184-185.
[23] Economic Research Service *Tobacco: Situation and Outlook Report September 1991*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1991).

method was used, which entails harvesting individual leaves that have primed on the plant as the leaves ripen from the bottom up. Guy describes the labor process of preparing leaves for hanging:

> Workers, called hands, passed small bundles of leaves to another worker who tied them with a string (tobacco twine) around a tobacco stick taking care not to crowd the leaves. In the local vernacular, this process would be described as handing to the stringer who then turned out a full stick.[24] Once the tobacco leaves were tied, the full sticks were brought into the barn and places on the drying poles. The barn poles were filled top to bottom. The next step was flue-curing the tobacco.

Curing is one of the most important stages of the Brightleaf cultivation process. Flue-curing would take about five to six days.[25] Early on this method was done by wood-burning furnaces, which were later replaced with kerosene or propane burners. During curing, the air circulation and temperature would constantly be monitored to assure all leaves were properly dried. After the tobacco was finished curing, the barn would be unloaded and the leaves were taken over to a storage barn or "packhouse" to be untied and sorted.[26] The final step at the farm was bundling like tobacco grades together into "sheets" and then loading them off for transportation to the warehouse for market.[27] At the warehouse, tobacco would be auctioned off, farmers paid, and leaves exported. Once the leaves were bought they would be taken to a redrying plant to ensure uniform moisture so the leaves would not rot or crack.

# Historic Tobacco Buildings

## Flue-Curing Barns

South Carolina's flue-curing barns changed little in design from the 1890s until the 1940s. The 1940s was a pivotal time for tobacco barns. This decade marked their peak in South Carolina.[28] In addition, technological advancements and the introduction of mass-produced building materials updated the tobacco barn design. By the 1970s the traditional South Carolina flue-cured tobacco barns were abandoned in favor of bulk curing barns.[29] These new, rectangular, all-metal barns with concrete floors eliminated labor and fuel costs. The bulk barns can cure large amounts of tobacco leaves at once, require no monitoring, and only one person is needed to load and unload the metal packing boxes full of tobacco leaves.[30]

---

[24] Yvette Richardson Guy, *A Look at Traditional Tobacco Barns Pleasant Hill Community Georgetown County, South Carolina*, July 1988, 2.
[25] Eldred E. Prince Jr., "Tobacco Barns," in *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Edgar (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 969.
[26] Guy, *A Look at Traditional Tobacco Barns Pleasant Hill Community Georgetown County, South Carolina*, 3.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Prince, *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina*, 180.
[29] Ibid., 185.
[30] Guy, *A Look at Traditional Tobacco Barns Pleasant Hill Community Georgetown County, South Carolina*, 4.

**Figure 1. Dillard Barn, Marion County - Example of a late 1800s tobacco barn (SCDAH)**

## General Characteristics

Tobacco barns are square or rectangular in plan, wood, two-stories tall, and typically have a gable roof and a dirt floor. A shed roof is typically present on at least one exterior elevation of the barn to shelter workers during tobacco leaf curing preparation. The shed roofs are typically located on the non-furnace side. Sometimes work benches were built into the shed roof support.[31] Tobacco barns have no windows, but typically have two small access doors. These doors are less than five feet tall in order to help keep heat inside the barn. Doors are usually located on gable ends to aid interior ventilation.

There are two terms associated with describing flue-curing tobacco barn interior: "tiers" and "rooms." The vertical dimensions of poles are known as a "tier," while the horizontal space between the poles is referred to as "rooms."[32] The typical barn "tiers" are vertically arranged in about twenty-four inch intervals, with the last pole about six feet from the floor. A normal barn has enough space for six to seven "tiers."[33]

## 1890s-1930s Characteristics

Early tobacco barns were log or hewn timber with brick pier foundations. Sometimes wood was taken from older barns to make tobacco barns. The exteriors were sealed by "chinking" or "daubing" with plaster or mud. According to Guy, "Daubing had to be repaired at least once a

[31] Ibid., 2.
[32] Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, 304.
[33] John Fraser Hart and Eugene Cotton Mather, "The Character of Tobacco Barns and Their Role in the Tobacco Economy of the United States," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51 (1961), 288.

year since a tobacco barn spent a couple months being kept very hot and dry."[34] Some farmers partially covered the daub with lap-boards in order to better seal the barn. Dimensions were typically 16x16 feet and 20 feet high with four "rooms." Log structures were built with interlocking notched ends. Roofing material was usually hand-hewn shingles. These barns also typically have shed roofs skirting three or all of their exterior walls.[35]

Early tobacco barns originally had either one or two three-foot brick furnaces, either wood or coal burning, located on one side of the building. Hart and Mather describe that from the furnace:

> extend two flues of twelve-inch sheet metal pipe which cross the barn, make two right angle bends, and emerge from the side of the barn on which the furnace is located. These flues have smoke stacks to discharge gases and increase the draft.[36]

**Figure 2. Smith Barn, Dillon County - Double brick furnaces (SCDAH)**

[34] Guy, *A Look at Traditional Tobacco Barns Pleasant Hill Community Georgetown County, South Carolina*, 9.
[35] Ibid., 2.
[36] Hart and Mather, "The Character of Tobacco Barns and Their Role in the Tobacco Economy of the United States," 288-289.

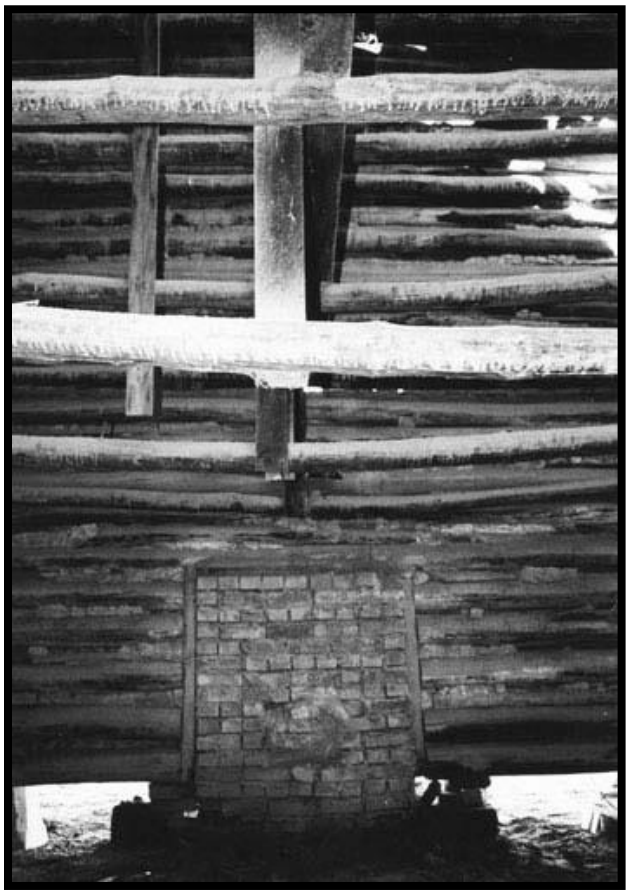

**Figure 3. Dillard Barn, Marion County - Early poles & closed-off furnace (SCDAH)**

## 1940s-1960s Characteristics

It is important to note that even if a barn exhibits some of these later design elements or technology it does not necessarily mean it was built post-1940. Many farmers updated their older barns with new equipment and materials that required less maintenance.

As tobacco production increased in the 1940s and 1950s, so did barn size. Barns from this time period are typically 20x20 feet with five "rooms."[37] Wood framed barns were popular, with walls made of weatherboard or vertical board. For better insulation, many barns were lined with asphalt rolls or "felt" on the exterior. The material was secured to the barn by either tacking or vertical wood battens, typically spaced two to three feet apart.[38] Roofing materials included sheet metal, or tin, and asphalt. Brick foundations were popular, but concrete block also began to appear.

Perhaps the biggest change from earlier barns was the use of propane or kerosene burners in the 1950s. These burners were placed in the center of the interior. Many older barns were retrofitted with this type of burner.

---

[37] Prince, "Tobacco Barns," 969.
[38] Guy, *A Look at Traditional Tobacco Barns Pleasant Hill Community Georgetown County, South Carolina*, 8.

## Packhouses

Another building associated with tobacco production is the packhouse. Identifying a packhouse can be difficult in the field. These barns are large, two-story buildings, and typically have multiple doors and windows. Packhouses were built near the curing barns, which is probably the best indicator that a barn is a packhouse. As discussed earlier, these barns served entirely different purposes than curing barns; this is where the post-curing processing took place. After 1950, as the need for tobacco curing barns decreased, some flue-curing barns were converted into packhouses.

## Warehouses & Redrying Plants

The last building types related to tobacco are warehouses and redrying plants, which are found in towns or cities. These structures vary in size, layout, and form. Although sometimes hard to distinguish, redrying plants are generally smaller than warehouses. Early warehouses and redrying plants, also known as stemmeries or prizeries, were wood framed, but soon brick (common bond) became the preferred construction material. The height of the buildings range from one-and-a-half to three stories and stepped parapets are common. Some buildings exhibit over-hanging eaves and arched windows or doorways. Window styles and materials vary, but doors are typically wood. Most buildings also have a drive-in entrance or loading docks. Roofs are typically gable or flat.

**Figure 4. Post 1940s tobacco barn in Florence County (New South Associates, Inc.)**

**Figure 5. Gas burner and post-1940s poles (New South Associates, Inc.)**

**Figure 6. Tobacco barn turned packhouse (New South Associates, Inc.)**

**Figure 7. Neal and Dixon's Warehouse, Marion County – c.1926 tobacco warehouse (SCDAH)**

**Table 3: South Carolina Auction Warehouses[39]**

| Market | County | 1915 | 1920 | 1925 | 1930 | 1935 | 1940 | 1945 | 1950 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Andrews | Georgetown | √ | 3 | √ | 1 | | | | |
| Aynor | Horry | √ | 3 | | | | | | |
| Bamberg | Bamberg | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Conway | Horry | √ | 4 | √ | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Cheraw | Chesterfield | √ | | | | | | | |
| Darlington | Darlington | √ | 4 | √ | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Dillon | Dillon | √ | 3 | √ | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 |

[39] Division of Agriculture Commerce and Commercial Feedstuffs. *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture Commerce and Industries of the State of South Carolina, 1912-1919* (Columbia: Gonzalez and Bryan, 1913-1920); *Year Book and Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture Commerce and Industries, 1920-1925* (Columbia: Gonzalez and Bryan:1921-1926); *Year Book of the Department of Agriculture Commerce and Industries of the State of South Carolina, 1926-1937* (Columbia: General Assembly of South Carolina, 1927-1938); South Carolina Department of Agriculture Commerce and Industries. *South Carolina Tobacco Report,* (1936-1970).

| Florence | Florence | √ | 2 | √ | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgetown | Georgetown | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Greeleyville | Williamsburg | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Hartsville | Darlington | √ | 3 | | 2 | | | | |
| Hemingway | Williamsburg | √ | 3 | √ | | | | | 1 |
| Johnsonville | Florence | √ | 3 | √ | 2 | | | | |
| Kingstree | Williamsburg | √ | 3 | √ | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Lake City | Florence | √ | 3 | √ | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 |
| Lake View | Dillon | | 3 | √ | | | | | |
| Lamar | Darlington | √ | 1 | √ | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Latta | Dillon | √ | 2 | | | | | | |
| Loris | Horry | √ | 4 | √ | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Lynchburg | Lee | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Manning | Clarendon | √ | 3 | √ | 1 | | | | |
| Marion | Marion | √ | 3 | √ | 1 | | | | |
| Moncks Corner | Berkley | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Mullins | Marion | √ | 4 | √ | 6 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 9 |
| Nichols | Marion | √ | 2 | √ | | | | | |
| Olanta | Florence | √ | 3 | √ | | | | | |
| Pages Mill* | Dillon | √ | | | | | | | |
| Pamplico | Florence | √ | 2 | | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| **Market** | **County** | **1915** | **1920** | **1925** | **1930** | **1935** | **1940** | **1945** | **1950** |
| Summerville | Berkley | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Sumter | Sumter | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Timmonsville | Florence | √ | 4 | √ | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| Total | | 57 | 77 | 40 | 37 | 35 | 40 | 35 | 50 |

*Name changed to Lake View in 1916

# National Register of Historic Places Evaluation

## Criteria for Eligibility

There are four National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) criteria, but most significant tobacco properties will be evaluated under the NRHP Criterion A, or possibly Criterion C. Because of this, Criteria A and C are further discussed below. In rare cases, it may also be possible for a building to fall under Criterion B for association with the lives of significant persons of our past. The fourth NRHP criterion, Criterion D, typically relates to archaeology as the criterion pertains to properties "that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory of history."[40] Archaeology sites associated with tobacco barns are usually limited to historic field scatters that are not likely to yield important information, therefore standing tobacco barns will typically not be evaluated under Criterion D.

### Criterion A

According to the National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Criterion A relates to resources "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." Areas of significance for tobacco properties may include community development or agriculture. For example, the resource might relate to the marketing or production of tobacco. Properties eligible under Criterion A for agriculture should exhibit characteristics associated with an important event or activity, direct involvement with these events or activities leading to the area's economic development or community, and reflect the important event or activity's period of significance. Other resources may be significant under Criterion A for community development. For example, NRHP listed Dillard Barn is significant for its connection with the town of Mullins development. A district, such as a farmstead, may also be significant as part of land uses and activities with its buildings and outbuildings reflecting local tobacco trends.

### Criterion C

This criterion is defined by the National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* as for resources "that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction." Areas of significance under Criterion C include architecture. For example, buildings may be distinctive of a design, style, or method of construction of "historic or local trends."[41] In the case of tobacco properties, the building may represent an excellent and intact example of a Pee Dee tobacco barn or warehouse. For example, the Meekins Barn in Dillon County is listed as significant under Criterion C because it is an intact example of an early 20th century tobacco barn, representing a building type of a particular period.

---

[40] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," *National Register Bulletin* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service: 1997), 2.

[41] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. "Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes," *National Register Bulletin* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service), 14.

**Table 4: NRHP Listed Tobacco Barns**

| County | Name | Date | Criterion |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dillon | Meekins Barn | Before 1935 | |
| Dillon | Smith Barn | 1942 | |
| Marion | Dew Barn | Before 1935 | |
| Marion | Dillard Barn | 1894-1895 | A & C |
| Marlboro | Manship Farmstead | Tobacco Barn ca. 1920 | A, C, & D |

**Table 5: NRHP Listed Tobacco Warehouses & Redrying Plants**

| County | Name | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Horry | Waccamaw River Warehouse Historic District | Tobacco Warehouse ca. 1900 |
| Marion | Imperial Tobacco Company Building | 1908-1913 |
| Marion | A.H. Buchan Company Building | 1924-1930 |
| Marion | Liberty Warehouse | ca. 1923 |
| Marion | Neal and Dixon's Warehouse | ca.1926 |
| Marion | Old Brick Warehouse (Demolished and Removed from NRHP, 2016.) | 1903-1908 |

## Assessing Historic Integrity

According to the NRHP Criteria, there are seven aspects that define integrity. Although tobacco properties are increasingly rare, in many areas tobacco barns are still in abundance. Because of this, it is important for the resource(s) to maintain a high degree of integrity by meeting several or most of the integrity aspects. Integrity is the composite of seven qualities, as defined in National Register Bulletin 15:

1. Location – the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred
2. Design – the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property
3. Setting – the physical environment of a historic property
4. Materials – the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property
5. Workmanship – the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory

6. Feeling – a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time
7. Association – the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property

## Individual Resources

### Flue-Curing Barns

Tobacco barns considered individually eligible for the NRHP should be excellent representations of the building type, but not all alterations comprise integrity for flue-curing barns, especially early barns. There are exceptions for the maintenance of barns with original log exteriors. Their chinking required regular maintenance to ensure heat did not escape. Because many of these repairs occurred historically, the addition of some historic materials, such as boards, over chinking, should not affect the barn's exterior integrity. Most early tobacco curing barns used wood or coal burning furnaces and many of these furnaces have since been bricked off, even historically, as new technology emerged. The closing off of these furnaces does not greatly affect a barn's character if the furnace has not been completely removed, because the switch to kerosene burners reflects the historical technology changes and trend in tobacco processing.

If multiple changes have been made to the barn, such as removal of door(s), brick furnace removed, and altered exterior, then integrity can be affected. Major alterations to a barn also compromise integrity. These include changes to the roof line, entrance, any additions to the form, loss of exterior side shed roof, or introduction of non-historic materials.

In addition, an intact interior could add to the significance of the barn's design. These elements include the presence of tiers, rooms, and original furnace. Work benches for leaf processing originally would have been placed under the exterior roofs.

### Warehouses/Redrying Plants

In comparison to barns, tobacco warehouses and redrying plants are more often individually eligible for the listing in the NRHP because they are typically not directly associated with other resources on the same property or area. Warehouses and plants considered individually eligible for the NRHP, especially under Criterion C, should typically retain their original exterior appearance.

Some successful warehouses may have additions to the original form. This does not diminish integrity as long as the additions occurred during the period of significance. The presence of original signage on the building and an intact interior may add to the significance.

## Multiple Resources (Historic Districts)

Tobacco barns are more likely to be eligible for listing in the NRHP as part of a historic district. Because barns were part of a larger production, the grouping of multiple tobacco barns and other related resources may hold greater significance under Criteria A and C then the buildings by themselves. Warehouses may also be eligible as part of a commercial or warehouse district, such as the NRHP listed Waccamaw River Warehouse Historic District in Conway. Districts considered eligible for listing in National Register of Historic Places, particularly under Criterion C, should retain:

- Setting

- Historic materials and design in majority of buildings
- Organization of space
- Design and style

Like individual properties, certain changes do not affect a historic district's National Register of Historic Places eligibility. For example, alterations to a small number of resources, loss of some original outbuildings or fields, or a small amount of resources with low integrity, do not affect a historic district's overall integrity. Some alterations that decrease the integrity of a district consist of a loss of considerable areas of the farm or a large number of noncontributing resources with major changes/alterations, especially non-historic changes.

# Bibliography


Bishir, Catherine W. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Collins, W.K. and S.N. Hawks, Jr. *Principles of Flue-Cured Tobacco Production*. Raleigh: North Carolina State University, 1993.

Cooper, Thomas. *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina; Statutes*, Vol. 4. Columbia: A.S. Johnston, 1838.

Division of Agriculture Commerce and Commercial Feedstuffs. *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture Commerce and Industries of the State of South Carolina, 1912-1919.* Columbia: Gonzalez and Bryan, 1913-1920.

Division of Agriculture Commerce and Commercial Feedstuffs. *Year Book and Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture Commerce and Industries, 1920-1925.* Columbia: Gonzalez and Bryan, 1921-1926.

Division of Agriculture Commerce and Commercial Feedstuffs. *Year Book of the Department of Agriculture Commerce and Industries of the State of South Carolina, 1926-1937.* Columbia: General Assembly of South Carolina, 1927-1938.

South Carolina Department of Agriculture Commerce and Industries. South Carolina Tobacco Report, (1936-1970).

Economic Research Service. *Tobacco: Situation and Outlook Report September 1991*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1991.

Guy, Yvette Richardson. *A Look at Traditional Tobacco Barns Pleasant Hill Community Georgetown County, South Carolina*. July 1988.

Hart, John Fraser and Eugene Cotton Mather. "The Character of Tobacco Barns and Their Role in the Tobacco Economy of the United States." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51, 1961.

Prince, Eldred E., Jr., with Robert R. Simpson. *Long Green: The Rise and Fall of Tobacco in South Carolina*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000.

Prince, Eldred E., Jr. "Tobacco Barns," in *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*. ed. Walter Edgar. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. “Thirteenth Census of the United States, take in the year 1910.” *Agriculture, 1909 and 1910, Reports by States with Statistics by Counties*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. “Fourteenth Census of the United States, take in the year 1920.” *Agriculture, Reports by States with Statistics for Counties and a Summary Table for the United States and the North, South, and West.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1922.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. “Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes,” *National Register Bulletin*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” *National Register Bulletin*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service: 1997.

# Additional Resources

For more information on evaluating farms, see the National Park Service's *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* and *Flue-Cured Tobacco Production Properties Thematic Resources MRA Nomination*. Houses and other outbuildings that are surveyed should follow the guidelines in the Statewide Survey of Historic Properties Survey Manual.

South Carolina Encyclopedia, Tobacco Barns

The Economic and Social History of Tobacco Production in South Carolina, Chicora Foundation (PDF)

Celebrate Tobacco Barns, North Carolina SHPO

South Carolina Tobacco Museum

Tobacco Farm Life Museum