

Agrarian Capitalism and The Cost of Building in Antebellum Virginia

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The antebellum period in the United States of America is defined as the period between 1815 and the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861. This paper seeks to reveal the causal links between intention and architecture in the American South during the antebellum period and the implications and legacies of an environment built with enslaved labor. A study of the actual construction costs of antebellum building campaigns can consider both the monetary and human cost of construction of enslaved labor. The focus of this study is the Greek Revival mansion house (Fig. 1) that James Bruce, a Virginia tobacco planter in Halifax County, completed at his Berry Hill plantation in 1845 [1].



Figure 1: Berry Hill Plantation, Halifax County, Virginia (Virginia Department of Historic Resources)

James Bruce enslaved more than 400 African Americans on his four Virginia plantations. Both the manuscript documentation and the surviving buildings of his home plantation, Berry Hill, are evidence of the human cost of agrarian

capitalism; such building campaigns exacted not only a monetary cost, but also a human cost. The cost of one enslaved worker's labor is fully documented in original sources, as is the cost of housing that enslaved worker. The cost of an enslaved worker can readily be compared to the cost that Bruce incurred of employing a tutor, an overseer, a clerk, or to the cost of a marble fireplace mantle, a silver-plated doorknob, a dining room sideboard.

The mansion house that James Bruce completed at his Berry Hill plantation in 1845, had a final cost of \$35,432.00. At 9,000 square feet, the house was two-and-a-half times larger than the Halifax County courthouse (Fig. 2) that the master builder, Josiah Dabbs, had finished in 1838. Berry Hill stood in the landscape of Virginia as the largest and finest example of Greek Revival architecture of the period, and more importantly to this discussion, as a testament to the profitability of an agrarian system of capitalism based in slavery [2].



Figure 2: Halifax County Courthouse (Virginia Department of Historic Resources)

On March 15, 1842 James Bruce paid \$3,000 to master builder Josiah Dabbs, who began work immediately, following the drawn plans and detailed descriptions according to the contractual agreement that Bruce and Dabbs had signed the previous month. Dabbs had the building ready for occupancy by November of 1843 and the Bruces were settled in their new house by Christmas of that year. Although Dabbs had finished most of the work on the house within eighteen months, he continued to work on outbuildings and the house itself for another year. During the entire building campaign Dabbs was responsible for procuring materials and for employing and supervising brick masons, stone masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, tinsmiths and general laborers. The most important members of his work force were skilled white laborers like the brick masons James and Joseph Whitice, who had experience with large building projects. Master carpenters and master masons often served as what today would be called general contractors. James Whitice, in partnership with carpenter William Howard, had built the large brick courthouse for \$8,000 in neighboring Mecklenburg County between 1838 and 1842. The resemblance between Mecklenburg's courthouse (Fig. 3) and the house at Berry Hill plantation is striking. Comparable in scale and dimension, the most striking similarity of the two buildings is the temple front motif. The difference lies in the Ionic order of the courthouse and the Doric order of Bruce's house. Whitice

no doubt understood the monumental nature of the building project at Berry Hill. Dabbs also employed two stone masons, George and Enoch Taylor, along with their assistant William Coarse to locate, quarry, and dress the granite. Except for their work at Berry Hill, the careers of these stone masons is unknown. Many other craftsmen, both free and enslaved craftsmen, who worked at Berry Hill remain nameless [3].



Figure 3: Mecklenburg County Courthouse (Virginia Department of Historic Resources)

Dabbs, the Whitices, and the Taylors supervised both skilled and unskilled, free and enslaved laborers. Unskilled laborers would be employed for such tasks as felling and hauling timber, preparing clay pits for bricks, and hauling brick and stone. Skilled free laborers included apprentices and journeymen. Apprenticeships were unregulated in antebellum Virginia, and advancement to journeyman was an informal rite, based on the artisan's reaching the age of majority and his experience. Journeymen generally possessed the same skills as their employer but lacked the capital to operate independently as a general undertaker. Most journeymen worked for daily wages. William Coarse was described as the assistant to stone masons George and Enoch Taylor, but he probably was serving an apprenticeship. He worked for \$.50 a day, while his employers each made \$1.50 per day, the equivalent of \$300 annually. By comparison, James Bruce paid the overseers of his four plantations \$.96 per day, or \$240.00 annually, plus housing. Bruce paid his clerk and children's tutor, skilled professionals, \$1.60 per day, or \$400.00 annually, plus housing. Although skilled workers such as stone masons were well compensated, the high rate of pay might reflect the short-term nature of the building season, and possibly fluctuations in the economy; if for example the stone masons had only seasonal work, they might charge more during the building season [4].

Slave owners who rented out their skilled slaves could often command wages equal to those of free skilled laborers. Masters often sent both skilled and unskilled slaves to cities like Charleston, South Carolina where they were to hire

themselves out, often negotiating their own contracts. Under these circumstances, slaves were allowed to keep a portion of the wage they had contracted. In the countryside, however, there is little evidence that slaves who were rented out were given any portion of the contracted amount. At the time that they built Berry Hill, Josiah Dabbs owned eleven slaves and James Whitice owned ten. The stone masons appear to be the only free labor that Dabbs hired, so the entire workforce that Dabbs and Whitice brought to the site was fourteen skilled and unskilled laborers. There is no evidence to suggest that Dabbs or Whitice supplemented this initial workforce by hiring additional skilled or unskilled slave labor. Some clients did on occasion loan their slaves to Dabbs as a form of payment for his services, but there is no indication that Dabbs or Whitice had such arrangements with Bruce while working at Berry Hill [5].

James C. Bruce owned two slaves trained as carpenters and one trained as a mason, and it is possible that when their skills were not required on one of his other plantations, these slaves worked alongside the white and enslaved laborers at Berry Hill. Bruce did, however, hire from his stepmother a slave, John Royall, who was trained as a carpenter. Bruce paid his stepmother \$125 for Royall's skills for one year beginning in December of 1842. Bruce's stepmother did not give her stepson a discount on the hire cost -- \$125 was the going rate for a skilled slave during the late 1830s and early 1840s. It is not known if Royall worked on the construction of Berry Hill mansion house or if he was hired for other building projects that were going on concurrently. The point is that, although the purchase price in 1842 for such a skilled slave such as Royal could be as much as \$450, the slave's owner could expect to realize a substantial return on that \$450 investment by hiring out a skilled slave. Likewise, anyone who hired a skilled slave was paying much less than they would for a free skilled laborer [6].

It is unlikely, however, that Bruce used any of his own slaves as unskilled labor for the building of his house. During the construction of Berry Hill, Bruce sold his 1500-acre Wolf Island Plantation in Caswell County, North Carolina because he did not have enough hands to work it. In fact, Bruce struggled during the early 1840s with a labor shortage on his four plantations and his other businesses, and he required the labor of more slaves than the 400 that he owned. When he began making improvements to the drainage system at Berry Hill, Bruce had to hire ten slaves from his neighbors to dig ditches ('ditchers'), paying their owners \$4.00 per month for each enslaved worker, and he paid Thomas Webb \$135 to oversee these ditchers. Even if Bruce's house had been constructed entirely with free white labor, the slaves who worked on his plantations, in his mills, on his boats, and the slaves who toiled for the Roanoke Navigation Company in which Bruce owned stock, all contributed directly to the resources that Bruce commanded, making such a building campaign possible [7].

Regardless of the status of his workforce, Dabbs was responsible for the quality of all his workmen and he was held accountable according to the contract. After assembling his workforce, Dabbs directed the brick masons to begin work [8]. Having finished the courthouse a few months before, James Whitice already had a group of skilled enslaved brickmakers and masons ready to begin work immediately and he would have been well prepared to undertake work at Berry Hill. Whitice's masons began work on the foundation while brickmakers prepared clay pits for making more brick. The Whitices evidently began work immediately for by August of 1842 they had laid the foundation and begun building the walls of the house. By March of 1843, when they had finished the walls and installed the windows, construction of the roof was ready to begin [9].

For the roof over the main block of the house, Dabbs supervised the carpenters in building a principal rafter roof system supported by king posts that span the sixty-four foot breadth of the house. Both Dabbs and the Whitice brothers were familiar with this roof system since they had employed it in their courthouse constructions. The largest structural members, the king posts and the principal rafters, were hand hewn on the site. Bruce operated a sawmill that had a water-powered reciprocal saw at Meadesville, a hamlet on the Bannister River about fourteen miles north of the plantation. This mill was managed by his slave whom Bruce called 'Meadesville Joe,' dealt with customers to the mill and who oversaw the four other slaves Bruce assigned to the mill. Because of the increased production of wood for the construction of the mansion house, Bruce hired from neighbors two enslaved workers, Pleasant and Bob, for \$25 per year. Meadesville

Joe supervised the cutting of joists, rafters, beams, and the common rafters, as well as the studs framing the partition walls of the first and second floors. By June of 1843 tinsmiths were installing the roof and gutters [10].

By the fall of 1843, Berry Hill mansion house had assumed the Grecian temple form that Bruce had envisioned from the beginning, and in March of 1844, two years after construction began, Dabbs and Bruce began settling accounts. In the final reckoning, James C. Bruce paid Josiah Dabbs the balance he owed, \$27,141.00 for his house -- a princely sum in 1844, the same year that Bruce paid his overseer at Berry Hill an annual salary of \$325.00 [11].

Although the house seems to stand aloof and isolated on its hill, it was in fact the center of an extensive and bustling agricultural enterprise. This large operation required numerous structures of its own and Bruce oversaw the construction and placement of all the requisite outbuildings that supported the main house. Tobacco barns were essential to the operations of Berry Hill, and although none survive on the property, carpenter Isaac Smart built two for \$128.00 each. Wheat was the second largest cash crop grown at Berry Hill and in 1844 master carpenter Pleasant Headspeth built a granary at Berry Hill for \$1,089. Corn was a staple for Bruce's family, his slaves and his livestock, and Josiah Dabbs charged \$630.00 to build a substantial corn house the same year he built the granary. The smoke house, completed by Dabbs in 1845 at a cost of \$150.00, was one of the most important buildings because it held the cured meat that the entire plantation consumed over a year's time. Bruce placed it in the rear yard of the main house where he could keep a watchful eye on it. The two large barns that Bruce built for livestock no longer stand, but the foundations of the substantial stable which measured thirty feet by sixty feet survive near the corn house. Dabbs built the stable for \$1,156.00. All of these utilitarian structures were dispersed through Berry Hill's landscape, located for convenience on the road that bisected the plantation.

Berry Hill slaves were an active, influential force that James Bruce had to consider when planning his plantation. Berry Hill slaves appropriated the southeast corner of the plantation as a burial ground, a location that was well beyond white surveillance. Space at Berry Hill was as fluid as it was static. Both households, black and white, carried on a domestic life in discreet, well-defined spaces enclosed by wood, brick, and stone. Yet the yards, the fields, and the woods constituted another space which blacks and whites claimed, abandoned, surveyed, and contested daily. Berry Hill plantation, like any plantation in the antebellum south, comprised a landscape that was simultaneously simple and comprehensible, yet complex and inscrutable.

The stone slave houses that James Bruce and his slaves built between 1853 and 1855 were a crucial aspect of this landscape. Compared with most slave houses that survive from the antebellum period, these stone slave houses are substantial and capacious dwellings. The quality of these slave houses and their placement in the landscape are significant for what they indicate about James Bruce and his notions of slave management. James Bruce spent ten years arranging his plantation landscape before he considered more thoughtfully the living conditions of his slaves. In February of 1853 Bruce wrote to his son Alexander quote:

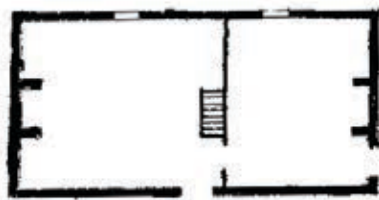
I have put up an overseers house and kitchen of stone with Alec as my principal and Sam, old Darby and Harris for aids. We think it shows talent and energy for a first effort. I shall next build a cook's house of stone with two rooms one for cooking for the people, the other for cook and family to live in. It will be placed where the road crosses the pond branch below Viny's house [12].

This letter is significant because it indicates the location of the overseer's house which is well beyond the view from any slave house. Perhaps most important, this letter mentions the names of the slaves who built the houses. Sam was one of two slave stone masons at Berry Hill. Old Darby and Harris are listed as carpenters in Bruce's slave inventory. And Alec, although not trained in building trades, was a trusted slave who traveled with Bruce and who presumably possessed some organizational skills that Bruce valued in his building campaigns.

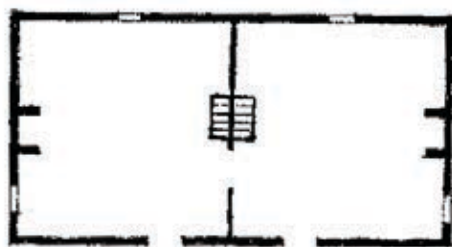
The Cook's House (Fig. 4) that Alec, Sam, Old Darby and Harris built is one of two types (Fig. 5) found at Berry Hill. It measures twenty feet by thirty-eight feet and its stone walls are, on average, one-and-a-half feet thick. A stone wall partition with a paneled door divides the structure into two heated rooms, each measuring approximately seventeen feet square. Each room has an exterior door on the east wall and a glazed window on the west. Above stairs are two more rooms, divided by a wood partition, one with a small firebox. Each of these rooms is lighted by two small windows that flank the small fireplace. Bruce built the kitchen adjoining the north wall of the slave house. It measures approximately fifteen feet square and has access only through a door on the east wall. A window on the west wall lights the interior. The firebox is small but large enough for the cook to prepare the simple meals that that slave children would take to the field hands at mid-day.



Figure 4: Cook's House at Berry Hill Plantation, Halifax County, Virginia (author)



Slave house, plan type #1, 1853, Berry Hill plantation, Halifax County, Va.



Slave house, plan type #2, 1853, Berry Hill plantation, Halifax County, Va.

Figure 5: Two types of slave housing at Berry Hill Plantation, Halifax County, Virginia (author)

The second type of slave house at Berry Hill is a variation on the cook's house -- slightly smaller, with different fenestration. The slave house near the small pond and just outside the stone wall surrounding Bruce's mansion house belonged to his butler, Ellick Pamplin. (Fig. 6) It measures eighteen feet by twenty-eight feet and its stone walls are one-and-half feet thick. A wood partition probably divided this structure into two rooms on the first floor. The larger room has a fireplace that measures three feet wide and is large enough to cook in. The other fireplace measures only one-and-a-half feet wide and was probably used only for heating the small room it served. Each of these rooms has an exterior door. The smaller room has a door on the gable end while the larger room has a door centered on the east elevation parallel with the ridge line. Each room also has a window on the west elevation. Although no evidence for a stair exists, the two small windows flanking the western chimney stack indicate that an unheated garret above stairs was occupied as well.

Bruce built at least eight of these single-family houses at Berry. Josiah Dabbs had built 8 brick slave houses for Bruce at another plantation, Morotock, for approximately \$280 each. Feeling confident that the skills of his enslaved carpenters, stone masons, and brick masons could be put to use with results as good as those of Dabbs, Bruce assembled a workforce of skilled and unskilled slaves and commenced a building campaign at Berry Hill plantation. In building these stone slave houses, Bruce's slaves increased the value of Berry Hill plantation by \$2,228, no small sum considering that Bruce paid the oversser at Berry Hill \$325.00 that same year. The \$2,228 value that Bruce's slaves produced easily equaled the amount that Bruce paid for those slaves on the auction block.



Figure 6: Ellick Pamplin's House at Berry Hill Plantation, Halifax County, Virginia (author)

When in 1852 Bruce made his inventory of the 109 slaves he held at his Berry Hill plantation, he counted seventeen families, so these eight single family houses probably supplemented the existing slave houses that are known to have existed on the plantation. Levi Pollard a slave on Charles Bruce's Staunton Hill plantation described a house similar to the ones that James Bruce built, explaining the room arrangement and how his family occupied those spaces.

We had us a two-story house. Of course upstairs you couldn't stand up straight because the roof cut the sides off. Part of the children stayed up there. There was two rooms downstairs. One was the kitchen, and mammy and pappy and the other children slept in that other room. Some slept in the kitchen, too. There were fourteen children in all [13].

A family with fourteen children would find Bruce's stone slave houses crowded, to be sure. Yet, these slave houses averaged 760 square feet of living space on the first floor, which was considerably more than the 256 square feet of the average slave house in the antebellum South. In both materials and space, Berry Hill slave houses were unusually substantial and well-built and provided a level of comfort that characterized what would seem to be one of the most benevolent of plantation regimes of the antebellum period [14].

Bruce's efforts to create arcadian idyll with his Grecian temple, stone slave houses, and full complement of well-built, substantial farm buildings disguised a hard fact. At his home plantation, Berry Hill, Bruce knew his 109 slaves by name. But he owned more than 400 slaves. James Bruce had so many slaves working at various tasks and locations that it was impossible for him to have any meaningful interaction or understanding for their welfare. In at least one instance he literally lost track one slave, Connie. Bruce's father, James Bruce Sr. and his business partner, Thomas Hagood, had acquired Connie sometime before 1820 in a foreclosure when they were in business as Bruce and Hagood. Evidently Bruce and Hagood had hired the woman out. By 1857, nineteen years after the death of James Bruce Sr., Connie had been lost in the shuffle and her 'guardian' John Forbes wrote to James C. Bruce that

the old woman Connie owned by Bruce and Hagood is still at my house and wishes to remain with me. I have kept her up to the first of January for \$20.00 per annum at which time I informed Dr. Atkisson that I would have to charge more. Dr. Atkisson said he wished her to continue where she is and that you would do right. The old woman is almost helpless and needs waiting on. I thought \$30.00 per year would not be too much and I can keep her for that as she wants to stay. I haven't received anything for the last two years and being pressed for money, if it suits your convenience, I would be glad [15].

In executing his father's will, Bruce had left Connie in the employ of the man who originally hired her. Rather than assume direct responsibility for Connie when she became infirm, Bruce arranged for her to stay under the care of Forbes. Like his father, however, Bruce found owned so many enslaved individuals that he forgot about Connie's existence altogether. In March Bruce paid Forbes the money due him, but Forbes wrote again in August, this time informing him of Connie's death and charging him \$3.50 for providing her a shroud and coffin and \$1.56 for digging her grave [16].

James Bruce was keenly aware of the economic forces that were shaping antebellum Virginia, and he spent his life shrewdly building an agricultural and business empire that reached far beyond his home in Halifax County. He was a man who was in control of his destiny. Old Connie, on the other hand, knew little of the machinations of the market economy, except that much of that economy depended on the forced labor of people like herself. Old Connie spent her life in the constant knowledge that powerful people like Bruce could go bankrupt or die, leaving her fate in the hands of yet another master or mistress. The substantial and permanent stone houses that Bruce's slaves built masked the very nature of a world organized around agrarian capitalism, a nature that was volatile, unpredictable, and rife with the anxiety and fear of those whose labor built that world [17].

References

- [1] This paper draws upon the original source material of the Bruce Family Papers, which are held at the University Virginia Library. Over the course of a calendar year, these documents were mined for evidence of James Bruce's architectural legacy.
- [2] Account of James C. Bruce with Josiah Dabbs, Bruce Family Papers, University of Virginia, Business Papers 1844.
- [3] Gilliam, Gerald T. "Josiah Dabbs: Carpenter and Contractor." *The Southsider*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter 1986; Josiah Dabbs & Co., Accounts (1837-1845), and Dabbs, McDearmon & Co., Accounts (1839-40), in possession of Mrs. David McGehee, Halifax County.
- [4] On builders, apprentices, and journeymen see: C. W. Bisher, C. V. Brown, C. R. Lounsbury and E. H. Wood, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building*, Chapel Hill: University Press of North Carolina, 1990, pp. 33-38, pp. 93-97; and Richard Charles Cotes, "The Architectural Workmen of Thomas Jefferson in Virginia," PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 1986, 80-109. Wages for George and Enoch Taylor and for Bruce's overseers, clerk, and tutor are listed in the Bruce Family Papers (BFP), University of Virginia, (UVA), Business Papers (BP) 1842 and 1843.
- [5] H. Greene, H. S. Hutchins, Jr. and B. E. Hutchins, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004.
- [6] On slave labor in the building trades in antebellum Virginia, see: Bisher, et al, *Architects and Builders*, 99-102; and Cotes "Architectural Workmen", 97-99. Also see Catherine W. Bishir, "Black Builders in Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61, no. 4 (Oct. 1984), 423-61. A list of Bruce's slaves is in "Register of Negroes" BFP, UVA, Box 13. Dabbs's experience with slave labor is described briefly in Gilliam, "Josiah Dabbs", 16. Bruce inherited John Royall after the death of his step-mother and in his list of skilled slaves, he identifies John Royall, Jacob, and 'Cheeseman' as carpenters. See James C. Bruce (JCB) to Elvira Bruce, Dec. 27, 1842, BFP, UVA, BP 1842; and "Register of Negroes" BFP, UVA, Box 13. For the average price of skilled and unskilled slaves during the period of 1804 to 1862, see MeasuringWorth.com, Measuring Slavery in 2020. <https://www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php> accessed 06/05/2021.

[7] In a letter to William Price, Bruce offered to sell his Wolf Island plantation stating he did not have enough hands to work it. JCB to William Price, April 18, 1842, JCB Letterbook, BFP, UVA. Bruce sells the 1500-acre plantation to Price on April 30, 1842. See Caswell County, North Carolina Deed Book FF, p. 810. In 1847, Bruce hires slaves to dig drainage ditches at Berry Hill indicating that he still has a shortage of labor. See various receipts for hire of slaves BFP, UVA, BP 1847.

[8] Letters indicate that the Bruces moved into the house during the first week of November 1843. See Sarah Bruce to Charles Bruce, October 6, 1843, and Elvira Clark to Charles Bruce, BFP, Virginia Historical Society. Receipts for finished work also indicate the progress of the building campaign at Berry Hill. See: Receipt, Josiah Dabbs to JCB, March 15, 1842, BFP, UVA, BP 1842. Receipts, Josiah Dabbs to JCB, November 8, 1843 and December 25, 1843, BFP, BP 1843, UVA. Receipts for services rendered by Dabbs and other skilled laborers and for the hire of skilled slave masons are in BFP, BP for 1842-46. Bruce also owned slaves who were skilled as stone masons, brick masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths who presumably worked on the building projects at Berry Hill. See Slave Book, Berry Hill, 1841, BFP, UVA, 2692-c, vol. 6.

[9] On the Whitices's work at the Mecklenburg County courthouse see John O. and Margaret T. Peters, *Virginia's Historic Courthouses*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 78-79; and "Mecklenburg County Courthouse," VDHR file no. 173-6. On the Whitices's work at Berry Hill see JCB to EWB, August 8, 1842: Bruce instructs his clerk to check on the progress of the walls and quality of the brick and the lime in the mortar; See also a performance bond in the amount of \$25,000 dated May 29, 1843 that Joseph and James Whitice co-signed with Josiah Dabbs to James C. Bruce guaranteeing that work would be 'well and faithfully' executed: BFP, UVA, FP 1843. The brick for Berry Hill was hand made. For more on nineteenth-century brickmaking see: Bill Weldon, "The Brickmaker's Year", in Earl L. Soles, Jr., ed., *The Colonial Williamsburg Historic Trades Annual*, Vol. 2, (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), 1-41; Bricks were handmade in Virginia throughout the antebellum period. Thomas Jefferson estimated that two men could mold 2000 bricks per day. In 1819 the first patented brick-molding machine operating near Washington D.C. molded 30,000 bricks in a twelve-hour day. There is no evidence to suggest that such machines were in used in southside Virginia during the antebellum period. For the mechanization of the brickmaking industry in the United States see: Harley J. McKee, "Brick and Stone: Handicraft to Machine", in Charles E. Peterson, ed., *Building Early America: Contributions toward the History of a Great Industry*, (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Co., 1976), 74-96.

[10] Dabbs charged Bruce for hauling materials from Dixon's Mill. See: Receipt, JD to JCB, June 15, 1843. Large structural members for framing continued to be hand-hewn in Virginia well into the second half of the nineteenth century. Smaller structural members like studs and rafters were often prepared at sawmills using reciprocal saws powered by water. By 1820 three sawmills were in operation in Halifax County. See: *Census of Manufactures*, Halifax County, Virginia, 1820. While smaller framing members were mechanically sawn, lath for plastering continued to be hand-riven. Lath at Berry Hill is hand-riven. Dabbs billed Bruce for four bushels of "coal for tinnners" indicating that the tin roof was in place and that the tinsmiths were using the coal to heat the solder for the roof work. See: Receipt, JD to JCB, June 5, 1843, BFP, FP, 1843. See also Waits Report. p 11.

[11] Account of James C. Bruce with Josiah Dabbs, BFP, UVA, BP 1844.

[12] BFP, Box 14, Feb. 17, 1853.

[13] C. L. Perdue, Jr., and T. E. Barden, *Weevils in the Wheat*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991, p. 227. Taken from the records of the Federal Writers' Project of the 1930s, these interviews with one-time Virginia slaves provide a clear window into what it was like to be enslaved in the antebellum American South.

[14] L. McKee, "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of 19th Century Virginia Slave Cabins," in A. E. Yentsch and M. C. Beaudry, eds., *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz*, London: CRC Press, 1993), p. 198.

[15] John Forbes to James C. Bruce, Feb. 25, 1857, BFP, UVA.

[16] Receipt, John Forbes to James C. Bruce, March 7, 1857. John Forbes to James C. Bruce, Aug. 30, 1857, BFP, Business Papers 1857, UVA.

[17] *ibid.*