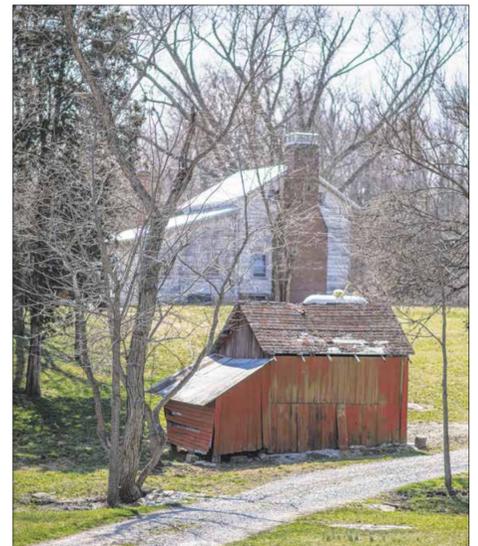


The Herald-Times

\$2.00 ■ Bloomington, Ind. ■ Sunday, March 31, 2019 ■ HeraldTimesOnline.com ■ 5 sections

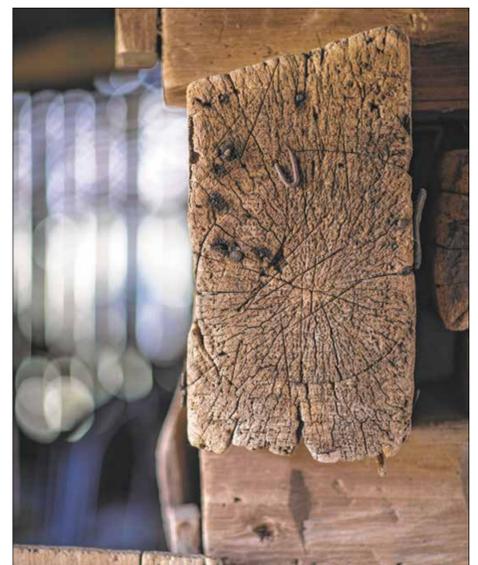
Beams of HISTORY



ABOVE: The barn in the foreground is one of several that are original to the Tate-Tatum Farm near Sanders. A farmhouse on the property, also shown, may be the oldest in Monroe County. **BELOW:** Hand-hewed timbers are seen in the large red barn on the Tate-Tatum Farm south of Bloomington. (Chris Howell / Herald-Times)



TOP, ABOVE: A two-story log farmhouse built circa 1822 near what's now the intersection of Fairfax and Rayletown roads south of Bloomington will be considered for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. See more of this historic farm in a photo gallery linked from this story on HeraldTimesOnline.com. (Chris Howell / Herald-Times)



Monroe County's Tate-Tatum Farm, nearly two centuries old, nominated for National Register of Historic Places

By Ernest Rollins
The Herald-Times

Nearly two centuries after John and Susanna Tate moved to Monroe County from Tennessee, two of their descendants last October found themselves standing in the log cabin they built in 1822.

"It was overwhelming," said David Tate, John and Susanna's great-great-grandson. "I am very fortunate to be able to do that."

David's brother, Alan Tate, researched the family's genealogy for several years. But standing in the farmhouse — along Rayletown Road in southern Monroe — he could feel history coming to life. In his mind, he played out a 19th-century newspaper article that described a staged break-in at the property:

Martha Tate, who married into the Tatum family, was living in the home at the time. A family cousin claimed that there was a break-in and the perpetrators had emptied a chest in the home. However, further investigation revealed that the claim was false and that the cousin had broken the window himself from the inside to cover up his theft.

Given the rich history associated with the Tate-Tatum Farm, county officials, with the permission of current property owners Anne Fields Lucas and Jeff Lucas, have requested that the property be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Jacqueline Nester, Monroe County

"For the John Tate homestead to be nominated is almost too good. It is a dream come true. It is the best thing since sliced bread."

DAVID TATE, great-great-grandson of the original owners of the Tate-Tatum Farm

planner, said many of the original structures on the Tate-Tatum Farm remain in decent shape. This includes a two-story log house and a double-crib log barn, believed to have been built in 1822.

Other buildings and structures on the farm include: a circa 1890 Transverse Frame barn; a circa 1860 wood storage and canning building; a circa 1822 house well; a circa 1880 animal feed shed; a circa 1880 granary; a circa 1925 garage; and a circa 1900 concrete water trough.

"For the John Tate homestead to be nominated is almost too good," David Tate said. "It is a dream come true. It is the best thing since sliced bread."

For years, the Daniel Stout house in northwestern Monroe County was considered the oldest remaining county residence, historic preservation board member Danielle Bachant-Bell said. That house is believed to have been built in 1828. She said research is still being done on the Tate-Tatum Farm to see if it is the oldest.

Bachant-Bell said the original farm was around 160 acres, although the size of the farm has changed since

then. When Martha Tate married into the Tatum family, the farm increased to more than 260 acres, according to nomination documents. Now the farm is around 119 acres.

Bachant-Bell said the existence of this farm was nearly forgotten. While the farm was listed as a notable structure in the 1989 "Indiana Historic Sites and Structures: Monroe County Interim Report," it was not surveyed again for the later 2015 report, according to the nomination application.

Historically significant

Unlike other historic farms, the Tate-Tatum Farm is not tied to a well-known Monroe County family, Bachant-Bell said.

For example, the Breezy Point Farm, north of Stinesville in Bean Blossom Township, has ties to the Van Buskirk family. While John Tate may not have been a high-profile settler, the fact that the farm lasted with the same family for multiple generations is historically significant, Bachant-Bell said. Descendants of the Tate-Tatum family occupied the farm from 1822 to 2013, and family members still meet regularly for

family reunions.

"I think they were your typical, hardscrabble pioneer farmers," Bachant-Bell said.

The rediscovery of the homestead was a happy accident.

Ann Fields Lucas said she and her husband were out driving one night when they noticed a retro-looking sign on Fairfax Road that listed a farm for sale. They turned down the driveway and fell in love with the property at once. They didn't realize the structures' historic significance until later, she said.

Some had suggested that they knock those structures down and sell the beams for mantels after the purchase. Instead, Fields Lucas contacted Bachant-Bell, who confirmed that the buildings were of historical significance. She said she was glad she did.

Along with running Whippoorwill Hill, a wedding venue, at the site, Fields Lucas said her husband still farms a portion of the property. They have 50 acres where they rotate planting soybeans and corn, and on other parts of the property they raise about 40 head of cattle, she said. Some have suggested that, given the history of the site, their property may be home to the oldest working farm in Monroe County. She said in researching the farm, she enjoyed reading about the Tate family's farm operation.

If the Tate-Tatum Farm is added to the National Register of Historic Places, it would be the third

Tate-Tatum Farm



farmstead in Monroe County to be listed: The Breezy Point Farm was listed in December, and the Hinkle-Garton Farmstead has been on the register since 2007.

"It is just a really, really awesome place," Fields Lucas said. "We feel honored to own and be stewards of this property."

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