THE ROADSIDE FARMSTAND IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

by

BRIAN W. C. STURM

(Under the Direction of Mary Anne Alabanza Akers)

**ABSTRACT** 

The cultural landscape is the physical manifestation of peoples' actions, values, and

beliefs wrought on the land. As a discipline, cultural landscape studies teaches environmental

designers how people use structures and places to establish identity, articulate social

relationships, and derive cultural meaning. Despite previous research in both rural and roadside

cultural landscapes, knowledge on the roadside farmstand constitutes a gap in the intellectual

record. This work is a cultural examination of the roadside farmstand. Through contextual,

process, formal, and functional approaches, I explore the multiple aspects of cultural meaning

embedded in this heretofore ignored element in the cultural landscape. Contextual meanings of

farmstands are tied to visualization perceptions of detail and change. Their formal patterns are

reminiscent of farm utility structures set along an ever changing road. Through

multidimensional processes and functions roadside farmstands continually reshape themselves in

an evolving landscape.

INDEX WORDS:

roadside farmstand, cultural landscape, rural landscape, roadside

landscape

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My utmost lesson learned in the process of doing this research has been remembering how I fell in love with the American landscape in the first place –by seeing it through the windows of my family's station wagon. I cannot thank my parents enough for driving four kids around the country on countless summer trips. They are still two of the most enthusiastic observers of the landscape I know.

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#### CHAPTER 1

#### INTRODUCTION

It's quite possible that I have seen more landscape from behind the windshield of a car than by any other single means. My earliest and most visceral automobile memories come from the trips between my family's home, then in Charleston, South Carolina, and my grandparents' home in Raleigh, North Carolina via Interstate 95. The incessant billboards for the place known as "South of the Border" left an indelible mark on my three-year old mind. I don't remember foreboding pine flatlands or tobacco farms though they must have been prevalent. But the bright colors, tacky amusements, and overgrown sombreros of this tourist trap come back with an odd fondness. The place held attraction for miles beyond its actual physical limits. I still feel that when you are driving through the middle of nowhere, nothing makes you feel like you have arrived at, well, at least *somewhere* the way a little shack on the side of the road promising hot dogs and free ice water does.

In the years since I have found solace on the smaller routes and highways of our land. It's not the turnpike oasis or cloverleaf interchange that attracts my wandering eye but the painted barn rooftop, abandoned chimney, and especially the roadside farmstand. The farmstand provides a direct link between the automobile-bound populous and abundant rural produce of this nation. No other place does this. While the scholarly record provides ample literature on places along the open road from gas stations to miniature golf courses and elements resting amidst amber waves of grain from tobacco barns to silos, I have yet to find a good read on the

farmstand. These places are a connection between the highway and farmstead and worth an examination as both roadside and rural landscapes continue to evolve.

This study is an examination of the roadside farmstand in the cultural landscape. I argue that through multidimensional processes, the roadside farmstand is a distinct place that continually remakes itself in response to cultural evolution in both the rural and roadside landscapes of America. I define roadside farmstands as those roadside facilities specifically designed to sell produce and other farm-raised or derived products that may or may not be located on the land from which the produce is harvested and that may or may not include multiple structures that support one another such a produce stand, where the majority of the stock is sold, as well as, picnic tents, bathrooms, coolers, greenhouses, packinghouses, nurseries, and concession stands. This definition derives from a combination of my own experiences in the field as well as information provided in prescriptive literature found in agricultural extension newsletters and country living magazines (Garrison 1992; Lee 1994; Marketing 1976; Stapleton 2002). I base my study upon four case studies of locally owned and operated farmstands in the town of Ellerbe, North Carolina. Sitting along U.S. Highway 220 in a part of the state known for its peach orchards and mixed-produce farms, Ellerbe is home to numerous roadside farmstands that have become common rest stops for vacationers traveling to and from South Carolina These farmstands face the challenges common to family farms in many rural beaches. landscapes, as well as the future bypass of their roadside location by the new Interstates 73 and 74. I base my analysis of the roadside farmstand on a framework derived from precedent studies performed on comparable cultural resources in both the rural and roadside landscapes. The framework touches on four approaches to understanding the farmstand as a cultural resource: contextual, process, formal, and functional.

I have organized the body of this work in the following manner. It commences with a description of the cultural backdrop that surrounds the roadside farmstand. An understanding of the changes occurring in both the rural and roadside landscapes is vital to the understanding of the roadside farmstand. Next I review the previous scholarship in both rural and roadside landscapes studies and explain the methods I have employed in my research. Chapter Three gives a brief cultural and ecological history of Ellerbe as well as thumbnail descriptions of each of the four case studies. The next four chapters deal with the actual findings of the study. "Passing Glances from the Highway" distills the meanings these farmstands carry when viewed as images in their rural and roadside context. "The Dynamics of Change" analyzes the multiple cultural processes manifest in farmstands and their relationship to the culture in rural and roadside landscapes. "Structure vs. Sign vs. Location" examines the relationship between the three dominant forms present in each of these case studies. The chapter "Capitalizing on Culture" explores the different cultural roles these places serve in the landscape. Finally, Chapter Nine offers my conclusions towards what environmental designers can learn from the farmstand.

#### **CHAPTER 2**

#### THE CULTURAL BACKDROP

The cultural landscape says everything about who we are as a community. This study employs a definition that describes the landscape as "a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land, functioning and evolving not according to natural laws but to serve a community" (Jackson 1984, 8). To understand that all land has been and continues to be shaped *by* people and *for* people is to realize that all landscapes are cultural. The landscape is the great thumbprint of our actions as a civilization and reflects the stories as well as values, beliefs, and ideals of us as a community of people. A change in the landscape reflects a change in culture (Lewis 1979, 12-13).

Like a thumbprint or history book, the landscape is text and though it does not read quite as easily as a *USA Today* it can be read as a narrative of our values as a culture. It has been said that, as Americans, we exhibit an inability to read our own landscape holistically (Bake 1964, 8-9; Lewis 1979, 12). Landscape literacy is, however, demanded in this society. A better understanding of the ordinary environment could lessen the environmental dangers and confusion otherwise caused by those who cannot interpret their surroundings (Groth 1997, 2). Environmental designers, especially, require a sound understanding of the cultural significance behind any landscape. At the vanguard of analysis and planning in the construction and development industry, environmental designers play a key role in the renovation and conservation of the changing cultural landscape.

One landscape undergoing change in America is the rural landscape. Current rural landscape studies focus on the disappearance of the family farm and the onslaught of rural urbanization. Writers acknowledge the family farm as both a hallowed symbol and dying institution in America (Hart 1998, 287; Jackson 1984, 31). Geographer Carl Sauer explains that the rural landscape, once dominated by the processes, functions, and formal language of small farms, is losing its perceived rural character for a number of reasons: mechanization, specialization, and consolidation of farms and farming practice (1977, 15). Environmental planners Ervin and Margaret Zube estimated in 1977 that the annual net loss of cropland stood at 1.25 million acres (p. x). Geographer John Fraser Hart has estimated that between 1934 and 1992 the number of farms in the United States decreased from 7 to 2 million (1998, p. 333). Today the farming population, which just five decades ago made up almost a third of rural America, accounts for less than a tenth of the rural population in the United States.

Table 1.1: Rural Population in the United States from 1950 to 1990. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1953; 1964; 1973; 1983; 1993.

Census Year	Total Rural	Nonfarm	% of Total	Farm	% of Total
	Population	Population		Population	
1950	54,229,675	31,181,325	57.5	23,048,350	32.5
1960	54,041,888	40,596,990	75.1	13,444,898	24.9
1970	53,878,039	45,591,154	84.6	8,286,885	15.4
1980	59,491,167	53,873,264	90.6	5,617,903	9.4
1990	61,658,330	57,786,747	93.7	3,871,583	6.3

And despite this apparent disappearance of the family farm, the staple of the roadside farmstand, and the spread of limited access highways and interstates, the roadside stand survives. It does so in plentiful number. The Georgia and South Carolina Farm Bureaus provide farmstand proprietors in their respective states with both a certification program and means of promotion on

their websites. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs lists over 700 direct farmers' markets on their promotional website <a href="http://www.ncfarmfresh.com">http://www.ncfarmfresh.com</a>. In the months of May, June, and July of 2004, this site received 43,939 hits (Schultz 2004). That breaks down to an average of over 475 visitors each day. While this site lists several regional and city markets as well as pick-your-own farms, the vast majority are simple farmstands.

Coinciding with the shift in farm techniques and farm population is the expansion of the city into the rural landscape. Cities once viewed the hinterlands as a source of raw industrial material but now see the countryside as a source of inexpensive land and recreational opportunity (Jackson 1977b, 33). Factors contributing to this phenomenon include: industrial relocations, dissatisfaction with urban life, lower taxes, cheaper labor, and the chance to escape the perceived environmental and social detractors of urban life such as noise and crime (Zube and Zube 1977, ix). The combination of country folk doing the mechanized, specialized work once relegated to cities and city folk engaging in the exurban life of hobby farming results in a landscape that one author has described as "a complex zone of contention extending in some instances for hundreds of miles" (Clay 1973, 15-16). Such landscape evolution is nothing new in the American experience. Some authors state that it is this evolution that defines the environmental experience of Americans today (Jackson, 1980, p. 25).

In the last fifty years, scholarship in the field of cultural landscape studies has examined various elements in the built environment as cultural markers of change in the rural landscape. Studies that focus on the ordinary places and environments of the South run the gamut from folk housing (Swaim, 1978a), to tobacco barns (Flynn and Stankus 1978), and courthouse squares (Haynes 1978; Jackson 1984), to agricultural fairs (Janiskee 1990). Employing the techniques pioneered by cultural geographers, historians, and anthropologists, these works write the

narrative of this vernacular landscape in the hope that some measure of culture can be resurrected from its corpus.

Another cultural landscape that exhibits continual change is the roadside landscape. Automobiles have created a whole set of places specific to the American landscape along the roadside. Together, the automobile and highway unflinchingly subjugated the American landscape within the first half of the twentieth century. Automobile registration climbed from just 8,000 in 1900 to 27.5 million by 1940 (Liebs 1985, 17-22). In 1934, a *Fortune* magazine article estimated that America possessed over 900,000 miles of paved roadway (53). This article introduced into popular culture the concept of "the Great American Roadside." Describing this string of gas stations, hotels and eateries as the most extensive market ever established, it predicted that in that year roadside industries would gross over \$3 billion.

Today, roads are not just the primary means for traveling through the American landscape, but for viewing and understanding it as well. Bound by "mechanized civilization and massed humanity" (Jackson 1977c, 149-150), Americans take to their cars whether it involves a weekend trip to the beach or a ten-minute run to the grocery store. Furthermore, scholars cite the roadside has having cinematic appeal (Liebs 1985, 4) or "clear place implication," due to the combination of quickly passing scenery and bodily sensations felt at high speeds (Jakle and Sculle 1999, 325). In our zeal to hit the open road, Americans have transformed the highway into what Main Street and the courthouse square used to be, the primary place for spending leisure time (Jackson 1997a, 188). Not surprisingly, scholars have called the roadside an "environmental imperative around which the entire of America was reorganized geographically" (Jakle and Sculle 1994, 8).

Writers in the field of cultural landscape studies have documented the design and behavior of the roadside landscape nearly since its emergence. Research features landscape icons as ordinary as the gas station (Jakle and Sculle 1994) and as flamboyant as Las Vegas casinos (Venturi, et al. 1977). There is not a body of literature that focuses specifically on the on the roadsides of the South, per se. To some extent, it can be argued that roadsides create a national landscape without regional distinction. As with the works pertaining to rural landscape, these studies mine their respective topics for gems of culture in an effort to understand the processes, forms, and functions that are fundamental in the evolution of the American roadside.

Sitting at the nexus of these two vast and ever changing landscape types, the rural and the roadside, is the roadside farmstand. As an element in the built environment, the roadside farmstand is both ubiquitous and immediately identifiable. Resting on the cusp of two changing cultural landscape types, it holds the potential of acting as a cultural barometer for both the rural and roadside landscape. Despite the aforementioned scholarship surrounding built elements found separately in these landscapes, little to no research exists to support the roadside farmstand as embodying the culture of both.

#### CHAPTER 3

#### THE INTELLECUAL RECORD

The field of cultural landscape studies investigates how people use everyday space, such as buildings, rooms, streets, fields, or yards, to establish their identity, articulate their social relationships, and derive cultural meaning (Groth 1997, 1). Many in the field attribute the genesis of this discipline to John Brinckerhoff (J.B.) Jackson and his founding of the periodical *Landscape* in 1951 (Groth and Wilson 2003, 4). This magazine, for which Jackson served as editor until 1968, published articles by nascent observers of the landscape both from within and outside academia. Currently the discipline maintains a diverse academic membership that includes cultural geographers, environmental historians, journalists, planners, and landscape architects. Consequently it generates scholarship diverse in methodology. Researchers make use of archival data, oral interviews, photography, and scaled drawings. It is from this eclectic vantage point that this study begins its examination of the roadside farmstand.

Roadside farmstands are those elements in the cultural landscape that sit at the juncture of rural and roadside America. They rest at the intersection point of two different but equally powerful images associated with this nation: the family farm and the highway. Despite a dearth of literature on the rural and roadside landscapes of America, the intellectual record shows that little has been written on the roadside farmstand as a cultural resource.

In this chapter I review the literature written on comparable cultural resources in rural and roadside landscapes. These sources all come from within the discipline of cultural landscape studies. They all loosely share the same objective of attempting to understand the culture

reflected in a particular place. Where they differ is in the approach from which they analyze the cultural resource in question, the corresponding methods they employ in taking this approach, and the findings that they reach. I have organized these references into a rough typology based upon these analytical approaches: contextual, process, formal, and functional. These different approaches determine the way in which an element in the landscape can be understood. I argue that all four approaches provide valid methods for the study of the roadside farmstand.

#### Context

Viewers perceive elements in both the rural and roadside landscape as symbols of culture through context visualization. Methods for distilling these image-based meanings characterize the *contextual* approach to cultural landscape studies. Linda Dahl, Tracy Stegner and Whitney Talcott attempt to cut a cultural cross-section of North Carolina in their article "Highway 64, in Postcards" (1978). Their objective is to frame the contemporary vernacular mix exhibited in landscape photographs by using a principle east-west federal highway as a sampling device. This study provides a broad examination of historical and popular landmarks in their context along a federal highway. Employing photography, pencil sketches of roadside views and archival data, this team of landscape architecture students is able to amass a photo album representative of the state's roadside landscape. Their methods focus the analysis on those cultural resources that are current or still standing. Views of the various resources, which range from mountain streams to barbecue joints, also generate discussion on the meaning of roadside landmarks as symbols.

Flynn and Stankus (1978) examine the North Carolina tobacco barn in photographs with the aim of understanding how it behaves as a symbol in the landscape. These authors argue that these structures conjure up a host of qualities and affections in the minds of even casual viewers unknowledgeable of the methods behind tobacco curing (113). From an examination of multiple images of sets of tobacco barns taken from multiple vantage points, the authors conclude that it is possible for one barn to have multiple meanings when placed in a different context. Whether standing alone or clustered in a group of barns, the authors argue that different unconscious images arise from scenes of barns depending upon their surroundings. Since tobacco barns are stand-alone structures that fulfill no immediate human function they often appear to the unknowing viewer as generic manipulated forms. This detachment from function that the casual viewer possesses gives the barn a sculptural rather than architectural quality. The authors do acknowledge that this contextual approach to landscape is fraught with biases. Apprehension of cultural resources is biased by the point of view as well as the knowledge a viewer possesses.

This approach to landscape analysis provides insight into the symbolism and cultural identity attached to elements in the built environment. By examining cultural resources solely through photograph or image, their implicit visual characteristics become the primary data. For a resource so often seen from the windows of swiftly moving automobiles, a study of context is perhaps appropriate. How are farmstands perceived within the greater rural and roadside landscapes of their region? How are farmstands perceived differently depending upon point of reference? These are questions for later analysis.

#### **Process**

To analyze a piece of the landscape as the embodiment of a cultural system or routine is to follow the process approach to cultural landscape analysis. Geographer and planner Robert Keber chooses such an approach in his study of folk house site section in Appalachia. Keber (1978) argues that the site selection process that went into the vernacular design of pre-1940 Appalachian homes constitutes a form of folk art. This study makes use of site surveying

techniques and field diagrams to distill the process by which nonprofessional designers sited their homes. Factors that contributed to the process include proximity to gravity flow spring water, protection from west and northwest winds, and location next to tillable land. In such an unselfconscious culture as was pre-1940 Appalachia, these factors contributed to a design process that sought equilibrium with the harsh environmental conditions of the place.

J.B. Jackson describes another process indicative of rural landscapes in his account of rural courthouse squares (1984). His study based upon countless instances of personal observation speaks of numerous courthouse squares melded into one archetypal vision filled with lawyers and townspeople scurrying about on court days, older gentlemen gathering along outdoor benches to wile away the afternoon, and farmers flocking into town on market Saturdays. These processes observed within such space not only reflect but also shape a culture particular to the rural South. Cultural norms such as a self-sufficiency and independence from urban life, a close sense of kinship among people, entrenched class and racial distinctions, and a respect for local history and the past, Jackson argues are tied to the courthouse square (81).

Jackson's article "Other-Directed Houses" (1997a), initially published in a 1952 issue of *Landscape*, is one of the earliest accounts by a cultural landscape scholar of the roadside landscape. Though Jackson's methods in this piece are no more elaborate than that of contemporary travel writers, his description transcends the specific language of form or function and describes an expected series of events common to these new places in the American landscape:

"I keep remembering the times when I have driven for hour after hour across an emptiness—desert or prairie—which was *not* blemished by highway stands, and how relieved and delighted I always was to finally see somewhere in the distance the jumble of billboards and gas pumps and jerry-built houses. Tourist spots or not, these were very welcome sights, and even the commands to eat, come as you are, gas up, get free ice water and stickers had a comforting effect. Common report has it that the people get as

much of your money as they can. I have rarely found that to be the case; they usually had a friendliness and willingness to help which somehow came with their job. The gaudier the layout, the nicer it seemed, and its impact on the surrounding landscape bothered me not at all" (186).

Subsequent scholars of the roadside have followed Jackson's lead in describing the processes that define culture along this linear landscape. In his work *Close-up* (1973), journalist Grady Clay examines the evolution and morphology of the total roadside from its primitive roots as path to its climax as an *interchange zone*. In the tradition of postmodern scholarship, Clay makes use of all available source material from interviews to archival data and hand-drawn maps to and personal observation. He characterizes the culture along the roadside by the constant coming and going of traffic, the rapid turnover of population, and the dealing and haggling behind rapid transactions—all processes he groups under the term *automobility* (87-88). Strips, a highly evolved species in the evolution of the roadside, attain an identity of their own when they stop serving as simply a connector between two places but become a destination within a regional network. Examples cited are the "Hungry Mile" in Norman, Oklahoma known for its endless string of eating establishments and "Airline Highway" between New Orleans and its airport, a market for swamp buggies and oil drillers' equipment (101).

Historian Keith Sculle examines an all but lost chain of motels to explain the historical process of modernization in the American roadside landscape (1990a). The process of modernization is defined as a movement towards a way of life that resulted in post-World War II America from mass affluence and technological innovation. On the roadside, modernization ironically led to a desire for homogenization and standardization among business operators and a desire for the unexpected and unique among tourists. In this process, roadside consumers developed antimodern desires in the types of vacations they took yet modern tendencies in the service they demanded (125). Sculle employs a heavy dose of oral history to uncover the story

of Frank Redford's Wigwam Village, a standardized chain of kitschy tepee-laden auto camps. Sculle champions the use of oral history as a systematic compliment to the abstract analysis of cultural process. In this study, guided interviews with motel chain employees prove useful in illuminating themes of hard work, business partnership, and managerial style (1990b).

The roadside team of geographer John Jakle and Sculle confront the cultural process exhibited by a distinct roadside building type with their work *The Gas Station in America* (1994). Their objective in this study is to show how roadside culture is reflected in the process of *place-product-packaging*. They define place-product-packaging as the networking of look-alike places defining trade territories, all supported through coordinated advertising (1). Gas stations, hotels, and fast food chains compete for consumers by engineering complete environments that act as corporate calling cards. Jakle and Sculle describe a roadside in which experience and form are calibrated to serve as marketing tools. This extensive study makes use of corporate archival data, trade publications, contemporary photography and architectural documents to make its case that the changing forms and functions of the roadside are tied to a single process.

In sum, the process approach to cultural landscape study leads to findings about the cultural systems that govern landscapes. To analyze process is to not only view the traits that characterize a landscape but the factors that contribute to its formation and reformation over time. This approach demands methods such as personal observation or oral history that can explain change over time. It is well suited to cultural resources in dynamic landscapes such as the rural and roadside.

#### Form

Analysis of strictly the architectonic form present in a cultural resource characterizes the *formal* approach to cultural landscape study. The cultural geographer Fred Kniffen (1936; 1965)

and later his pupil Henry Glassie (1975) pioneered the methodology for determining patterns of geographical migration and stylistic change from the architectural patterns of traditional folk housing. Building form in this approach is seen as cultural spoor (Lewis 1975). Swaim's study of folk housing in North Carolina (1978) examines how the formal product of early housing in the state speaks to a folk tradition. Like many buildings in the rural landscape, these houses are not the product of choice but tradition. Swaim employs floor plan diagrams and photographs of case studies to show how forms within common housing reflect the mindset of the people who built them. The structures read as an expression of early pioneer identity, European tradition, and cultural drift.

In addition to their contextual analysis, Flynn and Stankus (1978) also discuss the forms that distinguish the Carolina tobacco barn. The architects' objective is to understand how variance in the formal language exhibited by tobacco barns results in varied meanings. As with the contextual approach, their interest is in the image of the tobacco barn in the minds of casual viewers. Using elevation diagrams, the authors create a typology of Tar Heel tobacco barns that roughly coincides with geographic distribution by county. Tobacco barns consist of three parts: roof, shaft, and shed. The authors argue that these easily changeable forms greatly affect the perceived nature of the barn endowing it with potentially *shabby*, *fearsome*, or *monumental* personality (114).

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenhour examine the form of the complex, if not cacophonous, Las Vegas strip in their work *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977). They argue that in an increasingly complex and contradictory roadside landscape, structures cannot rely on the subtle expression of a minimalist or modern architecture but must speak directly through an *architecture parlante* (9). Through a montage of photographs and

architectural drawings, the authors distill a formal roadside design language dominated by the sign. With a battery of casino case studies, they present ways in which signs subvert structure along the strip: buildings are set farther back and signs are placed at the curb; profiles of buildings are designed to be more elaborate than facades; large decorative signs cover small concrete block structures. The authors directly advocate a new language for commercial architecture based off of this new vernacular.

As prescriptive data, the literature coming from agricultural extension agencies and country living magazines provides direct insight on the formal patterns of farmstands. In their recommendations to farmers and growers, the articles de-emphasize the form of the actual farmstand structure for the sake of the signage and site. The idea is that such a structure does not have to be stately or even permanent, just up and running in order to conduct the business at hand. Converting barn wagons (Lee, 1994, p. 40) and simply setting planks upon sawhorses (Garrison, 1992, p. 30) are both methods mentioned. While having a clean and attractive place is important, being noticed by drivers is paramount. Careful consideration is placed on all levels of signage from how far apart to place signs along the highway to how large letters must be so as to be readable from the road (Lee, 1994, p. 41). Eye-catchers such as totem poles are suggested (Garrison, 1992, p. 30), as is a marketable farm logo that can be stuck on t-shirts, bumper stickers, or coffee mugs (Stapleton, 2002, p. 10). Location is also critical to the success of a farmstand. Authors discuss site in terms of road types, parking, and proximity to farmland. It is understood that a farmstand requires a well-traveled road, perhaps connecting shopping and residential areas, but nothing as busy as a turnpike. People need to be able to easily pull off the road. It is suggested that one locate on the side of the road that the evening going-home traffic

follows (Lee, 1994, p. 40). Though this literature is written not from an analytical, but rather a prescriptive viewpoint, it provides data that can be applied to the case studies in this research.

Studies that employ a formal approach focus on the geographic distribution and material patterns exhibited over a broad sample of structures. This approach is generally applied to singular structures and not sites or landscapes. It favors static artifacts that can be assessed in a single moment in time. It typically yields typologies of building form, patterns of design vocabulary, and interpretations of cultural identity rooted in form. Roadside farmstands experience cultural influence from two sources of different but distinct formal languages: the traditional farm and popular highway attraction. Analysis of the specific forms in farmstand design may yield an understanding of how these cultural forces come together.

#### **Function**

The final approach mentioned in this review of landscape literature is the functional. This approach seeks to understand landscapes as places that play host to a given set of actions or rituals. By examining the functions inherent in a landscape, it is possible to determine the cultural roles a place may or may not play.

Bob Janiskee's study of South Carolina rural festivals seeks to understand the cultural and economic function these phenomena serve in small communities. His aim is to apply such knowledge towards a more scientific management of these events. He employs a broad selection of source material from promotional literature to personal interviews with festival organizers. Janiskee argues that such events bring together numerous functions in time and space to one place. Festivals serve as community fundraisers, tourist attractions, markers of local identity and ritual, as well as something to do for nearby rural residents.

Paul Haynes' exploration of North Carolina county courthouse squares discusses symbol and tradition embedded in the rural landscape of the South. In predominantly rural counties the courthouse square supports multiple civic and commercial functions. In addition it may be the only planned or professionally designed space in the county. His study looks at five case studies from across the state and makes use of architectural plans and photographs. He argues that these spaces embody notions of community and authority for individuals in the rural landscape. The courthouse square is the seat of judicial authority, commercial activity, and community gathering. These functions dictate form and culture on site.

In his article "Other-Directed Houses" (1997a), J.B. Jackson addresses the then-new forms of the American roadside in functional terms. His observation speaks to how roadside structures are no longer the expression of a practical or working lifestyle but the embodiment of a flamboyant consumer-driven vacation culture. This *other-directed architecture* is characterized by flashiness, use of lights and signs, and a total absence of domesticity or the common (190-192). Jackson observes that vacationers want something they cannot get at home and the forms of this new landscape cater to that desire.

The lay articles written for farmstand proprietors focus on the economic and cultural functions that farmstands serve on rural roadsides. The farmstand is a form of direct marketing and one of the only ways growers can receive quick cash on their sales. Farmstands not only serve the farmer as an outlet for excess product, but can also serve the community as a specialty farm-fresh market (Stapleton, 2002, p. 10). It is the cultural function that the authors stress. It is this function that sets the farmstand apart from any similar establishment. They can be run as community-based businesses in which multiple growers display and sell their goods under one roof (Garrison, 1992, p. 31). They provide a connection to the past in the way they operate

seasonally and are typically non-franchised and family-owned (32). They offer a connection to the rural landscape on the sides of hectic roads. And with the addition of tours, workshops, and value-added goods such as homemade ice cream or hot-boiled peanuts, they function as spots for recreation (Stapleton, 2002, p. 10).

An understanding of function is central in the decision-making process planners and designers use in shaping and reshaping the cultural landscape. These studies indicate the broad range of findings that functional analysis of a landscape can yield. This approach demands specialized knowledge of the cultural interactions that occur within a place. Successful studies make use of multiple sources of data including ethnographic. An element on the edge of two different landscape types such as the roadside farmstand is likely to serve multiple functions.

#### A Modified Method

Any honest academic work exists in concert with current scholarship from within the field. This work is no different. This cultural assessment of the roadside farmstand builds upon the intellectual record referenced in the literature review. The four approaches I have thus far aid out serve as a framework for structuring my analysis. Moreover they provide the lines of inquiry and methods necessary for a holistic study of this rural roadside cultural resource. My study builds on each approach by applying it directly to the roadside farmstand.

The contextual approach to cultural landscapes examines the symbolism, identity, and meaning of a particular cultural resource as a form in the landscape. It relies not on specialized knowledge of the resource itself, only images of the resource in its broader surroundings. Hundreds and thousands of motorists experience the roadside farmstand from the road and nothing more yet it remains a ubiquitous and recognizable form. Using site photographs of my case studies, I examine what makes roadside farmstands such recognizable places in the

landscape. Through multiple images taken from one farmstand site, I propose how perceptions of these places can change depending upon a visitor's visual point of reference. Lastly, through a photographic survey of the roadsides of the region, I compare and contrast visual meanings of the farmstand sites and surrounding roadside landscapes.

The design, operation, and history of these roadside farmstands reflect multiple cultural processes. This approach studies the systems that both characterize and constitute the essence of a cultural resource. The literature suggests that both rural and roadside landscapes are prone to systemic behavior. Farmstands exist in both landscapes. Using data gathered in photographs, measured drawings, and oral interviews, I outline the processes reflected in these places.

Analysis of form in a cultural resource can provide insight into the identity and values of the form-makers. Though writers have examined the structural and formal patterns in vernacular rural structures and roadside environments, I found no documentation detailing form in farmstands. Formal analysis of cultural landscapes can be problematic as they are prone to large-scale change over time. I make use of measured drawings of site, floor plan, and elevation to distill the formal patterns endemic to these four case studies.

These farmstands indeed do more than just market produce on the side of the road. The functional approach to cultural landscape study examines the functions a landscape serves to understand the cultural meaning of that landscape. Using data collected in oral interviews, I extract the cultural role that these places fill in their rural roadside setting.

I focus my study of the roadside farmstand through four case studies in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. The means for selection of these cases I will detail in the next chapter devoted to the description of Ellerbe and these places. Suffice it to say, all four cases sit along a

10-mile stretch of U.S Highway 220, are locally owned and operated, and conform to the definition provided by the prescriptive literature.

The precise methods I employed to assemble the photographic imagery necessary to document contextual and process aspects of these farmstands are as follows. Borrowing a systematic method of photographic sampling from the social sciences (Prosser and Schwartz 1998), I took photographs of the roadside landscape along the 10 miles of U.S. 220 that encompasses all four farmstand locations. At 1/2-mile intervals, I took a 180-degree panoramic photograph of each roadside view. These 40 images comprise a visual sample of the roadsides of this region that is necessary for a proper contextual study of the farmstand. They are included in their entirety in Appendix A. Borrowing from a photographic documentary technique that emphasizes pictorial narrative (Collier and Collier 1986; Keller 1986) I took extensive photographs of each farmstand site. I used a photographic script to guide my shooting at each farmstand, a copy of which I have included in Appendix B.

I have documented each of the four case studies in scaled drawings for the sake of process and formal analysis. These scaled drawings include a site plan, floor plan, and side elevations for each farmstand. I define farmstand site by the tax parcel or parcels upon which the farmstand and its complex of buildings sit. The floor plans include only the principle farmstand structure, the produce stand, and its immediate auxiliary buildings. Elevations are drawn from the floor plans. All drawings were initially sketched and measured in the field using a 25' measuring tape and 1000' measuring wheel. In all cases, I used a tax map provided me by the Richmond County Department of Planning and Geographic Information Services as a base map for site plan drawings. In the cases of North State Orchard and David's Produce and Plant Farm, I used aerial photographic imagery provided by the county in addition to the tax map as an aid in

rendering the site plans. All drawings were redrafted to scale with pencil on vellum paper. Site plans are scaled at 1"=100'=0". Floor plans and elevations are scaled at 1/8"=1'-0". The drawings are included in their entirety in Appendix C.

Lastly, I have collected ethnographic data pertaining to the process and functional aspects of each case study through oral interviews. I tape recorded one interview with the proprietor or proprietors of each case study. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were structured as loose conversations. For the purposes of focusing these discussions, I prepared a rough interview guide to use at each farmstand. I have included this document in Appendix D. Each interview was transcribed then coded for data pertaining to process and function using a method prescribed for qualitative observation and analysis (Lofland and Lofland 1995).

In order to provide a broad cultural survey of this heretofore ignored element in the American scene, I make use of all four approaches found in the literature. My intent is not to create a universal description of the American roadside farmstand but rather, in the postmodern tradition, to offer an outline of the possible meanings, processes, forms and functions that surround these elements in the vernacular landscape. As planners and designers make decisions affecting the conservation and reformation of this vernacular landscapes, such an outline is perhaps a timely addition to the already rich intellectual dialogue.

#### **CHAPTER 4**

#### ELLERBE AND ITS OFFERINGS

Ellerbe, North Carolina was completely unknown to me before this research began. As with other places that mark an intense period of learning in my life, I have begun to wonder how I ever lived not knowing this town. The history and cultural identity of Ellerbe and the Sandhills region make this location a desirable place for a study of the roadside farmstand. In the first half of his chapter I provide an environmental and cultural history of Ellerbe and the Sandhills region. In the later half I detail my selection method for choosing the four case studies used in the research and give thumbnail descriptions of each.

Ellerbe sits at the geographic center of Richmond County, a county situated in central North Carolina on the border with South Carolina. This region of sandy soils drained by the Pee Dee River, is better known in both Carolinas as the Sandhills (see Fig. 4.1). Running north to south through the south-central part of North Carolina, these rolling sandy hillocks are all that remain from a sandy shore that once separated the primordial sea from the mighty Uwharrie Mountains. The Uwharrie Range, one of the oldest mountain systems in North America still exists but only in name. Rivers such as the Pee Dee long ago eroded these mountains down to rolling hills leaving sand deposits as the bulk of the soil mixture remaining in Richmond County. The soil in this region drains well but is low in nutrient content and supports a native plant community of long-leaf pine and blackjack oak. Supposedly, it was "Way Down Upon the Pee Dee Ribber" that Stephen Foster entitled his famous song in 1851. Later on, after looking at a map of Florida, Foster changed the name of the tune to "Way Down Upon the Swanee River" to

better fit his lyrics. He sold the song for \$15, it became immortal, and the Sandhills remain mired in anonymity (Huneycutt 1976, 2-3).

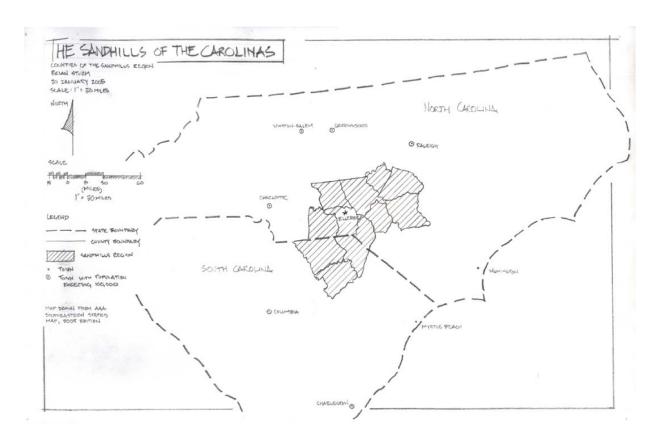


Figure 4.1: The Sandhills of the Carolinas. Source: AAA 2005, Southeastern States Map.

Human settlement of the area now Richmond County began no later than 10,000 years ago. Settlement by European immigrants began in the 1730s by second-generation homesteaders from the Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, as well as from South Carolina. The town of Ellerbe lies near the junction of Mountain Creek and the Pee Dee River. Historically, this junction marked the upper most navigable point on the river's course north from Georgetown, South Carolina (Florance 1995, 24). In 1790 Ellerbe, then known as Hurricane, was already the

agricultural center of Richmond County (Huneycutt 1976, pp. 202-3) with a population of 913. The 2000 Census recorded the population at 1,021.

Ellerbe has a history of being a kind of retreat, a place for rest and repose as well as celebration. In 1793, the town was incorporated as "Fairgrounds" to promote the region's annual Scottish Fair. This event, held annually until around 1840, attracted hundreds of local descendents of Highlanders who would come to play games, race horses, play bagpipes, dance, drink, and fight over women. In 1850, Colonel W.T. Ellerbe of Marlboro County, South Carolina acquired 1,077 acres of land that included mineral springs and former fairgrounds (Huneycutt 1976, 203-204). Ellerbe invited his friends from "Up North" to enjoy the temperate climate and salubrious waters of the mineral springs (Florance 1995, 180). The site became a summer Mecca for the wealthy planters of the South Carolina lowlands who came "to escape the disease and drink of the healing waters that reportedly healed asthma, soothed their rheumatic pains, and rejuvenated their spirits" (Huneycutt 1976, 208). In 1906, a local entrepreneur who had previously purchased the property from the Ellerbe family opened a hotel at the springs (Cadieu 1995, 14), (see Fig. 4.2). The Ellerbe Springs Inn still stands and through the early part of the 20th century was the site of numerous Independence Day celebrations, political rallies, musical performances, and hoedowns (Florance 1995, 180).

The economy in Ellerbe is and has always been centered on agriculture. Both the tourism industry and the peach industry precipitated a land boom in the late nineteenth-century that brought hundreds of wealthy northerners down to the Sandhills to try their hand at the orchard business. The cultural renaissance brought about by the influx of capital and educated newcomers is captured in the novels *Sand in My Shoes* (Ripley 1931) and *Up From Mt. Misery* (Florance 1990). These works of historical fiction explore the cultural and environmental

changes wrought on the land in the first decades of the twentieth century. Through the first half of the century, the primary cash crops in Richmond County and the Sandhills region were tobacco and peaches. By the 1980s, late spring frosts and worn-out soils were cutting into peach growers' revenues and government policy was hurting the tobacco industry. Since the 1950s, commercial peach and tobacco growers in the region had supplemented their crop with a variety of mixed produce (Brach 2005; DeWitt 2005). As peaches and tobacco became less viable uses of acreage, mixed vegetables became a bigger regional crop. The Sandhills are an ideal region for growing almost any crop adapted to well-drained soils and mixed vegetables, anything from sweet potatoes to zucchini to watermelons, qualify. The monument-style signs that welcome drivers into Ellerbe along U.S. 220, in fact, depict such produce surrounding the name of the town (see Fig. 4.3).



Figure 4.2: The spring at Ellerbe Springs Inn, cir. 1908. Source: Cadieu 1995, 36.



Figure 4.3: Ellerbe welcome sign on northbound U.S. 220.

Farmstands have been a roadside feature in Ellerbe for longer than most residents can remember. People have been farming produce since the days of the peach and the drive-by consumer has been around nearly as long. Nearly all of the town can be seen from U.S. Highway 220. This two-lane road, which constitutes the spine of this tiny town, runs from the border of New York and Pennsylvania down to the border between the Carolinas at which point it dead ends into U.S. Highway 1 (see Fig. 4.4). In a migration reminiscent of that of the first settlers of the Sandhills, thousands of Pennsylvanians, West Virginians, and Virginians travel this road throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Farmland is no longer the object of the quest, but instead beachfront property. Traffic is heavy on the weekends but brisk all season long as motorists from points north travel to the beaches of North and South Carolina. There are no federal interstates that directly access the coastal Carolinas.

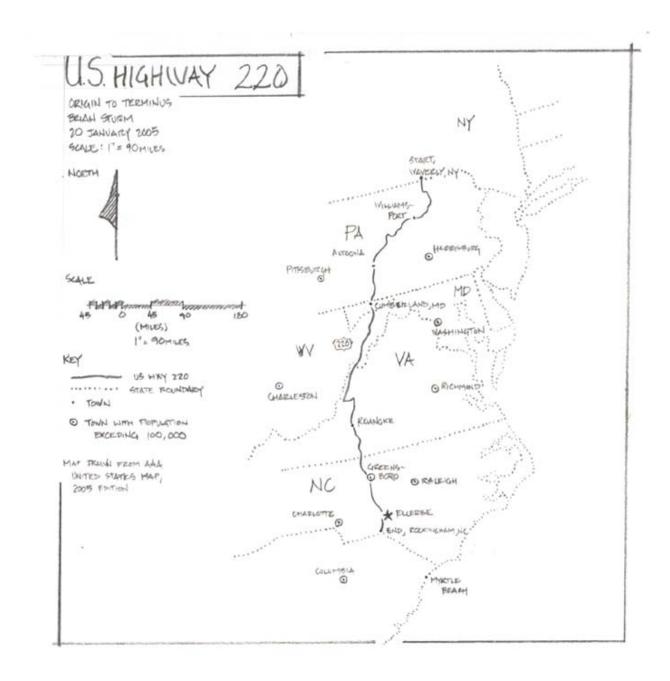


Figure 3.4: U.S. Highway 220. Source: AAA 2005, United States Map.

Not quite yet. Interstates 73 and 74 are the two roads that will change this highway anomaly in the next decade. Introduced into legislation in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (AARoads.com), this pair of interstates would provide a viaduct between the Great Lakes, Ohio River valley, and "Grand Strand" of beaches in South Carolina

(see Fig. 4.5). Interstate 73, a completely new road, will run from the Canadian border at Sault Saint Marie, Michigan to Georgetown, South Carolina. Interstate 74, which currently runs from the Quad Cities to Cincinnati, will extend southeast to Myrtle Beach. Both roads will share the same roadbed through the heart of North Carolina down into the Sandhills (see Fig. 4.6). That roadbed will be what is now U.S. 220. Already, the segment of U.S. 220 between Greensboro, North Carolina and Candor, two towns north of Ellerbe, has been converted into the limited-access interstate. In 2006, a new bypass around the town of Ellerbe will open, allowing the interstates to continue south to Rockingham and onward toward the beaches (see Fig. 4.7).

This combination of a growing tourist corridor, an agriculturally centered economy, and an historical legacy of leisure make Ellerbe an ideal laboratory for the cultural assessment of the roadside farmstand. If I could have handpicked the town in which to perform this study, it would have been Ellerbe. However, I was well into the literature review of this study and pondering how on earth I would assemble a set of viable case studies, when a friend of mine introduced me to this town then unknown to me. His family connection to Carter Farms led me to my first case study, Hill's Horn of Plenty. This family connection was crucial to the germination of this study, as methods such as oral interviewing require a considerable level of comfort and trust between researcher and subject. Contacts and introductions to other area farmstand proprietors soon followed. After several visits to the town, I had picked my four cases that would ultimately yield the primary data for this study.

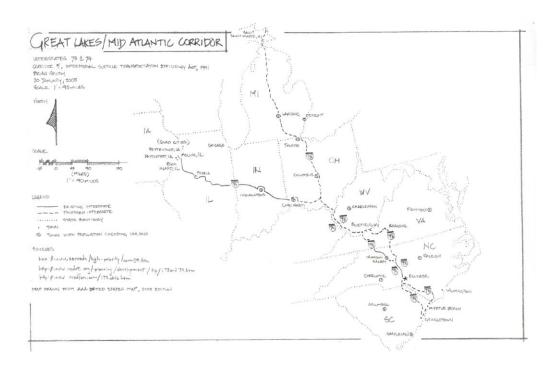


Figure 4.5: Great Lakes/Mid Atlantic Corridor. Source: AAA 2005, United States Map; AARoads.com; North Carolina Department of Transportation; Roadfan.com.

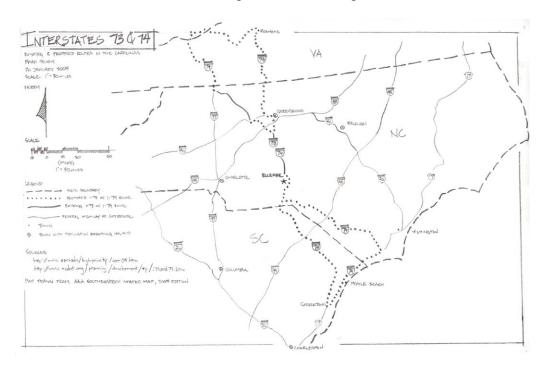


Figure 3.6: Interstates 73 & 74. Source: AAA 2005, Southeastern States Map; AARoads.com; North Carolina Department of Transportation.

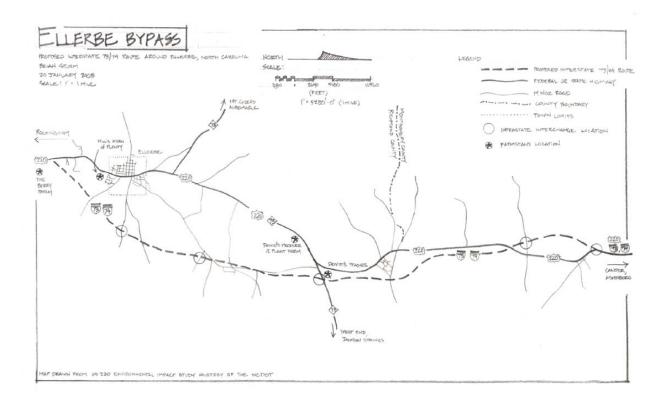


Figure 3.7: Ellerbe Bypass. Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Hill's Horn of Plenty, the Berry Patch, David's Produce and Plant Farm, and North State Orchards are not the only farmstands in town. They are the first four with which I was able to establish contact, through the snowballing effect of mutual acquaintances. Over successive introductory visits to town, I choose to pursue these four sites as case studies for their distinguishing characteristics. Since the literature in cultural landscape studies does not provide a typology of the roadside farmstand or even a precise definition, I chose these cases based on evidence found in the field. I think of each of these farmstands as one character in an alphabet. Taken apart, they do not define farmstand types but, rather, as a group help to spell out a broad definition of the Southern roadside farmstand.

## Hill's Horn of Plenty

Hill Carter opened his roadside produce stand on U.S. 220 just south of the Ellerbe town limits in 1963. It was the first piece of Carter's produce operation that would evolve from a small truck farm business wholesaling to local grocers to a grower with interstate distribution. Today, Carter Farms employs approximately 60 people in the growing and packing of mixed produce that includes among other crops tomatoes, watermelon, squash, and sweet corn (DeMuth, 2004).

Getting into the produce business was originally a means of diversification for Carter. He began his farming career as a tobacco grower and bookkeeper for the American Tobacco Company. But, as his daughter Jennifer Brach puts it, "being a professional tobacco person he saw the handwriting on the wall." Tobacco, like the peach before it, would see a decline in the Sandhills in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. Hill Carter realized quickly after opening his roadside stand that the produce market held a bigger appetite than mere roadside retailing would satisfy. Brach remembers Sunday mornings when she'd ride in the back of her daddy's pickup truck picking up crates behind Winn-Dixie grocery stores and going back to their farm and filling them with squash. Their first packinghouse was nothing more than a flatbed truck with a big plastic vat resting on it with its top sawed off.

To meet a growing demand for mixed produce, Carter moved his packinghouse to the site his roadside stand already occupied. Ironically, be built the packinghouse on the concrete pad left from the remains of a burnt tobacco warehouse. Today Carter Farms sells mixed produce to retail and wholesale buyers. Hill's son Julian manages the wholesale operation and Brach manages the farmstand.

Open from May to August, Hill's Horn of Plenty is known for its sweet corn. It is the oldest continuously running stand in town. The farmstand sits on two tax parcels owned by the Carter family (see Fig. 4.8). It is comprised of the following structures: the produce stand, a linear market over 100 feet in length that fronts U.S. 220; a bathroom shelter just to the north of the stand; a structure that once housed the now out-of-business J & M Auto Wrecker Service; and the 42,500 square foot packinghouse that includes tobacco barns, two coolers and an office.

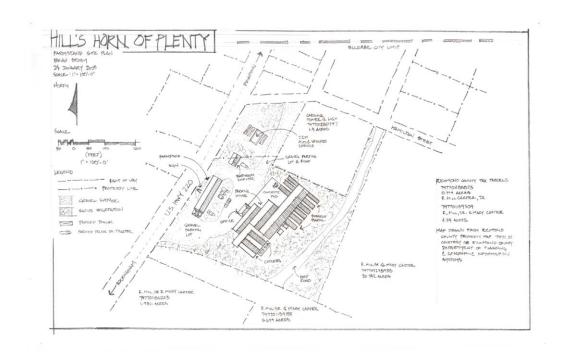


Figure 4.8: Site Plan for Hill's Horn of Plenty

# The Berry Patch

The Berry Patch has been open as a farmstand for two years and is the youngest farmstand in town. Owner and operator Lee Berry has grown strawberries for nine years and ran a pick-your-own farm for the first seven. Prior to farming his own property, he worked for two of the other growers featured in the study. In the spring of 2003, he opened his farmstand 4

miles south of Ellerbe on U.S. 220 to retail his strawberries as well as other mixed produce and homemade ice cream.

Berry began growing his own produce for wholesale trade on land purchased from his parents. When he acquired an adjacent parcel of land with U.S. 220 frontage, he built his farmstand. The Berry Patch is the only farmstand amongst the case studies that sits on a section of four-lane divided highway. A turn-around in the grassy median just south of Berry's parcel allows both northbound and southbound motorists on U.S. 220 to access his site. The Berry Patch is also the only case study that will not be bypassed in the immediate future by Interstates 73/74 (see Fig. 4.7). The future Ellerbe bypass will intersect the existing four lanes of U.S. 220 just north of the farmstand. Not until the next phase of expansion, projected for 2010, will this stretch of road be converted into a limited access interstate.

The Berry Patch sits on a 5.5-acre site that backs up on a larger parcel of land farmed by Berry (see Fig. 4.9). The farmstand includes the following structures: a produce stand that was once the carport on his parents home; a packing shed; a cooler; two hot houses in which Berry grows tomatoes; and a 500-square foot concession stand built in the form of a giant strawberry (see Fig. 4.10). Billboards for his establishment beckon motorists to come visit the largest strawberry in the world. Berry operates his produce stand from March until December and keeps the concession stand open year round. He deals almost exclusively in retail trade.

### **David's Produce and Plant Farm**

By the time you see the farmstand that belongs to David and Jackie Sherrill, you have driven past acres of vegetable fields and half a dozen colorful signs pushing cabbage, peaches, sweet potatoes, and other fresh goods. The Sherrills opened their farmstand on family farmland in 1982 after they had enough of selling sweet potatoes out of a pickup truck under a tree.

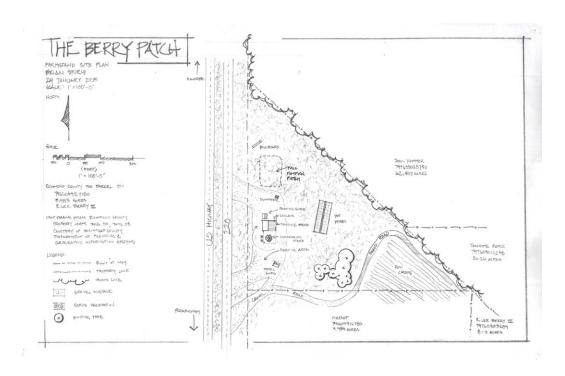


Figure 4.9: Site Plan for the Berry Patch



Figure 4.10: Concessions at the Berry Patch.

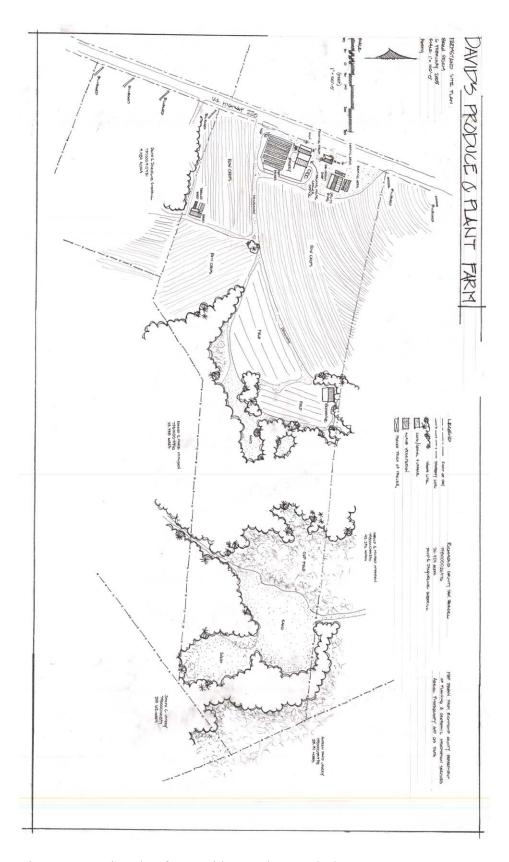


Figure 4.11: Site Plan for David's Produce and Plant Farm

David grew up in a farming not far from Ellerbe in Richmond County. The farmstand he and Jackie built sits on land that has been in ownership by David's maternal family the McFaydens for at least five generations. McFaydens or Sherrills own three of the five lots surrounding the one owned by David and Jackie. A visitor to the farmstand can look out over no less than 30 acres of shared farmland fronting U.S. 220. David and Jackie built the original structure of their farmstand from wood disassembled from a chicken house.

Today their stand sells produce, nursery-grown plants, and ice cream from March to December and generates the greatest retail revenue of any of the case studies. Of the 36 acres on which the farmstand sits, slightly over half are devoted to agriculture (see Fig. 4.11). The farmstand includes the following interrelated structures: the produce stand and attached packinghouse, cooler, and office; a retail nursery with display areas and 6 hot houses; and ice cream shop; a utility shed; a small tobacco barn; and the residence that is home to David and Jackie Sherrill's family.

### **North State Orchard**

Six miles north of Ellerbe at the junction of U.S 220 and N.C. 73 rests a collection of vacant structures, among them North State Orchard's peach stand. For years this crossroads, known as "DeWitt Junction," was the headquarters for DeWitt Trucking, a multi-million-dollar business that grew and hauled mixed produce across the nation. Lindsay Guy (L.G.) DeWitt began his trucking business in Ellerbe in 1935. What started with as a single truck hauling produce along the east coast grew by the 1980s to include 250 tractors and 300 trailers (Wireman, et al. 1998, 34). L.G. DeWitt expanded his trucking business to include the growing of produce. Eventually he would own orchards in five states. In North Carolina alone, he owned over 7,000 acres of land including the largest peach orchard in the state, North State Orchard.

The North State Orchard farmstand has stood on this 23.5-acre site since 1952 (DeWitt 2005) (see Fig. 4.12).

In the early 1980s, U.S. 220 was realigned and the DeWitt's had to move their roadside market. Edward DeWitt, nephew of L.G., built the present incarnation of the stand in 1984. He managed that roadside stand in addition to another DeWitt market on U.S. Highway 54 in Lilesville, North Carolina at Ruby Orchards. L.G. DeWitt passed away in 1990 and since then the family has largely divested their landholdings. The trucking operation has ceased. Ed DeWitt closed the farmstand for good at the end of the 2003 season.

Today, the farmstand site includes just one occupied building. The office for DeWitt Trucking still stands on the corner of U.S. 220 and N.C. 73 and is staffed by one secretary during the day. Four structures stand vacant including the produce stand and ice cream shop. The packinghouse foundation still remains but the packinghouse itself is gone. Three other buildings that show up in a 1994 aerial image provided by the Richmond County Department of Planning and Geographic Information Systems have been completely razed.

With sufficient time and resources, each of these farmstands could produce enough material to constitute separate studies. By examining them together, I hope to create a more developed picture of the culture found in the rural and roadside landscapes of the South. Exploring these places and speaking with these people has been an education far greater than can be expressed in the next thirty pages.

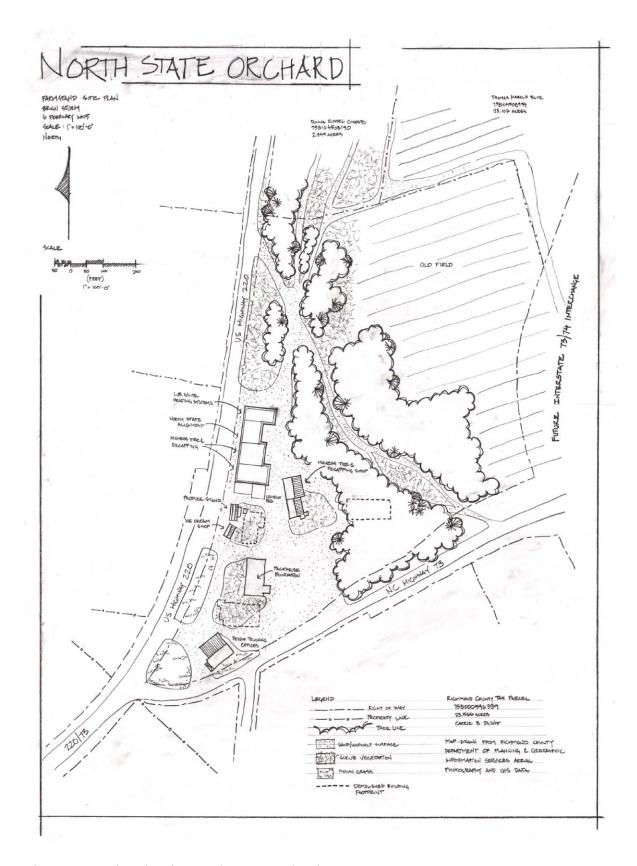


Figure 4.12: Site Plan for North State Orchard

### CHAPTER 5

### PASSING GLANCES FROM THE HIGHWAY

What makes a farmstand so recognizable on the roadside? What do they symbolize to the thousands that pass them daily? Do they mean something different to those that stop? Are they representative of their place? These are questions best answered from a contextual approach. In this chapter, I analyze the farmstand as an image from several different perspectives to highlight the visual elements that generate symbolic meaning. I go onto explain how these meanings can change depending upon visual point of view, and how they compare or contrast with the meanings generated in other images of the surrounding rural and roadside landscapes.

### Meaning from the Road

There are many possibilities for the visualization of these case studies. I have focused attention on those views typically experienced by the typical farmstand visitor –that being a view from the northbound lane of U.S. 220. It is along this road and in this direction that the majority of farmstand customers travel. I consider the four photographs chosen (see Figs. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4) to typify the visual experience of the motorist

Each of these images strikes a viewer with some vision of produce in the extreme. Previous work in landscape visualization has referred to human scale as the sense that the objects of a place are people-oriented (Jakle 1987, 76). These images each contain some farmstand product that has been scaled to human size. These over-sized proportions, advertised through sign and structure, give the idea that all one's produce desires will be bountifully satisfied at that particular nearby establishment.



Figure 5.1: South façade of the Berry Patch.



Figure 5.2: South end of Hill's Horn of Plenty



Figure 5.3: Southern approach to David's



Figure 5.4: Seeing North State Orchard from the south

The scenes in these photographs offer rich detail in imagery that contrasts with the surrounding wide, open spaces of the rural landscape. If only by contrast, farmstands symbolize excitement and intrigue because they provide much needed visual interest to motorists either unfamiliar with their rural surroundings or bored by its monotony. The marquee coupled with a giant strawberry startles the viewer of the Berry Patch. The sign and the litany of information they present at Hill's and David's beg for attention. The festive signs and canopies at Hill's help it stand out from its rural town setting. The off-kilter arrangement of the produce and concession stands at North State Orchards contrasts with the orderly and functional forms displayed by other buildings on this truck stop site. These details allow farmstands to reach out to motorists in the rural landscape.

Through personification, farmstands appear as sentinels on the landscape beckoning a viewer to tarry in their travel. Personification attaches human-like traits to an object in an image. This phenomenon is typically associated with the doors and windows of building facades. Structures have been shown to carry personified traits in their orientation as well. A tobacco barn may sit, squat, or huddle depending upon its placement in an image (Flynn and Stankus, 114). Farmstands suggest in word how they are visualized in the landscape. Hill's Horn of Plenty appears like hitchhiker on the side of the road with its sign posed as an outstretched thumb. The Berry Patch plays the part of the jolly fat man waiting for a stranger's company. The now defunct North State Orchard stand looks every bit like sun-bleached skull of a farmstand that it is. Even the inanimate signs leading up to David's remind one of a brigade of sandwich board-wearing extras advertising the next great roadside spectacle.

Lastly, I suggest change as a possible theme in farmstand visualization. In the fleeting seconds a viewer spots a farmstand from their car, they see in that image a passage of the past

and present reflected in the farmstand. Whether it is the shadow created by the low-slung roof of Hill's or the verdant fields of produce leading up towards David's, farmstands are tied to daily and seasonal cycles. This sense of change recorded in these images is what ties farmstands to the harvest calendar in a viewer's mind. Also the dated look of many farmstands shows up in image through cues such as faded paint on a sign or sagging timbers on the building itself. The image of the North State Orchard farmstand clearly looks long-abandoned to the viewer of the given image even know it has only been shut down for one season. Motorists symbolize the farmstand, in among other ways, as a timeworn vestige of rural and roadside landscapes.

### What You See and What You Don't

As a roadside landmark, farmstands are often only seen from one or two points of reference. Most viewers are restricted to seeing only one profile before blowing by on the highway in search of the next point of visual interest. Is it possible that the meaning attached to this element in the landscape might change if viewers were afforded a second or third view? Previous scholarship (Flynn and Stankus 1978, 114) suggests that two identical items can carry two different meanings when placed in different context. I content this theory holds true in the case of roadside farmstands. Simply moving from side to side or front to back can alter perception.

To see the southern and northern exposures of David's Produce and Plant Farm is to view the light and dark halves of the moon all at once (see Figs. 4.5, 4.6). Since farmstands in Ellerbe live by the cycles of beach traffic, they orient their consumer-friendly profile, without exception, towards the south so as to catch northbound vacationers on their trip home. Distinctions between these two images clearly coincide with this economic imperative. The view from the northbound lane of U.S.220 offers a motorist serial rhythm in the gables of farmstand and iconic rhyme in

the various signs leading the eye towards the produce stand as a destination. Moreover, the elements in the image appear in human scale and inviting to the passing potential customer. The image from the southbound lane reflects a landscape out of proportion and uninviting to most people. The vast parking lot runs into large faceless structures, their shapes in no clear rhythmic relationship. By changing the context, meaning is altered.



Figure 4.5: Northbound view of David's

Casual visitors rarely see the backsides of farmstands for the practical reason that the structures are designed to serve a drive-up clientele. These images from the Berry Patch (see Figs. 4.7, 4.8) do nothing to argue against that notion. The frontal image of the farmstand provides hierarchy in the ascending displays of produce from floor to countertop, dimensional coordination rhyme amongst the numerous pumpkins, as well s vivifying detail in the quantity and types of produce. The view from the rear shows objects in a reversed hierarchy diminishing

the farmstand. There is neither rhyme nor a definitive style within the composition. This is not to say that the back-ends of farmstands do not offer visual interest. They simply do not offer the visual grammar exhibited up front that yields an ordered image.



Figure 4.6: Southbound view of David's.



Figure 4.7: Frontal view of the Berry Patch.



Figure 4.8: Rear view of the Berry Patch.

## **Surrounding Environs**

A comparison of farmstands images and other roadside scenes from Ellerbe shows how farmstands provide a level of detail and personification that set them apart from many scenes within their regional context. Whether or not these farmstands provide a more or less visually appealing image is not the question. What is at stake in this portion of the study is whether or not the symbols and meaning carried in farmstand imagery matches up with that seen in other images of the region. Are these farmstands of the place or out of place? For the sake of reader convenience I am including here only 4 of the 40 images collected for this portion of the study. For a look at the other photographs used in this visual survey of context, see Appendix A. For each photograph included in this chapter I examine its visual characteristics in comparison with those drawn from the scenes of farmstands in Figures 5.1-5.4. I include a locator map (see Fig. 5.9) showing the approximate locations of each of these views along U.S. 220.

The scene shown in Figure 5.10 elicits a set of meanings similar to those discussed earlier in connection to the case studies. A hierarchy of scale from street to holly shrub hedge to church to forest helps the viewer relate all parts of this scene by degrees. The combination of foreground clearing and background woods provides visual detail and the church building is an obvious focal point. Despite being devoid of windows the Sandy Level Primitive Baptist Church brings to mind a modest human image in its solitary stance. And the image conveys a sense of age and season in the weathered structure and naked trees.

The second example (see Fig. 5.11) does not share the same degree of detail and level of character as seen in the farmstand shots. It has significance in neither terms of humanity nor aesthetics. There is no human scale aspect to the image. The level of detail is minimal since the

rather cumbersome blue building pushes most other items into obscurity. There is no way to personify the image and little evidence of change.

For an image to be so different from a typical farmstand scene, Figure 5.12, shares several of the same visual features. From street to broomsedge to pines there is a hierarchy of scale that allows a person to feel at ease with the subject. Despite lacking a vista or any prospect, the texture within the image provides ample detail. And the range of healthy to dormant to dead vegetation creates a sense of change and time in the scene. However there is nothing beckoning a person in this scene. Like the tobacco barns in the Flynn and Stankus piece, these pine trees do not need people (116). The scene is more sculptural than architectural.

The scene in Figure 5.13 is as humanistic as any roadside image from the study. Clearly the farmstand and small rural town are of different places. A visitor can see among the doors

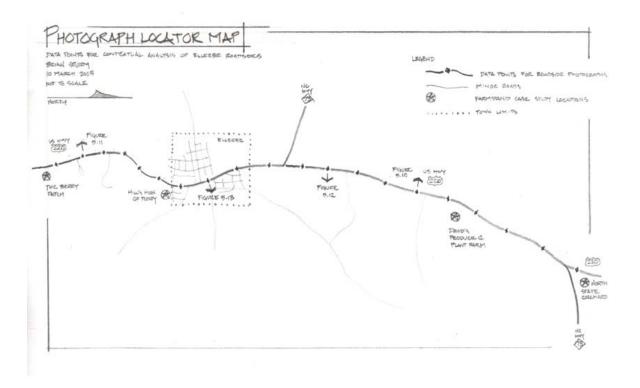


Figure 5.9: Photograph locator map for visual context study.



Figure 5.10: Sandy Level Baptist



Figure 5.11: Blue Warehouse



Figure 5.12: Broomsedge and Pine



Figure 5.13: Downtown Ellerbe

and windows of the numerous facades the reflection of human presence. The entire landscape is modified for human interaction. Detail is maximized through a combination of building material, color and sign. Due to the seamless character of this setting, however, evidence of change is minimal. Downtown Ellerbe appears a place trapped in a time warp, a condition that does not apply to the roadside farmstands.

To assess the meanings carried by these farmstands in comparison with that of their context is an attempt to assess their sense of place. Jakle writes that sense of place is not so much obtained from moving through a landscape as by stopping and watching (1987, 75). While that is exactly what I have done to write this chapter, ironically it is exactly what most viewers of this landscape do not do. These places are experienced for only fleeting moments. Even a photograph in all its temporality can be examined for too long.

It has been said that in our mobile society only tourists have an honest viewpoint on landscapes. Theirs is a vision based solely on the visual composition of space and not on the complex attitudes of someone immersed in the environment (Tuan 1974, 63). This fresh perspective on the landscape provides just one way of understanding cultural resources. In terms of the roadside, it is an appropriate approach.

### **CHAPTER 6**

### THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

How does the roadside farmstand work? Where does the produce come from? Where do the customers come from? How do they end up in the same place? The answers to these questions touch on multiple environmental, and economic, and cultural cycles evident on the farmstand landscape. Processes typical of both rural and roadside landscapes play out at roadside farmstands like a performance. Drawing from photographic data, scaled drawings, and oral interviews, this chapter examines the features of the farmstand landscape that reflect cultural systems.

# **Daily**

Through casual observation and rich narrative J.B. Jackson captures the daily processes particular to places on the open road (1997a) and open country (1984). He records the buzz of a drive-in restaurant on a busy weekend night or the languid leisure of a courthouse square on a summer afternoon. These repeated actions define the culture of these places and contribute to its perpetuation. Repeated actions and scenarios at these farmstands define a cultural landscape revolving around hard work. Features in the land that turn over on a daily basis are: the gravel-and-grass groundcover symbiosis, farm truck transhumance, and retail-wholesale exchange. They are systems endemic to these places in the landscape and speak to the nature of work valued by the folks associated with them.

Hill's Horn of Plenty features two forms of groundcover: gravel and scrub. You can drive over just about any part of the two lots that make up the site. Since traffic dominates the

site, there are few areas set aside strictly for grass or plantings of any sort. A mix of native and exotic grass species takes hold wherever it can for as long as it can. This seems to stabilize the sand and gravel until the space is needed again by cars, trucks or tractors. A visit to these places is not without the noise of gravel under the wheels and a small cloud of dust outside the window.

This gravel and grass symbiosis allows farmstand proprietors the ease of quick expansion. Parking lots are increased in an afternoon. There's no tree removal to fuss over when a new building is needed. Lee Berry's clear-cut parcel of mostly scrub vegetation allowed him to expand his business from a pick-your-own field to a retail stand in one winter. The gravel and scrub serve as temporary groundcover until the space is needed. To the outsider the landscapes may appear rough-hewn. To the proprietor they are diamonds in the rough.

At most farmstands a roaming herd of trucks seems to graze on the gravel and grass. Wherever there is not a building at Hill's, David's, or the Berry Patch, space is dominated by trucks, cars, and tractors. These vehicles on site tend to float from one spot to another depending upon when you visit. At Hill's the vehicles serve a complex of buildings on the farmstand site (see Fig. 6.1). At the Berry Patch they migrate between the fields, the hot houses, the produce stand, and the pig pin in the adjacent lot. This transhumance is a vital element to the landscape at each site. Bumping along gravel and sand roads, these trucks are the primary form of transport in this working system.

For the Hill's and North State, the addition of a wholesale business adds another system to these busy sites. Both farmstands are or were stocked each day with fruit from an adjacent packinghouse. Tourist visitors to Hill's retail stand share space with truck farmers who have come to buy wholesale. Jennifer Brach says that the business and hard work evident on site are

an expression of her family's values: "One characteristic that you can see just by driving up is everybody's real busy. We love hard work." The visibility of the packinghouse with its forklifts and tractor-trailers makes this working spirit of the place apparent (see Fig. 6.2). At the North State site, the packinghouse and produce stand shared a common labor force. Ed DeWitt borrowed employees on occasion from the packinghouse when business there was slow or business at the peach stand was particularly busy. At most, he'd have eighteen kids working his stand. As he puts it, "The name of the game was work."



Figure 6.1: Members of Hill's herd of farm vehicles

# **Seasonal Cycles**

The seasonal growth cycle pervades the atmosphere at each farmstand. For a farmstand like Hill's Horn of Plenty which sells exclusively homegrown produce, it constricts the season to just three or four months. The Berry Patch and David's purchase goods from regional farmers

markets in order to remain open from March to December. At David's, the season determines the overall appearance of the entire site. The farmstand sits in the middle of a working farm. In addition to their fields, the Sherrills turn over the stock in each of the six hot houses in their nursery twice a year.



Figure 6.2: The packinghouse at Carter farms

Like the products they sell, the farmstands also rely on customers that return seasonally. Ellerbe farmstands rely on a traveling customer base of beachgoers. Lee Berry believes 90% of his customers are the folks taking U.S. 220 back north from South Carolina beaches. All of the farmstands would agree that better than 70% of their customers are tourists and not locals. All of the farmstands are located on the northbound side of this highway. Berry talks about regular customers that show up year after year but only once or twice each year. They are typically from the Greensboro-Winston-Salem-High Point metropolitan area or Virginia. Jen Brach speaks of

summer Saturday afternoons when the one stoplight in downtown Ellerbe half a mile away will back traffic all the way up to her farmstand.

### **Dead Ends**

The proprietors at each of these businesses have stories about trial and error. Competition in Ellerbe demands that these farmstands experiment with new ideas. As Lee Berry explains, "I see it as a couple hundred thousand people a day that travel up and down this road. Its fair game where they want to stop at and I can't make them stop here." Some of the ideas to get ahead take and others don't. Berry has raised greenhouse tomatoes for the past five years. He says he can raise a good tomato but still has not made any money off the venture. He keeps trying, however, hoping that it will pay off. In the meantime, he considers the practice as learning experience.

Ed DeWitt began selling homemade ice cream at his stand in the mid-80s. His was only the second roadside establishment along U.S. 220 in Richmond County to sell ice cream and the first farmstand to offer up the product. It began as an attempt to attract a few more customers and move more peaches. As Ed puts it, "That's all it was, a game." Evidence along today's roadside landscape indicates that homemade ice cream and fresh produce have become the bread and butter of many Sandhill farmstands (see Fig. 6.3).

In the late '80s, Hill Carter began collecting exotic animals, caring for them on a small reserve on the parcel directly east of his farmstand and packinghouse. Among other species, his menagerie included: wallabies, emus, ostriches, llamas, long-horned steers, Saipan chickens, pygmy goats, a zebra, and a camel. His interest in creating a small zoo was partially to attract customers as well as to entertain his own grandchildren. Because of lack of visibility, it did little to attract the traveling customer but was well known amongst locals. Due to the difficulty of

maintaining and caring for so many types of animals throughout the year, the Carters sold off their collection. These fantastic trial and error schemes exhibited along U.S. 220 suggest the process of *automobility* seen on highly developed commercial corridors (Clay 1973, 87). The ten miles between the four case studies at time behaves like a farmstand thoroughfare.



Figure 6.3: The bread and butter of Ellerbe farmstand culture

### Generational

Those farmstands with 25 or more years' presence on the highway exhibit long-term processes. These environmental and economic systems involve multigenerational layers of action and feedback. They indicate the complexity involved in the management of these businesses and landscapes.

One system that pervades the cultural history and landscape of Ellerbe farmstands is the agricultural commodity market. This cyclical system impacts the scale and diversity of

farmstand sales. It also manifests itself in their overall design. In the case of North State Orchards, a single crop, the peach, was able to carry much of the retail business of this stand for its 50-year lifetime. L.G. DeWitt was able to run a business primarily based on hauling and distributing of produce grown in his southern peach orchards. By the time of his passing in 1990, the DeWitt family had veered away from peaches. The crop became cost prohibitive in North Carolina due to earlier frosts, worn out soils, and pesticides being removed from the market. Today, the remains of the DeWitt trucking and orchard industry still dominate the farmstand site. The peach packinghouse foundation and the vacant farmstand still sit side by side. Ed DeWitt and other family members remain in agriculture but with greater diversification in their landholdings. DeWitts in Richmond County raise chicken, tobacco, wholesale produce, and game birds. The former orchard on the northeast corner of the DeWitt parcel is growing over in broomsedge and pines. The stand sits vacant.

Hill Carter began retailing produce to diversify his tobacco-dominated crop holdings. This effort to follow the growing produce market changed the Ellerbe roadside. What was in 1962 the site of a burned down tobacco warehouse is today the home of Carter Farms. To meet the demands of the market the family moved its packinghouse to the U.S. 220 site behind the farmstand.

Currently a new twist to the agricultural commodity system is causing trouble for even diversified growers. Consumers by less product. Brach associates this change in produce consumption with the passing of a generation: "You see my generation doesn't can and freeze like our parents and our grandparents. And I don't sell as much of that anymore. If I sell in bulk, it's more to wholesalers who are gonna go up the road and sell it." Jackie Sherrill agrees and attributes the change to a shift in the overall food culture of families: "Cause they're going

to McDonald's the next day; and maybe that night. Cause they're busy. Families are busier. Old folks have died that eat this stuff." The result is a business that once sold primarily to local families buying in bulk now sells mostly to tourists buying on impulse.

Sculle might argue that this shift in produce consumption is linked to the process of modernization. To meet the needs of tourists, businesses have to specialize and focus their attention on the comfort and convenience of the consumer (1990a, 125). Farmstands in Ellerbe may have to downsize the amount of each type of product they offer and simply offer more variety. Since Hill's sells only products grown on Carter Farms, they are limited in this option. The Berry Patch and David's both buy produce from regional farmers markets to supplement their own crop and can thus offer a greater variety

The farmstands will certainly confront this process of modernization in the coming years as they see the high volume of traffic that now passes in front of their businesses on U.S. 220 move east onto the new I-73/74 corridor (see Fig. 4.7). Jenn Brach describes the advent of the I-73/74 bypass as symptomatic of a larger cultural shift in America from a "mom and pop fabric" to a "Wal-Mart mentality." She remarks, "And I guess for that reason I'm just not thrilled with the road coming through because it's the same thing that we're seeing everywhere. The true character of our culture is completely shifting and that's sad to me."

What sets the farmstand apart from perhaps any other widespread roadside business, and certainly any other roadside food service provider, is its ability to succeed as a solo operator in the market. They show no evidence of Jakle and Sculle's process of place-product-packaging. They do not franchise. Only in the case of the DeWitt's did one proprietor own more than one stand. Even in that case, L.G. DeWitt kept the names of the two orchards, Ruby and North State, distinct from one another. As roadside ventures they thrive off the consumer weary of

modernized, standardized chain operators. They feed the antimodern desires of the modernized traveler (Sculle 1990a, 125). In doing so, they maintain a presence roadside eccentrics. Does the new interstate bypass jeopardize this cultural paradigm? In the case of Hill's Horn of Plenty, Brach fears, "we're gonna have to go big or go home."

## CHAPTER 7

## STUCTURE VS. SIGN VS. LOCATION

Do all farmstands look alike? How are they built? Do all farmstands use signs? Does location matter? The questions of structure, sign and site are best answered by the formal approach to cultural landscape studies. In this chapter I make use of the scaled drawings to assemble a set of formal and spatial patterns from amongst these four case studies. While this study is not large enough to suggest a broad pattern of farmstand form, I argue that the vernacular patterns present in Ellerbe share formal aspects with other rural and roadside cultural resources outside the region.

## **Structural Patterns**

In their materials and construction methods, the produce stands at all four case studies resemble most small American farm structures built in the twentieth-century. Their design language consists of a wood frame, wood siding, and a single-gabled roof. Hill's Horn of Plenty is the most simple of the cases with its open-air post and beam structure (see Figs. 7.1, 7.2). At David's Produce and Plant Farm, the produce stand walls consist of horizontal timber planks borrowed from a chicken coop (see Fig. 7.3, 7.4). Similarly, the Berry Patch and North State Orchards feature plywood walls and wood siding (see Figs. 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8). The concession stand at the Berry Patch would appear to stand out as an exception were it not for the fact that underneath the red polyurethane foam exterior sits a balloon-frame and plywood sheeting (see Fig. 7.9). Two of the four cases have single-gabled metal roofs. Hill's has a single-gabled vinyl

roof in which the vinyl covering is molded to look like metal. Only North State Orchards with its gabled loft and lower mansard roof both of asphalt shingles buck the metal trend.

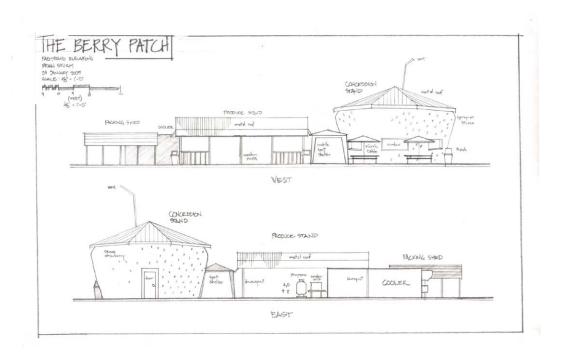


Figure 7.1: East-West Elevations of the Berry Patch

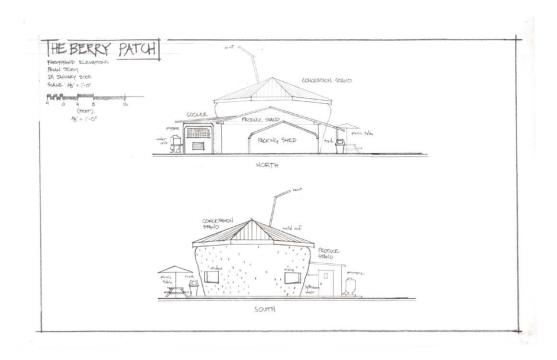


Figure 7.2: North-South Elevations of the Berry Patch

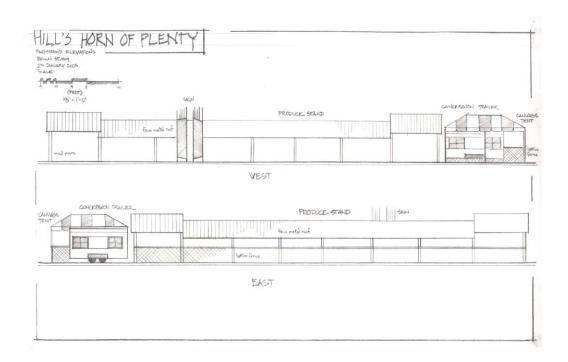


Figure 7.3: East-West Elevations of Hill's Horn of Plenty

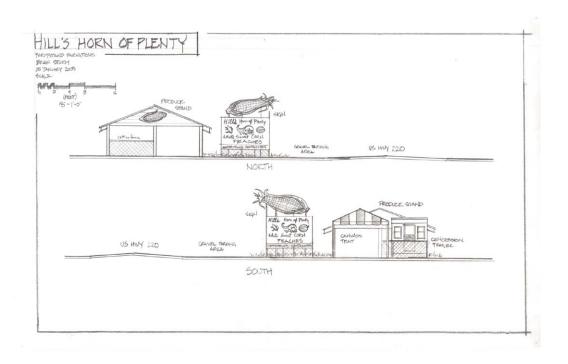


Figure 7.4: North-South Elevations of Hill's Horn of Plenty

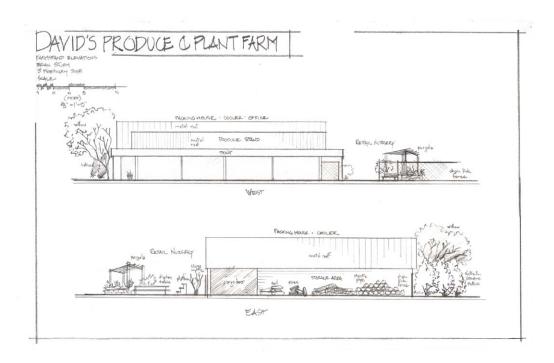


Figure 7.5: East-West Elevations of David's Produce and Plant Farm

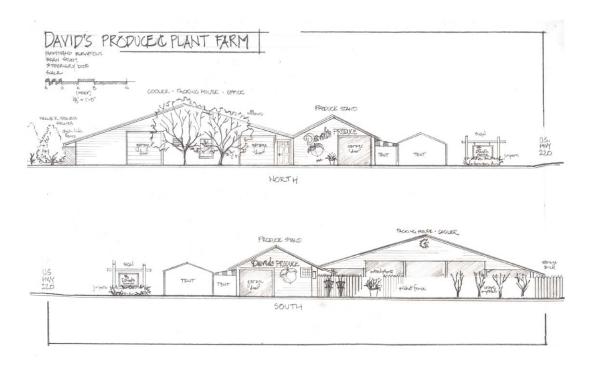


Figure 7.6: North-South Elevations of David's Produce and Plant Farm

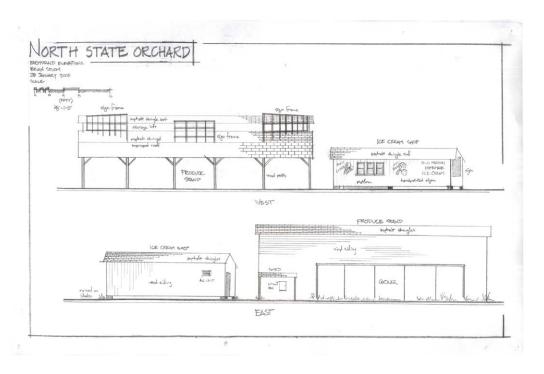


Figure 7.7: East-West Elevations of North State Orchard

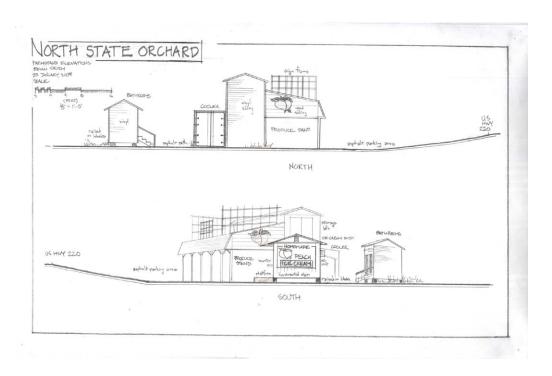


Figure 7.8: North-South Elevations of North State Orchard



Figure 7.9: The Berry Patch under construction. Source: Lee Berry

The result leading from these choices in materials and construction methods is that these buildings express a southern American farm vernacular. The case studies appear as though they belong on a farmstead with the other barns, utility sheds, and animal pens. It is interesting to note that whereas scholars have defined domestic architecture as a popular theme in roadside structures such as pre-World War II gas stations and contemporary family restaurants (Liebs 1985, 38) these structures display a decidedly utilitarian theme. In other words, David's Produce and Plant Farm is to Perkins Family Restaurant as the back shed is to your parent's split-level.

In plan view, the case studies are characterized by a lack of interior or exterior walls and an open floor plan (see Figs. 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, 7.13). Hill's Horn of Plenty is entirely open air. Only in the rear and partially on the sides does a 4'-tall wood lattice fence create some barrier to movement. North State Orchards is open on three of its four sides. The produce stands at David's and the Berry Patch feature one open side but have at least one large side entrance. In

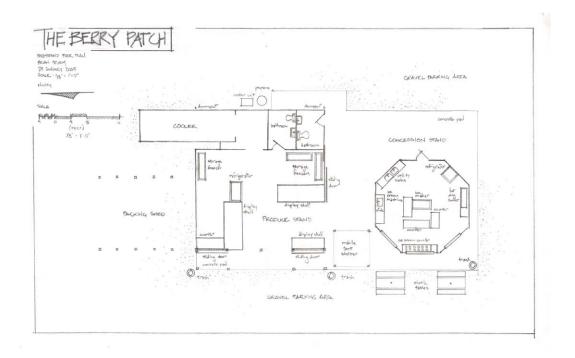


Figure 7.10: Floor Plan for the Berry Patch

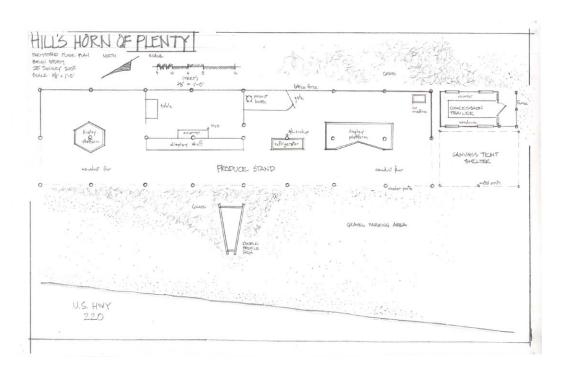


Figure 7.11: Floor Plan for Hill's Horn of Plenty

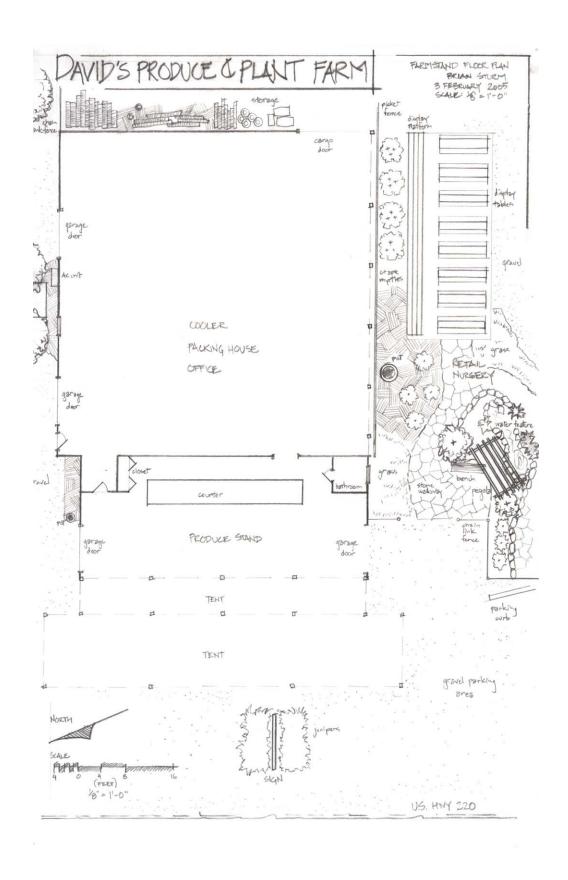


Figure 7.12: Floor Plan for David's Produce and Plant Farm

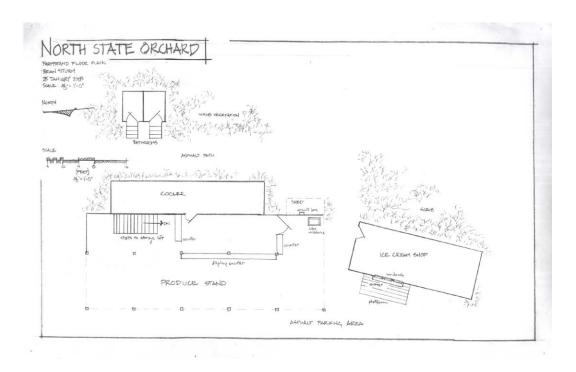


Figure 7.13: Floor Plan for North State Orchard

all cases these structures are closed or secured by sliding shut barn doors, or lowering garage doors or large framed chicken wire gates into place. To customers, these patterns likely express an air of friendliness and hospitality as they provide an entrance from nearly all sides.

The open floor plan also provides a customer more accessibility and freedom. Across the cases, these farmstands feature floor plans consisting of 88 to 95% modular floor space (see Table 7.1). The only permanent fixtures in these produce stands are counters or display platforms. The fixture they all share in common is a single long counter in the center of the produce stand. Hill's Horn of Plenty features 2 large display platforms that rise eight inches off the sawdust floor. The lack of permanent display space allows the consumer more freedom to peruse the stock. It also allows the proprietor more freedom to stock the farmstand in whatever way possible to attract the consumer's impulsive eye.

Table 7.1: Farmstands in terms of their fixed and modular space

Farmstand	Fixed Space	Modular Space	<b>Total Space</b>	% Modular to Total Space
Berry Patch	92 sf	964 sf	1056 sf	91
Hill's Horn of Plenty	287 sf	2113 sf	2400 sf	88
David's Produce and Plant Farm	104 sf	1780 sf	1884 sf	95
DeWitt's Peaches	107 sf	1333 sf	1440 sf	93

# **Big Signs, Measly Buildings**

The genius loci of these farmstands cannot be examined without some mention of their signage. In order to market their produce, farmstand proprietors put considerable effort, time, and money into the sign. Previous scholarship has shown how developed commercial corridors exhibit a design language in which sign subverts structure (Venturi, et al. 1977, 58). This theory finds full expression on U.S. 220 where professionally designed signs attract highway consumers to vernacular structures.

In none of the case studies will one find a structures designed by an architect or engineer. That isn't to say they were not planned out on paper at all. Berry actually sketched out a floor plan for his strawberry-shaped concession stand within thirty minutes of his wife's mention of the idea (see Fig. 7.14). He built it two months later out of wood and spray-on polyurethane foam with the help of one other friend. David and Jackie Sherrill designed the original structure to their stand themselves, as well. As Jackie tells the story, "We sat out there before we were married on the side of the road and got a cigarette carton and drew this stand off on the back..."

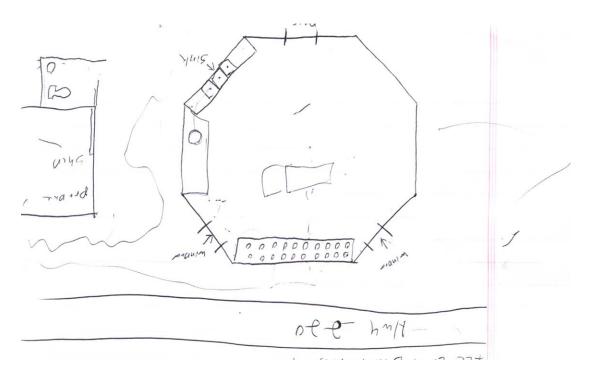


Figure 7.14: Preliminary sketch of the berry. Source: Lee Berry

Both Berry and the Sherrills had the fortune to come upon materials or entire buildings that could be borrowed to hasten the construction of their produce stands. The Sherrill's farmstand began as a modified chicken house. They disassembled the structure that sat on David's mother's land and moved it to the side of U.S. 220. The 32' x 32' structure that makes up Berry's produce stand was originally the carport on his mother's house. Berry had the carport moved to his site for the price of \$2,000 then later added bathrooms, plumbing and electricity. He closes this story by remarking, "I couldn't [have] build it any cheaper."

Perhaps the money not spent on construction goes to signage. The prescriptive literature on farmstands emphasizes sign over structure (Garrison 1992; Lee 1994). While the Sherrills built their stand themselves out of chicken house lumber, they had a professional design their logo and entrance sign (see Fig. 7.15). "We put a lot of money into signs and everybody else

started putting it in there too," explains Jackie. They pay someone local to paint over a dozen signs spaced in regular intervals on both the northern and southern approaches to their stand.



Figure 7.15: Entrance sign to David's Produce and Plant Farm.

Lee Berry summarizes the greatest challenge in roadside business when he says, "... one of the hardest things in the world to do [is] to build a new business and convince someone going down a major highway to pull in and stop." Berry answered the challenge by turning an entire building into a sign (see Fig. 4.10). Upon his wife's suggestion, he constructed his concession stand in the form of his best selling item, and curiously enough, his namesake as well. This tactic is reminiscent of a bygone era of roadside architecture characterized by mimetic or

programmatic design (Liebs 1985, 48-49). Roadside structures such as the Big Duck in Riverhead, Long Island, New York, (see Fig. 7.16) built in 1931, employed fantastic imagery to lure motorists off the highway. Berry's concept can be linked to the French *architecture parlante* in that his building does what it purports to do – it sells strawberries. Berry also rents two billboards off site in addition to the one on his property. Each billboard makes the same claim across the top in large letters: "World's Largest Strawberry!" They go onto mention the produce, ice cream, and free maps to the beach that can also be found at the farmstand.

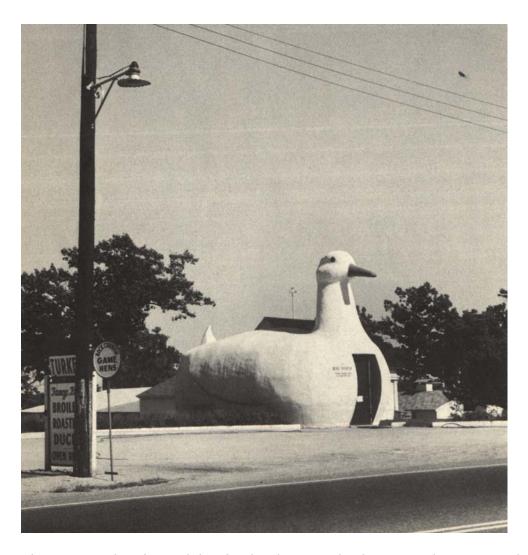


Figure 7.16: The Big Duck in Riverhead, Long Island, New York. Source: Blake, 1964, 101.

# **Site Patterns**

Adjacent to the produce stand in most cases is a set of auxiliary structures. These typically consist of a packing shed or packinghouse, cooler, concessions stand, and picnic area. But as previous work suggests (Flynn and Stankus 1978, 114) the subtle repositioning or omission of any one of these elements can completely change the meaning of the space. The Berry Patch and David's Produce and Plant Farm stand out as examples of this phenomenon.

The Berry Patch features a permanent concession stand on its south end, a packing shed on its north end, and a refrigerator truck trailer attached to the east end of the produce stand serving as the farmstand cooler (see Fig. 7.10). The close proximity of the strawberry-shaped concession stand to the produce stand encourages those who stopped to gawk buy ice cream to venture into the stand and check out Berry's produce and vice versa. This spatial relationship also helps to emphasize the relationship between the ice cream and its principle ingredient -fresh produce. Berry keeps two picnic tables with umbrellas somewhere between the concession and produce stands at all times to encourage patrons to linger and relax. The visibility of the packing shed on the north side of the produce stand allows Berry to show off his freshly harvested stock before it goes into the vending area. He is also able to easily and quickly pack larger amounts of stock for those customers who desire it. The refrigerator trailer built into the east end is a makeshift cooler and kept out of sight.

David's farmstand includes a retail nursery area on its south end and a large single-gabled building attached to the east end of the produce stand housing the farmstand office, packinghouse, and cooler (see Fig. 7.12). The nursery and the greenhouses south of it are the first images a northbound motorist on 220 might have of David's Produce and Plant Farm. The nursery sells retail plant stock and garden décor. It also provides visitors with a pocket park.

Entering the space between the produce stand and greenhouses, one passes a raised garden bed with specimen ornamental shrubs, a gurgling water feature, and a bench situated underneath a pergola. The proximity of the nursery to the stand does influence customers to come to both and firmly establishes an aura of abundance on site. Perhaps to preserve this atmosphere, David Sherrill keeps his more utilitarian structures like the coolers and packinghouse tucked back behind the produce stand and out of sight. Visitors might notice the large barn that houses these functions from the outside of the produce stand. From the interior, however, it is inaccessible and hardly noticed with all the plentiful stock to look at. David's also has a concession stand but it is on the north side of the site and too far from the produce stand itself to be considered an immediate auxiliary building.

What follows from this analysis is that Lee Berry has designed a farmstand to sell primarily ice cream and fresh produce and give visitors the experience of seeing him ply his wares as they come out of the field. David and Jackie Sherrill have designed a farmstand to sell primarily nursery grown plants and fresh produce and give visitors the experience of being able to browse an ample selection of items in a controlled bucolic environment.

# Location, Location

While the sign seems to subvert the structure in the overall design of these farmstands, location subverts them all in determining the ultimate form and function of these places. For example, one business practice all farmstand proprietors in Ellerbe agree upon is that location on the northbound side of U.S. 220 is critical. Beachgoers typically stop at produce stands on their way home more than on the way down. There are no farmstands currently open on the southbound side of the road, only the ruins of failed attempts (see Fig. 7.17).



Figure 7.17: Abandoned Ellerbe stand on the southbound roadside

Armed with that bit of anecdotal knowledge, I also argue that the site plans suggest a pattern amongst the case studies in which the three factors of location along U.S. 220, site acreage, and site land use determine whether or not farmstands succeed as well as whether or not they are able to operate a wholesale operation in addition to their retail market. I will first state the factors as they exist for each farmstand then explain the pattern that emerges.

Table 7.2: Farmstand Location, Adjusted Available Highway Acreage, and Land-Use

Farmstand	Location on 220	Adjusted Available Highway Acreage	Land- Use	Market Type
The Berry Patch	Northbound	13	Farm	Retail
Hill's Horn of Plenty	Northbound	44	Nonfarm	Retail/Wholesale
David's Produce	Northbound	111	Farm	Retail
North State Orchard	Northbound	23	Nonfarm	Retail/Wholesale

Table 7.2 summarizes the location, adjusted acreage, and land-use data from each case study. I use the term *adjusted available highway acreage* to mean the total amount of contiguous land available to the farmstand proprietor that borders on U.S. 220. The chart makes two relationships clear: the one we already know which is that location on the northbound side of U.S. 220 is prerequisite for a successful farmstand; and that when highway acreage is put to farm use, a farmstand deals exclusively in retail trade. This second relationship is curious. By farming land along the highway, how is it that Berry and the Sherrills limit their farmstand operation to retail sales only? Conversely, by not farming highway acreage, how do the Carters and DeWitts carry on a retail and wholesale trade?

The acreage figures listed and acreages not listed begin to shed light on this pattern. It is first necessary to understand that the retail market earns a higher price per unit of produce than does the wholesale market. Thus retail sales earn higher dollars per acre of land than wholesales. For this reason, only growers with reasonably large landholdings can turn a profit on the wholesale market. With only 13 available acres along the highway, Lee Berry is probably restricted to a retail operation if he wants to be able to recoup his land investment. In the case of the Sherrills, the site plan indicates that they do not farm all 111 available acres. By my casual estimate, the Sherrills are probably farming half of this land in mixed produce. Thus it is possible that they do not have the necessary land holdings for a wholesale operation either. It can be assumed that the DeWitts and Carters have farmland elsewhere to generate the produce they sell, or sold, at their farmstands. And it can be assumed that these land holdings are significant enough to be able to afford a wholesale operation in addition to their retail operations.

But I propose that it is not simply the single factor of acreage but the three factors of acreage, location, and land use that determine farmstand function. Scholarship in cultural

geography (Hart 1991, 37) shows how proximity to urban regions and corridors determines land value and, in turn, the agricultural land uses possible. Property values in town are higher than those in the hinterlands and demand a more cost-efficient form of agriculture. Here in Ellerbe, we see that growers who chose to farm land along U.S. 220 participate in a more cost effective form of agriculture than those growers who chose to farm land elsewhere. It is a safe assumption that even in the rural landscape, land values increase with proximity to a major corridor such as U.S. 220. Thus, individuals who want to farm and enjoy quick access to roadside markets pay a premium and must operate accordingly. I contend that were the DeWitts or Carters actually farming on their highway acreage, they would need to expand their retail sales.

Farmstands highlight a land use pattern on the rural/roadside edge that poses several broader questions regarding development of rural and roadside landscapes. How can farmers maintain necessary acreage and get their crops to urban markets? How will land use change in rural landscapes as more roads are cut through them? How can roadsides within rural landscapes maintain their rural character?

The new Ellerbe bypass affects the location of all three farmstands still in business. Hill's and David's will be bypassed and their stands will no longer sit on the major route of travel. The Berry Patch will be temporarily spared until the year 2010 when the stretch of four-lane U.S. 220 on which it currently sits is converted to limited access interstate.

Jennifer Brach recognizes that if Hill's Horn of Plenty is to stay in business, it will most likely have to change location. "Unless people really, really, really want some sweet corn they're not gonna get off the highway," laments Brach. Hill Carter was quoted in a local newspaper last summer as saying, "We hope to get a new place (for the stand) on the bypass." (DeMuth, 2004).

If either the Carters or Sherrills find land at an interstate exit, how will that location change the form and function of their farmstands? Will the retail marketing of produce pay for such expensive real estate? Will growers like the Sherrills be forced to consider acquiring more farmland and entering the wholesale market just to pay for the land a retail market sits upon? Will they have to relocate at all? This formal analysis of structure, sign, and location gives future environmental designers many questions to consider the regarding the future of these and other places in the rural and roadside landscapes of America.

## **CHAPTER 8**

## CAPITALIZNG ON CULTURE

Why do farmers create roadside farmstands? Why do they sell produce and ice cream under one roof? Why do people stop at them? Why do they exist in the first place? This chapter deals with the primary function roadside farmstands serve in the cultural landscape. At first glance, farmstands appear to be another roadside venture designed for economic gain. Based on ethnographic data generated from oral interviews, I argue in this chapter that these places do more than just sell fruits and vegetables. They fulfill the roles of family businesses, tourist attractions, and expressions of regional identity. These cultural functions are as crucial to the identity and success of roadside farmstands as is the simple economic function of making a buck.

# **Bottom Dollar**

When I asked Lee Berry what his business plan had been the eighteen months he had been in business, he replied with the statement, "Just to grow and make as much money as I can and offer a good product." The bottom line of making money is crucial to this business owner. The Berry Patch is his sole source of income. Similarly, the Sherrills have no other business interests besides their farmstand. When I asked the Sherrills what they were trying to do when they began their business in 1982, David's quick response was, "Trying to make fifty cent! We were broke." When I asked Ed DeWitt why an orchard as large as North State bothered to sell peaches on the side of the road at all, he explained that the roadside stand was essentially a means for selling over-ripe peaches that would otherwise be thrown out. In his mind, the primary function served by the farmstand was economic

Hart states the primary factor behind any modification of the rural landscape as the imperative of making a living (1998, 3). Farmstands do not pose an exception to this rule. But as shown in scholarship regarding courthouse squares (Haynes 1978, 172-174), the farmstand is an element in the rural landscape that exhibits multiple functions. Particularly, as the produce consumption market undergoes the systematic changes discussed in Chapter Six, farmstands must adjust functionally. With consumers buying less produce, farmstands have to find other commodities to market. Jenn Brach explained how the business plan at Hill's Horn of Plenty has adjusted to this market shift: "We're in business to make money, no doubt. But it's not a business exclusively or primarily to make money. It's an expression of who we are."

# Regionalism

The farmstands of Ellerbe are an expression of the Sandhills region. The growers of the Sandhills tout their region as a place with special identity. According to Berry, "This area has always been known for farming. Not farming cows; not dairy; it's been known for farming produce. And the Sandhills is a unique place, and that's what it's called. It's a hotter place, and it's hotter climate. Your produce, your vegetables, your fruits are always sweeter because of the dry conditions. And something about the sand just grows a better product."

Farmstands operate within this rural landscape the way civic and family organizations do in urban areas by establishing social bonds amongst the various growers. Lee Berry spent seven years working at David's Produce and Plant Farm. His wife, whom he met there, worked at David's for eleven. He also worked in the field for Hill Carter. He grew up in the business of roadside produce. Hill Carter drove produce trucks for L.G. DeWitt before getting into the mixed produce business himself. L.G. DeWitt employed thousands of locals in the produce business over his lifetime. The North State packinghouse was as much a local institution as the

peach stand. The peach packing operation employed 125 to 150 school-aged kids every summer. Ed DeWitt claims, "there's not many kids in a three-county area that did not work at that peach packinghouse."

The degree of competition along this farmstand thoroughfare does not detract from this socialization pattern. When asked whether or not the concentration of farmstands along this 10-mile stretch of highway created an atmosphere of competition, Lee Berry's response was, "I see it as a couple hundred thousand people a day that travel up and down this road. It's fair game where they want to stop at and I can't make them stop here. I can give them a good experience when they do stop. I do my best. But if they stop somewhere else that's fine." Berry engages in the local wholesale produce trade by selling off stock to other local retailers when he is overstocked. He returns the favors as well. The relationship follows the old adage that *if you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours*. Whenever he cannot offer a particular product from his own fields he buys local.

Across the cases, the proprietors share in an independence from town or city life. In conversations regarding the projected affects of the Ellerbe bypass, subjects spoke of the town of Ellerbe and their own farmstands as separate geographical entities. The bypass will have a different impact on Ellerbe than it will on the farmstands. David Sherrill and Lee Berry see Ellerbe as a crossroads of antique shops and convenience stores that will lose all its traffic due to the bypass. They assume small store owners will relocate. But they don't consider themselves to be located in Ellerbe proper. They don't own small shops or gas pumps in town. They own large parcels of land in the country. They cannot relocate as easily as a gas station. They identify less with the town of Ellerbe and more with Richmond County or the Sandhills region.

This independence from urban or metropolitan ways in rural southerners is a trait cited in previous work (Jackson 1984, 81).

# The Family Farm Model

These cases support the argument that the roadside farmstand fulfills a family farm role that is significant in to the cultural heritage of this nation (Hart 1998, 287). Across the cases, farmstand proprietors vary in the ways they came into the business of retail farming. Not all were raised on a traditional farm. Not all expect their farms to last in perpetuity. In all cases, however, these business owners share the hope that through family involvement their business will prosper.

Lee Berry did not grow up doing this sort of work. His father was an electrician and his mother was a teacher. As he proclaimed it, "I went out on my own on this." Berry manages his operation almost entirely himself but receives significant support from his wife. She was the one to come up with the idea for the strawberry-shaped concession stand. Berry has two children and admits that he'd like to give them the opportunity to work in his business. However, he wants them to have the opportunity not afforded to many children on family farms, which is a college education.

Carter Farms is a family operation with Hill, Sr. still presiding over much of the operation. His son Julian manages the wholesale business during the growing season and his daughter Jennifer manages the roadside stand. As the second generation explained to me, the farm is essentially Hill's legacy. As Brach puts it, "He *is* Carter Farms. And without him there's really not a whole lot left." Jennifer Brach describes her family's love of their work as bordering on obsessive: "I don't know if it's dysfunctional or functional or what it is, but it's a passion with him and with his children too. It's our passion. That's what we love to do."

Between the peach stand and the peach packinghouse, the DeWitt's ran an operation at North State Orchards that resembled a farming village. They not only employed over a hundred teenagers but educated them in the ways of hard work, public decorum, and business. Edward describes the operation in very paternalistic language: "We tried to treat those kids just like we wanted our kids to be treated if they went somewhere else. I don't mind telling you, if a kid screwed up and we knew it, we called their parent."

The Sherrills, as a couple, split the management of the produce and plant farm. David attends to the business of the farm while Jackie manages the nursery. Their children are fixtures at the farmstand. Jackie put their names on the farmstand marquee when they were born. Long-time customers that return each year ask about them. That said, Jackie and David are adamant when they say that none of them will work at the stand past high school. She says they don't like the work, they've gone to private school, and they have a different lifestyle. Jackie Sherrill laments how the nature of the farmstand has forced them to work so hard while still being parents. "You know our kids have had to grow up here. If they wanted to be with us they had to be up here or, you know, they didn't get to." Nevertheless, in the case of the Sherrills, family support is a vital and visible element to the function of their farmstand.

# **More than Fruits and Veggies**

Value-added goods such as concessions help the farmstands in Ellerbe distinguish themselves as well as attract extra customers. In addition to the country ham, jams, and jellies sold in the produce stand, Hill's Horn of Plenty sells hot dogs, cotton candy, and snow cones out of the trailer adjacent to the stand. Ice cream is a staple at many of these stands. When made from produce from the stand, the ice cream is a value-added product and reduces throw away. Thus it makes money for the farmstand in two ways. For the DeWitt's, homemade ice cream

became one of the biggest attractions at their stand. Ed DeWitt recalls speaking with the patrons of his stand, "And I had people stop there from Ohio and say, 'Well, we stopped and we're gonna stand in this line to get ice cream cause we heard all the way down the road that this was the best ice cream there was.'"

For the folks who braved lines for ice cream at North State Orchard, I argue that the farmstand was more than just a market selling a commodity. The farmstand was a welcomed respite from an otherwise hot summer drive. These places continue to offer rest and relaxation free of charge. Berry talks about customers that linger to use the bathroom, let their dog and kids out of the car, have a hot dog to eat, stretch the legs a bit, etc. Especially, for the tourist, these farmstands are rest stops along the weary route to vacation. David Sherrill believes it is most often the free restroom that attracts first-time customers to his establishment. And for that reason, the bathroom gets mention on the first sign a northbound motorist sees on the approach to David's (see Fig. 8.1).



Figure 8.1: The first sign along the southern approach to David's

Ironically, in addition to leisure, farmstands also sell work as a commodity. Lee Berry keeps his packing shed right up in front next to the produce stand because it brings in customers: "they pull up and see you washing squash or cucumbers or tomatoes or unloading a load of watermelons right out of the field. Then they know that the money they're spending is buying a local or homegrown product." Berry believes his customers are willing to pay his price for produce because they can see the work that goes into it. The Berry Patch also offers visitors a chance go out and work for themselves. The pick-your-own practice allows farmstand proprietors to charge customers to do their work for them. Lee Berry's pick-your-own customers pay him twice: once for the strawberries and once for the opportunity to perform labor. He makes money three times when you figure the amount of money he does not have to spend paying someone else to pick the product.

There is something about being at a farmstand that makes customers feel as though they have done something they can write home about. Ed DeWitt remembers the regular and not-so-regular customers who would speak to him: "People would stop and say, 'Well, I stopped here with my momma and daddy when I was a little girl going and coming from the beach. I remember stopping here when I wasn't six years old." The notoriety and tradition that comes with being a dependable roadside amenity certainly sells at each of the case studies. Even though they may only spend five or ten dollars on each trip, Lee Berry values his regular customers who travel to their beach property on a monthly basis. He knows their word will be the seed of recognition yet to blossom.

For many visitors far removed from rural living and rural landscapes, it is possible that a trip to a farmstand is as much an attraction as a trip to the amusement park. Jennifer Brach views the packinghouse and lot behind their farmstand as an attraction in and of itself, "People see the

tractors parked around back and they wanna stop and let little Johnny see the tractors." Since the Carters only keep Hill's Horn of Plenty open for three months, they have found ways in the past of bringing visitors to their site through other means. The small exotic animal reserve they once managed behind their packinghouse was such a scheme. Families could ride through the zoo on golf carts and let their kids feed the zebras, emus, and camels. For three nights near Christmas, the family used to set up live nativity scenes, dressing up as the Biblical characters themselves, employing a camel or two, and serving hot apple cider.

Lee Berry markets his business like a circus promoter. He claims to have the largest strawberry in the world on his site (see Fig. 8.2). His concession stand is approximately twenty-five feet tall, eighty feet in circumference, and five-hundred square feet in area. Berry claims that the current Guinness Book world record holder is in El Paso and that his strawberry beats it "by a tremendous amount." This year, he wants to get his strawberry registered with Guinness and, in his words, "get on the internet as the world's largest strawberry and start marketing some of the products."

Despite the charm of such oddities, farmstand proprietors do not invest solely in gimmicks. Lee Berry makes quite clear what he is actually selling when he says, "You try to offer people who live in the city a little part of the country for fifteen, twenty minutes a year and offer them the local produce and reassure them that you've grown it or it's local, from the area." Whether it's the chance to pick your own bucket of strawberries, sit under an umbrella and eat an ice cream cone, or watch tractors have their engines serviced, the farmstand provides an experience as well as a commodity. The proprietors of such places seem to design for both functions.

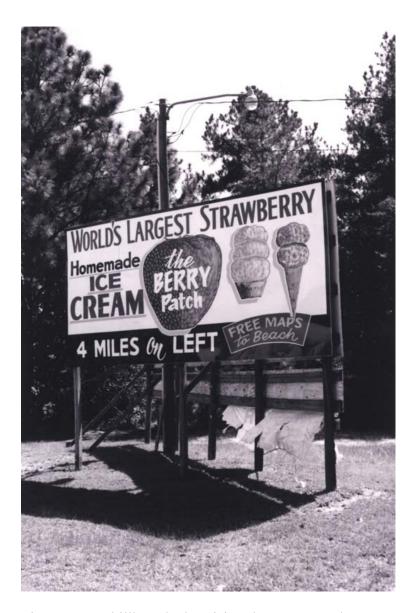


Figure 8.2: A billboard advertising the Berry Patch

The farmstand is not a quick study. For designers, planners, and preservationists, however, it is vital that the story behind places as ubiquitous and common as the farmstand be told. Finding solutions to the problems posed by rural urbanization and in particular the Ellerbe bypass, will depend upon a solid understanding of the cultural function endemic to place.

## CHAPTER 9

#### LEARNING FROM ELLERBE

This study of the roadside farmstand demands the attention and awareness of environmental designers. There is no question that the vernacular landscape is of interest to cultural landscape theorists and conservationists. Understanding the cultural significance of American vernacular landscapes needs to be of paramount concern to environmental designers as well. As the speed with which landscapes evolve in America continues to increase sensitive and intelligent decisions regarding the manipulation of the cultural landscape will need to be made on an increasingly regular basis. Environmental designers and planners have both the task and opportunity to execute designs that offer private developers and the public the chance to learn from and enjoy the resources of their cultural and environmental heritage. The end result of this process is landscape literacy.

But what facilitates this landscape literacy? For decades the literature within cultural landscape studies has accepted this knowledge deficit amongst Americans. Peirce Lewis made the claim more than a quarter of a century ago that "most Americans are unaccustomed to reading landscape. It has never occurred to them that it *can* be done, that there is reason to do so, much less that there is pleasure to be gained from it" (1979, 12-13). What has scholarship done to correct this social ill? Have the works of great landscape writers the likes of J.B. Jackson fallen on deaf ears?

Clearly this study shows that there are gaps in the literature on the American cultural landscape. If a relic of the American experience so closely tied to the powerful images of farm

and highway receives no attention, it is likely that other less apparent icons of the cultural landscape face similar disregard. This survey of the roadside farmstand is my personal effort to introduce a recognizable and easily accessible cultural landscape element into the academic realm. While the roadside farmstand is not a space that can easily replicated or repeated through design guidelines or preservation methods, it is a space that can teach designers about the dynamic processes and functions that occur in our rural and roadside landscapes.

Here I review what this study of four roadside farmstands in Ellerbe, North Carolina has to offer for the field of environmental design. This list is meant to be neither prescriptive nor universal. It simply illuminates the conclusions I have made within this thesis.

Contextual study of farmstands exhibits how applying visual analysis to elements in the cultural landscape yields clues to the meanings embodied in places. To create meaningful places is an ever-present goal among designers. Understanding how such meaning is generated in the most common of places can propel the design of new elements in the landscape of equal value. The same visually pleasing scenes achieved through the vernacular design of these places can inform professional design practice as well.

Farmstands continually reshape themselves through a system of multi-dimensional processes, both economic and environmental. They persist along the roadside by resisting the standardization embraced by other roadside ventures. This behavior promotes the idea that complexity and eccentricity in design are valid in the public eye. Designers should embrace this concept when considering new roadside, corridor, or linear landscape prospects.

Formal patterns exhibited in farmstands provide designers applicable design languages at different scales for different contexts. In their imitation of farm utility structures farmstands offer up a building form not seen in typical roadside landscape design. In their pattern of

location-specific land use they support an efficient model of rural landscape development. Retail farmstand sales make the farming of mixed produce along busy routes a profitable venture.

Functional analysis of these case studies shows how a single place can play multiple roles in the cultural system of a community. For designers bent on the idea of creating places for multiple uses this piece of vernacular design serves as a model.

As an aside I must remark that while I do argue for the awareness of these elements in the cultural landscape I do not necessarily call for their preservation. As much as any place in the American vernacular landscape, the roadside farmstand resists preservation by traditional means. As a landscape, the farmstand cannot be treated as an artifact. It cannot be placed in a time capsule. In a 1976 letter to the editor, J.B. Jackson urged *Landscape Architecture* readers to allow new things to be created and others to be forgotten. He said that the power with which an "ancient environment possesses to command our affection and respect derives from its having accepted changes of function; its beauty comes from its having been part of the world, not from having been isolated and protected, but from having known various fortunes" (1997b). The multidimensional processes that characterize the culture of the farmstand are also instrumental in the shaping the farmstand. To initiate a method of traditional preservation for such places would be to sound its death knoll as a place of daily, seasonal and generational change.

I do promote the notion that designers and planners can become advocates for the use and awareness of such spaces. The conservation of arable farmland and design of safe highways are vital to the prosperity of farmstands as cities continue to expand into the rural landscape. Regional planning districts, departments of transportation, and environmental and planning consultants have the skills and jurisdiction to plan good roads that both bring new business to rural areas as well as allow for continued agricultural production. Farmstands are a familiar

landmark to many motorists in both rural and roadside landscapes and thus depend upon visibility. Landscape architects, planners, and graphic designers can create signage and community planning initiatives that promote these places as cultural attractions within a community or region. Even in communities that do not have a legacy of roadside farmstands, the multi-dimensional functions and process that make farmstands an appealing roadside attraction can be applied to other places. Designers and planners can still create rest stops, parkways, and even commercial outlets like gas stations and cafes that both allow motorists to satisfy their needs for relaxation, leisure, and consumption, while still bringing them in contact with the rural heritage of a region.

Current efforts by farmers and agricultural extension specialists in Ellerbe highlight the commitment to process-related evolution that is needed for farmstand survival. In the face of rural urbanization posed by the coming Interstates 73 and 74, farmers in conjunction with North Carolina Cooperative Extension have formed the Sandhills Agritourism Task Force. This organization, directed by North Carolina Cooperative Extension offices in four counties including Richmond, operates on a volunteer membership of growers dedicated to the growth of a regional-based agricultural market oriented to tourists. This mission feeds off a tourist-generated economy that has already fueled the local farmstand business for decades. Their objective is to keep this tourist clientele but attract the many new visitors that interstates will bring through the region. By studying the examples of successful farmstands in other densely populated and heavily traveled regions of the United States, the Task Force has created a set of guidelines for achieving success in a more urbanized environment. These guidelines encourage farmstand proprietors to add more value-added products such as ice cream and baked goods as well as heritage exhibits such as farm tours to their stand's offerings. The idea is that if

farmstands can become more of an attraction that promotes the farm heritage of the region, then they will become tourist destinations on par with state parks, historic sites, and wineries. The group has succeeded in lobbying the North Carolina legislature to permit tourist oriented directional signs (TODS) that will direct interstate motorists to the various farmstands on rural roads. In addition, their accomplishments include the publication of a tourist brochure and website that promote farmstands and markets throughout the four-county region.

Environmental designers need to have an understanding of the multiple processes and functions served by such vernacular elements in the landscape. In my study I endeavor to assess such processes and systems occurring at one such element. I do not hold my method up as a universal approach for the investigation of vernacular landscapes or even the roadside farmstand specifically. My study, in a sense, is nothing more than an initial survey prepared in dialogue with the precedent literature found on comparable cultural resources. There are many approaches to the study of places such as roadside farmstands. I chose the approaches that reappeared over various sources in the field. At best, my method provides a loose sketch of these four case studies in preparation for a more thorough mockup of many more roadside farmstands. In other words, there is more that could be done.

Future directions in this research will expand the scope of the study to include more case studies, more attention to environmental characteristics on site, and data on consumer perceptions of these places. I contend that the roadside farmstand is a phenomenon immediately recognizable not just in North Carolina, or the South, but throughout North America. To understand the context, processes, forms, and functions exhibited by this continental design archetype, a proper examination must include case studies from multiple cultural and physiographic regions of North America. This initial study has focused on the cultural processes

and functions that take place at roadside farmstands and while my conclusions offer designers clues as to how people and place interact with one another, there is a side of the story about the crops, the soils, the fertilizers, and the land history that is missing. If much of the consumer appeal and certainly the economic vitality of these places are tied to the land, then a thorough inventory of the environmental characteristics on site is necessary. Lastly, to completely understand the values attached to these places I must look into the minds of the consumers that visit and patronize these places. This study explored these places from the point of view of the grower and farmstand proprietor through interviews. I would employ the same methods with regular consumers of farmstands with a focus on how they interact with these places.

I have learned from this research that works of vernacular design, no matter how common and recognizable their form can still teach us a deep lesson on how we visualize, perceive and use our cultural resources. I have driven by and visited roadside produce stands for years and never come close to the enlightenment gained though the simple gazing at photographs, sketching of forms, and conversing with real people I did over the course of this research. Ironically enough, it is the *process* itself in this study of common landscape that has been the greatest lesson learned.

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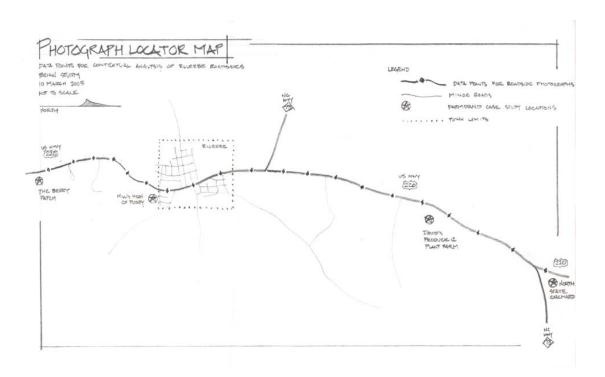
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### APPENDIX A

### ELLERBE ROADSIDES

The following forty photographs comprise the complete set of roadside photographs taken for the portion of the study devoted to farmstands and their surrounding environs. I took all photographs using the same digital camera on the afternoons of January 5 and 6, 2005. At points every 1/2-mile along a 10-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 220 in Richmond County, North Carolina, I took a 180-degree panoramic shot of the roadside viewshed on either side of the highway. The photographs are arranged here, two to a page, with labels indicating the cardinal direction of the view that they depict, East or West. I have arranged the views in their sequential order as one might see them from a car traveling from South to North along U.S. 220. The following map illustrates the approximate location of each of the 20 data points along U.S. 220.





East



West











East



West



East



West







East



West



















East



West

















West



East



West







East



West





### APPENDIX B

# A SHOOTING GUIDE FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION OF FARMSTAND CONTEXT AND PROCESS

### Structure

- o Is it new or old?
  - Are parts of the structure in disrepair
  - Are there parts recently added
- Is it permanent or temporary?
- o Is it open-air or a closed structure?
- o Of what materials is it built?
  - Are the al the same or a mix?
  - Were materials borrowed from other structures?
- O Does it feature farm implements or other items?
- O Does it feature items from town or other towns?
- o Does it feature advertising?
  - Are their signs inside or outside?
  - Are their brochures, cards, or logos

### Site

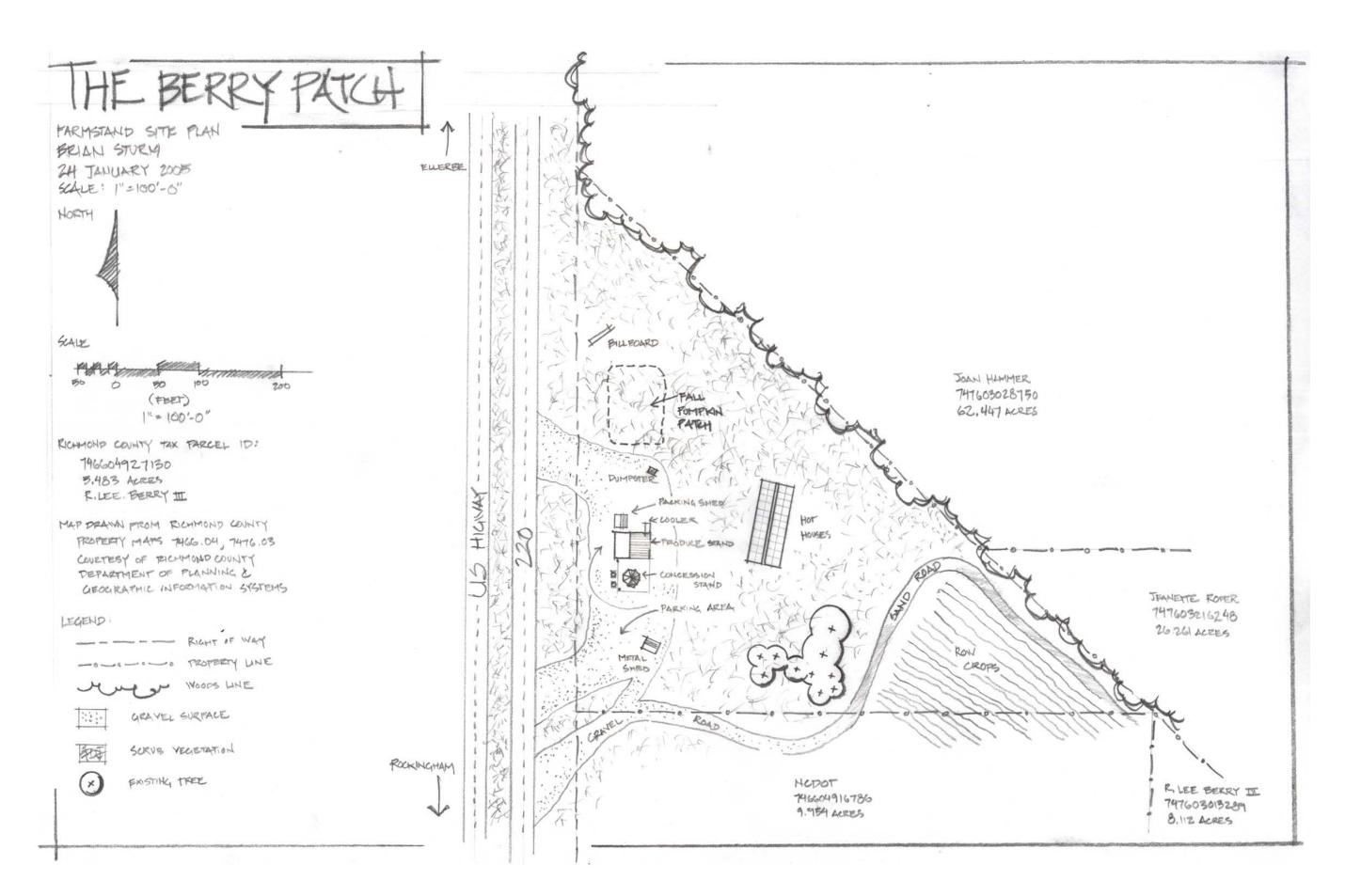
- o On what type of road does the farmstand sit?
  - How close does it sit to the road?
  - What is its orientation to the road?

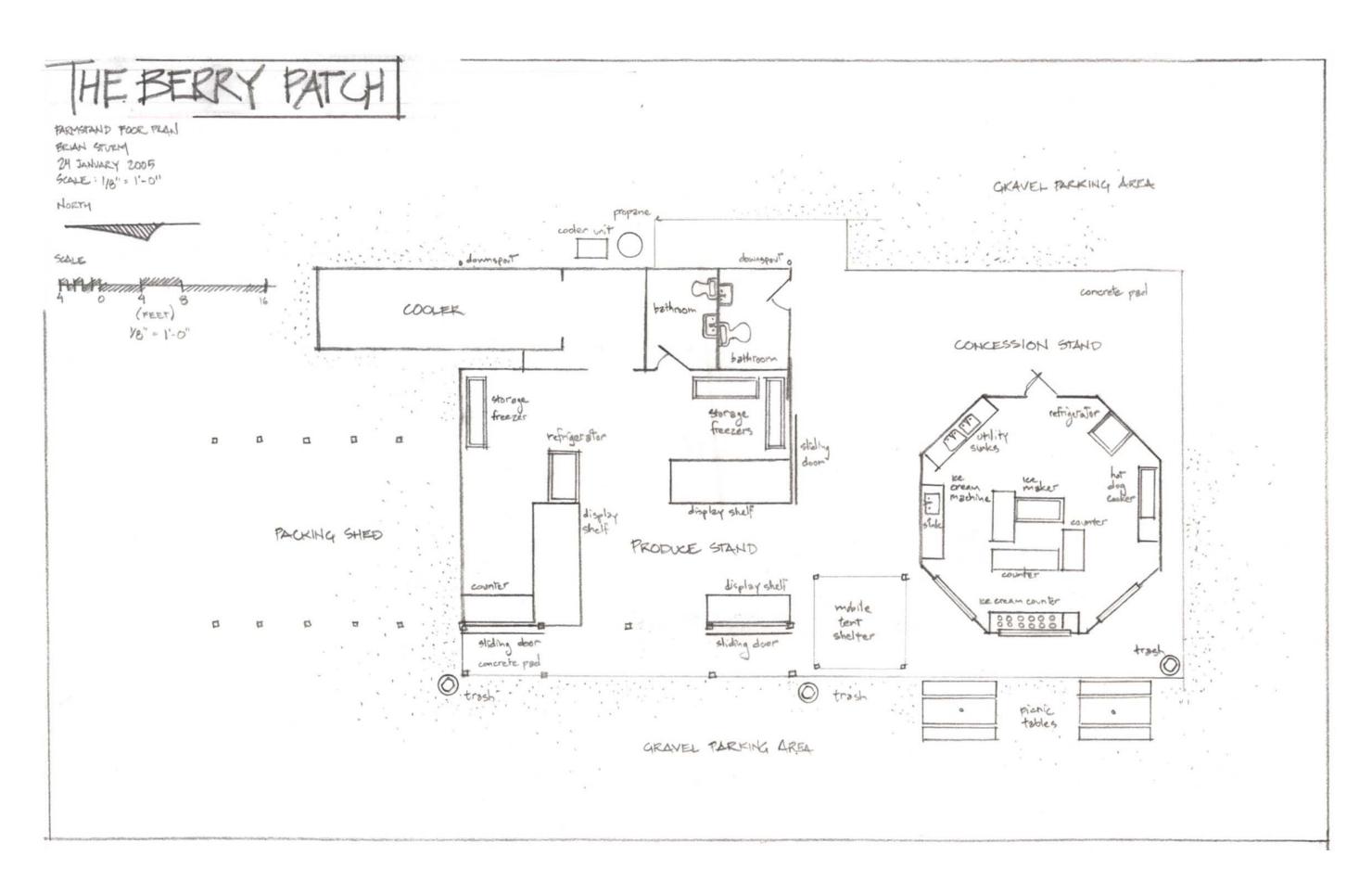
- What is the approach to the farmstand along the road like?
- Do different approaches seem different?
- o Generally, in what type of landscape does the farmstand lie?
  - Does it sit on or face farmland?
  - Does it sit in or face residential neighborhoods?
  - Is the site urban?
- o Does it feature parking?
  - How is parking provided or arranged?
  - Where do folks like to park?
- o Does it feature farm implements or items?
  - Are these for show or functional?
  - Where are they kept?
- O Does it feature installed trees, shrubs, or flowers?
  - Are these planted or naturally growing?
  - Are they natives or ornamentals?
- O Does it feature advertisements?
  - How are signs arranged?
  - How are they constructed or designed?
- o What types of buildings sit on the site?
  - How many are there?
  - What do they do?

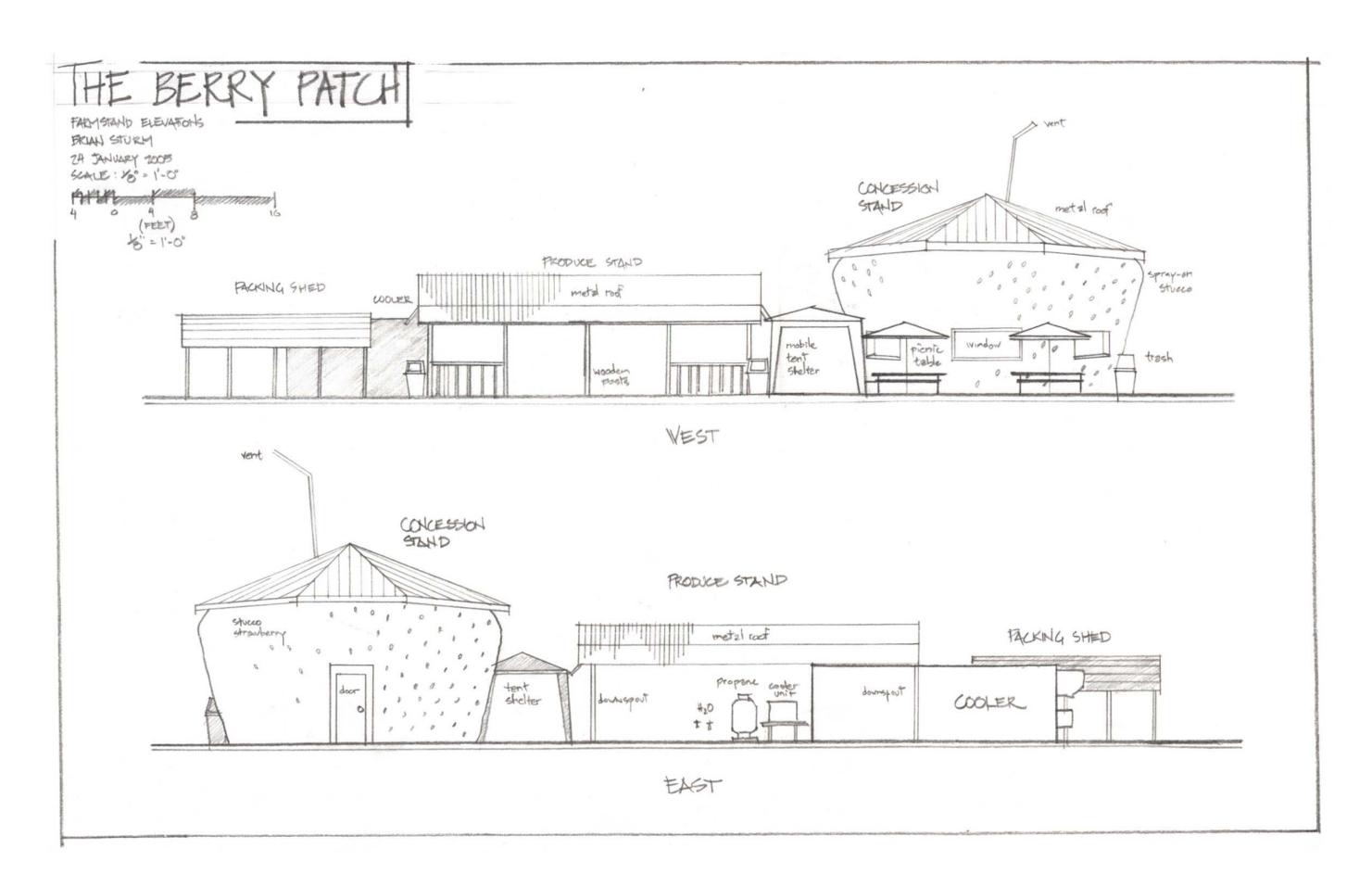
#### APPENDIX C

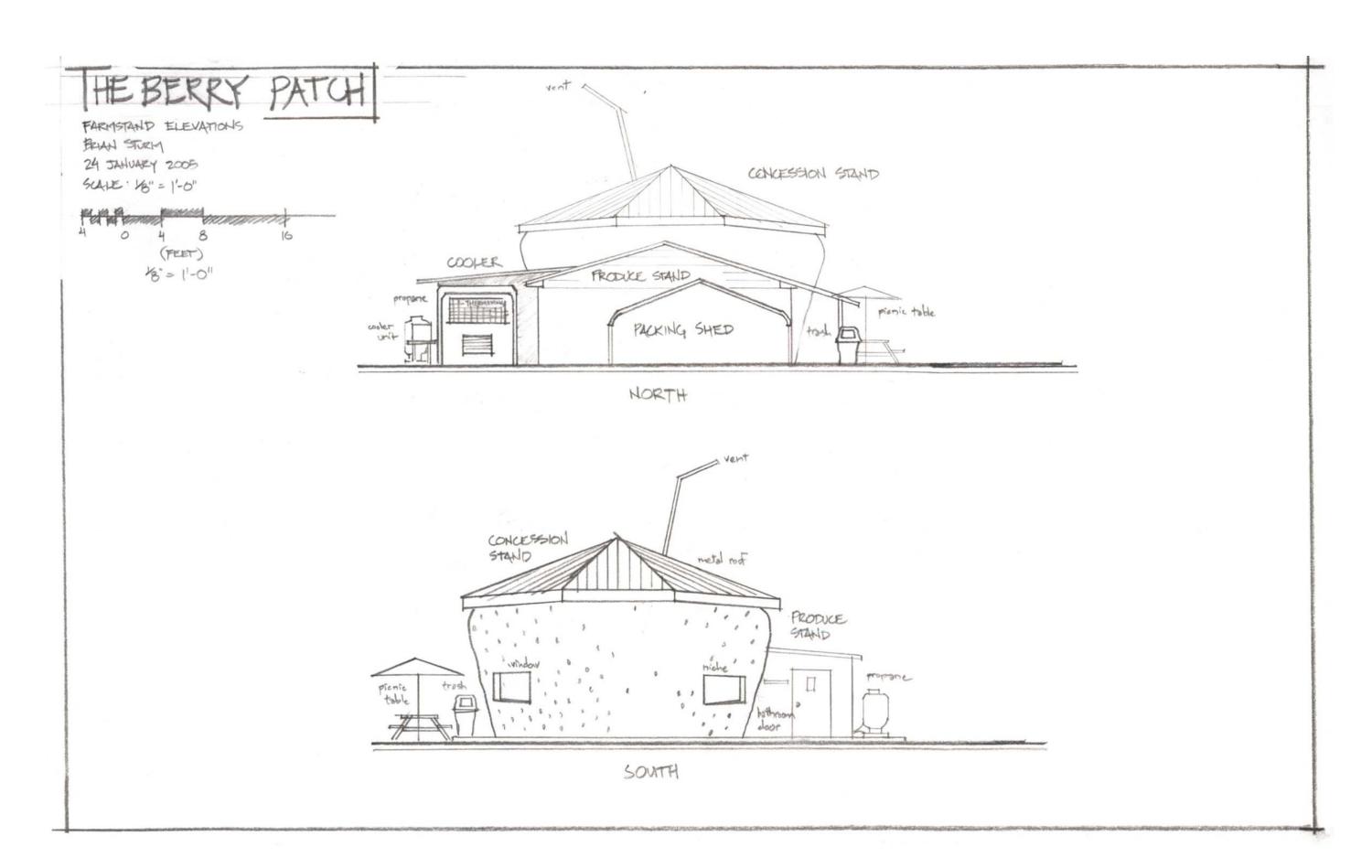
## FARMSTAND SITE PLANS, FLOOR PLANS, AND ELEVATIONS

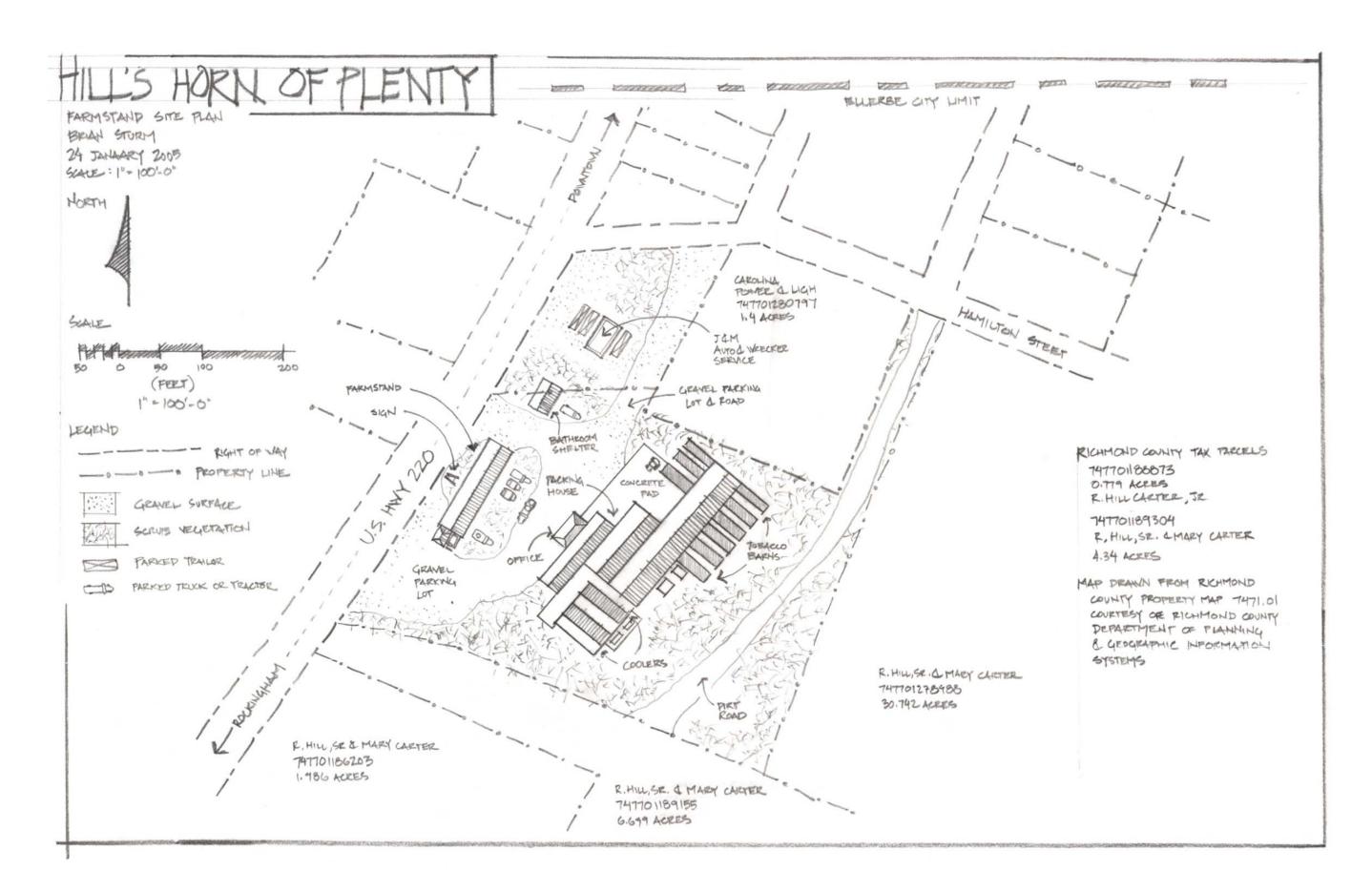
The following sixteen drawings comprise the entire set of scaled drawings done of the four case studies. In each case I prepared the drawing through a process of sketching and measuring in the field and redrafting to scale in the studio. Sketches and measurements were taken at each of the sites in successive visits on January 5, 6, and 28, 2005. The date recorded on each drawing refers to the date it was completed in the studio. To aid in the drafting of all site plans, I used tax maps provided by the Richmond County Department of Planning and Geographic Information Services. In the cases of David's Produce and Plant Farm and North State Orchard, I used 1994 aerial photographic images in addition to the tax maps. The county provided these images as well. I give credit on each map in which county documents were used. The site plans were originally scaled to 1"=100'-0" and the floor plans and elevations to 1/8"=1'-0". They have been reduced to fit the format of this publication. Information on scale can still obtained from the graphic scale bar.

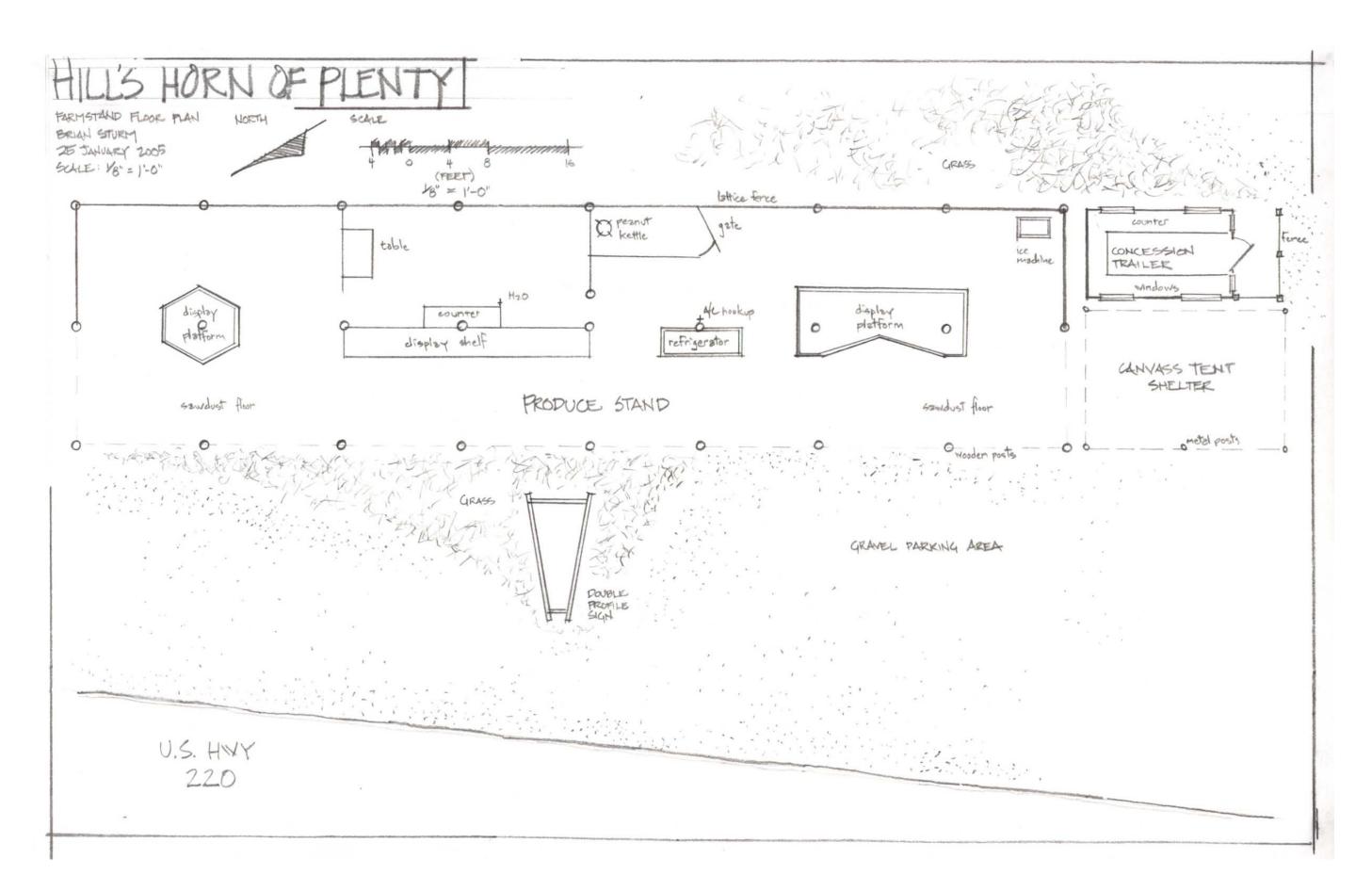


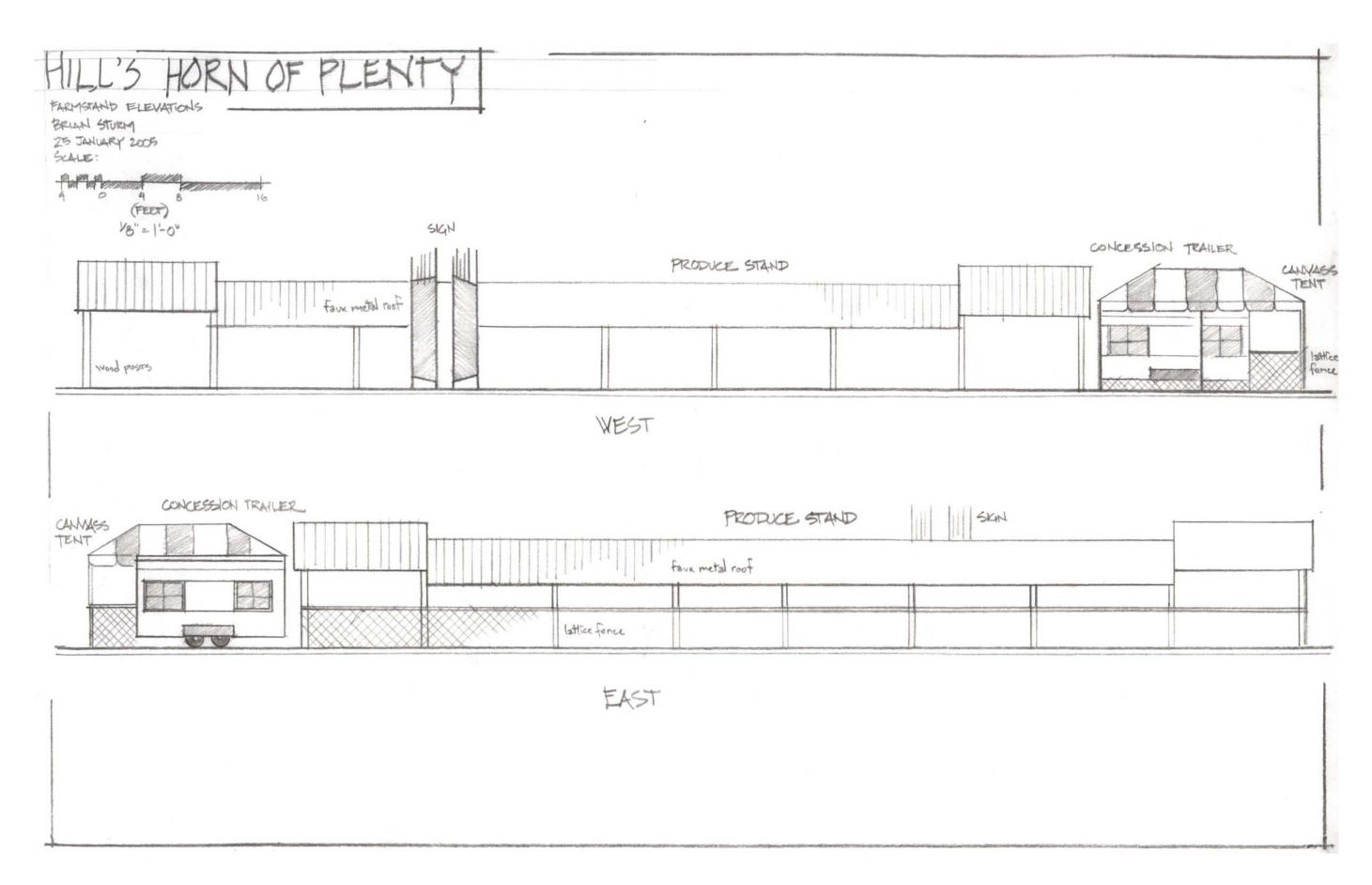


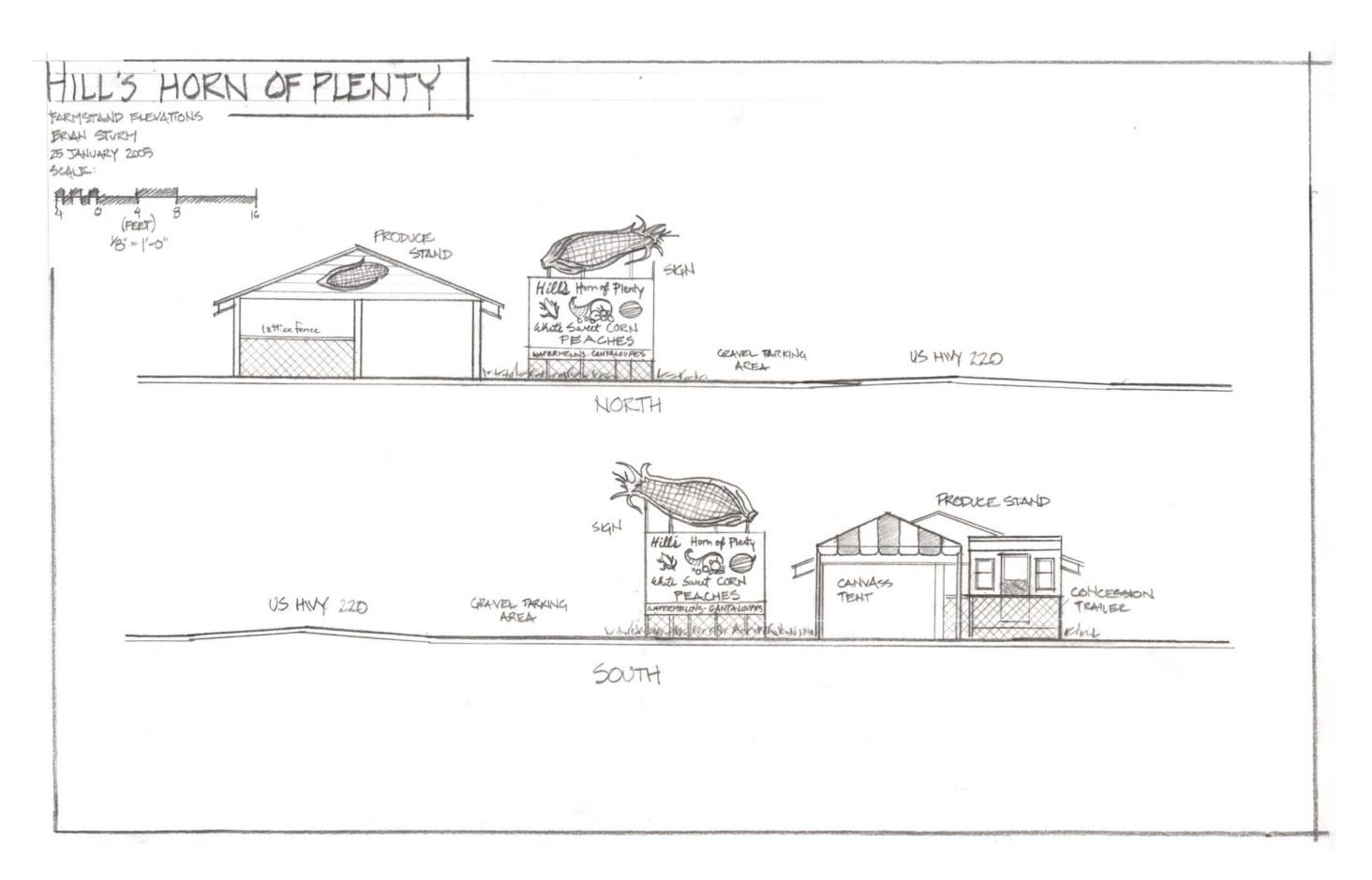


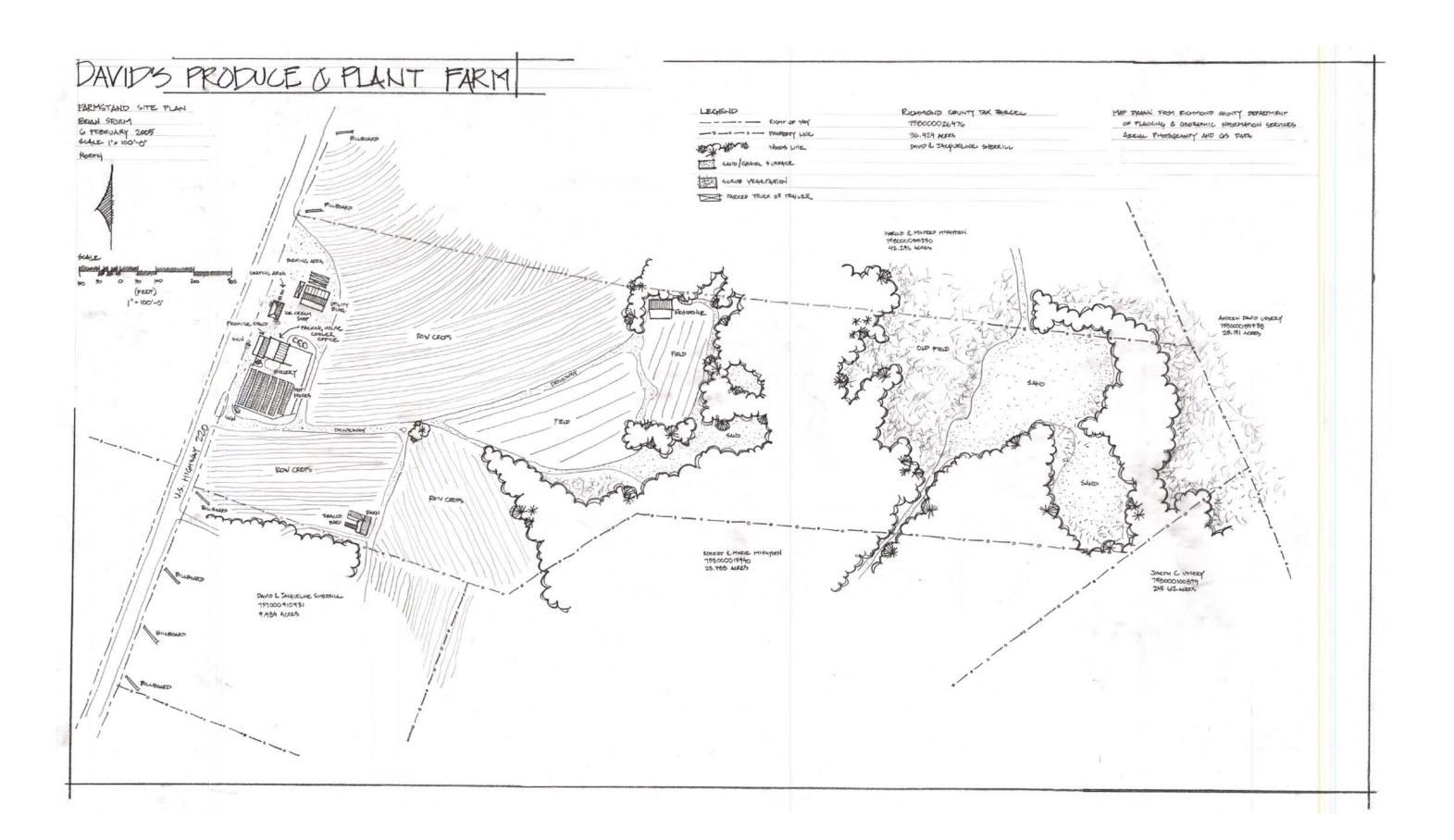


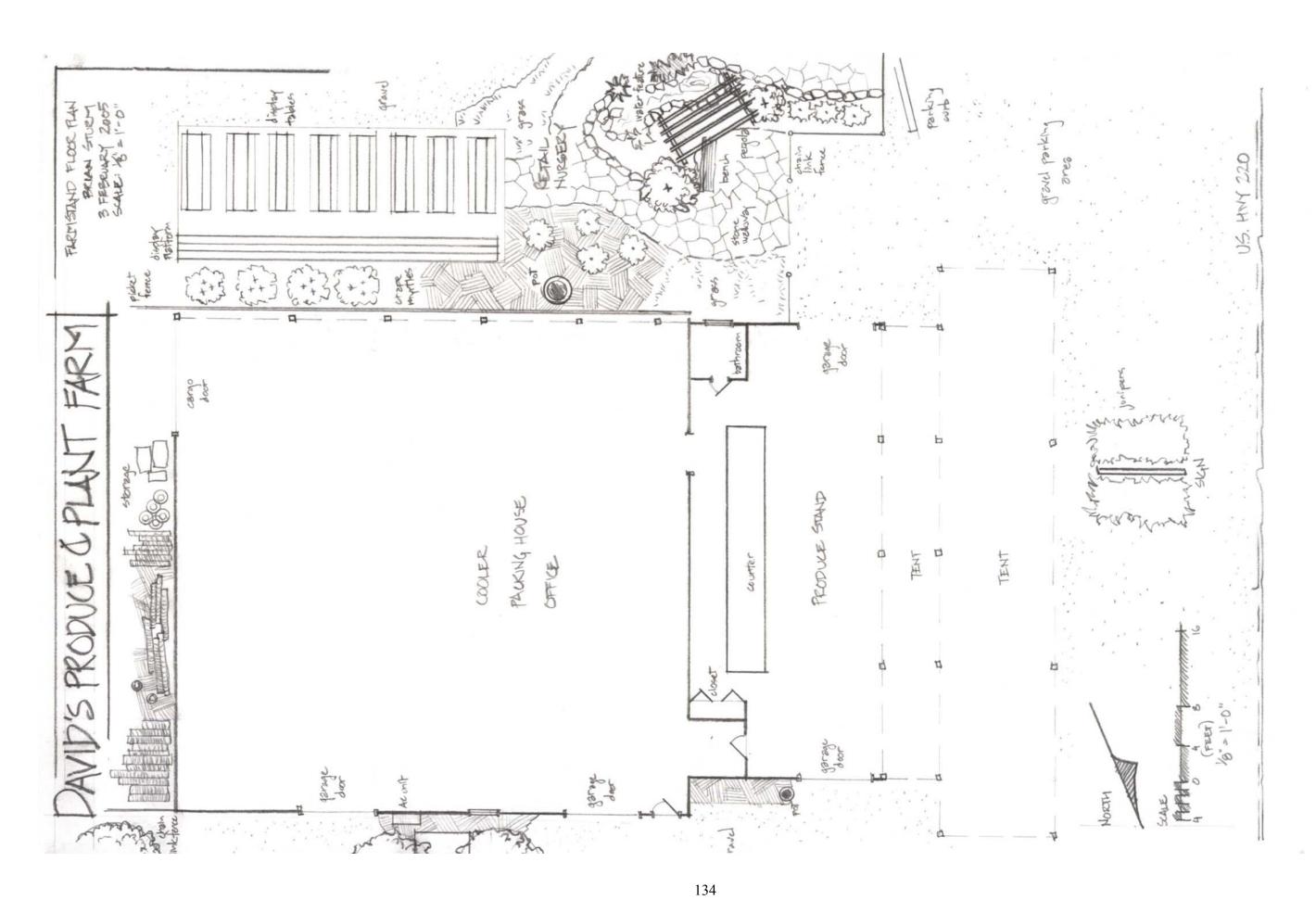


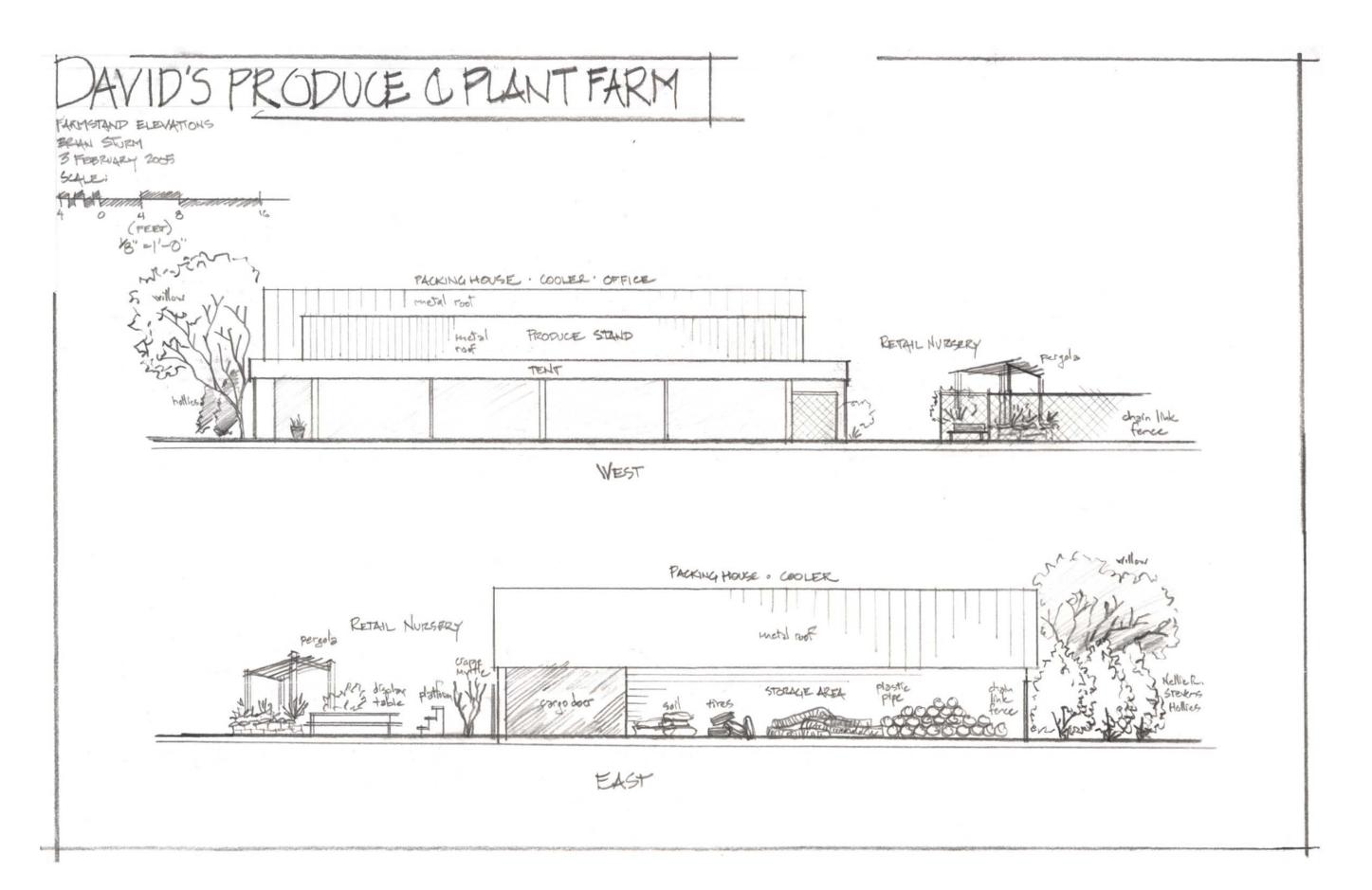


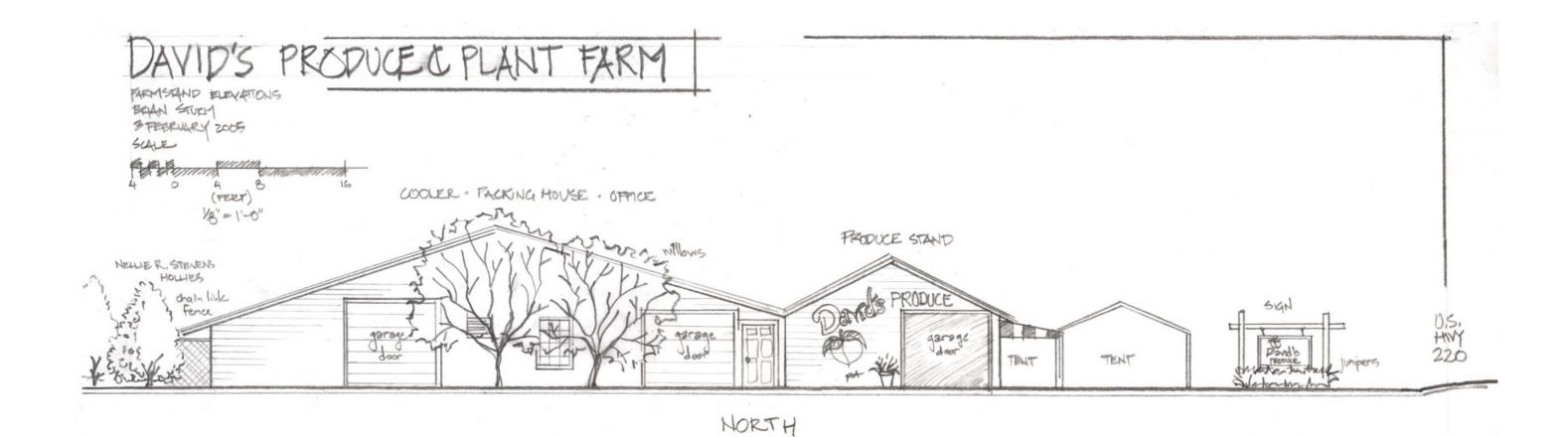


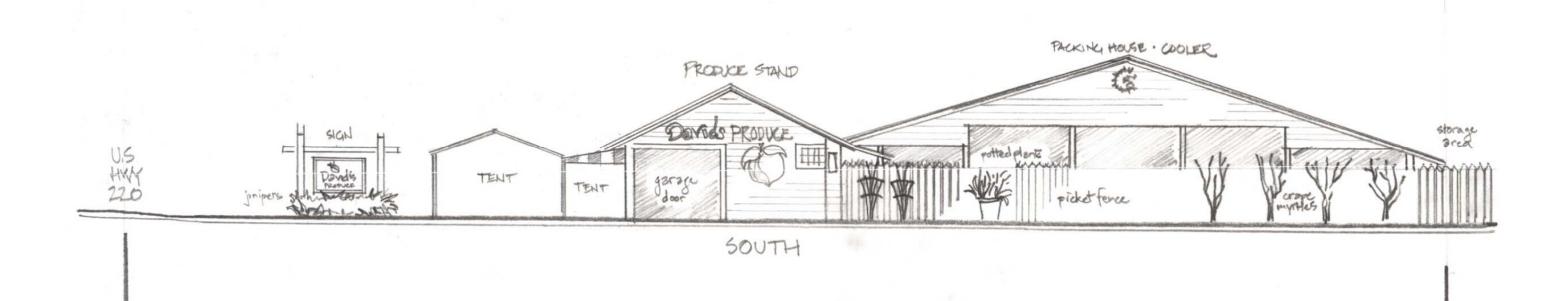


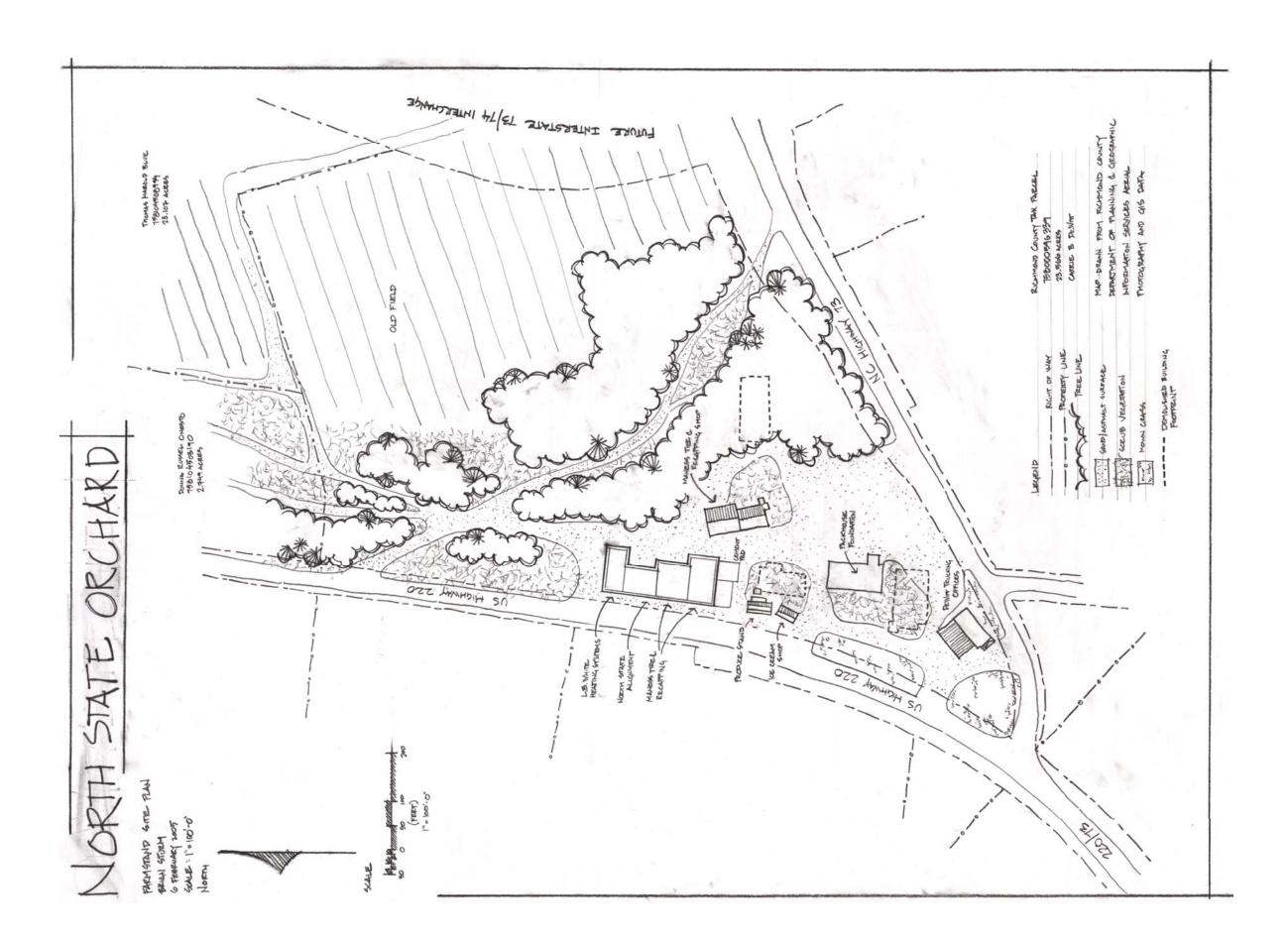


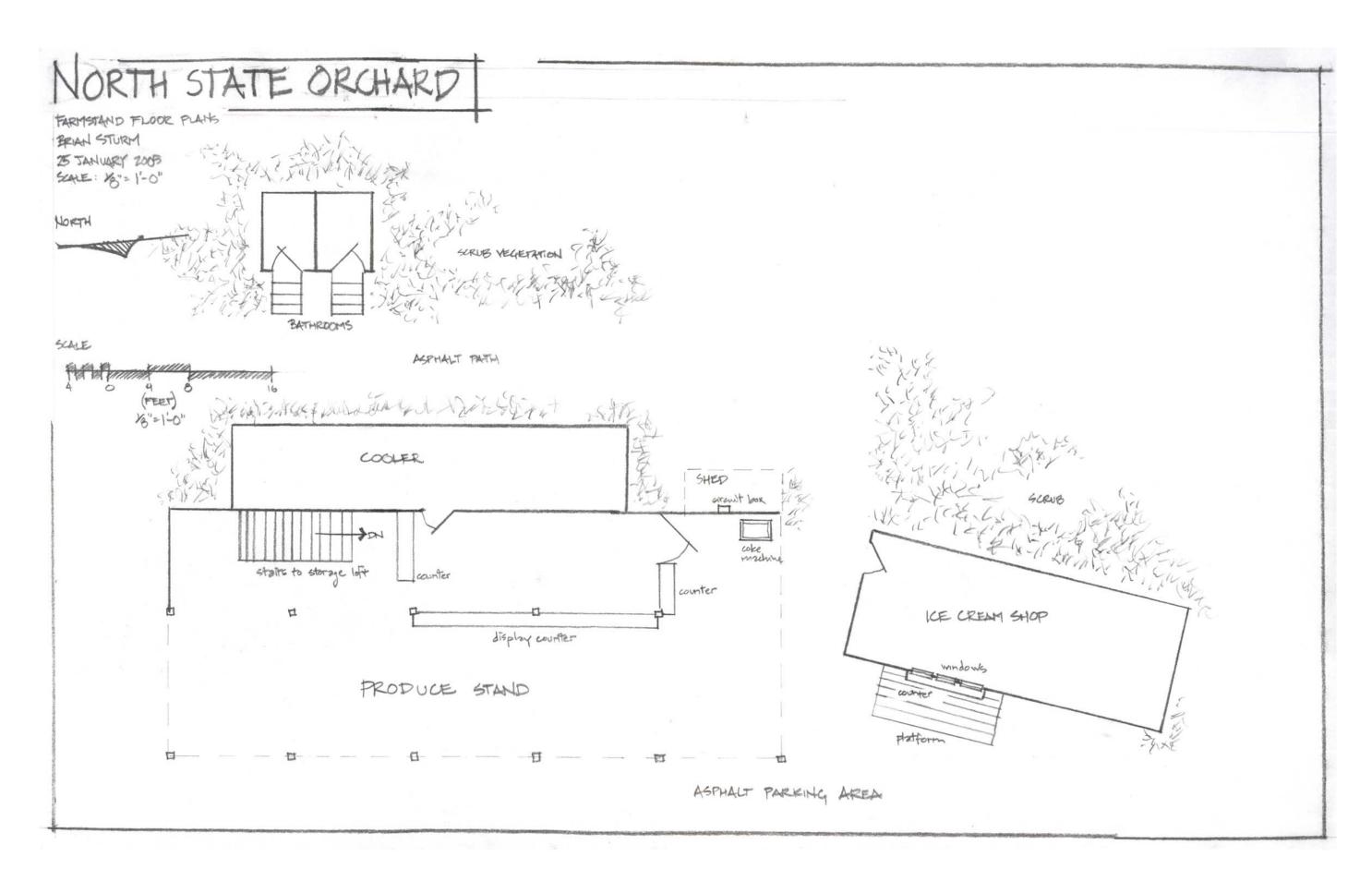


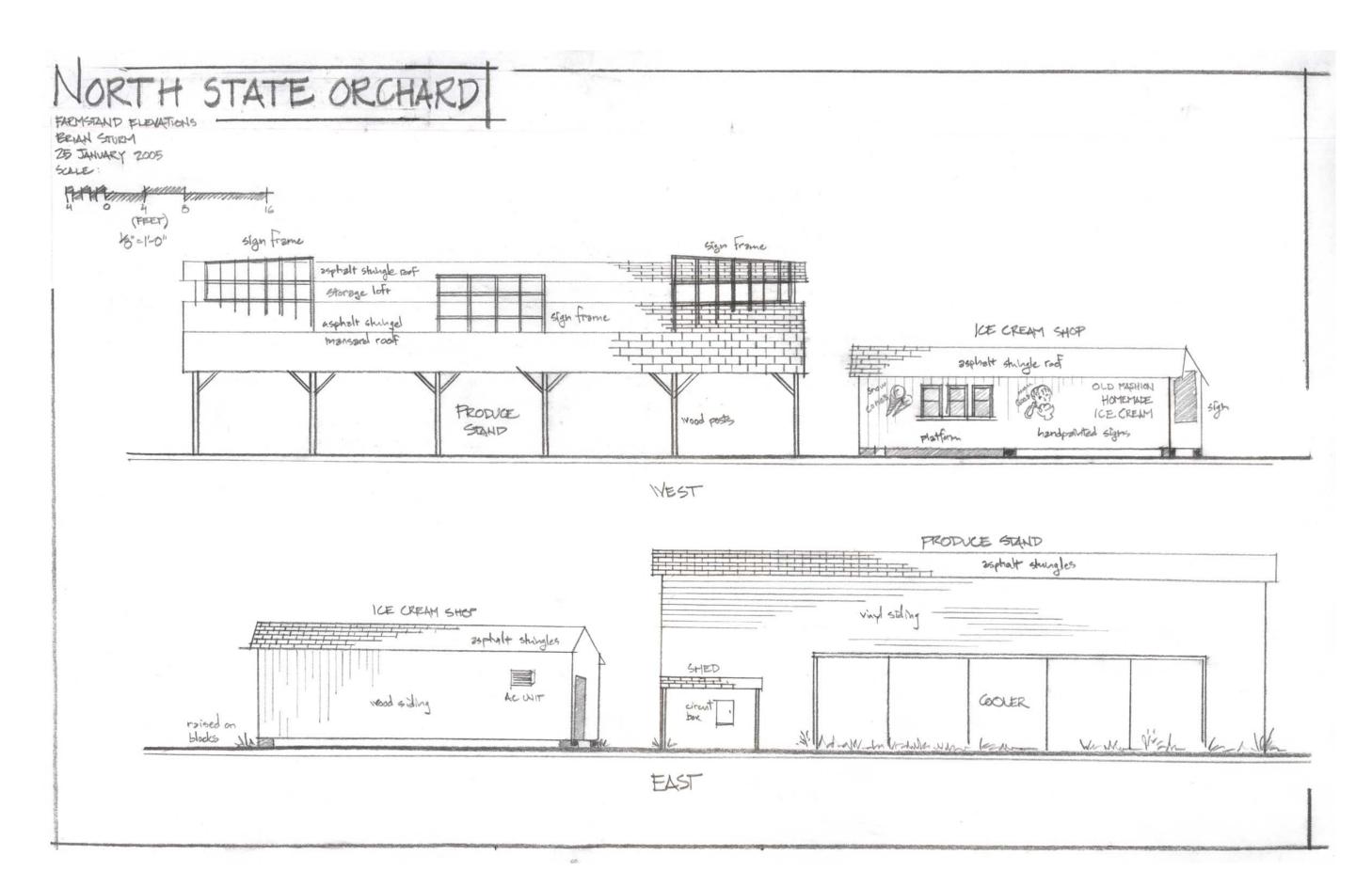


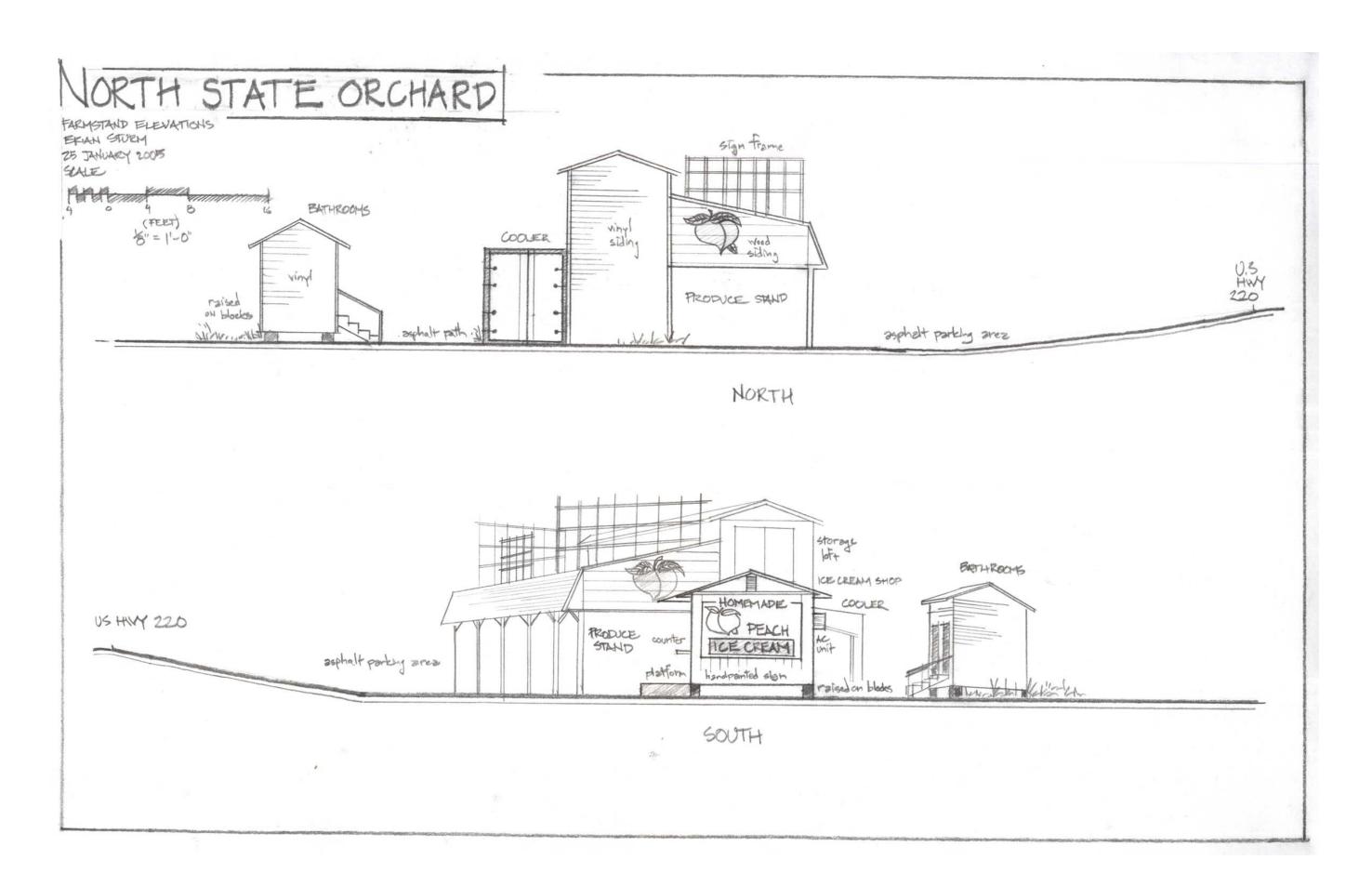












### APPENDIX D

### A LOOSE GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH FARMSTAND PROPRIETORS

### Tenure

- o Do you own the farmstand?
- o How long has it been in operation?
- o Do you own a farm?
- o How long have you owned this farm?

#### Structure

- o Did you build this farmstand?
- o Did your family build it?
- Where did the materials come from?
- O Where did you get the idea for the design?
- o Have you renovated or changed the farmstand over the years?

### Site

- o Did you decide where the farmstand now sits?
- o Has it always been on this spot?
- o How did you decide to build it here?
- Do you decorate your site?
- Where do you get your decorations?
- o Do you plant trees, shrubs, or flowers?
- Have you modified the lot or yard around the farmstand over the years?

### Business

- o How do you price your goods?
- o How often do the prices change?
- o Do you charge sales tax?
- o Do you advertise or market in anyway?
- o Where do you market or place advertisements?
- o Do you market produce through retail trade, wholesale trade, or both
- Do you sell produce at other sites?
- o Do you buy produce from other farmstands or markets?

# Proprietors

- o Where are you from?
- o How long have you lived in this area?
- o Did your parents operate a farmstand?
- O Do other members of your family operate farmstands?
- o Do you grow the food?
- o Do you know the growers?
- O Do you know your patrons?
  - Are there patrons you prefer?
  - Are there patrons you dislike?
  - Do you talk to the patrons?
  - What do you talk about?
  - Where do you talk?

### Patrons

- Where are they from?
- o How do they get to the farmstand from there?
- O Why do they come here?
- o Do they know you the proprietor?
- O Do they operate farmstands nearby?
- o Do they know each other?
- o Do they talk to one another?
- o What do they talk about?
- O Where do they do it?

### Produce

- o What do you sell?
  - Is it organic, ethnic, or specific?
  - Is it processed, refined, or raw?
  - Is it from this farm or another?
  - Is it from a farm or food distributor?
- o How do you decide to arrange it all?
- o What sells?
- o How fast?
- O What do you do with surplus?
  - Do you can or freeze?
  - Do you give food away?
  - Do you compost?

## Community

- o Do you know other farmstand proprietors?
- o Have you ever worked as a hand or an employee at a nearby farmstand?
- o Would you say there exists competition between you and other farmstands?
- Would you say there exists amity between you and other farmstands?
- o Do you take part in farm organizations?
- Do you take part in town organizations?

### Attitudes

- o Do any items in the farmstand have special meaning to you?
- What is different about your farmstand from others nearby?
- What do you like about other farmstands you see nearby?
- What do you dislike about other farmstands you see nearby?
- o How does your farmstand differ from those you knew in childhood?
- o Is there produce you would like to sell but don't?
- Are there decorations you would like for your farmstand?
- What gives you the most pleasure about working in this farmstand?
- What is most frustrating about working in the farmstand?
- Do you like living here in Ellerbe?