

Hearth and Home: A Lesson Plan for the Use of Cultural Geography to Identify Regional Settlement Patterns in North Carolina

W. Frank Ainsley

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Introduction

As teachers of geography, we are constantly aware of how little our students know about the cultural landscape. Our responsibility is to create an atmosphere of excitement in which our students cannot help but be swept up by an emotional and subjective response to an awareness of human patterns upon the earth.

Cultural geography is the study of the human occupation of the earth. It looks at the question of how human beings interact and interrelate with their physical environments. In cultural geography, you study the distributions and spatial patterns of such human and cultural topics as the ways people make a living, their languages, their religions, and all aspects of their settlement patterns.¹

One of the best approaches to introducing cultural geography to the novice is to cultivate an appreciation for the cultural landscape. "Cultural landscape" is a concept introduced by geographer Carl O. Sauer in 1925.² Sauer defined the study of cultural geography as the analysis of the "cultural landscape"—the human imprint on the earth's surface. Anything that people have done to alter or change the face of the earth from a purely natural or physical landscape has created some form of human imprint or cultural landscape. All human activities—the ways we make a living, the ways we build our shelters, our food production methods, even ceremonial and religious practices—all of these help to create new varieties of cultural landscapes.

The study of material culture can be a springboard for the studying the cultural landscape. Material culture refers to any things, artifacts, or materials

that are made by people. Artifacts or objects of material culture are not only things such as tools, weapons, or ornaments; they include the larger manifestations of material culture that compose our landscapes. Houses, barns, country stores, all types of buildings, fences, roads, and even field patterns are all part of the material culture of a region. As geographers, we learn a great deal about the history and culture of places by analyzing their material cultural patterns. The first group of people to permanently settle in a region generally makes the most lasting imprint on that region. Kniffen's concept of "initial occupance"³, or Zelinsky's "doctrine of first effective settlement"⁴, can be seen best in patterns of land division and the oldest types of houses found in a region.

When we begin to study the cultural landscapes of North Carolina, we need to remember that the land survey system used here was the old British system of "metes and bounds." Because this land division system used landmarks such as "the corner oak" or "a large pine stump" or the "stone in the bend of the creek," the resulting land parcels very often were extremely irregular in shape. As a result, the road systems throughout the rural parts of our state form an irregular net across our land.⁵

Like the initial survey system, the types of buildings erected by the first permanent settlers formed the organizing framework upon which later architecture would flourish. In studying cultural landscapes, geographers usually talk about "folk housing."³ Folk houses (not planned by professional architects) are the ordinary houses, the traditional houses, the ones marketed, built, and used locally.⁶ They characterize a region, and are often referred to as vernacular, or local,

architecture. Folk houses did not change much with the passage of time. The small coastal frame cottage was very similar throughout the time span of its usage in North Carolina (Figure 1). On the other hand, folk architectural patterns varied greatly across geographic space.

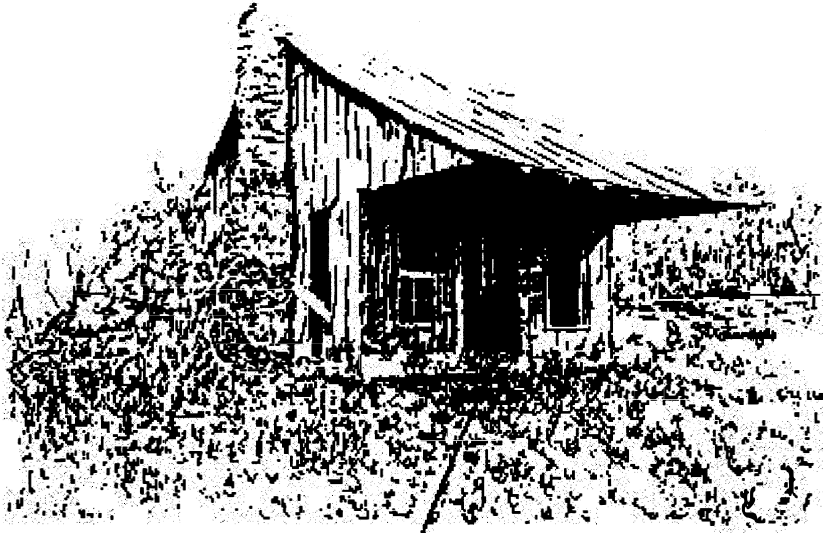


Figure 1. A typical coastal cottage.

Folk or vernacular building patterns are most often those identified with the past historical evolution of the region. In the late 1800s, new mass media building information, new building technologies, and mass milling and marketing of architectural components, brought about the beginnings of a major shift away from the pure, locally crafted folk house types. Popular styles became the norm. Older locally designed and built forms such as coastal cottages, single-room log houses, and the central hallway "I" house, began to be replaced by national house styles such as Queen Anne Victorian, foursquare houses, and bungalows.

The important question at this point is, "How do we practically apply the concepts of material culture and cultural landscapes to the teaching of geography?" Encourage students to travel with open eyes and inquisitiveness. Teach them that local geography can be exciting and interesting if they will only take time to

observe the countryside around them. A brief field trip to introduce them to material culture on the local landscape will be even more educationally rewarding.

Just as you can learn from reading a book, there is a tremendous amount of knowledge about the

world and its geography that can be gained by "reading the cultural landscape."⁷ We should encourage our students to notice the patterns of material culture that are out there on the land. They should look for any unusual or unique types of things that may help to label or identify a particular region. Travel the "blue highways!" Learn to identify traces of past human settlement and movement patterns that you can still discern. A good cultural geographer should be a "collector" of the material cultural landscape.

How do you become a "collector" of the cultural landscape? As a start, we need to become acquainted with the names of the types and styles of buildings, structures, and other objects that are found on the land. We need to be aware also of the roads, paths, fields, survey lines or markers, and communications lines that are part of a region's cultural landscape. So often we just take most of these things for granted. There are many elements of material culture that can

be collected in this fashion. Some examples are different house types, country store buildings, old hotels or taverns, modern motels and other roadside architecture, farmhouses, barns and other farm outbuildings, fences, church buildings and other religious structures, bridges, gas stations, and types of cemeteries or gravestones. Surely, we can find some elements of the cultural landscape that will stimulate the intellect of each of our students, no matter where his or her particular interests may lie.

To collect a sampling of the material culture of a region, we need to use one of the basic tools of the geographic profession—field methods. Using a good base map as a guide, (U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute quadrangles work best), a preliminary windshield survey can be made of a region. Then a more comprehensive inventory should be conducted of a selected study area. Documentation forms should be filled out and photographs taken of the material cultural objects being studied. Sketches and drawings of the structures or objects in their natural setting should also be made in order to give some overall context or sense of place to the data being collected. For secondary students, the end result of such an examination of the local cultural landscape could be the production and publication of an inventory booklet including an historical geography of their community. If such a field excursion type project is being used with elementary or middle school students, the end result could be the compilation of a class sketchbook, a photograph album, or even a poster collage illustrating the kinds of material culture they “discovered” on their trip.

Many excellent resources exist that can be used as guidebooks for such investigations of the cultural landscapes of our state’s cities and towns and rural areas. Many of these contain detailed diagrams and photographs which help the beginning cultural geographer to identify the various elements of material culture. In addition to the basic seminal works by geographers already mentioned, there are numerous “field guides” available to help one know what the artifact is and what its importance is to the region. Included in the list of end notes is a listing of some of the most helpful materials. ^{8 to 18}

Hopefully, all of us are becoming more aware of the valuable landscape “textbook” that is out there in

all of our communities and regions. Now let’s introduce our eager geography and social studies students to the endless possibilities of material culture that they can find. With a sense of exploration and discovery, and with guidebooks in hand, let’s go forward and capture that sense of landscape understanding that can make cultural geography come alive both for the student and teacher. Good hunting!

The Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

Where it fits into the NC Standard Course of Study: Social Studies Objectives:

- 2.3 The student will assess similarities and differences among communities in different times and in different places
- 6.1 The student will identify and analyze changes which have occurred in communities in different settings
- 6.2 The student will assess the impact of change on the lives of people in communities studied
- 7.3 The student will identify a variety of examples of cultural traditions
- 8.1 The student will distinguish among various kinds of maps and globes and suggest their uses
- 9.1 The student will know absolute and/or relative locations of the local and other communities
- 9.5 The student will distinguish the local region from other regions of which it is a part

OBJECTIVE:

The student will identify the folk housing that reflects the Lowland South and Upland South culture regions in North Carolina.

INTRODUCTION:

Conduct a lesson on the folk house types of North Carolina’s Lowland South and Upland South culture. Review associated background information,

historic preservation vocabulary, and architectural characteristics of specific styles of the period. Use drawings and transparencies to demonstrate visually the specific characteristics, features, and functions of the buildings and structures.

Teaching activities consist of the following sections:

- I. Getting Started (inquiry question)
- II. Setting the Stage (historical background)
- III. Determining the Facts (readings, documents, charts)
- IV. Visual Evidence (photographs and other graphic documents)
- V. Locating the Site (maps)
- VI. Putting It All Together (activities).

The lesson plan format was designed to allow flexibility but works best if the material in each lesson plan is presented to students as described below:

I. Getting Started

Ask students to discuss possible answers to the inquiry questions that accompany the **"Getting Started"** image (Figure 2). To facilitate a whole class discussion, you may want to print the page and use it to make an overhead transparency. The purpose of the exercise is to engage students' interest in the lesson's topic by raising questions that can be answered as they complete the lesson. Rather than serving merely as illustrations for the text, images are documents that play an integral role in helping students achieve the lesson's objectives.

To assist students in learning how to "read" visual materials, have them answer the following questions about this photograph.

- a. What is the material from which this building is constructed?
- b. Of what material is the chimney built?
- c. How many rooms do you think this house contains?
- d. How many openings are on the front façade of this house?
- e. Would you classify this building as a "folk house type?"

II. Setting the Stage

This material may be read aloud to students, summarized, or better yet photocopied for students to read individually or in small groups. "Setting the Stage" material provides background information necessary to acquaint students with the topic of the lesson they will be studying.

PIONEER SETTLEMENT:

Approximately one-half of North Carolina lies outside the Coastal Plain—in the Piedmont and the Mountain regions—areas that were initially settled by an assortment of pioneers. Many of these pioneers are considered members of the Upland South culture. The Upland South culture in the United States dates back to the mid eighteenth century, when a wave of Scots-Irish and German immigrants arrived from Pennsylvania. These groups blended their experiences into what became known as the Upland South culture. They initially settled in the Piedmont hills and the Appalachian mountains where they found cheap and abundant land. With them came their cultural baggage—their ideas about building and other traditions—which they modified to fit their new environment. Historically those who made up the Upland South culture were evangelical Protestants, who held on to their independence with an unyielding tenacity, and did not accept central authority. Farming, hunting, and livestock raising were their main activities.

During the 1750's the Upland South culture came to North Carolina. They brought their culture and traditions with them. The Upland South culture was noted for its simplicity and adaptability. Its folk house types were of such a nature that they were easily duplicated. The Scots-Irish brought with them the British pen house as the basic model of their domestic architecture and the German-speaking settlers brought the central European tradition of log construction.

The few surviving Upland South buildings in North Carolina are a testimony to its pioneer heritage. Most of the buildings constructed in keeping with the Upland South culture in North Carolina are no longer standing because the early buildings were either abandoned or altered so that they were no longer recognizable as Upland South architecture.



Figure 2. Example for class room discussion.

In the Coastal Plain of North Carolina, the English settled in the mid-seventeenth century. They brought with them the traditional folk house types from southern England, and adapted those dwelling units to the flat, humid environments of the coastal region. As in the Piedmont and mountain regions, not many of the earliest buildings still exist, but the astute observer of the cultural landscape can still discover examples of a few eighteenth century structures and quite a number of nineteenth and early twentieth century folk house types.

III. Determining the Facts &

IV. Visual Evidence

Provide students with copies of the following outline of readings, drawings, and references. Again, allow students to work individually or in small groups. For the examples of each folk house type, references are given to the appropriate pages in the excellent series of three books: *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina*, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina*, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*.¹⁹⁻²¹

Also basic references to web pages for individual houses are given. For general information and more photographs go to the following web sites:

<http://www.ncmuseums.org/history.html>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>

COMMON FOLK HOUSE TYPES IN NORTH CAROLINA: A LEARNING OUT- LINE

PIONEER HOUSE TYPES (usually built in frontier areas by first settlers):

(1) **Single pen house** (Figure 3)

- a. Usually 16 by 16 feet or 16 by 18 feet
- b. Usually built with logs, with V-notches or dove tailed notches at corners
- c. Chimney constructed of field stones, or mud and sticks built outside the walls at gable end
- d. Doors centered in front and rear walls
- e. Entire family, ate, cooked, and slept in single room
- f. Example: Davis House at Mountain Farm Museum, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Swain County, NC (Bishir, et.al., *Western NC*, pp. 389-90)

<http://www.blueridgeviews.com>

[BR129 Davis House.htm](http://www.blueridgeviews.com/BR129_Davis_House.htm)

<http://pictures.care2.com/view/2/790526011>

- g. Importance: All pen-tradition houses consist of combinations of single-pen unit

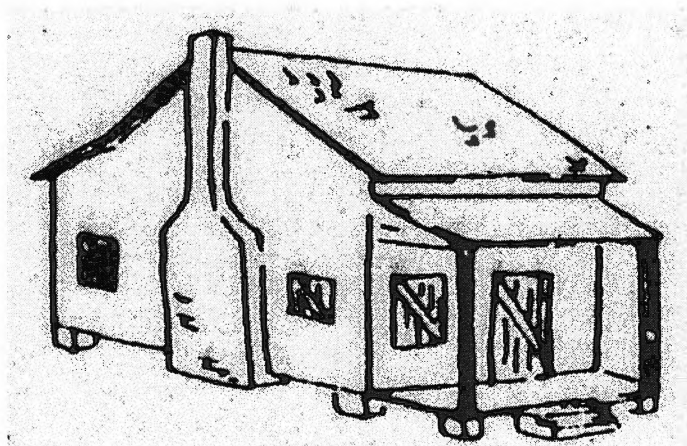


Figure 3. Single-pen house.

(2) Double pen house (Figure 4)

- a. Consists of two single pens joined gable-to-gable with chimney at either end.
- b. Core commonly ranges from 16 by 32 feet to 16 by 36 feet
- c. Commonly have galleries and rear shed rooms
- d. Doors on front and rear walls
- e. Construction techniques same as for single pen
- f. Windows often lacked glass
- g. Example: Gunter House (ca. 1875) at Fontana Village Graham County, NC (Bishir, et.al., *Western NC*, pp. 398-99)

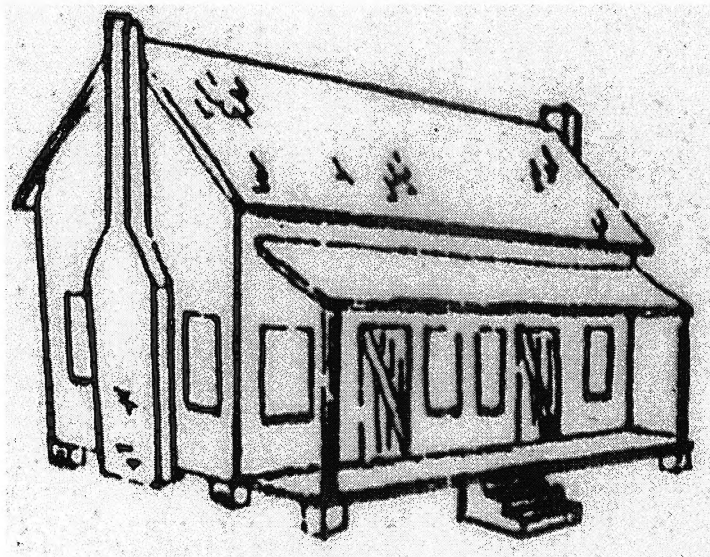


Figure 4. Double-pen house.

(3) Saddlebag house (Figure 5)

- a. Consists of two single pens joined gable-to-gable with chimney in center.
- b. Core commonly ranges from 16 by 32 feet to 16 by 36 feet
- c. Commonly have galleries and rear shed rooms
- d. Doors on front and rear walls
- e. Construction techniques same as for single pen

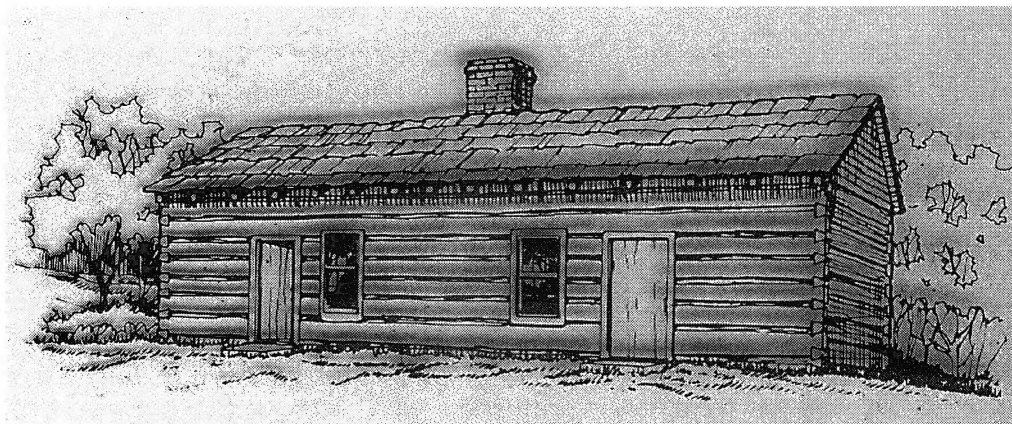


Figure 5. Saddlebag house.

(4) Dog trot house (Figure 6)

- a. Consists of two single pens separated by open, roofed passageway
- b. Open passageway is usually half the width of a single pen
- c. Usually ranges from 16 by 40 feet to 16 by 45 feet
- d. Usually has a full gallery on front and shed rooms across the rear
- e. Almost invariably one story
- f. Evolved from the British pen-house
- g. Theories about plan of Dog Trot Houses:
 - 1. Log rooms could not be attached, hence they were separated by a passageway
 - 2. Developed to cope with hot summers
 - 3. Plan came to America from Scandinavia
 - 4. Frontiersman's efforts to make a symmetrical house in the Georgian style
- h. Represented more prosperous owner than those of single and double pens
- i. Few dog trot houses remain because many were changed with time into more modern floor plans
- j. Example of dog trot house:
Log House Museum at John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, Cherokee County, NC (Bishir, et.al., *Western NC*, p. 411)

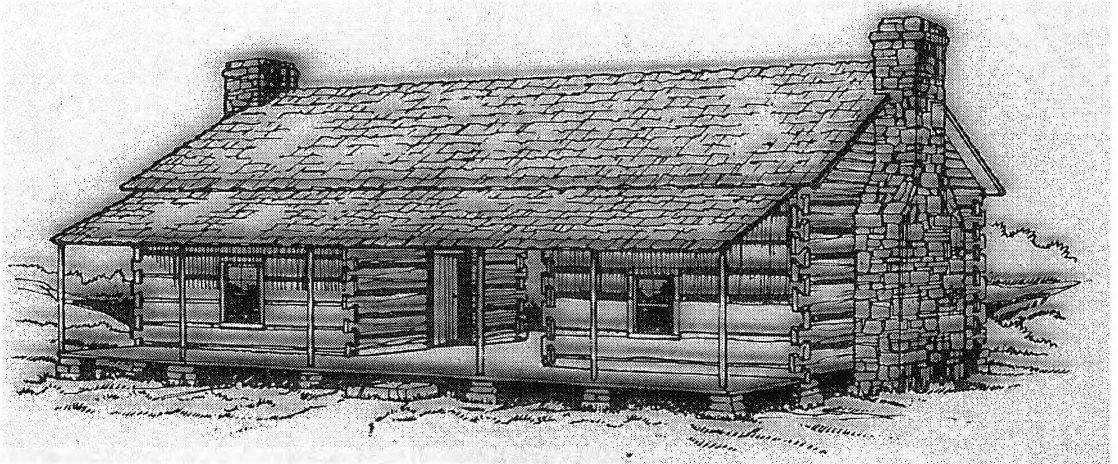


Figure 6. Dog trot house.

OLD WORLD HOUSE TYPES (folk house types brought from Europe as cultural baggage):

(5) Coastal frame cottage (Figure 7)

- a. Consists of two rooms
- b. Usually one-and-a-half story, with a storage area or sleeping loft above
- c. Constructed of frame lumber
- d. Raised above ground level (sometimes several feet) to allow ventilation
- e. Single, exterior gable end chimney
- f. Examples of coastal frame cottages:
 1. Dunn-Canady House (early 19th century), near Graingers, Lenoir County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, p. 373)
 2. Sloop Point House (1726), on Sloop Point Road, Pender County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, p. 231)
 3. David Newby House (early 19th century), at the Newbold-White House, near Hertford, Perquimans County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, p. 113)
 4. Archibald Monk House (ca. 1824), Newton Grove, Sampson County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, p. 410)

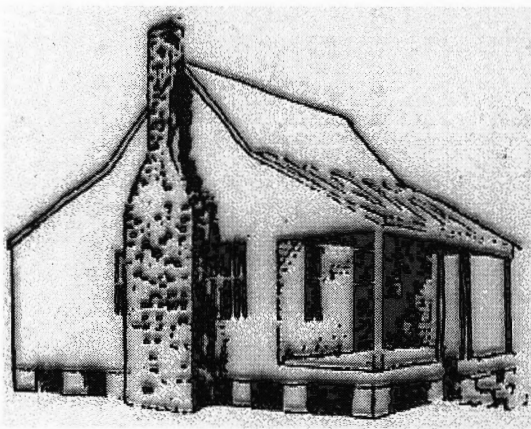


Figure 7. Coastal frame cottage.

(6) Hall-and-parlor house (Figure 8)

- a. Consists of two rooms, a large square “hall” and a smaller formal “parlor”
- b. Plan usually used in many early coastal frame cottages
- c. A one-and-a-half story house, usually with a boxed-in corner stairs
- d. Examples of hall-and-parlor houses:
 1. Newbold-White House (1729), near Hertford, Perquimans County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp.17, 113) <http://newboldwhitehouse.org/history.html>
 2. Jones-Litch House (ca. 1810s) (hewn log construction, rare for Coastal region), Laurinburg, Scotland County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp.17, 113)
 3. King-Bazemore House (1763), on grounds of Hope Plantation, Bertie County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp.278-79)

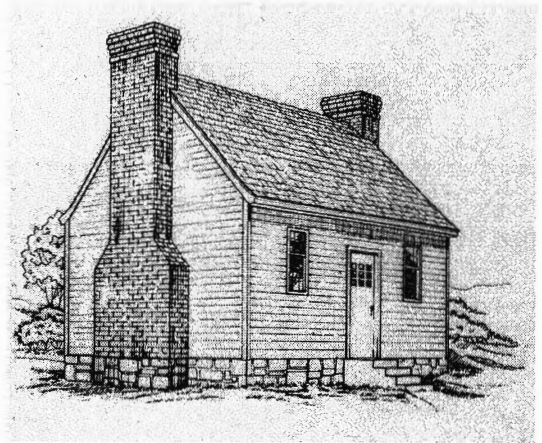


Figure 8. Hall-and-parlor house.

(7) Central hallway I-house (named by Fred Kniffen) (Figure 9)

- a. Has a central passage ("descended" from the English cross-passage house)
- b. One room deep, two or more rooms wide
- c. Two story house
- d. Chimneys usually at gable ends
- e. One story porch (sometimes two story porches) across the front façade
- f. One story shed extension across the rear
- g. Examples of the I-House:

- 1. John McNider House (ca. 1800), near Bethel, Perquimans County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp. 19, 114)
- 2. Duke Homestead State Historic Site (ca. 1852), Durham County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Piedmont NC*, pp. 212-13)
<http://www.ibiblio.org/dukehome/>
- 3. Eaton Place (1843-44), Warrenton, Warren County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Piedmont NC*, pp. 149-150)

- 4. Kelly-Farrior House (Cowan Museum) (1850s), Kenansville, Duplin County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp. 413-14) <http://www.cowanmuseum.com/cowaninfo.htm>

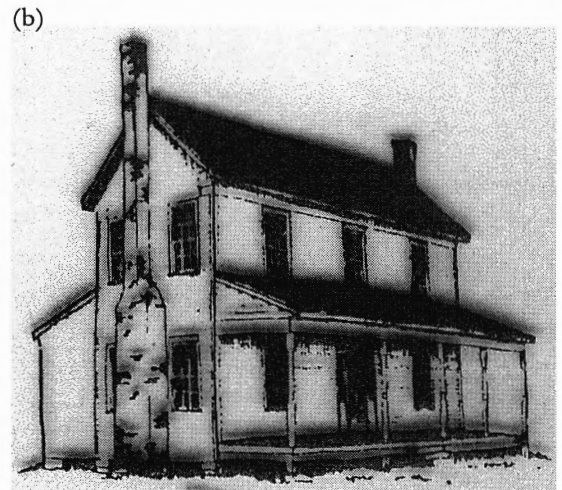
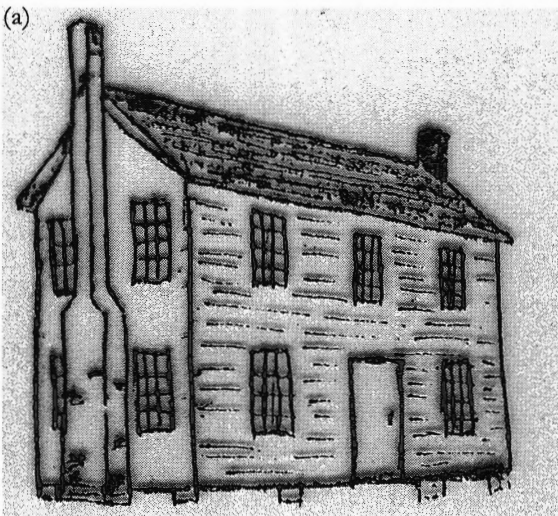


Figure 9. Central hallway I-house: (a) basic I-house and (b) Carolina I-house.

(8) Four-over-four house (Figure 10)

- a. Two story house
- b. Has a central passage
- c. Two rooms deep
- d. Chimneys symmetrically placed between front and rear rooms
- e. May have gable or hip roof
- f. May have double-tiered porches across the front façade (sometimes across the rear)
- g. Generally the homes of the wealthier people (merchants, businessmen, planters)
- h. Examples of four-over-four houses:
 1. Buckner Hill House (1859), near Faison, Duplin County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, p. 417) http://www.carolinaplantation.com/buckner_hill_main_frame.htm
 2. Tryon Palace (1767-70), New Bern, Craven County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp. 194-95) <http://www.tryonpalace.org/>
 3. Poplar Grove (ca. 1850), Scotts Hill, Pender County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, pp. 230-31) <http://www.poplargrove.com/>
 4. Hope Plantation (1796-1803), near Windsor, Bertie County, NC (Bishir and Southern, *Eastern NC*, p. 278) <http://www.hopeplantation.org/>

V. Locating the Sites

Next provide students with copies of a blank North Carolina map that shows the counties of the state. One is included for reproduction at the end of this lesson plan. Have the students, working in groups, locate all of the folk house types used in this exercise.

Then have the students complete the following questions. The map should familiarize students with the historic dwelling's location within the state, and more specifically within one of the physiographic regions of the state.

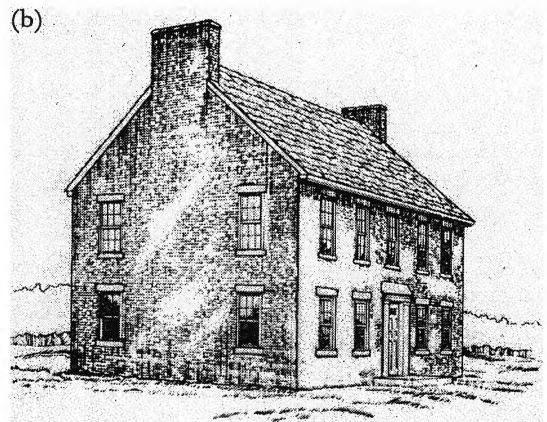
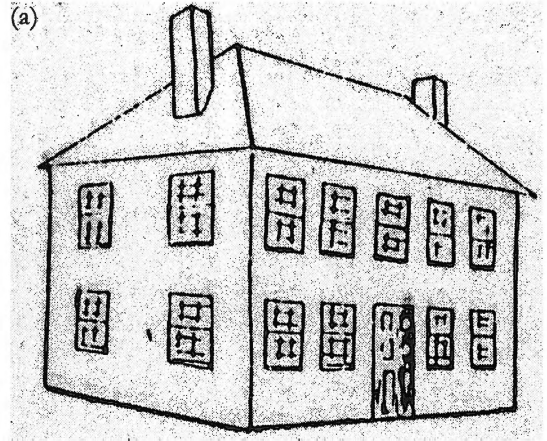


Figure 10. Four-over-four house: (a) hip roof and (b) gable roof.

Questions:

- A. From examining the eight types of folk houses, can you discuss any environmental adaptations that might have been made?
- B. Are there any obvious differences between the Coastal Plain house types and those found in the Piedmont and Mountains?
- C. Can you trace the settlement patterns of the Scots-Irish and German immigrants by looking at the folk house type regions?
- D. What are the main features of the "T" House? Is it found in more than one physiographic region of our state?
- E. Using the three guidebooks to the Historic Architecture of Eastern, Piedmont, and Western North Carolina, make a list of ten more of these folk house types around our state.

VI. Putting It All Together

After students have completed the questions that accompany the maps, readings, and visuals, they should be directed to complete the following activity. This activity engages students in a creative exercise that helps them synthesize the information they have learned and formulate conclusions.

Assign students to look for examples of these basic folk house types in their community. Have them document and research the history of the houses by photographing and drawing sketches of each of them. Have them find out as much as possible about the houses they pick: when the house was constructed; who the builder was; who has lived in it?

This can be the beginning of the students' "collections" of a sampling of the material culture of their own community. In this way, students will learn to make connections between their community and the broader themes of American cultural geography and history they encounter in their studies.

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Additional Material for students: North Carolina County Map