



Spring Creek Township Historic Barn Tour

A 2-hour drive around Spring Creek Township, NC

A project of the Appalachian Barn Alliance

The Spring Creek Township Barns Story

The historic barns of the Spring Creek, Bluff, and Meadow Fork communities quietly tell the lifestyle stories of the late 19th to mid-20th century farms and families. The oldest barns have survived with few family descendants remaining to tell their stories. Thus, the known history of these barns is limited, often qualified by the phrase “according to oral tradition” and known only through the recollections of community members. Many barns are referred to by a historic owner’s name, yet that barn’s history and ownership may be several generations removed. On rare occasions the name of the builders may be known, such as barn builder Arthur Gunter, or rock mason Clarence Lawson, but in general the barns were built by the owner with the help of neighbors, often influenced by “new” barn designs seen elsewhere.

While very few barns of the 1800s have survived, an important exception is the now rare, flue-cured tobacco barn. Mountain subsistence farming changed dramatically when flue-cured or “bright leaf” tobacco was introduced in the 1870s. The first commercial cash crop in the mountains, it was called flue-cured because it required a specialized wood-fire heated barn built of logs sealed with mud chinking. Several of these very old log barns are visible from the road, retrofitted later for hanging burley tobacco and other uses.

The introduction of burley tobacco in the 1920s replaced the flue-cured era and brought a major change in the function and design of local barns. Prior to this time, all barns were either general purpose livestock barns or small, square, flue-cured barns. With their large hay lofts, open log construction, and lattice siding, the livestock barns were well suited for this new air-cured tobacco and were retrofitted with horizontal tier poles to allow the hanging of the green tobacco. The flue-cured tobacco barns were also adapted by the removal of the clay chinking to allow for better air flow. Very few of today’s farmers are aware of the flue-cured tobacco history of a century ago.

The Spring Creek township is unique in its other barn types. While many 19th century hewn log *houses* remain here, as evidence of the Appalachian hewn-log building tradition, there is a notable absence of barns built with heavily hewn log cribs supporting large timber-framed loft structures above. Instead, *unhewn, round* log barn construction was the norm here and continued well into the 20th century. As in other townships, builders made appropriate use of the abundant chestnut trees dying from the chestnut blight which made its way into Madison County in the 1920s.

Another distinctive barn type here is the small, Dutch gambrel roof barn with flared eaves. The gambrel roof itself is found throughout the county, but the purer Dutch style is represented by a dozen or so barns here, the earliest being the C. J. Justice barn built in 1947, and was likely an influence for subsequent builders. These barns also demonstrate the distinctive prevalence of diagonal board siding, predating diagonal siding use in other townships.

Similar to other townships in Madison County, these farms enjoyed a surge in the construction of burley tobacco barns following WWII, and many of the barns of that period were built exclusively for burley tobacco, with no accommodation for livestock.

The early 20th century use of concrete is another distinctive trait of barn construction here. Sand and lime was typically hauled fifteen miles or more from Hot Springs, by wagon or early truck, and used in a tedious process to form concrete foundations, stone walls and silos.

These beautiful and distinctive barns now stand sentinel as reminders of the hard work and resourcefulness of the previous generations, and their dedication to the land.

Henry Davis Barn

1 Log Flue-cured Tobacco (late 1800s & before 1924)

*Near 310 Bluff Mt. Road (on right before Indian Trails Rd. on left)
Hot Springs 28743*

This type of log barn is now extremely rare in Madison County, an example of a log barn used to heat cure “bright leaf” or “flue-cured” tobacco, the first commercial tobacco type introduced to mountain farmers in the 1870s. The spaces between the logs were originally filled or “chinked” with clay and rocks to keep the heat from the rock “flue” fire inside, to quickly cure the hanging tobacco leaves. The current owner recalls many years ago removing the clay chinking and adapting it to the air curing of burley tobacco. Many of the chestnut logs, cut before the chestnut blight, still have their original chestnut bark, the only example of mature chestnut bark that people of our generation will likely ever see. These flue-cured tobacco barns consistently measured 21 feet square by 21 feet to the top log, with only slight variations. By 1882 the estimated value of flue-cured tobacco was \$200 per acre, with the average production per household of 4 ½ acres, providing a windfall of cash for mountain families.



For more information on the barns, go to
<http://appalachianbarns.org>
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2 Henry Davis Log Barn Livestock & burley tobacco (early 1900s)

*Near 310 Bluff Mt. Road (on the left before
Indian Trails Rd. on the left)
Hot Springs 28743*

This livestock barn represents the typical early 20th century chestnut log livestock barns built during the first half of the 20th century in the Spring Creek township. The log corner notching is the simpler saddle notch that requires less time and skill than the earlier half dovetail notch or V-notch, and represents the later generation of log building in Madison County. This barn includes some logs that have scarring from the chestnut blight disease, indicating that those trees were cut after the chestnut blight infected the chestnut trees of the region, around 1924. Typical of most early 20th century log barns, this one has been adapted for use in the air curing of burley tobacco which became the primary cash crop in the early 1920s, as flue-cured tobacco was being phased out.



4 Furman Willett log barn Log barn adapted as livestock and burley tobacco barn (late 1800s/1953) 11461 NC Highway 209 Hot Springs 28743

The Furman Willett log barn represents a very common practice in the log barn building history of this and other townships, where an older log barn has been relocated to its current site. The original is thought to have been built in the late 1800s on the mountain across the road and was moved to this site in 1953 and adapted as a livestock and burley tobacco barn. The logs are predominantly chestnut, some with the bark remaining. There are also logs with scars from the 1920s chestnut blight which would indicate that those logs may have been added when the barn was moved, as its function was also changed. The adjacent livestock barn with the gambrel roof was built in the late 1940s. Furman Willett's father was known to have also grown the earlier flue-cured tobacco until the early '20's, and Bull Face chewing tobacco, that was smoke-cured.



3 Banie Winston Lusk barns Large round-log burley tobacco barn & Dutch roof livestock barn (1942 & 1954)

*8661 NC Highway 209
Hot Springs 28743*

This farmstead was first established up the hollow northeast of the house and barns where Joe Lusk built a log house. The large round-log barn was built around 1942, a late example of log barns in the county, built to air cure burley tobacco. The builders ran out of metal roofing because of the WWII metal scarcity and had to roof one side with the traditional split oak shingles, using chestnut oak. The hewn log smokehouse was moved from the earlier homestead, the poplar logs licked smooth over the years by cows after the salt in the wood. The well-built large gambrel roof livestock barn was built beginning in 1954 and is an excellent example of the purer Dutch gambrel roof and diagonal siding that are a signature feature in this township. Construction of the house was begun in 1890 and finished in 1904.



5 Burgin Cemore and Molly Higgs Meadows Barn Livestock and general purpose barn (early 1920s) 12815 NC Hwy 209 (across from junction with Caldwell Mt. Road) Hot Springs 28743

The barn of Burgin and Mollie Meadows represents that of a successful farm and business family. Molly Meadows ran a boarding house for traveling salesmen and schoolteachers, including a hostel during the 1930s. The barn's stalls housed riding horses belonging to the boarders, as well as the farm animals. This barn features many early 20th century innovations including the use of a continuous poured concrete footing, the unusual use of diagonal siding as sub-sheathing under the horizontal lapped siding, and two storage rooms raised above ground level to avoid flooding from the adjacent creek. It also demonstrates the early use of a gambrel roof including the earliest metal roofing, known as 3-V metal. The loft was retrofitted with tier poles for hanging the newly introduced burley tobacco. While the roof form is gambrel, this is not a true gambrel roof but is supported by interior posts in the loft.



6 **Homer Reeves Barn** **Livestock barn (1953)**

13691 NC Highway 209

Hot Springs 28743

A modern and classic 20th century American livestock barn, this barn was begun in July, 1953 and completed on October 21, as written in the concrete footings, and signed by the builder, Arthur Gunter. Homer Reeves and his son Clyde, who was 26 at the time, designed and drew the plans for this barn, but did not agree on the roof vents at the time. The lumber was milled at the family sawmill from timber cut on the mountain across the valley, owned by their Askew relatives. The concrete silo was built before the barn, and used sand hauled by pick-up truck sixteen miles from the sand pits on the French Broad River bank in Hot Springs. Like most livestock barns, this one was also used for burley tobacco when needed. Loose hay was still in use in 1953 but baled hay replaced it early in this barn's history. The farmstead also has a massive stone wall that was built early in the settlement period of this valley.



8 **John Gardner barn** **Livestock and general purpose barn** **(early 20th century)**

1181 Highway NC 63

Hot Springs 28743

Jasper and Tilitha Plemmons Ebbs were successful farmers and store owners here on Friezeland Creek in the upper end of this township. Married in 1877, they built the two-story frame house onto an existing two-room log house. Jasper, and later his son-in-law John Gardner, ran the Trust community store and post office down the valley at the junction with NC 209. This large barn was likely built by John Gardner. A large livestock barn, it is over 52 feet across, built of sawn lumber, with a massive rock retaining wall forming the bank at the south end. Large hand-hewn wood sills are placed on rock piers, with hewn plate beams across the tops of the framed walls. Like most livestock barns, it was later adapted for hanging burley tobacco. It is notable for its unusual standing seam metal roofing, some of the earliest metal roofing to be used in this township, and the only standing seam type roofing found to date.



7 **Eulas "Billy" Askew barn** **Gambrel roof livestock barn** **(c. 1925)**

13581 NC Highway 209

Hot Springs 28743

The C. C. Askew family was one of the first to settle in this valley in 1820. This classic gambrel roof livestock barn is one of the earliest of its type and sits at the south end of the large "upper flats" bottom land of Spring Creek. It has a true gambrel roof structure in which the roof rafters form a shallow roof truss, allowing the loft area to be free of vertical posts and thus better accommodating the moving and storage of hay. Another innovation of the times in this barn is a vertical pipe that houses the pulley rope for the hay fork mounted on the ridgeline rail. A horse would be stationed in the ground level hallway and walk forward, pulling the loaded hay fork into the large loft area in the floor above. The animal stalls were built to house the large draft horses that Billy Askew used in all aspects of the farm operation, and much of the original draft horse gear is present.



9 **Josiah Henry Price barn** **Burley Tobacco barn (1930s)**

Up the road from 1616 NC Hwy 63

Hot Springs 28743

This is one of Spring Creek's earliest barns built exclusively for the air curing of burley tobacco. The owner's mother recalls watching the family harvest tobacco for this barn in the 1930s. The crop of tobacco was grown high on the steep hill, now covered in forest, across the road from the barn. Josiah Price and son David, builders of the barn, installed an ingenious cable zip line to carry the harvested tobacco from the mountain side, down to the barn to be hung. This is a very large burley tobacco barn, measuring sixty feet long, thirty-one feet wide, and twenty-eight feet high. Sawn posts of 4 x 4 inch hemlock sit on large hand-hewn sills on concrete and rock foundation walls. Later burley barn construction used round poles instead of sawn posts. The Price farm includes many older farmstead buildings, including a late 19th century livestock barn with log crib stalls, a rare surviving type in the Spring Creek township.



**OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP—
INCLUDES BARN # 10 & 11**

**OPTIONAL LOOP SIDE TRIP—
INCLUDES BARN # 12 & 13**

10

**Dave Bright barn
Livestock barn (early 1900's)**
16820 NC Highway 209 (across from Gentry Farm Road)
Hot Springs 28743

The Dave Bright barn is a good example of a transition from the earlier log barn type, to a sawn lumber-framed barn. The steep roof indicates that this barn was built when split oak shingles were the earlier standard roof material, prior to the availability of metal roofing. This barn retains the large hewn wood timbers that provide the primary frame of the barn but are integrated with the hemlock sawn lumber. The pattern of lattice around the loft area and gable end is an unusual design. Another hold-over of the earlier type barn includes the use of round pole rafters, many of which are chestnut with the bark remaining in place, a feature of a lost natural history. As typical, the barn was later adapted for hanging burley tobacco. This farmstead also features a very unique and creative early 20th century house.



11

**C. J. Justice barn
Livestock/ burley tobacco barn (1947)**
20163 NC Highway 209
Hot Springs 28743

This barn may be the first in the township that exhibits the distinctive Dutch gambrel roof with Flemish eaves and strong diagonal siding, a Spring Creek style trend of this period that is not found expressed in other townships. The barn was built by C. J. Justice and his brother James in 1947, with some of the materials salvaged from a house they had demolished in Marion. The foundation is of poured concrete footings in which they embedded hemlock sills into the concrete, an innovation at the time that may have been copied from the Meadows barn. Even though built as a livestock barn, it has always been used as a burley tobacco barn as well. This farmstead is one of the highest in Madison County at over 3700 feet elevation.



12

**Hal Woody barn
Livestock & burley tobacco log barn (1915 - 1935)**
960 Poplar Gap Road
Hot Springs 28743

The Hal Burton Woody barn represents the most common type of small, general purpose livestock log barn of the early 1900's. More recently known as the farm of W. T. Moore, a county political leader, it is thought that this barn may have been built by a neighbor, Landon Gregory. It was adapted for hanging burley tobacco even though the loft area is small. Log notching is of the later saddle notch with several V-notch corners. The rafters are round poles, an uncommon feature for this period, especially with the tightly spaced roof sheathing, originally installed for tarpaper roofing. The farmstead is at an elevation of over 3300 feet, in a steep valley in a remote corner of the county.

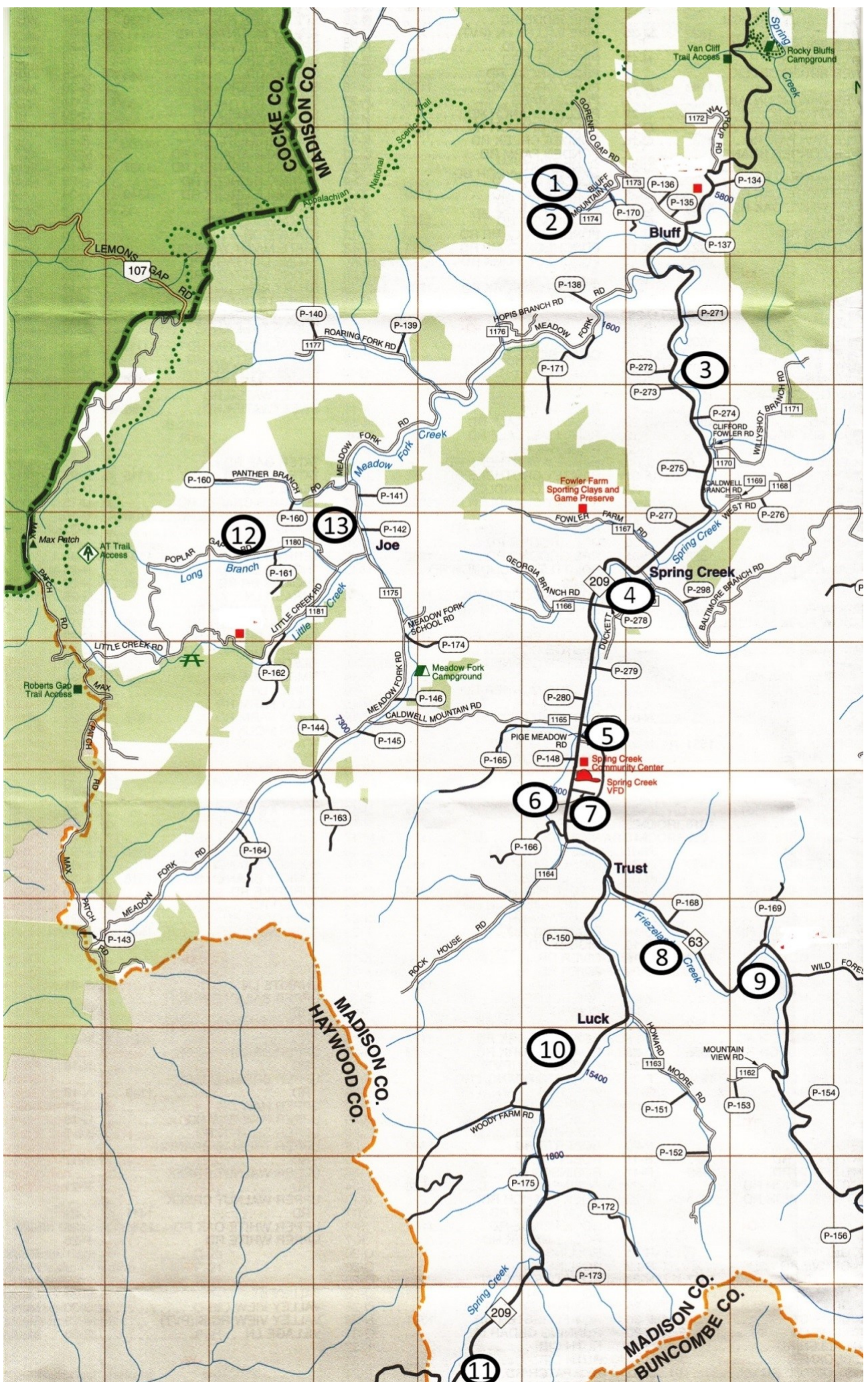


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**Claude Rainey barn
Livestock barn (1954)**
4756 Meadow Fork Road
Hot Springs 28743

The Claude Rainey barn is a thoughtfully constructed mid-20th century livestock barn that proudly exhibits the Dutch gambrel roof with flared eaves, sometimes known as Flemish eaves. A true gambrel roof structure, the original had no interior support posts, allowing for an unobstructed hay loft. This roof style, along with the distinctive diagonal siding, is a good example of a Spring Creek style trend of this period that is not found as strongly expressed in other townships. Like most barns built for livestock, this barn was later adapted for air-curing burley tobacco. Claude Rainey was known as a good farmer who took pride in maintaining an orderly farmstead and his barn represents the best building methods of the post WWII era, with sawn lumber throughout and a poured concrete foundation, while retaining the traditional concrete spring-fed water trough and loft-level access bank. The construction date is etched into the concrete.





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SAFE DRIVING SUGGESTIONS:

Before you drive, please remember that this is a DRIVING tour. The barn owners graciously participate but, although you may get out of your car for pictures, please do not venture onto PRIVATE PROPERTY.

Take care on these scenic roads in the Spring Creek Township. Watch for blind curves when stopping, Take care that the shoulders are wide enough to drive onto and watch for ditches that may be hidden by deep grass. Here are some suggestions to ensure your safety: Please pull off, stop, or slow down ONLY where you know it is safe. Use your safety flashers to alert other drivers that you are stopped or driving slowly.

Thank you. Enjoy these wonderful barns. And be safe!

DRIVING DIRECTIONS FOR THE TWO-HOUR ROUND TRIP TOUR

Leave the Town of Hot Springs Welcome Center traveling south on Hwy 209 and drive for 6.5 miles. Barn addresses are Hot Springs

Turn right on Garenflo Gap Road for 0.6 miles to a left turn onto Bluff Mtn Road and continue for 0.2 miles to

BARN #1 (Davis Log Flue-cured) on right and #2 (Davis Log Burley & Livestock) on left

Turn around and return to Hwy 209, turn right and drive for 2.2 miles for BARNS #3 (Lusk) on left side of road

Continue on Hwy 209 for 3 more miles to BARN #4 (Willett) on left side of the road.

Continue on Hwy 209 for 1.3 miles to BARN #5 (Meadows) on the left side of the road

Continue on Hwy 209 for 0.7 miles to BARN #6 (Reeves) on the right side and BARN #7 (Askew) on the left side of the road

Continue on Hwy 209 for 0.8 miles to intersection with Hwy 63 (before reaching Trust General Store on Hwy 209)

Take left turn onto Hwy 63 and drive for 1.2 miles to BARN #8 (Gardner) on the right side of the road. Note: This one is hard to see with the overgrowth.

Continue on Hwy 63 for 0.4 miles to BARN #9 (Price) on the right side

Turn around in the next safe driveway and return to Hot Springs on Hwy 209

Trust General Store and Café:

The store is open 7 days. Monday through Friday from 7am to 8pm. Saturday from 8am to 8pm. Sunday from 9am to 5pm. The Café is open Thursday through Saturday from 11am to 8pm and Sunday from 11am to 4pm.

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP—INCLUDES BARNS # 10 & 11. Note: this will take you to the highest elevation farmstead (over 3700 feet) on the tour & perhaps in the county and the earliest example of the Dutch roof with diagonal siding.

FROM TRUST GENERAL STORE NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF HWY 209 & HWY 63 (30 MINUTES ROUND TRIP)

At intersection of Hwy 63 and Hwy 209 (at Trust General Store), travel south on Hwy 209 and drive for 2.4 miles to BARN #10 (Bright) on the right side of the road.

Continue on Hwy 209 for 3.4 miles for Barn #11 (Justice) on the left

Turn around by pulling into the driveway with the sign on the gate that says “Spring Creek Gap” and return to Hot Springs on Hwy 209

Or continue on Hwy 209 to intersect with Interstate 40 at Lake Junaluska.

OPTIONAL LOOP SIDE TRIP—INCLUDES BARNS #12 & 13. Note that this is the route to Max Patch

FROM CALDWELL MOUNTAIN ROAD OFF HWY 209 & RETURN AT MEADOWFORK ROAD (35 MINUTES)

From the Intersection of Hwy 63 & Hwy 209, go 2.8 miles to turn left onto Caldwell Mountain Road. Note that this is approximately where BARN #5 is.

Turn left onto Caldwell Mountain Road and travel for 2.1 miles to turn right on Meadowfork Road

Continue on Meadowfork Road for 1.7 miles and then turn left onto Little Creek Road

Continue on Little Creek Road for 0.2 miles and then turn right onto Poplar Gap Road

Travel 0.9 miles to BARN #12 (Moore) on the right. Turn around and go back to Little Creek Road and turn left

Travel 0.2 miles on Little Creek Road and then turn left onto Meadowfork Road at the T intersection.

Travel 0.4 miles on Meadowfork Road to BARN #13 (Rainey) on the left.

Continue on Meadowfork Road for 4.8 miles to get back to Hwy 209 and turn left to return to the town of Hot Springs.