

APPENDIX H. Detailed Description of Park Improvements

Laws Farmhouse. The entry feature to the Park, the Laws family farmhouse is a historic preservation project, separate from the park operations, which may receive future funds from Orange County. Due to its location within the property, and the resulting impact on Park visitors, it is included here. The Laws house was originally built in the period between the 1860s-1880s and consisted of the back portion of the existing structure, including the stone chimney. The portion of the house closest to Guess Road, and situated parallel with the road, including the large front porch, was added around the turn of the century. The house was inhabited through the 1960s, and subsequently abandoned. It was inherited with the property in a state of neglect and disrepair.

Parks management originally investigated the potential to restore the Laws House, and integrate it into the park infrastructure, either in its current location or relocated elsewhere within the Park. When it was determined that use of the structure as a park office or information center, cultural/historical museum, or caretaker residence was not feasible due to prohibitive cost or loss of historical significance if relocated, discussion turned to the demolition of the structure. In the Summer 2004, with the Park opening impending, it was eventually determined that, as part of a larger effort to retain the rural character of Orange County, and as an example of a quickly disappearing era of vernacular architecture, the Laws house should be stabilized and aesthetically restored until its fate is decided. As the restoration of the Laws house was not in the interest of Durham County, due to its location in Orange County, Durham County shifted its portion of the budget allocated for deconstruction to the stabilization project and will make no further contributions to the restoration.

The contents of the house were removed in 2004 with significant artifacts retained by Orange County DEAPR. Professional historic building restorers, Pete and Robin Hendricks, repaired the ailing front porch, removed rotten siding, sanded and refinished the wooden siding, replaced the rusted roofing, and sealed off access to the house.

The house was then used for storage of building materials salvaged from other structures within the park. It has also served as a habitat for many different species of animals including dogs, cats, ground hogs and gray foxes. Stabilization of the structure should be reassessed due to erosion of the ground around the house. It will also need to be repainted in the near future.

Hiker Shelter (former Tobacco Pack House). This structure was relocated by Pete and Robin Hendricks, from adjacent to the Laws House to the main junction of hiking trails. It stands on four stone footings, and the siding was restored with reclaimed wood in 2010. An additional window opposite the entrance has yet to be installed. The pack house serves as a shelter for Park users during inclement weather and is well suited for the installation of interpretive displays.

Wood Storage Tobacco Barn. Located in proximity to the Caretaker Residence, this is the only historic building on the property that has not been restored. It is a traditional tobacco drying barn, constructed of white oak logs, with several layers of horizontal beams used to dry harvested tobacco leaves. The bottom tier of drying beams was removed in October 2004 to allow for the storage of lumber, fencing, roofing materials, and bundled tobacco sticks, for use in the Park. The awning most likely sheltered the fuel tank that supplied gas burners that served as the drying method for the tobacco.

Maintenance Shed (former Tobacco Drying Barn). This historic building remains in its original location, next to the Park Office. The maintenance shed was constructed from white oak logs with layers of tobacco drying beams on the interior, and as with the other barn, natural gas burners were supplied by a gas tank that was sheltered by the easterly facing awning. At some time since the last use of the building, a portion of the roof had blown back, exposing the north wall of the structure to weather and rot. Pete and Robin Hendricks replaced the rotten portion of the wall with swinging barn doors, an upper storage door, and reclaimed siding, as well as restoring the awning. The barn floor and area under the awning are poured cement; as a matching area on the west side of the structure was covered with an additional awning and enclosed storage area in 2007. The lower tier of drying beams was removed to facilitate access and movement in the barn. The tobacco barn was re-chinked in 2007.

Corn Crib/Visitor Information Center. This structure was relocated by Pete and Robin Hendricks, from next to the stand of Chinese Privet by the Guess Road entrance gate, to the trail-head next to the parking lot. Here it was stabilized and set on six stone footings. The Corn Crib serves as a visitor information center with maps, brochures, donor recognition signs and logos. A small window into the crib, located on the interior of the sheltered area will serve as a view into a display of farm implements and historical artifacts, held inside the “crib.” An additional “window” will need to be cut to serve smaller visitors. [Future Work: A seventh stone footing may be needed at the center of the donor recognition wall if sagging increases.]

Caretaker Residence. This is the only private residence in the Park, and the only structure not originally built on site. The Caretaker Residence is a 1960s modular home previously located on at 611 Yorkshire Drive (south of Chapel Hill), which was damaged by the flooding of Price Creek in 1996. It was moved to the park in the Summer of 2003, and has subsequently been rewired, re-plumbed, re-sided, and re-floored, as well as receiving two new back porches, a new refrigerator and a new oven and stovetop. The Caretaker Residence is occupied by a caretaker who pays a modest rent and is responsible for closing the park on weekends as well as covering for other staff and being available after the park closes for campers or emergencies.

Park Office. Built in 2004, the Park Office was designed to fit with the overall rustic style of the park, with cedar siding and red, tin roofing. It contains a visitor reception desk, sitting area with park information, educational materials, wildlife displays, an office for park staff, a staff work room/kitchen, and staff only restroom. In addition to serving as a staff office and visitor information area, the Park Office is used for programming during cold or inclement weather. The water cut-off to the building is located in a buried tube, next to the HVAC fan, on the maintenance shed end of the building. A first aid kit is on the reception desk, and two fire extinguishers, one near the staff restroom entrance, and one directly inside the kitchen/break area, are in the building.

Public Restrooms. This newly built structure is of similar architectural style as the Park Office, with separate male and female facilities, and supply room with door in the rear. The men’s room has a single ADA-compliant commode, a waterless urinal, sink and spigot. The women’s room has two commodes, one of which is ADA compliant a sink and spigot. Two water fountains are located on the front side of the structure, between the entrances to the men’s and women’s restrooms. Motion sensor lights and Solartube were added in 2006. The motion sensor lights failed in 2012 and were replaced with toggle light switches. Fire extinguishers for the shelters are mounted on the front of the building on either side of the water fountains as per instructions from

the Orange County Fire Marshall. Water cut-off to the building is located in a buried tube directly outside the chase entrance, and the fire extinguisher and circuit panel are located inside the supply room.

Large Meadow Picnic Shelter. This open-sided structure currently holds 12 picnic tables, two of which are wheelchair accessible, and is located in the vicinity of the public restrooms and playground, all of which are connected by a paved path. It also has a handicapped accessible, double-sided grill, outdoor electrical outlets, lights, field hydrant which was replaced in 2013, and trash and recycling receptacles. [Future Work: add two ceiling fans.]

Small Forest Picnic Shelter. Identical to the large meadow picnic shelter with smaller proportions, this open-sided structure is located just inside the paved loop trail, and currently holds 8 picnic tables two of which are wheelchair accessible. It also has a handicapped accessible, double-sided grill, outdoor electrical outlets, lighting, field hydrant which was replaced in 2013, and trash and recycling receptacles. [Future Work: add a ceiling fan.]

Playground. This accessible structure is recommended for 5- to 12-year-olds. It contains three slides, two overhead components, a sliding pole, and a safety surface of engineered wood fiber. The double wave slide was replaced in the spring of 2013 due to cracking along the contact point with the structure. Safety surfacing will need weekly attention in the busy seasons, and yearly replenishment. Total replacement of the surfacing is recommended every 7-10 years. Drainage was improved but not solved, and may need additional attention in the future, particularly in the Northeast corner. Slides tend to get very hot in the summer sun, and trees planted to provide shade are many years away from serving this purpose. [The playground may require some form of shade netting in the interim.]

Well Pump. The well pump house is a new structure built by park staff from reclaimed building supplies in 2007. It is located down the park driveway from the Caretaker Residence. A new well was drilled because of recurring contamination issues in the old well. The old well pump-house was also built from reclaimed building supplies by the Hendricks to provide insulation for the well pump and water tank. It is located next to the paved interpretive loop trail, in the vicinity of the small forest picnic shelter. The wellhead was capped after the new well was installed.

Group Campground. A group camp area was added in 2006 as an Eagle Scout project. It is located 100 feet from the end of the paved interpretive loop trail heading towards the pack house. The site consists of a wood chip trail, 4 tent pads, 2 fire rings, a field hydrant and lantern hooks at each tent pad. Tent pads consist of pads bordered by landscape ties and filled with stone dust. The fire rings are metal rings with cooking grills set on fireproof bricks. One grill has two benches mounted near it. There are three picnic tables.

Parking Areas. Access to the parking is from a long meandering drive culminating in a teardrop shaped circulation pattern with drop off along the outer edge and designated parking for 40 spaces in the interior. Three ADA van accessible parking spaces are also located within the parking area. Exiting the teardrop is an additional elongated space for a bus or a trailer. Additional parking is available by parking vehicles on the mowed areas along the driveway and in the “islands” separating the parking rows. Staff directs visitors to these areas when the main lot has reached capacity. The driveway and parking area were covered in a chip and seal surface treatment when the park was built. Chip and seal has a life expectancy of 7-10 years. It is being

maintained by using pea gravel to fill any ruts and pot holes that develop. [Future Work: Resurfacing of the driveway and parking area is recommended to maintain a good visitor first impression.]

Pollinator Garden. In Spring 2005 the area between the public restrooms and the Large Meadow Shelter was developed into a pollinator garden. The fenced garden is approximately 30 feet by 60 feet. A small planted area behind the garden is used for hands-on programs. Several compost bins are also located behind the garden. The garden consists of mainly native plantings which attract a variety of pollinators at different stages of their life cycle. An arbor and bench were built in the center of the garden as part of an Eagle Scout project and the wooden entrance gates were built and donated by a volunteer.

Mountain Bike Trail Areas. Mountain biking trails were built in progressive loops of increasing technicality and range from moderate to difficult. No novice bike trails exist for beginning bikers or young children.

The mountain bike trails were designed and constructed by the Durham-Orange Mountain Bike Organization (DOMBO) with volunteer labor. In 2012, DOMBO reorganized as Triangle Off Road Cyclists (TORC). TORC currently maintains sections of the mountain bike trails.

Mountain Bike Skills Course. A skills course is under construction at the Park by TORC that would enable mountain bike users to hone and refine their biking abilities and skill levels. This area is undergoing a risk assessment and safety evaluation at the present time and is not yet open to users.

Accessible Loop Trail. This paved, quarter mile trail loops through the woods next to the small picnic shelter and is one of the most heavily used facilities in the park. It is in need of major renovations as tree roots have been damaging the asphalt steadily for many years. As part of this renovation, plans should be made to expand the paved trail with a loop potentially around the perimeter of the large meadow. This would greatly expand length of the trail and provide a new amenity within the existing developed area.