

Historical Summary

Our physical examination of the Hill-Woody House led to the conclusion that it was constructed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century in a regional Federal style and later remodeled in a regional Greek Revival style during the second quarter of the century. Deed research by Jesse Adams-Doolittle failed to provide all the answers but does provide a framework in which to put the pieces of the architectural puzzle.

There are two possible scenarios for original construction. Nathaniel, age unknown but probably fairly old, could have started the house soon after its purchase in 1804 and before he dies in 1807. It would be reasonable to assume that William then completed the house for his mother. A roof-sheathing nail can be dated to 1799-1816 but possibly into the 1820s, making the second scenario possible-- that William waited until 1822 to start construction of the house. Other nails from finished plaster would suggest a date of 1828-1837. This date works with either William finishing parts of the house after his father dies or constructing the house after 1822. In any case William is dead by 1829. His son Edmund is the one most likely to have remodeled the house in a Greek Revival manner in the 1830s-40s, most notably with the two-story portico on the façade. When this portico roof was attached to the main roof it encapsulated some chestnut shingles that were relatively unweathered with a coating of red paint and held on by nails dating to ca. 1828-1847. The nails and shingles would suggest that they were a second roof covering replacing an earlier wood shingle roof—arguing for an earlier construction date since a later one would preclude the necessity of a roof covering replacement so soon. It is likely that the remodeling included the separation of room 201 from the upper stair hall, and the creation of a bath room and vestibule (room 203 and 204) out of the eastern portion of room 202. Moldings on the partition wall of 200-201, matching those from datable examples from the 1830s, and a lath nail from the 202-203 partition wall (nail type ca. 1828-1837) would support this hypothesis.

The roof sheathing nail, style of the house, moldings, and the ghost of a one story front portico all suggest that the house was early and then remodeled in an up-to-date fashionable style by the new occupant/owner, Edmund. Subsequent remodeling took place during the Quick era (1907-1933) (internal basement stairs and partition in basement (room 003) and more following the Woody era (1940s-50s and 1970s-80s) (eastern and southern addition, greenhouse, northern porch, and basement changes). Some type of early back porch was replaced in the twentieth century. More could certainly be researched to substantiate the construction and evolution of the house.

Ownership Chronology of the Hill-Woody House

- 1804 Nathaniel Hill and wife Elizabeth Thurmon Hill purchase 664 acres of land for 44,460 lbs. of inspected tobacco (land formerly owned by Nicholas Cabell)
- 1804 By this date son William D. Hill becomes his parents financial agent and manager of their plantations
- 1807 Nathaniel Hill dies by this date
- 1822 Elizabeth Hill deeds the property to William; Elizabeth dies that year.
- 1829 William D. Hill dies; wife Nancy survives but property given to son Edmund J. Hill, who lives there with his wife Mary E. Hill
- 1901 William Hill dies by this date
- 1902 Mary Hill dies and wills the house to Edmonia Peebles and husband D.C. Peebles
- 1905 The Peebles sell the property to W.A. Mason and J.H. Busby
- 1906 Mason and Busby sell the property (“Home Place” or “Mansion House” tract of 450 acres) to Austin T. Quick
- 1933 Alice M. Quick sells to W.R. Preddy
- 1933 W.R. Preddy sells to Citizens National Bank of Orange
- 1936 Citizens National Bank sells to Henry Stubbins (or Stebbins) of Norwich, NY)
- 1944 E. W. Woody and Gladys Viar Woody purchase the property

