

GABRIEL DENNY

Gabriel, son of Joel Denny, was born December 20, 1842 and married Sarah Delphina Stone on June 14, 1868. She was born on December 7, 1852 and was the daughter of Francis Rutherford Stone and the older sister of my mother.

In June, 1869, Gabriel purchased a tract of 60 acres of land on the north side of the Mill Dam on Pilot Creek. He later purchased about 50 acres adjoining the above and built what was probably the most complete and self-contained farm in the country. It contained a grist mill, blacksmith and woodworking shops and all the other barns and shops usually found on a farm during that period. This farm is on the north side of the base of the Pilot Mountain and is now a portion of the Pilot Mountain State Park.

Gabriel Denny was a devout, religious and scrupulously honest and moral person also he was stern and puritanical in his life and practices. He was a Primitive Baptist Preacher and highly respected by those who knew him. He and his wife raised seven sons and four daughters but all of them left Surry County settling from Galax, Virginia to Jackson, Mississippi. All of the sons were responsible and successful men, three becoming Baptist preachers and the youngest, Emery Byrd Denny, became a lawyer and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for the State of North Carolina.

Delphina died August 12, 1905 and Gabriel died July 4, 1927 and both were buried in the cemetery of the Cedar Hill Primitive Baptist Church.

Roby Taylor
February 23, 1973

The Gabriel Denny Farm
Prepared by Emery B. Denny 1968

Gabriel Denny was born in Surry County, North Carolina, December 20, 1842. He served in the Confederate Army in Company E. 53rd North Carolina Regiment, Hill's Division. He was nineteen years of age when he entered the service and was discharged about nine months later by reason of his physical condition. He broke out with the measles while on guard duty on a cold rainy day while stationed in Raleigh, North Carolina. He became seriously ill in a field hospital and suffered a serious attack of erysipelas in his left leg and ankle and lost one of the bones in his left ankle. He had to use crutches for many years after his discharge and finally was able to walk with a cane. He never plowed a single furrow in his life after his discharge from the army. This explains why he bought this farm on Pilot Creek and built a mill, a wood shop and a blacksmith shop.

My father was married June 14, 1868. He first established his home near where the highway crosses Pilot Creek and built a mill a short distance above there. His first three children were born while he and mother were living there. However, when their fourth child, John G. Denny was born October 24, 1875, he was living at the present site of the old home. My parents had fourteen children, a set of twin boys died in infancy and another little boy died of diphtheria at the age of about ten months. Eleven of their children grew to be adults, four girls and seven boys. All these children are now deceased except Miss Mary Denny and Mrs. Roxie E. Spease of Winston-Salem and Emery B. Denny of Raleigh.

During the rearing of his family, my father built many buildings of one sort and another on this farm. Starting at the foot of the hill we had a cane mill, a washhouse, a wood shop, a charcoal shed, a blacksmith shop and the mill building that housed a saw mill, a corn mill and cut off and shingle saws. Then about halfway up the hill we had a fruit drying house located in the apple orchard. The kitchen was separate and apart from the main dwelling and had a bedroom in the rear thereof. The well house was located in front of the kitchen, then a wood house next to the well, then a corn crib, a gear house where we kept the harness and saddles. We also had two permanently constructed covered hog pens, a shuckhouse, a cow barn with a shed where we kept two buggies, the feed barn as we called it, where we kept the mules. We also had a packhouse or granary with sheds on each side for storing wagons or buggies, a tobacco barn, a smokehouse, a chicken house and an outhouse or privy.

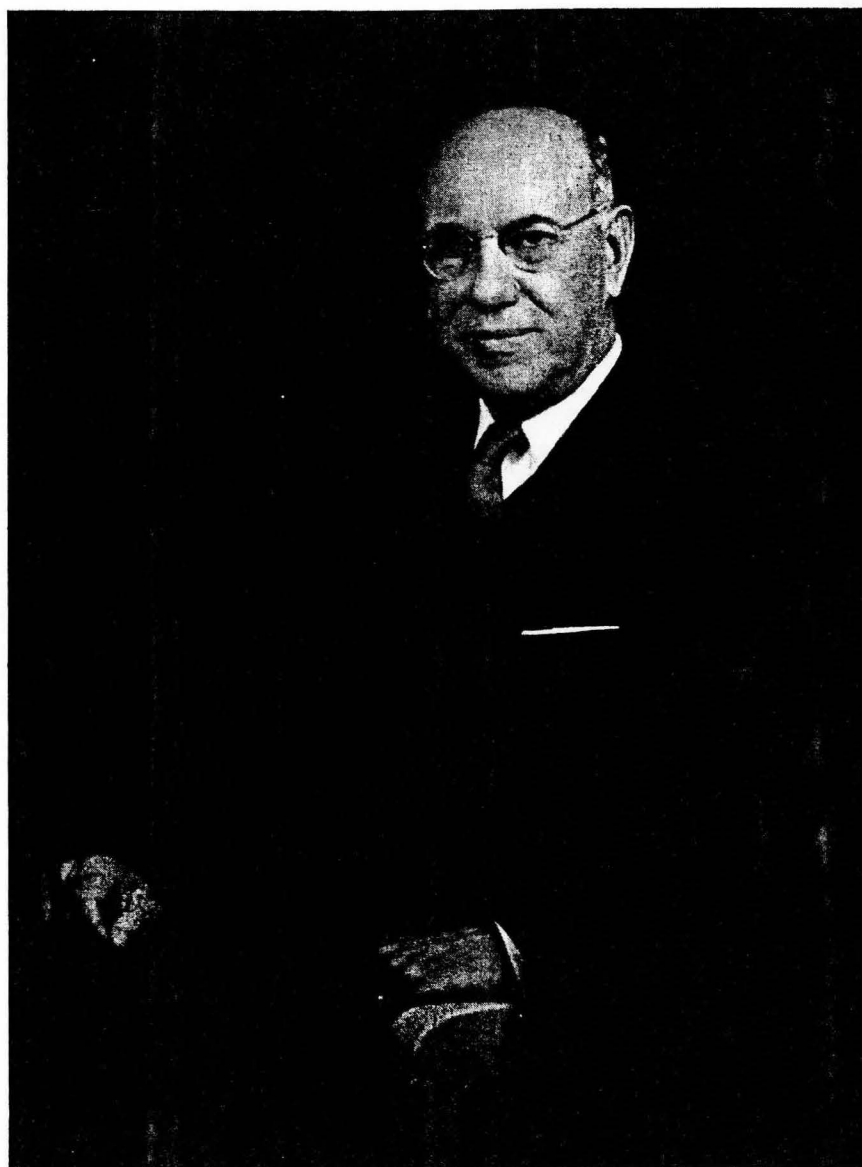
When the weather was good the boys were supposed to work on the farm, when the weather was bad they were supposed to work in one of the shops or the mill. At noon or in the evening the corn mill was operated if the neighbors had brought in corn to be ground. If the rains were heavy and the creek had sufficient water to run the

saw mill continuously we sawed timber. The water in Pilot Creek was insufficient to run the saw mill in dry weather. I worked many a day as bellows boy for my father in the blacksmith shop. Our home was not operated on the theory that children should be idle in good or bad weather. We produced enough to live very well, but there never seemed to be any surplus money while I lived on the farm. In later years tobacco became a very valuable crop and some surplus money was made on this farm, but not in my day there.

My mother died August 12, 1905, and by the summer of 1907 when I was only fourteen years of age, I became the plowboy of the family. I did the plowing and hauling necessary to carry on the farm operations. I continued to do this through the crop year of 1912, after which my father rented the farm and later sold it to a daughter and her husband. In the fall of 1910 I borrowed the money to enter Gilliam's Academy, a preparatory school in Alamance County, and continued to go there until I graduated from both the Academic and Business Departments in 1914. This school operated only six months each year and after school closed I returned home, broke land and planted a crop and sowed the wheat before I left for school in the fall. After graduating from Gilliam's Academy and working as a bookkeeper for two and a half years, I entered the Law School of the University of North Carolina in September, 1916, only to have my studies interrupted by World War I. I was admitted to the bar in 1919.

My father was a Primitive Baptist minister and spent a great deal of time holding services in churches in an area ten or fifteen miles from home. He was pastor of his home church, Arrarat, better known as Cedar Hill, for over fifty years. Services were held each month on the second Sunday and the Saturday before. It was the custom in those days to hold services Saturday and Sunday once a month. At times he was pastor of two or three churches simultaneously. Consequently, his church services, weddings and funerals required a great deal of his time.

My father died July 14, 1927, and he and my mother are buried at the Cedar Hill Cemetary about two and one half miles west of the homeplace.



Emery B. Denny

Chief Justice, Supreme Court of North Carolina

EMERY B. DENNY

Chief Justice, Supreme Court of North Carolina

Emery Byrd Denny was born in Surry County, North Carolina, November 23, 1892. Son of Rev. Gabriel and Sarah Delphina (Stone) Denny. Attended public schools of Surry County, Gilliam Academy, 1910-1914; University of North Carolina, 1916-1917 and 1919. Honorary degree LL.D. conferred by the University of North Carolina in 1946, and by Wake Forest College in 1947. Admitted to practice law, 1919. Member law firm of Denny & Gaston, 1919-1921, Mangum & Denny, 1921-1930, practiced alone 1930-1942. Attorney for Gaston County, 1927-1942, and North Carolina Railroad, 1937-1938; Mayor of Gastonia 1929-1937. Past President of Gaston County Bar Association, Past Vice-President of North Carolina Bar Association, Member American Bar Association, Fellow of American Bar Foundation. Private, corporal, sergeant and master electrician in aviation section, Signal Corps, World War I. President, Gastonia Chamber of Commerce, 1925; Chairman, Gaston County Board of Elections, 1924-1926; Chairman, Gaston County Democratic Executive Committee, 1926-1928; chairman, State Democratic Executive Committee, 1940-1942. President and director Ranlo Manufacturing Company, 1936-1941; Trustee, University of North Carolina, 1941-1943; Chairman, Board of Trustees of Gaston County Public Library, 1935-1942; Chairman, Board of Trustees of Garrison Memorial Hospital, 1934-1939, and special counsel for the Governor during the General Assembly of 1941; Member American Legion, Commander of Gaston Post #23, 1926; Holland Memorial Lodge, # 668, A.F. & A.M., Past Master; Gastonia Chapter, # 66, Royal Arch Masons, High Priest; Gastonia Commandery, #28, Knights Templar and St. Titus Conclave, # 72, Red Cross of Constantine; Grand Orator, Grand Historian, Grand Steward, and Grand Deacon of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina A.F. & A.M.; Judge Advocate of Grand Lodge, 1968-1971; Member Board of General Purposes of Grand Lodge, 1968-1973; Chief Adept of the North Carolina College Societas Rosicruciana In Civitatibus Foederatis; Honorary Member for life in International Supreme Council of Order of DeMolay. Baptist. Trustee and Member of Executive Committee, North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Winston-Salem, N. C., serving over a period of 21 years; Trustee, Chairman of Board of Trustee, Chairman of Executive Committee, Chairman of Building & Grounds Committee, Chairman Long-range Planning Committee of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C., serving over a period of 22 years. The Seminary's Library Building was named in his honor, 1969. Phi Delta Phi; Member American Judicature Society; Chairman of Judicial Council, 1956-1962. Appointed Associate Justice Supreme Court of North Carolina, by Governor Broughton, February 3, 1942, to succeed the late Associate Justice

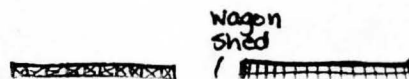
Heriot Clarkson. Elected to fill out the unexpired term and for a full eight-year term, November 3, 1942; re-elected for terms of eight years in November, 1950 and 1958. Appointed Chief Justice, by Governor Sanford, March 14, 1962, to succeed retiring Chief Justice J. Wallace Winborne. Elected to fill out the unexpired term in November, 1962. Served as Chief Justice until his retirement February 5, 1966. Wrote "History of the Supreme Court of North Carolina from January 1, 1919, until January 1, 1969." Served as Chairman of State Constitution Study Commission which drafted revisions of 1868 Constitution. Married Bessie Brandt Brown, Salisbury, N. C., December 27, 1922. Children Emery B. Jr., Betty Brown, Sarah Catherine and Jean Stone. Emery B. Denny died April 24, 1973; Buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Raleigh, N. C.

Gabriel Denny Farm & Buildings

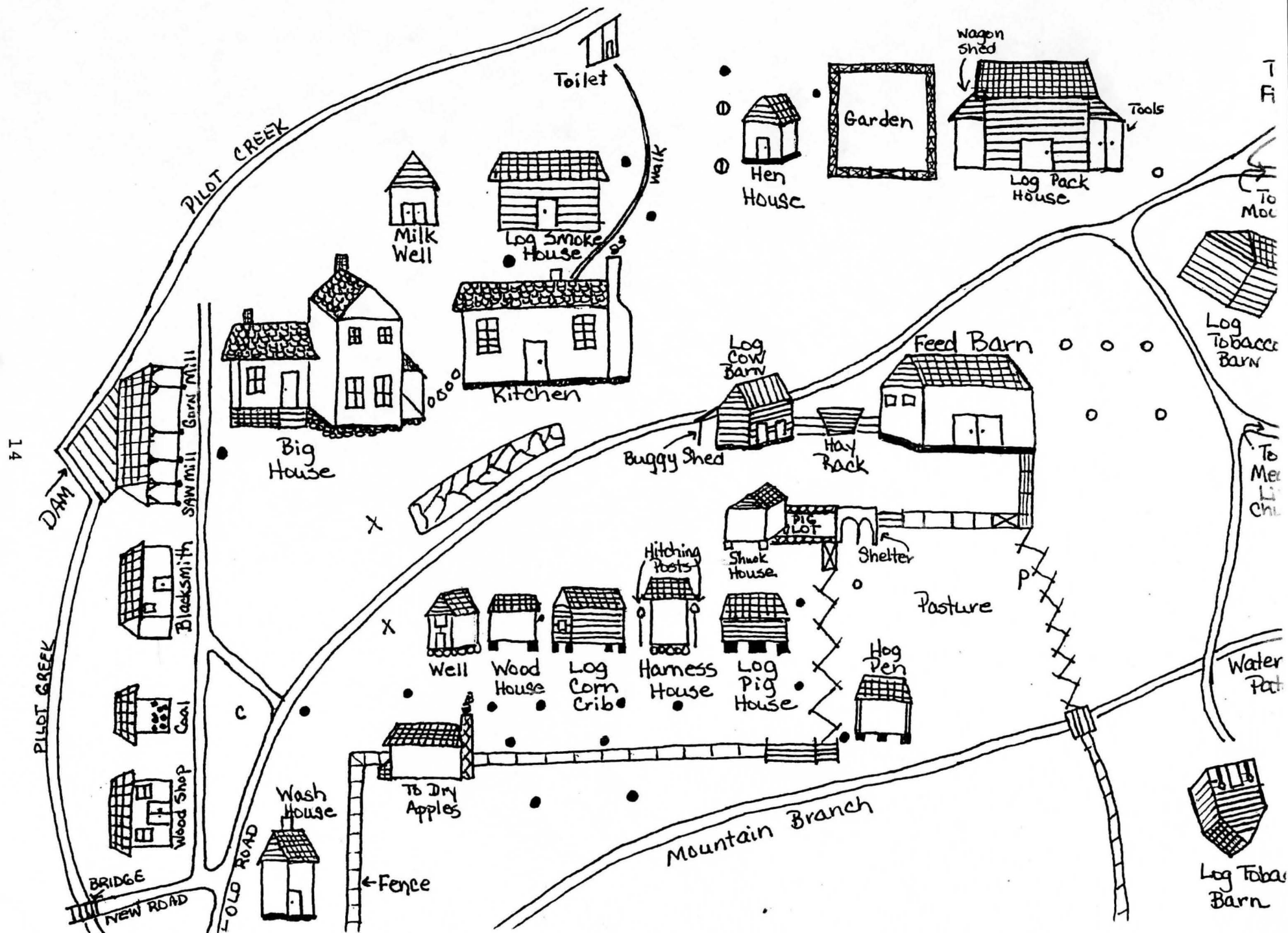
As sketched by
Roxie Denny Spease
copied by R.E.T. Oct. 20th 1978.
copied by J.D.S. March 2nd, 1990.

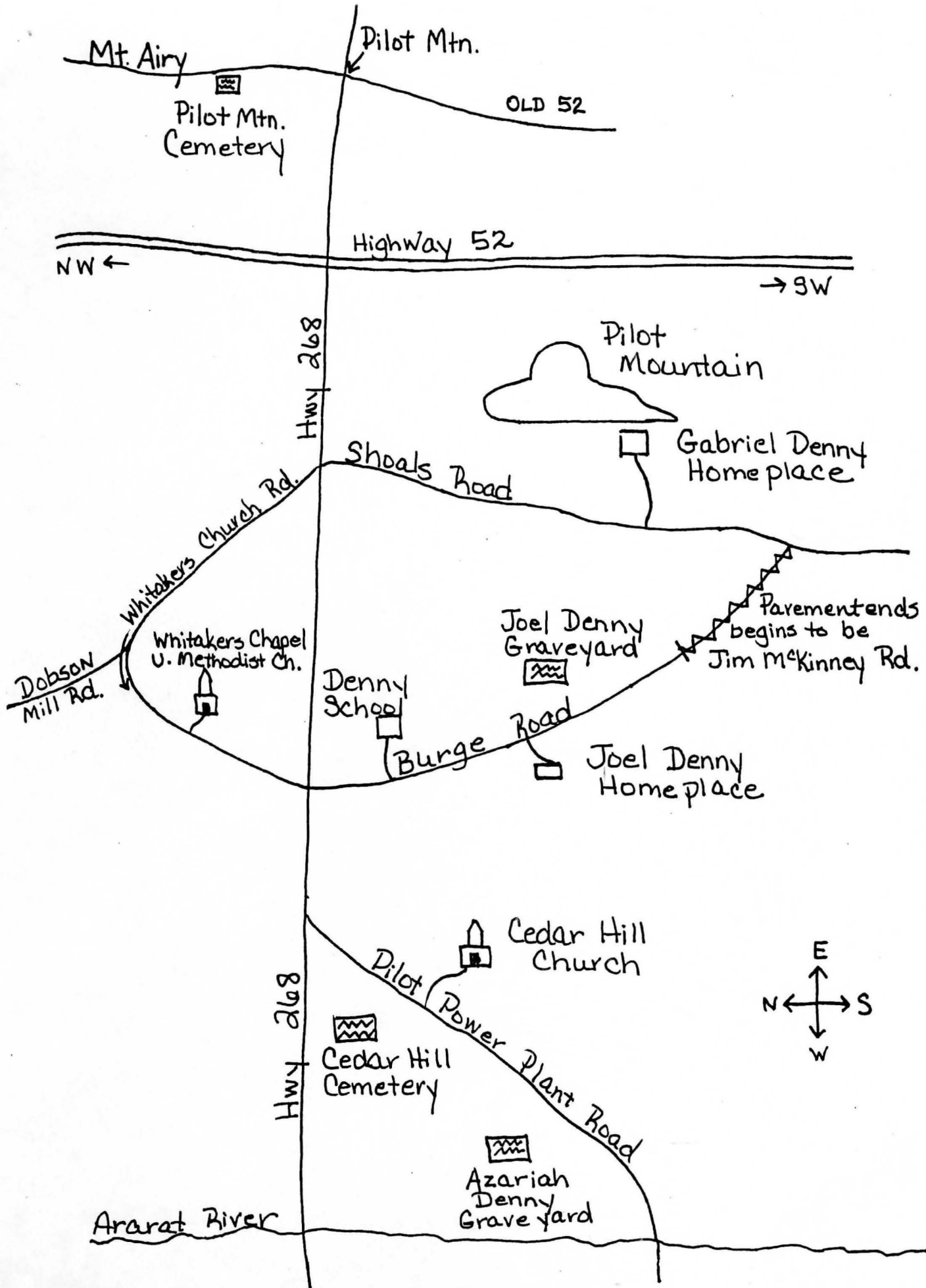
All buildings covered
with riven boards
except kitchen &
big house.

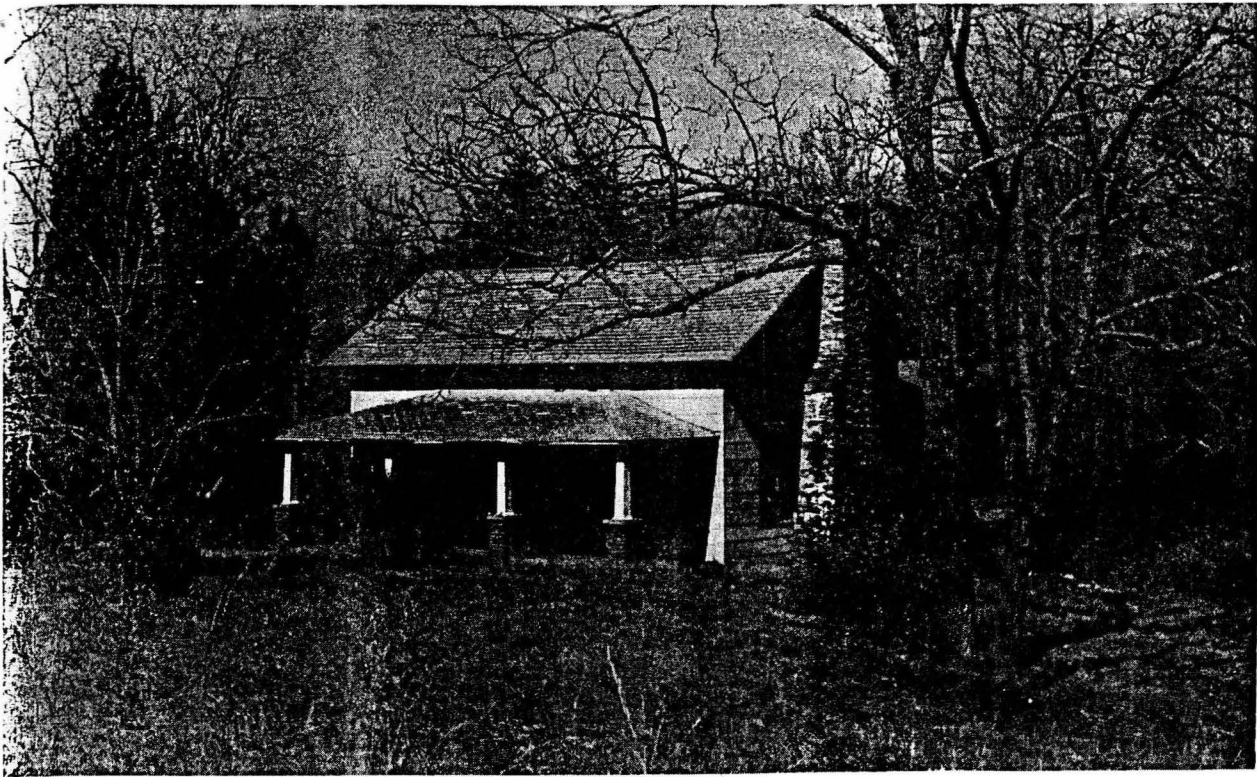
P - Peach tree	○ - Plum tree
o - Pear tree	● - Apple tree
x - Walnut tree	c - Cherry tree



big house.



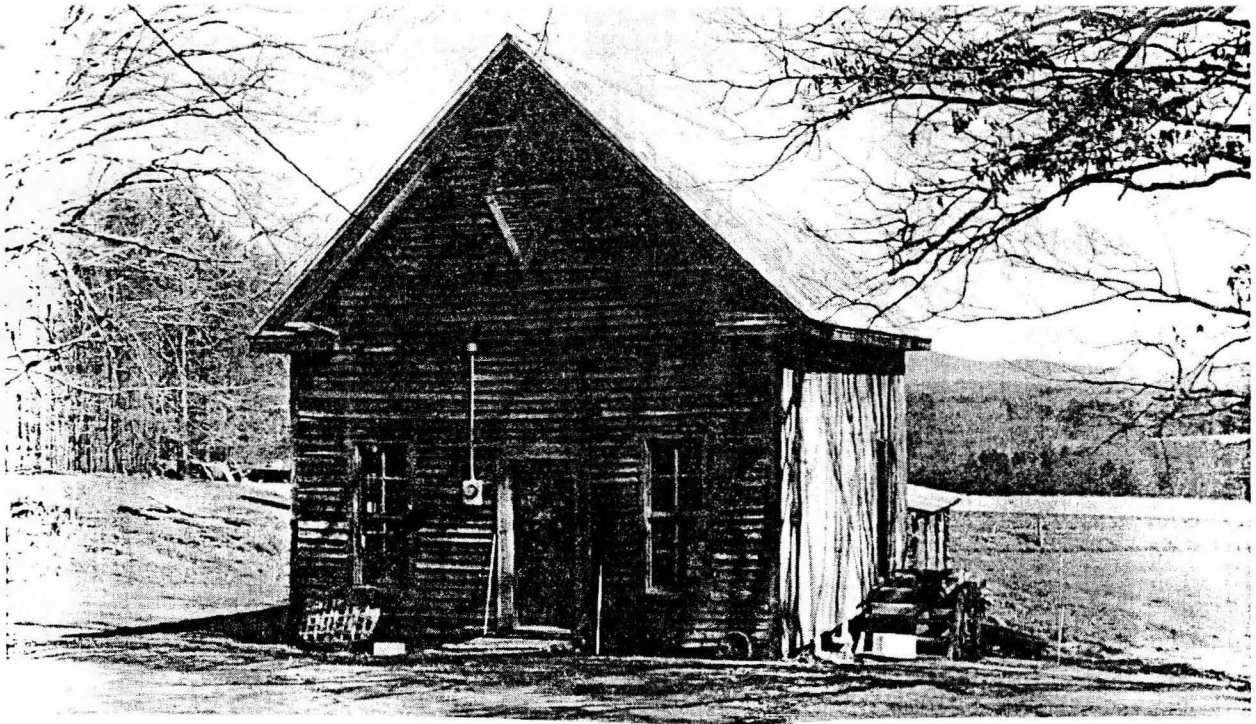




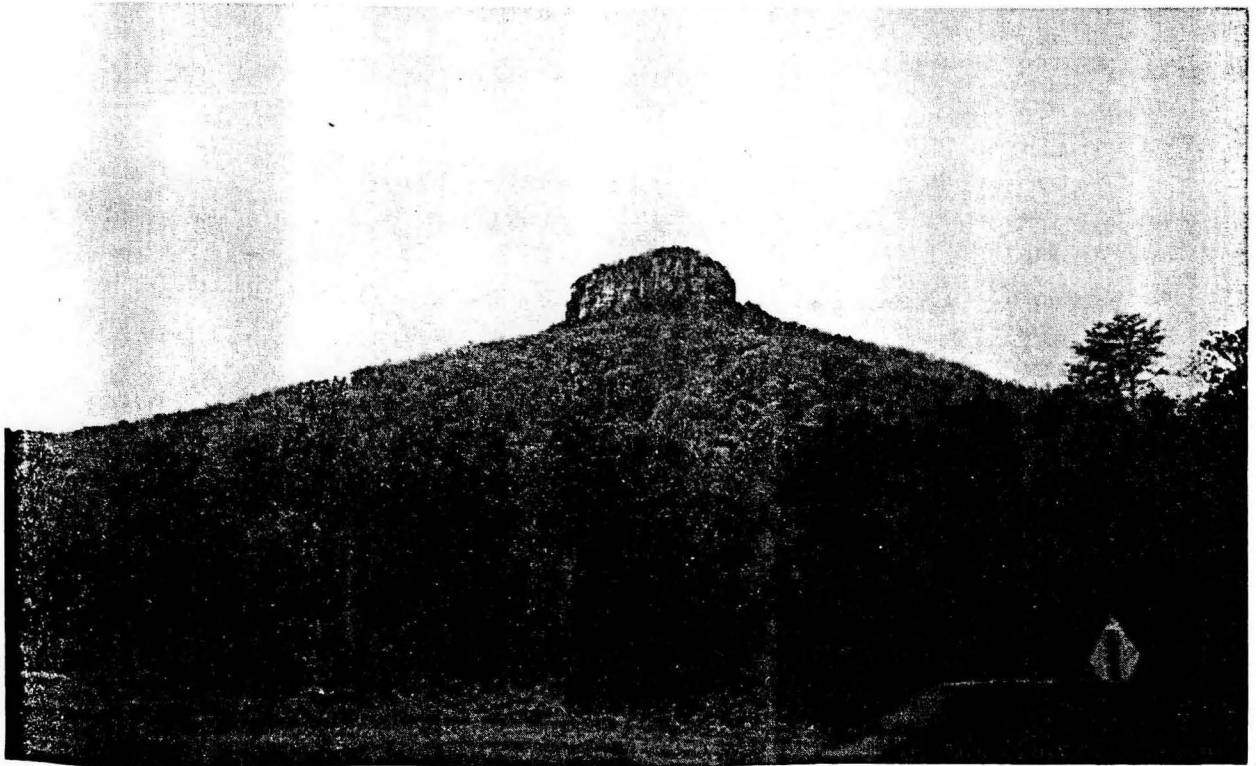
Farmhouse
"main dwelling"



Separate kitchen building where cooking, eating and working took place, included a rear bedroom and attic playroom for cold weather. The kitchen was moved after the farm was sold and used as a packhouse.



Denny School House
 Attended by all Denny children
 Last remaining intact one room school house in Surry County



View of Pilot Mountain which is now a North Caroling State
 Park and includes the Gabriel and Sarah Denny farm.

DRAFT

**Mr. Andy Whitaker, Superintendent
Pilot Mountain State Park
1792 Pilot Knob Park Road
Pinnacle, NC 27043-9201**

January 30, 2001

Dear Mr. Whitaker,

We have learned that consideration is being given to preserving to some degree the Gabriel Denny property now located within the confines of the state park. The Board of Directors of the Surry County Historical Society wishes to go on record in support of this effort.

The Gabriel Denny farm was certainly one of the most advanced farm operations within Surry County during the last quarter of the 19th century. The attached drawing by his daughter Roxie Denny Spease, and the written description by his son Emery B. Denny bear testimony to this fact. This farm, with its many self-supporting enterprises, is precisely the kind of historical site that cries to be preserved for the edification of generations yet to come.

In addition to the historical aspect of the farm operation itself, it is significant that a humble lad working on his father's farm, rose through great difficulty and hardship to the lofty position of Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. This, Emery B. Denny did, along with a myriad of other outstanding accomplishments during his lifetime. This alone we believe should warrant the preserving of this property.

We wish you to know that our Society stands ready to assist you and other interested parties in any way possible in this endeavor. I am attaching a collection of documents relating to the Denny farm in the hope that they may assist you in some way. Please feel free to contact me, should you deem that we could be of assistance in saving this irreplaceable segment of Surry County history.

Very truly yours,

**Cama Merritt
President**

1 attch: Denny Farm & Buildings