

Understanding Early 20th Century Tenant Farming in Bartow County, Georgia

Tenant farming is an agricultural system in which farmers cultivate crops or raise livestock on rented land. Tenant farming became prominent directly following the American Civil war due to the bad economy former slaves and poor whites faced. Tenant farmers oftentimes owned equipment and supplies and were provided with food and other necessities from the landowners. The Adams family house is a historic building situated in Cartersville, Georgia located only a few miles northwest of the Etowah Indian Mounds. The house was constructed on the Walnut Grove Plantation, owned by the Young family since the early 1830s. Abandoned for a century or more, my research focuses on rediscovering what we know about the daily life of the Adams family through archaeological investigation, archival study, and oral history. Archaeological investigation was centered on clearing the vegetation as well as mapping the extant building to reveal architectural and construction information. Artifacts excavated from in and around the house help to round out what we know about their socioeconomic status. Archival study and oral history were more limited in scope and scale, but the information retrieved complemented the archaeological field and lab work. Combined, the research presents a picture of an early 20th century tenet farming family, hidden from view until now. Exposing this lifestyle adds to our understanding of the mode of production of this specific family in relation to the typical tenant farmer standard at the time.