

Building Formal Analysis

114 Shake Rag Street, Mineral Point, WI

American Vernacular Field Research

UW-Madison

Nick Coombs

Pendarvis House, sits at 114 Shake Rag street in a section of Mineral Point that was particularly popular for lead mining during the lead boom of the early 19th century. Pendarvis' land itself was not sold individually, the lot designated lot 192 in the initial survey of Mineral Point would encompass the land now containing three Cornish style houses: Polperro, Pendarvis and Trelawny. On July 25th, 1839 an English (but non-Cornish) emigrant by the name of George Kislingbury bought lot 192. Given that Kislingbury was not married at the time, it was most likely that he was more interested in speculation of the property rather than building his own home on it. The land for Pendarvis sat unused for several years until Kislingbury sold the land in 1845 for \$50 to an English copper miner of by the name of Henry Williams and his wife Ann (Erdman, Daniel. 1982, p. 27). Upon purchasing the land, the Williams' set about having a house built on the land. There is no specific evidence towards whom actually built Pendarvis, Williams himself was a copper miner. Therefore it is likely that his next-door neighbors at Trelawny: James Carbis and Sampson Thomas, who were both Cornish stone masons were involved in the construction of Pendarvis.

The design they chose for Pendarvis was one that was typical of Cornish mining houses of the time. The outer façade is a rectangular, symmetrical, single-gabled stone structure with dressed stone on the front and undressed stone on the sides and back of the house. The walls, with the exception of the later addition in the back of the house are a uniform thickness of 1'6" with plaster covering the interior walls. The frontal exterior of

the house is telling of the interior, with the two symmetrical windows emphasizing the one-room structure of the interior with the door separating the two halves of the interior. Each side of the building would have had a stove, however the right stove has been removed (see photo) and the left side was turned into a mantled-fireplace by the preservationists Robert Neal and Edgar Hellum in the 1930's. An addition was added onto the back of the property at an undetermined time which features clapboard siding, its initial purpose is also unknown. The interior of the building looks like many other one-room houses that were popular in the early 19th century. With no specialization of rooms, the daily tasks would have all taken place within the singular interior space. The gabled roofing employs sash-sawed 2x4's with a 1x6 board running along the apex of the roof and slopes down at a uniform angle. Pendarvis shares a very similar aesthetic quality to the other two buildings Trelawny and Polperro.

The construction of Pendarvis in the mid 1830's does not, however, end the known history of the building. Although Kislingbury sold the land to Henry Williams in 1845, Williams never paid Kislingbury the \$50, nor did he ever receive a deed or title for the land he built Pendarvis on. This issue went largely unnoticed until June 10th, 1848 when Kislingbury sold the entire lot, including the land on which Pendarvis was constructed to James Penberthy for \$200 (*Warranty Deed Book. Vol. N. p.198*). Although both Penberthy and Williams would die within the next three years, the conflict of ownership of the land did not end until the widows on the two men took the case to court. In 1853, citing that the Williams had "made valuable improvements thereon by erecting thereon a permanent dwelling house of stone and other improvements" (Court Case File, Tregay v. Penberthy. Platteville ARC). The court ruled in favor of Ann Williams and she

was rewarded with the deed to the land set out in a land division performed by Kislingbury in 1843.

Following Ann Williams' death in the 1860's, the historical record of Pendarvis seems to disappear for over a half century until the preservationists Robert Neal and Edgar Hellum acquired the property in 1936. The two men first acquired lot 192 from a "sale of real estate of infant heirs" from Evelyn Fine and her legal guardian at the time, Amy Eckstein for \$11.82 (*Warranty Deed Book*, Vol. 132, p. 137). On October 22nd, 1936 they assumed the property of Pendarvis with a quitclaim deed from Iowa County for \$10 and set about creating their vision of a Cornish mining town in Mineral Point. Neal and Hellum then used the property as a restaurant for the next three decades serving such Cornish staples as Pasty's and Tea Biscuits (*Pendarvis Menu*, Wisconsin State Historical Society, c. 1960). Following their retirement, the property was acquired by the Wisconsin State Historical Society in 1970 and it remains in their possession to this day.

Deed Research for:

114 Shake Rag Street (Hoard St.) Mineral Point, WI

“Pendarvis House”

07/25/1839

Erdman, Daniel. 1982, p.23

George Kislingbury purchases lot 192 at *the pre-emption sale*.

1845

Erdman, Daniel. 1892, p.27

George Kislingbury sells land for Pendarvis to *Henry Williams* for \$50.

06/10/1848

Volume N-198

George Kislingbury sells lot 192 to *James Penberthy* for \$200.

1853

Erdman, Daniel. 1892, p.27

Court case between widows of *Henry Williams* and *James Penberthy* rules in favor of *Ann Williams*. Williams' obtain legal title of land for Pendarvis.

09/22/1936

Volume 70-472

Robert Neal and *Edgar Hellum* acquire lot 192 from a “sale of real estate of infant heirs” from *Evelyn Fine* (legal guardian: Amy Eckstein) the infant heir of *Katherine Sieger* for \$11.82.

10/22/1936

Volume 132-137

Robert Neal and *Edgar Hellum* buy Pendarvis for \$10 in a “quitclaim” from Iowa County.

12/6/1957

Robert Neal and *Edgar Hellum* get a warranty deed with *Evelyn Ketter* for \$1 on lot 192.

04/26/1971
Volume 269-490

Bob Hellum and Edgar Nealson sell land to the Wisconsin Historical Society for \$79,000.
(Parts of lot 190,191, and 192 were also given in this delling)