

Whitaker-Waggoner House

North of the town of Paragon in Morgan County, Indiana, Warren Roberts discovered a nearly two-story, two-room log house built in 1820 and known today as the Whitaker-Waggoner house. Each room had its own fireplace and exterior limestone rubble chimney. The two front doors are original and, with the two gable chimneys and the interior floor plan characterize the house as a double-pen house.

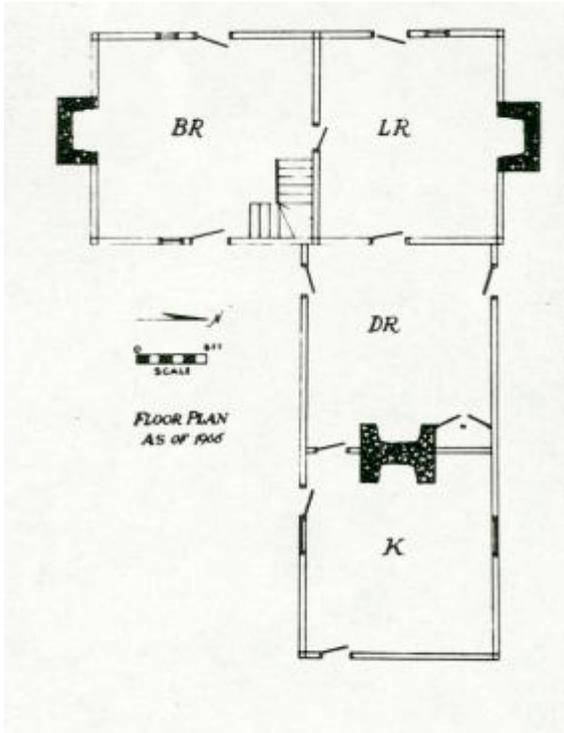


The Whitaker-Waggoner house, front view

A two-room rear wing, or ell, built of both frame and log construction was added a few years later. The log portion is at the gable end and the frame portion adjoins the original house.



The Whitaker-Waggoner house, rear view



This two cell floor plan shows us a story of development through time. The original building is the horizontal part at the top. The gable fireplaces and double front and back doors suggest a floor plan known as double-pen, a logical way to gain length in log construction.

The addition is to the back and is frame where it adjoins the original house and log at the bottom end, containing the kitchen. This is a variant two-cell form known as a saddlebag plan, because it has a single center-located chimney stack with hearths on both sides. It is called saddlebag because the two cells hang on either side of the chimney stack like saddlebags over a horse's back.

The Whitaker-Waggoner house, floor plan.



Corners were constructed by selecting a form of notch that varied for a variety of practical reasons (“How much time do we have before winter comes?”) and cultural reasons (“This is the way we have always done it!”).

This is an interesting and more complex form of notching. Look back to the floor plan and notice that Roberts has drawn the intersection of the interior partition differently in both sections, crossing in the old part and not crossing in the new part.

This junction of logs is three-way, two lateral pieces joining with one transverse piece showing at the butt end. This is the crossed intersection in the original house, indicating that both pens are conceived as parts of the larger unit, the original house.

Three-way corner notching

The four fireplaces had been boarded up before the house was dismantled. When the kitchen fireplace, shown here, was opened, the original iron crane was found to still be in place. Three of the four neoclassical-influenced mantelpieces were preserved. "It is obvious that a carpenter of unusual ability designed and built these features," Roberts wrote.



The original kitchen fireplace and mantel



The unusual eight panel door

The two front doors were of an unusual eight-panel design. The motif is sometimes called "cross and bible," the cross overlaid on the open bible represented by the panels. More commonly, the cross-piece is omitted on the bottom set of panels. The width of the cross-piece on this door is unusual.