

# SUTTLE, ALABAMA

## Remnants of J. Freeman Suttle Mercantile and Residential Complex

Suttle, Perry County, Alabama  
April 8, 2010

Suttle is a rural community located approximately thirteen miles southeast of Marion in Perry County, Alabama. No town or settlements are shown on *La Tourette's An Accurate Map of the State of Alabama and West Florida* of 1837. Perryville, located approximately nine miles to the northeast, is the only community shown in the area on the 1902 U.S. Department of Agriculture's Perry County Soil Survey Map. Despite this, the Felix post office opened near present-day Suttle in 1880. While current maps show Felix somewhat further north, the 1930 soil map shows Felix at this location. The post office was renamed Suttle in 1933 and continued to operate until 1973.

James Freeman Suttle, alternately referred to in historical sources as James, J. F., and J. Freeman Suttle, was the eighth and last child of John White and Rebecca Jane Smith Suttle. He was born in Perry County on January 2, 1866 and was raised at the family's plantation house about three miles north of the present-day Suttle community. Suttle married Lucille "Angie" Jones in 1898. The 1910 census records James F. Suttle, Sr., age forty-four, a merchant operating a general store, living with his wife Angie and children James, Jr., Pettus, John, Walter, and Roger, and two boarders. He is listed in the 1920 census as J. Freeman Suttle, a farmer, and the family had grown to include a daughter by that time. Living next door in a rented house (Resource #3) was Dr. D. A. Mason and his family. Suttle was appointed by the Governor to serve on the state Highway Commission on October 1, 1923, and served as the Commissioner of Maintenance. The 1930 census for the Suttle family is essentially the same as that of the 1920 census, with Walter no longer listed and two boarders still living with the family.

Freeman Suttle took over the operation his family's farm and under his management it expanded from primarily a cotton plantation to a diversified agricultural enterprise. It is unclear whether or not he or his father began a dairy at the site, but the family recalls that it became a large concern incorporating four separate farms. Butter and milk was sold to markets in the region. With their other agricultural interests, including cotton and crops, the family at one time controlled about 12,000 acres. Freeman Suttle began diversifying into pork, chicken, and beef production in the early twentieth century and the dairy operations were gradually phased out. About that time, the gin was converted into a mill to make feed for the animals.

James Freeman Suttle, Sr. died in December 1934. Farming operations were then carried out by his sons James Freeman Suttle, Jr. and Pettus Suttle. The Suttle family gradually reduced its farming operations beginning circa 1950. By the early 1960s, the family had leased part of the land to the MacMillan Bloedel Ltd., a large Canadian forestry company. Comparison of aerial photographs from 1950, 1959, and 1974 and current satellite images shows the gradual conversion of the farmland from croplands with scattered woodlands to extensive timberland, with the most dramatic changes occurring after 1974.

This site includes the remaining resources associated with Suttle's mercantile and residential complex. Still standing are a the cotton gin and several associated outbuildings, a storage warehouse for the former store, the dwelling formerly occupied by Dr. Mason and others, and the house of Freeman Suttle, Jr. In early 2010, the Suttle store was demolished as were several nearby agricultural buildings and the demolition of the gin and its associated outbuilding is planned. Several additional agricultural resources related to Suttle are scattered within the surrounding area. Still remaining in February 2010 were the ruins of a dairy building and, some distance away, a silo. A former hog pen adjacent to the dairy building had been demolished shortly before and two or three animal pens shown on satellite photos to the southwest of the dairy building were not accessible. An unidentified informant at the site indicated that he thought the latter buildings had been demolished.

### Resource List:

01.01	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Gin Building	ca. 1915	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
01.02	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Outbuilding	ca. 1915	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
01.03	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Outbuilding	ca. 1915	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
01.04	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Outbuilding	ca. 1915	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
01.05	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Outbuilding	ca. 1915	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
01.06	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Outbuilding	ca. 1935	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
01.07	Suttle, J. Freeman, Gin Complex, Outbuilding	ca. 1935	Agriculture, Agricultural Processing Facility
02.01	Suttle, J. Freeman, Store (Demolished)	ca. 1880	Commerce/trade, Department Store
02.02	Suttle, J. Freeman, Store Storage Shed	ca. 1920	Commerce/trade, Storage
03.01	Mason, Dr. D.A., House	ca. 1890	Single dwelling, Residence Garage
03.02	Mason, Dr. D.A., House Garage	ca. 1950	Garage
04.01	Suttle, J. Freeman, House	ca. 1925	Single dwelling, Residence

