

Walter Reed's Birthplace
Belroi, Gloucester County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-57

HABS
VA
37-BEL,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESTRPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Major Eugene Bradbury, District Officer
Richmond, Virginia

HABS
VA

37-BEL

1"

WALTER REED'S BIRTHPLACE
Belroi, Gloucester County, Virginia

Owner:

Date of Erection: Early Nineteenth Century

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Good, restored.

Materials: Brick basement and chimneys, wood superstructure.

Additional Data: This inconspicuous cottage was the birthplace on September 13, 1851 of Walter Reed, the great bacteriologist whose researches made possible the abolition of yellow fever. He was son of a methodist minister and it is said that due to repairs to the parsonage nearby the Reed family moved into this cottage shortly before Walter Reed's birth. He entered the University of Virginia at 16 and was given his M.D. in two years. He obtained another M.D. degree from Bellevue Hospital in New York in 1870. He was commissioned assistant surgeon in the United States Army in 1874. In 1890 while stationed in Baltimore he studied at Johns Hopkins, specializing in bacteriology. In 1900 he was appointed to a commission to study the cause and mode of transmission of yellow fever. Through a series of experiments with human subjects it was demonstrated that transmission was through the Stegomyia mosquito. In 1900 there were 1400 cases of yellow fever in Havana alone, but due to the findings of Reed's commission and the consequent extermination program launched against the Stegomyia mosquito there were only 37 cases in the whole of Cuba in 1901 and in 1902 there was not a single case. In 1901 Reed returned to Washington where he died of chronic appendicitis in 1902.

The house is a typical cottage of the region with a lean-to across the back. The arrangement of the center door, instead of to the side of the front makes it seem that this may have been built as a

lawyer's or doctor's office to a house now gone,
or may have been the pastor's study.

The building possesses two large outside brick
chimneys on the east side, an unusual condition
for so small a building. This probably points
to the leanto in the rear being an addition later
than the building of the main house.

Reference: Dictionary of American Biography, Charles Scribners Sons,
N.Y. 1935.

Text by

Thomas I. Waterman

Oct. 27. 1937