

Piece by piece. Everything that the Foothills Farmstead consists of comes out piece by piece to be moved to its future home site. Every tin shingle panel, every salvageable pane of glass, every hand numbered and hewn timber—they all come out together by Foothills Farmstead front man Nick Gambrell, the ancestral heir to the original home in Oakway, SC. Restoring a home that has been in Gambrell's family for generations is quite the undertaking, but Nick has held his dream of restoring this historic home since he was five years old. That dream is slowly but surely coming to fruition by Nick's hard work, labor and love with the help of his wife, select family members, enthusiastic volunteers and select Clemson University interns.

We can tell upon meeting Nick that restoring this home is what he was truly meant to do in life. Nick says, as we stand examining where the front door once was hinged and welcomed people in and out of its grand entrance, "As you grow older, you realize that all the other things in life don't really matter unless you're doing what you want to do in life." The sense of pride that Nick has in the home is evident, and we immediately begin to understand the importance of honoring the original builder of the farmstead house Andrew Bearden and his family. Inspiration also comes from preserving this great home's history for others to enjoy again like so many did when Nick's great grandparents lived there from the 1930's until his great grandmother's death in 1985. In dismantling every bit of the home carefully, each with a hand-written label or number, you are able to see that Nick will eventually reassemble the home exactly as it was in its original place but in the new setting that will ultimately serve the public as a living history site and working farmstead.

Oconee County, South Carolina has historically always been an area of agricultural development as early as the 1800's. The land developed was used for crops and farming as well as being home to two railroads, a nuclear power plant and water sources of lakes and rivers. The Farmstead home is an important piece of architectural history from this region thanks to the Bearden family, who lived and worked in the Oakway community for many years. The Farmstead home was first built as a two-room home by Andrew Bearden and grew to a six-room, two-sided shotgun style home, with a hallway down the middle. The ornate Folk Victorian porch came as a later addition by Mr. Bearden before 1920, when he passed away. Thanks to the Bearden family of carpenters and masonry artisans, up to five homes in the Oakway community were built by the Bearden family with the same floor plan and chimney styles. Nick points out the signature style of the Farmstead home's chimney with intricate, sturdy slabs of granite at the base, a unique construction feature that can be found in all of the Bearden homes. In deconstructing the chimney, Nick found that some of the bricks even have baby footprints that were imprinted in the wet clay before they were hand fired.

The Oakway, SC region were home to many similar Folk Victorian style homes all with almost identical frame structure due to the Bearden Family, who were known to have built many homes in the region. Today, Nick and his wife currently live in a

historic home that dates as older than the 1925 Farmstead house, and Nick believes the Bearden Family also built their home.

The new location of the Foothills Farmstead will be located less than two miles from the home's original site and will essentially stay true to the original home built by the Bearden family. By saving each timber, each redwood porch post and each original fired brick, Nick is putting the house back together like you would a giant puzzle. Since Nick has stepped aside from his salvage business in Seneca, SC, he has focused on bringing statewide attention to the physical relocation of the house as well as forming the endeavor into a non-profit organization with a future mission to educate the public and serve the community as a living history site. Nick hopes that at the new location, the Farmstead house will overlook an area complete with a corncrib, a barn to house domestic animals, field space for crops, a schoolhouse, and even a stage area out of another preserved home to host local events for the community.

For a home that remained vacant for thirty years before the Foothills Farmstead project plans began in late 2013, the structure is sound and has weathered well while maintaining many of its unique characteristics. As large of a task Nick has before him, his dedication and passion to complete what he has started is truly admirable. Nick Gambrell, his wife, and members of the historic preservation community are coming together to shape the Foothills Farmstead organization and future site that will help demonstrate to visitors what a working farmstead of 1900-1950's looked like and how it operated. All this will surely help drive local and Upstate tourism through a culturally rich and educational site that is sure to put Oakway, SC on the map for years to come.

Nick was born in time to meet his great grandmother that lived in the house until in the mid 1980's. Other older family members that frequented the home have shared family photos with Nick to let him know how the house was used and enjoyed by so many of the past. In almost all of the Gambrell family's photos the beautiful front porch served as a gathering space and the perfect backdrop for a family portrait. Now with the vision of the Foothills Farmstead, the Gambrell and Bearden front porch will see that energy and life once again.