

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Perry-Shepherd Farm**

Lansing, Ashe County, AH0108, Listed 4/5/2006  
Nomination by Sherry Joines Wyatt  
Photographs by Sherry Joines Wyatt, July 2005



Overall view of farm, looking northeast



Façade view

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Perry-Shepherd Farm

other names/site number Shepherd, Swansie Farm

**2. Location**

street & number 410 Swansie Shepherd Rd. not for publication N/A

city or town Lansing vicinity X

state North Carolina code NC county Ashe code 009 zip code 28643

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<u>    </u> entered in the National Register <u>    </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u>    </u> determined eligible for the National Register <u>    </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u>    </u> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> other (explain): _____ _____	_____	_____

Perry-Shepherd Farm  
Name of Property

Ashe County, North Carolina  
County and State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)      Category of Property (Check only one box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling  
AGRICULTURE: outbuilding  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural field  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling  
AGRICULTURE: outbuilding  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural field  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete Block  
walls WOOD: weatherboard  
roof Asphalt Shingles  
other Wood

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Perry-Shepherd Farm  
Name of Property

Ashe County, North Carolina  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or a grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

c. 1890 - 1956

**Significant Dates**

1904, 1921

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

Western Office, State Historic Preservation Office

Perry-Shepherd Farm  
Name of Property

Ashe County, North Carolina  
County and State

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** approx. 62 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1   17 449050   4040490  
Zone   Easting                  Northing

2   17 449350   4040610  
Zone   Easting                  Northing

3   17 449690   4040110  
Zone   Easting                  Northing

4   17 449360   4040640  
Zone   Easting                  Northing

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Sherry Joines Wyatt

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date August 2005

street & number 102 Junkin Street telephone (540) 381-8268

city or town Christiansburg state VA zip code 24073

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

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name Walter Clark and Johnny Burlison

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street & number 2943 Rue Sans Famille telephone (919) 829-8154

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27607

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division,

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
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Perry-Shepherd Farm  
Ashe County, North Carolina

**7. Description**

The sixty-two acre Perry-Shepherd Farm is located at the end of Swansie Shepherd Road near the community of Apple Grove, on Little Horse Creek, in northwestern Ashe County. The farm is approximately five miles northwest of the town of Lansing. The Perry-Shepherd Farm is situated in a narrow cove. A small stream flows from the ridge lying east of the house through the farm to join Greer Branch, which eventually joins the South Fork of Little Horse Creek at Joe Hampton Road, north of the farm. The Perry-Shepherd Farm is made up of eight resources including the main dwelling, a caretaker's cottage, a barn, a warehouse, a granary, and three sheds surrounded by woodland, open pasture, and blueberry and apple orchards.

The main house is a good example of a double-porch, decorated I-house, a common house type in the county. The ornamentation that decorates the c.1890 house is primarily derived from Queen Anne stylistic motifs. Indicative of the I-house is the two-story, single-pile form of the front section of the house. Like many I-houses in Ashe County, the house has an original rear wing. Unlike most of these houses, however, the wing, which has a double-gable roof, is two rooms wide instead of the more common single room wide configuration. The wing is set back from the side-gable front section of the house creating a T-plan.

The three-bay house is sheathed in weatherboards. The metal roof, a recent replacement of the original, is pierced by two interior brick chimneys at the ridge of the front section roof. The windows are c.1965 two-over-two horizontal light replacements on the first floor and original two-over-two-light double-hung sash on the second floor. A small, one-story, shed-roof addition (mid-twentieth century) is located at the northwest corner of the house between the front section and the rear wing and appears to be an enclosed porch. A similar shed-roof porch is located at the northeast corner and is partially enclosed with concrete block and screen.

A circa 1940 photograph of the Perry-Shepherd house shows the original front-gable, double-tier porch at the facade's central bay. The lower porch was altered, probably during the 1940s or 1950s, to extend across the width of the facade. It is supported by paired, slender, battered posts on boxed piers. The upper level of the porch is original, however, with sawn balustrade and flat, sawn board posts and sawn brackets. All of these sawn elements are curvaceous and ornate. Additional Queen Anne-inspired ornamentation includes small brackets with circle cut-outs at the eaves (these brackets were noted on several similar houses in the area). Diagonally-laid boards create a v-pattern in the front gable. Attic vents in each of the gables feature bracketed lintels. Decorative cut-work surrounds are set within the rectangular sidelights at the upper and lower front doors, which are four-panel and multi-panel with a single light, respectively.

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Perry-Shepherd Farm  
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The interior of the center passage plan house is well-preserved. The passage or hall is sheathed in painted horizontal beadboard above a varnished vertical beadboard wainscoting. The newell post is turned with a large ball finial. The stair balustrade has turned balusters. The floor is three to four inch, painted wood. The modern paneling in the western front room has been recently removed to reveal the original rough-sawn lumber over beadboard wainscoting. This room was used as a bedroom by the Gardner Shepherd family. It is likely that the rough-sawn lumber was originally covered with canvas and then papered. The mantel features simple pilasters carrying a wide, single panel. The removal of modern paneling in the eastern room revealed beadboard walls over beadboard wainscoting. This room was used as a living room by the Gardner Shepherd family. The original mantel for this room has been removed. The flooring in both of the front rooms has been removed to allow for installation of new HVAC system and repair of termite damage. The original flooring was unsalvageable and will be replaced with new heart pine. In the two-room rear wing, the western room (used as a dining room) has horizontal beadboard over a vertical beadboard wainscoting. The eastern room (used as the kitchen) in the wing also has some of its original beadboard. The floors of both these rooms have been removed to repair termite damage. The enclosed porch at the northwest corner of the house contains a mid-twentieth century bathroom. A partially enclosed porch on the northeast corner of the house has a spring trough. Four panel (two long over two short) doors are typical throughout the house while door and window trim is relatively simple, molded trim without corner blocks or other ornament.

The first floor plan is mirrored on the second floor, but the second floor finishes are simpler, with wall paper over board sheathing. Floors are four-inch painted pine and there are no fireplaces, only flue openings. The heavy turned balusters and newel posts are repeated as well.

The house is currently undergoing a major rehabilitation following the Secretary of Interior's Standards to repair termite damage and remove late-twentieth century changes such as the modern paneling. The first floor will be restored as closely as possible to its original condition. On the second floor, modest changes are being made to better accommodate modern life. The ceilings (originally rough-sawn lumber) have been removed and new beadboard added between the ceiling joists to add height to the relatively low space. A former bedroom in the northeast corner of the second floor has been divided into two rooms, each a bath. The original rough sawn board sheathing has been removed from most of the walls in the second floor to accommodate insulation, but the boards will be replaced at the end of rehabilitation.

Directly in front (to the south) of the house, adjacent to the drive, are two grape arbors with apple trees planted between them. This is believed to be a part an orchard that was on the



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property when purchased by the Shepherds. The orchard has been expanded over time and contains a number of heirloom varieties such as Virginia Beauty, Winesap, and Yellow Transparent. No map of the varieties has ever been produced as Swansie Shepherd, who was responsible for adding and grafting many of the trees, held that information in memory. Some of the varieties in the orchard are unique such as Mary McKinney, which Swansie Shepherd collected from a tree growing at the southwestern grave of Mary McKinney. He also raised White Bausel, a popular local apple. Ron Joyner, owner of a local heirloom apple orchards states that he “cannot be sure if he [Shepherd] was the first to locate this apple but he was certainly responsible for making it available for many other local growers. This is an apple that never gained much attention outside of Ashe Co. but remains a much sought-after variety in our area.”<sup>1</sup>

The grape arbor nearest the drive is constructed to each side of a granary. The granary, which has a walk-through aisle, is sheathed in vertical boards and has a corn crib on its western side created from small lath. Adjacent to the grape arbor is a concrete block foundation, it was to be a warehouse that Swansie Shepherd began, but never completed. To the west, adjacent to the fields and pasture, is a shed-roof transverse barn with vertical board siding said to have been built around an earlier barn. Typical of the Ashe County’s outbuildings, the barn has had a number of alterations and additions leaving little that can clearly be identified as the earlier barn. Most of the building appears to date from the early to mid-twentieth century. Like most of the county’s barns, it is framed with light and medium-sized timbers. The stalls are divided by plank walls and are accessed via plank doors. Some of these planks are quite wide. The loft of the barn is unusually large and low-ceilinged suggesting that it was part of the later alterations. The barn is banked against the drive with a central entry in its northeast side leading to the loft (hay storage) from the drive. The eight stalls in the barn are arranged along a center aisle on the lower level and are accessed from a door at the southeast end of the barn. A shed-roof addition probably dating to the early or mid-twentieth century is found on the southwestern side of the barn, while a c.1965 concrete block addition is attached to the northwest side of the upper floor. Inside this addition is a brick fireplace or furnace used to boil down large kettles of molasses. A hole in the roof over the fireplace serves to vent the space. Adjacent to this is a concrete block produce warehouse dating from the 1960s.

Southeast of the house is a second shed-roof building. It was probably built during the mid-twentieth century and has been recently reworked to create a pavilion for recreation as well

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1. Ron Joyner, email communication to Sherry Joines Wyatt, 6 January 2006.

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as a place to conduct the blueberry picking business. The building has vertical board siding. It is built over a culvert that carries the stream out of blueberry field. The east side of the building is open, facing the field. Swansie Shepherd created an underground culvert through the blueberry field to carry the small stream, and in the process provided underground irrigation to his blueberry bushes, which were planted about 1965.

A caretaker's cottage, c. 1950, is located west of the main house. It is a simple, one-and-a-half-story, front gable building with concrete block foundation and German siding. The cottage has four primary rooms (living room, kitchen, two bedrooms and a bath) and an open room upstairs. The interior finishes on the first floor include modern paneling, c.1950 drywall, and modern vinyl flooring. The second floor is sheathed in pine planks that have been recently sanded to a smooth finish.

### Inventory List

1. Perry-Shepherd House, c.1890, **Contributing building**  
This two-story, decorated I-house with two-tier, gable-roof porch includes ornamentation derived from Queen Anne stylistic motifs. The rear wing of the house has a double-gable roof and is two rooms wide, an unusual feature. The house features a central passage plan.
2. Caretaker's Cottage, c.1950, **Contributing building**  
This is a one-and-a-half-story, front-gable Minimal Traditional-style house with German siding and three-over-one windows.
3. Barn, c.1890 with twentieth century additions, **Contributing building**  
The two-story, banked, shed-roof transverse barn is sheathed with vertical board siding. The building is said to have been built around an earlier barn, but little of this original building remains. The barn is framed with light and medium-sized timbers. The barn has eight stalls and early to mid-twentieth century additions.
4. Granary, c.1890, **Contributing structure**  
A small, shed-roof granary with slatted corn crib (west side) and vertical board sheathing, the building has a walk-through center aisle. Grape arbors flank the granary.

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5. Cattle Shed, mid-twentieth century, **Contributing building**

This shed-roof outbuilding has vertical board sheathing and a double door entry.

6. Farm Landscape, c.1890 - 1956, **Contributing site**

The agricultural fields, woodlands, and stream that are part of the setting for the farm house and outbuildings, an important feature in its significance. Notable are the open pastures to the southwest and northwest of the house as well as the orchards to the northwest, northeast and southeast. The orchard contains approximately 200 trees from the early through mid-twentieth century with many traditional varieties such as Virginia Beauty, Winesap, and Yellow Transparent. Swansie Shepherd managed the orchard during the second half of the twentieth century and some varieties are known to have been collected by him, such as Mary McKinney. Another variety White Bausel is locally well-known and was popularized by Shepherd. The blueberry patch contains approximately 3,000 plants that were rooted, grown, and installed by Swansie Shepherd about 1965. These bushes, which appear to be two varieties of highbush blueberry, are still in production and were an important feature of Shepherd's commercial produce trade, which was (and still is) open to the public.

7. Loading Ramp, mid-twentieth century, **Contributing building**

This modestly- sized open, shed-roof outbuilding has a sloped floor and a concrete block foundation. A double-leaf gate at the elevated end allowed livestock to be loaded into a truck.

8. Blueberry Pavilion, mid-twentieth century and c.2003, **Non-contributing building**

This shed-roof frame building has vertical board sheathing. The eastern side has been opened to form a pavilion with four bays. A privy has been added to the north end of the building.

9. Apple House, c.1965, **Non-contributing building**

Concrete block, side-gable building has a narrow engaged porch supported by plain square posts. There are two wide openings giving access to the building, which was used to store and process apples.

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**Summary Paragraph**

The Perry-Shepherd Farm lies at the end of Swansie Shepherd Road near the community of Apple Grove on Little Horse Creek in northwestern Ashe County. The farm is approximately five miles from the small town of Lansing. Ashe County is in the mountainous northwestern corner of the state, lying west of the Blue Ridge. The house and barn are believed to have been built by Jonathan and Alvah (Alvia) Perry, about 1890. The farm was sold to Ambrose and Rebecca Shepherd in 1904 and remained in the Shepherd family until 2003. Built during a period of intense agrarian prosperity, the farm is a good example of a well-preserved farmstead with an I-house featuring the Queen Anne-inspired ornamentation and front-gable, double-tier porch that is common among houses built in Ashe County during the thirty year period from 1880 through 1910. The property meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion C for the local significance of the house design.

The outbuilding complex and the sixty-two acres of farmland and woodland surrounding the building complex, give a clear sense of the historic agricultural use of the property. The continued production of blueberries on the farm and the extant orchard embody the agricultural history of the farm. During its earliest phase, the farm was a minimal cash operation that supported the Perry and Shepherd families' needs. Its shift to more intensive livestock, tobacco, bean, and fruit production by the 1950s is indicative of the shift in Ashe County agriculture to a more cash intensive economy. This farm's contribution to Ashe County's agricultural history lends the property significance under Criterion A.

The period of significance for the Perry-Shepherd Farm begins c. 1890. Despite its continued use as a farm, the property lacks exceptional significance after 1956, thus the period of significance ends in 1956.

*Historical Background*

**History of Ashe County**

The north and south forks of the New River run through Ashe County forming rich river valleys surrounded by large hills, mountains, and steep slopes. Deep rich soils are found not only along the river valleys, but also cover many of the steep hillsides and mountain peaks. These abundant rich soils create areas for the farming of crops and pasture for livestock. The earliest European settlers came into the area during the mid eighteenth century and settled there shortly before the Revolutionary War. As late as 1790, however, the county was home to only about

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eighty families. Steady growth through the early nineteenth century brought the population to 7,500 by 1840.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the population growth and economic development occurring in the county, it became known as one of the “Lost Provinces” of northwestern North Carolina. The moniker helped perpetuate a myth of the county’s remoteness (and by extension backwardness). Ashe was indeed connected with the outside world, but these connections were primarily with Virginia and Tennessee as the county was not easily accessible from eastern North Carolina. In fact, in the late 1850s the trip between Jefferson and Salem (now Winston-Salem) took thirty-six hours whereas today the journey is less than two hours. In 1850, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad reached Abingdon, Virginia, fifty-six miles from Jefferson, opening up new trade opportunities for Ashe County.<sup>3</sup>

By the eve of the Civil War, Ashe County was the leading producer of buckwheat, rye, molasses, and cheese in western North Carolina. Much of the agricultural produce came from farms of fairly modest size. In fact, only one in twenty-three farmers owned more than 200 acres of improved land in 1860. The 1860 census showed 391 slaves in the county and 6.6 percent of the heads of household as being slave holders (compared to about 49 percent in the cotton South).<sup>4</sup> Still, Ashe County was the second poorest county in the state in 1860.<sup>5</sup>

The Civil War manifested hardships in Ashe County as it did in most of the South. The county experienced little direct fighting, yet by mid-1862 one-third of all Ashe households had members engaged in the war. Local residents and the Confederate Home Guard were often harassed by Union non-regulars or bushwhackers who came over the border from Tennessee.

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2. John Houck, et al, *Ashe County* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing Co., 2000), 7 and Ruth Shepherd, ed., *The Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. I (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Co., 1984; reprinted 1998), xi and Crawford, Martin, *Ashe County's Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 16.

3. Crawford, 11 and Shepherd, 15-18.

4. Crawford, 31 and 34.

5. Ibid, 38 and “Grassy Creek Historic District National Register Nomination, 1976,” Asheville Regional Office of the State Historic Preservation Office.

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There were pockets of Union supporters in the county, centered in the North Fork area. Over sixty Ashe men served in the Federal troops.<sup>6</sup>

Agriculture in the county recovered from the Civil War during the 1870s and several new post offices were established during this period. These new offices included one at Apple Grove, which is located about two miles north of the Perry-Shepherd Farm. Apple Grove, now hardly distinguishable except as a notation on county maps, was the closest commercial center to the farm.<sup>7</sup>

By 1890, Apple Grove was a bustling community with three lumber dealers, three livestock dealers, and five general stores. It should be noted that, like most agrarian communities in the county, many of these businesses were dispersed over a wide area and not concentrated at the community center, which is noted on a 1912 Soils Map as the intersection of present day Little Horse Creek Road and Stansberry Road.<sup>8</sup>

The 1880-1910 period was a prosperous time for farmers in Ashe County. The availability of improved farming implements and technology better utilized the natural richness of the region in the production of corn, wheat, and hay, which helped to increase livestock production. The large number of decorated I-houses with substantial farm complexes dating from this period attest to the good economic conditions. Population increased and more post offices were established including Lansing and Comet in 1882. Lansing is located about five miles southeast of the Perry-Shepherd Farm. Comet is located about two miles southeast of the farm. While today Comet is reached by a circuitous route, the 1912 Soils Map of Ashe County indicates that the road that now ends at the Perry-Shepherd Farm extended over the ridge to Comet.<sup>9</sup>

Significant economic change came to Ashe County with the arrival of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad in 1914-1915. A branch line from Abingdon, Virginia was built through the center of the county and terminated at Elk Cross Roads (now Todd). A depot was built at

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6.Crawford, 94, 126, 142, and 149.

7.Shepherd, 89.

8. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890 and U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Soil Map, North Carolina, Ashe County Sheet, 1912."

9.Shepherd, 89 and U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Soil Map, North Carolina, Ashe County Sheet, 1912." Note: vestiges of the road illustrated on the 1912 map are today Swansie Shepherd Road and Monroe Miller Road.

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Lansing and the small community flourished, becoming a thriving town with many stores, houses, and a boarding house.<sup>10</sup>

### **Farm History**

Oral tradition in the Shepherd family holds that Jonathan and Alvah Perry built the farm house about 1890 and the deed records support this claim as the Perrys owned the farm during this period. Jonathan Perry was born in Ashe County in 1858 and died there in 1938. He is buried in the Jonathan Perry Cemetery near Husk (see county survey file AH 121, Perry Farm). Jonathan Perry married Alvah (Alvia) Jane Sheets, who was born in Ashe County in 1859 and died in 1940. The couple had ten children between 1880 and 1901. The 1880 Census indicates the Perry, then only 21 years old, was a farmer living in the Horse Creek Township with his wife and two young children. In 1900, the Perry family included eight children and a boarder. Jonathan Perry is not listed among the farmers in Apple Grove in *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory* from 1890, but his father, Richard Perry (R. Perry) is listed. The Perrys were not listed as living in the Horse Creek township in 1910. Jonathan Perry could trace his ancestry in Ashe County to Richard Perry whose will was probated there in 1835.<sup>11</sup>

The Shepherd family were also early Ashe County settlers, descendants of William H. Shepherd who arrived in the area by the early nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Ambrose Shepherd, born about 1872, was the great-grandson of William Shepherd. In 1880, Ambrose was nine years old and living with his parents in Horse Creek township. He was not living in that township in 1900.<sup>13</sup>

Ambrose and his wife, Rebecca Sapp Shepherd, acquired the farm, then 78 acres, from Jonathan and Alvah Perry in August of 1904. In 1920, Ambrose and Rebecca were living in the

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10. Wyatt, Sherry Joines and Lori Tolliver-Jones, "Phase I Planning Report: Ashe County Historic Architectural Survey, 2004," (Asheville: Western Regional Office of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office).

11. *Branson's 1890 North Carolina Business Directory*, accessed at New River Notes website, [www.ls.net/~newriver/nry](http://www.ls.net/~newriver/nry), 1880, 1900, and 1910 *Federal Census*, Ashe County Public Library, and Shepherd, 397.

12. *The Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. I., 1984, 455.

13. *1880 and 1900 U.S. Census*, Ashe County Public Library;

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house with their son Melvin (born 1897), his wife, Dollie, and their daughter Juanita. Also in the household was Ambrose's mother, Elizabeth Shepherd. Ambrose Shepherd was listed as a farmer and his son as a teacher. Shortly after this, the family sold the farm and moved to Yadkin County, North Carolina. Other information indicates that Ambrose had been a teacher and a representative of the Ashe County Good Roads Commission. The family may have eventually moved to Maryland.<sup>14</sup>

Gardner (1884 - 1931) and Etta Baugess Shepherd (1892 - 1992) acquired the farm on August 3, 1921. Gardner was Ambrose Shepherd's younger brother. At the time of sale, the farm was 110 acres. The Gardner Shepherds had lived in several places in northwestern Ashe County before purchasing the farm, including Pond Mountain and Tuckerdale. Gardner Shepherd had been a school teacher as a young man, but was a farmer for most of his life. He and his wife raised corn, small grains (i.e. wheat), some fruits, cattle, sheep, turkeys, and chickens. The large family garden was also an important part of the farm. It was located near the present blueberry pavilion. Most of the farm's produce was used by the family, which included seven children. Corn, for example, was ground into meal at Jim Landreth's grist mill located nearby. Wool, lambs, cattle, butter, milk, and eggs were all sold locally for income to buy what could not be produced on the farm. Much of the family's shopping was done in Lansing, but small country stores nearby, such as Lee Osborne's store at Roaring Branch Road, were also utilized.<sup>15</sup> The Shepherd children attended Osborne School, which had once been taught by Gardner Shepherd. The school was near the intersection of Jack Jones Road and Roaring Branch Road and was a two-room, eight-grade school by the 1930s. The children finished high school at Lansing.<sup>16</sup>

While the production of livestock by Gardner and Etta Shepherd on their farm through the 1930s was part of traditional agricultural practices, changes in agriculture markets after World War II became evident on the farm. After Gardner's death in 1931, the farm's operation was turned over to his wife and children and to the eldest son, Swansie, in particular. Swansie Shepherd worked at the Norfolk Naval Yard and other placed during the war, but by the late

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14. *1920 U.S. Census*, accessed at *New River Notes* website; Pauline Jones, telephone interview by author, 2 August 2005; and "Zurilgen Family," available at [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com).

15. Pauline Jones, interview.

16. "Swansie Shepherd, a Man of Accomplishment," *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 9 (Warrensville: privately published by Northwest Ashe High School, 1981), 18 and Shepherd, 70.



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1940s he had returned to Ashe County to run the farm. During the post-World War II period, the dominance of dairy and beef cattle as well as tobacco strengthened. Shepherd began to build houses and do carpentry work while on the farm he turned to the production of livestock and fruit.

The first house built by Shepherd was a small cottage located just west of the main farm house. An Osborne family lived there as caretakers for a time, but by the mid-1950s, the Wayne and Roseanne Greer family were living in the cottage and working on the farm as caretakers. The size of Shepherd's agricultural endeavors by this time made the need for additional labor an important consideration. The Greer family helped Shepherd raise sheep, cattle, tobacco, beans, hay, apples, grapes, peaches, raspberries and blueberries. They also assisted with raising sorghum and producing molasses from this crop. The Greer family received the use of the cottage and use of some of the farm's land as compensation for their labor. Wayne and Roseanne Greer grew tobacco and raised cattle on the farm. The Greers remained on the farm until the 1980s.<sup>17</sup>

Swansie Shepherd was inventive and mechanically inclined. As a young man, he built a water wheel and made electricity to power lights in the house (evidence of his work is found in the old junction box on the front porch). Widely known for his electrical, mechanical, and carpentry skills Swansie began teaching vocational classes when Northwest Ashe High School opened in Warrentsville in 1965. There, he and his students constructed an indoor swimming pool, a field house, and football stadium. He retired in 1978.<sup>18</sup> Swansie Shepherd died in 2000 and the farm was sold out of the family in 2003.

**Agricultural Context: Ashe County, 1890 - 1956**

Although a timber boom followed the completion of the railroad through the county in 1915, the traditional agricultural rhythms of the county were little altered. Farm life was organized by the seasons. Corn, wheat, and buckwheat were planted each spring along with a large vegetable garden that provided a significant portion of the family diet. Summer was a time for maintaining the garden and hoeing the corn. Oral history records the tradition of hoeing young corn three times during early summer to remove weeds and hill soil around the base of the

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17. Ellen Greer Woodie, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 8 August 2005.

18. "Swansie Shepherd, a Man of Accomplishment," 18-19.

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plants. With late summer came cutting and raking hay with horse-drawn machines. Dried hay was stacked into large, rounded stacks. Wheat produced on the Shepherd farm was cut, shocked, dried, and then threshed by a traveling threshing machine. The grain was then taken to a local mill to be milled into flour.<sup>19</sup>

The high quality grazing and ample water available in Ashe County for production of livestock was recognized by the earliest European explorers and settlers. By 1868, there were two livestock dealers listed in *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*. This number had increased exponentially by 1883 when thirty-seven dealers were listed. There were forty-three dealers in the 1890 directory. Livestock dealers bought local cattle and drove them to markets in Marion, Virginia, Trade, Tennessee, and elsewhere for sale.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the sale of milk and beef cattle produced on the Shepherd farm were part of the traditional agricultural practices, but by the 1920s and 1930s, the State Department of Agriculture promoted dairying and beef cattle helping to spur growth in this type of agriculture. Swansie Shepherd continued to produce both beef cattle and sheep on his family farm throughout the mid and late-twentieth century. Although beef cattle production was common, sheep production had become extremely rare in Ashe County by the late twentieth century.

By the early 1950s, changes in national markets and agricultural technology accompanied by the founding of manufacturing plants in Ashe County brought about a shift in agriculture. Small family farms declined in number and mechanization (via tractors) decreased the amount of farm labor necessary. New cash crops such as beans were introduced in the 1930s and 1940s. Local farmers experimented with other crops such as potatoes, cabbage, and Christmas trees. 1960s and is thriving today with Ashe County leading the state in Christmas tree production. While dairying and other types of agriculture have now been completely superceded by the production of Christmas trees, the beef cattle industry still has a strong presence. Though not large in terms of income, the continued production of beef cattle and their associated need for hay helps to keep pasture and meadow open, protecting the historic land use patterns in the county and on the Shepherd farm.

Christmas trees

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19. Joines, Sherry, *Up Before Dawn: Farms and Farm Ways in Alleghany County, N.C.*, University of Georgia Master's Thesis, 1998, 88-92. Although this work looked at neighboring Alleghany County, practices in Ashe would have been very similar.

20. "Grassy Creek Historic District National Register Nomination, 1976," Asheville Regional Office of the State Historic Preservation Office; Sherry Joines Wyatt, "A.S. Cooper Farm National Register Nomination, 2000," Asheville Regional Office of the State Historic Preservation Office; 1868, 1883, and 1890 *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, accessed at New River Notes website, [www.ls.net/~newriver/nrv](http://www.ls.net/~newriver/nrv).

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The agricultural use of the land on the Shepherd farm varied from year to year, but the meadow between the trees of the orchard was mown with a scythe for hay. The field that now contains the blueberry patch once had tobacco. Pole beans and cane (sorghum) were grown nearby. Although the molasses produced from the cane was for the farm's use, the beans and tobacco were sold at West Jefferson markets. The large field above the blueberries was the primary grazing land for livestock, but the field behind the house was also used for grazing.<sup>21</sup>

Swansie Shepherd found for himself and his farm a niche in fruit production. While fruit production was an important part of most Ashe County farms, Swansie's orchard, which was well-known for its heirloom apple varieties, and his blueberry patch (planted c.1965) were large for the area and were in production during a period when large home fruit production was in decline. Shepherd was enthusiastic about the growing process and began his blueberries from cuttings. He often grafted and experimented with the apple trees.<sup>22</sup>

Orchards were found on virtually every Ashe County farm during the historic period. The 1910 census found that apples accounted for most of the large fruit production in the county. Much of this produce was used by the farm family or traded locally. Oral history records that farmers would take wagon loads of produce to larger towns like Wilkesboro, North Carolina and Marion, Virginia where they would sell modest quantities of surplus apples and other produce to both commercial firms and individuals. While travelers had observed the bounty of Ashe's orchards since at least the late nineteenth century and the State Department of Agriculture promoted orchards in their 1910 pamphlet "Orchard Lands," the apple was not a cash crop in the modern sense. Rather it was one of many forms of supplemental income for farmers.<sup>23</sup> The more intensive production on the Perry-Shepherd Farm stands out as an unusual practice.

Only one other farm researched to date during the ongoing architectural survey of Ashe County is known to have had commercial fruit production. The Daugherty Farm in Pond Mountain produced strawberries and apples, among other crops for sale to customers who came to the farm beginning in the 1950s. Similarly, Swansie Shepherd's orchard and blueberries were

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21.Woodie, interivew.

22.Woodie, interview.

23.Joines, *Up Before Dawn*; Catherine Bishir, Michael Southern, and Jennifer Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999), 202; John Preston Arthur, *Western North Carolina: a History* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Co., 1914), 518; and Arthur L. Fletcher, *Ashe County: A History*, (Charlotte: Heritage Printers, 1963), 209.

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open to the public beginning in the 1960s. He also processed apple cider for sale. The hydraulic apple press was located in the apple house, a modern concrete block building west of the barn. When asked what prompted Shepherd to begin fruit farming, his sister Pauline replied that “he always liked to work outside.” His love of farming helped to make the Shepherd farm a place of note in the county and at the same time helped to keep the farm land clear and in agricultural production.<sup>24</sup>

### **Architectural Context**

Originating in English folk culture, the two-room wide, one-room deep I-house was a common house type throughout the Upland South from the late eighteenth century through the early twentieth century. Its wide facade, designed to present the largest possible face for a basic four-room house, symbolized agrarian prosperity and social stability.<sup>25</sup> As Michael Ann Williams points out in *Homeplace*, her study of the use and social meaning of folk dwellings in western North Carolina, the earliest I-houses were often built by the antebellum planter class. After the Civil War, the I-house persisted, but in a more modest form generally having three bays instead of the earlier norm of five bays. Williams finds little evidence of a separate social class among I-house builders from the post-bellum period.<sup>26</sup> Yet, owners of I-houses in Ashe County and western North Carolina generally were clearly addressing a strong sense of fashion and taste. The level of detail and finish of I-houses in the county ranges considerably, but the majority of the largest and most finely appointed houses of the c.1880 - c.1910 period are I-houses indicating the form’s fashion status.

There is evidence among Ashe County’s I-houses that the prosperity of the period and awareness of larger architectural forms influenced builders to create a more commodious version of the I-house. It is very common in the county for the rear wing of an I-house to be part of its original design. Often these wings, which create either an L or T-plan, have two stories and rarely, as in the case of the Perry-Shepherd House, the wings are two rooms wide. This variation

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24.Ibid. and Jones, interview.

25.Southern, Michael, “The I-house as a Carrier of Style in Three Counties of the Northeastern Piedmont,” in *Carolina Dwelling*, Doug Swaim, ed., North Carolina State University, 1978, 71-2..

26.Michael Ann Williams, *Homeplace*, (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 1991), 98-99.

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in plan is thought to represent the very gradual shift in the area towards larger houses with a more modern spatial sensibility (i.e. living room, dining room, and separate bedrooms) that culminated by c.1915-1920 in increasing numbers of foursquare plan houses in the county.

The three-bay facade, center-hall plan I-house is the most prevalent variant of the I-house in Ashe County. While the tri-gable or center-gable I-house is very common in North Carolina, it is seldom seen in Ashe County. Instead, the use of a decorated, double-tier porch in the center bay of the house is a particularly common feature. The derivation of this feature is unknown, although Michael Southern theorized in his study of I-houses that the central gable grew out of Italianate and Tusca-villa models.<sup>27</sup> The connection to romantic models, the use of plan book and mass-produced ornament, and the increasing awareness of the irregularity and high level of ornament associated Queen Anne models of the late-nineteenth century were likely contributors to the development of the double-tier porch in northwestern North Carolina and Southwestern Virginia during the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. Jean Sizemore writes in *Alleghany Architecture: a Pictorial Survey* (a publication of a neighboring county's architectural survey) that "invariably, these two-tiered porches are showcases for exuberant sawnwork or jigsaw decorations, the motifs of which no two are alike."<sup>28</sup>

Seventy examples of I-houses have been surveyed to date in the ongoing architectural survey of Ashe County, which has recorded approximately 500 properties. The Little Horse Creek area has many well-preserved I-houses, with six examples noted in the recent survey. Only the Grassy Creek, Weaver's Ford, Chestnut Hill, and Sutherland areas have similar numbers of I-houses. About one-fourth of the surveyed I-houses feature the two-tier porch and five of these are in the Little Horse Creek area. As in Alleghany County, none of these houses are identical, but similar pieces of ornamentation are found. For instance, small brackets at the eaves featuring small circular holes are found on three houses in the area, including the Perry-Shepherd house. Other ornament varies. The Perry-Shepherd house, the Clark house (AH 114), and a house on Tucker Road (AH 101) all utilize sawn board or silhouette porch posts while the Charles Hinson and the Foster Eldreth houses (AH 100 and AH 96) have turned posts.

The use of a two-room wide rear wing is unusual, but the Perry-Shepherd house and the house located on Tucker Road are identical in this respect. In fact, the two houses share several common features including the use of diagonally placed (v-pattern) boards in the gable ends, the

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<sup>27</sup>.Ibid, 80-1.

<sup>28</sup>.Jean Sizemore, *Alleghany Architecture: a Pictorial Survey* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing, 1983), preface.

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small brackets, and very similar porch posts and brackets and are as close to identical as any two I-houses in the county. The primary difference between the them is that the Tucker Road house has a wrap-around lower porch with silhouette posts that match those on the upper, single-bay porch. It is unclear if the lower porch is original or an early addition. Historic photographs from circa 1940 show the Perry-Shepherd house with a single-bay porch; the lower level was extended after 1940. The two dwellings are located about four and a half miles apart.

The interior of the Perry-Shepherd house maintains common elements found in many of the interiors of I-houses in the county. The use of wood interior sheathing, both beadboard and plain boards, is ubiquitous. The central hall of the Perry-Shepherd house, has beadboard wainscoting below horizontal beadboard sheathing. The use of beadboard is most common among later (c.1900-1910) I-houses and among houses where purchased goods made up a larger part of the building's materials. The newel post of the Perry-Shepherd house, a heavy turned post with large ball finial, is not unlike that found at the nearby Foster Eldreth House. Like the porch ornament, however, no two newells are identical.

Despite the c.1950 alteration of the lower section of the porch, the Perry-Shepherd house is among the best-preserved I-houses in the county. One of several located in the Little Horse Creek vicinity, the Perry-Shepherd House is representative of this section of the county and part of an important concentration of this house form in that part of the county.

The concentration of I-houses is most likely due to the agricultural potential of the soil in the area. Pockets of prime farmland, according to the 1983 Soil Survey, are found in Grassy Creek, Nathans Creek, and to the west of Jefferson and West Jefferson. Lands with soils that are notable for agricultural production are found in virtually all sections of the county, however, and especially in areas where early settlement is known to have occurred such as Sutherland and Helton. The soils along Little Horse Creek are primarily Edneyville loam, which is listed as a notable agricultural soil in the 1983 Soil Survey. The slopes in much this area, however, are greater than what is today considered best for agriculture and erosion prevention.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, the richness of the soil helps to explain the section as one attractive to farmers during the historic period. While the flattest and best agricultural locations were settled during

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<sup>29</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Ashe County, North Carolina* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 14-15, 20-21 and 25

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the earliest period, agricultural development in the county during the late-nineteenth century utilized these fine soils with less regard to the steepness of the slope. The soil's richness enabled farmers to create wealth that allowed them to build dwellings that were among the finest in the county during the 1880 - 1910 period. Supporting this idea is the coordination between rich soils and concentrations of late-nineteenth century I-houses in Helton, Grassy Creek, Little Horse Creek, and Sutherland.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the Shepherd Farm is shown on the attached Ashe County tax map delineated by a heavy, solid line.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the property encompasses the most of the acreage known to have been historically associated with the property.