**1 NAME**

**HISTORIC**

Robert L. Doughton House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER** West side of NC 18, 0.2 miles south of the junction with NC 88

See continuation sheet

**CITY, TOWN** Laurel Springs

**STATE** North Carolina

**CODE** 37

**COUNTY** Alleghany

**CODE** 005

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
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**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**NAME** Jack Van Lindley

**STREET & NUMBER** Box H

**CITY, TOWN** Greensboro

**STATE** North Carolina

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.** Alleghany County Courthouse

**STREET & NUMBER**

**CITY, TOWN** Sparta

**STATE** North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.** Alleghany County Courthouse

**STREET & NUMBER**

**CITY, TOWN** Sparta

**STATE** North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE**

**DATE**

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

**CITY, TOWN**

**STATE**
Note on the Laurel Springs USGS map and the location of the Ashe-Alleghany county line as related to the Robert L. Doughten House:

The Laurel Springs USGS map shows the Doughten House located on the west side of the Alleghany-Ashe county line in Ashe County. This line does not take into account an amendment in the county line made in 1899, apparently inacted at the request of Robert L. Doughten, to reverse the effects of a previous adjustment of the county line in 1893 that did in fact cause the inclusion of the house site in Ashe County. The 1899 adjustment remains in effect today, and the property is listed in the Alleghany County, not Ashe County, tax books.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. David Leroy Corbitt, *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties 1663-1943* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950) 6, 15. The specific reference reads: "...That the boundary line between the counties of Ashe and Alleghany be changed so as to run as follows:...then up said creek (Cranberry Creek) to the junction of Piney Fork and Meadow Fork creeks, then south twenty west to R. L. Doughten's spring; then south seventy east to Meadow Fork creek;... (Public Laws 1899, Ch. 105)." The section of creek running between Piney Fork and Meadow Fork creeks is considered on the modern USGS map to be the continuation Cranberry Creek. In the boundary description of 1899 it is considered to be the lower end of Meadow Fork, with Cranberry Creek beginning at the confluence of Meadow Fork and Piney Fork.

2. Interview with Mrs. James H. Dillon (nee Betsy Doughton, granddaughter of Robert L. Doughten) by James A. Gray, Director, North Carolina Preservation Fund, May 3, 1978, Laurel Springs, N. C. Mrs. Dillon indicated that the house was in Alleghany County though everything else on the west side of the road was in Ashe, and that Doughten had the line moved so that he could remain a legal resident of Alleghany County.

3. Corbitt, 6. (Public Laws 1893, Ch. 234) The amendment describes the line as the stretch of creek running on the east side of the house site, placing the house site in Ashe County.

The Robert L. Daughton House stands at the base of a steep, wooded hill at the edge of the floodplain of Cranberry Creek in rural southwestern Alleghany County adjacent to the Ashe County line. The two-story frame farmhouse is a simplified, country version of the late Queen Anne style; while it retains something of the irregular massing, complex roofline, and textural variety associated with the style, the simplicity of plan and detail denies it any claim to architectural pretension. It is the comfortable turn-of-the-century country house of a political leader in a quiet agricultural region.

The house is essentially a large frame box under a steeply pitched hip roof, with a two-story, one-bay gable roof projection extending from the left side of each of the four elevations, giving the house a kind of pinwheel plan overall. It rests on a modern cinderblock foundation and is covered in plain white weatherboard. A hip roof porch shelters the first floor level of the front (east) elevation and carries halfway along the south side, ending at the corner of the gable roof projection on that elevation. The porch is supported by plain square-in-section posts. Over the entrance bay the porch roof breaks into a shallow gable, the sheathed tympanum of which is adorned with two sawn boards arranged in a V-pattern. The original—probably plank—porch floor was replaced in the mid-twentieth century with a flagstone floor over earth fill within a brick foundation.

All windows are set in plain surrounds and hung with two-over-two sash, with the exception of the two first floor windows of the facade flanking the entrance under the porch; these are large, mid-twentieth century single-pane picture windows. The front door is of four flat panels with wide applied moldings; this is encased in a plain frame surround and flanked by sidelights.

A wide frieze board carries under the eaves. The eaves are supported throughout with curvilinear sawn and turned brackets, and return on the gable ends of each of the projections. The tympanum of each of these gables is shingled. In the gable of the front elevation is centered a small six-over-one sash window; in the other three are set diamond-shaped louvered attic ventilators. A gable dormer with a double six-over-one sash window is centered on the roof of the front elevation.

An original, one-story kitchen with a raised attic extends from the northwest corner of the rear elevation. A narrow two-story, hip roof frame addition housing bathrooms and storage space carries across the rear elevation from the kitchen to the southwest corner of the house; this probably dates from the early twentieth century. A small screened back porch is set in the corner between the kitchen and this addition.

The interior follows a center hall plan, two rooms deep, heated by interior chimneys, and is simply finished. The most elaborate interior feature is the closed-stringer stair in the center hall. This begins midway down the hall and rises to the left three steps to a landing, and then carries the remaining distance up the left wall of the hall. Flanking the first step are fluted square-in-section newels adorned with neck moldings. From the forwardmost newel rises a turned post topped with a heavy molded cap and supporting a double transverse arch perpendicular to the axis of the hall. The spandrels of the arches are finished with vertical sheathing.
The remainder of the interior is of standard turn-of-the-century execution. Doors are of four panels with applied moldings. Window frames are symmetrically molded with corner blocks inscribed with rondels. A wainscot of narrow vertical sheathing carries around the first floor center hall, but all other rooms contain only a molded baseboard. Mantels are simple ones of the period, consisting of plain wooden frames with shelves supported by brackets or spindles. The second floor plan is identical to the first, with an enclosed attic stair rising above the stair well in the second floor hall.

The lot is landscaped with a variety of shrubs and hardwood trees. Cranberry Creek crosses the lot between the house and the highway, and the house is accessible only by foot over a concrete bridge over the creek. The only other structure on the property is a board-and-batten shed garage on the east side of the creek near the footbridge.
PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

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SPECIFIC DATES 1898

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Robert L. Doughton (1863-1954) was one of North Carolina's foremost politicians of the first half of the twentieth century. In the first decade of the century "Farmer Bob" or "Muley Bob" served the state variously as a member of the State Board of Agriculture (1903-09), as a State Senator (1908 and 1909), and as Director of the State Prison Board (1909-11). In 1911 he was elected to Congress, a position he held for 42 consecutive years, until 1953, making him one of the longest serving members in Congressional history. He distinguished himself as Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee (1933-45) during the difficult years of the Depression and World War II, and was recognized as the nation's leading authority on tax legislation during the New Deal era.

Doughton's house, a large, rambling, turn-of-the-century farmhouse typical of the period, stands on his lands at Laurel Springs in Alleghany County. The house was maintained by his family after his death, but was unoccupied after 1968, and was damaged in an attack by vandals in 1971. However, the house remains structurally sound and stands as a community landmark to the memory of a local politician who achieved national prominence.

Criteria Assessment:

B. The house is associated with the life of Robert L. Doughton, one of North Carolina's chief political figures of this century.

C. The house is a representative, comfortable farmhouse of the turn-of-the-century period, a late and simplified version of the Queen Anne style. It is one of the more prominent houses ever built in this farming region of Alleghany County.
Between 1886 and 1899 Robert Lee Doughton received at least 626 acres of land near Laurel Springs in Alleghany County. (Two deeds for that vicinity which were issued to him during that period do not list their acreage.) A number of the documents conveying this property to Doughton make general references to appurtenances. Also apparently there was a house on one tract conveyed in 1892, because the deed referred to the land as being that "on which said (G.W.) Upchurch now resides." A tract from William and Lena Gentry in 1895 also included a house. In 1898 one deed from Eunice Weaver and W. H. and Emma Cox specified that the Weaver family cemetery was to remain the possession of that family even though the tract on which it was located was being sold to Doughton. It was on these 626 acres of land that Robert Lee Doughton constructed the house which bears his name. According to local tradition he built the house in 1899.

The Doughton family was one of Alleghany County's oldest. Joseph Doughten was the first of the family to settle in that part of Ashe County which became part of Alleghany in 1859 when it was formed from Ashe. Joseph Doughten arrived in the area in the 1790s, became one of the largest landowners, served as a justice of the county in 1806, and a member of the General Assembly in 1817. He died in 1832. Robert Lee Doughton's father, James Horton Doughten (1832-1904) was a large landowner and served in Co. F., Twenty-Second North Carolina Infantry Regiment of the Confederate Army during the Civil War. The company, also called the "Alleghany True Blues," saw service in the Virginia campaigns where Doughton was wounded. Doughton also became a captain in a company called the "Alleghany Greys" which may have been the "True Blues" renamed. Or the "Greys" may have been the militia company that local tradition claims Doughton formed to combat Union sympathizers, or so-called "bushwackers." These Unionists were active in Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes, and other western North Carolina counties. But Doughton's official service record, Walter Clark's Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-65, and War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies give no details of militia activities by Doughton.

Robert Lee Doughton was born at Laurel Springs in 1863, the son of James Horton Doughton and Rebecca Jones Doughton. He was educated at Laurel Springs' public and high schools. He then became a farmer, livestock raiser, and merchant. In 1893 he married Miss Boyd Greer. She died in 1896 and he then married Mrs. Lillie Stricker Hix in 1898. She died in 1946.

Doughton soon rose to prominence in state government. He served as a member of the State Board of Agriculture, 1903-1909, and in the State Senate in 1908 and 1909. He was director of the State Prison Board, 1909-1911. In the latter year he became president of the Deposit and Saving Bank, North Wilkesboro (later called the Northwestern Bank), a position he held until 1936.
Following his success in state government he was elected to the United States Congress in 1911 where he was one of that body's longest serving members, until 1953. Here he rendered a distinguished career as chairman of the powerful ways and means committee from 1933 to 1945.10

Residents of Alleghany County and North Carolina recall Doughton, who was a Democrat, as an official attuned to the grassroots of the state. One citizen remembers that Doughton "understood the problems of the poor and particularly the farmers and took pride in the fact that he was known as 'Farmer Bob.' To some others he was known as 'Muley Bob' because he always clung stubbornly to what he thought was right." On one occasion, it was alleged, President D. Roosevelt was seeking from Congress a special tax levy of which Daughton disapproved. In expressing his disapproval the chairman used a farm metaphor, saying to the President, "you can shear a sheep many times and always get wool, but you can only skin him once."11

As chairman of the ways and means committee Doughton's influence was widely felt in the Federal government. He advocated sound fiscal policy and was active in the formulation of tax policies. (In North Carolina he opposed the sales tax.) Doughton's most exhausting labors came during the Great Depression and World War II when the demands of United States financial policy were staggering. He played a strong role in the writing of the social security law and other New Deal measures. "I am so busy almost every hour, night and day," he wrote to a constituent shortly after World War II began, "outside of a little time for sleep, trying to work out a tax program to finance the colossal expense of the Government I have very little time to give to any other subject."12

Because of his distinguished state and national service, Doughton was promoted by many members of the Democratic Party as a candidate for governor of North Carolina in 1936. He refused to run, however, and Clyde Hoey, the Democratic candidate, was elected, at least partly as a result of Doughton's withdrawal. (Doughton's brother Rufus did serve as lieutenant governor in 1893 and as speaker of the State House of Representatives in 1891 as well.)13

North Carolinians especially remember Robert L. Doughton's effect in securing the creation of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia. The parkway enters North Carolina in Alleghany County not far from Doughton's Laurel Springs home. The Robert L. Doughton Park and a North Carolina highway historical marker both near his Alleghany County home commemorate the place that he played in the history of the state and nation. A wing of the county hospital at Sparta is also dedicated to him.14
Doughton died in 1954, and in his will he declared:

I will and devise my residence in Laurel Springs, and the lot of land upon which it is situated--4 acres more or less--including the fenced yard surrounding said residence and fenced garden adjacent to it--but not including the tenant house and its lot nearby unto my daughter Reba (Rebecca) Doughton...15

Miss Reba Doughton lived in the house until around 1968 when she moved to Charlotte. After her departure, according to the Alleghany News, the house was "raided by thieves and vandals. Most of the antique furniture," declared the newspaper, "has been removed and the house left with papers and other articles scattered on the floors." When Reba Doughton soon died the house was returned to the estate of Robert Lee Doughton for settlement according to his will. The Northwestern Bank served as trustee. On May 22, 1971, the property was sold at auction.16 Mr. John Van Lindley of Greensboro bought the property and still owns it.

FOOTNOTES

1 Alleghany County Deed Books (microfilm), Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. Deed Books G, 114; H, 78; I, 26; J, 151; L, 313, 316, 318, 483, 503; M, 529, 532; hereinafter cited as Alleghany Deed Books.

2 Alleghany Deed Books L, 313; M, 532.

3 Alleghany Deed Books I, 26.

4 Alleghany Deed Book J, 151.

5 Alleghany Deed Book L, 483.

6 Author's telephone interview with Michael Southern, architectural historian, Asheville, N. C., April 18, 1979.


Alleghany News (Sparta), May 5, 1966.

Robert L. Doughton to Miss Ruth Current, April 19, 1941, May Thompson Evan Papers, Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


Alleghany News (Sparta), May 5, 22, 26, 1966.

Alleghany County Will Books (microfilm), Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, Will Book D, 161.


May Thompson Evans Papers, Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


U. S. National Archives. Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers from North Carolina, microfilm copies in Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

right-of-way of NC 18 and the line formed by the wire fence running east-west on the south side of the house. Go west a distance of 240 feet, more or less, along the wire fence along the south side of the house, crossing Cranberry Creek and continuing to the point of intersection of the line formed by said wire fence and the 2780 foot elevation contour of the hill behind the house. Go north a distance of 400 feet, more or less, along the 2760 foot contour of the hill to the point of intersection of the contour of the hill and the line defined by the wire fence running east-west on the north side of the house. Go east along the said wire fence a distance of 400 feet, more or less, across Cranberry Creek and back to the point of beginning.
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.5

UTM REFERENCES

A[1,7] B[0,0] C[0,0] D[0,0]
ZONE 6 2 2 3
EASTING 31 29 1
NORTHING 8 45 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated 3.5 acres includes the house, the fenced and landscaped lot extending between the house and NC 18, the garage and concrete footbridge in front of the house and the base of the wooded hill rising behind the house. Beginning at the point of intersection of the line formed by the wire fence on the north side of the house and the west line of the right-of-way of NC highway 18, go south along the right-of-way of NC 18 a distance of 400 feet, more or less, to the point of intersection of the

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

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<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
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FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Property Description by Michael Southern, Survey Specialist
Statement of Significance by Joe Mobley, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section
N. C. Division of Archives and History

DATE May 10, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 109 E. Jones Street

TELEPHONE 919-733-4763

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh,

STATE North Carolina

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
Robert L. Doughton House
West side of NC 18, 0.2 miles south of the junction with NC 88
Laurel Springs, Alleghany County, N. C.
3.5 acres, Laurel Springs Quadrangle.
Scale 1:24000
UTM references: Zone 17, Easting 476220, Northing 4029310

Map note:
This USGS map shows the house located over the county line in Ashe County. This boundary does not take into account an adjustment of the county line effective in 1899. See discussion and references in item 2, continuation sheet one, of the nomination.