

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Hermitage

and/or common

2. Location

street & number E side NC SR 1357 1 mile E of jct. with NC SR 1358 — not for publication

city, town Merry Hill —x— vicinity of congressional district 1

state North Carolina code 37 county Bertie code 015

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: storage

4. Owner of Property

name ~~Edward Farless, Leonard Farless~~
c/o Mr. and Mrs. Wood Farless
street & number Route 1

city, town Merry Hill —x— vicinity of state North Carolina

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bertie County Courthouse

street & number King Street

city, town Windsor state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? — yes —x— no

date — federal — state — county — local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hermitage sits in a small yard near the east shoulder of unpaved North Carolina state road 1357. A fenced pasture and a cultivated garden plot surround the house on three sides. The north facade of the house is nearly obscured by two large magnolias. The house and yard form the center of a farm of several hundred acres bisected by state road 1357; the house stands a few hundred yards from the west bank of the Chowan River. Near the east side of the house are two old outbuildings. The large gable roof smokehouse retains much beaded siding and a batten door with large wrought iron hinges; a two-room structure dating from the Greek Revival period features a central chimney and an unfinished interior.

The oldest section of the Hermitage is the story-and-a-half side-hall plan Georgian coastal cottage which now forms the rear wing of the house. The exterior features beaded siding, one-part architrave surrounds around the nine-over-six sash, and a double-shoulder chimney with a free-standing stack of 3:1 common bond brickwork. At the base of the chimney is the brick entrance to the cellar beneath the house. The east front of the house has a shed porch supported by turned columns of undetermined date. The west side features a small pedimented porch supported by two tapered square posts with molded capitals; apparently the original supports, these represent a rare survival. The trim of the interior is intact except for the retrimmed rear shed room; the hall and front room feature a fielded wainscot with molded baseboard and chair rail, and one-part architrave trim. The stair rises in one run against the north wall of the hall and is trimmed with a square newel with a molded cap, a molded handrail, and square balusters. The mantel of the front room has a plain surround beneath a two-panel frieze supporting a heavily molded shelf. The second floor room has a small fireplace opening but no mantel.

The two-and-a-half story Federal period addition is attached to the north wall of the Georgian house at a right angle. The asymmetrical five-bay exterior features molded siding, paneled cornerposts, and three-part architrave trim around the windows; nine-over-nine sash appears on the first floor and six-over-six on the second. The east end of the house features an interior end chimney while an exterior double-shoulder chimney, with tumbled shoulders and a free-standing stack, appears at the west end. The north facade originally featured a double portico with square box columns; tall iron poles now support the porch roof. A shed porch with turned columns runs across the rear and joins the porch of the coastal cottage.

The plan of the newer section of the house consists of a wide center hall flanked by a single large room on each side. The plan is repeated on the second floor with the addition of a small room partitioned into the hall. The hall and west room on both floors feature Federal period woodwork, while the rooms on the east, which open into the Georgian coastal cottage, are trimmed with Greek Revival woodwork. It appears that the Greek Revival woodwork was applied on top of older woodwork in the first floor east room; a Federal-period wainscot is still in place in this room. The hall and west rooms retain molded baseboards, chair rails, and two-part architrave trim. The handsome pilaster-type Federal mantel of the second floor west room is in place while the first floor west room has a Victorian-period white marble mantel. The other mantels are typical Greek Revival pilaster-type mantels of bold proportions. The stair rises against the east wall of the hall and turns to the west over the rear door; it features a square newel with molded cap, a molded handrail, and handsomely scrolled stair brackets. An enclosed stair rises from the second floor hall to the attic over the main stair. The house retains its original flooring,

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plaster, and raised-panel doors. Some graining remains on the second floor woodwork; fragments of wallpaper of considerable age also remain on the second floor.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hermitage was built in the late eighteenth-century as a small coastal cottage, a regional house form found in the Carolinas. Later owners expanded the house in the Federal and Greek Revival periods to form a large plantation residence. The house and its woodwork of each respective period is intact. The Hermitage Plantation not only included the house and farm, but also a wharf and fishery on the Chowan River. The house has had many owners, the most prominent being Dr. Alexander Wood Mebane and Augustus Holley. Dr. Mebane represented Bertie County in the state legislature from 1829 to 1835; Augustus Holley was one of the wealthiest citizens and largest landowners of Bertie County.

Criteria:

- A. Associated with the large agricultural plantation unit of antebellum eastern North Carolina, as well as with a fishery on the nearby Chowan River.
- B. Associated with the lives of Dr. Alexander Wood Mebane (1800–1847), state legislator from Bertie County, and Augustus Holley (1820–1882), one of the county's largest landowners.
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of the home of a prosperous antebellum family, as well as exemplifies the practice of expanding a house to suit changing tenants and their needs; consequently, the house reflects the characteristics of Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival vernacular architecture. The oldest section is an eighteenth-century example of an important regional house type, the coastal cottage.
- D. Is likely to yield information in the history of large antebellum plantation household activities.

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The first known owner of the Hermitage property was Thomas Brownrigg, a merchant of Chowan County.¹ In 1777 Brownrigg deeded to his sister Sarah Brown 925 acres on the west bank of the Chowan River with all "houses, outhouses, edifices, buildings, yards, gardens, orchards."² Possibly the Georgian coastal cottage forming the rear wing of the present house was one of the buildings on the property Sarah Brown received from her brother. The house and land remained in the Brown family until 1802; in that year Joseph A. Brown sold 764 acres on the west side of the Chowan River to George Reed, a planter of Perquimans County, for 3,890 silver dollars.³ Reed was a prosperous planter who appears to have first established the Hermitage fishery on the Chowan River. At his death in 1809, Reed left his wife Mary the "plantation whereon I now live and one-third interest in the fishery;" a fishery was connected with the Hermitage Plantation until the 1930s.⁴ Household goods mentioned in Reed's will included three beds, a buffet with china and crockery, a set of china with a large bowl, a sideboard, two dining tables, a looking glass, one dozen setting chairs, a loom, and two pairs of andirons; the will also mentioned a plantation on Durants Neck, a house and lot in the Bertie County village of Colerain, and ten slaves.⁵ Reed's son James lived on the property and possibly built the Federal section of the house before he sold the property. In 1833 James Reed sold "all the land whereon I now live comprising the dwelling house tract . . . on Chowan River . . . containing 1,050 acres . . . with all manners of improvements unto the said land and fishery" to Dr. Alexander Wood Mebane.⁶

Dr. Mebane (1800-1847) was a native of Orange County, North Carolina, who was educated in Philadelphia.⁷ Mebane apparently settled in Bertie County after his marriage to Mary Howe, "a lady of fine estate," and a local resident.⁸ Dr. Mebane represented Bertie County in the House of Commons from 1829 to 1831, and served in the state Senate from 1833 until 1835.⁹ According to one source, Dr. Mebane "settled in Bertie County on the Chowan River, where he became one of the successful and enterprising men of that section. He was a man of unblemished reputation, faithful to every duty, active and energetic in every good work and enterprise."¹⁰ Possibly Dr. Mebane was responsible for the Greek Revival changes to the house. At the doctor's death in 1847, the Hermitage was inherited by his wife Mary; after her marriage to James Raynor, the couple resided at the Hermitage until Mrs. Raynor's death in 1855.¹¹ The Hermitage was inherited by Mrs. Raynor's daughter Mary Mebane with the instructions that at her twenty-first birthday the property would revert to her brothers William A. Mebane, Alexander W. Mebane, and John T. Mebane.¹² Mary Mebane may have resided at the Hermitage as a minor and after her marriage to John Pool. In 1867 she deeded the Hermitage property to her brother Dr. Alexander Wood Mebane of nearby Edenton.¹³ Three years later Dr. Mebane sold the property to Augustus Holley (1820-1882), one of the wealthiest men in Bertie County.¹⁴ At the time of the 1860 census, Holley owned 7,338 acres of land valued at \$50,000 on which his 172 slaves raised 7,000 bushels of corn and 176 bales of ginned cotton.¹⁵ According to local tradition, Holley used the Hermitage as his summer residence, spending the winters at one of his several neighboring plantations. At his death in 1882, Holley left his wife Salley Jernigan Holley the Hermitage Plantation and fishery, along with his Mt. Gould Plantation, Askew Plantation, Mills Landing Plantation, Gaskins Place, Bandon Plantation in Chowan County, and two fisheries on the Chowan River.¹⁶ At Mrs. Holley's death in 1894, the Hermitage was inherited by her son J. H. Jernigan. The Hermitage property then exchanged hands several times until it was purchased in 1930 by the family of the present owners.¹⁷

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The Hermitage provides a good example of the once-common practice of expanding a house to suit the changing needs of its tenants. The Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival periods are well represented in the simple but substantial woodwork of the house. The side-hall plan Georgian coastal cottage and the center-hall plan Federal and Greek Revival addition also represent two common regional house types, although the handsomely detailed and spacious staircase of the addition is a relatively rare feature in Bertie County architecture of the Federal period.

The structure is, of course, closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archeological record. Therefore, archeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

Notes:

¹Thos. Brownrigg to Sarah Brown, 14 November 1777, Bertie County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, Book R, 421, hereinafter cited as Bertie County Deeds.

²Thos. Brownrigg to Sarah Brown, 14 November 1777, Bertie County Deeds, Book R, 421.

³Joseph A. Brown to George Reed, 9 March 1802, Bertie County Deeds, Book S, 523.

⁴Will of George Reed, 22 May 1809, probated November 1809, Bertie County Wills, Office of the Clerk of Court, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, Book F, 122, hereinafter cited as Bertie County Wills.

⁵Will of George Reed, Bertie County Wills, Book F, 122.

⁶James Reed to Alex. W. Mebane, August 1833, Bertie County Deeds, Book DD, 70.

⁷John H. Wheeler, Reminiscences and Memoirs of North Carolina and Eminent North Carolinians (Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Printing Works, 1884), 331.

⁸Wheeler, Reminiscences, 331.

⁹John L. Cheney, ed., North Carolina Government, 1585-1974 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975), 293; 300; 303; 305.

¹⁰Wheeler, Reminiscences, 331.

¹¹Will of Alexander Wood Mebane, 30 October 1846, probated February 1847, Bertie

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County Wills, Book G, 413.

¹²Will of Mary Raynor, 20 October 1853, probated 10 October 1855, Bertie County Wills, Book H, 20.

¹³Mary Mebane Pool to Dr. A. W. Mebane, 1 June 1867, Bertie County Deeds, Book NN, 468.

¹⁴Dr. A. W. Mebane to Augustus Holley, 28 July 1870, Bertie County Deeds, Book NN, 508.

¹⁵Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Bertie County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, 13; Slave Schedule, 128, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

¹⁶Will of Augustus Holley, 23 May 1882, probated June 1882, Bertie County Wills, Book I, 147.

¹⁷Will of Salley J. Holley, 15 March 1892, probated January 1894, Bertie County Wills, Book I, 395; Land Division of J. H. Jernigan, W. E. Daniels et al to Lizzie B. Jernigan, 23 November 1920, Bertie County Deeds, Book 215, 14; Lizzie B. Jernigan to L. B. Evans, 1 January 1921, Bertie County Deeds, Book 215, 193; L. B. Evans to W. R. Lawrence and L. E. Farless, 2 January 1930, Bertie County Deeds, Book 264, 316.

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Cheney, John L., ed. North Carolina Government, 1585-1974. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975.

Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

Wheeler, John H. Reminiscences and Memoirs of North Carolina and Eminent North Carolinians. Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Printing Works, 1884.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bertie County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor.

Bertie County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Court, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 2 acres

Quadrangle name Edenton

Quadrangle scale 1: 62500

UMT References Zone 18 Lat $36^{\circ} 05' 12''$ Long $76^{\circ} 46' 00''$

A

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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification The property included in the Hermitage^e nomination is the two-acre yard bounded on the southwest by state road 1357 and represents the original house tract with outbuildings still immediately associated with the house.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marshall Bullock, Consultant to the Mid-East Commission

organization Survey and Planning Branch
Archaeology & Historic Preservation Section
N.C. Division of Archives & History date August 1980

street & number 109 East Jones Stree telephone 919-733-6545

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

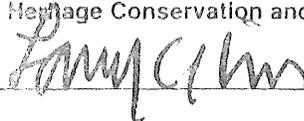
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 16 October 1980

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

The Hermitage,
Bertie Co., NC



PASTURE

FENCE

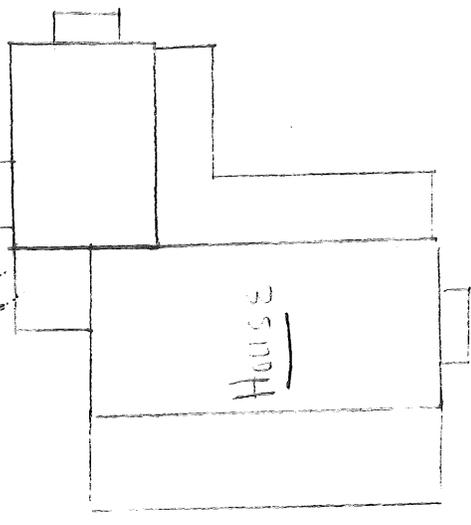
GARDEN plot

SMOKE HOUSE



two-room
structure

WATER TOWER



House

YARD

McNABER
TENNANT
HOUSE

NC SR 1357



Approximate Scale

