**NAME**
Historic: King-Freeman-Speight House
And/or common: Francis Speight House

**LOCATION**
Street & Number: S.W. side N.C. 308
0.9 mi. N. of jct. w/SR 1243
City, Town: Republican
State: North Carolina

**CLASSIFICATION**
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<th>Ownership</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Structure</em></td>
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<td>Work in progress</td>
<td>Educational</td>
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<td><em>Site</em></td>
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<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
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<td>In Process</td>
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**OWNER OF PROPERTY**
Name: Mr. Thomas Speight, Clerk of Court
Street & Number: Bertie County Courthouse
City, Town: Windsor
State: North Carolina

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**
Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.: Bertie County Courthouse
Street & Number:
City, Town: Windsor
State: North Carolina

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**
Title: Determined eligible-No
Date: N/A
Depository for Survey Records: N/A
DESCRIPTION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The King-Freeman-Speight House stands on the southwest side of NC 308 in a three-acre yard shaded by large oaks. The house is situated between the Bertie County towns of Woodville and Windsor in the rural community of Republican.

The original appearance of the house and outbuildings can be accurately determined with the aid of a documentary photograph of the house, ca. 1897, and floor and site plans provided by a former occupant. Built in two sections, the older part of the house forms the present two-story rear wing and probably dates from between 1808 and 1828. The documentary photograph shows that the house was built originally as a story-and-a-half, three-bay frame structure with a single-shoulder chimney at each end; two shed rooms were to the rear flanking an open porch. Probably in the mid-nineteenth century a two-room structure, housing a dining room and kitchen, was added to the rear of the house and connected by a breezeway. In 1907 the original section of the house was extensively remodeled; it received a full second floor and the interior woodwork was largely renewed. The house was slightly lengthened and the end chimneys removed and replaced by interior stacks; the hall-and-parlor plan was made into a center-hall plan. The front northeast room retains its handsome Federal-period woodwork except for the mantel while the new center hall is trimmed with elaborately molded and reeded woodwork salvaged from the remodeled parlor. The 1907 woodwork of the house is heavily molded with cornerblocks with rondels; there is much wainscoting of narrow beaded sheathing.

Attached to this part of the house is a two-and-a-half story, side-hall plan addition joined at a right angle to the southeast corner of the original house; this addition was probably built soon after 1828. The only means of communication between the two houses is by an L-shape shed porch supported by handsome sawn posts with molded handrails and bottom rails with slender square balusters. The newer portion of the house features three bays on the first floor and four bays on the second. A pedimented porch with six posts, matching those of the rear porch, shelters the entrance. The original nine-over-six sash of the first floor and the six-over-six sash of the second survive as does the beaded siding, the three-part architrave trim of the openings, and the handsome box cornice. The only changes to this part of the house have been the replacement of the original tumbled single-shoulder chimney with the present stepped-shoulder chimney and the new solid brick foundation between the original brick piers.

Entrance to the house is gained through a wide front door which is grained and paneled in imitation of a pair of narrow double doors. The first floor plan consists only of the side hall and a large parlor. The rear door of the hall as well as the parlor door are also handsomely grained in imitation of curly maple; the parlor door features rising butt hinges. The hall is trimmed with a fielded wainscot and molded chairrail. An open closed-stringer stair rises along the west wall and turns sharply over the rear door. The stair features square newels with molded caps, a molded handrail, and slender square balusters with a tiny bead on each corner. The large parlor features a fielded wainscot with graining of the highest quality while the stiles of the wainscot and the chairrail are painted a rich sky blue. The only comparable graining in Bertie County is found in the Eason House, where the stiles are also painted blue. The baseboard and mantel are painted black. The tall mantel features applied reeded columns on either side of the plastered surround. Above the columns at each end of the frieze are projecting blocks which feature a cut-out detail of a
six-point star within a circle. The frieze is surmounted by a wide and elaborately molded shelf which breaks out at each end. A similar mantel is found in the Bazemore House in the Bertie County village of Woodville.

The second floor is divided into three small rooms, the largest featuring an attractive three-part Federal mantel. The second floor is trimmed with a beaded baseboard, molded chairrail, and three-part architrave trim around all openings; the woodwork appears to retain its original gray-tan paint. The stiles of the doors around the doorknobs are painted with black panels with rounded ends. This paint treatment is also found on the doors of Pineview and the Hermitage, both early nineteenth-century Bertie County houses.

Originally, a picket fence enclosed the "Little Yard" around the house. The fence was connected to a two-room, Greek-Revival period office, a dairy, a story-and-a-half kitchen with beaded siding, and three smokehouses, one used only for salted fish. Today, the office, the kitchen, and two of the smokehouses remain. Outside of the "Little Yard" and in the "Big Yard" stood the gin house, which burned in 1910, a carriage and buggy house, a hen house, and a large shelter. None of these survive, but several tobacco barns have been built to replace them.
The King-Freeman-Speight House was originally constructed in the first decade of the nineteenth century by Charles King as a story-and-a-half, hall-and-parlor plan dwelling. John Freeman, sheriff of Bertie County, acquired the house in 1828 and was probably responsible for the two-story addition. The house was subsequently owned by Whitmel T. Sharrock and his son-in-law, the Rev. T. T. Speight, whose descendants owned the house until donating it to Historic Hope, Inc. In 1907 the original part of the house received a second floor and the interior was extensively remodeled. The two-story addition, a fine example of Federal domestic architecture, remains remarkably intact with original paint and woodgraining. Two smokehouses, the kitchen, and an office survive in the oak grove which surrounds the house. The house was the birthplace of Francis Speight (1896- ), a nationally known landscape painter who taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1925 until 1961. With his works hanging in most major American museums, Mr. Speight has received numerous medals, awards, and fellowships, and in 1960 was elected a member of the National Academy of Arts and Letters.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Associated with the agricultural plantation unit in eastern North Carolina.

B. Associated with the lives of John Freeman, sheriff of Bertie County; the Rev. T. T. Speight, locally prominent Baptist leader; and Francis Speight, nationally recognized art teacher and landscape painter.

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of an antebellum plantation home, provides an example of a traditional vernacular house form: the hall-and-parlor plan combined with the more sophisticated Federal side-hall plan addition, and illustrates the adaptations and changes made by a series of owners to suit their needs and tastes.

D. Is likely to yield information about the activities of a large plantation household in Bertie County during the nineteenth century.
The King-Freeman-Speight House is thought to have been built by Charles King in 1808. When King purchased his house site is uncertain, but between 1773 and 1807 he bought 22 parcels of land in Bertie County from various individuals, including relatives. King was a prosperous farmer, owning several hundred acres of land and a small number of slaves. The 1790 census records five heads of households named Charles King living in Bertie County, all owning slaves. In 1800 only Charles King, Sr., and Charles King, Jr. were listed in the census, in Bertie County, with the elder King possessing twelve slaves and his son ten slaves. In 1810 Charles King, Sr., maintained a household of ten with twelve slaves. A Bertie County tax list of 1815 shows that Charles King, Sr., owned 1,126 acres of land valued at $2,365.50 and five slaves. A year later, King only owned 996 acres of land valued at $2,500. At his death in 1818, King appears to have been in prosperous circumstances. His estate inventory listed 30 head of sheep, 34 head of cattle, numerous plantation tools, and 5 slaves. In addition, "cash found in the House" amounted to $2,033.08 while 43 individuals owed King's estate $14,136. These figures would suggest that King acted as a local banker or was engaged in some commercial activities not revealed in his estate papers. Household goods listed in King's inventory included 3 pine tables, 1 walnut table, 4 windsor chairs, 1 press, 4 pine chests, "one valuable desk," 1 lot of pewter, 4 leather beds, 1 large looking glass, and 1 small looking glass. King's plantation was inherited by his youngest son, Willie, a minor at the time of his father's death. Willie King died within a year of his father, and his brother Charles King, Jr., became executor of the estate. The estate was equally divided among several heirs, but it cannot be determined which heir received the house tract. Beginning in 1828, John Freeman, the son-in-law of Charles King, Jr., began acquiring land from the heirs of Willie King, and the house must have been included in one of the purchases. It would seem likely that upon his purchase of the property, John Freeman built the large addition to the small house built by Charles King, Sr.

John Freeman was a prosperous planter as well as sheriff of Bertie County from 1830 until 1846. In 1835 Freeman owned 1,510 acres of land valued at $3,020 and 17 slaves. By 1849 Freeman's holdings had increased to 2,679 acres worth $7,127 and 30 slaves. In 1850 Freeman's household included an overseer and a common school teacher; in that year he owned 3,000 acres worth $10,000 on which his 73 slaves raised 5,000 bushels of corn as well as hemp, wool, peas, and 300 head of swine.

In 1856 Freeman sold 1,180 acres including "all the land and plantation whereon I now reside" to Whitemiel T. Sharrock for $10,500. Sharrock was a well-to-do planter who served as a justice of the peace as well as colonel in the Bertie County militia. In 1860 Sharrock owned 1,870 acres of land valued at $15,000 on which his 36 slaves raised 4,000 bushels of corn, 1,000 bushels of peas, 1,000 bushels of oats, and 300 head of swine and other livestock worth $3,100; Sharrock's personal estate was estimated at $50,000. Sharrock's wealth was diminished by the Civil War, but he was able to retain a sizeable portion of his estate. In 1870, the year of his death, Sharrock's real estate was valued at $8,500 and his personal estate at $3,000. Sharrock's will provided for his property to be divided equally among his five daughters after his wife's dower had been secured; Mrs. Sharrock was to receive a third of the land as well at the "residence, offices, outhouses, gin house." Household goods inventoried included a piano, a sofa, parlor chairs, five beds, a carriage and buggy, many plantation tools, and four horses, including one named Longstreet. At Mrs. Sharrock's death the house was inherited by her daughter.
Margaret and her husband, Albert V. Cobb, treasurer of Bertie County, lived in the house until Cobb's death in 1880; in 1887 Margaret Cobb married the Rev. Thomas T. Speight and they continued to live in the house. The Rev. Thomas T. Speight was a prominent Baptist minister serving several Bertie County congregations, and sat in the North Carolina senate in 1915. The Rev. Mr. Speight died in 1921, and Mrs. Speight died in 1934; title of the house remained in the Speight family until 1980 when the family donated the house to Historic Hope, Inc.

Perhaps the most notable person connected to the house is the artist Francis Speight (1896- ). The son of the Rev. Thomas and Margaret Speight, Francis Speight was born and reared in the house. Educated at Wake Forest College (now University), Speight entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1920; in 1925 he was hired by the Academy as an instructor and taught there until his retirement in 1961. Known primarily as a landscapist, Speight has received numerous fellowships and awards for his work. These include the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Gold Medal (1926), the first Hallgarten Prize of the National Academy of Design (1930), the Kohnstamm Prize from the art Institute of Chicago (1930), the Clark Prize and Bronze Medal of the Corcoran Gallery of Art (1937), and the First Altman Prize for Landscape from the National Academy of Design (1951, 1958). Mr. Speight was awarded the North Carolina Medal for Achievement in the Fine Arts in 1964. Featured in more than thirty exhibitions, Mr. Speight's landscapes now hang in most major American art museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Speight's paintings have been described as exhibiting "a kind of hurried realism" in which "buildings, the settings in which they occur, and the landscape beyond them are apt to be the element of this artist's paintings." Mr. Speight has painted several views of his birthplace.

The house built by Charles King, Sr., and much remodeled in 1907 by the Rev. Thomas Speight, retains handsome interior woodwork which relates the house to others in the county. The trim of the hall, with reeded swags and rope-twist molding of the wainscot, is very similar to the woodwork of the Henry Bazemore house, the Ward-Bazemore house, and the Jeremiah Bunch house (dated 1806). The addition to the house is remarkable for its degree of preservation and architectural sophistication. The elaborate woodgraining of the parlor is among the best examples known in eastern North Carolina, and the woodwork is a fine example of late-Federal vernacular design.

The structures of course are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structures. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological 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.
Footnotes

1 Francis Speight, "The Speight House," 2. Unpublished history in the working file of the King-Freeman-Speight House, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; hereinafter cited as Speight, "The Speight House." Mr. Speight states that when the house was remodeled in 1907, a brick was found in a chimney which he thinks was dated 1808, although it possibly could have been 1818 or 1828. The architectural evidence of the house would strongly suggest the earlier date.

2 "A List of Taxable Property in Capt. Cherry's District for the Year 1815," Bertie County Tax Lists, Treasurer and Comptroller's Papers, Box 2, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

3 "A List of Taxable property in Captain James Cherry's District in 1816," Bertie County Tax Lists, Treasurer and Comptroller's Papers, Box 2, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

4 Estate Inventory of Charles King; 14 February 1820, filed in folder labeled "Two Estates, Charles King, Sr., and Charles King, Jr., "Bertie County Estates Papers, 1720-1930, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Bertie County Estates Papers.

5 Will of Charles King, Sr., 28 October 1817, Bertie County Wills, 1749-1897, Archives Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Bertie County Wills.

6 Estate Records of Willie King, 1820, Bertie County Estates Papers.


8 William B. King to John Freeman, 7 January 1829, Bertie County Deeds, Book CC, p. 288, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Bertie County Deeds; Harriet B. King to John Freeman, 21 August 1826, Book DD, p. 395; Joseph B. King to John Freeman, 1 July 1830, Book DD, pp. 409-410, including a 200 acre tract "where I now live," Bertie County Deeds. Freeman made numerous other purchases from King heirs throughout the 1830s and 1840s.

9 Freeman is identified as Sheriff in these years in the index of Bertie County deeds.

10 "A List of Taxable property taken in Capt. Spivey's for the year 1835," Bertie County Tax Lists, 1830-36, Treasurer and Comptroller's Papers, Box 2, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

11 "A List of the taxable property in the Snakebite District for year 1849," Bertie County Tax Lists, 1847-1853, Treasurer and Comptroller's Papers, Box 2, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
12 Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Bertie County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 68; Agricultural Schedule, 269; Slave Schedule, 69, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


15 Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Bertie County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 66; Agricultural Schedule, 637; Slave Schedule, 69, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

16 Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Bertie County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 457, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

17 Will of Whitmel T. Sharrock, 8 November 1870, probated 17 November 1870, Bertie County Wills; Estate Records of Whitmel T. Sharrock, Bertie County Estates Papers.

18 Inventory of estate of Whitmel T. Sharrock, Bertie County Estates Papers.


23 Most of the following biographical information was taken from the exhibition catalog Manayunk and Other Places: Paintings and Drawings by Francis Speight, (University Park, Pa.: Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania State University, 1974).

24 Manayunk, 3.

25 Two paintings of the house are reproduced in Manayunk, 33-34.
Bertie County Appointments of Justices of Peace, 1784-1873, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Bertie County Deeds, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Bertie County Estates Papers, 1720-1930, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Bertie County Tax Lists, Treasurer and Comptroller's Papers, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Bertie County Wills, 1749-1897, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Fourth Census of the United States, 1830: Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


Third Census of the United State, 1820: Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3.26 acres
Quad name - Republican
Quad scale: 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE
EASTING
NORTHING

A
3
1,8
3
6,0

B
C
D

ZONE
EASTING
NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property included in this nomination is a 360'x395' rectangular plot located on the Southwest side of NC 308 and containing 3.26 acres. Included in the parcel are the house, small yard with outbuildings, and oak grove. This is all the land still directly associated with the house.

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

STATE N/A CODE COUNTY N/A CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: J. Marshall Bullock, Consultant
ORGANIZATION:
Survey and Planning Branch
Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section
DATE: December, 1980
STREET & NUMBER:
Division of Archives and History
109 E. Jones Street
TELEPHONE: (919) 733-6545
CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh
STATE: North Carolina 27608

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL X

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: [Signature]
DATE: 20 October, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
SITE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

TOWN OF WINDSOR
NORTH CAROLINA