United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Clifton House and Mill Site

and/or common

2. Location

street & number West and East side SR1103, at Crooked Creek and, 0.5 mi. North of bridge at pond

city, town Royal X vicinity of congressional district Second

state North Carolina code 037 county Franklin code 069

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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<td>occupied</td>
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<td>unoccupied</td>
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<tr>
<td>structure</td>
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<td>educational</td>
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<tr>
<td>site</td>
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<td>in process</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name Dr. and Mrs. William R. Ginn Dr. and Mrs. John Cella

street & number 3909 Stratford Court 3344 Granville Drive

city, town Raleigh X vicinity of state North Carolina 27609

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Franklin County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Louisburg, state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Franklin County Inventory has this property been determined eligible? X yes X no

date 1974 X federal X state X county X local

depository for survey records Archives and History Survey and Planning Branch

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina
7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Clifton Farm and Mill compose a complex representative of the rural culture of nineteenth century Franklin County. The gently rolling agrarian landscape here is undisturbed by suburban or strip development, and the Clifton Farm with its mill and surrounding 245 acres remains an identifiable historical and visual entity. A paved secondary road leads south from Royal, and the house faces the road which continues south to cross the bridge across Crooked Creek and the Clifton Mill Pond.

The Clifton House was built in the Greek Revival style with accents of Italianate and vaguely Gothic flavor suggesting an influence from the eclectic Warrenton, North Carolina builder, Jacob W. Holt. Some of the architectural details of the house are also reminiscent of the Warren and Franklin county builder, Gamaliel Jones. The white frame dwelling maintains the simplicity and elegance of the building period. A rectangular building with a hip roof, the Clifton House has a two story pedimented front porch. Unusual in the county, the porch in scale and elaboration dominates the facade. The house is three bays wide and one deep, with most of the windows containing six-over-nine sash. The front windows facing the porch are full length with nine-over-nine sash. Exterior end chimneys rise through the heavy overhang of the roof.

The porch has four heavy square wooden posts with tall arched fluted panels with bracketed caps. These motifs recur in the pilaster-like corner posts of the building which carry a wide frieze and roof overhang. Both the lower and upper stories of the porch have delicate wooden balustrades. The lower balustrade is composed of very plain narrow vertical posts treated as a minor arcade, and the upper balustrade has a sawn balustrade with a small oval horizontal pattern. A frieze extends across the first level of the porch and has panels accented with the trefoil or spearhead motifs. Beneath the frieze is sawn curvilinear ornamentation.

The central entrance has a narrow double door with a transom and arched sidelights reaching above small side panels. Round arched glazing and circular corner lights are filled with angular and pinwheel tracery.

Characteristic of Greek Revival houses, the interior has a center hall plan two rooms deep. The mantel piece in the room to the left has a similar design to that of the exterior woodwork separating the two porch stories. The pilasters and frieze feature the trefoil or spearheaded panels. Typical of the Greek Revival period, the mantles are sturdy. The mantle in the right front room, identical to that in the room above, is plain with fluted pilasters and an ogee-arched lower profile of the wide frieze. The mantle in the upstairs left hand room has a curved, horizontally fluted inset frieze, with fluted pilasters.

The extensive use of marble in the hall makes the Clifton House distinctive. The stair risers and the baseboard in the central hall are richly treated with skillful marbleizing. The slender balusters are square in section and the newel is turned. Curvilinear brackets adorn each tread of the open string. The front stair flight curves at the head of the stairs to meet the second shorter transverse flight.
The upper hall contains a single paneled door leading onto the upper porch. The ornamentation around the door is a similar theme to that of the unusual front door of the house with delicate rectangular sidelights, rectangular corner lights and a transom overhead. Most of the doors have four panels and the frames are molded and mitered with heavy molded bases. The baseboard in most of the house, with the exception of the marbelizing in the front hall, is plain. Altogether, the house possesses an aura of spaciousness and simplicity characteristic of the antebellum south.

To the rear of the hip roof section extends a two-story ell with gable roof with a box cornice that returns slightly into the gable. It has a central interior chimney of stone. The finish is simple and of mid-nineteenth century date. Attached now to the rear of this is a one-story-with-attic structure that obviously predates the other section and was originally a small dwelling; it probably dates from the early nineteenth century but could be earlier. Both elevations are covered—the south by a shed porch, the north by a shed. An exterior end chimney rises at the east end; it has single paved shoulders and is made of blocks of stone, typical of the county. The depth of the walls of this structure suggests it is built of logs and weatherboarded. A tiny four-pane casement window lights the attic, and narrow windows occur at the first floor. The house stands on stone piers subsequently infilled with concrete block. The interior has been altered over time.

A short distance behind the house stand two frame outbuildings of nineteenth century vintage; both are in rather poor condition but could be reclaimed. The gable roofed structure described as a kitchen has plain weatherboards, a simple box cornice, and a big stone chimney. The single room is served by a vast fire opening typical of the separate kitchen houses of the period and place. The gable roofed frame smokehouse is plainly finished and covered in brick patterned sheathing.

Several yards farther to the rear of the house stands the structure noted as a tenant house on the enclosed property map. The owners think that this may have been a slave dwelling before its use as a tenant house; this is at this time uncertain. The plain, small gable roofed structure also has plain weatherboards and a big, single-shouldered stone chimney. Like the others it is in serious need of repairs but could be reclaimed. Also like the others this structure contributes strongly to the completeness of the farm complex.

Noted as the Miller's House on the enclosed property map and standing slightly north of the creek on the east side of the road is a modest, frame, L-shaped dwelling, also with a stone chimney and plain weatherboards. A rear ell and small shed expand its space. It is simply finished. This little dwelling is also in poor condition but could be reclaimed; it contributes substantially to the totality of the complex and is especially important in relation to the history of the farming and milling operation. Though its date is uncertain it appears to date from the nineteenth century, probably the later decades.
South of the house the road crosses Crooked Creek. Near the road is a dam creating Clifton's Mill Pond which lies west of the road and dam; to the east of the road are a second dam and the ruins of the mill, including some machinery.

At the millsite is a stone dam of fine blocks rising about 15 or 20 feet high and extending across the creek. It is in good condition. Foundations of the mill survive, and a sluice pipe, wheel, gears, an oak shaft, and other elements as well. The site's known history combined with the dam and the surviving elements doubtless can provide information about milling practices of the nineteenth century.

The structures of course are 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 structures. 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.
8. Significance

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|              | development and prosperity of the agricultural economy of antebellum Franklin County and the continuation of the agrarian culture into the twentieth century; and with the key role of water-powered mills in the agrarian economic and social life.
|              | Associated with the locally prominent Clifton family. |
|              | Exemplifies early 19th century modest vernacular housing types seen in the small scale, stone chimney, and log construction of the rear section; and exemplifies the regional, vernacular influence of the distinctive and eclectic idiom of Warrenton builder Jacob Holt upon prosperous farmers' increasingly ambitious houses in the decade before the Civil War. |
|              | Is likely to yield information about nineteenth century milling practices. |
The Clifton House and Mill were important parts of community life in Harris Township, Franklin County, for more than a century. The house reflected the lifestyle of an antebellum planter, while the mill provided community residents with both a service and a meeting place. That Thomas Turner Clifton was responsible for the basic home that now stands there is little doubt, though one wing seems older than his ownership. The property, however, has a milling history spanning 200 years, and while the Clifton family appears to have erected the mill whose ruins now rest on Crooked Creek, the records indicate that at least one mill operated on the same acreage about fifty years before Clifton possession.

The tract on which the house and mill are located was part of a state grant issued to John Ferrell in 1778. Some time between then and 1786, Ferrell constructed a gristmill on Crooked Creek. His will, written in 1786, gave to his son William, "315 acres known as my Mill Tract." Another heir received the home place, clearly indicating that it was not on the mill tract. William Ferrell sold the property to Thomas Arendell who, in 1803, transferred it to James Ferrell, grandson of John.

James Ferrell received 156 acres along Crooked Creek surrounding the millsite. This land was adjacent to the 250 acres he had inherited from his father, Bryant Ferrell. The portion of Crooked Creek covered by the bounds of the 386 acre tract extended from the mouth of Spring Branch to Benjamin Wright's old ford, a distance of approximately 2,145 feet. If the Ferrell mill was not located at the same site as the Clifton mill, it was nevertheless on Crooked Creek less than one-half mile away, and on the same tract of land later to be known as the Clifton Mill Tract.

Records reveal very little about James Ferrell and nothing about his residence. He was a wealthy individual who had somehow managed to consolidate the vast estate of his grandfather which exceeded 1,500 acres. The earliest section of the Clifton house architecturally appears to date from the period of his ownership, but it is unknown whether it was his home.

On December 20, 1831, Ferrell sold to Willie (Wiley) Clifton a 720 acre tract on both sides of Crooked Creek "beginning at a pine in the edge of the mill pond." The consideration was $3,000 indicating that the mill was then in operation. The description included common metes and bounds with the plat showing the mill tract (lot #9) in the division of Willie Clifton's estate in 1849.

Local tradition maintains that the Clifton mill was built in the early 1830s, yet the millpond was created by 1831. If the James Ferrell mill was not on the same site, it must have been very close, perhaps near the smaller retaining dam located on the west side of the bridge over Crooked Creek (SR 1103). In any event, Willie Clifton owned a mill that operated at the present site some years before 1849.
Clifton moved from Wake to Franklin County sometime after 1831 and began adding to his already extensive landholdings. When he died in 1847 he left 3,556 acres of real estate valued at more than $13,000. A large contiguous tract was divided into thirteen lots, one for each of his children. Lot #9, known as the 125 Tract, was devised to Bolling Clifton. Thomas Turner Clifton received Lot #7, consisting of thirty acres, to be added to 233 acres he had previously been given. In January, 1850, Bolling sold the 225 acre mill tract to his brothers Thomas Turner and Willie S. Clifton. Included along with the gristmill were a cotton gin and extra millstones. Willie transferred his interest to Thomas T. in October of the same year, and in January, 1851, Thomas T. Clifton purchased Lot #8, the 1/5 acre tract between his properties, from his sister Ann Wall, thus giving him a contiguous tract of 430 acres running north from Crooked Creek.

At the time he purchased the Wall property, Thomas T. Clifton was residing in the northern portion of the Mill Tract (Lot #9). He apparently moved there a year earlier. Probably in the 1850s the front section of the present house was constructed. Three more children were born after the move, making a total of nine plus the parents and a house servant. In addition to the mill operation, Clifton turned 300 acres into improved farmland, raising crops of wheat, rye, corn, rice, cotton, peas and beans, hay, and sweet potatoes.

At age fifty, Thomas Turner Clifton was too old for Civil War services, but his oldest son, Dr. James B. Clifton, enlisted as a Confederate surgeon and was assigned to various theaters of operation. After the war, he returned to Louisburg to continue his medical practice. In 1869, James B. paid $1,900 for the 225 acre mill tract and family home where his father continued to live. He improved the industrial operation by adding a sawmill to the facility to go with the gristmill and cotton gin. A year afterwards, he sold the mill tract and improvements to his brother John for $5,500.

John Thomas Clifton, the second oldest child of Thomas Turner Clifton, never married and lived at home with his father. They formed a business partnership regarding both the farming (wheat and corn) and milling operations. John assumed principal responsibility for the mill, hiring a miller and another employee to run the grist and flour mill, and three hands to work the sawmill. Production figures for 1870 showed 4,500 bushels of corn meal; 1,900 bushels of flour; and 150,000 feet of timber. The value of manufactured products reached $8,500, a substantial income in 1870.

Thomas Turner Clifton died on July 13, 1882, and John continued to manage the family business while residing in the Clifton home place. Because the landholdings were involved in business agreements, the articles of partnership tied up any settlement of Thomas's estate until the death of John Clifton in 1902. At that time, the 225 acre mill tract, dwelling house, and all improvements, valued at
$7,000, were given jointly to four of Thomas Turner's children: Virginia, Joseph, William, and Robert. Over the next twenty-three years, Robert acquired the interests of his brothers and sister. He never married, nor did his sister Virginia, and the two remained in the Clifton home place. Virginia died in 1918, leaving Robert as sole occupant of the house.

Robert T. Clifton, called "Babe" by many who knew him, earned a reputation as an eccentric among community residents. Among his unusual habits were always dressing in suit and tie even when home alone, and walking on the house balcony every evening at dusk to play "Redwing" on his flute. Robert was also the subject of a local rumor that he never married because he had killed a peddler years before in a fight over a young lady. According to the story, only the connections of the prominent Clifton family and the exertions of his lawyer, "Pink" Harris (his sister Sarah's husband), kept him out of jail.

The beauty of the natural setting around the mill created an attractive gathering place for the community. On Saturdays, families enjoyed picnics by the millpond, and an annual Easter dance was held on the premises. In the early 1920s, "Babe" Clifton built a pavilion close to the mill called "Punkin Center," complete with player piano and plenty of room for dancing. Even with its social aspects, the mill was primarily a business operation, producing meal, flour, and timber. A grain store was erected near the mill, and in there were established a voting precinct and post office.

In August, 1926, Robert Clifton was forced to mortgage the property to the Joint Stock Land Bank of Raleigh to cover a $5,000 debt. About the same time, his brother, William Clifton, sent Robert $1,000 to rebuild the dam at the mill. The dam was rebuilt and all debts apparently paid as Robert retained possession of the property. Robert "Babe" Clifton died in 1928 and was buried in the family cemetery near the house. The home and mill tract were bequeathed to his nephew, Maurice S. Clifton.

In 1944, Maurice and Anna Clifton deeded the property to Mary Elizabeth Howell Clifton, who appears to have resided in the house after the death of Robert Clifton. About 1959, J. G. Lloyd was hired to operate the mill and he lived in a small house nearby. Lloyd managed the mill operation until 1951 when new restrictive laws forced a number of small milling businesses to close their doors. Mary Clifton sold the property to Maurice S. Clifton and several others in 1961 but reserved for herself a life estate in the 245 acre tract. She died in 1968, the last Clifton to live in the house. In 1971, John and Mary Cella, and William and Peggy Ginn, purchased the property with the home and abandoned millsite. For the first time in 120 years, the land passed from ownership and occupancy by descendants of Thomas Turner Clifton. The house is in need of repair, but the present owners plan a careful rehabilitation.
T. H. Pearce, "Clifton Home Included in Survey," Franklin Times (Louisburg), January 9, 1975, hereinafter cited as Pearce, "Clifton Home." According to architectural historians, the house bears a Jacob Holt influence (Catherine Bishir, Notes attached to preliminary report on Clifton House, November, 1979), but Holt did not come into prominence until the 1850s (Catherine Cockshutt (Bishir), "Jacob Holt," a report submitted to Research Branch, Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, undated, p. 2). By then, T. T. Clifton owned the land (see below).

See will of John Ferrell, 1786, Franklin County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Franklin County Courthouse, Louisburg, Will Book B, 12, hereinafter cited as Franklin County Will Book.

Franklin County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Franklin County Courthouse, Louisburg, Deed Book E, 36, hereinafter cited as Franklin County Deed Book.

Franklin County Will Book B, 12.

Franklin County Deed Book 9, p. 102; and Deed Book 11, p. 280. For relationship of John and James Ferrell, see John Ferrell's will, Franklin County Will Book B, 12.

Franklin County Will Book A, 110.

Calculated from measured plats found in Wiley Clifton Estates Papers, 1849, Franklin County Records, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Clifton Estate Papers; and from 1961 plat of mill tract.

See Franklin County Deed Book 9, p. 102; and Deed Book 26, p. 495.

The wording of deeds and wills relating to Ferrell property gives no indication that a major dwelling house existed on the mill tract during Ferrell's ownership, certainly not one reflecting the wealth of John, Bryant, or James Ferrell. See Franklin County Deed Book 9, p. 102; Deed Book 26, p. 495; and Franklin County Will Book B, 12.

Franklin County Deed Book 26, p. 495.

Clifton Estate Papers.

Jerry L. Cross. Interview with George Lloyd of Franklin County, December 6, 1979. Lloyd's father, J. G. Lloyd operated the mill from 1939-1951, hereinafter cited as Lloyd interview.
13. The deed to Clifton in December, 1831, lists him as a resident of Wake County. Franklin County Deed Book 26, p. 495. For land holdings see Franklin County Deeds, grantee index, and Clifton Estate Papers.


15. Franklin County Deed Book 30, p. 434.


17. See Deed from Wall to Clifton, Franklin County Deed Book 30, p. 401.

18. Until the settlement of his father's estate in 1849, Thomas Turner Clifton resided on the south side of Crooked Creek. See Clifton Estate Papers; Map of Franklin County Townships, 1880, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Franklin Township Map; Sixth Census of the United States, 1840: North Carolina--Franklin County, Population Schedule, 75, hereinafter cited by census number, date, and schedule; and Franklin County Deed Book 30, p. 404. See also Pearce, "Clifton House."


22. Franklin County Deed Book 34, p. 435; and Deed Book 35, p. 377.


25. Franklin County Court Records, microfilm in State Archives, Raleigh, Orders and Decrees, Book 6, p. 444. See also Ninth Census, 1870, Population Schedule, 165.

26. Franklin County Will Book V, 483; Will Book W, 62; and Franklin County Deed Book 249, p. 582/ Residency and marriage status from Janet Hutchison, interview with Mrs. S. W. Washington, granddaughter of T. T. Clifton, April 26, 1979, hereinafter cited as Washington interview.

27. Washington interview. Mrs. Washington is the niece of Robert Clifton.
28 Washington interview.

29 Washington interview. See also reference to rebuilding the dam in 1920s in Lloyd interview.

30 Franklin County Deed Book 246, p. 508.

31 Washington interview; Lloyd interview; and Franklin County Will Book W, 217.

32 Washington interview; and Franklin County Will Book W, 217.

33 Franklin County Deed Book 400, p. 216.

34 Lloyd interview.

35 Franklin County Deed Book 577, pp. 189-190.

36 Franklin County Deed Book 693, pp. 512-513.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Cross, Jerry L. Interview with George Lloyd, December 6, 1979.

Interview with Dr. John Cella, December 6, 1979.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 245 acres

Quadrangle name Louisburg and Bunn West, NC

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A Zone 177 Easting 739 Northing 340 818000

B Zone 177 Easting 739 Northing 540 816710

C Zone 177 Easting 731 Northing 6140 816460

D Zone 177 Easting 738 Northing 61760 818610

E Zone 177 Easting 738 Northing 410 816480

F Zone 177 Easting 738 Northing 61760 818610

G Zone 177 Easting 738 Northing 410 816480

H Zone 177 Easting 738 Northing 410 816480

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the Clifton House and Mill Site is shown as the red line on the accompanying map.

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>
<th>code</th>
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11. Form Prepared By

Janet Hutcheson, Consultant and Catherine W. Bishir, Head--Survey and Planning Branch: Architectural Description Janet Hutcheson, Consultant and Catherine W. Bishir, Head--Survey and Planning Branch: Architectural Description

Jerry L. Cross, Researcher--Research Branch: Historical Statement

Survey and Planning Branch

Archaeology and Historic Preservation

date November, 1979

street & number 109 E. Jones Street

telephone 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 January 10, 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
Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas. 1892.


Hutchison, Janet. Interview with Mrs. S. W. Washington, April 26, 1979.


Clifton House and Mill Site
West and East side SR1103, at Crooked Creek and
0.5 mi. North of bridge at pond
Louisburg and Bunn West Quadrangle
Quadrangle Scale 1:24000    Zone 17

UTM's
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