Form No. 10-300 (REV. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK 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
Mill Prong
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
South side SR 1120, 0.7 mi. east of junction w/SR 1119

CITY, TOWN
Edinburgh

STATE
North Carolina

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

PRESENT USE

(status)

ACCESSIBLE

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

PARK

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER:

NAME William S. McLean

Mill Prong Preservation, Inc.

CITY, TOWN
Lumberton

STATE
North Carolina

STREET & NUMBER
McLean, Stacy, Henry, McLean
Southern National Bank Building

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Hoke County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL

STATE

COUNTY

LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE
DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
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<td>MOVED</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAIR</td>
<td>ALTERED</td>
<td>DATE</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Mill Prong, the impressive two-story Federal plantation seat of John Gilchrist, derives its name from the stream long known as Mill Prong, which flows in a southeasterly direction through the Little Raft Swamp bisecting the plantation grounds. Just as it has lost its complement of farm outbuildings, Mill Prong has also lost its formal gardens said to have been among the first in Robeson County. Today, walnut, chestnut, sycamore, and crepe myrtle trees shade the house and its immediate lawn. The remnants of an orchard of fruit trees stand in a modest grove to the southeast. Abandoned as a family residence by its owner in the late 19th century, the house has remained to the present in a surprisingly stable condition.

Mill Prong, as it exists today, owes its appearance to three of its owners. The main portion of the house, built by John Gilchrist, is a two-story frame structure, resting on high, thick brick piers and covered with weatherboards and a gable roof. It has a three-bay division on its front (northwest) elevation with a pedimented two-tier porch sheltering entrances in the center bay. Flemish bond chimneys, flanked by windows on each level, stand at each gable end, while engaged one-story shed rooms, flanking a porch, carried across the rear elevation.

The center bay, two-tier porch, sheltering flush sheathing and taller on the first story than the second, is nearly square in plan. Steps providing access to this porch and the house's other entrances are now lost. On the first story four square posts, symmetrically paired to either side of the entrances, are connected by a railing connected by square palings. The porch posts, chamfered just above the handrail, become octagonal and taper as they rise to a square capital. The entrance on the first story, strongly Federal in design, features an eight-panel door, with pairs of panels diminishing in height from bottom to top, below a four-light transom. The door is set in a three-part molded surround, resting on a base, which rises to applied pilasters—on either side of the transom—supporting an architrave which breaks across the top of the transom. On the second floor the porch has a simpler design. Here posts, repeating the form below, occur only at the outside corners of the porch. They are connected by a railing also repeating the form seen below. Here a six-panel door, and its shallower three-light transom, are enclosed in a simpler three-part surround.

The fenestration of Gilchrist's house, has nine—over—nine sash on the second story and rear shed with six—over—nine sash on the second story. The window openings are enframed by a two-part Federal surrounds. Some of the original blinds, removed from the windows, now rest on the ground beneath the house. The chimneys at each gable end, resting on a hip base and laid up in Flemish bond, have single paved shoulders at the level of the second story fenestration; their free-standing stacks terminate with molded caps. On the house's rear (southeast) elevation, the first story has a three-part division with shed rooms flanking a recessed, flush sheathed porch. From the porch are entrances to the shed rooms to the right and left together with a door—summoned by a three-light transom into the block of the house. A flight of six steps rises in the north corner to a six-panel door behind which the flight continues inside the house to the second story. While the newel remains the handrail has been lost.

The house retained this appearance until the 1830's when Archibald McEachern added a pair of rooms above the rear shed rooms. The second-story rear elevation was given a five bay
division with window openings containing six-over-six sash. At the same time the ridge line of the house's gable roof was raised several feet higher to cover this rear addition giving the house a double pile form. No fireplaces were provided for either of the additional rooms.

In the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century Daniel Purcell replaced the then existing kitchen with the present one-story frame ell which he connected to the southernmost half of the house's rear elevation with a gable roofed breezeway. Three bays deep, this block contained a kitchen and dining room separated by an interior chimney. A shed porch carries across the southeast gable end of the ell. The door and window surrounds have a simple two-part Greek Revival configuration. The interior finish here is plain as well with plastered walls relieved by a simple chair rail. The mantel features simple board pilasters rising to a wide frieze.

The interior of Gilchrist's house was built on a two-room plan seen in other houses of Highland Scots in the area. The front entrance gives into the larger of the two rooms (the south one), which is finished with flush vertical sheathing. A molded baseboard and chair rail contain a molded panel wainscot. The window opening resting on the top of the chair rail are enframed by wide three part molded surrounds as are the doors into the front and rear porches and a third door in the partition wall. The mantel has been removed from this room to the residence of a family member in Red Springs, N.C.

The smaller north room is similar in finish to its pendant. A closet is set below the rise of the stair in the south corner of this room; its board and batten door is attached by strap hinges. A six panel door gives into the shed room behind while a third, later door on the east side of the fireplace on the northeast elevation opens to the exterior--its access long lost. The mantel in this room has been removed to Red Springs as well.

The shed rooms are finished with flush sheathing, molded chair rails, and panelled wainscoting. Neither room has a molded cornice as do the larger front room.

On the second floor of the house, the arrangement of the two room plan differed from the first story in that the partition separating the two rooms is set to the west side of the entrance onto the front porch thereby making the northernmost room the larger of the two. These rooms have flush vertical sheathing with molded baseboards and chair rails enframing a plain, wide single board wainscot. The mantels in both rooms are simply constructed with symmetrically disposed molded boards framing the wide boards which surround the fire opening. A narrow shelf
carries across the top. The door connecting the rooms has a six panel arrangement. The stair well is protected by a railing comprised of square newels connected by a molded top rail with square palings.

When McEachern added the rooms to the rear second story he added a partition along the north edge of the stair well through the larger of the two rooms thus altering the second story to a center hall plan. That wall, while repeating the use of the chair rail from the original scheme is plastered over lath. The hall extends into the center portion of the rear shed addition (above the rear first story porch) where it is flanked by small rooms finished with plastered walls and molded chair rails. The door and window surrounds have a two part molding. The doors here are rather unusual having two large rectangular panels at the bottom and three long panels at the top.

About two hundred feet to the southeast of the house are the completely overgrown ruins of a one story structure whose brick chimney stack is visible. It was used as a tenant house.

The McEachern Cemetery, located in a grove of deciduous trees at the southeastern edge of the Mill Prong tract, contains sixty-six graves (fifty-nine marked and seven unmarked). The burying ground, established with the interment of Gilbert McMillan in 1772, remained in use by the Highland Scots and their descendants into the first decades of the twentieth century. Duncan McBryde (1842-1911) is one of the last Scots to be buried here. The majority of the stones have a tablet form with variations in size, craftsmanship, and design sophistication; often funeral and other sentimental motives are inscribed on their faces. A tablet first marked the grave of Gilbert McMillan and thirty years later, in 1802, that of John Gilchrist the builder of Mill Prong. The tablet form continued in use throughout the nineteenth century with several, including the gravestone for Flora Currie who died in 1856, executed by George Lauder, a prominent Fayetteville stonemason. The graves of Mary (Gilchrist) Purcell, (1771-1843), and her second husband, John Purcell, Sr. (1758-1850), are prominently marked with table monuments. Mary Purcell was the daughter of John and Effie Gilchrist. The third marker form, the obelisk and variations thereon, was the first used in 1873 to mark the grave of Archibald McEachern and later those of a son and daughter.
**PERIOD** | **AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW**
---|---
PREHISTORIC | ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | COMMUNITY PLANNING | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | RELIGION
1400-1499 | ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | CONSERVATION | LAW | SCIENCE
1500-1599 | AGRICULTURE | ECONOMICS | LITERATURE | SCULPTURE
1600-1699 | ARCHITECTURE | EDUCATION | MILITARY | SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799 | ART | ENGINEERING | PHILOSOPHY | THEATER
1800-1899 | COMMERCE | EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | TRANSPORTATION
1900- | COMMUNICATIONS | INVENTION | OTHER (SPECIFY)

**SPECIFIC DATES** | **BUILDER/ARCHITECT**
---|---
Standing alone after a long period of neglect, Mill Prong, a two story Federal house, retains its distinguished architectural qualities which set it above the other plantation seats in the portion of Robeson County that became Hoke County in 1911. The plantation with its manor house and cemetery, also retains the important historical associations which ally it with the most prominent Highland Scots families in the upper Cape Fear region. Built in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century by John Gilchrist (1740-1802), an important political and social leader of the community, the house is one of the very few remaining houses known to have been built by an immigrant Highland Scot. Mill Prong remained in the Gilchrist family until 1834 when John Gilchrist, Jr., who inherited the house from his father, sold it to Archibald McEachern (1788-1873), another prominent leader in both the Highland Scots community and the state. McEachern enjoyed the greatest benefit of Mill Prong living there from the date of his purchase of the property until his death in 1873—a period of nearly forty years. The house was the residence of his son Daniel Purcell McEachern (1836-1912) until his removal to Red Springs about 1895. The house was subsequently used as a tenant house and for agricultural storage by McEachern's descendants who continued to farm the plantation fields. The McEachern Cemetery, several hundred yards to the southeast of the house, contains not only the graves of builder, John Gilchrist and his family, Archibald McEachern and his descendants, but also the graves of many members of the large Highland Scots community who established here in the upper Cape Fear region the largest settlement of their people in the United States. Its historical significance is, therefore, as strong as that of the house itself. With the formation of Mill Prong Preservation Incorporated in March, 1978, descendants of Mill Prong's owners, allied families and friends are setting about to raise the funds for its restoration and preservation as focus of sentiment and interpretation of the important Highland Scots community in North Carolina.

**Criteria Assessment:**

A. Mill Prong and the McEachern Cemetery have strong and important associations with the settlement and development of the upper Cape Fear region by the Highland Scots who established here the largest settlement of their group in the United States. Their descendants have continued to dominate the social, political, and economic circles of that area to the present. This is one of the few extant plantation seats known to have been built for a Highland Scot immigrant.

B. The house was built by John Gilchrist, a Highland Scot immigrant, who rose to regional prominence, serving in the North Carolina Legislature from 1792 to 1797, and later the residence for nearly 40 years of Archibald McEachern, another prominent leader in the political and cultural circles of the Highland Scots Presbyterian community.
C. Mill Prong embodies the distinctive architectural characteristics of the Federal period including the Flemish bond chimneys and well executed Federal detail, mantels, doors, and hardware. Its design and construction document a sophistication which sets it apart from its contemporaries and neighbors. It also reveals regional vernacular characteristics, including the plan with two front rooms, two rear shed rooms, with the stair rising from the rear porch. The McEachern cemetery, whose oldest stone is dated 1772, contains a wide range of gravemarker forms including several stones crafted by George Lauder, a Scottish stonemason who worked on the North Carolina Capitol and later removed to Fayetteville where he practiced his craft until his death in 1888.
Mill Prong was built in Robeson County (present day Hoke) around 1800 for John Gilchrist, a prominent area farmer. Gilchrist, a native of Campbelltown, Cantyre, Scotland, was born in 1740. In 1770 he emigrated to North Carolina in a group that included his sister Mary Gilchrist and his bride Effie McMillan Gilchrist, whom he had married in Campbelltown on February 12, 1770. Gilchrist and his family were among the many Scottish Highlanders who settled in the Cape Fear region of North Carolina in the period between 1732 and 1776. This mass immigration of Highlanders (following upon the defeat of the Scots in this period in the Battle of Culloden, etc.) represents the principal direct settlement by Europeans into North Carolina; most other settlement of the state came from other colonies rather than from abroad. The Scots Highlanders culture in the Cape Fear area is thus of unique significance in the heterogeneous makeup of the state.

Many of the Scotsmen who emigrated to the New World were men of means. Gilchrist was of this type. The fact that his house is one of the few remaining houses in the area built not for Scots descendants but a first generation immigrant gives evidence of this solidity. According to one account:

They (the Gilchrist Family) seemed unusually well supplied with such things as clothing, books, and the best household furnishings of the day. In addition to this . . . John Gilchrist, Sr. brought a tutor from Scotland for his children when they were old enough to go to school. He also introduced the study of classics in this section.

Shortly after landing in North Carolina Gilchrist purchased 70 acres from James O'Berry for 10 pounds. He augmented this purchase with numerous others throughout the years, including a transaction in February of 1794 in which he purchased 860 acres "on Mill Prong." It was on this tract that Gilchrist built his second home, the house presently known as Mill Prong. Gilchrist became one of the area's largest landholders and most influential citizens. He was a member of the North Carolina Legislature from 1792 until 1797. Gilchrist's son, John Gilchrist, Jr. also served in the legislature in 1810-1811, 1816-1817, 1822, and 1825-1826. The younger Gilchrist was also one of the first Robeson County graduates of the University of North Carolina, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in 1809 and a Master of Arts in 1812. He was also one of the earliest supporters of Floral College, an early Robeson County Female College.

John Gilchrist, Sr. died in 1802. About half of his Mill Prong property, including the house, was left to his son, John Gilchrist, Jr., who was still a minor. The exact amount of property left to Gilchrist is uncertain, but is believed to have been in excess of 2,000 acres. John, Jr. lived in the house with his stepmother, Flora Gilchrist, until 1812 when he moved to Red Springs to set up a law practice. The widow Flora continued to reside there until the late 1820s when she moved to Fayetteville. In 1834 John, Jr. sold the Mill Prong property to Archibald McEachern for $3,500.

Archibald McEachern was born in March, 1788, the only son of Daniel McEachern and Beatrice Torrey McEachern. He too was of Scots descent. Some years before purchasing Mill Prong he married Effie Sellers, also of Scots descent. They had the first of their twelve children, Mary Priscilla McEachern, in March of 1817. According to family tradition the house was enlarged and remodeled sometime in the early 1830s. McEachern added a large formal garden which "was a large garden for that day, set apart and carefully worked."
Also on the Mill Prong property was a private cemetery that would become known as "McEachern's Cemetery." The oldest tombstone appears to be that of Gilbert McMillan who died in 1772. McMillan was John Gilchrist's father-in-law. This cemetery contains graves of members of the Currie, McBryde, McEachern, Gilchrist, McMillan, and other allied Scots families of importance. As such it is an important site in the cultural history of the area.11

Archibald McEachern became one of the leading citizens in the area, a fact attested to by his commission as a Robeson County militia lieutenant in 1811 and his commission as a major in 1819.12 McEachern became "a man of good education, real culture, fine business judgment, and a leader respected by his entire community."13 He was instrumental in founding the Montpelier Presbyterian Church near Wagram.14 He was a successful farmer, with real estate valued at $5,000 in 1850 and 28 slaves to work his land. The 1860 census reveals that McEachern had increased his slaves to 41 and owned over 3,000 acres, 500 of which was cultivated. He grew wheat, corn, rye, oats, peas, beans, potatoes, and had livestock valued at $2,885.15

McEachern died in May of 1873. In his will, probated the next year, he left his Mill Prong property to Daniel Purcell McEachern, the tenth of his twelve children, along with "the mill and blacksmith shop, the wagon and carts, all the farming utensils, all the stock of horses, mules, hogs, sheep and cattle." Also included was the cemetery.16 Daniel Purcell McEachern was born in 1836, making him 38 when he inherited his father's land.17 He attended the University of North Carolina, receiving an A.B. degree in 1859.18 In the Civil War he served in the Fourteenth North Carolina Volunteers under Captain W. J. Clark. In 1880 he was married to Mary McNeil of Cumberland County, a daughter of Sheriff Hector McNeil and direct descendant of Neil McNeil who was one of the founders of the Scots colony in the upper Cape Fear region. D. P. McEachern was a religious leader in the area, serving for many years as an elder in the Presbyterian Church, while his wife taught in several schools in the area.19 In 1912 McEachern willed the cemetery property "in which . . . lie the mortal remains of a long line of ancestors" to the Fayetteville Presbytery, but it was not accepted.20 Mill Prong continued to be a center of culture and learning in the region, in addition to a prosperous farm.21

D. P. McEachern and Mary McEachern had three children, the last of whom died in infancy. The other two children were daughters, Beatrice Torrey McEachern, born July 22, 1881, and Mary McNeil McEachern, born September 8, 1883.22 In 1895 the family moved to Red Springs for a time to allow the daughters to attend Flora McDonald College, from which both graduated.23 D. P. McEachern died October 19, 1917. His will left the Mill Prong property, consisting of one thousand acres to his eldest daughter, while leaving the land east of Mill Prong to his youngest daughter. He left his wife, who died in 1934, "use of all resources of the whole estate" for the remainder of her life.24 In 1919 Mary McNeil McEachern sold her part of the inheritance to her sister for $10.00.25 By 1919 Beatrice McEachern, who had married George Bullock of Vance County in 1906, had five children.26 In 1964 she sold Mill Prong to her eldest son Walter Richard Bullock for one dollar. This transaction encompassed 500 acres.27 Mrs. Bullock is the current owner of the home.

In May of 1978 Mill Prong Preservation, Incorporated, was formed and secured a fifty-year lease for the house and 2.6 acres of surrounding property.28 The group plans to preserve the house and thereby preserve almost 200 years of area history reflected in Mill Prong.
FOOTNOTES

1 John Edwin Purcell, II, Lumber River Scots and Their Descendants (Lumberton; 1942), 464-465, hereinafter cited as Purcell, Lumber River Scots. Gilchrist was followed in North Carolina by his older sister Mary Gilchrist who emigrated from Scotland in 1773 with her husband John McBryde. John McBryde died in 1785, while his wife died in 1792. Both are buried in McEachern cemetery. Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 735.


3 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 465-466.


6 Robeson County Will Book 1, p. 75. The last of Gilchrist's ten children was born to his second wife Flora Currie Gilchrist, whom he married after the death of his first wife in 1794. Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 466-468.

7 Third Census of the United States, 1810, Population Schedule, Robeson County, 224; and Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 698.

8 Unrecorded deed found in McEachern Papers.

9 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 338-339, 343.

10 News-Journal (Raeford), October 5, 1978; Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 341.

11 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 467.

12 McEachern Papers.

13 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 340.

14 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 341.


16 Robeson County Will Book 3, p. 69.
17 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 399.

18 Alumni Directory of the University of North Carolina, 563.

19 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 399-401.

20 Hoke County Deed Book 12, p. 98.


22 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 401

23 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 400.

24 Hoke County Will Book 5, p. 599.

25 Hoke County Deed Book 19, p. 536.

26 Purcell, Lumber River Scots, 401-402.

27 Hoke County Deed Book 131, p. 527.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY_________

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED PLAT MAP

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
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STATE HISTORICAL 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 HISTORICAL PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE September 13, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER


JOHN GILCHRIST PROPERTY
CA. 1800
(FROM IDENTIFIABLE PLATS)

- MILL PRONG
  (PRESENT HOUSE)
- PRESENT MILL PRONG TRACT
- BOUNDARY OF DIVISION BETWEEN JOHN GILCHRIST, JR.
  AND GILBERT GILCHRIST
  JOHN - LAND TO SOUTH
  GILBERT - LAND TO NORTH
- MCEARCHEN CEMETERY
  • BELIEVED TO BE LOCATION
    OF JOHN GILCHRIST, SR.'S
    ORIGINAL HOME