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
The Cellar
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
404 Whitfield Street 3/4 mi. N of NC 481
CITY TOWN
Enfield
STATE
North Carolina

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
_DISTRICT
_X BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
_SITE
 OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
_PUBLIC
_PRIVATE
_BOTH

STATUS
_OCCUPIED
_UNOCCUPIED
_WORK IN PROGRESS
_ACCESSIBLE
_YES: RESTRICTED
_YES: UNRESTRICTED
_NO

PRESENT USE
_AGRICULTURE
_COMMERCIAL
_EDUCATIONAL
_ENTERTAINMENT
_GOVERNMENT
_INDUSTRIAL
_MILITARY
_X OTHER VACANT

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
Mr. Hugh Blount Sherrod, Jr. Mrs. Hugh Sherrod, Sr.
STREET & NUMBER
85 Lisa Avenue 404 Sherrod Heights
CITY TOWN
Kemper, LA 70052
Enfield, NC 27823

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE
Registery of Deeds, etc
STREET & NUMBER
Halifax County Courthouse
CITY, TOWN
Halifax
STATE
North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
DATE
_FEDERAL _STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
STATE
The Cellar, which was originally the center of a large estate, now stands on a large lot near the outskirts of the small Halifax County town of Enfield, sheltered from surrounding twentieth century residential development by a dense planting. The house, a large two-story frame structure, long retained a collection of many outbuildings. At present, only a few still survive to recall the earlier grouping. These include an attached one-story kitchen, a shed with flanking roofs sheltering automobiles, and another small, simple frame outbuilding. The area around and especially in front of the house is planted with large trees, flowering shrubs, beds of bulbs, and other ornamental plants. A driveway of generally semicircular form approaches and departs from the front of the house.

The main house is among the largest and most handsomely finished early nineteenth century buildings surviving in Halifax County. It is one of the few extant houses of this period in the county or the immediate region following the spacious and relatively formal central hall plan two rooms deep. The early form, materials, and much of the early finish survive intact; the front porch, front door, some mantels, and other decorative elements date from an early twentieth century remodeling of the house by Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Sherrod I. These do not detract significantly from the character of the house. A pre-remodeling photograph in possession of the present owner shows the house with a one-bay, two-story, pedimented entrance portico, presumably the original treatment.

The symmetrical five-bay house is characteristic of the standard, substantial eastern North Carolina house of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The rectangular structure stands on a brick foundation, has exterior end chimneys of brick, and is covered with a rather steep gable roof. The front elevation is five bays wide with a central entrance. Molded, mitered frames and heavy molded sills are generally employed. The window sash, originally of six and nine panes per sash, has been replaced by two-over-two, evidently part of the turn-of-the-century remodeling. The large front door is flanked by plain sidelights, and the present door is ca. 1900 with a handsome patterned glass panel featuring a deer. This elevation, like the others, is covered with unusually richly molded weatherboards and terminates at either end in fluted corner pilasters. The molded roofline cornice is underlined by undercut modillions: a refinement relatively rare in the region. The porch extends across the first story, with the central bay projecting and topped by a gallery. Turned posts with long neckings carry the roof and are linked by a turned balustrade.

Pairs of rather narrow double-shouldered chimneys stand at either end of the house. The brickwork is of Flemish bond, and the chimneys are brick to the bottom. Fenestration of the sides is somewhat irregular, with original and later windows at the first, second, and attic levels.
The interior of the house is significant in two respects: for the unusual adaptation of the central hall plan and for the survival of original fabric, enriched by turn-of-the-century embellishments. Whether more than one period of early construction occurred is uncertain, but it is possible. The central hall extends front to back, with the stair placed in an unusual fashion: instead of the open stair rising in the hall itself, fairly standard in formal central plan houses, the stair is enclosed. It rises in a single long flight back to front, is partitioned from the hall by a wall, and rises from a tiny room or vestibule between the hall and the right rear room. At the second level the stair emerges into a very wide central hall, partially partitioned to enclose the stair, but mostly open. This arrangement is not standard; a slightly similar arrangement is seen at Hope Plantation, roughly contemporary, in Bertie County. The enclosed stair is found in smaller vernacular or traditional houses usually of the hall-and-parlor plan, but in the formal double pile plan the open stair is more usual. Perhaps the plan here arises from the combination of traditional construction habits with the grander plan.

The double pile plan is also modified by the reduction of the rear rooms to perhaps two-thirds or half the size of the large front rooms -- again a blend of the traditional and formal approaches.

The predominant finish of the house is original and of very late Georgian character -- wide floor boards, six-panel doors with raised panels, mitered and molded door and window frames, sheathed or paneled wainscots, and mantels of Georgian form. The mantel in the left rear room is characteristic, and it is essentially identical to those seen in a nearby country house, Strawberry Hill. Broad pilaster strips rise to a heavy molded shelf, which surmounts two raised panels; the whole frames a rectangular fire opening. Deep fluting in a distinctive pattern articulates the pilaster strips, rising to the level of the tops of the panels. The mantel in the front left room is a heavier three-part composition and may be slightly later. Present in the front right room is a fret-cut chair rail of intricate design.

The principal elements from the early twentieth-century remodeling are the decorative spindle screen midway the hall, a tall classical mantel in the right front room, and probably the French windows of the front rooms. The front door, too, dates from this era, a handsomely paneled one with notable frosted or etched glass featuring a stag by a lake with birds soaring.
SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

--- PREHISTORIC --- ARCHAEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC --- COMMUNITY PLANNING --- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE --- RELIGION
--- 1400-1499 --- ARCHAEOLOGY-HISTORIC --- CONSERVATION --- LAW
--- 1500-1599 --- AGRICULTURE --- ECONOMICS --- LITERATURE
--- 1600-1699 --- ARCHITECTURE --- EDUCATION --- MILITARY
--- 1700-1799 --- ART --- ENGINEERING --- MUSIC
--- 1800-1899 --- COMMERCE --- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT --- PHILOSOPHY
--- 1900- --- COMMUNICATIONS --- INDUSTRY --- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
--- SPECIFIC DATES --- INVENTION --- OTHER (SPECIFY)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cellar is architecturally significant as one of the most substantial early-nineteenth century houses surviving in Halifax County, representative of the scale and craftsmanship of the dwellings of the prosperous planters who dominated the time and place. It is historically significant as a longtime home of the prominent Branch family; it stands on property owned by (and may have been built for) Colonel John Branch, a Revolutionary veteran, wealthy landowner, and county sheriff; it was the home of Joseph Branch, himself locally prominent and brother to John Branch, North Carolina governor and senator; it was the birthplace and childhood home of Joseph's son, Lawrence O'Bryan Branch, president of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, congressman, and confederate brigadier general. The house is also one of the few buildings surviving where the "Nation's Guest," the Marquis de Lafayette, visited in his American tour of 1824-1825: tradition claims that he spoke from the second level of the porch, and indeed Lafayette's journal of his journey confirms a brief stop at Joseph Branch's home.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Associated with the development in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century of a prosperous plantation and merchant culture in the Roanoke Valley.

B. Associated with the lives of several members of the prominent Branch family, John, Joseph, John, and Lawrence (see above) and with the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette.

C. Embodies distinctive regional characteristics of traditional and late Georgian domestic architecture: the craftsmanship of the Flemish bond chimneys, molded weatherboards, modillion cornice, and the interior finish are characteristic of the substantial houses of the region; the combination of the modified center hall (double pile) plan with the enclosed stair is unusual and perhaps significant in the development of domestic architecture in this period and area. Since many of the fine houses that once stood in Halifax County have been lost, this is a significant survivor.
The date of construction for the Cellar, or Joseph Branch House, is uncertain, but it was standing in 1806 when Colonel John Branch bequeathed to his son Joseph the "lands and plantation known by the name of the cellar containing six hundred acres more or less." The late Georgian character of the house suggests a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century construction date. When John Branch bought the tract from Nathaniel Bradford in late 1781, the property contained several houses, one of which was Bradford's home. Existing records do not clarify whether or not Bradford's house, or any portion of it, became the Cellar Plantation home of Joseph Branch.

The Branch family was one of the most successful and prominent families in the history of Halifax County. Joseph Branch's father, Colonel John Branch, achieved fame in the American Revolution. He later became one of the wealthiest landowners in the Roanoke Valley and was for many years sheriff of Halifax County. Joseph's brother, also named John Branch, was a state legislator, governor, U.S. Senator, and the first North Carolinian to hold a presidential cabinet post. Joseph's son, Lawrence O'Bryan Branch served as president of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, member of Congress, and as a brigadier general in the army of the Confederacy. Joseph himself was a major in the militia, a successful antebellum planter, and a man of learning whose advice was frequently sought by the county's political leaders.

Joseph Branch married Susan Simpson O'Bryan and lived at Cellar Plantation for at least ten years. All six of their children, including Lawrence O'Bryan Branch, were born in the house. It was a showplace in the county and on one occasion was visited by a foreign dignitary. In 1824 the Marquis de Lafayette, George Washington's comrade in arms and the last surviving general of the American Revolution, began a tour of the United States as the nation's guest. On February 28, 1825, while traveling from Halifax to Raleigh, he was met at Enfield by Joseph Branch who escorted the general to the Cellar for rest and refreshment. Local tradition claims that Lafayette addressed a gathering of citizens from the balcony of the Branch House. While this would have been in accordance with the general's consistent acknowledgement of the people's appreciation of his service to America, there are no documents to support the tradition. If Lafayette spoke from the balcony of the Cellar, he had time to make only a few brief remarks because the stop at Joseph Branch's home lasted only half an hour. In mid afternoon, Lafayette's entourage left the Cellar headed for the home of Henry Donaldson at the Falls of Tar River. There they spent the night of February 28.

The year that had begun in pleasure ended in sorrow. Susan O'Bryan Branch died on Christmas Day leaving Joseph with their six children. Joseph decided to make a new
home in Tennessee on land inherited from his father. In August, 1826, he sold the Cellar land and house to Daniel Southall for $5,118. Exempted from the sale were the family cemetery and a small portion sold to Joseph's brother John. Later that year Joseph moved his family to Williamson County, Tennessee. In May, 1827, Joseph Branch died, followed in the same week by his oldest son John. The five remaining orphans became wards of their uncle, John Branch.

Daniel Southall, the new owner of the Cellar, was Joseph Branch's brother-in-law. He married Patience Branch, and at the time of purchasing the Cellar, he was a resident of Hertford County. Southall was a Methodist minister as well as a farmer and apparently met his future wife while riding the circuit. The marriage brought together two families of substance, and by 1830 Southall had amassed lands totaling more than 1,700 acres. His health declined and in 1833 he moved to Florida with his brother-in-law, John Branch. Southall died the following year leaving a widow and three children and an estate valued in excess of $16,000 in land and slaves.

The history of the house for the next sixteen years is something of a mystery. Records do not clarify who owned or lived in the Cellar before 1850. Since all the Southall heirs had left North Carolina it may have been occupied by members of the Branch family who were related to Daniel Southall through his wife. The next known resident of the house was J.J.B. Pender who acquired the property before June of 1850. How Pender came to own the house and tract is unknown, but he appears to have been related to the Branch family through marriage.

Pender was born in Edgecombe County and resided there until the late 1840s. Between 1848 and 1850 he moved to the Cellar where he operated a corn farm. At age thirty-five, he and his thirty-one year old wife, Elizabeth, were parents of eight children ranging in age from thirteen to one month. Although he owned ten slaves (7 male, 3 female), Pender either was unsuccessful or made no effort to turn the land along Burnt Coat Swamp into a thriving plantation. Only 200 of the 600 acres were improved and they produced entirely corn. In 1850 the 300 bushels would have provided barely enough food for his large family, ten slaves, and thirty-four head of livestock. The cash value of the farm was listed at $320.00. On July 21, 1852, Pender sold the 600 acre Cellar tract to Thaddeus Davis for $3,000, which was $200 less than the value of his total estate in 1850.

With the purchase by Davis, the property passed through several absentee owners.
with no references as to occupancy of the house during the ensuing five years. On April 21, 1857, the Rev. John C. Whitfield bought the Cellar land for $5,500. 18 Whitfield was a Methodist Protestant minister who preached in Enfield and nearby communities. He converted the former corn fields into a cotton farm and was moderately successful. 19 He lived at the Cellar for twenty-two years until his death in 1879. His will directed that "my wife Martha may upon such terms and amount as may be agreed upon by her and my executor hereinafter named live upon and occupy that portion of the tract of land near Enfield upon which I now reside." 20 Ownership fell to ten heirs who jointly held rights to the tract which had been reduced to 333 acres. 21

For the next seventeen years the Cellar was constantly under mortgage, and heirs to the property transferred it back and forth in an effort to prevent foreclosure. 22 Whether the house was occupied or not, or by whom is not known. Efforts to prevent foreclosure finally failed, and on November 23, 1896, the house and 333 acres were sold at public auction. Bettie J. Bryan, widow of Blount Bryan of Granville County, became the highest bidder at $3,100. 23 The house was apparently rented to tenants during Mrs. Bryan's ownership. 24

In 1914 Bettie J. Bryan conveyed the house and about 300 acres to her daughter Margaret Elizabeth Sherrod, wife of John H. Sherrod. 25 The Sherrords moved into the Cellar and made a number of repairs and additions to the structure. 26 The house has remained in the Sherrod family with the last resident being Mrs. Kate Sherrod who lived there until the late 1970s. Kate Sherrod was the wife of Hugh Sherrod, Sr., son of John and Margaret Elizabeth Sherrod. 27 Hugh Sherrod, Jr., presently living in Kenner, Louisiana, now owns the property and has expressed an interest in selling it as soon as an appropriate buyer can be found. 28

Footnotes


2 Conversation with Catherine W. Bishir, supervisor of Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, May 22, 1979.


8. Free Press, March 18, 1825; and Raleigh Register, March 8, 1825.

9. Branch Genealogy. See particularly "L. O'B. Branch's Sketch of Himself."


11. Branch Genealogy. See particularly "L.O'B. Branch's Sketch of Himself." See also John Branch Estate Papers, Halifax County Records, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Estate Papers with appropriate name.

12. Branch Genealogy; and Halifax County Deed Book 27, p. 125.

13. Halifax County Deed Book 23, pp. 93, 110; Deed Book 24, p. 216; and Deed Book 27, pp. 125, 133.
Halifax County Deed Book 23, pp. 93, 110; Deed Book 24, p. 216; Deed Book 27, pp. 125, 133; Halifax County Records, Inventories and Accounts of Sale 1828-1835, Daniel Southall Estate, State Archives, Raleigh; and Researcher's interview with John McGwigan of Enfield, May 21, 1979, hereinafter cited as McGwigan interview. See also division of Southall lands, Halifax County Deed Book 29, p. 202; and Joseph Branch Estate Papers.

Southall's children lived in three different states: J.J.B. Southall in Tennessee; Frances A. Southall in Louisiana; and Martha Southall English in Florida. See powers of attorney granted to F. A. Southall, Halifax County Deed Book 32, pp. 203-204. See also Branch Genealogy.


Halifax County Deed Book 33, p. 243. See also fn. 16.

Halifax County Deed Book 33, p. 329; and Deed Book 34, p. 239. Henry Joyner, grantor in 1857, was the son of Andrew Joyner who purchased the tract in 1853.

McGwigan interview. Mr. McGwigan is married to John G. Whitfield's great granddaughter.

Halifax County Will Book 6, p. 214.


The transactions can be traced in the following: Halifax County Deed Book 63, p. 469-470; Deed Book 65, pp. 3, 8-9, 12, 424-425; and Deed Book 68, p. 543-546.

Halifax County Deed Book 115, p. 293. See also Deed Book 254, p. 337.
See letter from John McGwigan to Gordon Gray, January 7, 1979, copy in file for Cellar, Halifax County, Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Halifax County Deed Book 254, p. 337; and McGwigan interview.

McGwigan interview.

Kate Sherrod to Larry Tise, June 4, 1977, original in file for Cellar, Halifax County. See fn. 24.

1. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


Branch Genealogy: Papers now in possession of John McGwigan of Enfield.

Cellar File: Correspondence. Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: approx. 3 acres. The lot now associated with the house.

ZONE EASTING NORTING
A 11.8 25.9 0.6 11.6 2.5 0
B 11.8 25.6 0.5 10.6 2.5 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Approximately 3 1/2 acres, the land (with mature plantings) now owned with and surrounding the house. See enclosed legal description.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Catherine Bishir, Head Survey & Planning Branch - Description

Jerry L. Cross, Researcher, Walter D. Best, Researcher - Significance

ORGANIZATION: North Carolina Dept. of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER: 109 E. Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh

STATE: North Carolina

DATE: June 14, 1979

12. STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ______ STATESX ______ LOCAL ______

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE: [Signature]

TITLE: State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE: July 12, 1979

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


*Halifax County Records*
- Deeds
- Estate Papers
- Inventories and Accounts of Sale
- Marriage Records
- Miscellaneous
- Tax Lists
- Wills


The College
304 Whitfield Street, Enfield
Halifax County, North Carolina
Enfield Quad. 1:24000
UTM Reference
A. 18/259668/40626420
B. 18/260950/40626420
C. 18/260976/40674350
D. 18/259998/40674350