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 Ventrers Farm Historic District

and or common

2. Location

street & number Both sides of US 258, southeast of junction with SR 1229— not for publication

city, town ____________________________________________ vicinity of Richlands

state North Carolina code 037 county Onslow code 1

3. Classification

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4. Owner of Property

name (see continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town ____________________________________________ vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Register of Deeds

street & number Onslow County Courthouse

city, town Jacksonville state NC 28540

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes xx no

date ____________________________________________ federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town ____________________________________________ state
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet  Venters Farm Historic District  Item number  4  Page  1

OWNERS:

Elmer Jerome Venters, Sr.
Rt. 3, Box 488
Richlands, NC  28574

Dr. Wayne V. Venters
408 Country Club Drive
Jacksonville, NC  28540

Dr. George C. Venters
905 Williamson Drive
Raleigh, NC  27608

Mrs. Mary Lou Venters Paschall
5820 Timberlake Terrace
Atlanta, GA  30328

Mr. E. Jerome Venters, Jr.
P. O. Box 786
Richlands, NC  28574
# 7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Venters Farm Historic District, occupied by three generations of the Venters family during the past 90 years, includes some 37 buildings situated on approximately 536 acres of mostly open fertile land west of the New River and on both sides of US 258 in the vicinity of Richlands in Onslow County. The family house, ca. 1896, and its contemporary and later outbuildings, clustered in a grove of trees on the west side of US 258, and the nine tenant houses dating from 1896 to the 1950s, each situated in a grove of trees and located on both sides of US 258, are surrounded by open fields given mostly to plantings of tobacco and corn. They have survived as a unique example of the large landowner/tenant type of farming prevalent from the late 19th century through the first half of the 20th century. Soon after Wayne Brimson Venters (1873-1948) and Julia Stephens (1875-1946) married in 1894, each inherited a couple of hundred acres of land. The land on the west side of US 258 was inherited by Wayne Venters from his father, Brimsom Venters, in 1896, and that on the east side was inherited by Julia (Stephens) Venters from her father, Christopher Stephens, also in 1896. The original buildings built by Wayne and Julia Venters, ca. 1896, include a well-crafted, well-maintained, two-story frame, late Victorian farm house with a detached kitchen in the house yard; a corn barn, a carriage house, and a smoke house in the farm yard just west of the farm seat. They also built four of the original eight one-and-a-half story frame tenant houses on the east side of US 258. Wayne Venters later built the two-story frame mule/hay barn and the one-and-a-half story frame cow/pig barn in the farm yard in the late 1920s; a couple of the remaining tobacco curing barns situated east and west of the farm seat and along the farm lanes in the 1930s, two tenant houses in the late 1920s, and one tenant house in the 1940s. Wayne Venters' son and one of the present owners of the farm, Elmer Jerome Venters Sr., built the pump house, located in the house yard, in the 1950s; the oil house, located in the farm yard, in the 1960s; several remaining tobacco curing barns and tobacco pack houses at various sites in the 1930s and 1940s; and two one-and-a-half story cinderblock tenant houses on the west side of US 258 in the 1950s.

The 37 mostly frame buildings of the Venters Farm complex are situated either on both sides of US 258 which bisects the farm district on a north/south axis or on farm lanes which cross at the center of the farm district on an east/west axis. The farm district is bounded as follows: on the northwest by a row of trees and shrubs (on the property boundary) and SR 1229, on the northeast by a row of trees and shrubs (on the property boundary), on the east by the New River, on the southeast by a row of trees and shrubs (also on the property line), on the southwest by an access road which runs (on the property line) from US 258 to SR 1221, and on the west by SR 1221. The farm district consists of approximately 530 acres of open land and approximately 30 acres of woodlands located in the easternmost part of the property and adjacent to the New River. Situated in the center of the district on the west side of US 258 is the main house and its immediate outbuildings just west of the main house and along a farm lane. On the west side of US 258, at the northern and southernmost ends of the district and farm complex, are two 1950s tenant houses. Along the east side of US 258 and at the west edge of the eastern fields, from the northern to the southernmost ends of the district, are a row of tenant houses dating from 1896 to the 1940s. The tenant houses and their outbuildings are set in evolving groves of oak, pecan, chinaberry, and mulberry trees.

Twenty-three of the buildings in the district are contributing; fourteen are non-contributing because they were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s after the period of significance. In scale, materials and form, however, most of the non-contributing structures blend into the district.
The house yard, containing less than an acre of land, surrounds the main house, a detached kitchen just northwest of the main house, a pump house just southwest of the main house, and a cinderblock garage south of the main house and on the south side of a house driveway. A picket fence and shrubs along the fence separate the house yard from the farm yard which is west of the main house. There are a number of large oak and pecan trees throughout the house yard and along the house driveway. These trees were planted at the time the main house was built. In the front yard of the main house there are oak trees and a large magnolia tree, also contemporary with the main house. Along the northern edge of the house yard are a number of dogwood trees and azalea bushes.

Outbuildings in the farm yard include the carriage house, the smoke house, both ca. 1896, on the south side of the farm lane; a mule/hay barn in the northwest corner of the farm yard; a corn barn just south of the mule/hay barn; and a cow/pig barn just west of the corn barn. Between the smoke house and the carriage house is a small fenced in vegetable garden. On the west side of the carriage house are grapevines planted by Elmer Venters in the 1950s. Farther west of the farm yard and along the farm drive are four tobacco curing barns built in the 1950s and the 1960s.

Directly east of the farm seat and on the east side of US 258, a long farm lane runs from the highway through the fields and forest to the New River. There is an older tobacco curing barn, built in the early 20th century, on the south side of the lane and just off the highway, and two later tobacco curing barns farther east along the drive. Large oaks and pecan trees in a row along this drive were planted at the time the main house was built.

Inventory list of the buildings at the Venters Farm Complex:

1. Venters Farm Seat
   Contributing
   ca. 1896; ca. 1920

   Venters Farm Seat, ca. 1896, is a weatherboarded frame house consisting of a two-story main block with a gable roof; a one-story gable roof kitchen ell, ca. 1920, on the northwest corner of the west rear elevation; and an enclosed shed room, ca. 1960, on the southwest corner of the rear elevation. According to Elmer Jerome Venters, Sr., one of the present owners and the son of Wayne Brimson Venters, construction of the house was begun, ca. 1896, by a local carpenter, Mr. Rouse. The house built by Wayne and Julia Venters consisted of a five-bay, two-story main block with a gable roof. A photograph taken of the house in 1898 shows a late Victorian house with some Italianate and Queen Anne details. For example, the front facade originally had a three-bay, two-tier porch with turned posts and balusters at each level. The porch supports were replaced after a hurricane in the 1960s with four two-story square-in-plan columns. From the photograph, one sees that the decorative elements, such as the bracketed eaves on all sides of the house, the pedimented crowns above the windows and doors, and the deeply
The east front facade of the main house, five bays long, has symmetrically arranged windows and doors on the first and second stories. There are two two-over-two sash windows flanking the entrance and the second story door onto a balcony. All the windows and doors have peaked lintels. Both the doors have transoms of four glass panes and sidelights of three glass panes. The original front door has four panels with the top two being slightly arched. The (replacement) portico, three bays long, has four two-story-in-height, square-in-plan columns. The small, one-bay, ca. 1960, balcony onto the second story has square posts and balusters.

The north and south elevations both have two two-over-two sash windows with peaked lintels symmetrically placed on the first and second stories. There are very deep returns on both sides.

On the west rear elevation, in the second story of the main block, there are two four-over-four sash windows flanking a four-panel door. These openings have the same details as those on the front and the north and south elevations. The one-story gable roof kitchen ell on the north corner of the west rear elevation is attached to the shed room on the south corner of the west rear. Access to the kitchen ell from the main block is from the dining room. The enclosed shed (now a den and bathroom) is connected with the main block by the original rear door of the main block. There is also an opening from the den into the kitchen ell. The kitchen ell has a gabled west end with a chimney of common bond brick. South of the chimney is a six-over-six sash window. On the north side there is a single six-over-six sash window and a row of three smaller six-over-six sash windows east of the larger window. On the east side of the shed room three six-over-six sash windows flank a four-panel door. On the south side there is a row of three six-over-six sash windows.

The interior of the main block appears much the same as it did when it was built in 1896. It has a spacious center hall with two rooms off each side on the first and second stories. Besides the two east front parlors on the first floor, there is a bedroom in the southwest corner and a dining room in the northwest corner. There are three bedrooms on the second floor in the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners. The fourth original northwest bedroom has been divided by a wall to create a bathroom, ca. 1940s, off the center hall and a storage room in the northwest corner. All the window and door surrounds and the baseboards are simply molded. The interior doors have four panels. All eight of the rooms in the original block, except the two front parlors which are carpeted, have the original exposed 8-12" heart pine floor boards. The kitchen ell has a vinyl floor covering and the den is carpeted. The tongue-and-groove sheathing forming the ceilings in the original block is cut and placed diagonally with the diagonals emphasized by strips of applied molded wood so that they form triangles and diamond shapes. The plaster walls are covered with wall paper. The eight mantels in the

molded returns on the north and south gable ends of the house have survived. The present house has two original interior brick chimneys of common bond with decorative tops. The house rests on brick piers with later cinderblock infilling.
original block are of the Tuscan order. They have pilasters on blocks and simple designs on the backbands; i.e., diamond shapes. The stairway along the south wall of the center hall rises east to west. It has robustly turned newels and turned balusters.

2. Detached Kitchen
Contributing
ca. 1896; ca. 1920

The (detached) kitchen, ca. 1896, located near the northwest corner of the main house, was originally connected to the house by a breezeway. About 1920, when the present kitchen ell was added to the main block, the detached kitchen was moved a short distance west, to the spot where it now stands. It is a one-story frame structure with a gable roof. The exterior covering is of weatherboards and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The building rests on brick piers. The south front gable end has a six-panel door. There are three brick steps rising to this door. The west elevation has a six-panel door and a six-over-six sash window to the north. The chimney in common bond brick on the north elevation has a broad shoulder. On the east elevation there are two six-over-six sash windows with paneled blinds. The interior has the original 8-12" heart pine floor boards. The walls have recently been covered with wood paneling and the window surrounds have been replaced with flat boards. The brick hearth has been rebuilt.

3. Carriage House
Contributing
ca. 1896

The Carriage House, ca. 1896, on the south side of the farm lane and southwest of the main house, is a frame building with a sloping gable roof. It has 12" vertical board siding and a sheet tin roof. It rests on brick piers. The central section of the north gabled front is open to the driveway. The two shed end rooms have a board-and-batten door with the original locks and hinges. The end rooms have the original 8-12" heart pine floor boards. When the carriage house was built, the central space where the carriages were kept also had heart pine floor boards. They have been removed.

4. Smokehouse
Contributing
ca. 1896

The Smokehouse, ca. 1896, located just west of the carriage house and on the south side of the farm lane, is a frame gable-front building rising to a full two-story height. Its gable roof covered with sheet tin slopes to a shed room on the east side. It is covered with 8-12" vertical pine boards. A board-and-batten door with the original locks and hinges centered on the north elevation opens into a meat curing room which rises two stories to rafters. It has a dirt floor. Another door at the east end of the north elevation opens into the shed room where the meat was rubbed with salt before curing. Its floors have 8-12" heart pine boards.
5. Corn Barn

Contributing
ca. 1896

The Corn Barn, ca. 1896, on the north side of the driveway and facing east, is a frame structure with a sloping gable roof. Attached to its west rear elevation is a ca. 1950s equipment shed of pole construction with a sheet tin-covered gable roof. The shed, covered with vertical boards, is open to the south. The original corn barn has 12" vertical board siding and a sheet tin-covered roof. It rests on brick and later cement piers. Access to each of the corn barn's three rooms is from the outside only. On the east front gable end, a centered board-and-batten door with the original locks and hinges opens into a central feed storage room. Another board-and-batten door on the east front opens to the north shed room. On the south elevation there are double board-and-batten doors to the south shed room. The 8-12" heart pine floor boards survive in each of the corn barn's three rooms.

6. Pump House
Non-contributing
ca. 1950s

The Pump House, ca. 1950s, just southwest of the main house, is a small cinder-block building with a gable tin roof. The east elevation has a board-and-batten door; the north elevation, a six-over-six sash window; the west elevation, two six-over-six sash windows; and the south elevation, a six-over-six sash window and a small greenhouse.

7. Oil House
Non-contributing
ca. 1960s

The Oil House, ca. 1960s, just north of the pump house, is a small, one-story frame structure with a gable roof. It is covered entirely with sheet tin. There are no windows and only one board-and-batten door on the west elevation.

8. Mule/Hay Barn
Contributing
ca. 1920s

The Mule/Hay Barn, ca. 1920s, located northwest of the main house and on the edge of the north field, is a large two-story frame building with a gable roof. Its exterior walls have been covered with sheets of green asphalt and the roof is covered with sheet tin. It has a brick foundation. The south elevation, facing the farm yard, has sliding double board-and-batten doors on the first floor and a single board-and-batten door on the second story. On the north elevation are two six-over-six sash windows. Originally the work mules were stabled on the
first floor and hay was stored on the second floor. The barn was later used as a
tobacco pack house. The interior consists of a single space on both the first
floor and the second floor. The original animal stalls have been removed. The
floors of the second story are of 8" pine boards.

9. Boat House
   Non-contributing
   ca. 1960

   The Boat House, ca. 1960s, south of the mule barn, is a frame structure covered
   with plywood. It has a shed roof covered with sheet tin. Open on the east side,
   it has a centered, slender, square support post.

10. Cow/Pig Barn
    Contributing
    ca. 1920s

    The Cow/Pig Barn, ca. 1920s, located west of the corn barn, is a one-and-a-half
    story frame structure with a gable roof sloping to an open shed on its south
    elevation. The roof is covered with sheet tin. Later used as a tobacco pack
    house, it was subsequently covered with imprinted asphalt which has been partially
    removed to expose its original 12" vertical boards. Centered double doors of
    board and batten on the south elevation open to three cow stalls on a north/south
    axis. A sliding door on the south wall of the stalls opens into a central feed
    storage room. Board-and-batten doors on the east and west elevations, in the
    attic and the first floor, open into the central feed storage rooms. A ladder
    on the east wall of the first floor feed storage room to the attic ascends from
    south to north. The floors in these rooms have the original 10" pine floor boards.
    Double board-and-batten doors on the north elevation open into a single pig stall.

11. Tobacco Barn #1
    Non-contributing
    ca. 1930s

    Tobacco Barn #1, one of a number of remaining tobacco barns built at various sites
    on the farm complex in the 1930s through the mid 1950s, is located farther west
    of the farm seat, along the north side of the farm lane and at the edge of the
    field. It was built in 1954 and is a frame building covered with asphalt and
    sheet tin gable roofs. It has an open shed along the north side. The single
    interior space rises to horizontal tiers. The floor is concrete. There is a
    stove in the middle of the floor.

12. Tobacco Barn #2
    Contributing
    ca. 1930s

    Tobacco Barn #2 is like the one previously described and also is located on the
    north side of the farm lane.
13. Tobacco Barn #3  
Contributing  
ca. 1930s  
Tobacco Barn #3 is located on the south side of the farm lane. Similar to the two above mentioned, it has an open shed on its north elevation.

14. "Ashley" Tobacco Barn #4  
Contributing  
ca. 1945  
Tobacco Barn #4, similar to the three previously cited, is located on the south side of the farm lane. Built ca. 1945, it has an open shed on its north elevation.

15. Garage  
Non-contributing  
ca. 1960s  
The Garage, a cinderblock building with a gable roof covered with sheet tin, is located just south of the main house and on the south side of the driveway. It is three bays long and is open on the east elevation. There is a storage room along the west rear.

16. Brooder House  
Contributing  
ca. 1946  
The Brooder House, ca. 1946, just southwest of the garage, is a small frame building with a sheet tin gable roof. It is covered with horizontal boards. There is a door-size opening on the south elevation and a small four-pane window on the west elevation.

17. Tenant House #1  
Contributing  
ca. 1896  
Tenant House #1, located at the northwest end of the property and on the west side of US 258, was built by Wayne Venters. This simply finished house is a one-and-a-half-story frame building with a gable roof sloping to a full-facade front porch. Originally three bays long like the other 1896 tenant houses to be described, it was later extended southward one bay to its present full width. The house, covered with aluminum siding, rests on brick piers. On the west front elevation are two six-over-six sash windows flanking a four-panel replacement door; to their south is another six-over six sash window. The porch has slender square posts. The north elevation has a square chimney in common bond brick between two six-over-six sash windows on the first floor. There is a six-over-six sash window in the attic. The openings on the east rear elevation are the
same as those on the front. There is a three-bay-long porch along the east rear. A bathroom with a gable roof was built on the house's south elevation, ca. 1940s. There is a single six-over-six sash window west of the bathroom addition which has one two-over-two sash window on its south side. There was no access to the interior; however, other tenant houses built at the same time were examined and will be described.

18. Equipment Barn
Non-contributing
ca. 1960

An Equipment Barn in the southwest corner of the yard of tenant house #1 and at the edge of the field is a two-story, gable roof, cinderblock building. It has a shed and a board-and-batten door on its south elevation. The east and west elevations both have board-and-batten doors to the first and second floors.

19. Tenant House #2
Contributing
ca. 1896

Tenant House #2, south of tenant house #1, has been greatly remodeled. Like the one previously described, it is a one-and-a-half-story frame building with a gable roof sloping to a full-facade front porch. However, this tenant house retains its three-bay length on the front. It has a kitchen ell attached to the south end of its east rear elevation. It is covered with aluminum siding and a sheet tin roof. The windows are the original six-over-six sash. There was no access to this house.

20. Tenant House #3
Contributing
late 1920s

Tenant House #3, farther south along US 258, was built in the late 1920s. It is a one-story, weatherboard frame building with a pyramidal hipped roof and a nearly full-facade front porch. The roof is covered with sheet tin. It has one interior chimney of common bond brick. Its brick pier foundation is covered with sheets of tin. The north front facade, five bays long, has four-over-four sash windows on each side of a door which has five vertical panels. Both the north and south elevations have two four-over-four sash windows. On the east rear elevation there is a ca. 1940 bathroom addition at the south end and a porch extending from the bathroom to the north end. The bathroom addition has a small four-over-four sash window on its east side. The rear door to the main block has five horizontal panels. North of the door are two four-over-four sash windows. The interior of the house has three rooms on the front and three on the back. The ceiling and the walls are tongue and groove; the floors are carpeted. The present tenant, Norman Hudson, has resided here for twenty years.
21. Outhouse
Contributing
ca. 1920s

An Outhouse in the northeast corner of the yard of tenant house #3 is a weather­
board frame structure with a sheet tin roof. A door is located on the west side.

22. Tobacco Barn #5
Contributing
early 20th century

Tobacco Barn #5, built in the early part of the century, and one of three along
a farm lane on the east side of US 258, is a frame building with a gable roof
covered with sheet tin. Because of vegetation growth, this barn was inaccessible.

23. Tobacco Barn #6
Contributing
late 1930s

Tobacco Barn #6 is farther east of the one previously described and on the north
side of the farm lane. Similar to the previously described barns located on the
west side of US 258, it has a shed on its south side.

24. Tobacco Barn #7
Contributing
ca. 1945

Tobacco Barn #7, just east of the one previously described (23) and on the south
side of the farm lane, is very similar to the others; it has an open shed on its
north side.

25. Tenant House #4
Contributing
ca. 1896

Tenant House #4, though now uninhabited and dilapidated, it is the least altered
of the 1896 tenant houses. This house, like the others described, has a one-and­
a-half-story block with a gable roof sloping to engage a full-facade porch and an
east rear gable roof kitchen ell. The house is covered with weatherboards and
a sheet tin roof. It sits on brick piers. The west front elevation, three bays
long, has two six-over-six sash windows flanking the four-panel door. The south
elevation has two six-over-six sash windows in the first floor and a six-over­
six sash window in the attic. On the north elevation are two six-over-six sash
windows flanking a slender chimney of common bond brick. In the attic is a
smaller six-pane window. On its east elevation, a cross gable kitchen ell with
a shed porch along its south side is connected to the main block by a breezeway. The breezeway is closed on the north side. The door from the breezeway to the main block and the door from the breezeway to the kitchen ell are both board and batten. On the south side of the kitchen ell another board door opens onto the porch. In the kitchen ell there is a six-over-six sash window on both the north and east sides. The main block of the house has two rooms on the front, two on the back, and an attic room. The original 8-12" heart pine floor boards survive in all the rooms. The walls are covered with 12" boards. The window and door surrounds are plain boards. The door hinges and locks are original. The ceilings, like those of the farm seat, are tongue and groove. The mantel in the northwest room has a simple design on the backband and pilasters on corner blocks. It is very similar to the mantel in the dining room of the farm seat. The south wall of the northwest room is tongue and groove. There is an opening to the small southwest room and a tongue and groove door opening into an enclosed stairway which runs north to south. A four-panel door on the east wall of the northwest room opens into the two east rear rooms. Each of these rooms has a six-over-six sash window on its east wall. There is a board-and-batten door from the southeast room to the breezeway. The walls and ceiling of the attic room are tongue and groove. The floors here have been covered with plywood. The kitchen ell is a single room finished like those in the main block.

26. Tenant House #5
Contributing
ca. 1896

Tenant House #5, just south of tenant house #4, is the fourth of the surviving 1896 tenant houses. It is very dilapidated and inaccessible because of vegetation growth; however, a photograph taken in 1984 shows it to be very similar to tenant house #4.

27. Tenant House #6
Contributing
ca. 1940s

Tenant House #6, the next tenant house along US 258, was built in the 1940s. It is a one-story, three-bay, gable roof house with a small entry porch on the front and a cross gable kitchen ell with a shed porch on the east rear elevation. Covered with weatherboards and a sheet tin roof, the house rests on cement piers. The east front has two four-over-four sash windows flanking a four-panel door with two glass panes at the top. The entry porch has slender square posts. Both the north and south elevations have one four-over-four sash window. On the east rear elevation there is a six-over-six sash window in the main block. The kitchen ell with its porch along the south side has six-over-six sash windows on the north and east sides. There is a five-panel door from the kitchen ell to the porch. This little house has three rooms. The front door opens into the living room and there is a bedroom off each side of the living room. The interior of the house has tongue-and-groove ceilings and walls; the floors are carpeted.
28. Tentant House #7  
Contributing  
late 1920s  

Tenant House #7, built in the late 1920s and like tenant house #3, is a one-story frame house with a pyramidal hipped roof. It has a cinderblock ell on the southeast corner of its east rear elevation. There is a two-over-two sash window on the ell's north, south, and east sides. Otherwise, it is the same as the late 1920s tenant house previously described.

29. Tobacco Pack House  
Non-contributing  
ca. 1950  

A Tobacco Pack House in the southeast corner of the yard of tenant house #7 and at the edge of the field is a two-story, gable roof, frame building with a shed porch along its west side. On both the north and south elevations there are centered board-and-batten doors on the first and second floors. The sides are covered with asphalt and the roof is covered with sheet tin.

30. Tenant House #8  
Non-contributing  
ca. 1950s  

Tenant House #8 on the west side of US 258 and at the southwest corner of the property is a late-1950s one-and-a-half-story cinderblock house with a sheet tin covered gable roof. The east front, three bays long, has two casement windows with eight panes of glass flanking the two-panel door which has nine panes of glass above. There is a small entry porch with the posts removed. The north and south elevations each have a casement window with eight panes of glass. The west rear elevation has a casement window and a rear door like those on the front. A gable-roof ell is attached to the north end of the east rear elevation.

31. Equipment Barn  
Non-contributing  
ca. 1960s  

An Equipment Barn just south of tenant house #8 and on the north side of an access road is a two-story cinderblock building with a gable roof. It has a two-story opening on the east elevation and a small opening on both the east and the west elevations.
32. Tobacco Barn #7
   Contributing
c. 1940s

   A Tobacco Barn, built in the 1940s on the north side of an access road and west of tenant house #8, is similar to the tobacco barns east and west of the farm seat.

33. Tobacco Barn #8
   Non-contributing
c. 1950s

   A Tobacco Barn, built in the 1950s, stands along the north side of an access road south of tenant house #8 with barn #7 and barn #9 and is similar to those barns already described.

34. Tobacco Barn #9
   Non-contributing
c. 1950s

   Tobacco Barn #9 is like the other tobacco barns in the farm complex; it was built in the 1950s.

35. Tenant House #9
   Non-contributing
c. 1950s

   Tenant House #9, located on the west side of US 258 and at the northwest corner of the property, is like tenant house #8. It too is a one-and-a-half-story cinderblock building with a gable roof. The east front elevation, five bays long with a full-facade front porch, has a casement window with eight panes of glass above and a casement window with sixteen panes of glass at the north end. Attached to the west end of the north elevation is a gable roof wing. In the main block of the north rear elevation there are two casement windows with eight panes each in the first floor and a smaller casement window with four panes in the attic. Openings on the west rear elevation are the same as the north front.

36. Grocery Store
   Non-contributing
c. 1950

   A Grocery Store, located on the northwest corner of the property where US 258 and SR 1229 juncture, was built by Bill Carroway about 1950. Wayne Venters sold less than an acre of land to Carroway in the 1940s. The property was sold back to Elmer Venters in the 1970s. The store is a cinderblock building with a flat top. On the east front, two large picture windows flank a glass door. There are picture windows on the east ends of the north and south elevations. A metal awning wraps around the front and the sides.
A Rental House, located northwest of the store and facing SR 1229, is a one-story frame house with a gable roof built by Carroway about 1950. The north front has paired six-over-six sash windows flanking a three-panel door with six panes of glass at the top. On both the east and west elevations, there is a six-over-six sash window.
The Venters Farm Historic District, located in Onslow County near the New River and the community of Richlands, was put together in the mid-1890s when newlyweds Wayne Brinson Venters (1873-1948) and Julia Stephens Venters (1875-1946) joined tracts of land from their parents' adjacent farms. Wayne Venters became perhaps the largest landowner in Onslow County and a prominent businessman, while the Venters children included longtime Onslow County state legislator Carl Venters (1906-1977). The Venters farm district consists of 37 buildings, most prominently an 1896 family house and nine tenant houses, four of which date from around 1896. A large and varied assortment of agricultural buildings comprises much of the remainder of the structures. From its inception, the Venters farm has been remarkably representative of North Carolina's tenant system which arose after the Civil War and the breakup of the plantation system. The Venters farm was typical of the state in many respects. The Venters family, as owners, received one half of the crop in exchange for land, housing, barns, livestock, fertilizer, seed, and so forth, while the tenant received one half in exchange for labor. The tenants were both black and white, (although in recent years white tenants have tended to predominate the Venters lands). Cotton was the primary cash crop on the Venters farm in the early part of the century, before being replaced by tobacco. Tobacco, a crop that came relatively late to Onslow County, is unusually well adapted to the tenant system. Its arrival in Onslow County enabled the tenancy rate in the county to parallel the state rate of 40% to 50% in the 1920-1940 period. Venters farm was and is larger than most North Carolina farms. With this exception, it is characteristic of much of the state's tenant farms. This aspect of the farm, combined with the large and historically varied number of associated buildings on the property, makes the Venters farm an unusually effective and representative example of the important tenant system in North Carolina. In comparison to the typical tenant farm, Venters Farm is of particular significance because of the survival of so many of its tenant houses and because of the unusual visual impact created by their location facing each other along both sides of US 258.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. The Venters Farm Historic District is associated with and representative of the development and practice of the tenancy system in North Carolina for a half century from 1896 through 1948.

C. The buildings making up the Venters Farm Historic District embody the distinctive characteristics of rural farm buildings in North Carolina for the period and region and include frame and log construction. The Venters Farm seat, with its Italianate brackets, is one of the largest farm houses in the later 19th century in Onslow County.
CRITERIA EXCEPTION

G. The Venters farm documents the development of the tenant farm system in eastern North Carolina from 1896-1948. One of the nine tenant houses and five of the ten tobacco barns were built between 1937-1948, and are therefore less than fifty years old. These buildings, however, are of exceptional significance because they represent an anomaly: the continuation of traditional tobacco culture in North Carolina until the 1950s, long after the traditional culture of rice and tobacco had disappeared. Tobacco was still being cultivated by tenants, using traditional log and frame tobacco barns, at Wayne Venters' death in 1948. These less-than-fifty-year-old outbuildings contribute to the district as representative of the unchanging tobacco culture at this late date.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Venters Farm Historic District is located in Onslow County, near the community of Richlands. The district includes 37 buildings, some of which date back to 1896 when the large Venters farm was put together. The family house was built in that year by Wayne Brinson Venters (1873-1948) and his wife Julia Stephens Venters (1875-1946). Crucial to the district are the nine tenant houses on the Venters property, four of which date from the late 1890s and are thus contemporary with the family house and the establishment of the farm.

Wayne Brinson Venters and Julia Stephens married on December 26, 1894. Wayne Venters was the middle of three children born to Brinson Venters (1835-1910) and Louisiana Frazel Venters (1843-1881). Venters was a Confederate veteran who farmed a large amount of land in Onslow County, while his wife was a member of a prominent family which claims European royalty in its lineage. Julia Stephens was the eldest of the two children of Christopher Stephens (1810-1890) and Julia Ann Stephens (1833-1907). Christopher Stevens had seven children by his first wife who died in the mid-1870s. He was a prominent merchant, farmer, and civic leader in the Richlands area, serving on Onslow County's Board of Superintendents of Common Schools and the Onslow County Board of Commissioners.

The Venters and Stephens farms were adjacent to each other. After the marriage of Wayne Venters and Julia Stephens, they put together a farm with land from both families. Wayne Venters obtained 558 acres from his father in 1896, while his wife inherited about half that amount of land upon her father's death. This farm formed the core of the Venters holdings, which eventually became perhaps the largest in the county.

Wayne Venters was educated locally at Richlands Academy. In addition to managing his large farm holdings, he was president of the Citizens Bank of Richlands for sixteen years and served lengthy terms on both the Onslow County Board of Commissioners and Onslow County Board of Education. Mrs. Venters attended Peace College in Raleigh where she studied art.
Venters built at least four tenant houses on his property about the same time he built his family house. These tenants supplied the labor while Venters supplied the land and supplies. The tenant system developed in North Carolina and the rest of the South after the Civil War "as the natural readjustment in a region inhabited by landed proprietors who lacked capital and labor and by...(workers) who were experienced in farm labor but lacking in land and capital." Despite complaints that the system was inefficient, promoted soil depletion, discouraged the growth of scientific farming, and led to a variety of social, intellectual, and moral ills, the tenant system thrived in the state until the middle of the twentieth century. The number of farms in the state more than doubled from 1860 to 1880 and tripled from 1860 to 1900. The tenant system evolved as the best way to respond to this breakup of large antebellum plantations. By 1900 over forty percent of the state's farms were operated by tenants. This figure increased to almost fifty percent by 1930 before beginning a gradual decline.

Farm tenancy flourished in regions where the soil was unusually rich, thereby making the use of unskilled labor profitable. Tenancy also flourished in regions where tobacco and, to a lesser extent, cotton were primary crops. Tobacco is essentially non perishable, yields a small bulk relative to its value, can be sold shortly after harvesting, and can not be easily destroyed or eaten. Soil quality varies in Onslow County but is particularly high in the appropriately named Richlands area, near the New River. Cotton and corn were the primary crops in Onslow County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lumber was also a prominent source of farm income in the county. However, land was invariably logged by its owners, taking lumber outside the tenant system. Tobacco gradually became the dominant crop in the county during the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus it is no surprise to see tenancy rates increase in the 1900-1930 period as tobacco becomes increasingly prominent.

Farm tenancy rates in Onslow County were usually roughly comparable to those of the state as a whole. In 1900, the first available census after the establishment of the Venters farm, 32.7 percent of Onslow's farms were operated by tenants, as compared to the statewide average of 41.4 percent. The relationship of tobacco to farm tenancy can be seen by the fact that, as early as 1900, counties such as Edgecombe, Lenoir, Greene, and Wilson, that were heavily dependant on tobacco, had tenancy rates in excess of 60 percent. Onslow was typical of the state in two other respects. Almost all of the tenants were share tenants, as opposed to cash tenants. A majority of tenants were white, although a disproportionately large number of tenants were black.

The cultivation of long leaf tobacco began in the county around 1900. Richlands resident Dr. J. L. Nicholson is believed to have been among the first in the county to plant the crop. By 1910 the county had over 1,000 acres of tobacco under cultivation. Cotton and corn remained the main crops. The tenancy rate in the county had increased only slightly, up to 34.1 percent from the previous census, leaving
the county still below the state average. The amount of land devoted to cotton in Onslow County increased by about 50 percent from 1910 to 1920, while that devoted to corn decreased slightly in that period. The acreage used for tobacco almost tripled in that period, from 1,229 in 1910 to 3,164 acres in 1920. Tobacco production in the latter year was about 2.3 million pounds. This likely accounts for the increase in tenancy to 40.6 percent in 1920, almost equal to the state average of 43 percent. The tenancy rate in the state peaked in 1930 at 49 percent. Onslow's rate in that year was 47.5 percent. The amount of land in cotton and corn decreased during this decade, while the tobacco acreage continued its increase. Onslow's farmers planted 8,075 acres of tobacco in 1930, growing 5.5 million pounds. Onslow's tenancy rate declined to 46.3 percent in 1940, slightly above the state average of 44 percent. Cotton production continued to decline, while tobacco production increased to 10,103 acres and 9.3 million pounds. During this period, share tenants continued to greatly outnumber cash tenants and white tenants continued to outnumber black tenants in the county at an approximate ratio of 3:2.

In most respects, the Venters farm was typical of the county. Cotton and corn were heavily grown in the early part of the century. Cotton was the cash crop with most of the corn used to feed livestock. Generally, in North Carolina, the landowner received from one fourth to one half of the crop, with the laborer receiving the rest. The arrangement that has existed on the Venters farm almost from its development was a common arrangement. The owner received one half the crop. In exchange, he furnished housing, barns, mules (usually 15-20 to each tenant), fertilizer, seeds, and other supplies. The tenant received half the crop in exchange for his labor. (Arrangements in which the tenant received more than one half the crop required him to furnish some supplies and equipment. This arrangement has apparently not been used on the Venters farm to any extent.) The Venters farm gradually made the switch from cotton to tobacco and by 1940 had largely dispensed with the former crop.

At least four tenant houses were built in the latter 1890s by Venters. Others date throughout the early to middle twentieth century and a number of houses are no longer standing. It is not possible to ascertain through census information exactly who the Venters tenants were. It is clear from the 1900 and 1910 population schedules that Wayne Venters and his family were enumerated near a large number of farm tenants. Several of these tenants, including Thomas Stephens in 1900 and Hugh Humphrey and Lewis Humphrey in 1910, have family names that have long tenant associations with the Venters family. Other families with unusually long tenure on the Venters land include the Whaley, Brinson, Findeisen, Chase and Bynum families. Most of the tenants in the early part of the century were white, although some were black. In recent years, virtually all of the tenants have been white. The tenant farmers tended to be family men, with wives and children. A number of these families have farmed on the Venters land into the third generation.

Wayne and Julia Venters had five children: Christopher Harry (1901-1971), Wayne Victor (1903-1980), Carl Vernon (1906-1977), Mary Lou (b. 1908), and Elmer (b. 1912). Carl Venters was a prominent lawyer who represented Onslow County in the North Carolina
House of Representatives for eight terms between 1949 and 1971, and served one term, 1965-1967, in the North Carolina Senate. All of the children were raised in the Venters house.

The Venters estate was divided among the children. Elmer Jerome Venters, the youngest of the five, obtained the house and has generally overseen the agricultural operations of most of the Venters farm. Elmer Venters attended the University of North Carolina and served in the United States Coast Guard during the Second World War. In addition to his agricultural activities, he has been active and prominent in the insurance and banking fields and helped organize the Richlands American Legion chapter. He married Janice Elizabeth Tolson (1916-1981) in 1943. A native of Swansboro, Mrs. Venters taught school in Richlands for many years. Their son, Elmer Jerome Venters, Jr., is a Richlands insurance and real estate agent. Mr. Venters, Sr. continues to live in the Venters house and oversee the farming operations.

The Venters agricultural district contains outbuildings from a number of different years. Four of the remaining nine tenant houses date from the late 1920s, about the time tenant farming peaked in North Carolina. The other three date from the 1940s and 1950s. Family sources indicate that at least three, and possibly more, earlier tenant houses are no longer standing. Several agricultural buildings date from the late 1890s, including a smokehouse and a corn barn. Also dating from the 1890s are a detached kitchen and a carriage house. Most of the tobacco facilities are post World War II; however, the existence of an early twentieth century tobacco barn indicates that the Venters complex had some early involvement in tobacco. Also of importance to the district is a grocery store built on the edge of the farm around 1950 by Bill Carroway on land purchased from Elmer Venters. The store was one of only a few grocery stores in the Richlands area.

Farm tenancy in North Carolina in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continues to be a subject of some controversy. Most historians agree with Hugh Lefler's assessment that tenancy was "one of the greatest social and economic problems of North Carolina and the rest of the South." Lefler asserts that tenancy decreased farm size and efficiency, decreased soil fertility, discouraged the use of machinery and scientific farming, hindered the growth of rural organization, intellectual and moral development, good citizenship, a healthy political life, and social mobility. Another historian acknowledges that "all the evils of the tobacco economy came to be heaped at the door of the tenant farmer." On the credit side, the tenant system enabled the system to function during a period when North Carolina's chronic lack of capital was critical and when farm size was dramatically decreasing. Farm tenancy was rarely a going concern in the mountainous, western third of the state. In the remaining two thirds of the state, however, at least half of the farms in operation during the first four decades of the twentieth century were tenant operated. Whatever its deficiencies, the tenant system was an integral part of the agricultural landscape during most of the post Civil War period.
The Venters farm was considerably larger than the average North Carolina farm, tenant or otherwise, during the early part of the century. With this exception, the Venters operation was highly representative of the state's tenant operations. The type of rental plan employed, the relative reliance on cotton and then tobacco as money crops, and the use of both white and black tenants were all typical elements of tenant farming in North Carolina. The large number of buildings in the district, most notably the tenant houses dating from all periods of the farm's development, greatly adds to the importance of the district. The Venters farm was and continues to be an unusually effective and representative example of an important aspect of the state's agricultural history.

The period of significance of the Venters Farm Historic District extends from the formation of the farm in 1896 by Wayne Brinson Venters until his death in 1948. His death roughly coincides with the end of the traditional tobacco tenant farm in North Carolina. In a recent study of the cotton, tobacco, and rice cultures of the South since 1880, Pete Daniel, an agricultural historian, documents the unchanging persistence of the traditional tobacco farm in North Carolina up to the recent past, long after the cotton and rice cultures had died out. He writes that the tobacco culture "remained relatively stable until the mid-1950s and largely unmechanized through the 1960s." In these decades, mechanization began to cause consolidation of farm acreage, and tobacco tenant farmers lost their land. Venters Farm, then, is a microcosm of the North Carolina farm in the twentieth century. The buildings clearly demonstrate the practical and social aspects of the farm tenancy system and the gradual evolution of that system. The buildings also demonstrate the subtle transitions in agricultural production from hand work to mechanization and the gradual shifts in the planting and harvesting of cash crops from corn and cotton in the early years of the twentieth century to mainly tobacco and corn in the interwar years. The tenant houses and tobacco barns built during the ascendancy of tobacco, from the late 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and even a few in the 1950s, illustrate the final chapter in the history of the tenant farm in North Carolina. The continued operation and management of the farm by Wayne Venters' son, Elmer Jerome Venters, Sr., (1912- ), reinforces the significance of this farm in the history of the county.
FOOTNOTES


2. Onslow County Deed Book 61, p. 31; Onslow County Will Book 4, p. 264.

3. The Heritage of Onslow County, 445-446; The News and Observer (Raleigh), May 7, 1948.


5. Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 522, 577.

Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Agriculture; Tilley, *The Bright-Tobacco Industry*, 95.


Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Agriculture.

Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Agriculture.

Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Agriculture.

Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Agriculture.

Tilley, *The Bright-Tobacco Industry*, 102-103; information supplied by the Venters family.

Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Onslow County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Onslow County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; information supplied by the Venters family.

*The Heritage of Onslow County*, 445-446.

*The Heritage of Onslow County*, 445-446; information supplied by the Venters’ family; Onslow County Will Book 6, p. 217.

Elmer Jerome Venters, Sr. remembers at least three tenant houses standing in the 1950s that no longer remain.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Onslow County Deed Books, Will Books.


Venters Family, Information Supplied by.
9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 536 ± or -

Quadrangle name Catherine Lake

Quadrangle scale 1: 24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached Onslow County Tax Map #45, property being nominated is outlined in red. The acreage being nominated is the property owned and developed by Wayne Brinson Venter over his 50-year ownership of the farm. US 258 within the boundaries of the district is included.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Architectural description and inventory list by Cynthia Craig, consultant; historical research by Jim Sumner, staff, State Historic Preservation Office

organization N.C. Division of Archives and History

date Fall 1986

street & number 109 E. Jones St.

telephone (919) 733 6545

city or town Raleigh

state NC 27611

12. State Historic 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 Historic Preservation Officer signature

date March 31, 1987

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

GPO 911-359
KANSAS, Doniphan County, Wathena vicinity, Silvers, John, Barn (Byre and Bluff Barns of Doniphan County TR), N of Wathena (05/07/87)

KENTUCKY, Henry County, Eminence vicinity, Thompson House, KY 22 and Old Giltner Rd. (05/05/87)

MARYLAND, Baltimore (Independent City), Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, 429—433 N. Eutaw St. (05/08/87)

MISSOURI, Jackson County, Kansas City, Dorson Apartment Building, 912—918 Benton Blvd. (05/05/87)
MISSOURI, Pike County, Louisiana, Georgia Street Historic District, Roughly Georgia St. between Main and Seventh Sts. (05/06/87)
MISSOURI, St. Louis (Independent City), Oakherst Place Concrete Block District, Roughly bounded by Julian, Oakley, Plymouth, and Oakherst (05/05/87)

NEW MEXICO, Chaves County, Roswell, New Mexico Military Institute Historic District (Roswell New Mexico MRA), Roughly bounded by 19th and N. Main Sts., College Blvd. and Kentucky Ave. (05/07/87)

NORTH CAROLINA, Henderson County, Rugby Grange (05/05/87)

NORTH CAROLINA, Onslow County, Richlands vicinity, Venters Farm Historic District, US 258 and NC 1229 (05/07/87)

OHIO, Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, Colonial and Euclid Arcades, 508 and 600 Euclid Ave. (05/08/87)
OHIO, Franklin County, Lockbourne vicinity, Landes, Samuel, House, 590 Hibbs Rd. (05/08/87)
OHIO, Fulton County, Wausen, Jones—Read-Touvelle House, 435 E. Park St. (05/08/87)
OHIO, Harrison County, New Athens, Franklin College Building No. 5, Main St. (05/08/87)
OHIO, Pickaway County, Orient vicinity, Scioto Township District No. 2 Schoolhouse, 8143 Snyder Rd. (05/06/87)
OHIO, Stark County, Massillon, First National Bank Building, 11 Lincoln Way W. (05/08/87)
OHIO, Wood County, Bowling Green, Boom Town Historic District, Roughly bounded by W. Wooster, S. Church, N. Grove, N. Maple, and Buttonwood (05/08/87)

OREGON, Clatsop County, Astoria, Fisher, Ferdinand, House, 687 Twelfth St. (05/06/87)
OREGON, Multnomah County, Portland, Honeyman, David T. and Nan Wood, House, 1728 SW Prospect Dr. (05/07/87)

SOUTH CAROLINA, Charleston County, Townends, Hephzibah Jenkins, Tabby Oven Ruins (Edisto Island MRA) (05/05/87)
SOUTH CAROLINA, Charleston County, Edisto Island vicinity, Old House Plantation and Commissary (Boundary Increase) (Edisto Island MRA), .5 mi. E of SC 174 and Oak Island Rd. jct., then right on dirt Rd. (05/05/87)
SOUTH CAROLINA, Charleston County, Edisto Island, Brooklands Plantation (Edisto Island MRA), Off Laurelhill Rd. on Scanawah Island (05/05/87)
SOUTH CAROLINA, Charleston County, Edisto Island, Frogmore (Edisto Island MRA), S of Pine Landing Rd. near intersection of SC 174 and Laurel Hill Rd. (05/05/87)
SOUTH CAROLINA, Charleston County, Edisto Island, Hutchison House (Edisto Island MRA), N side of Point of Pines Rd. (05/05/87)

VIRGINIA, Amelia County, Chula vicinity, Dykeland, VA 632 (05/08/87)
VIRGINIA, Culpeper County, (also in Orange County) Rapidan, Rapidan Historic District, Jct. of VA 614, VA 615, and VA 673 (05/08/87)