United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Burleigh

and/or common McGehee-Phifer Plantation

2. Location

street & number Down a long dirt lane on the NE side NC 57, 0.3 mi.

n. of jct. with SR1313

city, town Concord

county Person
code 037

state North Carolina
code 145

3. Classification

Category __ X__ district

building(s) __ X__ public

structure

site

object

Ownership __ public

private

both

Public Acquisition

in process

being considered

Status __ X__ occupied

X__ unoccupied

X__ work in progress

X__ accessible

yes: restricted

yes: unrestricted

no

Present Use __ X__ agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Mimi Sheib Proctor (Mrs. Arnold M.)

street & number 3413 Hawthorne Avenue

Phone: (804) 329-8395

city, town Richmond

violinity of

state Virginia 23222

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Person County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Roxboro

state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title

has this property been determined eligible? __ yes __ X__ no

date

federal __ state __ county __ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state
7. Description

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Sited on a rise in northwest Person County, Burleigh is a two-and-one-half-story symmetrical frame house with a gable roof and paired, interior chimneys. Facing west the house was originally approached by a drive that climbed up from the south. According to its owner, it was built between 1800-1820 but the diverse combination of architectural elements make a later date possible. This house and its remaining dependencies were once the nucleus of substantial agricultural holdings in this area. The 133 remaining acres form a context and protective boundary for this collection of buildings.

Burleigh itself, a central hall plan, two room deep house is an almost perfectly cubical block on continuous field stone foundations. This plan and proportions are usually associated with Greek Revival style domestic buildings in North Carolina as is the unbeaded siding, simple box and molded raking cornices and thin molded corner posts. But, the six-over-nine sash windows centered in each bay of the first floor elevations and the six-over-six of the second and attic floors are tall and narrow in proportion to the wall. Their thin, triple molded jambs, flat sills and top plates are more characteristic of Federal forms.

The other features of the exterior which relate to the Greek Revival are the one-story modified Greek temple front porticos in the central bays of the front and rear. The former has paired Tuscan Doric columns supporting a plain architrave and triangular pediment. Pilasters in antis frame the door. The double doors have six recessed panels each, and are framed with a triple flat molding. A transom with two pairs of lights heads the doors. The rear portico is identical in scale to the front. Instead of Tuscan Doric, the columns are octagonal piers on simple bases with abstracted capitals. According to the owner both porticos originally were finished by stairs of shallow closed risers with a molded edge that wrapped the portico on its three sides.

Burleigh's exterior is given an informal regional flavor by the one-story porch on open piers that is attached across the entire south side. Six columns identical to those of the entrance portico support the shed roof. Doors from the two south rooms and an exterior central stair provide access. The owner says the porch is original, but the open piers and shed roof make a later date possible.

Entering the house by the west, to the immediate right is the dining room, and beyond is a room now used as a kitchen. The living room is on the left with another room beyond. Ceiling heights in all the downstairs spaces are approximately twelve feet. Each room has a fireplace centered on its shared, interior wall. The two rooms on the north have deep niches on each side of the fireplace. In the rooms on the south the deep niche is treated as a closet.

The main stair rises on the south wall of the hall and turns beneath the window centered above the rear portico. It is plain with square balusters and turning marked by an enlarged, slightly pyramidal post. The newel post at the bottom is a flat s-curve that swells toward the bottom. The handrail is slightly turned. A second, later, stair is located in the south east corner room. It rises directly to the second floor and ends on a narrow landing screened from the bedroom by a false wall. The treatment suggests the hand of Milton cabinetmaker Tom Day.

The second floor is identical to the first. The niches on either side of the fireplace have been enclosed to make storage space.
The interior decoration of the house may be summarized:
1. All rooms are finished with plaster on lathe, no crown moldings or cornices. Floors are wide-boarded, heart pine, pegged.
2. All doors have six recessed panels, set in identical triple molded, thin, flat, frames.
3. All wood frames, doors, baseboards, and windows are wood-grained to simulate oak. They are unaltered.
4. All important rooms have panels beneath each window which consists of a flat molding on each side of a recessed rectangular panel.
5. The ground floor rooms have identical black and white marbelized mantels and fireplace surrounds. An Ionic column on a base supporting a raised, undecorated block stands on each side of the opening. The undecorated center block is connected to the corner blocks by convex panels. The shelf is deep, continuous and plain. The second floor rooms have reduced, but identical, black and white marbelized mantels and surrounds. The Ionic columns have become pilasters and the scale has been reduced appropriately.

Burleigh, therefore, exhibits an interesting combination of elements. The plan is late Georgian, a vernacular use in North Carolina associated with Federal and Greek Revival; interior decoration, with its thin, flat, tall proportions is more readily related to late Federal, but the porticos and mantels are evidence of some knowledge of the Greek Revival. The same differences are found in the dependencies.

Located to the south and east are the service dependencies: kitchen, cistern, well, smoke house, privy and carriage house which was moved from its site at the entrance to the south. Within easy access of the kitchen are the remains of the dairy house, a barn, and smokehouse.

The kitchen is the oldest building. Originally two rooms with a loft it rests on continuous field stone foundations. Beaded siding, taller six-over-six sash windows, steeply pitched gable roof, and exterior single shouldered chimneys with free-standing brick stacks all speak of an earlier date than the house. The kitchen has been altered in this century by additions to the west side.

All other buildings follow traditional late 18th, early 19th century patterns of building practice, employing substantial corner posts and plates, heavy beams and sills, some interior diagonal bracing, and lap siding. Field stone foundations are common. Wooden shingle roofs remain on the privy, smokehouse, and the carriage house.

The privy is perhaps the single most interesting building in this ensemble. It is decorated with Ionic pilasters framing the three louvered blind panels of
the facade. The middle panel is the door for this convenience which, with its proportions and pyramidal roof is clearly of pattern book origin and Greek Revival inspiration.

Down the hill to the east are two buildings designated slave houses. The one nearest the main house is a single room with a fireplace. It is in ruinous condition. The second house is much more complex. Of fairly tall proportions, substantial posts, beams and sills with lap siding and single shouldered exterior end chimneys like those of the kitchen it could be as early as the kitchen. Originally symmetrical it has been altered by a porch, additional doors on the west and interior wall sheeting. Centered on the west are a pair of narrow staircases separated by a wall which also separates identical rooms up and down stairs. The first floor rooms have fairly elaborate tripartite but crude Federal mantels with decorated end and center blocks. The owner states that only one family ever used the house at any time and it might have been for the overseer.²

Burleigh and its dependencies provide an ensemble of architectural forms and details which attest to the variety and vitality of the marriage of high style with vernacular practices and local needs that characterizes the plantation architecture of North Carolina. The character of the unaltered house with Federal and Greek Revival components is reflected in the outbuildings, particularly the outhouse with Ionic pilasters.

The structure of course is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.
Footnotes

1 Originally wood shingles, the mid-nineteenth century embossed metal shingles were replaced in 1978 by a composition roof.

2 Interview with the owner, Mrs. Mimi Sheib Proctor, August 19, 1979.

3 This is based on an oral tradition as well as a circa 1886 photograph of the rear portico in the possession of the owner.

4 Interview with the owner, August 19, 1979.

5 With reference to the nomenclature of the rooms, the names given are those used by the owner.

6 Interview with the owner, August 19, 1979 who also says that the attic stair was added at the same time.

7 Interview with the owner, August 19, 1979.

8 This is a very interesting problem. If it was a slave house the only comparable plan is that of the slave houses at Stagville's Horton Grove in Durham County which was much later.
The McGehee-Phifer House, commonly known as "Burleigh," was built in northern Person County, near the Virginia border, in the early part of the nineteenth century for Thomas McGehee, Sr. or possibly in the mid-century for his son Thomas Jeffrey McGehee. The land and house still remain in the hands of descendants of the builder. Family tradition cites a ca. 1820 date. This may relate to the smaller house nearby.

McGehee inherited the property from his father Mumford McGehee. The elder McGehee had built up a farm of modest size by way of two state grants and several purchases. In 1794 McGehee was credited with the ownership of 700 acres and 10 slaves. The 1805 tax lists show a slight decline, to 515 acres and 8 slaves. McGehee died in 1815. His will, probated in 1816 left "the tract of land on which I now live" to his son Thomas.

Thomas McGehee was a prosperous and prominent farmer in Person County until well after the Civil War. One observer said of McGehee: "The late Thomas McGehee was a gentleman of sterling worth—a man of intelligence, public spirit, integrity, and honor." He was a representative in the state legislature for five terms, 1826, 1829, 1830, 1831, and 1833.

McGehee gradually increased the size of his plantation. In 1823 he owned 1,160 acres and worked them with 21 slaves. By 1840 he had over 2,000 acres and 124 slaves. In many respects McGehee's plantation was similar to other Person County farms. Antebellum Person County was almost entirely rural and suffered seriously from a shortage of good roads. As a result its farms were unusually self-sufficient. McGehee grew a wide variety of crops. In 1850 for example his farm produced 1,200 bushels of wheat, 4,500 bushels of Indian corn, 1,060 bushels of oats, 300 bushels of sweet potatoes, 1,200 pounds of butter, 360 pounds of wool, in addition to peas, beans, and Irish potatoes. His livestock was valued at $3,800. He owned a mill which employed four people, ground $1,800 worth of flour in 1850 and had $2,000 in capital invested in it. His cash crop, however, was tobacco, the major export of Person County. McGehee grew 50,578 pounds in 1850, making him the largest grower of the crop in the county. Undoubtedly most of the plantation's 119 slaves were used to produce this crop. McGehee's farm in 1850 consisted of 3,057 acres and was valued at $30,478.

Thomas McGehee, Sr., sold a part of his plantation to his son Thomas Jeffrey McGehee in 1843. The tract consisted on 766 1/2 acres "on the plantation on which the said Thomas Jeffrey McGehee now lives." The deed also included livestock and other plantation utensils. The elder McGehee built another plantation house, called Woodburn, adjacent to Burleigh, while the younger McGehee married Mary Allen Hunt, and settled down at Burleigh. McGehee had three daughters, Ellen, born in 1848, Isabelle, born in 1849, and Elizabeth, born in 1851. His farming operation was similar to his father's, although on a smaller scale. McGehee died
in 1853, however, at the age of 33, leaving his wife widow at the age of 24.

Mrs. Mary McGehee lived at Burleigh until her death in 1925 at the age of 96. She never remarried. Her husband's will stated that he "desires among other things that his entire estate (is) to be kept together and his family (is) to remain on the estate with a continuation of all agricultural functions thereon and the property should remain intact until all the girls had reached full age before any property could be sold." McGehee's wishes were carried out. The 1860 census indicates that the activities of the farm were being carried on.

Mrs. McGehee corresponded with friends and relatives during the Civil War. On several occasions she was able to send food and supplies to correspondents. She received help on the farm from both her father-in-law and her brother-in-law, Montford McGehee.

Mrs. McGehee continued to operate the farm after the Civil War, although its value declined during these hard times. In 1870 the plantation consisted of 1,090 acres and was valued at $8,000, while ten years later it contained 694 acres and was valued at $6,840. Tobacco continued to be the main crop, as 7,000 pounds of it were grown in 1880.

Two of the daughters married. Isabelle McGehee married Robert S. Phifer of Charlotte on March 18, 1872, while Elizabeth McGehee married Percy Clark on December 1, 1885. The first born daughter, Ellen, apparently never married. The Clarks farmed near the Burleigh plantation, while the Phifers lived in Danville, Virginia, except in the summer when they lived at Burleigh. Robert S. Phifer, the son of William F. Phifer and Mary Martha Phifer of Charlotte, was the longtime instructor of music at the Roanoke Female Academy in Danville, Virginia. Phifer studied music in Leipzig, prior to taking over the post in Danville in 1878. For a quarter of a century the Phifers were at the center of Danville's musical life. Phifer's students presented a steady stream of concerts and recitals which were well received by Danville's musical public.

Of particular interest was Phifer's friendship with the noted English composer Frederick Delius. In 1885 Delius left Florida to journey to Danville where he became an instructor at the Roanoke Female Academy, along with Phifer. Delius "found an enthusiastic admirer and loyal supporter in the most influential amateur of the town, Robert S. Phifer who . . . took upon himself some months later to write (Delius's father) ... in the warmest terms of his young friend's talent." Phifer and Delius performed and taught together, and it is Phifer family tradition that Delius composed his Florida Suite during a summer visit to Burleigh. Delius left Danville in 1887 to study at the Leipzig Conservatory in Germany, where Robert Phifer had earlier studied.

Robert and Isabelle Phifer had five children. When Robert Phifer died in 1910, his widow moved back to Burleigh. Mary McGehee died in 1910. Her will
divided the property among her daughters but left Isabelle "the part of the land with the house on it." Isabelle's two sons "grew up to distinguished careers." Thomas McGehee Phifer became a prominent businessman and financier, before losing most of his estate in the Great Depression, while his brother Robert Phifer became an attorney in Mississippi. The three Phifer girls married. Wilhelmina married J. P. Giles, a merchant from New York, Mimi married Dr. S. H. Sheib, a scientist, while Dieudonne married T.J. Lipscomb, a New Orleans cotton broker. In 1939 Mrs. Giles purchased the property, which by this time had been reduced to 310 acres, from her mother for $12,000 with the provision that "the granter... reserves the possession of the foregoing described premises for the term of her natural life." A newspaper article on the plantation at this time referred to Burleigh as "a typical, solid plantation house which is filled with historic remnants of a more abundant life."

Wilhelmina Phifer Giles died in 1957. She left the property to her two sisters. The next year Dieudonne Phifer Lipscomb conveyed her interest in the property to her sister, Mimi Phifer Sheib, who was widowed. Mrs. Sheib lived at the estate until her death in 1960s. The present owner of the house is her daughter Mrs. Mimi Proctor.
Footnotes

1 Katherine Kerr Kendall (compiler), Person County: North Carolina (Raleigh, 1978), 10, hereinafter cited as Kendall, Person County.

2 Kendall, Person County, 75.

3 Person County Will Book 6, p. 82.

4 Undated newspaper account, Montford McGehee Scrapbook, Montford Mitchell Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

5 Kendall, Person County, 36. McGehee was also elected Councilor of State in 1839 and 1840. Stuart Thurman Wright, Historical Sketch of Person County (Danville, Virginia: Womack Press, 1974), 223, hereinafter cited as Wright, Historical Sketch of Person County.

6 Kendall, Person County, 112; Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Person County, North Carolina: Population Schedule.

7 Wright, Historical Sketch of Person County, 51-55.

8 Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Person County, North Carolina: Population Schedule, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule, Industrial Schedule. The 1850 figures represent the McGehee plantation after a portion of it had been conveyed to his son. Comparable figures are not available for the earlier years when the plantation was even larger.

9 Person County Deed Book D, 209.


11 Caswell County Deed Book A, 2; Book B, 199; Book D, 108. According to family records Thomas McGehee, Sr. married Mildred Jeffrey. He was one of seven children of Montford and Sarah Moore McGehee. Montford was one of ten children of Edward McGehee and Elizabeth DeJarnett McGehee of Cumberland and Prince counties, Virginia. Telephone interview with Mrs. Mimi Proctor, August 13, 1979.

12 Person County Estate Papers: Thomas McGehee.

13 Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Person County, North Carolina: Agricultural Schedule.
### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
#### INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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<td>14. Montford McGehee Papers, Series B, Southern Historical Collection. Of particular interest is a letter from F. McGehee Smith, a nephew of Mrs. McGehee, to his aunt for the recent shipment of food, clothing, and supplies he had received from her. This indicates that Mrs. McGehee was relatively well off at a time late in the war. There are also several letters from Montford McGehee, Mary McGehee's brother-in-law, and a prominent attorney, planter, member of the General Assembly (1862-1879) and North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture (1880-1887). These letters indicate that Montford McGehee aided in the running of the plantation.</td>
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<td>15. Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Person County, North Carolina: Agricultural Schedule; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Person County, North Carolina: Agricultural Schedule.</td>
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<td>16. Person County Marriage Index.</td>
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<td>17. The Robert S. Phifer Papers at the Southern Historical Collection contain a large number of concert programs, advertisements, and reviews of his Danville concerts. These indicate that Phifer had a wide range of interests. In addition to the usual salon pieces popular at the time, Phifer and his students gave Danville generous amounts of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Mozart, Schumann, and others.</td>
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<td>18. Frederick Delius (1862-1934) had spent 1884 and 1885 in Florida where his father had sent him to manage a family business in the hope that his son would choose commerce over music. Sir Thomas Beecham, Frederick Delius (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1959), 24-30, hereinafter cited as Beecham, Frederick Delius.</td>
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<td>19. Beecham, Frederick Delius, 31.</td>
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<td>20. Beecham, Frederick Delius, 32-34; Milton Cross and David Ewen, The Milton Cross New Encyclopedia of the Great Composers and Their Music (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), 1, 381; Roxboro Courier-Times May 3, 1976; Robert S. Phifer Scrapbook, Phifer Papers, Southern Historical Collection, 19. The Florida Suite was published in 1887, thereby making it likely that Delius did work on it while at Danville and possibly at Burleigh.</td>
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<td>23. Greensboro Daily News, March 2, 1941.</td>
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Caswell County Deed Books. Microfilm copy: Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.


McGehee Papers, Montford. Southern Historical Collection. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

News and Observer (Raleigh). October 15, 1942.


Phifer Papers, Robert S. Southern Historical Collection. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Proctor, Mrs. Mimi. Telephone Interview with, August 17, 1979.


8. Significance

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Specific dates: Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in the early to mid nineteenth century, Burleigh is an impressive, austere, frame plantation house based on traditional patterns of building. It combines a late Georgian plan with late Federal and Greek Revival details. This combination is characteristic of a vernacular adaptation of high style ideas to rural North Carolina plantation architecture. The site, which takes advantage of the topography, enhances Burleigh's importance both visually and as a focus for the remaining dependencies whose presence attest to the importance of the family and its prosperity. The house was built for Thomas McGehee, a prosperous planter, and it remains in the hands of descendants.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Is a powerful embodiment of broad patterns of agricultural and social development in northern North Carolina counties.

B. Associated with lives of significant persons, regionally and statewide—Thomas McGehee, Robert S. Phifer and, briefly, Phifer's friend Frederick Delius.

C. In plan, form, and construction Burleigh exemplifies early 19th century plantation building in North Carolina which is a substantial and careful adaptation of high style ideas within a regional context. With its remaining dependencies it forms an ensemble which is not only architecturally valuable for its diversity but also represents a pattern of life associated with agricultural and cultural prosperity, other examples of which are limited in this area.

D. Is likely to yield information about antebellum plantation life.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Caswell County Deed Books. Microfilm copy: Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property __133 acres____
Quadrangle name Olive Hill
Quadrangle scale __1:24000__

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes the house, outbuildings, and adjacent farmland historically and visually associated with Burleigh plantation; it once encompassed more than __1,000 acres__.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Architectural description by Charlotte V. Brown, Consultant
Historical statement by Jim Sumner, Researcher/Research Branch
Survey and Planning Branch
organization Archeology and Historic Preservation
N.C. Division of Archives and History
city or town Raleigh
street & number 109 E. Jones Street
organization date November, 1979
telephone (919) 733-6545

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

For HCRS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date January 10, 1980
Burleigh
Concord vicinity
Person County, North Carolina
Olive Hill Quadrangle
Quadrangle scale 1:24000
Zone 17

UTMs
17/668660/4058580  17/668000/4059910
17/668400/4059750  17/668900/4058300
INLET / HYCO LAKE

SLAVE/OVERSEER? COTTAGE

SLAVE CABIN RUINOUS

STEEP DOWNGRADE

BURLEIGH GENERAL SITE PLAN.

SHEP-FAIRLY RUINOUS

ALL LOCATIONS APPROX.

Dairy House
Built - Foundations Remain

KITCHEN

SMOKE HS

CISTERN

WELL HS

MAIN HOUSE

CURRENT ACCESS
via SR 1313
ROUTE #57

OLD ROAD