

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lang, Robert J., Jr., House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number W. side SR 1231, 0.1 mi. S. of jct. with SR 1200 N/A not for publicationcity, town Fountain IX vicinitystate North Carolina code NC county Pitt code 147 zip code 27828

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

2

Noncontributing

 buildings1 sites structures objects21 TotalName of related multiple property listing:
NoneNumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register None

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official William S. King, Jr.Date 7-23-90

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival/Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof steel

other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Robert J. Lang, Jr., House is located at the crest of a small rise above State Road 1231 in rural western Pitt County. Built about 1870, the one-story, double-pile, gable-roofed frame Greek Revival/Italianate farmhouse with detached rear kitchen wing is approached by a long, unpaved drive and sits in a grassed lot planted with assorted evergreens and hardwoods, as well as a massive oak tree. Adjacent to the house on the south is a small family cemetery, while to the rear is a collection of early twentieth century farm outbuildings, mostly relating to tobacco culture. Surrounding the house and home lot are cultivated fields. Only the front and side yards are included in this nomination. They provide an appropriate setting for the house and kitchen.

The clapboarded farmhouse has a symmetrically-arranged, three-bay front elevation with a nearly full-width, hipped porch. Between the square, classical posts are low railings with elaborate, scroll-sawn board balusters. The porch ceiling, typical of the coastal area, is of beaded boards with spaces between them for ventilation. The four-panel front door has a transom and sidelights with panels below them framed in heavy, raised moldings. Flanking the doorway are large, six over six windows with plain surrounds.

The steep, side-gabled main roof of the house is straddled by a pair of ornately-corbelled, stuccoed brick chimneys. The roof material itself is standing seamterne metal applied at the turn of the century. Boxed cornices that return on the side elevations have rich shingle and bed moldings and a deep board frieze.

At the corners of the house are narrow corner boards with caps. The side elevations each have a rectangular, louvered gable vent and a pair of six over six windows which are smaller than the front elevation, but also have plain surrounds.

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At the northwest, rear corner of the house is a shallow, shed-roofed wing with its own boxed cornice and small, six over six windows. Adjacent to it, and stretching across the rest of the rear, is a hipped porch with square, classical posts, between which are railings with a suspended, horizontal flat panel. Echoing the front entrance, the rear door onto the porch has sidelights. It appears that there was also originally a window or secondary door opening from the southwest room onto the porch.

The main portion of the house has a center hall plan with pairs of equal-sized rooms on either side, each opening into the hall. A modern partition with glazed door has been constructed to close off part of the east end of the hall, chair rails have been added, and some modern trim molding installed, but otherwise the hall retains its original high baseboards with cap molding, beaded-edged door surrounds with molded backband, and four-panel doors with molded panels.

The four chambers each have exuberantly vernacular Greek Revival mantels whose pilasters and friezes are ornamented with strips of molding of various types arranged to form panels. The partitions which divide the rooms on either side of the hall are provided with closets, each of which has a narrow, one-panel door with raised panel. As in the hallway, although some of the rooms have added chairrail and modern casing, they mostly retain the original casings, high baseboards, and four-panel doors.

Joined to the rear porch of the house by a short, covered breezeway is the kitchen wing, a rectangular, clapboarded, gable-roofed frame building perpendicular to the main house. Its standing seam tin roof has boxed cornices that are flush on the gable ends. The small windows on the side and end elevations of the kitchen have a mix of nine over six and four over four sash. The east two bays of the three-bay south side of the kitchen are recessed for a porch with plain post supports and three board and batten doors that lead into the adjacent rooms. Within the kitchen wing are a dining room (closest to the house), the actual kitchen, and a small pantry. Separating the dining room from the kitchen is a partition containing the chimney (stack now removed above the roof) and a small closet. The interiors of these rooms are beaded-board sheathed, and there is a plain, post and lintel Greek Revival mantel in the dining room. Like the exterior doors, those of the interior are also board and batten.

While there are enough differences in detailing to suggest that the kitchen wing may have been built and occupied before the main house, similarities in hardware, style and construction indicate that the two

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sections were built within a few years of each other. The foundations of the house and kitchen were originally brick piers, now filled in with concrete block.

In addition to the main house, the Lang property immediately around the house includes a family cemetery and a number of farm outbuildings and structures. Set in the south side yard and surrounded by a chain link fence, the small family cemetery contains mostly early twentieth century stones marking the graves of Lang family members, including Robert J. Lang (1841-1892), Louisa T. Lang (1847-1901), Robert Joe Lang (1870-1924) and the infant son of Wilton and Lillie Lang (1909).

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

ca. 1870

ca. 1870

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Robert J. Lang, Jr., House, located in rural western Pitt County, North Carolina, is significant in the county's history as a representative example of the one-story, center hall plan, double-pile Greek Revival/Italianate farmhouse. Civil War veteran Lang (1841-1892) married Louisa T. Ward in 1866 and in 1870 purchased with her brother a 632 acre tract on the which the house was built, probably soon thereafter. Although the plan and massing of the house, as well as some of its ornament look backward to the Greek Revival farmhouses of the immediate antebellum period, the Lang House's Italianate ornament has a modest delicacy exhibited by a class of coastal Italianate houses built right after the war. The well-preserved house also has a notable collection of exuberant vernacular mantels ornamented with a variety of moldings. In the side yard is located a small family cemetery containing the graves of both Robert J. and Louisa Lang.

Historical Background

Robert Joseph Lang, Jr., (1841-1892) was born in the Falklands District of Pitt County where his father Robert J. Lang, Sr., (1803-1854) and mother (Ann) Mariah Rodgers Lang (1813-1880) owned a farm. (Pitt Chronicles, p. 444) After the elder Lang died in 1854, Mariah Lang remained on the land, working it with the assistance of her six children. (U. S. Census, 1860) At the age of 20, Robert Lang, Jr., enlisted as a private in Company E of the 27th North Carolina Regiment of the Confederate Army. In 1862 he was promoted to corporal and was wounded at Bristoe Station, Virginia in October of 1863. Rejoining his unit, he was wounded again at Wilderness, Virginia in May of 1864, returning to duty before November of that year, and surrendering with Lee at Appomattox Courthouse in April, 1865. (North Carolina Troops, p. 50)

☒ See continuation sheet

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Lang returned to Pitt County after the war, and was married to Louisa T. Ward (1847-1901) in 1866. (Tyson & May Genealogy, p. 570) Where they lived for the next few years is not clear, but in January of 1870, Lang and Joseph T. Ward (Louisa's brother) purchased a tract of land in Farmville Township for \$5,000 from James H. and Nancy Exum. (Pitt Deeds, Book F3, p. 145) Like Robert Lang, Joseph Ward was a Civil War veteran, and Robert may have come to know Louisa through Joseph. (Pitt Chronicles, p. 699) Located on the north side of Little Contentnea Creek, the 632 acre farm was adjacent to that of Louisa's father, Gideon Ward, a substantial agriculturalist with a Greek Revival house located to the east along what is now SR 1200. Probably soon after the purchase, Robert and Louisa built the existing Lang house on a high point in the tract.

In 1872 Louisa Lang purchased her brother's half interest in the farm for \$1,000. (Pitt Deeds Book F3, p. 187) In court papers twenty years later she averred that she had acquired the land by an exchange of her own lands, possibly some given to her by her father. (Pitt County Estates)

The 1880 census shows the Langs and six of their eventual ten children on their farm in Farmville Township. Consisting of 150 acres of cultivated land and about 400 acres of woodland and forest, the farm had an estimated value of \$8,000. Its 1879 production is listed in the census as worth about \$2,495, including 60 acres of corn producing 500 bushels, 10 acres of oats yielding 100 bushels, 2 acres of apples, and 65 acres of cotton yielding 45 bales, together with small numbers of cows, chickens and swine.

Pitt County's pre-war makeup of small, largely middle-class farms facilitated its post-Civil War recovery. While large plantations had to struggle with redefining labor relationships, eventually establishing tenancy and sharecropping, the economic backbone of the county continued to be relatively small plots of owner-cultivated improved land like the R. J. Lang farm. By 1880 the average size of a Pitt County farm was 142 acres, about two-thirds of which were owner-cultivated. (Power, pp. 75-76)

Cotton remained the dominant crop in post-bellum Pitt County, along with substantial amounts of several grains. An 1880 United States Agricultural Census report noted that Pitt was "one of the best cotton counties, and its grain crop is larger in proportion than that of most of the cotton counties..." Of the county area, 24.57 percent

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in 1880 was tilled land, with 30.15 percent of the latter cultivated in cotton. (Power, p. 76) Pitt County tobacco production was minimal at that point, but over the next several decades it grew rapidly in importance as a crop, although it was not until the second decade of the twentieth century that tobacco production surpassed cotton culture. (Power, p. 77)

Lang must have encountered financial difficulties in the late 1880s, because he left his estate encumbered with \$3,500 in notes for loans taken in 1890 from the British and American Mortgage Company. A suit by the holder of the notes sought the sale of the entire farm, but Mrs. Lang was able to defend her ownership of a half interest in the farm separate from that of her husband. When her husband's half interest was sold at auction in July of 1893, Louisa Lang purchased it for \$700. (Pitt County Estates)

Mrs. Lang apparently continued to live in the house until her death in 1901, with her oldest and unmarried son, Robert Joseph Lang III, farming the land with assistance from his brothers Tony and Wilton. (US Census, 1900) Following Louisa's death, each of the ten children inherited a tenth interest in the farm. Over the next year Robert Joseph Lang purchased tenth interests from at least four of the other children. (Pitt Deeds Book A-7, p. 232, 233, 234 and Book H-7, page 496) However, at the end of the decade Roland O. Lang, Tony W. Lang and Wilton E. Lang, through a complicated set of transactions, acquired the interests of the other children and divided the farm into three tracts of 207, 270 and 230 acres, respectively. The owner of Tract 1, T. W. Lang, subsequently bought parts of Tract 2 and ended up in possession of the farmhouse. (Pitt Deeds Book S-8, p. 257, Book S-8, p. 531, Book J-9, p. 269, 270, Book M-9, p. 163, Book U-9, p. 527)

Tony Ward Lang (1884-1965) farmed and was a principal in the merchantile business of Tyson and Lang in Farmville. (Tyson & May Genealogy, p. 573) During most of his ownership the land was occupied by tenants. At his death the property passed to granddaughter Jane Darden Brown, with a life estate for his daughters Mary Elizabeth Lang and Bertha Lang Darden, the latter of whom is deceased. The house and farm are currently occupied by tenants. (Jane Brown interview)

Architectural Context

During the first third of the nineteenth century, Pitt County domestic achitecture was dominated by the single-pile, one- or two-story hall

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and parlor plan house in the Federal style. In the 1840s and 50s, however, the growing popularity of the Greek Revival style, with its less delicate ornament and blocky proportions, combined with the increasing use of the center hall and double pile forms to generate new house types. The result was a domestic architecture that was highly varied in scale, plan and proportion, while largely unified in style. (Power, pp. 43-44)

The concurrent rise in use of the center hall plan and the double-pile house form resulted in a preference for interior chimneys, which could efficiently provide a heat source for all rooms. While the double-pile form was used for both one- and two-story houses, in Pitt County the one-story form was more widely constructed. (Power, p. 44) Porches also assumed a greater importance in Pitt County domestic architecture in the 1840s to 60s, the porch and its adjacent front entrance serving as a repository for much of the style-defining ornament used on the exterior of the house. (Power, p. 46)

An interesting predecessor for the Lang House is the James W. May House in nearby Farmville, built about 1860, which has a similar form. Although one and a half-stories, and without a front porch, it has a side gable roof with returns, a pair of interior chimneys, a three-bay front elevation which includes large six over six windows, and a central entrance with four panel door, sidelights and transom.

In Pitt County, as in much of North Carolina, the Greek Revival style of the 1850s to 70s was infused with elements usually associated with the Italianate style, such as brackets, heavily-molded, hood-like window lintels, square, classical porch posts and scroll-sawn ornament. (Power, p. 46) By 1870, many rural dwellings were being built in the coastal plain that exhibited more delicate Italianate ornament, while retaining Greek Revival stylistic elements such as deep friezes, two- or four-panel doors and post and lintel mantels. Typifying these is the ca. 1870 Elias W. Carr House (National Register) in adjacent Greene County. The Robert J. Lang, Jr. House is a representative Pitt County example.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the availability of machine-produced ornament, such as built-up brackets, turned balusters and porch posts and a proliferation of moldings, helped create a vernacular "Victorian" style combining Queen Anne and Italianate stylistic elements. Although center hall, double-pile, one-story houses continued to be built with this new ornament grafted on,

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single-pile houses with side gable roofs and rear ells, either in one- or two-story forms, became almost standard in rural areas.

Prior to the Civil War, the southern kitchen was typically a separate structure located far enough from the main house to obviate the fire danger, heat, smells and noise of food production. The availability of slave labor removed cooking from the responsibility of even the yeoman farm wife. After the war, however, many detached kitchens were moved and joined to the main house and new houses were built with attached kitchen/dining room wings. The Lang House kitchen represents a transitional form; neither attached, nor more than a few steps from the back door. A similar, originally-detached kitchen is located behind the May House.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately 2 acres

UTM References

A

1	1	8
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2	5	7	7	2	0
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3	9	4	6	3	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Robert J. Lang, Jr. House nomination are as shown by the dashed line on the attached map, drawn at a scale of 1 inch equals 200 feet from Pitt County Tax Maps.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Robert J. Lang, Jr. House nomination are drawn to include the farmhouse and associated kitchen, the adjacent cemetery containing the graves of Robert and Louisa Lang, and a small area of surrounding farmyard needed to provide an appropriate setting for the house. Excluded are twentieth century farm outbuildings behind the house which are outside the period of significance.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David R. Black/Architectural Historian

organization Black & Black, Preservation Consultants date May 1, 1990

street & number 620 Wills Forest Street telephone (919) 828-4616

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina zip code 27605

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Major Bibliographical References

Copeland, Elizabeth H., ed. The Chronicles of Pitt County.
Greenville: Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1982.

Jordan, Weymouth T., Jr. and Manarin, Louis H. North Carolina
Troops 1861-1865, A Roster. Vol. VIII. Raleigh: North
Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981.

Kammerer, Roger. The Tyson & May Genealogy of Pitt County.
Greenville: DeVisconti Scroll Trust, 1987.

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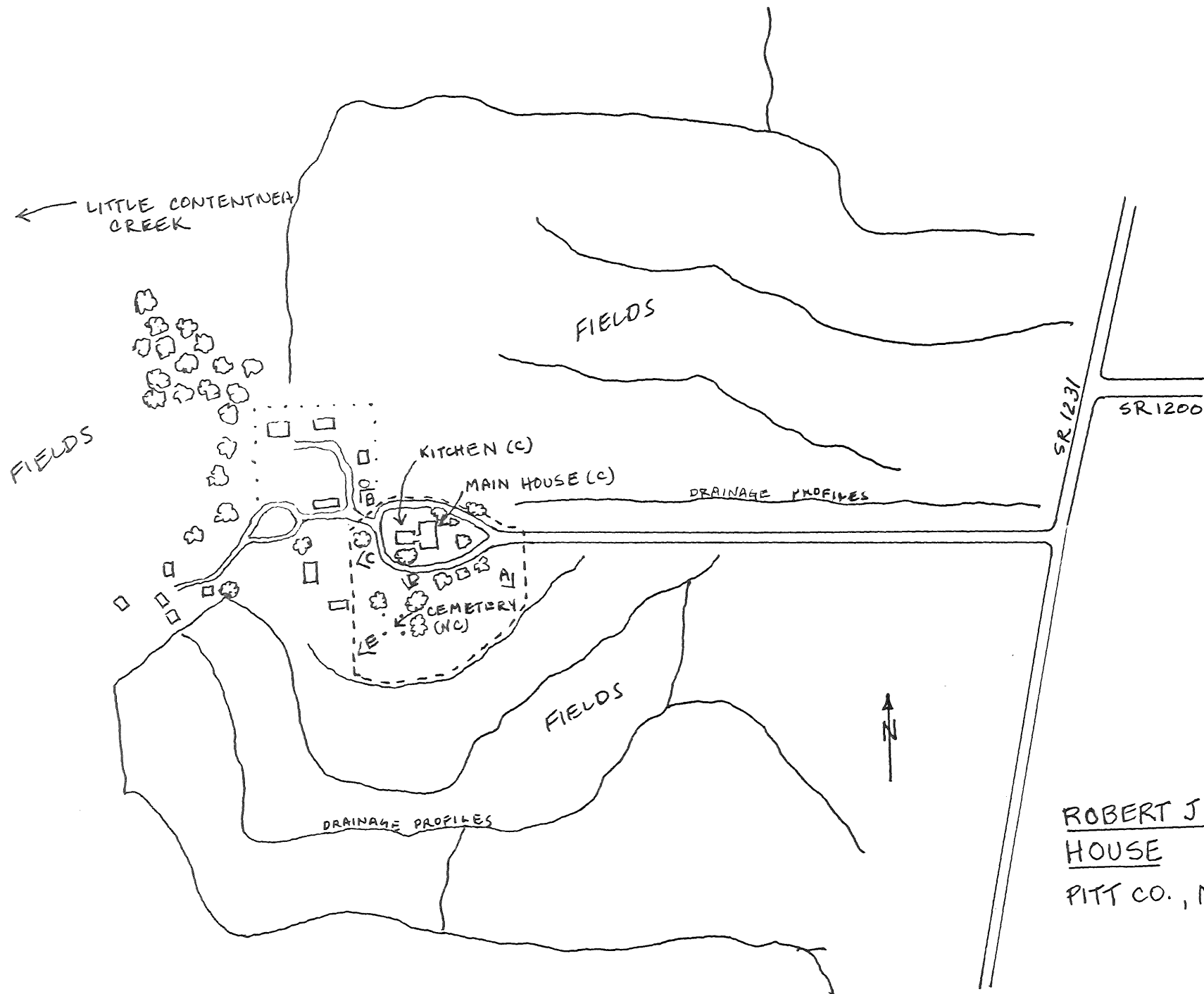
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Survey Files, Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division
of Archives and History, Raleigh.

U. S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Population
Schedules: 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900. Agricultural Schedules:
1880.

David R. Black interview with Jane Darden Brown, 15 January 1990
at Lang House.



ROBERT J. LANG, JR.
HOUSE
PITT CO., N.C. 1"=200'



24 000
 1 2
 1000 2000
 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10 000

AL 2 METERS
 ICAL DATUM OF 1929
 O THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
 THE NEAREST 0.5 METER
 MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 RVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 ND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROBERT J. LANG, JR. HOUSE PITT CO.
 N-3946320
 E-257720
 ZONE 17 FOUNTAIN QUAD



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

CONTOURS AND ELEVATIONS
 IN METERS

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
 Primary highway, hard surface
 Secondary highway, hard surface
 Interstate Route
 Light-duty road, improved surface
 Unimproved road
 U. S. Route

FOUNTA
 NW/4 FALKLAND
 N3537.5-V

