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 John Phillips Little House

and/or common

2. Location

Down a 0.15 mile dirt lane, North side NC 73

street & number opposite junction with SR 1155

city, town __ vicinity of Little's Mills

state North Carolina code 37 county Richmond code 159

3. Classification

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Status</th>
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4. Owner of Property

name Mary Margaret Evans

street & number Route 1, Highway 73

city, town Mt. Gilead __ vicinity of __ state N. C. 27306

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Richmond County Courthouse

street & number __

city, town Rockingham __ state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date __ federal __ state __ county __ local

depository for survey records

city, town __ state __
The Little House stands near the crest of a hill on the west bank of the Little River, overlooking North Carolina Highway 73 at its intersection with state road 1155. A dirt lane runs through a pasture up the hill to the house. One large and old cedar tree stands near the west side of the house while two pecan trees and one pear tree complete the remaining landscaping. A photograph of the house, taken ca. 1925, shows a wide walk in front of the house flanked by small shrubs and flowerbeds, but no evidence of these remains. A thick wood borders the yard to the east and north, and a sweeping vista of rolling pastures and woodlands can be enjoyed from the front yard. The present house tract, composed of wood and pastures, includes fifty-four acres.

The house, built ca. 1850-1855 by John Phillips Little, is a frame, two-story, Greek Revival structure with a low hip roof (presently covered by asphalt shingles). The house stands several feet above the ground on common-bond brick piers (some of which are new) with lattice-work panels between them; beneath the house are the stone foundations of an earlier structure. The fenestration of the house is composed of large six-over-six sash windows with symmetrically molded trim; a few old shutters with movable louvers survive. The south, or main, facade of the house features a one-story porch supported by four fluted Doric columns with pilaster returns which flank a double doorway with trabeated sidelights and transom. The flat roof of the porch, with a simple post balustrade, forms a second-floor balcony entered by a doorway similar to that below. Flanking these entrances are tripartite windows (six-over-six sash and three-over-three). At the time of this writing, the deteriorated porch has been taken down, to be reconstructed using the original columns. The house was originally built with a one-story, hip-roof porch across the rear, with the east bay of the porch enclosed for a pantry next to the dining room. Late in the nineteenth century, a small frame kitchen was attached to this pantry. During the current restoration, the kitchen is being enlarged along its original lines to provide a new kitchen and bathroom. At one time a small porch existed near the north end of the east wall, sheltering a doorway into the dining room. The house features molded cornerposts and a plain, narrow frieze beneath the overhanging molded cornice and eaves.

The interior of the house follows the standard center-hall, double-pile plan on both floors, with interior chimneys flanked by closets, and the stairway to the rear of the hall. Identical mantels, composed of heavy molded pilasters supporting a wide frieze with a molded shelf and with sunken brick hearths, appear throughout the house as do the two-panel doors (some retaining original mortise and rim locks), and wide molded baseboards. Molded panels appear beneath the windows of the southwest room which was probably used as the main parlor. The window and door trim throughout the house is a typical Greek Revival symmetrical molding with square cornerblocks. Some of the rooms retain old, perhaps original, bluish-gray paint while several of the doors feature woodgraining in poor condition. The stair rises against
the east wall and gracefully curves to a landing over the rear hall doorway before continuing to the second floor. The stair features a scrolled bottom step with circular newel post, handsomely scrolled stair brackets, and a simple banister with slender, square balusters. Beneath the stair is a panelled closet entered from the northeast room.

The house has received few changes since its construction. A picture molding was added to several rooms at one point, while electrical wiring was limited to the two rear rooms of the first floor and plumbing to the attached kitchen. Prior to the start of the present restoration, the house was robbed of its original window hardware and some of the hardware from the doors. Remarkably, a local resident has presented the current owner of the house with a small canvas bag marked "John P. Little" (the builder of the house), containing numerous pieces of period hardware, apparently leftover from the construction of the house.

Several outbuildings survive near the house. To the rear is a small, deteriorated frame building once used as a blacksmith's shop; beaded siding in the gable suggests that this structure predates the present house. Near it are the ruins of the cook's house; behind it is the site of the original kitchen. Northwest of the house are two small dovetail plank structures, perhaps built as cribs or granaries, and a twentieth-century shed structure. Several hundred yards from the house to the west is a large plank barn. A twentieth-century tenant house, in poor condition, stands in the southwest corner of the house tract. A general store and post office once stood at the end of the house lane on the north side of Highway 73.

Nothing is known of the workmen responsible for the construction of the Little House. However, standing a mile to the east on the north side of Highway 73 is another two-story, frame Greek Revival house with a facade of tripartite windows nearly identical of the Little House, suggesting that the two houses shared the same designer and workmen.

In the southeast corner of the junction of Highway 73 and state road 1155 and across from the entrance to the house lane, is a large and well-kept cemetery surrounded by a stone wall. While not part of the present house tract, the cemetery contains early graves of members of the Steele family, who owned the house site prior to John Phillips Little's purchase of the land in 1846.
The Little House is a large and little-altered Greek Revival frame plantation house. Probably built between 1850 and 1855, the house was the home until 1879 of John Phillips Little (1827-1905), a wealthy planter and grist mill owner, and a member of a locally prominent family. From 1879 to 1972, the house was used as a tenant dwelling with practically no changes made to the building's appearance. John Phillips Little's grandson Calvin Little was the last member of the family to own the house. At his death in 1982, Calvin Little left a multi-million dollar estate to the Methodist Church of North Carolina and other charitable and religious organizations.

Criteria:

A. Associated with the plantation socio-economic society based on the large-scale production of cotton by slaves in the antebellum South.

B. Associated with the lives of wealthy planters and mill owners Thomas Little (1781-1855) and his son John Phillips Little (1827-1905), and John Phillips Little's grandson Calvin Little (ca. 1892-1982), a philanthropist.

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a large Greek Revival dwelling with associated outbuildings as the hub of an antebellum cotton plantation.

D. Is likely to yield information important in history related to large-scale farming and milling operations of the nineteenth century.
The Little House is a large, little-altered, two-story frame Greek Revival plantation dwelling in the northwest corner of rural Richmond County near the Montgomery County line. The house is located on a hill above the Little River and within sight of the Uwharrie Mountains of Montgomery County. The house, one of only a small number of substantial plantation dwellings surviving in the region, was probably built between 1850 and 1855 by John Phillips Little on land owned by his father, Thomas Little; both men were wealthy planters with large slave holdings. By 1830, the cultivation of cotton had become an important part of the economy of Richmond County, which, along with Anson, Mecklenburg, and Lincoln counties, formed a "cotton belt" along the North Carolina-South Carolina border. By 1860, the per capita aggregate real and personal wealth of Richmond and adjoining Anson County was substantially higher than that of their neighboring counties to the north and east where subsistence-level farming dominated. The Little family, with large holdings in land and slaves, was part of the small planter society of the area which had most benefited from the large-scale production of cotton.

Thomas Little (1781-1855) immigrated to North Carolina from Carlisle, England, in 1806. In 1796, Thomas's brother William Little (1775-1848), a skilled cabinetmaker, had settled in Anson County. Prospering in his work, William acquired land and slaves and by the time of his death in 1848 he was among the wealthiest of the region's citizens, owning 112 slaves, thousands of acres of land, a gristmill, a tanyard, and stock in various North Carolina and South Carolina banks. It was no doubt due to William's encouragement that Thomas Little came to North Carolina in 1806, where he found employment as the overseer on an Anson County plantation owned by General Henry William Harrington, one of the region's wealthy and politically prominent residents. In 1821, Thomas moved from Anson County across the Pee Dee River to neighboring Richmond County. By 1824, he had acquired enough land and the social status to marry Ermin Elizabeth LeGrand, member of a wealthy Richmond County planter family. Thomas and Elizabeth became the parents of John Phillips (1827-1905), Benjamin Franklin (1830-1879), and Jane (1833-?).

In 1846, Little purchased 2,255½ acres of land in northern Richmond and southern Montgomery counties from the Steele family. The purchase apparently included a house, for the present Little House is built over the stone foundations of an earlier structure. The existing house may have been a Steele home as the Steele family cemetery is within sight of the house. The Richmond County
acres was within the bounds of Steele tax district (now Steele Township). Little probably purchased the land as a plantation tract for his oldest son, John Phillips, who had finished his education at Davidson College in 1843. In 1847, John Phillips married Sarah Ann Covington (b. 1827), member of another wealthy Richmond County family, and they became the parents of two daughters, Jane Elizabeth and Sarah Ann. It is not known whether the young couple lived in the existing house or perhaps started construction of the present house, but at the death of Sarah in 1849, John Phillips and his infant daughters moved into his father's household. The 1850 census records the widower and his two daughters living with his parents Thomas and Elizabeth and their other children, Benjamin Franklin and Jane. Thomas was listed in the census as a farmer with 67 slaves and real estate valued at $30,600, while John Phillips, also listed as a farmer, owned 32 slaves.

In 1852, John Phillips married Frances (Fanny) Myers (d. 1924), and by the time of his father's death in 1855 his family was almost certainly living in the present house. That Thomas Little's will provided for his own house and furniture to go to his widow for her lifetime and then to his son Benjamin Franklin, while John Phillip's inheritance was the Steele tract, suggests that John Phillips was already established in his own home on the Steele land. Thomas Little died a very wealthy man, with his estate including $1,306 in cash, 111 bales of cotton worth $3,280, notes totalling $4,250 due the estate, stock in the banks of Wadesboro (Anson County), Charlotte (Mecklenburg County), and Cheraw, South Carolina, worth $43,000, and 78 slaves valued at $44,226, in addition to his large land holdings. Besides receiving title to his land, John Phillips also received from his father's estate 22 slaves, 47 shares in the Bank of Cheraw and 112 shares in the Bank of Wadesboro, and joint title with his mother, brother, and sister in his father's summer residence in the Uhwarrie Mountains in Montgomery County.

By the time of the 1860 census, the Little House was home for John Phillips, his wife Fanny, his daughters Jane and Sarah, and sons Benjamin, Thomas, and John; also living in the household was twenty-year old Caren Hawkins, a "private tutor." Sixty-nine slaves (with twenty-one being males over the age of fifteen) lived in eighteen slave houses on the plantation. Little's personal property, including the slaves, was valued at $80,000. He only cultivated 570 acres of his 3,320 acres valued at $13,000, raising 2,000 bushels of corn, 400 bushels of oats and 250 of wheat, and a money crop of 98 bales of cotton. In addition to his farming activities, John Phillips also operated a grist mill on the Little River just east of his house as
well as a general store by the entrance drive to his house. Living just two miles away from Little was his brother Benjamin Franklin, with 53 slaves, real estate valued at $15,000, and personal property worth $61,000.  

John Phillips's activities during the Civil War years were not discovered, but the consequences of the war affecting him are revealed in the census of 1870. He still owned 3,195 acres of land worth $12,000, but with the emancipation of his slaves he only had 150 acres under cultivation compared to 570 acres in 1860. His corn production fell from 2,000 bushels in 1860 to 400 in 1870, and cotton production dropped from 98 bales to 16. Little apparently was forced by the post-bellum economic conditions to turn his interest to his flour and grist mill on the Little River just below his house. Although he only had capital of $500 invested in the water-powered mill (which employed two hands), its production of meal and flour earned him $8,000 in 1870. In addition to the mill, he continued to operate a general store near his house. The community surrounding his plantation was known as Little's Mills. The 1870 census also recorded that Little's household consisted of himself, his wife Fanny, and children Lizzie (Elizabeth), 22; Sallie (Sarah), 20; Thomas, 17; Franklin (Benjamin Franklin), 13; John P., 12; Calvin, 10; Albert, 9; Addie, 6; Julian, 5; William, 3; and Fannie, 1.

In 1879, after an outbreak of typhoid fever in his family which he attributed to the house's unhealthy location near the river, John Phillips built a new home farther away from the river on his property. The older house was then rented, probably to tenants who farmed for him or worked at his mills, although local tradition claims that a preacher once lived in the house.

John Phillips Little died in 1905 leaving an estate of real and personal property valued at $11,641.90. His sons John P., Jr., and Albert J. Little received joint ownership of the tract of land with both houses, with his widow Fanny having lifetime rights to the 1879 house. The mills, which burned in the 1950s, were owned in common by all of his surviving children. The land, with its farms and timber tracts, was managed after World War I for the two brothers by their nephew, Calvin Myers Little, son of their deceased brother Calvin, for a salary of $1,500 a year. During this period the house continued to be inhabited by a series of black and white tenant families. At Albert Little's death in 1952, Calvin purchased the land, consisting of 2,106 acres and including both of the family residences. With tenant families continuing to live in the older house until 1972, Calvin provided only minimum maintenance for the house, with plumbing
limited to the attached kitchen and electricity provided in only two first-floor rooms. As a result of Calvin's benign neglect, the house has remained practically unchanged since its construction.

Calvin Little died in 1982, aged 90, leaving a multi-million dollar estate, mainly derived from the timber on his lands, divided among the Methodist Church of North Carolina and other religious, educational, and charitable institutions.22 His will directed his executor to deed the house with 54 acres of land to "an appropriate non-profit, historical preservation society, organization, or agency that he deems appropriate."23 In 1983, the house and land was conveyed to the Historic Preservation Fund of North Carolina, Inc. (now the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina), a private, non-profit, statewide revolving fund which purchases endangered properties and sells them to buyers for restoration.24 Created in 1975, the revolving fund was the first of its kind in the United States. The fund sold the house in 1983 to the present owner who is currently restoring the house.25

The Little House survives remarkably unchanged as a fine example of an antebellum Greek Revival plantation dwelling. One of the few plantation residences left in the county, the house remains as a witness to the economic prosperity of cotton-oriented antebellum Richmond County as well as to the wealth of the Little family.

The structure is, of course, closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological 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 archeological record. Therefore, archeological remains may well be an important component of the significance 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.
Notes:


3 Alexander Worth McAlister, From These Ruins (Privately printed, 1969), 21. This account of the Little family in Richmond County, which utilized family papers in private possession as well as family traditions, was written after the 1963 destruction by fire of Carlisle, the home of Benjamin Franklin Little, the son of Thomas Little. The Benjamin Franklin Little Papers are in the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Calvin Little Papers have only been recently deposited in the same collection, and have not been available for research. Mildred Little Hendrix (b. 1904), of Greensboro, the great-great-granddaughter of Thomas Little, has provided the writer with much information on the Little family in numerous telephone conversations.


5 McAlister, From These Ruins, 21-29.

6 McAlister, From These Ruins, 21-29.

7 The deed for the purchase was either never recorded in the Richmond County deed books or was not included in the index for such. However, Oscar Penegar, in a letter of 9 March 1983, to Elizabeth T. Melvin of the Historic Preservation Fund of North Carolina, stated that the original deed was in the possession of Calvin Little, last owner of the house, and that it recorded Thomas Little’s purchase of 2,557½ acres for $10,000 on 8 January 1846 from Thomas L. Steele. See the copy of this letter in the Little House files, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. In 1844, Thomas Little had served as one of five commissioners to divide the land of the late Thomas Steele whose heirs included Robert L., Walter L., Thomas W., and Elizabeth Steele. In the division, Robert L. Steele's lot was 2,487½ acres, and it may have included this acreage which was later acquired by Thomas Little, see Division of Thomas Steele, Richmond County Deeds, September 1844, Book S, p. 19, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

9 Sarah Ann Covington Little's portrait can be seen in Laura McMillan (comp.), The North Carolina Portrait Index, 1700-1860 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 142.

10 Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Richmond County, North Carolina, Population schedule, 94; Slave schedule, 43, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. There was no entry for the Littles in the Agricultural schedule.

11 Will of Thomas Little, 21 June 1854, probated 21 April 1855, Richmond County Wills, Book 4, p. 87, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

12 "Thomas Little, 1855," Richmond County Estates Papers, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

13 Ibid.

14 Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Richmond County, North Carolina, Population schedule, 5; Agricultural schedule, 1; Slave schedule, 9, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

15 Ibid., Slave schedule, 8; Population schedule, 5.

16 Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Richmond County, North Carolina, Population schedule, 2; Agricultural schedule, 1; Products of Industry schedule, 1, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

17 Oscar Penegar to Elizabeth T. Melvin, Historic Preservation Fund of North Carolina, 9 March 1983, copy in Little House file, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. This story and date are also confirmed by Mrs. Hendrix (see note 3).

18 "John P. Little, 1905," Richmond County Estates Papers, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

19 Will of John P. Little, 7 December 1899, probated 10 June 1905, Richmond County Wills, Book 7, p. 95, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
These details are given in the will of Albert J. Little, 14 May 1946, probated 1952, Richmond County Wills, Book 9, p. 175, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Julian H. Little et al to Calvin Little, October 1952, Richmond County Deeds, Book 340, p. 79, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


From a xerox copy of the will, without date or book citation, in the Little House file, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


9. Major Bibliographical References


See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 54 (fifty-four)

Quadrangle name: Mount Gilead East

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification: The fifty-four (54) acre tract is bounded on the east by the Little River, on the south by NC 73, and on the north and west by boundary lines as shown on attached map, and is the amount of land deeded with the house to the Historic Preservation Fund of N. C., Inc.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Marshall Bullock, consultant

organization:

date: 29 August 1984

street & number: P. O. Box 808

telephone: 919-967-6986

city or town: Chapel Hill

state: North Carolina

27514

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

- national
- state
- 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: William S. {signature}

date: Oct. 31, 1984

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

*Durham Morning Sun*, 9 September 1983.

Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Richmond County, North Carolina.


Little House file, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Richmond County, North Carolina.

Richmond County Deeds, Wills, Estates Papers, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Richmond County, North Carolina.
John Phillips Little House
Richmond County, N. C.
Mount Gilead East Quad.
Zone 17  Scale 1:24 000

A 17  598960/3890640
B 17  598250/3890540
C 17  598570/3890100
D 17  597660/3890210