

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National 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 Phifer, John Farm
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	<u>East and west sides of Phifer Road (SR 1977),</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not for publication
city, town	<u>Cleveland</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vicinity
state	<u>North Carolina</u>	code <u>159</u>
code	<u>NC</u>	county <u>Rowan</u>
		zip code <u>27013</u>

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing <u>12</u>	Noncontributing <u>6</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>sites</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>3</u>	<u>structures</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	<u>objects</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>18</u>	<u>11</u> Total

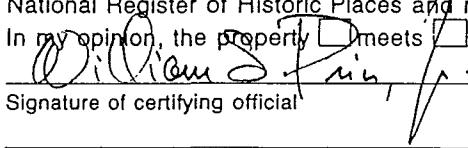
Name of related multiple property listing:

None

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

Date

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)
See continuation sheet

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
See continuation sheet

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: 19th Century Vernacular

Other: 20th Century Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other Metal

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation Sheet

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Cleveland vicinity, Rowan County

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Historic Functions

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
secondary structure
AGRICULTURE: storage
agricultural field
animal facility
agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
secondary structure
AGRICULTURE: storage
agricultural field
animal facility
agricultural outbuilding

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Continuation Sheet**Phifer, John Farm
Cleveland vicinity, Rowan CountySection number 7 Page 1**Architectural Description**

The John Phifer Farm, comprising 234 acres of fields, pastures, and woodlands and some two dozen buildings, is located on Phifer Road (SR 1977), just inside the Rowan-Iredell County line. It is situated in the seemingly remote northwest corner of Rowan County in Scotch-Irish Township; Phifer Road is still a dirt/gravel road as is Rary Road (SR 1978) that heads eastward from Phifer Road within the nominated property. The farm is located on the north side of Fourth Creek and it is watered by two small branches that conjoin just outside the farm boundary and flow southeasterly into Fourth Creek. Set in the gently rolling landscape of the Carolina piedmont, the farm is but four miles from Third Creek Church where the Phifer family has worshipped since 1806 and where many members of the family are buried.

The principal complex of buildings on the farm, including the 1850s Jacob Phifer log house and the third Phifer family residence, erected in 1956, are grouped on the west side of Phifer Road, just above the intersection with Rary Road. The main residence, the 1850s house, and the domestic outbuildings stand together at the center of the complex in the shade of oak, walnut, and pecan trees; the outbuildings form an approximate and inverted L-shape to the west and northwest of the present dwelling with which they combine to enclose its rear yard on three sides. To the north of this domestic cluster is a fenced pasture; inside it are a group of pig sties and the former pantry that has been a feed room since 1956. Downgrade, to the south of the house and the vegetable garden, stands the barn and its attendant farm outbuildings with fenced pasture to the south and west; the pasture, partially shaded by random walnut trees that merge with the edge of the woodlands, continues to the west and northwest, behind the main house. Inside it are the spring house and a blacksmith shop at the east edge of the branch. The ca. 1819 John Phifer House stands on a knoll to the west of the branch. Although separate from the above buildings, it is within easy view whereas the log tobacco barn on the northeast of Phifer Road is entirely separate. There is no formal or symmetrical arrangement to the location of any of these buildings. Instead, they stand where use, tradition, and economy of effort dictate. None of the buildings has been painted, and their weathered appearance gives them a strong unity with the landscape.

1. John Phifer House
ca. 1819
Contributing

Standing on a knoll on the west side of the branch that flows between it and the farm complex begun by Jacob Wilson Phifer, the John Phifer House is the lone building associated with the first forty years of the family's occupation

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of this farm. The house is thought to have been built by Phifer about 1819 when he received a tract of 139 acres from his father. The exact origins of the house remain something of a mystery just as its form is an anomaly in Rowan County architectural history. The house is a small two-story dwelling with its log construction and half-dovetail joints covered by weatherboards; they are nailed to furring strips and it appears that the house was always (or very early on) weatherboarded. Its sills rest on large stones; the side-gable roof is now covered with sheet metal.

The signal feature of the building is the projection of the roof's west gable some four to five feet to engage and protect the chimney. The chimney stands in the center of the west elevation. The lower half of it, comprising the shaft and housing the firebox, is built of field stone that is mortared with clay, probably dug from the banks of the nearby creek. The stack of the chimney begins at a point near the top of the first story and is made of brick. The chimney originally rose up above the weatherboarded gable end and through the roof; apparently the top of the chimney was taken down, to a point below the ridge line, when the present metal roof was installed.

Because of cuts and breaks in the structure of the house, it appears that the present front (south) and rear doors were added in the mid-nineteenth century when the flush board paneling was installed to create the principal room on the first story. They are opposite each other, off-center in each elevation, and open inside to rest against the west face of the partition wall. The rear, north door is board and batten and held by long strap hinges. The front door is likewise unique in the county and is double-leafed in the "Dutch" fashion; it, too, is board and batten. The only window openings on the front elevation are the small window to the east of the front door and a smaller opening to the west of the door high up and immediately under the eave. Both were originally fitted with board and batten blinds; they were never glazed. On the east gable end there is a rectangular opening in the gable. There is a window to the south of the chimney on the first story of the west gable end that is fitted with four-over-four sash. It is contemporary with the interior sheathing. There is also an opening to the east of the chimney on the second level; it is unglazed.

Apparently the interior of the house was one single room until the 1850s when a well-finished room was created out of about two-thirds of the space. The east end of the room is formed by a partition wall that thereby created a small chamber in the east end of the house. The wide logs and their clay chinking are still visible here. The walls of the principal room are flush sheathed with vertical boards that are likewise used to enclose the stair to the second story loft; it is set in the southwest corner of the room. The finish of the first story room is simple and has a slight late-Federal flavor,

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and has equally wide pine boards on the floor. The house was not occupied after 1957 and is maintained and used for storage.

3. The Phifer Siblings' House
1956
Non-contributing

The present family residence, the third successive family house on the farm, was built for Henry, Ralph, and Kathleen Phifer who first occupied it in 1957. The one-and-a-half story frame house rests on a running bond brick foundation and is covered with vinyl siding and a side-gable asphalt shingle roof. It is essentially a rectangular house with an off-center gable roof porch on the three-bay front elevation, a larger gable roof porch occupying the east half of the south elevation, and a small gable roof service ell at the south end of the rear, west elevation. It was originally sheathed with asbestos shingles; the vinyl siding was added in 1986. The window openings contain two-over-two, horizontal sash. The informal interior finish is simple and typical of smaller houses of the 1950s. There are three bedrooms on the first story and two on the second story.

4. The Barn
ca. 1858, with later additions
Contributing

Jacob Wilson Phifer probably built this double-pen log barn within a year or two of his marriage in December 1856 and by 1860 when he had established a separate household. The hewn logs, surely cut from the Phifer woodlands, are joined by a half-dovetail notch. They form individual pens, containing stables on either side of a cutting room, that is set on a north/south axis; the upper levels house haylofts. The barn has weatherboarded gable ends with diamond-shaped ventilator cut-outs in the apex of the gables. The original barn and its encircling sheds are covered with sheet tin. It appears that the immediate sheds across the front (north) and south elevations are likely original to the antebellum construction, and typical of their time. They sheltered the entrances into the stables, the lofts, and the central cutting room. The sheds on the gable ends, covered with weatherboards and varied sheathing, were probably added in the early twentieth century when Robert Wilson Phifer and his five sons worked the place. The broad shed across the entire south elevation of the barn was added in the 1950s by Henry and Ralph Phifer. In use by the family for some 130 years as its principal barn, the building remains remarkably intact despite the need for slight alterations and more substantial additions.

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especially in the profile of the molding around the door in the partition. The mantel appears as something of an afterthought and is later. It consists of a single board shelf supported by simple shaped braces. It is possible that this work was installed about the time of the construction of the larger house east of the branch for Jacob Wilson Phifer. A board and batten door encloses all but the bottom step of the flight of steps that rises west to the corner of the house and then continues to the north. The second story loft of the house is a single space and like the east downstairs chamber has exposed log walls chinked with clay. To the north of the house there is a man-made pile of bricks and nearby a tumbled cluster, now partially overgrown, that are said to have been from the chimney of the long-lost kitchen dependency.

2. Jacob Wilson Phifer House
ca. 1858, moved 1958
Contributing

Thought to have been erected by Jacob Wilson Phifer shortly after his marriage in December 1856, this two-story weatherboarded log house served as the seat of the family farm until 1957. When built it stood immediately south of the present farm seat with its present north gable end facing to the east. An offset one-story bedroom ell was added at the turn of the century to the south (front) elevation; a long two-room ell containing the kitchen and dining room extended to the north, behind it. The kitchen/dining room ell was pulled down in 1956 and the present house was built on a portion of its site; the pantry was saved and moved to the northeast into the pasture and became a feed room (#19). In 1958, or thereabouts, the original house was moved some 200 feet to the southwest to its present location and the front bedroom ell was moved about 100 feet to the northwest and used for canning and storage (#17). The tall two-story log house is rectangular in form, has flush eaves on its gable ends, and is covered with a sheet metal roof. The present east elevation was the front (south) elevation and has a door in the near-center that opened into the living room of the two-room plan house. There is a single window to the right of the door and another window in the center of the second story elevation; both contain four-over-four sash. The main chimney stood in the center of the north (then east) gable end but it was taken down during the move and the wall weatherboarded over on the exterior. There is a single window beside (west of) it, and there is likewise one widow in the south gable end. On the rear (now west) elevation there is a single door directly opposite the front door that connected to the ell and an unglazed opening on the second story. The first story of the house has a two-room plan and is fully sheathed with flush boards. The millwork and mantel have simple vernacular Greek Revival details; the doors are board and batten. A partially enclosed stair rises in the northwest corner of the living room to the second story. The single large room here is sheathed with wide 11- to 12-inch boards

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5. The Tool Shed
1930s
Contributing

Standing due west of the barn, this rectangular frame building stands on cement block piers and is covered with weatherboards and a side-gable sheet metal roof. It was built by Henry and Ralph Phifer as a combination granary, tool shed, and tractor shed. On the north elevation there are paired board and batten doors opening into the single space interior. There is a grain bin in the southeast corner; the Phifers garaged their tractor in the west end. (It is possible that the building was built to house the first tractor bought by the Phifer brothers.)

6. Automobile Garage
Late 1920s/early 1930s
Contributing

This small weatherboarded frame building, erected to house the family automobile, is flush with the ground on the north gable end and rests on low stone stacks at the south. After construction the building was extended by some two feet on the north gable end. The paired board and batten doors in the clipped-corner full-width opening were removed in the 1980s. The building roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

7. Milk Parlor
ca. 1960
Non-contributing

According to Paul Phifer this small weatherboarded frame, two-stall milk parlor was used until 1977 when Henry Phifer sold his small herd of Jersey dairy cattle after his brother's death. The gable-front building rests on a cement block foundation and is covered with sheet metal. The building stands at the edge of the pasture; the cows entered through a sheltered opening on the west side and exited out the south gable end. The interior of the parlor has a poured cement floor and flush sheathed walls. The metal stanchions remain in place.

8. Granary and Corn Crib
ca. 1858 and later
Contributing

The unequal-sized blocks of this double-pen building make it an unusual form among surviving antebellum log farm outbuildings. It is one of three log

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outbuildings erected by Jacob Wilson Phifer in the late 1850s and probably about 1858. It houses both the corn crib and the granary and indicates the small scale of Phifer's farming operations. The pens rest on stone stacks and are positioned to the north and south of the center passage built on an east/west axis. The gable ends are finished with weatherboards and the side-gable roof is covered with sheet metal. The north pen housed the corn crib; it has a single door on the east end. The granary was in the south pen and was entered from a door on the south gable end. The granary door is fitted with hand-forged hardware. In the late 1940s or early 1950s Henry and Ralph Phifer added an L-shaped shed along the north and west sides of the building. It has broad full-width openings at its east and south ends. Just inside the crib there is a ladder to the loft area above the corn crib and granary; just outside the east opening of the shed stands the milk cooler where cans of milk were stored prior to pick-up.

9. Springhouse
ca. 1930
Contributing

Said to have been erected in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the springhouse is a small weatherboarded frame building standing on a partial stone foundation and covered with a sheet metal gable roof. It stands immediately west and downgrade of the Jacob Wilson Phifer House and has a board and batten door and a window opening on the south elevation. On the west gable end, facing the branch, there is a poured concrete cooling trough that was fed from a pipe extending from inside the building.

10. Blacksmith Shop
ca. 1925
Contributing

Standing just a few feet east of the branch, the blacksmith shop is a simple frame building sheathed with wide flush vertical boards. Its upper gable ends are weatherboarded; it is covered with a side-gable sheet metal roof. There is a simple frame shed on the east gable end. A board and batten door near the center of the south elevation opens into the interior that has a dirt floor. It is unclear when the Phifers last practiced blacksmithing here; however, much of the equipment and pieces of forged iron remain.

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11. Chicken House
1930s
Contributing

This building was built to house the laying hens kept by Ida Knox Phifer and her daughter Kathleen. The simple rectangular frame building stands north of the Jacob Wilson Phifer House and is covered with weatherboards and a sheet metal shed roof. There is a board and batten door on the south end of the east elevation and a long screened opening carrying across the middle of the south, front elevation. The wood roosts for the hens remain inside.

12. Log Coop
1930s
Contributing

This small building, having the appearance of a log pig sty, appears to have been built to house chickens. Standing north of the above Chicken House (#11), it is covered with a sheet metal shed roof. The peeled bark logs are joined by round notching. There is a door in the near center of the east end. Inside, roosting poles remain in place above the dirt floor.

13. Wood Shed
ca. 1930
Contributing

Standing to the southwest of the house, the wood shed is a weatherboarded frame building covered with a sheet metal shed roof. The east front of the building has a two-bay division formed by the center support, and is completely open except for a shallow frieze of weatherboards across the top. Inside the dirt-floored building, there is a simple vertical partition forming an approximate one-third/two-thirds division of the space; the larger area is now stacked with neatly chopped wood, much as it has been for the past sixty years. It is possible that the smaller section was reserved for smaller wood, cut for the kitchen cookstove and/or smaller stoves.

14. Pump House
ca. 1956
Non-contributing

The pump house is a simple rectangular cement-block building covered with a gable front roof. The sheet metal roof has clipped rafter ends and projects on the east front to shelter an off-center board and batten door. It has metal windows on the south and west sides, and a poured cement floor.

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15. Smokehouse

ca. 1858

Contributing

Together with the barn and the combined crib/granary, this log building is the third in the complement of log outbuildings that Jacob Wilson Phifer built in the late antebellum period. The simple rectangular building rests on low stone stacks and has logs joined with half-dovetail joints. The gable-front sheet-metal roof projects on the south front to shelter the entrance. It is fitted with a board and batten door. Inside there is one of the old meat boxes. Although called a "smokehouse," the building did not function as a smokehouse; instead, the pork was salt and pepper cured.

16. Chicken House II

ca. 1940

Contributing

Somewhat later than the other chicken house (#11) on the farm, this simple rectangular frame building also stands on stone stacks and is covered with an asphalt shed roof. The weatherboarded building, built by Henry and Ralph Phifer, has a door in the near center of the south front elevation; it is flanked by horizontal bands of glazed and screened openings that carry across the entire facade. It, too, has a wood floor.

17. (Former Bedroom E11) Canning House

ca. 1900, moved 1958

Non-contributing

This small one-room building was the south ell of the log house built about 1858 by Jacob Wilson Phifer. According to family tradition the weatherboarded frame room was built onto the log house near the turn of the century. It might have been added after the marriage of Robert Wilson Phifer and Ida Knox as a bedroom for the newly-wed couple. It was separated from the log house about 1958 and moved here where it has been used for canning and storage. The building has a full-facade shed porch, supported by chamfered posts, across the now south front elevation. The entrance, holding a typical five-panel door, and a window are protected by the porch; there are additional windows in the center of the west and north sides. All windows have plain board surrounds and contain four-over-four sash. The interior is fully sheathed with flush boards.

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18. Fruit House
ca. 1960
Non-contributing

Standing immediately east of the canning house (#17), this rectangular cement block building is covered with an asphalt shingle shed roof. It has a door, to the west of center, on the south, front elevation and small metal windows in the east and west sides. It has a poured cement floor and shelves along the rear, north wall for canned goods. The building was also likely used for root foodstuffs and apples.

19. (former Pantry) Feed Room
ca. 1858, moved 1956
Non-contributing

This small one-story rectangular weatherboarded frame building was originally the pantry of the ca. 1858 Jacob Wilson Phifer House. It stood at the north end of the porch that carried on the east side of the two-room kitchen/dining room ell. In 1956 when the ell was pulled down to build the present farm seat, the pantry was saved and moved into the pasture here where it was used as a feed room for the Phifers' herd of swine and cattle. The building stands on stacks of cement blocks and rocks and is covered with a sheet-metal shed roof. A boxed eave carries across the top of the northeast (earlier east) elevation; in the center of this side there is a four-over-four sash window set in a two-part molded surround. At the west edge of the southeast elevation there is a two, vertical panel Greek Revival style door that earlier opened onto the porch. The interior of the former pantry is flush sheathed with simple Greek Revival millwork.

20. Privy
ca. 1930
Contributing

Standing to the west of the feed room, the privy is a small square frame building covered with flush vertical boards and a sheet metal shed roof. There is a single board and batten door on the south front that opens into the interior with its two-seat wood banquette along the north wall.

21. Pig Sty
ca. 1960s
Non-contributing

Standing to the southwest of the feed room and now much deteriorated, this temporary shelter for swine is a simple frame structure with cedar pole uprights and ventilated horizontal boards penning the four sides. It is covered with a partially lost sheet metal shed roof.

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22. Pig Sty
ca. 1950s
Non-contributing

This deteriorated structure, with its roof lost, was a simple frame pig sty with horizontal boards nailed up with ventilator spaces between them. Unlike the four other sties it had sawn uprights at the corners. All that now survives are those corner verticals and a few boards.

23. Pig Sty
ca. 1950s
Non-contributing

Standing to the northwest of the feed room (#19), this simple frame structure is one of the two most intact pig sties. It has cedar poles at the four corners to which are nailed horizontal flush boards on the sides and rear. There is a single board across the top of the front. It is covered with sheet tin.

24. Pig Sty
ca. 1960s
Non-contributing

With its roof lost this simple frame enclosure consists of cedar pole corner uprights to which are nailed horizontal boards, with spaces between, on four sides.

25. Pig Sty
ca. 1950s
Non-contributing

The general appearance of this sty is similar to #23 and has cedar pole corner posts and flush sheathed side and rear walls. Its shed roof is covered with sheet metal.

26. Scalding Vat
ca. 1935
Contributing

Said to date from the 1930s, this poured cement trough, set into the ground, was used for scalding slaughtered swine prior to scraping the hair from the skin. This was the first stage of the butchering process after which the hog would be hung vertically by its feet and its entrails removed.

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27. Washpot Mount
1930s
Contributing

Having something of the appearance of a barbecue pit this somewhat deteriorated brick structure, with its poured cement slab top, was built as a mount for the cast iron wash pot. In it the family's clothes were boiled and washed prior to the purchase of a washing machine. A brick flue stands at the north end. The wash pot was removed and the site has long since fallen into disuse.

28. (former) Tobacco Barn/Equipment Storage Building
ca. 1895 and later
Contributing

Standing alone on the northeast side of Phifer road, northeast of the farm complex and near the edge of the family property, this log building had an apparently brief tenure as a tobacco barn around the turn of the century. The wide 10- to 12-inch logs are joined by half-dovetail notches. The lower part of the south wall has been cut away so that the building can be used for equipment storage. Weatherboarded frame sheds have been added to the west and east sides and they have full-width openings on the south. A secondary shed has been added to the east side of the east shed. The roofs are all covered with sheet metal.

29. The Farm Landscape
Contributing Site

The John Phifer Farm is located in the gently rolling landscape of northwestern Rowan County on the north side of Fourth Creek and just inside the Rowan-Iredell County line. Its undulating topography includes the house and farm yards, fields, pastures, and woodlands watered by two small branches that conjoin with a third branch to the east of the property and flow southeasterly into Fourth Creek. The twenty-eight buildings included in this nomination all stand in the upper northeast corner of the nominated acreage. All but one--the John Phifer House--stand on the northeast side of the upper branch. To the north, the west, and the south of the house and farm outbuildings, there are pastures that enframe the complex. These partially merge into the woodlands and occupy the northern one-fourth of the nominated acreage. The remaining three-quarters of the farm are occupied by fields and woodlands in an approximate three-to-one ratio. Well into the twentieth century, these fields were farmed with horses and mules. The sizes of the individual fields remained relatively constant even after Henry and Ralph Phifer began farming with a tractor in the 1920s or 1930s. The two brothers farmed the property together for forty years after the death of their father in 1936 and until Ralph Phifer's death in 1978. Thereafter the pace and scale of farming was reduced; Henry Knox Phifer was seventy-two years of age when

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his youngest brother died. Since 1985, most of the open acreage has been leased to area farmers and some of the small fields have been combined into larger ones. Even so the major borders of woodland and field have remained intact just as corn and small grains are still raised here as they were in the early-nineteenth century and antebellum period. A farm lane, belonging to another farmer, forms most of the south border of the farm. On the east side of Phifer Road, that follows a north/south route through the farm for nearly a mile, there is a dirt lane leading to the east to the house built by Matthias Phifer, the progenitor of the Rowan County family who have lived on this property since 1806.

John Phifer Farm: List of Resources

Contributing Buildings

- #1 John Phifer House
- #2 Jacob Wilson Phifer House
- #4 Barn
- #5 Tool Shed
- #6 Automobile Garage
- #8 Granary and Crib
- #10 Blacksmith Shop
- #11 Chicken House
- #15 Smokehouse
- #16 Chicken House II
- #20 Privy
- #28 (former) Tobacco Barn/Equipment Storage Shed

Non-Contributing Buildings

- #3 Phifer Siblings' House
- #7 Milk Parlor
- #14 Pump House
- #17 (former Bedroom Ell) Canning House
- #18 Fruit House
- #19 (former Pantry) Feed Room

Contributing Structures

- #9 Springhouse
- #12 Log Coop
- #13 Wood Shed

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Non-Contributing Structures

- #21 Pig Sty
- #22 Pig Sty
- #23 Pig Sty
- #24 Pig Sty
- #25 Pig Sty

Contributing Objects

- #26 Scalding Vat
- #27 Washpot Mount

Contributing Site

- #29 The Farm

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)

Agriculture
Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1819-1940

Significant Dates

ca. 1819

ca. 1858

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.

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Cleveland vicinity, Rowan CountySection number 8 Page 1**Statement of Significance**

The John Phifer Farm, taking its name from the head of this branch of the Phifer family who acquired the property from his father in 1819 and lived here until his death in 1853, is important in the architectural and agricultural history of Rowan County. It meets Criteria A and C for nomination to the National Register. Matthias Phifer (1771-1852) acquired a tract of 475 acres on the waters of Fourth Creek in 1806 and it was a part of this property that he deeded to his eldest son John Phifer (1793-1853) four years after his marriage in 1815 to Jane Hughey. Here, by 1820, John Phifer built the two-story weatherboarded log house with its engaged gable end chimney that itself survives intact as a landmark in the architectural history of North Carolina. In 1856, Phifer's son Jacob Wilson Phifer (1819-1900) married Martha J. Hughey. Shortly thereafter, he erected a new two-story weatherboarded log dwelling and three log outbuildings that remained the center of his farm until after the turn of the century. That house would continue as the farm seat and the residence of his son Robert Wilson Phifer (1861-1936) and his children until 1956 to 1957 when they erected a new house. These three successive houses, three antebellum log outbuildings, the turn-of-the-century log tobacco barn, and some twenty frame twentieth-century outbuildings survive intact amidst 234 acres of pastures, fields, and woodlands. Here John Phifer and three generations of his descendant family have practiced a successful self-sufficient agriculture, largely separate from the sequential stages in agricultural history seen elsewhere in the county. The weatherboarded log and frame buildings, none of which has ever been painted, reflect an economy of scale, finish, and construction practiced by a single family over 121 years (1819-1940). Their survival and occupation to the present, in the remote and unspoiled landscape of northwestern Rowan County, is a singular instance of the persistence of tradition in the architectural and agricultural history of Rowan County and piedmont North Carolina.

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Cleveland vicinity, Rowan CountySection number 8 Page 2**Historical Background**

The acreage addressed in this nomination includes the land that became the property of John Phifer in 1819 and that has been held by his descendants to the present.¹ Here John Phifer established the farm whereon he would live until his death in 1853. John Phifer's farm was one of five farms, all believed to be contiguous, that were occupied by him and his brothers, the sons of Matthias Phifer. It, alone of the five, is the only one that remains the residence of his descendants.

The land on which John Phifer established his farm, a tract of 139 acres, was a part of the original (first) acreage acquired in Rowan County by his father Matthias Phifer in 1806. Matthias Phifer (1771-1852) was born in Switzerland and emigrated, with his parents and sister, to the United States in 1772. They came into the port of Charleston, S.C., and made their way to Mecklenburg County, N.C. and on to Cabarrus County where other members of the Phifer family were living. What prompted his decision to remove to Rowan County remains unknown, but in 1806 he acquired from James Graham a tract of 475 acres on Fourth Creek in Scotch-Irish Township that became the home tract. When he purchased the land he was still a resident of Cabarrus County but shortly thereafter he moved onto the property. There he built a two-story log house that survives today on an adjacent tract unoccupied but in the ownership of his and John Phifer's descendants.

Matthias Phifer appears to have been married at least once prior to 1790 when he married Leah Wiley. The known surviving sons who occupied the upper northwest corner of Scotch-Irish Township were of that marriage. The eldest of this group was John Phifer who was born in 1793. He was followed by four brothers and at least two sisters: Paul Phifer (1796-1848); Silas Phifer (1798-1886); Benjamin (1804-1882); Margaret A. Phifer (ca. 1806-1885); Mary Phifer (ca. 1808-1885); and Jacob Phifer (ca. 1812/1815-1891). Within this family John, Paul, Silas, and Benjamin established farms adjacent to or nearby that of their father; the houses built by the four were standing as late as 1977, and today only two survive.² Jacob, the youngest son, remained a bachelor at home where he lived with his two maiden sisters, Margaret and Mary.

As noted above, the Phifer family holdings in upper Scotch-Irish Township began with Matthias Phifer's purchase of 475 acres in 1806. By 1820 Phifer expanded his family's holdings here by purchases: in 1811 by the purchase of 67 acres on the north side of Fourth Creek from Robert Hair; in 1817 by the purchase of 91 1/2 additional acres on the north side of Fourth Creek from John B. Burk; and last in 1819 by the purchase of 35 1/2 acres on the creek from the State of North Carolina. In that same year, 1819, Phifer began the

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dispersal of his holdings by the deed of 139 acres to his eldest son John. In 1833 he deeded his fourth son Benjamin a tract of 102 acres. Finally, in 1848 he sold his home tract to his youngest son Jacob who was to care for his sisters. Meanwhile, Phifer's other two sons Paul and Silas had long since established their own farms.

The history of the John Phifer family's occupation of this property can be said to date from his marriage to Jane Hughey (ca. 1791-187?) in 1815. She was a member of a family that would remain prominent in Scotch-Irish Township and the Third Creek Church community through the nineteenth century. At least seven surviving children were born to the couple between 1819 and 1832 or 1833. It is believed that John Phifer erected the two-story log house (#1) here shortly after his marriage and by 1820. During the following decades he farmed the original acreage and through additional acquisitions he was the owner of 417 acres in 1850. In that year he is identified as the head of a nine-member household including his wife and their seven children; although five were above the age of twenty, none had married. This is indicative of two Phifer family traits: late marriage by some members of the family and bachelorhood and spinsterhood by other members of the family.

The 1850 Census, with its component slave and agricultural schedules, provides the first clear insight into the lives of the family occupying this land. In that year John Phifer is listed as a farmer with 125 acres of improved land and 292 unimproved acres; assisting him on the farm were his three sons, Jacob Wilson, John C., and Robert H. who were identified as laborers. The cash value of his farm was \$800, the value of his livestock \$450, and the value of his machinery and farm implements was \$120. Clearly, John Phifer was operating a self-sufficient farm that fed him, his family, and his livestock.⁶

The decade of 1850 to 1860 brought dramatic changes to the family and their lives. On 30 May 1852 the family patriarch, Matthias Phifer, died and was buried at Third Creek Church where he had long been a member. On 25 June 1852, John Phifer's youngest son Robert died at the age of twenty. A year later, in the summer of 1853, John Phifer died. In December 1853 the eldest daughter Maria (1821-1906) married Lewis A. Wilhelm (1830-1917). Three years later in December 1856, at the age of 37, his eldest son Jacob Wilson Phifer (1819-1900) married Martha J. Hughey (1834-1901), the daughter of Jacob Hughey.

In his will, dated 21 April 1853, John Phifer bequeathed to his ". . . beloved wife Jane the land and Plantation whereon I now live containing about one hundred and thirty eight acres, Known as the home tract. . . ." To his two sons Jacob Wilson and John C. Phifer he devised ". . . my tract of land Known as the Hughey tract joining the home tract and Supposed to Contain about Two

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hundred and Seventy nine acres, to be equally divided between my said two sons. . . ." He bequeathed to his four daughters ". . . One Feather Bed Bedstead & furniture . . ." and a side saddle and bridle each. Jane Phifer continued to live in the homeplace and in the 1860 Census she is listed as the head of a household including her daughters Catharine, Sarah, and Leah (Laura) and one John H. Phifer, aged two years.

It was during the three-year period between his marriage in 1856 and the recording of the 1860 Census that Jacob Wilson Phifer built the two-story log house (#2) that remained his family's residence until 1957. Like his childhood home it was weatherboarded on the exterior but on the interior it was better finished with flush board partitions and vernacular Greek Revival woodwork. It is tempting to believe that he was assisted in the erection of the house by his uncle Jacob Phifer who is listed in the 1850 Census as a carpenter. This new log house represented an impressive increase in the family's status. It stood some 1,000 feet east of the earlier house and on the east side of the branch that flowed between the houses. It was here that Jacob Wilson Phifer would construct the log outbuildings that formed the center of his agricultural operations.

The 1860 Census presents a clear description of Jacob Wilson Phifer's life on the eve of the Civil War. His estate was worth more in that year than it would be in any year until his death in 1900. He owned real estate valued at \$2,248 that included 120 acres that were in cultivation and 161 acres that were unimproved. His personal worth was \$4,141; this figure included the worth of his livestock and farm machinery and two male slaves, aged twenty-five and fifteen. In that year his uncle Silas, who lived on the adjoining farm to the east, owned a total of eleven slaves.⁸ The crops of Indian corn, wheat, and oats together with his five milk cows, eight other cattle, eighteen sheep, and forty swine indicate a modest but self-sufficient farm in antebellum Rowan County. Also, by 1860 a son had been born to the couple: Jacob Franklin Phifer was born on 9 August 1859.

The effects of the Civil War forced a marked decline in the value of Jacob Wilson Phifer's estate and it crippled the route of prosperity on which his farm had been embarked. In 1870 his real estate was valued at \$800 and his personal property was valued at \$618. His second son, Robert Wilson Phifer, was born at the outset of the war on 19 September 1861. In the 1870 Census Jacob Wilson Phifer is listed as the head of household #158 in Scotch-Irish Township, that included his wife, two sons, and Alexander Phifer, a fifteen-year old Black farm laborer. Household #159 was headed by his mother Jane; it included her two unmarried daughters. In the immediate vicinity there were three additional related Phifer family households plus two households of Blacks, headed by former slaves, who had adopted the family surname.

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Changes continued for the family in the 1870s. Two daughters were born to Martha and Jacob Wilson Phifer: Mollie Catherine was born on 11 June 1871, and Elizabeth Jane ("Lizzie") was born on 25 August 1874. Sometime in the mid-1870s and prior to March 1878 Jane Hughey Phifer, the widow of John Phifer and the matriarch of his branch of the family, died. The date of her death is unknown as is the place of her burial, but presumably it would have been beside her husband and probably in a now-unknown Hughey Family graveyard. In March 1878 Catharine Phifer Corzine and Maria Phifer Wilhelm sold their brother Jacob Wilson their individual one-fifth interests in the original family tract. His unmarried sisters, Sarah and Leah, likewise deeded him their collective three-fifths interest in May; however, he, in turn, deeded them back a portion representing two-fifths (54 acres) of the original tract. It appears likely that this later noted tract was the land on which John Phifer's house stands and where the unmarried sisters continued to make their home. Thus, by 1878, the conditions were established under which Martha and Jacob Wilson Phifer would continue their lives on the farm.¹⁰

The Population Schedule of the 1880 Census lists six Phifer families living adjacent to each other on Fourth Creek in upper Scotch-Irish Township. Silas Phifer (1798-1886) is head of household #182; Smart Phifer, a former slave, is head of household #183; Jacob Phifer (ca. 1812/1815-1891) is head of household #184; Jacob Wilson Phifer is head of household #185 that included his wife, their four children, and Henry Wilson, a twenty-two year old laborer; Sarah Phifer, at the age of 51, is the head of household #186 and living in the John Phifer House (#28); and ¹¹John C. Phifer, Jacob Wilson and Sarah's brother, is head of household #187.

During the years from 1880 until 1900 events occurred that set the pattern for the family's life on this farm and established the size of the farm acreage for the first decades of the twentieth century. In February 1887 Jacob Wilson and his brother John C. exchanged tracts of land of some 140 acres each, and in 1889 Jacob Phifer sold a tract of fifty-eight acres for \$400 to Jacob Wilson Phifer.¹² The more significant event in this period was not a land transaction but a marriage ceremony. On 14 March 1895, Robert Wilson Phifer, then forty-three years of age, married Ida M. Knox who was then twenty-one. Their marriage produced seven children, all of whom remained unmarried and lived with their parents on the farm. In 1900 Robert Wilson Phifer was listed as the head of the seven-member household occupying the 1850s log house (#2). His father Jacob Wilson Phifer, then apparently enfeebled, would die before the year was out, on 28 December. His widow Martha Jane lived on here with her son's family for another year, dying on 5 December 1901; she was interred beside her husband in the cemetery at Third Creek Presbyterian Church, about four miles from the farm on which they had lived together for forty-four

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years. The Census of 1900 also listed Robert Wilson's first three children: Kathleen (born on 19 September 1896);¹³ Robert B. (born 27 August 1898); and Joseph Wilson (born 28 March 1900).

On the 28th of April 1899 Jacob Wilson Phifer wrote his will. The first item in the will uses typical language that reinforces the tradition of the family. "It is my will that everything remain just as it is at my death, both personal and Real estate during the time my wife Martha J. Phifer lives or remains my widow and at her death to be disposed of as follows (:) 2nd I give to and devise to my son Robert W. Phifer my home place containing seventy Eight acres more or less and also thirty acres more to be cut off of the tract of land that J. F. Phifer lives on by running a line East and West giving him the south end in woodland (;) 3rd I give and devise to my son J. F. Phifer all the tract of land on which he now lives except the thirty acres cut off for R. W. Phifer containing one hundred and twelve acres more or less(.)" He also gave his sons his "blacksmith Idols and Wagon" and to J. F. Phifer, his executor, he bequeathed his interest in a threshing machine. Phifer's two daughters, Mary C. Hall and Lizzie J. Gaither, were each to receive a total of \$200 each to be paid to them by their brothers.¹⁴

After the death of his parents in 1900 and 1901, Robert Wilson Phifer (1861-1936) and his wife Ida (1874-1951) lived on here in his childhood home and raised their family. It would appear that they continued the agricultural practices of the earlier generation; the only real change was the addition of tobacco as a cash crop at the turn of the century. During the first decade of the twentieth century four additional children were born to the family: Walter Howard (born 5 March 1902); Henry Knox (born 28 September 1903); Sarah (born 1 June 1905); and Ralph (born 15 May 1909). Their lives continued apace until the death of little Sarah on 9 September 1913 at the age of eight years. But in the 1920s a cruel twist of fate struck the family. Within three and a half years the couple's three eldest sons all died at the age of twenty-four: Robert B. died on 23 December 1922; Joseph Wilson died on 19 June 1924; and Walter Howard died on 31 March 1926. All were buried at Third Creek Church. For the next ten years, until Robert Wilson's death on 4 April 1936, the reduced group of five lived on the family farm. The three unmarried siblings--Kathleen, Henry, and Ralph--continued on here with their mother until her death on 26 April 1951.

Except for the natural forces of life and death and the modest changes in a primarily self-sufficient agriculture with some small-scale cash crops, life on the Phifer Farm continued with little interruption day by day, week by week, and year by year. During the course of the preceding hundred years, outbuildings had been added to the growing farm complex, first of log and later frame. The first visible change in the appearance of the place came in

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1956 when the brothers and sister decided to build a new house (#3). A one-story wing extending from the north side of the old house (#2) was pulled down and a one-and-a-half story frame house was erected immediately beside the century-old weatherboarded log house. The family moved into the new house in 1957. Shortly thereafter the log house was moved about two hundred feet to the southwest and a secondary ell (#17) was separated and moved to the northwest. The old house was never again occupied. Although there were two cement block buildings (#14 and #18) added afterward, for use as pump and fruit houses, the appearance of the farm changed little in the next thirty years.

Ralph, the youngest of the children, died first on 1 September 1976. Kathleen ("Kattie") died five years later on 14 August 1981. Henry, the last of the siblings, died on 30 August 1984. As the residual heir of his father who had left no will, Henry, at his death, was the sole owner of the John Phifer Farm. It included nearly 300 acres on which stood the two nineteenth-century log houses, the 1956 residence, and a group of some twenty-three outbuildings. Of near equal importance were the household furnishings and agricultural implements and machinery that had been acquired, made by the family, and used here for an uninterrupted period of 165 years.¹⁵ Henry Knox Phifer bequeathed the house tract that included all the buildings and the farm machinery and equipment to Paul Franklin Phifer (born 25 January 1932). He was the son of Henry's cousin Daniel Boone Phifer (1899-1974) and his wife Zeldia Lea Bollinger (1900-1972) and the grandson of Jacob Franklin Phifer (1859-1932)--the eldest son of John Wilson Phifer (1819-1900). The remaining farm acreage was willed jointly to Paul Phifer and his cousin John Frank Phifer, the son of John Wilson Phifer (1891-1969) who was the son of Jacob Franklin Phifer and the namesake of his grandfather Jacob Wilson Phifer (1819-1900). Paul Phifer and his wife Brenda Carol Bradshaw (born 7 October 1940) moved into the 1956 dwelling on 4 July 1985 and have made their home here on the ancestral farm.¹⁶

Architectural Context and Significance

The John Phifer Farm, consisting of two successive nineteenth century log houses, three-nineteenth century log outbuildings including a double pen barn and a crib and granary, more than a dozen frame outbuildings, and some 234 acres of pasture, fields, and woodlands, is one of the most important farm complexes in Rowan County, North Carolina. It is also, arguably, one of the more representative and significant nineteenth century farm complexes in piedmont North Carolina. Its importance in North Carolina architectural history does not reside in the collective value of the log and frame buildings alone. The John Phifer House (#1), thought to have been erected about 1819, possesses Statewide architectural significance as one of the very few known early-nineteenth century houses with an engaged stone and brick chimney, here on its west gable end. The occurrence of this late-Medieval European building

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form in early-nineteenth century Rowan County is the only existing example in the county¹⁷ and one of less than a half-dozen known similar examples in North Carolina.

Although some modest alterations have been made to the fabric of the house, mostly on the interior, it survives remarkably well-preserved to the present. This high state of architectural integrity is due, in large part, to the fact that the house appears to have ceased being used as a dwelling house in the very late nineteenth century, probably following on the deaths of the maiden sisters Sarah and Leah Phifer. The rectangular weatherboarded frame house is covered by a side gable roof that projects on the west gable end for some four to five feet to protect and engage the stone and brick chimney in the center of the elevation. The lower shaft of the chimney, containing the fireplace, is stone, mortared with clay probably dug from the bank of the branch below (east of) the house. The brick stack is possibly a later-nineteenth century replacement, but whether it replaced an original brick, stone, or stick chimney remains unknown.

As explained above, the John Phifer House (#1) is one of a very few known examples in North Carolina of a house whose side-gable roof engages and protects an exterior end chimney. The only other known, closely-related, intact example of an engaged gable-end chimney in the Piedmont is found on the kitchen of the David Melton House. The house and kitchen, thought to have been built in the late 1820s or early 1830s stand on a hill above the Pee Dee River in Stanly County. The dry-laid coursed slate rocks of the chimney are protected by the projecting weatherboarded gable end in a manner remarkably like the same feature on the John Phifer House. There are two related examples in western North Carolina but they are not as developed as the Piedmont examples and they lack integrity. One is the two-story log house reconstructed at the Zebulon Vance Birthplace State Historic Site to replicate the actual birthplace that was torn down in the 1890s. Its roof projects to engage a brick chimney that is said to be from the original nineteenth-century house. A single board brace carries across the face of the chimney stack in the gable end; it is not weatherboarded over as are the Piedmont examples. The manner in which the side-gable roof projects to engage the reconstructed stone chimney on the relocated Alonzo Allison log house at Old Fort in McDowell County is similar.¹⁸ Within this small group of related peers the John Phifer House stands alone.

The John Phifer House is altogether a more important building when it is considered in the context of building in early-nineteenth century Rowan County. It is one in what Davyd Foard Hood describes as "The second stage of log construction in the county (which) included the better and later log houses which form the second and third generation of building in the county and are contemporaries of the oldest frame and brick houses. These compose an

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important group of structures constituting a large and significant part of the historic architectural fabric of the county."¹⁹ Matthias Phifer's house of ca. 1806 (on an adjacent parcel and not included in this nomination) is also prominent in this group. It is also useful to note that the John Phifer House is nearly contemporary with Mt. Vernon, the unusually handsome Federal plantation house erected but a few miles away for Jacob Krider, another member of Third Creek Presbyterian Church.²⁰ The nearly-concurrent building of these two houses in the Third Creek Church community, totally different in their appearance, scale, finish, and costliness, is indicative of the broad range and patterns of building in Rowan County in the early national period.

The Jacob Wilson Phifer log house (#2) is one in a small group of late log dwellings, including the Joseph H. Mingus House,²¹ erected in antebellum Rowan County and the North Carolina piedmont. By the 1850s the greater majority of residential construction in eastern and piedmont North Carolina was of sawn lumber. Nevertheless, within small isolated rural communities the traditional methods of building with logs remained a viable choice for the small farmer. That was the case for Jacob Wilson Phifer; however, the contemporary house built in 1854-1856 by James Graham for Robert Knox (1804-1885) as the seat of his larger farm was a weatherboarded frame house.²² Knox and Phifer were both members of Third Creek Presbyterian Church. Weatherboarded log construction was also a likely choice for Phifer for yet other reasons. First was the fact that his grandfather Matthias Phifer's house was weatherboarded log, as was his own childhood home and the nearby residence of his uncle Silas Phifer (1798-1886). The stands of virgin trees then on the farm provided him with a bounty of building timbers. The flush-sheathed interior of the two-room plan house with its corner stair and vernacular Greek Revival woodwork was also typical of small log houses of antebellum Rowan County. Tradition still held on the second story where the entire space was a single room with wide twelve-inch flush sheathing and similar pine floors.

Writing in "The Landscape of an Agrarian Society," a chapter in THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, Hood specifically cited the (John) Phifer Farm and the Knox Family Farm as significant examples of ". . . the largest and most significant farm complexes in the county . . . found on farms which have enjoyed the longest continuity of family ownership and operation." The outbuildings making up the John Phifer Farm are likewise representative of his description of the farm complex. "On many of the county farms the complex of buildings dates from several generations of ownership and exhibits a variety of construction techniques as well as variance in the sophistication of execution. Not unexpectedly the sophistication and quality of construction reflect the economic conditions of the time as well as the size and production capacity of the farm."²³

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The complex of three intact antebellum log outbuildings on the John Phifer Farm, once typical of most early-nineteenth century and antebellum Rowan County farms, is a rare and important example. Together with the existence here of the two log dwellings and the fact that the barn and the granary and crib have remained in use to the present, the complex has an even greater significance. The principal farm outbuilding was always the barn and here the double-pen log barn (#4) is typical of a great number of such barns erected in Rowan County in the nineteenth century. It was probably erected in the late antebellum period when, after 1856, Jacob Wilson Phifer established his farm on the east side of the branch flowing southeasterly through his lands to Fourth Creek. Unlike its contemporaries, many of which have been torn down on the other county farms, the great barn (#4) at the John Phifer Farm has remained in constant daily use as the one and only barn on the farm. The sheds encircling three of its elevations have been extended over the years to accommodate the increasing number of cattle. The double-pen building (#8) containing the unequal-sized pens for the corn crib and the granary is one of the few such combined-use buildings in this form in the county. Typically both of the double pens of such a building would have been used as corn cribs; however, the single crib here and the larger granary block are important evidence of the small scale of Jacob Wilson Phifer's farming operations from the 1850s through the remainder of the nineteenth century. The third log outbuilding here is the smokehouse (#15). As a log building form it, together with the double pen log barn and the double pen crib, formed the dominant trio of log outbuildings on any Rowan County farm. The smokehouse, with its single door on the south, projecting gable end, stood to the west of the two-story log house (#2) erected by Jacob Wilson Phifer, probably about the time of his marriage to Martha J. Hughey in December 1856.

The log outbuildings erected by Jacob Wilson Phifer well-served the family into the early twentieth century; however, the complex of outbuildings was substantially increased by the frame buildings erected during the ownership of the farm by Robert Wilson Phifer from 1901 to 1936, and afterward by his wife and children. These simple frame buildings, erected in the 1920s, the 1930s, and thereafter, are representative of like frame outbuildings erected elsewhere in Rowan County during that period. The tool shed (#5), the wood shed (#13), the garage (#6), and the poultry houses (#11 and #16) are typical farm outbuildings covered by shed or gable roofs and well within the pattern of traditional building on smaller farms in early-twentieth century Rowan County. Their significance lies in their perpetuation of traditional construction practices and their co-existence here with the earlier generation of log buildings. The exceptional individual buildings in this group are the blacksmith shop (#10) and the spring house (#9) that are rare surviving buildings of their type in Rowan County and the region.

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Whereas the house and outbuildings built by Jacob Wilson Phifer and his descendants are important as well-preserved examples of their type and are significant for their representative qualities, the house (#1) built about 1819 by John Phifer is important for its unique character. Prior to the architectural survey of 1977 the building was unknown to anyone outside the family. Its significance was immediately recognized; the John Phifer Farm was included on a one-day tour of Rowan County buildings by the Vernacular Architecture Forum on 1 April 1982 during its third annual conference.²⁴

Agricultural Context and Significance

Although the period of significance for the John Phifer Farm begins in 1819 when he received a tract of 139 acres from his father, there is little reliable information on the agricultural history of the family operations until 1850. Clearly Phifer farmed a portion of his lands immediately on assuming title to the property; that same year a son was born to him and his wife of four years and he was responsible for the livelihood of his family. The statistics in the Agricultural Schedule for the 1850 Census and those that follow until 1880 indicate that John Phifer and his son Jacob Wilson operated a small but successful self-sufficient farm. The scale and size of the outbuildings erected on the farm by Jacob Wilson Phifer, his son Robert Wilson Phifer, and his grandsons are evidence that the successive generations of the Phifer family who lived here made little alteration to the pursuit of agrarian self-sufficiency.

In 1850, three years before his death, John Phifer owned 417 acres of land. He had 125 improved acres while 292 acres remained unimproved and woodlands. Surprisingly, he farmed that acreage with but the help of his three sons; he did not own slaves. These acreages were substantially above those for Rowan County farms that, on average, had 97 acres in cultivation and pasture and 136 unimproved acres. The value of his farm, including the improvements and implements, was below the average of \$1,081. The cash value of his farm was \$800, about \$2.00 an acre, and the value of his farm implements was \$120. He owned livestock valued at \$450 that included five horses, three milk cows, three other cattle, twenty-eight sheep, and forty-six swine. The only surprising figures are the number of swine and sheep; wool, mutton, and pork may well have been his only cash crop. Phifer's twenty-eight sheep were nearly five times the county average of six per farm; the average Rowan farm had twenty-seven swine. He had raised 150 bushels of wheat, 600 bushels of Indian corn, and 200 bushels of oats. These grains and corn were the mainstays of farm produce in nineteenth century Rowan County regardless of the size of any farm. The average production of these crops on Rowan County farms was 81 bushels of wheat; 505 bushels of Indian corn; and 133 bushels of rye and oats.²⁵

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In addition to the fact that John Phifer had died in 1853 and that his principal holding was being farmed by his son Jacob Wilson in 1860, there were other changes in the farm evident in the Agricultural Schedule of the 1860 Census. Jacob Wilson Phifer reported his ownership of 120 improved acres and 161 unimproved with a value of \$2,248. It seems likely that those numbers included his mother's acreage that he was farming for her. These figures are remarkably close to those for the average Rowan County farm that had a cash value of \$2,251, 105 improved acres, and 152 unimproved acres. Although the arrival of the Western North Carolina Railroad in Salisbury in 1855 brought widespread prosperity to both town and rural residents, part of the increased value of Phifer's real estate surely reflected the construction of his new house, barn, granary and crib, and smokehouse. He operated his farm with the help of two male slaves, aged twenty-five and fifteen; his farm implements and machinery were valued at \$135, whereas the county average was \$114. His livestock, valued at \$796, included five horses, five milk cows, eight other cattle, eighteen sheep, and forty swine. These figures are mostly double the county average except for the number of sheep; Phifer's eighteen sheep were three times the county average of six per farm. From them he garnered thirty pounds of wool. The average Rowan County farm had twenty swine. Clearly pork was a cash product as it was in 1850. He reported growing 150 bushels of wheat, 800 bushels of Indian corn, and 200 bushels of oats. The average production of these crops on a Rowan County farm was 155 bushels of wheat, 391 bushels of corn, and 58 bushels of oats.²⁶ It would appear that the high production of corn was necessary to feed his swine; the oats may have been a cash crop or mostly fed to his horses and sheep.

During the next twenty years there was little apparent change in the operation of the farm despite the fact that in 1880 he reported only ninety acres in cultivation and pasture and seventy acres of woodland. The value of the farm dropped to \$1,000; his farming equipment and machinery was valued at \$120. These figures and those for the crops of wheat, Indian corn, and oats he grew to feed his family and livestock confirm a relative sameness in his agricultural practices. Although Jacob Wilson Phifer's activities remained largely those practiced by his father some fifty years before, there were important changes occurring in the agricultural landscape of Rowan County. Between 1860 and 1880 the number of farms nearly doubled from 1,299 to 2,467. Equally as telling is the drop in the average improved acreage per farm in Rowan County, from 105 acres in 1860 to 44.66 acres in 1880. There was a comparable drop in the average of unimproved acreage per farm from 152 acres in 1860 to 70.75 acres in 1880. While Jacob Phifer's unimproved holding was exactly the county average, he was farming double the acreage of the average county farmer. The value of his farm was \$1,000 compared to the county average of \$947.51; his equipment was valued at \$120. His four horses, two milk cows, three other cattle, sixty-five swine, and the barnyard and range

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poultry had a value of \$381. The surprising number in that group is the sixty-five swine; the average number per farm in the county was 8.5. Again, while the nature of farming was changing in the county around him Jacob Phifer held to family tradition and continued to raise pork as a cash product. He also reported ²⁷ sixty pounds of butter, twenty-one pounds of cheese, and 500 (?) dozen eggs.

The statistics cited above reflect the family's continued operation of a self-sufficient farm and the raising of sufficient cash crops/products to purchase such goods as could not be raised on the farm. This well-established pattern would see little change through the first four decades of the twentieth century except for the addition of motor-driven machinery. Even so, the scale of the farm remained largely the same. Tobacco was added as a cash crop for a period around the turn of the century, but it was not viable for long and the log tobacco barn (#28) has long since been used for equipment and machinery storage. The hand-milking of cows was superseded by a milking parlor (#7) with vacuum milkers in the late 1950s or early 1960s; but that was discontinued after Ralph Phifer's death in 1976. Ida Phifer and her daughter Kathleen continued the family practice of keeping laying hens and selling eggs. Likewise, the raising of swine was an important part of the farm production until very recent years. Although the five pig stys (#21-#25) were erected after 1940, outside the period of significance for the farm, they are structures that reflect the family's uninterrupted raising of swine since at least 1850. The remarkable degree of integrity, tradition, and the persistence of sameness, that marked the operation of the John Phifer Farm from 1850 through the following century, continued up to Henry Knox Phifer's death in 1984.

The widespread existence of the semi-isolated self-sufficient farm was a traditional feature of piedmont and western North Carolina agriculture in the nineteenth century. Gradually, in the twentieth century, the majority of these farms were brought into the mainstream and conventional practice of agriculture in the state. The John Phifer Farm was an exception. It remained largely self-sufficient, somewhat isolated in this seemingly remote corner of Rowan County, and it reflected a method of agriculture and a way of living that involved the combined efforts of family members who as often as not remained unmarried. In fact, Robert Wilson Phifer's marriage in 1896 to Ida M. Knox was the last marriage in that line of the John Phifer family. In retrospect, there is a curious poignancy to the request that Jacob Wilson Phifer wrote into his will in 1899, asking ". . . that everything remain just as it is at my death. . . ." In truth, it would for the next eighty-four years, and this important group of buildings survive as evidence of the exceptional life lived at the John Phifer Farm.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Rowan County Deed Book 25, pp. 154-155, Office of the Register of Deeds, Rowan County Office Building, Salisbury, N.C. Volumes in the series will hereinafter be referred to as Deed Book.
2. Davyd Foard Hood. THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY: A CATALOGUE AND HISTORY OF SURVIVING 18TH, 19TH, AND EARLY-20TH CENTURY STRUCTURES (Salisbury, Rowan County Historic Properties Commission, 1983), pp. 104-106, 117-118. Hereinafter cited as Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY.
3. Deed Book 23, pp. 196-197. Genealogical information on the first, second, and third generations of the Phifer Family who occupied this property was supplied in part by the family. The most comprehensive genealogical information on Matthias Phifer and his sons is a series of family charts prepared by Mary Jane Fowler of Salisbury, North Carolina who provided me with photocopies of the charts for Matthias, John, Paul, and Silas Phifer. The photocopies and all notes of conversations and interviews conducted for this nomination are in the file for the property in the Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, N.C. The last family occupants of the Matthias Phifer House were Elizabeth Jane Phifer (1874-1942), the daughter of Jacob Wilson Phifer, and her husband James L. Gaither (1870-1940). It is not included in this nomination because of lack of cooperation by the owner.
4. There are discrepancies in the birth dates and ages of Margaret, Mary, and Jacob Phifer in the successive nineteenth century censuses. The approximate birth dates are those based on the 1850 Census. The houses built by John Phifer and his brother Benjamin still stand on Phifer Road. The Benjamin Phifer House has passed out of the family, has been altered and expanded, and is occupied. The weatherboarded log house built by Silas Phifer was dismantled in 1977 and rebuilt elsewhere in the county; the log outbuildings were also taken down, moved, and re-erected elsewhere. The house built for the Rev. Paul Phifer, a handsome Federal period two-story-with-attic house and the most architecturally stylish of the quintet, has also been lost.
5. Deed Book 23, p. 343 (Hair to Phifer); Deed Book 24, p. 623 (Burk to Phifer); Deed Book 31, p. 483 (State to Phifer); Deed Book 25, pp. 154-155 (Matthias Phifer to John Phifer); Deed Book 32, p. 187 (Matthias Phifer to Benjamin Phifer); Deed Book 38, p. 336 (Matthias Phifer to Jacob Phifer).
6. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Rowan County, North Carolina: Population, Agricultural, and Slave Schedules.

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7. Rowan County Will Book K, p. 152, Office of the Clerk of Court, Rowan County Court House, Salisbury, North Carolina. Volumes in the series will hereinafter be cited as Will Book.
8. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Rowan County, North Carolina: Population, Agricultural, and Slave Schedules.
9. Ninth Census of the United States, Rowan County, North Carolina: Population Schedule. Genealogical information on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth generations of the Phifer Family who have occupied this property was obtained from the Jacob Franklin Phifer BIBLE and the Robert Wilson Phifer BIBLE; both are the property of Paul Franklin Phifer, Cleveland, North Carolina, the current co-owner of the John Phifer Farm. Black members of the Phifer Family eventually settled in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century near each other some three to four miles to the south on old US 70 in an area that came to be known as Phifertown. The principal survivor of this Black community is Knox Grove Baptist Church that stands north of the settlement.
10. Deed book 56, pp. 48-49 (Corzine to Phifer); Deed Book 56, pp. 46-47 (Wilhelm to Phifer); Deed Book 56, pp. 51-52 (Sarah and Leah Phifer to J. W. Phifer); Deed Book 56, pp. 49-50 (J. W. Phifer to Sarah and Leah Phifer).
11. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Rowan County, North Carolina; Population and Agricultural Schedules.
12. Deed Book 69, pp. 353-354 (J. C. Phifer to J. W. Phifer); Deed Book 69, p. 355 (J. W. Phifer to J. C. Phifer); Deed Book 72, p. 311 (Jacob Phifer to J. W. Phifer).
13. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Rowan County, North Carolina: Population Schedule.
14. Will Book 3, pp. 407-408.
15. The household furnishings were sold at public auction on 15 September 1984. It is the family's understanding that Henry Phifer intended for the family furnishings to pass with the homeplace to Paul Franklin Phifer; however, an error in the language of the will resulted in the sale of the household furnishings by the order of the deceased's attorney and executor two weeks after Henry Phifer's death.

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16. Will Book 84 E, p. 576.
 17. This group includes the kitchen on the David Melton House in Stanly County.
 18. According to Donna Dodenhoff, who has conducted a comprehensive survey of historic buildings in Stanly County, David Melton is believed to have established his residence and built his house between 1825 and 1835. The chimney is built of horizontal courses of slate rock. The house was occupied by the family until the 1950s. The reconstructed log house, recalling the dwelling in which Zebulon Vance was born on 13 May 1830, is the principal dwelling at the State Historic Site that was nominated to the National Register in 1972 but rejected. Alonzo Allison built his small log house on Cane Creek about 1860. It stood approximately four miles east of Old Fort but was recently moved into town and stands adjacent to another local log dwelling.
 19. Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, p. 21.
 20. Mt. Vernon was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.
 21. The Joseph H. Mingus Farm was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.
 22. Third Creek Presbyterian Church and Cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. Davyd Foard Hood, THIRD CREEK CHURCH (Statesville; Brady Printing Co., 1985). The Knox Farm Historic District was nominated and listed in the National Register in 1983.
 23. Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, p. 20.
 24. This tour was organized and led by Davyd Foard Hood.
 25. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Rowan County, North Carolina: Agricultural and Slave Schedules.
 26. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Rowan County, North Carolina: Agricultural and Slave Schedules.
 27. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Rowan County, North Carolina: Agricultural Schedule. "500" appears to be the correct figure; however, there is a smudge on either the microfilm or the original copy.

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:

Survey and Planning Branch

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 234.734 acres

UTM References

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

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property included in this nomination for the John Phifer Farm consists of two adjoining parcels: outlined on the enclosed, parcel 3 on Rowan County Tax Map #726, and parcel 2 on Rowan County Tax Map #727. The north end of the latter parcel appears on Rowan County Tax Map #726, immediately south of and adjoining parcel 3. A sketch map of the farm complex is also included with this nomination.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property being nominated comprises 234.734 acres of the farm's total 297.409 acres that were intact at Henry Phifer's death in 1984. A tract of 62.675 acres at the north end of the farm, designated as Tract A in the Henry Phifer Estate settlement, was subdivided and sold in 1985. The majority of the 234+ acres have been in the family and associated with this farm since 1819.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood, Architectural Historian
organization _____ date 22 August 1990
street & number 7360 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-1847
city or town Vale state North Carolina zip code 28168

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Fleming, John Kerr. HISTORY OF THE THIRD CREEK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. Cleveland, N.C.: Third Creek Presbyterian Church, 1967.

Fowler, Mary Jane. Manuscript genealogical charts for Matthias, John, Paul, and Benjamin Phifer. These charts are based on the extended private research into Rowan County families by Miss Fowler during the past dozen years. The original manuscript charts are in the possession of Miss Fowler, Salisbury, North Carolina. The photocopies made available to Davyd Foard Hood are in the John Phifer Farm file.

Hood, Davyd Foard. THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY: A CATALOGUE AND HISTORY OF SURVIVING 18TH, 19TH, AND EARLY-20TH CENTURY STRUCTURES. Salisbury: Rowan County Historic Properties Commission, 1983.

Jacob Franklin Phifer Family BIBLE, in the possession of Paul Franklin Phifer, Cleveland, North Carolina.

Paul Franklin Phifer, interviewed by Davyd Foard Hood, Cleveland, North Carolina, 6 July 1990 and 14 August 1990; interview notes in the John Phifer Farm file, N.C. Division of Archives and History (Survey Branch).

Robert Wilson Phifer Family BIBLE, in the possession of Paul Franklin Phifer, Cleveland, North Carolina.

Rowan County Records, Office of the Clerk of Court, Rowan County Courthouse, Salisbury, North Carolina (Subgroup: Wills).

Rowan County Records, Office of the Register of Deeds, Rowan County Office Building, Salisbury, North Carolina (Subgroup: Deeds).

United States Census Office. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Rowan County North Carolina, Population, Agricultural, and Slave Schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Rowan County, North Carolina, Population, Agricultural, and Slave Schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Rowan County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Rowan County, North Carolina, Population and Agricultural Schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Rowan County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.

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Photographs

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John Phifer Farm

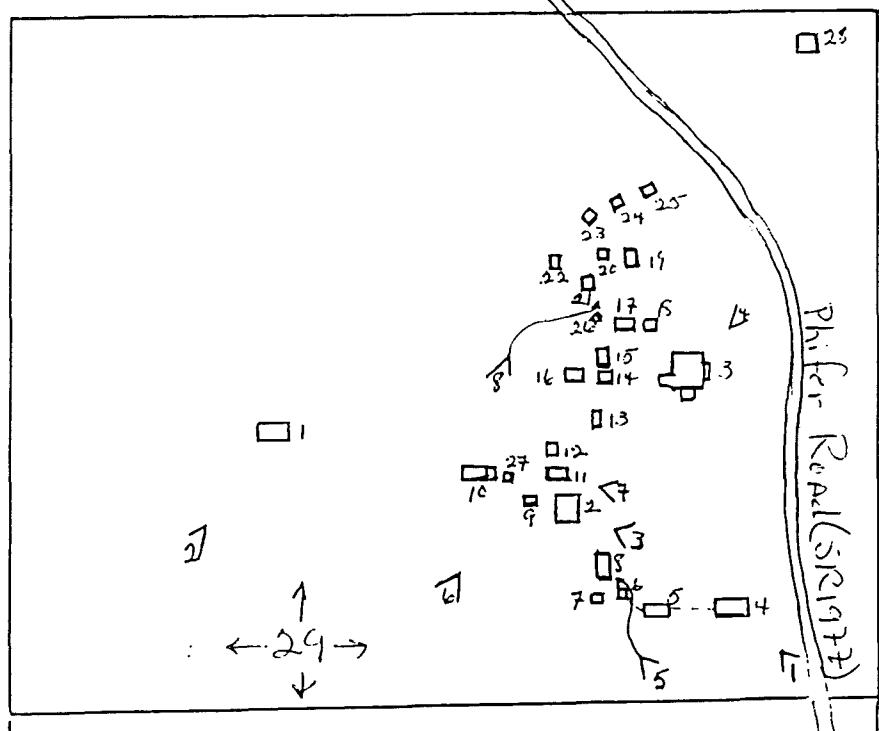
East and West sides of Phifer Road (SR 1977). at junction with Rary Road (SR 1978)
Rowan County. North Carolina

All negatives are on file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

Schedule of Photographs

1. View of the Phifer Siblings' House, the Barn, and adjacent agricultural outbuildings, from the southeast. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.
2. John Phifer House, from the southwest. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.
3. Jacob Wilson Phifer House, from the southeast. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.
4. Phifer Siblings' House, from the northeast. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.
5. Granary and Corn Crib, from the southeast. Davyd Foard Hood, 30 June 1981.**
6. Rear view of the farm complex, from the southwest, including, left to right: Blacksmith Shop, Washpot Mount, Chicken House II, Smokehouse, Log Coop, Chicken House, Springhouse, Jacob Wilson Phifer House. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.
7. Chicken House and Log Coop, from the southeast. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.
8. (former Pantry) Feed Room and Pig Stys, from the south. Davyd Foard Hood. 23 July 1990.

**Although this photograph is nine years old, site visits in 1990 confirm that it continues to portray the resource accurately.



John Phifer Farm
Rowan County

Phifer Road (SP 1978)

Rooster of Buildings

1. John Phifer House
2. Jacob Wilson Phifer House
3. Phifer Siblings' House
4. Barn
5. Coal Shed
6. Automobile Garage
7. Milk Parlor
8. Granary/Corn Crib
9. Spring House
10. Blacksmith Shop
11. Chicken House
12. Hog Cep
13. Wood Shed
14. Pump House
15. Smokehouse
16. Chicken House II
17. (former Bedroom II) Canning House
18. Fruit House
19. (former Pantry) Feed Room
20. Pigsty
21. Pigsty
22. Pigsty
23. Pigsty
24. Pigsty
25. Pigsty
26. Soda/Fridge Unit
27. Washout Mount

28. (former) Tobacco Barn
Equipment Storage Building
29. The Farm

✓ = photograph

Daryl Foard House
24 September 1980

PHIFER, JOHN, FARM
CLEVELAND VIC, NC
COOL SPRINGS Quad
ZONE 17

A: N 3960240
E 525320

B: N 3958500
E 525245

C: N 3958500
E 524695

D: N 3960260
E 524760

