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 Watso	on, John House		
other names/site number Burwe	ell House		
2. Location			
	tway Burwell Rd	., 4 m w of NC 401	NAnot for publication
city, town warrenton			x vicinity
state North Carolinæode	NC county	Warren code 18	5 zip code 27589
3. Classification		and the second	
Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Res	ources within Property
X private	building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
public-local	district	4	buildings
public-State	site	American Security Sec	sites
public-Federal	structure	and the second s	structures
	object		objects
	object	4	Objects Total
Name of related multiple property listing	na:	Number of cont	ributing resources previously
Name of related multiple property listin	.5.	listed in the Nati	tional Register
4. State/Federal Agency Certific	ption	and a state of the	
4. Otate/rederar Agency Certifica			
X nomination request for deter National Register of Historic Places In my opinion, the property mee Signature of certifying official State or Federal agency and bureau	and meets the procedura	al and professional requirements :	set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property mee	ts does not meet the I	National Register criteria. See	continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official	l		Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
5. National Park Service Certifica	ition		
, 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)	Current Fun	ctions (enter categories from instructions)
Domestic/single dwelling	Vacant/	Not in Use
Domestic/secondary struc.		
Agriculture/storage		

7. Description		
Architectural Classification	Materials (e	nter categories from instructions)
(enter categories from instructions)		
	foundation _	Brick
Italianate	walls	weatherboard/wood
Federal		
	roof	Metal
	other	Wood
	WIII	

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The John Watson House, surrounded by overgrown fields and nearly hidden by dense shrubbery and a large magnolia tree, looks out from atop a low hillock in sight of rural highway 401, that runs through low, rolling hills approaching Warrenton from the south. Scattered seemingly at random in open fields, punctuated occassionally with massive, ancient oaks, the complex of outbuildings lies several hundred feet from the large frame house.

Although the rambling structure appears visually to be unkempt, and has become somewhat deteriorated due to neglect for a number of years, nearly all the original fabric survives. The house is a notable and unusual example of an older Federal structure incased within the more elaborate Greco-Italianate house of Jacob Holt and his school.

Although the John Watsons configuration is not entirely clear, the rear section of the Watson House was built in a very simple and clean Federal style. The house appears to have begun two stories tall and had a center passage plan, one room deep, plus a rear ell that may slightly predate or postdate the taller section. The overbuilding attributed to Jacob Holt included a cross hall the length of the original front facade and flanking parlors added to the east and west ends of the main block with their front facades slightly forward of the central block creating a recessed front porch. The two-story main block and its one-story wings have the typical Holt hip roofs and Italianate finish. The earlier rear west portion has an attic gable roof and the newer west wing (1938) that parallels the earlier wing has a one-story flat roof. windows on the front and side of the main block and on the wings are six-over-six sash windows, while the windows on the rear facade on the second floor are nine-over-nine sash, suggesting that they were in place from the federal house or relocated from the front facado during the 1850's remodeling.

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The remaining portion of the early house (c.1815, indicated by stylistic elements and the use of crudely formed and cut nails), reflects both Georgian and Federal periods of construction. No molded weatherboard is seen to survive, but at the rear of the ell is a slim double-shoulder chimney of brick laid in common bond. It is flanked by narrow six-light windows at attic level and nine-over-nine sash windows on the first story. Other exterior vestiges of the earlier house remain at the rear of the main block, such as a simple doorway with rectangular transom and door composed of eight flat panels. Also, unlike the brick foundation of the front of the house, the rear ell and the rear wall of the main block rest on a stone rubble foundation.

In front of and around this earlier house was constructed an elaborate Greco-Italianate dwelling. The two-story main block completely encompasses the original main block of the early house. The three-bay central unit features the rectilinear Greek Revival form typical of Holt's work, overlaid with ornate Italianate detail. The blockiness of the house is emphasized by the heavy plain exterior baseboard, fluted cornerposts rising from bases that break out from the baseboard, and wide frieze beneath the broad overhang of the shallow hip roof. Small brackets ornament the caps of the corner pilasters, and larger brackets with bulbous turned pendants articulate the frieze and support the roof overhang. The six-over-six sash windows on the south elevation are set in simple molded, mitered frames. The finish is consistently repeated on the one-story wings which project slightly forward of the main block. Interior end chimneys occur at the north end of each side of the main block and at the east and wast The original rear ell has an exterior gable end chimney.

The most distinctive ornament of the house occurs on the porch and front entrance—both of which are very ornate and well-preserved. The porch extends across the full width of the block's main (south) facade, from wing to wing, projecting forward off the wings. The bays are defined by pairs of fluted posts, rectangular in section. Each post is finished with a molded cap articulated by two sawn brackets, like the cornerposts of the house, and joined by a common upper cornice. The large double door features four ogee-arched flat panels per leaf with broad flat moldings. The ceiling of the porch was plastered as seen in a number of Holt's houses.

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On the spacious interior, Holt's work predominates, with finish repeating the bracketed decoration and heavy masses of the exterior, especially notable in the excellent and extensive use of marbleizing and woodgraining. Walls are plastered above a very broad molded baseboard and heavily molded door frames rise from a molded base or foot. A distinctive feature of the central block is its two-room-deep plan, with a fourteen-foot-deep cross hall extending the full width at the front of the block and the one-room-deep center hall plan of the c.1815 house to the The unusual cross hall opens at either end into the wing rooms. Entering into the wing rooms and into the rooms at the rear of the hall are ogee-arched paneled doors. hall is dominated by the stair, which rises in a single flight from west to east along the north wall. The polygonal newel has a cap with flat quatrefoil panels, similar to the only remaining documented Holt house, Vine Hill. Slender turned balusters and a turned post carry the rounded handrail which ramps at the top of the stair. The open string is ornamentd only by simple moldings at each tread. The risers are expertly marbleized. The spandrel of the stair is flat-paneled, and joins with the flat paneling of the area beneath the stair on the east side.

Each wing contains a single room. Windows feature heavy molded frames that extend to the floor to frame a panel ornamented with a spearhead design frequently found in Holt's houses. Mantels in these rooms are typical as well, having spearhead paneled pilasters carrying a frieze with a central spearhead panel flanked by brackets that function visually as end blocks. A backboard rises above the simple, heavy shelf. Flanking these are cupboards, with doors having spearhead panels as well—an ununual use of the spearhead motif.

In contrast to the ornamentation of these front rooms is the restrained Georgian and Federal character of the rear rooms of the main block and the room in the ell. These portions of the house are finished with plastered walls above a flat-paneled wainscot with wide Federal moldings. All of the doors have six flat panels with similar moldings. There is evidence showing a stair, now removed, was present in the center hall. The mantel in the east room is particularly notable, and typical

of the Federal era in Warren County. It is a tall three-part mantel, with three-part reeded, symmetrically molded pilasters, resembling reeded colonnettes carrying a band of gougework. Above, flat panels occur on the end blocks, center tablet,

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and freize, and there is a handsomely molded cornice and shelf, which breaks out over all three elements. It is flanked by Holt-period cupboards that repeat the spearhead panel treatment. The mantel across the hall, evidently a replacement, is a simple Greek Revival model.

The finish of the two large front rooms in the main block on the second floor is simple Greek Revival with two-panel doors, symmetrically molded surrounds with roundel corner blocks, instead of mitered (a common shift in Holt's second floors) and beaded baseboards. Mantels are of typical Greek Revival form, with incised round-arched grooves on the pilasters. French doors open to the porch roof.

It is possible that the ell room is earlier than the center hall portion of the main block. It features a plain Georgian-form mantel, with two flat panels outlined with narrow Federal molding. In the northwest corner of the room rises an enclosed stair, with the steps of the first short flight open. It has an open string, with a plain newel and a rounded handrail. It turns within the enclosure to rise west to east along the partition wall. The attic room above has a simple Federal finish with beaded baseboards, simple molded surrounds and a flat paneled Federal mantel, similar to that on the firebox below.

When the second ell was added in 1938, alterations also were made to the house. The pantry attached to the original ell was removed and a window was introduced to mirror that of another on the other side of the fireplace. In addition, the Burwells had the house wired for electricity, plumbing was installed on the first floor in the new kitchen and bathroom, and all the chimney stacks were extended to create a better draft.

OUTBUILDINGS

There are three significant outbuildings with the John Watson House:

The SMOKEHOUSE, located to the northeast of the house approximately 75 feet and facing west, is an early brace-frame structure. The one-story building is sided with weathered clapboards attached with early cut nails. There is evidence of early wrought door hardware. Because of the Federal proportions (vertical), boxed cornice tapered rake boards and a steep gable roof, the building appears to be of an earlier period than the Jacob Holt sectors, more likely contemporary with that of the first structure.

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The CORNCRIB, located approximately 150 feet to the northwest of the house, is a small round-log building with V-notched joints and a steeply pitched gabled roof likely of nineteenth century construction.

The CARRIAGE HOUSE, located northwest of the house approximatedly 100 feet, is brick laid in five-to-one common bond. The brick is similar to those used in the foundation of the additions to the main house attributed to Jacob Holt. The interior framing has been crudely repaired but appears basically as it was built and contemporary with the 1850s house. This structure has a low pitched north to south gable roof and wide doors opening at each gable end.

8. Statement of Significance		
Certifying official has considered the significance of this prop	erty in relation to other properties: statewide Thocally	
Applicable National Register Criteria A B CC	D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	D DE F G	
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions) Architecture	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
	Cultural Affiliation	
Significant Person N/A	Architect/Builder, Jacob (a	attributed to)

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

SUMMARY

The John Watson House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as a unique example of the Greco-Italianate mode of Jacob Holt and his school. His style dominated Warren County and nearby areas in the decade before the Civil War. The Watson House is unusual in two respects: for the use of a front cross-hall and side wings seldom seen in Holt's work. and for the construction of the 1850s house as an expansion of a much earlier dwelling. While most of Holt's houses were built all of a piece, he was clearly not above expanding an existing house in his distinctive style--and leaving the early house pretty much intact. The house, typical of Holt's two-story Italianate structures, has one of the county's most beautiful porches and front entrance with well proportioned sawnwork brackets and graceful detail. In addition to the plan, the interior is important for its excellent and extensive marbleizing and wordgraining. The earlier house still retains its original integrity from the simple Federal finish of the baseboards and flat paneled mantel in the attic room of the ell to the fine mantel in the first floor east room, typical of the Federal era in Warren County. Watson plantation house has been in a state of disrepair due to neglect, but the historic fabric of the house is completely intact and evokes an aura of late antebellum elegance soon to be restored by new owners.

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ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

From 1850 to the depression of 1873, the architecture of Italy inspired the building designs seen throughout the nation. Italian architecture had an adaptability to be picturesque as the Gothic or restrained as the classical (Howard, p.111). The picturesque influence spread quickly, added by the proliferation of architectural books such as Downing's COTTAGE RESIDENCES, Ranlett's THE ARCHITECT, and Sloan's THE MODEL ARCHITECT filled with elevations and plans for Gothic Revival and Italianate houses. North Carolina newspapers wrote articles urging their readers to reject "oldfashioned building forms and improve their rural architecture by adopting Downing's ideals--and thereby to elevate public morality, stability, and prosperity" (Bishir, p.247). most North Carolinians paid little attention to such articles, the Italianate house became the style of choice by the planters and merchants (p.247).

In the United States the Italianate style flourished with various modification and embellishments from both builders and architects. Some distinguish the Italianate in two phases: from the 1840s to the 1850s, structures have simpler detailing, while the houses from the 1860s to the 1870s are more decorative (McAlester, pp.212, 214).

In North Carolina the ornate Italianate house is best remembered in Wilmington, but in Granville, Franklin, and Warren Counties they also flourished (Swaim, p.79). Some builders built directly from popular publications, while others, including Jacob Holt of Warrenton, found a workable synthesis between the popular and traditional elements that met the changing demands of regional customs and current styles (Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt: An American Builder", in Upton and Vlach, p.448).

Jacob Holt, a native Virginian, moved to Warrenton, North Carolina, in the 1840s. Warrenton, small but fashionable, was the trading and political center of Warren County, the wealthiest county in the South's poorest state. The county offered talented builders and cabinet makers a respected and lucrative lifestyle. By 1850, Jacob Holt's workshop had gained a growing reputation in Warrenton and the surrounding area. Although his earlier works exemplified the Greek Revival

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style, by the 1850s he was creating the more eclectic Italianate style (Bishir, "Jacob Holt," p.450). Holt's success stemmed from a four-part formula: the use of current publications, vernacular reliance on conservative form, an understanding of his strengths and limitations, and the ability to know the character of his clientele (Bishir, "Jacob Holt," p.453).

The John Watson House, c.1855, is representative of Warren County's wealthy plantation owners in the decade before the Civil War and illustrates Jacob Holt's versatility and influence in the area. Although the house cannot be documented to Holt, it contains key elements attributed to him, including utilizing series of brackets to dramatize the broad eaves of his houses; contrasting his strongly rectilinear form, using a wide variety of ornamental arches, in windows, doors, panels and on porches; and embellishing the interiors with stylish marbleizing and woodgraining on the woodwork. (National Register Nomination: Cherry Hill, Warren County, The house has an entrance typical of his North Carolina). style, displaying a fascination with detail of design in the reshaping of doors and window moldings, combining round and agee arches, and enriching the entrance with pinwheel and scallop motifs (Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt," p.458).

Although Holt frequently built entirely new houses for his clients, it was by no means unusual for him to remodel or expand an existing dwelling. This was especially true in his work for prospering planters in the 1850s. The John Watson House is one of the few surviving illustrations of Jacob Holt's ability to combine old, c.1815,* and new to create a workable synthesis. This dwelling is also notable as one of the few houses where Holt used the front cross-hall and side wings, echoing the popular tripartite form of the earlier Federal era. The project most akin to the Watson project, and documented as Holt's work, was the expansion of the W.R. Baskerville House in Mecklenburg County (across the Virginia line, where he built a tripartite front enlargement for an existing plantation house. At Fool Rock Plantation House in Vance County, he left intact a two-story Federal style house and simply built an elaborate, bracketed residence in front of it. joined with a passage between the two buildings. At Vine Hill in Franklin County, also documented as Holt's work, he

^{*} Due to deterioration of existing records on Warren County deeds dating to the early 1800s, it is impossible to verify with certainty where the original, c.1815 house came from on the "Home" tract, mentioned in William Watson's will.

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completely disguised an earlier house in a new house; only the contract with the owner indicates the original house at the core. At the Mary Ann Browne House, "Oakley Grove" in Warren County, a small Federal period house was partly subsumed in a two-story, Holt school house. There are additional examples of Holt's pragmatic adaptation to economy and existing buildings. Related to the Watson House in form is the William T. Alston House in Warrenton, which was apparently a single building phase but which features a two-story central block with front transverse hall, and flanking one-story wings. This plan, it should be noted was characteristic of tripartite, Palladian-influenced plantation houses built in this county and other parts of the Roanoke Valley during the late Georgian and Federal periods. Holt continued this conservative plan as one alternative among his mid-19th century houses (Bishir, "Jacob Holt," p.467).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

John Watson was born in Franklin County on September 25, 1815, son of William and Frances Norsworthy Watson, one of Warren County's successful landowner families (Taylor, p.167 and Census: 1860). In 1849 William Watson bequeathed to his son John a parcel known as the Perry Tract, "where he now resides" (Will: William Watson, October 16, 1849). The young Watson built this initial tract of 268 acres into one of Warren County's more prosperous plantations (Deed Book: September 13, 1884 and Census: Agricultural Schedule 1870). At his death in 1889, John Watson left a large diversified family farm with 2,143 acres and a grist, flour and saw mill (Census: Agricultural Schedule 1880).

In 1840, John Watson married his first wife, Miss Rowena Rodwell. Rowena gave birth to three children, but John Watson lost both his wife and infant son Robert not long after his son's birth. Rowena was survived by her daughter Rowena, who only lived to fifteen, and by her other daughter, A.V. (Fleming) who would eventually inherit the "Freeman Tract" and the mill, known as "Turner's Mill" [the mill site, with the c.1900 Hamme's Mill, is at the end of SR1602, 1.6 miles northeast of the John Watson House] (Taylor, p.168 and Will: John Watson). After the death of Rowena, John married young woman from Malifax County, Mary G. Powell, on October 27, 1845 (Marriage Bonds: Halifax County). From this marriage there were three more children, Pryor, Pattie, and Lizzie [Mrs. George W. Purefoy, [f Orange County] (Taylor, p.168).

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John and Mary Watson were a strong team, active in both the development of the plantation and his involvement with the Baptist Church. In fact, "it was likely her Christly Spirit that influenced him in some of his noblest deeds" (Taylor, p.168). After his graduation from Wake Forest College, John became a member of Brown's Church which he served as Clerk for forty years. He was one of the Tar River Association to contribute \$1,000 to begin the present endowment of Wake Forest College and he was also one of the first to contribute to the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage (Taylor, p.167 and Paschal, p.236).

Watson was part of a generation of planters who greatly increased their land and slave holdings during the 1850s, as the state's economy, the access to markets through the railroad--which after 1840 traversed Warren County--and the greater availability of credit stimulated many to engage more heavily in a growing market (Bishir, comments on Warren County). During the 1850s, John Watson and his family began to build onto their land holdings and develop agricultural production into a respectable profit each year. At the beginning of the 1850s. the Watsons' real estate value was \$7,000, and the farm was valued at \$3,480, including 200 improved acres and 380 unimproved acres. With the help of his 50 slaves, the majority being over 14 years of age, he was able to harvest 100 bushels wheat, 750 bushels Indian corn, 300 bushels oats, 11,000 pounds tobacco, 10 bushels peas and beans, 10 bushels Irish potatoes, and 20 bushels sweet potatoes in that year. The family also kept and raised 3 horses, 2 mules, 8 milk cows, 4 oxen, 20 cattle, 9 sheep, and 75 swine (Census: Agricultural Schedule 1850).

The 1860 Census records show John Watson, age 45, with real estate that had jumped in value to \$25,000, the farm at \$25,000, livestock at \$3,000, and personal property at \$82,000. Much of the last amount was slaves. Watson had 59 slaves in 14 slave houses. His real estate would have included the house and the mill and perhaps investment property elsewhere. The farm included 800 acres improved land and 1,343 acres unimproved land. By 1860, 2,000 bushels wheat, 3,000 bushels corn, 600 bushels oats, 4,800 pounds tobacco, 60 pounds wool, 15 bushels Irish potatoes, and 100 pounds of sweet potatoes were harvested. With greater demands on the land, the need for livestock grew to include 6 horses, 11 mules, 18 milk cows, 10 oxen, 40 cattle, 30 sheep, and 250 swine (Census: Agricultural Schedule 1860.

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Watson was able to hol'd onto his property after the Civil War. The 1870 Census shows him still owning 2,143 acres, with the value of real estate at the 1860s value of \$25,000, but the farm value had dropped to \$8,572, livestock to \$2,500, and his personal estate to \$15,000. It would be safe to say the large drop in personal estate, from \$82,000 in 1860 to only \$15,000 in 1870, was due to the emancipation of his slaves after the war. It should also be noted in the 1870 Census a new entry was made for total wages paid. John Watson paid a total of \$1,100 that year to people who helped him harvest 600 bushels wheat, 400 bushels Indian corn, 400 bushels oats, 1,200 pounds tobacco, 8 bales cotton, 5 bushels beans and peas. 10 bushels Irish potatoes, and 50 bushels sweet potatoes. The number of livestock he maintained was also cut to 4 horses, 8 mules, 6 milk cows, 2 oxen, 9 cattle and 50 swine (Census: Agricultural Schedule 1870).

John Watson died in 1889, leaving the house and 1,200 acres to his daughter "Lizzie Purefoy wife of Dr. George W. Purefoy, of the County of Orange...the tract of land in said county of Warren, on which I now reside, known as the 'Horne Tract'... My said daughter Lizzie, however, is to furnish my beloved wife Mary G. Watson during her life in widowhood, a home in the Mansion house on said tract of land,..." (Will: John Watson).

In 1906, after the death of Mary G. Watson the house and 1,128 1/2 acres were sold to Mark Petway Burwell, Sr. for \$12,500 (Deed Book: Vol.72, April 19, 1906). After purchasing the land, Mr. Burwell divided the land with a cousin. farmed the land but never moved into the John Watson House. Instead, he raised his family of four girls and one son in another house attributed to Jacob Holt in Warrenton, the William Eaton House. Mark Fetway Burwell, Jr. purchased the property from the family estate in 1938, after his mother's death. Petway and Elizabeth Burwell worked on a restoration of the house from 1938 to 1941. In 1941 the Burwells moved into the John Watson House. Once in the house, Mr. Burwell decided any continued restoration would be a waste of money, and subsequently the house has received no maintenance and is showing serious signs of deterioration (Interview: Mrs. Elizabeth Burwell).

Preservation/North Carolina obtained the rights to sell the John Watson House in 1989. On August 17, 1989, Allen Kit and Janet Thomas of Hampton, Virginia purchased the house. The couple are planning to rehabilitate the house in the near future.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): X 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 # secorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	Primary location of additional data: State historic preservation office Other State agency Federal agency Local government University Other Specify repository:
10. Geographical Data Acreage of property 12.946	
UTM References A [1,7] [7 5 ,2] 6,5 ,0] [4 0 2 , 7 8 ,9 ,0] Zone Easting Northing C [1,7] [7 5 , 2 9 , 5 , 0] [4 ,0 2 ,7 7 ,7 ,0]	B 1 7 7 5 2 8 7 1 0 4 10 2 1 7 9 0 10 Zone Easting Northing D 1 7 7 5 2 6 6 1 0 4 10 2 7 7 1 1 0 See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description The nominated property is all of parcel The property is shown on the accompanyis survey map prepared for the property in	ng copy of a portion of the
	See continuation sheet
Boundary Justification	
The boundary of the nominated property historically associated with the John Wa	
	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Sandra Webbere	1 07 1000
organization <u>Architectural Research Group</u> street & number <u>5501 Kellwood Court</u>	date <u>August 23, 1990</u> telephone <u>919-881-0062</u>
city or town Rale i ch	state Nic zin code 27600

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Mary Ann Browne House, Warren County, North Carolina.
Cherry Hill, Warren County, North Carolina.
Pool Rock Plantation, Vance County, North Carolina.
Vine Hill, Franklin County, North Carolina.

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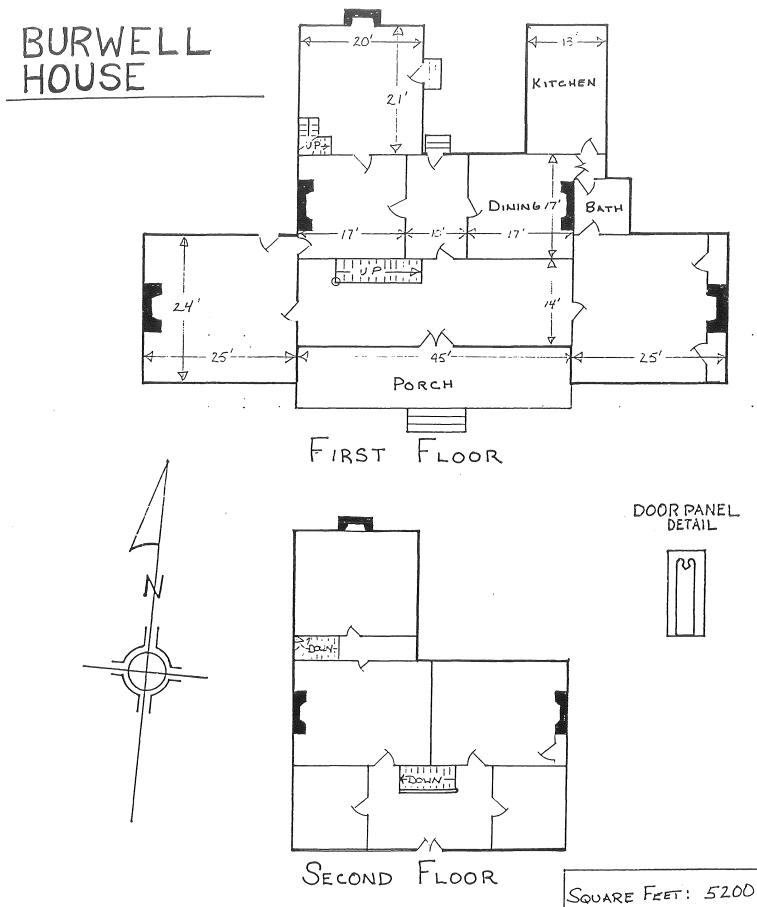
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Watson, John. Will: November 11, 1884. Warren County, North Carolina.

Watson, William. Will: October 16, 1849. Warren County, North Carolina.



SQUARE FEET: 3200 ACRES: 10

ZONING: NONE

