

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 Worsley-Burnette House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number W. side SR 1526 .8 mi. North of SR 1540

not for publication

city, town Conetoe

vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Edgecombe

code 065

zip code 27886

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u> buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

4-19-90

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Federal
Greek Revival

foundation brick
walls weatherboard
other: flushboard
roof steel
other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Worsley-Burnette House is located in the rural southeastern corner of Edgecombe County, near the Pitt and Martin County lines, on largely flat farmland. Set in an angle of SR 1526, it is surrounded by a landscaped yard with mature trees of a variety of species. Built ca. 1830 as a Federal style, hall and parlor plan house, it was expanded ca. 1850 with a Greek Revival style end wing, giving the two-story, gable-roofed frame plantation seat an L-plan with rear shed. Although the hipped front and side porches were constructed during the 1930s, other changes to the house have been minor, and it retains an integrity of materials, design, setting and workmanship.

As originally constructed ca. 1830, the Worsley-Burnette House faced east and was a two-story, single pile, hall and parlor plan house with side gable roof. Its three-bay front elevation had symmetrically arranged windows, with nine over nine sash on the first floor and nine over six on the second. These windows are framed with three-part Federal style architraves with molded sills. Two small, louvered vents are located in the upper gable end on the north side of the house, and were no doubt echoed on the south end. The original portion is covered with half-beaded clapboards, and has a neatly-crafted box cornice with frieze, bed molding and shingle molding, that returns at the flush gable ends.

At either extreme of the original portion of the house is a narrow, exterior end chimney (the south chimney is now enclosed) with double, coved shoulders. At the rear, the original house had a one-story shed wing with two shed rooms on either side of a porch open at the back. The size and position of the original front porch is unknown, though ghost marks suggest that there was a shed-roofed, full-width front porch.

On the inside, the house was originally divided on the first floor into a large hall room and a smaller parlor room. The stair to the second floor was enclosed in the northwest corner of the parlor, but entered through a door in the southwest corner of the hall. Probably in the early twentieth century, this door was moved to the shed room, making the stair a straight run. A board partition was also added to create a narrow, central hall, but this has been removed.

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Both the hall and the parlor have board ceilings with wooden crown moldings. Both also have panelled wainscoting with flat panels, three-part molded window and door architraves with mitred corners and six panel doors with raised panels on one side, flat on the other, all hung on cast iron butt hinges. Each of the rooms has a well-proportioned, three-part, Federal style mantel richly ornamented with reeding and moldings. The hall mantel has reeded double pilaster strips, raised sunbursts in the panels and a frieze of squares of diagonal reeding. The parlor mantel is similar, but has no panel ornaments or reeding in the frieze.

On the second floor, the original portion of the house has the same two-room plan, although the stair landing was turned into a narrow hall by the addition of a partition wall ca. 1850. The ceilings are plastered, and there are plastered dadoes between a chairrail and beaded baseboard, but the window and door surrounds match the downstairs. The upstairs rooms have narrower mantels with molded shelves. The north mantel has a two-panel frieze and a band of diagonally-reeded blocks, while the south mantel is framed with backband molding and has a single panel.

About 1850, the house was extended one bay by the addition of a cross-gabled wing perpendicular to the original dwelling and projecting beyond the original front elevation. The end sheathing, sections of cornice and one window surround were taken from the original south elevation and used to extend the Federal style detailing of the rear. The new south elevation, as well as the other elevations of the new wing, received simple Greek Revival detailing on all but the cornice, which duplicated that of the original house. Windows on the Greek Revival wing are considerably larger than those of the Federal wing, and have simple, bevelled-edge backband moldings, but follow the same nine over nine and nine over six sash patterns.

As part of the renovations, the shed-roofed porch was extended in the angle of the front ell, and the front wall of the house underneath the porch flushboard sheathed. Two new, double-shouldered exterior chimneys were built at the south and east gable ends of the house. At the rear, the shed section was probably extended a bay by an open porch.

The new wing's interior was laid out on a central hall plan with a new front door separate from the original building. The central hall has a steep stair with winders at the bottom and a plain, capped square newel post and square-section balusters. Doors in the new wing are eight panel, except for two-panel closet doors and doors where the two

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wings meet, which are six panel doors matching the original wing. Baseboards in the Greek Revival wing are very high, with a flat cap, while door and window architraves are plain boards.

The east room downstairs has a brick 1930s mantel, but the west room retains its high, austere, post and lintel Greek Revival mantel. Crown moldings in this room are modern additions, the plaster walls and ceilings otherwise being unornamented. At the northwest corner of this room is a door that connects the new wing with the old, and which was probably originally located on the adjacent wall in the old wing, leading into the shed room.

On the second floor, the new wing has a central stair hall, the north end of which has been enclosed for a bathroom, and two flanking rooms. These rooms have the same vernacular Greek Revival trim as the downstairs and the same plain, Greek Revival mantels. A door in the west room leads into the old wing.

After the acquisition of the house by the Burnettes in the 1930s, what was probably a Victorian replacement porch was removed and a new, classically-detailed hipped front porch installed with tapered square piers, architrave and frieze, as well as exposed rafter ends. A small, hipped portico with the same detailing was added to the south side of the house. The Burnettes also reworked the rear shed, enclosing the central porch and the porch at the south end of the shed. They also enlarged a window under the front porch, added the standing seam tin roofs, and enclosed the foundation of the house, replacing the original brick piers.

To the rear and south side of the main house are four small outbuildings constructed after 1930:

- A.- Ca. 1940 gable-roofed frame double garage.
- B.- Ca. 1940 gable-roofed, concrete block boiler house.
- C.- Ca. 1940 gable and shed frame storage building with ca. 1850 eight panel doors.
- D.- Ca. 1940 shed-roofed chicken house.

**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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca. 1830; ca. 1850

Significant Dates

ca. 1830; ca. 1850

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.

Summary

The Worsley-Burnette House, probably built ca. 1830 for (Nathan) Mayo Worsley (ca. 1808-1867) and enlarged by Worsley ca. 1850, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, as a representative example of group of well-detailed Federal style plantation houses built in rural Edgecombe County during the 1820s and 1830s. These houses represent the growth in wealth of Edgecombe planters due to improved agricultural practices, to the point of having the most productive and valuable land of any county in the state at the eve of the Civil War. Worsley married well-to-do widow Nancy Wiggins in 1828, and over the next forty years steadily increased both his wealth and the size of his family. A ca. 1850 Greek Revival addition to the original hall and parlor plan house, in the form of an unusual front ell, doubled it in size. After a long period of tenancy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the house and farm were purchased in 1935-36 by Archie R. Burnette, Senior, who occupied the farm and made a number of minor alterations to the house, including construction of new porches.

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Section number 8. Page 8.1Historical Background

Neither the parents, nor the county of origin of (Nathan) Mayo Worsley is known, but he was probably born in 1808 or 1809 in either Martin or eastern Edgecombe counties and named after Revolutionary War officer and prominent early citizen Nathan Mayo from the same area. He seems to have gone by the name Mayo Worsley throughout his adult life. Worsley first appears in Edgecombe County records on December 8, 1828, when he married Nancy Wiggins. (North Carolina Marriage Bonds) Judging from census records, Nancy was as much as ten years older than Mayo, and had been married twice before, first to Joshua Wilkinson and then to Blake Wiggins in 1823. (U. S. Census 1840, 1850 and Edgecombe Deeds) She had outlived both previous husbands, as well as a son, Allen D. Wilkinson, who died in 1826, but had a surviving daughter by Wiggins named Delphia. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 19, p. 286)

Nancy Worsley had acquired considerable personal property and life interests in real estate as a result of her first two marriages. (Edgecombe Wills Book F, p. 83 and Edgecombe Estates-Allen D. Wilkinson) In 1828 she purchased rights to a 200 acre tract of land that had been part of Joshua Wilkinson's property, and on which she appears to have lived. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 19, p. 202 and Edgecombe Estates-Joshua Wilkinson) This tract is probably the one on which Mayo and Nancy Worsley built a house ca. 1830. The use of cast iron butt hinges on early doors in the house suggests an early 1830s date.

Nancy Wiggins died in 1841, leaving Mayo with Delphia, Caroline (born 1830), Edwin (1832), James A. (1834), and Nancy L. (1840). (Tarboro Southerner 31 July 1841 and Martin Heritage p. 646) Mayo was married again on February 22, 1842 to Mary Louise Staton, the daughter of Winfield D. and Julia Mayo Staton, and a descendant of Nathan Mayo. (Martin Heritage, p. 646) They in turn had Virginia Elizabeth (1843), Laura Melissa (1845), Aneliza A. E. (1848), Thadeus Alphonza (1849), Franklin Lafayette (1850), Nathan Mayo (1853), Mary Louise (1855), Frances (1857), and Ida (1860). (Martin Heritage, p. 646 and U. S. Census 1850, 1860) Although a family history notes that the daughters were sent to St. Mary's School in Raleigh, and the boys to a military academy, the need for a substantial addition to the original six room house is obvious.

Worsley's gradual increase in wealth can be charted through census records. In 1830 he owned seven slaves, in 1840 seventeen, in 1850 thirty-five and by 1860, thirty-seven. On the eve of the Civil War he owned 700 acres, 400 of them improved, worth \$25,000. His plantation produced a variety of crops in abundance, but primarily corn and

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cotton, while he maintained herds of cattle, swine and sheep. The 1850 agricultural census also shows that he essayed an experiment in rice production, producing 460 pounds. (U. S. Census, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860, slave and agricultural schedules)

The antebellum period saw Edgecombe County's development from subsistence farming and dependence on naval stores to one of the state's foremost centers of agriculture. In the 1850 census Edgecombe's improved farm lands were worth more than \$2 million, more than any other county. (Taves, p. 15) Prominent farmers in the county led a period of reform in agricultural production, with emphasis on soil enrichment, drainage, better implements, and better use of farm labor. Edgecombe cotton production jumped twelve-fold between 1840 and 1859, with the county in the latter year reigning as the state's leading producer of cotton, more than double its nearest rival. The impetus for this improvement was provided by agricultural societies and farm journals, with which Edgecombe County was well-provided during the period. (Watson, pp. 59-62) Deed records indicate that Mayo Worsley took part in at least some of the agricultural reforms, joining his neighbors to construct the Ballyhack drainage canal in the 1850s. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 26, p. 507 and 516)

Parallelling improvements in agricultural production in Edgecombe was a growth in the number of slaves. Whereas only 28 families owned more than 20 slaves in 1790, by 1860 142 families owned more than that number. (Watson, p. 62)

Mayo Worsley died at the age of 59 on February 28, 1867 of erisypelas, according to the Tarboro Weekly Southerner. (7 March 1867, p. 2.) He left a substantial estate, despite the depredations of the Civil War, including another farm of 282 acres in Martin County. (Edgecombe Estates-Mayo Worsley) Mary L. Worsley received dower rights to 300 1/4 acres of land, "including the Mansion House, which they think she is justly entitled to." (Edgecombe Deeds Book 29, p. 645). Mary in turn died in 1881, and the house passed to sons Thaddeus and Nathan Mayo Worsley, who had paid \$6,101 in 1874 for 690 acres of the home tract, subject to the widow's dower. (Tarboro Weekly Southerner, 2 June 1881 and Edgecombe Deeds Book 46, page 114)

In 1882 the Worsley brothers sold the house and home tract to Bryan J. Keech of Tarboro. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 53, page 495 and Book 54, page 135) Keech was the owner of a Tarboro general store and continued to live in Tarboro, presumably using tenants to farm the acreage. Following Keech's death in 1902, the property was held in a life estate by his wife. In the early 1920s, a suit led to the property

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being subdivided and Lot 1 of the Worsley Farm, including the house and 271 acres, was allotted to William A. Hart, subject to Mrs. Keech's life estate. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 266, page 191) Hart apparently lost or sold his interest in the property to the North Carolina Bank and Trust Company, because in 1935 Lot 1 was sold to Archie R. Burnette, Senior, for \$2,125. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 334, page 321) Burnette also acquired the remainder of the Worsley property in 1936 from other Keech heirs. (Edgecombe Deeds Book 342, page 523) A native of Edgecombe County, Burnette returned from Hopewell, Virginia in 1921. It is possible that Burnette had been living on the farm for several years before he purchased it. (Raleigh News and Observer 13 May 1944, p. 8 and Burnette interview)

Unlike other owners of the property since the 1880s, the Burnette family lived in the house and farmed the land themselves. They made a number of minor alterations to the house, the most significant of which involved rebuilding the front and side porches. During the 1930s surviving outbuildings on the property burned, leaving the house the only nineteenth century building on the tract, which must at one time have included a full complement of outbuildings.

Following Archie R. Burnette's death in 1944, the house was lived in by his widow, daughter, and son Archie R. Burnette, who farmed the land. The younger Mr. Burnette lived on and farmed the property until moving to Tarboro about 1985. (Burnette interview) Since that time tenants have occupied the house and farm.

Architectural Context

The rise in average wealth generated by improvements in agricultural production during the four decades before the Civil War gave birth to an architectural renaissance in the rural parts of the county during the same period. The more prosperous planters were able to build larger, more comfortable and more stylish houses than heretofore. Shifting from earlier practice, they adopted larger forms and embraced the Federal style. (Taves, p. 9)

Edgecombe County has a distinctive group of Federal style plantation houses (as well as several recorded, demolished examples) constructed mostly during the period from about 1825 to 1835. (The most useful dating mechanism for these houses is the presence of cast iron butt hinges, available about 1830, versus wrought butt hinges and H and L hinges used earlier.) Most frequently these are two-story, single pile, gable-roofed, with a hall and parlor plan. Distinctive features include boxed cornices with flush gable ends and returns; three-part

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window surrounds with molded sills; beaded siding, with flushboarding under porches or porticos; double-shouldered, exterior end chimneys that have coved shoulders; six panel and eight panel doors, usually with raised panels; rear shed rooms; wainscoting with flat panels; three-part interior door and window architraves; enclosed stairs; and three-part Federal mantels with paired pilaster strips and a wealth of reeding, sunbursts and sometimes gougework. (Survey Files) All of these elements can be found individually or in partial combination on other North Carolina Federal period houses, but taken as a whole they form a distinct entity. Two good examples in the immediate vicinity of the Worsley-Burnette House are the Wilkinson-Dozier House (National Register) of the late 1820s and the Pippin House, from the early 1830s. Both houses share most of the characteristics noted above, as does the earlier portion of the Worsley-Burnette House.

A comparison of the Federal style as it manifests itself in rural Edgecombe County with the Federal style in adjoining counties immediately shows a closer relationship between the counties bordering Virginia, particularly Warren and Halifax, than to the coastal counties. The highly-ornamented manifestation of the Federal style in these areas is noticeably different from the more restrained, academic approach of New Bern and the surrounding area.

There is no clear evidence to indicate when the Greek Revival wing at the Worsley-Burnette House was added, although surviving door hardware suggests that a ca. 1850 construction date is likely. Most extant rural Edgecombe County examples of the Greek Revival are vernacular rather than academic, and show a generalized influence of pattern books more than a copying from them (an exception being Bracebridge Hall, National Register). Usually, like the Greek Revival wing at Worsley-Burnette, they are well-proportioned but plain. Their most distinctive feature is a growth in both the size of windows and the height of baseboards, letting the two meet in a demi-wainscot, most exuberantly seen at Danielhurst, ca. 1850, where the baseboard steps up to the window sill. Danielhurst, like the Worsley-Burnette House, is an embodiment of the rise in agricultural wealth of the county, beginning with an even smaller Federal period house and adding a substantial vernacular Greek Revival wing.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approximately 7 acres

UTM References

A 

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2	7	9	9	5	0
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3	9	7	1	2	1	0
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B 

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C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the Worsley-Burnette House nomination are as shown on the attached sketch map, drawn at a scale of 1 inch equals 100 feet.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Worsley-Burnette House nomination include the house and its accompanying yard. These approximately seven acres of landscaped lawn have historically been associated with the house and provide an appropriate setting for it. The boundaries have been drawn to exclude adjacent modern farm buildings.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title David R. Black/Architectural Historian

Black & Black Preservation Consultants

March 1, 1990

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WORSLEY-BURNETTE  
HOUSE

EDGECOMBE CO., N. C.  
1"=100'

FIELDS

MODERN FARM BLDGS.

FARM ROAD

FIELDS

SR 1526

FARM ROAD

FENCE LINE

FIELDS



