

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Person-McGhee Farm

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East & West sides of US 1, just South of Tar River, see boundary

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION description

CITY, TOWN

Franklinton

— VICINITY OF

2nd

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Franklin

CODE

69

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Wyatt Lemuel McGhee

STREET & NUMBER

Route 2, Box 40

CITY, TOWN

Franklinton

— VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 27525

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Franklin County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Franklinton

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Person-McGhee farm consists of a substantial dwelling, expanded several times, and more than a dozen agricultural buildings, dotted throughout a self-contained, gently rolling valley. The house is dominated by a large Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style section, which was built in front of Federal and postbellum vernacular units. The tenants' houses, tobacco and cattle barns, chicken coops, and sheds document the evolution of farming efforts from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. Above all, however, the integrity and quality of setting make the Person-McGhee farm a place of exceptional tranquility and beauty, an important element in North Carolina's rural landscape.

The "yellow house place" on the Tar River at Chavis Bridge that Presley C. Person bequeathed to Joseph A. Person on 1846 is the core of the present building. There is no documented date for construction of this earliest section, but stylistically it appears to have been built sometime between 1770 and 1820. It is a three-bay, two-story frame dwelling erected over a stone-walled cellar. A handsome modillion cornice is the major surviving exterior decoration. Original nine-over-nine sash remains in the second floor windows, while the fenestration below was modernized to one-over-one, probably at the time of the 1890s additions. At either end of the house are double shouldered brick chimneys, now covered with stucco and whitewash. The initial yellow color, popular during the Federal period, has been changed to white.

The plan of this portion of the house is two rooms per floor with an entrance from the center bay of the east facade into a two-bay room on the south. From the small, northern room a narrow, closed staircase ascends along the interior wall. This vernacular hall and parlor plan with enclosed stair is the dominant one for Franklin County houses to the Greek Revival era. Little or nothing remains of the original woodwork on the first floor. Above, the smaller room is finished with raised panel wainscot and six-panel doors with HL iron hinges attached by rose-headed nails. The fireplace surround in this room was altered in the Greek Revival period when curious obelisks or attenuated triangles on plinths were applied flanking the opening. The larger chamber woodwork was replaced in the late nineteenth century.

In addition to a major building campaign in the 1890s, the Person-McGhee House was expanded by a number of accretions of indeterminate date. Since Joseph A. Person was living in the house with a wife and eight children in 1883, it is safe to assume that some of the expansion had to have been made before the property was sold to the McGhees. An ell, extending west from the center and northern bays of the Federal section's west facade, was probably added between the end of the Civil War and the 1880s. It is a one-story, gable roof unit with a later porch along its southern side. The six-over-six glazing supports a third quarter of the nineteenth century construction date. The ell was probably built as a kitchen, a function it continues to serve.

The house was dramatically transformed after the property was acquired by Wyatt Lemuel McGhee in 1883. Probably in the 1890s, he constructed a large, two-and-a-half story, Queen Anne style house in front of the older house, completely obscuring the earlier building from the front. L-shaped in plan, the new main house has semi-octagonal ends projecting to the south and east with the entrance stairhall located in the angle

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of the L. In elevation, the entrance facade is distinguished by gable pavillions flanking the central entrance core. A one-story porch is wrapped around the east and south facades; its turned posts and spindle decoration lighten yet anchor the design. Similar turned ornament was used to fill the gable ends and to modernize the porch flanking the earlier kitchen ell.

At the second story center, a semi-circular fanlit doorway gives access to what was once a balcony over the porch. The door is flanked by pairs of vertical windows, the group forming a horizontal Serliana or "Palladian window." It is possible that the fan light had originally surmounted the entrance to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century house. This Colonial Revival element suggests that the McGhee section was constructed in the 1890s or even in the first decade of this century. Interior woodwork reinforces this theory. The open staircase has slender balusters and urn-topped newel posts, and the mantel in the entrance hall is encrusted with swags and bows. The parlor and master bedroom, to either side of the hall, display less elaborate mantels and glazed tile fireplace surrounds, typical of turn-of-the-century decoration.

Other structures on the property evidence changes in farming practices. Directly behind the big house is a two-story, four-room clapboard tenants' house thought to have been built by the Persons in the 1860s or 1870s. In the immediate environs of the house are also a water tower, smokehouse, cattle barn, three log tobacco barns, and several sheds. The property west of the house yard includes the vestiges of Wyatt Lemuel McGhee orchard terraces. Further south along Route 1 and facing the road is a salt-box shaped frame tenant house built by Claude L. McGhee in the 1920s. The chicken coops and cattle barns on both sides of Route 1 were built by Wyatt Lemuel McGhee, II, from the 1940s through the 1960s. The character of the land was modified by strip-cropping in the 1940s and 1950s but is now open rolling pasture that supports a herd of black Angus cattle. From the front porch of the house there are uninterrupted views of the McGhee land bounded only by adjacent hills, a setting that has been little altered since the McGhee house was built.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Person-McGhee Farm is principally significant not merely for the handsome farmhouse and extensive collection of outbuildings but for the exceptional beauty of the small valley in which it is set. This important and well-preserved rural landscape is visually defined by natural boundaries of streams and hills and the man-made boundaries of farm roads and railroad tracks. The farm was located here because of the open topography and easy access to water. The earliest section of the house relates to Franklin County's prosperity in the early nineteenth century; the larger, appended Queen Anne style residence was built in the period of renewed economic growth after recovery from the Civil War. The land and farm structures provide evidence of agricultural evolution from open fields to sharecropping, to tobacco, orchards, cotton and corn, to poultry raising and strip-cropping, and finally to cattle herding. The farm has been associated with families of local importance--the Person family from 1837 to 1880s and the McGhee family since that time.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. The Person-McGhee farm is significant as physical evidence of early settlement in Franklin County and of the evolution of agricultural practice from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. (See text for description of use of land.)
- C. The main house includes a representative example of Federal style domestic architecture in Franklin County combining the traditional, vernacular two-room plan with handsome details such as the modillion cornice; the front section is among the most elaborate and substantial Queen Anne style houses in Franklin County, a county where post-Civil War architecture is generally relatively plain and modest. The outbuildings, built in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, are numerous and varied, and are typical of their several purposes. They are important as a collection, not for individual architectural value.

Note: 500 acres is included. This land is historically and visually significant and has been the farm since 1900; W. L. McGhee bought the first 353 acres in the 1880s and added about 146 acres in 1900. The entire 500 acres has thus been a working farm and most important, is all a visual unit, much of it visible from the house as a significant rural landscape.

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In 1817 Thomas Cook, a large landowner and farmer, sold to Robert Taylor of Granville County 262½ acres in Franklin County south of the Tar River in what is now Franklinton township.¹ At the time of the sale evidently there was at least one structure, a house, on the property. Taylor was also a large landowner and the nephew of Thomas Person who was one of North Carolina's Colonial-Revolutionary War era leaders in the popular movements of Regulation, Revolution, and Anti-federalism. Person served in all the provincial congresses, spent many years in the General Assembly, and in 1784² was elected a delegate to the Continental Congress, though he did not serve.

In 1837 Taylor sold the tract in a larger parcel of 1,153 acres to Presley C. Person who was a farmer and at one time high sheriff of Franklin County.³ In this period Person was one of several farmers along the route of the new Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, which was constructed in the late 1830s. As it crept southward, the railroad was constructed largely with labor and materials supplied locally, often hiring slaves from landowners along the route. P. C. Person was among those providing assistance. The railroad crossed the Tar River--a span 90 feet above the water--at the bottom of Person's property, and the railroad still defines the east boundary of the farm property. The railroad was to stimulate the growth of nearby Franklinton, and doubtless enhanced the value of lands it crossed.^{3A}

In Franklin County in 1846, commissioners appointed by the county superior court divided "the land and tenements of Presley C. Person decd. to and amongst his several heirs." To one of these heirs, Joseph A. Person, went 466 acres, "being the yellow house place on Tar River at Chavis Bridge," in Franklinton Township.⁴ The house standing on the property was probably built in the early nineteenth century. Although Joseph A. Person continued to own the tract, the first extant record of his living there is found in the 1880 census. Here he is listed as a 65 year old farmer with a wife, age 39, and 8 children, ages 2 to 20. According to the agricultural census for 1880, the Person farmed 68 acres of improved land and produced 100 bushels of corn on 20 acres, 76 bushels of wheat on 18 acres, and 10 bales of cotton on 30 acres. They owned \$260 worth of livestock and 300 acres of unimproved land. The total value of the farm was \$6200.⁵ Person's wife, Alice, was well known in the state for making, bottling, and selling a home remedy as a medicinal tonic.^{5A} Evidently the Persons lived in the early nineteenth century house already on the farm but made an addition after the Civil War.

In 1883 Person transferred 353 acres of his farm property in a deed of mortgage to Wyatt Lemuel McGhee. Person died in the following year.⁶

McGhee was a prominent citizen and a prosperous merchant in Franklinton. In North Carolina and the South after the Civil War, furnishing merchants were a part of the crop-lien system which was brought about by post-war financial stringency, the abolition of slavery, and the dissolution of the plantation system. Under the crop-lien

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system, small town furnishing merchants like McGhee provided goods and supplies on credit to farmers and share-croppers in return for a lien on their crops. Supplies sold on credit cost more than those sold for cash, and a high rate of interest was added. Furnishing merchants frequently speculated in cotton--buying it locally and selling it to larger dealers. "McGhee and Co. will give Raleigh prices for all the cotton you bring to Franklinton," announced the Franklinton Dispatch in 1887.

McGhee's general store supplied county farmers with all types of goods and supplies from dry goods to seed. "Examine the New Goods and Low Prices at McGhee & Co's before you buy," urged the proprietor. Advertisements in the 1880s declared that among its many goods the store had "Beautiful and New Style Men's and Boy's Clothing and Hats," and customers could "save 20 per cent by buying Hardware and Crockery a [t] McGhee & Co's." One notice proclaimed that "the wild man is dead and the tools used in digging his grave were bought at McGhee & Co's at 50 cents in the dollar. See these cheap tools before you buy."

Buyers for McGhee purchased supplies for the store from Northern cities and shipped them to Franklinton--doubtless via the railroad that crossed the farm--for sale. Hardware, especially, was a fast-moving commodity since most Franklin County farmers were in constant need of tools, equipment, and repair items. McGhee's shipments of hardware were very large, as suggested by an article in the Franklinton Dispatch in 1887

We noticed a few days ago some men, as we thought, at work on McGhee & Co's sidewalk, but upon going near we found they were putting a new sill under the hardware side of their house. McGhee bought a lot of hardware, but we did not think it would have caused the house to have given way.

In addition to being a furnishing merchant, McGhee was frequently speculating in land and property, and evidently it was such dealings that led him to purchase the Person property in a mortgage deed.¹¹ When bright leaf tobacco began to become an important crop in the state in the 1880s (overtaking cotton, the price of which was declining), McGhee built a tobacco warehouse with "basement and equipment" in Franklinton and announced that he would offer it "free from rent for twelve months to any responsible party who will open and run it for sale of leaf tobacco. This house is fifty by one hundred feet and is as good a sales-floor, with both side and sky light, as can be found in the South," he boasted.¹² The Franklinton merchant was also a notary public and a member of the Grange.

According to his grandson, McGhee, who supposedly had strong unfulfilled military ambitions, formed and led an independent military unit in Franklin County in 1892, and furnished the company with uniforms and weapons. The company evidently became part of the National Guard in 1915. McGhee was married to the former Bessie J. Moore, daughter of John Wheeler Moore, author of Roster of North Carolina Troops in the War Between the States.

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Apparently the Franklinton merchant never lived on the former Person farm because his wife refused to move from town, but he constructed the main house (the older early nineteenth century house became part of the rear of the new structure) as well as a number of outbuildings. Tenant farmers lived in the old portion of the house and the family, especially McGhee, went to the farm on weekends.¹³ McGhee made various innovative improvements to the farm. Using local labor, he terraced a large portion of the tract and planted 7-8 acres of plum trees, 10 acres of peach trees, 20 acres of apple trees, and a number of grape vines. He was, his grandson recalled, "mighty proud of his terraces," which stood "higher than your head," one after the other along the hilly land. He made cider and brandy from the apples as well as sold the fruit from the orchards. He also planted 2 acres of mulberry¹⁴ trees. When McGhee died in 1920 he left the property to his son Claude L. McGhee.

Claude Lemuel McGhee, who lived at the farm, plowed over his father's orchard terraces and planted cotton and corn, over a hundred acres of cotton. He also constructed a cabin to house his tenant farmers. During the Great Depression hard times hit McGhee who borrowed money from the Federal Land Bank. At his death the farm passed to his son Wyatt Lemuel McGhee, II, (the present owner) who had to pay off his father's land bank debt in order to take possession of the property. He began paying the debt¹⁵ in 1933 and moved onto the property around 1939. (The debt was paid off in 1950).

Wyatt L. McGhee, II, tried a number of agricultural schemes in the 1930s-1940s in order to make the McGhee farm profitable. Long attracted to the farm, he worked to improve and maintain the land. He took agriculture at the local high school and gained more information from the Agriculture Department at "State College"--now North Carolina State University--and sought to follow progressive methods of farming the land. He attempted to raise poultry and built several structures for keeping chickens. He tried the then-innovative strip-cropping method of raising grain with the aid of the Civilian Conservation Corps encamped at Franklinton. He later instigated the contour planting of tobacco and built several tobacco barns. Eventually, however, he abandoned these plans, for he saw that there "weren't anything to plowing up these hills." In the 1960s he built feed houses for cattle and now uses the land as pasture for cattle.¹⁶ He has worked to maintain the character of the rolling farmland. It is now a rural landscape of rare beauty amid countryside now generally grown up and randomly developed.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Franklin County Deed Books (microfilm), Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, Deed Books 17:234-235, hereinafter cited as Franklin Deed Books.

² Allen Johnson, Dumas Malone, and others, eds., The Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Scribners and Sons, 1928), XIV, 496.

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³ Franklin Deed Books 27:338.

^{3A} "Location Book," James Herron, Civil Engineer, Duke University Manuscript Collection, Durham.

⁴ Franklin Deed Book 30:90-92.

⁵ Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Franklin County, Population Schedule, 9; Agricultural Schedule, 24.

^{5A} Catherine W. Bishir, interview with T. H. Pearce, Franklin County historian.

⁶ Franklin Deed Books 62:145, 146; 63:205-206; Franklin County Estate Records, Joseph A. Person, 1895, Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Franklin Estates.

⁷ Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 27-28.

⁸ The Dispatch (Franklinton), September 23, 1887.

⁹ The Dispatch (Franklinton), September 23, 1887.

¹⁰ The Dispatch (Franklinton), September 30, 1887.

¹¹ Franklin Estates, Joseph A. Person, 1895.

¹² The Dispatch (Franklinton), August 12, September 30, October 7, 1887.

¹³ Catherine Bishir's interview with Wyatt L. McGhee, II, Franklinton, 1978, grandson of Wyatt L. McGhee (notes on interview in possession of Historic Preservation Section, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh), hereinafter cited as McGhee interview.

¹⁴ Franklin County Will Books (microfilm), Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, Will Book W:84, hereinafter cited as Franklin Will Books.

¹⁵ Franklin Will Books W:84; McGhee interview.

¹⁶ McGhee interview.

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Goodwyn, Lawrence. Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America. New York:
Oxford University Press, 1976.

Johnson, Allen; Malone, Dumas; and others, eds. The Dictionary of American
Biography. New York: Scribner's and Sons, 20 volumes plus supplements, 1928.

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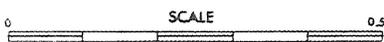
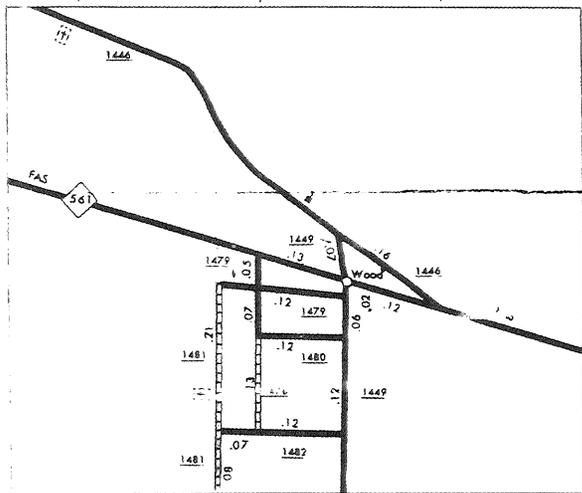
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Boundary Description

Geographical and manmade boundaries define the 500-acre tract of the Person-McGhee farm. These include the south bank of the Tar River on the north; to its intersection with the western edge of the right-of-way of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad on the east; to its intersection with the center line of the private road separating the McGhee property from that of the Continental Can Corporation; and a continuation of that line to its intersection with the east bank of Taylors Creek on the west; and back to the confluence of Taylors Creek and the Tar River. These boundaries reflect both the historical and visual extent of the Person-McGhee farmplace. The 500 acres represents the 353 acres acquired in the 1880s by Wyatt Lemuel McGhee, plus acreage added to the tract in 1900. The entire farm is carefully tended and is one of the few such rural landscapes in the several-county area. The property is bisected by U.S. 1, running north-south. The house, facing the road, is the centerpiece. The contrast between this rolling, well-kept farm and the surrounding countryside is dramatic and sets off the McGhee farm as a discrete and valuable visual and historical entity.



WOOD

PERSON-MC GHEE FARM
 East & West Sides of US 1, just South
 of Tar River
 Franklinton, Franklin County, NC

Highway Map of Franklin County
 500 Acres

Latitude

Longitude

A 36° 10' 12"

78° 26' 47"

B 36° 08' 01"

78° 26' 58"

C 36° 09' 10"

78° 27' 43"

D 36° 10' 16"

78° 27' 09"

