

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 Speed Farm

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number West side SR 1436, between SR 1432 and SR 1434 N/A not for publication

city, town Gupton vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Franklin code 069 zip code 27549

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>14</u>	<u>7</u> buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> sites
<u>5</u>	<u>8</u> structures
	objects
<u>20</u>	<u>17</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.

William S. Price
Signature of certifying official

11-8-91
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)

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

/processing

/agricultural field

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

/secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

/processing

/agricultural field

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Other: I-House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls wood

aluminum

roof steel

other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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

Period of Significance

1857-1941

Significant Dates

1857
1900

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.

See continuation sheet

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 596 acres

UTM References

A

17	751710	4008870
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

17	753840	4009170
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

17	753860	4008450
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

17	752830	4007300
Zone	Easting	Northing

E: 17 751660/4007490

F: 17 751460/4008290

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are indicated by the curved and rectilinear pencilled lines on the accompanying USGS map, Gold Sand Quadrangle. These are the precise boundaries, transposed to USGS map scale from a composite map of several surveys drawn by D. T. Proctor (2/12/88 for James D. Speed) using a computer deed mapping program (Deed Analysis System 1.6) that is capable of producing accurate maps of deed plats to any scale.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is all of the farm currently owned by James D. Speed. All of this land has remained in the possession of the Speed family since his grandfather acquired it in 1857 or was sold out of the family in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and re-assembled by James D. Speed.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claudia Brown, National Register Coordinator; Michael Hill, Researcher
 organization N. C. Division of Archives and History date October 1991
 street & number 109 E. Jones St. telephone 919/733-6545
 city or town Raleigh state North Carolina zip code 27601-2807

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Speed Farm, Franklin County, NC

DESCRIPTION

The Speed Farm encompasses approximately 600 acres of the gently rolling terrain of rural northeastern Franklin County in North Carolina's eastern piedmont. The farm stretches from SR 1436 west to SR 1433 and is bordered on its south side by Sandy Creek and the Mount Zion Baptist Church property. Almost two-thirds of the acreage, including the western, northern, and most of the central areas of the farm, has always been wooded, primarily with pines. Pasture lines the entire road frontage along SR 1436, which incorporates a sliver of land with a small pond on the east side of the road. Three sizable manmade ponds at the western edge of this open space mark the heads of three of the five small streams cutting across the property. A large field stretches north from Sandy Creek and three smaller fields almost completely surrounded by woods are located in the eastern portion of the farm. One of these fields forms the farm's northeasternmost corner that stretches to SR 1434 and contains a small family cemetery developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the tract had passed out of Speed family ownership (it was re-acquired in the middle of this century).

Except for the cemetery at the northeast corner of the acreage, all of the manmade features of the Speed Farm are situated on the west side of SR 1436, in the midst of the largest expanse of pasture. These features are distinctly grouped into domestic and agricultural complexes neatly defined by wire and horizontal board fences.

[Note: Unless otherwise described, the roofs of all resources, agricultural as well as domestic, are covered in 5-V galvanized steel.]

DOMESTIC COMPOUND

Near a massive oak marking the southwest corner of the yard, a gravel driveway runs northwest through a deep mowed lawn, past a lane to the agricultural buildings, and on to the main house and its five associated outbuildings and small family cemetery. The driveway makes a loop south of the house, in front of the modern garage and pump house. Three weatherboarded outbuildings--a milk house, smoke house, and kitchen--are arranged in an "L" north of the house, with which they are contemporary. The house and three early outbuildings apparently were built for Archibald Taylor shortly after he acquired the property in 1847. Horizontal board fences link all of the outbuildings, except for the pump house, and delineate the rear (northwest) and northeast side yards. Immediately behind the section of fence southeast of the garage are the three marked graves of infants comprising the cemetery. Pasture sectioned by wire fencing extends behind the yard, while to the northeast there is more pasture and the large agricultural compound. Dozens of magnolia, dogwood, red and silver maple, pin oak, birch, pecan, locust, and elm trees, most of them mature, line the driveway and shade the lawn. With the spacious lawn, the domestic compound encompasses 6.5 acres.

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D-1. Main House. ca. 1847. Contributing building. Today an I-house with rear one-story wings, this house apparently originated as a one-and-one-half-story, one-room-deep dwelling with a rear ell built for Archibald Taylor. A photograph taken in the late 19th century reveals that the mortise and tenon frame house had a gable-end roofline without dormers, flush eaves in the gables and simple box cornices, double shoulder exterior end chimneys of stone with brick above the lower shoulders, and a stone foundation. A five-bay main facade with two nine-over-nine windows flanking a central entrance featured a shed-roofed porch supported by tapered box posts at the middle three bays.

In 1900 Henry Plummer Speed executed a major remodelling when he raised the upper portion of the main block to a full second story with a tri-gable roofline with molded box cornices and returns in the gable ends. The main facade was reworked with three symmetrical bays in which the windows are six-over-six. The brick stacks of the original chimneys were extended and one of the original windows was moved to the first story of the northeast gable end, which previously had been windowless except for small openings in the gables. This early window is on the front side of the chimney; to the other side there is a small shed-roofed projection accommodating an early closet. The opposite gable end remains blank. The original matching exterior doors with three vertical panels at the front and rear of the center hall also appear to have been retained, but glazing in a five-over-five pattern was inserted in their upper portions. Henry Plummer Speed also was responsible for the current almost-full-facade hip-roofed front porch, which features slender chamfered posts and a matchstick railing with cross pieces inserted at alternating heights between the balusters. Five wooden steps flanked by railings lead to the porch. The original porch across the rear and the one-and-one-half-story dining room ell extending from the northeast end of this porch were retained and the ca. 1847 milk house was moved to the end of the ell to which it was attached by a breezeway for use as a kitchen. The dining room later was lowered to a single story, apparently in 1903 when Speed is recorded as having renovated the dining room at a cost of \$50.00.

The interior of the two-story block displays elements from three periods--the original, ca. 1847 construction, remodelling that appears to date to ca 1860, probably executed by Robert A. Speed shortly after acquiring the property, and the major renovation of 1900. All of the flooring of approximately six-inch boards is original except for the 20th-century strip flooring in the southwest downstairs room. This room and the downstairs hall differ from the others in that their ceilings are plastered; ceilings in the other three rooms were sheathed in narrow beaded boards in 1900.

Tall plain baseboards are the only original elements appears throughout the entire two-story block. Except for a reworked surround at the staircase, all of the trim

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in the center hall, consisting of plain mitred surrounds with an interior bead, also are early; the doors to the two rooms, however, are the vertical two-panel, Greek Revival style and probably were installed around 1860. The original enclosed staircase rises from the back of the center hall and is entered via two steps in the hall to winders just inside the enclosure, which is sheathed in very wide beaded, hand-planed boards. Other original features are a six-panel closet door in the downstairs northeast room and the two second-floor mantelpieces. The mantelpiece in the southwest room has panelled pilasters, a tall frieze reworked ca. 1900 with narrow beaded boards placed on the diagonal, and a heavily molded shelf. The mantelpiece in the northeast room is simpler with plain pilasters, flat-panelled frieze, and molded shelf.

In contrast, the downstairs mantelpieces are distinctly Greek Revival and the most noticeable aspects of the ca. 1860 remodelling. Both have tall tapered pilasters and a simply molded shelf. The frieze of the mantelpiece in the northeast room is plain while that in the southwest room features a distinctive faceted, full width panel which recalls designs by architect-builder Jacob Holt who worked in Franklin and neighboring counties.

Much of the front block of the house bears the stamp of the 1900 renovation. Molded window and door surrounds in all four rooms and the upstairs hall and a railing with chamfered newel post and turned balusters at the top of the staircase date from this time. In addition, there are five-panel doors upstairs and vertical narrow beaded board used on the first floor in wainscoting in the northeast room and a panel under the window in the southwest room.

The rear portion of the house has experienced numerous alterations throughout the 20th century. The porch across the two-story block has been enclosed as a bathroom in the end connecting the ell and as a dining room behind the original southwest room. The room in the ell is now used as a den and retains vertical beaded board wainscoting from the turn of this century. In the mid-1960s, a hall and kitchen were added next to the ell behind the dining room and a gabled roof was built over the entire wing. Also during this period, the ca. 1847 milk house was detached from the rear of the original ell (and returned to its initial site) and replaced with a small gable-roofed wing and a deck. Modern changes to the two-story block consist of parging the foundations and chimneys and the installation of aluminum siding. Despite these changes, virtually all salient features from the 1900 renovation remain evident.

D-2. Kitchen. ca. 1847. Contributing building. Large single-shoulder stone chimneys with brick stacks mark each gable end of this small one-story weatherboarded frame building facing the northeast gable end of the main house. A four-bay facade consisting of two doors (an original batten door and an early-20th-century four-panel door) flanked by nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows with early louvered shutters reflects the two-room plan. There is no porch. A small

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square window at each side of both chimney stacks and one other double-hung sash window on the rear elevation mark the attic and northwest room, respectively. The roofline features plain rake boards at flush gable ends and simple box cornices. On the interior, the finish has been removed from the northwest room but the southeast room retains original plaster and a very plain mantelpiece. The original staircase in the southeast room was replaced many years ago with the current ladder stair in the northwest room that rises to the unfinished attic along a partition sheathed in flush horizontal boards. Believed to have served originally as a kitchen and perhaps as slave quarters, the building also has been used as a dwelling and office and currently is used for storage.

D-3. Smoke House. ca. 1847. Contributing building. Small cubical, weatherboarded frame building with a large shed on the southwest gable end. The tall one-story building's only opening is a batten door on the southeast elevation. The unfinished, smoke-blackened interior retains a stone-lined fire pit.

D-4. Milk House. ca. 1847. Contributing building. This small rectangular, one-story, gable-front weatherboarded frame building has flush gable ends, an off-center door in the southeast gable end, and one window in the other facades. The plain interior of replacement materials indicates the building's adaptation as a kitchen when it was moved and attached to the rear of the main house around 1900. When the current rear wing of the house was built ca. 1965, the milk house was returned to its approximate original site.

D-5. Garage. modern. Noncontributing building. Gable-front building sheathed in T-111 siding that is open at the front and has room for two cars.

D-6. Pump House. modern. Noncontributing structure. Very small and low shed-roofed structure sheathed in weatherboards.

D-7. Cemetery. 1867; 1922. Contributing site. Three marked graves are located in a mowed lawn immediately behind a short length of horizontal board fencing southeast of the rear of the garage. The three markers are arranged in a row parallel to the fence. The oldest marker, a round-arched tablet now resting flat on the ground, is for Archie Speed, the infant son of Robert Alexander and Mary Plummer Davis Speed, who died in 1867. Two low, rough-cut granite markers identify the graves of twins Annie Bobbit and Alfred Alston Speed, children of Henry Plummer and Addie Jeffreys Speed, who died in infancy in 1922.

AGRICULTURAL COMPOUND

Access to this grassy area is provided by a gravel drive making an arc that connects at each end with SR 1436. Near the south end of this farm lane, another gravel drive runs past the south end of the complex and proceeds to the southwest where it

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connects with the driveway to the main house. The agricultural complex covers approximately 12.5 acres and consists of twenty-eight buildings and structures arranged in four groups at the edge of pasture. Although many of these resources are noncontributing because they are less than fifty years old, with very few exceptions they exhibit traditional forms and materials and are indistinguishable from the earlier features.

At the south end of the compound, shaded by tall trees, there are six garages, sheds, and other storage buildings (A-1 to A-6) arranged in a row and linked by short lengths of horizontal board fencing. Except for a nineteenth-century granary (A-5), most of these were built after World War II.

Immediately northeast of this row, a large square feed lot is the focus of ten nineteenth- and twentieth-century barns, cribs, pens, a trough, and a tobacco grading building (A-7 to A-16), all within the fenced enclosure except for a gambrel-roofed barn (A-7) on the south side of the fence. A large two-story, timber-framed, antebellum barn (A-10) at the southeast edge dominates the lot, which is dotted with three huge oak trees providing shade to grazing cattle.

Northeast of the enclosure, a woodland pasture of mature oaks is the setting for a modern elevated barn (A-17), four ca. 1940 tobacco barns (A-18 to A-21), and a small tenant house with three outbuildings constructed ca. 1935 (A-22 to A-25). Although the buildings and structures in the feed lot and the woodland pasture are irregularly sited, with only one exception these, as well as the row of agricultural buildings at the south end of the complex and the domestic buildings, all are oriented with the ridge of their gable roofs either on an approximate northwest-southeast axis or perpendicular to it.

At the northeast end of the lane there are two modern metal bulk curing barns (A-27 and A-28) and a ca. 1940 frame tobacco barn (A-26). In addition, the woodland pasture also contains a few unobtrusive wooden sheds in fair condition that are not counted for the purposes of this nomination due to their very small size and indeterminate use.

[Note: All doors are the batten type except for those on the tenant house (A-23).]

A-1. Tractor Shed. 1950. Noncontributing structure. Five-bay structure consisting of gable roof supported by poles. Corrugated metal encloses rear and east ends and covers roof with exposed rafters.

A-2. Garage. 1950. Noncontributing building. Weatherboarded gable-front building, open at the front and large enough for two cars. Moved to current site from behind main house.

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A-3. Shed. post-WWII. Noncontributing building. Small shed-roofed building covered in asphalt sheets. The only opening is a door on the front elevation. Originally located at southeast edge of feed lot.

A-4. Shed. post-WWII. Noncontributing structure. Very small and low German-sided, shed-roofed structure, moved to farm from Raleigh.

A-5. Granary. late 19th c. Contributing building. One-room weatherboarded, gable-roofed building with a door centered on the main elevation and asphalt sheeting applied to the northwest and northeast facades. A low shed of flush horizontal boards is attached to the southeast side. The building is now used for tool storage.

A-6. Shed. 1950. Noncontributing structure. Two-bay shed-roofed structure open on the front and covered with corrugated metal on the sides and rear, used for lumber storage.

A-7. Barn. ca. 1945. Noncontributing building. One-and-a-half-story weatherboarded, gambrel-roofed barn with a door at each level in the southwest gambrel end. An open shed is attached to the northwest side. Moved to current site from another farm.

A-8. Corn Crib. late 19th c. Noncontributing structure. Small gable-front building with weatherboard sheathing now largely obscured by asphalt sheets. The crib is deemed noncontributing because it was moved to this site from another property after World War II.

A-9. Ram Tower. ca. 1935. Contributing structure. Two-story structure consisting of poles supporting a gable roof that sheltered a hydraulic ram and two 60-gallon storage barrels. The flow of water from a spring 100 yards away provided the power to pump 25 percent of the flow to the barrels. A depression in the concrete slab at the base indicates the location of the ram which has been removed, as have the barrels. Since ca. 1975, electric pumps have provided water for the agricultural compound.

A-10. Barn. 1840 or 1850s. Contributing building. Tall two-story, gable-roofed building, approximately 25 feet square, distinguished by heavy timber frame construction indicating a construction date in the first half of the 19th century. Although the exterior recently has been sheathed in corrugated metal, the overall form, fenestration and interior remain unaltered and render this barn a rare and remarkable survivor of early agricultural construction. The interior has two open levels displaying the exposed hand hewn timber framing that incorporates 14-inch-square summer beams supporting the second story. A door is located on each elevation at the first story and at the second story on the front (northwest) and rear; a small square opening, now covered by boards, appears in each gable.

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Virtually flush gable ends and small box cornices also suggest an early 19th-century date of construction. The foundation is stone. A low one-story, pole-supported open shed spans the northeast gable end and a similar but taller shed runs across the opposite end. The extremely sturdy construction of the upper floor and openings in the upper floor that appear to be original support the tradition that the building accommodated an antebellum cotton gin, despite documentation suggesting that Robert Speed did not begin cultivating cotton until the 1870s. The building has served as a hay barn since the Civil War.

A-11. Corn Crib. late 19th c. Contributing structure. One-story gable-front building sheathed in narrow horizontal boards slightly separated for ventilation. Short door in southwest gable end provides access on rare occasions corn must be shovelled; normally an auger is used to store and remove the corn. Roof has fairly deep overhang and exposed rafter ends. Building rests on block piers.

A-12. Corn Crib. late 19th c. Contributing structure. Except for smaller size and wider, almost flush boards, this crib is identical to A-11.

A-13. Hog Shed. early 20th c. Contributing structure. Very low shed on a concrete slab with spaced horizontal boards on sides and rear and open on front. Originally housed hogs for fattening one month prior to slaughter. Shed extensions were added after World War II. Hog operation ceased ca. 1975 and shed now is used for storage.

A-14. Corn Crib. ca. 1935. Contributing structure. Virtually identical to A-11 except that sheathing is vertical boards.

A-15. Tobacco Grading Building. ca. 1930. Contributing building. Low one-story log building with low-pitched gable roof, door in southwest gable end, and enclosed frame shed along northwest side.

A-16. Foot Trough. ca. 1960. Noncontributing structure. Concrete trough several inches deep and approximately four feet long embedded in the ground. Installed to contain medication for "foot rot," a fungus that afflicts cattle and sheep.

A-17. Barn. ca. 1960. Noncontributing building. Large one-story gable-roofed building elevated a full story on creosote-treated poles to provide storage for large equipment at ground level. The entire building is sheathed in corrugated metal and there is a door in each gable end.

A-18. Tobacco Barn. ca. 1940. Contributing building. Typical tall, almost cubical building with ventilator at crest of gable roof, modern asphalt sheathing, short door at ground on one side, and cinder block foundation. Very large and tall shed wraps around northeast and northwest sides.

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- A-19. Tobacco Barn. ca. 1940. Contributing building. Identical to A-18, with a smaller shed on only one side.
- A-20. Tobacco Barn. ca. 1940. Contributing building. Identical to A-18 except that it has a rubble foundation and a smaller shed on one side.
- A-21. Tobacco Barn. ca. 1940. Contributing building. Identical to A-18 except that fairly large shed runs across only one side.
- A-22. Corn Crib. 1950. Noncontributing structure. Very small gable-front building sheathed in flush horizontal boards slightly spaced in the gables for ventilation. Portions of the exterior have been covered in sheet metal.
- A-23. Tenant House. ca. 1935. Contributing building. Low one-story, one-room-deep weatherboarded building with three-bay main facade, rear two-room ell (end room appears to be early addition), exposed rafter ends at all rooflines, and six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The hip-roofed front porch is less than full-facade and has slender tapered posts on brick plinths. Front unit and rear ell each has an interior brick chimney.
- A-24. Pump House. 1980. Noncontributing structure. Very small gable-roofed cinder block structure.
- A-25. Garage. 1950. Noncontributing building. Gable-front one-car garage sheathed in flush horizontal boards and open on the front.
- A-26. Tobacco Barn. ca. 1940. Contributing building. Identical to A-18, with large open gabled shed on northeast side.
- A-27 & A-28. Bulk Curing Barns. 1980s. Noncontributing buildings. Long rectangular, flat-roofed metal units with double doors in one end.
- A-29. Cemetery. late 19th to early 20th c. Noncontributing site. Located at the northeast edge of the farm, near SR 1434, this small overgrown cemetery of approximately fifteen stones was developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries on a 21-acre tract Robert A. Speed sold sometime after 1871 to Britton Williams. Most of the stones, some of which are simply rocks etched with dates, mark graves of the Cooper and Rowe families, subsequent owners of the tract. Current owner James Speed reunited this tract with the rest of the farm in the mid-20th century.
- A-30. Agricultural Landscape. Contributing site. Roughly 577 acres constitute the agricultural landscape of the Speed Farm. The great majority of this gently rolling landscape has always been woodland, predominantly pines. Portions of the forested area were cleared for cotton cultivation late in the 19th century, but in the second

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quarter of the 20th century grew up in pines and since then timber cultivation has been a mainstay of the farm's income. Field patterns have remained constant for most of this century. At the south edge of the farm, a large field extends north from Sandy Creek; three smaller fields, including the one containing the Cooper and Rowe family cemetery, are in the eastern third of the farm, near the pasture that characterizes the far eastern end surrounding the domestic and agricultural compounds. Today, in addition to timber, the farm's primary products are tobacco, cattle, and grains.

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Speed Farm, Franklin County, NC

Section number 8 Page 1SUMMARY

Bordered on the south by Sandy Creek and Laurel Mill in northeastern Franklin County, the Speed Farm comprises approximately 600 acres of rolling fields and woodland. The heart of the farm is at its eastern edge where there are sizable complexes of antebellum, later nineteenth-, and twentieth-century agricultural and domestic buildings. The main house originated as a one-and-a-half story building probably erected in the 1840s for Archibald Taylor, who lived here until 1857 when he sold the house and accompanying farm to Robert Alexander Speed. Speed, his wife Mary, and their ten children operated the farm for the rest of the nineteenth century, raising primarily hay, grains, tobacco, and cotton. After Speed's death in 1895, his son Henry Plummer Speed farmed the house tract left to him as well as his siblings' tracts, embarking upon a series of improvements over the next decades that began with enlarging the main dwelling to a full two stories and included the addition of numerous facilities in the agricultural complex. James D. Speed, the second of Henry Speed's five children, inherited the house tract in 1957 and over the next several years reassembled the tracts that had passed to his grandfather's and father's other heirs. James Speed and his family still produce hay, grains, livestock, and tobacco and have continued the practice of timber cultivation established by his father. Today, the farm's impressive domestic and agricultural complexes and the surrounding acreage of fields, pasture and timber reflect three generations of activity by the Speed family that parallels agriculture in north-central North Carolina. Over the course of almost a century and a half, the farm and its owners have witnessed the fall of the traditional slave-based antebellum economy, the rigors imposed by a ruined postwar South, variations in market demand for tobacco and cotton, the rise of a system of tenant farming, economic hardships associated with the Great Depression, and the creation of a price support system for tobacco.

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Speed Farm, Franklin County, NC

AGRICULTURAL CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bordered on the southwest by Sandy Creek in northeastern Franklin County, the 600-acre Speed Farm centers around a ca. 1847 farmhouse and an adjoining agricultural compound. Originally a one-and-a-half story structure, the residence was raised to two stories and substantially renovated in 1900. Antebellum outbuildings include a heavy timber barn said to have served originally as a cotton gin building. From the first four decades of the twentieth century, numerous tobacco barns and other auxiliary structures remain. Remarkably, since 1857, the farm has been owned and operated by only three generations of a single family.

The house's presumed builder and its resident for its first ten years was Archibald Taylor (1820-1885). In 1847, at the age of twenty-seven, Taylor took Mary Boddie Perry, member of a locally prominent family, as his wife. Taylor was a highly successful farmer, amassing by the eve of the Civil War, an estate valued at over \$100,000, including his sixty-two slaves. Taylor's rapid rise on the social ladder made the modest ca. 1847 house less than adequate for his wife and himself. Consequently, around 1855, construction commenced on a larger house about six miles northeast on Shocco Creek near the Wood community. Responsible for work on the impressive Italianate-style Archibald Taylor House (NR) was Warrenton builder Jacob Holt. The Taylors' first child was born after their move into the new house.¹

In March, 1857, Archibald Taylor sold his first home and accompanying 923 3/4 acres to Robert Alexander Speed (14 March 1831- 25 March 1895).² The purchase price was just over \$5100. Speed grew up in Granville County, at "Rose Hill," built in 1834 and today the sole surviving antebellum brick dwelling in that county (NR). His father John Joseph Speed (1803-1870) and mother, the former Ann Strachan Jones (1807-1851), moved from Virginia to the site immediately south of the North Carolina/Virginia border shortly after Robert's birth.³

Robert A. Speed in 1852 had married Mary Plummer Davis (1835-1914), daughter of Franklin County planter John Calvin Davis and his wife Lucy Alston. Robert and Mary Speed had ten children, in order of birth: Annie Jones (born 1855), who married E. H. Bobbitt; Robert Alexander, Jr. (1856); Lula Alston (1858), married S. J. Beckwith; John Davis (1860); Rosa Belle (1862), married Edward T. Alston; Alfred Alston (1864); Henry Plummer (1865); Minnie Scott (1869), married R. J. Stuart; Eugene Davis (1871); and Elmo Murray (1874). Three other children died in infancy. Robert A. Speed is said to have been a "large man of impressive bearing in contrast with the petite bearing of his wife." They took pleasure in entertaining guests at their home, then known as "Sunny Side."⁴

The community in which R. A. Speed and his family lived was known as Laurel. There was a post office operating under that name. In addition, despite the fact that the area was sparsely settled, there were nearby a grist mill, cotton gin, and cotton

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yarn factory, all operated by water power. Though the gin and factory are gone, the grist mill is today restored and operates as Laurel Mill (NR).

R. A. Speed in 1860 owned seventeen slaves, nine of whom were adults. This did not qualify him as a large slaveholder in Franklin County, where it was not uncommon to own seventy- five bondsmen. In that year Speed had 400 of his acres, or a little less than half of his holdings, in cultivation. His principal crop was tobacco, of which he harvested 15,000 pounds annually. Most every farmer in the district had some tobacco in 1860. Speed's production was above average but not unusually large. A neighbor, Thomas Alston, harvested six times Speed's amount. On the farm in 1860 were relatively small herds of stock: three horses, ten cows, and twenty-four swine. Twenty tons of hay were harvested in that year. In addition to grains (wheat, oats, and corn), Speed in 1860 had sizable plantings of Irish and sweet potatoes.⁵

Ten years later Speed reported to the census taker that 600 acres were improved and the rest wooded. The full report indicates that much of the improved acreage must have been in pasture or old fields. No tobacco production was reported in 1870. The same was true of many of Speed's neighbors. Only a few, perhaps five percent, reported the harvest of just a small amount. Again, corn, wheat, oats, and potatoes were grown but only at a subsistence level. For the first time Speed reported the harvest of cotton, albeit only five bales. In time cotton would surpass tobacco as the principal crop on the Speed Family Farm. Added to the small herds of livestock were fifty sheep, from which 100 pounds of wool was gathered during the year.⁶

At the outset of the Civil War, Robert A. Speed was thirty years of age. In January, 1862, Speed received a commission as assistant commissary with the rank of first lieutenant in the Fortieth Regiment, Tenth Brigade, of the North Carolina Militia. The militia had long been dormant prior to the war. The units reactivated for temporary service were hastily organized, not uniformed, and armed only in rudimentary fashion. After July, 1863, the Home Guard, created by act of the legislature, replaced the militia for the duration of the war. All able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and fifty were liable for service in the Home Guard. Their responsibilities were to preserve order on the home front; arrest deserters; guard bridges, roads, and railroads; and protect the countryside from marauders.⁷

In 1863 Robert A. Speed donated one acre to Laurel Church "situated adjoining Colonel Jones [i.e., Laurel] Mill." In December of 1867, in the depths of the hard times following the war,⁸ Speed mortgaged the entire farm for \$2,750 only to settle the debt a month later. In 1871 Speed sold 200 acres, land upon which he had constructed a "store house" and other buildings. Other parts of the farm were sold off over the next several years, including a four-acre tract to Mount Zion Church.⁹

In 1880 Robert A. Speed, his wife Mary, and all of their ten children, ranging in age from seven to twenty-three, were living at home. The eldest, Annie, was a

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schoolteacher as was her sister Lula. The two oldest sons, Robert, Jr., and John D., assisted their father in operating the farm. For six weeks of the year outside "colored" labor was hired. Livestock herds, (sheep, swine, cattle, and horses) remained of modest size. Six acres were in pasture. One hundred acres were kept in cultivation, half of that in cotton and the rest in corn, oats, wheat, and potatoes. From the fifty acres of cotton the yield was twenty-five bales. The total farm production for the year was estimated at \$1500. This included the harvest from 150 peach trees and fifteen apple trees. No tobacco production was reported in the 1880 census.¹⁰

Robert A. Speed, Sr., died in 1895 at the age of sixty-four.¹¹ His eldest son, R. A., Jr., was listed separately in the 1880 agricultural schedule although he was still living at his parents' house. With his father he continued to manage the farm over the next decade but by 1900 he had moved across the county to Franklinton. His brother Henry continued to live at home and gradually assumed the day-to-day management of the farm. Residing at the homeplace at the turn of the century were Mrs. R. A. Speed (Sr.), age sixty-five, and her sons Henry P., thirty-five, and Eugene D., twenty-eight. Ten years later the widow Speed and Henry remained and were joined by Annie, also by then a widow. A fifty-eight-year old white servant and cook, Jane Person, lived with the Speeds.¹²

Henry Plummer Speed (1865-1957) was responsible for major changes to the farm. Between April and August 1900 he renovated the ca. 1847 farmhouse, raising it to a full two stories with a new roof. Prior to the improvements the "mansion house" was described as being in "very bad condition" and needing numerous repairs "to make it habitable." Serving as his own foreman and carpenter, he estimated his expenses at \$250.

In 1903 he worked two months on renovating the dining room at a cost of \$50. Other improvements which he made to the property included the following: construction of an outbuilding, 1901-1902, at a cost of \$37.50; a new crib, 1904, \$27; "wired in the yard," 1908, \$25; a wagon shed, 1908, \$15; digging of a new well, 1913, \$24; and cow stalls, 1913, \$20. In addition Henry P. Speed estimated that he paid out of pocket for numerous other expenses during these years. In enumerating his costs Speed did not ask for compensation in the division of property but rather wished to make the expenses a matter of record.

The occasion for this accounting was the division of property among the Speed siblings following the death of their mother Mary on March 11, 1914. At that time the nine brothers and sisters (Eugene was by then deceased) were judged by the court to be "tenants in common" on what was then a 394-acre farm. Through purchase of his siblings' shares Henry P. Speed gained five-ninths interest in the property with his brother Alfred and sisters Annie, Minnie, and Rosa reserving tracts to themselves. Consequently the court divided the property, allotting to Henry P. Speed 178 acres including the "home and barns and so forth." Still, Henry continued to farm the

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entire original property, making arrangements annually to compensate his siblings who declined to sell to him outright.¹³

Henry P. Speed married relatively late in life, wedding his distant cousin Addie Jeffreys Speed (1882-1948) in 1912. Primarily a farmer, Speed also worked as a mail carrier in the early years of the twentieth century. He and Addie had five children: Thomas (born 1913), James D. (1915), Robert A. (1916), and twin sisters Mary and Rose (1920), all of whom survive. Mary married Hubert Cameron of Raeford and Rose married James Hight of Henderson. A second set of twins, Annie and Alfred (born 1922), died in infancy.¹⁴

On several occasions accumulated debts led Henry P. Speed to mortgage all or a portion of the farm. In 1914, just after acquiring the five-ninths interest in the property, he and his wife placed the farm in the hands of a trustee in exchange for \$800. The mortgage deed was cancelled two months later. Likewise, in 1918, 1921 and 1923, parts of the farm were mortgaged, for amounts ranging from \$750 to \$3000. During the 1920s, Henry P. Speed twice entered into contracts selling the timber rights to specified tracts on the farm.¹⁵

In 1929 and again in 1932, during the lean years of the Great Depression, Henry and Addie Speed borrowed money from the Prudential Insurance Company. The first time they mortgaged their entire farm, then 178 acres, for \$2000. The note, payable in ten years, was repaid in four. The second time the loan for \$2400, secured with the same property, was repaid over eleven years.¹⁶

During Henry P. Speed's long tenure on the farm, market prices, technological advances, and the boll weevil dictated the changes in what was planted and how it was cultivated and harvested. Following the area's general trend in the twentieth century, the shift was from cotton to tobacco as the primary cash crop. In the period before 1950, there were as many as six cotton gins operating within a five-mile radius of the Speed farm. It was around mid-century that the weevil infested the crop, the gins closed up shop, and farmers by necessity looked elsewhere to cast their lots.

Tobacco became increasingly important to the Speeds just as it was to their neighbors. This marked the completion of a cycle, for a century earlier, on the eve of the Civil War, Robert A. Speed had been primarily a tobacco farmer. Senator James D. Speed, the present owner, has maintained an annual allotment under the tobacco price support system for several decades. During his lifetime an average of fifty to seventy-five acres has been kept in cultivation in most years. A sizable portion of this has been in tobacco. In addition Speed has grown grains, hay, and timber, and raised beef cattle. Tenants have occupied and farmed tracts on the property throughout this century.¹⁷

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Henry P. Speed died at the age of ninety-two in 1957, nine years after his wife Addie. By terms of his will he directed that his home and property should be divided equally among the five children, reckoning that "some of the heirs could sell their interest to others, as the farm is not in shape to be divided into more than two farms." Perhaps recalling the difficulties involved in the division of the estate forty-three years earlier, Henry Speed willed that "above all else there be no falling out among them" [i.e., his heirs]. Mindful of his father's wishes and in an effort to reassemble a close approximation of the nineteenth-century farm, James D. Speed acquired his siblings's shares over the next several years.¹⁸

James Davis Speed, farmer and public official, married Martha Matthews in 1947. Their children are Claudia, Tommy, and James. In 1961 James D. Speed was elected to the first of six consecutive two-year terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives. Since 1977 he has served in the North Carolina Senate, where he presently chairs the Agriculture Committee.¹⁹

NOTES

¹Seventh Census, 1860, Population Schedule; Archibald Taylor House, Franklin County, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1975. The Speed family tradition holds that the house had an owner prior to Robert A. Speed. Interview, Senator James D. Speed, June 27, 1991. Archibald Taylor's birth and death years are taken from his tombstone in the Oxford Cemetery. Works Progress Administration Pre-1914 Graves Index, North Carolina State Archives.

²Franklin County Deed Book 31, p. 723.

³"Rose Hill," Granville County, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1988; Sixth Census, 1850, Population Schedule. John Joseph Speed and his wife Ann, according to the WPA Graves Index in the North Carolina State Archives, are buried in Shiloh Cemetery in the Grassy Creek area of Granville County.

⁴Genealogical information received from Thomas Speed, Oxford, North Carolina.

⁵Seventh Census, 1860, Agriculture Schedule; Franklin County List of Taxables, 1858-1871. Tax records indicate that R. A. Speed was also taxed on a carriage, gold and silver items, and a piano during these years. In 1867 he was taxed on \$450 worth of liquor purchased out of state and \$5000 worth of goods purchased from merchants. This almost certainly indicates that R. A. Speed operated a mercantile business of his own.

⁶Eighth Census, 1870, Agriculture Schedule.

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⁷Commission in the possession of James D. Speed; Wilson Angley, "A Brief History of the North Carolina Militia and National Guard" (Research Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1985), pp. 17-18.

⁸Franklin County Deed Book 32, p. 546; Deed Book 33, p. 337; and Deed Book 34, p. 44.

⁹Franklin County Deed Book 36, p. 426; Deed Book 37, p. 166; and Deed Book 45, p. 65; and Deed Book 114, p. 273.

¹⁰Ninth Census, 1880, Population and Agriculture Schedules. The Speed Family Farm, at the turn of the century, was of above average size for Franklin County, the median then being ninety- three acres. Department of the Interior, Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895).

¹¹Robert A. Speed and his wife Mary are buried in the Davis Cemetery near the site of the former John C. Davis homeplace. Information received from Thomas Speed, Oxford, North Carolina.

¹²Eleventh and Twelfth Censuses, 1900 and 1910, Population Schedules.

¹³Franklin County Orders and Decrees Book 9, pp. 132-137; interview with James D. Speed, June 27, 1991.

¹⁴Franklin County Index to Vital Statistics; interviews with Thomas Speed, June 25 and July 2, 1991.

¹⁵Franklin County Deed Book 177, p. 220; Deed Book 224, p. 141; Deed Book 234, p. 312; and Deed Book 229, p. 555. The timber rights deeds are in Franklin County Deed Book 254, p. 181, and Deed Book 274, p. 412.

¹⁶Franklin County Deed Book 259, p. 559, and Deed Book 250, p. 722.

¹⁷Interview with James D. Speed, June 27, 1991.

¹⁸Franklin County Will Book X, pp. 339-340; interview with James D. Speed, June 27, 1991.

¹⁹North Carolina Manual, 1989-1990 (Raleigh: Secretary of State, 1989), p. 289.

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Speed Farm, Franklin County, NC

The following information applies to all photographs:

1. Speed Farm
2. Gupton vicinity, North Carolina
3. Michael T. Southern
4. September 1991
5. N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC

Note: All photos are keyed to large-scale sketch map except for photos A and K which are keyed to the map of the entire farm.

- A) View of compounds from pasture, to the north
- B) Main house (D-1), to the northwest
- C) Mantelpiece in main house, southwest room of first floor
- D) Kitchen (right, D-2), smoke house (D-3), and wash house (D- 4), to the northwest
- E) View of agricultural compound from domestic yard, to the northeast
- F) View of main house and related outbuildings from agricultural compound, to the southwest
- G) View of shed (middle, A-6), granary (A-5), and other agricultural outbuildings from feed lot, next to tobacco grading building (A-15); to the southwest
- H) Corn crib (left, A-14), hog shed (A-13), tobacco barn (A-18), and two corn cribs (A-12 and A-11), to the northeast
- I) Tobacco Barn (A-20), garage (A-25), corn crib (A-22), and pump house (A-24), to the northwest
- J) Tenant House (right, A-23) and barn (A-10), to the west
- K) Field with cemetery at northeast corner of farm, to the southwest

