

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Freeman House

and/or common The Stateline House

2. Location

East side of Hwy. 13 traveling North divided by N.C./Va. line  
street & number

not for publication

city, town Gates

vicinity of

~~Congressional district~~

First

state North Carolina

code 037

county Gates

code 037

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Michael D. and Margaret S. Lefler

street & number Rt. 2, Box 172

city, town Gates (phone 919-357-1435) vicinity of

state N. C. 27937

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Gates County and Nansemond County Courthouses

street & number

city, town Gatesville, N. C.

Suffok, Va.

state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town

state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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 State-Line House, so named because it straddles the line between Virginia and North Carolina, is a good example of the evolution of the vernacular farm house. Though an exact construction date is difficult to determine, either through historical records or construction techniques, it is obvious that through a series of building campaigns succeeding generations expanded the structure from a small one-room dwelling with loft to its present configuration. Each of the three building phases exemplifies the traditional architectural form popularized during its respective period; the basic early-Federal-style one-room plan with a loft was superseded by the addition of a late-Federal-style two-story side-hall-plan addition which was finally enlarged and converted during the mid-nineteenth century to a more substantial center-hall-plan dwelling.

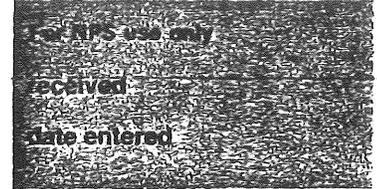
The dominant two-story frame structure with beaded molded weatherboards is five bays wide and set on a 1:3 common bond brick foundation. A one-story shed-roof porch shelters three bays and is supported by gently tapered square-in-section posts with flat panels. A railing with rectangular balusters carries around the porch. A gable roof covered with standing-seam tin shelters the simple molded box cornice which maintains ornamental pattern boards at each north terminus. Exterior chimneys are located at each gable end. The north chimney is primarily a replacement; however, the lower portion remains which is laid in 1:3 common bond. The south chimney has stepped double-shoulder, 1:7 common bond, and an off-set stack.

The fenestration of the front facade is asymmetrical, and a break in the weatherboards and gable roof indicates that the southern portion containing two bays is a later addition. Windows on the front are 9/9 along the first floor and 6/9 on the second. Further substantiating the house's three building periods, is the use of the stylish Federal tripartite or three-part surrounds for both the doors and windows during the second building phase of the new side-hall-plan "addition." The entrance way also originally had a Federal-style molded three-part surround which was later modified by the introduction of narrow side panels characteristic of the late nineteenth century. The single leaf door in use now probably replaced double three-part leaf doors, possibly those recently found in the barn.

The oldest section of the house, located in the rear and now used as the kitchen, was a one-room structure with a loft reached by an enclosed corner stair. A replacement exterior chimney is located in the gable end. The interior of this room as well as the rest of the first-floor ostensibly contains plain board wainscot with a variety of chair rail profilus. In this earlier one-room section, the vernacular tripartite mantel contains carving which could possibly be either initials or Roman numerals. A short, raised four-panel door leads to a storage area beneath the stair. Windows in this section are 4/4 with plain mitered surrounds. An enclosed stair, located in the southwest corner opposite the fireplace leads to a low-ceilinged loft area with plaster interior.

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The next portion to be built was originally a side-hall-plan section which comprises the northwest portion of the house. The former parlor now used as the dining room contains a mantel much like the one in the kitchen only a bit more elaborate and refined. A stair closet in one corner contains original wooden pegs. Attenuated windows 6/6 sash flank the fireplace. Rising from back to front an enclosed-string dog-leg stair with landing dominates the former side hall. The stair is accented by very plain rectangular balusters and square newel posts which create a gallery on the second floor. The present parlor was added, sometime before 1897, converting the house to a center hall plan. This parlor also has a tripartite mantel, similar to the others but more characteristic of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Also only the flat panel wainscoting in this room is bisected by a simply molded horizontal member. Tall windows of 9/9 sash flank the mantel.

The three rooms upstairs are more simply finished than those below and feature a plain chair rail and baseboard combination. Windows are 6/6 in the north room and 6/9 in the south. The mantels are most like the one in the oldest section of the house, but on a more modest scale.

The house's surrounding property includes a nice complement of frame outbuildings: a tall, gable-roof smokehouse; a kitchen with exterior end chimney; an one-story tack house with an attached wood shed; a small, unidentified shed; two large barns; and a stable.

The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

# 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 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/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates                      Unknown                      Builder/Architect                      Unknown

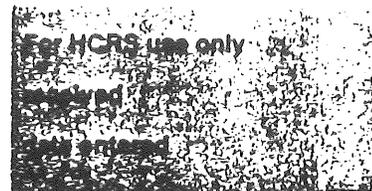
## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The State Line or Freeman, House stands squarely on the boundary line between North Carolina and Virginia, half in Nansemond County, Virginia and half in Gates County, North Carolina. Once the seat of a 350 acre plantation, the house now commands only one and one quarter acres most of which lies in the Tar Heel State. The structure is an example of the evolution of the vernacular farm house, exhibiting three distinct building phases having developed from a one room house with loft to a side-hall plan to a center-hall plan. Destruction of records in both states prohibits the establishment of a construction date or knowledge of the builder, but architecturally the oldest section of the house dates possibly from the late eighteenth century. From the earliest documented date (ca. 1817) until 1917, the house served as the center of a substantial, but fairly typical, farming operation in northeastern North Carolina; however, the unique location of the structure added colorful elements to its history that are probably unparalleled among extant buildings in the state. Edmund J. Freeman, who lived in the house for forty years, was a justice of the peace in both states. His home was the site of numerous marriages of young couples wishing to cross the state line to exchange wedding vows. Tales of duels on the grounds and divided state loyalties among brothers and sisters have become part of the house's lore. The house has been kept in excellent condition by members of the Freeman family who have owned it for over a century.

## Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the agrarian society so prevalent in the development of eastern North Carolina and Virginia.
- C. Representative of three distinctive building periods, each embodying characteristics of its respective styles--Federal, late-Federal, and Greek Revival. The survival of the original one-room section is especially important, because such modest dwellings were prevalent among the housing of the Albemarle section but now seldom survive in recognizable form. The subsequent plan development, including a side-hall plan and central-hall plan, parallels widespread patterns in the region, so that the house embodies in a single building much of the region's domestic architectural growth.

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The early history of the State Line House (also known as the Freeman House) straddling the boundary between Nansemond County, Virginia, and Gates (formerly a part of Hertford) County, North Carolina, may forever be shrouded in mystery. A series of fires totally destroyed the Nansemond County records prior to 1865, and the early Hertford records were burned in 1862. The absence of land records, tax lists, wills, and court records make it impossible to document the house beyond 1817, a date attained through information found in later records. Architectural analysis indicates that the oldest part of the structure dates from possibly the late 18th century, but who built the house, or when it was constructed, cannot be established and documented.<sup>1</sup>

From isolated fragments of information, however, a hypothesis can be developed. Samuel Cross (the earliest documented owner of the house) appears to have been the son of Samuel Cross of Nansemond County who died in 1792 and the grandson of William Cross who owned considerable land east of Somerton Creek as early as 1752.<sup>2</sup> No member of the Cross family received land grants in Nansemond before 1732, thus William acquired his property in the twenty year interval.<sup>3</sup> He may have built the house for himself or one of his sons, which would coincide with the time period indicated by the architectural analysis. The available records indicate that the Cross family lived on property along the state line from 1752 to 1866.<sup>4</sup>

The reader is reminded that the above hypothesis forms ONLY a POSSIBLE explanation of the early history of the State Line House. It has been included to help provide a possible continuum for placing the structure in historical context. Under NO circumstances should the theory be treated as fact or even implied to be an accurate rendering of the structure's origin. The documented history must begin with the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Samuel Cross was living in the house when his son, William H. Cross, was born in 1817.<sup>5</sup> He probably had been living there for some time and may have been responsible for the first enlargement of the structure in the early years of the century.<sup>6</sup> The original house appeared to have been a side hall dwelling with the southern end immediately adjoining the state line. At the time, the house stood wholly in Virginia, but the addition to the southern end caused the structure to straddle the boundary between North Carolina and Virginia.<sup>7</sup> Samuel Cross died between 1840 and 1850 and his widow, Elizabeth, continued to live in the house with her son William H.<sup>8</sup>

When William H. Cross acquired possession of his father's estate, the house tract contained 350 acres, a large part of which Cross farmed until his death in the mid 1860s. He died intestate and the Gates County Court ordered that the property be sold to pay the outstanding debts.<sup>9</sup> Cross's widow, Sallie, had married Jesse Eason in the late 1860s, and on February 7, 1870, Jesse and Sallie [Cross] Eason purchased the State Line House and property at the public sale.<sup>10</sup>

The Easons held the property for only a year before selling it to a group of investors residing in Norfolk County, Virginia. The house and land remained in absentee ownership until 1876, during which time the occupants of the house, if any, remain unidentified.<sup>11</sup> On October 18, 1876, Edmund J. Freeman bought the 350 acre tract, and a clause in the deed excluding the Cross family cemetery suggested that the absentee owners may have been members of the Cross family.<sup>12</sup> No direct relationships were found, however.

E. J. Freeman was born in Nansemond County, Virginia, but the unique location of his later home made him a resident of North Carolina as well. "He slept in Virginia and ate in North Carolina. . . ."<sup>13</sup> Freeman's principal income came from farming, but his dual

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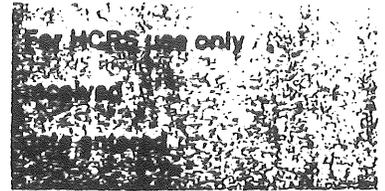
residency afforded him the opportunity to serve as a justice of the peace in both states simultaneously. Descendants of E. J. Freeman recall family stories about young lovers eloping from each state and coming to the house to be married in the adjoining state by the same magistrate.<sup>14</sup>

The unique location of the house occasioned many incidents and stories, such as the unconfirmed report that the property was a favorite dueling ground, an unusual joint birthday party celebrated by North Carolina and Virginia youths born on the same day, tugs of war across the state line, and the splitting of state loyalties among brothers and sisters.<sup>15</sup> Although historically the family ties to North Carolina and Virginia were about equally strong, it appears that only E. J. Freeman opted for dual residency; other occupants of the house seem to have declared allegiance to only one of the two states.

The State Line House has undergone two major alterations and some minor renovations since its construction.<sup>16</sup> The structure now stands on one and one-fourth acres, one third of which is in Virginia and two thirds in North Carolina. The house has been evenly divided since 1887 when the last boundary survey was made. Mrs. Edith Freeman Seiling, granddaughter of E. J. Freeman, related her grandmother's story of the chainbearer "bringing the chain through the front door and taking it out the back."<sup>17</sup> The home is in excellent condition and is now owned and occupied by Michael and Peggy Lefler.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Lefler is the great granddaughter of Edmund J. Freeman in whose family the house has remained for over a century.

The evolution of plan types from one room to two-room, side-hall, and central-hall plans is a basic element in the architectural development of the Albemarle section. As Carl Lounsbury points out in his study of the region's architecture, the early houses were commonly of one room form with a loft above, but few of this type survive in recognizable form. The Freeman House is thus an important survival of that early type. And its subsequent growth to incorporate first a side-hall plan and then a central hall plan similarly embodies typical patterns in the region, which, as Lounsbury observes, reflected changes in prosperity and demand for space and privacy. The house thus encapsulates important patterns in the domestic architecture of the Albemarle and the area of southeastern Virginia it adjoins.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See data sheet in Freeman (State Line) House File, Gates County, Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Survey File.

<sup>2</sup> See Gates County Records, Samuel Cross Estate Papers, State Archives, Raleigh; First Census of the United States, 1790: Nansemond County, Virginia, Heads of Families; and Wilma L. Hall (ed.), The Vestry Book of the Upper Parish, Nansemond County, Virginia 1743-1793 (Richmond: The Library Board of Virginia, 1949), 79, hereinafter cited as Hall, Vestry Book.

<sup>3</sup> Based on examination of the Virginia land grant books abstracted by Nell Marion Nugent, Cavaliers and Pioneers, 3 vols (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1934-1979) and compared with data in Hall, Vestry Book, 79.

<sup>4</sup> Hall, Vestry Book, 79; First Census, 1790, Fourth Census, 1820, Sixth Census, 1840, Nansemond County, Virginia; and Samuel and William H. Cross Estates Papers, Gates County Records, State Archives, Raleigh.

<sup>5</sup> Seventh Census, 1850, Gates County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 24. William H. Cross was listed as 33 years of age, indicating that he was born in 1817.

<sup>6</sup> See Survey File.

<sup>7</sup> See Survey File. Samuel Cross considered himself a resident of Virginia where he paid taxes on his property. See First Census, 1790, Nansemond County, Virginia. This census record was based on tax lists of Virginia residents made 1782-1784.

<sup>8</sup> See Sixth Census, 1840, Nansemond County, Virginia, Population Schedule (Samuel Cross); and Seventh Census, 1850, Gates County, North Carolina, Population Schedule (William H. Cross). The age of Elizabeth in 1850 corresponds to the age of the oldest female in Samuel's household in 1840. That William was the son of Samuel is proven in Gates County Deed Book, Office of the Register of Deeds, Gates County Courthouse, Gatesville, Deed Book 23, p. 766, hereinafter cited as Gates County Deed Book.

<sup>9</sup> William H. Cross Estates Papers, Gates County, North Carolina, State Archives, Raleigh.

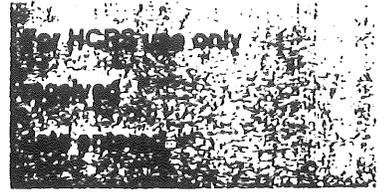
<sup>10</sup> William H. Cross Estates Papers; and Gates County Deed Book 23, p. 738.

<sup>11</sup> Jesse Eason and Sarah A. Eason to John T. King and Company, Gates County Deed Book 23, p. 738; John T. King and others to George R. Bishop, Gates County Deed Book 23, p. 766; and George R. Bishop to Edmund J. Freeman, Gates County Deed Book 27, p. 445.

<sup>12</sup> See Gates County Deed Book 27, p. 445.

<sup>13</sup> Suffolk Herald, March [n.d.] 1938. Copy of article in Survey File.

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<sup>14</sup>The Virginian Pilot, March 27, 1978.

<sup>15</sup>The Virginian Pilot, March 27, 1978.

<sup>16</sup>See Survey File.

<sup>17</sup>The Virginian Pilot, March 27, 1978.

<sup>18</sup>The Leflers purchased the house in May, 1978. Mrs. Margaret (Peggy) Lefler in interview by Walter Best, researcher, February 18, 1981.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1,307 acres

Quadrangle name Gates, VA-NC

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

### UMT References

A 

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

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached survey map, property is outlined in red.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state VA. code 51 county Suffolk code 800

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jo Ann Williford and Dru G. Haley, Survey Specialists

organization Survey and Planning Branch

date July 8, 1982

street & number 109 E. Jones Street

telephone (919) 733-6545

city or town Raleigh,

state N. C. 27611

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*William J. Rieff*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 8, 1982

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

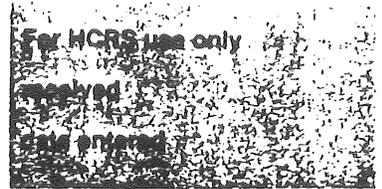
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

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Freeman House File. Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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Deeds

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Wills

Hall, Wilma L., ed. The Vestry Book of the Upper Parish of Nansemond County, Virginia, 1743-1793. Richmond: The Library Board of Virginia, 1949.

Lefler, Margaret S. (Peggy). Interview, February 18, 1981.

Lounsbury, Carl. "The Development of Domestic Architecture in the Albemarle Region," North Carolina Historical Review, LIV, No. 1 (January, 1977).

Maps (North Carolina)

Moseley, 1733

Collet, 1770

Price-Strother, 1808

MacRae-Brazier, 1833

Colton, 1861

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