

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House

Union vicinity, Hertford County, HF0470, Listed 2/13/2007
Nomination by Nancy Van Dolsen
Photographs by Nancy Van Dolsen, October 2005



Façade and side view



Rear view with addition

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Brown, Wiley and Jane Vann, House**
other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **West side of SR 1108, 0.5 mile North of SR 561** not for publication **N/A**
city or town **Union** vicinity state **North Carolina** code **NC** county **Hertford** code **091**
zip code **28734**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
4. 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 Keeper

Date of Action

=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **N/A**

Name of related multiple property listing **N/A**

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Domestic** Sub: **Single Dwelling**
 Agriculture **Agricultural Outbuilding**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Domestic** Sub: **Single Dwelling**
 Agriculture **Agricultural Outbuilding**

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **BRICK**
roof **METAL**
walls **WOOD/weatherboard**
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X** C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance **ca. 1850**
Significant Dates **N/A**
Significant Person **N/A**
Cultural Affiliation **N/A**
Architect/Builder **Unknown**

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreeage of Property **approximately 20 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1 18 317660	4021380	3 18 318000	4021110
2 18 318100	4021360	4 18 317600	4021120

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title **Nancy Van Dolsen** date **21 July 2006**
street & number **1601 Highland Drive**
city or town **Wilson** state **NC** zip code **27893**

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name

William and Mary Lee Brown

street & number **503 Woodland Road** city or town **Henderson** state **NC** zip code **27536**
=====

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Narrative Description

The Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House, built ca. 1850, stands on the west side of a small state road (SR 1108) in south central Hertford County, approximately three miles northwest of the largest town in the county, Ahoskie, in northeastern North Carolina. The house faces east toward the road and is surrounded by flat open farm fields punctuated by small areas of woodlands that are found along the small creeks and tributaries that meander through the area. The twenty acres included within the historic boundaries of the property include the yard immediately around the house, and some open fields. Three outbuildings stand to the west and south of the house: a ca. 1850 cider barn with later shed wings, a shed for peanut dryers (ca. 1960), and an equipment shed (ca. 1960).¹ A dirt lane runs between the house and the agricultural outbuildings.

House, ca. 1850, contributing

The Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House is a two-story, single-pile, three-bay, side-gable timber frame house with brick exterior end chimneys built ca. 1850. The end chimneys are constructed with a common bond (one row of headers to every row of stretchers) pattern; the lower three feet of the chimneys have been parged, and the upper third have been rebuilt with historic brick. The house stands on brick piers with open brick work infill between the piers. About 1950, a one-story frame kitchen ell had been built onto the rear of the house, replacing a separate two-room kitchen/dining building that was contemporary with the main block. The ca. 1950 addition was removed in 2004 and replaced with a one-story, side-gable, frame addition linked to the main block with a one-story hyphen that is two-bays wide with a side porch; the hyphen and addition were built in 2005. The gable-roof of the addition runs parallel to the roof of the main block. The hyphen and addition are sheathed in weatherboards and have details similar to that of the main block, including a shorter brick, exterior end chimney on the west side of the addition. A one-story porch with simple Doric-style posts runs across the rear (north elevation) of the addition and shelters large one-over-one sash windows arranged in two groups of four flanking a central door.

The main block of the house retains its weatherboard siding, original window and door surrounds, interior plan and all interior finishes (including four mantels). Wood louvred shutters flank the windows and are held open with cast iron holders. The one-story gable-front porch is a restoration of the original porch; the pediment of the original porch had been raised to the second floor, and was lowered to its original location as part of restoration work completed in 2004-2005. The paired octagonal porch columns with simple capitals, pilasters, and the height of the porch floor were replicated from earlier photographs that showed the porch columns and from scars left on original material (the weatherboards).

The vernacular Greek Revival style house features thin pilasters adorning the corners of the main block, rosette corner blocks and reeded casings decorating the window and door surrounds of the

¹ The small barn has been known to the Brown family as the "cider barn" for many years; Mary Lee Brown, Interview, December 2004.

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main block, six-over-six sash windows on the façade and rear elevations, and four-over-four light sash windows flanking the chimneys on the gable end elevations. The simple box cornice tops a board frieze with a simple board frieze. The primary entrance—a grained, double-leaf, four-panel door—features sidelights over panels, and a transom. The sidelights and transom retain their original, complex form that features two diamonds in the transom.

The main block of the house has a central passage plan, with an enclosed stair (with four winders to ninety degrees) entered from the rear of the passage, an unusual configuration for ca. 1850 when most dwellings with Greek Revival finishes contained open stair cases. The stair and passage are sheathed with flush boards, while all of the other rooms have plastered walls and ceilings. The wide wood board floors are original throughout the main block. The baseboards in the house are approximately ten inches high and have a simple cap molding. All of the doors in the main block are four-panel doors. The door surrounds in the passage feature decorative corner blocks with a linear motif.

The south parlor (to the left as one enters the house) has a very sophisticated Greek Revival mantel with paired, full reeded columns and a tripartite frieze. The windows have a paneled apron, and the casings terminate with reeded capitals incorporated into a simple frieze. The door and window surrounds in the north parlor (to the right as one enters the house) have vernacular Greek Revival details, with exaggerated crosssetted surrounds (the “ears” are approximately one foot in length) with slightly peaked lintels, and a fireplace mantel that has battered pilasters outlined with a thin board, emphasizing the linearity of the design. This fireplace opening has been closed. It was from the door on the west (or rear) wall of this room that one originally entered the breezeway to the dining room and kitchen building; this pattern of having the most formal room (in this house, the south parlor) the farthest from the kitchen was common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The door on the west wall of the north parlor now enters a dressing/bath area in the recently constructed hyphen.

The second floor of the main block has three rooms and a passage. The one small room is unheated and is to the west (right) of the stair opening. The woodwork on the second floor is a simpler version of that found on the first floor and all of the windows have paneled aprons. The room above the south parlor has a simple mantel with half-round pilasters, and reeded door and window surrounds. The room above the north parlor features a mantel, window and door surrounds with slightly peaked lintels.

Cider Barn, ca. 1850, contributing

A ca. 1850 cider barn stands southwest of the house. The central, gable-front section of the one-story building is a heavy timber frame building with down corner braces and hewn sills. A door leads into the central open space, and a door in the gable provides access to the loft. The side sheds on the eave elevations were added during the early-to-mid-twentieth century and feature exposed rafter ends and a door into each wing. The entire building is sheathed in weatherboards, has a metal roof, and stand son a concrete block foundation.

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Peanut Dryer Shed, ca. 1950, non-contributing

The tall, one-story peanut dryer shed stands to the south of the house, closer to the road than the cider barn. This large shed has a central open, side-gable block with two side sheds, sheathed on the north and south elevations with 5V metal. The roof is covered with metal.

Equipment Shed, ca. 1960, non-contributing

The one-story light timber frame equipment shed stands to the south of the cider barn. The building is open on the east elevation and is sheathed on the exterior with metal. The building houses small tractors and other small pieces of equipment.

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Summary

The Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House, a rural farmhouse in southern Hertford County in northeastern North Carolina, is an excellent example of a vernacular Greek Revival style house constructed ca. 1850. The exterior of the two-story, single-pile house features a front-gable pedimented porch, delicate corner pilasters and reeded window and door surrounds with rosette corner blocks. The interior retains all of its original finishes: wood floors; horizontal-sheathed central passage; enclosed staircase; four Greek Revival mantels; window and door surrounds with a variety of Greek Revival-style details including paneled aprons under the windows; and four-panel doors. This woodwork—with its careful inclusion of a variety of interpretations of popular aspects of the Greek Revival style, exhibiting linearity, peaked lintels evocative of pediments, reeded surrounds, and ornate corner blocks—is almost an encyclopedia of regional taste during the period. The Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House meets National Register Criterion C for architecture and its period of significance is its date of construction, ca. 1850. Also on the property is a ca. 1850 cider barn, a rare survivor of the antebellum period, and a contributing building.

Historical Background

Hertford County in northeastern North Carolina is located at the boundary with Virginia, between Gates and Chowan counties to the east, Northampton County to the west, and north of Bertie County. The county was formed in 1759 and reached its present boundaries in 1779. The county is rural, with the largest towns being Winton (the county seat), Murfreesboro, and Ahoskie. The Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House is located approximately three miles northwest of Ahoskie, in the south central section of the county.

Historically and currently, the county is primarily agricultural. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the major crops were corn, wheat, flaxseed, potatoes, rice, indigo, and lumber products. Cotton began to be grown in the county just prior to the Civil War, but only became a major crop during the postbellum period, with the amount grown increasing tenfold between 1850 and 1870 (from 270 to 2,680 bales.) Until about 1900, cotton was the leading crop, but peanuts quickly became a major commodity, with more acres being planted in peanuts than cotton after 1900, and by 1910, twice as many acres were devoted to peanuts. Tobacco also became a cash crop after 1900 but was never as popular as peanuts.² Hertford County is still among the top ten counties in the state in the production of peanuts.³

Wiley Brown (1817-1880) was born in Hertford County, the son of Benjamin and Nancy Benthal Brown, also natives of Hertford County. Members of the Brown family had owned land in the

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Hertford County, North Carolina* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917) 9, 10.

³ North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Agriculture, County Statistics, Hertford County; <http://www.agr.state.nc.us/stats/cntysumm/hertford.htm> ; accessed 10 January 2006.

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county since the late eighteenth century.⁴ Wiley Brown married Jane Vann (1824-1880), the daughter of Jesse and Jane Vann of Northampton County, in November 1843.⁵

By 1850, Wiley and Jane Vann Brown had established their own farm and lived with their five-year old son, Charles, their three-year old daughter, Lavinia, their five-month old baby James, Jane's mother Jane Vann (age 64), and Mary Davis (age 20) who may have been Wiley's or Jane's sister. Wiley's real estate was valued at \$475.⁶ Also living on the property in a separate slave house were five slaves: a female woman, age fifty, and four children, three girls (ages fourteen, twelve, and five) and a boy (age fourteen).⁷

The value of the Browns' property increased greatly between 1850 and 1860, from \$475 to \$1,248, suggesting that the house was constructed between 1850 and 1860. The Browns also owned \$4,559 in personal estate. Living in the Brown House in 1860 were Wiley, Jane, their daughter Lavinia (age twelve), and two sons, George Andrew (age eight) and Julius Herbert (age five), and two servants, Angy Huron (age fifteen, mulatto) and Bryant Manly (age fifteen, mulatto). There were no slaves recorded as owned by Wiley Brown on the 1860 slave census.

By 1870, Wiley and Jane Brown were living with their son Julian, two African American domestic servants, Hester and Amanda (ages fifty-five and fifteen, no last names given) and Jessy, an African American farm laborer (age eighteen, no last name given). Their farm was valued at \$2,500 and their personal worth was now \$1,000.⁸

In February 1880, Wiley Brown made and signed his will. In this will, he "loaned" to his wife Jane Brown "the home plantation including all the land recently purchased attached to the original tract, also one mule, one horse . . . containing about four hundred acres, during her life time." In addition, he gave his son George A. Brown another tract of land and a store in the nearby town of Union. After the death of his wife he gave his son Julian all of his property and requested that he "take good care of my brother in law Chas. Vann and his wife as long as they live, supplying all their temporal wants out of the profits of the property given to him."⁹

⁴Hertford County, 1782 Tax List; <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/nc/hertford/tax/1782tax.txt>; accessed 10 January 2006. This list was transcribed by Linda Gamel from a microfilm from the Family History Library, Church of the Latter Day Saints.

⁵ Vann family Bible, quoted in Jim Borland, "The Life of Wiley Brown and his Descendents to the Sixth Generation," no date. Also, Jane's county of birth is noted in the 1860 census as Northampton.

⁶ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1850. St. John's Township, Hertford County, North Carolina.; household 19. Mary Davis is most likely a relative of the Browns since she is not listed as having an occupation in the census.

⁷ Federal Manuscript Slave Census, 1850. Hertford County, North Carolina, page 495.

⁸ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1860. St. John's Township, Hertford County, North Carolina.; household 364.

⁹ Will of Wiley Brown, Hertford County, North Carolina, Feb. 19, 1880; transcribed in Borland, 2. There are no deed records for Hertford County prior to the mid-1860s when the county seat, Winton, was burned during the Civil War. Wiley Brown purchased land 325 acres from Charles Vann in 1868, a tract of land from William and Mary Darden in 1869, and 318 acres from Henry D. and Lavinia Godwin in 1873; it may be the Godwin tract that Brown refers to in his will as being "recently purchased."

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Wiley Brown died on April 23, 1880 of rheumatism, which may have been rheumatic fever.¹⁰ His son Julian carried out his wishes, as his aunt and uncle, Charles and Mary Vann are listed in the census taken in June 1880 as living with him, his wife Abelia (whose full name was Mary Ann Abelia), their daughter Helen, and his mother Jane who was sick with diphtheria. Also residing on the property were a white farm laborer named John Daughy (sp.?), age twenty-three, an African American male farm laborer named John Eaby (age eighteen), a female African American farm laborer named Bettie Vann (age eighteen), and a female African American servant, Janie Vann, (age sixty-two).

Julian's mother, Jane Vann, died the day after the census was taken, on June 26, 1880. The house and land then transferred to Julian Herbert Brown (1854-1914). Julian had married Mary Ann Abelia Mitchell (1855-1905) on June 5, 1878.¹¹

By 1900, Julian and Mary Ann had been married twenty-two years, and had four children living with them; their fifteen-year old (Gurney) and twelve-year old (Herbert) sons were already listed as working as farm laborers on the census. Aunt Mary Vann still lived with Julian and his wife.

In 1905, Julian's wife Mary Ann died, and in January 1907 he married Stella Marietta Railey Dukes (1871-1952). In 1910, Julian and Stella had six offspring living with them, Helen (age thirty-one), Gurney (age twenty-five), Herbert (age twenty-two), Ray (age nineteen), and Ralph (age two). Julian, Gurney and Herbert were listed as farmers, while Ray was considered a laborer. Also living on the property was Farah (sp?) Davis, a twenty-year old African American servant.

Julian Brown died in 1914, and the house and farm passed onto his son Herbert Julian (1887-1964). By 1917, Herbert Julian was married to Annie Wynn Sears with one child, and considered himself a farmer and a merchant.¹² In 1920, Herbert, now listed as a merchant, his wife Annie, and their son, Herbert Jr., lived next door to Annie's mother, Annie Sears, and her three children. Herbert Julian Brown transferred ownership of the farm to his son Herbert Julian Brown, Jr. (1915-1977). The current owner, William Sears Brown, is the son of Herbert Julian Brown, Jr.

Architecture Context: Greek Revival Houses in Hertford County, North Carolina

The Wiley and Jane Vann Brown House is an excellent local example of the Greek Revival style found in more modest dwellings in northeastern North Carolina. The Greek Revival style first

¹⁰ U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule, 1850-1880, North Carolina, Hertford County, St. John's Township, entry 481 (?).

¹¹ Julian's wife is referred in official documents sometimes as Mary Ann and sometimes as Abelia.

¹² Brown, Herbert Julian. World War I, Draft Registration Card. Hertford County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

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appeared in North Carolina domestic architecture in the construction of large plantation houses such as Creekside, Burke County (1837; NR 1972) and Lands End, Perquimans County (1830s, NR 1973). By the 1840s and 1850s, Greek Revival was the style of choice among the well-to-do in North Carolina. Most Greek Revival style houses in North Carolina followed a form established in the eighteenth century: a bilaterally symmetrical facade with a center passage plan, one or two rooms deep, three or five bays wide. More elaborate houses featured the double-pile plan with a five-bay façade, and in the largest examples, full-tiered porches across the façade and rear elevations, such as the house at Lands End and the Susan J. Armistead Moore House (1853, NR 2005) in Chowan County. More modest examples, such as the Wiley and Jane Vann Moore House, were single-pile, three-bay dwellings with an ornamented porch or portico only on the primary elevation.

The original pedimented portico roof found on the Brown House is an extremely rare survivor and may be the only one remaining in rural Hertford County. Only one one-story, pedimented Greek Revival-style portico remains in nearby Pitt County, on the Thomas Sheppard House (ca. 1845).¹³

The single-pile, center-passage plan of the Brown House was common in the region from about 1835 through 1915, long past the popularity of the Greek Revival style.¹⁴ Other mid-nineteenth century examples with Greek Revival elements in Hertford County include the King Parker House (NR 2002), the Cowper-Taylor House (NR 1982), and the Tayloe House which is located less than a half-mile south of the Brown House. The Cowper-Taylor House, also known as Vernon Place, is a two-story, five-bay example that dates to the late 1820s, and which features both federal and Greek Revival woodwork. The two-story Tayloe House dates to ca. 1837 and has a five-bay façade and a one-story porch across the length of the façade. The King Parker House, built ca. 1850, has a three-bay façade (like the Brown House) and a one-story portico; the portico, however, on the King Parker House is not Greek Revival in style but Italianate.

Enclosed stairs, such as the one found at the Brown House, were a common architectural feature in North Carolina during the late eighteenth century through the late 1830s; the enclosed stair at the Brown House is a late example of this popular form. The neighboring Tayloe House, constructed in 1837, also has an enclosed stair. Vernon Place and the King Parker House have open stairs.

The woodwork found on the Brown House, on the exterior and interior, features the design motifs most commonly used in the houses of the region in the 1850s. The cornerblocks on the exterior and interior window and door surrounds, the corner pilasters, the peaked lintels and linear aesthetic of the mantelpieces are all indicative of this style and period in this section of the state. The

¹³ Scott Power, *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Greenville, N.C.: Pitt County Historical Society, 1991) 62.

¹⁴ Thomas Butchko states that the center-passage plan was the most dominant form in neighboring Gates County from 1861 through 1929; Butchko, 44.

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neighboring Tayloe House has woodwork that is Federal in style, and includes paneled wainscoting in the primary rooms. The Dr. R. H. Riddick House (ca. 1855) in adjoining Gates County features similar peaked lintels above door and window surrounds.¹⁵

¹⁵ Thomas R. Butchko, *Forgotten Gates: The Historical Architecture of a Rural North Carolina County* (Gatesville, N.C.: The Gates County Historical Society, 1991) 31.

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary is Hertford County tax parcel 5984-03-5024.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house, cider barn and other agricultural buildings, the yard immediately surrounding the residence and provides an historically intact setting for the resource. The boundary includes approximately twenty acres of land, and is part of a larger 295-acre tract.