

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The Hermitage

AND/OR COMMON

Tillery House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

See continuation sheet #2

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Tillery

VICINITY OF

Second

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Halifax

083

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Mr. Curtis Clark Tillery  
NAME Mr. John Gregory Tillery  
Mr. Richard King Tillery

STREET & NUMBER

106 Roe Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Wilson

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

Halifax County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Halifax

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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CONTINUATION SHEET #2

ITEM NUMBER Location PAGE

Northwest side of N.C. 481, 0.2 mi. southwest of S.R. 1117

# DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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 Hermitage, oriented toward a long-gone road (said to have been the old post road) stands in a tree-framed clearing; with its range of outbuildings it creates a strong impression of a functioning plantation complex, now deserted. The dwelling is a handsome tripartite frame building. The two-story central block has a three-bay wide pedimented facade, and the one-story flanking wings, their rooflines parallel to the facade, are two bays wide. An exterior end chimney rises at the end of each wing and at the rear of the very long central block. At this rear elevation a double-shoulder chimney is flanked by windows. The house stands over a cellar on a foundation of brick covered with scored stucco.

The exterior finish is extremely well-preserved and essentially unaltered, with traditional--and occasionally slightly inventive--early Federal elements. The house is covered with molded weatherboards, and the windows, with nine-over-nine sash, have molded frames and rounded sills. An especially rich cornice treatment occurs, outlining the pediment of the main (northwest) facade and running along the sides (but not rear) of the central block and across the facades of the wings. Reading from top to bottom it consists of molded cornice above a narrow band of dentils, a frieze, a course of undercut modillions, and another molded cornice above two rows of dentils. The sides of the modillion cornice downward are handsomely shaped to reflect the outline of the elements. A similar cornice outlines the pediment of the delicate entrance porch, which has tapered, turned posts. The tympanum of this pediment, like the main pediment, is covered with weatherboards in a chevron pattern.

The highly individualized character of the doorway treatment contrasts with the rather traditional finish of the rest of the exterior and is suggestive of the woodwork of the interior. It is also related to work at Mowfield, in neighboring Northampton County. The door itself has eight raised panels--two lower vertical rectangles, three pairs of nearly square rectangles above that. This is framed by a curious arrangement of three concentric crossetted moldings--with the crossettes occurring at the side rather than at the corner, and the inner one having a triangular rather than squared crossette. Two curious triglyph-like blocks interrupt the lintel. Flanking this frame are two-stage, tapered fluted pilasters, a short pilaster topping a longer one and the shorter ones flanking an arcaded transom. From the upper pilasters springs a pediment with a curvilinear central cartouche.

As expected in a tripartite house, the interior has a central entrance hall with stair in the main block, with doors leading to the wing rooms. On the rear wall of this hall, however, is a fireplace, and to the rear of the hall is a rather narrow lateral hall between the front hall room and the large rear parlor. The plan of the second floor consists of a narrow hall running front-to-back along the side, providing access to the three rooms: one in the front, one midway, and one--larger and extending the width of the central block--at the rear.

The first-floor finish is quite handsome and generally consistent. Doors with six raised panels are hung on rising butt plate hinges in molded frames. Wainscots generally cur, though the lateral hall has a plastered dado beneath the chair rail. The front

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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hall and rear parlor have molded cornices as well. Mantels are of a transitional Georgian-Federal character, some quite eccentric, resembling the doorway in the un-academic application of classical motifs.

The mantel in the front hall has a marble fireplace surround. This is framed by a heavy, molded, mitered frame. From this rises a frieze with a plain center tablet and narrow, oval-paneled end blocks with upper demi-sunbursts. The cornice shelf, which breaks out over all three elements, is adorned with heavy dentils. The mantel in the rear parlor, removed in the last two years, was the most elaborate in the house. Marble faced the fireplace, framed by an ornate band of gougework. This in turn was flanked by pilasters with reeded panels terminating in demi-sunbursts and caps adorned with a foliate motif. A band of gougework ran beneath the three-part frieze. The end blocks were truncated versions of the pilasters, while the reeded center tablet was carved with an oval. Elaborate reeding and gougework also adorned the cornice shelf. In this room--unaltered except for the removal of the mantel--the woodwork is the most ornate, with a variation on a wall-of-troy motif along the heavy molded chair rail, and panels breaking out from the wainscot to serve as bases for the windows. The wooden cornice is heavy and molded, with a fretwork pattern.

The wing rooms have plastered dadoes beneath molded chair rails. The mantel in the southwest wing room has a molded, mitered architrave, with a most unusual frieze treatment. Rounded end blocks carry a band of fretwork like the parlor chair rail, and the very heavy cornice shelf breaks out over the end blocks as caps. The tall frieze extends outward to flank the end blocks and is cut out in an exaggerated curvilinear pattern, almost resembling a ramped frieze. The mantel in the northeast wing room has elements that are simplified, much less impressive versions of those of the entrance hall mantel.

The second story is simply finished, with beaded chair rails and baseboards. Mantels (in the front and rear rooms only, the middle one being unheated) are also simple--standard secondary mantels with a single panel above the opening, and a molded shelf.

Of considerable interest are the outbuildings located to the rear. (There is a newer outbuilding to the side of the house as well.) These are arranged in a line running back from the rear southwest corner of the dwelling, and all are one-story frame structures. First is a board-and-batten kitchen with a gable roof. Inside it is plastered and partitioned into a small hall and a larger room, sharing a massive interior chimney. An enclosed stair leads to a loft. Next is a board-and-batten smokehouse, a tall windowless structure with a steep gable roof. To the rear of this, probably the most interesting of the group, is the dairy. It too is board-and-batten beneath a vent space of plain wooden strips. Above is a deeply coved plastered cornice, sheltered by the overhang of the pyramidal roof which is topped by a pointed wooden finial. Ranged other from the house are barns, a servants' quarters, tobacco barns, and other structures.

# SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES Ca. 1810

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hermitage, built early in the nineteenth century for planter Thomas Blount Hill, is an impressive and well-preserved example of the tripartite house form, a house type especially popular in Virginia-influenced northeastern North Carolina. The handsome proportions of the facade are complemented by the rich woodwork detail inside and out. The frame dwelling, essentially unchanged, exists in an isolated rural setting as part of a plantation complex including several interesting outbuildings.

One of the most prominent families of eastern North Carolina were the Hills. Some time after May, 1808, Thomas Blount Hill purchased a plantation from the 680-acre estate of John Ricks, planter of Halifax County. This plantation was situated on the south side of Roanoke River and south side of Conococonnara Swamp, in Halifax County, and eventually was expanded to over two thousand acres on both sides of the Conococonnara. Hill's family home near Palmyra in Halifax County, was burned after 1797, and Thomas Blount Hill then purchased the Ricks property, after 1808 and probably before 1810, on which he built his elegant house, which he named the Hermitage.

Thomas Blount Hill was a son of Colonel Whitmel Hill and his wife Winifred Blount. Colonel Hill was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania in 1760, and a conspicuous public figure during the Revolution. He was a delegate to the Provincial Congresses at Hillsborough in 1775 and at Halifax in 1776, a delegate to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia from 1778-1781, and a member of the Council of State in 1781. He died at his Palmyra house on September 12, 1797. His son Thomas Blount Hill was born February 26, 1775, and was married on November 26, 1799, to Rebecca Norfleet, a daughter of Reuben and Mary Figures Norfleet of Bertie County. Rebecca was born January 28, 1783. Hill, member of a widespread and socially prominent family, evidently was a typical planter but did not enter into politics.

Stylistic evidence is consistent with the tradition that the house on the Hermitage plantation was built about 1810; the house is related by its tripartite form to a number of significant dwellings in the Roanoke River Valley. It is ventured that the same master builder may have worked at the Hermitage and at Mowfields in adjoining Northampton County.

Thomas Blount Hill died on October 15, 1815, leaving a wife and five children. Rebecca Norfleet Hill died on May 19, 1845, at which time her youngest son, Thomas Blount Hill, Jr., inherited the Hermitage plantation.

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Thomas Blount Hill, Jr., was born June 28, 1813, and married Maria T. Simpson of New Bern, North Carolina on September 15, 1836. He received an AB degree from the University of North Carolina in 1832.

On July 26, 1842 Hill deeded 400 acres on the "South side of Conoconary Swamp adjoining the land of Thomas Tillery & others . . ." to John Tillery. The deed was recorded at February Court, 1845. John Tillery lived nearby, and whether the Hill family remained in the house until the greater part of the large plantation was sold to John Tillery a number of years later is not evident. On December 15, 1853, Thomas Blount Hill, Jr., then residing in Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina, sold 2,290 acres to John Tillery. This tract was "lying on the south side of Roanoke River & north of Connoconary Swamp including the Mill and Mill pond known as Hill's." The price was \$10,000. In November, 1853, Thomas Blount Hill, Jr., had purchased a house and five acres of the James Phillips estate in Hillsborough, North Carolina, named it Belle Vue, and moved his family there.

John Tillery was a member of a family of prominent planters in central Halifax County. The Hermitage passed unaltered to his son, John Richard Tillery who lived in the house until his death in 1928, at age 92, at which time he left a life estate in the property to his nephew Junius Tillery, at whose death it was to go to his son, John. The property is now owned by the heirs of the late Dr. John Tillery.

The house is important as one of the few surviving examples of the tripartite house type in northeastern North Carolina. The Grove, at Halifax, was a notable example; the Sally-Billy House in Halifax County is an eccentric with a one-bay central block, and Little Manor/Mosby Hall, now in ruins, has the other extreme with its massive five-bay central block. Thomas Waterman sees all of these--and the other examples now gone--as being inspired by the Semple House in Williamsburg and finds their deviations in proportion from that example unfortunate. He cites the "Tillery house in Tillery, Halifax County," as "approximat/ing/ the Randolph-Semple house more nearly than any other" despite "countrified modifications that detract from the design, "singling out the placement of the chimneys at the ends of the wings. He describes the Tillery house as "the pediment type at its fullest development."

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Boddie, John Bennett. Southside Virginia Families. Redwood City, California, 1955.

Halifax County Records, Halifax County Courthouse, Halifax, North Carolina  
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Halifax County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina  
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 20 acres

## UTM REFERENCES

A	18	2	7,4	6	2,0	4	0	7	3	4	9,0
	ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING				
B	18	2	7,4	7	6	4	0	7	3	4	9,0
	ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING				
C	18	2	7,4	9	2	4	0	7	3	4	4,0
	ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING				
D	18	2	7,4	7	9	4	0	7	3	3	2,0
	ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING				

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist;  
Architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

3 March 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

# 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3 March 1975

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Interview with Charles L. Tillery, Halifax, North Carolina. December 30, 1974.  
The University of North Carolina Alumni Directory 1795-1953. Chapel Hill, 1954.

The Hermitage

sketch map

1975

Catherine Cockshutt

no scale



