

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 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 an 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 Tillery-Fries House

other names/site number Conoconnara Hall; The Mansion; Oak Grove

## 2. Location

street & number SE side of NC 481, 0.3 m. N of jct. with SR 1117 N/A  not for publication

city or town Tillery  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Halifax code 083 zip code 27887

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

William S. P...  
Signature of certifying official/Title

5-22-92  
Date

State of 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- 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:)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tillery-Fries House  
Name of Property

Halifax County, NC  
County and State

**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**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
7	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

-0-

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Domestic/secondary structure

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Domestic/secondary structure

Agriculture/animal facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Colonial Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

\_\_\_\_\_

roof Asphalt

other Wood

\_\_\_\_\_

**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.
- 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. 1800; ca. 1891-ca. 1910

Criteria Considerations  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

ca. 1800

ca. 1891

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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

Bibliography

(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:

Tillery-Fries House  
Name of Property

Halifax County, NC  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 23.29 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	275850	4013770
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2	18	275960	4013670

3	18	275740	4013480
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4	18	275630	4013580

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 Sandra Webbere

organization Architectural Research Group date January 1991

street & number 5501 Kellwood Court telephone 919/881-0062

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27609

**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 SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 7 Page 1

---

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Tillery-Fries House rises up from the low, flat countryside of eastern Halifax County in northeastern North Carolina. The focal point of the property is the main house which sits behind a low, whitewashed, open-plank fence of recent vintage at the end of an L-shaped magnolia-lined drive. The house sits in the west quadrant of a rectangular 23.29-acre parcel and faces to the northeast. Its immediate yard is flat with only small foundation plantings and an ancient oak tree standing in the side yard, with a small manmade pond directly behind the house. In addition to the ca. 1800 Federal style house that was enlarged and remodelled in the Colonial Revival style in ca. 1891 to ca. 1910, the property includes three small outbuildings (dairy, smokehouse, and storage shed) situated in a row southeast of the kitchen wing, a pre-1810 overseer's cabin, a turn-of-the century manager's cottage, and a modern barn.

The central block of the main house is the original large, two-story with attic gable-roofed, Federal style dwelling. By 1892, a two-story wing in the Colonial Revival style was added to the northwest and southeast gable ends. The main block is four bays wide, double-pile, with two large single-shoulder brick chimneys at each gable. The entire Federal section of the house is covered in its original molded weatherboarding which exhibits a small ovolo with fillets on each side. This detail differs from most Federal period weatherboarding found in the area, which lacks the fillet at the lower edge. The front facade is asymmetrical, suggesting the possibility that the central block originated as a hall-parlor plan dwelling that was later extended one bay to the north when a partition was installed to form a central hall. Ghost marks indicate an early two-story single-bay portico centered over the existing front door. Other early nineteenth-century features include the molded window sills; window openings which would have held six-over-nine sash on the second floor and nine-over-nine sash on the first floor; Federal style boxed cornice with punched dentils on both the crown and bed moldings; narrow, panelled cornerboards or pilasters with small semi-circular sunburst inserts at both the top and bottom; and molded tapered rake boards at the gables. The house is completely shuttered.

Construction features indicative of a very early nineteenth-century date include the heavy brace-framing that can be seen in the attic. The timbers are very large, displaying pit-saw marks and some sash-saw marks. The nails that can be seen are the crudely made cut nails which were new to the technological scene in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

When Harold Fries expanded and renovated the house beginning in around 1891, numerous alterations were made in the Colonial Revival style. Changes to the main

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetTillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NCSection number 7 Page 2

block include the removal of the original two-tiered entrance porch and the construction of full-facade one-story porches at the front and rear of the house. The very low-pitched roofs of these porches are supported by full Tuscan columns with no rail. The window openings that are sheltered by the front porch were extended to the floor, hinged panels to allow walk-through access were installed in the bottom two feet, and the sash windows were changed to two-over-two. All of the other windows have replacement one-over-one sash of this period. The trabeated entrance appears to date from the turn of the century and has a single-leaf door with three tall raised panels over three short panels, side lights, and a tall two-light transom.

The most significant change of the remodelling was the addition of a two-story wing to each gable end. The original chimneys appear to dictate the proportions of the wings, with their front and rear facades flush with the northeast side of the north chimney and southwest side of the south chimney, respectively, and their cornices level with the base of the shoulders. The wings are flat-roofed, one bay wide and two bays deep. The southwest wing's ground floor has banks of tall casement windows with transoms and molded crowns on each of its facades, reflecting that room's use as a solarium. Elsewhere the windows are one-over-one double-hung sashes.

The other major addition of the Fries renovation is the one-story wing perpendicular to the rear of the house and connected to the southeast end of the rear porch. Although this is reached via the open rear porch and is an independent structure counted as a separate building for the purposes of this nomination, the wing is an integral part of the main house. It is sided with plain weatherboards with comparable exposure to those of the main house. It is gable-roofed with a lower pitch than that of the main house. This kitchen and dining wing consists of two main rooms with a central chimney that now opens only into the dining area (closer to the main house). To the southeast side are three shed rooms, apparently used once for a pantry and storage. The dining room retains original built-in cupboards with leaded glass doors and the kitchen, to the rear of the dining room, still retains a large hot water heater, cook stove, and large sinks.

The interior of the main house also displays a combination of the Federal and Colonial Revival styles. The central block follows a center-hall, double-pile plan. The original staircase is enclosed on the right side of the hall rising from the rear. The woodwork throughout the main block of the house appears to be original to the Federal period with two- and three-part mitered molded door and window surrounds and six-panel doors with ghost marks of large early box locks. There is flat-panelled Federal period wainscoting with middle horizontal stile, molded chair rail, and baseboards throughout the first floor. Mantelpieces are of Federal design and proportions on both floors, but assume a variety of configurations. The most elaborate is at the north chimney on the first floor and dates to the early

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 7 Page 3

---

nineteenth century. It is finely detailed with fluted pilasters topped with a molded cap. Above each pilaster is a rectangular block bearing a sunburst. The tall frieze is of flush beaded boards divided by molded stiles and rails into five panels, the center one containing another sunburst. A heavily molded broken shelf completes the design. The east first-floor mantelpiece is a plain post and lintel design dating from the late nineteenth century.

In the original portion of the house the ca. 1891 to ca. 1910 renovation entailed changes to the plan and the staircase. The partition wall between the two first-floor rooms northwest of the hall was removed to make one large parlor. The new opening is flanked by two Tuscan columns and pilasters and the mantelpiece at the rear chimney is a replica of the original Federal style mantelpiece in the front part of the room. The rear mantelpiece's details are not as fine as the surviving original one and the workmanship indicates it may have been copied "by hand" on the premises. It was probably also at this time that the south fireplace was closed off. The original staircase was enclosed on the right side of the hall rising from the rear. The enclosed stair, originally reached by a few steps in the hall, was modified by the replacement of the hall steps and enclosed winders with a seven-step lower run rising against the hall wall toward the back of the house to a landing level with the top of the original removed winders. The landing extends into the enclosure to provide access to the remainder of the original enclosed staircase running from back to front. The newel post has inset panels trimmed with egg and dart moldings. The closet under the stair has an original four-panel door and beaded board sheathing under the stringer.

The second-floor finish is simpler but typically Federal. The basic design of the second-floor mantelpieces consists of a three-part molded surround encircling the firebox and a tall six-panel frieze beneath a molded shelf. It appears that the Colonial Revival renovation entailed the addition of certain moldings to these mantelpieces. Each of the four bedrooms on the second floor opens into a private dressing room and bath in an added wing. The wings retain their original closets and bath and light fixtures.

Some of the interesting conveniences installed in the house for Harold Fries included an electric annunciator system, a hot water heater connected to the kitchen stove, and electric ceiling lights, all of which remain in place.

In addition to the main house and kitchen-dining room wing, there are six other resources on the nominated property as follows:

SMOKE HOUSE. Late 19th/early 20th century. Very tall one-story, frame building approximately 10 x 12 feet, with a hip, pressed metal shingled roof and weatherboarded walls with some replacement German siding.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 7 Page 4

---

DAIRY. Late 19th/early 20th century. One-story, frame building approximately 10 x 12 feet, with gable, pressed metal shingled roof and German-sided walls.

STORAGE SHED. Late 19th/early 20th century. One-story, frame building with gable, pressed metal shingled roof and German-sided walls.

BARN. ca. 1985. Non-contributing. One-story, frame building with gable roof. A shed wing has been added the full length on the east side.

OVERSEER'S HOUSE. ca. 1800. This small house of heavy brace-frame construction was built in an unusual form: it is a two-room house with gable roof sheltering a main room and a small piazza room next to an engaged corner porch. The end chimney was later enclosed by a shed along the gable end. A 16-sided chamfered post supports the corner porch roof. The early 19th-century details still remaining include a molded rake board, six-panel door, some Federal style moldings, and evidence of H-L hinges.

MANAGER'S COTTAGE. Early 20th century. The cottage is divided into two living areas. It has a simple low pitched gable roof, German siding, and a full-length recessed front porch.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 8 Page 5

---

## SUMMARY

The Tillery-Fries House exemplifies two phases of architecture in the nineteenth century, the Federal style and the early Colonial Revival style. The house in eastern Halifax County, North Carolina, began as one of the many Federal style houses built at the turn of the nineteenth century for planters who dominated the culture and architecture of the Roanoke Valley. The central passage, two-story block was built ca. 1800 for Major John Tillery, who was among Halifax County's most prosperous planter families. At his death in 1826, the approximately 2,600-acre plantation extended from Beech Swamp to the Roanoke River. His house is notable for its molded weatherboards, decoratively molded cornice, panelled cornerboards with half-sunbursts at top and bottom, flat-panelled wainscoting, and variety of Federal style mantels. Southeast of the main house, a frame, two-room overseer's house of ca. 1800 remains largely intact, displaying a 16-sided chamfered post at the recessed corner porch. New York City chemist, inventor and entrepreneur Harold H. Fries purchased more than 2,000 acres with the house in 1889 and by 1891 had begun a remodelling that continued until ca. 1910 using modern household technology. Fries was one of many northern businessmen who acquired and improved properties in the economically depressed South in this era. In keeping with an emerging trend, Fries employed the newly popular Colonial Revival style to expand and modernize the house, adding a two-story wing to each end of the original block and a kitchen-dining wing to the rear and using restrained features complementing the existing fabric. Fries also installed the most modern conveniences of his day, including indoor plumbing with running hot water and electricity, and constructed a smoke house, dairy, and manager's cottage to renew the usefulness of the plantation complex.

## ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The Federal style became popular in the 1780s and continued to flourish until around 1820. The traditional American Federal house was a simplification of the English Georgian house, adapted from the work of Robert and James Adam and their book, *The Works in Architecture*, interpretations of Asher Benjamin's designs, and the use of pattern books. Federal style architecture is found throughout the cities and towns of the eastern United States, where from region to region there was considerable contrast in style and method, reflecting both patterns of trade and immigration into a specific area. Throughout the eastern seaboard, a noticeable range of craftsmanship and finish served to announce a particular level of status among builders and their residents. While in many of the states the Federal style developed in a more formal manner, North Carolina created its own interpretation due to its unique agrarian society. Here, a conservative philosophy, coupled with pragmatic unpretentiousness by both rich and poor alike, helped shape Carolina's architecture (Bishir, Brown, Lounsbury, and Wood, pp. 50, 51, 54).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetTillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NCSection number 8 Page 6

---

During the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, two-story single- and double-pile houses were built throughout the Tar-Neuse River Basin (*Historical and Architectural Resources of the Tar-Neuse River Basin*, Region L, pp. 10-15). Among wealthy Halifax County planters at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the basic form typical of the eighteenth century--a rectangular configuration under a gable roof--continued to proliferate, but the average size increased, proportions became more vertical, and detailing was selected from the more attenuated and delicate classical vocabulary of the Federal style. Basic Federal elements remained popular for the more formal houses, although they were sometimes crudely imitated or exaggerated. The rigid symmetry of the facade persisted in most cases, but the main entrance was sometimes off-center, as at the Tillery-Fries House, usually to accommodate a hall and parlor plan. It is also true of most of North Carolina's Federal style houses that stylistic elements are found in the stairs and mantelpieces (Taves, pp. 14-16).

Of the nine fully detailed Federal style houses remaining in Halifax County, the Tillery-Fries House is one of only three that are double-pile. White Rock (NR 1979), built ca. 1800 and expanded ca. 1820, also features asymmetrical five-bay facades, molded weatherboards, an elaborate molded cornice (in this case with modillions), and panelled cornerboards. The Winfield Staton House of ca. 1822 also has decorative cornerboards, but its front and rear facades are three-bay. White Rock and the Winfield Staton House have mantelpieces with five-panel friezes and two of White Rock's are embellished with sunbursts.

The house was only part of a complex of dwellings on a planter's land. Many small buildings were clustered around the house, and each has a specific purpose in the scheme of the working farm or plantation (Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, p. 149). These outbuildings were arranged in a rectilinear pattern, rows, or a casual cluster. Location indicated whether or not the building had any significance, as did the construction materials used in building the structure. Dairies and smoke houses were often conveniently located near the kitchen; the dairy more often would be a frame structure, while the smoke house might be of plank or frame construction depending on the wealth of the farmer (Bishir, pp. 151-52). The designs of these outbuildings did not change much over time, as exemplified by the frame smoke house, dairy, and storage shed constructed in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century behind the Tillery-Fries House. The outbuildings, including the manager's house, were unified through their simplicity; one-story gable-roofed frame structures with circular sawn framing members and unadorned details. Even the interior of the overseer's house is austere.

While economic limitations coupled with conservative lifestyles fostered the continued popularity of regional styles in rural North Carolina during the post-

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetTillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NCSection number 8 Page 7

Civil War period, elsewhere the advent of new ideas would soon have a profound effect on residential architecture. The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 introduced Americans to the Colonial Revival style in response to the patriotism inspired by the Centennial. The style rejected clutter; instead the trend was toward order, practicality, good sense, and a feeling of America's past (Howard, *How Old Is This House?*, pp. 129-31). The renewed interest in the American way and our earlier architectural heritage inspired by the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition had become fairly widespread by the early 1890s. The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago was largely responsible for the mass popularity of the Colonial Revival style due to its numerous exhibits and exhibition buildings that appropriated and adapted Georgian and Federal motifs. The 1893 Exposition also helped direct the individual's attention to more modern living patterns with the aid of new machines by introducing the public to electricity, the telephone, and other modern conveniences never experienced (Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture*, pp. 214-215, 227).

By the early twentieth century, Colonial Revival style residences were becoming the preferred choice in the housing industry because they were "eminently livable" houses (Howard, *How Old Is This House?*, pp. 129-31). Often the Colonial Revival style was introduced with the remodelling of an existing structure, "utilizing already symmetrical facades and adding Colonial Revival style porches, window and door moldings and surrounds, and mantelpieces" (Lally, National Register nomination for Oak View, Wake County, NC).

In Halifax County, remodelling most often addressed plain features by adding to them. For instance, Tuscan and other classical orders became popular for porch decoration on both new and old houses, while columns and colonettes were incorporated into mantelpieces, replacing pilasters (Taves, pp. 56, 57). In keeping with a popular Colonial Revival style configuration, shorter units in the form of wings or porches sometimes were added to each gable end to create a larger, symmetrical building, as exemplified by the Tillery-Fries House. This house was one of the first instances in Halifax County of remodelling a pre-existing structure with "colonial" motifs inspired and promoted by the expositions and with the developing technologies popularized in Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition. The remodelling of the house from ca. 1891 to ca. 1910 included two large Colonial Revival style wings with classical details and modern bathrooms with hot running water. In 1894, the house was electrified--the first in the area to have its own dynamo.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 8 Page 8

---

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Tillery-Fries House was part of Major John Tillery's original Halifax County plantation. John Tillery was the son of Judith Conway and Epphroditus Tillery ("Eppy," b. 1747), a wealthy land owner in Halifax County until his death in 1796 (William Murphy, genealogical researcher, Raleigh). In his will, Eppy Tillery left his "sons David Tillery and Thomas Tillery land and Plantation whereon I now live . . . residue of estate to be divided between my wife and the rest of my children: John, Judith C., Nancy, Eliphitis, Alcy, Samuel, Polly, and Betsy" (Halifax County Will Abstracts, #592, p. 310). John Tillery was able to develop one of Halifax County's most successful plantations with acreage acquired from his father's estate and an earlier acquisition nearby of 440 acres in 1779.

On October 2, 1797, the *North Carolina Journal* in Halifax reported, "Married on Thursday evening last, Mr. John Tillery and Mrs. Mary Pons" (Abstracts, *North Carolina Journal*, 1795-1797). Together they would have four children--Mary, Rebecca, Julia Anne, and John--who, with their twelve children, would later develop and shape the county's economy and propel the town of Tillery into the twentieth century (William Murphy and interview with Charles Tillery). By 1800, John Tillery had 1,350 acres, eighteen slaves, two free persons working for him, and a growing family to house (Tax Lists).

All family papers prior to those of the mid-1800s associated with John Richard Tillery, grandson of Major John Tillery, have been lost, making personal family history difficult to document other than through oral history. Stylistic evidence is consistent with the tradition that the Tillery-Fries House was built ca. 1800 on the land John Tillery owned before 1803. In 1803, Tillery expanded his holdings into Edgecombe County by purchasing 1,616 acres for \$6,000. In 1811, he was able to buy 593.5 acres on the north side of Deep Creek to the south of the Roanoke River in Halifax County (Halifax County Deed Book 19, p. 217, and Book 22, p. 170). The latter parcel of land was critical to the financial well being of his plantation, since the Roanoke River provided a transportation route eastward to Plymouth and the Albemarle Sound, linking his land to markets in the north for his crops of tobacco and cotton (Interview with local historian Alfred Cook).

Major John Tillery lived on his plantation with his family until his death in 1826. Major Jack (as he was fondly referred to) left the house to his daughter, Mary Tillery Gregory (1799-1836), who lived there with her husband, Thomas W. Gregory, and six children (including two from two previous marriages) until 1832. On March 28, 1832, Mary sold the house with 471 acres for \$2,540 to her sister Rebecca and her husband Orestes Smallwood. The deed read, "which she drew from the Estate of her died Father John Tillery" (Deed Book 28, p. 338). The Smallwoods never had any children and lived in the "Mansion," as it was sometimes referred to before the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetTillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NCSection number 8 Page 9

twentieth century, until 1841 when they sold it to E. T. Clark for \$3,000 (William Murphy and Deed Book 31, p. 6).

E. T. Clark came from Northampton, Virginia, with his wife Mary and their two children, John and Ella. In 1850, his family had grown with the addition of four girls born at the Tillery-Fries House. Between 1850 and 1860, E. T. Clark's personal worth increased from \$3,100 to \$48,000, primarily due to the ownership of fourteen slaves, furniture, land (300 improved acres and 310 unimproved), farming equipment, livestock, and one slave house. By 1860, Clark had a full household which included his wife; three of his children; Anna Lucas, age 22, a teacher; Sarah Herbert, age 26, a seamstress; and James Wiggins (age 35) and his son Bryant (age 15), who were mulatto farm laborers (Census: Population and Agricultural Schedules 1850 and 1860).

During the 1860s, the house was given the name Conoconnara Hall after a nearby creek and swamp. At the time, it was a common practice across the state for people to open their homes to create private schools and academies, since education was a private matter until the mid-nineteenth century (Taves, p. 60). In fact, most North Carolina papers carried ads touting the virtues of the many individual schools (Coon). Records indicate that Clark employed Anna Lucas from Virginia to teach the members of his household as well as young ladies from other area families before the Civil War and during the occupation of the area by Union soldiers (*Scotland Neck-Enfield Circular*, 27 July 1988, and Census: 1860).

On October 2, 1869, John Richard Tillery (1836-1928), grandson of Major John Tillery, purchased the "Mansion" and 611 acres of the former plantation from the Clarks for \$4,000 (Deed Book 37, p. 22). John Richard Tillery never married. In the 1870 Census, he is listed as having two servants living with him, Maria Devereaux (age 70), a widowed black woman, and a black man, Frank Davis (age 23). The house was the centerpiece of activity; on July 26, 1883, the *Scotland Neck Commonwealth* wrote, "It was our pleasure to be at the pic-nic at Tillery's and we are quite sure that no one had any cause to come away saying he did not enjoy himself. . . . The party in attendance from Scotland Neck went up on the morning train at 7:30, and returned on the special train in the evening at 7:30."

John Richard Tillery and his father, John Tillery (1811-1895), operated a local sawmill, Tillery's Mill, which was to become by 1860 the county's second most productive sawmill (Taves, Preliminary Survey Report for Survey and Planning, 1987). Today there is no evidence of the exact location of Tillery's Mill. The lumber business added to the prosperity of the area, fueling J. R. Tillery's dream to create a town near the family sawmill. In 1882, Tillery began to make his vision into a reality by establishing a telegraph office (John Richard Tillery Papers, 6 February 1882). Further steps to develop the community, three-quarters of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 8 Page 10

---

a mile from the Tillery-Fries House, included working with the Chowan & Southern Railroad to bring the new Scotland Neck Branch to his incipient town, which he laid out in a grid of streets near the railroad tracks and named "Tillery Station" (John Richard Tillery Papers, 4 and 29 October 1884 and 14 November 1888). A number of houses, stores, and a post office were built, but only the post office survives (Taves, p. 43).

The town never grew to John Richard Tillery's expectations, and lack of capital forced him to put all his real estate on the market. In 1889, he ran an advertisement:

2,000 acres valuable lands, &c. for sale . . . 2 large stables . . . a two-story barn . . . a large two-story residence . . . 20 two-room tenement houses . . . 4 three-room and 2 four-room cottages; a steam power cotton gin and press; . . . farming implements; 10 mule carts; 5 wagons and 15 mules, and all the town of Tillery; including houses, lots and many other things . . . (flyer in John Richard Tillery Papers).

The *Scotland Neck Commonwealth* began to write updates on J. R. Tillery beginning on August 8, 1889, "Rumor has it that Mr. J. R. Tillery has sold his sawmill and dry-kiln at Tillery to some Northern capitalists for \$70,000." And on December 5, 1889, "Some one remarked that Mr. J. R. Tillery had offered his entire town for sale, and that it is not common that a whole town is offered for sale at once. This is true, but it is equally true that it is seldom the good fortune of a single man to own a whole town as Mr. Tillery does."

Harold H. Fries (1866-1946) was the New York "capitalist," chemist, inventor, and entrepreneur who purchased the Tillery-Fries House, land, and town in 1889 (Deed Book 87, p. 22). Fries acquired the property for both business and pleasure, maintaining the "Mansion" and surrounding acreage as a winter home and game refuge for himself and his many guests, including Averill Harriman (Cook interview). An extensive renovation of ca. 1891 to ca. 1910 included the addition of two two-story wings, a detached rear wing, and modern plumbing (including hot water). In 1894 the house was the first in the community to have electricity, powered by a dynamo on the premises (Cook's notes referring to news clips: 5 April 1892 and 29 November 1894).

Harold Fries continued to reside in New York City most of the year except for holidays. He was credited with developing "Freeze-on," a popular medication for corns, and with his brother continued the family business established by their father, Alexander Fries. Harold Fries was president and treasurer of the Torsion Balance Company, president of Christian Becker, Inc., and director of the Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital (*Enfield Progress*, obituary 5 July 1946). With other northern investors, Fries founded the North Carolina Lumber Company in Tillery in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 8 Page 11

---

1891. In the next ten years his lumber operation expanded and the town population grew to 200 by 1895 (Taves, pp. 43-44).

It was apparently after the death of Harold H. Fries that the name Oak Grove became the preferred name of the house and its compound. It had been reported in one of the local papers that the house was in the midst of a beautiful grove of oaks--hence "Oak Grove" (Cook interview).

On November 7, 1948, the *Durham Morning Herald* reported, "The latest chapter in 'Tillery's' history began in April of last year when the Cary Lumber Company of Durham purchased the 6,000 acre tract, including 'the big house' and 14 other buildings, from the Dr. A. H. Fries estate. All but 400 of the 6,000 acres are timber land." On June 25, 1953 it was reported that the Halifax Paper Company purchased 6,500 acres from the Cary Lumber Company, including the old mansion and numerous other buildings (*Scotland Neck Commonwealth*). The house remained unaltered as neither company used it.

In 1956, the Halifax Paper Company sold the present parcel of land (23.29 acres) with the house to William B. Carroll, who maintained the house and property with few alterations. William Carroll was forced to sell the house in 1984 when he became overextended in the stock market. Preservation/North Carolina obtained the rights to sell the Tillery-Fries House and sold it to Jan L. Barbour and John R. Killian in 1984, and again to Fain E. and Catherine S. Edwards in 1989. The Edwardses bought the house and moved to North Carolina from Florida with the intention of turning the house into a bed and breakfast inn. They have spent the last two years rehabilitating the house in preparation for their endeavor and plan to work on the overseer's house and the manager's cottage at a later date.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 12 Tillery-Fries House Halifax Co., NC

---

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cook, Alfred. Local Historian. Phone interview conducted by Sandra Webbere, September 13, 1990. Newspaper clips obtained by Cook, unidentified newspapers April 5, 1892 and November 29, 1894.

Coon, Charles L. NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES 1790-1840. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1915.

Deed Books: Halifax County, North Carolina, Vol. 19, Vol. 22, Vol. 28, Vol. 31, Vol. 37, Vol. 87.

DURHAM MORNING HERALD, November 7, 1948.

ENFIELD PROGRESS. Harold H. Fries: Obituary, July 5, 1946.

Fouts, Raymond Parker. ABSTRACTS FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA JOURNAL, Halifax County 1795-1797, Vol.II. Florida: GenRec Books, 1989.

Murphy, William. Genealogical Researcher, Private Papers.

SCOTLAND NECK COMMONWEALTH, August 8, 1889, December 5, 1889.

SCOTLAND NECK-ENFIELD CIRCULAR, July 27, 1988.

Taves, Henry V. THE RURAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF HALIFAX COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA. Unpublished Manuscript, March 1989.

Tax Lists 1800. Halifax County, North Carolina.

Tillery, Charles. Telephone interview conducted by Sandra Webbere, August 12, 1990.

Tillery, Eppy. Will: 26 April 1798. Halifax County, North Carolina.

Tillery, John Richard. East Carolina Manuscript Collection, Collection No. 175: February 6, 1882, October 4 and 29, 1888, November 14, 1888.

United States Census Records: Halifax County, North Carolina 1850, 1860.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC

Section number 10 Page 13

---

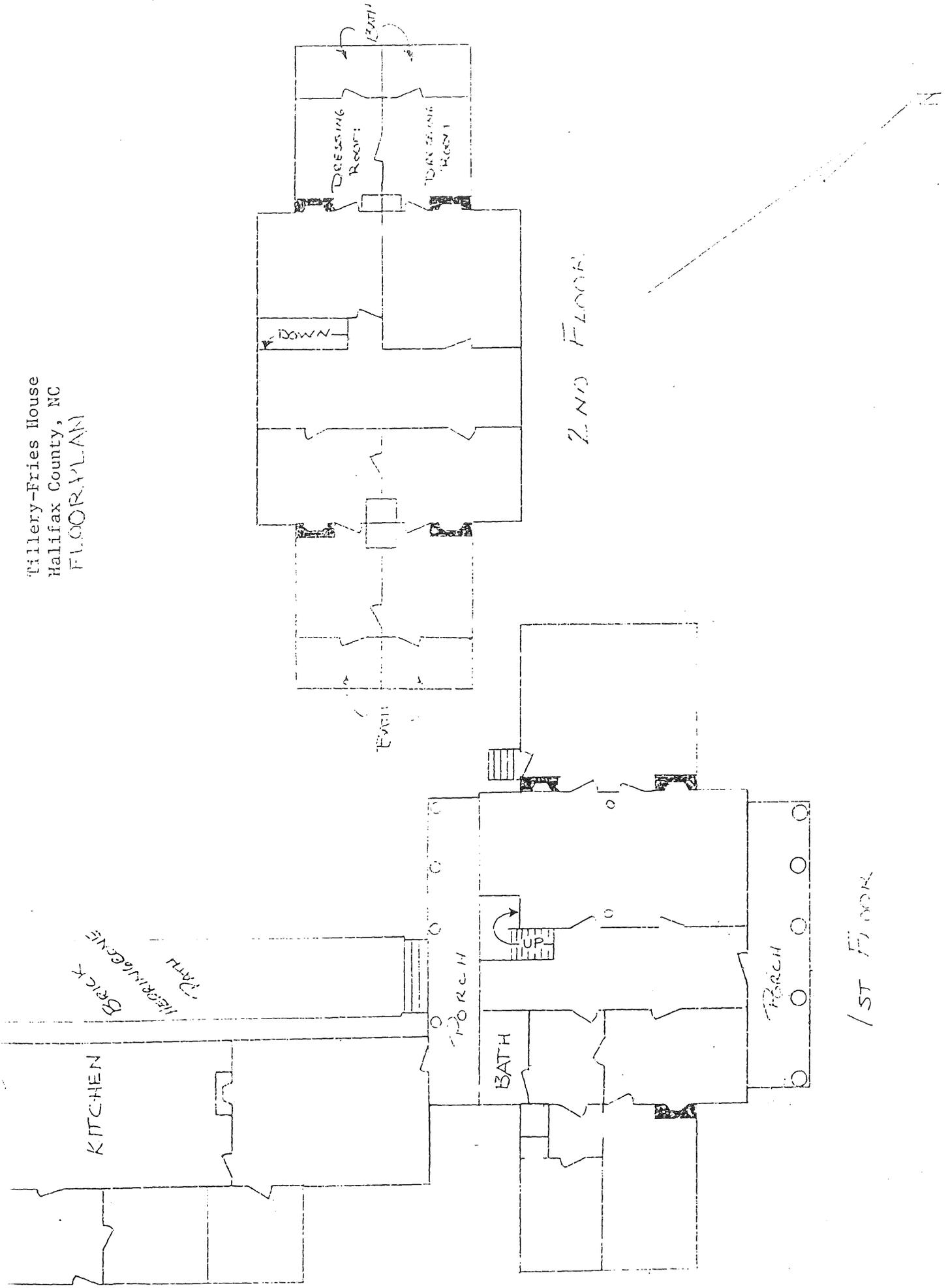
## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is all of the parcel conveyed to W. B. Carroll by Halifax Paper Company and described in Halifax County Deed Book 644, page 456.

## VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated property encompasses all of the parcel currently and historically associated with the main house and its associated surviving outbuildings, providing an appropriate historic setting for these resources.

Tillery-Fries House  
Halifax County, NC  
FLOOR PLAN



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

77°30'  
36°15'

0.2 MI TO N.C. 561  
276000m E.

HALIFAX (U.S. 301) 8 MI

278

279 27'30"

280

281

TILLERY-FRIES  
HOUSE, TILLERY, NC  
SCOTLAND  
NECK QUAD  
4014000m N.  
HALIFAX CO, NC  
ZONE 18

① NORTHING  
4013770

EASTING  
275850

② NORTHING  
4013670  
EASTING  
275960

③ NORTHING  
4013480  
EASTING  
275740

④ NORTHING  
4013580  
EASTING  
275630

ROCKY MOUNT (VIA U.S. 301) 29 MI.  
CROWELL'S CROSSROADS (N.C. 124) 3.5 MI.

