

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 Griffin, W. W. Farm

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 0.9 mi. N. of Rt. 1505
(1871 Wendell Griffin Rd.) N/A not for publication

city or town Williamston vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Martin code 117 zip code 27892

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.)

Jeffrey A. Cross SHPO 8/17/01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
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 commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
- other. (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Griffin, W. W. Farm
Name of Property

Martin 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	
5	2	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
7	2	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and early 20th century

Other: I-house

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof tin

other

Narrative Description

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

Griffin, W. W. Farm
Name of Property

Martin County, NC
County and State

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.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

Period of Significance

c. 1902 - 1940

Significant Dates

c. 1902

c. 1930

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:

Griffin, W. W. Farm
Name of Property

Martin County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6.8 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	3 2 3 1 2 2	3 9 6 6 5 7 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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 Beth Keane

organization Retrospective date March 23, 2001

street & number 2001 Metts Ave. telephone 910-815-1096

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28403

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 (see attached sheet)

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.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The William W. Griffin Farm is located in Williams Township, approximately ten miles east of Williamston, the county seat of Martin County. Lying in the northeastern coastal plain of North Carolina, Martin County encompasses 482 square miles of forest, swamp, and farmland. Broad sections of the county's flat coastal plain are interrupted by rivers and swamps and interspersed with small towns and crossroads. The county, bordered by Bertie County on the north, Beaufort and Pitt counties on the south, Washington County on the east, and Edgecombe and Halifax counties on the west, is divided into ten townships: Bear Grass, Crossroads, Goose Neck, Griffins, Hamilton, Jamesville, Poplar Point, Robersonville, Williams, and Williamston. The county's ten small towns comprise only forty-four percent of the county's total population of approximately 25,000 persons (Butchko, 1).

The county's primary geographical feature is the Roanoke River, which forms its northern border with Bertie County. Lesser waterways and creeks divide the county, running either northward to the Roanoke River or southward into the Tar River. The county's elevation above sea level gradually rises toward the northwest, from a low of about ten feet along the Roanoke River near east of Jamesville to a high of about ninety feet along the border with Edgecombe and Halifax counties. This change and the accompanying differences in soils make for agricultural conditions that vary markedly between the southeastern and northwestern sections of the county. The eastern and southeastern sections are marked by broad swamplands and pine barrens of poor sandy soils having marginal arability unless they are extensively drained by ditches.

While agriculture in the southeastern section has always been difficult, the area's forests contained timber that supported a thriving lumbering industry throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Towards the higher elevations in the western and northwestern part of the county, the soils become well-drained sandy loams well suited for cotton, tobacco, peanuts, corn, soybeans, and truck crops. The favorable land conditions, combined with a moderate climate, provided the setting for the development of an agrarian-based economy that has thrived for three centuries in Martin County (Butchko, 1).

The William W. Griffin Farmhouse is situated on a large tract of land north of Route 64 midway between Williamston and Jamesville. It is bordered on the west by Devil's Gut, a tributary of the Roanoke River. Much of the 1200-acre tract of land is swampy, unsuitable for farming. Approximately 100 acres has been cleared and put into cultivation. Much of the remaining property has been timbered for lumber over the past century.

The auxiliary outbuildings associated with the c. 1902 William W. Griffin Farm are clustered primarily north and west of the main house. Landscape features which fan out from the farm buildings include vineyards, cultivated fields, pastures, and wooded areas. Although the farm, in its entirety, includes approximately 1200 acres, this nomination comprises only the farmhouse, the immediate surrounding outbuildings, and several adjacent fields, amounting to approximately six and eight-tenths acres.

The William W. Griffin farm nomination encompasses a stylish turn-of-the-twentieth century I-house, along with five outbuildings, and a 1994 modern ranch house. The rural setting of the complex continues to evoke the character and setting of the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century agrarian society of Martin County. The nominated property retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Inventory List

1. William W. Griffin House c. 1902, c. 1930 Contributing Building

The William W. Griffin House is a classic example of the popular I-house built throughout eastern North Carolina around the turn of the twentieth century. Facing east, the two-story frame house with weatherboard siding rests on brick piers. Three bays wide, six-over-six double-hung sash windows flank a central paneled door with two semi-elliptical lights. The central door is flanked by sidelights which retain the original frosted glass punctuated with a snowflake pattern. Additionally, carved half-diamond architrave trim surmounts the windows and door.

The house features a stylish front porch supported by turned posts and embellished with carved double-scalloped-edge trim punctuated in the center with small holes. The porch wall is sheathed with diagonal boards laid in two opposing directions. A wide baseboard emphasizes its function as a warm-weather sitting room. The second-level features three smaller six-over-six sash windows, symmetrically arranged over the first-level windows.

The north and south gable-end elevations of the main block of the house are identical, with each boasting boxed cornice returns and a single-shoulder, exterior-end chimney flanked on both levels by six-over-six sash windows, similarly sized to those on the front facade.

A one-story ell with an engaged side porch is attached to the rear (west) side of the house. Three separate doors on the porch, each flanked on one side by a six-over-six sash window, open into three separate interior rooms. The west end of the porch is enclosed to

incorporate an additional small pantry room, with its own entrance. A massive exterior-end chimney on the back wall of the ell served a large fireplace in the kitchen. The chimney is flanked by six-over-six sash windows. An additional door, opening into the kitchen, is located on the north elevation of the ell. Two six-over-six sash windows are situated east of the door.

A standing-seam metal roof has replaced the original wood shingle roof. A boxed cornice with corner returns completes the exterior of the main block of the house.

A curious one-room addition is situated at right angles to the north side of the main house. Although the room, itself, is detached from the house, the front porch wraps around to encompass the additional room, providing a sense of continuity. The room was added to the house c. 1930, when William Griffin returned to his farm after spending time in a sanitarium recuperating from tuberculosis. Apparently, the family thought it wise to keep him isolated until he was completely recovered (Frankie Griffin interview, 8 Nov 2000). With the door located on the south elevation, entrance to the room is achieved from the porch. A six-over-six sash window on each elevation provides light for the small room. A free-standing stove was the only source of heat for the room.

The traditional center-hall plan interior of the main house is considerably enlivened by diagonal beadboard wainscoting, a repetition of the diagonal porch siding. The staircase, with turned balustrades and carved newel post, runs along the south wall of the hall from the rear. A four-panel door opens onto the rear side porch.

The living room, or parlor, is located on the south side of the central hall. A carved mantel displaying a diamond motif creates a visual focal point. The remaining three rooms in the main block of the house are similar in size and ornamentation. The mantels are somewhat less elaborate and are carved with rectangular shapes. The walls throughout the house are of plaster, while the floors are covered with wide pine boards and the ceilings display tongue-and-groove beaded board paneling. Ten-inch base boards, four-panel doors, and rather plain window and door moldings are found throughout the house.

The three rooms in the rear ell are arranged in a linear fashion. The walls and ceilings of these rooms, as well as the added front room, are paneled with horizontal tongue-and-groove beaded board, while the floors are covered with pine boards. The kitchen boasts a large fireplace on the west end with a carved mantel similar to the mantels in the bedrooms. A sturdy batten door with metal hinges leading to the exterior is located on the north wall of the kitchen. The remaining two rooms in the ell were utilized as a bedroom and a dining area. A

stove connected to an interior chimney provided heat for the small bedroom.

While the house was wired for electricity c. 1946, it was never updated with indoor plumbing or mechanical systems such as central heat or air conditioning. The kitchen is very basic with only a large fireplace for heat. There are no modern kitchen appliances to detract from the historic integrity of the house. The original c. 1926 telephone remains hanging on the wall of the back porch. Although occupied until 1995, the house is in a somewhat deteriorated condition due to neglect. Structurally sound and amazingly intact, however, the dwelling is currently undergoing renovation following the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

2. Storage Shed c. 1920 Contributing Outbuilding

Built as a storage/wood shed, this frame eight- by fourteen-foot outbuilding sits approximately twelve feet behind (southwest) the main house. Apparently, only one-half of the original building remains intact. The shed sits on a combination cinderblock and brick foundation and features board-and-batten siding, a batten door with iron hinges on the east side, and a window opening on the west side. The interior is lined with beaded board paneling and contains some built-in cabinets and bookshelves. Furnished with a metal bed, the building was occasionally used as extra sleeping space.

3. Machinery Shed c. 1970 Non-contributing Outbuilding

Situated approximately 120 feet behind (northwest) the main house, this twenty-four- by thirty-six-foot frame shed rests on a brick foundation and is supported by braced poles. It has a side-gable metal roof, metal siding, and is enclosed on three sides. Three open bays on the north side provide cover for farm machinery. Three divided storage areas for hay/feed or small equipment are located on the west side.

4. Corn Crib/Garage/ c. 1900/c. 1940/ Contributing Outbuilding
Machinery Shed c. 1960

This group of attached buildings faces west and is situated across the farm lane, approximately forty feet northeast of the dwelling. The original structure was a one-story-with-loft frame corn crib, built approximately the same time as the main house. Family history relates that this was the first building on the property and that William Griffin slept in it while he was building his residence (Fred Griffin interview, 8 Nov 2000). The fifteen- by fifteen-foot side-gable structure rests on brick piers, is sheathed with board-and-batten siding and a metal roof. Double-leaf doors with iron hinges open into two interior spaces lined with wide cypress boards.

Attached to the south side of the barn is a c. 1940 two-bay garage. The fifteen- by fifteen-foot frame building rests on a brick foundation, is sheathed with a combination of horizontal and vertical board siding, and is covered with a metal roof.

Attached to the north side of the corn crib is a c. 1960 machinery shed. Five bays wide, the frame building, of pole construction, measures seventeen by sixty feet. It retains a shed metal roof and is sheathed with vertical boards.

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------|
| 5. Cotton Barn/ | c. 1910/ | Contributing Outbuilding |
| Machinery Sheds | c. 1960 | |

Facing east, this building is located approximately thirty-five feet west of the previously described buildings and approximately forty feet north of the main house. Again, the center section was the original structure and was used variously as a cotton storage barn and a fertilizer storage shed. Similar to the corn crib, this side-gable fifteen-by-fifteen-foot frame structure is one-story-with-loft, is covered with board-and-batten siding, and has a metal roof. It also features double-leaf doors with iron hinges. The interior was not accessible for inspection.

Circa 1960 machinery sheds are attached to the north and south sides of the cotton barn. Similar in size (twenty-five by fifteen feet each), the three-bay wings, of pole construction, are enclosed on three sides with vertical-board siding and are clad with metal roofs.

- | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------------|
| 6. Hay Barn | c. 1940 | Contributing Outbuilding |
|-------------|---------|--------------------------|

The twenty-eight- by fifteen-foot frame hay barn sits approximately sixty-eight feet northwest of the previously described cotton barn/machinery sheds. This was an area that was previously reserved for the farm animals. A no-longer-extant mule barn sat opposite the hay barn. The frame gable-end barn sits on brick piers, has board-and-batten siding, a metal roof, and double-leaf doors with iron hinges. Two early shed additions are attached to the north and south sides of the barn.

- | | | |
|----------|------|---------------------------|
| 7. House | 1994 | Non-contributing Building |
|----------|------|---------------------------|

A frame gable-end ranch house featuring a shingle roof with overhanging eaves, vinyl siding, and one-over-one sash windows rests approximately fifty feet northwest of the main dwelling house. Four bays wide and two bays deep, the house rests on a concrete pad and has a gable-front attached portico supported by slender poles. The house was built for Vernon Griffin, William Griffin's youngest son, to reside in when he became too sick to live in the "Old Home Place."

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 6

W. W. Griffin Farm
Martin County, North Carolina

8. Well c. 1930 Contributing Structure

A brick well, measuring approximately four by four feet, is situated several feet from the northeast corner of the main dwelling house. The original frame shelter with a pyramid roof is no longer extant.

9. Agricultural Setting c. 1900- Contributing Site
present

The surviving agricultural landscape which continues to contribute to the historic character of the Griffin farm consists of several elements. North of the farmhouse is a cultivated field bordered on the north by woods. An eight-foot wide dirt farm lane runs about forty feet in front of the house, makes a ninety-degree turn, and then runs to the back of the property, effectively bisecting the nominated parcel in half. The lane has historically provided access to the rear of the property for farming and timbering purposes. Two established vineyards are located west of the house. One consists of four rows of grapevines measuring 160 feet in length. Fifty-five feet to the north are four more rows of grapevines which are eighty feet long. The grapevines were cultivated by Vernon Griffin, a self-taught horticulturist. Although not included in the nomination, wide open fields surrounding the farmhouse retain the traditional viewscape of the property through the past century.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The W. W. Griffin Farm, with its farmhouse and outbuildings, evokes the turn-of-the-twentieth-century agrarian life of Martin County. Significant under Criterion C, the property is one of the best remaining examples of a stylish I-house, representing late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century architectural development in Martin County. The house remains in the ownership of the descendants of William Washington Griffin and is virtually unaltered since its construction. The property is also being nominated under Criterion A for agriculture. The farm is an intact example of a representative early-twentieth-century North Carolina farmstead. The period of significance begins c. 1902, the year it is believed Griffin built his house, and extends to 1940, the date of the last contributing outbuilding.

The W. W. Griffin House sits at the center of the nominated parcel. In addition to the house, the nominated acreage features a collection of farm outbuildings, including a c. 1902 corn crib and c. 1910 cotton barn. The rural setting of the W. W. Griffin Farm still evinces the character and setting of the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century agrarian society of eastern North Carolina. The farmhouse and outbuildings and approximately six and eight-tenths acres immediately surrounding them exhibit a high degree of historic integrity and continue to maintain the design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association of a turn-of-the-twentieth-century farm in Martin County.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Martin County was formed in 1774 out of the southeastern portion of Halifax County and the western end of Tyrrell County. Economic growth during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was concentrated around the county's three towns--Williamston, Jamesville, and Hamilton--all located along the Roanoke River. Consequently, few efforts were made to develop or improve land transportation routes. During the turn of the nineteenth century, Martin County was populated with farms, ranging from prosperous planters who owned several dozen slaves to those who barely survived with their own labor. Cotton culture, however, exploded between 1850 and 1860, causing the slave population to increase by nineteen percent. By 1860, corn was the most prevalent crop, with sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, peas and beans, wheat, oats, and rice also being grown (Butchko, 5-9).

Early industries of Martin County included gristmills, flour mills, and sawmills. During the early 1840s, the introduction of steam-powered machinery into the county revolutionized the timber industry, permitting commercial lumber production on a large scale. Naval stores also thrived, producing turpentine, pitch, and tar

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W. W. Griffin Farm
Martin County, North Carolina

required by the world's expanding maritime fleets. Fishing also continued as an important industry, not only as a food source for local residents but for shipment to out-of-state-markets (Butchko, 11).

Martin County met with far-reaching turmoil during the military, political, and social upheaval of the Civil War. Out of a total male population in 1860 of 1,676, almost 1,000 left the county to serve the Confederacy. Other than as a supplier of men and foodstuffs, Martin County's primary military role in the Civil War was guarding access by the Roanoke River to the railroad bridge across the river at Weldon in neighboring Halifax County. This bridge was the primary link between Williamston and Wilmington, the last major Southern port not completely blockaded by Union forces and the Army of Northern Virginia. The other major concern was protection of the Halifax County shipyard, located several miles upriver from the Martin County border, where the ironclad ram, *C.S.S. Albemarle*, was constructed between 1863 and 1864. The county was in continual danger of military excursions because of the proximity of Union forces based in nearby Washington and Plymouth (Butchko, 14-15).

The end of the Civil War in 1865 found Martin County's farms, businesses, and industries struggling to recover. The emancipation of the slaves brought about major economic and social changes. The loss of resident chattel farm labor brought about the sharecropping system of farming. Agricultural loss and stagnation in the county was indicated by a thirteen percent decrease in farm acreage and a dramatic twenty-four percent decrease in the value of farm implements used on Martin County farms between 1860 and 1870. The coming of the railroad in the late nineteenth century, however, encouraged development in the county, enabling the citizens to transport their farm and lumber products to market. The county also gradually made road improvements, necessitated by the increasing popularity of the automobile.

The introduction of peanuts and tobacco into the county during 1880s and 1890s, respectively, successfully challenged and eventually surpassed cotton and corn as the primary crops of the county. Advanced farming techniques and improvement in seed quality and fertilizer brought about a dramatic increase in yield per acre and a substantial improvement in the income levels of all farmers. By the early twentieth century, approximately half of all Martin County farms were tenant operated. Living conditions in the county remained rather dismal, however, with large families crowded into small houses with no electricity or indoor plumbing. Few of the county's children attended school (Butchko, 20-21). Lumbering continued to maintain its lead as the largest industry in the county. Other important industries to develop included makers of coach and wagons, textile, brick, and fisheries (Butchko, 26-27).

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W. W. Griffin Farm
Martin County, North Carolina

William Washington Griffin's parents, William Jordan and Sarah Jane Coltrain Griffin, had emigrated to Martin County from Tennessee in the mid-1800s, settling in Williams Township. Born in the Fairview community on August 20, 1868, William W. Griffin spent his childhood on his parent's farm. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Griffin left his family's farm and began purchasing property in the Islands section of Williams Township, approximately midway between Williamston and Jamesville.

Griffin bought his first tract of land, consisting of twenty acres, on February 3, 1900, for \$100.00 (Martin County Deed Book CCC:200). Approximately one year later, on January 25, 1901, he purchased 250 acres on the south side of the Roanoke River, adjoining the Fannie Smithwick tract, for \$2500.00 (Martin County Deed Book EEE:361). And then on June 10, 1902, he purchased another 100 acres for \$600.00 (Martin County Deed Book HHH:592). This land was described as being four miles from Jamesville. It is surmised that the house was constructed, using timber from his property, during this time period. Family history relates that he built and lived in a corn crib on the property during construction of the house (Fred Griffin interview, 8 Nov 2000).

On February 4, 1903, William W. Griffin married Mary Emily Lilley, daughter of William B. and Martha A. Lilley of Martin County. They were married at the bride's father's home in Jamesville by a minister of the Primitive Baptist denomination (Marriage Certificate, dtd. 3 Feb 1903). Mary Emily had taught school for several years in Jamesville before her marriage (*The Enterprise*, 13 Sep 1929).

William W. Griffin and Mary Emily began their married life in the newly constructed home on Griffin's farm. Over the years, they acquired additional property, eventually accumulating over 1200 acres. Their first son, William Clyde, was born on November 25, 1903, eleven months after their marriage. Their subsequent six children included Henry Erving, born January 22, 1906; Wendell Washington, born April 25, 1908; Benjamin Eugene, born May 7, 1910; Vernon Wilson, born July 1, 1912; David Marshall, born July 8, 1915, and a daughter, Mary Jane, born November 4, 1918 (*Martin County Heritage*, 371).

Much of the property acquired by William Griffin was swampy and unsuitable for farming. However, the family managed to clear approximately 120 acres for cultivation. Some of the crops they grew included tobacco, cotton, corn, soybeans, and peanuts. Griffin's obituary reports that he "followed the basic and practical approach to modern farming and succeeded beyond all his expectations" (*The Enterprise*, 23 July 1957).

Griffin became involved with several local civic enterprises

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W. W. Griffin Farm
Martin County, North Carolina

during the early part of the century. A movement was launched in Williamston in 1913 to rebuild the peanut cleaning plant which had been destroyed by fire nearly two years earlier. A meeting was held by the Chamber of Commerce and attended by a number of farmers who were interested in having the plant rebuilt in the county. All were in favor of forming a stock company capitalized at \$25,000.00 with shares to be sold at \$50.00 each. W. W. Griffin was appointed as a part of a committee to explain the plan to the farmers in the Williams Township. The plant was finally built in 1915 (*Martin County History*, Vol. II, 218).

Soon after World War I was declared in 1917, the nation faced a huge agriculture challenge. Martin County responded by setting up a county board of agriculture charged with the duty of stimulating food production and conservation. W. W. Griffin was appointed as a representative from Williams Township to assist the county in meeting the challenge (*Martin County History*, Vol. II, 146).

After the war, during the Depression, county farmers employed every possible idea or means to survive. It was reported that W. W. Griffin was among the first to build a sweet potato curing house in the county and that he produced fine yams on his farm during the early 1930s, growing them on a large commercial scale (*Martin County History*, Vol. II, 137).

Griffin was also reported as being a "champion timberman." In 1909, Griffin agreed to sell for \$1,000.00 the timber rights for ten years on 175 acres to Wiltz Veneer Company (Martin County Deed Book WWW:220). Several additional deeds were issued over the next thirty years to various timber companies for timber rights on his property.

Griffin also served as a member of the community school and road committees (*The Enterprise*, 23 Jul 1957). He donated a one-acre tract of land along the public road from Williamston to Jamesville for a one-room schoolhouse to be built. He also bought the first school bus in the county and rented it to the Martin County school system. His son, Henry, was the first school bus driver in the county (Fred Griffin interview, 8 Nov 2000).

In 1926, Griffin granted an easement for the Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Company to place telephone poles along his land and he became one of the first farmers in the area to obtain a telephone. This same telephone is still hanging on the wall on the back porch of the house. The Griffins were also one of the first families to have their home wired for electricity, long before electricity became available to the rural residents of Martin County in the mid-1940s. In 1946, Griffin granted an easement on Islands Road to the Virginia Electric and Power Company for the purpose of erecting pole lines to

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W. W. Griffin Farm
Martin County, North Carolina

his residence (Deed Book V3:430).

The 1920 population census of the United States listed William W. Griffin, farmer, fifty-one years old, as living in Williams Township along with his wife, Mary E., age forty-four, his six sons and one daughter. Two orphan nieces (children of Mary Emily's brother, John William), Opal Lilley, age ten, and Audrey Lilley, age seven, had also joined the household by this time. Griffin's wife, Mary Emily, died on September 13, 1929, from heart failure. Apparently, she had been in poor health and suffered from heart problems for a number of years (*The Enterprise*, 13 Sep 1929).

With the exception of Vernon, as the Griffin children grew up, they struck out on their own, married, and raised families; but for the most part, stayed close to home in Martin County. Vernon, however, never married, and except for serving in the armed forces during World War II, remained at the homeplace. He helped his father with the farm; and in 1945, William Griffin sold two tracts of land totaling 875 acres to Vernon, for \$4,000.00 (Martin County Deed Book U4:116).

After suffering from declining health over approximately ten years, W. W. Griffin died on July 20, 1957. Vernon remained on the farm, continuing to farm the land, experimenting with different crops and establishing a vineyard. As the years went by, he became somewhat eccentric and reclusive, eventually living in only one room of the house. He kept his mother's bedroom virtually the same as the day she died in 1929, with her coat, hats, and purses still hanging on hooks on the wall. Two nurses were hired to assist Vernon and a new house was built in 1995, adjacent to the old one, in order for him to be more comfortable and to receive better care. He was reluctant to move into the new house, however, and he died on July 9, 1995, shortly after the move took place.

The W. W. Griffin property remains in the family. Before his death, Vernon deeded the house and 1200 acres to his niece and nephew, Martha and Henry Griffin, Jr., children of Henry Erving Griffin. In addition, the surrounding land is owned and occupied by additional descendants of William W. Griffin. Although the old house has become somewhat deteriorated due to neglect, it remains structurally sound. The house is being stabilized with the addition of a new roof and windows, where needed. Henry Griffin, Jr., is planning further restorative steps to the house in the near future.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In Martin County, as elsewhere in much of rural North Carolina, the most popular house form between the Civil War and World War I remained the I-house, a traditional two-story dwelling that is one room

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W. W. Griffin Farm
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deep and two rooms wide. Restricted to prosperous planters before the Civil War, by the late nineteenth century, this form had become synonymous with middle-class status. Even with the adoption of nationally popular forms in the early twentieth century, the traditional two-story house endured up to the 1920s, superficially transformed with the addition of fashionable devices (Butchko, 63-64).

The late nineteenth century also brought adjustments in the plans of these houses. In contrast to the typical plan of this house type before the Civil War, in the late nineteenth century, the two-story house uniformly exhibited front symmetry and had a central passage dividing the two main rooms on each level. Furthermore, whereas earlier houses had shed additions that led to a breezeway linking the house to a freestanding kitchen-dining building, by 1900, the house was typically expanded at the rear by both a shed room and a two- or three-room ell. It was typical for the house to grow in stages, adding rear rooms as family needs dictated (Butchko, 64).

It was this two-story, one-room deep house type with rear ell and full-width porch that dominated the county's building tradition during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The two-story I-house became a symbol of economic achievement and social respectability in a democratic agrarian society. The center hall with a door on each end also created a good ventilation system making the plan especially suitable for a hot, humid Southern climate (Southern, 71).

I-houses, especially those built after the turn of the century, often exhibited a varied chimney arrangement, with one interior and one exterior chimney, or two exterior chimneys rising from the rear elevation rather than the gable ends. By this time, metal heating stoves had largely replaced open fireplaces as a means for heating. Iron cooking stoves came into general use even earlier in the post-war period. The house was usually covered by a gable roof, sometimes with a center gable, known as a triple-A roof, for aesthetic emphasis.

Martin County's rich stock of traditional houses erected during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was enlivened through the judicious and frugal placement of decorative features such as turned porch posts and rail balusters, sawn porch scrolls and cornice brackets, and more rarely, sawn gable ornaments and gables sheathed with imbricated wood shingles.

The W. W. Griffin House is a typical I-house found in Martin County with some additional stylistic details. It was built c. 1902 with a two-story center-hall plan with a rear ell containing three additional rooms, including the kitchen. In addition to the two single-step exterior-end chimneys, a third, more massive exterior chimney is placed on the gable end of the ell to serve a kitchen

fireplace. The porch is the most highly decorated aspect of the house. Supported by turned columns, the cornice is enlivened with a double-scalloped edge, each scallop centrally pierced with a small round drill hole. The area is further embellished with half-diamond architrave trim over the first-level windows and central door. In addition, the porch shelters a wall sheathed with diagonally-laid tongue-and-groove bead-board siding, laid in two opposing directions, underscoring the porch's traditional role as an outdoor sitting room.

This tongue-and-groove bead-board siding was widely manufactured in eastern North Carolina during the late nineteenth century and, as seen in the W. W. Griffin House, was universally used to sheath kitchens, dining rooms, ceilings, and in many modest dwellings, the entire interior. Its use on porches was not unusual, and can be found on the c. 1883 William E. Griffin house located in Griffins Township. In this case, the porch is carried by slender paired posts with elongated sawn scrolls and shelters a wall sheathed with diagonally-laid tongue-and-groove siding. The use of the siding on porches can also be found on more ambitious town residences such as the early 1900s Barnhill Houses (108-119 West North Railroad Street, Robersonville), as well as non-residential buildings such as the c. 1885 (former) Williamston Graded School (107 North Pearl Street, Williamston).

The W. W. Griffin House includes a second period (c. 1930) small semi-detached room set at right angles to the front of the house. It is attached to the house by wrapping the front porch around to incorporate the addition. The room is completely sheathed on the interior with the bead-board siding and was heated by a small interior wood stove. It is thought that this room was added to the house when William Griffin was recovering from tuberculosis and was required to remain isolated from the rest of the family. Interestingly, in its form and placement, this sick room recalls traditional detached kitchens of earlier eras.

Although the W. W. Griffin House resembles many other frame I-houses built in Martin County around the turn of the twentieth century, the Griffin House remains virtually unaltered since its construction. Although electricity was added to the house in the 1940s, indoor plumbing, modern insulation, or mechanical systems were never incorporated into the house. Even the kitchen remains devoid of any modern appliances.

AGRICULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Griffin property is an exceptionally intact example of a typical early-twentieth-century farmstead in Martin County. The c.1902 Griffin farmhouse sits amongst an assortment of subsidiary outbuildings, providing a clear picture of farming practices and

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traditions at the turn of the twentieth century in Martin County.

The corn crib is the earliest remaining outbuilding on the farm and it is said that Griffin lived in this structure while his house was being built. As with most farms, the outbuildings on the Griffin farm evolved with the changing needs of the farm and the family. The majority of existing farmsteads in Martin County were established during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period of major changes in agricultural traditions, transportation systems, and construction methods. As the labor required in the production of subsistence crops, cash crops, and improved herds of livestock became more complex, the layout of farmsteads became more orderly to facilitate a smooth flow of the many coordinated tasks necessary to manage the farm. Domestic outbuildings, including the smokehouse, wash house, and wood house were normally clustered close to the main house. Buildings sheltering diverse farm operations, such as stock barns, chicken houses, and corn barns were often organized in a courtyard at the rear or side of the house. Most farmers located their tobacco curing barns some distance from the house, in close proximity to their tobacco fields or the homes of tenants who tended the barns.

The Griffin's farmstead was typical in that the domestic and agriculture buildings were divided with the domestic buildings situated behind the main house and the agriculture buildings located across the farm lane. The original corn crib and cotton barn have additional sheds attached to either side as the need for additional storage space for farm equipment increased. The hay barn is situated farther north of these buildings, adjacent to a no-longer-extant mule barn. The tobacco barns, not included in this nomination, are located down a farm lane, closer to the tobacco fields, as was a no-longer-extant tenant house.

Similar turn-of-the-century farmsteads in Martin County include the Benjamin R. Jenkins Farm located in Robersonville Township. It includes a c. 1885 I-house favored by prospering farmers in the late nineteenth century. Behind the house are three interlinked dependencies: a rectangular corn barn, an automobile garage, and an old, one-room schoolhouse. Other late-nineteenth-century outbuildings include a gable-front mule stable with central drive-through and a one-room tenant house. Twentieth-century outbuildings include five tobacco barns, a packhouse, and a gable-roofed tenant house (Butchko, 359).

The c. 1885 Robert Andrews Farm, also located in Robersonville Township, includes the ubiquitous I-house. A full complement of agricultural outbuildings are aligned west of the dwelling, including a notable gable-roofed corn barn. The 1916 Henry Blount Ange Farm features a traditional I-house with rear kitchen ell. The farmstead includes a full complement of outbuildings: a chicken house, a

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smokehouse, two packhouses, a flue-cure tobacco barn, and an old kitchen. The focus of the c. 1900 Lewis Henry Roberson Farm is a substantial I-house featuring a broad front porch. Numerous outbuildings are arranged in orderly groups, including several from the early twentieth century. Like the Griffin Farm, the Roberson Farm includes additional farm buildings from the mid and late twentieth century, providing a view of the changing farm complex in Martin County during the past century (Butchko, 353, 282, 208).

One last example of an early-twentieth-century Martin County farmstead is the c. 1915 Hyman Gomer Harrison Farm. It includes a two-story dwelling and a full complement of tobacco farm buildings. Numerous outbuildings aligned along a sandy land behind the house include a wash house, a packhouse, a workshop and shed, four tobacco barns, a combined packhouse and mule stable, two silos, several equipment shelters, and a former general store now utilized for storage. Somewhat north of the complex is a modest tenant house of coastal cottage form (Butchko, 127).

The W. W. Griffin Farm and its full complement of outbuildings dating from c. 1902 to the present continue to reflect the evolving farm practices of this family-owned Martin County farm. The farm as a whole is in good condition and Henry Griffin plans preventive and restorative steps to maintain the Griffin House and early outbuildings.

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National Park Service

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W. W. Griffin Farm
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Verbal Boundary Description

The W. W. Griffin Farm nomination includes approximately six and eight-tenths acres. The property is situated at the end of Wendell Griffin Road and measures 660 feet along the east and west borders and 452 feet along the north and south boundaries. The boundary is delineated on the attached Martin County Tax Map.

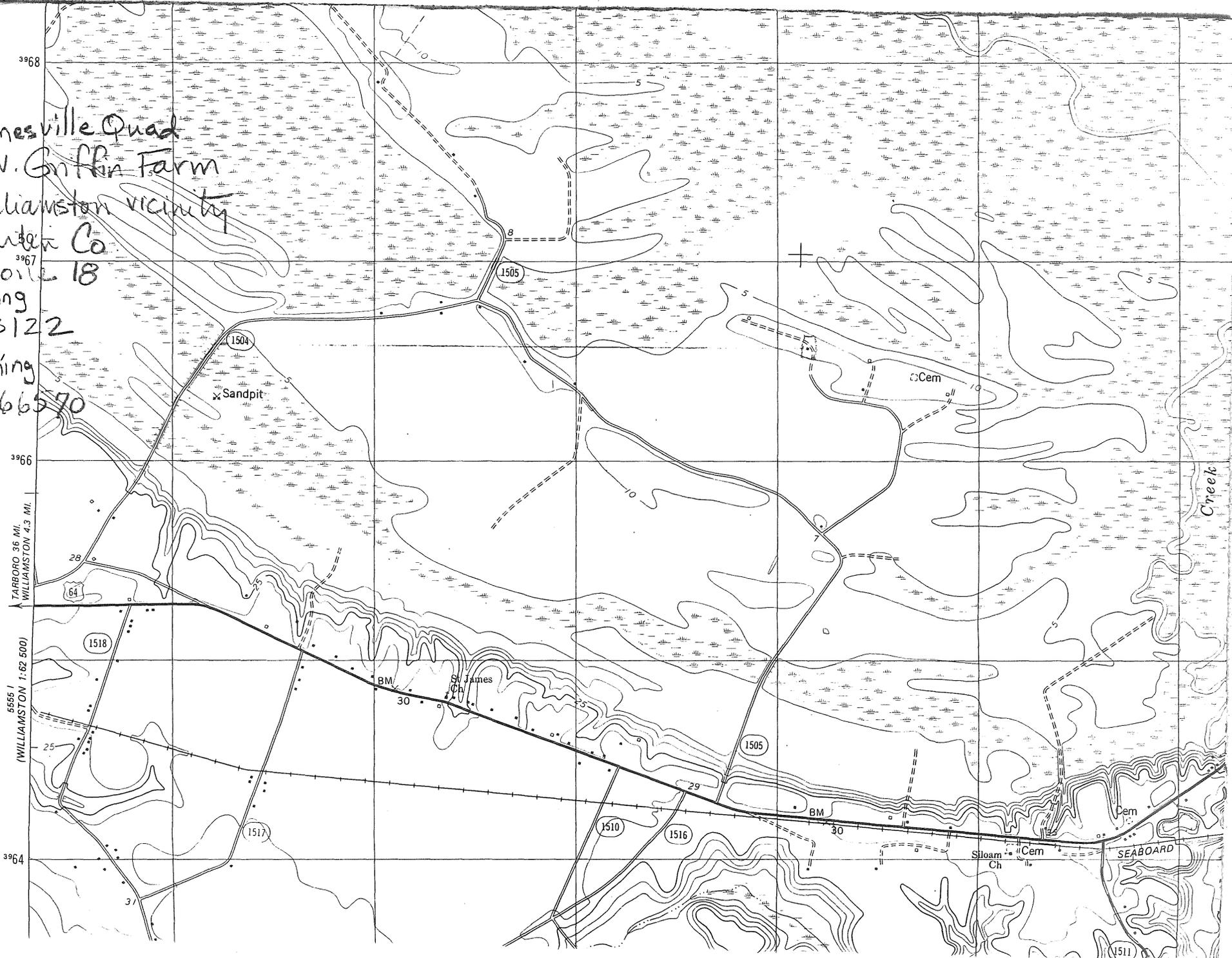
Boundary Justification

The property boundary for the W. W. Griffin Farm entails an approximate 6.8-acre tract containing the c. 1902 W. W. Griffin House, and associated outbuildings, along with enough land to retain historic and architectural integrity in an agricultural landscape. The southern and eastern boundaries constitute the legal property lines. The northern boundary follows the tree line. The western boundary includes the historic outbuildings while excluding non-historic outbuildings.

Jamesville Quad
W.W. Griffin Farm
Williamston vicinity
Macon Co.

3967
E011218
Easting
323122
Northing
3966570

TARBORO 36 MI.
WILLIAMSTON 4.3 MI.
5655 /
WILLIAMSTON 1:62 500)



Creek

1511

