

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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Mason-Hardee-Capel House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number NE side of SR 1308, 0.8 miles west of SR 1307 (555 Blackwell-Stephenson Rd.) not for publication N/A

city or town Garysburg vicinity X

state North Carolina code NC county Northampton code 131 zip code 27831

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. (\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey Brown SHPO 12/10/04  
Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	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): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Mason-Hardee-Capel House  
Name of Property

Northampton 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	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

Georgian

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

roof metal

walls weatherboard

other brick

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Mason-Hardee-Capel House  
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**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.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a 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

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1775; ca. 1840

**Significant Dates**

ca. 1775

ca. 1840

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.8 acres

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

Zone Easting Northing  
1 18 275220 4037260  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 May, 2004

street & number 2001 Metts Avenue telephone 910-815-1096

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28403

**12. Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Robert B. Capel

street & number 20 Longstreet Rd. telephone 252-536-3663

city or town Weldon state NC zip code 27890

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Mason-Hardee-Capel House  
Northampton County, NC

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Mason-Hardee-Capel House is a frame ca. 1775 hall-parlor house with nineteenth- and twentieth-century additions located between Garysburg and Seaboard in a very sparsely developed section of largely rural Northampton County. Located in the northeastern portion of North Carolina, Northampton County is bounded on the east by Bertie and Hertford counties and the Meherrin River, on the south by Halifax County, on the west by Warren County and the Roanoke River, and on the north by the state of Virginia. The Mason-Hardee-Capel House is situated on a 140-acre tract of land on the northeast side of Blackwell-Stephenson Road (SR 1308). It is located several miles east of Garysburg, one of Northampton's early towns (*Footsteps in Northampton*, p. 94).

The one-story-with attic frame house sits well back from the road about midway between NC 186 and Gumberry Road (SR 1313). Agricultural fields completely surround the approximately 1.8-acre plot. A gravel driveway, about one-quarter mile in length, leads from the road to the house. The principal façade of the house originally faced south toward the road, but in the mid-nineteenth century the orientation was reversed and the north side is now the main facade. A small family cemetery, overgrown and shaded by a small grove of trees, sits about 200 feet northeast of the house, outside the nominated boundaries. No outbuildings remain on the property.

It is thought the Mason-Hardee-Capel House was built as the two-room, hall-parlor plan house with a steeply-pitched gable roof and two massive exterior-end brick chimneys that constitutes the current central block of the dwelling. The Mason-Hardee-Capel House originally had two front doors on the south façade, one leading into the hall and one into the parlor. The house retains both these entrances although they are now enclosed by the rear hall. The raised six-panel doors are mounted with H-L hinges. In approximately 1840, a previously detached one-and-one-half-story kitchen was attached to the west gable end at a slightly lower level than the main rooms of the house. At about the same time, the end bay of the south-elevation porch was enclosed, creating an additional sleeping chamber. With the partial porch enclosure, the orientation of the house was reversed so that the original rear, north side of the dwelling became the front and the larger original room (the hall) was partitioned to create a center hall plan. The central passage was removed in the late nineteenth century, returning the house to the hall-parlor configuration. The south-elevation porch was entirely enclosed in 1928 with the construction of another shed bedroom and a rear center hall. The current owner began a restoration of the house in 2003, while also adding a bedroom wing, similar in size and proportion to the kitchen wing.

Originally resting on brick piers, the foundation of the house was filled in with bricks in 2003. Several slatted foundation air vents are included on the north and south elevations. Mortise-and-tenon joints hold together the heavy framing members of the house. Replacement cypress beaded weatherboards and cornerboards, replicating the original, severely deteriorated sheathing, are attached to the framing with reproduction rosehead nails, replicating the original

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nails. A small section of the original weatherboards and rosehead nails has been preserved on the west gable end of the house, protected by a kitchen pantry located adjacent to the chimney. The roof, originally sheathed with cypress shingles, was replaced in the early twentieth century with standing-seam metal. A new standing-seam metal roof was installed in the 2003 restoration.

Nine-over-nine sash windows flank the front (north side) door. Each first-level shed bedroom incorporates a six-over-six window on the front and side elevations. The kitchen includes a separate entrance on the south side flanked on one side by a nine-over-six sash window. The bedroom wing also has a nine-over-six window centered on the south side. Each flanking wing includes a nine-over-six sash window centered on the north elevation as well. At the time of the 2003 restoration, few windows survived and those that remained appeared to be early nineteenth-century replacements that were very deteriorated. Consequently, all of the windows were replaced with custom-made windows duplicating the few sash that remained. Salvaged nineteenth-century glass was utilized for the window lights. All of the surrounds are two-part molded and mitered.

The original exterior-end double-shoulder chimneys, seven feet wide at the base and laid in Flemish bond, are partially covered by the east- and west-side, gable-end additions. The east-side chimney stack leans away from the house, but was stabilized in 2003. A small fixed-sash window flanks each of these chimneys at the attic level. The gable end of each wing features an exterior-end chimney with paved shoulders, also laid in Flemish bond. The west-side kitchen chimney has recently been rebuilt, using the original bricks. The chimney on the new east-side bedroom wing was built to match the kitchen wing chimney.

Both north- and south-side porches have recently been reconstructed. Resting on brick piers, the gabled, north-side porch shelters the entrance and is supported by salvaged heart-pine chamfered posts and enclosed with a picket balustrade. The south-side entrance porch rests on brick piers and consists only of an uncovered deck flanked by a rail balustrade. A simple boxed eave appears on the north and south elevations. The molded Georgian cornice on the north elevation is original and was relocated from the now enclosed south elevation where it had been protected from the elements by the original full-façade porch. The east- and west-side gable ends have flush eaves with tapered raking cornice.

The interior of the house is notable for the generous proportions and high ceilings of the original first-floor rooms and the retention of many simple vernacular Georgian features. The hall and parlor rooms feature arched fireboxes, the openings measuring 3 feet, 6 inches high and 5 feet, 2 inches wide. The central portions of the back walls of the fireboxes are slightly recessed, probably to accommodate firebacks. The mantel in the original hall room has been reconstructed from cypress wood to replicate the original mantel according to sketches drawn by the current owner's aunt, who was born and raised in the house. The tall mantel features four raised vertical panels. The parlor mantel incorporates two horizontal, flat panels over the fireplace. A former arched firebox in the kitchen has been diminished in size, probably in the early twentieth

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century, with the addition of new brick and is now rectangular in shape. The kitchen mantel features one long, flat panel over the fireplace. A small pantry closet is located south of the projecting chimney (opposite the fireplace) in the kitchen wing. The bedroom wing incorporates an arched fireplace, somewhat smaller than those found in the hall and parlor, while the mantel duplicates the kitchen mantel. Each of the four fireplace mantels includes a narrow, plain mantel shelf.

An enclosed winding stair located in the northwest corner of the original hall rises to a pair of half-story sleeping rooms. The stairwell is sheathed with wide, flush, beaded boards. Another enclosed winding stair is located in the southwest corner of the kitchen wing. The bedroom wing also incorporates an enclosed winding stair in the northeast corner of the room. Small closets with vertical board doors are located beneath each stair. The attic level of the house, crudely finished with pine boards, was generally reserved for sleeping and storage space. Insulation and plaster on lath have recently been applied to the attic walls and steeply pitched ceiling.

Heart pine floors are found throughout the house. Interior sheathing and decorative moldings support a mid- to late-eighteenth-century date for the construction of the house. The hall is simply finished in a vernacular Georgian style with a flush-sheathed wainscot consisting of two sixteen-inch boards. A band of quarter- and half-circle molding covers the joint where the boards meet. A wide baseboard with a top bead and a chair rail featuring cyma reversa molding and a flat shelf complete the simple ornamentation. The entire south wall of the hall is paneled with flush sixteen-inch-boards, while the remaining three upper walls are plastered. The parlor wainscot also consists of two sixteen-inch boards. A baseboard similar to the one in the hall and a hand-planed, beaded chair rail encircle the room. The upper walls have recently received a new coat of plaster. The kitchen and one of the shed bedrooms are also sheathed with flush heart pine boards. Hand-planed, beaded ceiling beams are exposed in the hall, parlor, and kitchen. Adz marks are also visible on the lower side of the second-story floorboards.

The ongoing restoration of the house includes the first-time addition of plumbing, wiring for electricity, and insulation. One of the shed bedrooms is being converted to a bathroom. The new bedroom wing includes a bathroom and small closet. Kitchen appliances will be installed in the old kitchen wing. Despite the addition of modern mechanical systems, reconstruction of the porches, and replacement of exterior weatherboards and windows, the Mason-Hardee-Capel House retains a significant amount of historic fabric, identifying it as a rare surviving example in Northampton County of a mid- to late-eighteenth-century hall-parlor house with early nineteenth-century additions. The recent construction of a new addition, necessary to adapt the house for modern residential requirements, is appropriately small in scale and placed on a secondary, gable-end elevation of the original house to minimize obstruction of historic fabric and leave the house's original, historic form clearly apparent.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Built ca. 1775, the Mason-Hardee-Capel House is being nominated under Criterion C for architecture as a significant example of a one-story-with-attic, hall-parlor dwelling, a type prevalent throughout northeastern North Carolina during the second half of the eighteenth century. The heavy framing members of the house held together by mortise-and-tenon joints, along with the massive gable-end chimneys laid in Flemish bond, portray late eighteenth-century construction methods in this region of the state. The interior depicts a simple sophistication in Georgian period details and illustrates the progressive development in the hall-parlor plan through the incorporation of rear shed rooms. The house, located in largely rural Northampton County and surrounded on four sides by farm fields, stands as a reminder of the agricultural economy and culture which has historically predominated in eastern North Carolina. The house has remained exclusively in the hands of the Hardee and Capel families since 1813 and is presently owned by a descendant of both William Hardee, who acquired the house in 1813 from Daniel Mason, and Thomas Capel to whom Hardee sold the house in 1862. The Mason-Hardee-Capel House represents the attractive yet functional dwellings built by members of the mid- to late-eighteenth-century plantation gentry of the region. There are two periods of significance for the house: ca. 1775, when the first section was built, and ca. 1840, when the kitchen wing was added.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Mason-Hardee-Capel House has been in the family of the current owner for five generations. The tract of land on which the house sits, including 634 acres, was purchased by William H. Hardee in 1813 for \$2,500.00 from Daniel Mason and his wife, Dorothy (Deed Book 16, p. 307). Census records and deeds reveal that Daniel Mason was a large landholder in Halifax County with additional landholdings in Northampton County and Tennessee. The 1800 and 1810 U.S. census disclose that he was living in Halifax County and that he owned forty-two slaves, an indication that he was a wealthy man for the time period. An examination of grantor-grantee indexes shows that he participated in numerous land transactions in both Halifax and Northampton counties during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, although it remains unclear both how he acquired the Northampton County tract he sold to Hardee and exactly when or if Mason built the house. The ca. 1775 construction date for the house has been determined by evaluating the structure's building fabric, including the heavy braced timber framing with mortise-and-tenon joinery, the beaded cypress weatherboard siding fastened with rosehead nails, and the chimney form and dimensions. Interior elements consistent with a ca. 1775 date include arched fireboxes with Georgian mantels, flush board wainscot, hand-planed decorative molding, six-panel doors with HL hinges, as well as a hall-parlor plan, a popular room arrangement during the mid to late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in northeastern North Carolina. Hardee family tradition that David Hardee, the son of William H. Hardee who was born in the house in

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1817, recounted that the house was old when he was a small boy tends to support the proposed construction date.

William H. Hardee (b. September 2, 1784) was the first preacher for the Elam Baptist Church (organized in 1788 as Vasser's meeting house and reorganized in 1844 as Elam) (*Footprints in Northampton*, p. 8). Hardee married a woman named Sarah T. on May 22, 1810. The 1830 population census reveals that William H. Hardee's household was made up of four white males between the ages of five and fifteen, one white female between thirty and forty years old, five white females between the ages of five and fifteen, and one white male between forty and fifty years old. The family also owned eight male slaves and three female slaves, an average number for a large landholder in Northampton County. According to the Hardee family Bible, the Hardees produced twelve children, seven boys and five girls over a period of twenty years, 1811 to 1831. Sarah died on January 22, 1859, at the age of sixty-seven, and her husband, William, died the same year on December 16, 1859, at the age of seventy-five (Hardee family Bible).

On March 31, 1862, the youngest of Sarah and William's children, Montelus L. Hardee, now living in Parish of Carroll, Louisiana, sold 231-5/12 acres and the house, referred to in the deed as the "Mansion Lot," to Thomas Capel for \$1,800.00 (Deed Book 38, p. 232). Thomas Capel (b. 1810) married Mary Kee (b. 1814) on June 22, 1831. The Capels had seven children during their marriage, including four girls and three boys (Capel family Bible).

By the time he purchased the Hardee property, Thomas Capel was fifty-two years old and all his children had been born. The U. S. population census of 1850 lists him as a farmer living with his wife Mary, five children, and son-in-law R. C. Coker. His farm, including 130 improved acres and 145 unimproved acres, was valued at \$1,000.00 while his livestock, including seven horses, five cows, seven oxen, and thirty-five swine, was valued at \$438.00. The farm produced approximately 700 bushels of corn, three bales of cotton, 100 bushels of peas and beans, and 100 bushels of sweet potatoes (1850 Census Agriculture Schedule). The 1860 census also lists his occupation as a farmer, living with Mary and three children, with real estate (175 improved acres and 120 unimproved acres) valued at \$2,500.00. The value of his livestock had increased to \$880.00 and included three horses, three mules, four milk cows, two working cows, four other cattle, twenty sheep, and fifty-two swine. His agricultural yield had also increased to 1,250 bushels of Indian corn, 30 bales of cotton, 20 pounds of wool, 200 bushels of peas and beans, 30 bushels of potatoes, 600 bushels of sweet potatoes, and an orchard with an output valued at \$180.00 (1860 Census Agriculture Schedule).

In 1869, following the Civil War, Thomas Capel apparently ran into financial trouble. The Reconstruction era resulted in instability for many Southern farmers as they adjusted to their loss of free labor. In Northampton County, as throughout the state, many of the large plantations were subdivided and tenancy became a common practice. Capel's property, including 526 acres

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with the house and another tract of 225 acres, was sold at public auction to John S. Long (Deed Book 39, p. 19). Several weeks later he sold the 526 acres to Thomas Capel's son, William T. Capel, and sons-in-law, Ishram T. Bennet and John W. Taylor. The deed specified that it was the same land on which Thomas Capel was then residing (Deed Book 39, p. 77). The 1870 census lists a family by the name of Barry (including husband, wife, and five children), possibly tenant farmers, residing with Thomas Capel, age 59, farmer.

William T. Capel married Henrietta Barham, a granddaughter of William H. Hardee, on February 6, 1867. On February 15, 1876, William T. Capel, now of Greenville County, Virginia, sold to his mother, Mary A. Capel, a one-half interest in the "Hardee tract" (526 acres) (Deed Book 48, p. 260). Thomas Capel died two years later on May 1, 1878. The 1880 census lists Mary Capel, age 68, living with the following grandchildren: Robert L. Reese, a farmer, age 21, Maggie Reese, age 17, Joe T. Capel, age 10, James Edward Capel, age 8, David Capel, age 7, Etta Barham Capel, age 6, and an unnamed male laborer. Robert and Maggie Reese were the orphan children of Carolina Capel Reese (d. 1862) and Captain R. H. Reese who died on November 31, 1863, from wounds received in battle during the Civil War. Joe T., James Edward, David, and Etta Barham were the children of William T. and Henrietta Barham Capel.

On April 22, 1910, heirs and descendants of Mary A. Capel deeded 230 acres of the Capel property to her grandchildren, Joe T. Capel, James Edward Capel, David H. Capel, and Etta Capel Read (Deed Book 148, p. 511). On February 14, 1929, David H. Capel deeded a one-quarter undivided interest in two tracts of the 230 acres, known as the Capel tract and the Barham land containing approximately 180 acres, to his brother James E. Capel (Deed Book 232, p. 43).

James Edward Capel and his second wife, Ruth Stephenson (b. August 23, 1885), were married on October 3, 1912. They resided in the house and farmed the property during the first half of the twentieth century. The economy of the county had stabilized by this time with agricultural production based on peanuts, corn, cotton, and potato crops, as well as livestock, commercial poultry, and dairy operations. James had two children from his first marriage: Paul (b. ca. 1903) and Tom (b. ca. 1907). James and Ruth had three additional children: Braxton Naff (b. 1914), Anne Hardee (b. ca. 1918), and George Lafayette (b. ca. 1924). The 1920 and 1930 population census lists James Edward Capel as a literate farmer living in his mortgage-free home.

James Edward Capel died in 19???. In 1941, Etta Capel Read, the heirs of Joe T. Capel, and Ruth Stephenson Capel, owners of a tract of land containing 272 acres and described in Deed Book 148, page 511, agreed to a partition of the land. Etta Capel Read and the heirs of Joe Capel deeded to Ruth Stephenson Capel the house and 136 acres of the land, referred to as Lot No. 5 in the division of the W. T. Capel land (Deed Book 278, p. 306). James Edward Capel died in 1952, and upon his wife Ruth's death on December 29, 1973, the same 136 acres passed to her

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children, Braxton Naff (B. N.) Capel, Anne Hardee Capel Barnes, and George Lafayette Capel (Will 74-E-4). The following year, Anne Hardee Capel Barnes and other various heirs deeded their portion of the property to B. N. and George L. Capel (Deed Book 563, p. 716). Finally, on October 20, 1976, Marie Capel, widow of George L. Capel, sold her portion of the property to B. N. Capel (Deed Book 576, p. 232). The house remained vacant during most of the second half of the twentieth century.

B. N. Capel and Virginia Boseman were married on April 21, 1942. They had two children, Robert B. Capel (b. 1948) and Martha (b. 1955) (Capel interview). After the death of her husband in 1992, Virginia deeded 139 acres to her son, Robert (Deed Book 800, p. 184). In a separate deed dated June 10, 2002, she transferred 1.82 acres referred to as the "Mansion Lot" to him (Deed Book 802, p. 634). After a half-century of vacancy and deterioration, the Mason-Hardee-Capel House is being restored by Robert B. Capel, great-great-great-great grandson of William H. Hardee and great-great grandson of Thomas Capel.

#### ARCHITECTURE CONTEXT

The Mason-Hardee-Capel House is one of only a few surviving eighteenth-century dwellings in Northampton County. Many of the early settlers in Northampton County had migrated south from Virginia, first settling near Margarettsville on the Meherrin River in the northeast part of the county. The simple one-room cabin was the most common form of housing for North Carolina's earliest settlers. The multi-functional hearth provided the pioneers with a source of heat, cooking, and light. The typical cabin included a small second-story loft, adding space and a dry floor for additional sleeping area. Access to the loft was generally provided by either a ladder or a narrow, boxed-in stairway (Swaim, p. 30).

The English brought the tradition of building a square cabin out of sawn lumber with them when migrating first to Virginia and then south to North Carolina. The typical dimensions of the cabin were sixteen by sixteen feet, "the maximum size room comfortably warmed by a single fireplace." Following the English precedent, exterior gable-end chimneys heated the one-room houses, with brick being the preferential material in the east. The simple one-room buildings provided shelter for all the family's domestic activities (Swaim, p. 30).

Frequently, a more spacious hall-parlor house replaced the single room cabin within a few years. Both English and Scotch-Irish colonists brought the idea for the hall-parlor house to North Carolina. The plan is basically two rooms: the square "hall," entered directly from outdoors with a fireplace centered in the end wall. This is where most domestic activities occurred. Sleeping, entertaining, or both took place in the small parlor. A narrow boxed-in stairway, of later medieval origin, ascended in a tight steep turn from the hall to a sleeping loft. Later, the hall frequently was partitioned to create a center-passage plan. Often, shed rooms were

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appended to the rear and a large porch, either attached or engaged, was added to the front of the dwelling (Swaim, pp. 33-34).

Porches were a standard addition to the hall-parlor houses constructed in eastern North Carolina. Occasionally a hall-parlor house was built with the porch structurally integrated or fully engaged, a solution which simultaneously allowed an increase in the size of the second-story loft. More often, however, the dwelling included a double-pitched roof, often referred to as the "coastal cottage." An end bay of the shed porch was sometimes enclosed to form a porch room (Swaim, pp. 35-36).

The rear shed room was another common appendage to the hall-parlor house. Throughout North Carolina, the shed stands out as a standard component of the folk-building vocabulary, most often used as sleeping chambers. It is thought that this building tradition is also distinctly English in origin (Swaim, p. 36). The appendage of a small dependency as a wing is another type of addition that was not uncommon.

Over a number of decades, expansion of the Mason-Hardee-Capel House followed this pattern. The house was built ca. 1775 as a hall-parlor house with two large exterior, gable-end chimneys. A formerly detached kitchen, of the same era as the house, was appended to one gable end of the house ca. 1840. At approximately the same time, one bay of the porch was enclosed to create an extra sleeping chamber and the orientation of the house reversed so that the original front porch became the rear of the house. Thus the added sleeping chamber was located in the back, mimicking the traditional rear shed room. The house was also updated with the insertion of a partition (later removed) to create a central hall resulting in a more formal, symmetrical arrangement. The porch was entirely enclosed in 1928, creating another rear bedroom.

A reconnaissance survey conducted in Northampton County in the mid 1990s identified very few surviving eighteenth-century dwellings, including the Francis Parker House which may be the only house in the county comparable to the Mason-Hardee-Capel House in construction, plan, and number of stories. The Parker House differs most significantly in its gambrel roof with shed dormers, a variation of the more typical side-gable roof. Believed to have been built in the late eighteenth century, it was moved in 1976 to its current site near the Hertford-Northampton county line where it sits on a raised basement foundation. Like the Mason-Hardee-Capel House, the Parker House is sheathed with beaded weatherboards and distinguished by both a shed-roof porch and a complementary engaged rear shed. Also similar is the interior highlighted by finely detailed and finished Georgian elements, but here the wainscoting has raised panels and all of the mantels are flat-paneled (Francis Parker House National Register nomination).

Surviving eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century houses in other counties close to Northampton can contribute to our understanding of the timber-framed one-and-one-half-story hall-parlor house, although they, too, are few in number. To the east in Gates County, which also

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borders Virginia, examples include two of the oldest surviving houses in the county, both built in the late eighteenth century. While the Lawrence-Lassiter House in the southwest region of the county and the Thomas B. Riddick House in the north-central area both have gambrel roofs, they share numerous identifying interior features with the Mason-Hardee-Capel House including raised six-panel doors with HL hinges in the Riddick House and sheathed board wainscoting and molded Georgian chair rails and baseboards in the Lawrence-Lassiter House. In the Gates County houses, however, the enclosed stairs rose from original rear shed rooms, all of which have since been removed as have the original exterior end chimneys (Butchko, pp. 116 and 137). Other surviving late eighteenth-century one-and-one-half-story timber-framed, hall-parlor houses, such as the diminutive coastal cottage built for David Rice in the northeast corner of the county, retain even less original fabric (Butchko, p. 165). Early nineteenth-century examples include the ca. 1820 Hofler Family House, a coastal cottage in the southeastern area of the county that reflects its later construction date in its simple Federal style finish. At the time of the county architectural survey in the 1980s, the house was deteriorated but largely intact, retaining a portion of its original beaded weatherboards, sheathed wainscoting, and raised six-panel doors. Like the Mason-Hardee-Capel House, the Hofler Family House had its hall-parlor plan converted to center-hall with the insertion of a partition in the nineteenth century (Butchko, p. 207).

Nearby to the west in Warren County, the 1790s Cannon House in Warrenton follows the hall-parlor plan with a single front door opening directly into the hall. With few changes over the years, the house is a fine example of the three-bay, one-and-one-half story gable-roofed dwelling typical of early domestic building practice in the region. Access to the rooms above is again provided by an enclosed winder stair leading up from the rear corner of the hall. Similar to the Mason-Hardee-Capel House, first-floor details include flush-board wainscoting beneath a molded chair rail and plaster walls, simple panel mantels, and six-panel doors hung with HL hinges. Here, however, the exterior-end chimneys are constructed of stone rather than the more typical brick (McFarland, p. 77). The Talley House near Wise, also with a nicely crafted stone chimney in each gable end, is one of the oldest and least altered dwellings in Warren County, although it is quite deteriorated. Here, the interior is sheathed completed in beaded boards, but it resembles the Mason-Hardee-Capel House in its raised-panel doors with HL hinges, two-part molded architraves, and most notably in its exposed ceiling joists with beaded edges (McFarland, p. 82).

Of the northeastern counties in relatively close proximity to Northampton, Perquimans County has the highest number of surviving late eighteenth-century one-and-one-half-story frame, gable-roofed, hall-parlor houses, but most are quite deteriorated and otherwise altered. Among this group, the John Parker House, a coastal cottage in Parkville Township, may be the oldest, distinguished by a massive exterior chimney unusual for its English bond. The chimney and brick wall at the other gable end are lost, as is much of the interior which had wide flush beaded board sheathing and simple molded chair rails with finished ends (Haley, pp 33, 219). In Bethel Township, the William Arrington House of ca. 1790 was built with massive Flemish bond

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chimneys with paved shoulders and an interior with plaster walls above wainscoting, but it is narrower in overall form than the Mason-Hardee-Capel House (Haley, p. 103). Built ca. 1795 in Belvidere Township, the Willis Riddick House retains its original front door with six raised panels, portions of the original beaded weatherboards applied with rosehead nails, and a portion of the original cornice molding, while the White-Jessup House of ca. 1800 appears closest to the Mason-Hardee-Capel House in overall form and retains its massive paved double-shoulder Flemish bond chimneys (Haley, pp. 85, 88). At all four of these examples, the rear shed rooms were later additions, similar to those of the Mason-Hardee-Capel House; the only Perquimans County example originally built with rear shed rooms is the ca. 1800 Joseph Evans House in Parkville Township, now used as a storage shed, but even here the enclosed stairs rose from the hall rather than the shed (Haley, p. 209). Furthermore, at about the same time the shed rooms were added to the White-Jessup House in the mid-nineteenth century, the associated free-standing kitchen was attached to one gable end of the main house.

The preceding examples of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century frame hall-parlor plan houses represent a type of house built by many substantial farmers in northeastern North Carolina. The Mason-Hardee-Capel House followed the typical pattern of enlarging the house through the addition of shed rooms by enclosing a porch. Its original asymmetrical façade and large paved double-shoulder, exterior-end chimneys dominating each gable end were also typical of the time period, as was the fully enclosed stair rising out of the hall from back to front along the partition wall. Interiors were typically embellished with sheathed wainscots and decorative hand-planed molding. Arched fireboxes with paneled mantels were also common features. Like many of the dwellings, the Mason-Hardee-Capel House was updated in the nineteenth century with the addition of a partition wall in the hall to create a more symmetrical center-hall plan with rooms of equal size, although it was later returned to the original hall-parlor plan.

While the Mason-Hardee-Capel House is important as a member of this ever-dwindling group, it also is significant as one of the earliest surviving examples of its type in the region. Numerous details, including the heaviness of the bead on the surviving weatherboards, the large dimensions of the door casings, the depth of the original fireboxes, and the generous proportions of the rooms with their very tall ceilings indicate that the house was built closer to 1775 rather than towards the end of the eighteenth century. Despite the necessity of replacing window sash and most of the weatherboards due to deterioration, the house retains a relatively high degree of integrity in comparison to many of the region's other examples due to its retention of original structural members, plan, chimneys, doors, and much of the interior woodworking. Altogether, these features identify the Mason-Hardee-Capel House as a rare surviving example of a once common house type in Northampton County.

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National Park Service

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**Section 10 – Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated parcel is a 1.842-acre parcel on the northeast side of S. R. 1308 (Blackwell-Stephenson Road). The parcel is a portion of a larger 69.5-acre parcel and is delineated on the accompanying Northampton County Tax Map, PIN 4938-88-7209.

**Boundary Justification**

The property boundary includes the eighteenth-century Mason-Hardee-Capel House, along with the maintained yard surrounding the house. The boundary incorporates an appropriate setting for the architecturally significant dwelling and the defined parcel is all of the land that is both historically and currently directly associated with the house.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
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**Photo Sheet**

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Photographs – Marson-Hardee-Capel House

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Photographer: Beth Keane

Date: June, 2003

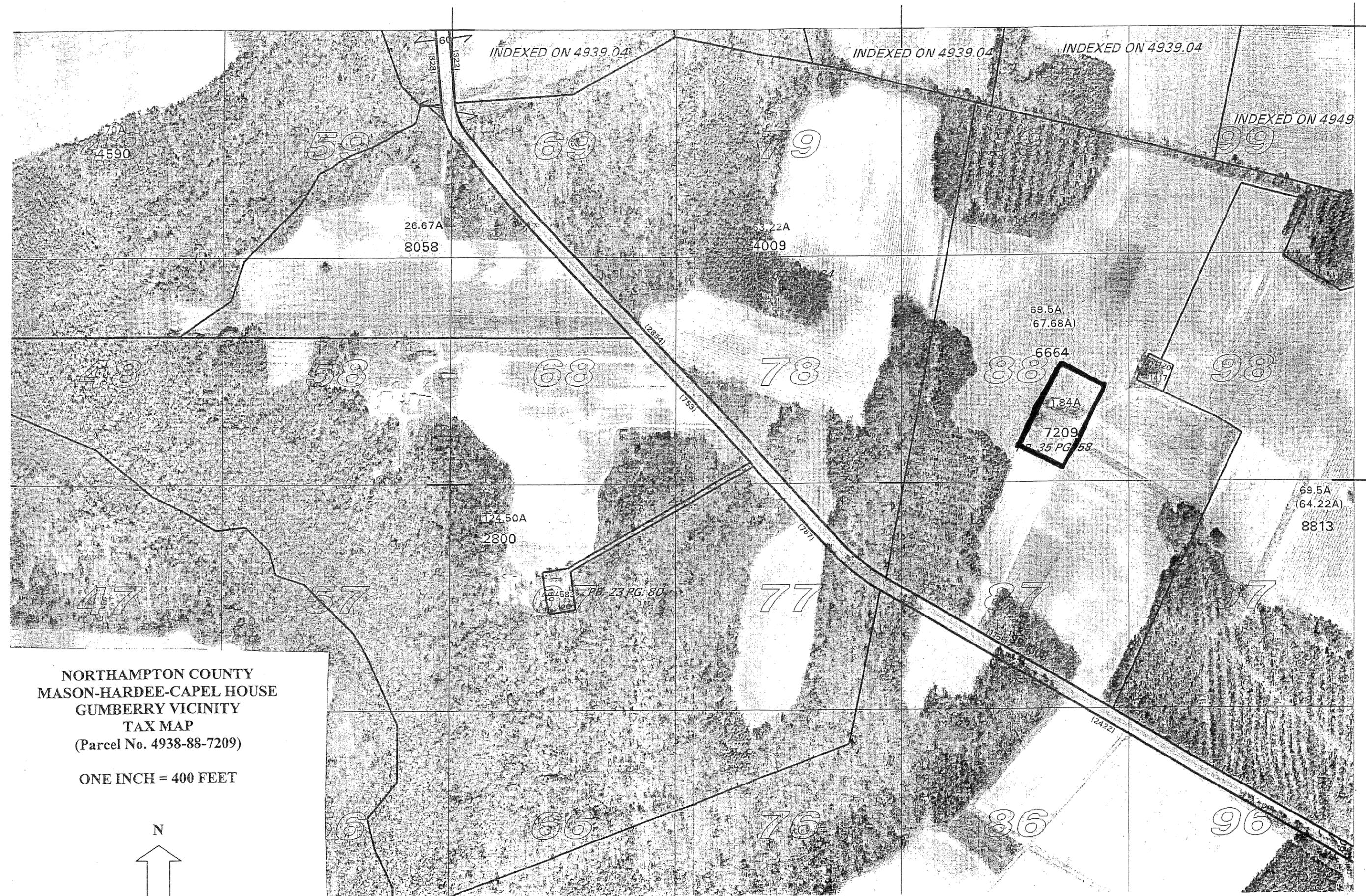
Location of Negatives: Raleigh Archives

Views – listed by photograph number

1. North Elevation
2. Oblique – South and East elevations
3. Oblique – South and West elevations
4. West Elevation
5. Interior – Stairs in kitchen
6. Interior – Parlor fireplace



40°38'  
Mason-Handee-  
Capel House  
Gumberry vic  
27°30"  
Northampton Co,  
NC  
Zone 18  
40°37'  
E 275220  
N 4037260  
Weldon Quad  
40°36'  
40°35'  
40°34'



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY  
MASON-HARDEE-CAPEL HOUSE  
GUMBERRY VICINITY  
TAX MAP  
(Parcel No. 4938-88-7209)

ONE INCH = 400 FEET

