

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Walnut Grove (Robeson Plantation)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER North side N.C. 87, 0.5 mi. east of junction with N.C. 131

at Tar Heel

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Tar Heel

VICINITY OF

#3

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Bladen

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Averitte

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1, P. O. Box 62

CITY, TOWN

Tar Heel

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Bladen County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Elizabethtown

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Robeson Plantation, known as Walnut Grove, located between the Cape Fear River and N.C. 87 just south of Tar Heel, includes a well-preserved Greek Revival house and an extensive collection of contemporary outbuildings: kitchen, dairy, smokehouse, barn, well, cold frame, and scalding vat. The two-story frame house, five bays wide and four bays deep, faces N.C. 87. The house rests on a brick pier foundation, is covered with plain siding, and is capped by a low hip roof from which rise two interior brick chimneys with molded caps. Three-bay double porches mark the main (south) and rear elevations.

The center bay entrances at both levels of the front and rear elevations are identical, each consisting of a single door with four flat panels, flanked by Doric pilasters, and framed by an irregularly paned transom and three-pane sidelights set within a molded surround. Beneath the sidelight on each side is a panel. Six-over-six sash windows set within simple molded surrounds occur on each elevation. The main facade windows have louvered shutters. Heavy corner posts give visual support to the wide frieze and molded box cornice which continue around the main block. The front porch features at both levels octagonal Doric posts and a rounded rail with square balusters. The rear porch has square Doric posts, and only the upper level has a railing. A single flight of stairs with an identical railing and an octagonal chamfered newel leads from the lower to the upper porch level. This exterior stair is characteristic of early houses in the area. The northwest bay of the lower level of the rear porch has been enclosed. The main block eave treatment is repeated on both porches.

The dining room dependency, a one-story frame building, stands at the northeast rear corner of the house, connected by a breezeway identical in treatment to the rear porch. With the exception of the nine-over-nine sash, this dependency is identical in treatment to the main block.

The center-hall plan two rooms deep is unaltered except for the addition of a bathroom on each floor. The interior Greek Revival treatment of both floors consists of plastered wall and ceiling surfaces, doors containing four flat panels, simple molded architraves, a flat panel beneath each window, and simple, heavy mantels. The open-string stair rises in a single flight against the west wall of the wide hall to the second floor. A square tapering newel with a molded cap, plain balusters, and an oval handrail form the balustrade. A large plaster ceiling medallion is centered in the front half of the first floor hall. The stylized flower center is set within an abstract foliage border and concentric moldings. The hall walls at both levels contain a beaded board recessed into the plaster at eye level.

The mantel of the main parlor (southeast room) is a heavy composition consisting of paired Doric pilasters supporting a plain frieze and a molded cornice and shelf. The mantel of the dining room (northeast room) is similar but contains single Doric pilasters. The mantels in the west side rooms on the first floor have been removed. Lighter versions of the dining room mantel occur in each of the second-floor rooms.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE one

The dining dependency contains its original two rooms, the dining room and the pantry, although the pantry has been extended to the east. The dining room has been converted to a kitchen. The dairy, a small square structure elevated on wooden stilts and capped by a pyramidal hip roof, is located directly behind the dining dependency. The east and west faces contain a small door, and the south face contains two louvered openings. The openings have molded surrounds and eave finish identical to the house. The original kitchen, located behind the house, is a one-story frame building with a gable roof, nine-over-six and six-over-four sash windows, and an east end exterior brick chimney. It contains two rooms with a corner enclosed stair leading on the loft. The interior is finished with horizontal sheathing, a plain chair rail, and has several six-panel doors, one hung on HL hinges.

The hip roof smokehouse, located behind the kitchen, is covered with wide flush horizontal sheathing, an unusual siding for this period and climate. Two vertical battens are attached with large nails to the sheathing of the west elevation, perhaps to anchor the siding more firmly. The large salting tubs, constructed of wooden staves, in which meat was preserved, still remain inside. Two barns form the rear boundary of the farm complex. One of the barns, which appears to be contemporary with the rest of the complex, is a saddle-notched log building with a gable-end facade and side frame lean-tos. Much hand-wrought iron hardware remains on these outbuildings. Other surviving remnants of antebellum plantation life include huge wooden gate posts with decorative round caps at the plantation entrance on N.C. 87, a large iron scalding vat which rests on a round brick base, a well, and a substantial brick cold frame located on the east side of the house.

SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES Ca. 1855

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Standing on land granted to the Robeson family in 1735 and owned by Revolutionary leader Thomas Robeson, Walnut Grove (built in the 1850s) consists of a handsome Greek Revival plantation house and a notable group of well-preserved contemporary outbuildings. Walnut Grove is unique among Bladen County's antebellum plantation houses in retaining its original context of a complete plantation complex; its significance is enhanced by the survival of Civil War letters documenting plantation life. Of interest in the evolution of southeastern North Carolina dwellings is the rare use of both exterior and interior stairs.

The land upon which the present Walnut Grove stands was granted to Thomas Robeson, Sr., in 1735. Robeson's father, Andrew Robeson, Jr., was a native of Scotland and a graduate of Oxford University. He arrived in America about 1690 and became active in public affairs, serving as chief justice of the province of Pennsylvania for a time.

Thomas Robeson is believed to have settled on the Cape Fear River sometime after his father's death about 1719. He was married to Sarah Singletary and was the father of two sons and a daughter. His early homestead on the south bank of the Cape Fear's northwest branch became known as Walnut Grove.

Robeson's oldest son Thomas Robeson, Jr., was born at his father's plantation on January 11, 1740. He served as one of Bladen County's delegates to the Third Provincial Congress, held at Hillsborough in 1775, and at Halifax's Fourth and Fifth Provincial Congresses of 1776. The following year he was elected as Bladen's first state senator.

During the Revolutionary War Robeson served as commanding colonel of the Bladen County militia. In August, 1781, a group of Tories under Colonel David Fanning raided a number of settlements along the Cape Fear. In his Narratives, written a number of years later, Fanning recorded that he "came to a plantation belonging to a Capt. Robertson /Capt. Peter Robeson, Thomas Robeson's brother, who resided nearby/--which I burned; From thence I marched to his brother's Col. /Thomas/ Robertson, which served in the same manner." Colonel Robeson took an active part in the Battle of Elizabethtown, in which victorious Whig forces virtually eliminated Tory influence in the Cape Fear region.

Colonel Robeson died May 2, 1785. In 1787 a new county was created from portions of old Bladen and was named Robeson in his honor. The homeplace tract apparently descended to Colonel Robeson's son William Robeson (1771-1825), then to William's son James Robeson, Jr. The latter is believed to have built the present Walnut Grove during

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE one

the 1850s. (Family tradition states that a second house stood on or near the site of the present mansion; this is supported by an 1864 letter James Robeson's widow noting that the plantation's cows were being kept "below the old House.") The census of 1850 credits James Robeson with the ownership of 2,220 acres valued at \$4,500; a decade later his landholdings had increased to 5,061 acres valued at \$28,509. A list of Robeson's taxable property for 1860 includes--in addition to 3,265½ acres of land--twenty-four slaves, one piano, one carriage (valued at \$150), one barouche (valued at \$150), and two buggies (valued at \$100 each).

By 1863 war had again involved the inhabitants of Walnut Grove. James Robeson's two oldest sons, James McKay ("Coy"), aged twenty-one, and Cad W., aged nineteen, enlisted in May of that year as privates in Company H, Thirty-Sixth Regiment North Carolina Troops. Letters from Walnut Grove to Coy Robeson before and after his enlistment provide an inkling of attitudes and conditions of the period.

In February, 1863, Coy's younger brother Cad wrote to inform him that

we have Boiled about 65 Bu of Salt father says that will last him this year and next father is giving his Beaves to the /Confederate/ goverment he has Kild about 20 and has about 10 more he gets 15 cents a pound for them and saves the hides heads . . . and tales Some of them went 500 I don t Know exackly how many he has got to Kill But he says he thinks he will have about 200 home and /on/ howards Creek. . . .

Fifteen months later Coy's mother Eliza Ann Robeson, now a forty-year-old widow (James Robeson, Jr., died February 3, 1864, at the age of fifty-three) in charge of four children ranging in age from four to sixteen, wrote to her son:

Emmie & Jimmy & Jeff have binn quite sick with bad colds and I do not feel very well my self . . . we have two many horses. I am shearing the sheep to day I have 31 old & 13 lambs at Home & 5 old & 6 lambs at Hammons Creek we have had that many for the last 3 or 4 years they die evry winter that is the reason I thought I had better sell some of the old ons your Oxon I do not now what to do with them they wont stay no where they brake down they fens and go where they please I thought if you were willing we would sell them they would bring a big price 4 or 5000 thousen dollars I would rather not sell them if I could ceep them I will have use for them next winter we have to . . . see about them evry day . . . I milk 8 cows onely 3 young calvs I have not time to send after the others . . . I have the sheep drove up evry night . . . I will not have any meat to sell it is quite small and not fat stephen thinks we can get allong with out buying corne I got 30 bushels from Uncle Billy I have Oats at the uper place and Home looking vary well and the Rye is looking well . . . I have lost 4 sows with sickness . . . the rest is in good order enough and one of the bors was altered last week he has not binn seen since sandy thinks some one stole him we have not

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE two

got more than 40 pigs I will turn them in the Rye at the house as soon as it is wripe . . . we will have a great many apples and some peaches they will help with the hogs we have commenced planting the low lands to day we have finished replanting the up lands . . . I keep the children in the field they will quit now the mulburys are geting ripe John has planted all of the uper place that has not groon up there is 7 negros and 3 horses up there I sent him up eve /r/ since the deth of your Father I get Mrs Perdie s boy to do my worke I have just had the plows fixt . . . I have a good garden have been eating greens for some time . . . the Cotton has not come up yet and I am affraid it will not come up it was planted when it was dry I dont no what the wheat will do it was planted late . . . the Irish potatoes did not come up well . . . I have bad luck with the chickings the hawks are eating them . . .

Coy I think I will send Emmie to school this fall . . . I want her to lern musick . . . the p ple in this neighbourhood wont hire a teacher . . . they would be vary willing for me to hire a teacher but I will teach Jimmy and send Emmie off

my envelops are nerly gon

Census data suggest that Eliza Ann Robeson continued to reside at Walnut Grove until her death on October 5, 1891. The property apparently then descended to seven principal heirs and remained under multiple ownership until the early 1920s. In December, 1922, William W. Robeson and his sister Mary E. Myers, pleading a desire "to have the home place," brought suit in Bladen County Superior Court to have the old James Robeson tract divided and valuated for sale. The following year they were awarded "Share No. 1-2," amounting to 351 acres, including the mansion house. This tract was valued by court-appointed commissioners at \$15,000. Three months later William W. Robeson and Mary E. Myers conveyed a one-third undivided interest in Walnut Grove to Mrs. Myers's husband Patrick Henry Myers. The house is presently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Myers's daughter Sarah Myers Averitt.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Bladen County Records, Bladen County Courthouse, Elizabethtown, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds).

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A | 17 | 703950 | 3845240 |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by Robert Topkins, survey specialist;
architectural description by Ruth Little-Stokes, survey specialist

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

5 March 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___

STATE ___

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 5 March 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE one

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ROBESON PLANTATION - WALNUT GROVE
TAR HEEL
BLADEN COUNTY
1974

Sketch map
by Ruth Little-Stokes
not to scale



