

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
**Office of Archives and History**  
**Department of Cultural Resources**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**William H. Lee House**

Lewiston vicinity, Bertie County, BR0081, Listed 4/16/2012

Nomination by Laura Blokker

Photographs by Laura Blokker, November 2009



Façade view



Side and rear view

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Lee, William H., House  
other names/site number Billy Lee Farm

## 2. Location

street & number 246 Farm Road not for publication  
city or town Lewiston vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Bertie code 015 zip code 27849

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide **X** local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	<b>Total</b>

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

**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  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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

VACANT/ NOT IN USE  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

Federal  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK  
 walls: Weatherboard  
 roof: METAL  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Clearly displaying the attenuated proportions and delicate details of the Federal style, this three-bay, two-story, hall-and-parlor I-house is an excellent example of a well-crafted vernacular plantation house of ca. 1820 in the Lewiston-Woodville vicinity of Bertie County, North Carolina. It is built of a wood frame set on brick piers with brick exterior end chimneys and a side-gable roof. Hip-roofed porches cover the front and rear entrances. The William H. Lee House retains a very high

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level of integrity on both the interior and the exterior that is superior to comparable examples in the county. The entire building is clad in remarkably intact beaded weatherboard siding and the windows, doors, cornice and corner boards retain original molding. The interior meets and exceeds the expectations created by the exterior. Reeded moldings and exceptional vernacular Federal-style mantels enliven the first floor while the second floor features a more restrained treatment. Located at the end of the aptly named Farm Road in the northwest part of Bertie County, the William H. Lee House stands amid cultivated fields and woodlands, retaining a completely rural setting. The nominated property is composed of approximately seven-eighths of an acre that slopes up slightly from the road with the house situated in roughly the center of the grassy site facing northeast. A few pine trees and a noncontributing 1940s front-gable, wood-frame car shelter with three weatherboarded sides stand at the south and north edges of the property, respectively.

The Lee land lies between the Cashie River and the Wahtom Swamp. Although the manner of crop production and the variety of standing trees on the land has changed over the past two centuries, it retains its historically agricultural character with no encroachments from modern developments.

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### **Narrative Description**

The front façade of the William H. Lee House is divided into three bays as is typical of nineteenth-century I-houses in Bertie County. The arrangement of the window and door openings is nearly symmetrical such that at first glance it may appear so, but the spacing between the openings varies slightly to accommodate the hall and parlor plan. Slightly corbelled brick chimneys flank the timber frame dwelling, which is supported by brick piers. According to family tradition, the chimneys were rebuilt ca. 1922 after W. S. Jernigan purchased the property, but their design is in keeping with the period of original construction and they do not adversely impact the building's architectural integrity. The side-gable roof is covered in standing-seam metal. Its eaves are flush at the sides and boxed on the front and rear elevations. Nine-over-six sash windows are framed by finely molded three-part architraves. Molding also adorns the corner boards and the cornice of the house. It is sheathed in remarkably intact original beaded weatherboards. The front door and first floor windows are sheltered by a hip-roofed porch. Front porches were often replaced and it is estimated that this one dates to ca. 1900 when such hip roofs were in vogue; however there is not clear evidence presently visible of any different original porch configuration. The porch's plain, square posts, floor, and stairs date to the late twentieth century. These small alterations of the porch do not detract from the overall historic appearance of the house.

The northwest and southeast side elevations have the same beaded weatherboards, three-part molded window architraves and molded corner boards seen on the front elevation. Four-over-four sash windows are located on either side of the chimneys. The south elevation features one out of place nine-over-six window to the rear side of the chimney on the first story. This is an original window relocated from the rear elevation, which was fitted into the frame of what was originally a door. A door in this location was a common feature of houses like this in northeastern North Carolina and is known as a fire door after its purpose of providing quick access to firewood. With the exception of a smaller porch, and the above mentioned relocated door, the rear elevation is a mirror image of the front. The rear porch was added recently after a later one-story ell addition was removed. Though this porch is new, there was likely a porch of some kind in this location originally, so it is historically appropriate. New weatherboards were installed where the later ell was removed.

The original floor plan was composed of a hall and parlor on the first level with an enclosed winder stair leading up to two chambers on the second floor. This floor plan was modified ca. 1900 with one partition wall of beaded board added on each floor to create a center hall. Like the exterior, the interior is remarkably intact with the exception of the partition wall, which is clearly a later change, allowing the original hall and parlor plan to remain apparent. The first floor is distinguished by robust reeded chair rails and distinctive mantelpieces featuring recessed molded panels, reeding, and delicate dentil moldings. The friezes of both mantelpieces have circular/oval carvings of horizontal reeding in their centers that are flanked by diamonds of vertical reeding. The shelf of the parlor mantel is heavily molded and the shelves of both mantels project out over the pilasters. In the parlor, these projections are supported by short brackets that are presumed to be later additions but appear to be of substantial age. Similar mantel forms without the reeded embellishments and plain chair rails are found on the second floor.

Throughout the house are molded door and window surrounds. The original six-panel rear door of the house is intact, and though interior doors have been stolen, outstandingly their original hinges with original screws remain in place. The original first floor walls and ceilings are plastered with the exception of those of the enclosed winder stair, which are sheathed in horizontal wood planking. Beneath the stair is a small closet accessible from the parlor. The second floor ceilings have been sheathed in beaded board, while the walls retain their plaster. The floors are composed of wood

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planks of consistent width. The second floor stairway opening is bordered by a wall on one side with a balustrade wrapping the other two sides. The square newel post features beaded corners with a chamfered cap and the balustrade has a beaded bottom edge. The balusters are plain, but set with their corners meeting the flat side of the rails, such that they read as diamonds in plan section. In total, the house is presently in a sound, dry, and secure condition and the owner - wishing to preserve it in a historically appropriate manner - will consult with the Historic Preservation Office regarding any future work.

The structure is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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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.)

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1820  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

ca. 1820  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Period of Significance is the estimated date of construction, ca. 1820.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

As an excellent example of a Federal-style house in Bertie County, North Carolina, the William H. Lee House is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C for architecture. Constructed ca. 1820, it displays an exceptional level of integrity and is one of the most intact examples of the Federal style in Bertie County. A vernacular interpretation of the Federal style is beautifully illustrated by its attenuated proportions and the decorative details of the house, which include molded window and door architraves, a molded cornice and corner boards, and reeded chair rails and mantelpieces. The tradition of investing in quality craftsmanship and interior ornament while retaining modest in dimensions is demonstrated by the William H. Lee House, built with a hall-and-parlor plan, that remains evident today reflected on the exterior through the slightly asymmetrical fenestration of the front and rear façades. It is without match in the combination of its size, vernacular stylistic elements, and level of preservation. It is an exceptional example of a mid-sized, planter's house of 1820; its size is modest when juxtaposed with many other extant early nineteenth-century planter's homes in Bertie County.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The William H. Lee House reflects its time, place, and inhabitants in its form, plan, craftsmanship, and decorative details. The two-story, one-room-deep, side-gable form known as an I-house was popular in North Carolina – and particularly Bertie County – from the end of the eighteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century. In the first part of the eighteenth century in rural eastern North Carolina, even the wealthiest planters lived in homes which did not exceed one-and-a-half stories. Their social standing and financial comfort was communicated by the quality of the building and decorative interior details.<sup>1</sup> With the evolution of the one-and-a-half-story house into the two-story house, the dwelling space of planters and other well-off citizens became slightly more spacious and its façade a more obvious symbol of prosperity, particularly when a center hall plan was adopted.<sup>2</sup> The tradition of investing in quality craftsmanship and interior ornament continued and a majority of houses remained modest in dimensions and retained very traditional one-room or hall-and-parlor plans. With the exception of occasional forays into new plans and stylish designs – such as Hope Plantation (NC 308, Windsor vicinity, NR 1970), the 1803 residence of North Carolina governor and US senator David Stone – the architecture of Bertie County displays great conservatism.<sup>3</sup> The William H. Lee House demonstrates an aspect of this with the perpetuation of the hall-and-parlor plan, which had been in use in this region since the seventeenth century. While a partition inserted ca. 1900 created a center hall plan, the original, retarditaire hall and parlor plan remains evident on the exterior through the slightly asymmetrical fenestration of the front and rear façades, and is readily apparent on the interior due to the change in wall sheathing; the original walls are plastered while the partition wall is beaded board.

In creating this house of very traditional plan and form, the builder used a quality of materials and craftsmanship that have proven their worth for nearly two centuries. The heavy wood framing of the house is joined by mortise and tenons and it is clad in beaded weatherboards. Beading of the weatherboards was one of the small decorative flourishes common to the exterior of finer houses during this period in Bertie County. The William H. Lee House features other exterior touches not always found on its lesser contemporaries: it has molded corner boards and a molded cornice in addition to molded three-part window and door architraves. These delicate details, along with the home's attenuated proportions show how readily the I-house form was adapted to conform to the Federal style of the day.

When the William H. Lee House was constructed ca. 1820, the Federal style was very much in fashion in Bertie County. The Federal style that emerged in America in the 1780s continued in popularity in North Carolina into the 1830s. Many of the state's elegant, academic expressions of the style are concentrated in the eastern river town of New Bern. In more

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 128-129; Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> Harry L. Watson, "An Independent People: North Carolina, 1770-1820," in *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*, ed. Joe A. Mobley (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 159.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Blokker, "Comprehensive Architectural Survey of Bertie County: Final Report," (unpublished report, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC, 2010).

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rural and remote areas like Bertie County, the adoption of new styles occurred more slowly, and sparingly. The most formal interpretations of the Federal style in Bertie County are Hope Plantation, which is a square, two-story house based on a Palladian model; the Hill-Pugh-Mizelle House (NC 11, Lewiston-Woodville, Woodville Historic District, NR 1998) of 1801 and Woodbourne (SR 1139, Roxobel vicinity, NR 1971) of 1810 and 1819, both of which have Palladian inspired tripartite forms with T-plans. Aside from these examples, the Federal style in Bertie County is mostly manifest in proportions of otherwise standard house forms and in details of the interior woodwork; especially mantels, but also in wainscoting and door and window surrounds. Although the Greek Revival style appeared in Bertie County in the 1830s, it coexisted with the Federal style for many years before becoming the prevailing taste in the 1850s.

There are a number of buildings in Bertie County that display elements of the Federal style, but the William H. Lee House is exceptional in its particular, beautifully preserved vernacular expression of the Federal Style. It is estimated to have been built ca. 1820 based on its stylistic elements and the facts of its owners' lives. The details of the house most closely correspond to others built in the county between 1819 and ca. 1825 as described below. Henry Lee, for whom the house was almost certainly built, passed away in 1822 which indicates it was constructed prior to that year. The interior of the William H. Lee House is a superb artifact of the rural carpenter's artistic expression and craftsmanship in this period. The assemblage of window and door moldings, baseboards, wainscoting, and chair rails follows the standard of well-finished Federal houses. Its delicate cyma reversa profiles, combinations of moldings, and horizontal reeding are all quintessential Federal elements. The hierarchy between the public and private importance of floors denoted by the use of plainer features on the second floor is also typical. As was often the case, the craftsman found the best medium to demonstrate his creative abilities in the first floor mantels. No other like mantels are known to exist in Bertie County. The hall mantel is the most decorative. It has wide pilasters with vertical reeding that runs from the floor to the mantel shelf. The frieze is ornamented by a delicate dentil band below the shelf and a large center reeded oval flanked by two reeded diamonds. The front of the top tier of the heavily molded shelf projects out over the pilasters and its sides angle inward to meet the top of the pilasters short of their edge. The parlor mantel repeats the same theme with slightly altered details including smaller pilasters and a simpler shelf.

A building of comparable form and estimated age is the ca. 1820 Morris-Spruill House, located several miles to the east on the Connaritsa Swamp (NC 305, Burden vicinity). This three-bay I-house is of similar proportions with an asymmetrical arrangement of six-over-six sash windows on the front elevation, four-over-four sash windows and two fire doors on the side elevations and a shed addition on the rear. It has a similar molded cornice to the William H. Lee House, but does not have like molded cornerboards and retains only a portion of its beaded weatherboards and some window molding. One chimney has been replaced and the porch has been altered. The interiors are inaccessible because of dense storage, but are not reported to share the same exuberant detail as the William H. Lee House.<sup>4</sup> Across the county in the far northeastern corner is the Askew-Felton-Harrell House (NC 45, Colerain vicinity), another I-house of similar proportion with an 1819 date brick. This house has four bays on the second floor and three on the first. Though it retains some beaded and molded weatherboarding and a raised-panel front door, it has been subject to many alterations. All of the windows have been replaced with two-over-two sash and a large addition extends to the rear. The interior has been modernized, but does feature an original mantel. This mantel has a tripartite composition with a heavily molded shelf that projects over the pilasters and the center frieze panel. It is accented with reeding, which was used in Bertie County throughout the Federal period and has been documented in various manifestations in twelve rural buildings. There is a kinship between the use of reeding in the Askew-Felton-Harrell house and the William Henry Lee House. Although the mantels of the former are much more academic than the William H. Lee House's, both utilize reeding on the pilasters in the manner of fluting on columns. The mantels of both houses also share the use of the projection of the mantel shelf over the pilasters. This feature is also found at Oaklana (SR 1249, Roxobel vicinity, NR 1980) where the original mantels are compositionally similar to those of the William Henry Lee House, but have no reeding at all. Oaklana was constructed ca. 1825 and is an unusually spacious example of a center hall I-house with a two-story rear ell. In contrast to the modest William Henry Lee, Morris-Spruill and Askew-Felton-Harrell houses, it demonstrates that there were substantially larger domestic design alternatives for the planter class at this period. Oaklana received many alterations in the twentieth century.

Three other buildings that help to illustrate the architectural context of the William H. Lee House are the Bond-Haste House (NC 308, Windsor vicinity), the King-Freeman Speight House (NC 308, Republican vicinity, NR 1980), and Pineview (SR 1249, Roxobel vicinity, NR 1980). The Bond-Haste House is a center-hall I-house with amply dimensioned, high ceiled rooms set on a high brick foundation. Family tradition maintains that the house was completed ca. 1830, but the similarity of the craftsmanship to that of the nearby Hope Plantation has led to the speculation that it was constructed

<sup>4</sup> Henry Spruill, owner, telephone interview by author, March 9, 2010.



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closer to that house's 1803 construction date by the same builders. The King-Freeman-Speight House was constructed in two phases. The later section, built ca. 1825, is a side-hall I-house. Its large parlor features reeded chair rails and baseboards, and a tall, elaborate mantel. The horizontal reeding of the chair rails is like that of the William Henry Lee House and the 1819 sections of Woodbourne. All of the woodwork was finished with decorative faux painting. Built in 1838, Pineview is an example of a late Federal style house. Like the William H. Lee House, it is a three-bay I-house with a hall and parlor plan, but it is of somewhat more spacious proportions with more sophisticated woodwork. It was constructed by Joshua Brown for his own family and its style was no doubt influenced by the time he had spent as a builder and carpenter in Mississippi. Though each of these three houses share the I-house form and Federal style with the William Henry Lee House, they are grander in their proportions and more elegant in their interior woodwork. They, and the selection of comparable buildings above, demonstrate that while the William H. Lee House has some commonalities with other dwellings of its period, it is without match in the combination of its size, vernacular stylistic elements, and level of preservation. It is an exceptional example of a mid-sized, planter's house of 1820. Its size was large compared to the one room houses many yeoman farmers would have occupied at the same time, and yet it is modest when juxtaposed with the buildings described above. Likewise, its woodwork is highly decorative, but fully vernacular rather than from a pattern book. As a result of its high quality of craftsmanship and materials and the care of generations of owners, it possesses an amazing degree of historic integrity.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

Bertie was named a precinct in 1722 when it was divided from the Chowan precinct. Both were part of land that had been designated as Albemarle County in 1664. Several other counties were divided out of Bertie County during the eighteenth century. Hertford County was divided from it in 1759 and by 1780 Bertie County's boundaries were close to those of today. The colonists who settled in this Tuscarora homeland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were primarily of English descent and most came by way of Virginia. The history of the William H. Lee farm begins with the acquisition of 200 acres between the Wahtom Swamp and Cashie River in the northwestern part of Bertie by Henry Lee in 1763. Previously a resident of Chowan and Hertford counties, he settled in Bertie, marrying Sarah Sholar, the daughter of a local landowner. Like many other Bertie settler's, Lee descended from a Virginia family.<sup>5</sup> In 1767 he bought another seventy-four acres in the same area and in 1775, he acquired yet more land for his son John Sholar Lee. Further acquisitions and disposals of property were made by Lee and his sons in subsequent years. Then in 1801, Henry Lee Sr. sold his approximately 150 remaining acres to his son Henry Lee Jr., and left Bertie to join another son, Joshua, in Guilford County, North Carolina. The deed lists the line of said Henry Lee Jr. as one boundary of the property so it is evident that Henry Jr. already had his own land holding, though of what size is not clear. In the following years, he systematically increased that holding by buying more and more adjoining acreage: fifty acres in March 1803, eighty-six-and-one-half acres in March 1803, eighty-eight acres in May 1803, 200 ½ acres in November 1803, 180 acres in 1808, and 40 acres in 1818.<sup>6</sup> Thus, by the year 1820, Henry Lee Jr. owned at least 800 acres between the Wahtom Swamp and the Cashie River and it is about this time that he had the present house constructed. In addition to being the owner of a fair amount of land, Henry Lee Jr. was also from a locally well-established family; his father having first acquired some of their property nearly sixty years before, his maternal grandfather having first bought 135 acres in the area in 1736, and his sister Abigail having married into the prominent Bertie County King family.<sup>7</sup> The house he had built demonstrates his status and moderate prosperity.

During the years that he was expanding his land, Henry Lee Jr.'s household had also grown. According to census records, in 1800, Lee's household was composed of just one free white male between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six, one free white female of the same age, one free white female under the age of ten, and one slave of unspecified race, sex or age. The census of 1820 provides a detailed portrait of a much larger household at approximately the time the Lee's four-room house was constructed. The nine free members of the household included one free white male of age forty-five and over, one of age twenty-six to forty-five, one of age sixteen to eighteen, one of age ten to sixteen, and three under the age of ten; one free white female of age forty-five or over; and one free colored male of age fourteen to twenty-six. There were seventeen slaves: two male slaves of ages forty-five or greater, one of age twenty-six to forty-five, two of ages ten to

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<sup>5</sup> Henry Lee King, *Henry Lee of Bertie Co., NC and Henry Lee of Gates Co., NC, 18<sup>th</sup> century* (The Henry Lee Society, 1986), 22, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Bertie County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, North Carolina.

<sup>7</sup> King, 44-54.

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twenty-six, and six under the age of fourteen; two female slaves of ages forty-five or greater, two of ages twenty-six to forty-five, and two of ages ten to twenty-six. According to the census, fifteen of these twenty-six people worked in agriculture. In this year, households in Bertie County counted anywhere from one to one-hundred of their members as working in agriculture, but one-hundred was the exception while the majority had less than twenty. Just under ten percent of 827 households enumerated in this census included more than ten people working in agriculture and just under five percent had fifteen or more. All of those who identified more than ten people working in agriculture were slave owners, while approximately forty-three percent of Bertie's households had no slaves at all.<sup>8</sup> By these statistics, Henry Lee fell into the top ten percent of farmers and planters, but not into the top five percent, a demographic which included families of disproportionate wealth. Lee's position appears to have been that of a middling farmer, owning a moderate acreage and number of slaves.

Just two years after the 1820 census, Henry Lee – who was presumably the male of the family older than forty-five listed therein – died. His will gives names to some of the census numbers. To his wife, Anna Lee, he left for the duration of her natural life, one third of all his lands and “two negroes, Bob and Lucy”.<sup>9</sup> His grown daughter Elizabeth Powell was also included in the will and balance of the property both real and personal was divided equally between his sons Freeman, John, Henry, William, and Joseph. The inventory of Henry Lee's estate further illuminates life in the house near the time it was built. The “home plantation” was allotted to the Widow Lee while an “old house” went to Powell Harrell (of unknown relation) for Priscilla Powell. It is possible that this “old house” was the one inhabited by the Lee's before the new I-house was built. Some of the inventory items related to the agricultural use of the land are orchards, picking fields, potato hills, cotton seed, plows, horses, cows with calves, young cattle, a heifer, hogs, sheep, and beehives. The contents of the house, which unfortunately were not itemized by room, included a buffet and furniture, desk, bottle case, one dozen chairs, set of knives and forks, looking glass, waiter, lot old books, large trunk, clock, walnut table, small trunk, tea table, shot gun, scales and weights, five beds, bedsteads and furniture, and one naked bed.<sup>10</sup> It appears that the four sons, who were still under the age of twenty, continued to live in the house with their mother. Although the house was constructed for Henry Lee, it was his son William who would live in it the longest and whose name would remain attached to the property.

In 1829, the Lee brothers increased their landholding with the purchase of sixty-five acres. In 1839, Joseph sold to William “a certain tract of land descended to me from my father” and his interest in the Peele lands.<sup>11</sup> This transaction is the beginning of a pattern in which William's share of the land would be steadily increased, though only John and Joseph are listed as heads of households in 1840. In that year, it seems that William was living in the house with John and his mother, as well as his wife Nancy and their first two children. John F. Lee predeceased his mother in 1842 and left to her his whole estate for the rest of her natural life after which it was to be divided equally between Henry, William, and Joseph. In 1848 Henry and Joseph each separately deeded land to William. The 1850 census finally shows William as the head of the household which included his wife Nancy, their seven children, his mother Anna, twenty-year-old Emily Horn (who he would later marry) and two young black men. His occupation was listed as farmer and the value of his property as \$3000. In this year, the property values for farmers in the county varied widely from \$2 to \$30,400. Only about ten percent of this rural county's more than 500 farmers had property values greater than \$3000, and most were well below. William expanded the property in the 1850s and early 1860s with several land purchases and his portion of his brother, Henry's estate.<sup>12</sup> When Henry Lee (III) died in 1856, he left his brother Joseph the Gum Pond plantation on which he then lived and William “\$4000 in negro property,” with the residue of his property to be divided equally between Joseph and William.<sup>13</sup> With this inheritance, when the 1860 slave census was taken, William was the owner of twenty-eight slaves between the ages of one and fifty-six. No slave quarters survive on the property, but there is potential for archaeological evidence of those and other outbuildings that would have supported the functioning of the household. When Bertie County was

<sup>8</sup> These figures were calculated by the author based on the transcription of the 1820 census as posted at “Census Finder: North Carolina Census Records Page 2,” Census Finder, [http://www.censusfinder.com/north\\_carolina2.htm](http://www.censusfinder.com/north_carolina2.htm) (accessed February 8, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Bertie County Wills, Office of the Clerk of Court, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, North Carolina, Book G, 93-94.

<sup>10</sup> Inventory and Acco' Sales of Property belonging to the Estate of Henry Lee, 1823, Bertie County Estates, 1730-1920, CR.010.508.59, North Carolina States Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>11</sup> Bertie County Deeds, Book EE, 148.

<sup>12</sup> Bertie County Deeds.

<sup>13</sup> Bertie County Wills, Book H, 27-28. Henry also left sums from \$25 to \$500 to individual “negro” men and women.

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mapped by the Confederate Engineer Bureau in 1863, the house was clearly depicted with at least two outbuildings and labeled, W. H. Lee.<sup>14</sup> Several outbuildings were documented when the property was surveyed in the 1970s.

William H. Lee was remarried to Emily J. Horn on December 19, 1865 and passed away without a will in 1867, ending his forty-five years of residency in the family house. His estate was sold in August of 1867 with only "so much of the crop, stock and provisions, belonging thereto as may be adequate to the support of herself and her family for one year" reserved for Emily.<sup>15</sup> The census of 1870 shows that the Lee household was reduced to a population of two: Emily and the youngest son of William and Nancy, Thomas, who was then twenty-two. Both were listed as farmers. All of the other Lees then residing in Woodville Township were African American. Ten years later, in the 1880 census, Thomas and Emily were still a household of two with Thomas occupied as a farmer, and Emily listed as keeping house. In 1883, Emily Lee sold some land to Thomas and the majority of the property on which she "dowered as the widow of Wm. H. Lee" to Langley Tayloe of Hertford County. That deed mentions a gin house among the boundary lines indicating that the Lees had been growing cotton, which was one of the main crops in Bertie County following the Civil War, as well as before.

Langley Tayloe conveyed the property to Kenneth Bazemore in 1886. Bazemore sold the cypress on the farm to S. J. Meakin in 1893, along with the right of "locating and erecting of a steam saw and shingle mill and all necessary out buildings for the purpose of manufacturing shingles" on the property.<sup>16</sup> In 1901, Kenneth Bazemore sold the tract "known as the Wm. H. Lee place" to Samuel, John R., James A., and E. E. Tillery.<sup>17</sup> This began the second extended period of ownership by one family for the William H. Lee House and it is in this family that it remains today. It was conveyed to J. A. Tillery from Samuel Tillery et al in 1910; then from J. A. and Utelia Tillery to W. W. Tillery in 1913; and from W. W. Tillery and Sarah Tillery to W. S. Jernigan in 1922. William Sharian Jernigan had married Rennie Elizabeth Tillery, the daughter of adjoining property owner J. D. Tillery some years earlier. After the death of W. S. Jernigan, the "'W. S. Jernigan Homeplace' being part of the 'Old Billie Lee Farm'" was sold at public sale to Herbert Jenkins Jr., but a tract containing the house was immediately thereafter conveyed to Joseph Minton, the grandson of W. S. Jernigan.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Confederate States of America, Dept. of Northern Virginia, Chief Engineer's Office, *Map of Bertie County, NC: no. 2* (1863. Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division).

<sup>15</sup> Estate of Wm. H. Lee. <http://files.usgwarchives.org/nc/bertie/court/estate1868.txt> (accessed February 9, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Bertie County Deeds, Book 80, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Book 112, 32.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Book 176, 255 and Book 539, 604.

Lee, William H., House  
Name of Property

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County and State

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bertie County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, North Carolina.

Bertie County Wills, Office of the Clerk of Court, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, North Carolina.

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Blokker, Laura. "Comprehensive Architectural Survey of Bertie County: Final Report," unpublished report, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC, 2010.

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King, Henry Lee. *Henry Lee of Bertie Co., NC and Henry Lee of Gates Co., NC, 18<sup>th</sup> century*. The Henry Lee Society, 1986.

Spruill, Henry, telephone interview by author, March 9, 2010.

Watson, Harry L. "An Independent People: North Carolina, 1770-1820," in *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*, ed. Joe A. Mobley. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Wells, John. National Register Nomination for Woodbourne, Bertie County, North Carolina. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC, 1971.

#### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: State Archives

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** .85 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 307300 4001650  
Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

2                                   
Zone Easting Northing

4                                   
Zone Easting Northing

#### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property consists of .85 acres identified by Bertie County tax record pin # 5847-85-7719 as depicted on the included survey from Bertie County deed book 539, page 606.

#### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property provides an adequate historically appropriate setting for the house. Land beyond this tax parcel - all of which is agricultural - is divided between different owners.

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura Ewen Blokker  
organization Southeast Preservation date 6-16-11  
street & number 11627 Hwy 37 telephone 985-514-7802  
city or town Greensburg state LA zip code 70441  
e-mail lblokker@sepreservation.com

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Lee, William H., House  
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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: William H. Lee House

City or Vicinity: Lewiston vicinity

County: Bertie State: NC

Photographer: Laura Blokker

Date Photographed: November 22, 2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 8: Front (northeast) façade.
- 2 of 8: Side (northwest) and rear (southwest) façades.
- 3 of 8: Detail of molded cornice and corner boards.
- 4 of 8: Hall mantel.
- 5 of 8: Detail of reeded molding and molded window surround in hall.
- 6 of 8: Parlor mantel.
- 7 of 8: Rear door and enclosed winder stair.
- 8 of 8: Second floor northwest chamber mantel and wainscoting.

**Property Owner:**

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

name Joseph Minton  
street & number P. O. Box 487 telephone 252-332-9770  
city or town Murfreesboro state NC zip code 27855

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.