

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Sperling, George, House and Outbuildings

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

### 2. Location

street & number 1219 Fallston Road N/A not for publication

city or town Shelby N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Cleveland code 045 zip code 28150

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jasper Crow SHPO 11/2/01  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Department of Cultural Resources  
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

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

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

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

Sperling, George, House and Outbuildings  
Name of Property

Cleveland, North Carolina  
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	
6	0	buildings
0	0	sites
3	0	structures
0	0	objects
9	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Domestic: single dwelling
- Agriculture/subsistence: agr. outbldg.
- Agriculture/subsistence: processing
- Agriculture/subsistence: storage
- Agriculture/subsistence: animal facility
- Agriculture/subsistence: agricultural field

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof asphalt

other wood

Narrative Description

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

Sperling, George, House and Outbuildings  
Name of Property

Cleveland, North Carolina  
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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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1909-1951

**Significant Dates**

ca. 1909

1927

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Branton, Augustus, builder

**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:

Western Office, Archives & History

Sperling, George, House and Outbuildings

Name of Property

Cleveland, North Carolina

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 [1|7] [4|5|2|6|2|0] [3|9|0|7|9|2|0]
Zone Easting Northing
2 [1|7] [4|5|2|5|7|0] [3|9|0|7|8|2|0]

3 [1|7] [4|5|2|3|5|0] [3|9|0|7|8|7|0]
Zone Easting Northing
4 [1|7] [4|5|2|3|5|0] [3|9|0|7|9|2|0]

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 Sybil A. Bowers, Preservation Consultant

organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation date August 10, 2001

street & number 166 Pearson Drive telephone (828) 253-1392

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28801

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Ralph Meekins, Teddy and Meekins, PLLC

street & number 400 West Warren Street telephone (704) 487-1234

city or town Shelby state NC zip code 28150

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

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

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Cleveland County, North Carolina

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### Property Description

The George Sperling House and Outbuildings are located on a large lot of five acres on the west side of Fallston Road (Highway 18), at the edge of the city limits, northeast of Shelby, North Carolina. The large, two-story, yellow brick Neoclassical Revival style house (1927) faces east, with a grouping of eight associated early-twentieth century outbuildings located to the rear of the main house. The nominated tract was historically part of the eighty acres originally associated with the house. Remaining acreage has been sold through the years, once the property was no longer used as a working farm. The outbuildings on the property, most of which pre-date the main house, were built ca. 1909-1920, as part of the original farmstead surrounding the simple frame farmhouse which the current house replaces. The barn, built ca. 1927, replaces the original barn and dates from about the same time as the current house. These outbuildings are set in a cluster close to the rear, or west, of the main house. Open fields are located to the west beyond these buildings. These buildings and structures are a two-story gambrel roof mule barn with German siding; one-story corn crib with metal roof; one-story hog pen; one-story wood house with weatherboard siding; two-story granary with weatherboard siding and a pressed metal roof; one-story smokehouse with weatherboard siding; one-story generator house of rusticated concrete block; and a tack house which appears to be identical to the generator house. Notable landscape features include circular driveways, mature hardwood trees, and remnants of a formal garden to the northwest of the house. Foundation plantings around the house are primarily newer materials, with a few scattered older boxwoods. Flat land located to the south and west of the house is the only remnant of the original farming area. Woods rim the property along the western edge.

The nominated property consists of nine contributing resources, including the main house, the barn, the corn crib, the hog pen, the wood house, the granary, the smokehouse, the generator house, and the tack house.

#### **1. George Sperling House. Contributing. 1927.**

The imposing two-story Neoclassical Revival house of yellow brick is basically square in plan and massing, with the main block of the house being five bays wide and five bays deep. The present house was built in 1927, partially on the foundation of an earlier frame ca. 1909 house. The builder/contractor for the 1927 house was Augustus Branton, a local builder. Architectural elements of particular note testify to the skilled

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craftsmanship of Branton, and they include large framing timbers milled at Sperling's sawmill; hand-crafted dentils on the first floor; unusual brick detailing which forms even uninterrupted courses with deeply recessed mortar joints; incised concrete lintels; and the wooden monumental portico exhibiting all the elements of the Neoclassical Revival style. While not fully documented, it is possible that the Sperling House was designed by M. Lawson Holly Ledford, husband of one of the Sperling daughters, Corinne. The Ledfords built a house on East Marion Street in the 1920s, for which Ledford, not a trained architect, drew up plans. Although the Ledford House is not as large as the Sperling House, and it does not have a monumental portico, there are similarities in massing and detailing between the two houses (see working file for photo of the Ledford House).

The most notable feature of the exterior of the house is the monumental, full-width portico on the front (east) elevation, with a projecting, circular, center section supported by fluted Ionic columns. The entire portico is topped by an elaborate entablature and balustrade. Modillion blocks and dentils are visible beneath the wide overhanging eaves. The front entrance features an elliptical fanlight and sidelights, with a balcony above. The porch floor is yellow quarry tile mosaic. Windows are twelve-over-one, nine-over-one, and six-over-one, single, double, and tripartite. A widow's walk caps the low hip roof, which is punctuated by a front-facing attic Palladian window and large brick chimneys with corbeling. Concrete balustrades with turned balusters edge the widow's walk and cap the porte cochere and side porch. A porte cochere extends from the north elevation, and one-story porches are located on the south (side) and west (rear) elevations. Windows on the south-facing porch are nine-over-one with multi-light transoms. The rear porch has a combination of six-over-one windows and added screening between the porch posts. Doors opening onto the porches and the balcony are multi-light. Some of the first story windows have incised concrete flat arches simulating bricks with keystones. Minor changes to the exterior of the house include the installation of glass panels on the north side of the porte cochere, and the addition of lattice on the rear porch.

Inside, the double-pile house is a variation on a four over four plan, with a wide center hall located in the rear section of the house through an arched opening, and a living room spanning two-thirds of the front façade. A one-story rear service wing spans the full width of the house and includes an open porch, kitchen, breakfast room, and bathroom. Notable details include the stairs with turned balusters, walnut newel posts

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and handrail, crown molding with dentils, and built-in cabinets. According to George Sperling, grandson of the original owner, the dentils were installed in separate pieces, not in one large strip as is more common today.<sup>1</sup> All of the first floor and some of the second floor mantels were stolen from the house. Floors throughout the house are oak tongue and groove, and walls and ceilings are plaster. Rooms downstairs in the main house block are the living room to the south of the main entry, a music room to the north, a bedroom and the dining room.

The second floor has a central hall plan, with a sunroom, five bedrooms, and a bath with original tile and fixtures. The balcony over the front entrance opens off the sunroom. Some of the upstairs mantels remain intact. They are classical in form with fluted pilasters and architrave trim. Decorative copper fireboards cover the openings. A servants' staircase is located near the bath at the southwest corner. Closets throughout the house are cedar-lined. Remaining doors are typically one-panel, some with the original hardware. The attic of the house is finished in pine paneling. The basement of the house has a concrete floor, and concrete and brick foundation walls. Family members note that this house was constructed partially on the foundation of the ca. 1909 farmhouse which was built in the same location.<sup>2</sup> (See Exhibit A, floor plans of existing house).

### **2. Mule Barn. Contributing. ca. 1927.**

The mule barn is a two-story, gambrel roof, frame building with one-story shed roof wings on the north and south sides. Six-over-six windows on the upper level. The original exposed dimension lumber structure and animal stalls are intact on the interior. German siding and metal roof.

### **3. Corn Crib. Contributing. ca. 1910.**

One-story front gable roof frame structure with German siding in the gable ends and slatted walls. Metal roof covering.

### **4. Hog Pen. Contributing. ca. 1910.**

One-story front gable roof frame building with a concrete block foundation, slatted walls, and metal roof.

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<sup>1</sup>Sperling, George R. Grandson of George E. Sperling. Interview by Sybil Bowers 25 March 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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**5. Wood House. Contributing. ca. 1910.**

One-story frame building with a metal front-gable roof and lapped siding.

**6. Granary. Contributing. ca. 1910.**

Two-story, front gable roof frame structure with clapboards. Pressed metal roof may be original. Panel door at front on first level, with a loading door at the second level.

**7. Smokehouse. Contributing. ca. 1909.**

One-story roof frame building with weatherboards and diagonal boards with spaces between them at the upper part of all walls. Metal front-gable roof.

**8. Generator House. Contributing. ca. 1920.**

One-story structure constructed of rusticated concrete block. Metal front-gable roof. Entrance in gable end.

**9. Tack House and Horse Trough. Contributing. ca. 1920.**

One-story front gable building identical to the generator house. Trough is also of concrete block and is located in front of the tack house.



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### Significance Summary

The 1927 George Sperling House and its associated early twentieth century outbuildings are locally significant as a highly intact farm complex built by a successful farmer and businessman at the height of cotton production in Cleveland County. The brick Neoclassical Revival style house is unusual in rural Cleveland County, as most farmhouses were simple frame structures. More elaborate residences such as this one were built primarily within the town of Shelby. It was built by Augustus Branton whose skill as a brickmason and master carpenter are evident throughout the house.

The George Sperling House and Outbuildings are eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for the property's association with the development of the cotton farming industry in Cleveland County and as a working family farm in the county through the mid-twentieth century. The property also meets Criterion C as a rare example of the Neoclassical Revival style residence in rural Cleveland County, along with its associated intact frame outbuildings which serve as intact examples of support structures for a family farm complex. The period of significance is from ca. 1909, the date of the earliest outbuilding, until 1951. Although the farm continued to operate after 1951, it has been determined that the property does not possess exceptional significance.

### Historic Background and Agricultural Context

George Elzie Sperling (1871-1953) was the son of John Jefferson and Margaret Eskridge Sperling, farmers in Cleveland County. A life-long resident of Cleveland County, George Sperling grew up on his father's farm and attended Teacher Training School as a young man. He taught for several years in Cleveland County schools, but then turned his interests toward full-time farming.<sup>3</sup> George Sperling married Mary Jane Justice (1878-1977) on May 28, 1899.<sup>4</sup> Sperling began buying up land, at one time owning close to 1000 acres which would lead to his success as a farmer and businessman in the community. Most of Sperling's property was located around

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<sup>3</sup>Marler, James D. The Heritage of Cleveland County, Volume 1. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Hunter Publishing Company, 1982, p. 539. The location of the Teacher Training School is unknown, and it is assumed that Sperling attended the school in his late teens to early twenties.

<sup>4</sup>"G. E. Sperling Succumbs at 82", The Shelby Daily Star, 13 July 1953.

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present-day Highway 18, the Fallston Road, and along with his additional business ventures, became known as Sperling's Crossroads.<sup>5</sup> At the Crossroads, Sperling ran a general store, corn mill, saw mill, cotton gin, and blacksmith shop in addition to his farming operation, which was centered around the present day Sperling house. All of these operations serviced travelers along present-day Highway 18, as well as local residents in Shelby and Fallston, with travelers and local residents alike being able to buy all their supplies and process their cotton crop in one central location. George Sperling was a member of Ross Grove Baptist Church and the founder of the Cleveland County Fair Association.<sup>6</sup> After World War I, Sperling sold 300 acres of his land in order to buy into the cotton futures market and was a major investor in the NuWay Spinning Company in Cherryville, North Carolina.<sup>7</sup>

Not all of the land of Sperling's Crossroads was contiguous with the original acreage associated with the present house and outbuildings. Approximately eighty acres were associated originally with the George Sperling House, which extended onto both sides of Highway 18. The initial portion of this land was bought by Sperling as early as 1900, when he purchased seven acres from B. A. Parker.<sup>8</sup> In 1901, Sperling bought an additional two acres; in 1912 thirty-one and three-eighths acres; in 1918 thirty acres; in 1923 approximately four and one-fourth acres; and in 1941 one-third of an acre.<sup>9</sup> The simple frame one-story house, which is still located directly across Highway 18 from the present house was the first house where George and Mary Jane Justice Sperling lived while their frame farmhouse across the road was being built. The larger two-story frame house with a wraparound porch that Sperling built was in the same location as the present day brick house. It was completed ca. 1909, along with many of the existing support outbuildings that were critical to the operation of the farm. The general store building, no longer standing, was located adjacent to the main house, and

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<sup>5</sup>Sperling, George R. Interview by Sybil Bowers.

<sup>6</sup>"G. E. Sperling Succumbs at 82", The Shelby Daily Star, 13 July 1953.

<sup>7</sup>Eades, Brian. "Historical and Architectural Resources of Cleveland County, North Carolina", unpublished, September 1998, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup>Cleveland County Deed Book JJ, page 303.

<sup>9</sup>Cleveland County Deed Books JJ, 484; WW, 526; 3-B, 577; BBB, 577; OOO, 288; MMM, 164; LLL, 318; 5-D, 125; and an unrecorded deed for 6,312 square feet from D. L. Houser to Sperling (spelled Spurlin).

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operated from ca. 1912 to 1935, selling items such as meat, salt, flour, coffee, candy, nails, hay, corn, aspirin, shirts, soap, matches, shoes, potatoes, oil, and cigarettes.<sup>10</sup>

The main crop of the Sperling Farm was cotton, the predominant agricultural product in Cleveland County from the late nineteenth through the first decades of the twentieth century until the boll weevil devastation of the 1940s. In 1870, the county produced 415 pounds of tobacco, 236,252 bushels of corn, and 520 bales of cotton. Small subsistence farms of the late nineteenth century produced sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, beans, corn, wheat, apples, peaches, and a variety of livestock.<sup>11</sup> After the railroad arrived in Shelby in 1872, agriculture as an economic mainstay for the county began to change from subsistence and small tobacco farms to larger scale production. By 1909, 38,876 acres in the county were planted in cotton, producing 15,568 bales. Corn was still a major crop, but cotton exceeded all other production. Cleveland County was one of the top fourteen North Carolina counties in the production of cotton for 1909.<sup>12</sup> It was during the beginning of this major boom time for the cotton industry that Sperling began buying up land for his cotton farming operations. His first house was built ca. 1909, with most of the associated outbuildings were built soon thereafter.

Cotton production continued to grow into the 1910s and 1920s, with North Carolina being rated as seventh in the nation for cotton by 1925.<sup>13</sup> The construction of textile plants beginning in the late nineteenth century, coupled with readily available rail transportation, spurred the production of cotton. Shelby witnessed its greatest period of population growth in the 1920s, expanding from 3,609 in 1920, to 10,789 in 1930.<sup>14</sup> As the number of textile mills continued to grow throughout the county and in the state, the need for cotton also grew, and the Sperling Farm was one of the largest producers.

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<sup>10</sup>George R. Sperling, grandson of George E. Sperling, notes that most of the existing outbuildings associated with the property date from the time of the first house, ca. 1909 to 1910. Some were probably built a few years later, and the barn was built ca. 1927. Interview by Sybil A. Bowers, 25 March 2001. Ledger books remaining in the house, dating from 1909, 1929, and 1930, and currently in possession of the present owners, list some of the accounts and items for sale at the general store. Running accounts were kept for all customers.

<sup>11</sup>"Historical and Architectural Resources of Cleveland County", p. 55.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Keller, Timothy and Genevieve. "Central Shelby Historic District". National Register nomination. January 1983.

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Other subsistence crops such as corn were also grown, but by far the majority of the farm acreage was devoted to cotton production. The Sperling operation also had to continue as a working family farm, however, providing food for the family and livestock that were a vital part of the farm operations. Most of the current outbuildings are clear evidence of this, with the hog pen, wood house, smokehouse, generator house, and tack house associated with the farming operations located close to the main house and primarily serving the needs of the family. Of the other outbuildings, the corncrib, granary, and mule barn are more directly associated with the larger crop yields from the farm operation. The mule barn in particular filled this role, since the mules were used to plow the fields and carry agricultural goods to market. The sharecropping or tenant system of farming was prevalent in Cleveland County from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, and the Sperling farm was no exception. At one time, the Sperling land was divided into seven smaller farms worked by sharecroppers.<sup>15</sup>

The Sperlings had nine children, two sons and seven daughters, all of which grew up on the family farm, some living in the original ca. 1909 farmhouse on the property, and then, from 1927, the younger ones living in the new Neoclassical brick house which their father built.<sup>16</sup> Cotton production in Cleveland County continued into the 1940s, with 83,549 bales produced in 1948.<sup>17</sup> Soon thereafter, however, the boll weevil hit North Carolina, and cotton production slowed dramatically beginning in the early 1950s. While many large farms in the county then switched over to dairy farming, the Sperling farm did not.<sup>18</sup> The Sperling farm remained as a working family farm until the mid-1950s, after the death of George Elzie Sperling, but never went back to the one-crop production days of cotton after the mid-1940s. Daughter Madge Roberta (1909-1996) married M. Lloyd Ray Little, and they lived in the house with her parents. After George and Mary Jane Sperling and then Madge died, Lloyd Little continued to live in the house until 1997. The property was sold out of the family on June 10, 1998 when Charles C. Sperling, the youngest son of George E. Sperling, sold it to Bali

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<sup>15</sup>Interview with Geroge R. Sperling by Sybil Bowers.

<sup>16</sup>The Sperling children are Corinne (1899-1996); Margaret Iva (1902-1989); George Heyward (1904-1970); Clara Jane (1906-1981); Madge Roberta (1909-1996); Macie Gold (b. 1911); Lalage Louisa (b. 1914); Nancy B. (b. 1917); and Charles Coleman (b. 1920).

<sup>17</sup>"Historical and Architectural Resources of Cleveland County", p. 105.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 106.

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Palani, LLC.<sup>19</sup> Bali Palani then sold the present five-acre tract to the current owners, Teddy and Meekins, LLC, on December 14, 2000. Teddy and Meekins, a law firm, is presently rehabilitating the house for use as offices.<sup>20</sup>

### Architecture Context

The Neoclassical style "...was not a style reserved for the common man. Economically powerful citizens who sought to advertise their status were attracted to the style's lavish proportions".<sup>21</sup> In contrast to other classical styles of the early twentieth century, the Neoclassical Revival style featured monumental proportions and included such elements as two-story porticos, square, solid massing, and one-story side wings or porches. Classical elements and detailing such as two-story columns of the Ionic or Corinthian order, elaborate entablatures, and dentils or modillions are typical. Buildings in the Neoclassical Revival style, particularly in Shelby, were often sited as the centerpiece of the landscape, creating an imposing presence. The George Sperling House in its bucolic rural setting accessed by circular drives, exemplifies this characteristic of the style. In contrast, the Classical Revival and the Colonial Revival styles, although similar in terms of their use of symmetry, were more simplified and two-dimensional in their application. These buildings usually had classical ornament applied to the wall surface and the entrance may have had a one-story entry portico featuring a triangular or broken pediment with simple Doric or Tuscan columns.

While the town of Shelby contains many fine examples of high style late nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture, very few buildings make use of the Neoclassical Revival style. Of these, the most notable are Webbley (403 S. Washington Street, National Register, 1980), home of O. Max Gardner, a mid-nineteenth century Italianate house remodeled in the Neoclassical style in 1907; the S. S. Royster House (413 S. Washington Street), built in 1908 and designed by Charlotte architect J. M. McMichael; the Cleveland County Courthouse, built in 1907 (National Register, 1979); and the James Hayward Hull House (710 N. Lafayette Street), built ca. 1907 which features a monumental portico much like the Sperling House.

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<sup>19</sup>Cleveland County Deed Book 1224, page 816.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, Book 1285, page 714.

<sup>21</sup>"Historical and Architectural Resources of Cleveland County, North Carolina", p. 148.

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Indeed, it is highly unusual in Cleveland County to find a house of the high degree of architectural refinement as the Sperling House that was built as a farmhouse, out of the typical in-town setting. Sperling's business endeavors in the early decades of the twentieth century included a successful cotton farming operation (with over 500 acres planted each year in cotton), investments in the cotton textile industry, and the income generated from his crossroads operations. All of these elements combined made him one of the wealthiest businessmen in the county, and, in 1927, led to the construction of his grand Neoclassical Revival style farmhouse, perhaps the most elaborate in the county. The use of the Neoclassical Revival style for the Sperling House, constructed by a highly skilled craftsman, Augustus Branton, was testament to the fact that the Sperlings and their farm operations were indeed one of the most successful in the county.

In contrast to the grand Sperling House, most early twentieth century farmhouses in the county tended to be simple frame one and one-half to two-story buildings. A good example of this is the Rufus and Kathleen Plonk Farm with its simple side gable, three-room farmhouse. The house served as the center of first a cotton, and later dairy farming operation.<sup>22</sup> Outbuildings at the Plonk Farm are more related to the conversion to dairy farming, but, like the Sperling House complex, there is a smokehouse, granary, wood house, and corn crib.

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<sup>22</sup>Cleveland County survey files, Western Office, Archives and History.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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25 March 2001.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Cleveland County, North Carolina

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### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of this nomination are shown on the accompanying survey map.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the 1927 house, remaining associated historic outbuildings, and fields to the west of the house to provide an appropriate setting.

### George Sperling House and Outbuildings Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs.

Name of Property: George Sperling House and Outbuildings  
1219 Fallston Road  
Shelby, Cleveland County  
North Carolina

Photographer: Sybil Argintar Bowers

Date of photos: February 2001

Location of  
original negatives: Division of Archives and History  
One Village Lane  
Asheville, North Carolina 28803

1. House exterior, view northwest
2. Exterior details, monumental portico
3. Exterior details, monumental portico ceiling and columns
4. Exterior detail, typical window
5. Mule barn, view southwest
6. Generator house, smokehouse, granary, view south
7. House interior, entry hall, view east
8. House interior, newel post and stairs, view northwest
9. Side porch, view east
10. House interior, second floor bedroom, view northeast
11. House interior, typical second floor mantel
12. House interior, attic, view east




- 1) mule barn
- 2) corn crib
- 3) hog pen
- 4) wood house
- 5) granary
- 6) smoke house
- 7) generator house
- 8) tack house / horse trough
- 9) 1927 brick Neoclassical house

Ross Grove Church  
P-57:111-373

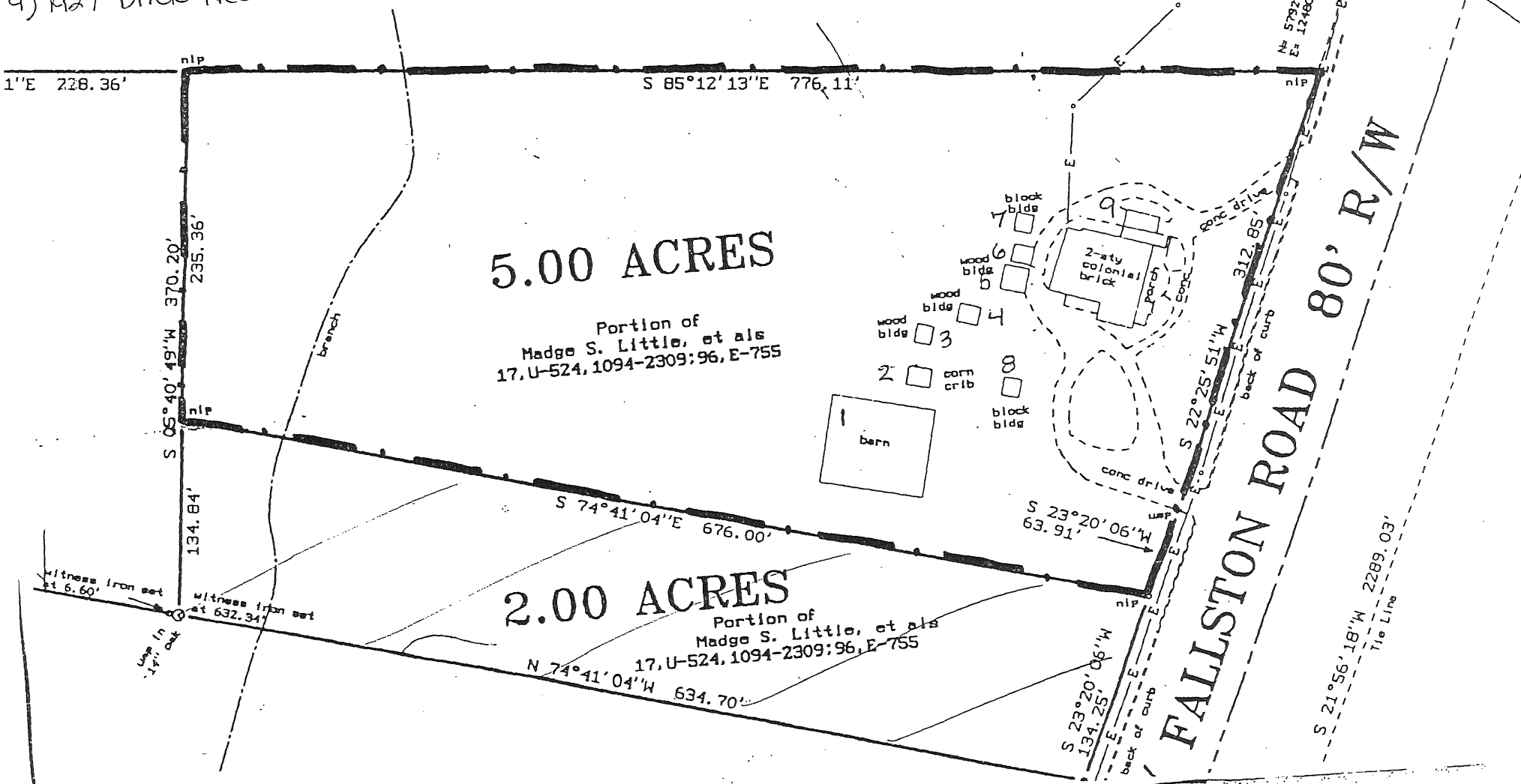
# George Sperling House and Outbuildings Shelby, NC Cleveland County

one inch = 100 feet

North 

— o — nomination boundary

N.C.G.S. 100A  
ROSS  
N= 579538.258 FT  
E= 1248127.762 FT



5.00 ACRES

Portion of  
Madge S. Little, et als  
17, U-524, 1094-2309; 96, E-755

2.00 ACRES

Portion of  
Madge S. Little, et als  
17, U-524, 1094-2309; 96, E-755

FALLSTON ROAD 80' R/W

N= 579278.133 FT  
E= 1248019.023 FT  
N 22°41'10"E 281.94'  
Tie Line  
S 21°56'18"W 2289.03'  
Tie Line



3909  
3908  
3906  
3905

17°30"

George Sperling House  
1219 Fallston Rd.  
Shelby, NC  
Cleveland Co.

UTM S  
① 452 620  
3907920

② 452570  
3907820

③ 452350  
3907870

④ 452350  
3907920

(WACO) 4754 14 SW  
LINCOLN 18 MI



'01 221