

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number NE corner of the intersection of Sol Legare Road & Old Sol Legare Road not for publication
city or town James Island vicinity _____
state South Carolina code SC county Charleston code 019 zip code 29412

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy SHPO, S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

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 Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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

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

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Meeting Hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Meeting Hall
 WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

 NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
 roof METAL/tin
 walls WOOD/weatherboard
 other

Narrative Description

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

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 prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/ Black
SOCIAL HISTORY

Significant Dates

1915

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Period of Significance

1915-1953

Architect/Builder

N/A

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: S.C. Dept. of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>17</u>	<u>596796</u>	<u>3616253</u>	3 _____
2	_____	_____	4 _____	_____

_____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen Nickless
 organization _____ date 17 August 2007
 street & number 134 Tranquil Lane telephone (843) 851-2845
 city or town Ladson state SC zip code 29438

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767
 street & number 1745 Sol Legare Road telephone (843) 799-4895
 city or town James Island state SC zip code 29412

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Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767
name of property
Charleston County, South Carolina
county and State

The Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767 (circa 1915) is located on Sol Legare Road, the main thoroughfare through the Sol Legare community. Sol Legare is a historically African American community on James Island. The Seashore Farmers' Lodge is a two-story rectangular building, measuring 40' x 20', with a lateral gable roof with exposed rafters. The roof is raised-seam tin. The structure stands on concrete piers. There are currently (March 2007) no steps into the building, as a non-historic concrete slab that served as a porch and step was recently demolished in preparation for a restoration of the building. The lodge is sided with wood clapboarding. The façade (south elevation) comprises five bays. The central bay contains a single wooden door on the first floor and a window on the second floor. The other four bays contain a window above and below. Windows are simple openings with wooden full-panel shutters. The lodge has never had window glass. The north façade also has five bays: the left bay has no openings and the central bay has only a window in the upper story. The other three bays have windows on both floors. The west elevation is gabled, with three bays. The central bay contains a door on the first floor and a louvered attic vent in the gable. The side bays have a window up and down. The east elevation also has three bays, with an upper window in the left bay and a window on the ground floor in the central bay.

The floor plan is simple. The first floor comprises one large room with four support columns, and a partition in the southeast corner blocking the view of two bathrooms, each 4' x 6'. They were added in 1971. The northeast corner contains a narrow (approximately 3') stairwell that leads to the second floor. Floors are wooden planks throughout; walls and ceiling are bead board.

The second floor is two rooms. One is approximately 20' x 33'. A wall runs the width of the building near the stairs, forming a room that is approximately 7' x 17'. Currently (March 2007) there is a large hole in the roof.

The lodge has seen few alterations; a window in the central bay of the façade has been enclosed, the porch has been removed, the lodge has been plumbed and wired, bathrooms have been added, and a wood or coal stove and chimney have been removed.

The building is currently undergoing an extensive restoration. A concrete slab porch and the shed roof over it have been removed and the building will be restored to its original appearance, using like materials. A porch will wrap around the west and south elevations. The building will continue to be used as a Lodge and community center, and may also house a small museum of rural life, with a section devoted to the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers (Colored), which served in the Union Army during the Civil War and was prominent during the Siege of Charleston, and was memorialized in the movie "Glory."

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The Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767 (circa 1915) is significant under Criterion A as an illustration of the importance of fraternal orders in the cultural life of the lowcountry African American community in the early twentieth century. Lodges such as Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767 were, along with the church, the heart of the community. Communication and cooperation with other lodges in the area and annual lodge parades and gatherings helped cement ties with the wider African American community.

The Seashore Farmers' Lodge is located on Sol Legare Road, the main road on Sol Legare Island, an 860-acre island located on James Island. The area took its name from Solomon Legare (1797-1878), the antebellum plantation owner. A 1863 "Map of Charleston and its Defenses" shows the island divided into 17 fields with 12 structures on the main road; likely a cotton plantation with a plantation house and slave row. By 1942, the General Highway and Transportation Map of Charleston County shows 72 farm units: most lots are long and linear, fronting on Sol Legare road with about 15 acres behind them. In addition to the farms, in 1942, Sol Legare Island had 4 other dwellings, 3 businesses, one white church and one black school.¹

The lowcountry had a larger proportion of black ownership than the rest of South Carolina. The 1900 census shows 42.8% black ownership of farms in Charleston County. Most African Americans acquired their land through purchase, taking advantage of the depressed prices of the 1870s and whites' inability to pay high taxes levied by the Republican government.² The small plots were ideal for the growing industry of truck farming, which persisted into the 1960s. William "Cubby" Wilder, a local community activist who grew up and still lives on Sol Legare Island, remembers sitting on the porch of the Seashore Farmers' Lodge as a child and seeing "fields of potatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe and collard greens until the land met the marsh."³

Small, neat houses, most built in the 1920s and 1930s, line Sol Legare Road and the short dirt roads that lead from it. Most are owned by the original builders or their descendants. Lots still stretch back to marsh or creek, but truck farming has been abandoned. About 500 people live in the community.

There have always been a few businesses on Sol Legare Island. The Oyster Factory was once a major employer, and Ed Palmer, a former employee, remembers oystering as "hard physical work."⁴ According to resident Joe Chavis, the oyster factory opened in 1923. Wilhelmina Singleton remembers men harvesting oysters, and women shucking and packing them. Workers came from off Sol Legare and boarded with area families and in cottages built on Mosquito Beach Road.

By the end of the 1920s, "The Factory," as the area on Mosquito Beach Road came to be called, became a gathering place, with beer, wine and food sold from Joe Chavis's home. When the oyster factory closed in the late 1920s or early 1930s, other clubs opened, as did a guest house, and the area was known for good music, good food, dancing and access to the water during the era of segregation. In 1953, the Wilder family opened the Harbor Pavilion and the area, then and now known as "Mosquito Beach," boomed, drawing people from off Island. There are still nightclubs operating in the historic buildings on the quarter-mile long Mosquito Beach Road.⁵

¹ Mike Trinkley, *The Archaeology of Sol Legare Island, Charleston County, South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: Chicora Foundation, 1984), pp. 9, 11.

² Paul Brockington, et. al., *Rural Settlement in the Charleston Bay Area* (Charleston, S.C.: Garrow & Associates), pp. 59, 62.

³ Robert Behre, "Historic lodge's past may save it for future," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 11 December 1997, p. 1-B.

⁴ Jason A. Zwick, "In the Neighborhood: Ed Palmer on Sol Legare Road," *Charleston City Paper*, 3 May 2006, p. 2.

⁵ Jill L. Norman, "Mosquito beach buzzing with plans to restore the area," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 22 March 1990,

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Another employer was Bachman's Seafood, on King's Flat Creek. Owned by the same family since the 1940s, Bachman's was once a thriving concern with a fleet shrimp boats. With the decline of the shrimping industry, the family proposed (in 2003) to sell their land for a condominium complex and marina. Fearing that the sale would spark further development, the community opposed the plans, which did not reach fruition. The business now stands empty. As land on the coast steadily increases in value and desirability, pressure for development is great, but the Sol Legare community is proud of their heritage and hopes to maintain the rural look and feel of their Island. As one Charleston County official put it, "It's like a time warp out there."⁶

The Seashore Farmers' Lodge is part of that rural context and has been an important part of the Sol Legare Island since its founding, circa 1915. It is also part of the larger context of the African American community in the South in the early twentieth century. Burial aid and other mutual benefit societies provided many needed services; they served as safety net, social gathering place and information clearinghouses in rural communities throughout the South in the years after the Civil War. Scholars speculate that the societies evolved from both the mutual benefit societies of European immigrants and from secret and public antebellum black fellowship societies. Mutual aid societies took on many functions similar to fraternal societies in West Africa, such as social control and celebration.⁷ The importance of the local benefit society is hard to exaggerate. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in 1906, "**No** complete account of Negro beneficial Associations is possible, so large is their number and so wide their ramification." He called their function, "partly societal intercourse and partly insurance. They **furnish** pastime from the monotony of work, a chance for parade, and insurance against misfortune. Next to the church they are the most popular organizations among Negroes."⁸

Seashore Farmers' Lodge is affiliated with the I.F.L.U.J (International Farmers' Liberty Union Justice) order (variously known as the ILU and the ILUJ). The I.F.L.U.J. Foundation Creed consists of 12 points:

1. **Fraternity** and "good fellowship"
2. **Cooperation** through "mutual buying and selling and improvement plans"
3. **Liberty**, meaning "equal rights" and "opposing all forms of oppression, injustice and tyranny"
4. **Protection** from sickness, accident or death (insurance)
5. **Self-education**
6. **Godliness**
7. **Health** and personal cleanliness
8. **Harmony**, achieved by "hearing and absorbing as much music as possible"
9. **Industry**
10. **Economy**
11. **Purity**

p. 1.

⁶ Arlie Porter, "The Buzz on Mosquito Beach: Condo plan makes waves in black-owned community," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 25 August 2003, p. 12-A.

⁷ Margaret Washington Creel, *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1988), pp. 48-49.

⁸ Walter B. Weare, "Fraternal Orders, Black," in Charles Reagan Wilson and William B. Ferris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 158.

12. **Recreation**, and providing “clean, wholesome amusement for our mutual benefit”⁹

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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The Lodge fulfilled the tenets of their creed in a number of ways that not only provided mutual assistance for members, but also benefited the Sol Legare community and the lowcountry African American community.

In 1915, the members of the Lodge built a building on land belonging to Henry Wallace, a member. Lodge members Mose McNeal, Eddie Singleton, Lawrence Gilliard and many others assisted with the construction. In 1921, the sale of the land closed, for \$32.00.¹⁰ The Lodge members were small farmers, bound together by familial and community ties. Women were admitted as members from the beginning, and the by-laws from the international union suggest a “Lady Vice President (if Lodge has lady members),” in addition to the other, male, Vice President.¹¹

The Lodge provided, as its creed mandated, support for its members and celebration of life with music and recreation. If a member “defaulted” at the end of a growing season or had other problems with a crop, the Lodge would help buy seeds for the coming year. The Lodge provided health and life insurance and current information on farming. If a member or a member’s family was ill the Lodge members would “nurture” them; they gave money if possible and provided assistance with the home and children. The Seashore Farmers’ Lodge also provided assistance, recreation and education for the community; they raised money for the local Sunday school, and hosted Vacation Bible School for the area children.¹²

Meetings were held the 2nd Monday of the month at 3:00. Members were mostly family members of original Lodge members and were mostly residents of Sol Legare, though some were from “over the pond.” Members brought their children into the Lodge. The Lodge rituals were typical of secret societies; according to the lodge’s ritual booklet, the room was arranged with a table in the center with an open Bible and a 2-foot triangle before the table known as the “Altar of Justice.” The Lodge had a secret grip and other secret knowledge. At meetings, the Lodge members conducted business, such as checking to see if memberships were up-to-date, had reports of officers, balloting on applications for membership, and initiation of new members. The Seashore Farmers’ Lodge also rang out with song during meetings, as members sang songs that are not in the ritual book, including spirituals such as “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”¹³

But the Seashore Farmers’ Lodge did not just focus on its members and the Sol Legare community. In the 1930s there were at least thirty-seven mutual aid societies in the South Carolina Lowcountry, and the Seashore Farmers’ Lodge No. 767 was instrumental in the founding of several. Seashore Lodge became the “mother lodge” to other ILUJ lodges on James and Johns Island: Solomon, Riverside and Seaside. The lodges helped each other as much as possible, and all lodges in the lowcountry would join together for parades in town. The competition was fierce. The Seashore Lodge members wore dark pants and pink shirts with their lodge regalia, and the Seashore Lodge drummers often won first place. Benjamin “Demi” Richardson always caught the crowd’s eye with his drumming and his trained rooster, which would jump off and on his shoulder to strut its stuff.¹⁴

⁹ *Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767 I.L.U.J*, Booklet, n.d., pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Interview with Henry Wallace’s grandson, cited in S.C. Statewide Survey Site Form, “Seashore Farmers Lodge,” 24 July 1989, James and Johns Island Survey, on file at the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

¹¹ *Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767*, p.4.

¹² Interview with Rebecca Wilder, William “Cubby” Wilder, Edward Wilder, Jr., Alonzo Gilliard, Lavola Whaley, James Island, S.C., 10 October 2006.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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Lodge members turned out for sad occasions, as well. When a resident of the Sol Legare community died, a drum was sounded from the Lodge to inform the community of the death. Lodge members served as pall bearers for other members and assisted the bereaved in any way they could, including with the Lodge's death benefit if the deceased was an active member who had paid the death assessment.¹⁵

From the recollections of members, it seems that the community and recreation components of the Lodge became increasingly important as the years passed and farming became less important. The Lodge held "Guest Rallies" on Sunday evenings, collecting 25 cents from guests and serving ice cream and cake. Holidays found the community gathering at the Lodge. The 4th of July celebration featured homemade ice cream and watermelon. There were celebrations on Labor Day, and on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, when the Lodge members roasted a pig and turkeys, and community members brought food. Celebration included drumming and dancing in addition to feasting.¹⁶

William "Cubby" Wilder recounts the programs for children, particularly the Saturday picture shows. A projectionist from Charleston brought a movie and the projector, the Lodge provided a sheet as a screen, and for 25 cents, a child could travel far beyond Sol Legare. Cowboy movies featuring Tom Mix were favorites with the boys, and one local boy earned the nickname "Backup," as he would back up and draw, emulating his movie heroes.¹⁷

In 1953, the pavilion at Mosquito Beach opened and much of the recreation in the community began to center there. By the 1980s, the Lodge had approximately three hundred members. (Most records were destroyed during Hurricane Hugo in 1989, which also damaged the building.) Membership in the Lodge is considered a family tradition, and many members pay dues for children who no longer live in the community and are not active in the Lodge. Edward Wilder, Jr. is the current president and a descendant of the founders. Ninety-three year old member, Rebecca Wilder, is the daughter of the Lodge's first secretary, Lawrence Gilliard, and William "Cubby" Wilder is her son. Dues are currently \$17.00 per year with a \$5.00 death assessment. The Lodge pays a \$50.00 death benefit. Current membership hovers at 100. The Lodge meets once a month at the Sol Legare Community Center.¹⁸

The Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767 served as the heart of the Sol Legare community for many years. It has hosted meetings, educational sessions, celebrations and wakes in its nearly one hundred-year history. Thelma Gilliard of Sol Legare Island describes the Lodge: "This speaks to the culture, the way of life, of how people supported each other. Laughed together. Cried together. Felt each other's pain. This was a focal point."¹⁹ There were once three other African American lodges on James Island; one has been demolished, one encased in concrete block, and one has been converted to a home complete with lunette window and fancy front door.²⁰ Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767 remains, "an ongoing tradition, and . . . the center of [the Sol Legare] community."²¹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Quoted in Robert Behre, "James Island's historic lodges slipping away," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 25 August 2006.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ William "Cubby" Wilder, quoted in Robert Behre, "Historic lodges's past may save it for the future," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 1 December 1997, p. 1-B.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the black line marked "Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767" on the accompanying Charleston County GIS Map. The property is bounded by Sol Legare Road on the south, Old Sol Legare Road on the west, 1805 Sol Legare Road on the east, and a wooded area on the north.

Verbal Property Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically identified with Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767.

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The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of Property: Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767
Location of Property: Sol Legare Road at Old Sol Legare Road,
James Island, Charleston County, S.C.

Name of Photographer: Karen Nickless
Date of Photographs: 25 November 2006
Location of Digital Images: S.C. Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

1. Facade and Right Elevation
2. Right Elevation
3. Left Elevation
4. Facade
5. First Floor Interior
6. Stair
7. Second Floor Interior
8. International Liberty Union (ILU) Charter for Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767