

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ritchie Family Home Place

Other names/site number: PE 6

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 88 Slabtown Hollow

City or town: Viper State: Ky County: Perry

Not For Publication: NA

Vicinity: X

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 X 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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A X B ___ C ___ D

<p>Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Craig Potts/SHPO</u> Date _____</p> <p><u>_____</u> Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office _____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <p>Signature of commenting official: _____ Date _____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
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Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
3

1

4

Noncontributing

1

1

buildings
 sites
 structures
 objects
 Total

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/ Single dwelling

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/Hotel.

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

EARLY20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow

EARLY20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Other: American Small House

Materials:

Doll House: Foundation: cinder block, wood.
Wall- wood frame, board and batten exterior.
Roof- metal.

White House: Foundation: - hand hewn stone.
Walls- wood frame, drywall, aluminum siding.
Roof- metal.

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Ritchie Home Place (PE 6) is a property lying 4 miles directly southeast of Hazard, seat of Perry County, Kentucky. The property is on Slabtown Hollow Road, near its intersection with State Route 7. The area proposed for National Register listing consists of two main structures, referred to as the “White House” and the “Doll House” that contribute directly to the legacy and historical significance of the family and, in particular, Jean Ritchie (1922-2015), who was the youngest of fourteen children born to Abigail and Balis Ritchie. The entire property owned by the Ritchie Family trust is 80+ acres in two parcels. The area proposed for National Register listing is .84 acres, delimited to include the most important buildings associated with the important person, Jean Ritchie. The area proposed for listing is .76 acres and includes 3 contributing buildings and one non-contributing structure. To the west of the property is a log house erected for Jean Ritchie in the early 1970s, labeled “Jean Ritchie Homeplace” on the map below. That property relates to a later era of Ms. Ritchie’s significance. That property’s eligibility may be explored in a later version of this nomination, and a boundary expansion proposed, after expanding this nomination’s historic context to include the later years of her career.



Richie Family Home Place, Perry County, KY

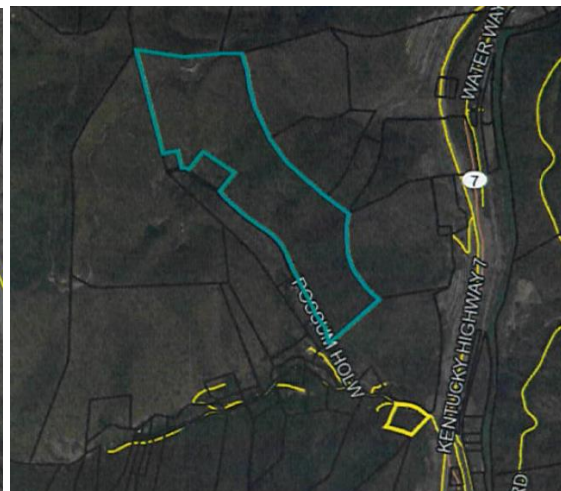
Latitude: 37.190709° Longitude: -83.151055°

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

Character of Land Making up the Site

The property proposed for listing abuts Slabtown Hollow Road, so named for the shanties built with slab board at the hollow's entrance which served as temporary housing for the workers who built the rail lines in the early 1900s. The total property owned by the Ritchie Family Trust today is about 80 acres, made up of a "lower" and an "upper" portion. The lower portion is some 1.75 acres south of Slabtown Road, and extends to Jean Ritchie Lane. The "upper" portion lies north of Slabtown Road, beginning just above the family cemetery (owned by the Brashear Family) and about 50 yards north of the adjacent Elkhorn creek. That larger part of the property is not included in this proposed listing, and extends northwest to the top of its hill, along the ridge to the strip-mined section of the slope. This upper section of the property borders at the lower end by a gate ½ mile up the upper access road, just past the last private home. This upper access road begins ¼ mile from the entrance to Slabtown Hollow Road from Route 7 and encompasses all the land past the gate from the creek bottom to the top of the ridge including the early 1960s coal strip mine and ridgetop above.



"Lower" property, includes the nominated area.

Both property parts ("lower" in yellow)

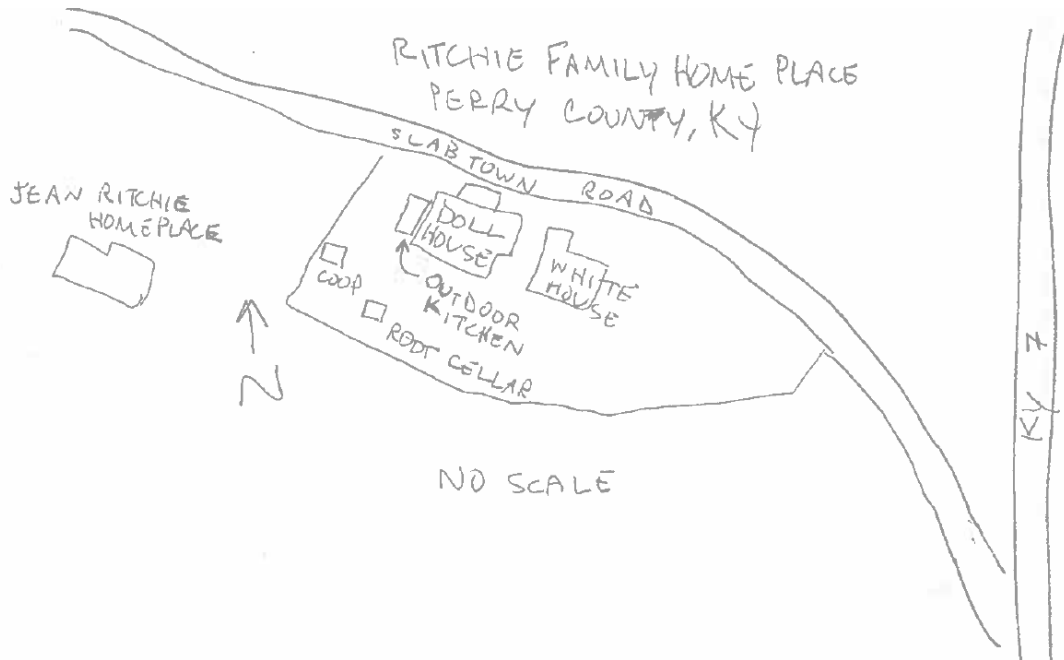
The buildings making up the Ritchie Family Home Place served as the birthplace for the members of the Ritchie Singing Family and residence for the 14 children of Abigail and Balis Hall. The family songs and traditions were passed down there. Singing filled the house at evening gatherings and during the day, while family members engaged in work activities, such as washing dishes or clothes, quilting, farming, and family celebrations. These activities took place in the two contributing buildings, the White House and the Doll House.

The White House now serves a hotel, commonly called an "Airbnb," for the company through which it rents to families and groups. The visitors to the property are informed about the historical identity of the property and the musical traditions of the Ritchie Family through photos, website listings, family videos and recordings, crafts, period pieces and written history.

The "Doll House," next door to the White House, currently is being rehabilitated to serve as a gathering place for reunions, concerts, weddings, dances, crafting and artists in residence uses.

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State



Ritchie Family Home Place Site Plan

Individual Feature Description

Doll House, contributing building

The older of the houses is called the Doll House and was built in 1916 to replace a small cabin that was the original family home that stood about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away on the upper access road. The house is bungalow in form and with a wood frame structure and board and batten exterior siding and a modern sheet metal roof with ridges simulating a standing seam metal roof.



Doll House, front, prior to latest rehabilitation.



Doll House, current view, opens to the east.

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

The Doll House was originally built in an "L" shape approximately 32 x 18 ft with a surrounding porch. The 18 ft. "L" section extended west on the northside (creekside). This was the main family home and the birthplace of 6 of the 14 children. It contained a small bedroom in the front in the ell, and an open area serving as a shared sleeping area. The porch was the boys' sleeping area and evening singing place. Behind the house is an outdoor covered kitchen area and an outhouse behind the house (not extant). A root cellar stands further behind the house.



Doll House, south side

In 1964, the board and batten style house was expanded to 32' by 32', which allowed for an addition of 10' x 10' indoor kitchen, a full bathroom, a half bath, and a 12' x 12' bedroom. To accommodate the new shape, the pitch and direction of the new roof was rotated 90°. In the late 1960s a 32' x 16' deck was built on the back for family gatherings.

For years this house served as the workshop area for the making and marketing of the Ritchie Corn Shuck Dolls, some of May's, the oldest, are housed in the Smithsonian Institution, hence the name, "The Doll House." Since 1980, the Doll House and deck have been the primary family gathering place for the annual (now in its 44th year) Ritchie family reunion of singing, story telling, dance, talent show and auction.

In 2019 the sub-floor and foundation joists were replaced due to termite and fungal rot. Instead of replacing damaged interior walls in the rebuild, an open floor plan was adopted to better accommodate large group functions. This required using 6" x 6" beams and column supports. The only interior wall having been rebuilt, is for a 10' x 10' full handicap accessible bathroom in the northeast corner. A frame for a 14' x 16' addition was added perpendicular to the existing house with a gable roof over top of the back shed on the creek side. When finished, the shed underneath will be torn down and a bedroom and half bath will be added. The entire exterior will retain the board and batten exterior of the original house.

Richie Family Home Place

Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky

County and State

White House, contributing building

The White House sits about 35' in front of the Doll House, facing east and was built in 1936 to accommodate the growing extended Ritchie family. It's a wood frame house with aluminum siding exterior and a gable roof covered in sheet metal simulating the appearance of a standing seam metal roof. Three dormers are on the front slope of the roof and two dormers are on the rear side. An interior brick chimney rises from the ridge. The house faces east, toward KY Route 7, and the ridge runs north-south. Windows on the house are one-over-one double hung sashes. The house has a Cape Cod form, and its compact size and lack of gable end overhangs and other ornament make it appear related to the American Small House movement.



The original house plans called for a stone house which Abigail rejected in favor of a residence with a wood frame. The foundation is made from local stones, hauled from the creek and carved into large rectangular blocks. Leftover blocks were used to form a retaining wall on the north side next to Slabtown Road.

The interior consists of two stories, with four bedrooms, a half bath, and a full attic upstairs. The first floor accommodates the kitchen, dining and living rooms, a full bath, and a bedroom.

A large porch was added to the front of the house in 1965 which became the main singing area for the family's nightly sing-along gatherings. Also, in 1965, a mudroom/laundry entrance off the back, facing west, was added. An additional 12 x 12 space was added off this bedroom in 1970 on the creekside (north) to serve as an additional sleeping, storage, and sewing room. The walls downstairs originally consisted of dark stained and varnished plywood. They were replaced in 2005 with drywall after the addition of wall insulation throughout.

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

Non-contributing structure #1: Original outdoor covered kitchen

A detached outdoor kitchen still stands at the back of the Doll House. It was assumed to have a wood burning cook stove. The structure now serves as a game and craft display area. The historic element of the outdoor kitchen is a circular post that remains, but the wooden members of the structure have been replaced over time as needed, and the structure does not retain a historic appearance.



Root Cellar, Contributing Structure

Just in front of the original kitchen stands an ivy covered stone root cellar built into the hillside just six feet south of the current deck of the Doll House. It was used in the early years to extend the shelf life of root vegetables such as potatoes, yams, and squash. The root cellar is built of stone into the southern hillside next to the outdoor kitchen, and still stands just off the current deck.



Root Cellar



Detail of Root Cellar

The walls of the structure are made of randomly placed flat stones in mortar. The roof appears to be poured concrete, overhanging the front wall nearly a foot.

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

Chicken Coop, Contributing building

The Ritchies kept chickens for many years to help feed the growing family. The coop overlooks the terraced garden the family tended just above the Doll House on the southern hill. It is of box construction, board and batten wood siding, with rafters visible and a sheet metal gable roof.



Chicken Coop, seen from the Doll House



Chicken Coop

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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

- 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

Performing Arts

Significant Person

Ritchie, Jean

Period of Significance

1945-1972
Richie Family Home Place

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

1936, 1946

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Ritchie Family Home Place (PE 6) meets National Register Criterion B and is significant within the historic context “Folk Music in the United States, 1945-1972.” The Ritchie family Home Place sits within the beauty of the mountains and nurtured a resilient innovative family of 14 children, which includes their youngest, Jean Ritchie, a significant figure in American Folk Music. Shortly after her passing in 2015, numerous national publications, including the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, recounted her significant contributions, referring to her as “The Mother of Folk,” who gave rise to a renewed interest in traditional folk music as well as its power as a voice of protest and activism. The Perry County property is significant for giving authenticity to Jean Ritchie’s voice. The property was the place where she lived while acquiring her songs and developed her personal stories that became the foundation for her music and her presentation of traditional culture in the form of song. Folk Music underwent two major revivals, on shortly after World War II, and another when Folk Music was incorporated into Commercial/Popular Music beginning in the early 1960s; Jean Ritchie served as a focal musician and a touchstone during both revivals. The Ritchie Family Home Place lends a truth to her lyrics, which involved stories of the traditional culture of this area of Kentucky. Her songs communicated messages about strong values, hard life, and deep emotional ties to home and family--lessons that were learned while growing up in this place.

Historic Context: Folk Music in the United States, 1945-1972

Folk Music is characterizes in Wikipedia:

Traditional folk music has been defined in several ways: as music transmitted orally, music with unknown composers, music that is played on traditional instruments, music about cultural or national identity, music that changes between generations (folk process), music associated with a people's [folklore](#), or music performed by [custom](#) over a long period of time. It has been contrasted with [commercial](#) and [classical styles](#). The term originated in the 19th century, but folk music extends beyond that. From: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music

The use of the term sometimes focuses on the process of creating and transmitting music, which emphasizes the democratic access to the music. A related characteristic of Folk Music is that it seeks to tell the stories of the “low” culture, or the life of all people, particularly those without power, money, or status. If elite culture tells the story of a people or a place by focusing on the exploits of a few, Folk Music tells the story of a people by giving a view of their lives as either impacted by those elite exploits, or independent of those interests. If elite history has a purpose of establishing the significance of a few key players in life, Folk Music seeks to establish the significance of the many, giving dignity to all human lives on some level. Folk Music certainly offered entertainment and relief from the hours of toil in hard labor, but it also enabled people to sing their history, which had an uplifting effect for a frequently impoverished existence. Folk Music could provide a sense of identity, unity, and strength for people whose life circumstances could be isolating and harsh.

Richie Family Home Place

Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky

County and State

The most basic form of Folk Music has been a component of all human cultures from the earliest days, as music seems to be a universal activity among humans. Certainly, all people coming to the Americas from Europe, Africa, and elsewhere brought their homelands' musical expressions with them when they came to this new land as a way of maintaining their cultural identity. Those traditional songs continued being sung, taught, re-sung, and often evolving, for centuries before the advent of mechanical recording equipment.

America became aware of Appalachia in the 19th century as a place holding untold natural resource wealth, just when those resources were needed to facilitate new industrial processes. Vast amounts of timber and coal were exported from the region, but for all the riches that left this part of the nation, few in the local population appeared to benefit. Newspapers and magazines cast a light upon the economic plight of the mountain people, and illuminated the level of poverty that these people endured. Social reformers from New England and missionaries from the east coast made education a campaign for improving Appalachia. In the absence of much written history in the area, Folk songs became a basis for the larger American population to learn about life in the mountains. Folklorists began to arrive in the area to document the culture for the rest of the country. The Folk Music of Appalachia, of which eastern Kentucky is a part, became a vital tool by which to know the people of this area.

Folklorists began to bring recording equipment into eastern Kentucky and other parts of Appalachia in an effort to record traditional music. These efforts were propelled by the thought that any musical piece could disappear if the person who remembered it and knew how to play it had not passed it on to others. Formal and academic efforts were established to create an archive to serve the nation's interest in capturing this regional history.

By the 1930s, the Library of Congress had established a repository for folklorists Alan Lomax and Winslow Gordon to collect their recordings and transcriptions. Mr. Lomax gained wide renown as he traveled throughout the country for years, at first accompanying his father John, seeking out the roots of traditional American folk music and recording the songs and singers he "discovered". He recorded and befriended the legendary likes of such notables as Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Burl Ives, the Weavers, Josh White, Muddy Waters and countless others.

After World War II, there was a renewed interest in Folk Music, perhaps through the nation's exposure to European cultures during the War. Jean Ritchie arrived on the musical scene in New York City during this time of revitalized interest in folk music in the United States. By all accounts, she certainly seemed to have had an immediate and lasting impact on those in the folk community of New York City beginning in 1946. Going from performing at small clubs and venues, Jean by 1948, was sharing the stage with The Weavers, Woody Guthrie, and Betty Sanders at the Spring Fever Hootenanny. By October 1949, she was a regular guest on Oscar Brand's Folksong Festival radio show on WNYC.

Lomax's work with the Library of Congress continued after WWII—finding and recording the traditional music and singers that defined American Folk Music. Alan Lomax became

Richie Family Home Place

Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky

County and State

captivated by the talents and interests of Jean Ritchie. He was one of the first to recognize and appreciate her production as a singer, folklorist, researcher, archivist, storyteller, and performer.

On their first meeting, Mr. Lomax recalled, "I was in an office about 14 floors up on 57th Street working on a folk music project for Decca Records when this young lady came in--this beautiful, golden-haired woman from the mountains with a gorgeous voice. She said her friends had told her she should sing for me and she wondered if she could, so I said, 'Yes, sing.' She hadn't gone very far when suddenly the tears came to my eyes and I was crying at the beauty. In my mind she's one of the finest pure mountain singers ever discovered" (*The Guardian*, obituary to Jean Ritchie 2015, re quoting from the Louisville Courier-Journal interview, 1989).

Lomax introduced Jean to his circle of friends, Pete Seeger, et.al, who became hers. He arranged for her to give her first formal concert, which was held at Columbia University. Lomax found in Jean a kindred spirit who painstakingly researched, recorded, learned and performed the traditional songs of her Appalachian heritage and with the aid of a Fulbright fellowship (1952) even traced their roots and variations to numerous traditional folk singers in the British Isles. He also recognized the importance of documenting her work and arranged to record more than three hundred of her songs for the Archive of the American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. Of her importance, Lomax added, "It's the rare person who knows how the flow of the poem enhances the melody of the song," he told the Courier-Journal. "Jean has a pure, instinctive knowledge for that. The true folk singer sings a new tune for every verse. All folk singers, if they're good, do this, but Jean handles it with extraordinary grace... There is no one else in her category. She has devoted herself to her heritage and the struggle to convey it in all its majesty and beauty" (*The Guardian*, obituary to Jean Ritchie 2015, re quoting from an Courier-Journal interview, 1989). Soon Jean was performing and recording with the likes of Seeger, Guthrie, Doc Watson and sang at the first Newport Folk Festivals and many thereafter serving on its board and was a regular on Oscar Brands long running Folksong Festival.

By the early 1960s, Folk Music and folk artists were moving beyond just singing the traditional songs that purists like Lomax championed. The turbulent politics of the decade ushered in a renewed interest in the themes that Folk Music gave voice to. The songs of traditional Folk Music resonated with a new set of musical artists, who began creating folk songs to voice the real struggles and sentiments of the anti-war and civil rights movements. Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and others began to write and sing songs of protest and to experiment with non-traditional instrumental innovation such as electric guitars. This became the second folk revival.

It seems at first that Jean was reluctant to take up the mantle of many of her folk contemporaries who wrote and championed political protest songs as part of this 1960s folk revival. An obituary that appeared in the Guardian reflected on this period in Jean's life,

Richie stayed true to the traditional songs, but also proved to be a fine songwriter, using traditional tunes and song forms. Her work focused on Kentucky-based themes, which nevertheless had wider implications, then and now – for example, the destruction of the environment by loggers and the strip-mining techniques of coal firms. These included Blue

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

Diamond Mines, Black Waters and The L&N Don't Stop Here Anymore, which was recorded by Johnny Cash. (*The Guardian*, obituary to Jean Ritchie 2015, quoting from the Louisville Courier-Journal interview, 1989)

Ryan Book of Music Times postulated, "So why does Ritchie get the title of 'the mother of folk'... Her popularity helps, but the political edge that she sometimes brought to her original songs resonated with the folk music of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and others. Among her most noted tracks are "Black Waters," a song lamenting the effects of strip mining in her home state, as well as "West Virginia Mining Disaster," which also drew attention to the tough life of the mining community" (Ryan Book, *Music Times*, June 5, 2015).

Jeff Giles, writing for Ultimate Classic Rock, summarized Ritchie's influence and her role in the history of the folk revival of the 1960s. "Bob Dylan and his contemporaries wove the folk music tradition into rock 'n' roll — and they did it by standing on the shoulders of giants like Jean Ritchie, the singer and musician whose tireless efforts to preserve traditional song helped shape modern American music" (Jeff Giles, *Ultimate Classic Rock*, June 4, 2015). Novelist and musician Silas House is quoted as saying in her *Northern Kentucky Tribune* obituary, "She has single-handedly preserved hundreds of songs that would have been lost otherwise. It is hard to measure how important Jean Ritchie has been to folk music" (Silas House, *Northern Kentucky Tribune*, June 7, 2015). The Los Angeles Times highlighted a quote from the American Folklore Center of the Library of Congress at her death in 2015, "No one was more important to the survival, appreciation, and revival of traditional Appalachian folk music in the 20th and 21st centuries" (Steve Chawkins, *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2015).

But for Ritchie, her work was just a continuation of a tradition that had been in place before she was born, and would continue long after she was gone. "I see folk music as a river that never stopped flowing," she told the *New York Times* during a 1980 interview. "Sometimes a few people go to it and sometimes a lot of people do. But it's always there" (Steve Chawkins, *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2015).

Fiona Ritchie (no relation to Jean) host of the long running National Public Radio's "Thistle and Shamrock" show, summarized in her book, *Wayfaring Strangers*, about the historical role and context that Jean Ritchie played in the folk music world, "Jean Ritchie became known in the traditional music community as "The Mother of Folk," an accolade richly deserved as a leader of the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s (Fiona Ritchie and Doug Orr, *Wayfaring Strangers*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

"The history of Kentucky so far is tragic exactly because of our failure to recognize and cherish and protect the precious exchanges by which the life of a given place and the human life given back may be made one life, enduring and sustaining. The paramount voice of that tragedy, and of the goodness and beauty of what we have lost is Jean Ritchie's — and by her gift, it is ours, to help us to remember and to hope" (Wendell Berry, quoted by Susie Glaze, *Folkworks, Celebrating the release of "Dear Jean — Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie*, 2015 in the jacket of *Dear Jean, Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie—Singin' the Moon Up*).

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

History of the Ritchie Family:

Abigail and Balis taught the songs and dulcimer accompaniment passed down from their parents and ancestors from the British Isles. This is precisely why the Ritchie Home Place is of historical importance. It instilled a lasting connection to the traditional music and singing and to the love they shared in harmony with one another and the place, their home and mountains. The family even sang as they planted fields and worked. Each of their children, in turn, taught their favorite family songs, hymns, and ballads to their children and grandchildren. Several, in particular Edna and Jean, were inspired to share their love of their traditional music and heritage to a broader audience as performers and educators. Jean, the most widely known, established a national and international career as a folklorist. She collected, recorded, performed, and wrote both music and books about the heritage of eastern Kentucky, most notably, *The Singing Family of the Cumberlands*. At the time of her death in 2015 at the age of 92, the Smithsonian memorialized her as “The Mother of Folk”, a name given her by Joan Baez, for her contributions (Diana Turnbow, Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative, December 8, 2022).

The historical roots of the Ritchie family in Eastern Kentucky reach back to 1768 when James Ritchie and five of his brothers emigrated from the British Isles and settled first in Virginia, Tennessee and Texas. As Jean relates in her narrative of the family, it was James, her great-great-great-grandfather, who moved to eastern Kentucky. Jean traces the family lineage through her father, Balis Ritchie, who married Abigail Hall in 1895.

During a time in the early half of the twentieth century when poverty in Appalachia was deeper even than today, Balis and Abigail toiled in many occupations to provide for their growing family. Balis taught at a nearby one-room school, ran a printing press and newspaper, and played fiddle at dances. The printing press produced many things vital to the community, including the music for a collection of traditional songs he had assembled called *Lover’s Melodies*. Meanwhile, Abigail ran the local post office and gave birth to the first of eight children.

In 1910, Balis, Abigail and their eight children left their first home in Clear Creek and moved to the current home in Viper, Kentucky, the small town where Abigail grew up. To support his large and ever-growing family, Balis and his older children farmed the approximately 80-acre parcel of land he owned at the head of the holler in which they lived. Farming in the Kentucky mountains was not easy, as the land was steep and the soil was predominantly composed of rocks. Still, plowing with a mule and raising corn and sugarcane helped support the family. In addition, Balis would try his hand at anything new that came along. He continued playing fiddles and dulcimers at local dances, became the community photographer, sold spectacles out of a pre-ordered eyeglasses kit, and even went from house to house with a recording machine and let people listen to prerecorded songs at a nickel a play.

The material lifestyle of the Ritchies differs from what is common for people today. The family experienced the economic challenges faced by most of their neighbors in eastern Kentucky. For example, new shoes were a once-a-year treat for children in a large family, even if they outgrew them before a new pair was due. Store-bought food was limited to just the basics such as flour

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

and salt. Meat was usually limited to one or two main meals per week. A sense of joy was brought into family life through activities such as shared songs, games, and stories.

The Ritchie children's great grandfather Solomon had emphasized the value of education, and his grandson, Balis, taught school himself, leading all the children to be encouraged to incorporate formal learning into their lives beyond the basics they learned in the one-room school system. To accomplish this, they took advantage of the settlement schools in the area by sending their children to Pine Mountain Settlement school in Harlan County, Kentucky or the Hindman Settlement school in Knott County, Kentucky.

The Christian missionary settlement school movement started in the nineteenth century in England as a social welfare project to provide education for under-privileged children. In America, it first began in urban communities such as the Henry Street Settlement in New York City but eventually spread to impoverished rural areas like the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Kentucky. Balis' maternal grandfather, Solomon Everidge, is credited with bringing settlement schools to eastern Kentucky. Family lore is that in 1899, Everidge, who was 80 years old at the time, walked 22 miles barefoot to meet with settlement teachers and, with an offer of free land, recruited them to open the first rural settlement school in the United States in Hindman, Kentucky. Within a few years, Pine Mountain Settlement School was also established. Both schools recognized the important role that singing played in the lives of the mountain folks and incorporated daily singing and the learning of passed-down family songs and traditional crafts into their daily curriculum of activities.

Balis arranged for all of his children to either attend a settlement school when they were of age or take advantage of other educational opportunities that became available. In such a way, all 13 children (baby Opal had died at 1 year of age) received a high school education. Nine of them went on to receive college degrees. Considering the financial circumstances of Balis and his large family, such an accomplishment by an impoverished mountainside farmer living hand-to-mouth in one of the poorest regions in the country is simply astounding. If he had accomplished nothing else in his full life, this alone singled out Balis W. Ritchie as one of the most remarkable people ever from the heritage rich mountains of eastern Kentucky.

Balis was the one who taught Jean to play the dulcimer and instilled his passion for music and learning the songs of their heritage. Jean recalls in her book, *The Singing Family of the Cumberlands* (1955), that as a teenager she traveled from Viper to visit her elderly cousin, Jason Ritchie, in Knott County. Jason, a former lawyer, was known within the family as the keeper of the family history and family songs. Cousin Jason was also an accomplished musician and taught Jean several versions of the old ballads that had been passed down to him. She provides his version of "Fair Nottingham Town" in her book that he sang to her at this visit.

This recollection from the book is important historically because it establishes that Jean, from an early age was inspired by a family that valued and preserved its heritage. She sought out others who could teach her songs that she wrote down, learned and then shared with her family and others. Throughout this book, first published in 1955, Jean shared forty-four such songs woven within a colorful story of growing up in her home place. Jean relates how there were songs and

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

singing for almost all occasions. “We sang sort of to accompany the things that we did, accompany our lives, I guess,” Ritchie said in the documentary film on her life, *Mountain Born: The Jean Ritchie Story* (1996). “There was no teachers of singing. People just sang as a natural thing. The way they heard it from their mothers and fathers and grandfathers and grandmothers” (Stephen Winick, Library of Congress Blogs, June 11, 2015).

Cecil Sharp, noted folklorist, was an early visitor to the newly founded Hindman school. He collected the Ritchie version of the “Little Devils” from Jean’s older sister, Una, a young student there at the time (Paul Derienko, AMNY, June 18, 2015). Twelve of the fourteen Ritchie children made the long trek over the mountains from Viper to attend Hindman weekly. The Settlement schools provided the local youth with the opportunity to learn and value education, but the settlement schools also fostered pride and a connection with their mountain heritage and traditions. These values were evidenced in the Ritchie family, as nine of the fourteen children went on to attend various colleges and universities, a rare achievement for its time. They in turn taught their own children the family songs and returned frequently to the home place to reunite in song.

The Ritchie Home Place, to the present day, serves to keep the heritage and traditions alive, not just during the yearly family reunions, but as it now is being developed. The White House on the Home Place site has been returned to the original feeling in decor and there are photos and displays chronicling the stories, music and crafts of the family over time. The current generations are working on preserving the Doll House, maintaining the look and feel as it has stood for generations, as a gathering place for singing, dance, craft workshops and groups interested in folk heritage.

Evaluation of Jean Ritchie as a Significant Musician in the Historical Context

“As the ‘Mother of Folk,’ Jean is a living museum of impeccably rendered songs passed down from singer to singer, influencing and inspiring generations” —Joan Baez (quoted in Susie Glaze, *Folkworks, Jean Ritchie—The Mother of Folk Music*, Celebrating the release of “Dear Jean – Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie”, 2015).

“Jean Ritchie, an original Village folkie and Appalachian songstress known as the “Mother of Folk,” died on June 1 at the age of 92. Perhaps the most important singer, interpreter, and proponent of Appalachian traditions since Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882-1973), she had been part of the American folksong revival for about seventy years” (Stephen Winick, Library of Congress Blogs, June 11, 2015). Her work over decades has served as a bridge between traditional and contemporary folk music.

In 2002, her contributions to music were honored with the prestigious National Endowment For The Arts Bess Lomax Hawes National Heritage Fellowship Award”. By the end of her life, Ritchie had recorded more than 30 albums and authored seven books about folk music and her family. In addition to her Fulbright fellowship and the National Heritage Fellowship Award, Jean was also honored with the Folk Alliance Lifetime Achievement Award. She was also one of 12

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

musicians (along with Loretta Lynn, Rosemary Clooney and the Everly Brothers) chosen for the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame's first inductees in 2001. Other notable awards included The *Rolling Stone* Critics Award and *Melody Maker* Award for best folk album, 1977, for *None But One*. She was also awarded the University of Kentucky Founders Day Award and a place in their *Hall of Distinguished Alumni*, the *Phi Beta Kappa Certificate of Honor*, a 1983 *Doctor of Letters degree from the University of Kentucky*, a 1991 *Honorary Doctor of Arts from Berea College*. In 1984 she received the *Milner Award from the Kentucky Arts Council as Outstanding Kentucky Artist of the Year*. In 1986, Ritchie Family Week was declared, and Jean accepted Proclamations from the City of Lexington, Kentucky, the State of Kentucky, the National Congress, together with a Capitol flag and a letter from the President of the United States, honoring Jean and her family's contribution to music. Her book, *Celebration of Life*, won a national prize upon publication. Her Biographies appear in *Folksingers and Folk Songs in America*; *The Encyclopedia of Folk, Country, and Western Music*; "Current Biography"; *Kentucky Country*; and *Who's Who of American Women*.

Evaluation of the Integrity Between Jean Ritchie's Significance and the Physical State of the Property Today

There is an interesting dimension to this property's integrity that does not exist with other nominated places. Integrity is usually the relationship between just two things: our appreciation of a property (i.e., its "significance") and the physical dimension of the property as it exists today. In this evaluation, a third factor exists: the authentic connection that Jean Ritchie maintained with the property. The nominated property was a place that created her, in a sense, and she carried her affection for this place within her heart and expressed it within her music and writing. Her importance as a Folk Music figure cannot be separated from her home. This distinguishes her from many of her popular Folk Music peers of the early and middle 1960s, whose places of origin are less known or less intimately integrated into their music. Much of the soul of Jean Ritchie's music lies in its relationship to the place that Jean returned to frequently: her family home in Viper. She eloquently describes her love of the mountains and her connection to her heritage in her songs and in her book *The Singing Family of the Cumberlands*. Not only did her songs speak of her connection to her homeplace and her mountain neighbors, but she also wrote songs that witnessed the effect of resource extraction upon herself and people in this area ("Black Waters," 1971). She also wrote about the hardship and disasters caused by the region's dependence on coal mining (e.g., "Blue Diamond Mines" (1969), and "The L & N Don't Stop Here Anymore" (1965), which lament the economic hardships of the laid-off coal miners due to the move to strip mining, mountaintop removal and subsequent closing of local rail lines. Her music rang true insofar as it had an integrity with her place of origin, which includes the nominated property.

In 1983, Jean spearheaded and convinced her siblings that the property and homes needed to be incorporated into a family trust with the sole purpose of encouraging and ensuring that the family always had the home place to gather to share their stories, their songs and heritage. The Ritchie family reunion became an annual event at their Viper home, ongoing now for 44 years.

The basis for National Register eligibility under Criterion B is when the "(p)roperty is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past." It calls us to reflect on which physical aspects

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

of the property are most crucial in supporting our ability to understand and appreciate Jean Ritchie, an important artist and member of the mountain culture. Of the 7 aspects of integrity, location and setting will be most important to maintain that appreciation, and materials and design that have been retained will also reinforce those understandings of Jean Ritchie and her story.

The Ritchie Family Homeplace maintains an integrity of **location**. It is the place which has been at the center of Jean Ritchie's development into an adult and as an articulate spokesperson for the region. There is a continuity of place in this property, within Jean Ritchie while she was alive, and continues with the surviving members of the Ritchie Family. This is the place where she and the other family members learned and practiced the act of singing as part of their daily life. The place is very often the subject of, or at least the allusion within, the traditional songs that became the basis for Jean Ritchie's renown. Jean Ritchie left this location when she became known to the world, but she became known because she sang about this place, which for her, centered upon the nominated property. For us, this location is the most important place to understand if we wish to understand what Jean Ritchie's music explains.

The Ritchie Family homeplace maintains an integrity of **setting**. The property still sits in a rural locale, which has seen few modernizations since the Period of Significance. The widening of Kentucky Highway 7 is perhaps the greatest change to the immediate setting since the 1970s, but that transportation improvement has not led to a great deal of residential or industrial development in the immediate vicinity of the property. The visitors to the Ritchie Family Home Place, now supported by tourist rentals, encounter a surrounding area that looks, feels, and sounds much as it did during the Period of Significance. This surrounding reinforces the character of daily life that shaped the Ritchies into the people they became. The isolation of the Home Place required a self-sufficiency for the family. The presence of a mountainous terrain imposed physical challenges in wrestling a living through a farming existence. The remoteness from urban areas and concerns gave much of the character to this setting for the family historically and for visitors today. Much of the lyrical content of Jean Ritchie's music involves a relationship between the singer and her surroundings. That connection is perceivable today through the setting which remains intact for those who visit the site.

The Ritchie Family Home Place maintains many aspects of their **materials** and **design**, such that it seems appropriate to judge that both integrity factors are present. The two houses have had exterior changes in the form of new siding applied, reoriented openings, and rooms added. Those changes happened during the Period of Significance and continued after the Period of Significance. The White House, built in 1936 when Jean was about 14, was itself a building-sized addition to the family's original dwelling, which could no longer accommodate a family whose size and needs went beyond the ability of one house. Jean Ritchie witnessed her family adapting their living circumstance as needed and as resources allowed, and her music arose from that culture of resilience and adaptability. Within a life that accepted physical change to their dwelling as a positive response to current needs, we still have two dwellings whose designs are clearly products of their time. The earlier house is a bungalow form from its erection during the early twentieth century. The White House remains a version of the Minimal Traditional trend in housing that began to be popular in the 1930s. The two residences display less of the integrity of

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

materials that is expected from properties that qualify for the National Register due to their high style architectural value. That expectation for eligibility is that the materials of houses of architectural significance change very little. At the Ritchie Family property, the truth is that these two houses were undergoing change during Jean's lifetime and continued being changed after she left for college. The ancillary features, such as the chicken coop and the root cellar, balance this change, because they are as they were when constructed, and so have very high material and design integrity, and reinforce the view of the nominated property as a historic subsistence farm. Whatever historic materials were changed or covered up on the property do constitute a break with the factual past, where materials derive a power from their ability to help us say "Jean Ritchie touched this surface." Knowing that Jean Ritchie continued to return to her birthplace, erected a cabin on the adjacent property, and through her career allowed the nominated property to inspire her music, must be considered as actions that in some way testify to the power of the materials and design of these two houses to have value *to her*.

The value of this nomination action will come from its planning benefit to the owners of the property. This nomination form conveys the National Register's view toward the integrity relationship: that the materials and design of a property are about to reinforce our view of the property's significance. This integrity analysis will give the property owners greater clarity for future rehabilitation work so that they might prioritize retention of historic materials or might expose what original materials remain underneath layers of newer materials.

Because the property retains integrity of location, setting, design, and some integrity of materials, the property supports our integrity of **associations** with Jean Ritchie, which is the basis for claiming the property meets Criterion B. The property is thus eligible for National Register listing.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- (1) Susie Glaze, Folkworks, JEAN RITCHIE – THE MOTHER OF FOLK MUSIC Celebrating the release of "Dear Jean – Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie", 2015
- (2) Stephen Winick, Library of Congress Blogs, June 11, 2015
- (3) John Cheves, Lexington Herald Leader, Nov. 12, 2015
- (4) Paul Derienko, AMNY, June 18, 2015
- (5) Diana Turnbow, Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative, December 8, 2022
- (6) Mandalit del Barco, NPR, June 2, 2015
- (7) John Passmore, WNYC, June 2, 2015
- (8) Jeffery Lee Pluckett, Louisville Courier Journal, June 4, 2015
- (9) Kathryn Keiserman, Cow Neck Peninsula Historical Society
- (10) The Guardian, obituary to Jean Ritchie 2015, re quoting from the Louisville Courier-Journal interview 1989
- (11) Ryan Book, Music Times, June 5, 2015
- (12) Jeff Giles, Ultimate Classic Rock, June 4, 2015
- (13) Silas House, Northern Kentucky Tribune, June 7, 2015
- (14) Steve Chawkins, Los Angeles Times by, writer June 4, 2015

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

- (15) Margalit Fox, The New York Times, June 2, 2015
(16) Fiona Ritchie and Doug Orr, Wayfaring Strangers, The University of North Carolina Press, 2014
(17) Singing Family of the Cumberlands, 1955, Oxford University Press

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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): PE 6

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property .84 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.190709° | Longitude: -83.151055° |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Richie Family Home Place
Name of Property

Perry County, Kentucky
County and State

4. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

UTM References

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description

The property proposed for National Register listing is the non-forested area within a larger parcel defined by the Perry County Property Valuation Administrator as parcel 121-00 00 020.00, owned by the Ritchie Family Trust. The nominated area is less than one acre of that parcel, south of Slabtown Hollow Road, and whose dimensions are shown with greater detail on page 4 above.

Boundary Justification

This boundary is the minimal area that has the greatest concentration of physical intactness of location, setting, and built features, by which to understand and appreciate the feeling of place that constitutes home for Jean Ritchie, and what home meant within her music and to her musical development.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _____ Jonathan Kermiet/Trustee, Ritchie Family Trust organization: _____
street & number: _____ 3704 West St. ,, _____
city or town: _____ Lansing _____ state: _____ Michigan _____ zip code: _____ 48917 _____
e-mail _____ jonkermiet@gmail.com _____
telephone: _____ 517-528-4184 _____
date: _____ December 10, 2023 _____

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: _____ Ritchie Family Home Place

Richie Family Home Place

Perry County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

City or Vicinity: Viper
County: Perry
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Jon Kermiet
Date Photographed: November 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 13 total # of photos__.

KY-Perry County_Ritchie Doll House_0001

Photo taken Nov. 2023 facing west from 25 ft. of East front of Doll House

KY-Perry County_Ritchie Doll House_0002

Photo taken facing south, Nov. 2023 from 22 ft. of North side of Doll House

KY-Perry County_Ritchie Doll House_0003

Photo taken facing east, Nov. 2023 from 25 ft. of Westside of Doll House

KY-Perry County_Ritchie Doll House_0004

Photo taken facing north, Nov. 2023 from 30 ft. of Southside of Doll House

KY-Perry County_Ritchie Doll House_0005

Photo taken facing NW, Nov. 2023 from 10 ft. from SE of Southside of Doll House showing ongoing construction

KY_Perry County_Ritchie White House_0001

Taken Nov 2023 facing west, 30 ft of East front of white house

KY_Perry County_Ritchie White House_0002

Taken Nov 2023 facing SE, 30 ft from northside of white house

KY_Perry County_Ritchie White House_0003

Taken Nov 2023 facing east, 25 ft of back westside of white house, showing Hand hewn local stone

KY_Perry County_Ritchie White House_0004

Taken Nov 2023 facing north, 30ft from southside of white house

Non-contributing- Original Root Cellar

Taken Nov. 2023, Facing N from 15ft. from off back deck

Non-contributing- Original Chicken Coop

Taken Nov. 2023, Facing NW from 25ft.

Non-contributing- Original Outdoor Kitchen

Taken Nov. 2023, Facing NW from 25ft.

Non-contributing- Original Outdoor Kitchen on back of current deck of doll house

Taken Nov. 2023, Facing North from 38ft.