1. NAME
COMMON: Lea Springs

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER: 11 mi SW of Rutledge off US 11W on Lea Lake Road
CITY OR TOWN: Rutledge
STATE: Tennessee

3. CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY (Check One)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

OWNERSHIP
- Public
- Private
- Both

STATUS
- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- In Process
- Being Considered
- Preservation work in progress

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
- Yes
- No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Religious
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)
- Museum
- Scientific
- Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
OWNER'S NAME: Tillman J. Keller
STREET AND NUMBER: 3558 Iskagna Drive, S. W.
CITY OR TOWN: Knoxville
STATE: Tennessee

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Grainger County Register's Office
STREET AND NUMBER: Courthouse
CITY OR TOWN: Rutledge
STATE: Tennessee

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE OF SURVEY:
DATE OF SURVEY
- Federal
- State
- County
- Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN:
STATE: Tennessee
CODE:

RECEIVED
MAR 21 1975
NATIONAL REGISTER
Lea Springs, or Lea Lakes as it is sometimes called, is located just off present day Highway 11-W, the road which many of the early settlers traveled into Tennessee.

Built around 1819, the brick home was of the traditional Federal design with a back ell. The back portion of the ell contained the kitchen and house servants' quarters. The second floor of this section of the house can only be reached by a separate staircase and the rooms are not as ample in size as the other rooms of the house. The main portion of the house has large commodious rooms with high ceilings and large windows. The front entrance has the typical fanlight window over the door. The interior has been well maintained with new plumbing and electrical systems recently installed.

Two major alterations are the two-story porch added after World War II and a large dining room and ballroom. This latter addition was constructed during the 1920's. The brick on the original part of the house have been painted white.

In front of the house are the famous mineral springs which made Lea Springs famous during the 1880's. There are large maple, oak, and elm trees around the house and two well stocked lakes near the southwest side. The house sits on a secluded road. The grounds are well maintained by Mr. Tillman's staff thus giving the home a truly antebellum aura.
Lea Springs is significant in several respects. First, it reflects the prominence of the Lea Family of Grainger County. Second, and more specifically, it stands as a reminder to the achievements of its remarkable builder, Pryor Lea. Finally, the house reflects the area's fame as a resort and health region.

Major Lea, Pryor Lea's father, came to the region in the early 1790's. He traveled with Daniel Boone during his second trip through Cumberland Gap. Major Lea's sons played important roles in East Tennessee's development as well as the development of the West. One son, Albert Lea, was the first to survey the lands gained in the Louisiana Purchase and there is a town in Minnesota named after him. Major Lea's home, Richland, the oldest in the county, is also being nominated to the Register.

Pryor Lea was Major Lea's first son. In 1818 Pryor married Maria Kennedy whereupon his father gave him the several hundred acres which comprised Lea Springs. The brick home is generally assumed to have been started in the spring of 1819. Slaves were used as labor and practically all material was obtained from the site.

In 1824 Pryor Lea served as United States Attorney for Tennessee. He was secretary of East Tennessee College, later known as University of Tennessee, from 1826-1827. From 1827 to 1831 he served as a United States Representative from Tennessee at the time that David Crockett and James K. Polk were serving.

In 1836 Lea moved his family to Mississippi where he established a law firm with his brother, Luke. Because of his strong interest in education it is not surprising that he was one of the co-founders of the University of Mississippi and member of its first board of trustees.

In 1846 Lea again moved, this time to Texas. There he was credited with helping establish the railroad systems of the state and helping write a substantial portion of the new state's laws. Born in 1794, Pryor Lea died at the age of 85 in 1879.

After Pryor Lea had moved from Lea Springs the property changed hands several times. By the 1880's it had become one of the South's
**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**


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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:** 9

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME AND TITLE:** Jon Coddington  
**ORGANIZATION:** East Tennessee Development District  
**STREET AND NUMBER:** 1810 Lake Avenue  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Knoxville  
**STATE:** Tennessee  
**CODE:** 47

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**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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

- National [ ]
- State [ ]
- Local [x]

**Name:**  
**Title:** Executive Director  
**Organization:** Tennessee Historical Commission  
**Date:** 3/4/75

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**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

**Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation**

**Date:** 3/29/75

**ATTEST:**

**Keeper of The National Register**

**Date:** 5/28/75
8. **Significance, Continued**

most famous resorts. Its fame was primarily due to the hot sulphur springs near the house.

The financial panic of the 1890's signaled the decline of Lea Springs. However, during the 1920's interest was again revived in Lea Springs as a health resort. It was at this time the large dining room and ballroom was added. The investors' plans were never fully realized due to the Great Depression and Lea Springs fell into disuse. After World War II Lea Springs was purchased by Tillman J. Keller who has restored it to its original grandeur. Mr. Keller uses Lea Springs primarily as a weekend residence. He has also acquired approximately 1,000 acres of farm and woodland around the house.