

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 Siler City City Hall

other names/site number Siler City Town Hall or Municipal Building

2. Location

street & number 311 N. Second Avenue n/a not for publication

city or town Siler City n/a vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Chatham code 037 zip code 27312

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.)

Stephen Alrow SHPO 9/17/98
Signature of certifying official Title Date

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

Siler City City Hall
Name of Property

Chatham Co., NC
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 | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> | structures |
| | | objects |
| <u>2</u> | <u>1</u> | 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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: city hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls granite

roof asphalt
other cast iron

Narrative Description

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

Siler City City Hall
Name of Property

Chatham Co., NC
County and State

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1939-1940

Significant Dates

1939 -1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Markley, R.R., Architect

Phillips, Carl, Contractor

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Siler City City Hall
Chatham County, NC

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Narrative Description

The Exterior and Setting

Erected between 1939 and 1940, the handsome two-story, seven-bay Colonial Revival structure Siler City City Hall at 311 North Second Avenue is typical of public buildings erected under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Located one block west of the central business district, the building faces a main thoroughfare and the impressive brick edifice of the 1928 First Baptist Church to the east. The city hall building is faced with a veneer of uncoursed rusticated, rectangular-cut gray granite, distinguishing it from other public buildings in the area which are mostly brick. A low retaining wall, also of granite, borders the driveway on the north side and a paved parking lot is located to the west (rear) of the building. A similar wall delineates the lawn on the east (front) side and on the south side, separates it from a parking lot that is situated below street-level. Also located on the south side of the building is a frame structure sheltering a bell from the Thompson School building which previously stood on the property from 1887 to 1897. While the 1981 frame structure is a noncontributing resource, the network of walls is counted as a contributing resource. A set of concrete steps on axis with the building entrance ceremoniously leads visitors from the sidewalk along North Second Avenue onto the oak-shaded front lawn, completing the dignified impression of City Hall.

The front (eastern) facade of the City Hall building is dominated by a two-story, tetrastyle pedimented pavilion with a portico *in antis*. A keystone and louvered roundel accents the stone-covered, modillioned tympanum of the front-gabled pediment. Behind the two cast-stone fluted square columns and flanking matching pilasters, the entry door is flanked by full-height multi-paned sidelights and surmounted by a six-light transom. On either side of the entry door is a tall narrow twelve-light window. The main entry was formerly filled with six-paneled double-leafed doors that were replaced by a single glass door in 1974. Entrance to the balustraded upper-level porch is gained through a fifteen-light single-leaf door. Ten-light windows flank the door, with similar windows located on the end walls of the porch.

Ten windows are visible on the front facade. In the central pavilion, 2 six-over-six sash windows with keystone cast-stone lintels occur between the first and second levels, lighting symmetrically flanking interior stairwells. Eight symmetrically-placed windows mark the end-bays. Those windows at the first level exhibit twelve-over-six sash, keystone lintels, and decorative wooden base panels. Those at the second story have six-over-six sash, plain surrounds and granite sills.

Three original interior end-chimneys and two more recent chimney stacks punctuate the roof. The end-chimneys are of constructed of brick and veneered with rusticated granite; the later brick-faced chimneys are visible from the west (rear) facade.

The same classical elements that define the front elevation of the building are present in the rear (western) facade and are largely unaltered from the date of construction. These include two multi-light double-hung windows with twelve-over-six lights on the first level and six-over-six lights on the second level. Granite keystone lintels surmount all windows. The roof-wall junction at this end has a slight cave overhang and is lit with a roundel similar to that of the front facade. There are two entry doors on the northern-most end of the building with frame porticoed stoops added in the 1960s and in 1986.

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The northern and southern facades maintain much of the same classical balance evident in the more public facades. This balance is disrupted only where a need for interior lighting occurs. Windows, where asymmetrically placed, correspond to interior stairwells. In addition, a basement level is evident on the south side.

The Interior

The plan of the T-shaped concrete- and brick-structured building is basically the same as when construction concluded in 1940. The main entrance opens into a foyer with a set of “dogleg” stairs on each side. The foyer leads to a central corridor lined with offices on the first floor and offices and a city council chamber on the second floor. A fireman’s hall with a brass sliding-pole was originally located at the northern end of the building. A large auditorium, which also served as a community meeting hall where plays were staged to entertain town citizens, was located on the west side of the south end of the building’s second level (Construction documents, 1939). When the auditorium was remodeled in the 1960s, the ceiling was lowered with an acoustical tile installation that obscured the eight windows. Also at this time, the exposed brick walls were covered with simulated wood paneling. In 1970, the room was remodeled for use as city council chambers and a courtroom. The judge’s bench was located on the raised area of the former stage platform. A 1995 restoration sought to recreate elements of the original courtroom by removing the acoustical ceiling panels and replacing the simulated wood paneling with sheetrock. Additionally, the chair railing and baseboard molding were carefully reproduced using original architectural detail drawings as a guide (K. Graybeal interview with Helen Buckner, March 24, 1998).

While the basic plan is unaltered, the interior finishes have been refurbished and the rooms somewhat reconfigured—alterations necessitated by the changing functional needs of the growing community. The brick remains exposed on the walls of the lower-level finance offices. The brick on the lower portion of the main corridor walls and stairwell walls was sheetrocked in 1985. The area on the west side of the building was formerly a garage for the town’s two fire trucks. When this area was converted into offices for the Chamber of Commerce in the 1960s, the garage openings were infilled with solid granite block and covered with simulated wood paneling on the interior. A window and door were inserted into the infilled wall. This west side area was sheetrocked circa 1972 and is currently serving as the City Manager’s offices (K. Graybeal interview with Wanda Ingold, Finance Director, March 25, 1998). The southern portion of the building that now serves the police department had housed the public library and the public health department from 1940 until circa 1967 (Town Commissioners’ meeting minutes, p. 145). An elevator was added in 1996 adjacent to the north stairwell.

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Chatham County, NC

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Statement of Significance

As one of three extant Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) buildings in Chatham County and as the county's most impressive civic building erected during its period of significance, the 1939 Siler City City Hall building is significant under Criterion C for *architecture*. Typical in style, material and function of buildings erected under the auspices of the W.P.A. during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the handsome granite-veneered structure presents an authoritative countenance, appropriately alluding to the governmental functions it houses. A Colonial Revival influence informs the building's central pavilion with pedimented tetrastyle portico *in antis*, its entry elements, and its multi-light double-hung windows. The only building in Chatham County that was erected prior to the 1970s specifically to serve as a town hall, the dignified edifice has remained largely intact since its construction, particularly on the exterior.

Designed by architect R.R. Markley of Durham, North Carolina, and constructed by local contractor Carl Phillips, the building was erected at the close of the Great Depression- a period when local governments were held accountable for devising more efficient methods of operation while endeavoring to provide better service to an increasing population. The grandly- and solidly-presented building is symbolic of this new focus of local governments on their increasingly greater role in serving the interests and activities of individuals, organizations, and governmental agencies.

The period of significance for the City Hall- from 1939 to 1940-- is the period during which the building was constructed. The period of significance ends with the completion of the building given that most of the fundamental changes in the town's demographics and local government policies that gave rise to the need for a new city hall occurred in the years leading up to this period.

Historical Background

Siler City began in the late nineteenth century as a small trade center at the intersection of present-day Routes US 421 and US 64, and was noted for its various small industries. The first mayor, J.D. Guthrie was elected to serve the two-year term between 1887 and 1889. In 1895 the North Carolina General Assembly returned to the people the right to elect county commissioners by direct vote. The first elected town council on record for Siler City is listed for the year 1915. This governing body soon came to be called the Siler City Town Board of Commissioners. William Owen Mann was hired as city clerk in 1925 and served in that capacity until 1964, but the Board of Commissioners regulated finance. This form of government operated in Siler City until the first city manager was hired in 1960 (files of the city clerk of the Town of Siler City).

During the early 1930s, at the outset of the Great Depression, social and economic affairs were playing an increasing role in the interests and activities of governmental agencies nationwide. Individuals and a growing number of professional, business, and social organizations turned more often to their local governments as the common agency for the solution to common problems. The novel social concept of government as a service agency for community development had become prevalent, and this philosophy was epitomized by the word "commonwealth" which had come to mean "common wealth." As citizens demanded more services from local government, its role and structure expanded and its costs increased; thus citizen taxes became more burdensome. This trend, however, was apparently accepted by a majority, and was an inevitable

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result of the increasing number and complexity of social and economic problems arising from a growing urban population linked together by progressively-improving transportation and communication facilities (Lefler 1956, p. 766).

Thus, the social and economic problems brought on by the Depression inspired the implementation of large-scale relief and welfare programs which emanated from the Roosevelt administration's New Deal Policy and have continued to remain the central focus of local governments today. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), a federal program established to initiate public projects that would create jobs without competing with private business, was established to combat unemployment during the Great Depression. While community initiatives usually originate from local pride and prosperity, the W.P.A. projects were a unique historical event- a joint-effort by citizens, local government, and federal government to meet local needs. The program created jobs that focused on meeting public needs, such as the necessity of new public buildings to serve community or municipal functions.

Toward the end of the Depression, in the late 1930s, there was a nationwide call for local governments to focus on economizing and operating more efficiently while continuing to provide greater service to increasing numbers of citizens. In Siler City, accommodating the needs of growing citizenry during this period included opening the City Hospital in 1937 and the establishment of a new Greyhound bus service. By 1940, a new post office building had been constructed in the business district (Hadley 1971, p. 219). Siler City Town Commissioners' meeting minutes reveal that issues for consideration by the board at this time included street paving, sidewalk installation, tax assessment and collection methods, approving funds for power lines, and the establishment of a public library and a Public Health Department clinic (Town Commissioners' meeting minutes, May 31, 1940, p. 145). Chatham County newspapers announced "considerable building activity" in Siler City between 1939 and 1940, including a new motor company building and theatre (Chatham Record, December 1939 and January 1940).

Out of this increased and newly diversified mercantile and industrial activity grew a need for additional administrative and judicial facilities throughout the state. In Siler City, the need for a new city hall was identified, and at a regular meeting of the Board of Town Commissioners on Friday, July 22, 1938, contractor G. Paul Phillips was instructed to apply to the W.P.A. for funds for the building (Town Commissioners' meeting minutes, p. 44). As with most public works projects of the time, the City Hall project sprang from necessity. Prior to the current building's construction, municipal services operated out of a small two-story 1926 brick building (demolished in 1940) located on the northeast corner of Matthews Street (now North Second Avenue) and McLean Street (now East Third Street). This building housed the offices of the mayor and town clerk, a court room, a town jail, and a garage for the town's new fire truck (Hadley 1971, p. 55 and Sanborn Map of 1930). But from about 1910 to 1930, community meetings and gatherings took place at another location- the second floor of the C.D. Riddle Building at 109 North Chatham Avenue. This space was called "Riddle Hall" or "Town Hall" and it served as the town's main facility for public events such as reunions, political rallies, plays and entertainment by local talent and traveling shows. It was fitted with a Venetian scene drop curtain, footlights, and dressing rooms (Hadley 1995, p. 6).

The site chosen for the new city hall was that of the Thompson School, a private school that operated in Siler City from 1887 to 1897 and was torn down in 1932 (Sanborn Map 1930; Board of Town Commissioners' meeting minutes dated July 26, 1930, November 11, 1931 and April 22, 1932). William Owen Mann, the town clerk and treasurer, signed a purchase agreement on January 23, 1939, paying \$1,340 as a twenty-percent deposit on the lot. The town bought the property for

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\$6,701. On February 1, 1939, the Board of Town Commissioners, represented by Mayor O.B. Reitzel, signed a letter of agreement hiring Durham architect R.R. Markley to design a two-story municipal building and local contractor Carl Phillips to supervise its construction under the auspices of the W.P.A (Town Commissioners' meeting minutes, p. 45). Markley also provided the 1940 renovation plans for the brick Colonial Revival Sampson County Courthouse erected in 1904 in the town of Clinton, North Carolina (Bishir and Southern 1996, p. 408).

Under the supervision of Mann and Carl Phillips, construction of the City Hall building began in the first months of 1939, using granite shipped from a Randolph County quarry eight miles west of Siler City. The owner of the quarry, R.F. Hedrick, built his home in Siler City of the same granite; however, the house is no longer standing. Stone cutters sized the rock on site for the building and a surrounding stone wall. In late September 1940, the building was completed, with the total cost of construction being \$73,289- the W.P.A. providing \$51,000 for labor and materials, and the town of Siler City supplying \$22,289. After a year of occupancy, the building was dedicated on November 11, 1941. The opening of the building generated much interest and pride and was considered by local political leaders to be one of the most significant events to have occurred in Siler City. After its completion, the building housed among other functions, a fireman's hall, a public library and the health department until about 1967 (Town Commissioners' meeting minutes, p. 145). An auditorium on the second level also served as a community meeting hall until about 1960. The main function of the building, however, was to provide space for a number of city departments and offices including the town's police department, administrative offices, and county magistrate and courtroom, each of which it currently houses. Thus, the City Hall remains at the Siler City government's functional core and is a testament to a need well met.

After World War II, issues surrounding the quality of government services, as well as education, transportation, and industry returned to the forefront of civic and economic life in North Carolina. Counties and municipalities were no longer dependent upon national defense to contribute to their economic base, and thus were compelled to become more economically diversified. But the nation's participation in the War had created a residual watershed for development in Chatham County as it had in counties nationwide. Thus, little change was seen in the nature of Chatham County's economy immediately after World War II, but demographic changes were evident with the increasing population. In 1945, the Institute of Government at Chapel Hill conducted an extensive study of how city and county government systems in North Carolina responded to the demands of a growing citizenry. In addition to numerous statewide laws affecting local governments, some 750 local acts launched changes that year to various county court and city hall procedures. The study reported that the 1945 legislature considered a great number of bills especially relating to fiscal affairs and local taxation in an effort to determine the most proficient use of increased revenue from the citizen tax base (Institute of Government, July 1945, p. 11). During the 1950s, Chatham County's population grew 5.5 percent, to 26,785, but during this same period, the town of Siler City experienced its largest growth ever with an increase of over 100 percent from 2,501 to 4,455 when the town limits were extended (Osborne and Seldon-Sturgill 1991, p. 40). Thus, the completion of a new building to house Siler City's municipal government facility in 1940 was timely given that it was on the cusp of a period of burgeoning population growth which necessitated greatly expanded municipal services.

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Architectural Context: 1930s and 1940s Public Buildings in Chatham County

Given the historically agrarian economic base of Chatham County, few civic buildings were erected other than churches and schools. Especially few are those civic buildings erected between 1920 and the 1950s. Siler City's 1939 City Hall was the only building in the county built during this period to serve exclusively as a municipal government facility. The practice of erecting buildings to serve as town halls did not occur in other towns in the county until the 1970s. The municipal governments of these towns originally operated out of adaptively-reused buildings or portions of buildings erected for other uses, a practice which is still common in towns across North Carolina (Osborn and Seldon-Sturgill 1991; Randolph County Historical Society 1980, pp. 142-143).

In the first two decades of the twentieth century a general air of prosperity pervaded Chatham County but was thwarted by the Great Depression and returned only gradually to the county thereafter. A few building trends from the previous century continued, but increasingly, technologically inspired nationally-popular styles and standardized forms came to predominate over the earlier, more vernacular approaches to public buildings. Those public buildings that were erected during the 1930s and 1940s, including school buildings, often embodied nationally popular styles such as Greek Revival, Colonial Revival, and Art Moderne and were often more stylistically sophisticated than residential architecture. As the Queen Anne style waned, the Colonial Revival style gained preference in public architecture and returned to a more restrained approach with its symmetry and simpler, classical exterior detail (Osborn and Seldon-Sturgill 1991, p. 49).

Brick-molding machines, which came into use at the turn-of-the-century, facilitated the use of brick in the implementation of the Colonial Revival style and the modernistic styles, and the material began to be used more frequently in commercial and public structures in the state. By the 1930s, brick was the preferred material for schools, churches, and commercial structures. These trends in material and style are evident in the architecture of two early 1930s school buildings in Chatham County, both now demolished: the 1932 modernistic Bonlee Elementary School building erected just south of Siler City and the 1935 Colonial Revival Goldston Elementary School (Osborn and Seldon-Sturgill 1991, p. 44 and p. 198; Hadley 1971, p. 292).

The onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s greatly curtailed the construction industry on the private front, and the principle patron of architects during the late 1930s was all levels of government- federal, state, and local- assisted by the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) (Bishir 1990, p. 448). The W.P.A. was a federal program initiated in 1935 to meet employment needs on a local level by providing jobs through the construction of public buildings. A collection of W.P.A. buildings in Siler City, including the stone-veneered City Hall and post office buildings, and the frame Siler City High School gymnasium (Siler City High School NRN 1998), are still in use today and present an architectural record reflecting Depression-era civic activities in a small southern town. The 1939 City Hall displays a solid civic conservatism in its Colonial Revival elements and granite veneer, lending to the building's symbolic impact as a government facility. The United States Post Office, located on East Raleigh Street in downtown Siler City and erected in 1940, is a handsome one-story building which, like the City Hall, is Colonial Revival in style.

W.P.A. projects in North Carolina reflected the trend towards applying the popular Colonial Revival and modernistic styles of Art Deco and Moderne- styles which often informed public works buildings such as water plants (Bishir 1990, p. 448 and Bishir and Southern 1996). Stone was a material often used in W.P.A. buildings in the western section of the state

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where it was abundant, but its use was rare in Chatham County as well as in eastern and other piedmont counties, where brick was the most popular material for public buildings (Osborn and Seldon-Sturgill 1991, p. 44). Thus the granite of the City Hall and post office buildings in Siler City distinguish them from other public buildings in the mid- and eastern sections of the state. The policy of the W.P.A. was that indigenous materials were to be used in order to maximize local employment. Thus, the use of brick from local suppliers was encouraged; however, the granite used in the construction of the Siler City City Hall and post office buildings was indeed obtained from a local quarry located eight miles from Siler City in Chatham County. Two nearby examples of W.P.A. projects rendered in brick in Chatham County include the 1938 addition to the 1881 County Courthouse in Pittsboro, and the 1938 Asheboro City Hall in adjacent Randolph County (Hadley 1971, p. 68; Randolph County Historical Society 1980, p. 142). Although political controversy surrounded the validity and purpose of the W.P.A. relief program, the importance and impact of W.P.A. projects is evident in their continued use today in housing vital community services in Siler City as well as in many towns across the country (Lefler 1956, p. 782).

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Chatham County Historic Architecture Survey Committee.

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Sanborn Maps for Siler City, 1930. Located at the Chatham County Public Library.

Town Commissioners' meeting minutes for the Town of Siler City, 1938-1940. Located at the Siler City Town Hall Finance Department.

Section 10: Geographical Information

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the nominated property encompass the portion of the city-owned tract located within and including the granite stone walls encircling the north, south and east sides of the building and including the sidewalk on the west (rear) side as delineated by the dashed line on the accompanying Siler City Property Index Map.

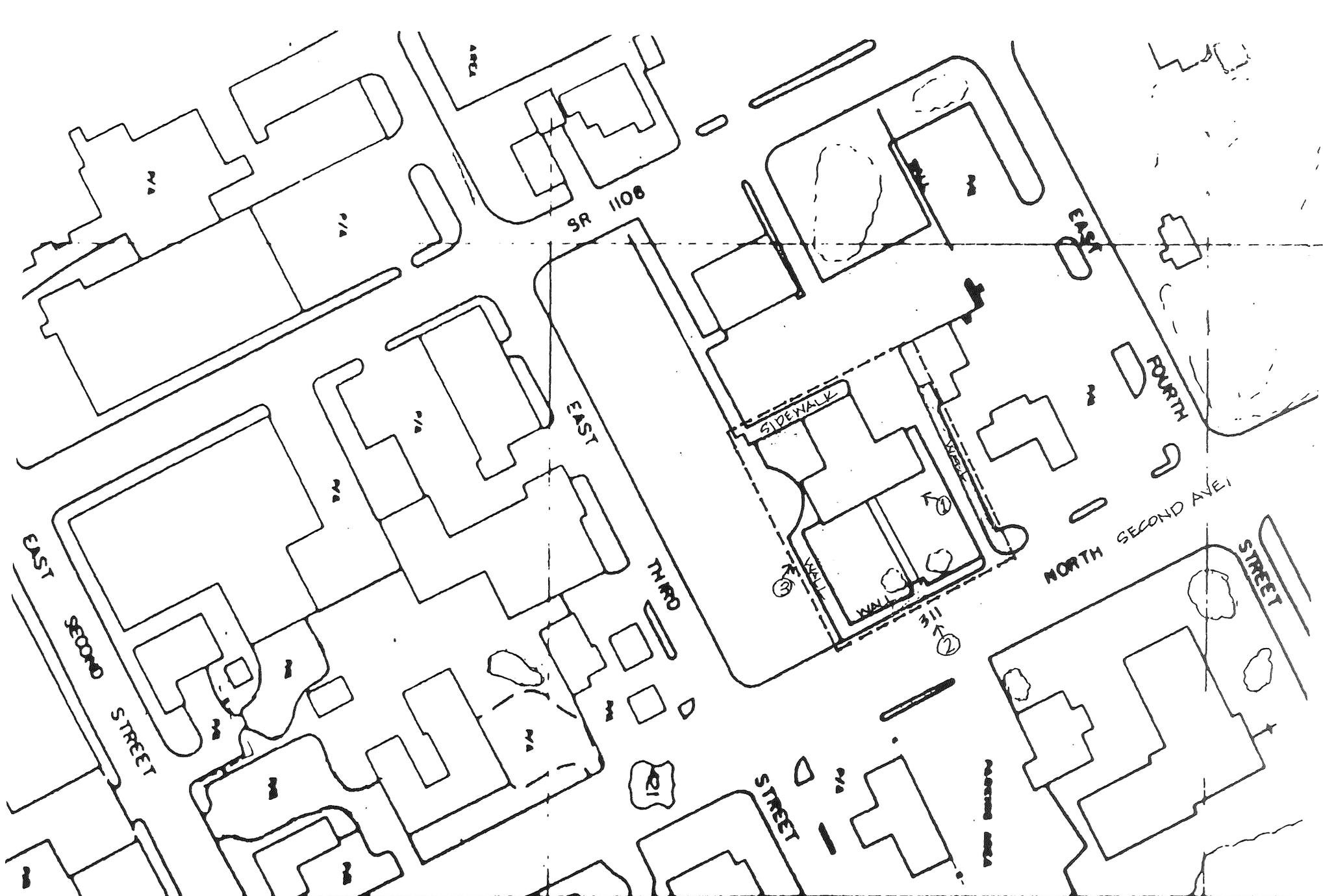
Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the nominated property encompass approximately .6-acres of the original one-acre city land tract which retains its integrity of historic setting. Intact elements include the granite stone walls on three sides of the building and the large oak trees shading the front lawn. The remainder of the original tract was not included given that its historic character has been altered by parking lot pavement.

Photograph Key

All photographs were taken on September 12, 1997 by Kaye Graybeal. All original negatives are located at the State Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh, NC.

- 1.) East (front) and north facades- camera facing southwest
- 2.) East (front) facade- camera facing west
- 3.) East (front) and south facades- camera facing northwest



CITY HALL
311 N. SECOND AVE.
SILER CITY
CHATHAM CO.
SCALE: APPROX. 1" = 100'



--- National Register Boundaries

