

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCERS use only
received _____
date entered _____

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Speight House and Cotton Gin

and/or common

2. Location

street & number E. Church Street extension
(NE side jct. NC 32 & US 17 Bus.) _____ not for publication

city, town Edenton _____ vicinity of congressional district First

state North Carolina code 37 county Chowan code 041

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name J. Gillam Wood

street & number Hayes Plantation

city, town Edenton _____ vicinity of state North Carolina 27932

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chowan County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Edenton _____ state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date _____ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The W. O. Speight House is a highly picturesque dwelling built of brick laid in one-to-seven common bond and executed with an exuberance characteristic of the Queen Anne style, which is unusual in the Albemarle Sound vicinity where traditional Greek Revival forms lingered long into the twentieth century. Moreover, extensive use of exposed brick, especially for ornamental details, as found in the Speight House, is uncommon among Queen Anne houses. In addition to the dwelling, the site contains numerous dependencies, including a small brick smokehouse, a brick cotton gin, and various frame outbuildings.

The house, two stories plus attic, has an irregular L-shaped plan. The main block, containing four corner rooms on each floor, is six bays wide and four deep, with three full-height projecting demi-octagonal bays: one located on the northern end of the main (northwestern) facade and two on the southwestern elevation. The northeastern rear room of the main block projects one bay outward beyond the body of the house. Attached to the eastern end of the rear elevation is a three-bay square service wing housing a first-story kitchen and second-story sleeping quarters. A two-story porch, located on the southern end of the rear elevation, was enclosed and remodeled in the late 1920s. A small one-story brick garage covered by a bellcast mansard roof was recently added along the three northern bays of the northeast elevation. The asymmetry of the floor plan effectively asserts the formal independence of each room division; however, the roof, through the very complexity of its massing, unifies the house through the use of gable and cross gables to clearly mark the interior room divisions.

Four flat-paneled, richly corbeled neo-Jacobean chimneys punctuate the roof. The core of the roof consists of a rather small center hip which is connected to multiple cross gables. The roof is sheathed with slate shingles and each ridge line is trimmed with ornamental cresting, which terminates in a fleur-de-lis at the apex of each gable end. These gable ends carry a full pediment and are pierced by a window; the rear one contains a single round-arched window, while the remaining gable ends contain small Palladian ones. Especially rich is the treatment of the broad overhanging eaves which are supported by thick boldly molded brackets. Pierced brackets, in the form of elongated cyma recta curves, each accented by a star in its angle, ease the transition from each polygonal bay to the gable end above it. The cornice consists of three corbeled courses beneath a saw-tooth band of brick. Full-height brick pilasters serve as ornamental buttresses, marking both the corners of the building and the divisions of the projecting bays.

Windows generally contain one-over-one sash in the main block and two-over-two in the ell. Each window is set in a segmentally-arched wooden surround featuring a stylized garland applied in low relief above the upper sash. The surrounds are each surmounted by three courses of molded headers laid like radiating voussoirs. The window sills consist of broad strips of rock-faced granite.

The main entrance, located off-center to the west, is treated in the same manner. It is a double leaf door, with two heavily molded raised panels per leaf, capped with a single light transom. The soffit and reveals are dramatized by similarly molded raised-panels. On the granite door sill appears the carved legend: "W. O. Speight. - 1900."

A spacious veranda wraps around the house and the western half of the southwestern elevation. A small pedimented gable protects the steps leading up to the porch entrance. The northern corner of the porch sweeps outward into a squat, domed pergola capped by a bulbous turned finial. The porch roof is hipped and sheathed in standing seam tin. The roof is supported

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Description (Cont'd)

by large rectangular-in-section brick piers which rest on sturdy brick plinths. Each pier is capped by a pair of scroll brackets. Formerly the porch was enclosed by a balustrade whose pintles are still visible in the brick plinths. In addition, a photograph of about 1908 reveals that the brick piers are a relatively recent addition; in place of the present brick piers, tapered wooden columns, three to each plinth, originally supported the porch roof.

The interior of the main block, which consists of four corner rooms on each floor, with the front western room serving as the stair hall, contains Neo-Classical Revival woodwork typical of the turn-of-century. All rooms are trimmed with a broad baseboard featuring ovolo, cavetto and bead moldings and similarly treated picture and cornice moldings. The stair hall, in addition, is skirted by a flat-paneled wainscot, each panel of which is sheathed with thin beaded ceiling. A heavily molded ovolo and scotia chair rail runs across the walls on both levels. The first story only contains a handsome parquet floor.

Interior door and window surrounds are symmetrically molded with square, beveled cornerblocks inset with roundels. Each door contains four raised panels above which is a single light transom. A folding double door connects the northeastern rooms on each floor.

The principal stair is a huge two-run dog-leg stairway designed in the robust Eastlake style. The first light, which rises front-to-back, extends into the hall with a balustrade on either side. The molded handrail is supported on thick, turned balusters. There are four pairs of boldly turned and chamfered newels ornamented with pinwheel roundels by heavily molded nosing.

Mantels throughout the house are generally large, elaborate and classically inspired. However the mantel in the first floor northeastern front room is especially striking with its rich surface treatment and picturesque curves. The mantel has a handsome cast-iron summer grate cover highlighted by a naively painted landscape on the flue cover. A curvilinear surround with exaggerated guilloche molding connects the large projecting floral bosses at either end of the frieze to each other. An ogee-arched over mantel frames a like-curved mirror.

Southeast of the house stands a one-story hiproofed smokehouse measuring one bay square. The building is built of brick laid in one-to-seven common bond with a sawtooth brick cornice above three courses of corbeling. An almost identical structure with segmentally arched windows is farther east.

Located northeast of the house is a cotton gin, also built of brick laid in one-to-seven common bond. The gin, like the house, has an L-shaped plan; the main block, one-story plus a loft, is six bays long and three deep, and the ell, a story taller, is two bays long and four deep. A one-story shed is attached to the northeast elevation of the structure. Each block is covered with a standing seam tin roof and contains segmentally-arched windows with four-over-four sash.

Sprawled across the eastern section of the site are several small weatherboarded one-story dependencies, intended as servants quarters and storage sheds, as well as an octagonal chicken coop.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1900–House, 1901–02 Gin Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located just within the Edenton town limits, the Speight House is an imposing two-and-one-half story Queen Anne style dwelling built of brick and covered by a hip roof intersected by multiple cross gables. Constructed in 1900 as a plantation residence, the house is stylistically rare for its vicinity and shows all the exuberance of Queen Anne design. Moreover, the extensive use of exposed brick for ornamental details as found in the Speight House is also uncommon among Queen Anne houses. The builder, Will Oscar Speight, was the founder of the Edenton Brickworks and obviously intended his house to be a tour-de-force example of the decorative and compositional qualities to be found in brick construction. The house was once the center of a large cotton and peanut farming conglomeration, and numerous early outbuildings remain standing on the site, including an impressive two-story brick cotton gin, a small brick smokehouse, an octagonal frame chicken coop, and several small one-story weatherboarded dependencies used as laborers' quarters and storage sheds. The house and site are today representative of the region's late nineteenth century agricultural rejuvenation following the dark years of the Civil War and its aftermath.

Criteria Assessment

- B. Associated with W. O. Speight, who was the founder of Edenton Brickworks which supplied brick for many municipal projects in the Albemarle region, including the Currituck Courthouse (NR).
- C. Constructed in 1900 as a plantation house and stylistically rare for its vicinity, the Speight House shows all the exuberance of Queen Anne design and was obviously intended to exemplify the potential of brick construction.
- D. The Speight house and cotton gin are likely to yield information about late 19th-early 20th century life, farming and ginning practices, and brick construction techniques.

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Historical Significance¹

Although the historic Chowan County Town of Edenton, North Carolina's third oldest, saw little or no bloodshed during the Civil War,² the economic impact of the nation's greatest tragedy upon the town was disastrous. All property in Negro slaves was naturally gone forever; thus the formerly productive and valuable farm land which surrounds Edenton, and from which she had long benefitted, now became a costly liability in the absence of an adequate labor force. Yet to those persons who emerged unscathed financially from the war, it was a time of opportunity as well as tragedy; for the financial ruin of the antebellum gentry provided opportunities to acquire lands which had theretofore been unattainable. Such was the case with one James A. Perry and his brother Augustus, both of whom bought up in the early 1870s enormous tracts of rich farm land just east of what was then the town limits of Edenton.³ These purchases included the eminent Strawberry Hill plantation and the land which later became the heart of the Speight farm (including the site upon which the house and cotton gin now stand).⁴

In early 1878 James A. Perry was married to Rosetta Hobbs, and a daughter named Minnie Lee was born of this union that December. Tragically, however, both parents died three years later. Young Minnie was subsequently raised at Strawberry Hill (NR - Chowan County) by her uncle Augustus A. Perry and at Hertford in Perquimans County by an aunt, Mattie E. White. As the sole heir to her father's estate, young Minnie stood to gain a sizable inheritance upon reaching majority age.⁶ Moreover, Augustus A. Perry bequeathed one-third of his Strawberry Hill estate to his "beloved niece Minnie" upon his death in 1891. Thus a legitimate heiress Minnie Lee Perry, undoubtedly was one of the leading belles in Chowan and Perquimans counties. Guardianship records show that she was educated at boarding schools in Suffolk and Petersburg Virginia.⁸ However, at the age of fourteen and apparently with the consent of her guardian, she was married on July 4, 1893, to Will Oscar Speight, a successful twenty-year-old farmer and merchant of Hertford. The newlywedded Speights soon afterward moved to Edenton, where W. O. Speight established a brickyard and assumed managerial control with his wife of the Perry lands.

W. O. Speight's "Edenton Brickworks" operated successfully until its cessation at the beginning of World War One. The company provided much of the brick building materials for the Albemarle region, including the brick used in the construction of the Currituck County Courthouse and in an addition to St. Ann's Catholic Church in Edenton, among others.¹⁰ As a result of his success in the brick business and following the final settlement of the Perry Estate in the late 1890s, the Speights decided to construct a large plantation house to serve as their residence and which to center their farming operations around. According to family tradition, an architect from Norfolk, Virginia, was employed, and Minnie Lee Speight helped in designing the house, having hallways and closets omitted because of a childhood fear of such.¹¹ As mentioned, Will Oscar Speight obviously intended his house to be a tour-de-force example of brick construction, and the exuberant Queen Anne style dwelling (naturally built of Edenton brick) was completed in late 1900.¹² The brick smokehouse and large brick cotton gin were constructed the following two years.¹² Leasing the majority of their extensive farm acreage to tenants, the Speights managed a farming operation which produced annually seventy to ninety bales of cotton as well as a large variety of other crops.¹³ The Speight's new plantation dwelling remained their home for the rest of their lives, Mrs. Speight dying in 1949 and Will Oscar Speight in 1960.¹⁴ The house and farm, however, were sold in 1955

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Historical Significance (Cont'd)

to Gilliam Wood, an Edenton land magnate, who has since rented the dwelling to the Speight family.¹⁵ Only minor changes have been made to the house over the years, and it stands today as a symbol of the exuberance of the age in which it was built.

The structures of course are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structures. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details, are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Notes compiled by Mary Alice Hinson and Dru Haley, Speight House folder, Survey and Planning Branch files, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Survey and Planning Branch files.

²See Thomas C. Parramore, Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County and Edenton, North Carolina (Edenton: Chamber of Commerce, 1967), 72-82.

³See the Chowan County Deeds index (grantee) for numerous Perry citations. Microfilm copy, State Archives, hereinafter cited as Chowan County Deeds.

⁴Chowan County Deeds, Book B-2, p. 393; Book C, 464.

⁵Chowan County Estates Papers, James A. Perry and Augustus A. Perry folders, State Archives, hereinafter cited as Chowan County Estates Papers with appropriate folder.

⁶Chowan County Wills, Book E, 102, microfilm copy, State Archives, hereinafter cited as Chowan County Wills; Chowan County Estates Papers, James A. Perry and Augustus A. Perry folders.

⁷Chowan County Estates Papers, Augustus A. Perry folder; Chowan County Deeds, Book B-2, p. 393. Strawberry Hill was valued at \$31,535 in 1891.

⁸Chowan County Estates Papers, James A. Perry and Augustus A. Perry folders.

⁹Pasquotank County Marriage Register, Book 2, p. 28, microfilm copy, State Archives; Fisherman and Farmer (Edenton), 7 July 1893. Will Oscar Speight (1873-1960) was a son of Uriah and Sally Berry Speight of Hertford, Perquimans County. The Speight family of Perquimans was an old and distinguished family, both in farming and mercantile businesses.

¹⁰Speight House folder, Survey and Planning Branch files; Eastern Courier (Edenton), 12 July 1900.

¹¹Speight House folder, Survey and Planning Branch files.

¹²Speight House folder, Survey and Planning Branch files.

¹³Chowan County Estates Papers, James A. Perry and Augustus A. Perry folders.

¹⁴Chowan County Wills, Book i, p. 353.

¹⁵Speight House folder, Survey and Planning Branch files.

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Bibliographical References (Cont'd)

Manuscript Sources (Cont'd)

Lewis-Smith House, Raleigh - Survey and Planning Branch files

Contemporary Newspapers

Eastern Courier (Edenton)

Fisherman and Farmer (Edenton)

Secondary Sources

Parramore, Thomas C. Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County and Edenton, North Carolina. Edenton: Chamber of Commerce, 1967.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Manuscript Sources

State Archives, Raleigh - Chowan, Pasquotank, and Perquimans County Records
Federal Census Records, 1900

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5 (Approx.)

Quadrangle name Edenton, NC

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A 18 Lat. 36 07' 33"
Zone Easting Northing

B Long. 76 36' 30"
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The Speight House and Cotton Gin nomination include that triangular portion of land which lies between NC 32, the Old Hertford Road (US 17 Bus.) and Strawberry Lake. This area contains the house, gin, and associated outbuildings.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Description - Mary Alice Hinson, (former) Survey Specialist
Significance - Bruce S. Cheeseman, Researcher
organization Survey & Planning Branch
Archeology and Historic Preservation Sect date June, 1980
N. C. Division of Archives and History
street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone (919) 733-6545
city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

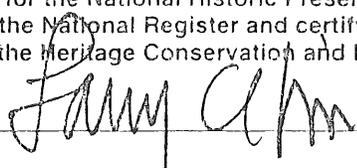
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 10, 1980

For HCRS use only

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

date

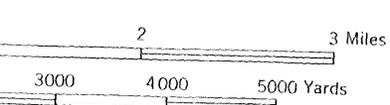
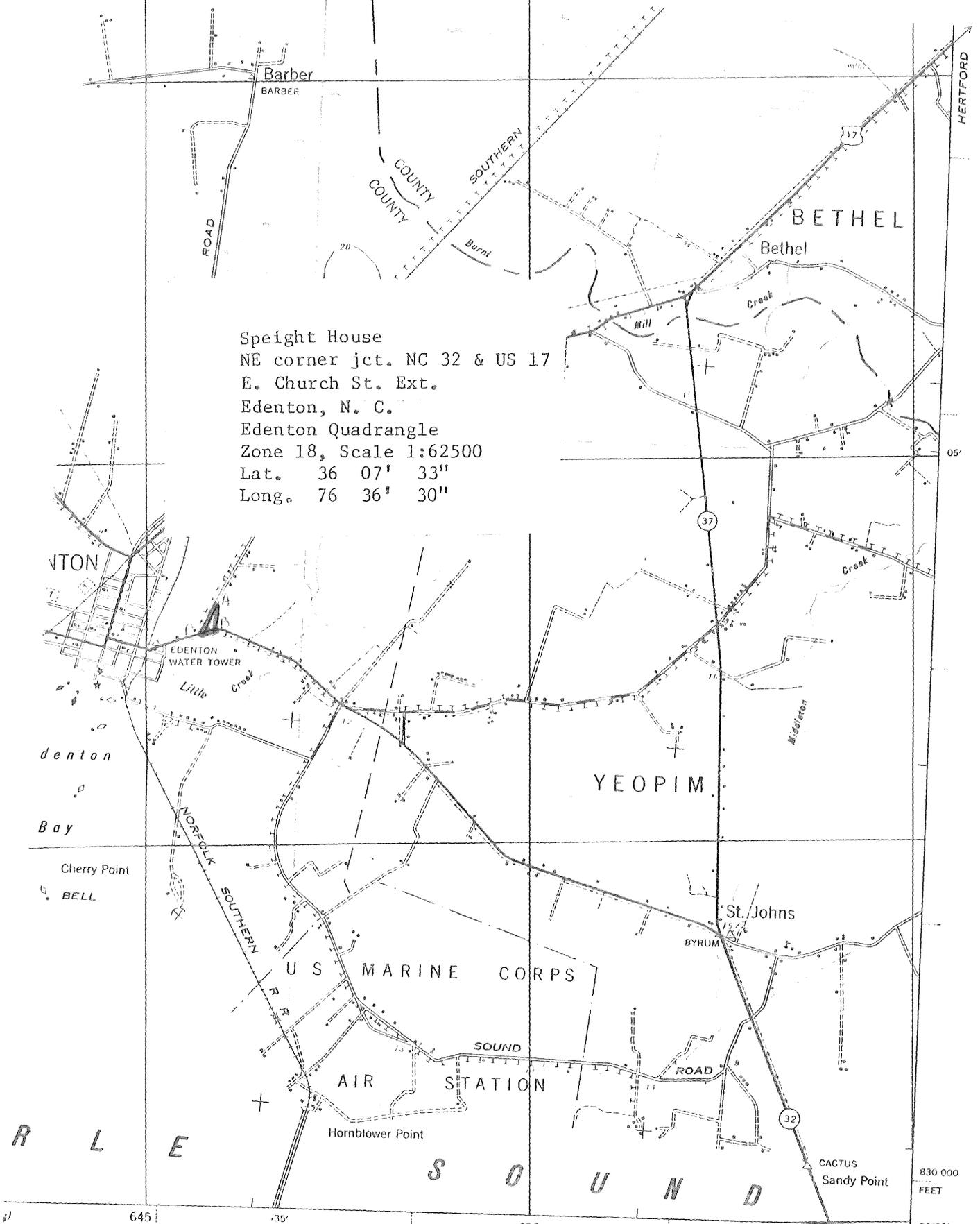
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

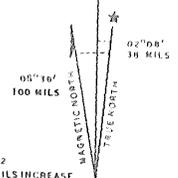
Chief of Registration

Speight House
 NE corner jct. NC 32 & US 17
 E. Church St. Ext.
 Edenton, N. C.
 Edenton Quadrangle
 Zone 18, Scale 1:62500
 Lat. 36 07' 33"
 Long. 76 36' 30"



MEAN SEA LEVEL (1929 ADJ.)
 DIRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS WHICH COME
 FROM THE NATIONAL ENGINEERING SURVEYING
 ENGINEERS, WASHINGTON, D. C.

APPROX MEAN DECLINATION 1942
 ANNUAL MAG. CHANGE 0.21--06 MILS INCREASE



2 730 000 FEET U.S. ROUTE 64 5.7 MI. 76°30'
 GRID TABLE, U.S.C. & G.S. SPECIAL PUBLICATION NO. 69
 (THE LAST THREE DIGITS OF THE GRID HORIZONTALS ARE OMITTED)
 THE X GRID IS INDICATED BY SHORT STIPS ALONG THE BORDER AND SMALL
 CROSSES WITHIN THE GRID OF THE MAP. THE LARGER CROSSES WITHIN THE
 MAP AND LONG STIPS ALONG THE BORDER INDICATE LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE
 TO 1000 FOOT GRID SYSTEM BASED ON NORTH CAROLINA PLANE
 COORDINATE SYSTEM

EDENTON, N. C.
 N3600-W7630/15

830 000
 FEET
 36°00'
 (COLUMBIA)

