

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| |
|--------------------------|
| STATE: North Carolina |
| COUNTY: Chowan |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| ENTRY DATE |

1. NAME

COMMON:
Edenton Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
See continuation sheet for boundaries

CITY OR TOWN:
Edenton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
First

The Hon. Walter B. Jones

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

COUNTY:
Chowan

CODE:
011

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress | Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Town |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Various owners

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Chowan County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Edenton

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey (various buildings)

DATE OF SURVEY: Various

Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D. C.

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
North Carolina

COUNTY:
Chowan

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|--|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One) | | | | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
| | (Check One) | | | (Check One) | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Edenton is perhaps more than most towns a product of its geography, having begun as the "towne on Queen Anne's Creek," an isolated village located where that creek and Pembroke Creek empty into Edenton Bay. The bay, Edenton's southern boundary, is a large inlet flanked by Reedy Point on the west and Horniblow's Point on the east, and opening into the great Albemarle Sound. Like nearly all of North Carolina's harbors, the sound is cut off from the Atlantic by the treacherous Outer Banks. To the west of Edenton, separating it from the body of North Carolina, is the broad Chowan River, and to the northeast, toward the rest of the Albemarle, is Bear Swamp. For most of its history, the town was approachable by land only from the north by difficult roads, and the nature of the Albemarle Sound and the Outer Banks made arrival by boat something of a challenge. (In the early days when difficult transportation was universal, Edenton was a flourishing trade center, but with time its isolation became more and more of a barrier to commerce.)

The town was laid out in the standard grid pattern, with its orientation to the bay reflecting the importance of the waterfront, and though Edenton is no longer a port, the town plan and water orientation are essentially unchanged. The courthouse green extending down to the bay remains open, and nearly the whole waterfront is lined with buildings overlooking the bay. Also unchanged is the traditional location of the commercial district, on Broad Street extending up from the wharf area, one block west of and parallel with the green. For years Broad Street centered on and was lined by rows of great trees; the central row has fallen to "progress," but with this exception the trees that shade the quiet streets of Edenton remain essentially undisturbed. Following the early boom times, growth has been slow--sometimes nonexistent--so that today the scale, plan, and leisurely atmosphere of Edenton are remarkably unchanged.

Unlike some other towns whose architectural fabric includes representatives of several periods, Edenton is not made up of separate stylistic sections but is rather a rich and intriguing mixture, with unexpected juxtapositions that create dramatic visual foils: for example, the robust Jacobean-Georgian Cupola House is complemented by the richly ornamented metal facade of the Leary Building (1894) across Broad Street. Similarly, much of the special character of the West King Street area comes not only from the inherent excellence of the buildings there but also from the remarkable contrast that brings out the individuality of each--along one block stand major examples of the Federal (Beverly Hall), the Greek Revival (Pembroke Hall), the Victorian (Wessington House), and the Queen Anne styles (Powell House). The Courthouse Green, too, is a delightful combination of styles--crowned by the serenity of the Georgian Chowan County Courthouse, the green is flanked by a pleasant collection of Federal, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, and Bungalow styles, all related by scale and material. Throughout the town, the simple clarity of eighteenth century forms and the satisfying texture of hand-worked wood and brick exist in vibrant counterpoint to the irregular massing and the exuberant machine-made ornament of the Victorian era.

In its early days Edenton was not a particularly impressive place, at least according to the 1728 description of William Byrd, who noted the

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|------------------|------|
| STATE | |
| North Carolina | |
| COUNTY | |
| Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

(Number all entries)

7. A

"Dirty Slash . . . all along the back of it, which in the summer is a foul annoyance." He went on, "They may be 40 or 50 Houses, most of them Small, and built without Expense. A Citizen here is counted Extravagant, if he has Ambition enough to aspire to a Brick-chimney." It was by all accounts a crude, ruffianly place during the proprietary period, with little to commend it to the visitor. In such a place the Cupola House--built for Richard Sanderson of Perquimans Precinct in 1725 and the only building remaining of this period--must have been considered opulent and its great brick chimneys evidence of considerable "Ambition." With its New England-Jacobean overhang, the richness and vigor of its interiors, and the remarkable survival of nearly all its original fabric, the house is of major architectural significance to the nation.

With time and prosperity Edenton became more civilized; Moseley's 1733 map shows three roads into Edenton, and the village a small area of a few blocks abutting on Broad Street. A visitor of 1739 described it as "a little place, beautifully situated by the water-side," an impression confirmed by visitors of 1745, who enjoyed its "handsome Tavern". By 1769, as shown on C. J. Sautier's map, it was a well-laid-out town extending back about eight blocks from the waterfront, with a wharf at the ends of Broad, Court, and Granville streets. Labeled were the "Church, Courthouse, Goal [Gaol], School-house, Tann Yard, Wind Mill, Flag Staff, and Wharf." St. Paul's Church (a building since the 1730s) was completed by this time and is in Thomas Waterman's words, "the ideal in village church designs," rarely rivaled in this country. Though restored after interior fire damage, the brick structure with its unusual apse, simple tower and fine brick quoins and door and window frames, is essentially unchanged. Also new in 1769 was the Chowan County Courthouse, one of the finest Georgian buildings in the country. Its architect is unknown, but its attribution to John Hawks, designer of Tryon Palace, seems eminently reasonable. Classically academic, the five-bay brick structure features a three-bay pedimented central pavilion with a pedimented Tuscan frontispiece. It is crowned by a handsome two-stage cupola. The interior has on the first floor essentially the original court room and on the second, what is said to be the largest paneled room in the colonies. With its "excellent proportions and . . . restful dignity," the courthouse is indeed "the finest Georgian courthouse in the South."

In contrast to these imposing major buildings are the smaller frame dwellings of Edenton, some of which are believed to be those shown on the 1769 map. One of the early house types used was the gambrel roof house, of which three remain: the small two-bay western half of the Leigh House (120 West Queen Street) is thought to be one of the two built by Gilbert Leigh in 1757. The porch roof is framed into the gambrel roof. Somewhat larger is the Charlton House (206 West Eden Street), built between 1761 and 1769, which also has a shed porch framed into the main roof--a typical Edenton feature. Much original fabric, as well as some early outbuildings, survive. The third gambrel roof house is apparently of somewhat later date--the Booth House

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|------------------|------|
| STATE | |
| North Carolina | |
| COUNTY | |
| Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

(Number all entries)

7. B

(Granville at West Gale Street), built about 1777-1791.

Also thought to have been built by 1769 is the Hewes House (105 King Street), a two-story formal house five bays wide with an interesting central entrance with fluted Doric pilasters supporting a segmental-arched transom. The Edmund Hatch House (200 East King Street), believed to have been built in 1745, is a simple two-story L-shaped house with a hip roof. The Craven House (a two-story side-hall-plan dwelling, at 110 West King Street) and the Leigh-Bush House (124 West Queen Street, a large two-story house with hip roof) have been considerably altered, but both are thought to incorporate pre-1769 structures. The large Greek Revival Ellison House may include a circa 1760 dwelling.

It is not known when Edentonians started building two-story houses with full-width double porches framed into the main roof of the house, but it was a style both aesthetically and climatically suited to the town, and it has been re-used--with variations of changing styles--throughout the last two centuries. It is interesting to note that this double-porch motif, prevalent in the West Indies, finds its northernmost mainland limit in Edenton and does not venture into Virginia. Eighteenth century examples include the Homestead (Water Street at the southwest corner of the green), a waterfront landmark with an interesting scalloped cornices and porches originally on all four sides; the Littlejohn House (218 West Eden Street), five full bays with a central entrance; the Millen House (207 East Water Street), a side-hall plan enlarged over the years; the Blair House (East Church Street), also a side-hall plan and one of the best-preserved of the type; the West Custom House (108 Blount Street); the Barker House (moved to Town Wharf) which evolved from a smaller house; and the Tredwell House (214 West Eden Street).

NT.

Examples of the type also exist in the Federal style. The primary Federal period example of the double-porch type is the Bond House (Court Street), built about 1804 and retaining much of its original fabric; this typically Edentonian building is one of the important elements of the green. Along with these localized versions of the Federal mode, Edenton also has other more typical exponents of the style. The town's most sophisticated Federal building is Beverly Hall (114 East King Street), built about 1810 as bank and residence; the original vault is still intact. The dignity of the facade is emphasized by the academic grace of the pedimented entrance porch. The main section of the James Iredell House (East Church Street) was constructed during the Federal period and features a handsome sheaf-of-wheat balustrade on the double porch. Near the Iredell House are the moved and separated parts of the Edenton Academy; the simplicity and craftsmanship of these functional buildings are typical of the Federal era. This same character is present in the Chowan County Jail, a two-story building of brick, some laid in English bond, with a corbel cornice and a quality of well-constructed sturdiness appropriate to the oldest still-used jail in the country. There are a number of other Federal period buildings and dependencies.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|------------------|------|
| STATE | |
| North Carolina | |
| COUNTY | |
| Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

(Number all entries)

7. C

Because of decreased activity in the post-1830 period, there are relatively few buildings of the antebellum period; however, two of the town's most ambitious houses date from this era and exemplify the use of architect's published manuals; in each, the double-porch motif is again adapted to the current style. Pembroke Hall (121 West King Street) is a grand embodiment of the restrained Greek Revival style at its best, with double porches featuring "the most academic essays in the classical orders in Edenton." Both exterior and interior elements were apparently taken from Minard Lafever's Beauties of Modern Architecture (1835). Across the street from Pembroke Hall and next door to Beverly Hall stands Wessington House, the most grandiose and flamboyant structure in Edenton--and possibly in North Carolina. Adapted from William Ranlett's Architect . . ., its massiveness and fine, ornate eclectic detail are remarkable; the double porch motif is here translated into a great bracketed front porch and elaborate cast-iron balconies at both levels along the sides. An interesting functional structure is the Ice House, diagonally across the street from Wessington. There are also a number of smaller dwellings in the Greek Revival mode, including the Paine House (100 South Granville Street), a circa 1850 coastal cottage. The Ellison House (106 West King Street), possibly at core a small early house, is now a large, impressive Greek Revival double-porch dwelling. Also with a double porch is the Coffield House (209 East King Street), a massive two-and-one-half story structure with handsome early Greek Revival trim, whose porch, much of it original including a fine modillion cornice, has been embellished with Victorian ornament.

The second half of the nineteenth century of course brought new and unprecedented variety in architectural styles with the many revivals of romantic and exotic modes. Particularly well-represented in Edenton is the Gothic Revival. Some of the dwellings may be antebellum but are more probably post-war. Of particular significance is the number of "cottages" of the sort popularized by A. J. Downing; all are delightful, but most notable are two Gothic ones at 301 North Broad Street and 105 West Queen Street. Each has the steep gables and picturesque massing of the type, embellished with delicate sawn ornament. These unpretentious dwellings scattered about the town supply a charmingly playful element, a grace note, in the architectural composition of Edenton. Of particular interest is St. Ann's Catholic Church, erected in 1858. In most respects it follows the standard tenets of the Gothic Revival, but all openings are round-headed, making the building, in effect, a revival of the Romanesque. As such, it is the earliest example of the use of Romanesque elements in the state, as well as one of the few at this time in the country. There are also a number of more typical Gothic Revival churches. In contrast to the informality of the Gothic Revival dwellings is the dignity of the Italianate ones, the other revival mode that found expression in Edenton--mostly in the form of the later High Victorian Italianate. Most versions are frame, with polygonal projecting bays and interesting cornice treatment--including 206 and 208 North Broad Street, 307 and 309 North Broad Street; 205 South Granville Street is an unusually sophisticated brick example.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|------|
| STATE | North Carolina | |
| COUNTY | Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | | DATE |
| | | |

(Number all entries)

7. D

Along with the expanded vocabulary of styles came the new availability of elaborate ornament at reasonable prices thanks to mass production. There were in the late nineteenth century a number of saw mills in the Edenton area, and it may be that these were the source of much of the remarkable wealth and variety of sawn and spindle wooden ornament that enriches the Victorian houses and, in some cases, notably the Coffield House, some earlier buildings as well. Predictably, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century builder found the double-porch house an irresistibly suitable background for a splendid display of fancy work. Uniquely appealing is 215 South Oakum Street, where an otherwise undistinguished house is given architectural significance by the incredibly rich and complex ornament of the double porch, which features sawn symbols of sun, moon, comet, and star. None rivals this one, but there are many other examples of the type. At 107 West King Street the simple gable roof house has a double porch dripping with sawn and spindle work, and the gable end is elaborated with a fancy kingpost ornament.

The most prevalent identifiable style near the turn of the century was the Queen Anne mode; its irregular massing, rambling spaciousness, and many double and single porches accommodating varying degrees of ornament made it especially appealing. Probably the finest exponent of the style is the Powell House, 304 Granville Street; its scale, detail, and spectacularly dramatic massing make it a worthy neighbor of Wessington House and Pembroke Hall. Also notable are 305 and 306 North Broad Street, 202 West Queen Street, 203 East Water Street, and 205 East King Street, the latter an unusual brick example. There are also throughout Edenton many handsome Victorian houses of different types, ranging from the modest to the monumental. Their scale and material blend with the earlier buildings, and the ornament and irregular massing add variety. In the early twentieth century the Neoclassical Revival and Bungalow (113 West Church Street, 407 Court Street) styles achieved popularity, and these, too, harmonize pleasantly with the earlier fabric of the town, as do the later twentieth century buildings. Of particular interest in exhibiting the continued vitality of the double porch motif is the contemporary dwelling at 111 Blount Street--where the traditional double porch overlooking Edenton Bay has been reinterpreted in the clean lines and weathered natural wood of the late twentieth century.

Complementing the domestic architecture of Edenton is its commercial district, an area which apparently has ever been slow to change and has been since the earliest days located along Broad Street extending a few blocks inland from the water. Until the last decade of the nineteenth century there survived "an entire block of colonial buildings stretching from King Street to the county wharf, quaint old English structures fashioned of heart wood and almost the only business section of its kind left in America." "Cheapside," as it was called, was destroyed by a fire that threatened the whole town. The business section was soon rebuilt, and a number of handsome commercial structures remain largely unaltered from that time. Most important are the uninterrupted scale and lively facades of the unbroken blocks of the entire

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| STATE North Carolina | |
| COUNTY Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

(Number all entries)

7. E

commercial district. Within this well-preserved context, the J. N. Leary Building (1894) is the most remarkable, for both stories of the elaborate metal facade beneath its heavy bracketed cornice and parapet are intact. There are as well several other handsome metal-front buildings with elaborate detail and early twentieth century brick structures of varying degrees of elaborateness. The Taylor movie theatre is a splendidly flamboyant survival and still in use. The Bank of Edenton and the Bank of North Carolina are handsome representatives on a small scale of the monumental temple-form commercial structures of the early twentieth century. The former is especially notable with its well-executed metal entablature and stone columns and pilasters. Also interesting are the vernacular frame commercial buildings -- including temple-form ones at 104 and 108 South Oakum Street--that occur in mixed residential-commercial areas.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| STATE North Carolina | |
| COUNTY Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

(Number all entries)

2. Location

Starting on East Gale Street at the intersection with the eastern rear property line of South Oakum Street, thence south down said line to the north bank of Queen Anne Creek, thence west along the Edenton waterfront (north bank of Queen Anne Creek, and Edenton Bay) to the point where the waterfront intersects the western rear property line of Mosely Street, thence north up said property line to the southern rear property line of West Church Street, thence east along said line to a point midway between Mosely and Granville streets, thence north to the northern rear property line of West Gale Street, thence east along said property line to the eastern rear property line of North Broad Street, thence north along said line to Freemason Street, thence east along Freemason Street to the eastern rear property line of North Broad Street, thence south along said line to the northern rear property line of East Albemarle Street, thence east along said line for the width of one lot, thence south to the northern rear property line of East Gale Street, thence east along said line to Oakum Street, thence south down Oakum Street to its intersection with East Gale Street, thence east across East Gale Street to the beginning point.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The small coastal town of Edenton combines in unique fashion seldom rivalled in America architecture of exceptional quality and range with an idyllic atmosphere that comes from the survival not only of the fabric and scale but also of much of the leisurely charm of the past. The superb Georgian courthouse at the head of the green overlooking Edenton Bay, the Cupola House with its Jacobean features and vigorous early Georgian interiors, and St. Paul's Church with its simple dignity set off by the serenity of its ancient churchyard--these compose the most important group of Georgian buildings in North Carolina. Yet Edenton's architectural character stems as well from the Federal elegance of Beverly Hall, the Greek Revival monumentality of Pembroke Hall, and the magnificent eclecticism of Wessington. The significance of the town lies not in the presence of any single building but in its inimitable amalgam of variety and continuity, of the restraint of the Georgian complemented by the flamboyance of the Victorian, the simplicity of its cottages coexisting with the opulence of its mansions. Intermingled throughout the town are two-story frame houses with double porches. Though they date from many eras and occur in a variety of styles, their consistency of form, color (white), scale, and rhythm give a subtle cohesive quality to almost every block in the district. Besides its buildings, and, perhaps equally essential to the quality of the historic district, is the feeling of the place--created at least in part by its well-tended gardens, the great trees that line the streets, and, gleaming at the end of vista after vista, the smooth expanse of Edenton Bay.

After the failure of Sir Walter Raleigh's sixteenth century efforts to colonize at Roanoke Island, there was no English settlement in North Carolina until the mid-seventeenth century when Virginians began to drift into the Albemarle Sound region where good land was plentiful and cheap. By 1665 several families were living on the Albemarle Sound at the mouth of the Chowan River. The first Vestry Act of 1701 established there St. Paul's Parish (North Carolina's oldest), and a church was soon begun--which the parson himself described as "very sorrily put together." The western part of Albemarle County was known after 1685 as Chowan Precinct, and its court met at planters' houses, for no town had been established. In 1712, to end the difficulties of an itinerant court, the General Assembly voted to create a courthouse and to sell off lots to be located on Queen Anne's Creek. By 1715 the first lot was sold and three years later a frame courthouse and a public landing heralded the future importance of politics and trade to the settlement. After the death of Governor Charles Eden in 1722 "ye towne on Queen Anne's creek" was named "Edenton" in his honor. In the same year,

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|------------------|------|
| STATE | |
| North Carolina | |
| COUNTY | |
| Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

(Number all entries)

8. A

the assembly ordered most state functions to be centered in Edenton, though no "capitol" appears to have been built. In the 1720s and 1730s the town's growth was stimulated by burgeoning trade with New England merchants, who could "pick up a load of the products of Carolina fields and forests and sell it in the West Indies for the salt, rum and molasses so much desired in America." Mercantile wealth was accompanied by political power: for years the Albemarle dominated the province and most sessions of the assembly were held at Edenton. The Albemarle leaders long resisted demands for change from the men of the growing southern and western counties, but in 1746 the seat of government was ordered moved to New Bern by Governor Gabriel Johnston. The impact of moving the "capital" could have been disastrous for Edenton, for the loss of political influence was accompanied by a state of near anarchy, and trade was discouraged by increased attacks by Spanish privateers.

Fortunately, however, the stubbornness of the Earl of Granville spelled the difference between ghost town and boom town. When in 1729 North Carolina had been taken over by the crown, Granville was "the only one of the proprietors who insisted on keeping his property rights . . . [which included] half of all the area within the present State of North Carolina." Edenton became the site of the land office through which was administered Granville's "colossal feudal domain." All the business of surveying, entry-taking, sales, and rent-collection passed through the Edenton office. Granville's agent in Edenton was Francis Corbin, a "powerful and arrogant" man who was accused by his political opponents of "dishonesty and tyranny." Fortunately his taste exceeded his rectitude: it was he who acquired the Cupola House and he spent some money on its refurbishment. Corbin "drew money and influence to Edenton like a magnet," and the "land office" era brought unprecedented prosperity accompanied by new achievements in culture and architecture. Edenton's earliest extant buildings--and its finest--date from this period. St. Paul's Church, begun in 1736, was finally completed in the 1760s; its rectors--Clement Hall (1744-1759) and Daniel Earle (1759-1778)--were among the most distinguished clergymen in the colony. In 1767 the Chowan County Courthouse was built; its superb proportions and excellent craftsmanship testify to the confidence, pride, and sophistication of the town Edenton had become. Deed research and C. J. Sautier's map of 1769 suggest that as many as twelve other buildings may survive from this period as well. In addition, parts of early dwellings exist encased within later structures.

In the years leading up to the Revolution, Edenton's commercial prosperity continued, and much of her political power was regained. Edenton's importance in the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary periods stemmed mostly from the presence of four of the "most remarkable and gifted men of the age"--all of whom, born and well educated elsewhere, were attracted to the bustling life of the prosperous port town. Samuel Johnston came from Scotland as a child to North Carolina and later came to Edenton to study law under Thomas Barker (Barker House). In 1765 Johnston established a plantation at nearby Hayes, where he built up a library of 500 volumes. A man of superior ability

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| STATE North Carolina | |
| COUNTY Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |

(Number all entries)

8. B

and character, Johnston was one of North Carolina's chief leaders in the Revolutionary period and served as governor 1787-1789. Joseph Hewes, who came from New Jersey to become a prosperous shipping merchant, was one of North Carolina's three signers of the Declaration of Independence and became a key figure in the national wartime government, appointing his friend John Paul Jones to a commission in the new navy. Hugh Williamson, superbly educated abroad, had been "associated in scientific experiments with no less a savant than Benjamin Franklin;" he owned ships that traded profitably between Edenton and the West Indies, practiced medicine in Edenton, and later was appointed surgeon-general of the North Carolina troops. James Iredell (house on East Church Street), a brilliant young lawyer from England, took an active role in Revolutionary leadership and wrote a series of pamphlets defending the position of the colonists.

From the beginning, Edenton was embroiled in the movement toward Revolution. In 1773 Hewes and Johnston were members of the Committee of Correspondence, and in that same year Hewes, with John Harvey of Perquimans County, sent supplies to besieged Boston. Edenton's men were leading members of the aristocratic group of men who guided North Carolina from the early protests through the war years. Yet it was Edenton's women who gave the town a colorful place in the history of the Revolution in North Carolina. On October 25, 1774, fifty-one Albemarle women signed a resolution "not to drink any more tea, nor wear any more British cloth, &c. . . . [and] to give a memorable proof of their patriotism. . . ." The "Edenton Tea Party," memorialized in a British caricature of 1775, was claimed to be "the earliest instance of political activity on the part of women in the American colonies." Some of the women who signed it lived in houses that still stand, including Penelope Barker, who traditionally presided over the group (the core of the Barker House); Abigail Charlton (Charlton House); Sarah Littlejohn (Littlejohn House); Lydia Bennett (Leigh-Bennett House), whose husband, William, was a member of the Committee of Safety; and Sarah Valentine, whose husband bought the Leigh-Bennett House in 1777. The cast-bronze teapot on a cannon, standing near the green to the rear of The Homestead, memorializes the "tea party."

Early in the Revolution, the powerful British navy blockaded the chief American ports, but Edenton's harbor, protected by the hazardous Outer Banks, became a haven for trading ships and part of the vital lifeline to Washington's army. Shipping, though dangerous, brought such profits that according to a visitor, "Edenton found itself in such good circumstances that the inhabitants wished peace away." British troops never attacked Edenton, although raiding parties occasionally threatened Edenton Bay. It was to this bay that the Swiss Captain William Borritz brought Spanish cannons made of Swedish iron on order from the Virginia and North Carolina governments. They were dumped in the bay to hide them from British raiders. They were retrieved, and some still exist about the town. The Tredwell House (West Eden Street) was apparently built for Borritz, who purchased the unimproved lot in 1787. A number of other houses are believed to have been built in the 1770-1785 period,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
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including the Blair House (East Church Street) built by carpenter Richard Whedbee; the Booth House (North Granville Street), the West Custom House (West Blount Street) built between 1772 and 1777 for Wilson Blount, a merchant; The Homestead (East Water Street), built just before the Revolution for Robert Smith, a partner of Joseph Hewes; and the Millen House (East Water Street), possibly built for Quentin Millen, a Scots merchant and Tory.

The end of the war brought an economic recession, intensified by the generally chaotic state of affairs under the loose government of the Articles of Confederation. In the 1780s James Iredell, Hugh Williamson, Samuel Johnston, and the young Frenchman Stephen Cabarrus (who came to Chowan in 1781 and lived in The Homestead until 1786--all strong Federalists--led the fight for ratification of the Federal Constitution by North Carolina. Unsuccessful in 1788, the Federalists finally triumphed in 1789 at the Fayetteville convention with Johnston presiding and the brilliantly persuasive Iredell perhaps chiefly responsible for the victory. At Edenton, news of the decision was greeted joyously, with flags raised and salutes fired.

With this began an economic resurgence of the town; vast quantities of slaves, tobacco, grain, and naval stores passed through the port. Also during this period was begun a major agricultural project that would contribute to Edenton's economy: the firm of Collins, Allen, and Dickinson had purchased a great tract of marshy land on Lake Phelps in Tyrrell County, for which they imported many slaves to dig drainage canals to obtain timber and later to grow rice. The company traded through Edenton, and the partners had residences there. Especially notable was Josiah Collins, who, with his descendants, would play an important role in Edenton for decades to come. In 1786 he bought The Homestead and the Edmund Hatch House; the former has remained in the hands of his descendants.

Prosperity was accompanied by a state-wide "postwar revival of social, educational, and religious activities and institutions." Edenton's two strongly Federalist newspapers began--the Intelligencer was founded in 1788, and the State Gazette moved from New Bern in the same year. Hugh Williamson, though elected to the national House of Representatives in 1789, retired in 1793 to devote himself to his scientific studies and to literary pursuits, including a History of North Carolina, published in 1812. Under the classical pseudonym, "Sylvius," he wrote political and literary essays; James Iredell's brilliant papers were under the nomsde plume of "Marcus," "Sully," "Tiberius Gracchus," "True Citizen," and "Plain Farmer." Iredell, younger than the other major Edenton political figures, was the town's most illustrious son in this period; in 1790 he was appointed by George Washington to the first Supreme Court of the United States. With Anglicanism unpopular because of its British connections, other Protestant denominations gained a foothold in Chowan County, and Francis Asbury found his visit to Edenton in 1804 quite encouraging. Worldly pleasures thrived as well: a local dramatic society produced several plays and travelling theatrical groups stopped in Edenton from time to time. A musical society met in the courthouse--ladies on

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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| STATE North Carolina | |
| COUNTY Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
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Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, gentlemen and boys in the evening, and on Sunday, all in concert. An important step in education was taken in 1800, when Samuel Johnston and others organized the Edenton Academy, which opened in 1801 in a building across the street from the Blair House (East Church Street) and became a widely respected institution that lasted over a century.

Several other buildings remain from the early Federal period: the Chowan County Jail was constructed in 1788 from plans based on the 1773 drawings of John Hawks, architect of the Governor's Palace in New Bern; it is the country's oldest jail in continuous use. The Paxton House (West King Street) advertised as new in 1799, was built on property confiscated during the Revolution. The Bond House (Court Street) was built about 1804 for Joseph Blount Skinner, one of the town's most important and enterprising men in the early nineteenth century; living with Joseph was his younger brother, Thomas Harvey Skinner, who would be a founder of Union Theological Seminary. The core of the East Custom House (Court Street) was built by the elder Skinner as his law office after 1807. The house on West King Street, built before 1802, was bought in 1816 by James Iredell, Jr., later governor, for use as a law office. The most ambitious Federal house remaining in Edenton is Beverly Hall (West King Street), built about 1810 for John Bonner Blount, who had his private bank there as well as his residence. In 1811 it became a branch of the State Bank of North Carolina, which closed in 1835.

This prosperous era was interrupted by the British blockade of the War of 1812, which brought shipping to a standstill and the economy to the brink of collapse. The postwar rally, however, was the beginning of a new era of growth. Fishing--early championed by Parson Earle--was established as an important industry. Long part of the economy, its profits were expanded dramatically when Joseph Skinner opened an enterprise using vast nets 2,000 yards long, pulled in by horse-drawn windlasses and crews of slaves. At about the same time Skinner and others formed the Edenton and Plymouth Steam Boat Company, using the 89-ton twenty-horsepower side-wheeler Albemarle to carry passengers, produce, and horse and carriage. It was the Albemarle that carried President James Monroe and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun on their April, 1819, visit to Edenton and the Outer Banks, where they had come to consider an inlet through the banks which would have benefited Edenton's trade immeasurably. The Albemarle was sold after three years, and only intermittent ferry service existed after that.

By the mid-1820s, the growing use of the Dismal Swamp Canal had begun to put a severe pinch on Edenton, diverting so much commerce to the port at Norfolk that in 1830 the Gazette called the canal "to North Carolina a blood-sucker at her very vitals." The success of the canal meant too that the inlet through the Outer Banks, necessary for Edenton's continued prosperity, would never be made. Also in the 1830s, the railroad from Edenton to Norfolk was authorized, but, as a visitor reported, "with a suicidal perverseness the citizens will not build it, for the very politic reason, that though it could not but benefit Edenton it would also help Norfolk!" After 1837, Edenton's

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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| STATE North Carolina | |
| COUNTY Chowan | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
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trade and prosperity dwindled. In a period when the state as a whole flourished, a newspaper reported of Edenton in 1856, "Enterprise and energy is a stranger that will never visit this place and if he does he will stay only long enough to say, 'finished town' and turn his heel." One enterprise was an exception to this dismal state of affairs--the purchase in 1836 of the steamboat Fox, which commenced regular service between Edenton and the Norfolk Railroad via the Blackwater River. In 1850 this was supplanted by the inauguration of the Albemarle Steam Navigation Company, which put several vessels into service and continued the route for eighty years, connecting Edenton to Norfolk via boat and rail. The Edenton partners in the company were Dr. Thomas D. Warren and Edward Wood. The business flourished, and it was Warren who built about 1851 the grandiose eclectic villa, Wessington--quite an ambitious project at any time and especially so in the "finished town" of antebellum Edenton. Across the street from Wessington stands another major mid-nineteenth century house, Pembroke Hall, built for Mrs. Matthew Page, daughter of Josiah Collins, Jr., whose plantation at Lake Phelps was booming. A number of lesser buildings in town remain from this period as well as the many great plantation houses whose agricultural base remained stable despite Edenton's economic difficulties.

Edenton was only peripherally involved in the Civil War. Many of her young men enlisted, and her bells were collected and melted into gun-metal; many of the cannons bore names recalling their sources: the academy bell became part of the Edenton and the Episcopal church bell formed part of the St. Paul. Early in the war, Edenton was occupied by Union forces. There was brief but plucky resistance: citizens stood behind makeshift barricades armed with Borritz's old Revolutionary period cannons--of which a Union soldier claimed there was "more danger behind them than in front of them." Throughout most of the war, Edenton was visited by gunboats and ships in search of supplies, but no battles ever threatened the town. The chief source of trouble was the "Buffaloes", lawless gangs of deserters and Union sympathizers who plagued the county until they were finally eliminated by a unit of the Confederacy. An important Edentonian during the war was Dr. Edward Warren, of the plantation Albania, who served as surgeon-general of the North Carolina troops and later went on to a brilliant medical career at Johns Hopkins and abroad.

Like the rest of the South, Edenton emerged from the war in a "gloomy and depressed condition," and Reconstruction continued the downward spiral. The great plantations whose staple crops had kept Chowan County solvent were ruined or enfeebled; there was no capital to stimulate new industries. It was several years before events began gradually to rescue Edenton from depression and isolation. A telegraph line came to Edenton in 1879, and two years later the Norfolk and Southern Railroad came to Chowan County, followed by the Suffolk and Carolina line in 1887, though it was not run through to Edenton until 1903. The railroad brought industry: the Branning Manufacturing Company, a vast mill, came in 1888, and by 1895 it "employed nearly half the population

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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| STATE | |
| North Carolina | |
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| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
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of Edenton and included an array of cotton gins, grist mills, shingle mills, planing mills and sawmills." Other companies, many financed by local capital, were soon established, most exploiting the cotton and timber of the area. With the economic revival came a building boom, and the many Victorian and Queen Anne houses of Edenton with their elaborate wooden ornament are most likely the products of Chowan's roaring mills.

In the twentieth century new industries came to Edenton (notably the Edenton Peanut Company), and at last bridges were built across the Chowan River (1927) and the Albemarle Sound (1938), which ended "the last barrier to Edenton's progress" and also ended, unfortunately, the steamboats that had been a picturesque part of the town for a century. Along with progress came an increasing appreciation of the town's unique quality and historic heritage, stimulated in part by the novels of Inglis Fletcher, who settled at Parson Earle's Bandon Plantation and laid many of her historical novels in colonial Edenton and the Albemarle. Local efforts have preserved the Cupola House (saved from destruction in 1918 and the woodwork of two first floor rooms, taken to the Brooklyn Museum in 1917, reproduced in 1965), the James Iredell House, and the Barker House, while the courthouse and St. Paul's Church still serve their original function. In Edenton today there is growing awareness of the importance of preserving the fabric and ambiance of the historic town.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE Addendum Page 1

Addendum - Edenton Historic District

William Jackson
31CO17**

The archeological site of the Edenton Tannery, active between 1757 and about 1770, is located within the existing boundaries of the Edenton Historic District. The remains of the colonial tanyard complex are situated in downtown Edenton in the southeast corner of a block bounded on the north by Church Street, on the west by Broad Street, on the south by Queen Street, and on the east by Court Street. The area of the site is approximately one-half acre. It is now the property of Chowan County (c/o Chairman of the County Commissioners of Chowan County, Edenton, North Carolina 27932). The site, buried beneath one to two feet of soil, was located through documentary research with the use of the 1769 map of Edenton drawn by C.J. Sauthier;¹ archeological tests of the area were conducted in 1977 by Soil Systems, Incorporated during a survey of the proposed location of a new county courthouse and detention center for Chowan County. In testing for intact cultural deposits, the archeological surveyors transected the suspected tannery site with forty-one auger-bored holes. Each bore hole was four inches wide and between five and six feet deep at maximum, so that testing affected less than one percent of the site's remains. However, the tests demonstrated that material preservation at the site is excellent; the soil core profiles revealed several intact features with tanbark and lime at points that correspond to the tanning vats and other tanyard structures (such as the lime kiln) shown on the Sauthier map.² Preservation of wood, leather, and even metal artifacts has been aided by the high water table and by the presence of tannin, which has a remarkable ability to preserve iron as well as many organic substances.³

To date, the Edenton Tannery is the only colonial tanyard in North Carolina with intact remains verified by archeological testing. Tanyard studies have been rare in the United States,⁴ in spite of the fact that leather-working has been an essential industry throughout American history. The tanning industry has been described by the historian Peter C. Welsh as "a basic industry, meeting the needs of an essentially agrarian society,"⁵ and the Edenton Tannery was in fact the first formally incorporated business in Edenton.⁶

The site meets criterion A) in its association with the era that saw the rise of colonial towns and their commerce with the outside world. In his analysis of the cultural geography of colonial North Carolina, Harry Roy Merrens has stated:

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE Addendum Page 2

Urban settlements were an important and distinctive element in the geography of the colony. The ties between them and surrounding areas were instrumental in changing the character of those areas and in turn imparted certain distinctive qualities to each urban settlement. They played a key role in economic development, and many of the changes taking place within the colony are only understandable in terms of the growth, function, and distribution of urban settlements. They were few and small, but the activities carried on by their inhabitants were of considerable significance.⁷

Although a number of houses have survived from this period of North Carolina's history, the work places of trade and industry have not survived as well. As a result, the daily activities that supported the growth of these colonial towns and their commerce are under-represented in the material record.

The site meets criterion C) in that the tannery remains embody the distinctive characteristics of the workplace of a class of colonial artisans whose product has not survived well through the intervening centuries. The leather-workers of the period usually produced perishable items such as tanned hides, clothing, and tackle, and their tanyards were considered noxious places more deserving to be buried and forgotten than preserved intact for posterity. As a result, "tanning artifacts other than hand tools have almost disappeared."⁸ With its excellent preservation, the Edenton Tannery can present in microcosm a vital craft largely neglected in studies of colonial arts and industries.

The site meets criterion D) in that the tannery is likely to yield information important in history. In addition to the information that the site can provide on the growth of trade and industries in colonial towns, as well as on the distinctive workplaces of a specific group of artisans (colonial tanners), the site is a source of information on the material culture of a colonial town during the relatively restricted period of the tanning company's operation (1757-ca. 1770) and shortly thereafter. The well-preserved artifacts from the dated context of the tanyard are likely to be useful for interpreting the colonial era in Edenton and to provide a standard to which the material culture of other settlements can be compared; e.g., urban Edenton vs. rural plantations, the sea-port of Edenton vs. inland towns, or Edenton vs. other seaports.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE Addendum Page 3

The Chowan County detention facility originally proposed for construction on the southeastern corner of the block was eventually built on the northeastern corner to avoid destroying the tannery remains.⁹ In addition, Chowan County agreed to preserve the site of the tannery by covering it with a layer of clean sand, followed by a two foot layer of clean soil fill and shallow-rooted landscaping plants.¹⁰

*For future reference, this site will be known as 747 in the inventory list.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE Addendum Page 3

FOOTNOTES

¹Sauthier, Claude Joseph. A Plan of the Town and Port of Edenton in Chowan County North Carolina Surveyed and Drawn in June 1769. By C.J. Sauthier (Sauthier-Edenton 1769 Ms A). Ms on file British Museum, King George III's Topographical Collection. cxxii 57.

²Garrow, Patrick. Phase II Intensive Archaeological Survey; Proposed Site of the Courthouse and Detention Facility for Chowan County, Edenton, North Carolina. (Ms. on file, Soil Systems, Incorporated, Marietta, Georgia and Archeology Branch, N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, 1977)

³Pelikan, J.B. "Conservation of Iron with Tannin." Studies in Conservation 2 (3):109-115.

⁴Garrow, Page 32.

⁵Welsh, Peter C. Tanning in the United States to 1850: a Brief History (Washington, D.C.: Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, 1964), p. 4.

⁶Garrow, Page 9-10.

⁷Merrins, Harry Roy. Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: a Study in Historical Geography (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Press, 1964), p. 142.

⁸Ellsworth, Lucius F. "A Directory of Artifact Collections," in Technology in Early America: Needs and Opportunities for Study, by Brooke Hindle (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Press, 1966), p. 108.

⁹Foss, Robert W., Patrick H. Garrow, and Silas D. Hurry. Archaeological Investigations of the Edenton Snuff and Tobacco Manufacture. North Carolina Archaeological Council Publication 12. Raleigh: N.C. Division of Archives and History. 1979: 3.

¹⁰Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce; Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer; County Commission of Chowan County, N.C.; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. "Memorandum of Agreement." Ms. on file, N.C. Archeology Branch, Chowan County Courthouse file.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY | | | O R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | |
| | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds | | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds | |
| NW | 36° 03' 53" | 76° 36' 58" | | 0 | 0 | |
| NE | 36° 03' 53" | 76° 36' 15" | | | | |
| SE | 36° 03' 18" | 76° 36' 15" | | | | |
| SW | 36° 03' 18" | 76° 36' 58" | | | | |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 150 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
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| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Survey and Planning Unit

ORGANIZATION: Office of Archives and History

DATE: 5 June 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:
 109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh

STATE: North Carolina

CODE: 37

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Name: H. G. Jones

Title: State Historian/Administrator

Date: 5 June 1973

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

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date: _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS