COMMON:
Old Town Plantation

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
US 97, 1.7 miles east of junction with US 301

CITY OR TOWN:
Battleboro (Second Congressional District, Honorable L. H. Fountain)

3. CLASSIFICATION

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<tr>
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<tr>
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PUBLIC ACQUISITION:
In Process
Being Considered

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Museum
- Other (Specify)
- Park
- Private Residence
- Religious

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
Yes
No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. M. C. Braswell

STREET AND NUMBER:
Box 575

CITY OR TOWN:
Battleboro

STATE:
North Carolina

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Edgecombe County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Tarboro

STATE:
North Carolina

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:

FEDERAL

STATE

COUNTY

LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:
The Old Town Plantation house is a one-and-a-half story frame gambrel-roof dwelling resting on a brick foundation laid in English bond. The front (north) facade is three bays wide with flush weatherboards under the shed porch. The slightly off-center main entrance is a replacement for an earlier central entrance and is flanked by windows with six-over-six sash. There are three gable dormers on the front and rear of the roof, all containing replacement sash. The west side features a double-shoulder Flemish bond chimney with small brick wings above the first shoulder. The only window on this side of the main block appears at the first level of the rear of the chimney. Another smaller step-shoulder chimney heats the shed addition on the rear. On the west side of the house is a modern one-story addition, but fortunately the double-shoulder Flemish bond end chimney remains intact.

The Old Town Plantation house has a hall-and-parlor plan with the enclosed main stair rising from the rear shed addition through the main room on the west wall. Some of the interiors have been changed, but most door surrounds and the mantel in the hall remain. This Georgian mantel features four vertical raised panels above an arched opening. The whole is surmounted by a narrow molded shelf.

Several of the original outbuildings remain, including a log storage house with a pyramidal roof and a board-and-batten door studded with rose-head nails.
Old Town Plantation house, said to be located on the site of an Indian village, is thought to have been built by Samuel Holliman in or before 1742 on a 400 acre-tract officially granted to him on May 6, 1742. In August of 1747 Holliman sold the house and 400 acres to Elisha Battle for "50 pounds in current Virginia money," the currency of Battle's previous home state. Elisha Battle, the progenitor of a large and distinguished North Carolina family, served the state in many capacities: justice of the peace, chairman of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, one of the original commissioners of the town of Tarboro, and a delegate to the State Congress in 1776. For twenty years he represented Edgecombe County in the General Assembly, being senator during the American Revolution, and afterward until 1787, with the exception of two years. In 1788 he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention during which he was chairman of the committee of the whole. Battle died in 1799, but the Old Town Plantation, representing only a small portion of his extensive holdings, remained in the Battle family for over a hundred years more. In December of 1908, 537.3 acres of "that part of the Cool Spring Plantation called Old Town" were sold to M. C. Braswell by Gaston Battle and his wife, Bettie Wright Battle. Old Town is still owned by M. C. Braswell, who has been described as "one of the safest and foremost business men of his section."

Old Town Plantation house, thought to be the oldest dwelling in Edgecombe County, is an interesting remnant of the early influx of planters into North Carolina's upper coastal plain. The house is notable not only for its long association with the locally prominent Battle family, but also for its early architectural features—gambrel roof, English bond foundation, and Georgian interiors.
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 [X] Local [X]

Name: H. G. Jones

Title: Director, State Department of History and Archives

Date: June 18, 1971

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date __________________________

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date __________________________
9. Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Since I can remember, I have always had a great respect for things of age - people as well as the products of their hand and mind. I began my collection of such things at the age of six by looking for arrow heads while hunting and farming on our farm in Warren County. At that time I became absorbed with the many early houses that had been abandoned and left to the elements. I recall Jones Spring, Montmorencie, Mosby Hall, Tusculum, and others that were used for storage of grain and other farm products and eventually fell into ruins because the owners were unaware of what they possessed. Others have become the victims of decay and total ruin because of neglect, indifference, and apathy - both public and private. Still other early homes have been allowed to deteriorate beyond repair because of economic hardships on the part of the private owners. Whatever the cause of the neglect, as long as we fail to recognize the public's responsibility for the preservation of these early dwellings there can be no recourse.

I have admired Old Town for over five years and the efforts I have made toward developing a proposal for restoration of this important dwelling is justified in my respect not only for its architectural excellence but most importantly for the hand of the person that wrought this landmark. Yet recognition is not sufficient; we must act now to preserve Old Town for future generations. In this regard, I pray for your every consideration in helping to restore Old Town to the appearance of 1747 when it was sold to Elisha Battle.
THE OLD TOWN RESTORATION

The Main Dwelling and Smokehouse

The existing buildings would of necessity have to be restored where structural timbers were deteriorated or missing. This would require the following:

1. New mortar (based on existing mix) for all brick work that has been repaired in the 20th. century. New tops for the East and West main chimneys above their shoulders, and other masonry that would have to be repaired for functional use. Archaeological investigations would determine the style and construction of North and South porches. These would be reconstructed as well as possible in the 18th. century manner.

2. Beaded weatherboarding (pine or juniper) for the entire building as well as oak shingles for the roof. These materials would be cut as near as possible in the 18th. century manner.

3. Door and window sash replaced with correct panelling and muntin, respectively; in the early 18th. century style. This applies to the smokehouse as well which will require new timber cut in the manner of the existing original. (See photos)

4. Every attempt would be made to secure the original panelling for the interior of the house. Other panelling appropriate to the early Georgian style would be used in the hall and parlor and appropriate chair rail or trim in the other rooms.

5. The stairs would be restored using the existing structure with new balusters if necessary, in the early style.

6. A back room of the house would be used as a kitchenette along with a small bathroom. Every effort would be made to keep this in an inconspicuous location with the simple objective of providing minimum modern facilities.

7. Plumbing and electrical installation would be kept to a minimum. Heating and air-conditioning would be electric forced air. This would be in one unit in the cellar.

8. All trees would remain except those unacceptable to the restoration. Appropriate landscaping and plants would be essential to the site.

9. A small fruit orchard and vegetable garden would be planted between the house and cemetery in the 18th. century manner.
THE OLD TOWN RESTORATION

Interior

What remains of the original interior is in good condition especially the interior of the second story.

The interior of the downstairs hall and parlor has been removed with modern flooring and sheetrock replacing the old panelling and flooring. All window sash is new and incorrect. The mantle piece in the West Room is original and in good condition. Great care would be required to remove the many layers of new paint without damaging the original (which I believe to be blue). A door that once perhaps was a window leads out of the West Room into a modern kitchen addition. In the kitchen one can examine several original beaded exterior weatherboards on the west side of the house. These two rooms would require the greatest efforts and expense to restore. Again, it is essential that the original woodwork be replaced in these rooms.

The back room with the small chimney dated 1742 is entered through an original panelled door with HL hinges from the stair hall. As it has been stripped of its original fabric extensive research would be required to determine its original use.

The stair hall and stair well are in very good condition. The possible absence of balusters are the only details that lessen the impact of this unpretentious room. Great care should be exercised in removing the new layers of paint from the woodwork. Especially important is the banister rail and newel post. The newel has lambs tongue and chamfer detail. The underside of the rail does not indicate any holes that may have received balusters. However, there are some faint initials or markings here--the usual care should be taken not to injure this detail because of the possibility of important names and dates. I believe the newel and rail to be of walnut. With the removal of all modern additions one could determine if the back room extended the length of the house.

The stair well is of original pine with flush beaded sheathing. The stair steps are original. Care should be taken not to remove the old plane marks that are found on the boards in the stair well.

The two upstairs rooms are in very good condition. Original tongue and groove flooring, original beaded sheathing on the walls and ceiling is intact and in good condition. The original door and case with HL hinges leads into the East Room which is larger than the adjacent room.

A particular interesting detail lies in a modern closet that has been built in the West Room. Inside one can examine the early panelling with its original blue paint--this detail would serve as a basis for determining the colors for interior paints.

The sash in the dormers are modern replacements, but the window casements and the dormers are original. The southside of the roof still has the original oak shingles.
Old Town Plantation house, said to be located on the site of an Indian village, is thought to have been built by Samuel Holliman in or before 1742 on a 400 acre tract officially granted to him on May 6, 1742. In August of 1747, Holliman sold the house and 400 acres to Elisha Battle for "50 pounds in current Virginia money," the currency of Battle's previous home state. Elisha Battle, the progenitor of a large and distinguished North Carolina family, served the state in many capacities: justice of the peace, chairman of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, one of the original commissioners of the town of Tarboro, and a delegate to the State Congress in 1776. For twenty years he represented Edgecombe County in the General Assembly, being senator during the American Revolution, and afterward until 1787, with the exception of two years. In 1778 he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention during which he was chairman of the committee of the whole. Battle died in 1799, but the Old Town Plantation, representing only a small portion of his extensive holdings, remained in the Battle family for over a hundred years more. In December of 1908, 537.3 acres of "that part of the Cool Spring Plantation called Old Town" were sold to M. C. Braswell by Gaston Battle and his wife, Bettie Wright Battle. Old Town is still owned by M. C. Braswell, who has been described as "one of the safest and foremost business men of his section."

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The Old Town Plantation house is a one-and-a-half story frame gambrel roof dwelling resting on a brick foundation laid in English bond. The front (north) facade is three bays wide with flush weatherboards under the porch. The slightly off-center main entrance is a replacement for an earlier central entrance and is flanked by windows with six-over-six sash. There are three gable dormers on the front and rear of the roof, all contain replacement sash. The west side features a double-shoulder Flemish bond chimney with small brick wings above the first shoulder. The only window on this side of the main block appears at the first level of the rear of the chimney. Another smaller step-shoulder chimney heats the shed addition on the rear. On the west side of the house is a modern one-story addition, but fortunately the double-shoulder Flemish bond end chimney remains intact.

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THE OLD TOWN RESTORATION

Objectives

1. All buildings or parts of buildings which the colonial tradition persists should be retained irrespective of their actual date.

2. Where the classical tradition persists in buildings or parts of buildings great discretion should be used before their removal.

3. Within the "Restoration Area" all work which no longer represents colonial or classical tradition should be removed.

4. Old buildings outside the "Restoration Area" whenever possible should be left and if possible preserved on their original sites and restored there rather than be moved within the area.

5. No surviving old work should be rebuilt for structural reasons if any reasonable additional trouble and expense would suffice to preserve it.

6. It must be held in mind by the Trustees the distinction between preservation, where the object is scrupulous retention of the surviving work by ordinary repair, and restoration where the objective is the recovery of the old house by new work, and that the largest practicable number of buildings should be preserved rather than restored.

7. The Trustees must recognize that such preservation and restoration work requires a slower pace than ordinary modern construction work and that in my opinion a superior result should be preferred to more rapid progress.

8. In restoration the use of old materials and details of the period and character properly marked is commendable when they can be secured.

9. Where new materials must be used, they should be of a character approximately the old as closely as possible.

10. No commercial or otherwise modern buildings will be constructed in the restoration area and every effort will be made to secure and maintain Old Town Plantation as it was during the early eighteenth century.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic
Old Town Plantation—Renomination

and/or common

2. Location

street & number
N side SR 97, 0.65 mi. W of jct w/ county road 1406

not for publication

city, town
X vicinity of Battleboro

state
North Carolina
code
037
county
Edgecombe
code
065

3. Classification

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Public Acquisition: in process
N/A

Accessible: yes: restricted
X: yes: unrestricted

4. Owner of Property

name
John Christian and Jane Connell Wilson

street & number
1412 Branch Street

3550 Cool Spring Road

city, town
Raleigh

vicinity of
state
North Carolina
27601

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.
Registry of Deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse

street & number


6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title
National Register of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible?   yes   no

date
January 20, 1972

federal
state
county
local

depository for survey records

city, town
state
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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**
## 8. Significance

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- community planning
- landscape architecture
- religion
- conservation
- law
- science
- economics
- literature
- sculpture
- education
- military
- social/
- exploration/settlement
- philosophy
- humanitarian
- engineering
- music
- theater
- industry
- politics/government
- transportation
- invention
- other (specify)

### Specific dates
ca. 1742

### Builder/Architect
Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
The Old Town Plantation near Battleboro in Edgecombe County was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in January 1972. Believed to have been built ca. 1742 by Samuel Holliman, the house probably is the county's oldest surviving dwelling and is an important remnant of the early influx of planters into North Carolina's upper coastal plain. The house is also associated with the locally prominent Battle family, beginning with its purchase in 1747 by Elisha Battle, the progenitor of a large and distinguished North Carolina family. Elisha Battle served the locality and the state in many capacities prior to his death in 1799, as justice of the peace, as an original commissioner for the town of Tarboro, representing Edgecombe County in the General Assembly for twenty years, and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1888, among other endeavors.

The house is a one-and-a-half story frame gambrel-roofed structure resting on a brick foundation and built on a hall-and-parlor plan. Significant features include double-shouldered Flemish bond chimneys on the east and west sides and a smaller Flemish bond chimney which heats the rear shed addition, gable dormers rising through the front and rear roofs, and a Georgian mantel with four vertical raised panels above an arched opening, which survives in the hall. The front (formerly north, now south) elevation of the house is three bays wide with flush weatherboards under the shed-roofed porch.

In recent years, Old Town Plantation had been endangered by a large-agribusiness. Within 100 feet of the rear of the house was a large hog operation. During the winter of 1982-83, the owners of this operation acquired the land in front of the house and planned to expand their operation to the newly-acquired property, thus surrounding the house. The house was in marginal condition, with no maintenance having been done for several years. The owner had no plans to rehabilitate the property, and prospective buyers would have been unlikely to wish to renovate the house at its original location, in the midst of a hog operation.

The house was donated in 1982 to the Historic Preservation Fund of North Carolina and the Historic Preservation Fund of Edgecombe County, both non-profit revolving funds. On June 3, 1983, the house was sold to new owners, John Christian and Jane Connell Wilson, and then moved on June 10 to a new site less than one mile west of the original site. The new site, comprising just over ten acres of Elisha Battle's original 400-acre tract, was donated by Dorothy B. Wilkinson, a descendant of Battle and probably the only direct descendant who still owns part of the original Battle land. Although a mid-twentieth century side addition and a twentieth century shed porch were removed, the original three Flemish bond chimneys were moved with the house. The house now stands at the end of a drive lined on both sides with 30-year-old cedar trees, on cleared land with a backdrop of mature pine trees. The Wilsons plan to restore the house to its original state using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, while making it liveable by modern standards.

Moved with the plantation house was a slave cabin which was not included in the original nomination because of its location across the highway from the main house. Of numerous original dependencies of Old Town Plantation, only one survives. This small frame building was one of 15-20 slave cabins that lined Highway 97 until the
1960s when the others were burned and removed. It is a one-story, gabled roof building with two brick exterior end, single-shouldered chimneys. According to a date brick in one of the chimneys, the building was constructed in 1834. Double front doors lead to two simple rooms with a loft. The building is in very poor condition, but the interior still contains some of its original flooring and horizontal wood sheathing on the walls. Although the chimneys had to be removed in order to relocate the structure, the date brick and as much as possible of the original brick was saved and the chimneys will be accurately reconstructed.
Addendum to original nomination of Old Town Plantation

As the new owners began their restoration of Old Town they have discovered a considerable amount of original interior woodwork intact in the house, contrary to the original nomination. They discovered this woodwork when they removed sheet rock panels which hid the woodwork for many years. They are completely documenting their work with photographs, measured drawings and color slides. They will base their restoration of Old Town on factual information and physical evidence of the original appearance of the house. The following is a list of original woodwork in Old Town Plantation, found when the sheet rock was removed. The list is organized by floor and room of the house as it is now positioned on Highway 97, east of Rocky Mount.

First Floor

East room (was west room in original nomination):
This room contains the only original mantel left intact at Old Town. The Wilsons have discovered a beaded ceiling and three walls of flush, horizontal beaded heart pine sheathing. Also found was the framing for a transon and door to the existing side porch.

Main room:
The Wilsons discovered a beaded wooden ceiling, and learned that some the raised, beveled-edge paneled wainscoting original to this room survives in a private home in Rocky Mount.

Rear staircase hall:
A beaded ceiling and three walls of horizontal beaded sheathing were uncovered.

Rear east room:
Beaded horizontal flat wainscoting was found beneath the sheet rock.

Rear west room:
The Wilsons uncovered two walls of beaded horizontal flat wainscoting and original window and door surrounds. The original flooring in this room is intact.

Second Floor

All elements of the stair are intact.
Beaded wooden ceilings were uncovered in both of the upstairs rooms. The original flooring is in basically good condition here.
See original nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 10.1165 acres

Quadrangle name: Hartsease

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See plat map

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Allison B. Harris, Survey Specialist

organization: Division of Archives and History
date: July 14, 1983

street & number: 109 E. Jones St.

telephone: 919 733-6545

city or town: Raleigh

state: N.C.

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration
Old Town Plantation

Dorothy B. Wilkinson

MAP OF PROPERTY OF
DOROTHY B. WILKINSON

N.C. Hwy No. 97, No. 7 Twp., Edgecombe County, N.C.

Scale: 1" = 200'

Date: May 18, 1983

GAY-JARVIS ASSOCIATES, INC.
ENGINEERS - PLANNERS - SURVEYORS
ROCKY MOUNT, N.C.

Being a portion of Tract No. 1 of the Mrs. Neil G. Battle Land division as surveyed by the office of Hunley & Gay, dated Dec. 12, 1961 and now being known as the Cool Springs Farm - Dorothy B Wilkinson Tract.

454/61