

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Atkinson-Smith House  
AND/OR COMMON  
Atkinson-Smith House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER End of lane, south side S.R. 1007, 0.5 mi. west of junction with  
S.R. 2524  
CITY, TOWN  
Smithfield  
STATE North Carolina  
VICINITY OF CODE 37  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT #3  
COUNTY Johnston  
CODE 101

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME William W. Smith *Jim Casey*  
STREET & NUMBER 606 Brockwood Lane *Rt 2 Box 2748*  
CITY, TOWN Goldsboro *Smithfield* VICINITY OF *NC* 27577  
STATE North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
STREET & NUMBER Johnston County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN Smithfield  
STATE North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 Atkinson-Smith House stands at the end of a long drive, in the midst of the flat farmland of Johnston County, flanked by large shade trees and crepe myrtles. The two-story frame plantation house is of typical vernacular Greek Revival form: three bays wide with a central entrance, a boxy form defined by heavy cornerposts, a wide frieze and baseboard, and a shallow hip roof with rather deep overhang. This standard format, however, is here distinguished by the lavish application of elaborate and surprisingly sophisticated classical ornament, freely interpreted and combined.

Dominating the main (north) facade is a two-tier superimposed tetrastyle entrance portico. At the first level, fluted Doric columns carry a simplified Doric entablature. The columns are connected by a balustrade consisting of rounded rails and a sheaf-of-wheat motif with solid lozenges. The second story, with the same balustrade, has fluted Ionic columns that carry an unacademic frieze and cornice with paired brackets above each column and a simple dentil course beneath the eave. This same cornice carries around the flush-boarded tympanum, with the brackets simpler and smaller. Centered in the tympanum is a round-arched window with tracery, with handsome detail: from small scroll consoles terminating in foliate tips springs a molded arch accented by a complex pierced and fluted keystone. The facade under the porch is flush-sheathed at both levels, and pilasters repeat the design of the columns.

Continuing around the main block is the bracketed dentil cornice of the porch. This is carried by large fluted Ionic corner pilasters. These face front, and the sides of the front corners are narrow pilasters with caps; this latter pattern recurs at the rear corners.

The front entrance consists of a double door with sidelights and transom. It is rather elaborately treated, with a wide mitered surround slightly crossetted at the upper corners to contain cornerblocks with a fancy geometrical design. Two panels break out from the upper architrave, each featuring an elaborate symmetrical scroll design with fans and floral patterns. The second-level door is similar but lacks the upper panels. Double windows occur in each of the flanking bays. Each window is framed by symmetrical molding and contains six-over-six sash. The molding between the members of each pair is surmounted by a roundel cornerblock, but at the outer corners of each pair is a cornerblock whose molding appears to be a quarter of a large roundel cornerblock and is placed to create the illusion that the symmetrically molded frame rounds the corner. At the first level only, a simplified Doric entablature extends across each pair of windows. The side windows occur singly, with the curious round-cornered cornerblock treatment.

At each side rise two exterior chimneys of brick laid in common bond; each has tumbling at the single shoulder--which occurs at cornice level--and an ornate molded cap.

The rear elevation is three bays wide, with doors at all first-floor bays; that in the center is a double door with sidelights; the side bays have single doors. There is also a window between the two west bays. At the second level, single windows occur in the three bays. The entire facade at the first level is covered with flush sheathing, indicating an original full-width one-story porch, to which all three doors led.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

The interior, as suggested by the exterior, follows a center-hall plan, two rooms deep, with elaborate Classic Revival finish. The most unusual feature is the placement of the stair; rather than rising in the main hall, it begins at right angles to the hall, and rises in two-story well between the two west rooms; the west wall of this well is rounded to accommodate the spiral stair. A fat turned newel and slender turned balusters carry a heavy molded, rounded handrail. The stair rises in essentially a slightly abbreviated full-turn hairpin curve, with the steps at the inner curve very compressed.

The center hall, thus uninterrupted, is an impressively spacious one. Centered in the ceiling is an elaborate plaster medallion, a swirling composition of acanthus and other sinuous foliate and floral motifs. This is framed by a squared outline of egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel plaster moldings, and anthemions appear in each corner. A wide molded plaster cornice outlines the entire hall ceiling, and the anthemions recur at the corners and where the stair well interrupts the molding. Four doorways lead off the hall to the flanking rooms. Doors have six panels: pairs of long ones separated vertically by a pair of horizontal ones. Each has a transom above, and the whole is treated with motifs like the entrance: the complex geometrical cornerblocks (which are plaster or composition) and the fancy scrolled upper panel. This treatment recurs within the rooms but without the panel. The same motifs are used to enframe the windows. The two front rooms are the most elaborately treated, having plaster ceiling medallions like the hall as well as molded cornices. The windows in the east room are the only ones having the scroll panels. Mantels in the house are all different. That in the front east room is particularly interesting, composed of plain paired pilasters carrying an entablature that breaks out in end blocks. This is ornamented with a curious version of a Doric entablature, complete with mutules, triglyphs, and guttae. The other first-floor mantels are heavy two and three-part ones, with Federal elements executed in robust Greek Revival fashion.

A small enclosed stair rises in the northwest corner of the rear east room. The second story is more simply finished than the first and follows essentially the same plan. An unusual mantel occurs in the front west room; it is a three-part one, with a tall frieze area. Upon the end blocks and center tablet are faceted panels in very high relief, rising to points like pyramids.

To the rear of the house are a number of outbuildings, including a barn and several tobacco barns. The somewhat-altered barn is said once to have housed race horses.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

Ca. 1850

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Atkinson-Smith House is a remarkably unchanged antebellum plantation dwelling, of an ambitiousness unusual in rural Johnston County. It combines in distinctive and impressive fashion the overall form and classic motifs of the Greek Revival style with a lavish application of ornament presaging the Victorian era. Especially notable are the curved stair and the well-preserved plaster and wooden detail. Built for Elijah Atkinson about 1850, it was later the home of a prominent Unionist and Reconstruction era Republican, William A. Smith, in whose family it remains.

On April 1, 1829, Stephen Woodard of Johnston County, North Carolina, sold to John Atkinson, also of Johnston, 720 acres of rich land on the "North side of the River Neuse . . ." in Johnston County. On July 22, 1843, John Atkinson, Sr., a veteran of the Revolutionary War and wealthy planter, sold to his son, Elijah, 2,028 acres in three tracts on both sides of Neuse River. "One tract lying and being . . . on the North side of Neuse River including the Plantation whereon the said Elijah now lives . . ."; it contained 720 acres.

Judging from stylistic evidence and local tradition, it appears that Elijah Atkinson built his plantation house about 1850. At this same time his brothers, Thomas and William, were also building large and handsome plantation houses in the Greek Revival idiom, only a short distance away. All the Atkinsons lived on the post road from Goldsboro in Wayne County, to Smithfield, in Johnston.

Elijah Atkinson, the eldest son of John and Polly, was born in 1819, and married twice, first Elizabeth Bradberry, by whom he had one daughter. He then married Mary Ann Peacock (called Polly), by whom he had five daughters. Elijah Atkinson purchased several thousand acres of land, and inherited several thousand from his father, John. After he died, about 1857, and his widow had received her one-third dower, there was still 5,690 acres of rich farm land to distribute between his five daughters. After Elijah's death Polly married William A. Smith.

William Alexander Smith was born January 9, 1828, in Warren County, North Carolina. He had a limited education in an old field school, and worked on a farm until the age of fourteen, when he hired on as a hand to help build the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad. He removed to Shreveport, Louisiana, with the hope of bettering himself. He returned to North Carolina before 1858 and settled in Johnston County, where he married the rich widow, Polly Atkinson, and began administration of her large plantation. Smith rose rapidly in the political affairs of the county. He represented Johnston County in the

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE one

Secession Convention of 1861, at which time he was an outspoken Unionist. When the state entered the Confederate States, he, by his own admission, sought a safe commission in the Home Guard, and finally secured a position as major in the 37th battalion. His opposition to secession was so vocal and his opposition to the state's entry into the war so strong that it impaired his friendship with Governor Zebulon B. Vance, himself a strong Unionist before the war. Vance afterward referred to Smith as an "old traitor." In a letter to Governor Vance, dated January 3, 1863, Smith complained that a Confederate detachment from Goldsboro had come into the area and taken a number of mule teams and wagons for the Army's use. He further stated that half the area's able-bodied slaves had been taken away to work for the Confederate Army.

Smith served in the General Assembly in 1864, and was a member of the state convention of 1865 which restored North Carolina to the Union. He became a member of the radical Republicans who carried out Reconstruction in North Carolina. He became president of the North Carolina Railroad in 1868, and in 1873 president of the Yadkin Railroad. He was an unsuccessful candidate for lieutenant governor in 1873. Smith narrowly won election in 1873 to the United States Congress as a Republican but served only one term, being defeated in 1875 by the political forces of former governor, Vance, when the Reconstruction government of North Carolina was ousted and the Democratic party resumed power. Major Smith was often the target of attacks in the newspapers controlled by the Bourbon Democrats, due to his association with and participation in the affairs of the radical Republicans in the state.

William and Polly Smith had two sons, Claude, and Roger, to whom most of their Johnston and Wayne county property descended. William A. Smith died on May 16, 1888, in Richmond, Virginia. He was buried in Hollywood Cemetery. At his death he had almost 4,000 acres of land.

Dr. Roger Alexander Smith of Goldsboro inherited the Atkinson Plantation in Johnston County. At his death the plantation went to his son, Roger, of Smithfield, North Carolina, who lost it soon afterward, but purchased it back some years later. He in turn left it to his son, William W. Smith, an attorney, of Goldsboro, who still owns the plantation.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Annals of an American Family. Greensboro: privately printed by the Richardson Family of North Carolina, 1937.  
Biographical Directory of American Congress 1774-1949. U. S. Government Printing Office, 1950.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9 L&L: 35° 24' 50" 78° 14' 17"

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist;

architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

25 March 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     STATE x 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 25 March 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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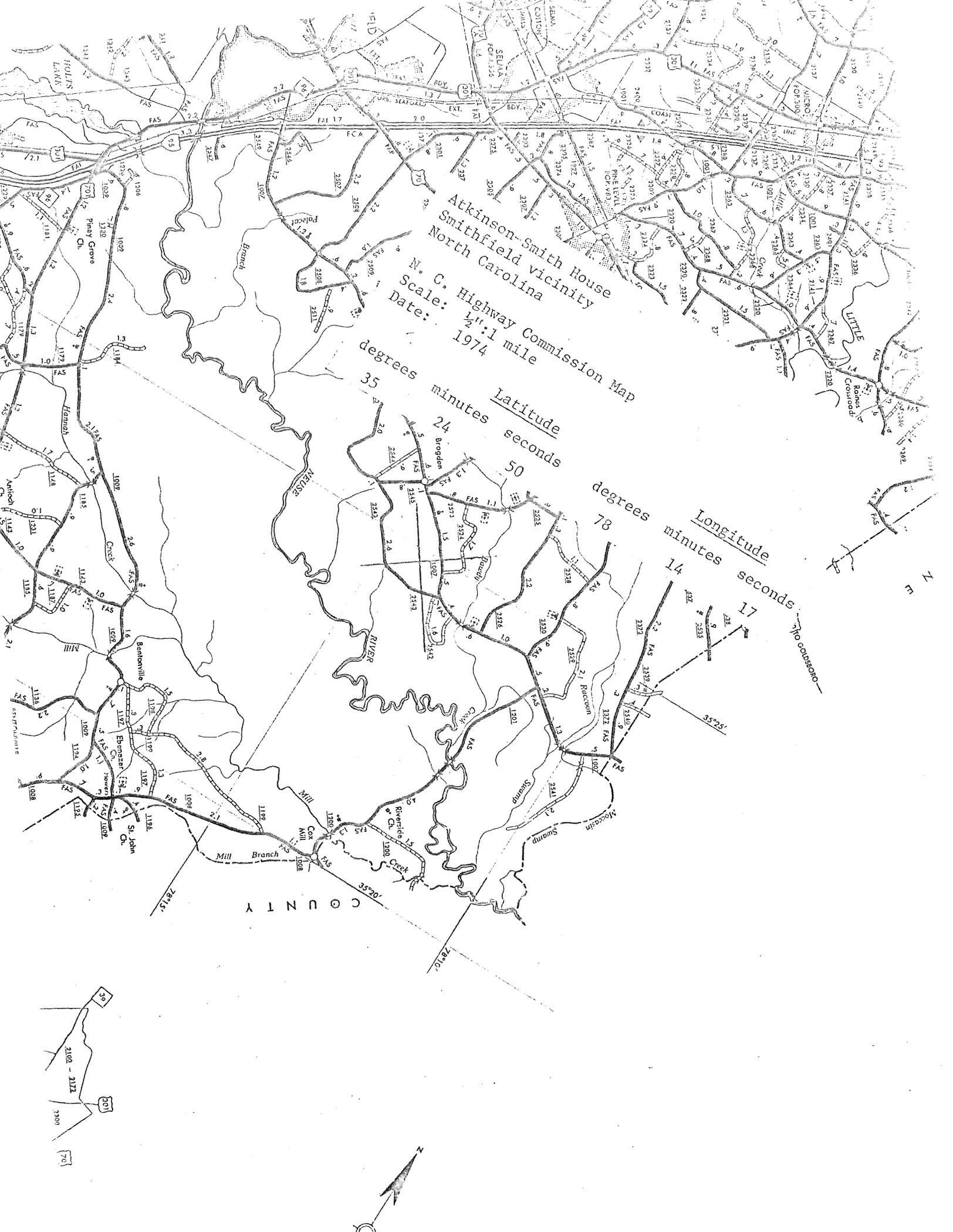
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE one

- Johnston County Records, Johnston County Courthouse, Smithfield, North Carolina  
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate papers, Tax records, Census records).
- Johnston County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina  
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate papers, Tax records, Census records).
- Roundtree, Moses. "Another Relic of Yesteryear Will Soon Be Gone From Goldsboro  
Scene." Goldsboro News Argus, May 17, 1962.
- William A. Smith Papers (in private collection).
- Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina Archives.
- Wayne County Records, Wayne County Courthouse, Goldsboro, North Carolina (Subgroups:  
Deeds).
- Wayne County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina  
(Subgroups: Deeds).



Atkinson-Smith House  
Smithfield vicinity  
North Carolina  
N. C. Highway Commission Map  
Scale: 1/2" = 1 mile  
Date: 1974

degrees minutes seconds Latitude  
35 24 50  
degrees minutes seconds Longitude  
78 14 17

C O U N T Y

