

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Nash	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Dortch House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
West side of S.R. 1527 just south of junction with N.C. 43

CITY OR TOWN:
Dortches (Second Congressional District, The Hon. L. H. Fountain)

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Nash	CODE 127
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
John F. Griffin, Jr.

STREET AND NUMBER:
Route 3, Box 333

CITY OR TOWN: Rocky Mount	STATE: North Carolina	CODE: 37
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville	STATE: North Carolina	CODE: 37
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey NC-68

DATE OF SURVEY: 1940 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Capitol and Independence Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: D.C.	CODE:
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17. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input 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

The Dortch House is a frame Federal-style farmhouse distinguished by extremely handsome exterior and interior detail. Set on a slight knoll in the small community of Dortches, it is shaded by several large trees and has a number of outbuildings to the rear. The house consists of a two-story main block covered by a gable roof and a one-story wing to the rear, whose gable roof runs perpendicular to the other. The whole building is covered with beaded weatherboards.

The main (east) facade is three bays wide, with a full-width one-story porch. The porch, said to have replaced an earlier one-bay entrance porch, has a hip roof supported by chamfered posts adorned with sawnwork brackets. A sawnwork balustrade appears beneath a heavy handrail. The central entrance consists of a double door, each leaf of which has three flat panels, flanked by Ionic pilasters and surmounted by a graceful fanlight with extremely delicate members framed in a molded arch. On either side are well-executed Palladian windows each of which features fluted Ionic pilasters supporting full entablatures with dentils and modillions. A molded arch with molded keystone springs from the two entablatures. The sides have vertical two-over-three sash; the central window has nine-over-nine, surmounted by tracery in the arch. On the second floor there are triple windows of complementary design, with six-over-nine sash in the center and two-over-three at the sides; the same entablature, supported by the Ionic pilasters, extends uninterrupted across the whole window. The ends of the facade are defined by paneled corner posts. They support a handsome modillion cornice enriched with dentils.

The cornice returns slightly at the corners and continues along the rake of each gable. At each end of the house is a single-shoulder chimney of brick laid in Flemish bond with stepped weatherings. It is flanked at each level by single windows with plain fluted pilasters supporting full entablatures like those on the facade.

Originally the rear facade of the house was apparently much like the front. According to the present owner, however, in the middle of the late nineteenth century another, earlier house (described by Thomas Waterman as being built in 1798) was moved up to the main block and joined at the rear. In 1942, the rear section was dismantled, reconstructed, and enlarged, using much of the original fabric. The windows and door of the north side of this rear structure now feature trim that imitates many of the elements of the front section. The rear section, which covers the two south bays of the first story of the main block, is three bays long, with the entrance in the center bay. To the rear is a double-shoulder chimney of brick laid in Flemish bond, said to be original to the early building.

The interior of the main block follows a center-hall plan one room deep. The finish is very much like that of the exterior; the cornice and use of curvilinear designs incised on tablets recall Stonewall, in nearby Rocky Mount. The floors throughout are original and in good condition, with the boards extending unbroken across the width of each room. All the first-floor rooms, including the hall, have flat-paneled wainscots, with delicate molding around the panels, and the hall and main (north) parlor feature cornices consisting, from bottom to top, of a simple molding, an astragal

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band, and a course of undercut modillions. The front door is treated on the inside as on the exterior, including the flanking pilasters; the arch lacks the keystone. The other doors, with one exception, all have six panels with flat panels on both sides outlined by molding. The doorways leading from the hall to the two flanking rooms are elaborately treated on both sides. The three-part molded frame is surmounted by an overdoor consisting of fluted consoles that support an entablature with gougework below the molded cornice. In the hall and north parlor, the consoles are Ionic, with an egg-and-dart pattern on the torus. A flat tablet with an incised curvilinear design occurs in the center of each frieze.

In the north parlor, the Palladian window treatment repeats that of the exterior. The chair rail and baseboard break out to create caps and bases for fluted pedestals for the Ionic pilasters flanking each element of the window. The single, trabeated end windows are similarly treated. The three-part Federal mantel has pairs of slender, engaged Ionic colonnettes supporting plain end blocks. The center tablet repeats the incised design of the overdoor. Pierced gougework occurs beneath the molded shelf.

The south parlor is somewhat simpler in finish: there is no cornice, and the order of all the woodwork is Tuscan, rather than Ionic. The window treatment is the same except that the pilasters rest on paneled, not fluted, pedestals. The mantel has single engaged colonnettes. The Palladian window on the rear wall was taken out when a door to the rear addition was made.

The stair rises in the hall in three short flights: the first flight rises along the south wall; winders occur at the corner; the second flight runs across the rear wall; and a landing occurs before the third flight which rises along the north wall. Each tread is ornamented by a simple wave bracket. Slender square balusters support the rounded handrail, which is ramped but interrupted at each turn by a plain square post. The wainscot continues up the stair, and the soffit, spandrel, and the area between stair and rear door, are flat-paneled. A closet beneath the stair is reached by a short door with flat panels on the outside and raised panels on the inside. An early box lock is in place.

The finish of the second floor is plainer than that of the first. The wainscot in the hall is flat-paneled, but in the two flanking bedrooms a plaster dado is bounded by a molded chair rail and a high two-part baseboard. The wainscots do not break beneath the windows. Each room has a simple three-part Federal mantel with dentils below the shelf. The three-part window in the hall is flanked by fluted Tuscan pilasters and surmounted by entablatures with a dentil cornice. The triple windows in the bed chambers are simpler, with pilaster strips supporting the cornice. The single end windows are similarly treated.

The rear section of the house has on the back wall a Georgian mantel believed to be original to the early structure. It has a segmental-arched

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opening with a range of three raised panels beneath a molded shelf. A double door, each leaf of which has three square flat panels, is also said to have come from the early building.

Several outbuildings exist, including an early two-level log corncrib with an overhang at the second level.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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 type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1779 a William Dortch patented 500 acres of land in Nash County on the north side of Swift Creek. In all likelihood he lived on this tract and farmed it; a note recording rent due on it indicates it was in the possession of his heirs as late as 1836. The present house, however, was probably built on a 70-acre tract acquired from Delilah Whitfield in 1810. Mrs. Whitfield's lands were at that time sold for the payment of debts, and William Dortch bought both a 200-acre tract for 376 pounds and the latter mentioned tract for about twelve pounds. The relatively higher amount paid for the 200 acre tract may reflect the presence of a building, probably the Whitfield residence. Dortch may have allowed Mrs. Whitfield to continue to reside on the larger tract while he built on the smaller one, for he married her daughter, Drucilla (Whitfield) Bunn, probably shortly after 1810. The Dortch House located on the 70 acres "near the public road" most likely dates from this time.

In the United States Census of 1830 William Dortch was listed as the head of a household in which there were ten children and thirty-four slaves. When Dortch died in December of 1830, his wife Drucilla was allotted a third of his holdings, 483 acres including the dwelling house. William T. Dortch, the son of the above William, appears to have held the Dortch homestead in 1848, according to the list of taxables for that year. At that time the estate included 450 3/4 acres and seven slaves. The following year Drucilla Dortch deeded the property in trust to him.

William T. Dortch was born in 1824 and began the study of law at the age of seventeen. He was licensed to practice in the Nash County Court at the age of nineteen, and at twenty was admitted to practice before the North Carolina Superior Court. At this young age he became county attorney for Nash. He moved to Goldsboro in 1849 and represented Wayne County in the General Assembly from 1852 to 1861, serving as speaker of the house in 1860. Dortch spent the years of the Civil War as a member of the Senate of the Confederate States. After the war he returned to state government as a senator, and was in 1883 described as having the "largest and most lucrative practice" of law in the state.

The year 1877 marks the dissociation of the Dortches with the family residence. In that year the house and a large tract were sold in a division of the estate among the heirs. The Dortch House was the property of several owners briefly until 1889 it was bought by John H. Griffin in whose family it remains. His grandson, John F. Griffin, Jr., lives there

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and keeps it in good condition.

The Dortch House, one of the finest Federal farmhouses in the state, was cited by Thomas Waterman in The Early Architecture of North Carolina as an "interesting house [with] a series of well designed Palladian and triple windows." The craftsmanship of the detail, inside and out, is excellent. Even more impressive, however, is the sophistication evident in the handling of that detail, achieving an unusual degree of subtle variety within a restrained, harmonious whole.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Nash County Records, Nash County Courthouse, Nashville, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
 Nash County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
 Dowd, Jerome. Sketches of Prominent Living North Carolinians. Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1888.
 Waterman, Thomas T., and Johnston, Frances B. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

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	0 0 0	0 0 0		36° 00' 35"	77° 51' 36"	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 8 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History

DATE: 16 June 1972

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 Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 16 June 1972

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

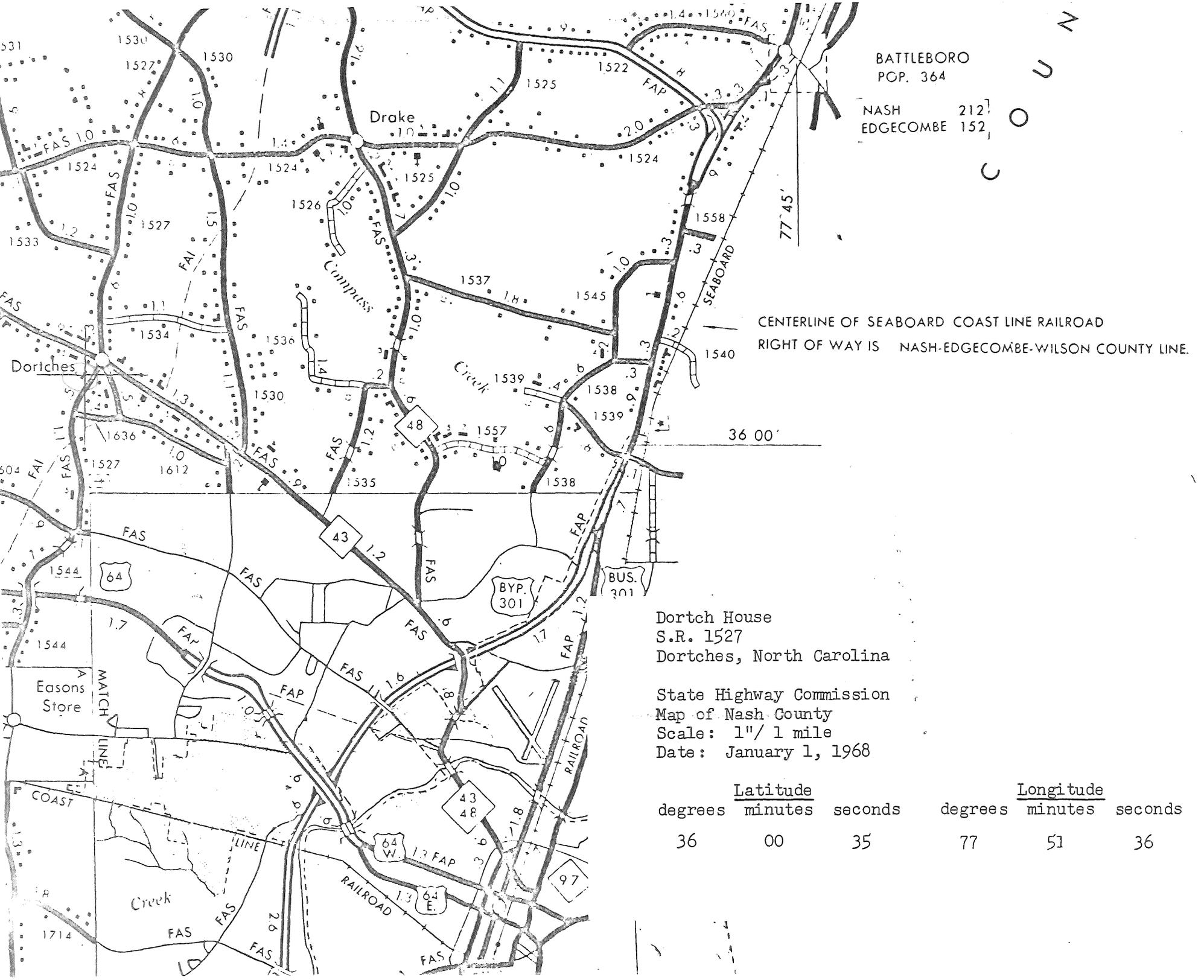
Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



BATTLEBORO
POP. 364

NASH 212
EDGECOMBE 152

CENTERLINE OF SEABOARD COAST LINE RAILROAD
RIGHT OF WAY IS NASH-EDGECOMBE-WILSON COUNTY LINE.

Dortch House
S.R. 1527
Dortches, North Carolina

State Highway Commission
Map of Nash County
Scale: 1" / 1 mile
Date: January 1, 1968

Latitude			Longitude		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
36	00	35	77	51	36

