

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
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See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Owen-Harrison House

and/or common

2. Location

At the end of a private lane, entrance off the north side of SR 1768 (Sloan Road),  
street & number 0.7 mile west of junction with SR 1770 (Goodman Road) not for publication

city, town X vicinity of Mill Bridge

state North Carolina code 037 county Rowan code 159

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"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth C. Lauder

street & number Route One, Box 21-A

city, town Mt. Ulla vicinity of state N. C. 28125

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds Office, Rowan County Office Building

street & number 402 North Main Street

city, town Salisbury state N. C. 28144

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

The Architecture of Rowan County ( ) A Catalogue and History of Surviving 18th, 19th and  
title Early 20th Century Structures has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Summer 1983 federal X state county local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

# 7. Description

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

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Owen-Harrison House, a grand two-story with attic brick house laid up in Flemish bond, is the finest surviving brick plantation seat of the antebellum period in Rowan County. While brick houses were built in the county in the Federal period--see Wood Grove (NR 1982), and the John Stirewalt House--neither matches the grandeur of scale and refinement of detail which distinguish this handsome house. Today its south front facade is mostly hidden behind a pair of magnolia trees flanking the entrance. Documentary photographs show that a two-story brick kitchen stood behind the house to the northwest but it has long been lost as have all the many farm outbuildings which would have been used during the farm's heyday in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It survives today with nearby Kerr Mill (NR), Oakland, and Thyatira Church as an expression of a cultured and wealthy society which flourished in the Thyatira/Mill Bridge community in the 1800s and has declined since the century's turn.

The house, completed for James Owen in 1843, is a rectangular double pile structure with a four bay front (south) elevation and pairs of single shoulder chimneys asymmetricaly disposed on its gable ends. The asymmetrical front and side elevations suggest the off-center center hall and the uneven size of rooms within the house. The house rests on a shallow water table. The window openings have a granite sill and wood lintel which extend into the brickwork beyond the edges of the opening. Symmetrically molded surrounds with cornerblocks are fitted inside the opening to enframe the window sash. The window sash on the first story have a nine-over-nine division while those on the second story and attic have a six-over-nine arrangement. The front entrance on the south elevation is sheltered by a one-story pedimented porch which is in the process of restoration. Its free-Doric entablature was--and, is to be--supported by fluted Tuscan columns.

The frontispiece, enframing a pair of doors flanked by sidelights above panels, is taken from Plate 28 of Asher Benjamin's The Practical House Carpenter. Handsome Greek key pilasters rise at each side to support a shallow frieze. This entrance is set in the second bay from the southeast corner (right side facing) of the house. A pair of molded, four, flat panel doors open into the hall. A pair of symmetrically disposed chimneys stand to either side of the center of the house's east gable end. Pairs of windows are set between the chimneys on both the first and second stories while a fifth window is set on the first story to the north side of the northernmost (right facing) chimney. The sixth window in this elevation is in the attic.

On the west gable end the chimneys are of two sizes with the larger chimney standing in the southern half of the elevation and providing fireplaces for the parlor (in the southwest corner of the first story) and the principal bed chamber above. It is flanked by windows on each story which illuminate these important rooms. The smaller chimney stands near the north (rear)edge of the elevation. There is a fifth, attic window on this elevation.

The only exterior changes which have been made to the house appear on the rear (north) elevation where a one-story enclosed porch--carrying nearly the full facade--is sheltered by a hipped roof. It rests on a high brick foundation. The porch was added by the present owners in the 1970s. The second story has a four bay division.

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There is a shallow molded cornice across the front and rear elevations and projecting molded eaves.

The Owen-Harrison House, built on a center stair hall plan with a double rank of rooms at either side, is finished with a thorough and consistent program of wood trim taken from the pattern books of Owen Biddle and Asher Benjamin. While many houses in the county can boast a single mantel (or two), an entrance or doors, etc. taken from the plates of Asher Benjamin no where else in the county is the program as complete, as well-proportioned, and as well-crafted. Its closest frame equivalent is the once handsome Osborne Giles Foard House at Rowan Mills (now Cleveland), twice removed from its site and shorn of much of its dignity. Without doubt this is the handsomest and most intact brick plantation house surviving in the county from the antebellum period and reflects a culture and gentility enjoyed by the wealthiest members of Rowan's planter aristocracy in the mid-nineteenth century. It was a privileged state of short duration.

The central--though off-center--hall extends the full depth of the house. The doors connecting the first story hall to the two rooms at either side do not reflect each other; three of the four doors are directly opposite the fireplaces fitted in the outside walls. The doors on the east side of the hall are connected by a clothes rail. The door at the rear of the hall consists of a pair of three panel leaves hinged in the center. The opening is topped by a four light transom. The reveals are panelled also. Basically there is a general symmetry within each room. It is regrettable but the painted finish of this room and most of the stained and grained, or marbelized finish of many of the other rooms and particularly the stair was removed by sandblasting by the present owners.

The parlor to the west of the hall is the largest and enjoys the finest finish of the first story rooms. Centered on the west wall, opposite the five panel door from the hall, is a grand mantel modeled on Plate 51 of The Practical House Carpenter featuring fluted columns supporting a Greek key frieze. The plastered walls of the room rest on a robust molded baseboard. The door and window surrounds here rest on blocks fitted in the baseboard. These surrounds and those elsewhere in the house were molded on Benjamin's plates. The lower portion of the window surrounds enframe molded panels below each of the windows in the parlor and elsewhere on the first and second stories. A simply molded chair rail--a remnant of the Federal period--encircles the room.

Dominating the room, however, is the splendid medallion on the ceiling of the parlor. It consists of four concentric bands of molded plaster around the central device featuring ten richly molded acanthus leaves radiating from a core. The inner circle is a foliate ring encircled, in turn, by an applied reeded circle. Next to it the outer circle is a chain of bell flowers whose bell shape is formed of acanthus leaves. The outer circle is reeded and carries on its outer perimeter closely spaced, smaller acanthus leaves which reach beyond the circle. This medallion is nearly identical to two other medallions in piedmont North Carolina, in the drawing room at Ingleside (NR), the Forney house in Lincoln County, and in the parlor of the Johnson-Neel House in Iredell County. A fourth medallion in the stair hall of the Utzman-Chambers House (NR) in Salisbury would also appear to be by the same hand. It consists of a medallion featuring twelve acanthus leaves radiating from a central device which, in turn, is encircled by a ring of bell flowers. A simply molded rim completes the composition. Ingleside, the Johnson-Neel House, and the Utzman-

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Chambers House are all earlier than the Owen-Harrison House and the medallions therein would appear to be later additions, and presumably nearly contemporary with this house.

A door in the center of the parlor's north wall connects to the smaller rooms behind it. It has a fireplace in the center of its narrow west elevation, a pair of windows on the north elevation and a second door on the east wall which connects with the hall. The mantel in this room is transitional Federal-Greek Revival in form with recessed panel pilasters rising on either side of the opening to the full entablature. The entablature breaks forward over the pilasters and over the central, wider block in a Federal tripartite design. The mantel shelf is also broken and repeats the tripartite form. A chair rail encircles the room.

On the east side of the first story hall are a pair of rooms of near equal size. The room in the southeast corner of the house has a fireplace in the center of its east elevation directly opposite the door connecting it with the hall. A window is set in the center of its south elevation and a second window occurs beside (and to the north of) the fireplace. The mantel in this room, now used as a dining room, is copied directly from Plate 50 of The Practical House Carpenter. The plastered elevations rise from a boldly molded baseboard. The door and window surrounds are symmetrically molded with recessed fluting and cornerblocks. There is no chair rail. The present owners have installed cupboards in the southeast and southwest corners of the room and faced their openings with moldings based on the design of the original woodwork. A door in the center of this room's north wall connects to the room behind it. The present owners have built storage cupboards into the southwest and northwest corners of this rear room and installed an octagonal island in the center during their outfitting of it as a kitchen. A fireplace flanked by windows at either side is centered in the room's east elevation. The mantel consists of molded flat panel pilasters which rise from a molded base, at either side of the fire opening to cornerblocks. A molded flat panel lintel carries across the top of the opening and connects the cornerblocks. A frieze carries above the lintel and is itself surmounted by a molded cornice supporting the mantel shelf.

A twentieth century door opening is set in the center of the room's north wall and originally opened into a frame addition. It now opens into the modern enclosed porch.

The open string stair which rises from the first floor to the second has slender square-in plan balusters which carry a round hand rail. There is no newel at the bottom of the staircase but rather a circle of balusters set in the rounded end of the first step. It rises to the north along the west wall to a landing in the northwest corner of the hall and then continues its ascent across the rear of the hall to a second landing in the northeast corner then turns to the south and rises to the second floor. The hand-rail ramps at the (northwest) corner landing above the simply square-in-plan newel and ramps a second time as it approaches the (northeast) corner landing and the newel there. It ramps a fourth time when it reaches the newel on the second story landing. The brackets at the ends of the steps are modeled on the well-known tulip bracket which appeared in Owen Biddle's Young Carpenter's Assistant (1810). The carpenter used the scroll but omitted the tulip in the execution of the bracket.

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The plan of the second story of the Owen-Harrison House repeats that of the first story with only minor differences. Symmetrically molded surrounds with cornerblocks are used in each of the rooms and baseboards anchor the plastered elevations. Flat paneled, molded five panel doors are used throughout the second story.

The only room with a fireplace is the large southwest corner bedroom (above the parlor). The mantel here, with its recessed panel pilasters and frieze is copied from Plate 49 in Benjamin's The Practical House Carpenter. The window surrounds, resting on blocks in the baseboard rise to cornerblocks at the top of the openings enframing both the windows and the panels below. This arrangement appears throughout the second story.

A door in the center of this bedroom's north wall connects to the room behind it in which the present owners have fitted a bathroom in its western end and laundry facilities and closets in its east end. The connecting door and the panels below the windows in the smaller room's north walls retain their original, boldly painted finish from 1843. The panels are ochre while the framing elements are a near oxblood.

Because of the configuration of the stair there is no opening from this room into the stair hall. The rooms on the opposite, east side of the hall are simple chambers with plastered walls and symmetrically molded surrounds with cornerblocks. The baseboards in these rooms are somewhat simpler than those in the large bedroom and both are less ambitious than those on the first story. These rooms each connect with the hall but do not communicate with each other. A closet, recalling the shape of a corner cupboard, has been installed in the southwest corner of the southeast (front) bedroom. A like closet has been installed in the northwest corner of the northeast (rear) bedroom. The present owners have installed a bathroom for these bedrooms across the front (south) end of the hall.

The stair connecting the second story with the attic--independent of its predecessor connecting the first and second stories--rises to the north along the west wall of the hall to a (northwest) corner landing, continues to a second (northeast) corner landing and then rises in a flight to the south to the door opening into the attic. The slender newel at the foot of the stairs is round for its greater length though square at the base and at the top where it engages the round handrail. The stair bracket is the same as seen earlier. Ironically the rich use of color which once characterized the interior decoration of the house survives in its most intact and almost only instance here in the staircase. The brackets and stair ends are marbelized with black veining over a grey-ochre ground. The sheathing enclosing the upper reaches of the attic stair and the sheathed wall separating it from the attic are painted a rich and brilliant turquoise blue. The door at the top of the stairs opening into the attic is boldly stained and grained to simulate mahogany. It is in the attic--on the opposite side of this door--that J. W. Rainey printed his name in an arch over the word "PAINTER". The date "June the 22nd, 1843" is handpainted in script below.

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It is the wonderful combination of expertly rendered graining and marbelizing and rich deep colors, ochre, turquoise, and oxblood surviving here which suggest and attest to the brilliant interior decoration completed by J. W. Rainey for James Owen in 1843. While portions of the wood work and walls had been repainted in the intervening years much survived intact and was photographed as late as 1975 before it was sandblasted away by the present owners.

# 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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Interior Design

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Owen-Harrison House, an unusually handsome two story brick plantation seat completed in 1843 for James Owen (\_\_\_\_-1853), is the finest surviving antebellum house in Rowan County. The expertly laid Flemish bond exterior elevations are matched on the inside with a program of architectural woodwork taken directly from the plates of Owen Biddle's Young Carpenter's Assistant (1805) and Asher Benjamin's The Practical House Carpenter (1830), the most prominent design source for builders/carpenters in antebellum North Carolina. On the parlor ceiling there is a large exquisitely molded medallion which appears in only one other house in the county, the Maxwell Chambers House in Salisbury and in but a few houses in the Piedmont including the Johnson-Neel House (Iredell County) and Ingleside (Lincoln County). (These three houses are already on the National Register.) But the most spectacular feature of the interior design of the house was the bold wood graining and decorative painting, executed by J. W. Rainey in 1843, which survives in part in single rooms on the first and second stories and the stair to the attic where Rainey signed his name on the door. The source of the wealth which built the house is not known and Owen enjoyed a sad life in his mansion after the death of his wife in 1844 until his own death in 1853. It was, however, during the lives of his daughter Frances (1842-1906) and her husband John Mack Harrison (1837-1910)--they were married in 1861--that the family plantation reached its greatest size and prominence and was praised in the Carolina Watchman in 1885 as the "finest farm in Rowan, if not western North Carolina..." The house remained in the Harrison family until 1974.

### Criteria Assessment:

- A. The Owen-Harrison House is associated with the large scale, prosperous plantation system of the antebellum period and its revitalization with free labor in the last decades of the 19th century. It was praised as "the finest farm in Rowan" in the Carolina Watchman in 1885.
- B. The house is associated with the life of its builder James Owen (\_\_\_\_-1853), a prominent millowner, militia captain, and resident in the Thyatira community. The house is also associated with the life of John Mack Harrison (1837-1910) who married Owen's daughter Frances in 1861. In the last decades of the 19th century Harrison raised the cultivation of his farm's acreage to its highest yields and enjoyed a high regard among the leaders of the agricultural community of Rowan County. The house is also associated with the life of J. W. Rainey, a decorative painter in piedmont North Carolina in the antebellum period, and contains the only known signed example of his work in the state.
- C. The Owen-Harrison House embodies the distinctive characteristics of the large scale transitional Federal-Greek Revival plantation house of the early antebellum period and represents, by its interior finish taken from the plates of the leading architectural patternbooks, its plaster ornamentation, and the boldly handsome painted and grained decoration by J. W. Rainey, the epitome of domestic architectural sophistication and elegance in piedmont North Carolina.

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The Owen-Harrison House is one of the finest antebellum plantation houses surviving in Rowan County. Located twelve miles southwest of Salisbury in the Mill Bridge community, the house was completed in 1843 by James Owen (ca. 1796-1853), planter, millowner, militia captain, and remained in his family until 1974. From the early antebellum period until the end of the nineteenth century Mill Bridge was the leading agricultural community in Rowan County, and Owen and his descendants were among its most prosperous residents.<sup>1</sup>

The house is a two-and-a-half story, four-bay structure with a pedimented portico and is built of brick laid in Flemish bond. The trim of the eight interior rooms was taken from designs published in Asher Benjamin's Practical House Carpenter (Boston, 1830) while the details of the staircase were copied from Owen Biddle's The Young Carpenter's Assistant (Boston, 1810); both pattern books were widely used by builders in antebellum North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> The ceiling of the parlor features a large and ornate plaster medallion which also appears in a number of other buildings in the surrounding area, including the Maxwell Chambers House in Salisbury, Mt. Mourne and the Johnson-Neel House in neighboring Iredell County, Philanthropic Hall at Davidson College in nearby Mecklenburg County, and Ingleside in Lincoln County.<sup>3</sup> The interior of the house was originally painted and grained by J. W. Rainey (who signed and dated his work 22 June 1843), a house painter working in the piedmont area from the 1830s until the 1850s.<sup>4</sup> The house was complimented by a number of brick outbuildings, including a two-story kitchen, of which none survive.

Unfortunately, the details of James Owen's life prior to the construction of his house are not well documented, and it remains unclear how he accumulated the funds to build such a fine house. Owen was born ca. 1796, the son of Josiah Owen (d. 1851), a modest land and slave owner, and his wife Lucy Nicholson Owen of Rowan County.<sup>5</sup> James Owen had evidently lived for some time in Iredell County by 1837 when he sold 211 acres there, "with rents now due," and moved to a 514-acre tract purchased the same year from his father for \$1,500.<sup>6</sup> Three years later Owen married Mary Knox Patterson (1802-1844), a member of a family long settled in Rowan County.<sup>7</sup> At the time of his marriage the Salisbury Carolina Watchman referred to Owen as "Captain James Owen," probably indicating his rank in the Rowan County militia.<sup>8</sup> Owen must have started construction on the house soon after his marriage, but it is unknown how he financed the work as his only known assets were his 514-acre farm and five slaves listed in the 1840 census. It seems unlikely that Owen's agricultural pursuits alone, no matter how successful, would have enabled him to build so fine and expensive a dwelling.

James and Mary Owen were the parents of two children, Frances (1842-1906) and Josiah (1844-1852). According to family tradition, Mary Owen died of injuries received in a carriage accident while going to Thyatira Presbyterian Church for the baptism of her son Josiah in April of 1844.<sup>9</sup> Family tradition also claims that Owen, in his grief, never lived in his house after his wife's death, but it seems unlikely he would have abandoned so fine a house.

One month after his wife's death Owen and his brothers-in-law John K. Patterson and Thomas H. Patterson of Iredell County and David H. Patterson of Rowan County, purchased at auction a gristmill on Withrow's Creek for \$2,710.<sup>10</sup> The 74-acre mill tract straddled the Iredell-Rowan County line and was located about five miles north of Owen's home.

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The 1847 Rowan County tax list recorded the mill as "James Owen and Co." with a value of \$1,706.<sup>11</sup> The following year the tax list identified Owen as "Capt." and valued his 514 acres at \$2,570.<sup>12</sup> By the time of the 1850 census Owen and his brother-in-law David H. Patterson had bought out the interests of the other Patterson brothers in the mill. The census described the mill as a flour, corn, and sawmill capitalized at \$3,500 which produced 728 barrels of flour, 6,600 barrels of corn meal, and 50,000 feet of lumber.<sup>13</sup> The total value of the mill's production, \$5,267, was the ninth highest of the twenty-seven gristmills in Rowan County.

Owen was listed in the 1850 census as a farmer with property worth \$2,800 and as the owner of eight slaves.<sup>14</sup> He cultivated 250 acres of his 514-acre plantation, producing 4 bales of ginned cotton, 50 tons of hay, 800 bushels of corn, 400 bushels of oats, 200 bushels of sweet potatoes, and 150 bushels of wheat. Owen's livestock included six horses, four cows, eight sheep, and seventy swine.<sup>15</sup>

James Owen died 16 October 1853, leaving his daughter Frances an eleven-year old orphan (his eight-year old son Josiah had died in 1852). David H. Patterson, Owen's brother-in-law and co-owner of the gristmill, was appointed administrator of the estate and guardian for Frances, posting a \$13,000 administrator's bond. Items sold at Owen's estate sale included many farming tools, 2 wagons, 5 horses, 4 mules, a windmill, 6,000 bushels of oats, 604 bushels of corn, many carpenter's tools with bricks, laths, plank-ing, and shingles, as well as cooper's tools and 1,144 barrel staves indicating that Owen made the barrels used at the gristmill. Owen's household furnishings were surprisingly few for so large a house, but this may have been due to his wife's early death and the small size of his household. Furniture sold at the sale included 4 beds, 5 tables, 3 sets of chairs, 1 bureau, 1 cupboard, 1 washstand, 2 mirrors, 2 carpets, 1 clock, and a quantity of flatware, china, and glass. The sale netted the estate \$2,971.84.<sup>16</sup>

Frances Owen lived with her guardian and uncle David Patterson until her marriage in 1861. Patterson's guardian accounts show that he hired out three slaves and rented the plantation to provide Frances with a yearly income ranging from \$200 to \$300, in addition to the money resulting from the estate sale.<sup>17</sup> It is not known whether the Owen House was rented with the plantation or maintained by Patterson for eventual use by Frances. In the fall of 1853 Frances and Patterson petitioned the county court to sell the mill tract owned jointly by her father and Patterson. There is no record of the sale of the mill but it was not reported in the 1860 census and 1853 was the only year Patterson reported any income from the mill, \$113, in his guardian accounts. Between August 1855 and February 1856 the cash balance of Patterson's guardian accounts increased from \$2,693.40 to \$4,408.71, probably resulting from the sale of the mill, and Patterson's administrative bond was increased from \$13,000 to \$20,000. Patterson also reported in February of 1856 that he had loaned out \$1,500 of the estate's funds. By the time of the 1860 census, nineteen-year-old Frances Owen was the owner of real estate valued at \$7,710 and personal property worth \$10,800, including three slaves.<sup>18</sup>

In 1861 Frances Owen married John Mack Harrison (1837-1910), a native of Mecklenburg County, and they moved into the Owen House where they reared their twelve children.<sup>19</sup> Although Harrison had previously failed in the mercantile business, he apparently possessed the successful ingredients for the making of a good farmer. No doubt aided by

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his wife's inheritance, Harrison improved and expanded the Owen plantation by several hundred acres, eventually subdividing his land to provide farms for his children. Well before his death Harrison was regarded not only as the largest landowner in the Mill Bridge community but also as its most respected and prominent resident. In 1885 a traveler reported to the Salisbury Carolina Watchman that he had visited "the finest farm in Rowan, if not western North Carolina--Mr. J. M. Harrison's fine improved lands, brought up from worn out old fields, now set in 50 acre lots of clover. And when we say here we saw stock, we mean STOCK and not scrubs. Fine hogs--Jersey Red, Poland China, Berkshire and other full-blood breeds--also sheep, and fine, large, healthy looking cattle. It is here you can see the thoroughbred Jersey cow to perfection. Mr. Harrison is undoubtedly a good farmer, and makes farming and stockraising an interesting and paying business."<sup>20</sup>

In 1872 James S. McCubbins, a wealthy and prominent Salisbury merchant, purchased the Kerr gristmill and plantation located between Harrison's property and Thyatira Presbyterian Church. In 1881 McCubbins took Harrison as a partner in his milling business, and in 1886 McCubbins and Harrison converted the mill's grinding mechanism from millstones to steel rollers.<sup>21</sup> The roller process had first been used in the United States in 1876, and the McCubbins-Harrison mill was probably one of the first mills in North Carolina to use the new process. In 1893 McCubbins sold his interest in the mill to Harrison who operated it with miller John W. Page until 1895 when Harrison sold out to Page. In addition to his farming and milling activities, Harrison served as chairman of the district school board, participated in the Western Rowan Farmers' Alliance, and acted as a community money lender.<sup>22</sup>

Frances Owen Harrison died in 1906 and J. Mack Harrison in 1910. The house tract was inherited by their unmarried daughter Ida (1885-1943). In 1911 Ida married Dr. Grover C. Cress, a veterinarian, and they lived in the house until their deaths. The Cress heirs sold the house and 75 acres in 1974 to Mr. and Mrs. Clayton A. Davis who deeded the house to their daughter, architect Merry Lane Lauder, who is rehabilitating the house.<sup>23</sup>

Although the house had been neglected prior to its sale in 1974, it remained in sound condition and was virtually intact except for the loss of its porch. The house is an important example of the impact that pattern books, such as Benjamin's Practical House Carpenter and Biddle's The Young Carpenter's Assistant, had upon the traditional building styles in antebellum Rowan County. As the finest surviving antebellum dwelling in the county outside the town of Salisbury, the house is one of the architectural landmarks of western Rowan County.

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed study of the Mill Bridge community during this period consult Bruce S. Cheeseman, "Historical Research Report, Kerr Mill and the Mill Bridge Community, Rowan County," Typescript, May 1979, copy in the Research Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Cheeseman, "Kerr Mill." Much information on the Owen House and its occupants has been provided by Davyd Foard Hood of the Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

<sup>2</sup>Several other houses in piedmont North Carolina using these pattern book designs are illustrated in Frances Benjamin Johnston and Thomas Tileston Waterman, The Early Architecture of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 214-217, 228-230.

<sup>3</sup>See the respective files for these buildings in the Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

<sup>4</sup>Rainey advertised in the Salisbury Western Carolinian of 17 May 1839 that he was working in the Cabarrus County seat of Concord; by 1855 he was working in Charlotte according to the Charlotte North Carolina Whig of 24 April 1855. The 1840 census for Rowan County (p. 11) listed a John Rainy who may have been the painter for the Owen House.

<sup>5</sup>At Owen's death on 16 October 1853, his age was given on his tombstone as "about 60," see Thyatira Memorial Association, Inscriptions on Grave Stones in the Cemetery of Thyatira Church, 1775-1982 (Salisbury, N.p., 1982), 41, hereinafter cited as Thyatira Memorial Association, Thyatira Cemetery. See also Rowan County Marriage Bonds, microfilm copy, and Rowan County Estates Papers, folder for James Owen, 1800, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Archives. An examination of the Rowan County records reveals that there were two distinct Owen families in the county. The families probably shared a common ancestor but after 1800 there seems to be no connection between the families.

<sup>6</sup>James Owen to William Summers, 13 February 1837, Iredell County Deeds, Book T, 216, microfilm copy, Archives; Josiah Owen to James Owen, 21 May 1837, Rowan County Deeds, Book 31, p. 371, microfilm copy, Archives.

<sup>7</sup>Rowan County marriage bonds, microfiche copy, Archives. Mary Knox Patterson was the daughter of James and Frances Knox Patterson; through her mother she was a second cousin of President James Knox Polk (1795-1849), a native of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, see Hattie S. Goodman, The Knox Family (Richmond, Va.: Whittet & Shepperson, 1905).

<sup>8</sup>Western Carolinian (Salisbury), 18 September 1840; the Owens were married 3 September 1840.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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<sup>9</sup> Beulah Davis, "Owen-Harrison House in Being Restored," China Grove South Rowan Times, 2 May 1979. In an undated letter to Davyd Hood of the Survey and Planning Branch, Mrs. Davis, secretary to the Rowan County Historic Properties Commission, cites her source for the family tradition as Mrs. Frances Putnam of Chapel Hill, a great-granddaughter of James Owen. Mary Owen died 16 April 1844 and is buried at Thyatira Presbyterian Church.

<sup>10</sup> George Clodfelter to James Owen et al, 14 May 1844, Rowan County Deeds, Book 37, p. 297, microfilm copy, Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Rowan County Tax Lists, 1841-1849, Capt. Goodman's Co., p. 322, Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Rowan County Tax Lists, 1841-1849, Capt. John W. McNeely's Co., p. 345, Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Rowan County, North Carolina, Industrial Schedule, 472, microfilm copy, Archives, hereinafter cited as 1850 census with appropriate schedule.

<sup>14</sup> 1850 census, Rowan County, Population Schedule, 98, Slave Schedule, 18, manuscript copy, Archives.

<sup>15</sup> 1850 census, Rowan County, Agricultural Schedule, 15, manuscript copy, Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Rowan County Inventory and Account Register, 1854-1858, pp. 31-34, Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Rowan County Inventory and Account Register, 1854-1858, p. 34; Rowan County Guardian Accounts, 1849-1860, pp. 305, 471, 525, 544; Rowan County Estates Papers, folder for James Owen, Archives. All information on the Owen estate comes from these sources.

<sup>18</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Rowan County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 96, Slave Schedule, 31, manuscript copy, Archives.

<sup>19</sup> For biographical information on Harrison, see Cheeseman, "Kerr Mill," 63-64, and Beulah Davis, "Owen-Harrison House."

<sup>20</sup> Carolina Watchman (Salisbury), 9 April 1885.

<sup>21</sup> Cheeseman, "Kerr Mill," 67-70.

<sup>22</sup> Beulah Davis, "Owen-Harrison House,"

<sup>23</sup> Beulah Davis, "Owen-Harrison House."

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 41

Quadrangle name Cleveland

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	17	5	3	10	6	10	10	3	19	4	15	6	11	10
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B 

1	17	5	3	10	9	12	10	3	19	4	15	6	11	10
Zone		Easting						Northing						

C 

1	17	5	3	10	8	11	10	3	19	4	14	9	10	10
Zone		Easting						Northing						

D 

1	17	5	3	10	6	13	10	3	19	4	14	8	19	15
Zone		Easting						Northing						

E 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The property included in this nomination is a 41 acre tract identified as Lot 15, Rowan County Tax Map 771, Steele Township. A copy of the map is attached.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

Architectural description, statement of significance, and criteria assessment by name/title Davyd Foard Hood; historical research report by Marshall Bullock, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section

organization Division of Archives and History date

street & number 109 East Jones Street telephone 733-6545

city or town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. King date

title State Historic Preservation Officer date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

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Page 1

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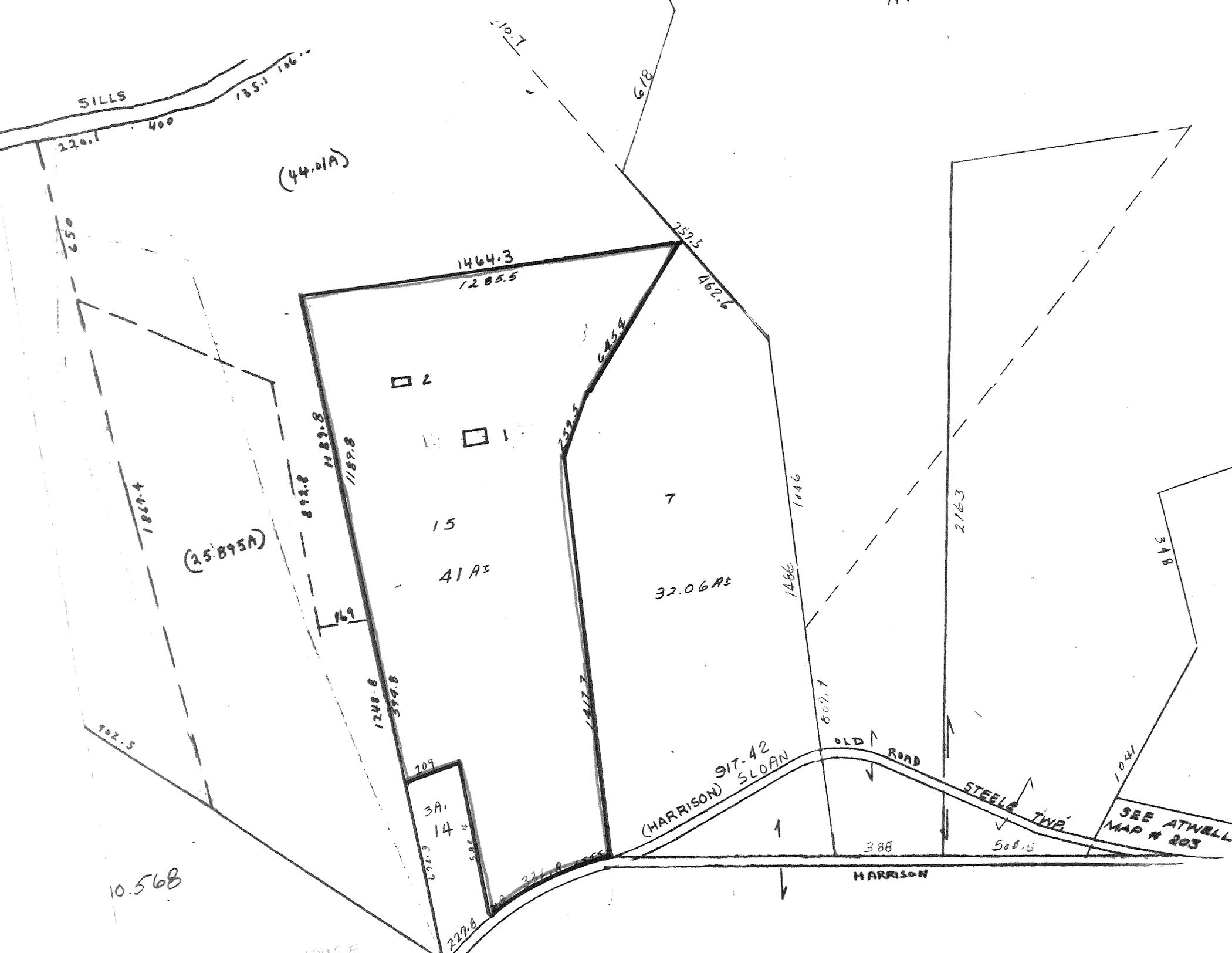
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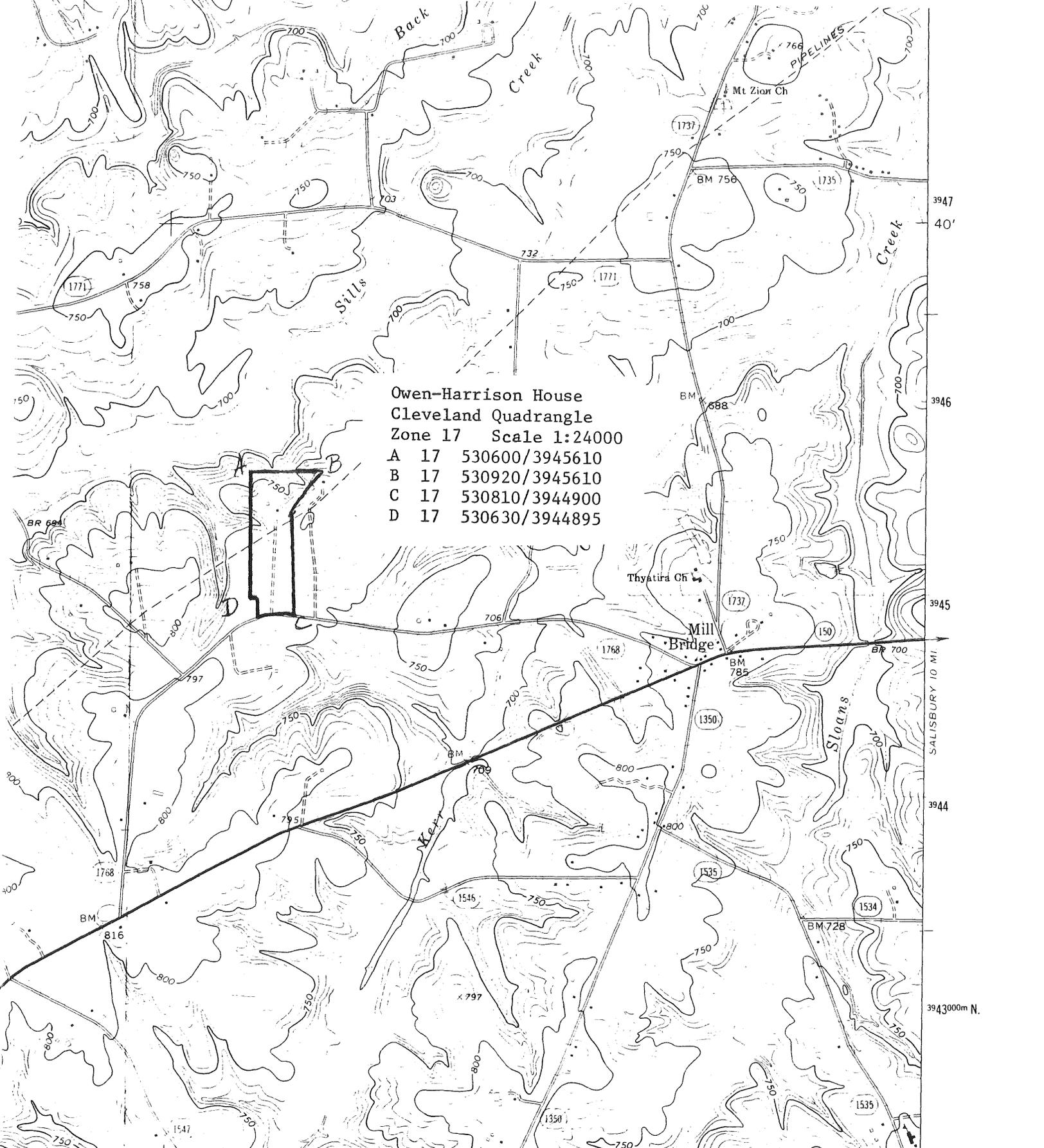
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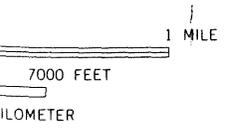
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Western Carolinian (Salisbury), 17 May 1839, 18 September 1840.





Owen-Harrison House  
 Cleveland Quadrangle  
 Zone 17 Scale 1:24000  
 A 17 530600/3945610  
 B 17 530920/3945610  
 C 17 530810/3944900  
 D 17 530630/3944895

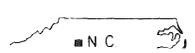


530' 40' 531' 532' 533000m E 80° 37' 30" 3943000m N

● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D C —1972

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route



(CHINA GROVE 1885 II SE)

