

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property Scuppernong River Bridge
historic name Main Street Bridge; Tyrrell County No. 4 Bridge; Columbia Bridge
other names/site number _____

2. Location
street & number U.S. 64 Business n/a not for publication
city, town Columbia n/a vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Tyrrell code 177 zip code 27925

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

William S. Pinn Signature of certifying official 23 Jan 92 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet. _____

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. _____

determined not eligible for the National Register. _____

removed from the National Register. _____

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/Road-Related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/Road Related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Warren Ponytruss Swing Span

Other: Trestle

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls

roof

other Steel
Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

The Scuppernong River Bridge spans the Scuppernong River narrows and leads into downtown Columbia, the seat of Tyrrell County, North Carolina. The drawbridge is at the western end of Columbia's historic commercial area, which is a two-block area of Main Street containing one- and two-story brick and frame vernacular commercial buildings dating from the early twentieth century to about 1940. Two blocks from the bridge, also on Main Street, is the Tyrrell County Courthouse, a 1903 two-story brick building with round-arched, two-over-two double-hung windows and a porch that appears to have been added in the early twentieth century. This section of Main Street, extending from the bridge to the Courthouse, is an architecturally cohesive area that is locally significant in the areas of commerce and government. (It is hoped that Columbia's commercial area will be nominated to the National Register when funding for a survey and National Register project is available.) The bridge is an important visual and historic link to this historic area. A commercial enterprise and public park are located at the western end of the bridge. US 64 Business is routed over the bridge and through the town (Rubach p. 2-3).

The two-lane bridge was built in 1926 on the site of a timber trestle and drawbridge that also led into Main Street. A private ferry provided access during the construction period. The bridge is in its original location and has undergone only minor alteration since construction, principally significant repairs in 1949 and removal of a tender's house and traffic gates. The main span is a steel Warren-type pony truss swing span located at the Columbia (eastern) end of the bridge, with 22 concrete-pile-supported timber approach spans. The swing span and its rest piers are protected by a timber fender system. The swing span, fabricated by the Virginia Bridge and Iron Company of Roanoke, Virginia, is 123 feet 4 inches long and consists of timber stringers with steel support beams. Rest piers consist of reinforced concrete cap supported by twelve 18-inch octagonal reinforced precast concrete piles. The center of the swing span rests on a 22-foot-diameter pivot pier with reinforced concrete cap supported by 37 piles. The manually-operated swing span has no drive motors, brakes, speed reducers, nor any electrical drive of any kind. The wedges and latch are separated by a manually-driven capstan drive. The span is turned by a second manually-driven capstan. In addition to the main swing span, the bridge has 22 timber joist approach spans resting on bents consisting of reinforced concrete caps, each supported by three 16-inch octagonal precast concrete piles. The wearing surface is bituminous. Overall length of the structure is 566 feet 4 inches. Roadway width is 16.8 feet; overall deck width is 17.9 feet. Vertical clearance for navigation is four feet with swing span closed. Horizontal clearance through swing span opening over the west channel is 43 feet where the mean water depth is 35 feet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION
ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1926 - 1941

Significant Dates

1926
1927

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

N.C. State Highway Commission

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary

The Scuppernong River Bridge was built in 1926 across the Scuppernong River narrows immediately west of downtown Columbia, the seat of Tyrrell County, North Carolina. The 566-foot-long, two-lane bridge consists of a 123-foot-long steel Warren-type pony truss swing span protected by a timber fender system at the east end and twenty-two concrete pile-supported timber approach spans. The swing span is turned by a manually driven capstan and has no electrical drive of any kind. The Scuppernong River Bridge is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of transportation as a distinctive reminder of North Carolina's Good Roads Movement in Tyrrell County. As the replacement of a timber trestle bridge, the Scuppernong River Bridge was the final element in the construction of U.S. 64 eastward from Creswell in Washington County across the Piny Marsh swamp to Columbia. Prior to the construction of this section of U.S. 64, inadequate roadways across the swamp had isolated Columbia and Tyrrell County from much of the rest of the state. Under Criterion C, the bridge is of statewide significance in the area of engineering. Across the country the swing span was a standard engineering solution for moveable bridges in the 1910s through the 1930s, but most of them have been replaced. The Scuppernong River Bridge is not only North Carolina's oldest drawbridge; it also is the state's only remaining manually operated truss swing span bridge on its original site. The bridge maintains a high degree of integrity as its only alterations have consisted of the repairs of bracing and redecking in 1949 and the removal of a tender's house and traffic gates. Today the Scuppernong River Bridge provides an important visual link to Columbia's historic downtown area.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NCTransportation Context

As the twentieth century progressed, highways became more important than railways. In 1902 the North Carolina Good Roads Association was organized, and it favored the establishment of a state highway commission and provision for highway maintenance by the State. In 1915 the General Assembly created the State Highway Commission to cooperate with the counties in road building. Two years later the State Highway Commission was authorized to receive federal funds and state automobile license fees for the purpose of maintaining roads and bridges. The Highway Act of 1921 directed the building and maintenance of a state system of almost 6,000 miles of improved roads "connecting all county seats, state institutions and leading towns," and authorized a bond issue of \$50 million for highway and bridge construction. Under the leadership of Frank Page, Chairman of the State Highway Commission, an era of unprecedented construction of roads began which soon brought fame to North Carolina as the "Good Roads State" (Lefler & Newsome, pp.587-588, 600).

There were no paved roads in Columbia before 1926. U.S. Highway 64 from Creswell in Washington County to the West through Scuppernong Township had been paved, but the pavement ended at the edge of Piney Marsh, a swamp in Tyrrell County bordering the Scuppernong River on its western bank. The highway did not extend across this marsh, but the swamp was spanned by a punching or corduroy road. This causeway was inadequate, remaining under water during times of abnormal high tide (Davis, p. 66).

In 1925 the General Assembly appropriated money to extend U.S. Highway 64 across the marsh and to construct a bridge into Columbia. The railroad began hauling in material to build the Piney Marsh Road. However, this effort was soon abandoned due to engineering difficulties. For nearly a year crossing the swamp was impossible for automobiles and the town of Columbia remained isolated (Davis, p. 66-67).

The idea of spanning the Piney Marsh by bridge rather than road was conceived by A. J. Cohoon of Columbia. He is said to have supervised the construction of the long causeway bridge across Piney Marsh with materials contributed by various lumber mills in Tyrrell County. This bridge afterward became a "washboard" road due to it sinking into the swamp in places. The Piney Marsh bridge-road connected the timber trestle Scuppernong River Bridge with U.S. Highway 64 in Scuppernong Township when it was completed. The State Highway Commission paved Columbia's Main Street, and constructed the new drawbridge shortly afterward. The Scuppernong River Bridge spanning the narrows of the river was dedicated in 1927 with much fanfare (Davis, p. 67).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

Ben Dixon MacNeill, staff correspondent of The News & Observer, led his September 7 report from Columbia, as follows:

"North Carolina crossed the Scuppernong River today over a new \$90,000.00 bridge and reannexed Tyrrell County to the State amid scenes of festivity. It found practically the entire population of Tyrrell waiting at this end of the bridge with a welcoming hospitality that is not to be encountered anywhere except in a newly redeemed and reannexed county.

"Officially represented by State Highway Commissioner Frank Page and Congressman Lindsey Warren, and unofficially by a thousand or so visitors from other newly redeemed counties, the State upon entering Tyrrell for the first time had but one thing to regret, the bridge might have been built and this ceremony staged a long time ago (MacNeill, p. 1).

Schools were closed so that the 2,000 county school children could view the parade and witness the ribbon cutting and opening of traffic across the river. The parade extended the length of Main Street and included twelve floats, one of which bore a beauty queen and her six attendants. Citizens hosted a day-long barbecue and picnic. Fifty pigs, a dozen calves, and hundreds of hens were furnished. Tons of apples were pressed into sweet cider. Barrels of Tyrrell County Irish potatoes were made into crisp, brown chips. Local housewives baked cornpone, beaten biscuits, pies and cakes enough to fill the football-field long picnic table. The day's festivities ended with a dance on the banks of the Scuppernong River.

Twice a year, early spring and late fall, the James Adams Floating Theater came to Columbia. It usually docked on a Sunday about 12:30 p.m. After Church servies, crowds gathered on the bridge to welcome the Theater's arrival. It stayed a week and showed plays nightly. A reserved seat cost about fifty cents (Swamproots, 1977, p. 19).

Maynard Davis was the first bridge tender, opening the bridge alone when needed. His daily responsibilities also included manning the traffic gates and putting out and taking in the kerosene navigation lamps at the extremities of the the fender system.

Aside from standard repairs, the bridge has been little altered during its fifty-six year history. In 1949 the State Highway Commission braced up and redecked the bridge. Then in 1957 the continued necessity of the bridge was threatened when a 541-foot, high level bridge was

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

constructed immediately to the south so that through traffic on U.S. 64 could by-pass Columbia's Main Street (Tyrrell Times, November 27, 1979, p. 4). The 1926 bridge remained in place, however, and in 1979 to 1980 all timber was replaced and the swing span was repaired, cleaned, and painted at a cost of \$125,000.00. A fire near the west end of the approach spans in 1985 did minimal damage. At present the bridge is in its original location with all the original functioning parts in operable condition. Currently, North Carolina Department of Transportation is pursuing plans to remove the only manually-operated pony truss swing span bridge remaining in North Carolina. This threatens the existence of the bridge and its historical integrity with the downtown commercial district and courthouse in Columbia.

ENGINEERING CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Scuppernong River Bridge is the only manually-operated pony truss swing-span bridge remaining in North Carolina. It was fabricated by the Virginia Bridge and Iron Company of Roanoke, Virginia. The bridge is the oldest of the 19 extant drawbridges remaining in the state and is one of nine extant truss swing-span bridges. Of these nine, only four are over fifty years old and only two are manually operated. The two manually-operated bridges are the Scuppernong River Bridge, which is a pony truss, and the Tar River Bridge at Grimesland, which is a through truss. The Tar River Bridge, however, was moved to Grimesland from another, original location. The two other historic swing-span truss bridges are in New Bern and in New Hanover County.

The remaining North Carolina truss bridges represent the higher order of truss bridge development. They are the result of the later period of truss bridge building that applied physical principles to the configurations and quality control to the materials.

In 1978 the Federal Bridge Replacement Program (Sec. 144) was amended to allow repair and rehabilitation of bridges. Rehabilitation was defined as "major repairs necessary to restore the structural integrity of a bridge as well as work to correct a major safety defect." This work was done in 1979 to 1980 on the Scuppernong River Bridge when timbers were replaced and the metal swing span repaired and painted.

"The Warren Pony Truss with verticals is one of the most numerous bridge types in North Carolina. Most of the 78 ponies in the group cross small streams in the rural mountains." So stated a Department of Transportation report in 1979. (North Carolina's Metal Truss Bridges, An Inventory and Evaluation, p.1, 43). Today the Scuppernong River Bridge is the only manually-operated pony truss swingspan in North Carolina and the state's oldest drawbridge.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

The swing span was a standard engineering solution for moveable bridges in the 1910's through 1930's, but in many regions they are extremely rare today because most of them have been removed. From Delaware to Florida there are probably no more than one dozen swing spans remaining out of only two dozen historic moveable bridges. Consequently, the swing span bridge is a high priority for preservation efforts. The mechanism of these bridges is of primary interest, and the operable hand-cranked type is extremely rare (Brown, p.1).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

North Carolina Department of Transportation

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than One Acre

UTM References

A 18 386740 3975300
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire bridge, its abutments, its fender system, and the swing span operational area and contains all that is historically significant.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ray McClees-Chairman, Laura Wolke-Vice Chairman

organization Bridge Preservation Council date December 6, 1991

street & number Post Office Box 629 telephone (919) 796-1251

city or town Columbia state NC zip code 27925

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 1 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

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- Saunders, W. O. - "There'll Be Some Real Goings-On in Columbia," The Independent, Elizabeth City, N.C., September 2, 1927.
- Swamproots. Columbia High School publication. Spring 1977, Vol. IV; Spring 1979, Vol. VI; and Spring 1984, Vol. XI.
- Tyrrell Times. "Old Bridge Gets a New Look," November 27, 1979.
- U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. Map, "Columbia West, N.C." 1953, Photorevised 1974.
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 10 Page 1 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

Beginning at National Geodetic Survey vertical control marker N245 located on the north side of the Tyrrell County Courthouse, 403 Main Street, Columbia, North Carolina; then westward along and across Main Street 645', more or less, to the northeast corner of the easternmost abutment of the Scuppernong River Bridge, the point of origin; then westward paralleling the truss and approach spans of said bridge 567', more or less, to the northwest corner of the twentieth approach span west of the swing span of said bridge near the west bank of the Scuppernong River (said span abutting the easternmost approach span of a concrete bridge leading into Piney Marsh and connecting with U.S. Highway 64 bridge); then southward along the westernmost edge of said approach span to the southwest corner of said span; then eastward paralleling the approach spans and truss of said bridge to the southeast corner of the easternmost abutment of said bridge; then northward to the point of origin; also incorporating four wood fenders on the north and south ends of the two swing span rest piers, the wood fender system extending north and south 70', more or less, from the swing span pivot pier, and such space over said river as is required for the operation of the swing span (a radius of 65', more or less, from center of said swing span); thus describing an imaginary rectangle on an east-west axis 567' by 34', more or less, containing the spans, intersected by another imaginary rectangle approximately 140' by 130' centered on the swing span and north-south fender system and containing these elements as well as the four small fenders and the space required for operation of the swing span (see accompanying drawing).

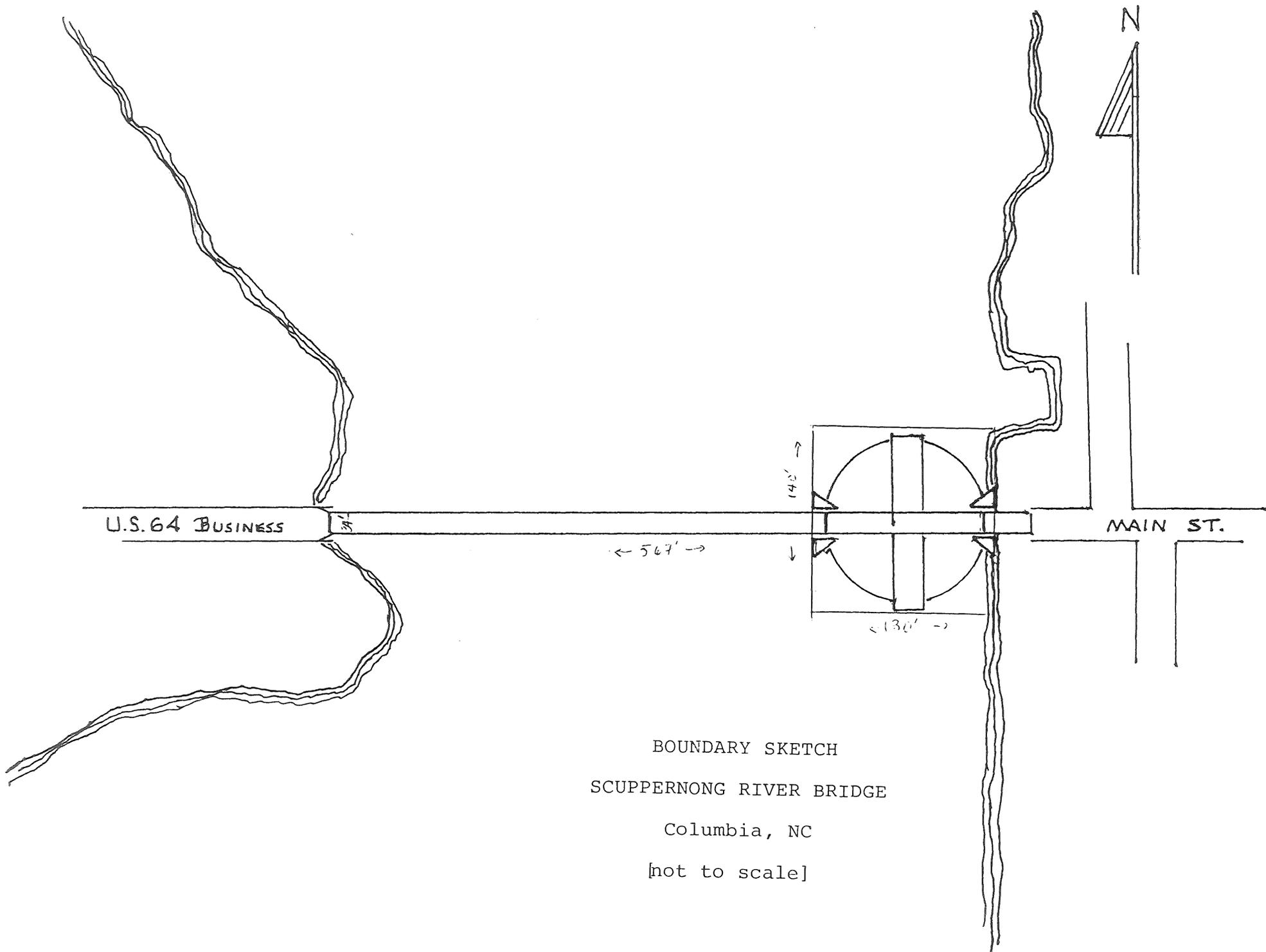
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

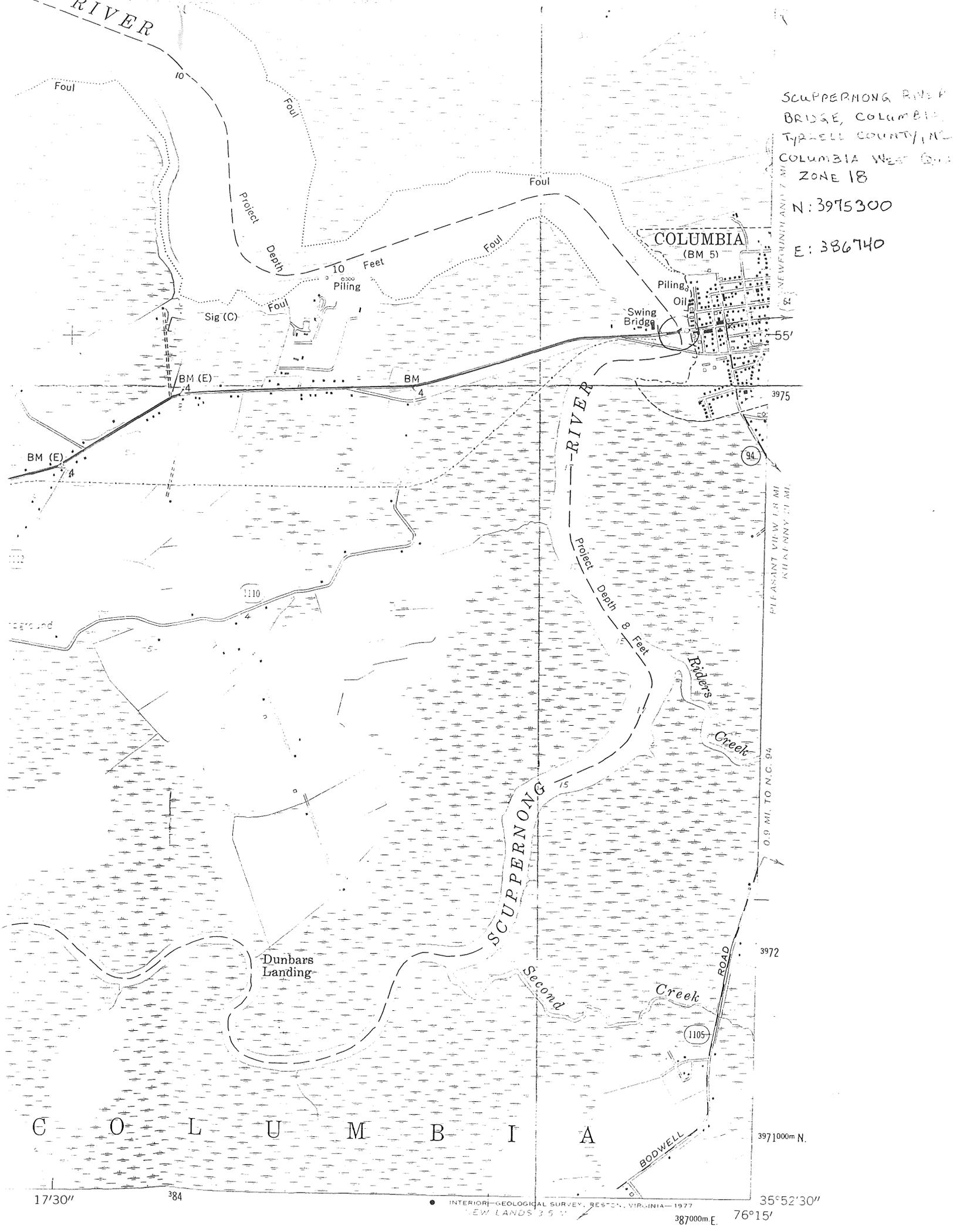
Section number Photos Page 1 Scuppernong River Bridge, Tyrrell County, NC

The following information applies to all photographs:

- 1) Scuppernong River Bridge
 - 2) Columbia, North Carolina
 - 3) Laura Wolke
 - 4) November 1991
 - 5) N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC
-
- A. View of east end of bridge with swing span, downtown Columbia in background; to the northeast
 - B. View of entire south side of bridge from east end, swing span in foreground; to the northwest
 - C. Detail of gear works under swing span; to the southwest
 - D. Detail of fender and swing span; to the north
 - E. View of entire north side of bridge from east end; to the southwest



BOUNDARY SKETCH
SCUPPERNONG RIVER BRIDGE
Columbia, NC
[not to scale]



SCUPPERNON RIVER
 BRIDGE, COLUMBIA,
 TYRRELL COUNTY, N.C.
 COLUMBIA WEST QUAD
 ZONE 18

N: 3975300

E: 386740

COLUMBIA
 (BM 5)

Piling
 Oil
 Swing Bridge

Dunbars
 Landing

Bishop's
 Creek

Second
 Creek

BODWELL
 ROAD

C O L U M B I A

17'30"

384

● INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1977
 NEW LANDS 25

387000m E

76°15'

35°52'30"

3971000m N

3972

0.9 MI. TO N.C. 94

PLEASANT VIEW 1.8 MI
 KUMFERNY 2.1 MI.

3975

94

1105

1110

BM (E)
 4

BM (E)
 4

BM
 4

Sig (C)

10 Feet
 Piling

Project
 Depth
 10

Foul

Foul

Foul

10

RIVER

