

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

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

## 1. Name

historic Apex <sup>TOWN</sup> City Hall

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number W. side of N. Salem St. (SR 1011)  
just of jct. with Center St. (SR 1010) \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Apex \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state North Carolina code 37 county Wake code 183

## 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input 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 Town of Apex, c/o Mr. Larry M. Jordan, Mayor

street & number P. O. Box 250

city, town Apex \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state NC 27502

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wake County Court House

street & number

city, town Raleigh \_\_\_\_\_ state North Carolina

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_X no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state

## 7. 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 Apex Town Hall, built in 1912, stands on a corner lot on North Salem Street, the town's main commercial street; it faces the railroad depot that represents the central role of the railroad in Apex. The two-story brick municipal building blends with the scale and material of the commercial buildings that line the main street, and its importance is emphasized by its parapeted, classically treated facade.

The brick building is three bays wide and four deep. Windows, now filled with glass brick, are set in segmental-arched openings. The side elevations are simply treated, with brick arches surmounting the door and window openings, but the main (front) facade is rather elaborately handled, in a freely interpreted classical fashion, with bold brickwork details. The facade is defined by four broad brick pilasters which rise two stories to molded caps, enriched with a narrow egg-and-dart motif. These pilasters occur at the corners and separate the bays. At the first story, full-height openings are surmounted by round arches outlined with molded brick and accented by white-painted keystones. At the second level are three broad segmental-arched openings filled with rectangular windows with glass brick. These too are topped by molded brick arches with brick keystones. Above each window, interrupted by the pilasters, is a corbeled brick frieze. Carrying across the facade is a bold modillion cornice, above which rises a parapet. The parapet has paneled brick pillars at either end and a higher central portion flanked by pillars and accented by an oculus. The facade is little altered except by a flat one-story metal canopy roof, the glass brick infill, and some alterations to the entrances.

The interior condition varies markedly from floor to floor. The structure is now vacant. The first floor, used as municipal offices, has been extensively altered in plan and finish. At the rear, a small jail still exists which retains simple finish and a pair of tiny metal grille cells, with the trademark of the Stewart Ironworks, Cincinnati, Ohio. The second floor, approached by enclosed wooden stairs on the north side, has not been altered significantly. Elements of the stair, including well-detailed upper posts, seem to be original. The front portion of the floor contains a foyer and small office; some original door treatment and other material survive. The door frames have grooved pilaster strips and a plain entablature, and doors have six horizontal panels. This pattern recurs throughout this story. Most of the second story is occupied by a large single room intended as an auditorium, well lit by the tall windows and facing a stage. Surfaces are sheathed with narrow boards. The stage, now boarded up, is framed by paneled pilasters with Ionic caps from which springs an arch. To the rear of the stage is a room with unfinished brick walls for activities supporting of stage productions. From this area rose the fly associated with the stage productions.

Several blocks of downtown Apex have been rehabilitated in the past decade. A group of concerned citizens proposed to rehabilitate the Town Hall and in so doing will anchor the end of the commercial district in the town.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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	1911-12	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A prominent landmark and focal point of the civic history of the small town of Apex is the handsome red brick Town Hall, built in 1911-1912. The town, named after its location at the highest point on the Chatham Railroad, and incorporated in 1873, had grown slowly until the early twentieth century. The establishment of the Merchants and Farmers Banks of Apex, and the Gold Leaf Tobacco Warehouse, and the construction of the Durham and Southern Railroad intersecting the Seaboard Line at Apex--these events in the first decade of the century created a period of growth and prosperity. Civic pride and confidence was expressed in the construction of the new town hall, which housed not only municipal offices but also a theatre, firehouse, jail, and market. The substantial brick building features a well-detailed facade with classical pilasters, arched openings, and a parapet that emphasizes its prominence in the streetscape.

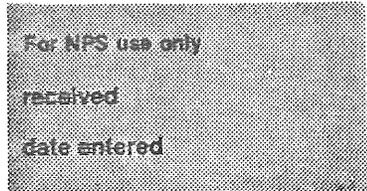
Long before the railroad spawned the town, downtown Apex was called Log Pond, a local watering hole well known to hunters because of its attraction for wild game. During the antebellum years, the area around Log Pond was heavily wooded and virtually unsettled. Not until the Chatham Railroad Company laid track through the region in January, 1869, did the rudiments of a town emerge.

A surveyor for the railroad had determined that the area around Log Pond was the highest elevation along the line and called it Apex; thus the present name was derived. The first business to arrive after the railroad was a large lumber industry run by J. McC. Ellington. His immediate prosperity prompted others and soon a business community of merchants, a wheel manufactory, a turpentine distillery, and a steam powered sawmill formed the nucleus of a town. Most of these firms, however, depended upon the huge lumber industry that dominated the economy.

- Criteria: (A) Associated with the early twentieth century growth of Apex and its town government in the period when tobacco market and railroad traffic boosted the depot town's economy.
- (B) Embodies characteristic small-town commercial and civic architecture of the early twentieth century, and the multiple use--municipal, market, theatre, firehouse, and jail--of such buildings.

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The town of Apex was incorporated by the General Assembly on February 28, 1873.<sup>5</sup> Prosperous, but not populous, Apex grew very slowly. Not large enough to require a separate town hall, the commissioners met in the office of Samuel Branch, the town's secretary and treasurer for many years.<sup>6</sup> Branch's office was located on the second floor of the Sellar's Building, now 112 North Salem Street.<sup>7</sup> For nearly thirty-two years, all town business was conducted from one small office, but the first decade of the twentieth century brought dramatic changes to the community.

In 1905, the Merchants and Farmers Bank of Apex was founded which supplied capital for the establishment of the Golden Leaf Tobacco Warehouse.<sup>8</sup> A year later the Durham and Southern Railroad intersected the Seaboard Line at Apex and the town became a hub for railway traffic. Other tobacco warehouses soon followed, making the tobacco industry the main source of livelihood for the community. Apex entered a boom period, and with a growing population and increasing demands for town services, it was obvious that business could no longer be conducted from a one-room office.

On June 6, 1911, the Town of Apex purchased a lot on North Salem Street from C. P. and Vivian Grey Sellars for \$750.<sup>10</sup> Bond issues produced the necessary funds for a new structure, and the Apex Town Hall was completed in 1912 at a cost of \$7,500.<sup>11</sup> The cornerstone was laid by Council No. 233, Junior Order of American Mechanics.<sup>12</sup> The building was, from the beginning, designed to serve numerous functions. The first floor housed a large vegetable and meat market, a small jail, and a storage room which doubled as a "fire house."<sup>13</sup> The second floor<sup>14</sup> contained the mayor's office and the town's opera house with a seating capacity of 300.<sup>14</sup> A notable architectural feature of the building was a small addition situated on the roof covering the stage area. In early theatrical circles, this was called the fly gallery and housed the machinery and space for raising and lowering the stage curtain during the various productions.<sup>15</sup> Just how many theatrical performances were staged is uncertain, but during the next decade the large auditorium was used as a theater for silent movies, a stage for dramas and musicals, and a setting for chautauquas. It was even used for a classroom in 1922 when the public school was destroyed by fire.<sup>16</sup> Until new quarters were provided, the Apex Recorder's Court held its sessions in the town hall. Among the most notable attorneys to appear in that court was a solicitor named J. Melville Broughton, later governor of North Carolina.

Competition from new tobacco markets in Durham and Fuquay Springs, a perennial blight in tobacco crops, a worldwide price decline, and changes in the method of selling tobacco all contributed to Apex's economic collapse in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> The town drifted into stagnation before the Great Depression, and it struggled just to survive. Not until the early 1960s did Apex rebound from its economic slumber.

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During Apex's forty year period of recuperation, the town hall underwent major interior renovations. The vegetable and meat market was abolished and the space converted into offices for town officials and police services. Much of the open space was carved into storage rooms for equipment and files. The stage<sup>19</sup> was boarded up as entertainment facilities were provided elsewhere in the town.

Apex recovered from its economic woes in the early 1960s, aided by a diversity of income-producing products. Town officials decided to "jazz up" the face of the town and to removed the "old look."<sup>20</sup> Canopies became a common storefront feature, and in October, 1964, the mayor announced that "a new facing of similar construction has been approved for the town hall."<sup>21</sup> The present canopy was constructed shortly thereafter.

The Apex Town Hall originally was designed as a functional facility, but it also reflected the cultural aspirations of a town not abounding in wealth. For many years, nearly all social events and public entertainment centered around the old town hall. Although a new town hall is planned, the old structure, nevertheless, stands as a reminder of Apex's "golden age."

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Anne Lydia Olive, Apex in 1911 (Apex, 1963), 1, hereinafter cited as Olive, Apex in 1911. Material was taken from a special edition of the Apex Journal, September 15, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> Carl P. (Toby) Holleman, Jr., Pluck, Perseverance, and Paint (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1973), hereinafter cited as Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint.

<sup>3</sup> Moses N. Amis, Historical Raleigh with Sketches of Wake County and Its Important Towns (Raleigh, 1913), hereinafter cited as Amis, Historical Raleigh. See also William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Olive, Apex in 1911, p. 2; and North Carolina Business Directory 1872, pp. 222, 228.

<sup>5</sup> Photocopy of charter illustrated in Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, insert between pp. 44 and 45.

<sup>6</sup> Taken from interviews with elderly residents H. M. and R. D. Poe and quoted in Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 77, hereinafter cited as Poe interviews with Toby Holleman.

<sup>7</sup> Poe interviews with Toby Holleman.

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<sup>8</sup> Olive, Apex in 1911, p. 5. See also Amis, Historical Raleigh, 213-214/

<sup>9</sup> In 1871, the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line bought out the financially troubled Chatham Railroad. Thirty years later (1901), the Raleigh and Augusta merged with the Raleigh and Gaston to form the Seaboard Air Line Railway. Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 2. Holleman cites a North Carolina Supreme Court case, "Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railway Company vs. E. B. Sturgeon," as his evidence.

<sup>10</sup> Wake County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Wake County Courthouse, Raleigh, Deed Book 26, p. 437.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the Apex Town Board, 1911-1912. Stored in vault at Apex Town Hall, hereinafter cited as Town Minutes.

<sup>12</sup> Inscription on cornerstone of Apex Town Hall. The inscription reads, "A. C. Hughes/Mayor/L. S. Olive/ H. T. Beasley/ W. H. F. Branch/ J. F. Mills/ Commissioners/ Presented and laid/ by Apex/ Council No. 233/ Junior Order of/ United American/ Mechanics 1912."

<sup>13</sup> See attached floor plan, ca. 1915, copied from Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, insert between pp. 44 and 45; and Poe interviews with Toby Holleman. Sketch was made by A. J. Harris, Jr., about 1971 based on his recollection of the town hall in 1915.

<sup>14</sup> See attached copy of floor plan ca. 1915.

<sup>15</sup> Researcher's interview with Bill Bates, January 25, 1978, Division of Archives of the Arts, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh. Bates based his information on the writings of John Gassner, deceased, considered by many to have been the best historian of the American theater. The fly gallery was later known as the fly loft and more recently as the stage loft.

<sup>16</sup> Poe interviews with Toby Holleman.

<sup>17</sup> Town Minutes, 1918.

<sup>18</sup> Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 18-20.

<sup>19</sup> Survey and Planning Files: Apex Town Hall, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh.

<sup>20</sup> The News and Observer (Raleigh), October 25, 1964, hereinafter cited as The News and Observer.

<sup>21</sup> The News and Observer, October 25, 1964.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Amis, Moses N. Historical Raleigh with Sketches of Wake County and Its Important Towns. Raleigh, 1913.
- Cross, Jerry L. Interview with Bill Bates, Theater Arts Section, Division of the Arts, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh. January 25, 1978.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Apex, N. C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24 500

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	9	4	3	6	0	3	9	5	6	2	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Property being nominated is lot 88 of the Apex Tax Map. A copy of the map and the deed, from C. P. and Vivian G. Sellart to the town of Apex, June 6, 1911, are enclosed.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A		N/A	

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Description prepared by Catherine W. Bishir, Head, Survey and Planning Branch  
Significance prepared by Jerry L. Cross, Research Branch

organization Division of Archives and History

date October 10, 1985

street & number 109 East Jones St.

telephone 919/733-6545

city or town Raleigh

state North Carolina 27611

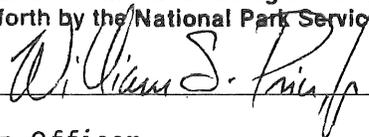
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 10, 1985

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

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Holleman, Carl B. (Toby), Jr., Pluck, Perseverance and Paint. Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1973.

Minutes of Apex Town Board, 1911, 1912, 1918. Apex Town Hall.

The News and Observer. Raleigh. October 25, 1964.

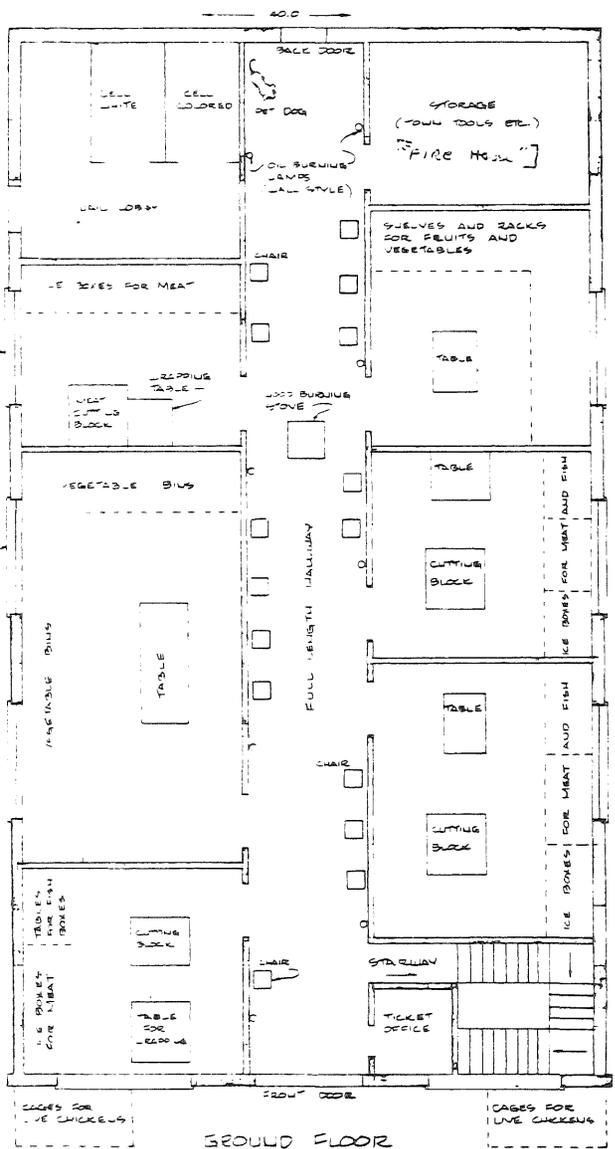
North Carolina Business Directory, 1872.

Olive, Anne Lydia. Apex in 1911. Apex, 1963. Material taken from Apex Journal, September 15, 1911.

Powell, William S. The North Carolina Gazetteer. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Survey and Planning Files. Apex Town Hall. Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

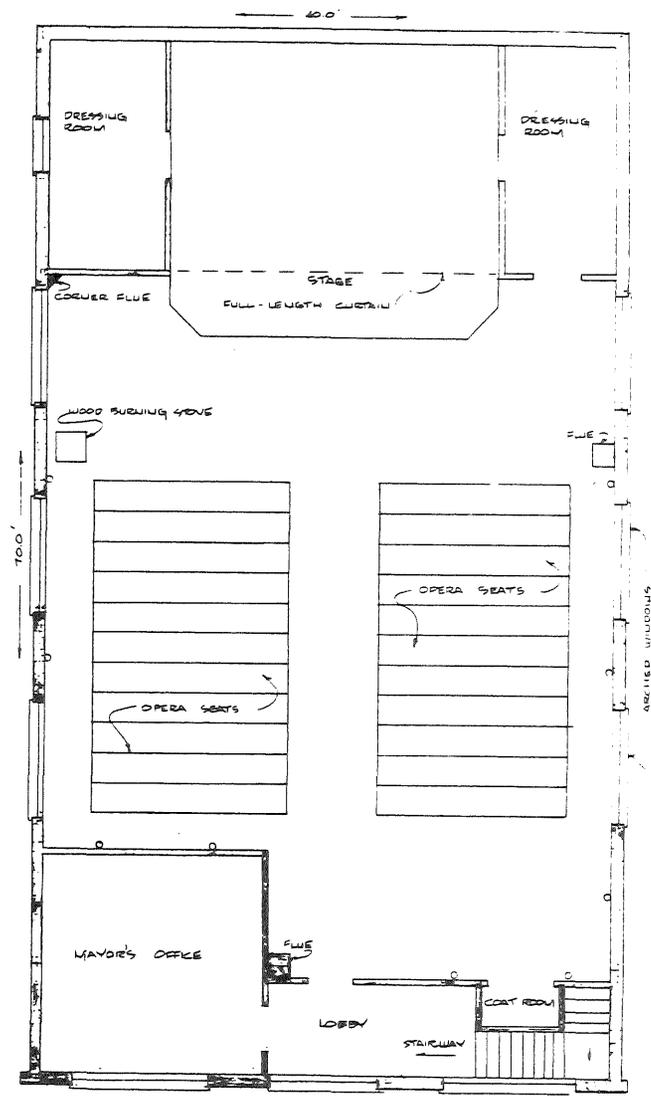
Wake County Deed Books, Wake County Courthouse, Raleigh.



○ OIL BURNING AND  
LAMP STYLE  
□ CHAIR  
NOTE INTERIOR WALLS  
WERE SHOULDER HEIGHT

Town Hall - 1st Floor

FLOOR PLAN OF  
APEX TOWN HALL  
CIRCA 1915  
DRAWN BY  
SMITH & SMITH SURVEYORS  
FEB 24, 1972  
FROM SKETCH BY  
A. J. HARRIS, JR.  
SCALE: 1" = 40'



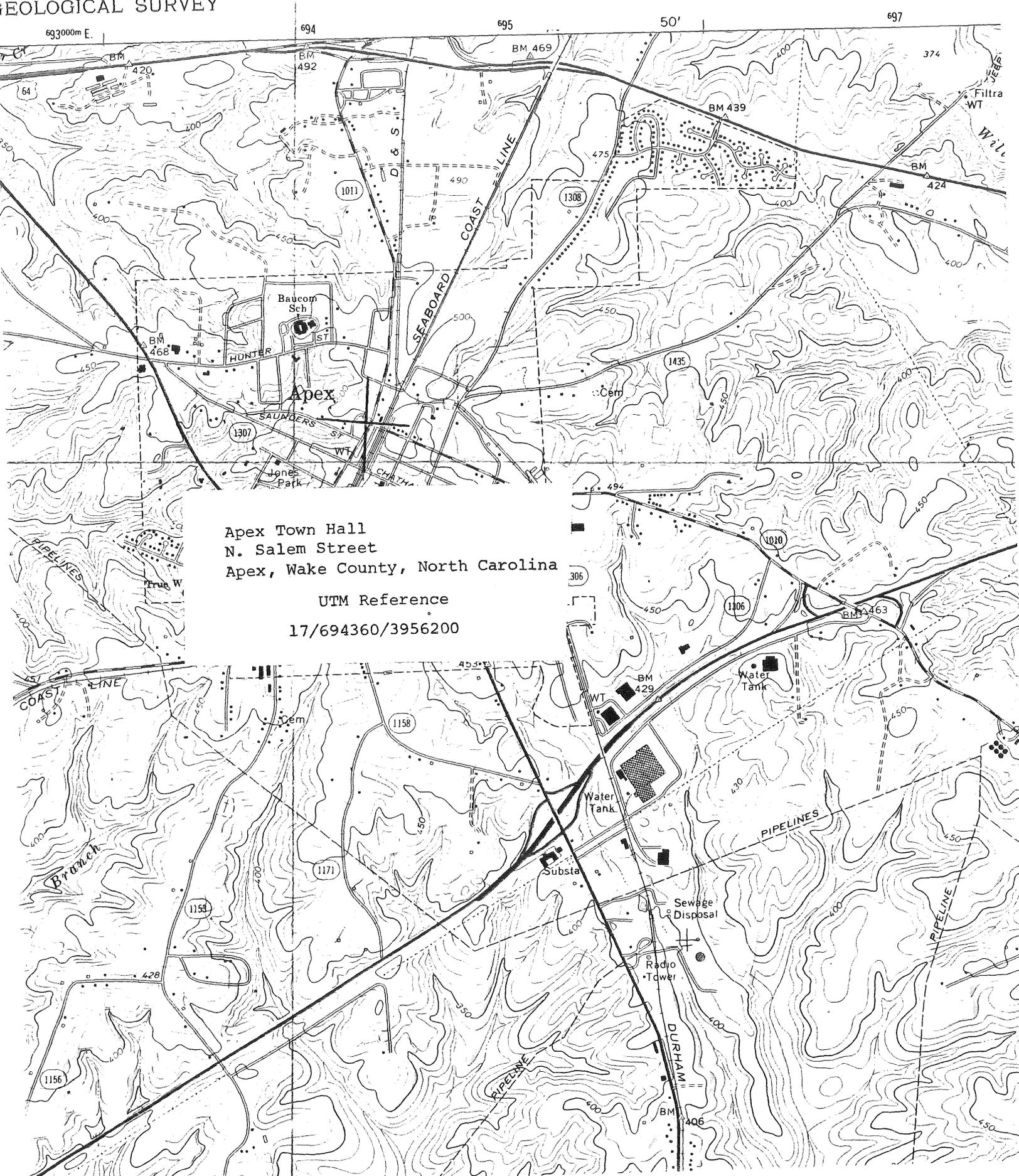
○ OIL BURNING LAMP  
□ CHAIR

SECOND FLOOR  
APEX TOWN HALL  
SCALE: 1" = 40'

Town Hall - 2nd Floor



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Apex Town Hall  
N. Salem Street  
Apex, Wake County, North Carolina

UTM Reference  
17/694360/3956200

STOP

