

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

historic name (former) Apex Union Depot

other names/site number Apex Town Library

2. Location

street & number SE. corner N. Salem St. and Center St. n/a not for publication

city, town Apex n/a vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27502

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
1	0
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.

Signature of certifying official

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

10-25-88

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 rail-related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

Stone - brownstone

roof Metal

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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The Apex Union Depot stands at its original location along the tracks of the CSX Transportation Corporation (formerly Seaboard Air Line Railway) near the corner of N. Salem Street and Center Street on the edge of the Apex commercial district. The nominated property includes the building, which is owned by the town of Apex but which occupies land the town leases from the railroad, and its "footprint" to its drip line. The structure is surrounded by railroad right-of-way and modern landscaped pedestrian walkways and a parking lot to the west.

Though converted to a public library about 1970, the one-story brick depot is remarkably well preserved and in excellent condition, largely retaining the form, plan, and finish shown in the railroad's 1914 architectural drawings.¹ The structure is built on a simple rectangular plan, measuring 76'8" by 30'6", with 13'6" wide bays projecting 5' at the centers of the longer trackside and Salem Street elevations. A bellcast hip roof covers the building and is apparently still clad with the "Cartwrights Victoria Galvanized Shingles or equal" specified in the drawings, now coated with aluminum paint. A 7' roof overhang shelters the walls, supported at the corners with heavy chamfered brackets. On the Salem Street side, the bay terminates under the slope of the roof, while the trackside bay breaks through the roof to form a hipped dormer. Though a semaphore may have once been connected to the trackside bay and dormer, there is no apparent access to the attic and the dormer does not appear to have functioned as an observation post.

The dark red brick veneer, laid with red tinted mortar, may be the "Oriental brick" specified in the drawings. Window sills, door sills, and a continuous string course, which doubles as the sills of

¹Plan and elevation drawings of the depot from the Seaboard Air Line Railway Office of Chief Engineer, Norfolk, Va., dated 3.17.14 are in possession of the Apex Historical Society. The individuals who executed the drawings are not identified; they are approved by "Faucette."

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the larger windows, are of brown sandstone. All window and door openings have segmental arch heads, and all or nearly all sash and doors are original and remain in place. Passenger entrances flank the bays on the west and track sides; window types and arrangements are irregular, depending on the interior spaces behind them. Larger windows lighting the waiting rooms and agent's office have one-over-one sash; and smaller, almost square windows with four-pane casements occur singly, in pairs, and in triplets to give light into bathroom and utility spaces of the interior. The paired square windows in the trackside dormer have simple Queen Anne style casements composed of a diamond pane centered within a rectilinear frame, identified as "Fancy design frosted glass" on the drawings. Exterior doors have seven panels, with two triplets of vertical panels divided by a single horizontal one. The baggage room doors on the south end of the east and west elevations are similar but double-leafed sliding doors, though the west side door may be a later replacement. Original, conical cast iron corner guards manufactured by Raleigh Iron Works protect all four exterior corners of the building and the jambs of the baggage room doors.

The interior plan varies only slightly from the 1914 design, retaining the spaces once used for racially segregated waiting rooms and restrooms, an arrangement common to all depots built during the era. The waiting rooms for whites (north end) and blacks (south end) are divided across the center of the building by the agent's office, which extends into the trackside bay on the east, and utility closets and restrooms projecting into the bay on the west. The north waiting room was partitioned on the north side to create a separate lounge and restroom for white women. The lounge and restroom partitions have been opened up and the restroom removed for library space, but their upper portions remain in place. On the south side, the baggage room was partitioned off from the black waiting room. This wall remains in place, now pierced with modern doorway, though the baggage room itself has been further partitioned to set off a small mechanical room on the southeast corner of the building. The agent's office remains much as originally configured. What were formerly black and white men's restrooms in the west bay remain as men's and women's today. A narrow hall connects the two former waiting rooms with a utility room, previously the black women's restroom, opposite the restrooms.

Interior finish is well preserved. Walls are plaster over a wainscot with a symmetrically molded 6 1/4' chairrail, a dado paneled with vertical beaded boards, and a wide baseboard. Window and door

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frames, including those of the ticket windows between the agent's office and the waiting rooms, are molded and mitred. Interior doors have five horizontal panels. Three fireplaces, originally heating the two waiting rooms and the separate women's lounge, remain in place with their paneled mantels of Neo-classical design; Ionic capitals cap the pilasters flanking the fireplace openings and carry a deep shelf. Some of the original tongue and groove flooring, laid over the "Tar-rok sub-floor" specified in the plans, may survive under modern flooring materials. Remarkably, the restrooms retain the wooden stalls with louvered doors shown in the drawings.

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)

Architecture

Transportation

Period of Significance

1914-1915

1914-1938

Significant Dates

1914-1915

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Seaboard Air Line Railway Office
of Chief Engineer

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

Summary

The former Apex Union Depot is architecturally one of the most distinctive small town passenger depots in central North Carolina. Designed by staff architects of the Seaboard Air Line Railway and completed late 1914-early 1915, the brick building features a bracketed bellcast hip roof with original metal shingles, segmentally arched window and door openings, a stone string course and stone trim, and projecting bays on both the street and track sides. The plan and finish of the interior remain in an excellent state of preservation, and original architectural plan and section drawings survive. In addition to its architectural significance and eligibility under criterion C, the depot is eligible under criterion A for its associations with the development of Apex as a tobacco and cotton marketing center at the junction of the Seaboard and the Durham and Southern railroads. Ten years after passenger service was discontinued in 1959, the building was acquired by the town of Apex for adaptive reuse as a public library, though CSX Transportation Corporation, the successor to Seaboard, retains ownership of the land it occupies.

See continuation sheet

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Historical Background and Context: The Railroad and the Development of Apex, 1869-1930

Railroad building and inland transportation flourished in antebellum North Carolina. In earlier times inadequate transportation had been partly responsible for the derisive description of North Carolina as the "Rip Van Winkle State."¹ By the mid 1850s Raleigh, the capital city, had rail tracks that radiated north, east, and west with only the southern approach to the city remaining unconnected. On February 14, 1855, the General Assembly incorporated the Chatham Railroad Company which planned to lay tracks from Raleigh to the coalfields at Deep River in nearby Chatham County to the southwest.² The company, however, remained dormant for six years following incorporation until a similar act authorizing construction became law on February 15, 1861.³ Two months later the company officers held their first meeting in Raleigh.⁴ With the outbreak of the Civil War it was hoped that the line would be able to supply much needed coal for the Confederacy, but due to wartime rail shortages the company remained largely an idea on paper. Construction would wait until after the war.

On July 6, 1869, the board of directors approved a contract with John F. Pickrell and Company to finish the first thirty miles of

¹Hugh Talmadge Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of A Southern State: North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 314.

²Walter C. Clark, compiler, History of the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad Company, Known Originally as the Chatham Railroad Company, Including All the Acts of the General Assemblies of North and South Carolina, Thereto (Raleigh: The Raleigh New Steam Job Printers, 1877), 2-3; hereinafter cited as Clark, History of the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad Company. In 1871 the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad purchased the financially troubled Chatham Railroad. The Raleigh and Augusta then became part of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad in 1901. See Seaboard Company Papers in the North Carolina State Archives.

³Clark, History of the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad Company, 16.

⁴Clark, History of the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad Company, 16.

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track.⁵ It was at some point during the grading that survey engineers designated a small settlement seven miles south of Cary, known as Log Pond, as Apex. At the same time, it was apparently the highest elevation on the Chatham Railroad and thus a suitable site for a water and fuel station.⁶

Within a short span a number of businesses began to grow up around the rail site. The earliest was a large lumber business founded by John McC. Ellington, who began to harvest the large stands of pine in the area.⁷ By the spring of 1870 a depot had been constructed to handle the growing commercial traffic.⁸

Ellington and Hillard Bell, who owned large sections of the site, began promoting development by dividing their properties into lots for sale on both sides of Salem Street, the main artery through the small settlement.⁹ The first post office was established on August 23, 1871, with grocery store owner Daniel Mann as postmaster.¹⁰ His store on Salem Street was directly across from the rail depot.¹¹ By 1873 the settlement had grown large enough that the citizens petitioned the General Assembly for incorporation and the town of Apex was formally incorporated on February 28, 1873.¹² The charter set

⁵Clark, History of the Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad Company, 64. See also Levi Branson, Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, 1869 (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1869), 208 for a description of track work completed.

⁶Moses N. Amis, Historical Raleigh with Sketches of Wake County and Its Important Towns (Raleigh, 1913). See also William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 11.

⁷Anne Lydia Olive, Apex in 1911 (Apex, 1963), 2; hereinafter cited as Olive, Apex in 1911. Material was taken from a special edition of the Apex Journal, September, 1911.

⁸Elizabeth Reid Murray, Wake: Capital County of North Carolina (Raleigh: Capital Publishing Company, 1983), 651; hereinafter cited as Murray, Wake: Capital County of North Carolina. See also Sentinal (Raleigh), May 7, 1870, for a description of the Apex area.

⁹Murray, Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, 652.

¹⁰Murray, Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, 651.

¹¹Murray, Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, 651.

¹²Carl P. (Toby) Holleman, Jr. Pluck, Perseverance and Paint (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1973), 5; hereinafter cited as Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint.

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corporate limits of the town as a half mile in each direction of the four points of the compass from the center of the Chatham warehouse.¹³ Thus, the rail depot became the center of the town's growing business district.

The years 1905 and 1906 were pivotal years in the town's commercial growth. On August 17, 1905, outside investors and local businessmen opened the Merchants and Farmers Bank.¹⁴ The bank in turn financed the construction of the Golden Leaf Tobacco Warehouse and a year later the Planter's Warehouse.¹⁵ By the close of the nineteenth century tobacco had become a major cash crop for area farmers with cotton as a close second.¹⁶ With the area rapidly becoming a major tobacco and cotton center a second rail line was built connecting Apex with the tobacco and textile empire of the Duke family in nearby Durham. Grading began on the Durham and Southern Railroad in late 1905 and by the summer of 1906 the line was completed.¹⁷ To facilitate service for the new line and the established Seaboard Air Line Railroad a new wooden depot was constructed in 1906.¹⁸ The two lines then linked Apex with virtually all markets on the east coast, and by 1911 over thirty trains passed through Apex daily carrying passengers and goods.¹⁹

In 1911 fire destroyed the a large section of the entire business district.²⁰ The town, however, quickly bounded back from the destruction. Within a short span the business area consisted of new brick buildings.²¹ Although the railroad water tank was destroyed in the fire the frame depot remained untouched.²² In late 1913 or early 1914, however, the depot was burned during still another town

¹³Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 5.

¹⁴Olive, Apex in 1911, 5.

¹⁵Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 14.

¹⁶Olive, Apex in 1911, 12-13.

¹⁷Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 9.

¹⁸Olive, Apex in 1911, 6.

¹⁹Olive, Apex in 1911, 20.

²⁰Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 63. See also the News and Observer (Raleigh), June 13, 1911, for a complete description of the destruction.

²¹Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 69.

²²Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 67.

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fire.²³ For some reason, the two rail companies were slow in replacing the depot and as the tobacco season approached, the town commissioners lodged a formal complaint over the delay in rebuilding the station.²⁴

Nevertheless, the town was rewarded for its long wait, for in late 1914 or early 1915 a handsome brick depot was constructed that would serve as the final rail station.²⁵ Designed by Seaboard architects in the Portsmouth, Virginia home office, the depot was constructed at a cost of \$8,586.²⁶ Compared to other nearby small town depots, the expensive and impressive brick station reflected the railroad's belief in the continued growing commercial promise of Apex.

Town expansion apparently justified the railroad's optimism. From 1900 to 1920 the town's population increased from 349 citizens to 926; a dramatic increase of 165%.²⁷ As an agricultural community, town merchants were largely dependent on the yearly success of the tobacco market for sales. During the early twentieth century there was a growing movement by tobacco farmers to form cooperative markets for tobacco sales instead of being dependent on existing warehouse and auction sales. Both Planters and the Golden Leaf warehouses became part of the cooperative system in 1922.²⁸ The cooperative markets, however, expanded too rapidly and were frequently the victims of poor management. In addition, the growers faced opposition from hostile established warehouses and the tobacco companies. Sales prices in the Old Belt region plummeted from a high of 53.9 cents per pound in 1919 to 17.3 cents per pound in 1929 due to overproduction.²⁹ Facing financial ruin, the farmers abandoned

²³Minutes of the Apex Town Board, 1914. Stored in vault at Apex Town Hall; hereinafter cited as Town Minutes, 1914. At a February 2 meeting the board approved a special payment of \$1.00 each to Bernice Baker and W.B. Seagroves for their special police service during the burning of the depot.

²⁴Town Minutes, 1914.

²⁵Original architectural drawings of Apex Union Depot in archives of the Apex Historical Society.

²⁶E.P. Bohn, Director-Building Design, CSX Transportation Corporation to Tom Belton, December 8, 1987. Original letter in the archives of the Apex Historical Society.

²⁷Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 17.

²⁸Holleman, Pluck, Perseverance and Paint, 18.

²⁹Nannie Tilley, The Bright Leaf Tobacco Industry: 1860-1929 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 357; hereinafter cited as Tilley, The Bright Leaf Tobacco Industry.

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the concept of cooperative markets and the two Apex warehouses were sold at public auction on February 26, 1927, dealing a death blow to the town's agricultural economy.³⁰ The collapse of Apex as a major tobacco center was followed by the devastation of the Great Depression and the town quickly slipped into economic ruin.

These conditions were reflected in the rapid decline of the town's rail service. By 1934 only four daily stops were made at the Apex depot and despite a revival of rail service during World War II, service declined even more during the post-war years.³¹ In March, 1959, Seaboard petitioned to discontinue all passenger service to Apex.³² Ten years later officials of Seaboard and Durham and Southern donated the brick depot to the town of Apex while retaining the land property rights, and the station was converted into a community library.³³ Other than landscaping, virtually no changes were made to the building's exterior and little to the integrity of the interior during the transition from depot to library.³⁴ A new regional library is currently under construction to serve the Apex region, and the future use of the depot remains unclear. However, it remains today as the focal point of the downtown business district and as a daily reminder of the town's origins.

Architectural Context: Small Town Railroad Depots in Central North Carolina, 1850-1930

The growth and dominance of railroads across North Carolina in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth brought construction of passenger and freight depot facilities to scores of existing small towns and to many more new towns and trading points that grew up along the new lines. From the beginning, railroad companies began to standardize depot designs both to reduce construction costs and to create a specific identifying architectural "logo" for the lines. As railroads consolidated into larger operations, specialized engineering departments were

³⁰ Tilley, The Bright Leaf Tobacco Industry, 486.

³¹ Photocopies of Seaboard Air Line time tables dated December 16, 1934 and April 24, 1949 in the archives of the Apex Historical Society.

³² News and Observer (Raleigh), March 10, 1959.

³³ News and Observer (Raleigh), September 20, 1969.

³⁴ Julia M. Street, "Resurrection at the Apex Depot," State (magazine), XLI, No. 2 (July, 1973).

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~~created to provide full control of all aspects of design and construction, with special attention being given to depots as the focal points of the railroads' presence and importance in their communities.~~

Most small town depots were simple frame buildings. Though no stations in central North Carolina are known for certain to predate the Civil War, the frame board-and-batten depot at Warren Plains in Warren County may have been built by the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad in the antebellum period. It already has the basic characteristics that were to become common for small depots across the state and nation: a rectangular plan with a low-pitched hip roof and deeply overhanging eaves, frequently with shaped brackets. Gable roofs were almost as common. With local variations in detail, this became the basic identifying form for smaller depots across much of the region, state, and nation. As racial segregation was institutionalized in the early twentieth century Jim Crow era, even the smallest passenger depots were given separate waiting rooms for blacks and whites. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century frame depots of this basic form survive in the Wake County and adjacent counties of communities of Neuse, Auburn, Garner (fragment), Franklinton, and Angier.

Railroads reserved more substantial brick depots for larger towns and smaller communities at the junctions of two or more lines where many passengers changed trains. Frequently railroad companies cooperated to build "union" depots to serve both lines. The Apex Union Depot, built at the connection of the Seaboard and Durham and Southern lines, is the only such example in Wake County outside of Raleigh. Designed by Seaboard architects and carefully preserved to the present, the well-built brick depot is far and away the most sophisticated small town depot in the county, and one of the finest in the region. The only comparable depot in neighboring counties are the ca. 1900 Sanford Depot (Sanford NRHD) in Lee County, at the junction of the old Raleigh and Augusta and Western Railroads, and the larger and more elaborate 1924 Selma Depot in Johnston County, at an important junction of the Southern and Atlantic Coast Line railroads.

The architectural significance of the Apex Depot is enhanced by its excellent state of preservation and the existence of the original architectural drawings documenting the design process used by railroads in creating this important historic American building type.

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 # unknown

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1/10 acre

UTM References

A

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

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is the footprint of the building to its drip line, measuring 83'8" X 37'6". The parcel on which the building is located is shown on the enclosed Wake County Tax Map, Sheet 8, Parcel 91, outlined in red.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The building is freestanding with no other associated historic features in its immediate vicinity. It is surrounded by railroad right-of-way and compatible but modern pedestrian walkways on the north and east; a parking lot separates the structure from N. Salem St. to the west.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tom Belton and Michael T. Southern

organization N.C. Division of Archives and History date September 23, 1988

street & number 109 E. Jones St. telephone 919/733-6545

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27611

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Selected Bibliography

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PHOTOGRAPHS

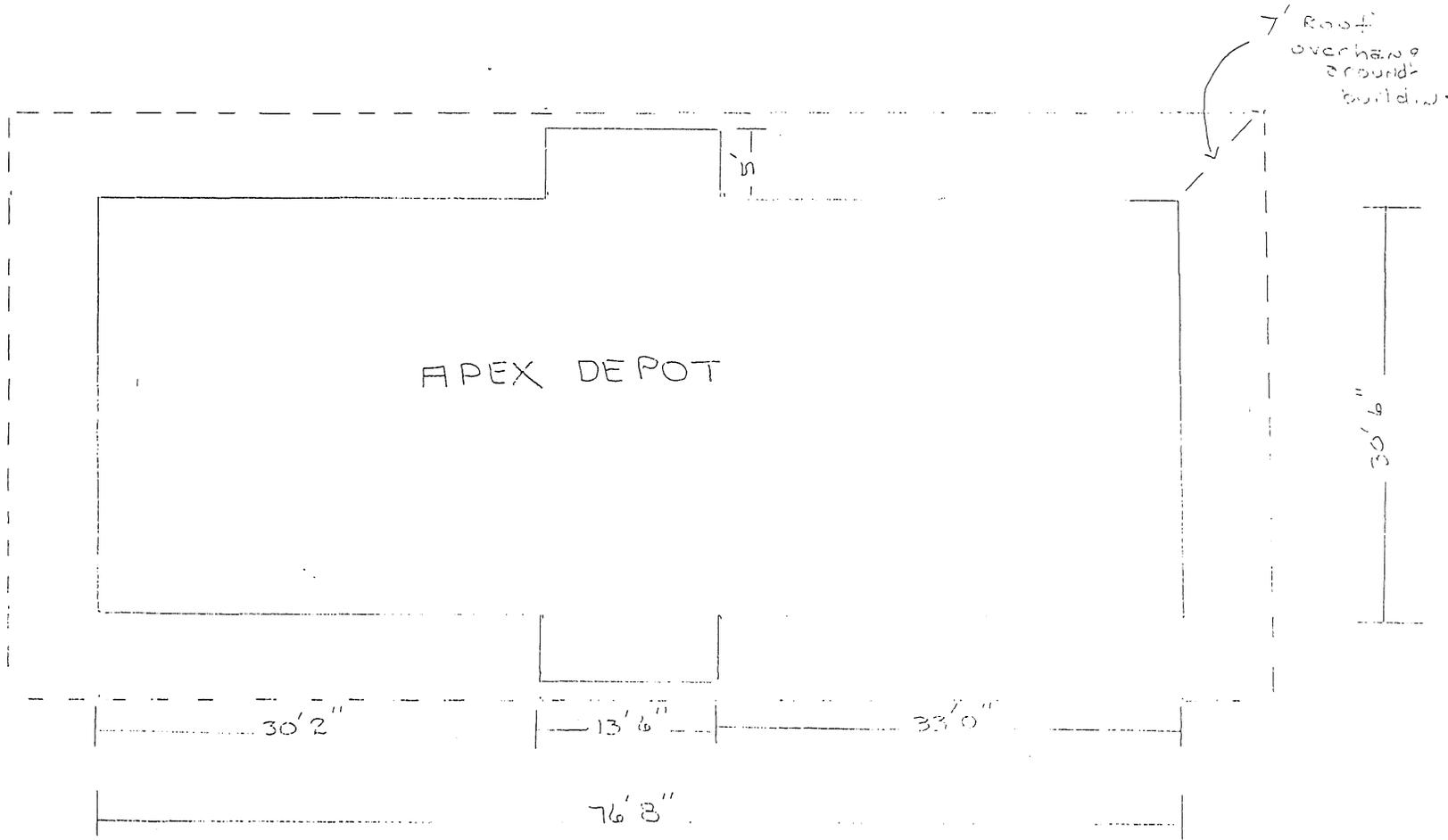
All photographs by Michael T. Southern, N.C. Division of Archives and History,
Raleigh, N.C.

All photographs taken August 18, 1988.

1. N. 88.7.794 Overall from southeast
2. N. 88.7.784 N. Salem St. facade from west
3. N. 88.7.788 Closeup of southwest corner
4. N. 88.7.801 North wall of south waiting room showing mantel, door, ticket window
5. N. 88.7.806 South wall of north waiting room.

Railroad Track

CENTER STREET



APEX DEPOT

Roof overhang around building

30' 6"

5'

30' 2"

13' 6"

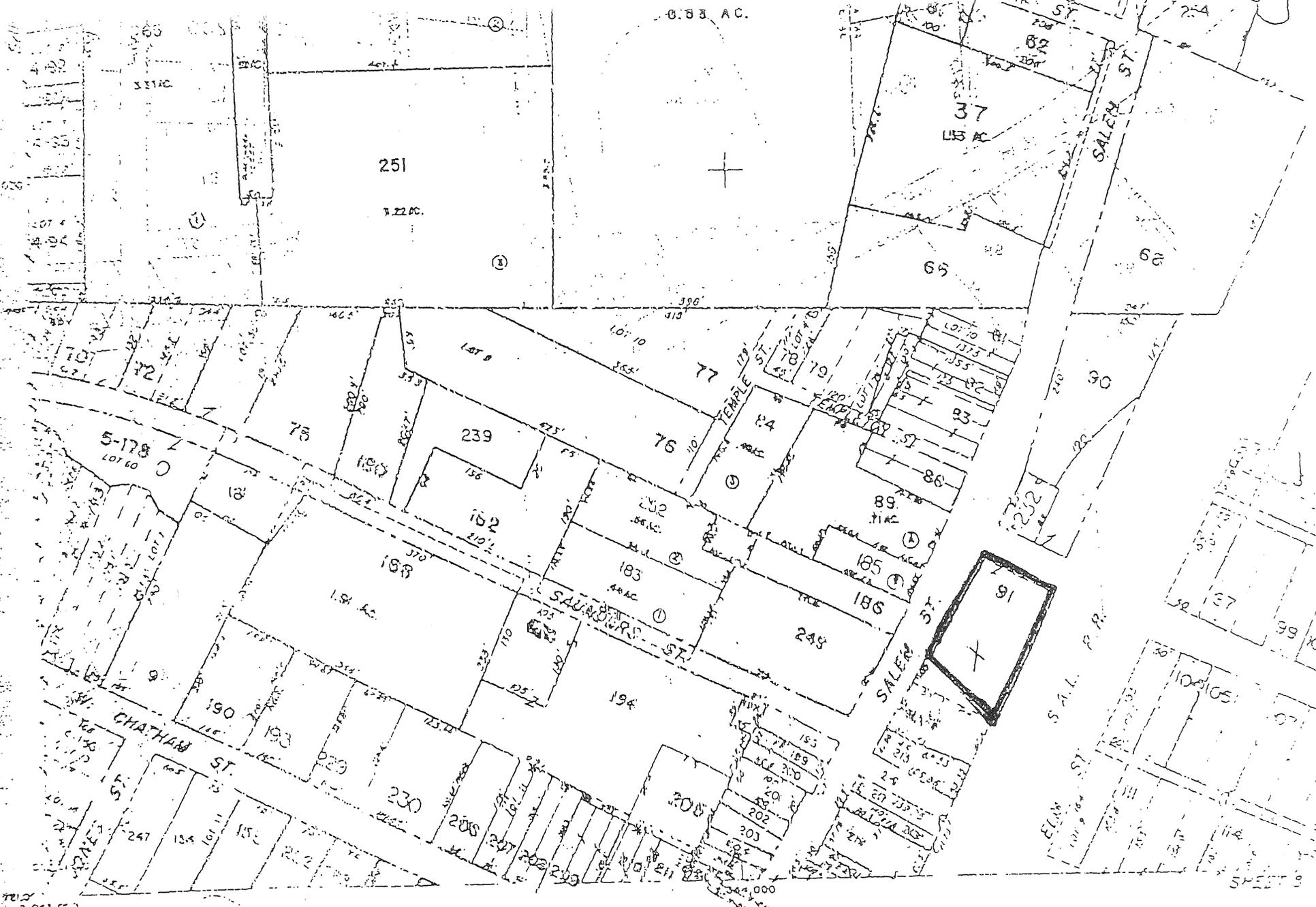
33' 0"

76' 3"

220 N. Salem Street
(Library address)



NORTH SALEM STREET



0.83 AC.

251

3.22 AC.

37
1.15 AC.

65

62

77

76

79

84

89

185

186

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200

202

204

206

208

5-178

LOT 60

239

156

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211

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114

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122

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MAP IS BASED ON MAP...

MAP BY...

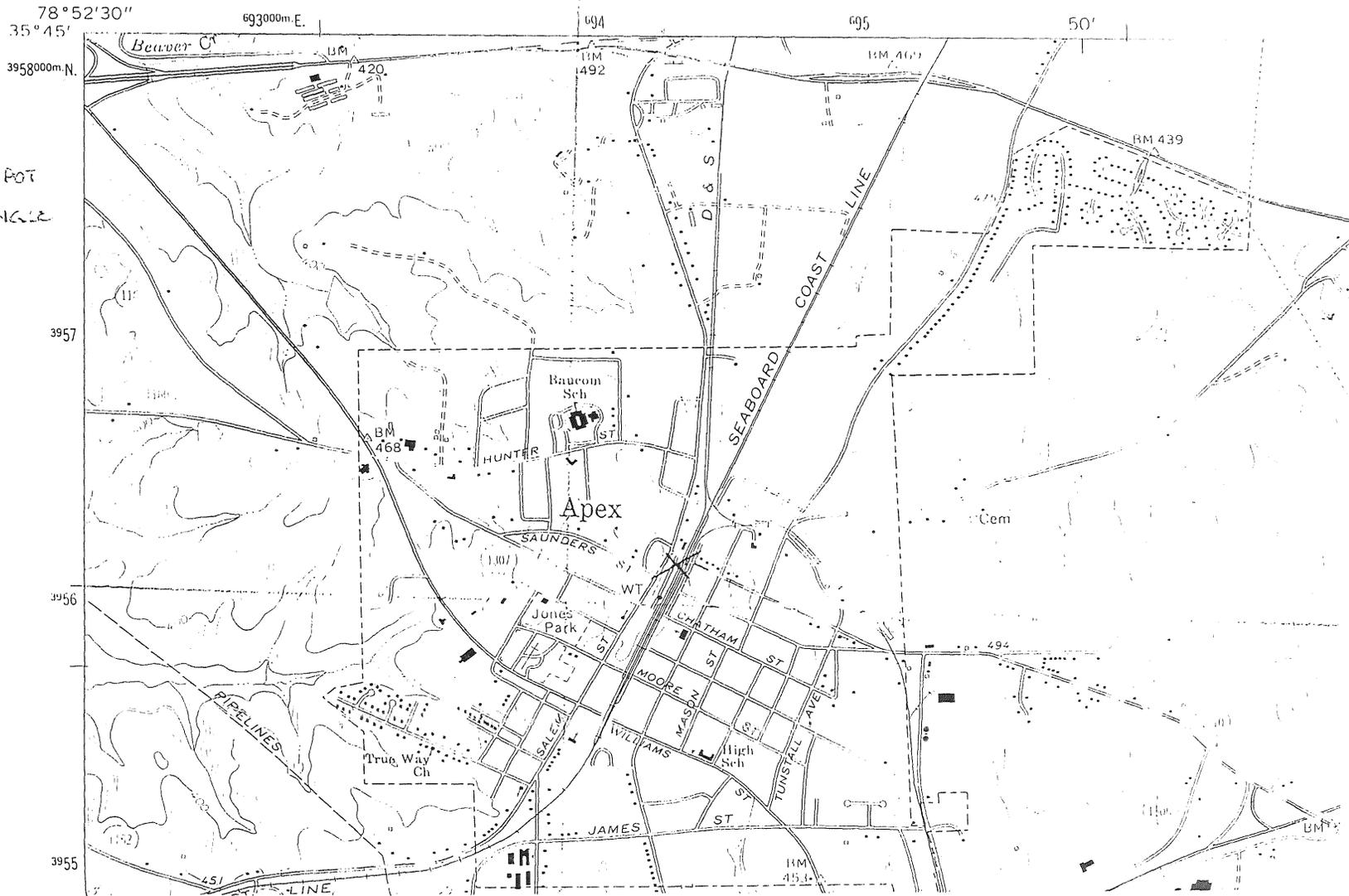
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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5255 IV SW
(GREEN LEVEL)



(FORMER)
APEX UNION DEPOT
APEX QUADRANGLE
APEX, NC
ZONE 17
E: 694410
N: 3956150

