

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Oaklana

and/or common

2. Location

street & number N side SR 1249 .4 mile E of jct. with SR 1206 not for publication

city, town Roxobel vicinity of congressional district 1

state North Carolina code 37 county Bertie code 015

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. John E. Tyler, II

street & number Oaklana

city, town Roxobel vicinity of state North Carolina 27872

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bertie County Courthouse

street & number King Street

city, town Windsor state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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 date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Oaklana, home of the Tyler family since 1825, stands in the center of a well-landscaped five-acre grove of oak trees on the north side of North Carolina secondary state road 1249 on the outskirts of the village of Roxobel. The west side of the grove is bordered by cultivated farmland while a ditch separates the grove from a wood on the north and east.

Oaklana is a frame, two-and-a-half story, five-bay structure of the Federal period with an original two-story ell to the rear. The double doorway with transom is sheltered by a small pedimented porch supported by four turned columns. The porch was reconstructed in 1955 on its original footings with the columns copied from surviving originals; the roofline was determined from the outline of the old flashing found on the siding. The house retains its beaded siding and features a handsome modillion block cornice on all sides. A single-shoulder chimney of common-bond construction with a freestanding stack appears at each end of the house and on the ell. Nine-over-nine sash is used on the first floor and nine-over-six on the second, with the sash of the end elevations being one pane narrower. All openings are trimmed with mitred architrave molding. The house has received several additions which faithfully reproduce the style and details of the house. About 1937 the rear shed porch was made into a modern kitchen and den, and a wing consisting of a small library-office, bedroom, and bath, was added to the west end of the house. In 1978 a porch, with columns copied from those on the front porch, was added to the east end of the rear shed.

The plan of the house consists of a large center hall flanked on each side by a single large room. An enclosed winder stair originally opened from the rear of the hall on the west wall, and rose against the wall inside the west room. Behind the west room was the ell with a cross hall with enclosed winder stair and a single large room. The plan of the second floor repeated that of the first floor. In 1937 the enclosed stairs were removed; a graceful curved stair was built at the end of the center hall and the first-floor cross hall was incorporated into the west room while on the second floor the space was used for a bathroom.

Other than these changes, the woodwork and finish of the house are original. The first floor is finished with sheathed wainscoting with molded baseboards and chair rails, raised six-panel doors, and mitred architrave molding around the doors and windows. Above the doorways are candle shelves with holes for eleven candles. The trim of the second floor is similar, but lacks the sheathed wainscot. The mantels are of simple but handsome vernacular design; all being slightly different, they feature a wide beaded surround beneath a molded frieze supporting a robustly molded shelf. The mantel of the first floor west room is a replacement, and is of a three-part design with pilasters and raised paterae.

The first floor hall was at one time painted in imitation of ashlar stone with marbled baseboards, and the ceiling of the first floor east room was painted with a star-shaped medallion and crescent-shaped corner designs. Also in this room were two narrow ledges set into the plaster between the two windows on the front and rear walls; these ledges supported a matching pair of gilt-framed mirrors. The plaster of the house has been renewed, but the pine flooring is original. Much old glass survives in the windows and some old hardware remains on the doors.

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Originally, there were many outbuildings located in the grove around the house, but only the large plank smokehouse and the small dairy survive. To the east of the house was the carriage house and to the west a school house; directly behind the house was the kitchen and the surviving smokehouse and dairy. The privies were located near the ditch on the north side of the grove. In the northwest corner of the grove was the flower and vegetable garden with a large grape arbor. Beyond this was a large barn, the stables, and slave cabins.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Oaklana was probably constructed soon after Perry Cotten Tyler (1788–1866) purchased the property in 1825, and has remained in the Tyler family since that time. Oaklana has been the home of John E. Tyler (1850–1930), judge of the Bertie County Inferior Court; Ernest R. Tyler (1886–1958), prominent lawyer and Solicitor of the Third Judicial District of North Carolina from 1937 until 1958; and of the present owner, John E. Tyler, II, past president of the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina. The house is a large and handsome intact example of vernacular domestic architecture of the Federal period. Many pieces of Tyler family furniture remain in the house, several of which were made by the plantation slave carpenter.

Criteria:

- A. Associated with the large-scale antebellum plantation unit of eastern North Carolina.
- B. Associated with the prominent Tyler family of Bertie County, owner of the property since 1825.
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a prosperous antebellum plantation home in eastern North Carolina, as well as provides an example of good quality vernacular domestic architecture of the Federal period.
- D. Is likely to yield information concerning the household activities of an antebellum plantation family.

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Oaklana was built by Perry Cotten Tyler (1788-1866) soon after he purchased a two hundred-and-forty acre site from Hezekiah Callum in 1825.¹ Callum had inherited the property in 1816 upon the death of his father Willis Callum; Willis Callum had served as the guardian of Perry Cotten Tyler upon the death of Tyler's father in 1788.² Willis Callum had owned the property since 1754, and it is thought the Callum home stood directly behind the present house built by Perry Cotten Tyler.³ Tyler family tradition maintains that a Mr. Bazemore was the carpenter who built Oaklana.⁴

Perry Cotten Tyler was the son of Moses and Helen Cotten Tyler of Hertford County. He was first married to Elizabeth Sutton Harrell and at her death to Celia Creecy Rice Raby. With his children by both wives, step-children, and in-laws, Tyler maintained a large household; at the time of the 1850 census eleven people were living in the house.⁵ Tyler was a prosperous planter in a county that supported a large planter class based on cotton and corn production. The 1850 census recorded Tyler's ownership of 3,000 acres of land valued at \$9,000 on which his 34 slaves raised 5,500 bushels of corn and 4 bales of ginned cotton.⁶ In 1860 Tyler owned 2,400 acres of land worth \$35,000 on which his 35 slaves produced 6,000 bushels of corn and 48 bales of ginned cotton.⁷ Hogs were also raised in large numbers at Oaklana for sale at the Petersburg, Virginia, market.⁸ A charcoal portrait of Perry Cotten Tyler, done about 1840, is still owned by the Tyler family.

Perry Cotten Tyler died in 1866, leaving the Oaklana property as a life estate to his widow and at her death, which would occur in 1892, to his youngest child, John Edward Tyler (1850-1930).⁹ John E. Tyler was educated at a preparatory school at Franklinton, North Carolina, before the Civil War and was a student at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He married Martha Adelia Capehart in 1873, and they spent their married life at Oaklana where they reared five children. In addition to his farming interests, Mr. Tyler, a scholar of Latin and Greek, taught at the Roxobel Academy. He was a published poet and author; after his death a volume of his poems was privately printed entitled Bertie at Gettysburg and Other Poems. Mr. Tyler also obtained patents on his numerous inventions involving farm equipment, ordnance, and mechanical tools. Known for his legal expertise, Mr. Tyler served as a judge of the Inferior Court of Bertie County for many years.¹⁰

At Judge Tyler's death in 1930, Oaklana was inherited by his youngest son, Ernest R. Tyler (1886-1958). A graduate of the University of North Carolina law school, Tyler began his legal career in Roxobel in 1914. A noted trial lawyer in eastern North Carolina, he was appointed solicitor of the Third Judicial District of North Carolina by Governor Clyde Hoey in 1937; Tyler was reelected to this position every four years for the rest of his life.¹¹ It was Tyler's wife, Ethel Leigh Pierce Tyler, who skillfully modernized Oaklana in 1937 with the additions of a kitchen, bathrooms, and the bedroom wing, all the changes respecting the integrity of the original house. Mrs. Tyler was a regionally-known artist, and several of her paintings remain in the house.

John E. Tyler, II the only child of Ernest R. and Ethel Tyler, moved into the house at the death of his father in 1958. At Mrs. Tyler's death in 1969, John E. Tyler received title to the property and currently occupies the house. He and his wife, Margaret Long Tyler, have long been active in historic preservation activities in North Carolina, particularly in the restoration of Hope, the Bertie County home of Governor David Stone. In recognition of his work at Hope, the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina

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presented its highest award, the Ruth Coltrane Cannon Cup, to John E. Tyler in 1967; in 1973 the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association presented him the Christopher Crittenden Cup. Tyler is a past president of the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina, and currently serves on its board of directors as well as on the Tryon Palace Commission. His son, John Cotten Pierce Tyler, and grandson, Ernest Rutland Tyler, represent the fifth and sixth generation of Tylers to live at Oaklana.¹²

In addition to the family papers and books remaining in the house, there are many pieces of family furniture at Oaklana, several of which were made there by a slave carpenter named Charles.¹³ Other descendants of Perry Cotten Tyler also own many pieces of family furniture no longer at Oaklana.

As the home of six generations of one family, Oaklana has received additions and modernization, but remains an intact example of vernacular Federal domestic architecture. Although its center-hall plan is a typical eastern North Carolina house form, Oaklana is distinguished by its spaciousness due to the large size of its rooms and the rear two-story ell. The turned columns of the porch, the modillion block cornice, and the well-detailed mantels mark the house as the home of a person of means as well as attest to the skill of a local builder.

The structure is, of course, closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archeological record. Therefore, archeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

Notes:

¹Thomas Ruffin, Sheriff of Bertie County, to Perry C. Tyler, October 1825, Bertie County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor, Book BB, 394, hereinafter cited as Bertie County Deeds.

²John E. Tyler, II, "History of Oaklana and Its Residents," 2-3, unpublished typescript in the possession of John E. Tyler, II, Roxobel, hereinafter cited as Tyler, "History of Oaklana." This 34 page documented history is the result of Mr. Tyler's personal research, recollections from his childhood, and interviews with older relatives. Copy in the Oaklana file, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

³William Roberson to Willis Callum, 20 October 1754, Bertie County Deeds, Book H, 168; Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 2. The ancient grove of oaks certainly antedates the present house, and could have been planted by Willis Callum.

⁴Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 30.

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⁵Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 30-31.

⁶Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Bertie County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 54; Agricultural Schedule, 257; Slave Schedule, 500; microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

⁷Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Bertie County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, 35; Slave Schedule, 153, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

⁸Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 24.

⁹Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 3.

¹⁰Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 9-10.

¹¹Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 10-12.

¹²Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 12-14.

¹³Tyler, "History of Oaklana," 20.

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Seventh United States Census, 1850, Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

Tyler, John E., II. "History of Oaklana and Its Residents," TS., 1980.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bertie County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Bertie County Courthouse, Windsor.
 Eighth United States Census, 1860, Bertie County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5 acres

Quadrangle name Kelford

Quadrangle scale: 24000

UMT References

A

1	8
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3	0	0	2	0	0
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4	0	1	0	3	9	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification The area included in the Caklana nomination is bounded on the south by SR 1249 and on three sides by a wooden fence and includes five acres. This represents the original tract of land associated with the house, its outbuildings, and the surrounding oak grove.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marshall Bullock, Consultant to the Mid-East Commission

organization Survey & Planning Branch
 Archaeology & Historic Preservation Section
 Division of Archives & History date August 1980

street & number 109 East Jones Street 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:

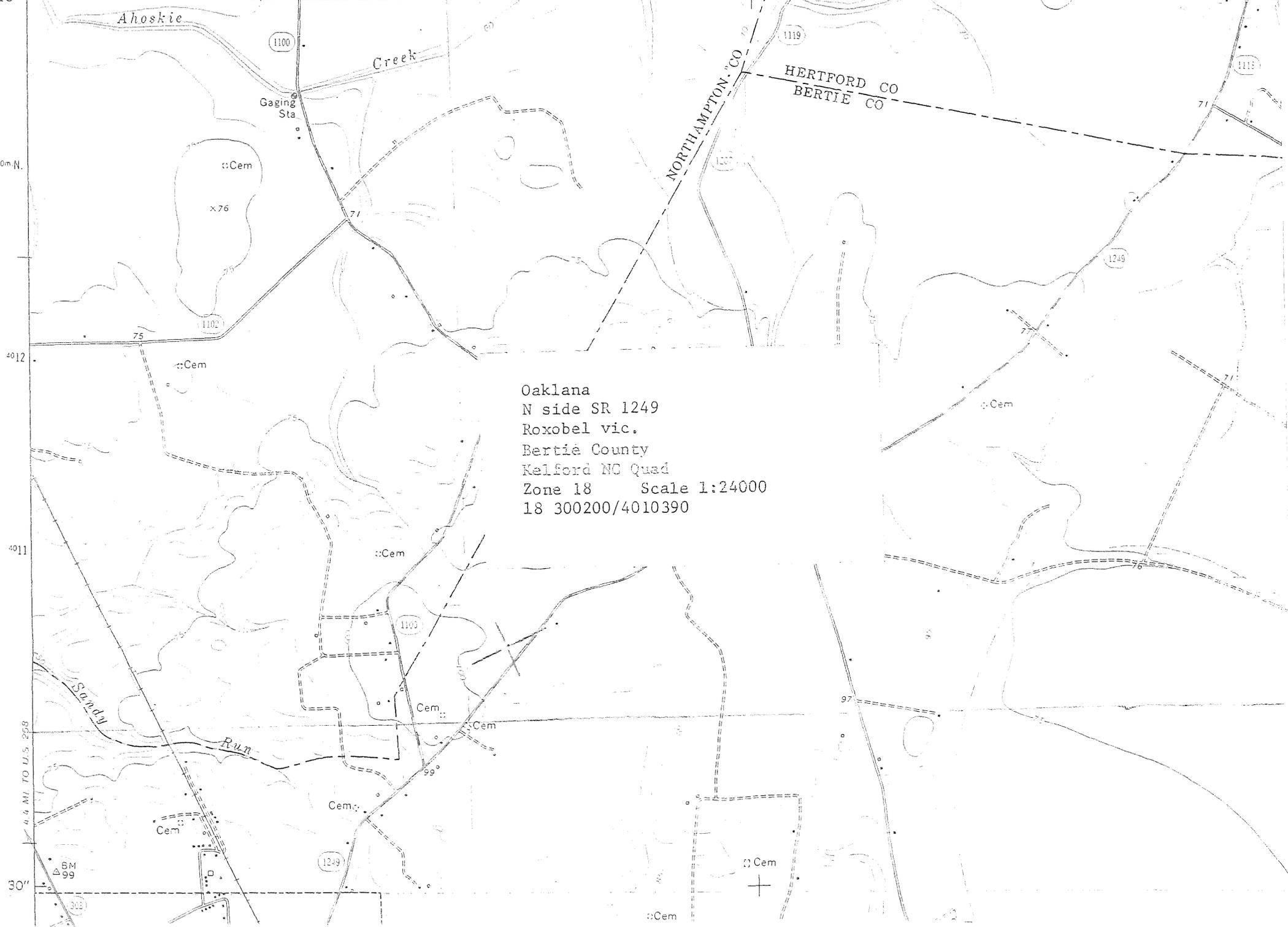
national state local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Ray E. ...*

title State Historic Preservation Officer signature date 16 October 1980

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	date
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	



Oaklana
N side SR 1249
Roxobel vic.
Bertie County
Kelford NC Quad
Zone 18 Scale 1:24000
18 300200/4010390

4.4 MI TO U.S. 258

BM 99
303

