

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 (former) Camden County Jail

and/or common

2. Location

street & number SW side of NC 343, 0.15 mi. NW of jct. with US 158 not for publication

city, town Camden vicinity of

state N. C. code 037 county Camden code 029

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 Camden County Commissioners: Mr. T. F. Leary, Chairman

street & number Camden County Courthouse

city, town Camden vicinity of state North Carolina 27921

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Camden County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Camden state N. C. 27834

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None 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 type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Camden County Jail survives as a pristine example of early twentieth century internment architecture. It was built to replace the previous jail, which burned in March, 1910. The county commissioners contracted with the Stewart Jail Works Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, in May, 1910, to replace the old jail, and the new structure was completed in June of that year. Nearly square in shape (approximately 29 feet by 24 feet), the jail is two stories high. Its high hip roof is covered with slate. It is built in the standard commercial style popular at that time, characterized by brick exterior walls, segmentally arched windows, and corbelled brickwork. However, the jail's high hip roof is more typical of Colonial Revival style buildings of the period.

Exterior walls are of brick laid in one-to-six common bond. The jail rests upon a concrete foundation that projects slightly from the wall surface. A notable corbelled cornice carries around all four elevations. On each side elevation is an interior end chimney stack with a handsome corbelled cap above a simple string course. The front elevation is three bays wide; the side elevations, two bays deep. An entirely different fenestration pattern is found on the rear elevation. The first story has four bays, but the second has only a single central bay.

Jail windows are segmentally arched and have four-over-four sash set in plain wood surrounds with concrete sills. Full-length iron bars remain in place over all window openings. Window arches on the second floor are connected by a string course that also carried around all four elevations. All sash appear to be later replacements.

On the interior, all walls are plaster over brick. The first floor is divided into four rooms. There is only one entrance and it opens into a large hall. On the south end of the hall is the iron stairway to the second floor. Two rooms that are entered from the hall on its western side were designed to hold prisoners, and have heavy iron doors with peep-holes and bars. One of them was intended for female prisoners. A smaller room that probably served as the jail office is entered from the hall at its northern end. Its door consists of a flat sheet of iron with no peep-hole or bars. Flues with holes for tin piping permitted the use of stoves on both floors.

The Stewart Jail Works Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, manufactured the ironwork used extensively in this building. All doors are made of iron and have the company nameplate attached to them. The substantial iron door in the entrance has a large flat metal panel in its lower half and iron bars in its upper half.

The most interesting feature of the Camden County Jail is the iron cellblock or "bullpen," as it is called locally, on the second floor. Its physical appearance can be likened to that of a large metal box. Evidence of its great weight is indicated by the use of "I" beams that give additional support to the floor of the second story. The entire second floor is actually one large room. The iron cellblock, which measures approximately 7 feet high, 21 feet wide, and 14 feet deep, sits in the center of the room. A narrow walkway surrounds the cellblock.

This iron cellblock has a center-hall plan with two four-bunk cells on each side. Its door of iron bars is the only entrance and bears the Stewart Jail Works Company nameplate. A small sink and toilet are located in the hall at the opposite end from the entry door. Each cell has a door of iron bars that opens into the center-hall, and a window of iron bars that faces the walkway. Cell doors can only be opened from control boxes flanking the entrance on the cellblock's outside wall. There is a separate handle for each door. Thus, the jailer could open doors individually or all at one time from the outside. The use of the iron cellblock made the Camden County Jail a formidable internment facility.

The jail sits a short distance to the east of the Camden County Courthouse (ca. 1847), a

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Camden County Jail

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handsome Greek Revival structure listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Together, they form a picturesque and well-preserved courthouse complex.

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

Specific dates 1910 **Builder/Architect** Stewart Jail Works Company/
Southern Jail Building Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The former Camden County Jail, built in the standard commercial style popular at the beginning of the twentieth century, is a well-preserved reminder of local methods of incarceration at that time. It is one of North Carolina's several extant examples of the work of the Stewart Jail Works Company of Cincinnati, Ohio. Aspects of the jail's interior, including the formidable cellblock on the second floor, are evidence of the austere conditions to which prisoners often were subjected. The jail's small size, somewhat haphazard management, and brief period of use reflect the small, rural county's difficulty in adequately providing penal facilities--a common problem in counties throughout the United States.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with techniques and problems of incarcerating prisoners on the county level in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century.
- B. Embodies distinctive characteristics of early twentieth century commercial architecture, including segmentally arched windows and decorative brickwork, as well as austere features commonly used in jails of the period.

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The former Camden County Jail in Camden reflects significant aspects of the county's history and the condition of county jails in America during the early twentieth century. The jail's small size and the relatively short period during which it was used to incarcerate prisoners are evidence of the county's static, rural population and chiefly agricultural economy. The austere design and somewhat haphazard management of the facility largely parallel conditions prevalent among county jails of the period.

Camden County, which was created in 1777 from Pasquotank County¹, has changed little in over two hundred years of history. Its 308 square miles in the isolated Albemarle section of the state have always been dominated by agriculture, although shipping activity along local creeks thrived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.² The county's population, which was 4,100 in 1790, reached a peak of 6,733 in 1830 and has subsequently varied between about 5,000 and 6,000.³ Camden County still has no incorporated town.

The citizens of Camden County recognized the need for a jail in the late eighteenth century. In 1782 commissioners appointed by the General Assembly purchased 1¼ acres near the Plank Bridge (the present site of Camden) from Thomas Sawyer and his mother, Margaret. They were to build a courthouse, prison, and stocks on the property.⁴ The nature of the original jail is unknown, although by 1883 it or a subsequent structure stood more than one story high. That year the Superior Court Grand Jury recommended that sash with glass be installed in the "two up-stairs windows that have never been provided with them."⁵

A near calamity on the night of March 8, 1910, created the need for a new jail. That evening four Negro prisoners set the building afire and "narrowly escaped being burned to death, as the Sheriff had the key and lived some distance from the Court House. . . ." The Camden County Commissioners immediately initiated plans for construction of a new jail. On March 19 they appointed a committee to examine jails in Currituck, Pasquotank, and other counties for the purpose of securing plans. The commissioners solicited plans from various companies, and on April 4 they accepted⁷ those submitted by the lowest bidder, the Stewart Jail Works Company of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The two parties agreed to a contract by the beginning of May. The Southern Jail Building Company of Baltimore, general agent for the Stewart Jail Works Company, was to construct the new facility for \$6,250. The Camden County Commissioners agreed to pay \$1,250 on June 1, 1910. The balance was to be paid in five yearly installments--6 percent coupon bonds valued at \$1,000 each. The jail works company promised to complete the building on or before September 1.

Work proceeded rapidly. The structure was ready for use by early June. Upon an order by the Stewart Jail Works Company, the Camden County Commissioners on June 6 gave J. A. Page \$1,250 as partial payment for building the jail. G. O. Bramble, superintendent⁹ of the construction work, reported that the materials and labor were of good quality.

In several respects the Camden County Jail reflected trends prevalent among such institutions throughout the country. Many county jails contained small cells in which prisoners had little privacy. The jails often lacked adequate light, ventilation and heating and

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sanitary facilities. Local governments seldom possessed sufficient funds with which to operate their jails. Because many counties could not afford to hire permanent staff to provide for prisoners' needs, the sheriff or local residents received fees for supplying food and a variety of services.¹⁰

Some of these conditions prevailed in Camden County. Prisoners confined to the cells on the second floor were subjected to cramped quarters and insufficient light and ventilation. Coal used to heat the building was sometimes stored inside the jail rather than in exterior bins.¹¹ The interior of the jail was not always kept clean.¹² Local residents were paid fees for feeding the prisoners and washing their clothes.¹³

Ultimately, the expense of maintaining the Camden County Jail proved to be unjustifiable for such a sparsely populated county. Probably in the 1940s, but certainly by 1951, the county arranged to send its prisoners to Pasquotank County's jail in Elizabeth City. Today the prisoners are incarcerated at the Albemarle District Jail in that city. The former Camden County Jail has been used for storage purposes at least since September, 1951.¹⁴

FOOTNOTES

¹William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 82, hereinafter cited as Powell, Gazetteer. The county is the name-sake of Sir Charles Pratt, Earl of Camden (1716--1794), an English jurist who opposed taxation of England's American colonies.

²Powell, Gazetteer, 82; Jesse Forbes Pugh, Three Hundred Years Along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County (Old Trap, N.C.: The Author, 1957), 104, 195-197; W. W. Forehand, "From the Past to the Present," in Historical Highlights of Camden County, 1777-1977 (Camden, N.C.: Camden County Historical Society, 1977?), 6-11, hereinafter cited as Forehand, "From the Past to the Present." Tobacco, cotton, and corn have provided a livelihood for Camden County's farmers at different periods. During the twentieth century corn, Irish potatoes, and pork have been the primary sources of income.

³Forehand, "From the Past to the Present," 8-10.

⁴Thomas Sawyer and Margaret Sawyer to Lemuel Sawyer, Isaac Gregory, Dem/p/sev Burges/s/, Caleb Grandy, and Joseph Jones, March 15, 1782, Camden County Deeds, Camden County Courthouse, Camden, Book C, 87.

⁵Grand Jury Report, Camden County Superior Court, Spring, 1883, term, Camden County Miscellaneous Records, C.R. 018.928.3, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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⁶Minutes of the Camden County Board of Commissioners, March 19, 1910, Camden County Courthouse, Camden, hereinafter cited as Commissioners Minutes, with appropriate date; Elizabeth City Tar Heel, March 11, 1910; Grand Jury Report, Camden County Superior Court, March, 1910, term, Commissioners Minutes, March 19, 1910.

⁷Commissioners Minutes, March 19, April 4, 1910. It is interesting to note that the jail in nearby Tyrrell County, also constructed by the Stewart Jail Works Company about this time, is very similar in design and appearance. Caswell County's former jail, constructed in the late nineteenth century, is another product of this firm. Author's interview with Mrs. Nancy Ferebee, Camden, N.C., November 18, 1983 (notes on interview in files of the Survey and Planning Branch, N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh); Ruth Little-Stokes (comp.), An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Caswell County, North Carolina: The Built Environment of a Burley and Bright-Leaf Tobacco Economy (Yanceyville, N. C.: Caswell County Historical Association, 1979), 196.

⁸Commissioners Minutes, May 2, 1910. The commissioners levied a special tax of 15 1/3 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation to finance the jail. Changes in the levy were made the following year. Commissioners Minutes, June 6, 1910; August 7, 1911.

⁹Commissioners Minutes, June 6, 1910.

¹⁰Henry S. Curtis, "The County Jail," The American City, IX (November, 1913), 428; J. M. Moynahan and Earl K. Stewart, The American Jail: Its Development and Growth (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1980), 64-73, 79.

¹¹Grand Jury Report, Camden County Superior Court, September, 1936, term, Commissioners Minutes, October 5, 1936.

¹²Grand Jury Report, Camden County Superior Court, October, 1939, term, Commissioners Minutes, October 2, 1939.

¹³Commissioners Minutes, November 7, 1910; January 2, February 6, 1911.

¹⁴Author's interview with W. W. Forehand, local historian, Shiloh Township, N. C., November 17, 1983; author's interview with Randy Keaton, Camden County register of deeds, Camden, N. C., November 17, 1983^o (notes on interviews in files of Survey and Planning Branch, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh); Grand Jury Report, Camden County Superior Court, Fall, 1951, term, Commissioners Minutes, September 4, 1951.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Camden County Board of Commissioners Minutes. Camden County Courthouse, Camden, N.C. 1910--1951.
 Camden County Deeds. Camden County Courthouse, Camden, N.C.
Elizabeth City Tar Heel. March 11, 1910.
 Historical Highlights of Camden County, 1777-1977 Camden, N.C.: Camden County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

[1977?]

Acreage of nominated property approx. 3 1/2 acres

Quadrangle name Elizabeth City, NC
 (1982)

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	3	9	4	5	3	0	4	0	2	0	8	7	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

The former Camden County Jail is situated on the approximately 3 1/2 acre site associated with the Camden County Courthouse (NR: Feb. 1, 1972) which was nominated prior to NR acreage requirements. The nominated property is identified on the enclosed Camden County

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (see continuation sheet)

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Description prepared by Stanley Little, Archives & History Assistant
 Significance prepared by Maurice C. York, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Eastern Office date December 19, 1983

N. C. Division of Archives and History
 street & number 117 W. 5th Street telephone (919) 752-7778

city or town Greenville state N. C. 27834

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William S. Price, Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date January 12, 1984

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

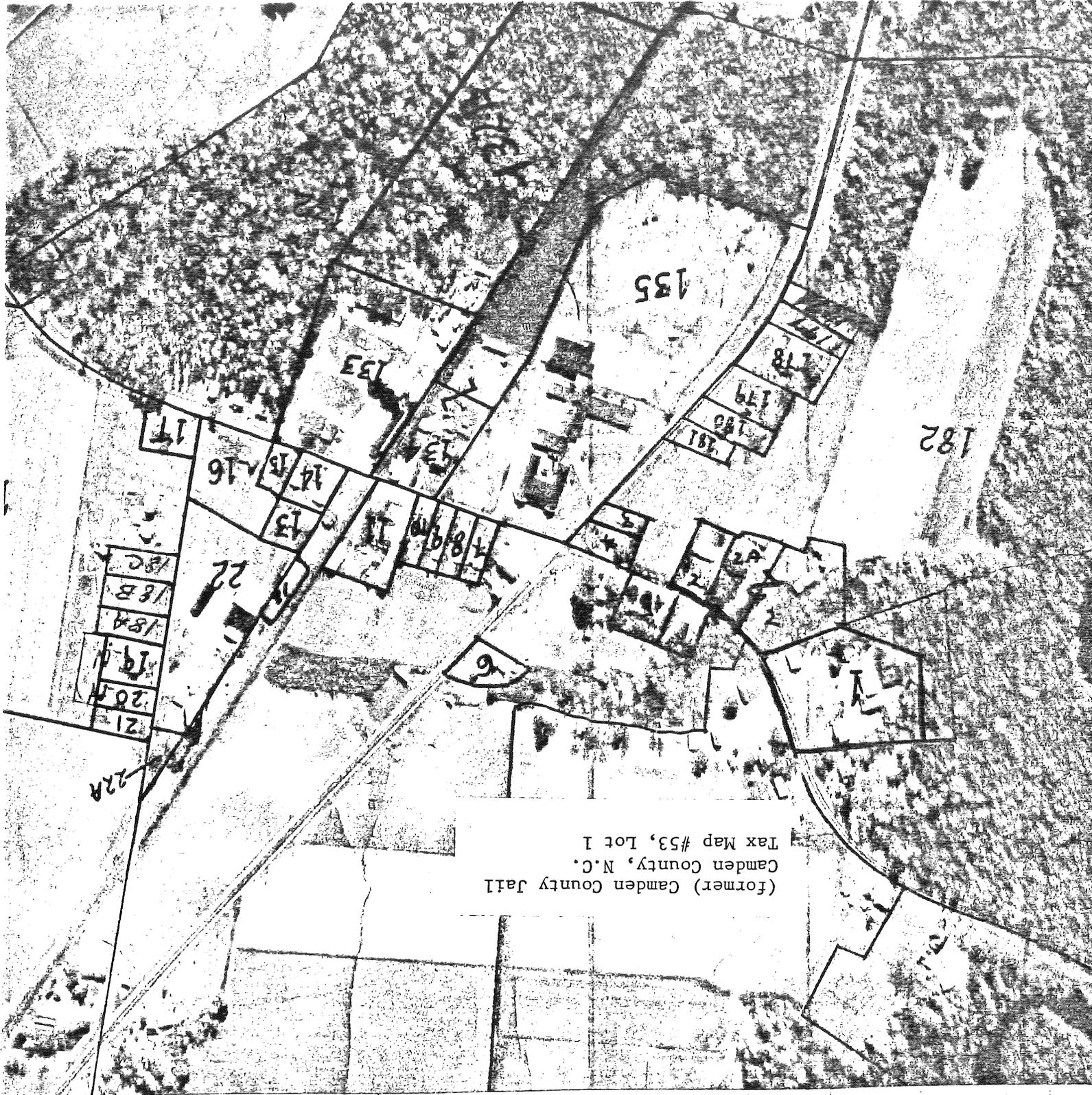
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tax map #53, lot 1 by a red outline.



(former) Camden County Jail
Camden County, N.C.
Tax Map #53, Lot 1

Scale 1" = 40'

