

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| STATE:<br>North Carolina |      |
| COUNTY:<br>Chowan        |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY         |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER             | DATE |
|                          |      |

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Wessington House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
120 West King Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Edenton (First Congressional District, The Hon. Walter B. Jones)

STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37      COUNTY: Chowan      CODE: 041

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)   | OWNERSHIP  | STATUS  | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building<br><input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both                                    | Public Acquisition:<br><input type="checkbox"/> In Process<br><input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)  |  |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____                          |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mr. John W. Graham

STREET AND NUMBER:  
120 West King Street

CITY OR TOWN: Edenton      STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Chowan County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
East King Street

CITY OR TOWN: Edenton      STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1935       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
East Capitol and Independence Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina

COUNTY: Chowan

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

|           |   |   |                               |                                       |   |                                    |
|-----------|---|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                                   |   |                               |                                       |   |                                    |
|           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
|           | (Check One)                                   |   |                               | (Check One)                           |   |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered |                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site |                                    |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Wessington House, set on a large, beautifully landscaped lot, is an exceptionally fine house of a type unique in North Carolina. With its elaborate double porch and exquisite ironwork, it would seem much more at home in New Orleans or Natchez.

The house is essentially a large rectangular block, two-and-a-half stories high above a full raised basement. It is built of brick laid in common bond. The walls were originally stuccoed but this was removed, leaving a greenish tint over the pink brick--a combination which causes the house to change color under various lights at different times of day. The high deck-on-hip roof is pierced by four tall chimneys which are paneled on each face and terminate in corbel caps. The roof deck is fully expressed by brackets supporting a slightly extended platform surrounded by a low wooden balustrade of intersecting diagonal members with simple pedestals, square in section at each corner. A single gable dormer occurs on the front slope and pairs of dormers on either side. These feature heavy bracket cornices and are fixed with multiple louvered blinds.

The main (south) facade features a double porch supported on both levels by robust fluted chamfered posts. At the first level there is a simple block modillion cornice, and at the second an intricate bracket one. The wide wooden entrance steps feature elaborate iron railings which terminate at the base in delicate open work iron lamp posts topped by superb octagonal glass lanterns. The lower porch balustrade is a heavy iron one of geometric design, while the upper has a diminutive iron railing above a solid paneled wooden base. Beneath each end of the porch are glassed-in excavated areas that function as greenhouses.

On each floor of the facade are three openings. The central entrance on the first level is set in a huge segmental arch. It consists of a segmental-headed double door flanked by engaged Corinthian columns and five-pane segmental-headed sidelights. In each leaf of the door above a rectangular panel is a long frosted glass featuring a cut diaper pattern and a rich deeply cut center medallion. The frosted glass in the sidelights is cut in an overall pattern of tiny yellow crosses--a most striking contrast to the grey frosted field (on the interior it gives the effect of sunlight streaming through the grey glass). The rest of the openings on the facade are in the form of double floor-length casement windows. Each section has a segmental head, a two-light transom filled with colored glass, and two leaves with three clear glass panes above a solid panel.

The east and west side elevations are identical. At both levels run full-length balconies with exquisite iron balustrades of intricate curvilinear design. The balconies are supported by delicate foliate brackets. On each level four large full-length casement windows with segmental heads open on the balconies. Each window contains a four-light transom filled with colored glass and two leaves each having six clear glass panes above solid panels. All of the floor-length windows are fixed with dark green louvered blinds. Above the upper balconies the main cornice is extended to form a shallow roof resting on open triangular braces with the diagonal member scroll sawn.

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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

7.

On the interior Wessington House has a center hall with a parlor and dining room on the west side and a study, stair hall and bedroom (originally the dining room) on the east. At the rear of the hall later additions house a kitchen, service areas, and formerly a back stair, now replaced by an elevator.

The main hall is an impressive space being approximately fifty feet long, twelve feet wide, and fourteen feet high. Its proportions are emphasized by a deep plaster cove cornice with unusually heavy pendant moldings outlining the upper edge of the cove. In the center of the ceiling is a diamond-shaped plaster medallion of a tight interlacing foliate design. It is flanked by two square medallions of similar but more open design. Heavy molded baseboards and exceptionally wide molded door cases with paneled reveals and soffits occur throughout the house. There are two double doors near the center of the west wall and one near either end of the east wall. Each leaf contains a long vertical panel above a square one. Slightly to the south of the center of the east wall is the arch framing the side stair hall. Within a large rectangular frame, similar in design to the other doorcases, two engaged Corinthian columns support a shallow segmental arch with paneled soffit and spandrels. The stair rises along the north wall to a transverse landing and returns along the south wall in a reverse flight. It features a heavy newel, octagonal in section, a molded rail, and turned balusters. The open stringer is not enriched, and the spandrel is finished with narrow vertical panels. On the north wall of the landing is a small round-headed niche.

The parlor and dining room have woodwork and plaster cove cornices like the hall. An especially rich effect is achieved as the moldings of the cornice break and return around the projecting chimney breast in each room. In addition the flat ceiling area is outlined by a simple molding punctuated at the corners and at the midpoint of each side by rich foliate cartouches. In the center of each is a large diamond-shaped medallion like the one in the hall. Identical white marble mantels are found in each room. They have segmental-arched openings, spandrels with flowers and foliage carved in low relief, and a central keystone in the form of a cluster of foliage and grapes. Around the top of each mantel, below the plain shelf, is a heavy molded label terminating in foliated pendants.

The study and bedroom on the east side of the hall have similar but simpler mantels and trim. The second floor follows the same plan as the first, but is less elaborately finished.

As a whole, Wessington House has an aura of almost limitless space filled with an abundance of light. The effect of the great windows opening on the side balconies and the spots of varying brilliant color in the stained glass transoms make the immense scale of the house warm and inviting where it might otherwise be quite overpowering.

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science        | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From 1722 to 1758 lots 22, 23, and 24 in the New Plan of the Town of Edenton formed one piece of property, as they have done since 1850. John Lovick bought lots 23 and 24 when they were first auctioned off, November 1, 1722. He acquired lot 22 soon afterward, and improved the three with a house fine enough to be occupied by Richard Everard, the last proprietary governor, during his entire term of office, 1725-1731. Everard stayed there even after Lovick sold it in 1730 to the mercantile firm of Charles Westbeer & William Rowden for £700. Westbeer, who died first, left his half-interest to his widowed sister, Mrs. Amy Worden; Rowden left his to his wife, Sarah, and their two children, William and Sarah. In 1748 Mrs. Rowden married Dr. Abraham Blackall, who on that same day bought out Mrs. Worden's son James for a beggarly £15.12.0, a price which suggests that Governor Everard's house was no longer standing. This guess is strengthened by the facts that the Blackalls did not occupy the property and that the next sale of it, in 1756, by Blackall's step-daughter, Mrs. Sarah Rowden Lyell and her husband, brought only £30. The purchaser, Francis Clark of Princess Ann County, Virginia, may have bought only a half-interest, for that is what he sold, for the same amount, to James Whitlock, an Edenton carpenter, in 1757. There is no record of how Nicholas Collins, tavern-keeper, acquired the other half-interest. In 1758 the three lots went into separate ownership and passed through various hands until 1850, when all three were purchased by Dr. Thomas Warren.

Dr. Thomas Warren, son of Dr. Michael Warren and his wife, Eliza Allen of Virginia, came to Edenton in the 1830s. In 1840 he married Penelope Johnston Dawson Skinner, the only daughter of Joseph Blount Skinner and a great-granddaughter of Governor Gabriel Johnston; she died in childbirth a year later, leaving an infant daughter. In 1843 Warren married his fifteen-year-old ward, Margaret Lavinia Coffield, the only child of James Coffield, exactly two weeks after her father's death. They continued to occupy her home, the Coffield house on East King Street, but began to plan a more handsome one, using a design by William Ranlett.

The Warren descendants still have their copy of Ranlett's The Architect, a Series of Original Designs, for Domestic and Ornamental Cottages and Villas, Connected with Landscape Gardening, Adapted to the United States: Illustrated by Drawings of Ground Plots, Plans, Perspective Views, Elevations, Sections and Details; it was published in 1847 by William H. Graham, Tribune Building, New York. Design XX provided the plans and specifications for Wessington, going into such details as the manner of blocking the stucco

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8.

finish to imitate brownstone--the stucco was removed long ago--and the pattern of the "lock furniture" for each floor: "blue coral" for the second floor and "blue coral gilt" for the first. (The present owners have found one knob not thrown away when all were replaced.) The estimate of cost of materials was \$8,006.44, of labor (at \$1.00-\$1.75 a day) \$2,435, making a total cost of \$10,441.44.

On April 22, 1848, Warren bought lot 22 for \$400; on June 11, 1850, lot 24 for \$500; and on October 24, 1850, lot 23 for \$200. Since there were residences and other buildings to be demolished, construction of Wessington probably began early in 1851. Warren did not adhere precisely to Ranlett's plan. He did not build a tiny wing for bathrooms and storerooms, which was on the right side of the Ranlett plan, opening onto the stair landings. Instead of a porch running all around the house, he preferred a double-galleried porch with wrought iron railings across the front of the house and wrought iron balconies, upstairs and down, along both sides. Some time after the house was completed he added a big two-story wing to the back, making it T-shaped.

Mrs. Warren's death in 1854 left her husband to bring up a thirteen-year-old daughter and five children between four and ten years old. He did not remarry. While he was serving as a surgeon with North Carolina troops during the Civil War, his house was occupied for a while by Federal officers quartered in Edenton. All of his business affairs suffered disastrously during his absence; even in 1869 he was still deep in debt, and his house had to be sold. His chief creditor, in debt to a creditor of his own, bid on the property for the latter, John G. Williams of New York. Williams and his daughters moved to Edenton, moved in with the Warrens (only a daughter was still at home), and let the Warrens share the house as long as Dr. Warren lived. In 1886 Williams sold it to Mrs. Margaret B. Mordecai of Raleigh, for her niece, Mrs. Pauline Cameron Shepard, wife of William B. Shepard of Edenton. The Shepards' daughter, Anne Cameron (Mrs. William A. Graham), inherited the house, which is still owned and occupied by her son.

Architecturally, Wessington is one of the most interesting houses in the state, not only for its unique overall design, but also for its having been taken from one of the designs published in Ranlett's book. There are few houses in North Carolina which combine such great scale with such exceptionally well executed detail. Its position on King Street makes it of great importance to the Edenton Historic District.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chowan County Records, Chowan County Courthouse, Edenton, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Chowan County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Moore, Elizabeth V. "Wessington House, Edenton," unpublished manuscript in Survey files, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                         |  |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER  | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE  | LONGITUDE               |  |
|   | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees Minutes Seconds   | Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW  | 0 , "                   | 0 , "                   |        | 36° 03' 27"   | 76° 36' 37"             |  |
| NE  | 0 , "                   | 0 , "                   |        |   |                         |  |
| SE  | 0 , "                   | 0 , "                   |        |   |                         |  |
| SW  | 0 , "                   | 0 , "                   |        |   |                         |  |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3/4 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY  | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
|        |      |         |      |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|        |      |         |      |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|        |      |         |      |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|        |      |         |      |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION

State Department of Archives and History

DATE

7 August 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:

109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name

H. G. Jones

Title

Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date

7 August 1972

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chowan County Records, Chowan County Courthouse, Edenton, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE  | LONGITUDE               |  |
|  | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees Minutes Seconds   | Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | 36° 03' 27"   | 76° 36' 37"             |  |
| NE   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        |   |                         |  |
| SE   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        |   |                         |  |
| SW   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        |   |                         |  |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3/4 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |

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NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: 7 August 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:  
109 East Jones Street

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Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 7 August 1972

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Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

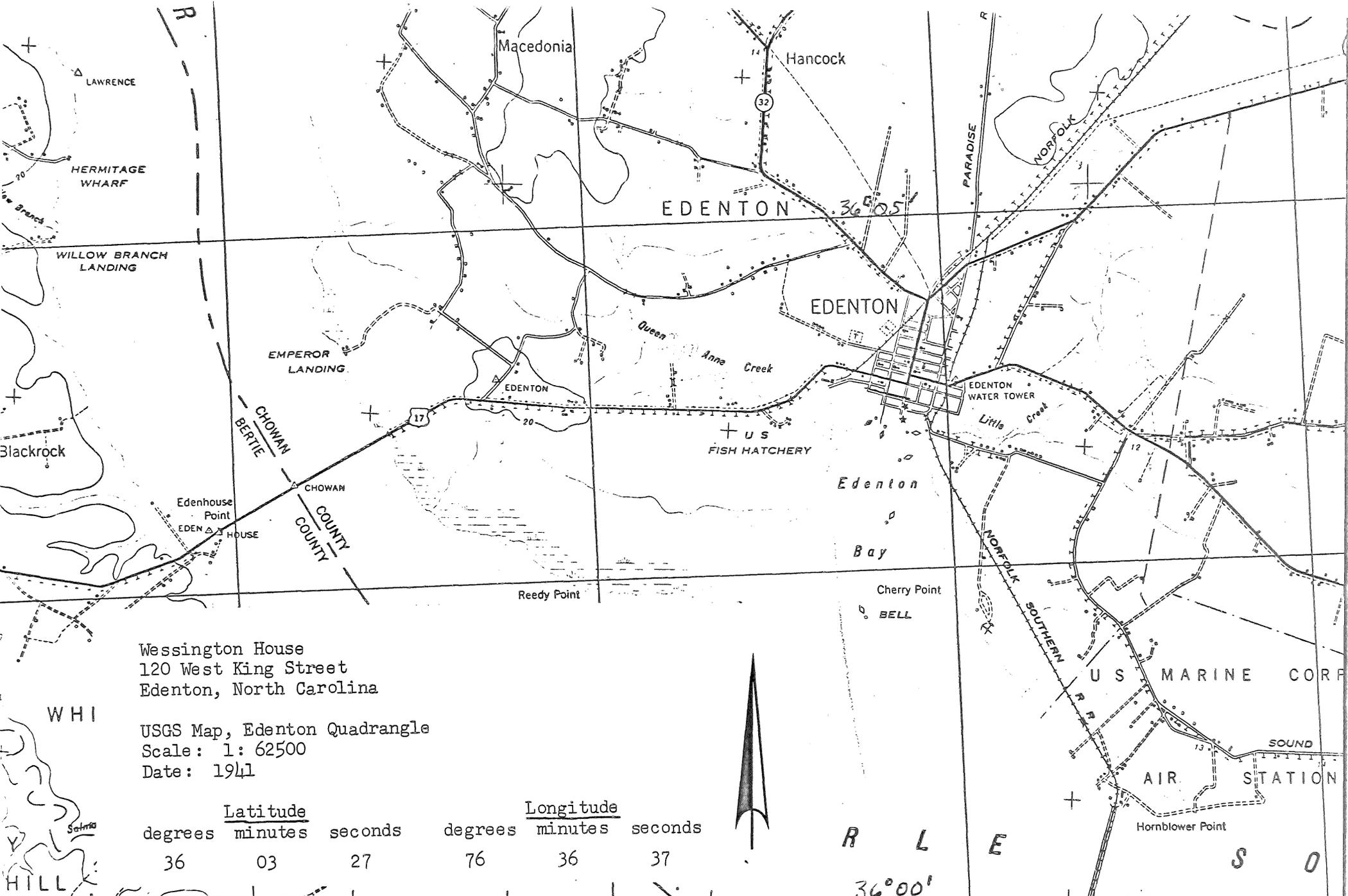
ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

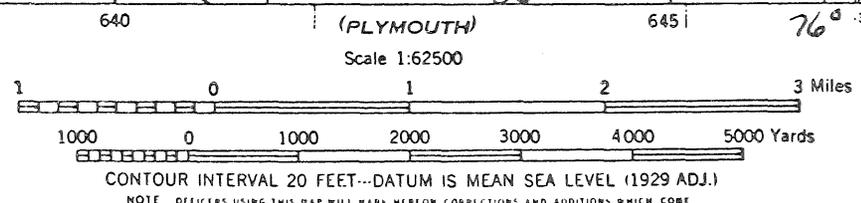




Wessington House  
 120 West King Street  
 Edenton, North Carolina

USGS Map, Edenton Quadrangle  
 Scale: 1: 62500  
 Date: 1941

| Latitude |         |         | Longitude |         |         |
|----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| degrees  | minutes | seconds | degrees   | minutes | seconds |
| 36       | 03      | 27      | 76        | 36      | 37      |



635000  
 160877  
 ROAD CLASSIFICATION 1942  
 Graded earth, gravel and stone  
 Unimproved  
 U. S. Route 100  
 State Route 101

APPROX BEAR DECLINATION 1942  
 ANNUAL MAG. CHANGE 0.21" DB MILS INCREASE



