

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR _____ THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 302-304 E. Pettigrew St.

____ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN Durham

____ VICINITY OF

STATE North Carolina

CODE 037

COUNTY Durham

CODE 063

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME C. W. Walters Co., Inc.

STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box 681

CITY, TOWN Danville

____ VICINITY OF

STATE Virginia

24543

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Register of Deeds
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Durham County Judicial Building

STREET & NUMBER 201 E. Main St.

CITY, TOWN Durham

STATE North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Claudia Roberts Brown

ORGANIZATION Consultant to the City of Durham

DATE June 1984

STREET & NUMBER 301 E. Poplar Ave.

TELEPHONE 919/968-1181

CITY OR TOWN Carrboro

STATE North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

Office of North Carolina State

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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

With its long western elevation very close to S. Roxboro St., the Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse is a prominent visual landmark of that major thoroughfare as it ascends a gradual incline to enter Durham's central business district. The main facade of the building, at its narrow north end, fronts E. Pettigrew St. and the tall railroad embankment that separates the warehouse's predominantly light industrial area from the heart of the city's downtown. Narrow strips of grass separate most of the building's street elevations from the sidewalks; along the east elevation there is a dirt loading area and parking lot. A three-story brick prizery built some time between 1925 and 1935 is situated about fifty yards east of the south end of the warehouse, to which it is attached by a metal-clad enclosed bridge at the second story. (The austere, nondescript prizery, where tobacco is sorted by grade, is excluded from the nomination due to numerous alterations that include the addition of a one-story cinder block warehouse to its south side in 1952.) Virtually all of the numerous late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century industrial buildings that once surrounded this warehouse have been destroyed, leaving lots that are vacant or recently redeveloped with very plain one- and two-story modern structures, contrasting to the massive form of the Venable warehouse.

The irregularly shaped Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse consists of three units: Units No. 1 and No. 2 are identical 100-foot by 100-foot blocks built in 1905 to form a rectangle on an axis perpendicular to the railroad tracks; Unit No. 3, added to the south end of the warehouse in the 1910s, is polygonal in form and at an angle to the original building, in conformance to the edge of the lot along S. Roxboro St. Because the site slopes gently downward to the south, each unit is approximately two feet lower than the next unit to the north.

Like other contemporary buildings of its type in Durham, the warehouse exemplifies slow burn construction in its heavy timber supports and solid brick exterior walls in one-to-five common bond. On the exterior, the expanses of brick are interrupted by narrow windows and wide doorways evenly spaced fairly far apart across the east, north and west elevations: the south facade is a solid brick wall, adorned only with a metal staircase leading to a square second-story doorway, apparently added after the original construction. Except for three windows that have been enlarged as squares and filled with multiple panes of frosted glass, the openings are segmental-arched with lintels of two rows of headers. All of the segmental-arched windows contain metal louvered vents and most of them retain their original tin-clad shutters hinged on one side. The double wooden doors also are tin-clad. Dozens of small rectangular vents filled with metal grilles pierce the base of the building; a few of these small vents also appear at the bottom of the second story. Each unit has a very shallow gable roof with four wire-glass skylights.

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Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse
Continuation sheet Item number 7

Page 1

In addition to its irregular shape, the most distinctive features of the Venable Tobacco Co. Warehouse are its four flat-topped parapets. The two parapets rising from the fire walls between the units and the parapet on the rear elevation are plain except for several courses of corbelling at their ends as they extend several inches beyond the width of the building. In addition to the corbelling at the ends, the parapet across the main facade features a cornice of small corbelled pendants. A sign painted directly on the brick bearing the name "The Venable Tobacco Company Inc." in large white letters fills the remainder of the front parapet. The letters of an earlier sign for Durham Tobacco Storage & Inspection Co. have bled through the painted background of the present sign. A wooden platform with a metal shed roof across the first story of the main facade has been removed: a similar platform survives on the east elevation of Unit No. 1.

In each unit, each level is a single open space punctuated by the exposed support system of timbers. The girders are ten inches by fourteen inches thick. The ten-inch-square posts are spaced eight and sixteen feet apart in order to accommodate the hogsheads in which the tobacco is stored. A metal-clad door connects Units No. 1 and No.2, but there is no interior passage between Units No. 2 and No. 3. The open elevators installed in the middle of each unit at the time of their construction have been replaced with enclosed elevators along the fire walls.

The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological 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 archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological 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.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

____ NATIONAL

____ STATE

 X

____ LOCAL

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1905/1910s

BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Of the two remaining examples of the numerous independent tobacco warehouses built throughout central Durham during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only the Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse survives intact. Furthermore, it remains in use as a tobacco warehouse, occupied by a branch of its builder's parent company. Typical of the turn-of-the-century tobacco warehouses in its plain yet handsome design, the Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse exemplifies the slow burn method of construction which combines interior supports of heavy timbers with thick fire and exterior walls of brick. It was built in 1905 by the Durham Tobacco Storage and Inspection Co. and occupied by its associate firm, the Venable Tobacco Co. Both companies were branches of Dibrell Brothers, a Danville, Virginia-based firm. The latter company became one of the nation's largest independent leaf brokers by establishing branches as the tobacco manufacturing industry expanded southward after the Civil War. Construction of the Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse reflected both the vitality of Durham's tobacco industry and Dibrell Brothers' preeminence as purchasers of leaf on order for re-sale throughout the country and abroad. Around 1920, control of the Durham operations shifted from Dibrell executives in Danville to established local tobacconists Clinton W. Toms and James S. Cobb who set up a new partnership, also named the Venable Tobacco Co., with the parent company.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Built in 1905 by a branch of Dibrell Brothers of Danville, Va., the Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse reflects both the vitality of Durham's tobacco industry early in this century and the preeminence of its parent company as an independent leaf broker.
- C. Unusually well preserved, the handsome, sparingly decorated Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse is typical of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century brick tobacco warehouses in its design and slow burn method of construction.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse was built in 1905 by one recently formed company and occupied by another related firm, both with roots in Danville, Virginia. The history of the building's owners and occupants begins, however, in the immediate post-Civil War years when Richmond, Virginia, gradually was declining as the hub of tobacco marketing. As new manufacturing firms arose throughout Virginia and North Carolina, Richmond-based leaf dealers reacted by establishing branches elsewhere or relocating close to new manufacturers.

The practice of Virginia companies maintaining their businesses by forming partnerships and branch houses in North Carolina was exemplified by Dibrell Brothers of Danville. Its founder was Richard H. Dibrell (1823-1896) of Richmond, one of the old-style commission merchants who pooled his resources to overcome the strong competition of small speculators controlling Richmond's tobacco market when it reopened just after the Civil War. Believing Danville to be a more promising center for the leaf business, in 1872 he sent his sons Richard Louis and Alphonso there to organize Dibrell Brothers under his supervision.¹

Dibrell Brothers grew with the tobacco manufacturing industry as it expanded southward. By 1864 they had a branch house in Durham under the name of Dibrell Brothers & Co. and by 1885 they also were in Henderson, N.C., as Dibrell and Walker.² Branson's 1887 city directory lists Dibrell Brothers & Co. as leaf tobacco brokers located on Morris St., in the middle of the tobacco district at the north edge of the downtown area.³ Nannie May Tilley notes in The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1948 that the names of these branch houses indicate that Dibrell Brothers united with or absorbed other leaf dealers. By the late 1880s Dibrell Brothers was very strong in the purchase of bright wrappers, a type of leaf used for chewing tobacco, which they were purchasing for Liggett⁴ and Myers Tobacco Co., then the largest manufacturer of plug tobacco in the world.

Although it is not known what became of the firm in Durham from the late 1880s to the turn of the century (it is not listed in the city directories for 1889, 1892 and 1902), Tilley has documented some of Dibrell Brothers' activities at its home office during this period. In 1891, after Alphonso Dibrell died, the company

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Durham City Directories.

Durham County Register of Deeds.

Tilley, Nannie May. The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1948. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .90 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	6,8,9,3,0,0	3,9,8,4,90,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That portion of lot 1, block 1 of Durham County Tax Map 41 as drawn on the attached tax map and copy of sheet 201 of the 1979 anborn Maps for Durham.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse
Item number 8

Page 1

reorganized under the same name with A. Berkeley Carrington (1862-1936) as a partner. Carrington had moved to Danville from Charlotte Co., Va., in 1878 to go into business as a leaf dealer with his uncle, Paul C. Venable. Tilley speculates that it was Paul C. Venable's firm that became the Dibrell Brothers branch named the Venable Tobacco Co.⁵ In any event, some time in the 1890s, Dibrell Brothers established a new branch named the Venable Tobacco Co. which functioned under the same management as the parent company for many years.⁶

As Dibrell Brothers became a very strong leaf firm, specializing in order buying (buying to fill orders already received from manufacturers rather than buying to sell as orders came in), it established many re-drying plants throughout the Southeast. In February, 1905, Richard Louis Dibrell and H.L. Boatwright, Dibrell Brothers executives in Danville, and Sterling Smith of Winston-Salem incorporated the Durham Tobacco Storage and Inspection Co. (DTS&I) in Durham. A month after it incorporated, DTS&I purchased a lot at the southeast corner of E. Pettigrew and Pine (now S. Roxboro) streets from the Golden Belt Manufacturing Co. and shortly thereafter began construction of a two-unit brick warehouse on the site.⁸ According to the Sanborn insurance maps, by 1907 DTS&I was leasing the warehouse to its associate firm, the Venable Tobacco Co., which had fifteen workers there. Venable's vice president was A. Berkeley Carrington, Dibrell Brothers partner, who also was a major stockholder in DTS&I by 1910.¹⁰ Samuel W. Venable, Jr., served as general manager for both Durham firms.¹¹ The next series of Sanborn maps, issued in 1913, indicates that the Venable Tobacco Co. had constructed a prizery and a re-drying plant just to the east of the warehouse. The 1910 City of Durham Illustrated published by the Durham Merchants Association states that the Venable Tobacco Company was ". . . a branch of Dibrell Brothers, Inc., of Danville, Va., one of the largest independent firms in the trade, and {had} connections in practically all foreign countries, as well as factories in Maryland and Kentucky." According to the publication, Venable Tobacco Co. bought raw leaf in local warehouses in very large quantities, re-dried it "with their modern and thoroughly equipped drying plant, and {shipped} it to all parts of the world."¹²

With a reorganization in the early 1920s, Dibrell Brothers' Durham operations came under greater control of local tobacconists. In July, 1922, a new Venable Tobacco Co. was incorporated under the laws of North Carolina with Clinton W. Toms, Jr., James S. Cobb, and J.O. Cobb (son of J.S.) as its officers and equal shareholders.¹³ Toms and James S. Cobb had established solid reputations as two of Durham's leading tobacconists when they served as president and vice president, respectively, of the American Tobacco Co. trust, which named two of its warehouses for them, and later as executives of Liggett and Myers Tobacco Co.¹⁴

One month after its formation, the new company purchased the prizery and re-drying plant from the Virginia-based Venable Tobacco Co. and two years later purchased

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse
Item number 8

Page 2

the warehouse, which had been enlarged prior to 1913 to its present size with the addition of a third unit on its south end.¹⁵ Although the North Carolina-based firm was directed by its Durham principals, Dibrell Brothers became a major stockholder.¹⁶ S. W. Venable, Jr., remained active in the new firm as its vice president, lending continuity to the reorganized operation.

The Venable Tobacco Co. enjoyed continued prosperity as Durham's largest independent tobacco leaf broker for many years. Its organizational structure remained the same with its officers based in Durham and Dibrell Brothers retaining a major portion of the company's stock. James S. Cobb served as president of the firm until his death in 1935, when he was succeeded by Toms. Sometime between 1925 and 1935, the company replaced its original prizery and re-drying plant with attached three- and two-story buildings, respectively, on the site of the original buildings; in 1952 a cinder block warehouse was attached to the south side of the prizery. Presidents after Toms were W. Mortimer Harrison during the late 1940s and 1950s, and then W.E. Michaels when Harrison became chairman of the board in the late 1950s.¹⁷

In 1970 the Venable Tobacco Co. merged with several other Dibrell Brothers branches. One of the other branches was C.W. Walters Co., Inc., of South Boston, Va., which lent its name to the new firm. Shortly after the merger, a fire destroyed the re-drying building at the Durham plant. Since then, the leaf purchased by C.W. Walters' Durham facility has been shipped to Danville for re-drying. The amount of tobacco handled here now averages about 1.5 million pounds annually as compared to three to four million pounds prior to the fire.¹⁸ Nevertheless, C.W. Walters remains one of Durham's leading independent leaf brokers.

NOTES

¹Nannie May Tilley, The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1948 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), p. 279.

²Hiram Paul, History of the Town of Durham, North Carolina (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1884), pull-out between pp.158 and 159; and Tilley, p. 280.

³Levi Branson, Directory of the Business and Citizens of Durham City for 1887 (Raleigh: Levi Branson, Publisher).

⁴Tilley, p.280.

⁵Ibid. Dibrell Brothers absorbed Venable Tobacco Co. when Carrington became a Dibrell partner. It also is possible that the Venable Tobacco Co., managed in Durham by Samuel W. Venable, Jr., from the 1900s to the 1930s, grew out of the S.W. Venable

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Venable Tobacco Company Warehouse
Item number 8

Page 3

Tobacco Co. that was doing business in Petersburg, Va., in 1893. Perhaps both Venable firms were associated. See also footnote on p.625 of Tilley.

⁶Ibid., p.280.

⁷Durham County Register of Deeds (DCRD), Book of Incorporations A, page 650.

⁸DCRD, Deed Book 30, page 572.

⁹Sanborn Map Co., "Durham, North Carolina," 1907 series. All series of Durham are in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁰DCRD, Book of Incorporations 2, page 368.

¹¹See Hill City Directory for Durham, 1911/12.

¹²The City of Durham Illustrated (Durham: The Merchants Association, 1910), p. 12.

¹³DCRD, Book of Incorporations 3, page 258.

¹⁴By contrast, J.O. Cobb, an investor in real estate and other ventures, was never active in the new Venable Tobacco Co. and sold his stock in the company within five years of its incorporation. See DCRD, Book of Incorporations 3, page 391.

¹⁵DCRD, Deed Book 65, page 538; and Sanborn Map Co., 1913 series.

¹⁶Of the authorized stock of 1,250 shares, in 1924 Dibrell Brothers owned 499 shares, James S. Cobb 410 and Toms 235; by 1927, Dibrell Brothers still owned 499 shares, but Cobb had become the principal stockholder, having acquired 100 additional shares. See DCRD, Book of Incorporations 3, page 391, and Book of Incorporations 4, page 11.

¹⁷See Durham city directories and original Sanborn maps for Durham with dated "paste-overs" through the 1950s, all in the North Carolina Room of the Durham Public Library.

¹⁸Telephone interviews by Claudia Roberts Brown with Wilton Mann, 5 April 1984, and Phillip Bobbitt, 17 April 1984, both with the C.W. Walters Co. plant in Durham.



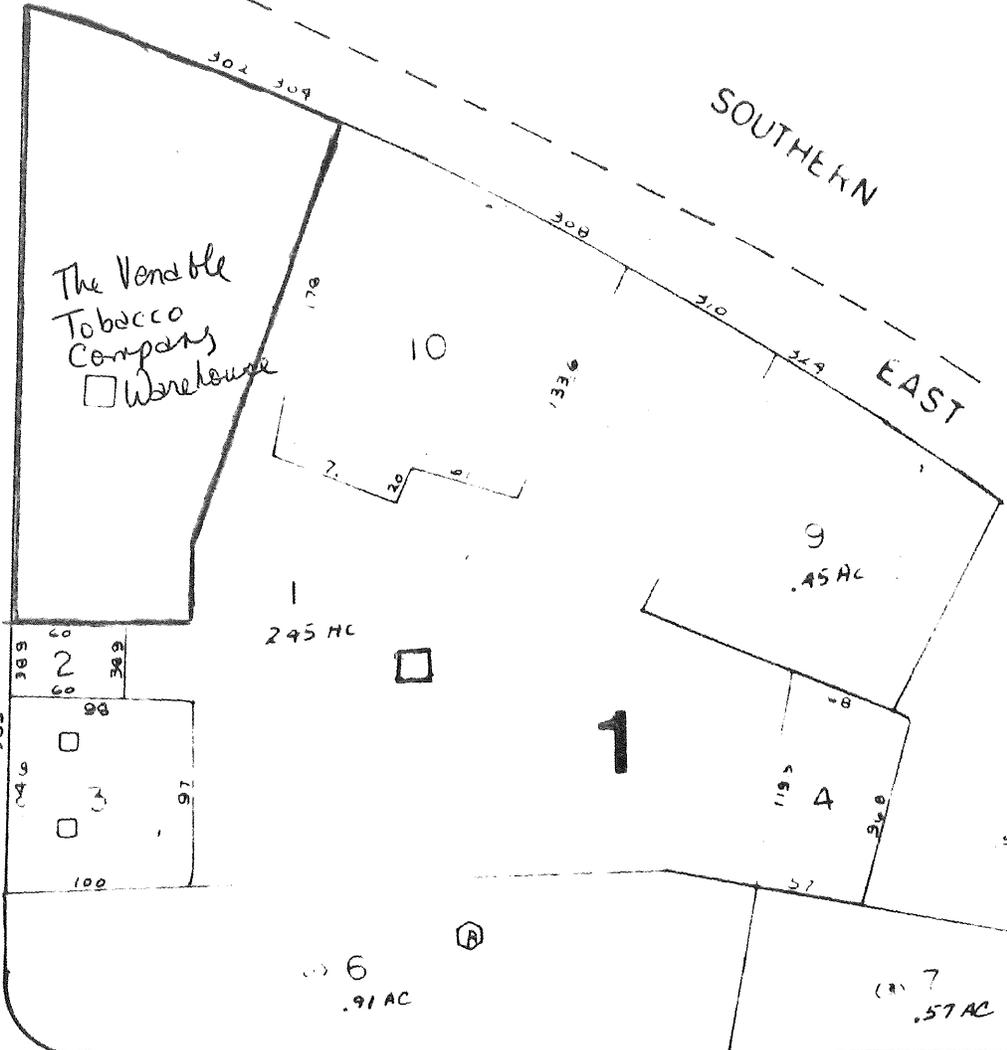
ROXBORO ST.

SOUTH

The Venable Tobacco Company
Warehouse

SOUTHERN EAST

DILLARD STREET



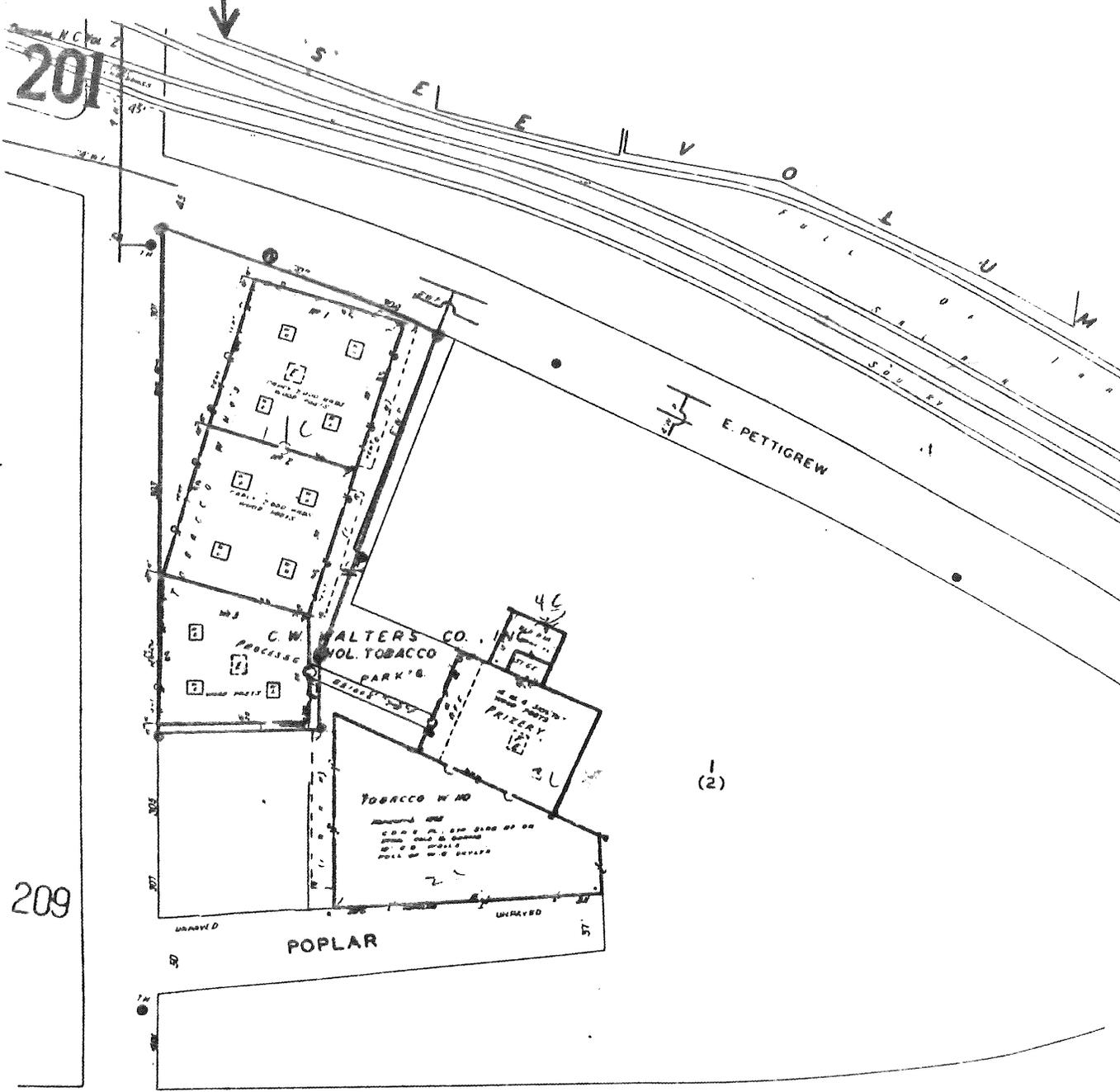
4.65 AC.

PROJECT 3
NC A-54

40

201

209



E DILLARD

S. ROXBORO

E. DILLARD

.90 acres
 .001 sq. mi.
 39176.94 sq. ft.

1 (2)

2

