

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Gates County Courthouse  
AND/OR COMMON

Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

N. side of Court Street (S.R. 1112 across from junc. w/ S.R. 1111)

CITY, TOWN

Gatesville

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Gates

CODE

073

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Gates County Commissioners Lamar Benton, Chairman

STREET & NUMBER

Hobbsville, N.C. 27946

CITY, TOWN

Gatesville

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Gates County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Gatesville

STATE

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

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 type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

The Gates County Courthouse, abutting the sidewalk of the main street of the small town of Gatesville, is a handsome two-story brick structure of unusual design. The masonry walls are stuccoed and rusticated (as of 1904) and the roofline features a modillion cornice. The main block is T-shaped, with the crosspiece of the T forming the main (south) facade. The main facade, seven bays wide, is articulated by a slightly projecting three-bay central entrance pavilion. There is no porch. The pavilion, like the gable ends of the building, features a slightly parapeted roofline, which kicks out at either side of the gable to form a square corner. The gable of the pavilion (which is not pedimented) is dominated by a very large fanlight which has radiating muntins and an outer frame adorned with a corbel molding. The remaining openings of the main facade are simple rectangular ones set deep into the thick masonry walls of the building. The main entrance, in the central bay, consists of a replaced double door, set, like the other doorways, in a deep opening with paneled soffit and reveals, with stone lintels and granite steps. Above, at the central bay of the second level, is a doorway served by a delicate cast-iron balcony--added in 1904. The door has five vertically aligned Greek Revival panels and is crowned by a large nine-pane transom. The flanking bays of the pavilion contain windows with granite sills and lintels: six-over-six sash occurs at the first level and much longer windows with nine-over-nine at the second.

The flanking sections of the facade contain nine-over-nine sash at the first level and six-over-nine at the second, except for the inner first-level bays; each of these has a door with the vertical row of five horizontal panels and reveals with corresponding panels. The panels are of the slightly raised Greek Revival variety and are framed by quarter-round molding. At each gable end the interior end chimney rises from the raised gable and is flanked by windows corresponding to those of the main facade. To the rear of the building extends a central ell forming the T shape of the structure. The fenestration of the ell corresponds not with the sides of the T but with that of the pavilion facade treatment, with rather short six-over-six sash at the first level and tall nine-over-nine at the second (lighting the courtroom of the second floor). To the rear of the stem of the T is appended a gable-roof addition running at right angles. It was constructed in 1940 and blends reasonably well with the finish of the front section.

The first floor of the building features a cross hall in the crosspiece of the T. There is a stair at either end, and at each end of the hall is a rather small room, each served by the gable end chimney; to the rear, in the stem of the T, the space has been remodeled as offices. On the second floor, there is a hall with the stair and rooms at either end, as on the first floor; the stem of the T contains the large courtroom. (The function of the first and second floor rooms was reversed from the original uses.)

While alterations have been made over the years to the finish of the building, a surprising amount of early to mid-nineteenth century fabric remains intact. Most notable are the rooms at either end of the front cross hall. Their doors are like the front doors, with five horizontal panels vertically aligned, and some retain carpenter locks. In each of the first-floor rooms survives a Federal style mantel and other elements of early finish. In the west (left) room the mantel has reeded pilasters, a heavy rounded band over the fire opening, sunbursts at the center tablet and end block areas, and diagonal reeded decoration at the end block area and beneath the robustly molded shelf. This room also retains a simple wainscot. In the other room is a simpler mantel with

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typical three-part Federal form and a wainscot as well. A second-floor room also retains a mantel, of Federal form with a heavy rounded architrave with plain corner blocks, and there is a beaded chair rail and baseboard. As in the other rooms, the chair rails function as sills beneath the deep reveals of the windows.

The stairs at either end of the hall are similar, each with a newel square in section slightly chamfered at the corners. Turned slender balusters support a heavy molded handrail; the brackets of the open-string stair are simple curved ones.

The courtroom, on the second floor, is large and simply finished, and the spacious feeling is enhanced by the large windows on either side. The audience area is set off from the slightly raised court area by a balustrade with turned balusters and posts like those of the stair. The audience area is filled with two rows of church-like pews with curvilinear ends.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1836

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gates County Courthouse, built in 1836, is one of a small number of antebellum courthouses surviving in the state. The substantial two-story brick building, a restrained example of the late Federal style, is distinguished by slightly parapeted gables and a central entrance pavilion with a handsome fanlight. A landmark and focal point in the small county seat town of Gatesville, the courthouse is of major architectural and historical significance to Gates County.

When Gates County was formed in 1779 from Chowan, Hertford, and Perquimans counties, the legislative act establishing the county also provided that "commissioners be appointed to select a site centrally located for the erection of a courthouse." The courthouse was built around 1781 when the state legislature levied a tax to pay for its construction.<sup>1</sup> After the completion of building, the community in which it was located, Bennett's Creek Landing, was known as Gates Courthouse. In 1830-1831 the legislature passed an act that said "the place now known as Gates Court House, in the county<sup>2</sup> of Gates, shall in the future be known and distinguished by the name of Gatesville."<sup>2</sup>

By 1834 the old courthouse in Gatesville was in desperate need of repairs. In that year work began on a new one, and the county commissioners imposed on the citizens of Gates County a tax of "fifty cents to the poll<sup>3</sup> and 20 cents on the 100 dollar valuation of land" in order to finance its construction.<sup>3</sup> The new building was completed in May, 1836. At that time the old courthouse was sold for \$33.50 to Marmaduke Norfleet "at six month's credit."<sup>4</sup>

The land on which the courthouse of 1836 was built was probably that deeded to the county in 1794 by Dr. John B. Baker, who sold to Thomas Hunter, chairman of the county court of pleas and quarter sessions, one-and-one-half acres "where the old courthouse now stands."<sup>5</sup> Because of the close proximity of the old and new courthouses it is likely that both were located on the same plot of land deeded by Dr. Baker.

Although the Gates County court minutes do not list the original building specifications for the new courthouse, they do show that in August, 1834, "a majority of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions" rescinded the original plans for the building and stipulated that the height (sic) of the structure should "be 40 feet square only, and the porch and portico taken off from the building and that the court room be below."<sup>6</sup> In February, 1835, the court authorized "the commissioners appointed to superintend the building to make such additions as they may deem proper and advisable provided it can be performed for a facie compensation."

As the work for the new structure was nearing completion in February, 1836, the court ordered that William Daughtry, clerk of court, "be appointed to take charge of the

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new courthouse, to have it cleaned and the windows to be open when necessary with a reasonable compensation for his services." The court also declared that "in the future all persons who shall abuse the Court House, shall be fined as follows: for chewing tobacco and spitting on any part of the house or floor, fifty cents; for writing or marking with either pen or pencil on any part of the wall or window facing above or below, fifty cents; for cutting any part of the house or bar or otherwise defacing the same above or below, one dollar." The clerk was instructed to post notices of these rules on the doors of the offices and jury room to insure that the public was constantly aware of them.

When the building was completed in May, 1836, new benches and tables were purchased for the court room, jury room, and offices. Three dozen "spit boxes" were also obtained and placed in the rooms. The costs of these items were to be reported to the next court which met in August, 1836, in the new courthouse for the first time.

The man most responsible for the construction of the new courthouse was Dr. John Baker, a physician and large landowner in Gates County. Although the court minutes for the county do not specify when he received his first payment for erecting the structure, they do show that on the third Tuesday in May, 1836, the "county trustee" paid Dr. Baker "sixteen hundred and seventy three dollars . . . for the second payment for building the Court House."<sup>10</sup> Other county residents also had a hand in constructing various parts of the new building. James R. Riddick, sheriff of Gates County, for example, shared a payment of \$400 with Dr. Baker in 1835 "for extra work" on the structure.<sup>11</sup> Riddick also earned \$116.83 in May, 1836 for "furnishing materials and painting the brickwork of the courthouse."<sup>12</sup> William B. Stephens was also paid in February, 1836, for doing "extra work" on the new building,<sup>13</sup> as was Henry Gilliam for doing minor work and painting the blinds in August, 1836.<sup>15</sup>

It is not known whether John Burgess Baker had a direct role in designing and building the structure, or if men in his hire or ownership did so. Baker was a wealthy and influential man in the Gatesville area. He was born in Gates County in 1785, the son of Lawrence and Anna Maria Baker. He attended the University of North Carolina in 1802, but alumni records for the school do not indicate that he received a degree or further college training, although they do list him as becoming a physician. Baker served as a member of the North Carolina House of Commons, 1811, and the state senate, 1818-1838. Dr. Baker's estate included many slaves and over 2,000 acres of land in Gates County as well as considerable land and a number of slaves in Florida. He owned a remarkably extensive library that included volumes on philosophy, science, geography, history, and literature. There were also many medical books, especially ones on surgery.<sup>14</sup>

Since its completion in 1836 the courthouse in Gatesville has been subjected to extensive use and some changes. The clerk of court and register of deeds' offices are today located where the courtroom auditorium was originally. In 1904 the original brick was covered with stucco and a small balcony was added. Workmen built the rear part of

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the structure, including the jail, in 1940. County officials plan to abandon the building in June, 1976, when a new one will be completed to house the county offices and court. Concerned citizens of Gates County are making plans to preserve the courthouse of 1836 as a significant part of the county's 198-year history.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Corbitt, David Leroy. The Formation of the North Carolina Counties, 1663-1943 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1969), p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Public and Private Laws of North Carolina, 1830-1831, Chapter 69, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, May 19, 1834, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Gates County Court Minutes.

<sup>4</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, May 1836; Gates County Miscellaneous Papers, 1780-1912, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

<sup>5</sup>Gates County Original Deeds of Sale, John Baker to Thomas Hunter, August 21, 1794, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

<sup>6</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, August 20, 1834.

<sup>7</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, February 18, 1835.

<sup>8</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, February, 1836.

<sup>9</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, May, 1836.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, November 18, 1835.

<sup>12</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, May, 1836.

<sup>13</sup>Gates County Court Minutes, February, 1836; August 17, 1836.

<sup>14</sup>Alumni History of the University of North Carolina, General Alumni Association, Daniel Lindsey Grant, Executive Secretary (Durham: Christian and King Printing Company, 1924), p. 29; Gates County Will Book 2: 1; Gates County Estate Records, 1765-1900, John Baker, 1839, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alumni History of the University of North Carolina. General Alumni Association, Daniel Lindsey Grant, Executive Secretary. Durham: Christian and King Printing Company, 1924.

Corbitt, David Leroy. The Formation of the North Carolina Counties, 1663-1943. Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1969.

Elizabeth City Advance, 1976.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre Latitude Longitude  
 UTM REFERENCES 36° 24' 15" 76° 45' 14"

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

## 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 Research by Joe Mobley, survey specialist; architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 919/829-4763

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina

# 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

*July E. Jim*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 7/6/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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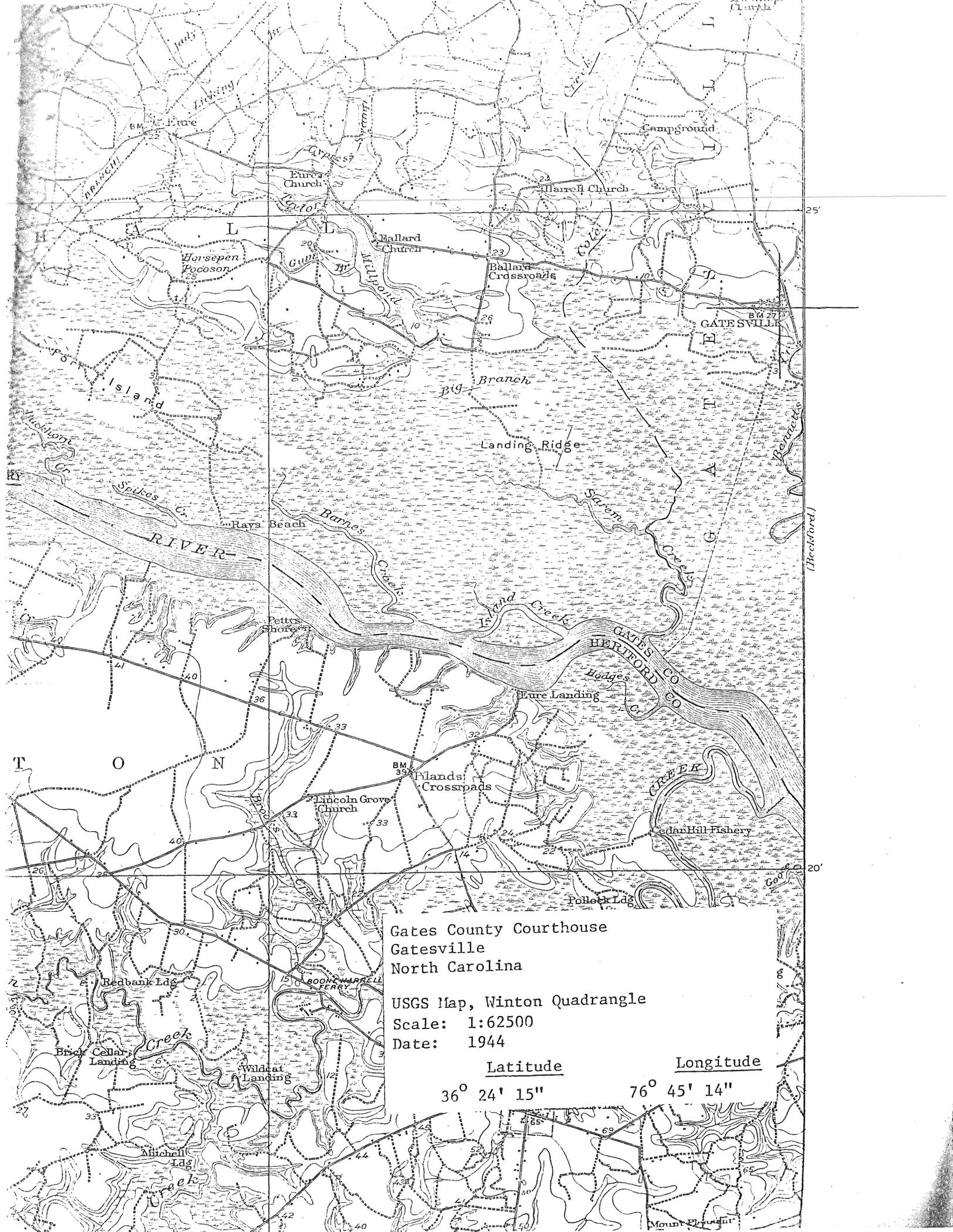
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Gates County Records, Gates County Courthouse, Gatesville, North Carolina (Subgroups:  
Wills).

Gates County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina  
(Subgroups: Court Minutes, Deeds, Estate Records, Miscellaneous Papers).

Public and Private Laws of North Carolina, 1830-1831.



Gates County Courthouse  
 Gatesville  
 North Carolina

USGS Map, Winton Quadrangle  
 Scale: 1:62500  
 Date: 1944

Latitude                      Longitude  
 36° 24' 15"                      76° 45' 14"

