

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Littlejohn, Joseph B., House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 219 Devin Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Oxford N/A vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Granville code 077 zip code 27565

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Historic & Architectural Resources of Granville County, N.C.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Price, Jr.  
Signature of certifying official 6-14-88  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Historic Preservation Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-single dwelling

Domestic-single dwelling

Agriculture/Subsistence

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: transitional Georgian/Federal

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof wood

other brick

wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 DESCRIPTION

The finely finished, transitional Georgian/Federal style woodwork and unusually generous five-bay facade of the 1820s Joseph B. Littlejohn House are visible proof of its prominent position during Oxford's early years, a position bolstered by the status of its early owners. Set amidst trees and lawns on a gracious 3.1 acre town lot, the two-story, one-room deep dwelling was first built as a two-story side-hall plan house. (This plan became apparent during renovations by the present owners in the early 1980s, when window framing was uncovered at the south wall of the hallway.) Built first was the three-bay wide northern two-thirds of the front block, which encompasses the north downstairs room and bedroom above and the downstairs and upstairs hallways. This section was erected, probably shortly after Littlejohn's 1819 purchase of the property, on a rock foundation. It is served by an original gable end Flemish bond chimney. Littlejohn had moved from Edenton on North Carolina's coast and his choice of a side-hall plan is therefore not surprising, even though it is unusual among Granville County's surviving dwellings. The two bays to the south, which added an extra room downstairs and one above to the exterior end of the hallway, were probably added not long after the house was built, for their finish is quite similar to that of the original structure. The additional rooms had certainly been built by 1832, when a sale notice of the house described an apparent center-hall plan structure with a "spacious passage."<sup>1</sup> This later section of the house was built on a brick foundation, which was replaced in the early 1980s, and is served by a common bond chimney.

The entire main block of the house is built of numbered, heavy timbers which were mortised, tenoned and pegged together. The hand-hewn sills are still visible in the basement, which has also retained, at its oldest north end, part of its original hearth. Another common link between the two sections of the main block is the use of the same fenestration; nine-over-nine windows light the downstairs rooms while six-over-nine windows light those above. The central, one-bay front porch was built in the early 1980s at the location of a shadow of what was apparently the original front porch. The new porch replaced a Victorian porch which had been a later addition.

Inside, original three-part transitional Georgian/Federal style surrounds frame the openings in the downstairs north room and hall. The six-panel doors - raised on one side, flat on the other - and flush paneled wainscoting, as well as the simply but

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elegantly finished one-panel mantel, are also transitional in finish and original. The later southern room downstairs is finished in a similar fashion; in fact two of the window surrounds are identical to those in the parlor and perhaps originally lit the exterior wall of the side hallway. Some subtle differences do separate the older from the later finish, however. In the southern addition the three-part surrounds have a slightly more Federal articulation; the six-panel doors have no raised panels; and the mantel has a taller, more stylized, pilastered form.

The upstairs of the main block also retains almost all of its original finish. The original north bedroom is finished similarly to the room beneath it, with flush-sheathed wainscoting, slightly simpler surrounds, a matching one-panel mantel and a six-panel door with both flat and raised panels. A small room at the head of the stairs, perhaps originally a nursery, retains flush-sheathed wainscoting and a six-panel door. The later south bedroom is of a piece with the room beneath it, with flush-sheathed wainscoting, a flat six-panel door and a matching mantel.

In the early twentieth century the house was altered again, probably by Richard C. M. Calvert, who purchased it in 1911. The old two-story rear ell was removed and the present one added; the stairs in the hall were replaced with the present Colonial Revival style run; a wall of closets was added to the upstairs north bedroom; and a three-bay wide front porch, adorned with cut-out brackets and turned balusters, was also possibly added at this time. In the early 1980s the present owners removed the porch and replaced it with the present one. They also took out the old deteriorated plaster walls - exposing the numbered framing of the house and its original side-hall plan - and replaced them with sheetrock. They retained all of the original woodwork in the rehabilitation, however, and the house is now in excellent condition. To the north of the main block and ell stands a pre-Civil War outbuilding. Mortised and tenoned together, it was perhaps originally a smokehouse. Although it is but one of the many outbuildings the property once contained, it is quite significant, for it is one of only two pre-Civil War outbuildings known to still stand in Oxford, the other found at the Kingsbury-Bryan House a few blocks to the west.

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<sup>1</sup> Notice of sale in the Oxford Examiner of October 4, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with James Cross Jr., present owner of the house,  
April 13, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Notice of sale in the Oxford Examiner of October 4, 1832.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Social History  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

circa 1820-1937  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

circa 1820  
1821-1832:  
extension to  
center hall plan

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joseph B. Littlejohn House is architecturally significant as one of Oxford's and Granville County's most deftly finished transitional Georgian/Federal style dwellings. The two-story, one-room deep, heavy timber frame structure is also significant as an early example of two of the county's most important traditional plans, the side-hall and the center-hall. (See associated Property Type 1 - Georgian and Federal Style Dwellings) Historically, the house is significant as one of the three oldest buildings in Oxford and it is eligible for the Register because of the significance of its distinguished occupants to the social history of Oxford.<sup>1</sup> Its residents included some of the town's more prominent nineteenth and twentieth century citizens, including attorney and planter Joseph B. Littlejohn, its builder; attorney and principal of the Oxford Male Academy, Thomas H. Willie; Robert I. Devin, one of the founders of the Oxford Baptist Church, and his son, Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court William A. Devin; and federal judge Frank W. Bullock Jr. (See Historic Contexts 1 - The Plantation Era in Granville County, 1746-1865 - and 3 - Bright Leaf Tobacco and the Ascendancy of Oxford, 1866-1937) Insulated from surrounding development by a spacious lot, providing it with an unusually gracious setting, the house also retains one of only two pre-Civil War outbuildings known to survive in Oxford.<sup>2</sup> (See associated Property Type 6 - Outbuildings)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The house was built, probably at the opening of the 1820s, by Joseph Blount Littlejohn (1776-1852) and his wife, the former Anne Maria Jones (1779-1840).<sup>3</sup> He purchased the 107 9/10 acre tract of land upon which he raised the dwelling, located just to the east of Oxford's original bounds, in 1819 for \$1,079.00 [Deed Book 2, Page 335]. Born in Edenton to a shipping merchant, Littlejohn was educated in New York and at Princeton University. A lawyer by profession, he had followed his brother, Thomas, to Granville County in 1819 to take up farming. (Eight years earlier Thomas had sold to Oxford the 50 acres of land upon which the town was originally laid out. One of the town's largest landowners, Thomas sold the 107 9/10 acre tract to Joseph.)<sup>4</sup>

Joseph moved to Tennessee in 1828 - an early member of North Carolina's outmigration of the 1830s - and two years later the house and estate, listed at 108 acres,<sup>5</sup> were sold to Jesse Isler for \$5,100.00 [Deed Book 6, Page 363]. Isler in turn, in a deed

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recorded in 1831, sold the property to Thomas T. Hunt for an undivided half interest in a gold mine in Burke County in the western Piedmont near the Appalachians, land that was indeed known at the time for its gold mines [Deed Book 6, Page 80]. In 1836 John O'Brien, the trustee of the wife and children of Spencer O'Brien, purchased the house and six acres for \$1.00 [Deed Book 7, Page 236]; he sold it five years later for \$800.00 to Thomas H. Willie [Deed Book 10, Page 315]. An attorney, Willie was also the first principal of the Oxford Male Academy. A wealthy man, he owned 19 slaves at the taking of the 1850 federal slave census. The house remained in his family until sold by the estate of his son, Rev. Lewis K. Willie, to Rev. William Jordan in 1878 [Mortgage Book 7, Page 281]. It was purchased the following year with 12 acres of land by Rev. Robert I. Devin for \$1,200.00 [Deed Book 35, Page 273].

According to a short history of Oxford's Baptists written by William A. Devin, Rev. Devin's son, "In November, 1846, Robert I. Devin, a native of Virginia, came to Oxford, under a special charge from the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, and undertook the task of inaugurating here a Baptist Church." By 1848 the church had been organized and built and Devin had begun the first of his nine years as its pastor. William A. Devin, who spent his childhood at the house, went on to become Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court in the early twentieth century.

In 1911 the house left the Devin Family, purchased by Richard C. M. Calvert [Deed Book 64, Page 504]. It remained in his family until sold by his son, R. C. M. Calvert, Jr., to Frank W. Bullock, Jr. [Deed Book 140, Page 387]. Bullock, a federal judge, sold it with 3.1 acres in 1980 to its present owners and restorers, James and Deborah Cross [Deed Book 231, Page 81].

## ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

In finish the five-bay house appears to be a very early version of a Granville County center-hall plan I-house. However, during work on it by the Crosses in the early 1980s window framing was uncovered that showed that it was originally a side-hall plan structure. Few side-hall plans survive in the county and it is fitting that one was built by an individual raised on North Carolina's coast, where the plan was much more common and might, for North Carolina's Piedmont, have originated. The

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almost uniform, finely executed, transitional Georgian/Federal style finish of the downstairs rooms - both the original side-hall and parlor and the later southern addition - suggests that the house was quickly converted to a center-hall plan. It certainly had a center hallway by 1832, for an advertisement for sale of the house in that year describes an apparent center-hall plan house with a "spacious passage" on the first floor.<sup>1</sup> The house is one of the earliest surviving examples of this plan, which is represented at many hundreds of later built houses standing throughout the county.

Along with National Register nominated Thorndale, the house is the only pre-Civil War dwelling in Oxford retaining a gracious, wooded lot, a lot that makes it easier to envision its semi-rural origins. These origins are also illuminated by its surviving pre-Civil War outbuilding, one of only two known to stand in the town. Probably originally a smokehouse, the small mortised and tenoned outbuilding was once just a single part of a varied collection of outbuildings.

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<sup>1</sup>The Taylor-McClanahan-Smith House at 203 College Street was built in the 1820s and the Bryant-Kingsbury House at 417 Goshen Street was built circa 1826. Like Littlejohn's house, the Taylor-McClanahan-Smith House started out as a side-hall plan and was soon converted to a center-hall. Both dwellings are included within Oxford's National Register nominated historic district.

<sup>2</sup>A heavy timber frame former smokehouse survives behind the circa 1842 Kingsbury-Bryan House at 303 High Street. Both the smokehouse and the Greek Revival style house it serves are included within Oxford's National Register nominated historic district.

<sup>3</sup>Anne Maria Jones was the daughter of Halifax County's Willie Jones, who was an aristocratic leader of the Radicals in North Carolina in the late eighteenth century and a contemporary and political ally of Granville County's Thomas Person. Littlejohn's marriage to the daughter of such a prominent figure indicates the status of his own family. See Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert R. Newsome's North Carolina: The History of a Southern State, 1963, pages 206, 215 and 241 for discussion of Jones.

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<sup>4</sup>W.H. Littlejohn and F.S. Littlejohn, William Littlejohn Descendants, no date. Extensive genealogy of Littlejohn family donated by authors to North Carolina Archives in 1948.

<sup>5</sup>W.H. Littlejohn and F.S. Littlejohn, William Littlejohn Descendants.

<sup>6</sup>"Some Old Oxford Families," Oxford Public Ledger, November 6, 1953. Located at Volume 25 of the Hays Collection.

<sup>7</sup>W.A. Devin, "A Short Sketch of the First Century of Baptist History in Oxford," 1948. Located at Volume 51 of the Hays Collection.

<sup>8</sup>A notice of sale in the Oxford Examiner of October 4, 1832, provides an exceptional view of the house and its outbuildings and grounds. It advertises 107.5 acres of land for sale on the northeast boundary of the corporate limits of Oxford that included a dwelling house 60 by 40 feet with 16 rooms and ten fireplaces. Four were said to be in the cellar; four at the first floor plus four porches and a "spacious passage"; six on the second floor; and two in the garret. Alterations to the house, including the replacement of the ell, apparently altered its configuration; it is also possible that the advertiser, Thomas T. Hunt, was generous in his description of the size of the house and its number of rooms. The house is further described as having been designed by Joseph B. Littlejohn, Esq., "who took his design from the best models of modern architecture."

<sup>9</sup>The property is described in the October 4, 1832, Oxford Examiner notice of sale as including: a large framed kitchen with three rooms and two fireplaces; a servant's house; a meat house; an outhouse; stables; a carriage house; a crib; a lumber house; a spring house; and a distillery built of stone with the necessary fixtures and vessels for extensive operations. The grounds also included a "large falling garden" for vegetables and fruits.

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Continuation Sheet

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Devin, W. A. "A Short History of the First Century of Baptist History in Oxford", (1948). Included within a centennial publication of the Oxford Baptist Church located at Volume 51 of the Hays Collection.

"Federal Homes Reveal Aspects of Early Builders, Architecture." Oxford Public Ledger (November 16, 1981).

Granville County Deeds. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, N.C.

Hays, Francis B. Unpublished collection of 135 scrapbooks on Granville County history located at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

Interview with James Cross Jr., present owner of the house, April 13, 1986.

Lefler, Hugh Talmage and Albert Ray Newsome. North Carolina: The History of a Southern State. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963.

Littlejohn, W. H. and F. S. Littlejohn. William Littlejohn Descendants. No date. Extensive printed genealogy of Littlejohn family donated by authors to North Carolina Archives in Raleigh in 1948.

Oxford Examiner (October 4, 1832). Notice of sale of Joseph B. Littlejohn House - including description of house, outbuildings and grounds - located on microfilm at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

"Some Old Oxford Families." Oxford Public Ledger (November 6, 1953). Located at Volume 25 of the Hays Collection.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 3.1 acres

UTM References

A 

1	7	7	1	7	2	0	0
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4	0	2	1	0	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Joseph B. Littlejohn House is the entire 3.1 acre parcel on which it is located, as shown on the accompanying 1983 survey map of the property of James E. Cross Jr., and as described in the accompanying deed of 1983 recorded on Deed Book 234, page 287.

See continuation sheet

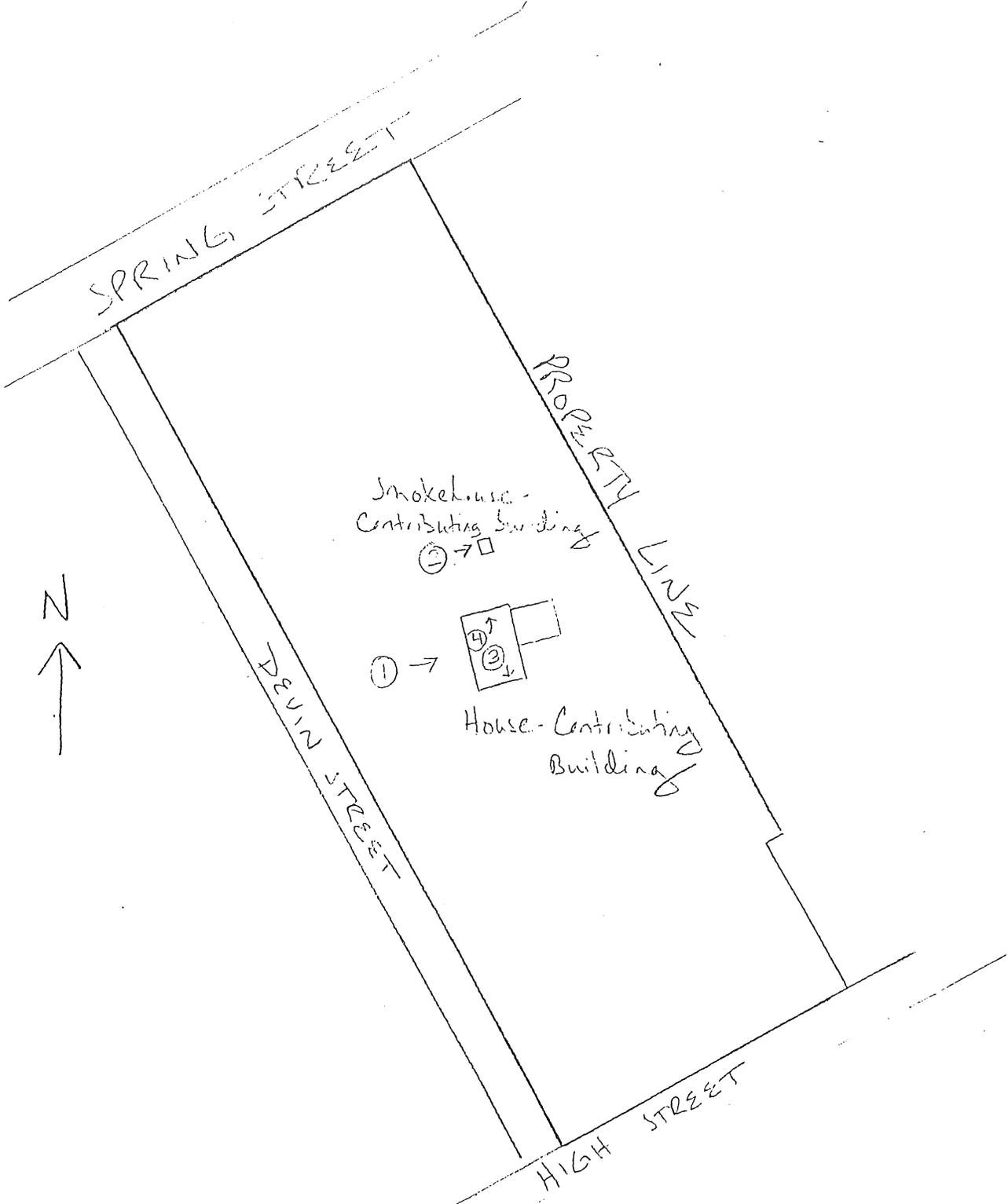
Boundary Justification

The boundaries follow legally recorded property lines. Former land associated with the house has been sold off and subdivided.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin Brown/Architectural Historian & Patricia Esperon/Historian  
 organization Granville -Oxford Historic Survey date 12/9/87  
 street & number P.O. Box 1556(State Hist. Pres. Off) telephone 919-693-1491  
 city or town Oxford state N.C. zip code 27565



JOSEPH B. LITTLEJOHN HOUSE

Granville County, N.C.

Approximately 3.1 acres

Scale 1" = 100'



Joseph C. Littlejohn House  
 Granville County, N.C.  
 Quad Oxford, N.C.  
 Scale 1:24,000  
 17 71200 4521090

Joseph C. Littlejohn House  
 Granville County, N.C.  
 Quad Oxford, N.C.  
 Scale 1:24,000

VIRGINIA 12 25  
 ADRIAN L. BAKER, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

ROXBORO 24 41  
 H. A. 7 41

5266 1 SW  
 (BEREA)

OXF

HENDER

