

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 Bryan-Bell Farm  
other names/site number Oakview Plantation

### 2. Location

South side NC 58, 1.05 miles east  
street & number of junction with SR 1119 N/A not for publication  
city, town Pollocksville  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Jones code 103 zip code 28573

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>25</u>	<u>7</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>2</u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
		<u>28</u>	<u>12</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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. Fin, Jr. 11/20/89  
Signature of certifying official Date

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)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE/agricultural field  
LANDSCAPE/forest

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding  
AGRICULTURE/agricultural field  
LANDSCAPE/forest

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical Revival  
Late Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Weatherboard  
Vinyl  
roof Tin  
other Wood  
Log

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Bryan-Bell Farm

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The Bryan-Bell Farm is a 2251 acre tract that straddles the line of NC Highway 58 (formerly the Trenton-Pollocksville Road) west of Pollocksville, in Jones County. Bordered on the north by the meanderings of the Trent River, on the west by Mill Run, on the south by Little Hell and Bender Branches, and on the east by Goshen Branch, the farm is divided, as it has been since at least the mid-nineteenth century, about equally between woodland and cultivated farmland in mostly flat coastal terrain. The several large fields are subdivided into a patchwork of smaller fields separated by drainage ditches. In the north middle section of the farm is a dense hardwood stand including marshland along the Little Hell Branch. Centered in the tract is the Neo-Classical Revival style Bryan-Bell House, built ca. 1840 and renovated in 1920, together with an array of farm outbuildings dating from the 1840s to the late 1940s. Also within the farm, and along the line of the highway, are six groups of resources that contain traditional farmhouses and farm buildings from the mid-nineteenth century to World War II. In the woods south of the Bryan-Bell House are the remains of a nineteenth century burying ground.

## (C) Site 1. The Landscape

Both the present and traditional uses of land on the Bryan-Bell Farm are largely based on the topography and natural features of the central-coastal plain landscape. Flowing west to east along the north side of the property is the serpentine line of the Trent River. Three small subsidiary creeks run north across the Bryan-Bell Farm to join the Trent: Mill Run at the west side, Little Hell Branch through the center, and Goshen Branch (formerly Long Branch) at the east end of the farm.

North of the east-west line of NC 58 (formerly the Trenton-Pollocksville Road), Little Hell Branch meanders through low-lying wooded land, identified appropriately on an 1850 survey map of the James C. Bryan Farm as "Marsh Lands." This core of dense mixed hardwood forest has remained largely inviolate since the initial clearing of the land, except for several small fields in the north central portion along the river, formerly a tenant farm. Aerial photographs taken in 1938 show outlines virtually identical to those of today for this forested area, except that the woods have been allowed to encroach on several small fields just north of the highway (Areas C, D and E), identified on the 1850 map as "Negro Lots."

Woodland has also been preserved along the lines of the three creeks, which are fringed with irregular bands of mixed pine and hardwoods. Some of this woodland appears to have been harvested at various periods,

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but has either been replanted or regenerated naturally to its previous outlines.

The cultivated area of the farm in general takes the form of two very large cleared areas separated from each other by Little Hell Branch. Each of these fields of several hundred acres is in turn divided by the highway. This arrangement of fields was clearly in place, at least for the core of the farm, by the mid-nineteenth century. The 1850 survey map shows 247 acres of cleared land in the southwest corner of the farm, 387 acres of cleared land in the southeast corner of the farm, and a field of 81 acres, referred to as the Notts or Natts Field, at the northeast corner. Outlines of these fields are substantially identical to their present configurations. A major addition to the farm occurred with the purchase by J. H. Bell in 1899 of a large tract of mostly cleared land on both sides of Highway 58 north and west of the Bryan lands. This tract, known as the Perry Farm, included 700 acres. Other major acquisitions added land north of NC 58 and east of Little Hell Creek Swamp, an area known as the Goshen Lands, in the early years of this century.

Largely flat, the great fields are subdivided irregularly into a series of smaller fields, sometimes by drainage ditches, in other cases apparently by traditions of use. Dotting the fields are isolated trees, and along drainage ditches and dirt roads that cross the fields, unplanted rows of trees and bushes. Most of the land is either still in cultivation or being used as pastureage.

South of NC 58 is the house tract, including the main house and outbuildings and surrounded by a grove of trees. Just east of the house tract is a large, circular pond, next to which is a group of livestock-related outbuildings. West of the home tract is an approximately 2000 foot long, grassed strip used as an airfield by the farm's owners.

The continuity of land use and delineation is even more striking when a comparison is made between 1938 aerial photographs and modern maps. The most substantial difference between the 1938 and modern landscapes is that the large number of farm-related buildings that lined NC 58 in 1938 have been reduced to a token number of mostly superannuated buildings today.

While no archeological survey of the farm or county has been carried out, it appears likely that considerable historic, and possibly prehistoric archeological resources exist on the Bryan-Bell Farm.

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### (C) 1. Bryan-Bell House

Down an arrow-straight lane, approximately 200 yards long and lined with large cedars and white oaks, the Bryan-Bell House sits at the back of a pear-shaped driveway in a several-acre lawn filled with mature trees of a variety of species. Grouped around the house are a number of outbuildings of various types and periods.

As originally constructed, probably in the early 1840s, the Bryan-Bell House was a two and a half-story, five-bay, double-pile, Late Federal style residence with a central hall plan. Documentary photographs taken during the 1920 renovations indicate that the house originally had a full-width, two-tier front porch, possibly with a central pediment or dormer. The two chimneys on the east side of the house and one on the west side, with their high, stepped shoulders and common bond masonry, appear to be original. The front elevation of the earlier house was simply-ornamented, with double tiers of Doric pilasters at the outer corners and a boxed cornice that returned a short distance at the corners. On the first floor was a large, central doorway that probably included a transom and sidelights, while the second floor porch was reached from a central, single door, probably with transom. A surviving transom sash stored in the attic, grained in imitation of mahogany, is likely the original transom from the second floor.

During the 1920 renovations the two-tier porches were removed and a monumental portico was added across the front elevation. Typical of early twentieth century Neo-Classical Revival porticos, it has four fluted Corinthian columns supporting the main, flat entablature of the roof, while another two columns support a central, projecting bay. The upper cornice of the portico extends some distance, but has a plain soffit. At both the front and rear corners of the house the eaves return several feet.

Topping the porch roof is a balustrade of panelled pedestals with balustered railings between them. A large, gabled dormer sits on the front of the main roof behind the balustrade. The standing seam metal roof was also applied during the 1920 renovation.

As part of the 1920 changes to the front elevation, an airlock or antechamber was added to the first floor doorway. Glazed on three sides, it had corner Doric columns which supported the balustraded second floor deck. In recent years, however, the walls of the antechamber have been removed.

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Most of the window openings of the original house were retained in the remodelling, although the original windows were replaced with twelve over one sash. A possible exception is the attic windows, which appear to have their original nine over six sash. The original, slightly-pedimented first floor window surrounds appear to have been retained, while the other windows have plain, 1920 classical surrounds. The wooden blinds on the front of the house are a modern addition.

Another 1920 change to the exterior was the addition of a one-story, gable-roofed wing at the rear of the house on the southwest corner. An engaged porch was constructed across the inner side of this wing and a shed-roofed addition to the southeast corner of the house.

Other changes since 1920 include the installation of a second-level, shed-roofed bathroom wing above the earlier rear addition, the replacement of the rear engaged porch with an enclosed den, and the construction of a gabled shelter over the basement steps on the southeast corner of the house. The clapboards and main roof cornice soffits of the house were also covered with vinyl siding in the mid-1970s.

In keeping with the exterior, the interior of the Bryan-Bell House has a modest level of original finishes with more ornate, 1920 elements. The central hall has a narrow, Late Federal molded chairrail with plaster above and below, 1920s classical door surrounds with flat entablatures, and 1920s two-panel doors. Most of the dentilled crown molding in the hall is a modern addition, but there is a section of original, molded, wooden crown molding without dentils on the stair landing. The doglegged stair with landing that rises at the rear of the hall has a panelled, Classical Revival newel post, unornamented string, and square-section balusters. At the front of the hall, the main entrance is a mixture of 1920s sidelights and a modern, six-panel door.

On the east side of the first floor, the two rooms are simply-finished, with three-part Late Federal mantels with fluted pilasters, and 1920s Classical Revival window surrounds and high baseboards. Much more ornate are the two west rooms, which contain high-style 1920s finishes and more elaborate Federal style mantels salvaged from the nearby Mary Simmons House in 1934. Both rooms have plastered ceilings with a grid of panelled wooden beams. Dividing the two spaces is a screen of Ionic columns and pilasters on a base of panelled pedestals. The rear, or dining room, on this side extends beyond the outer walls of the original house into the one-story, 1920 addition, which also includes the kitchen.

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The second floor of the house has two bedrooms on either side of a central hall. Like the first floor, its central hallway has 1920s Classical Revival door surrounds and a plain stair with panelled newel post. The Late Federal chairrail in the upper hall is slightly wider than on the first floor. Rooms on either side are simply-finished, with plain Late Federal mantels.

At the third, or attic level the house retains many of its ca. 1840 features. Doors to the single rooms on either side of the central hall are six-panel, with flat panels and applied moldings. These doors are hung on cast iron butt hinges and have, as their original hardware, Carpenter style locks marked with the initials of William IV (reign 1830-37). The door surrounds are plain boards with an edge bead. The newel post on this level is a typical Federal post with cap. Closing off the stair from the upper hallway are a pair of oak-veneered doors with Art Nouveau stained glazing, originally located at the back of the first floor antechamber.

Other Buildings on Home Lot

(NC) 2. **House**; one and a half-story, gable-roofed frame house built in 1947 for H. C. Bell; gabled central entrance portico, three dormers across front; brick sunroom on west end; six over six sash; asbestos siding.

(NC) 3. **Storage Building**; ca. 1947, small, one-story, gable-and-shed frame storage building with asbestos siding.

(NC) 4. **Smokehouse**; ca. 1840, gable-roofed, rectangular frame smokehouse; central board and batten entrance door hung on strap hinges; rear elevation of building cut away for double garage; interior completely panelled; concrete floor.

(C) 5. **Office**; small, one-story, clapboarded frame office building constructed in 1920s; five-panel front door; two over two sash; gable roof with exposed rafter tails and outriggers.

(C) 6. **Pack House**; ca. 1920, one and a half-story, gable-roofed pack house on piers with heavy frame, plank siding; shed wing on side; covered with asbestos siding; double doors on gable end with second level doorway above; six-light sash.

(C) 7. **Equipment Building**; ca. 1939, gable-roofed frame building with

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and roof tin.

(NC) Structure 1. Grain Storage Bin; cylindrical modern metal grain storage bin.

(NC) Structure 2. Grain Storage Bin; cylindrical modern metal grain storage bin.

(NC) Structure 3. Grain Storage Bin; cylindrical modern metal grain storage bin.

(NC) Structure 4. Grain Storage Bin; cylindrical modern metal grain storage bin.

(C) 8. Storage Building; ca. 1930, gable-roofed frame storage building covered with asphalt sheeting.

(C) 9. Barn; ca. 1840 barn on brick piers moved from west side of house in 1940s; frame-sawn heavy timber frame with pegged mortise and tenon joints; opposing board and batten doors with strap hinges and stock lock marks centered on long sides; beaded door surrounds; central open stairway; clapboarded sides; originally gable-roofed; roof raised and converted to hip with sheds all around when moved; metal shed roofs supported on cedar posts; hipped dormer at front.

(C) 10. Chicken House; ca. 1923, shed-roofed frame chicken house with clapboarded sides.

(C) 11. Chicken House; ca. 1923, shed-roofed frame chicken house with clapboarded sides.

(C) 12. Stable/Carriage House; ca. 1920 shed-roofed, clapboarded frame stable/carriage house with sliding doors on long side.

(NC) 13. Office/Tack Room/Stable; ca. 1950, German-sided, shed-roofed frame office building and tack room; six over six sash; joined to stable/carriage house by passageway with small monitor on roof.

(C) 14. Garage; gable-and-shed frame double garage with German siding; erected ca. 1932.

(C) 15. Garage; ca. 1930, small, gable-roofed frame garage with German siding.

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### Area A

Area A is a grouping of buildings and structures northeast of the main house, adjacent to the pond, which are associated with the raising of livestock. These buildings and structures date from ca. 1920 to 1950.

(NC) 16. **Tenant House**; ca. 1920, small, one-story, gable-roofed frame tenant house converted to storage/cattle shelter; on brick piers; open shed roofs added to either side, gable extended one end; windows boarded up; covered with roll roofing on ends.

(C) 17. **Equipment Shed**; ca. 1930, gable-roofed frame equipment shed; side walls with open ends.

(NC) Structure 5. **Concrete Silo**; ca. 1950 pre-fabricated concrete silo with domed metal roof.

(C) Structure 6. **Metal Silo** ca. 1930 pre-fabricated galvanized metal silo; faceted metal roof.

(C) 18. **Hay Barn**; ca. 1932 frame livestock barn with steep gambrel roof, side shed wings; extended gable ends; agricultural metal roof; clapboarded sides covered with tar paper.

### Area B

Area B is a small grouping of frame buildings just north of NC 58 in the large field at the northwest corner of the farm. All are related to tobacco culture in the early twentieth century.

(C) 19. **Pack House**; ca. 1920, rectangular, gable-roofed, one and a half-story frame pack house with open sheds along both sides; covered with asphalt roll roofing.

(C) 20. **Pack House**; ca. 1920, rectangular, gable-roofed, one and a half-story frame pack house with enclosed shed wings on either side; board and batten doors; concrete block piers; covered with asphalt roll roofing.

(C) 21. **Tobacco Barn**; ca. 1920, rectangular, gable-roofed frame tobacco barn with enclosed shed wings on either side; covered with asphalt roll roofing.

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Area C

Area C is a small group of frame farm buildings located in a shallow clearing along the north edge of NC 58, formerly associated with adjacent fields to the north and east.

(C) 22. **Pack House/Barn**; ca. 1920, shallow, broad-gabled, one and a half-story frame pack house/barn; open shed across front elevation; clapboarded exterior with metal roofing over exposed elevations; three door openings on front.

(C) 23. **Pack House**; ca. 1920, rectangular, one and a half-story, gable-roofed frame pack house covered with asphalt roll roofing.

Area D

Area D is located in a shallow clearing on the north side of NC 58 just to the west of the head of the driveway leading to the main house. It contains a late-nineteenth century farm house and two early twentieth century buildings associated with tobacco culture. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries open fields and additional buildings were located to the west of this area.

(C) 24. **House**; ca. 1880, three-bay, single-pile, two-story frame I-house with one-story rear kitchen ell; hipped porch across front; stepped-shouldered end chimneys rebuilt early 20th century; six over six sash; standing seam roofs; Late Greek Revival mantels.

(C) 25. **Pack House**; ca. 1920, gable-roofed, one and a half-story frame pack house with open sheds.

(C) 26. **Tobacco Barn**; ca. 1920, gable-roofed frame tobacco barn covered with asphalt roll roofing.

Area E

Area E is located in a shallow clearing on the north side of NC 58 directly across from the head of the driveway leading to the main house. It contains some of the earliest outbuildings not directly associated with the main house. These buildings originally sat in an open area connected with fields to the west.

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(C) 27. **Log Barn**; ca. 1890, two-story log barn with gabled roof; small logs with square-notched corners; sheds on sides; second floor cantilevered over first at front; covered with asphalt roll roofing.

(C) 28. **Small Plank Building**; small, mid-19th century sawn plank building; side gable roof cantilevered across front; three door openings with board and batten doors; rose head nails; three pens; possibly corn crib.

Area F

Area F is located on the north side of NC 58 northeast of the main house and at the southwest corner of the large field in that corner of the property. It includes the nucleus of a small, turn-of-the-century farmyard, plus a modern brick ranch house.

(NC) 29. **House**; ca. 1980, one-story, gable-roofed brick ranch house.

(NC) 30. **Storage Building**; ca. 1980, one-story, gable-roofed frame storage building with shed carport attached.

(C) 31. **Farm House**; ca. 1900, two-story, three-bay, single-pile, frame I-house with rear, one-story ell; hipped porch across front with chamfered posts; small, two over two windows; step-shouldered end chimneys; standing seam metal roofs; vinyl-sided.

(C) 32. **Pack House**; ca. 1920, two-story, frame, gable-roofed pack house with shed at side; two doors on gable end; covered with asphalt roll roofing.

(C) Site 2. **Graveyard**

Thoroughly overgrown, small, 19th century graveyard; remains of brick-domed burials of type typical in eastern North Carolina coastal counties; portion of fenced enclosure; footstone and one marble headstone for Charles Edward Whitly (Whitty?) (1810?-185?); extent and origin of graveyard unknown.

**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)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1844-1939

Significant Dates

1844

1850

1920

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.

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Bryan-Bell Farm

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The Bryan-Bell Farm, also known as Oakview Plantation, is significant in the history of Jones County, North Carolina, in the areas of agriculture and architecture. One of the county's few surviving intact plantations established in the nineteenth century, it possesses a history which illustrates general developments in Jones County agriculture from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, the evolution of a particular plantation from the second quarter of the nineteenth century through the late twentieth century, and the relationship between this evolution, the plantation landscape and the principal building around which the plantation was centered. The plantation core of approximately 1,100 acres was established by James C. Bryan in the mid-1840s; he probably built the Late-Federal style plantation house at the same time. The plantation was maintained from 1850 through the end of the century by his widow and his son, also James C. Bryan. Divided among the three heirs of the latter at his death, it was reassembled over the first two decades of the twentieth century by Joseph Hiram Bell, who remodelled the main house in the Neo-Classical Revival style for his son, Edward Earl Bell. Both Bells added substantial tracts of farmland and forest to the original plantation, doubling its size by 1939. Traditionally predominantly rural, with a relatively small population, Jones County's economy has been based almost entirely on the land, in agriculture and the harvesting of forests. Prior to the Civil War, farming was largely carried out on a small number of substantial plantations and a greater number of mid-size farms. The years following the war, and continuing up to World War II, saw a steady break-up of both into ever-smaller farm units and the development of an extensive tenant-farming and sharecropping system. At various times the owners of the Bryan-Bell Farm have used wage-labor, tenant farming, sharecropping and land rental for the cultivation of its fields, but the farm has remained intact, except for a short period in the early twentieth century. Although the success of the farm's owners has been somewhat at variance with general developments in the area, the farming operations carried out on the plantation have been representative, and agriculture-related buildings and structures survive in a number of sites around the farm. The relative prosperity of its owners is evidenced in the original Late-Federal style plantation house, and in its Neo-Classical Revival style remodelling, both of which reflect the continuing architectural influence of nearby New Bern. Additionally, the Bryan-Bell House appears to be the only Jones County example of the Neo-Classical Revival style, characterized by the use of the monumental portico and classical detailing.

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Bryan-Bell Farm

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In 1820, Edward S. Franks (Franck, Francks) began acquiring the land which became the core of the Bryan-Bell Farm, all of which is said to have been part of the huge, multi-farm plantation owned in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Needham Simmons (ca. 1772-1822) [deed book 15, p. 163; Tar-Neuse - p. 13-2; and Graves Index]. At Franks' death in 1827, most of his estate, including the land he owned on both sides of the road from Trenton to Pollocksville and south of the Trent River, passed to his son, William W. Francks, who at the time was only nine years old [will book B, p. 90; and Graves Index]. The younger Francks added to the property in 1843 with the purchase, from Joseph R. Hatch of Wayne County, of an additional 335-acre tract on the south side of the Trent River [deed book 21, p. 147]. It is not clear from descriptions in the deeds if the plantation house that is the heart of the Bryan-Bell Farm was standing at this time.

Less than six months after acquiring this last tract of land, in February 1844, W. W. Francks (1818-1850) sold it and the land he inherited from his father to James C. Bryan (1817-1850) for ten thousand dollars. The transaction included six tracts of land totaling approximately 1,280 acres, of which about 1,100 acres, on the south side of the Trent River and straddling the Trenton to Pollocksville Road, remained intact when the plantation passed out of Bryan family possession in the early twentieth century [deed book 21, p. 435; and Harriett - pp. 121-122]. It is likely that Bryan, who had married Julia Caroline Sanderson in 1837, built the two-and-one-half-story, frame, Late-Federal style plantation house shortly thereafter [Harriett - p. 121]. He selected a site on the south side of the road in the eastern section of the plantation, about two miles west of Pollocksville. The Bryans planted white oaks and cedars around the house and along a driveway leading to the house from the Pollocksville-Trenton road; the farm became known as Oakview Plantation because of the resulting massive oak trees. Bryan became a prominent citizen of Jones County and was serving as Clerk of Superior Court when he died of consumption in January 1850, at the age of thirty-three ["Died"; and 1850 U. S. Census, Mortality schedule].

Bryan died intestate, and his estate passed to his minor son, also James C. Bryan (1839-1898), with a one-third, life dower interest for his young widow, who managed the entire property with the help of an overseer until their son reached his majority [1850 U. S. Census, Population schedule]. A map showing the boundaries of the plantation in 1850 is located in the papers regarding the settlement of Bryan's estate

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[Estates Papers]. A comparison of the boundaries on the 1850 map and the current boundaries of the Bryan-Bell Farm reveals the close correlation between the plantation as it existed during the Bryan ownership, as it existed in the late 1930s, and as it exists today. It also demonstrates the similarities in land usage, showing that the relationship between cleared fields and woodlands has remained largely unchanged.

The 1850 agricultural census indicates that the Bryan plantation was among the ten largest and most valuable plantations in Jones County, which ranged in size from about 1,000 acres to 14,000 acres. The Bryan plantation was listed at 1344\* acres, of which 800 were improved, and was valued at ten thousand dollars. Farm products included corn, rice, peas and beans, and hay, but it is not known what areas of the plantation were devoted to these various crops. Substantial numbers of livestock were also listed, with wool and butter as byproducts. In addition to owning one of the largest Jones County plantations, the Bryans were among the principal slave-holding families in the county, owning seventy-five slaves in 1850 [1850 U. S. Census, Agricultural and slave schedules]. It is probable that some of the more than 500 acres of woodland were being logged.

By the time that the 1860 census was enumerated, the younger James C. Bryan had come of age, and the major portion of the plantation had passed into his possession. However, most of its value (twenty thousand dollars) was still listed with his mother, who retained approximately 300 acres as her dower. The plantation was one of the five most valuable in the county. In addition to its great numbers of livestock and production of staple crops, the Bryan farm also listed five bales (of four hundred pounds each) of ginned cotton as part of its output [1860 U. S. Census, Population and Agricultural schedules]. The number of slaves had increased to one hundred and three, and more than two thousand dollars of income had been derived in a year from the hiring out of some of these slaves. Indeed, during the ten-year period between the elder Bryan's death and the younger Bryan's twenty-first birthday,

\* Total acreage figures for the plantation in the nineteenth century vary from source to source and decade to decade. One discrepancy appears to reflect Julia Bryan's dower interest, while others may result from land purchases and sales made by her, but some variations remain unexplained.

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more than twenty-four thousand dollars had come from this source [Divisions and Settlements of Estates; and 1860 U. S. Census, Slave schedule].

The Civil War and Reconstruction had a devastating effect on the economy and agricultural system of Jones County. During the War, the county was the site of several skirmishes. But more importantly, it lay between New Bern, which was captured by Union forces in 1862, and Kinston and Goldsboro, important coastal plain towns held by Confederate forces which were the object of forays by troops occupying New Bern. As a result, there were fairly frequent army movements through Jones County, whose farms suffered depredations at the hands of both sides in the conflict [Butler - pp. 11-12; and Henderson - pp. 35-38]. Documentation for military activity on the plantation was not found, but, given its location on the banks of the Trent River and along the Trenton to Pollocksville road, it seems likely that this wealthy plantation was at least visited and perhaps plundered by one or both sides. No record has been found of military service by James C. Bryan, who was probably exempted as the owner of a large number of slaves.

The years following the Civil War saw the beginning of the breakup of many of the large pre-War plantations and mid-size farms and the institution of a vast tenant-farming and share-cropping system, trends which continued through the 1930s.

The Bryan plantation was one of a small number of substantial farms whose owners were able to hold together their lands and whose value was not severely depressed after the War. Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1872 placed the value of James C. Bryan's 895 acres at seven thousand dollars. Julia Bryan's dower acreage and other property she owned were not listed. Only twelve plantations were listed as having a greater valuation, and each of those was substantially larger in number of acres [Branson, 1872 - p. 135]. The agricultural schedules for the 1870 and 1880 censuses show that James C. Bryan had increased cotton production, with yields of seven bales (at 450 pounds each) in 1869 and eight bales from ten acres in 1879. Three bales (also of 450 pounds each) were produced on Mrs. Bryan's dower tract in 1869. Some of the farm work was done by hired labor, with one hundred ten dollars of wages paid on the two farms being shown in the 1870 census and three hundred dollars indicated in 1880 [1870 and 1880 U. S. Censuses, Agricultural schedules]. At some time between 1884 and 1890, Bryan began operating a steam flour and corn mill and cotton gin, although its location has not been determined [Branson's, 1890 - p. 404].

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In addition to his farming and mercantile endeavors, James C. Bryan, like his father, was active in the civic/political sphere, serving on the Jones County Board of Commissioners during the late 1880s, with four terms as its chairman [Harriett - p. 10]. Bryan had married Mary E. Koonce in 1869, and in 1870 the young couple was listed as living in the plantation house with both his mother and grandmother, Julia Sanderson. James C. and Mary Bryan had three children, Julia C., Charles H. and Annie L. Bryan [Harriett - p. 121; and 1880 U. S. Census, Population Schedule]. When Bryan died in 1898, his mother was still alive and retained her dower interest in the plantation. The estate was divided among the three children, with each of the daughters receiving 275 acres and the son inheriting 282 acres. They each were awarded a one-third interest as tenants in common in the undivided remainder of the property, which included most of the wooded acreage [Division and Settlements, vol. 6, p. 684 ff.]. Annie L. Bryan received the tract which included the plantation seat.

Julia Bryan died in 1901, and the plantation was no longer encumbered by her dower interest [Harriett - p. 121]. Joseph Hiram Bell (1852-1921) began acquiring the Bryan plantation in 1901 with the purchase of Charles H. Bryan's portion of the family property [deed book 45, p. 70; and deed book 47, p. 528]. Twelve years later, Bell bought the tract accorded to Julia Bryan Jones, which had previously been sold to R. V. Taylor, and in 1918 he acquired the final section of the plantation from Annie Bryan Leary [deed book 62, p. 47; and deed book 71, p. 219].

Joseph Hiram Bell was a native of New Hanover County who apparently came to Jones County in the early 1880s and opened a general merchandise concern in Pollocksville with his brother, T. A. Bell. He also engaged in farming on the Bryan lands and adjoining acreage acquired in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, apparently using both the tenant-farming and share-cropping systems. From the early 1890s until his death in 1921, Bell served numerous terms on the Jones County Board of Commissioners, with several tenures as its chairman. He was killed in an automobile accident, and at his death, acquaintances said that he was "the wealthiest man in Jones County . . . a man of good business judgment . . . [who] did much for the improvement of his county" ["Hiram Bell Killed"; Branson's Directory, 1877-78, p. 172; Branson's Directory, 1884, p. 412; and Harriett - p. 10].

Joseph Hiram Bell was married in 1887 to Lillie Sanders Ward; of their two children, only Edward Earl Bell (1889-1972) lived to adulthood [Harriett - p. 114; and 1900 U. S. Census, Population Schedule]. In

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1919, the senior Bell deeded the Annie Bryan Leary and Charles H. Bryan tracts to his son and began remodelling the main house to its current Neo-Classical Revival appearance [deed book 72, p. 75; and Tar-Neuse - p. 13-2]. Photographs dating from 1920 show the house in the process of being remodelled.

In December 1920, Edward Earl Bell, a veteran of World War I, married Nannie Badger Creagh of Pollocksville. For most of his life he engaged in farming on his plantation, again apparently employing both tenant farming and sharecropping [Harriett - p. 114]. Upon the death of his father in 1921, Edward Earl Bell inherited the rest of his father's property, as well as, apparently, an appointment to the latter's position on the Jones County Board of Commissioners, where he served several terms in the 1920s and 1930s [Harriett - pp. 10, 74-75]. His prominence in Jones County and the elegance of his newly remodelled residence led to its being the only Jones County house depicted in that county's section of a promotional booklet published by the Eastern Carolina Chamber of Commerce in the early 1920s ["Eastern North Carolina Encyclopedia" - p. 25].

Edward Earl Bell and his wife Nannie Bell continued to purchase adjoining tracts of land to add to the farm, so that by 1939, Oakview Plantation consisted of the 2251 acres included in this nomination [deed book 89, pp. 39 and 75; deed book 92, p. 255]. The Bryan-Bell Farm was then one of sixteen in the county with more than 1,000 acres, and its ratio of cleared to wooded lands was about the same as that for the county as a whole [1940 U. S. Census, Agriculture, vol. I - pp. 313 and 333]. The principal cash crop produced on the farm was tobacco; other major products included sweet potatoes, corn, wheat, and, later, soybeans. Livestock also figured prominently in the plantation's economy, with large numbers of pigs, cattle and chickens being raised [H. C. Bell, Jr. interview].

The Edward Earl Bells were the parents of two sons, Edward Earl Bell, Jr., who was killed during World War II, and Hiram Creagh Bell [Harriett - p. 114]. Hiram Creagh Bell married Albertina Louise Brinson in 1946, and his parents began conveying portions of the plantation to him in 1947 [Harriett - p. 14; and deed book 109, p. 157]. Also in that year, the Bells built a one-and-one-half-story, frame, asbestos-sided house just northwest of the main house for the younger Bells. Edward Earl Bell had established a substantial livestock operation in the 1920s, raising and selling cattle and mules; he also operated E. E. Bell Farm Supply. Hiram Creagh Bell expanded the business to include saddle horses, Shetland ponies and Hereford cattle [H. C. Bell, Jr.,

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interview]. After his father's death in 1972, the remainder of the plantation passed to Hiram Creagh Bell, who has lived in the main house since that time. The smaller house is now occupied by one of his four sons. Today, the farm land at Oakview Plantation is rented out, thus completing the evolution of the plantation's agricultural economy. The principal crops produced remain tobacco, corn, wheat and soybeans, and cattle continue to be raised on the farm [Bell interviews].

Through the years the Bryan-Bell Farm has had many secondary buildings associated with it, including slave houses, tenant houses, and a variety of structures directly related to the farm activities. Maps dating from the 1930s show the numerous buildings then lining the highway which bisects the plantation; most of these were used at some time as tenant houses, only two of which survive today. These two are typical late nineteenth/early twentieth century farm houses whose origins could not be traced, but which are known to have been used as tenant houses by the Bells. Also gone are the houses occupied by the slaves who carried out the farm operations prior to the Civil War. The largest group of buildings remaining are part of the home tract; they include the main house, an antebellum barn, late nineteenth and early twentieth century barns, chicken coops, garages, smokehouse, silos, etc. With the six other clusters of buildings, they constitute a picture of the evolution of the plantation since the mid 1840s.

In the southwest section of the property is a small nineteenth century graveyard, with remains of several brick-domed burials of a kind typical of eastern North Carolina coastal counties. One marble headstone survives; it records the birth and death of Charles Edward Whitly (perhaps Whitty), who appears to have been born in 1810 and who died in the 1850s (the dates are partially illegible). The extent of the graveyard is not known, nor is its association, if any, with the Bryan or Bell families. However, it does illustrate a standard practice in rural North Carolina in the nineteenth century, when small family cemeteries were typical in the plantation context.

### Agriculture Context

Since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, Jones County agriculture has been divided between food and fiber crops grown on cleared land and the harvesting of plentiful woodlands. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the principal field crops in the county were cotton, corn, and sweet potatoes. Grown in lesser quantities were grains such as wheat, oats, rye and rice and a variety of orchard fruits, winter and summer vegetables, and legumes. Livestock (cattle,

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swine, horses and sheep) and poultry also figured heavily in the value of the farms and plantations [Branson's Directories; and "Eastern North Carolina Encyclopedia"].

The county's terrain is typical of the coastal plain region of North Carolina in which it is located--flat to undulating. Large, swampy areas cover much of the county's 467 square miles, and more than half of the land, including the swamps, is covered with timber--sweet gum, cypress, water oak, juniper, and pines. These forests have long served as the source of the county's major industry, as well as providing many necessary articles for the building and maintenance of the plantations and farms. Lumber from the forests was used in the construction of buildings, which were roofed with shingles (oak, cypress, juniper and pine). Firewood heated the main house and the dwellings of servants and slaves, and smoked meats in smokehouses. The sale of excess lumber and naval stores furnished an extra source of income for the planters and farmers. By the late nineteenth century, several large lumbering companies were operating in nearby New Bern, and the course of the Trent River through the northern portion of the county made the area attractive to the lumbering interests of New Bern, which stands at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers [Sharpe - pp. 1919-1921]. These companies also built rail links with the vast forests of Jones County; indeed, a portion of the now disused railroad of the Roper Lumber Company forms part of the southern boundary of the Bryan-Bell Farm [deed book 109, p. 193].

The forests also helped sustain the plantations and farms in more indirect ways. They were a good forage area for the pigs and cattle so necessary for the support of owners, their families and the large number of workers (mainly slaves prior to the Civil War) required in the labor-intensive agriculture typical of nineteenth century North Carolina. Finally, wild plants supplied roots, berries, bark, etc., which were used both as food and in dyes for fabric processed as part of home industries.

Through the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, a handful of families amassed large tracts of land between the Trent River in the north and White Oak Swamp in the south. Their names appeared frequently in the list of state legislators from 1782 to 1850. The county's plantation class was a very affluent group, whose ". . . wealth lay in land and slaves" [Sharpe - p. 1924]. Jones County towns remained small, so that the cultural and political life of the county was centered around the large plantations. One of the families which can be counted among this group was that of James C.

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Bryan, whose plantation was one of the ten most valuable in the county when the 1850 U. S. Census was recorded soon after Bryan's death. His widow and son held the plantation together through the vicissitudes of the Civil War, when Jones County was the site of depredations by both sides in the conflict, and the Reconstruction Era, which saw the beginning of radical changes in the plantation system.

According to Davyd Foard Hood in his discussion of Jones County's history and architectural resources in the 1976 study of the Tar-Neuse River Basin, the county's ". . . plantation economy was wrecked by the Civil War and was replaced by one of the most extensive tenant farming systems in North Carolina" [Tar-Neuse - p. 13-2]. This evolution can be seen in an examination of agricultural census figures from 1870 to 1940, which saw dramatic increases in the number of farms, decreases in average farm size, and an explosion of the number of individuals involved in farming on either a tenant or a share-cropping basis, phenomena which were affecting the state as a whole [Lefler and Newsome - p. 522]. In 1870, 182 farmers were listed in Jones County, with an average farm size of 492.7 acres. By 1900, the county listed 1,226 farms, with average farm size being 125 acres. This trend continued through the 1930s. In 1940, 1,493 farms appeared whose average extent was 71.8 acres. Although this course was somewhat reversed by the late 1950s, with a return to slightly larger farms--an average size of 97.1 acres--substantial operating plantations such as the Bryan-Bell remained unusual [Sharpe - p. 16]. As Hood pointed out,

The only major exception to the reduced circumstances of agricultural practice in the county is the E. E. Bell Farm and house. . . . The Bell Plantation is the only successful suggestion of what life would have been if the county economy had been able to recover its prosperity after the Civil War. Several of the early-nineteenth century plantation houses remain, but serve as residences for owners whose life-style is no longer dependent on or derived from the soil [Tar-Neuse - p. 13-2].

The core of the Bryan-Bell Farm remained intact until its early twentieth century division among the heirs of James C. Bryan, Jr.; it was reassembled by 1920 through the efforts of Joseph Hiram Bell, who, with his son and heir, Edward Earl Bell, made substantial additions to the plantation. Evidence of this accomplishment emerges in the obvious twentieth century prosperity of the Bryan-Bell Farm and in the alterations which were made in 1920 to the main house.

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## Architecture Context

Jones County, formed in 1779, was originally a part of Craven County, and it ". . . has continued to be oriented--politically, socially, and economically--toward New Bern, the seat of Craven County" [Tar-Neuse - p. 13-1]. The early influence of New Bern is also evident in the architecture of Jones County, particularly as seen in the small group of plantation houses surviving from the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century.

In its earlier existence, the Bryan-Bell House appears to have taken a form common to North Carolina's coastal counties in the first half of the nineteenth century--the two-story, gable-roofed, double-pile house with full-width, two-tier porch. A number of these were recorded during a 1976 survey of the Tar-Neuse River Basin, including the C. P. Banks House, the Page House, the Green House, Hill Farm and the John Simmons House, all dating from the first or second quarter of the nineteenth century. Unlike almost all of these examples, however, the Bryan-Bell House appears to have had an attached, rather than an engaged, front porch. Documentary photographs from 1920 clearly show a boxed cornice on the front elevation. The attached front porch became popular only at mid-century, and specifically with the solid assumption of the Greek Revival style.

However, judging from earlier elements which survive, the Bryan-Bell House appears to have been stylistically a modest example of the Late Federal style, from plain, three-part Federal mantels to cavetto-molded chairrail and six-panel doors with applied ogee moldings. A possible exception is what appears to have been the second floor transom sash, which has a muntin pattern similar to those shown in Asher Benjamin pattern books.

Although not part of its original finishes, the two mantels in the first floor rooms on the west side of the house, taken from the nearby Mary Simmons House (probably built in the early nineteenth century) when it burned in 1934, represent a higher level of Late Federal craftsmanship. Particularly notable is the well-proportioned, three-part mantel in the front room, which is ornately carved with sunbursts, reeding, gougework and drillwork. Most unusual are the large, engaged Tuscan columns on each side of the mantel which support pairs of tiny, engaged Tuscan columns that in turn support the projecting mantel shelf. The only similar known example is a mantel salvaged from the Swert House in New Bern [Sandbeck - p. 69].

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Renovations made by the Bell family in 1920 grafted onto the Late Federal plantation house a monumental portico of the type closely associated with the Neo-Classical Revival of the 1895-1915 period in North Carolina. Although similar porticos are relatively common in the pre-World War I period, the configuration of the Bryan-Bell House portico and front elevation is remarkably similar to a Neo-Classical Revival house built about 1910 in New Bern for timber magnate James B. Blades. Although the Blades house no longer exists, documentary photographs show a portico with four nearly identical Corinthian columns, with a portion of the entablature breaking forward and supported on two columns. The deeply-overhanging cornice of the Bryan-Bell House was, on the Blades House, filled with modillions, and on top of the portico was a balustrade nearly identical with that on the Jones County house. Similarly, there was a large, gabled dormer above the portico. Underneath the main portico of the Blades House was a small portico topped by a balustrade very like the Bryan-Bell House. The renovated rural dwelling could not compete with the New Bern Broad Street mansion for profusion of ornament, but by adopting some of the basic elements of the style, the Bryan-Bell House aspired to Neo-Classical grandeur in a way unique in the county.

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 2251

UTM References

A 18 291400 3877320  
 Zone Easting Northing

C 18 296400 3873480

B 18 296400 3877320  
 Zone Easting Northing

D 18 291400 3873480

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Bryan-Bell Farm nomination correspond to the boundaries of the property acquired by and associated with the James C. Bryan family and J. H. and E. E. Bell prior to 1939.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David R. and Allison H. Black, Architectural Historians

organization Black & Black, Preservation Consultants date August 7, 1989

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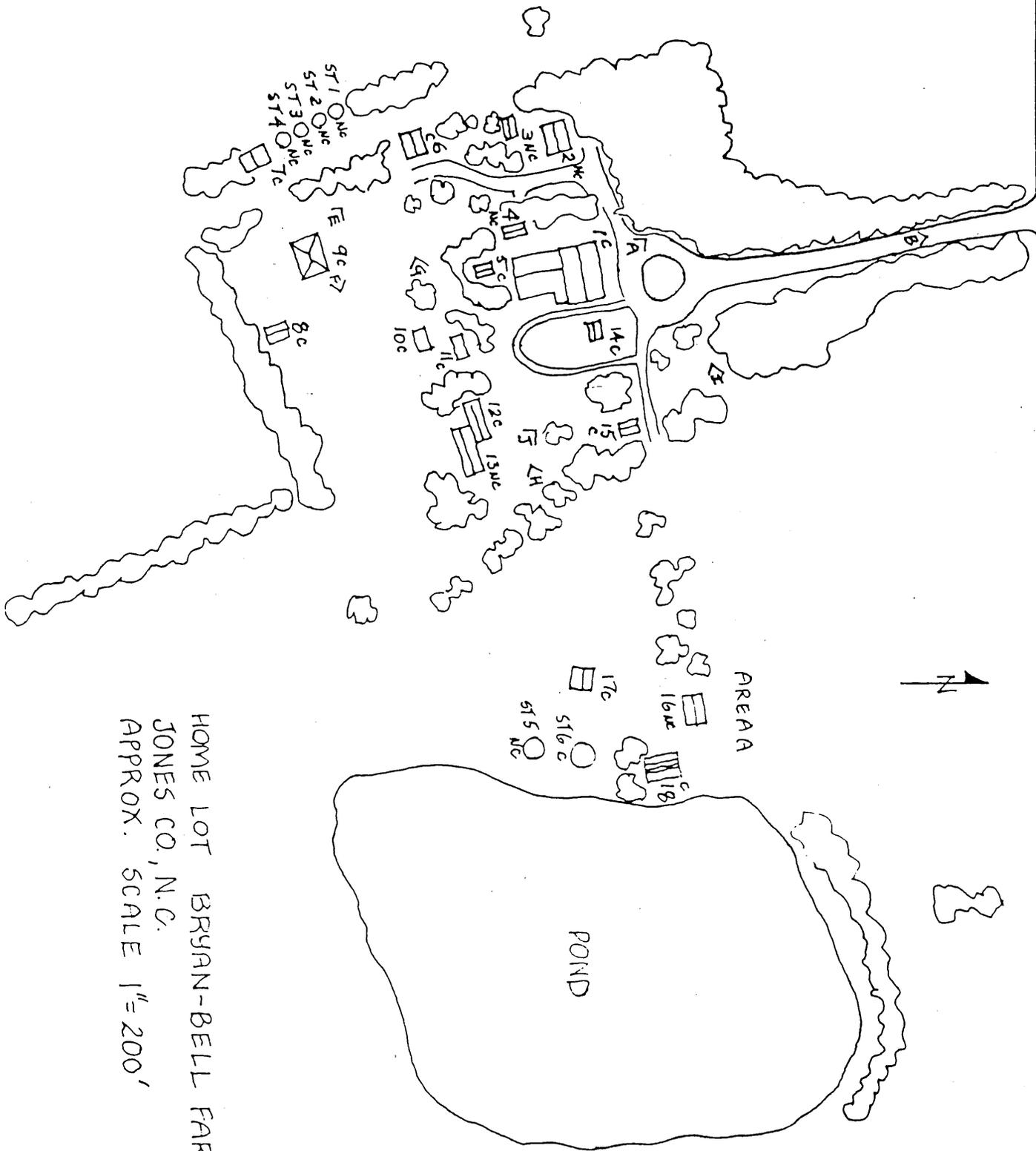
Section number 10 Page 10.1

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### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Bryan-Bell Farm nomination are those of Jones County Tax Parcel 8447, minus two tracts. The first is along the Goshen Branch and consists of 32 acres described in Jones County Deed Book 165, page 91. The second consists of 55.4 acres along Bender Branch, as described in Jones County Deed Book 109, page 193.

NC 58

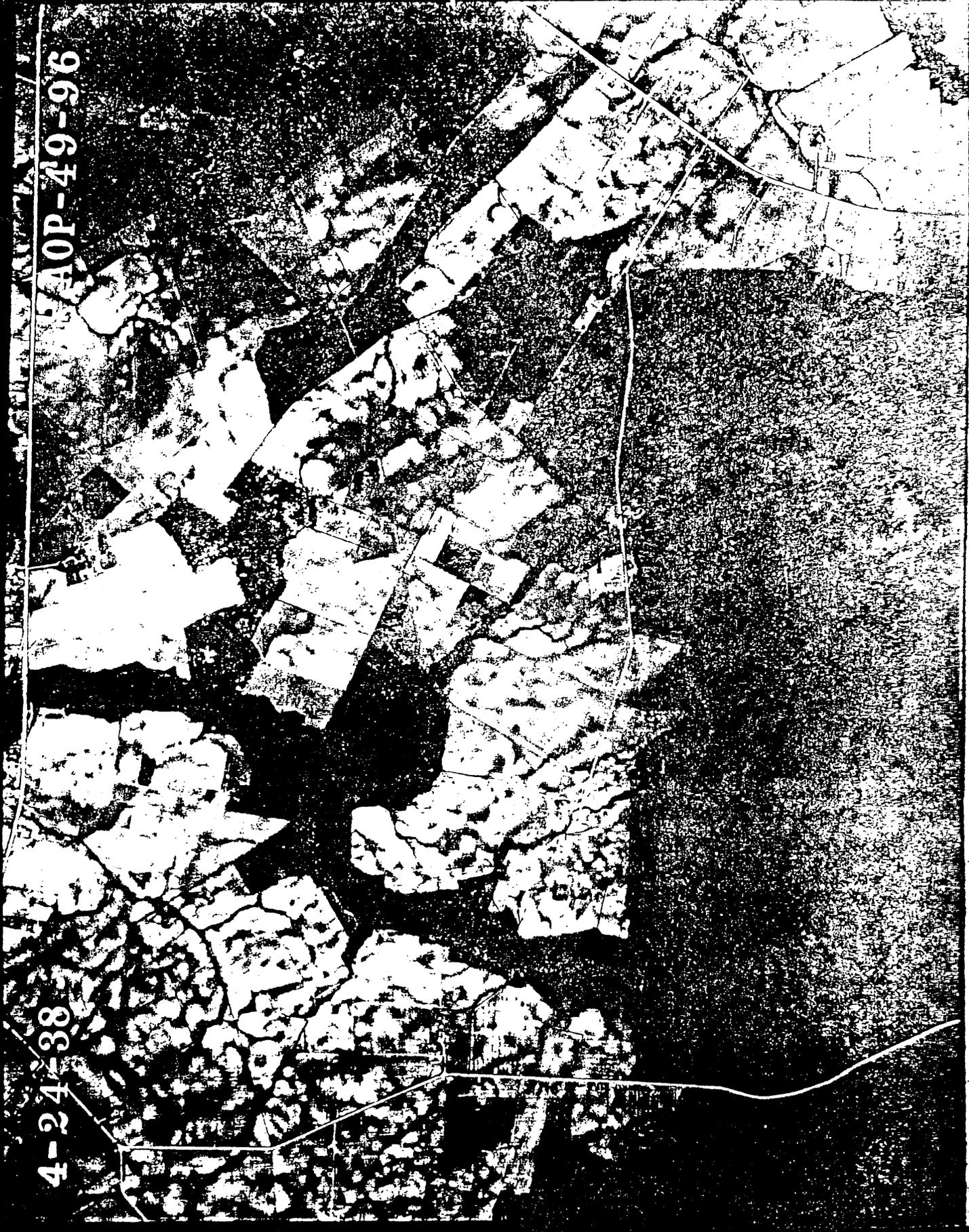


HOME LOT BRYAN-BELL FARM  
JONES CO., N.C.  
APPROX. SCALE 1"=200'



4-24-38

BAOP-49-96



North Carolina State Archives. County Aerial Photograph  
Collection. Jones County, 1938.



