

(Oct. 1990)

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name CSS Neuse

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 2612 West Vernon Avenue

not for publication

city or town Kinston

vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Lenoir

code 107

zip code 28501

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffer Crow
Signature of certifying official/Title

SHPO

4/23/01
Date

North Carolina 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 for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C moved from its original location.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Military

Engineering

Period of Significance

1862-1865

Significant Dates

March 12, 1865

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Confederate Navy Department/Howard & Ellis, Shipbuilders

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Division of Archives and History, Historic Sites Section

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

CSS *Neuse*
Lenoir County, NC

7. Narrative Description

Confederate ironclads were designed to be “floating batteries.” Armor plating protected ships built to defend the general area where they were constructed.¹ Ironclads were universally slow, as their steam engines and boilers could not generate enough speed to move, steer, and maneuver the weighty ships easily. The vessels were still considered to be more effective in battle than their wood counterparts, however, as they were more resistant to enemy fire. By the end of the Civil War the Confederate Navy Department contracted thirty-one ironclads, of which twenty-two were constructed and commissioned. As there was not a standard prototype, the ironclad gunboats tended to vary regionally in size and configuration. The scarcity of iron, administrative problems, and the lack of a highly skilled labor force delayed the completion of the two ironclads “laid down” in North Carolina. As a result, the CSS *Neuse* and the CSS *Albemarle*, both in the 150-foot, “home-water,” diamond-hull *Albemarle*-class, saw little time in service.²

The *Neuse* never participated in a naval battle due to logistical problems, and was set on fire and abandoned to sink before the arrival of Union troops in Kinston on March 12, 1865. After being buried in the Neuse River for ninety-six years, efforts to raise the remainder of the wood hull and salvage artifacts began in 1961. By 1964, the CSS *Neuse* was situated in a wooden cradle at the site of the Governor Richard Caswell Memorial in Kinston. An open-sided shelter was constructed in 1969 to protect the gunboat from rain, but the hull still suffered moisture damage. Plans to enclose the gunboat in its original shelter were discarded after flooding from Hurricane Fran damaged the hull. In 1998, the *Neuse* was moved approximately 750 feet to a new open shelter out of the flood plain.³ This move proved to be fortuitous, as the flooding following Hurricane Floyd in September of 1999 completely surrounded the new shelter with water and destroyed the visitor center located closer to the river. The new 12,600 square foot protective shelter consists of a round timber pole framework set in a concrete foundation with partial metal siding and a metal roof.

¹ Leslie S. Bright, William H. Rowland, and James C. Bardon, CSS *Neuse*: A Question of Iron and Time (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 5.

² William N. Still Jr., Iron Afloat: The Story of the Confederate Ironclads (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 91.

³ Architecture Branch, Design and Production Branch, Historic Sites Section Division of Archives and History, “CSS *Neuse* Civil War Museum: Planning Report” (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, 1999), 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

CSS *Neuse*
Lenoir County, NC

8. Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

The CSS *Neuse* played an important role in Confederate naval history from October of 1862, when construction began, to March of 1865, when Confederate forces sank the ironclad gunboat to prevent its capture by Union forces. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and D. The CSS *Neuse* meets Criterion A for engineering and military significance as it reflects a unique form indicative of the evolution of the wooden vessel to encompass the demands of heavy iron armor and steam engines for naval maneuvers during the Civil War. Criterion D is applicable as well, as the physical remains of the CSS *Neuse* and the associated artifact assemblage have and will continue to provide important information about the use, method of construction and operation of ironclad gunboats during the Civil War. The CSS *Neuse* is the only survivor of two diamond-hull, *Albemarle*-class ironclad gunboats constructed by the Confederacy. Thus, the remains of the CSS *Neuse* and the plans of the CSS *Albemarle* are the only extant sources of information about this hull type.

Historical Background and Engineering and Military Context

Stephen R. Mallory, appointed Secretary of the Confederate Navy in February of 1861, instigated a massive shipbuilding program to counter the established United States Navy. He soon realized that the limited means of the South could never support a Navy of conventional wooden warships. European armor-plated ships were not initially available for purchase, so Secretary Mallory decided to construct a limited number of ironclad gunboats as experimental models, hoping that the invulnerability of the vessels to gunfire would overcome their disparity in number. By 1862, two standardized types of ironclads had evolved, the standard hull and the diamond hull. The navy department's first ironclad, the CSS *Virginia*, was a 3,200-ton steamer (the *Merrimack*) converted to an ironclad in 1861.¹

After 1862, four out of five ships constructed by the Confederacy were ironclads.

¹ Still, *Iron Afloat*, 24.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

CSS *Neuse*
Lenoir County, NC

including turpentine, and made an effort to set the *Neuse* on fire. Although the ship did not burn, she was struck many times with shot and shell from the battle in Whitehall.⁵

Work on the ironclad was not abandoned due to the attack, but progress was delayed. By the summer of 1863, the *Neuse* was ready for the move to Kinston, where she was moored near the foot of Caswell Street. Through the fall of 1863, workman installed iron plating whenever it was available and worked on the ship's interior. Administrative problems and iron shortages plagued the construction process, and by early 1864 the *Neuse* was still behind the intended completion schedule.⁶ The ship was not ready for the expedition to regain control of New Bern in February, and after the assault failed, construction efforts were increased.

General Robert F. Hoke, supervisor of protection efforts for both the *Neuse* and the *Albemarle*, detailed 145 men from his command to assist with the shipbuilding process, bringing the construction force to a total of 170 men.⁷ Before the ship could be considered ready for service, however, an active crew had to be recruited, and although qualified officers were in abundance, there was a shortage of enlisted men. Lieutenant Benjamin Loyall was appointed commander in late February, and he predicted that the *Neuse* would be ready for service by mid-March. Due to more delays in materials acquisition and pay disputes, it was April 22, 1864, before the *Neuse* left Kinston, still unfinished, and steamed toward New Bern to meet the *Albemarle* and attempt to recapture the town. The *Neuse* only made it half a mile downriver before she grounded on a sandbar. It was mid-May before the river rose high enough to free the ship and return it to Kinston.⁸

By the beginning of June, workmen completed the *Neuse*, taking advantage of the time the ironclad was once again grounded. General Robert E. Lee had called all support troops to Virginia, so the *Neuse* was forced to remain inactive. Commander Loyall was reassigned to

⁵ Tyrone G. Martin, "North Carolina's Ironclad" *Naval History* (July/August 1996): 47.

⁶ Bright, et al., *CSS Neuse*, 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

CSS *Neuse*
Lenoir County, NC

damaged the hull of the CSS *Neuse* and forced the Department of Cultural Resources to allocate funds for the removal of the gunboat from the floodplain. Construction of a new protective shelter began in 1998 and was completed in 1999.

Research Potential

The vessel *Neuse* was one of twenty-two ironclad gunboats constructed and commissioned by the Confederate Navy Department, most of which were destroyed in the course of the Civil War (see Appendix 1). There are only three surviving Civil War ironclads in suitable condition for display in the United States (see Appendix 2). The Woodruff Museum of Civil War History in Columbus, Georgia, houses the remains of the CSS *Jackson*, a diamond-hull, *Missouri*-class ironclad gunboat that was never completed. The USS *Cairo* is located at Vicksburg National Military Park in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The CSS *Neuse* in Kinston is the only Confederate ironclad on display that was turned over to the navy for official use during the Civil War.¹³

The rarity of ironclad gunboats available for study makes the CSS *Neuse* an important educational and research tool. Careful examination of the *Neuse* revealed evidence of the construction technique employed to fasten the sections of the gunboat together, as well as charred ribs and planking that reflect the explosion and fire that sunk the vessel. William E. Geoghegan of the Smithsonian was able to project the probable dimensions of the completed Confederate ironclad using measurements from the remaining hull of the *Neuse*.¹⁴ The artifact assemblage associated with the gunboat is one of the largest excavated with a Confederate naval vessel. Approximately 15,000 artifacts have been catalogued and categorized, providing valuable information as to the types of materials required to operate an ironclad gunboat during the Civil War and the daily life of the crew on board. Artifacts include ship fittings and parts, galley equipment, ordnance, tools and implements, hardware, personal effects and other miscellaneous items.¹⁵

¹³ Jessamine A. Calhoun, "A Question of Wood and Time," Naval History (July/August 1996): 45.

¹⁴ Bright, et al., CSS *Neuse*, 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Biblio, Page 9
 10

CSS *Neuse*
Lenoir County, NC

Bright, Leslie S., William H. Rowland, and James C. Bardon. CSS *Neuse*: A Question of Iron and Time. Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, 1981.

Calhoun, Jessamine A. "A Question of Wood and Time." Naval History (July/August 1996): 45.

Holcombe, A. Robert, Jr. "The Evolution of Confederate Ironclad Design." Master's thesis, East Carolina University, 1993.

_____. "Notes on the Classification of Civil War Ironclads." Savannah, GA: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, 1980.

Martin, Tyrone G. "North Carolina's Ironclad." Naval History (July/August 1996): 45-50.

Naval Historical Center, Historical Research Branch. "Quick Reference Table- Civil War Ironclad Wrecks." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 1989.

Still, William N., Jr. "The Career of the Confederate Ironclad *Neuse*." The North Carolina Historical Review XLIII (January 1966): 1-13.

_____. Iron Afloat: the Story of the Confederate Ironclads. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1985.

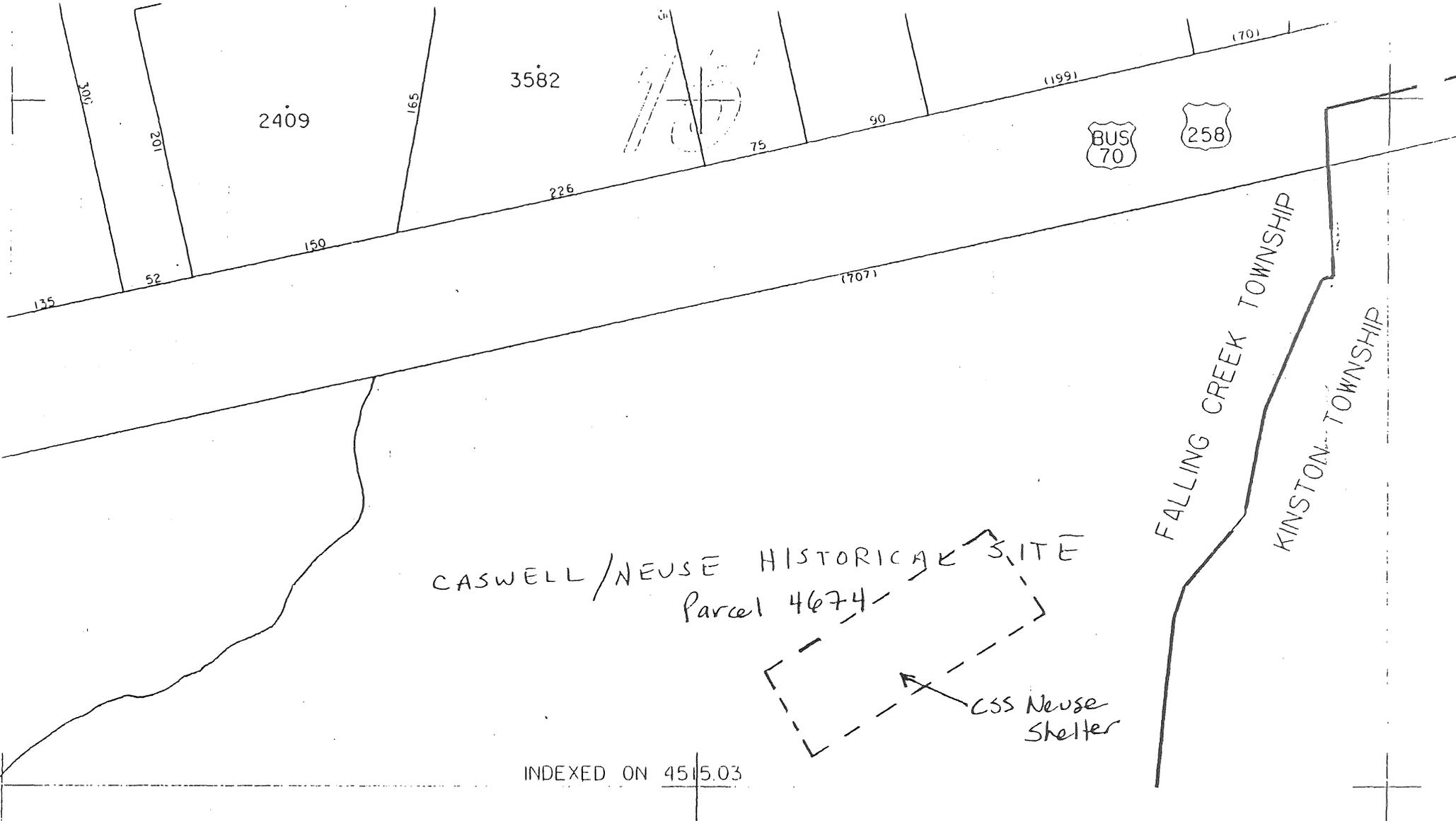
10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is the .29 acre rectangular area (the protective shelter for the remains of the CSS *Neuse*) in parcel 4674, located approximately 200 feet from US 70/West Vernon Ave. as indicated by the heavy dashed line on the accompanying Lenoir County Tax Map 4515.09.

Boundary Justification

The remaining fragment of the wood hull of the CSS *Neuse* is 136 feet long with a 37-foot wide beam, housed in a 12,600 square foot protective shelter. The area covered by the shelter adequately encompasses all of the significant historic resource.



CASWELL/NEUSE HISTORICAL SITE
Parcel 4674

CSS Neuse Shelter

INDEXED ON 4515.03



1.000

E 2411.500

E 2412.000

CSS Newse
Lenoir County, NC
Flood plain map

