

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 15). 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 Blalock, Robert L., House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 300 South McLewean Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Kinston

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Lenoir

code 107

zip code 28501

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

_____ buildings

_____ sites

_____ structures

1

_____ objects

_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic & Architectural Resources

of Kinston, 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. Pinn, Jr.
Signature of certifying official

9-12-89
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

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: mortuary

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival
Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Weatherboard
roof Slate
other Brick
Asphalt

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Robert L. Blalock House is a large frame residence now housing a funeral home located one block east of Kinston's principal commercial thoroughfare, Queen Street. The house stands close to the street, facing west on a corner lot defined by a low brick wall and shaded by large deciduous trees lining McLewean and Bright streets. Late 20th century low-rise brick apartment buildings have replaced the mid-19th through early 20th century frame houses which once occupied the remainder of the city block on which the house stands. To the north is the block occupied by the Kinston Municipal Building and main fire station, while several early houses survive on the blocks to the west and northwest.

The main block of the house, believed to have been built in the late 1850s for Alexander Nicol, is a two-story, double-pile, side-hall-plan frame dwelling with a gable roof. It originally rested on brick piers which were later infilled with brick. A pair of paved single-shoulder brick chimneys laid up in one-to-five common bond rises on the south elevation. The basic form of the house, siding material, and these two chimneys may be all that survives of the original house. Its current appearance dates from a series of additions and remodelings which were made largely in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Changes made by the Best family, which has operated a funeral home in the house since the late 1940s, are mainly cosmetic in nature.

Today, the Blalock House consists of the original two-story, double-pile, side-hall-plan main block and a large, two-story rear ell. A one-story gable-roofed wing and a small shed-roofed room extend to the north of the rear ell. On the south elevation is a complex arrangement of one- and two-story additions and enclosed porches. Some of these additions date to the 19th century, while others were constructed as late as the 1920s.

Spanning the three-bay facade is a one-story porch supported by groups of square-section brick columns on brick piers with granite accents; the porch continues on the north elevation, where one section is enclosed. It has a round corner pavilion with a finial at the

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northwest corner and a porte cochere at the southeast corner. Two exterior-end brick chimneys on the north elevation have rounded shoulders and recessed round-arched windows at the second floor. This brickwork dates from the early 1920s alterations made by R. L. Blalock.

A slate gabled roof tops the main block of the house, while asphalt shingles cover the roofs on the porch and additions. Centered on the front roof slope is a large gabled dormer with a Palladian attic window arrangement. Other ornamental features include a modillion cornice, panelled classical cornerboards and arched attic windows with Gothic upper sash in the gable ends. The main entrance features multi-pane transom and sidelights with arched end pieces, flanked by classical pilasters. A date has not been determined for these features, but they likely were added in the early 20th century. The complementary front door has been replaced with a commercial metal-framed glass door. The missing door and a Queen Anne/Colonial Revival mantel were stored in the house as recently as 1985.

Although sheet paneling now covers the plaster walls in the main first floor rooms, most decorative features remain intact, including the three massive classically-inspired brick mantels with mirrored overmantels which are found in the hall, the right front room, and in a rear wing. The rear portion of the hall has been converted to a reception area with the construction of a partition along the staircase. The main first floor rooms have been transformed to a chapel with the removal of pocket doors which separated them. Windows at the rear are covered with curtains. Windows and doors in this section have molded surrounds with floral bosses in the corner blocks.

A variety of finishes mark the rooms added at the rear. One room with a large brick mantel has an elaborate cornice; doors into this room have transoms, and one wall has beaded tongue and groove sheathing. Other rear rooms have weatherboard sheathing. On the south elevation, a former kitchen now serves as the embalming room.

The two-flight with landing open string staircase has a molded handrail, turned balusters and chamfered newels with molded caps. Anaglypta wallpapered wainscot extends along the stair wall. The stair rail on the second floor has square-section balusters. Square-section columns are spaced along the second-floor hall, from which several rooms open. These rooms are occupied by a caretaker and were not accessible to the surveyor.

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

Period of Significance

1914-1929

Significant Dates

1914

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Blalock, Robert L.

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

The Robert L. Blalock House is significant in the history of the Kinston, North Carolina, as a largely intact example of a mid-19th century house heavily remodelled in the early 20th century by Robert L. Blalock, one of Kinston's most prolific building contractors during the first three decades of the 20th century. The current appearance of the house retains little of the Greek Revival styling which probably characterized its late 1850s construction for businessman Alexander Nicol. It is now a distinctive Classical Revival building with unusual brickwork features on both the exterior and interior which reflect Blalock's preference for constructing heavy masonry buildings. This current appearance dates from Kinston's early 20th century boom era, when the town's population more than doubled, and growing numbers of industries and commercial enterprises combined with the availability of rail transport to produce an expanding economy. Robert L. Blalock (1870-1929) was responsible for the design and construction of many important early 20th century buildings in Kinston, including numerous large commercial and institutional buildings. The stylistic details characterizing his residence reflect his familiarity with the popular architectural styles of the early 20th century and represent his mastery of design. The house is a member of the property type Late 19th/Early 20th Century Residential Buildings and Neighborhoods; its associated historic context is Kinston's Era of Accelerating Prosperity, 1890-1941.

Historical Background

According to the inscription on his tombstone in Maplewood Cemetery, Alexander Nicol was born 20 May 1824 in Edinburgh, Scotland and died on 6 October 1884 [Graves Index]. Nothing is known of his early life, and the first mention of him with regard to Kinston that was located is an announcement in the American Advocate of his marriage to Mrs. Susan C. McKinney of Kinston on 7 May 1857 ["Married"]. The 1860

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U. S. Census lists Nicol as a merchant owning real estate valued at \$7,800. The value of his real estate increased to \$10,000 by 1870 [U. S. Census, 1860 and 1870]. He first appears in Levi Branson's North Carolina Business Directory in 1872, when he is listed as a commission merchant and cotton factor [Branson's 1872 Business Directory].

It is probable that Nicol built a residence in Kinston in the late 1850s. Unfortunately, as with all early Lenoir County land transactions, the Nicol deeds regarding this property did not survive the 1880 fire which destroyed the county courthouse. The Gray's Map of Kinston published in 1882 shows a large house standing on the southeast corner of McIlwean and Bright streets. The house is identified as belonging to Alex. Nicol. Gray's Map also shows a building on the northeast corner of Queen and Caswell streets in Kinston's business district as being owned by A. Nicol [Gray's Map].

In the year of his death, 1884, the Branson's directory gave Nicol's occupation as insurance agent and fertilizer dealer. He had also served as a town commissioner. Mrs. Nicol continued to live in the house until her death in 1903. Three years later, Emma Mills acquired the house and lot from Mrs. Nicol's estate [deed book 35, p. 210]. She and her husband Walter W. Mills, vice-president of Kinston Lumber Company, occupied the house until 1910 when they sold it to R. M. Bryant. Robert L. Blalock purchased the house from Bryant in 1914 [1908 City Directory; deed book 49, p. 248].

Born in neighboring Johnston County in 1870, Robert L. Blalock learned carpentry while helping his parents with their substantial farming operation. Through the years he extended his interests and skills to include designing and engineering and began his career as a building contractor in 1899. He worked in Winston-Salem, Wilmington, Raleigh, and Wilson, where he was active from about 1902 until his arrival in Kinston in 1906 [Heritage, p. 155; "Robt. L. Blalock"; and Ohno, Wilson Historic, p. 234]. Blalock married Rossie Summerlin of Clinton in 1896, with whom he had ten children; the size of his family would have made a large house desirable [Heritage, p. 155].

Blalock built his reputation on the design and construction of commercial and civic buildings, primarily in the Classical Revival style, although he did contract for some residential structures which included extensive brickwork. Under contract to Blalock were anywhere from fifty to two hundred of the best local craftsmen in all areas of construction--carpentry, brick, stone, concrete and steel [Kinston Daily News, 24 Sept. 1921]. Blalock did his own design and engineering work

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and was known to supervise personally every job he contracted. His designs included a great many of Kinston's most significant early 20th century structures including the Quinn and Miller Furniture Store, the Hunter Building, Lewis School, Hines Ice Cream Factory, Adlers Department Store, Kinston Garage, Central Tobacco Warehouse, the J. C. Penney Building (in the Queen-Gordon Streets Historic District), Union Station and several buildings at the Caswell Center [Mock interview; and Dreyer, Kinston's Architecture, p. 51].

Blalock's credits also include many other buildings scattered across eastern North Carolina. In 1921, the Kinston Daily News paid tribute to his work in the following terms:

To properly outline the character of the work done by this major building institution, it is only necessary to point to the finished jobs to be found all over eastern North Carolina, each and all of which today stand as evidence, and as a monument to the superior quality of the work and the efficiency of the designer and contractor [Kinston Daily News, 24 Sept. 1921].

Blalock died in 1929 leaving an important legacy in Kinston's central business district and in the design and execution of his renovations to his residence.

The most notable alterations carried out by Blalock on his McLewean Street residence were the construction of a wraparound brick porch with circular corner pavilion and porte cochere, the installation of three massive brick mantels with overmantels, and the building of unusual round-shouldered chimneys with inset arched windows. The brick work for these renovations was executed in the early 1920s by local brickmason Simon Fields [Fields interview]. Other Classical Revival embellishments include a Palladian attic window in the front gabled dormer, a modillion cornice, and a band of tiny dentils.

Some of the characteristic design features of Blalock's large masonry buildings include arched openings as seen on the Quinn-Miller Furniture Store and the Lewis School (both razed) and stone and stucco accents as seen on both these and other buildings. These features are echoed in the alterations he made to his residence--the arched recesses in the north elevation chimneys, the stone accents on the wraparound porch and porte cochere, and massive brick mantels with both arches and stone accents.

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After Blalock's death, his widow sold the property to S. S. Lawrence, who sold it in 1936 to real estate agent Fred B. Sparrow [deed book 241, p. 94]. Sparrow used the house as rental property until 1947 when Ezekiel K. Best purchased it and established the Best Funeral Home and Best Mutual Burial Association [deed book 241, p. 94; and Best interview]. The Best family continues to operate a funeral home in the Blalock House today. They have made a number of cosmetic alterations to the house, but the character of the house as it was remodelled by R. L. Blalock remains substantially intact.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Best, E. K., Jr. 300 S. McLewean St., Kinston, N. C. Martha Dreyer interview, May 1985.

Fields, Simon. Kinston, North Carolina. Kenneth E. Hill interview, April 1981.

Mock, Mrs. Mabel Blalock. Kinston, North Carolina. Martha Dreyer interview, April 1981.

Ohno, Kate. Wilson Historic Buildings Inventory, Wilson, North Carolina. City of Wilson and N. C. Department of Cultural Resources, 1980.

"Robt. L. Blalock Dead at Age 59; Here Many Years." Kinston Daily Free Press, 24 August 1929, p. 1.

Works Projects Administration Graves Index. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N. C.

For general works, see Major Bibliographical References for Historic and Architectural Resources of Kinston, N. C.

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 0.4

UTM References

A

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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 property being nominated is lot 1 on Lenoir County Tax Map 45 in the city of Kinston, North Carolina.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The parcel originally associated with the house was 1/4 of the block bounded by S. McLewan, E. Bright, S. Independent and E. Shine streets. The property being nominated consists of the house and the surviving portion of the larger lot historically associated with the house. The remainder of the original tract has been sold and redeveloped.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Allison H. Black, Architectural Historian
organization Black & Black, Preservation Consultants date June 1, 1989
street & number 620 Wills Forest St. telephone 919 828-4616
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27605

S McLEWEAN ST

320.95'

120'

148'

148'

120'

①

E BRIGHT ST



E SHINE ST

Robert L. Blalock House
300 S. McLewean St.
Kinston, N. C.

③

1" = 100'

774.8'

S INDEPENDENT S

Lenoir County Tax Map 45, Lot #1

100'

80'

80'

②

100'

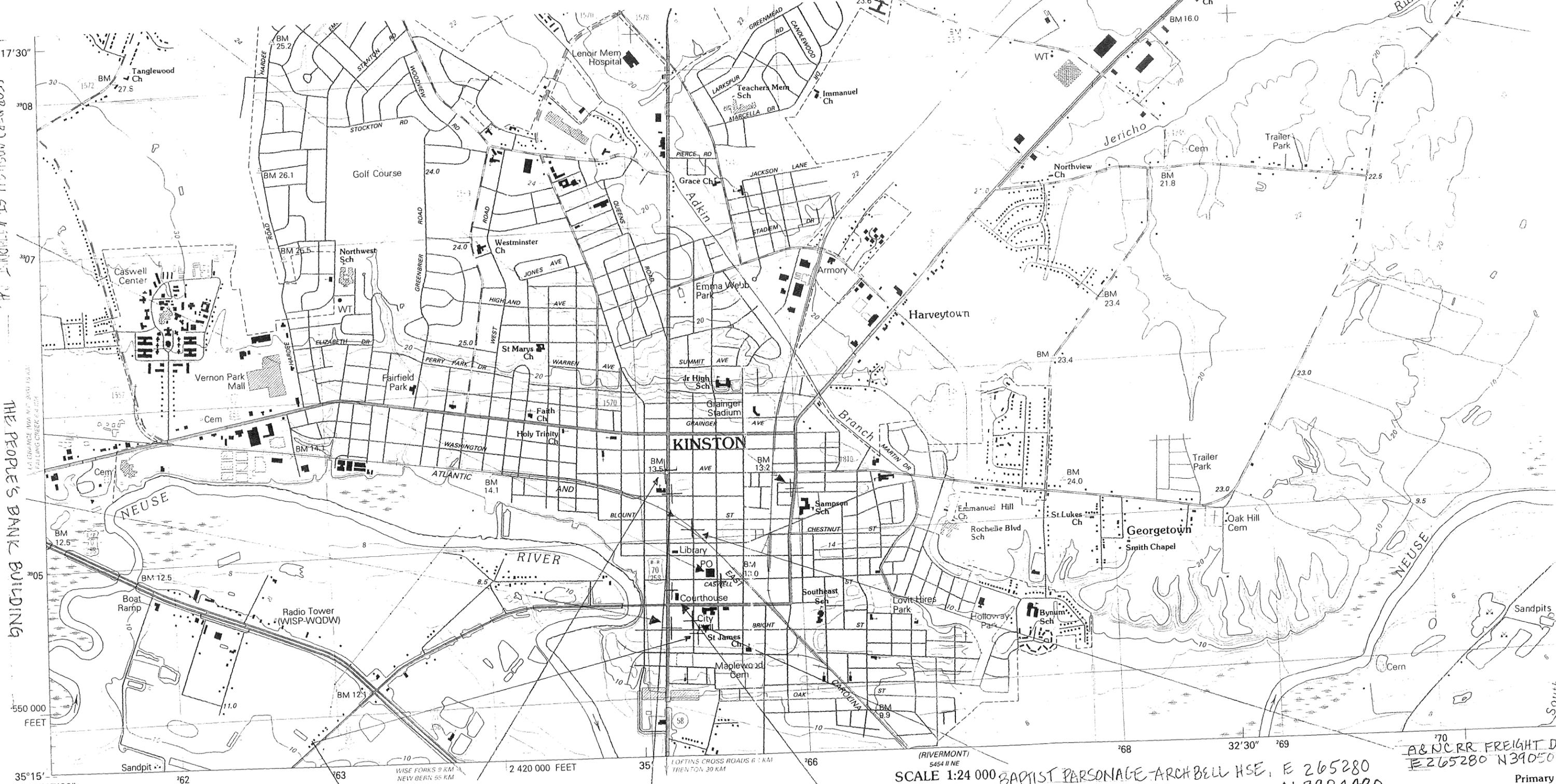
353.0'

TRB 45

S EAST ST

(FORMER) CASWELL ST. & HARDEE CH.
E 265470 N 3904720

THE PEOPLE'S BANK BUILDING
E 265150 N 3904430



550 000 FEET

35°15' 77°37'30"

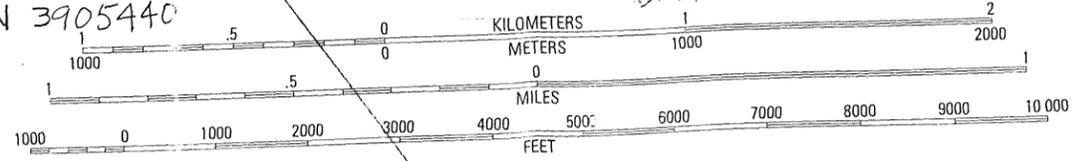
Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and North Carolina Geodetic Survey
Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1977. Field checked 1979. Map edited 1983
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: North Carolina coordinate system (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18
1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 12 meters south and 26 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Gray tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

B.W. CANADY HSE., E 265160 N 3905440



UTM GRID AND 1983 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

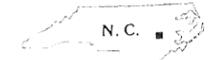
BLALOCK HOUSE
E 265310 N 3904400



SCALE 1:24 000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 2 METERS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

(FORMER) KINSTON FIRE STATION, 317 HWY
E 265160 N 3904670



QUADRANGLE LOCATION
CONTOURS AND ELEVATIONS IN METERS

A&N CRR FREIGHT D
E 265280 N 390500

BAPTIST PARSONAGE-ARCH BELL HSE., E 265280 N 3904480

Primary hard sur
Second hard sur

