

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC **Burras House**

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

On US 64 (south side) 0.1 mi. E. of jct. with SR 1582

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Jamesville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

1st

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Martin

CODE

117

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Morrison Myers, Chairman, Burras House Foundation, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 246

CITY, TOWN

Jamesville

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 27846

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Martin County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

East Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Williamston

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>1928</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Burras House is a one-story with finished attic frame structure typical of a rapidly diminishing number of small, well-finished, vernacular farmhouses of North Carolina's eastern counties. Though its exact age is uncertain, its form and decorative Federal style details suggest that it was built in the early nineteenth century.

The house, covered in plain, replacement weatherboards, is a rectangular gable roof structure with front (north) shed roof porch and rear shed. The house rests on concrete blocks and is covered by a standing seam tin roof. The chimney, like the foundation, is a replacement. The five-bay, symmetrical facade sheltered by the porch is covered with flush sheathing and pierced by windows with nine-over-nine sash and molded surrounds. Other notable exterior details include a molded cornice highlighted by a pierced swag over the porch, beaded rakeboards, and some remnants of dentil sawn-work with cornice returns. The most distinctive exterior features, however, are the vernacular, Doric-type porch posts with an exaggerated entasis that have earned them the sobriquet "milk-bottle columns." Most of the round-in-section handrails inserted between the porch posts survive. The footrails have disappeared. The turned porch posts, with heavy bases and simple capitals, are unusual survivals and are related to at least two other known examples in adjacent Washington County, the Harrison-Blount House (Roper vicinity, late eighteenth century) and Garretts Island Home (Plymouth vicinity, mid to late 18th century). The side elevations feature nine-over-six sash at the first level and two-over-two sash in the attic. Six-over-six sash light the rear of the shed rooms.

The single-leaf entrance door with its two-part molded surround and four-light transom contains its original raised-paneled door, featuring two square and two rectangular panels over a diamond-shaped panel below the lock rail. It is hung on rising butt plate hinges and opens into an interior that now follows a center-hall plan, but originally had a hall-and-parlor plan. The inside face of the entrance features a strip of molding between the door frame and transom which is carved to resemble a braid. A plain transom occurs over the door at the end of the main portion of the house. The original enclosed stair survives. Interior details, including flat-panel wainscot, beaded sheathing on the ceiling, standard six-panel, raised panel doors, and two, similar mantels are typical of the early nineteenth century and remain relatively intact. Both mantels in the main body of the house are Federal in style. The more elaborate features paired pilaster strips on bases which support a simple entablature with molded architrave and cornice and flat paneled frieze. The end blocks are decorated with fluted trim reminiscent of triglyphs. The other Federal mantel is similar in form but simpler in decoration; flat panels frame the fire opening and decorate the end block.

The rear shed, now fully enclosed, formerly had an open center bay. The shed contains a remarkably vigorous, highly vernacular, late Federal style mantel embellished with sunbursts, scrolls, a shell, and other decorative motifs. It must have been added at a somewhat later date; the ornateness, unrivaled in the surrounding area, leads to speculation that it came from another county or state. To each side of the fire opening are strips of reeded trim framed by chain moldings. The frieze is embellished with carved detail in heavily molded and reeded panels. Above is an elaborately molded shell that breaks forward over the end blocks and the center tablet.

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Upstairs, as below, the space is divided into two rooms. Chamfered posts with lambs tongues support a beaded rail around the stair well. The larger of the two rooms contains a simple, late Georgian type mantel. The fire opening is framed with simple molded detail. Above the opening is a frieze of flat panels and a simple molded shelf. There is no fireplace in the smaller room. The plastered rooms are treated with plain, beaded chair rails and baseboards. The door surrounds have delicate, Federal style, molded finish.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of Martin County's least altered early nineteenth century dwellings, the Burras House is a vernacular Federal style frame cottage. The ornamentation--inside and out--is remarkably varied, with each motif occurring only once. Turned porch columns are an element shared with at least two other houses in neighboring Washington County. Owned by the local prominent Moore, Burras and Smithwick families, it is currently the focus of a local preservation group.

The first known resident of the Burras House was George Moore Burras from whom the structure received its name. He occupied the house for about fifty years beginning in the 1850s, but the architecture indicates the building is considerably older than this. Local tradition contends that the property on which the house now stands (and its previous location as well) belonged to the locally prominent Moore family and descendants from the mid-eighteenth century to 1976. Because of a ca. 1880 fire, only a handful of pre-1880 records exist for Martin County, and what few facts exist in relationship to the Burras House give some credence to the contention. There is, however, far too little evidence to fully document or disprove the claim.

The Moore family was settled in Tyrrell County, in the part that later became the eastern section of Martin County, as early as 1757 when Morrice /Maurice/ Moore, son of James Moore, listed himself as a planter. Maurice died before 1766 leaving sons James and Maurice to continue the family name and to continue the acquisition of property.² Maurice (Jr.) was born before 1765 and is believed to have owned the land on which the Burras House was later built. A few extant deeds show that he purchased property in the vicinity of present Jamesville, but the extent and exact boundaries cannot be ascertained.³

Shortly after 1800 Maurice Moore married a woman named Sarah; it may have been a second marriage since Moore was nearly forty-five years of age and Sarah was about twenty years younger.⁴ Three children were born by 1810 and Clayton, the youngest son, was born in 1814. By the former year Maurice Moore had accumulated sufficient property to demand the services of eleven slaves but the location of his plantation house is uncertain. Circumstantial evidence indicates that he lived on Gardner's Creek even though the Burras House possibly was built during his lifetime and on his land.⁵

Maurice Moore died during the second decade of the nineteenth century.⁶ No will was recorded but somehow his property passed to his wife Sarah who retained possession until her death in the 1860s. Sixty-eight year old Sarah Moore was listed as a farmer and head of household in 1850. Her property, consisting of about 200 acres in and adjoining Jamesville, was valued at \$800. Sarah, however, was not residing on her own property but rather on her son's (probably Clayton's) land a few miles west of Jamesville.

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Apparently some of Maurice's estate had been divided among his children as well. The Burras House seems to have been occupied by a tenant or overseer who managed the 200-acre plantation, which possibly indicates that it may have been built for that purpose originally. Sarah Moore also received income from the rent of lots within the town of Jamesville (called Jameston until 1855).

Living in Sarah Moore's household in 1850 was seventeen-year-old George Burras whose occupation was listed as clerk. George was Sarah's grandson and the son of Eugene Burras and Emily Moore Burras. George was born in 1833; his mother died three years later at the age of twenty-six. His father Eugene returned to his native New York, leaving George with his grandmother who raised him along with several other grandchildren. Upon reaching maturity George Moore Burras seems to have established his own household in the home that bears his name. His aged grandmother came to live out her remaining years with her grandson who by 1860 appears to have purchased a retail store in Jamesville, perhaps the one in which he had worked as a clerk.

Sarah Moore died in the 1860s after passing her 80th birthday. In an unrecorded will she bequeathed the Burras Plantation and adjoining town lots to her grandson George M. Burras. Twenty-four slaves belonging to her estate were divided among her children and grandchildren as was \$1,500 in cash. Sometime before the summer of 1870 George Burras married Sarah Elizabeth White who was fifteen years younger than he. The couple set up housekeeping in Burras' home and began their family. In 1880 the household included two children, Hugh and Sarah; Burras' sister-in-law Amelia White; and two white house servants, Frances Callaway and John Baily. Another daughter Emily Elizabeth was born October 1, 1881.

The Burras family, like all plantation owners, had suffered economic reverses engendered by the Civil War, but the coming of the railroad, affectionately known as the Jiggle and Wiggle, to Jamesville portended economic prosperity. Unfortunately no boom period ever materialized and George M. Burras drifted into worsened financial straits. By the mid 1880s he was nearly broke having lost more than \$12,000 over a period of twenty-five years. In 1886 Burras was forced to mortgage his property to cover a \$300 debt. There was confusion over whether he complied with the terms of the agreement and the property was tied up in litigation for sixteen years. In 1902 the Superior Court of Martin County ruled in favor of a suit brought by Sarah E. Burras and declared her to be the legitimate owner of the land. Title was transferred by the court's decision to Sarah E. Burras.

George Moore Burras died in 1905 but Sarah E. Burras continued to live in the house until her death on December 12, 1923. Either through an unrecorded will or estate settlement, the house and property passed to Sarah's daughter Emily Elizabeth who was born and reared in the Burras House and who had married Dr. James E. Smithwick, long the community's only physician. The couple lived about 100 yards west of the

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Burras House until 1928, when the Smithwicks' home burned. The Smithwicks moved the Burras House to the location of their former home and built a new home on the original site of the Burras House, amid a grove of oaks. Until the construction was completed Dr. Smithwick made his home and office in the Burras House.¹⁷

Emily Elizabeth Smithwick outlived her husband by thirty-one years; after her death in 1967, the property went to her granddaughter, Jo Smithwick Hayes.¹⁸ On January 12, 1976, she donated the aging structure to the Historic Burras House Foundation, Inc. with the understanding that it be used as a public facility. For more than thirty years the house had been rented to tenants after which it stood vacant for nearly a decade.²⁰ Weather and neglect resulted in minimal deterioration of the exterior; now the Historic Burras House Foundation plans to restore the structure for possible use as a library.

FOOTNOTES

¹Margaret Hofmann, Abstracts of Deeds, Edgecombe Precinct, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, 1732-1758 (Weldon: The Roanoke News Company, 1969), p. 226.

²Tyrrell County Estates Papers, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

³Birthday calculated from Second Census of United States, 1800: North Carolina - Martin County, Heads of Families, hereinafter cited as Second Census, 1800; and Martin County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Martin County Courthouse, Williamston, Deed Book A, 143 and Deed Book F, 305, hereinafter cited as Martin County Deed Book.

⁴Sarah was born in 1782. See Seventh Census of United States, 1850: North Carolina - Martin County, Population Schedule, hereinafter cited as Seventh Census, 1850. See also Second Census, 1800.

⁵Third Census of United States, 1810: North Carolina - Martin County, Population Schedule, Second Census, 1800; and Interview with Mrs. Annie P. Wolfe, a Moore descendant, July 18, 1977, hereinafter cited as Wolfe interview. For birthdate of Clayton Moore and general location of Moore family, see Seventh Census, 1850, and Martin County Deed Book A, 143.

⁶Wolfe interview. Moore appears in Third Census, 1810, but does not appear in Fourth Census, 1820.

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⁷ Seventh Census, 1850. Compare with Eighth Census of United States, 1860: North Carolina - Martin County, Population Schedule, hereinafter cited as Eighth Census, 1860. Note that Sarah's neighbors were different, yet Clayton and E. S. Moore resided in close proximity as they had in 1850 when they lived near Sarah.

⁸ Lots are mentioned in Sarah Moore's will, copy in Research Branch, Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. Original in possession of Mrs. Annie P. Wolfe of Williamston. Hereinafter cited as Sarah Moore Will. See also William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 251.

⁹ Seventh Census, 1850; Wolfe interview; and WPA Pre-1914 Grave Index, State Archives, Raleigh.

¹⁰ Burras' personal property jumped from zero in 1850 to \$12,000 in 1860. He had not then inherited his grandmother's estate. Furthermore, the store is mentioned in a later deed as part of the property inherited by Emily Elizabeth Smithwick, Burras' daughter. Seventh Census, 1850; Eighth Census, 1860; and Martin County Deed Book R 7, p. 297.

¹¹ Sarah Moore appears in Eighth Census, 1860 but not in Ninth Census, 1870. See also Sarah Moore Will.

¹² Burras was not married in Eighth Census, 1860, but has a wife and no children in Ninth Census, 1870. See also Wolfe interview and Vital Records, Department of Human Resources for birthdate of Emily Elizabeth (Burras) Smithwick, hereinafter cited as Vital Records.

¹³ The official name of the railroad was the Jamesville and Washington. It acquired its popular name because of the mushy ground on which the track was laid. The weight and speed of a passing train created a jello-like movement under the track causing the train to jiggle and wiggle. Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina, 4 vols. (Weldon: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1959-1965), vol. 4, p. 1948.

¹⁴ Martin County Deed Book KK, p. 231.

¹⁵ Martin County Superior Court Records, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Martin County Courthouse, Williamston, G. M. Burroughs and S. E. Burroughs vs H. W. Mobley, September Term, 1902.

¹⁶ Wolfe interview; and Martin County Marriage Register, microfilm copy in State Archives, Raleigh.

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¹⁷ Wolfe interview; and interview with Morrison Myers, chairman of the Historic Burras House Foundation, Inc., and current resident in Dr. Smithwick's home, July 14, 1977.

¹⁸ Martin County Deed Book R7, p. 297; and Wolfe Interview. Before her death in 1967, Emily Elizabeth executed an irrevocable trust agreement with Branch Banking & Trust Company to provide for herself and her son James. The bank was to manage the estate in return for a fixed fee. At their deaths the bank was to deed the property therein described to Jo Smithwick Hayes, Emily's granddaughter and only child of James and Josie Lucille Smithwick. Jo Smithwick Hayes took possession of the house and grounds on May 23, 1969, according to terms of the agreement.

¹⁹ Martin County Deed Book P8, p. 199; and Deed Book Q9, p. 382.

²⁰ Wolfe interview; and Enterprise (Williamston), undated newspaper article, copy in survey file for Burras House, Survey and Planning Branch, Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Corbitt, David Leroy. The Formation of North Carolina Counties, 1663-1943. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1950.

Hofmann, Margaret. Abstracts of Deeds, Edgecombe Precinct, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, 1732 through 1758. Weldon: The Roanoke News Company, 1969.

Interviews with Morrison Myers, July 14, 1977. Deane Phelps, July 15, 1977. Annie P. Wolfe, July 18, 1977.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Description prepared by H. McKelden Smith, Survey Specialist
Significance prepared by Jerry L. Cross, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina ZIP 27611

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE September 8, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Enterprise. Williamston, North Carolina. Undated article with no by-line in survey file on Burras House.

Martin County Records. Martin County Courthouse. Williamston, North Carolina.
Subgroups: Deeds, Estate Papers, Marriage Register, Superior Court Minutes, and Wills.

North Carolina Land Grants. Secretary of State's Office. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Powell, William S. The North Carolina Gazetteer. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Sharpe, Bill. A New Geography of North Carolina. Vol. 4. Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1965.

Tyrrell County Records. Tyrrell County Courthouse. Columbia, North Carolina.
Subgroups: Estate Papers, and Wills.

United States Census Records, 1790-1880. North Carolina, Population Schedules.

Vital Records. Department of Human Resources. Raleigh, North Carolina.

WPA Pre-1914 Graves Index. Division of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Corbitt, David Leroy. The Formation of North Carolina Counties, 1663-1943. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1950.

Hofmann, Margaret. Abstracts of Deeds, Edgecombe Precinct, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, 1732 through 1758. Weldon: The Roanoke News Company, 1969.

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre
 UTM REFERENCES

Latitude 35° 48' 58"
 Longitude 76° 54' 05"
33

A

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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 VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

D

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LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME - TITLE Description prepared by H. McKelden Smith, Survey Specialist
Significance prepared by Jerry L. Cross, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina 27611

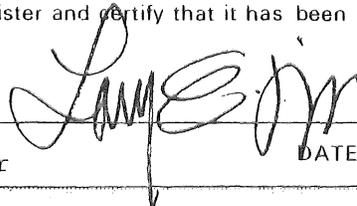
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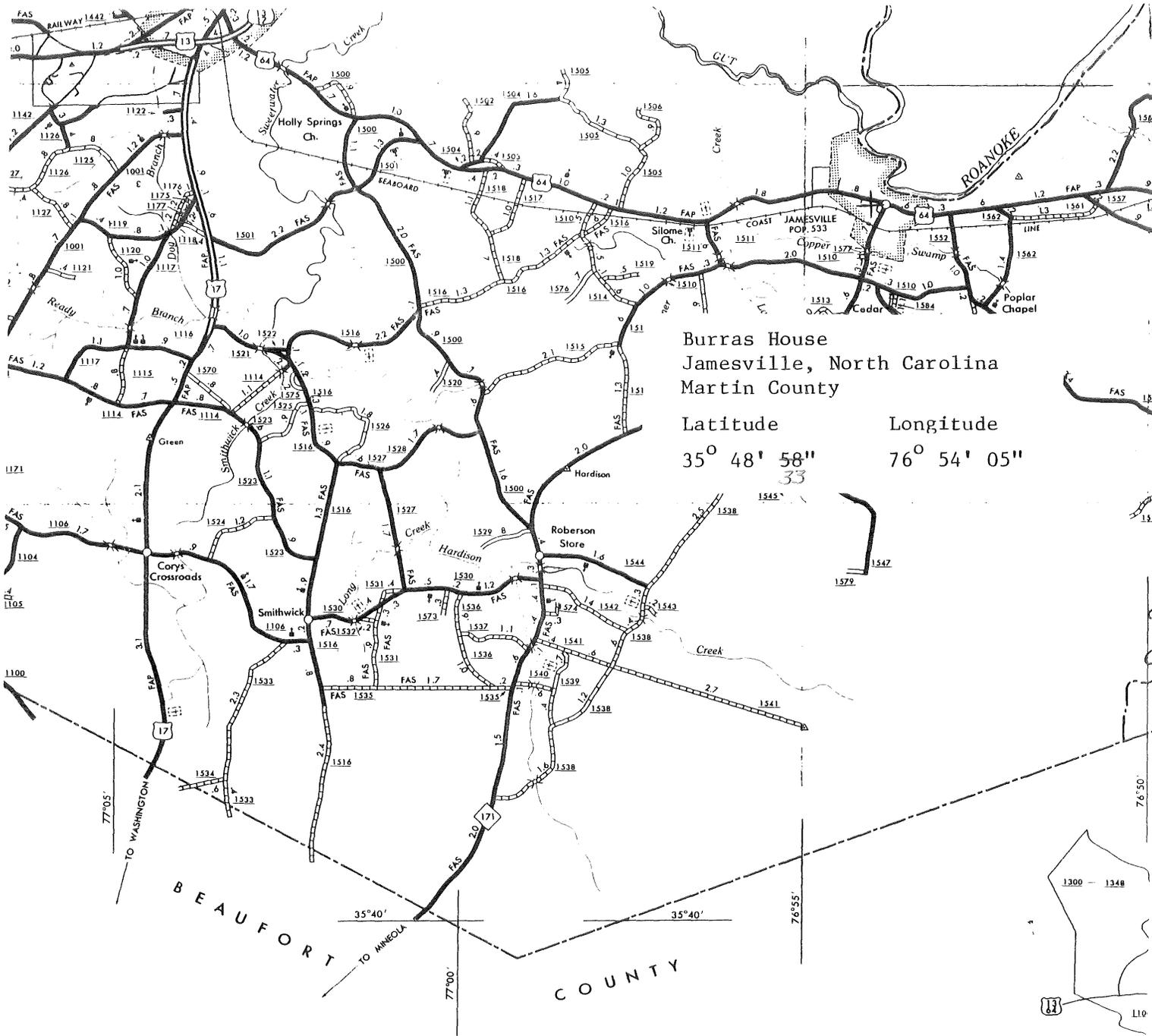
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Burras House
 Jamesville, North Carolina
 Martin County

Latitude $35^{\circ} 48' 58''$ Longitude $76^{\circ} 54' 05''$

NOTE: MAP INCLUDES ONLY STATE MAINTAINED ROADS
 OR IMPORTANT NON-SYSTEM ROADS.
 MILEAGE NOT SHOWN ON FRONTAGE ROADS.
 ROADS SHOWN AS OF JAN. 1, 1976

