

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 Sunny Side Inn

other names/site number Sunny Side Oyster Bar

2. Location

street & number 1102 Washington Street N/A not for publication

city or town Williamston N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Martin code 117 zip code 27892

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 forth 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.)

Officer J. Cross, Acting SHPO 10/16/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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

Sunny Side Inn
Name of Property

Martin County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/ restaurant

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/ restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American:
Craftsman

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls weatherboard
roof tin
other asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 a birthplace or grave.
- 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)

Social History

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929-1945

Significant Dates

1929

1931

1945

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Sunny Side Inn
Name of Property

Martin County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	313680	3961821010
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penne Smith / Consultant

organization _____ date August 31, 1995

street & number 415 Evans Street Mall, Suite 1 telephone 919-758-1446

city or town Greenville state NC zip code 27858

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Sunny Side Inn
Martin County, North Carolina

The Sunny Side Oyster Bar, historically known as the Sunny Side Inn, is a double front-gable frame building in the Craftsman style on the east side of Williamston's Washington Street, near the Highway 13-64 intersection, in Martin County. Located at the edge of Williamston's commercial district near the Skewarkey Primitive Baptist Church, the Sunny Side Oyster Bar has achieved a unique landmark status as a well-preserved and very rare example of an early to mid-twentieth-century eastern North Carolina oyster bar. The building, in its sixty-six years of existence, has evolved in multi-functional units. It began as Theodore Roberson's frame, one-story, gable-front Sanitary Service Market in 1929. Then, in the winter of 1930-1931, Roberson extended his Sanitary Service Market on its south side with a front gable room and opened a small cafe, the Sunny Side Inn, there. Between 1935 and 1940, Theodore Roberson and his two sons, Charles Tilghman (C.T.) and George had a rear extension built onto the Sunny Side Inn, which they used as an oyster bar. The Sanitary Service Market apparently was closed with Theodore Roberson's death in 1940, and the space was incorporated into the Sunny Side Inn. Since November 1945, the building has been known as the Sunny Side Oyster Bar instead of the Sunny Side Inn, and will be referred to as such to minimize confusion.

The setting of the Sunny Side Oyster Bar, originally outside the town limits, has since become part of Williamston; the immediate area around the restaurant, however, consists of older small commercial buildings. An unpaved parking lot lies between the Sunny Side's north elevation and the north property line. The main (west) elevation of the Sunny Side is separated from Washington Street by an unpaved sidewalk and an unpaved driveway leads to the parking lot. The main elevation (west) and north elevations are about fifty to sixty feet long, and the south elevation is approximately eighty-five feet long, creating an irregular building footprint.

The building is covered by a gable-front roof with galvanized metal and rests on a poured concrete foundation; it is also finished with weatherboarding and has Craftsman-style exposed roof rafters, two three-panel front doors (the windows

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Sunny Side Inn
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and door to the original section have been covered) and, at the entrance to the Sunny Side Oyster Bar, a lancet-shaped louvered ventilator pierces the asphalt hexagonal-tiled front gable.

The first, or north section, of the building was Theodore Roberson's "Sanitary Service Market", built shortly after the Robersons bought the tract of land from Lovette Biggs Harrison in 1929. This simple weatherboarded building still has its original paired windows (with bars across) flanking the flush centered front door on the main elevation. On the building's north side are two barred four-over-one windows, one of which is paired with a three-paneled four-light sash door under a whimsical-looking bracketed flush gable that probably was originally a covered receiving area for the market. Inside the former Sanitary Service Market, the walls and ceiling are sheathed with manufactured beaded board tongue-and-groove siding, and one of the original metal meat display counters is at the east (rear) wall, next to the kitchen entrance. There is an entrance to the adjacent oyster bar's waiting room, at the southeast corner of this room. Presently, this space serves as an overflow waiting area.

The present oyster bar's "waiting area" -- the original "Sunny Side Inn" lunch room opened in 1931 -- is lit by two front display windows, the recessed storefront entry's sidelights, and two four-over-one windows at the side. The guests at Mr. Roberson's opening dinner on January 29, 1931, would have sat at the wooden booths that are still in place and feasted upon "turkey, barbecue, brunswick stew and sea foods" for the price of seventy-five cents. The room still has its original recessed entry, oak floors, and wooden counter at the east end, or back, of the room. Minor alterations include the dropped acoustical tiled ceiling and some sheet paneling. Local history relates that Mr. Roberson chose the name "Sunny Side" because of the sunlight that flooded into the room in the late morning and afternoon, but the Williamston Enterprise has advertisements just before the cafe opened, during the winter of 1930-1931, for a movie called "The Sunny Side," which may have

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played a part in the name.

The oyster bar (ca. 1935-1940) is a walled-off narrow, rectangular room directly behind the rear, east wall of current waiting room. The floor joists in the oyster bar are directly on the ground, making it necessary for customers to step down into the room. The U-shaped bar, restored during a recent rehabilitation, dominates the room. Surrounding the bar are wooden stools, many of which are original to the oyster bar, and painted a lacquered green and white, echoing the green-and-white of the beaded-board, tongue-and-groove sheathed walls. Behind the metal bar is the shuckers' station; the shuckers' side of the bar has an aluminum trough all around for easy cleaning, and a plywood floor covered with cedar shavings to catch any stray oyster juice. The use of cedar shavings, a practice outlawed some time ago by the health department, is allowed in the historic oyster bar under a grandfather clause. According to local history, the oyster bar was opened in 1935; the first documentation of its existence, however, was the announcement by Theodore Roberson's sons, George and C.T., that the "Sunny Side Oyster Bar" was, as of November 1945, open for business with steamed oysters the specialty of the house. It is probable that the oyster bar gradually came about in the mid-1930s as a way to supplement the cafe business and in response to seasonal demand for oysters.

The original complex of steaming and storage outbuildings immediately east of the Sunny Side was torn down in 1993, due to its condition, and replaced by a small, side-gable cement block building that houses an oyster steamer, washing pit, boiler, and storage area. The building is simple and unobtrusive. When an order is placed in the oyster bar, the shuckers go to this building to give the orders to the steamer, who hands over the requested oysters in a metal pail -- a process identical to what occurred in the original steamer outbuilding. The steamer itself is the same one used by the oyster bar since the 1940s.

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Sunny Side Inn
Martin County, N.C.

Sunny Side Inn
Williamston, Martin County, N.C.

Statement of Significance

The Sunny Side Oyster Bar is historically significant for two reasons: First, it is an authentic, well-maintained and well-preserved early twentieth-century eastern North Carolina oyster bar; and, second, it is a good example of a small town early-to-mid-twentieth-century cafe/oyster bar, built in the days before franchise restaurants and fast-food chains. The Sunny Side Oyster Bar is, therefore, eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for its unique architectural integrity, and also under Criterion A for its view into an equally unique history, that of oyster bars in eastern North Carolina in the early twentieth century.

The Sunny Side building, on its original site on the old Washington highway, is markedly similar to documentary photographs of period oyster bars, oyster bar/barbecue stands, and detached frame eating houses, nearly all of which have vanished from rural and small town North Carolina. The Sunny Side, in addition, represents a significant chapter in the American love affair with the oyster, an affair that often bordered on the obsessive, from the seventeenth-century "oyster war" between the Maryland and Virginia colonies to the later nineteenth-century plundering of the Pamlico Sound by Chesapeake oystermen. The ritual of oyster consumption, a common sight in the northeastern cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, where the food writer, M.F.K. Fisher, describes oysters served "on a plate of shaved ice, with small round white crackers in a bowl or vase (Fisher, p: 64)," became a less elaborate ritual in the South. Here, a diner enjoyed an informal intimacy in surroundings and ritual. In a simply finished room lit by an exposed light bulb or a fluorescent tube, all the pleasure is in the ritual and the oysters themselves, as opposed to the decor; the shucker expertly flipping oysters from the shell into a small dish and conversing easily on sports or the weather, while strangers seated all around the bar with their oysters, crackers, and beer might well become friends. Later, there might even be dancing in the front room. This simpler form of entertainment in humble surroundings is given a heightened sense of pleasure because of the seasonal aspect of oysters; six

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months out of the year, the oyster bar will be closed, waiting for Fall. In its sixty-four years as a cafe and grocery, occasional fireworks depot, and oyster bar, the Sunny Side has retained its exterior and interior integrity, and its original unpretentious quality.

Of the approximately sixteen oyster bars that flourished and perished in the eastern towns of Williamston, Plymouth, Rocky Mount, Tarboro, Greenville, New Bern and Wilson between 1931 and 1950, the Sunny Side is the only one which has survived to the present day. Since Theodore Roberson opened his "lunch room" next to his meat market in January 1931, the Sunny Side has been a convivial gathering place for local residents and a pilgrimage spot for oyster lovers from Ahoskie, Greenville, Raleigh, Edenton, southeastern Virginia, and places further afield.

Historical Background and Social History Context

Oysters rapidly emerged as a gastronomic delicacy in colonial America. The Swedish traveler Peter Kalm wrote in 1748 of the exceptional quality of oysters in Philadelphia and, particularly, New York City; "Oysters here are reckoned very wholesome," Kalm noted, adding that "some people assured us that they had not felt the least inconvenience after eating a considerable quantity of them (Kalm, 126)." In Samuel Wood's Cries of New-York, 1808-1814, there is mention of the "many oyster stands in the city, where black men are ready with some of the finest oysters, which they open and serve out raw from one to three cents a piece."

Oyster cellars opened in the basements of Philadelphia townhouses, and the docks and waterfront of New York and Boston had their share of oyster saloons (rather than cellars) into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Initially, according to John F. Watson's 1830 Annals of Philadelphia, the oyster cellars in that city were "entirely managed by blacks, and did not include gentlemen among their visitors [sic]" (Watson, 220). Nine years later, Francis J. Grund's American diary compares the oyster cellars in Philadelphia and New York; overall, Philadelphia's reputedly "elegant" cellars, he wrote,

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"are mostly kept by white men" and that ownership of the New York oyster cellars was quickly turning from African Americans to whites (Grund, 280). A print of an 1830s oyster cellar in Philadelphia indicates these establishments were not exactly genteel. Booths alongside the front window were curtained, whether for privacy or anonymity; the patrons at the oyster stand, all white men, appear slightly furtive and disreputable. A bar in the niche between the entrance and wall is run by a white man, but the oyster shucker is an African-American. All in all, it appears to be a nineteenth-century version of what would today be called a "dive."*

In 1849, railroads began shipping oysters packed in ice to inland cities such as Buffalo and Chicago; where there were no railroads, horse-drawn wagons brought oysters inland (Root, 135). By the 1880s, hungry eyes were looking south to North Carolina's "great Pamlico Sound, with its wonderful oyster bed" (Nowitzky, 206). Norfolk and Baltimore became major oyster processing centers, shipping most of their product to northern cities. According to Gary Dunbar's study of the North Carolina oyster industry, Virginian oystermen freely plundered the waters of the Pamlico for "spat" (or young oysters) in the late 1880s, thereby revitalizing their own oyster stocks (Dunbar, 86). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps reveal that oyster canneries and smaller oyster packing houses were a dominant feature of the 1890s and early 1900s townscapes of Beaufort, Elizabeth City, Morehead City, Washington, and New Bern, North Carolina. The major oyster dealer in New Bern at the end of the nineteenth century was George Ives, a strong advocate for North Carolina's early oyster industry. Belhaven had the Montgomery and Makely packing house and Washington had the J.S. Farrow and Company Canning Factory in 1901.

New Bern and Elizabeth City appear to be the first towns in North Carolina with oyster-eating establishments. Lack of firm documentary evidence, however, precludes definitely stating that these establishments were oyster bars as known today. Raleigh also had establishments offering oysters in season (for health reasons, oysters were traditionally consumed between September and April) like the Moseley House at 124 Fayetteville Street in

*A copy of this print was sent to me by Dell Upton, who did not list a citation; until I find out otherwise, I'm assuming it's from Francis Grund's Aristocracy in America.

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the 1880s. A circa 1900 photograph of Elizabeth City's Episcopal Church on Fearing Street includes a sign for a nearby oyster saloon. In 1880, New Bern had Detrick's Restaurant and Billiard Parlor at the corner of Pollock and Middle Streets, which advertised "Oysters In Every Style" as part of its menu. There was also a short-lived oyster saloon at 45 1/2 Middle Street in 1898, as well as oysters in season at the Norfolk and Southern Railroad's Lunch Room. It is possible that the other restaurants on Middle Street below Front Street, New Bern's oyster and fish market center until the 1930s, were oyster bars; an unattributed photograph, circa 1900, in a 1960 New Bern tour guide brochure of the Middle Street docks shows a sign on the west side of the dock labeled "Restaurant -- Oysters of All Kinds."

The oyster saloons in New Bern and Elizabeth City were in the tradition common to cities farther north such as Baltimore and New York. But there was a spontaneous factor, also common to the docks of northeastern urban centers, that prefigured the oyster-eating establishments to come later in North Carolina. A circa 1900 photograph in the Craven County Public Library's collection shows a group of African American and white children thronged around a Middle Street photograph gallery -- and a small African American boy, posing just in front of them with a tray of oysters in his hand (Acc. No. 21-23). It was then a common practice that oyster shuckers would proffer raw and steamed oysters to passers by on the docks (Fearing, 3/95 interview). The informality and guilty pleasures of eating oysters in the open air continued in these riverside towns, according to Fred Fearing of Elizabeth City, into the 1930s.

This informal, spontaneous form of dockside dining had a counterpart in eastern North Carolina's early twentieth-century cafes. In the 1933 Beaufort County Directory, there are two illustrations of "sandwich shops" in Washington, NC -- Togo's Sandwich Shoppe at Charlotte Street and the Shore View on East Main Street. Togo's Sandwich Shoppe, a side-gabled, one-story log bungalow, had a front-gable porch and two timber-frame outbuildings, one a pavilion and the other an open shed with a chimney grill visible. The Shore View is depicted as a plain one-story, side-gable building with a rear shed extension -- and an open side deck, all with a view of the Pamlico River. Another similar cafe (but not illustrated) of the time in Washington was the Ed Hassell Cafe at South Market Street, which

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advertised "Oysters. Barbecue. Short orders and regular meals."

Theodore Roberson's Sunny Side Inn was, although not on a river front, very much in the spirit of a less formal dining atmosphere in tune with the needs of a small town/rural North Carolina community. Roberson, listed in the 1920 U.S. Census Report as a forty year-old proprietor of a grocery store, married, and with three small children, bought a tract of land from Lovette Biggs Harrison near the Skewarkey Primitive Baptist Church in 1929, where he built a meat market (Harrison > Annie L. Roberson: Deed. Martin County Register of Deeds, Book D-3, p. 426, September 26, 1929). The stock market crash one month later affected Roberson, like many small businessmen; he took out an ad in the Williamston Enterprise on December 31st, thanking his customers for their business but emphasizing "Business conditions compel me to sell only for -- Cash Next Year." A little over a year later, Roberson took out another ad in the Enterprise on January 27, 1931, to announce the opening of a "New Lunch Room -- Sunny Side Inn" on Thursday, January 29. The opening celebration was to include a dinner of turkey, barbecue, brunswick stew, and "sea foods" for seventy-five cents. Deciding to open a lunch room could have either have stemmed from a need to make ends meet for his growing family, or to capitalize upon his successful grocery business. Four years later, Roberson is said to have added the oyster bar in an addition at the back of the lunch room. Roberson further diversified his small mercantile establishment by selling fireworks at the Sunny Side during the 1934 and 1935 Christmas seasons.

Williamston residents have recalled that Theodore Roberson did not get his oysters from the local North Carolina markets but, instead, from Virginia. This has not been verified, but conditions of the time make it probable; in the 1930s, the Virginia oyster industry, as well as its general seafood industry, was more sophisticated and extensive. In 1931, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce's 1933 Statistical Abstract of the United States, North Carolina's overall seafood harvest was approximately 98,000 pounds but Virginia's came to 226,637 pounds. Norfolk and Portsmouth had seven major seafood wholesale distributors in 1931 and, apart from a 1925 quarantine due to an outbreak of typhoid fever, the oyster industry had steadily grown stronger in the Virginia and Maryland area while the stock in New Jersey and Delaware Bay waters was attacked by

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parasitic "oyster drills." Paul Titlow, a writer for the Atlantic Fisherman trade periodical, noted in 1933 that Norfolk's "oyster shipments in a single week [in November 1933] from near-by packing houses reached a total valuation of \$50,000." (Titlow, 12) Within the industry, there was great concern that oyster prices remain stable "in order that those in the business may not show a list to the loss side", and smaller dealers could remain in business (Sandusky 1931, 9). The trucking industry increased oyster sales, much in the way transporting oysters by railroad or wagon had one hundred years before. In 1934, Curtis Sandusky reported to the Atlantic Fisherman that "Virginia oysters, taken from beds in the Rappahannock River near Urbanna, are now being served in homes and restaurants in Dayton, Ohio, and it is probable that when present plans are completed, a number of trucks will be in constant service carrying bivalves to cities of the Middle West" (Sandusky 1934, 12).

An article on the front page of the November 27, 1931, issue of the Williamston Enterprise quoted H.F. Prytherch, the Director of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries' station at Beaufort, NC, as saying, "It will not be long before much of the bottoms of the inland waterway in this State will be planted in oysters, as much of the area through which it passes is admirably suited to oyster growing." Three years later in 1934, the Atlantic Fisherman reported that Prytherch's efforts to recultivate the North Carolina waters were well under way, but oysters from the small town of Belhaven were already gaining popularity; J.H. Ward's Market in Williamston, NC, advertised "We now have fine Belhaven Oysters. They are fresh and fine," in 1932. A month later, the Enterprise reported on its front page that "an employee of George N. Baker, Belhaven oyster dealer," had been apprehended in Charleston, SC, for selling Baker's oysters and pocketing the money himself. The felon was one of Baker's truck drivers; according to the story, he had sold nearly all the oysters in his shipment and abandoned the truck in Williamston, where he "asked a worker in the cafe here to call the owner and tell him where the truck was." The cafe is not identified in the article.

The growth of the oyster industry in North Carolina and the popularity of informal barbecue/oyster stands spelled competition for the Sunny Side Inn. Its most flamboyant early competitor was Greenville's Yum Yum Barbecue Palace, located north of the Tar River Bridge on Greene Street. It would have

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been, at that time, about an hour's drive from Williamston. On December 18, 1931, J.W. Clark ran an ad in the Enterprise announcing that "Cards will be thrown from aeroplane Sunday, December 19, on Main Street, Williamston," entitling the lucky recipients to a free airplane ride after a meal at the Yum Yum Palace. The menu at the Yum Yum consisted of "barbecue, brunswick stew, slaw," and "oysters all styles," and dances were also held there. A competitor closer to the Sunny Side's doorstep emerged with Mickey's Place (later Mickey's Inn) in the fall of 1935. Mickey's Place, located on the Everett highway one mile from Williamston (across from Martin Community College), advertised itself as a "little colony" complete with steamed oysters, homemade barbecue, "drinks, and other miscellaneous items sold at modern filling stations and lunch stands." Two years later, now advertised as Mickey's Inn, business was apparently healthy; "an unlimited supply of fireworks" for the Christmas and New Year's holidays was listed, along with "Drinks of All Kinds and DeMais Sandwiches" and, prominently centered, "Dancing and Oysters." There is a documentary photograph of Mickey's Inn, circa 1937, in the Martin Community College Library collection; the building itself, a frame one-story, side-gable store, was modest and comparable in style to the Sunny Side. Another photograph in the library's collection features a Williamston Gulf station with a small cement block rear addition with "Hot Barbecue --- Oysters in Season" painted directly on the facade, a further indication of the growing popularity of oyster dining in the region.

These documented oyster/barbecue stands, now either gone or significantly altered, give a sense of what these places were like: small frame or concrete block structures, unpretentious in appearance, and often a bit tumbledown. They reveal an interesting dichotomy in the 1930s and 1940s oyster industry's promotion of its product. A 1934 editorial in the Atlantic Fisherman extolled the nutritional value of the oyster and its potential to become a family foodstuff on the plateau occupied by chicken, pork, or fish. On the other hand, there are the oyster bars and oyster/barbecue stands of eastern North Carolina with their advertised connotations of spicy barbecue, warm steamed oysters, drinks (after Prohibition was repealed), and dancing; while the oyster/barbecue establishments were frequented by respectable people and were not dens of iniquity, neither were they, by nature of their sensual connotations, considered clean family fun.

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Between 1930 and 1954, seventeen oyster bars or oyster/barbecue stands have been documented in eastern North Carolina, and there were probably more; the fifteen other documented oyster bars, which were located in Rocky Mount, Plymouth, Williamston, Greenville, Wilson, Raleigh, New Bern, and Tarboro, no longer exist. One exception, besides the Sunny Side, is Cliff's Oyster Bar (now Cliff's Seafood Restaurant and Oyster Bar), which was established in the early 1950s by Clifton Whitehurst outside of Greenville, North Carolina. It is interesting that these cities are, for the most part, inland.

The seafood restaurants in the Morehead City and Beaufort area were comparatively more sedate than these inland barbecue/oyster establishments. There were cafes comparable to Mickey's Inn or the Juniper Lodge (Plymouth, NC, 1944-1946) in the area, particularly Stanley's on Route 70 east of Morehead City between 1939 and 1941. Local ordinances on the sale of beer and restaurants serving beer, however, indicate that the citizens of Beaufort and Morehead City preferred restrictions on alcohol. In 1938, Ted Garner and Tony Seamon rented an old fish house from Charles Wallace, an established local fish and oyster wholesale merchant on the Morehead City's waterfront, with the understanding that "no beer would be sold and no drinking [would] take place" (Morehead City, 108). The original Sanitary Fish Market seated twenty people; by the 1970s, as the tourist industry continued to expand in the Morehead City area, the restaurant's "new" building (circa 1949) east of its original site seated over 500 customers (ibid., 109). Captain Headen "Bill" Ballou, in turn, renovated an old fish house on the Morehead City waterfront in 1941 into an officer's club and, in 1945, "Capt. Bill's Waterfront Restaurant" (ibid., 106). Unlike the majority of the inland oyster bars, these restaurants were self-sufficient in terms of seafood produce. They were also more conventional restaurants, which offered full meals and catered especially to young families.

The Sunny Side was in the Roberson family for just over sixty years, except for a brief interlude in the early 1940s. On July 2, 1943, the Williamston Enterprise announced "The Reopening of Sunny Side Inn, Operating Under New Management"; Geraldine Moore, the new proprietress, advertised chicken and steak dinners. Apparently, this venture was not very successful because the Sunny Side Inn metamorphosed into the "Traveler's Rest Cafe" just a year later. Mr. and Mrs. Mayo Matthews

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Martin County, N.C.

advertised the bill of fare as including "Vegetable Dinners", steak, chicken, and seafood. By November 1945, however, the Sunny Side was either back in the Roberson family, or back in the management of the Roberson family, and remained so until 1993. In those ensuing years, C.T. Roberson ran the oyster bar during the months between October to April; his other source of income was the C.T. Roberson Tire Company at 905 Washington Street, which he sold in 1977. Annie L. Roberson, Theodore Roberson's widow, deeded the Sunny Side property to her son, C.T., in 1964 (Roberson>Roberson: Deed, Martin County Register of Deeds, Book R-7, page 152, October 22, 1964). In 1993, the Robersons leased the Sunny Side to a group of local investors, who have carefully restored the exterior and sensitively rehabilitated the interior.

The Sunny Side Oyster Bar's survival as a business and distinctive example of an early twentieth-century cafe and oyster bar is due largely to the tenacity of both the Robersons and the loyal following the Sunny Side acquired over the years, who have appreciated the original simple finish and furniture of the place and have, by their patronage, ensured that it remain thus. But the Sunny Side Oyster Bar's survival is remarkable, because of both the transient nature of oyster bars and oyster/barbecue stands and because of the conscribed season that is peculiar to oyster bars, which makes it a unique and not always lucrative business.

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Sunny Side Inn
Martin County, N.C.

Architectural Context

The Sunny Side Oyster Bar (historically known as the Sunny Side Inn) is the only one of seventeen known or documented oyster bars/barbecue-oyster bar establishments built in eastern NC between 1930 and 1955 that has continuously been a cafe/oyster bar. It is only one of three known buildings that has retained its original exterior and interior appearance. There is enough documentation, among photographs, directory citations, newspaper articles, town maps, and oral histories, to piece together an approximation of the material and form of these early-to-mid-twentieth century oyster bars and the Sunny Side Oyster Bar's place in this family of buildings. This approximation will not be identical to the Sunny Side, but it will be close enough to validate how the Sunny Side is part of this picture -- and possibly the lone survivor of an early twentieth-century authentic small-town oyster bar in coastal North Carolina.

The locations of oyster bars have contributed to their being difficult to document. Many of the known oyster bars or oyster bar/barbecue restaurants built during this period were located outside of town limits. This may have been one reason why beer and wine were available at them, and, conversely, that their location could have been deliberate. The following is a list of oyster bars in the area located outside of the respective town limits:

Sunny Side Oyster Bar*	Williamston, NC	near Hwy. 17 [1931]
Mickey's Inn*	Williamston, NC	on Everetts Hwy [1935]
Juniper Lodge	Plymouth, NC	Hwy 64, e. of town [1944-46]
Respass Barbecue*	Greenville, NC	Greene St., over Tar River bridge [1930-1960s]
Cliff's Oyster Bar*	Greenville, NC	Hwy. 264, e. of town [1953]
Port Terminal Inn	Greenville, NC	Hwy. 264, e. of town [1947-1949]

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Martin County, N.C.

Dixie Inn	Wilson, NC	Jct. Routes 22 and 40 [1931]
Stanley's Cafe	Morehead City, NC	Hwy 70, w. of Morehead City [1939-41]
Purifoy's Oyster Bar	Rocky Mt., NC	1333 Tarboro Street [1950-1963]

* = Buildings are still standing

An additional oyster bar, now demolished, was in the Greenville, North Carolina, city limits -- the Oyster House at 101 Short Street (1944-1946), which was briefly May's Oyster House in the late 1950s. Citations exist in the Greenville City Directories, the Daily Reflector (Greenville, NC), and there are documentary photographs of the building/s in the 1960s as well as documentation from the Sanborn City Maps.

Of these building complexes, most apparently originally had their oyster bars separate from their other eating facilities. The original Mickey's Inn complex, operated by S.J. Dickson in the 1940s, was located on the north side of what is now Highway 13-64, about one and a half miles west of the Highway 17 junction. Three of the surviving buildings include the gas station/cafe, facing Highway 13-64; the Dickson's house, a small frame single-pile two-story simple Craftsman side gable with a one-story rear ell; and the oyster bar, now rehabilitated into a residence but still retaining its original frame exterior (front-gable, three-bay, one-story vernacular Craftsman cottage), interior brick flue, six-over-two, and four-light windows. The rear shed ell is thought to be original, and where the oysters were stored and possibly steamed. There are still mounds of oyster shells around the lot. There is also a 1946 record of the Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEP CO)'s easement with the Dicksons to construct a pole line on the Mickey's Inn property. This easement describes the lot as containing "one store, one residence, and one oyster bar." A photograph, not dated (but apparently pre-1945), in the Francis Manning Collection at Martin Community College shows the Mickey's Inn Complex -- the residence, the store just barely, and two of the tourist cabins that were on site in the 1930s. Unfortunately, a

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Sunny Side Inn
Martin County, N.C.

car is blocking the oyster bar, but a large wooden sign where the bar was apparently reads "OYSTERS".

Another oyster bar was located at the Respass Brothers Barbecue Restaurant and Oyster Bar (now Pirates' Galley) in Greenville, between the 1930s and 1960s. The former Respass Brothers' restaurant was originally the Yum-Yum Barbecue Palace in 1930-1931. It is not known how the Yum-Yum actually looked. The earliest documentary photograph of the Respass Brothers Restaurant found to date is from 1960, and shows the building much as it appears today: a long concrete block side gable building with a center entrance sheltered by an attached hipped-roof porch supported by two posts over piers. A closer inspection reveals that, on either side of the porch, the building appears to be different; on the south side are three paired one-over-one sash windows, but on the north side, which has a side entrance, the three windows are nine-light metal casement windows. Greenville natives who went to Respass in the 1940s and 1950s have recalled that they entered the building at the side entrance, and the oyster bar was to the left, upon entering (Howard, 1995).

From this documentation, it can be deduced that the rear oyster bar at the Sunny Side Inn (later the Sunny Side Oyster Bar) was the normal practice, if the oyster bar itself was not detached altogether. It can also be deduced that these establishments tended to be simple, straightforward, frame or block early-to-middle twentieth-century structures with little exterior or interior decoration that were generally located on the edge of town, if not out in the country. That the Sunny Side is incredibly well-preserved and intact when so many of these once-popular restaurants are no longer in existence makes it, truly, a rare example of this early twentieth-century eating establishment.

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Martin County, N.C.

Urban documented oyster bars in eastern North Carolina are, as follows:

Detrick's Restaurant [1880]	New Bern, NC	Pollock & Middle
Union Station [1880s]	New Bern, NC	
"oyster saloon" [1898]	New Bern, NC	45 1/2 Middle St.
"oyster saloon" [1900]	New Bern, NC	Middle St., W. side
Railroad Lunch Room [1908]	New Bern, NC	N&S Passenger Station
John B. Watson [1920-21]	New Bern, NC	2 Middle Street
Ed Hassell Cafe [1930]	Washington, NC	S. Market Street
Bee Jay Oyster Bar [1937]	New Bern, NC	73 Broad Street
Bowden's Oyster Bar [1937]	New Bern, NC	27 Middle Street
Beacon Oyster Bar [1937]	New Bern, NC	not known
Bowden's Oyster Bar [1941]	New Bern, NC	46 Middle St.
Hamilton's Cafe [1941]	New Bern, NC	S. Front St. at Trent River Bridge
Wainwright Cafe [1948]	Greenville, NC	1906 Dickinson Ave.
Dixie Inn, Inc. [1950s]	Raleigh, NC	3625 Hillsborough St.

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Martin County, N.C.

It is not known if any of these urban buildings are still standing or are still recognizable as oyster bars or restaurants with oyster bars.

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Sunny Side Inn
Martin County, NC

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the Sunny Side Oyster Bar are as drawn on the attached survey plat of the property prepared for William L. and Ann T. Ritter by Roanoke Land Surveying in August, 1993. ("Tract I" on survey plat).

North: S 58°33'01"E
South: N 59°10'52" W
East: S 36°32'12"W
West: N 33°07'14"E

Tract I is bordered on its north side by "Tract II", an undeveloped lot; on its south side by Nancy R. Lilley's property; on its east by property belonging to the Motor Inns of Carolina; and on its west by Washington Street.

Boundary Justification

The above boundaries listed encompass all of the lot historically associated with the Sunny Side Inn.

Advertisers Will Find a Latchkey to Over Hundred Martin County

VOLUME XXXIII

HENRY MIZELL FOUND DEAD HIGHWAY CA

Evidence Indicates Man Was Murdered Near Conctoe

Funeral at Home in Bear Grass

Henry Mizelle, young white this county, either committed or was shot to death in a camp near Conctoe Creek, Ed county, early yesterday morning following an investigation by Bardin and the coroner of Ed...

About ten o'clock yesterday Mizelle went to the entered his room. A short the creek working next door...

First reports indicated that had taken his own life, but examining the body, officers the opinion that the man was someone else. There were powder marks on his head...

A. T. Pinkom, of Washington of the Highway Co. said that Mizell remarked before the shooting: "I had thing on my mind that I can't figure that I am going to do some time." Pinkom said he did not do that, and Mizell figure I would be better off...

He said that he and Mizell returned to their work of concrete and had drilled inches and found water used the work and Mizell used a bucket at the camp house...

Funeral services and scheduled this afternoon 250 post-mortem pending findings coroner's jury. Elder D. S. C. conduct the services, and will follow in the Mobley Gr Bear Grass township.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Mizell, of Bear Grass town, young man had been in the of the Highway comm- years. In a letter written the fore to his wife, he stated money, but the note it is no evidence of any rash act. He is survived by his wife, his mother and father, three and two sisters.

DIES AT HOME IN KENTUCKY

Judge W. Williams

Opens New This Week... Monday, the 2nd day of February 1931, at twelve (12) o'clock noon, at the Courthouse door of Martin County...

Liquor Fort County

Swamp section yesterday after transfer and...

...the operator before the on... the good cows...

SALE

...in County - In... defined as all...

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

North Carolina, Martin County - In Superior Court...

NOTICE OF SALE

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to and by virtue of that certain deed of trust executed February 20th...

NOTICE OF SALE

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to and by virtue of that certain deed of trust executed February 20th...

SALE

...Martin County - In... on, surviving of Harrison...

STATEMENT OF CONDITION

MARTIN COUNTY BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATION of Williamston, N. C., as of December 31st, 1930

north 41 1-4 degrees East 20.68 poles; to a corner of the fence; thence North north 42 1-2 degrees East 11.64 poles; North 33 1-4 degrees East 6 poles; North 40 1-2 degrees East 7 poles; North 41 3-4 degrees East 23.4 poles up Daley Branch; thence down the canal a line to a curve; thence north 62 degrees East 19.2 poles to the Robertsville and Washington Road; thence up said road degrees West 8 poles; North 43 1-2 degrees West 17 poles to degrees West 3 1-4 poles; North 59 3-4 degrees West 11.4 poles; North 66 1-4 degrees West 16.4 poles; North 52 degrees West 14.52 poles to a hardwood knot and gum in Margaret Andrews' corner; thence North 53 1-4 degrees West 5.4 poles, to the beginning, containing 187 acres more or less.

Announcing Opening - New Lunch Room Sunny Side Inn THURSDAY NIGHT January 29th I wish to announce that my new lunch room, "Sunny Side Inn," will be opened for business on Thursday night at 7:30 o'clock. For this special occasion, I have prepared a very special dinner which will be served for the small cost of 75 cents per plate. The opening dinner will consist of turkey, barbecue, brunswick stew and sea foods. This is a special invitation to all. Your presence and patronage will be appreciated. Don't forget the opening date—Thursday Night, January 29th Theo. Roberson, Mgr. "The Home of Good Eats"

Statement of Condition MARTIN COUNTY BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATION of Williamston, N. C., as of December 31st, 1930 ASSETS THE ASSOCIATION OWNS:

SUNNY SIDE INN Martin County, NC (Exhibit C)

SUNNY SIDE INN
 Martin County, NC
 (Exhibit D)

administration.

Attending Conference

Mrs. Margaret Ricks Pearce and Messrs. T. B. Brandon and Claude Goodman are attending extension service conferences in Raleigh this week.

Visits Grandmother

Miss Glyn Spiers of Louisburg College spent the week-end in Everetts with her grandmother.

Simpsons Move Back To Home

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Simpson have moved back to their home on Watts Street following two years spent in the service by Mr. Simpson.

Secure Marriage License

A marriage license was issued in the county last Saturday to James Bland and Hilda Hopewell, both of Oak City.

and Mrs. W. M. Harrison visited Shelton Bailey in Rex Hospital, Raleigh, Saturday.

Spends Week-End In Norfolk

Miss Ida Roberts spent the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. Louis S. Skiba in Norfolk.

Ladies Aid Meets Saturday

The Corinth Ladies Aid will meet with Mrs. Quencie Modlin Saturday, November 3. All members are asked to be present.

In Local Hospital

Mrs. Ella Davenport, of Jamesville, is a patient in the local hospital.

Here From Washington

Mrs. H. B. Searight, Henry Searight, Miss Katherine Searight, Mrs. Robert Bogart, and Miss Penelope Bogart, of Washington, visited Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Wynne here Sunday afternoon.

Spend Week-End Here

Misses Mary Lawrence and Mary Hinnant, of Wilson, spent the week-end here with Miss Lilybet Muse.

Visit Relatives In Speed

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Howell visited relatives in Speed, N. C., over the week-end.

Miss Maude Taylor, of Norfolk spent the week-end here with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Dick Taylor.

Visit Chessons Here

Mr. and Mrs. Mark Chesson, of Roper, spent last week-end here with Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Chesson.

Visit Relatives In Richlands

Mrs. George Harrison and Mrs. Gaylord Harrison and children, spent the week-end in Richlands with relatives.

Visit In Rocky Mount Monday

Mr. Rush Bondurant, Hilton Feele, Rush Bondurant, Jr., and Mack MacLawhorn visited in Rocky Mount Monday afternoon.

Former Teachers Visit Here

Miss Katherine Bradley, of Camp Butner and Miss Kathryn Mewborn, of Fort Bragg, spent the week-end here with Mrs. Daisy Pope. Former teachers in the local school, the young ladies are now employed by the American Red Cross and stationed at the two centers.

Attend Circus

Mrs. Davis Harrison and Mrs. Gaylord Harrison and children, attended the circus in Rocky Mount Monday afternoon.

Good News!
 FOR FOLKS WITH SNIFFLY
Head Colds

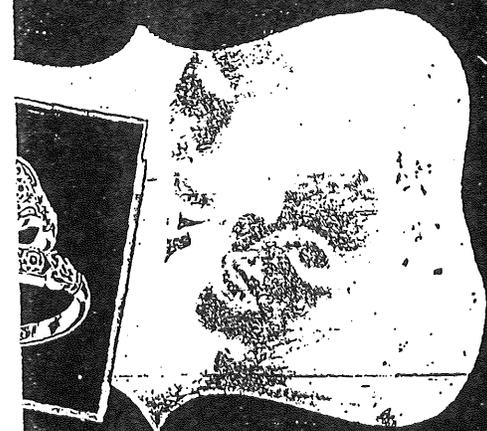
Quick relief from distress of head colds is what you want. So use Va-tro-nol. A few drops up each nostril soothe irritation, relieve congestion. Also helps prevent many colds from developing. It used in three, just try it! Follow directions in folder.

SPECIAL Double-Duty Nose Drops Works Fast Right Where Trouble Is!

VICKS VA-TRO-NOL

FEW
 in 1 Cultivators

Supply Co.
 N. C.



Jewelry And Gifts
Arriving Daily
 receive a few pieces of metal
 been available since the beginning
 Jewelry at the Most Reasonable Prices
 Visit
Jewelers
 Williamston

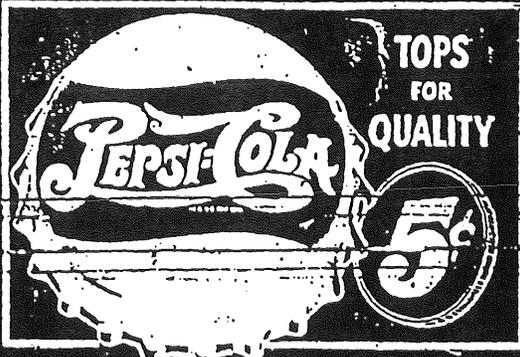
"SUNNY SIDE OYSTER BAR"
NOW OPEN

Service From 6 P. M. To Midnight

Steamed Oysters Our Specialty

We extend to you and your friends a cordial welcome to visit us.

George and C. T. Roberson
 Highway No. 17 — Williamston



Pepsi-Cola Company, Long Island City, N. Y.
 Franchised Bottlers: Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. of Greenville

Office and Storage
 Located in 11

Carolina

— We Pay —
HIGHEST MARKET

Be sure to see or call
 before you sell your

We Pay Drayage To O
 Telephone 1

Gurganus &

Roy Gurganus, Ur
 Russell Roge
 Williamston, N. C.

Glass To Beautify Y

We can furnish ready to
 install with screws

DOOR MIRRORS (Full Length)
MANTLE MIRRORS
WALL MIRRORS

Easy to install. Send us
 measurements for a quote

MIRRORED TABLE PLACES
 Size 16"x16" with Octagonal
 or inverted corners.

FURNITURE AND DESK TOPS
 Any pattern, polished glass
 protect your furniture and
 us your pattern or measurement.

ARTCRAFT GLASS CO.

1718 Sunset Ave. - Box 1
 Rocky Mount, N. C.



SUNNY SIDE INN
Martin County, NC
(Exhibit E)

A PHILADELPHIA OYSTER CELLAR, c. 1830

Print List Entry 290

From F. Grund, Aristocracy in America (vol. 2)



Jones, from 12 Canton Woodville ptg 1848

Politics in an Oyster Cellar

p + w

LC-USZ62-36097

12

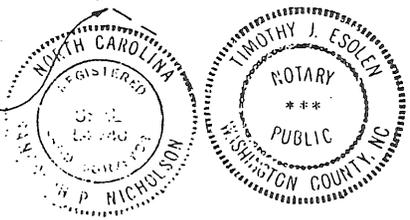
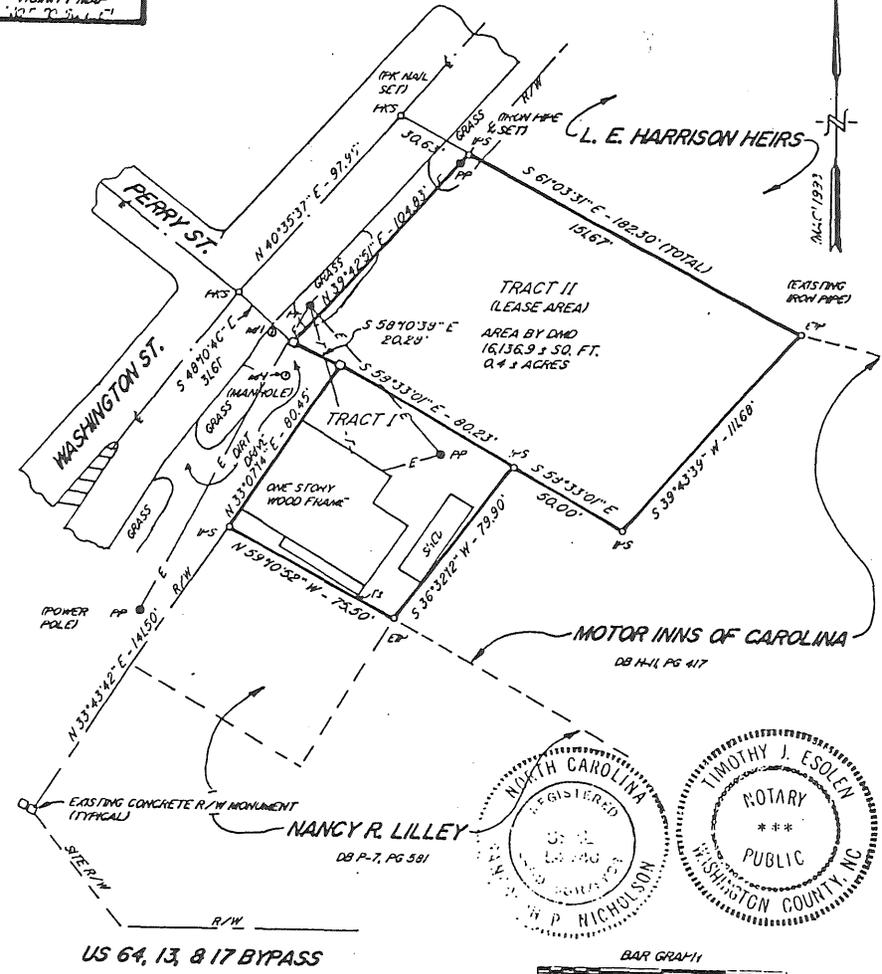
SUNNY SIDE INN
Martin County, NC
(Exhibit F)

TRACT I
AREA BY DMD
6,227.0 ± SQ. FT.
0.15 ACRES

ADJACENT
DB P-7, PG 581
DB H-11, PG 417

NOTES
SUBJECT TO ALL R/W'S, EASEMENTS, ZONING REGULATIONS
AND/OR RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS OF RECORD
AND NOT SHOWN HEREON
NO ENCROACHMENTS
NOT IN A FLOOD HAZARD AREA

VICINITY MAP
10" = 70' (SHEET 1)



I CERTIFY THAT THIS IS A SURVEY OF AN EXISTING PARCEL OF LAND.
State of North Carolina MARTIN County
I, Randolph P. Nicholson certify that this
map was (drawn by me), (drawn under my supervision)
from (an actual survey by me), (an actual survey
under my supervision), (deed description recorded in
Book EE, Page REF); that the ratio of precision
as calculated by latitudes and departures is 1/10,000;
(that the boundaries not surveyed are shown as broken
lines plotted from information found in Book _____,
Page _____); that this map was prepared in accordance
with G.S. 47-30 as amended. Witness my hand and seal
this 25 day of AUG, 1993.
Timothy J. Esolen Notary Public
North Carolina
Washington County WASHINGTON
I, a Notary Public of the County and State
aforesaid, certify that Randolph P. Nicholson,
a registered land surveyor, personally appeared
before me this day and acknowledged the execution
of the foregoing instrument. Witness my hand
and official stamp or seal, this 25 day of
AUG, 1993.
Timothy J. Esolen

AUGUST 24, 1993
SCALE: 1" = 50 FEET

SURVEY FOR:
WILLIAM L. RITTER
AND WIFE
ANN T. RITTER

TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON - MARTIN CO., NC

ROANOKE
LAND
SURVEYING

P.O. BOX 1193
WILLIAMSTON, NC GREENVILLE (NIGHTS)

SUNNY SIDE INN
Martin County, NC
(Exhibit A)

Sunny Side Inn
Martin County, NC
Williamston Quad
Zone 18
E/313680 N/3968200

