

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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 Northampton County Courthouse Square

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER North side of Jefferson St. between
Atherton St. and Brown St.

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Jackson

___ VICINITY OF

2nd

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Northampton

131

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Northampton County Commissioners (Mr. Jasper Eley, Chairman)

STREET & NUMBER

Northampton County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 27845

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Northampton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE

North Carolina 27845

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Northampton County Courthouse and Clerk's Office are located amid a grassy, tree-shaded courthouse square in the small, very southern town of Jackson. The exteriors of both are well-preserved, extremely representative examples of antebellum public architecture. The courthouse square, dominated by these two major buildings, also includes three later structures.

The courthouse, an imposing Greek Revival style temple-form structure faces south. To the west, also facing south, is the smaller one-story brick clerk's office, with the stepped parapet gable ends and plaster cornice, composing a type only rarely represented in the state. Between the two buildings is a small brick domestic-scale building, built in 1900, which while less distinguished than its neighbors, does not intrude.

The courthouse is built of brick laid in common bond and painted white (early twentieth century photographs show it unpainted). It is three bays wide and three longer bays deep. The main floor, treated as a piano nobile, rises a tall single story above the raised basement, which is differentiated by a projecting water table. The main (south) facade is dominated by an imposing prostyle tetrastyle portico with great fluted Ionic columns carrying the simple, heavy pediment. In The Early Architecture of North Carolina, Thomas T. Waterman observed that the "large scale of the columns gives the building a monumental quality which is rivalled only by the heroic portico of the Davidson County Courthouse at Lexington." The outer columns rest on large pedestals that break out from the high foundation of the porch. Two flights of steps rise to the porch--replacing the broad single flight shown in early photographs. The simple entablature of the portico continues along the sides of the building, and at the front and rear corners of the building it is supported by Doric pilasters with simple granite caps and bases.

The main facade now has three entrances: a large, ornately treated central one and two flanking doorways inserted during a 1939 WPA remodeling and expansion. The central entrance consists of a tall double door, each leaf with eight flat panels, beneath a fourteen-light transom. Surmounting the doorway is a heavy, ornate entablature supported on scrolled acanthus consoles. The entablature is enriched with bands of egg-and-dart, acanthus, and foliate moldings. The general appearance of this imposing entrance is seen in early photographs. The flanking doorways are much shorter and simpler, with four flat panels and a simple entablature.

The side elevations have at the first (basement) level, simple windows with two-over-six sash beneath stone lintels. There is a door in the second bay on the west side; it has four flat panels and a simple entablature. The openings of the main story feature extremely large nine-over-nine sash beneath entablatures enriched with a band of egg-and-dart molding.

To the rear of the original courthouse is the WPA era addition, a large two-story block that creates a T-shaped composition. Its scale fits with that of the original block, and the material (brick) and finish blend with the original as well, including the projecting water table, corner pilasters, and entablature. Fenestration is different, however, reflecting the interior space division into two main stories of normal height rather than the high single story of the earlier building. The ends of the addition

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1831, 1858

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Abraham Spencer / H. K. Burgwyn(?)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The broad, open courthouse square at the center of Jackson contains buildings from well over a century of the county's government, including two antebellum public buildings of considerable architectural distinction. The fireproof Clerk's and Register's Office was built in 1831 by Captain Abraham Spencer of Oxford; its construction is well documented in county records. It is a small, handsomely executed brick structure distinguished by Flemish bond brickwork, coved plastered cornices, and stepped gables. The imposing courthouse, built in 1858, is among the few surviving examples in the state of the full-blown Greek Revival temple-form public buildings. Tradition credits H. K. Burgwyn with its construction, but no documents survive from its construction. Later additions to the complex include a small 1900 clerk's office and a 1939 rear addition to the courthouse--both rendered in the fashion typical of their eras.

The county of Northampton in North Carolina was established in 1741 from Bertie County, on land purchased by Jephtha Atherton in 1762.¹ On June 4, 1798, the North Carolina Journal at Halifax reported:

"For lease--Land and plantation at Northampton Courthouse formerly belonging to Col. Jephtha Atherton upon which is a good dwelling house--convenient outhouses--also a grist mill. Besides--immediately at the courthouse there is a house which is now used as a tavern and is from its location well calculated for that purpose. And--a storehouse near it which is well situated for a country store."

This gives a clear picture of the village which later (the property by then belonged to Joseph H. Bryan of Granville County, North Carolina) became the town of Jackson--evidently named for General Andrew Jackson. Before its establishment as Jackson, the village was simply called "Northampton Court House."²

In 1831 the Statehouse of North Carolina, located in Raleigh, burned to the ground. The disaster dramatized the vulnerability of public records to fire, and as a result a number of counties in the state began to make plans to build fireproof buildings to house the county records. Northampton County was among the first, if not the first county in the state to do so.

On April 21, 1831, Samuel Calvert, Esq., chairman of the Northampton County Court, accepted bond of \$1,400 from Abraham Spencer and John D. Amis for the successful completion of the proposed Fire Proof Clerks and Registers Office, which was to be located on the courthouse square in the town of Jackson.³

The cost of the building was to be \$1,400 and Spencer got the job.⁴ Little is known of Captain Abraham Spencer of Oxford, North Carolina, beyond the fact that he did

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later the roof was to be relaid by Bragg, and made tight so that there would be no leakage.¹⁰

On September 20, 1845, William B. Turner was contracted to do additional repairs to the building; the records indicate that he was to lay a new brick floor, the doors to be repaired and some glass panes added in the windows, where they were obviously broken, or missing. This work was undertaken for ninety-five dollars.¹¹

The fireproof building provided some sense of safety which became very attractive in August, 1831, when Nat Turner's slave insurrection in neighboring Southampton County, Virginia, began. A granddaughter of Samuel Calvert, whose house was at the courthouse, recalled:

It was rumored that Nat was headed toward Northampton County. The militia was quartered in the old Clerk's office for the protection of our people. The signal was to be the firing of a gun should Nat be coming this way. That night the soldiers were frolicing and accidentally fired a gun. The people near enough to hear it rushed to town in a panic, and more came as the rumor spread.¹²

Nat Turner never came into Northampton County.

The building was damaged on August 1, 1886, when a severe earthquake occurred near Charleston, South Carolina, which sent great shocks up and down a large section of the eastern seaboard.¹³ At that time the building was repaired, and it continued to be used for its original purposes.

The building located between the Clerks and Registers Office and the courthouse was built in 1900 as offices for the clerk of court and the register of deeds, and used for that purpose until 1939. When the clerk of court and the register of deeds moved into this structure the old Clerks and Registers Office, built in 1831, was used for a number of county offices, among them the sheriff and the superintendent of schools.¹⁴

In 1939 the clerk's and register's offices were moved into the new addition to the courthouse, and the 1831 Clerks and Registers Office was then used for the county library,¹⁵ until December 7, 1970, when the library moved to new quarters. For a time the library had also served as the Northampton County Museum, but as that collection grew, more space was needed, and the museum moved out and into the 1900 building. In 1970 the museum returned to the 1831 Clerks and Registers Office, and shared space with the county Industrial Development Commission who for a time used one room of the building. It is now used solely as the Northampton County Museum.¹⁶

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The additions to the building are of more recent date. The Raleigh News and Observer, Sunday, August 6, 1939, reported that the work of renovating was complete. ²⁰ A. Mitchell Wooten of Kinston, North Carolina, was architect for the addition and the Dermont Construction Company of High Point, North Carolina was general contractor. The paper reported the "work was completed this week. . ." and went on to report that "in the renovation work a wing was added at the rear to provide ample office space. This wing contains offices, jury rooms, county commissioner's room, the judge's chamber, attorney's rooms, and rest rooms. The addition is 80 feet long and 40 feet wide."²¹ The front steps, which originally had descended in a broad, straight flight to the ground, were divided into two main sections and the old wooden balustrade substituted by a more elaborate one of cast iron. The two rooms just inside the front doorway of the original building (originally used as jury rooms) were removed in the renovation²² to enlarge the courtroom. Colonial Revival elaboration was added to the courtroom. The renovation of the courthouse was made possible through the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bragg genealogical data on file in the Genealogical Section of the North Carolina State Library, Raleigh.
 Cross, Jerry L. "Historical Research Report for the Clerk of Court's Office, Halifax, North Carolina." an unpublished manuscript on file with the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
 Flowers, John B. III, Interview with Henry Wilkins Lewis, Northampton County Historian, and director of the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Latitude

Longitude

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 23 acres

36° 28' 24"

77° 25' 11"

UTM REFERENCES

23

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

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 John B. Flowers, III, Survey Specialist, prepared significance
 Description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, Survey Supervisor

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Preservation Section, Div. of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

829-4763

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina 27611

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

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 Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

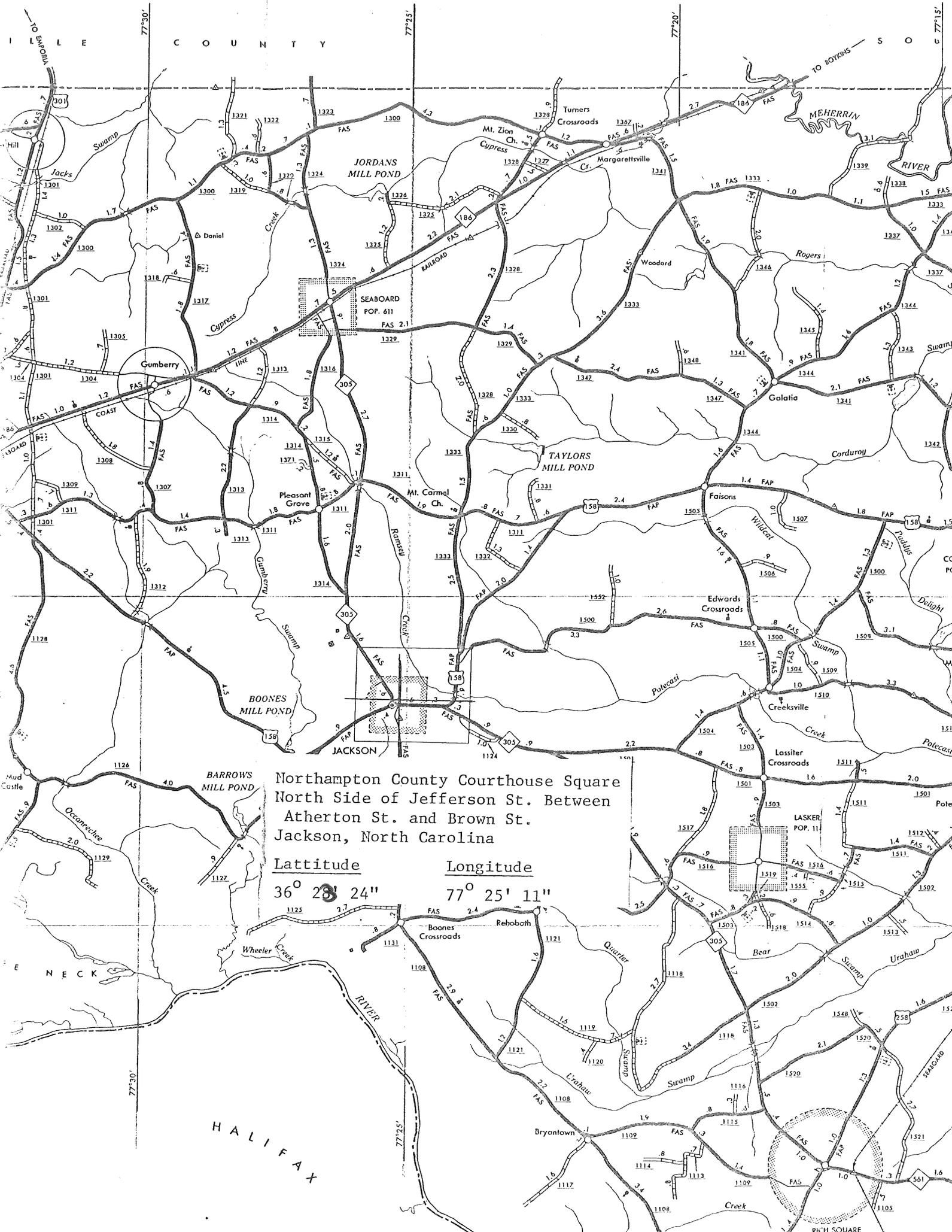
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Northampton County Courthouse Square
 North Side of Jefferson St. Between
 Atherton St. and Brown St.
 Jackson, North Carolina

Latitude

Longitude

36° 28' 24"

77° 25' 11"

