

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 Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House and Outbuildings

other names/site number Swampside

2. Location

street & number NE side of SR 1301, 0.45 mi. SE of jct. with SR 1300 <sup>N/A</sup>  not for publication

city or town Hertford  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Perquimans code 143 zip code 27944

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.)

William S. P... SHPO 12-7-93  
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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

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	
4	1	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
5	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)

Domestic: single dwelling

Domestic: secondary structure

Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural

Agriculture/Subsistence: outbuilding

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: hotel

Other: storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood: weatherboard

roof Metal: tin

other Stucco

Narrative Description

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

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Located in an agricultural area of Perquimans County known as Old Neck, the ca. 1820 Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House and Outbuildings are currently associated with an approximately five-acre site surrounded by agricultural fields to the west and south and by woodland and former pasture to the north and east. This five-acre site includes the dwelling house with its two dependencies, fenced pastures to the northwest and southeast, an area associated with the barn further to the southeast, and a strip of pasture directly behind the house. Old Neck Road separates the house site from the fields beyond, which extend to a thin stretch of woodland that parallels the east bank of the Perquimans River. A new farm road, which runs from directly in front of the dwelling to the river, accents this expansive vista from the house to the river. Fences define the perimeter of the house site and pastures. They also separate the property from the fields. Following a traditional planting scheme, cedars parallel these fence lines in many instances. An enormous, ancient white oak tree stands in the pasture behind the house. The woodland behind the property covers a swampy creek area, which gave rise to the plantation's sometime name, "Swampside."

The house site is comprised of the main dwelling, which stands approximately 75 feet from the road, a cook's house, a brick dairy, a frame smokehouse, and a brick well. The former cook's house currently serves as the kitchen and is perpendicularly placed at the rear north corner of the main house. According to family tradition, it was moved a short distance to this site by Thomas Nixon ca. 1925.\* Oyster shell walks connect the main house with the road, driveway, and dependencies. Directly behind the cook's house, two perpendicularly placed short walks link it with the dairy to the northwest and smokehouse to the northeast. Mature pecan, walnut, and cedar trees shade the yard to the northwest and at the rear. In 1954 Hurricane Hazel destroyed the grove of trees in front of the house.

A remarkable example of an early nineteenth-century Federal-style plantation dwelling, the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House, built ca. 1820, is distinguished by an engaged double-tier piazza on the main (southwest) elevation and flanking pairs of exterior end chimneys. In all likelihood, this two-story frame dwelling, sheathed with beaded weatherboard, originally had a one-story rear shed. During the mid-nineteenth century, this shed was raised to two stories and a one-story shed-roof porch was added. Continuous sills beneath the front section of the dwelling, however, imply that the earliest plan for the house mirrors its present center-hall plan. Today, the body of the house measures approximately 32 feet by 44 feet with an additional ten feet for the depth of each porch.

Additional features, which convey the regional and period character of the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House, are the kick in the gable roofline, the five-bay asymmetrical fenestration pattern, and its beaded weatherboard sheathing. The flush gable ends of the house are accented by a tapered rake board with

\* The former cook's house is counted as a separate, non-contributing building.

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beaded edge. Only one pattern board survives intact on the northwest corner, and it features a curved wave design. Standing-seam tin protects the roof. The fenestration pattern of both the front and rear facades is identical, with corresponding entrances at the central bay. Highlighted by an unusual diamond-pane transom, the front entrance has a double-leaf door, with each leaf containing three raised panels. In comparison, the rear entrance features a four-light transom and a massive door with four raised panels. Both entrances retain their original hardware and three-part Federal surrounds.

Inexplicable variations in window configuration and placement complicate the structural analysis of the dwelling. All first-floor windows contain nine-over-six sash, except for the two windows flanking the front chimney on the northwest elevation, which contain six-over-four sash. The second-floor windows are primarily six-over-six sash, except for those flanking the two front chimneys, which are four-over-four sash. A variation occurs again at the front chimney of the northwest elevation with the second-floor windows. Here, they do not abut the chimney shaft as do all the others. The window surrounds are plain, with a simple inner bead, and all the sills are molded with a cavetto bed molding, except the plain square ones protected by the rear porch. Although each window features shutters, few are original; however, most windows still have the original pintle for each hinge.

Built on brick piers, the house exhibits several typical masonry construction features. Much of the primary pier foundation, however, has masonry infill. Each set of exterior end chimneys conveys a different nineteenth-century building period in form and brickwork. The earlier front two chimneys have stepped double shoulders and are laid in Flemish bond using queen's closure. Their mortar joints are scored and pencilled. The southeast chimney, however, varies in width seven inches from that on the opposing elevation. In contrast, the mid-nineteenth-century rear chimneys are laid in 1:5 American bond and have stepped single shoulders. Each chimney has suffered damage through the years, requiring the replacement of the off-set stacks.

Porches often serve as an extension of interior living spaces, and the double-tier piazza at the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House is no exception. Of generous proportions, it is supported by heavy posts featuring chamfered edges with lamb's tongue motifs. The second floor of the porch survives intact and includes a balustrade composed of a molded handrail with beaded edge and diagonally placed, square-in-section balusters. A v-notch helps secure the balusters to the bottom rail. Also, an apron board with a 10-inch drop skirts the porch roofline, and its bottom edge is highlighted with reeding and a heavy bead. The exterior walls protected by this porch are flush sheathed with beaded boards. Today, the first floor supports are copies of the originals, and the railing no longer exists. Ghost marks on the original attached posts give evidence of the existence of this railing. On the other hand, the one-story shed-roof back porch is supported by slightly

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tapered square-in-section posts with a simple cap. Here the walls are simply flush-sheathed with plain boards.

The interior evolves around a double-pile center-hall plan featuring an expansive hall extending the depth of the house, with a generous straight stair rising from the back of the hall. Interior finishes include plaster walls and pine floors throughout the house. Highly sophisticated Federal-style woodwork, featuring reeding, drillwork, and sunburst medallions, graces both the hall and the northwest main parlor on the first floor. The woodwork in the three other downstairs rooms is simplified and continues to reflect the Federal style; however, all mantels in these rooms are later nineteenth century replacements.

The main parlor exhibits handsome raised-panel wainscoting and one of the finest Federal-style three-part mantels in Perquimans County. The mantel's deep cornice and flanking pilasters contain handsome reeding patterns that complement the robust central sunburst and the two smaller ones highlighting the frieze band. Three-part surrounds with mitred corners frame each window. Picture rails are placed between the facade's front two windows and on the opposing wall.

In contrast, the center hall has flat-panelled wainscoting and one of the most outstanding Federal-style staircases in the county. This stair incorporates a square-in-section newel with molded cap, rectangular-in-section balusters, molded handrail with coved bottom edge, wave-patterned stair brackets, and a stringer with reeded banding forming a herringbone pattern. The wainscoting of the hall also rises along the wall of the stair. All interior doors leading from the hall have six raised panels, and all surrounds are three-part Federal-style ones with mitred corners. An exposed summer beam with beaded edges divides the hall.

Through the years, the three other downstairs rooms have remained basically unchanged except for the very plain Greek Revival mantels in each. The southwest parlor has flat-panelled wainscoting, including a chair rail with simple reeding. Here, the door surrounds repeat the three-part profile of the hall and main parlor; however, the window surrounds are a simplified version with the same molded backband and inner bead. On the other hand, the two former shed rooms have identical but simplified woodwork details. Both the door and window surrounds have cyma reversa backbands and an inner bead. The baseboards are plain with a beaded edge. The southeast room has a closet extension beside the rear chimney, which may be an original feature.

The plan of the second floor mirrors that of the first floor, except for a small closet at the rear of the hall. The hall and southwest bedroom have identical chair rails; however, the chair rail in the northwest bedroom copies

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the downstairs wainscoting of the hall and main parlor. In the northwest bedroom, the window and door surrounds are simplified versions of the ones in the main parlor. This bedroom also has picture rails placed identically to those in the main parlor. In the hall and southwest bedroom, the door and window surrounds vary slightly in the use of a cyma reversa molding profile. All doors are Federal in style and contain six flat panels.

The upstairs mantels illustrate both the Federal and Greek Revival styles. Those in the two front bedrooms reflect the Federal style but vary in form and size. The southwest bedroom fireplace opening has a simple mantel composed of a shallow cornice and mitred architrave surround. In the northwest bedroom, the mantel is similar in form but restrained in detail in comparison to the one in the main parlor. It features a molded cornice, three-part frieze, pilasters, and reeded banding. The mantels in the rear bedrooms exhibit simple Greek Revival lines.

Currently serving as the kitchen for the main house, the former cook's house is perpendicularly placed with its gable end to the northeast corner of the back porch. This gable-end roof projects to form a small sheltered breezeway connection with the rear porch. The simple one-room frame structure features gable-end entrances, six-over-six sash, plain weatherboards, and standing-seam tin roof. The interior is sheathed with beaded tongue-and-groove boards on both the walls and ceiling.

In 1992, the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House was adapted for use as a bed and breakfast inn. During this conversion, several finishes were painstakingly restored, including the floors and the marbelizing on the baseboards and mantels. Bathrooms were unobtrusively placed in each bedroom upstairs. A door was also cut in the northeast room downstairs to obtain direct access to the kitchen. In addition, the former closet in the southeast bedroom downstairs was adapted to accommodate a larger bathroom. Outside, a picket fence, resembling one documented in a ca. 1897 photograph, was reconstructed along the road. Board fences were also built around the remaining perimeter of the house site.

Outbuildings

(C) Dairy: rare ca. 1820 brick dairy with stucco skim coat; measures approximately 9 feet by 9 feet; features a pyramidal roof with finial cap, wooden shingles, and a deep eave overhang measuring 1 foot 3 inches with boxed cornice; central entry includes molded surround and replacement door; southeast elevation contains single window with fixed louvred insert; beneath the overhang, each elevation has rectangularly-shaped ventilator with diagonally set grille and board shutter; strap hinges, twisted hooks secure board shutters; interior has stuccoed and whitewashed walls, plaster ceiling,

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dirt floor, and three tiers of shelving.

(C) Smokehouse: mid-nineteenth-century gable-roof frame smokehouse measuring approximately 12 feet 4 inches by 10 feet 3 inches; exterior features beaded weatherboards, tapered rake boards, brick pier foundation, exposed ceiling joists, and steeply pitched roof sheathed with wood shingles; mortise-and-tenon construction with diagonal bracing; replacement board-and-batten door.

(C) Well: nineteenth-century circular brick well with cement overcoat; currently capped.

(C) Barn: ca. 1860 one-story transverse frame barn with loft measuring approximately 60 feet by 55 feet; pegged mortise-and-tenon construction; exterior features include steeply pitched gable-roof, weatherboard sheathing currently covered by agricultural metal, pent-roofs protecting each gable-end central entry, and massive board-and-batten doors hung on strap hinges; combination entry on northwest elevation protected by shed extension of main roof; interior used for crop and equipment storage as well as thrashing; wide center aisle flanked by five cribs on southeast side and three on northwest; loft area used for additional storage and accessed by interior stair and hoist opening plus gable-end opening on northeast elevation.

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)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1820-1897

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

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:

\_\_\_\_\_

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Summary

The Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House and Outbuildings in Perquimans County represent collectively a remarkable cross-section of buildings typically associated with the plantation society of the Albemarle region during the first half of the nineteenth century. Probably built by William Fletcher about 1820, this outstanding Federal-style, two-story frame dwelling features an engaged double-tier piazza, a porch form which derives from the West Indies and embodies a vernacular tradition common throughout eastern North Carolina. The interior follows a center-hall plan and includes beautifully crafted Federal-style mantels, stair, and wainscoting. Located approximately one-half mile from the Perquimans River in an area known as Old Neck, this approximately five-acre complex includes two period domestic outbuildings, a rare brick dairy and a traditional frame smokehouse, in addition to a large mid-nineteenth century transverse barn. Associated culturally with the Society of Friends during the eighteenth century, Old Neck became an area dominated by a plantation society during the nineteenth century prior to the Civil War. Following the war, this rural society evolved into one dependent on tenant farming, a trend which extended well into the twentieth century. Ownership patterns associated with the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House clearly reflect these changes. Of Quaker descent, William Fletcher was one of the earliest North Carolinians to provide by will for his slaves to be freed and transported to Liberia or some similar place. Following Fletcher's death in 1826, the plantation was purchased successively by four brothers in the prominent Skinner family. In 1843 Benjamin S. Skinner, owner of nearby Cove Grove plantation, acquired the property and in 1849 deeded approximately 362 acres of it to his son, James Leigh Skinner. The eldest son, Skinner lived on the farm until he moved to Raleigh in 1897, after which the property was sold first to Joseph A. Byrum and then to Judson J. Fleetwood, both of whom used it as a tenant farm. Thomas Nixon acquired the property in 1922. His descendants own it today and have adapted it into a bed-and-breakfast inn.

Agricultural Context

Formed circa 1668 and one of the oldest counties in the state, Perquimans County is geographically isolated from most of North Carolina in an area known as the Albemarle region. Its accessibility to navigable waterways, primarily the Albemarle Sound and Perquimans, Little, and Yeopim rivers, promoted trade and development during the early years of the region's history. Old Neck, one of the first areas of substantial settlement in Perquimans County, occupies an area near the town of Hertford, on the east bank of the Perquimans River between Sutton's Creek and Vosses Creek. Old Neck's agricultural history illustrates important patterns in land ownership and use from settlement to the present day. Domestic architecture in the Albemarle region associated with this changing agricultural society reflects the influences of vernacular

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building traditions, trade, and architectural patternbooks noting stylistic trends.

During much of the eighteenth century, Perquimans County was the center of North Carolina Quakerism, with the North Carolina Yearly Meeting convening in Old Neck until 1785. Increased membership necessitated the establishment of a second monthly meeting called Sutton's Creek in 1794, but it was discontinued in 1835 as membership declined. Between 1825 and 1854, six of the seven individual Quaker congregations in Perquimans were discontinued and only Piney Woods Meeting remained.<sup>1</sup>

Small farms dominated the rural landscape of Perquimans County throughout the eighteenth century; however, during the early nineteenth century, an outward migration from the densely populated county gave rise to the development of large plantations. With the land and economy less able to support the rising population, people began to migrate. This migration proceeded along two lines, with many Quakers beginning circa 1812 to move to free states in the old Northwest, especially Indiana, and others, primarily slaveowners, moving to the deep South. The population continued to grow, however, rising from 5,440 to 7,419 between 1790 and 1830. By 1860, the population had declined slightly to 7,238.<sup>2</sup>

Farmers in Perquimans County depended on two principal crops, Indian corn and wheat, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Smaller quantities of oats, beans, and potatoes were also produced. The 1780 taxables list indicates that 65% of the Perquimans landowners owned 200 acres or less, and on average, each landholding was 230 acres. Although the Society of Friends had renounced slavery at the time of the Revolution, slaves were an important part of the labor force in Perquimans County. As early as 1790, slaves comprised 35 percent of the Perquimans population, and were owned by 46 percent of the families in the county. Fewer than five bondsmen were owned by 60 percent of these slave-holding families. In 1790 the largest number of slaves in Perquimans were held by Gosby Toms and William Skinner, with 52 and 47, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

Trade with the West Indies remained active during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with corn, staves, and shingles the principal exports. Perquimans County's rivers and creeks provided numerous private landings where schooners and sloops from northern and West Indian ports traded commodities and manufactured goods for produce of the county. Many local merchants purchased their goods in New York and Philadelphia, and a few, like Samuel Nixon, owned sailing vessels.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning around 1810, as the Quakers' small farm society began to decline in Perquimans County, their property was often consolidated into large plantations worked by slaves for such planters as James Leigh, Benjamin S.

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Skinner, William Jones, Francis Nixon, and Josiah T. Granberry. Many of these planters lived either in Old Neck or Durants Neck and were of Quaker descent. On the other hand, James Leigh was an orphaned carpenter's apprentice who served as a deputy sheriff, magistrate, legislator, and head of the county militia; he became one of the wealthiest planters in the county by 1850.<sup>5</sup>

Drainage of land by ditches or canals was a common practice among farmers and planters due to ". . . the low and marshy terrain of Perquimans, particularly in the peninsulas or necks."<sup>6</sup> Many of the most successful farmers in the Albemarle region lived in Perquimans County, and southern agriculturalist Edmund Ruffin noted that the county was the ". . . scene of the greatest drainage labors in northeastern North Carolina. . . . And ditching was remunerative."<sup>7</sup> Extensive fencing protected each farm from livestock, which was allowed to graze openly. Ruffin criticized this practice and recommended developing fenced pastures for livestock as a more economical alternative.<sup>8</sup> Clearing land, constructing and maintaining drainage systems, and building fences required time and a great deal of labor.

Concomitant with the growth in size of plantations was the growth of slave labor. Between 1830 and 1860, the slave population in the county increased from 2,749 to 3,558. Indian corn and wheat remained the county's two principal crops; however, the cultivation of cotton was rapidly on the rise. The 2 bales of cotton produced in 1850 had dramatically increased to 225 bales by 1860.<sup>9</sup>

Although the economic depressions of 1819 and 1837 had reduced land values significantly in Perquimans County as well as North Carolina, by 1850 general economic prosperity was once again on the upswing. "From 1850 to 1860 improved acreage in the county rose by 12 percent, to 52,182 acres; the cash value of farms, 49 percent, to \$1,537,770; and the value of farm implements and machinery, 42 percent to \$47,594."<sup>10</sup> The value of livestock also rose by 51 percent. By 1860 in Perquimans County, the principal draft animals during the antebellum period, oxen, were slowly being replaced with mules. The 1850 and 1860 census figures clearly reflect this shift from 605 oxen and 471 mules to 568 oxen and 661 mules, respectively. In addition, the decline in the number of farms from 505 to 456 underscores the continuation of the trend to consolidate farms during this decade preceding the Civil War.<sup>11</sup>

Support for the Confederacy during the Civil War was not wholesale. The Quaker community, whose numbers had risen once again prior to the war, were opposed to both slavery and the war. Also, seven out of every ten white men in the county did not own slaves, and resented this unfair form of competition with free labor.<sup>12</sup>

Reconstruction and its ensuing years wrought significant changes to the agricultural economy of Perquimans County. Farmers were confronted with two

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major problems, "adapting to a new labor system" and "obtaining capital and credit."<sup>13</sup> Although few changes took place in agricultural production, a system of farming through tenancy now became widespread and furnished a solution to both of the farmers' problems. This system provided an alternative for many unskilled laborers and was based either on a cash arrangement or, as in most cases, on share-cropping. Usually the landowner supplied the necessary seeds, tools, and mule teams. In return, he received one-half share of the tenant's crop.<sup>14</sup>

Indian corn, wheat, and oats continued as the staple crops in the county following the Civil War. Corn remained the primary cash crop. By the end of the century cotton had become an important cash crop, while wheat production had declined notably. During the early twentieth century, both soybeans and peanuts emerged as important money crops. Tobacco was also grown, but on a small scale by comparison with other tobacco producing counties.<sup>15</sup>

The severe economic repercussions of the Civil War brought dramatic changes in agricultural farm patterns. Large plantations often were divided into smaller farms, and as the figure for the number of farms increased, the size of farms diminished. In North Carolina, the number of farms increased from 75,203 in 1860 to 225,000 in 1900. Conversely, the average size of a farm decreased from 316 acres in 1860 to 101 acres in 1900. The number of farms operated by tenants increased significantly; in 1880, more than one-third of the farms in the state were operated by tenants. This trend continued throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In Perquimans County the number of farms listed in the 1870 census had more than doubled from 491 to 1,016 by 1880, of which 744 were owner occupied and 272 hired.<sup>17</sup> The number of tenant farms continued to rise steadily and totalled 641 by 1900 and 762 by 1920. This 1920 figure represents 52% of all the county's farms.<sup>18</sup>

#### Architectural Context

Architectural development in Perquimans County during the Federal period is usually regional in character, vernacular in interpretation, retardataire in development, and modest in form. The surviving architectural fabric of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries exhibits an increase in spatial needs which instigated a re-evaluation of spatial functions. A desire for an increase in utility, privacy, and/or formality, often, dictated a change in traditional plans. The growing plantation society in the Old Neck, Durants Neck, and Harveys Neck areas of the county, however, introduced and fostered a more sophisticated appreciation for current architectural trends. This evolution culminated in the antebellum period. By the late nineteenth century, new construction in Perquimans County was governed more by popular trend than by tradition.<sup>19</sup>

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In Perquimans County by the nineteenth century, typical dwellings evolved as a composite of house forms, floor plans and styles with economics, traditions, ability, and personal preferences serving as the determinates. One-and-a-half story and two-story dwellings with gable roofs were the norm. Most floor plans were either hall and parlor or center hall, with both usually having one or two shed additions. The front shed additions were always porches which were either engaged or attached and one or two stories; however, rear sheds comprised a series of two or three rooms, with the central area sometimes serving as an open porch. A double-pile plan and a symmetrical fenestration pattern were rarely used until the mid-nineteenth century. The same holds true for the use of two-story rear ells which were associated only with large plantation homes. Period styles were usually illustrated in exterior and interior woodwork details, often, in a retardataire manner. During the first half of the nineteenth century, these styles typically ranged from transitional Georgian/Federal to Federal to Greek Revival.

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the two-story house form was beginning to replace the one-and-one-half-story dwelling. These two-story gable-roof dwellings usually had a one-story shed-roof porch at the front and a one-story rear shed addition. Their interior plans were either hall-and-parlor or center-hall ones. In Perquimans County, the James Whedbee House (ca. 1790) is one of the finest examples of this form with transitional Georgian/Federal style detailing and a center-hall plan. On the other hand, the modest Layden-Reed House (ca. 1810) has a hall-and-parlor plan with transitional Georgian/Federal style detailing. Both of these houses have one-story front and rear shed-roof additions but the stair placement on the interior varies. In the James Whedbee House, a dog-leg stair rises in the hall, but at the Layden-Reed House, a straight stair rises out of the central room in the shed. Located on Durants Neck road, both houses have asymmetrical fenestration patterns.

Porches traditionally fall into two types, the more common one-story shed-roof form and the double-tier piazza. Representing a practical extension of living space, each is supported by posts and includes a balustrade. The double-tier piazza, however, is usually associated with more up-scale dwellings and derives from long-standing trade associations with the West Indies. In Perquimans County, two early nineteenth-century examples are the Isaac White House and Ashland, the home of John Skinner which burned in 1952. During the antebellum period, this porch form took on classical proportions as exemplified by Land's End (ca. 1835), the home of planter and carpenter James Leigh. It was also incorporated into the development of two-story rear additions creating either an ell or T-plan, as illustrated at the Edmund Blount Skinner House (ca. 1845) and the William Jones House (ca. 1860 addition).

Three remarkable Federal-style examples of this form in Perquimans County

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are the John McNider House (ca.1805), Joseph Mardre House (ca. 1810), and Thomas D. White House (ca. 1845). Located in Bethel Township, the McNider and Mardre houses both exhibit modest examples of Federal woodwork. Here, the wainscoting and six-panel doors feature typical flat panels and the three-part mantels are distinguished by a molded cornice and flanking pilasters with reeding. On the other hand, the Thomas D. White House illustrates the retardetaire use of various styles. The wainscoting and six-panel doors have raised panels featuring polychromatic trompe l'oeil painting to enhance these panels. The Federal three-part mantels are massive and elaborately reeded.

Earliest use of the Greek Revival style in Perquimans County probably stemmed from the work of James Leigh, a local builder and one of the largest property owners in Perquimans. In his plantation Land's End (ca. 1835), Leigh utilizes the Greek Revival vocabulary of Asher Benjamin's architectural pattern book, Practical House Carpenter, published in 1830. Another patternbook, Minard Lafever's The Modern Builders Guide, may have inspired the tripartite design for Stockton (ca. 1840), the plantation of Josiah T. Granbery. On the other hand, the Godfrey-Reed House (ca. 1845) illustrates the influence of the county's major Greek Revival plantations on the homes of substantial farmers in the area.

Embodying many of the architectural trends within Perquimans County during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House is an outstanding example of the two-story house form with center-hall plan associated with more prosperous farmers during the early part of the century. Its double-tier engaged piazza and asymmetrical fenestration pattern are tied to the vernacular building traditions of the region. This porch is also one of the earliest examples of the double-tier piazza remaining in the county today. The Federal-style woodwork of this plantation house is exemplary and its scale and detail exhibit a true desire for more formal living. The mid-nineteenth-century enlargements to this house reflect a very restrained interest in the then popular Greek Revival style by comparison with the academic patternbook-inspired examples being built by prosperous farmers within the Old Neck vicinity.

Farm complexes dating from the first half of the nineteenth century are rare in Perquimans County; however, a good cross-section of domestic and agricultural outbuildings that illustrate typical construction techniques and forms do exist. Most outbuildings are frame and utilize mortise-and-tenon construction. The use of brick, plank, or log is rare. The more common domestic outbuildings are smokehouses and dairies. Smokehouses usually have gable roofs and central entrances with board and batten doors featuring strap hinges and pintles. A closely spaced stud system with diagonal bracing is also characteristic. On the other hand, dairies often have pyramidal or gable roofs with deep overhanging eaves. Ventilation was aided by either a grille or fixed louvers. Examples of stilted dairies also exist. Only five

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antebellum barns survive in the county today. These massive structures are either transverse or English in form and most are feed barns. Usually, small pent roofs protect each entrance, and the doors are hung on a series of massive strap hinges.

Historical Background

Between 1814 and 1824, William Fletcher [ca.1794 - 1826] consolidated land from inheritance and purchase to create his approximately 391-acre plantation in the Old Neck area of Perquimans County.<sup>20</sup> Fletcher was the son of Joshua Fletcher and Margaret Toms, whose Quaker families were long time residents of Old Neck. In January 1817, he married Sarah Nixon, the daughter of wealthy planter and merchant Samuel Nixon.<sup>21</sup> In all likelihood, Fletcher built his plantation house about 1820. Life in the Fletcher household centered around the farm and included five slaves. The 1820 census indicates five people were working in agriculture and one in manufactures. His household also included four children and four adults.<sup>22</sup>

Fletcher's life was prematurely cut short when he was lost at sea during a trading voyage to the West Indies in 1826. As stipulated by will, his property was sold except for his slaves and special bequests. One of the first North Carolinians to do so, Fletcher had made special provisions in his will for his slaves to be freed and transported to Liberia, Haiti or any free state they might choose. One of the bequests included a building called the cabinet maker's shop which he left to his brother Zachariah Fletcher along with a half acre of land.<sup>23</sup> As the estate for William Fletcher was settled, accounts indicate that on January 13, 1827, Peter Moor was paid \$7.49 for sawing and on February 13, 1827, Willie Reynolds was paid \$40 for "painting the house." Both payments included an additional payment for twenty-four months interest.<sup>24</sup>

From 1827 to 1843, the property was owned at various times by four Skinner brothers. The Skinner family originally settled in Perquimans County across the river from Old Neck in present-day Bethel Township. Although of early Quaker descent, the Skinners quickly became one of the county's largest land and slave holding families from the late eighteenth century until the Civil War. First, Joseph B. Skinner [1781-1851] of Chowan County purchased the plantation from Fletcher's estate on August 14, 1827, for \$5,777.50.<sup>25</sup> Five months later, he sold it to Dr. Josiah C. Skinner [1800-1835] for \$5,777.54 on January 1, 1828.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, Dr. Skinner planned to live on the plantation, because he also bought from his brother eighteen slaves and ". . . all the cattle, mules, hogs, provisions and farming utensils of every description on the plantation late William Fletcher's . . ." for \$6,400.<sup>27</sup> By 1830 his slave holdings totalled thirty and his household included twelve people, five of whom were children.<sup>28</sup> Following his death in November 1835,

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Dr. Skinner's will stipulated that his real estate be sold. Charles W. Skinner [1784-1871] purchased the plantation on December 21, 1835, for \$10,000.<sup>29</sup> Residing in the Bethel Township area near Albemarle Sound, Charles Skinner was a Baptist layman and prosperous planter owning 79 slaves.<sup>30</sup> In all probability, the former Fletcher plantation was one of several owned by Charles Skinner. Benjamin S. Skinner [1795-1861] purchased the property from his brother November 1, 1843, for the sum of \$8,000.<sup>31</sup> This lower price, in all probability, reflects reduced land valuations following the economic depression of 1837.

One of the county's most prosperous antebellum planters, Benjamin S. Skinner began in 1818 purchasing small tracts of land in the Old Neck area to form a plantation. His marriage on December 23, 1819, to Elizabeth Leigh, the daughter of the prosperous builder and planter James Leigh, was the impetus for the construction of one of the most outstanding plantation houses in the Albemarle region, Cove Grove (ca. 1830).<sup>32</sup>

As his children matured, Skinner purchased neighboring properties with the intent of providing for each child. His purchase of the adjoining Fletcher plantation fit into this plan. In 1849, Skinner deeded the bulk of the property, approximately 362 acres, to his eldest son, James Leigh Skinner [1823-1902] ". . . in consideration of the natural love and affection which I have and do bear toward my son . . . ." <sup>33</sup> This deed was also confirmed by will upon the death of Benjamin S. Skinner in 1861. It is uncertain when James L. took up residence at the plantation; however, by 1850, he maintained his own household, was married to Nancy Baker Hoskins, and had an infant son, Benjamin Skinner.<sup>34</sup> In all likelihood, it was James L. Skinner who named the farm Swampside.

In 1850, James L. Skinner was a substantial farmer with 14 slaves and a plantation valued at \$8,500 that included 250 acres of improved land and 221 unimproved acres. He farmed using farm implements and machinery valued at \$100 and working livestock which included six mules and a yoke of oxen. His livestock had a value of \$1,151, and the primary crops raised were 2,500 bushels of Indian corn, 500 bushels of wheat, and 200 bushels of sweet potatoes.<sup>35</sup>

Prior to the Civil War, dramatic changes reflecting increased prosperity had taken place within the household of James L. Skinner. His family included his wife, three children, and his mother-in-law. The farm was now valued at \$14,000 and included 336 improved acres and 426 unimproved acres. An increase of improved acreage allowed the farm to become diverse in production and increase crop yields. Sheep and cattle were now being raised and another yoke of oxen assisted with the farming. Corn production had nearly doubled to 4,500 bushels, and wheat had more than tripled to 1,856 bushels. Small quantities of sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, hops, and beans were also

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raised. To help feed the livestock, hay production nearly quadrupled to 20 tons. Slaveholding on the plantation also rose to 26.<sup>36</sup>

The effects of the Civil War on the farm were significant. By 1870 the value of the farm had plummeted to \$7,000. Apparently, James L. Skinner solved the problem of labor by paying his workers wages which may have included board. In 1870 he paid \$2,400 in wages. Farm production included 4,000 bushels of corn and small quantities of oats, sweet potatoes, beans, and Irish potatoes. Cotton was also grown for the first time with 4 bales produced. Overall the estimated value of the farm production was \$5,350.<sup>37</sup>

By 1880 the farm had not only decreased in size to approximately 610 acres but also included one tenant working on a share basis. Its valuation now was \$4,500. Improvements in crop production were wholesale. Although cotton production showed the biggest increase rising to 27 bales, the largest acreages were planted in wheat and corn with corn production exceeding that of wheat. The estimated value of all farm production was \$3,265. The figure for total wages paid dropped to \$1,055.<sup>38</sup>

The sale of the farm by James Leigh Skinner in 1897 marked a major transition for the property, the end of owner occupancy. For the next twenty-five years, it would be developed and operated solely as a tenant farm. Skinner, who moved to Raleigh, sold the 480-acre farm to Joseph A. Byrum for \$10,000.<sup>39</sup> Byrum in turn sold it in 1903 to Judson J. Fleetwood, a prosperous lumber mill operator.<sup>40</sup> Fleetwood amassed an 844-acre tract in Old Neck dotted with tenant houses which he sold to the White Land Company in 1919.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Nixon purchased from the White Land Company in 1922 the approximately 230-acre portion of the Fleetwood property which included the Fletcher-Skinner House.<sup>42</sup> Descendants of Thomas Nixon own the property today and adapted it into a bed-and-breakfast inn in 1992.

Footnotes

1. Dru Gatewood Haley and Raymond A. Winslow, Jr., The Historic Architecture of Perquimans County, North Carolina (Hertford: Town of Hertford, 1982), 24, hereinafter cited as Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans; Alan D. Watson, Perquimans County: A Brief History (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1987), 69, hereinafter cited as Watson, Perquimans County.

2. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 20-22.

3. Watson, Perquimans County, 43.

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4. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 23; Watson, Perquimans County, 54.
5. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 20-21.
6. Watson, Perquimans County, 45.
7. Watson, Perquimans County, 46.
8. Watson, Perquimans County, 46.
9. Fifth Census of the United States, 1830: Perquimans County, North Carolina, 120, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, hereinafter cited as Fifth Census, 1830, with appropriate page number; J. D. B. DeBow, The Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), 321, hereinafter cited as DeBow, Seventh Census; Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Agriculture in the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 109, hereinafter cited as Kennedy, Agriculture in 1860.
10. Watson, Perquimans County, 43-44.
11. Watson, Perquimans County, 44; DeBow, Seventh Census, 319; Kennedy, Agriculture in 1860, 108.
12. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 26.
13. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 55.
14. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 55.
15. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 55; Watson, Perquimans County, 97.
16. Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, third edition, 1973), 522.
17. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 55.
18. Fourteenth Census of the United States taken in the Year 1920. Volume VI, part 2: Agriculture (Washington: Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1922), 239.

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19. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 27-54. The following discussion of architecture in Perquimans County is well documented in this book.
20. Samuel Nixon to William Fletcher, September 20, 1815, Perquimans County Deeds, Office of Register of Deeds, Perquimans County Courthouse, Hertford, Book T, 197, hereinafter cited as Perquimans County Deeds; Zachariah Fletcher to William Fletcher, December 30, 1820, Book U, 231, Perquimans County Deeds.
21. Author's interview with Raymond A. Winslow, Hertford, N. C., July 7, 1993 (notes on interview in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Winslow Interview.
22. Fourth Census of the United States, 1820: Perquimans County, North Carolina, 143, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.
23. Will of William Fletcher, Perquimans County Wills, 1711-1909, C.R.077-801.4, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
24. Account of the estate of William Fletcher, Estate Records of William Fletcher, Perquimans County Estate Records, 1714-1930, C.R. 077.508.35, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
25. Executors of the estate of William Fletcher to Joseph B. Skinner, August 14, 1827, Book V, 820, Perquimans County Deeds.
26. Joseph B. Skinner to Josiah C. Skinner, January 1, 1828, Book V, 821, Perquimans County Deeds.
27. Joseph B. Skinner to Josiah C. Skinner, January 1, 1828, Book V, 822, Perquimans County Deeds.
28. Fifth Census, 1830, 120.
29. Notes of Raymond A. Winslow, Jr., Fletcher-Skinner House file, Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; Executors of the estate of Josiah C. Skinner to Charles W. Skinner, December 21, 1835, Book Y, 294, Perquimans County Deeds.
30. Sixth Census of the United States, 1840: Perquimans County, North Carolina, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

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31. Charles W. Skinner to Benjamin S. Skinner, November 1, 1843, Book AA, 665, Perquimans County Deeds.

32. Haley and Winslow, Historic Architecture of Perquimans, 208.

33. Benjamin S. Skinner to James L. Skinner, 1849 [registered on March 22, 1850], Book CC, 444, Perquimans County Deeds.

34. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Perquimans County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 35, microfilm of National Archives manuscript copy, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, hereinafter cited as Seventh Census, 1850, with appropriate schedule and page number. This copy of the census lists James Leigh Skinner in the Yeopim District; however, as noted by Raymond A. Winslow and verified by the author, the manuscript copy located in the North Carolina State Archives correctly lists Skinner in the Sutton's Creek District. Winslow Interview.

35. Seventh Census, 1850, Agriculture Schedule, 35; Slave Schedule, 221.

36. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Perquimans County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 33-34, microfilm copy of National Archives manuscript copy, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, hereinafter cited as Eighth Census, 1860, with appropriate schedule and page number; Eighth Census, 1860, Agriculture Schedule, 23; Slave Schedule, 14.

37. Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Perquimans County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, 3, manuscript copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

38. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Perquimans County, North Carolina, Agriculture Schedule, 1, microfilm copy of National Archives manuscript copy, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville.

39. James L. Skinner to Jos. A. Byrum, January 1, 1897, Book 2, 152, Perquimans County Deeds.

40. Joseph A. Byrum and wife, Pennie L. to J. J. Fleetwood, September 5, 1903, Book 6, 215, Perquimans County Deeds.

41. J. J. Fleetwood and wife, E. Mae to The White Land Company, January 3, 1919, Book 12, 386, Perquimans County Deeds.

42. The White Land Company to Thos. Nixon, November 8, 1922, Book 14, 591, Perquimans County Deeds.

Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House & Outbuildings  
Name of Property

Perquimans County, NC  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 5.06 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	8
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4	0	0	6	4	2	5
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

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 Drucilla H. York, Architectural Historian

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 6, 1993

street & number 1903 E. Fourth Street telephone (919) 752-5260

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 Mrs. Nancy D. Rascoe

street & number Box 10, Route 3 telephone (919) 426-1812

city or town Hertford state NC zip code 27944

**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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Haley, Dru Gatewood and Raymond A. Winslow, Jr. The Historic Architecture of Perquimans County, North Carolina. Hertford, N. C.: Town of Hertford, 1982.

Lefler, Hugh Talmage and Albert Ray Newsome. North Carolina: The History of a Southern State. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, third edition, 1973.

Perquimans County Deeds. Office of the Register of Deeds, Perquimans County Courthouse, Hertford, N. C.

Perquimans County Estate Records, 1714-1930. Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Perquimans County Wills, 1711-1909. Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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Watson, Alan D. Perquimans County: A Brief History. Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1987.

Winslow, Raymond A., Jr. Interview, Hertford, N. C., July 7, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. Notes, Fletcher-Skinner House file. Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

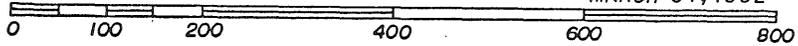
Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description: The property boundaries for the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House and outbuildings are shown on the accompanying survey map recorded in Perquimans County Deed Book 143, 692.

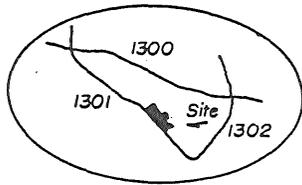
Boundary Justification: The nominated property includes the entire parcel of land currently associated with the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon House and outbuildings.

# A SURVEY AND PLAT FOR NANCY DAWSON RASCOE PARKVILLE TOWNSHIP PERQUIMANS COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

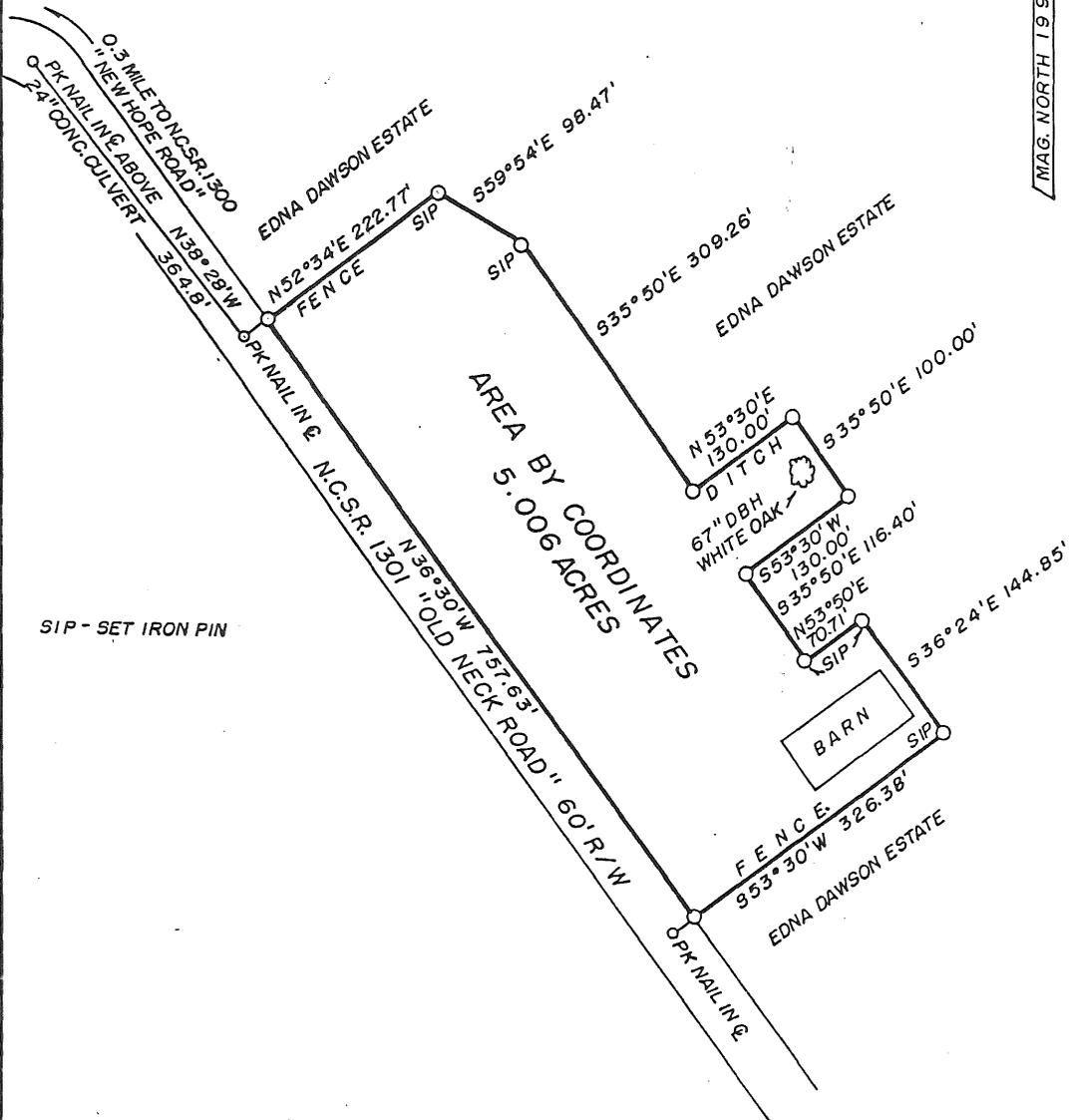
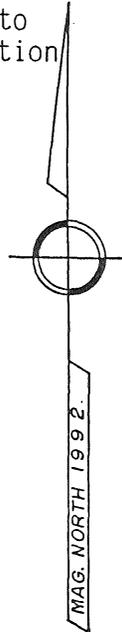
SCALE: 1" = 200' MARCH 04, 1992



This survey is an exception to the Perquimans County definition of "Subdivision".



VICINITY SKETCH



NORTH CAROLINA  
CHOWAN COUNTY

I, JOSIAH A. WEBB III, CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAT WAS DRAWN FROM AN ACTUAL SURVEY CONDUCTED BY ME, THAT THE ERROR OF CLOSURE AS CALCULATED BY LATITUDES AND DEPARTURES IS 1:10,000+ AND THAT THIS PLAT WAS PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH G.S. 47-30 AS AMENDED. WITNESS MY ORIGINAL SIGNATURE, REGISTRATION NUMBER AND SEAL THIS 5TH DAY OF MARCH, 1992.

JOSIAH A. WEBB III  
 JOSIAH A. WEBB III L-2989 EDENTON, N.C.

NORTH CAROLINA  
CHOWAN COUNTY

I, KATHLEEN H. ELMORE, A NOTARY PUBLIC IN AND FOR CHOWAN COUNTY CERTIFY THAT JOSIAH A. WEBB III, R.L.S. PERSONALLY APPEARED BEFORE ME THIS DAY AND ACKNOWLEDGED THE DUE EXECUTION OF THE FOREGOING INSTRUMENT. WITNESS MY HAND AND OFFICIAL SEAL THIS 5TH DAY OF MARCH, 1992.

Kathleen H. Elmore  
 KATHLEEN H. ELMORE MY COMM. EXP. 06/08/93



