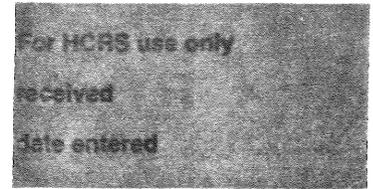


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**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 James Dexter Ledbetter House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number North side of US 74 business, 0.1 mile west of junction not for publication  
with SR 1551  
city, town Cool Springs Township  vicinity of Forest City Congressional District Eleventh  
state North Carolina code 037 county Rutherford code 161

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park (occasional)
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Butcher

street & number 239 Hillside Avenue

city, town Charlotte  vicinity of state North Carolina

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rutherford County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Rutherfordton state North Carolina

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

---

## 7. Description

---

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

Sited on the north side of US 74 about three miles west of Forest City, the James Dexter Ledbetter House presents a bold and somewhat fanciful interpretation of the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles. The large frame house sits about one-hundred-and-fifty yards off of the heavily traveled business thoroughfare facing south. The house is buffered from surrounding roadside development by its attractively landscaped fifteen acre lot. A flat grassy lawn lies between it and the highway. Mature ornamental evergreens flanking the structure blend with the native forest to the rear and sides. Fortunately, the semi-natural landscape continues immediately across US 74 in front of the house. A cluster of well-maintained outbuildings, mostly contemporary with the house, populate the wooded fringe to the rear.

Family tradition provides that Mr. Ledbetter designed the house himself and that local contractor Andy Daynard built it. While inventively composed, however, all the architectural elements employed in the design were standard to the early twentieth century Neoclassical and Colonial Revival lexicon. At most the building's "designer" selected options from within the current vernacular. Nonetheless, the dramatic result was the finest country house in Rutherford County in its day and remains the outstanding local survivor of its type.

The house relies on the traditional double-pile plan for its formal symmetry. It sits on a continuous, low brick foundation with no basement and rises two-and-one-half stories through a three-bay facade to a dormered attic beneath a symmetrical hipped roof. The tin shingled roof is truncated yielding a flat central section bounded by a heavy balustrade which crowns the structure. Finials ornament the apexes of all the roof dormers. Undercut modillions ornament the broad overhanging boxed cornice.

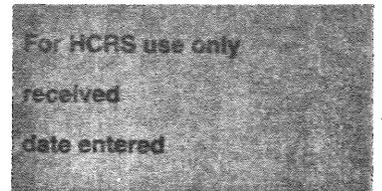
An interplay of porch spaces produces the drama that dominates the building's facade. First, the house's overall cubical form is eroded by a two-story space engaged deeply beneath its hip roof and supported in three bays by continuous Tuscan columns. At the central bay the columns are doubled in the axis of entry so as to provide support for a deeply pedimented projecting central gable. This gable is flanked by pedimented dormers. An oval window accents its tympanum.

Second, a flat-roofed one-story porch threads the space between the large columns and the house, turns at each end and continues along one-half of each side elevation. This porch is also supported by Tuscan columns and displays, in contrast to the heavy modillions at the roofline above, light dentils beneath its boxed cornice. It is surmounted by a turned-member balustrade punctuated by square posts set above the supporting columns. Urns crown these posts. The same elements make up the balustrade on top of the house.

The resulting porch composition plays the imposing vertical scale of the full-height space and columns against the strong horizontal line and more human scale of the one-story element. A variety of degrees of shelter results: from the uncovered promenades at the sides on the second tier (where the one-story porch emerges from the engaged two-story space), to the covered porte cochere beneath the one-story eastern wing, to the doubly-sheltered principal entrance beneath the layered canopies of both porches.

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet    DESCRIPTION    Item number    7    Page    one

The central circulatory bay of the double-pile plan projects forward onto the porches at both levels announcing entrances. The doorway onto the second tier is flanked by oval windows like the one which, on its side, accents the principal gable. The broadly-lighted double doors of the ground-floor entrance are surrounded by exquisite stained glass sidelights and transom.

The central hallway beyond the double doors is wide enough, at ten feet, to function as a fully furnished hall. It is also the building's finest interior space architecturally. Diminutive alcoves open to either side under arched openings immediately inside the entrance. Doors midway and at the end of the hall open to the four principal downstairs rooms. Besides the stained glass transom and sidelights, and lighted front doors, the hall features paneled wainscotting, a heavy full-entablature cornice, and an elaborate hall mirror framed by ornate Corinthian columns. Broad open-string stairs descend toward the front of the house along the east wall. Their heavy, boxed starting newel toes out onto a bottom swell step. Narrow square balusters support a simple, rounded handrail.

Few changes have been made to original conditions throughout the house. All interior woodwork retains its original stained and varnished finish. The walls and ceilings are cream-colored plaster. Every room besides the hallways contains a fireplace served by one of two interior chimneys. Most display mirrored millwork mantels common to the period. A one-story kitchen wing to the north is served by its own exterior chimney.

Several substantial outbuildings stand to the rear of the house. Two of these, a small, servant's quarters and a stable, display detailing which relates them architecturally to the main structure. Both are gable-roofed, weatherboarded frame buildings with boxed cornices which return in their gable ends. The servant's quarters is one story with a small porch engaged in one corner and supported by a single Tuscan column and two pilasters. The stable is a story-and-half structure with an open passage to one side on the ground floor and a single two-over-two window in its gable, lighting the stable loft.

A sturdy brick "pump house" sits immediately to the rear of the servant's cottage. It is also a carefully constructed building, with boxed cornice and hip roof, and with segmental arches above its door and several windows.

The James Dexter Ledbetter property retains all the characteristics which early in this century earned for it local landmark status as the finest country house in Rutherford County.

# 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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1914 **Builder/Architect** James Andrew Baynard

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The James Dexter Ledbetter House is a bold and inventive interpretation of the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles built in 1914. It is located about three miles west of the Rutherford County town of Forest City on a landscaped and wooded fifteen acre site with several contemporary outbuildings. The two-and-one-half story frame house features a dramatic interplay of one-and two-story columned porches on its facade. James Dexter Ledbetter was a prominent businessman in Forest City, best known as the president of the National Bank of Forest City, which he founded in 1923. He died in 1926 and his widow, the former Affie Harris, resided in the house until her death in 1961. The house is currently owned by their daughter, Mrs. Doris Ledbetter Butcher, who lives in Charlotte with her husband. It is unoccupied, except for the frequent visits by Mrs. Butcher and her family. Little altered and in excellent repair, the house remains the county's finest example of Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styling.

**CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:**

- B. The James Dexter Ledbetter House is significant as the estate of its namesake, a prominent early twentieth century western North Carolina businessman.
- C. The Ledbetter House presents a bold interpretation of the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles and has been since its construction in 1914, Rutherford County's finest example of the type.
- D. Located on the site of a late eighteenth century tavern, the old Red Tavern, the Ledbetter property is likely to contain significant archaeological information.

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Continuation sheet    HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE    Item number 8

Page 1

The James Dexter Ledbetter House is located near Forest City in Rutherford County. The handsome country house was built in 1914, by Ledbetter, a native of McDowell County and the son of Dr. Jonathan and Amanda Ledbetter.<sup>1</sup> It is still owned by his descendants.

Forest City, originally called Burnt Chimney, was incorporated in 1877. The town contained only 110 residents in 1880. The coming of the railroad in 1887 and the establishment of the Florence Mill in 1897 gave the town needed impetus, however, and by 1900 it had a population in excess of 1,000. In 1904 the Forest City Bank, the town's first bank was formed, with Dr. G. E. Young as president. Three of the bank's seven organizers were residents of Marion in McDowell County, including Ledbetter.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of his business interests in Rutherford, Ledbetter remained a resident of Marion until 1910, after the death of his first wife. In 1912 he married Affie Harris. He purchased 15 acres just west of Forest City and built his house, employing a local builder James Andrew Baynard. The house was located on the site of the old Red Tavern, a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century tavern, which was built near the intersection of the Salisbury-Lincolnton-Asheville turnpike with the Charlotte-Asheville road.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to his banking career Ledbetter dealt in real estate and quickly became one of Rutherford County's wealthiest men, and a civic leader of note. In 1923 the National Bank of Forest City opened with Ledbetter as president. He remained president until his untimely death in April of 1926 at the age of 55 years.<sup>4</sup> His widow lived in the house until her death in 1961. They had two daughters Frances R. Ledbetter and Doris Ledbetter Butcher. Miss Ledbetter died in 1971 leaving Mrs. Butcher as the sole owner of the house.<sup>5</sup>

The house is presently unoccupied. Mrs. Butcher and her husband live in Charlotte and make frequent visits to the house and keep it in good repair.<sup>6</sup> Called by the Asheville Citizen "the finest country home in the county," the Ledbetter house is still one of Rutherford's showpieces.<sup>7</sup>

The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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Continuation sheet HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Asheville Citizen, April 14, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Forest City Courier, August 1, 1968; Clarence W. Griffin, History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties, North Carolina, 1730-1936 (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1977, originally published 1937), 353-354, hereinafter cited as Griffin, History of Rutherford County; Rutherford County 1979: A People's Bicentennial History (Rutherfordton: Rutherford County Bicentennial Committee, 1979), 467-470, hereinafter cited as Rutherford County, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Rutherford County 1979, p. 654; Clarence W. Griffin, Essays on North Carolina History Forest City: The Forest City Courier, 1951), 174-176; Letter from Mrs. Doris Ledbetter Butcher to Dr. John Little, June 29, 1981, hereinafter cited as Butcher letter.

<sup>4</sup> Asheville Citizen, April 14, 1926; Griffin, History of Rutherford County, 390; Forest City Courier, August 1, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> Asheville Citizen, December 19, 1961; Butcher letter; Rutherford County Will Book B, p. 567. Ledbetter also had three sons by his first marriage but they did not figure in the house's chain of title.

<sup>6</sup> Butcher letter.

<sup>7</sup> Asheville Citizen, April 14, 1926.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation page

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 15.7

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UMT References

A 

1	7	4	1	8	0	0	0	3	9	1	2	5	1	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing									

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Zone		Easting				Northing								

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Forest City, Rutherford County, tax map 241-1-1, outlined in red.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

Description by Douglas Swaim, Survey Specialist; Significance by Jim Sumner, Research name/title Specialist

organization N. C. Division of Archives and History date December 15, 1981

704-298-5024 (Asheville)

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 919-733-6545 (Raleigh)

city or town Raleigh, state N. C. 27611

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William S. Fair, Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 14, 1982

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

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Page 1

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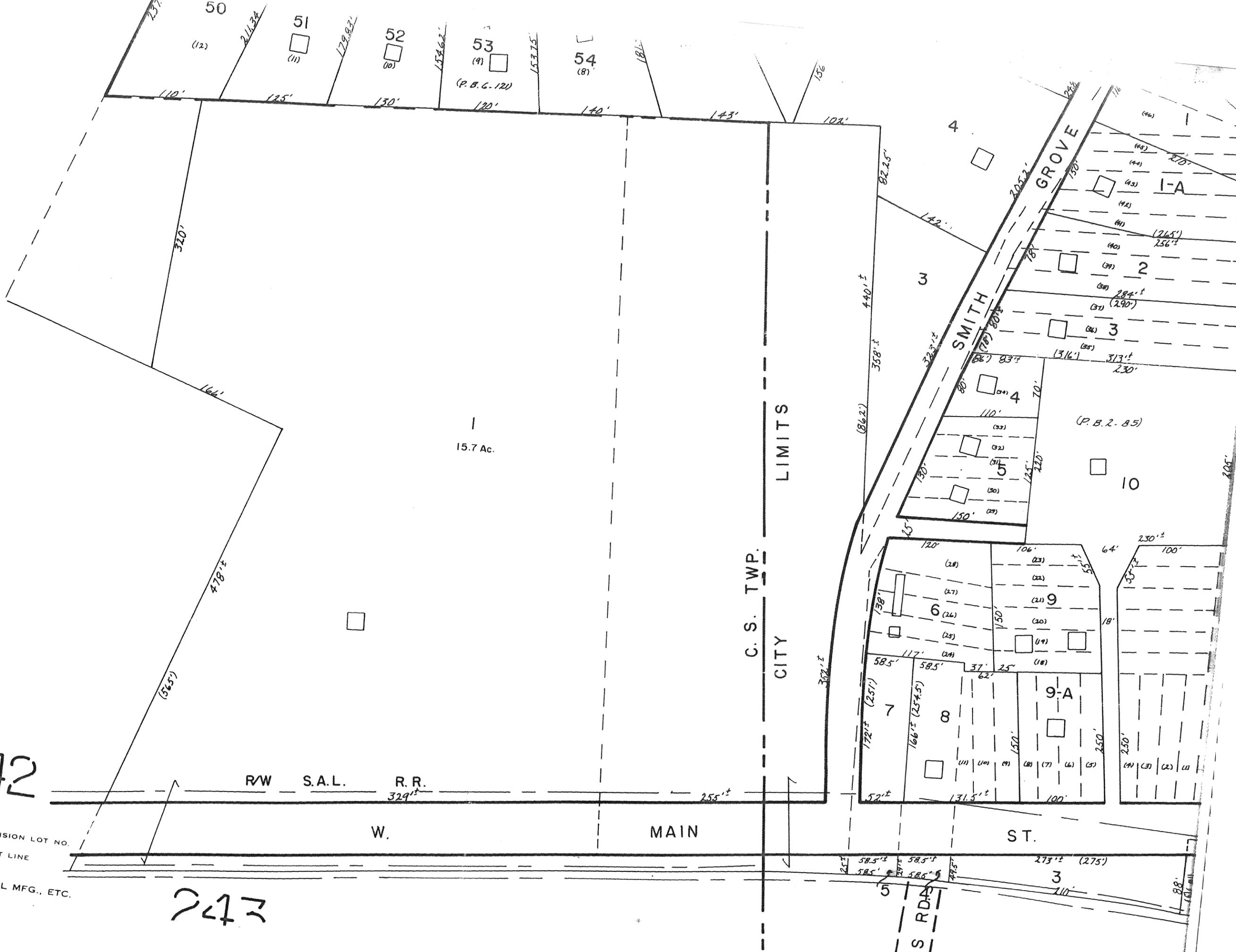
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NUMBER IN ( ) INDICATES ORIGINAL SUBDIVISION LOT NO.  
OPEN NUMBER INDICATES TAX MAP LOT NO.  
DASHED LINE IS ORIGINAL SUBDIVISION LOT LINE  
SOLID LINE IS LIMIT OF OWNERSHIP

RESIDENCE  COMMERCIAL MFG., ETC.



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15.7 Ac.

C. S. TWP.  
CITY LIMITS

R/W S.A.L. R.R.

W. MAIN ST.

SMITH GROVE

S RDA

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