

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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received  
date entered

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic North Carolina Granite Corporation Quarry Complex

and/or common

2. Location

street & number N Side NC 103  
0.6 mi. E. of Mount Airy city limits not for publication

city, town Mount Airy vicinity of congressional district Fifth

state North Carolina code 037 county Surry code 171

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object:	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
Machinery	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name North Carolina Granite Corporation  
Mr. Sam Brintle, Treasurer (919) 786-5141

street & number Post Office Box 151

city, town Mount Airy, vicinity of state North Carolina 27030

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Surry County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Dobson state North Carolina 27017

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input 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

The North Carolina Granite Corporation Quarry Complex is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Surry County, near the town of Mr. Airy. The mountainous site covers an area of 266 acres, with approximately 1/3 square mile being the quarry itself. The Ararat River flows through the northwestern portion of the site and provides the water used in the cutting and sawing of the granite. The North Carolina Granite Corporation claims to own the largest open-face granite quarry in the world. Covering an area approximately one mile long and 1/3 mile wide, the quarry as seen from the air resembles a giant oyster shell. The granite deposit is perfectly solid showing no natural bed planes or seams, and the stone is a biotite granite of medium grey, almost white color. It has been estimated that at the present production rate of 3,000 carloads per year, the deposit still will not be exhausted five hundred years from now. Stone is quarried by the "lifting process", first used when quarry operations began in 1889. The lifting process is a combination of the impact of confined black powder gases and the natural tendency of the granite to expand and contract with the wide range of temperatures in the North Carolina mountains. Some early machinery continues to be used, including a 1928 Patch-Wegner gang-saw from Rutland, Vermont, two 1926 and 1927 Pawling and HERNISCHFEGER Builders cranes, and a 1926 Ingersoll-Rand air compressor.

Several early buildings remain on the site. The cutting shed, constructed in 1927 by the J. D. Sargent Granite Company, is a two-story rectangular frame building sheathed in weatherboards and carrying a gable roof. The building houses the principal cutting operations for monuments, mausoleums, structural details, and other types of artisan work and is approximately 660 feet long by 85 feet wide displaying six-over-six sash windows and large diagonally braced sliding doors. A one-story granite shed addition on the east elevation contains the blacksmith's shop, boilers, compressors, and other mechanical equipment. The saw shed, a large two-story structure approximately 175 feet long by 150 feet wide with a two-story addition on the south elevation, was originally a long one-story building sheathed in weatherboards but is now covered with metal siding. Built in 1930, the shed contains the cutting operations for the production of granite curbing and other traffic control and highway safety products.

In addition, there are two significant early granite structures, the office building and a structure which was built as the company blacksmith's shop. The latter is a long one-story T-shaped structure constructed of random-laid ashlar with quoined corners and solid board shutters with strap hinges on the shorter side of the building. The gable roof is surmounted by a louvered clerestory. The office building, constructed in 1928, is an imposing three-story with basement structure of coursed rock-faced ashlar over a random-laid granite basement. It is six bays wide with bottom hung casement windows delineated by full-height pilasters and a string course between the second and third stories. The low hipped roof with exposed granite rafters is pierced by an offset capped granite chimney and a half-timbered elevator tower which rises from the northeast corner. Over the first floor windows are pointed granite lintels, and diamond-shaped trim blocks are set within the pilasters between the small third floor windows. The recessed porch, sheltering the three door entrance bay, is distinguished by a frontispiece with a simple granite pediment inscribed with the date "1928" and ornamented by flanking scrollwork. Plain Doric columns and flat Doric pilasters carry the entablature which bears the words "North Carolina Granite Corporation" on the frieze.

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Several recent structures dot the property. Included are a large metal building used for the cutting of bridge members, storage buildings, and a granite structure with an adjacent granite silo where crushed stone is produced. Other early structures and features include a granite water tank, no longer used, a granite horse-watering trough and pump building adjacent to the office building, and several remnants of workers' housing opposite the entrance and on a hillside overlooking the quarry. Although most of these buildings are small undistinguished frame houses, one granite bungalow remains, said to have been built by one of the Vermont stone cutters who came south to work for the company. Random-laid rock-faced granite walls are found around much of the site, especially around the excavated faces of the west, east, and south sides of the quarry and along the entrance road. Finally, standard-gauge railroad tracks extend around the north side of the quarry with spurs to the cutting, sawing, and crushing plants.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates      1889      Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The North Carolina Granite Corporation is the largest open-face quarry in the world, in continuous operation since 1889. The several companies that have operated on the site have produced granite for some of the most significant structures in the United States, including the Ft. Knox Bullion Depository, the Arlington Memorial Bridge, the Wright Brothers Memorial, and the Albert Einstein Memorial. The most prominent figure in the history of the site was J. D. Sargent, a Vermont native who served as president of the North Carolina Granite Corporation from 1918 until his death in 1945. Under his leadership the company rose to a position of national prominence in the granite industry. Located on the Ararat River in Surry County near the town of Mt. Airy, the 266-acre site contains, in addition to the one-third square mile quarry, several early structures that continue in use, including the 1928 office building, constructed of granite with much ornamental granite detail, the 1927 cutting shed, a long two-story frame building with a stone shed addition, and a one-story T-shaped granite structure said to have been used originally as a blacksmith shop.

### Criteria Assessment:

A. The North Carolina Granite Corporation is significant for the important contributions that it has made to the architectural history of the United States through the production of the granite used in the construction of many nationally prominent structures. These include the Bullion Depository at Fort Knox, the Arlington Memorial Bridge in Washington, the Wright Brothers Memorial at Kitty Hawk, and the recently dedicated Albert Einstein Memorial in Washington.

B. The history of the North Carolina Granite Corporation is associated with the work of J. D. Sargent, president of the company from 1918 until 1945. Sargent, who came from Vermont to serve as superintendent of the quarry, directed the rise of the North Carolina Granite Corporation to a position of national importance in the granite industry.

C. The North Carolina Granite Corporation is a significant example of the type of construction associated with the production of granite, which ranges from the imposing office building constructed entirely of granite produced on the site to the massive cutting shed, one of the largest frame structures in North Carolina. As an industrial complex of such importance not only to the State of North Carolina but also to the entire country, the North Carolina Granite Corporation is an industrial archeology site of extreme prominence.

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Surry County's North Carolina Granite Corporation is built around what is believed to be the world's largest open faced granite quarry. The quarry is the most important commercial granite deposit in the state and is the cornerstone of Mt. Airy's industrial base. The quarry is responsible for Mt. Airy's nickname, the "Granite City." It encompasses over 200 acres, is nearly a mile long, and is 1800 feet wide.<sup>1</sup>

No attempt was made to exploit the granite commercially until the late 1880s. The catalyst for this change was the arrival of the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley railroad in Mt. Airy in 1888. Prior to the arrival of the railroad, the small community, incorporated in 1885, had been important only as a vacation resort.<sup>2</sup> The railroad was begun in 1877 with the intent of linking the Blue Ridge with Wilmington. The stretch which reached Mt. Airy was begun in Greensboro. Its approach to Mt. Airy was slow and tortuous. Several times the under-financed railroad almost slipped into financial ruin only to be saved by the firm leadership of its president Julius Alexander Gray, a Greensboro financier and son-in-law of Governor John Motley Morehead.<sup>3</sup>

Arriving with the railroad was Thomas Woodruff, an English-born contractor, who operated a Greensboro based building firm. Woodruff's company was employed by the railroad to build railway stations along the path of the railroad. As much as possible they used whatever local materials they could find. According to local tradition, Woodruff took one look at the high quality medium grain granite and immediately recognized its worth.<sup>4</sup> Woodruff and his sons, Thomas, Jr., George, and Frank, along with several prominent Greensboro businessmen such as Julius Gray and J. A. Odell purchased the granite deposit and some surrounding acreage in 1888.<sup>5</sup> Quarrying operations were begun in 1889 with a production of 135 carloads in 1890. Business was slow in the early years due to several factors, including the Panic of 1893, the necessity of importing skilled workers from New England and from Europe, and difficulty in getting the product to major markets, although a spur was built connecting the quarry with the main railroad.<sup>6</sup>

As word of the opening of the quarrying operations in Mt. Airy spread to other established centers of granite production, there was an influx of experienced labor to the Mt. Airy area. Skilled quarrymen and stone cutters from New England, Scotland, England, and Italy gained employment with the new company. In addition, the quarry became an important source of jobs for the people of the surrounding area, providing needed training in a skilled trade. Although there are no foreign workers with the North Carolina Granite Corporation today, descendants of those who immigrated to Mt. Airy in the early years continue to work there.

In 1899 Woodruff and his sons, under the name of Thomas Woodruff and Sons, leased from the Mt. Airy Granite Company "all its real estate and personal property . . . [in] Mt. Airy together with all of its cutting sheds, overhead cableways, steam

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engines, hoist steam boiler and drills, derricks, rock crushers (etc.)," for a per annum rental of \$5,000 until January of 1905.<sup>7</sup> By that time the North Carolina Granite Corporation had been formed with incorporation in Delaware. By 1908 the latter corporation had bought out the older Mt. Airy Granite Company. This series of transactions left Woodruff in charge of the company, backed by an infusion of northern capital.<sup>8</sup>

In 1910 the company hired John D. Sargent as superintendent. Sargent was a 39 year old stonecutter from Vermont at the time he was hired. The dynamic, innovative Sargent quickly became the dominant man in the company. Sargent leased the company's cutting sheds as a separate operation, thus serving for a time in the dual capacities of quarry superintendent for the North Carolina Granite Corporation and owner of the J. D. Sargent Granite Company.<sup>9</sup> In the latter role he became particularly interested in the monument trade and "proved to his own satisfaction that Mt. Airy's white granite could compete with the finest stone from Vermont."<sup>10</sup>

Sargent's business was so successful that it created tension between himself and Thomas Woodruff. Sargent obtained the financial backing of three bankers, William Shaffner, and F. H. Fries of Winston-Salem and Charles B. Keese of Martinsville, Virginia, and bought out the Woodruff operation in 1918, with Sargent becoming president of the firm. He remained in this capacity until his death in 1945.<sup>11</sup> "During that time, using aggressive merchandising methods, Sargent built the North Carolina Granite Corporation into a national institution."<sup>12</sup>

Sargent concentrated the efforts of the company in three areas: memorials, monuments, and mausoleums. Projects such as the 17 million dollar Arlington Memorial Bridge were built largely of Mt. Airy granite.<sup>13</sup> In 1927 production reached 3,000 carloads per annum, a figure that has been maintained to the present day. By this time most of the company's employees were natives of the area.<sup>14</sup> When the Depression came, Sargent had strengthened the company to such an extent that it weathered the difficult years in good shape.<sup>15</sup> Production was kept at a high level, as was employment. The jobs offered by the company and the capital funded into Mt. Airy enabled the city to weather the Depression. When Sargent died in 1945 he had developed the North Carolina Granite Corporation into a recognized national leader in the field.<sup>16</sup>

The prominent position that the company occupies in the industry is evidenced by the many nationally important structures that have been built of granite from the Mt. Airy quarry. In addition to the Arlington Bridge, the bullion depository at Ft. Knox, the Wright Brothers Memorial at Kitty Hawk, the Municipal Building in New York, and the Pennsylvania State Memorial at Gettysburg have been built of Mt. Airy granite. Also, several important buildings housing North Carolina state government departments in Raleigh utilized stone from the site, including the Justice Building and the Education Building. A significant recent project was the Albert Einstein

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Memorial in Washington. The base, including the star chart of black Norwegian granite, was entirely executed by the North Carolina Granite Corporation using both native and imported stone.

John Prather Frank took over as company president following the death of Sargent. Frank had been hand-picked by Sargent and had served as the company's vice-president from 1940 until 1945, and as secretary-treasurer for five years prior to that. Under his leadership the company continued to thrive.<sup>17</sup> Frank continued as president until 1977 when he became Chairman of the Board of Directors. He was replaced as president by Lacy S. Vernon. The company currently employs approximately 250 people. Although many of the sheds and buildings date from the 1920s, as well as some early equipment the company's equipment is modern and up to date. Its products include mausoleums, building stone, pressed stone, poultry grit, and highway curbing, and its customers are situated throughout the eastern United States.<sup>18</sup>

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sam Brintle (compiler), "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," Unpublished paper, 1, 9, hereinafter cited as Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation." An open faced granite quarry is distinct from a pit quarry, which is below the surface. At the Mount Airy quarry the pieces of granite are "lifted" to the surface using a combination of confined black powder gases and the natural tendency of the granite to expand during the day.

<sup>2</sup>William Franklin Carter, Jr., and Carrie Young Carter, Footprints in the Hollows: or Surry County and Her People (Elkin, North Carolina: The Northwestern Regional Library, 1976), 94-96.

<sup>3</sup>Bettie Caldwell (compiler), Founders and Builders of Greensboro: 1808-1908 (Greensboro: Joseph J. Stone and Company, 1925), 258-260; Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 2.

<sup>4</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 2; Winston-Salem Journal, February 26, 1950.

<sup>5</sup>J. A. Odell purchased three tracts from R. S. Gilmer in 1889. In 1891 Odell sold these tracts to the Mt. Airy Granite Company for \$14,000. These tracts encompassed almost 300 acres. Surry County Deed Book 26, p. 69; 26, p. 70; 26, p. 72; 45, p. 97; 45, p. 99.

<sup>6</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 3; Winston-Salem Journal, February 26, 1950.

<sup>7</sup>Surry County Deed Book 45, p. 80.

<sup>8</sup>Surry County Deed Book 57, p. 143.

<sup>9</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 3-4; The State, "Mount Airy Section." IV (November 7, 1936), 25-28, hereinafter cited as The State, "Mount Airy Section."

<sup>10</sup>Winston-Salem Journal, February 26, 1950.

<sup>11</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 4-5; The State, "Mount Airy Section," 27-28; Winston-Salem Journal, May 26, 1945, February 26, 1950.

<sup>12</sup>The State, "Mount Airy Section," 25.

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<sup>13</sup>Other prominent projects featuring Mt. Airy stone include the gold bullion depository at Fort Knox, the Wright Memorial at Kitty Hawk, and the Dodge Memorial in Detroit.

<sup>14</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 4-5.

<sup>15</sup>Of particular importance in the depression period was the Arlington Bridge, completed in the early 1930s. "The quarrying and cutting of the \$2,000,000-worth of stone used required over a year and tided the quarry over the early years of the Depression, furnishing labor for the granite cutters, and a concomitant boost for the slackening business of the community." Winston-Salem Journal, September 5, 1937.

<sup>16</sup>Sargent's obituary in The News and Observer (Raleigh) remarked that he "was a leader in developing the South's quarrying resources for many years and was a recognized figure in the nation's granite industry." The News and Observer, May 27, 1945.

<sup>17</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 5.

<sup>18</sup>Brintle, "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation," 9-12; Telephone interview with Sam Brintle, treasurer, North Carolina Granite Corporation, Mount Airy, March 30, 1979.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Brintle, Sam (compiler). "History of the North Carolina Granite Corporation."  
Unpublished paper.
- Caldwell, Bettie (compiler). Founders and Builders of Greensboro: 1808-1908.  
Greensboro: Jos. J. Stone and Company, 1925.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 266 acres

Quadrangle name Mount Airy North, Va.--N.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>17</u>	<u>537820</u>	<u>404081810</u>	B	<u>17</u>	<u>5378210</u>	<u>40395210</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>17</u>	<u>535700</u>	<u>40400810</u>	D	<u>17</u>	<u>535640</u>	<u>40401510</u>
E	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	F	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
G	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	H	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The boundary of the N.C. Granite Corporation is shown as the red line on the attached map entitled: Property of the N.C. Granite Corporation, Mount Airy, Surry County, N.C. Traced from original map surveyed by I.W. Barber and drawn by John P. Frank, October, 1940. This includes the quarry, associated industrial sheds, and

**Offices**  
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 Architectural description by David W. Parham, Consultant  
Historical statement by Jim Sumner, Researcher--Research Branch

organization Survey and Planning Branch date November, 1979  
Archeology and Historic Preservation  
N.C. Division of Archives and History

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

city or town Raleigh, state North Carolina 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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date January 10, 1980

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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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Carter, William Franklin, Jr. and Carter, Carrie Young. Footprints in the Hollows:  
or Surry County and Her People (Elkin, North Carolina: The Northwestern  
Regional Library, 1976).

The News and Observer (Raleigh). May 27, 1945.

The State. "Mount Airy Section." IV, November 7, 1936.

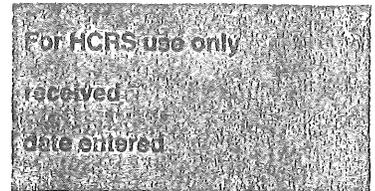
Surry County Deed Books. Microfilm copy. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

Telephone interview with Sam Brintle, Treasurer, North Carolina Granite Corporation,  
March 30, 1979.

Winston-Salem Journal. September 5, 1937; February 26, 1950.

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Continuation sheet Addendum

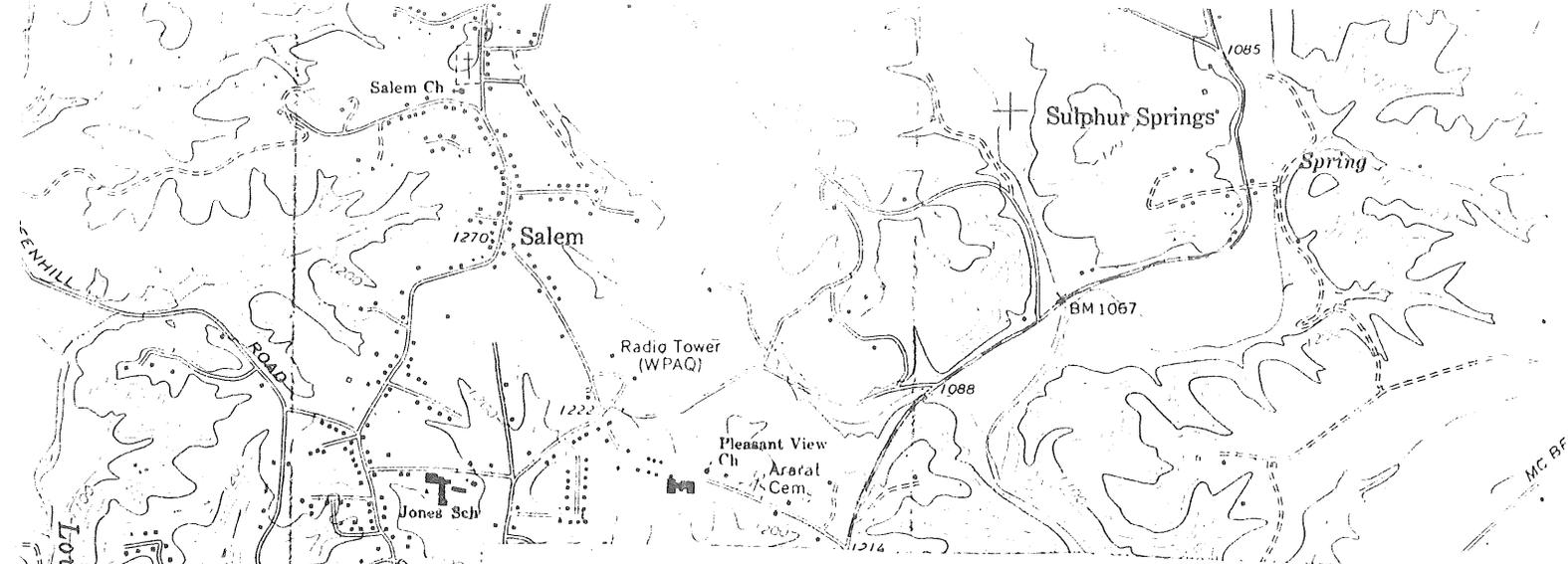
Item number

Page

Included within the nominated area are several properties not owned by the North Carolina Granite Corporation. These were previously outlined in red on the site map and labelled "Omit." All copies of the nomination should be amended to indicate that they are part of the Granite Quarry site. They are as follows:

1. Flat Rock Ruritan Club: a one-story cinder block building faced in granite ashlar, donated by the NC Granite Corporation, ca. 1962.  
Address: Flat Rock Ruritan Club, %Alfred Hiatt, 1006 E. Linville Road, Mount Airy, North Carolina 27030.
2. Herman Stone Co.: one-story metal cutting shed with granite face storefront. Property now owned by the NC Granite Corporation rather than Herman Stone.
3. Flat Rock Presbyterian Church and Parsonage: 1940s granite church with small stone residence immediately adjacent. Stone donated by NC Granite Corporation. Address: Flat Rock Presbyterian Church and Parsonage, E. Pine Street. Ext., Route 2, Mount Airy, North Carolina 27030.
4. Collins Upholstery Shop (Shown as Hunter on map): one-story, brick upholstery shop built in 1950s.  
Address: Collins Upholstery shop, 838 E. Pine Street, Mount Airy, North Carolina 27030.

Except for the Collins building which is non-contributing, the buildings listed above certainly contribute to the site due to their link with the Granite Corporation and their exterior finish.



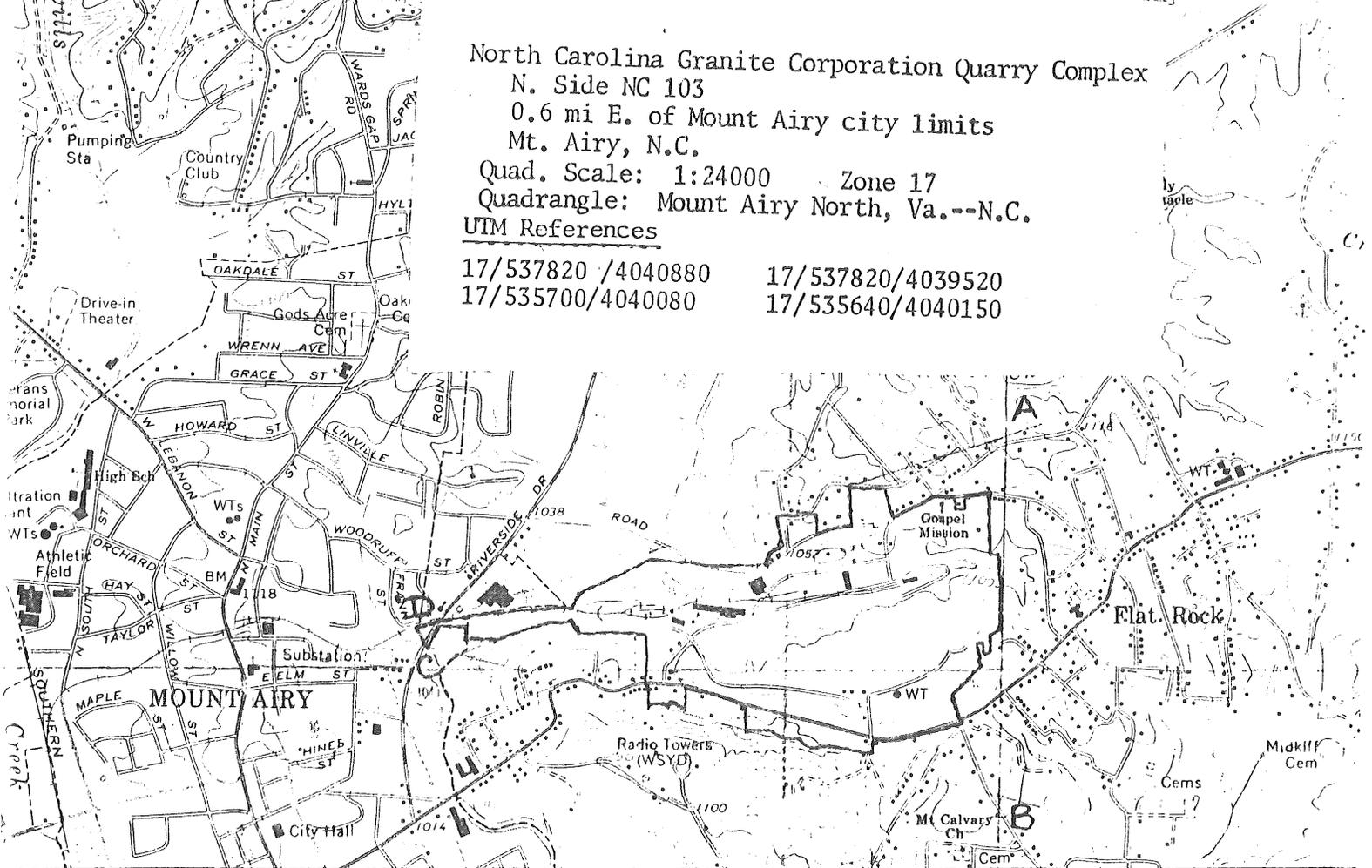
North Carolina Granite Corporation Quarry Complex

N. Side NC 103  
 0.6 mi E. of Mount Airy city limits  
 Mt. Airy, N.C.

Quad. Scale: 1:24000 Zone 17  
 Quadrangle: Mount Airy North, Va.--N.C.

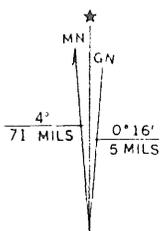
UTM References

17/537820 /4040880      17/537820/4039520  
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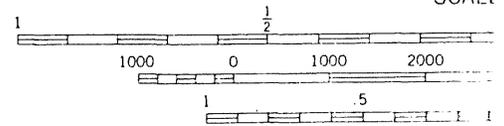


1 380 000 FEET (VA.) 1 335 336 337 35 338 (MOUNT 4 SCALE

and published by the Geological Survey  
 and USC&GS  
 Photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
 field checked 1968  
 on 1927 North American datum  
 based on Virginia coordinate system, south zone,  
 the coordinate system  
 Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17,  
 areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



UTM GRID AND 1977 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR IN NATIONAL GEODETIC

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NAT FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS





