

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic (former) Clarkton Depot

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Northwest corner of the junction of Elm and Hester streets not for publication

city, town Clarkton vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Bladen code 017

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name The Town of Clarkton Mr. Dan Meshaw, Mayor

street & number Post Office Box 307

city, town Clarkton vicinity of state NC 28433

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Bladen County Court House

street & number

city, town Elizabethtown state NC 28337

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A 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 type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>October 1975</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located at the northwest corner of Elm and Hester streets, the Clarkton Depot is a well-preserved example of typical, early twentieth-century frame railroad depot design. Approximately 30 X 90 feet in size, the building is a single-story rectangle with a shallow intersecting bay on the south side, marking the location of the former ticket agent's office. Walls are sheathed in German siding, and are protected by broad extensions of the medium-pitch gable roof. Corner boards and a plain wood belt course, painted in a contrasting color, define the edges of the building. A wood deck with handicap ramp was constructed along half of the south side and the west end of the depot where the baggage platform formerly stood; small similar uncovered porches serve the waiting room entrances at the east end of the south side and the east end. Small rectangular wood signs at the attic level in the center of each gable end identify the station as "CLARKTON, NC."

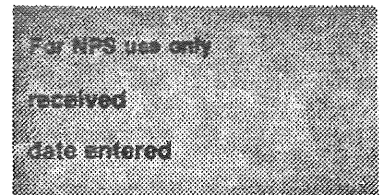
Two freight entrances opening to the deck, like their pendants on the opposite north side of the building, retain their original heavy wood doors, although contemporary sliding glass doors have been installed on the outside to provide insulation for public use of the interior. Six-over-six or four-over-four double-hung windows with simple frames are disposed along the eastern half of the building, providing light to the former waiting rooms and offices. A low brick foundation was constructed for the building when it was moved to the present site in 1975.

The two interior waiting rooms, agent's office, and baggage/storage room--in the east end of the building--retain their original dimensions and finishes. Walls are faced with four-foot high "boxcar" wainscoting; above, bias-laid lapped boards reach to the ceiling. Doorways and ticket windows, the latter still filled with their metal grids, connect the agent's office with the white and black waiting rooms in the southeast (present front) and northeast (present rear) corners of the building, respectively. A third ticket (telegraph) window to the outside is located on the west side of the projecting bay of the agent's office, which now serves as the Clarkton Museum and, on occasion, for meetings of the town council. It is noteworthy that the agent's original large wood desk still sits along the east wall of the room. The small baggage/storage room lies behind the north wall. The waiting rooms are currently used as offices for the Town of Clarkton, and are so furnished. The original hardwood floors remain in all rooms, but those in the town offices have been carpeted for protection and convenience of care.

The long, open freight warehouse in the western end of the building has been cosmetically remodeled to serve as a meeting place, but the space retains much of its original character because of the exposed wood-trussed ceiling. The original wide pine board walls were resurfaced in unfinished board-and-batten to suggest the rustic character of the original room. A more durable hardwood floor replaces the former wide pine board floor. A small kitchenette was installed at the southeast corner of the room to accommodate social gatherings. Here, as in the offices and council chamber, period industrial-type ceiling lamps were hung, but all can be augmented with contemporary electric lighting from the ceiling. Paired men's and women's restrooms are set in the northeast corner of the original freight depot space.

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In 1975, when the survival of the building was jeopardized by abandonment by the railroad, the Town of Clarkton purchased it and moved it to town-owned land a block south of the original site. With a broad buffer of land surrounding the building on all sides, the original tracks and crossing visible in close proximity to the rear, and the decorative wood-and-metal track-side station sign positioned in front, the depot retains the character of its original setting. The larger context of the building remains the same, with small-scale commercial buildings to the northeast and small-scale residences to the south. No known archaeological resources were destroyed on either site during the move.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1915 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

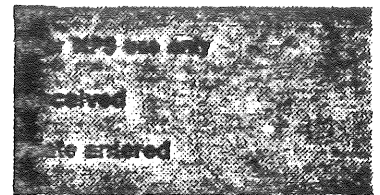
The history of the Clarkton Depot covers a span of little more than half a century. Built as a passenger and freight station by the Seaboard Air Line Railway in 1915, it served the Clarkton community until 1975 when the line discontinued its local service. Sometime earlier, Seaboard had adopted a policy of disposing of non-functioning structures through deeds of gift in exchange for removal from railroad right-of-way. The Town of Clarkton took advantage of the offer, moving the station and freight warehouse about 150 feet south to municipally-owned property. With restoration and renovation completed in 1977, the Clarkton Depot began a new life as the town hall and still functions in that capacity. The historical significance of the depot lies in the building itself and in the importance of the railroad to Clarkton and the surrounding community. Rehabilitated as the town hall, the old depot stands as a reminder of the time when railroads provided the economic lifeline for inland North Carolina towns and also symbolizes the vital relationship between good transportation and community survival.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The Clarkton Depot is associated with the development of the railroad, the economic lifeline of inland North Carolina, and the growth of Clarkton, a village along the railroad which grew into a small town as a result of its location on the rail line and its role as a trading center for lower Bladen County.
- C. The Clarkton Depot is architecturally significant as a fine local example of early twentieth-century frame railroad depot design typical of small-town American architecture. Its significance is enhanced by full retention of the plan and finishes of the interior station agent's office, waiting rooms, and baggage/storage room.

CRITERIA EXCEPTION

- B. The Clarkton Depot was moved to save the structure. In 1975, when Seaboard Air Line Railroad closed the station here, the building was offered to the city for \$1.00, else it would have been pulled down by the railroad. The City of Clarkton, recognizing the importance of the building to the city, purchased the former station and relocated it with sensitivity on city property on the south side of the tracks within eyesight of its original location.

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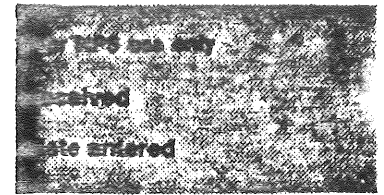
Historical Significance

Clarkton's relationship with the railroad, vital though it was, progressed somewhat differently from that of many other towns because the railroad made little initial impact and sustained a long period of painfully slow growth rather than generating intense boom periods. The Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad Company had laid track through the site that was to become Clarkton by 1860.¹ A year later the company built a depot on the line forty-six miles west of Wilmington in Bladen County. It was named Brown Marsh Station for the nearby swamp.² Five years later it continued to stand a lonely vigil as the only semblance of a community in the area clustered around Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church two miles to the north.³ In 1866 John Hector Clark and his brother-in-law, John Duncan Currie, moved their mercantile store from Elizabethtown to Brown Marsh Station to take advantage of the railroad traffic. They also constructed a turpentine distillery, and within three years a few houses, a gristmill, and a post office had been established.⁴ By 1870 the rudiments of a village were present and the name was changed to Dalton, but while the railroad served as an outlet for turpentine and timber products, it failed to generate any growth around the depot.⁵

Dalton's potential growth was retarded by the presence of Abbottsburg four miles to the west where the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad had established its company shops. For a brief period Abbottsburg was the largest town in Bladen County, but when the railroad moved its shops to Wilmington in 1873, Abbottsburg almost became a ghost town overnight.⁶ Principal beneficiary of its neighbor's decline was Dalton, which inherited former railroad employees and others who moved the short distance to the depot near the business firms of Clark and Currie. In 1874 Dalton was renamed Clarkton in honor of John Hector Clark, senior member of the first business and who was regarded as the founding father of the community.⁷ By the late 1870s Clarkton was entering a period of slow but steady growth for which the railroad served as its economic lifeline. For nearly a century, commercial activity in the town centered around the depot where turpentine, lumber, cotton and tobacco awaited shipment to distant markets.

In 1890 the railroad linked the small town of Clarkton to the largest city in North Carolina (Wilmington) and to one of the fastest growing textile manufacturing areas (Gaston County).⁸ Direct access to markets in great demand for turpentine, cotton, and lumber created a frenzy of activity around the depot. Company representatives arrived by rail to inspect the raw materials and stayed at the newly constructed Clarkton Hotel where they were joined by traveling salesmen hoping to cash in on the prosperity.⁹ Increase in income brought to many town residents the luxury of vacation time, and the depot agent, who was also the local telegraph operator, was kept busy issuing tickets, sending messages to friends and relatives, and making arrangements for passenger trips for destinations from the coast to the mountains.¹⁰ The railroad and depot thus became integral parts of the social and recreational life as well as the source of economic survival of Clarkton.

A depression caused by the "Panic of 1893" brought a setback to the small Bladen County town. The turpentine business virtually disappeared; the economic slowdown

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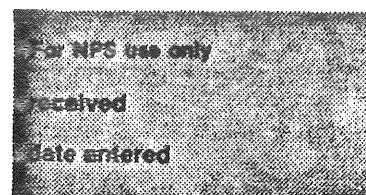
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drastically reduced demand for lumber; and the price of cotton fell far below the profit margin for production.¹¹ The railroad remained, however, and along its tracks came a new hope for the future. By the mid 1890s, the booming tobacco industry in North Carolina sought new areas for cultivation of its raw material. Agricultural specialists from R. J. Reynolds Company arrived at the Clarkton depot to teach area farmers how to grow, harvest, and cure the leaf for market.¹² Tobacco flourished beyond expectation, and in two decades became the leading cash crop in southern Bladen County. With direct rail access to two major cities (Wilmington and Charlotte) and trunk line access to much of North and South Carolina, Clarkton became a regional center for the Border Belt tobacco market. The Banner Warehouse Company constructed the first storage/auction warehouse in Bladen County in 1898.¹³ During the late summer and early fall of each year, the depot hummed with activity as buyers, sellers, and company representatives bought, sold, and shipped the golden leaf to market.

In 1901 Clarkton was incorporated and the Seaboard Air Line Railway assumed ownership of the old Central Carolina Railroad.¹⁴ Twelve years later the 1861 depot burned to the ground. Seaboard constructed a new passenger and freight station in 1915 and the railroad continued to be the only effective artery of transportation for Clarkton and the southern tier of Bladen County.¹⁵ The 1920s saw the advent of the "Good Roads Movement" in North Carolina, and with improved alternate transportation a trucking industry emerged to compete with the railroads.¹⁶ Seaboard Air Line held its position in the Clarkton area until the end of World War II but then slowly lost ground to the less expensive trucking industry. First passenger service was discontinued, and in 1975 Seaboard decided to close the depot at Clarkton. The old passenger and freight station was sold to the town for just one dollar with the stipulation that the building be moved from the railroad right-of-way.¹⁷ Clarkton officials contracted C. O. Wright of Tabor City to relocate the depot to municipal property a short distance south of the tracks. The structure was renovated to serve as the town hall and was dedicated on September 10, 1977.¹⁸ It continues to fill that function.

For most of Clarkton's history, the railroads supplied its economic lifeline, but unlike some other towns, Clarkton neither mushroomed when the depot was established nor declined when service was discontinued. Growth has been slow, from one general store and a few houses in 1866 to a modern population of slightly more than 850.¹⁹ The pace of growth insured that the railroad sustained the constant needs of the community rather than generating the often false promises of an immediate boom period. Though the railroad is no longer necessary for the town's survival, the people of Clarkton acknowledged its historical importance by preserving the depot as a symbol of their heritage. They have also demonstrated that progress can be achieved without cutting all ties to the past.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Sources vary as to when the tracks were actually laid through the area, but the line had been completed seventy miles beyond Wilmington by 1860, which took it through Bladen County. See William K. Boyd, History of North Carolina: The Federal Period 1783-1860, vol. II in series (Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1919), 348. See also Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina, 4 vols. (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1956-1965), III, 1153, hereinafter cited as Sharpe, A New Geography; and Madeline G. Clark, "Early Clarkton History" (Unpublished two-page typescript, undated), 1, copy in Research Branch, Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Clark, "Early Clarkton."

² Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1; Levi Branson, Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1867-'68 (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1867), 152, hereinafter cited as Branson's N. C. Business Directory; and Researcher's interview with Myrtle Pope, Clarkton town clerk, August 11, 1986, hereinafter cited as Pope interview. A photo of the old depot in the clerk's office is inscribed with an 1861 date of construction.

³ Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1; Star (Wilmington), November 13, 1978 ("Friendly Bladen County town has claims to Fame"), hereinafter cited as Star; and Branson's N. C. Business Directory 1867-'68, 16. Branson lists no merchants or town activity at Brown Marsh Station.

⁴ Branson's N. C. Business Directory 1869, 20; Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1; State (magazine), X, No. 23 (November 7, 1942); and Star, November 13, 1978.

⁵ Apparently Clark and Currie represented the only business at Brown Marsh Station (then Dalton) until the late 1870s. See Branson's N. C. Business Directory 1867-'68, 16; 1869, 20; 1872, 33-34; 1877-'78, 36. For products carried by railroad see Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1; and Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 381, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina.

⁶ Sharpe, A New Geography, 1157; and Branson's N. C. Business Directory 1877-'78, 202.

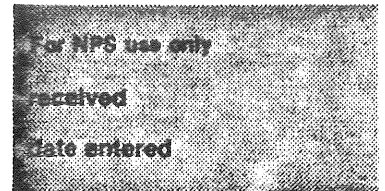
⁷ Compare the listings for Dalton in 1872 and Clarkton in 1877 in Branson's N. C. Business Directory 1872, 33-34 and 1877-'78, 36. See also Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1; and William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 108, hereinafter cited as Powell, Gazetteer.

⁸ See Robert A. Ragan, The Pioneer Cotton Mills of Gaston County, N. C.: "The First Thirty" (1848-1904) and Gaston County Textile Pioneers (Charlotte: Robert Allison Ragan, n.d.), 1-3; and John F. Gilbert, Crossties Through Carolina (Raleigh: Helios Press, 1969), 42, hereinafter cited as Gilbert, Crossties.

⁹ See Brandon's N. C. Business Directory 1890, 109; 1896, 107; Clark, "Early

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Clarkton," 1; and Star, November 13, 1978.

¹⁰ See Sidney Nathans, The Quest for Progress: The Way We Lived in North Carolina 1870-1920 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 85, 87; and Lawrence Lee, New Hanover County: A Brief History (Raleigh: Department of Archives and History, 1971), 113-119.

¹¹ Sharpe, A New Geography, 1141; and Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 524.

¹² Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1-2; and Star, November 13, 1978.

¹³ Gilbert, Crossties, 42; Star, November 13, 1978; and Clark, "Early Clarkton," 1-2.

¹⁴ Powell, Gazetteer, 108; and Clark, "Early Clarkton," 2. See also Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 586. WC&R Railroad became Central Carolina in 1880s.

¹⁵ Pope interview; and data supplied from files of Seaboard Air Line Railway (now owned by CSX Transportation Corporation) by Betty Wolfinger, archivist, Corporate Communications Department, August 7, 1986.

¹⁶ Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 587.

¹⁷ Pope interview; and Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 650-651.

¹⁸ Pope interview. See also Southeastern Times (Clarkton), December 15, 1976.

¹⁹ Pope interview.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See addendum.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Whiteville

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Property being nominated consists of the lot on which the depot rest and the immediately adjacent area, approximately 100 feet square. Location of the depot lot is marked on the enclosed map in red.

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Architectural description by Diane Filipowicz, consultant: statement of significance by Jerry L. Cross, staff.

organization Division of Archives and History date September 1, 1986

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

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Fair

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 10, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

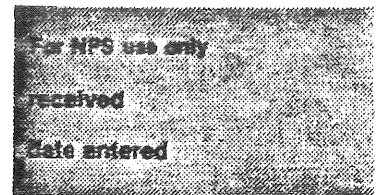
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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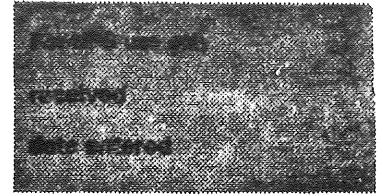
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Selected Bibliography

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- Star. Wilmington. November 13, 1978.
- State (Magazine). Volume X, No. 23 (November 7, 1942).

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The UTM's in the nomination of the Clarkton Depot, Clarkton, Bladen County, are in error. The correct UTM's are as follows:

Northing: 3818700

Easting: 715050

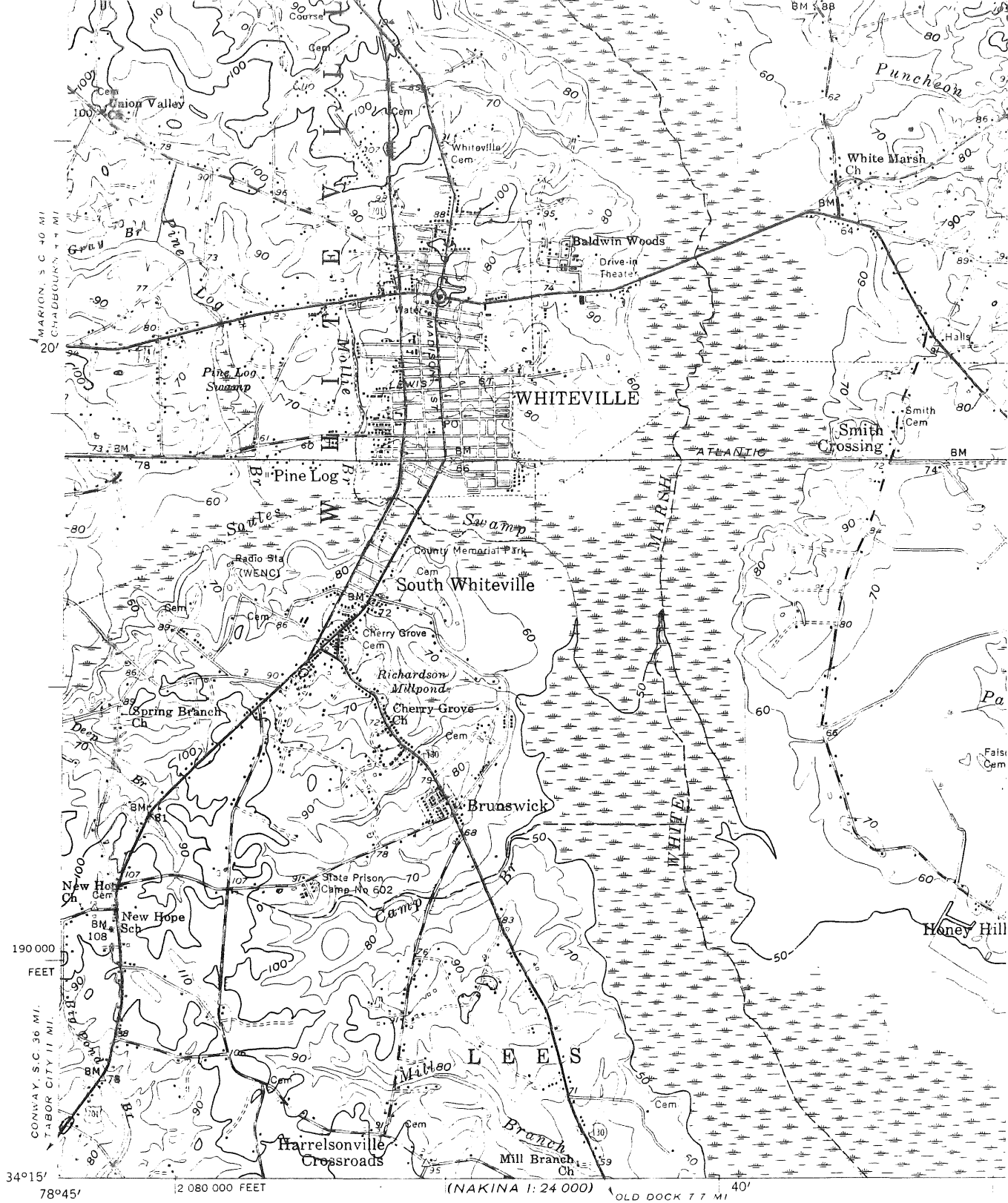
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby submit this amendment to the Clarkton Depot, Clarkton, Bladen County nomination and certify that this amendment has been evaluated according to the procedures set forth by the National Park Service.



State Historic Preservation Officer

2-24-87

date



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1951. Topography by planetable surveys 1955
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on North Carolina coordinate system
1,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown

THIS MAP COMPLETE
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHY

Whiteville Quadrangle

