

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRA 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 Athol

and or common

2. Location

Down a long drive on the S. side of SR 1114, 0.1 mi.
street & number E. of jct. with SR 1119 not for publication

city, town Edenton X vicinity of congressional district First

state North Carolina code 037 county Chowan code 041

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. C. W. Gregg

street & number Box 41

city, town Edenton vicinity of state North Carolina 27932

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chowan County Courthouse

street & number Corner of E. King and Court Streets

city, town Edenton state North Carolina 27932

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic American Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1940 (T. T. Waterman) X federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state D.C.

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Athol is a handsome Greek Revival plantation situated not far from the Albemarle Sound. It stands, isolated and imposing, on a clearing dotted with gnarled trees and surrounded by light forest and heavy underbrush. Athol is a two-story plus attic, T-shaped weatherboarded frame dwelling, one of the homogeneous regional group of antebellum mansions that includes the Edmund Blount Skinner House, Cove Grove, and Land's End (all in Perquimans County). Athol is particularly distinguished by the grandeur of its proportions and the consistency and simplicity of its finish.

The main block, facing north, is five bays wide and two deep and follows a center hall plan one room deep. The latter is a rather distinctive feature which Athol shares with the Skinner House. Such proportions represent a departure from the two-room depth of the more traditional T-plan house. The main block is covered by a gable roof punctuated at either end of the ridge line by a corbel-capped interior end chimney. The facade contains a striking central entrance behind a colossal portico of unfluted Roman Ionic columns--an arrangement identical to that found at Cove Grove. The columns rest on a sturdy brick rounded-arched arcade which is pierced at regular intervals by lozenge-shaped latticed vents. The columns rise from this sturdy base to support a grand academic entablature with a molded dentil cornice that returns at either gable end. The porch is completely engaged under the roof of the house, creating a curious side elevation--unlike Cove Grove and Land's End where the roofline kicks out to accommodate the porch.

The rear section of the house, measuring three bays deep and two wide, features two-tier porches on either side, a form found at the Skinner House as well as at Somerset Place (Washington County). At Athol, the second story galleries are carried by the full height Ionic columns which are identical to those on the main facade. A recent one-story shed addition runs almost full length across the western elevation and somewhat obscures the symmetry of the original composition. The upper level of each porch is enclosed by an elegant balustrade in a stylized sheaf-of-wheat motif. The roof line of the rear gable displays the distinctive, almost jaunty, angularity characteristic of the Albemarle Sound plantation group: the gable slopes fall sharply away from the ridge line, then broadly splay outward to cover the side porches. A single interior corbel capped brick chimney services the rear wing. A one-story diminutive porch has been added to the southern elevation and is protected by a gable roof supported by four attenuated Ionic columns.

Fenestration is consistent throughout the house. Windows contain nine-over-nine sash at the first level, and six-over-nine at the second; the single attic window, centered beneath the gable apex of the rear elevation, contains a six-over-six sash. All windows have rounded sills and are framed by symmetrically molded architraves with paneled upper corner blocks and blank lower ones. Doors are similarly treated. The main entrance, a single leaf door with twelve raised panels flanked by five-light sidelights above paneled plinths, and surmounted by a five-light transom, is set within a symmetrically molded frame. Located in the center of the upper lintel is a raised rectangular panel ornamented with Greek frets in bas-relief; the whole composition is highly suggestive of the style of Asher Benjamin. The two lateral entrances are similarly designed, although they contain double doors with each leaf containing six equal size raised panels placed one above the other. Each has a centrally placed unadorned lintel panel. Only side lights are used to further articulate the doorway. The rear entrance is an additional simplification of the other entrances. It maintains the Greek Revival framing design but eliminate the transom and

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side light features.

The interior continues the restrained Greek Revival elegance of the exterior detailing. The plan, with a front parlor on either side of a spacious center hall, is bisected by a transverse stair hall entered through a transverse elliptical arch at the southern end of the principal hall. Behind the stair hall is the large rear block which serves as a formal dining room. The design of the front center hall and connecting transverse stair hall is particularly impressive, and like other features found at Athol, bears a close resemblance to the hall configurations found at Somerset Place in Washington county and the Edmund Blount Skinner House in Perquimans County. The elliptical arch in the dividing wall is carried on engaged square-in-section fluted posts with simple caps rimmed by a band of necking.

Walls throughout are plastered above a plain board baseboard with a beveled upper ledge. Door and window casings are symmetrically molded in characteristic Greek Revival fashion. The interior doors, which are all single leaves with eight raised panels, feature paneled upper cornerblocks on the hall side of each doorway, while each inner surround contains cornerblocks graced by elegant roundels inset with pierced spokes radiating from a center point. The window surrounds descend to the baseboard, framing rectangular aprons with reverse crossetted raised-panels.

The original mantels have been removed but the front parlor one is said to have been marble relocated in the house next to the Barker House in Edenton. Those found in Athol today are Georgian Revival replacements.

The arch frames the stair hall which contains an open-string two-run stair with a transverse landing. The first and longer flight rises east-to-west. Rounded balusters support a rounded handrail which ramps at the landing level. The original newel has been replaced but was probably identical to the distinctive shell cap found at Land's End, the Edmund Blount Skinner House and Cove Grove. The stair ends are ornamented with wave patterned brackets above a raised-panel spandrel. The fascia of the landing is decorated with a boldly applied wave molding identical to that at Land's End.

The second story finish is much like that of the first, although plainer. The wall between the main block and the transverse hall is framed by a demi-octagonal plain board arch identical to the one in the second story hall of the Skinner House. The stair to the attic closely resembles the principal stair but has a blank landing fascia.

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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.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input 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

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

Athol is an imposing Greek Revival plantation house of unusual form and handsome detail. Fashionable classicism, regional forms, and the personal style of an unknown builder combine to create a house of distinctive individuality. The house is dominated by full-height Roman Ionic columns which compose a heroic portico at the front and double porches along the sides of the T-shaped house. Built for the planter Joshua Skinner, who obtained the property in 1836 and died in 1853, the house is an important member of a distinctive group of major houses in the Albemarle region not only related in style but also with the Skinner family. This group includes Cove Grove, the Edmund Blount Skinner House, and Land's End--one of the most outstanding regional interpretations of the Greek Revival in North Carolina.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Representative of northeastern North Carolina's antebellum agricultural economy which was often based on a large-scale plantation society in the Albemarle region.
- B. Associated with the Skinner family of the Albemarle area which was extremely active in building a number of typical regional structures with classic Greek Revival details in Perquimans and Chowan counties. The owner, Joshua Skinner was a very prominent plantation owner in Chowan County.
- C. Athol is one of approximately five outstanding regional structures with Greek Revival details that are not only associated with the same family but also derive their details directly from the pattern books of Asher Benjamin. Apparently the unknown builder is more than likely responsible for the introduction of the Greek Revival as a building style to the Albemarle area. These Greek Revival characteristics combine with the standard regional type to form an interesting and unusual group of structures.
- D. Is likely to yield information about antebellum plantation life.

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Athol, an elegant, colonnaded plantation house, was built in rural Chowan County sometime in the 1840s by Joshua Skinner, one of the area's largest and most successful planters. It is regarded as one of the "finest of a considerable group of colonnaded houses" in the area.¹

The Benbury family has owned the plantation for 120 years when Richard W. Benbury mortgaged it to Joseph N. Hoskins in 1835.² On January 2, 1836, it was sold to Joshua Skinner of Perquimans County, who had come to Edenton around the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Little Blair, daughter of Captain George Blair.³ The deed does not mention a house, but Benbury was living there at the time, and got \$10,875 for it, a price which indicates considerable "improvements" to the 600 acres. Later owners, descendants of the Benburys said that the house burned soon afterwards. At any rate, Joshua Skinner was soon able to indulge his family tendency to build.

The names of seven of the thirteen children of Joshua and Martha Ann Blount Skinner of Perquimans County are associated with nine-well-known buildings.⁴ The Bond House on the green in Edenton was built for, or bought and enlarged by, Joseph Blount Skinner, whose law office next door became the East Custom House. This property later belonged to his youngest brother, Dr. Josiah Collins Skinner. Charlesworth Skinner gave generously towards the construction of Bethel Baptist Church in perquimans County, and gave a dormitory to Wake Forest College. Elizabeth Blount Skinner married Exam Newby and lived at Belvidere, in Perquimans County. Martha Ann Skinner married Baker Hoskins of Chowan County, for whom the present house at Shelton was built soon afterwards. Benjamin Smith Skinner had Cove Grove built and was instrumental in the building of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Hertford. His brother-in-law James Leigh built Land's End, in Perquimans County. Another brother, Edmund Blount Skinner, built a handsome house in Durant's Neck, Perquimans County, while Joseph Blount Skinner's Beechwood, in Chowan County, long since burned, was strikingly similar to Athol and Cove Grove, all built about the same time. Land's End, Cove Grove, and the Edmund Blount Skinner House all bear strong resemblance to Athol. They compose a distinctive stylistic group, related by family connections. The talented builder of this group is as yet unidentified.

By purchasing land on both sides of Athol, Joshua Skinner enlarged the farm to 1,368 acres, which he farmed until the time of his death. In 1850, 800 acres of Skinners plantation were under cultivation. His farm valued at \$27,500 and produced 7,500 bushels of corn, 2,100 bushels of wheat, 500 bushels of peas, and 250 pounds of butter. Skinner's 68 slaves made him one of the largest slave-holders in the county.⁵

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Joshua Skinner's wife died in the late winter of 1852 and he died the following August. There were no children.⁶ There were, however, two wills, each naming a different executor, and the usual unsettled debts connected with a big farm before harvest time. Apparently it was impossible to determine which of the two mills was the later. The heirs of legal age and the executors agreed that somebody had to take charge, and they settled on one of the older nephews, Tristram L. Skinner, son of Joseph Blount Skinner. His deed to cousin John Skinner of Perquimans County, son of Joseph Harvey Skinner of Montpelier, shows that Athol reached from Montpelier on the west (owned by the heirs of Joseph Harvey Skinner) to Mulberry Hill on the east (owned by John H. Leary). This deed dated January 16, 1854, shows a price of \$33,100.⁷ Since the total amount Joshua Skinner had spent was less than half of this price, the house itself must represent a large part of his investment.

John Skinner's tract was smaller than that of his uncle, consisting of 950 acres in 1860, 600 of which were improved. The farm was valued at \$30,000 and produced large amounts of corn, wheat, and dairy products. His livestock alone was valued at \$3,000. Skinner owned 36 slaves.⁸ John Skinner died in 1860, but it was not until October 5, 1863, that his executors sold the soundside part of Athol, including the house, to Edward Wood. By this time the farm had been reduced to 796 acres, for which Wood paid \$30,000.⁹

An energetic businessman and farmer, Edward Wood was the owner of Greenfield and eight other farms and much town property. He also ran two of the largest fisheries of Albemarle Sound.¹⁰ He had been one of the organizers of the Albemarle Steam Navigation Company, which carried most of the passenger traffic between Edenton and the Franklin, Virginia terminal on the Chowan. Two years later, in 1865, he would inherit Hayes and Mulberry Hill from his friend James Cathcart Johnston.

Edward Wood and his family remained at Greenfield until they moved to Hayes. Athol was occupied by Joshua Skinner's brother Charlesworth and his son's family, whose home in Perquimans had burned during the war (Mrs. Charlesworth Skinner, Jr., was a sister of Mrs. Edward Wood). They left Athol some time between Edward Wood's death, in 1872, and 1878, and Athol was then occupied for some years by Edward Wood, Jr., who was allotted it in the settlement of his father's estate in 1879.¹¹ He enlarged the farm from 796 to 900 acres. The farm, however, was only valued at \$8,000 in 1880 and after mortgages in 1881 and 1884 Wood sold the property.¹² His mother purchased it on January 4, 1886, about ten months before her death.¹³ In the settlement of her estate by sale of her property, Julien Wood, a younger son, bought Athol for \$8,000.¹⁴ In June of that year he sold a half-interest to his sister Annie.¹⁵ Two years later they decided that their younger brother Hal had a right equal with their own, and together gave him one-third interest.¹⁶ On January 1, 1904, Annie Wood and her husband, W. D. Pruden, and Hal Wood sold out to Julien Wood for an undisclosed amount.¹⁷ It was still his property and occupied by his son Thomas Benbury Wood, when it was taken over by the United States Government in 1942 to house a Marine Corps Air Station. The station was active until 1946 and has been reactivated several times since then.¹⁸

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After the last reactivation of the air base, in 1962, Athol came into the hands of a firm making prefabricated houses. The firm offered to sell four acres with the house but continued to decrease the acreage until little was left but the front yard since a road along the sound had been laid off between the back of the house and its original sound beach. Nevertheless the house was bought and is still occupied by Mrs. Charles W. Gregg. Although little of the original plantation lands remain with the house, Athol remains a distinctive and impressive example of antebellum plantation life in eastern North Carolina.

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¹Frances Benjamin Johnston and Thomas Tileston Waterman, The Early Architecture of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 43. The origin of the name "Athol" has apparently been lost.

²Chowan County Deed Book K-2, p. 638.

³Chowan County Deed Book L-2, p. 115.

⁴Doris Seymour Wahl and Cynthia Walker Rummel (Compilers), The Skinner Kinsmen: The Descendants of Richard Skinner in North Carolina (n.p., 1958), 28, hereinafter cited as Wahl and Rummel, The Skinner Kinsmen.

⁵Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Chowan County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule, Slave Schedule.

⁶Joshua Skinner had at least one child, Josiah C. Skinner, who died in childhood. Wahl and Rummel, The Skinner Kinsmen, 28.

⁷Chowan County Deed Book P-2, p. 566.

⁸Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Chowan County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule.

⁹Chowan County Deed Book R-3, p. 121.

¹⁰Chowan County Deed Book P-3, p. 447; Book Q-2, pp. 145, 146, 374, 376, 461; Chowan County Estates Papers, Edward Wood.

¹¹Chowan County Deed Book Y, p. 513.

¹²Chowan Mortgage Book A, p. 220, Book D, p. 19; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Chowan County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule.

¹³Chowan County Deed Book Z, p. 458.

¹⁴Chowan County Deed Book A-4, p. 326.

¹⁵Chowan County Deed Book A, p. 368.

¹⁶Chowan County Deed Book B-2, p. 320

¹⁷Chowan County Deed Book I-2, p. 507.

¹⁸News and Observer (Raleigh), September 30, 1962.

Major Bibliographical References

Chowan County Deed Books, Mortgage Deed Books. Microfilm copy, Raleigh, Division of Archives and History; Chowan County Estates Records, Raleigh, Division of Archives and History.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 8 acres

Quadrangle name Edenton

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A 1 8 3 5 9 3 7 0 3 9 8 6 2 1 0
Zone Easting Northing

B [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
Zone Easting Northing

C [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

D [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

E [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

F [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

G [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

H [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

Verbal boundary description and justification

Athol is bounded on the North by SR 1114 and on the East, West and South by recently developed residential properties. This includes all the original plantation property still associated with the house.

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 Drucilla Haley, Survey Specialist Jim Sumner, Historical Statement by Elizabeth Moore, Chowan County historian Researcher

Survey and Planning Branch

organization Archaeology and Historic Preservation date November, 1979

N.C. Division of Archives and History

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

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

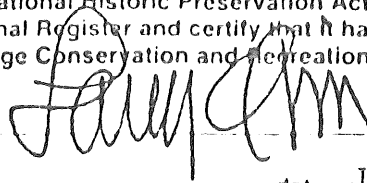
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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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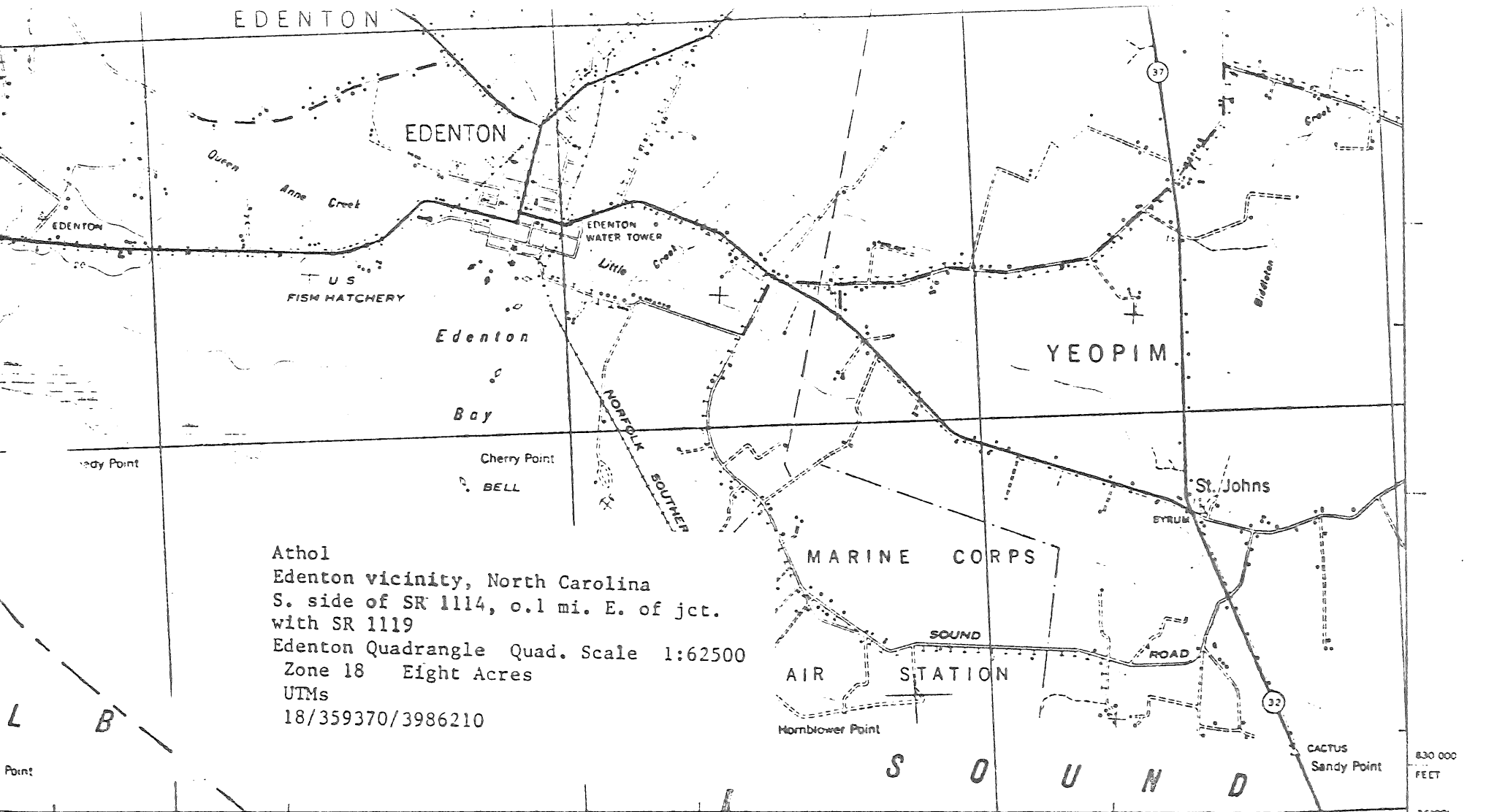
PAGE 1

Johnston, Frances Benjamin and Waterman, Thomas Tileston. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

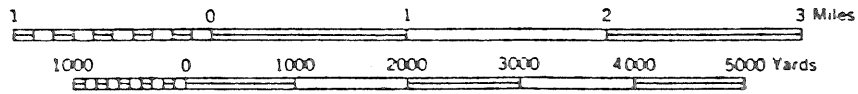
News and Observer (Raleigh). September 30, 1962.

United States Census Records. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Chowan County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule, Slave Schedule, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Chowan County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Chowan County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule.

Wahl, Doris Seymour and Rummel, Cynthia Walker. The Skinner Kinsmen: The Skinner Descendants of Richard Skinner in North Carolina. No Publisher, 1958.

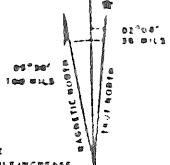


Athol
 Edenton vicinity, North Carolina
 S. side of SR 1114, 0.1 mi. E. of jct.
 with SR 1119
 Edenton Quadrangle Quad. Scale 1:62500
 Zone 18 Eight Acres
 UTM's
 18/359370/3986210



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET--DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL (1929 ADJ.)
 NOTE OFFICERS USING THIS MAP WILL OBLI. HEREON CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS BE CH. CLAS. TO THEIR ATTENTION AND GOV. DIRECT TO THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

APPROX. BEAR DECLINATION 1942
 ANNUAL MAG. CHANGE 0.21--06 DITS INCREASE



2 730 000 FEET U.S. ROUTE 64 5.7 MI. 76°30'

GRID TABLES U.S. G.S. SPECIAL PUBLICATION NO. 00
 THE LAST THREE DIGITS OF THE GRID COORDINATES ARE IDENTICAL
 THE D. GRID IS INDICATED BY SHORT TICKS ALONG THE BOUNDARY AND SMALL
 CAPTIONS WITHIN THE BODY OF THE MAP. THE LETTERS CARRIED WITHIN THE
 MAP AND THE FIGURES ARE IN BRACKETED LETTERS AND FIGURES TO THE
 10 000 FOOT GRID SYSTEM BASED ON NORTH CAROLINA PLANE
 COORDINATE SYSTEM

EDENTON, N. C.
 N3600-W7630/15

(COLUMBIA)

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