

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Craven	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: PATTERSON
Simpson-Oaksmith-Duffy House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Vance Academy

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
226 East Front (First Congressional District, Hon. Walter B. Jones)

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern

STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37 COUNTY: Craven CODE: 19

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Bridges, Donald Duffy, Rodolph and Elizabeth

STREET AND NUMBER:
10028 Eighth Street, N. W.

CITY OR TOWN: Seattle STATE: Washington CODE: 40

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Craven County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
302 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN: New Bern STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1941 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Capitol and Independence Avenue, S. E.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D. C. CODE: 11

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins
	(Check One)		(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1887 the Simpson-Oaksmith-Patterson House was described as "the greatest ARCHITECTURAL CURIOSITY in the South." That designation is in some respects as accurate now as it was then. The house is an interesting combination of a variety of architectural elements testifying to the many changes that have been made during the history of the building.

The house generally can be described as being a brick three-and-a-half story main block which is raised on a high basement and has a low hip roof. To the rear (east) a two-story wing, five bays long with a raised basement, has been attached to the main block. At the juncture an engaged tower with mansard roof rises above the roof line.

The Simpson-Oaksmith-Patterson House began as a two story house of brick laid in one-to-three common bond with a corbel cornice below a gable roof. The front facade was (and still is) at the first two levels five bays wide, the central one containing an entrance. The sides were three bays wide with interior end chimneys separating the front two bays. With the exception of half lunettes on either side of the chimney which admitted light to the attic, all these windows had stone lintels and sills.

By the time of the Civil War, the basement and one story of the wing had been built. A door replaced the window in the rear bay on the north side. Since it was at street level, it probably provided access to both the basement and to the rear transverse hall. About the same time, the front door was converted to a window.

Sometime between 1884 and 1887, the house took on the appearance that won it acclaim as an architectural curiosity. A broadside advertising the Vance Academy, which then occupied the house, shows the wing raised to two stories, three gable dormers on the front, and the tower which obscured the rear bay of the north side of the main block. The tower rises in two open and three enclosed stages and is covered by a straight mansard roof topped by a balustrade since removed. A balustrade also enclosed the second stage. Between the second and third stages was placed a classical male head flanked by lion heads. These pieces of sculpture have fostered numerous legends, none of which seem to bear any truth. Three stone corbels support the roof on each side of the tower. On the front facade, finials were added at the ends of the fractable gable.

In later years of the nineteenth century, the central entrance was re-opened and a one-bay porch, approached by transverse steps on each side, was added. The porch consisted of two unacademic columns which supported an entablature adorned with block modillions. A balustrade encircled the porch at the second level which served as a gallery. Although the above elements are of wood, the steps are stone and have solid balustrades which rise to form pedestals for the columns with an arcaded stone balustrade between. The entrance itself features a six-light transom and four-light sidelights.

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In the early twentieth century, certainly before 1909, the last significant addition was made to the main block of the house. It was raised to three-and-a-half stories, the third level being broken into six bays, one more than the stories below. The house was covered by a low hip roof and twin gable dormers were added near the center of the roof as well as one on either side. Stucco was applied to the basement and to the entire surface of the wing. Other changes included the addition of a porch on the south side and the roofing of the gallery to match the entrance porch below it.

The interior architectural elements, although somewhat more conventional, are as diverse as those on the exterior. The original portion of the house has a center-hall plan one room deep with a transverse hall extending across the rear. The central hall is finished with a wooden cornice and a molded chair rail. An elliptical transverse arch springing from paneled pilasters leads from the central hall to the rear one. The south quarter of the rear hall was allocated for the stair which now is only accessible from the side porch. The stair, composed of a molded handrail carried on turned balusters and heavy turned posts, is obviously a later addition. No indication of an earlier stair or its location is evident. The door and window architraves in the main block are symmetrically molded and have corner blocks with molded rondels. Both parlors are entered through six-panel doors above which thin strips of wood carried on spindles form diamond-patterned grills. The decorative architectural elements of the south parlor reflect the eras of change evident on the exterior. The window architraves and the panels below the windows are vestiges of the early nineteenth century period of the house. An elaborate pressed tin ceiling is a turn-of-the-century addition and an early twentieth century classical mantel with fluted Ionic columns supporting a molded shelf installed to replace an earlier one. The north parlor, relatively unchanged since the construction of the house, has a paneled wainscot and a transitional mantel. Pilasters flank the square opening above which unadorned end blocks and a center tablet form the frieze. A course of dentils, augmented with tiny pieces of reeding which drop below the bottom of each dentil, runs below the molded shelf. In this room, as in its counterpart on the south, panels appear below the windows. Upstairs, the mantels are of particular interest, for in both rooms only the friezes of the early mantels survive. The friezes, outlined in one case by heavy beaded astragal bands and in the other by a bold cable molding, are surmounted by replacement shelves supported on modern fluted columns.

The rear wing, although now divided several times, was basically a side-hall arrangement one room deep. A very simple mid-nineteenth century wooden mantel in the rear room is the only interior survivor from that period. A transverse stair hall in the middle of the large room seems to have been a post Civil War addition.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Simpson-Oaksmith-Patterson House at 226 East Front Street has been the focus of more stories and traditional history than any other structure in New Bern. It is reputed to have been the home of Blackbeard the Pirate, though he died almost a century before it was constructed. It is said to have been copied from Morro Castle in Havana, though by whom and for what reason is not clear. It is also said to have been the home of Christoph de Graffenried, founder of the town of New Bern in 1710. A glowing newspaper article in 1920 concerns de Graffenried's attachment to Queen Anne and his placement of a mask of her on his New Bern House. The author describes the age and character of the house and mask, and calls the structure "the greatest of the houses. . ." At that time the house was perhaps 110 years old, and the mask had been in place less than 50 years.

Somewhat more accurate was George Nowitzky's description of the structure in 1888 as

The greatest ARCHITECTURAL CURIOSITY in the South. It is formed of one of New Bern's oldest brick buildings (one has done duty as a jail), transformed into such a remarkable combination and blending of dormers, balconies, pinnacles, fantastic-looking tower, railings, human, griffin and dog heads as to make it a veritable architectural puzzle. No one knows what it is intended for, and the owner, evidently believing it nobody's business, has failed to enlighten them.

The property on which the house stands was purchased from John Sears, by Samuel Simpson in 1808, and it was probably Simpson who built the basic portion of the present house. It is also shown on Jonathan Price's 1810 map as "Simpson's," and an 1883 Abstract of Title describes it as his.

Samuel Simpson was a merchant of well known and excellent standing who occupied all the property in question for business and residential purposes during a long and successful life. He had a fine wharf and warehouse at which his vessels, engaged in the West India trade, used to load and discharge their cargoes. He also built the brick dwelling house now on the property on the corner of Pollock and East Front Streets.

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Stephen F. Miller, who worked as a clerk in Mr. Simpson's firm, described his employer as

from the country a portionless youth, whose good qualities attracted the friendly notice of Toggart & Torrans, leading merchants in the city. After serving faithfully as clerk for a number of years, Mr. Simpson succeeded these men in business, and became in his turn one of the most prominent and successful merchants [in New Bern]. . . .

The house remained in the Simpson family until 1860, when it was transferred to Raymond Castex, who immediately transferred it to Aretas Williams. During the period of Union control of New Bern, 1862-65, the building served as the provost marshal's office and guard house. One military historian noted that those arrested awaited their examination here and that it "corresponded to police headquarters in civilian life." Several diaries, and other accounts relate incidents during the use of the structure for this purpose, and the remnants of at least one cell door survive in the rear or jail wing of the structure.

Appleton and Augusta Oaksmith bought the property in 1874 and sometime after 1884, Vance Academy operated there. The academy was a boarding and day school with "special attention given to mathematics, commercial law, book-keeping, and penmanship." It was also during this period of time that the exterior changes began, with the addition of the tower.

By 1898 the structure was listed on the Sanborn Insurance Maps as "tenements." By 1904 this had been changed to "boarding house," and by 1907 to "Patterson House," also a boarding house. By 1908, the house had reached its present style and shape. It was returned later to residential use by the Duffy family, which still owns the property.

The house has considerable significance because of its unusual and well-executed architectural features and the important and varied roles it played in the history of nineteenth century New Bern. Enhancing its interest to the historian is the wealth of extant photographic documentation that enables us to start with the basic house built by Simpson and to place chronologically each exterior addition or change. This, together with the available completed verbal documentation, provides an unusually revealing history of one of the more important buildings in New Bern.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Craven County Records, Craven County Courthouse, New Bern, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Craven County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Miller, Stephen F. "Recollections of New Bern 50 Years Ago," Our Living and Our Dead. New Bern, 1873.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE							
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds			
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	35°	06'	23"	77°	02'	02"
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"						
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"						
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One Acre.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION

State Department of Archives and History

DATE

9 September 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:

109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name

J. B. Wells, III

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 9 September 1971

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

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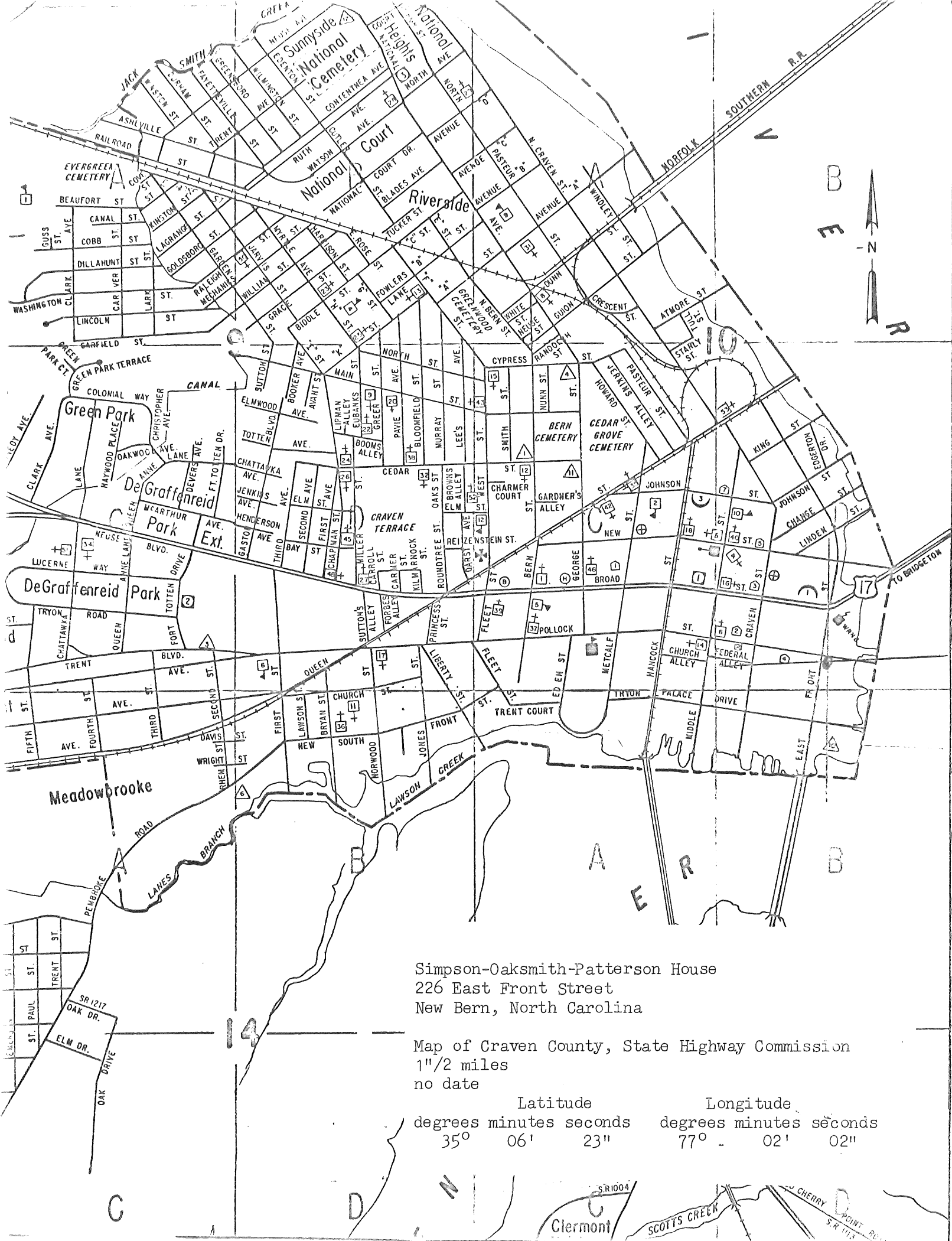
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9.

Nowitzky, George I. Norfolk: The Marine Metropolis of Virginia and Sound and River Cities of North Carolina, Norfolk and Raleigh: George I. Nowitzky, 1888.



Simpson-Oaksmith-Patterson House
 226 East Front Street
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of Craven County, State Highway Commission
 1 1/2 miles
 no date

	Latitude			Longitude		
	degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
	35°	06'	23"	77°	02'	02"

