

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:  
Eli Smallwood House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
524 East Front Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern (First Congressional District, The Hon. Walter B. Jones)

STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37      COUNTY: Craven      CODE: 049

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
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) _____ _____ _____
			Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. D. L. Ward

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Post Office Box 867

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

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:  
300 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: 1936       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
East Capitol and Independence Avenue

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

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(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

The Eli Smallwood House epitomizes the elegance of the Federal era in New Bern. This brick side-hall plan town house faces East Front Street, and a pleasant garden leads back to the Neuse River. The building is set on a brick cellar and rises two-and-a-half stories above the sidewalk. The most striking feature of the house is the wealth of the hand-carved ornament which occurs in profusion on the main cornice, the porches, and the dormer pediments. This, combined with the perfection of scale both inside and out, make the Smallwood House one of the great showplaces of New Bern.

The exterior of the dwelling is of brick laid in Flemish bond, and because the house has a side-hall plan, the fenestration is varied with three openings occurring on the front (west) facade and on the south side, and four on the rear and on the north side. The gable roof is pierced by two interior end chimneys on the north side and four pedimented dormers, two on each facade. Centered in both gables is a round-headed window, that on the south side being flanked by half-lunettes. The window openings on the first two levels contain six-over-six sash and have stone flat arches above and wooden sills below. Arches of stone and wooden sills are used for the openings at the gables. All openings with the exception of the half-lunettes have louvered shutters held back with cyma curve shutter stops. The main cornice on the facades and in the gable ends is carved with a variety of motifs which from top to bottom include cable molding, a wave pattern band, undercut modillions, another cable, and a course of dentils. On the dormers the cornice is simpler and combines modillions and a cable molding.

The Smallwood House has two entrances---a major one in the southern bay of the front facade and a secondary one in the central bay of the south side, each of which is covered by one-bay wooden porch. The primary entrance is approached by twentieth century sandstone steps which begin with a curtail and are cordoned on either side by an iron balustrade with a brass finial. The small pedimented porch, a standard feature of the New Bern side-hall houses, is found here in its most perfectly executed form. It is composed of coupled colonettes which support an open-arch soffit pediment. A cornice of modillions and dentils separated by a cable molding carries around the pediment and the base of the arched soffit. Pedestals square in section support the colonettes, and a rounded handrail atop square balusters links the pedestals and encloses the porch. The entrance features a six-panel door surmounted by a transom in which thin wooden members used in imitation of leading create a fanlight pattern. This transom, the most delicate and best preserved of its type in New Bern, features a carved wooden medallion depicting a draped female figure in the hub of the fan and tiny wooden bosses with swags of beads in between the other intersections. A half-guilloche band occurs between the transom and the door. The two bottom panels of the door are flush and the upper four, flat-paneled; the field of each flat panel is outlined with an additional applied strip of molding, the corners of which are indented. The reveals and soffit are paneled to match the door, and the whole is outlined with a cable molding. The larger and much simpler side porch has a pediment outlined with a cornice identical to that of the front porch and carried on simple colonettes. This porch

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shelters a six-panel door identical to that on the front. The transom above, although rendered in the same manner as that of the front entrance, is heavier. Around the north bay of the front facade are traces of yet another pedimented porch. It is said that the front room was originally used as a counting house office. This possibility is supported by the less elaborate finish of the interior. Later a window replaced the door and access to the hall was provided inside. A twentieth century two-story brick wing is attached to the rear.

The plan of the Smallwood House consists of a side hall with two rooms opening on to it. The elegant scale and delicate details that characterize the exterior of the dwelling are repeated on the interior. Well-executed in every aspect, the wide hall has a transverse arch which forms a visual frame for the stair. Supported on fluted pilasters with a vertical cable molding on each corner and pierced gouge work in the caps, the elliptical arch has a molded archivolt and keystone. Carved cornices composed of dentils punctuated with undercut modillions with a band of cable above appear on either side of the transverse arch. The walls are plastered above a flat-paneled wainscot. The same flat paneling appears on the interior box shutters. Beginning with a curtail, the stair rises in three flights with two square landings between. It features balusters square in section and tapered posts which carry a ramped rounded handrail. The profile of the handrail is repeated on the opposite wall by a continuation of the paneled wainscot. The tapered newel is encircled at the top by the handrail carried on balusters, a motif echoed at the back of the curtail by an ascending plaster swirl. A stylized wave-pattern bracket adorns each step.

Although the front parlor is the simpler of the two first floor rooms, both have several features in common: a flat-paneled dado with a molded chair rail and baseboard, a carved wooden cornice, and flat-paneled interior box shutters. In the front parlor, the cornice is identical to that found in the hall. The Federal mantel consists of a square fire opening flanked by reeded pilasters with pierced gouge work in the caps upon which rests a three-part frieze. A sunburst in the center tablet is the only ornamentation on the frieze. Adorned with bands of pierced dentils and cable, the shelf breaks above the end blocks and bows over the center tablet. Above the mantel, the chimney breast is flush-paneled.

The rear parlor, currently used as a dining room, is more elaborately finished. The cornice has a cable band with modillions outlined by cables above a course of dentils. The chair rail is enriched with a guilloche band and the baseboard with a cable. Although the mantel is quite plain, it is surmounted by a rich overmantel with a broken pediment. The mantel itself is composed of engaged colonnettes which support an unadorned three-part frieze. A cable band and a course of dentils occur in the shelf which breaks above the end blocks and bows over the center tablet. The overmantel is more elaborate: dentils and undercut modillions outlined with a cable form the broken pediment which is carried on fluted engaged columns, pierced just

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below the necking of the plain caps. Flush paneling backs up the overmantel, and in the center the field of a large panel is outlined by strips of applied molding. Centered on the opposite wall, a door with six flat panels is set in matching reveals and soffit. Two arched recesses flank the door. The elliptical arches correspond to the transverse arch in the hall and are carried on pilasters which have pierced gouge work in the caps. An unusual treatment is seen on the pilaster shafts. Five vertical strips of delicate beaded molding have been applied, creating a sort of reeded effect.

The plan of the second floor includes, in addition to the two adjoining rooms, a small room created from the front portion of the hall. This unheated room by virtue of its elaborate finish appears to be an original feature of the house. A bathroom was made by enclosing part of the hall which necessitated moving the middle window on the south side one foot to the west, placing it off center as seen from the exterior.

The walls of both front chambers are finished identically. Bounding the flat-paneled dado are molded and carved chair rails and baseboards whose complexity is equalled in New Bern only by those found in the lodge room of the Masonic Temple. A diamond and oval guilloche band with a cable beneath occurs in the chair rail while a Wall of Troy band with a cable above is found in the baseboard. The elaborate cornice consists, from top to bottom, of a cable molding, a band of scallops, undercut modillions outlined with cable molding, and a course of pierced dentils. Above each window and door, a broken pediment embellished with pierced dentils and undercut modillions outlined with cable molding is carried on paneled pilasters. The pilasters rest on the dado which breaks out to form pedestals. The interior shutters, flat-paneled on both sides, are twentieth century additions. The northwest bedchamber contains a mantel with overmantel that is quite similar to that in the dining room, the only difference being in the cornice, where pierced dentils are substituted for plain ones, and in the center tablet which is adorned in the center by a large sunburst and in the corners by tiny quarter sunbursts.

The rear bedchamber is quite simply finished with plastered walls between a wooden cove cornice and a flat-paneled wainscot. Supported on pilasters with a cable molding placed vertically at the corners, a plain frieze carries a molded shelf which breaks over the end blocks and is adorned with dentils.

On the third floor the plaster walls are finished consistently with molded chair rails, baseboards, and cornices, except in the hall where beaded chair rails and baseboards are used. Beaded coat rails occur in the chambers. The front room contains the only third-floor mantel. Extremely simple, it has an architrave around the fire opening, a flush frieze and a heavily molded unbroken shelf. In the rear room, a curious closet is enclosed between the chimney and partition wall. A three-panel door with a panel above closes it off.

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1807 Eli Smallwood purchased from the heirs of Joseph Leech the land on which he was to build his house. The property transfer specifically notes that the lot is the one "whereon Colonel Joseph Leech formerly had a tanyard." According to local tradition Smallwood was a merchant who had grown prosperous in trade with New England and the West Indies, but Stephen F. Miller in his Recollections of New Bern listed him as a planter "residing in Town." Miller wrote that Smallwood

was successful in accumulating property. His marriage with Mrs. Blackwell, a Northern lady, took place just before my removal from Newbern, and his character for shrewd financial management was then well-established.

Smallwood was probably a bachelor when he constructed this house about 1810. Colonel John D. Whitford has written that

Eli Smallwood from his birth was not confined to the bed by any kind of illness until within three weeks of his death, which occurred in the seventy eighth year of his age. Where he died, and had resided for nearly fifty years . . . [was his house on East Front Street].

Since Smallwood died in 1860 this would corroborate a construction date of about 1810. In addition the Jones house next door, which is almost a twin to the Smallwood House, was begun about 1810. Smallwood's house was certainly completed by 1816 when the lot was listed as "improved" in the tax lists.

Kenneth Clark in his White Pine Series monograph on the Smallwood house describes it as

an excellent example of what the well-to-do merchant of that place [New Bern] and time considered to be the proper thing for himself and his family. . . .

Two possibilities exist for the identity of the designer and builder of the house. Martin Stevenson, Sr., had constructed the Bryan House on Pollock Street at an earlier date, and he was still practicing "the house carpenters and joiners" business in 1831 when he announced his retirement in the January 15 Newbern Spectator. Both houses are brick, and almost identical in plan and layout, and Stevenson was available.

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If one considers the interior finish of the house, however, the evidence seems to point to John Dewey as the designer and builder. Dewey is known to have designed the Masonic Theater, and to have finished the lodge room there. There are striking similarities between his finish of the lodge room and the interiors of the Smallwood house. The wainscot with molded chair rail and baseboard ornamented with diamond and oval guilloche, cable molding, and Wall of Troy moldings appear in both places, in the same relationships. In addition, the treatment of the door and window surrounds with full entablatures is almost identical. This, plus the fact that the records of the Masonic Lodge contain numerous complaints against Dewey for delays in finishing the Masonic Theater, indicating his involvement in other building activity, seems to point to Dewey as the designer and builder. Both the Smallwood House and the Masonic Lodge Room seem to have been finished at the same time, which further supports the point.

Smallwood died just before the Civil War, but the neighborhood was intensively used during the war. The Jones House next door was General John Foster's residence after the occupation of New Bern in early 1862, and General A. E. Burnside's Headquarters were just across the street in the Slover House.

Ownership had passed to Smallwood's son by the end of the war and after his move to New York he transferred the property to his mother in 1869. She sold the property to Charles R. Thomas in 1873.

The Thomas family was socially and politically prominent, and a son, Charles R. Thomas, represented an eastern North Carolina district in the United States Congress until well into the twentieth century. When Congressman Thomas sold the property to Caroline F. H. Jones in 1925 it was described as

The dwelling house and lot formerly owned and occupied as a residence by Judge C. R. Thomas, deceased, and now owned and occupied by the parties of the first part as a residence.

Mrs. Jones, a descendent of Smallwood, began the small amount of restoration which the house needed and completed the work before the mid-1930s when she sold the house and lot to Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Ward, Sr. The late Mr. D. L. Ward served in the North Carolina General Assembly from 1935 to 1949. His widow still owns the house.

Originally the lot, which borders on the Neuse River, had also contained Smallwood's wharf, barns and other outbuildings. These, though they survived until well into the twentieth century, are now gone. The waterfront orientation remains, however, in excellently landscaped gardens, adjacent to the additions to the rear of the house added by the current owner.

The Eli Smallwood House, of superb design enhanced by a wealth of beautifully executed ornament (probably the work of the expert craftsman,

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John Dewey), represents the quintessence of the Federal style in New Bern, a town where that style reached a level of development unmatched in North Carolina.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Craven County Records, Office of the Register of Deeds, Craven County Courthouse, New Bern, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Craven County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Clark, Kenneth. "An Eastern North Carolina Town House. The Smallwood-Jones Residence." The White Pine Series (Volume XIII, Number 3). New York: Russell F. Whitehead, 1927.  
 Waterman, Thomas T., and Johnston, Frances B. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

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		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	35	06	43
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	79	02	14
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3/4 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: 24 May 1972

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 H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 24 May 1972

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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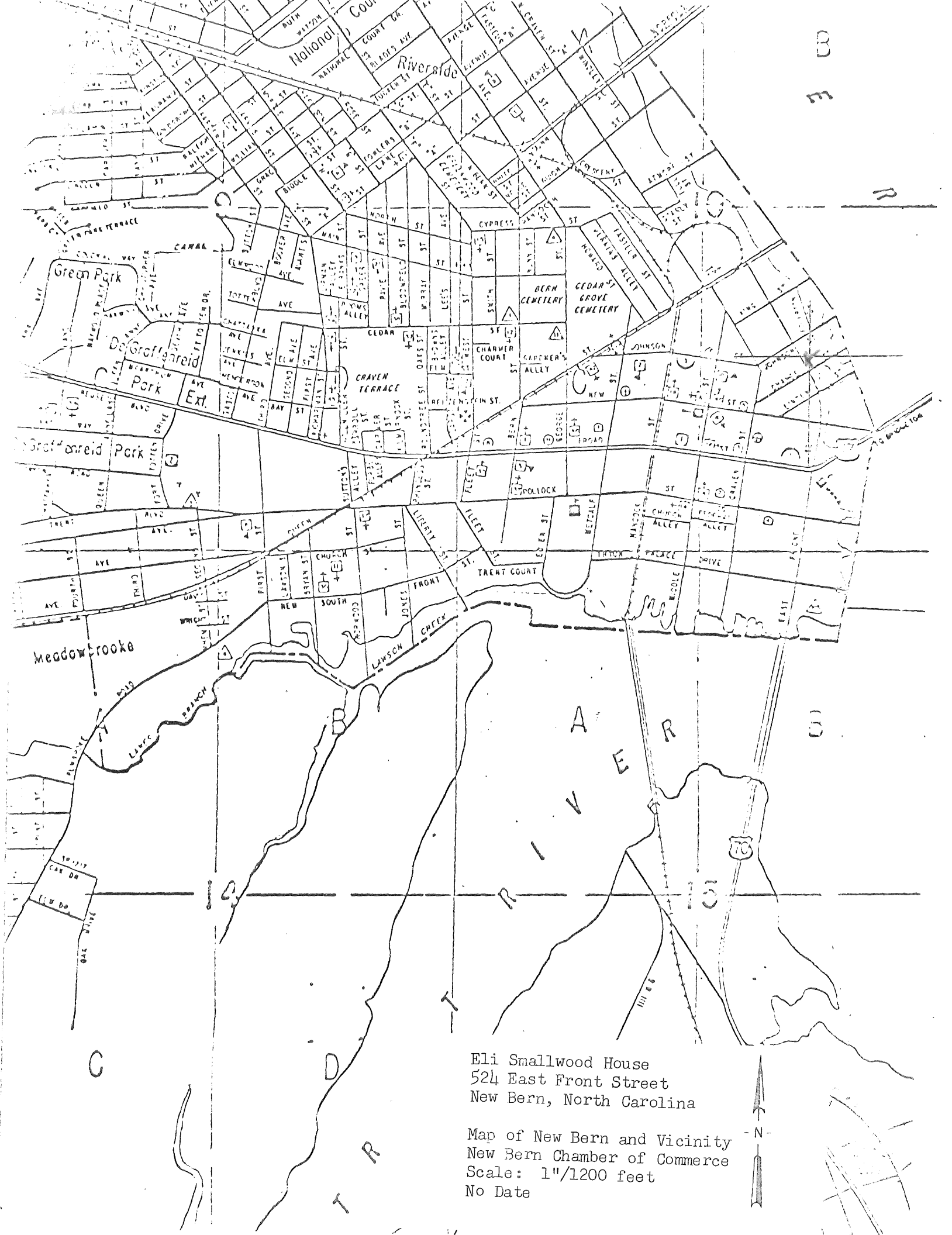
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Miller, Stephen F. "Recollections of New Bern 50 Years Ago." Our Living and Our Dead. New Bern, 1873.  
"Town Taxables for the Years 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819." Original lists, Vaults, City Hall, New Bern.



Eli Smallwood House  
524 East Front Street  
New Bern, North Carolina

Map of New Bern and Vicinity  
New Bern Chamber of Commerce  
Scale: 1"/1200 feet  
No Date

