

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Howell Homeplace

and/or common

2. Location

street & number North side SR 1517
1.4 miles East of junction with US 258 not for publication

city, town Tarboro vicinity of Second congressional district

state North Carolina code 037 county Edgecombe code 065

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. W.B. Howell

street & number 302 Church Street

city, town Tarboro vicinity of state North Carolina 27886

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Edgecombe County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Tarboro state North Carolina 27886

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architectural & Historical Resources of the
Tar-Neuse River Basin has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Survey & Planning Branch, Division of Archives & History

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Sited in a grove of trees at the end of a farm road, amid a variety of outbuildings the Howell Homeplace seems to be the epitomy of the straightforward mid-19th century farmhouse found in eastern North Carolina. The solid, cubical wood frame two-story house is sheathed in plain weatherboards, has a simple box cornice and thin corner posts. Two interior chimneys accentuate a feeling of height that derives from the surrounding trees and the elevation of the house on brick piers. Hipped roofed in standing seam tin the tall form is related to the horizontal feeling of the site by the one-story attached porch which surrounds the house on three sides and the later one story kitchen ell on the rear. The porch roof rests on thin columns sprouting attenuated lotus-like capitals under an Ionic volute. These thin porch supports and the assymetry of the house are its most immediately notable features.

The asymmetry derives from the presence of three entry doors, each with side lights and transom, which are placed on the south, west, and north sides of the house. On the west, which is the principal entry, the door is placed on the right, balanced by two windows. On the north and south sides the doors are placed opposite each other, about two-thirds down the side elevations of the house. On the north windows flank the door symmetrically, but on the south the wall between the west end and the door is blank. A window between the south door and the east end emphasizes the contrast of the blank wall. Windows placed symmetrically over windows on the first floor add to the confusion.

Entering on the west, the Howell House appears to be a side-hall plan house bisected by a cross-hall behind the entry hall and parlor. This cross hall creates a large entrance and stair hall for the north/south doors and gives access to the back dining room and sitting room. This plan makes for an equally complex plan upstairs, with a bedroom over the entry hall and one over the parlor which opens into the back hall. This hall, directly above the cross hall below gives access to two back bedrooms.

This unusual plan is one of gracious scale and convenience separating in a formal way the public and private activities of the house. This idea is further enhanced by the rather extraordinary painted decoration of the entrance and stairhalls in the front wing. This was clearly intended to be the focus of the house. Attributed to Edward Zoeller, a Bavarian fresco painter known to be active in Tarboro between the 1850s and 1880s, this, like his other work, combines delicate, marble-like colors to produce trompe l'oeil raised panels with thin moldings and attenuated rosettes which fill the entry and stair hall with an unusual atmosphere that contrasts with the otherwise simple detail of the house.

The interior detail of the house dates it in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when vernacular Greek Revival was somewhat altered by the more fashionable Italianate. The plaster walls, wide boarded floors, simple molded window frames, door frames, six-over-six sash and four recessed panel doors are typical of this period and area. The fireplace openings are slightly arched, with flat, plain pilasters supporting a plain entablature and shelf.

OHD 10040018
EXP 12-31-84

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Taken as a whole the house is somewhat startling. Its plan and realization seem to be in conflict. There are two possible explanations for this conflict. The first is that the Howell homeplace is made up of two parts; an early side hall plan house that was connected to a later addition by adding the cross hall and second tier of rooms. The second possible explanation is that it is simply a slightly eccentric building which combines the older side hall form with the more up to date cross hall for convenience sake. The former hypothesis is more convincing because of the complex connections of the two parts of the house--chiefly in the way a door appears to have been cut through from the upstairs front hall into the back. It is lower, awkward and squeezed. The latter hypothesis, of one build, is convincing because of the homogeneity of scale, materials, moldings, fireplaces and doors throughout the house. It is conceivable, however, that the old house with its taller, thinner proportions dictated scale while interior details were replaced throughout to create a setting appropriate for the splendid decoration of the front entry and stair hall.

The question of the date of the house is made no easier by one of the surviving outbuildings. This is a single room with a loft and engaged porch which stands directly behind and to the southeast of the present house. It probably served as a kitchen. It is also probably siding over log-construction--this is suggested by the heavy sills and corner posts still in evidence. This type of outbuilding could date from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century but its relatively tall proportions and steep gable roof make a late 18th century date possible. The other outbuildings, of which there are approximately six, are of diverse quality, age, and agricultural use.

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 checked="" 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	N/A		Builder/Architect	Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Howell Homeplace, built during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, is the seat of a self-sufficient, multi-crop farm which has been in single family ownership for over a century and a half. A moderately prosperous farm by Edgecombe County standards, the site contains a large farmhouse and several outbuildings of varying age and use. The house, a rather straightforward example of vernacular Greek Revival architecture, derives its significance from the contrast of this simple exterior with a more sophisticated interior, notably a stair hall with trompe l'oeil paneling and marbleizing which is attributed to Edward Zoeller, a Bavarian fresco painter active in Tarboro in the mid-nineteenth century. This work is part of Edgecombe County's collection of interior painting, probably the most important such assemblage work in the state.

-
- A. The Howell Homeplace has remained in the hands of a single family for over a century and a half. For much of that time it has been a prime example of a multi-crop farm and as such is associated with the broad patterns of economic development in eastern North Carolina.
 - B. The homeplace is associated with the Howell family which has been prominent in rural Edgecombe County since the 1830s.
 - C. Outwardly a typical farmhouse with vernacular references to the Greek Revival style, the Howell Homeplace is surprisingly complex on the interior. Its distinction derives from the painted trompe l'oeil stair hall which is probably the work of Edward Zoeller, a Bavarian-born Tarboro fresco painter active in the mid-nineteenth century.
 - D. A working farm for over a century, the Howell Homeplace is likely to yield information concerning rural life in nineteenth century Edgecombe County and perhaps answer questions concerning the date of construction and use of the earliest outbuilding.

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The Howell homeplace, located in Edgecombe County, dates before the Civil War. Its exact date of construction is not certain, but family tradition places it between 1830 and 1840. The house is located several miles east of Tarboro and has been the seat of the Howell farm for well over a century.¹

The house was built by Brittain Howell as the seat of his Edgecombe County plantation. Antebellum Edgecombe County was one of North Carolina's leading agricultural counties, and plantations with one hundred or more slaves were not uncommon. Seen in this context Brittain Howell's holdings were moderately large. In 1830 he owned 13 slaves,² while in 1850 he owned 17. In the later year his plantation consisted of 1,000 acres, 300 of which were under cultivation, and was valued at \$10,000.³ Howell's farm reached its peak in 1860. During that year he had 400 acres under cultivation, valued at \$15,000. Howell owned 10 horses, 3 mules, 4 milk cows, 8 oxen, 28 "other cattle," 18 sheep, and 100 swine. His livestock was valued at \$2,500. The farm grew 75 bushels of wheat, 20 bushels of rye, 1750 bushels of corn, 250 bushels of oats, 38 bales of cotton (15,200 pounds), 50 pounds of wool, 200 bushels of peas and beans, 1,000 bushels of sweet potatoes, 50 pounds of butter, and 18 tons of hay. Howell owned 35 slaves.⁴ His farm was a typically self-sufficient Edgecombe County farm, with cotton as the primary money crop.

Brittain Howell died in 1867. The farm and house were left to his son Brinkly G. Howell.⁵ Brinkly Howell was born in 1837. He served in the 17th North Carolina regiment in the Confederate army, attaining the rank of corporal in 1864. His regiment was engaged in numerous battles, including the battles of New Bern, and Fort Fisher in North Carolina and Drewry's Bluff and Cold Harbor in Virginia. Howell served from May, 1862 until the end of the war.⁶ He married Sallie Sherrod prior to the war and they had seven children, five daughters and two sons.⁷ The 1870 census shows that he managed to keep the farm at a level approaching its pre-Civil War status. He farmed 400 acres that year, with value of \$10,000. Howell grew 40,000 pounds of cotton (92½ bales) and continued to keep large amounts of livestock. In 1880 he increased his production of cotton to almost 50,000 (109 bales). Howell continued to grow large amounts of corn, oats, and sweet potatoes.⁹ Brinkly Howell was a leader in the Edgecombe County Grange, a farmer's group dedicated to educating its members in scientific farming advances, and was regarded as a leader in his rural community.¹⁰

Brinkly Howell died in 1903 and left the house and farm to son Britton Howell. Howell and his wife Emma Redmon had six children, two sons and four daughters.¹¹ He continued to farm the land until his death in 1944 at age 82 and was regarded as one of the area's most "prominent farmers." The property was willed to his son William Brinkly Howell.¹² He died in 1973 leaving the property to his wife, who still owns it. Since 1943 it has been the home of the farm's caretaker A. W. Waters, who continues to farm it. Like much of eastern North Carolina tobacco is the farm's main crop.¹³

The Howell farm has remained in the hands of a single family for a century and a half. For much of that time it has been a prime example of a self-sufficient, multi-crop farm that epitomizes much of the history of rural North Carolina.

Architecturally the house is fairly simple on the exterior. The side hall plan is somewhat unusual in Edgecombe County. But the glory of the house, which gives it regional importance, is the presence of superbly executed and well preserved interior trompe l'oeil painting. The hall is painted in skillful imitation of panelling, and this may be the

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work of one of two men: Mr. Dreyer who was sent by E. G. Lind, Baltimore architect, to execute the far more elaborate trompe l'oeil painting of Coolmore (ca. 1860) or Edward Zoeller, a Bavarian-born fresco painter who came to Tarboro during its antebellum prosperity along with many other foreign and northern artisans, and, unlike many of them, remained there.

Zoeller was born in Bavaria on March 14, 1834, and he came to Edgecombe County between 1850 and 1857. In the Tarboro Southerner of December 4, 1857, he began advertising "Edward Zoeller and Company, House, Sign, Ornamental, and Fresco Painters." In his advertisement Zoeller described himself and his workers as "Guilders, Bronzers, and Imitators of Wood and Marble" who paid "Prompt Attention. . . to Glazing, Varnishing, &C." Furthermore, the advertisement declared, "the citizens of Edgecombe are urgently solicited to give them a trial," and "all work will be executed with fidelity and dispatch." In addition the commercial notice pointed out that "paper hangings would also be attended to in town or country." Zoeller's early work in the area is believed to include the elaborate painting at the Coolmore Plantation in the county.

Several Tarboro and vicinity houses possess notable painting of this type, making up a group of painted interiors of statewide significance. Many are locally attributed to Zoeller. That which most closely resembles the Howell Homeplace is in the Cotten-Engelhard-Howard House in Tarboro. Whether this work was done in the antebellum period or post-Civil War years is uncertain; that similar work was being done later is evident in the elaborate painted decoration of the Redmond-Shackleford House of the 1880s, also attributed by tradition to Zoeller.

The other houses with such work are far more elaborate than the Howell Homeplace. The presence of the painting here illustrates the charm of this decoration for moderate planters who owned conservative houses as well as for the merchants and planters who erected more flamboyant dwellings.

The structures of course are 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 structures. 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.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Letter from Mrs. William Brinkly Howell to Catherine Bishir, June 15, 1977, copy in file, hereinafter cited as Howell letter.

²Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.

³Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule.

⁴Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule.

⁵Howell letter; Edgecombe County Will Book G., p. 301.

⁶Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr. (compiler), North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster (Raleigh: Archives and History, 7 volumes, 1966-1979), VI, 270-276.

⁷Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.

⁸Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule.

⁹Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule; J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., History of Edgecombe County (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1920), 338, hereinafter cited as Turner and Bridgers, History of Edgecombe County.

¹⁰Turner and Bridgers, History of Edgecombe County, 339.

¹¹Howell letter; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; Edgecombe County Estates Papers.

¹²News and Observer (Raleigh), January 31, 1944; Edgecombe County Will Book N, p. 548.

¹³Howell letter.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 478+ acres

Quadrangle name Speed

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A	1 8	2 7 6 9 1 0	3 9 7 7 7 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 8	2 7 8 0 7 0	3 9 7 7 8 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 8	2 7 8 0 8 0	3 9 7 5 9 4 0
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D	1 8	2 7 7 1 6 0	3 9 7 5 4 0 0
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E	1 8	2 7 6 2 0 0	3 9 7 6 5 6 0
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F			
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G			
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H			
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet for justification. See enclosed plat map showing property boundary.

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

Charlotte V. Brown, Architectural Historian
 name/title Jim Sumner, Researcher
Survey and Planning Branch
 organization Archeology & Historic Preservation Section date September, 1981
Division of Archives & History
 street & number 109 East Jones Street telephone (919) 733-6545
 city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 31, 1984

For HCERS 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

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Howell, Mrs. William Brinkly to Bishir, Catherine. June 15, 1977. Copy in file

Jordan, Weymouth T., Jr. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 7 volumes, 1966-1979.

News and Observer (Raleigh). January 31, 1944.

Turner, J. Kelly and Bridgers, John L., Jr. History of Edgecombe County.

United States Census Office. Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; Seventh Census of the United States, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule, Slave Schedule; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Edgecombe County, North Carolina Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Population Schedule. Microfilm copies. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

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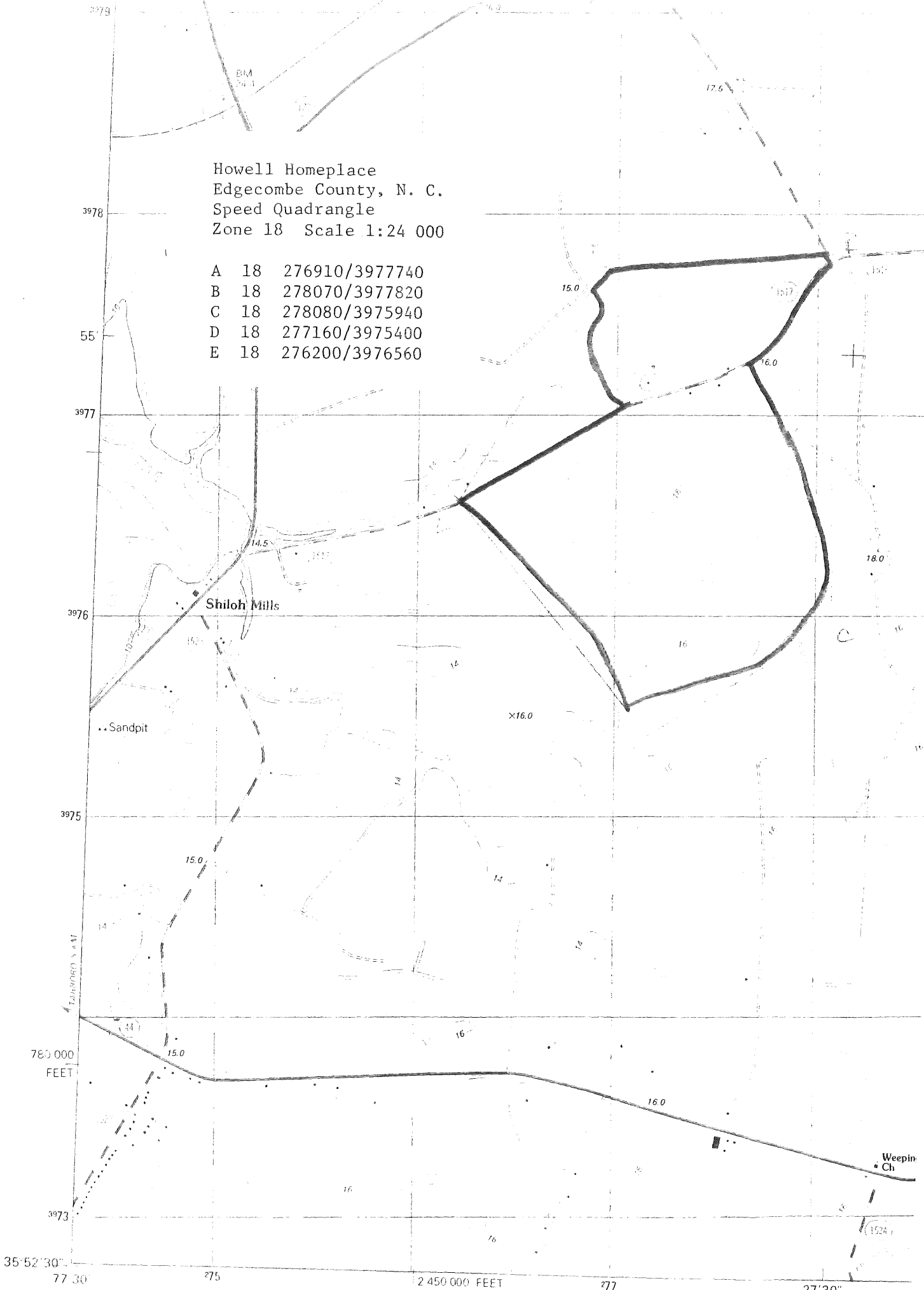
date entered

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The property being nominated is a combination of cultivated fields and woodland, and as such has been associated with the Howell Homeplace since its construction between 1830 and 1840. Edgecombe County was the location of a number of large working plantations during and after the antebellum period of the state's history. In 1860 over 400 acres of the 1000 acres owned by the Howells was under cultivation. The property being nominated contributes to the agricultural history of the house, county, and state.



Howell Homeplace
 Edgecombe County, N. C.
 Speed Quadrangle
 Zone 18 Scale 1:24 000

- A 18 276910/3977740
- B 18 278070/3977820
- C 18 278080/3975940
- D 18 277160/3975400
- E 18 276200/3976560

