

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Porter Houses and Armstrong Kitchen

other names/site number N/A

## 2. Location

street & number 821 Wells Road

N/A not for publication

city or town Whitakers

vicinity

stat North Carolina

code NC

county Edgecombe

code 065

zip code 27891

e \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey Acrow SHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

7/1/02

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other,

(explain):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Porter Houses and Armstrong Kitchen  
Name of Property

Edgecombe County, NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary structure (kitchen)

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

VACANT: Not in Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: One-and-a-half story gambrel-roofed house

Other: One-room heavy-timber frame house

Other: One-room frame outbuilding

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof METAL: Tin

other WOOD: Shingle

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

Last quarter eighteenth century

Ca. 1850, ca. 1900

**Significant Dates**

Last quarter eighteenth century

Ca. 1850, ca. 1900

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Porter Houses and Armstrong Kitchen  
Name of Property

Edgecombe County, NC  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 259800 3994280  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Heather Fearnbach  
organization consultant date 2/1/02  
street & number 705 Mills Street telephone 919-828-6548  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27608

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name James Proctor  
street & number 2512 Noble Road telephone 919-834-7317  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27608

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Porter Houses and Armstrong Kitchen  
Edgecombe County, NC

## 7. Narrative Description

The Porter Houses and Armstrong Kitchen are located approximately four miles southeast of Whitakers, North Carolina at 821 Wells Road on a one-acre parcel of land. The gambrel-roofed Porter House faces north toward a small front lawn that includes two sweet gum trees, two oak trees, three established crepe myrtles, a large cedar tree, landscaped beds separated from the road by a ditch, and a privet hedge at the northeastern corner of the property. Wells Road is the northern boundary of the parcel; a modern post and rail fence delineates the eastern boundary; a ditch, some trees and an overgrown privet hedge form the western boundary; and a row of sycamore and locust trees and overgrown vegetation mark the southern boundary. In addition to the gambrel-roofed Porter House, the parcel includes the late eighteenth-century, gable-roofed Porter House and a ca. 1850 kitchen that was remodeled ca. 1900.

### **Gambrel-Roofed Porter House Contributing Building**

The Porter House, constructed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, is a one-and-one-half-story frame, gambrel-roofed building with a wood shingle and standing-seam tin roof, beaded replacement siding, two original double-shouldered exterior end chimneys and a twentieth-century brick pier foundation. The house is four bays wide and one-room deep, with a one-story shed addition on the southern (rear) elevation. The shed addition encompasses recessed double interior and storm doors and two four-over-four wood sash windows. The shed-roofed porch on the northern (front) elevation shelters two entrances and two six-over-six wood sash windows. The three-and-one-half-inch wide door surrounds have a beaded interior edge and mitered corners, as do the two-and-one-half-inch wide window surrounds. Two original board-and-batten doors composed of five beaded, shiplapped boards attached to three horizontal battens with wrought nails are centered on the front elevation and protected by late-twentieth-century storm doors. The front doors are hung on reproduction H-L hinges and are secured by reproduction rim locks with brass and porcelain knobs. Notches in the plate for the porch suggest that there was an enclosed shed room roughly eight-and-one-half by eight-and-one-half feet square that was created during the nineteenth century. The porch floorboards, framing and balustrade were replaced during the 1994 stabilization of the building, but the original flush board ceiling remains. There are two dormers with tapered-board sides and four-over-four wood sash windows on the front and rear elevations of the house.

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Original double-shouldered, Flemish-bond, exterior chimneys dominate the eastern and western elevations. The chimneys have been repeatedly parged over the years, most recently during the twentieth century with portland cement. On the western elevation, a four-over-four wood sash window and a board-and-batten door on the first floor and two four-over-four wood sash windows on the second floor flank the chimney. The board-and-batten door is original to the house, and is identical to the front doors. The eastern elevation is identical with the exception of the absence of a door opening.

The Porter House has a hall-parlor plan. The rooms are notable for the exposed, mortised and pegged, rectangular corner posts and door posts. The exposed ceiling joists are beaded on both edges. Unpainted, beaded, horizontal pine sheathing ten-to-eleven-inches wide is recessed within the heavy timber framing of the corner posts and door posts. The stair wall in the southwest corner of the hall has wider sheathing, averaging around fourteen-and-one-half inches. The closed-stringer stair originally had a door at the landing where the steps turn ninety degrees, but that area is now open. The upper run of the stair is enclosed, while a molded handrail, square balusters and a square newel with a square carved finial serve the lower section. The hall retains original, variable-width, pine floorboards secured with wrought nails.

The sheathed area over the mantel in the hall was originally plastered. The fireplace box has been infilled and parged but the original segmental arch opening can still be seen. The replacement sheathing boards now covering the area were salvaged from the second floor of the gable-roofed eighteenth-century house on the property. One window on the eastern wall flanks the simple Georgian mantel with a flat upper panel topped by a narrow shelf. A door in the southwestern corner of the room leads to the rear shed addition.

The hall and parlor are connected by a replacement low board-and-batten-door that was hung during the 1994 restoration and fitted with a reproduction thumb-latch. The interior finish of the parlor is similar to that of the hall. The chimney brick above the Georgian mantel is exposed in this room, and mid-twentieth-century flush pine floorboards cover the original pine floor. In addition, an original board-and-batten door leading to a later (no longer extant) porch on the western elevation and the detached kitchen is adjacent to the replacement board-and-batten door to the rear shed rooms in the southwest corner of the building. A reproduction thumb-latch secures the door into the shed addition, which is hung on reproduction H-L hinges.

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The rear shed addition is composed of two rooms and a L-shaped passage. The L-shaped passage bisects the kitchen and bath, and separates the bathroom from the parlor. The eastern room contains a modern kitchen, while the western room was converted into a bathroom during the 1994 renovations of the house. All of the bathroom walls were sheetrocked after the installation of the plumbing for the fiberglass shower and other fixtures. The three-beaded-board-and-batten bathroom door originally hung in the gable-roofed eighteenth-century house on the property. The original flooring in the passage and bathroom is covered with wide mid-twentieth-century pine boards.

The northern wall of the kitchen is weatherboarded, and drywall covers the other interior elevations of the room. The kitchen and passage retain original, variable-width, pine flooring. Original beaded siding with large wrought nails is still extant on the eastern two-thirds of the rear elevation on the main section of the house. The siding does not appear to have been exposed for a long period of time before the shed addition was constructed. The original pine ceiling boards are intact in the shed rooms.

Other than removal of the original sheathing on the perimeter walls and ceiling, the second floor is in a largely unaltered eighteenth-century condition. The partition wall for the parlor chamber is composed of ten-inch-wide beaded flush horizontal boards. The three-beaded-board-and-batten door into the chamber has original H-L hinges with leather washers and is secured by a rim lock. The wide pine flooring is installed with wrought L-head flooring nails. One of each of the windows flanking the chimney of the eastern and western elevations was added during the 1994 renovation when the walls and ceiling were sheetrocked. A fireplace with a replacement brick hearth serves the parlor chamber. The balustrade in the hall chamber at the top of the stairs has narrow, square balusters and a square newel post.

### **Gable-Roofed Porter House Contributing Building**

The second late eighteenth-century house on the property is a one-room, one-and-one-half story gable-roofed building that is approximately sixteen feet wide by twenty-four feet long. Twentieth-century shed additions were removed from the gable ends of the building during the 1994 work on the property. The original framing that survives is identical to that in the gambrel-roofed Porter House, with heavy, hewn, rectangular corner posts and door posts

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with pegged mortise and tenon joints. Substantial corner down braces are mortised and pegged into the corner posts and the sills, and light pit-sawn infill studs are nailed into the plate and sill. The exposed ceiling joists are beaded and have a heavy accumulation of soot on them. The rafters rest on a pit-sawn false plate, and are braced with lapped collar beams.

The upper run of a corner stair enclosed with diagonal sheathing boards attached with wrought nails remains in the southwest corner of the building. The stair made a ninety-degree turn; the lower run of the stair is not extant but the support members for the stair remain intact. Variable-width pine floorboards on the second floor are secured with wrought flooring nails.

The original configuration of windows and doors has been changed, but it appears that there was a door with a narrow window to the south on the eastern elevation and a door with a narrow window on its southern side on the western elevation. An original board and batten door hung on H-L hinges that are secured with leather washers is located on the east elevation. A no longer extant exterior chimney dominated the southern elevation, and the northern elevation had a centrally located door and one window at the second-floor level.

There is no evidence of an original interior partition wall in the building. The interior elevations were most recently sheathed with wide pine boards attached with wire nails, but there may have been an earlier generation of interior sheathing. The door posts, corner post and studs were exposed for some time, however, as they were all whitewashed. The first-floor replacement flooring material is mid-twentieth-century, narrow, tongue-and-groove oak boards.

Weatherboards and a standing-seam tin roof protect the building, which has been moved at least once during its history. The building currently rests on concrete blocks on the edge of a ditch that marks the property line. There is no documentation as to its original location.

## **Armstrong Kitchen**

**Ca. 1850, ca. 1900**

### **Contributing Building**

The kitchen, roughly sixteen-feet wide by eighteen-feet long, is located at the southwestern corner of the gambrel-roofed Porter House. The eight-by-nine-inch hewn sills indicate the former location of a cooking hearth on the west elevation. The floor joists were replaced with circular sawn wood and are laid across the sills. Hewn timbers flank the original fireplace opening that was approximately five feet six inches in width. The kitchen rests on



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brick and concrete block piers and is covered with a standing-seam tin roof. The building appears to date to mid-nineteenth century but the interior finishes and roof structure date to ca. 1900.

Asbestos shingles were applied over wide flush boards on the exterior of the building, while beadboard sheaths the walls and ceiling of the interior. Two rows of beadboard form the six-inch wide door and window surrounds. A six-inch-high-baseboard lines the room.

A brick stovepipe chimney replaced the original cooking fireplace on the western elevation. The front (north) and rear (south) elevations of the kitchen each had one door and window, while the eastern elevation had one centrally-located window. The front door is a twentieth-century board and batten door constructed with wire nails and hung on butt hinges. The rear door opening has been boarded-up.

## Integrity Statement

The gambrel-roofed Porter House possesses a high degree of integrity due to its retention of an eighteenth-century hall-parlor plan, heavy-timber framing, Flemish-bond chimneys, board-and-batten doors, and beaded, horizontal, interior sheathing throughout many generations of use as a residence. A previous property owner used the Secretary of the Interior's Standards during the 1994 restoration of the gambrel-roofed Porter House, and the current owner plans a careful restoration of the second gable-roofed eighteenth-century house and kitchen on the property. The gable-roofed eighteenth century house and the kitchen retain architectural integrity as well, retaining original framing members, interior finishes and form.

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Summary Statement

The Porter Houses, two of the oldest extant dwellings in Edgecombe County, are important examples of rural North Carolina plantation houses built during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The gambrel-roofed and gable-roofed Porter Houses reflect the lasting influence of traditional building practices brought south from tidewater Maryland and Virginia, as the new settlers from those colonies moved into North Carolina's central coastal plain. There are few surviving examples of eighteenth-century houses of this scale and finish built for the emerging planter class in the coastal plain of North Carolina, making these

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buildings eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C. The Armstrong Kitchen is also eligible under Criterion C as a representative example of this once common, but now rare type of domestic outbuilding in Edgecombe County. A separate kitchen once accompanied most houses during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but most have either been demolished or incorporated into a rear service ell.

## Historical Background

John Lord Carteret, Earl of Granville, granted the land on which the Porter Houses stand to Charles Porter, Sr. in 1749. It is possible that Charles Porter constructed one or both buildings, or that his son, Moody Porter, built one or both houses after he inherited the property in 1788. According to the Edgecombe County census of 1800, Moody Porter and seven members of his family lived on the property with six slaves. By 1815, Moody Porter owned 710 acres valued at \$2,590 and nine slaves. These statistics place the Porter family in the middle tier of slaveholding families owning less than ten but over two slaves. Wheat, corn, tobacco, cotton, and flax were the principal agricultural crops in Edgecombe County in the early nineteenth century, and most families also raised livestock. The Porters were not extraordinarily wealthy and never incorporated the newest trends in the Federal and Greek Revival styles into the earlier Georgian form of their houses.<sup>1</sup>

Moody Porter died in 1822, leaving the central portion of the property, including the houses, to Benjamin P. Porter. Benjamin Porter married in January 1833 and started buying other adjacent parcels of land. In 1841 Benjamin Porter was forced to sell his property at auction. Milly Lynch purchased the central tract, including the houses. The 1850 census lists sixty-seven-year-old Milly, her sixty-five-year-old husband Eaton, and a young woman as occupants of the house. They owned nine slaves and farmed one hundred acres, producing

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen E. Bradley, Jr., The 1800 and 1810 Federal Censuses: Edgecombe County, North Carolina (South Boston, VA, 1989), 8; David B Gammon, 1815 Tax List: Edgecombe County, North Carolina (Raleigh, NC, 1985), 53; J. Kelly Turner, History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina (Raleigh, Edwards & Broughton Publishing Company, 1920.), 160; Alan D. Watson, Edgecombe County: A Brief History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1979), 20-22.

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corn, cotton, wool, peas, potatoes, and hay. In 1869, the Armstrong family purchased the property. The house remained in the family until Martha Armstrong Parrish's son, J.A. Parrish, sold the property to Henry A. Braswell in 1948. Henry Braswell's children inherited the property and used the Porter Houses as a tenant house until they donated the house and a one-acre parcel to the Historic Preservation Fund of Edgecombe County in 1987. The Historic Preservation Fund revolved the property to Preservation North Carolina in 1990.

PNC sold the Porter Houses to Robert J. Benton in 1993. The current owner, James C. Proctor, purchased the house from Robert Benton in 2001.<sup>2</sup>

**Architecture Context: Eighteenth-Century Frame Houses**

In both form and construction, the Porter Houses and the few other small eighteenth-century frame houses still standing in the Pamlico and Albemarle regions all show a strong kinship with those built throughout the larger area of the Chesapeake in the first half of the eighteenth century. These survivors, usually of one- or two-room form, reflect the lasting influence of the traditional building practices brought south from Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, as the new settlers from those colonies moved into North Carolina's central coastal plain. Settlement in the Tar and Neuse river basins gained momentum rapidly during the 1730s, following two decades of unrest in the wake of the disruptive Tuscarora wars. The largely anonymous house-carpenters and joiners who built the Porter Houses clearly understood and practiced the architectural vocabulary of the Chesapeake and Albemarle regions.<sup>3</sup>

Examples of surviving eighteenth-century one-room houses comparable to the gable-roofed Porter House are extremely rare in the counties surrounding the Albemarle Sound. Although now moved and much altered, the Joel Hollowell House, built circa 1760 in the Belvidere Township of Perquimans County, is also a very large (twenty-six feet by nineteen feet)

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<sup>2</sup> Homer B. Vernon, "Origins of the Parrish House of Edgecombe County," n.p., n.d.; Stephen E. Bradley, Jr., *The 1850 Federal Census of Edgecombe County, North Carolina* (Keysville, VA, 1990), 14, 86, 119; Edgecombe County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

<sup>3</sup> Heather Fearnbach and Peter Sandbeck, "Robson House Historic Structures Report," Prepared for the Exhibit Design Section of the North Carolina Museum of History, 2002.

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single-room house. Like the Porter House, it has a massive frame of the type often left partially or fully exposed, in this case trimmed with beaded edge on all exposed corners within the room. The corner stair rises in a short flight, then turns ninety degrees to rise upstairs. A one-room log or plank house built in Pasquotank County in the mid-eighteenth century also exhibited a one-room plan, with a large interior chimney and a winder stair rising in the adjacent corner.<sup>4</sup>

In neighboring Pitt County, the 1742 Robson House is the earliest of several extant braced-frame timber dwellings constructed during the eighteenth century. The Robson House was originally a one-room, gable-roofed dwelling with an unfinished interior, but by 1750 had grown to include an additional room. Both rooms were finished at that time with vertical, shiplapped, beaded wall sheathing boards. A partially enclosed corner stair provided access to the second floor from the 1740 room. The relatively high degree of interior finish in the house distinguishes it from the average dwelling constructed in the county during this period.

The circa 1750-1775 Hathaway House, located in the Belvoir Crossroads vicinity in Pitt County, was originally a one-room, gable-roofed, frame dwelling with an interior end chimney. The house evolved into a saddlebag plan with a rear ell and has been moved from its original location, but still retains significant eighteenth-century elements such as projecting ceiling joists with a tilted false plate, a pinned cornice, and a forty-five degree roof pitch.<sup>5</sup>

The Dee Moore House, located near Fountain, Pitt County, was built about the same time as the Hathaway House. The one-story, gable-roofed, frame dwelling has lost its exterior end chimney but still possesses original beaded clapboards attached with wrought nails. The partially enclosed corner stair and beaded ceiling joists are typical eighteenth-century interior treatments and both are found in the Porter Houses.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dru Gatewood Haley and Raymond A. Winslow, Jr., The Historic Architecture of Perquimans County, North Carolina (Hertford: The Town of Hertford, 1982), pp. 16-17, 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

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Improving economic conditions following the Revolutionary War led to an increase in the size of the average late eighteenth-century dwelling resulted in the construction of eighteenth-century, gambrel-roofed, hall-parlor plan houses in eastern North Carolina. The gambrel-roof form, brought to the American colonies with early English builders, was not uncommon for well-finished urban and rural houses during the Georgian era. The upstairs chambers in these houses benefited from additional space provided by the gambrel roof.

Extant gambrel-roofed, hall-parlor plan houses in the region include Old Town Plantation House in Edgecombe County, Garrett's Island House in Washington County, the Van Der Veer House in Beaufort County, the Owens House in Halifax County, and the King House in Bertie County. These buildings exemplify the new wealth of the emerging planter and merchant classes and the growing availability of artisans in the building trade in North Carolina by the 1750s and 1760s.<sup>7</sup> By the early nineteenth century the gambrel-roof form died out rapidly in houses constructed by wealthy propertyowners and was replaced by newer architectural styles. Vernacular structures continued to reflect established roof framing techniques, such as the gambrel roof.

The circa 1785 Old Town Plantation House (NR 1972) was moved to its current location in the vicinity of Battleboro in Edgecombe County. This one-and-a-half story, gambrel-roofed, frame dwelling with a hall-parlor plan, a rear shed addition and double-shouldered, Flemish-bond, end chimneys is one of the oldest dwellings in Edgecombe County. The hall includes an original enclosed stair, a raised-panel mantel, and raised-panel wainscoting set off by plaster walls. The parlor has simpler wainscoting and plaster walls, while the walls of the upstairs chambers are sheathed with flush beaded boards.<sup>8</sup> Like the gambrel-roofed Porter House, Old Town Plantation has a four-bay fenestration, with two centrally placed doors leading into the hall and parlor flanked by two windows. This four-bay fenestration is a distinctive regional feature in the coastal plain of North Carolina.

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<sup>7</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, North Carolina Architecture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, A Guide to the Architecture of Eastern North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 320.

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Garrett's Island House (NR 2000), located approximately two miles south of Plymouth in Washington County, is a circa 1760, one-and-one-half-story, weatherboarded, frame, gambrel-roof building with a new wood shingle roof, one surviving double-shouldered exterior end chimney and a brick pier foundation supplemented with concrete blocks. The house is three bays wide and one-room deep, with a one-story shed addition on the rear elevation. The interior of the house retains Federal mantels and wainscoting. The walls of the hall, parlor, and upstairs chambers were originally plastered.<sup>9</sup>

The Owens House (NR 1970), located in Halifax, is a circa 1760, two-story, gambrel-roofed, frame dwelling with a side passage and two rooms on each floor. The structure is maintained as a house museum at Historic Halifax State Historic Site. The circa 1790 Van Der Veer House (NR 1970) in Bath is a one-and-a-half-story frame house with a hall-parlor plan and a gambrel roof. This building was moved to its current location and its interior has been altered to function as exhibit space for Historic Bath State Historic Site.<sup>10</sup>

The King House (also known as the King-Bazemore House), constructed circa 1763 in Bertie County, is another finely finished one-and-a-half story house with a gambrel roof. It differs from other examples in that the structure is frame with brick ends, interior chimneys, and elaborate paneled interiors. The house was moved to its current site at Hope Plantation in 1978.<sup>11</sup>

A handful of Georgian-era, gambrel-roofed plantation houses have been assessed during county surveys and found to be significantly altered. The Thomas B. Riddick House, in Gates County, is a late-eighteenth-century gambrel-roofed house with simple Georgian detailing. Its orientation was reversed in the 1940s when the road was moved, resulting in the front porch and rear shed rooms being transposed. The Sanderson-Sutton House, in the vicinity of New Hope township in Perquimans County, is a hall-parlor plan, gambrel-roofed house of the late eighteenth century that has experienced changes in the first-floor configuration and is missing its rear shed rooms and open

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<sup>9</sup> Heather Fearnbach, "Garrett's Island House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond F. Pisney, "Historic Halifax State Historic Site," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1969.

<sup>11</sup> Survey and Planning Unit, State Department of Archives and History, "King House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1971.

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Edgecombe County, NC

front porch. The Edgecombe House, located in the Coakley vicinity of Edgecombe County, is a three-bay, one-and-one-half story, gambrel-roofed house with a hall-parlor plan that has lost its chimneys, front porch, and interior finishes. One room of the interior paneling has been installed in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Old Salem, and includes raised-panel wainscoting and an impressive raised-panel mantel.

These examples of eighteenth-century dwellings in the coastal plain of North Carolina illustrate the diversity of the housing stock that existed during the late Colonial period. The most ephemeral earth-fast and log buildings that housed most of the rural population have disappeared from the landscape, but a representative number of well-built houses constructed for the emerging planter class remain. Pervasive eighteenth-century building forms included one-room and hall-parlor plan dwellings with gable and gambrel roofs, often augmented with front and rear shed porches and rooms. The two Porter Houses represent the range of building forms that were constructed for the emerging planter class in coastal North Carolina.

The Porter Houses possess a degree of integrity of setting, workmanship and materials that exceeds most other surviving eastern North Carolina examples of rural eighteenth-century houses. The houses are significant not only due to their status as two of the oldest extant houses in Edgecombe County, but also because of their fine representation of rare and rapidly disappearing early architectural forms.

## Architecture Context: Kitchens

Freestanding kitchens were standard components of most domestic complexes through the eighteenth, and much of the nineteenth centuries in rural and urban North Carolina. Kitchens were usually one or two-room frame structures with a large cooking fireplace, often centrally located in a cluster of other outbuildings such as dairies, smokehouses, wash houses, and well houses near the main house. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries kitchens were either attached to the main house by an open breezeway or incorporated into the main block of the house as cookstoves became widely available and affordable.<sup>12</sup> The Armstrong kitchen illustrates the transition from cooking fireplace to cookstoves as they became available with its surviving evidence of a large cooking hearth and exterior chimney removed for a stove chimney.

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<sup>12</sup> Bishir and Southerri, Guide to the Architecture of Eastern North Carolina, 447.

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Separate kitchen buildings were not a primary focus of Henry Taves 1985 survey of Edgecombe County's architectural resources, perhaps because of the frequency of their appearance on the landscape at that time. There are several intact examples of late-nineteenth-century, two-room, kitchen-dining room buildings in the vicinity of the Armstrong Kitchen, and one good example of a detached urban kitchen in Tarboro (approximately twenty miles south). However, there do not appear to be any other extant examples of one-room, detached kitchens in the northwestern quadrant of Edgecombe County.

The Braswell Kitchen-dining room building is located approximately three miles north of the Armstrong Kitchen on the south side of Wells Road. The frame, weatherboarded, side-gable-roofed building appears to date from the turn of the twentieth century. The interior rooms are sheathed with beadboard. The five-panel doors and two-over-two wood sash windows have plain-board surrounds. A shed-roofed porch shelters the two doors on the western elevation and once extended around to the door on the northern elevation. There are three windows on the eastern elevation and one on the southern elevation. A brick stovepipe chimney on the southern elevation serves the building, which rests on tall concrete block piers and is protected by a standing-seam metal roof.

The Bryan Kitchen is located one-and-one-half-miles north of the Armstrong Kitchen on the north side of Wells Road. The two-room, frame, side-gable-roofed, kitchen-dining room building originally sat directly behind a circa 1850 house, but was moved about two hundred yards west into a field in the 1950s. The weatherboards on the building have been covered with asbestos shingles, and the front porch enclosed, but the interior retains its original plan including a large pantry in the kitchen. The building is served by an interior chimney, rests on brick piers, and has a standing-seam metal roof.

The circa 1885 Redmond-Shackelford House, located at 300 N. Main Street in Tarboro, is an impressive example of a Second-Empire-style townhouse. The two-room, brick, kitchen-dining room in the rear was used until the late 1980s. The building has segmental-arched



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window and door openings and a plastered interior. The standing-seam metal roof is pierced by a central chimney.

These examples of late-nineteenth-century detached two-room kitchens illustrate the range of forms popular at that time. Detached one-room kitchens and two-room kitchen-dining room buildings were used through the twentieth century in some cases. The Armstrong Kitchen is an intact example of a significant component formerly found in most rural domestic complexes, and perhaps the only surviving one-room, detached kitchen in the northwestern quadrant of Edgecombe County. The fact that the kitchen never moved into the main house may indicate that the property was occupied by tenant farmers by the early twentieth century.

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## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of Edgecombe County tax parcel 3894-45-3865 on the  
enclosed map, Scale 1"=128'.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated tract is the original site of the Porter Houses and provides a historically  
appropriate setting for the buildings.

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Edgecombe County, NC

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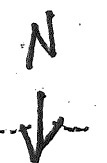
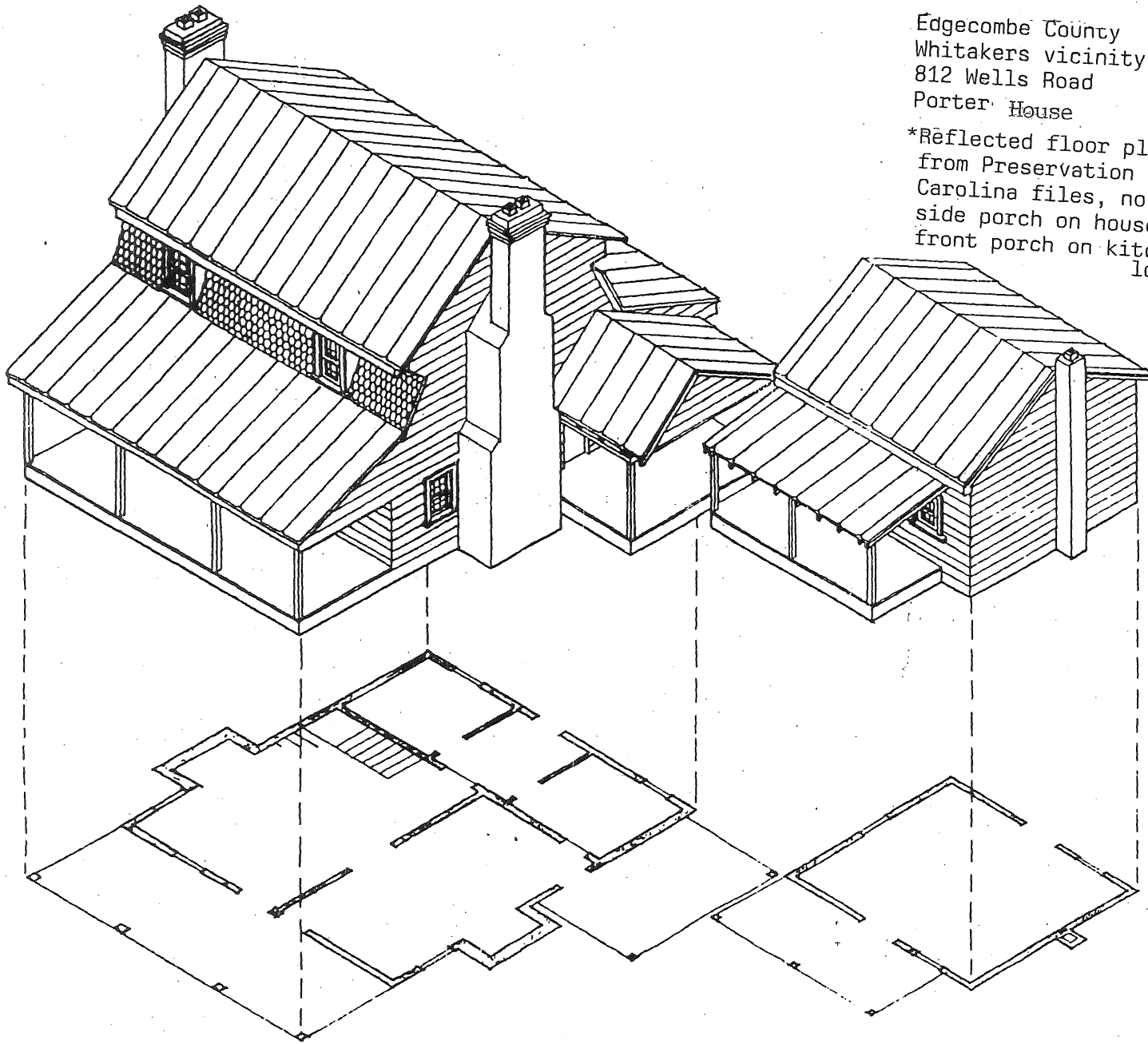
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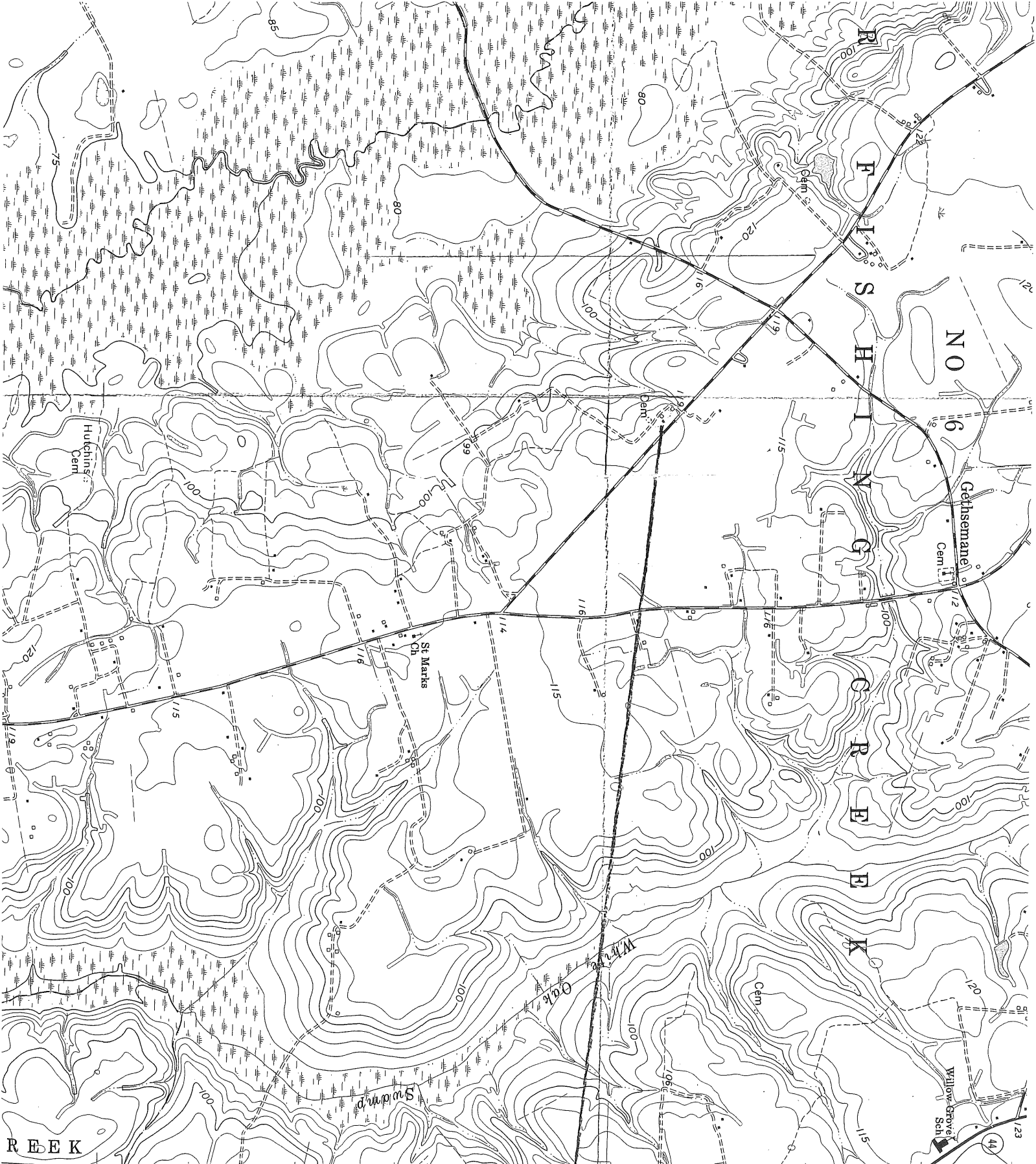
All photographs by Heather Fearnbach, 705 Mills Street, Raleigh, NC, on November 12, 2001. Negatives located at the North Carolina SHPO.

1. Gambrel-roofed Porter House (northern) façade and Armstrong Kitchen
2. Gambrel-roofed Porter House side (eastern) elevation
3. Gambrel-roofed Porter House rear (southern) elevation and Armstrong Kitchen
4. Gambrel-roofed Porter House Interior- Hall stair
5. Gambrel-roofed Porter House Interior- Exposed framing, beaded ceiling joists
6. Gambrel-roofed Porter House Interior- Second floor partition wall and door
7. Gable-roofed Porter House front (eastern) and side (northern) elevations
8. Gable-roofed Porter House Interior- Corner stair

Edgecombe County  
Whitakers vicinity  
812 Wells Road  
Porter House

\*Reflected floor plan  
from Preservation North  
Carolina files, no date  
side porch on house and  
front porch on kitchen are no  
longer extant





LEGGETT 7 MI.  
11 MI. TO U.S. 64

(DRAUGHN) 14

Pater Hses.  
 Armstrong Kit.  
 812 wells vld.  
 Whitakers vic.  
 Edgecombe  
 Zone 18  
 E 259800  
 N 3994280  
 Whitakers Quad

92

230"

R E E K

