



**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

December 14, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley *Renee Gledhill-Earley*
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT:: Historic Structures Survey Report for the Replacement of Bridge 261 on SR 1541
Over and Unnamed Tributary of Grant's Creek, PA 17-05-0046, Rowan County,
ER 17-1982

Thank you for your October 19, 2017, letter transmitting the above-referenced report. We apologize for the delayed response and offer the following comments.

We concur that the Blackwelder Family House and out buildings (RW0673a) are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Place due to their lack significance and integrity.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT, mfurr@ncdot.gov



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ER 17-1982
H Jenn 11/20
Due 11/3

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III
SECRETARY

ER letters 12/7
page

Renee Gledhill-Earley
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4617

October 19, 2017



Dear Gledhill-Earley:

RE: Historic Structure Survey Report, PA# 17-05-0046, Replace Bridge No 261 on SR 1541 (Stirewalt Rd) over an Unnamed Tributary of Grant's Creek in Rowan County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes Replace Bridge No 261 on SR 1541 (Stirewalt Rd) over an Unnamed Tributary of Grant's Creek in Rowan County. Mattson Alexander prepared the attached Eligibility Report and recommends the Blackwelder Family House (RW0673a) not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The report and survey materials are enclosed for your review and comment per 36CFR.800. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding this project. I can be reached at (919) 707-6088 or by email at slreap@ncdot.gov.

Sincerely,

Shelby Reap
Historic Architecture Section

Attachment

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RALEIGH NC 27610

HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

**REPLACE BRIDGE NO. 261 ON SR 1541 (STIREWALT ROAD) OVER AN UNNAMED TRIBUTARY
TO GRANT'S CREEK
ROWAN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**

**WBS No. 17BP.9.R.58
Limited Services Contract No. 7000016411**

Prepared by:

**Frances Alexander, Project Manager
Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
2228 Winter Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205**

Prepared for:

**North Carolina Department of Transportation
Human Environment Section
Raleigh, North Carolina**

October 12, 2017

HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

**REPLACE BRIDGE NO. 261 ON SR 1541 (STIREWALT ROAD) OVER AN UNNAMED TRIBUTARY
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Charlotte, North Carolina 28205**

Prepared for:

**North Carolina Department of Transportation
Human Environment Section
Raleigh, North Carolina**

October 12, 2017

MATTSON, ALEXANDER AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

Frances P. Alexander

12 October 2017

Frances P. Alexander, M.A.

Date

Richard L. Mattson, Ph.D.

Date

North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is replacing Bridge No. 261 which carries SR 1541 (Stirewalt Road) over an unnamed tributary to Grant's Creek in Rowan County. NCDOT architectural historians conducted a reconnaissance-level review of the area of potential effects (APE) and identified one historic property—the Blackwelder Family House (RW0673a)—that required intensive-level investigation to determine National Register eligibility. This report contains the eligibility evaluation for the house. Bridge No. 261 did not warrant intensive-level examination. Built in 1976, the structure is less than fifty years of age and does not qualify for the National Register under Criteria Consideration G. The project location is depicted in **Figure 1**, and the APE is shown in **Figure 2**.

This architectural resources investigation consisted of background research into the historical and architectural development of the study area and a field survey of the APE. The principal investigators surveyed the entire APE, defined as the geographic area or areas within which a project may cause changes to the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The APE for this bridge replacement project extends sixty (60) feet in each direction from the center line of the existing roadway as well as extending 250 feet from each end of the bridge.

An in-depth field investigation of the Blackwelder Family House was undertaken in September 2017. The property was surveyed originally in 1977. The intensive-level evaluation contained within this report does not recommend the house for National Register eligibility (**Table 1**).

Table 1

| Property Name | Survey Site Number | Eligibility Recommendation |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Blackwelder Family House | RW0673a | Not Eligible |

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I. INTRODUCTION

This eligibility report was prepared in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) project entitled, *Replace Bridge No. 261 on SR 1541 (Stirewalt Road) over an Unnamed Tributary to Grant's Creek*. The WBS Number is 17BP.9.R.58. As shown in **Figure 1**, the project is located in Rowan County.

The area of potential effects (APE) for this bridge replacement project extends sixty (60) feet in each direction from the center line of Stirewalt Road as well as extending 250 feet from each end of the bridge. The APE was drawn to include any area that might be affected by the proposed improvements. Surveyed originally in 1977, the Blackwelder Family House (W0673a) was the only resource within the APE that warranted intensive-level investigation (**Table 1**). The property is shown on the APE map (**Figure 2**).

This investigation was conducted to evaluate the house for National Register eligibility. The current evaluation of eligibility report is part of the environmental studies undertaken by NCDOT and is on file at NCDOT, Raleigh, North Carolina. This documentation complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800), the National Register criteria set forth in 36 CFR 61, and NCDOT's current *Historic Architecture Group Procedures and Work Products*. The report also complies with the *Report Standards for Historic Structure Survey Reports/Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina* established by the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (HPO). Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects on properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places and to afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office a reasonable opportunity to comment.

The eligibility evaluation consisted of research into the history and architecture of the resource and a field survey of the property. For the research phase, both primary and secondary sources were examined, including published architectural histories, deeds, HPO survey files for Rowan County, and census schedules. In addition, a windshield survey was conducted to identify other surviving examples of L-plan houses in Rowan County that are comparable to the Blackwelder Family House.

Field work took place in September 2017. The house, along with outbuildings and landscape features on the site, were examined and documented with photographs to assess the level of current integrity. The current tax parcel for the property is shown on the site plan (**Figure 3**).

Table 1

| Property Name | Survey Site Number | Eligibility Recommendation |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Blackwelder Family House | RW0673a | Not Eligible |

Figure 1
Project Location Map

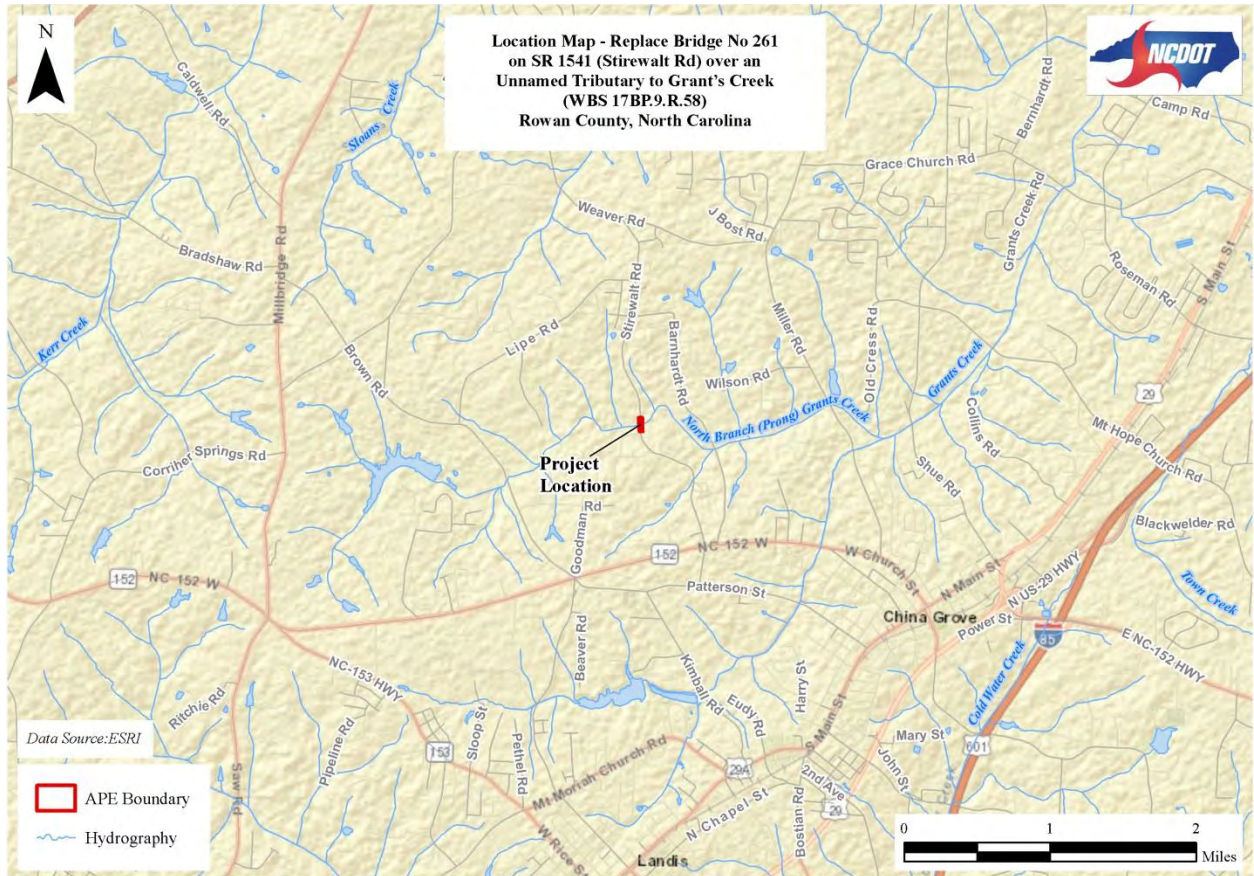
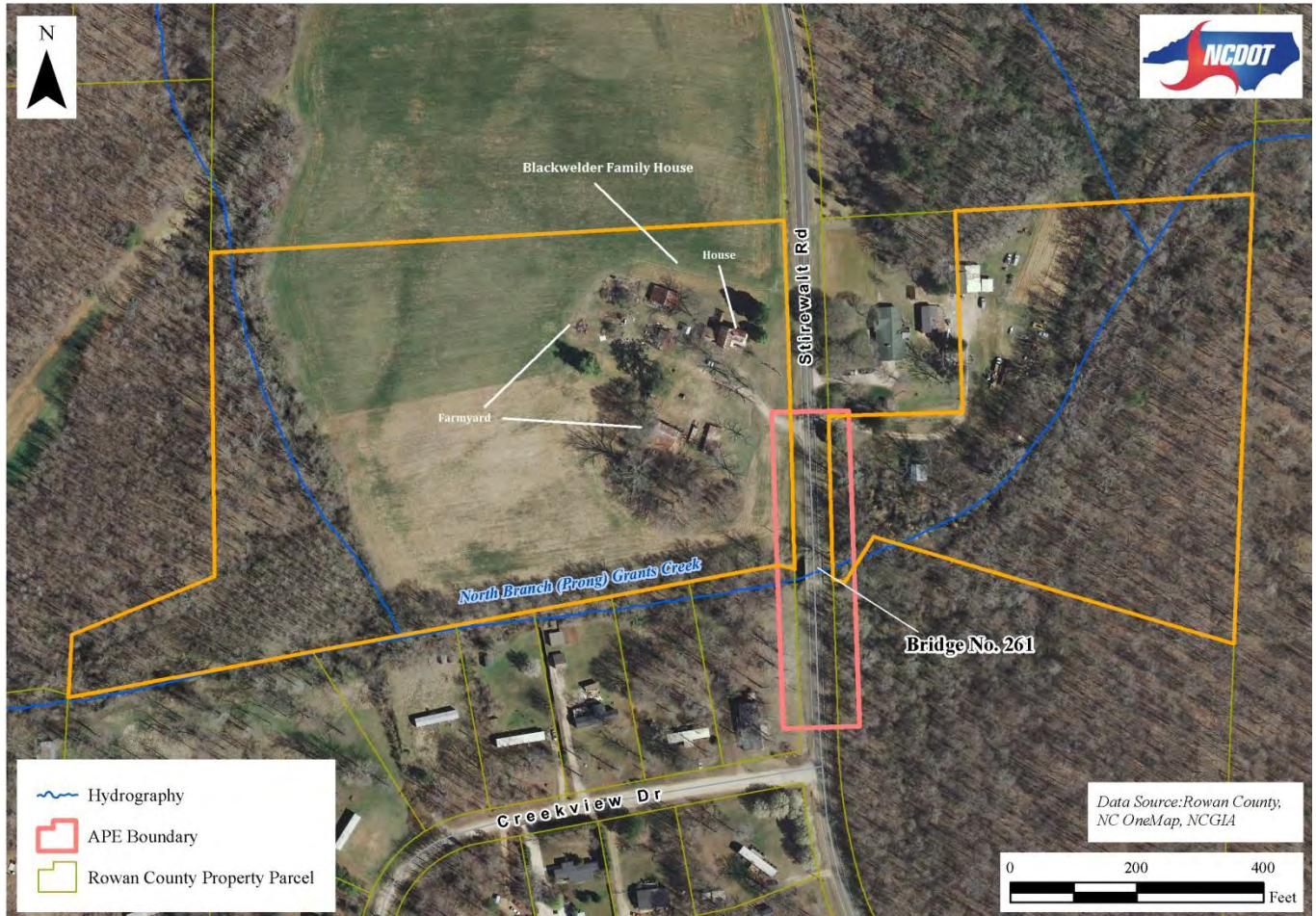


Figure 2
Area of Potential Effects (APE) Map



II. PROPERTY EVALUATION OF ELIGIBILITY

Blackwelder Family House (RW0673a) (PIN 112 034)

1220 Stirewalt Road
China Grove, Rowan County

Date of Construction: circa 1864; circa 1900
Eligibility Recommendation: Not Eligible



Physical Description (Figure 3)

House

The Blackwelder Family House stands on a rolling, 19.01-acre tract spanning both the east and west sides of Stirewalt Road in rural, southern Rowan County. Sited northwest of China Grove, the house and farmyard sit on roughly thirteen acres on the west side of the road, and a mostly wooded, six-acre parcel occupies the east side. The entire tract is a subdivision of a larger, 135-acre farm developed by the Blackwelder family through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The remainder of the farm now contains a mix of agricultural land, woodland, and several modern buildings.

Now unoccupied and deteriorated, the two-story, frame house has an L-shaped plan consisting of the original side-gable, three-bay dwelling (circa 1864) and a gable-front ell added to the house circa 1900. A one-story kitchen wing extends from the rear and appears to have been constructed with the original house. The circa 1864 sections of the house have later asbestos-shingle siding while the front ell has original weatherboard siding. In its present configuration, the house has a cross-gable roof covered in standing-seam metal sheathing, and the foundation consists of corner granite piers with mid-twentieth-century brick infill.

An original brick chimney (circa 1864) survives on the south gable end of the original house although its upper chimney stack appears to have been rebuilt at the turn of the twentieth century. A brick chimney at the junction of the two main blocks of the house was added with the construction of the front ell circa 1900. The original dwelling never had a chimney on the north gable end, and the gable-end chimney on the rear kitchen wing was probably removed when the one-story ell was remodeled in the mid-twentieth century.

Although in disrepair, original six-over-six sash windows remain in the circa 1864 sections, and two-over-two sash windows survive in the circa 1900 ell. (The six-over-six sash window on the second story of the gable-front ell was probably reused from the original house.) Four-panel doors that were probably installed with the construction of the front wing remain in the rear ell, but the main entrance has a mid-twentieth-century door.

The front porch has a Z-shaped configuration extending along the front (east) and south elevations of the front ell and the exposed east elevation of the original house. The extant porch appears to be a combination of the original shed-roofed porch of the circa 1864 house and the hip-roofed porch that wrapped the circa 1900 ell. The porch has replacement wood posts, concrete-block porch steps, and a concrete-block and brick foundation. At the rear of the house is a shed-roofed, L-plan

porch that spans the north bay of the main block and the east elevation of the rear ell. The rear ell porch was later enclosed with German siding and metal-sash windows, and the porch steps are now ruinous. The kitchen wing has an interior, brick chimney flue and modern windows in the gable end.

The principal investigators were not able to gain access to the interior. A limited view through a window into the south room of the circa 1864 house revealed a mid-twentieth-century, brick mantel and a dropped plywood ceiling. The arrangement of interior doors indicates that the original block of the house followed the traditional three-room plan that was common in Rowan and neighboring Piedmont counties into the late nineteenth century.

Outbuildings

The tree-shaded Blackwelder farmyard contains a collection of deteriorated and abandoned agricultural and domestic outbuildings constructed between circa 1864 and the mid-twentieth century. Now heavily deteriorated, a four-crib, log barn, with both half-dovetailed and V-notch construction, stands on the south side of the farmyard. Topped by a side-gable, standing-seam metal roof, the barn has a center passage, frame upper level, and frame shed appendages. Original vertical boards cover the logs and gable ends. Such log barns were erected in Rowan County throughout the nineteenth century, and this example may date with the circa 1864 house or may have been constructed at a later date by the Blackwelders.

A shed-roofed, metal-sheathed chicken house (twentieth century) with an attached, frame equipment shelter is located east of the barn, and two gable-front, frame corncribs are located just to the west. The earlier crib, probably dating to circa 1900, has a side passage as well as frame shed appendages, and metal sheathing. A slatted, one-bay corncrib was built later and stands to the south. Two frame, twentieth-century equipment sheds and a small, brick pump house are located behind the house to the west. The larger of the two equipment sheds defines the western edge of the farmyard. The shed has a gable-front, standing-seam metal roof with shed extensions. The smaller one has a shallow-pitched shed roof and an enclosed tool shed.

Two domestic outbuildings stand closer to the house. Just behind the kitchen wing is a frame, gable-front smokehouse with a modern metal roof, vertical planking on the front and rear elevations, and wide, horizontal boards along the sides. A nearly collapsed, weatherboarded well house is situated immediately north of the house.



Blackwelder Family House, House and Setting, Looking Northwest From Stirewalt Road.



Blackwelder Family House, House and Tract, Looking South From Stirewalt Road.



Blackwelder Family House, Original House (Left), Front (East) Elevation, and circa 1900 Front Ell (Right), South Elevation, Looking Northwest.



Blackwelder Family House, Front Porch and Main Entrance, Looking North.



Blackwelder Family House, Front Ell, Porch Along East Elevation, Looking Southwest.



Blackwelder Family House, Original house, Side (South) Elevation and Rear Ell, Looking North.



Blackwelder Family House, Original House, Side (South) Elevation, Looking North.



Blackwelder Family House, Original House and Rear Ell, Side (South) Elevations, Looking North.



Blackwelder Family House, Original House, Rear (West) Elevation and Rear Ell, Looking Southeast.



Blackwelder Family House, Rear Ell Porch, Looking Southeast.



Blackwelder Family House, Side (North) Elevation and Ruinous Well House, Looking South.



Blackwelder Family House, Original House, Interior, South Room.



Blackwelder Family House, Farmyard, Chicken House (Left), Log Barn (Center), Corncrib (Right), Looking South.



Blackwelder Family House, Log Barn, Looking West.



Blackwelder Family House, Log Barn, Center Passage, Looking South.



Blackwelder Family House, Corncribs, Looking West.



Blackwelder Family House, Equipment Sheds (Left and Background) and Smokehouse (Right), Looking North.



Blackwelder Family House, Smokehouse, Looking South. (Log Barn in Background.)

Historical Background

According to family tradition, the oldest section of this L-plan house—the two-story, side-gable dwelling with the one-story rear ell—was constructed by Erie Riley Blackwelder (1825-1914) during the Civil War. The house was probably built around the time of his marriage to Jane C. Lowrance (1840-1906) in 1864. The 1870 federal census records Blackwelder as a middling farmer in the Atwell community of southern Rowan County, possessing a farm worth \$800.00 and personal property valued at \$390.00. By 1880, Blackwelder was employed as a sawyer as well as a farmer, and the household included five children, Tena, John, Gaither, Dallie, and Cora. The 1880 agricultural census lists the Blackwelders as having a 135-acre farm—forty acres under cultivation and ten additional acres as pasture. The farmland and buildings were valued at \$1,000.00, and the Blackwelders owned livestock worth \$150.00. Typical of the middling farms around Rowan County in this period, the farm grew grains primarily but also produced eight acres of cotton which yielded three bales in 1880 (Hood 1983: 210; U.S. Census, Rowan County, Population Schedules 1870 and 1880, Agricultural Schedule 1880).

The dwelling was subsequently owned by son, Gaither Blackwelder (1873-1964), and his wife, Cynthia Sechler (1875-1941), who were married in 1894. The Blackwelders probably added the two-story wing to the front of the house around 1900 to accommodate a growing family. The 1910 census shows Gaither as a farmer, and the Blackwelder household included seven children as well as widower, Erie Blackwelder, who was 84. In 1913, the family moved to nearby China Grove where Gaither Blackwelder served as postmaster, and the house was leased to various tenants (Hood 1983: 210; U.S. Census, Rowan County, Population Schedule 1910).

In 1924, daughter, Ruby Blackwelder, and her husband, Murrell H. Stirewalt, assumed occupancy of the house with their three sons, Earnest, Paul, and John. She later inherited the house and a twenty-one acre tract that roughly conforms to the existing tax parcel. During the 1930s, the Stirewalts moved permanently to China Grove where Murrell and their oldest son, eighteen-year-old Earnest, went to work in the local cotton mill. The house, which remains in the Stirewalt family, has been rental property or unoccupied since that time (Hood 1983: 210; U.S. Census, Rowan County, Population Schedules 1930 and 1940; Rowan County Deed Books 72: 786; 430: 107; 574: 958).

National Register Criteria Evaluation

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) the Blackwelder Family House is recommended **not eligible** for National Register eligibility under any criterion because of a loss of integrity. The property was surveyed previously in 1977.

Integrity

The Blackwelder Family House does not retain all of the seven aspects of integrity needed for National Register eligibility. The dwelling stands on its original location and thus has integrity of location. The property also retains elements of its farmyard setting and rural feeling and association, but the deterioration of the house and near ruinous state of the outbuildings compromise these aspects of integrity. In addition, alterations and the general dilapidation of the house and outbuildings undermine integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. In the mid-twentieth century, the front door and a fireplace mantel were replaced, and modifications were made to the rear ell that included the removal of a chimney. The asbestos-shingle siding also

appears to date to this mid-century remodeling. In more recent years, the porch posts, have been replaced.

Criterion A

The Blackwelder Family House is recommended **not eligible** under Criterion A. To be eligible under Criterion A, the property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American prehistory or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or a nation. Furthermore, the property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, the property's specific association must be important as well (National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: 12*).

The Blackwelder Family House does have the integrity to illustrate important patterns of events within a local, state, or national historic context. Specifically, the Blackwelder Family House does not represent major trends in the agricultural development of Rowan County. Now occupying a roughly nineteen-acre site, the Blackwelder house has lost most of its historic acreage that was used for crops and pastureland, and the outbuildings are now largely ruinous. Little remains to illustrate the operation of the farm or its role in the agricultural history of the county.

Criterion B

The Blackwelder Family House is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (Person). For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state, or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance; and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group (National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: 14*).

The property is not eligible under Criterion B because it is not associated with individuals whose activities were demonstrably important within a local, state, or national historic context.

Criterion C

The Blackwelder Family House is recommended **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. (National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: 17*).

The Blackwelder Family House no longer retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, methods of construction, or plan to be eligible under Criterion C. The original circa 1864 house was significantly altered by the circa 1900 addition of the prominent, two-story front ell as well as later modifications. In addition to the front ell, asbestos-shingle siding was added to the circa 1864 house and rear ell, and a new front door, brick mantel, and dropped plywood ceiling were added in

the mid-twentieth century. The original dwelling retains its original brick chimney and six-over-six sash windows, but the windows are in disrepair. The asbestos-shingled rear kitchen ell, which appears to be original, no longer retains its gable-end chimney and has some replacement windows and an enclosed porch.

Limited views of the interior show that the circa 1864 house retains its original three-room plan. Sometimes referred to as a Penn or Quaker plan, the first floor consists of a one main room (hall), opening directly from the outside and running the full depth of the house, and two smaller rooms. Houses with this traditional layout were often built by the German and Scots settlers migrating into the North Carolina Piedmont in the eighteenth century and remained a popular choice among farmers into the post-Civil War years. As architectural historian Davyd Foard Hood states, “This plan with its simplicity and functionalism—long a tradition in Pennsylvania—admirably suited the requirements of Rowan’s settlers and their descendants who continued to use it—with variation in dimensions—well into the third quarter of the nineteenth century” (Hood 1983: 23).

A collection of well-preserved, two-story, three-room-plan houses survives in Rowan County, among which are some of the most noteworthy historic residences in the county. The early-nineteenth-century Wood Grove (RW0043) (National Register 1982), the circa 1820 General William Kerr House (RW0035) (National Register 1982), and the circa 1855 Robert Knox House on the Knox Farm (RW0044) (National Register Historic District 1985) all represent this house type (Hood 1983: 22-23; 51-53; 61-63).

Although the circa 1900 front ell of the Blackwelder house reflects the picturesque movement that influenced building patterns across North Carolina during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rural Rowan County retains more intact examples to express this trend. In the county and throughout North Carolina, the rural houses of this period illustrated both the enduring appeal of traditional forms and the conservative application of new, nationally popular styling. Testifying to the conservative tastes and means of the county’s agrarian society, the picturesque movement introduced few radically new house types to rural Rowan County. Traditional side-gable, rectangular forms persisted into the early twentieth century as the favorite choice with property owners sometimes embellishing porches and eaves with picturesque sawnwork or adding decorative roof gables. Rowan farmers opting for up-to-date, fashionably asymmetrical forms often erected houses with restrained L-plan and T-plan configurations, variously embellished with sawnwork or, as the Blackwelders did, occasionally adding front wings to their existing farmhouses (Bishir 1990: 281-295; Hood 1983: 66-70; 153, 156, 216, 238, 248, 281-282).

Rural Rowan County still contains substantially intact, two-story, L-plan and T-plan dwellings that date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two notable examples are located in southern Rowan County in the general vicinity of the Blackwelder property. The 1897 Lawson Kluttz House (RW1401) (Study List 1979) near Rockwell was built by house carpenter and farmer, Lawson Kluttz, as his own residence. This substantial, frame, T-plan dwelling is encircled by a wraparound porch with turned posts and treated with bracketed eaves, cutaway bays, and decorative window and door surrounds. The interior of the house also remains well preserved. As with the Blackwelder House, the James Newton Plaster House (RW1350) (Study List 1977) in the Enochville community began in the 1860s with a traditional side-gable, single-pile form that was later expanded and updated with a prominent ell. The original section of the two-story house, which included a one-story rear wing, was constructed in 1869 to face north towards a road. About 1912, the rear wing was expanded to two stories, remodeled with a new porch, and converted to the main entrance, which now faced west towards a new road. The original front porch was

enclosed. The new L-plan design combined conservatively picturesque asymmetry with classical elements that were retained on the 1869 section of the house and repeated on the enlarged ell (Hood 1983: 40, 69, 153, 248).



Lawson Kluttz House, Façade, Looking South.



James Newton Plaster House, Façade, Looking East.

Finally, the agricultural and domestic outbuildings situated within the farmyard of the Blackwelder property are not recommended for National Register eligibility. Although extant log barns and other log and frame outbuildings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are increasingly rare in Rowan County, the Blackwelder outbuildings do not retain the level of integrity required for eligibility under Criterion C. More intact examples remain. As throughout the Piedmont region of North Carolina where immigrants of German and Scots heritage dominated early settlement, Rowan County has a tradition of log construction. Rowan County farmers constructed log barns and other outbuildings throughout the nineteenth century, and intact examples of log construction as well as early-twentieth-century complexes of frame outbuildings survive throughout the county. Among numerous examples are the aforementioned Knox Farm Historic District in western Rowan County and the assortment of outbuildings on both the Lawson Kluttz and James Newton Plaster tracts in southern Rowan (Hood 1983: 32-38; Bishir and Southern 2003: 437, 441-443).

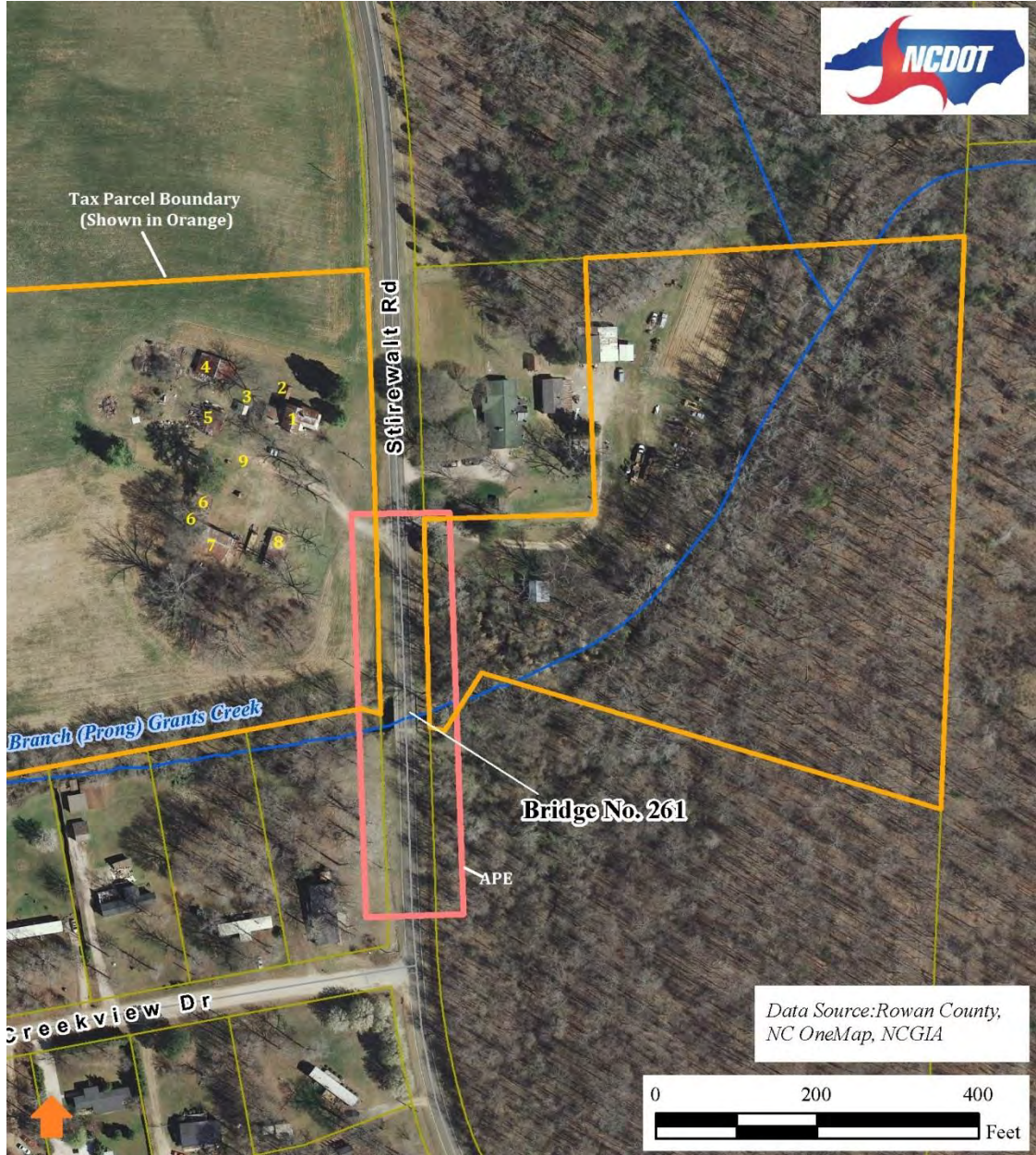
Criterion D

The Blackwelder Family House is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or prehistory; and 2) the information must be considered important. (National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15*: 21).

The property is not eligible under Criterion D because it is not likely to yield any new information pertaining to the history of building design or technology.

Figure 3

**Blackwelder Family House
Detailed Site Plan**



Key:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. House | 6. Corncribs |
| 2. Well House | 7. Barn |
| 3. Smokehouse | 8. Chicken House |
| 4. Equipment Shed | 9. Pump House |
| 5. Equipment Shed | |

III. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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