



## North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

James B. Hunt Jr., Governor  
Betty Ray McCain, Secretary

Division of Archives and History  
Jeffrey J. Crow, Director

April 23, 1999

Roy C. Shelton  
Federal Highway Administration  
Department of Transportation  
310 New Bern Avenue  
Raleigh, N.C. 27601-1442

Re: Replacement of Bridge 49 over White Oak River,  
Carteret-Onslow Counties, Federal-Aid Project BRZ-  
1101(5), State No. 8.2160801, B-2938, ER 99-8587

Dear Mr. Shelton:

Thank you for your letter of March 24, 1999, transmitting the historic architectural resources report by Mattson, Alexander & Associates, Inc., concerning the above project.

We concur that the Stella Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for community development, and Criterion C for architecture. DOE

Further, we concur with the district's boundaries, except for the western edge that we believe should encompass Bridge 49 as a contributing element to the district. While Bridge 49 lacks one year of being fifty years old, it appears to be compatible with the rural character of the district as a whole and to reinforce the district's relationship to the White Oak River. Bridge 49 also appears to be rather unique in design and length for a timber bridge.

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, please contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919/733-4763.

Sincerely,

David Brook  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DB:slw

cc: William D. Gilmore  
Barbara Church  
Mattson, Alexander & Associates

bc: File Brown/RGE Eastern Office County RF



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HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT  
REPLACE BRIDGE NO. 49 ON SR 1101 AND SR 1442  
OVER WHITE OAK RIVER  
CARTERET AND ONSLOW COUNTIES  
NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
TIP NUMBER B-2938  
STATE PROJECT NUMBER 8.2160801  
FEDERAL PROJECT NUMBER BRZ-1101(5)

Prepared for  
Wang Engineering  
Cary, North Carolina

Prepared by  
Mattson, Alexander & Associates, Inc.  
Charlotte, North Carolina

1 March 1999

*Richard L. Mattson*

Principal Investigator  
Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.

*3/1/99*  
Date

*Barbara Church*

Historic Architectural Resources  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

*3/19/99*  
Date

**Replace Bridge No. 49 on SR 1101 and SR 1442  
over White Oak River  
Carteret and Onslow Counties  
TIP No. B-2938  
State Project No. 8.2160801  
Federal Project No. BRZ-1101(5)**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to replace Bridge No. 49 on SR 1101 and SR 1442 over White Oak River at the border between Carteret and Onslow counties (Figures 1 and 2). The following alternatives are being evaluated for the subject project:

Alternative A removes the existing bridge and replaces it with a new two-lane bridge at the existing location. The approach work will begin just west of the intersection of Terry Street and Wetherington Road (SR 1101), and additional right of way and a construction easement will be required for property just east of the bridge on the north side of Wetherington Road. A construction easement will be required for the warehouse property on the south side of the road. No additional right of way or construction easement will be needed for the store/post office property on the north side opposite the warehouse.

Alternative B replaces the existing bridge with a new two-lane bridge downstream. The approach work will begin at the intersection Stella Road (SR 1100) and Wetherington Road (SR 1101). The warehouse on the south side of Wetherington Road near the bridge will be removed. No right of way or construction easements will be required on the northeast side of the bridge.

Alternative C replaces the existing bridge with a new two-lane bridge at the existing location while maintaining traffic with a one-lane bridge. If the bridge is replaced at the existing location, the vertical alignment in front of the post office and attached building would be raised to correct the sight distance. The approach work will begin just west of the intersection of Terry Street and Wetherington Road (SR 1101), and additional right of way and a construction easement will be required for property just east of the bridge on the north side of Wetherington Road. A construction easement will be required for the warehouse property on the south side of the road. No additional right of way or construction easement will be needed for the store/post office property on the north side opposite the warehouse.

Alternative D replaces the existing bridge with a two-lane bridge downstream, spanning the marshland in Onslow County. The bridge will be approximately 1900 feet long. The approach work will be begin at the intersection of Stella Road (SR 1100) and Wetherington Road (SR 1101). The warehouse on the south side of Wetherington Road near the bridge will be removed. No right of way or construction easements will be required on the northeast side of the bridge.

### **Purpose of Survey and Report**

This survey was conducted and the report prepared in order to identify historical architectural resources located within the area of potential effects (APE) as part of the environmental studies conducted by NCDOT and documented by a Categorical Exclusion (CE). This report is prepared as a technical appendix to the CE and as part of the documentation of compliance

with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that if a federally funded, licensed, or permitted project has an effect on a property listed in or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be given a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings.

### Methodology

This survey was conducted and the report compiled in accordance with the provisions of FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A (Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents); and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 800; 36 CFR Part 60; and Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines for Historic Architectural Resources by NCDOT.

The "Final Identification and Evaluation" was conducted with the following goals: 1) to determine the APE, defined as the geographic area or areas within which a project may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist; 2) to identify all significant resources within the APE; and 3) to evaluate these resources according to the National Register of Historic Places criteria.

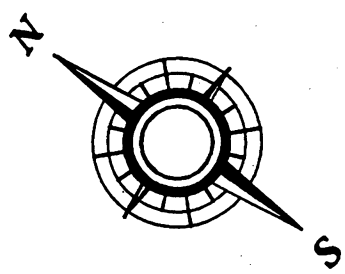
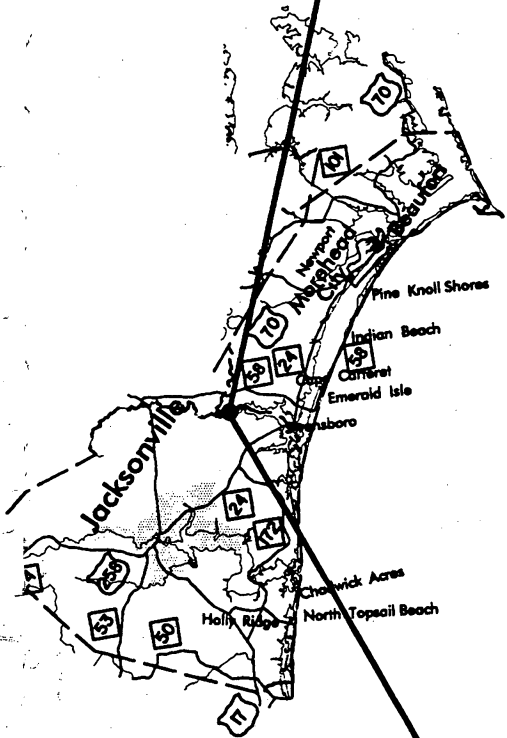
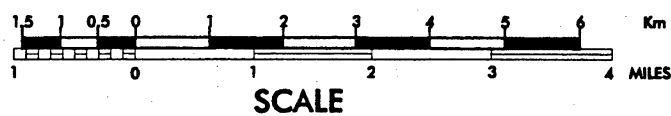
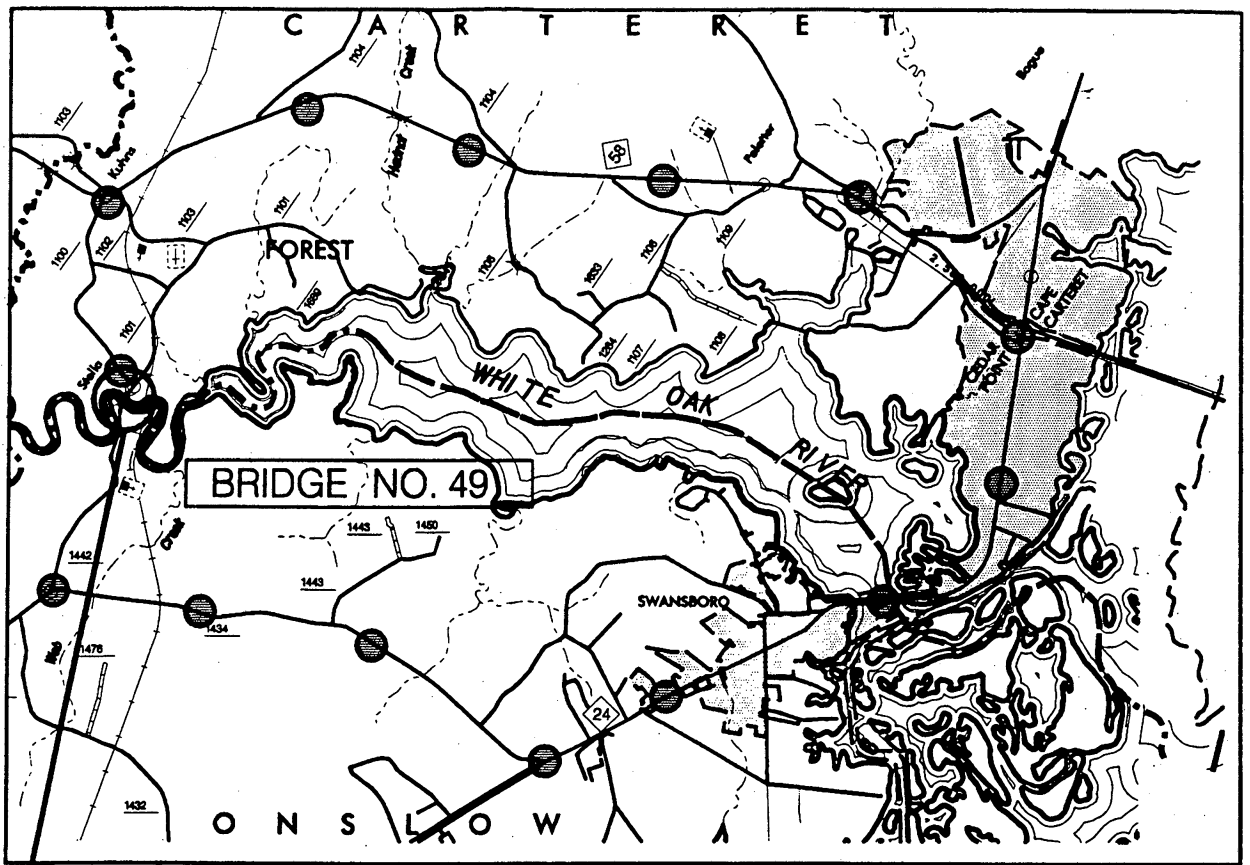
The methodology consisted of background research into the historical and architectural development of the area and a field survey of the APE. The field survey was conducted in January 1999, by automobile as well as on foot to delineate the APE and to identify all properties within this area which were built prior to 1949. Every property at least fifty years of age was photographed, mapped, and evaluated, and those considered worthy of further analysis were intensively surveyed and evaluated for National Register eligibility. For those resources considered to be eligible for the National Register, National Register boundaries were determined.


The boundaries of the APE are shown on a US Geological Survey topographical map (see Figure 3). The APE is defined by modern construction, topographical features, and sight lines. One hundred percent of the APE was surveyed.

No properties within the APE had been previously surveyed. However, Mr. Jack Goodwin with the Carteret County Museum of History of Art in Morehead City provided useful background information on the community of Stella within the APE. Additional background information was provided by the Eastern Office of the State Historic Preservation Office (Greenville).

### Summary Findings of the Survey

The project is situated at the border of Carteret and Onslow counties which is defined by the White Oak River. West of the river (Onslow County), the APE and general survey area are characterized by rural open space and marshy lands along the waterway. To the east of the White Oak River within the APE (Carteret County) lies the small riverside hamlet of Stella. This community began as a ferry landing in the eighteenth century and developed as a lumber port with a large sawmill operation in the late nineteenth century. Today,

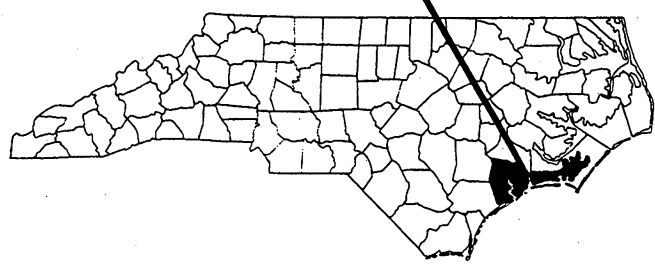


 **NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL BRANCH**

**CARTERET AND ONSLOW COUNTIES**

**BRIDGE NO. 49 ON SR 1101 & SR 1442  
OVER WHITE OAK RIVER**

**B-2938**



**FIGURE 1**

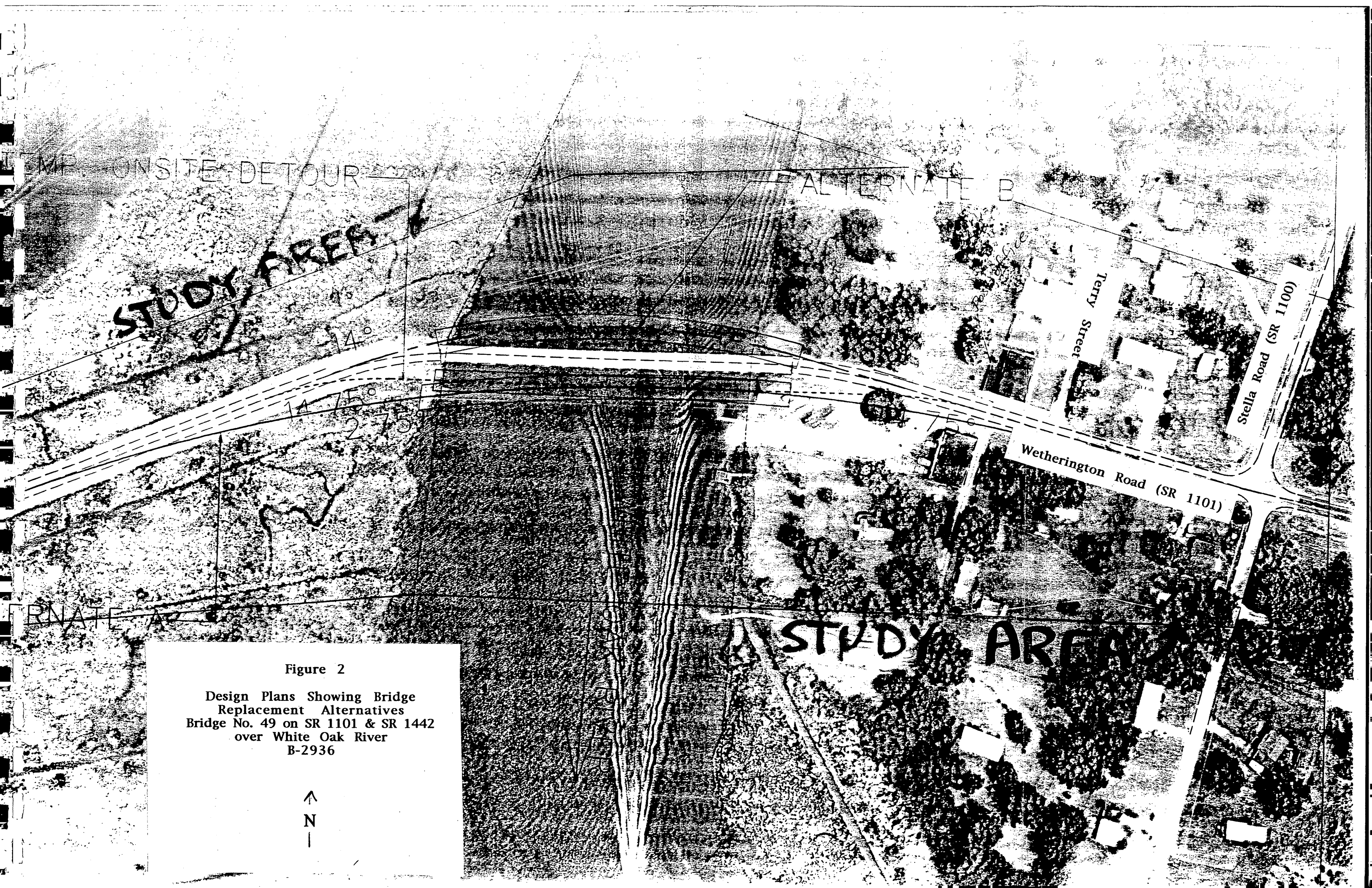


Figure 2  
Design Plans Showing Bridge  
Replacement Alternatives  
Bridge No. 49 on SR 1101 & SR 1442  
over White Oak River  
B-2936

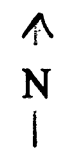
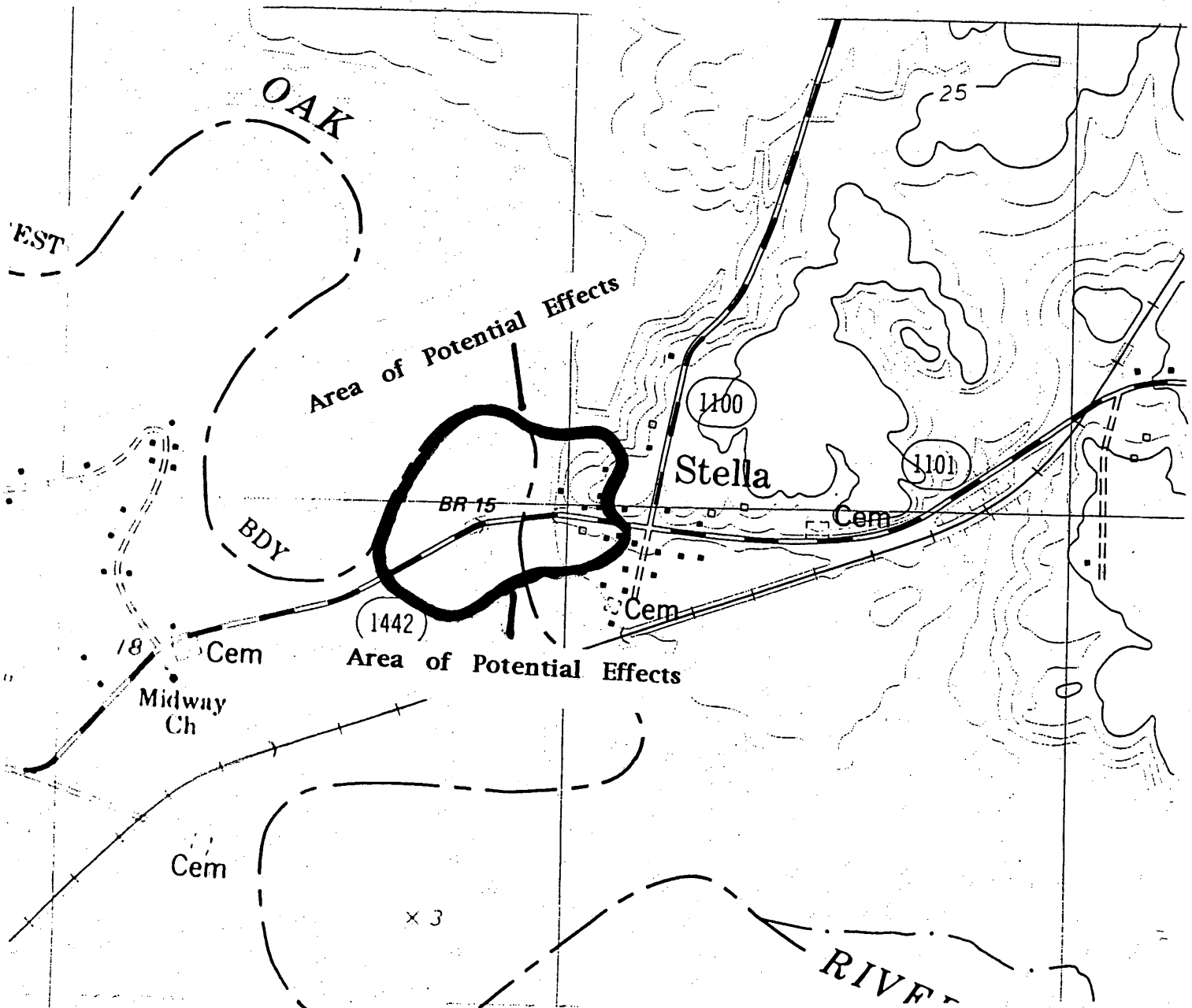
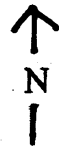




Figure 3

Area of Potential Effects Map

Bridge No. 49 on SR 1101 & SR 1442  
over White Oak River  
B-2936



Stella retains a significant collection of buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including a general store/post office, a warehouse, and several dwellings and outbuildings. Bridge No. 49 on SR 1101 and SR 1442 over White Oak River was built in 1950, and is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion Consideration G. The approximately 432-foot-long, multiple-span structure is supported by twenty-three timber approach spans and one steel-deck girder main span.

No properties located within the APE are currently listed on either the National Register or State Study List. However, the community of Stella is recommended as eligible for the National Register as an historic district.

*Properties Listed on the National Register or North Carolina State Study List*

None

*Properties Evaluated and Considered Eligible for the National Register:*

Stella Historic District

### **Historic Context and Historic Background Information**

European settlers began migrating into Carteret and Onslow counties during the early eighteenth century. These newcomers were mainly of English origin but also included a mix of other cultural groups, including some Scots, Germans, and French Huguenots. In both counties, which border the south Atlantic coast, white settlement proceeded first along the sounds and rivers, and then along the major creeks. The waterways were the principal avenues of transportation and trade until the arrival of railroads in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (North Carolina Division of Archives and History 1977: Appendix 2).

By the end of the colonial period, a network of crude roads linked local towns and spurred overland trade with New Bern to the north and Wilmington to the south. Principal among these routes was the King's Highway (roughly following sections of U.S. 17 through Onslow County). This highway was part of the major colonial post route that stretched from Virginia along the North Carolina coast into South Carolina. Locally, the road connected New Bern on the Neuse River with Wilmington on the Cape Fear, crossing the New River at a ferry site in Onslow County. In 1722, the white population in the region was of sufficient size to warrant the creation of Carteret County from Craven County. In 1734, Onslow County was formed from New Hanover County (Watson 1995: 1-3; 14-16).

From the early decades of settlement, fishing and forest products played major roles in the economy of this area. While fish became a major export and canning facilities were built in the coastal communities, the abundant virgin stands of longleaf pine inland yielded profits from the production of lumber and naval stores (i.e., tar, pitch, and turpentine). The proximity to the coast and the network of waterways, including the New and White Oak rivers, enhanced naval stores production. The wealthiest landowners took special



advantage of the river access by having their own coastal scows and ocean-going vessels, as well as operating their own turpentine distilleries. These plantations shipped turpentine and other naval stores directly to markets in the northeastern United States, England, and the West Indies (Cathey 1966: 3. 10-11; Pezzoni 1989: E.7-10; Watson 1995: 13, 49-50; Perry 1983: 11, 26).

Although agricultural production was hampered by the predominant naval stores industry as well as extensive swamplands, farming played an increasingly important role in Onslow County by the mid-nineteenth century. The area around the present community of Richlands in Onslow County, so named for its fertile soils, contained commercial agriculture. In addition, larger landowners throughout the region raised swine and cattle for sale, herding the livestock to markets in Fayetteville and Wilmington. Corn and truck crops were consumed largely on the plantations and farms, but cotton as well as rice increased as market crops. In Onslow County, for example, the number of ginned cotton bales jumped from 53 in 1850 to 336 in 1860. The principal cotton producer was David W. Sanders' Palo Alto plantation on the White Oak River, which devoted extensive amounts of its 9,500 acres to the crop (Cross 1971; Pezzoni 1989: E.20-21; Watson 1995: 47-49).

The self-sufficient character of the plantation economy (which prevailed especially in Onslow County) plus the perilous coastline limited the development of a major port or other large urban places in the two counties. However, in Carteret County, the town of Beaufort, strategically sited at the narrow opening between Shackleford Banks and Bogue Banks near Cape Lookout, was designated a port of entry in 1722. Beaufort developed through the nineteenth century as a small port town and seaside resort with a stable economy geared to fishing, tourism, and some ship building (North Carolina Division of Archives and History 1977: Appendix 2).

Morehead City along Bogue Sound in Carteret County was incorporated in 1861. It was named in honor of John Motely Morehead, North Carolina governor and advocate for railroads and other internal improvements, who purchased land here in 1853 for the eastern terminus of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad. Morehead City expanded as a sea port primarily during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and stands today as the only deep sea port in North Carolina north of Wilmington (North Carolina Division of Archives and History 1977: Appendix 2).

In Onslow County, the coastal town of Swansboro remained small. The 1850 census recorded 801 residents in Swansboro, including 228 slaves. This port town shipped annually some \$100,000 of crops and naval stores during the antebellum era, and contained several prosperous turpentine distilleries and ship-building enterprises (Watson 1995: 32-33, 50-51; Pezzoni 1989: E.4).

By the nineteenth century, numerous tiny hamlets also dotted both counties.. In Carteret County, Newport on the Newport River, Smyrna and Marshallberg on Core Sound, Harlowe on Harlowe Creek, Williston on Jarrett Bay, and Stella (within the APE) on the White Oak River, took shape as ferry landings and entrepots for lumber and other inland products bound for the larger ports. These settlements included such services as general stores, churches, a

schoolhouse, a post office, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, perhaps a large sawmill (with nearby housing for mill workers) (Hill 1975: 61-104).

The coming of railroads after the Civil War boosted the region's economic recovery by facilitating the export of forest products and cash crops. More than a century of naval stores production had severely depleted the stands of longleaf pines in the two counties, and the commercial timbering of loblolly pines and hardwoods rose to replace turpentine distilling as the preeminent industry. In Onslow County, the lumber boom began with the completion of the Wilmington, New Bern, and Norfolk Railroad (later part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad) in 1893. The rail line cut north-south through both counties, connecting Jacksonville, Maysville, and Pollocksville with the cities of Wilmington and New Bern, and spawning such small railroad stops as Belgrade, Deppe, and Kellum (Watson 1995: 98; Pezzoni 1989: E.16-17).

The leasing and cutting of forest lands was accomplished at an astonishing pace by such firms as the Onslow Lumber Company (later Parmele Eccleston Lumber Company of New Jersey), the Roper Lumber Company of Virginia, and the Goldsboro Lumber Company based in Dover, North Carolina. Jacksonville, in particular, grew with the lumber industry, attracting several large-scale mills and hundreds of laborers. Between 1890 and 1910, the town's population climbed from 170 to over 500 (Pezzoni 1989: E.16-17; Branson 1890, 1910; Watson 1995: 115-116).

Within the APE in Carteret County, the community of Stella expanded primarily after 1885, when a group of northern investors known as the White Oak Lumber Corporation set up a large sawmill operation here. Supplied by the forests that dominated the northeast corner of the county, the mill operated for approximately fifteen years. During this time, barges drawn by river steamers hauled lumber down river to Swansboro. The lumber company also constructed a canal just below Stella to shorten the shipping route to the sea (Davis and Hamilton 1982: 153-154). At its peak in the early twentieth century, Stella contained a hotel, a Methodist church, a cotton gin, a general store, a post office, a social hall, the sawmill, and a cluster of dwellings. This riverside community still retains a significant collection of buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is recommended as eligible for the National Register under criteria A and C, for community development and architecture.

By the early twentieth century, Onslow County emerged as a leading tobacco-producing county in the state. Between 1900 and 1920, the production of bright-leaf tobacco here rose from 500,000 pounds to over 2,000,000 pounds. The emergence of bright-leaf cultivation, which was labor intensive, expanded sharecropping in Onslow County and stimulated the proliferation of small farms (*North Carolina Industrial Statistics, 1920*: 320-321; Harriett 1987: 13-14; Pezzoni 1989: E.22). Local farmers also began growing peanuts in the late nineteenth century. In 1890, Onslow County ranked third in the state in peanut production, as farmers raised the crop primarily for hog feed, a practice which continues to the present day (Pezzoni 1989: E.22).

story side wing retains its original two-story porch across the entire facade. While the upper story porch remains open, with square posts and balusters under the hipped porch roof, the first story was enclosed in the 1940s. Original two-over-two windows survive on the main elevations, and chimneys with corbelled brick stacks pierce the roofs. An intact one-story generator house with weatherboard siding stands directly behind the residence (Carteret County Historical Society and Museum of History and Art: Files).

Sited just east of the Pelletier House is a ca. 1960s one-story, brick-veneered dwelling. The modest design consists of a simple rectangular form, a side-gable roof, and an attached carport on the east elevation (Carteret County Historical Society and Museum of History and Art: Files).

Located on the south side of SR 1101, across from the store/post office, is a 1910s, two-story, red-brick warehouse. Associated with the general store, this building was constructed to store surplus merchandise and equipment. The simple, square form has a three-bay front facade with a central, arched garage doorway and segmental-arched, six-over-six windows. The side elevations have stepped parapets and segmental-arched windows. Although this building is currently vacant and some of the windows are boarded over, it remains in stable condition (Carteret County Historical Society and Museum of History and Art: Files).

Commanding the east end of the historic district is the Barker House, which stands at the intersection of SR 1101 and SR 1100 (Stella Road). This ca. 1888, weatherboard dwelling has a traditional two-story, side-gable, one-room-deep form, with stuccoed chimneys and single and paired two-over-two windows. The corner pilasters, wide frieze board, and six-panel front door appear to be original elements. The three-bay front facade is dominated by a columned, two-story porch that was probably added after World War II. The decorative metal balcony on the front facade, and the one-story bay on the south elevation also may have been added at that time. A later, one-story garage is attached to the north elevation.

#### Background Information

The small settlement of Stella is located in the westernmost part of Carteret County. In this area the White Oak River was the principal avenue of commerce, providing transportation for naval stores, lumber, and export crops to the port of Swansboro at Bogue Inlet. As early as 1723, the Carteret Court ordered a bridle path cut from the courthouse at Beaufort to a plantation on the White Oak River. A branch of this path was laid out to a point on the river that became known as Smith's Mills (later Stella). It was here, in 1742, that Joseph Smith was granted a license from the county to operate a ferry across the White Oak River. The ferry landing would eventually include a sawmill, a grist mill, and a tavern ("publick house of entertainment") owned by Smith (Davis and Hamilton 1982: 153-154). By the latter nineteenth century, Stella also included the only bridge across the White Oak River in Carteret County, a cotton gin, a cotton press, and a house owned by Matthew Mason, whose estate encompassed this community. Mason's granddaughter, Mary Barker, and her husband, Dr. William H. Barker, later acquired the Mason family estate and were major property owners in Stella in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Pitts 1984: 402; Pitts 1992, 5 April).

rewired for electricity. In recent years it has served as a part-time consignment and antiques shop (Carteret County Historical Society and the Carteret County Museum of History and Art: Files). The warehouse and residences also remain in good condition.

#### Evaluation of Eligibility

Stella is a rare surviving example of a small river landing and farming community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Carteret County. Although the White Oak Lumber Corporation sawmill and hotel were razed decades ago (the sawmill was demolished in the early twentieth century and replaced by a cotton gin business that closed in 1925), Stella retains key architectural resources that reflect its development alongside the White Oak River. The substantial Barker and Pelletier residences clearly illustrate the prosperity that visited this riverside hamlet in the decades around the turn of the century. The remarkably well-preserved general store/post office building and the associated red-brick warehouse reflect the community's historical role as a rural service center. Moreover, while Stella now contains some modern dwellings, they are modest in scale and number. The physical integrity of the district is enhanced by its quiet, rural setting, bordered by the river and adjacent marshlands to the west, and marked throughout by mature shade trees and shrubbery.

The recommended Stella Historic District is considered eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for community development and Criterion C for architecture. The historic district is not considered eligible under any other Criterion. The district is not eligible under Criterion B because the property is not associated with individuals whose activities were demonstrably important within a local, state, or national historic context. The property is also not considered eligible under Criterion D because the architectural component is not likely to yield information important in the history of building technology.

#### Boundaries

The proposed National Register boundaries are depicted in Figures 4 and 5. These boundaries primarily conform to existing property lines. However, on the southeast side of the district, the proposed boundary follows an original property line (as designated by a broken line on the Carteret County tax map) directly behind the warehouse building to exclude modern or extensively altered dwellings and several modern sheds located south of the warehouse near the White Oak River. At the east end of the district, the boundary conforms to the driveway east of the Barkley House and to a fence line north of the house. This boundary is drawn to encompass the Barkley House and yard, but to exclude modern farm buildings and fields to the east and north.

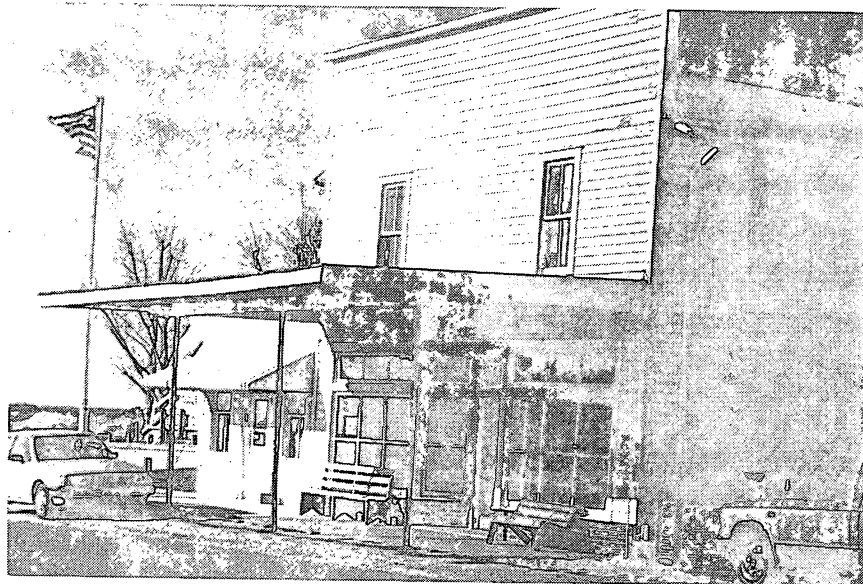


Plate 1. General Store/Post Office, Looking West.



Plate 2. Post Office, Looking East.



Plate 3. Post Office, Looking North.



Plate 4. Pelletier House, Looking North.



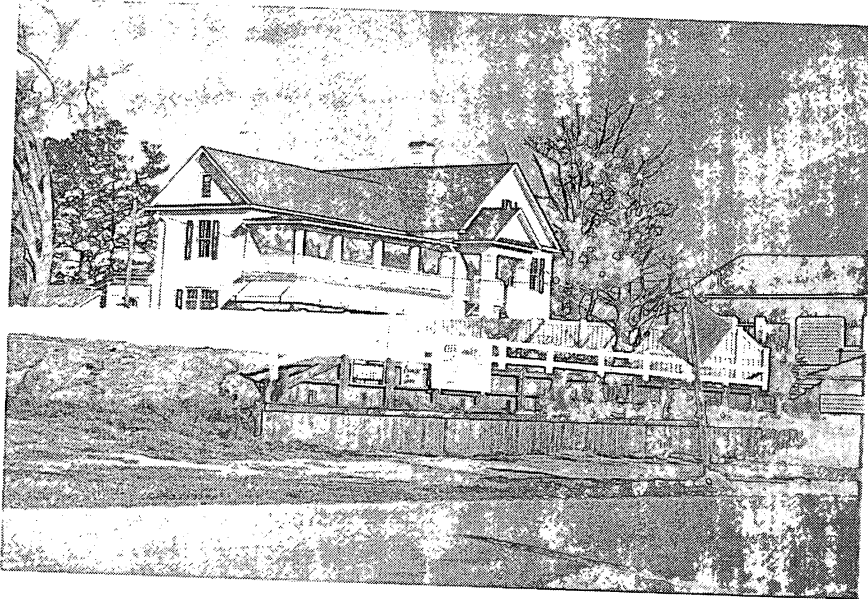


Plate 5. Pelletier House, Looking Northeast.



Plate 6. Pelletier House, Front Facade, Looking North.

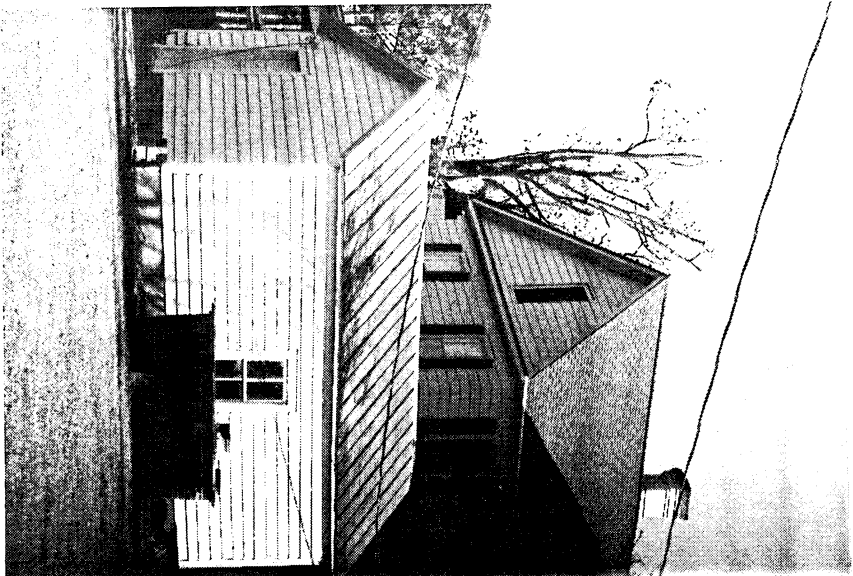


Plate 7. Generator House, Looking East.

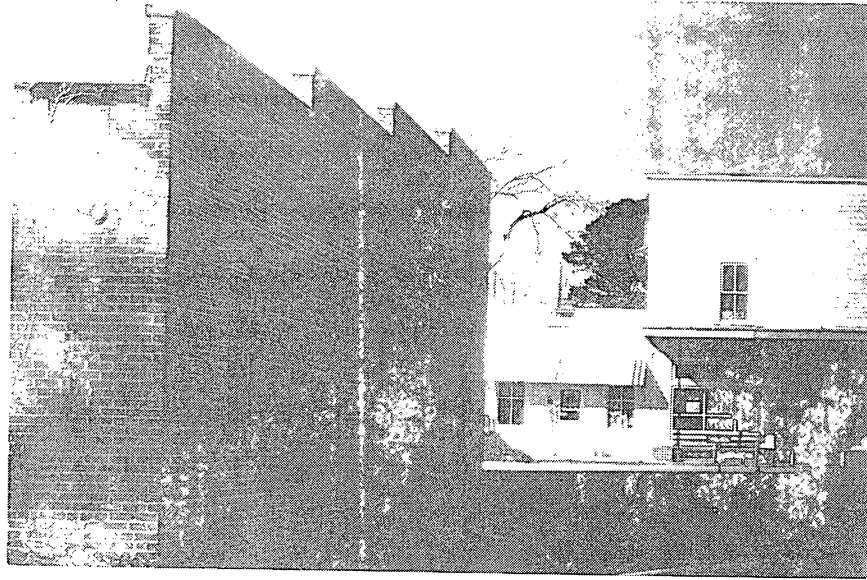


Plate 8. Warehouse, East Elevation, Looking North towards General Store/Post Office.

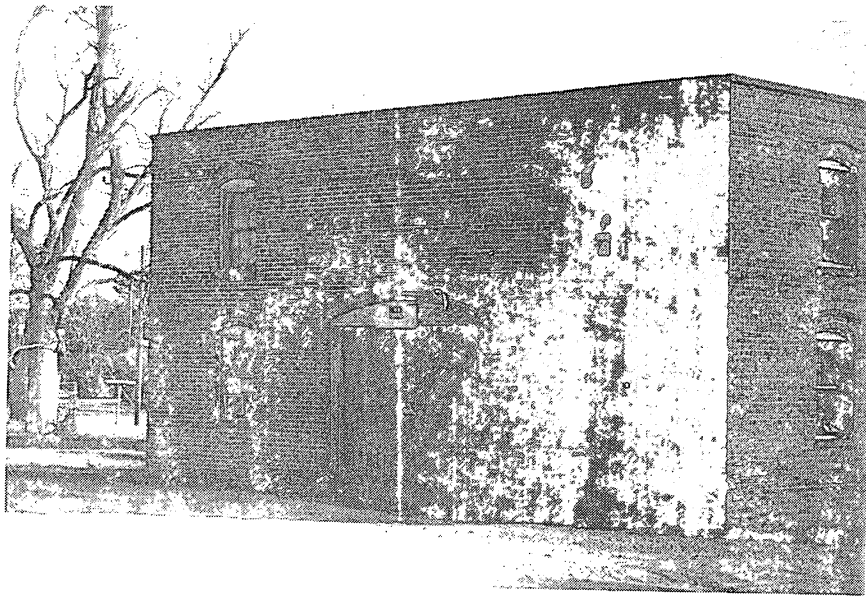


Plate 9. Warehouse, Front Facade, Looking South.



Plate 10. Barkley House, Front Facade, Looking East.



Plate 11. Barkley House, Front Facade and South Elevation Looking North.

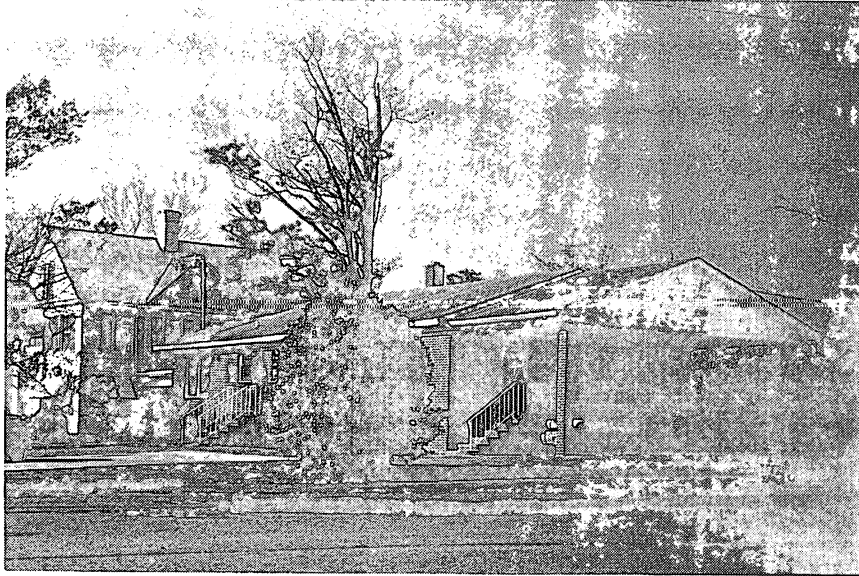


Plate 12. Modern House, Looking Northwest.

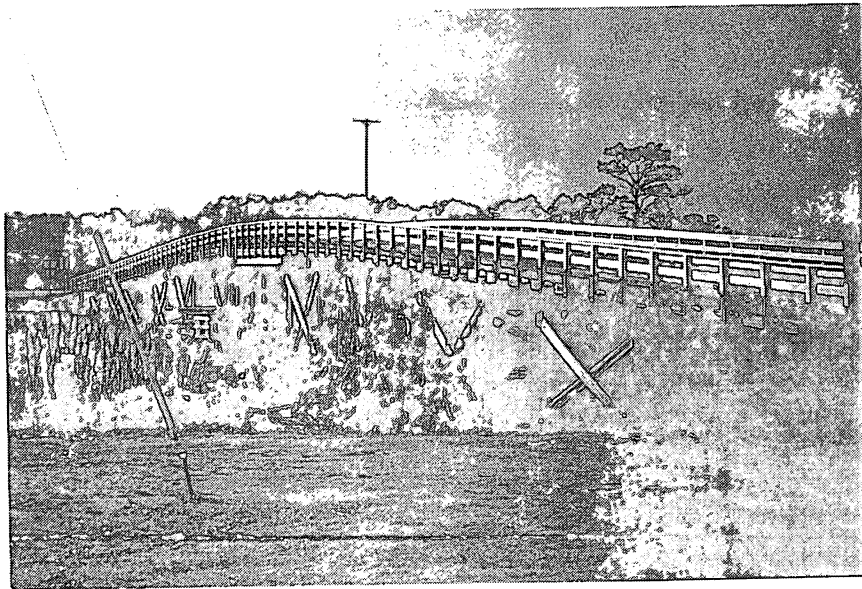


Plate 13. Bridge No. 49 (Outside Stella Historic District), Looking West.

Figure 4

Stella Historic District  
Site Plan

(not to scale)

C--Contributing Resource  
N--Non-Contributing Resource

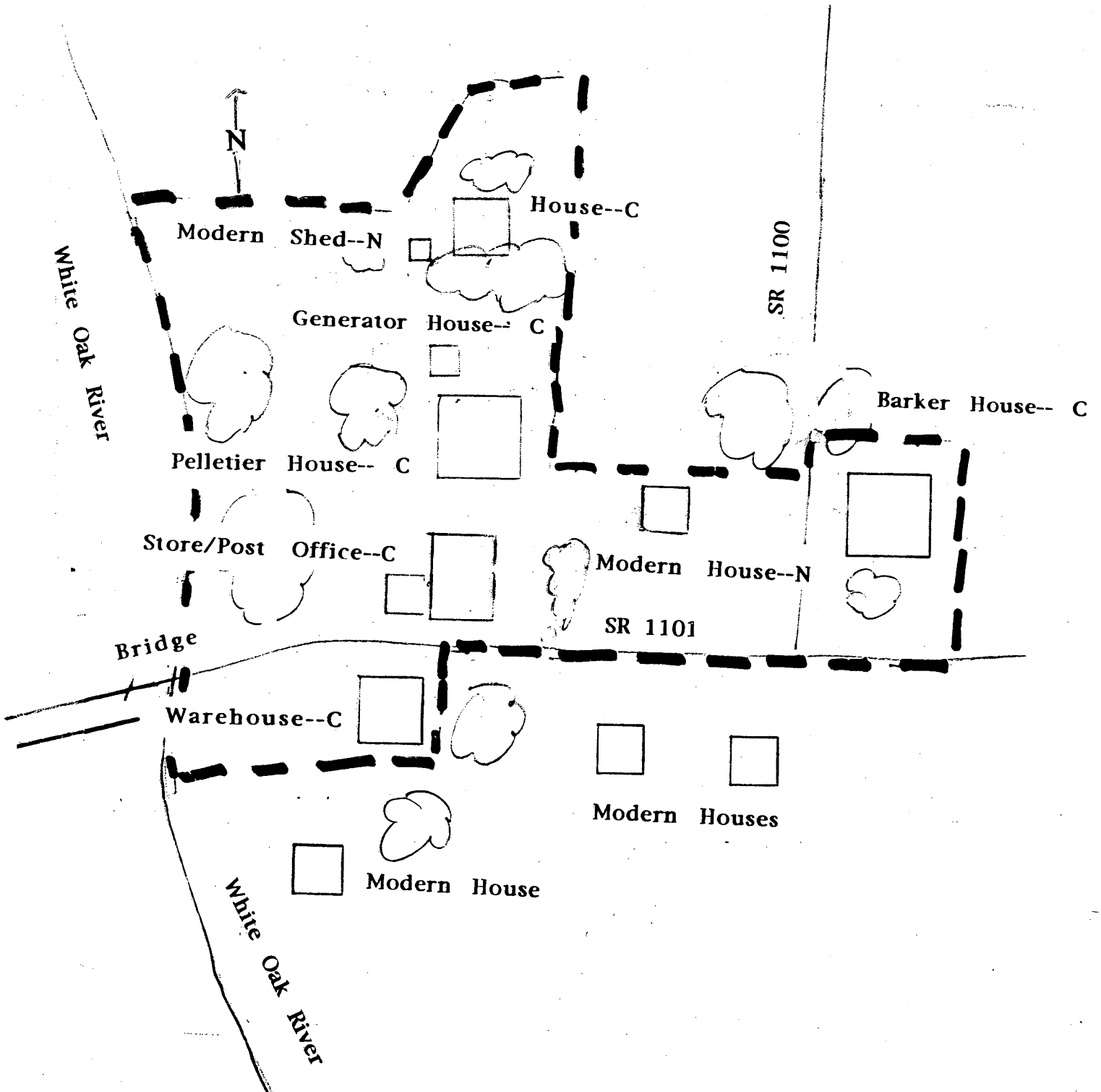




Figure 5

Stella Historic District  
Proposed National Register Boundaries

1" = 200'

(Carteret Co. Tax Map 5357.01)

