

**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

October 15, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kate Husband  
Office of Human Environment  
NCDOT Division of Highways

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

SUBJECT: Historic Structures Survey Report, Replace Bridge 183 on SR 1389 over North Turkey Creek,  
PA 19-05-0012, Buncombe County, ER 19-2815

Thank you for your September 16, 2019, memorandum transmitting the above-referenced report. We have reviewed the report and offer the following comments.

We concur that the Joseph Wells House and Barn (BN0747) is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of agriculture and Criterion C for its local architectural significance. The recommended boundaries illustrated on page 22 of the report, which show the proposed DOE boundary as the current tax parcel for the property, which crosses North Turkey Creek Road appear appropriate.

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 919-814-6579 or [environmental.review@ncdcr.gov](mailto: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](mailto:mfurr@ncdot.gov)

Received: 09/17/2019  
State Historic Preservation Office



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III  
SECRETARY

**ER 19-2815**

September 16, 2019

Due -- 10/9/19

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Renee Gledhill-Earley  
Environmental Review Coordinator  
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

H- ER letters  
10/15

**FROM:** Kate Husband  
Architectural Historian  
NCDOT Division of Highways

**SUBJECT:** Replace Bridge No. 183 on SR 1389 (N. Turkey Creek Road) over N. Turkey Creek, PA No. 19-05-0012, Buncombe County

Enclosed please find the Historic Structures Survey Report, survey site database, and additional materials for the above referenced project for your review and comment per 36CRF.800. Please contact me by phone (919-707-6075) or email (klhusband@ncdot.gov) if you have any additional questions or comments.

Historic Structure Survey Report  
Replace Buncombe Bridge No.  
100183 on SR 1389 (N. Turkey Creek  
Road) over N. Turkey Creek

17BP.13.R.201

Leicester, Buncombe County



Prepared for:  
North Carolina Department of Transportation,  
Environmental Analysis Unit  
1598 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27699-1598

Prepared by:  
Gannett Fleming, Inc.  
1 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 900  
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27603



Gannett Fleming Project No. 064926  
September 2019

Historic Structure Survey Report

Replace Buncombe Bridge No. 100183 on SR 1389 (N. Turkey Creek Road) over  
N. Turkey Creek

17BP.13.R.201

Leicester, Buncombe County

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GF Project No. 064926  
September 2019

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Adam J. Archual – Principal Architectural Historian  
Gannett Fleming, Inc.

Date

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Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor  
Historic Architecture Team  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

## Management Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes replacing Buncombe Bridge No. 100183 on SR 1389 (N. Turkey Creek Road) over N. Turkey Creek in Leicester Township, Buncombe County. This project is subject to review under the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA/USFS, 2015).

An NCDOT architectural historian defined an area of potential effects (APE) and conducted preliminary documentary research and a site visit to identify and assess all resources of approximately fifty years of age or more within the APE. One resource warranted intensive NR eligibility evaluation and is the subject of this report. NCDOT architectural historians determined that all other properties and districts do not warrant further study and evaluation due to lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

In June 2019, NCDOT-Division 13 requested Gannett Fleming, Inc. complete a NR-eligibility evaluation for the property presented in the following report. Submitted separately are the completed North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (NCHPO) survey site forms, geospatial data, and photographic documentation.

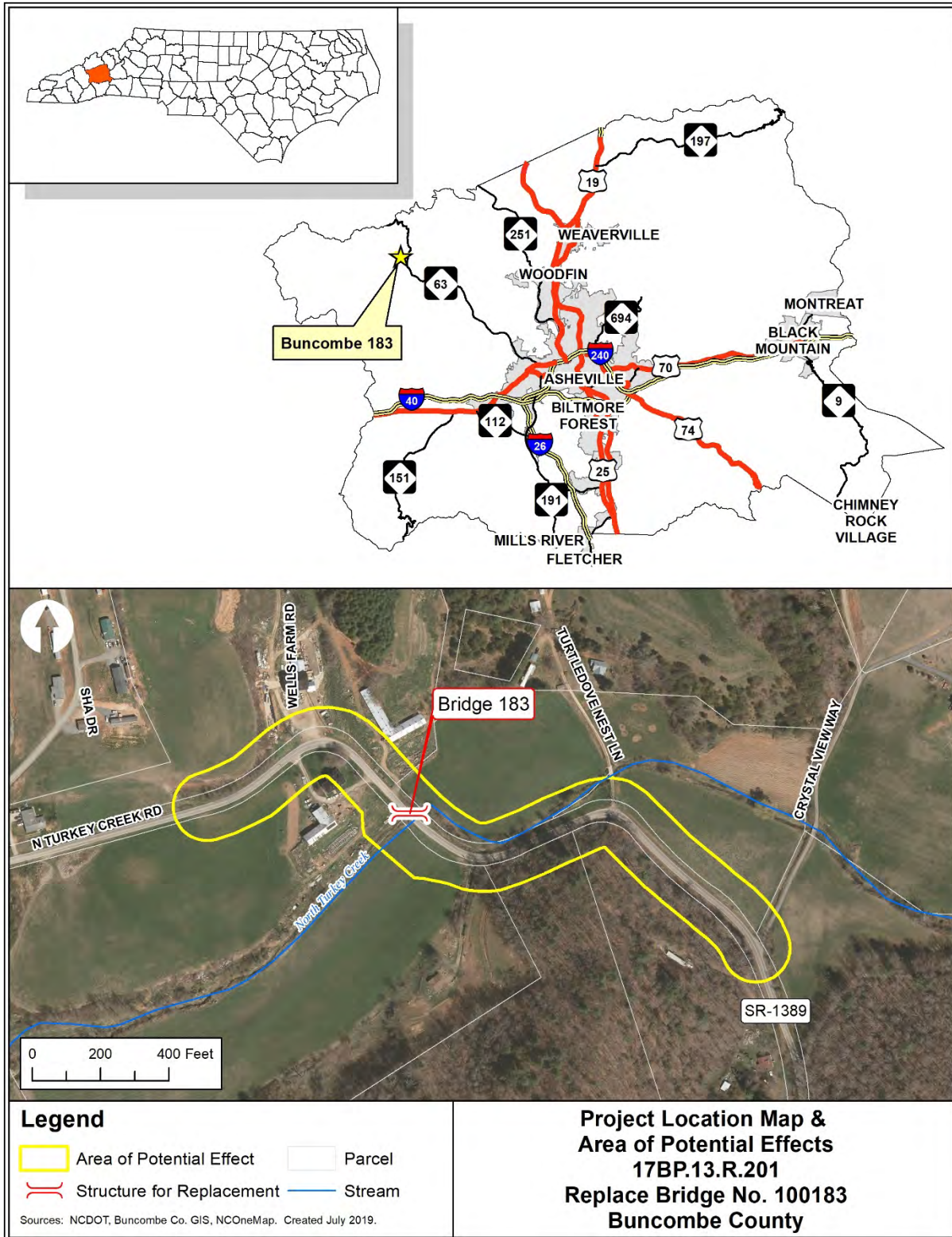
Gannett Fleming conducted the survey and prepared this report in accordance with NCDOT's *Historic Architectural Resources, Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines*, and the NCHPO's *Report Standards for Historic Structures Survey Reports/Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina*. These property evaluations meet the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service (NPS). As a result of these efforts, one property is recommended eligible for listing in the NR.

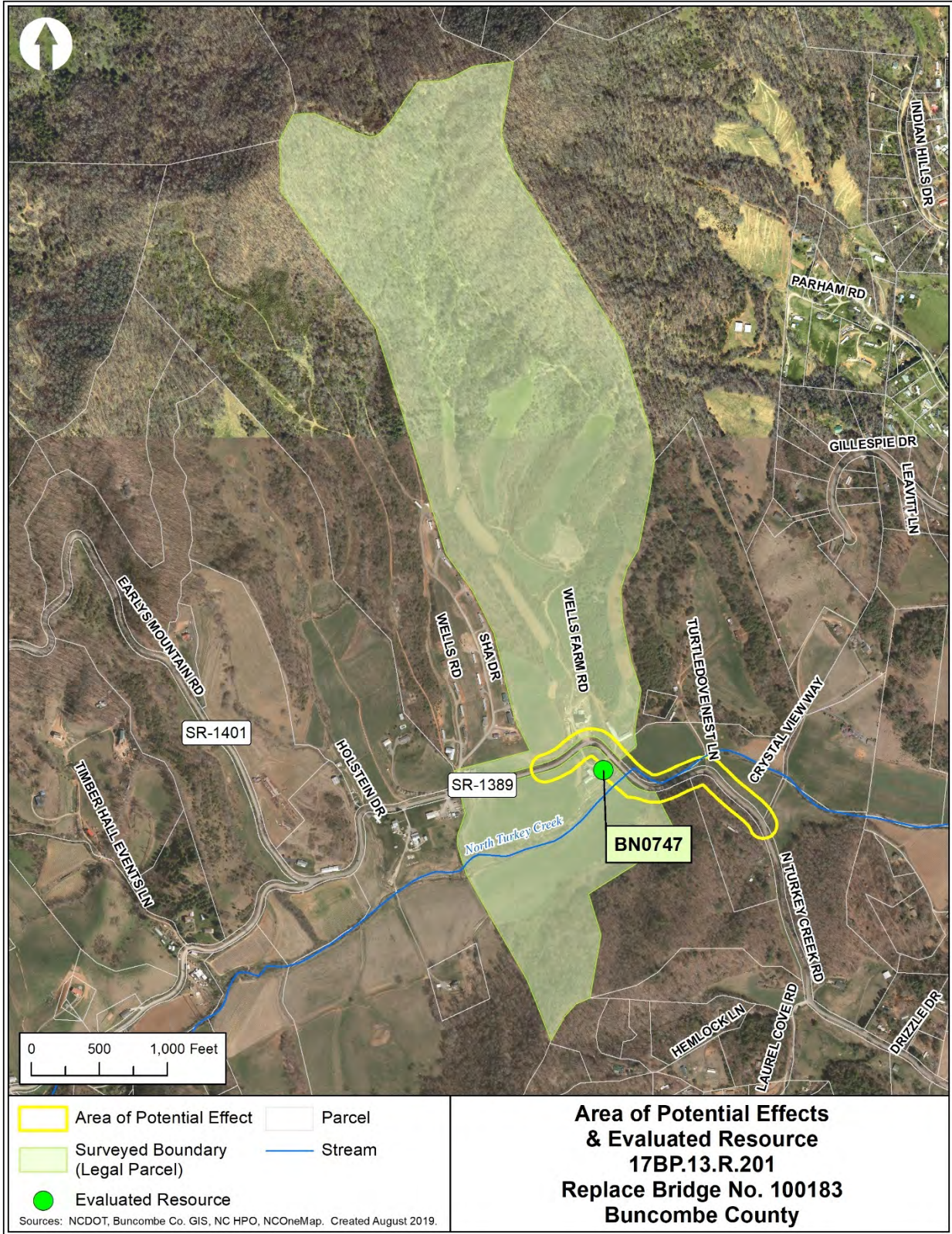
<b>Resource Name</b>	Joseph Wells House and Barn
<b>HPO Survey Site #</b>	BN0747
<b>Address</b>	202 N. Turkey Creek Road, Leicester
<b>PIN</b>	8482-64-2615-00000
<b>Date(s) of Construction</b>	1903; 1905; 1951; 1954; circa 1960s
<b>Recommendation</b>	Eligible under Criterion A (agriculture) and Criterion C (architecture)

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# I. Project Location Maps







## II. Introduction

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes replacing Buncombe Bridge No. 100183 on SR 1389 (N. Turkey Creek Road) over N. Turkey Creek in Leicester Township, Buncombe County.

The project is in northwestern Buncombe County, approximately thirteen miles northwest of the Buncombe County Courthouse in Asheville and approximately four miles northeast of the unincorporated Leicester community, in the Blue Ridge physiographic province of North Carolina. Topography in the project vicinity consists of a deeply dissected mountainous area with numerous steep mountain ridges, intermontane basins, and trench valleys that intersect and give the area its rugged mountain character (NCDNR). Elevations within the APE range from approximately 2,100 to 3,000 feet above mean sea level.

The project is approximately 0.1-mile in length within a generally rural area. Land use in the project vicinity is primarily agricultural and residential.

## III. Methodology

Buncombe Bridge No. 100183 is subject to review under the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA/USFS, 2015). An NCDOT architectural historian defined an area of potential effects (APE) and conducted preliminary documentary research and a site visit to identify and assess all resources of approximately fifty years of age or more within the APE. One resource warranted intensive NR eligibility evaluation and is the subject of this report. NCDOT architectural historians determined that all other properties and districts do not warrant further study and evaluation due to lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

In June 2019, NCDOT-Division 13 requested Gannett Fleming, Inc. to complete a NR-eligibility evaluation for the property. Gannett Fleming conducted the field work on July 26, 2019 and pursued background research to obtain a greater understanding of the historical development of the area and place resources within their historic architectural context. Gannett Fleming consulted materials at the Sandy Mush Community Center, Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, Pack Library's NC Collection (Asheville), NCHPO, and through internet searches. The Buncombe County GIS and Register of Deeds were accessed on-line during research. The following report presents Gannett Fleming's assessments of the property.

During fieldwork, the exterior of the resource was documented through written notes and photographs. Access to the interior of several buildings and structures associated with the resource were permitted and interior assessments made. An on-site interview was conducted with Michael J. Wells, the current property owner, his brother Ken Wells and sister-in-law, Norma Jean Lannon. The surrounding landscape and setting were photographed as well.

The property is evaluated in this report for eligibility using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation as outlined in 36 CFR Part 60.4. Gannett Fleming conducted the survey and prepared this report in accordance with NCDOT's *Historic Architectural Resources, Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines*, and the NCHPO's *Report Standards for Historic Structures Survey Reports/Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina*. The property evaluation meets the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service (NPS).

## IV. Joseph S. Wells House and Barn (BN0747): Property Description and Evaluation

<b>Resource Name</b>	Joseph S. Wells House and Barn
<b>HPO Survey Site #</b>	BN0747
<b>Address</b>	202 N. Turkey Creek Road
<b>PIN</b>	8782-64-2615-00000
<b>Date(s) of Construction</b>	1903; 1905; 1951; 1954; circa 1960s
<b>Recommendation</b>	Eligible under Criterion A (agriculture) and Criterion C (architecture)



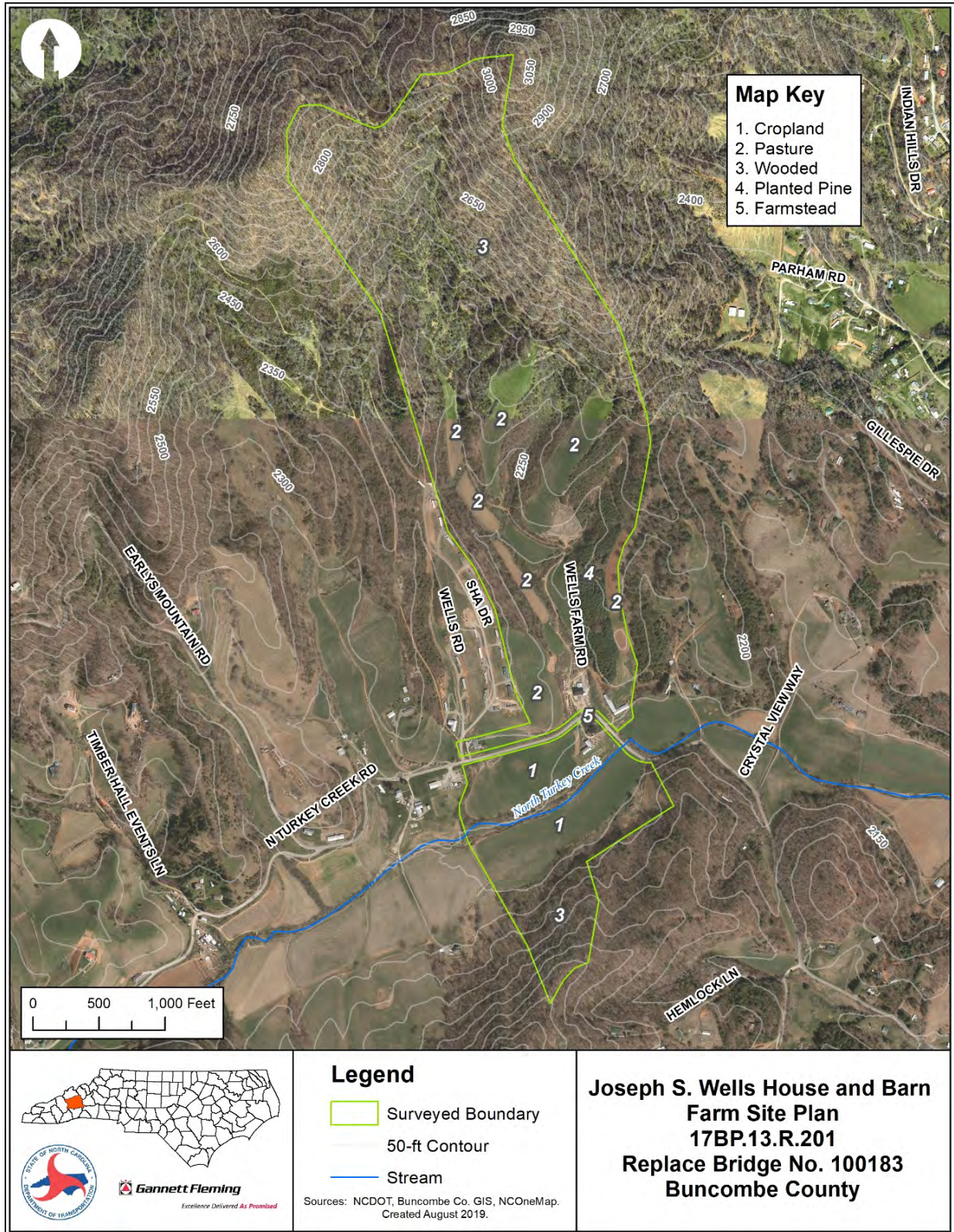
Figure 1. Joseph S. Wells House (left) and Barn (right), view to the north; Buncombe Bridge No. 100183, carrying N. Turkey Creek Road over N. Turkey Creek, is visible at right.

### Physical Description

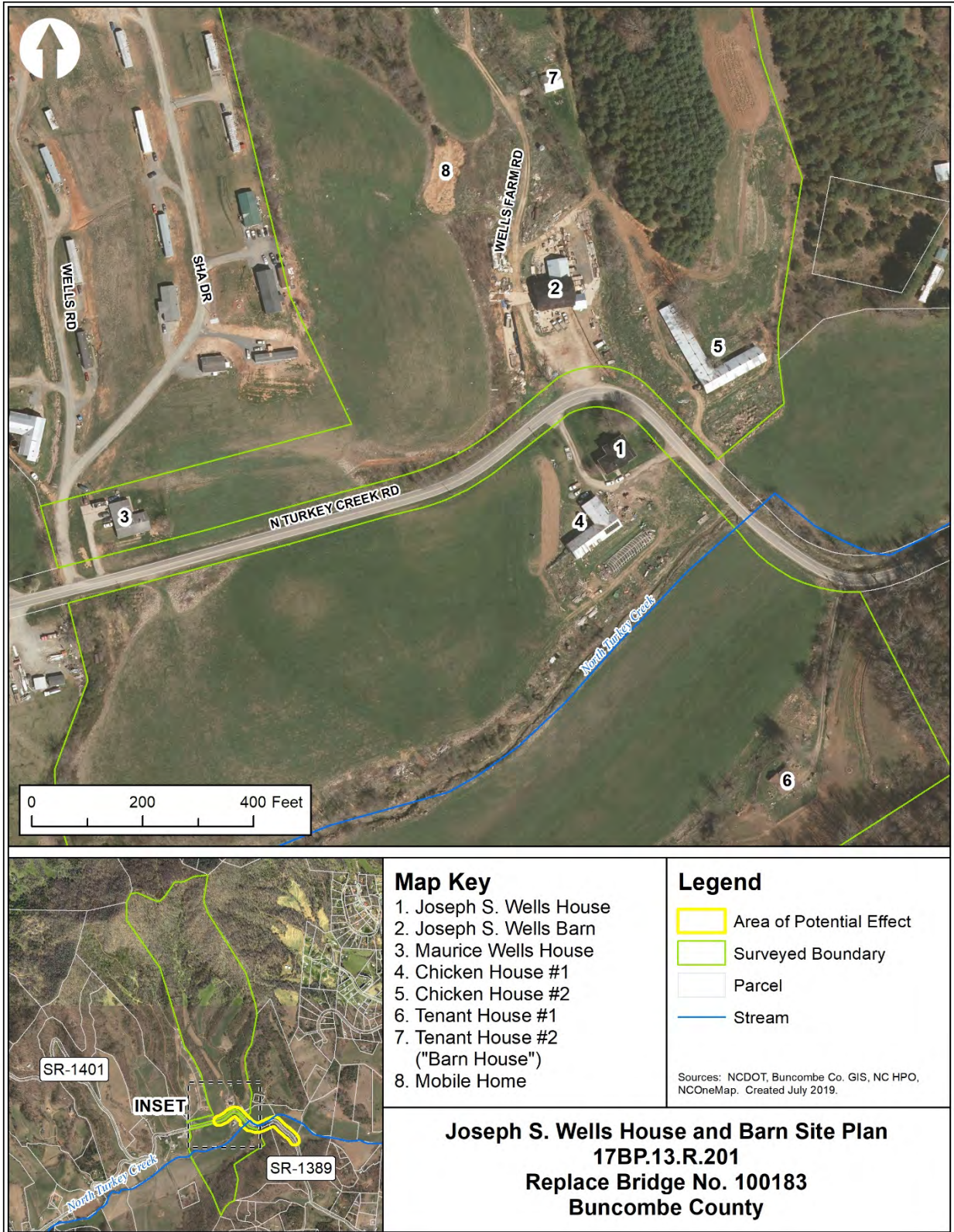
#### *Setting*

The Joseph S. (JS) Wells House and Farm is located approximately four miles northeast of Leicester, an unincorporated community in northwest Buncombe County. The 204-acre property straddles N. Turkey Creek – which flows west to east through the south portion of the property – and extends into the mountains bounding the north side of the valley. The valley stretches in a generally northeast-southwest direction and remains mostly in agricultural use. N. Turkey Creek Road generally follows its eponymous creek and crosses the creek along the east property boundary, approximately 180 feet southeast of the house. The road makes a sharp turn north of the creek and continues to the west

between the house and barn. The principal buildings on the property cluster along the public road (see Site Map).



(Note: The numbers in parentheses included in this section's sub headers are keyed to the Site Map.)



*Joseph S. Wells House (1)  
1905, Contributing*

The Wells house is oriented to the east, towards N. Turkey Creek Road. The three-bay, double-pile, two and a-half story house is organized around the foursquare house form (in plan and massing) with elements of the Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival styles. A two-story addition extends from the rear (west) elevation and a one-story, full-length porch is on the east façade. The house is capped by a hip roof with hip dormers on the east and north slopes; a narrow projection extends from the south elevation under a gable with return. The rolled asphalt roof covers a tin-shingle roof, which was observed through sheathing in the attic. Wide, closed eaves are finished with a molded cornice and plain frieze; gutters are fixed to the eaves. Three interior brick chimneys extend from the roof.



*Figure 2. Joseph S. Wells House, oblique view of east façade and south elevation*



*Figure 3. Joseph S. Wells House, oblique view of east façade and north elevation*

The second story – including dormers and the open gable – is clad with shingles and the first story with weatherboard; a slight pent is at the divide. Paired 1/1 wood sash windows with attached wood frame screens are the most common treatment on the house with a few noted exceptions: a triple 1/1 sash unit in the façade south of the entry; a fixed pane between two single-unit 1/1 wood sash on the south elevation; a single 1/1 wood sash on the second story above the kitchen door (south elevation); and two vinyl windows in the first story of the west elevation (in the addition). Several sashes are missing in the dormers, though some multi-pane upper and single-pane lower sashes remain. Two fixed-pane windows are located under the gable-with-return on the south elevation.

The one-story porch extends the full façade length and features a pedimented central bay above the single-leaf wood and glass door. The porch's hip roof is supported by Tuscan columns at each corner and under the pedimented central bay. A low square picket balustrade runs between the columns. An aluminum storm door is fitted in the primary entry which is flanked by sidelights that mimic the door's form, including a single wood panel below a narrow, molded wood ledge with glass above. The glass in the sidelights includes a Queen Anne-influenced geometric design that the door does not. The primary entry is accessed by a set of wide, poured concrete steps. The porch ceiling is beadboard; the floor is tongue-and-groove

The kitchen is accessed on the south elevation by a glass and wood door with three vertical panes over three horizontal panels. The kitchen door is approached via concrete block steps and a small concrete porch landing protected by a hip roof supported by cast iron foliated pillars. A wood panel door in the west elevation provides access to the rear addition and is accessible by two poured concrete steps. A wood and glass door provide access to a small roof deck with a cast iron railing on the second story of the north elevation (in the rear addition).



Figure 4. Joseph S. Wells House, view of south elevation



Figure 5. Joseph S. Wells House, oblique view of north and west elevations

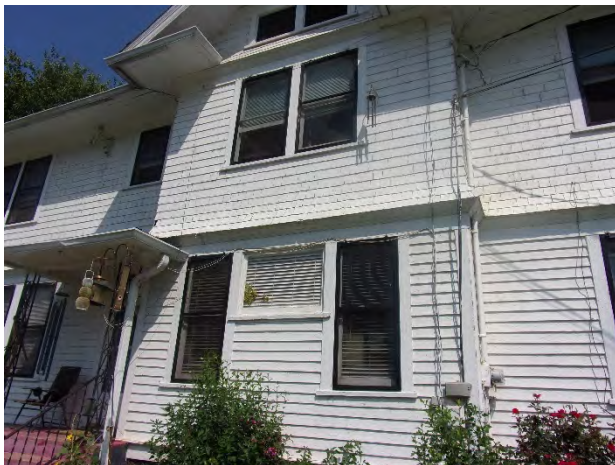


Figure 6. Joseph S. Wells House, detail view of south elevation



Figure 7. Joseph S. Wells House, detail view of primary entry

The house sits on a continuous, poured concrete foundation with stacked stones providing interior support. A small basement with concrete floor is in the southwest corner of the house, under the kitchen.

An interior survey was permitted by the owner. The floor plan consists of a central hallway flanked by two rooms on each floor (see Figures 6 and 7) in a modified foursquare plan. The first-floor central hall has a French door separating the forward and rear rooms. The quarter-turn, open staircase appears to be intact, and features a rounded-end starting step, a Craftsman-style paneled square newel post, and

turned balusters. A closed stairwell accesses the half-story attic from the second-floor hallway. The attic has unfinished flooring. The rear addition includes a bathroom on the first story and one large room on each floor; doorways were punched through the original exterior wall to permit interior circulation. According to the owner, the house is framed with oak harvested from the Wells property and milled nearby; this is the case with most – if not all – of the wood used in the buildings and structures on the property. Historic interior finishes remain, including plaster-and-lathe walls, five-panel wood doors (most with historic glass doorknobs and door hardware), oak flooring, molding, and flush window and door surrounds. One Queen Anne-style mantel was observed in the first-floor, north bedroom and others were reportedly removed. The extant mantel features turned columns with lamb’s tongue capitals, a bracketed shelf, inset mirror, and cornice; the fireplace surround is covered with replacement tile.

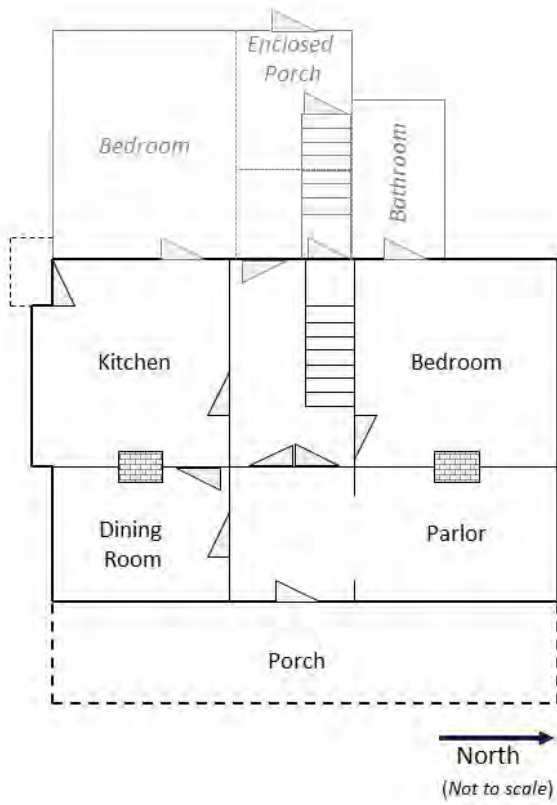


Figure 8. JS Wells House, first floor plan view. Note that greyed features represent the 1960s addition.

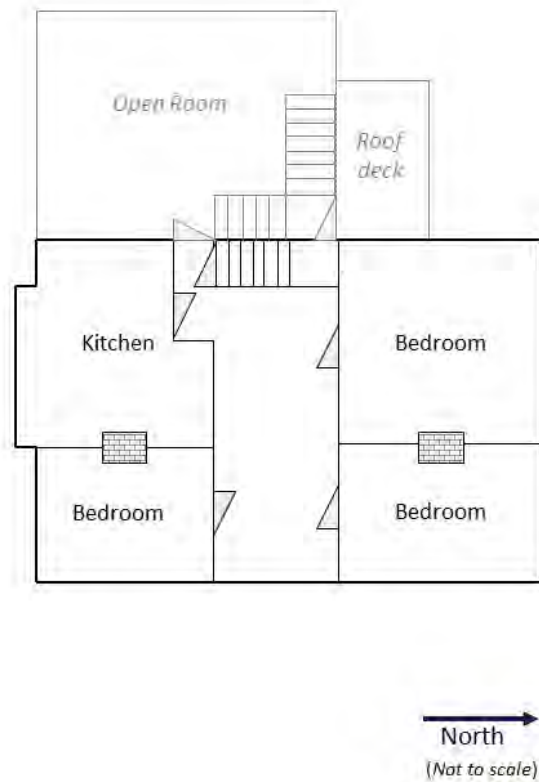


Figure 9. JS Wells House, second floor plan view. Note that greyed features represent the 1960s addition.

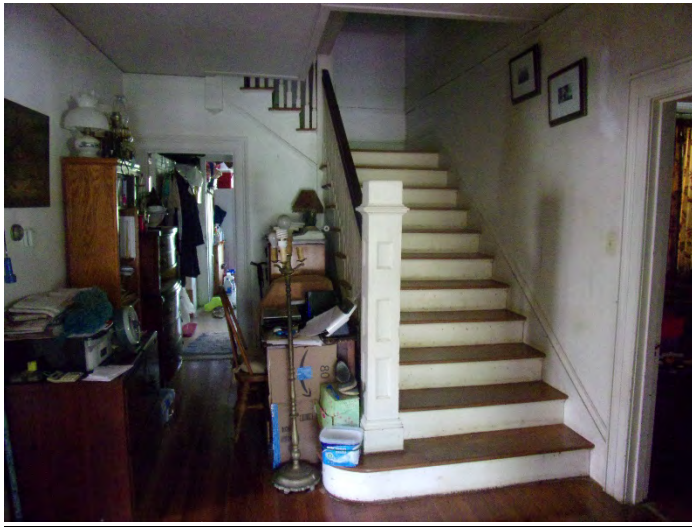


Figure 10. Joseph S. Wells House, interior staircase



Figure 11. Joseph S. Wells House, interior mantel in the first-floor north bedroom



Figure 12. Joseph S. Wells House, front door detail



Figure 13. Joseph S. Wells House, second floor hall detail



## Outbuildings and Landscape Elements

### *Joseph S. Wells Barn (2)*

*1903, Ca. 1950s, Contributing*



*Figure 14. Joseph S. Wells Barn, oblique view of west and south elevations; the milk house is visible at right*

The three-level, timber-frame, weatherboard, banked barn is located on the north side of N. Turkey Creek Road, approximately 300 feet north of the house. The 66-foot by 38-foot livestock barn is built into the hillside on its west side with a stone-and-mortar wall. The barn's clipped gable roof with exposed rafter tails is reportedly clad in copper shingles which have been tarred over and a gable roof tops the narrow ventilating monitor. The outlines of three silos (one concrete, one brick, and once concrete tile) are evident in the hill cut southwest of the barn, extending from the retaining wall; however, these features have been removed. According to the owner, the milk house was added to the barn's southeast corner in the 1950s and the milk parlor was added to the north side of the barn in the 1960s.

Three north-south oriented bays traverse the barn's first floor, providing access to four livestock stalls and a storage room in the central and western bays. (Livestock stalls were reportedly removed from the eastern bay.) Each bay is accessible by an opening with clipped corners. The barn doors are not present, and the openings are currently covered with plastic sheets or left open. Documentary photos from the 1990s show double swinging doors over each opening. Each livestock stall has a simple vertical board door mounted on U-shaped (horseshoe) rollers; the storage rooms are accessible by a hinged, X-

batten door. Floors are poured concrete, as is the foundation. Interior walls are sheathed in flush poplar boards and whitewashing, mixed on-site, remains visible on some historic structural elements.



Figure 15. Joseph S. Wells Barn, view of west elevation from above



Figure 16. Joseph S. Wells Barn, view to the south inside the central bay

The barn's second floor is accessed on the banked west elevation by a large opening with clipped corners and missing doors. The large second floor is open to the exposed rafter ceiling and has replacement oak plank flooring; parallel hay lofts are constructed of posts and rails along the north and south walls with a wide "hall" between. Recently, wooden stairs and some decking have been added in the eastern extent of the lofts. A double board-and-batten hay door in the west elevation under the clipped gable provides access to the hay pulley above the door opening. The hay pulley remains in place and was used to move hay in and out of the barn where it was piled in the parallel hay lofts. Three windows are symmetrically placed in the north and south elevations with two more in the east elevation, though the sashes have been removed and openings covered with sheet plastic. The narrow ventilating monitor that runs along the ridgeline permits some light into the loft.



Figure 17. Joseph S. Wells Barn, view to the southeast; the circa 1960s milk parlor is in foreground.



Figure 18. Joseph S. Wells Barn, view to the southwest

The concrete block, circa 1950s milk house has a low-pitched gable roof and is joined to the southeast elevation of the barn by a breezeway between the two structures. Window types in the milk house

vary, including a metal casement, a fixed vinyl, and a double 1/1 vinyl unit. A set of double commercial-grade glass and aluminum doors is in the south elevation. The interior has been subdivided with frame walls and drywall.

A circa 1960s one-story, concrete block, gabled milk parlor extends from the north elevation. Sliding X-batten doors are placed centrally on the north elevation. Windows are regularly placed in the north, east, and west elevations and consist of a mixture of metal, wood, and vinyl sashes; several windows are covered in plywood or plastic. The gable end and the roof are clad with corrugated metal. Interior floors are poured concrete and the ceiling is corrugated metal. A portion of the bank barn's exterior wall was removed to permit interior passage between this addition and the barn's easternmost bay.



Figure 19. Joseph S. Wells Barn, oblique view of the circa 1950s milk house south elevation and breezeway attached to southeast corner of barn



Figure 20. Joseph S. Wells Barn, oblique view of the circa 1960s milk parlor north and west elevations

### *Maurice Wells House (3) 1951; Contributing*

This brick Ranch-style house was constructed by Maurice Wells, Joseph's youngest child, in 1951. It is located at the western extreme of the parcel boundary, approximately 800 feet west of the Wells House, along the northside of N. Turkey Creek Road. The house is currently rented, and interior access was not granted.

The L-plan house sits on a continuous concrete block foundation with a flash range brick skirt wall and T1-11 siding on the upper exterior walls. Windows vary in size and configuration, including picture windows, single-, paired-, and triple-unit 6/6 and 8/8 wood windows. The wood-and-glass primary entry is off-center and slightly recessed from the south-facing façade. A poured concrete patio extends from the front door. The gravel driveway approaches the engaged garage in the west elevation of the rear ell; however, the garage was converted for interior space and the door(s) replaced with aluminum framed sliding glass doors. A lean-to frame porch extends from the east elevation of the rear ell.



Figure 21. Maurice Wells House, view of south façade



Figure 22. Maurice Wells House, view of west elevation

The low-profile side gable roof is clad in composite shingles. The wide eaves are open, and the gable ends are clad in T1-11 siding as well, though painted a different color to differentiate the space. An interior brick slab chimney breaks the roof ridge at the east end of the house.

*Chicken House #1 (4)  
1954, Contributing*

There are two large, two-story, gabled concrete block chicken houses on the property. Both were constructed in 1954, by the same mason (Bill Irishman), and with similar L-plans. Chicken House #1 is the smaller of the two and is located southwest of the Joseph S. Wells House. The short end of the L-plan contains a one-bay two-car garage, access to the mechanical feeder, and the egg packaging room; the long end of the plan was devoted to coops. The first level floor is poured concrete and the second level is floored with wood.



Figure 23. Chicken House #1, view of east elevation



Figure 24. Chicken House #1, view of south elevation; the Joseph S. Wells House is visible at right.

Windows are placed regularly around the chicken house on both floors and consist primarily of metal awning windows over brick sills. Board-and-batten and vinyl replacements were observed, although

several doors have been removed. An interior concrete block flue breaks the east slope of the roof plane in the 5-V metal roof. The gable ends are clad in asbestos shingles.

*Chicken House #2 (5)  
1954, Contributing*

Chicken House #2 is similar to Chicken House #1 in most of its details. It is the larger of the two and is located on a rise northeast of the Joseph S. Wells House, on the east side of N. Turkey Creek Road. Also an L-plan, the first story includes a breezeway between the two masses, reportedly to permit drainage from the hillside behind to pass through. One noted difference is the gable ends are clad in vertical boards with dog-eared bottoms.



*Figure 25. Chicken House #2, oblique view of south and west elevations*



*Figure 26. Chicken House #2, view of north and west elevations from above*

*Tenant House #1 (6)  
1954, Contributing*

Tenant House #1 reportedly replaced an earlier frame tenant house on this site (see Figure 36) and was constructed at about the same time and by the same builder as the chicken houses and Tenant House #2. The side-gabled concrete-block house is oriented to the north and is located towards the south end of the property, approximately 650 feet southwest of the Joseph S. Wells House, on the hillside south of N. Turkey Creek. The house is currently rented, and interior access was not granted. According to the interview, the interior plan consists of four rooms and a bathroom with concrete block partitions, similar to the barn house described below. A locked gate and electric fencing restricted access to the primary façade.

The house is roughly 30-foot by 36-foot with a shallow projecting front wing on the west side of the façade that covers the off-center front door and a metal casement window. Metal casement windows with concrete sills are present throughout the house. The back door (south elevation) is at the east end of the house and is covered by a lean-to addition which the tax assessor identifies as a carport added in 1985. The house's gable ends are clad in vertical boards with scalloped ends. An interior concrete block chimney breaks the roof ridge at the east end of the house; the roof is clad in composite shingles.

Two small, non-historic outbuildings are associated with Tenant House #1: a small wood-frame chicken house directly east of the house and a plastic utility shed to the south. The yard is fenced with a combination of post-and-rail wood fence and electric fencing.



Figure 27. Tenant House #1, view of north façade



Figure 28. Tenant House #1, oblique view of the south and west elevations

*Tenant House #2 (“Barn House”) (7)  
1954, Contributing*

The “barn house” was reportedly built for tenants hired to help with the Wells’ dairy operation; thus, it was located closer to the barn, about 340 feet to the north. The barn house was constructed by the same mason responsible for the chicken houses and at roughly the same time. This tenant house is accessible by a gravel and dirt driveway that leaves N. Turkey Creek Road east of the Joseph S. Wells House and traverses the west elevation of Chicken House #2.

This 32-foot by 28-foot side-gabled concrete block house features an off-center wood panel entry door on the south façade, accessed by concrete block steps, and flanked by paired 3/1 wood windows. The rear (north elevation) door consists of three vertical lights over three horizontal wood panels. Both the front and rear entrances have a vinyl storm door. Windows on secondary elevations are single-unit 3/1 wood sash. One window in the north elevation has been partially enclosed with concrete, with a small vinyl window above. The gable ends are clad in asbestos shingles. An interior concrete block chimney breaks the roof ridge at the east end of the house. The roof is clad in 5-V tin.

The house is currently rented, and interior access was not granted. Views through windows and the interview with the current owner revealed that interior partitions are concrete block and the house consists of four rooms and a bathroom.

A non-historic wood frame shed is located northwest of the house. This shed was reportedly constructed by a previous renter approximately 20 years ago.



*Figure 29. Tenant House #2 (Barn House), oblique view of the south façade and east elevation*



*Figure 30. Tenant House #2 (Barn House), view of the north elevation*

**Mobile Home (8)**  
**2006, Non-contributing**

This double wide mobile home was placed on the property approximately 250-feet northwest of the barn in 2006, according to the current owner. It is accessed by a gravel drive that connects to the agricultural road (Wells Farm Road) passing by the west side of the barn. An above ground pool is located northeast of the mobile home. The mobile home is currently occupied by an employee of the property owner.



*Figure 31. Mobile home, view of the east façade*



*Figure 32. View to the north with mobile home in mid-frame and the property extending to the ridgeline on the north side of the valley; a few pastures are visible on the hillside.*

**Landscape Element**  
**Circa 1903-1960s, Contributing**

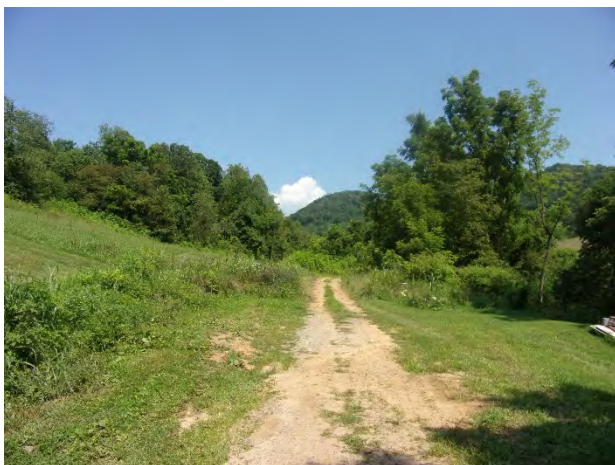
Set on approximately 204 acres, the landscape surrounding the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn includes natural and cultural features. N. Turkey Creek flows generally west-to-east through the southern portion of the property. An unnamed stream flows generally south through the center of the property,

originating in the mountains at the north end of the property. The mountainsides consist of a mixture of pasture and woods.

The substantial manmade (cultural) features are discussed in detail above and constitute the farmstead, or the domestic and working spaces which cluster along the bottomlands in proximity to the public road (N. Turkey Creek Road). The immediate manmade landscape around the house consists principally of maintained lawn and graveled or concrete circulation drives. A few mature hardwoods and foundation plantings surround the Joseph S. Wells House and other dwellings; however, formal landscaping is scarce.

The relatively flat floodplain and bottomlands associated with N. Turkey Creek have been historically planted and remain so primarily in hay. Dairy cattle were historically grazed in pastures north of N. Turkey Creek Road and extending into mountainsides at the north end of the property. The pastures are planted in forage and cover crops. The dozen beef cattle currently kept on the property graze in these pastures. Surplus hay and forage crops are harvested and marketed. The pastures were carved out of the wooded hillsides; the timber harvested from the Wells property was a valuable commodity in most – if not all – of the buildings and structures on the property. The current owner has planted a stand of pines along the east side of the property for timber. Fencing is mostly modern – consisting of electric fencing on metal posts and metal swinging gates – and utilized in the uphill pastures only. The fields in the bottomlands are not fenced.

Circulation patterns within the farm complex appear to have evolved as needed, providing access throughout the farmstead and extending into the pastures on the mountainsides to the north. The public road as it passes through the farmstead is a part of that circulation. The private Wells Farm Road is the primary agricultural road that travels north from the public road past the barn and into the mountain-side pastures. The road is graveled in the area of the farmstead then turns to a dirt two-track path beyond. The private road roughly follows an unnamed tributary to N. Turkey Creek. The owner stated the road used to access an old cabin and a springhouse, but that the old cabin was demolished, and the property is currently serviced by municipal water.



*Figure 33. View to the north on Wells Farm Road, north of the barn*



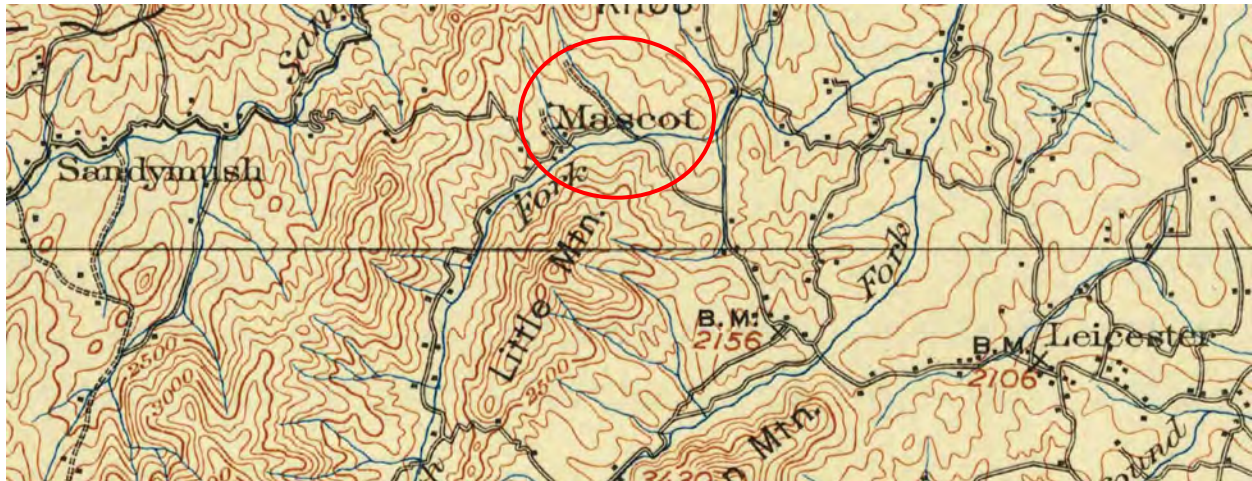
*Figure 34. View to the south down the N. Turkey Creek valley, from the north end of the property*



## History

Joseph Stringfield (JS) Wells was born to John Franklin (Frank) (1849-1922) and Laura Elizabeth (1846-1892) Wells on January 27, 1871 in Buncombe County, the second of eight children. Buncombe County land records show Frank purchased multiple tracts of land in the N. Turkey Creek and Sandy Mush vicinity following the Civil War. JS Wells married Dorcas Vernon Reynolds (1871-1959) on December 31, 1896; they had seven children. Frank deeded 200 acres on N. Turkey Creek to JS for the sum of one dollar and in consideration of love and affection in October of 1899 (Buncombe County Deed Book 227 Page 92).

According to the family, Frank established the Leicester General Store on the Leicester Highway (currently NC 63/New Leicester Highway) near the S. Turkey Creek Road intersection, approximately two miles southeast of the property. Responsible for its operation, JS lived close to the store in the early years of his marriage. (Neither the store nor the house are extant.) JS also served as the postmaster for the Mascot Post Office between 1894-1901 and 1902-1913 (Brookshire 2016). Mascot was a mid-way point between Leicester and the Sandy Mush community, located near the intersection of Earley's Mountain Road and N. Turkey Creek Road, or about 0.5 mile west of the property (Figure 35).



*Figure 35. "Mascot" was a mid-way point between the Town of Leicester and the Sandy Mush community; JS Wells served as postmaster at the small Mascot Post Office located near the Earley's Mountain/N. Turkey Creek intersection. (Source: USGS, 1901.)*

The family reported that JS began construction of the barn in 1903 and the house in 1905 while he and his young family resided in Leicester. According to local histories, Sid Aldridge was hired as carpenter for the barn and house; he was reportedly paid \$150 dollars to build the barn (Bishir et al 1999: 298; Swaim 1981: 130;). A Sid Aldrege (sic) is recorded on the same 1910 Census page as JS Wells, suggesting he lived nearby. The record indicates Sid was 42 in 1910, had seven children, and was occupied as a farmer and carpenter.

Local histories relate that Aldridge had to seek assistance to complete the barn's complex roof (Swaim 1981: 130). The family stated assistance was required for the house as well, for which Aldridge hired a German carpenter from the Canton area. This story lends some credence to the barn's clipped gable, an uncommon approach in the area and one more commonly associated with barn traditions in northern states.

JS and his family reportedly moved into the house for only a short period of time as the general store suffered in their absence, and they moved back to the house off Leicester Highway in the 1910s. The Wells House was then rented out to paid tenants responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm. The farm produced milk, butter, and meat, corn for silage, as well as some cash crops, including strawberries and, later, burley tobacco. The large hay loft doubled for hanging tobacco.

JS's fourth child, Eugene Rankin (Rankin) Wells (1905-1995) and wife Edith Mae Randall (1906-2001), reclaimed the house around 1930 after moving back from Texas where their only son Joseph Rankin (1927-1989) was born. Based on family history, Rankin found the house in disarray – the second story was being used as a chicken coop – and the farm was in debt to the Federal Land Bank of Columbia (organized by the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916). JS and his wife negotiated a repayment plan in 1940 (Buncombe County Deed Book 374 Pages 345 and 349). Rankin reclaimed the house and was renting the house according to the 1940 Census – apparently from his father. Rankin was listed as an employer occupied as a farmer and dairyman.

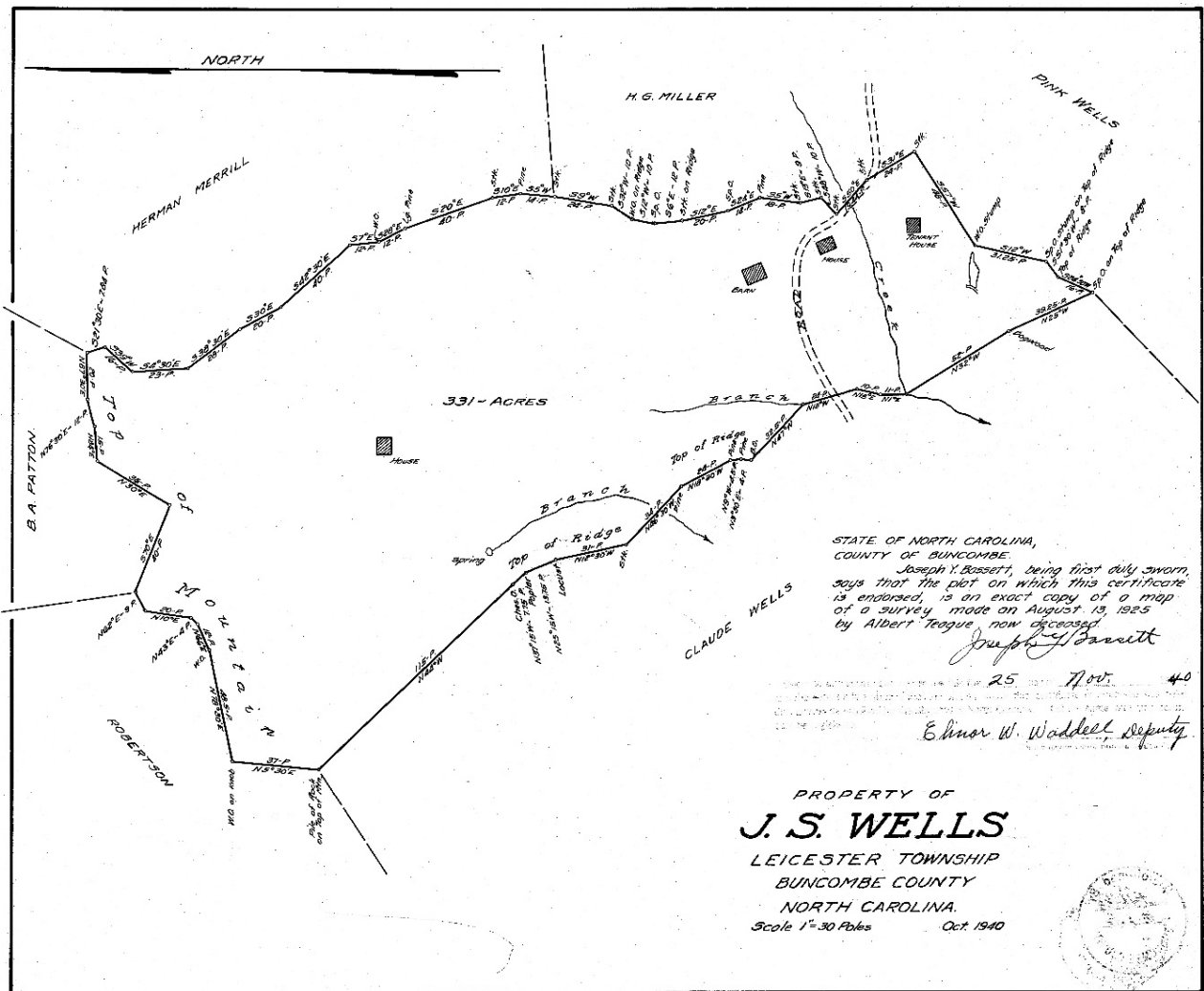


Figure 36. Property of JS Wells showing 331 acres in 1940. The house at the north end of the property, an old cabin inhabited by a family acquaintance by the name of Ms. Hart, was demolished in the early 1950s. The tenant house at the south end of the property was replaced by Tenant House #2 in 1954. (Source: Buncombe County Plat Book 19 Page 109.)

Joseph Rankin Wells married Gladys Sue Brown (1926-2007) in 1947. The couple had three boys, Ken (1948-), Eric (1952-2019), and Michael (1956-) (current owner). The young family took up residence on the second floor of the Wells House shortly after their marriage; Rankin and Edith lived on the first floor. Rankin's youngest brother Maurice constructed the brick Ranch house at the west end of the parcel in 1951 after selling his home in Canton.

Several changes were made to the Wells House beginning in the early 1950s, according to the family. The second-floor kitchen (located above the first-floor kitchen) was presumably introduced in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Around the same time an original quarter-turn porch and a doorway were removed from the north elevation. The interior doorway to the parlor was also removed and the entry expanded and left open.

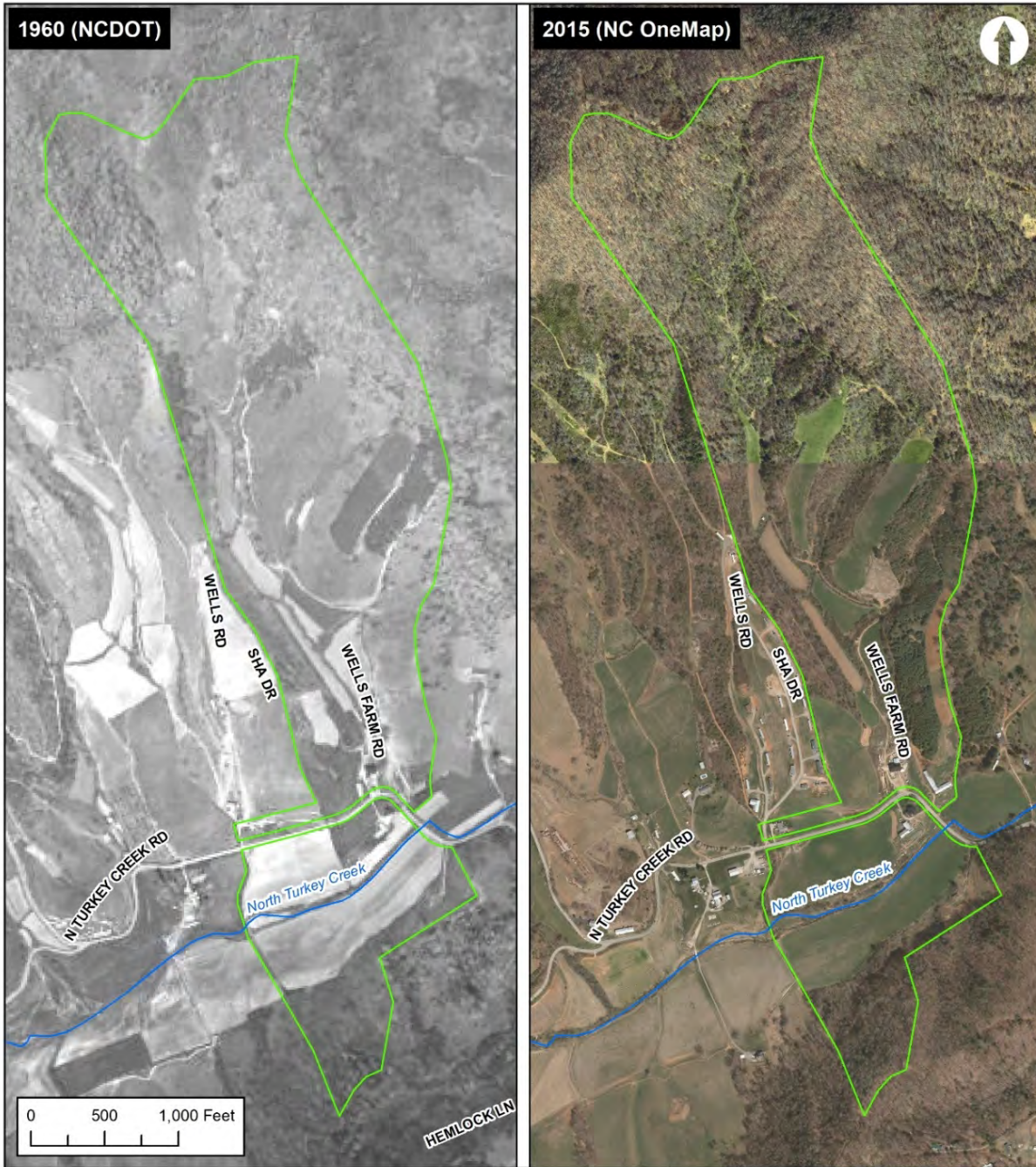
As the children aged, the house was expanded with the two-story rear addition in the 1960s. The first floor of the addition included a bathroom, an inset porch with access to a stairwell to the second floor (later enclosed and converted to a laundry room), an interior stairwell to the partial basement, and a bedroom behind the kitchen. This addition covered an exterior concrete stairwell to the basement on the rear (west) elevation of the house. The second floor of the addition included a single, open room and a small roof deck above the bathroom. Alterations within the past 30 years include the removal of all but one of the mantels and conversion of fireplaces to gas; the reconstruction of two chimneys to accommodate the conversion; and updates to the kitchens and bathrooms.

JS Wells and his descendants have farmed on the property since the early twentieth century; it is likely this property was productive land for his father before him. Wells' farm products were primarily sold in Asheville, about fourteen miles to the southeast; milk from the Wells dairy was also sold at the Leicester General Store. The Wells' operated a dairy for approximately 90 years beginning around 1903.

According to the family, the size of the herd varied over the years, with typically between 60-70 head and at most 90; there were 42 cows when the dairy operations ceased following Rankin's death in 1995. The milk was reportedly sold to Skyline Cooperative Dairies and Coble Dairy in Asheville. The additions to the barn, including the milk house in the 1950s and the milk parlor in the 1960s, reflect upgrades on the farm in compliance with health and sanitation standards for commercial milk products. The three silos were removed in the late-1980s in response to growing concerns about silo gas (e.g., carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds); silage was stored, instead, on a concrete pad and covered.

Within the past 10 years, the owner addressed the subsidence of the southeast corner and stabilized the barn. Reportedly, the corner of the barn was jacked up and the concrete foundation re-laid. According to the family, renovations to the exterior and interior were undertaken with compatible materials to the extent practical, and – consistent with the historic construction – timber materials were harvested from the property. The original poplar siding was replaced with new poplar siding; interior poplar wall coverings were replaced; livestock crib doors were reconstructed, and hardware replicated; oak was used to brace the barn and replace the loft floor boards. Updates to the barn interior included pouring concrete in the livestock cribs and adding stairs and decking in the loft. The owner plans to reconstruct and replace the missing doors and windows.

Chickens have also been a part of the farm industry since they were reportedly kept inside the house in the 1920s. The family reported that a large wood frame chicken house was present on the property into



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**Legend**

- Surveyed Boundary
- Stream

Sources: NCDOT, Buncombe Co. GIS, NCOneMap.  
 Created August 2019.

**Historic Aerial  
 Joseph S. Wells House and Barn  
 17BP.13.R.201  
 Replace Bridge No. 100183  
 Buncombe County**

the 1940s, located on the north side of the road west of the barn, but fell into disrepair and was removed. It appears that the industry expanded significantly in the 1950s when the two large concrete block chicken houses were constructed on the property. According to the family, up to 50,000 layers were kept on the farm, and the eggs sold for hatching and/or consumption.

The three young Wells boys assisted in farm labor throughout their youth, as did other members of the immediate, and extended family, as needed; however, additional help was required. According to the family, Tenant House #1 replaced an earlier tenant house on the property and the house on the mountainside north of the barn (refer to Figure 32) was rented to a family friend into the 1940s but is no longer extant. The Ranch house on N. Turkey Creek Road was constructed in 1951 for a member of the Wells family. Tenant houses #1 and #2 were constructed in 1954, at the same time as the chicken houses were added to the property. The Wells have accommodated employees on the farm as recently as 2006, when the mobile home was placed on the property.

The Wells property is enrolled in Buncombe County's Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program, indicating the owner's interest in conservation of the agricultural use of the property. Indeed, the farm remains active under the current owner, Michael Wells. In addition to keeping beef cattle on the property, hay and other forage and cover crops are grown for feed on the farm and the surplus is sold.

#### Context: Farms from the Early Twentieth Century in Buncombe County

Buncombe County contains numerous late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century farms and intact rural landscapes; the Leicester and Sandy Mush communities retain their fair share. The Farm Heritage Trail – organized by the Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District's Farmland Preservation Program and local farmers – is a scenic route that covers roughly 50 miles of public roads through the rural agricultural communities of Alexander, Leicester, Newfound, and Sandy Mush in northwest Buncombe County. (Note that N. Turkey Creek is not included on this route.) The purpose of the trail is to preserve local heritage and boost agritourism (Smith 2016). Farm complexes in this area tend to be concentrated in the bottomlands, with houses and outbuildings positioned upslope of the streams, or on gentle, low lying, cleared hills. A few of the county's farms have been evaluated for historical significance. Of the thirteen "farms" returned by HPOWEB in Buncombe County, three have been evaluated for the National Register (NR); another three have been demolished and one is a commercial property. Of those evaluated two have been determined eligible for the NR and one, the John G. and Nannie H. Barrett Farm (BN2484), is listed in the NR (discussed below).

Though farm size varied widely in Buncombe County, by 1920 the average farm was about 72 acres of which less than 50 percent (or about 35 acres) were improved. Perkins (1923: 792) noted a few large holdings in the county – upwards of 2,000 acres – but stated these consisted primarily of forest and mountain pastureland. Timber was historically an important product and cleared mountainsides made for good pasture. Farms tended to be self-sufficient, relying on diverse agriculture to provide for the family with modest surplus yields for trade. Farm labor was scarce and was worth about \$1 to \$2 per day in 1920. Some laborers were hired for long periods of time and provided a house, garden, and cow in addition to a monthly wage ranging from \$20 to \$50. (Perkins 1923: 792)

The first decade of the twentieth century saw a large increase in the value of livestock and livestock products in Buncombe County. There were 12,381 dairy cattle in the county in 1920; the value of dairy products and cream amounted to nearly \$750,000 in the previous calendar year (Perkins 1923: 789).

Dairying was given a boost when state departments of agriculture created extension offices prior to World War I as a means of promoting new methods of farming and soil conservation. State and federal programs also began to encourage diversified agriculture as a safeguard during economic downturns, and dairying became a focal point of the new agricultural programs. Agricultural extension offices promoted dairying by ensuring the quality and safety of milk products through new government regulations and by promoting sanitary farm conditions. The Agricultural Extension Service even designed standardized plans for milking barns, with gable or gambrel roofs and concrete-block walls. Concrete block construction was considered easier to clean than frame construction, and by the 1920s new state hygiene laws required milking barns to have concrete floors that could be easily washed down. In 1921, the state passed a law giving the department of agriculture the authority to inspect dairy products and plants. With these technological improvements, increased demand, and governmental quality controls, dairy increased statewide, particularly during the 1920s when the boll weevil destroyed the cotton economies of many counties. In addition, increasing urbanization insured demand and buffered dairy farms from the agricultural depression of the 1920s. (Silverman 2002: 45)

North Carolina's poultry industry expanded greatly in the same period under similar market conditions. Enthusiasm for poultry quickened statewide when boll weevils invaded fields and profits from cotton and tobacco withered during the Great Depression. In 1929, North Carolina farms sold 5.8 million chickens valued at nearly \$4.4 million and 240 million eggs valued at \$6.3 million. Demand for eggs and chickens soared during World War II, as the federal government bought large quantities to serve in military mess halls. By 1943 North Carolina farmers had shattered all previous poultry records; growers, for example, sold 15.5 million chickens and grossed \$15.7 million. Wartime demand accelerated the evolution of the industry and floated North Carolina and other southern states to the top of poultry production charts. (Jones 2006)

After the Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR) reached Asheville in 1880, farmers gained improved access to markets and manufactured goods became easier and cheaper to purchase (Bishir et al 1999: 33). Soon thereafter, improved roads penetrated the mountainous regions and by 1923 Perkins (1923: 787) described Buncombe County's public roads as the best in any county in western North Carolina. Frank Wells described the construction of a one and one-half mile sand-clay road in the Sandy Mush community in an October 1911 newspaper article. (It is unclear what and if this account refers to N. Turkey Creek Road or another local road.) Construction took about one month and cost \$1,100. The county graded the roadbed and the sand-clay was laid by the local people and the county (Brookshire 2016).

The turn of the twentieth century saw prosperous families replace traditional log dwellings with frame houses – some of these were finished in the current architectural styles. The two-story I-house form with rear kitchen ell was the most prevalent and many houses displayed ornate porches with readily available sawn and turned millwork. By the early twentieth century, simply finished foursquare houses joined the rural housing stock, as did the popular Craftsman bungalow, often enriched with the use of local stone. Outbuildings were also improved, often following traditional log construction practices but also employing frame construction to erect large barns. Dairy farmers, especially, built large gambrel-roofed barns. (Bishir et al 1999: 63)

The Ruth Jane and Reuben Burton Caldwell Farm (MD0302) (8578 Big Pine Road) is tucked deep in the narrow Big Pine Creek valley, in the rural, mountainous Big Pine community in nearby western Madison

County. The I-house and outbuildings, including the well-preserved banked monitor-roof livestock barn, are situated on a mountainous twenty-four acres of cleared and wooded land, typical of Appalachian agricultural traditions. The Caldwell Farm retains a high degree of integrity and was determined eligible for the NR under Criterion A in the area of agriculture and Criterion C in the area of architecture.



*Figure 37. Caldwell Farm I-House, view to the southwest*



*Figure 38. Caldwell Farm Barn, view to the west*

In southeastern Madison County, the Riddle Ray House/Farm (MD0333) represents a large, elaborate, and intact farmhouse within an agricultural landscape and a complement of historic outbuildings. Located at 278 Riddle Hill Road, just north of the Mars Hill town limits, the early twentieth-century house and barn retain a moderate to high degree of material integrity. The one and one-half story house features three gabled dormers, and a wraparound porch; many of its historic interior finishes remain intact. Though non-historic additions and alterations were noted, the historic post-and-beam livestock barn retains original milled and latticed siding and sits on wood sills and dry-laid rock piers. The property was determined eligible for the NR under Criterion A in the area of agriculture and Criterion C in the area of architecture.



*Figure 39. Riddle-Ray House, looking northeast (Courtesy of Annie McDonald, July 2019).*



*Figure 40. Riddle-Ray Barn, looking northeast (Courtesy of Annie McDonald, July 2019).*

The NR-listed John G. and Nannie H. Barrett Farm (BN2484) (aka Ox-Ford Farm) is at 75 Ox Creek Road in the Ox Creek community of the Reems Creek Township, east of Weaverville. Twenty buildings and structures (including six contributing and fourteen noncontributing) are situated within the fifty-four-acre, active farm ranging from the bottomlands along Ox Creek (aka South Fork Reems Creek) into the mountains to the south. The property was determined to retain its historic agricultural setting – despite the presence of fourteen buildings and structures constructed after the period of significance (ca. 1950) on the property, the arrangement of historic buildings and structures remains intact and the active farm retains pasture and woodlands. The NR Registration Form asserts that integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are intact for the contributing late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century buildings, as the relatively few alterations are consistent with those typically made over time in response to new technologies and evolving agricultural uses. However, the property was not listed under Criterion C for architecture. The property was listed on the NR in 2013 under Criterion A in the area of agriculture as a rare surviving farmstead from the first half of the twentieth century.



*Figure 41. John G. and Nannie H. Barrett Farm, view to the southeast along Ox Creek Road*



*Figure 42. John G. and Nannie H. Barrett Farm, Lower (Old) Barn, view to the southeast*

## Evaluation

The buildings and structures on the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn property retain integrity of location, as there is no evidence to suggest any of the structures have been moved. The relationship between the buildings and structures remains intact, as do circulation routes and patterns of agricultural use (i.e., cropland, pasture, and woodland). Alterations and additions to the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn reflect historic adaptations to changing domestic and agricultural needs, and recent rehabilitation to the barn has been undertaken in a sensitive manner. As a result, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are considered intact. Despite the development of a small mobile home park along the western property boundary and the placement of the mobile home on the property in 2006, the immediate surroundings, and the N. Turkey Creek valley in general, remains largely agricultural. The property itself contains over 200 acres of agricultural land, including the farmstead, fields, pastures, and woodlands. As a result, the integrity of setting is considered intact. The farm remains active and under ownership of the same family; therefore, the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn conveys integrity of feeling and association as a continuously operated farm dating to the early twentieth century. The Joseph S. Wells House and Barn compares favorably with other NR-listed and -eligible farms in Buncombe and



adjacent counties, consisting of a historic farmhouse and a complement of historic outbuildings within an intact, and active, agricultural landscape.

The property was evaluated under Criterion A for its historic association with agriculture in Buncombe County. The current owner, Michael Wells, retains over 200 acres of the historic 300-acre Joseph S. Wells property, still a relatively large private farm holding in Buncombe County. While subdivisions and development are encroaching into rural Buncombe County, as witnessed in the Leicester and Alexander communities to the south and east, respectively, the N. Turkey Creek valley remains predominantly agricultural. The Joseph S. Wells House and Barn contains the historic farmhouse and a complement of historic outbuildings, including the barn and chicken houses, three worker houses, and a patchwork of cropland, pasture, and woodlands. Alterations to the barn represent the property's development during the mid-twentieth century to stay current with agricultural practices and market standards; additions to the house and construction of the tenant houses and two large chicken houses represent the growth of the farm industry on the property in the mid-1900s. The property remains in agricultural use, primarily in hay and forage crops, with about a dozen beef cattle and several acres devoted to timber. As a result, the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn is recommended eligible for the NR under Criterion A in the area of agriculture with a local level of significance for the period of 1903-1960s, which corresponds to the dates of the earliest and latest extant construction on the property.

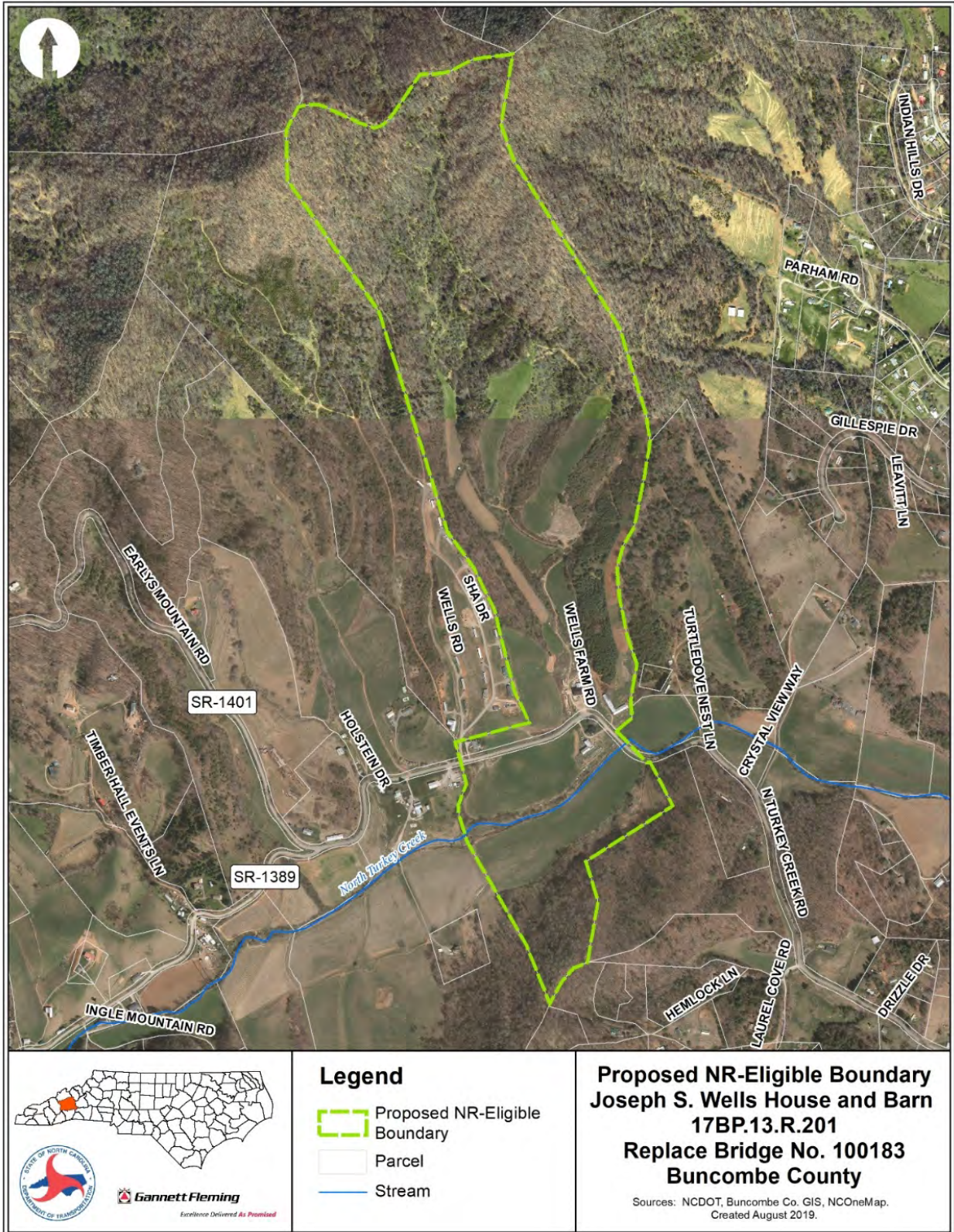
The property was evaluated under Criterion B for its association with Joseph Stringfield Wells. In addition to serving the local community in the capacity of postmaster and clerk/operated of the Leicester General Store, research revealed that JS Wells was one of three incorporators of the Leicester Telephone Company in 1922 (the company was first incorporated in 1907). While JS Wells appears to have been a well-known and well-respected member of the community and local businessman, he derived his identity chiefly from associations with occupational and social groups. Therefore, the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn is not considered eligible under Criterion B.

The property was evaluated under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The Joseph S. Wells House and Barn convey distinctive characteristics of a circa 1900 rural, agricultural complex. The house is a good example of the foursquare house form in a rural context and the modest application of popular architectural ornamentation, specifically the Colonial Revival influence in the Tuscan columns and pedimented central bay on the front porch. Though most mantels have been removed, the foursquare plan is mostly intact, and several historic interior features remain, including plaster walls, the central staircase, and oak flooring. The rear addition was built to house extended family and with the intent to blend into the overall composition by using compatible exterior materials and treatments. The barn represents a large and uncommon local example of a dairy barn, employing a clipped gambrel roof uncommon in the county. The historic additions to the barn represent the Wells' response to evolving dairy practices and standards in the 1950s and 1960s in the state of North Carolina and in Buncombe County. Recent efforts to preserve the barn have been undertaken sensitively, using timber from the Wells property and matching original wood types and finishes where possible. The structural reinforcement ensures this unique barn will remain upright but does not detract from the barn's integrity of design. The historic construction of tenant houses and chicken houses reflects the Wells prosperity and growth in the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn is considered eligible for the NR under Criterion C in the area of architecture with a local level of significance.

The property owner indicated that several Native American artifacts have been recovered from the N. Turkey Creek floodplain on the property through plowing activity. Considering the long history of agricultural activity in the floodplain, it is unlikely that an intact and significant archaeological site is located on the property. The NCDOT conducted archaeological investigations within the project's APE and determined intact and significant archaeological deposits are not likely due to the unfavorable conditions; no further archaeological work was recommended. Therefore, the resource is recommended not eligible under Criterion D.

#### Boundary Description

The proposed NR-eligible boundary for the Joseph S. Wells House and Barn corresponds to the current legal parcel boundary (Buncombe County PIN 8782-64-2615-00000), approximately 204 acres. The boundary includes all buildings and structures associated with the farmstead, all circulation paths, and the surrounding agricultural fields, pastures, and woodlands that contribute the resource's agricultural setting. As the parcel spans both sides of the road, and the public road has historically served circulation within the property, the proposed boundary includes both sides of a 0.3-mile stretch of N. Turkey Creek Road.



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