

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

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper

Secretary D. Reid Wilson

July 1, 2021

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Vanessa Patrick [vepatrick@ncdot.gov](mailto:vepatrick@ncdot.gov)  
NC Department of Transportation  
Environmental Analysis Unity, Historic Architecture Group

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley  
Environmental Review Coordinator

*RGE for Ramona M. Bartos*

SUBJECT: Replacement Bridge No. 23, BP1-R005, PA 21-01-0013, Tyrrell County, ER 21-0997

Thank you for your May 28, 2021, memorandum providing additional information and asking us to reconsider the eligibility of the proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District.

Having reviewed the additional information regarding the National Register eligibility of the Bonarva Canal as part of a proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District, we concur with the initial eligibility report's findings that the district, with the Bonarva and Somerset Canals as contributing resources, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with agriculture and social history and under Criterion C in the areas of architecture and engineering.

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 [mpfurr@ncdot.gov](mailto:mpfurr@ncdot.gov)

ER 21-0997



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE  
SECRETARY

To: Renee Gledhill-Earley, NCHPO

From: Vanessa E. Patrick, NCDOT

Date: May 28, 2021

Subject: *National Register Eligibility for T.I.P No. BP1.R005, Tyrrell County, North Carolina. WBS No. BP1.R005.1. PA Tracking No. 21-01-013. ER 21-0997.*

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Thank you for your recent comments concerning our National Register eligibility recommendations for the Bonarva Canal (TY0189).

Your reviewer suggests that we should establish a case for eligibility under Criterion A in the area of "agricultural history/development" for the proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District. My only possible response is to cite the recommendation presented on page 4 of the eligibility report – "The proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District is recommended as NR-eligible under Criterion A in the areas of agriculture and social history ..." – and reference its substantiation by the historical narrative and images accompanying the evaluation. To be clear, we are recommending the proposed historic district as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under both Criterion A (agriculture and social history) and Criterion C (architecture and engineering).

Attached are several supplementary images that should assist review. Contributing resources in the proposed historic district are predominantly *structures* and *objects*. The appearance and disposition of the canals and fields are illustrated in the eligibility report; included here is a general aerial of the landscape and a view of the Pettigrew Cemetery. The only contributing *buildings* are those of Somerset Place, components of not only a well-known National Register-listed property, but a North Carolina State Historic Site (see attached). No photographs are provided for other historic district resources noted in the eligibility report as they no longer stand (like the Bonarva dwelling house), are already determined not eligible (Bridge No. 23), or are considered not contributing or otherwise eliminated from further study for purposes of the Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects (those constructed in the 1920s and later).

As you know, we have submitted the eligibility report specifically to inform an effects assessment of the Bridge No. 23 replacement project on the Bonarva Canal. Besides this most immediate purpose, we hope that the report will serve in future as the basis for a National Register nomination of a most distinctive and significant historic landscape. Please let me know if additional discussion is needed. Thank you.

V.E.P.

Attachments

Copy: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT – EAU, Historic Architecture



**Looking north from the vicinity of Somerset Place along the Thirty Foot Canal.**



**Pettigrew Cemetery**



**Somerset Place State Historic Site (WH0004 - NR)**





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

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper

Secretary D. Reid Wilson

May 17, 2021

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Vanessa Patrick [vepatrick@ncdct.gov](mailto:vepatrick@ncdct.gov)  
NC Department of Transportation  
Environmental Analysis Unit - Historic Architecture Group

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley *RGE for Ramona M. Bartos*  
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT: Replacement Bridge No. 23, BP1-R005, PA 21-01-0013, Tyrrell County, ER 21-0997

Thank you for your April 20, 2021, memorandum transmitting the above- referenced report. Having completed our review, we offer the following comments.

While we would like to concur that the canal is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, given its history and continued integrity as well as its relationship to the surrounding agricultural landscape, we are unable to agree with the proposed historic district and its boundaries minus photographs of the extant buildings referenced in the report. We would also suggest that a case could be made for a district being eligible under Criterion A in that the canal and its landscape were and are associated with the agricultural history/development of the area.

We will look forward to receipt of a revised report that includes the necessary photographs and re-evaluation of the criteria applicable to the property. We will also look forward to the upcoming archaeological noted in the report.

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 [mpfurr@ncdot.gov](mailto:mpfurr@ncdot.gov)



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III  
SECRETARY

To: Renee Gledhill-Earley

From: Vanessa E. Patrick

Date: April 20, 2021

Subject: *Bonarva Canal (TY0189) National Register Eligibility. TIP No. BP1.R005, WBS No. BP1.R005.1. PA No. 21-01-0013. Bridge No. 23 Replacement, Tyrrell County.*

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The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to replace Bridge No. 23, built in 1973 and carrying SR 1118 (S. Fork Creek Road) over the Bonarva Canal about 1.5 miles southeast of Creswell in Tyrrell County (Figures 1, 2, and 3). The circa-1814 Bonarva Canal and other such man-made waterways transformed the forested wetlands around Lake Phelps into viable farmland beginning in the 1780s. The canals also facilitated irrigation of cultivated fields, the transportation of produce and goods, and the powering of grist- and saw-mills. The agricultural potential of the area persisted into the twentieth century, inspiring the establishment of Scuppernong Farms, one of four New Deal resettlement communities in North Carolina. An early-twentieth-century dwelling house standing southwest of Bridge No. 23 likely belonged to the farm community. The Bonarva Canal and the nearby house are the only architectural or landscape resources of possible significance in the Bridge No. 23 project area. The existing bridge itself is neither aesthetically, nor technologically distinctive. The project is state-funded, but requires a federal (United States Army Corps of Engineers) permit and thus a consideration of the resources for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NR) under the provisions of Section 106 (see reference map of historic resources and related features in the project area, Figure 4).

**HISTORY.**

Lake Phelps, the second largest natural lake in North Carolina, is an ancient Carolina bay located on the peninsula formed by the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds.\* Its unusual geology and ecology, as well as that of its vast surrounding swampland, attracted yet also constrained Native American and European settlement well into the eighteenth century. Draining the black loam of the swamp yielded rich land easy to plough and maintain, a

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process that became truly consequential by the efforts of the Lake Company, chartered in 1784. Led by the Edenton merchant Josiah Collins (1735-1819), the Lake Company purchased around 125,000 acres and imported slaves directly from west Africa to dig a six-mile-long canal between Lake Phelps and the Scuppernong River plus a subsidiary network of ditches and channels. Completion of the Somerset Canal in 1787 launched and sustained a land reclamation program of unprecedented scope and success. Josiah Collins, who eventually acquired control of the Lake Company assets, established a plantation called Somerset Place, its home farm located on the northeastern shore of Lake Phelps at the head of the Somerset Canal in Washington County (Figure 5). Reverend Charles Pettigrew (1744-1807) of Edenton began acquiring property around the lake in the late 1770s and created Bonarva Plantation immediately south of Somerset Place in Tyrrell County. Both plantations employed the same kind of drainage system, and Pettigrew also enjoyed connections to and use of the Somerset Canal by deed of gift from the Lake Company. The neighboring plantations engaged in similar agricultural activity into the first half of the nineteenth century, originally cultivating rice and experimenting with crops like hemp and cotton and eventually abandoning them for intensive wheat and corn production and the extraction of various forest resources. The relative elevation of Lake Phelps generated gravity-driven water power along a growing canal network. Poplar, pine, gum, and cypress logs floated on the larger ditches and main canals to sawmills and rice, corn, and wheat to threshing machines and grist mills constructed along the banks. Processed items like shingles, barrel staves, and flour, as well as raw commodities travelled by flatboat to meet larger vessels that carried cargoes to and from Edenton and ports beyond.

Unlike the Collins family, the Pettigrews took up permanent residence at Lake Phelps in the late 1780s. About ten years later Charles Pettigrew built a second dwelling house at his nearby Belgrade Plantation on the Scuppernong River, retiring there and turning over Bonarva to his son Ebenezer (Figure 6).\*\* Ebenezer Pettigrew (1783-1848) significantly increased his cultivated lands – from approximately 700 acres in 1815 to 8500 acres in 1840 – through expansion of the canal system and informed agricultural practice. Around 1814 he built the Bonarva Canal (TY0189), running parallel to the Somerset Canal and a major addition to the drainage and transportation network. Mills and other outbuildings soon appeared along the new canal, as well as a dwelling house for Magnolia, another Pettigrew plantation, completed in 1844. In 1839, as the existing dwelling house at Somerset Place (WA0004) neared completion, the agriculturist Edmund Ruffin visited “... the swamplands where I had heard had been made the most successful and interesting improvements by draining ...” and praised the Collins and Pettigrew plantations to the national readership of *The Farmers’ Register*.

Ebenezer Pettigrew and his sons, Charles Lockhart Pettigrew (1816-1873) and William Shepard Pettigrew (1818-1900), managed and developed their plantations during the years prior to the Civil War. The canal network continued to evolve, including the creation of the Bee Tree Canal (TY0188) and various smaller channels. The Pettigrew correspondence reveals a concern for the physical toll the digging and maintaining of canals imposed on the enslaved workforce, but economic imperatives prevailed as William Pettigrew observed in 1847: “... [slaves] are indispensable in this unhealthy and laborious country; for these long canals, that are all important in rendering our



swamplands valuable, must be dug by them, or not at all.” The operation, indeed, the very existence of the Pettigrew plantations depended on chattel slavery, and its abolition assured their quick demise. Sales of Bonarva, Belgrade, and Magnolia started in 1865, and by 1930 the plantations had been abandoned and partially subdivided into mostly tenant farms (Figure 7).

Beginning in 1937 the Federal Farm Security Administration acquired large parts of Bonarva, Magnolia, and Somerset Place and divided the lands into single-family farms offered for sale with forty-year mortgages to both black and white farmers willing to relocate to the area. Short-lived and less than totally successful in its primary objectives of relief and relocation, the “Scuppernong Farms” project nevertheless did advance the conversion of the former plantations into smaller holdings and provided long-needed public roads (Figure 8). In 1939 the federal government started to lease, then sell the remaining lands of Scuppernong Farms, principally to the state of North Carolina. The resultant Pettigrew State Park contains the site of Bonarva house, the Pettigrew family cemetery, Somerset Place house, Lake Phelps, and their immediate surrounds. In the 1980s the restored Somerset Place, designated a North Carolina historic site in 1967, became one of the first house museums in the country to interpret the experience of enslaved African Americans in the southern plantation economy. Perhaps the Bonarva and Somerset Canals, which remain virtually unchanged from the 1800s, speak even more eloquently of their lives. To this day agricultural and timbering activities around Lake Phelps are supported by the network of waterways initially created over two centuries ago.

#### **DESCRIPTION.**

The principal resource in the Bridge No. 23 project area is a section of the Bonarva Canal (Figure 9). A linear, open excavation, fifteen feet wide and approximately four feet deep, the canal traverses nearly five miles between Lake Phelps and the northeasterly end of the Somerset Canal. The channel was dug manually and the material removed used to build up and shape the berms and banks, as well as a mostly now overlaid, parallel, earthen farm road. The canal is not lined or buttressed in any apparent way; clay and rock is not locally abundant, and nothing like tile or concrete has been introduced. The surrounding land is sloped towards the canal and cut with connecting, increasingly narrower, shallower, and closely spaced collector and field ditches (termed “leading” and “tap” ditches by Ruffin) placed at successive right angles, through which gravity draws water over the surface into the canal. Water from the Bonarva Canal falls into the Somerset Canal about one-third of a mile northwest of Bridge No. 23. Wooden sluice gates, now replaced in concrete, control flow in the canal.

The second resource in the project area is a one-story, gable-roofed, L-shaped, frame house standing approximately one hundred feet southwest of Bridge No 23 (#2579 S. Fork Creek Road, PIN: 7787113222). Clad in asbestos shingles and metal roofing and sitting on masonry piers, the house is augmented with an open porch in the interior angle and a narrow rear addition, both shed-roofed. A frame outbuilding of similar materials is located to its south.

## EVALUATION.

The disappearance of much of Scuppernong Farms through demolition, alteration, and intrusion has greatly diminished the historic integrity of the house near Bridge No. 23, presumed a survivor from the resettlement community, specifically its qualities of association and feeling. In contrast, the Bonarva Canal retains a high degree of integrity. More or less maintained since its creation, the canal has remained in its original location and essentially free of changes to its earthen banks, fifteen-foot width, shallow depth, and connections to Lake Phelps and the broader drainage system. The loss of the mills, barns, and other buildings that once lined its banks has diminished its qualities of setting and feeling. Nevertheless, the canal continues to sustain the surrounding farmland, fulfilling its intended purpose and reflecting its association with an historic agricultural landscape. The Bonarva Canal can be evaluated and understood only as an integral element of that landscape. Thus it is considered here as a contributing structure in a proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District, incorporating the NR-listed Somerset Place State Historic Site (WH0004) and the study-listed Somerset Plantation Boundary Expansion (WH0463).

*Criterion A.* The man-made network of waterways established to the northeast of Lake Phelps between the 1780s and the 1850s represents the most ambitious and successful canal building effort in North Carolina history.\*\*\* The state initiated its own swamp draining plan in the 1830s, hoping to benefit public education with land sales, and various private concerns also undertook similar programs. Many of the resultant structures are evident near Lake Mattamuskeet and Alligator Lake in neighboring Hyde County and also the Lower Cape Fear, but nowhere does an antebellum canal system survive to such an extent and also in association with related resources -- like the dwelling house at Somerset Place -- as at Lake Phelps. The larger and better known canals -- like the Roanoke (HX0009) and the Dismal Swamp (CM0008) -- which still exist at least in part, did not serve land reclamation but commercial transportation, operating for far fewer years and with less financial return than the agricultural waterways of the Collins and Pettigrew plantations. Bonarva, Belgrade, Magnolia, and Somerset Place depended upon hundreds of enslaved men, women, and children, whose labor brought into being some of the largest and most prosperous plantations in North Carolina. Engaged in all the typical tasks of farming, many also carried out less common activities -- the dangerous and debilitating digging, scouring, and repairing of canals and ditches that David Cecelski calls “the nightmare of maritime slave life.” The agricultural possibilities of the reclaimed land did not end with emancipation and the consequent failure of the plantations, as the Scuppernong Farms resettlement project of the late 1930s suggests. The community, however, no longer conveys much of a cohesive presence, and the scattered handful of surviving houses speak less of the New Deal and more directly of the farming and timbering that characterize the area today. The proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District is *recommended as NR-eligible under Criterion A in the areas of agriculture and social history*, significant in the development of the eastern North Carolina plantation economy, including the contributions and experience of enslaved African Americans.

*Criterion B.* The productive lives of the Collins and Pettigrew families, as well as their many slaves, are represented by resources both within and outside the proposed historic district, notably the Belgrade and Somerset Place dwelling houses, St. David’s Church,

the Pettigrew graveyard, and the canal network. The residents and administrators of Scuppernong Farms are less well reflected, as the community no longer exists as a recognizable entity. The proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District is *recommended as not NR-eligible under Criterion B*, since the identities of the people associated with it are less individual and more precisely collective as members of specific occupational and social groups.

*Criterion C.* The Bonarva and Somerset Canals exemplify venerable methods of introducing new waterways into a natural landscape. In form and appearance they resemble the smaller of the exclusively transportation canals like the Clubfoot and Harlowe's Creek (CR0565 and CV1338) of 1827 and the earlier canals dug specifically to drain Lake Mattamuskeet like the Fairfield (HY0612) of 1849. Eastern North Carolina is well supplied with drainage ditches and networks of varying age and complexity. The system that survives at Lake Phelps is not only the oldest established, but the most fully realized in a plantation context. That it has retained its physical qualities and functionality over two centuries of existence is due to careful planning and skillful construction by those responsible for its creation and use. The canals and drainage system developed during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have not ceased to shape, nourish, and preserve a distinctive North Carolina landscape, which includes the architecturally significant dwelling house at Somerset Place. The early-twentieth-century house located near Bridge 23 is likely a remnant of Scuppernong Farms. It is of unexceptional design, but does conform to the scale, form, and construction of other such houses surviving in the area. The physical presence of the resettlement community is far less complete and evocative than that of the contemporary Penderlea in Pender County (Penderlea Homesteads Historic District (PD0318), listed NR 2013). It does not read as a cohesive district itself or as a contributing element in the larger, proposed district. Therefore, the house and others like it are not considered as contributing resources in the proposed rural historic district. The proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District is *recommended as NR-eligible under Criterion C in the areas of architecture and engineering*, its material resources clearly illustrating the evolution of a place over time.

*Criterion D.* The proposed Somerset Place Rural Historic District is *recommended as not NR-eligible under Criterion D*. None of its above-ground resources is likely to yield new information about building technology or the construction of drainage and transportation canals. The archaeological potential of the Bridge No. 23 project area will be assessed separately.

#### **PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY.**

The proposed National Register boundary for a Somerset Place Rural Historic District includes and extends those already established for the Somerset Place State Historic Site and its boundary expansion (Figure 10). Beginning at the southwest corner of the historic site, the proposed boundary follows the same line along the shore of Lake Phelps to the northwest bank of the Bee Tree Canal. It then runs along the northwest bank of the canal to the northeastern boundary of the state park and turns northwest to follow the park boundary to the southeast bank of the Bonarva Canal. Turning northeast it follows the canal to its junction with the Somerset Canal and follows the southeast bank of the latter to the Scuppernong River. The proposed boundary then turns northwest along the

riverbank and heads southwest along the northwest bank of the Somerset Canal to meet the northeast line of the boundary extension. By so delineating the rural historic district several significant and related resources are added to the National Register-listed and study-listed areas: the Pettigrew cemetery, the site of Bonarva House, representative fields and wetlands, and the two oldest canals and their connections with each other, the Scuppernong River, and Lake Phelps.

Should questions arise or if you require any additional materials in support of this National Register eligibility assessment, please let me know. Thank you for considering our recommendation.

V. E. P.

Copies to: Paul Williams, NCDOT – Division 1  
Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT – EAU-Historic Architecture

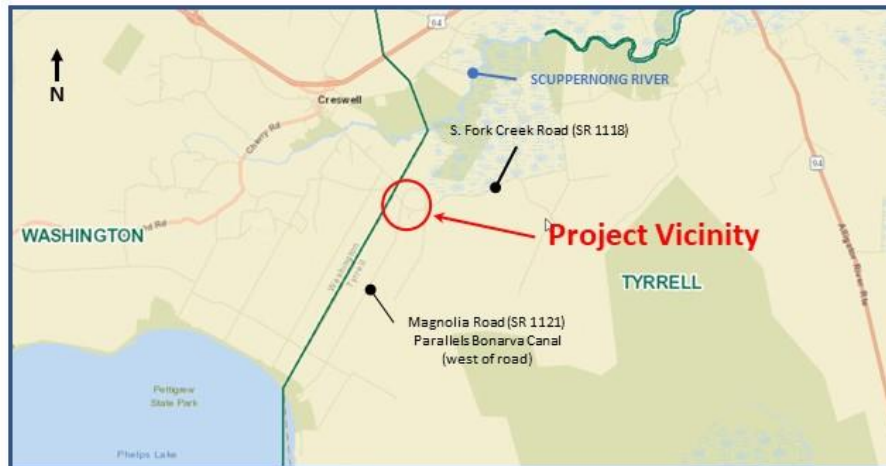
#### **NOTES.**

\*This historical profile of the Lake Phelps area is drawn principally from: Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, ed., *The Pettigrew Papers*, Vols. I and II, Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1971 and 1988; Edmund Ruffin, "Journey Over the Firm Land of Washington County. First Impressions of the Great Swamp, and Lake Scuppernong," *The Farmers' Register* VII, No. 11, 1839; Bennett H. Wall, "The Founding of the Pettigrew Plantations," *North Carolina Historical Review* 27, No 4 - October 1950, pp. 395-418; William S. Tarlton, "Somerset Place and its Restoration," Raleigh: North Carolina Division of State Parks, 1954; David S. Cecelski, "A March Down into the Water – Canal Building and Maritime Slave Labor" in *The Waterman's Song – Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001; and Wilson Angley, "A Brief History of the Scuppernong River," Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1986.

\*\*Information about the Pettigrew dwelling houses in the text and related graphic found in Lemmon and Wall. Also the National Register nomination for Belgrade and St. David's Church, (WA0001) on file North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office; the records of the Historic American Building Survey viewed at <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>; and North Carolina Architects and Buildings – A Biographical Dictionary viewed at <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu>.

\*\*\*In addition to the source materials noted above, the evaluation of National Register eligibility is informed by: Clifford Reginald Hinshaw, "North Carolina Canals Before 1860," *North Carolina Historical Review* 25, No. 1- January 1948, pp.1-56; J. Paul Lilly, "A History of Swampland Development in North Carolina" in C. J. Richardson, ed., *Pocosin Wetlands*, Stroudsburg, Pa.: Hutchinson Ross Publishing Co., 1980; Michael O'Driscoll, "The 1909 North Carolina Drainage Act and Agricultural Drainage Effects in Eastern North Carolina," *Journal of the North Carolina Academy of Science* 128, Nos. 3 & 4 - Fall/Winter 2012, pp. 59-73; the National Register nominations for Penderlea Homesteads Historic District (PD0318) and the Somerset Place State Historic Site (WH0463) on file North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office; and the websites of the Somerset Place State Historic Site (<https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/somerset-place>) and the Pettigrew State Park (<https://www.ncparks.gov/pettigrew-state-park/home>).

Figure 1



Bridge No. 23 Replacement  
WBS No. BP1.R005.1

Tyrrell County  
Base map: HPOWeb, nts

NCDOT – Historic Architecture  
February 2021  
PA Tracking No. 21-01-0013



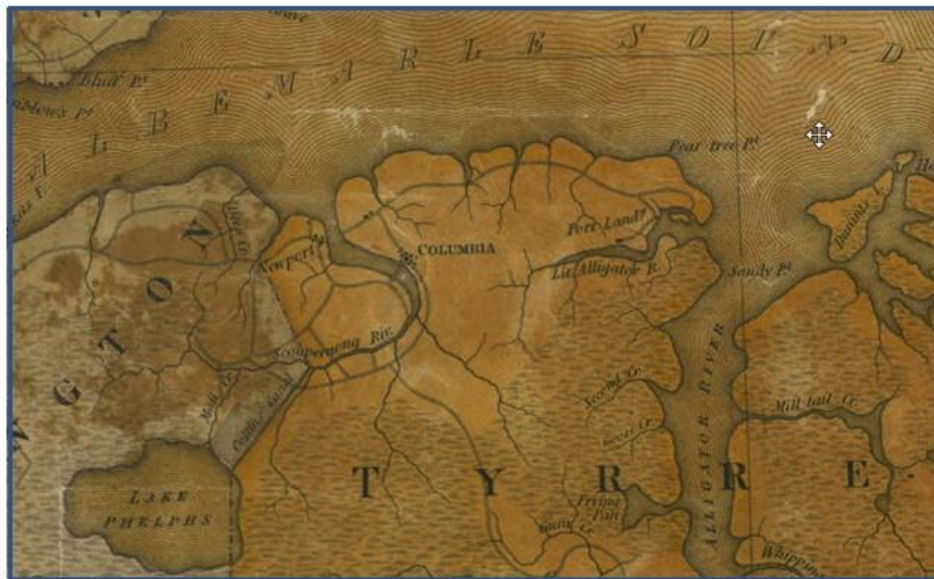




**Figure 4. Historic Resources and Related Features in the Bridge No. 23 Vicinity  
Washington and Tyrrell Counties**

Base map: HPOWeb, nts





**Figure 5. The Somerset Canal**

Detail of the 1833 MacRae-Brazier map (above) of the state showing the Somerset Canal (here called the “Collins Canal,” and later also known as the “Old Canal”) as a major geographical feature. View along the canal (below), looking northeast from the dwelling house at Somerset Place.

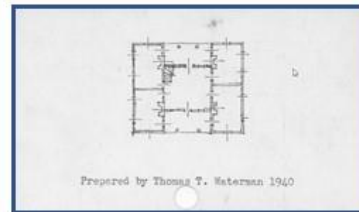
Images from <https://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps>  
and <https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/somersetplace>.





**Figure 6. The Pettigrew Dwelling Houses**

**Belgrade** (above), built for Charles Pettigrew in 1797 on his Scuppernong River plantation of the same name. **Magnolia** (below), built for Ebenezer Pettigrew in 1843-4 midway between Lake Phelps and the mouth of South Fork Creek on the Bonarva Canal. Both photographs by Thomas T. Waterman, who recorded the houses for the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1940 (HABS NC 35 and 72). With St. David's Church (Pettigrew's Chapel) Belgrade is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (WA0001). Placed on the North Carolina Study List in 1974, Magnolia (TY0109) has subsequently burned.



**Bonarva** no longer stands, but is included in *North Carolina Architects and Builders – A Biographical Dictionary* as the work of carpenter Nathaniel Bratton. Additional craftsmen identified in the construction are the carpenter Dave and bricklayer Joe Welcome, both enslaved African Americans. Built around 1815 for Ebenezer Pettigrew to replace an earlier house, it burned in 1860. A third house at Bonarva constructed in 1861 and demolished in 1953 provided some of the materials used in the restoration of Somerset Place.

**North Carolina Advertiser.**

RALEIGH, :: :: SATURDAY, JULY 8, 1865.

**Scuppernong Plantations**

It is not exaggeration to say that the Scuppernong Plantations which we offer for sale in our present issue are as valuable and as susceptible of future development as any on this continent. As the section in which they are located is of remarkable agricultural value, they are worthy of a special notice.

A glance at the map of North Carolina shows two remarkable bodies of water of sufficient depth to carry sea-going vessels, extending inland from the coast about fifty miles. Between and around these beautiful sheets, thirty to forty feet above their level, is a body of land rich in the accumulation of vegetable matter, mixed with fertile soils washed by the rains from the highlands of the central counties.

Twelve miles south of Albemarle Sound is Lake Phelps or Lake Scuppernong, of pure fresh water, twenty-three miles in circumference and fourteen feet deep, containing a variety of fresh water fish. The bottom of this lake is twenty feet above the level of the sound, and from its shores the land rapidly falls eighteen feet in a distance of five miles, thereby creating a water power of great local value.

Scuppernong river rises near the dividing line of Tyrrell and Hyde counties, and runs in a northeasterly direction to Albemarle Sound. Its principal tributary, South Fork Creek, joins it twenty miles from its mouth, and the river is navigable to the junction for coasting vessels, carrying 4000 bushels of grain. Herrings annually ascend these streams and afford a plentiful supply of fresh fish.

This land, covered with a stately growth of cypress, gum, ash and pine, often 150 feet high, with festoons of grape vines hanging from their branches, in the days of the Red man the habitation of the bear and the wild cat, has, by the industry of man, been converted into soil of surpassing fertility. Six canals, from twelve to thirty feet wide, are the main arteries for carrying the superfluous waters of the region north of Scuppernong Lake into Scuppernong river and its tributaries, and communicating with these canals is a network of ditches, dividing the fields into plats of seven to ten acres. The fields thus reclaimed are capable of producing, without manures, fifty to seventy-five bushels of corn for a hundred years.

**1000 ACRES OF SCUPPERNONG RIVER LANDS.**

ALL THAT REALLY BARONIAL ESTATE known as William S. Pettigrew's **MAGNOLIA PLANTATION** for sale cheap.

**1000 ACRES IMPROVED!**

Over 600 Acres in <sup>the</sup> **high state of Cultivation!**

50 OR OVER BUSHELS OF CORN PER ACRE.

**RICH ALLUVIAL SOILS SUITABLE FOR FARMS AND VEGETABLE GARDENS!**

**ONLY TEN HOURS FROM NORFOLK!**

**WATER TRANSPORTATION FROM THE BARN.**

The far-famed **SCUPPERNONG GRAPE** is a native of this county, and grows in a luxuriant abundance unsurpassed in any country. The Residence, Baths, Outbuildings, Groves, &c., &c., are very superior. Good well of water, &c., &c.

This very large and really magnificent estate contains Seven Thousand Acres of those rich alluvial Scuppernong river lands, One Thousand Acres already drained, and most of it in a high state of cultivation, and the whole of the rest can be easily and effectually drained, thus opening up large plantations scarcely surpassed in fertility by the Mississippi bottoms, which they greatly exceed in proximity to markets, having cheap and easy carriage, almost if not quite from the Barn door to Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and

**THE WHOLE WORLD!**

Sea-going vessels can now come within a few miles of the Barn door, and by deepening one Canal this desirable result can be obtained.

That unequalled and far-famed grape, the Scuppernong, is a native of Scuppernong river, and can be grown in an abundance and to a perfection that is quite surprising.

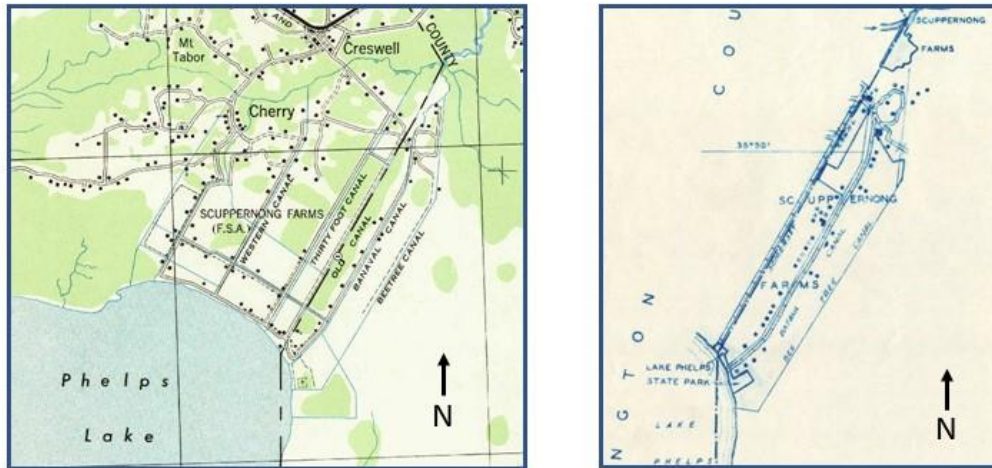
The Residence is

**Large, airy, and in Good Condition,**

is 14 feet square with two piazzas, and six large rooms. This fine residence is surrounded by every necessary out-house, including Office, Store Room, Dairy, Pantry, Washhouse, Six Double Houses for hands, 26 by 18 feet, Barn 150 feet long, by 40 feet wide, with large Stacks, Corn Crib, &c., &c. This building stands in a fine grove of Elm, Ash, Beech, Maple, Gum, &c., &c., while immediately in the rear is a grove containing two or three hundred acres of land; there is also a good well of water in the yard. General health of the situation good, the present owner having resided on the place for eighteen consecutive summers.

For further particulars apply to the  
**NORTH CAROLINA LAND AGENCY,**  
Raleigh, July 8, 1865. 1-11

Figure 7. Profile of the plantations at Lake Phelps (excerpt, left) and advertisement for the sale of Magnolia (above). North Carolina Advertiser 8 July 1865, p. 1, col. 4-5 and col. 1.



**Figure 8. Scuppernong Farms**

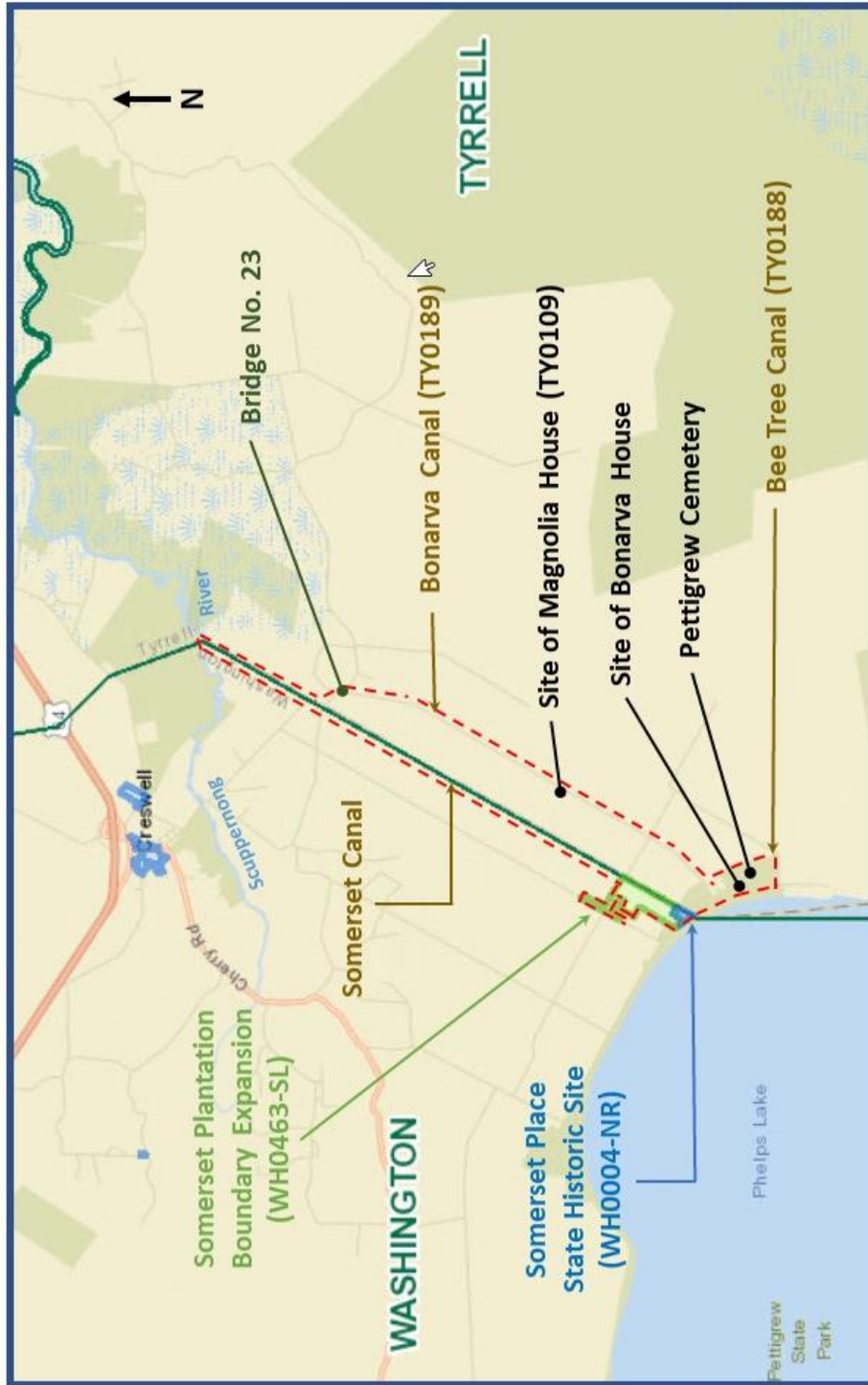
Details of the 1943 USGS quadrangle for Columbia (above left) and the 1938 State Highway Commission map for Tyrrell County (above right) showing the location and development of Scuppernong Farms. Some eighty houses and about 340 agricultural and support buildings appeared during the brief existence of the community, and comparatively few survive. Named for the nearby river and the historic descriptor “the Scuppernong Swamp Lands,” the area continued to be included on state highway maps into the early 1960s. Alternate names for the Bonarva Canal (Banaval, Batava) also persisted. The Somerset Place Historic Site has conducted research of Scuppernong Farms, presented in a video series, “Lost Buildings of Somerset” from which the images below are captured (<https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/somersetplace>). The Administration/Community Building stood just east of the Somerset Place dwelling house, and archaeological investigation of the site has revealed that its circa-1938 construction destroyed both above- and below-ground resources dating to the pre-1865 era. The building was demolished around 1954 during restoration of the dwelling house.





Figure 9. **The Bonarva Canal.** Looking northeast along canal (above) and aerial view of Bridge No. 23 vicinity (below). Images from NC Digital Collections, State Archives of NC (2016) and Google Maps (2021).





**Figure 10. Proposed National Register Boundary - - - -  
 Somerset Place Rural Historic District  
 Washington and Tyrrell Counties**

Base map: HPOWeb, nts

## BP1.R005, Tyrrell County -- NR Eligibility Evaluation

Patrick, Vanessa E <vepatrick@ncdot.gov>

Tue 4/20/2021 1:03 PM

To: DCR - Environmental\_Review <Environmental.Review@ncdcr.gov>

Cc: Gledhill-earley, Renee <renee.gledhill-earley@ncdcr.gov>

📎 1 attachments (1 MB)

BP1.R005TyrrellEligEval.pdf;

Attached for HPO review is a memorandum presenting an evaluation of National Register eligibility for resources located in the BP1.R005 project area in Tyrrell County. Should questions arise or if you require additional information, please let me know. Thank you.  
Vanessa

### **Vanessa E. Patrick**

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